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SERIALS

JUL 18 2007

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
LIBRARIES

COVER STORY

32 Play It Again, Sam

Fairway Green's Sam Lang takes a cumulative approach to marketing and client development.

BUSINESS

**44 Business Opportunities –
Deicing Dealerships**

Determine if adding a liquid deicer dealership is the right add-on for your snow removal operation.

**65 Best of the Web –
Give Me a Break**

When is an employee off the clock, and do workers warrant a paid rest break? *Lawn & Landscape* Online Message Board participants take a moment out of their busy day to muse on the subject of work breaks.

MOWING

70 The Ergonomic Advantage

Ergonomically friendly mowers can make for more comfortable and more productive crews.

IRRIGATION

82 Smart Upgrades

A look at two properties before and after smart upgrades.



Cover image: Tim Broyer

32



44



65



70



82

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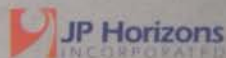
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SERVICE STRATEGIES

84 Seed It to Believe It

Hydroseeding can produce a great-looking lawn with less money in less time.



84

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHTS

92 Safe Bet

Don't gamble with hazards on the job. Try protective products.



92

94 Smart Water

These irrigation components are designed to meet the need for more efficient use of a precious resource.



94

102 Small Wonders

The power behind this handheld equipment shows that size can be deceiving.

108 Well Established

See the latest equipment for hydroseeding and erosion control projects.

DEPARTMENTS

- 10 Editor's Focus
- 12 Sales & Marketing
- 14 Benchmarking Your Business
- 16 People Smarts
- 18 From the Field
- 20 What's the Deal?
- 22 Inside the Industry
- 28 Market Watch
- 29 Calendar
- 110 New Products
- 120 How We Do It
- 122 Advertisers' Index

Special Section – Professional Landscape Design

starting after page 48



PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

S3 Inside Out

Vanessa Nagel merges two worlds – interior design and gardening – to create engaging residential environments.

DESIGN SPECIALTIES

S6 Light the Way

Designers add lighting to their designs as clients embrace the urge to enhance their landscapes and make them more enjoyable for longer periods of time each day.

S9 Patio Solutions

The latest hardscape trends, particularly with patios and walkways, add texture and dimension to landscape designs.

S14 Plant Life

When designing an area that has special erosion control needs, paying attention to plant selection is essential.



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SMART IRRIGATION CENTRAL



The Irrigation Association named July Smart Irrigation Month to raise awareness about water efficiency. This month's issue features a special section focused on smart irrigation, but our coverage doesn't stop there. Check out these special features at www.lawnandlandscape.com throughout the month to find out what you need to know about the issue.



> LISTEN TO THE LATEST

Lawn & Landscape continues to provide you with multiple ways to learn how to make your business better. Click on the podcast logo in the top right corner of our homepage and choose the irrigation podcast to listen to an industry expert explain what's new in irrigation and what's to come.



> YOUR SMART IRRIGATION PRODUCT GUIDE

Watch your inbox July 19 for a special edition of our weekly product e-newsletter. The resource that brings you a weekly peek at the industry's latest equipment and technology will be devoted to smart irrigation products for one installment. There you'll see a sampling of what irrigation manufacturers are doing to promote water conservation.



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ONLINE QUOTABLE

"I could care less what a lawn care product costs. If everyone figures out what it costs them to pull up to a house, before you get out and do anything, you wouldn't be worried about what a product costs you. You want a product that works well and will not generate any return service for you. Pulling up at no charge is going to kill you." – *Sam Lang, president of Fairway Green Lawn Care in Raleigh, N.C., this month's cover profile subject, in an online extra about pricing*

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cindy code | editorial director



Developing Bench Strength

While the Cleveland Cavaliers were unceremoniously swept out of the NBA finals, losing four games to zero, they didn't reach the pinnacle of pro basketball by happenstance.

Only two out of 30 NBA teams reach the finals in any given year presenting a challenge to any coach who must field a team of five players, along with bench players, to weather the highs and lows of the long season. Most teams have one or two stars – LeBron James in Cleveland's case – and an assortment of role players specializing in defense, three-point shooting or speed.

Sure, one or two players regularly make the highlight reel on Sports Center, but a team effort is the only way the team achieves overall success in the playoffs as well as the record books.

While the Cavs lost and I have to endure chiding from my friends, the Cavs surprising season often reminds me of parallels to running a successful business. Building a sports franchise or building a business takes a clearly defined strategy, a leader to carry out the plan and a team to bring the company's goals to fruition.

The president or owner of a landscape company is recognized monthly on our magazine cover. That person is the clearly recognized leader and, generally, mastermind behind the business. But that person didn't achieve prominence without a strong management team, crew leaders and front-line workers.

The key to any strong organization is not size, image or even technology; rather it's talent, commitment and leadership. While talent is essential at the top, it's incumbent upon the owner or president to prepare for the future of his or her company. Your company's future depends on your ability to identify key employees, hire and retain them and mentor them as the next generation of leaders at your company.

Bench players must be continually groomed in all facets of your business. Most owners recognize this fact, but many are reluctant to fulfill this essential job obligation for fear that a groomed employee might leave and start a competitive business. This happens regularly in the landscape industry, or any service industry for that matter.

Yes, the possibility exists that your most coveted employees might be lured away by a competitor or the entrepreneurial fever, but that doesn't mean you don't bring them into the fold and share your hopes and dreams for your company. On the contrary, mentoring a young professional in the landscape industry should be a rewarding experience even if they leave your company. Hopefully, that person will benefit from your experience and bring a professional approach to his or her new business.

Depth is essential for any organization. Your company needs someone who will step in and perform your responsibilities should you be hit by a bus or otherwise not able to run your company.

Every sports team relies on its bench. Every theater company carries understudies to back up its performers. We elect a president and a vice president so our country isn't left without a leader should the president be unable to fulfill his duties.

Grooming your employees to interact with customers, keep your crews running efficiently and keep your projects moving forward is vital to your business success. What's the point of driving your business, building a customer base and accumulating wealth if the business dries up when you're no longer at the helm?

Aligning your most talented employees with your most critical needs and projects is essential to developing organizational depth. Don't put this off for another season or another year. Bench players are essential to the depth and versatility of your business and the future of the landscape industry. ■

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Three Of My Biggest Mistakes

I recently addressed a group of landscape professionals in San Diego and I had one contractor ask me what my biggest regret was in my 24 years of running a landscape company. I'm asked this all the time, but for some reason, this time I really had to think.

I gave him the standard "Oh, too many to mention," answer. But flying back to Ohio, I really thought about his question. What were the biggest mistakes I've made and could my readers learn from them?

Here are three mistakes I've made operating Grunder Landscaping.

NOT REALIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF PEOPLE.

It took me way too long to hire my first salesperson. I thought I needed to do all of the sales myself. After all, no one could do it as well as I, and they would just cause problems. It wasn't until my eighth year in business that I hired a salesperson. That person didn't last too long because I had no clue how to hire a good salesperson. But I learned a lot from the experience and realized others could effectively sell my company's services. In fact, if I planned to grow, I would need others selling for me. Don't wait too long to hire someone to help you sell. In fact, I frequently tell contractors I'm coaching to hire a salesperson: "Remember, a good salesperson doesn't cost you money, they bring you money."

NOT ATTENDING INDUSTRY SEMINARS UNTIL 1991.

If I had gone to the seminars offered by PLANET, ANLA, and the countless other groups in 1984, there's no telling where I'd be today. I didn't go because I was afraid – afraid no one could possibly understand what I'm going through. Surely those companies had far bigger problems than those of my \$100,000-per-year company. I

was dead wrong. By being a member of PLANET, I had the opportunity to meet Frank Mariani, who arguably runs the best landscaping company in America. Today Frank serves as a mentor and has helped me grow and prosper. I also met many other landscape contractors who shared their ideas with me.

Landscape contractors, I have discovered, pretty much share the same business problems, except they're either bigger or smaller in scale. Don't wait to go to a seminar. Attend the next one you can, find other successful landscape contractors and take them to dinner. You'll be amazed at what you can learn for the cost of a steak.

UNDER APPRECIATING TIME MANAGEMENT.

I was in business for almost 10 years before I realized the more I knew about time management, the more efficient I would be, and the more profits I could make for my company. I have studied every piece of information I can get my hands on about time management. It has made a difference. No salesperson has a chance of reaching his full potential if he doesn't use his time wisely.

For the past 15 years I have written a to-do list detailing what I planned to accomplish the next day. I'm not going to lie, some days I do better than others. But one thing is for sure, I'd be lost without my list and waste a ton of time and money.

My friend Ed Eppley says successful people do the things unsuccessful people don't want to do. I would add that the difference between success and failure is often associated with doing those things we need to do vs. doing the things we'd like to do. Procrastination is the language of the poor. If you put off important tasks, then expect to be poor.

Please learn from my mistakes in a way that makes your company better. ■

marty grunder

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Factoring Material Costs

Factoring is one of six estimating methods – including Market-Driven Unit Pricing, the Single Overhead Recovery System (SORS), the Dual Overhead Recovery System (DORS), the Multiple Overhead Recovery System (MORS) and the Overhead and Profit Per Hour (OPPH) – used within the green industry.

The prices these methods calculate often vary dramatically for the same job or service. In fact, they can vary so much that a critical look at each method is not only useful, but also imperative for contractors who want to understand costs and pricing structures. Understanding these methods is important when a contractor needs to take his best shot at the bid table.

Factoring is another word for multiplication. Simply put, its formula is: Factor 1 multiplied by Factor 2 = The Product. Applying numerics to the formula looks like this: $2 \times 3 = 6$. The 2 and 3 are factors of the product 6.

Using the factoring method, also called the multiplier method, we simply multiply estimated material costs by a “factor.” The factor may be based on past Profit & Loss statements, or may be a number “arrived” at as a result of monitoring past competitive bidding situations.

The rationale is if you ended a previous calendar or fiscal year with a sufficient net profit, and if material costs were 33 percent of your gross sales for that year, then all you have to do is multiply material costs for the new year by a factor of 3.0. Supposedly, this will produce prices that will cover all costs and insure sufficient net profit.

The flaws in this method are too numerous to mention, but it’s surprising how many contractors bid their work using this “material-times-two” approach. Job costing the most critical component of your bids

– field labor – is impossible and many contractors use this method until they learn a better way to price their services.

The only variables addressed in this method are the amount of materials and the factor (2.0, 2.5, 3.0, etc.). Unfortunately, factoring doesn’t address the multitude of other variables – general conditions, net profit markup, site conditions, etc. – that apply to your bids.

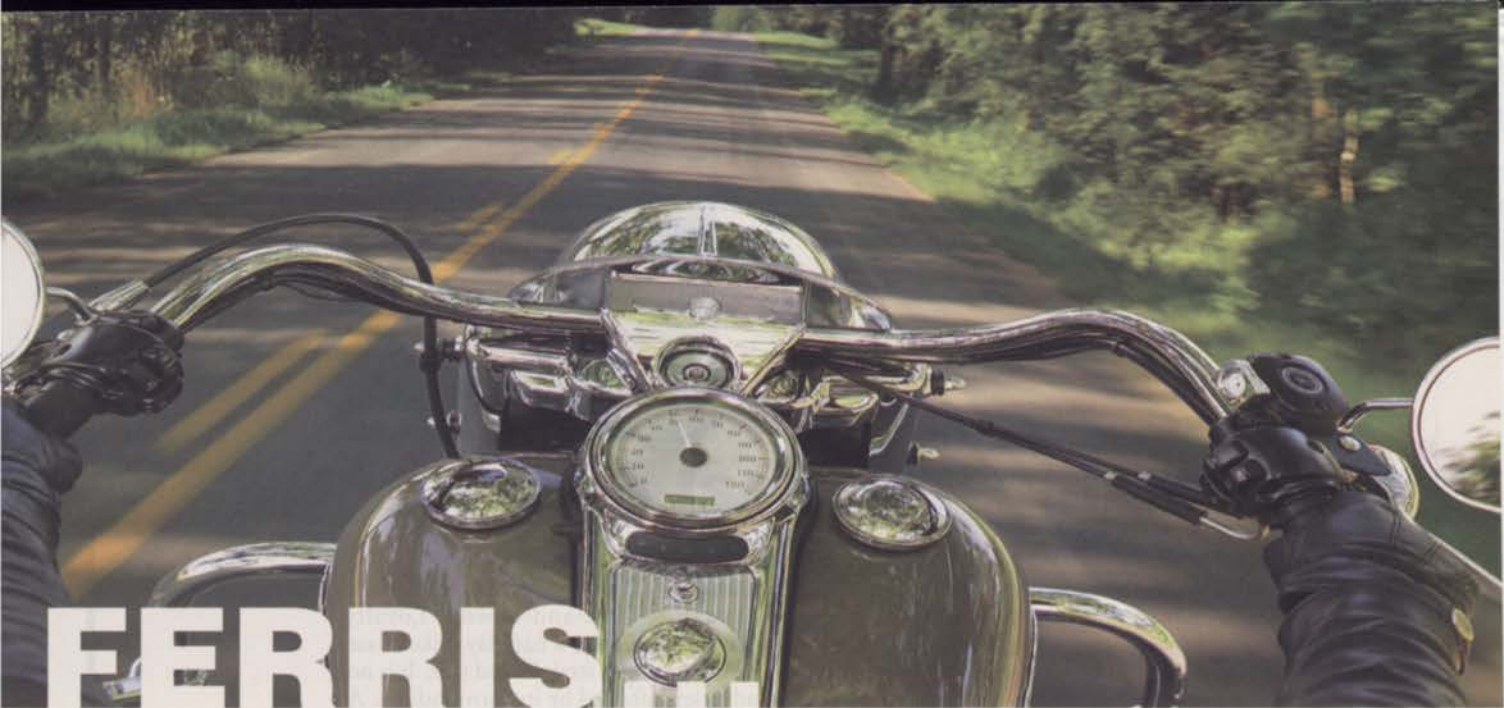
Jobs A & B Using the Factoring Method

	Job A	Job B
Material costs	\$20,000	\$10,000
Factor	x 3.0	x 3.0
Price	\$60,000	\$30,000

Turn your attention to the two sample jobs (above). Assume both jobs take a three-person crew one month to complete. Job A may have more expensive materials than job B. Or Job B may have a lot of demolition involved. The 3.0 factor calculates a price on these jobs of \$60,000 and \$30,000, respectively. The additional \$40,000 and \$20,000 is intended to cover general and administrative (G&A) overhead costs, net profit margin, field labor, labor burden and equipment costs. If the net profit margin is 20 percent for both, that equates to \$12,000 on Job A and \$6,000 on Job B. That leaves \$38,000 on Job A and \$14,000 for Job B to cover these costs (without net profit). That’s ridiculous. The G&A overhead costs, labor and labor burden costs should be the same for both jobs as they both require the same amount of time to complete. ■

jim huston

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Partnerships: A Real Asset

It occurred to me when I started GreenSearch almost 15 years ago that there exists a preponderance of partnerships in our industry. I then found a statistic suggesting a business begun by partners had greater potential for long-term survivability than one started by a single owner – but it takes a lot of work.

Partnerships in business require many of the same characteristics found in long, enduring friendships. The common theme permeates both relationships – values count. To emphasize this last point, ask anyone in your circle of network contacts if that is true or not. My guess is the answer almost always is yes.

Successful partnerships, like friendships, endure because of a common belief in core, shared values. These values never dilute the individual strengths and creativity each partner brings to the enterprise. However, when the chips are down and tough decisions must be made based upon issues of character and what is the right thing to do, they are the glue that holds everything together. These values may vary in both number and description, but those who share them know what they are and when they should be applied without delay, debate or long-winded discussions.

Here are some values to consider.

HUMILITY. Sooner or later, partnerships peel back the veneer that covers each individual's strengths and weaknesses. Circumstances conspire and partners face the fact that one is clearly better than the other in certain aspects of the business. Many times this is a difficult admission to make and the potential for resentment and jealousy is great. Enduring partnerships avoid this pitfall by taking quiet pride in the other's strengths and a sense of relief that this talent belongs to their team rather than with a competitor.

LOYALTY. Partnerships, like friendships, have their ups-and-downs. Loyalty, though, never has a bad day. Like a laser beam, loyalty is straight and true. It is not adversely affected by its surroundings. As you look back in history, men and women have willingly given up much because of an unyielding sense of loyalty to a cause or another person. This principle holds steady and true in business.

ABILITY TO GIVE AND TAKE. No one has all of the answers all of the time. However, what separates success from failure is sound advice delivered in a timely fashion. The ability to take and give counsel requires a willingness to take a chance on offending someone while offering a worthwhile and objective perspective. Just as important is the willingness to ask for counsel and take it seriously when it is given.

HONESTY. This is a bedrock issue. Throughout history and the chronicles of many successful landscape businesses, there was the inevitable moment in each friendship in which there was nothing else to speak but the truth. The truth hurt in some situations and it was not until years later that the friends recognized the courage it took to be honest when it would have been easier to say nothing. Although it may appear to do otherwise, honesty strengthens any business relationship.

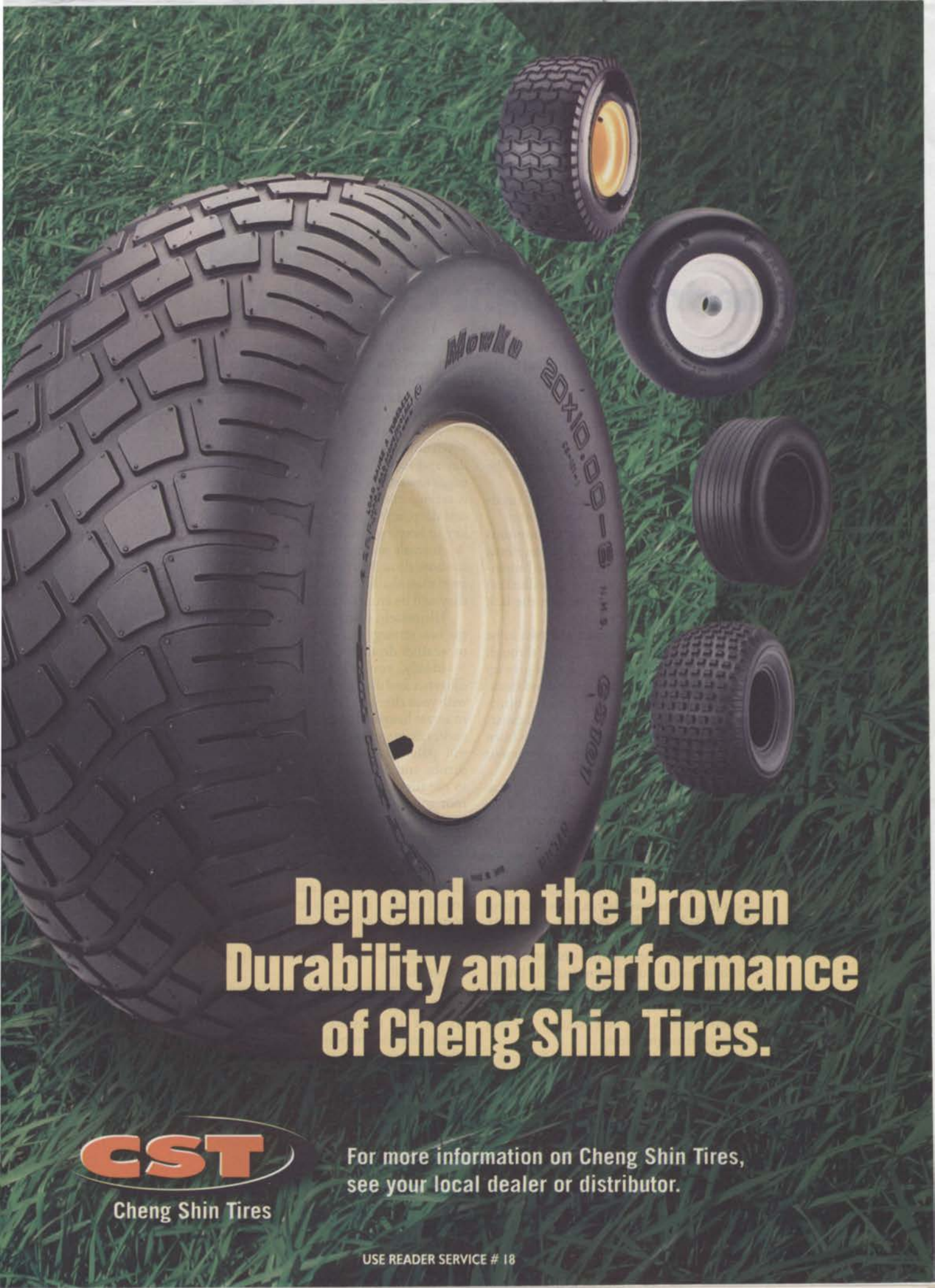
Clearly, these four values are but a few that could be applied successfully to business partnerships, but they do give us much to work with and consider.

Give your business partnerships and friendships some thought and attention daily.

The time we spend together in work is much greater than the time we spend with each other in almost any other endeavor. Every little bit helps. ■

larry fish

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USE READER SERVICE # 18



Weathering Drought Conditions

By now, nearly everyone has heard about the drought conditions plaguing many regions of the United States this summer.

And if you're operating a landscape maintenance company in one of those areas, then you've noticed much of the plant material you're taking care of is off-color and wilting, especially during the hottest periods of the day.

So how can we best tend to the needs of these green spaces and our clients?

Turf usually shows drought symptoms before trees and shrubs. For turf, symptoms manifest in grass becoming gray to brownish in color. When the lawn is walked on you will see the foot steps from the lack of interior cellular pressure.

There are some common myths to be aware of when managing turf through drought conditions. First, do not give up on fertilizing during low-water conditions. Fertilizing is very beneficial with a nitrogen and potassium ratio of 1:1. Likewise, using slow release fertilizers reduces burn potential. Also, using iron promotes color without promoting growth.

Next, it's OK to cut the turf as long as you don't mow more than one third of the grass blade off, which will stress the plant. Likewise, don't mow during the hottest parts of the day, cut with a sharp blade and refrain from blanket applications of herbicides or quick release high-nitrogen products to stressed lawns. If weed control is needed, it is best to use a spot-spray strategy to address the problem.

Another popular misconception is a brown lawn is a dead lawn. Turf will brown when it goes into dormancy to reduce water consumption. In fact, infrequent deep water is the best strategy for turf during drought times.

Reducing irrigation to as little as a half-inch of water over a two-week period may be enough to prevent dehydration of

the crowns, rhizomes and roots. And if the lawn does not receive at least 1 inch of water during a four- to five-week period when it is dormant, severe dehydration can lead to death.

With trees and ornamental shrubs you'll notice wilting during the heat of the day and leaf margins browning from the edges toward the mid vein. If the drought is serious enough, defoliation will occur and deep, infrequent watering will be the key to keeping them healthy.

Annuals will often be the first plants to show drought conditions due to their immature shallow root systems. Generally they will be stunted and wilted.

Ultimately, educating the customer is the best strategy a contractor can employ to weather drought conditions.

Ideally, you've performed your due diligence and discussed drought potentials with your clients. You've convinced clients to aerate heavily thatched lawns in the fall and/or early spring. Likewise, you've added soil polymers when planting trees and shrubs and moisture retaining products to the turf to help retain moisture at the root zones. Maybe you've even incorporated drought-resistant plant types in your landscape designs.

While these measures are all good starting points, many times, though, the client education process starts when lawns go off color. Let clients know what the best course of action is during this time period and give them the straight facts of what they can expect, both visibly and economically.

Also, consider investing in a soil probe. They're great tools for showing the customers what the moisture is in the soil core. Lastly, consider employing wetting agents which help water penetrate hydrophobic soil conditions by reducing surface tensions. Good luck. ■

j.b. toorish and brian kelley

are part of LESCO's Tech Services Department. They can be reached at fromthefield@gie.net or at 800/321-5325 ext. 6150 to answer technical questions.



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what's the deal?

The editors of **Lawn & Landscape** and **COMMERCIAL DEALER** magazines believe ongoing dialogue between contractors and commercial dealers is essential. Each month, one contractor and one commercial dealer will address a question or issue posed by the editors.

This month's question: "Should dealers offer commercial customers special hours? Are dealers' hours convenient and sufficient for commercial customers?"

THE DEALER:

Dante Terzigni, owner, Do-Cut Sales & Service, Warren and Canfield, Ohio



"The good commercial contractors plan ahead and really don't have surprises that necessitate an emergency visit to a dealership. Because of this, I think our hours are plenty. I think a lot of contractors these days very easily can plan ahead. There's no reason to go to a dealer on Sunday. We are open Sundays, but only for a few hours. Not including Sunday, we're open 69 hours during the week. This

business is extremely competitive. It goes from almost no business to extremely busy. We literally do 50 percent of a year's business in three months and you have to watch how many hours your employees are working. You have to look at employee burnout. For them to work extra hours could be problematic. If they're working too many hours, quality and attitude suffer and it can show in their work.

"With most commercial customers, they go to one or two dealers exclusively. They tend to learn their dealers' ways. Because of this, they know when they can get equipment serviced and they plan for it.

"With Internet sales and special shipping, and shipping that we can arrange directly from the manufacturer, contractors can get the things they need."

THE CONTRACTOR:

Chris Beeler, branch manager, Stay Green, North Hollywood, Calif.

"As far as equipment like mowers is concerned, I don't expect my dealer to be open past 5 p.m. It's more important for me as a contractor for my dealer to have the equipment and parts I need than to be open all hours of the day. They also know what we need and can help make sure those items or equipment are on-hand.

"But early morning hours are most beneficial to me and the crews. It all comes down to good planning. We know in advance what's needed and can plan for it. It's not an efficient use of time for someone to run down to the dealer on the spur of the moment because we need something. All of the most commonly used items, like filters, we try to have well-stocked. If something does arise and a mower goes down and it's after-hours for a dealer, we'll shift resources within the company to make it work. It may be a bit of an inconvenience to move equipment around on short notice, but this is a team effort and that's not going keep us from working.

"In a pinch, dealers I do business with are accommodating. I've called dealers at closing time, at say 6 p.m., and have asked them to remain open in an emergency, and they've been accommodating."



say what's on your mind

If you'd like to say what's on your mind for future issues, please e-mail Mark Phillips at mphillips@gie.net.



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IMMIGRATION UPDATE

The Future is Uncertain for Senate's Immigration Reform Bill

The Senate is expected to wrap up work on its comprehensive immigration reform bill by early this month, but the likelihood S.1639 will pass is still uncertain. In the meantime, green industry groups are hopeful and urge contractors to voice their concerns to Congress.

Following the early June setback in which Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) pulled the bill from the floor because it failed to gain enough votes to limit debate, Senate leaders have reached a new proposal including a deal to consider 20-plus amendments.

This bill contains a number of provisions that are favorable to the landscape industry, including reform of the H-2B seasonal worker program that would address the restrictive cap, in addition to a legalization mechanism for currently undocumented workers.

If Congress fails to pass this bill, green industry trade groups expect labor woes to worsen, immigration raids and enforcement to step up and a rush by states and municipalities to take the immigration issue into their own hands. Many of these bills would penalize employers with unauthorized workers or mandate additional verification programs for employment.

Already this year, 1,169 immigration-related bills have been proposed in states and municipalities – this is more than twice the 570 similar bills proposed in 2006, according to the American Nursery & Landscape Association.

In the meantime, the industry should continue putting its full



support behind comprehensive measures, says Bob Dolibois, executive vice president of the ANLA. "We may eventually get to the point where comprehensive reform is categorically dead and we need to move forward particularly with the H-2B exemption for returning workers expiring – we do need to do something about that – but the reality is as long as comprehensive reform has even a faint heartbeat, it's still in our best interest as an industry overall to continue to push for comprehensive immigration reform," Dolibois says.

The call to action for industry members, Dolibois says, is to contact Senators urging that they move forward with the passage of S.1639 in addition to restating the industry's interests in securing changes in the law that will assure a reliable workforce moving forward. – Marisa Palmieri

TAKE ACTION

ANLA, the Professional Landcare Network and the California Landscape Contractors Association all have legislative contact tools on their Web sites that allow contractors to track important issues, search for representatives and formulate template-based letters, e-mails and talking points to communicate with legislators. To contact your congressmen, visit their sites at www.anla.org, www.landcarenetwork.org and www.clca.org.

www.lawnandlandscape.com

Visit the *Lawn & Landscape* Web site to stay up to date on immigration and H-2B issues and all breaking news.

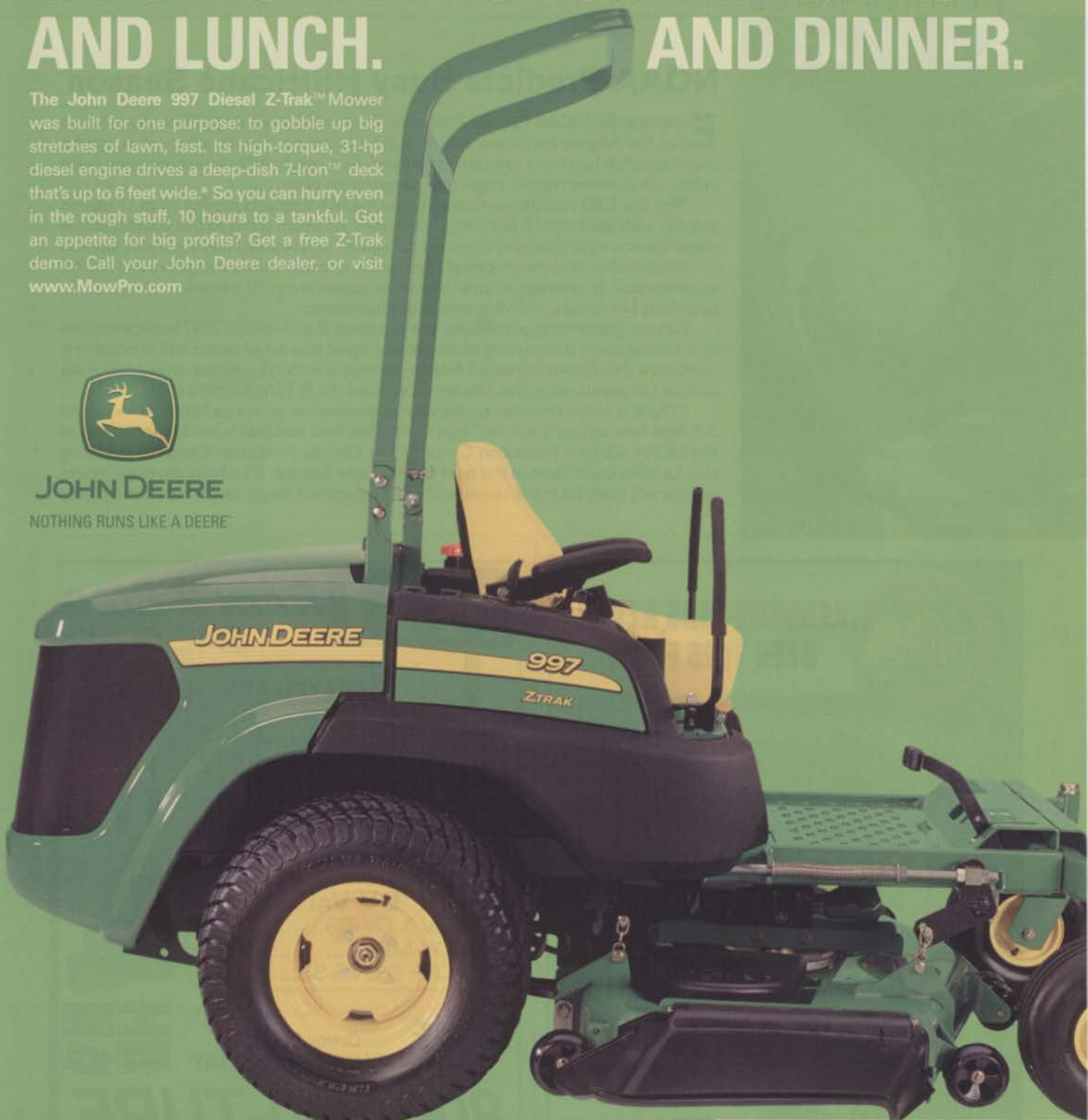
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757



727A



657A

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7 IRON

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USE READER SERVICE # 20

WEATHER WATCH

NOAA Predicts Busy Hurricane Season

Experts at the NOAA Climate Prediction Center are projecting a 75 percent chance that the Atlantic Hurricane Season will be above normal this year – showing the ongoing active hurricane era remains strong. As a result, NOAA recommends those in hurricane-prone regions begin their preparation plans.

"For the 2007 Atlantic hurricane season, NOAA scientists predict 13 to 17 named storms, with seven to 10 becoming hurricanes, of which three to five could become major hurricanes of Category 3 strength or higher," says retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. An average Atlantic hurricane season brings 11 named storms, with six becoming hurricanes, including two major hurricanes.

Climate patterns responsible for the expected above normal 2007 hurricane activity continue to be the ongoing multi-decadal signal (the set of ocean and atmospheric conditions that spawn increased Atlantic hurricane activity), warmer-than-normal sea surface temperatures in the Atlantic Ocean and the El Niño/La Niña cycle.

"There is some uncertainty this year as to whether or not La Niña will form, and if it does how strong it will be," says Gerry Bell, lead seasonal hurricane forecaster at the NOAA Climate Prediction Center. "The Climate Prediction Center is indicating that La Niña could form in the next one to three months. If La Niña develops, storm activity will likely be in the upper end of the predicted range, or perhaps even higher



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USE READER SERVICE # 22



depending on how strong La Niña becomes. Even if La Niña does not develop, the conditions associated with the ongoing active hurricane era still favor an above-normal season."

"With expectations for an active season, it is critically important that people who live in East and Gulf coastal areas as well as the Caribbean be prepared," adds Bill Proenza, NOAA National Hurricane Center director. "Now is the time to update your hurricane plan, not when the storm is bearing down on you."

The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) Education & Research Foundation offers these suggestions. Preparing for the storm season:

- Make sure you have the right equip-

ment to handle post-storm clean up.

- Check existing equipment to make sure it's in good working order. Get repairs done in advance of a storm or consider purchasing new equipment.

- Make sure you have adequate fuel and that the fuel is stored properly. For chain saw use, make sure you have gloves, eye and ear protection.

After the storm:

- Do not operate power generators in enclosed areas. Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that can become concentrated in enclosed areas and cause serious injury or death.

- For chainsaw operation, keep children and pets out of the work area; handle gas carefully and don't overfill; keep hands and feet away from any

moving parts; wear proper footwear, snug clothing, gloves and eye/ear protection; do not overreach; secure your footing and plan retreat path; and watch for "kick-back," a violent reactive force propelling the cutting bar back toward the operator.

The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30, with peak activity occurring August through October. The NOAA Climate Prediction Center will issue an updated seasonal forecast in August just prior to the historical peak of the season.

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For the latest industry news, updated daily, visit the *Lawn & Landscape* Web site.



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IN THE NEWS

Money Magazine Addresses Value of Landscaping

Money magazine, in its June issue, promotes the increase in home value and selling price that landscape improvements provide. The article quotes a Michigan State University study, funded by the Horticultural Research Institute (HRI), the research arm of the American Nursery and Landscape Association, that found, "depending on where the house is located, high-quality landscaping adds 5 to 11 percent to its price." Also quoted in the article is ANLA Landscape Division Board member, Chris Valenti, owner of JB Landscaping in Lewes, Dela.

The article promotes the fact that, "landscaping



adds more value than almost any other home renovation." *Money* magazine also informs homeowners that even if they are not planning a move right away, "landscaping is the one home improvement that actually appreciates over time." Other recommendations include investing in larger sized, unique material for a more significant impact, as well as annual color plantings and lawn fertilizing and maintenance.

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USE READER SERVICE # 24



ENGLISH TO SPANISH PHRASES

Considering that a growing number of landscape contractors are employing Hispanic or H-2B workers, improving communication is becoming more crucial to ensure quality work done right the first time.

In an effort to aid landscape and lawn care professionals in their communication efforts, *Lawn & Landscape* will be running a few phrases each month in English and Spanish, including a pronunciation guide, courtesy of the book "The Lingo Guide For Landscapers" by E.G. White. To inquire about ordering the book, which costs \$14.95, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com/store or contact the *Lawn & Landscape* Book Department at 800/456-0707.

If there is a phrase you are having trouble with, let us know at mzawacki@gie.net.

1. ENGLISH: Have you used a sod cutter before?
SPANISH: Ha utilizado una cortadora de césped/prama/pasto/tepe/terrón anteriormente? (ah oo-tee-lee-SAH-doh OO-nah kohr-tah-DOH-rah deh SEHS-pehd/GRAH-mah/PAHS-toh/TEH-peh/teh-RRROHN ahn-teh-ree-ohr-MEHN-teh?)
2. ENGLISH: We need to apply fertilizer with a push spreader.
SPANISH: Debemos aplicar fertilizante con el roceador de mano. (deh-BEH-mohs ah-PLÉE-kahr fehr-tee-lee-SAHN-teh kohn ehl roh-she-ah-DOOR deh MAH-noh.)
3. ENGLISH: We need to mow this lawn.
SPANISH: Debemos cortar este césped/grama/pasto/tepe/terrón. (deh-BEH-mohs kohr-TAHR EHS-teh SEHS-pehd/GRAH-mah/PAHS-toh/TEH-peh/teh-RRROHN.)
4. ENGLISH: We need to remove all clippings from the lawn as needed.
SPANISH: Debemos retirar todos los recortes del césped/grama/pasto/tepe/terrón a medida que se necesite. (deh-BEH-mohs reh-TEE-rahs TOH-dohs loh reh-KOHR-tehs dehl SEHS-pehd/GRAH-mah/PAHS-toh/TEH-peh/teh-RRROHNah meh-DEE-dah keh she neh-she-SEE-teh.)
5. ENGLISH: We need more bags.
SPANISH: Necesitamos más bolsas. (neh-she-see-TAH-mohs mahs BALL-sahs.)



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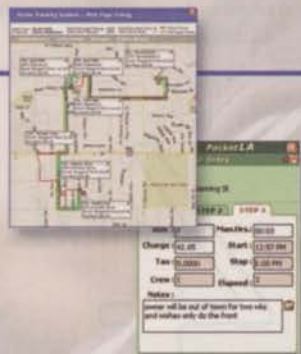
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- Handheld Data Collection
- Voice Turn By Turn Directions



HANDHELD FEATURES

- Overhead scrolling maps
- Reduce Fuel Cost
- Increase Productivity
- Production Entry
- Estimates
- Invoices
- Block Leading
- Speed up Data Entry



market watch



1 percent

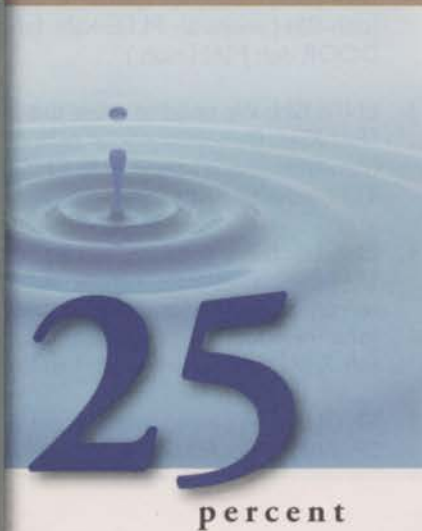
of the Earth's water is available for human use, though approximately 75 percent of the Earth's surface is covered in water.

Source: EPA

120 gallons

Approximate number of gallons of water the average American family uses outdoors daily. More than half of that is used for watering lawns and gardens. It's estimated that families use another 280 gallons of water per day indoors.

Source: EPA



25 percent of water savings potential most manufacturers expect from smart controllers.

Source: EPA

Population Will Rise in Dry States

The U.S. population topped 300 million in 2006 and it isn't expected to slow down anytime soon, with some estimates predicting 30 percent growth to more than 400 million by 2050.

Critical to smart irrigation and water conservation is the fact that population growth is especially prevalent in areas where the water supply is already stressed. The 50 fastest growing metropolitan areas are concentrated in the West and South. The top 10 are:

1. St. George, Utah
2. Greeley, Colo.
3. Cape Coral-Fort Myers, Fla.
4. Bend, Ore.
5. Las Vegas-Paradise, Nev.
6. Provo-Orem, Utah
7. Naples-Marco Island, Fla.
8. Raleigh-Cary, N.C.
9. Gainesville, Ga.
10. Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, Ariz.

Source: Census

1/3

Amount of all residential water use that goes to landscape irrigation nationwide – totaling more than 7 billion gallons per day.

Source: EPA

50 percent

Estimated percent of landscape irrigation that's wasted due to evaporation, runoff or overwatering.

Source: EPA



4 billion-plus

Number of gallons of water that have been saved since Florida began requiring rain sensors in 1991.

Source: Hunter Industries

36

Number of states that anticipate local, regional or statewide water shortages by 2013, even under non-drought conditions, according to a Government Accountability Office survey of water managers.

JULY

JULY 14 – 22 Aquascape's Pondemonium Annual Water Garden Training, St. Charles, Ill.
Contact: www.pondemonium.org, 866/877-6637, ext. 1668-U.S., 866/766-3426-CAN.

JULY 15 – 17 Professional Landcare Network Day on the Hill and Renewal & Remembrance Event, Washington, D.C. Contact: www.landcarenetwork.org, 800/395-2522

JULY 17 Ohio Turfgrass Foundation Regional Seminar, Centerville, Ohio.
Contact: www.ohioturfgrass.org, 888/683-3445

JULY 17 – 19 PA Green Expo, Harrisburg. Contact: www.pagreenexpo.com, 800/789-5068

JULY 23 – 25 American Nursery & Landscape Association Legislative Conference, Washington, D.C. Contact: www.anla.org, 202/789-1893

JULY 24 – 26 Penn Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (PANTS), Atlantic City, N.J.
Contact: www.pantshow.com, 800/898-3411

Calendar Note

To ensure that your meeting date is published, send an announcement at least 12 weeks in advance to Heather Wood, Web editor, at hwood@gie.net.



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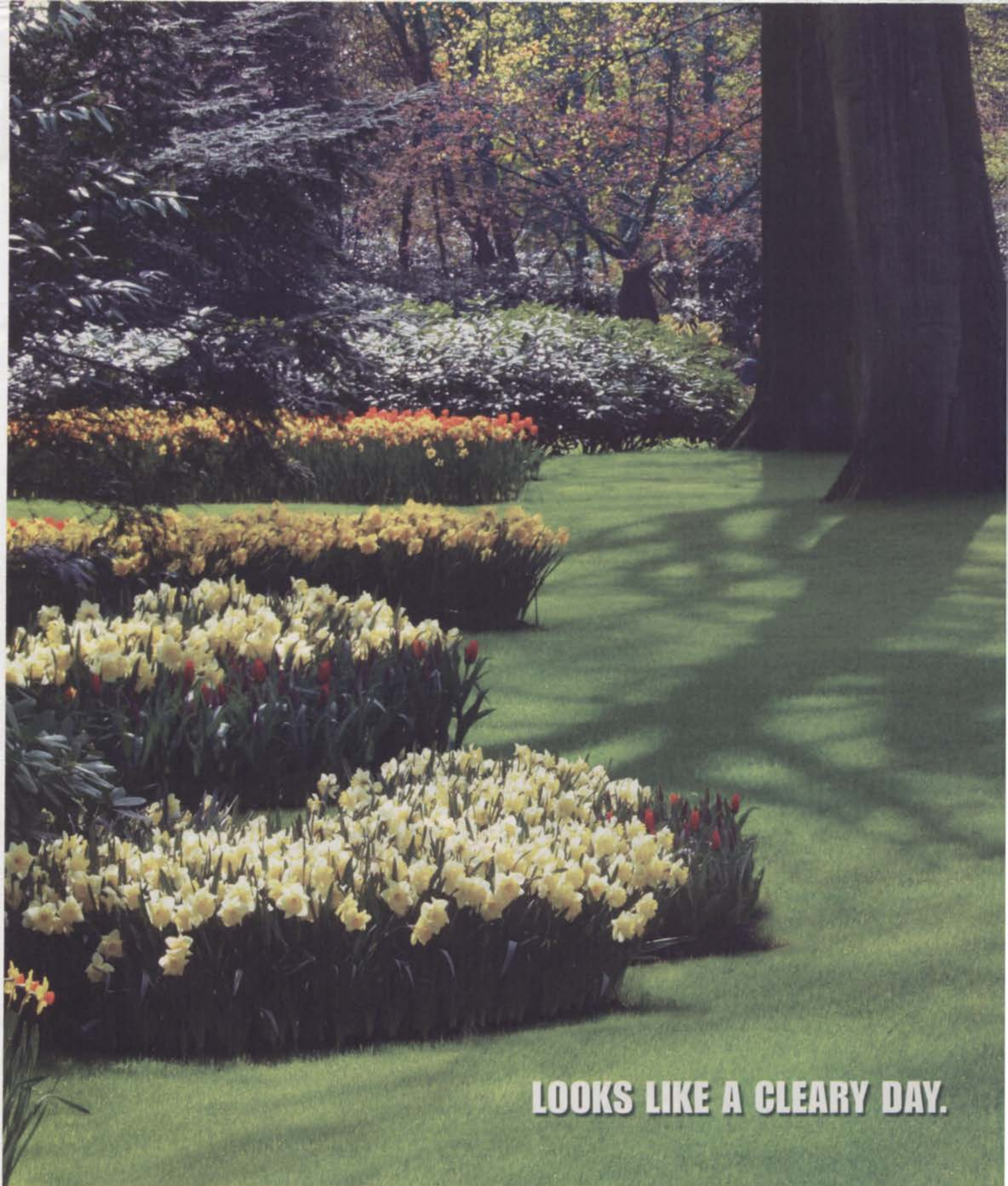
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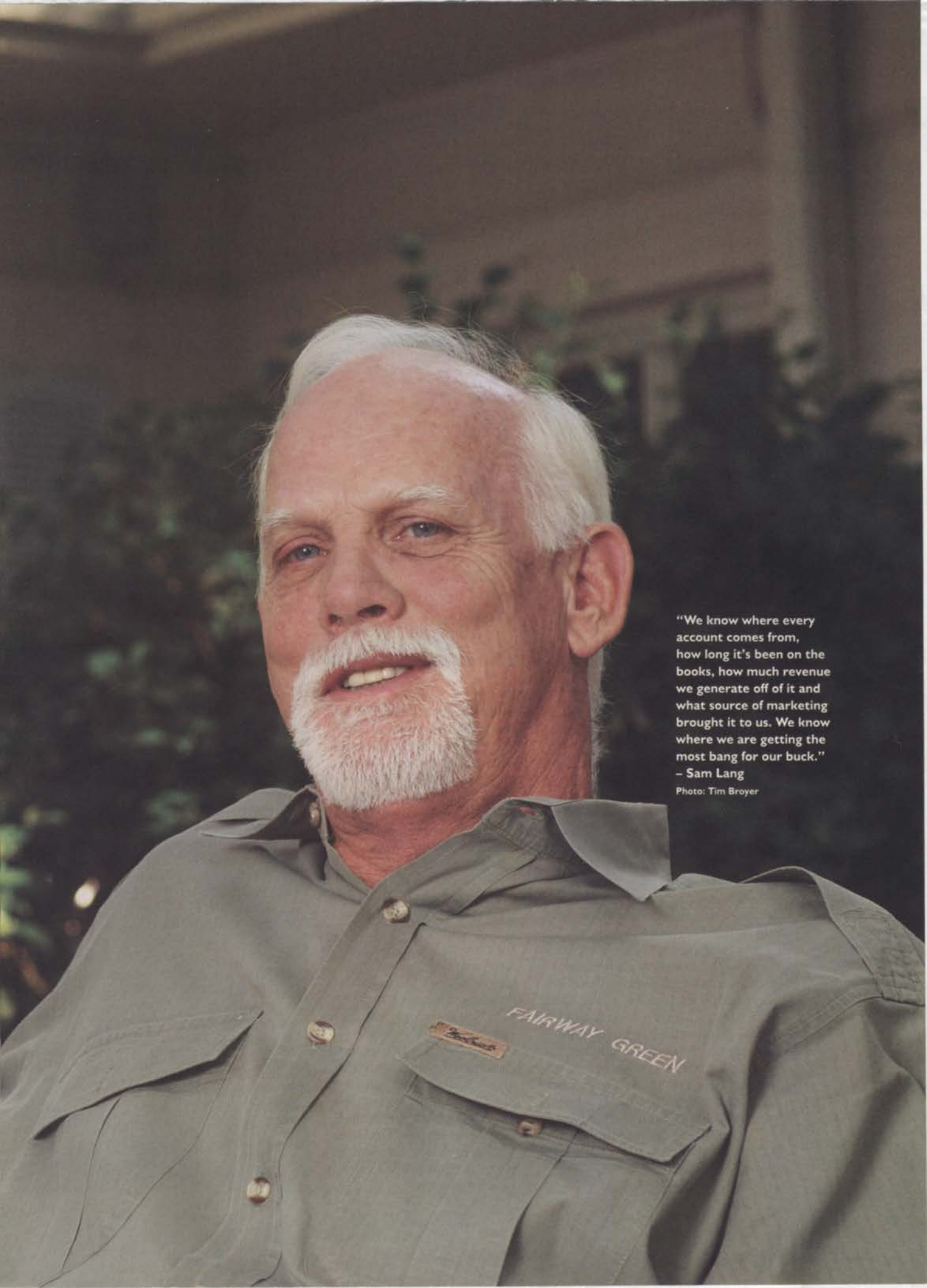
USE READER SERVICE # 27

Play It Again, Sam

Fairway Green's Sam Lang takes a cumulative approach to marketing and client development.

by mike zawacki | managing editor





"We know where every account comes from, how long it's been on the books, how much revenue we generate off of it and what source of marketing brought it to us. We know where we are getting the most bang for our buck."

- Sam Lang

Photo: Tim Broyer

Photo: Tim Broyer



Fairway Green

PRESIDENT: Sam G. Lang, IV
HEADQUARTERS: Raleigh, N.C.
OTHER OFFICES: Charlotte, N.C.
FOUNDED: 1989
EMPLOYEES: 24 year-round, 9 seasonal

SERVICE BREAKOUT:

70% Chemical lawn care
 20% Tree and ornamental services
 10% Aeration and seeding

CLIENT BREAKOUT:

80% Residential
 10% Commercial
 10% Commercial Residential

REVENUE BREAKOUT:

2007 Revenue: \$3.1 million (projected)
2006 Revenue: \$2.5 million

MARKET CONDITIONS:

While both Raleigh and Charlotte are saturated with lawn care companies, the regions are experiencing major population growth, increasing the base for potential new business.

MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY:

Successful businesses run off good systems.

CONTACT INFO:

3219 Northside Drive
 Raleigh, N.C. 27615-4126
 PH: 919/872-1880
 FX: 919/872-6869
 WEB: www.fairwaygreen.com
 E-MAIL: info@fairwaygreen.com

Ten years ago, a national competitor approached Sam Lang about selling his lawn care company, Fairway Green. "I said, 'Do you know the difference between my company and your company?'" Lang says. "All of my family, friends and neighbors are on my service list."

That says it all, Lang surmises. Fairway Green services those closest because Lang is confident the work will be done correctly.

"At the large corporate companies many of the managers don't want their friends or relatives on their lists because they don't want to hear about it," Fairway Green's president says. "We've always taken great pride in our service. Do we make mistakes? Absolutely, but we try our best to do it right. Plus, I don't want to go into a restaurant and have someone I know complain to me about sorry service."

Tracking and understanding his 5,000 chemical lawn care clients has generated success for Fairway Green in North Carolina's highly com-

petitive lawn care market. It's contributed to the firm's 10 to 15 percent average annual growth rate and has earned the 18 year-old, \$2.5 million company a place in a region exploding with growth.

Headquartered in Raleigh, with a satellite office in nearby Charlotte, Fairway Green sits in a hotbed of commercial and high-end residential growth. And the average Fairway Green client is employed within Raleigh's high-tech Research Triangle area or at one of Charlotte's financial institutions.

"This is the only market I've ever worked in where you mail out MSDS sheets to customers," Lang says of his highly educated customers.

"Our population is scheduled to double again in the next 10 to 15 years," he says, adding each new homeowner is another prospective Fairway Green customer.

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Employee Time Card

Name: DAVID B. Date: 13-17

Day:	Start:	Lunch:	End:	Jobsite:	Activity:	Hours:
Monday	7	1/2	3:30	Brentw/Gen		8
Tuesday	7	1/2	3:30	"	"	8
Wednesday	7	1/2	4	"	"	8 1/2
Thursday	7	1/2	4	Crestv		8 1/2
Friday	7	1/2	4	"	"	8 1/2

Employee Signature: David B. Total Hours: 41 1/2

Employee Report

Burns, David Date Range: 8/13/2007 through 8/17/2007

Day	Date	Jobsite	Start	Stop	Cost Code	Hours	Total
Mon	8/13	Brentwood	7:08 AM	12:05 PM	Irrigation	4:57	
			12:41 PM	3:22 PM	Irrigation	2:41	7:38 hours
Tue	8/14	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:07 PM	Irrigation	4:55	
			12:43 PM	3:23 PM	Irrigation	2:40	7:35 hours
Wed	8/15	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:02 PM	Irrigation	4:50	
			12:46 PM	3:49 PM	Irrigation	3:03	7:53 hours
Thu	8/16	Crestview	7:17 AM	12:19 PM	Planting	5:02	
			12:50 PM	3:46 PM	Planting	2:56	7:58 hours
Fri	8/17	Crestview	7:13 AM	12:07 PM	Planting	4:54	
			12:44 PM	3:39 PM	Planting	2:55	7:49 hours
						Total	38:53 hours

Signature: David B. Burns, David

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EXAKTIME
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SET EXPECTATIONS.

So how does the lawn care company best serve its clients? For starters, Fairway Green is realistic about service limitations and what clients should expect. And often these initial expectations are high. For example, the typical client is a Northern transplant used to lush bluegrass lawns. "The first thing we do is ask, 'Where are you from?'" Lang says. "Forget bluegrass. This is fescue country."

"They think their yard is going to stay green all year round," he adds. "Listen, we tell people that August in North Carolina is Hell Month, when fescue looks horrible. It's been beaten to pieces and ravaged by heat and brown patch fungus."

Fairway Green technicians are trained to be honest with clients and to explain the problem is temporary, Lang says. To circumvent disappoint-



Photo: Tim Broyer

ment, Fairway Green produces a newsletter that explains what is going on with clients' lawns.

This newsletter accompanies invoices sent after each chemical application, says General Manager Kevin Herrmann, who produces the in-house publication. The Fairway Green newsletter is published at a cost of about \$100 per edition sent to all customers. Each newsletter (six are produced annually) focuses on that particular time of year, what clients

can expect from recent applications and what problems may arise. "It saves them from calling and asking 'What's this in my yard?'" Herrmann says. "It answers a lot of questions they may not pick up the phone to ask you but are concerned about."

Winter kill, for example, is a regional turf problem. Warm weather in January and February tricks

fescue into emerging from its winter slumber. The unseasonable temperatures, though, are short lived and the inevitable cold snap damages the turf.

"When we see that scenario happening we send a newsletter out explaining there is a high degree of probability that they're going to see winter kill in their grass," Lang says. "We're proactive in telling people what to expect from our services, but I'm not Jesus Christ. I can't raise the dead."



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USE READER SERVICE # 28

The background of the advertisement is a photograph of a large, two-story house with a grey exterior and white trim. The house has several windows and a central entrance. In front of the house is a well-manicured lawn with a black wrought-iron fence. To the left of the fence is a large, ornate fountain with a statue of a woman pouring water into a basin. The overall scene is a lush, green lawn in a residential setting.

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USE READER SERVICE # 30

cover story **INSIDE**

CLIENT TRACKER. Successful companies run off solid systems and the most influential business system Fairway Green employs is how it tracks accounts. "We know where every account comes from, how long it's been on the books, how much revenue we generate off of it and what source of marketing brought them to us," Lang says. "We know where we are getting the most bang for our buck."

While Fairway Green takes a shotgun approach at marketing and client development, it also closely evaluates and scrutinizes what methods generate the greatest return. According to Lang, Fairway Green budgets nearly \$200,000 annually for marketing.

yellow flag

Fairway Green's marketing analysis turned up one surprising conclusion: Yellow Pages ads were not worth the investment. "What we've done over the years is track what we've spent in the Yellow Pages and what we've gotten in return," says General Manager Kevin Herrmann. "What we've learned is the return has been miserable every year for the last six to seven years."

The firm spent at least \$1,400 per month for ads in its Raleigh and Charlotte markets. "We were getting maybe a \$3,000 return on that investment annually," he says. Now the firm pays \$125 per month for a line advertisement.

The Yellow Pages sales rep hates it when Fairway Green pulls out its marketing analysis, says Sam Lang, company president. "He comes in and guarantees this and that and we pull out the report and say this is what your ad produces for us," Lang says. "The rep looks at the report and says, 'Oh my gosh!'"

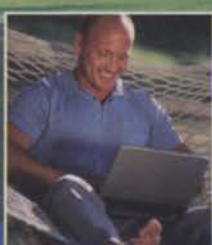
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"We looked at our options and said we're going to try some different marketing methods," Lang says. "We've evaluated them all and came up with a system that works well for us. But like anything else, you can't hang your hat on any one thing."

The new homeowner list is one such account driver. Fairway Green contracts with a Virginia-based company for the data on anyone who has purchased a home in Raleigh or Charlotte. The firm pays 14 cents per name and receives about 150 names per week, per market via e-mail.

The list is checked against the national Do Not Call Registry. If a sales rep can not cold call the individual, then they mail Fairway Green's information to them. That material is distributed two to three more times throughout the year. Fairway Green receives about one call for every 1,000 mailings. It's not the greatest, Herrmann admits, but it's part of a cumulative approach to client cultivation.

"When people buy a new house, there is so much going on in their lives they normally won't commit to you from the get go," Herrmann says. "But if you can get that information in front of them enough, they'll remember you when the time comes."

Because Lang and Herrmann believe marketing and client development is cumulative, they need to know what drives new clients to Fairway Green.

"If you call us, whoever answers the phone knows to get your name, address, and all of that neat stuff," Herrmann says. "But one of the first things we have them say is 'How did you hear about us?' We want to get a good feel for how they know us."

To do this, Lang developed an information form, printed on carbonless copy paper, that is filled out when someone calls inquiring about lawn care services. "We've got everyone using the forms," he says. "Everyone knows better than to hand me some

notes scribbled on a sheet of paper."

The copy is then filed by date and later bound. "As you get larger it gets easier to lose things," Lang says. "That's why you need good systems in place. We went with a real simple call-in form and we have a back-up copy in case anything gets lost. It's unbelievable the number of times someone says, 'I called you back on this date and you didn't do so and so.' We'll go back and look at the copied document of that initial conversation."

Periodically Herrmann analyzes the information culled from call-ins for trends, especially if people react to marketing initiatives. (For more information, see "Yellow Flag" on page 38).

To ensure accuracy, Herrmann offers different discounts for each marketing initiative. For example, the firm's direct-mail piece corresponds with one discount while a new homeowner package offers something different. Radio and Yellow Pages ads offer no discounts.

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"If the client wants to take advantage of the discount, which everybody does, they'll tell me they want a certain amount of off their first application," Herrmann says. "That tells me right from the start where they're getting their information about us from."

"It's a redundancy thing," he says. "A client may tell me one thing, but then they mention the discount and that tells me what marketing source it really came from."

UPSELLING. Another key to Fairway Green's success has been increasing the amount of revenue per customer. "We realized early on that we're not building the space shuttle," Lang says. "So let's keep business simple."

For example, most clients have cool-season grass in the South's high humidity, making their turf susceptible to brown patch fungus. "There are two types of lawns in North Carolina — those that have brown patch and those that are going to get it," Lang

says. "We realized if our clients can afford an irrigation system they can afford a preventative fungicide program. They want a nice looking lawn and they're willing to pay for it."

On average, Fairway Green charges about twice the normal \$47 treatment price for a fungicide application.


Besides treating brown patch, the company increases its revenue per account through a deep-root feeding program, the cost of which depends on the client's landscape plan. The firm also sells clients an overseeding program, offered once a year for \$405.

"You take the \$47 average application charge and multiple that by six times a year," Lang says. "Then you throw in overseeding and fungicide applications and you end up producing more in your overall revenue than what the account was initially worth."

While not a nuisance yet, fire ant control is a future way to increase revenue per account that Fairway Green is actively gearing up for, Herrmann says

"Fire ants are marching northward and we see this as a very, very big revenue producer for us in the future," Herrmann says. "Within the next three years, we anticipate quadrupling our revenue just with fire ant control."

All Fairway Green technicians are certified for fire ant control and they've been prepping clients for the inevitable through regular mentions of the coming fire ant invasion in the company's client newsletter.

"We've started telling customers that we will offer fire ant services even though it's not a huge problem right now," Herrmann says. "We put the info out in front of them. When the time comes they'll say 'Oh, yeah, my lawn care company handles this.'" 

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For more on how Fairway Green develops new clients and boosts revenue, check out the July issue online.



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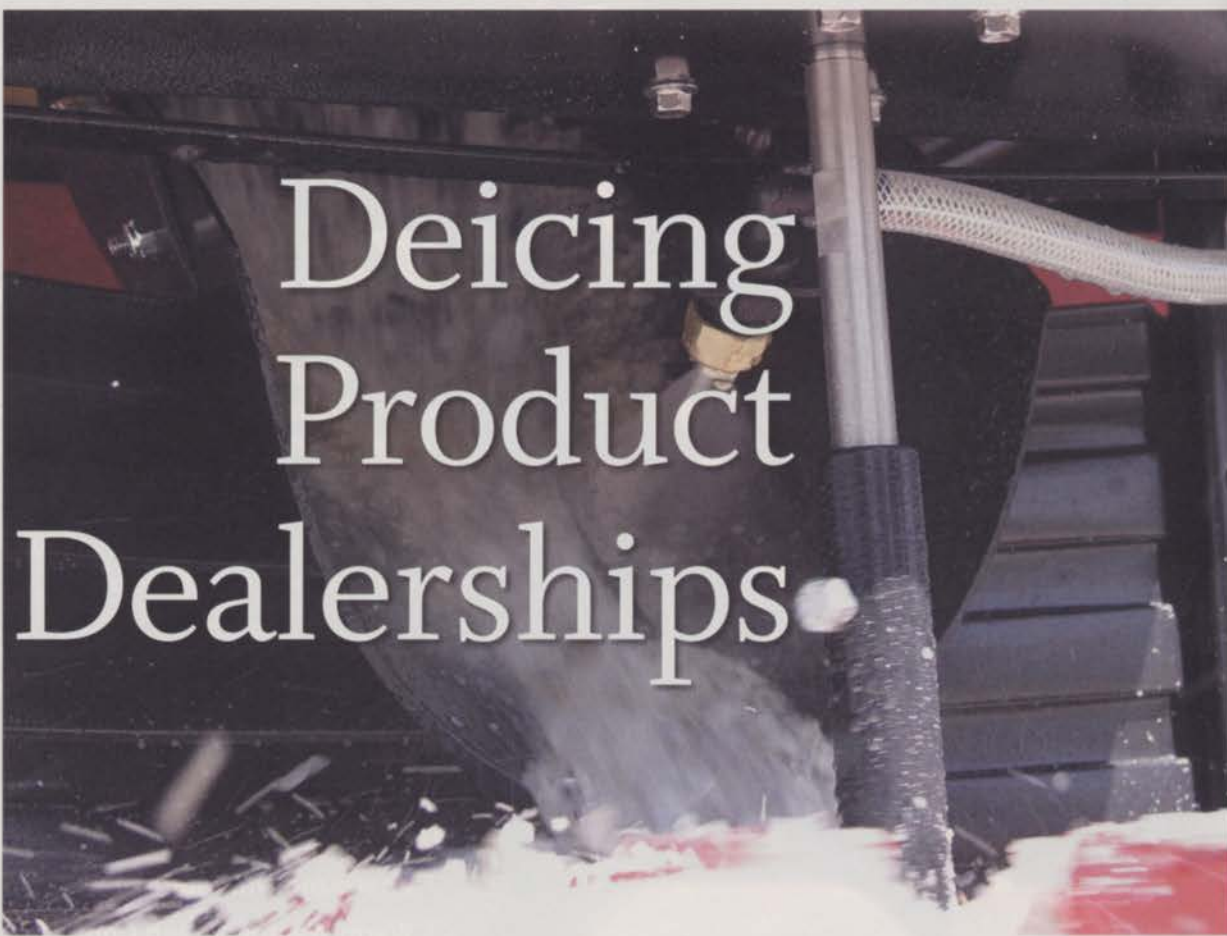
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USE READER SERVICE # 35

Photo: SnowEx



Deicing Product Dealerships

Determine if adding a liquid deicer dealership is the right add-on to boost winter business.

Landscape firms with snow removal divisions certainly understand the ups and downs of doing business in a snow-driven market. Many companies look for ways to stabilize their winter profits – whether it's through increasing sales or cutting costs.

A business model has taken shape over the last decade allowing snow contractors to become sub-distributors, or dealers, of liquid deicing products. Adding dealerships allows contractors to increase profits two-fold: by acquiring the product at wholesale pricing for their own use and by reselling the material to other contractors and non-municipal customers. Considering retail profit margins can reach 60 to 100 percent, adding a liquid deicing product dealership might be worth a look.

Jonathan Jackson of Jackson Lawncare, Columbus, Ohio, added a liquid deicing product dealership to his business in October 2005. Currently, he does about \$250,000 in snow business with six employees and 25 subcontractors. The main reason he added a liquid ice melt dealership was to have access to a product he wanted that he couldn't purchase in his region.

by marisa palmieri | associate editor

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After two seasons, Jackson is pleased with the product's performance and says he's close to breaking even on the \$30,000 investment he made to become a dealer. However, he has experienced two sub-par snow seasons and hasn't yet focused on out-bound sales, which he says has limited his ability to realize the service's true earnings potential.

"I haven't pushed it real hard," Jackson says. "But the potential is huge. It could easily grow to a million-dollar a year business if you give it enough time."

Snow contractors like Jackson are ideal dealers in the master distributors' eyes because they are the primary users of the product, says John Oakes, sales manager for Taconic Maintenance, Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Taconic, a former snow-removal firm itself, is the distributor of Magic Salt. "Contractors know how it works and can really give the hands-on sales experience because they are the users themselves."

But even if a dealer chooses to reap the benefits of wholesale pricing rather than ramp up sales, deicing product distributors say they don't mind. Either way, their product is being exposed to the user community.

"Some people really get that this is a great opportunity to make some additional cash, and they go gung-ho selling and marketing," says Brian Walters, director of business development for RMG Enterprises,

value the fact that they're buying the product at wholesale price. Either scenario is a good one."

HOW IT WORKS. Becoming a dealer entails buying bulk deicer (usually a 4,500 gallon semi-trailer tanker), storing it and treating customers' stockpiles of rock salt and/or sand. Typically, the dealer provides a spray tank unit and the customer provides a loader and operator to turn the mate-

"The potential is huge. It could easily grow to a million-dollar a year business if you give it enough time." - Jonathan Jackson

the parent company of Ice Kicker, a deicing product master distributor. "Other people do very little selling - they probably don't even pick up the phone to call prospects. They

rial as the liquid is applied to ensure uniform treatment. Application time is about 30 minutes for a 25-ton pile.

First, though, a contractor must have the infrastructure required to



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house a dealership. No storefront is needed – a typical landscape yard will do. Dealers need to have trucks equipped with spray systems (a 230-gallon capacity spray system is required to treat a 25-ton stockpile of rock salt), the space for at least one liquid storage tank that can hold up to 5,000 gallons and the ability to fill tanks (pumps, hoses, etc.).

Contractors source a lot of their supplies from the master distributors, and many contractors may already own some equipment, such as a spray system. Of Jackson's initial \$30,000 investment, about \$15,000 was for the cost of equipment and deicing material, including two 3,000 gallon storage tanks plus plumbing and pumps, a spray system, one semi of granular material and one tanker load of liquid deicer. The other half was for a franchise-type fee and two days of classroom training. Jackson says he took advantage of a financing plan set up through the master distributor,

which put monthly payments at less than \$900.

Other master distributors report initial investments as low as \$10,000. Some assign strict territories and have annual fees, others are more flexible. Most provide some sort of marketing support, whether it comes in package form or a la carte offerings.

Master distributors also provide pricing recommendations, Jackson says, though the dealers have complete autonomy over what they charge their customers. Prices vary depending on region, but as an example Jackson treats 100 tons of material for \$24 per ton; the price per ton increases slightly if he treats fewer tons per trip.

Jackson pays an annual "collective" marketing fee, depending on the plans set by a dealer marketing committee. He paid about \$1,200 in 2006. "There's a lot of buzz and I've gotten a fair amount of calls," he says, noting he hopes to add a salesperson in the future.

RISKY BUSINESS. One obstacle is selling to other contractors. Some may be averse to patronizing a competitor's business. Other challenges are proving the product's worth and the inherent risk in any seasonal business. Although liquid deicers have many believers, sticker shock may drive away price shoppers, as liquids tend to be more expensive than bulk rock salt. "People have been using salt for 120 years – it's hard to convince them there's a better way to do it," Jackson says. And if it doesn't snow, customers won't buy snow melter, Walters says. "The risk is just like any snow-related business."

Beyond that, the drawbacks are limited, distributors say. Because the bulk of the start-up cost is equipment, the worst-case scenario is the contractor will just use the product himself and not sell it to other parties. "The greatest risk involved is their time," Oakes says. "Very rarely do we have dealers who drop out." ■

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USE READER SERVICE # 40



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Cover photo: Allan Mandell

inside out

Vanessa Nagel takes a holistic approach to landscape design, seeking to unify the entire environment, not merely select plants and hardscape elements. With an extensive background in interior design, Nagel pays particular attention to the inside of a client's home before she creates an outdoor design. "Having a disconnect between the house and the garden causes a very uncomfortable environment - one in which the cause of the discomfort may not even be readily apparent," Nagel says. "The connection should be seamless."

Creating harmonious environments is something Nagel's been doing for more than 25 years. She left a corporate interior design position with an international architecture and engineering firm to start her own business in 2002. Merging her bachelor's degree and years of experience in interior design with her passion for gardening, Nagel founded Milieux Design Studio, a Vancouver, Wash.-based residential interior and garden design studio. Today, her business is split 75/25 in favor of landscape design.

Nagel's first order of business is to discover what's truly unique about her clients, so she can tailor her designs specifically to their tastes. Using this approach, rather than simply asking clients which of their neighbors' landscapes they like the best, ensures clients will become more engaged and satisfied with their gardens, she says. "So rather than just looking at it, they'll actually go out and experience it."

By Marisa Palmieri / Associate Editor

THE DESIGNER FILE

Vanessa Nagel
Owner, Milieux Design Studio
Vancouver, Wash.

Education: Bachelor's degree in interior design, San Jose State University; courses in landscape design from Portland Community College, Rock Creek

Service/client mix: 75 percent residential garden design; 25 percent interior design

Project price range: Up to \$500,000 (installed price)

First step in the design process?

"Gathering information. Trying to get inside the head of the client to understand their wants and needs is extremely important. It's the beginning of a relationship, which is always done best with good communication. After that the information gathering continues at the site – documentation with measurements and photos. A project is always only as good as the information available to the designer."

What's the last step? "This depends on how much work the client wants to do. It ranges from handing them a set of documents and explaining everything to them to walking a finished site with the client after the contractor has finished picking up items on a 'punch list' to attending the garden party."

How do you break a creative block? "I find inspiration everywhere I look. The value of having a formal education in design is not only learning design principles, but absorbing them into how you think. It's learning to see rather than just look."



Photo: Vanessa Nagel

But getting to this information can be tricky for designers. As Nagel says, "You're trying to take what's in their head, put it in your head and put it back in their head again." As a result, her approach isn't just to ask clients what they like and take their word for it. Instead, she digs for clues that tell the whole story.

The design process starts with a seven-page questionnaire that divulges details about the property and the clients – from cues like personal philosophies and childhood memories, right down to where they'd like to place their trash cans.

Next, she walks through clients' homes seeking elements she can pull from the inside to accent or compliment the landscape.

While touring clients' homes, Nagel pays special attention to color choice, furniture, artwork and tidiness. She's looking for hints about style that clients may not have mentioned or may not be conscious of. For example, one of her client's homes had a contemporary feel with Asian influences, except for one element in the living room: wildly colored ceramic roosters. These French Provencal-inspired figurines revealed a whimsical side of her clients' style that she wouldn't have discovered by simply asking them their likes and dislikes.

Like any good landscape designer, Nagel also considers the home's setting, whether it's in a neighborhood, urban location or countryside, and its architecture. "I always hope a client has an interior design that also works with the architecture of the home, but that's not always true," she says. "When there's a disconnect, I have a bigger design challenge on my hands."



Photo: Vanessa Nagel

Vanessa Nagel doesn't classify herself as a designer who specializes in any one type of garden, like English gardens, for example. But she does focus on sustainability.

INTERIOR DESIGN INSIDER: SPATIAL REQUIREMENTS

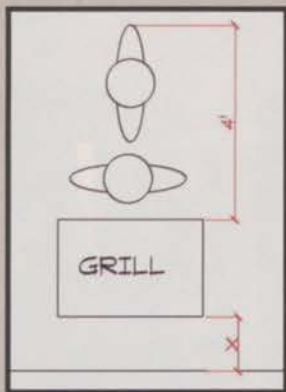
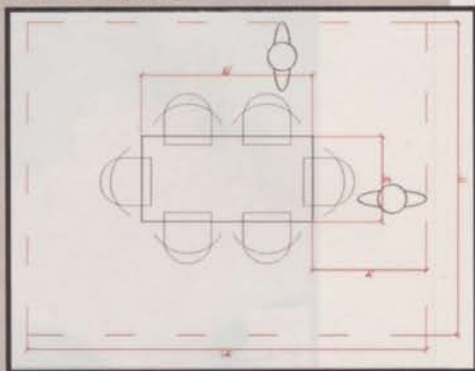
From her days as an interior designer, Vanessa Nagel has picked up a few tips for determining spatial requirements and circulation planning. After finding out which elements a client seeks from his outdoor space, Nagel breaks down the space required for each function (see diagrams, below, for examples). Once these dimensions have been determined, multiply the width and depth of each function to get square footage and then add them all together. "Circulation on average could be 25 percent, but would increase to as much as 60 percent if all of the functions use very small amounts of square footage," Nagel says. "Circulation could decrease to a very small amount if the majority of the functions were very large."

This exercise is particularly valuable when a client requests a considerable amount of function within a small space, she says. Being able to estimate requirements before layout may prepare the designer to design areas with multiple uses or to ask the owner to prioritize functions, considering all may not be possible within the available space.

Diagrams: Vanessa Nagel

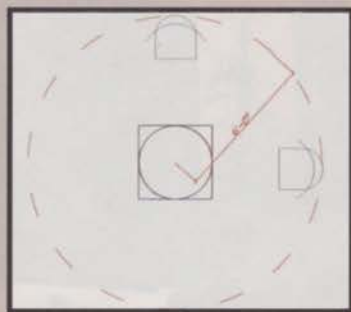
Six-person dining area

The minimum table size to comfortably seat six people is 3 feet by 6 feet. Ideal minimum clearance around the table is four feet, which allows room for moving the chair and a person to pass behind the chairs.



Grill

Consider the required safe distance from a structure, space for a person to stand at the grill and space for a person to pass behind



Firepit

The ideal dimension for a firepit area is suggested to be 12 feet in diameter, assuming the fire pit is 3 feet.

A scenario like this – modern furnishings in a Victorian home, for instance – challenges the potential harmony of the space as a whole. In this contempo-Victorian case, she'd strive for a landscape that was simple enough to fit the homeowners' tastes, yet still had enough detailing to complement the ornate nature of the house, like keeping elements on axes or incorporating fountains or urns. "You're looking for ways to help balance the entire environment," she says.

Indoors, Nagel also notes the views from the home's windows. "It's important to see those openings and be able to understand what somebody's going to be looking at from the inside out, or the outside in, in some cases," she says. In addition to taking notes, Nagel will snap some photos to remind her later about the views.

Being conscious about inside-out vistas is particularly important during new construction or renovation when the interior design isn't complete. Even if a designer doesn't have access to the inside of the home, the exterior and site plans should give enough clues about what the views might be. In this situation, a designer should continue to dig wherever possible, asking homeowners, builders or interior designers about the style of the interior finishes and furnishings. As Nagel says, "It's important to have a good understanding of what's going on inside before you start looking at the outside." **PLD**

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USE READER SERVICE # 41



Landscape lighting adds hours onto the time clients can enjoy their outdoor spaces. Photos (this spread): Sea Gull Lighting



Designers add lighting as clients embrace the urge to enhance their landscapes and enjoy them after dusk.

light the way

By Jennifer Lash / Contributing Writer

A landscaped yard can do wonders for a home, and a good lighting design can do wonders for a landscape. For those designers looking to extend the enjoyment of their clients' outdoor areas, landscape lighting design can do just that and more.

"If you're going to spend \$50,000 on landscaping, why do you want to turn it off at 6 p.m.?" asks Eric Borden, vice president of product management and market research at Sea Gull Lighting, Riverside, N.J. Landscape lighting "really allows you to accentuate your landscape design. There's nothing more attractive than driving down the street and seeing a well-illuminated home."

In addition to increasing nighttime usability of a landscape, lighting also enhances safety, adds Steve Parrott, media and marketing director of CAST Lighting, Hawthorne, N.J.

In fact, once people hear the benefits of landscape lighting, it's normally not a hard sell. And these days, with

people “cocooning” and improving the home they’re in, landscape lighting is one route homeowners can take, says Randall Whitehead, architectural lighting designer at Randall Whitehead Lighting Solutions, San Francisco.

“Instead of moving to a bigger house, which is what our parents did, I think people are doing more cocooning, staying in the house they’re in and enhancing it,”



In addition to aesthetics, clients enjoy the safety and security aspects that great lighting design can offer. Photo: CAST Lighting

Whitehead explains. “They’re using equity in the house to upgrade the interior, and naturally moving to the exterior. If they have a lot of untapped property outside, they could put some time and money into it and really create an environment out there.”

REASONS TO LIGHT. To some, adding a light here or there throughout the yard doesn’t seem like it would have much of an effect, but landscape lighting can serve many functions.

As far as security goes, Parrott points out that “intruders are less likely to target a well-lit landscape.” Lighting also can help put homeowners’ minds at ease, whether they’re in the home, working late or on vacation. “If you have a lighting control, you can set it to where you can leave and feel secure that certain lights will come on at certain times,” says Carrie Edwards, designer at Illuminations Lighting Design in Houston.

But while lighting for security reasons is a good starting point, designers should make sure their clients realize the other benefits to a landscape lighting design.

“Security lighting and landscape lighting are two different things,” Whitehead explains, adding that discussing security lighting is a “good way to get your foot in the door without offending the client. Usually we’ll come in and have a two-headed fixture over a garage door. We’ll say, ‘Oh, you put in security lighting... now let’s talk about landscape lighting.’ We want them to realize there’s a difference between lighting for protection purposes and lighting that’s more for ambiance.”

With security lighting, “pathways, stairs and other areas of passage are lit sufficiently for safe movement throughout the property,” Parrott says. But in addition to that, lighting can be used to enhance textures of the home and landscape.

“It’s how you’re drawing interest in and whether the client wants to draw your eye to the fountain first,” Edwards says as she explains how using different angles and lighting techniques can accentuate various areas of the landscape. “Lighting can guide you from one point to the next. Depending on how bright or dim something is or the particular color that it is, these elements can set a very flat picture apart from a very

interesting and diverse environment.”

Having lighting outdoors also helps avoid what Whitehead calls the “black mirror effect,” which occurs when homeowners stand inside at night and look through a window. If no outdoor lighting exists it’s like looking at your own reflection in a black mirror, Whitehead explains. Installing a variety of lighting techniques can make a world of difference.

DESIGN TECHNIQUES. Anyone can install landscape lighting. It’s more of a question of whether he can do it well and if the end result enhances the landscape.

“Anyone can do just a general lighting,” Edwards says. “Everybody wants to have something to set them apart, and that’s what designers do. When clients come to us, we take that general idea and enhance it and refine what they want and give them a little more.”

Dave Zorich and his wife, Kim, realized the benefits of working with a professional when they were installing landscape lighting at their Asheville, N.C. home. The couple realized they didn’t know how to properly sequence lighting to enhance the right areas the right way, Dave Zorich says.

There are a variety of lighting techniques, some of the more common being uplighting, downlighting and silhouette lighting. And, Borden says, “the best lighting design is a layered design, combining at least two lighting techniques.”

A combination of lighting works well to highlight different plants, areas of the home, sculptures or really anything in the yard that the client wants to draw attention to. With moonlighting, fixtures can be mounted in trees to allow light to come down as if from a full moon; uplighting can be used on the walls of a home to create texture or shadows.

“We’re combining these lighting techniques to create environments that are inviting and dramatic and usable,” Whitehead says.

One of the challenges for designers is they sometimes have to reel in their ideas to fit within their clients’ budgets.

“As a designer, when you first go look at the landscape and look at the house, your first instinct may be that you can do so many



Lighting suppliers encourage designers to think beyond photos and brochures when selling outdoor lighting. Temporary displays and demos are a great way to give clients the full effect.
Photo: CAST Lighting

things," Edwards explains, adding that some clients have fairly strict budget restrictions. "But you learn to kind of compromise and find a different way to do it than the actual conventional way."

Whitehead says he often has clients who come to him and say, "Come in and make my landscape look good." When that happens, Whitehead gives a five-minute talk that he calls "the language of light," during which he goes over various techniques and how they can enhance the landscape. "Once they get it, they have these terms to work with," Whitehead says. "I say, 'We're going to accent this,' then they get it."

object, it's not just 'Here, we'll put this up there and it's going to shine.' There's more of a technique of where it will shine, how far it will shine, can you diffuse the lens, is there a way to spread the beam, a way to soften the beam ... the challenge for the designer is how do you make all of these elements relate with each other?"

FORWARD THINKING. When designers are dealing with a client who is building a home, they usually recommend that clients think ahead in terms of what they might want from their landscaping down the road.

was thought about and installed after the fact." The couple was convinced by their landscape designer that thinking ahead about lighting was the right thing to do, and Zorich is happy with the result. "We had a general idea, a vision of where we wanted to go, and we kind of turned it over to him to take care of it," Zorich says. "To me, I'm into hiring professionals to do what they do best."

While it's easiest to plan for landscape lighting with new construction, Whitehead says, "75 percent of the work we do is on existing gardens." In warmer climates, work can be done year-round, but Parrott

"Lighting can guide you from one point to the next. Depending on how bright or dim something is or the particular color that it is, these elements can set a very flat picture apart from a very interesting and diverse environment."

— Carrie Edwards

While customers might learn the lingo, there's still the matter of actually implementing the techniques.

"Clients are looking at the lighting, they don't want to see the fixtures and how you're doing it, they just want to turn it on and look," Edwards says. "It's not just setting the light in the ground. If the fixture is in a tree, you have to focus that light on a particular

"Landscape lighting is something people look at when they drive down the block, they see a job and they go, 'Wow, why didn't we think of that?' It's usually an afterthought," Borden says. "It should be considered when the landscape design is being done. You can prepare for it."

Zorich says he and his wife knew they didn't want their lighting to "look like it

says the majority of people are inspired to enhance their landscape with lighting in the spring.

When it comes to selling landscape lighting to a client, Parrott says, "brochures are never sufficient to give a homeowner a sense of what landscape lighting can do for their home." Ideally, it's best to show them in person various lighting designs so they

can get an idea of what they can do with their own yard. Borden says most manufacturers of landscape lighting products will have a demonstration kit available for purchase, which allows designers to do a mock-up in a client's yard.

"We'll plug in a variety of fixtures, we'll upright some plants, tape some up in the

trees to throw light down. The client gets immediate gratification," Whitehead explains. "I don't think we've ever not gotten the contract if we go in and do a mock-up."

STICKER SHOCK. There's no set pricing standard for landscape lighting, and the cost really depends on the size of the landscape

and how much a client wants to do.

Parrott estimates that most professional landscape lighting designers/installers start at about \$2,500 for about 12 fixtures. While bigger residential projects may have as many as 200 fixtures for a cost of about \$45,000, he says smaller jobs tend not to be very cost-effective for designers.

With outside lighting, "you can spend a small amount of money and make a huge difference," Whitehead says. He estimates that a good landscape accent light is about \$125, and it'd probably be about \$125 for the electrician's time, so he says about \$250 per fixture and installation is probably a good benchmark.

One trend in landscape lighting is the usage of energy-efficient products. More fluorescent and LED lights are being used outdoors. The draw is their longevity. For example, while an incandescent bulb might last 750 hours, an LED equivalent to that bulb might last 50,000 hours. However, these bulbs tend to be more costly.

People "basically will be leaving light bulbs to their children in their will using LED lights," Whitehead says. "We can thank Al Gore for making us a little more aware of our contribution to greenhouse gases - LED bulbs are very good for the environment."

While there are a number of benefits to using energy-efficient bulbs, some homeowners just don't like the look of them. Zorich says he doesn't think LED lights "look real natural outside," so he and his wife chose to not use them in their design.

Designers take note: The Zorichs are pleased their landscape designer urged them to think ahead about incorporating lighting into their landscape. "You save a lot of money, heartache and effort if you think about what you want on a grander scale and think about how you want to do it from the very beginning," Zorich says. "Consumers don't often think about the big picture enough."

Professionals also should remember to upsell the fact that lighting may increase the home values, Edwards says. "Some will do a little at a time, but once they realize how much lighting sets their home apart from the average Joe, then they tend to lose that sticker shock and realize it's definitely something worth doing." **PLD**

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USE READER SERVICE # 42

By Kristin Van Veen-Hincke / Contributing Writer

patio solutions



Photo: Scapes

The latest hardscape trends, particularly with patios and walkways, add texture and dimension to landscape design.

The landscape industry has grown substantially over the last 20 years.

More people are investing time and money into their outdoor spaces and home buyers are looking for properties that reflect this trend. "People are looking at their homes as life-long investments and are spending the money to make the most of their properties," says Larry Smith, marketing manager of Navastone, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada. "Homeowners today are committed to landscape projects that will result in the increased value of their homes. They often plan to stay put for a long period of time and they want to adapt their homes to their individual tastes and comfort. The role of a landscape designer is to introduce new and exciting concepts to their clients."

One of these fresh ideas is hardscapes, particularly patios and walkways made of varying materials that add texture to a landscape. Stephen Jones, president of Pave-Tech, Prior Lake, Minn., believes the growth in hardscapes today is adding a newer, more exciting dimension to landscapes. "There is only so much you can do with the soft landscapes and soft plantings," he states, "and to make it a real liveable space you need to have the hardscapes, retaining walls, patios and arranged areas."

TODAY'S TRENDS. According to Smith, patios and walkways are increasingly popular and homeowners are requesting specific patterns that reflect their personal styles. "A landscape designer should demonstrate to the client that a patio and walkway can preserve and enhance the natural beauty of their outdoor living space while adding to the market value of their property," he explains. "In fact, some homeowners feel so strongly that these hardscapes are necessary that they are factoring the extra cost of a completed patio/sidewalk/driveway into their mortgages."

James Alfieri, owner of Pave Ohio, Highland Heights, Ohio, has customers not only asking for new features, such as elevated patios, outdoor kitchens and covered terraces, but they are also requesting these areas be built with materials that bring a bit of nostalgia to their homes. "We have seen the hardscape business grow by leaps and bounds," he says. "Customers want to use materials that recapture the past—our heritage—and certainly brick is part of that. People are trying to recapture the heritage of their area. Downtowns are renovating and upgrading, going back to the brick look—the more Middle America look."

Jones has also seen a growth in the integration of varying materials. "I think this trend follows what has been going on in Europe for some time. The integration of many materials. From natural stone to aggregate retaining walls to interlocking concrete and clay brick paving and natural stone slabs, I see more integration and more materials being utilized in landscape designs. It's a great opportunity for growth by expanding both the contractor's offerings in what he does for a project, and the designer's opportunity because it really opens up a pallet of things they can select to make the designs better."

The trends in colors and textures have also changed in recent years. Customers are getting away from the primary colors and looking more for natural and earth tones. In moving toward the trend in rustic ma-

ON FIRE

One trend that is gaining in popularity in patio areas is the presence of a fire feature. More customers, especially those installing hardscapes, are asking for a fire feature as well. Mark Schmitt of Schmitt's Landscaping Co. in Wheaton, Ill., sees a fire feature as the focus of a backyard. "Everyone thinks that fire pits are great," he says. "I think there's something soothing about fire, it's something kind of relaxing. I have received a lot of feedback from customers who notice that their teenage kids like to hang around by the fire pit. My experience has been similar. We had a birthday party for my 16-year-old daughter, and we must have had 30 kids sitting around that fire talking and laughing with each other."



The American Society of Landscape Architects identified outdoor firepits and fireplaces as a top trend in residential landscape design for 2007. Photos: ASLA/John Ellis (above), Navastone (left).

terials, the industry has seen a rise in the use of tumbling and texturing of material products to create these results.

Mark Schmitt of Schmitt's Landscaping Co. in Wheaton, Ill., has seen a growth in concrete products that mimic natural ones vs. the actual natural stone products. Although the prices remain nearly the same, the concrete products can be laid more efficiently. "It's really more of a craft to lay natural stone because it's kind of an irregular process whereas all of the paving products can be installed in a repetitive motion," he says. The concrete product looks like flagstone, but can be purchased in various shapes and sizes.

Alfieri believes the increased popularity of pavers is due to the development of polymeric sand which has helped pavers become maintenance-free. "This sand goes into the joints of all types of pavers and it hardens," he explains, "therefore, you minimize the weed growth. We are now able to install pavers in a patio at approximately the same cost as a deck, but the customer doesn't have the maintenance issues that exist with a deck and they don't have the weed problems."

Another recent trend focuses on the affects of the landscaping on the environment. "More customers are looking at the environmental features of the products



they use in landscape project design," Smith states. "Many prefer using man-made pavers and architectural tiles as opposed to using natural cut stone because they are concerned about the long-term effects on the environment."

Permeable pavement is another environmentally friendly option for customers. This pavement allows water to seep through it into a drainage system below, protecting the groundwater supply. "I would say in the next three to five years, this pavement will start taking the place of asphalt parking lots," Alfieri states. "It's environmentally friendly because you don't have the surface water going into the catch basins bringing oil, grease and dirt into the sewers. I've already had customers asking about permeable pavement for their driveways."

When assessing the pros and cons of clay vs. concrete, Rick Sherer, paver product manager, Belden Brick, Canton, Ohio, points out that clay can be unique in its properties. "There are some intrinsic values of clay products vs. other products that seem to appeal to today's customer," Sherer explains. "For instance, the durability of the color, it doesn't fade, and the product is able to resist salt deterioration. Another value is the different colors and shapes available for interesting design innovations." **PLD**

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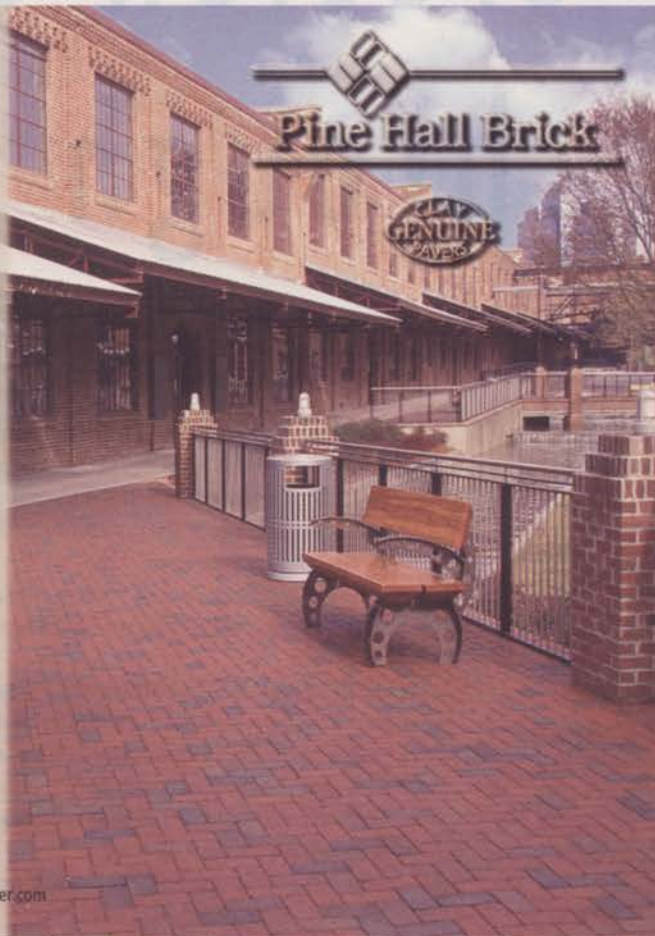
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USE READER SERVICE # 43

When designing an area that has special erosion control needs, careful plant selection is essential.



Photo: The Dow Gardens Archives, www.forestryimages.org

erosion control through plants

By Alan Whitney & Adam Henderson / Contributing Writers

Erosion control is an important factor in all landscape design. Nothing destroys a landscape faster or looks worse than an eroded hillside or slope. All the effort of the designer's and installer's work slides right down the hill if the impact of running water is not taken into account. Preventing erosion during the life cycle of the installation and planning for long-term soil conservation should be a top priority for any landscape designer.

Controlling erosion is a multi-approach goal. The three main areas to review in any landscape project involving soil conservation are design considerations, vegetation selection and soil treatments.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS. There are several design methods to help mitigate the effect of erosion on a landscape, both during and after the landscape installation:

- Examine the site carefully prior to installation – existing “wear” patterns in the surface may indicate problem areas that need special attention.
- Preserve existing vegetation as much as possible during the construction process – if there is no need to excavate an area, don't do it.
- Minimize the length and steepness of slopes by installing benches, terraces and retaining walls or building flow diversion structures.

• Install drainage systems to capture and channel water.

A careful site review in the planning and initial construction stages will help ensure the maximum efficiency of the installation and effective long-term soil conservation.

VEGETATION SELECTION. Vegetation is one of the best defenses in the long-term fight against erosion – and the most visible. Careful plant selection can both beautify the landscape and minimize the need for artificial erosion controls.

Plants work in two ways to mitigate erosion. First, the foliage helps to break up raindrops before they hit the ground, lessening the impact force and reducing the volume of dislodged soil. Second, plant root systems, particularly those with dense, fibrous roots, hold the soil in place.

These two characteristics can work together to form several “bands” of protection, as in a hillside planted with a number of small trees, shrubs and ornamental grasses. Each band of foliage would lessen erosive force of heavy rainfall while the progressively deeper layers of roots help protect against the impact on running surface water.

Fortunately, a broad number of plants can be effective in erosion mitigation. Examples of plants that work very well include:

Crimson Pygmy Japanese Barber (*Berberis thunbergii* var. *atropurpurea* ‘Crimson Pygmy’, USDA hardiness zones 4 to 8) – This low, dense multi-purpose thorny shrub has bright reddish purple foliage.

Cranberry Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster apiculatus*, zones 4 to 7) – This low, spreading groundcover shrub has small deep green leaves that turn bronzy-red in the fall. Small, pinkish-white flowers are followed by numerous small cranberry-red fruits in the fall.

Compact Burning Bush (*Euonymus alatus* ‘Compactus’, zones 4 to 9) – This densely branched deciduous shrub is useful as a hedge or screen. The medium green leaves turn fiery red in the fall and the plant has a strong horizontal branch structure that lends interest in the winter. The dense roots system helps to lock soils in place.

Forsythia cultivars (*Forsythia* cvs., zones 5 to 9) – These spring-flowering

shrubs are a mainstay of soil conservation plantings due to their suckering habit and tolerance of poor soils. Low-growing selections such as ‘Bronxiensis’ and ‘Courtasol’ are particularly effective on banks.

Hydrangea cultivars (*Hydrangea* cvs., zones 4-9) – The many species and selections of this genus produce spectacular flowers throughout the summer months. Cultivars of *H. macrophylla* and the native *H. quercifolia* are particularly effective for erosion control.

Blue Star Juniper (*Juniperus squamata* ‘Blue Star’, zones 4 to 8) – One of the most compact and interesting varieties of low-growing and groundcover juniper for soil conservation is ‘Blue Star.’ This slow-growing, rounded evergreen has rich blue needle-like foliage.

Winter Jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*, zones 6 to 10) – This fast-spreading plant features arching bright green stems that root wherever they touch ground. The small evergreen leaves provide a nice backdrop for the numerous bright yellow flowers that appear in mid- to late winter.

Variiegated Lilyturf (*Liriope muscari* ‘Variegata’, zones 5 to 11) – This dense, clumping groundcover has green strap-like foliage edged with white stripes and spikes of lavender flowers in summer and fall.

Japanese Spurge (*Pachysandra terminalis*, zones 4 to 8) – This evergreen groundcover related to boxwood (*Buxus*) is especially effective for shady and low-light applications. *Pachysandra* spreads rapidly, forming a dense carpet 6 to 10 inches high with leathery deep-green leaves about 2 to 4 inches long.

SOIL TREATMENTS. Adding soil amendments, such as water-retaining polymers, can also reduce erosion by augmenting the soil’s ability to retain moisture. These high molecular weight soil additives absorb excess water and release it as soils dry, reducing the need for supplemental waterings by up to half. They also can reduce soil compaction allowing for deeper, denser roots systems.

Aeration also helps to increase the water-holding capacity of compacted soils. Aerated soils allow water to percolate through rather than run off – particularly important in soils with a high clay content.

THE NEXT STEP. These are just a few strategies that make up an effective erosion mitigation plan. Your local landscape supplier can help you select the appropriate nursery products that will thrive in your specific area and assist you in accomplishing both your soil protection and beautification goals. **PLD**

The authors are from Shemin, The Landscape Supply Co., Danbury, Conn. Reach them at 203/207-5000 or via www.shemin.net.

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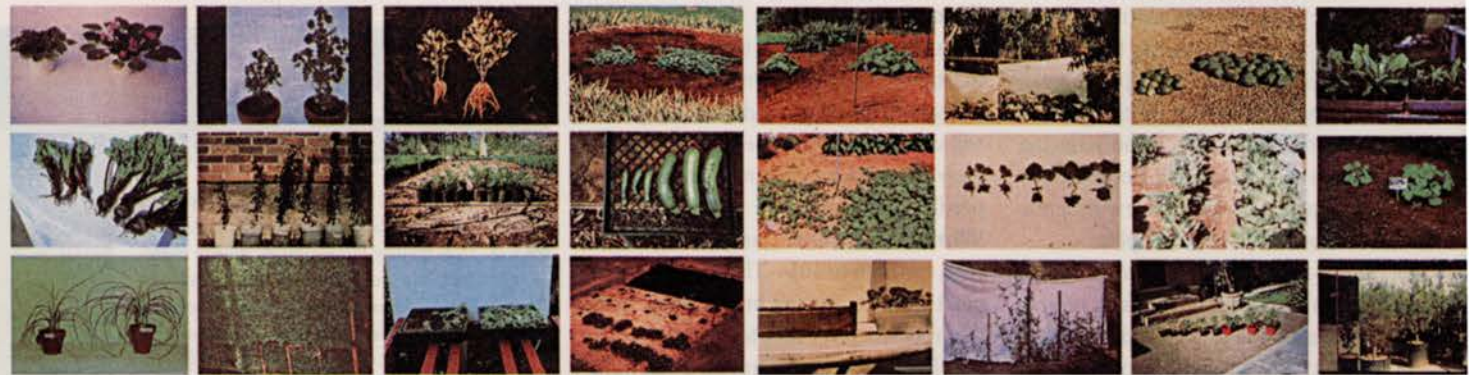
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| 13 HYDROPONICS | 19 PROPAGATION | 23 INTERIORSCAPING |
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When is an employee off the clock and do workers warrant a paid rest break? *Lawn & Landscape Online* Message Board participants take a moment out of their day to muse on the subject of work breaks.

Give Me A Break

When is a break in the action break time for an employee? Matthew Schattner recently queried the *Lawn & Landscape Online* Message Board community on whether traveling the long distance to the next jobsite warranted the designation of an official employee break, allowing the worker to eat his lunch, make a personal cell phone call or simply kick back and relax.

"It's a reasonably long distance to our next stop," Schattner says. "So can I tell him he's 'on break' while riding in the truck?" While the employee hasn't complained, Schattner wants to know where he stands if the subject ever becomes an issue.

Schattner's query sheds some light on a common gray area for many contractors. Two main issues, according to message board commentary, center on when it's appropriate to consider downtime an official break and whether breaks should be paid.

It's not the laborer's fault if the landscape contractor's accounts are spread over a wide geographic area, posts Andrew Aksar, president of Outdoor Finishes in Walkersville, Md. "You are buying the worker's time," he says. "Just like how your clients are buying your time, you have to compensate him or her for their time."

Chad Stern, owner of Mowing & More in Chevy Chase, Md., says a good rule of thumb in determining when an employee is on break vs. when he's on the clock is whether the individual has the freedom to engage in non work-related activities. "When he's in the truck can he go shopping or meet a friend?" Stern says. "If the answer is 'no' then he is working and is on the clock. A break means that the employee can do whatever he wants with his time."

Truck time is work time, posts Sal Mortilla, president, Landscape Unlimited, Long Island, N.Y., who adds that he makes breaks manda-

tory for his crew. "I actually have to force my guys to take their breaks," he points out. "I allow them to stop whenever they feel they need to. An over tired or dead employee is of no use to anyone."

State laws vary quite a bit on the issue of employee breaks, posts Bill Smallwood, owner of W.J. Smallwood Landscaping in Salem, N.H. In fact, some states mandate that employers provide workers with lunch and periodic rest breaks and if the employer fails to comply he or she can be held liable for back pay for each day there was a violation. When in doubt about local labor laws, Smallwood advises contractors to place a call to their states' department of labor office.

Contractors were split on the matter of supplying workers with an "official" or "real" lunch break. Some posted to the message board that they allow workers to eat lunch in between jobsites because the workers would much rather complete their tasks and

rest breaks

The federal government does not have a law requiring business owners to give adult employees either rest periods or meal breaks during the workday, according to the National Federation of Independent Business. In fact, only 19 states specifically require rest or meal breaks for adults, while only seven states specifically require adult employees to be allowed a rest break and a meal break, according to the NFIB.

Although the federal government has no specific requirements for break times, the Fair Labor Standards Act states that if employers choose to provide employees with rest periods, they must be paid. In addition, if employers grant employees a meal break, they, too, must be paid, unless the break qualifies as a bona fide meal period.

To find out if your state requires you to give meal periods, visit the U.S. Department of Labor's Web site at <http://www.dol.gov/esa/programs/whd/state/meal.htm>. To find out if your state requires rest periods, visit <http://www.dol.gov/esa/programs/whd/state/rest.htm>.



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leave for the day earlier rather than stop for a lunch break. Other contractors, though, say they prefer to stop work and provide a lunch break.

However, some question whether workers should be compensated for these designated break times.

With the premium placed on quality laborers, Aksar posts not providing certain perks, such as paid breaks, only hamstring landscape contractors. "In this day and age, with the difficulty in finding good people to employ, I do all I can to keep my employees happy," he says. "Labor laws should not even play a part in this discussion because if you want a good employee you will treat them well."

"If you nickel-and-dime workers, then you get back what you put in," he adds. "My guys get paid for travel time — always have, always will. If they take a break in the afternoon, they still get paid. The last thing I want to do is step on their toes."

While some contractors expressed

the importance of keeping workers happy, others indicated that compensating idle workers may make them less competitive in the marketplace.

For example, Todd McCabe, president, McCabe Landscape Group, Wrightsville Beach, N.C., recently finished a project that was an hour drive to and from the jobsite. At one point McCabe contemplated only paying the drivers and not compensating the laborers, but he decided against it.

"Paying four or five guys for two hours of travel time on projects that last a few weeks can add up," McCabe says. "On some of these jobs we are basically giving the employees a ride to and from the jobsite. These are commercial jobs. Employees of other subcontractors don't arrive in a taxi."

"We would be much more competitive in our pricing if we didn't have to account for travel time," he adds.

Other contractors agreed, adding on jobs requiring long distances of travel they give workers the option

of driving themselves or using their transportation, with the understanding that the clock does not start until they arrive on site.

Some contractors prefer to pay travel time for practical reasons. For example, if an employee is in a company truck and gets into an accident they want that worker covered by worker's compensation insurance.

Bryan Taynor, president of Taynor Landscape Design in Gahanna, Ohio, posts that not compensating for travel time is a poor business practice. "Years ago I worked for a company that only paid drivers," he posts. "I thought it was cheap then and it's just as cheap now. Pay your people for the time required for the job, travel or not, and stay closer to home. Take care of your people or someone else will."

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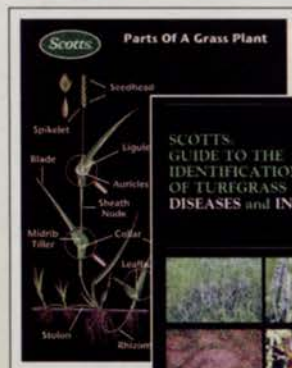
For U.S. Department of Labor views on rest breaks check out the July Online Extras.

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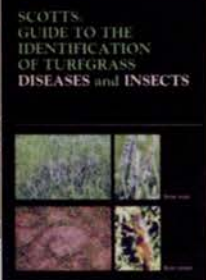
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The Ergonomic Advantage

Ergonomically friendly mowers can make for more comfortable and more productive crews.

To Webster, ergonomics means the applied science of equipment design intended to maximize productivity by reducing operator fatigue and discomfort in the workplace. To landscape contractors, ergonomics can mean more comfortable – and more productive – crews. But even as issues like workplace injuries and the rising cost of health insurance become more prominent in the landscape industry, manufacturers agree that ergonomics continue to take a backseat to factors like price and productivity. “Ergonomics are pretty far down on a contractor’s list of priorities,” says Bill Wright, president of Wright Manufacturing, Frederick, Md. “We hear thousands of comments about things like durability and functionality, but most contractors seem to be willing to tolerate some discomfort for the sake of making money.”

Despite the seeming lack of interest, advancements are being made to make mowers and other landscape equipment safer and more comfortable for those who operate them



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continued from page 84

day in and day out. And while the advancements seem slight, like seats with more padding or handles with better grip, they could have dramatic affects on the industry, particularly from a productivity standpoint. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2004, musculoskeletal disorders comprised nearly 32 percent of all nonfatal occupational injuries, with 27 percent of these injured workers missing 31 or more days of work. These injuries become more expensive to employers as each day goes by. "If a crewmember is absent even for a day or two, the owner or foreman has to account for that loss somewhere," says Brian Roberts, director of ergonomic services, CNA Financial Corp., Chicago, Ill. "Quality and productivity are undoubtedly affected."

WHERE IT HURTS. Soft tissue injuries, known as cumulative trauma, are the most common outcome of an ergonomically unfriendly workplace,

Roberts says. With riding mowers, these injuries occur mostly in the lower back, but also in the ligaments and tendons of the shoulders and knees. With hand-held equipment and walk-behind mowers, the wrist is also susceptible to injury. These injuries are cumulative in nature and can lead to musculoskeletal disorders like sprains, strains, carpal tunnel syndrome and hernias.

There are a variety of movements that can lead to cumulative trauma, with two of the most common being improper bending and twisting of the lower back, Roberts says. "Bending, particularly to lift something, puts tremendous force on the lower back," he explains. "Twisting on the way up is the worst motion you can make because you are putting more torque on the soft tissue in the vertebrae." Sitting on a stiff surface like the seat of a riding mower for hours at a time can also cause strain on the lower back, and the bumpy terrain of a lawn

only makes it worse, Wright says. "We've noticed from our research that when a mower goes over a bump the front wheels dip down first followed by the back wheels, causing the seat to repeatedly bang against the operator's back," he explains. "To prevent that, the driver lurches forward and sits away from the back of the seat, leaving no support for his back."

Contractors operating stand-on mowers should avoid standing rigidly with stiff legs, Wright says. A better method would be to mimic a skier, with a slight bend in the knee and a flexible back. "This way the body can flow with the bumps," he says.

Another common motion that strains the lower back is lateral flexion, or carrying heavy items with the arms extended away from the body, Roberts says. "Extending the arms while lifting creates more force on the back," he explains. "Keeping the elbows close to the side of the body gives the lifter the

continued on page 76, sidebar on page 74



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OSHA and Ergonomics

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) does not have a standard when it comes to ergonomics. "Ergonomic issues are not high on OSHA's priority list, unless there is an employee complaint," says Brian Roberts, director of ergonomic services, CNA Financial Corp., Chicago. "The landscape industry is not one of the targeted groups that the organization often deals with."

In the case of an ergonomic complaint, OSHA can site employers under a general duty clause, which mandates that they are required to keep the workplace free of recognized hazards that can cause death or serious harm to employees, Roberts says. "Requirements will depend on the OSHA compliance officer handling the case," he explains. "For example, the officer can say there is too much lifting of material weighing 100 pounds or more and the employer will have to change that."

According to OSHA's Web site, two of its 26 state occupational safety and health programs – California and Washington – have adopted state ergonomic standards, although Washington's was repealed in 2003. California's standard, adopted in 1996, states that when at least two employees performing identical tasks have been diagnosed by a physician with repetitive motion injuries (RMIs) within 12 consecutive months, the employer must establish a program which shall:

- Evaluate each job, process or operation of identical activity for exposures which have caused RMIs at the affected worksite;
- Control or minimize to the extent feasible the exposures that have caused repetitive motion injuries, considering engineering controls and administrative controls; and
- Provide training to affected employees.



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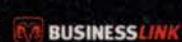


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continued from page 72

most strength and creates the least amount of force on the back.”

Hand-held equipment like string trimmers are known to cause cumulative trauma to the wrist, Wright says. Fortunately, these machines are usually used for no longer than 10 minutes at a time on most residential jobs. But on large commercial jobs, crewmembers may have to use them for anywhere from four to eight hours at a time depending on the size of the property. “The vibration of a string trimmer’s staff can numb an operator’s wrist after an hour, and the tingling can go all the way to the shoulder,” Wright says, adding that wearing a harness can help carry the bulk of the machine and alleviate some force.



Photo: Wright

Operating pistol grip walk-behind mowers can also cause stress to a contractor’s wrists. Because the squeezing action turns the mower on and off, it requires a good deal of force and has been connected to carpal tunnel

syndrome Wright says, comparing the action to exercising too long with handgrips. “Contractors repeat this motion sometimes hundreds of times per day and their wrists can get very tired,” he says. “When using exercise handgrips, five squeezes are good, but after 20 you can’t squeeze anymore. That shows how much stress contractors can encounter throughout a typical day. Even with exercise you shouldn’t overdo it.”

BETTER ERGONOMICS. Improvements in design have helped make some mowers more ergonomically friendly. The largest leaps have been made in seat design, says Mark Woodlief, project manager, Husqvarna commercial wheeled goods, Charlotte, N.C. More, larger springs and suspensions absorb the jostles of a lawn’s bumpy terrain so the operator doesn’t have to. The backs of mower seats are also being made taller and more con-

continued on page 78, sidebar on page 77

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the OSHA approach

While OSHA does not have an ergonomic standard, it does have a four-pronged approach to ergonomic safety that states may follow. Enacted in 2002, the comprehensive approach was designed to quickly and effectively address musculoskeletal disorders in the workplace.

- **GUIDELINES:** Voluntary guidelines are tools to assist employers in recognizing and controlling hazards. The guidelines are industry- and task-specific, but employers in other industries for which guidelines have not been developed may find useful information for implementing their own ergonomic programs.
- **ENFORCEMENT:** The Department of Labor's enforcement plan for ergonomics focuses on industries and employers with known high injury and illness rates related to ergonomic hazards. OSHA coordinates inspections

with a legal strategy designed to target prosecutable violations. Serious ergonomics hazards will be addressed using the OSHA's General Duty Clause.

- **OUTREACH & ASSISTANCE:** OSHA provides assistance to businesses, particularly small businesses, and helps them address ergonomic issues in the workplace. The agency offers a variety of assistance, including Internet-based tools, cooperative programs, partnerships, training and education.
- **NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE:** Until 2004, the National Advisory Committee on Ergonomics advised the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health on ergonomic guidelines, research, outreach and assistance. The committee reported periodically to the assistant secretary on its findings and recommendations.

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continued from page 76

toured to fit to a contractor's body, preventing the back from twisting and turning, he says.

Wright agrees that today's mower seats are receiving the most ergonomic attention, with some made with up to 6 inches of vertical spring stroke that can absorb even abrupt shock. "With a vertical 6-inch stroke, you can hit a ground-hog hole and not really feel it," he says. "With other mowers, that could knock your teeth out."

The handles of some mower designs are being made at a seven-degree angle, the proper position in which a person would rest their hands while sitting down, Woodlief says.

Thick, textured padding on the handgrips of some mowers makes them easier and more comfortable to hold and also absorbs vibration.



Photo: Husqvarna

"Imagine holding a glass of tea," Wright says. "You don't want to drop it so you squeeze it very tightly. If the glass was textured, you wouldn't have to exert as much force to hold on to it."

Some manufacturers are going beyond just suspending the seat and are suspending the whole frame. This can make for a smoother ride particularly

for contractors who mow for eight or more hours per day, Wright says. Mowers with suspended frames tend to have more moving parts than regular mowers, making them more expensive to purchase and maintain.

When purchasing a push mower, contractors should be sure to choose a self-propelled machine with an automatic start, Roberts says. This eliminates the need to push the mower physically and bend down to pull the mower on and off multiple times a day. If purchasing a stand-on mower, a padded sulky can help reduce some of the machine's vibration, Roberts says. "How much vibration is absorbed will depend on the type of equipment, type of terrain and the ergonomic precautions," he says. No matter what type, manufacturers suggest contractors purchase

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mowers with adjustable seats and handlebars to suit each rider. Some of today's mowers can adjust to fit riders weighing 100 to 350 pounds, Wright says.

Manufacturers agree that the costs of ergonomic additions are slight — less than 1 percent of the total cost of the machine, Woodlief says. An ergonomically friendly seat can cost \$400 to \$500, while foam handgrips can cost \$10 to \$20. Other upgrades like arm rests may add another \$50 or \$60. A more expensive upgrade, a suspended frame, may add another \$1,000 to the mower's cost. Wright says some manufacturers give their customers the option to mix-and-match their mowers so they can choose the ergonomic features that are right for their businesses.

EASE THE PAIN. Roberts says that many landscape crews get into ergonomically unfriendly routines that could be prevented with a reexamination of their daily practices. He suggests premeditating the layout of each job to keep necessary equipment and materials in the most accessible places. This will not only promote ergonomic consciousness, but also save time from a productivity standpoint. "I tell contractors to preplan their jobs in relation to the human interface," Roberts says. "How far do crewmembers have

"We hear thousands of comments about things like durability and functionality, but most contractors seem to be willing to tolerate some discomfort for the sake of making money."
— Bill Wright

to walk to get what they need? Is the plant material located on one side of the jobsite when it's needed on the other? Were pallets unloaded from the truck just to be picked up and moved later? This type of consideration needs to be done everyday."

Roberts suggests aiming for an additional half hour of productivity and a 10 percent reduction in the amount of walking, bending and reaching each day. "You're reducing cumulative trauma and fatigue while increasing productivity," he says. "There is no way to keep a crew 100 percent efficient all of the time. But that extra half hour a day will go straight to the bottom line and make a significant difference in the long run."

Roberts says the price of an

ergonomically unfriendly workplace can be broken down into direct and indirect costs. Direct costs include things like filing a claim, medical and insurance costs, and indirect costs include having to pay someone to cover the injured person's responsibilities and lost productivity. Roberts says indirect costs can be four times more than direct costs. "If you have a \$100 claim, the final cost to an employer will be around \$400," he says. "Someone may not be collecting those costs, but they are real and they are there."

Just like it's impossible to keep a crew 100 percent efficient all of the time, it's impossible to eliminate 100 percent of the aches and pains. But to ease them, Wright says it's a good idea to not spend too much time using any one piece of machinery. His suggested timeline is one-hour increments separated by five- to 10-minute breaks. An alternative is four-hour increments separated by 30-minute breaks. "This distributes the work to different parts of the body throughout the day," he says.

There are exceptions, Wright says. For example, string trimmers should not be operated for more than one hour without a one-hour break. "It's best for a body to stop repeating a specific motion for too long to avoid problems in the long term."

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Photo: Tom Campbell



SMART UPGRADES

A look at two properties before and after smart upgrades.

At this residential estate, a smart irrigation upgrade saved the homeowners 30,000 gallons of water in one billing cycle (above).

Tom Campbell's irrigation consulting business isn't called Water Scout for nothing.

A 25-year veteran of the landscape and irrigation industries in Marin and Sonoma County, Calif., Campbell conducts irrigation audits as a means of reconnaissance before outlining a plan of attack to upgrade clients' faulty systems. Before retrofitting a system, Campbell first conducts a zone by zone assessment of the existing system. He flags broken heads and repairs these immediately so he can accurately measure the system (in gallons per minute) before he makes any extensive upgrades. After the project is complete Campbell takes another reading to measure the savings. It's not uncommon for the systems to improve so much so that zones that were once running at up to 45 gallons per minute now operate in the high 20-gallons-per-minute range.

In addition to conserving water, Campbell is saving his clients money – as much as 50 percent off of their water bills – which is an increasingly attractive offer as many water districts migrate to tiered water rate structures.

Here's a look at two of Campbell's past renovations.

by marisa palmieri | associate editor



Photo: ET Water

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY UPGRADE

Autodesk headquarters
San Rafael, Calif.

Site specifics: The 42-zone area is located on clay and amended clay/loam soil. The property is a mix of turf, planted areas, trees and parking-lot islands. Runoff and overwatering were concerns.

OUTDATED SYSTEM: Broken heads, leaking valves and various other inefficiencies afflicted the 15-year old system, which was a top-notch system when it was originally installed. However, maintenance had gone awry. "The site was pretty much bleeding out," Campbell says. "There were a lot of issues – broken heads, leakages and the master valve was offline because of a cut wire." Existing components included:

- **Controller** – three controllers operated this system, creating programming and scheduling challenges. Every time one controller's battery died, the system would go into default, watering every day for 10 minutes. "There were conventional controllers that had enough capacity to handle all of the zones," Campbell says. "I have no idea why someone slapped in three controllers."
- **Turf area, planted areas and trees** – traditional stream sprayheads, many of which were broken.
- **Parking-lot island** – pop-up sprinklers, broken and fixed in upright position causing a tripping hazard.

SMART UPGRADE: After a zone-by-zone evaluation, Campbell retrofitted the system with the following:

- **Controller** – one ET-based controller with Web-based irrigation management capabilities.
- **Turf and planted areas** – check valves; institutional pop-up bodies with pressure compensation; and multi-stream, multi-trajectory rotating sprinklers.
- **Parking-lot islands and trees** – inline drip emitters.

SAVINGS: The site's bimonthly water bill was reduced 38 percent – from \$2,600 to \$1,600 – during summer months year over year.



Photo: Tom Campbell

RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY UPGRADE

Hillside estate, Ross, Calif.

Site specifics: Single-family home; landscape includes mature plantings, planted beds and specimen trees, but no turf. Homeowner sought to reduce water bill, which had swelled to about \$1,000 bimonthly.

OUTDATED SYSTEM: "There were some things that had been an issue for many years," Campbell says, pointing to leaking valves as one major cause of the high water use on the 15-year old system. Other outdated components included:

- **Controller** – Two, 12-station traditional timers that were prone to quick battery loss. This created scheduling and maintenance difficulties as these controllers lacked non-volatile memory and therefore needed to be reprogrammed every time the batteries died or the power went out.
- **Planted/bed areas** – standard sprayheads on all zones except for two drip zones for hillside trees.

SMART UPGRADE: This system was long overdue for renovation, so he made the following changes:

- **Controller** – replaced the two outdated conventional timers with a new controller featuring a weather module and flow meter.
- **Valves** – replaced all valves.
- **Planted/bed areas** – converted all standard sprayheads to drip emitters or multi-stream, multi-trajectory rotating sprinklers.

SAVINGS: The changes resulted in a 50-percent reduction in gallons used – as much as 30,000 gallons in one billing cycle. It also reduced the two-month water bill to \$243 from \$900-\$1,200.

Seed It to Believe It

Hydroseeding can produce a great-looking lawn with less money in less time.

This season marks Bob Baldner's first attempt to offer hydroseeding as part of his full-service landscape and irrigation company. So far, he's sold about 3 acres of seeding, which will cover all of his initial equipment costs and even leave him with a little bit of profit. While it's still too early to tell, Baldner says the current demand for hydroseeding should help the business grow each year. "It's such a new service for us that I can't really make any accurate predictions pertaining to revenue," says the owner of Irrigation Innovations, Livingston, Mont. "The demand seems to be there though, so it should be a good revenue stream for our business."

Like many other contractors, Baldner began offering hydroseeding as an alternative to laying

sod. When done well, hydroseeding can produce sod-like quality results with about one-third of the labor and for about one-third of the cost. The biggest drawback to hydroseeding seems to be the lack of "instant gratification" achieved by using sod, says Ray Badger, president of Turbo Technologies, Beaver Falls, Pa. But with a little patience and regular watering, hydroseeding can often produce a better-looking lawn than sodding within six weeks, Badger says.

According to *Lawn & Landscape* research, about 2 percent of contractors purchased hydroseeding machines in 2006 and 4 percent plan to purchase a machine in 2007. The hydroseeding industry grows about 10 percent each year, Badger says, adding that machines and products are more



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WHAT IS HYDROSEEDING? Hydroseeding is the process of combining grass seed, dyed mulch, fertilizer, tackifier and water into a hydroseeding machine. The machine's tank mixes the materials together to create a substance that is evenly sprayed through a hose over bare soil. The dyed mulch, usually green or blue, helps contractors see where they have sprayed to ensure an even application. Regular watering helps soak-in the seed and the mulch-based covering holds in the moisture and speeds up seed germination. The mulch also protects the newly planted seeds from harmful sun rays and hungry birds. As the lawn grows, the mulch gradually decomposes and nourishes the soil.

Contractors can choose any kind of grass seed and fertilizer they prefer, and the costs will vary significantly depending on type and quality. Tackifier

is the glue that holds the hydroseed mixture together and also makes it slick enough to be sprayed through the machine's hose. About 5 to 10 percent of mulch comes with it pre-added, Badger says, but most contractors purchase it separately. Tackifier costs about \$50 for an acre's worth, and can be purchased anywhere hydroseeding supplies are sold, he adds.

Types and qualities of mulch vary as well, says James Lincoln, owner of TurfMaker Corp., Rowlett, Tex., adding that the lowest quality mulch is made of shredded newspaper and the best mulch is made of 100 percent wood. "The mulch is what makes the difference," he says. "The more good quality mulch a contractor puts on the ground, the better chance he'll have of getting a good stand of grass." Paper mulches can cost around \$8 to \$10 per bale, wood mulch can cost \$12 to \$14 per bale and a blended mulch of paper and wood falls somewhere in the middle costing around

\$10 to \$11 per bale, Badger says.

The type of mulch used determines if the process is considered low-cost or premium hydroseeding, Lincoln says. Low-cost hydroseeding is often used for highway grassing jobs, mine reclamation projects and other large-scale jobs where high-quality grass, total coverage and quick results are not required. Premium hydroseeding is mostly used for residential and commercial projects where a great-looking lawn is the top priority, although it is common for homeowners to choose sod for their front lawns and hydroseed for their back lawns, Badger says. "Laying sod gives clients an instant lawn, while you might have to wait three weeks to see the results of hydroseeding," he explains.

Manufacturers agree knowing how to apply low-cost and premium hydroseeding is an important part of offering the service. "The most common mistake among contractors is to not know the difference between the two,"

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Lincoln says. (For more information, see "Tank Loads" on page 90.)

HYDROSEEDING HISTORY.

Hydroseeding, sometimes known as hydromulching, first emerged in the 1950s and was a very literal process simply consisting of water and grass seed. The machines were costly – falling into the \$100,000 range – and the process was not offered regularly until the 1970s. By this time, mulch was added to the mix and machines became more affordable and user-friendly. By the 1980s hydroseeding emerged into the landscape market and has since evolved to what it is today.

Other improvements to the process include greater accessibility to more varieties of durable grass seed and better quality mulch. "When we first offered the service 17 years ago, hydroseeding materials were hard to find," Badger says. "Now they're available anywhere turf supplies are sold."



Contractors and manufacturers agree that most hydroseeding jobs can be done by one contractor with one machine in one step. Photo: Finn Corp.

Jet agitation and mechanical agitation are the two main types of hydroseeding machines, and both produce different results. Jet agitation machines are the less expensive of the two, costing around \$4,000 each, Badger says. The machines use a recip-

rotation method to tank-mix paper mulch, seed and fertilizer to create a thin, or "soupy," substance, Lincoln says. Using better quality wood mulch can lead to clogging jet agitation machines, he adds.

The "soupy" applications produced by jet agitation machines work best in areas with dry, powdery soil that will easily absorb the seed and cool weather free of heavy rains that won't wash the seeds away. These conditions can be found in Northern areas like the Pacific Northwest and the Northeast, Lincoln says.

Mechanical agitation machines are more durable and thus more expensive than jet agitation machines, costing around \$8,000 each. These machines are capable of blending wood mulch, creating substances dramatically thicker than jet agitation machines can, Lincoln says.

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Mechanical agitation machines can be used anywhere, he adds, because the operator can vary the thickness of the mulch. Thicker hydroseed applications are necessary in areas with extreme heat that can dry out the seed, heavy rains that can wash the seed away and wet or hard soils that won't absorb the seed easily, Lincoln says.

LESS LABOR. Contractors and manufacturers agree that hydroseeding is the most efficient way to install a lawn from a labor standpoint. Most jobs can be done by one contractor with one machine in one step. "We added hydroseeding because one person will be able to do what several had to do to install sod," Baldner says. "It was

essentially a labor availability issue."

Depending on the size of the job and the machine being used, Badger says it can take one man one to three hours to hydroseed a 10,000- to 12,000-square-foot lawn, and one to 1½ days to hydroseed a 1- or 2-acre lawn. Baldner says he alone handles jobs 6,000 square feet or less, but brings another crewmember along to jobs any larger to help with tasks like mixing and handling the hoses.

Badger says that laying sod is six times more labor intensive than hydroseeding. From lifting heavy pallet loads to ensuring precise applications, a six-man crew can be needed to perform a 1- or 2-acre sod job in two to three days. With dry seeding, the applications of grass seed, fertilizer, straw and water are all done in separate steps. "If you do it by hand it can take forever," Badger says. "Straw blowers are more effective, but sell for the same price as a hydroseeder."

One thing to keep in mind when it comes to hydroseeding is having a reliable way to transport the machine, Badger says. Depending on the machine's size, a trailer or a pickup truck with a ramp will most likely be required. Another challenge is the prep-work of evening out the soil to make for a level seedbed. This can be done by hand with a rake or rototiller or on a machine like a skid-steer with a box scraper attachment.

SELLING HYDROSEEDING. "The key to selling hydroseeding is to sell it against sod," Badger says. "Guys who use sod as a comparison can get more money than those spreading some seed and throwing straw over it."

While manufacturers say seeding can be done from April to November in the North and year-round in the South, Baldner says the best time to sell it is anytime. "We are always selling any or all of our services," he says. "But in Montana, we have a relatively short growing and installation season, so seeding takes place from May to October." Baldner and his crew will also perform dormant seeding before and after the active seeding season which gets the seed in the ground so it's ready for next season.

Badger notes that different types of grass seed need to be planted in different climates. Bermudagrass needs warm temperatures to grow properly, while ryegrass and fescue can grow



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during colder times of year. Ultimately, the type of grass planted is up to the contractor. "I like the ability to custom mix the seed," Baldner says. "We can offer mixes you can't get with sod."

One of the troubles with sod is that trying to transplant grass to unfamiliar soil can be difficult, and sometimes it won't take, Badger says. Because of this, some contractors and manufacturers view hydroseeding as a more natural way to install a lawn. "It is not uncommon to find crummy sod available out there," Lincoln says. "With hydroseeding, contractors can choose premium grass seed so they know what they're getting."

Most contractors price their hydroseeding services by the square foot and Baldner factors in things like cost of materials, labor and overhead. An average job for Baldner is a 6,000-square-foot lawn for which he charges \$800 to \$900. "I use this pricing for-



The dyed mulch used to hydroseed helps contractors see where they have sprayed to ensure an even application. Photo: Turbo Technologies

mat because it's readily understandable for the potential customer," he says. Badger says pricing can vary depending on location, but 8 to 10 cents a square foot is a nationwide average. "A company with little or no competition and a good salesman can possibly charge 20 or 25 cents per square foot,

but I've also seen companies charge as little as 6 cents per square foot," he says.

Manufacturers agree that to run a successful hydroseeding business a contractor has to know his stuff. From the different types of mulch to the process itself, there are many mistakes an inexperienced contractor can make along the way. "I started doing research on the actual process, and I'm learning about grass types and trying to increase my level of expertise as quickly as possible," Baldner says. "I haven't been doing this long enough to know what mistakes I will make, but I've been in business long enough to know how to learn from the ones I do make." ■

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For more on caring for a newly hydroseeded lawn, visit the July Online Extras section.

tank loads

The quantity and quality of mulch and tackifier, the glue that holds the hydroseed mixture together, make a significant difference in the final result of almost any hydroseeding job, says James Lincoln, owner of TurfMaker Corp., Rowlett, Tex. The better the mulch and tackifier, the better the seed germination and soil erosion protection. Lincoln describes three ways to mix the tank load of a 600-gallon machine to get fair, better and great applications.

Fair Application: Apply 25 pounds of paper mulch per 1,000 square feet

Load 200 pounds of paper mulch and enough seed and fertilizer for an 8,000-square-foot application. Use a small nozzle to spray the "soupy" mixture. This type of application will not have a high likelihood of a good final result, Lincoln says, but mild weather and gentle rains will better its chances. The cost of this type of application is around 1 cent per square foot, or \$10 per 1,000 square feet.

Better Application: Apply 50 pounds of blended wood and paper mulch per 1,000 square feet

Load 200 pounds of blended wood and paper mulch into the tank and enough seed, fertilizer and tackifier for a 4,000-square-foot application. Use a medium-sized nozzle to apply the mixture. This technique is likely to produce a good stand of grass if the weather is not "blistering hot" or if hard rains do not occur during the first week or 10 days, Lincoln says. The total cost for this application will be between \$25 and \$40 per 1,000 square feet, he says.

Great Application: Apply 75 pounds of wood mulch per 1,000 square feet

Load 200 pounds of wood mulch and enough seed, fertilizer and tackifier for a 2,700-square-foot application. Use a large nozzle to apply the mixture. This type of application has a high likelihood of producing a good final result, Lincoln says, even in the face of hot weather and significant rain. Total cost for this application may exceed \$50 per 1,000 square feet, he adds.



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- Hi-viz, acrylic-dipped glove with thermal protection for use in high activity/low light settings also available
- Perfect Fit Glove – www.perfectfitglove.com

Circle 203 on reader service card



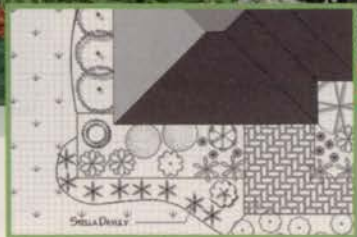
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USE READER SERVICE # 71

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Smart Water

These irrigation components are designed to meet the need for more efficient use of a precious resource.

compiled by heather wood | web editor

DIG LEIT-2 Controller Plus RC2 Remote Handset

- Virtually invisible wireless controller and handset
- RC2 handset operates 100 percent of the controller functions, eliminating the need to visit the controller after installation
- Each LEIT-2 controller operates two valves
- Handset operates as many as 198 stations
- No AC or batteries are needed for the controller
- Controller is compact and can be mounted directly onto the cover of valve boxes
- DIG Irrigation Products – 800/322-9146, www.digcorp.com

Circle 204 on reader service card



Hunter ET System

- Measures key climatic conditions to calculate the local evapotranspiration (ET) factor
- Combines ET information with each zone's particular plant, soil, sun and sprinkler data to create an ideal program
- Minimizes water waste by applying just the amount of water the plants need
- WiltGard technology triggers protective watering when extreme conditions threaten plants
- Non-volatile memory retains program and site information in the event of power failure
- Includes a range of scheduling options
- Add-on accessory to any Hunter controller that operates with SmartPort
- Hunter Industries – 760/744-5240, www.hunterindustries.com

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- Combines a low-flow valve, filter and pressure regulator into a single unit
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- Fits inside a 6-inch round valve box
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- Filter is upright for maintenance access
- Hydro-Rain – 888/493-7672, www.hydorain.com

Circle 206 on reader service card



Miller-Leaman Thompson Irrigation Nozzle Filter

- Prevents sprinkler nozzles and micro-drip emitters from clogging
- Available in Type 304 and Type 316 stainless steel
- Features a large conical element with more surface area than traditional strainers
- Available in a variety of screen mesh options
- Can be outfitted with optional instrumentation packages
- Miller-Leaman – 800/881-0320, www.millerleaman.com

Circle 207 on reader service card



Irrrometer WaterSwitch

- Can be retro-fitted to existing systems or installed with new construction
- Wiring is similar to rain switching devices
- Connects to the controller's existing sensor input terminals
- Uses a single Watermark sensor in the turfgrass roots to signal the

controller to skip unnecessary watering

- Four selectable positions allow for user adjustment of the appropriate moisture level
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Circle 208 on reader service card



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- Allow the user to irrigate more efficiently and establish deeper root systems
- Rain Bird – 800/724-6247, www.rainbird.com

Circle 209 on reader service card



Superior Controls Co. Sterling Series ET Controller

- Adjusts watering schedule to weather
- Features automatic, semi-automatic, manual and timed operation
- Flow monitoring abilities available
- Includes a programmable one- to 32-day watering calendar
- Storm Manufacturing Group – 800/210-2525, www.storm-manufacturing.com

Circle 211 on reader service card



Weathermatic SmartLine SL4800 Controller

- Designed for parks, sports fields and large commercial sites
- Features a 12-station base unit that expands to 24, 36 or 48 zones with the addition of hot-swappable 12-zone modules
- Control panel is identical to the panel on the SL1600
- Features a large, backlit LCD display
- Can be set up in two modes: Auto Adjust or standard
- Weathermatic – 888/474-3776, www.weathermatic.com

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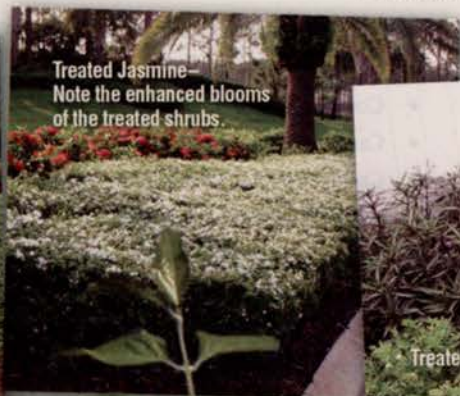
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Untreated Jasmine



Treated Jasmine—
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Untreated Mexican Petunia

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Treated Boxwood

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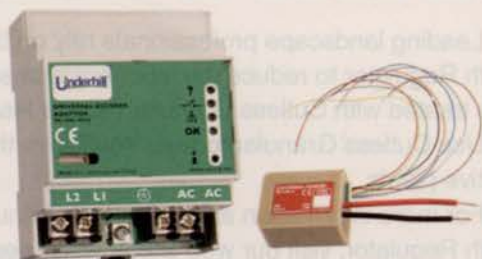


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Toro TMR-1 Maintenance Remote

- Allows a single operator to perform most manual operations remotely from the field
- Operates on unlicensed MURS frequencies, giving it optimum range without the hassles of FCC licensing
- All Stations Cycle function tests all stations with a two-minute runtime per station
- Includes a long-range, handheld transmitter with rechargeable NiMH batteries and a pre-wired, quick-release receiver
- Quick connect system allows the receiver to be moved from one controller to another
- Receiver operates off of the power from the controller
- Toro – 888/676-8676, www.toro.com

Circle 212 on reader service card



Underhill 2Wire Decoder System

- Converts any commercial controller to a two-wire operation
- Can operate as many as 63 irrigation stations
- Can be mounted internally inside an existing controller or externally in a separate enclosure along the two-wire path, as many as 3,000 feet from the controller
- Includes 2Wire Universal Senders
- 2Wire Decoders can be installed at any location along the two-wire path and control one or two valves per station
- Underhill – 800/863-3744, www.underhill.us

Circle 213 on reader service card

LEIT Link[®] 2-way Radio Remote



Facilitates wireless 2-way communication with LEIT XRC Controllers.



Features:

- Secure 2-way wireless communication
- Full in-the-field accessibility to all controller data using the hand held remote
- Can be used with most brand name valves using DIG's solenoid adaptors
- No weak link; any disruption in one controller site will not effect the others
- The LEIT XRC controller can operate with or without the radio link

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USE READER SERVICE # 81

Small Wonders

The power behind this handheld equipment shows that size can be deceiving.

compiled by heather wood | web editor

Cub Cadet Commercial ST 26 String Trimmer

- Powered by a 1.22-horsepower, 25.6-cc Shibauro engine
- Features solid-steel straight shaft design, a gearbox with dual shaft bearings, anti-winding design and anti-vibration shaft drive
- Cub Cadet Commercial – www.cubcadetcommercial.com

Circle 214 on reader service card

ECHO PB-755 Backpack Blower

- Equipped with a 63.3-cc engine
- Features a shorter hip throttle and an L frame with straight back
- Re-designed tube stays flexible in cold weather
- Includes a 68-fluid-ounce fuel tank, 625 cubic feet per minute at the pipe and 205 miles-per-hour maximum air speed
- ECHO – 800/432-3246, www.echo-usa.com

Circle 215 on reader service card

Husqvarna 335LS Trimmer

- Features a 34-cc, two-stroke X-TORQ engine
- Includes a heavy duty gearbox, steel shaft and oversized clutch
- Equipped with the LowVib anti-vibration system
- Runs up to one hour on a tank of fuel
- Husqvarna – 704/597-5000, www.usa.husqvarna.com

Circle 216 on reader service card

John Deere BP65LE Backpack Blower

- Has an air velocity of 190 mph and 630 cubic feet per minute of air volume; powered by a 64.7-cc Kawasaki 2-cycle engine
- Includes a low-emission, fuel-efficient engine and a large muffler
- Padded backpack harness absorbs vibration; weighs 21.4 pounds
- John Deere – 309/765-8000, www.johndeere.com

Circle 217 on reader service card





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- Kawasaki Power Products – 800/433-5640, www.kawpowr.com

Circle 218 on reader service card



RedMax Strato-Charged Backpack Blower

- Blower moves 463 cubic feet per minute of air at 131 miles per hour
- Unit weighs 14.9 pounds
- Powered by a 29.5-cc Strato-Charged pure two-cycle engine
- Super e-START reduces pulling force needed to start the engine
- RedMax – 800/291-8351, www.redmax.com

Circle 220 on reader service card

Maruyama HT2300DR Hedge Trimmer

- Powered by a 22.5-cc Maruyama LE commercial engine
- Weighs 10.9 pounds; features a rotating handle
- Includes a 24-inch double-sided blade
- Induction-hardened chrome steel blades are polish ground sharpened on cutting surfaces
- Maruyama U.S. – 940/383-7400, www.maruyama-us.com

Circle 219 on reader service card

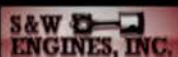


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Circle 221 on reader service card



Tanaka TBL-7800R Backpack Blower

- Powered by a 65-cc, 4.3-horsepower, two-stroke engine
- Features 850 CFM output; blows up to 205 mph
- Includes a tube-mounted throttle control switch
- Weighs 22.9 pounds
- Tanaka America – 800/482-6252, www.tanaka-usa.com

Circle 223 on reader service card

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- Releases 201 mph and 712 cfm of blowing power
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- Attachment's frame construction protects the hydraulic cylinder
- Bobcat – www.bobcat.com



Circle 229 on reader service card

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- Line of decorative planters that look like stone
- Lightweight for easy handling
- Features a contemporary style with smooth, rounded lines
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Circle 231 on reader service card

Nastek Turf Stress Detection Glasses

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- Designed to help users spot disease and turf problems before they become visible to the naked eye
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Circle 232 on reader service card

McCullough Cover-Up 1000 Backfiller



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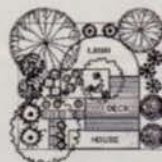
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Opening A New Location At Greater Texas Landscape Services

Sometimes, when listening to tales of glory at green industry conferences, there is an overwhelming desire to run with the big dogs.

Those of us who are small fish hear the stories of fleets of trucks and fancy equipment and layers upon layers of staff members all reporting to multiple locations. If we could just open a second location, then we would have surely arrived at success. Ah, the stuff of dreams.

At Greater Texas Landscape Services, we listen to all the glories of those industry patrons living the good life while wielding the baton of leadership over a kingdom of lawn mowers, skid-steer loaders and fancy corporate offices. All



Six years ago, Deborah Cole, president of Greater Texas Landscape Services, believed her company was at a crossroads. The service area for its commercial landscape maintenance operations had grown and she sought to reduce expenses and increase efficiency by opening up a satellite office. Photo: Greater Texas Landscape Services

5 Keys to Opening a New Location

- 1. Stop and think.** Don't get caught up in the excitement of being "big." Stop and consider the wisdom of expanding your landscape operations through a secondary location. What are the overall and long-term benefits?
- 2. Talk to people.** Seek out those who have walked this path before. Talk to your industry peers – both within your market and on a national level. What have they done in this situation? What issues, concerns and pitfalls did they deal with and how did they resolve them?
- 3. Crunch the numbers.** What will this endeavor cost you? How will this move impact your company's bottom line?
- 4. Proper staffing.** Talented, skilled and trusted employees are key to the new location's ultimate success. Are these individuals already on the payroll or will you be recruiting new talent? Will you have the right leaders in place?
- 5. Continue to cultivate.** The challenges do not end once the new location is up and operational. Take an active part in the site and staff's continued development.

too often, we get caught up in the excitement of being "big" and don't stop to think through the wisdom of making these moves.

It is important to be confident and comfortable that the time is right and the company is ready for those big steps. Otherwise, making huge monetary and time investments will insure a disastrous outcome. Knowing when to open a second location, branch or satellite is one of those scary steps.

Six years ago, Greater Texas Landscape Services was at that infamous crossroad. Our geographic service area for our commercial landscape maintenance operation had grown, gas prices were on the rise (when have they not been) and the drive time was increasing due to traffic snarls.

Whereas in years past, we spent

we could save by having crewmembers report to a second location. We calculated the costs of setting up another office. We underestimated the costs, of course, but justified it through the numbers.

We were right on target with the savings. Multiply that by the five years we have had the location and the numbers get even larger as more and more efficiencies are achieved.

The first office was established with subleased space with a local arborist. Instead of being 30 miles from our main office, this was 20 miles.

As we anticipated, there was separation anxiety by moving a portion of our staff to a new location. At the new location, some individuals felt a disconnect from the main company.

Doing it over again, we would have staffed it with all new staff members to allow those individuals

satellite being careful to look for someone who was a team player, but would thrive in an independent environment.

We moved a third of our base portfolio of commercial maintenance contracts to the new satellite office.

This was a good move for the company because it gave the team enough work to be fully occupied.

Soon the new satellite office grew and served as the catalyst for additional expansion. Within two years, there was enough additional revenue to become a full branch and warrant the hiring of a new branch manager.

We purchased land, built buildings, hired administrative staff and set up a virtual private network (VPN) so the staff could easily access the main branch

"Staffing, communication and standardized procedures are the real challenges. Before jumping in to open a second location, be sure you have enough money to finance it, the right people to manage it and time to spend cultivating it." - Deborah Cole

10 to 12 percent of our crew time on the road, we were now approaching 20 percent. To reduce this drive time, which was very non productive, we had to either reduce our service area or open a second location.

We talked to people who operate multiple locations and some indicated that they just took the plunge and invested the people, money and equipment and simply did it.

Some said they invested in new real estate while others said they leased space. Some set up full-blown branches by moving half of their portfolio, staff and equipment to the new location.

I was not ready to take such a monumental step. I wanted to minimize my company's risk while reducing drive time, saving money and adding to the potentially shrinking bottom line.

What is the magic number or the trigger to know when it is the right time to pursue a second location?

It comes down to numbers. We analyzed how much time and money

to develop their own identity and not feel as though they are second-class citizens because they are separate from the mother ship.

Our original branch manager spent two days a week with the new "satellite" staff. The owner spent a half-day per week. In retrospect, this was not enough time. Even though we had the business systems well established in our main office, it did not mean they would translate easily to the new location. Leadership was needed.

Within six months after start up, we moved to our own site 5 miles further into the new service area. We replaced the account manager we had moved from the main office to the

server for information. There is no magic number for dollar volume of revenue to justify a branch/satellite, however, \$1.5 million to \$2 million works well for us.

The logistics of location and equipment were easy. Staffing, communication and standardized procedures are the real challenges. Before jumping in to open a second location, be sure you have enough money to finance it, the right people to manage it and time to spend cultivating it.

Would we do it again? Yes, in fact we've done so 100 miles to the south in a different city and we used the lessons learned from the first branching out. ■

We Want Your Feedback

Do you have a successful business system at your company that you would like to talk about in our How We Do It section? If you do and you're willing to share details about how and why you implemented this system, as well as the costs associated with it, contact *Lawn & Landscape's* Mike Zawacki at 800/456-0707 or mzawacki@gje.net.

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Ariens/Gravelly	www.gravelly.com	5	12	New Holland	www.newhollandconstruction.com	2	10
Bayer Environmental Science	www.bayerprocentral.com	47		Oldham Chemicals Co.	www.oldhamchem.com	46	38
Carl Black GMC	www.carlblackgmc.com	110	87	Pace American	www.paceamerican.com	26	24
Carson Industries	www.hosenclose.com	96	73	PBI Gordon	www.pbigordon.com	3, 43	11, 35
Caterpillar	www.cat.com	9	14	Perma-Green Supreme	www.permagreen.com	71	51
Christmas Lights Etc.	www.christmaslightsetc.com	111	89	Project EverGreen	www.projectevergreen.com	91	69
Clary Chemical	www.clarychemical.com	30, 31	27	Prospects Plus	www.prospectsplus.com	78	58
Cutter's Choice	www.cutterschoice.com	76	56	Rain Bird	www.rainbird.com	123	91
DIG Irrigation Products	www.digcorp.com	100	79	Real Green Systems	www.realgreen.com	25, 27, 29, 23, 25, 26	
Dodge Truck	www.dodge.com	75		Robert Kershaw, Attorney at Law	www.workvisausa.com	98	76
Dow AgroSciences	www.dowagro.com/turf	21		Scotts	www.scottsprohort.com	68	48
Drafix Software	www.drafix.com	93	71	SePRO Corp.	www.sepro.com	99	78
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MistAway Systems	www.mistaway.com	106	85				

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