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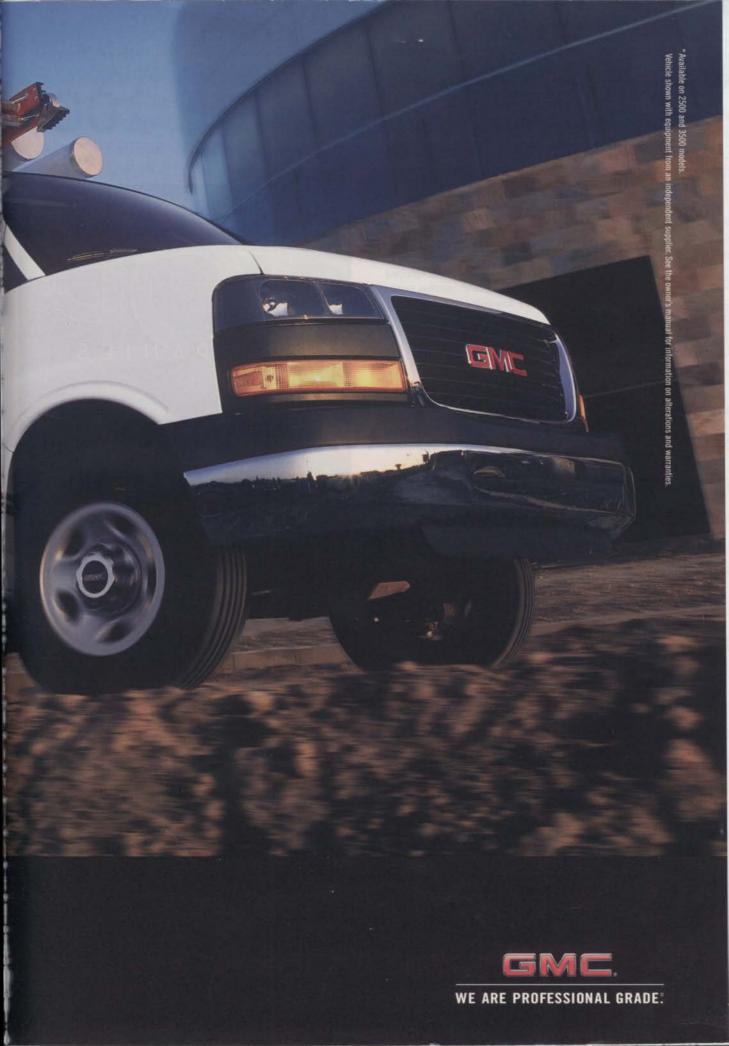
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JUNE 2007

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ONLINE EXTRAS

There is so much valuable content prepared for Lawn & Landscape each month that there sometimes isn't room to print all of it. Luckily, this information is offered as online extras, available via our Web site each month. Scroll to the bottom of the homepage and look for the image of this month's cover of Lawn & Landscape. Under the image you'll find the titles of the latest online extras. Check back each month for more valuable online information.

SEEKING QUALITY EQUIPMENT

Not all mowers are created equal, according to mower technicians. After you read the story on zero-turn mower productivity on page 92, log on to our Web site and learn about ways to ensure quality in your equipment.

SMART IRRIGATION MONTH

> WATER FEATURE MAINTENANCE MATERIALS

A contractor provided a checklist with all the necessary tools for a water feature contractor. Look and see if you've thought of everything.

SMART IRRIGATION MONTH IS NEARING

Last

the Irrigation Association declared the first Smart Irrigation Month. The initiative, designed to promote the set of efficient irrigation systems, continues this year. We want to heat from you. Have you changed your irrigation installation or maintenance practices to become more efficient with water use? Have local drought conditions forced your practices? Do municipalities in your area offer any incentives for smart irrigation? Visit www.lawnandlandscape.com/messageboard and sound off.



Those in the lawn care and landscaping fields know that working outdoors all summer isn't always a picnic. Serious hazards accompany the job. With a little knowledge, however, unhealthy conditions can be avoided. Log onto lawnandlandscape.com in June for summer work safety tips, including Industry Buzz columns written by industry experts.



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cindy code | editorial director



Setting the Record Straight

re you and your crews in mid-season form? A You've cleaned months-old leaves out of beds and expertly edged them. Sweet -smelling mulch completes the job, forming a clean barrier to keep moisture in and weed pressure down.

Applications of fertilizer green-up the turf forming a lush green carpet beneath your feet. Mowing and edging on commercial and residential properties is clean and crisp improving rental and real estate values.

New installations of annuals and perennials, bedding plants, trees and shrubs in landscapes, atriums and gathering areas enhance not only a sense of employee well-being, but also increases overall productivity.

These benefits of our profession are just the tip of the iceberg. The lawn and landscape industry is an important part of the economy nationwide and represents significant socioeconomic rewards.

So, clear in your mission as a lawn and landscape professional, you've set your marketing plans. Your project board ebbs and flows as your business shifts from existing clientele to new customers, and installation to maintenance jobs. You're donating some of your landscape services for your son's sports team. You're feeling good about your business. And you should.

But don't be tempted to put your business in cruise control.

The lawn and landscape industry has faced challenges time and again from anti-pesticide groups. Very real forces under the veil of environmentalism have worked overtime to overturn preemption at the federal and state level to restrict or ban pesticides. These issues are continually monitored through lobbyists, associations and end-users – like you – who are committed to protecting our industry's right to use products; products that are thoroughly reviewed and approved by the EPA.

Now, a highly visible group calling themselves Safelawns.org is voraciously promoting what it calls "emerging public dialogue about alternatives to traditional lawn care." The group is shrouding itself as a non-profit organization to raise funds to create educational materials to show how pesticides and related lawn care materials are not only unnecessary but harmful to the environment.

Much of the rhetoric being published in newspapers and magazines across the country is false and misleading. And, while the information is not substantiated by recognized field studies, they can result in long-term damage. Statements - true or not - repeated often enough become fact.

Customers are much more educated today than they were 20 or 30 years ago. Take the time to thoroughly and accurately discuss the types of products you're using and services you're offering on their properties. Work with city officials and community groups to understand your business and the environmental, economic and lifestyle benefits landscape services provide. Respond to inaccurate statements published as stories in local media outlets. Set the record straight.

Lawn and landscape professionals are stewards of the environment. Don't be intimidated by activist groups spreading inaccurate, undocumented information that serves to prey on consumer fears. Share your message loudly and often. And, most importantly, remain true to your mission to care for the

environment. III

JOE DIFRANCO Group Publisher jdifranco@gie.net

EDITORIAL

CINDY CODE Editorial Director ccode@gie.net

NICOLE WISNIEWSKI Deputy Editor nwisniewski@gie.net

MIKE ZAWACKI Managing Editor mzawacki@gie.net

MARISA PALMIERI Associate Editor mpalmieri@gle.net

MARK PHILLIPS Associate Editor mphillips@gie.net

EMILY MULLINS Assistant Editor emullins@gie.net

HEATHER WOOD Web Editor hwood@gie.net

www.lawnandlandscape.com

CREATIVE

MARK ROOK Creative Director

HELEN DUERR Director, Production

SAMANTHA GILBRIDE Advertising Production Coordinato

DAVID BLASKO National Sales Manager

ROSE BORSUK Account Manager rborsuk@gie.net

DAVE ANDERSON Account Manager

DREW BREEDEN Account Manager

MIKE ZAVERL Account Manager

AMEE ROBBINS Account Manager 616 Marine Ave., Manhattan Beach, Calif. 90266 PH: 310/465-6060 FX: 866/857-5442

BONNIE VELIKONYA Classified Advertising Sales bvelikonya@gie.net

> CHRISTINA HACKEL Marketing Coordinat

CONFERENCES

MARIA MILLER Conference Manager mmiller@gie.net

CORPORATE

RICHARD I. W. FOSTER CEO

CHRISTOPHER W. FOSTER President & COO

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DOUG ADAMS Director, Marketing & Research

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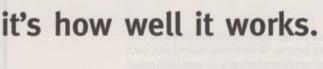
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sales and marketing



5 Tools to Boost Your Sales

While sales success is largely dependent on the person doing the selling, it doesn't mean you can't employ a few tools to make your job easier. Here are five I couldn't get by without:

I. Contact Management Software Sales success begins and ends with the client and prospect database, for which you need a good contact management software system. I've found the best is GoldMine because it enables you to cull vast amounts of information about your clients and prospects and then analyze it to make better marketing decisions. At my company, we record all of our contacts with clients and prospects, as well as employees and vendors, in GoldMine so all of this information is readily accessible in one central electronic database. In addition to the organization and targeted marketing, GoldMine helps us to save the planet by using less paper. So explore the market and find a system that serves your particular needs best.

2. Personal Digital Assistant (PDA)

If you aren't already using a PDA to make your day more productive, I recommend you purchase one right away. Then either read the owner's manual carefully or take a class on how to use it properly. I've come across many business owners who haven't realized their PDA's full potential and, as a result, they waste a lot of time. Now, this might surprise you, but I'm not a big fan of having e-mails forwarded to my PDA. Receiving 40 or so e-mails a day, a few of which require immediate response, is very distracting.

3. CompanionLink Software

This application enables your contact management software to synchronize with your PDA. No one wants to do twice the work for the same result and this way you don't have to. With CompanionLink, you enter appointments, phone numbers, notes and the like into either your computer or your PDA and the other will automatically be placed in sync. And should you ever suffer the unfortunate fate of losing your PDA, you won't have to endure the added misery of losing all of the information you had stored. Once you replace your PDA, sync the new one with your computer and you're back in business.

4. CardScan

This valuable little gizmo converts a business card into an electronic record in your contact management database with a touch of the hand. You've collected countless business cards over the years that, at best, have landed in a pile at the bottom of a desk drawer or, at worst, in the trash can. Consider each business card an open invitation to a future sale. CardScan captures any information you might need down the road. Just be careful to not write on the cards, which can cause CardScan to malfunction.

5. Pocket Briefcase

I never leave home without my Levenger pocket briefcase, a small leather note card holder that comes with a holder for 3-by-5 cards to jot down notes and two pockets to store your cards and other small paper items. This way I always have notepaper to scribble my thoughts and ideas, whether I'm walking around a jobsite, waiting in line at the grocery or stuck in traffic. I also have all of my notes in one easily accessed place. Anyone who's ever retrieved their pants from the dryer only to find the laundered bits of a very important and now totally illegible note in the pocket can appreciate the importance of this simple device. III

marty grunder

is a speaker, consultant and author, as well as owner of Grunder Landscaping Co., Miamisburg, Ohio. Reach him at 866/478-6337, landscapesales@gie.net or via www.martygrunder.com.



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Learn To Think The Right Way

eadership is a nebulous concept. It's not only hard to define, it's much more difficult to learn and implement.

In "The Effective Executive," Peter Drucker offers timeless insight on effective leadership. Drucker contrasts managers' roles as compared to the roles of executives. A manager's primary responsibility is to get things done right. Whereas a leader's primary responsibility is to get the right things done.

Managers must be efficiency experts while leaders must focus on effectiveness. If you just focus on efficiency, your company

won't grow.

Too often, though, entrepreneurs get stuck in their thinking and they get into mental ruts that prevent them from thinking "outside of the box." Usually, they only think in terms of technical or "job" issues. Often the technical thinker fails to see the value of planning, implementing systems and building a high-performance team. Unable to multi-task, step back and see the big picture; this owner rushes from one crisis (job) to another.

The "technical" thinker reaches maximum annual sales between \$300,000 and \$400,000. It's at this point that an intellectual metamorphosis must take place. Entrepreneurs who successfully transition through this stage and grow their companies

learn to think differently.

First, they realize the importance of planning and effective mental reflection. Second, they compartmentalize the way they view their businesses. They realize efficiency is important, though it should be the primary focus of managers and crew leaders.

The entrepreneur, on the other hand, realizes, to become successful and take their company to the next level, he or she needs to focus on effectiveness.

Landscape entrepreneurs should ask

"strategic" questions, such as:

"Am I working on the right tasks/

problems?"

"Is my team working on the right

tasks/problems?"

'Where should I focus my energy?"

· "What threats or opportunities are we missing?

· "Are the right IT systems in place to grow the company?"

• "Is the right team in place to grow

the company?"

"What don't I know or don't I see?"

These questions are "strategic" as compared to "tactical" because tactical issues relate to specific tasks. Strategic ones, instead, deal with big-picture issues, such as threats and opportunities. This is where effective entrepreneurs, who grow their companies, spend most of their time.

Here's a measurable (objective) and an intuitive (subjective) benchmark to determine if you have the right team and IT systems in place. I call the intuitive benchmark the concept of "minimal supervision." Your team should meet your budgeted sales and profit goals (an objective benchmark) with minimal supervision (a subjective benchmark). Your team should get things done right the first time and not need to be constantly reminded what they need to do or do over.

In previous issues I've talked about the five transitional administrative plateaus that a green industry business goes through as they grow to \$5 million. It is this process of mental reflection that allows entrepreneurs to grow their businesses through the five plateaus. As Drucker points out, what entrepreneurs focus upon determines what they get. If you focus upon minutiae, you'll never get beyond it. III

im huston

The author is president of J.R. Huston Enterprises, a Denverbased green industry consulting firm. Reach him at 800/451-5588, benchmarking@gie.net or via www.jrhuston.biz.



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Ratio, Ratio, On The Wall...

Sales, profit, pricing, budget to actual, projections, re-forecasting, plus the other transactions that take place in a business, make it difficult to stay on top of important trends. But that's a pretty feeble excuse for not knowing the key drivers of your operation and the resulting financial trends.

One of the ways to monitor your business without having to look deeply into the financial details is to identify some key ratios that, if properly monitored, can give you a "heads up" on both positive and negative trends, especially regarding customer and people costs. Let's take a look at a few.

REVENUE TO EXPENSE. The ideal relationship between revenue and expenses is that revenue should grow at twice the rate of expenses. Obviously this is hard to do, but it does create a ratio that helps identify how much in revenue your company generates for every dollar of expense it incurs. Many very solid companies operate at a \$1.50 to \$1.65 revenue to expense ratio. Revenue to expense ratio = total revenues divided by total expenses.

RETURN ON SPACE. Companies that are constantly trying to determine the most productive use of square footage and real estate might find this ratio an interesting one to watch. Return on Space = net profit after taxes divided by floor space.

EXPENSE GROWTH. Expense growth from one year to another can be an elusive trend if you don't have an easy way to check it. Look at this one along side growth in net sales. Expense Growth = total expenses minus expenses last year divided by total expenses last year.

CUSTOMER GROWTH. Real growth from one year to another can sometimes be determined by the growth in new customer counts. This is by no means an absolute indicator of growth but may be another key indicator worth tracking. This ratio tends to indicate a fundamental growth that is not affected by market changes or economic factors. Customer Growth = 100 times customers this year minus customers last year divided by customers last year.

EMPLOYEE TURNOVER. Employee turnover is another good ratio to track. It should never be looked at in a vacuum, but should be tracked in concert with other important ratios that are indicators of the health of the business. Far beyond the impact turnover has on employees who actually leave a company, it is also an important indicator of management's effectiveness in dealing with an increasingly scarce resource, its people. Employee turnover = 100 times employee terminations divided by average number of employees employed during the year.

Now, don't go out and fire your accountant, bookkeeper or CPA after reading this article. Ratios are meaningless unless they are compared to something and tracked on a regular basis. Another trap with ratios occurs when we start to track so many of them that the process implodes from overanalysis and underuse.

All of us have certain blind spots and weaknesses when it comes to understanding and using good financial information. Determine what your blind spot is and then see if there is a ratio that, if identified and tracked on a regular basis, can give you a set of good questions you should be asking of those who do your books. Look at combining and tracking certain key ratios that might have cause-and-effect relationships. You'll be surprised what you will uncover.

larry tish

is president of GreenSearch, a human resource consulting organization. He can be reached at 888/375-7787, peoplesmarts@gie.net or via www.greensearch.com. PeopleSmarts[®] is a registered trademark of GreenSearch.

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Mite Control - No Small Service

One thing is for certain, mites are tiny pests who can cause big problems for landscape contractors and their clients.

However, with the right preventive program and some solid treatment practices, your clients' ornamental trees and plants will look their best all season long and mites will be a thing of the past.

LITTLE SUCKERS. Stippling, webbing, wilting, drying and defoliation of leaves are the typical signs that a client's ornamental trees and plants may be the unwitting hosts to an infestation of hemlock rust mite, spruce spider mite or any of the other usual pint-sized suspects. These tiny buggers do damage by sinking their mouth parts into the leaf cuticle on the undersides of leaves, causing drying and wilting as well as giving the foliage a bronze cast. In very severe infestations, defoliation occurs, which can lead to plant death.

Mites can become a problem on a wide variety of ornamental plants, from fruit trees to junipers and arborvitaes to many annuals and perennial flowers. However, diagnosing the symptoms of a particular mite infestation can be a challenge to contractors because these very small critters are very difficult to see without the aid of magnification. Likewise, not fully understanding the mite life cycles can complicate the type of product selected to combat an infestation.

There are two basic types of mites, which are generally referred to as cool- and warm-season mites. Cool-season mites, such as spruce spider mites, southern red and clover mites, peak in late winter to late spring with populations rebuilding in the fall.

Warm-season mites, such as two spotted, the European red mite and honey locust, peak in late spring through the early fall. smart solutions. Contractors can reduce the risk of mite infestation by using dormant oils (horticultural oils) and reducing mulch levels around plant material. Overmulching plant beds creates a great winter home for mites, which will cause populations to build up rapidly once the warm weather sets in.

If this happens and a mite infestation sets in, then a contractor has two options to deal with the problem. One course of action is to treat the infected ornamental with a miticide applied with a backpack sprayer, which will bring about results in less then 24 hours.

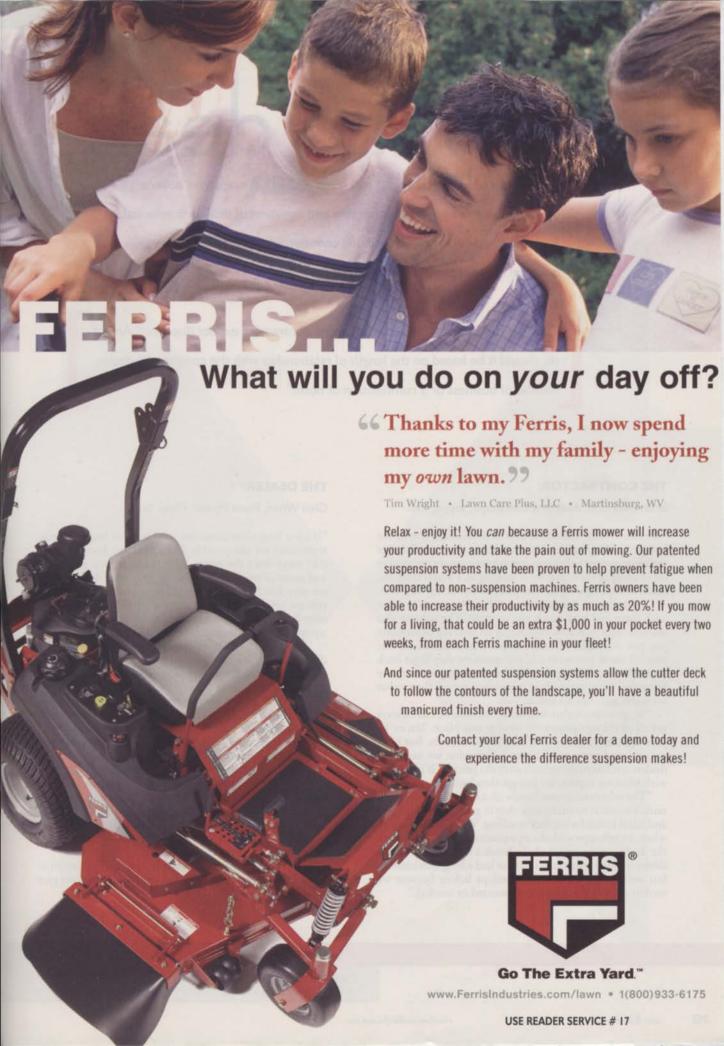
The other option available to the contractor is to release predatory insects that feed upon the mites, which, while effective, may take up to three weeks in optimum weather conditions to bring the mite infestation under control. However, one of the most common mistakes contractors make in treating mite infestation is to use a broad-coverage chemical treatment that eliminates not only the mites but also the predatory insects feeding on them, which leaves the ornamental plants vulnerable to future infestation.

Competitive pricing for mite control services takes into account a number of factors, including the type of control product being used, the amount being applied, how much plant material is receiving treatment and the competitive labor rates for the contractor's particular market. However, an average minimum price for mite control service would be around \$50.

Preventative mite control can be a money maker and generate revenue for the contractor during slow times. However, the key is being able to identify what ornamental plant material is susceptible to mite infestation and then proposing preventative measures utilizing an Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM).

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.



what's the deal?

The editors of land and 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 landscape contractors expect discounts? And, if so, should it be based on the length of relationship with the commercial dealer, volume of business or a combination of both?"

THE CONTRACTOR:

Brian Akehurst, Akehurst Landscape, Joppa, Md.

"We don't ask for discounts. Our dealers usually give us the best price. If I get a flier in the mail from the manufacturer saying next month they're going to have a certain percentage off of an equipment line we're looking at, I'll hear from the dealers they're giving us that price or better anyway.

"I think it's a combination of how long you've been with them and how much you've spent. The volume also matters. New vendors, depending on how big of an order you put in, might tell you one price and then as soon as you tell them you want a larger quantity, they'll get back to you with a revised price. With our existing vendors, we know we're getting the best price when we tell them what we want, whether it's one or five.

"We go to more than one dealer because we can't always get all of the equipment we need at one place. Ten or 15 years ago, we came out and asked for discounts. But now, we just send out a spreadsheet listing what we need and dealers send something back with the pricing. If it's in line with what we expect, we just go ahead with it.

'The relationship you have with a dealer is very important. You want to make sure they're going to service you and stand behind what they're selling. We've had situations where we're happy with the equipment but not happy with the dealer, so we switched. To break a relationship with a dealer is tough, especially if you've had a long relationship, but we've switched from dealerships before because we weren't getting the support we wanted or needed."

THE DEALER:

Glen Whirt, Plano Power, Plano Texas

"If it's a long-time customer who buys in large volume, sometimes we can provide discounts. But discounts just take away from the gravy. We have to remain profitable and most of our products go for suggested retail. There are very few customers who are long-term and buy large volume who get discounts. Some of the manufacturers offer fleet programs where if they buy so many pieces of equipment then they get a better price.

"But I can't afford to take the bite with too many discounts and continue to run a business in a profitable manner. Those margins are designed for us to be healthy,

and we want to be healthy.

"If you let some contractors get a discount, they're all going to expect it. For example, if you give priority treatment to someone who is commercial, then every guy who mows the next door neighbor's lawn becomes commercial. If you give them an inch, they'll take a mile.

"I have to tell contractors I can't give them a discount every day. I have to explain to them that we have to make a profit to remain here. If we don't remain profitable, we're not going to be here next year to serve them. Most of them understand this since they also have to charge enough for their services to remain profitable or they won't be there to buy from us next year.

"I get asked for discounts many times a day. Everyone has a different approach to it, but the basic answer we give

them every time is 'No.'

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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Mergers & Acquisitions

JDL Completes LESCO Acquisition

ohn Deere Landscapes will continue to grow, but not through closing branches and letting go of employees in light of the company's purchase of LESCO, says Tom Childers, vice president of marketing for John Deere Landscapes.

"John Deere Landscapes will grow its presence in the green industry through a commitment to the lawn care and maintenance markets," Childers says. "We will grow through providing valued products, services, solutions and not through closing branches or letting go of valued employees."

The voting results by LESCO shareholders to accept the purchase by John Deere Landscapes were announced in a special shareholders meeting that lasted a mere five minutes in downtown Cleveland on May 3. LESCO is based in Cleveland, while John Deere Landscapes is headquartered in Alpharetta, Ga.

That vote signaled the completion of John Deere's acquisition of LESCO. About 67 percent of shareholders who voted approved the purchase.

LESCO has 332 service centers and 125 stores-on-wheels. Childers says John Deere Landscapes has always had its eye on the lawn care and maintenance markets.

"They are stable markets and provide a little more pre-

IESCO®

dictability than the construction side of the green industry," he says. Already, some branches are sharing delivery fleets so as to maximize delivery and response time to customers, Childers says. "The goal is to make the entire network of employees, service centers and branches more valuable to the contractor by solving more of the contractor's day-to-day business challenges," Childers says. "The real challenge is to meet the contractor's total business needs so he can grow while maintaining a competitive position," he says. "John Deere Landscapes believes it has figured out that part and with LESCO's help, can bring it to the lawn care and maintenance markets when it rolls out the Partners Program and Business Solutions to LESCO customers in June."

Those programs range from discounts from companies like Sprint, Office Max and Paychex to programs from National Health Access, which offers comprehensive health care solutions. – Mark Phillips

ON THE ROAD

Snow Expo Attendees Learn Inexpensive & Effective Marketing Techniques

MONS 3# CONFERENCE

udy Guido, principal of Guido & Associates, a green industry business management consulting firm, told attendees at the inaugural Snow Industry Exposition & Conference in May that having a marketing strategy helps businesses to thrive, yet only 6 percent of companies employ the practice.

"You need a blueprint to say how you're spending your three most valuable resources: people, time and money," she says, adding companies with a plan have 47 percent higher profits, 92 percent higher customer satisfaction and retention ratings, 64 percent employee retention, 88 percent owner employee balance, and are No. 1 or 2 in their respective markets.

To craft a good plan, think about clients' expectations. Guido interviewed 3,500 different customers who use green industry services and found they value easy interaction cost. Questions they ask companies include: How quickly can I get

to you? How quickly can you get your contract/proposal to me? How quickly can your people get here? How convenient is it?

In addition, know your target audience. Increasingly, women are becoming a powerful purchasing force, Guido says. Not only does the female population talk and make referrals more than men, but American women are the wealthiest consumer segment in the world, with buying power of \$9.8 trillion per year. On the residential side, 81 percent of women take charge of the household's checkbook, while more than half of the decision-makers in the corporate world are women.

To best market to this group on the residential side is to find a way into their social networks, i.e. professions, sports/hobbies and charities. On the professional side, market to organizations like the National Society of Women in Construction, Guido says. – Heather Wood





5 Things You Can Do to Battle Rising Fuel Costs

- Add fuel surcharges to your services.
- Raise prices overall to cover the rising cost of gasoline.
- Tighten your routes to reduce mileage and save on fuel.
- Provide your employees with fuel cards to better track the money spent on fuel.
- Install GPS systems in your trucks to perfect routes and better track mileage and employee driving practices.

Prepare for \$4 gasoline

With gas prices near record highs, experts say \$4-a-gallon gasoline is just around the corner this summer.

Already California gas prices average \$3.48 a gallon, according to AAA, and one San Francisco service station was charging \$3.95, according to GasBuddy.com.

Refinery problems and strong demand are the two main reasons cited for the run-up. Prices hit a record high of \$3.07 a gallon on May 6, per a Lundberg survey. The Energy Information Administration even raised the projected average summer gasoline price by 14 cents per gallon from its original estimates. Retail regular grade motor gasoline prices are now projected to average \$2.95 per gallon this summer compared with the \$2.84 per gallon average of last summer. During the summer season, the average monthly gasoline pump price is projected to peak at \$3.01 per gallon in August, compared with \$2.98 per gallon last July.

This all comes just as the landscape industry gears up for the busy summer season. "I know you should plan on fuel prices rising going into the summer, but I never thought they would get as high as \$4 per gallon," says Todd McCabe, president of McCabe Landscape Group, Wrightsville Beach, N.C.

But "it's all part of the game of doing business," says Sal Mortilla, owner, Landscapes Unlimited, Long Island, N.Y. "It costs me \$100 to fill up my dump truck."

Andrew Aksar agrees. "Just be glad you don't have a truck that takes up to 100 gallons," says the president of Outdoor Finishes, Walkersville, Md. "You should see the looks on people's faces at the filing station when the clerk says to me, 'OK, pump 14, that'll be \$268.65."

The result will be price increases and fuel surcharges for customers in order

to cover the increased operating costs, most contractors report.

"We have to raise prices big time – we have no choice," says Roger Meshberger, owner of Nature's Design and Landscaping, Ellenton, Fla. His installation and renovation services, which range from \$500 to \$50,000, will increase by 5 percent due to gas prices. Meshberger says he was hit the hardest on fuel costs for his pickup truck and deliveries for materials. Deliveries, which were once \$10, are now \$35 but expected to almost double.

"There's no way you can absorb \$4 per gallon and plan for it," adds Kory Ballard, president, Perficut, Des Moines, Iowa, explaining the company has been adding fuel surcharges to its clients' bills for two years. "We charge 4 percent for maintenance and 2 percent for installation work that was bid months ago. If we bid something now we do our best to account for fuel. We also raised all prices 5 percent this year in maintenance to help. So far, people don't seem to mind the surcharge."

While some contractors are surprised by the fuel price increase predictions, others expect it, saying it will keep going until there are alternatives.

In addition to fuel surcharges and price increases, some companies are also tightening their routes, eliminating customers located out of their preferred service radius, giving their employees fuel cards to better track spending and trying to run leaner organizations any way they can to cut costs.

For instance, Doug Austreim, owner of Austreim Landscaping, owns a couple of trucks that run on propane, which costs just more than \$2 a gallon. "They get a little less fuel economy but have longer lasting engines than gasoline," he says.

Another landscape company – Nanak's Landscaping, Longwood, Fla. – has experimented with hybrid vehicles to help reduce costs and waste. Recently, Nanak's converted 37 pickup trucks and SUVs the managers use to visit clients that get only 15 miles per gallon to 30 Toyota Scions and seven hybrid Toyota Priuses that get 50 mpg and 30 mpg, respectively. This one change will save the business 15,000 gallons of gas this year, the company predicts.

Are there other ways you're covering these costs at your business? If so, share your ideas at www.lawnandlandscape.com/messageboard. – Nicole Wisniewski



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BOLDMOVES

Will Change Do Them Good?

What does CD&R's acquisition of ServiceMaster mean for TruGreen's parent company?

Since November 2006, a big question throughout the lawn care industry has been "What is going to happen with ServiceMaster?" November was when ServiceMaster Chairman and CEO J. Patrick Spainhour said the company was exploring "strategic alternatives," including a possible sale.

Rumors swirled about who was courting ServiceMaster, parent company of TruGreen ChemLawn, TruGreen Land-Care and other home services. Was it another big business already involved in service industries, a large corporation not involved in service industries, or a private investment equity firm looking to take the publicly traded company private?

In March, those rumors were put to rest with the announcement that ServiceMaster had entered into a definitive merger agreement to be acquired by an investment group led by Clayton, Dubilier & Rice (CD&R) for a total value of \$5.5 billion, which includes the assumption of \$800 million in debt.

NEEDED FIX? News of the ServiceMaster sale did not come as a surprise to those following the company, which had been facing challenges in recent years, including a falling stock price and higher operating costs.

"I know that they've had some issues for some time now. They've had some turnover with their top management, including their chairman (Jonathan Ward, who resigned in March 2006)," says Harvey Massey, CEO of Massey Services, Maitland, Fla. "Their stock wasn't performing well and I think their stockholders were getting a bit uneasy and asking difficult

questions. That's when I think they started marketing the business to be sold."

Many in the industry speculate that stockholder pressure picked up once Ward was ousted and pro-

vided a sizable severance package, after which two of the bigger investors were supposedly pushing for radical change.

Also in November, Spainhour announced that Service Master appointed Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs to advise it on strategic alternatives. But many in the industry believe talks with CD&R were well underway when this announcement was made. "My guess is that announcement was a warning notice to investors that a deal was close," says Pam Jordan, president of Acquisition Strategies, Tampa, Fla. "With a public entity you've got to do all the security law requirements. It is a complicated and time-consuming process. I can't imagine they started exploring things in November and it already is a done deal."

GOING PRIVATE. So what does the sale mean for ServiceMaster? Only time will tell, but ServiceMaster Group President Katrina Helmkamp told *Lawn & Landscape* that the company will be able to focus more on long-term investments by going private, as opposed to being a publicly traded company, where investments need to be reasonable within any quarter.

ServiceMaster's TruGreen divisions, for example, always were hampered by the seasonality of their businesses, Helm-

kamp says. "TruGreen is a great example where revenue drops off in the fourth and first quarters, and as a result we have not historically made large investments in those time periods because it would hurt the quarter's result," she says. "Going private allows you to make those kinds of investments if they are the right thing for the long term; for example, doing additional direct mail campaigns in the fourth quarter."

WHO IS CD&R? The key, of course, to the success of the "new ServiceMaster" will be how it is managed, supported and funded by CD&R. A look at its history might provide some answers. CD&R specializes in turnaround situations. Targeting underachieving units of large corporations, CD&R typically structures a leveraged buyout and works to improve operations.

CD&R has experience with branded businesses operating in multi-location formats such as Hertz and Kinko's that CD&R Partner Thomas Franco believes is "directly relevant to ServiceMaster." "ServiceMaster, similar to previous multi-location businesses we acquired, has outstanding investment characteristics," he says. "In particular, operating in fragmented markets provides attractive upside opportunities and significant downside protection. ServiceMaster has a No. I market position in all of its primary businesses. In addition, its large number of locations and customer base of approximately 9 million create a diversified operational base from which to build."

But CD&R's history also suggests its short-term goal might be to turn around ServiceMaster, with a long-term goal of selling

it. For example, CD&R purchased Kinko's in 1996 and then sold its interest in Kinko's to FedEx for \$2.4 billion in a 2004 cash transaction. Industry observers think Service-Master's success depends on how patient its "new masters" are. If

they are in it for the long-term, they'll support them and give them the finances they need to succeed. But the amount of debt they are taking on initially in addition to their acquisition growth plan could make cash flow become an issue, some speculate.

The \$800-million debt assumed by CD&R has many speculating it may sell some ServiceMaster divisions to recoup some of that cash. During an audiocast following the March announcement, CD&R Partner Richard Schnall said the company has no immediate plans to sell any of ServiceMaster's companies.

While questions still remain about ServiceMaster's long-term plans, the consensus among those in the industry seems to be that CD&R's track record in turning around companies, combined with inherent benefits of "going private," could be the cure for an ailing company. – Brad Harbison

EDITOR'S NOTE: At press time, the transaction had not been approved by the ServiceMaster Board of Directors. The next step is for ServiceMaster to issue a proxy statement, followed by a shareholders meeting (targeted for late second quarter or early third quarter) at which shareholders will vote. A majority of shareholders must approve the sale.



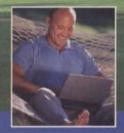




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OWNER ISSUES

Staying Sane During Peak Season

ate nights and work-filled weekends seem to be the norm among owners and managers in the landscape industry — especially during spring and summer.

Being stressed out and overworked is one of a landscape business owner's top five concerns – right up there with rising fuel costs and increasing interest rates, according to Lawn & Landscape research.

Contractors on the fast-track to burning themselves out should stop to consider the potential implications of their workaholic tendencies – neglecting family and friends and impairing personal health – and find a way to balance these with the traits that make them successful. There are many simple ways to alleviate stress. The National Federation of Independent Businesses offers the following tips:

Block Time Out. In the same way as you set blocks of time aside for work tasks, schedule time for your personal life. *Helpful hint:* Schedule a weekly outing with your children, spouse or friends.

Mind Your Manners. Workaholics often exhibit signs of impatience and anger when things don't get done right or quickly. Self-monitoring of behavior often triggers a greater awareness of workaholism — and more cooperative relationships at work. Helpful hint: Keep

a list of five "anger comments" on your desk. Whenever you feel impatient or upset, glance at the list and stop the disruptive behavior.

Savor the Process. Workaholics are often content only when they finish things. Tomorrow, spend some time reflecting on the way you do things – the research you do, the people you meet, the tools you use – and enjoy the skills involved in making things happen. Helpful hint: Take two or three minutes toward the start of any task and enumerate the things you like most about it.

Look to Others. As hard as it may seem at first, pass some important tasks and responsibilities to others. *Helpful hint:* On a big project, delegate tasks to others. Check in at infrequent intervals.

Say "No." Decline requests that don't fit your priorities. Helpful hint: Estimate the time needed to complete current and upcoming tasks. Once you're at 110 percent of your available time, say no to new requests.

Think of Others.
Research says workaholism can harm family life. Helpful hint: Keep family photos near your workspace.
When you feel overwork or pressure, glance at the photos and remember your highest priorities in life. — Marisa Palmieri





IN THE NEWS

Warming Temperatures Have Mixed Outcomes

Rising temperatures caused by global warming mean longer growing seasons for plants – and pests. While palm trees grow in Tennessee and subtropical camellias in Pennsylvania, poison ivy is more toxic than ever before and the invasive kudzu vine is making its way north.

Tara Dillard a Stone Mountain, Ga. landscape designer, started noticing these changes three years ago. "They are no accident," she says. "They align with permanent water restrictions, which are part of global warming."

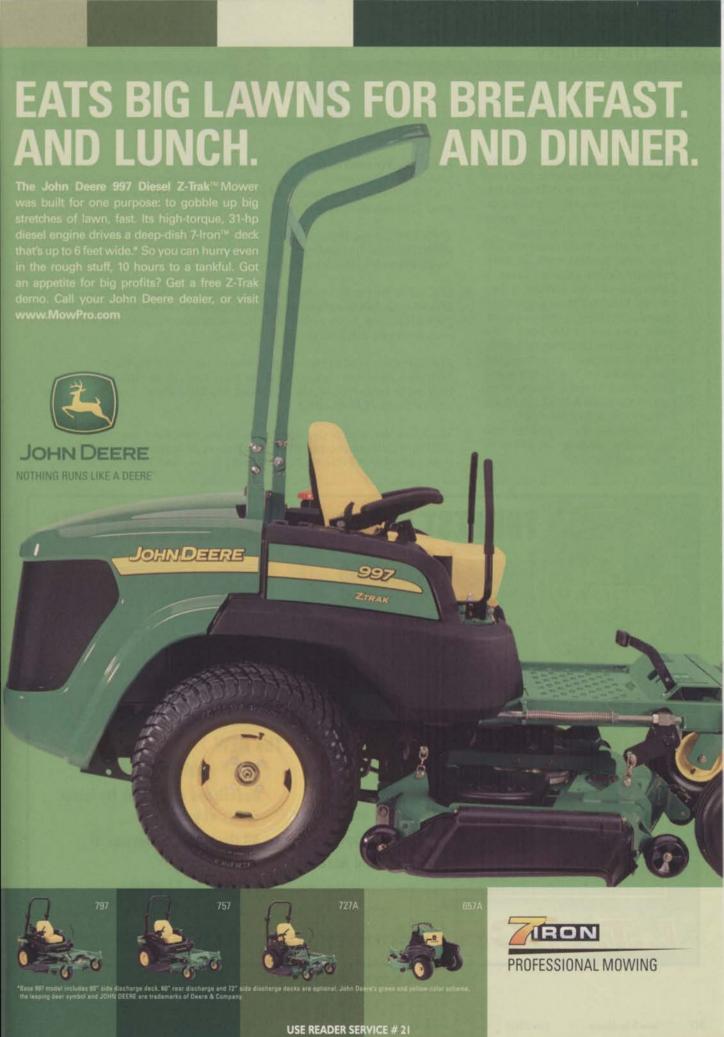
While some contractors see this as positive – hardier plants make for more work – experts say it's not that cut and dry. Research from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration indicates that many areas of the country are one or two zones warmer than they were in 1990. For example, northern Georgia has changed from zone 7 to zone 8, meaning the average low temperature has increased from zero to 10 to 10 to 20 degrees Fahrenheit.

And, according to "The Gardener's Guide to Global Warming," as a result of increasing temperatures, the climate will no longer be favorable for the official state tree or flower in 28 states by the end of the century.

DROUGHT-TOLERANT DESIGN TIPS

- Assume water restrictions and aim for low-maintenance designs.
- Create lushness with evergreen groundcovers and espaliered shrubs.
- Be bold and dramatic with simplicity – use no more than seven genuses of plants in each design.

Some experts say global warming is helping to create awareness among contractors. Southern states, for instance, are embracing drought-tolerant landscapes. Dillard now urges designers to think outside the box when choosing plants for their clients' landscapes. – *Emily Mullins*





ENGLISH TO SPANISH PHRASES

onsidering 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: We need to pull the weeds in this bed. SPANISH: Debemos retirar la maleza de este cantero/arriate. (deh-BEH-mohs rrreh-tee-RAHR lah mah-LEH-sah deh EHS-teh kahn-TEH-roh/ah-rrree-AH-teh.)
- 2. ENGLISH: Do you know what is a weed and what is a flower? SPANISH: Sabe Ud. cual es maleza y cual es una flor? (SAH-beh oos-TEHD kwahl ehs mah-LEH-sah ee kwahl ehs OO-nah floor?)
- 3. ENGLISH: We need to remove all dead blooms from these plants. SPANISH: Debemos remover todas las plantas en flor muertas de estas plantas. (deh-BEH-mohs rrreh-moh-VEHR TOH-dahs lahs PLAHN-tahs ehn floor moo-EHR-tahs deh EHS-tahs PLAHN-tahs.)
- 4. ENGLISH: We need to remove all yellow leaves from these plants. SPANISH: Debemos remover todas las hojas amarillas de estas plantas. (deh-BEH-mohs rrreh-moh-VEHR TOH-dahs lahs UH-hahs ah-mah-RRREE-yahs deh EHS-tahs PLAHN-tahs.)
- 5. ENGLISH: We need to dig these plants up and plant them over there. SPANISH: Debemos desplantar estas plantas y replantarlas alli. (deh-BEH-mohs dehs-plahn-TAHR EHS-tahs PLAHN-tahs y rrreh-plahn-TAHR-lahs ah-YEE.)

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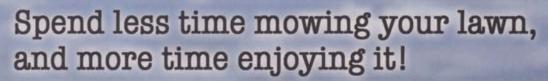
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Spam E-mail Impacts Small Businesses

s more small businesses become technology savvy, they fall victim to the inevitable invasion of spam e-mail. Nearly 82 percent of landscape contractors use e-mail on a daily basis, according to Lawn & Landscape research, and this is only increasing.

"My company has 10 different e-mail accounts that are used all day, everyday," shares Steve Cissel, founder and CEO, 10-20 Media, an industry search directory. "We receive 700 to 1,000 e-mails per day, and almost

50 percent of them are spam."

Today, two out of every three e-mail messages received by business e-mail users are spam, according to a study by Nucleus Research, Wellesley, Mass. The study showed that e-mail users spend an average of 16 seconds identifying and deleting each spam e-mail they receive. This results in lost worker productivity equal to \$712 per employee - \$70 billion to all U.S. businesses – each year.

Experts say that small businesses are especially vulnerable because many

don't have full-time computer technicians on staff or big budgets to try and combat the problem. But spam is more than just a nuisance. Some carry programs that allow hackers to break through a computer's security system, giving them access to personal information like credit card and social security numbers. Spam can also bury legitimate e-mails, which interferes with day-to-day business. "We have effective measures in place to deal with spam," Cissel says. "But, if unmanaged, it would definitely interfere with employee productivity."

Cissel recommends the following tips for dealing with spam e-mail:

I. Don't just delete it. Deleting spam e-mail does nothing to prohibit the arrival of more junk e-mail from the same sender. Instead, use filtering tools built into widely used programs, like Microsoft Outlook, Yahoo and Google. Cissel's e-mail server comes equipped with spam assassin software. When a spam e-mail happens to make it through to his inbox, Cissel feeds it back into the spam assassin, which analyzes the e-mail a second time. "By doing this, I usually don't get that same spam e-mail twice," he says.

2. Write an e-mail policy. At most, 10 percent of small companies have formal e-mail policies because most don't think they're big enough to justify something so formal, says Mike Song, co-author of "The Hamster Revolution: How to Manage Your E-mail Before it Manages You." If a policy is necessary, it should remind employees that computers are for business and not personal use and to report surges in spam to supervisors. It should also explain when to use company e-mail addresses to buy products and services online and how to use anti-spam software.



3. Use "disposable" e-mail addresses. Create a new e-mail address to use when signing up for online offers, making online purchases or for marketing and advertising purposes. When spam starts to fill up the "disposable" address inbox, simply delete it and create another one.

Cissel has a private e-mail address that he puts on his business cards, and a public e-mail address that he uses for marketing promotions and advertising. "The worst thing you can do to yourself

is publish your e-mail address on your site as a link," he says. "That address will be toast in no time."

4. Boost defenses. Utilize free programs, such as SpamBayes and MailWasher, that work with certain e-mail programs to provide additional anti-spam protection. Also, make sure any anti-spam shields included on company computers are enacted and up-to-date.

Cissel also suggests using Web site forms as a way for potential clients to contact a business via e-mail. Instead of e-mailing someone directly, customers fill out a Webbased form with a submit button that sends the inquiry to a predetermined e-mail address. "The e-mail address should not be visible in the source code of the form," he says. "This format is the most effective at keeping spam out of your inbox." A company webmaster should be able to get HTML forms on his own or get them from the e-mail host, he adds.

Putting an e-mail address on a Web site in the form of a graphic is another way to keep spam at bay, Cissel says, pointing out that "spam crawlers are learning how to read graphics, so this method is about 70 percent effective." – *Emily Mullins*

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narket watch

9 tons

The amount of air conditioning to which the average size lawn's cooling effect is equal.

Source: Virginia Cooperative Extension

70 Decibels

Busy streets and vacuum cleaners can reach 70 decibels. When leaf blowers were introduced for general use in the 1970s, they reached 100 decibels. Now, with advancements in technology, the sound of many chain saws and other pieces of outdoor power equipment has been reduced to about 65 decibels.

Source: The Washington Post



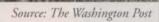
Emissions Continue to Decline

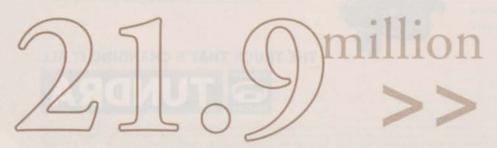
50 square feet

The amount of turf that can supply enough oxygen to support four adults.

ver the last 13 years, improvements in technologies for outdoor power equipment have reduced exhaust emissions by more than 70 percent, says the Old Town Alexandria, Va.-based Outdoor Power Equipment Institute. The federal Environmental Protection Agency says proposed Phase III regulations would result in an additional 35-percent reduction in exhaust emissions and a 45-percent reduction in fuel evaporative emissions.

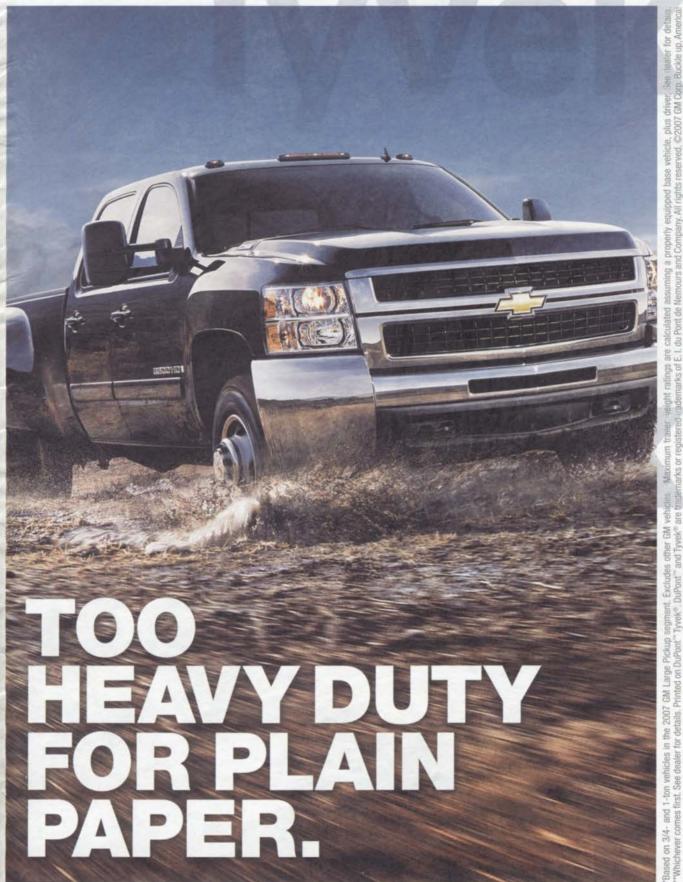
Sources: The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, Environmental Protection Agency





The number of people, ages 16 to 24, who worked summer jobs, including landscape-related work, from April to July 2006.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor



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CALENDAR

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.

JUNE 14 – 17 Florida Nursery, Growers & Landscape Association Annual Convention, Marco Island, Fla. Contact: www.fngla.org, 800/375-3642

JUNE 20 – 24 Professional Landcare Network Summer Leadership Meeting, Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada. Contact: www.landcarenetwork.org, 800/395-2522

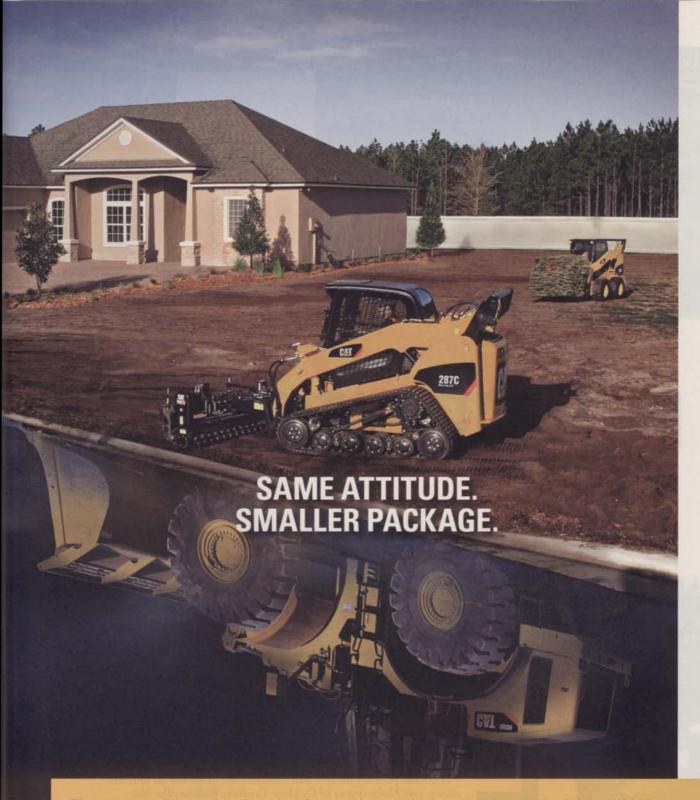
JULY 14 – 22 Aquascape's Pondemonium Annual Water Garden Training , St. Charles, Ill. Contact: 866/877-6637, ext. 1668 (U.S.) and 866/766-3426 (CAN), www.pondemonium.org

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



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





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INTRO TO PATIOS

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Installing paver patios is a common way many contractors enter the hardscaping realm.





leven years ago, when Andrew Aksar began installing patios, there were more or less four different paver styles and four different colors. He traveled around with samples in the back of his pick-up truck.

That's not possible today – one manufacturer alone has 20 different colors, says Aksar, owner of Outdoor Finishes, Walkersville, Md.

The wide selection of pavers available today is just one indication of how the market for patios has grown during the past decade. Add to that the option for premium upgrades like fire pits, grills and pergolas, and it's obvious why many contractors want to be in the patio installation business.

Not to mention the profit potential. Aksar, who has a \$3,500 minimum on all hard-scape installations, realizes a net profit of between 18 and 30 percent.

LEARN AS YOU GO. Just like with any new area of business, the No. 1 piece of advice a seasoned contractor will offer a patio installation newcomer is "know your operating

by marisa palmieri | associate editor



Photos: Interlocking Concrete Paver Institute (above and page 38, bottom left)

expenses." That's the first key to pricing for profit. While prices for paver patios can range from \$10 per square foot to \$18 per square foot and up, hardscape contractors say never to offer a set square-foot price, as prices should be strictly based on overhead, labor, materials and profit — not a predetermined amount.

Another factor to consider in patio pricing is the cost for design. For extensive designs (incorporating a pool, for example), where Aksar engages a landscape architect, he

passes along that cost to clients, but he does not charge for patios he, the owner, designs himself because he's already figured his design cost into the overhead for the project.

The policy at Alliance, Ohiobased DeHoff's FGL, which has several designers on staff, is to waive the design fee for regular customers, but charge newcomers a \$35 fee. "We should charge more," Manager Seth DeHoff says, explaining this rate just barely covers his costs, meaning they aren't making any money off of the design fee itself. The reason they don't charge regular customers is because the close rate on these jobs is high.

Other elements that could add to the price of a patio include difficult excavating conditions and the inability to use certain equipment. DeHoff's has installed patios since it added hardscaping to its business in 1990. It averages a double-digit profit margin on most patios. "The profit margin is higher than maintenance, but not as high as chemical lawn applications," he says.

business opportunities

Many patio installation contractors are self-taught. An abundance of how-to information is available on the Internet and from manufacturers, as it's a popular DIY project. If a contractor plans to take the learn-asyou-go route to hardscaping, DeHoff recommends he begin with smaller projects like front walks or basic square patios and work his way up to more complicated jobs.

He also encourages contractors to attend training sessions and obtain certifications. Manufacturers offer classes for their contractor customers on topics like installation techniques, budgeting, job costing and estimating, Aksar says. In addition, the Interlocking Concrete Paver Institute offers

certification programs. Building codes are another operational consideration for installers. Contractors should remember that hardscaping is a facet of the landscape industry, but also is part of the construction industry, Aksar says. Consequently, understanding building codes is essential. This information can typically be obtained from city or county Web sites or by calling their permit and inspection offices. Two patio-related areas to look out for in building code specifications, Aksar

says, are steps and dryer vents. "Frequently, a contractor is going



to be building steps coming off a house and those steps have building codes for them," he says. "Also, a lot times there are dryer vents attached to the house in an area where you might be building a step or, if you're doing a raised patio, the dryer vent might be

interfering with the raised patio itself. You need to know those codes so you know if you can modify that vent or

ONLINE MARKETING. There is no marketing tool today more important than the Web, says Aksar, who sees about 75 percent of new business coming from his company's Web site, which was professionally redesigned about a year and a half ago.

Aksar also believes four-color visuals are a high-impact marketing element for any hardscaping contractor, which is the reason his site includes more than 100 photos, his business cards are four-color and he runs print ads in high-end magazines.

"Your marketing is what shows your capabilities for the work you can perform," Aksar says. "If you do very detailed jobs, your marketing should reflect that.

While visuals are important, they count for nothing if no one seems them, Aksar says. "You can have a really well-done Web site, but if it's not optimized for search engines, it's just going to be floating out in cyber space," he says. Search engine optimization (SEO) is the art of Web site building that carefully places key words that will allow a site to appear near the top of the list when an



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USE READER SERVICE #28

Internet user searches on Google, for example. Some companies pay SEO experts hefty hourly rates for optimizing their sites for searches, but Aksar has refined his site's SEO himself, learning tips by networking with other business owners on industry message boards.

Aksar spent less than \$1,500 for a professionally designed site. He also pays about \$300 annually for Web hosting and \$80 per hour to make changes to site text and graphics. He saw an almost immediate return on investment for those costs, and his site continues to pay for itself, as three-fourths of his business comes from this marketing component.

SALES & DESIGN. In patio design and sales, landscape contractors say closing a deal in two meetings is common. At the initial consultation, DeHoff's salesperson/designer gathers all of the information necessary for a design, including the client's goals and preferences and site photographs and measurements. Ideally, he'll close the job in the second meeting when he presents his design concepts to the client.

One sales challenge is educating some clients about the cost to install a patio, contractors say. Some customers aren't prepared to pay thousands of dollars for a professional firm to install the patio they saw on HGTV. One way to quickly weed out tirekickers is to put a minimum price on your Web site, as Aksar has done. He publishes a \$3,500 minimum on his site to deter calls from prospects seeking tiny patios, like a townhouse owner with a \$1,500 budget, for example.

Various levels of client hand-holding are required during the design phase, DeHoff points out. Sometimes customers have a very detailed idea about the specific type of patio they'd like, right down to the color, style and pattern of paver. "Other times, it's up to us to make the suggestions and do what we think works best," he says.

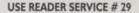
One tool that DeHoff's designers use to their advantage is landscape design software. Designers take photos of the clients' yard during their initial meeting, import them into a design program and enhance them with imagery of the design, including patio shape, size and color. These programs range from about \$1,000 to \$2,000.

Now that Aksar can't carry around all of the samples in the back of his truck anymore, he partners with vendors to help clients narrow down their paver selection. He recommends clients visit his vendor to view the pavers in person. He says, "Suppliers are usually happy to meet with landscape contractors' clients."

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Visit the June Online Extras section for information on off-season pricing. Or, share your thoughts on the Message Board.







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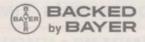
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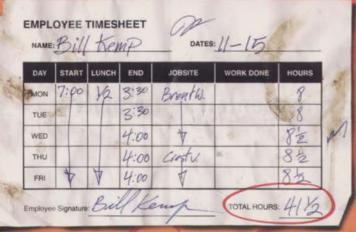
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Wed	6/13	Brentwood	7:12 AM 12:46 PM	12:02 PM 3:49 PM	Irrigation Irrigation	4:50 3:03	7:53 hours
Thu	6/14	Crestview	7:17 AM 12:50 PM	12:19 PM 3:46 PM	Planting Planting	5:02 2:56	7:58 hours
Fri	6/15	Crestview	7:13 AM 12:44 PM	12:07 PM 3:39 PM	Planting Planting	4:54 2:55	7:49 hours



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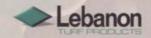
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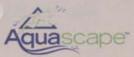
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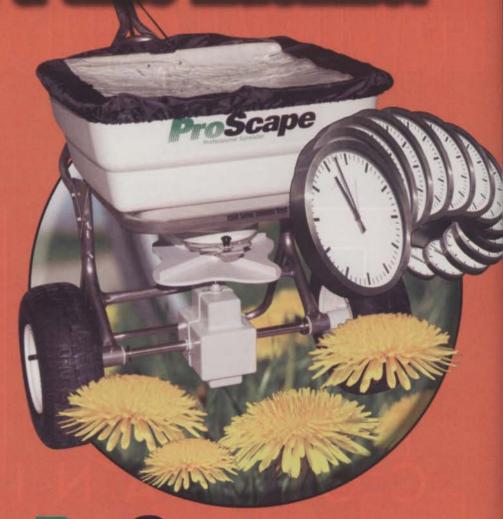
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USE READER SERVICE #31





by marisa palmieri | associate editor

THE LAWN & LANDSCAPE TOP 100

Our annual list of the landscape industry's top earners, ranked by revenue.

leven years ago, Lawn & Landscape debuted the Top 50 list, which grew to the Top 100 the following year. The list was the green industry's response to business-world lists like the Fortune 500 and the editors' response to a question they were asked frequently: Who are the biggest companies in the industry?

This year we answer that question like we have every year for more than a decade, but we've made some upgrades. In addition to moving the Top 100 list to a cover-story slot this month from its former home as part of October's State of the Industry report, we've added a series of related articles designed to track news and trends, plus identify best practices that companies of all sizes can relate to. A few highlights from the list:

- Today, the list's threshold stands above \$14 million. In 1998 a \$5.2 million company would have made the list.
- The Top 100 companies have more than doubled their aggregate revenue from \$2.9 billion
 in 1998 to \$6,765,323,402 today—a testament to the growth of the landscape industry. Even
 adjusted for inflation, revenues have nearly doubled. That combined revenue of \$2.9 billion
 in 1998 is equal to \$3.56 billion today.
- On average, Top 100 companies reported 17 percent growth over 2005 revenues.
- Top 100 companies report they're planning for an average of 10 percent revenue growth for 2007.
- As a whole, companies on the list employ more than 25,000 full-time and 18,000 parttime or seasonal workers (that doesn't include data from TruGreen, ValleyCrest and several other firms that didn't provide employment numbers).
- Three-quarters of the companies on the list reported they provide at least three of the five traditional green industry services: landscape maintenance, chemical lawn care/ fertilization, landscape design/build/installation, irrigation installation/maintenance and tree and ornamental care.

HOW WE DID IT. Starting in February, Lawn & Landscape editors began requesting Top 100 submissions via fax and e-mail from green industry companies we identified may be large enough to make the list. In addition, we solicited submissions from companies of all sizes on our Web site and in print. We asked companies to report 2006 revenue and growth figures, number of employees, service/client mixes and some additional data. We calculate and omit any reported revenue sources that are not widely offered green industry services — like structural pest control, for example. In addition to the five traditional services noted above, revenue from interior landscaping, snow removal, erosion control, holiday decorating and nursery and retail garden centers are some of the services included with revenue. Some companies choose not to disclose their revenue and therefore are not included.

Our goal is to provide the industry with the most comprehensive and accurate Top 100 List. We made every attempt to identify and contact firms we deemed eligible for the list. If you know of a company we missed, please let us know. Contact Associate Editor Marisa Palmieri at 216/925-5011 or mpalmieri@gie.net.

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Lawn Flandscape TOP 100 LIST

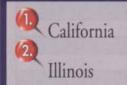
2007 Rank	Last Year	Company	HQ Location	2006 Revenue	% change from 2005	Expected % change for 2007	Year-round employees	Seasonal/ part-time employees
1	1	The TruGreen Cos.	Memphis, Tenn.	\$1,496,595,000	1	2	n/r	n/r
2	2	ValleyCrest Cos.	Calabusas, Calif.	\$870,000,000	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/t
3	3	The Brickman Group	Gaithersburg, Md.	\$506,000,000	17	15	1,900	5,850
4	4	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	Kent, Ohio	\$467,000,000	8.3	5	5,500	600
5	5	Scotts LawnService ^A	Marysville, Ohio	\$210,000,000	14	15	1,500	230
6	6	Gothic Landscape	Valencia, Calif.	\$171,000,000	15.	-12	1,800	n/r
7	7	Bartlett Tree Expert Co.	Stamford, Conn.	\$142,000,000	15.6	9	1,400	200
8	8	Initial Tropical Plants	Riverwoods, III.	\$112,000,000	n/r	nir	1,150	150
9		U.S. Maintenance	Norristown, Pa.	\$93,205,800	n/r	n/r	462	0
10	10	Lawn Doctor*	Holmdel, N.J.	\$87,000,000	10	9	800	150
11	9	Weed Man*^	Mississauga, Ontario	\$83,774,250	6	5	750	2500
12	11	OneSource Landscape & Golf Services	Tampa, Fla.	\$78,000,000	0	n/t	1,200	200
13	12	U.S. Lawns^	Orlando, Fla.	\$76,000,000	12	10	1,475	420
14	13	Vila & Son Landscaping Corp.	Miami, Fla.	\$61,042,000	9.1	10	720	0
15	14	American Civil Constructors	Littleton, Colo.	\$56,500,000	2	5	300	300
16	26	Autumn Landscaping	Englewood, Colo.	\$52,800,000	40	20	800	n/r
17	15	The Care of Trees	Wheeling, Ill.	\$51,897,982	6.1	5	463	14
18	16	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	Woodbine, Md.	\$46,500,000	0	5	330	190
19	19	Grounds Control Division of Sanitors	San Antonio, Texas	\$45,700,000	11	20	n/r	n/r
20	18	Acres Group Professional Landscaping	Wauconda, Ill.	\$45,100,000	11.1	13.1	106	644
21	36	Choate Irrigation USA	Carrollton, Texas	\$45,000,000	30	15	350	25
22	36	Creative Environments Design & Landscape	Chandler, Ariz.	\$44,000,000	20	-10	400	n/r
23	17	The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin	Middleton, Wis.	\$42,376,000	1	10	225	425
24	20	Landscape Concepts Construction	Richmond, Ill.	\$41,695,000	26	0	260	40
25	30	Dixie Landscape Co.	Miami, Fla.	\$41,320,000	2.5	-2.5	335	0
26	27	Ruppert Nurseries	Laytonsville, Md.	\$41,054,870	32	27	350	in/r
27 (t)	34	Teufel Landscape	Portland, Ore.	\$40,000,000	29	5	296	119
27 (c)	21(6)	Toll Landscape	Lambertville, N.J.	\$40,000,000	30	0	n/r	n/r
29	21(t)	Oak Leaf Landscape	Anaheim, Calif.	\$37,500,000	7	n/r	320	0
30	37(t)	Tropics North	Homestead, Fla.	\$37,100,000	25	10	425	n/r
31	21(t)	Marina Landscape	Anaheim, Calif.	\$37,000,000	6	10	310	n/r
32	29	Denison Landscaping	Fr. Washington, Md.	\$36,840,000	22	10	160	120
33 (t)	35	AAA Landscape	Tucson, Ariz.	\$36,000.000	45	25	625	n/r
33 (t)		McDonnell Landscape	Brookeville, Md.	\$36,000,000	217	16	86	34.
35	24	Jensen Corp, Landscape Contractors	Cupertino, Calif.	\$35,040,000	5	11	280	0
36	39	Metroplex Garden Design Landscaping	Dallas, Texas	\$33,509,000	24	n/r	36	n/r
37	28	The Groundskeeper	Tucson, Ariz.	\$33,500,000	10	9	700	n/r
38	33	Nanak's Landscaping	Longwood, Fla,	\$33,000,000	14	15	450	200
39	31	Mariani Landscape	Lake Bluff, III.	\$32,000,000	n/r	n/r	100	380
40.	32	Cagwin & Dorward	Novato, Calif.	\$31,858,960	7.8	10	424	3
41.	41	CoCal Landscape	Denver, Colo.	\$30,700,000	16.7	5.	250	300
42 (t)		American Landscape Cox.	Canoga Park, Calif.	\$30,000,000	-10	-10	350	50
42 (t)	42	NaturaLawn of America^	Frederick, Md.	\$30,000,000	25	8	350	50
44	45(t)	Nissho of California	Vista, Calif.	\$29,000,000	21	10	420	2
45	50	The Greenery	Hilton Head, S.C.	\$28,360,000	20	10	405	25
46	44	Groundmaxers**	Loveland, Ohio	\$28,087,280	15	15.	201	250

2007	Last				% change from	Expected % change	Year-round	Seasonal,
Rank	Year	Company	HQ Location	2006 Revenue	2005	for 2007	employees	employee
7.	37(t)	Chalet	Wilmette, Ill.	\$27,500,000	7	5	110	310
8	84(t)	Piedmont Landscape Contractors	Chamblee, Ga.	\$27,500,000	83	30	250	100
9	25	Lipinski Landscape & Irrigation, Inc.	Marlton, N.J.	\$27,250,000	-13	20	50	80
0	.43	Lucas Tire Expert Co.	Portland, Maine	\$27,000,000	8	8	400	n/r
51	57(i)	Mainscape	Fishers, Ind.	\$26,558,000	35	48	274	184
52	48(t)	Spring-Green Lawn Cate Corp. [^]	Plainfield, Ill.	\$26,500,000	11	11	n/r	nlr
53	200	Reyburn Landscape Contractors	Henderson, Nev.	\$26,300,000	1	14	300	0
H	40	Clintar Groundskeeping Services*	Markham, Ontario	\$25,573,192	4	7	175	300
55	63	Mission Landscape Services	Tustin, Calif.	\$25,500,000	34	18	600	0
56:	45(t)	Scott Byron & Co.	Lake Bluff, IIL	\$25,000,000	3	5	95	200
57	73(t)	Ecoscape Solutions Group	Charlotte, N.C.	\$24,500,000	36	35	290	30
8	70	FAIRCO -	Scottsdale, Ariz.	\$24,470,000	47	-10	250	n/r
9	55	Odyssey	Stockton, Calif.	\$24,250,000	18	0	300	n/t
0	59(t)	LMI Landscapes	Carrollton, Texas	\$23,680,000	26	30	310	n/r
1	59(t)	R.H. Dupper Landscaping	Tempe, Ariz.	\$22,300,000	14	3	120	75
2 (t)	53	Countryside Industries	Wauconda, III,	\$22,000,000	0	20	50	350
2 (t)	84(t)	Florida Landscape Service	Orlando, Fla.	\$22,000,000	22	0	125	0
(£)	51)	Meadows Farms	Chantilly, Va.	\$22,000,000	1	5	200	400
5	62	Benchmark Landscape	Poway, Calif.	\$21,540,000	12	5	300	0
6	64(t)	Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping	Portland, Ore.	\$20,200,000	n	10	300	n/r
7 (t)	78	Landscape Specialists	Lake Forest, Calif.	\$20,000,000	25	10	400	100
7 (t)		Moore Landscapes	Northbrook, Ill.	\$20,000,000	10	10	36	200
7 (t)	57(t)	Realty Landscape Corp.	Newtown, Pa.	\$20,000,000	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
7-(t)	99(t)	Stiles Landscape Co.	Fort Landerdale, Fla.	\$20,000,000	30	0	150	50
1	68	Complete Landscaping Service	Bowie, Md.	\$19,902,250	n/r	15	130	295
72	61	McFall & Berry Landscape Management	McLean, Va.	\$19,650,000	1	15	150	120
73	56	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting.	Germantown, Wis.	\$19,200,000	-1	8	240	100
4 (t)	64(t)	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	San Antonio, Texas	\$19,000,000	15	15	250	120
74 (t)	64(t)	McHale Landscape Design	Upper Marlboro, Md.	\$19,000,000	1	2	200	n/r
6	64(t)	Mariposa Horricultural Enterprises	Irwindale, Calif.	\$18,500,000	12	15	328	0
7	19 1	Luke Brothers Landscape Services	Holiday, Fla.	\$18,200,000	17	5	400	n/r
8	80	Gachina Landscape Management	Menlo Park, Calif.	\$18,178,051	14.4	14	240	50
9 (t)	75	Clarence Davids & Co.	Matteson, Ill.	\$18,000,000	11	7	85	215
9 (t)	81	Ourside Unlimited	Hampstead, Md.	\$18,000,000	10	5	100	100
9 (t)	71	Sebert Landscaping Co.	Bartlett, III.	\$18,000,000	10	15	50	200
9 (t)		Shearon Environmental Design	Plymouth Meeting, Pa.	\$18,000,000	0	10	300	100
9 (t)		WH Canon Co.	Romulus, Mich.	\$18,000,000	n/r	15-20	225	n/r
14	76	Northwestern Landscape Co.	Puyallup, Wash.	\$17,892,000	12	12	225	100
5	77	Western Dupage Landscaping	Naperville, III.	\$17,354,000	8	10	40	140
16	69	The Highridge Corp.	Issaquah, Wash.	\$17,100,000	1.5	5	188	70
7	92	Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care	Denver, Colo.	\$16,693,772	14	2	175	55
18		Scapes	Marietra, Ga.	\$16,605,000	8	10	100	50
19		Andre Landscape	Azusa, Calif.	\$16,283,741	52	n/r	160	n/r
0	89(t)	Dora Landscaping Co.	Apopka, Fla.	\$16,000,000	n/r	n/r	90	30
1		Russell Landscape Group	Dacula, Ga,	\$15,970,180	30	25	270	115
12	72	Girard Environmental Services	Sanford, Fla.	\$15,660,000	-5.4	9.4	110	30
3	82(t)	New Garden Landscaping & Nursery	Greensboro, N.C.	\$15,565,164	32	5	200	35
4	97	BIO Landscape & Maintenance	Houston, Texas	\$15,460,000	28	29	145	180
5 (t)	89(t)	Carson Landscape Industries	Sacramento, Calif.	\$15,000,000	7	2	215	0
5 (c)	84(i)	Hermes Landscaping	Lenexa, Kan.	\$15,000,000	n/r	n/r	100	150
7	87	Heads Up Landscape Contractors	Albuquerque, N.M.	\$14,700,000	4	25	170	100
8		DLC Resources	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$14,535,000	23	7	235	n/r
9	88		Tucker, Ga.	\$14,555,000	3	5	95	30
2.7	1000	Visionscapes	Lucavii Viti	\$1.1/1.7.7(UUU)	2	K.	100	-





THE TOP 5 STATES FOR TOP 100 HQs





Florida



Maryland



Not-So Second City -The Chicago region leads all metropolitan areas with 13 Top 100 companies based there.

HEADQUARTER-LESS

Twenty-four states aren't home to any Top 100 firms. They include: Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Delaware, Rhode Island. New York, West Virginia, Kentucky, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, Hawaii, Alaska.



TRUGREEN





PRIVATE EQUITY IMPLICATIONS

While companies are bought, sold and merged frequently in the green industry, it's rare for the largest company to go private, its No. 2 player to sell majority interest to a tech mogul's investment firm and its No. 3 firm to obtain new private equity partners – all in less than six months. (See "The Deals," below.)

"There have never been more eyes, ears or wallets looking at our space right now," says consultant Judy Guido, principle of Guido & Associates. "When Michael Dell invests, everybody listens."

While these moves reflect the industry's viability, don't expect them to create tremors. The effects will be more like ripples, created as a result of the top three companies' continued access to capital for organic growth, acquisitions and partnerships and a greater awareness about the green industry in the financial world. Though unlikely, there is a chance for more landscape companies to be acquired by private equity firms. "The place it would be most likely to raise interest would be firms that have some strong geographic coverage, healthy cash flows and attractive growth opportunities," says ServiceMaster Group President Katrina Helmkamp.

Scott Brickman, whose company has held private equity partners since 1998, says these deals boost perception of the industry in they eyes of the greater financial community. "Transactions like these raise the industry's profile with lenders, so it makes capital more available to our industry," he says.

CONSOLIDATION? The No. 1 consequence that could affect the average landscape company is the potential for consolidation. In this highly fragmented industry, consolidation is possible, but it was likely to be considered with or without private equity involvement, Helmkamp says.

While large companies routinely receive requests to be acquired from smaller firms, those have heated up over the last few months, says Andy Mandell, Valley Crest's executive vice president and CFO. "We used to get about two or three requests a month – we're probably getting that a week now."

The Brickman Group, too, has seen an increase in inquiries, but Brickman attributes these to the fact that the recent recapitalization allowed owners and managers to receive liquidity from their equity in the company. Early this year, the company distributed approximately \$60 million to 240 managers as a result of the deal, Brickman says.

Even though these inquiries may have increased, don't expect a buying spree. "I think acquisitions will increase somewhat," Guido says. "But I don't see those three companies doing whirlwind acquisitions. They're going to look at opportunities the way they always have."

Guido also predicts these companies will continue seeking "smart partnerships," like ValleyCrest's alliance with Costco club stores, a pilot program to market its HomeScapes brand of residential design/build services.

Speculation cropped up that ValleyCrest's partnership with Michael Dell's investment firm would bring new computerized business systems to the landscape sector, but Mandell says that's not the case, as MSD Capital and Dell computer are separate entities and have little direct business interaction.

Even if no groundbreaking technological developments take place, progress may unravel from these private equity transactions anyway. "Creating a professional image of our industry has at times been challenging and something we've strived to do," Brickman says. "To get recognition for these three businesses in the financial community helps raise the perception of the industry significantly." – Marisa Palmieri

No. 1 ServiceMaster

(TruGreen's parent company)

Investor: Investment group Clayton, Dublier & Rice.

The deal: Buyout (\$5.5 billion, including the assumption of \$800 million in debt). The ServiceMaster Board approved the agreement and recommends stockholders adoption (expected in late second or early third quarter). A majority of shareholders must approve the sale. ServiceMaster

filed a preliminary proxy statement and awaits SEC clearance before scheduling shareholder meeting.

No. 2 ValleyCrest

Investor: MSD Capital – the private investment firm of Michael Dell, founder and chairman of Dell Inc.

The deal: MSD obtained majority ownership interest; undisclosed amount. ValleyCrest management team including members of the Sper-

berfamily retained significant equity ownership and continue to operate the business.

No. 3 The Brickman Group

Investor: Private equity firm Leonard Green & Partners

The deal: Recapitalization; undisclosed amount. Brickman family, management and stockholders retain a majority share of the company, owning just more than 50 percent.



Nanak's managers now drive high-mileage vehicles, like the Toyota Priuses pictured here. Photo: Nanak's Landscaping

EARTH-FRIENDLY COST CUTTING

Last year, Sampuran Khalsa, president of Nanak's Landscaping, recognized an "inconvenient truth" in the company's fleet: It was senseless for management employees to drive gas-guzzling SUVs and pick-up trucks that get about 15 miles per gallon of gasoline.

"That just ceased to make sense, even though traditionally that's what the management personnel in our industry

would drive," he says.

Six months after making the switch to a hybrid vehicle himself, Khalsa redefined the company's fleet of non-production vehicles, bringing in seven hybrid Toyota Priuses, which get about 50 miles per gallon, and 30 high-efficiency Toyota Scions, which get about 30 miles per gallon. The move will save Nanak's 15,000 gallons of fuel this year.

In time, Khalsa hopes to increase the efficiency of the firm's 300 production

crew vehicles, too.

The switch to high-mileage vehicles is good for the planet, good for the bottom line and good for customer relations. But it wasn't without challenges. "We as a company had to go through a cultural shift - in this industry everybody's used to driving trucks," Khalsa says. "People were reluctant at first to drive these smaller vehicles, but once they got into them and started to see what type of impact it was having and started getting a lot of positive feedback from our customers and people in the community, a general sense of enjoying being in the forefront started to happen."

Nanak's has carried over that commitment to energy efficiency to its corporate offices. In collaboration with an alternative energies grant from the state of Florida, Nanak's installed solar power technology at its Orlando head-

quarters.

While browsing the Internet last fall Khalsa came across a mention of a state grant program created as part of the 2006 Florida Energy Act, which earmarked funds to motivate businesses to use renewable energy. "When I found out about it, it had been passed about three weeks earlier," Khalsa says. "We wanted to hurry and get in line first because they had only a certain amount of grant money."

Nanak's moved quickly, received the grant and had the 20 kW Solar PV System designed and installed by January. The system supplies 35 percent of the facility's energy needs, reduces its output of greenhouse gases and even allows Nanak's to sell excess power generated back to the power company.

With an \$80,000 state grant plus federal tax incentives, Nanak's installed a \$160,000 system with about \$35,000 of its own money. The amount of power saved since January has produced a 15 percent return on investment for Nanak's.

As of press time, this year Nanak's has generated more than 9,310 kWh of electricity and avoided emitting more than 20,622 pounds of CO2 - equivalent to the energy required to power 331 homes for one day.

(Nanak's tracks the solar energy it generates and greenhouse gases it avoids in real time on its Web site. Visit www. nanaks.com/saving.energy.html to

check it out.)

'We did it because we're excited about doing something forward-leaning for the environment, but the fact that it's a good financial move is really cool," Khalsa says. "It's really neat when government and business can collaborate together and take steps forward like that." - Marisa Palmieri

Identify who doesn't need a truck.

"Look at your operations and see which management personnel are literally just driving out to supervise crews and see customers and don't need to be in a truck," Khalsa says. "Those folks can be in a high-efficiency vehicle. A small company could save a significant amount of money and be guite a bit more efficient. You don't have to be a large outfit for that to work."

For more tips from Nanak's, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com's June Online Extras.





HEALTH PROMOTERS



Janet Collins (center) of Alexian Brothers has teamed with Countryside Industries William Adelizzi (left) and Bob Adelizzi (right) to improve employee wellness. Photo: Countryside Industries

In March of 2006, Bill and Bob Adelizzi set out to create a healthier organization. It had been less than two years after losing their father, Robert, the founder of the company, to cancer, and the second-generation leaders wanted to find a way to bring to life their father's vision of always treating employees like family. "We've had a genuine concern for our employees and their families for decades — our dad taught us that," company President Bob Adelizzi says. "We wanted to take it to a more serious level."

The result was a multi-faceted wellness program to improve the health, productivity and well-being of the company's 43-member office staff. Management hopes to some day extend the program to the field staff (at peak, about

350 members strong), too.

Countryside teamed up with Alexian Brothers Health System, a Chicago area heath-care network, which administered health screenings, including physical testing and a lifestyle-related assessment (smoking, drinking, eating, etc.). Alexian provided confidential reports to individuals and an aggregate company report to Countryside. "Some people learned things they never knew about themselves – like they are at great risk for developing diabetes or they had high blood pressure," Bill Adelizzi says.

More than three-quarters of the staff took the company up on its offer to be tested – and received a \$50 bonus for doing so. The Adelizzis also offered employees another \$50 bonus if they brought in a note showing they discussed the findings with their physician. In October, they'll award another incentive to the employee with the greatest health-rating improvement (to be determined by Alexian representatives) – two round-trip tickets anywhere in the U.S., a paid

week off plus \$1,000 cash.

Additionally, Countryside pays for Alexian to periodically give one-hour talks on employee-identified areas of concern – topics like weight management, smoking cessation, cancer-risk reduction and stress management. And the company has extended its support to diet and exercise, replacing donuts with complimentary fresh fruit, yogurt, juice, skim milk and low-sugar, high-fiber cereals, as well as covering the cost of health club memberships for employees who work out at least three times a week.

The total cost of the program has been about \$13,000 since March 2006 – that's about \$300 per employee. Though it's too early to tell if the program has increased productivity or turnover, Countryside's insurance broker was able

to negotiate a slightly better rate as a result of the program.

There have been intangible gains, too. The Adelizzis say the program already has improved morale and camaraderie. "Our company is aglow with energy," Bill Adelizzi says. "We have happy, healthy people working for us. Our customers can see that." – Marisa Palmieri

TAKE-AWAY TIP

Replace donuts and Doritos with nutritious snacks. "Any owner can bring in bananas and cereal from Costco,"
Bill Adelizzi says. Providing healthy breakfast options has cost Countryside less than \$3,000, about \$70 per person, since March 2006. "It's hard to be productive when you're starving or have a headache—so it really benefits the owner to provide that."

For more tips from Countryside, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com's June Online Extras.



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AAA Landscape, Phoenix and Tucson, Ariz.



Meetings between AAA Landscape's two branches now take place through videoconferencing. Photo: Duane Darling

TOPS IN TECHNOLOGY

Richard Underwood laughs recalling the days of running a landscape business 30 years ago without two-way radios. Today, technology plays an essential role in the way AAA Landscape does business. Over the last two years, AAA has invested in advancements that will allow it to run more efficiently in several key areas, including fleet management, planned community management and interoffice communications.

In early 2007, half of AAA's 180 trucks were outfitted with active GPS tracking systems; the rest will get the technology next year. The installation process is expected to cost \$80,000 and it will cost about \$40 per truck per month, or about \$86,000 per year, to run the system including the cost of a monitoring service to track the trucks and notify management of concerns. If a driver is speeding, for example, the monitoring company makes two phone calls: one to the driver and one to his direct supervisor.

In addition to saving on fuel, which comes from improved routing and keeping drivers' speeds in check, GPS will keep overtime down as a result of better routing and reduced on-the-clock side trips. To foster acceptance of the GPS systems, AAA explained to employees that it's main purpose was for cost-cutting, which employees genuinely care about because it affects their quarterly profit-sharing program. "Technology like this affects profitability and directly affects their bonuses," Richard Underwood says.

Over the last year AAA also began using GPS technology to better manage landscape maintenance at about 10 percent of its planned community accounts.

Initially, AAA uses an aerial GPS

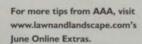
photograph of the property and an inventory software system to document the exact location of trees, irrigation components and other elements on a map of the community, which may be several square miles and have thousands of trees. The value of having this information is twofold. Logging an exact inventory of a property's trees (their location, type, size, condition, maintenance schedule, etc.) and irrigation systems helps AAA's property manager clients plan for maintenance and budget appropriately for services like tree pruning. Additionally, it improves AAA's crews' efficiency by cutting down the time it takes to search for trees and irrigation components. The initial investment was about \$20,000. The program's ROI should come in the first year and be a profit center after that, Bob Underwood says. "But more than that we'll be more efficient on the job and we'll be more in demand because we'll be giving more back to our clients - and that's a lot of what it's about."

Videoconferencing between AAA's two branches is another recent endeavor. The network of flat-screen TVs is used mainly for interoffice meetings among committees who previously met over the phone, drove the 100 miles to convene or neglected to meet regularly. "One of the things it's really saving is windshield time, which is inefficient time and ties directly into safety," Richard Underwood says. The investment for the videoconferencing system has been about \$35,000 over three years. "I can't put an absolute dollar amount on savings, but with what we've saved on gas and road time we've absolutely made that back," he says. "It's made us more efficient and much closer." - Marisa Palmieri

TAKE-AWAY TIP

First and foremost, become financially literate.

"First you've got to know your costs and you've got to know your overhead," Richard Underwood says. In the early days, the Underwoods attended seminars at green industry events to gain business acumen. From there, they were able to price their services right and manage cash flow appropriately to begin making equipment and technology upgrades.





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Call Now & Save

More cost effective than some other popular forms of advertising, landscape contractors wonder whether door hangers will give them the edge over their competition. Lawn & Landscape Message Board users debate the merits of marketing their companies and generating new business with door hangers.



Hanging In here

yan Holt is trying door hangers for the first time this year and he hopes that, in return for his effort, opportunity knocks.

nity knocks.

However, the owner of Driftwood Lawn Care in Rising Sun, Md. wonders what type of results he should expect and how he'll know whether or not his marketing campaign was, in fact, a success. Landscape contractors contributing to Lawn & Landscape's Online Message Board were eager to contribute opinions and recently posted their thoughts on the effectiveness of door hangers as an industry marketing tool.

Holt purchased 3,000 door hangers for just less than \$200 from an online Web site. The door hangers were pretty basic, he describes, adding they were white with green and black lettering. Regardless of their minimalist and simplistic design, Holt believes the door hangers will prove to be more effective than fliers or mailers.

"I get mailers all of the time and I barely look at them as I am throwing them away," Holt says. "But if I have to pull a door hanger off I am definitely going to read it."

In his initial advertising push this spring, Holt distributed about 800 door hangers and received five calls and two e-mails in response. Industry colleagues have told him to expect a 2- to 3-percent return from door hangers and he recognizes that this recent less than 1 percent return could be interpreted as a disappointment at this juncture. "But they were all serious customers with nice size jobs (for example, a new-yard install, a paver patio and maintenance work)," Holt says. "I wish I would have done this before because the cost is much better than advertising in the local newspaper. Door hangers seem to be a no-brainer, for me, at least."

Contractor Nicholas Esposito disagrees and posts he believes in the power of advertising in his local newspaper and says distributing door hangers

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best of the web



is a waste of a contractor's time. "Put some bucks into a good old advertisement and a good giveaway," says Esposito, the owner of Mohegan Country Gardens in Mohegan Lake, N.Y., "As you approach your sales call, give away a pen or something they can take away with them. Have some good folders with your price quotes to hand over to prospective clients and your callback ratio will go higher."

Andrew Aksar, president of Outdoor Finishes in Walkersville, Md., suggests additional responses will come in time and adds the business leads door hangers generate are worth the work. "Door hangers can be time consuming for a small company," he explains. "But they sure beat a \$6,000 Yellow Pages ad, where 50 percent of the calls the ad generates are from tire kickers."

To distribute the door hangers, Aksar has one worker drive and two workers hanging – with this system the trio can cover more than 2,000 homes in about six hours. The return rate varies, Aksar says, and he has no real explanation for why one wave resulted in a number of sales leads and

"We find door hangers to be very inexpensive and we seem to get great results. Like with any advertising program, you need to be consistent. We usually distribute the door hangers a few days a week with a couple of part-time employees. For best results, we have them in uniforms and they deliver in the evenings and on Saturdays." – Kory Ballard

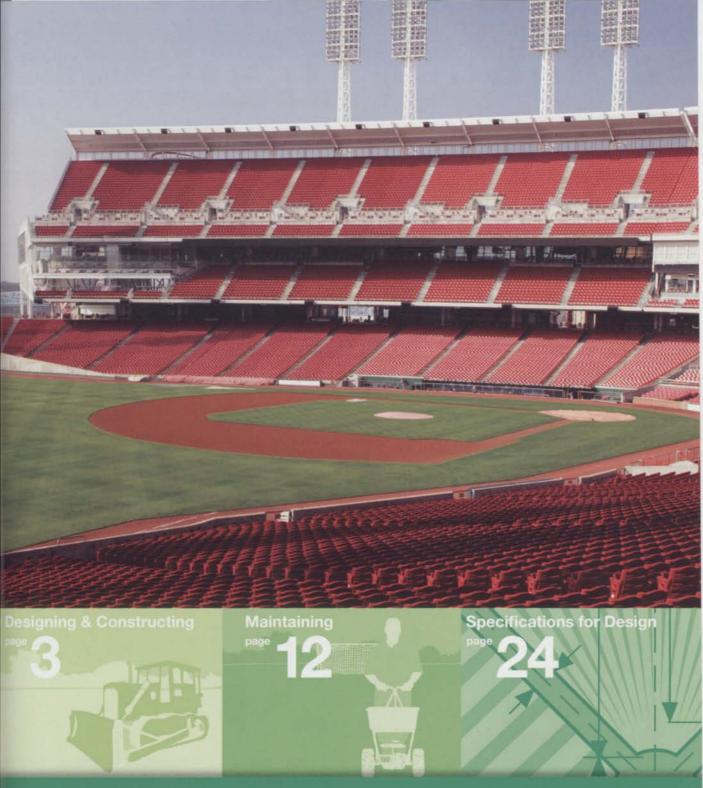
another turned up nothing. "We have hung door hangers were the phone was ringing before we even departed the neighborhood," he posts. "And then back in August 2006, we hung about 2,000 door hangers and didn't get one phone call. But this doesn't mean they didn't hang onto the hanger and won't be calling us in the future."

Many contractors posted comments about the long shelf life door hangers have with potential new clients. While they may not solicit job leads immediately following distribution, they may at some time in the future. "I got a call the other day from a hanger from three years ago," posts Kelly Tohill, the owner of Atlanta-based Tohill Landscape Management. "I sold them a maintenance package. Door hangers work. It's what I have built my business on."

Contractor Daniel Bailey posts he has been disappointed with the results from his Yellow Pages ad and is turning to door hangers as his marketing push this year. "They seem to work much better," says Bailey, owner of Bailey's Lawn and Landscape in Middletown, Del. "The tricky part, though, is getting them out at the right time."

Door hangers should generate a return rate of sales leads of between 1 and 2 percent, with around a 35-percent close rate on those inquiries, posts Rob Shauger, owner of Deer-

continued on page 91; sidebar on page 91



Sports Turf Handbook



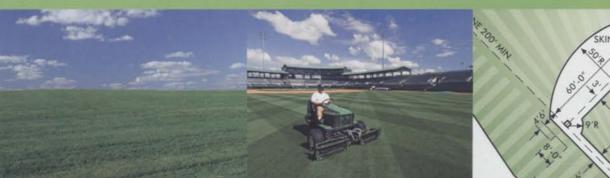
From the experts

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This handbook brings together a wealth of practical advice on managing sports turf. Experienced professionals will find it a handy reference, while those newer to the job will value it as an all-in-one source of practices and products. Highlights include an overview of issues relating to field design and construction, turf maintenance practices, suggested annual maintenance programs and official field diagrams and specifications. No matter what type of sport, climate or playing schedule you are dealing with, the LESCO Sports Turf Handbook surely includes information you will find helpful.



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Products for

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Part I. Designing and Constructing Playing Fields

Design Considerations

Constructing a sport field is an exciting project. It is also a big responsibility. From the time the site is selected until the day the players first step onto the field, you have the opportunity to create an extraordinary playing environment. The design considerations in Chart 1 provide an excellent overview for a variety of sports. Use the chart, along with the diagrams in Part III of this handbook, to help achieve the best possible results with your field.

CHART 1

SPORT	AREA REQUIRED	ORIENTATION	GRADE/DRAINAGE
(See Part III for actu	al dimensions of playing	g field)	
American Football	1.5 acres (minimum)	Long axis should run northeast/ southwest to suit the angle of the sun for the fall playing season; or north/south for longer periods.	Grade with a 10-18" crown down the center of the field sloping toward the sidelines, with 1% slope from center to each sideline.
Baseball	3.0 to 3.85 acres	Locate home plate so the pitcher	Grade so that home plate and
Little League	1.2 acres (minimum)	is throwing across the sun and the batter is not facing it. The line from home plate through the pitcher's mound and second base should run	baselines are level; provide 1% slope from pitcher's circle toward the bases; provide 1%-2½% slope from centerfield to outside edges
12" Softball	1.5 to 2.0 acres	east-northeast.	of outfield.
Croquet	3,000 sq. ft.	Orientation is not critical and may be adjusted to suit local conditions.	Turf is to be close cropped and level with a maximum 2% slope and adequate underdrainage.
Field Hockey	1.5 acres (minimum)	Orientation is to be north/south where practicable.	Grade with a 1% slope from the center to each sideline.
Soccer	1.7 to 2.1 acres	Long axis should run northeast/ southwest to suit the angle of the sun for the fall playing season; or north/south for longer periods.	Grade with a longitudinal crown and 1% slope from center to each sideline.
Lacrosse	1.5 acres (minimum)	Orientation is to be north/south where practicable.	Grade with a 1% slope from the center to each sideline.
Lawn Bowling	12,996 sq. ft. to 17,424 sq. ft. (square green with 6 rinks)	Orientation is not critical and may be adjusted to suit local conditions.	Turf is to be close cropped bentgrass and completely level with adequate underdrainage. Sand/clay surface is an alternative.
Rugby	2.0 acres (minimum)	Long axis should run northeast/ southwest to suit the angle of the sun for the fall playing season; or north/south for longer periods.	Grade with a longitudinal crown and 1% slope from center to each sideline.

Drainage

Drainage is critical to:

- · Removing excess water
- · Maintaining the playing surface
- · Allowing the field to better withstand traffic

Three components influencing drainage:

- · Soil composition
- · Field grade
- Drainage system

Soil Composition

The soil composition of sport fields generally falls into one of three categories:

- New fields, especially those at a professional or semi-professional level, may be constructed of 100% coarse sand offering superior drainage
- Other fields may be composed of native soil amended with 50% or more coarse sand
 - The sand particle size and adequate mixing with the native soil are key to good results
- · Many fields are built entirely on native soil
 - Adequate grading and drainage becomes increasingly important on fields built entirely on native soils

Grade

Most playing fields are relatively flat with a slight grade or crown, from the center to the edges:

- · Grading/crowning provides natural runoff
- · Actual grade varies with the sport
- Check guidelines in Chart 1 for field-specific information

Drainage Systems

To be effective, all sports turf fields require some type of drainage:

- Perimeter drain lines, consisting of plastic drain pipe embedded in gravel, are a basic requirement
- Cross-field herringbone or ladder-type drainage systems are recommended for areas with heavy rainfall or for fields composed of heavy, native soil
- The LESCO vertical turf drain can be beneficial on any field
 - This innovative device is easily installed in new or existing fields as shown in Diagram 1

DIAGRAM 1

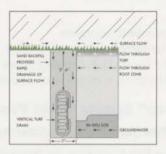
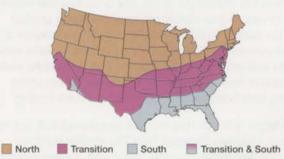


CHART 2



LESCO TURFGRASS SEED		CLASSIFICATION	
	For High-Traffic Sports Fields	5 17 1 C 10 V	
	Premium Athletic Mix (001365) Double Eagle® Blend (011663) Tuf-Turf Mix™ (007343) Team-Mates Mix™ (019873) Team-Mates Plus™ Mix (019586)	premium premium premium very good very good	
	TriGold** (056625) Duro-Turf (087970) Transition Blend** (007330) Team-Mates Mix (019873)	premium premium very good good	
	Hybrid Bermudagrass (vegetative) SunSport (088188) SunStar Bermudagrass (025915)	premium premium very good	
	For Sports Field Renovation		
	Premium Athletic Mix (001365) Double Eagle Blend (011663) Classic Sunny Turf (009689) 50/50 Blue-Rye Seed (031403) Eagle Blend" Plus Blue Seed (011942) Park and Athletic (001689) Metro Seed (018345)	premium very good very good very good good good good	
	Transition Blend (007330) Team-Mates Mix (019873)	premium premium	
	SunSport (088188) SunStar Bermudagrass (025915)	premium very good	
	For Overseeding Dormant Bermudagrass	HOTESEL	
	Double Eagle Supreme (011663) Overseeding Eagle Blend (061638) ProBlend** (011545)	premium premium very good	

Selecting Turfgrasses

Several things must be considered when selecting turfgrass seed for sport fields:

- Durability
- · Disease and insect resistance
- · Suitability for climate and growing zone
 - o Chart 2 shows U.S. Growing Zones
- · Drought resistance, if irrigation is not available

Pro's Choice® Sports Field Products

Pro's Choice Red (formerly Soilmaster Red)

Use Pro's Choice Red to improve the composition, color and playability of your field, season after season. Designed to meet the challenges of wet, dry or compacted infields, this unique, highly-absorbent montmorillonite product blends easily into the existing infield mix and creates a more porous soil profile. Pro's Choice Red absorbs excess water and facilitates drainage, eliminating puddles, slick spots and muddy conditions. It alleviates compaction giving truer bounces, fewer injuries and surer footing.

The larger granules help fracture compacted soil, opening narrow channels for water flow. The smaller particles interconnect these channels and absorb excess moisture. Pro's Choice Red granules are very durable and will remain permanently rigid in the soil, releasing stored water as needed to alleviate dust.

To renovate infields:

Usage Rates For Standard Field Renovation

	Regulation Field	Softball Field	Little League Field
	12 Tons	10 Tons	5 Tons
١	(480 Bags)	(400 Bags)	(200 Bags)

- Position bags of Pro's Choice Red soil conditioner evenly over the entire skinned area of the infield. Open and empty bags into piles then spread Pro's Choice Red soil conditioner over the surface with a drag mat.
- Using a rototiller, blend the soil conditioner into the top 3 inches of soil. Use a drag mat to breakup any clumps and to blend the product into the surface.
- Moisten the infield lightly and roll with a one-ton roller or hand roller. This will smooth and firm up the playing surface, allowing it to settle.
- Continue to drag the infield slowly until low spots are level and the soil has loosened. Topdress with at

least 20 bags of Pro's Choice Red soil conditioner or Pro's Choice Select topdressing and fine drag the surface again. For that professional ballpark look, topdress periodically with Pro's Choice Pro Red professional topdressing.

To condition infields:

Usage Rates for Standard Field Conditioning

	Regulation Field	Softball Field	Little League Field
1	6 Tons	5 Tons	2 Tons
1	(240 Bags)	(200 Bags)	(80 Bags)

- Moisten skinned areas and spread Pro's Choice Red soil conditioner over the entire infield.
- 2. Apply more to problem areas.
- Work Pro's Choice Red into the top 1 inch of soil with a nail drag or rake.
- 4. Smooth with a drag mat.
- 5. Topdress as above.

Long term benefits:

Because Pro's Choice Red soil conditioner granules are heat-treated to enhance durability and reduce breakdown, they continue to work in your field season after season, substantially reducing maintenance costs and labor.



 Application rates of Pro's Choice Red conditioner can vary depending on current field conditions. Ask your LESCO representative for recommendations regarding special conditions. When renovating an infield, the general application rule of thumb is 1.5 tons of Pro's Choice Red conditioner per every 1000 square feet of skinned area. For conditioning, the rule of thumb is 0.75 tons per 1000 square feet.

Pro's Choice Select (formerly Soilmaster Select) & Pro's Choice Pro Red

Use Pro's Choice Select and Pro's Choice Pro Red to give you the look of a professional ballpark.

Pro's Choice Select and Pro's Choice Pro Red are specially formulated to work as the perfect topdressing, enhancing the performance of our original Pro's Choice Red soil conditioner. Small, uniform granules give you the look of a professional ballpark, and deep red color is the perfect match for our Pro's Choice Red and Rapid Dry® products.



To topdress infields:

- 1. Position 20-60 bags of Pro's Choice Select or Pro's Choice Pro Red topdressing evenly over the entire skinned area of the infield, between the bases.
- 2. Empty bags into piles and spread topdressing over the surface with a rake or a drag mat.
- 3. Level and fine drag the infield slowly to an even and finished appearance. Repeat as needed throughout the season.
- 4. To deepen red color, lightly water after application.

For additional areas of the field:

Base Paths: Apply 3-4 bags to each base path and scratch in with rake or nail drag.

Home Plate Area: Lightly spread 2-3 bags in batter's boxes and around home plate.

Pitcher's Mound: Spread 1-2 bags over the mound to regulate surface moisture.

Rapid Dry

Rapid Dry drying agent. When you need a game saver, you need Rapid Dry in the lineup. It quickly wicks away excess water from your playing field and improves soil consistency. Its perfectly-sized granules improve stability, encourage rapid absorption of moisture and reduce compaction with less dust than other quick drying products. Its sand-like texture improves footing on slippery surfaces. Rapid Dry is the only drying agent available in the same deep red color as Pro's Choice Red infield conditioner. It works quickly so puddles disappear and you're back in the game - fast.

Rapid Dry drying agent is the game-saving fix for wet, muddy ballfields. Because it is specifically formulated to be a drying agent and not just a powdered by-product, it has the perfect granule size to stabilize muddy areas on the skinned parts of the infield and blend into the turf in your outfield. It's easy and economical to use.

To apply to infields:

- 1. Pour a sufficient amount of Rapid Dry drying agent on top of puddles or soggy area.
- 2. Spread evenly over the entire wet area with a rake or by hand.
- 3. Once the water is absorbed, work the material into the soil with a rake. Use a drag mat on large areas. Repeat steps 1 - 3, until desired surface condition is achieved.

To apply to turf areas:

- 1. Fan out with a shovel or spreader to evenly distribute over wet and soggy turf.
- 2. Reapply until moisture disappears. A push broom can be used to help work Rapid Dry drying agent into the turf thatch.



Pro's Choice Green

For hall of fame performance in any turf area, put Pro's Choice Green soil conditioner in your lineup. Pro's Choice Green conditions your turf to hold up to even the most grueling traffic. The granules, colored to blend in with your turf, can even camouflage bare or worn areas. Pro's Choice Green soil conditioner is made of the same highly absorbent montmorillonite clay as our regular Pro's Choice Red soil conditioner - making it perfect for topdressing and game day touch-ups.

Pro's Choice Green soil conditioner's hard absorptive granules offer your turf all the benefits of Pro's Choice Red, plus a green color to camouflage their appearance in grass. Incorporating Pro's Choice Green into turf reduces compaction and increases infiltration and drainage. By opening up passageways in the soil, Pro's Choice Green enhances the root zone growing area, allowing moisture and nutrients to flow into the root zone, promoting strong, vigorous root growth and healthy turf all season long.

Topdress worn turf areas:

Pro's Choice Green soil conditioner is the perfect answer for important game day appearance problems. The green granules will give muddy areas a healthy turf look, while drying wet muddy areas and covering worn turf. Pro's Choice Green works well on heavy traffic areas such as between the twenty-yard lines and the hash marks on a football field and at the goalmouths on a soccer field.

Application suggestions:

- 1. Apply Pro's Choice Green to worn or muddy areas using a top dresser, shovel or by hand.
- 2. If using a spreader the recommended application rate is 250 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. Heavier applications can be used for cosmetic applications.



3. After applying Pro's Choice Green, it is recommended to either level off with a rake or drag mat.

This product is perfect for all types of sports turf fields:

- Football
 - Baseball
- Field Hockey

- Soccer
- Rugby
- Lacrosse

Non-cosmetic soil conditioning and topdressing:

Use Pro's Choice Turf soil conditioner to repair and modify large areas of your fields. Pro's Choice Turf is cost effective for large non-cosmetic repairs. Aeration followed by topdressing helps alleviate compaction, enhancing root growth, allowing water, nutrients and oxygen to move through the soil profile.

Pro Mound® Packing Clay

Pro Mound packing clay is easy to install. It requires only a shovel, rake, tamp and water. Approximately forty 50 lb. bags (1 pallet) of Pro Mound are needed to resurface and maintain the mound, batters' boxes and catcher's station.

To install:

- 1. In the mound, remove the top 4-6 inches of soil from the area around and in front of the pitching rubber or only in the high wear areas, such as immediately in front of the pitching rubber and in the foot landing area.
- 2. Remove 4-6 inches of soil from the batters' boxes and catcher's station (either the entire box dimensions or only in the worn areas).
- 3. Lightly apply water, to the prepared area. Let soak in. This will help form a bonding base with the existing soil.
- 4. Apply a 1-inch layer of Pro Mound packing clay to each excavated area. Compact Pro Mound firmly with a tamp. Lightly water these areas and let soak in. Add another 1-inch layer of Pro Mound. This will bring the packing clay to near grade level. Tap firmly. Repeat this process until Pro Mound is within 1/2 inch of finished grade.
- 5. Cover each area with a skin coating of infield mix and tamp again. Apply two bags of Pro's Choice Select or Rapid Dry to absorb surface moisture.

To repair:

- Sweep out any divots made in the Pro Mound and use a rake to level off any high spots.
- 2. Moisten the area to be repaired.
- 3. Fill the divots with Pro Mound and tamp firmly.
- 4. Finally, cover with infield soil and tamp again.

To maintain:

Lightly water mound, catcher's station and batters' boxes and cover with a tarp when not in use. If this is not possible, cover them with a light coating of Pro's Choice Red infield conditioner to maintain the correct moisture level.

Pro's Choice also offers pre-formed Pro Mound Bricks. These packing bricks are also easy to install and very durable.





Initial Seeding and Reseeding

For cool-season areas:

- Seeding cool-season grasses around the beginning of September is ideal
- · Seeding can also be done in the spring
- Allow 4 to 6 months for cool-season grass seedlings to fully establish

For warm-season areas:

- Seed or sprig warm-season grasses in late June or July
- · Allow 3 to 4 months for turf to establish

More than any other type of turf area, sport fields require frequent reseeding due to wear and tear. Most susceptible to damage are the mid-field sections of American football and rugby fields and the goal-front areas on soccer, field hockey and lacrosse fields. While many sports turf managers make an ongoing commitment to dense turf by regularly putting down seed and allowing the athletes to "cleat" it in, reseeding on a larger scale is often still required.

The procedures listed below provide guidelines for initial seeding or reseeding:

- 1. Disk or till the area.
- 2. Fill low spots with good-quality topsoil and level.
- Adjust soil pH with either ground limestone or sulfur, as required.
- Apply a high-phosphorus fertilizer (such as LESCO Starter 18-24-12) to promote optimum seed germination and development, or apply Bolster G organic fertilizer with mycorrhizae to promote root growth and to enhance turf survivability.
- 5. Re-till and finish-grade the area.
- Seed with the appropriate LESCO seed mixture using a broadcast spreader, cultipacker seeder or by hydroseeding. When reseeding, select a LESCO seed mixture with varieties similar to the existing turf. Chart 3 shows typical seeding rates by variety.
- If you use a broadcast spreader, drag or lightly rake seed into top ¼" of soil and then firm with a light roller.
- 8. Mulch the area with suitable mulching material.

CHART 3

Seed Type	Lbs./1,000 sq. ft.
Bahiagrass	8-10 lbs.
Bermudagrass	2-3 lbs.
Bluegrass/Ryegrass mixtures	3-4 lbs.
Tall Fescue mixtures	8-10 lbs.

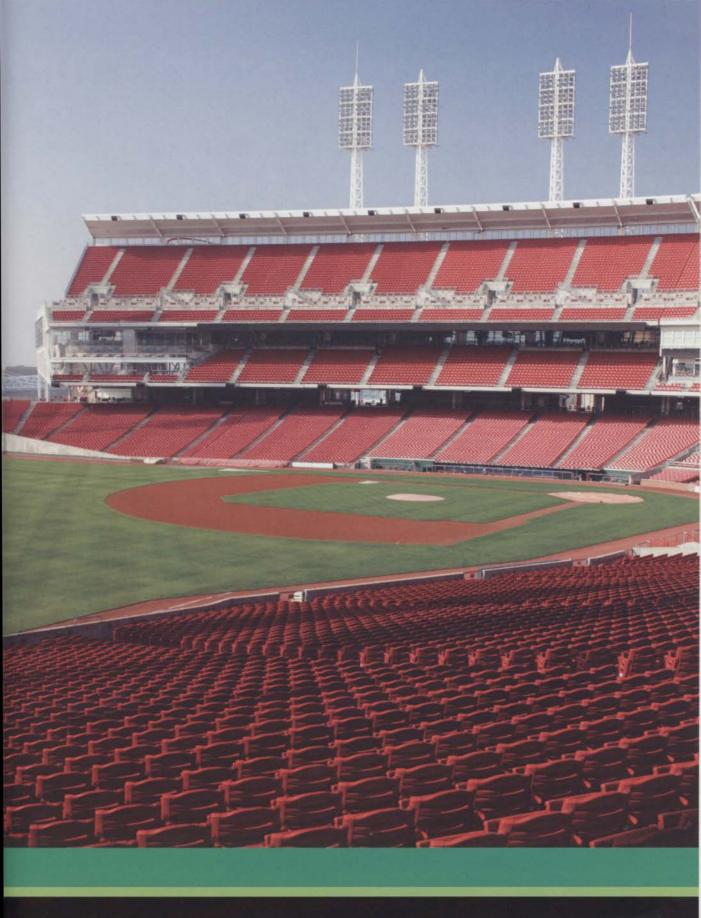
Overseeding

Overseeding is the procedure used for sports fields where damage is not extensive enough to require complete reseeding, or for converting warm-season playing surfaces to cool-season surfaces during the time the warm-season grass is dormant.

Suggested procedures:

- In the North, overseed into honeycombed soils from late February through late March. You'll see best results if the soil freezes at night and thaws during the day. Apply seed in the early morning when the soil is still frozen. Apply at one-half to three-quarters of the initial seeding rate shown in Chart 3. Best results are achieved with several applications 4-5 days apart, rather than all at once.
- 2. In the North, you can also overseed later in the spring. After cleaning up winter debris, aerate the field 8-10 times with a spoon-type aerator. Broadcast the seed or cut it into the turf with a turf-type disk seeder. Then drag the field with a section of chain link fence or similar material to break up soil cores and work the seed into the soil.
- In the Transition Zone or South, overseeding begins as early as September in the more northern areas and as late as December in South Florida. Use the procedures outlined in paragraph 2 above.





Products for

Maintenance of Sports Turf



Slow Release & Top Performing Fertilizers

LESCO offers a complete line of fertilizers ideal for sports turf maintenance:

- TriVex™
- · PolyPlus®
- LESCOCote™
- PolyVex™
- Ecosential™
- · ProMax"

- TurfVigor®
- MacroN™
- Iron Plus
- · Chelated Iron Plus
- GreenFlo™
- · Bolster® G



Soil Testing & Irrigation

LESCO offers soil testing services through one of the country's best laboratories, as well as irrigation equipment:

- · Complete soil testing and analysis
- · Soil testing supplies
- Irrigation supplies
 - » Nozzles» Valves

- » Conversion Kits
- » Flexogen® Hoses



Aerators & Mowers

LESCO offers several mowers and aerators suitable for sports turf maintenance:

- · Z-Two® Riders
- · Walk-Behind Rotaries
- Stand-On Rotaries
- · Ride-On Aerator
- Walk-Behind Aerator
- · Pull-Behind Aerator



Tools & Protective Gear

LESCO offers tools and protective gear for sports turf managers and crews:

- · Rakes & Shovels
- · Measuring Wheel
- · Safety Glasses
- · Hearing Protection
- · Paint and Pesticide Respirators
- · Boots, gloves, coveralls, rainsuits
- · Par Aide® hand tools special orders only



Application Equipment

LESCO offers the product application equipment required for maintaining quality sports turf:

- Poly Tank Sprayers
- Backpack Sprayers
- Handheld Sprayers
- · Portable Spot Sprayers
- Rotary Spreaders
- · Roto/Drop Spreader
- Spreader/Sprayer
 Combination



Weed Control

LESCO offers a complete line of pre-emergent and post-emergent herbicides for the control of weeds before and after they appear:

- · Proven and trusted active ingredients
- · Granular or sprayable formulations
- Granular fertilizer/pre-emergent/post-emergent herbicide combination products
- Products for both cool- and warm-season turfgrass



Specialty

LESCO offers specialty products designed to improve sports turf stress tolerance, appearance and simplify product application:

- RegiMax PGR™
- Tracker®
- LESCOFIo™ Ultra
- LESCO Green™
- Moisture Manager



Disease Control

LESCO offers a complete line of turfgrass fungicides:

- · Proven and trusted active ingredients
- · Choice of contact or systemic mode-of-action
- · Preventive or curative
- · Granular or sprayable formulations
- · Granular fertilizer/fungicide combination products



Insect Control

LESCO offers a complete line of insecticides for the control of turf pests:

- · Proven and trusted active ingredients
- · Products to control surface and sub-surface insects
- · Granular or sprayable formulations
- Granular fertilizer/insecticide combination products
- · Products for both cool- and warm-season turfgrass



Marking Paint

LESCO offers both the paint and equipment needed to mark sports fields:

- Tournament™ Athletic Field Marking Paint
- Turf Marking Machine
- · Marking Paint Wand

Part II. Maintaining Sports Turf

Testing the Soil

Soil testing is the first step toward developing and maintaining quality sports turf. LESCO offers complete soil testing services – contact your sales representative or stop by your LESCO Service Center® for details. A kit is also available if you prefer to do your own testing. A soil test will:

- Specify nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium levels and whether they are high or low
- Specify micronutrient levels and whether they are high or low
- Provide soil pH information (see next section on pH balance)

Based on soil test results, you can work with your LESCO Sales Representative to develop an annual nutrient management program. Re-test as needed to evaluate results and make necessary adjustments.

pH Balance

pH indicates the level of acidity or alkalinity in your soil:

- · Neutral soil measures 7.0 pH
- · A pH above 7.5 indicates alkaline soil
 - Sulfur can be applied to lower pH
- · A pH below 6.8 indicates acidic soil
 - A neutralizing product, typically limestone or gypsum, can be applied to raise pH
- Sulfur and lime can be applied at any time, but typically in the late fall, followed by aeration
- In northern areas, sulfur and lime are sometimes applied during the winter to dormant turf



Fertilizing

The three primary nutrients in professional turf fertilizer are:

- Nitrogen (N)
- · Phosphorus (P)
- · Potassium (K)

The three large numbers printed on a fertilizer package denote the fertilizer analysis, and correspond to the percentage of N, P and K in the fertilizer – 28-5-12, for example. You can work with your LESCO Sales Representative to select fertilizers and develop an annual program best suited to the agronomic conditions or requirements of your sports turf.

Some basic fertilizer considerations include:

- Fertilizer with a higher proportion of nitrogen can promote quicker greening and encourage growth
- Potassium helps the turf resist stress caused by drought, heavy traffic and high temperatures
- Starter fertilizers typically have higher percentages of phosphorus to encourage root establishment

Most professional turf fertilizers also contain additional essential plant nutrients classified as secondary and micronutrients and often called trace elements. These can include:

- Manganese
- · Iron
- Magnesium
- Calcium
- Sulfur
- Others

If soil tests indicate a deficiency in any of these elements, be sure to correct this imbalance with a fertilizer containing an adequate secondary or micronutrient element package or apply a supplemental fertilizer.

The final consideration when purchasing fertilizer is the type of nitrogen source and how the nitrogen is released to the turf. Fertilizers with slow-release technology are very popular and offer several benefits:

- · Nitrogen is released over extended period of time
- · Provide steady, gradual greening
- Prevent excessive top growth, which can weaken turf and make it more susceptible to drought, disease, insects and other problems

- Can reduce labor requirements by reducing mowing frequency and minimizing clippings
- · Minimizes potential of turf burn

Fertilizers can be applied in a granular form, using a rotary or drop spreader, or in a liquid form with spray equipment. A typical fertilizer program for a single growing season might include periodic granular fertilizer applications providing the majority of the required nutrients, supplemented with smaller, more frequent liquid fertilizer, micronutrient, or biostimulant applications.

Chart 4 shows a typical fertilization schedule with recommended application rates.

CHART 4

RATE PER ACRE AND TIME OF APPLICATION

	FERTILIZER ANALYSIS	LATE SPRING	LATE SUMMER	FALL
	For cool season turfgr	asses:		
034474	LESCO 24-5-11 2%Fe, 1%Mn 50% sulfur-coated urea	180#	180#	180#
016481	or 32-3-8 2%Fe 30% sulfur-coated urea	140#	140#	140#
	OR			
000777	LESCO 39-0-0 sulfur-coated urea plus	100#		
032595	LESCO 18-24-12 50% sulfur-coated urea	180#	180#	
	For warm season turfg	rasses*:		
011695	LESCO 16-4-8 50% sulfur-coated urea	275#	275#	275#
	OR			
034474	LESCO 24-5-11 2%Fe, 1%Mn 50% sulfur-coated urea	180#	180#	180#
	OR			
000777	LESCO 39-0-0 sulfur-coated urea plus	100#		
032595	LESCO 18-24-12 50% sulfur-coated urea	180#	180#	
"If dorman	t turf is overseeded, then an addition	nal fertilize	r applica	ation

"If dormant turi is overseeded, then an additional fertilizer application should be made in late Fall at the same Fall rate.

Top-Performing Fertilizers

TriVex – homogeneous nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium granular fertilizer

PolyPlus – blended controlled release polymer-coated sulfur-coated urea fertilizer

LESCOCote – blended polymer-coated urea nitrogen fertilizers

PolyVex – blended granular fertilizers utilizing two controlled-release nitrogen sources, Poly Plus and methylene urea

Ecosential - 100% organic and nitrogen-fortified products

ProMax / TurfVigor - complete biostimulant/stress reduction products

MacroN – complete line of water-soluble fertilizer products

Iron Plus - liquid micronutrient supplements

Chelated Iron Plus – chelated liquid micronutrient supplements

GreenFlo – complete line of liquid nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium fertilizers, many utilizing Urea-Triazone slow-release nitrogen

Soil/Turf Amendments – Bolster G granular organic fertilizer with mycorrhizae and biostimulants, limestone/gypsum, phytes and more

Irrigation

To thrive, turfgrass needs adequate water at regular intervals. Since this ideal combination rarely occurs naturally, an irrigation system may be needed for your sports turf. This can range from an in-ground system with pop-up sprinkler heads and automatic timers, to simple garden hoses and sprinklers. Typically, you should install an irrigation system that can deliver 1½" of water to a field every 4-5 days under drought conditions. Consult a local irrigation professional for particulars.



Mowing

The two primary issues with mowing involve cutting height and frequency. In general, you should adjust the frequency so that no more than one-third of the blade height is removed at one time. With proper frequency, clippings returned to the turf will mulch in and decompose, adding their nutrients back to the soil. Chart 5 provides guidelines for various types of grasses.

CHART 5

Grass Type	Mowing Height (inches)	Mowing Frequency (days)
Kentucky Bluegrass	2.0	5-7
Tall Fescue	2.5	7-10
Bermudagrass (common)	1.5	3-5
Bermudagrass (hybrid)	1.0	3-5
Bahiagrass	3.0	7-14

Although reel mowers are considered to provide the best quality of cut, rotary mowers give you excellent results when they are kept sharp.

Aerating

Aerating allows a more efficient and quicker uptake of air, water and nutrients to the turfgrass by eliminating soil compaction.

- · Recommended frequency is three times a year
- If field is showing effects of soil compaction, aerate every 10-14 days, but avoid aeration during periods of stress

Always use a closed-spoon aerator (not spike) to remove soil cores. For athletic fields, the core should be ¾" to 1" in diameter. Light aeration means running the aerator 1-3 times over the field and heavy aeration means 6-8 passes. Generally, perform heavy aeration once in the spring prior to fertilization and/or overseeding, and light aeration in late summer and fall. For spring and summer aeration, drag the field afterwards with a chain drag or a section of chain link fence. Do not drag after the fall aeration to receive maximum effect from winter freezing and thawing. To maximize the effects of aeration, always follow with an application of LESCO Starter Fertilizer and/or Bolster G (mycorrhizal product).

Dethatching

Dethatching is needed to thin the layer of dead and living shoots and stems that form above the soil and reduce the air and water penetration to the turfgrass roots.

- When this thatch layer exceeds ½", the plant's roots will begin to grow in the thatch instead of the soil. This makes them very susceptible to drought, temperature change and disease.
- Dethatching removes these growth clippings mechanically with a power rake that cuts the thatch and brings it to the surface for collection.

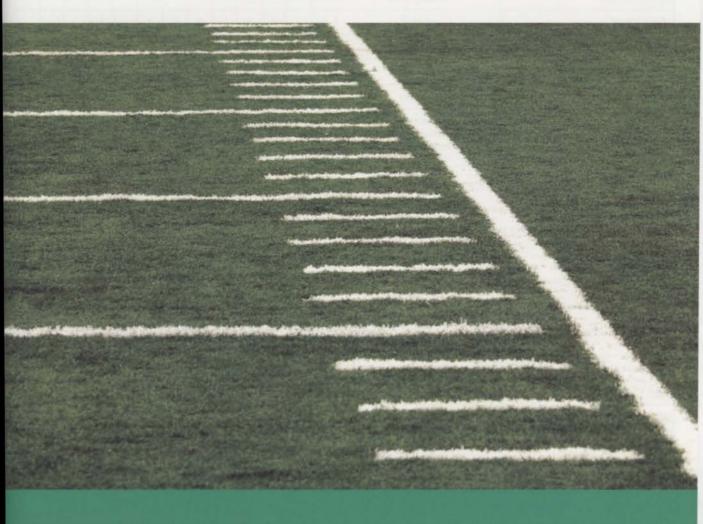


Marking the Field

Most sports fields are marked with sidelines, end lines, goal lines, some form of yardage markers and so on. The preferred marking materials are turf marking paint, powdered chalk or other materials that are non-toxic and non-injurious to the players. Never use caustic lime to mark playing fields.







Disease Control

Disease control is an important aspect of sports turf maintenance. It involves accurate pathogen identification, proper fungicide programming, the choice of systemic or contact mode-of-action and resistance management. LESCO simplifies disease management by offering the latest in plant protection chemistry along with tried-and-true favorites in both granular and sprayable formulations, as well as convenient combination products. Contact your LESCO Sales Representative for assistance in disease identification and selection of the appropriate fungicides.



		Contact, Systemic, Both	Anthracnose	Brown Patch	Dollar Spot	Gray Leaf Spot	Gray Snow Mold	Leaf Spot	Pink Snow Mold	Pythium	Red Thread	Rust	Southern Blight	Yellow Tuft
Disease Control	Solutions	ప					9		4				U)	
LESCO PRODUCTS	COMMON NAME													
LESCO 18 Plus™	Iprodione	S		X	X		Х	X	Х		Х			
LESCO Bayleton® 50	Triadimefon	S	X	X	X		Х		Х		X	Х	X	
Bayleton 1.0% Granular	Triadimefon	S	Х	Х	Х		Х		Х		χ	Х	Х	
Mancozeb 4F	Mancozeb	С		X	Х	X		Х	Х	X	X	Х		
Mancozeb DG	Mancozeb	С		X		Х		Х	Х	Х	χ	Х		
MANhandle*	Mancozeb+ Myclobutanil	В	X	X	Х	Х		Х	Х	Х	Χ	Х		
Manicure® 6FL	Chlorothalonil	С	Χ	Х	Х	Х	Х	X	X		Χ	X		
Manicure T&O	Chlorothalonil	С	Χ	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х			Χ	Х		
Manicure Ultra 82.5%	Chlorothalonil	С	Χ	X	Х	Х	Х	Х	Χ		χ	Х		
PCNB 12.5% + Fert	PCNB	С		Х	X		Х	Χ	Х					
Prodigy™ Signature™	Fosetyl-Al	S								Х				Χ
Revere™ 10G	PCNB	С		Х	Х		Х	Х	Х					
Revere 4000	PCNB	C		Х	Х		Х	Χ	X					
Spectator®	Propiconazole	S	Χ	X	X	X	Х	Х	Х		Χ	Х		
Spectator Ultra 1.3	Propiconazole	S	Χ	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х		χ	Х		
LESCO T-Storm 2G	Thiophanate-methyl	S	Х	Х	Χ	Х		Χ	Х		Χ			
LESCO T-Storm** Flo	Thiophanate-methyl	S	Х	Х	Χ			Х	Х		χ	H		
LESCO T-Storm 50WSB	Thiophanate-methyl	S	Х	Х	χ			Х	Х		Х			
TwoSome™ Flowable	Thiophanate-methyl + Iprodione	В	Х	Х	X			Х	Х					

Insect Control

All turf areas can occasionally have problems with insects, and sports turf is no exception. Before applying an insecticide, it is important to properly identify the pest to be controlled. Contact your LESCO sales representative for assistance in pest identification and selection of the appropriate control product.



			history	CONTRACT	CONTRACT	Shirter	
Nuisance Wildlife Soluti	ons	Moles/Voles	Gophers	Geese	Deer	Rabbit	Sauirrel
LESCO PRODUCTS	ACTIVE INGREDIENT						
Talpirid**	Bromethalin	Х					
Kaput [®] Mole Gel Bait	Warfarin	Х					
Liquid Fence® Mole/Vole Repellent	N/A	Х	Χ				
Liquid Fence Goose Repellent	N/A			Х			
Kaput D Gopher Bait	Diphacinone		Х				
Flight Control® Plus	Anthraquinone			Х			
Deer Off®	N/A				х	Х	Х

Nuisance Wildlife

Sub Surface

Insect Contro	ol Solutions	Ants	Armyworms	Black Turfgrass Ataenius - Adull	Bluegrass Billbug - Adult	Chiggers	Chinch Bug	Cutworm	Earwig	European Crane Fly	Fire Ants	Fleas	Grasshopper	Mites (Various Turfgrass)	Sod Webworms	Spittlebug	Ticks	Black Turfgrass Ataenius - Larva	Bluegrass Billbug - Larvae	Hyperodes Weevil	Mole Cricket	European Crane Fly - Larvae	White Grub Species
LESCO PRODUCTS	ACTIVE INGREDIENT																						
Merit [®] WSP	Imidacloprid						X	X										X	Χ	X	Х	X	X
Allectus® SC Flowable	Bifenthrin & Imidacloprid		Х	X	Х		Х	X	Χ	Χ	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х		X	Х	Χ	Х	X	Х	X
Allectus Granular	Bifenthrin & Imidacloprid	X	Х	X	Х		Х	Χ		X	Х				Х			Х	Χ	Х	Х	Х	X
CrossCheck® Plus Flowable	Bifenthrin	Х	Х	Χ	Х		Х		Х	Х	Х	Х	χ	Х	Х		Χ			Х	Х	Х	Х
CrossCheck EZ Granular	Bifenthrin	Х	Х	Х	Х		Х		X	X	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х		X			Х	X	X	X
CrossCheck PL Granular	Bifenthrin	Х	Х	Χ	Х		Х		Χ	Χ	Х	Χ	Х	Χ	Х		χ			Х	Х	Х	Х
TopChoice®	Fipronil	X									X	Х					X				Х		
Advion® Fire Ant Bait	Indoxacarb										Х												
Dylox® 6.2G	Trichlorfon		X					X							Х					Х	X		Х
Sevin® SL	Carbaryl	Х	Х	X		Х	Х	Χ	Х	X		χ	Х		Х	Х	Χ	Х	Χ	Х			X
Sevin 6.3% Granular	Carbaryl	X	Х		X	X	X	Х	X			X	X		X	Х	X					X	X
Advion Mole Cricket Bait	Indoxacarb																				Х		
Fertilizer Comb	ination Products																						
Merit + Fertilizer	Imidacloprid																	χ	Χ	Χ	. X	х	χ
Mach 2 [®] + Fertilizer	Halofenozide																						X
Talstar [®] + Fertilizer	Bifenthrin	Х	Х	Х	Х		Х	χ			Х	χ			Х		Х			Х	Х		
Allectus + Fertilizer	Bifenthrin & Imidacloprid		Х		Х		X	X		X	Х	Х			Х		Х	Х	X	Х	Х	χ	X
TopChoice +Fertilizer	Fipronil	Х									Х	Х					Х				Χ		

Surface

Weed Control

Weed management is an important aspect of sports turf management. The process can be broken down into two basic categories, commonly referred to as pre-emergent and post-emergent weed control.

Before they appear

Pre-emergent weed control is the process of eliminating weeds before they appear. Pre-emergent herbicides are generally used to prevent annual grassy weeds, such as crabgrass, goosegrass, *Poa annua* and foxtail, and some broadleaf weeds. These products can be applied as either a granular or sprayable and control weeds by establishing a barrier in the soil that prevents germinating weed seeds from emerging. Timing can be critical and many professional turf managers treat the turf twice to maximize weed prevention.



				(Gras	sy W	/eed	s				В	road	dlea	f We	eds			N	Misc.
Pre-emerge Weed Con	nt trol Solutio	ons	Annual Bluegrass	Barnyardgrass	Crabgrass	Fall Panicum	Foxtail	Goosegrass	Johnsongrass	Carpetweed	Chickweed	Florida Pusley	Henbit	Knotweed	Lambsquarter	Oxalis	Purslane	Shepherdspurse	Spurge	Ornamental Labeling
LESCO PRODUCTS	COMMON NAME	FORMULATION																		
Lifeguard® WSP	Dithiopyr	Sprayable	х	х	Х		х	Х			Х		Х			х	х	х	Х	
Dimension® + Fertilizer	Dithiopyr	Granular	х	χ	х		Х	X			X		Х			X	Х	X	х	
PRE-M + Fertilizer	Pendimethalin	Granular	х	Х	х	х	х	Х	Х	Х	х	х		х	Х	Х	Х	х	х	
PRE-M 3.3 EC	Pendimethalin	Sprayable	Х	х	х	Х	х	χ	Х	X	X	х		Х	Х	х	X	Х	х	
PRE-M® AquaCap™	Pendimethalin	Sprayable	х	Х	х	х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	х		Х	Х	Х	Х	х	х	
Stonewall® + Fertilizer	Prodiamine	Granular	χ	χ	х		х	χ	Х	Х	Х	Х	Ī	χ	Х		Х	х	Х	χ
Stonewall 65WDG	Prodiamine	Sprayable	х	χ	х		х	Х	χ	Х	χ	Х		Х	х		Х	χ	Х	χ

After they appear

Post-emergent weed control is the process of eliminating weeds after they appear. Post-emergent herbicides are most often used to control broadleaf weeds like dandelions, clover, spurge, chickweed and others. They can be applied as a granular or a sprayable to an entire sports field or spot sprayed on individual weeds or weedy patches.



												Br	oad	lea	f W	eed	s									Ι	Mis	sc.
Post-en Weed	nergent Control Sc	olutions	Black Medic	Carpetweed	Chickweed	Chicory	Clover	Curley Dock	Dollarweed	Dandellon	Florida Pusley	Ground Ivy	Henbit	Knotweed	Lambsquarter	Mallow	Oxalis	Plantain, Buckhorn	Pursiane	Sheep Sorrel	Shepherdspurse	Speedwell	Spurge	Thistle, Canada	Thistle, Russian	Virginia Buttonweed	Yarrow	Wild Garlic / Onion
LESCO PRODUCTS	COMMON NAME	FORMULATION																										
Eliminate LO	TIPA 2,4-D, MCPP & Dicamba	Sprayable	Х		х	Х	Х	х		х		x	х	х	Х	х	Х	Х	Х	х	Х	Х	х				х	х
Eliminate™ D	2,4-D, MCPP & Dicamba	Sprayable	X		X	X	X	X		X		х	X	X	X	X	х	X	Х	Х	x	х	х				х	χ
Eliminate	MCPA, Triclopyr & Dicamba	Sprayable	Х	х	X	X	х	х	X	Х	X	Х	х	X	Х	X	х	х	х	Х	х	х	Х	X	X		х	х
Momentum® FX2	2,4-D, Triclopyr & Fluroxypyr	Sprayable	х	х	Х	Х	х	Х		Х	Х	Х	х	χ	Х	Х	х	X	Х	Х	х	Х	х	X	х	Х	х	
Three-Way™	Amines of 2,4-D, MCPP & Dicamba	Sprayable	х		х	Х	X	Х		Х		Х	Х	Х	Х	Х		Х	Х	Х	х	Х	Х				х	
Three-Way Ester II	Esters of MCPA, Triclopyr & Dicamba	Sprayable	x	x	x	x	×	x		x	х	x	x	x	x	х	x	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Momentum Force Weed and Feed	2,4-D, Mecoprop-p, Dicamba	Granular	х	x	х	X	x	х	х	х	Х	х	х	х	х	х	x	х	х	х	х	х	х	x	х	x	х	х
Atrazine + Fertilizer	Atrazine	Granular	х		x		Х		х	Х	X		X	х	Х		X				x							
18-2-3 (Mini) Weed and Feed	2,4-D, MCPP & 2,4-DP	Granular	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	χ		Х	Х	х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	X	х	Х	X	Х	Х	X	х	Х
23-0-8 (Mini) Weed and Feed	2,4-D, Mecoprop- p & Dichlorprop-p	Granular	X	х	х	х	х	Х	х	X	Х	х	X	X	Х	Х	X	х	х	X	X	X	х	x	х		х	х

Seasonal Field Maintenance

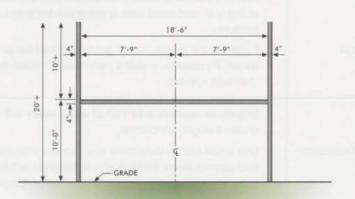
February/March	April
Overseed cool-season grasses on northern fields Stripe fields with LESCO Tournament Athletic Field Marking Paint, and freshen markings prior to each event	Every 3-4 years, conduct a soil test to determine nutrient balance and pH level of soil As turf recovers from dormant period, aerate field thoroughly Apply pre-emergent herbicide Reseed bare patches from fall season with appropriate turfgrass seed mixture
May	June
Begin maintenance fertilization Apply systemic herbicide to control broadleaf weeds Repair low spots, puddles to get ready for fall season	Fertilize and irrigate as needed. Use of specific fertilizers can help minimize the effects of "summer stress" heat and drought Apply systemic herbicide to control broadleaf weeds as needed Do initial seeding/sprigging of new fields in southern areas
July	August
Fertilize, irrigate as needed	Aerate field Fertilize, irrigate as needed
September	October
Apply pre-emergent for Poa annua Fertilize, irrigate as needed Reseed bare patches from spring season with appropriate turfgrass seed mixture Do initial seeding of new fields in northern areas Repair low spots, puddles to get ready for spring season	Aerate field Fertilize as needed Overseed cool-season grasses on warm-season fields to create a winter playing surface

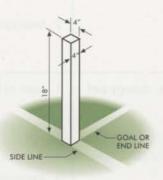
Troubleshooting

Observed symptom	Possible Cause	Remedy
Puddling	Low spots in field	Fill the spots with good quality topsoil, Pro's Choice Red or Rapid Dry, level, incorporate into the top 2" of the soil, and seed with appropriate turfgrass seed mixture.
	2. Inadequate drainage	Examine the grade and re-grade the field for proper runoff. If possible, install a perimeter or cross-field drainage system.
Sparse, clumpy turf	1. Lack of water	Irrigate as needed; add 1½" of water every 4-5 days under drought conditions.
	Lack of/improper fertilization	 Use a soil test to determine any nutrient imbalances and correct them. Provide a maintenance fertilization program similar to that outlined in Chart 4 (page 15).
	Excessive soil compaction	Change use pattern on field. Aerate the field thoroughly. Use Pro's Choice products as needed.
Excessive scarring	Use of field when it is wet Improper use of the field	Reduce or eliminate play on the field when conditions are wet. Check to see whether there is adequate drainage for the field and install if necessary.
Dead & dying areas	Lack of water	Irrigate as needed; add 1½" of water every 4-5 days under drought conditions.
	Attack by turf disease or pests	Determine the problem and provide specific treatment with the recommended control product. Generally, turf diseases and pest problems show other symptoms such as spotting, wilt, the presence of insects and so on.
Poor growth	1. Lack of water	Irrigate as needed; add 1½" of water every 4-5 days under drought conditions.
	Lack of/improper fertilization	 Use a soil test to determine any nutrient imbalances and correct them. Provide a maintenance fertilization program similar to that outlined in Chart 4 (page 15).
	Excessive soil compaction	Change use pattern on field. Aerate the field thoroughly.
Saturated wet field	Inadequate drainage	Examine the grade and re-grade the field for proper runoff. If possible, install a perimeter or cross-field drainage system.
		Install Pro's Choice products as needed.

Part III. Specifications for Design of Playing Fields

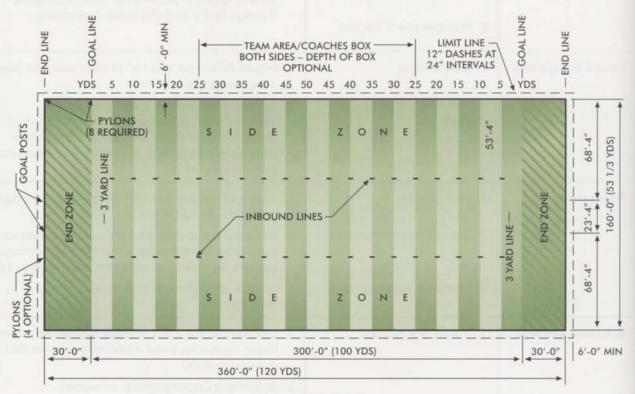
American Football (NCAA, Pop Warner Junior League)





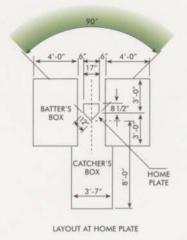
PYLON DETAIL

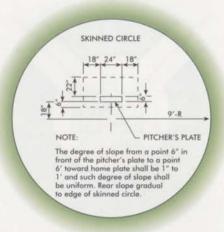
GOAL POSTS



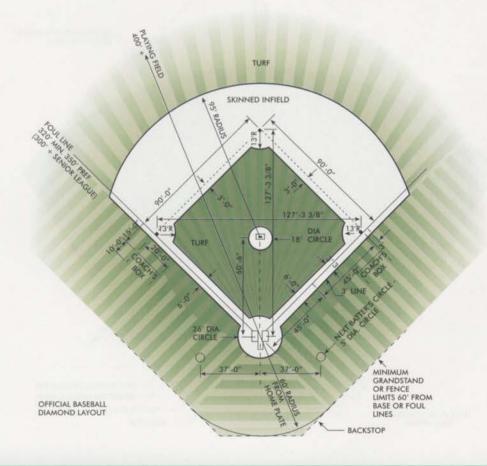
FOOTBALL FIELD LAYOUT

Baseball (Official, Babe Ruth, Senior League)

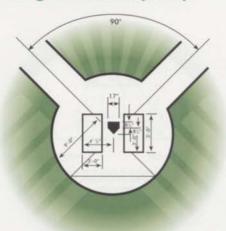


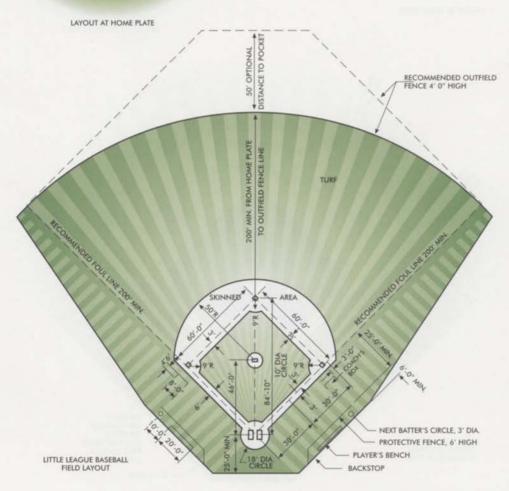


LAYOUT AT PITCHER'S PLATE

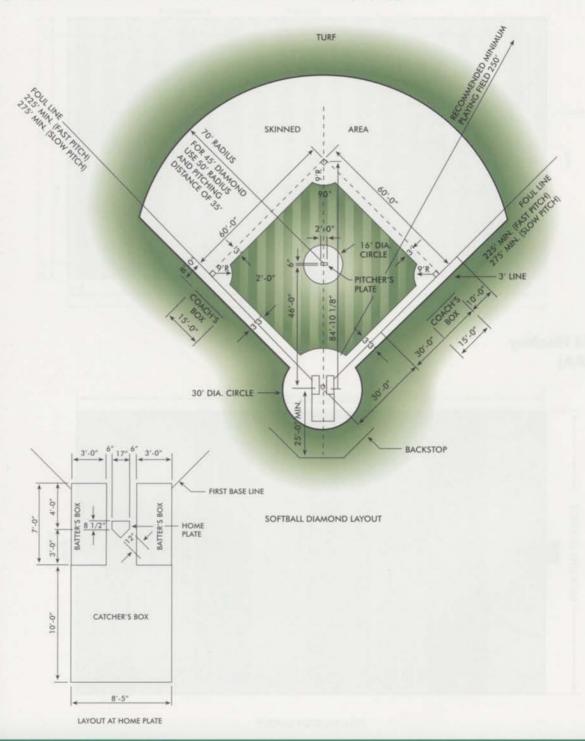


Little League (Little League Baseball, Inc.)

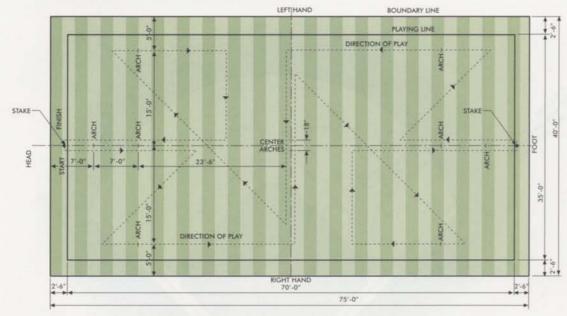




12" Softball (Fast or Slow Pitch) [Amateur Softball Association of America (ASA)]



Croquet [National Croquet Association (NCA)]



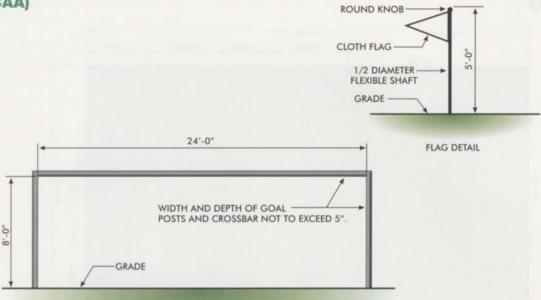
CROQUET FIELD LAYOUT

Field Hockey (NCAA)

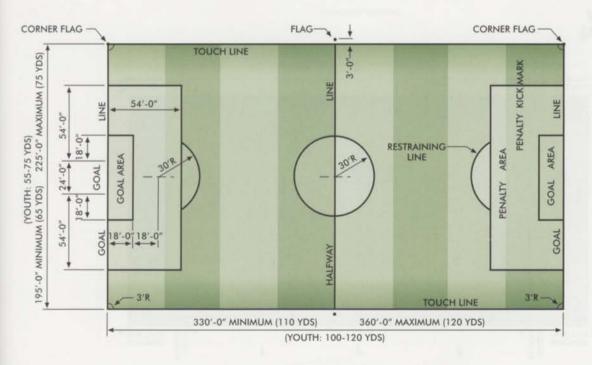


FIELD HOCKEY LAYOUT



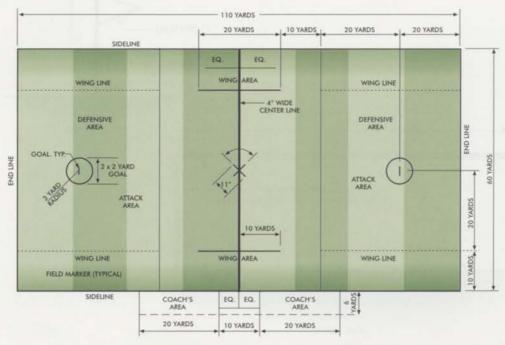


GOAL POSTS



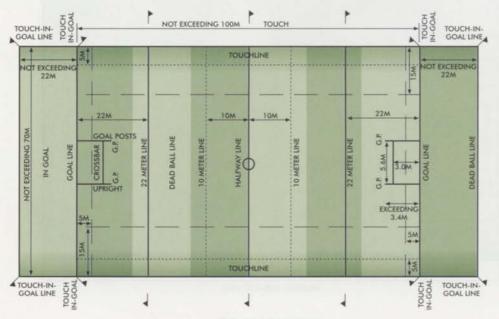
SOCCER FIELD LAYOUT

Lacrosse (NCAA)



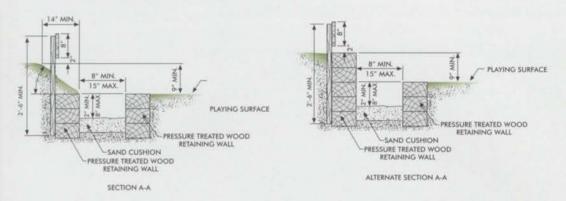
Rugby (NCAA)

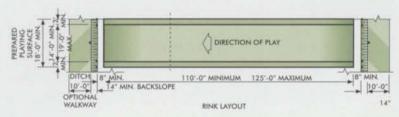
LACROSSE FIELD LAYOUT

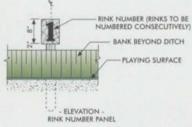


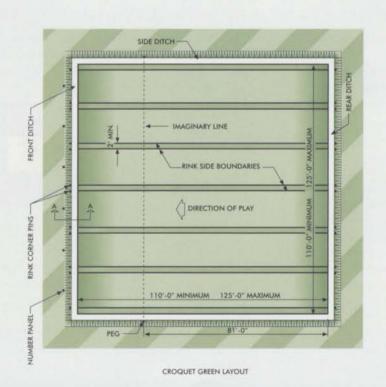
RUGBY FIELD LAYOUT

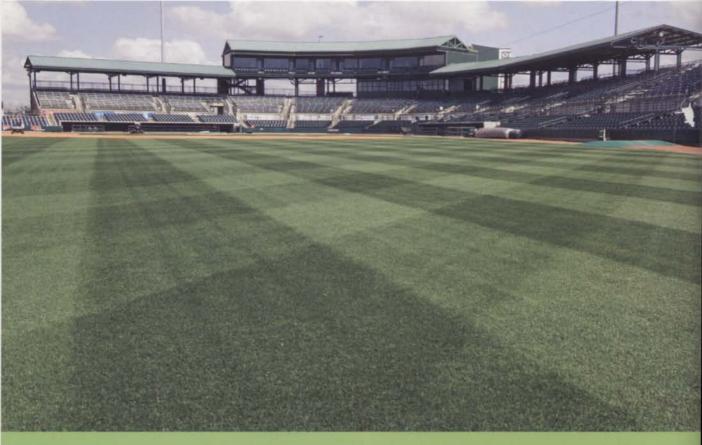
Lawn Bowling [American Lawn Bowls Association (ALBA)]











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- Disease Control
- Insect Control
- · Sports Turf Supplies
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- · Golf Course Accessories
- · Ice Melt Products
- ... and more!

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LESCO Professional Turf Products



continued from page 58

field, N.Y.-based Advanced Applications. However, he adds results vary depending on geographic markets.

Kory Ballard, owner of Perficut Lawn & Landscape in Des Moines, Iowa, has distributed door hangers on a large scale – more than 25,000 – for a number of years and prefers them over mailers. "I like the fact that they will need to remove a door hanger from their door and at some point look at it," he posts. "Even if they're not in the market for your service, they'll see your name.

"We find door hangers to be very inexpensive and we seem to get great results," he adds. "Like with any advertising program, you need to be consistent. We usually distribute the door hangers a few days a week with a couple of part-time employees. For best results, we have them in uniforms and they deliver in the evenings and on Saturdays." While he hasn't tracked exact return-rate figures, Ballard says after distributing on a Saturday he always notices an influx of calls the following Monday.

Chad Stern posts that he likes door hangers as a marketing tool, especially custom-designed hangers, which he believes are worth the extra \$100 to \$200 since they stand out among the more unprofessional ones customers may typically receive. "When I go to do an estimate at a new house I usually try to leave door hangers at all of the surrounding houses," says Stern, owner, Mowing & More, Chevy Chase, Md.

While door hangers sound like an intriguing advertising method, many contractors, especially those who push

snow in the winter, say they don't have the manpower to cover new neighborhoods and distribute hangers.

Without accounting for street-tostreet transportation, Warren Turner, owner of Turner's Landscape in Sacramento, Calif,, posts he can install two hangers per minute. "If I'm really going fast, then maybe three per minute," he says. "It depends on the house setting and if you walk on lawns or around them and use the walkways."

Jerry Naiser, president of Tree Masters in Austin, Texas, hires an outside company to distribute his company's door hangers. The company charges 16 cents per door and runs eight walkers, each who can hang 90 pieces per hour. "Last year we put out 100,000 hangers and picked up 700 customers," he says.

marketing plans

To achieve success and drive sales, a sound marketing plan is key.

Regardless if a contractor commits to simple door hangers or a flashy television commercial, the U.S. Small Business Administration recommends business owners define three key objectives.

1. DEFINE YOUR BUSINESS:

- · Your product or service; your price
- Your geographic marketing area neighborhood, regional or national
- · Your competition and how you differ from them what makes you special
- · Your promotion methods and the competition's promotion methods; your distribution methods

2. DEFINE YOUR CUSTOMERS:

- Your current customer base age, sex, income and neighborhood
- . How your customers learn about your product or service advertising, direct mail, word of mouth, Yellow Pages
- · Patterns or habits your customers and potential customers share where they shop, what they read, etc.
- Qualities your customers value most about your product or service selection, convenience, service, reliability, availability and affordability
- Qualities your customers like least about your service can they be adjusted to serve your customers better?
- · Prospective customers who you aren't currently reaching

3. DEFINE YOUR PLAN AND BUDGET:

- Previous marketing methods you used to communicate to your customers; methods that have been effective
- Cost compared to sales; cost per customer
- · Possible future marketing methods to attract new customers
- · Percentage of profits you can allocate to your marketing campaign
- Marketing tools you can implement within your budget newspaper; magazine; Yellow Pages; radio or television advertising; direct mail; telemarketing; and public relations activities such as community involvement, sponsorship, or press releases
- Methods of testing your marking ideas and methods for measuring the results of your marketing campaign

THE BIG ZERO

The ability to reduce downtime makes zeros the real jobsite heroes for many landscape contractors. Would a zero-turn commercial mower be right for your cutting fleet?

Paul Rauch readily attests that the advent of the commercial-grade zero-turn mower not only has been one of the most productive advancements in lawn maintenance technology, but it has had a significant impact on his mowing operations. Three years ago, Rauch, the vice president of Wildrose Lawncare in Lutz, Fla., added a 60-inch zero-turn to his three-man mowing crew and the impact on jobsite efficiency was almost immediately noticeable.

"We tend to high-end residential clients," Rauch says. "With the zero-turn we get the site cut quickly and have the freedom to make the property look really good for our client."

Compared to the walk-behind mowers they previously used exclusively, the zero-turn was easy to drive and maneuver around a residential yard and it made a high-quality cut. Likewise, the machine's speed and durability, along with its engine's fuel efficiency, allowed for more consistent use and required less downtime throughout the day. But besides the mechanical advantages, the zero-turn mower was able to assist Rauch's maintenance crew



Photo: John Deere

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The new ENFORCER" has just what the commercial operator is looking for — from the legendary Command Cut System" and its fabricated mower deck in 44", 48" and 54" sizes — to the foot pedal height adjustment and high-back suspension seat. Features like Timken" tapered roller bearings, a heavy-duty pivoting front axle and fully welded steel frame mean it's built fough. All this, plus a premium Kawasaki" engine and our 2-year limited commercial warranty, means you should demo one today! Sold exclusively at Independent Retailers. Stop in and ask about our fleet programs.



www.cubcommercial.com *See your local Independent Retailer for warranty information

in building up a decisive advantage over mow-and-blow competitors. "It's cut my mowing time in half," he says. "I'm then able to spend more time on detail work, which is what distinguishes my company from the competition."

On average, Rauch spends one hour on a residential jobsite. Prior to adding the zero-turn, mowing occupied upwards of 40 minutes of that time, with the rest devoted to pulling weeds and pruning. With the addition of the zero-turn, the average mowing time is now only 15 minutes, he says. "With the zero-turn I was able to switch to charging per labor hour instead of by square footage because my clients saw how much more they were getting from my crew in that hour we were on the site," he says. "I was then able to increase my fees by 20 percent and my customers were OK with that because they see how much gets done in that hour."

Ask most contractors what they favor and they respond there's not much not to like about zero-turn mowers?

Zero-turn mowers are true to their name. Pivoting on a single spot by a pair of levers that control turning, acceleration and breaking, zero-turn mowers can revolve 10 times before a standard mower can make a single revolution. Designed to be more maneuverable and faster than standard commercial cutters, and comparable in cost to the large walk-behind units, landscape contractors have come to rely on zero-turn technology to get their mowing jobs done faster, with

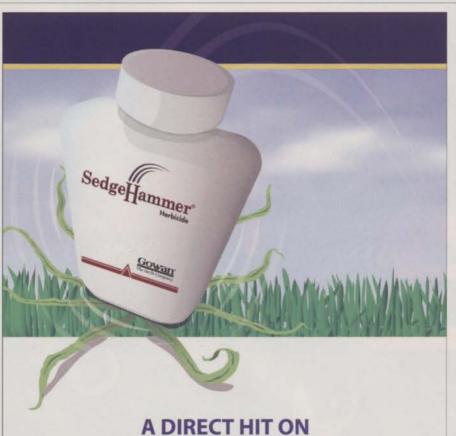
"Zero-turns have cut my mowing time in half. I'm then able to spend more time on detail work, which is what distinguishes my company from the competition." – Paul Rauch

less downtime and without sacrificing jobsite quality.

Mowing can be a cut-throat environment, and competition is one of the biggest obstacles a landscape contractor faces.

"In mowing, there's always someone else out there who is willing to do
the same job for less," says Ken Raney,
advertising manager for Hesston,
Kan.-based Hustler Turf Equipment.
"This challenge is for the contractor to
figure out ways he can do the job for
less, yet still be profitable. Most times
this means finding a machine that will
allow the contractor to be competitive, yet make him money. The zeroturn mower is that machine."

ZERO HISTORY. Early versions of the zero-turn mower bear little resemblance to the modern-day machines zipping around commercial business



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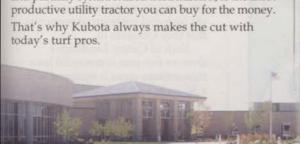
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parks and residential backyards.

Original models from the 1960s were chain-driven and, while effective in concept, they developed a reputation for poor reliability, high maintenance costs and being predominately a cutter for flat surfaces.

Manufacturers, seeing the untapped potential in the machines, began to focus zero-turn evolution on in-the-field performance. For example, the addition of independent suspension provided protection from abuse and increased contractor comfort.

Subsequent generations of zeroturn mowers featured models with lower centers of gravity and more even weight distribution. Both advancements proved to be key for the machine because operators could now attack hillside jobs more effectively and efficiently.

In additions, manufacturers began to turn toward diesel engines to provide users with greater fuel efficiency, durability and torque, which beefed up mowing and mulching in lessthan-ideal conditions.

By the late 1980s, manufacturers cite the evolution towards an enclosed final drive as a distinct advancement in zero-turn mower technology. For landscape contractors, this advancement meant they no longer had to be concerned about chain adjustment because a connection exists from the drive to the transmission.

In terms of its development, the zero-turn mower is constantly changing. For example, the addition of liquid-cooled electronic fuel injection in some models – similar to engine technology in trucks and automobiles – provides contractors with a cooler-running machine that results in a longer-lasting, more fuel-efficient engine.

Wit recent generations of zeroturn mowers manufacturers have turned their attention towards durability to address contractor concerns about downtime. For example, many manufacturers began constructing zero-turn mowing decks with highstrength steel for less wear-and-tear.

TIME IS MONEY. Downtime is a landscape contractor's biggest bane as they try to become more productive business owners. So how are zero-turn mowers increasing productivity and reducing downtime for contractors?

Joe Porta, vice president of sales at Canete Landscape & Garden in Wayne, N.J., says without zero-turn mowers, his maintenance crews could not compete against other outfits for the high-end commercial properties that they specialize in.

Each of Canete Landscape's three-to-five-man commercial lawn maintenance crews is equipped with a 36-inch, a 48-inch and a 52-inch zero-turn mower. The company's management philosophy is to equip each crew with the right tools for a variety of landscape challenges, Porta says.

For example, if a jobsite has a sloping area, a 36-inch zero-turn is the more feasible choice, Porta says. However, if a commercial property has fenced-in areas, than the smaller, 36-inch zero-turn is the more eco-







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nomical choice because it can more easily enter and exit these tight areas, he says. "It's good to have variety to deal with the different cutting situations you'll encounter," he points out. "All together, these three are the right combination of tools to allow us to do our job quickly and efficiently on each jobsite."

Speed, Porta says, is one major asset a commercial-grade zero-turn mower brings to the job. "With zero-turns we've been able to cut the amount of time we're on a jobsite by half," he says, compared to belt-driven standard riding mowers. "Cutting the time we're on site has allowed us to be more competitive in a very tight marketplace. Zero-turns have allowed us to knock 5 percent off of our mowing price and still remain profitable."

Zero-turn mowers offer landscape contractors machines packed with horsepower. This translates to faster ground speeds and increased productivity. Together they are the core of

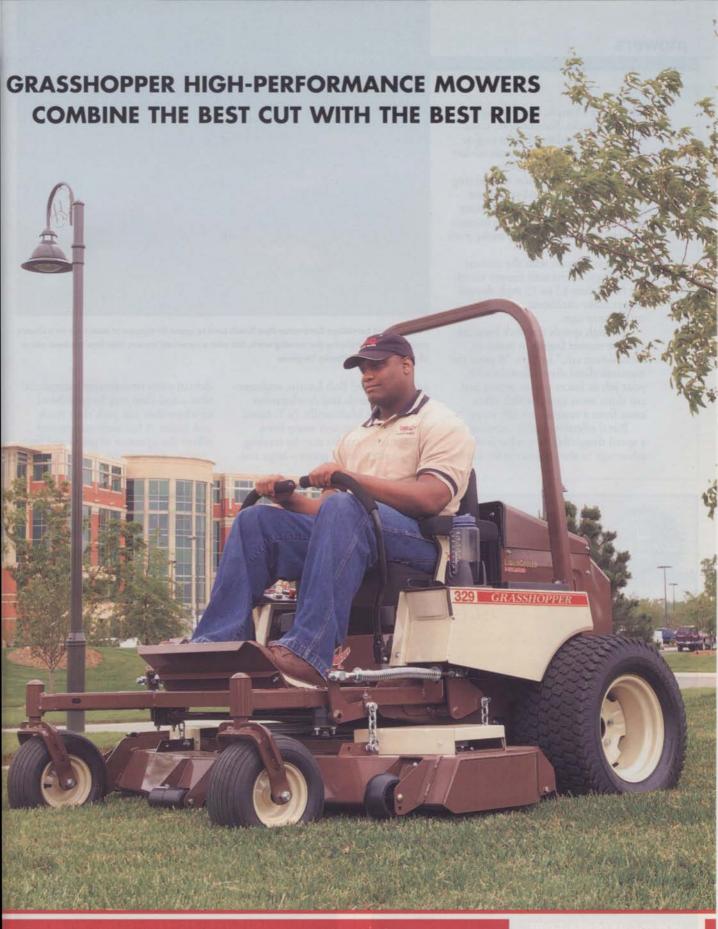


True to their name, zero-turning radius mowers can revolve 10 times before a standard mower can make a single revolution because of their unique pivoting action controlled by a pair of levers that enable the machine to turn, accelerate and break. Photo: Toro

the attraction to zero-turn mowers because the faster an operator can cruise over the surface the quicker he can complete a job and the more mowing that individual or crew can do in a day. A mower with a 72-inch deck typically comes equipped with a minimum of a 27- to 30-horsepower gasoline-powered engine, Raney says.

Raney warns, though, that while contractors say they want more horsepower and operational speeds





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faster than 15 mph, there are significant drawbacks. For example, more horsepower requires a bigger engine and larger engines increase the sticker price of the zero-turn mower.

"At some point, you're not gaining any more efficiency and you're just increasing your overall costs," Raney says. "No contractor wants to increase his costs and not be able to make it on the jobsite."

This is because with the current technology, a zero-turn mower traveling faster than 12 to 15 mph doesn't always make consistent or quality cuts, Raney says.

"At high speeds the deck bounces and the mower begins to make an inconsistent cut," he says. "A poor cut increases client dissatisfaction with your job or forces you to return and cut those areas again, which takes away from a contractor's efficiency."

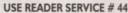
But if effective quality mowing has a speed threshold, then what is the advantage to the contractor for having

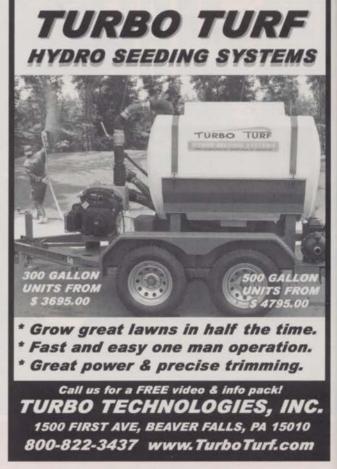


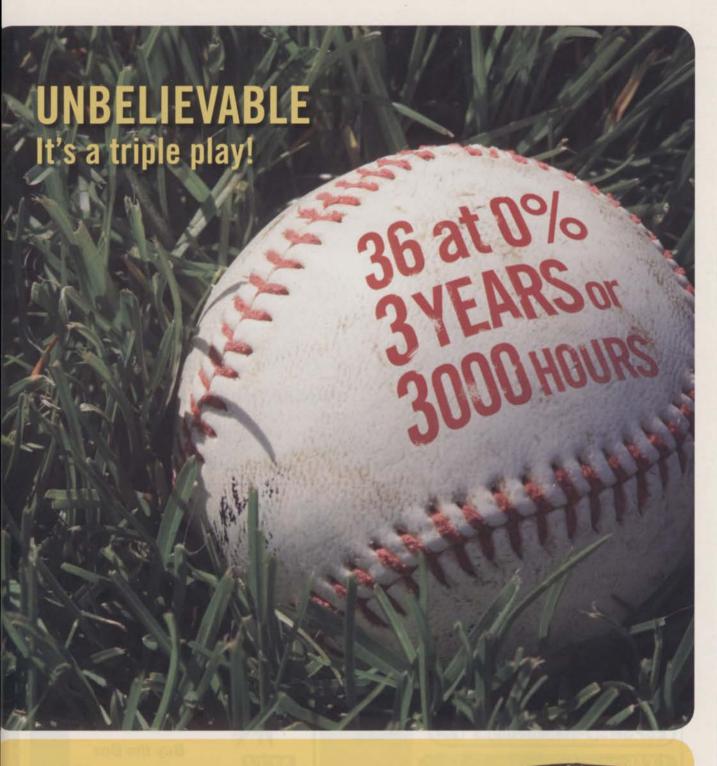
Florida-based Landscape Contractor Paul Rauch used to spend 40 minutes of each hour on a client's property just completing the mowing work. But with a zero-turn mower, that time has been cut to 15 minutes. Photo: Massey Ferguson

a fast machine? Bob Laurin, engineering and research and development manager for Munnsville, N.Y.-based Ferris Industries, says many lawn maintenance outfits may be tending to long stretches of green – large residential yards or extensive commercial sites – and they may be prohibited to where they can park their truck and trailer. A fast zero-turn mower allows the operator to get to and from continued on page 104, sidebar on page 102





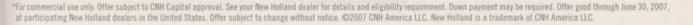




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the smart buy

andscape contractors add zero-turn mowers to their fleets to become more effective and efficient cutters. This process, though, doesn't start at the jobsite, but rather at the commercial dealer's showroom.

Making sound purchasing decisions will dictate the level of success a contractor has with his new zeroturn machine. Contractors and manufacturers offer some practical and important key points for purchasing zero-turn mowers that go beyond just kicking their tires.

KNOW YOUR NEEDS: Review the scope of your mowing operations and gravitate toward models that address your particular mowing needs. Don't be swayed to models with bells-and-whistle features that contribute to costs but won't increase on-site efficiency.

REAL WORLD USE: Get the mower out of the showroom and into the real world. The machine may prove to be a fast, sweet ride in the dealership parking lot, but how does it handle on a slope or on uneven terrain?

COST CONSIDERATIONS: There's more financially to consider about zero-turn ownership beyond the initial sticker price. Closely examine maintenance and replacement part costs. And is an extended warranty a cost-effective option?

LONG-TERM PROTECTION: Is this model prone to maintenance or mechanical problems after a specific number of hours in service? What is and is not covered under the zero-turn's warranty? What provisions will the commercial dealer make to make sure you're up and running when your zero-turn is in the shop?

PERSONAL PROTECTION: Is a roll-over safety device an option on the zero-turn under consideration? Protecting yourself and your workforce is paramount to cutting efficiency.



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continued from page 100

various jobsite areas quickly, reducing downtime.

"You'll most likely not want to mow at those speeds," Laurin says. "Most manufacturers will tell contractors that those higher speeds are transportation speeds."

USE AND RELIABILITY. Other keys to the zero-turn allure are versatility, durability and reliability.

To boost on-site efficiency, Rauch prefers to equip his zero-turn with a mulching blade, which eliminates the need for a bag and reduces the amount of post-mowing clean-up required when using a side-discharge shoot.

"I believe the mulching blade on a

"I believe the mulching blade on a zero-turn makes a much better cut on the grass, which overtime leads to a healthier lawn," Rauch says. "Mulching may require you to operate the zero-turn at a slower speed than if you were bagging or using the side-discharge shoot, but that reduction in speed makes you more aware of where

"Cutting the time we're on site has allowed us to be more competitive in a very tight marketplace. Zeroturns have allowed us to knock 5 percent off of our mowing price and still remain profitable."

- Joe Porta

you are on the lawn and results in a better quality of cut."

The zero-turn's unique suspension and hydraulic system work in concert to improve mowing in otherwise adverse conditions, such as a wet landscape, Porta says.

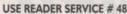
"With a standard mower you're mowing operations are down if there are wet conditions, which puts you behind schedule and forces you to hope the weather turns so you can play catch-up," he says. "But a zero-turn allows you to manage those conditions and mow effectively when the surface is wet."

A zero-turn suspension also ensures a superior quality of cut, Laurin says. Without a decent suspension system the zero-turn's operator will take a physical beating on an uneven surface, Laurin says.

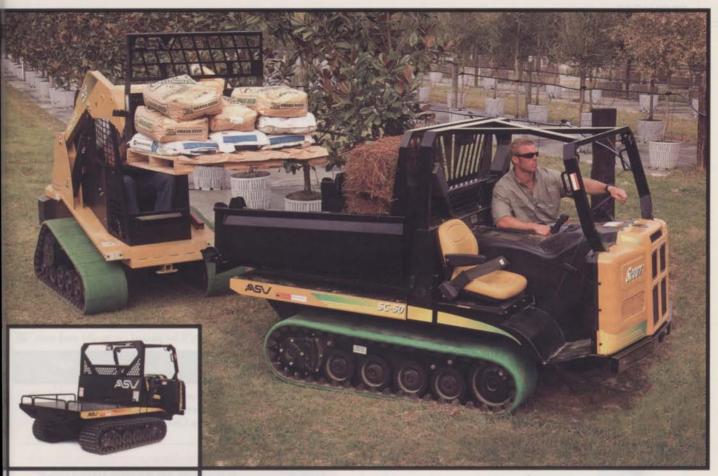
"The suspension allows your deck to float along with the zero-turns tires to provide a consistent cut," he says. "That is going to increase your efficiency with the mower."

However, the most efficient and effective zero-turn mower won't amount to much if it needs constant servicing, Raney says.











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"A quality, well-built zero-turn mower is not going to have a lot of downtime for maintenance and repairs," Raney says. This is a key factor to landscape contractors, he adds, because they're not hampered by inactivity waiting for their mower to be repaired, or worse, stuck on a jobsite with a broken zero-turn."

Most zero-turns can take a beating, Porta says. "When contractors talk about a manufacturer's name and reputation they're talking about durability and reliability," he says. "With a quality zero-turn you're running seven to eight hours a day without problems.

In seeking the correct zero-turn, contractors should keep in mind what they need the machine to do, Porta says. "The guys are on the jobsite to cut lawns," Porta says. "And that's what that mower needs to do for them in the most effective and efficient fashion possible."

However, before they can become workhorses for mowing, zero-turn mowers need to be applied to a mowing operation, contractors say. And that comes down to their ease of use. "Sometimes manufacturers can get too carried away with the bells and whistles they add to newer models," Raney says. "Often these can make the machines seem complicated, which intimidates contractors into not wanting to learn how to use the machines, or worse, even trying it.

"However, good zero-turns are simple machines," Raney adds. "And people who run the equipment on a regular basis will tell you that they find the equipment easy to use and learned to use it and become productive on it fairly quickly."

FUTURE ZERO-TURNS. Manufacturers says future advancements in zero-turn technology come down to contractor needs.

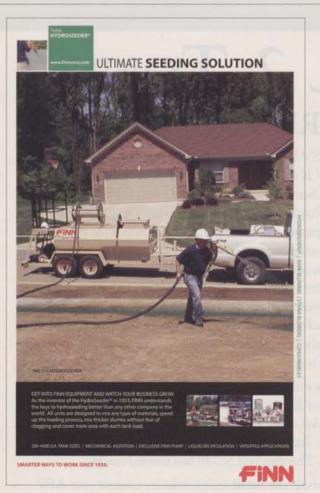
Contractors request future models be equipped with even more powerful engines to make mulching more efficient and to improve suction and vacuum actions when cutting.

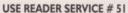
And with summer fuel prices expected to reach record heights, contractors and manufacturers say they expect future zero-turn innovations to include more efficient components and alternative-fuel engines.

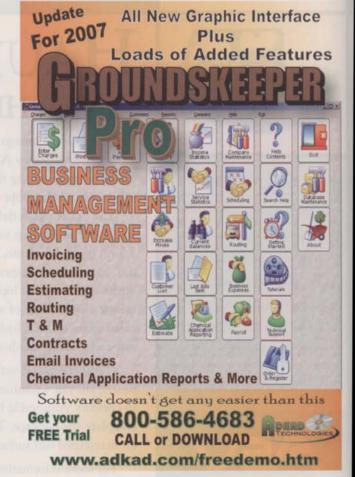
It's no doubt that zero-turn riding mowers will continue to evolve into smaller, faster, more maneuverable and efficient cutting machines. But of all of these components, whether it be a more sophisticated engine or a specialized fuel tank, "the fancier they get the more they're going to cost to produce," Laurin says. "And an outdoor equipment manufacturer can't continue to absorb those costs, so they'll be passed on to the end user."

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For more information on choosing the best zero-turn mower for your business, visit the June Online Extras section.







USE READER SERVICE # 52

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by kristin van veen-hincke | contributing editor

THE PREVENTIVE APPROACH

If diseased patches are ruining your clients' lawns, a fungicide service may be just the add-on you need to please customers and boost business.

inding customers with turf diseases can be a daily occurrence for some lawn care operators (LCOs). Many homeowners are more than agreeable to the curative treatments needed to save their lawns. However, convincing these customers that preventive treatments could help them avoid these problems all together can be a different story.

Michael Boyd, owner of Kemko Lawn & Shrub in Loganville, Ga., knows all too well the challenge of selling a preventive program. "We had a customer who was on an applied-as-needed program," he explains, "and we were applying fungicides as the problem presented itself on a curative basis. Well the disease just kept coming back. Every time we would get into a weather situation, the disease would rear its ugly head. Now this customer is on a preventive program, and he's thrilled with the results."

Mike Daly agrees. "The best disease control programs are used preventively to make continued on page 110.







continued from page 107

sure that problems are never noticed by the customer and turned into complaints about the appearance of their turf," says the fungicide business manager for Bayer Environmental Science, Research Triangle Park, N.C.

WHAT THE SERVICE ENTAILS.

High-quality lawns that are being maintained during hot summers are the best candidates for disease problems, particularly in areas with poor soils, Daly points out. "Without addressing these disease issues, the customer will sooner or later decide that the rest of their lawn care package is not delivering the kind of results they thought they were purchasing and may cancel their service," he says.

This is why disease control can be the perfect service addition for lawn care operators with customers who have these types of lawns.

Basic lawn care services can include fertilization, weed control and surface insect control. Adding fungicides into the service mix can be a challenge

for any LCO. According to Steve Ambrose, general manager of ABC Pest & Lawn Services in Austin, Texas, fungicide application services are offered on the front end to all of his customers. "Disease control is an option

that is offered on all properties that have a type of grass that may be disease prone, such as St. Augustine," he says. "We try to focus more on a preventive program. In other words, if a homeowner is on our regular service, and they have purchased our fungicide treatment, we try to do everything we can to be proactive in the early fall to get down a preventive application so that symptoms will never be present. In my opinion, it's better to work

on a preventive program as opposed to a curative one."

Daly concurs. "In all cases (on warm-season or cool-season turf), the best time of year to start a disease program is before the pathogen starts affecting the turf," he explains. "That period of time depends on the pathogen, the host and the weather patterns in place at the time. Most people wait too long to start a disease

control program and compromise the

ultimate effectiveness of the fungicide by forcing it to work in a curative fashion, at the same time using a low rate of product with a long interval between applications."

While some lawn care operators offer disease control as part of their overall package, others offer it as an add-on service. The typical lawn care service for Clarence Davids & Co. customers consists of four applications of fertilizer, two applications of preemergents and two applications of broadleaf weed control. A fungicide application is sold as an add-on to the regular service. "In regards to fungicide on turf, most of our treatments are sold just about the time we start seeing the disease," explains Brian McAnally, division manager, lawn care and quality control/maintenance supervisor for the company, which is located in Plainfield, Ill.

Whether a lawn care operator chooses to incorporate disease control in their regular lawn care service package or offer it only to clients who have



Photo: Bayer Environmental Science

a history of turf disease on their properties, some pesticide manufacturers suggest that presenting the service in an total package format might be best. "Disease control is really about providing a total lawn care service package to customers and should be positioned and priced that way as a way to ensure that customers are delighted with the lawn care service they contracted for, including disease control," Daly suggests.

NEW FUNGICIDE ADVANCE-

MENTS. New fungicide advancements can have a positive impact on any LCO's business. These advancements include not only products, but how operators can market fungicide treatments to their customers. Kyle Miller, senior market development specialist with BASF in Richmond, Va., outlines three advancements. "First, manufacturers are marketing products just for the lawn care segment," he points out. "This is quite a change since the market has focused on the golf industry for so long. Secondly, the market has some broader spectrum products that may have 20 or more different diseases on the label. This is a real advantage for the lawn care operator. Lastly, there are some fungicides now that show good residual meaning they will last a month on a lawn and that's a real time saver.'

The price of fungicides has also decreased as they've been adapted for the lawn care market, Miller says. Bob Yarborough, turf and ornamental busi-

> ness unit manager, Advan, Roswell, Ga., agrees. But though they are coming down, fungicide prices are still higher than other products a lawn care opera tor is used to purchasing and applying.

For instance, according to Miller, a typical LCO may charge \$50 for a routine application containing fertilizer and pre- and postemergent products on a 7,000 square foot lawn. The cost of the product amounts to about \$9 per lawn. But an application of fungicide at the full rate on the same lawn may cos \$50 per lawn, and that jus covers the cost of the prod uct, Miller explains. So when the average LCO's

total pesticide expenditure is around \$46,467 (based on 2004 research, according to Miller), \$6,320 of that will go to fungicide purchases, while \$16,907 goes to insecticides, \$11,343 goes to preemergent herbicides, \$7,74 goes to selective herbicides and \$4,151 goes to nonselective herbicides, Miller says. Overall, Miller's research shows that 60.5 percent of LCOs offer fungicide services, so there is a need fo disease control in the marketplace de-



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spite the product's extra cost. The trick is getting the customers to buy into the service, since the majority of LCOs (54.9 percent) say only 1 to 10 percent of their customers' lawns are treated for disease control, Miller says.

In addition to newer fungicides priced more reasonably for the lawn care operator – 33 to 50 percent lower, according to industry suppliers – the increase in generic pesticides may also help improve product affordability,

Yarborough adds.

However, with any pesticide purchase, LCOs should examine their options carefully since price isn't the only factor to take into consideration – for instance, product efficacy, packaging and company support can also be crucial, Miller points out. "I think it just depends on whose product it is and is it a quality product," he says. "Will the company stand behind that product if you have a problem? Do they have history in the turf market-place? Are they going to bring new products to the marketplace in years to come? I think we need to ask these types of questions."

Ambrose lists technical support from the manufacturer as his top priority when purchasing products. "Fungicides can be expensive, and disease is a big problem. If it doesn't work I want to be able to pick up the phone and have someone come and

figure out why."

Dan Loughner, product technology specialist, Dow AgroSciences, Huntingdon Valley, Pa., suggests researching fungicide effectiveness, including results, history and experiences from other applicators. Another consideration is residual. "You don't want something that needs to be sprayed every couple of weeks," he explains. "If a fungicide is going to give six weeks of residual, but it's going to cost twice as much, is that favorable to my business versus something I have to spray every three weeks at a much lower cost? You have to weigh your options."

After figuring out their product options and costs, many LCOs wonder when they should add fungicide services. Boyd recommends lawn care professionals listen to their customers. That's exactly what he did. "Customers were asking for it so we decided to add it," he explains. "It wasn't challenging at all – the market was there, and the only challenging part was finding the right employees and

leaf disease & fungicides

awn care operators (LCOs) may find a number of ornamental foliar diseases in the landscape. The majority of the diseases are caused by fungi and a few are caused by bacterial agents. Most practitioners provide management of fungal diseases as needed.

For disease outbreaks to occur, it is necessary to have a susceptible plant (host), favorable environment and a virulent pathogen – these three things make up the disease triangle. These diseases are host-specific, meaning they infect a specific group of plants under conditions favorable for the disease.

To better understand the foliar diseases, they are typically grouped into early-, mid- and late-season diseases. Among the early season diseases, anthracnose, apple scab, powdery mildew, rust, foliar blights and conifer needle disease are the most common and detrimental to the plants.

The above early-season diseases are favored by cool and moist weather during the spring and are more detrimental for the health of plants than the diseases that occur later in the season. This is because these diseases can distort and defoliate prematurely and affect photosynthesis and sugar production. Late-season diseases are not as detrimental because the plants have had a chance to produce adequate sugar for the season before the disease infestations occur.

After the initial early season infections, plants may produce a new set of leaves by using the stored energy from previous years. If cool and moist weather conditions prevail, the disease activity may continue through the growing season. This process can weaken plants if diseases appear year after year, depleting the nutritional reserves of trees and causing them to be more susceptible to other biotic and abiotic disorders.

Management of these diseases depends upon the following: Proper identification of plants (host) and the pest (the causal factors), proper material (fungicides for fungal problems), proper methods (target treating), and proper timing. If these practices are not properly followed, the success in managing diseases may vary.

To manage these foliar diseases, first provide good cultural management practices, such as proper planting, mulching, watering and fertilizing, as needed to help improve plant health. If there is a history of disease activity consider providing preventive treatment of labeled and recommended fungicides as needed. Generally, most disease treatments should start around bud break and the treatments repeated two to three times at 10- to 14-day intervals unless otherwise indicated on the fungicide labels. Always refer to the label and follow the guidelines for the best results.





In the beginning was the SK500, the original workhorse that launched the Ditch Witch compact utility line. This family of extraordinarily versatile and reliable machines continues to grow, and now includes the SK650 mini skid steer and XT1600 excavator-tool carrier, both of which can drive numerous quick-change attachments. So you can tackle an unearthly number of jobs with a single compact utility machine. For details, call 800-654-6481 or visit ditchwitch.com.











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getting them trained." Kemko followed this same logic when it began treating trees and shrubs for disease in the 1990s.

When adding fungicide services, lawn care operators should consider pricing carefully. Some companies price by the square foot and others take the entire property into consideration. "We typically treat the whole property because it is a preventive program," Boyd points out. "But we also offer a square foot treatment because some properties are so large that it would be unrealistic to treat the entire property."

Turf Management Lawn Care charges \$9 to \$10 per 1,000 square feet for most fungicide applications, according to the Lawrenceville, Ga.-based company President Steven Vandervest. That price includes a 25-percent markup for materials.

Preventive fungicide programs can be more profitable because the company can include them in routine routes,



Brown patch's telltale rust-colored rings invade this Texas turf. Photo: ABC Pest & Lawn Services.

Vandervest says, estimating that 25 to 30 percent of the company's clients are on a preventive program. Turf Management's preventive programs are usually targeted toward cool-season grasses and begin at the end of March when temperatures near 80 degrees and humidity reaches 70 percent.

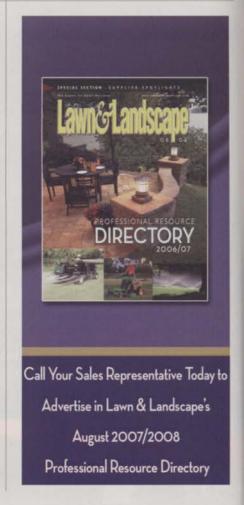
Curative applications can be less profitable because they require technicians to make multiple stops, which means Vandervest must pay for added labor and fuel costs. In general, he says fungicide applications result in 15-percent profit margins compared to 25-percent profit margins for other lawn care applications.

SERVICE CHALLENGES. Adding fungicide treatments to a service mix can be a challenge even with established customers. Kemko experienced that obstacle just this spring. "We did really good business last year," Boyd explains, "but when we contacted our customers for this year's program, almost 75 percent of them backed off of the fungicide treatment. I've seen this type of situation before. The customers don't want to address the situation until the situation addresses them. I guarantee you once the fungus rears its ugly head they are going to be calling us wanting the treatment again."

Explaining the high cost of fungicide applications to inquisitive customers is another challenge facing LCOs. Ambrose recommends explaining to the customer that the cost of the curative materials is higher and usually a second application is necessary which can add to the price; however, he has seen less of a need to explain fungicide pricing due to



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more savvy homeowners. "We find that quite a few customers have tried to do fungicide treatments themselves so they're not sticker shocked by the prices," he says. "They have been to the big box stores and know this product is expensive."

McAnally sees the unknown as the most challenging aspect to selling fungicide sérvices. "Not knowing if you're going to have disease that year is difficult for the customer to understand," he states. "You're trying to sell a preventive program and the disease hasn't appeared yet, so the customer wants to know how we can predict what is needed. It can be challenging, but after applying a curative treatment two or three years in a row, that customer is no longer a hard sell."

EDUCATING CUSTOMERS. It has become increasingly important for customers to understand that without fungicide treatments, even the best lawn care operator cannot save a lawn

from disease. So what is the best way to educate a customer? "Sometimes you just have to meet with them,' Boyd recommends. "We have pamphlets that we put out with photos so homeowners can identify what disease their lawn might have, but because your business grows each year and you add new customers, sometimes you have to start over with them, and faceto-face meetings are best.'

With the advent of the Internet, homeowners are becoming more educated not only on the uses of the products, but also on the expected costs. Ambrose has found his customers are using the Internet to research their lawn problems. "They are pretty educated when it comes to disease,' he says. "We have a lot of people who will tell us what disease has infected their lawn before we get out there because of the Internet. They kind of have an idea of what is going on and they will access the Texas A&M Web site or some other lawn care Web site

and learn more about it. This is definitely a new trend that has developed in the last five years.'

Boyd has also found that his customers are actively searching for information regarding their lawns. "Overall I think customers have become more educated than they were 20 or 30 years ago," he says. "From 1970 to 1980 even the state of Georgia, including the University of Georgia, had no idea how to take care of lawns. It was all pastures, field crops and farms. Now I'm finding that customers are becoming very educated, and I like to think we as lawn care operators have been part of that process ourselves through our customer service.'

"It seems as customers get older they are willing to pay for the things that they want," Boyd adds. "If they want a nice looking lush, green lawn, they are more than willing to pay for the maintenance needed to keep it looking that way." II





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Contractors are continually driven to these mini machines that reduce the labor necessary to perform backbreaking tasks, extend employee energy and save their clients' landscapes from wear and tear.

THE COMPACTION ATTRACTION

n the landscape industry, productivity is key. Increasing efficiency results in getting more jobs done in less time, so it makes sense for landscape contractors to invest in machines that will help them achieve their goal of running more streamlined and profitable businesses.

Performing numerous jobs and offering a wide variety of attachments, compact utility loaders allow contractors to "reduce their dependence on hand labor and bulkier pieces of equipment that don't perform well in many of their applications," says Greg Lawrence, Toro marketing product manager for compact utility loaders, Bloomington, Minn. "By replacing expensive hand labor and eliminating the cost of repairing turf damage caused by larger equipment, landscape contractors have quickly bolstered profits by employing these lightweight, compact machines."

by jennifer lash I contributing writer



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MARKET HISTORY. Now considered "extremely popular" in the landscape industry, Kevin Smith, product manager for compact utility at Ditch Witch, Perry, Okla., says the market for compact utility loaders "has really evolved over the past few decades, starting primarily in Australia and New Zealand." Following that trend, the compact utility loader has evolved in the United States over the past decade or so.

When first introduced, Lawrence says compact utility loaders were "wheeled, dedicated ride-on loaders. Since then, the selection has expanded for contractors." Now, in addition to wheeled designs, there are tracked designs with both ride-on and walk-behind capabilities. However, Lawrence says trends indicate that tracked units are more popular than wheeled units, likely because tracked units "can move around with a light footprint" and perform well on all ground conditions and in all seasons.

"The evolution of the compact utility loader means more choices, and contractors should select a model based on the type of fleet they currently have, their typical applications, local ground/soil types, altitude and climate in which they work, and the attachments they will operate," Lawrence suggests.

Initially, Smith points out that compact utility loaders primarily were used as material handling units, to move materials from point A to point B. "As jobsites became more confined, the need for a compact unit was more established. Where the growth in these machines has come is that contractors are able to use a wide variety of attachments. That's the biggest benefit of how compact utility loaders have evolved."

Another benefit contractors are realizing is that compact utility loaders are small enough to be "quickly and easily transported from jobsite to jobsite," says Aaron Kleingartner, loader product specialist at the Bobcat Co., West Fargo, N.D. And, he adds, the ride-on platform for the loaders results in a "comfortable solution for outdoor projects."

While the machines still are used to move materials, what those in the market are looking for is a piece of equipment that will provide a better return on investment and add



There are many reasons landscape contractors have been opting for smaller construction equipment like compact utility loaders, including accessing tighter areas and getting work done at faster speeds. Photo: Bobcat

versatility to their workforce. "Small, compact, versatile machines have been able to fill that need," Smith explains. "That's what's driven the growth of compact utility loaders over at least the past decade here in the U.S."

VERSATILE EQUIPMENT. Bob Tunzi, owner of Tunzi & Sons in Peotone, Ill., has had his compact

utility loader for about two and a

half years. His company also has two full-size skid-steer loaders, but Tunzi says the amount of residential remodel and renovation work the company does led him to buy a compact utility loader because "we were just having a problem where we couldn't get into people's backyards. Full-size loaders can be kind of hard on the lawn getting them into yards, so we looked at alternatives."

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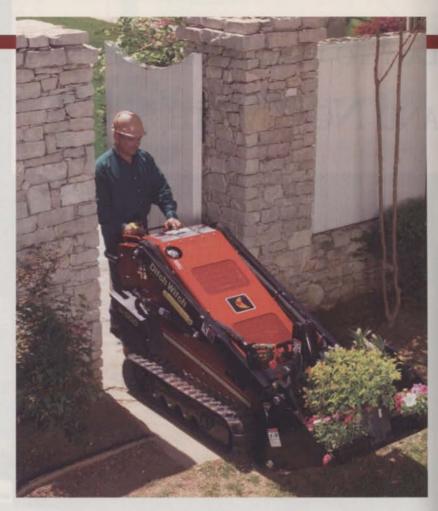
construction equipment

Since the market for compact utility loaders has expanded over the years, there are many options out there for contractors looking to purchase machines to aid their businesses. Depending on what jobs a machine will be expected to perform, contractors should make sure what they're buying comes with all of the necessary attachments.

"I looked at different models and talked to people" about the compact utility loader, Tunzi says, pointing out that he tried out about four units before settling on one to purchase. "I like the wide tracks – they allow you to get into situations in muddy conditions where a wheeled machine would get stuck. They are more turf friendly."

More and more contractors are realizing the benefits and versatility of a compact utility loader, Kleingartner says. "There are many reasons why residential landscape contractors are opting for smaller equipment to assist them with performing their work," he says, pointing out that smaller machines can access more areas and help get work done faster.

"They are the ideal size for landscaping applications because they easily maneuver through standard gates and door frames, travel and operate in areas where only hand labor could otherwise work, move across sensitive



When first introduced, compact utility loaders where "wheeled, dedicated ride-on loaders. Since then, the selection has expanded for contractors to include tracked designs with both ride-on and walk-behind capabilities. Photo: Ditch Witch

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turf with minimal ground and site disturbance, and can be transported on a single-axle trailer," Lawrence points out.

"Everything in our business comes down to productivity," Tunzi explains. "If you were doing things by hand – for example, digging holes by hand or trenching – it's going to take you longer and you'd have to use more people. You can save time by using the machine, which makes you more competitive on your price and it's easier on the crewmembers having equipment that helps them do the task so they don't wear out as quickly."

Not wearing out those in the field definitely is one of the benefits to having a stand-on compact utility loader. Smith says stand-ons "really come into play when people have to make a lot of ground movement, providing the operator to be with the unit all day. It's definitely for the guy doing a lot of moving all day long – the stand-on machine allows him to be a little refreshed on the job rather than having to be behind the product."

One thing manufacturers and contractors agree on when it comes to compact utility loaders is that those in the market for one should try before they buy. Harley Caton, owner of Caton's Lawn Care in Washington, N.C., has had his compact utility loader for

about a month and says he looked at two or three different machines before making a decision.

"When selecting a compact utility loader, the equipment operator should gain a full understanding about what the equipment can do," Lawrence says. "Prospective purchasers cannot simply rely on the brochure specifications of the machine to determine

"If a dealer is not going to let you try out the machine, then they're not very confident in the machine," Tunzi says. "The whole business world is competitive, and dealers have to be able to put it out there and say, 'We think we're the best, and here's why."

MAINTENANCE MATTERS. For landscape contractors interested in

"With all of the attachments available, these machines have gone beyond just added efficiency – they are another way for contractors to expand the number of services they provide." – Greg Lawrence

which model will be the best for their business. It is critical to put the machines on their jobs and demo them in 'real-world' conditions to determine which machine will best fit the needs of their business."

Lucky for contractors, most dealers are more than willing to loan out machines. Tunzi says back when he was shopping around, he just contacted dealers and told them he was interested in a compact utility loader and wanted to try it.

investing in a compact utility loader, taking the time to learn about and care for the machine is extremely important.

One of the first steps toward extending the life of a compact utility loader is to use the machine only for what it's designed to do, Lawrence says. Also, he recommends "routine, basic maintenance after each use to ensure the continued performance and increased longevity of a compact utility loader."

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Some compact utility loaders on the market have safety features built into the product, such as parking brakes, which are helpful while operators are using the machine. In addition to these built-in features, landscape contractors buying a compact utility loader should read the instruction manual accompanying the machine and have an understanding of its capabilities. Regular upkeep, such as checking fluids, changing filters and removing debris, is the best bet for keeping the machine up

provide service and support," Smith says. "Make sure you're getting a quality product. And if something does happen, make sure you can get service."

Smith admits that every compact utility loader on the market is different, but they all require the proper care. "If a landscape contractor takes care of his compact utility loader, it will give him years of use without any trouble. Most of the products out there are rubber-tracked versions. Wash and clean and inspect them,

"Prospective purchasers cannot simply rely on the brochure specifications of the machine to determine which model will be the best for their business." – Greg Lawrence

and running. "The cheapest repair is regular maintenance," Lawrence points out.

But what happens when, even with regular maintenance, something goes wrong? That's something to think about before the problem arises. "One of the big things that a land-scape contractor needs to remember is to buy from a company that can

that will increase the life of the machine considerably."

RETURN ON INVESTMENT. Tunzi has bought a number of pieces of equipment in his day, and he says he can't think of one where afterward he's said, "Man, I shouldn't have bought that." He admits that he's careful when purchasing equipment, trying it

out first and making sure that it will do what he needs it to do.

"Rent first and try it," Tunzi advises. "When it becomes an issue when you're renting it and rental fees exceed the cost to own and appreciate it, then it's time to buy it."

The cost of a compact utility loader has risen over the years, mostly because of economic inflation and higher steel prices, but Lawrence claims that the overall price of the machines has remained consistent since being introduced to the market. Today there is a range of units with varying horsepower and numerous attachments, and with that comes a range in price. Depending on what the machine is needed for, a compact utility loader can run a contractor anywhere from \$12,500 to \$22,000. Attachments can vary from \$300 to \$8,000, manufacturers estimate. Many manufacturers offer special financing options to assist contractors when purchasing a compact utility loader. Manufacturers point out that the more attachments a customer wants to go along with the machine, the higher the price tag becomes but more attachments means more opportunities.

"With the wide range of attachments available, these machines have gone beyond just an added efficiency on the jobsite – they are another way

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for contractors to expand the number of services they provide to customers," Lawrence says.

But Smith cautions contractors looking to buy a compact utility loader to purchase only what they need. Contractors need to figure out what applications they need the product to do, and from there, they should source the product that fits that most appropriately. Trying to stay on the lower-end of the price scale is possible for some contractors, but ultimately the machine needs to be able to perform the jobs the contractor needs it

Some of the most common attachments for a compact utility loader are augers, vibratory plows, trenchers, trench fillers, soil cultivators, tillers, power rakes and underground boring units. Contractors can use a variety of attachments to grow their businesses, completing jobs such as installing pipe and valve boxes, hauling materials and covering open trenches. "Their uses are virtually endless," Lawrence says.

For contractors who want to try the product out before purchasing it, drive units with one attachment can

"These small, compact, versatile machines have been able to provide better return on investment and add versatility to a contractor's workforce. That's what's driven their growth." - Kevin Smith

usually be rented for \$100 to \$150 a day, and separate non-hydraulic attachments usually rent for about \$15 to \$25 per day, while hydraulic tools usually go for \$25 to \$90 a day, manufacturers state. They also advise that if a contractor is renting a compact utility loader and attachments once a week, it's probably a good sign that it's a time to buy.

'I think it's evident by the growth in the market, this product line is providing contractors a wonderful return on their investment," Smith says. "For the cost versus value that they're gaining from this product, they're able to return more to the bottom line of their business, and that's what it's really all about." \blacksquare

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here's an old saying in the irrigation industry: "Profit is sanity, volume is vanity." This adage applies to contractors eager to get into commercial installation, says Kevin Gordon, senior product development manager for Hunter Industries, San Marcos, Calif.

"I wish I knew where that saying came from, but I've heard it in the industry for the last 20 years," he says. "The biggest mistake is vanity or ego gets in the way and people get in over their heads. When somebody starts looking at volume first instead of profits, that's where the trouble begins."

Making the change from just residential irrigation installation should be done only if a contractor understands the different practices and technology required, is confident in his team's production rates and understands how to bid accurately – not merely when

by marisa palmieri | associate editor



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he thinks it's time to work on larger projects, experts say.

THE COMMERCIAL DRAW. Commercial work is understandably tempting. Although the net profit on commercial installations tends to be lower than residential installations (10 to 15 percent for commercial vs. 15 to 30 percent for residential) – economies of scale make up for it. A 15-zone commercial job could be in the \$30,000 to \$40,000 range, whereas a residential job with a few zones could cost several thousand dollars.

Plus, commercial jobs keep crews busy longer, often up to a month, which decreases downtime and boosts profitability. "In residential, jobs are turning over much quicker, which means you need to make more sales," says Judson Byleen of Judson Irrigation in Lincoln, Neb. "That short turnover can wear on you."

Not to mention, installing commercial systems is get good way to



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build a relationship with the property manager, which can lead to service contracts down the road.

Selling commercial installation is much different from residential, as systems are typically designed and specified by architects or irrigation consultants, and then put out for bid. "With commercial, you can't sell yourself and your value," Byleen says. "If there's a new commercial building going up, there may be 10 bidders." Often, the lowest price prevails.

Things get tricky when contractors are eager to take it to the next level, but don't have the knowledge or experience of sound bidding practices. Simply because of the scope, improperly bidding a large commercial installation is much more severe than a misquoting a residential job. A 40- or 50-zone commercial job may keep an entire staff busy for a month, absorbing 100 percent of the company's resources. "One mistake can kill the whole company," Gordon says.

"When somebody starts looking at volume first instead of profits, that's where the trouble begins."

- Kevin Gordon

BID RIGHT. "If contractors are going to make that leap from residential to commercial, they just need to use good solid biding practices and make money on the job," Hunter's Gordon says. "Don't get overzealous and low bid. Yes, it's a competitive world out there and a lot of times the low bidder gets the job, but not always. You have to keep you company's health in mind when going out to bid."

One of the greatest mistakes commercial contractors make is worrying about what everyone else is bidding, says Brian Klimek, president of Green World Irrigation Specialists, West Nyack, N.Y. "To me, price is labor, materials, overhead and profit. Everyone has different overhead; everyone has different profit margins, so you can't worry about what they're bidding."

Improving bidding skills and efficiency are two ways to remain price competitive, Klimek says.

"The best advice I got for doing commercial work was to time everything and track every cost," Klimek says. He recommends developing internal benchmarks for how long it takes to complete every installation task, including installing sprayheads to trenching 1,000 feet of pipe. This can be done by timing technicians, finding an average time and calculating the cost do perform this activity. (See "Production Rate Guidelines for Irrigation Installation" on page 139.) When bid-



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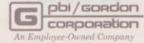
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In addition to "hitting your numbers," it's important to increase efficiency. Klimek's firm began implementing lean management concepts over the last few years by focusing on how to reduce waste in one process per month. Switching out open trailers for enclosed ones has been the best change Green World has made, Klimek says. The measure has improved profitability by reducing downtime on the job. "One problem we used to have was not bringing enough material, but now there's no driving off site to a supplier to get what we need.'

PRODUCT PRIMER. Once an irrigation contractor knows his costs and is confident in his bidding abilities, he's



ready to begin installing commercial systems. The difference between commercial and residential components tends to be a matter of scale and durability.

Because of higher water pressure on commercial jobs, pipe sizes are larger – 6 inches in diameter and up compared to 1-inch pipe for residential work. Fittings are larger to correlate with larger pipe sizes. In addition, the use of thrust blocks to support fittings is more common

in commercial installation than residential, says Jim Laiche, commercial business manager for Toro Irrigation, Riverside, Calif. Thrust blocks are typically created by pouring concrete behind fittings at points where there's a change in water direction. "In those larger systems, when you're carrying water in a 6-inch pipe and it has to make a

right turn, it carries a lot more force behind it than water in a 1-inch pipe

does," Laiche says.

Additionally, commercial installations with 3-inch pipe and up require the use of gasketed pipe rather than gluing or clamping pipes together, so the pipe can expand or contract with temperature changes.

Valves for commercial applications differ in their pressure ratings and ducontinued on page 138; sidebar on page 166





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technology focus: two-wire systems

Vith copper prices rising and contractors' ever-lasting search for labor savings, two-wire systems, popular for decades in Europe, are catching on in the United States, manufacturers say.

"Historically, the thought on two-wire is that it's only for very large systems, but anytime you have more than 300 feet of mainline and more than three valves. you can generally break even with a two-wire system." says Ed Underhill, president of Underhill, Aliso Viejo, Calif. "With more valves the savings are quite significant." A major advantage of two-wire systems, is that adding an unanticipated zone after installation is as simple as opening the trench in one spot, splicing into the control line and adding another valve and decoder.

Conventional multi-wire systems, which can be converted to two-wire for expansion, require one common wire that runs from the controller to each valve

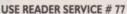
plus "hot wires," which run to each valve independently.

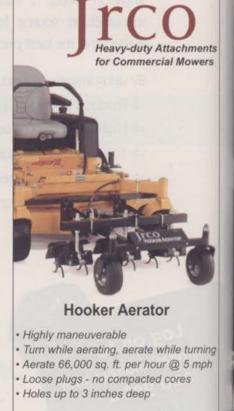
Two-wire systems, however, require just two wires that run to all valves on the site and back to the controller. Each valve box has a valve decoder that's connected to the two-wire and to the valve solenoid. When the controller wants to turn on a valve, it sends a signal over the two-wire path, which can be branched along the mainline, finds the right decoder (each has its own address) and activates the valve solenoid.

A multi-wire irrigation system with many zones can result in an extensive network of wires, which may make system expansions and repairs complicated.

Generally, two-wire system installation isn't difficult to learn, Underhill says. For more specifics, contractors interested in installing two-wire systems may want to seek training from supplier- or association-sponsored seminars and literature.







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rability. A typical residential valve has a pressure rating of 150 psi vs. 220 psi for commercial and the products are made from more robust materials.

The same can be said for commercial sprayheads and rotors. Commercial rotors can expel larger volumes (throwing water 50-plus feet rather than 20 to 40 feet for residential), and may be built with more durable materials to withstand the beating they'll take from commercial lawn mowers and other equipment and traffic they're likely to meet out in the field.

Pressure regulating devices that allow for the fine tuning of downstream pressure are also prevalent in commer-

cial applications.

Likewise, commercial contractors should be familiar with specifications for check valves, which prevent low-head drainage, and swing joints (threaded connections of pipes and fittings between the pipe and sprinkler that allow for raising and lowering sprinklers without plumbing changes). "I've seen some consultants who prefer to have this connection on all heads," Toro's Laiche says. Swing joints aren't used frequently in residential applications,

In terms of controllers, central control systems for commercial sites are generally more complex than residential controllers, manufacturers say. In addition to using smart or ET-based technology, commercial control systems likely require weather stations when they include more than two controllers per system. "A lot of contractors aren't familiar with installing weather stations," Laiche says. "A lot of times we see mess ups there.

Another type of technology that's becoming increasing popular for commercial sites is the two-wire system. As opposed to conventional multi-wire systems that require one wire going to all valves, plus one wire going to each valve individually, twowire systems require just two wires plus a decoder for each valve. This

setup saves on wire costs and allows for great labor savings in repairs and renovations. (Fore more information, see "Technology Focus: Two-Wire Systems" on page 136.) "That's probably one of the fastest-growing segments today," Gordon says. "Within five years, the majority of commercial systems installed will be two-wire.'

Another perk of the commercial market is the audience is more likely to invest in top-tier water-conservation products like ET controllers, pressure regulators, etc., manufacturers and contractors say. "For a commercial customer, their water bill is a much bigger percentage of their budget," Gordon says. "Products that offer a 10 to 30 percent savings on their bill are a much bigger payback than they are a homeowner." III

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Visit the June Online Extras section for another tip on selling upgrades to commercial irrigation systems.

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production rate guidelines for irrigation installation

Some of the best advice irrigation contractor Brian Klimek ever received regarding commercial installation was to calculate production rates. The president of Green World Irrigation Specialists, West Nyack, N.Y., says these numbers are the first step to bidding accurately, which is the key to success in commercial installation.

Contractors should note that each company should develop its own rates by conducting time trials; however, some guidelines do exist. See if your firms' rates measure up by checking them against the following industry benchmarks.

ITEM	UNIT	QUANTITY/ MAN-HOUR	TIME/UNIT
Point of connection	Lump sum	0.25-0.5	2-4 hours
Automatic controller	Each	0.5-1	1-2 hours
Trench/clean/fittings/backfill (6-inch by 24-inch) with ride-on trencher	Linear feet	20-30	2.4 minutes
Install pipe (only)	Linear feet	100-125	0.5-0.6 minutes
Backfill (only) with tractor	Linear feet	100-125	0.5-0.6 minutes
Backflow preventers	Each	0.5-1	1-2 hours
Remote control valves	Each	2-3	15-20 minutes
Quick coupler valves	Each	2-4	15-30 minutes
Ball/gate valves	Each	2-3	20:30 minutes
Wire	Linear feet	500-600	6-7.2 seconds
Turf sprayheads	Each	4-5	12-15 minutes
Turf rotors	Each	2-3	20-30 minutes

Note: The above rates are approximations and based on normal/flat site conditions. They are provided for comparison only; your production rates will vary depending upon site conditions, experience of labor force, types of equipment used, etc.

Source: How to Price Landscape & Irrigation Projects by Jim Huston. To purchase the book, visit www. lawnandlandscape.com/store.



Make water feature installation and maintenance profitable services by looking beyond the big picture.

THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT

s a full-service lawn and landscape company, contractors at SunCo Grounds Management in Omaha, Neb., "dabbled" in water feature installation before officially offering the service in the early 1990s. Until then, the lack of a good system made them difficult to install and even more difficult to maintain. "The filters and skimmers we have now just weren't available," says Mike Newcomer, landscape and water feature manager. "It was basically just a pump and a hose."

With access to new and improved filtration systems in the mid-to-late 1990s, offering water feature installation was a more feasible task that produced better results, and the service "started snowballing" from there, Newcomer says. Today, water feature installation and maintenance comprises about 40 percent of SunCo's annual revenue, Newcomer says. From creating designs to spring start-ups to installations to winterizations, the service keeps the company busy year-round.

by emily mullins | assistant editor

When incorporating any new service, ensuring that it will be profitable is always a front-running factor. And while great construction and a large client base are important, sometimes it's the little things a company can do, like care about the details and truly take pride in its work, that can keep customers coming back year after year.

TAKE ENOUGH TIME. While construction is often seen as the most important part of water feature instal-

Photo: Linda Oyama Bryan

lation, it is certainly not the only part. Clients expect more than just a rubber liner or a concrete fountain to fulfill their aquatic visions. "There's basic construction, but then there's the detail part of it," says Tony Lobello, project manager for Mariani Landscape, Lake Bluff, Ill. "Sometimes I don't think contractors factor in the finishing touches."

Lobello says the final boulder placement, the type and placement of gravel, art work and sculptures, flow-

ers and islands are the "frosting on the cake" beyond the
shell of a great-looking water
feature. An average-size pond
measuring 10 by 15 feet can
be installed by a productive, systematic crew in one
or two days, says SunCo
Grounds Management
President Chris Andersen.
Contractors should factor in an additional one or
two days to place the extra
touches, Lobello says.

Depending on size and complexity, contractors say that the price of water feature installations can range from \$3,000 to \$10,000 and even up to \$50,000 if the client is willing to spend the money. The average 10-by-15-foot water feature with a pond and a waterfall costs around \$5,000, Newcomer says. Inclusion of plants and fish as well as additional landscaping around the water feature can add another \$3,000 to the final cost, Andersen says.

Hardy plants like water iris, blue pickerel, thin-leaf cattail, lily pads and water lilies are great for water features because they come back up every year and spread throughout the pond as they grow, Newcomer says.

Fish are other popular additions to water features and should be chosen with time and care. Newcomer suggests

first asking clients questions about the wildlife that inhabits their area, as raccoons, birds and other "critters" have a tendency to prey on fish. Contractors at SunCo build fish caves made of 8-inch PVC pipe in all of their water features so fish have a place to go if they're threatened. The

most popular fish addition is koi because their main food source is algae, but goldfish, shibunken and even catfish are sometimes included as well, Newcomer says.

GET THE WORD OUT. Advertising and marketing are important for most companies to generate business, but advertising outside the box can often have huge benefits. SunCo has displayed its water features at an annual Omaha home show for the last 13 years and has found that to be a great way to land jobs and market their professional image.

SunCo's design team treats each year's home show as it would a client experience, designing a water feature specifically for the event. Like the features themselves, the company's booths have become more elaborate over time – from 10-by-10 spaces to 40-by-40 foot spaces. Each year, SunCo's crew puts in about 100 manhours to create the \$8,000 to \$10,000 project, Andersen says. Pieces and parts of the feature are often reused for installations throughout the season, which can alleviate some of the

initial cost.

As a full-service company, all of the division managers attend the home shows to promote the company's other services like lawn care, irrigation and landscaping. But only the pond experts speak to attendees about their water feature installations to ensure they're receiving accurate information. The first question the pond expert asks is if the potential client has a project in mind. "Ive found it's best to initially let the customer do most of the talking," Newcomer says. Get their information and a feel for what they're looking for first and then let them know how you can give then what they want.

About a week after the home show a representative from SunCo will follow up with phone calls to interested attendees, and also will send them informational videos about the pond or pondless feature they're interested in. To further sell the project, SunCo will offer a free consultation, and then, depending on the size of the potential project, charge \$65 to \$100 to create a design on paper.

This process generates significant revenue for SunCo, Newcomer says. From this year's show alone, the company secured 10 water feature



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installations and 14 landscaping contracts – about \$175,000 worth of work. "After this year's home show, we're booked through July," he says.

SunCo will send potential clients tickets to the home show to try to get them to come out and see examples of their work. "Particularly in the wintertime when there are no water features up and running, it's hard for people to visualize what we can do," Newcomer says. "Sending them to a Web site or giving them photographs really don't do the features justice." These invitees are often referred by the company's existing client base or are people who have called to request information, he adds.

MAINTENANCE MATTERS. "Many contractors just do the installation and walk away from a potential relationship with a customer," Newcomer says about water feature maintenance services. "But it's a simple service to add and existing customers

always upgrade after a few seasons."

Lobello agrees that offering maintenance services can create continual profitability, as well as help keep the feature's original design intact. However, if a company is going to offer maintenance, it's important to do a thorough job in order for clients to be satisfied with their investments, he adds. "We've taken over jobsites previously maintained by other companies and found that the water feature didn't meet the client's expectations," Lobello says. "If a water feature is poorly constructed and hard to maintain, people find it easier to just get rid of it.

SunCo utilizes its maintenance services as a selling point when making a water feature installation sale, estimating for the client how much it will cost to maintain it each year. "We first give them an idea based on previous, similar jobs, but it can vary once we actually do it," Newcomer says. "Also, as ponds progress with more plants or

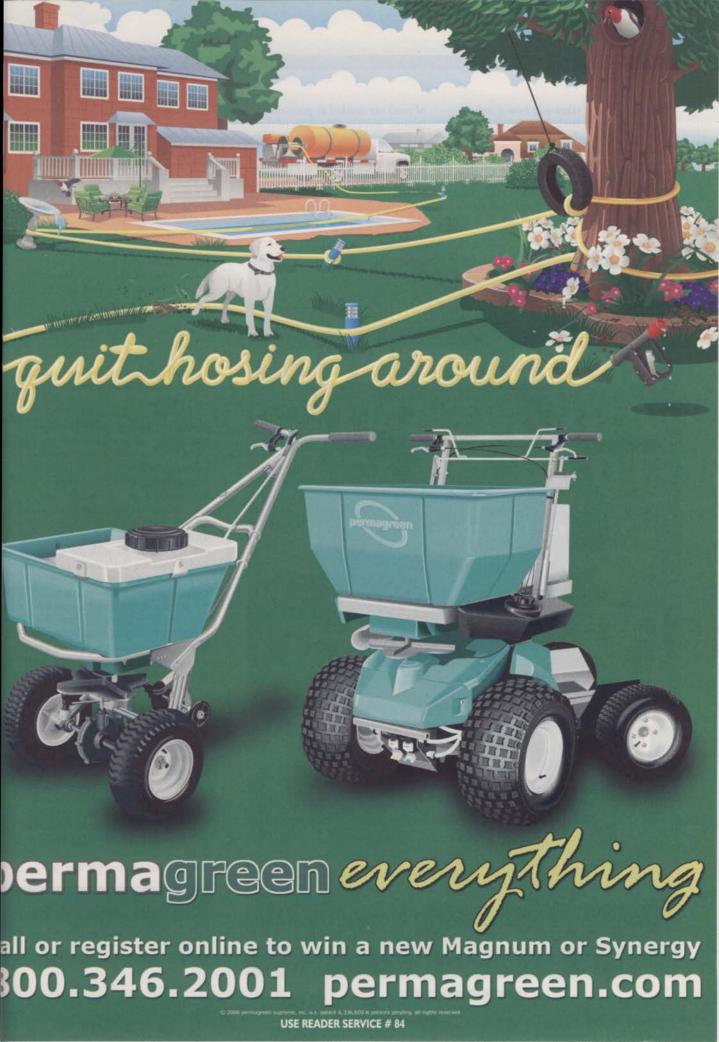
more fish, they take a little more time and care to maintain, so each year the price increases accordingly."

Maintenance services include spring startups and winterizations. Spring startups involve removing the fish, cleaning the sides of the pond, adding new water and chemicals and generally freshening it up for the coming season. Winterizations involve draining most of the pond, shutting the system down and storing the pump during winter months. Prices for the services vary depending on the size and intricacy of the water feature, Newcomer says. For pondless features, spring startups usually cost around \$150. For features with ponds measuring less than 11 by 15 feet, startups usually cost \$150 to \$200, and "normal-sized" ponds measuring 10 by 15 feet or 11 by 16 feet usually cost around \$325 to start up, Newcomer says.

The cost of winterizations ranges from \$45 to \$95, depending on



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how long it takes and how much labor is involved. "Maintenance is a no-brainer when it comes to offering spring start-ups and winterizations," Newcomer says.

While it can differ depending on the weather, most startups take place in March and early April, and winterizations are done in late fall. A variety of tools are needed to perform maintenance services, but most of them are "pretty primitive," Newcomer says.

know your work. Most contractors agree that it pays to take pride in your work. By staying involved with each client's feature, SunCo's contractors are able to take care of questions

and problems quickly and efficiently. "It seems like no matter how many years clients have water features they always ask the same questions, like how much product to put in, or what to do if the pump breaks. So it saves us time when our pond guys know their jobs like the back of their hands," Newcomer says.

Contractors fill out forms about each water feature that include information such as the feature's measurements, the types of plants and fish and the sizes of skimmers, hoses and pumps. This information is then stored in a computerized database, making each account easily accessible. "If a customer calls and says their pump stopped working, our secretary can pull up the information and relay the problem and the solution to us," Newcomer says.

This also comes in handy during pond cleanouts. Every February a secretary will give each client a phone call, as well as send out letters, to remind them of their cleanout appointments and take preorders for any supplies they will need to get their features up and running. Clients who are involved with their features and know what and how much they need can place an order with the secretary, and those who don't know can make an appointment for a contractor to come and survey the situation.

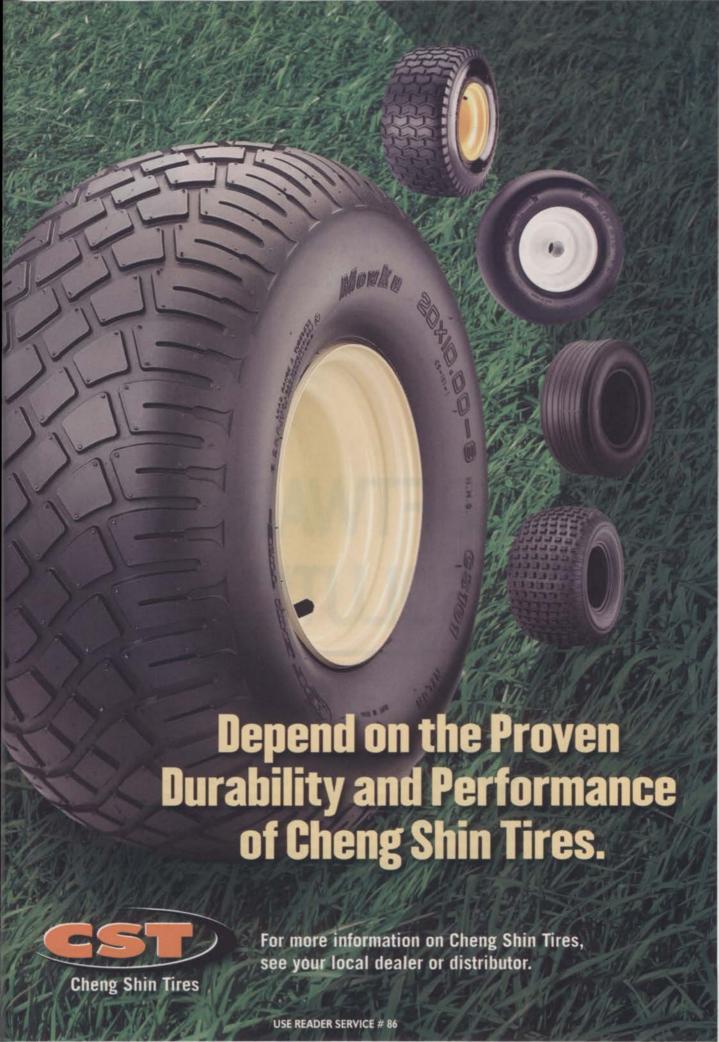
By allowing clients to preorder supplies, contractors will have the necessary fish food, light bulbs, algae and bacteria cleaner, and other products prior to arriving at the appointment, saving time and money. The preordering service and most of the supplies are free to the client, who is only charged for the algae and bacteria cleaner products. "We like to make sure pond cleanouts go as smoothly as possible," Newcomer says. "And we always have extra stuff just in case."

Most contractors agree that great design and construction is the first step toward a profitable water feature installation and a satisfying customer relationship. But, offering your clients little conveniences and extra services can also pay off in a big way.

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Visit the June Online Extras section for a checklist of the equipment needed to keep your clients' water features up and running.





product focus

Are you using the latest tools to manage your business? And we're not talking about the newest mower or skid-steer loader. We're talking about software. Many contractors are forgoing pencil and paper to reap the benefits — and time savings — business software provides.

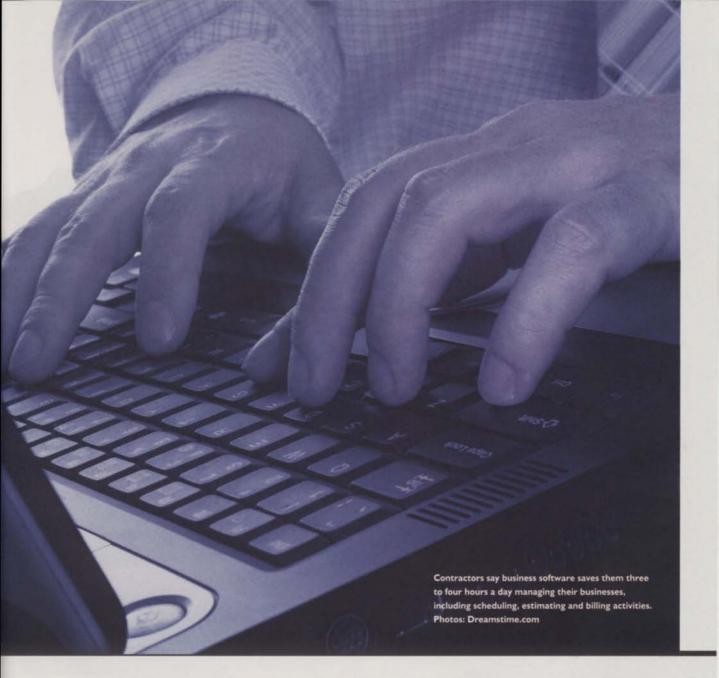
THE SOFTWARE SOLUTION

ou would never think of sending a crew to a site with a tool that takes them twice as long to complete the job. So why are contractors still using pencils and paper to manage their businesses when software programs can do the billing, invoicing, scheduling and routing in half the time? Let's find out.

software benefits. "The No. 1 reason why a landscape contractor should buy business software is it makes it easy to manage his business," says Chris Chapman, chief operating officer of Boston-based Insight Direct. No more memorizing route schedules or spending hours writing invoices. Software helps contractors organize their customers with its automated systems. With a click of a button users can view schedules, estimates, bills, statements and full customer histories.

According to Lawn & Landscape research on business technology integration, nearly 66 percent of landscape contractors have updated their computer software within the last

by katie morris | contributing writer



year. Likewise, according Lawn & Landscape State of the Industry data, the average contractor spends more than \$1,700 annually on business software purchases and upgrades.

Chris Kozol, owner of Forest Green Lawn Care, Omaha, Neb., was always afraid of losing his customer information, but business software enables him to keep all that vital data secure. "Now I can keep track of specific things for specific customers," he says. Software also helps companies provide better customer service, says Jamie Misch, Marathon Data Systems, Tinton Falls, N.J. Clients can easily receive information because all contractors have to do is pull it up on their screen. "Contractors need to realize people who are not using software are at a disadvantage to companies who are using software," she says.

TIME-SAVING DEVICE. Surveys conducted by Insight Direct indicate

that software saves contractors three to four hours a day managing their businesses, including time spent on scheduling, estimating and billing. The surveys also show software decreases drive time and billable time by 20 percent. Kozol used to store routes in his head, now software maps out where each yard is so he can visualize routes on the computer. "Location and time are what my company is based on," he says. "Grouping yards together has saved time, money and fuel."





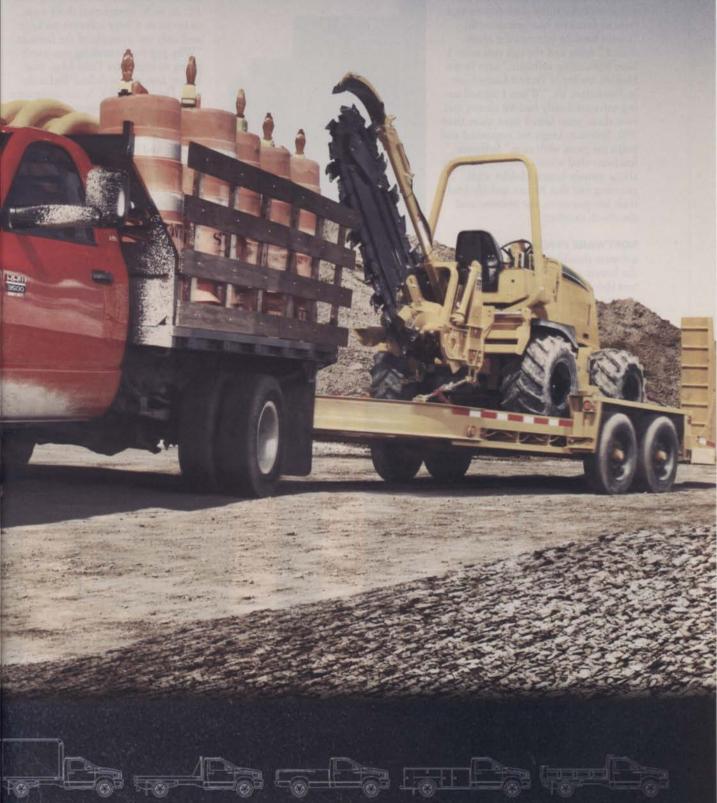
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GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS









Time is money in the landscape industry and the less time spent on paperwork the more time contractors have to focus on business growth. "I have been in business for more than 12 years and the last two years I have been using software," says Jason Holder, owner of Perfect Lawn Care in Powhatan, Va. "When I started using software I only had 40 clients and now three years later I have more than 350. Software keeps me organized and helps me grow with ease." Software has been vital when customers inquire about money issues, Holder adds, pointing out that he can quickly find their last payment, the amount and the check number.

software shouldn't be about choosing the lowest price, Misch says. Contractors should purchase a program they can see themselves using in five years. Software costs depends on how many people will be using it. For example, a



company with five users will not need the same program as a company with 15. As such, contractors don't want to invest in a large software package and only use a couple of the features. "Why pay for something you aren't going to use?" says Dave May, marketing manager at Adkad Technologies, Delanson, N.Y. Some companies offer one software program that can be used by any size company, while others offer individual software for smaller and larger companies. For instance, the software for smaller companies is developed for new contractors just looking for a billing and invoicing system.

Software varies in price, as well. Some programs start around \$100 while others cost as much as \$6,000. Price depends on what the contractor needs and how many people will be using it. Kozol purchased his software for \$2,300 and pays an annual fee of \$400 for access to classes, a feature he was looking for when he chose the

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software company. Another concern contractors have is software that soon becomes obsolete. However, software companies constantly update their programs with new features. Misch says her company updates software quarterly with new features based on staff observations and customer suggestions. For some contractors, updates are included with their annual maintenance contract. For others, they have to purchase the upgrades when they become available.

SOFTWARE FEATURES. Software provides contractors with a simple way to manage their businesses. No more rifling through mounds of papers to find an old work order. No more arguing with customers over invoices. Software allows users to view all of the information they need on the screen in front of them. Automated billing and invoicing systems are fast, efficient and minimize errors. Once a contractor enters a job name, he won't have to enter the name again. These things reduce the amount of time contractors and their employees spend on a task.

Chapman's favorite software feature is the scheduling assistant. "It contains all the information you need to make an intelligent, proactive scheduling decision," Chapman says. One click shows users a list of all opened jobs and the closest proximity to these locations. A contractor can view a map of the customer's area, who's working nearby and schedule the job while on the phone with the client. Another feature is the ability to track how their business is doing. "Some software shows a contractor where he's doing the most business, helps him set other hand, needed to organize his business because he was beginning to fall behind in jobs and billing. He also wanted a program that was easy to use, especially if an employee had to retrieve client information. "I wanted to keep it simple," he says.

AFTER THE PURCHASE. A software company's job doesn't end after the sale. Even though software training is often provided, contractors will have questions as they begin to use the

"The No. 1 reason why a landscape contractor should buy business software is it makes it easy to manage his operations." – Chris Chapman

budgets and keeps track of advertising," Misch says.

Holder uses his tracking system to see how business has grown from year to year. "I can track and see how much money I made during this same week last year," he says. He also uses the customer notes feature on a daily basis. Instead of storing data, such as "the customer is picky so don't forget to close the gate" in his head, Holder types the note next to the customer's name so everyone can view it.

FINDING YOUR SOFTWARE. Buying business software doesn't have to intimidate a landscape contractor. Prior to purchase, May says contractors should ask, "What do I do on a daily basis? What are my business needs?"

Contractors should consider a software package they see themselves using for many years. "They should find a company who is investing in technology – a company that will bring them up to the next platform," Misch says.

Kozol spent time researching software to fit his company. He wanted a developer he could easily contact if he had problems, a program geared toward the landscape industry and software he could customize to his specifications.

Holder, on the

program. Contractors can purchase a support package, visit software company Web sites, e-mail their questions or simply call the developer. A selling point for Kozol was the online classes his software company provides its clients. If he has a specific problem such as how to schedule a job, he gos online and takes a class on that topic.

After purchasing, Chapman says contractors need to prepare for the culture shock it may cause their staff. Learning a whole new way of doing things can be frightening for employees. "I was nervous about using software, but once all of the information was in the computer everything was good," Holder shares. Training is a continuous process and contractors are not going to know how to immediately use every software feature. "I am still learning," says Kozol, who has been using his software for more than a year.

Since using software, Kozol's marketing is up, his numbers are more exact and he no longer uses books to keep track of his customers. Likewise Holder used to keep everything in his head and now it's organized in his database. Has it changed the way they do business? As Kozol says, "I am never going back to paper."

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Visit the online archive for some quick tips or choosing and purchasing business software.

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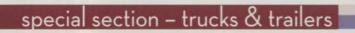
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o a landscape contractor, his truck is the ultimate tool. It gets crews where they need to go, hauling equipment, towing trailers and sometimes even pushing snow. Without it, productivity comes to a standstill—and clients get angry. Contractors expect a lot out of their vehicles and, if maintained properly, most trucks are up for the challenge. "A company's truck is its revenue generator," says Dave Spence, director of commercial products for GMC, Detroit. "If the truck goes down, the paychecks stop."

Contractors spend more money on their trucks than on any other piece of equipment – an average of \$34,481 – according to 2006 Lawn & Landscape research. Because all trucks are not built the same, it's important for contractors to identify what they want and need their trucks to do for their businesses to make sure they invest in the most efficient choice. "Efficiency improves the bottom line and that's important

by emily mullins | assistant editor



in all businesses," says Bob Raybuck, technical services director for the National Truck Equipment Association, Farmington Hills, Mich.

THE 3 Ps. Most manufacturers agree that the "three Ps" – power, pulling and payload capacity – are the most important things to consider when purchasing a truck for the landscape industry. "The three Ps are a given," says Brian Goebel, communications manager for Chevrolet, Detroit.

"Hauling heavy equipment and trailers is perhaps the most important function landscape trucks are required to perform so you need a truck that is able to do that."

Most landscape trucks come from classes three, four and five and can carry 10,001 to 19,500 pounds of gross vehicle weight. Heavier-duty landscape trucks fall in class six with capacities for carrying 19,501 to 26,000 pounds of gross vehicle weight. Because this weight includes

the truck itself as well as crewmembers and all equipment, contractors should have a good idea of what they'll be hauling on a day-to-day basis before investing in a truck. "Size is important when purchasing a truck," Raybuck says. "If it's too small and loaded too heavy, it will have to work too hard. If it's too big and under utilized, you'll spend more money in fuel costs for no reason."

Size is also an issue when it pertains to the crew cab, Goebel says. A

special section - trucks & trailers

one- or two-man crew will usually opt for the regular-sized cab, while threeor four-men crews will generally choose extended cabs. Bigger crews will go for the full-sized, or crew, cab equipped with a backseat. "This comes in handy comfort-wise when companies travel longer distances to get from job to job," Goebel says.

OUTSIDE ADD-ONS. Custom-tailoring abounds for contractors looking to upgrade the outsides of their trucks. According to John Lackey, director of national account sales, The Knapheide Co., Quincy, Ill., the landscape industry is a growing segment of the company's truck customizing customer base, with it doubling in the last 10 years. "The landscape industry as a whole has grown considerably because people just don't have as much time to tend to their lawns anymore," he says. "There's a need for more professional landscape contractors."

Custom-tailoring can be as basic as

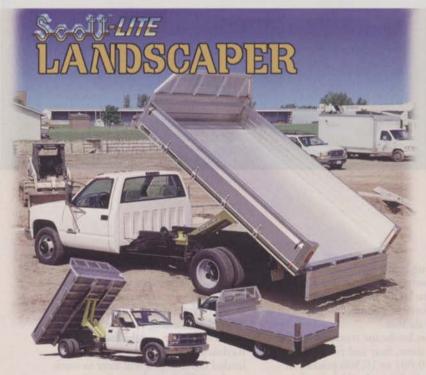
adding a toolbox to the bed of a truck and as elaborate as choosing a custom-made body. One common add-on is the cargo management system, which is a rail system installed around the upper portion of a truck bed that can serve as a ladder rack, a bed divider or extender or hold portable tool boxes, Goebel says.

Driver information centers monitor factors like a truck's tire pressure, oil life, cylinder deactivation and fuel economy and present this information on the dashboard. Contractors can program the center to send them monthly e-mails updating them on their truck's needs. "Many contractors are used to changing the oil in their vehicle every 3,000 miles, which can be wasteful in some cases," Spence says. "These computerized devices tell the customer to do maintenance only when it's necessary."

The cost of these more basic additions are often rolled into the price of the truck itself and are covered under warranty or can be purchased separately. For example, a tool box or a dump hoist can add 25 percent to the total cost of the mounted equipment, while a trailer hitch can cost around \$300, Lackey says. The purchase of a customized truck body is usually an extra expense added to the price of the chassis. (For more information, see "Body Image" on page 160).

LITTLE LUXURIES. Manufacturers agree that efficiency usually overrides comfort and luxury when choosing landscape trucks, and the practical road is more often taken by contractors purchasing trucks for their crews. "When considering high-end trucks, the first thought most contractors have is, 'It's just going to get dirty,'" Goebel says.

Raybuck agrees that contractors want work trucks that look great from the outside, but are easy to clean inside, with rubber floor mats and seats continued on page 162; sidebar on page 160



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body image

When customizing a truck body, landscape contractors have three main options: the dump body, the drop-side or contractor body and the landscaper body, says John Lackey, director of national account sales, The Knapheide Co., Quincy, III. But the choices don't stop there. Each type of truck body can be further customized to meet any landscape need. "With a variety of choices, contractors can better carry out their businesses more efficiently in terms of loading, hauling and delivering landscape products," Lackey says.

The most basic truck body type is the dump body, Lackey says. These bodies come 8, 9, 10 and 11 feet long and can be used on trucks from classes three, four and five. Their main purpose is to haul and dump, with short sides measuring 12 to 18 inches tall and no doors. Accessories for the dump body include swinging rear doors, bed extenders and equipment mounting kits. Dump bodies range in cost from \$5,300 to \$6,000, depending on which combination a contractor chooses, Lackey says.

The drop-side, or contractor, body is a step up from the basic dump body. It's hauling and dumping

functions are similar, but this style has folding sides to allow for curb-side access. Drop-side bodies can come in lengths ranging from 8 to 18 feet, with sides measuring 11 to 14 inches tall. This truck body ranges from \$5,800 to \$6,500.

The landscaper body is the most elaborate of a contractor's options. There are two types of landscaper bodies – one geared strictly toward lawn maintenance and one geared toward landscape care and installation. The landscaper body still hauls and dumps, Lackey says, but it's built for bulk carrying capacity. Its sides measure 40 inches tall, and its body measures 9 or 11 feet. It has folding side doors for loading and unloading purposes and comes with a variety of rear-door styles.

Many landscape contractors purchase a landscaper body with a tool box for extra storage capacity, as well as a door located behind the driver's seat for storing personal equipment like raincoats and boots. "The lack of storage is a deficiency in many types of landscape trucks," Lackey says.

Landscaper bodies, including the tool box, cost from \$9,000 to \$10,000, Lackey says.



Photo: GMC



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special section - trucks & trailers

continued from page 158

that are easy to wipe down.

But like with any landscape equipment, manufacturers are aiming to improve operator comfort with additions like seats with more back support, spacious cabs and engines for a quieter, smoother ride. "In the landscape industry, the job might beat you up, but the truck doesn't have to," Spence says.

Manufacturers report that results of customer clinics show that fuel economy is a top concern on most contractors' lists as gas prices soar higher each year. Some trucks come equipped with active fuel management, which shuts down two of the vehicle's eight cylinders when they're not needed. Others are made with a smoother, slicker surface to eliminate wind resistance. Diesel-powered trucks can last longer than gas-powered, and are at least twice as efficient in terms of gas mileage, Raybuck says.

Other practical improvements include wider dashboards with larger, more accessible buttons, outlets for



laptop computers and cellular phone chargers and foldable seats that transform into work areas. "Sometimes a contractor's truck also needs to serve as his office," Spence says. "With these additions, his gadgets can charge up while he drives from job to job."

In the future, manufacturers will aim for both aesthetic and safety improvements, particularly with truck frames. Stiffer, fully-boxed frames and smaller gaps between the doors, cab and bed will make the truck safer to drive and more pleasing to the eye, Goebel says. "Trucks today are not what they were 10 or 15 years ago," he says, "The term 'ride like a truck' doesn't really apply anymore."



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special section – trucks & trailers



PONDER THE PURCHASE

Contractors have options when it comes to investing in a truck and it's smart to explore all of them before driving off the lot.

nvesting in a new truck is not a task to be taken lightly. The decision to go with a new or used vehicle via buying or leasing can have major impacts in the long term. Cash flow, necessity and intended use are all factors to consider before signing on the dotted line, so knowing your business is a good way to start.

Thirty-nine percent of contractors invested in a new truck in 2006 and 42 percent plan to invest in one in 2007, according to *Lawn & Landscape* research. But how do they do it and why? While nothing is guaranteed, most manufacturers agree that buying new equipment is the best way to go because of the wear and tear associated with the landscape industry. But being aware of all of the options can make the purchase of a truck a quick and easy, educated decision.

WHERE, OH WHERE. When a contractor chooses to invest in a truck he can certainly be influenced by region, says Bob Aquaro, vice president of product assurance, Mitsubi-

by emily mullins | assistant editor



special section - trucks & trailers

shi Fuso Truck of America, Logan Township, N.J., particularly North vs. South. For contractors in warm, moderate climates, the buying season is year-round because landscape work never really stops. There can be a need for a new truck during the winter months just as easily as during spring months and, because of the year-round working season, cash flow is not as important an issue.

In Northern areas with a snowy season "it's a whole different story," after most contractors have "survived" the winter months and are gearing up for the good working conditions of spring and summer, he explains. For landscape companies that offer snow removal services, a severe winter can increase cash flow, which can also influence a contractor's purchasing decision.

Mike Cannon, business manager for Hill International Trucks, East Liverpool, Ohio, agrees that late winter and early spring are popular times of even earlier to ensure that the vehicle is ready for the busy spring season. "We don't stock many trucks with bodies because a lot of contractors want to customize them," Cannon says. "It can take a month or longer for a contractor to choose which body and features they want and then have them installed on the truck."

But sometimes purchasing of a truck is just as easily based on necessity. Eric White, owner of Acorn Building & Landscape, Bloomfield Hills, Mich., traded in a truck and plow this past December because his crews found the particular machine inconvenient to use. With a busy plow season coming up, White needed a truck his guys could operate and he needed it quick. "Other than this particular instance, the times we've purchased new trucks have been all over the map," White says.

HOW TO BUY. When it comes down to making a purchase, manufacturers agree that most contractors choose to buy their trucks rather than lease them. The wear and tear accumulated

"As the truck gets older and things break, repair costs go up. If there's a problem and the truck is under warranty you're hitting a home run." – Bob Aquaro

Aquaro says. The bulk of the buying season is the first-quarter months of January, February and March. This is year for contractors to invest in new trucks. Contractors looking to customize their trucks should purchase



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through the years makes leasing a risky option, they say. "Our customers investing in work trucks only lease at around a 5- to 10-percent rate because of the wear and tear inherent with jobs such as landscaping," says Brian Goebel, communications manager for Chevrolet, Detroit.

White owns seven work trucks, all of which were financed through a local bank. "I'm just not a fan of leasing," he says. "Trucks can last a long time if you maintain them properly, and after a few years, you have them paid off. It's nice not to have to make that monthly payment, and if you lease, there will always be that payment to make."

It's difficult to find a downfall to financing, White says, particularly if interest rates are low. As a contractor with good credit, White was able to finance his trucks at around a 5.5 percent interest rate, and he was able to keep the money he would have spent had he purchased the truck outright. "I'd just as soon have the money I'd use to buy a truck outright to fall back on," he says.

Another reason landscape contractors buy rather than lease trucks is because many try to keep their trucks in usable condition for as long as possible. It's common for landscape trucks to be passed down from employee to employee and finally traded in after 10 or 12 years, Aquaro says, adding that the average truck lease lasts only three years. "Contractors tend to keep their trucks for a long time and get as many years of operation out of them as possible," he says. "Most of the trade-ins we see are at least 10 years old, so leasing wouldn't make much sense."

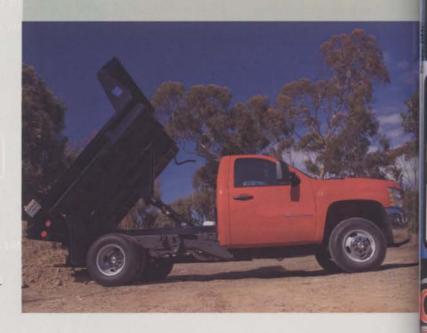
Cannon agrees that leasing work trucks is rare because contractors like to get the most out of their vehicles. "We don't have a lot of two- or threeyear-old work trucks available on the lot," he says. "Most of our used vehicles are at least eight or 10 years old." Those who do lease are usually advised to do so by their accountants because it would be a better option for them tax-wise, Cannon adds. There are a few types of leases a contractor can choose from if he decides to go that route, and the best option is highly dependent on a contractor's individual situation and personal preference, he says. (For more information, see "Leasing Logistics," right).

leasing logistics

TRAC, or terminal rental adjustment clause, and FMV, or fair market value, leases are the most common types for contractors to choose from, says Mike Cannon, business manager for Hill International Truck, East Liverpool, Ohio. Manufacturers agree that the typical work-truck lease lasts three years. Although the percentage of contractors who lease their trucks is relatively small – 5 to 10 percent, according to Brian Goebel, communications manager for Chevrolet, Detroit – leasing options are available for contractors who prefer to trade in their trucks on a regular basis.

TRAC Lease – A terminal rental adjustment clause lease has a predetermined purchase price at the lease end. A contractor can eliminate the guesswork by paying a fixed amount equal to what the vehicle is predetermined to be worth at the end of the lease. The contractor has the opportunity to purchase or sell the truck at the end of the lease. If the truck is sold for more than the residual value, the contractor keeps the balance. If the truck sells for less, the contractor is responsible for paying the difference.

FMV Lease – A fair market value lease is available on new trucks and tractors and is recommended when ownership and depreciation benefits are not desired. A contractor isn't responsible for equipment's residual value at the end of the lease term and has the option to purchase the truck, extend the lease or walk away from the vehicle with no further obligation.







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special section - trucks & trailers

White has only traded in one of his seven work trucks, and that was simply because the regular-sized cab was too small for his crew. Some of his trucks have up to 130,000 miles on them, but maintenance costs have not yet outweighed the luxury of owning the vehicles. "I definitely hold on to my trucks for as long as possible," he says. "I plan on keeping them until they have more than 150,000 miles on them or when the time comes when they get too expensive to maintain. When a truck's maintenance costs are equal to a monthly finance payment, that's probably when I'll trade it in." White says that his monthly finance payments cost around \$600, and if the cost of a truck's repairs ran more than \$4,000 in a season that's when he'd think of trading it in.

MOST FOR THE MONEY. Most

manufacturers agree that the trend of purchasing new vs. used vehicles is linked to company longevity. More established companies with steadier cash flow tend to opt for new vehicles, while younger companies more often go with used. "It can be a mixed bag, but most often established companies want new equipment, while the newer guys just starting out are looking for more affordable, used pieces," Cannon says.

Aquaro agrees. "It's the nature of the beast," he says. "New companies are looking for the best deal, but the ones that have been around for awhile seem to want better quality."

If a company can afford it, buying new is always a safer way to go, Cannon says. The biggest advantage of investing in a new vs. used vehicle is having access to a warranty, manufacturers say. An average new truck can come with a five-year, 150,000- to 175,000-mile warranty that certainly comes in handy should problems arise. The unpredictability of used vehicles can leave contractors with downtime in addition to costly repair bills. "As the truck gets older and things break, repair costs go up," Aquaro says. "If there's a problem and the truck is under a warranty, you're hitting a home run.'

White has never purchased a used truck, and has taken advantage of warranties on many occasions. "If you buy a used truck you're buying someone else's problems," White says. "Unless you have an intimate knowledge of who previously owned the vehicle, it's best to buy new."

There is no real way to tell when things will start to go wrong with a used truck, Aquaro says, and proper maintenance is the only way to prolong a vehicle's life. "You're going to reach a point where repairs are going to be more and more frequent and this depends on usage and preventive maintenance," he says.

Generally, preventive maintenance for new and used vehicles is the same, Aquaro says. Oil and filter changes, tire rotations and basic repairs are important to keeping even the newest truck up and running. Unfortunately, some contractors don't seem to understand the value of properly maintaining a truck, Aquaro says. "It's COST COMPARISONS. When it comes to price, the difference between new and used trucks can be significant, and tends to increase even further based on region, Aquaro says. In the South and West where trucks are not exposed to harsh winter weather, a well-maintained, two- or threeyear-old truck can cost from 70 to 75 percent of the price of its new truck equivalent. In the North and East where trucks are subjected to more wear and tear, the same truck can cost about 60 percent of the price of the same new truck. "Trucks exposed to severe weather conditions for a few years are not going to be in as good condition," he says.

Some used trucks can cost even less than 60 or 70 percent of the value of their newer counterparts, Cannon



Photo: Mitsubishi

a valuable piece of mechanical equipment," he says. "It's penny-wise and dollar-foolish not to take care of it."

When he runs into problems, White takes his trucks to the dealership until the warranty expires and then works with a local mechanic he's developed a relationship with over the years. By working closely with his mechanic, White is often able to have his trucks back in a day's time. He also keeps an extra truck on hand in case one of his vehicles is in the shop for more than a few days. "It can be hard on business to have a truck pent up for more than a day," he says.

says. A 2001 truck with a 12-foot dump can cost around \$23,900 while the 2007 model with the same horse-power and specs can cost \$49,000. "When it comes to pricing, a lot of it depends on the conditions of the trade-ins we receive," he says.

Buying a truck can be a very personal experience so it's best for a contractor to know his businesses before making any final decisions. As Goebel says, "Whether you're a landscape, lawn care or even a dry wall company, the type of truck and how you buy it is going to depend on the company's needs."

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Serving as a mobile warehouse, a trailer fulfills all of a landscape contractor's hauling needs.

awn and landscape contractors need a lot of stuff to get their jobs done and it's not feasible – or economical – to make multiple pit stops during the day to load and unload equipment. As a result, irrigation sprinklers tag along to mowing jobs and zero-turn riding mowers make appearances at water feature installation sites.

Many contractors invest in trailers to simplify their hauling needs. And just more than one-third of contractors invested in new trailers just last year, whether to add to their fleet or replace old models, according to Lawn & Landscape research. Manufacturers and contractors agree that trailers can prevent equipment theft, prolong equipment life and keep tools easily accessible and organized. Certain types of trailers can even serve as mobile billboards to advertise a company and its services. Trailer customizations are endless, making it easy for a contractor to invest in the perfect trailer for his business. "Transporting your people and equipment is an important part of the landscape

by emily mullins | assistant editor



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INSECTICIDE

USE READER SERVICE # 100

special section - trailers

industry," says Tony Bass, president of Super Lawn Trucks, Bonaire, Ga. "It needs to be done in a safe, dependable way."

TRAILER TYPES. Customizations aside, there are three main types of landscape trailers.

The open utility trailer is the most basic and is used primarily to haul equipment. A higher-end open utility trailer can have racks located on its side to mount hand-held equipment, and most contractors choose to add job boxes, which commonly measure 84 inches across and hold various other hand-held tools and accessories, says Frank Calpalbo, national sales manager of Alumne Manufacturing, Wildwood, Fla. The price of open trailers range from \$3,000 to \$6,000,

depending on the amenities, he adds. The green industry, though, is moving toward enclosed trailers, says Mark Bonek, division sales manager for Wells Cargo, Elkhark, Ind. The trend originated in the Northeast, perhaps due to the harsher weather conditions, and has since moved throughout the country. The main benefit of enclosed trailers is that they add to the life of equipment by protecting it from the elements, as well as from debris on the road. "Equipment in enclosed trailers is not exposed to harmful UV rays, snow and rain," Bonek says.

Many contractors invest in enclosed trailers to prevent theft, which is a rising concern. More than 62 percent of contractors have experienced some type of equipment theft, according to a recent poll conducted by Lawn & Landscape. "With an enclosed trailer, someone can't just walk up and pluck a string trimmer off of a truck," Bonek says.

Because the equipment is enclosed and protected, some landscape contractors utilize it as a "warehouse on wheels," Bass says, which can cut down on other storage expenses. Also, by not having to load and unload the trailer each day, Bass says contractors can save as much as \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year in labor costs. An enclosed trailer can range from \$5,000 to \$10,000, Bonek says.

Dump trailers are used for loading and unloading material like mulch, dirt, clippings and gravel. Their sizes range from 7,000 to 24,000 pounds of gross vehicle weight to fulfill the



top requests

With all of the available choices, what exactly are landscape contractors asking for when it comes to purchasing their trailers? Tony Bass, president of Super Lawn Trucks, Bonaire, Ga., discusses the top five requests his clients typically order to make their trailers their own.

1. Accessible Interior

Contractors are asking for the interior of their enclosed trailers to exactly match the tools they use. Trailer manufacturers suggest that contractors come prepared with a detailed list of everything they will be hauling when they purchase trailers.

2. Marketable Message

The customization of landscape trucks has doubled in the last 10 years, says John Lackey, director of national account sales, Knapheide Co., Quincy, III. While about 70 percent of contractors choose permanent graphics, some customization companies offer changeable fleet graphics, which can be altered to promote seasonable services or special promotions. Types of images that can be shown include completed projects, photos of crews, a company's headquarters or the company name, to note a few, Bass says.

3. Build a Body

Different body sizes are the third most common request, Bass says. Most trailers attach to trucks from class three to six, depending on the trailer's dimensions. While 8 to 8 ½ feet is the standard width, trailer lengths range from 12 to 48 feet.

4. Side to Side

Contractors are asking for trailers that have functional side doors that give them curb-side access and enhance crew productivity, Bass says.

5. Decision to Dump

Debris dumpers, or dump hoists, are popular trailer additions that hold clippings and other disposable items that can be discarded right off the side of the truck. They can come in different sizes depending on how much debris a company usually has, Bass says. According to Lackey, these can add 25 percent to the total cost of the mounted equipment.



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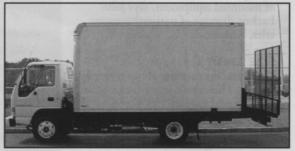
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special section - trailers

payload of any landscape contractor, and they cost as much as \$17,000, Capalbo says.

An alternate to the dump trailer, debris dumpers, or dump hoists, are popular additions to enclosed trailers. These devices hold clippings and other items to be discarded right off the side of the trailer, and can come in different sizes depending on how much debris a company usually has, Bass says. A dump hoist adds, on average, 25 percent to the total cost of mounted equipment, says John Lackey, director of national account sales, Knapheide Co., Quincy, Ill.

SIZE 'EM UP. On the small end, enclosed trailers measure about 6 feet by 10 feet. The most common size trailer in the landscape industry measures 8 feet by 20 feet, which generally carries two riding mowers and a push mower, along with a job box to hold various hand-held tools, Bonek says. Although manufactures agree that the biggest trailer that can still be maneuvered through a residential area measures 8½ feet by 24 feet, trailers can be made up to 48 feet long.

Trailers any larger than 8 to 8½ feet wide can interfere with daily business because they become too difficult to maneuver in average urban areas, Bass says, "If the standard parking space is 10 feet wide by 18 feet long, why would anyone want to work with a trailer that's 12 feet wide? It would just make what they have to do everyday that much harder," he says. When contractors come to his business with requests for wide trailers that would do more harm than good, Bass coaches them along toward a more reasonable choice.

In terms of length, 20 to 24 feet is the most common, Capalbo says, and the biggest concern is the longer the trailer, the more brake power it will take to stop it. "The truck you drive has to be heavy enough to stop the trailer behind it or accidents may happen," he says. "It's important to keep the trailer and the truck brakes synchronized."

Most trucks capable of pulling trailers are 10,000 to 26,000 pounds of gross vehicle weight, falling in classes three to six, depending on the trailer's dimensions, Bass says. Some of today's more modern trucks have the capability to adjust the breaks



Stephen Hillenmeyer is serious about workplace safety. As owner of Stephen Hillenmeyer Landscape Services, Lexington, Ky., he was awarded an Overall Safety Achievement Award from the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) in 2006. Truck and trailer driving safety is a big part of his program. "Our biggest trailer is 24 feet long – add a truck to that and my crews are working with a vehicle almost 50 feet long," he says. "That is not easy to do, so we take our training program very seriously."

Each employee has a background check and violations prolong the time until the individual can be trained. For example, there is a mandatory two-year delay from the date of a DUI to the start of training.

Training is done in house by other certified employees, so there is no cost to the company. Hillenmeyer gives his crews flexibility of who they choose to train with because he finds comfort impacts productivity. "The training can be frustrating and somewhat embarrassing if the guy can't drive the thing worth a darn," he says. "We tell them to work with someone they feel comfortable with, but the choice has to be approved by management,"

The test consists of a 25-mile drive that tests the workers ability to make turns, back up, start, stop and judge appropriate braking distance. The driver must adhere to the company's back-up policy, which involves honking the horn to draw attention to the truck going in reverse and to follow the cues of a second crewman who acts as a spotter.

Another part of the test is the daily inspections. The employee learns to check tire pressure, break and turn signal lights and how to properly hook the trailer to the truck. The inspection is done at the beginning and end of each workday and documented on a sheet filed in the office. Any problems are reported to the in-house mechanic and repaired before they go on the road again.

The manager who accompanies the employee on his test drive determines if he passes or fails. Those who need more training do it on their own time, with most pass the second time.

Once an individual passes, truck and trailer driving safety is usually only reviewed if unsafe behavior ensues. Penalties for unsafe behavior vary depending on what the offence may be, Hillenmeyer says Most offenders are first given a verbal warning, following by a written warning. Accidents are extensively documented and dealt with on a case-by-case basis. A safety committee reviews all driving violations and incidents every month and implements strategies for how they can be avoided in the future.



When you're looking at another long day on your mower, you want to know you've got the power to get through the job quickly and the comfort features that make the day seem a little shorter. That's why we built our Massey Ferguson. Zero-Turn Mowers with rugged diesel engines and high-performance hydraulics that let you get down to business, while the open platform design and high-back deluxe seat offer a smooth, comfortable ride.

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- *Convenient knob on right-hand console controls electro-hydraulic, multi-disc wet clutch to engage/ disengage mower deck.

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of the trailer from inside the cab to get the most accurate reading, says Dave Spence, director of commercial products for GMC, Detroit. A truck's manual will have step-by-step directions on how to perform this task, and some trucks can relay to the driver when the adjustment needs to be done by indicating it on the dash-board, Spence adds.

"When purchasing a

trailer, it's wise to keep in

mind that a business can

grow, so it's a good idea

to buy one with some ex-

tra room." - Mark Bonek

TIPS TO PICK. As with most

landscape equipment, there are a few factors a contractor should consider when choosing the right trailer for his business. One is to have a list of all of the tools a crew will carry on the trailer, Bass says.

This can help the contractor choose the right length and width, and, if customizing the truck, create a storage package specifically for each piece of equipment. Having the weight, length and class of the truck intended to pull the trailer is also important to make sure they are

compatible, he says.

Manufactures stress the importance of not buying a trailer that is too small to suit their hauling needs now or in the future. "When purchasing a trailer, it's wise to keep in mind that a business can, and should, grow, so it's a good idea to buy one that can be expanded if need be," Bonek says. It's also important to invest in a trailer with a ramp sturdy enough to handle riding equipment, which can exceed 1,700 pounds, he adds. Some trailer ramps are made of an outdoor pressure-treated plywood, which holds up to the moisture that can come from equipment, clippings and mulch.

Particularly on enclosed trailers, manufacturers encourage a contractor to come prepared with a logo and other company information to include on the trailer to serve as a mobile advertisement. The more consistent the colors and display, the more effective it is, Bass says. "The

long-term impact of marketing with the same logo and color scheme has been shown to strengthen a business," he says. "If possible, the logo on the trailer should match company uniforms, business cards, Web site, brochures and letterhead for the greatest impact."

The customization of landscape trucks has doubled in the last 10 years, Lackey says. Logo marketing can help potential clients get a

landscape company's information quickly and easily, from across a parking lot or across the street. Some contractors have even been able reduce the advertising they spend in other areas because they can use their trailers to generate leads. "Some of my customers report that once they begin to use a large billboardlike enclosed vehicle, they're amazed at the impact on their

marketing," Bass says. "They're just instantly perceived as more profes-

ional."

Logo packages can cost around \$1,700, and include details on both sides and the back of a trailer and the front cab of the truck, Bass says. Some companies also offer changeable fleet graphics that allow contractors to change the logo on their trailers based on things like the seasons and promotional offers. Cost of changeable customizations is about \$2,500, Bass says, and about 30 percent of his clientele opts for this logo package.

BETTER WITH AGE. Recent

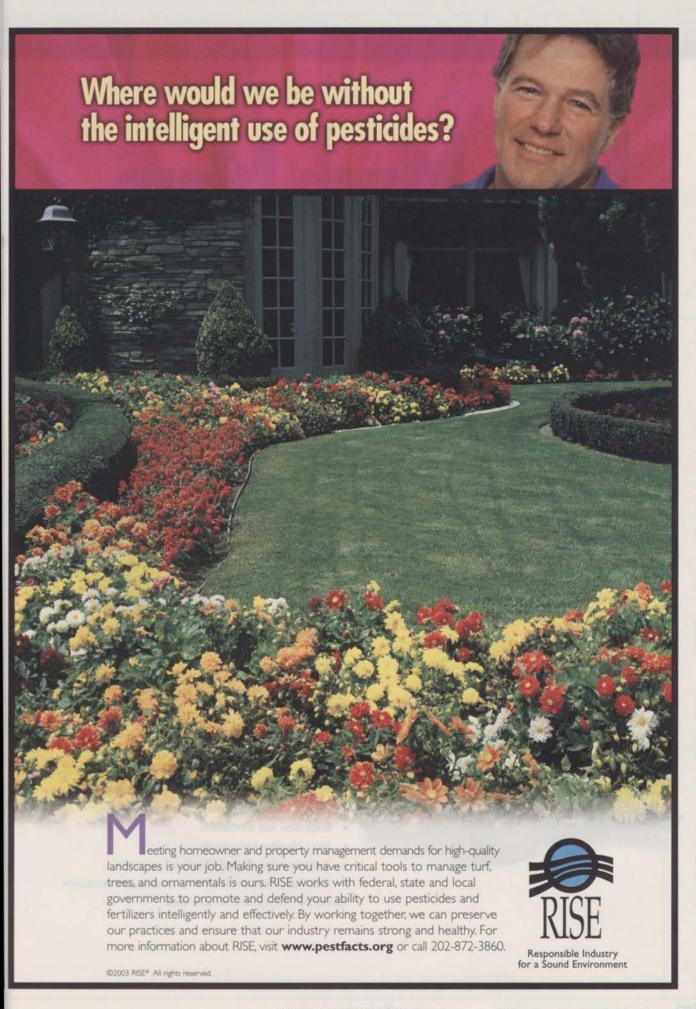
advancements in trailers aim to make them easier on equipment. Manufacturers have begun installing vinyl-coated equipment racks inside enclosed trailers to better keep equipment in place during rides down bumpy roads. "When you're driving down the road, trailers bump up and down meaning the equipment bounces around too," Bonek says. "Improved racks hold equipment in place more securely, which can prolong the life of equipment."

Other advancements address the problem of trailer corrosion. Electrolysis barriers are installed in some trailers to prevent corrosion of metal panels that rub against each other as the trailer moves over time. Barriers are also being installed to prohibit mulch, fertilizer and clippings from eroding a trailer's sides and frame,

Bonek says. 📖



When considering the right trailer for his business, a landscape contractor should create a list of a the tools a crew will carry on the trailer. This can help the contractor choose the right length and width, and if customizing, create the appropriate storage package. Photo: Alumne



Mow Much More

Designed to cut more than just grass, these zero-turn mowers can also chop job time.

compiled by heather wood | web editor

Bush Hog Tough Zero-Turn Mower

- · Features a structural steel frame
- · Decks are fabricated and reinforced for extra strength
- Cast-iron spindles are easy to grease from the top
- · Three-year limited warranty included
- Hi-Lift Bush Hog blades deliver 18,500 fpm blade tip speed
- Powered by Kawasaki and Kohler Command Pro engines up to 30 horsepower
- Bush Hog 334/874-2700, www.bushhog.com

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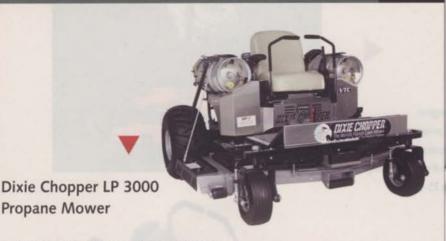




Cub Cadet Enforcer

- Equipped with a 19-, 21- or 23-horsepower Kawasaki V-Twin engine
- Includes a charged Hydro-Gear ZT 2800 transmission
- · Pivoting front axle includes lockout functionality
- · Suspension seat is adjustable
- · Has a 10-gallon fuel capacity
- Available in 44-, 48- and 52-inch cutting widths
- Cub Cadet Commercial www.cubcadetcommercial.com

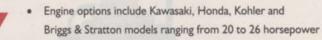
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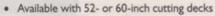


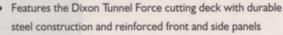
- Capable of 15 miles per hour ground speed
- Can mow 71/2 acres per hour
- Includes a Generac Power Systems 992-cc liquid propane engine
- Fueled by two 40-pound metal cylinders that hold 7.9 gallons each
- The Gaseous Alternative Power can cut ozone-forming emissions by more than 50 percent when compared to conventional gasoline engines
- Dixie Chopper 765/246-7737, www.dixiechopper.com

Circle 202 on reader service card

Dixon Kodiak Zero-Turn Mower







- · Oversized cast-iron blade hubs provide increased durability, while the Fusion blades ensure longer intervals between sharpening
- Deck lift and height adjusted with a foot assist pedal
 - · Deep cushioned seat adds to comfort
 - Dixon 704/921-6864, www.dixonztr.com

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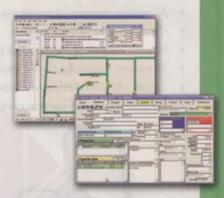


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product spotlight

EverRide Warrior

- Features a 66-inch deck
- Powered by a 27-horsepower Kohler engine
- Includes a wide height of cut range and pivoting front axle
- EverFlow tunnel deck features a 149-square-inch discharge opening, overlapping blades and a baffle-free front design
- Also available with a 60-inch deck and a 25-, 26- or 27-horsepower engine
- EverRide 402/274-8600, www.everride.com

Circle 204 on reader service card

Encore X-treme

- Two additional deck sizes 48- and 60-inch recently introduced
- All versions designed for power and versatility
- Can mow up to 10 miles per hour
- · Mowers feature bigger tires, a foot pedal lift and built-in comfort
- All mowers include the 10-year deck warranty and two-year parts and labor warranty
- Encore 800/267-4255, www.seriousred.com

Circle 205 on reader service card



Exmark FrontRunner

- Equipped with a hydraulic push-button power deck lift and fold system
- Designed to cut grass in hard-to-reach places
- Powered by a 27-horsepower Kohler Command Twin engine or 25-horsepower diesel Kubota engine
- Available in either a 52- or 60-inch deck width
- Exmark 402/223-6300, www.exmark.com

Circle 206 on reader service card







Ferris IS 2000 Z Mowers

- · Two models were added to the lineup
- First new model features a 26-horsepower liquid-cooled Kawasaki engine
- The other new option features a Briggs & Stratton Vanguard Big Block engine
- Both models will be available with either a 52- or 61-inch deck
- The IS 2000Z series also features a 25-horsepower unit with a Kawasaki engine and a 27-horsepower unit with a Kohler engine and a 61-inch deck
- Mowers also feature four-wheel IS independent suspension
- Ferris Industries 800/933-6175, www.ferrisindustries.com

Circle 207 on reader service card



Grasshopper MidMount Mower

- Powered by a liquid-cooled, 22-horsepower Kubota MaxTorque diesel engine
- Three-cylinder, horizontal-crankshaft OHV engine offers triple the life of 2-cylinder air- or liquid-cooled models
- Direct port fuel-injection offers fuel efficiency and minimal service
- DuraMax decks are available in 61- or 72-inch cutting widths and have air flow for even dispersal of clippings
- · Deck easily converts from side discharge to optional mulching or vacuum collection
- G2 hydrostatic drive provides True Zero Turn maneuverability and is said to finish intricate or highly landscaped jobs quickly
- · Edger, dethatcher and sprayer implements are available
- Grasshopper Co. 620/345-8621, www.grasshoppermower.com

Circle 208 on reader service card



Great Dane Brutus



- Available with a 24-horsepower
 Kawasaki or 27-horsepower
 Kohler engine
- Includes either a 52- or 61-inch cutting deck
- · Features a solid shaft deck spindle
- Cushioned, full-suspension, highback operator seat includes twin lever between-the-legs transmission controls
- Great Dane 402/274-8600, www.greatdanemower.com

Circle 209 on reader service card

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USE READER SERVICE # 105

Gravely Extra Durability Zero-Turn Mower Line

- Features a 30 percent overall increase in durability
- Available in 144, 148, 152 and 160 models of the Gravely 100 series and the 252, 260 and 272 models of the 200 series
- Improvements to the subsystems include ground drive, electrical, deck drive and deck
- Results in cooler hydraulic temperatures that result in longer pump and motor life and increased durability
- Improvement to electrical systems designed to eliminate corrosion and downtime
- Gravely 920/756-2141, www.gravely.com

Circle 210 on reader service card

Hustler Super Z

- Features a top speed of 15 miles per hour
- Includes an XR-7 mowing deck in 54, 60,
 66 or 72 inches wide
- High-capacity hydraulic pumps and wheel motors allow reduced pressure and longer system life at high speeds
- · Hydraulic oil cooler increases system life
- Includes a 14.4-gallon fuel capacity
- Features wide stance and a low center of gravity for increased stability
- · Powered by fuel-efficient Honda, Kawasaki or Kohler engines
- Hustler Turf Equipment 800/395-4757, www.hustlerturf.com

Circle 211 on reader service card

Husqvarna iZ5223T Zero-Turn Mower

- Powered by a 23-horsepower Briggs & Stratton Engine
- Features a 52-inch deck
- Ground speed reaches as high as
 9.5 miles per hour, which is a productivity rate of as much as 5 acres per hour
- Tunnel Ram deck design provides performance in heavy cutting conditions
- Deck features 10-gauge steel with a rolled front edge and
 7-gauge steel side skirts
- Compact size permits operators to work in close quarters
- Husqvarna www.usa.husqvarna.com

Circle 212 on reader service card









John Deere 737 and 757 Mid-Frame Z-Trak Mowers

- Can handle small, tight spaces and open fields
- 23-horsepower 737 and the 25-horsepower 757 feature a horizontal-shaft, air-cooled Kawasaki engine
- Can accommodate the 54- or 60-inch 7-Iron II mower deck
- Includes low-effort dial height-of-cut adjustment with foot-assist deck lift system
- One-piece, high-back, deep-cushioned seat includes standard armrests
- Holds 9.5 gallons of fuel
- Service is made easy with a flip-up footrest, tilt seat and removable grille
- John Deere 309/765-8000, www.johndeere.com

Circle 213 on reader service card



Kubota ZD-300 Series Zero-Turn Mowers

- Includes five models
- Powered by Kubota energy-efficient diesel engines ranging from 21 to 31 horsepower
- Design features said to help reduce downtime
- Feature high-capacity transmission systems, deep mower decks and comfortable operating systems
- Accessories, including a mulching system, are available
- Kubota Tractor Corp. 800/458-2682, www.kubota.com

Circle 214 on reader service card

Massey Ferguson Zero-Turn Mowers

- Line includes the ZT29 and ZT33 models
- · Deliver 29 or 33 gross engine horsepower
- Powered by 3-cylinder, liquid-cooled diesel engines
- Features a consistent quality of cut
- Massey Ferguson 770/813-9200, www.masseyferguson.com

Circle 215 on reader service card





product spotlight

Scag Wildcat

- Engine options range from 25 to 30 horsepower
- Provides comfortable operation with its Soft-Ride and Quick-Fit control levers
- Includes a two-year limited warranty with a three-year limited cutter deck and spindle warranty
- Scag www.scag.com

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Wright Mid-Mount, Zero-**Turning Radius Mower**

- Nearly 3 inches lower than most mid-mounts
- Rear wheel motors can be moved back and forth through three settings
- Can be powered by a 21-, 23- or 25-horsepower engine
- Deck width options include 48, 52 and 61 inches
- Wright Mfg. 301/360-9810, www.wrightmfg.com

Circle 217 on reader service card







Walker Riding Mowers

- Eight models are offered and range from 13 to 31 horsepower
- Gas and diesel engines are available
- Eleven mower deck sizes are available, ranging from the 36 to 74 inches
- Include grass collection, side discharge or mulching capability
- All decks tilt up to 90 degrees for maintenance and compact storage
- Walker Manufacturing 970/221-5614 www.walkermowers.com

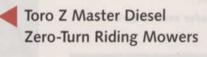
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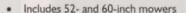


Yazoo/Kees Mid-Max Zero-Turn Rider

- Features an 11.2-gallon fuel capacity
- · Powered by a 25-horsepower engine
- · Cutting deck is constructed of 10-gauge steel with reinforced 7-gauge side skirts
- Features quick-lift cutting height adjustment with standard foot assist, dual 5.6-gallon fuel tanks and ground speed as fast as 4.1 acres per hour
- Yazoo/Kees 877/368-8873, www.yazookees.com

Circle 220 on reader service card





- Powered by a 23-horsepower Kubota liquidcooled diesel engine
- Diesel engine is under less stress in aggressive conditions like hilly terrain or dense grass
- Feature a 12-gallon fuel capacity
- Ground speed reaches 11 miles per hour
- Toro 800/348-2424, www.toro.com/professional

Circle 218 on reader service card



No Compact Feat

Though they may be small, these compact utility loaders bring power to the job.

compiled by heather wood | web editor

ASV RC-30 All Surface Loader

- Has a rubber track undercarriage with suspension to give it only 2.5 psi ground pressure, making it sensitive enough to work on turf without causing damage
- Safety features include full ROPS/FOPS canopy, lap bar, seat belt and parking brake
- · Equipped with a 30-hp Perkins diesel engine
- Weighs 3,000 pounds
- ASV 218/327-3434, www.asvi.com

Circle 221 on reader service card





Bobcat MT52 Mini Track Loader

- Ride-on platform option can be installed or removed within a couple of minutes for ride-on and walk-behind capabilities
- Features a user-friendly control system
- Has a 520-pound rated operating capacity
- Compact size of 3 feet wide, 6 feet long enables it to go where many skid-steer loaders cannot
- Includes a turf-friendly lug track that distributes the loader over a larger area
- Powered by an 18.8-horespower, liquid-cooled Kubota diesel engine
- Works with 15 different attachments
- Bobcat 800/743-4340, www.bobcat.com

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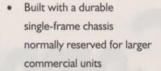
Vermeer S600TX Compact Skid-Steer

- Dedicated ride-on, springcushioned platform allows for greater visibility to the attachment and bucket edge
- Universal mounting plate allows operators to hook up various attachments
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- 7- and 9- inch track options
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 Pro gas or 26.3-horsepower Kubota diesel
- Vermeer Mfg. 888/837-6337, www.vermeer.com

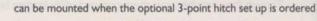
Circle 223 on reader service card



Yanmar CBL40 Compact Backhoe Loader



- · Backhoe is removable
- Most Category one- to threepoint hitch attachments

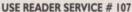


- Features automatic bucket leveling with a loader lift height of 9 feet, 6 inches and 2,960 pounds lift capacity
- HMT transmission means no range shifting during loader operation with forward-reverse pedal
- Backhoe dig depth is 10 feet with a backhoe reach of 13 feet, 2 inches
- Yanmar Construction Equipment 770/877-7570, www.yanmar.com

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- Update of the TL-224-34
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- Includes a two-pump, 3,000-psi, 14.5-gpm hydraulic system
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- Offers an integrated track system that retracts from a fully-extended
 43.5 inches to a width of 35 inches
- · Track system is controlled by a joystick lever on the control panel
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Circle 225 on reader service card

Ditch Witch SK650

- Powered by a 31-horsepower Kubota turbo diesel engine
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- Hydraulic tank is mounted on the outside of the machine for increased capacity and machine performance
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Circle 226 on reader service card







John Deere Compact Track Loader

- Models include the CT322 and CT332
- · Two-speed transmission is optional
- Features a push-button Quick-Tach system option
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- Delivers 360-degree visibility
- John Deere 309/765-8000, www.johndeere.com

Circle 227 on reader service card

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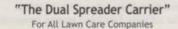
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The author is office manager at Garrick-Santo Landscape Co., Malden, Mass. She can be reached at 781/322-0006 or dverolla@garrick-santo.com

Bridging the Language **Barrier at Garrick-Santo** Landscape Co.

he customer on the other end of the phone is frantic, and the crew at her home is uncertain how to

"Please! I need to tell your crew not to trim the bushes on the side of my yard - they actually belong to my neighbors. Your crew can't understand what I am trying to say!"

In the past, such phone calls were something I dealt with during a typical week as office manager at Garrick-Santo Landscape Co. in Malden, Mass.

Not only are customers becoming more frustrated with the language barrier, but our workers are concerned as well. As the industry's workforce has become increasingly Hispanic, this is a frequent problem and concern with many landscape companies nationwide.

My job is to keep the office running smoothly and these types of calls are counterproductive to that goal. Not only did office productivity slip while one or more of us were placating

the unhappy and frustrated client, but job efficiencies fell as crewmembers, attempting to figure out what the customer wanted, halted production.

In the past, the crew may have left the job unfinished, for fear of doing something wrong. Likewise, the customer is left less than pleased by our performance. Our crews take a lot of pride in their work, and it is upsetting to see a customer come racing out of the house, trying to tell them something that is obviously of an urgent nature, yet not being able to understand, communicate with or help the client.

Communicating the best we could with the crew when they came back to the shop, trying to explain what the customer wanted and then sending the crew back out to the job the following day was not an uncommon practice. Despite the cost, Garrick-Santo Landscape is committed to customer satisfaction, but it certainly was not an efficient or economical solution.

We needed to develop a way to ensure our customers could communicate their concerns to the crew.

Fortunately, Richard Gottschalk, president of Garrick-Santo Landscape Co., is always open to new ideas. During one of our staff meetings I suggested trying out a business card that the crew leader could hand to the client, indicating that translation was available

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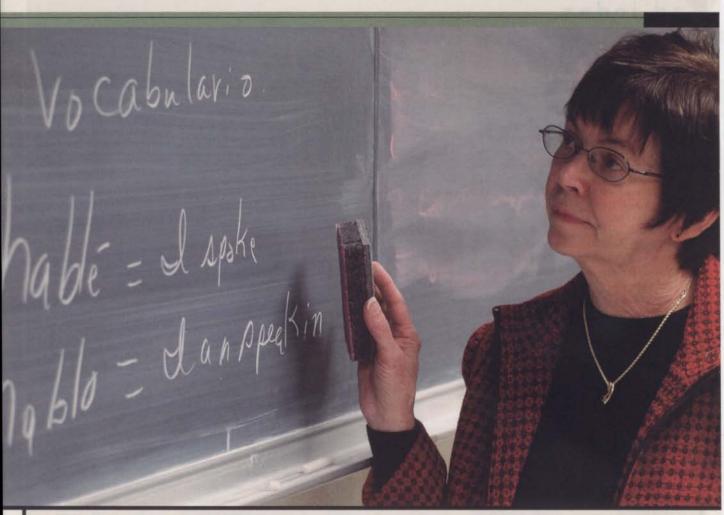
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Hello, my name is_ . Although I do speak some English, I want to be sure that we are servicing the property to your satisfaction. I am able to contact a translator to help us communicate better, if you would like. Thank you!

or, déle esta tarjeta al cheme si lo ves en la propiedad. Porfavor, lláme al oficina tan pronto el cliente necesite una tradución.

Gracias.



Not unlike a Spanish-English teacher, landscape contractors who employ multi-cultural work forces are increasingly finding it necessary to adapt. Garrick-Santo Landscape implemented a business card that a Hispanic crew leader could hand to a client indicating a translation was available over his two-way radio.

Photo: Dreamstime.com

immediately over the crew leader's two-way radio.

Gottschalk gave the go ahead, and Sybil Velez, who joined our management team a year ago as assistant manager and is bilingual in English and Spanish, was enthusiastic about the idea. Sybil speaks directly with customers and gathers their concerns and then relays the information at that moment to the on-site crew, resolving the situation. Done. No upset client and no need to send the crew back. The company saves time and money, and most importantly, the customer receives a greater level of service.

Our costs to implement this idea were minimal. Sybil and I discussed various formats for the business card, we went back and forth with our printing service a few times, and have a template that we can update as needed.

The total cost to print 500 cards was about \$65. Obviously the cost

to add another person to the payroll would have to be considered, should a company not have a bilingual person in their employ. In our case, having such a person in the office, centrally located and easily accessible has proven to be the best solution.

The end result is a business card, held by all Hispanic crew leaders on every job. The card reads:

"Hello, my name is _____, although I do speak some English, I want to make sure that I am servicing your property to your satisfaction. I am able to contact a translator to help us communicate better, if you would like. Thank you!"

On the reverse, instructions are printed in Spanish for the crew leader, outlining the proper use of the language card.

To implement our new service, we held a crew meeting, during which we introduced the cards, along with an explanation of how and when to use them. We in-

structed our Hispanic crew leaders to hand the card to any customer who met them on the property, even if there didn't seem to be a problem. In that way, our customers would be aware that should a concern ever arise, there is a solution at hand. Also, an announcement regarding the card will be sent to our clients with their annual renewal notices, to further ensure that everyone involved is aware of the benefit the card will provide.

We began to utilize this service in September and the initial results have been very positive. Clients and crewmembers alike have expressed relief in not having to worry about how to communicate with each other now or in the future.

We expect this one innovation, while seemingly small, will pave the way for additional ideas and mutual growth as our two cultures continue to work closely together. – **Donna**Verolla

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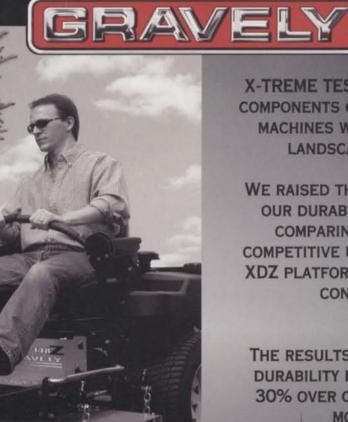
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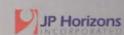
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