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Turn prospects into long-term clients, pg 108

Buyer's Guide: sprayers, spreaders, aerators and dethatchers, pg 120



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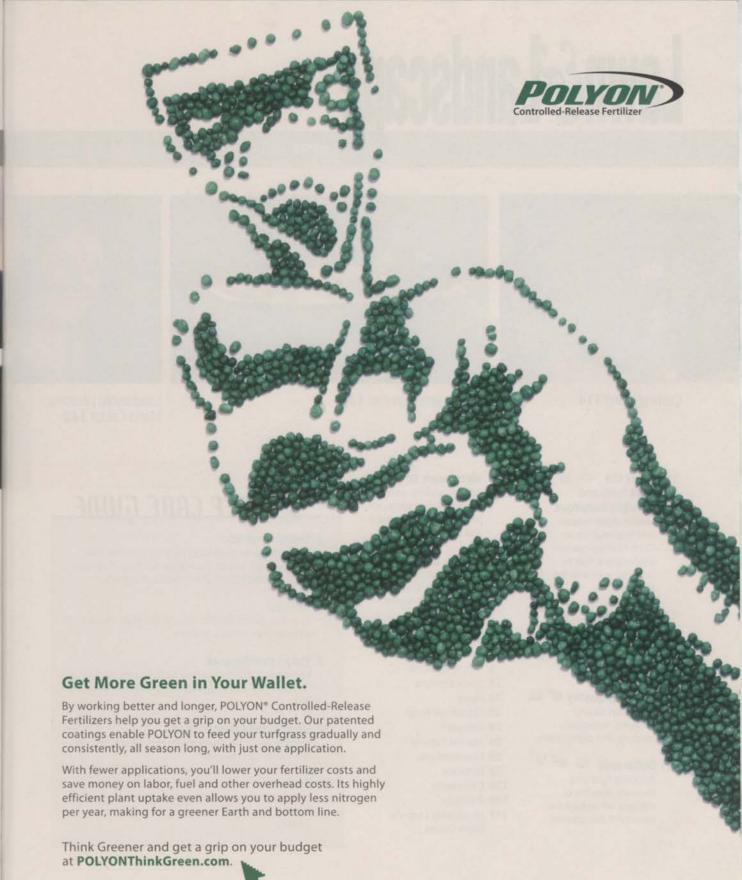








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ONLINE Contents



Outside the industry

We love providing you with news and advice from inside the green industry. But there's a wealth of information out there from other professions. Here are some articles from outside your world that you might find interesting and can apply to your business.

Basketball barber shop

Banks laughed at Calvin 'Tito' Hudson when he wanted a loan to start his business - a barbershop with a basketball court inside. He perservered, and five years later he's still scoring points with his customers.

bit.ly/barberbasket



Responsible rocker

While former Guns N' Roses bassist was recovering from an exploded pancreas in 2004, he realized he had no grasp on the millions his band made. CNN Money reports on how he's starting his own wealth management firm. bit.ly/duffmoney



Winning time

Charlie Sheen was everywhere in March. Some find him entertaining, some think he is crazy. Blogger Steven Berglas says you can learn a lot from the former "Two and a Half Men" star about how to manage your most talented workers. bit.ly/manage_sheen



VALLEYCREST **RECOGNIZED FOR**

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PAIN AT THE PUMP

bit.ly/gaslco

LCOs say they may have to

Some stories our Tweeps liked:

increase prices if the cost of gas

The landscaping company made the 2011 Training Top 125 list. bit.ly/valcrest

CORNELL PEST PROGRAM FUNDING MAY BE EXTERMINATED

be a victim of budget cuts. bit.ly/cornellpest

RUBY FALLS REDBUD INTRODUCED AS A **BRAND NEW VARIETY**

The woody plant has deep purple foliage and a small weeping form. bit.ly/rubyredbud

New multimedia clips on www.lawnandlandscape.com

LCO takes advantage of rising gas prices

Bel-Air Lawn Care and Maintenance shares its strategy for successfully dealing with higher pump prices. bit.ly/gaspricelco



Grow Show: Avoiding I-9 form mistakes

This podcast will focus on another key driver of business potential - your human resources plan. bit.ly/growshowi9



CENTS 2011 in review

Lawn & Landscape Associate Editor Carolyn LaWell looks back at CENTS 2011 and talks with attendees about why they come to the event. bit.ly/cents2011





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What you're good at (and what you're not)

realized a long time ago that math was not my strong suit. So, while my friends took physics and advanced calculus, I headed down the hall to journalism class. Now, they're accountants and engineers and I'm running a magazine. (Still think I came out ahead on this one.) But I'm stubborn. Case in point: Last year I did my own taxes

and had to cut a check to the government. This year, my accountant buddy did them and Uncle Sam is sending me some

In his early years, Mark Pendergast, owner of Salmon Falls Nursery and Landscaping, in Berwick, Maine, thought he could do it all himself. "When you're just starting out on your own, and you're a small business, you think you know it all," he says. "But as you grow, you realize you need other people around you that understand certain aspects of running your business that maybe aren't your strong points."

Last year, the insurance company Travelers asked small business owners whom they relied on for guidance and advice when it came to managing risks facing their business. Two of the top three answers were "peers" and "myself." Nearly a third said they use an attorney; only eight percent said they relied on an accountant.

There are a lot of things you can do really well - closing deals, designing land-

See my video blog at www.lawnandlandscape.com.

Think of them as a team of white-collar mechanics to help your business run as efficiently as possible.

> scapes, managing crews - but probably a few things you can't. All references to Mr. T aside, every business owner needs his own A-Team - a group of professionals, peers and colleagues he can rely on to help handle things he's not great at. For our cover story (on page 52), we talked to contractors like Pendergast to find out whom they brought in to build their own teams - folks like attorneys, CPAs, marketers and bankers.

> Think of them as a team of whitecollar mechanics to help your business run as efficiently as possible. They might be on staff full-time, or you might only talk to them every six months. The point is they bring a level of expertise to your business that you might not have, which gives you the time to focus on what you're best at: growing your company. - Chuck Bowen



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EDITORIAL

CHUCK BOWEN EDITOR AND ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER Chowen@gie.net BRIAN HORN ASSOCIATE EDITOR bhorn@gie.net

CAROLYN LaWELL ASSOCIATE EDITOR clawell@gle.net

MARTY GRUNDER GRUNDER LANDSCAPING CO., MAITY GRUNDER INC. marty@gie.net.

JIM HUSTON LIL HUSTON ENTERPRISES huston@gie.net

JEFF KORHAN TRUE NATURE jkorhan@gie.net JOHN OSSA IRRIGATION ESSENTIALS OSSA@gie.net

HEATHER TUNSTALL WEB CONTENT MANAGEM htunstall@gie.net

CHRISTINA HACKEL WEB CONTENT EDITOR chackel@gle.net

SALES

DAVID 5ZY NATIONAL SALES MANAGER dszy@gie.net DAN HEBERLEIN ACCOUNT MANAGER dheberlein@gie.net

JAMIE LEWIS ACCOUNT MANAGER jlewis@gie.net

SEAN MAURATH ACCOUNT MANAGER SMBUrath@gie.net

AMEE ROBBINS ACCOUNT MANAGER 616 Marine Ave. Manhattan Beach, Calif. ANDREA VAGAS CREATIVE DIRECTOR

90266 PH: 310-465-6060 FX: 866-857-5442 arobbins@gle.net

IRENE SWEENEY MARKETPLACE PRODUCT MANAGER ISWeeney@gie.net

BONNIE VELIKONYA GLASSIFIED ADVERTISING SALES byelikonya@gle.net

HEIDI CLEVINGER ADVERTISING PRODUCTION COORDINATOR Inclevinger@gle.net

JODI SHIPLEY MARKET COORDINATOR jshipley@gie.net

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RICHARD FOSTER CEO

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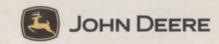
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ValleyCrest named to Training Top 125 list

CALABASAS, Calif. – ValleyCrest Landscape Cos. was selected as one of the best companies in the nation for training by Training magazine.



ValleyCrest was named a top company for training by *Training* magazine.

In its first year entering the recognition program, ValleyCrest earned a ranking of No. 118 and is the only landscape services firm named on the list. The annual ranking recognizes organizations with operations across the world for outstanding employersponsored workforce training and development.

"We are extremely pleased to be selected for this honor," said Parke Kallenberg, vice president of training at ValleyCrest Landscape Maintenance, "We have always believed that properly training employees results in improved productivity, enhanced job quality and higher job satisfaction. Being selected for this award validates that we are on the right road in regards to employee training and development."

The Top 125 ranking is determined by assessing a range of qualitative and quantitative factors including financial investment in employee development, the scope of development programs and how closely such development efforts are linked to the company's business goals and objectives.

Georgia associations to merge this month

ATLANTA-The Metro Atlanta Landscape & Turf Association and two other associations are in the last stages of finalizing a merger with the Georgia Urban Agriculture Council (UAC), forming a truly statewide organization.

At press time, the last legal details were being finalized by MALTA, the Georgia Turfgrass Association, the Georgia Sod Producers Association and UAC. The merger is expected to go into effect April 1.

Upon approval by each board of directors, MALTA, GTA and GSPA proposed the merger to its members.

The votes resulted in a 98 percent approval, said Mary Kay Woodworth.

Woodworth, executive director of MALTA and president of UAC, will become executive director
of UAC with the new organization.

"We're excited because we'll be able to offer so much more to all of our members," Woodworth said. "All of the existing services, events, educational opportunities that each individual association has will stay – nothing is going to change in that regard. They'll just be bigger and better and open to a larger audience."

Woodworth added that in the next few months, members of the associations will not see much of a change until processes are streamlined.

The merger gives UAC a membership of 1,100. But Woodworth expects that number to grow.

"I think there were many companies, because Atlanta was in the name of MALTA, that felt that it was only for Atlanta companies, and I think by removing that obstacle it will make a big difference," she said. Also, the different types of outreach the organizations offer will be a boost. For instance, MALTA offered monthly education sessions, while GTA hosted a yearly tradeshow.

"There will just be a lot more opportunities for people to learn about the association and interact, so I think it will definitely drive membership," she said.

UAC was founded in 2005 to provide an industry voice on legislative and regulatory matters for multiple Georgia associations. Because UAC is a more recognizable name throughout the state, it made sense for the three associations to merge and maintain the UAC name, URBANAG COUNCIL Woodworth said.

"As an advocacy group for the industry, we more than double our size now," Woodworth said. "And (we) just create a bigger power and a bigger voice – one voice for the industry." – Carolyn LaWell

Swingle acquires LawnCare Aeration Plus

GREELEY, Colo. – Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care, has acquired LawnCare Aeration Plus.

Larry Torrez, former owner of LawnCare Aeration Plus, said after deciding to retire, he looked for a landscape business known for customer service to buy his company.

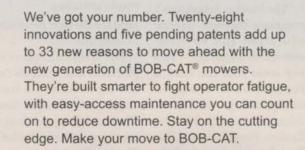
"Swingle's recognition over the past 64 years for receiving many industry and business ethics awards was a key factor in my selection process," he said. "Swingle also offers an expanded service line that will allow my former customers to use a single point of contact for their lawns, trees and holiday décor services."

Swingle has recently acquired several landscape and holiday décor service companies, including three in the fall of 2010, said President John Gibson.

The acquisitions have allowed the company to expand its services to all Front Range communities. The Font Range is the most populous area in the state of Colorado, extending from Fort Collins in the north and south through Boulder, Denver and Colorado Springs. This acquisition of LawnCare Aeration Plus will be supported by Swingle's Fort Collins branch.

"We will focus on continuing to give great service to Larry Torrez's customers at LawnCare Aerations Plus and developing even stronger customer loyalty by offering a host of new services supported by a highly trained team ...," said Thomas R. Tolkacz, Swingle's CEO. "We look forward to servicing even more Colorado communities as we grow and develop the Swingle brand in these new market segments along Colorado's Front Range communities."

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Arboretum receives education grant

LISLE, III. – The Exelon Foundation has donated \$100,000 to The Morton Arboretum to promote several teen mentoring, career exploration and learning programs.

"The Morton Arboretum's programs combine science education and environmental stewardship – two key areas that the Exelon Foundation is dedicated to supporting," said Steve Solomon, president of the Exelon Foundation. "The Foundation is pleased to help advance the Arboretum's efforts to provide young people hands-on experience in the natural sciences and



The Morton Arboretum serves as a starting point for careers in forestry and botany.

produce the next generation of scientists."

The arboretum offers exploration that students cannot experience in a traditional classroom, said Susan Wagner, vice president of education and information at The Morton Arboretum.

Students aged 12-18 will have the opportunity to work alongside scientists and master educators.

The Arboretum's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Pathways Program is designed as a successive stepping-stone to careers such as forestry, natural science interpretation and botany.

"Research shows that positive early experiences in nature foster a lifelong appreciation and respect for living things," Wagner said. "By providing a deeper understanding of trees and nature, children grow up to be adults who are more inclined to make decisions that protect the environment."

The Arboretum Education Program was founded in 1922 and is one of the oldest and largest of its kind.

Case launches rodeo competition

RACINE, Wis. - Case Construction Equipment has launched the Case Triple Threat Rodeo Competition, a yearlong rodeo competition featuring Case loader/backhoes, wheel loaders and skid-steers.

The operators who win rodeo events at Case dealer-ships across North America will compete in a final event during the 2012 World of Concrete tradeshow to determine the champion. The grand prize winner receives a new Case compact track loader for the sponsoring company and a Ram truck for themselves. Fully loaded





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with a quick coupler, pilot controls and Ride Control, the compact track loader is valued at \$59,000. The Ram 2500SLT truck features a 5.76 V8 Hemi and is valued at \$42,000.

"Operators demonstrate their skills on the job every day," said Rob Marringa, Case marketing manager. "They're placing pipe in narrow trenches, maneuvering equipment around job site obstacles and leveling ground to exact specifications. The Triple Threat Rodeo gives the very best operators a chance to show off their skills."

Operators participating in the local rodeo events are eligible to win up to \$500 in

cash prizes and Case gear. First-prize winners also will win a trip for two to Las Vegas and the opportunity to compete in the Case North American Triple Threat Rodeo Championship.

Case dealer events benefit local charities, such as Habitat for Humanity. Each participating Case dealership will make a donation to its local Habitat affiliate or other local charities and provide the opportunity to recruit skilled volunteers at the events.

The rodeo events also will promote the Case Community Challenge program, which honors contractors who donate their time and energy to participate in local community improvement and organizational projects.

The Case Triple Threat Rodeo begins this month. For more information about the competition including a calendar of events, visit www.caserodeoseries.com.

Coalition releases EAB management recommendations

WALNUT CREEK, Calif. – A new set of recommendations has been released by experts on how to approach emerald ash borer management in urban landscape.

The newly-formed Coalition for Urban Tree Conservation released the EAB statement after a summit hosted by Valent Profession-



Emerald ash borer has been found in 15 states.

al Products. The coalition, which comprise university researchers, tree and land care company representatives, nongovernmental organizations, municipal arborists and foresters and a Valent representative, developed a consensus document to clarify the misconceptions about the effects of EAB and management options.

"This document will help increase alignment between





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different groups – governmental, scientific and the arborists – regarding EAB management," said Joe Chamberlin, regional field development manager at Valent. "It emphasizes the point that conservation of healthy ash trees is more sensible in many cases, from economic, environmental and public safety perspectives, than tree removal."

The statement describes the economic and ecosystem incentives that ash trees provide. For instance, the trees provide increased property value, storm water mitigation and decrease energy demands. Consequently, EAB, which is now in 15 states, is predicted to cause

\$10 billion to \$20 billion in losses to urban forests during the next 10 years.

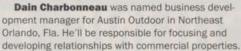
University scientists have developed and refined treatment protocols to protect the healthy ash trees, which can be more effective, economical and environmentally sound than actually cutting down the ash trees. The coalition supports three means for EAB control.

Dinotefuran is registered for basal trunk bark or soil application, emamectin benzoate for trunk injection only and imidacloprid for soil application or trunk injection.

For more information in both English and Spanish on how to identify and control EAB, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com.

NEW HIRES

Jim Houston was promoted by The Davey Tree Expert Co. to vice president of Midwest operations for its residential and commercial services division. Most recently Houston serves as operations manager for the Northeast region.



DJ's Landscape Management, a Michigan-based company, named **James Sheely** sales account manager for the Holland and Kalamazoo markets. He will be responsible for developing opportunities from existing and new client relationships.

Arysta LifeScience hired **Matthew Siebel** as its Midwest territory sales manager. He'll oversee Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois and the Pittsburgh areas.

Jon Ackerman was appointed a field sales representative in BFG Supply Co.'s Western region. Ackerman will mainly handle the Minneapolis area as his territory.

Jacobsen has named **Ric Stone** vice president of sales. Stone will be responsible for sales in North, Central and South America and will oversee customer service and parts support.



Houston



Charbonneau



Stone





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Hunter List Price

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PLANET names new board

At its annual Leadership and Executive Forum meetings, the association announced its 2011-2012 board. By Chuck Bowen



AMELIA ISLAND, Fla. – As part of its annual Leadership meeting, PLANET installed its new board of directors.

David Snodgrass, PLANET president until his term expires in May, spoke to members as he passed the gavel to the incoming president Jerry Grossi.

He said his father gave him two gifts as a child: optimism and enthusiasm. "Those are the two things over my career I have leveraged my success on. Those are the secrets to my success," he said. "It is my highest honor to be president of this association."

Snodgrass also expanded on the association's decision to keep its annual Green Industry Conference in Louisville, Ky., through 2014. While some members question the value of remaining in the same location year after year, Snodgrass said the fall meeting – when coordinated with the GIE+EXPO – is a financial boon to the association.

"First and foremost, it's a financial thing," he said. The GIC brings the association about \$1 million a year in revenue – a line item second only to membership dues, and Snodgrass said a conference independent of the GIE+EXPO wouldn't likely bring in that much cash.

"In this world of tightening budgets, you need to be smart in running your business and smart in running

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AN GREEN

L&L ON THE ROAD

the association," he said.

The Executive Forum meeting opened with a keynote from author and journalist Carmine Gallo, who spoke on innovation. His book, "The Innovation Secrets of Steve Jobs," outlines ideas business owners can steal from Steve Jobs and Apple to improve their customer service and innovate

at their own companies. In his keynote presentation, Gallo gave attendees a plan to get started.

Do what you love. "You cannot come up with innovative products unless you are passionate about moving society forward," Gallo said. "It's not the product. It's what the product means to your customers."

Kickstart your brain. Expose yourself to diverse experiences and different types of people to keep your ideas creative and fresh. Apple stores are modeled not after other electronics retailers, but after lobbies at the Four Seasons.

Say no to 1,000 things. Gallo said Apple knows what

it does well and also what it doesn't do well. Their goal is to have products that are simple to use; the company has just 30 products but earns \$50 billion in revenue. "It takes courage to be simple," Gallo said.

And, create good experiences. In a market where your product is hard to differentiate, companies have to stand out on things like customer service.

At the Apple store, you can set up an appointment with a personal shopper (who isn't on commission) who will walk you through the store and help you shop. L&L

The author is editor and associate publisher at Lawn & Landscape. He can be reached at cbowen@gle.net.

PLANET's new executive board, whose terms begin May 1, include:

- · Jerry Grossi, Arborlawn, president
- · Norman Goldenberg, TruGreen Cos., president-elect
- · David Snodgrass, Dennis' 7 Dees, immediate past president

The association's new board of directors comprises:

- · Phil Allen, Brigham Young University
- · Michael Byrne, Hunter Lane, South Hamilton, Mass.
- · Tom Fochtman, CoCal Landscape, Denver
- · Bill Horn, Terracare Associates, Martinez, Calif.
- Glenn Jacobsen, Jacobsen Landscape Design and Construction, Midland Park, N.J.
- · Kurt Kluznik, Yardmaster, Painesville, Ohio
- . Jim McCutcheon, HighGrove Partners, Austell, Ga.
- · Roger Phelps, Stihl, Virginia Beach, Va.
- Barb Scheibe, Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association, Waukesha, Wis.
- Kyle Webb, A-Z Lawn and Landscaping, Centerville, Ohio



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Architects expect strong sales in 2011 for outdoor living/landscape design

espite the fact that the economy is still on the mend, landscape architects anticipate strong interest in outdoor living and designed residential landscapes, according to the American Society of Landscape Architects' 2011 Residential Trends Survey.

The survey asked 245 residential landscape architects about the relative popularity of certain design features and elements, including outdoor living features, outdoor recreation amenities, landscape and gardening and sustainable design. Architects were able to pick multiple features, which were then ranked by percentage of votes.

So what were the most popular features expected this year?

The **top five outdoor living features** are: lighting (96.2%), fire pits (94.2%), seating/dining areas (94.1%), grills (93.8%) and installed seating (89.5%).

Among the **popular landscape garden elements** are a focus on low-maintenance landscapes (94.2%), native plants (87.2%), water features (81%) and food/vegetable gardens (80.3%).

And the **most common sustainable design features** are expected to be waterefficient irrigation (83.1%) followed by permeable pavers (77%) and reduced lawn (72.6%). The full results can be found at asla.org/land.





SURVEY: Government involvement will increase

In an industry facing more local, state and federal regulations, being able to shape policy is becoming crucial for lawn care, irrigation and pest management contractors. A new McKinsey Global Survey found companies aren't more effective at managing ties with governments than they were in late 2009, but they are engaging in more collaboration.

Of the survey's 1,396 respondents, just more than half said government and regulators will be among the stakeholders with the biggest economic effect on their companies in the next three to five

years. Only customers ranked higher on the list of possible influencers. Also, 61% of respondents said government's involvement in their industry will only continue to increase.

Two-thirds of the executives who responded said companies in their industries should proactively and regularly engage with governments and regulators, but less than 50% of the companies said they actually do.

"Companies might benefit most from adopting the same practices used by those that already have good relationships with government," the survey said. "Even the successful companies can improve their overall performance by developing proficiency in many other activities."

Consumer confidence reaches 3-year high

U.S. consumer confidence rose to a three-year high in February – another hopeful sign for the economic recovery.

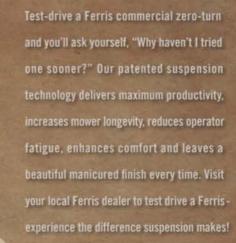
The Thomson Reuters and University of Michigan survey index on consumer sentiment rose to 77.5, the highest since January 2008. The index was at 74.2 in January of this year. Analysts said the survey pointed to indications that consumers were weathering higher gas prices and felt optimistic about the labor market.

"Consumers do appear to be taking the rise in gasoline and food prices in stride, which is very encouraging," Ryan Sweet, a senior economist at Moody's Analytics in West Chester, Penn., told Reuters. "I wouldn't be surprised if we had a few bumps along the road, but I do think the consumer will continue to play an important role in the recovery."



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GAS CANS AND HIRING

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 flexperts@gle.net.

O. We are a small maintenance company (four employees). Currently, our crews take two gas cans into the field - a 2.5-gallon mix can and a 1-gallon regular gas can. I am looking at purchasing metal safety cans. Should we get the gas cans with a roll cage or, since we are required to strap them down, just get the regular ones? Any light you can shed on regulation and safety would help.

A. When it comes to a secure gas can system for his trucks and utility trailers, if your employees are always aware of the need to strap down both of the gas cans in question, you don't need to spend the extra money on gas can roll or protective cages.

Gas cans become more expensive when you add the cages, and if you purchases good quality safety cans, you should be fine.

It is not a matter of training the workers on the strap requirement; it is important that crew members are constantly reminded

about this important safety consideration every day they are out on the job and moving from site to site.

You should monitor the gas cans whenever you visit job sites and provide the constant safety reminder to the crew members.

Sam Steel, PLANET Safety Consultant

Q. How can I stay competitive when hiring new employees? I'm having a hard time finding employees - specifically because the oil fields in this area offer jobs at great starting salaries. I am facing competition from startup, one-man operations.

A. The key to successful recruiting is using as many avenues to find the people you need. There is no "best way." just a lot of different approaches. There are good people out there, but it will take time and creativity to find them.

Your challenge is finding competent people who will be able to deliver commendable



service to your customers - a task easier said than done. Here are some basic recruiting tips:

Staff referrals. Your current staff is a great source for finding new people. Statistics have shown that referrals have the lowest turnover rate. Offer cash incentives for referring people. One word of caution: Do not blame the referring employee if the new employee does not work out. It was your decision to hire that person.

Newspaper ads. Newspaper ads can be a hit or miss. It is a good idea to have several different ads put together. Try placing a darker border around the ad or change its size and placement. Have the ad placed under different headings.

Instead of using "landscaping," try "general labor" or "driver." Newspaper ads have their place, but do not rely on them as your only source of new employees. You will be sadly under-staffed if you do.

Never stop recruiting. Look for recruiting opportunities during your normal day-to-day activities. Always keep a supply of business cards with you and hand them out when you happen upon an

Individual that impresses you. Retail businesses, convenience stores or restaurants usually hire people that like to work with the general public. If you come across someone who appears bright, energetic, and enthusiastic, hand out your business card and say, "Give me a call if you are looking for a change."

Be creative. Local junior colleges often have help wanted bulletin boards. Make up a small poster and put it up. Talk with the financial aid office and see if it keeps a list of employers that offer jobs to students who have a financial need. Create a "Help Wanted" poster and put it up in churches, on community bulletin boards or any place that people gather. Put it on your truck so people will see it as you drive around your community.

Network. Talk with vendors, suppliers, bankers, friends, insurance agents or anyone else you meet on a regular basis and tell them you are looking for employees. You want to get the information to a person who meets with many other people. Use these people as your own "private" recruiting company.

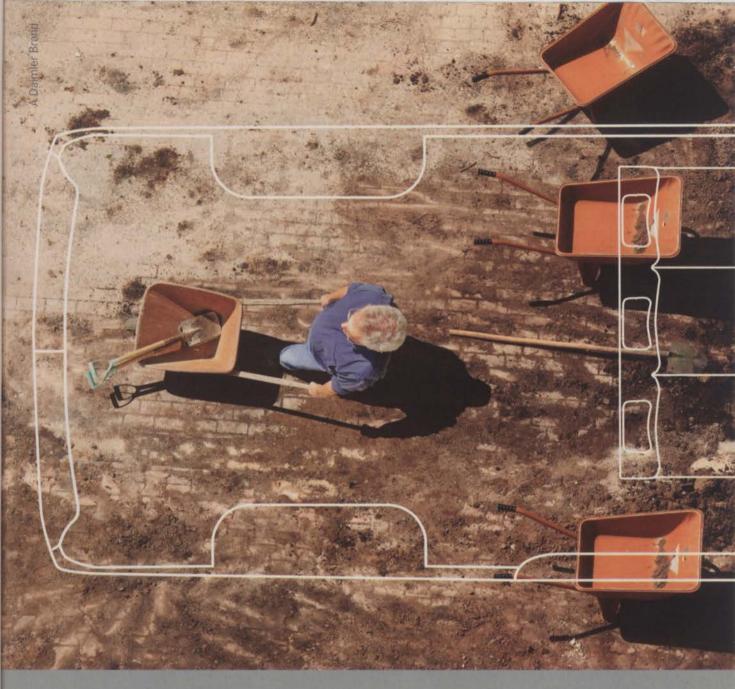
Good recruiting is just the first step. Then comes interviewing, hiring and, finally, training the new employee.

It is critical to the success of the process that professionalism and image be addressed 100 percent of the time. Is your office neat and clean, or is it a mess with papers piled all over the desk? If your ad states that your company is a premier place to work and the office looks like a tornado just hit, it will not project a good image for the recruit.

Turnover will occur on a regular basis. Be prepared for this and plan accordingly. If possible, overstaff at the beginning of the year. Never stop looking for new people who may be as good, if not better, as those who you currently have on staff.

Do not wait until you are short of people to start recruiting. You know it will happen, and it will happen at the worst possible time, so take time now to get your recruiting process in place. L&L

Harold A. Enger, Spring-Green Lawn Care Corp.



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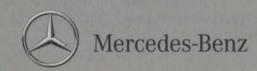
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^{*} Based on a comparison of Automotive News classification of full-size commercial vans.

^{**} In base configuration.

Ashbash Home Fire Pit

The pitch: The Ashbash Home Fire Pit is used for outdoor barbecue, Dutch oven and fire pit cooking.

Specs:

- The fire pit controls heat vertically and horizontally, comes with a pivoting cooking surface and has a 430-square-inch cooking surface (24-inch model).
- . Stands 19 inches tall and weighs 65 pounds.
- · Grill lift height: 8 inches.
- . Side wall: 1/4-inch rolled steel.

Contact: www.volcanogrills.com



Waterfall Spillway

The pitch: This compact spillway includes strategically positioned internal barriers that diffuse the rush of incoming water, providing a smooth flowing waterfall.



Specs:

- The 22-inch wide spillway handles flows up to 7,500 gallons per hour.
- . The one-piece roto-molded design makes it durable.
- Easy to camouflage since it can be buried beneath stone, gravel, mulch or soil.

Contact: www.aquascapeinc.com

Ratchet Rake

The pitch: The Ratchet Rake is a multipurpose implement that quickly attaches to tractor and skidsteer loader buckets.



Specs:

- The combination of two separate rows of angular teeth projecting outward and downward enables this product to rip out thick brush and vegetation.
- Can be operated in a forward or backward direction, making it suitable for many jobs.
- · Comes in 52-, 68- and 72-inch sizes.
- Accepts cutting edges up to %-inch thick.

Contact: www.ratchetrake.com

Mounting System

The pitch: This universal accessory mounting system for riding lawn mowers provides an alternate solution to the pull-behind/hitch-style attachments currently on the market.



Specs:

- Uses a 4-point hitch platform that provides easy mounting of lawn mower attachments.
- The adjustable mounting system allows it to fit the majority of riding lawn mowers.
- An integrated spray boom makes it a useful attachment when used as a liquid fertilizer or herbicide sprayer.

Contact: www.mowerboss.com

Design Pro LED Accent Light

The pitch: Kichler's Design Pro LED hardscape, deck, step and bench accent lights illuminate retaining walls, columns, steps and rails.



Specs:

- · A slim 3/4-inch profile and low heat output.
- The fixtures use 75 percent less energy than traditional incandescent/halogen lighting.
- The wet-location-approved fixtures are available in three finishes (aluminum, copper and brass), and three sizes – 6.9 inches, 12.9 inches and 18.9 inches.

Contact: www.landscapelighting.com

Harpoon Granular Aquatic Herbicide

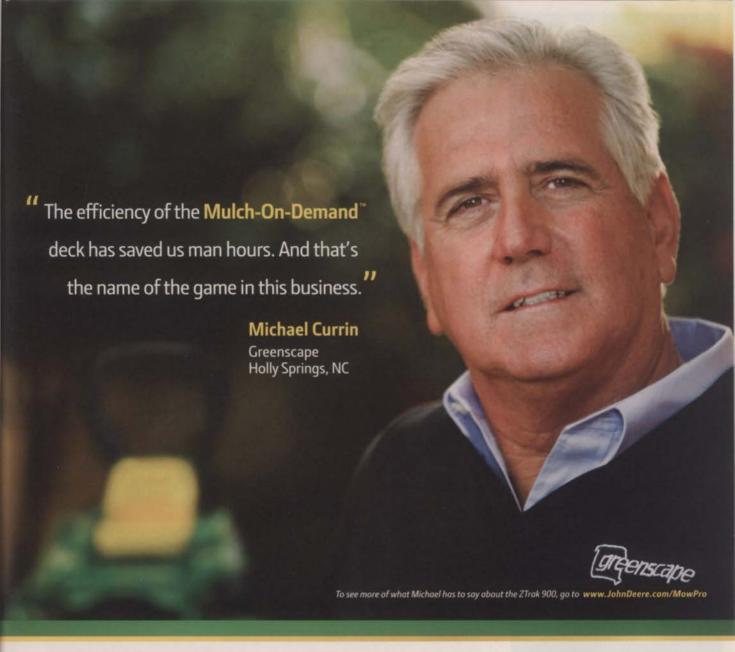
The pitch: Harpoon Granular targets copper-sensitive aquatic plants. At label rates, treated water can be used immediately for irrigating, swimming and animals to drink.

Specs:

- Specifically labeled for controlling Hydrilla, pondweeds, Elodea, Naiads, coontail and Eurasian watermilfoil.
- Designed and formulated to go after rooted, bottom-growing plants.
- Available in 40-pound bags and is also available in a liquid formulation.

Contact: www.archchemicals.com





The ZTrak PRO 900 Series

Landscape pros like Michael know firsthand the time savings they get with a ZTrak PRO 900 with **Mulch-On-Demand** deck. You can switch instantly from mulching to side-discharging, then back to mulching without ever leaving your seat. And there are the other legendary benefits of a ZTrak PRO 900: ease of use, superior controllability, and exceptional mowing performance.

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NEW PRODUCTS

CAST LED Engineered Wall Light

The pitch: The CAST LED Engineered Wall Light is rugged and durable.

Specs:

- Solid bronze landscape lighting fixture features a water-resistant, replaceable integrated LED module housed in a glass-enclosed compartment.
- Solid copper bracket allows for quick installation in a variety of locations. Bracket is thin enough so it does not interfere with retaining wall construction.
- Bracket extends from back of fixture so it is hidden from view, allowing seamless flush-mounting with no visible hardware.

Contact: www.cast-lighting.com



Vermeer Brush Chipper

The pitch: Vermeer has enhanced its BC1000XL brush chipper with two diesel engine options – a 49-hp Cat C2.2L Tier 4a or 85-hp Cummins B3.3 Tier 3, which will offer increased fuel efficiency and reduced emissions.



Specs:

- Both engine options offer the power needed to efficiently process material up to 12 inches in diameter.
- The 25-gallon fuel tank cuts the time spent refueling and increases time spent on the jobsite.
- The BC1000XL also features the Vermeer SmartFeed system, which monitors
 engine rpm and automatically stops or reverses the rollers when feeding larger
 hardwood material reducing the need to manually manipulate the control bar.

Contact: www.vermeer.com

Vista's 4260 Series Hardscape Lights

The pitch: A compact design makes this light series versatile.

Specs:

- The compact design (6 inches long x 1 inch wide x % inch tall) makes it easy to hide
- Removable flange plate allows unit to be firmly anchored into masonry or paver installations.
- · Impact resistant lens protects LED emitters.
- · Supplied with all mounting hardware and connectors.
- Available in 15 different powder-coated finishes, plus natural brass, antiqued brass, copper or stainless steel.

Contact: www.vistapro.com



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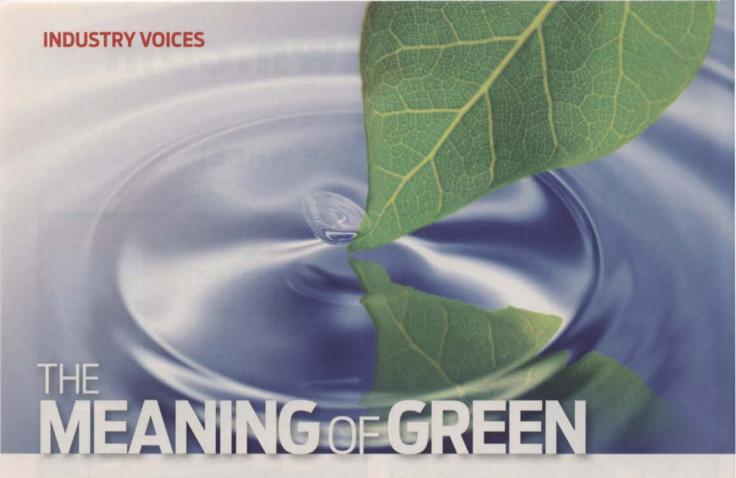
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EDITOR'S NOTE: Every month, our columnists give their take on a common topic. Last month they told you what to expect from the green industry's next generation and this month they're defining what "being green" really means.

Marty Grunder

t's pretty hard to go anywhere where you don't hear companies touting themselves as "green."

You see it at fast food restaurants, clothing stores, grocery stores, and you even see it at many of the professional sports games and arenas. We are reminded by our energy providers how important it is to save resources and we feel good driving our hybrid vehicles. There can be no denying that taking steps to avoid filling our landfills with things that can be reused and saving resources is a great thing. We've made much progress in this area in the last 10 years, but there still is a long way to go. As a whole, the U.S. is behind other nations in the area of recycling. Too many resources still aren't reused. So, what does the smart green industry company do? I think you do 3 things:

Make "being green" part of your company's culture. I would argue that the green industry is the longest standing and most responsible group of companies. Oh sure, there are some real losers that use leftover

chemicals and pour things down drains. But the term green industry is owned by us; we've been using it for years. It's NOT new to us. So, use it, promote this fact and make "being green" part of your everyday life.

Honestly, I don't see this as optional or difficult. I see it as the way a smart company with integrity does business. A while back, one of my friends at work asked our team to please stop placing plastic trash bags inside other plastic trash bags. I was proud to hear him fighting for something we all could agree on – saving the environment from more trash that never decomposes. How does your company handle its waste? Are your

people recognized for saving resources? You show what's important to you by communicating constantly about those items. So, get the message out to your team and your clients. Don't let up.

2 set a good example yourself. I came across a landscaper a few years ago that touted everything they were doing as being "what's best for the environment." They had hybrid cars, embraced many recycling programs and overall did a great job in this area. They were even looking to place solar panels on the roof of their building. However, the owner's wife secretly drove a Hummer – the full-sized one.

I really don't care what you drive, so please don't be upset with me. But if everything at the company speaks to one philosophy and what is done at home speaks to something else, then your efforts won't be believable. So, you have to show by your actions that a "green initiative" is important to you. Your ac-

tions MUST support your beliefs. You need to be the most "green" person in your company.

3 Don't get too carried away. To me, being green is the right thing to do. Generally, people and companies that do the "right things" will find that the "right things" happen to them. It might sound funny for someone who just wrote most of a column on being green to say this, but there are a lot of things that just don't make sense.

For example, I'd love to have an all electric fleet, but the only truck out there that I've come across that might work is one that Frito-Lay bought as a test for their fleet. They are more than \$120,000 each and don't have the power to handle the loads we work with at Grunder Landscaping. It's just not feasible or practical. Have some common sense towards this and you'll be just fine.

Being green is the right thing to do for our world. So, set a good example. Take as many steps as you can to save resources. And remember – "being green" is what a quality-focused, winning company does.

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

John Ossa

Through use, we have come to know what "green" signifies. We equate it with "sustainable," another amorphous term that lacks specificity. What these terms hope to capture are "ecological practices," which begin to describe science-based actions that don't undermine the biologically diverse and interdependent plant and animal communities.

In our rush to embrace "green," it is surprising how often basic truths are devalued or ignored in order to support the notion of the day. For example, all over the U.S. we see green roofs being installed. Building on experience from countries like Germany, where green roofs are not unusual, they are being installed because of their significant benefit to improving surface water quality by trapping and holding water, reducing excess runoff, and reducing the high temperatures associated with synthetic, static surfaces.

Yet many of the same people that promote green roofs also promote ripping out turf playing fields and installing synthetic playing surfaces. The fibrous root systems of turf catch and filter polluted runoff water. Turf root systems are efficient at controlling soil erosion and increase groundwater recharge. Turf grass reduces atmospheric carbon dioxide and releases oxygen. How much oxygen does the ground up car tires that make up a synthetic playing field release?

More ironic is the desire to reduce the "heat island" effect in the urban environment through installing green roofs, yet the "heat island" over something as large as a soccer field is discounted. There is plenty of data about extremely high surface temperatures of synthetic turf – in fact a study done at BYU documented average synthetic field surface temperature is more than 40 degrees higher than turf, and routinely more than 100 degrees. So why is the "heat island" from something the size of a football field, somehow different from the "heat island" over a rooftop?

A way forward is to set the objectives and let the free market economy solve the problems. For example, turf playing fields have been justifiably criticized for high water use. There are new irrigation delivery systems that are far more efficient than conventional rotor systems. These next generation sub-surface systems deliver water reliably and uniformly through a geotextile membrane, and create an optimum soil moisture environment using far less water than conventional hardware of any type.

There are extreme examples of fer-

tilizer applications on playing fields creating pollution or contamination of watersheds. Again, the free market is solving the problem. Manufacturers are developing slow release products and a whole awareness regarding the benefits of building a diverse and healthy soil biology as a key strategy in sustaining turf are being implemented. This combined with subsurface fertigation that does not run-off, are solving the problem.

Instead of knee-jerk measures equating removing turf as a step toward "sustainability," let's support clear goals for sustaining biological diversity, ecological practices and the new science based technologies that deliver the real green – real environmental benefits – real photosynthesis producing real oxygen.

JOHN OSSA is the national accounts director at Irrigation Water Technologies America and owns Irrigation Essentials. Mail jossa@ giemedia.com.

Jeff Korhan

Green seems to mean something different to all of us. The

reason is we all see the world differently based on our own personal values.

Growing up, I was taught not to waste anything. While that mindset of doing more with less is now fashionable, there are those of us that will always turn off the lights before leaving a room and resist being in a vehicle whose engine is idling unnecessarily.

In this respect, we do not define green as much as it defines us. Observe someone's behavior regarding the environment and you can gain insights into their personal values. This then gives clues about their motivations in general.

This is why it is important for green industry businesses to demonstrate leadership with respect to the environment and natural resources. Those positive actions suggest your company

INDUSTRY VOICES

will also apply the same values when caring for your customers.

Remember that your business is more visible than ever, and that the community often holds you to a higher standard. They also now have the power of the social networks to broadcast their opinions, which can include images and videos of your teams in action. This can actually work to your advantage if everyone in your company is aligned by a set of core values.

I believe the best approach for being green is to think of the natural environment as a giant ecosystem that not only incorporates every living creature, but all of us too. The most obvious inference is that we need to collectively find a balance that respects everyone's needs.

Unfortunately, political and economic factors are making it nearly impossible to achieve that balance, especially on a global level. For example, did you know that approximately 97 percent of the world's supply of rare earth metals necessary for the production of hybrid vehicles and wind energy are controlled by China? Imbalances such as these create significant challenges.

Green within the green industry brings to mind beautiful landscapes. In other industries it means doing more with less. Yet, on a global scale, it often points to the democratization of resources, including water, minerals and the technology for clean air and energy.

To say the least, green is a complicated topic. As resources become short in supply, we will hopefully find ways to share and work together to preserve a quality of life for as many human beings as possible.

As a small business owner, this means doing your part. Set a strong example in your community and you will be making your contribution to achieve a balance that is only attainable when all of us work together.

JEFF KORHAN is a speaker, consultant and topranked blogger on new media and small business marketing at www.jeffkorhan.com; mail jkorhan@ giemedia.com.



Jim Huston

"Green" is a term that means many things to many people. For many in the green industry, it represents not only what we do but also who we are. It isn't just a moniker for plants or vegetation. It can be a way of life that encompasses most everything outdoors – hardscape, irrigation, lawn fertilization, ad infinitum.

To others, green means ecologically or environmentally "friendly." Though rare, some take this to such an extreme that you might refer to them as "eco-terrorists." Then there are those who equate the term "green" with life itself. Still others see green as a label that identifies the very goal of free enterprise. Green is money. Greed isn't necessarily good but green is. On the negative side, there is "the green mile" and the movie so named starring Tom Hanks. Who would want to walk the green mile?

You could go on and on, nuancing and morphing words in an attempt to explain the various definitions of this one term. Because green is so often infused with our morals, ethics and values, it is not a neutral term – a mere descriptor. In addition, it's not a static term. It seems to be evolving (some might say devolving), almost on a daily basis. What green meant 10 or 20 years ago isn't necessarily what it means today. So it would appear that understanding the context of the term green is crucial if we are to understand what green means.

BACK TO THE FUTURE. Where I grew up, in rural Pennsylvania in the 1950s, my family didn't have city water. We had a flatbed truck with a large tank on it and we hauled our water from a local spring and poured it into a cistern behind our home. My aunts and uncles did the same. We had rain barrels that collected water from summer storms.

Our garden was huge and we all worked it. Most of what we ate was organic. All of us pitched in when it was time to can such items as beets, peaches, pears, string beans, cherries – fruit and nut trees speckled our property. We bought live chickens and butchered (or should I say processed) them at home. My parents, aunts and uncles were all pretty self-sufficient, and we recycled just about everything. However, somewhere along the way, we lost most of this. Fortunately, many of us are going forward by going back to our roots.

CONCLUSION. What green means may vary somewhat from person to person or group to group. However, put in its proper context, there does seem to be some consensus. In the extreme, it is preservation. The cosmos isn't here just to be looked at and not touched. Conservation seems the better description of what we should be about. You could call it enlightened consumption or good stewardship, if you will. But you have to be careful not to demonize and label a particular behavior or practice as degrading too quickly.

Practices and behaviors change often even if they do not change quickly. Just because a particular vehicle only gets 10 or 20 miles per gallon doesn't mean that it's a bad thing. (How many readers of *Lawn & Landscape* drive a truck that gets 12 or fewer mpg? This isn't bad. It's what is – today. Tomorrow will be different and probably better) A vehicle that gets 50 mpg isn't necessarily a good thing if it is unsafe to drive.

We are not necessarily dealing with absolutes here. Murder, or taking a life without just cause, is always wrong. It's an absolute concept. Green isn't like that. It has to be viewed in relation to its context.

You could say that green is a state of mind – a combination of morals, ethics, values and practices that we share and that encourage us to use all of our resources (material and spiritual) for the purpose of creating a more beautiful, yet more functional, world while doing so with a minimal amount of waste and/or abuse. Some would simply call this common sense. L&L

JIM HUSTON runs J.R. Huston Consulting, a green industry consulting firm. See www. jrhuston.biz; mail jhuston@giemedia.com.



A supplement to

Lawn&Landscape

2011 LIGHTING GUIDE

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ADDING VOLTA GE TO YOUR BUSINESS

What you need to know to launch a successful outdoor lighting service.

utdoor lighting is a niche service for contractors, but it's a profitable one. The profit margins are consistently in the 30-40 percent range. The lights are used to highlight buildings, plants and water features.

A typical residential installation can run more than \$5,000 in price, which often inspires other skilled contractors – namely irrigation specialists, landscapers and fence companies – to pick up outdoor lighting as an additional offered service.

But the transition is anything but an easy one. Often, these contractors rush into the job without proper research, proper licensing, certification or education – all barriers to entry for new companies.

Ask any outdoor lighting professional and they're likely to tell you that the "fake it 'til you make it" mentality just won't fly when staking out the niche and then carving out one within it.

So, what does a newbie coming into the outdoor lighting business need to know and watch out for when entering this niche market? Contractors can't enter the line of work and expect to be successful by osmosis, says Jeff Tullis, president of Accent Outdoor Lighting, Chesterfield, Mo.

"When I started out in outdoor lighting, I spent many hours educating myself and learning about design principles by driving through subdivisions and scoping out houses. I would go out night after night looking at all the



Landscapers interested in adding outdoor lighting as a service will have to dedicate a lot of time to training and becoming certified. Those who rush into the service or try to learn on the job without proper training won't last.

work, and it got to the point where a partner of mine was afraid I'd get arrested for it," Tullis says with a laugh. "But like anything else in life, you really have to educate yourself first. You just can't absorb how good lighting is

1

Tullis

done by sitting back and waiting for it to happen. Training and certification are really important – not just for ability, but for credibility as well."

Tullis, who is a certified low voltage lighting technician (CLVLT), says

that certification can be a big help in bolstering a new contractor's lighting knowledge and expertise. Members of the Association of Outdoor Lighting Professionals (AOLP) can take the exam at the annual conference.

"I've been a member of AOLP and did their certification and both have been immensely helpful – not just in creating work but keeping abreast of products, service and equipment and how the service and lighting has changed," he says. "Being involved in AOLP helped us with success – in partnering with other companies who

have complementary skills, finding good distributors, building valuable relationships and in providing support for our learning."

Beyond the assistance of AOLP, another lighting industry expert points to creativity and good experience as the bedrock for launching a successful outdoor lighting endeavor.

"I've been in this business over 40 years and my observation is you need an artistic eye to do this work," says Jim Paulin, head of Lumical Technologies Group in Sarasota, Fla.

"For those just coming in, the best lighting designs come from those who are more than perfunctory lights and wires people," he says. "New contractors might find it very difficult to work on a property and know how the trees will absorb or reflect light, how to back-light properly, do front-light wall-washing... a lot of this comes from years of apprenticeship and being an understudy working in the field."

Paulin also says that newbies should know that "equipment is generally quite minimal, but we do most everything by hand."

Irrigation contractors might have water trenchers at their disposal, which can make parts of our job easier," he says. "But really the amount of equip-



Gosselin

ment necessary has been small for us. We sweat solder all our own connections ... of course, high voltage lighting is a whole different ball game than

low voltage, because you need conduit and you'll need an electrician, or an electrician's background and their tools."

Paul Gosselin Sr. of NightScenes Corp. and the president of AOLP is quick to point to the association as a great resource – and to temper the complexity of entering the new niche with some much-needed levity.

"These folks need to know that it's not rocket science, but that it's not easy either. They need to know Lighting is strongest in the West and Southwest, where weather isn't as much of a factor in damaging installations, and people spend more time outside year round. This added service tends to mesh well with irrigation companies – both involve underground utilities, small, highly-skilled crews, special certification and high-end clients.



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LIGHTING W

A typical residential installation of outdoor lighting can cost a homeowner about \$5,000, and contractors can see a 30-40 percent profit margin on a lot of jobs. Those new to installing lighting shouldn't need to buy a lot of equipment.

something about lighting design," he says. "If they just want to plug in some lights, a half-day seminar would be enough. All I do is lights. When I got into it I was an electrician, but got in the mindset that I wanted to do this well.

"When I run into the guys from the irrigation supply houses who offer the basics of the basics - they may know how to do it well,



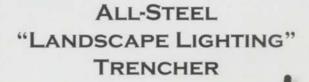
but any idea of design they might convey translates into crappy systems that don't work right," Gosselin says, adding the installers give up when the systems don't work.

Ask Gosselin what he wished he had known before he started out and he offers a laugh.

"I wish I had known there was pro lighting equipment available," he says. "For my very first job, I bought Malibu equipment at Home Depot. I knew nothing about

lighting design back then, either. I just started lying it down and hoped it looked good.

"The online forums I participate in today are really good - a real wealth of knowledge is out there," he says. "I wish I had those back then as well." \$\psi\$



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Do you need a license to practice?

Licensing and certification can be good for established contractors, as it increases the barriers to entry for "lowballers" and newer companies without a track record or positive Better Business Bureau docket.

Licensing and certification requirements vary by state, and while a few states require little or no qualifications, some, like Georgia require a low voltage contractor's license for the installation of outdoor lighting, some irrigation systems and electronic burglar alarm systems.

Many states are also requiring contractors to earn special licenses (similar to electricians) to do business.

While the biggest pro is eliminating barrier to entry, the biggest con is often the upfront cost involved, which is something relatively new businesses and those "against the margin" of profit may struggle with in the industry.

You can consult AOLP's website at www. aolponline.org for information on its CLVLT program.

You can also contact your local building department and consult online at www.licensedelectrician.com for state requirements and contact information.

CLOSING SALES

HOW TO SHOW CLIENTS THE VALUE OF LIGHTING.







Lighting design can give potential customers aesthetics, safety and security, all points that can be referenced during the sales pitch.

ighting isn't the first thing that comes to mind when most homeowners or property managers think about landscaping. In many cases, this can make the prospect of lighting contractors pitching and actually closing sales rather challenging.

To that end, most people in sales of any kind will tell you it's a far more complicated endeavor than attending how-to seminars, building customer loyalty, tiering customers, up-selling and reading Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People."

Especially when one considers that a typical residential installation can run more than \$5,000.

A mastery of lingo, product and service knowledge, etiquette, relationship building and "walking the walk" with a full-scale demonstration all comprise what's required for a great sales approach. And it all starts with training, says Jim Paulin, head of Lumical Technologies Group in Sarasota, Fla.

"Sales training is everything," says

Paulin. "You have to really be able to sell yourself and your product and face rejection – the typical things you face when you sell everything from vacuum cleaners to cars."

Paulin says that he has found ways to overcome objections and lead clients to decisions by spending valuable time meeting with and gaining an understanding of a potential client's needs and wants.

It doesn't always translate, but Paulin says that his gospel of attentiveness, candor, knowing your audience and product and being personable usually pays off in spades.

"You really have to spend the time finding out what the client is interested in – listening to them, engaging them – and then emphasize those items in the context of a lighting plan when you follow up," Paulin says. "But selling lighting jobs is also a matter of educating people as well.

"Good lighting design is going to give people an aesthetic, safety and security," he adds. "Those are the things to talk up, because, at the end of the day, those are the things that speak for themselves. That's how we approach it."

A seasoned veteran in commercial and residential landscape lighting, Paulin has found over the years that many would-be clients have no idea what quality landscape lighting is going to cost them – and that can be a huge barrier to overcome if it isn't dealt with up front.

"I've found out in some cases, when a potential customer finds out the cost, they bow out, run to a big box store and pacify themselves with a kit that they set up themselves," he says. "Quality comes at a price and that has to be emphasized. And when people install the box kits, it looks like it."

Showing a potential client the difference between a kit and a professional lighting installation can be a clincher, says Paul Gosselin Sr. of NightScenes Corp. in Kingsland, Texas.

"Whether you're just getting started (selling) or you've been doing it for a while, setting up a demonstration can be a critical sales tool," says Gosselin, who is also the president of the Association of Outdoor Lighting Professionals (AOLP).

"After you've clarified the wants and needs of a client, go out there to a site with a bunch of lights and create your own temporary, above-ground demonstration system," he says. "Then turn it on and watch their eyes pop out. That seems the biggest and best way to sell lighting jobs – say, 'look at it, here it is,' leave it there for a few days, and then come back, shut it off and take it out. After they liked it and have grown used to having it, losing the ambiance can sometimes be the best sales tool."

Jeff Tullis, president of Accent Outdoor Lighting of Chesterfield, Mo., reiterates the importance of the idea. "Three words: demos, demos, demos," he says. "My experience has been we close 99 percent of all demos we do.

"Of course, you have to qualify the customer first, because you're not going to demo five- or six-dozen lights for someone who's not in earnest. But when you get down the road, and they're on the threshold of making a hefty lighting purchase, seeing really is believing."

Tullis says that Accent's biggest sale came after he and his crew set up 60 lights in a potential client's front yard to show them how it would enhance their landscaping. The sale happened slightly slower than the speed of light.

"We turned it on, turned around, and everyone got a good look at it," Tullis says. "It didn't take long to hear 'We're sold! Where do we sign?' Honestly, that's the easiest sale we've

ever made. It took us a little over two hours in setting the demo up. You need knowledge, know-how and expertise to be able to execute that kind of a plan. You won't have that kind of success otherwise."

The education of customers is important, but that learning is a two-way street and absorbing aesthetic knowledge is important in helping close in those potential customers, Tullis says.

"Be sure to listen to the customer, hear what they're looking for and tailor to the taste of the customer, because while I might like a ton of light, you may like a lot of low light with lots of shadows," he says.

"If you don't listen to your customers, you won't have experiences like the one I just described. You'll lose business by having a cooking-cutter method of doing things." \$\Psi\$



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BRIGHT

Contractors recommend clients use LEDs because of the reduction in energy use and longer lifespan.

ight emitting diodes, those semiconductor light sources also known as LEDs, are the new hot commodity in the outdoor lighting world.

No longer harbingers of the glaring light reserved for cold industrial applications, LEDs are persuading homeowners to use them for residential applications.

It's easy to see why: LEDs can save tons of money over time – especially on big installations. New technology has warmed up the light and kept the energy-saving applications in the process.

Estimates suggest that LEDs offer customers up to a 75 percent reduction in energy use, have a 15- to 20-year lifespan, and require little (if any) maintenance and no service charges.

The U.S. Department of Energy research indicates that during the next two decades, LEDs could save the country more than \$265 billion in energy costs and reduce the demand for lighting electricity by one-third over the next 15 years.

What's more, they pay for themselves in a few short years. "LEDs are all I use," says Paul Gosselin Sr. of NightScenes Corp. in Kingsland, Texas. "I'm 100 percent LED for the last two years. I love them, and I'll never go back because, quite frankly, there's no reason to go back.

"They're so much easier to install, even though in many ways you design an LED system the same way you would the traditional halogen system, which also makes life a whole lot easier if you have to go back and make adjustments. Creating the runs and a lot of the design approach remains the same, which also makes using LEDs a smart move."

Gosselin says that his enthusiasm goes beyond the different wiring systems, smaller wires and transformers that make the infrastructures much easier to implement.

"There's not as much in voltage drop (with LEDs) because they operate at the same intensity at 9 or 15 volts," he adds.

While some lighting professionals have been reluctant to become early adopters of LEDs, the quality of the lights has consistently improved, bringing initially skeptical folks like Jim Paulin – leader of Lumical Technologies Group in Sarasota, Fla. – on board.

"From a technical and artistic perspective, for years there was nothing but a bunch of garbage out there," Paulin says. "It was a bit like the Wild West, with a lot of outlandish claims at how bright they were and a lot of offshore stuff coming in that you had to be careful of.

Paulin says that while some LEDs "can be wimpy and blue looking," with the right ones, customers can expect "wonderful brightness, good color rendition and performance, and the energy use is excellent." And the drawbacks?

"We like to change bulbs to keep people happy, so in that sense, the 15-year warranty puts a dent in service calls," Paulin says.

Jeff Tullis, president of Accent Outdoor Lighting of Chesterfield, Mo., says all of these reasons led his company to do a total of three incandescent jobs last year. Everything else was LED installation.

Tullis says that LEDs create reliability that isn't achievable with incandescent lighting and removes the "hassle factor" that home and business owners usually have with system upkeep. For example, once one or two incandescent bulbs burn out, the design losses the intended look and feel.

"I think that LED isn't going away anytime soon," he says.

"And reverting back to halogen after this will be like putting toothpaste back in the tube." \$\Psi\$

LEDs are part of a suite of lighting technologies referred to as solid-state lighting. Customers are starting to see their potential, including a new buzzworthy future-state item called OLED (or organic light emitting diode). OLEDs consist of sheets of carbon-based compounds that glow when a current is applied through transparent electrodes. OLEDs will likely operate as a thin layer of material installed on ceilings, walls, shelves and other indoor surfaces where illumination is important. Stay tuned.

LIGHTING LESSONS

Award-winning lighting contractor Jim Boyd shares his thoughts on the future of the industry.

If the name Jim Boyd seems even vaguely familiar, it stands to reason. Boyd cleaned up at the Association of Outdoor Lighting Professionals (AOLP) awards ceremony during the 2010 Annual Meeting & Expo.

His company, Boyd Lighting Designs, won two AOLP peer Merit Awards (Best Residential Lighting Application and Best of Show Lighting), an Award of Excellence for Best Lighting Project from AOLP's awards committee and it won the coveted Janet Lennox Moyer Award.

With more than 30 years in the landscape lighting industry - delivering both distinctive and thrilling lighting scenes for residents of San Antonio and adjacent Texas Hill Country area - it seemed the perfect time to debrief with Boyd on the state of the industry and what he sees ahead for outdoor lighting.

How'd you get into the lighting business?

Lighting goes back three generations in my family. I began learning about lighting from working in a lighting showroom business which specialized in residential lighting applications and design. When I began designing and installing landscape lighting, I was already familiar with many of the lamps used because they were the same lamps we had been using in recessed and track applications inside homes.

What are some of your biggest challenges as a lighting professional?

My biggest challenge - which I really enjoy - is to try and keep up with the continual evolution of the light bulb itself. When the term "lifelong learning" was coined, they had to be talking about the lighting industry.

You will never get bored in this business, because there is always something new, or new to you, to learn about and find ways to use to enhance your clients' experience with light.

What do outdoor contractors [irrigation, fencers, landscapers) who aren't currently lighting experts need to know - and what should they watch out for - when thinking about entering the outdoor lighting market or adding it as a service to their repertoire?

The landscape lighting business could be one of the worst opportunities for someone to attempt to fake it until you make it. A good place to start is www.aolponline.org, the Association of Outdoor Lighting Professionals. Many manufactures also offer opportunities for training.

I feel that before any lighting is sold, (contractors) need to educate themselves and spend the time necessary especially at night - to become familiar with lamps and fixtures that create effects used in outdoor lighting.

This requires that the individual designing the system knows both the capabilities and limitations of each component they choose to use in the lighting system, including lamps, fixtures, connection type, system layout and the wiring technique used.

What equipment will contractors need to get started in lighting installation?

Basic electrical tools and a test meter. They have most of the equipment as a landscape contractor already.

Licensing and certification are important. Talk a little bit about what certifications you have.

In 2004, I was part of the first group to test to become a CLVLT, or certified low voltage lighting technician. This educational program is offered and administered through AOLP.

The organization offers a certified outdoor lighting designer (COLD) program, which transpires over a fouryear period.

How will certification affect the industry in the future?

I believe that individuals who take the time to learn and apply best practices with regard to design and installation of landscape lighting can only help our industry, whether they become certified or are licensed.

Where do you see the industry in 10 years?

LED lighting is here to stay, but my hope is that we will have more standardization and consistency between manufacturers of solid state LED lamps. At the very minimum, I want the same offerings I have today from halogen MR16's in intensity, beam spread and color temperature to choose from. \$\Psi\$



Boyd recommends lighting contractors seek proper training and certification before entering the field.

To hire a PROFISSION OF MOT High quality photos of lighting installations can help sell jobs.

Perhaps the hardest part of installing a great landscape lighting project comes at the very end of the job: capturing that incredible view of your work for posterity.

There's an art and (some say) a science to capturing the subtle nuances, hues and shadows on film or digital card when, well, it's so dark. And yet, great evening photos can be a contractor's best friend when it comes to selling jobs.

"Seeing is believing, literally," says Jeff Tullis, president of Accent Outdoor Lighting of Chesterfield, Mo. His approach to the critical marketing facet? "My motto is, have a few high quality photos instead of a slew of marginal shots and always hire a pro."

With the economy being what it is, many lighting pros simply cringe at spending money on something that might not always translate into an increase in sales.

"I do all my own photography – unfortunately," Paul Gosselin Sr., says with a laugh. The president of the Association of Outdoor Lighting Professionals (AOLP) and catalyst behind NightScenes Corp. in Kingsland, Texas, sees the merit

in hiring photographers – but he still chooses to shoot his own photographs.

Gosselin, who had his company's work featured on an episode of ABC-TV's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," has some tips and tricks on how to take the best possible "semi-pro" photos of lighting work.

"Here's the thing: if you have a decent camera where you can turn off the flash – an SLR, or digital single-lens reflex camera, would be the lowest grade – that's the place to start," he says.

"Then you should have Photoshop or an equivalent computer program and a tripod. What that will allow you to do, when you turn off the flash, is to keep the lights themselves from disappearing into the night. What I like to do is drop (photos) into Photoshop, do a shadow highlight and my pictures come alive."

Gosselin is on the right track, at least according to Jeff Wignall – photographer and best-selling author of "The New Joy of Digital Photography" and several other books that qualify as "lifelong learning" manuals for photo buffs and semi-pros looking to brush up their skills.

"First, I always tell people to work on a tripod when they can for a lot of reasons," Wignall says.

"For one, working with a tripod - even an inexpensive one - slows you down. People tend to rush through photos when they are handholding a camera and don't always pay attention to details. It's far better to choose a good vantage point, put the camera on a tripod, shoot a few test frames and then examine the images on the LCD while the view is still framed nicely," the Connecticut native says. "Then if you spot something that needs correcting, you can fix it and just reshoot the same shot."

Wignall is big on tripods for another reason: They allow for "sharper photos because of the slower shutter speed ... more depth of field, or near-to-far focus."

He also recommends contractors shooting their own work heed the ambient light from the sky.

"Probably the most important thing about shooting lighting installations is not to shoot in total darkness, but rather at twilight," he says. "At twilight, you'll get some nice fill light from the sky, which helps to reduce

the contrast and dark areas – not to mention a nice sapphire blue background for your shots. Commercial photos of architecture shot using artificial lighting ... the photographers almost always work at twilight. I begin to set up the shot about an hour before sunset and then wait until the lights on the building or landscape blend nicely with the sky."

Wignall also recommends doing your own image editing, as Gosselin does.

"If your camera allows it, and you do your own image editing, learn more about shooting photos in the RAW exposure mode. In the RAW mode, you can adjust the white balance – the color balance of the lighting – after the fact, so you don't have to be perfect when shooting the image."

Most professional photographers shoot in the RAW mode.

Wignall says, while the images "take up more room on cards and computers" than typical photo file formats, if your digital camera supports RAW, "you can shoot even complex lighting installations and come back with some really great photos." \$\psi\$



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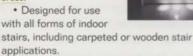


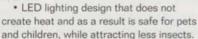
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By Carolyn LaWell

OUTINFRONT

As president of CLCA, Bob Wade is trying to position the landscaping industry for a brighter future.

D istrict water department meetings aren't generally standing room only.

So when Bob Wade and other landscape contractors began attending public meetings – meetings that usually never drew an audience – they started raising eyebrows.

In fact, a water department official, who Wade knew, approached him and said, "My boss wants to know what we are doing wrong that we're starting to draw a crowd."

The landscapers were there to hear what was coming down the pike in terms of policies that could affect their business. That simple action developed into a partnership.

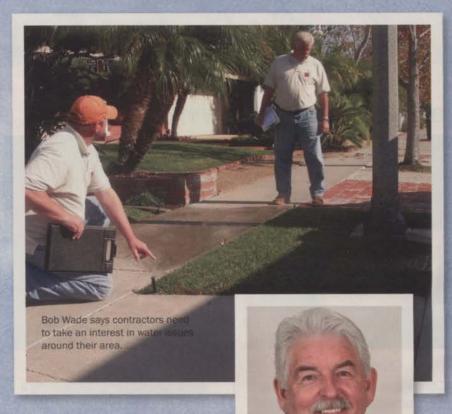
Now Wade, owner of Wade Landscape in Newport Beach, Calif., sits on several water district committees.

"The whole idea is to get the knowledge of the contractor in the room," he says. "Agriculture takes a bigger chunk of the water and agriculture is usually pretty well represented, but contractors typically aren't. So that's what you need to do."

That mentality is certainly not held to water. To have a say in shaping the future of the industry, it's important to be at the table with government bodies, whether local, state or federal.

Wade did it as the director of legislation for the California Landscape Contractors Association and he's doing it now as the new president of the 2,500 member organization.

He's worked on water conservation, immigration, licensing, the list goes on. Lawn & Landscape spoke with Wade about what the country can learn from the most populated state.



How is California leading the way when it comes to water restrictions?

Obviously I'm not a big fan of blanket restrictions because somebody thinks it's a good idea.

California water departments have had a very aggressive program on rebates for smart controllers. They discovered quite some time ago that the water they could find – it's already been delivered – is cheaper than the water they have to bring in from Northern California or from the Colorado River.

So they spend the money on rebates to get people to either fix their systems or install smart controllers. I work with several programs as one of the installing contractors, so we're very well versed in what a smart controller can and cannot do.

Because I am pretty active in the Irrigation Association also, I do know people around the country that are working on this. The rebate is not nearly as widespread in most areas like it is in California. There are always a couple of rebate programs going on and it's all pointed at new technology.

Also, the use of water budgets. Rather

Wade, pictured with his grandchildren, is president of the California Landscape Contractors Association.

than having plant lists or other types of restrictions, we have held the line that no plant list is how we have to go. It seems easy for a lot of people to say, 'Well, you can't have turf and you can't have hydrangeas.' It's my feeling that it's up to the landscaper to determine that.

You shouldn't use high-water use plants all over the place, but we should be able to meet any sort of smart water restriction like a water budget with the proper water techniques. In most of California, the water budgets are really taking over rather than watering days or one day a week.

Also, tiered water rates. In my area, they're really big. The water department that has probably half of the area I work in is called Irvine Ranch Water District. They have come up with on their own a tiered water rate where if you're very conservative with your water use, you actually pay less than what the water costs to deliver.

They have it graded A through F. If you're getting As, you're doing quite a good job. They come out and say we don't expect a lot of As, we want people to be in the B range, which is about 90 percent of ET.

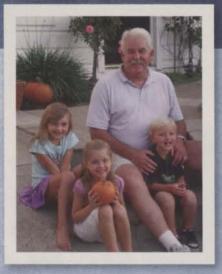
Their tiers and how they set them up are fairly liberal. They let you water what you want and even more than what you probably need.

But they still then keep you in a category for paying the normal bill for your water. If you waste, they have three levels of waste. One of them is extensive, and you pay 10 times as much for the water. So it's the consumer's choice.

What are some other lessons contractors can learn from California?

Don't wait for regulations to come. Get out there. And when you hear or see of a group getting together, get involved right at the start.

The people lobbying for Legislation AB 1881 (A California law that promotes urban landscape water conservation.) contacted CLCA, they wanted a representative on the central committee for it. So we did that. We put our staff



legislative person, who is extremely good at what he does (on the committee). But I also noticed there were several work groups that were going to be talking about what the law should be, so I volunteered for a work group.

I didn't wait to be asked, and I encouraged a few other members to do the same. It ended up that we had a very central part in how AB 1881 came about. You can't wait for somebody else to do it.

You have to just go do it. Be proactive. CLCA developed our own water management certification, which is all about sanctions by the EPA.

It is very inclusive and took us probably about four to five years to get to the point where it is at now, and it's a very good program.

Also in California, we have a very strong licensing procedure in the state. The one we deal with here is the Contractors State Licensing Board and it's within what we call the Department of Consumer Affairs, which the whole thing is set up to protect the consumer. They license nurses, barbers, all of that. We're in the construction wing of it.

We have made a point to get very, very close to that governing body. They ask us our opinion on things. We are by far the most active with them. We give them money. We do a lot of stuff so that we are in the group and can influence how things happen.

When I was active on the IA committees, we tried to get states licensed and there are a lot of states that don't want to do it or they're very reluctant. New York every year is on the brink of doing it, and then it gets knocked down.

What can California learn from others?

Certification programs – I think certification is going to be more and more necessary in the future. The smart timers are just the first part of the more technology and irrigation systems and how to manage a landscape. IA has several certifications, I have one of them. They are very rigorous tests, and I always encourage them to everybody I talk with to get at least one.

Because the people that are certified, I think in the future, are the ones who are going to get the best work. We've already seen that here where my office is in the city of Newport Beach. I've seen the specifications for their parks and recreation bids. They require certified irrigation people to manage the controllers and to perform site audits.

They don't trust that you're going to do a good job, they require certified people. I think that is going to be the way things go.

So California needs to not just depend on the IA, we should be doing our own or at least bump up our programs.

Also, we need to never forget about what happens when they turn off the tap like they did in Georgia. When that was going on, I got to know in the IA a guy who was pretty big in all of the associations in Georgia irrigation and landscaping. He told me 100-year-old companies that have always been thriving are out of business. They're gone. Because there is nothing they could do. They just weren't allowed to water anything. ...

We need to always make sure that we never get so confident in our position that we feel that they can just come and say, 'I'm sorry, no more for you.'

The author is an associate editor at Lawn & Landscape. She can be reached at clawell@gie.net.

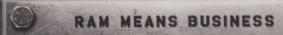
To read more from Wade, including his plans for CLCA's future and threats and opportunities he sees for the industry, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com and search for "Wade."



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COVER STORY

THE

A-TIEAM

THE

YOU

MARKETER

THE BANKER

THE ATTORNEY You're at the top of the org chart, but you don't know everything. When you get in a bind, you need help from a team of these trusted advisers.

business owner alone does not a company make. As head honcho, you may want to try and do it all yourself. In fact, you may even feel like you're failing if you can't handle all the jobs that are required to run a successful business. But the truth is that wise business owners know when it's time to delegate. You need a team of professionals backing you up.

Call them your A-Team. These folks are the go-to professionals who you can call in when the need arises.

In his early years, Mark Pendergast, owner of Salmon Falls Nursery & Landscaping, in Berwick, Maine, thought he could do it all himself. "When you're just starting out on your own, and you're a small business, you think you know it all," he says. "But as you grow, you realize you need other people around you that understand certain aspects of running your business that maybe aren't your strong points."

That perspective is right on par, says Jeff Harkness, industry consultant and partner with Three Point Group, and the sooner a contractor realizes it, the better. "Business owners need to be honest and know their strengths and weaknesses," he says. "At the end of the day, it's important for a business owner to admit that he or she may be great figuring out which crews are going where, but not so great at handling the books or making the sales. That's the time when you need to have a Rolodex full of key players."

Judith M. Guido, chairwoman of Guido & Associates, says that she's found most business owners who don't already have a team of supporting professionals in place have avoided it because of financial concerns. "They have this perception that it's expensive to pay for this type of help so instead they wear several hats and try to do it all themselves," she says. "However, the opposite is actually true. In the end you may cost yourself more money trying to do all the jobs yourself – and, more than likely, may not be performing them as well as a professional."

The ability to grow the business is also linked to growing your team, says Jim Huston, president of J.R. Huston Consulting. He says most contractors get stuck and can't grow past a certain point. "They're unable to build a team," Huston says. "They keep trying to do it all themselves. You have to bring in strong team members who can help you grow. It's like a high-performance athletic team. You're constantly striving to get the best players on the field."

But remember, any team is only as good as its leader – that's you. Even the best team of advisers can't help a dysfunctional business.

"Don't view professionals as people you can just follow blindly. While you may turn to them for their expertise, in the end they are just another tool in your arsenal," says Scott Hall, owner of Classic Landscaping, in Woodsboro, Md. "You're the one calling the shots."

So who do you need on your team? We talked to contractors and industry consultants to come up with a short list of must-have (and a few nice-to-have) advisers for green industry businesses of all sizes. On the following pages, we outline what to look for as you build your own A-Team.

The author is a frequent contributor to Lawn & Landscape.

COVER STORY

THE CPA

At the very least, your accountant should handle your taxes. A certified public

account can get you the maximum number of tax deductions and also ensure everything is submitted correctly to the IRS. But a CPA can also be a year-long member of the team as not only an adviser but a financial records keeper. The key is finding an experienced professional.

Growth consultant Jason Cupp says one of his clients had to pay (literally) when the person he'd hired to do his bookkeeping made a critical error. The bookkeeper submitted tax forms to the IRS that mistakenly listed a company loan as income. Because of that error, the client had to pay additional income tax.

Cupp recommends finding someone who has their CPA license. "There are a lot of people

who call themselves bookkeepers, but at the end of the day you want a certified accountant who understands accounting rules and regulations," he says.

With taxes that's certainly true; however, David Rykbost, owner of Massachusetts-based Dave's Landscape Management Co., says his "right-hand woman" in the office is a former CPA who just didn't keep up with the accreditation once she stopped working for a public accounting firm and started working full time for him. As office manager, she handles the books, but Rykbost still hires an accounting firm to do the taxes.

"They have touted many times they're the best set of books they've seen," says Rykbost. "Because everything has already been prepared so well, that saves the accountant a lot of time – and us a lot of money."

With an accountant, the amount you can expect to pay is going to largely depend on the firm size, but Cupp estimates it could be anywhere from \$50 to \$200 an hour.

While a lot of business owners like to build a long-term relationship with their CPA, Jeffrey Scott, founder of the Leader's Edge peer group consultancy, says he doesn't see that as a necessity. "Companies train CPAs all the time," says Scott. "I'd definitely say that longevity isn't nearly as important as competency."

Hall says that finding the best person for his business included looking beyond the local options.

"Because of today's technology and things like webinars, e-mail, and the instantaneous ability to get scanned documents back and forth across the country, we're no longer limited geographically," he says. "Our accountant is on the West Coast."

THE BANKER

Your banker is your connection to important financial matters in the business – particularly loans and lines of credit. The banker doesn't get paid anything upfront,

instead they get paid in the deal. But growth consultant Jason Cupp says he encourages business owners to "shop the deal."

"Definitely shop around initially," he says. "Don't just go with the first banker and the first deal they propose. And even once you do set up your financials, send them to bid at least every two to three years."

Sean Lynam, business development and estimating manager for Urban Farmer in Thornton, Colo., says that in a down economy it's especially important to negotiate regularly. "You just want to ensure you're being financially responsible and moving forward in a way that makes sense for business," Lynam says.

But with banking, forming a relationship can also be important. Robert Owens, owner of Landscape Management Services in Atlanta says he banked with a large national chain until his consultant recommended he try a smaller, localized bank. "They tend to be more personalized and get to know you on a first-name basis," says Owens. "We got hooked up with the right bank and that's been like gold to us. Small community banks are hungry and they not only want your business, but will work hard to retain your business."

THE ATTORNEY

Alot of business owners make the mistake of thinking they only need an attorney if they're being sued. But think of it this way: If you have a good lawyer advising on important business decisions and deals, you may never have to worry about a lawsuit in the first place.

Consultant Judy Guido recommends finding an attorney who is familiar with industry-specific topics, including H-2B and contractual law – particularly for snow removal where lawsuits are more likely. "In the green industry, there are quite a few issues that require dotting all the Is and crossing all the Ts," says Guido. "And as our industry becomes even more regulated, that's going to become more important than ever."

Rkybost says he's used a lawyer for various case-by-case scenarios. Reviewing certain snow plow contracts was a must, and he also consulted with his lawyer during a business acquisition. "I just felt more comfortable being represented and knowing I had legal documents in hand that would hold up in court."

Cupp suggests going with a smaller firm where you won't get "lost" in the crowd.

"I've also found that large firms will charge you to staple a document," he says. "They're a lot more fee-based. But a good attorney will educate you on when to bring him or her in, and when a situation is within your capacity to handle yourself."

In terms of fees, Cupp says to expect a lawyer to charge anywhere between \$150 to \$500 an hour, depending on the size of the firm. He also recommends going with a firm that has associates available – lower-paid attorneys who can handle less important tasks.



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THE MARKETER

The number one thing to look for in a marketing professional? Industry experience, says Jeff Harkness, a partner with the Three Point Group.

"You want someone who is familiar with the landscaping business, its background and its customer base," he says. "I'd find a company that has done work with at least one other industry-specific company. But you also want to make sure they're not working for a competitor."

Growth consultant Jason Cupp adds that marketing work is "measurable," so when looking at a firm or consultant's past work, you want to see that they have measurable, verifiable results. He says the fees can range anywhere from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand depending on the firm, deliverables and marketing budget.

Harkness recommends going to the firm with your own budget already in mind.

"Just be honest and say 'Our marketing budget is X this year, here's some ideas we already have and would like to execute, and can you put together a program for us based on all of that?'" says Harkness. "I like to ask for a monthly retainer or a flat fee and try to stay away from an hourly rate."

In the end, your marketing effort might not come down to just one professional. Classic Landscaping's Scott Hall says he assembled a team of marketing professionals as he couldn't find any one person to help in all the areas he needed. "You really have to know who you are as a company and also who you're trying to reach when you're doing a marketing campaign."

THE NICHE PROFESSIONALS

OK, now that you've got your four key professionals shored up, you can focus on fleshing out the rest of your team with other niche areas of expertise. There's no specific threshold for employees or revenue that mandates these folks – that's up to you. But as you take a look at your business, you can see where they could come in handy.

A HR SPECIALIST

You may already have someone coordinating everything from recruiting new employees, dealing with payroll or handling terminations. But even smaller businesses that can't afford a full-time employee can have the help of an HR professional by outsourcing many of these responsibilities to an HR consultant.

An HR consultant can help the owner build a solid foundation for growth of the company, while steering the business clear of (sometimes unseen) risks and liabilities says Jean Seawright, owner of Seawright & Associates, a company offering HR solutions. "A good HR consultant can help an organization reduce risks, ensure compliance with employment regulations, save time and money, and have peace of mind when dealing with employee issues."

As far as how much to pay, it's going to vary based on the size and scope of your business. Some consultants charge by the project, by the hour or set a monthly retainer. Ask for specifics of what you'll get for each level, and get a few estimates before you sign up.

AN IT OR WEB PERSON

The web is largely the future of business – but it's not an area that every small business owner understands completely. "Nowadays people Google everything," says the Urban Farmer's Lynam. "Anytime someone needs information, the first place they turn is the Web. You really have to have a website."

Besides getting your website up and running and keeping it maintained, you may also consider an IT person to help with other technology-related business tasks – say, setting up servers, maintaining handheld devices and troubleshooting computer glitches in the office.

"In small businesses, owners wear so many hats. It's important for them to recognize that utilizing technology is a wonderful way to take off several of those hats and become a more nimble and efficient organization," consultant Judy Guido says.

A BOARD OF ADVISERS

A board of advisers may differ from company to company. For some, the "big four" might already make up what could be considered a sounding board for business ideas and needs. But many business owners see the need to step beyond that. Huston says talking to a group of colleagues or an industry consultant is one of the best ways to get industry-specific advice.

Even knowing how much to pay an attorney or a CPA is a great question to pose to an advisory board. "You need to have someone you can get feedback from," says consultant Jim Huston. "That way you're not on your own." L&L

THE FULL-OR PART-TIME DEBATE

No matter what position you're hiring for, the question of whether it should be a full- or part-time job is one of the first points to address. Here are three questions every business owner should ask themselves when trying to make that hiring decision.

Is there a need? As part of the budget process every year, you should look at your organizational structure, says Jeff Harkness, partner with Three Point Group. If there's an area that's being short-changed, a new position may be needed.

Is it emotional?
One of the biggest mistakes that business owners make in hiring is making decisions based on emotion. This often happens in situations where family members want to join the business. A position that really only requires a part-time employee may be turned into a full-time job. Decisions need to be made based on facts, not emotions, says Harkness.

Anything related to hiring should be answered by looking at the budget, says Harkness. "We already know the plan we have to work with – now can we afford it? The budget is easily the deciding factor."



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Training 101

Programs that develop employees' skills show a company values its team members and is serious about delivering quality. By Kristen Hampshire

f every employee is thought of as a company ambassador – the face of the business and a sample of what the firm has to offer every customer – then what kind of owner would dispatch team members into the field without holding a rigorous and ongoing boot camp?

The products and services you sell are available from competitors. "The only thing we have to sell is ourselves," says Pat O'Bryan, general manager of Jamison Pest and Lawn in

Memphis, Tenn. When his company was a two-man outfit, he treated every lawn and knew every customer.

Today, he relies on his employees to carry out that example of quality and customer service.

Training ensures that a company's philosophies, quality standards and, at the base level, its services, are carried out according to the standards set by the owner and/or management.

Training is insurance, in a way. By teaching employees the right way to get it done, you avoid potential losses (customers, reputation, bids), and potential headaches.

This month, Lawn & Landscape spoke with three firms to learn how they use training to keep their associates sharp and develop employees into valuable team members.

For more advice from these three companies, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com and search "formulas for success."

Focusing on service

Jamison Pest and Lawn

Pat O'Bryan, general manager LOCATION
Memphis, Tenn. ESTABLISHED 2004
EMPLOYEES 11 2010 REVENUES \$1.5
million CUSTOMERS 90% residential; 10%
commercial SERVICES Lawn care, tree and shrub care, aeration, soil sampling, insect and disease control

Training doesn't cost, it pays," says Pat O'Bryan, general manager at Jamison Pest and Lawn in Memphis, Tenn. Sure, there is lost productivity during training time. But the invaluable result of training is, ultimately, customer referrals. "What is a satisfied customer base worth?" O'Bryan asks. "People are so conscious of how they

spend money these days, they are really looking for value and service."

These principals must be taught. And, at Jamison Pest and Lawn, the actual practice of treating lawns or controlling O'Bryan

pests also must be taught. That's because O'Bryan's recruiting efforts focus on

hiring for attitude and not necessarily aptitude. "We find the best people we can, and we break down our training into bite-sized bits," he says.

Specifically, O'Byran leads classroom sessions that correlate with the guidebooks for state certification for lawn (category 3) and pest control (category 7) in Tennessee. A new lawn care technician will learn about labels, safety, spill control – the works. "As they progress through the certification and understand mixing, pouring, personal protective wear, they are also out in the field," O'Bryan says.

And as the company has grown from two people to nearly a dozen, O'Bryan recognizes that every employee is a spokesperson for Jamison Pest and Lawn – and that he is no longer the "face" of the business. "If employees aren't excited and glad to be part of our team and have that service heart, they are not going to fit our culture."

Some of the "service heart" O'Bryan refers to is innate: a technician who picks up a client's newspaper from the curb and takes it to the door. Other aspects of service are taught during monthly meetings, and O'Bryan digs deep. He trains employees to only write on service tickets in red pen because

that color stands out on the light-green paper. He teaches them ways to write notes on those service tickets that are easy to understand and concise. He emphasizes why technicians must knock on doors at every stop, because O'Bryan finds that a good portion of customers are actually home during the service and appreciate the personal contact.

The payoff for training at all levels is growing an organization of strong, service-focused, quality-minded leaders. "Training keeps employees engaged and makes their jobs more enjoyable," he says. "They'll be better at their jobs, they'll feel better about that and they'll represent your company better."

QUICK TIPS

Cover the details. From how to write service tickets to what to say on the phone, cover every process and explain the importance of consistency and quality.

Test the training. O'Bryan gives crewmembers quizzes after bi-monthly training sessions to be sure everyone understood key talking points.

The right fit, By finding employees with "service heart, O'Bryan knows that he has an employee who fits the company's culture and will go beyond what is needed when it comes to customer service.



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Speaking their language

Pacific Landscape Management

Elias Godinez (founder, vice-president), Bob Grover (founder, president) LOCATION Hillsboro, Ore. ESTABLISHED 2001 EMPLOYEES 100 2010 REVENUES: \$6 million **CUSTOMERS** 100% commercial **SERVICES** Maintenance, irrigation, snow removal, pest control, tree and shrub care

company is only as good as its em-Aployees. That philosophy drives a robust training program for crewmembers at Pacific Landscape Management that shows everyone they are valued.

The return on investment for the Hillsboro, Ore.-based firm is high employee retention. "Our company is going to be 10 years old this year, and some

of our guys have been with us for that long," says Elias Godinez, co-founder and vice president.

A commitment to training means keeping education at the forefront of the business. The company does this with layers of learning an annual training day where all employees gather pre-season; on-site training for new employees, and weekly half-hour meetings during which employees take turns presenting on various topics for a couple of minutes.

Quality, attention to detail and teamwork are emphasized in training from day one at the company. An employee's first day is broken into two parts: company history and policies, where incentives and payscales are also covered, and a basic equipment overview, including getting to know the truck and trailer. From there, foremen take over on-thejob training. "They locate those new em-



ployees and spend quite a bit of time the first week to make sure they are learning the equipment," Godinez says.

Godinez says employees spend about a month

getting to know equipment - "we make sure they are learning each piece slowly" - and all workers get a "checkup" on equipment skills at the company's annual training day, where all employees from the company's three locations gather at headquarters for a full day of learning. "We start with a presentation about the prior year's success and failures," Godinez says, adding that the discussion includes goals and objectives for the coming year. "We share financial numbers with them. Then we show the orientation program again, which serves as a refresher so they don't forget about



QUICK TIPS

Get everyone involved. Requiring crewmembers to give a safety presentation at one weekly training meeting during the season builds confidence. Plus, peers support one another by listening and learning.

Encourage apprenticing. Crew foreman work one-on-one in the field with new employees as these "green" workers learn each piece of equipment in the fleet. After a month of supervised work, employees are prepared to work more independently.

Train professionalism. Learning extends beyond basic equipment know-how at Pacific Landscape Management. Godinez wants his workers to feel empowered to succeed, so he also provides business-focused training that builds leaders.

our beliefs and values and so they know exactly what new employees have heard about their first day."

Godinez also teaches courses on understanding business decisions and how to survive and thrive as a Hispanic in an American culture.

This enthusiasm for training is passed on to employees by giving them an opportunity to give short safety presentations during weekly meetings. The employee presenting chooses the next week's "speaker," who can choose any safety topic. Crewmembers who prepare and present well are rewarded with a lunch bag or coffee mug – and positive feedback from fellow team members.

"At the beginning, they may feel uncomfortable speaking in front of other people, but after a while it gets easier," Godinez says, noting how this activity builds professionalism and team spirit.

This attitude, and upstanding quality, is evident on job sites, Godinez says. "You can see them focusing on details or whatever we just trained – you can see the effects."

Measuring the value of training

Mariani Enterprises

Stacy Betz, human resources director LOCATION Lake Bluff, III. ESTABLISHED 1958 EMPLOYEES 420 (peak season) 2010 REVENUES \$35.5 CUSTOMERS 78% residential; 22% commercial SERVICES Design/build, maintenance, holiday lighting

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what you say," says Stacy Betz, human resources director at Mariani in Lake Bluff, Ill.

Betz says the company created flowcharts that document every procedure. This process triggered the company's training matrix: a detailed spreadsheet that outlines every weekly training meeting spring through fall, and includes every employee's name. Crew leaders are responsible for tracking who attends every meeting, and anyone in the company can view the chart and find out which employees missed a session.

The result of this progress chart-style system is more interest in training topics, more ownership in the overall training curriculum and better results in the field. The training matrix for an upcoming season is completed in fall by production managers, who develop the topics. They plug in sessions that focus



on procedural and safety topics. Training sessions can be swapped out or edited mid-season to accommodate real needs. such as if crew leaders notice performance is

lagging in a certain area, or if environmental conditions warrant a special topic, etc.

ISO auditors can check up on Mariani Enterprises at any time and find out if employees marked as attending training truly did - and that they honestly learned something, Betz says.

"Then they can take it one step further," Betz says "and go out to the crew and ask the crewmember, 'It says you attended: What can you tell me about it? Do you recall the training?"

Simply showing up to training is not enough. "We have a more educated

team because they are going through the training," Betz says, "and we have brought companywide recognition to our training." LAL

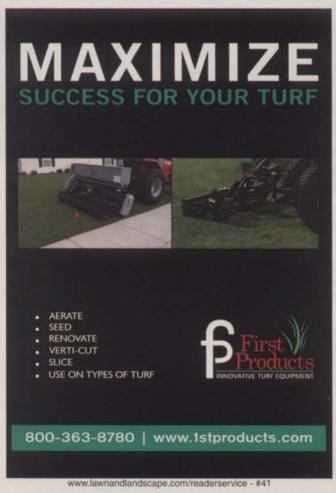
The author is a frequent contributor to Lawn & Landscape.

QUICK TIPS

Schedule training. By creating a matrix that lists training topics for every week of the season and distributing this to crewmembers the importance of learning company policies

Hold them accountable. To obtain ISO certification, Mariani Enterprises had to define every process - and to maintain certification, these processes are tracked

Make it a team effort. By giving everyone access to the training matrix and who attended sessions, employees encourage each other to attend to boost the company's overall participation score.





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BUSINESS BOOKSHELF



EDITOR'S NOTE:

To help out busy contractors, each month throughout 2011, Lawn & Landscape will run a review and synopsis of a business book – either from the accepted literary canon or a more modern classic. The fourth installment is David Allen's "Getting Things Done." The rest of the year's reading list includes:

Outliers

Malcolm Gladwell

Linchpin

Seth Godin

How to Win Friends and Influence People

Dale Carnegie

212: The Extra Degree

Sam Parker

7 Habits of Highly Effective People

Stephen Covey

The Prince

Niccolo Machiavelli

Marketing Warfare

Al Ries and Jack Trout

See You at the Top

Zig Ziglar

The E-Myth Revisited

Michael Gerber

Good to Great

Jim Collins



The Essential Drucker

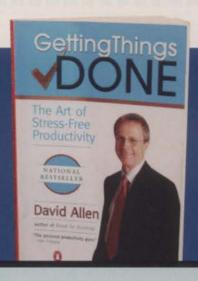
Peter Drucker



GETTING THINGS DONE

David Allen teaches the art of staying on task while remaining stress-free.

By Matt LaWell



The business world has changed during the decade since David Allen first published "Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity." Ten years ago, there were no Droids or iPhones to distract us at our desks, no games and photos and status updates on Facebook. There was no Twitter.

Today, Allen is on Twitter. His handle is @gtdguy. His photo is small and cropped, and he is flashing his toothy grin. He dishes out news and notes about business and life productivity, but not every day. He has more than 1.3 million followers.

All this is to say that almost all of the ideas Allen wrote about in "Getting Things Done" – or GTD, as many of his followers on Twitter and in real life refer to the book and the process, and as Allen even references in his Twitter handle – are still applicable and ideal for the busy office and the busy mind.

Some of the examples, however, are a little dated. (Does anyone still use a PDA over a smartphone? And no, your iPad doesn't count.)

There are certain keys to properly implementing GTD in your office, your home, your life, wherever. At times, especially during the middle chapters of the book, these keys can lead you to start feeling like Allen is peering over your shoulder, micromanaging every step ("Get rid of hanging files if you can" he wrote in Chapter 4). That's not necessarily a bad thing, but it can make actually hunkering down and organizing that much more difficult.

Or maybe that's the point. Back in the late 1960s, Allen met a psychic who said he owed Allen a "karmic debt," according to a 2007 magazine feature. So the psychic taught him karate and introduced him to Zen. To this day, Allen subscribes to the mantra "mind like water." Maybe by his micromanaging us – and by our micromanaging ourselves – we really can get things done. Here are some of those keys.

Be able to manage your commitments. In order to keep straight everything you need to do, you need to know what you need to do. So clear your mind and write down everything, as it comes to you, on a sheet of paper and toss it in your basket. Then determine what you need to do to make progress and remind yourself of what you need to do. This does not mean that you need to write down a to-do list. On the contrary. It just means that you need to write down your commitments and review them – every day – until you finish them. Be able to manage your actions.

Remember the five steps to deal with workflow. No matter your job title or description, these steps are always the same: Collect things that command our attention, process what they mean and what you should do about them, then organize the results, which you then review as options for what you choose to do. So collect, process, organize, review and do. Just five steps. Sounds easier than buying something from one of those latenight infomercials.

In order to get things done, you have to know what getting things done looks like.

Remember that Allen advises every last task to be written down, to be moved from your mind to paper (or your computer screen). Whenever you finish a task – whenever you send an e-mail, finish a meeting, review a file – cross it off. Better yet, ask yourself, "What's the next action?" Because there will almost always be a next action. Do you need to forward that e-mail? Schedule the next meeting? Pass along the file to someone else?

Read Allen and remember his lessons, and you'll always be able to get things done – but remember that there will always be more that needs to get done. L&L

The author is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.



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CUSTOMER REFERRALS

The seven marketing tips to follow to create a stream of nonstop referrals.

Growing your customer base

here's a theory in the industry that most customer bases grow strictly by referrals. It's usually not true, says Jeffrey Scott, author of "The Leader's Edge" and "The Referral Advantage." Not understanding where one's customer base comes from is just one of several mistakes contractors make when it comes to actually creating a stream of referrals. Scott spoke at CENTS 2011 and the OSU Nursery Short Course, giving attendees seven tips to build customer referrals.

MEASURE CUSTOMER DATA. Do you know where the majority of your customers are coming from? "When you go to collect data, you'll be surprised where your business is coming from," Scott says. One of Scott's clients was sure his company was growing from referrals. When he measured the data, referrals were third on the list. Scott recommends going back two years to determine customer data. "Once you do that, then you can put in a kick-butt marketing plan."

2 IF YOU CONFUSE, YOU LOSE. It's important that customers and the public know exactly what services you offer. That could mean making a more focused tagline or marketing plan, Scott says. For example, The Silent Gardener, a Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada company has the

tagline "Working towards a quieter, more livable city." Understand what drives the business and put that into a succinct message. "If people can't describe you succinctly, they can't refer you succinctly," he says.

By Carolyn LaWell

3 WAKE NETWORKING COUNT. Don't waste time networking in places where you can't grow your business. That place might be different for each company. Perhaps it's the local chamber of commerce or the local rotary. "Follow the 80 percent rule," Scott says. "Focus your networking where 80 percent of the people in the room could be your clients, or your potential clients or they're influencers."

4 CREATE A CONNECTION. Yes, win-ning awards says something about a company and it can help boost a brand and credibility. But to build a business by customer referrals, a business needs an emotional connection with customers and potential customers. Scott says successful businesses replace the word "me" with "we." "Associations teach you to win awards and promote it," Scott says. "There's a problem. You're not going to build emotional bonds with your community by talking about yourself. Build a reputation for giving back to the community. Scott's sister-in-law had breast cancer, so to show support for the cause, his fam-





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CUSTOMER REFERRALS

ily's business put a big pink ribbon on all of its trucks.

COMMUNICATE WHAT YOU DO. A business might give back to the community, it might win lots of awards, but without communicating that information, who would know? "You can't just do good work and expect to get referrals," Scott says. He recommends telling customers, the media and associations before and after the company takes on an event. Perhaps even think about involving customers in a community project. "Let them know before things are happening and ask if they want to get involved," Scott says. "I hate to say it, but just being a good guy isn't enough."

OUT OF SITE, OUT OF MIND. Research shows companies should be in front of customers at least monthly, whether phone calls, newsletters or direct mail. Scott says he knows one business owner who sends cards for every occasion - holidays, birthdays, sometimes just to say thank you. There are companies and people who know businesses are doing good work, but those businesses need to constantly remind them and stay fresh in their memory, he says. "Your ability to have a (customer) list and manage your list is what's going to drive your referral marketing success."

DON'T WAIT FOR THE PHONE TO RING. Sitting around and waiting is going to do little for your business. "The biggest problem I see is people are waiting for the phone to ring, they're waiting for the referrals," Scott says. "You shouldn't be waiting for your next referral, you should be out planting the seeds, planting the seeds for referrals." Maybe that means hosting a talk for commercial customers and potential customers on how businesses can deal with risks associated to snow. Or after finishing a job for a residential client, ask them to host a party on the company dime and have them invite their friends to see their new yard. "The magic mix is when you create these events and you bring clients and potential clients together," Scott says. LaL

The author is an associate editor at Lawn & Landscape. She can be reached at clawell@gie.net.



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Long, cold winter

A new financial product can help you weather the unpredictability of your region's climate.

By Mike Zawacki

The unpredictability of winter weather means that it can be either feast or famine for landscape contractors who also engage in commercial and residential snow removal activities in the offseason.

The inherent risks are many when it comes to snowfall totals. If it's a below average winter – or worse, doesn't snow enough at one time to trigger your crews to mobilize – then you're simply not making any money.

On the other hand, if there are a consistent number of aggressive snow and ice events, like there were during Winter 2010-11, a snow fighter could end up losing his profits to increased operational and material costs – especially if you're dealing with seasonal

contracts or, for those contactors serving residential customers, pre-paid snow removal agreements.

Thankfully, a relatively new financial product has entered the market that allows snow fighters to hedge the risk of an unpredictable winter. And through the use of this product, contractors can better control their costs, predict their profitability and even provide their clients with more competitive rates for winter snow and ice removal.

MITIGATING RISK. So you're interested in eliminating the risk of an uncooperative winter?

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Talkin' Tech with Jerry Corbett



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Comments or questions? Email me at JerryC@Quali-Pro.com



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RISK MITIGATION

exchange, brought to market snowfall contracts that allow snow fighters to manage their financial risk related to the ups and downs of a snowfall

Chicago-based CME Group knows a little bit about managing risk. It has been in the business of providing weather risk management tools that enable businesses adversely affected by unanticipated temperature swings or high snowfall to transfer this risk. Their products include temperature, frost and hurricane contracts.

And regardless of your market, your contract portfolio or even the size of your operation, these new snowfall contracts will enable contractors to offset the financial loss of an underwhelming, or an excessive, winter, thus managing their exposure, says Jeff Hodgson, president of Chicago Weather Brokerage. CWB is a Chicagobased firm that specializes in solutions for enabling companies to manage their exposure to unpredictable weather, and has an exclusive marketing partnership with Lawn & Landscape's parent company, GIE Media.

HOW IT WORKS. While it may seem complex, the best way to understand this product is to consider some common, real-world example, Hodgson says.

"Take the Cleveland market, for example." Hodgson says of this Midwest snow market. "Historically that snow market sees its fair share of snowfall ups and downs from year to year. Here the average winter snowfall, based on data collected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is around 55 inches, but you only need to look at winter accumulation totals over the last decade to see that figure swing both up and down."

So for a low-snowfall scenario, Hodgson says, a Cleveland snow fighter wants to protect himself against the loss incurred by a below-average winter. "Let's say, according to his P&L statement, he loses money when it snows 30 inches or less," Hodgson says. "To mitigate his risk, the contractor purchases a CME snowfall contract - for this example, let's say \$2,000 - protects him against a snowfall total of 30 inches or less. That winter it snows a total of 29 inches, according to NOAA figures, and the contractor receives a payout of \$10,000."

In a high-snowfall scenario, Hodgson says, that same Cleveland contractor, because of the way his seasonal snow

IS THIS INSURANCE?

n the surface, mitigating risk through snowfall contracts sounds similar to purchasing insurance, which causes many contactors to ask, "So isn't this lust insurance?"

It's a question the Chicago Weather Brokerage's Jeff Hodgson fields a lot when he addresses snow fighters about how they can integrate snowfall contractors into their winter operations.

"The concept is similar in nature to insurance in that it offers companies protection from adverse conditions, weather in this case," Hodgson says. "Frankly, I have always thought of insurance as protection from something you did not want to happen. In this sense, CME snowfall contracts are very similar to insurance.

"Pay-per-push business has a risk of too little snow and seasonal accounts have the risk from too much snow. This product offers a cost-effective solution to protect your business from what you don't want to happen," he says. "Chicago Mercantile Exchange traded snowfall contracts - binary options - are an entirely new concept. By having a product trade on the world's leading and most diverse financial exchange you avoid counter-party risk and have a competitive bidding process for the best price. Additionally, unlike insurance, this offers professional snow contractors much greater flexibility to trade in and out of positions."

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RISK MITIGATION

removal contracts are formulated, loses money if it snows in excess of 90 inches. So he purchases three CME snowfall contracts valued at \$1,000 each (a \$3,000 total investment) that pays out in the event snowfall totals reach 90 inches. "That winter it snows 95 inches," Hodgson says. "That contractor then receives a payment of \$30,000, which offsets the financial loss he would have incurred due to the excessive snowfall."

In a final scenario, let's say that same Cleveland contractor purchases a contract to protect against snowfall totals of 30 inches or less and two contracts protecting against totals of 90 inches or more.

That winter the snowfall total for Cleveland, according to NOAA data, is 65 inches. While the CME snowfall contracts don't pay out, the snow fighter

still made a healthy profit through his snow removal contracts. The \$4,000 investment made prior to the start of winter afforded that contractor the peace of mind that he would be protect in the event that it was a bad winter.

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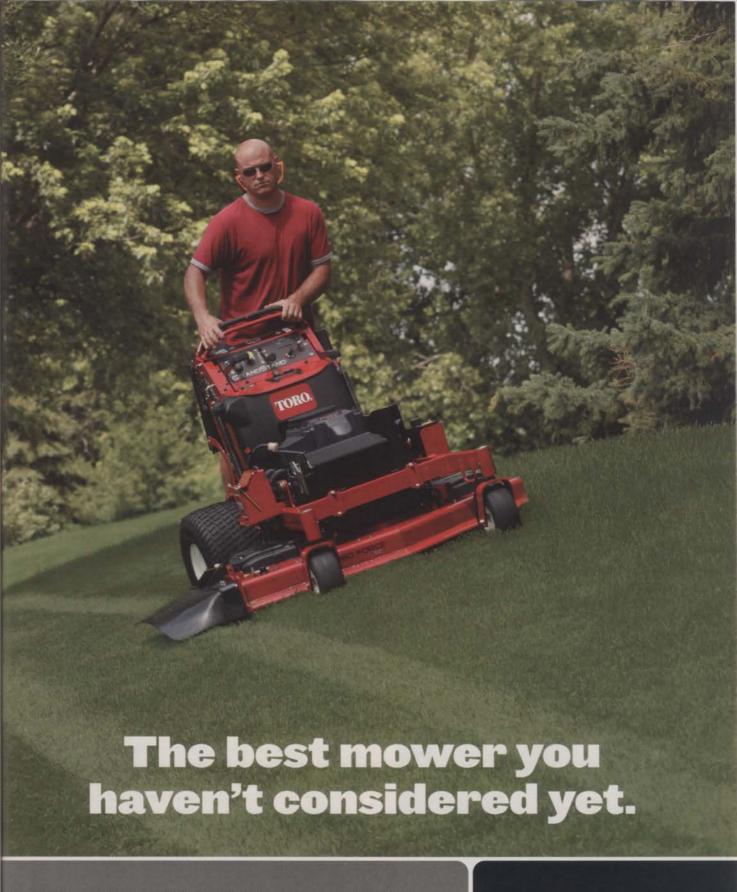
"Ultimately, you need to examine your financials, determine your thresholds and ask yourself: Is it worth giving up a little profit to protect against the possibility of a financially devastating winter?" Hodgson says. "How much is your peace of mind worth?"

While it may sound like a business cliché, purchasing snowfall contracts is a win-win proposition for snow fighters because it normalizes their earnings stream, predictability of revenue and profitability.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

More information on weather futures can be found by checking out the archived online articles at Snow Magazine www.snowmagazineonline.com and Lawn & Landscape's March case study. Visit www.lawnandlandscape.com and search "case study."

Have questions about how snowfall contractors can best work into your particular business model? Contact Chicago Weather Brokerage's Jeff Hodgson at 312-466-5666, or check out the website, www.cwbrokerage.com.



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RISK MITIGATION

These contracts not only protect contractors' bottom lines, but they allow snow fighters to better serve their customers.

"In a nutshell, CME snowfall contracts are a tool – just like a v-plow or a box spreader – that will allow contractors to do their jobs better and stabilize their profit margins," Hodgson says. Lal.

The author is editor of Lawn & Landscape's sister publication Snow Magazine. He can be reached at mzawacki@gie.net.

CME Group launches rainfall contracts in 9 cities

The Chicago-based commodities group already lets you hedge your snow removal business. Now they can help take the risk out of the rainy season.

CHICAGO – In a bid to help lawn care operators and other green industry professionals take the financial hit out of rainy days and delays, CME Group has begun listing and trading rainfall futures, options on futures and binary options.

Trading for the monthly and seasonal contracts opened in March, and will be based on the CME Rainfall Index. These contracts will be listed with, and subject to, the rules and regulations of CME.

"The new precipitation contracts are not only a viable hedging tool for large agricultural market participants, but are also applicable to smaller industries such as landscape contractors, golf courses and even pest control companies," says Jeff Hodgson, president of the Chicago Weather Brokerage.

In 2009, Lawn & Landscape's parent company, GIE Media, entered into an exclusive marketing agreement with Chicago Weather Brokerage to help them bring financial support to the snow management industry.

"Last year, we helped them launch snowfall options for snow contractors to eliminate the fluctuations in profit due to the unpredictability of Mother Nature," says Kevin Gilbride, business manager for GIE Ventures, a division of GIE Media. "Our sister markets in the green industry – specifically agriculture – have had these tools since the 1800s."

The rainfall contract locations include Chicago O'Hare International Airport, Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, Des Moines International Airport, Detroit Metro Airport, Jacksonville International Airport, Los Angeles Downtown USC Campus, New York LaGuardia Airport, Portland International Airport and Raleigh/Durham International Airport.

The futures and options on futures contracts enable buyers to manage exposure to rainfall. The binary options enable users to manage the ramifications on businesses or other operations if rainfall is more or less than anticipated. Binary options provide the options holder with a fixed dollar payout upon exercise. If the option expires without being exercised, the holder's losses are limited to the amount paid for the binary option. – Chuck Bowen



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Battered and bruised but turning around

he masses have spoken - the weak recovery is not acceptable. The thumping the Obama administration took in the fall election can be traced directly to this issue alone - not healthcare, tax rates on the ultra-rich or the other talking points of the political pundits. And when mamma's not happy, ain't nobody happy.

After the last two big recessions in the mid 1970s and early 1980s, the economy grew at close to 6 percent in the aftermath. This time around, the nation has averaged less than half that rate. As a result, the unemployment rate, which is typically falling by this point in a recovery, has remained stuck near 10 percent. The sources of the weakness are primarily consumer spending and

to unsustainable peaks in the bubble that preceded the crash. Regardless, the country wants growth, and it wants it now.

Economics is called the dismal science because it acknowledges that we live in a world of limited resources. This implies that we have to make tradeoffs - if we want to consume more of A, we must give up some of B - we simply can't have it all. Monetary and fiscal policy regarding short-term economic growth is similar in nature. We may make policy choices that will spur growth in the short run, but this necessarily comes at a cost to future growth.

This is the tradeoff the current administration and the U.S. Federal Reserve accepted when they opted to

and maintain the tax cuts put into place over the past eight years. Given that the economy is finally starting to pull out of the doldrums, these policies are sure to keep the recovery moving ahead at a solid pace for at least the next two years.

GDP. While the recovery remained lackluster in the third and fourth quarters of 2010 with gross domestic product (GDP) growth coming in at around 2 percent, we should, however, start to see the economy begin to reaccelerate in 2011. Consumer spending is expected to continue its holiday-spending momentum, as long as the increases in employment that are expected actually come into fruition. Housing should start to respond to record-low

rates and exports and equipment spending are expected to remain strong. On net, real GDP is forecast to rise to around 2.5 percent in the first quarter and move back into the 3 percent range in the second quarter. As I have said more than once at recent green industry meetings, this will be a slow recovery but hopefully a smarter recovery this time around.

HOUSING MARKET. High unemployment will likely constrain the recoveries in consumer spending and housing, but look for both to improve in 2011. Retail pundits look for consumer spending to rise 2.1 percent next year, up from 1.7 percent in 2010. Home sales, as well as new

(continued on page 96)



Lawn&Landscape.

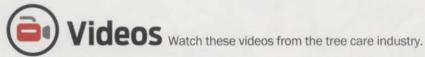


2011 Tree Care Guide

Inside Online contents, pg. 2 Adding tree care services, pg. 3 Top 10 tree and shrub diseases, pg. 7 Using cranes for tree removal, pg. 12 Top products, pg. 16

ONLINE CONTENTS

Check out the latest tree care news and videos from www.lawnandlandscape.com.



Oregon Cutting Systems keeps it sharp Trending trees

Donny Desiarlais describes the company's new PowerSharp Sharpening System. bit.ly/powersharp

CENTS 2011:

Greg Elwell of J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co. talks about CENTS and new trees. bit.ly/gregelwell

Champion advice

Mark Chisholm, a worldrenowned arborist, gives tips on adding tree care services. bit.ly/markchisholm

How and why to fertilize trees

RJ Laverne of The Davey Tree Expert Co. talks about the basics of fertilization. bit.ly/daveyfert









Thoughts from the chairman

Scott Jamieson, Bartlett Tree Experts vice president and the new chairman of the Tree Care Industry Association, gives some insight into the tree care industry.



SAFETY FIRST

Jamieson provides some safety tips to keep in mind when working in tree care. Visit www.lawnandlandscape.com and search "safety Jamleson."

Working with a tree care company

Jamieson gives some tips from the TCIA Expo about how to get the most out of your relationship with a tree care company. bit.ly/treescott



New blood

Kevin Caldwell of Caldwell Tree Care recorded video of Jamieson's inaugural address as TCIA chairman. bit.ly/tciachair



MEWS TICKER

Bartlett Tree Experts make acquisitions ... Davey names

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

We understand you're busy. So here are some past articles you may have missed about trees from Lawn & Landscape and our sister publication Nursery

TREES THWART SHADY BEHAVIOR

A recent study has revealed that large yard trees and street trees may reduce crime. The study measured trees at 2,813 single-family homes in southeast Portland, Ore., and compared this information with data on crime occurrences After looking at the data, a trend emerged - houses fronted blt.ly/treecrime

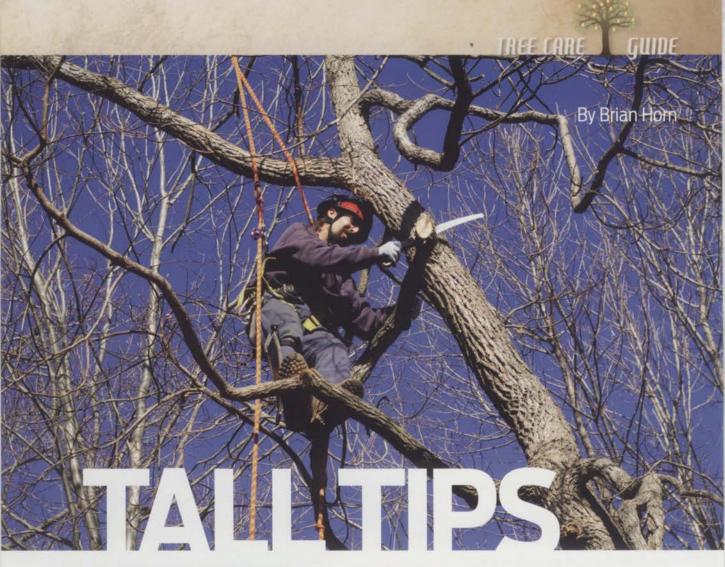
THE GOOD, BAD, & THE UGLY

Tree selection is one of the most important considerations when a homeowner, nurserymen or landscaper is deciding what species to grow or plant. Here are some trees to avoid in the Midwest and some excellent alternatives blt.ly/treeavoid

HOW TREES PAY US BACK

Growers, landscapers, arborists and the entire green industry understand that trees matter. Yet, we sometimes undersell the power of this message. Now is the time for the green industry to maximize the message that trees really do matter.

bit.ly/treematter





Tree care is dangerous work, so you want to make sure any company you are contracting with has insurance in case of an injury.

Tree care professionals give insight on the best ways to work with companies in the industry.

Since adding tree services to your company can be quite an undertaking, many landscapers subcontract to outside tree companies to take care of their tree needs.

But there can be a number of problems that come up between a landscaper and tree care professional.

For instance, if two companies are getting a job from a property manager, and the companies haven't worked together, there can be a lot of bickering and finger pointing if something goes wrong.

"In that situation, it would behoove either relationship, either the tree care company or the landscaper, to reach out to the other side and say 'Hey, we need to figure out how we can best take care of our mutual client and work together.' A lot of times, the property manager doesn't play a good facilitator," says Joel Spies, president of Rainbow Treecare Scientific Advancements in Minnetonka, Minn.

Whether you are in that type of a situation, looking to find a company to partner up with or you just want to improve your relationship with your current subcontracted company, it's important to remember the customer should always be the first priority.

But that can't happen unless the tree care company and the landscaper are on the same page.

Lawn & Landscape spoke with some tree care profesionals about what landscape contractors should and shouldn't do when working with a tree care company.



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DO YOUR HOMEWORK. You want to find out if the tree company is certified by the International Society of Arboriculture and the Tree Care Industry Association, but you also want to look deeper.

Ask to see how the tree company operates to find out if their standards for work match yours. Kevin Caldwell, president of Caldwell Tree Care in Roswell, Ga., says he's happy when a landscaper wants to see his day-to-day operations.

"I've had people that are interested in doing business with us and they'll stop by our office and they'll actually look, not necessarily just at the brick and mortar, but they look at how you do business," he says.

That means going beyond reading marketing materials and meeting with a salesperson.

"I think before someone does business with you on the scale that a landscaper can do, they ought to understand what your capacity is and how to expect to do business with you," Caldwell says.

Landscapers should also request written proof that the company has insurance," Spies says.

"If you have a tree worker and they're not insured and they cut a branch off, and it falls on someone's car or that tree worker gets killed and that company is not insured, they can go after the homeowner," he says.

Landscapers should also understand why the tree care company is taking a certain approach on an issue, Spies says. And don't be afraid to ask for industry information to back up that approach if you can't find any.

"It's almost like the better educated you are about what needs to be done, the better off you're going to be at hiring a qualified company to do it for you," Spies says.

DEVELOPCLEAR INSTRUCTIONS. Don't be vague when writing out what you want the tree care company to do on a property you are servicing,

Spies says.

"Clearly define 'We're going to do these trees' and this is what needs to be done to each tree – the trees are clearly identified, so a good quality site map," Spies says.

The instructions should also be laid out immediately and involve all the concerned parties. If a property manager comes to a landscaper and tells the landscaper tree work



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Learn more at landscapesolutions.dupont.com is needed, all three parties must be involved.

"I would engage that arborist as soon as possible in the conversations with their client," Spies says. "The sooner the better."

Greg Krogstad, co-president of Rainbow Treecare in Minnetonka, Minn., says there should be a mutual understanding that if something goes wrong, the companies will talk about it and not immediately go to the client and claim negligence.

"That starts long-term relationships," Krogstad says. **TRUST.** In the case of a tree care and landscaper relationship, the two sides need to trust that neither one will steal business from each other.

"It's important for a landscape contractor to find an arborist who doesn't have competing services," Krogstad says.

"So if you have an arborist that plants trees, you're going to have to have that conversation of how to work around that, or find an arborist who doesn't plant trees, just maintains currently established trees."

Whether it's in a contract or done

by a handshake, it should be established right away that stealing work from one another will not be tolerated, says Ben Tresselt, president of Arborist Enterprises.

"The relationship between the two companies tends to be more of a gentlemen's agreement I would say more than anything in that respect," he says. "And that we're not going to do anything that's going to jeopardize your relationship with that client and vice versa."

The author is an associate editor at Lawn & Landscape. He can be reached at bhorn@gie.net.

GOING TO THE TOP

Some landscape contractors want to add tree care as a service. Here are some facts they should know before getting started. By Brian Horn

Kevin Caldwell has seen his fair share of landscape companies try to add tree care as a service. And it hasn't ended well.

"I've seen really great landscaping companies try to go into the tree business and end up getting a lot more people hurt, really badly," says the president of Caldwell Tree Care in Roswell, Ga.

Some may not want to start the service from scratch, instead subcontracting with a tree care company or acquiring one, tree care can be another way to help your bottom line. Some companies, albeit a small percentage, are looking into the addition.

According to Lawn & Landscape's 2010 State of the Industry report, 3 percent of landscapers said tree service was the fastest growing service for them in 2010, and 3 percent expect it to be the fastest growing service in 2011

If you are willing to take on the responsibility of adding tree service within your own company, you'll want to find a strategic partner who can guide you on what you need to do, says Joel Spies, president of Rainbow Treecare Scientific Advancements.

"You need a resource – it's a very complicated thing," he says, adding you could start simple. "A tree care company like ours, they have like 60 protocols they use. A landscape company may want to start with one or two and focus on that."

To get started in the tree business, Peter Sortwell, president and CEO of Arborwell in Hayward, Calif., says it would take about \$150,000 for equipment and \$12,000

for outfitting the equipment with small tools. Other costs, such as company overhead and dues, can run about \$20,000. His company puts employees through about 150 hours of safety training a year, on top of technical and knowledge training and certification.

While a tree service can bring in revenue of \$250,000 to \$300,000 a month for a three-man crew, there are increased costs as well. It will vary by state, but a tree care company has a higher worker's compensation rate than a landscaping company, Sortwell says.

In addition, Sortwell says arborist are paid 30-50 percent more than a landscaper in an equal position, which can cause turmoil in the company. He says landscapers sometimes have trouble grasping that tree care may take overtime to get a job done, where a landscape maintenance job could or may have to wait until the next day.

"So quite often spending dollars on overtime makes a lot more sense than no overtime and driving them around back and forth to get the job done," Sortwell says. "It's very hard for landscape managers to understand that philosophy. When managers do understand it, it causes friction among the landscape employees that do not have the same opportunity."

Spies says some of the mistakes you make doing landscape maintenance can be undone, but mistakes in tree care can really hurt your business.

"It's also probably the biggest risk they are taking on," Spies says. "If they kill a tree, they'll lose that client forever."

TOP 10 TREE DISEASES

Members of The Davey Tree Institute provide a list of common tree and shrub diseases and how to control them.

nthracnose, lethal yellow of palm, Athousand canker - they aren't warm and fuzzy names, and for good reason. Among their symptoms are dving flowers and branches and, worse case, death of an entire tree.

And those are just three of the

diseases that could be growing on customers' trees and shrubs.

So we asked The Davey Institute's Deborah D. Miller, plant pathologist and senior diagnostician, and Grant Jones, technical adviser, to break down the 10 most common tree and shrubs diseases to look our for. Here is how the diseases are caused, how to identify symptoms and, most importantly, how to control and treat them. Of course, be sure to read and follow labels, as not all of the products are registered in every state. - Carolyn LaWell

ANTHRACNOSE

Anthracnose is caused by a group of fungi that attacks leaves, twigs, flowers and fruits of a great number of tree and shrub diseases. It can be found throughout various species in most of North America, but important species to keep watch on are sycamore and flowering dogwood.

Anthracnose symptoms vary by the

pathogen and host species. Sycamore anthracnose causes premature leaf defoliation and a twig blight resulting in witches blooming. Dogwood anthracnose is common on flowering dogwood in the Eastern U.S. and western flowering dogwood in the Pacific Northwest. All above-ground parts of the tree may be attacked, resulting in defoliation, branch dieback and tree death.

CONTROL: For management of sycamore anthracnose, begin foliar applications of fungicides two weeks before bud break. Alternatively, trunk inject with a systemic fungicide. The most effective active ingredient is thiabendazole. In the case of dogwood anthracnose, foliar applications must begin at bud break and continue all through the growing season to protect the tree. For dogwood anthracnose, propiconazole is an effective fungicide. Good sanitation practices can also help reduce disease inoculum.





APPLE SCAB

Apple scab is an early season leaf disease affecting crabapples. Some crabapple cultivars are more resistant than others. Scab-like lesions form on the leaves that eventually cause premature defoliation of infected trees.

CONTROL: While mostly aesthetic, homeowners may find apple scab objectionable. It can be managed with fungicide applications with active ingredients, such as fenarimol, beginning at budbreak.



CEDAR RUSTS

Cedar rusts are common foliar diseases of rosaceous plants, such as hawthorn and crabapple. As with apple scab, some cultivars and species are more susceptible than others. Rust diseases require junipers as an alternate host. Orange or rust-colored leaf spots form on hawthorn and crabapples in the spring. Twig cankers can develop and cause dieback. Spore-producing structures form on the juniper branches.

CONTROL: The disease can be managed with fungicide applications on the deciduous hosts beginning at budbreak or when orange spore masses develop on junipers. An active ingredient for controlling rust diseases is triadimefon. Prune out rust galls on junipers when noted.



DIPLODIA TIP BLIGHT

Diplodia is a common disease of Austrian and other pines. The disease initially develops at the base of the tree and progresses upwards. Candles and needles begin to expand before becoming infected and dying. Key symptoms include dead shoots with needles half elongated, lots of resin and witches brooms' dead shoots. Black fruiting structures are present between needles and on cones.

CONTROL: Management includes good sanitation, pruning and applying fungicides beginning at bud swell. An effective active ingredient for control is thiophanate-methyl.



DOTHISTROMA NEEDLE BLIGHT OF PINES

Dothistroma needle blight is a fungal disease that causes a premature defoliation in mature trees and sever stunting and death of young trees. It can be found in more than 35 pine species and hybrids throughout North America. However, it is not found in the western Great Plains or central Rocky Mountains.

Symptoms of yellow or tan bands on needles are detected in the fall, followed by needle tip dieback. Austrian, lodgepole, Monterey and ponderosa pine are the most susceptible species in the United States.

CONTROL: For management, begin applications of a protective fungicide at budbreak. Products with the active ingredient combination copper hydroxide and mancozeb are known to be most effective. Pruning out severely infected branches can also help in managing the disease.



LETHAL YELLOW OF PALM

Lethal yellowing is an important disease of palms in Florida and Texas. It is typically found in Canary Island date palm, coconut palm, date palm and other species, though native palms are usually not affected. Lethal yellowing is caused by a bacteria-like organism called a phytoplasma and is transmitted by a planthopper insect.

Symptoms vary with the host species. But generally flower death, premature fruit drop and foliage yellowing are distinctive symptoms. Infected palms usually die three to five months following infection.

CONTROL: Preventative and therapeutic treatments with an antibiotic injected into the trunk can help manage the disease. An effective active ingredient is oxytetracycline hydrochloride. Removal of moderately infected plants and use of resistance species is also recommended. Insecticides for control of vectors have proven ineffective in managing disease spread.



OAK WILT

Oak wilt is a systemic fungal disease that results in tree death. The disease can be found in more than 20 oak species in Minnesota, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas and recently New York. The disease is transmitted by infected beetles and through root grafts.

Initial symptoms on white and red oak are leaf wilt, rapid discoloration and premature defoliation. On live oak, the veins turn yellow then brown before defoliation occurs. A diagnostic feature is vascular discoloration.

CONTROL: Trees in the white oak family can be treated therapeutically. Trees in the red oak family cannot. For prevention, inject trees with a systemic fungicide, such as propiconazole, during the growing season.

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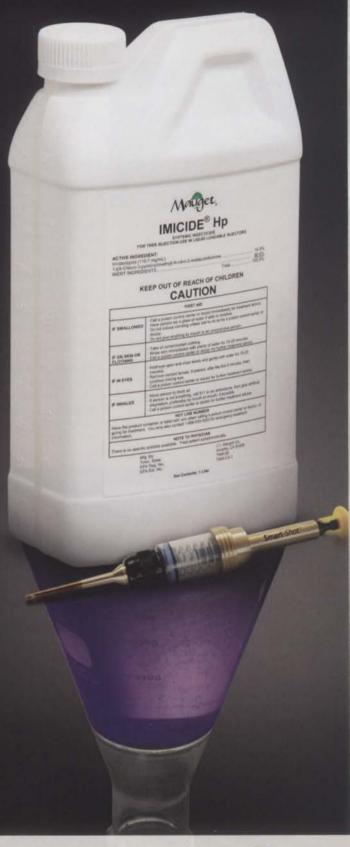
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POWDERY MILDEW

Powdery mildew is caused by a number of fungal pathogens that grow superficially on the plant surface producing white mycelia (fungal threads) and spores. It can be found in a host of trees throughout North America

Leaf, flower and shoot distortion and stunting occur when the fungus attacks young tissue. As the level of infection increases, tissue becomes dried and brown. Premature defoliation may also occur. On susceptible rose varieties, flower production may be inhibited.

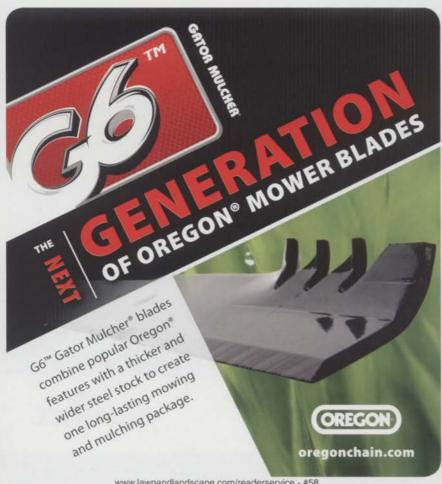
CONTROL: For management, select resistant varieties, avoid planting in shaded areas and overcrowding and practice good sanitation. Begin fungicide applications when symptoms are first noted. An effective active ingredient for control is triadimefon.



PHOTINIA LEAF SPOT

Photinia leaf spot is mainly found in the South and is an important defoliator of red tip photinia, Indian hawthorn, loquat and some pear cultivars. Infections by the fungal pathogen begin as small circular, dark red spots on leaves, stems and fruit. Spots coalesce into large blotches with gray centers.

CONTROL: Management strategies include purchasing disease-free plants, sanitation, planting in sunny areas and fungicide applications. Begin treatment at budbreak and repeat applications until most of the leaves have matured. For very susceptible species such as photinia, additional fungicide applications may be necessary for good control. Applications of products with the active ingredient propiconazole are the most effective. Planting resistant varieties and species can also help with control.



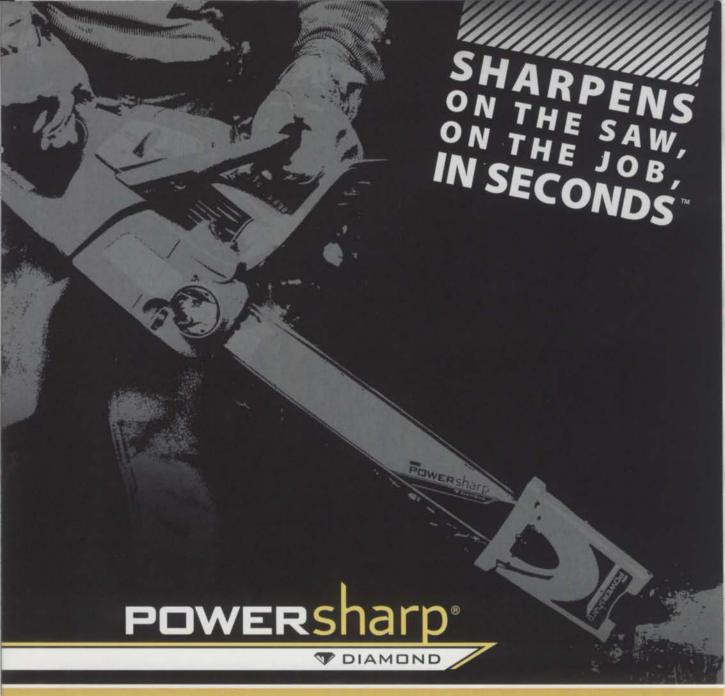


THOUSAND CANKER DISEASE

Thousand canker disease affects walnuts (Juglans sp.). It's mainly found in the Western United States; although, black walnuts in Tennessee were found to be infected last summer.

It is vectored by walnut twig beetles and forms small cankers around their galleries. Over time these small cankers coalesce to girdle branches and stems. Trees can be infested for years before showing symptoms. Foliage in the upper branches of declining trees wilt and become yellow.

CONTROL: Once a tree begins to decline, it is often dead within several years. At present there are no chemical management options for control.



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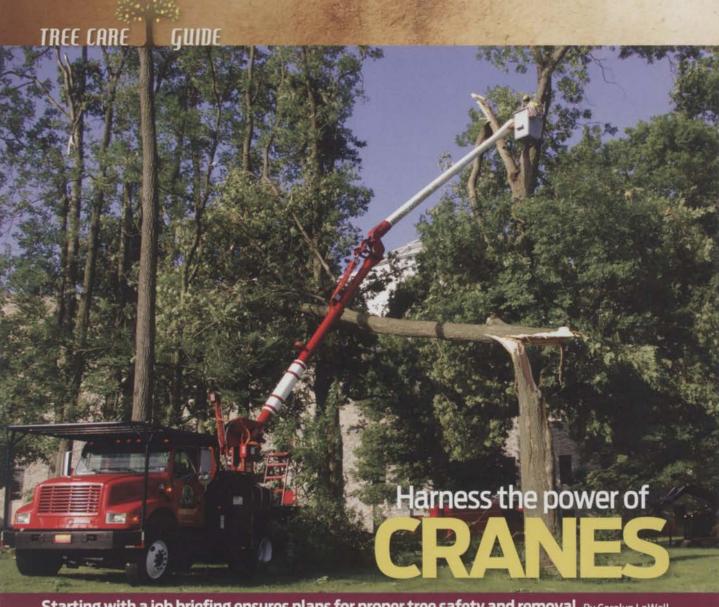




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Starting with a job briefing ensures plans for proper tree safety and removal. By Carolyn LaWell

hen Kramer Tree Specialists bought its first crane in 1991, the approach to safety training was, well, basic. Basic in the sense that crews were sent out with the instructions, 'Just be careful.'

All too often, that's the approach companies take when it comes to using cranes for tree removal, says Todd Kramer, director of field operations and education at the West Chicago, Ill., company.

After two decades of climbing trees - and some hard-learned lessons - Kramer has defined a list of training and communication techniques, which he now shares with others in the industry. At New England Grows in early February, Kramer provided an audience with his tips and tricks for using cranes when it comes to tree removal.

"One thing about crane work that I do believe in - I firmly believe in - is it is the absolute safest way to cut a tree down because you're never putting force back into the tree," he says. "But I also feel it can be the absolute most dangerous way to dismantle trees."

That risk comes into play when employees aren't trained, the job has not been completely thought out and there is a lack of communication among crewmembers. Once arriving at a job site, a crewmember will be in a tree, saws, ropes, large equipment all

will be involved, perhaps the spacing presents challenges - it's not a time to improvise.

"The thing about cranes is when you're wrong, it could be absolutely catastrophic," Kramer says. Cranes can flip and people can get hurt.

So to ensure safety and a job well done, Kramer runs through a to-do list of sorts.

An essential first step for using a crane to remove a tree is developing a job briefing.

To create a job briefing, the entire crew should sit down and discuss the tree removal process. During the process, someone should document the plan that is created. If something goes wrong, Kramer says, a written job briefing can be revisited to see where things went wrong and it holds each crewmember accountable.

Here are the elements Kramer suggests including in the brief:

HAZARDS AND OBSTACLES. Kramer's crews usually involve four members and they begin the job briefing by identifying and mitigating any hazards or obstacles that could come up during the process of removing the tree. By understanding the obstacles you might face on the job, solutions or a contingency plan can be designed in advance.

PLAN SETUP AREA. Before arriving on site, it's important to understand the area surrounding the tree. Possible

questions to ask include: How close is the tree to utilities or to other structures? Cranes must be on solid ground with large pads underneath and, above all, must be level. Cranes aren't like working with a truck, Kramer says. If it isn't level, side loading will occur. Also, prepare for the outriggers to be at least 8 feet from the foundation of the crane. In taking all of that information into account, where does the crane specifically need to be placed?

RIGGING AND COMMUNICATION. The third discussion point for the job briefing should be the rigging and communication plan. "Communication, in my opinion, is going to be the greatest factor – communication between the crane operator and the

riggers and cutters, whether climbing or in the aerial lift," Kramer says.

First and foremost, every member of the crew, not just the climber and the crane operator, should know crane hand signals. "Simply because when the guys are doing the dismantling on the ground, the disposal, there is still going to be some work to be done with the operator as far as moving the load around," Kramer says. "They need to know the hand signals."

It's important to discuss how the climber is going to get into the tree and, if known, will there be any challenges to communicating during the process. Sometimes the crane operator might not be able to see the person in the tree, Kramer says. In that case, a crewmember on the ground may be required. Another option is a voice

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Discussing rigging is important because that aspect of the job is one of the biggest mistakes Kramer sees, and it's due to the fact that the crane industry is not designed for tree work.

"A professional crane operator, a professional crane company, they have standard operating procedures for lifting certain things, whether it's air conditioners, pieces of steel," he says.

"Those have predetermined rigging points as far as where to lift it and trees don't. Most of the mistakes I see is really bad rigging. When the piece is actually cut because it's not balanced correctly, there's a lot of movement and that movement creates a hazard to the climber or the bucket truck operator, obviously as far as getting hit by the actual load."

CRANE INSPECTION. Before starting a job, it's essential to make sure the rigging and crane equipment are functioning properly. Kramer suggests always using your own rigging equipment.

Inspecting the crane especially comes into play when renting a crane (see sidebar), but it's essential to know things like the crane's configuration and the capacity of the weight it can hold.

WORK PLAN. Outline the responsibilities each crewmember will have during the job. This ensures that all aspects of the removal process are covered and documented.

SUMMARY. Once the job briefing is finalized, have each crewmember sign the document. If equipment and a crane operator are being rented, that person should also be involved with

and sign off on the job briefing.

"Once you document a job briefing, people tend to listen more," Kramer says. "You have to have accountability if you're going to put your name on it." ■

The author is an associate editor at Lawn & Landscape. She can be reached at clawell@gie.net.

TIPS FOR RENTING A CRANE

Renting cranes is common in the industry. Kramer Tree Specialists has two boom trucks, one that is 18.5 ton and another that is 23.5 ton. Still, two to three times a month the company is renting cranes to complete jobs.

And when it comes to renting, there are fundamentals to think about, Kramer says.

First, Kramer looks at how the crane is presented. Is the deck clean? Are pins or any other elements missing? Is there spilled oil? "That says a lot about how people may be maintaining their equipment," he says.

Do homework on the type and size of crane that might be needed for the job. All cranes are different, so it's important to understand the configuration, how far the crane will reach and what capacity it can hold. "It's definitely best to understand the crane, understand the configuration and study the correct charts," which can be found online, Kramer says.

If the crane rental comes with an operator, communication plays a large role in the success of the project. Kramer says it's important that the operator is not in charge of the actual job. The reason being, in areas like Chicago, most crane workers seldom handle tree removals.

To make sure everyone is on the same page, include the operator in the job briefing and outline each crewmember's role. The goal is to build trust with the operator.

"An easy way to do that is to do your homework, understand the lingos, the terms that come with the crane," Kramer says. "And ask a lot of questions, even if you know the answers."



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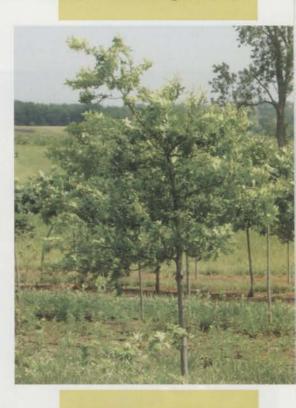
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The pitch: The Easy-Lift harness is a power assisted lifting harness designed to make tree work safe by reducing stress and fatigue.

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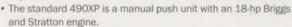
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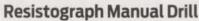
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ECONOMY

(continued from page 78)

home construction, also look set to improve, but questions surrounding the disposition of foreclosed properties could push off a full recovery until late 2011 and create some downside risks in some areas.

Stronger job growth will further lift household formations in 2011 and 2012 and also increase the number of qualified buyers. Affordability should not be a major issue, as home prices have already

overshot historic norms relative to income in many key markets. Unfortunately, price declines probably have a little further to run before we reach an abso-

lute bottom and many potential buyers will likely remain on the sidelines until prices stabilize.

The supply of homes either in foreclosure or at risk of foreclosure has many people wondering if housing starts will be able to rise at all in 2011. In my opinion, they will, albeit slightly. The current excess supply of homes on the market or likely to hit the market is around 2.5 million units and much of this excess supply is concentrated in a handful of markets. Builder inventories of completed homes are currently at historic lows and permits for new single-family homes are running slightly above single-family starts.

THE CONSUMERS. One very interesting outcome of this Great Recession is that it has divided America into two groups that are roughly the same size but that experienced very different economic downturns. For a narrow majority of Americans (55 percent) who are referred to as those who *lost ground*, the recession brought a mix of hardships (usually in combination) such as a spell

of unemployment, missed mortgage or rent payments, shrinking paychecks and shattered household budgets, according to a recent survey by the Pew Research Center. But for the other 45 percent of the country (those who are referred to as held their own), the recession was largely free of such difficulties.

All of these statistics serve to validate what we in the green industry have been surmising for a while – for some, not much has improved since June of 2009 (the month the National Bureau of Economic Research officially declared as the end of the recession); for others, life hasn't changed that much from before the recession. Interestingly, their level of income has not been a perfect predictor of which group folks fell into either.

As we consider the plight of consumers in the future, to me it matters less about how much more they save or how their purchasing behavior changes. We

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FCONOMY

already know that some of them will be more frugal and some will be more

risk-averse, but they all will incur greater search and acquisitions costs; that is, they will spend more time evaluating big-ticket purchases and more

carefully weighing product features and benefits before they purchase. To me, the real question is whether our industry will maintain its relevance in the mind of consumers. Thus, mindshare is more important than market share to the longrun profitability of our industry.

GREEN GROWTH. Without a doubt, the entire green industry in 2009-2010 continued to exhibit patterns of a maturing industry with a slowing growth in demand generating more head-tohead competition for market share. That included a greater emphasis on

reducing costs and enhancing service offerings; a reduction in industry profitability as reflected by tighter margins, and a number of mergers and acquisitions among former competitors.

The economy certainly took its toll on the landscape sector in 2010 (in spite of the recovery being underway), although its effects were not felt evenly. For example, several well-known firms who offered very high quality products and services are no longer in the industry. But in other regions, there were firms who made some serious money.

Those firms that have competed successfully in the midst of the economic downturn were those that: (1) shaved even more costs out of their value chain (maybe through implementing lean flow principles), (2) tweaked their existing value proposition in order to further differentiate themselves in the marketplace, and (3) had access to adequate levels of working capital to ride out the economic storm. I'd say this would continue to be a good strategy to carry on into 2011 as well.

Eventually the drivers of this growth spurt will have to be removed. Tax increases will need to be put into place to start closing the federal deficit. The excess liquidity of the monetary base will have to be mopped up. The good news is that for now, neither of these issues seems to be pressing. This implies the nation has at least a couple of years - and a presidential election - to move through. But eventually, monetary and fiscal discipline must be reasserted. When it does, watch out, L&L

The author is the Ellison Chair in International Floriculture at Texas A&M University.





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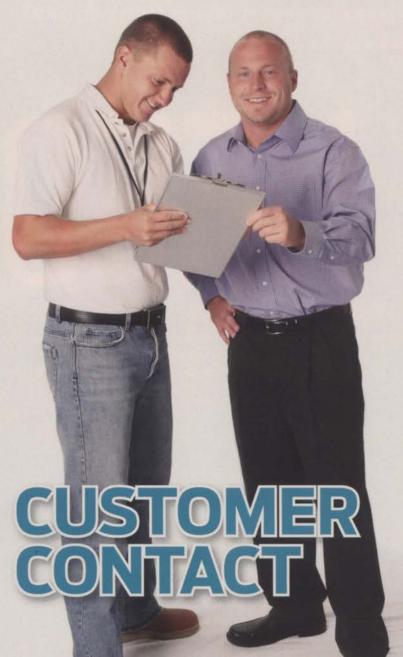
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awn and landscape companies are in the sales and marketing business as much as the grass cutting business, says general contractor and business speaker George Hedley. Grasp this idea, he says, and your profits will soar.

"Doing good work won't get you enough work," Hedley told an audience at the GIE+EXPO in Louisville, Ky., last October. "Companies need written marketing plans, a strategy to build relationships and a system to track your efforts."

Hedley says many landscape companies don't even take the time to host regular, face-toface meetings with their top 20 customers.

"You need to meet with your top customers at least four times per year," he says.

Hard work, competitive pricing, good service and having a market niche are still key factors in distinguishing your business from other companies, Hedley

By Lee Chilcote

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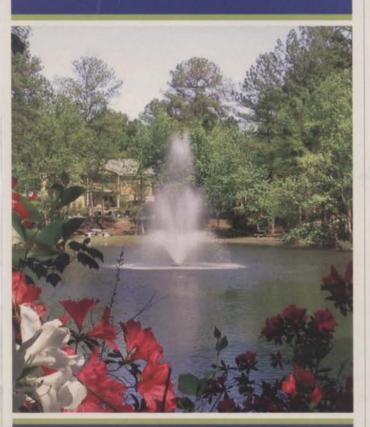


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SALES & MARKETING

says. Yet these things won't matter if you don't create loyal relationships with customers.

There are "four differentials" in any industry, Hedley says - price, product, niche and relationships. The last one is the most important because it helps companies convey their competitiveness while providing the greatest return on investment.

GG My marketing plan is playing golf with my clients and waiting for the phone to ring."

Effective marketers use a broad strategy that combines building personal relationships with other marketing activities. In addition to one-on-one meetings over lunch, sports games or concerts, Hedley recommends organizing regular direct mail and e-mail campaigns to gain customer attention.

Want more loyalty and referrals over the long run? Let your top clients know that you value their relationship, he says- and have fun while you are doing it.

"Most people are too busy working to make any money," Hedley says. "My marketing plan is playing golf with my clients and waiting for the phone to ring. This strategy brings in millions of dollars per year with the same people.'

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS. Like many contractors, Hedley used to think his goal was to get repeat customers. He bid on hundreds of projects a year with the hope that his hard work and attention to detail would earn him repeat business, but was often disappointed by the results.

"I found out that 'repeat customer' just means I'm on their bid list," Hedley says. "It doesn't mean I get all of their business. I was competitive, but I didn't stand out."

So he began to revise his goals. "Today, I try to develop loyal customers - people that will do business with me for a fair price on an ongoing basis," he says.

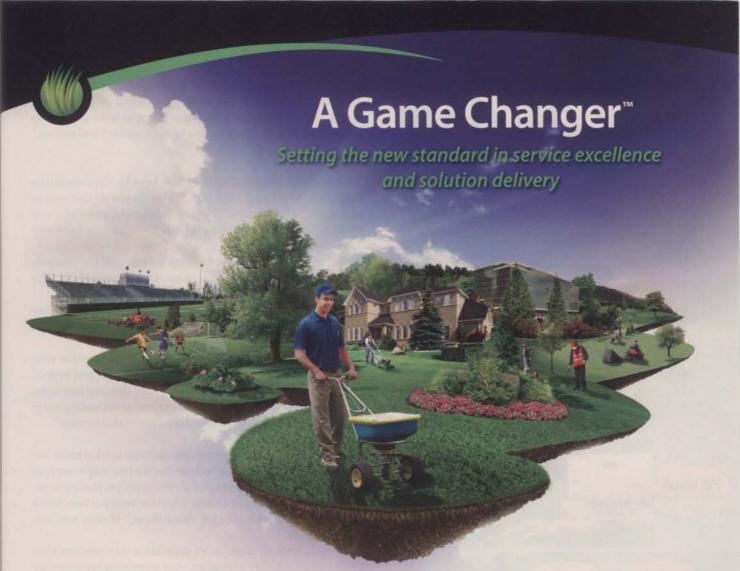
Hedley is not above using price as a negotiating tool - "I may buy my way in by bidding the job at a cheap price," he says - yet he doesn't stop there. Instead of constantly moving on to the next job, he develops long-term relationships with customers.

Hedley offers a snapshot of his marketing plan. He sets a goal of seeing his top 24 customers at least four times a year by inviting them to hockey games, the symphony or to play golf. He spends \$20,000 per year on such outings, but says it's worth it.

"You can make money schmoozing and having fun," he says. Of course, you don't have to spend vast sums of money wooing clients, Hedley says. In fact, you can develop a strong marketing plan using just a tiny fraction of your gross sales. "You just have to meet with people that can generate business for you - such as landscape architects, homebuilders and real estate brokers," he says.

Even Hedley, who is gregarious, doesn't like making cold calls to strangers. Yet he likened these calls to "one-a-day vitamins" that net him additional business.

Keeping an up-to-date customer mailing list and sending mail



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SALES & MARKETING

or e-mail to his entire database at least four times per year is also a critical move, Hedley says. For example, send customers special offers and useful information such as lawn care tips to get their attention. "You can do a lot with a little bit of money," he says.

FINDING YOUR MESSAGE. One of the keys to differentiating yourself is developing a message. "What do you do that no one else does?" Hedley says. "In your marketing materials, you should offer to do something different - such as a follow-up landscaping service."

The message should also be targeted towards the clientele that you are seeking to attract. "A good motto talks about your customers - not about you," he says.

Delivering your message also provides you with another opportunity to sell your service. You can offer an exclusive on certain materials or a quality guarantee.

Your message should be targeted towards services that your customers are interested in. "Don't tell people that you're good at everything," he says. "You may need more than one brochure. For instance, develop a piece on your expertise in creating water features, and target it to people interested in this service."

SETTING YOURSELF APART. Price, product and market niche are all important factors in your success. Yet the best way to set your company apart is developing loyal relationships, Hedley says.

Many customers discontinue a service because they think their contractor "doesn't care about them," Hedley told session attendees.

These customers often don't drop lawn care services altogether - instead, they engage another contractor because they haven't developed any loyalty.

Hedley cited his own experience as an example. He says that he doesn't know his landscaping subcontractors because his project manager hired them and they've never thanked him. "I don't know them because they don't know me," he says. "I feel like I'm just a number to them. A change order request is the only time I hear from them."

Hedley sums up his message: "Go where you're invited and stay where you're appreciated.

One of his favorite contractors is his carpet installer because he brings Hedley gifts. "He stops by my office every few months with a \$20 bottle of pinot noir," Hedley says. "He knows the kind of wine I like. He went to Scotland on vacation last year and brought me a golf book. Now he's earned all my business for the year."

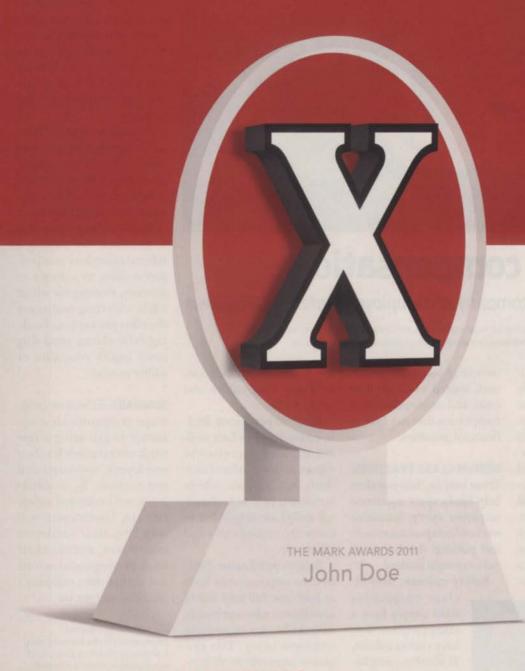
Perhaps Hedley's least favorite contractor is the one who gave him a wine basket that he later saw on sale at Costco. "A few days later, I saw it for nine bucks," he says.

"That's embarrassing. I gave that guy \$4 million in business last year."

Hedley adds, "Get me my favorite wine, and you've got me for life." L&L

The author is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

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Workers' compensation

How to keep your company and employees safe. By Steven Cesare, Ph.D.

This is the sixth in a series of the top 10 most serious HR mistakes landscape contractors make. To read previous installments, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com and search "Cesare."

Employers have an obligation to provide a safe working environment for all of their workers. Moreover, they are required to carry workers' compensation insurance as a method of providing medical care to "cure" or "relieve" an injured worker of the injury's effects, and supplying replacement income while the employee is temporarily unable to earn full income due to a jobrelated injury.

Landscapers are keenly aware of the interrelationship between safety, workers' compensation and insurance premium costs.

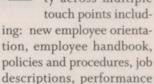
A landscaping company lacking a strong safety program without professionallydesigned workers' compensation procedures will likely have large insurance premiums, wasted administrative costs and inadequate legal compliance that can lead to financial penalties.

BEST-IN-CLASS PRACTICES.

These best-in-class practices help landscapers maximize employee safety, minimize workers' compensation costs and position themselves as industry-wide leaders.

Safety culture. Best-in-

class companies don't simply have a safety program; they have a safety culture. This culture emphasizes employee safety across multiple touch points includ-

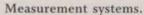


appraisals, training, rewards

and recognition, discipline, company core values and safety audits.

Internal processes. Bestin-class employers have welldocumented processes to ensure all safety-related incidents (e.g., injuries, vehicle accidents, first aid, chemical spills) are responded to correctly, consistently and efficiently.

Safety coordinator. Bestin-class organizations have
at least one full-time safety
coordinator who is primarily
responsible for supporting
employee safety. This employee responds to all injuries, completes all administrative and OSHA-related paperwork, interfaces with the
company's medical provider
network and workers' compensation provider, conducts
investigations and manages
the safety program.



Best-in-class companies have a series of tracking tools to measure all aspects of safety: job safety audits, yard safety audits, vehicle safety inspections, safety costs, number and types of injuries, training costs, OSHA measurements and days away from work due to injury.

Fraud investigation. Bestin-class companies work very closely with their insurance provider to investigate all questionable workers' compensation claims. Examples of fraud include: receiving a "kickback" for making a referral of workers' compensation claim to a doctor or attorney, working elsewhere while collecting temporary disability payments and making false claims regarding one's health condition or ability to work.

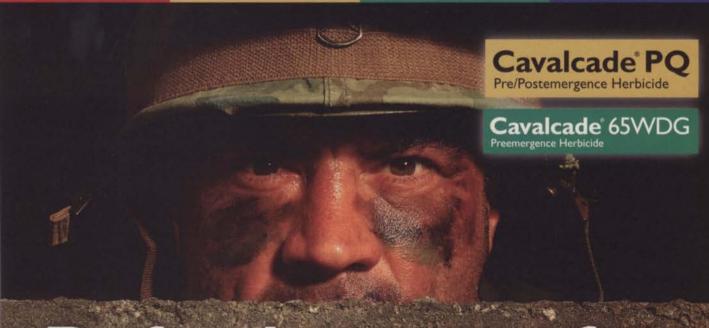
SUMMARY. Effective landscape companies are committed to providing a safe work environment for their employees, customers and communities. By establishing a well-rounded safety culture, landscapers will help keep their employees injury free, reduce their workers' compensation costs and ensure their company's financial success. Lea.

The author is an industrial psychologist with the Harvest Group, a landscape consulting group. Send your questions to him at scesare@ giernedia.com.

For more on workers' compensation, including common mistakes landscapers make, visit www.lawnandlandscape, com and search "workers' compensation."



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Sealing the deal

Five ways to turn hesitant prospects into long-term clients. By Phil Sarros





What do airplanes and new clients have in common?

They're both incredibly difficult to land without the right set of skills.

If your company offers a design/build service that specializes in outdoor living spaces, then you're no stranger to a hesitant client who is unsure and unwilling to move forward with your design.

It's not uncommon to feel frustrated in this situation because after all, your design is unique, creative and competitively priced. You probably even threw in some "extras" just to sweeten the deal. How could anybody say no to that? Are they in fact saying no at all? Be careful here because this is a fragile moment in the sales cycle where a potentially great project may be won or lost, based on how you address this hesitation.

Let's make several assumptions right away to make this extra energy worth our time. First, we'll assume that you've qualified your prospect and are not offering a water garden to someone

Prospect	Action/Interpretation		
"It just seems like a lot of money."	They don't see the value. You've failed to communicate how or why the service can benefit them, if in fact it can. Discuss alternative methods or solutions. Ask for help from a vendor or product manufacturer. This adds credibility and shows that you have their best interest in mind and you have quick access to industry "experts."		
"We're waiting on two other bids."	Respect the fact that people often get multiple bids on projects. Resist the urge to bash your competition for taking too long and ask permission from your prospect to follow up with them in three days to discuss your proposal and add clarity to any items they may have questions about.		
"I just can't visualize it."	Send some photos, draw a sketch and do it fast. They'll appreciate the energy and effort and it will elevate your value. Even better, set a time to meet them in person. Bring product samples and walk the property with them. Face time is incredibly valuable and worth the extra energy.		
"We may have to put some of it off."	They want a phased plan. Educate them on which items can fit into their budget now and which items can wait until later. It also helps them see you as a partner or consultant, and not just a contractor.		
"We're not sure if our community will allow us to do this work."	Offer to submit a drawing and a set of HOA documents for a nominal charge that gets applied directly to their project. Do not do this work for free because you may actually lose value in their eyes.		
"My husband/ wife isn't sure."	You have to get every decision maker involved in the project. Offer to meet with them and discuss a plan they both can agree on and incorporate a single vision with elements that each will enjoy.		
"Do you offer a warranty?"	Another company gave them warranty information and you didn't. Now you're being compared to them. This is a tough situation and you need to have a solid written warranty policy in place.		
"The other company is offering this, that and the other thing,	Proceed with caution. There's nothing wrong with offering an incentive but this is not the time. Be prepared to walk away.		

at no extra charge."

who simply wants their hedges pruned ... it happens. A contractor friend of mine (contractor friend is an industry term meaning "me," "myself" or "I") once spent 30 min-

utes with a couple explaining all

the lifetime warranties that each product carried along with a solid five-year labor guarantee. The pitch was perfect and the solid guarantee was a strength that had won him many jobs over the years. Yet, a moment later, the husband leaned slightly forward and said, "Son, I'm 83 years old, why don't you keep the warranty and just take some money off." Ouch! The point is, your reasons for buying may be very different from those of your prospect. Herein lies the opportunity to close more jobs and overcome objections.

Qualified prospects hesitate for only one single reason: They need more information. A hesitant prospect is a fragile prospect. Your job as a salesperson is to discover and deliver the information they need to remove the hesitation that is keeping them from saying "yes."

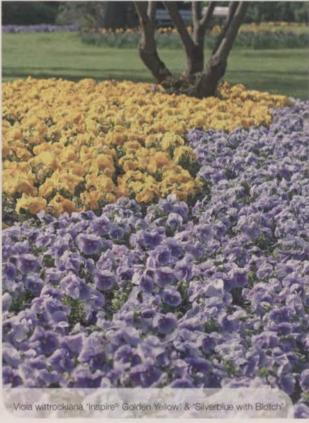
In the table on pg. 108 there are some common phrases that a homeowner may say to express their hesitation. Let's set the stage and assume vou've delivered a great design, a competitively priced proposal and, despite your professional follow up, your client is still expressing hesitation. Use the table to see if any of these phrases apply to your situation.

We each have a style, a subtlety or even a secret about what we say and do during a sales call that elevates our position over that of our competition. Successful companies have eliminated the most common mistakes that work against us, often from the very moment we take the first phone call. Here are the top five ways a business can reduce or eliminate hesitation from the prospect.

LIGHTNING FAST RESPONSETIME. Have you ever delivered a proposal and had a client e-mail you with a laundry list of itemized questions? How does that make you feel? Personally, I love it. It demonstrates a high level of commitment and tells







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OUTDOOR LIVING SPACES

me exactly what is standing in their way from saying "yes." Responses should be well thought out and articulate. Make sure you answer every single question and your response time should be measured in hours.

4 SYSTEMATIC FOLLOW UP. Follow up professionally and according to a calendar driven reminder schedule. Use your prospect's preferred method of communication and resist the urge to call them on every number you have listed. You should never leave a meeting or phone conversation without a clear understanding of when you will speak again and what the next step is. Make the process of closing the job an easy, pleasant experience. It sets the tone for the entire project and puts them at ease, which in turn makes them more eager to move forward.

DELIVER A PROPOSAL WITHIN 24-48 HOURS. You've done it. You've met the prospect, offered a verbal solution and took the time to collect all of your site measurements and field data. The sales call was perfect, and your credibility is solid. Then you toss your notebook on the dashboard and you do ... well, you do nothing. You sit, wait, run back and forth between job sites, appointments, meetings and more. Then, a week or so later, your phone is ringing and it is Mrs. Smith asking if we're still interested in the project and if she can expect a proposal. At this point, the hard work you put into that great sales call has gone out the window. You've invested money into marketing and attracting a client but failed to deliver on the most basic of expectations.

SHOW PROPRIETY. Look and act Let the way the customer expects you to look and act. Answer your phone with a live person or a very professional customized greeting. Deliver proposals on company letterhead and have

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a professional signature line in your e-mail. Use links to your Better Business Bureau report, client testimonials, project portfolios and more, as a way to help prospects learn more about your company and your reputation. But most of all, listen.

Look for opportunities to offer solutions and services that can speak to their wish list. Establish yourself as their partner for future projects. Help them phase the project into manageable increments. And remember this is not the time to "go for the gold."

JUST SHOW UP. I'm amazed, but no longer surprised, at the number of contractors who break some of the most fundamental rules of customer service beginning with showing up. Don't call and say you're running late, just show up. Don't make excuses, just show up. Set a time to be somewhere and just show up. Oh yeah, and don't forget to show up prepared.

We work incredibly hard for each and every piece of new business and, in recent years, many of us have worked harder than ever before, especially when it comes to selling large landscape renovations and outdoor living spaces. With increased competition and homeowners scrutinizing every dollar, you may find yourself struggling to sway an unsure client, despite your great reputation.

The fundamentals outlined above will increase your ability to reduce or eliminate hesitation. Remember that hesitation rarely has anything to do with price. Never offer a discount or freebie without first understanding exactly where the prospect is stuck.

Dropping prices is not an effective way to sway a hesitant homeowner. There is a time and place for a price incentive, but it is a very calculated tool to be used conservatively in select situations and almost immediately results in a signed contract. L&L

The author is president of Sarros Landscaping in Cumming, Ga. Email him at psarros@giemedia.com

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SEASON AFTER SEASON



will Spiegelberg used to get brochures in the mail about award contests, and he would just throw them away. After all, how could his company compete against larger companies with more resources? He'd be wasting his time and money on something he had no shot at winning.

Well, he eventually had a project in the \$50,000 range that he felt had a chance. He was right and the project won, and Spiegelberg says other companies shouldn't be afraid to enter a contest because of their size.

"Every submittal is judged against itself and not against the other submittals," says Spiegelberg, PLANET awards committee chairperson and former awards judge.

BY BRIAN HORN

But to win, first you have to enter. So, Lawn & Landscape spoke with some judges about ways you can get an advantage against the competition.

IT'S IN THE PHOTOGRAPH. You might take great pictures of your kids or pets, but when it comes to pictures of your work that you want to include in an entry, here's a tip – leave it to a professional.

"You can really see a difference between the ones that were professionally photographed compared to the ones that it was somebody on the crew took pictures," says Ann Joyce, 2010 Planet Environmental Improvement Awards judge.

Spiegelberg says to make

sure photos are horizontal, especially the "wow" shot.

And while retouching photos might not be allowed, cropping is permitted, so remember to cut out flaws in your design and construction.

"Many projects do have issues with things dying or whatever," he says. "It's important to leave those out of the picture. We've had people submit things with dead trees in them."

No matter if you are doing the picture taking, or paying a pro, make sure to take the photos on a low contrast day – overcast but bright or at sunrise/sunset, says Dan Long, chairperson of the 2010 Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado Excellence In Landscape awards.

"Keep your back to the sun and carefully frame your shots so they are not overwhelmed by too much sky or empty foreground," he says. The type of camera and lens used when photographing will also factor in on how well the pictures tell the story of the project.

A wide-angle lens pulls the foreground closer and pushes away the background, Long says.

"That might be great for a close-in pathway or patio, or to capture a vignette within your landscape," he says. "A telephoto lens does the opposite and will compress or layer a longer shot.

"To get other interesting shots to communicate your story, try getting up higher on a ladder or back into your plantings shooting inward."

KEEP IT SIMPLE. Much like you might pay a pro to shoot the photos of your work, Bill Horn says you might want to invest in a professional writer to work on your narrative, or find someone in your company who has a writing background.

"Don't be super-verbose," says Horn, former PLANET awards committee chair and judge. "Be concise, be clear, be articulate and get your point across, frame by frame, shot by shot and all the other aspects of the narrative.

"But don't be overly flowery or verbose because us as judges, we are looking at hundreds of entries. We start reading these flowery long winded things and frankly you tune out."

Joyce recommends between 20 and 30 words per slide, while Horn says you should focus the narrative not only on the work that was completed, but how this project is different.

"Talk about sustainable practices that you are using and partnering with the owner, the management company, whoever it might be ... talk about innovation, techniques that you are using, talk about safety," he says.

MAKE A PLAN Preparing to enter a project into a competition before you start it can be a great way to accentuate the story and impress the judges. You can photograph the project as you are working on it, which will show judges the impact you made on an area.

"They should really think ahead of time what they want to convey about this project," Joyce says. "So, if the project had some challenges or something like that, it's good if they can visually represent that and include that in their narrative."

A contractor should think about what can set a project apart from other projects the judges might be seeing.

"It's great to see some before and afters because that really tells the judges what kinds of obstacles there were – just really the kind of design intent too. And they should include things like that in the narrative," Joyce says.

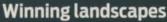
It also doesn't hurt to wait a little bit and choose projects that have matured, Long says. "Plantings that have filled in and flowered and trees that have flushed out with new growth will really add a higher level of quality to your project," he says.

"Images that display vast areas of mulch, concrete and lawn may not be giving the impression you hope."

THE MORE EYES, THE BETTER.

You might understand every little detail of a project, and you may think you conveyed that in your project submittal. But you worked on the project, so you know the ins and outs, and may have glossed over an important piece of the story.

That's why it's best to find someone who is familiar with the green industry, preferably in your company, but who didn't work on the project.



To see photos of award-winning work from the Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado and the California Landscape Contractors Association, visit www. lawnandlandscape.com and search "winning landscapes."



They can tell you if there are any holes or redundancies in the presentation.

"If they don't understand parts of the presentation, there's a good chance the judges aren't going to understand it as well," Spiegelberg says. "It's good to have a set of unfamiliar eyes take a look at it."

TURN PLAQUES INTO PROFIT.

Hopefully, if you apply some of these strategies, you'll be collecting awards so fast you'll run out of wall space to display them. But don't let them just hang on the walls. Use them as tools to market your company to the public.

Spiegelberg posts his awards on his website and has them in his portfolio when he meets with clients. Joyce says mentioning you won an award on Facebook and Twitter will get word out about your good news, and the award proves to clients the company is professional when it comes to its landscaping work.

"It shows that they are very serious about what they are doing and from the employee side it recognizes the employees that did the work that the company wants to acknowledge their awesome work," she says.

And remember, no project is too simple to be acknowledged.

"Don't be discouraged if you feel like you have an award winning project, but it didn't cost that much money," Joyce says. "Put it in." L&L

This project by EvLand won the Stuart J.Sperber Memorial Sweepstakes Trophy - Best In Show from the CLCA.



The author is an associate editor at Lawn & Landscape. He can be reached at bhom@gle.net.

Using the right tools and the right technique

Master stone mason and business owner Chris Pascoe teaches landscapers how to properly work with the material, By Carolyn LaWell

It wasn't a first for Chris Pascoe. He was on a job when an architect told Pascoe he was unsatisfied with a previous contractor's stone work. At first glance, Pascoe knew it was all wrong.

"They didn't know what they were doing because it was horrible, it was terrible," he says. "But it was trying to be sold to the architect as a new style of rock facing. I just looked at him and

laughed because it was clear the person who did it didn't have the right tools, didn't have enough material for the overhang and they had to dress the stone."

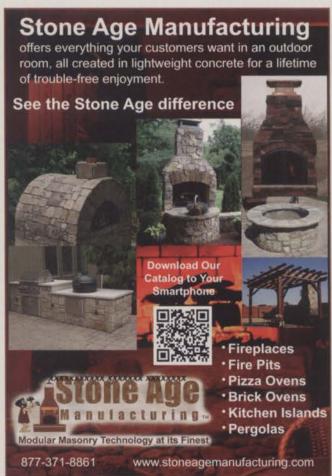
Pascoe wasn't being a snob. As a master stone mason, he knows what looks right.

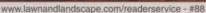
A native of England, Pascoe did an apprenticeship at Gloucester Cathedral, a shooting site for the Harry Potter movies. And he stud-

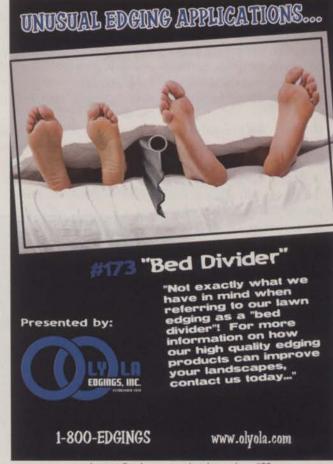


Gene Pouly of E.F. Pouly Co. participates in a stone clinic taught by Chris Pascoe and hosted by the Ohio Landscape Association.

ied every aspect of masonry cutting and carving, working with clients, the science of geology - in college, before he came to the states to work on the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in New York City. Since the age of 16, he's dedicated his life to the profession, and now as









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STONE WORK

one of three owners of Tri-R-Stone in Garfield Heights, Ohio, he's determined to continue to be an advocate for it.

Last year, Pascoe started teaching stone clinics for landscapers through the Ohio Landscape Association. As more companies take on the stone aspect of design/build projects, Pascoe felt it was important that they really understand

The dos and don'ts of working with stone

Dust is always an issue. Whenever possible, cut wet.

Wear goggles. Take the proper precautions to ensure safety is always first.

Generally, there's one shot. Measure twice and cut once.

Ask for a hand. Don't try to lift something too heavy.

Hit it once; hit it clean. If the stone was hit once and it looks like the corner is going to break off, nine times out of 10, it will.

how to go about using the material.

In his clinic, Pascoe teaches how to differentiate the materials, how much material should be used, what tools to use and industry terminology.

"A lot of people, they look at a piece of sandstone and they say, 'That's limestone.' It's like, 'No," Pascoe says. "There are different characteristics that they'll be shown to look for when trying to identify the piece of material they're going to be working with."

Understanding the stone is essential in order to properly cut it and design a project. Limestone and sandstone, which are mainly what Pascoe sees contractors using in his region, are sedimentary rocks, but if you break a piece off and actually look closely at the stone, they'll look different. If you break open Indiana limestone, for instance, Pascoe says, bits of shells and acorn cups will probably be visible from how it was naturally formed.

If you crack open sandstone, those grains aren't visible.

There are a lot of technical aspects that come into play when working with stone, including using the proper tools. Pascoe says one of the mistakes he sees contractors make when using man-made products from companies like Unilock or VERSA-LOK, is they use brick chisels designed for splitting bricks and not to dress and rock face stone.

Pascoe recommends every contractor's tool bag should have: pitching tools, drafting tools, a claw hammer, a plug and feathers and punch tools.

"That's really what the landscapers need in their tool bag," Pascoe says. "It's not a tremendous amount of tools, but for what a lot of contractors do, they'll find their quality of work will really come up." L&L

The author is associate editor at Lawn & Landscape. She can be reached at clawell@gie.net.

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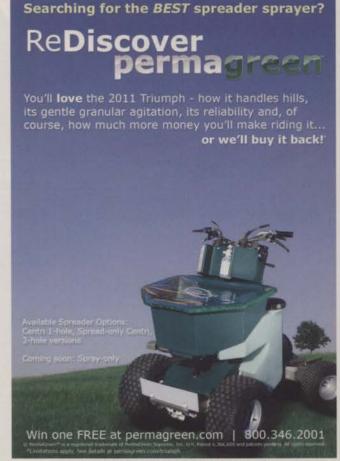
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Improve your seasonal color

It's the middle of May and your crews need 100 trays of pansies. Now. At this point, it doesn't matter what you slam in the ground your clients are going to be mad if they don't see beds teeming with annuals soon. But every other contractor in town needs flowers, too, and the growers don't have anything left.

You aren't happy. Your clients aren't happy. It doesn't have to be that way.

Installing seasonal color is a great add-on sale for any company. In fact, 82 percent of

landscape firms offer it as a service, according to the 2010 Lawn & Landscape State of the Industry Report. But often, contractors leave the choice of flowers to the last minute.

"It's not like you're running into the dealer to get a gasket for a mower. They're a support team, an extra pair of hands, especially as far as plant knowledge. You can look at catalogs all day, but a grower can give you that information on what's performing," says Polly Bailey-Rule.

Before she joined Four Star Greenhouse as landscape account manager, Bailey-Rule spent seven years in Colorado running her own landscaping company.

"I'm amazed with the number of contractors who don't know what growers do," she says.

Here, she offers her suggestions on how contractors can work better with their color suppliers, get the best flower installations possible and boost sales. - Chuck Bowen



Before the season gets into full swing, sit down and look at how much seasonal color you'll do. If you have a standard plant palette in many designs, jot down what you like to use.

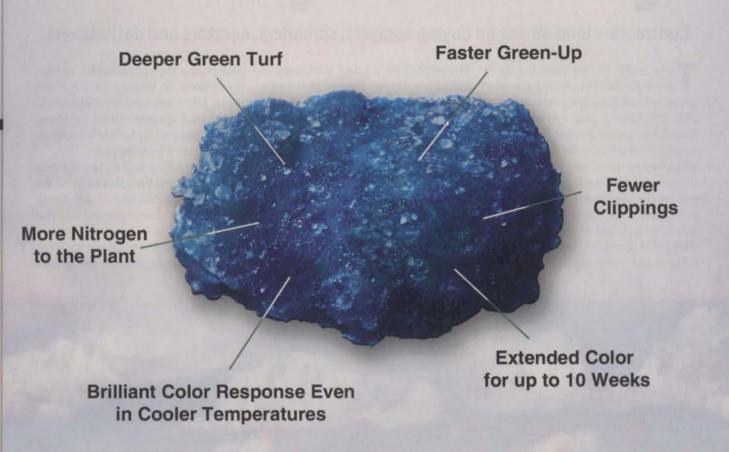
Develop a relationship with your grower. In the early winter months, stop in or call to discuss the types of plants you'd like to use in spring, "We would love to see our contractors much more often than the second week of May." Bailey-Rule says. "We can have exactly what they need at the price and size and color (they want)." If you establish a relationship now, you can get help planning for the season.

Once you're into the season, try to think about what you're going to need when you come in. Plan your combinations out and bring a list. "At least call a couple days ahead so the grower can figure it out," she says. Stopping in without any real idea "brings things to a grinding halt. You can't fill orders or trucks If you're taking care of one customer."

Be on time. Contractors need to arrive when they say they will to pick up plants, or at least call ahead, "Everyone fully understands this is a weather-dependent industry. If it's raining, that's a given. If there's a hang-up on the job, you need to let the grower know," she says. "Every contractor should put their grower's number on their speed dial."

During and after the season, let your grower know how the plants are doing. Did things look OK through July? How did the petunias handle the drought? Growers can also help diagnose and treat cultural problems, so give them a call. "We want to know the customer is pleased. How did the plants do?" Bailey-Rule says.

A Little Bit of Blue Makes a Whole Lot of Green









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QUEST FOR QUALITY

Contractors lend advice on buying sprayers, spreaders, aerators and dethatchers.

They might not be bank breakers when it comes to investing in equipment, but sprayers, spreaders, aerators and dethatchers play a vital role in most lawn care businesses. So we asked several contractors what they look for when buying these products. "Seek out the product with the highest quality, it will be the cheapest in the long run," says Clint Culver, operations manager at Nitro Green Helena in Helena, Mont. In addition to the advice, look for the newest products on the market on pg. 123.

SPRAYERS. Steven Johns is thinking of selling his ride-on sprayer after just a few years of ownership. The president of Envisioning Green in Alton, Ill., mainly does commercial work that requires covering large areas. And the sprayer just doesn't get the distance he needs.

"Because we bought our first one without (testing it), it was really \$6,000 or \$7,000 down the drain," he says. "It was a disappointment."

When it comes to buying new equipment, Johns says understand what you're going to use the equipment for and test the options. In looking for a replacement, Johns attended the GIE+EXPO and tested sprayers until he found what he wanted. He bought his original sprayer from a local supplier.

"I thought, hey, well if that's the only sprayer they sell then this must be the right one for us," he says. "I didn't realize how much of an important role that it played."

When it comes to ride-on sprayers, Johns says larger areas might require



equipment with additional fold out arms. Secondly, know what type of application you might be using.

"With a sprayer, I was expecting it to be more universal, but those sprayers are definitely designed for different types of applications," he says.

Culver says he looks for reliability and ease of use.

"When you have 10 guys, and you have to train them, you want it to be very simple to be able to train them and then for them to not make any mistakes," he says. "Then, I would say easy and consistent calibration."

Nitro Green uses spray trucks for large applications and handcan sprayers for spot treatment. Culver says when using hand sprayers - it's hard to find - but look for ones that don't leak and are easy to calibrate. He spends about \$30 to \$70 on each hand-can sprayer and they last about a season.

SPREADERS. There are two things contractors look for when it comes to spreaders: durability and clogability.

"We like all of our spreaders to be the same, so that if you send a guy out he has the same model and type," Culver says. "It's very important for them to operate reliably, not clog. We don't like them to clog because then it's a missed application."

Matthew J. Gilligan, owner of Magnolia Landscape in Virginia Beach, Va., says he doesn't only look for clogging but how easy the spreader is to clean out.

"If you look underneath, you want to always be able to hose it down clean," Gilligan says. "If there is just a lot of working parts that aren't easy to clean out, you might have to take some things apart. (Then) you're just losing time."

Gilligan bought a \$200 spreader last year. A top of the line model can cost anywhere from \$500 to \$600, he says. But he bought a cheaper spreader because he doesn't do a lot of fertilizer treatment.

Price can mean better quality, he says, especially when it comes to sturdiness and durability.

He says questions to ask are, "Does it have good sized tires? Does it have a nice axle? Is the frame nice, sturdy steel? Because once you're bouncing them around in the yards, transporting them in your trailer or truck, they can just fall apart easily if you don't spend money on a decent one."

Culver says he tries to get 10 years out of each spreader and the durability of the frame is usually where the equipment fails. Typically, out of eight spreaders, Nitro Green has to weld a couple each year.

When looking for new equipment, Culver says he reads reviews and looks at photos to judge quality.

"Sometimes you can just look at how it is built and you can see that it's going to be way too complex that if something went out of adjustment that your guys wouldn't be able to fix it."

AERATORS. Gilligan has used his aerator for three years and is looking to replace the \$150 piece of equipment with a better and more expensive one.

He's looking to spend about \$1,000 on a top of the line one he can pull with a mower.



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"The top-of-the-line is going to have a good solid plugger on it that's going to give you a huge plug when it aerates," Gilligan says. "And it's also that the metal is thicker and the axles are thicker. You know it's going to last."

When Matt Williams of Primary Grounds purchases an aerator, he looks for quality, ease of use and price.

"Obviously everyone needs to feel like they receive a fair price on purchases, but price should not be the determining factor, and is not for us," he says "Quality for us incorporates durability, ease of maintenance, availability of dealer support."

Williams also wants ease of use as it relates to productivity in the field.

"We have found some aerators easier to use through hydraulic drive systems as opposed to chain/belt drive systems," he says. "Ease of use for us also includes various sizes of machine. We look for the largest machine we can get while still considering the access points to the properties we service. A huge machine is useless if you can't get it through the gate, but proves very beneficial on open areas."

Johns says to avoid single drum aerators because you have to turn the machine yourself, which takes up a lot of energy. "You literally have to lift up the entire back of the machine and like manhandle it to turn it around completely by hand," he says. "And it's a 300-pound machine, so it gets very tiring.

"By the time your employee is aerating all day using that machine, they're so worn out it's not even funny."

Johns says to buy the alternative to that machine, which is called a split drum, but is \$1,000 more expensive.

"But by the time you've spent that extra \$1,000, you're getting 30 percent more yards done per day with the aeration because you don't have to pick the machine up and turn it. It turns more like a zero-turn mower might turn."

DETHATCHERS. When Brian Anderson of Farison Sports Turf in Louisville, Ky., buys dethatchers, he looks at what the tines are made of and the length of them.

"I don't want to have to replace tines every use and I want a good plug that comes out," he says. "Also, I look at how it moves and operates. Ideally I would want something that isn't too heavy but still pulls a good core. All in all, I want a good machine that gets the job done for a good price. I don't want to go bankrupt buying these type of machines."

Gilligan says he has rented dethatchers before, but is now in the market to buy one. He says there are ones you can pull with tractor that work OK, but you can't set depth on it as far as how far you need to go to get the grass up.

"There are ones that are all motorized and you can set the depth as far as how deep you want to go. Those do a pretty good job getting it all out of there," he says.

Gilligan also says you want to know how much area you have to cover before buying one.

"If you have a really big yard, you would probably want to get a dethatcher you could pull with a riding lawn mower," he says. "If you had a smaller yard than you'd probably want to get the push one with the motor on it." L&L

Accuaire FlexWing Core Aerator

The pitch: Gravely Turf Offers the Accuaire FlexWing Core Aerator for optimum ground penetration over any terrain contour.

- · Available in 65- and 89-inch working widths.
- · A solid frame adds weight to aid in soil penetration and solid coring.
- · Extra wide racks are built in for additional weight.
- · Lifting and lowering the unit is easy with hydraulic assist.

Contact: www.ariens.com



BlueBird 530 Lawn Aerator

The pitch: Greater productivity, better maneuverability and a user-friendly design are just a few of the features that make BlueBird's 530 Lawn Aerator a breeze to operate.

- · A free-wheeling tine system allows users to aerate corners and tight areas.
- · A folding handle, lift handles and semipneumatic front tire provide easy transport.
- · Removable side weights offer balance for easier slope aeration.

Contact: www.bluebirdintl.com

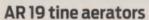


Tine-Rake dethatchers

The pitch: Tine-Rake dethatchers feature a unified raking motion that removes large amounts of thatch and surface aerates soil for better root development.

- . Triple dethatching efficiency by lifting thatch and vacuuming debris at the
- same time using a Grasshopper PowerVac Collection System. Front-mounted 48- and 60-inch dethatchers connect directly
- to the deck of any Grasshopper power unit and can be lifted easily from the operator's seat.
- · Permanent-mounting brackets can be installed in minutes.

Contact: www.grasshoppermower.com



The pitch: Husqvarna's hollow tine aerators feature free-wheeling outer tines for better maneuverability.

- · Additional side weights allow for improved soil penetration.
- · A folding operator handle, lift handles and semi-pneumatic front tire allow for easy transport and storage.
- · Rear-wheel control allows for adjustment of working depth and settings for stability.

Contact: www.husqvarna.com



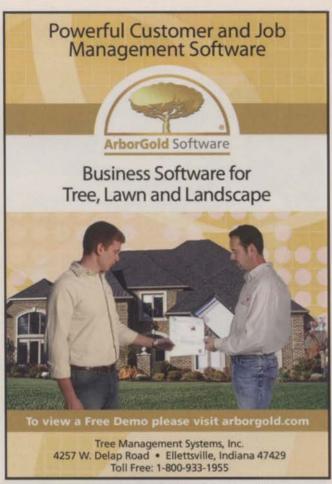




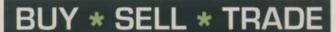
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PRODUCT FOCUS

Spreader cover

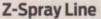
The pitch: Jump Start Lawncare's see-through slide on shield fertilizer spreader cover is a durable lid that keeps fertilizer dry.

. The cover is made out of lexan, allowing it to last longer, withstand impact,

and it is not susceptible to ripping or tearing.

- · With one piece of material, the cover stays on the spreader even
- · Keeps fertilizer from getting wet and easy to wipe dry.

Contact: www.jumpstartlawncare.com



The pitch: L.T. Rich Products Z-Spray line offers four sprayers, including Junior 36, Junior, Intermediate and Z-Max.

- . Each has a 4.0 GPM Pump, lock caster system, GPS system and stainless steel chassis.
- . The granular hopper ranges from 120 pounds to 220 pounds and the spray system ranges from 18 gallons to 50 gallons on the four models.
- . The spray width is 8 feet for the Junior 36, Junior and Intermediate, and 10 feet on the Z-Max.

Contact: www.z-spray.com



ATT 150 All Terrain Tric

The pitch: With the new ATT 150 All Terrain Tric from Mid-Atlantic Services. operators can get on the ground earlier, increasing productivity and improving results with its accurate pump system.



- · Lightweight and comes with tricycle steering, which keeps load off the ATV tow vehicle.
- · Features a 150-gallon, low profile poly tank with high flotation 31 x 13.5 terra rib tires.
- . The John Blue ground metering pump system allows for the application of chemicals and fertilizer.

Contact: www.masspray.com

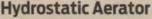
PermaGreen Triumph Sprayer Spreader

The pitch: The PermaGreen Triumph Sprayer Spreader can be used for all lawns, from postage-sized residential yards or sprawling, multi-acre commercial accounts.

. Ride on technology with a 5.5-hp Honda horizontal shaft engine and wet clutch.

- · A low-volume spray system and a 3,000 sq. ft. per minute production speed allow the equipment to be less fatigued.
- The sprayer spreader has a 150-pound hopper and 12-gallon spray tank.

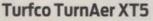
Contact: www.permagreen.com



The pitch: The primary feature of SourceOne's PL855 PRO HD hydrostatic drive aerator is built-in performance.

- · Features a fingertip speedcontrol knob and a self-propelled hydrostatic-drive system.
- · Like all Plugr reciprocating aerators, heat-treated, high-tensilestrength, computer-machined tines
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- · Engine power instead of bulky weights moves the reciprocating
- · Includes a sleek unibody construction, improved handle ergonomics and easier maintenance access.

Contact: www.sourceoneope.com



The pitch: The TurnAer XT5 utilizes Turfco's steerable aerator technology with a new variable-speed hydrostatic drive system.

- . Operators can steer and reverse with tines in the
 - ground eliminating the need to stop, lift and turn with each pass.
- · Places weight directly over the tines for better penetration and smooth operation.
- · A removable tine cover provides access for changes and
- · Sealed, self-aligning tine shaft bearings help keep maintenance to a minimum and reduce down time.

Contact: www.turfcodirect.com









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PRODUCT FOCUS



US250 sprayer attachment

The pitch: TurfEx's universal mount for zero-turn mowers allows the mounting system to stay within the mower's footprint and is completely electric powered.

- . With a 12-volt electric motor, the sprayer draws its power from the mower's battery.
- . The corrosion-resistant polyethylene tank holds 25 gallons and the pump is rated at 2 gallons per minute at 60 psi.
- . To apply liquid, the US250 features an adjustable spray wand, which is attached to a 25-foot hose.

Contact: www.trynexfactory.com

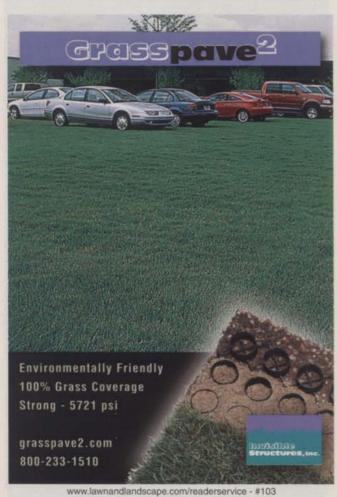


100 Gallon Sprayer

The pitch: Turbo Turf's 100 Gallon Sprayer was designed for reliability and for easy-to-use service.

- . Comes with a compact rectangular tank with an 8-inch fill well for easy loading.
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- . There is a front-mounted-tank shutoff valve and tank drain. along with a 30-micron filter that has a convenient, easy-toreach location.

Contact: www.turfsprayers.com







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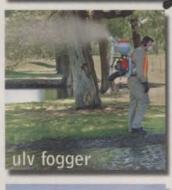
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ollar spot is an economically significant fungal pathogen caused by Sclerotinia homoeocarpa. The disease occurs on nearly all cultivars of cool and warm season turfgrass species worldwide.

Apart from your customers' lawns, the disease is an important concern for golf course superintendents across the country.

In fact, that's where the disease got its common name: On golf greens, symptoms of dollar spot appear as small, circular, sunken, patches of tan-colored grass. The spots are often the size of an American dollar coin; hence the term "dollar spot."

SYMPTOMS. In taller turfgrass species and on home lawns, spots are between 0.65-6 inches.

Spots may combine, creating large, irregular, bleached

Typical leaf blade symptoms commence as watersoaked spots that turn strawcolored with reddish-brown margins. The reddish-brown banding does not occur on annual bluegrass.

The spots may form distinctive "hourglass" shaped lesions on individual blades as the lesion is often narrower in width than the leaf.

In the landscape, leaf spot symptoms are more noticeable on taller mowed Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass species.

When heavy dew is present in the early morning, white cobwebby threads of the fungus may be seen in affected spots.

As the air warms and the turf dries, the fungal threads may not be visible. Turf in these heavily infected spots may be killed.

The presence of white aerial hyphae may be confused with other fungal diseases such as Pythium blight, Nigrospora blight and brown patch. Infected spots are sometimes also mistaken for red thread, although the mycelium of this fungus is pinkish-red in color.

ENVIRONMENT. The disease organism survives and overwinters in infected plants and debris.

The primary methods of dispersal are mowers and maintenance equipment, although shoes, wind and rain may also spread the disease.

Environmental conditions

of high relative humidity and extended periods of leaf wetness either from rain or irrigation provide conditions for the disease to develop.

The disease infection occurs between 59-86°F. However, the optimal temperature for infection of fungal biotypes varies greatly with different geographic locations. Other environmental conditions that favor disease development include: low nitrogen fertility, dry soils and high moisture canopy conditions.

PREVENTION. Maintaining a healthy, vigorous turfgrass stand goes a long way in disease prevention.

Encourage moderate shoot growth by applications of adequate nitrogen and top dress with compost to reduce disease development.

Aerify soil to reduce plant stress from compaction and thatch accumulation. Careful attention to irrigation practices is highly recommended.

Irrigate soil to a depth of 4-6 inches, preferably in the morning or early evening to reduce prolonged periods of leaf wetness.

Fungi need moisture in

order to infect leaves. When dollar spot is active, apply light and frequent amounts of nitrogen to reduce disease severity. In home lawns, raising the mowing height can stimulate growth and subsequent recovery.

CHEMICAL CONTROL. A number of fungicides are effective for control of dollar spot, including dicaboximide, DMI (demethylation inhibitor) and QoI (strobilurin).

The most satisfactory results can be achieved when products are applied early in disease development.

To avoid the development of fungicide-resistant biotypes of the pathogen, rotate chemical classes of fungicides and follow label directions.

Consult with regional turf specialists and professionals for advice on which products have the best efficacy for your geographical area. LAL

The author is plant pathologist and senior diagnostician at the Davey Institute, Davey Tree Expert Co.

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Water work

Adding aquatic weed control can be a smooth process for landscapers and LCOs. By Brian Horn



Using a boat is more effective than a land vehicle when controlling aquatic weeds.

aron Church admits he's a little hesitant about speaking with Lawn & Landscape about how landscapers can add aquatic weed control to their business. The president of Southern Aquatic Management in Sanford, Fla., says he's already seen an uptick in competition from landscapers and LCOs who've jumped into the aquatic weed control world.

Since landscapers and LCOs are familiar with working with chemicals, it shouldn't be too overwhelming to learn about aquatic chemicals, even though they are a different set of herbicides that need an aquatic label. "It wouldn't be like someone working as a banker and deciding to get into the aquatics field," he says.

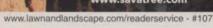
"These guys are probably working around herbicides on a daily basis anyways, so they would already have a pretty good background."

When Church started his company four years ago, he says it cost him about \$15,000 start to finish, including the fee to incorporate and the cost of insurance. He already owned a truck, so he used that to pull the boat. Church says a landscaper looking to add the service would cost, assuming they have a truck to pull the boat, about \$6,000 total - \$5,000 for the boat and \$1,000 for products and other equipment like sprayers.

"It's not an expensive endeavor if you already have an existing landscaping outfit," he says."

While the transition may not be hard, Church says a lot of contractors he's seen add it on aren't treating the weeds with the amount of product they should be, which has gotten him some clean-up jobs. If someone needs \$100 worth of herbicides, but the bid only called for \$75, then the customer







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AQUATIC WEED CONTROL

will not get the amount needed.

"You as the applicator have total control as to how much or how little product you're putting in the water," Church says.

From book study to actually getting on-site training, it would take about six months for someone to learn how to do the applications, Church says.

"Most of our guys are trained. They go out with someone that's already licensed and train for a minimum of two months before we ever turn them loose on their own," Church says.

Carlton Layne, executive director of the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Foundation, says you can also attend the University of Florida aquatic weed short course, which happens May 3-5 in Coral Springs, Fla. Layne says most states have reciprocal agreements with Florida when it comes to the aquatic weed category.

Layne says certification can cost anywhere from \$25-\$300, and normally is good for three to five years.

"Of course they'd have to comply with whatever their local business requirements were," Layne says. "If they're already in the lawn care business, though, adding another service probably isn't going to change their business license."

Aquatic weed control is most popular in the Southeast, Church says, with Florida being the biggest draw for the business. "There's quite a bit of work up through Coastal Georgia and the Coastal Carolinas," Church says.

"Once you get up north obviously it's a whole different type of ball game. You don't need someone to be out there once a month to spray."

Church says he's seen some contractors only using an ATV to spray aquatics, but it's best to use a boat. You most likely won't be able to get weeds in the middle of the water with land vehicles.

"You can do anything from a half-acre pond to a 30-acre lake out of a boat. It's universal, you can use it anywhere," says Church, adding that one employee with a boat can complete about five jobs a day.

Church says he charges about \$70 per hour, plus whatever chemicals he has to use. Church tries to keep chemical costs at 30 percent of the monthly cost. So, if a job takes \$100 a month to spray two ponds, he wouldn't want to exceed \$30 a month in chemical use.

Overall, Church advises any landscaper or LCO who wants to add the service to commit to it.

"If you're going to do it, go all the way and build yourself a couple of boats or at least a boat," he says. "And be able to get out on the water to do it." LAL

The author is an associate editor at Lawn & Landscape. He can be reached at bhorn@gie.net.





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Various species can attack plants and reduce their aesthetic quality.

By Raymond A. Cloyd

There are a number of different aphid species that attack landscape plants, including the green peach aphid (Myzus persicae), melon or cotton aphid (Aphis gossypii), foxglove aphid (Aulacorthum solani), chrysanthemum aphid (Macrosiphum rosae) and potato aphid (Macrosiphum euphorbiae).

Certain plant species and cultivars are more susceptible to aphids than others. And distribution varies depending on the plant species or cultivar.

BIOLOGY. Aphids typically feed on new terminal growth and the undersides of leaves. Its color varies depending on the host plant and should not be used for identification.

Aphids cause direct plant injury by removing plant fluids with their piercingsucking mouthparts. Feeding on new growth results in young leaves appearing distorted or curled (upward or downward). They may also cause plant stunting. Many aphids are also capable of transmitting viruses.

The pest produces a clear sticky liquid material referred to as honeydew, which serves as a growing medium for black sooty mold fungi. The presence of black sooty mold detracts or reduces the aesthetic quality of plants. High aphid populations may lead to the presence of white cast or molting skins that can also reduce plant aesthetics.

Aphids can be major insect pests of landscapes, particularly early in the season when new succulent growth is expanding.

control. Controlling aphids involves implementing cultural, insecticidal and biological strategies; preferably using all three. Proper watering and fertilization practices can effectively minimize potential aphid problems.

Aphids are attracted to and feed on plants receiving excess amounts of nitrogen, so avoid overfertilizing. Aphid reproduction increases when they feed on plants that have been overfertilized.

Sanitation is an important means of avoiding aphid problems. Remove plant debris and old stock plants from landscapes or place into containers with tight-sealing lids because winged aphids may abandon desiccating plant material and migrate onto the main crop.

Weed removal eliminates potential sources of aphids since many broadleaf and grassy weed species commonly found in and around landscapes serve as a reservoir for aphids and can support large populations.

Aphids are susceptible to contact, translaminar and systemic insecticides. There are a number of insecticides that have both translaminar

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and systemic properties. Be sure to rotate insecticides with different modes of action in order to avoid resistant aphid populations from developing.

If biological controls are going to be used, it is important to identify the aphid species. Various parasitoids are specific to the aphid species they will attack.

Parasitoid or predator releases must be made before aphid populations are "high" and plant damage is evident. Biological control agents for aphids include the parasitoids, Aphidius colemani, A. matricariae and A. ervi; the predatory midge Aphidoletes aphidimyza; the green lacewings Chrysoperla carnea and C. rufilabris; the ladybird beetle Hippodamia convergens and the beneficial fungus Beauveria bassiana. Lea.

The author is a professor and extension specialist in ornamental entomology/integrated pest management at Kansas State University. He can be reached at rcloyd@ksu.edu.





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Maria President and CEO, James River Grounds Management Candler



What have you been up to since you won the award?

Personally, I was going to have a baby like two days after the photographer left (for the award shoot). So life completely changed. And we've added a second child to the mix.

So personally it's been very busy and lots of things have changed there and that's been great.

Also during that same time, we were able to buy the company from the original owners. So, that was a very big thing that happened.

That was in May of 2005. That's something we had been working on for a long time and it was a fairly seamless transition, and the two original owners were fairly uninvolved at that point.

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

I try not to pay much attention to it honestly because if you listen to NPR on the way to work every morning, and you take what you hear as gospel, you'll probably drive your car off a cliff. But

we'll come out of it just the way we went into it. It was a long, slow process so that's how we're going to pull it out. It's going to be a long slow process.

But I do believe the companies that kept their chin up and focused on lean practices and really tried to be the best that they can be in all areas and are really focused – I think at the end of it, they'll come out a much better, stronger company in the end. We don't really talk about it around here.

We talk about how we can be better, and we take each issue as it comes and we try to be strategic and not really buy in to "Oh, the economy is bad."

It's like this ultimate excuse for everything and we just aren't going to have that conversation.

But shouldn't you keep an eye on the economy?

Well yeah, we keep an eye on everything. We are reacting and being proactive and trying to be strategic regardless. That's our mission, that's our culture. I guess when things get rocky, our culture was already that. So it's not been that big of a change.

We were disappointed that we're not growing at the rate we're used to growing, but you redefine what a great year is and you keep moving forward, and I think staying positive has been a huge thing.

Where do you see the industry being in 2020?

Part of me worries that the quality just won't be there. I think I sense that with almost everything. Quality just is taking such a dive.

But I am also optimistic when I see things like what Jim McCutcheon is doing at HighGrove where he is turning a really horrible regulatory environment into a great opportunity.

So, I think you'll have great cutting edge companies like that and you'll always have the startups. But I think you'll have less of those in the middle.

Why is quality taking a dive?

Well, right now it's taking a dive because companies are forced to cut their margins and some of us are trying

> hard not to play that game. But you have to be creative, and when your customer

tells you they need to cut their specifications and you want to keep them as a customer, you are going to do less. So, that's going to take a long time to change. And then that becomes the new status quo. I hope that is not the case, but it certainly feels that way.

In your 2004 profile you described yourself as a control person. Is that still the case?

I think it's good and bad. It's definitely my big challenge because of the personality that I am and something that I always try to keep my eyes on and be aware of.

And I think what's important is that I'm aware of it and that I work on it.

But I've sort of overcome it by really focusing my need for control on the things that I really should be controlling. ... And I think what helps me is that I am very energized by other people accomplishing things. So that helps me.

I just re-shift my control over controlling the tools I can give them.

That's just been my tool over the years to try and regroup and not be the one to do everything and be in the middle of everything. It's definitely been the hardest thing to overcome. Lal.

Read more from Candler, including her 2004 leadership profile, at www.lawnandlandscape.com/leadershiplessons.





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