

DECEMBER 2010
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Lawn & Landscape®

Leading business media for landscape contractors

inside:

2011 predictions, pg. 20

Adding pest control, pg. 36

Compact equipment trends, pg. 46

 GOING
green
p. 32

A fleet of propane equipment, a hurricane-proof green roof and a portfolio of water-saving projects took home the top prizes in the 2010 Environmental Business Awards.

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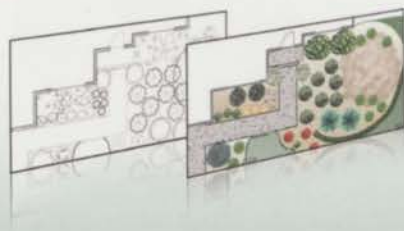
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Features




INTERVIEW

- 26 **In vino, veritas**  
Wine broker David Rosen shares his tips on cold calling and increasing referral sales.

COVER STORY

- 32 **Going green**    
Three winners of the Environmental Business Awards are recognized for their contributions to promoting green projects.

FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

- 36 **Pest profits**   
Money-making pest control services are a logical add-on for lawn care companies – if they focus on training and customer service.

2010 BREAKTHROUGH

- 44 **Feeding a need**  
From a deli to design/build, Gasper Landscape grows through a dedication to customer service.
- 46 **Cutting down time and money** 
New compact equipment is made for ease and versatility.
- 50 **Tracking time off**  
Keeping your calendars straight can be complicated – but it doesn't have to be costly.

GOING green

Cover story
32

Three winners of the Environmental Business Awards are recognized for promoting green projects.

Departments

- 4 Online Contents
- 6 Editor's Insight
- 8 News
- 14 Research
- 16 Ask the Experts
- 18 New Products
- 20 Columns
- 52 Classifieds
- 57 Ad Index
- 58 Leadership Lessons: Bill Arman

Feeding a need 44



Pest profits
36

In vino, veritas 26

ONLINE Contents

Check out what's now online from *Lawn & Landscape*.

Check out the latest videos from the *Lawn & Landscape* staff

And see more coverage of the 2010 GIE+EXPO at www.lawnandlandscape.com/multimedia.



Two transitions

Mike Rorie talks about growing a successful commercial maintenance company, selling it and joining Brickman and then working as an industry supplier.



Higher at HighGrove

Jim McCutcheon tells Jason Cupp how he grew his Austell, Ga.-based company 20 percent this year.



What the November elections mean for small business owners

Small business owner and New York Times columnist Gene Marks discusses the short- and long-term impact of the mid-term elections.



Leveraging the landscape to better manage water

This overview from the ASLA shows how a properly planned landscape can effectively handle high volumes of water.



New podcast online

Increasing gross margin through job sequencing

The latest installment from the Harvest Group examines how designating who does what and in what order can significantly improve your company's gross margin.



Lawnandlandscape.com NEWS TICKER

CLCA names legislator of the year ... Ruppert Landscape makes two hires ... Landscape architects see salaries drop ... TCI Expo

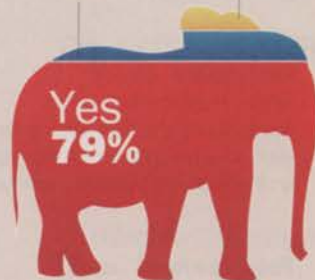
ONLINE POLL

POLL RESULTS

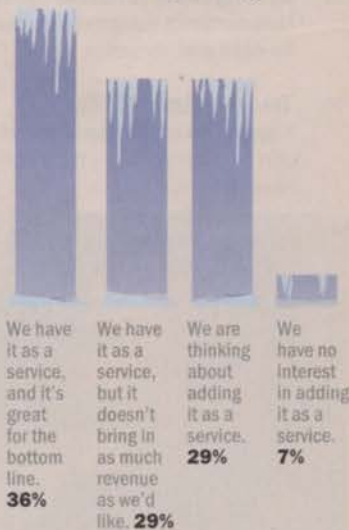
Do you think the GOP winning a majority of races in the November elections will help your business?

I've given up on politicians. **9%**

No. **12%**



What are your thoughts on snow plowing?



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kicks off ... Job postings drop in September ... Kinsella Landscape wins New Holland challenge ... Noon Turf Care acquires Lawnmaster ... Website tips for small business



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The year ahead

In 1973, a 22-year-old named Tom Jones drove to Wausau, Wis., with nothing but his gold '62 Chevy Impala and \$50 in his pocket. He and his friend were there to purchase a tree care company.

Jones had spent the previous summers working for his friend's uncle's landscaping company in Milwaukee, installing landscapes and managing a few projects. That uncle advised them about the Wausau company for sale.

The owner, "Old Ed" Blackford, knew the two young men didn't have any capital beyond the \$50 and whatever the Impala would bring in at auction, but he sensed something in them and did them one better than selling the company.

"He gave it to us, because we didn't have any money, any collateral," Jones says. With a few signatures, Jones and his friend – who before this point hadn't ever been to Wausau and couldn't find it on a map – owned the company.

They went to the bank with their newfound collateral, took out a loan and, eventually, paid Old Ed back.

Fifty-some years later LandArt has moved beyond tree care and does design/build and snow removal for clients in the North Woods.

And Jones says it's poised to have its most profitable year ever. He credits it to the company's solid reputation and relationships with clients, and not bowing to the price pressure so many of his competitors have.

He's got cash in the bank, and was able to buy a couple hundred thousand dollars worth of equipment for next year.

“The 22-year-old drove to Wausau with nothing but his gold '62 Chevy Impala and \$50 in his pocket.”

I'm writing this shortly after returning from the 2010 GIE+EXPO and GIC in Louisville, Ky. Most everyone I talked to was optimistic about the coming year.

According to our 2010 State of the Industry Report, 80 percent of owners are either somewhat or very confident in the industry's ability to rebound in 2011.

Maybe entrepreneurs and business owners are more positive than the average person. Maybe driving to a place you've never been to buy a company you've never seen is a little crazy.

But people like Jones – owners who have stuck to the basics of good business and have a strong faith in the ability of themselves and their employees – have a good feeling about 2011.

"We're looking at some really nice projects. We've got a healthy amount of work to start the spring," Jones says. "I think it's going to be a really good year."

I'm inclined to agree. – Chuck Bowen



See my video blog at www.lawnandlandscape.com.

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GIE+EXPO sees rise in attendance, staying in Louisville

LOUISVILLE, Ky. – The sponsors of the GIE+EXPO announced they have extended their partnership contract through 2014.

“With an ever-growing and changing industry, the combined show just makes sense,” said OPEI president and CEO Bill Harley. “Attendees are exposed to different aspects of the industry that can help grow their businesses and increase profits, while exhibitors are put in front of a larger audience.”

The show, held every fall, is sponsored by OPEI, PLANET and PGMS. 2010 saw the co-location of the Hard-scape North America show, which organizers said helped boost attendance and booth sales.

Preliminary registration results showed total attendee registration was up about 4 percent, with lawn and landscape professionals up about 17 percents, said Warren Sellers, show director. The exhibit space, both indoors and outdoors, increased by 20 percent and the show floor included more than 200 companies that were not part of the 2009 expo.

Those in attendance took part in three days of educational sessions, demonstrations by suppliers and conversations on the industry and economy. Overall, landscape contractors at the show were upbeat when asked about the state of their business and the future of the industry.



GIE+EXPO attendees checked out the latest equipment and took part in educational sessions during the show.

For video coverage from the GIE+EXPO, go to www.lawnandlandscape.com and search for GIE+EXPO. Among the attendees and exhibitors we caught up with were Jim McCutcheon of HighGrove Partners, who talked about growing the company 20 percent this year; Hollis Malone, the horticulture manager of Gaylord Opyland, who dealt with a massive flood last spring, and Denise Luedeke, winner of *Lawn & Landscape's* grand prize, a week for two in Hawaii.



McCutcheon

New fungicide approved for use on commercial sites

GREENSBORO, N.C. – Renown fungicide, a product from Syngenta, has received U.S. Environmental Protection Agency registration for use on commercial sites.

It is the only product to contain the active ingredients found in both Heritage and Daconil fungicides.

By combining proprietary azoxystrobin from Syngenta and

finely-milled chlorothalonil, Renown provides both systemic and contact modes of action, the company says. Its preventive and curative properties help control key plant diseases including, dollar spot, brown patch, gray leaf spot, algae, anthracnose and more.

Additional product features include:

Stick-and-stay technology: Proprietary technology that helps the contact component of Renown stick and stay on the leaf



surface longer, even after heavy rain or irrigation, providing broad-spectrum disease control.

Performance under summer stress: A non-DMI product that performs well under summer heat and stress.

Protection from root to leaf tip: Control of both soil-borne and foliar diseases.

Also this is the latest addition to Syngenta's The Turf Essentials line of combination fungicide product brands including Headway, Instrata and Concert each product relies on a formula-

tion of two or more active ingredients with multiple modes of action for broader-spectrum efficacy.

GreenTrust 365: Renown is available as part of the 2011 GreenTrust 365 Purchase Program.

Dow AgroSciences kicks off applicator rebate program

INDIANAPOLIS – Dow AgroSciences has kicked off the 2010-2011 Power of MORE rebate program.

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The full list of eligible products can be found at www.powerofmore.com. In addition, customers can earn bonus rebates based on the total rebate amount earned throughout the year.

Qualifying products must be invoiced during the purchase period of Sept. 1, 2010 through Aug. 31, 2011. Completed rebate forms and invoices must be postmarked by Sept. 30, 2011.

Include Software members honored for business leadership

ANNAPOLIS, Md. - Include Software team members were recognized by local business organizations for their leadership.

Include's Director of Sales, Jody Lenex, was named Young Professional of the Year by the Howard County Chamber of Commerce, and Bill Seven, Include's founder and president, was honored

as a finalist for Entrepreneur of the Year by the Annapolis and Anne Arundel County Chamber of Commerce.

Lenex was a founding member of the Young Professionals Network, an initiative of the Howard County Chamber of Commerce. The award honored his leadership in making YPN one of the fastest-growing professional groups in Maryland.

"Jody put YPN on the map and showed great leadership in assimilating many varied viewpoints and agendas, harnessing the energy of so many young professionals in the region," said Mac Casity, YPN's board chair.

Seven was honored for his ability to translate technical expertise into commercial

success throughout the country. He started the business by writing his own software code to assist in his construction job and parlayed the experience into management software for the land care industry.

SavATree expands acquiring DeerTech

BEDFORD, N.Y. - SavATree, a tree, shrub and lawn care services provider, has acquired DeerTech, a deer deterrent solutions company.

DeerTech's patented Three Circles of Protection shields valuable shrubs and plants from hungry deer. The service combines a patented ultra-sound technology with proprietary treatment.



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DeerTech offers services to residential and commercial customers in five states, including New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Delaware.

"Both organizations were built on providing the highest level of service through skilled local people and cutting edge technologies," said SavATree President Daniel van Starrenburg. "Through this merger, we are enhancing the deer deterrent service we offer, which we believe is now best in the industry."

"We are excited about partnering with a well-established leader that provides an even stronger value proposition to both existing and new customers," said DeerTech CEO Alan Seiler. **L&L**

6 plants named as 2011 Florida Garden Select

ORLANDO, Fla. – Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA) has named six plants as 2011 Florida Garden Select. Each year, a selection of Florida's best plants are hand-picked by a jury of horticulturists each representing a unique facet of the state's diverse nursery and landscape industry.

The 2011 selections were chosen for their exceptional appeal, marketability and projected success for Florida's diverse climate and beyond.

The six plants include one flowering accent tree, one low-growing conifer-like shrub, a seemingly constant-blooming vine, a dainty-looking, yet heat-tolerant annual, a spreading ground cover ideal for Florida and a distinctive, hybridized palm.

"2011 brings a new and refreshed approach to the program's marketing. We're taking aim at gardening enthusiasts and casual gardeners through the development of a Florida Gardening consumer website and Facebook interface designed to spur enthusiasm for these plants and for gardening in general," said Rick Brown, co-owner of Riverview Flower Farm (Wimauma, Fla.) and a member of FNGLA's marketing committee.

Last year, the Florida Garden Select name replaced Florida Plants of the Year. The winners are: Gold Medallion Tree (*Cassia leptophylla*); Prostrate Yew or Japanese Plum Yew (*Cephalotaxa harringtonia 'Prostrata'*); Caranday Palm (*Copernicia alba*); Snow Princess (*Labularia hybrid 'Snow Princess'*); Yellow Butterfly Pea Vine (*Callaeum macropterum (formerly Mascagnia macroptera)*) and Wire Vine (*Muehlenbeckia axillaris*).



Snow Princess (above) and Gold Medallion Tree named winners.

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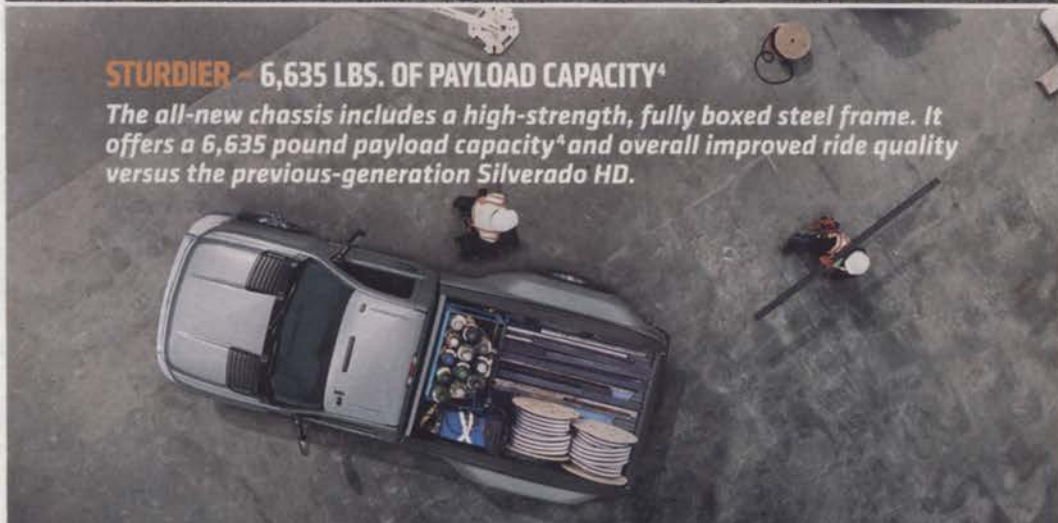


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Shown above: New 2011 Chevrolet Silverado 3500HD Crew Cab with available Duramax 6.6L Turbo-Diesel V8 engine with 21,100 lbs. max. towing and 5,122 lbs. max. payload. **1** Requires fifth-wheel trailer hitch and Regular Cab model. **2** Maximum trailer weight ratings are calculated assuming a base vehicle, except for any option(s) necessary to achieve the rating, plus driver. The weight of other optional equipment, passengers and cargo will reduce the maximum trailer weight your vehicle can tow. See your Chevy dealer for additional details. **3** Whichever comes first. See dealer for limited warranty details. **4** Requires Regular Cab model and gas engine. Maximum payload capacity includes weight of driver, passengers, optional equipment and cargo. **5** Requires available Duramax 6.6L Turbo-Diesel V8 engine. Allison is a registered trademark of Allison Transmission, Inc. Silverado and Duramax are registered trademarks and Chevy is a trademark of General Motors. ©2010 General Motors. Buckle up, America!



Small-business owners face challenges with ever-changing technology

The role at times may be overlooked, but one of the many hats small-business owners wear is that of chief technology officer. The National Small Business Association released its 2010 NSBA Small Business Technology Survey, which details owners' utilization of technology, time and cost spent on technology, and experience with doing business online. The results showed that the majority of small-business owners spend **more than three hours per day on a computer** and 98 percent think that even though technology is rapidly evolving, it's important to keep pace with the change to increase efficiency and grow their business network.

Here are some of the survey's questions and responses:

Who is primarily responsible for your tech support?

- 36% pay an outside company to handle it
- 36% use a member of their staff
- 25% do it themselves
- 2% use family and friends for help

What are the biggest challenges you face with your company's use of technology? (Check all that apply)

- 52% security issues
- 51% cost of needed upgrades to technology
- 49% cost of maintaining technology
- 37% time it takes to fix problems
- 31% breaks in service
- 26% lack of expertise
- 13% response time from external technology support

What are the biggest challenges you face with your website? (Check all that apply)

- 69% time it takes to make updates
- 39% cost of maintaining the site
- 16% security issues
- 13% response time from external web maintenance company

Do you sell or market your products or services online?

- 42% market online
- 33% don't sell or market online
- 26% sell and market online

More turn to online research before buying



Do you put weight into a web presence or search for how customers are reviewing your company online? A poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International found **58 percent** of Americans perform online research about services and products before they consider making a purchase. The number is an increase from 48 percent in 2004. Additionally, 24 percent of the respondents said they have posted comments or reviews online about the products or services they've bought.

"Many Americans begin their purchasing experience by doing online research to compare prices, quality and the reviews of other shoppers," says Jim Jansen, senior fellow at the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project. "Even if they end up making their purchase in a store, they start their fact-finding and decision making on the Internet."

Wireless technology crucial to maintaining business operations

One budget area not receiving the funding axe is technology, especially wireless. An AT&T Small Business Technology Poll surveyed 2,000 owners and found 80 percent maintained wireless technology spending in 2010 and expect to rely more on wireless tools in the next two years.

Other findings:

- More than 80 percent use smartphones, such as a BlackBerry, for business operations: checking e-mail, viewing data, surfing the Internet or updating social network sites.
- 65 percent would find it challenging for their business to survive without wireless technology.
- Nearly eight in 10 use WiFi hotspots to conduct business-related activities.



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PROPOSAL PACKAGES AND EMPLOYEE BREAKS

ASK THE EXPERTS is presented in partnership with PLANET's Trailblazers On Call program. Trailblazers are industry leaders who volunteer their time and expertise to give back to the industry. Have a question for the experts? Send it to llexperts@gie.net.

Q: I am trying to improve my proposal and the overall package, but I feel it is lacking and would appreciate some tips and advice.

A: The contractor who submitted this request to the PLANET Trailblazers on Call program attached a 12-page proposal package for a 60-day irrigation management and maintenance plan for a homeowners association. As first impressions are critical, I recommended that he begin by improving the appearance of his proposal. You always want to present a professional image, so I suggested he invest in a marketing folder to use when submitting proposals. More importantly, have someone proofread your document before sending it out.

The presence of misspellings, incorrect grammar and inconsistencies with wording and

capitalizations in your document can cause a decision maker to question your attention to detail and your qualifications.

I would also recommend that you do not go into extreme detail in your proposal. In this proposal, there was an extremely detailed irrigation maintenance program, an irrigation enhancements plan, a 60-day maintenance plan and three pages of financial analysis. He delineated specific things that he was going to do, when he was going to do them, quoted percentages of saving of dollars and a myriad of things, and stated he'd improve efficiencies by 21 percent. He also included more information than the management company asked for. Do not include unsolicited information, such as a resume. Instead, you may want to include a narrative about your company.

It's important that before you put together proposals, you have

a conversation with your clients to find out what they really want instead of telling them what they need. Find out what they value and price things according to their values. Finally, and above all else, you must be able to quantify and substantiate any statements you make in your proposal.

In closing, do your due diligence prior to providing a proposal to your client.

Bill Horn, landscape industry certified manager and technician, Terracare Associates Martinez, Calif.

Q: Our employees are provided with a 60-minute unpaid lunch break. They have asked us to change that to a 30-minute lunch and two 15-minute breaks. Currently our payroll system is automatically deducting that 60-minute lunch break. Do we need to adjust that to show one 30-minute and two 15-minute deductions?

A: Assuming that the employees are all non-exempt (hourly paid), there are two significant problems.

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) — In some states and in

certain industries breaks may be required (check the laws in your state), federal law does not require breaks of any kind. But, if you do provide breaks, the FLSA regulations require that all breaks of 20 minutes or less must be paid. You may only deduct for breaks in excess of 20 minutes. So, by dividing this into three breaks, two of them must be paid.

Automatic deductions — As long as your payroll system accommodates it, you should record them as three separate breaks. But understand that although automatic payroll/time deductions are not illegal, they can lead to significant problems if not administered closely. If an employee works during a lunch or any unpaid break period, he/she must be paid for that time, even if the company forbids them to work during that time. Whenever employees perform work for you, they must be paid. You may discipline or in some cases even terminate them for violating such a rule, but you must still pay them for the time worked.

The recommended solution is to have a system whereby an employee who works during a break can easily report that time to be recorded for the day. Often that responsibility is assigned to the supervisor who checks daily to see if anyone did any work during breaks. Any break time worked, even a few minutes, can result in overtime pay.

Also, be aware that requiring or even allowing an employee to eat lunch at their work station can result in you having to pay them for that lunch period. Leaving an employee in a location whereby he/she may be allowed or suffered to perform work, such as answering a phone or responding to a mechanical need, may result in a requirement to pay them for that entire time period.

Note that obvious exceptions to this regulation include work crews in the field or in vehicles.

**Bill Cook, Human Resource Associates
PLANET HR Consultant**

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Grasshopper turbine blower

The pitch: Grasshopper turbine blower clears debris from congested, hard-to-reach or wide-open areas and long stretches of walkways and curbs in a fraction of the time required by conventional backpack blowers and walk-behind units.

The target: Landscape contractors

Specs:

- The turbine blower offers a 360-degree nozzle rotation – controlled remotely from the operator's station – to direct airflow precisely for reduced high-volume cleanup time.
- Quieter than most debris blowers.
- Increases productivity and decreases labor.

Contact: www.grasshoppermower.com



Ariens MeltBuddy

The pitch: The salt spreader attaches to SNO-THRO units, which allows operators to clear snow and spread ice melt in a single pass.

The target: Snow fighters

Specs:

- Has an easy-to-use hand trigger and large capacity hopper, which allows operators to drop ice-melt granules where needed.
- Universal mounting for easy attachment on almost any manufacturer's snow blower.
- Snap-locking hopper cover keeps blowing snow out and away from the ice melting product.

Contact: www.ariens.com



Reed ratchet shears

The pitch: The shears with hardened steel blades can cut plastic pipe.

The target: Design/build and irrigation contractors

Specs:

- The RSP1 ratchet shears can be used for CPVC because of blade thinness and finish.
- Blades on Reed ratchet shears can be sharpened or replaced, enhancing performance and saving money.
- The pointed blade in the one-hand RSP1 model helps start the cut in tough plastics such as CPVC, and helps avoid bounce in thin wall material.

Contact: www.reedmfco.com



DuraClass Sidewinder Jr. dump body

The pitch: The versatile body is easily prepared for unexpected early or late snowfalls.

The target: Snow fighters

Specs:

- The 3- to 4-yard Sidewinder Jr. compliments the larger 5- to 14-yard capacity DuraClass Sidewinder dump body.
- With its compact size, the Sidewinder Jr. increases maneuverability, while minimizing clearance concerns.
- Can be used for mid-winter construction events without having to remove sanding equipment.

Contact: www.duraiclass.com



EZ Grout's Hog Crusher

The pitch: The Hog Crusher material recycler easily attaches to a skid-steer loader or forklift to become an on-the-spot recycling center at job sites.

The target: Design/build contractors

Specs:

- Used to recycle most jobsite materials such as brick, block and non-reinforced concrete up to 4 inches thick.
- Crushes material down to useable size of approximately 2 inches or smaller.

Contact: www.ezgrout.com



Forsta Filters M-90 self-cleaning irrigation filter

The pitch: The automatic backwash allows the filter to clean itself and requires almost no routine maintenance.

The target: Irrigation contractors

Specs:

- At less than 12 inches tall, it can incorporate into nearly any piping system.
- A stainless steel body, screen and components make the filter durable.
- It uses a single 1-inch flush valve and uses less than 2 gallons in the 6-second backwash cycle.

Contact: www.forstafilters.com

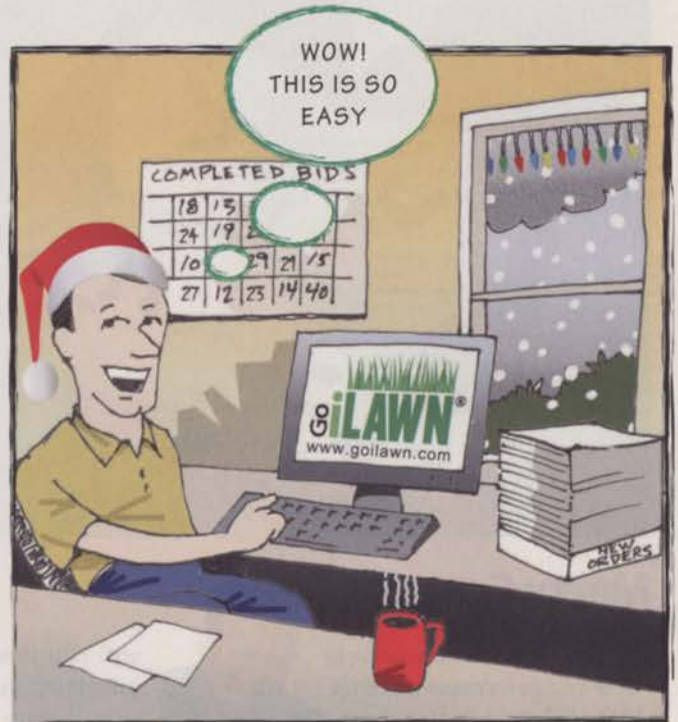


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Predictions for 2011



Marty Grunder



With some more balance in our government, I think 2011 will be a better year for all of us small business owners. In business and life, I feel when we have balance, good things happen. One piece of cake is good; two pieces of cake are not so good. Some work and some play is good; all work, no play is bad. I hope you get the picture. Our governing body had swung way too far to one side and it was a very unfriendly side for business owners. It should get better in 2011 for all of us as some confidence should return to owners and operators of green industry businesses, and they will buy equipment and hire more people because there is more business to perform. Other than the economy, here are five predictions I have for 2011. (And don't bet your life savings on these.)

1. Homeowners will spend money on backyard projects that enable them to spend more time with their families. Fireplaces, outdoor kitchens, water features, landscaping and hardscaping

will continue to fill companies' schedules. It's going to be a few years before the construction of new homes rebounds because it's going to be tough to sell an existing home. For now, I think homeowners will spend money to upgrade the place they're in.

2. Someone will come forward with software that enables the landscaper to run all parts of their business efficiently and profitably. A product will become available that handles the sales, marketing, service, finances, fleet and office operations quickly, easily and at a cost we can all afford. There are many options out there that do certain parts of the process well. The first one to do all this will win the prize; I predict that will be 2011, as I've seen some options that are close.

3. It will continue to be very tough to find people who want to work in the green industry. Kids aren't being introduced to gardening like they should be. Schools aren't exposing their students to gardening like they expose

children to foreign language and the arts. Maybe this will change but, until it does, I predict a shortage of people with a passion for gardening and landscaping. And, we certainly can't count on the H-2B program to provide us with good workers. That's a political hot button few politicians will want to touch.

4. Those companies who listen to their customers will continue to win and be paid a fair price to have the work done. Companies who communicate the value they bring to the table will do well. Many think it's all about the price. In certain sectors, such as commercial maintenance, there is a lot of truth to that. But if Coach, Porsche, fine restaurants and the like can do well, and they are in many areas of the country, you can do well selling a good product and service at a fair price. But you – you – have to communicate, show and prove to the prospect and client all that you do and how you do it. A properly positioned offering will bring you business.

5. Here's my last one and this one you can take to the bank. Every leader at every green industry company in America will do better if they think positively. The saying goes: "If you think you can, you will; if you think you can't, you won't." I could not agree more. Believe in yourself and make an investment in yourself. Read five books on business before next spring. Go to a seminar on leadership, time management or sales. Meet with your clients; ask them what you could do better. And spend some time with your family and realize what's most important in this world. I predict if you do that, you're going to be very happy.

MARTY GRUNDER is a speaker, consultant and author; he owns Grunder Landscaping Co. See www.martygrunder.com; mail marty@gie.net.

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John Ossa



Predictions for 2011 will focus on the economy ... and the operative word is uncertainty. Marginal signs of increased consumer spending will not be enough to get more banks interested in lending to small business. I am an optimist by nature, but realistically for 2011, and especially in California, I just don't see what is going to generate confidence and drive the economy forward.

For commercial contractors, the market will remain very slow. For contractors that focus on the residential market, there are small pockets of activity, particularly in the high-end market. These jobs will be aggressively contested

“For commercial contractors, the market will remain very slow.”

as contractors that don't normally focus on this market jump in and try to survive in this bleak economy.

The predictable results are lower margins for all. The public works sector can't be counted on as budgets are awash in red ink.

Midterm elections historically offer a "bounce" that can be positive. The most notable claim being made by many incoming political hopefuls is that they are "not career politicians." This is construed as a good thing, but, in the real world, experience still matters. The federal stimulus money will slow, and the weak results to date will trickle off.

What are things and activities that we will see in 2011 in response to this gloomy economic outlook? The products and activities will be at the intersection of cost-effective, environmentally conscious solutions.

- Manufacturers will create products that are more efficient and more environmentally friendly.
- Manufacturers will create products

with features that make the products smarter – any feature that makes a product more capable, and at the same time simple, streamlined and readily understood. These products will help contractors deliver more knowledge-based solutions to the many areas of the country that have an increasingly complex regulatory environment.

- Contractors will seek products with features that enable faster or easier installation. These products will help them make money.

- Small business owners will need to become adept at a wider range of business skills. Gone are the days of simply focusing on day-to-day operations and relying on past success to guarantee tomorrow.

- Owners must understand where new opportunities are that may be adjacent to their existing core competencies. This could mean reconfiguring your service(s) or expanding into new market niches. We live in a time of heightened focus on property value, climate change and the availability of water for use on landscapes. These conditions offer their own opportunities.

As business owners, we cannot blame all our problems on the economy. It is up to us to navigate change to a better and brighter future.

JOHN OSSA owns Irrigation Essentials, a web-based irrigation consulting firm. See www.irrigationessentials.com; mail ossa@gie.net.

Jim Huston



The 2010 midterm elections are turning out to be one of the most interesting election cycles in recent memory. The primary concern for the majority of Americans is *jobs, jobs, jobs*. To quote James Carville, Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign strategist, "It's the economy, stupid!" Foreign policy and the war in Afghanistan trail significantly behind in importance in the mind of the elector-

ate. Add to this the recent unemployment figures showing that the number of Americans out of work is not improving. Vice President Joe Biden's predicted "summer of the recovery" is quickly turning into the reality of the "fall of the continued fall." If this is a recovery, it makes a patient with a flat-line pulse rate in an intensive care unit look healthy enough to enter a bout in a cage fighting championship match!


Voters are frustrated, but more importantly, they are uncertain about the future. Uncertainty is the rule of the day. Businesses large and small, as well as individuals, are not spending because predicting the future is a crap shoot. Congress hasn't acted on extending the Bush tax cuts, which are set to expire early in 2011.

No one knows what their tax bills will be in 2011, let alone what the economy will do. Add to this the unprecedented debt load that we've incurred, the stimulus package that didn't, the public outrage over the health care bill that was passed (and the way in which it was passed) – put these together and voters all over the country are shouting, "We're mad as hell and we're not going to take it anymore!"

MY PREDICTIONS FOR 2011. If volatility and uncertainty are the order of the day, as I think that they are, they are being challenged by unprecedented involvement and engagement by the electorate. The Tea Party movement is simply the resulting embodiment and symbol of all of the pent-up frustrations. Here are my best, worst and most probable case scenario predictions for 2011:

BEST-CASE SCENARIO. Conservatives in the House of Representatives enact some changes.

- The financial craziness of the last two years is countered. Confidence begins to return to all sectors of the market, which results in consumer and commercial cash reserves being released to fund pent-up demand.
- The Bush tax cuts are extended.

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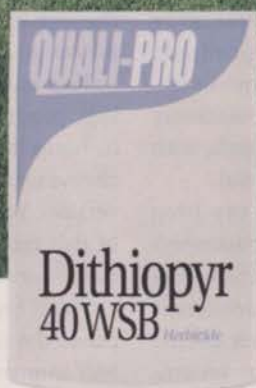


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- 2010 Christmas retail sales improve, as well as sales for companies installing Christmas decorations.

- Consumer confidence improves, and we begin to see residential installation sales increase in 2011. This market is even stronger in 2012.

- Commercial entities also begin to fund installation projects that have been on hold.

- All sectors of the green industry market steadily improve over the next two years.

- Unemployment figures begin to improve slowly but steadily.

- President Obama takes credit for the improved economy and then enters the private sector on Jan. 20, 2013.

WORST-CASE SCENARIO. Democrats in the Senate maintain power.

- The financial irresponsibility of the last two years continues.

- The health care bill that passed continues to be implemented with negative financial ramifications.

- The Cap and Trade bill passes which adds to our current economic doldrums.

- The Bush tax cuts expire.

- Unemployment figures do not improve, and all sectors of the green industry remain lackluster.

- President Obama blames George Bush for the continued poor economy and is sworn in for his second term on Jan. 20, 2013.

MOST LIKELY SCENARIO. As we near January, and the swearing in of the mid-term winners, it appears ever more so that the “most likely scenario” is leaning more and more toward mirroring the “best-case” one. Let’s hope so.

JIM HUSTON runs J.R. Huston Consulting, a green industry consulting firm. See www.jrhuston.biz; mail_huston@gie.net.

Jeff Korhan

Companies in all industries are learning they now have to embrace technology to meet the expectations of their customers.



Traditional methods of marketing, sales and service are no longer relevant. Returning all of your phone calls within 24 hours used to be the benchmark of professionalism. Now customers expect immediate access to you and your staff.

Social networking is a platform that gives your customers a voice, and they are using it to be heard.

This is why it will be vital for businesses to establish a presence on the major social networks to monitor what is being said about their brand, and to encourage a dialogue with customers and influencers.

Web forms can be embedded on your website or blog to allow customers and field representatives to make service requests. This is easily accomplished with Google docs. This minimizes time-consuming phone calls, pushes data to a central location and is available 24/7.

Mobile devices will create more opportunities for readily communicating with customers. Instead of print and digital newsletters, timely communications can be distributed to customers through any number of RSS feeds, with blogs being the most functional.

Tips and advice from my blog keeps my community and customers informed on small business marketing practices. Green industry professionals can do the same to keep their clients educated and advised about recommended practices, environmental updates and seasonal enhancements.

Mobile applications make this information even more valuable by making it more readily available. As the functionality of mobile apps increases,

they will almost certainly replace websites. Load speeds are faster and the data is available where and when the customer needs it most – here and now. If you have a blog now, you can use AppMakr.com to create an iPhone app for free.

Urgent news can be simultaneously delivered within seconds to multiple mobile devices using a new group text-messaging service provided by GroupMe.com. I can imagine using this to quickly communicate weather related news to crews, or to wish your customers the best for a long weekend, and to remind them that your offices will be closed.

Working from the cloud is a trend that will not only help to enhance and streamline your sales and service; it will also allow you to do more with less. Some of the benefits to cloud or web-based computing – where shared resources, software and information are provided to computers and other devices on demand – are ready access to documents, the ability to update client records from the field, and sharing information among teams in real time.

Most web-based software is available through freemium (free trial) and pay-as-you-go plans.

This eliminates the burden of buying, programming and maintaining in-house servers, and ensures you are always using the most current software version. You may not be ready for some of this technology, but many of your customers are.

You’ll find it is worth the effort, because the time and monetary savings will improve your bottom line – and keep your company competitive in 2011.

JEFF KORHAN is a speaker, consultant and top-ranked blogger on new media and small business marketing at www.jeffkorhan.com; mail_korhan@gie.net.

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In vino, *veritas*

By Chuck Bowen

Wine broker **David Rosen** shares his tips on cold calling and increasing referral sales.

High-end clients, a huge universe of prospective buyers, an 80 percent referral rate and a half million in sales. Oh, and lots of wine.

Sound good? It should – David Rosen is a personal wine broker, and he's built a solid database of clients across the country by sticking to the fundamentals of solid sales: taking good notes, listening and always looking for an opportunity.

"Most people don't know that such a thing exists," he says of his lofty title. "It's about as pretentious a job title as anybody could actually have."

In fact, he doesn't drive a Bentley or wear expensive

suits. He lives in Cleveland and spends most of his day on the phone, selling. He flips wrong numbers, pursues celebrities for fun and even successfully sold to a guy in the locker room at the gym while they were both *au naturel*. He was recently featured in *Inc.* magazine, which has helped his sales, too.

"There's people in any industry who complain they don't have any clients, but then they don't work on getting new clients," Rosen says. "The phone's not ringing, I don't understand!"

Lawn & Landscape caught up with Rosen (for coffee) to learn more about how he sets up his cold calls, how he got such a high referral rate and if he really closed a deal in the buff.

What's your process for an initial cold call?

Each call is very different. I don't do as many of those these days, even though I love them. Some cold calls for example, I would target someone I think would be fun to call. More often than not, you can find lots of publications on our industry – bulletin boards and forums and blogs and stuff. Do a little Google research and track them down.

The cool thing about cold calling that way is, if you know a little bit about them – you can find out if they're members of a local wine club, Rotary. But there's always that balance between how much time to spend on research, which can sometimes be a good excuse for people to

not get on the phone – planning to plan. Stop preparing at some point and just get on the phone.

Then what?

Keep notes of objections. Find out what people are saying that makes you stumble and fall down, that makes a call unsuccessful, so each time it keeps happening, you have something to come back to.

Do you record your calls?

Earlier, I would. That way I could hear what I really sounded like. People would be amazed what they actually sound like. Part of the problem, though, is, depending on your personality some people hear what they sound like and they get so self conscious that it messes them up. The main thing you want to do is make sure you're speaking slowly. The biggest thing people do is

David Rosen, a personal wine broker, shares cold-calling tips.



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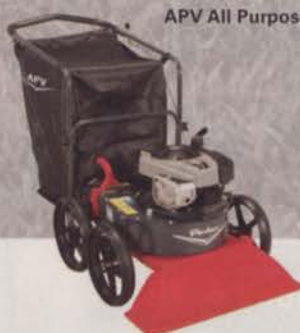
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INTERVIEW

talk really fast. I'm also saying the same thing 10, 20 times a day. How do you do that and not sound like a robot, or sound bored with yourself? One way is to use your hands – I just put pauses in the middle of nowhere. Because, when you say something over and over again, you tend to forget that someone's hearing you for the first time.

I suggest people call their own voicemail, give your own pitch and see what it sounds like.

Sometimes a new broker will come on and they're all technically oriented, but sometimes technology will get in your way. Cell phones for sales calls? Bad, bad, bad.

OK, so now you're on the phone and talking ...

I advise people, make a list of salient points: What are your differentiators? Why would someone buy from you? Why would they want to work with you? Why should they?

In the beginning, make sure you have that list available to you. Literally, right in front of you.

You want to make sure during the conversation that you hit those things, but the other is, it's also a very good vehicle for when you get objections on the phone – you want to really hear the objection, find a little nugget in there that will allow you to then take it back over to one of these points. Let them know, 'Yeah,

I hear what you're saying about this. As a matter of fact ...' Now you're back driving the conversation, but you've also hit some of your salient points.

I have a pitch that I use, and I've said it eight bazillion times. When you're young, you need to write it down. You have to know your personality. If you're reading that thing, you have to really make sure you don't sound like you're reading it. That just takes practice.

Sometimes I would advise people to make bullet lists, instead of a paragraph. Learn the pitch, then throw it away. Find a way to describe it like you're having a conversation, like you're talking.

I would imagine your universe of potential clients is smaller than in other industries.

No, it's huge. It's almost limitless, because when we're dealing with individual folks, and wines that can go from ten bucks to hundreds of dollars. The trick really is just reaching people, just finding them, because people don't know such a thing exists. And if I have one client at a law firm who likes what I do, there are 10 other lawyers at that firm.

How do you work referrals?

A significant number of my sales are from referrals. The trick is finding the right point, an appropriate point to ask for referrals. I tend



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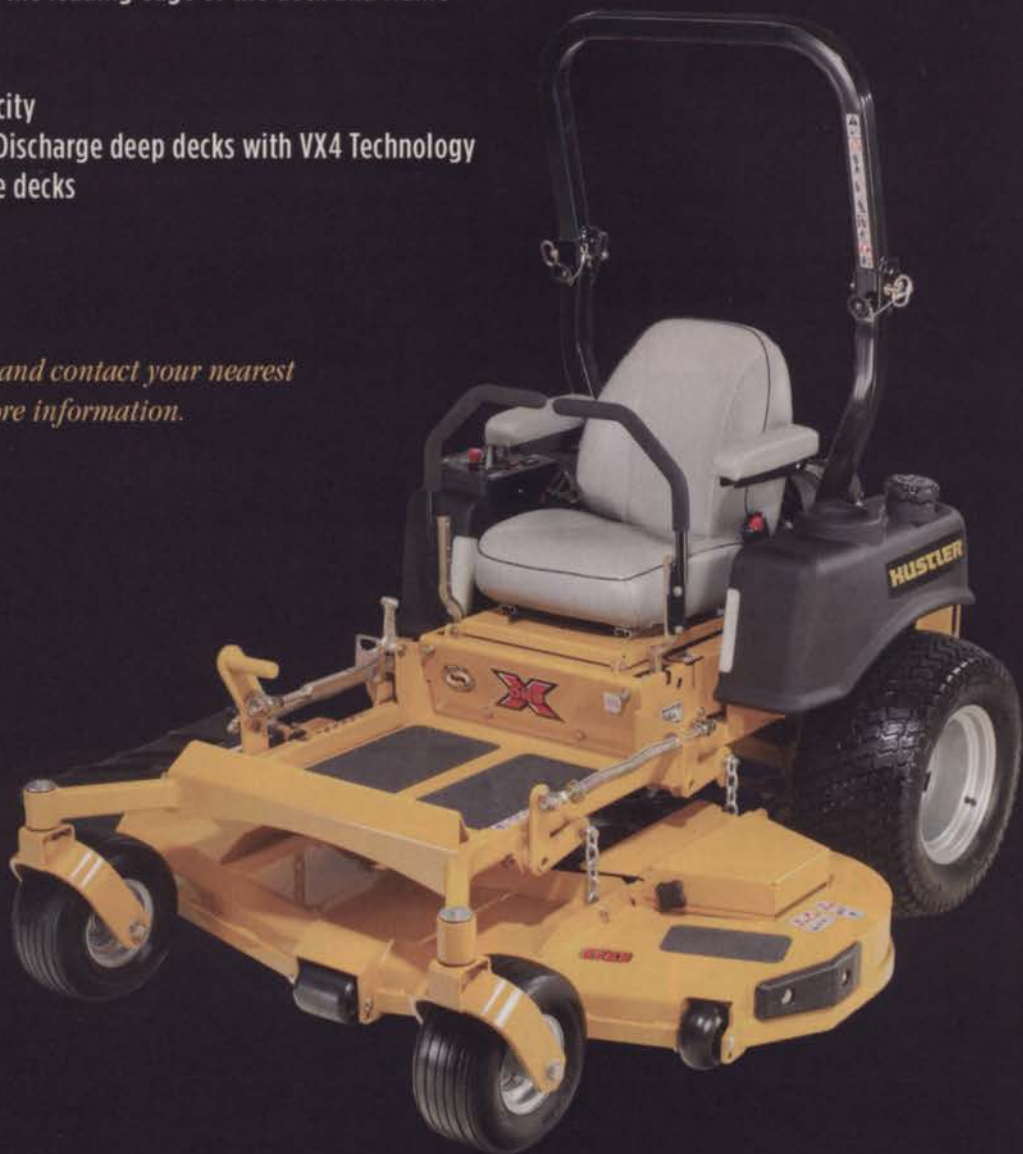
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INTERVIEW

to think – and it's not a cold hard rule – generally when they're about ready to buy for the third time.

I'm not shy, but at the same time, I look at the long-term strategy, and I also look at their comfort level. I tend to deal with a fairly educated, well-to-do clientele – not everybody's wealthy by any means – but they're pretty smart people and they're getting bombarded all the time.

I'm a coin-operated sales guy; that's my living. But I'm in it for other stuff. I believe very strongly in the beauty of

establishing a relationship, letting these people know, 'If you don't do business with me, I won't survive, and I appreciate that you're doing it.'

I'll ask for referrals constantly in bazillions of different ways. But someone who's brand new, I think after the second order, you know they really like it, you know they're in. That's the time you ask. And you keep lots of notes. Make sure you keep good notes, so you know when you asked. Because if you ask too often, you're going to be a completely

annoying pest. If you don't ask enough, you're missing opportunities.

What's your advice on how to best set up a sales system?

One thing I do advise against is getting contact management software. They tend to be massively overkill, and can be more intimidating to run and set up than they are a benefit. I've not been an early adopter of technology, but I kind of like setting up my own thing.

What's really critical is keeping track. You can always do the 3-by-5 card file if technology is daunting to you. Otherwise, you can fairly easily work out of Excel, but you really want to know who

you're prospecting and your customers.

The cool thing about data, whether you're writing it on a 3-by-5 card or putting it in a computer is you can create a field, when you last spoke to someone. When's a time to call them again, and keep them on cycles so you don't miss opportunities. Then dedicate x number of hours in a day to talk to clients. It doesn't matter what the system is. Have a system.

Did you really pitch a guy in the locker room?

Oh, yeah. That's absolutely true. L&L

The author is editor of *Lawn & Landscape*. Send him your best sales stories at cbowen@gje.net.

One more glass Read more about Rosen's data management system at www.lawnandlandscape.com. Just search for "Rosen."

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A SUPPLEMENT TO

December 2010

Lawn & Landscape®

INSIDE:

Japanese maples, pg. 6

Dwarf conifers, big impact, pg. 8

Time-tested landscape varieties, pg. 12



Compelling **COMBOS**

Cornell University research reveals
successful bulb and perennial 'mates.'



TREES, ORNAMENTAL & BEDDING PLANT EDITORIAL SUPPLEMENT

DECEMBER

2010 VOL. 1, ISSUE 10

The editors at *Lawn & Landscape* and its sister publications – *Greenhouse Management & Production*, *Nursery Management & Production* and *Garden Center* magazines – have teamed up to bring you the latest installment of our trees, ornamental and bedding plant editorial supplement. It's specifically designed for design/build contractors looking for the latest plant varieties, hardscape trends and best practices across the entire green industry.



FEATURES

4 **Compelling combos**

Cornell University research reveals successful bulb and perennial 'mates.'

6 **Japanese maples for every reason and season**

These year-round trees can stand alone or partner with other ornamentals to offer a wide variety to any design.

8 **Dwarf conifers**

Diversity in size, form, texture and color makes conifers a suitable addition for any garden.

12 **Tried and true**

Relying on 'tried-and-trusted' plants creates beautiful beds and new gardeners.

DEPARTMENTS

3 **Green Industry Insight**

15 ***Pseudolarix amabilis***

Golden larch is a mesmerizing tree for large landscapes.

15 **Ad Index**

16 **Jim Zampini**

The founder of Lake County Nursery has introduced a cache of superior trees, shrubs and woody ornamentals. And he's not done yet.

12



15



CONTENTS

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Grower Insight

Mix up plant options to increase your profits

By Joe Gray

Whether you're a small business or a large landscaping company, you can increase your profits by suggesting plants to your customers that bring life to their landscape and deliver great looks and color with ease.

Homeowners and businesses are looking for quality and value not only in installation and maintenance, but also with plants that perform well and improve their property value. Recommending the right plants for the right place that have been bred to perform in their climates and soil conditions is a good starting point.

Bottom line: They want their property to show well without a lot of work.

TEAMWORK. You and your customer are a team. Assessing the home's style and architectural features opens options for customers to discover new plants that will perform in their landscape and enhance its features.

For instance, Margie Grace, of Grace Designs, a member of APLD, who's both a professional landscape designer and landscape contractor, says customers are looking for simple and creative solutions and recommends plants that "don't hug your house's foundations but enhance the lines with color, style and great attributes." She suggests customers might "try crape myrtle to soften a corner or plant bougainvillea as a foundational plant for great color."

Since the trend toward less lawn and smaller gardens is on the rise, shrubs for smaller spaces remain popular. One new option on the market is the Bambino Bougainvillea Series, which offers a variety of colors and various foliage patterns.

ECO-FRIENDLY. National trends have fueled an interest for plants that require

less water and attract wildlife. Clients want exciting cultivars that are great looking, eco-friendly and attract pollinators like butterflies and birds. Savvy customers want plants that are attractive as hedges, borders and embankments and are heat tolerant and require less water.

One example: The new *Buddleia* hybrid Flutterby Series – a compact-growing series that features a dense growth habit and continuous showy blooms ranging from lavender, pink and white, throughout early summer until frost, in USDA Zones 5-10.

Plants like these butterfly bushes deliver what people demand – attractive, low-growing shrubs that require less water and look great in borders or embankments.

STAY IN THE ZONE. Keep abreast with trade shows, publications, webinars, social media sites, and with growers who can provide you with information on the latest plant material and best production plants for your zone.

Even if your customers insist on plants they've seen in a magazine, your role as a team partner is to guide and educate on the best plants that fit their home or business' architectural style and perform well in the soil conditions and climate.

Above all, keep your eyes open for new plants that deliver what they promise and use fewer resources to get and maintain satisfied customers on your winning team. 🌱

Joe Gray is the chief operations officer for Hines Nurseries in Houston.



Joe Gray



Landscape designers know that perennials and spring-flowering bulbs make great companion plantings. Not only can the proper pairings look good together, they can be mutually supportive.

For the most part, savvy gardeners have relied on a practiced eye and experience to create combinations that spark spring magic. Now researchers at Cornell University have cast the objective eye of science on the topic. In a series of trials covering four seasons at the university's Ithaca, N.Y., trial grounds (USDA Zone 5), the Cornell team put various pairings of bulbs and perennials to the test.

Cornell professor William B. Miller, who is director of the university's Flower Bulb Research Program, led the Cornell team.

"The idea of pairing bulbs and perennials to achieve multiple goals is so desirable that we felt it deserved more than an anecdotal approach," Miller said. "We created an objective study to document what works and what doesn't in a typical spring garden."

The combination trials were designed to achieve four goals:

1. Look at how early bulbs help extend the garden's bloom season.
2. Explore how perennials might best be used to mask the dying foliage of post-bloom bulbs.
3. Consider leaf texture as a design element.
4. Examine the various roles color plays in creating combinations.

The scientists evaluated plantings for their overall performance and benefits, not necessarily combinations that bloomed simultaneously. They focused on combos that worked.

Following are 15 of their top performing combos.

***Allium karataviense* 'Ivory Queen' with *Aster macrophyllus*.** The allium leaves match the aster foliage nearly perfectly, allowing for the blooms to show with no worry of unattractive foliage. The two plants grow at the same rate and the blooms are still visible.

***Anemone blanda* 'White Splendour' with *Rheum palmatum* 'Atrosanguineum.'** The fine white flowers of the anemone contrast well with the dark, coarse foliage of the rheum. The anemone

COMPELLING COMBO

Cornell University research reveals successful bulb and perennial 'mates.'

blooms before the leaves of the rheum get too large, and then the rheum grows to cover the old foliage of the anemone.

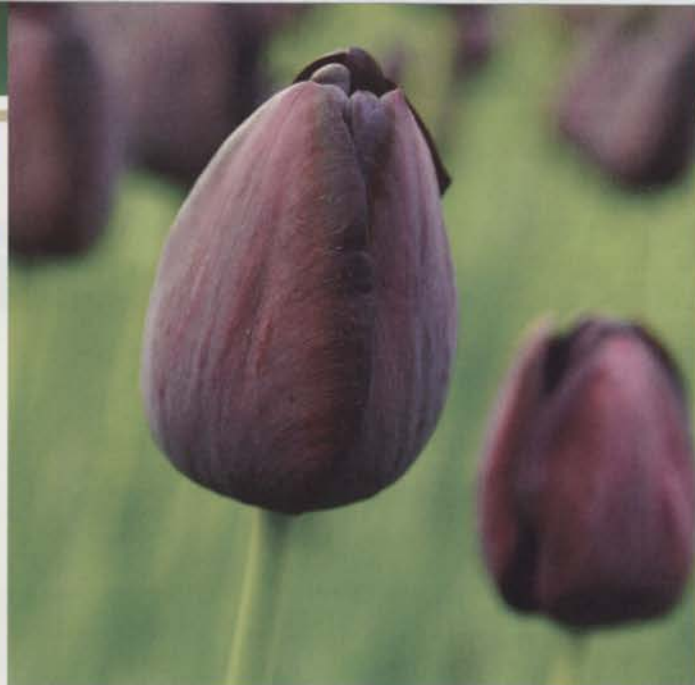
***Hyacinthus* 'White Pearl' with *Rheum palmatum* 'Atrosanguineum.'** Just as the rheum contrasted with and then covered the anemone, it does so for the hyacinth. This combo could be even better if a multiflora or "looser" white hyacinth were used.

***Hyacinthus* 'Jan Bos' with *Penstemon* 'Husker Red.'** The emerging penstemon leaves are dark purple just as the hyacinth is blooming, creating a nice color scheme. The penstemon is slow enough to allow the hyacinths to finish blooming and reenergize their bulbs, and

then takes over before the foliage becomes unsightly.

***Iopheion uniflorum* 'White Star' with *Potentilla argentea*.** The interesting texture of the newly emerging potentilla leaves makes a complementary surrounding for the blooming ipheion. The potentilla grows to sufficiently cover the browning leaves of the ipheion, making a useful combination.

***Narcissus* 'Fortissimo' with *Papaver orientale* 'Turkenlouis.'** An functional combination whereby the narcissus flowers slightly above the developing poppy leaves. The leaf-texture contrast between the narcissus and papaver make for an interesting mix early on, and the fast growth of the papaver covers the



Far left: *Tulipa* 'Queen of Night' and *Sedum* 'Matrona'; left: 'Fortissimo' is aptly named: Its enormous, handsome two-tone yellow and orange blossoms surely shout in the mid-spring garden; above: 'Queen of Night,' christened in 1944, is still considered top contender for the title of "blackest" tulip (though its color is actually a very dark, deep velvety maroon). Above right: *Narcissus* 'Fortissimo' and *Papaver orientale* 'Turkenlouise'; bottom right: *Pulsatilla vulgaris* 'Papageno' – commonly called pasque flower by some, this is a low-growing spring bloomer with bright flowers and unusual fern-like cut leaf foliage rather like a carrot's, but hairy.

narcissus foliage quickly.

***Narcissus* 'Ice Follies' with *Pulsatilla vulgaris* 'Papageno.'** This combination shows contrasting foliage texture, simultaneous blooming that complements both plants, and perennial foliage cover after the bulbs are finished for the season.

***Narcissus* 'Pink Charm' with *Cimicifuga ramosa* 'Brunette.'** The foliage of the cimicifuga complements the narcissus foliage and flowers early in the season. It also grows large enough to mask the browning daffodil leaves. This combo would be even better if narcissus were interspersed more evenly.

***Narcissus* 'Salome' with *Phlox paniculata* 'Bill**

Baker. This combination illustrates the use of bulbs with perennials to extend the bloom season. After the narcissi are finished, the phlox explodes with blooms, masking the bulb foliage.

***Narcissus* 'Slim Whitman' with *Achillea filipendulina* 'Gold Palette.'** The leaf texture of the emerging achillea offers contrasting texture, adding to the interest of the spring garden. The achillea foliage grows tall and thick enough to hide the fading narcissus foliage.

***Tulipa* 'Ballade' with *Geranium* 'Mayflower.'** The height of the purple-hued tulip at bloom and the early geranium foliage makes the tulip blooms look as if they are floating in a sea of green.

Later, the geranium's foliage and purple flowers mask the fading tulip leaves.

***Tulipa* 'Don Quichotte' with *Geranium* 'Claridge Druce.'** The blooming of the tulip and the growth of the geranium coincide perfectly. A functional combo, with the geranium foliage working to mask the tulip leaves as they senesce. The pink color of the tulip is echoed by some purpling of the geranium, caused by cool spring weather.

Tulipa* 'Negrita' with *Stachys byzantine. This combo has it all: extension of the blooming season, contrasting and complementary leaf color and texture, and the right timing for leaf coverage. The purple tulip is excellent with the gray stachys.

***Tulipa* 'Parade' with *Dicentra spectabilis* 'Alba.'** The red blooms of the tulip with the white blooms of the dicentra add charm to the spring garden. As the tulips finish their show, the dicentra continues to bloom for several more weeks.

***Tulipa* 'Queen of Night' with *Sedum* 'Matrona.'** The purple tulip-flowers complement the purple-edged foliage of the sedum to make a truly wonderful spring display. The deep, dark purple of the almost-black tulip flower echoes the hues of this dark-leaved sedum. The sedum then grows large enough over the season to overtake the old tulip foliage. This combo would be effective with any upright, dark-leaved sedum. 🍀

JAPANESE MAPLES

for every reason and season

These year-round trees can stand alone or partner with other ornamentals to offer a wide variety to any design. By Dawn Hummel

Japanese maples have been propagated and collected in Japan for centuries. They are a staple of North American gardens, especially in the Pacific Northwest. Landscape designers routinely spec them in designs due to their undemanding nature, varying seasonal colors, different leaf shapes, pleasing textures and winter “bone” structures.

Maples can be used creatively as bonsai, in patio containers or as garden-sized landscape specimens. Japanese maples graciously serve as understory trees for taller background trees, conifers or as border anchors. James T. Sahlstrom, landscape architect from Salem, Ore., has specific favorite maples for landscape projects. Sahlstrom prefers *Acer palmatum matsumurae*

‘Butterfly’ for its beautiful very narrow variegated green and yellow leaves. “Butterfly is great for those tight areas that you want an upright maple, but don’t want to use the common *Acer circinatum* ‘Vine Maple,’” he says. Before selecting trees for your next design project, consider the following elements:

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS.

Try to match the client’s desire for seasonal color, final size, texture and foliage. When a maple is specified on a plan and the contractor does not use that particular maple, there can be problems in the size or growth of the plant that will negatively impact the overall design. Select a maple that naturally takes shape that fits the space. This

LEARN MORE

You can learn more about Japanese maples from the North American Maple Society at www.maplesociety.org and in *Japanese Maples: The Complete Guide to Selection and Cultivation*, fourth edition, Timber Press, 2010, by Peter Gregory and J.D. Vertrees.

keeps pruning to a minimum and results in a happier client with virtually maintenance-free trees.

Selective shaping and thoughtful pruning is best done after leaf fall so the “bones” are exposed and structure can be maximized for presentation purposes.

Japanese conifers that are suitable partners for maples include *Pinus parviflora*, *Chamaecyparis obtusa* and *Cryptomeria japonica*.

Maples co-mingle well with

acid-loving smaller growing rhododendrons, azaleas, shrubs, perennials and bulbs.

GRACEFUL CANOPIES. Japanese Maples come in lacy leaf dissectum forms or pointed palmatum leaf structures.

Either upright or weeping, they are adaptable to many landscape interpretations including Asian-inspired designs.

“*Acer palmatum* ‘Katsura’ with beautiful color and arching growth makes a beautiful plant to hide something or to sit under and enjoy other plants,” Sahlstrom says. “And yes, there is still a place for *Acer palmatum* ‘Bloodgood.’ I use it sometimes for its color, sometimes just to look through or hide behind. I have seven Japanese maple varieties around my own home – and I love them all.”

The author is the marketing coordinator for Kraemer’s Nursery in Mt. Angel, Ore.

CULTURAL REQUIREMENTS

When considering Japanese maples for your project, keep these points in mind:

- Determine if soil and drainage are suitable on-site.
- Most maples prefer to grow in light shade.
- They can take full sun, but may require supplemental water to prevent leaf scorch.
- Uniform, consistent watering is recommended.
- Maples do not prefer heavy clay or wet feet for extended periods of time.
- Select varieties free of verticillium wilt.
- Reducing the moisture supply in late summer induces a very slight stress that can intensify fall leaf colorations.
- Maples have shallow root systems. Keep newly installed trees weed free for the first two years by mulching 2 inches deep.



Selecting maples by season and usage

Every contractor and designer has personal maple favorites. While *Acer palmatum* 'Bloodgood' and *Acer dissectum* 'Viridis' are commonly used, consider these other varieties in your future landscape design projects.

SPRING COLOR

Acer dissectum 'Inaba shidare'

– Red

Semi-weeping, mounding 6' tree in the landscape or can be used in a mixed container to 4' tall. Large, deep ruby red serrated leaves can take heat and humidity well and retains the deep color throughout the growing season.



Acer dissectum 'Orangeola' – Red

Wide and cascading 6'-8' tall lace leaf landscape tree with bright orange-red color in spring. Leaves switch to a rich red-green in summer and then burst into fiery orange-red in fall. Heavy shade encourages a deep green cast to the leaves.



Acer palmatum 'Peaches and Cream' – Variegated

Delicate upright 8' landscape tree or 5' in a container. Pastel pink serrated, waxy leaves are edged in pink with deep green veins. Prefer protection from the hot summer sun.



Acer palmatum 'Shaina' – Red

Compact, upright and rounded 6'-8' landscape tree maintains a 3' height in containers. Bright, clear red leaves in spring turn crimson in fall. Prefers protection from late frosts.



SUMMER BEAUTY

Acer palmatum linearilobum

'Beni otake' – Red

Bamboo-like appearance and more than 9' tall or 6' in containers. Long and narrow, deep purple lobed leaves in summer create a vivid crimson display in fall.

Acer palmatum 'Emperor One'

– Red

Vigorous and reliable 15' upright landscape maples which can get to 9' in containers. Deep red color is maintained even in shady areas and hot, humid conditions. Considered to be a new and improved version of *Acer palmatum* 'Bloodgood.'



Acer palmatum 'Kandy Kitchen'

– Red

Dwarf, compact rounded 6' almost shrub-like tree. If shaded, the leaves become a bronze-green. Bright, scarlet red fall color.



Acer palmatum amoenum

'Osakazuki' – Green

Round topped, upright 6' landscape tree. Bold bronze-green leaves featuring red tips which burst into a vivid crimson-red display in fall.



Acer dissectum 'Red Dragon'

– Red

Well-branched cascading 5' landscape tree or 3' in containers is a slower grower than most lace leaf maples. Bright red leaves hold their color well, but require protection during hottest part of the day to maintain best color.



Acer palmatum linearilobum

'Red Pygmy' – Red

Broad, round topped 7' landscape tree stays comfortably 3' height in containers. Thread-like maroon foliage turns a brilliant yellow-gold in fall.

WINTER WONDER

Acer palmatum 'Beni kawa' – Green

A columnar upright 9' specimen with salmon red winter bark. Fresh green leaves with red-tipped edges are followed by golden yellow. It comes into leaf after *Acer palmatum* 'Sango kaku' and is slower growing.

Acer palmatum 'Sango kaku' – Green

A columnar upright 18' specimen up to 8' in containers. Brightly colored red shoots and branches for winter interest. Brilliant green spring and summer leaves reveal a brilliant gold color display in the fall.





Chamaecyparis pisifera 'Golden Mop'



Pinus parviflora 'Hagoromo'



The Chicago Botanic Garden built trough containers to showcase some of its dwarf conifers.

Dwarf conifers

Diversity in size, form, texture and color makes conifers a suitable addition for any garden. *By Andrew Bell*

In September 2007, I arrived at the Chicago Botanic Garden as the newly hired curator of woody plants. My first big project was to oversee some aspects of the Dwarf Conifer Garden renovation, which was opened to the public in 1988. Due to overgrown plants, unstable paths and a less-than-desirable entrance, this garden was due for a makeover.

To be honest, my knowledge of dwarf conifers was rather limited when this work began. And still today when I speak with conifer enthusiasts, namely Chicago area nurseryman Rich Eyre, owner of Rich's Foxwillow Pines, I concede that I still have a lot to learn. My involvement with this project, and now having had two years to observe, study and enjoy the finished product, I have developed a deeper appreciation for dwarf conifers and their presence in the landscape.

Our Dwarf Conifer Garden includes a wide range of specimens, some of which

do not fall into the dwarf category as defined by The American Conifer Society. It is important to note that dwarf is a specific category based on growth rate and size at 10 years. In this article and in our garden, dwarf conifer includes slower-growing or unusual forms of gymnosperms: cone-bearing plant species (e.g. pines, spruce and firs) and their close relatives that do not produce cones or true flowers and fruits (e.g. ginkgos and yews).

Today with more than 150 different varieties and 600 individual specimens, the Dwarf Conifer Garden offers many horticultural highlights. Living sculptures in every shade of green imaginable, blues, yellows and in the winter hues of maroon and bronze greet visitors at every turn.

CORRECT CONIFERS. The diversity in size, form, texture and color makes conifers a suitable addition for any garden. Proper selection is important. Fortunately, the wide selection of com-

mercially available varieties provides choices for gardeners in all regions, regardless of garden size or style.

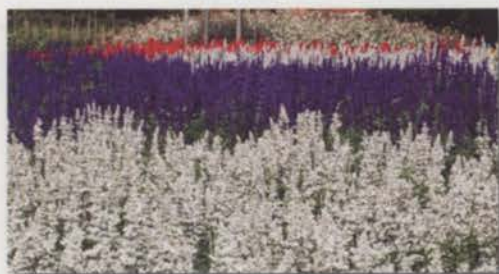
To have success with dwarf conifers, it is essential to consider minimum and maximum temperatures, rainfall, soil structure and moisture levels. Dwarf conifers – and conifers in general – have a reputation of not being widely adaptive to various landscape conditions. This is true for *some* species, and with a few exceptions, poorly drained soils and deep shade should be avoided.

Most conifers thrive in well-drained, slightly acidic soils, but there are options for poorly drained soils such as *Taxodium* (bald cypress), *Larix* (larch) or *Thuja* (arborvitae), which are predisposed to such conditions. Conversely, dry alkaline soils are just fine for some *Juniperus* (junipers) and *Cupressus* (cypresses).

Another important consideration is the amount of sunlight the site receives. Most conifer species prefer and even require full sun. This is especially true for *Picea* (spruce) and *Pinus* (pine). If the site is shady, there are still suitable options. Both *Tsuga* (hemlocks) and *Taxus* (yews) are quite tolerant of shady sites but good drainage is essential.

And now for the fun part – choosing

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the endless form, size and color combinations. It is important to consult reliable references for growth rate and size. Dwarf conifers may be slower-growing, but they do grow and many do not respond well to heavy pruning. Some cultivars have more normal growth rates but differ in foliage color or habit. Taking time to consider the habit or foliage color may yield the desired effect.

VERTICAL SPACES. If the site has generous vertical space but limited horizontal space, consider an interesting

fastigate or columnar form.

Fastigate forms can have a significant presence in the garden while occupying a small footprint. *Picea abies* 'Cupressina' (Cupressina Norway spruce) is a choice in these instances, and its adaptability makes it a great choice for urban landscapes. Beware, this plant is not a dwarf and falls into the "large" category. At 10 years it can reach 15 feet in height, but maintains a narrow upright habit.

Another selection for vertical spaces is *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* 'Green Ar-

row.' Green Arrow Nootka false cypress is a graceful fastigate form that it is very narrow with pendulous branches that develop a skirt at the base of the tree. This has a wonderful form and remains green in the winter months.

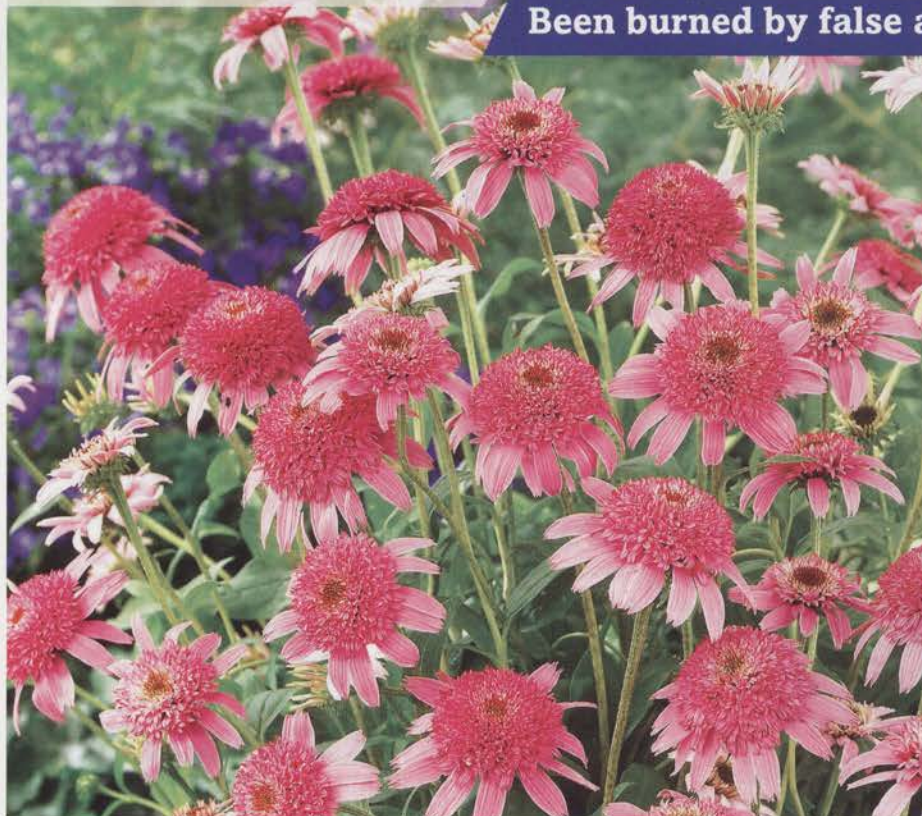
HORIZONTAL SPACES. If a horizontal effect is desired, there are numerous selections of *Juniperus horizontalis* that are suitable for the most challenging of landscape conditions. Creeping juniper is one of the most commonly planted evergreen groundcovers in the United States. This species and its selections are very adaptable to sandy and rocky soils and to hot, dry locations. Selections of blue and green foliage are plentiful, but if the site could use a splash of bright color, *Juniperus horizontalis* 'Mother Lode' will do the trick. This bright, golden yellow sport of 'Wiltonii' has a very flat, low-growing habit and the bright yellow foliage turns yellow-

The American Conifer Society: Conifer Sizes

Category	Growth per year	Size at 10 years
Miniature	Less than 1 inch	1 foot
Dwarf	1 to 6 inches	1 to 6 feet
Intermediate	6 to 12 inches	6 to 15 feet
Large	More than 12 inches	More than 15 feet



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orange tinged with plum in the winter.

Another option with a little more subtle color is *Juniperus virginiana* 'Grey Owl.' Grey Owl eastern red cedar has been around for decades, yet it's still not common in gardens. The foliage is a soft silvery gray, and being a female clone it can set abundant cones. The low-growing, spreading habit, pleasing foliage color, and adaptability to challenging landscape conditions keep this selection on my list despite dated introduction.

MINIATURES. If both horizontal and vertical space is limited, the miniature group has many exciting options. This group includes the little bowling ball and diminutive Christmas tree forms.

Picea omorika 'Guenter' (Guenter Siberian spruce) is one of my favorites in the Dwarf Conifer Garden. The needles are dark green above but silver below. The overall effect is subtle but delightful upon closer inspection. *Pinus parviflora* 'Hagoromo' (Hagoromo Japanese white pine) is also a true miniature and noteworthy, as there are very few miniature pines. Its globose habit and short silvery-blue needles make it an excellent specimen for rock gardens, a planter or landscapes with limited space. A deciduous member in this group includes *Larix decidua* 'Darling Susie.'

GIVE THEM A TRY. If proper selection is made, dwarf conifers are low maintenance and provide year-round enjoyment in the garden. Ornamental grasses, landscape roses and Japanese maples make great companion plants. Consider joining the American Conifer Society to learn more about this fascinating group of plants, and visit a conifer or dwarf conifer collection at a botanic garden or arboretum in your area. And most importantly, have fun and enjoy the artistic elements these plants bring to the garden. 🌿

Andrew Bell is the curator of woody plants at the Chicago Botanic Garden. Send him your conifer questions at abell@chicagobotanic.org.

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Tried and True

Rely on tried-and-trusted plants to create beautiful beds and new gardeners.

By Adrian Bloom

It has been 50 years since I started working with perennials, and 43 years since I began planting up my garden, Foggy Bottom, in Bressingham, England. In that time, I have developed a passion for, and philosophy of, developing successful plant associations to create continual change in the garden – a change that ensures enduring interest throughout the year, whatever the size of the garden.

By selecting plants that have proven themselves reliably perennial and easy to maintain, a successful border or island bed becomes attainable for even beginning gardeners, who are the lifeblood of our industry's future.

GIVEAWAY GARDENS. Many years ago, to inspire the public to learn more about perennials, I decided to install gardens at private homes using perennials and ornamental grasses to show how they could transform even the most colorless and static outdoor areas into dynamic and vibrant landscapes. The first in Massachusetts in 1997 was followed by more in Michigan, Toronto, Peoria and Sacramento, and later, larger and more pub-



lic gardens at the Kendall-Jackson Winery (California), Yew Dell Botanical Gardens (Kentucky), Chadwick Arboretum (Ohio), Cornell's Long Island Horticultural Research Center and the Massachusetts Horticultural Society (Wellesley).

Planted in one or two days by enthusiastic volunteers, the creation of these demonstration gardens was both motivating and rewarding for everyone involved, and helped further promote my goal of switching more people on to gardening. The demonstration gardens have become destinations for learning and showcase plants that perform well under diverse growing conditions.



Adrian Bloom surveys Adrian's Wood, a garden that connects his Foggy Bottom garden with that of his father, Alan Bloom.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRESSINGHAM

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?

I and many in the industry believe that there are simply too many new plants introduced each year, with too few of them being proved garden worthy. Pity the poor gardener who, faced with an overwhelming choice of plants, can hardly know which are the best to choose.

In addition to creating confusion in the minds of gardeners, there is concern that so many new, and generally untested, plants will supplant varieties on garden center benches that would bring more initial success.

It concerns me that so many gardening novices, suffering early disappointment, may be lost, blaming themselves for any failure. We need good new plants that gardeners will succeed with, not new plants for the sake of being new.

LESS IS MORE. There is a poster in my office featuring the words of Henry David Thoreau: "Simplify, simplify." This concept of less is more is key to ensuring gardening success, especially for novice gardeners, by encouraging them to start with a limited range of plants (no more than a dozen) that have proved their garden worthiness over time.

You may also have a list of plants that come to mind when you think of tried-and-trusted perennials and



Geranium 'Rozanne' and *Sedum 'Matrona'*

Blooms of Bressingham's demonstration garden shines at Yew Dell Botanical Gardens in Kentucky.

The garden on the opposite page, designed by Adrian Bloom, shows his signature design element of a "river" of a specific plant variety flowing through the garden. On the "banks" of the garden are a number of the key plants he uses in his designs for providing a long season of interest. The river is geranium 'Rozanne,' and along the edges are *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light', *Crocsmia* 'Lucifer' and *Achillea* 'Anthea.'



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grasses, but here are a few of my favorites for seasonal interest.

Geranium 'Rozanne' has been called the best, most garden-worthy hardy geranium you can grow. It blooms May until frost, is heat tolerant and is a striking groundcover plant. I have used this tough, high-performance plant in many of my demonstration gardens to create my signature garden design with "rivers" of color that run through each bed.

Brunnera macrophylla 'Jack Frost' grows easily in sun or shade and has most attractive foliage that provides a long season of interest from spring to late autumn. Silvery leaves are heart-shaped with dark-green edges and veins. In spring, light-blue forget-me-not flowers appear.

Sedum 'Matrona' has many outstanding merits. It is hardy and reliable, yet also withstands heat and drought. It offers succulent grey-green foliage in spring to reddening stems and rose-pink flowers in late summer. Seed heads are a bonus in autumn and winter.

Miscanthus sinensis 'Morning Light' is a beautiful grass with an "inner light" that emanates from the white midribs of its fine-textured leaf blades and the threads of white around their edges. It moves with the wind and turns golden in November, fading to beige in winter.

Other proven performers that I highly recommend include *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle,' *Crocsmia* 'Lucifer' (discovered by my late father, Alan, in 1966) and *Campanula* Blue Waterfall for summer color.

TIME-TESTED WINNERS. There are many perennials and grasses that have proven themselves reliable, easy to care for and attractive through a variety of seasons. In my experience, focusing on these tried-and-true cultivars is the most positive way to encourage people to use our products in an imaginative and productive way – and to keep them coming back for more. 🌱

Adrian Bloom is a world-class plantsman and holder of the Royal Horticultural Society's coveted Victoria Medal of Honour. He is well known for developing the Blooms of Bressingham brand. His newest book, "Bloom's Best Perennials and Grasses," features expert plant choices and dramatic combinations for the year-round garden. Available from Timber Press and White Flower Farm.

PLANT SNAPSHOT

NAME *Pseudolarix amabilis*

COMMON NAME Golden larch.

DESCRIPTION The 2½-inch long needles go from light green in spring to bright pea-green in summer and golden yellow in fall. Bark on mature trees is fissured and reddish-brown.

HABIT Young trees have a sparse and open pyramidal frame, gradually developing into an open, layered tree with a broad crown.

HARDINESS USDA Zones 5-8 (though some will argue Zones 4 and 9).



Young trees have a sparse and open pyramidal frame.



The needles of *Pseudolarix* are usually longer and broader than true larches.

Pseudolarix amabilis

Golden larch is a mesmerizing tree for large landscapes. By Kelli Rodda

This unusual conifer, with its geometric habit, looks like it was designed on a drafting table. But it's not too rigid in appearance. On the contrary, the soft green foliage and waxy green cones give it a delightful and approachable air.

Golden larch (sometimes called false larch) has a sparse and open pyramidal frame in youth, gradually developing into a graceful open, layered tree with a broad crown.

A 10-year-old plant is about 8- to 12-foot tall and 6- to 7-foot wide. Mature specimens range from 30 to 40 feet tall with an impressive spread of 25 to 35 feet. Wild specimens are purported to grow to 120-foot-tall.

FANCIFUL FOLIAGE. Its flattened and soft needles appear light green on top and blue-green on the bottom in spring, turning to a bright pea-green in summer. By fall the foliage changes to bright, clear golden yellow. The needles of *Pseudolarix* are usually longer and broader than those of the larches.

The needles (up to 2½ inches long) appear primarily in tuft-like clusters on spur-like short shoots.

After the fall color peaks, the needles drop quickly making for easy and one-time clean up. Or the needles can be left in the bed to enrich the soil.

Give golden larch plenty of room to grow. It makes an excellent specimen tree, but a small grove of them would be spectacular.

The famous plant explorer Robert Fortune first saw this unusual conifer as a container plant in China. He introduced it into cultivation in 1854.

CULTURE. This easy-to-grow tree thrives in humus-rich, fertile, well-

drained soil. It needs regular summer watering. Grow it in full sun or part shade because it won't grow in full shade, and protect it from high winds.

Very little pruning is required for this slow-growing tree. Excessive pruning can easily ruin its interesting, layered, branching habit.

It may struggle in hot and humid summers, but generally performs somewhat better than the common larch (*Larix decidua*).

It has no serious pest or disease problems, and is hardy to USDA Hardiness Zones 5-8, though some sources claim hardiness in Zones 4 and 9. It's synonymous with *Pseudolarix kaempferi* and *Chrysolarix amabilis*. 🌱

AD INDEX

ADVERTISER	WEBSITE	PAGE #	RS #
Ernst Benary of America	www.benary.com	11, 14	26, 27
Floranova Ltd.	www.floranova.co.uk	9	24
Plants Nouveau	www.plantsnouveau.com	10	25



JIM ZAMPINI

Lake County New Plants

The founder of Lake County Nursery has introduced a cache of superior trees, shrubs and woody ornamentals. And he's not done yet. By Kelli Rodda

ZAMPINI'S TOP INTRODUCTIONS

Roundtable series dwarf crabapple

Lancelot and Cinderella are the two most popular selections in this series, which feature a dwarf structure, varied flower color, fruit color and leaf tones.

Biblical series Kousa dogwood

Galilean, Samaritan and Prophet are the hardiest dogwoods on the market. Samaritan is the best-seller with its variegated foliage.

Kiddie series dwarf flowering pear

Zampini calls this series a milestone because it gives the industry a true pear that can be planted under electrical wires, is disease free, requires no maintenance and has a structure that stands up to snow loads.

Golden Ruby dwarf barberries

Spring foliage is fluorescent orange, turning maroon and eventually develops a gold ring around the outer leaf edge. It's a joint introduction with Monrovia Growers and Greenleaf Nursery.

Jim Zampini grew up in Lake County, Ohio, which was once the nursery capitol of the world. He saw nursery fields in every direction from his front door. By age 17 he was selecting *Rosa multiflora*, an important rose understock at the time on his father's nursery. It didn't take long to get hooked.

Founder of Lake County Nursery in Perry, Zampini has introduced a cache of trees, shrubs and woody ornamentals. And after more than 60 years in the green industry, Jim and his wife Marge sold the nursery to their son Joe, son-in-law Bob Pettorini and long-time employee Jeff Hyrne.

But Jim's not retiring. He's partnered with daughter Maria to form Lake County New Plants.

The pair will continue to market the patented and trademarked 'ZAM' plants, which have been Jim's life-long work and which are synonymous with his name, Maria said.

"I've always wanted to finish out my career by doing what I love the most and am most passionate about – selecting and developing new plant cultivars," Jim said.

Jim doesn't use high-tech hybridization methods. He uses a combination of Mother Nature and keen observation. He takes the best of a species – crabapples for instance – and plants them in rows next to each other. He lets the bees do their thing with open pollination. He collects the seeds and plants those out in seed-bed rows. He waits and walks the

beds once the plants have made their third set of fully matured leaves.

The late Don Egolf, breeder at the U.S. National Arboretum, liked Jim's method of selection above his own because Jim's plants had already passed the most difficult test – that of Mother Nature, Jim said.

Jim's looking forward to introducing plants that will benefit the modern consumer's primary need of low-maintenance varieties and smaller, more compact selections.

"With today's fast-paced society, the consumer doesn't have time for extensive yard maintenance, yet they still want that perfect outdoor living area," Jim

said. "This is where the new selections, good customer service and good education of consumers can play an integral part in getting consumers to continue gardening and landscaping. The happier the consumer is, the more likely it is they will return to buy more plants."

Jim also sees a tremendous opportunity for the industry to appeal to the "green" side of consumers.

"Now is the time for us to change the perception that plants are a luxury and a discretionary expenditure and help the consumer understand plants are a necessity and the easiest, most natural way to help themselves and the environment at the same time," Jim said. 🌱



Golden Ruby dwarf barberry

The author is deputy editor of *Nursery Management & Production* magazine. Send her an e-mail at krodda@gie.net.

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GOING green

By Carolyn LaWell

Three winners of the Environmental Business Awards are recognized for promoting green projects.

A fleet of propane equipment, a hurricane-proof green roof and a portfolio of water-saving projects took home the top prizes in the 2010 Environmental Business Awards.

Lawn & Landscape put out a call asking landscape contractors who made a direct environmental impact or successfully overcame major environmental obstacles in order to complete a project or body of work.

Eric Hansen, president of Competitive Lawn Service; Peter Salmeron, chairman of Complete Landscaping Systems, and Roger Grothe, president of Aloha Landscaping were recognized for their accomplishments at the GIE+EXPO in Louisville, Ky. Case Construction sponsored the awards and gave each winning company a trip for two to the Case Tomahawk Customer Center in Tomahawk, Wis., for a customized hands-on equipment training and operation experience,

as well as a \$1,000 Case gift card.

PROPANE POWERED. When Eric Hansen read about a Dixie Chopper salesman driving a propane-powered lawn mower from Indiana to Sacramento, Calif., it sparked an idea Hansen hadn't thought of during his nearly two decades in business.

"I thought that was really interesting that they would come up with an engine that would work and run and operate on propane," says Hansen, president of Competitive Lawn Service in Downers Grove, Ill.

Hansen turned to the Internet with questions about converting his equipment to propane. There was nothing. He called propane wholesalers. They thought he was nuts. "They said, 'We don't know what you're talking about. This is crazy,'" Hansen says.

A similar story has taken place in the last three years as Hansen has navigated the

world of propane-fueled equipment through his own experimentation.

He started by installing propane engines into two ride-on mowers. They performed so well he decided to take the idea one step further, and then another and another. Now, he's retrofitted equipment of all sizes with propane tanks. From Roush, Hansen purchased the first Ford F-350 to run on propane. And Competitive Lawn Service installed a 1,000-gallon propane tank on its property.

"This isn't easy and it certainly isn't cheap," Hansen says. "The reality is that this is beginning to shape the market for what it actually can be. I think over time things are going to change. Manufacturers will hopefully not be so old school and respond to these things."

While Hansen has made propane work for his company, it has created headaches.

First was meeting compliance issues. What should have been a 30-day process to install the propane tank turned into seven months of waiting to receive permits and to meet codes.

Second, the upfront cost involved: That F-350 cost \$43,000. The company received about \$9,500 in state and federal money for buying an alternative-fuel vehicle, but Hansen says it can take a year to see the checks.

Third, there's risk in betting on government reimbursement. Competitive Lawn Service was getting a \$.50 per gallon tax credit from the federal government, but in 2010 it stopped extending the credit for lawn equipment use.



Hansen



"The fun thing is, yes we can do it, and we can make this a viable opportunity," Hansen says. "It's difficult, but we can do it. I think it's worth it, and I think it will be worth it over time as we drive the prices down."

Certainly, Hansen has seen benefits: Installing a fill station on site and working with suppliers has dropped Hansen's price for propane to \$1.70 a gallon.

"The benefit is that propane is cheaper annually than gasoline and it always has been," he says. "The second thing is that the equipment runs cleaner and more efficient, it's an efficiency benefit and it's a benefit on the maintenance."

Instead of changing oil every 25 hours, on propane-run equipment Hansen now does it every 100 hours.

The fuel is in enclosed containers and can't spill from its tanks onto trailers or customers' lawns. And propane cuts

emissions on his equipment by as much as 60 percent.

Hansen's residential and government clients haven't shown much interest in the switch to propane. But he's made headway with larger companies with established environmental policies of their own.

In 2010, Competitive Lawn Service used 35,000 gallons of fuel, 5,000 of which was propane. Hansen's goal is to burn about 25,000 gallons of propane in 2011.

The jump will be helped partially because of Manchester Tank's new one-pound propane cylinders due out in January 2011. The cylinders can be used to fuel smaller equipment like blowers and trimmers.

"We worked for a year and a half screaming to get one-pounders and the market responded," Hansen says. "Every day gets even better and better because I see more equipment we can retrofit."



Roger Grothe's son Jake, Aloha Landscaping's green roof operations manager, takes a breather in Guam.

GREEN ROOFS IN GUAM. Like with any construction project, Roger Grothe knew he'd come across the unpredictable when he put in a bid to install the green roof on the Coast 360 Federal Credit Union. After all, his business, Aloha Landscaping was in Mendota Heights, Minn. And the credit union – well – the credit union was in Guam.

"We don't see a need to limit our boundaries," says Grothe, president of Aloha. "Every project is a learning experience."

Some more than others.

With plane tickets at \$2,500 a piece, Grothe knew he couldn't send a large crew to Guam to construct the roof. Originally approached with the idea by Bob Salas, president of LMS Guam, a real estate and landscaping company on the Pacific island, Grothe developed a partnership with Salas for their two companies to work together on the project.

The biggest challenge was getting the supplies to Guam because everything, even certain types of sand, must be shipped by boat.

"We ended up using (cinders) as the mineral for the green roof media," Grothe says. "We couldn't use coral because of the lime and how quickly it breaks down, so we ended up using volcanic cinders, which could have come from Japan. We actually worked with Home Depot to deliver the cinders just because they have such amazing shipping rates."

During the planning process, the companies ran into problems with certain supplies being too expensive, others just simply not able to work with the native landscape and species.

"They have a big problem with rhinoceros beetle and so all of a sudden there were certain materials we couldn't use in the roof because it would attract the rhinoceros beetle,



Aloha Landscaping and LMS Guam installed a green roof on the Coast 360 Federal Credit Union in Guam. The project was the first of its kind on the island.



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COVER STORY

which is devastating to palm trees," Grothe says. "You're working through all of these weird scenarios. We finally get the soil right and then we find out a bunch of the ingredients can't be used. We ended up using stabilized compost and came up with a great blend, it's heavy, sand-based media."

Over the years, Aloha has established itself as a green roof company but never before had

Grothe confronted such issues. They needed materials that would work with Guam's surroundings, but also its environmental conditions. The green roof had to withstand hurricane-force winds and torrential downpours that could dump as much as 6 feet of water in 24 hours.

The green roof allows any water that hits the site to be drained, filtered and depleted of pollutants, stored as non-potable water and then used again for irrigation. Guam, while in the center of the Pacific, has a history of drought, making the sustainable system even more important, Grothe says.

Take a shot

Applications are now being accepted for the 2011 Environmental Business Awards. For more information, contact Editor Chuck Bowen at cbowen@gie.net or call 330-523-5330.



"(The roof) is a big canopy, and when it grows in, the purpose is to reduce reflection onto the building there by keeping the building cooler," Grothe says of the 3,000-square-foot roof. "It's the first one, and it will set the standard just educating everyone on the construction site about how it works and what you have to prepare for and how to schedule it, so it was a great opportunity for everybody to learn."

The project has paved the way for



Complete Landscaping Systems designed and installed a water-filtration system in the fountain of one of its clients.

more of its kind on the island and deepened the partnership between LMS Guam and Aloha, who are now exchanging personnel to cross train and mentor each other's employees.

"You never know what's out there, and you have to be open to it," Grothe says. "The economy has allowed everyone to be a little more open and not so protective of thinking you know everything."

RECYCLING WATER. When Complete Landscaping Systems was contacted by one of its large banking clients who wanted to obtain LEED certification for its building, the idea meshed perfectly with the landscaping company's sustainability business strategy.

Serving as a consultative resource, Complete Landscaping Systems looked at the characteristics of the building and the land and it quickly became evident that the large, decorative water fountain – a highlight of the property – held promise.

"To make that the main opportunity, to push forward the idea that we are proponents for protecting the environment, that opportunity stood out above a lot of things" says Cabbell Lane, director of business development at the Wichita, Kan.-based firm. "Our company helped advise them about the different opportunities that they could have in terms of recycling the water. How they could reroute the current,

the plumbing of it, basically reconfiguring everything so that rain water would be the source for replenishment and also to protect against run off and things of that nature that could harm the landscaping overall."

Consulting with experts on sprinkler systems and researching irrigation and technology, the project took Complete Landscaping Systems six months and incorporated eight professionals for the planning and construction process.

What transpired was a fountain that pumps recycled water, cutting down on water and electric usage.

"It saved us about 5 percent annually in our combination of base water savings, water usage savings and overall efficiencies, which given the expense of what it took to run the fountain for the time of the year that it did run was a pretty big deal," says Lane, who worked for the client at the time of the project two years ago.

The system improved the quality of water in the fountain as well.

"The water filtration, water fountain, which is entirely 100 percent recycled, was the cornerstone of efforts to get them qualified for their eventual submittal and eventual approval as a LEED Gold certified building," Lane says.

Since the project was completed, the client has hired Complete Landscaping Systems to spearhead an installment program of weather-based irrigation controllers to manage overall water usage at about 250 of the client's sites.

"One of the principle components of our service standard is our relationships and how we partner with our clients and business associates," Lane says. "This was an amazing opportunity to dive into something extremely important and help one of our biggest clients get something that would drive their efforts forward in terms of sustainability, which we advocate quite highly." *L&L*

The author is associate editor of *Lawn & Landscape*. Send her an e-mail at clawell@gje.net

For video interviews with the 2010 Environmental Business Award winners, go to www.lawnandlandscape.com and search "EBA."

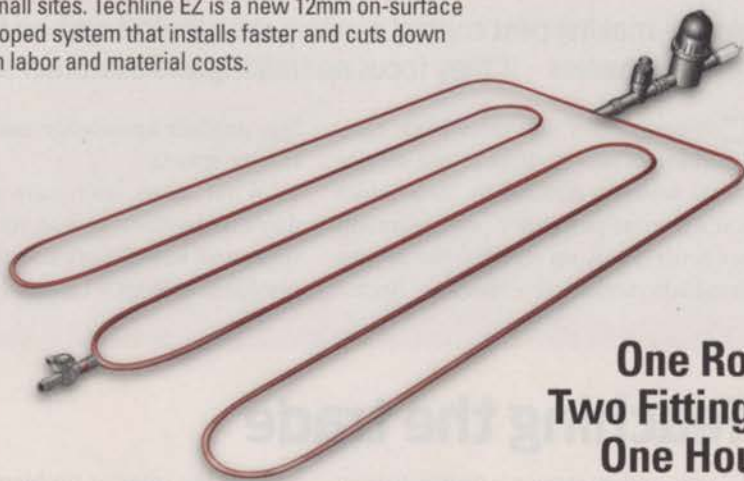


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By Kristen Hampshire

4 Less in Virginia Beach, Va.

Lawn & Landscape talked with professionals in the pest control industry who also offer lawn care to learn how they cross-sell both services, what's involved to offer pest control and what customers expect.

The good news: "We find that lawn care and pest control go hand-in-hand, and one service can drive the other," says Randy Hulett, assistant marketing manager, Hulett Environmental Services, West Palm Beach, Fla. "We are able to create new business for lawn care from our pest control customers, and vice versa, especially since ants that might be infesting the home are feeding on something in the landscape."

The caveat: You need far more than a sprayer and a customer list to do the job right. Here, pest control professionals provide insight on what it takes to offer their service and how landscape companies can profit from adding it to their repertoire.



Pest profits

Money-making pest control services are a logical add-on for lawn care companies – if they focus on training and customer service.

For companies that offer lawn care, adding a pest control to the service menu seems a natural fit. But before you advertise perimeter pest treatment to clients, study up on what the service demands: technical expertise, licens-

ing, product knowledge and customer service smarts.

"What many lawn care companies don't understand is that you can't just spray and leave," says Ronald Keehfus, president of Bugs 4 Less and Lawn Care

Teaching the trade

Spray-and-go service is no way to treat pests. "Not unless you want to move to a 1950s model of pest control," says Adam Jones, vice president and director of quality assurance, Massey Services, Orlando, Fla.

Landscape firms that add pest control services of any kind should prepare to do more than drench the perimeter of a home with product and call it control. "It's not a business where you can be successful by just going out and spraying or spreading large amounts of insecticide around the foundation to protect the home," Jones says. "It's not that basic."

Think thorough inspection rather than broadcast spray – and, with dedicated personnel, consider offering interior control along with exterior spraying. "If you are going to take care of the exterior, you have to be willing to

address the interior problems as well," he says. "Most consumers will not want to buy a pest service that disregards inside problems."

That said, Jones suggests that companies break into pest control by bringing on or training a qualified, licensed and trained individual who will manage these service calls. This person should know the different ant and roach species, understand bed bugs, fleas, ticks and other pests common to the region. In Florida, a license to perform pest services requires five initial training days – essentially, 40 training hours – along with additional hours every six months. At Massey Services, technicians go through two weeks of leader-assisted on-the-job training and, from there, an additional hour per week. Twice each year, the company holds all-day training

Massey Services

Adam Jones, vice president and director of quality assurance **LOCATION** Orlando, Fla. **ESTABLISHED** 1930 **EMPLOYEES** 1,200 **2009 REVENUES:** \$120 million **CUSTOMERS SERVICES** pest control, termite, lawn and ornamental care

events that cover pest control fundamentals and customer service issues.

That's because client expectations are also quite different on the bug side of the business. "You might tolerate a brown spot in your grass, but are you going to tolerate a roach in your kitchen?" Jones says. Responsiveness is critical. "You have to be willing to deal with problems at a moment's notice," he says.

As far as operations go, pest services require more manpower and lawn care requires more materials, Jones says.



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Massey Services budgets 5 percent for general pest control materials, while its landscape and ornamental segment has materials expenses that range from 12 to 18 percent of the division's overall budget. Basic tools to perform pest services include pump sprayers, hand

spreaders and dusters. Caulk guns and screen material are helpful for sealing cracks and crevices on the inside. "You have to be a bit of a craftsman to some degree," Jones says.

Revenue per stop for lawn care service calls is higher, but profit margin is

greater for pest services – an average 25 percent per job, Jones says. So landscape firms considering pest services as an add-on are correct when they see dollar signs. The key to capitalizing on this extra is to cross-sell various services, which is exactly how Massey Services' business model is set up. About 25 to 30 percent of customers buy more than one service from the company, and sales are mostly closed after face-to-face interactions with customers.

"When we get a customer that has more than one of our services, the likelihood that they would ever cancel us is greatly reduced," Jones says.

QUICK TIPS

Gather tools. Don't rely on lawn care equipment to handle pest control jobs. Invest in specific tools for the trade: pump-up sprayers, hand spreaders, etc.

Figure manpower and materials. Understand that manpower needs are greater for pest control, but materials costs tend to be lower for lawn care. It's important to budget accordingly.

Take it inside. How will you manage customer calls for interior services if you're only marketing an exterior perimeter treatment? Determine your service model, communicate this with the customer, and if you have the expertise on board to manage interior pests, do so to fulfill clients' needs.

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Protecting relationships

Communication gaffes are the biggest challenge for companies breaking into pest control services of any kind. Clients get fired up over bugs – much more so than a patch of crabgrass or other lawn problem, says Ronald Keehfus, owner of Bugs 4 Less and Lawn Care 4 Less in Virginia Beach, Va. Overall with pest control, customer expectations are high and service calls are urgent.

Keehfus's advice: Spell out every detail of the service and how problems are

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	Dave Sr.		MARIA	
	MARIA		Chuck	
	tere		Andrea	
	Richard		Carolyn	
	SHANE		Jim	
	DAN		HELEN	

handled – and put it in writing.

“Customers don’t want to hear, ‘I can’t get out there until Friday,’ when they call on Tuesday,” Keehfus says. “The key when it comes to pests is taking the time to solve problems.”

That’s because service calls – returning to a property once, twice, three times after an initial treatment – cost a company time and money. But chances are, landscape firms just getting into offering a perimeter pest service aren’t figuring this into the initial cost of the service, Keehfus says. And companies that merely sprinkle granular product or spray around a home might not be actually solving the problem. “They’re charging a low, low fee for it on top of their regular lawn services, but if product isn’t applied properly, you have service calls,” Keehfus says.

A full, exterior inspection is the most



Bugs 4 Less / Lawn Care 4 Less

Ronald Keehfus, president **LOCATION** Virginia Beach, Va. **ESTABLISHED** 2000 **EMPLOYEES** 2 **2009 REVENUES** less than \$100,000 **CUSTOMERS** 99% residential, 1% commercial (pest control); 100% residential (lawn care) **SERVICES** full-service pest control, termite, moisture control, lawn and ornamental care

critical aspect of providing a perimeter pest service, Keehfus says. This means looking for cobwebs on eaves and knocking them down. It includes scrutinizing the foundation of a home and identifying ant hills and crevices where pests could enter the home. The “treatment” is usually multi-faceted using liquid and granular applications, and/or gel baits. “Doing an inspection is how you

cut back on service calls,” Keehfus says, emphasizing this process as a key part of the pest service a lawn care company should provide.

Also, Keehfus is careful to fully explain treatments and his process so he can manage customers’ expectations.

“The key is to take the time to treat the house and make sure the homeowner understands the services that are included in the warranty so there are no miscommunications,” he says, relating another big difference between selling lawn care and pest services. A warranty for pest control is typical.

“Communicate what you provide, and how you will address service calls – because you always have service calls when you are in pest control. The key is to reduce the number of calls,” Keehfus says. This responsibility falls on the technician, which is why properly train-

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QUICK TIPS

Consider call-backs. Plan on call-backs for pest problems and communicate with customers in advance how and when you will manage those requests.

Write a warranty. This document is standard in the pest control industry and it protects the customer and the company.

Focus on inspection. A significant portion of pest control services involves proper inspection. Don't skip out on this step.

ing and hiring someone with experience will set up a lawn care company for success with a new pest service.

Selling lawn care and pest control services doesn't cost Keehfus much since he taps his existing customer base. He finds that customers are interested in consolidating service providers, so when they find out that Keehfus can handle both needs, they sign on for multiple services. The willingness to manage interior pest problems also helps close sales.

"When a client found out how much I charge (per treatment) and I do the inside and out, he said he'd rather pay more and hire a company that can handle both," Keehfus says. "That's a business model you have to debate over depending on what you are able to do."

Cross-selling the service

As a marketing-driven firm that owns the domain bugs.com, Hulett Environmental Services capitalizes on its premiere image in the pest control industry when selling lawn care – an offering the company rolled out in the early 1990s. Back then, Hulett Environmental – the 22nd largest pest control company in the country – had to rely on the same strategies that small business start-ups use to launch a division.

"We worked off our existing customer base, went door-to-door and used networking opportunities to get the word out," says Greg Rice, marketing director for the Florida-based firm.

Even Hulett Environmental confronted the hurdle of letting customers know that the company was more than pest control. "Sometimes, people don't associate your company with that new service and it can take longer to get the word out there," says Randy Hulett, assistant marketing manager. Advertising

Hulett Environmental Services

Greg Rice, marketing director, Randy Hulett, assistant marketing manager **LOCATION** West Palm Beach, Fla. **ESTABLISHED** 1968 **EMPLOYEES** 330 **2009 REVENUES** \$31 million **CUSTOMERS** 84% residential, 16% commercial (pest control); 75% residential; 25% commercial (lawn care) **SERVICES** full-service pest control and termite, lawn and ornamental care

on vehicles, in the newsletter and on all customer correspondence informed clients that Hulett could provide lawn care services.

The same rule applies to lawn care companies branching

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into pest control. Rice recommends a marketing program that begins with existing customers first. Before doing this, a company must polish its process and be sure that it can meet expectations. "Be prepared, and treat pest control as its own division," Hulett says. "You don't want to risk your existing customer base or reputation."

First, technicians must be trained and licensed by the state. "It would be a lot better for the business owner who is trying to expand his service base to hire someone who has experience, has background, has technical knowledge and have that person run the division and oversee that division and train specialized technicians who are going to work in that division," Rice says.

"If you want an expert, hire one - don't try to be one," Rice says.

Before rolling out the service, be sure

the treatment coverage and product offering is comparable to the competition. How concentrated is the product you will apply, what does the service include and what products will you use?

Once the right people are trained and on board, and the service is solidified, a company can begin cross-selling. Hulett Environmental promotes various services at different times of the year depending on the season, pest pressure and services a customer currently purchases. "We e-mail all customers that do not get our lawn care service free inspection offers and advice or tips," Rice says.

Every time a technician performs a service is an opportunity to provide a free inspection for lawn care or pest control, depending on what the customer currently gets.

"By adding lawn care, we deepened relationships with our existing customer

base," Rice says. "We expanded our customer base and kept customers from going to our competition for services we weren't providing." **L&L**

The author is a frequent contributor to *Lawn & Landscape*.

QUICK TIPS

Perfect your process. You don't want to lose your loyal lawn care clients because your new pest service isn't up to par. Before you dive in to a full-fledged marketing campaign, be sure you can deliver what you offer.

Mine your client list. Start cross-selling pest services by marketing the offering to existing lawn care clients.

Get it on paper. In pest control, an agreement is essential. "That protects the customer and the company," Hulett says. "When companies don't have an agreement, they open themselves up to liability and they hurt their value down the road if they choose to sell the company."



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Feeding a need

From a deli to design/build, Gasper Landscape grows through a dedication to customer service.

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Thank You

By Matt LaWell



Gasper Landscape uses vignettes to show customers examples of finished products.

on where their eyes turn and their attention leads, either a garden department specialist in the nursery or a landscape design specialist will talk with them first. If it's clear they need something more, Gasper says, the specialists will walk with them to the other department. Along the way, the customer can take a look at what Gasper and his roughly 80 employees refer to as vignettes – finished products across the grounds that show how the integration of plants, hardscapes and other installations might look when finished.

“When we design a project, we often walk people through the nursery to show them what we intend to put in,” says John Schweizer, senior sales director. “As they walk through, some other plants might catch their eye and they might inquire about another type of tree or whether they can replace something we’ve designed for them or implement something else.”

Gasper Landscape

Principal: Robert Gasper, president and founder **LOCATION** Richboro, Pa. **YEAR FOUNDED** 1989 **2009 REVENUE** \$5 million **EMPLOYEES** 80 **CUSTOMER BREAKDOWN** 99% residential, 1% commercial; 75% landscape, 25% garden retail **SERVICES OFFERED** Design/build, carpentry, masonry

Ever eat at Art's Station Deli? It was an old family shop tucked in a corner of northeast Philadelphia. Closed its doors for good just about 20 years ago now, but it filled up bellies in the neighborhood every day for a quarter of a century with the best ham and turkey and corned beef – with big, beautiful sandwiches, with whole meals wrapped up in paper. Art Gasper ran the place. His sons Art and Robert took over after he died. To hear folks tell it now, it was a good place to eat.

Only problem was, after a couple of years wrapping up those meals in paper, Robert Gasper had a hunch he wanted to do something else with the rest of his life. He had already worked for years in the airline industry. That was the first act of his professional life. Now here he was, smack in the middle of the second act, his days spent in the deli. All great lives unfold in three acts. Right?

Naturally, Gasper turned to the landscape industry to write his third act.

“I was looking for a career change,”

Gasper says, “and that was my hobby.”

SETTING UP SHOP. Gasper split the next four years between the back of the deli and in backyards across eastern Pennsylvania. In 1989, he left his brother in control of the deli and turned his attention to his landscape business, which today has evolved into Gasper Landscape.

The business specializes in bringing together its garden and landscape design departments to plan and install any project its customers or its team can imagine.

The efficiency of Gasper Landscape is in the fact that the two departments work together seamlessly – and have for years, even when they were located in separate buildings a mile from each other in Richboro, Pa., a suburb about 40 minutes north of Philadelphia. Since Gasper relocated the garden department to the same building as the landscape design department in 2005, the collaboration has been even more impressive.

When a customer walks in, depending

"Most clients don't have a real knowledgeable background of all the plant varieties that are available, so walking them through not only shows them what the projects look like, but also shows them what else is available. Having the retail facility here is just a great benefit to show them all the options that are available to them."

After that initial walk through the grounds and conversation about backyard ideas, the company will schedule an appointment for one of its sales designers to meet with the customer at their home. That's when the sales designer gathers general information, shoots photos and starts to plan the first draft of what will wind up in that yard.

Then, the sales designer will work with an in-house designer to develop a plan and a schedule for the project, then they'll talk again with the customer, this time back on the grounds. "And that's really critical," Gasper says. "We have a presentation room where we put our designs up on a large screen, we show them the plans and, if required, we'll show them a 3D plan of the project. After the presentation, we can take them out to the nursery and show them all the landscape and planting material, and all the hardscape material."

Customers can see the plans for their project on paper, on screen and in the flesh – or leaves – all in five minutes, all without walking more than a couple hundred yards.

"We don't have to send our clients somewhere else anymore to look at the plants and the furniture," says Mary Bowe, who has worked on the in-house design team since 1996. "The possibilities of what we can do have just grown exponentially. We used to be able to talk with clients about items – like

a birdbath being a focal point in a garden – but we wouldn't have any birdbaths we could show them. Now we can. We're more efficient."

CENTRALIZED GROWTH. And no matter how many birdbaths – or anything else, for that matter – might pop up in a consultation and design, projects can be any size. Gasper Landscape handles projects as small as a day of planting and cost between \$1,000 and \$2,000. There are other projects that last every bit of a year and run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, with the crew on site every day, involved in every aspect of the installation.

"There are lots of companies that narrow themselves to one end of the spectrum," Schweizer says. "We pride ourselves on being able to handle any kind of project our client might want."

None of this was possible even five years ago, back before Gasper moved all departments to one location. Now, of course, just about anything is possible.

And it all makes sense, doesn't it? The efficiency, the synergy, the relative ease for everybody involved. This might not be the exact image of what Gasper envisioned when he left the deli counter 21 years ago, but it fits – one department working seamlessly with another, just like salami or pastrami or tender slices of beef work seamlessly with a slice or two of cheese, some mustard and some horseradish between two slices of rye. The deli business seems to have so little in common with the landscape industry, but are they all that different?

Not to Robert Gasper.

"We did a good job," Gasper says. He was talking

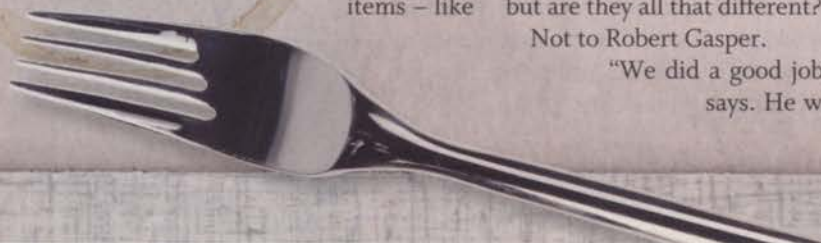
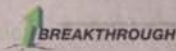


about the deli. He might as well have been talking about his company. He has dozens of awards from the Pennsylvania Landscape and Nurserymen's Association to prove it, the hundreds of quality recommendations, the hundreds of corresponding quality projects all around Philadelphia.

"We did do a very good job." L&L

The author is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

2010 Breakthrough is a series of success stories from the green industry. Each month, *Lawn & Landscape* and its sister horticulture publications – *Nursery Management and Production*, *Greenhouse Management and Production* and *Garden Center* – profiled businesses that have found success by working across the industry. To see more breakthrough stories from the rest of the green industry, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com/2010breakthrough.





The Cat 257B3 Multi Terrain Loader is one of multiple new compact equipment products recently launched.

Cutting down time and cost

New compact equipment is made for ease and versatility.

By Carolyn LaWell

Saving time and money are the two main elements landscape contractors are looking for and manufacturers are working to provide.

Those trends have translated into features that result in ease of use, versatility and speed in the latest compact equipment products. And experts say those trends will continue for years to come.

"Especially in light of the current economic times, people are really trying to do more with less," says Jason Williamson, Caterpillar's product solutions team supervisor for mini excavators. "Customers are trying to find ways to take equipment they have and get more utilization out of it – find ways to utilize that piece of equipment in more ways without necessarily having to spend a lot of money."

Here are some of the ways compact equipment is en-

abling more flexibility.

TRACKS. Landscape contractors want equipment they can use every day, no matter the conditions. They want better flotation. They want less lawn damage. In many cases, that has meant tracks replacing tires.

"One feature that stands out is the request for tracks on smaller equipment," says Matt Collins, compact equipment product manager for Ditch Witch. "Customers are asking for improved flotation, improved traction and looking for equipment that can operate in varying soil and weather conditions."

That request means tracks will most likely gain popularity in the years to come.

"Tracks are going to become more prevalent in a lot of the smaller products where they didn't have an option before," says Greg

Lawrence, product marketing manager for Toro. "People also are focusing on ease of use and products that are easy to train operators to use the equipment."

ATTACHMENTS. Manufacturers have the challenge of adding enhancements and technologies, while still making the compact equipment simple and reliable.

Landscape contractors, more and more, are looking for equipment that they can add different attachments to in order to get more usage out of their machinery.

"Customers continue to ask for more and more hydraulic outlets, easier to install implements and attachments, and greater comfort features on both open station and cab tractors," says Dan Paschke, tactical marketing manager, compact utility tractors for John Deere.

The EPA's Tier 4 emission standards will have an impact on future equipment.

The latest compact equipment is barely off the production line and manufacturers have already turned their focus to the next generation of products. The reason being new models must comply with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Tier 4 emission standards, which mandate reduced emissions from nonroad diesel engines by integrating engine and fuel controls.

The EPA expects exhaust emissions from these engines will decrease by more than 90 percent once the standards are completely instated. The majority of the changes will be rolled out in the next four years with yearly mandates being made based on engine power.

"In most products, in most manufacturers' lines, you'll see upward of a 20 percent increase in price just to meet engine regulation changes," says Robert Gilles, marketing manager for Bobcat. "I don't think you'll see a lot of major changes in the products themselves because most manufacturers are focused on meeting these new regulations for diesel engines."

Those who buy new compact equipment after 2013 can expect changes such as diesel particulate filters in place of mufflers, larger cooling systems and higher fuel consumption, says Matt Collins, compact equipment product manager for Ditch Witch. Many of the new engines will also include electronic controls for the exhaust after treatment and fuel injection systems.

"Contractors will see new machines completely redesigned to produce more horsepower and torque for smaller, more efficient engines that use new technologies to meet stricter emission standards," says Curtis Goettel, marketing manager, Case Construction Equipment. "These changes promise benefit for both the industry and the environment."



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EQUIPMENT TRENDS

Compact equipment will continue to be versatile in the coming years based on contractors' requests.

"More robust, total solutions that meet their needs," can be expected in the next five years, Paschke says. "I think we'll continue to see implement attachments improve and become easier to make a compact tractor capable of doing more jobs and making it easier to switch between those jobs."

SERVICEABILITY. When running a business, having equipment available and working when you need it is crucial.

"Another thing customers are asking a lot about is they

want a machine that is easy to take care of and easy to service," says Todd Lynnes, Caterpillar's manager of compact construction equipment product solutions for skid-steer loaders.

For example, manufacturers are incorporating ground-level servicing and making it easier to access service points without having to use tools to remove panels.

"Serviceability has become a big focus for equipment of all sizes," says Curtis Goettel, marketing manager for Case Construction Equipment. "Our philosophy is that the easier it is to perform service, the more likely it will get done."

SMALLER AND FASTER. The need for certain equipment might depend on the type of customer the business is catering too, whether commercial, residential or a mixture of both. Some manufacturers have seen an increase in sales of smaller loaders to access projects such as those done in the backyard.

At the same time, two-speed track loaders are gaining momentum. Bobcat is introducing two speeds that can travel up to 12.7 mph across its entire line.

"That request was mainly driven by a lot of the developments they get in to cover large areas, and they just want machines that can go

as fast as a skid-steer loader," says Robert Gilles, marketing manager for Bobcat.

BOTTOM LINE. Manufacturers expect strong sales as contractors look for versatility in their machinery.

"In a tough economy, as contractors try to do more with less, we expect continued strong demand for compact equipment," Goettel says. "These machines are affordable, productive and reliable – all key attributes that will help keep contractors competitive and profitable." **L&L**

The author is associate editor of *Lawn & Landscape*. Send her an e-mail at clawell@gie.net

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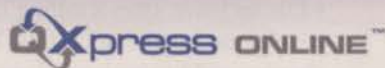


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Tracking time off

Keeping your calendars straight can be complicated – but it doesn't have to be costly. By Steven Cesare, Ph.D.

Editor's note: This is the second in a series of stories on the most serious HR mistakes landscape contractors make. In the coming months, *Lawn & Landscape* will cover: discrimination, the Fair Labor Standards Act, OSHA violations, time sheets, workers' compensation, wrongful termination, employee handbooks and retaliation.

Many landscapers severely underestimate the scope, complexity and financial impact of employee leaves of absence. Depending upon the size of the company and the state(s) in which it conducts business, there could be 15-20 different types of employee leaves of absence that must be communicated, documented and managed to remain legally compliant. Failure to maintain compliance can produce significant legal costs to the company, and in several cases, financial costs can even be applied against the employer's personal assets.

LEAVES OF ABSENCE. There are three categories of leaves of absence: federal, state and employer discretion (e.g., vacation, sick leave, personal time off).



Cesare

With those categories in mind, it is critical for a landscape company to identify all leaves of absence that impact its business operation, specify precise compliance routines for each type of leave and document the exact steps the company takes every time

an employee uses a leave of absence. Beyond the large number of leave programs – everything from vacation to military leave to religious observances – that must be managed, this issue is further complicated by state and federal laws that address similar functions (e.g., medical, pregnancy, military) yet have very different legal requirements that must be upheld.

PENALTIES. The penalties related to leaves of absence violations are usually related to one of three employer errors: negligence, improper administration and retaliation. Negligence is when the employer does not offer, communicate or approve the available leaves of absence as defined by law.

Improper administration is evident in those situations where the employer does not abide by the legal procedures outlined by the particular leave of absence program.

When it comes to retaliation, many recent court decisions have ruled in favor of employees based on employer comments – “Aren't you back from medical leave yet?” – or documenting

the leave of absence in an employee's job performance review.

Likely penalties include employee reinstatement, back pay and reimbursement for lost benefits.

BEST-IN-CLASS PRACTICES. In an effort to reduce the company's financial risk, here are some best practices used by top landscapers.

Training. Best-in-class companies train all appropriate staff (e.g., administrative, human resources, supervisors) on how to identify, discuss and review relevant leaves of absence.

Communication. In addition to having all required state and federal employment posters in place, companies should have an employee handbook that addresses each available leave of absence, stipulates an anti-moonlighting standard while on leave, cites a rolling 12-month timeframe for using certain leaves of absence and has each employee sign an arbitration agreement.

Policies. Develop formal policies to ensure compliance with each type of leave of absence to include: specific compliance standards, definition and duration of each leave of absence, employee eligibility standards, justification for taking each leave, impact on pay and seniority and benefits.

CONCLUSION. Landscape companies typically view the extent of leaves of absence as being vacation leave, sick leave or workers' compensation. That is not the case. By addressing this topic proactively, owners can improve their legal compliance, minimize legal risk to their companies and reduce their own personal financial liability. **L&L**

The author is an industrial psychologist with the Harvest Group, a landscape consulting group. Send your HR questions to cesare@gje.net.

For a list of common leaves of absence and best practices that all landscapers should consider, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com and search “Cesare.”



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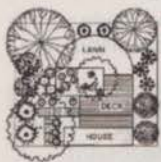
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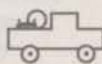
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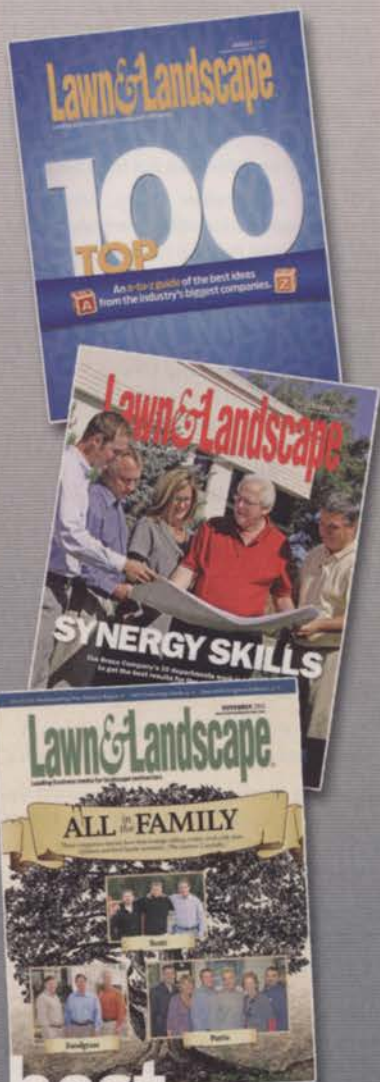
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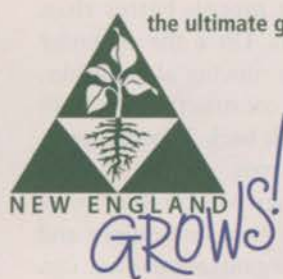
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Bill Arman

Head Harvester,
The Harvest Group

Tell me what you have been up to since you were a leadership winner in 2006.

I left a career of over 32 years of working in the corporate world with two best in class organizations and co-founded a national landscape coaching/consulting firm called The Harvest Group with Ed Laflamme in September of 2007.

Three years later, Ed and I along with our fellow Head Harvesters Cindy Code and Steve Cesare work with companies in over 20 states and three countries – from an idea born in my basement with my buddy Ed and a bunch of flip charts to a very fun and rewarding enterprise. By the way, I kept the flip charts. It has been a great ride.

Why did you become a consultant?

My passion has always been toward helping people with their journey to success. Being a consultant enables me

to play to my passion and my purpose in helping people harvest their potential.

This has been a vision come true with over 12 years of planning and building programs prior to our starting The Harvest Group.

I now get to travel all around and meet new people faced with challenges and help serve as their guide for their company to become a best in class organization. So, I guess the answer is freedom, fun and having new challenges while meeting new people and helping with their success.

What's your take on how the industry will recover from the economic troubles of the past couple of years?

Most of the companies we work with are well on their way, not only to recovery, but to success.

They really didn't know how to harvest their potential. They just needed some system tune ups, a game plan and some encouragement. Even our most challenged companies have now stopped the big pains in their business and are recovering quite well. It wasn't easy for sure but after

making some fundamental changes they are in pretty darn good shape. My take is stop whining and start winning.

Where do you think the industry will be in 2020?

This industry has the profound opportunity to affect the environment in which we all live in many positive ways. Just think about it. If we are doing our jobs right, we can actually put our signature on virtually every aspect of the living environment that affects everyone. The opportunities are boundary-less. This industry has no limits to its potential, especially for the ones that understand this fact.

In your Leadership profile, you said, "One critical component of a leader is to make it crystal clear what the expectations are." Do you still believe that?

Absolutely. One of the most important qualities of a great leader is to make certain everyone knows exactly what is expected of them and how that links to the overall success of the organization.

When this is in place, each person will be in alignment with the organization's path to success.

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These resources can then be directed to more important areas like making your customers become partners and your employees being focused, productive, positive, loyal and on purpose.

What trends are you seeing in the industry?

Many of the construction firms are trying to morph into maintenance folk – some morph better than others. Once the economy starts moving along again, most construction folks will morph back into construction types.

There will continue to be some great innovations and the organizations that can learn, adjust, adapt, change and innovate the fastest will do the best.

Also, shifting away from the account manager position in maintenance. Many companies now have client reps that deal only with the customer and with no field ops responsibilities.

They have supervisors or production managers deal only with the operations side. It was too hard to find account managers that could do both. L&L



Read more from Arman, including his 2006 Leadership profile, at www.lawnandlandscape.com/leadershiplessons.





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