

NOVEMBER 2010
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ALL *in the* FAMILY

Three companies discuss how they manage sibling rivalry, work with their children and fired family members. (The answer: Carefully.)



Seatz



Snodgrass



Pattie

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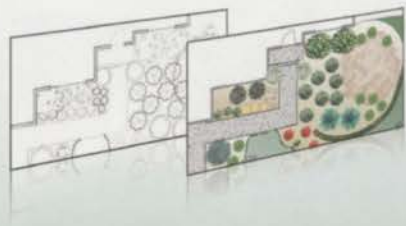
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Features

INTERVIEW

42 **Running Free**

Ron Shimony talks about the potential ups and downs of being your own boss, and how to retain employees who have that entrepreneurial spirit.

COVER STORY

44 **All in the Family**

Family-run businesses are common in the landscape industry but they come with some added areas of contention that other business don't face.

FORMULAS FOR SUCCESS

50 **Bring order to inventory chaos**

Whether you stockpile and store product or order materials just-in-time, developing systems for tracking, sustaining and purchasing inventory will help preserve your company's cash flow.

2010 BREAKTHROUGH

72 **Adjusting by demand**

Putting energy into their retail plant sales and adapting to meet customers' needs has helped South Texas Growers achieve growth in uncertain times.



76 **State of the irrigation industry**

The IA brought together experts this summer to predict where the irrigation industry is headed.

84 **Down the road**

Industry suppliers weigh in on what's next in the lawn care industry.

88 **I-9 nightmare**

Keeping tabs on your employees' employment eligibility can be a headache, but it is one contractors need to deal with. Here's how.

90 **Rolling stock**

An enclosed trailer helps one contractor keep things running year-round.

Departments

- 6 Online Contents
- 8 Editor's Insight
- 10 News
- 14 Good Works
- 16 Research
- 18 Ask the Experts
- 35 New Products
- 36 Columns
- 92 Classifieds
- 97 Ad Index
- 98 Leadership Lessons: Scott Jamieson

Benchmarking Your Business

- 4 Your spring tune-up guide
- 7 I'm stuck at ...
- 12 Financial FAQs
- 14 Charting a course



2010 TECHNOLOGY GUIDE

TECH MARKETING

60 **5 ways to become remarkable and attract more clients**

Use technology to break away from the mediocre majority and make your company remarkable.

USING GOOGLE

64 **New news now**

How to use a news reader to stay current and save time.

BUSINESS APPS












68 **'App'etizing**

Don't be left starving when it comes to business applications for your phone.

CREDIT CARDS

70 **New rules on the credit card front.**

Financial regulatory reform has been signed into law. How will it affect your company?

- Design/build 
- Equipment 
- Irrigation 
- Lawn Care 
- Management 
- Marketing/Sales 
- Money 
- Online Extra 
- Personnel/HR 
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New podcasts online

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Jeremy Miller talks about how he and his team at Miller Landscape took control of their customer base, and saw growth because of it.

The Grow Show

In the latest Grow Show podcast from The Harvest Group, the consultants begin a new three-part series: How to make more money.



Check out the latest videos posted at www.lawnandlandscape.com/multimedialist.aspx

Why you should use social media at your small business

Services like Twitter and Foursquare help you identify your customers.



Richard Branson: learning from failure

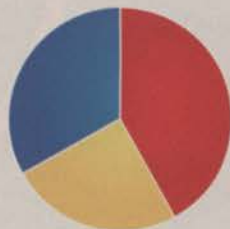
Richard Branson talks about coming up short in business.



ONLINE POLL

POLL RESULTS

How comfortable do you feel when it comes to the security of your equipment and tools?



- Not very. I lock it up and have a security system. **42%**
- Completely. Sometimes I even forget to lock up the stuff. **33%**
- Somewhat. We keep it locked up, but it doesn't cross my mind after I leave for the day. **25%**


How do you handle late-paying customers?



- With kid gloves. **53%**
- With an iron fist. **31%**
- I delegate that task. **16%**

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THE WRIGHT WAY TO MOW

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Love and money

Business can be hard enough without adding the extra pressure of family ties. And Thanksgiving dinner can be stressful enough without adding the extra tension of a rough year at the office. Many landscape companies are run by families – sometimes three generations' worth – and most make it work.

In this month's cover story, "All in the family" on page 44, we take a look at three operations across the country where companies have been successful in walking the thin line between business and family.

David Snodgrass runs Dennis' 7 Dees in Portland with two of his brothers and has to deal with sibling rivalry. Steve Pattie has his three children, his son-in-law and his ex-wife all on the Pattie Group's payroll. And Eric Seatz had to let go of his father, mother and brother to make ELS Landscaping & Lawn Service run the way he wanted.

When they work, family businesses are a beautiful thing – they take the close bonds of parents and siblings, and focus their collective passion on growing a successful organization. But when they sputter, that same passion can quickly turn into a special brand of discord and strife that non-family businesses don't typically see. It's hard to fire a foreman, but what if that foreman is your brother? Or your dad?

“I would give you a kidney, but I can't give you a raise.”

– Ira Bryck

To help alleviate some of that pain, we also talked with Ira Bryck, who runs the UMass Amherst Family Business Center. He explains some ways companies can address and work to avoid the stress of working with your family.

“I'm surprised how surprised people are that their family relationships get in the way. The family roles are constantly interfering much more than one might think,” he says. “Just in terms of the love issue – loving your children, spouse or siblings unconditionally gets in the way of how you evaluate their performance.”

Bryck says, bottom line, owners need clear communication and a separation of their feelings toward their family as family and as their employees.

“I would give you a kidney,” he says. “But I can't give you a raise.” – Chuck Bowen



See my video blog at www.lawnandlandscape.com.

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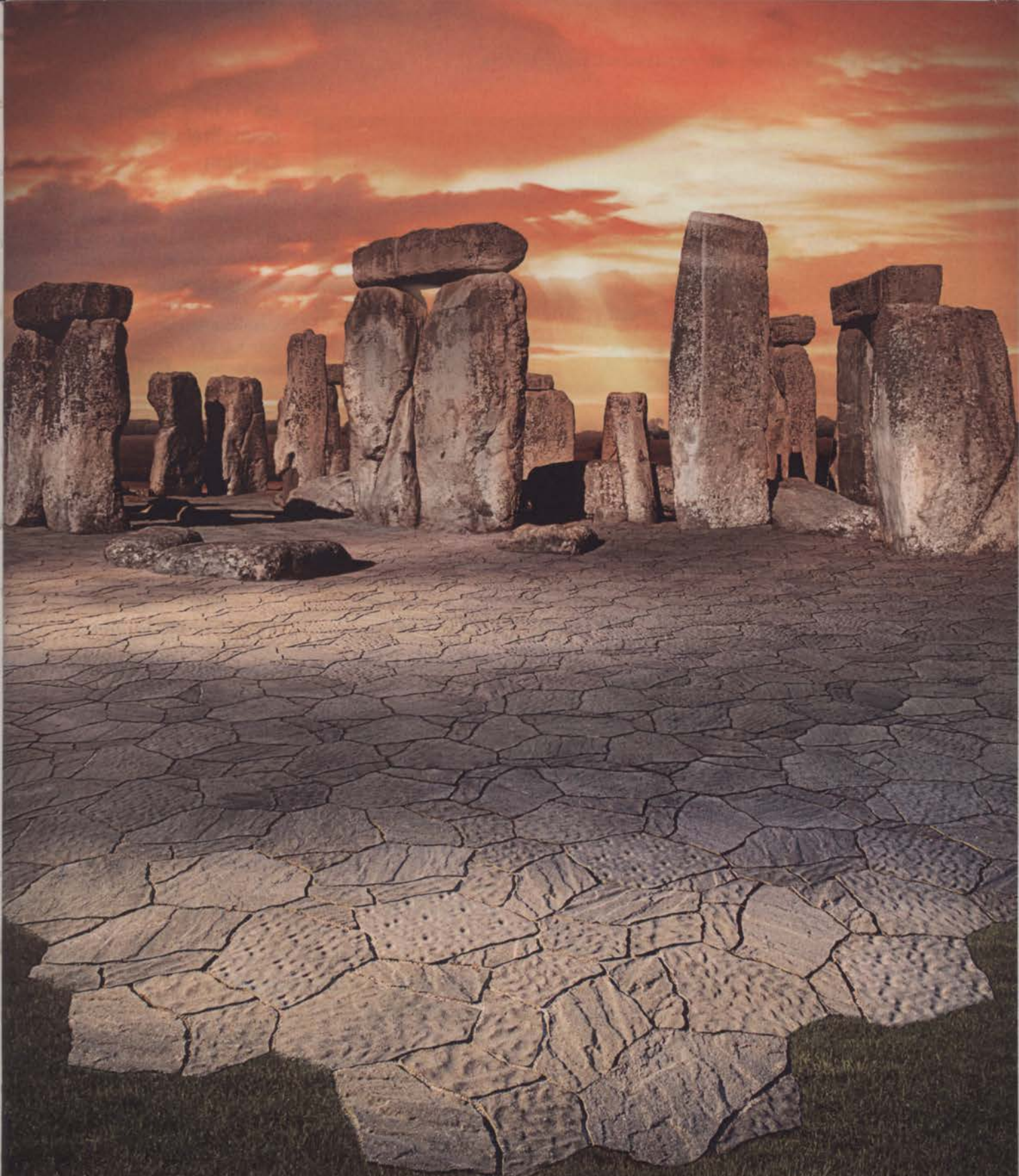
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Gallivan Corp. was recognized by PLANET for its backyard design.



Gallivan Corp. wins landscape award

TROY, N.Y. – Gallivan Corp., a family-owned and managed landscape design construction and management firm, was recently awarded a Distinction Award by PLANET. The award was given as part of PLANET's 2010 Annual Environmental Improvement Awards.

"We are thrilled to be recognized by PLANET as our talented team puts tremendous passion into each and every project," said Brendan Gallivan, president of Gallivan Corp.

The award was based on Gallivan's design/build, named 'A Backyard Transformation,' at a private residence. The design features a natural limestone waterfall that flows into a custom pool, equipped with a slide. Other features include a brick-veneered pool house, gas-burning fire pit with a circular seating area, paver patios, plants and lighting. Award classification lists the cost of the project between \$100,000 and \$500,000.

WaterSmart Innovations Conference and Expo attracts 1,000

LAS VEGAS – Water-efficiency professionals from around the world gathered October 6-8 to discuss innovation and conservation at the third annual WaterSmart Innovations Conference and Exposition.

More than 1,000 participants from 40 states and 10 countries attended the event. The conference, presented by the Southern Nevada Water Authority in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's

WaterSense program and the American Water Works Association, offered more than 130 professional sessions and an expo that featured 90 exhibitors from around the world.

"Natural capitalism" advocate Hunter Lovins and Steven Solomon, author of "Water: The Epic Struggle for Wealth, Power and Civilization," served as the keynote speakers. Technical tours of the Hoover Dam, the Springs Preserve and The Venetian Resort highlighted the area's water-efficiency practices and water resources.

"Based upon preliminary feedback, this was our most

successful event so far," said Doug Bennett, WSI program chairman.

"What really makes this event unique is the diversity and the quality of the professionals that attend."

The fourth WSI conference and expo has been scheduled for Oct. 5-7, 2011.

Ewing Irrigation opens in North Carolina

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Ewing Irrigation Products, the Phoenix-based distributor of landscape, irrigation and industrial products, makes its entrance into the North Carolina market with the opening of a new location in Charlotte.

EWING

The newly remodeled 24,824-square-foot facility is now open for business. An additional branch is set to open in North Charlotte later this year.

The growing amount of commercial work and new home construction served as a catalyst for Ewing's expansion into the market. Ewing serves more than 195 locations in the U.S., spanning the West Coast, Southwest, Midwest and Southeast.

Builder's association names Ruppert subcontractor of year

LAYTONSVILLE, Md. – The Associated Builders and Contractors' of Metro Washington and Virginia Chap-

NEI Holdings makes second acquisition of 2010

DANBURY, Conn. – NEI Holdings has completed its second acquisition for the 2010 season.

New England Irrigation, Milford, Mass., acquired the accounts of Underground Concepts, Hopedale, Mass. North East Irrigation, Bayville, N.J., acquired the residential service accounts of LandTech Enterprises, Warrington Pa.

"Adding these quality customers to our already strong service base not only contributes 20 percent growth to our service top line, but strengthens our footprint in the markets that we already service" says Eric Zima, owner of NEI. "We will continue to search for opportunities that will drive our business plan."

Correction The September Water Smart column, "Water wasters," was written by John Ossa, not Brian Vinchesi.

A SUPPLEMENT TO

November 2010

Lawn & Landscape



LEAFING OUT

Take a look at the new tree and shrub selections that will brighten up the market in 2011. pg.6



INSIDE:

Extreme roses, pg. 10

Deter deer damage, pg. 11

New alternative containers, pg. 13





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TREES, ORNAMENTAL & BEDDING PLANT EDITORIAL SUPPLEMENT

NOVEMBER

2010 VOL. 1, ISSUE 9

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

6 **Leafing out**

Take a look at the new trees and shrubs that will brighten up the market in 2011.

10 **Extreme roses**

These roses go through extreme trialing conditions before receiving the seal of approval.

11 **Deter deer damage**

Understanding deer feeding habits helps lessen damage in the nursery, landscape.

13 **New alternative containers**

A new crop of plastic-alternatives aims to change the way you handle plant installations.

DEPARTMENTS

4 **Green Industry Insight**

15 **Plant Snapshot: *Arbutus unedo***

This picturesque tree offers multiple interests from top to bottom.

15 **Ad Index/Classifieds**

13



11



CONTENTS

Green Industry Insight

Beyond traditional

By Herb Hamilton

Customers want their homes to look good for the upcoming holidays. If you plant only the tried and true, the home entrance begins to resemble a humdrum corporate park. Homeowners want a retreat from their busy lives – not a reminder of them.

So how do you dress it up? Cabbage, kale, mums and pansies are the basis for many late-fall plantings. They inject color and hold up well with the cooler, even colder temperatures of the season. But perhaps it's time to rethink the traditional color infusion that occurs every fall. Explore some of these other options this year.

Drift Roses: This is a colorful group of groundcover roses that bloom well beyond traditional roses. It is typical for these lovelies to bloom until the end of November. Coming in less than 18 inches tall with a spread less than 3 feet,

they are easy to incorporate into pathway plantings or spot throughout the garden.

Serve your customers well this holiday season and create new garden traditions.

Boxwood: The Green series, initially introduced by Sheridan Nurseries in Canada, is a sturdy group of compact boxwoods that do not bronze in the winter. 'Green Ice' is the latest addition to the series. Its rounded 3-foot-by-3-foot form is easy to maintain. Not only is it easy to shape into a hedge, but it also works well as a standalone plant marking the beginning or end of a path.

Virginia sweetspire: Don't let the name fool you; *Itea* is a hardy plant with year-round interest. 'Little Henry' is the compact form. Its leaves turn burgundy in fall and hold on well into the start of winter. In winter, the branches show off their dark-red stem color.

Shade perennial: *Begonia grandis* (hardy begonia) is a fantastic fall-flowering perennial that offers color beyond its showy pink flower. The leaf is a large, two-tone heart shape; green with a red underside. The ovary becomes encapsulated, three-winged and turns pink, remaining attractive well after leaf drop. Bulbils in the leaf axils are used for propagation.

Sun perennial: *Belamcanda chinensis* (blackberry-lily) is a sun lover in need of support. Plant it behind lower shrubs or perennials. It flowers in summer but the real show is in fall when the seed pods burst open to reveal its seed in blackberry like form. The seed pod is useful in flower arrangements.

Traditions are a wonderful thing, and consistency is comforting. But innovation is exciting and it sets you apart. Serve your customers well this holiday season and create new garden traditions. 🌿

The author is wholesale manager for The Conard-Pyle Co.



Herb Hamilton

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LEAFING OUT

Take a look at the new tree and shrub selections that will brighten up the market in 2011.

By Sarah Martinez

Abelia

1. 'Kaleidoscope.' Reported to be the longest blooming of all abelias, it features dramatically defined variegation exploding in varying combinations of green, red, yellow and orange throughout the year. Plant Haven.

2. Twist of Lime. Glossy, bright yellow leaves with green centers mature to rich ivory and green later in the season. A heavy bloom of white-tinged- pink fragrant flowers are attractive to butterflies, bees and birds. Garden Debut.

Acer saccharum (maple)

3. Autumn Fest. Strong upright growth and reliable, early-fall color make this a standout in the nursery and on the streets. J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.

Boxwood

4. Baby Gem. Tiny foliage never reveals pruning cuts, and, once established, it flourishes in conditions of sun to shade. Garden Debut.

Buddleia

5. Flutterby series. Hines Nurseries will introduce several buddleia hybrids in 2011: Flutterby Dark Pink, Flutterby Petite Snow White, Flutterby Peace and Flutterby Grande Peach Cobbler.

6. 'Miss Molly.' A butterfly bush that pushes the color spectrum further with rich hues of dark, Sangria-red. Red coloration may be more pronounced in the South. Proven Winners ColorChoice.



Camellia

7. Pink Yuletide ('MonDel'). A sport from the popular red Yuletide camellia, its blooms are pink, centered with bright yellow stamens. Monrovia.

Carpinus (hornbeam)

8. *C. betulus* Emerald Avenue. This vigorous, easy-to-grow tree is also heat tolerant, maintaining healthy, deep-green foliage in summer. J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.

9. *C. caroliniana* Native Flame. This American hornbeam was selected for good, upright growth and form and especially for its bright-red fall color. J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.

Caryopteris

10. Blue Balloon Bluebeard ('Korball'). The growth habit of this selection is very spherical – like a blue balloon when in full bloom. Striking deep-blue flowers appear from August through September. Monrovia.

11. 'Blue Moonshine.' An outstanding selection that reaches 2- to 3-feet high, depending on geographic locale. It features bright-yellow leaves and luminescent periwinkle flowers all season long. Flemings Flower Fields.

Cercis (redbud)

12. Burgundy Hearts. Burgundy Hearts Redbud retains its deep wine color throughout summer and the end of the season, with exceptional resistance to leaf scorch. It's the perfect size for suburban landscapes. Garden Debut.

Chaenomeles (quince)

13. Double Take series. Proven Winners ColorChoice unveiled its new Double Take quince series: Orange Storm, Pink Storm and Scarlet Storm. These selections are thornless and drought tolerant.

Crape myrtle

14. Early Bird series. Southern Living

Plant Collection will introduce its Early Bird crape myrtle series. Three color choices will offer 100-120 days of color: Purple, Lavender and White.

15. Red Rooster. Red Rooster crape myrtle is a beautiful mid-sized grower with large panicles of brilliant red blooms. It is the perfect plant to use as a specimen or grouping in any size garden. Gardener's Confidence.

Hydrangea

16. *H. arborescens* Bella Anna. Bella Anna is the first pink Annabelle hydrangea in the Endless Summer Collection and comes from the work of Dr. Michael Dirr. Bailey Nurseries.

17. *H. macrophylla* 'Fantasia.' The newest member of the Forever & Ever line has unique blush-pink to apricot-mauve colored flower clusters. Forever & Ever Hydrangea.

18. *H. paniculata* Great Star. This



9



12



13



16



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15

discovery, from the French garden of Princess Sturdza, features star-shaped flowers. Bailey Nurseries.

19. *H. paniculata* Mystical Flame. Creamy white panicles quickly turn burgundy red in cool weather. The color persists until frost. Novalis.

Juniper

20. *Juniperus scopulorum* Sky High. Silvery-blue, dense foliage makes it an excellent evergreen choice. It keeps its strong, columnar shape with very little pruning. Bailey Nurseries.

Physocarpus

21. Little Devil ninebark. Little Devil packs color and texture into a compact, easy-to-care-for ninebark. It reaches 4-feet tall. Bailey Nurseries.

Punica granatum (pomegranate)

22. Angel Red Pomegranate ('Smith'). Bright-red fruit ripens earlier than other varieties. Monrovia.

Rhododendron

23. 'Double Besse.' This double-

raspberry gem has exceptionally bright-green foliage. It is an excellent foundation plant as well as garden specimen. Briggs Plant Propagators.

24. 'Lemon Dream.' Abundant, soft true-yellow flowers adorn a compact plant with excellent foliage. Briggs Plant Propagators.

25. Southgate Series. Southern Living Plant Collection will offer its Southgate Rhododendron series in 2011. The collection includes: Southgate Brandi,

Breezy (pictured), Radiance, Divine and Grace.

Rose

26. Home Run. Proven Winners ColorChoice will offer Home Run shrub rose in 2011. The shrub rose has an outstanding black spot and powdery mildew resistance.

Syringa (lilac)

27. 'Josee.' This re-blooming dwarf lilac features lavender-pink fragrant flowers. Briggs Plant Propagators. 🌱

SOURCES

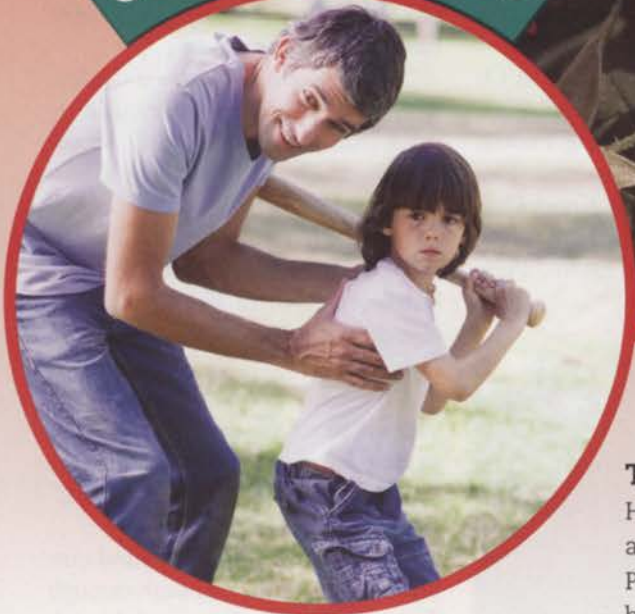
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Garden Debut	www.gardendebut.com
Gardener's Confidence	www.gardenersconfidence.com
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Gaye Hammond is past president of the Houston Rose Society and a member of the National Earth-Kind Advisory Board. She can be reached at gayeh@LPM-triallaw.com.

EARTH-KIND ROSES

These roses go through extreme trialing conditions before receiving the seal of approval.

The Guisse Field Watterworth Park houses 400 rose bushes that are part of the National Earth-Kind Rose Research Project – perhaps the largest environmental rose research study of its kind in this country.

These roses have never been sprayed with pesticides or fungicides, have never been fertilized and were only watered three times in 2009.

The partnership with Texas AgriLife Extension and the Houston Rose Society in this project has been really beneficial to the city and its citizens, says Pam Smith, city landscape manager.

“Not only have we been able to reduce our irrigation costs by 65 percent and totally eliminate applications of chemical sprays and fertilizer on the roses in the study, we are redirecting some 600,000 yards of tree trimmings that had been headed for landfills and

turned that material into mulch for the planting beds. This project has made it possible and has encouraged us to build four more parks using the Earth-Kind approach to landscape management,” Smith says.

THE LATEST EARTH-KIND ROSES.

Two more roses have been added to the Earth-Kind program – Cecile Brunner and Reve d’Or. Before receiving the designation, roses go without applications of pesticides, fungicides or fertilizers and greatly reduced supplemental irrigation.

Cecile Brunner and Reve d’Or join Belinda’s Dream, Caldwell Pink, Carefree Beauty, Climbing Pinkie, Ducher, Duchesse de Brabant, Else Poulsen, Georgetown Tea, Knock Out, La Marne, Mme. Antoine Mari, Marie Daly, Mutabilis, New Dawn, Perle

d’Or, Sea Foam, Souvenir de St. Anne’s, Spice and The Fairy – bringing the total number of Earth-Kind roses to 21.

BLACK SPOT RESISTANCE. Black spot is the most serious disease of outdoor-grown roses worldwide due to the potential for rapid leaf yellowing and defoliation. Fifty-eight roses, comprising 17 of the 21 Earth-Kind roses and another 41 roses under evaluation in Earth-Kind Research Trials are being challenged with three distinct races of *Diplocarpon rosae* collected across Eastern North America.

“To our knowledge, this is the first widespread screen of rose cultivars using characterized races of *D. rosae*,” says David Zlesak, a horticulture professor at the University of Wisconsin.

Test cultivars resistant to all three races of *D. rosae* include: Yellow Submarine, Brite Eyes, Blushing Knock Out, Pink Knock Out and Knock Out.

“Our hope is that the laboratory data will be an efficient predictive tool to help identify roses with durable disease resistance in the landscape,” says Zlesak.

As work under the Earth-Kind umbrella continues in the South through Texas AgriLife Extension and through their collaborators at universities across the country, nursery growers and landscape professionals are realizing tremendous benefits. 🌱

In Earth-Kind trials, roses are never sprayed with pesticides or fungicides, they’re not fertilized and receive very little supplemental irrigation.





Rose of Sharon

PHOTO COURTESY OF PROVEN WINNERS

DEER REPELLENTS

Deer are creatures of habit, and previous movement patterns or foraging experiences can determine where damage will occur. One plant species may be rarely damaged in one region of the country, but preferred in another due to differences in deer pressure. When plant selection doesn't keep the deer away, there are repellents available to growers and landscapers.

Some products include:

- Bobbex
www.bobbex.com
- Deer Away
www.havahart.com
- Deer Guard
www.repelproducts.com
- Deer Off
www.deeroff.com
- Deer Out
www.deerout.com
- Deer Stopper
www.messinawildlife.com
- Deerbusters
www.deerbusters.com
- DeerPro
www.deerprorepellent.com
- Dr. T's Deer Blocker
www.pestproducts.com/deerblock
- Gardener
www.gardeners.com
- Hinder
www.protectyourgarden.com
- Liquid Fence
www.liquidfencepro.com
- No Deer Zone
www.montereylawngarden.com
- Not Tonight Deer
www.nottontight.com
- Plant Pro-Tec
www.plantprotec.com
- Plantskydd
www.plantskydd.com
- Shake Away
www.critter-repellent.com
- Sweeney's Deer Repellent
www.wrsweeney.com

deter

deer damage

Understanding deer feeding habits helps lessen damage in the nursery, landscape.

by Kelli Rodda

Hungry deer can cost millions in crop losses, but some planning strategies can help deter these pests from feeding on your investment.

Deer browse year-round, but are most destructive during the winter when alternative foods are less available, says Scott Hygnstrom at the University of Nebraska's School of Natural Resources.

There is no such thing as a deer-proof plant – under severe circumstances, deer will eat anything. But

there are some plants that deer tend to avoid when other food is accessible. For trees, try *Aesculus parviflora* (bottle-brush buckeye), *Betula papyrifera* (paper birch), *Cryptomeria japonica* (Japanese cedar) and *Picea pungens glauca* (Colorado blue spruce). For shrubs, try *Asimina triloba* (pawpaw), *Buddleia* spp. (butterfly bush), *Hibiscus syriacus* (rose of Sharon) and *Mahonia aquifolium* (Oregon grape holly.) For ornamental grasses, try *Acorus* spp. (Japanese sweet flag), *Carex* spp. (Japanese sedge), *Panicum virgatum* (switch grass) and *Pennisetum alopecuroides* (fountain grass).

Check with your local extension office for a comprehensive list of plants that deer frequently eat and varieties that deer shun.



Home remedies, fencing and certain plant species may deter deer damage.



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Industrious growers have come up with some interesting ways to deter deer, short of a well-sighted rifle. Landscapers with clients in deer-browsing areas can also try these tricks.

One grower suggested filling small cloth bags with Milorganite and tying them to branches surrounding the nursery or landscape. Milorganite is a fertilizer and is not labeled as a deer repellent. But research at the University of Georgia and Berry College in Mt. Berry, Ga., found it repelled deer for up to 35 days.

Strong-smelling soap tied to trees may also keep deer away from nursery fields and landscapes. Leave the paper on the soap to help it last longer. The key is finding the soap with the strongest scent. An old-time home remedy for shooing away deer is human hair placed in old nylons and tied to tree branches. Blood meal is another home remedy often touted as a deer repellent, but several growers said it was ineffective. Dried peppers – the hotter the better – sprinkled on plants or around perimeters may also work.

Todd Efung, nursery manager at Van Putte Gardens in Rochester, N.Y., has been using Shake Away since spring to deter marauding deer from entering poly houses when the sides are vented during warmer months.

"Fencing 15 acres wasn't financially viable. And we didn't want to fence around the houses because they can be seen from our retail area," Efung says.

He set up a testing area around four Quonsets and a perennial holding area.

"We put out pouches with the Shake Away product around the corner perimeters of the area and also applied the granular product around the entire area," he says.

He applied the granules twice a week for the first two weeks, then switched to once a week.

"Staying on schedule is important to the success of this product," he says. "But so far no damage, and we usually have a noticeable amount by mid-May." 🌱

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

COMING SOON:

ALTERNATIVE CONTAINERS

A new crop of plastic-alternatives aims to change the way you handle plant installations.

Traditional plastic plant-containers are a bulky byproduct of most landscape installations. The green industry is looking to change that with more widespread use of degradable pots. Each year more options enter the market, and many have made their way to landscape distribution center yards.

Here's what you need to know about the alternative containers that could end up on your next job site.

SOILWRAP

SoilWrap is a bio-based, plantable container from Ball Innovations. It's made from Mirel, a renewable, biodegradable and environmentally friendly material.

This container recently won a Greener Package Award in a competition sponsored by Summit Publishing's Greener-Package.com.

Drew Effron, product manager for Ball Innovations, says studies they've done indicate a labor savings of 30 to 40 percent when plantable containers are used for installations. Time and effort are saved by not having to dislodge plants from pots and then clean up afterward.

SoilWrap will have a big roll out at next year's California Spring Trials. Effron says results from testing show plants thrive in the packaging.

"We've done a world of studies in both containers and in the ground," he says. "We show no ill effects. Plants just grow right out the bottom of the container. The current design has micro-perfs built into it, intended to allow quicker degradation once it's in the ground. It allows roots to come out of the pot's sides."

www.ballhort.com



BIOPOTS

Biopots, from Bellan International, are made from bamboo, rice husks and straw. Biopots are a pollution-free, degradable alternative to plastic. Grower pots range in size from 2½ inches up to 8 inches. The lifespan is one year outdoors (planted) and three years indoors (planted).

www.biopots.com



ROOT POUCH

Root Pouch containers are made from polyethylene terephthalate (PETE), which comes from recycled plastic beverage bottles. The manufacturing process turns the plastic into non-woven fabric. Plants grown in Root Pouch containers produce more fibrous roots that do not circle the pots. The Root Pouch needs 60 percent less space for storage or shipping than other containers.

<http://rootpouch.com>



COWPOTS

CowPots, which are made from cow manure, has been rigorously tested and validated by the University of Connecticut and many independent nursery partners.

The naturally porous property of manure enables tender, young roots to easily penetrate the sides and bottoms of CowPots. This allows for air pruning and the formation of root buds and secondary root development throughout the pot, providing dense, healthy root systems. CowPots stay intact for at least 12 weeks depending on the growing environment and irrigation methods used. The nitrogen in composted cow manure helps the CowPots naturally biodegrade. Sizes for production include 5-inch square and round, 6-cell flats and 3-inch round and square pots.

www.cowpots.com



ELLEPOT

Ellepot is made from a degradable paper that allows improved root systems, faster rooting, faster transplanting and uniform growth. Ellepots can be produced with many types of growing media, including peat, coco peat, perlite, pine bark, vermiculite and rock wool. The pots are used in propagation for nursery, greenhouse, forestry, cut flowers and vegetables.

www.ellepot.dk



PLANT SNAPSHOT

NAME: *Arbutus unedo*

COMMON NAME: Strawberry tree

DESCRIPTION: Small tree with clusters of white to pink flowers and orange-red knobby fruits. The cinnamon-colored bark peels with age.

LANDSCAPE USES: Can be trained as a large shrub, but better as a small tree. Choose a leader early and prune back other basal shoots. Grow in full sun or part shade.

HARDINESS: USDA Hardiness Zones 7-9.



Strawberry tree displays fruit and flowers simultaneously.

Arbutus unedo

This picturesque tree offers multiple interests from top to bottom. By Kelli Rodda

A*rbutus unedo* (strawberry tree) is a four-season evergreen shrub with outstanding flowers, fruit, leaves and bark on an easy-to-grow plant. It's a gift-wrapped landscape beauty.

The small, urn-shaped, whitish-pink flowers are produced from October to December. Unless winter weather is severe enough to damage flowers, they develop into round, 3/4-inch, knobby fruits that gradually ripen to orange-red throughout the year – hence the common name.

This is one of the few large shrubs that flowers in early winter, just at the time the fruit is ripening. Strawberry tree also has attractive, cinnamon-colored bark and rounded, glossy, medium-green leaves.

The flowers are similar to some of the other members in the heath family such as *Vaccinium* (huckleberry) and *Arctostaphylos* (manzanita). The bark of *Arbutus unedo*, much like the madrone tree (*Arbutus menziesii*) peels with age. The leaves are leathery and serrated, with red stems.

The Irish call it the Killarney strawberry tree and it grows along the coast, however, it is also native to Israel. This surprising geographical separation is the result of the Gulf Stream, whose warm waters affect coastal Ireland, Scotland and Britain, creating milder

winters, which *Arbutus* need.

IN THE LANDSCAPE. This handsome shrub can be used as an informal hedge or sheared for a more formal look. It may also be planted as a focal point, carefully pruned to accentuate the branch structure and beautiful bark.

Arbutus unedo tolerates a wide variety of soil conditions. It grows best in part or full sun and is drought tolerant once established. There are few insect and disease problems, though it can occasionally get aphids and there may be fungal spotting on older leaves if grown in very poor soil. Foliage and flowers may be damaged in extremely cold winters.

Ten-year height is about 8 feet high by 6-7 feet wide if left unpruned. Eventually it can grow to 15-20 feet high and nearly as wide.

It's hardy in USDA Hardiness Zones 7-9.

Some cultivars. 'Compacta' features white flowers and grows to about 6 feet high and wide. 'Elfin King' can grow as small as 3 feet high or up to 6 feet high. 'Oktoberfest' sports deep pink urn-shaped flowers in drooping clusters. 🌱

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

AD INDEX

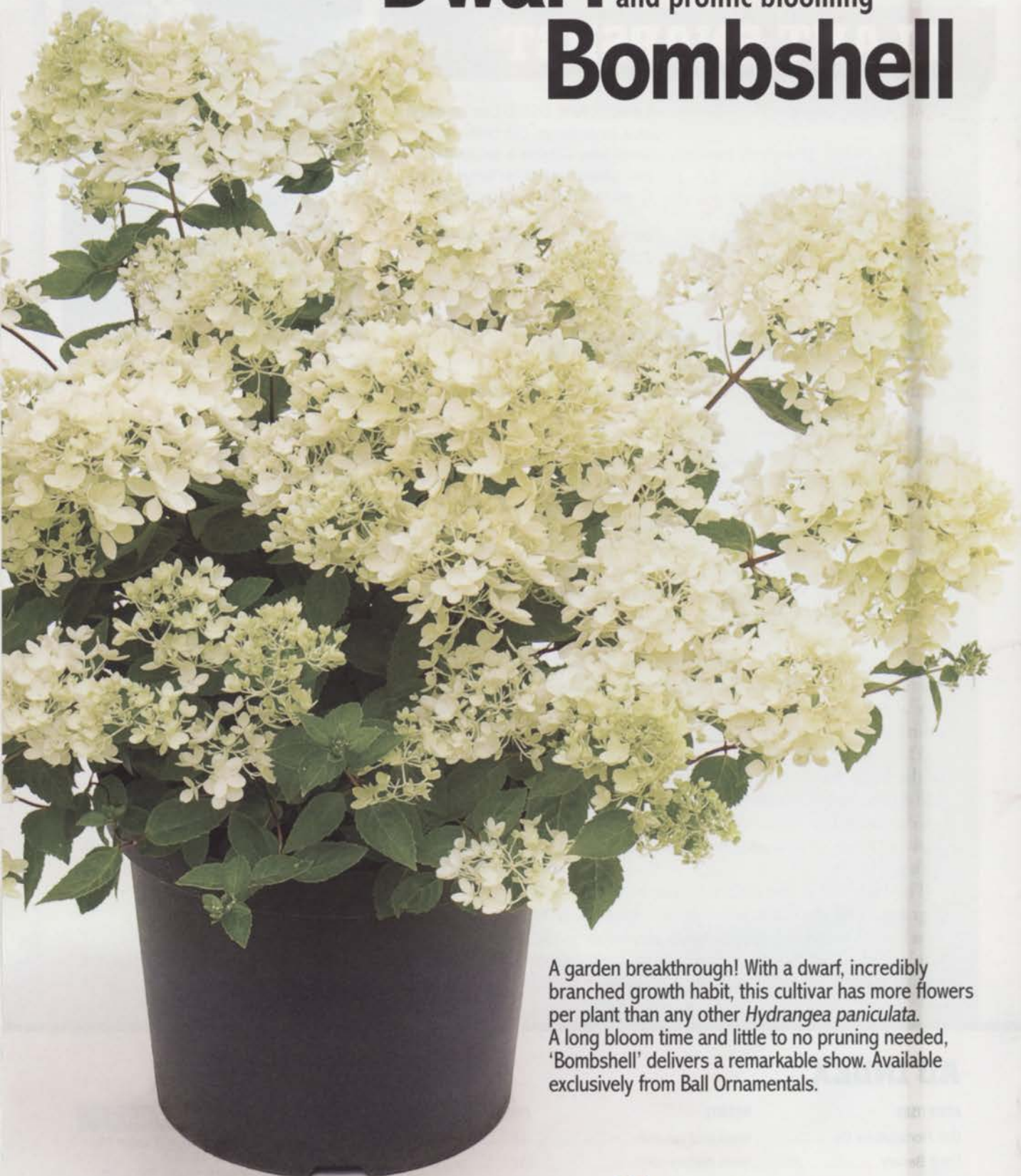
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Draw on the expertise of PLANET's Trailblazer network to solve problems in your business. Check out "Ask the experts" on page 18. Send your questions to llexperts@gje.net.



ters have named Ruppert Landscape its Landscape Subcontractor of the Year in their 2010 Excellence in Construction Awards program. This is the sixth time Ruppert has received this award that is given by the associations' general contractor community to the subcontractor who maintains the highest standards for quality and craftsmanship on award-winning projects.

"Teamwork and cooperation between general contractors, specialty contractors and material suppliers are prerequisites for

building excellence into any construction project," said Debra A. Schoonmaker, ABC's Metro Washington Chapter president.

Bob Jones, vice president and director of landscape construction for Ruppert said that the ABC award is one of the most meaningful honors a company can receive because the nominations and selection come from the contractors themselves.

"It's gratifying to know that we have met or exceeded many of our customers' expectations, and we're grateful to have been selected and

recognized with this award," he said.

Arlington named PLANET Trailblazer

ERIE, Pa. - Richard Arlington, certified landscape professional and certified snow professional, was recently named a Trailblazer by PLANET. Arlington is president of Rich Arlington & Associates and Arlington Lawncare in Erie, Pa., as well as a consultant and business manager at Affiliated Grounds Maintenance Group based in Lake City, Pa.

Trailblazers are a select group of individuals nominated by their peers as

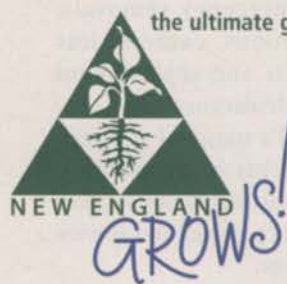


Arlington

dedicated professionals who have made significant and long-term contributions to the green industry. The program was launched in 2002 to recognize industry leaders and to share their knowledge with PLANET members. Arlington is one of 90 Trailblazers added since 2002.

"Success comes with a responsibility to help others and share what you have learned," said Arlington, "and I am truly honored to be among the 90 Trailblazers who have dedicated themselves to helping others in the green industry."

Arlington has spent 25 years in the landscape, lot sweeping and snow and ice



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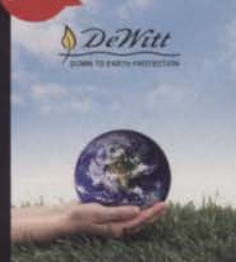


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NEWS ///

PEOPLE

Shannon Savage has joined Borst Landscape and Design, Allendale, N.J., as a garden maintenance supervisor/designer.



Savage

Mike Rorle joined GIS Dynamics as CEO.

Ball Horticultural Co. named **Janet Curry** as the National Key Accounts Manager and **Daniel "Danny" Brooks** as Eastern Technical Sales Manager to Daniels Plant Food (Ball DPF LLC).

Dow AgroSciences has named **Jason Nelson** to the position of portfolio marketing leader for the turf and ornamental business division. **Lee Conway** was named district sales manager responsible for overseeing the eastern turf and ornamental sales district.

maintenance industry.

He specializes in litigation consulting in the areas of snow management and landscape practices.

In 2000, Arlington joined Affiliated Grounds Maintenance Group, which has grown to encompass work in 27 states with over 300 contractors.

In 2005, he launched a consulting firm that works with facilities around the country to achieve better risk management for their exterior services. The company also consults to lawn care, landscape and snow management businesses on ways to improve profits, operations, marketing and safety practices.

Arlington continues to oversee Arlington Lawncare, formed in 1987, based in Erie, Pa. where he resides with his family. This company provides lawn, landscape and snow management services and currently employs a 30-person staff and 200 subcontractors.

HMI adds two firms to its network

CARY, N.C. - Taylor Tree

Services and JL Tree Service have joined HMI's Authorized Member Network in Northeast Florida and Virginia, Maryland and Washington, respectively.

HMI provides property owners and insurers, among others, full support services for trees and shrubs, including emergency removals, inspections, cause of loss analysis and replacement cost calculations.

HMI's national network of arborists and professional tree care companies support all of its product and service offerings.

Taylor Tree will support HMI in Jacksonville, St. Augustine and the neighboring areas.

"Having a leading company available to help in coastal areas exposed to tropical storms and hurricanes is invaluable for our clients," said Don Malawsky, executive vice president and chief operating officer of HMI, of Taylor Tree.

"Companies such as JL Tree Service are invaluable for our network, as they exemplify the highest standard of tree care work in the industry," he added. **L&L**



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SavATree's managers grab the clippers

Annual charity services remind leaders what their employees go through each day.

Employees at Bedford Hills, N.Y.-based SavATree don't stop pruning when it rains and neither do the higher-ups. The managers donated their time and labor on a rainy day in May to prune trees at a local zoo that will celebrate its 50th anniversary this year.

TRAGEDY TO CHARITY. Luann O'Brien, vice president of marketing and sales development for SavATree, says that after 9/11, management decided to stop doing fun, teambuilding exercises, and instead tended to the damaged trees at St. Paul's Chapel across from the World Trade Center site.

She says the Ground Zero work is "a tough act to follow," but SavATree continues to find annual opportunities to donate its services.

"We look for something that's community based, not-for-profit and in an area with a lot of customers, so we can contribute back to them," she says.

AT THE ZOO. Paul Carbone, New Jersey district sales



The SavATree crew helped out at the Bergen County Zoo.

manager, chose to donate the company's services to the Bergen County Zoo in Paramus, N.J.

"I picked the zoo because, as an animal lover, I thought it would be a lot of fun," Carbone says. Last winter's fierce weather took a beating on the zoo.

Aside from normal pruning needs, the zoo had to deal with the storms' attacks on the trees and fencing.

As with all the previous annual volunteer projects, it was management rather than the typical arborists and

pruners who did grunt work at the zoo.

"Of course for us, it's a great time for everybody to get together and it reminds us very clearly – especially those of us who are in corporate – of how hard our people work," says O'Brien.

She says that Carbone collaborated with the zoo's grounds supervisor to map out the work areas and prioritize what areas to do first.

SavATree was extra productive when pruning, thanks to help from zoo workers, who helped clean up debris.

WHAT YOU CAN DO. O'Brien says giving back shows your community that you're a responsible business.

"What we do as an industry is very, very valuable and there are many worthy options," she says.

Good Works is an occasional feature that highlights charitable projects our readers are working on. If you'd like to see your company's recent good work profiled, send an e-mail to Associate Editor Brian Horn at bhorn@gje.net.



When looking for a group to support, O'Brien suggests looking for one in the community you service, and in which your clients are involved.

The zoo project cost SavATree about \$14,000, but O'Brien says it's worth the time the company invested.

"The primary ROI is the intangible," she says. "It's the camaraderie between the management group, and the community service – the benefit of being a good corporate citizen." **L&L**

The author is an intern with *Lawn & Landscape* magazine.

SavATree

Principal: Daniel Van Starrenburg, president and CEO LOCATIONS Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia. **ANNUAL REVENUE** \$55 million **SERVICES** Tree, shrub and lawn care **CUSTOMER BREAKDOWN** 80% residential; 20% commercial **NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES** More than 500 **CHARITABLE PROJECT** The management team's annual community service project **COMPANY'S INVESTMENT IN PROJECT** \$14,000



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Boosting the local economy

Buy local. Though certainly not a new idea, supporting local businesses has received a push from a national movement of independent business owners that have formed Independent We Stand to educate their communities on the benefits of shopping at neighborhood stores. Independent We Stand is funded in part by STIHL.

The movement uses recent surveys to break down the benefits of buying from local businesses. According to the group:

If you spend \$100 at an independent business, \$68 returns to the local community. Spending the same amount at a national chain equates to \$43 back to the community.

Small businesses create 75 percent of all new jobs and half the non-farm private gross domestic product.

Locally owned businesses reinvest in its communities economy at a 60 percent higher rate than chains and Internet retailers.

Locally owned and operated businesses provide higher-paying jobs.

Finally, more tax dollars are reinvested in the community to fund essentials such as schools, fire and police and road improvements.

"This project began as a way to inform friends and neighbors on one of the best ways to revive our economy: buy local," says Bill Brunelle, spokesperson for Independent We Stand.

"Buying products and services from people who work and live in your town means more money goes back to your local area," he says.

Learning from the recession

The one thing the recent recession has taught business owners is how to manage companies smarter. While economic conditions certainly aren't ideal, they're finding ways to survive, ways that will make their businesses run more efficiently in the coming months and years. Of the Citigroup survey respondents, 64 percent said they have forever changed the way they run their business operations.

The changes in running their business:

- reducing debt
- increasing cash reserves
- freezing hiring
- delaying expansion plans

The challenges they're tackling:

- higher taxes
- decline in products and services
- tighter business regulations
- health insurance

The ways they're weathering the storm:

- long-term client relationships
- effectively managing expenses
- recession-proof products or services

Business owners cautious of future

A quarterly survey by Citigroup found that **85 percent** of small-business owners are worried about a double-dip recession. If any solace can be found in that number, it is that **75 percent** polled said they are very or somewhat prepared for another downturn, an indication of small-business owners' ability to adapt to the challenges presented during the recent recession.

The results of the most recent survey mirrored the ones from previous quarters, with **76 percent** of small-business owners rating the current business climate as fair or poor.

However, optimism continues to rise with an increasing percentage of owners calling current conditions fair. Of those polled, **28 percent** said their business was better off today than last year and **42 percent** expect business to improve in 12 months. A growing number of owners – up **5 percent to 45 percent** – say they expect conditions to remain the same in the next year.

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CREDIT CHECKS, HOLIDAY PAY AND FMLA

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 lexperts@gie.net.*

Q: Since we have been doing background and reference checks, the quality of our hiring has improved and our turnover rate has dropped. My boss wants to add credit checks to our process, but I'm not sure that's a good idea. Is that likely to help, and are there any precautions to be aware of?

A: There are certainly precautions. In today's litigious society and workforce, you need a good business reason to do anything. There are no acceptable data establishing that someone's credit rating has a direct correlation to their work performance. Unless the job you are filling is directly related to a credit rating, you should not pursue it. For example, if you are recruiting for a vice president of finance, then the credit rating may be pertinent.

If the person you are hiring will be officially representing your company in a public relations capacity or as a financial consultant to you or your clients, the credit rating might be pertinent. If the individual's reputation, financial standing or credit rating is a significant factor in the performance of the job, then the rating may be pertinent.

But, if you intend to do credit checks, recognize that by doing so you are assuming the role and legal responsibility of a bank lending money or merchant selling products.

You are required to obtain the individual's consent and provide him or her with a copy of your findings. If you reject the application based on the credit check, you must then allow him or her an opportunity to respond and appeal the results.

You are also required to at

least reconsider your decision after the process is complete. There have been several Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charges as a result of candidates being rejected based on the results of their credit checks.

Credit rating, in spite of what the banks say, is not a clear sign of character. If it's not job related, don't do it.

Bill Cook, Human Resource Associates, PLANET HR Consultant

Q: One of our employees had to service a customer on the holiday. Does he get paid overtime and, if so, at what rate?

A: No, he doesn't get paid overtime on the basis of it being a holiday.

The laws requiring holidays only apply to government employees. As a private employer, you are not required to provide holidays at all.

If you do provide paid holidays and an employee works on that day, you are only required to pay the employee's normal pay.

However, if he works more than 40 hours in your workweek,

the Federal Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires you to pay overtime at one-and-a-half time.

In that holidays are the most undesirable days of the year for most employees to work, the national norm is to pay the employee for the holiday and to also pay for the hours worked; that is, double time.

Bill Cook, Human Resource Associates, PLANET HR Consultant

Q: I have an employee on FMLA leave (Family and Medical Leave Act). The holiday occurred during her leave. Should she get paid, not paid, or does it even count as FMLA leave time?

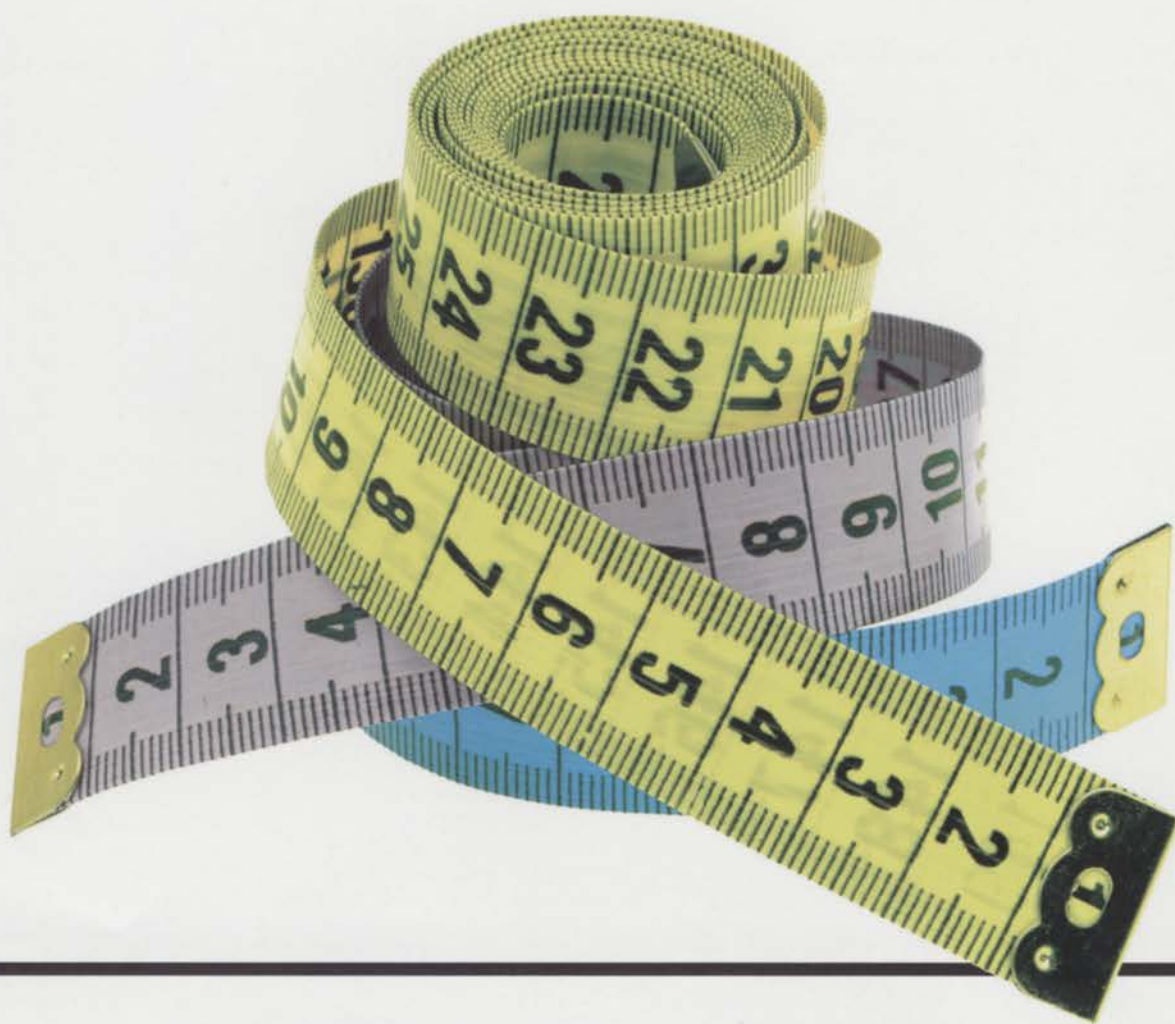
A: The holiday has no impact and does not change the FMLA count of days on leave. The entire week is counted as FMLA leave.

However, there are some exceptions. If the place of business is closed for at least one week and employees are not required to report that week, then the week does not count toward the FMLA leave.

The idea is that the employee is not missing work and there is no work being scheduled, so no leave is being granted or used.

In addition, if the employee is using the FMLA leave in increments of less than one week, then the holiday does not count toward the FMLA leave unless the employee was scheduled to work on that holiday. (Note: The federal requirement to provide FMLA only applies to companies with 50 or more employees.)

Bill Cook, Human Resource Associates, PLANET HR Consultant



2010 **Benchmarking** **Your Business** Report

See where your company – and your competitors – stand
with this financial guide.

Lawn & Landscape



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Benchmarking Your Business

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Our commitment to your business does not stop with providing quality products and solutions through our experienced John Deere dealer network. The John Deere dealer is there to serve as your partner and support your business needs after the sale with the most extensive factory trained service technicians and knowledgeable parts staff in the industry. They have one priority: To ensure product uptime in the most responsive manner, because downtime is not an option when you are running a business!

According to the following report, 39 percent of landscape contractors and lawn care operators don't receive monthly financial income statements and 18 percent never build a budget for their business. And at the end of the season, 35 percent of their equipment budgets will have gone toward unplanned purchases. You can't plan for everything; today's business world is unpredictable at best. But John Deere is dedicated to providing you with the support, solutions and products you need to succeed, from a 21-inch walk-behind mower to the industry benchmark 1600 Turbo WAM batwing mower!

We hope the work we do in 2011 and beyond will move us closer toward becoming your most trusted partner on the job site. Because even after 173 years, our business is not much different from yours: We are continuously changing, adapting and implementing new processes in order to build a better business for you, our customer.

We look forward to seeing you soon, whether at an industry event, or even at one of our facilities.

Have a prosperous 2011,

Ken Taylor, CLP
General Manager, Corporate Business Division, John Deere



JOHN DEERE



Your Pre-Spring Tune-Up

Get your financial house in order before you kick off the 2011 season.

Forget winter hibernation. Now is the time to get working *on* your business while you're not swamped *in* it, and prepare operations for a strong start this spring. Maximize the off-season by raking through your budget and taking stock of people, equipment and backlog. Review 2010 sales and form projections for 2011.

Your budget is a starting point for analysis. "It's a tool to use for examining your whole company," says Jim Huston, a green industry consultant and owner of J.R. Huston Enterprises, Englewood, Colo.

Meanwhile, tune into these vital signs: debt ratio, the balance sheet, payables and receivables. Also consider opportunities to grow your business. Decide to add a new profit center to the business, or close down a division that isn't performing.

Making some of these tough choices now will help get your business in shape for a successful 2011.

BUDGETING MATTERS.

Focus on that budget and

lock down your projected numbers for 2011. "Conduct a comprehensive review and take a look at every line item," Huston says. First, review the benchmarks on page B14 and see how your business stacks up. Here are some areas to watch: equipment purchases, labor costs, overhead costs and gross profit margin (GPM).

Equipment: Before you add a new piece of equipment to your fleet, ask yourself this: Can I keep it busy 50

percent of the time? Or, "Can you generate enough revenue from that piece of equipment to make all of the payments?" Huston says. Remember when budgeting, equipment costs also include fuel, depreciation, parts and mechanics' pay.

Labor: If labor costs are eating up your budget, then sales and marketing efforts should be ramped up to balance the ratio. Start by analyzing how much you are paying yourself (owner's salary).



by Kristen Hampshire



Guide

Huston recommends a fair market value salary of about 12 percent of sales. “Usually, if your overhead is above 25 percent, it’s because your office staff costs are too high,” Huston says.

Overhead: Generally, overhead should not exceed 25 percent of sales. So a company that does \$1 million in sales typically has overhead costs of \$250,000. Overhead is indirect costs, from office supplies to vehicles, cell phones and downtime with labor burden (see charts on page B14 for a full list).

GPM: A company’s overall GPM is usually 30 percent or higher – that’s profit after paying job-related costs from materials, crews, labor burden, equipment, etc. If GPM is 30 percent and overhead is 25 percent, net profit is 5 percent. “You should really focus on GPM for each division and if one area is too low, then work on improving it,” Huston says. In other words, one lagging profit center can stall the whole operation.

PERSONNEL PREP. “Fire them up or fire them out,” Huston says. Sounds harsh, but companies need high-performing leaders and employees to grow. Take inventory of personnel: What positions do you need to fill? Where could you trim the fat? What training do you need to

Reality Check: What’s Your Worth?

If you had to cash out, pay your bills and sell your business tomorrow, how much would it be worth? This winter, Huston recommends calculating your net worth to find out which areas of the business need a tune-up before spring.



provide to sharpen the staff’s skills? Don’t wait until the weather breaks to post your help-wanted ads.

“You need to think about personnel all the time,” Huston says. “You can’t snap your fingers and hire the right person. Recruiting takes time.”

Figure out how many and who you can afford to hire by analyzing the labor costs in your budget. Field labor is an average

The average company spends **37%** of its sales on overhead.

Source: Law & Landscape research



Benchmarking Your Business

30 percent of sales in maintenance and lawn care organizations, and about 20 percent of sales in design/build firms. (Labor burden is about 30 percent, as a percentage of labor.)

In the meantime, identify members of your organization that require minimal supervision. These are your

managerial superstars. Then, Huston suggests identifying those who require more than their share of oversight. "Identify those personnel and do something about it," he says.

Incentive plans will motivate the team to continue working productively, especially during the burnout days of

summer. Winter is a fine time to design and launch a program. The ultimate goal of incentives, of course, is to ramp up productivity.

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES. Huston says many businesses worked through 2009 and 2010 with a wait-and-see mindset, and aggressive companies that are in a position to grow this coming year are prepared to test the market with new services.

Identify client demands, analyze the competitive landscape and determine if there's a niche your company can capture. The offseason is an ideal time to think acquisition and sales. "It's a natural break," Huston says. "A lot of companies are going to wrap up the year, and if they want to acquire a company, doing that in November and December gives them a few months to get assimilated."


Before taking this step, consider bringing in an outsider to take a good, honest look at your company and its needs. A consultant can guide you through necessary budgeting exercises, prompt uncomfortable discussions that are necessary to engage in before a company can grow (Should you fire this manager? Can you buy a new division? Why is the design/build GPM so low?).

"For a company that has plateaued and can't get beyond a certain level, it's a good idea to get an outside perspective and look outward for insight," Huston says, suggesting that owners turn toward industry association colleagues, professional advisers (CPAs, attorneys, consultants) and other local business owners. "Strategic networking can really help get the creative juices flowing." ■

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

"Fire them up or fire them out."

— Jim Huston



Financial Clean-up Checklist

✓ Review Liquidity Ratios.

Current ratio: $\text{Current Assets} \div \text{Current Liabilities}$

Quick or "acid test" ratio: $(\text{Cash} + \text{Accounts Receivable}) \div \text{Current Liabilities}$

Working Capital: $\text{Total Current Assets} - \text{Total Current Liabilities}$

Leverage Ratio or Debt/Worth ratio: $\text{Total Liabilities} \div \text{Net Worth}$

✓ **Study your balance sheet.** Compare your budget to our benchmarks on page B14 and see where your company stands.

✓ **Manage payables.** "You want to go into winter with your payables down to zero if possible," Huston says.

✓ **Analyze receivables.** Who owes you money – and how much? Don't let clients use you as a bank. Put a collections process in place and focus this winter on bringing that receivables number to zero.

✓ **Calculate backlog.** How much work do you have on the docket going into winter and spring 2011? How much more will you need to sell to meet goals?

✓ **Control labor costs.** Take stock of personnel and ensure that labor costs are in line (average 30% for maintenance and lawn care companies; and 20% for design/build firms).

✓ **Watch equipment costs.** Before you buy that piece of equipment, be sure you can keep it busy 50% of the time, or at least have work lined up to cover the cost of payments.



I'm stuck at...

Break through your revenue block and grow your company to the next level.

by Kristen Hampshire

There are times when a business goes through a growth spurt – sales ring up revenues, crews work like well-oiled machines, you beat the budget. But inevitably, after that climbing, a business will land on a plateau. For some, that “flat” time might seem more like a desert – nothing ahead, no end in sight.

You're stuck.

But there are ways businesses can push past the doldrums and reach the next revenue level. “An owner’s ability to morph and evolve directly affects the revenue stream,” says Jim Huston, green industry financial consultant and owner of J.R. Huston Enterprises, Englewood, Colo.

Owners must keep a sharp eye on the budget (see our charts on page B14) and begin building a high-performance team, Huston says. “Between zero and \$5 million in sales, a contractor has to reinvent him or herself five different times,” he says.

Here, Huston shares the common revenue blocks where businesses get stuck and how to break through challenges that hinder growth.

\$0-\$300,000:

KEEPING ALL HANDS ON DECK

The business: At this stage, a design/build firm generally consists of an owner and two employees, and everyone’s working in the field during the day. At night, the owner is estimating, designing, crunching numbers – taking care of everything admin.

The block: An owner who thinks like a technician rather than a team leader. “The biggest factor preventing growth at this stage is the vision of the owner,” Huston says. “The owner needs to start building a team.”

The breakthrough: Step one is to hire a few good crew leaders who work with minimal supervision. “If you have good crew leaders, you’ll be more profitable,” Huston says, pointing out that owners of firms that net \$2.5 million aren’t showing up on site to babysit crews. “They hand their leaders a set of plans and they manage it,” he says.

To grow to the next level and generate \$600,000, a firm needs a total of six people in the field (including those leaders). This means spending more time marketing and selling services, so owners should hire a part-time office manager to offload some of the administrative burden, Huston says.

The real budget-busters at this stage are the owner’s lifestyle and labor costs. “If the owner is living big, they can drain the company of any capital,” Huston says. “And at this stage, if you don’t have the right labor, your costs will get out of control.”

Referencing the benchmarking charts on page B14, labor costs should be 20 to 35 percent of sales, depending on whether the business is maintenance, lawn care or design/build. Equipment costs are not generally a problem at this stage, unless a firm decides to invest in a significant piece, such as a skid-steer loader. Don’t let a single contract that demands higher-caliber equipment wipe out your profit.

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"Between zero and \$5 million in sales, a contractor has to reinvent him or herself five different times."

— Jim Huston

\$300,000-\$600,000:

MANNING UP FOR GROWTH

The business: Give or take, the owner has two solid crew leaders managing a total of six people in the field (for design/build); or four crew leaders and up to a dozen field workers (for maintenance). A part-time office manager handles billing, returns phone calls and takes care of other administrative odds and ends. The company is big enough to need systems, but small enough that the owner is still in the field and managing operations in a hands-on way.

The block: The owner needs more help in the office, more manpower in the field and systems to hold the business together so it can grow smoothly to the \$1 million mark. "The owner's mindset needs to be focused on building a high-performance team that maintains a high level of customer service," Huston says.

The breakthrough: For the owner to continue as a visionary, more leadership is necessary to manage tasks, including: sales, field operations and office duties. The business needs a chain of command. "That really gets down to an owner's ability to delegate, build and manage a team," Huston says.

The owner shifts from a role of managing tangibles to overseeing big-picture

goals — from ensuring that a project is installed correctly to building and managing a team. Huston relates an observation from a James Dean movie: What is essential is invisible to the eye.

"What's happening is the owner is making a transition from dealing with extremely tangible items — laborers, product, etc. — to something much more nebulous," Huston says.

Create more structure during this transition by developing an organizational chart that illustrates that chain of command. Get that budget on paper and work on long-term strategy. "If you can see your costs, you can make decisions based on more 'tangible' information," Huston says. "A budget will allow you to see that if you hire an employee and bring in an office manager, how much in sales do you need to bring in to make that work?"

"As a company grows, that budget is more and more important as a control document," he says.

\$600,000-\$1 MILLION:

PAINTING A BIGGER PICTURE

The business: With an established staff of managers, crew leaders and field workers, a chain of command is set and systems are developed so the owner can step back and work on the

business rather than in it, as the saying goes. A full-time office manager lifts daily paperwork from the owner's desk, allowing more time to focus on big-picture growth.

"The owner needs to be thinking business development, which is basically getting enough work to keep everyone busy while maintaining quality control and keeping customers happy," Huston says.

The block: Quality control becomes a focus as the company grows and systems are put in place. Meanwhile, the overhead is expanding along with the company, and sales must continue at a level where overhead costs don't sink the budget. Getting to the next level is all about boosting sales.

The breakthrough: Sales should be four times the overhead costs — no more. "If your overhead starts creeping up past 30 percent of sales or higher, you need to work on marketing," Huston says. "And if overhead is too much below 25 percent, think about getting more personnel in the office."

Also keep an eye on these overhead costs while expanding the business: Labor for a design/build firm should be about 20 percent of sales, plus or minus 2 percent. For maintenance firms, labor should be about 35 to 40 percent of sales. Equipment for both types of firms should run about 12 percent of sales — and that includes equipment repairs, fuel, depreciation, insurance and mechanics' salaries.



Minding the numbers is critical at any stage of growth, while thinking beyond the minutia of daily field work is critical to growth at this stage.

"It's so easy for an owner to get wrapped up in details," Huston says. "He has to develop a high-performance team that takes care of the details as he manages them."

\$1 MILLION-\$2.5 MILLION:

NETWORKING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

The business: The business has reached critical mass and it is staffed with high-performance managers, crew leaders and employees. A strong office staff helps carry out administrative duties. The company is a strong market competitor with growing sales, a good reputation in the community and a growing client list.

The block: The owner is stressed, especially if certain divisions are performing below their gross profit margin targets. If effective managers aren't in place to carry out systems, a business will suffer in the quality control arena. And speaking of systems, consistency is critical when a business expands beyond the point where an owner's hands are in daily operations.

"When a company gets to this stage and can't figure out how to grow beyond that, it's usually because the

business doesn't have strong managers," Huston says. "It's important to hire high-performance managers and it's really critical that these managers have budgets and understand them. I see a lot of companies that tolerate mediocre managers, and that's death."

The breakthrough: First, the owner must continue focusing on hitting key benchmarks. Labor and equipment can spiral out of control at this growth stage, Huston says. Keep an eye on the chart of business accounts.

"You need to constantly measure where you are making and losing money," Huston says, emphasizing that owners tune in to the gross profit margin of each profit center in the business: maintenance, lawn care, irrigation, snow, etc. Also, carefully track sales revenue. "Really measure what's in the pipeline," Huston says.

Delegate budgeting for each profit center to managers and guide them through the exercise. Compile these budgets into an overall plan for the company. While doing this, lean on external advisers – owners who don't have them should draft a team. "You need a good CPA, attorney and consultants," Huston says.

Networking groups, such as Kiwanis Club and local, state and national industry associations provide networking opportunities for owners to share ideas, develop an external team of advisers and make sales contacts.

Above all, no business can afford to tolerate leaders who aren't high-performance players, Huston says. "If managers are proactive, they're engaged

and they're setting goals and making contacts," he says.

\$5 MILLION AND BEYOND:

GROWING KEY LEADERS

The business: Only about 6 percent of landscape firms make it past \$2 million a year. They're multi-division firms with several managers and a good-sized employee roster. The firm might have acquired another company to grow, or added services along the way to expand.

The block: Challenges really depend on the region, market, business model and personality of the owner. But weak managers are generally the culprit of a business this size that feels "stuck."

"Owners cannot tolerate weak managers," Huston says, reiterating advice he provided for lesser revenue categories. "They need managers that are aggressively pursuing sales and doing what they need to do to grow their division."

The breakthrough: These companies need a controller to manager their accounting, human resources and IT. "It's a hard position to fill," Huston says. "You need someone who doesn't take any nonsense – someone who is meticulous and detail-oriented."

Also, a strong accounting software system will work wonders for a company this size, Huston says. "That and a controller can take a tremendous load off of an owner so he or she can go out and build the business," he says. ■

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

"I see a lot of companies that tolerate mediocre managers, and that's death."

– Jim Huston



Financial FAQs

Your biggest money questions are answered.

by Kristen Hampshire

Contractors are good at green – growing it and mowing it – but sometimes aren't good at tracking it. *Lawn & Landscape* sat down with Jim Huston, a green industry consultant and owner of J.R. Huston Enterprises, to get answers to common questions contractors ask when it comes to making money, and hanging on to it.

AM I MAKING MONEY?

First, figure out your individual job cost to make sure you're not losing money on every project. You'll essentially reverse the estimating process and find out the actual cost and profit margin of each job. Do this by taking your price less the cost of materials, labor, labor burden, subcontractors and equipment.

Next, look at your bottom line. As a rule of thumb, most seasonal businesses break even toward the end of summer and really begin making money the last few months in business (in fall). The problem is, that's when the crews are burnt out and productivity tends to lag if you're not careful. Keep in mind, a seasonal business can begin spring \$70,000 in the hole because of overhead costs during wintertime that aren't offset by income. The key is to focus on a strong finish to the year. Sit down with your budget before the end of the season and focus on weak points so you don't lose money during this critical time.

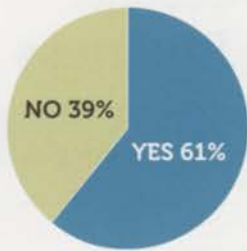
WHAT'S MY BREAK-EVEN POINT?

Find out your break-even point by dividing annual overhead costs by your gross profit margin for each division of the company. For example, if your sales budget is \$1 million and overhead is \$250,000, your gross profit margin is 35 percent. When you divide \$250,000 by 0.35, the result is \$714,000. That means that after reaching \$714,000 in sales, you should have earned enough to cover your overhead costs for the year. Usually, companies achieve this at the end of summer, in September (plus or minus a month). The beauty is, after



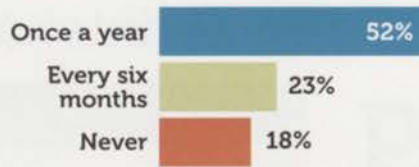


Do you receive monthly financial income statements?



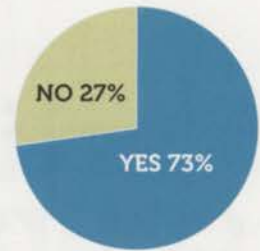
Source: Lawn & Landscape research

How often do you build a budget for your business?



Source: Lawn & Landscape research

Do you know your break-even point for the year?



Source: Lawn & Landscape research

hitting the break-even point, everything else you earn from a job (less direct costs) goes right to the bottom line.

HOW CAN I GET CLIENTS TO PAY ME ON TIME?

You're not alone. This is a sore spot for many owners – they have hundreds of thousands of receivables out, and they're wondering, 'When am I going to get this money?' You can do your best to prevent overdue receivables by getting bills out on time. The longer you wait to invoice, the harder it is to get your money.

Companies can encourage clients to prepay for services by offering a discount. If you have the sales volume, you might consider accepting credit card payments. While you'll take a hit by paying a fee, you can secure the cash,

and this might be a priority for your business now. Most of all, be diligent about following up with clients: make phone calls, e-mail reminders and find ways for them to pay you without thinking about it (electronic withdrawal, prepay, etc.). Reward customers who pay on time, and spread the word that you appreciate timely payment by offering coupons and other thank yous (gift cards, etc.) to loyal, timely-paying customers.

Finally, really evaluate your customer base and recognize that it's not worth doing business with customers that use you as the bank. When a slow-paying client wants a bid, maybe you should consider passing on that "opportunity" to not get paid.

More contractors are using collection agencies (GreenFlag Profit Recovery

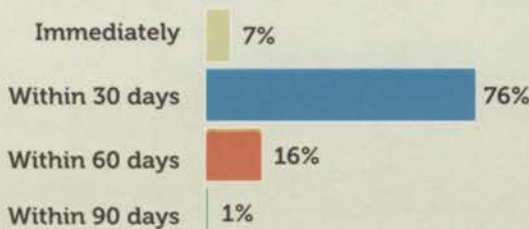
www.transworldsystems.com is very popular) and finding them to be an effective tool to encourage slow (or no) payers to pay up. While not as popular as collection agencies, factors are also an option. A factor buys your receivables at the time an invoice is created. Factors usually charge 2 to 3 percent of the amount of the invoice. But the advantage is no waiting – you receive payment immediately.

HOW ARE LANDSCAPE BUSINESSES DOING IN OTHER AREAS OF THE COUNTRY?

For the most part, companies are reporting flat growth – the doldrums. Everyone is treading water and for the most part has a wait-and-see attitude. It's rare that I see companies that are growing and expanding, and I have traveled to 33 states since Jan. 1. (And, as of publication, I'm still on the road.) People are doing what they can to break even and keep the doors open, and we're all looking toward the November elections to gauge how the political landscape might change in 2011. The economy is lackluster – it's anemic. There is little confidence in the direction of the country right now, and small businesses are critical to our recovery. For now, they're hanging tight. ■

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

How many days does it usually take to receive payment from customers?



Source: Lawn & Landscape research



P&L Chart of Accounts Maintenance Business

Charting a course

Use these P&L forms as a guide as you set up your budgets for 2011.

These three profit-and-loss charts of accounts forms are customized for maintenance, lawn care and design/build operations. If your company provides a mix of these services, you'll need to adjust your budget accordingly.

Some key differences to note:

Advertising costs tend to be higher in the lawn care business.

Subcontracting and equipment rental costs may increase in the design/build sector.

Cost of materials is higher for lawn care than for maintenance, but demand for labor is lower for lawn care and net profit margin is significantly higher (on average).

Most indirect overhead costs are the same across these segments.

As you develop your budget (or budgets) for 2011, keep more flexible direct costs like labor and materials in mind. And remember that adjusting certain indirect, overhead costs – like insurance, rent, and licenses and bonds – is more difficult.

COST OF GOODS SOLD (Direct Costs)	RANGE	AVERAGE
Materials (with tax)	5-10%	7.5%
Gas & oil	1-3%	2%
Labor (field)	35-45%	40%
Labor burden (field)	25-35%	30% (as a percent of labor)
	10-14%	12% (as a percent of sales)
Subcontractors	0-5%	2.5%
Equipment	8-12%	10%
Equipment rentals	1-2%	1.5%
Miscellaneous direct job costs	0-2%	1%
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS	60-70%	65% of sales, +/- 5.0%
GROSS PROFIT MARGIN	30-40%	35%

GENERAL and ADMINISTRATIVE (G&A) OVERHEAD (Indirect Costs)	RANGE	AVERAGE
Advertising	0.5-1%	0.75%
Bad debts	0.5-1%	0.75%
Utilities	0.25-0.75%	0.5%
Donations	0.1-0.2%	
Downtime		1%
Downtime with labor burden	1-1.5%	1.25%
Dues and subscriptions	0.1-0.2%	0.15%
Medical insurance for office staff	0.2-2.5%	1.75%
Interest and bank charges	0.2-0.4%	0.3%
Licenses and related bonds	0.1-0.2%	0.15%
Office equipment, computers, software	0.2-0.4%	0.3%
Office supplies	0.2-0.4%	0.3%
Professional fees	1-1.5%	1.25%
Cell phones	0.5%-1%	0.75%
Rent	1.0-2.0%	1.5%
Salaries, office staff/officers	10-12%	11%
Salaries labor burden	12-15%	13.5% (as a percent of labor)
Small tools/supplies	1-1.5%	1.25%
Taxes, business		0.1%
Training and education	0.2-0.3%	0.25%
Travel and entertainment	0.3-0.5%	0.4%
Uniforms and safety equipment	0.2-0.5%	0.35%
Vehicles, overhead	1.5-2.0%	1.75%
Yard expense and lease-hold improvements	0.1-0.2%	0.15%
Miscellaneous	0-0.1%	
TOTAL INDIRECT COSTS	25% +/- 1-2%	
NET PROFIT MARGIN GOAL	10% (good) 15% (very good) 20% (outstanding)	



P&L Chart of Accounts Lawn Care Business

COST OF GOODS SOLD (Direct Costs)	RANGE	AVERAGE
Materials (with tax)	10-15%	12.5%
Gas & oil	1-3%	2%
Labor (field)	25-30%	27.5%
Labor burden (field)	25-35%	30% (as a percent of labor)
Subcontractors	0-5%	
Equipment	8-12%	10%
Equipment rentals	0-1%	
Miscellaneous direct job costs	0-2%	0.5%
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS	45-55%	+/- 5%
GROSS PROFIT MARGIN	45-55%	50%
Net Profit Margin	25-40%	32.5%

GENERAL and ADMINISTRATIVE (G&A) OVERHEAD (Indirect Costs)	RANGE	AVERAGE
Advertising	2-4%	3%
Bad debts	0.5-1%	0.75%
Utilities	0.25-0.75%	0.5%
Donations	0.1-0.2%	0.15%
Downtime		1%
Downtime with labor burden	1-1.5%	1.25%
Dues and subscriptions	0.1-0.2%	0.15%
Medical insurance for office staff	0-2.5%	1.75%
Interest and bank charges	0.2-0.4%	0.3%
Licenses and related bonds	0.1-0.2%	0.15%
Office equipment, computers, software	0.2-0.4%	0.3%
Office supplies	0.2-0.4%	0.3%
Professional fees	1-1.5%	1.25%
Cell phones	0.5%-1%	0.75%
Rent	1.0-2.0%	1.5%
Salaries, office staff/officers	10-12%	11%
Salaries labor burden	12-15%	13.5% (as a percent of labor)
Small tools/supplies	1-1.5%	1.25%
Taxes, business		0.1%
Training and education	0.2-0.3%	0.25%
Travel and entertainment	0.3-0.5%	0.4%
Uniforms and safety equipment	0.2-0.5%	0.35%
Vehicles, overhead	1.5-2.0%	1.75%
Yard expense and lease-hold improvements	0.1-0.2%	0.15%
Miscellaneous	0-0.1%	
TOTAL INDIRECT COSTS	25% +/- 1-2%	
NET PROFIT MARGIN GOAL	10% (good) 15% (very good) 20% (outstanding)	

P&L Chart of Accounts Design/Build Business

COST OF GOODS SOLD (Direct Costs)	RANGE	AVERAGE
Materials (with tax)	30%	+/- 3%
Gas & oil	1-3%	2%
Labor (field)	20-22%	21%
Labor burden (field)	25-35%	30% (as a percent of labor)
Subcontractors	0-10%	5%
Equipment	8-12%	10%
Equipment rentals	2-3%	2.5%
Miscellaneous direct job costs	0-2%	1%
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS	65% of sales	+/- 5%
GROSS PROFIT MARGIN	30-40%	35%
Net Profit Margin	5-15%	10%

GENERAL and ADMINISTRATIVE (G&A) OVERHEAD (Indirect Costs)	RANGE	AVERAGE
Advertising	1-2%	1.5%
Bad debts	0.5-1%	0.75%
Utilities	0.25-0.75%	0.5%
Donations	0.1-0.2%	0.15%
Downtime		1%
Downtime with labor burden	1-1.5%	1.25%
Dues and subscriptions	0.1-0.2%	0.15%
Medical insurance for office staff	0-2.5%	1.75%
Interest and bank charges	0.2-0.4%	0.3%
Licenses and related bonds	0.1-0.2%	0.15%
Office equipment, computers, software	0.2-0.4%	0.3%
Office supplies	0.2-0.4%	0.3%
Professional fees	1-1.5%	1.25%
Cell phones	0.5%-1%	0.75%
Rent	1-2%	1.5%
Salaries, office staff/officers	10-12%	11%
Salaries, labor burden	12-15%	13.5% (as a percent of labor)
Small tools/supplies	1-1.5%	1.25%
Taxes, business		0.1%
Training and education	0.2-0.3%	0.25%
Travel and entertainment	0.3-0.5%	0.4%
Uniforms and safety equipment	0.2-0.5%	0.35%
Vehicles, overhead	1.5-2.0%	1.75%
Yard expense and lease-hold improvements	0.1-0.2%	0.15%
Miscellaneous	0-0.1%	
TOTAL INDIRECT COSTS	25% +/- 1-2%	
NET PROFIT MARGIN GOAL	10% (good) 15% (very good) 20% (outstanding)	



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TCT Series augers

The pitch: The augers are made for heavy duty drilling projects.

The target: Design/build and hardscape contractors

Specs:

- The augers work with General Equipment's full line of DIG-R-TACH hydraulic earth auger attachments, as well as competitive models. When given adequate torque and down force, they excel in tough ground.
- It's engineered to withstand high stress. The TCT Series drills in soft sandstone or limestone formations, caliche, hardpan and other tough materials.

Contact: www.generalequip.com



TurfEx TS200 mower attachment

The pitch: It's capable of spreading seed, fertilizer and ice melter, and the spreader is engineered specifically to maximize mower productivity.

The target: Lawn care professionals

Specs:

- The spreader comes with a universal mount, which helps it attach quickly to most available zero-turn mowers.
- It holds up to 2.5 cubic feet of material and features a corrosion-resistant polyethylene hopper to reduce weight and maintenance concerns.
- The spreading operation is controlled via the manual flow gate and electric-powered spinner, both of which can be actuated from the mower's seat.

Contact: www.trynexus.com



Underhill Gulp Syringe Ultra

The pitch: The Gulp Syringe Ultra can be used for multiple tasks including, water removal from sprinklers or valve boxes, spa and fountain clean-out and plumbing or pipe repair.

The target: Irrigation contractors

Specs:

- Features a 12-inch clear plastic chamber and pumps up to 12 ounces per stroke.
- Constructed from heavy-duty, corrosion-proof materials and has a stainless steel shaft for reliable performance.
- Pump chamber can withstand damage from accidental "run-overs" by carts or trucks.

Contact: www.underhill.us



VariThrow sprinkler

The pitch: The sprinkler sprays the exact shape of a lawn.

The target: Irrigation contractors

Specs:

- It can be installed in less than one hour, which saves time and reduces installation costs.
- A single Varithrow sprinkler can do the work of up to 16 or more pop-up sprinkler heads.
- The water spray distance (called "throw") is constantly self-adjusting to spray water only where you tell it to, leaving little to no overspray onto sidewalks, driveways, cars or other surroundings.

Contact: www.varithrow.com



Wacker Neuson's WL 30

The pitch: The articulated wheel loader can be transferred from a summer-time "jack-of-all-trades" to a versatile snow removal machine.

The target: Snow fighters

Specs:

- Offers a heated cab, adjustable seat, plenty of legroom and intuitive controls.
- Has an on-demand differential lock providing excellent traction, and the four-wheel drive with articulated steering offers outstanding maneuverability in confined areas.
- The overall low height allows the machine to work under sidewalk canopies. It also has up to 30 percent lower fuel consumption than skid-steer loaders.

Contact: www.wackerneuson-snow.com



Komatsu WA1200-6 wheel loader

The pitch: The new loader includes environmental, technological and ergonomic enhancements.

The target: Landscapers

Specs:

- The dual-mode active working hydraulic system allows the operator to select between normal and powerful loading, while the oil flow in the working system increases efficiency and reduces cycle times.
- The engine RPM control system with auto deceleration allows the operator to set the engine RPM at the optimum work performance level and control speed smoothly with the accelerator.

Contact: www.komatsuamerica.com



Benchmarking



Marty Grunder



Benchmarking is something all smart business owners do. I've been doing it since I started my company more than 25 years ago. There is a formal way to do it and an informal way to do it. I'm going to share with you how I informally use benchmarking.

In my mind, formal benchmarking means you look at the industry averages and compare your company's performance to the industry standards. Many of these numbers are available from PLANET. If you're not a member, you should be. I want to share with you the main areas that I benchmark my company and the ones I work with across the country. None of these numbers I'm going to share with you are anything other than my opinion. The numbers are the ones my work and research have shown me are good for my company and my consulting clients to try and beat. I hope this helps you.

1. Revenue per employee in a design/build firm should be at least \$80,000/full-time person employed. I

have found that you must do at least \$80,000 per full-time employee. If you are not close to that number, you're not going to be profitable. Highly-profitable firms do as much as \$135,000 per employee. How do you stack up? If you are in the maintenance business, you ought to be at \$60,000 per employee. If not, you're either not very efficient or need to raise your prices.

2. Revenue per truck should be at least \$125,000/truck. I love using this number. I often use it to size up the competition. I can get a ballpark feel for what a company's volume is just by counting how many trucks they have. Or I can at least tell what the maximum amount of sales the company is doing. I use this number for my own personal use to see how efficient my landscaping company is, and I use the number to share with my consulting clients to help show them areas they can improve. How do you stack up?

3. Sales professionals in our industry need to sell at least \$500,000/year to pay for themselves. That's the mini-

mum; they ought to be able to do much more if your company is focused on client satisfaction. Good salespeople in our industry sell more than \$750,000 a year and the best sell more than \$1 million. I've even run into a few salespeople in our industry who sell more than \$2 million a year. How do you stack up? How do your salespeople stack up?

4. Smart landscapers spend between 1.5% and 2.2% of their gross sales on marketing. Notice I said *smart*. I've run into companies spending much more than this and I just don't think that's smart, and I've seen landscapers spending much less than this and I don't think that's smart, either. Sadly, a lot of landscapers can't even tell you what they've spent and have not organized their approach to marketing.

Take a couple of moments this month and see how you stack up and drop me an e-mail with your findings.

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

John Ossa



Benchmarking is an act of measuring and comparing specific facets of your business with industry "standards." Benchmarking against like/kind companies depends on the quality of data and its relevance to your specific market. The "meaningfulness" of benchmarking depends on the quality of the question(s) you ask. What you do with this information represents the potential to improve your business.

What are the aspects of your business to benchmark? Benchmark the key things that your business success depends on. They are:

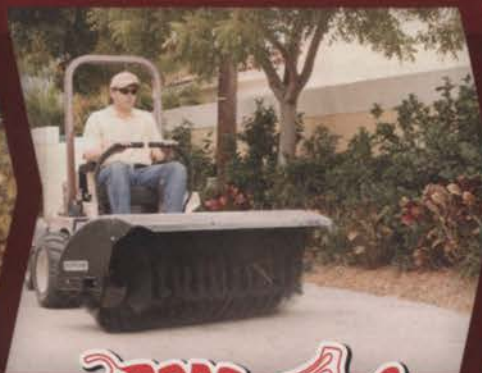
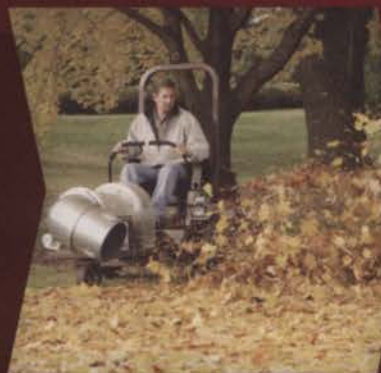
(continued on page 38)

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Jim Huston



The medical profession refers to them as “vital signs.” One’s body temperature, blood pressure, pulse rate, cholesterol levels, etc., are human benchmarks that indicate wellness or the lack thereof. The body temperature benchmark is 98.6 degrees. A few degrees over or under this vital sign indicates a potential problem that warrants further investigation. This benchmark is what I call an absolute benchmark. It never changes.

There are also vital signs for green industry companies that indicate business wellness. However, unlike the human body temperature, they are not necessarily absolute. They may vary from company to company and within the same company over a period of time. Barron’s Dictionary of Business Terms defines a benchmark as a “standard (or universal) unit for the basis of comparison.” If a company formats the right data properly and on a timely basis, it can condense vast amounts of information into some very simple measuring tools that can tell an owner or manager if the company is on or off track.

COMMON BENCHMARKS. Here are some benchmarks that you should monitor on a regular basis and find useful.

Sales per man-year: It indicates how much revenue a full-time field employee generates per year. A typical maintenance employee should generate between \$50-60,000 per man-year. A typical installation employee should generate \$100,000 or more per man-year. In other words, an average of 10 full-time installation employees should produce a minimum of \$1 million in annual revenue (this includes materials, equipment, overhead, etc.).

Gross profit margin: GPM is the best indicator of what is happening in a particular market. Calculate your GPM for a division or individual job by subtracting direct costs (materials, labor, labor burden, equipment and subcontractor costs)

from sales. In a normal economy, the benchmark for GPM is as follows: residential installation: 30 to 40 percent; commercial installation: 20 to 30 percent; all maintenance: 30 to 40 percent; irrigation service: 45 to 55 percent; lawn fertilization: 55 to 65 percent; tree work: 30 to 40 percent. Drop these benchmarks 5 to 10 percent in a down economy.

Production rates: You should know national production standards for the type of work that you do, as well as the actual production rates for your crews. I’ve seen production rates for one installation client improve 65 percent in the last twenty years.

Backlog: This is critical for companies to measure. How much work do you have ahead of you? Are you sold two to three weeks or two to three months out? Commercial installation companies should be building and monitoring their backlog for 2011. Comparing the backlog for 2011 to that of previous years can provide insight into the state of the economy and market conditions in your area.

HOW IT WORKS. A client in New England monitors his company’s key benchmarks on a monthly basis. His staff produces a Monthly Audit Data (MAD) report. This report indicates whether each division is on track or not. Most importantly, this company has developed its own benchmarks using its data and has compared these data to national standards. The owner and division managers can review the vital signs on the MAD report and know the condition of the company in short order.

CONCLUSION. National benchmarks can provide insight and a very useful tool for your company and staff. There are literally hundreds of benchmarks but you need to focus on the key ones that indicate your corporate wellness.

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(continued from page 36)

- Pricing
- Cost to produce your primary service
- Your ability to capture the needs and wants of your customer
- The alignment within your company – is everyone in the company very clear on how what they do impacts the goals of the company?

A topic we reflexively “benchmark” is price. Businesses benchmark pricing against “big box” rivals, and the local boutique or “specialist” vendor on a constant and ongoing basis. This is an example of external benchmarking. To really improve your business, drill down to core, labor intensive tasks and dissect your cost to produce that service. An example of a core task for an irrigation contractor is installing 100 lineal feet of 2-inch

“Be absolutely relentless in challenging yourself to do better.”

mainline with 18 inches of cover. How does your cost to produce benchmark against industry norms (external benchmarking)? How does your cost to produce compare to your own historical numbers (internal benchmarking)?

Once you have carefully analyzed your cost to produce, be absolutely relentless in challenging yourself to do better. Set goals to compress the time it takes on core tasks, write them down, make sure your team is aligned around the goal and measure your progress. Then do it again.

Some business owners are hesitant to reach outside their company for benchmarking purposes. Use membership in associations that are national in scope such as the Irrigation

(continued on page 40)



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Maintenance Division Director
Cornerstone Solutions Group
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Jeff Korhan



The most important benchmark for your small business is the happiness of everyone associated with it. When you get this right, everything else that matters falls into place.

WHAT'S INSIDE MATTERS MOST. Happiness is contagious. It attracts top quality employees, and their happiness attracts and retains customers that enjoy working with your team. This is why building a culture of happiness is guaranteed to enhance your bottom line.

I recently had conversations with several green industry companies here in the Chicago area, and they all report they are not just getting by, but actually growing in some segments of their businesses. What is most interesting is that they

“Happiness attracts top quality employees, and their happiness attracts and retains customers.”

are accomplishing this by quietly going about their business, with the intention of avoiding outside distractions.

In challenging business environments like this one, benchmarking your company against uncontrollable outside influences may lead you down a dead-end path. Instead, focus your attention on the happiness and well-being of your inner circle – your team, your advisers and your customers.

CORE VALUES SHAPE YOUR CULTURE. To achieve goals and objectives, the tendency is to develop rules that hold everyone accountable. This may generate results, but it seldom encourages a culture that will sustain those results.

A better approach is to clearly define

the core values of your company and make sure everyone commits to them. Once you achieve that, you can empower your people with guidelines, as opposed to lessening their motivation with restrictive rules.

A valuable tool that you may not have considered for shaping your culture is social media. That's right, instead of policing the use of social media, I'm suggesting you encourage your staff to use it. Why? As Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said, "When everyone sees what you are doing, it changes your behavior for the better."

ENHANCE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS.

In addition to happy employees, you obviously want happy customers. Not surprisingly, they generally want many of the same things as your staff – fewer restrictive disclaimers, new ideas and more opportunities to connect and collaborate with you and your company.

One way to stay on top of their needs and desires is to migrate your database to a social customer relationship manager – a social CRM. Batchbook (batchblue.com) is the social CRM that has proved ideal for my small business. It manages my contacts, tracks sales opportunities, and automatically brings valuable information to me that my clients are posting on their social networks.

Imagine picking up the phone to chat with a customer. You have not spoken in a while, so you refer to historical notes, which may no longer be relevant. Now imagine having a conversation based on timely news that is of interest to your customer now.

Batchbook and other services seamlessly merge my customer's updates from their blogs, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and LinkedIn – and it's all done in real time. Since your prospects and customers create this information, it stands to reason that it is important to them. This information is gold.

Measuring your success against bench-

(continued from page 38)

Association or PLANET to contact a reputable company that has a similar target customer in a different geographic area. Most people are eager to share with someone inside their industry that is not a competitor in their market. (Be mindful of regional differences in salary structures.) Simply ask for a conversation, share best practices and compare metrics. I have done this, and have always come away with a better understanding of my own business.


Another approach is to benchmark with a different service industry in your own market area. After all, a heating and air conditioning company for example has many of the same challenges that a landscape installation and maintenance contractor has. Additional benefits to reaching out in your own geographic area to a business owner in another industry are you may develop a relationship that evolves into lead sharing and a type of executive support network. This type of relationship can be invaluable to building your business – but the key to success is what you bring to the table. Specific metrics and unvarnished candor will go a long way to building credibility for you and your business!

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

marks is essential for keeping your team focused on what matters.

The key is understanding how intangible qualities such as happiness and culture work to get the numbers, and most everything else, to naturally fall into place.

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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Running free

Ron Shimony talks about the potential ups and downs of being your own boss, and how to retain employees who have that entrepreneurial spirit.

By Mike Zawacki

Ron Shimony went from driving a taxi cab to pioneering multi-million dollar companies. *Lawn & Landscape* caught up with him to talk about the mentality of small business owners and how they can encourage their employees to have an entrepreneurial mindset.

What traits do you see in a successful entrepreneur?

It's the dream of every employee to own their own destiny and to not have an employer deciding their income. But owning and operating your own business requires a lot more than what people expect in the beginning – self motivating, disciplined, adopting a routine, sticking to a goal.

These are the hardest parts of owning your own business because you don't have a boss. You don't have to wake up at 6 a.m. You don't have to show up for work or worry about someone firing you. The consequences aren't there and, instead, it's whatever you produce, you eat.

Most people who want to be an entrepreneur don't have these traits, but no one is taught about motivation, discipline and mind-set, or how to deal with fears, doubt and hesitation.

They go into this and find themselves out in left field. Until they learn these traits they're not going to succeed.

What questions should I ask myself before I turn in my two week notice?

There are three roadblocks to success, whether it's working for corporate America and especially in owning and operating your own business.

The first one is doubt. Doubt is the cancer for success. It makes your mind play games with you. Self-doubt will build fear and cause hesitation.

The second is fear. Fear, by itself, has absolutely no power. We give fear its power. Fear stands for False Evidence Appearing Real.

And most of our fears, if we're honest with ourselves, rarely happen.

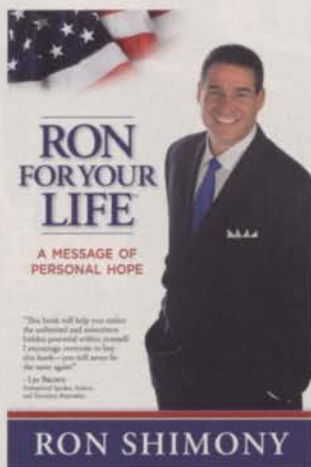
The third thing is hesitation. You need to take that first step and start.

Those three roadblocks hamper entrepreneurs more than any other roadblocks that I know of.

If we look at history and at all the people who made our world different, Thomas Edison failed over 1,000 times before he created the light bulb. If he would have stopped, we'd be sitting in the dark.

The world laughed at the Wright Brothers.

Those who changed the world were willing to fight their battles over fear and self doubt and just get started, and this takes courage.



Shimony went from a taxi driver to an entrepreneur.

What can business owners do to encourage that sense of entrepreneurship in their key employees without losing them?

While that looks attractive to some employees, actually there are a low percentage of people who go from being employees to starting their own business.

Right now, 95 percent of people work for someone else. So there is very little migration.

My advice to employers is to not give those employees with entrepreneurial ideas a reason to leave your company. You've got to give them a sense that they'd be losing something if they left. Job security? Sure, but an entrepreneur is willing to risk security for opportunity. But is there an opportunity for them to have a stake in your company?

Now, if they have an ownership stake in the company, they have something bigger to lose than just monthly income. Give your key employees an incentive to be part of your company. If they're so valuable, then give them a piece of the action.

If they're making a significant contribution to your bottom line, then give them a portion of it. You'll still reap the benefits, and you're giving those employees a long-term incentive if they stay and continue to contribute and perform.

When you do make that entrepreneurial leap, how do you convey that sense of excitement and optimism to suppliers, lenders and even potential employees?

No. 1, for those who have never been involved with starting something from scratch, is to find a mentor. Find someone who has fruit on the tree. And this is important because there are so many people out there who don't have the tree, let alone the fruit. Find that person and learn from them. Learn about their failures. It's the most economical way to save you a whole bunch of time, money and headache. **L&L**

The author is editor of *Lawn & Landscape's* sister publications *Golf Course Industry* and *Snow Magazine*. Send him an e-mail at mzawacki@gje.net.



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Pattie

The Pattie Group balances family and business relationships. From left: Jonas Pattie, Linda Pattie, Brian Pattie, Steve Pattie, Carla Pattie-Fitzpatrick and Jeremy Fitzpatrick.



Seatz

Eric Seatz, middle, at ELS Landscaping & Lawn Service had to part ways with his brother Todd (left) and dad, Tom.



Snodgrass

David Snodgrass, middle, his brothers Dean and Drew work hard to avoid sibling rivalry at Dennis' 7 Dees.

ALL *in the* FAMILY

Three companies discuss how they manage sibling rivalry, work with their children and fire family members.
(The answer: Carefully.)

By Lindsey Getz

One of the best aspects of the landscape industry is that it's one where family businesses are likely to crop up. It's not uncommon to see multiple family members and generations – husbands, wives, sons, daughters – all working for the same company. For some, it works great, but unfortunately there are also many cases where it fails miserably. Here, we take an inside look at the dichotomy of the family-run landscape business to find out what works and what doesn't.

SIBLING RIVALRY. Family businesses bring out a whole host of problems that other companies don't have to deal with. When working with brothers and sisters, for instance, it can be hard to completely shake feelings of sibling rivalry.

"You're dealing with people that you grew up with and no matter how close

the relationship, there's typically some degree of sibling rivalry," says David Snodgrass, president of Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers in Portland, Ore., and president of PLANET. He operates the business with two brothers, Dean and Drew, and says that sibling rivalry is one of the hurdles they've had to overcome. Communication was the answer, says Snodgrass, as well as accepting that each of them had their own areas of expertise, and their own methods of management. "I spent a lot of time writing down each person's job description including their roles and responsibilities," he says. "That included my own responsibilities. As president, I'm as accountable as anyone for what I'm expected to handle."

In addition to clearly delineated responsibilities, and accepting that each of them has their own way of managing

“You’re dealing with people that you grew up with and no matter how close the relationship, there’s typically some degree of sibling rivalry.” – David Snodgrass, Dennis’ 7 Dees

them, Snodgrass also says that assigning roles that didn’t overlap was important. As president and CEO, Snodgrass focuses mostly on long-term vision, administration, financial planning and budgeting. Dean handles the production side, including equipment purchasing and crew scheduling. Drew is responsible for key client design/build sales. “This gives each of us our own space to work,” he says. “In my experience, that is important.”

Giving everyone some space has also worked for The Pattie Group, in North-eastern Ohio, where President Steve Pattie’s three children all joined his company. “Our business is big enough and diverse enough that we’re not on top of each other,” says Jonas Pattie, the

eldest son and director of sales and marketing. “Our paths cross with each other but we’re not working hand in hand on every single detail. We have room to be our own persons and to be independent, while still making up a team.”

Ira Bryck, director of the UMass Amherst Family Business Center says this is a good business model, whether family is involved or not. “Good employees need to be given the authority to get the job done in the way they see fit, to a reasonable degree,” he says. “Overlap (in job responsibilities) only leads to role confusion, second-guessing, and micromanaging. It’s a good investment to discover what people are good at so that you don’t spend time reinventing a wheel that will never be round.”

Making it work

There’s a lot involved in turning any business into a success story, but that may be especially true of family-run businesses, where extra issues can lead to conflict. Ira Bryck, director of the UMass Amherst Family Business Center, says that in order to run a successful family business, you should keep these three things in mind.

HIRE THE BEST CANDIDATE. If your son or daughter isn’t capable of doing the job, then they aren’t going to do well. Some use the logic that there’s a little “affirmative action for family” meaning that if they weren’t the top candidate – but they were *almost as good as* the top candidate – they’ll still do well in the position. That can work; family comes with more loyalty because they feel the glue of the family business, so that can make up for it.

TAKE TIME OUT. Bryck has assigned siblings to go out once a month for dinner and to talk about totally philosophical aspects of the business instead of getting lost in the weeds of it all. Many people never get the chance for that 10,000-foot view. What are the values that helped this business survive the Great Depression? Take time out for philosophy.

GET A FLU SHOT. Metaphorically speaking, that is. You can build immunity to the diseases that are going to infect your company often by just discussing issues openly beforehand. There’s also that famous line, “Sunshine is the best disinfectant.” You need a special kind of transparency in a closely held company because there are too many nooks and crannies where dysfunctionality can fester. Be open and honest when you communicate.



OVERCOMING ENTITLEMENT. Another issue that often arises in family-owned businesses is a sense of entitlement. Family members may expect to be treated in a different manner than other employees, anticipate being hired for the business no matter what or may even want special privileges.

This happened with Eric Seatz, owner of ELS Landscaping & Lawn Service, Cedarburg, Wis., when he gave his brother a job. Seatz takes the blame for failing to set boundaries early on.

“I gave my brother some luxuries,” he says. “I didn’t make him punch in like the other guys and allowed him to use equipment for personal use. When I decided to make some changes, he took offense. I should have written a letter that laid out expectations and guidelines from the start. It’s important to establish that you’re hiring that person as an *employee*, not a brother. Then, you can enforce those expectations without feelings being hurt.”

Seatz says that his brother left the company after this fallout, and though it took a little bit of work to patch things up and let go of some resentments, their relationship is strong again. “It’s so important to be respectful and make sure you’re not hurting your family,” Seatz says. “You don’t want to go to Thanksgiving dinner and be holding resentments against each other. It takes extra work and being careful with your wording when family is involved.”

Steve Pattie established rules that looked to eliminate any sense of entitlement that his kids might have felt. The kids had to earn their jobs in the business. They were expected to complete college and had to work for at least two other companies before they’d be considered for a position.

“We had jobs in the field starting in high school,” says Carla Pattie-Fitzpatrick, executive assistant to her father. “We worked our way up and learned about the company from early on. We didn’t just walk into a job.”

“My motto is that with a family business you need to work twice as hard to

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COVER STORY

get half the respect," says Brian Pattie, operation manager for the company's division on the west side of Cleveland and youngest of the Pattie children. "Society wants to picture you as having been handed a job, but we all had to start at the bottom and earn everything we received."

Bryck says this method has been employed by other successful family-run businesses. "It's considered one of the more common 'right' answers for entry into a family company, hoping it sets a standard that the company is a privilege, not a safety net," he says. "Aside from giving the adult child some legitimacy, it also gives them the confidence that they can make it in the 'real world' if the family business isn't a good match."

SEPARATING BUSINESS FROM FAMILY. Struggling to keep business and family

“It’s important to establish that you’re hiring that person as an *employee*, not a brother.”

– Eric Seatz, ELS Landscaping & Lawn Service

separate is another hurdle that family-run businesses are constantly facing. Everyone has a different method of coping. For Snodgrass, talking business outside of the office is OK. "It's a big part of our lives," he says. "You certainly try to keep the conversation lighter at family gatherings and holidays, but you also don't need to pretend that side of your lives doesn't exist."

For Seatz, who had also hired his mother and father into his company, it was the flipside – bringing family issues into work – that caused a problem with his mother. Though she worked hard as an office administrator, his mom was

bringing too much gossip and family drama into Seatz's business days. "I'd be trying to run a business and she'd be questioning me about why I wasn't going to a family gathering," Seatz says. "The problem was that she struggled to keep business and family separate."

The Pattie family certainly faced these issues as well. Brian Pattie says it was a big transition to learn how to keep family and business separate and says there were times when it was very difficult. "It came down to learning *how* to talk about it and *when* to talk about it," he says. "In the past, it wasn't so easy. Thanksgiving would turn into a management meeting."

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When you're always talking about work, and you don't get a break, it can burn you out. If I had a bad day at another company and approached my dad about it, he'd talk to me like a father and give me some ideas. But since he's also the owner of the business, if I talked to him about a bad day, it turned into a meeting: 'Who are we going to fire? What do we need to change?' It suddenly became critical thinking on a Sunday night. So we learned to make those out-of-office work conversations more casual. We could bring up the issue, but decided not to troubleshoot until we get back in the office. You have to keep some of those issues where they belong."

Steve Pattie says it's come down to hats – knowing when to wear the "Dad hat" and when to wear the "boss hat." He literally has two hats (one that says "Dad" the other that says "boss")

displayed prominently in his office. "It reminds me that I have two hats to wear and sometimes I have to take off the boss one and just be a dad," Pattie says. "It's a fine line to walk and it can be a lot of work to keep them separate, but it's paid off."

HIDDEN GEMS. While it sounds like a lot of extra effort and stress for families that work together, there are some great upsides too. "Family can be a real asset," says Snodgrass. "They come with built-in loyalty to the company. They also come from the same or similar background. That makes for a lot of consistency and fit – something that can be harder to find with other employees. That often means that they contribute at a higher level. For me, even though we've faced challenges as a family business, we've worked through them and, as a result,

I think that's allowed us to grow into a better company."

The Pattie family members all have their own reasons why they love the family business. Carla says she enjoys seeing her family regularly and likes that she gets to drive to work with her husband, who works as a fleet mechanic for the company. Jonas says he values the legacy. "There's something special about working for a company that has your name stamped on the side of the truck," he says.

"And we're leaving a legacy behind. The work we do will still be here long after we're gone. And by all of us working together, and bringing our own individual strengths to the table, collectively we can do some amazing things. To me, that makes it worth the work." **L&L**

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



Mercedes-Benz

By Kristen Hampshire

Bring order to **INVENTORY CHAOS**

Whether you stockpile and store product or order materials just-in-time, developing systems for tracking, sustaining and purchasing inventory will help preserve your company's cash flow.

You can't control the weather. You can't control whether a potential customer will sign on the dotted line. You can't control the labor pool. But you *can* control your inventory, and doing so helps maintain a healthy cash flow.

Considering the cost of materials and investment in products, parts and plant stock to run a successful landscape business, inventory management should be part of the company culture. And it starts with the business plan, says Terry Kurth, director of development for Weed Man U.S.A. franchises. "When you see the dollar amount spent on products annually, you realize the importance of tracking inventory," he says.

Think about it: Every dollar tied up in inventory is money not available for other business development activities, or



simply paying the bills.

"In this economy, a \$10 bag of product you may not need for a month or two is \$10 of cash flow," says Jerry Schill, co-owner, Schill Landscape Development, Sheffield Village, Ohio. "Dollars turn into huge sums of money, and with pricing pressures and the cost of raw materials fluctuating seasonally, we have a responsibility to our clients to buy smart."

This month, *Lawn & Landscape* spoke to three firms to learn how they streamline purchasing and prevent materials, parts and other inventory from sitting in the shop.

Cleaning house

Before seriously purging and organizing inventory, Schill Landscape Development filled a 1,200-square-foot storage space loaded with shelves, bins and drawers with countless equipment parts and other "must haves."

"The parts room alone was disgusting," co-owner Jerry Schill says. "We used to have massive shelves full of stuff and trucks full of parts and whatnots – lightbulbs, wire, irrigation fittings, you name it."

But while "leaning" operations a few years ago, that must-have list was whittled down significantly. Now, parts fit in a 150-square-foot locker room and the company saves hundreds of thousands of dollars that were once tied up in inventory.

"We had brand-new obsolete parts for equipment we don't even own any more – they were still in their wrappers," Schill says of the glut.

Part of the reason for the mess of unused parts was a haphazard ordering system – or lack thereof. "If we needed it, we just went and got it," Schill says. A crew would swing by a supplier's shop to pick up a needed product rather than driving back to headquarters for the item.

"We had everyone in the company running around buying stuff – there were missing receipts, there weren't job numbers on items or purchase order numbers recorded," Schill says.

His office staff was wasting time tracking down receipts. Schill needed to fine-tune ordering processes, but the system needed to extend beyond the storage room and include how trucks are stocked to avoid making unnecessary purchases of parts and equipment.

Before embarking on the massive



Schill

clean-out, Schill invited key suppliers to participate in a strategic meeting with a goal of finding ways to reduce waste and streamline ordering. Schill asked suppliers how the company could reduce waste and make ordering mutually beneficial. By doing this, the company developed stronger partnerships with vendors so they can work together to implement just-in-time ordering. That way, Schill and vendors don't have to tie up cash flow on parts that won't be used.

Now, the parts supplier visits Schill's headquarters regularly, reviews inventory and replenishes it where needed. Schill's fleet manager meets with the

Schill Landscape Development

PRINCIPAL Jerry Schill, co-owner **LOCATION** Sheffield Village, Ohio **ESTABLISHED** 1993
EMPLOYEES 55-100 (peak season) **2009 REVENUE** \$7 million **CUSTOMERS** 95% commercial; 5% residential **SERVICES** commercial grounds management, design/build, snow

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equipment parts vendor annually to review parts used on a regular basis: belts, oils, filters. Now that equipment is standardized (Schill uses one brand of mower), the company can consolidate its parts purchases. "And at the end of the year, the inventory we don't use we

can give back to the supplier," he says.

Nursery stock is purchased once or twice weekly. Rather than crews waiting in the yard for plants, the vendor organizes orders by job and delivers them to the Schill property.

The actual clean-out was staged by

five leaders who accounted for every item. Some was scrap metal that could be recycled. Other unused parts were returned to vendors. Lots of items were sold in a good, old-fashioned warehouse sale Schill held. Some of the stuff was simply pitched.

The project took about six months, though Schill says that sustaining a lean inventory is the big challenge. "The pursuit of perfection is the trick," Schill says, recognizing the constant work involved in running a streamlined business in this economy.

But the motivation is a fatter cash flow, which keeps the organization healthy. "Every dollar we take out of unneeded or unused inventory is money that goes back into the cash flow stream," he says.

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QUICK TIPS

Build vendor partnerships. Work closely with vendors to create win-win strategies for managing inventory so you can order just-in-time.

Practice consistency. Consolidate parts purchases by standardizing equipment: Limit the brands you carry.

Shrink storage. It's the goldfish effect: Parts and materials grow to fill the space available to store them. The more room available, the more you'll stockpile unnecessary items. By limiting storage, you set a visual precedent for a just-in-time ordering system.

Systems and science

Managing inventory is an art and science that begins with a detailed business plan that outlines exact product costs. Also, every number is tracked: the average lawn size, projected growth, expected number of customers for the coming year. "We know how many millions of square feet we will treat and how much product will



Terry Kurth

Weed Man (branches)

PRINCIPALS Terry Kurth, director of development, Weed Man U.S.A. Franchising; Andy Kurth, general manager
LOCATION Madison, Rockford/Milwaukee, Appleton, Green Bay **ESTABLISHED** 2001
EMPLOYEES 10 full-time; 25 to 100 total in high season **2009 REVENUE** companywide about \$100 million **CUSTOMERS** 96% residential; 4% commercial **SERVICES** full-service lawn care

cover that, and we do the math," says Terry Kurth, director of development for Weed Man U.S.A. franchising.

Inventory is tracked each month, every day at every Weed Man location. In particular, systems at the four Wisconsin branches that Andy Kurth operates as general manager involve daily check-in and check-out of product. Before technicians leave the shop, they measure and log how much granular and liquid product they load on to the truck. They record their calibration levels. And when they return at the end of the day, they quickly review the day's work with a manager and the leftover product is recorded on a spreadsheet.

A truck report is created so managers know exactly how many square feet each technician treated. "We know how much fertilizer is used to the ounce, and we jot that down in our spreadsheet," Andy says.

"When you have almost 6,000 customers, it doesn't take long to go over on (product) usage, and you can lose \$10,000 to \$20,000 real quick if you don't monitor it," Andy says.

Product waste from improper calibration or ordering more than a branch needs can cost a branch thousands. If product ordering projections are off by 5 percent, a company that does \$2 million in business might spend \$300,000 annually on product and lose \$15,000 because of that inaccuracy.

"Fifteen thousand dollars buys a lot of time," Andy says.

Developing "good habits" around tracking and recording inventory eases the ordering process, which is the art of managing inventory. "The biggest challenge with inventory is making sure that managers across our different markets are always looking ahead," Andy says. "If we have a product that we are going through rapidly, we don't want to hear tomorrow, 'I'm running out.' We make sure we have a two- to three-week window of time before we run out so we never skip a beat."

Weed Man takes advantage of opportunities to buy product in bulk and secure lower prices. "It's a commodities

game," Terry says of manufacturers' early purchasing discounts. "Right now, we are looking at the market and wondering – will prices go up next year?"

These branches generally wage their bets on prices going up and opt to take discounts and store product. They have

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the warehouse space available, and manufacturers make storing materials worth their while by offering attractive terms for taking product in December or January for the upcoming season.

"We've had at least eight semi-trucks of product delivered in December because it made sense for us to do that before prices increased, and we got terms where we didn't have to pay for 30 days," Terry says.

Because franchises enjoy Weed Man's buying power, they can secure lower product prices. Still, the cost of product is significant, and sharing this information with employees helps them realize the importance of accurate application – a key to controlling inventory costs.

"When you're mixing and loading product on a truck daily, product cost doesn't seem that important, but when employees see the business plan and the dollar amount spent on an annual basis, it makes a big impact," Terry says.

The secret to stopping product "leakage" from misuse or inaccurate ordering goes back to developing and implementing solid systems, like those tracking spreadsheets. "Having the proper habits in place is imperative," Andy says. "As you grow the business, you continue with those good habits."

QUICK TIPS

Start with a plan. Focus on projecting product cost in your business plan, and constantly fine-tune those numbers each year so you can see how product cost fits into the overall picture of the business.

Track in, track out. Develop a spreadsheet or some tracking tool that holds technicians accountable for the products/materials they leave the shop with each day. Know how much inventory is used, and how much remains in storage at all times.

Share the numbers. When employees realize how much a product actually costs a business each year, they are more likely to take tracking systems more seriously and approach product use with a "handle with care" attitude.

Less is more

Mark Pendergast focuses on making sure his company doesn't carry product during the winter off-season.

"We try to be conservative in our buying," says the president of Salmon Falls Nursery and Landscaping. "Years ago, we would be more apt to carry inventory over the winter, but now we are trying to avoid that. You don't want to tie up a lot of money in hard goods."

Pendergast keeps inventory lean by sticking with this mantra: order less more often. That way, he can maximize cash flow and avoid storing materials that may not get used for months.

"My advice: use up your inventory and don't order so much," Pendergast says, simplifying what can be a daunting ordering process.



Pendergast

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It helps that Salmon Falls grows much of its own plant material – usually half of what is required for most landscaping projects. The company headquarters includes 160 acres of property where specimens like shade trees and evergreens grow. For some jobs, all plants can be

sourced from Salmon Falls' own stock. For other projects, Salmon Falls brings in additional materials from vendors. It all depends on the design, and Pendergast keeps up with landscape architects' trends so he can anticipate popular varieties and plant what will sell.

Salmon Falls Nursery and Landscaping

PRINCIPAL Mark Pendergast, president
LOCATION Berwick, Maine **ESTABLISHED** 1978 **EMPLOYEES** 50 **2009 REVENUES** \$4 million **CUSTOMERS** design/build: 80% commercial/20% residential; maintenance: 100% commercial **SERVICES** landscape design/build, maintenance, irrigation and nursery

Then twice each year, Pendergast takes inventory of the nursery, counting plants that are growing, and stock that's "above ground" and ready to be loaded on to trucks and taken to job sites. Salmon Falls works with a broker to sell some of its plant stock to wholesalers. "The nursery not only helps with inventory, it keeps us competitive because it pays for that real estate, which is an asset," Pendergast says.

Back at the pole barn where Salmon Falls stores materials and parts, Pendergast keeps track of what's in store with an inventory board. Each day, supervisors track items they remove from inventory and place on trucks. "Supervisors do the reordering based on what (parts) were sold on jobs," Pendergast says.

If one of Pendergast's vendors is running a special, say on PVC piping, he might buy extra to take advantage of the cost savings. But he is careful to make wise bulk-buying decisions. For example, the company no longer orders grass seed for the year. He'll place orders for seed several times during the season instead. "By not tying up inventory," he says, "you're freeing up cash." **L&L**

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



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QUICK TIPS

Think cash flow. Adopt a mindset that inventory is cash flow – the more you have on hand, the less cash you have to use in other areas of the business.

Clean out before winter. Aim to use all products and materials before season's end so you aren't storing it in slow months (if the business is seasonal). Inventory that sits in storage detracts from the bottom line.

Grow your own. Salmon Falls grows half of its nursery stock, which provides a number of benefits to the company's bottom line (including covering the cost of the real estate where those plants grow).

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By Chris Heiler

5 ways to become remarkable and attract more clients

Use technology to break away from the mediocre majority and make your company remarkable.

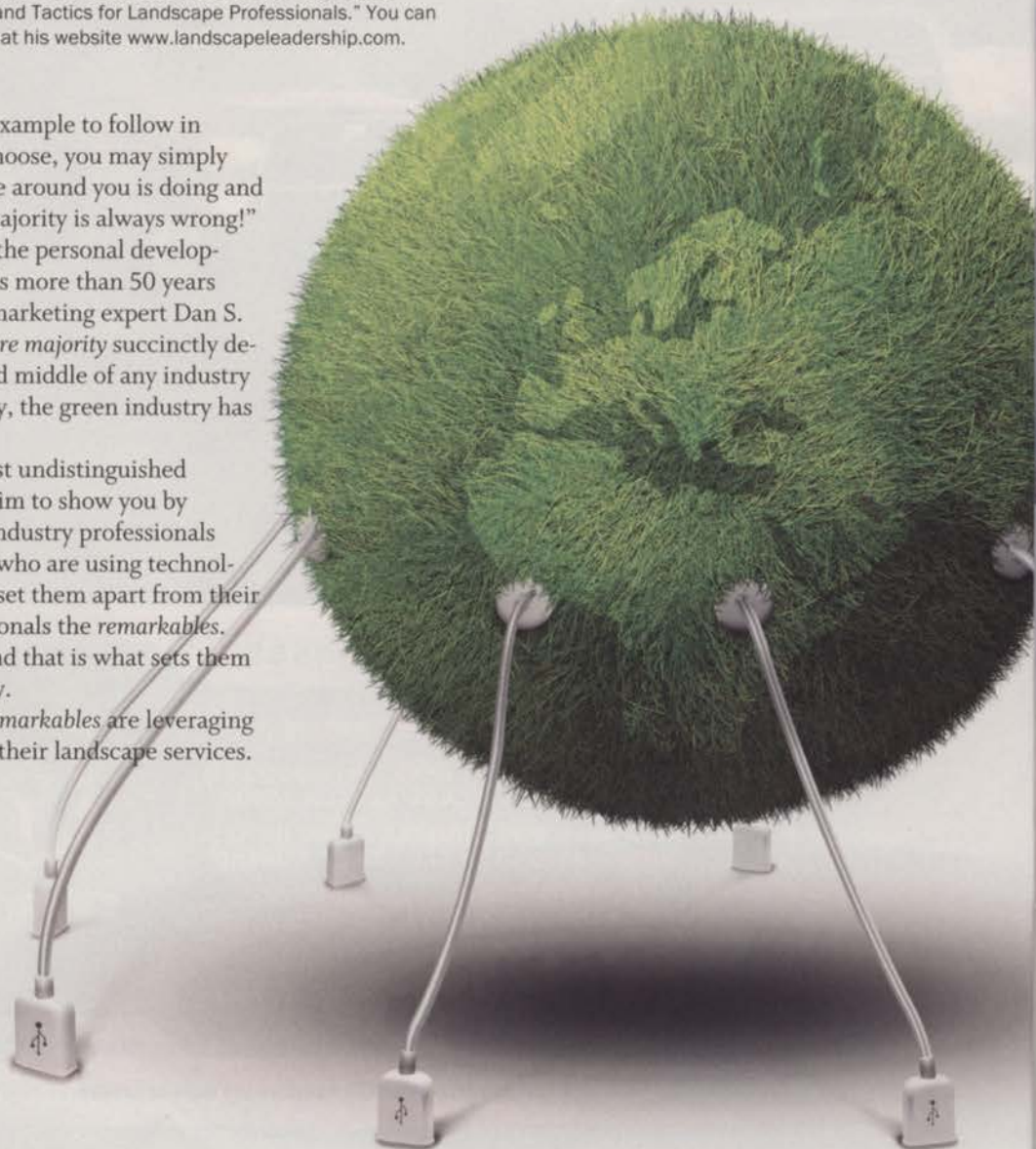
EDITOR'S NOTE: the following is an excerpt from Chris Heiler's book "The Little Green Book of Big Marketing Tips and Tactics for Landscape Professionals." You can download a free electronic version at his website www.landscapeleadership.com.

“If you have no successful example to follow in whatever endeavor you choose, you may simply look at what everyone else around you is doing and do the opposite, because – the majority is always wrong!”

Earl Nightingale, a pioneer of the personal development industry, spoke these words more than 50 years ago. More recently, author and marketing expert Dan S. Kennedy coined the term *mediocre majority* succinctly describing the vast, undistinguished middle of any industry or profession. And, yes, dare I say, the green industry has its very own mediocre majority.

So, how can you escape the vast undistinguished middle of the green industry? I aim to show you by highlighting a handful of green industry professionals who have embraced change and who are using technology in their marketing efforts to set them apart from their competition. I call these professionals the *remarkables*. The *remarkables* are *different* – and that is what sets them apart from the mediocre majority.

Let's explore five ways these *remarkables* are leveraging technology to effectively market their landscape services.



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BUILT AROUND YOU

1 Prospecting with the power of the Internet.

It is more difficult than ever to get your marketing message to stick in today's crowded marketplace. You can cut through the noise by applying the new rules of advertising. First, your advertising must be more targeted, and second, it must be more personalized. I'm not talking about blanketing an entire ZIP code or neighborhood with generic post cards and door hangers. Third, your marketing message needs to be delivered at an opportune time – when consumers may actually be interested in your services.

When Jason Cupp was the CEO of Highland Outdoor in Kansas City, Kan., his company stressed the importance of marketing their services while on a job site.

Although yard signs and door hangers had worked in the past, he wanted to make his company's on-site marketing much more personalized to generate more interest within the neighborhoods they worked.

Highland Outdoor accomplished this by creating a direct mail piece (what they refer to as an introduction letter) that was sent to every homeowner in the neighborhoods where

they worked.

These introduction letters included the company's "elevator pitch" and outlined the details of the landscaping project they would be coordinating. Each letter was personalized and mailed a week prior to the project start date, which built anticipation.

The trick, of course, is getting the names and addresses of homeowners in each neighborhood where you work.

Jason and Highland Outdoor used a combination of online resources including WhitePages.com and Google Maps to extract this data.

This strategy was effective for Highland Outdoor because the direct mail piece was highly targeted and personalized. It was also delivered at a time when interest would be high in the neighborhood.

You can view a full video tutorial of Jason explaining the process here: <http://bit.ly/90oJHY>.



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2 Become your own publisher.

Each time landscape designer Susan Cohan (Susan Cohan Gardens, Chatham, N.J.) visits with a potential client she gives them a copy of her portfolio published on CD. Why is this such a powerful strategy? First, the CD enables the prospect to look at Susan's portfolio in depth after the initial meeting. Susan doesn't waste valuable consultation time promoting herself, instead, she spends the time providing valuable information to her potential client (what a concept, right?). The CD actually sells her services a second time – after she's gone! Many of Susan's clients even share the CD with their friends.

As Susan can attest, there is nothing quite like a client who passes around your portfolio. Let's go one step further: How would you like a client to proudly display your portfolio on their coffee table for all their friends to see? Anyone can publish a book – I'm living proof.

You can easily and inexpensively turn your portfolio into a hardcover, coffee table-style book that your clients will be thrilled to display for all to see. Toss your brochures – this is how you differentiate yourself!

You can design and self-publish your masterpiece using Blurb.com. Prices range from \$22.95 for a 7-inch square hardcover to \$59.95 for a 12-inch square hardcover of 20 to 40 pages. You can give your book to clients as gifts, tote it around as your portfolio and even display it at garden centers and nurseries that refer your services.

What is more impressive: A stack of business cards or a full color, hard cover book showcasing your work?

3 The future is now.

Most green industry companies have at least a minimal presence online today. So, how can you ensure that your website or blog stands out from your competition? Add video! Not only will using video differentiate you from your competition, adding video to your site actually improves your placement in search rankings. This means more people will find and visit your site. Most importantly, video enhances communication. Instead of reading standard text, your prospects can see and hear you deliver your marketing message. Video will grab and hold a prospect's attention longer enabling you to pull them



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further into your marketing and sales process. Putting yourself front and center also adds a personal touch – prospects can put a voice and face with your company.

There are numerous ways in which you can use video to market your services online. Landscape designer and contractor Steve Griggs (Steve Griggs Design, Blauvelt, N.Y.) uses video to capture and present testimonials from his clients. Nothing can beat the emotion in the voice and on the face of a client telling everyone how great you are.

Landscape designer Genevieve Schmidt (Genevieve Schmidt Landscape Design, Arcata, Calif.) shoots “how to” maintenance videos for her NorthCoastGardening.com blog.

Video allows her to talk directly to her readers and potential clients and tell them about herself in a way that feels natural to her. Video allows Gen to form a connection with potential clients *before* they even pick up the telephone.

You can view a video testimonial from one of Steve's clients here: <http://youtube.com/aBKEJ1dcV0U>.



4 Your personal platform.

More and more green industry professionals are moving away from traditional, static websites and moving toward blogging. The benefits of blogging are many. First, setting up a blog is fairly simple and inexpensive compared to a traditional website. A blog also gives you the opportunity to interact with your readers unlike a static website which allows visitors to get to know you on a more personal, intimate level. That's a good thing, folks!

If you blog consistently, you will rank higher in search results compared to traditional, static websites – meaning more people will find you. There are three main reasons for this. First, search engines reward sites that are updated more frequently. A traditional green industry company website may have five to ten static pages that may be indexed and ranked by search engines like Google and Bing. In contrast, a blog that is updated once each week for an entire year will have more than 50 pages that can appear in the search results. On top of that, each post can be optimized for the different keywords

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that are important to your business. The third reason blogs typically rank higher than static websites is because more people (usually other bloggers) link to blogs than they do static websites. The more relevant links you have pointing back to you the higher you will rank.

5 The real you in 140 characters or less.

Would you be interested in knowing how you could get one new client each month at no cost by just being yourself? That's exactly what landscape designer Katie Ketelsen has done. How does she do it? Would you believe Twitter? I want to point out that Katie is an employee, not the owner of Timber Pine in Earlham, Iowa. Katie tweets under her personal account (@ketelsen) as well as under a Timber Pine account (@timberpine), but the majority of her new clients come from the interaction within her personal Twitter account. The truth is Katie spends about 90 percent of her time tweeting about things that most people would consider too personal. This is why she has had

such great success with Twitter – people meet Katie on Twitter, enjoy interacting with her, then eventually do business with her. Here's the lesson: Be personable, not boring!

Not all of us have a personality or zest for Twitter like Katie, but that's OK. I find that the biggest benefit and payoff from Twitter comes indirectly from the relationships you forge with other like-minded professionals. Landscape designer Andrew Keys (Oak Leaf Green Landscape Design, Topsfield, Mass.) befriended *Fine Gardening* associate editor Michelle Gervais and, as a result, their Twitter relationship has led to him writing three articles for the popular magazine.

CONCLUSION. These remarkables, from Jason Cupp to Katie Ketelesen, have demonstrated what it takes to escape the mediocre majority in our industry. By embracing technology as a part of your marketing efforts, you too can differentiate yourself from your competition and stand out in your crowded marketplace. **L&L**

Follow Katie and Timber Pine at @ketelsen and @timberpine.





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New news **NOW**

How to use a news reader to stay current and save time

By Jeff Korhan

Do you still read yesterday's news in a rolled-up (and sometimes soggy) paper? It's time to learn to use an online news reader to not only consume more timely news, but to customize the news you receive from the web to stay on top of what matters most.

RSS SUBSCRIPTIONS. You may be receiving some of your news digitally via e-mail subscriptions. Unfortunately, this practice requires that you give up control of your inbox, and is one reason e-newsletters are sometimes referred to as interruption marketing. In contrast, the RSS feeds that drive much of the content on the web are changing how many of us get our news.

Think of RSS feeds as a digital signal that is always on. When you subscribe to a blog or news source via this feed, you are giving the source permission to send news to you. This is why subscriptions involving news readers are known as permission marketing. Unlike e-mail subscriptions, RSS subscriptions allow you to remain anonymous, and you can turn the feed off with one click. This control allows you to reclaim your inbox.

SETTING UP GOOGLE READER. To get news from RSS feeds, you need a reader to send the news to. It operates from your computer or smart phone much like an e-mail inbox, but without the disadvantages. Here's how it works with Google Reader, which is easily the most popular: You need to obtain a Gmail address from Google, as this acts as your key to the company's ever-expanding suite of free online services that includes Google Reader. Do so at mail.google.com.

SETTING UP IGOOGLE. Admittedly, the Google Reader (google.com/reader) can be a challenge. That's where iGoogle makes all the difference. It serves up your subscriptions on a functional and attractive platform so you can easily consume the news. iGoogle (google.com/ig) provides your news reader feeds in a useful application that chronologically lists the most current and relevant articles from your subscription sources.

SUBSCRIBING TO A BLOG. Once you have Google Reader set up, you can click on the orange chiclet in your web browser to subscribe to any news feed. This will automatically take you to a screen that offers two choices. Click the one on the right that says "subscribe to reader." (Note: This is how it works with a PC. On a Mac you will have to click on the RSS icon in the Safari window to get the feed. Then copy and manually add it to your reader.)

SCAN THE HEADLINES. The beauty of using Google Reader within the iGoogle platform is the ability to scan the headlines and determine what to read in mere seconds. There is no loading time. One click quickly takes you to an article, while another closes it. After scrolling through a group of them, another click erases the entire group at once so you can move on to the next.

READ, SHARE AND SAVE. If you want to explore an article further, simply click to open the original item at its source. From there you can leave a comment, share it with your friends on Facebook or Twitter or save it online with services such as Evernote (www.evernote.com), which allows you to catalog it with searchable tags for future use.

MAKING THE MOST OF IGOOGLE. I recommend setting up iGoogle as the home page on your computer. Then add the Google Reader widget to the platform to add that technology.

What is a widget? It's just an application that brings one technology element to another.

On my iGoogle home page, in addition to my reader, I have added widgets for ESPN.com, the feed for my blog (jeffkorhan.com) and my Google calendar, to name a few.

There is also an iPhone app for the Google reader that synchronizes with your desktop application. RSS news readers are much more than just technology. They are part of a trend that is shaping how all of us will get our news in the future – in real time, and personalized to our needs. **L&L**

Jeff Korhan is a columnist for *Lawn & Landscape* and a top-ranked blogger on new media and small business marketing at jeffkorhan.com. Send him an e-mail at korhan@gie.net.





THE BEST DEFENSE IS A GOOD OFFENSE

Mauget insecticides – Abacide 2, Imicide, Inject-A-Cide, Inject-A-Cide B, Abasol, and Imisol – have defended trees against pests like Emerald Ash Borer, leafminers and caterpillars for more than 50 years. Abacide 2 Hp and Imicide Hp are now available in 1 liter Liquid Loadable containers.

Mauget's new insecticide, TreeAzin, is an OMRI-listed bioinsecticide formulated with azadirachtin, a natural neem seed extract. Like its product line, Mauget's legacy of proven, innovative chemistry continues to grow.

The Right Way To Treat A Tree

**Mauget**

'App'etizing

Don't be left starving when it comes to business applications for your phone. *By Brian Horn*

Technology is always changing. And whether you like it or not, as a business owner, you need to stay current on the latest advances in technology (or hire someone to do it for you). Not only can it make your life easier, but your competitors are using it to their advantage, and you risk being left behind.

One advancement is the use of "apps." No, not the dish before the main course.

An app is short for application software, which can be downloaded to your phone. Here are some apps you can download to help you run a more efficient company.



SHOEBOXED. From the creators of Shoeboxed.com, Shoeboxed digitizes your receipts and lets you generate an expense report all on your iPhone, iPod Touch or iPad.

By using the camera on your phone, Shoeboxed takes a picture of your receipt and archives it for later review.

The app has a snap feature, which helps to center the information on your screen, which shows the cost, method of payment, date and category of expense in a way that's easy to read.

After archiving your receipt, you can use the Shoeboxed app, which can be downloaded at the Apple iTunes store, to create an expense report that can be downloaded to your computer.

Shoeboxed works with programs like Quickbooks, Quicken and Microsoft Excel to help keep track of your expenses and budget.



INTUIT GOPAYMENT.

Cash is king, but not everyone is able to pay you right away when you are at a client visit.

But Intuit GoPayment, available at the Apple iTunes store, can help you get paid right away and get that cash flow moving sooner.

First, you can apply right from your iPhone or iPod Touch. You download the free GoPayment app and fill out a short application (you must have a GoPayment merchant account).

All transaction information and GoPayment user management is available online from the merchant service center from any computer, anytime. You can begin taking payments in as little as 15 minutes, and have receipts e-mailed or sent via text message to your customer.



SOILWEB.

Don't want to drag your laptop to a job site?

The UC Davis Soil Resource Laboratory has developed a smartphone application that performs location-based queries from GPS-enabled cell phones. The SoilWeb application uses its online soil survey and allows users to identify soils and access soil survey data from the lower 48. Query results are presented as a series of soil profile sketches, depicting soil horizons, series names, landscape position and taxonomic classification.

Clicking on a soil name provides the user with information such as depth profiles of soil chemical and physical properties, land classification indices, and land-use interpretations. The application is available for free download at the Apple iTunes store for the iPhone,

iPod touch and iPad, or from the Android Marketplace for the Android.



LANDSCAPER'S COMPANION FOR IPAD.

This app by Stevenson Software for your iPhone, iPod touch or iPad is a reference guide to

trees, shrubs, annuals, perennials and 12 more categories of plants.

You can browse more than 1,400 different plants by their scientific name and common names, as well as view information such as water usage, size and sun requirements.

Most entries have a short description of the plant along with cultivation information, common uses and any problems they may have. Each plant entry includes pictures. You can download it for \$9.99 from the Apple App Store.



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The My Scotts Lawn app from Scotts LawnService for your iPhone, iPod touch or iPad

gives you a customized schedule of regular lawn feedings. Simply enter your location, choose a grass type and save the schedule.

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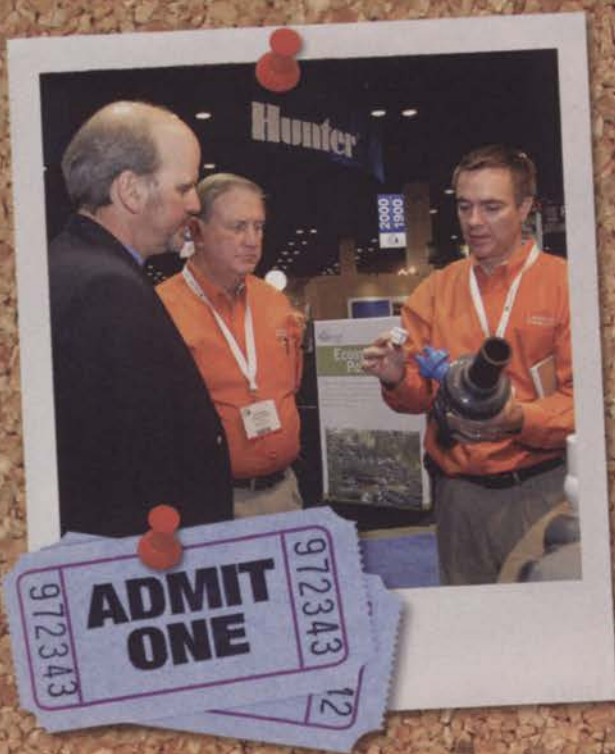
The LawnNotebook app is for the Android and is similar to the My Scotts app. You can link to the LawnNotebook Facebook page where you can chat with other lawn and garden enthusiasts.

The app also sends out tips and special offers from suppliers. Visit www.app-choice.net to download for \$1.99. **L&L**

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

You can read this story on our digital versions for the iPad. Just search "lawn and landscape" in the iTunes store.





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New rules on the credit card front

Financial regulatory reform has been signed into law. How will it affect your company?

The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (H.R. 4173) was signed into law this summer, and includes the following important provisions for green industry businesses accepting credit and debit cards:

NEW RULEMAKER. The Federal Reserve is charged with issuing new regulations within nine months of enactment, and taking effect three months after, on whether debit card interchange rates are “reasonable and proportional to the cost incurred by the issuer with respect to the transaction.”

DISCOUNTING. Credit card companies cannot restrict the ability of businesses to offer discounts for payments made by cash, checks, debit cards or credit cards. However, discounts may not differentiate between card issuers or networks.

MINIMUMS. Businesses can set a minimum transaction amount of up to \$10 for credit card transactions, with authority given to the Fed to increase the transaction amount.

NETWORK FEES. Network fees charged by credit-card companies to businesses are exempted from the Fed regulations. The Federal Reserve, however, is given authority to ensure that a network does not attempt to circumvent the new regulations by creating new fees to compensate issuers (directly or indirectly) for debit card transactions. As part of the rulemaking, the Federal Reserve is to consider the functional similarity between debit transactions and checks, which clear at par, and the incremental cost incurred by the issuer in the authorization, clearance or settlement of transactions.

FRAUD ADJUSTMENT. The Federal Reserve can increase debit card interchange rates on a per issuer basis if the issuer takes steps to reduce fraud, including through implementation of effective fraud prevention technology.

EXEMPTION. Banks, credit unions and thrifts with assets of less than \$10 billion (not adjusted for inflation) are exempted from the Fed regulations. Debit cards and general-use prepaid

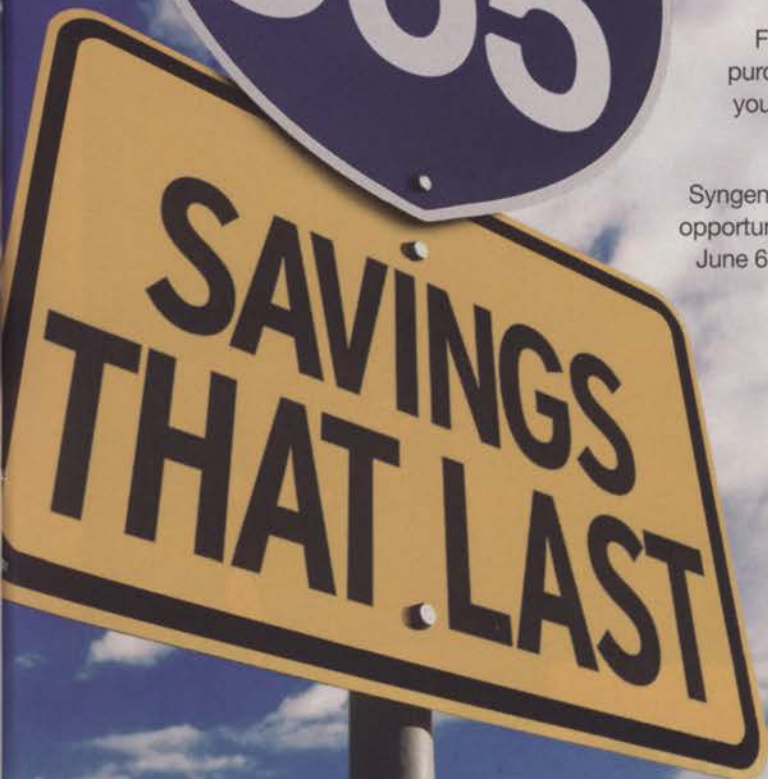
cards issued by federal, state, or local government-administered payment programs are exempted from the Federal Reserve regulations, as are all reloadable prepaid cards not tied to an individual's demand deposit account.

EXCLUSIVITY ARRANGEMENTS. One year after enactment, the Federal Reserve is charged with prescribing rules to ensure that payment card networks must provide businesses with at least two network “bugs” with which to route transactions. The regulations are also required to prohibit networks from erecting routing restrictions. This so-called multi-bug provision was added to the bill through the agreement reached by conferees. **L&L**

The American Nursery & Landscape Association worked closely with the Retail Industry Leaders Association and others to advance these provisions.

ONLINE EXTRA: Read “Swiped” and learn more about interchange and processing fees at www.lawnandlandscape.com.





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In 2009, South Texas Growers grew 50,000 native Texas grasses for the City of San Antonio. Today the company still grows most of its plants but has started purchasing some from larger wholesalers due to growing demand.

Adjusting to demand

Putting energy into their retail plant sales and adapting to meet customers' needs has helped South Texas Growers achieve growth in uncertain times. By Lindsey Getz



Michael and Joanne Hall, when they were first developing their new location.

Adaptability has helped South Texas Growers not only survive, but grow in a tough economy.

The projected revenue for the small, seven-employee landscape company is \$500,000 for 2010 – that's up \$150,000 from last year. Joanne Hall, vice president of the Bulverde, Texas-based company, says that she and her husband Michael (the president) have seen new installation and irrigation jobs drop off this year. But by focusing on their retail plant sales, an area that was never a big

seller in the past, they've been able to grow their business.

The company is pretty much equally split between their landscape and irrigation services (50 percent) and their nursery sales (35 percent retail plant sales and 15 percent wholesale plant sales) on the 3-acre nursery. By keeping their retail plant customers happy, they've found a great opportunity to cross-market their other services, keeping those divisions going strong.

The pair has been in business about 15

years, eight of which have been in their present location, a small community that's considered Texas Hill Country just north of San Antonio. In their previous location, the nursery side of the business had been wholesale-only. "Looking back, that definitely limited us," says Joanne Hall. "When we moved to the new location, we decided to add a retail division as well."

Still, for a long time it was the wholesale side of the nursery that always brought in the money. But last year

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Maruyama is introducing into the market a revolutionary new variation of its High Efficiency Recirculator Engine (H.E.R.E.) 2-cycle engine technology, incorporating innovative design concepts and manufacturing processes that will allow Maruyama to manufacture and market true world-class 2-cycle machines well into the future.

The first of the VENOM Series machines is the 42 cc, B42 Brushcutter, which has more power than predecessor machines. These engines dramatically reduce fuel consumption and are fully 50-state compliant, having exhaust emissions well below current EPA and CARB standards without the added weight and heat of a catalyst.



The B42 ut new, 3-piece cylinder design that allows for mirror smooth transfer ports which increase overall engine performance compared to earlier manufacturing methods. The B42 also has an offset crank and counterweight which allows for more complete and efficient combustion which results in very low exhaust emissions and greatly reduced fuel consumption.

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The B42 is covered by the Maruyama IRON 5 Year[®] Commercial Warranty, as are all of our other 2-cycle products. This is a warranty that the true professional cutter can take great comfort in.



Our entire VENOM Series range, the B42, B42L, B42A and B30L, are now available and can be found at a distributor near you.

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2010 BREAKTHROUGH

South Texas Growers

Principals: Michael Hall, president, and Joanne Hall, vice president

LOCATION Bulverde, Texas **NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES** 7, including 2 owners **SERVICE BREAKDOWN** 50% irrigation and landscaping; 50% nursery (35% retail plant sales and 15% wholesale plant sales) **CUSTOMER BREAKDOWN** 60% commercial; 40% residential **2009 REVENUE** \$350,000

everything changed. With new construction coming to a halt and other local landscape companies failing to secure those big jobs, wholesale sales took a plunge. Fortunately, retail sales took off. At press time, retail plant sales from the first two quarters of 2010 were up 55 percent from 2009.

SALES BOOM. Hall's theory for the increase in retail plant sales is that homeowners who are unable to sell their homes are instead investing their money into their existing landscapes. "If they're going to stay there, they want to spruce it up and enjoy the property more," she says. "Or maybe they're planning to put it on the market down the road, when things improve, and they're working on better curb appeal now."

South Texas Growers competes with a large home improvement store that's just down the road. But what sets them apart, and why they've been so successful, says Hall, is that they really promote their expertise. "We're in an area where we have a lot of deer, so we make sure our customers know that we specialize in deer-resistant plants," she says. "Even though we have a large competitor nearby, they just don't have the knowledge that we can offer."

Though the plants at the large home improvement store are often cheaper, Hall says customers are willing to pay extra for their knowledge, especially because of the climate and landscape of the region. "We live in an area where you can't just plant whatever you want," she says. "It won't work and you'll waste your money. We have extreme temperatures here. It can get as low as 15 degrees and as high as 115. And on top of that, there is the deer

problem. We have really built up a good reputation for knowing what kind of plants will work in this area."

Hall also says that their willingness to work with the do-it-yourselfers out there has really paid off. Many landscape businesses are obviously discouraged to see so many homeowners wanting to do their own landscape work, but Hall says that they've adapted their business to work closer with these customers. "We've heard a lot of people say they're just not able to afford to have a landscaper do their installation, so we don't get that install job, but they do come to us to buy the plants and rely on our expertise to get the right ones," she says.

That has also led to greater interest in a consultation design service that the company offers. "We charge a fee to go out and meet with the client and create a design for them," Hall says. "They get to keep that design and can come buy the plants from us for 15 percent off – a discount that's good for one year." While they're not getting the installation job, the company does make money off the consultation and it's become a great opportunity to market their plant sales. On the flipside, when customers come in to buy plants, the sales team takes the opportunity to market the consultation service.

Whenever possible, Hall says that the company seeks out ways to cross-market their other divisions. That, along with being willing to take on smaller jobs and adapt their services, has led to some success. For instance, Hall says that for an upcoming tree sale, the company would look for ways to market installation services. "There's a lot of rock in our regional landscape and it can be difficult for

homeowners to dig themselves," she says. "We'll definitely market our installation service when homeowners come out to buy trees. That in turn will bring in business for our landscape division."

Adapting their service offerings has also meant working side-by-side with customers. "They want to do what they can themselves," Hall says. "But we don't turn our noses up at smaller jobs. We offer to do *parts* of the job, even if it's not the whole job."

LOOKING AHEAD. In the past, Hall says that they've always grown their own plants. But with the increase in retail sales, they've started buying more plant material from large wholesale growers. "That's something I've never done before, but I decided we needed to bring more in and it's worked for us," she says. "We mark it up and it does turn, since there's a lot of demand. And it's simple because you don't have to grow it or mess with it – you just have to water it. So that's been a big change this year and it's been successful and something I'll likely do again."

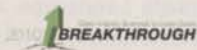
Looking ahead to 2011, Hall says they'll continue to do what has worked this year, including building a relationship with their customers and getting their name out there through involvement in the local Chamber of Commerce. She says it really comes down to good customer service to keep your clients coming back. "In these times you do need to have more patience, and be willing to work with what's out there," she says. **L&L**

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

2010 Breakthrough is an ongoing series of success stories from the green industry. Each month, *Lawn & Landscape* and its sister horticulture publications – *Nursery Management & Production*, *Greenhouse Management & Production* and *Garden Center* – profile 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.

How are you working across the green industry to succeed in 2010? Send your stories to Editor Chuck Bowen at cbowen@gie.net or call 330-523-5330 and you could be featured in an upcoming issue of *Lawn & Landscape*.

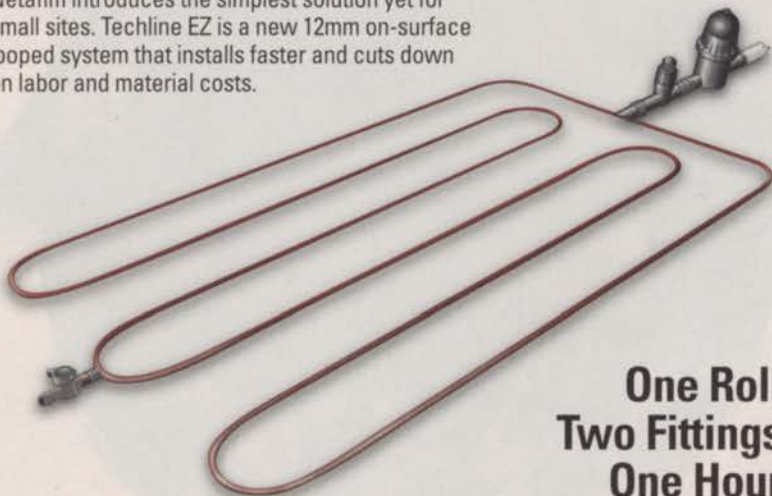


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State of the irrigation industry

This summer, the Irrigation Association brought together experts to predict the industry's future. Here's what they see.

The 2010 Water Conference, presented by the Irrigation Association, brought together leaders in irrigation to discuss important water issues facing the industry.

During the two-day conference held in July, participants discussed the state of the irrigation industry, and how it can drive policy discussions and best practices to be seen as part of a sustainable solution.

The conference was sponsored by Toro, Irrigation Consulting, Ewing, Harco, the Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association, TerraMannus Technologies, Regenes Management Group and Netafim. MaryLou Smith, policy and collaboration specialist for the Colorado Water Institute at Colorado State University, facilitated the meeting.

Speakers were asked to respond to this question: What is your vision for water in the 21st century? What follows are excerpts from the IA's report. — Chuck Bowen

“This regulation has the **potential** to put the **Massachusetts landscape industry out of business.**”

— Tom Barrett, Green Water Infrastructure



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Brave new worlds: Landscape industry trends

What does the recent economic downturn mean to our industry? Overall, the contraction to our market over the last 26 months is between 40 to 50 percent. The West Coast and East Coast have been hit the hardest. The Midwest, with the exception of Michigan, is experiencing the least amount of decline. Even in areas with lesser amounts of decline, such as New England, the pain is still present.

COMPETITION. In the short term, competition is fierce as competitors drop prices. Margins are being squeezed.

Surviving companies will be lean and extremely efficient. Smart companies are accepting the economic chaos and are seeking some hidden opportunities in it.



Barrett, right, says the Massachusetts landscaping industry could go out of business.

ADDRESS THE ENVIRONMENT. Environmental issues have dramatically changed from conserving precious natural resources into creating a sustainable environment. We in the landscape industry can play an important role. Conversely, if we do not play an important role, the environmental issues will dramatically

change our industry. We often think water conservation is reserved for the arid West. In Massachusetts today, most area communities impose water restrictions to meet the 2004 state standard setting the maximum per-person usage rate at 65 gallons per day. This regulation has the potential to put the Massachusetts landscape industry out of business. What is our role? Through landscapes, we create sustainable sites.

Several organizations have identified "green" industries as the number one growth industry. Simply: Plant trees. Vegetative roof surfaces, or green roofs, are an additional opportunity. Every organization has the power and the talent, which unleashed, will result in dramatic change. — Tom Barrett, owner, Green Water Infrastructure



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Water challenges: Personal vision from the eyes of a practitioner

As the manager of a mid-sized water utility in Tidewater, Va., for more than 20 years, I have seen the issue of water supply evolve from a climate of abundance to limited resources. I've seen groundwater supplies diminish to levels of great concern. I've participated in two attempts to obtain permits to build water supply reservoirs that were denied after years of efforts and huge investments because of environmental impacts. And, finally the negative impacts of climate change on water supply are becoming more and more evident. All of these things make it abundantly clear that as a society we have to better use our existing water resources and develop new water supplies.

TECHNOLOGY. We have to develop

Learn more

To view and download presentations from the Irrigation Association's 2010 Conference, visit www.irrigation.org/Events/Water_Conference_Presentations.aspx.



Foster says wastewater is an obvious underutilized resource.

technologies to treat tidally-influenced water to remove salts. We have to do this in quantities and at a cost to not only support the consumptive use of people but also the needs of agriculture.

New technologies are promising but still very expensive. Wastewater is an obvious underutilized resource. We have to develop affordable, safe technologies to maximize this underutilized resource.

OUTDOOR WATER USE. The landscape irrigation industry needs to be part of the solution for addressing local

water needs. Outdoor water use accounts for more than 50 percent of our water demands during the summer in my area. In periods of water scarcity, local governments will immediately migrate to limiting outdoor water use. This could have a devastating impact on local businesses. How can this be avoided? The landscape industry needs to be proactive in partnering with local governments to promote "smart" irrigation practices. Landscape professionals need to be ambassadors in promoting the latest technologies for encouraging water conservation to their customers.

COSTS. Benjamin Franklin said "no one knows the value of water until the well goes dry." He was right, but, much like energy, we have to maintain the cost of water at a level that makes it affordable to all segments of society. Thus, it is extremely important that as our "well goes dry" we find technologies that make affordable water supplies available. — Larry Foster, James City Service Authority

When 50 inches isn't enough

As an eastern state that receives an average of 50 inches of rainfall annually, many would wonder why water resources management has become a critical issue in Georgia. If states out west can manage their water issues with only as much annual rainfall as we receive in a good summer thunderstorm, have we done something wrong? The answer to that depends on whom you ask, but one thing that I feel is certain is that other eastern states will be dealing with similar issues in the future.

Several factors have led to Georgia's current position. First, we have experienced a series of droughts in the '80s, the '90s and most recently 2006-2009. These droughts stressed local governments and their ability to supply water, caused farmers to abandon the idea of dry land farm-

ing, and made homeowners rethink their landscapes. In Atlanta, where six million people primarily depend on surface water since there is very little groundwater in the geologic formations beneath them, rapid growth coupled with very small contributing watersheds and little available storage led to severe water shortages during these droughts.

When cities send out warnings that they have less than seven days of supply left, does it change the way people think of water? Is climate change driving the increased drought frequency? When we couple this with legal challenges such as Alabama and Florida's lawsuit against Georgia over downstream flows on the Chattahoochee and Flint rivers, South Carolina's lawsuit against Georgia claiming excessive groundwater use is causing



Georgia has its own problems, Risse says.

salt water intrusion, and a federal judge's decision that Atlanta cannot use the U.S. Corps of Engineers reservoirs for drinking water since it is not a designated use, you begin to realize how critical these resources are.

While some may claim that this is all the result of excessive growth and poor planning, there are critical scien-

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IA WATER CONFERENCE

tific and social questions that need to be answered. What are natural or historic flows? How much water do darters, or smelt, or oysters or snails really need, and when do they need it? Is food production more important than industrial growth? What about human needs versus environmental flows? How can we get by using less water? These are the types of questions that regional water planning councils around Georgia will be struggling to answer.

HOW DOES ALL THIS AFFECT IRRIGATION?
Conservation will be critical. It better be efficient.

I think we will still see green lawns and manicured landscapes, but hopefully the water costs associated with them will go up dramatically or water use will go down due to improved irrigation scheduling, application technologies, and more efficient use of rainfall. — Mark Risse, professor and coordinator of extension engineering, University of Georgia

WHO'S WHO

The 2010 Water Conference brought together a wide range of speakers and presenters. They included:

Aaron Salzberg, special coordinator for water resources, U.S. Department of State

Beth Davis, utility analyst, James City Service Authority

David Stewart, president and CEO, Stewart Environmental Consultants

Jimmy Daukas, managing director of agriculture and the environment initiative, American Farmland Trust

Adam Schempp, staff attorney and western water program director, Environmental Law Institute

Tom Barrett, president, Green Water Infrastructure

Mark Risse, professor and coordinator of extension engineering, University of Georgia

Michael Doane, director of ag economics and sustainability, Monsanto Co.

Paul Lander, Dakota Ridge Partners

Gregory Hobbs, justice, Colorado Supreme Court

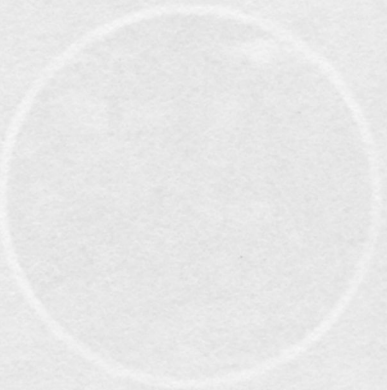
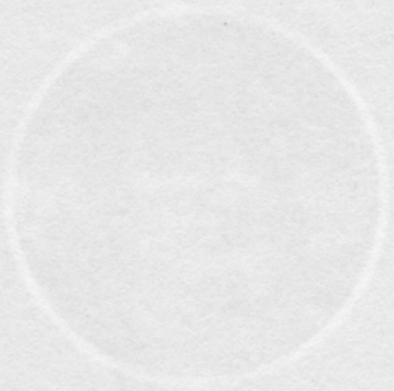
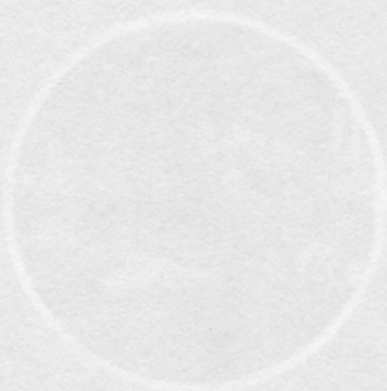
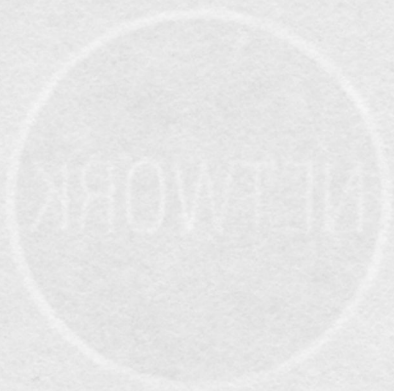
Prem Paul, vice chancellor for research, University of Nebraska, Lincoln



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Lawn & Landscape



Down the road

Industry suppliers weigh in on what's next in the lawn care industry. By Brian Horn

It's always important to stay ahead of the game if you want to win market share. And in the lawn care business, it's no different. *Lawn & Landscape* asked suppliers about what new products they have coming out next year, as well as their general thoughts on the future of the lawn care industry.

What new products do you have hitting the market next year?

Bryan Gooch, marketing manager, **Agrium Advanced Technologies**: While this product officially launched in 2010, it hit the market a little too late for many customers to take advantage of. The product is called Spread it & Forget it and it is a controlled release fertilizer that lasts all season with just

one application. It is designed especially for lawn and landscape professionals to use in commercial, municipal, parks and sports fields and institutional turf.

A number of progressive companies have also found a way to make this product work in residential services.

Adam Manwarren, product manager, turf and ornamental, **FMC**: SquareOne herbicide is a starter herbicide for newly seeded turf, including overseeding and interseeding. We have federal registration and are awaiting state registrations. It controls crabgrass and broadleaf weeds with a flexible application window of up to one day prior to seeding or as soon as seven days after emergence in either fall or spring turf renovation projects.

Blindside herbicide offers lawn care

professionals an all-in-one solution for post-emergent control of difficult broadleaf weeds, including dollarweed and sedges in St. Augustine grass and other warm season turf.

Talstar EZ is a granular insecticide for broad spectrum control of surface-feeding pests like ants, chinch bugs, billbugs and more. Verge granule technology enables Talstar EZ to provide more uniform coverage for consistent control against surface-feeding pests.

Talstar XTRA granular insecticide eliminates fire ant colonies and other surface-feeding lawn pests, often in as little as minutes.

Nancy Schwartz, marketing manager for turf and ornamentals, **DuPont Professional Products**: Much of our focus next year will be on introducing the product we are launching this fall.

DuPont Imprelis herbicide is a post-emergent broadleaf weed control product with new technology that lawn care professionals can use to control weeds, like ground ivy and wild violets, even during reseeding or rainy days.

Plus, they will see residual control of common weeds like dandelion and clover. Its single active ingredient has one of the lowest application rates, combined with low toxicity to mammals.

Professionals can treat residential and commercial lawns, sod farms, parks, athletic fields and areas around schools.

Dan Steltz, market manager, lawn and landscape for **Syngenta**: We are working on some exciting, new products for the lawn care industry. We anticipate introducing them during the first quarter of 2011. During the past year-and-a-half, two of our newer products have received a lot of attention from LCOs.

Monument is a selective herbicide that is very versatile for use on warm-season grass. It provides broad spectrum control and is especially effective for controlling major sedge species. We've also launched Heritage G fungicide. This granular formulation of Heritage

has shown to provide as effective broad-spectrum disease control as our liquid formulation.

And new for 2011 – Tenacity is a new herbicide that's already labeled for sports turf, sod farms and commercial turf, as well as golf. Many cool season grasses are tolerant to Tenacity. For extended pre-emergence control, it can be tank mixed with Barricade.

Bill Stringfellow, managing director, Quest Products: Main Event Dry Iron and Main Event Dry Manganese – both of these products are dry concentrates and have 100 percent chelated micro nutrients (they contain six different chelating element release systems). They also don't stain pumps, tanks, concrete or clothing, and they contain a vesicular-arbuscular mycorrhizae sustaining food resource for soil activity.

The Cut Guard Tree and Shrub Biological Wound Dressing is designed for application for plant wounds caused by string trimmer damage, pruning, mower bumps, lightning damage and other impacts to plant bark areas.

When a wound occurs, the material is applied and it immediately is absorbed into the vascular system of the plant in and around the wound area.

What trends do you see in lawn care technology in the next five years?

Gooch: A major trend we see happening are professionals doing more with less. As I mentioned, Spread it & Forget it only has to be applied once to last six months or longer and this helps eliminate labor and overhead costs. Obviously when companies get paid per fertilizer application, this may not be well re-

ceived, but may make a lot of sense in commercial settings or customers under contract.

Manwarren: Trends in lawn care technology in the next five years will involve doing more with less – more specifically, less pounds of active ingredient on the ground while not sacrificing any results, as well as combination products that do more than a tank mix by capitalizing on the synergy between chemistries based on the ratio of active ingredients.

Steltz: As the market becomes more competitive, the emphasis on technology to help run the LCO's operation is going to become more important. The ability to optimize resources – trucks, equipment and labor – can have a big impact because of their contribution to the input cost of the operator.



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FUTURE OF LAWN CARE

Schwartz: The trend is toward highly effective products that are also favorable to the environment. An increasing number of lawn care operators want to have reliable products that also allow them to be good stewards of the environment.

Stringfellow: Better utilization of time and labor through improved longer lasting and superior products, while, at the same time, increasing use of lower priced generic product for increased profit and cost reduction because of a competitive market place (a blending of both).

What do LCOs ask you to develop?

Gooch: There is a definite trend toward putting less chemicals and fertilizers into the environment. Controlled re-

lease fertilizers allow 25 to 40 percent less nitrogen to be used and still get high quality turf.

Manwarren: The biggest unmet need in the market is life after Monosodium Acid Methanearsonate (MSMA). This was a low cost, but effective chemistry for control on a wide number of weeds.

A MSMA replacement will likely involve different products and different treatment programs and put more emphasis on the importance of applying a preemerge product, which will most likely be used in a split application to lengthen the window of control.

Steltz: Because the industry is mature, fewer opportunities exist to solve problems that have never been addressed. Sometimes, several existing options are available to solve a given problem, which

is why a number of the products coming out soon are niche-type products.

Schwartz: LCOs have grown accustomed to the limitations of many of the available turf products but will welcome anything new that makes their job easier and meets or exceeds their standards.

They are looking for newer chemistries that provide reliable and lasting weed and insect control, and can play a key role in resistance management programs.

Stringfellow: LCOs are always asking how we can expand the number of registered products that can be basal bark applied with Pentra-Bark, because of speed and efficacy of the application method in the landscape. **L&L**

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

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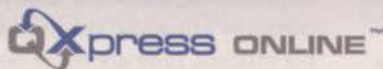


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I-9 nightmare

Keeping tabs on your employees' employment eligibility can be a headache, but it is one contractors need to deal with. Here's how.

By Steven Cesare



Editor's note: This is the first 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, retaliation and employee leave programs.

While human resources issues (e.g., selection, training, OSHA) are frequent concerns for all companies, compliance with immigration laws is a top priority for many, especially those in the landscape industry. Failure to meet government standards related to immigration laws can have extremely serious and increasingly costly consequences.

Much of this concern is based on the Immigration Reform and Control Act (1986), which requires all U.S.



Cesare

employers to verify the employment eligibility and identity of all employees hired after Nov. 6, 1986. The law also requires employers not discriminate against individuals on the basis of national origin or citizenship, or to require more or different documents from a particular individual. A vital component of this frequently-misunderstood and poorly-applied process is the Employment Eligibility

Verification Form, more commonly known as the I-9 Form.

This article presents the requirements of the I-9 Form, outlines possible consequences of non-compliance, and shares industry-wide questions and best practices aimed at improving landscapers' understanding while minimizing financial cost to their organizations.

EMPLOYER REQUIREMENTS. To maintain legal compliance, all employers must:

- Periodically review the documents submitted for Section 2 to ensure their expiration dates have not been exceeded, and if they have expired, complete Section 3 of the I-9 Form immediately.
- Retain the I-9 Form for three years after the date the person begins work or one year after the person's employment is terminated, whichever is later.

POTENTIAL EMPLOYER PENALTIES. The I-9 Form is relatively easy to administer, but many employers do not complete it properly or on time. Failure to comply

can have serious and costly impact on the employer.

If an employer makes a mistake on any I-9 Form, does not retain the I-9 Forms for the proper length of time, or does not allow the government to review the I-9 Forms when requested, the employer must pay a fine between \$110 and \$1,100 for each I-9 Form violation.

If the Department of Homeland Security determines that an employer has "knowingly" hired or continues to employ unauthorized aliens, the employer could pay civil penalties between \$375 and \$16,000 for each unauthorized alien. If an investigation reveals that an employer has falsified documents associated with the I-9 Form, the employer can be ordered to pay up to \$6,500 for each fraudulent document.

BEST IN CLASS PRACTICES. In an effort to improve the efficiency and reduce the company's financial risk in managing the I-9 process, here are some best in class practices used by top landscapers.

- Train all appropriate staff on how to complete an I-9 Form.
- Make sure the company has a formal written policy declaring its compliance with all immigration laws and I-9 Form procedures.
- I-9 Forms must not be stored in the employee's personnel file, but kept in a separate file. It is best to have all current employees' I-9 Forms kept in a binder and a separate binder for all inactive employees' I-9 Forms. Both binders should be alphabetized by employee last name. This two-binder solution enables the company to track each group by its unique retention criteria.

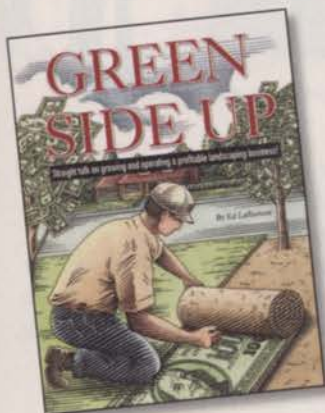
The author is an industrial psychologist with the Harvest Group, a landscape consulting firm. Send your questions to cesare@gje.net. L&L

I-9 FAQs

Do you still have to fill out an I-9 Form if you use E-verify? What about snow removal subcontractors? Visit www.lawnandlandscape.com and search "I-9" for answers to these questions and more ways to stay in compliance.



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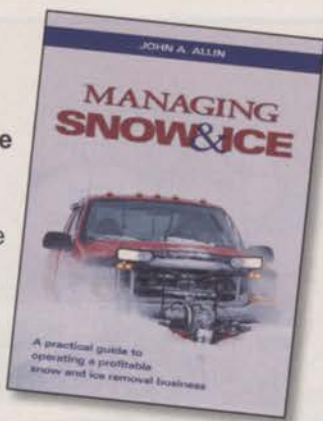
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EQUIPPING TRAILERS

Rolling stock

An enclosed trailer helps one contractor keep things running year-round.

by Kelly Pickerel

Landscaping and lawn maintenance is primarily a warmer-month job, so when the snow hits Brown Deer, Wis., a proper storage-house for lawn mowers and hedge trimmers is a must.

Andy Schlueter found that an enclosed trailer does the trick for storage but also doubles as a great device for moving from job site to job site in the Milwaukee area during the prime summer months.

"Everything is in there," Schlueter says of the trailer. "Your equipment is going to be dry. The weather is controlled."

Schlueter inherited the company, Gary's Landscaping, after his father, Gary, died in 2006. It's the definition of a family-



Andy Schlueter loads smaller equipment in the front of his trailer.

run business: Mom works in the office doing the billing and accounting, and Schlueter is out working the jobs with two employees during the summer and fall.

"I am running my dad's business. My dad left this all for me," Schlueter says. "I worked with him as a kid, and I've been running his business the way he taught me and continuing his legacy. We keep the spirit of my dad running here."



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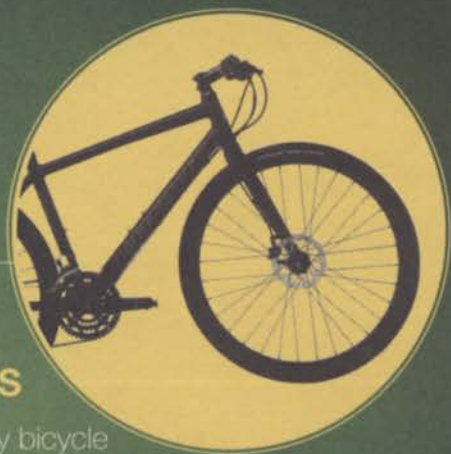
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Schlueter says having a trailer helps keep his equipment out of the cold, but also saves him time.

With a lack of manpower on his crew (the \$150,000-a-year company has three employees), Schlueter says an enclosed trailer speeds along daily tasks and helps get jobs completed more efficiently.

"In the morning, I'd come to work, and I'd have to pull out the rakes. I'd have to pull out the shovels. But now I don't have to move things back and forth from the truck and the trailer," he says.

Schlueter estimates that about 90 percent of his customers are residential, and an enclosed trailer helps present a professional look. Gary's Landscaping does lawn maintenance and cleanup, fertilizing and weed control and tries its best to keep the majority of its customers in the winter for snow removal.



Showing up in an organized, enclosed trailer definitely makes his business look that much better to the customer, Schlueter says.

Along with the mowers, the bulk of the equipment is kept in the trailer all year. Schlueter built shelves for the front of the trailer to expand storage space.

"I'll load the small equipment, like hedge trimmers, chainsaws, oil for the equipment (in the front)," he says. "All of it sits in the front of the trailer on two shelves. Maybe I'll bungee cord some things, but everything is in there. It's a security guard."

And when winter finally does roll around, Schlueter says getting things prepared for the colder months is easy with the trailer.

"In the winter, I pull out all the batteries, I put the locks on the doors, and it's a self-enclosed storage unit," he says.

Schlueter says the overall security of an enclosed trailer is what made him switch from an open one. If the crew is in a hurry, gas cans and other odds and ends can be thrown inside the trailer without having to be tied down. **L&L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Kent, Ohio.

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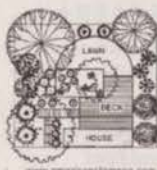


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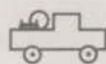
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Scott Jamieson

Vice president,
Bartlett Tree Experts

What have you been up to since you were a leadership winner?

In 2008, The Care of Trees (TCOT) was sold to Davey and I moved on from my role as president and CEO. After a much-needed sabbatical, I joined Bartlett Tree Experts as their vice president of corporate partnership and national recruiting.

The role focuses on industry relationships, national accounts and ways to improve Bartlett's visibility with potential clients. The recruiting piece is primarily at major universities where we recruit for career positions within the company. Many of the things I am doing now are leveraging relationships that I had built over the many years in our profession. Although the company I work for has changed, my values and focus have not.

What kind of adjustment did you have to make going from a top executive to a lower level one?

Bartlett is over three times the size what TCOT was so, although the role is different, the scope is similar. Many of the things I do today I was doing at TCOT. The biggest adjustment has been meeting and getting to know new teammates. It has been easy as Bartlett has the type of culture we were cultivating at TCOT – caring, respectful, professional.

For a company that is over 100 years old, there is no resting on laurels or complacency. It is full speed ahead. What is exciting for me personally is the opportunity to contribute in some new ways for Bartlett and to help them specifically in some markets that I have expertise in. That's rewarding.

What do you miss about being a president and CEO?

Building a team, developing people and seeing the results – there are a lot of things I don't miss that most people never realized I had to deal with, but that is the role.

I miss the many great people I worked with and although we keep in touch, it simply isn't the same.

What advice would you have for a president or CEO who is going through the sale of company like you did with The Care of Trees?

The key for me up until the very end was to support and lead the organization with confidence and honesty.

There were questions I could not answer and I let people know that. Communication is always the most important element even when you can't talk about it.

People still need to hear from the leader. It is in the vacuum of information that rumors are formed.

If you don't tell people what is going on, they will make something up.

When you have their trust, it is your responsibility, your moral imperative to communicate to them during times of transition.

The role of the CEO is to lead the company with the vision and values that have previously been in place, regardless of the decisions that ownership is making during the transition.

People need a North Star in times of uncertainty and the CEO has to provide that even in the toughest of times.

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

Three years of growth are coming – so says someone I really trust around economic trends. The "new normal" is now a cliché but it is also true. Like many firms, we have trimmed back, cut costs and improved our efficiencies. Our leadership, however, made it very clear that we are here for the long-term and we have not cut into the core values of the company.

We have retained the right people, we continue to invest in training and development of those people, we continue to conduct research on the latest tree care practices that will benefit our clients and we continue to hire great talent for our future. We think we have seen the bottom and are making the long climb out of it.

We have stayed close to our clients realizing their pain is our pain, and we have adjusted with them.

We don't operate our business quarter to quarter, we operate it decade to decade.

When you have been around over 100 years, you tend to look at the big picture and stay centered around your values. **L&L**



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Read more from Jamieson, including his 2007 Leadership profile, at www.lawnandlandscape.com/leadershiplessons.





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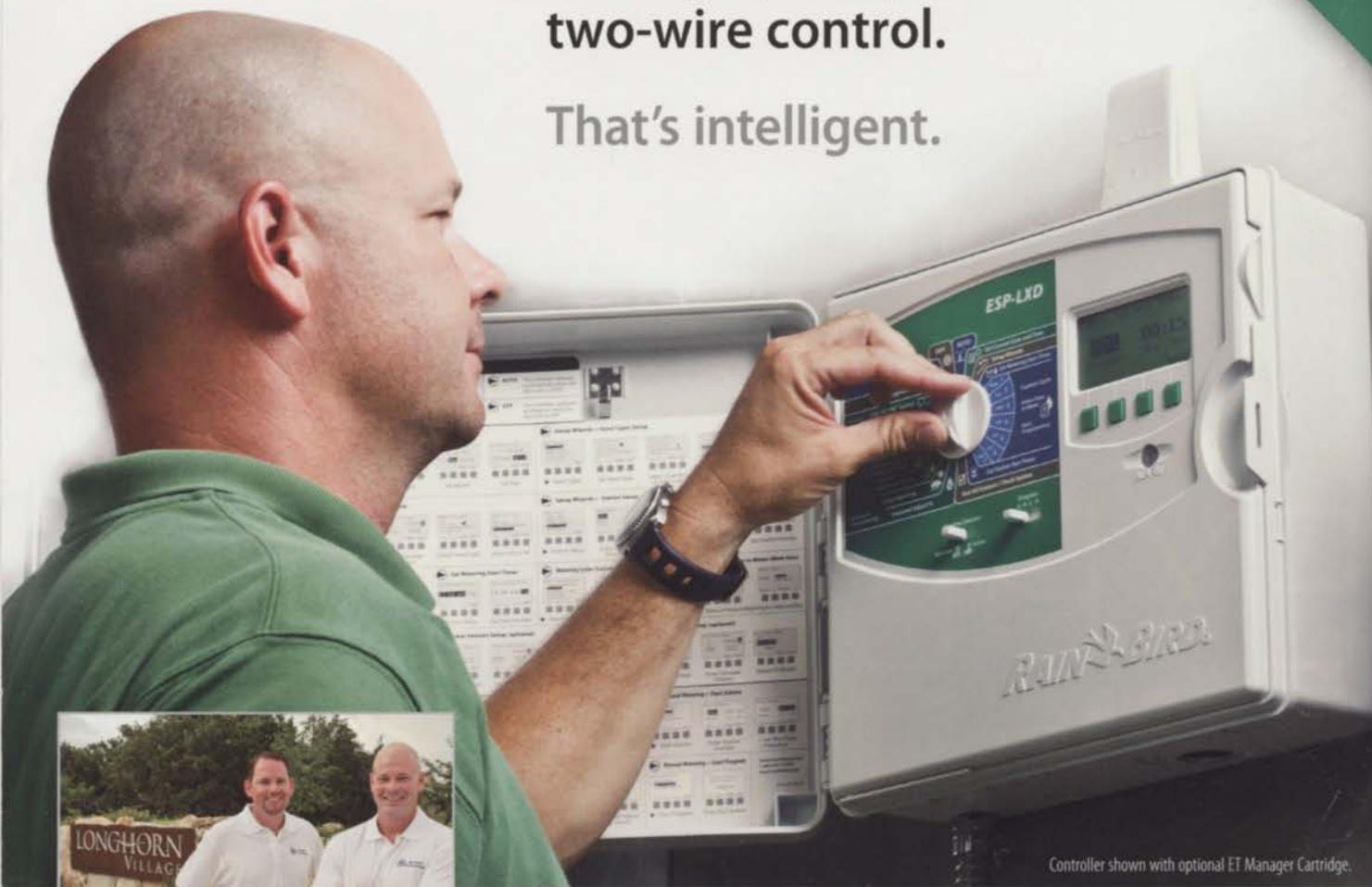


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