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100 TOP

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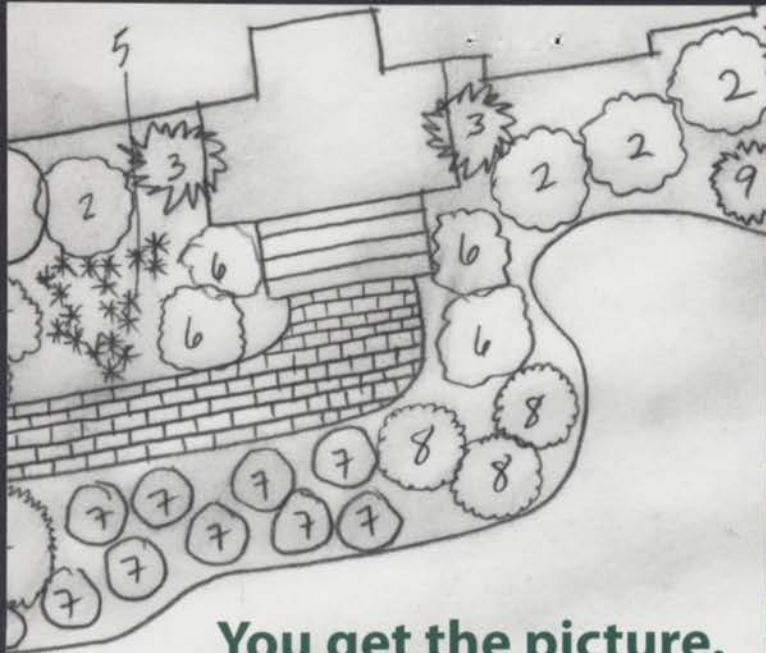
LESSONS FROM THE **BIGGEST COMPANIES** IN THE INDUSTRY. :: PG. 30



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ONLINE Contents

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

Check out a story from L&L's lawn care newsletter, *Going Green*, below.

Renewed focus



A move to maintenance work helped Bemus Landscape in a bad economy.

California. The company was earning 80 percent of its revenue from new home installations at the peak of the market.

Yet today, Bemus Landscape is a different company, now earning most of its revenue from maintenance work. Its focus on homeowners' associations (HOAs) and a range of other commercial clients has helped Bemus to remain strong in tough times and offers a lesson in the value of diversification and strategic planning.

Visit bit.ly/bemusland for the rest of the story.

As new home construction halted, Bemus Landscape diversified its lawn care model.

Beginning in the 1990s, new home construction in Southern California enjoyed a 15-year boom. It ended with a spectacular crash when the bubble burst in 2008. Yet before flipping the tracks, it brought a few companies along for the ride. One of these was Bemus Landscape, a 40-year-old company based in San Clemente, Calif.

"As the housing market took off in the '90s, we took off with it," says Jon Parry, Bemus Landscape's general manager. "Working with homebuilders had always been a niche for us, but during that time, it was like the market was on steroids."

Bemus Landscape was founded by Bill Bemus in 1973 when he began mowing lawns to pay his way through college. As the company grew, it developed strong relationships with national homebuilders working in Southern

Go to bit.ly/llenews to sign up for our design/build, irrigation or lawn care newsletters.



TOP TWEETS

Some stories our Tweepies liked:

GEORGE BALLAS

The inventor of the Weed Whacker dies at age 85.

nyti.ms/weedwhacker

TORO ACQUIRES LAWN SOLUTIONS COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS

The acquisition adds key product categories to support Toro's position in turf renovation.

bit.ly/torolsc



Check out the latest multimedia from *Lawn & Landscape*

Grow Show: Employer retaliation

Consistently audit your human resources practices to ensure they are legal, non-discriminatory and up-to-date.

bit.ly/growshowaugust



Talking with Michael Geary

The OFA Short Course CEO looks forward to a great event – this year and beyond.

bit.ly/ofageary



Promoting your hot list

Aaron Allison of SBI Software shows off the company's new Hot List Picture Pro option to its software suite.

bit.ly/ofasoftware



H-2B CHANGES TO OCCUR SOONER THAN EXPECTED

The DOL expedites the implementation of the program's wage methodology rule.

bit.ly/h2bchanges

POISONED AUBURN OAKS HANGING ON

But the fate of the trees is still uncertain.

bit.ly/auburnoaks



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Advice on cutting the grass

A few weeks ago, I was in rural Maryland at the headquarters of Chapel Valley Landscape. As part of a virtual tour project we're doing with PLANET, a videographer and I were conducting interviews with Landon and James Reeve, the founder and CEO of Chapel Valley, respectively.

It's a lot of fun to talk with landscapers at their shop, because they're in their

element and can show off all the cool equipment and projects and people they have. You get to meet with designers and crew members and the guy who runs the small engine repair and see how they fabricate their custom trailers.

Owners also tend to talk more openly and directly on their home turf than when they're at a trade show or conference. I asked James, who took over as CEO from his dad in 2003, about changes Chapel Valley has made in the past few years. Like many, he has moved the company away from the design/build work that it thrived on for years to a more maintenance-based operation.

Standing on a graveled hillside near a holding yard that's nowhere near as big as it used to be, James explained the move from construction to maintenance as one dictated by his customers. "You can't not cut the grass, but you can not plant the tree," he told me. "So we're cutting the grass."

This month's issue features our Top 100 list, our annual digest of the biggest companies in the landscape and

lawn care industry based on top-line revenue. We've interviewed the owners of some of the companies on the list to find out what they've learned, and also asked other readers about the best advice they've ever received, and we got some great responses. Those entries flow through this month's cover story, which starts on page 30.

"You can't not cut the grass, but you can not plant the tree. So we're cutting the grass." – James Reeve

With \$29 million of revenue in 2010, Chapel Valley came in at number 39 on this year's list. Reeve predicts his company will grow 7 percent in 2011. Your numbers might not be that big – or they might be bigger. Regardless of your revenue or growth – big or small, fast or slow – you'll hopefully learn something from the pages that follow. – Chuck Bowen

See my video blog at www.lawnandlandscape.com.

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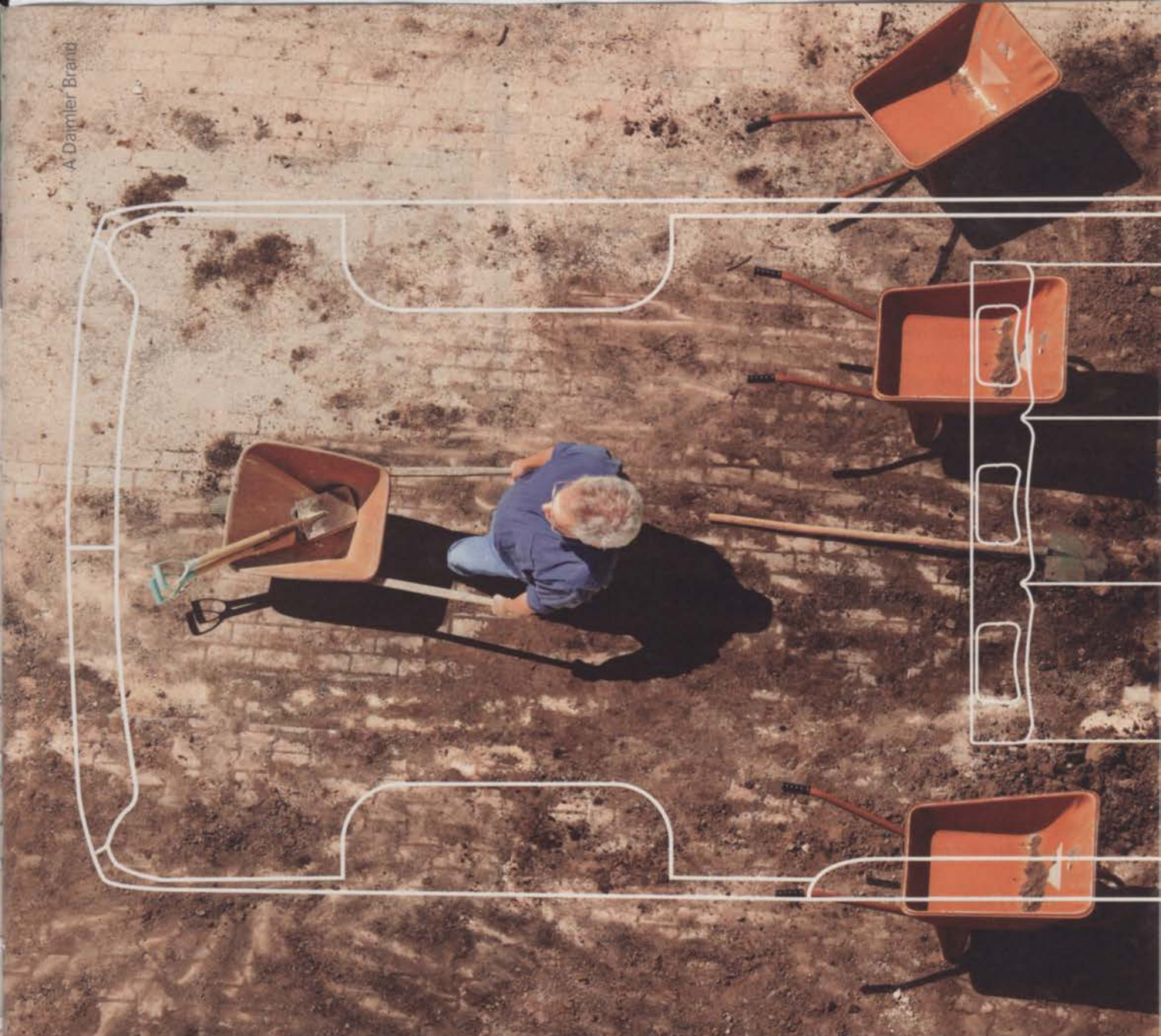
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Vila & Son seeks buyer

HOMESTEAD, Fla. — By October, one of the largest landscape companies in the country will no longer exist, according to its chief restructuring officer.

"There's not even a question in my mind" a sale will be done in mid-July, said Alan Goldberg, who joined Vila & Son in March as its chief restructuring officer.

According to the *Lawn & Landscape* Top 100 list, Vila & Son posted revenue of \$62.5 million in 2008 and \$53.8 million in 2009. Last year, it ranked as the 14th largest company in the industry.

The company was heavily reliant on the construction market, in addition to offering maintenance, irrigation, tree care and lighting services, and in 2010, its revenue dropped to \$45.9 million.

"That's tough on a company," said Goldberg, who also owns Miami-based Crisis Management, Inc. "Construction, main-line construction, went down and landscape construction went down. Were there things we could have done? ... That's irrelevant," Goldberg said.



Vila

Juan Carlos Vila, who founded the company in 1984, still serves as its owner and president, Goldberg said. The company has not entered bankruptcy.

Goldberg said the company is negotiating with three potential buyers — both landscape companies and private investment firms — right now, and recently hired an investment bank to help manage the process.

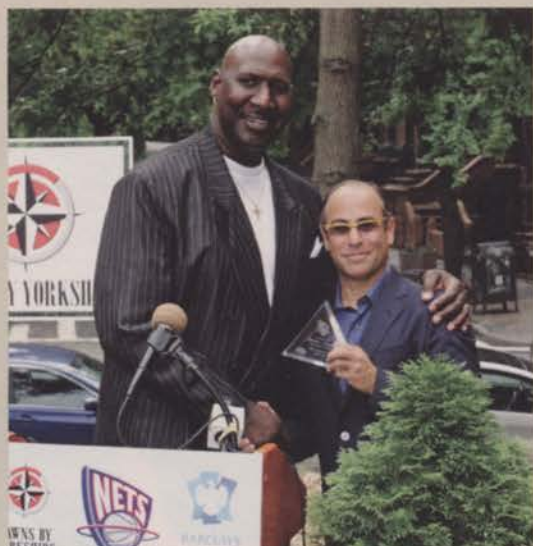
In anticipation of a sale, in early July Vila & Son filed a notice with the state of Florida that it could lay off all of its 641 employees in August.

"We're still around; we're still alive," Goldberg said. "Just like many businesses, we need an influx of cash."

Vila & Son, headquartered in Homestead, Fla., also has branch offices in Miami, Orlando, Fort Myers, Jacksonville, Tampa, Port St. Lucie and West Palm Beach.

At one time, the company also operated 200 acres of nurseries and tree farms throughout the state, as well as a retail store in Royal Palm Beach, Fla. The retail operation closed a few years ago.

A sister company, Vila & Son Tree Farm, Inc., is not involved in the company's restructuring. — Chuck Bowen



Former Nets center Darryl Dawkins and Lawns by Yorkshire CEO Steven Jomides celebrated the planting of 459 trees during a ceremony at a Brooklyn park.

Landscaper teams with Nets for Threes for Trees campaign

BROOKLYN, N.Y. — Lawns by Yorkshire has agreed to donate 459 maple trees to be planted this fall in Brooklyn and Newark, N.J. parks.

Why the obscure number? Well, it's the number of three-pointers the New Jersey Nets made during the NBA 2010-11 season.

The landscaping company and basketball team collaborated on the green initiative Threes for Tree, in which Lawns by Yorkshire committed to donating a tree for every three-point field goal made by the Nets during the season.

"The Trees for Threes Program is a fun and innovative program that educates and promotes environmental stewardship, and we are pleased to collaborate with the Nets and help grow trees in Brooklyn," said Lawns by Yorkshire CEO Steven Jomides. "Our cultures and green goals are perfectly aligned."

Jomides, members of the Nets organization and Brooklyn elected officials celebrated the planting during a ceremony at a Brooklyn park.

"The planting of these trees not only beautifies our wonderful and historic parks in this great borough, but it will also go a long way in helping to reduce pollution in our environment," said U.S. Rep. Edolphus "Ed" Towns. "This signifies yet another important step in our commitment to being good stewards of the land, and securing our precious natural resources for generations to come."

Nutri-Lawn adds U.S. franchise

SEATTLE — Nutri-Lawn has expanded its presence in the United States, adding Utah to the list of states it services.

The lawn care company has locations in Seattle, Colorado, Texas and nationwide in Canada. The newest franchise will service residents of Davis and Weber counties in Utah.



Local franchisee Jaxon Searcy opened a Nutri-Lawn location after deciding to move to the lawn care industry from the refrigeration and HVAC industry. Searcy has been servicing clients since the spring.

"After a long search for the perfect business to bring to the local market, I discovered Nutri-Lawn and contacted them about purchasing a franchise in lawn care," Searcy said. "Their commitment to eco-friendly lawn care impressed me so much that I purchased a franchise."



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DuPont's Imprelis may cause browning and dieback in trees

After reports of severe damage to conifers and other trees from Maryland to Minnesota, DuPont Professional Products is cautioning lawn care operators not to use the new post-emergent broadleaf weed control product in areas where Norway spruce or white pine trees are located.

The company released Imprelis in early spring, giving LCOs a low-volume option that, by all accounts, gave solid control of a wide range of weeds, including hard-to-eradicate species like ground ivy and wild violet. Imprelis controls the broadleaf weeds with a new active ingredient – aptexor – and a new subclass of the carboxylic acid herbicides.

But since Memorial Day, applica-



Imprelis, DuPont's new post-emergent broadleaf weed control, may cause browning and dieback on trees near turf that has been treated with the product.

tors and university researchers in the Northeast and Midwest have been reporting curling needles, severe browning and dieback in trees near turf that had been treated with Imprelis.

In a June 17 letter to Imprelis customers, DuPont said it is investigating the incidents, and has found them to have the following common variables:

- A majority of the reports involve Norway spruce or white pine.

- In most cases, Imprelis was not applied alone, but in a mixture with other herbicides, either pre-emergent, post-emergent and/or with a liquid fertilizer.

- Some reports indicate there may have been errors in use rates, mixing practices and/or applications to exposed roots, or the tree.

Bert Cregg, associate professor of horticulture and forestry at Michigan State University, said it's too early to tell what the damage means for trees' long-term health, but, based on the level of dieback seen, trees could look deformed for the foreseeable future. – L&L staff

For more coverage on this story, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com, and search "Imprelis."

JOHN KAMINSKI



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Californians form turfgrass and landscape foundation

A diverse group of turf and landscape professionals have formed the California Turfgrass & Landscape Foundation, a statewide coalition with the goal of

funding and supporting turfgrass and landscape research.

The new foundation is a charitable 501(c)3 corporation that will raise funds and support research that represents the interests of



stakeholders throughout the state in the areas of turfgrass, landscape and related water use.

"California is such a large geographic area, and up to this point, research support has been very regional and fragmented" said Bruce R. Williams, a golf course consultant who was chosen to serve as the executive director of the foundation. "We expect that the California Turfgrass & Landscape Foundation will change that and help unify the industry while giving much needed support to our research institutions."

ValleyCrest reshapes leadership team

CALABASAS, CALIF. — ValleyCrest Landscape Cos. has made changes to its senior leadership team, promoting Andrew J. Mandell to the newly created position of CEO of ValleyCrest Landscape Development, the company's construction division.



Mandell

Mandell previously served nine years as executive vice president and chief financial officer of ValleyCrest Landscape Cos. Richard Wolff has been named to succeed Mandell as executive vice president and chief financial officer.

Mandell will team with Tom Donnelly, who remains president of the development division.

In his new role, Mandell will be responsible for an operational network that serves clients in major markets across the United States and internationally in the United Arab Emirates, Asia and the Caribbean.

Wolff brings nearly 25 years of senior-level financial experience, operational business leadership and broad CFO capabilities to ValleyCrest. Prior to joining the company, Wolff held positions at Castle & Cooke, ITT Industries, Triton Media Group and Sage Publications. His new role includes overseeing all finance, accounting, acquisitions, safety, fleet, real estate and information systems.

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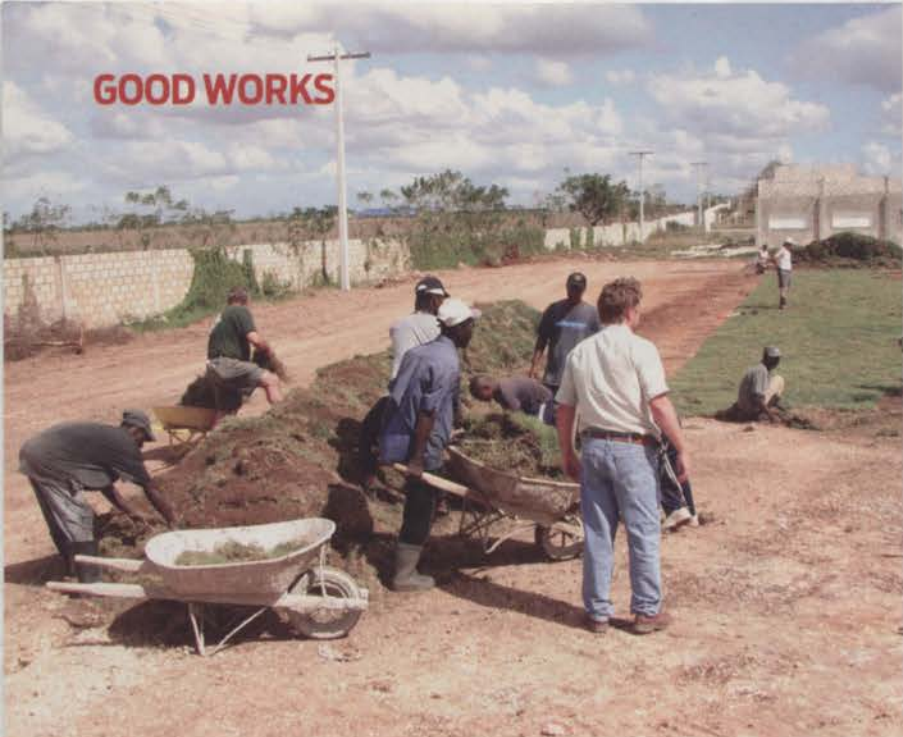
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Locals help volunteers sort through sod to find large, square shaped pieces, which can be a challenge. This helps support families from a nearby village by providing a source of income.

Most of the poorer workers are from Haiti and came to the Dominican Republic in search of steady work in the sugar cane fields. Today there is less work due to advancements in the technology for harvesting the sugar cane, leaving families struggling to provide regular meals and safe housing for their families.



After installing irrigation on the fruit orchard the first year, volunteers learned that machetes used to clear the field don't mix well with the pipes. Here one of the franchisees shows a local volunteer staff member how to repair broken pieces. The Nutri-Lawn volunteers leave behind all parts and tools they take with them.



Volunteers repaired and prepared a lot where 100 fruit trees were planted last year. The fruit trees were planted at the Don Juan Community Outreach Center to be distributed amongst the local bateyes, which are company towns where sugar workers live. While some trees were in good shape, a number of trees had died or were stolen off the property by poor families.

Traveling assistance

Nutri-Lawn journeyed to the Dominican Republic to help the local landscape.

For the third straight year, franchise owners and employees of Nutri-Lawn from Canada and the U.S. went to the Dominican Republic for a week to volunteer at a local orphanage, maintaining a 30,000 sq. ft. soccer field they installed. As part of a project called re:nourish, volunteers help the orphanage achieve its goal of being self-sufficient in the production of its own fruits and vegetables. Here are some photos from past trips. **L&L**



It wasn't all hard work on the trip. A BBQ extravaganza was set up, which included 800 hot dogs, 800 buns, 60 bottles of pop, 300 packages of cookies, 400 suckers and all the condiments that go with it. The food was purchased with money donated by Nutri-Lawn, Toro and Intellex, along with personal donations.

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



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READERS' FORUM

A FUNGUS AMONG US

I just finished reading the article titled Upselling fungicides by Matthew Noon in the May 2011 Edition of *Lawn & Landscape Magazine*.

I am deeply disappointed in your publication for accepting an article of this poor quality, content, and tone. I would like to spend a day with Mr. Noon and his lawn technicians to see how they go about diagnosing turf diseases, especially when he clearly doesn't even use the correct word when referring to more than one fungus.

Ask any plant pathologist – turf diseases, especially root diseases, can be difficult to identify without microscopic examination – at the very least – and often require plating on culture media or other laboratory techniques. Whatever happened to the green in Green Industry and the move



towards reduced pesticide use? Professional turf managers can be proactive with their clients by selling IPM, rather than unnecessary pesticides and fertilizers.

With that said, I do enjoy reading *Lawn & Landscape* and usually find the articles well-written and balanced. It allows me to keep up with the trends and concerns of the industry of our stakeholders.

Sharon M. Douglas Ph.D.

Plant Pathologist and Head, Department of Plant Pathology
& Ecology

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station
New Haven, Conn.

In the interest of equal time, we asked Noon to respond. Here's what he had to say:

Unfortunately, I think that Sharon Douglas missed the point of my article. My article on fungicide refers to a bigger challenge in our industry. That is to be proactive with customer service. It is about engaging the customer and bringing the lawn care experience to an entirely new level of service. Clearly the reader lacks the real world experience in

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the trenches of lawn care as she resides in her ivory tower.

I understand that certain fungi can be difficult to diagnose and I respect the efforts of any pathologist to diagnose the correct prognosis. Red thread or snow mold can be easily recognized by our technicians and arborists many of whom have over 20 years of experience in this area and can detect these issues and diagnose the condition instantly without laboratory analysis.

This is lawn care and not brain surgery. If one goes to a doctor with a finger that is fractured and causing pain, a doctor's observation can replace an X-ray to diagnose the problem.

On a side note, I respect the reader's opinion on the science of laboratory diagnosis, but in my opinion the article was well written and our clients appear to be quite satisfied with our service.

MEA CULPA

I have written to L&L before and wanted to bring something to your attention pertaining to two articles in particular in the May 2011 issue. The article on page 122 deals with entering the property management sector as if anyone can do it on a whim. In Georgia, one must have a realtor broker's license to operate property management services. To do so without one is a crime. Perhaps other states have similar requirements.

On page 124, the chemicals dithiopyr, proflam, pendimethalin, quinclorac, and fenoxaprop-p-ethyl are listed as grub control products. Correct me if I'm wrong, but don't those products control weeds only? I personally would have suggested Dylox or Merit for grub control.

Benjamin Bodnar
Owner
Integrity Landscape Management
Hampton, Ga.

Editor's note: You can find the correct list of grub control products at www.lawnandlandscape.com, search "grubs."



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TURF WARS

Facebook feedback: We asked our followers their thoughts on the growing number of homeowners removing lawns to save water and money.

Response: There's a balance. Take out the lawn in tough to mow, shady areas that don't make sense. Build your soil and follow good watering practices - you'll save water and money - a great looking lawn does not have to be expensive.

We have seen an increase this year in lawn replacement/renovation work. We have made the above recommendations.

Rick Longnecker
Owner
Buds & Blades Landscape Co.
Olympia, Wash.

THOUGHTS ON PHOSPHORUS

I've been in the professional lawn business since 1983. My first boss was in his 80s and always said this element was not needed in most areas of Ohio because the soil is abundant in it.

Look at the Grand Lake in Ohio, contaminated by P and farm run-off. P should only be applied during summer months, with a permit with a soil test to prove it is required application.

Our business needs to change for the better.

Rod Anderson
Owner
Prescribed Turf & Tree Care
Ohio

THE UNTOUCHABLES

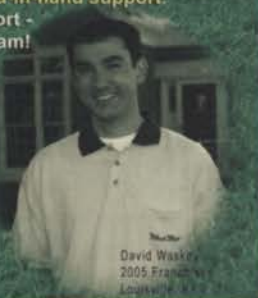
I was reading the article about Price Wars (October 2010), and it was talking about more and more people getting in to the landscaping business and low-balling the business. In our area of northern Indiana we have been hit by high numbers of unemployment. I don't mind competition, in fact I think it's fun to compete with others, but I don't want to compete with someone who gets a check from the government. I've worked this year to get our city, county, and state government to take a look at this unemployment fraud, but nobody wants to touch this issue.

Gary Parker
Owner/Operator
Parker Turf
Warsaw, Ind.

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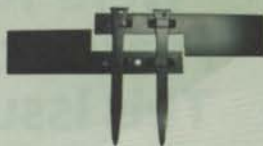
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RESEARCH



Four in ten small business owners **never plan to retire entirely**, according to a survey by The Guardian Life Insurance Business Research Institute. And less than half of them (**45%**) feel they are very or even fairly financially prepared for retirement. The main reason respondents said they plan to continue working is making sure they don't outlive the money needed to retire.

50.5 million people

Descendents of Mexico, Puerto Rico and Cuba remain the nation's three largest Hispanic country-of-origin groups, but the next four Hispanic sub-groups grew faster during the last decade, according to the 2010 U.S. Census and Pew Hispanic Center. Hispanics of Salvadoran origin, which is the fourth largest Hispanic country-of-origin, grew by 152%, followed by the Dominican population, which grew 85%, the Guatemalan population, which grew 180% and the Colombian population, which grew 93%. The Mexican population, which makes up 31.8 million of the 50.5 million total U.S. Hispanic population, grew 54% in the last decade.



Ken Chaya and Edward Sibley Barnard spent two and a half years detailing 19,933 trees in New York City's Central Park. The map they created includes 174 species and represents about 85 percent of the vegetation on the park's 843 acres, according to The New York Times. The two spent \$40,000 on the project, and they are now selling map and poster versions of their charted work at CentralParkNature.com.

19,933



A recent survey by telecommunications company eVoice found **72%** of the small business owners who responded believe an area code carries more prestige than a desirable zip code. Even a recognizable 800 number can provide a competitive advantage. More than half of the respondents (56%) said the biggest benefit to having an 800 phone number is that it makes their business appear larger.

72%



The Internal Revenue Service increased the optional standard mileage rate to 55.5 cents a mile for the last six months of the year. The 4.5 cents increase for business miles was made to recognize the recent rise in gasoline prices, according to the IRS. "We are taking the step so the reimbursement rate will be fair to taxpayers" said IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman.

55.5 cents

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SHOULD SPRAY TECHNICIANS HAVE THEIR BLOOD TESTED?

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.

Q. I own a growing company which primarily provides chemical weed control and fertilization services. As the company grows, I am placing a greater emphasis on safety. One question is in regard to blood work for spray technicians to assess their chemical exposure.

Are you familiar with this type of testing or know of any specific resources for additional information? Specifically, I am interested in learning more about the benefits/necessity of such testing, under what circumstances it becomes important and which tests are important and at what frequency. I am also seeking information regarding

appropriate policies and procedures regarding results of employee tests and any legality involved.

A. A recently retired Pennsylvania pesticide regulatory staff member stopped by my office, and I shared your email with him. We had a long discussion about the pros and cons of blood testing for pesticide applicators. Let me share with you some of our thoughts and recommendations.

One, many of the chemicals that your personnel are applying for weed control on turf will not show up in blood tests, and even if they did, they may show false readings. Take for example

2,4-D or dicamba herbicides. Neither of these products is a cholinesterase inhibitor, so the blood tests that measure the status of cholinesterase would not change from one month to the next.

Cholinesterase is an enzyme in the blood that is important for the transmission of nerve system messages at the nerve synapse (there are millions of these in the human body). This is where nerve endings come together and a chemical (cholinesterase) is found between the nerve endings that helps the messages flow uninterrupted across the synapse. If a cholinesterase-inhibiting pesticide (malathion, sevin, or other carbamates or organophosphates) has been absorbed, ingested or inhaled into the body, and then moves through the bloodstream to the central nervous system, it can inhibit or tie-up cholinesterase.

When this happens, the cholinesterase is not available to help in the transmission of nerve messages. Physical symptoms of this inhibition of the critical enzyme include profuse sweating, headaches or dizziness, and the individual may feel like he or she is going to throw up. Heavy doses of cholinesterase inhibitors can also cause more severe symptoms that may be life threatening.

Two, essentially, there are no blood tests that accurately measure cholinesterase inhibition for technicians who are performing weed control on turfgrasses. In lieu of these blood tests, we suggest that your technicians take part in periodic and ongoing safety training that emphasizes the

importance of personal protective equipment (PPE). I would spend some time and write up a comprehensive PPE program based on the PPE recommendations on product labels and MSDS.

Make the program as interactive as possible, meaning that you demonstrate, and then have the employees demonstrate their understanding and use of the PPE while applying pesticides. Make sure the PPE program is formally written and is an integral part of your safety training program. Please make sure that all employees who are trained on any aspects of your written safety program, sign-off (their signature) on their training, with the topic, instructor's name and date of training clearly identified on the documentation.

Reminder: All new employees should be trained before they apply any chemicals, and follow-up training should be conducted on a regular basis, especially with employees who have been observed in violation of your company's PPE policies and programs. Also, make sure you have plenty of PPE in reserve so your technicians can obtain the chemical-resistant body



suits, gloves, goggles, boots, and head and eye protection that will eliminate exposure to pesticides while they are making applications.

Three, in high temperature places like Texas and during warmer weather, please don't let your employees cut corners on wearing PPE.

I would agree that some of the PPE may be a little warm. However, not wearing PPE because of sweating is not an excuse. PPE only provides protection if it is fully implemented for each and every application. You can look for cooler examples of chemical-resistant body suits and skin protection if this becomes an issue with employees. **L&L**

Sam Steel, PLANET Safety Specialist

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The pitch: ACE-jet is a micro-injectable, broad spectrum insecticide used for the management of insects that damage trees and landscape ornamentals.



- Eliminates leaf-chewing insects, including caterpillars, piercing-sucking insects, including whiteflies and mining insects, such as leafminers.
- Beneficial insects, including wasps, soldier beetles and assassin bugs are not affected by ACE-jet since it is injected directly into a tree's trunk and only impacts insects that are feeding directly on the tree.
- Comes in a soluble granular form to maintain maximum potency until it is ready to be mixed with water and used.

For more information: www.arborjet.com

Sno-Pro Front End Loader Plow Blades

The pitch: Curtis Industries has introduced a line of Sno-Pro front-end loader plow blades.



- The blades feature a 30-degree hydraulic angle, four heavy-duty trip springs for added protection against blade damage from surface obstructions, easy-adjust depth shoes and guide markers.
- Made with 11-gauge powder coated steel, an extended 4-foot push frame and a high carbon steel reversible cutting edge.
- Blades are available in 5- to 8-foot models and are recommended for tractors and skid-steers up to 47-hp.

For more information: www.curtisindustries.net

Aquascape's Pond Fish Vitamin Treat

The pitch: Pond Fish Vitamin Treat comes with a new application formula and was designed to keep pond fish looking their best.



- Each depression of the pump-top bottle creates a small worm-like looking treat for your pond fish.
- Increases appetite and vitality, enhances natural colors of the fish and stimulates breeding.
- Includes vitamins, nutrients, lipids and garlic and has been used as a health supplement and as a control for internal and external parasites.

For more information: www.aquascapeinc.com

Bobcat Replacement Tracks

The pitch: Bobcat Co. introduces new replacement rubber track patterns for compact track loaders, compact excavators and mini-track loaders.



- The H-pattern lug design features a pyramid structure for even weight distribution and wear.
- The tracks feature continuous cable belting, forged heat-treated steel links and proprietary rubber compounds containing multiple rubber layers.
- The short-pitch technology of the EarthForce compact excavator tracks reduces vibration and helps extend sprocket life.

For more information: www.bobcat.com/rubbertracks

Stihl Grass Trimmers

The pitch: The new FSA 65 and FSA 85 grass trimmers deliver fuel savings, time savings and environmental benefits for gasoline-free trimming applications.



- Both trimmers have a convenient, on-board hanging slot that allows for easy storage, as well as a loop handle that adjusts without the use of tools.
- The FSA 65 curved-shaft grass trimmer is eight times quieter than the STIHL gasoline-powered equivalent.
- With zero exhaust emissions, the FSA 85 professional straight-shaft grass trimmer is ideal for universities and municipalities and is five times quieter than the STIHL gasoline-powered equivalent.

For more information: www.stihlusa.com/trimmers

Dramm One Touch Shower & Stream

The pitch: The new One Touch Shower & Stream from Dramm allows complete and total water flow control with just one touch of the thumb.



- Has a shower pattern, which cascades fine water droplets for a gentle shower that will not harm plants.
- The stream pattern is powerful enough to wash muddy sidewalks.
- Available in red, orange, yellow, green, blue and berry.

For more information: www.dramm.com

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Winning advice

EDITOR'S NOTE: Every month, our columnists give their take on a common topic. Last month they tackled the topic of government regulations. This month they share the best advice they've ever received.

Marty Grunder

Through the years I've gotten a lot of advice. Eat your vegetables, brush your teeth, work hard-play hard, pay cash for everything, stop and smell the roses, timing is everything, and of course, the harder you work, the luckier you get. But of all the advice I've received, the words that ring in my head daily came from my lovely mother. Here's what she taught me: You get more with honey than vinegar. Or in clear terms: be nice, it will help you get done what you need to get done; life's too short to be mean.

In 1978, we had a blizzard of epic proportion at our home in Ohio. When there is talk of a snow storm, the local media frequently show photos from that storm. I've shown my kids pictures and they are truly unbelievable. We had snow drifts at our house more than 20 feet tall, and we were stranded in our home for a week. The roads were closed and it was a big problem. My father worked for the Ohio Department of Transportation in a leadership role. He had influence over many things associated with highways and county roads.



He thought by making phone calls to the local county doing our snow removal, he could get them to get our street open so we could go to the store and get essentials. For days his calls did nothing. The last call I overheard him make was so harsh I thought whoever drove the snow plow better get out here or my dad, a former tough guy from the U.S. Army was going to make some people 'pay.' Despite my dad's calls, no snow plow came down the street. He was **vinegar** for sure.

Later that day, I came up the hallway and heard my mom on her bedroom phone. Being a curious 10 year old, I listened to my mom talk very nicely to the county garage about the road out front and asked them if they could please come out and clear the roads. She said, "I know you men are working very, very hard. We appreciate you. But, if you could find time as soon as you're able to clear our road, I would be grateful. We're almost out of food, and I have three young children." She thanked them profusely for doing a dangerous and tiresome job and hung



up the phone. My mom was **honey**.

Two hours later, my father yelled out, "Here comes the snow plow, I told you they'd get this road open if they knew what was good for them." My mom smiled and nodded her head, not saying a word.

My father passed away unexpectedly over 10 years ago. I miss him. He was a good guy, a hard worker, determined and good at all types of things. But he wasn't the greatest at handling problems. He was tough and not very friendly in a lot of his dealings. My mom, on the other hand, was the exact opposite. My mom lives right around the corner from me, and we are very close. She might be the nicest person I have ever met in my life. She never gets mad, she is nice and gets all kinds of people to want to help her naturally.

Her example, her way of doing things, her constantly teaching me to be nice, was the best advice I have ever received. I don't always follow it, and when I don't follow it, I tend to get in trouble. After all, *momma's always right*.

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

Jeff Korhan

When I searched my memory for the best advice I've ever received, I realized two things. One, I should have more carefully considered the wisdom that was shared with me over the years. And two, even when I did recognize its merits, I was not diligent enough about taking action on that advice.

The challenge with finding good advice is first hearing it, then recognizing its value, and most importantly, putting it into practice. When I started my landscape business, I was eager to grow, so I paid careful attention to any advice my colleagues were willing to offer.

Putting their advice into practice, I was able to build a successful landscape company. After some time, I was a veteran in this industry and others were asking for my advice. I now look back and realize that was probably when I unknowingly stopped listening as attentively to my customers as I was capable of doing.

Customers can come up with suggestions that on surface seem so ridiculous it's easy to discount them. This is precisely why you should give them your full consideration to really understand their point of view. The result may be a perspective that helps you to make an invaluable breakthrough.

That's what happened to me when I stopped by my client's home to pick up the final payment for a recently completed project. As he handed me the check he asked me an important question.

"What's next?"

I looked at him a little confused and gave an honest reply. "What do you mean what's next, we're done."

"You don't get it, do you?" he asked.

"I guess I don't. Help me," I said.

The ensuing conversation completely changed how I operated my business. I realized that I was not proactively thinking about what I could do next for my customers, and missing all kinds of opportunities as a result.

If you think about it, human beings are conditioned to think about what's next. If you aren't thinking about what's next to enhance all of your relationships – both personal and professional – then they will soon enough deteriorate.

Making suggestions to customers about how you can better enhance their situation accomplishes a number of objectives. It shows them you are on top of your game – and that elevates your role from that of a service provider to a trusted adviser.

This is one reason I work hard at sharing my social media and small business marketing expertise with my community via my blog, newsletter and columns like this one. If I can be the trusted resource that comes to mind when they have that first thought, then the one that follows will naturally be, "Jeff Korhan will know. I'll give him a call."

How about you?

What can you do to be the one that comes to mind when those in your community think about their outdoor environment?

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



Jim Huston

In today's culture of fast food, instant messaging, overnight success and constant contact, information overload tends to create a clutter that clouds our personal radar screens. This constant bombardment of images often causes us to lose perspective. It's like trying to piece together the pieces of a puzzle without having the box top to show us what the end product looks like. Good luck. Too much information seems to be the norm. Whether what we see and hear is true – an accurate depiction of reality – seems secondary or tertiary as the modern media rushes to splash incongruous images in front of us 24/7. Freedom of information has been replaced by flooding of information. The sad and irrelevant are often replaced by the bizarre and absurd. We are relieved to be rid of the saga of Charlie Sheen only to have it replaced by the tragic events of Anthony Weiner and his demise.

MODERNITY'S LOSS OF PERSPECTIVE. One of the tragic casualties of modernity is the loss of perspective. Data have replaced knowledge. Knowledge has replaced wisdom. Moderns tell us that timeless truths are obsolete relics. Ancient wisdom and ageless principles are oxymorons, they say. Principles that transcend the space-time continuum (the universe) simply do not exist. They are man-made fabrications from a by-gone era. All is relative, we are told. The fact that the very statement "all is relative" is self-contradictory and self-defeating seems to have escaped the modern mind.

JAMES DEAN, THE ULTIMATE AMERICAN ICON.

While the pursuit of instant success of those competing on American Idol is pushed upon us, perhaps James Dean, actor and ultimate American icon, perceived things a bit differently. Confused and youthful as he was – he died at age 24 in a car accident – he was on to an important truth. "What is essential is invisible to the eye," a quotation from Antoine de Saint Exupéry's "The Little Prince" was his favorite.



John Ossa



I have been fortunate to work with a lot of wonderful and talented people in my career. I can honestly say I have learned something from everyone along the way. My own shortcomings have made the totality of the advice at times less than the sum of the individual contributions.

I worked for a contractor that gave me this piece of advice. The context was how to approach dealing with a customer. His advice: "Tell them what you are going to do – do it – and then tell them you are done." I have reflected on the wisdom in this advice more than once. The advice has embedded in it the obligations of awareness, duty and responsibility.

"Tell them what you are going to do," means clarifying expectations and outcomes. To identify clearly what product or service will be the result of your action. There is no better place to start a business relationship than this point.



"Do it!" The fundamental requirement of business – you have to do what you say you will do. If you don't take this to heart, you will not succeed.

"Tell them you are done" is a less obvious, yet important piece of doing business. It speaks to a broader human need for closure, but in business it identifies the end of a contractual obligation. This signals the time for a range of possible next steps – not the least of which is getting paid.

Many of the learning moments that I have had came from situations that did not go well. Once, I gave a vendor some good advice after discovering what he felt was well-intentioned, only added to difficulties I had in completing a project. I had been promised shipment of pipe and control wire for a fast moving project. We had much of a parking lot excavated with trenches for irrigation main and control wire. The short version of the story is the vendor over-promised when he could deliver the materials to the site.

Once I had the opportunity to step back from the situation, I told him that what I really needed from him was for him to "... tell me what you CAN do, and then DO it." I told him that I can handle bad news, but what I didn't do well with was no news, or being told something that I "wanted to hear" instead of an unpleasant truth. Also, baked into my follow-up conversation with him was the acknowledgement that "... we both know that stuff happens," and that it was each of our responsibility to keep the other informed of changes.

So the advice that I gave contained some of the same elements that made such an impact on me earlier in my career. Now, if I could only remember everything I have learned

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

Principles, he was beginning to realize, provided the foundation upon which all else rested.

Juxtaposing some popular diverse terms may bring this concept into sharper focus. For instance, knowledge compared to wisdom, fame versus success, success versus significance, image versus substance, fad versus trend and popularity versus character, to name a few. Fleeting superficialities cannot compete with the longevity of character.

How it works in today's economy. The challenges of the current economic cycle have placed tremendous burdens upon all entrepreneurs and their staff. The temptation is to cut corners and lower standards in order to compete. Certainly, adjustments can be made to better serve clients and compete with competitors. However, lowering standards isn't one of them.

Contractors who are working their way through the current economic malaise and will survive are doing it based upon their reputation for excellent work and customer service. Such a reputation is the result of years of performance and dependability. This is called character! Quick fixes, instant gratification and popularity contests are not the stuff that create or sustain it.

CONCLUSION. It takes about 20 years to become an overnight success. Somewhere along the way, I heard this maxim. It runs counter to most of the popular thoughts that you'll experience and hear via today's media. However, behind just about every successful small business, you'll find a seasoned entrepreneur who has weathered numerous challenges over a long period of time.

This is one of the best pieces of wisdom that I've picked up over the years. It provides perspective – a box top of sorts – for the puzzle that life and the media is constantly throwing our way. It's a tidbit that I repeat to my three sons and clients as often as possible. It's one that you might want to pass along as well. *L&L*

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



By Carolyn LaWell

At the TABLE

The Irrigation Association's state affairs director offers a picture of the industry.

Chad Forcey has been in politics since 1998, first working for elected officials and then lobbying for the green industry. "It's a job I couldn't imagine giving up, and I couldn't imagine doing anything else," he says.

His experience and enthusiasm has landed him the title of state affairs director of the Irrigation Association. After six years as director of government relations for the Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Association, Forcey is now tasked with working with IA members and politicians to influence state irrigation regulations across the country.

Lawn & Landscape caught up with Forcey to talk about what industry issues keep him up at night, traveling and good movies.

What does your day-to-day schedule look like?

Well, a lot of questions and tips about legislation come from members across the 50 states. We are tracking more than 20 key state bills right now and numerous small state and local initiatives.

When I'm in the office, I'm doing whatever I can for us to No. 1, ascertain what these bills are and how they affect the irrigation trade across the country at the state level, and, No. 2, to help our members get involved and take important positions and play important roles at the state level.

When I'm out of the office and on the road, which is frequent, I'm meeting with irrigation contractors and manufacturers around the country, and I'm helping them to navigate their legislators and the regulatory process.

What are the most pressing issues you're dealing with now?

Right now, I'm thinking a great deal about licensing, certification and how to promote industry professional-

ism around the country. The method, the policy approaches, the political relationships and cultures vary greatly from state to state.

But the objective remains the same: How can we use our influence at the state level to promote good licensing programs that help irrigation professionals distinguish themselves, promote and build on their Irrigation Association certifications, and bring that level of workmanship across the trade up to the level utilized by our highly-skilled members. Our members do a very good job. We need to make sure that the rest of the industry is following their lead.

Government is coming after contractors right now across the country in a cross section of trades.

What keeps me up at night is the danger of sitting on the sidelines until workmanship and skill issues prompt state legislators to get involved and pass licensing and regulation bills at the expense of our skilled members.

We need to come to the table first.

Is that the biggest issue?

There is another key issue that I would be remised if I didn't bring it up and that's water policy in general. This keeps me up at night more than the licensing question. That is because our industry professionals are constantly improving the conservation technologies – this is a good thing – and that allows our industry to make sure water is available for irrigation for future generations.

The irrigation trade and profession have been around for a long time. ... It has to be protected and preserved for the future. In order to do that, water has to be utilized as efficiently as possible.

Policy makers at the local, state, federal level are asking important questions right now about the availability of water for the future. This pertains to numerous industries, not just ours, and it also pertains to the general public's use of water. As they have these discussions, are we an important part of those discussions? We have to be.



In five to 10 years, what will the regulatory landscape look like?

We're going to have a lot more states that have licensing on the books.

Right now we have 10 with licensing on the books and a couple more that are ironing out licensing. In five to 10 years, I wouldn't be surprised



Forcey

if that number doubles or triples.

There will be a lot more regulation affecting small business contractors in the irrigation trade at the state level. Also, our water quantity problems in the West and our water quality problems in the East, and other parts of the country, are going to probably escalate.

Since you're on the road a lot, do you have any travel tips?

I've learned travel tips from some movies. I saw "Meet the Parents" with Ben Stiller and from that movie I learned, as Robert De Niro's character tells his daughter, never check luggage. So I like my carry-on Samsonite bag.

Are you a big movie buff? What is your favorite movie?

Yes. My favorite movie of all time is "Planes, Trains and Automobiles" with Steve Martin and John Candy.

It's funny, but it's deeply moving. **L&L**

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

TOP 100

The biggest companies in the industry didn't reach their ranking overnight. For some, it's taken decades. Others, generations. During those years – some good, some bad – their dedication to the industry allowed them to grow and now claim a spot among the Lawn & Landscape Top 100, sponsored by Exmark.

It isn't an easy climb. This year, *Lawn & Landscape* spoke to five leaders about what they've learned during their years in the industry. How did they get to the top of their industry, and who helped them get there? What mistakes have they made, what lessons have they learned and what are the secrets behind

the success that got their companies on our Top 100 list? A running theme is close families, tremendous focus, energetic employees and a fervent devotion to customer service.

So, read on. Examine and take from what others have learned to build one of the best, and perhaps one of the biggest, companies in the landscaping industry.

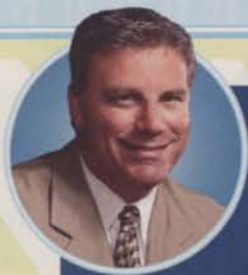
As always, we make every attempt to identify and contact companies via email and phone to gather the data needed to compile our annual Top 100 list. If you know of a company we missed on the list this year, please contact Editor and Associate Publisher Chuck Bowen at cbowen@gie.net or 330-523-5330.

» By Chuck Bowen, Brian Horn, Carolyn LaWell and Matt LaWell

"It's not about how many hits you throw out, but how many you can take and keep on." – **Jarek Wright**

"Keep pushing back until you get the result you were looking for." – **Jason Scott**

"Work to live!"
– **Michael Kernaghan**



JON GEORGIO

Gothic Landscape, president

Gothic was the street we grew up on in the San Fernando Valley.

When it came time to incorporate one day, my brothers and I looked outside the garage, saw the Gothic Avenue sign and that became the name of our company. We tried to change it a couple of times – corporate ID experts said we had to change it, that it had horrible connotations – and both times, the experts came back and said, “You can’t change it. There’s too much goodwill associated with your name.”

My brother Mike and I took over the company as very young men.

We were in our mid-20s, and we had some clients and some older guys we knew who were successful, and we met with them at least four times a year. We sought out their advice. One became a mentor of mine. These last 25 years, I’ve been meeting with him at least four to six times a year, to bounce everything off of him. That has been a huge advantage for us, to have that informal advisory board.

Take advice. The best part of advice is actually taking it. People have been there and done that. You just don’t have to make those same mistakes if you take a few minutes to incorporate what they say.

One of the best pieces of advice was from my brother Mike, who passed a couple of years ago. He told me to always leave the job with your head held high. His point was that you should never leave a project having made money but not having made the client happy. That really stuck with us. It’s part of our culture.

The other really good piece of advice I received was from a professor in business school who taught me about a mission statement. What he told me was a company needs to stand for something. People don’t get inspired, they don’t wake up every day and say, “I really want to go out and make a bunch of money for this company today. I’m really motivated by that.” So our mission statement is to create true partnerships through extraordinary service. It’s something people can wake up and get excited about. I really think that’s the glue that binds our 1,100 employees together – when they wake up, they think, “How can I create a partnership with my client?” And profits follow.

BEST ADVICE

LESSONS FROM THE
BIGGEST COMPANIES
IN THE INDUSTRY.



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“When you send out a \$5/hour guy who doesn’t care, it won’t be fun working with you.” – **Larry Ryan**

“Don’t start a job until you know what it’s going to cost.” – **Mike Lysecki**

“Strive to be ‘the place to work’ and everything will come easy after that.” – **Dale Elkins**

You ask who I admire. My brother Ron was the president of a window and door manufacturer for 14 years in the Southeast. He came back and joined the company in 1998, '99, and he's the absolute smartest guy I know. You don't want to play poker with him. He's grown our maintenance business. He took us from \$2 million to \$30 million. Just an amazing leader.

Our company is run, on a day-to-day basis, by amazing non-family managers. One of the favorite parts of my day is watching these employees who have been with us for 15 to 20 years blossom into industry-leading executives.

What we're going to take away from this recession is the continual reinvention of our company. In Las Vegas, which is the worst market we're in on the construction side, our management team created a situation where 85 percent of our revenue in 2010 was in product lines that we didn't have three years ago. Talk about a management team that reinvented its business. We didn't do public work three years ago. We didn't do general contracting. They're doing native restoration, public works projects, transportation projects, and they just reinvented themselves to keep our staff employed.

The fact that the name of our company is the street we grew up on keeps us pretty rooted.



SCOTT JAMIESON

∴ *Bartlett Tree Experts, vice president*

Relationships, even in a recession, can carry the day. Stay close to your clients because they are going through the same thing.

A lot of our clients, who we were doing larger programs with for many years – they had to cut back. Instead of us reacting a certain way, our primary response was "Let's stay close to our clients." Let's do what we need to do to help them through this but also keep them as clients. So it might be reducing their program a little or doing a little less. But more than anything, it was stopping in and checking in with them. Not just to ask for the sale, but to see how they're doing.

There was one of those forks in the road for me when I went to school. It was the Naval Academy or Purdue forestry. They were two very divergent paths. I often do wonder if I had gone to the Naval Academy and chosen a career in the Navy – I probably wouldn't be working in tree care.

We're optimistic. The cautiously optimistic thing, the "cautiously" part has gone out a bit and we're feeling good about where our clients are and where we're headed. We've done a couple acquisitions. We're feeling good about growth and expansion. I think it is a little different though. It's not like, "Hey, let's go hog wild." It's a little more constrained. A little more thoughtful. But we're pretty optimistic. We've controlled costs from early on, and I think we're watching those and investing a little smarter.

There's no question the company is going to continue to grow and expand. I'll use Chicago as an example, where I'm at. That's a market

the company's been in for years but has a tremendous upside potential to grab more market share especially as we've seen some consolidation of other companies in this market. And there's Atlanta, San Francisco, some markets where we're at, I think we could see tremendous growth in those markets. There may be new ones we enter, but when I look at Bartlett's foot print, it's pretty good.

I'm really concerned for the nurseries, really concerned like never have been concerned before.

Then, after that, I'm concerned for the commercial landscape maintenance companies. And we do some of that work through some of those folks. But I've watched the competitiveness – and I'd call it the commoditization of commercial landscape maintenance – has really gotten me concerned for the industry. Can it ever come back? Or have the prices and the competition and the amount of players pushed it so low that the property managers now go, "Now we know what this stuff is really worth. We're only going to pay this." I'm concerned about that.

I love doing sports photography for my son who plays hockey. He's a goalie for the high school team. So I'm always the official photographer for the team it seems like.

Trying not to be trite, but the first person that comes to mind who I look up to is my wife. It's because she was a career person, always was, came out of school and was in a career and then raised our family while I was out on the road helping to grow a business. I've always admired her ability to do all those things in my absence. She's also a ferocious volunteer and a great friend to people.

"Go with your gut. It sounds risky and is almost a 'gamble,' but I have always used this as a part of any decision I have made in the past. I don't know how many times I have looked back and gone 'Man, I had a feeling I should have done that.'" – **Terry Shaffer**



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2011 Rank	Company	Headquarters	2010 Revenue	% change from 2010	% expected for 2011	Employees - Year round	Employees - Seasonal
1	TruGreen Cos. ¹	Memphis, Tenn.	1,335,175,000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2	ValleyCrest Landscape Cos. ²	Calabasas, Calif.	835,000,000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
3	Brickman Group	Gaithersburg, Md.	807,500,000	18	7	7,000	4,000
4	Davey Tree Expert Co.	Kent, Ohio	591,732,000	5.3	n/a	6,723	281
5	Scotts LawnService	Marysville, Ohio	290,000,000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
6	Bartlett Tree Experts	Stamford, Conn.	158,000,000	5	6	1,350	25
7	Weed Man	Mississauga, Ontario	105,000,000	n/a	5	750	2,500
8	Ambius	Buffalo Grove, Ill.	103,000,000	5	2	905	10
9	U.S. Lawns	Orlando, Fla.	102,000,000	9	8	1,650	0
10	Lawn Doctor	Holmdel, N.J.	83,000,000	7	n/a	n/a	n/a
11	Yellowstone Landscape Group	New Canaan, Conn.	74,000,000	-7.6	-1.4	180	730
12	Ruppert Landscape	Laytonville, Md.	65,338,681	12.5	6	600	0
13	OneSource Landscape and Golf Services	Tampa, Fla.	60,000,000	0	2	700	150
14	American Civil Constructors	Littleton, Colo.	57,750,000 *	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
15	SavATree	Bedford Hills, N.Y.	55,098,000	15.7	19.5	440	100
16	USM ³	Norristown, Pa.	48,434,477 *	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
17	Clintar Landscape Management	Markham, Ontario	46,000,000	5	10	175	300
18	Vila & Son	Miami	45,904,062	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
19	Massey Services ⁴	Orlando, Fla.	45,196,618	101.2	10	1,191	0
20	Gothic Landscape	Valencia, Calif.	44,400,000	-6.5	0	n/a	0
21	Marina Landscape	Anaheim, Calif.	44,000,000	0	-3	500	0
22	Lipinski Outdoor Services	Marlton, N.J.	42,756,217	15	15	85	250
23	Jensen Corp.	San Jose, Calif.	41,000,000	-1	9	390	0
24	Mainscape	Fishers, Ind.	39,900,000	23	22	300	300
25	Ferrandino and Son	Farmingdale, N.Y.	38,000,000	n/a	n/a	325	0
26	NaturaLawn of America	Frederick, Md.	37,750,000	6.3	8.6	271	72
27	Acres Group	Wauconda, Ill.	37,000,000	0	13	105	540
28	The Bruce Company of Wisconsin	Middleton, Wis.	35,900,000	10	5	200	275
29	Denison Landscaping	Fort Washington, Md.	35,810,000	0	5	145	250
30 (t)	The Groundskeeper	Tucson, Ariz.	35,000,000	-1	11	600	100
30 (t)	Mariani Landscape	Lake Bluff, Ill.	35,000,000	0	3	90	330
32	Spring-Green Lawn Care	Plainfield, Ill.	34,215,000	5.4	6	n/a	n/a
33	Sierra Landscape Co.	Palm Desert, Calif.	32,965,000 *	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
34	Complete Landscaping Service	Bowie, Md.	32,650,000	0	3	475	150
35	Nanak's Landscaping ⁵	Longwood, Fla.	32,000,000	n/a	n/a	600	n/a
36	Lucas Tree Expert Co.	Portland, Maine	31,500,000	n/a	5	400	80
37	ISS Grounds Control ⁶	Phoenix	30,474,000	-18	8	1,800	6,700
38	Choate USA	Carrollton, Texas	29,750,000	30	n/a	n/a	n/a
39	Chapel Valley Landscape	Woodbine, Md.	29,000,000	n/a	7	200	175
40	Nissho of California	Vista, Calif.	27,710,000 *	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
41	Cagwin & Dordard	Novato, Calif.	27,450,000	3	6	338	0
42	The Greenery, Inc.	Hilton Head Island, SC	25,100,000	0	10	370	60
43 (t)	Terracare Associates	Littleton, Colo.	25,000,000	-7	0	250	150
43 (t)	Mission Landscape Companies	Irvine, Calif.	25,000,000	-4	10	480	0
45 (t)	Chalet	Wilmette, Ill.	23,800,000	-0.65	0	100	230
45 (t)	Gothic Grounds Management	Valencia, Calif.	23,800,000	14.4	20	986	0
47	James River Grounds Management	Glen Allen, Va.	23,721,283	20	10	182	195
48	Landscape Concepts Management	Grayslake, Ill.	23,656,000	-10	15	90	250
49	McFall and Berry Landscape Management	Annandale, Va.	23,400,000	n/a	n/a	180	120
50 (t)	Greenscape	East Taunton, Mass.	23,000,000 *	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

* 2009 revenue 1. TruGreen's revenue includes \$238,508,000 from TruGreen LandCare; 2. ValleyCrest's revenue includes \$36,000,000 from U.S. Lawns; 3. USM was acquired by EMCOR in May; 4. Massey includes all employees not just lawn care.

2011 Rank	Company	Headquarters	2010 Revenue	% change from 2010	% expected for 2011	Employees - Year round	Employees - Seasonal
50 (t)	Nutri-Lawn	Mississauga, Ontario	23,000,000	5	5	n/a	n/a
52	Mariposa Landscapes Inc.	Irwindale, Calif.	22,822,200*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
53	Scott Byron & Co.	Lake Bluff, Ill.	22,814,000	-1	5	100	140
54	AAA Landscape	Phoenix	22,420,000	21	22	425	45
55	Dixie Landscape	Miami	22,240,000*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
56	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping Inc.	San Antonio	22,000,000	17	0	200	100
57	Moore Landscapes	Northbrook, Ill.	21,000,000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
58 (t)	Cornerstone	Dade City, Fla.	20,400,000	n/a	5	300	n/a
58 (t)	Shearon Environmental Design Co.	Plymouth Meeting, Pa.	20,400,000*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
60	DLC Resources	Phoenix	20,372,000	-4.2	3.1	300	0
61	Russell Landscape Group	Dacula, Ga.	20,010,000	6.7	5	300	125
62	Sebert Landscaping	Bartlett, Ill.	20,000,000	0	8	60	200
63	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting	Germantown, Wis.	19,400,000	n/a	3	n/a	n/a
64 (t)	Sense Lawn & Tree Care	Kennewick, Wash.	19,000,000	4	10	200	70
64 (t)	Metroplex Garden Design Landscaping	Dallas	19,000,000	-25	10	150	0
66	Ecoscape Solutions Group	Charlotte, N.C.	18,902,364*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
67	Odyssey Landscaping	Stockton, Calif.	18,360,000*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
68	Christy Webber Landscapes	Chicago	18,200,000	-15	5	250	100
69	Villa Park Landscape ⁷	Orange, Calif.	17,928,000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
70	The Highridge Corp.	Issaquah, Wash.	17,859,461*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
71	Lambert Landscape Co.	Dallas	17,850,000	2.3	3.6	170	15
72	Heads Up Landscape Contractors	Albuquerque, N.M.	17,800,000	1.8	n/a	110	125-175
73	TBG Landscape	Whitby, Ontario	17,718,336	35	20	65	30
74	Girard Environmental Services, Inc.	Sanford, Fla.	17,571,316	-5	5	225	100
75	Teufel Landscape	Portland, Ore.	17,500,000	-31	26	190	70
76	Ryan Lawn & Tree	Overland Park, Kan.	17,300,000	19	10	160	5
77	Urban Farmer	Thornton, Colo.	17,193,150	0	10	175	125
78	Gachina Landscape Management	Menlo Park, Calif.	17,151,943	4	10	250	21
79	Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care	Denver	17,005,000	6.1	5	170	30
80 (t)	Landscape Specialists	Lake Forest, Calif.	17,000,000	0	0	150	165
80 (t)	Dora Landscaping Co.	Apopka, Fla.	17,000,000*	0	0	60	0
82	Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping	Portland, Ore.	16,557,660	-10.6	5	166	45
83	D. Schumacher Landscaping	W. Bridgewater, Ma.	16,500,000	-13	20	30	150
84	Outside Unlimited	Hampstead, Md.	16,000,000*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
85	Gibbs Landscape Co.	Smyrna, Ga.	15,950,000	9	7	229	52
86	High Tech Landscapes	Branchburg, N.J.	15,878,000	n/a	n/a	28	315
87	Clarence Davids & Co.	Matteson, Ill.	15,625,000	-13	5	70	180
88	Naturescape	Muskego, Wis.	15,602,612	12.83	10	150	5
89	Hazeltine Nurseries	Venice, Fla.	15,521,376	-2.8	10	143	0
90	Countryside Industries	Wauconda, Ill.	15,400,000	-19.4	7	50	170
91 (t)	Benchmark Landscape	Poway, Calif.	15,000,000	15	5	230	n/a
91 (t)	Frank and Grossman Landscape Contractors	San Francisco	15,000,000	0	0	171	0
93	Meadows Farms	Chantilly, Va.	14,875,000*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
94	Ronning Landscaping	Mesa, Ariz.	14,630,000*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
95	Realty Landscape Group	Newtown, Pa.	14,000,000	-8	5	75	60
96 (t)	LMI Landscapes	Carrollton, Texas	13,000,000	n/a	40	145	25
96 (t)	ArtisTree Landscape Management and Design	Venice, Fla.	13,000,000	0	10	165	35
98	Western DuPage Landscaping ⁸	Naperville, Ill.	12,600,000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
99	HighGrove Partners	Austell, Ga.	11,943,722	18.5	14	110	40
100	CoCal Landscape	Denver	11,847,806	-25	13	157	130

5. Nanak's Landscaping was acquired by ValleyCrest in 2010. 6. ISS Grounds Control's global revenue was \$383,474,4000. 7. Villa Park Landscape revenue based on 2010 projections. 8. Western DuPage Landscaping based on 2010 projections.

HARVEY MASSEY

∴ Massey Services, chairman and CEO



Carol and I will have been married 48 years on August 24. We've been married a long time. If I had married the wrong person, it detracts the mind and the heart from the things you're trying to build and create in business.

One of the things that I think has kept us together as a family over the years is the fact that my wife has always insisted, even when I was at Orkin and Terminix many years ago, we would take two weeks off every July and our family would get together. We went to Hilton Head for 15 years.

Middleton happened to be one of the things that I was extremely familiar with. I had a great deal of respect for, and a four-year relationship with, Chuck Steinmetz, and Greg Clendenin is a damn good operator. I became a shareholder because I knew Chuck and Clendenin. But here was a situation with a private company, built on the principles of being private, that became public. The people involved in some of those things became more interested in ROI than sustainability, quality growth and employee retention. Business wasn't doing well, and the stock continued to plummet. You start to protect

your own investments. I met with our CFO and I met with my son Tony. We talked and talked and talked, and Tony probably put it best. He said, "Dad, you've always told me, don't look back and say, What if? If we don't pursue this, I'm afraid we're going to look back and say, What if? Because that company fits with us and we could be a great company together. We could be a stronger company together." I said, "Let's go for it."

I don't know how big we're going to be, I don't know where we're going to wind up, but it won't be where we are. We're going to be bigger, and we're going to be better.

If you go online and read our mission statement, we call it our guiding philosophy, I wrote that. Toughest damn thing I ever did in my life. Once you write it and publish it, then you have to walk the talk.

I don't spend a lot of time looking back. I sometimes go back to Louisiana and ponder some of my childhood. I have to rack my brain, from one side to the other, to remember that stuff. I just don't spend a lot of time looking back. I'm always looking up and looking forward.

Online extra:

To read the interviews in whole, visit our website at www.lawnandlandscape.com and search "Top 100."



FRANK MARIANI

∴ Mariani Landscape, CEO

Might as well start with the family. That's what it's all about.

My grandfather on my mother's side had a nursery, John Fiore. He started that nursery in 1915. I actually grew up at that nursery. My dad, when he came from Italy and married my mom, he worked for my grandfather and eventually started a little landscape maintenance business in 1958. Unfortunately, he passed away in 1973, at the age of 45. I was just finishing high school and, being the oldest of five boys, I took over the range.

When you get up about 4:30 in the morning and go to work, and you put in a long, long day, I wasn't happy to have nine employees and a couple of trucks. I said, "You know, if I'm going to work this hard, I'm going to build something that's better than anybody else." I really thought we could be best in class. And the only way I knew to attract good people was to continue to grow.

I didn't want to grow just to grow. I wanted to grow so my team would have the opportunity to grow with me. That's always been my motivation. We've got employees that have been with the company longer than me. I'm very proud of that. I think it makes my job easier, it makes our company better, it gives our clients more expertise.

"Know your limitations."
- TJ Pieri

"Never put yourself in the role of taking orders. Clients want your professional opinion. Give them options and ideas and you will be viewed as their partner." - Frank Mariani

LARRY RYAN :: *Ryan Lawn & Tree, president*



The right people have made all the difference in the world.

We hired our first fulltime employee two years in, and he's been here since then. Probably the thing I've done wrong is the opposite of that, keeping some people in our organization too long, thinking that I can change them.

At the end of the year, we evaluate people by asking two questions:

Did you help pull us up? Or did you pull us down? If you pulled us down, why are you still here? But if you pulled us up, then we have something to talk about, and we can talk about how you can become even better.

That's sort of an overview of my philosophy. I think a large part of running a company is philosophy.

We have a meeting every year where we bring all the branches together.

It's a very positive thing, where everyone states their goals for the previous year and whether they hit them or not, then they state their goals for the coming year and why they think they can do better. If you do that in front of all your peers, you have to put a little thought into it.

You absolutely have to learn from mistakes and leave them behind you.

My father had a saying. He said, "Show me the man who doesn't make a mistake, and I'll show you the man who doesn't do anything."

We don't want to make every mistake, so we've learned from other people's mistakes, too. If I was picking one mistake, it would be keeping someone who just had a bad attitude. I don't care how talented someone is, it's not worth working with them if it makes life miserable.

We grew up on a farm in central Kansas, near Abilene, Eisenhower's hometown, about 150 miles west of Kansas City.

I was fourth of 10, so I'm in the middle.

We learned the value of quantity and speed.

We had to finish each job as fast as we could and get on to the next one. It wasn't until I watched "In Search of Excellence" on PBS – I used to play that over and over again – that I realized how valuable it was to do the job right every time.

Oh, my gosh, I was fulltime on a tractor at 9, I was working a full day in the field at 9. We milked cows, we fed pigs and cattle and chickens, we harvested. It was about survival.

Every night, we had prayer. My father was a World War II veteran who married mom at the end of the war and had 10 kids over the next 18 years. He was afraid he wouldn't survive and would leave mom with a bunch of little kids to feed. So our focus in prayer was that all of his sons get through college. Back then, you didn't think about your daughters, because they would get married. Later, he said he never meant to slight his daughters. Well, all of his daughters became registered nurses and all of his sons are driven professionals. He taught us how to work. He taught us the power of persistence, perseverance. **L&L**

They call me relentless. This might not be a good thing, but I'm never satisfied. I don't mean that in a negative way, but no matter how well we do, I think we can do a little bit better. I hope it drives our team. I have a lot of associates here who have the same sort of passion.

The down time is the best time to invest in your company. We added people who may never have looked at working for a landscape company. They came from construction or business backgrounds, and we were able to pick 'em up. Real gems. We built a nursery during one recession, we built a new office during another recession, we added property during another recession. We invest during bad times because we know that after bad times come good times, and we want to be prepared.

My dad gave me a great little business when times were better for growing a business. You could make mistakes and you weren't under a magnifying glass. I feel for my son and some of the younger people in the company I know will be future leaders. It's so much harder now. It's so much harder. That drives me. I want to be there, I want to mentor them, I want to help them. The greatest thing that could happen to me is my son and some of the younger people in this company take it to another level and people say, "Vito Mariani did a great job, Frank Mariani did an OK job, but these guys, you should see what they've done to the company now."

Worst Advice: Make yourself as reachable as possible... if you set that expectation be prepared to live with it. – **Jason Scott**

"Install good systems and keep it simple."
– **Douglas Cook**

"Quality work is our best marketing tool we have."
– **Larry McCallister**



The pricing sweet spot

How do you maintain margins and keep customers happy with your price structure in a competitive market?
Three landscape firms share their strategies.

By Kristen Hampshire

Pricing services is a science and art. There are hard numbers that figure into a company's cost of doing business, and there must be a return-on-investment for an operation to thrive.

The emotional side of pricing is trickier: What are customers willing to pay for the services you provide? What are competitors offering? What does pricing say about your reputation – can a higher price tag prompt customers to value your services more? Or, will prospects just leave that big, ol' bid at the front door?

"We lose a lot of work but we gain a lot of work," says Jessica Neese, controller of In Bloom Landscaping in Atlanta, of the firm's higher prices for design/build services than competitors in their area. "Reputation matters – referrals are powerful."

There are players who are just "throwing prices out there," Neese says. "I think a lot of companies are trying to cover cash flow situations," she reasons. "If we can't turn a profit, we won't even bid on it."

This month, *Lawn & Landscape* spoke with three landscape firms about how they manage to get prices that deliver favorable margins and what adjustments they've had to make in this economic environment to attract new business.



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RAIN  BIRD

Smarter pricing through strategic partnerships



Commercial Scapes

Michael LaPorte, president **LOCATION** Bristow, Va. **ESTABLISHED** 1990 **EMPLOYEES** 60 **2010 REVENUES** \$6.8 million **CUSTOMERS** 100% commercial **SERVICES** Irrigation and landscape installation, rain gardens, bio-retention systems

The jobs Commercial Scapes bids for projects today – mainly in the government and municipal sectors – are priced about 25-35 percent less than they were about five years ago. The decrease is steep. But Michael LaPorte says the industry in his area has followed suit.

So LaPorte had to figure out a way to cut costs inside to produce lower prices because the feedback at the bidding table was, his numbers were too high. “We were getting feedback on our bidding, and we found out we were out of the ballpark,” says LaPorte, president of Commercial Scapes in Bristow, Va. Specifically, he was told the prices he proposed were 10-25 percent above what commercial customers wanted to pay in his Washington market, which LaPorte says is strong and competitive.

“We quickly tried to adjust pricing on plant material and brainstormed how we could self-perform other services,” he says, listing irrigation, hydroseeding and light excavation.

Before 2007-08, when the housing market began its swift decline, LaPorte won about 15 percent of commercial landscape bids – the company places bids daily. “When we saw we were being out-priced, we were getting about 5-6 percent of the jobs,” he says. Today, Commercial Scapes’ success rate is 12-15 percent. “Owners are happy to see the lower prices,” he says simply.

But LaPorte is no low-baller. “We have always priced with profit, never at breakeven, and we always know our break-even point,” he says. The way LaPorte can cut prices is by “looking

inward instead of outward,” he says. There are efficiencies his company realizes through better business practices. For instance, crews report to work at 5 a.m. so they can beat the log-jam D.C.-area traffic. Trucks are loaded the night before. Email is used for job schedules, change orders, submittals and other communications – there isn’t a lot of time for run-around on today’s expedited job schedules.

Beyond the basic tightening of the belt, LaPorte has explored creative ways of working with suppliers to reduce his expenses, so he can pass the cost savings on to commercial clients. For one, the company partnered with a sod farm that was having tough times. LaPorte bought into the farm and Commercial Scapes harvests the sod.

QUICK TIPS

Negotiate with suppliers. Talk to vendors about ways to work a better deal on pricing, such as buying in greater volume or picking up materials rather than getting delivery. Also consider what strategic relationship can be built with suppliers.

Look inside. What areas of your operation could run more efficiently? Every business has room for improvement. “There are a lot of efficiencies that can be gained through better business practices, and the way I see the market, companies are going to have to (get leaner),” LaPorte says.

Listen to the people. Potential clients were giving LaPorte feedback that his prices were higher than bidding competitors, so he found a way to lower his cost of delivering service. You may not like what the customer has to say about pricing, but if you ignore it you might lose out on promising business.

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RAIN BIRD

"If you are going to win and be successful, you have to look inward, trim the fat out of your operation and negotiate with suppliers."

— Michael LaPorte

"That was a gain in market share for us because we can offer better prices, knocking about 25-30 percent off of sod services," he says.

Two years ago, Commercial Scapes began working with a topsoil processing plant, taking landscape waste from trash companies to the processor to produce compost. "Now, we are actually getting

paid to use our own product," LaPorte says, figuring an annual savings of about \$180,000. "By [using our own topsoil], we were able to actually lower prices and increase income."

Also, Commercial Scapes purchased four dump trucks this year so the company can deliver its own sod and trees rather than subcontracting the work. "By self-performing these services, we don't have to pay trucking companies or topsoil providers, which helps us to pay down our own overhead and gives us better margins in these products," LaPorte says.

No company can afford to operate in today's market without slimming down expenses, LaPorte says. "If you are going to win and be successful, you have to look inward and trim the fat out of your operation and negotiate with suppliers," LaPorte says. "There are always deals that can be made out there."

Holding fast, running lean

Valley Landscape Service

Jim Webb, president **LOCATION** Jackson, Wyo. **ESTABLISHED** 1987 **EMPLOYEES** 25 **2010 REVENUES** \$1.35 million **CUSTOMERS** 80% residential; 20% commercial **SERVICES** full-service landscape maintenance, some light installation

Jim Webb remembers when only five landscape maintenance companies served the Jackson, Wyo., area. Now, there are more than 100 operations and a good lot of them are one-truck wonders. "There is so much more competition now," says Webb, president of Valley Landscape Service. "Guys who used to pound nails now have a walker mower and a trailer and they are all coming out of the woodwork."

That doesn't mean Webb is actually competing with these outfits to keep existing clients. But he knows when he gets a "no" on a bid, it's because of price and not quality of service. The fact is, most customers don't talk about price to Webb. "I usually turn in a bid, and rarely do I get called back and asked any questions," he says. "It's either they call back and hire me or we don't hear from them."

Over the years, Webb has maintained steady prices. With only a handful of exceptions has he adjusted his price to please a client. In one instance, a longtime client got a maintenance bid for \$20 less per week. "I said, 'I can't match what the other company will offer, but if it means keeping you, I'll meet you halfway,'" Webb says, knowing that he'd make \$10 less per week on the job, but he'd hold on to a loyal customer and still make a profit. "If it had been someone new, I don't know if I would have done that."

Webb knows how much he can negotiate prices because he tracks expenses carefully. For the last six years, he has worked with an industry "bottom-line expert" to crunch the numbers. He has

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Talkin' Tech



with Jerry Corbett

Quali-Pro Technical Services & Product Manager



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spreadsheets that outline costs: equipment, labor, etc. He knows exactly how much each man-hour costs him. And he prices accordingly.

But Webb takes other measures to keep prices competitive. This year, he hired four more employees so he can control overtime. "That will kill you," he says of a budget line item he can now avoid. He is also managing payroll. "I haven't lowered anyone's salary, but I haven't given any raises," he says.

Fuel prices are a bear. "But we're trying to be efficient with routing," Webb says. "I've had a few people request days for their mowing and we try to fit them in to make them happy, but we also need to keep a nice, tight route where we aren't wasting fuel."

Webb expects a 15-20 percent profit margin, "which is high," he admits. "But I'm in a high-end market. On lawn care services, he gains a 40-50 percent profit."

When a customer asks Webb to lower his price, he holds firm. "I tell people, I know what my overhead is. I suggest that they ask the competitor for his proof of insurance and licensing. I can show mine."

The result of finding ways to keep his operation running leaner: steady performance. Valley Landscape Service's revenues were down just \$40,000 last year over 2009. "Considering the state of the economy, I think that's really good," Webb says. "Some were down 50 and 60 percent, and some are out of business."

QUICK TIPS

Consult with an expert. Consider hiring a professional to help you develop a strong budget system for recording expenses and pricing structure.

Stick to your guns. Don't compromise your profit margin to gain business from customers who simply want a deal. "You have to stick to your prices, otherwise you are working for free," Webb says.

Watch overtime. Paying people in your business can drive up the cost of service if you don't manage man-hours. Avoid overtime at all costs. Webb hired additional employees, which will cost him less than dishing out overtime dollars.

Pricing with a personal touch

In Bloom Landscaping takes a show-and-tell approach to prove to potential clients that their service is worth a higher price than the competition. "We invite any of our leads to come to our home garden," says Jessica Neese, controller of the Atlanta-based firm. "We are big gardeners. It's our business, but we live it."

This personal touch gives people the confidence they seem to be looking for, and the knowledge they are willing to invest in. "Landscaping is very foreign to a lot of people," Neese says. "They don't know how to evaluate it. They don't know what the plants are. A lot of it is built on trust, so when they can actually see what you do and they like it, I guess people are willing to pay more."

By "more," Neese says In Bloom's prices are never the lowest, and on jobs less than \$100,000, the company shoots for a profit margin of 15 percent. On larger projects, a 10 percent margin is good. "There is no chance we can win a (big) job unless we are a 10-12 percent profit margin."

In Bloom Landscaping

Jessica Neese, controller; Selby Neese, president **LOCATION** Atlanta **ESTABLISHED** 1996 **EMPLOYEES** 25 **2010 REVENUES** \$1.5 million **CUSTOMERS** 99% residential; 1% commercial **SERVICES** design/build and maintenance

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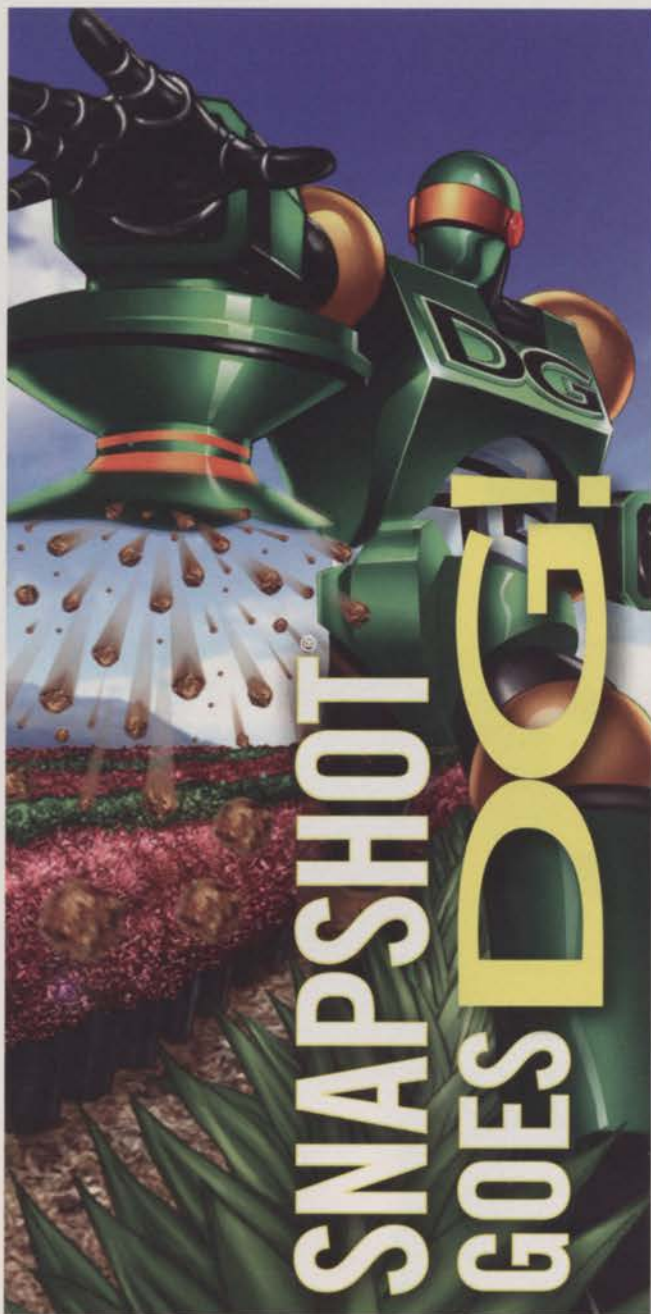
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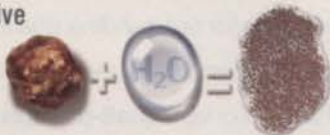
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In Bloom started recognizing this push for lower prices in 2009 when revenues gradually began to drop. "Sales in general were dropping everywhere," she says of the market. "But we just started losing more jobs than winning, and there were more people bidding on projects." People started shopping their services.

"We had to be super-aware of what our costs were," she says. And In Bloom knows exactly what expenses go into each job before preparing a bid. Neese crunches the numbers, figuring overhead and labor costs – and the time it will take to complete a job so she can figure a break-even point. Each year, she builds a budget by figuring out the total hours crews will work in the field and all overhead costs, breaking them down into a per-hour overhead cost. The same is done for labor. "Labor is easily figured out by figuring out your burdens and your actual – what you pay for your people," says Neese, who has a business background. "You work backward by adding materials and subcontractor costs and add your mark-up."

In Bloom has been able to stay competitive in the market while maintaining margins by bringing all of its work in-house and investing in people, Neese says. All workers are cross-trained. As a result, employee turnover is low at In Bloom; workers have been on board for five and eight years.

"To maintain my people and help them learn, we pay them well," Neese says, noting that their knowledge is what clients are willing to pay more for. Plus, customers like that there are no subcontractors on the job. "That is another selling point," she says.

Meanwhile, pricing pressure is letting up slightly in Atlanta, Neese notices. People are still cautious, and they still want several bids for their installation projects. "It's still really competitive but we are seeing a little bit of a shift from everyone going for the lowest price," she says. "I feel like people have tried it that way and are not getting the quality they want." **L&L**

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

QUICK TIPS

Get personal. To show potential clients that quality is more important than price, In Bloom owners bring leads to their home garden, where they give a tour and talk about their passion for gardening. This builds a trust from the start.

Crunch the numbers. By knowing the break-even point on every job, In Bloom can be sure it recovers all costs and then some (at least a 10-percent profit margin).

Reel in your costs. Rather than hiring subcontractors to perform tasks like installing irrigation systems or lighting, In Bloom has trained its employees to manage these jobs. That way, the company can earn a profit on the work. "Over the years, we have trained ourselves and brought everything in-house to diversify – especially in this economy," she says. "The more we can do ourselves, the better it is for leads and generating more revenue."



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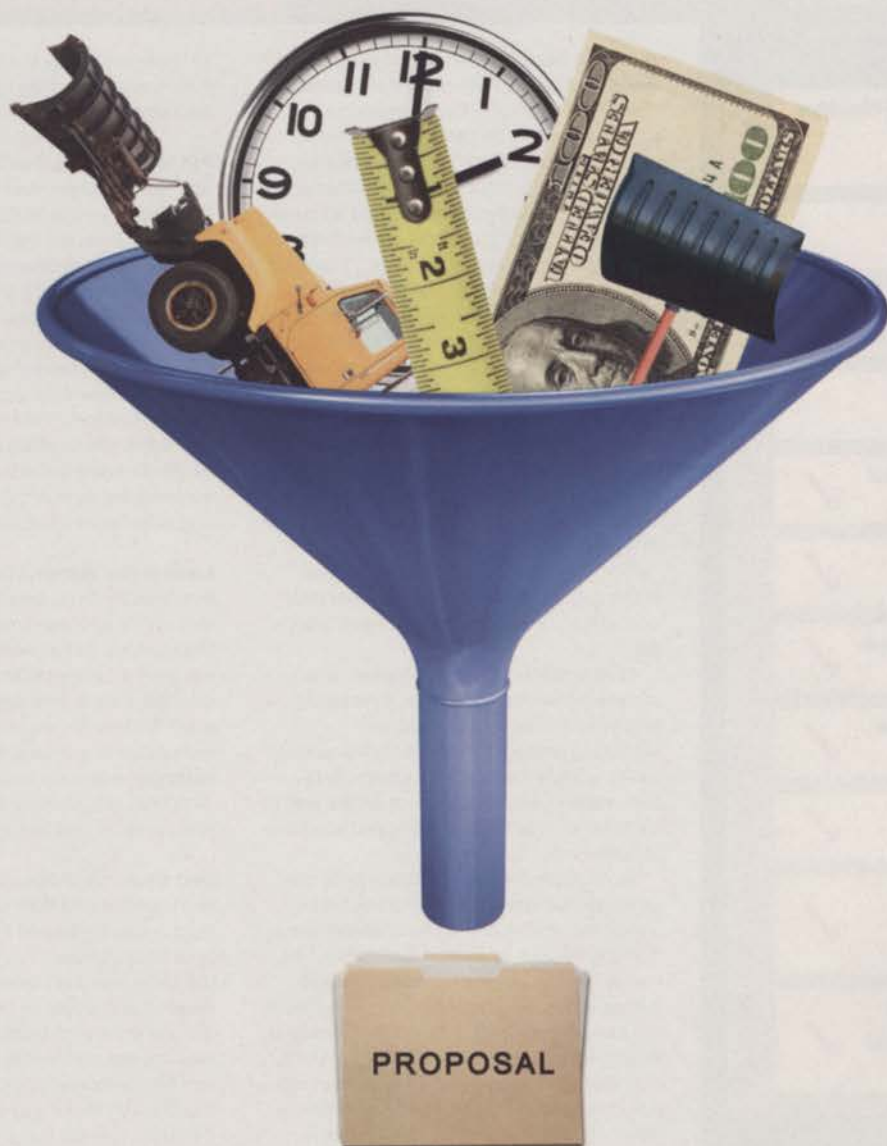
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EDITOR'S NOTE:

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 eighth installment is S.L. Parker's **"212° the extra degree."** The rest of the year's reading list includes:

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



Outliers

Malcolm Gladwell



Linchpin: Are You Indispensable

Seth Godin



How To Win Friends and Influence People

Dale Carnegie



212° THE EXTRA DEGREE

By Matt LaWell

212°

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s.l. parker

how to achieve results **beyond** your wildest expectations
the way to think • the way to act

Like so many business and motivational writers before him, S.L. Parker turns often to a swath of quotes intended to spur the reader into action. In the middle of his slim book, "212° the extra degree," he pulls wisdom from Lucretius, a Roman philosopher who lived and thought a couple of millennia ago. "The drops of rain make a hole in the stone not by violence," Lucretius said, "but by oft falling." Parker quotes Elbert Hubbard, too, an American writer who flourished his pen in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. "The line between failure and success is so fine," Hubbard said, "that we are often on the line and do not know it."

But perhaps the most familiar name, if not the most familiar quote, to appear in the 84 pages of Parker's straightforward meditation on action is Lawrence Peter Berra. You know him better as Yogi.

"You give 100 percent in the first half of the game," said Berra. "And if that isn't enough, in the second half, you give what's left."

All of which is to say that Parker, who is more known for his work in developing online resources for business and marketing leaders than he is for his writing, wants to show there are no shortcuts to accomplishment, no easy outs on the way to big finishes. You have to work, and you have to work hard.

To illustrate that point, Parker drills the same phrase into the reader three times during the course of the book, almost like a mantra. "At 211 degrees, water is hot," he starts. "At 212 degrees, it boils. And with boiling water, comes steam. And with steam, you can power a train." The idea is similar to the central argument of "The Tipping Point," that little steps can make all the difference. But Parker doesn't include any cute stories about "Sesame Street" or Hush Puppies or Paul Revere. Think of him as Malcolm Gladwell Lite.

There are plenty of other great lessons to pull from such a short book. Here are a few of the better ones:

Put in the hours. Remember the "8 Minute Abs" video? All you had to do was pop it in the DVD player (or the VCR, if you ordered it in the '90s) and work out eight minutes every day. End result? Washboard abs. Believe it or not, that program actually worked. A lot of newer products – for your abs, for your home, for the simplification of your life – are not quite as trustworthy. "Advertising messages continually promote methods of achieving end results with little or no effort," Parker writes. "And these messages are so effective that people will work harder to avoid the extra effort than actually applying the extra effort that will produce the originally desired outcome."

Look in the mirror. Where would your business be if you failed to keep accurate records? If your accounting department was in shambles, or just nonexistent? You might not have a business. So why would you not take the time to evaluate yourself in the same way? "Unless someone engages in frequent self-review or a source like a friend, a book, a manager, a spouse or a parent," Parker writes, "a person will continue throughout their lives making very small improvements, if any at all."

Just do it. Years ago, in the middle of all of his scoring titles and Stanley Cup championships, Wayne Gretzky turned into a philosopher, at least for a minute. "You miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take," he said. Maybe he meant literal shots on the ice, but the same thought applies to business and life, too. "You may not always be able to turn up the heat and hit the boiling point," Parker writes, "but that doesn't mean you shouldn't make the attempt." So take the shot. **L&L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.



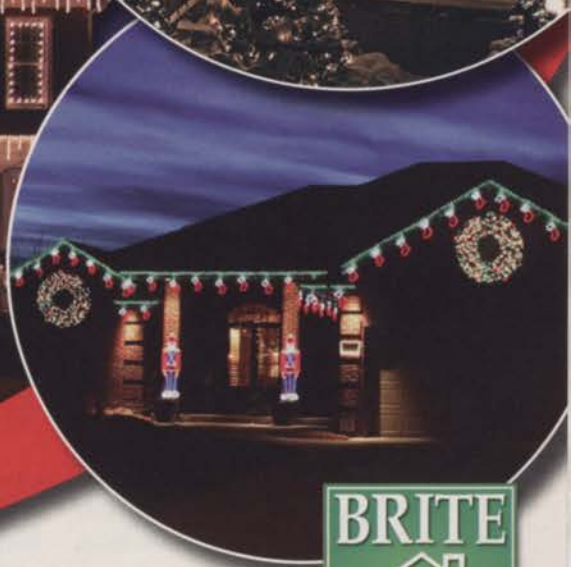
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Working in **HOT** weather

Summer months pose special hazards for outdoor workers. By Vern Morris

Heat related illness often does not receive as much attention as other workplace hazards and is often under reported.

A high profile case of heat stroke was that of Korey Stringer, a 27-year-old member of the Minnesota Vikings football team. On Aug. 1, 2001, he collapsed after two and a half hours of practice in 90 degree heat. At the hospital, his core body temperature was recorded at 108 degrees. He died shortly thereafter of major organ failure. Many were shocked at how sudden and serious the consequences of heat exposure can be, but his tragic story brought to light a serious workplace hazard that concerns thousands of workers every year.

According to OSHA, the combination of heat and humidity can be a serious health threat during summer months.

Here are several precautions to take:

- Drink small amounts of water frequently. When working in the heat, you should drink 5 to 7 ounces of water every half hour.
- Wear light colored, loose fitting, breathable clothing – cotton is good.
- Take frequent short breaks in cool, shaded areas.

- Avoid caffeine and alcohol or large amounts of sugar.
- Work in the shade whenever possible.
- Find out from your health provider if your medications will make you more susceptible to heat illness.
- Know that personal protective equipment such as respirators or coveralls can increase heat stress.

HEAT-RELATED DISORDERS. There are four kinds of heat-related disorders varying in severity. They include:

Heat rash is the most common problem in hot work environments. Heat rash is caused by sweating and looks like a red cluster of pimples or small blisters. This usually appears on the neck and upper chest. The best treatment for heat rash is to provide a cooler, less humid work environment.

Heat cramps are muscle pains usually caused by physical labor. Heat cramps are caused by the loss of body salts and fluid during sweating. Workers with heat cramps should replace fluid loss by drinking water or sports drinks every 15 to 20 minutes.

Heat exhaustion signs and symptoms include: headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness, irritability, confusion, thirst, heavy sweating and a body temperature greater than 100.4 degrees. Workers with heat exhaustion should be removed from the hot area and given liquids to drink. Remove unnecessary clothing including shoes and socks.

“At the hospital, his core body temperature was recorded at 108 degrees.

Cool the worker with cold compresses to the head, neck and face. Encourage frequent sips of cool water. Workers with signs or symptoms of heat exhaustion should be taken to a clinic or emergency room for medical evaluation and treatment. Stay with the worker until help arrives. If symptoms worsen, call 911 and get help immediately.

Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related health problem. Heat stroke occurs when the body's temperature regulating system fails and body temperature rises to critical levels (greater than 104 degrees). This is a medical emergency that may result in death. The signs of heat stroke are confusion, loss of consciousness and seizures. Workers experiencing heat stroke have a very high body temperature and may stop sweating. If a worker shows signs of possible heat stroke, get medical help immediately and call 911. Until medical help arrives, move the worker to a shady, cool area and remove as much clothing as possible. Wet the worker with cool water and circulate the air to speed cooling. Place cold wet cloths, wet towels or ice all over the body or soak the worker's clothing with cold water.

HEAT-ILLNESS REGULATIONS. California became the first state to adopt heat illness prevention regulations. These regulations were in response to a particularly tragic summer in 2005 where 13 workers died from heat-related illness in that state. The regulations require that outdoor employees have access to one quart of water per hour for the entire shift, that employees have the right to take a break in the shade for at least five minutes when they feel they need one, and that employers receive special training. Fines of up to \$25,000 per violation may be assessed on employers.

All employees should be made aware of the signs of heat-related health problems. I would also recommend making water and drinking cups available to workers, especially employees who perform lawn and termite work. **L&L**

The author is the loss control manager at Capital Risk Underwriters. He can be reached at vmorris@glmedia.com.

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Leasing lessons

How to get the most out of your rental equipment.

By Lee Chilcote

Many lawn and landscape companies spend upwards of \$10,000 per year on rental equipment. Whether they're digging a trench, cutting sod or just looking for an extra truck for a job, these business owners need good, reliable equipment delivered on time. There's nothing more aggravating than renting a skid-steer that breaks down hours after it's been unloaded – leaving workers stranded and idle until a replacement arrives.

"When we first started renting equipment, it was a nightmare," says Tom Rowand, Jr. of R & D Landscape

& Irrigation in Jacksonville, Fla., who spends an estimated \$15,000–\$20,000 annually on equipment rentals. "We rented three pieces of equipment and they all broke down on the job. Everyone was frustrated."

Yet rentals are essential to lawn and landscape companies' business, especially at busy peak times, Rowand says.

It doesn't make sense to buy costly equipment you don't use all of the time. Renting by the day, week or even month allows them to take on addi-



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RENTAL EQUIPMENT

tional work without breaking the bank.

The keys to getting the most out of rentals, contractors say, is to develop a good relationship with your dealer, have systems in place to ensure that the rental equipment works well and is there when you need it and only rent equipment af-

ter you've exhausted other options.

Companies that adhere to these guidelines can survive the ups-and-downs of today's economy by flexibly expanding their capacity, while also growing their bottom line.



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS.

Landscapers that purchase a substantial volume of equipment rentals can often negotiate the terms and pricing with their dealership and save big.

"Especially with the construction industry being as slow as it is, rental yards are open to negotiation, so we've taken advantage of that," says Tom Heaviland, owner of Heaviland Enterprises in Southern California. "In this economy, if you're not negotiating with your vendors like your customers are negotiating with you, then you're crazy."

"We have a fixed contract, but we still try to negotiate, and most of the time we're pretty successful," Rowand says. "We'll call them and say, 'We've only got \$200 in our budget, can you rent it to us for that price?' Most of the time they'll say yes."

"You can also get a good deal when you rent for a longer period of time," he adds.

Building long-term, mutual relationships with rental companies can also help circumvent problems such as broken equipment, late delivery or hidden fees.

"We've been doing business with our rental yard for 35 years, and have a great relationship," Heaviland says. "I know we can count on them to deliver and pick up equipment on time, it will be in good condition and won't break down on us."

To Heaviland, this reliability is worth its weight in gold. "It's rental stuff and gets the heck beat out of it," he quips. "You don't want it to break down and hold up your progress – but if it does, you need them to respond promptly and deliver another one."

While Rowand's relationship with his rental company isn't perfect, he continues to work with them because they have the largest inventory and deliver on time.

"We work with what you might call the Wal-Mart of rental companies, and although we usually give them a week's notice, sometimes I call the day of and they have what I need," he says.

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RENTAL EQUIPMENT

THERE WHEN YOU NEED IT. R & D employees ensure that their equipment arrives in good working condition by personally picking it up and using a rental checklist before it leaves the yard.

"If they deliver it to you, then you're at their mercy," Rowand says. "So we

inspect it, note any damage, check the oil level and fuel level and test it to make sure it's running properly. That system has helped us out immensely over the years.

"Probably 60 percent of the time,

“Like a war battalion with a tank, crews love having equipment on site, just in case something comes up.

there is something wrong with the equipment when we go to pick it up. The equipment is not checked out properly.”

Because Rowand has an established relationship with his dealer, they've come to expect the extra scrutiny. "They understand our process, and don't just think we're difficult."

Heaviland has even negotiated with his dealer to allow him to keep equipment on site for free when he's not using it. "We'll keep it for five days, but they'll only charge us for three days, if we call it off during the days that we're not using it," he says.

Gary Mallory, CEO of Heads Up Landscape Contractors in Albuquerque, N.M., says it's important to have a company culture of using equipment efficiently. "Like a war battalion with a tank, crews love having equipment on site, just in case something comes up," he says with a laugh. "Foster a culture of returning equipment immediately. If you have four to five pieces of equipment out and you don't need them, in this economy it can bite you."

Mallory also tries to rent a single, multipurpose piece of equipment rather than three separate pieces, and warns landscapers to beware of extra fees. "Watch out for hidden costs like delivery charges, environmental fees and wear and tear costs."

DECIDING WHEN TO RENT. Timing is everything when it comes to equipment rentals. By maximizing use of rental equipment, you can cut overall costs.

"If we rent a sod cutter, then we'll arrange for a supervisor to take it to more than one crew, so it's not just being used for three hours and sitting on a job," says Rowand.

Timing your rentals well can help you to maximize efficiency, Mallory adds. "We don't want equipment sitting on site that we only need one day a week," he says. "Sometimes it's better to rent an item for three single days, rather than three weeks."

Doing the math can be tricky, he says,

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RENTAL EQUIPMENT

but it's an essential part of bidding a job right and managing your costs effectively. "It can go the opposite way, too," he says. "If a job takes longer, you could end up paying the higher daily rate."

To avoid needless rentals, Mallory sometimes barter with other contractors. "If we're doing re-vegetative seeding, we have to rip up the ground," he says. "Yet if another contractor is on site creating a parking lot, they can rip it up for us using equipment they have. And vice versa, we'll also sometimes dig trenches for electricians."

Zuccaro preps his crews to do as much as they can by hand before they rent equipment. "Be smart – only rent when you need it," he says. "

RENTING VS. OWNING. Renting equipment can actually be more cost-effective for lawn and landscape companies than

buying it – even if it's something they already own.

"Ironically, most of the stuff that we rent are pieces of equipment we already have, like sod cutters," Rowand says. "For instance, if we have three crews that are doing sod cuts on a busy day and we only have one sod cutter, we'll rent two." When deciding to buy instead of rent, make sure the equipment isn't just going to sit.

"A lot of people in our industry love seeing steel in their yard, but they really have to look at purchasing equipment unemotionally," Mallory says. "I know people that own 12 skid loaders, but only need them for three months out of the year. That's not wise."

"The truth is that many companies own

too much equipment, and don't rent often enough."

On the other hand, Mallory says companies should also make sure they maintain their equipment so it doesn't go down unexpectedly, resulting in an unplanned rental. "If you're not able to invest in your equipment, you could end up being forced to rent," he says.

Owners should also treat rentals on a case-by-case basis. "You can have minimal downtime if you rent, but the landscaper has to be smart enough to know when to use it," says Zuccaro. **L&L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.



For more on how to get the most out of your rental equipment, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com. Search "rental equipment."



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Here's what you need to know to ensure your customers have rich soil and healthy lawns.

By Lindsey Getz

Healthy soil is a vital component of a successful landscape maintenance program. Still, many landscapers overlook the importance of improving their clients' soil – even though it may be affecting their bottom line. It's also a disservice to the customer considering most soils in the United States are poor for growing top-quality lawns. A simple soil test can tell landscapers what the soil needs in order to let a lush lawn and its ornamentals thrive. Implementing a soil testing program can add value to the services you already offer your clients. Many clients will appreciate the extra effort – they just need to be educated on why it's important and how it benefits them.

In order to help you better understand what it takes to test and improve soil – and why it's so important to do – we explored some of the most common questions landscapers pose on the topic.

Soil studies

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THE DIRT ON DIRT

What are some of the more common soil problems and what can I do about them? The soil problems faced by landscapers vary greatly depending on region, but some of the most common problems you hear about are nutrient or pH problems and poor drainage. All of these can have a detrimental effect on the success of your lawn care maintenance program. For the latter concern, there are several potential solutions. "For turf, aerations work well," says Bill Leuenberger, Soil and Turf Management Department, Chalet Nursery. "Gypsum (a naturally occurring mineral with the chemical formula of calcium sulfate) can help, though it takes a long time to see results."

For the former, the only way to know for certain whether a lawn is too acidic or too alkaline is to perform a soil test, says Chuck Darrah, president and consulting landscape agronomist for CLC Labs. Nutrient deficiencies in general are also a problem and different areas of the country have their own specific deficiencies, Darrah says. Many soils in parts of the Midwest and Mid-South are low in phosphorus. On the other hand, soils low in potassium are more common in much of the Northeast, Southeast and Northwest. "A good soil testing lab can give you the correct recommendations so that you're adding just the right amount of the right nutrient back into the soil," Darrah says.

Step-by-step sampling

If you're new to soil testing, there are a few key things to keep in mind. Chuck Darrah, president and consulting landscape agronomist for CLC Labs, offers the following tips on running a successful soil test.

WHEN to sample. Make sure to take the soil sample as part of an already-scheduled stop in order to maximize cost efficiency of your soil testing program. For new clients, the sample can be taken anytime during the first year of service to provide a baseline. It's an agronomic best management practice to soil test every three to five years, adds Darrah. Just always be sure to test before an application for an accurate reading.

WHERE to sample. Darrah recommends removing turf and thatch for a more accurate soil test. However, for efficiency, turf, thatch, and three inches of soil can be included. If you include turf and thatch in the first sample, for consistency purposes you should always include them.

HOW to sample. Technicians should always keep a soil probe and sample bags in their vehicle in order to be prepared for a sampling. A minimum of 10 to 12 cores are needed for a representative soil sample on a typical 6,000-square-foot lawn. Darrah says lawn soil samples should be taken to a 3 to 4 inch depth while tree/shrub and garden samples should be taken to a 5 to 6 inch depth. "Walk the lawn in a zig-zag pattern pulling 10 to 12 cores and place them into the sample bag," says Darrah. "Secure the ties on the bag and place the bag into a box on the truck. Once back at the facility, all of the sample bags can be placed into a larger 'sample collection' box, and then sent to the lab along with the completed sample information sheet."

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THE DIRT ON DIRT

But is healthy soil really that important to grass and ornamentals that it's worth the time and effort of testing? Yes. Poor soils can literally kill your bottom line, says Darrah. For instance, in acidic soil regions, acidity is a huge problem that can lead to a waste of fertilizer dollars.

"As the acidity of the soil increases, the efficient use of nutrients decreases," Darrah says. "The pH of an acidic soil can be raised by incorporating the right amount of lime. But the only way to truly know what the

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soil needs is to perform a soil test."

Lawn grasses in general have an optimum pH range and a minimum nutrient requirement below which a quality lawn simply cannot be achieved, adds Darrah. "Although nitrogen alone can produce a dark green lawn, long-term plant health cannot be assured unless other nutrients are present in the correct amount and the soil pH is in the preferred range."

"Healthy earth, healthy turf" is not just a rhyme – it's a fact," Leuenberger says. "Soils that are living, healthy and thriving root zones provide plants with the opportunity to flourish. Healthy soils have tiny microbes which help (plants) to develop strong root systems. Because the earth is always changing, the nutrients we supply are either taken up by microbes in the soil, plants or, in some cases, leached out of the soil. But great soils allow your plants to take all of its nutrients."

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Why aren't the regular fertilizer applications I'm already doing enough to solve these problems? They might be, but you often won't know until you do the soil test. In some cases, you may even be over-fertilizing. But because there are so many variables factoring into the health of the turf, often fertilizers alone aren't enough, says Leuenberger.

In addition, there's an environmental responsibility factor in play as well. LCOs know that there's a lot of "anti-phosphorous hysteria" out there resulting in more and more fertilizer bans, says Stuart Z. Cohen, president of Environmental & Turf Services. "Testing the soil lets you know just how much fertilizer needs to be applied," he adds. "There's actually a danger in under-fertilizing. If LCOs under-fertilize and there's patchy grass cover, they'll not only get fired by the client, but they'll add to environmental pollution because it will lead to more phosphorous-bound sediment running off and into the waterways. Good healthy turf helps reduce sediment run-off. It may not be

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THE DIRT ON DIRT

well-known, but in many cases, using the right amount of fertilizer is better for the environment than using none at all."


How do I successfully sell a soil testing service? Many landscape services have an almost immediate result that clients can see. A once-barren yard is made colorful with plantings or with well-maintained, lush green grass. Soil testing is part of that maintenance success, but the client needs to be educated on its benefits. Much of it will come down to trust, says Leuenberger. "You need to be credible in everything you tell your customers," he says. "Building trust is vital. Results from the use of a soil test, or any amendments you apply, may never be seen by the customer. It helps to remind your customer that the service is preventative."

It also helps to position a soil testing

service as added value to your client. Tell the client that soil testing helps you individualize the service for their lawn, suggests Darrah. Talk in terms of monetary value. If you find a low nutrient level or the need for lime, a corrective application can be made. This way, the client gets more bang for their buck.

In addition, part of educating the client on why soil testing is important means explaining what it is. Use language they understand. "Explain that a soil test is a series of tests done to see if everything is OK with the soil," Darrah says. "A soil test is like a 'physical exam' for your lawn. It shows us if there are any 'hidden hungers' and how much and what to use if a corrective application is needed."

The whole soil testing effort comes back to a marketing plan. "Establish how you want to position soil testing

“Part of educating the client on why soil testing is important means explaining what it is. Use language they understand.” 

within your various customer segments," says Darrah. "Soil testing has a high-perceived value among users of lawn care services. Newspaper articles on lawn care and gardening magazine articles always advise homeowners to soil test – as does every university. This makes it an important tool in customer acquisition and retention that not only individualizes the service you provide, but positions your company as both professional and environmentally responsible." L&L

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

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Break into government work

With many families and businesses cutting expenses, landscaping and lawn care are sometimes part of those cutbacks. But, there's another way green industry professionals can find jobs – government work. Local, state and federal government buildings need landscaping too, and there are government dollars available for certain

projects, says Scott Jamieson, executive vice president of Bartlett Tree Experts. "If priced right, this work can and must be profitable," he says.

Sure, it might not give you the satisfaction of designing and building a beautiful backyard on a high-end residential property, but it will keep you busy and help pay the bills. And,

you can use some of the same practices to find government work that you'd use to find commercial or residential work – being personable with the decision makers.

"There's the relationship piece of getting to know these folks," he says. Here's some things to think about before entering the fray for government work. – *Brian Horn*



1

First, you want to look at the U.S. General Services Administration schedule to see if it fits your organization. "It doesn't fit for everybody, but we have found that being on the GSA schedule has opened doors for us for governmental work. It's essentially a pre-qualification." While it doesn't guarantee work, it shows you meet certain requirements.

2

Create a target list. "Who do you want to work for? What sort of agencies or projects might be in your area? Sometimes that means just going and knocking on doors, others it might be scanning the Internet for a bid offering."

3

What better way to get a foot in the door than to work with someone who is already in the room? If you are a landscaper, create a business relationship with a company that provides another service, like tree care, on government property. "Most of these governmental projects are large in scope and they've got a number of players involved."

4

Keep an eye out for seminars or workshops that teach you or instruct you on how to do governmental work. Through the GSA program, Jamieson gets tons of emails from people who put on specific seminars for government jobs.

5

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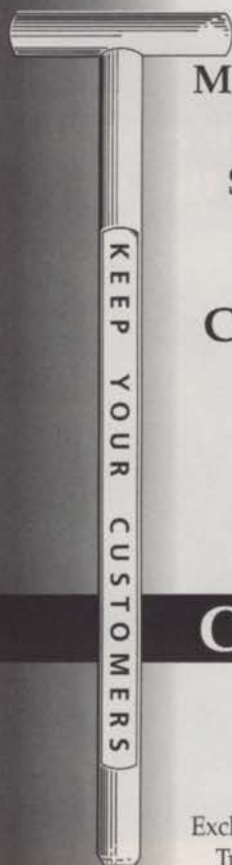
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Rust

Cultural practices can prevent turfgrass from turning orange.

By Carolyn LaWell

While some turfgrass diseases are impossible to identify with the naked eye, rust is not one of them. Walking through an infected area will often leave an orange residue on shoes, hinting that the discoloration is a rust problem.

"From a distance, the disease can sometimes be mistaken for other diseases. However in a closer look, symptoms and signs of the

disease are unique," says Alfredo Martinez, University of Georgia associate professor/extension plant pathologist.

Rust, which occurs in most turfgrass species and is especially problematic on Kentucky bluegrass, ryegrass, tall fescue and zoysiagrass, isn't one of the more harmful plant diseases, but it can have large outbreaks and it can be unsightly. *Lawn & Landscape* asked Martinez how to iden-

tify, prevent and control rust diseases in turfgrass.

How does rust form? Rust is a disease caused by a variety of related fungi, specifically by fungi belonging to the genus *Puccinia* and/or *Uromyces*. Rust infections occur on slow-growing turfgrass, particularly those areas with low nitrogen levels, imbalanced soil fertility, plant water stress, shaded-low lighted

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areas and soil compaction. Rust, as a whole, causes relatively minor turfgrass stand losses. However, the disease has the potential to cause severe outbreaks in stressed, weakened turfgrass areas.

How can LCOs identify rust?

From a distance, rust-infected turf appears to have a yellow-green, orange cast. As the disease progresses, symptoms occur in a diffuse, irregular, yellow-reddish pattern.

Because of the amount of spores produced on turfgrass leaves, shoes and clothes of lawn care operators are stained with an orange tinge while walking through infected areas. One easy way

for lawn care operators to detect rust is by rubbing their fingers along the leaf blades. A yellow, orange and powdery material adheres to the fingers. This material is made of bright colored spores.

How can it be prevented and controlled?

Rust thrives on stressed turfgrass areas. Mainly in areas with an imbalanced soil fertility, compaction and low nitrogen; therefore, rust severity can be greatly reduced by maintaining a healthy, vigorous turf stand. Maintain recommended soil fertility and soil pH levels. Following nitrogen fertility recommendations is a critical factor in controlling

rust in warm season grasses.

Follow proper irrigation practices, avoiding irrigation during early evening will limit the spread of the disease by diminishing the chance of extended dew periods. Proper mowing heights and removal of clippings can help to reduce inoculum levels. Improve air circulation and light penetration on shaded, closed areas.

Fungicides are rarely suggested on home lawns or landscape turfgrass areas for rust control. In rare cases, fungicides are warranted. Fungicides should only be considered as remedial treatments when cultural practices fail to prevent an outbreak.

In the few instances that fungicides are warranted, what active ingredients are effective?

There are a variety of fungicides that are effective against turfgrass rust diseases. Their use varies depending on the geographical region and state to state, so always follow the label directions for use.

The fungicide families/groups named demethylation inhibitors (DMI's) fungicides, the QoI (strobilurins) fungicides, or the benzimidazole fungicides, to name a few, are very effective against rust. I strongly suggest focusing on cultural practices. **L&L**

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

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Termites

Look closely at these pests because they can be mistaken for ants. By Brian Horn

While Subterranean and agricultural termites are commonly found throughout the Western and Southern U.S., and Drywood termites are mainly in Western and Coastal Southern states, they aren't limited to only those areas.

"With shipping and transportation today, they are probably everywhere," says Roger Gold, professor and endowed chair in the department of Entomology at Texas A&M University.

There are two types of termites that are most common in lawns: Subterranean (*Rhinotermitidae*) or agricultural

(*Termitidae*). Both termite types have "workers" that cause the damage, and "soldiers" that defended the colony. The reproductive castes are known as "queen" and "kings" and swarm during the spring and summer months.

A third type of termite is known as Drywood and essentially lives in the plants themselves, like in trees where they eat wood. Subterranean and agricultural termites live in the soil, where they tunnel through and attack cellulose either on the roots of plants, or above ground.

The agricultural termites prefer to

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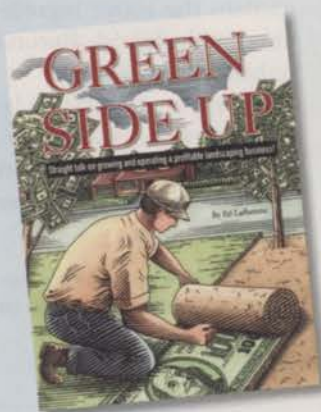
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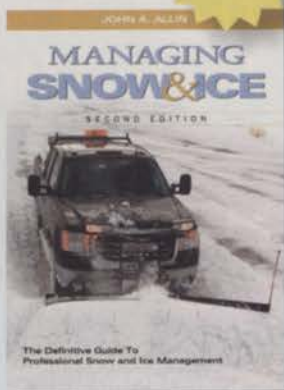
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PEST PROFILE

eat decomposing grasses, but in times of drought, they will attack growing ground covers.

IDENTIFICATION. Subterranean termites will have mud tubes the size of a small pencil that they use to protect themselves when they emerge from the ground. These tubes are diagnostic of subterraneans.

A drywood termite can be identified in the soldier caste by having teeth on the mandibles. "The mandibles are out in front of the face on the termites and they are used for the defense of the colony. The worker caste also has mandibles, but they are

very small compared to the soldier," Gold says. There are also characteristics on the soldier's head or the wings of the swarmers that give it away.

"The soldiers of subterranean termites have smooth mandibles, while both agricultural and drywood termites have at least one prominent tooth on the mandible," Gold says.

Drywood and subterranean termites can be, and often times are, misidentified as ants. "After termites swarm, they quickly lose their wings, and have the general appearance of ants," Gold says.

However they are broadly

jointed between the thorax and the abdomen, while ants have a narrow segment known as a pedicel.

TREATMENT. Gold says, generally, it is not economically justified to attempt to control agricultural termites, as the cost of control exceeds the value of the grass or twigs the termites eat.

These specific termites do not eat trees or bushes, and feed primarily on dead grass and small pieces of wood around shrubs or bushes.

"As far as lawns go, the damage from agricultural termites usually become apparent when the lawn or pasture is stressed and is dry-

ing or thinning out," he says.

Normally, lawn care operators would irrigate lawns, and a growing turf can outgrow the damage caused by these specific termites.

"If subterranean or drywood termites are destroying a tree, then control would be justified," Gold says.

Look for products that contain the active ingredients imidacloprid, fipronil or bifenthrin.

Always read pesticide label directions, Gold says, because the site or pest must be on the label to legally use the product. **L&L**

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

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Just treatment

Prejudice acts can cost your company in fines and reputation.

By Steven Cesare, Ph.D.

This is the tenth 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."

Illegal discrimination is the most serious human resources mistake a company can make. The potential financial costs to a company are significant, broad and possibly fatal. While legal fees, back pay, benefits and punitive damages are often exorbitant, damaged morale, negative public relations and industry-wide exposure can all impact the company in very traumatic ways.

Employee discrimination claims filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) rose significantly during the past year. For 2010, the top five most prevalent EEOC claims were: retaliation, race, gender, disability and age discrimination. This marks the first time since 1965 that race discrimination was not the most frequently-filed EEOC claim.

These findings illustrate that discrimination claims are more popular than ever, and more diverse than commonly conceived.

PENALTIES. Penalties associated with illegal discrimination typically fall into one of three categories: fines, litigation and lost company revenue. Fines are levied by the federal and/or state government defending the employee alleging discrimination by the company. These often sizable financial fines are intended to punish the company, which has committed the employment discrimination, to such an extent that the company will

not repeat the same action in the future.

Litigation expenses are all costs related to a court hearing in which the company defends itself against an employee's claim of illegal discrimination. Lost company revenue is the third type of penalty a company can experience when confronted with an illegal discrimination claim. Though difficult to quantify, this penalty is the direct result of negative publicity due to the company's illegal employment practices.



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COMMON VENUES. Illegal discrimination can take many forms, obvious as well as subtle, and thus employers must constantly be proactive in eliminating discrimination from their business practices. Here is a list of common venues in which landscapers may demonstrate discrimination.

1. **Illegal interview questions:** Despite the fact that they know better, many landscapers typically ask illegal questions during job interviews. These illegal questions may bias the interviewer's judgment thereby preventing a qualified protected class applicant from getting a job with the company.

2. **Sexual harassment:** Unfortunately, employees still make sexist comments or demonstrate behaviors that convey



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sexual harassment. Such comments, undertones or behaviors are discriminatory even if their intent is not to discriminate or harass another employee.

3. *Inappropriate comments:* Landscape employees who make comments about another employee's age, ethnic group,

national origin or disability status, even as a "joke," put the company in jeopardy of being sued for illegal discrimination.

4. *Poor recruitment practices:* While likely unintentional, many landscaping companies direct their recruitment efforts in a very selective manner,

frequently targeting certain types of job applicants. This narrow focus can be perceived as being discriminatory against other protected class members.

BEST-IN-CLASS PRACTICES. These practices can help landscapers minimize exposure to employment discrimination practices and minimize its costly consequences to their bottom line.

1. *EEO policy.* Best-in-class employers have a very strong EEO policy declaring a staunch commitment against all forms of discrimination. This policy is highly visible throughout the company culture (e.g., employee handbook, new employee orientation, employee selection process) and is consistently role modeled by all company executives.

2. *Human resources audit.* Best-in-class companies conduct a rigorous audit each year examining all of their human resources practices (e.g., selection, training, compensation) to ensure they are free from any hint of illegal discrimination.

3. *Employment practices liability insurance.* Best-in-class employers have comprehensive employment practices liability insurance to help protect them legally and financially against any claim of illegal discrimination.

4. *Arbitration agreements.* As part of their employee handbook, best-in-class employers require each employee to sign an arbitration agreement bypassing a costly court trial in favor of presenting a case to an arbitrator, when alleging a claim of illegal discrimination.

SUMMARY. The issue of illegal discrimination is very serious, injuring the employee while damaging the employer. Landscapers must be very sensitive to all protected groups, eliminate any form of illegal discrimination throughout their business operations and treat all employees with fairness and respect at all times. Then, and only then, will the threat of illegal discrimination cease to have a costly impact on them. **L&L**

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

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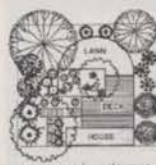
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Sandy Munley

Executive director,
Ohio Landscape Association

What have you been up to since you won the award in 2009?

Pretty much the same thing. Enjoying life and trying to keep the association on track. It's been good.

How have associations like the Ohio Landscape Association fared in the last two years?

Well, we get the trickle down from what the contractors are experiencing. Membership has been a little tougher. As far as member numbers, they had been down. But actually, this year we are trending up, which is a very exciting thing because I think that shows that there is recovery in our industry.

But throughout, our education has actually gotten stronger. More of the contractors are attending educational events and sending their employees. So I think that is another really good sign that our industry is on the right track.

Are you offering more educational programs because of the increasing attendance?

Yes, we have actually. That was our strategy. When we saw the economy going down, we felt that the contractors would need some

extra help, so we increased the offerings that we had and have had quite a number of new educational events. And as I said, they've been very well attended and very well received.

How have you seen the industry change in just the last two years?

Well, the economy has been tough and it has been very tough on our industry. I've seen a lot of companies get a lot leaner, and they're very cautious with their spending so that they're ensuring that, in the future, they'll continue to operate in a strong fashion. It's been interesting to see the changes – there have been a few companies unfortunately that haven't survived and many companies have grown stronger because of it.

What do you think will be the biggest issues the industry and OLA will face in the next five to 10 years?

I think it continues to be the same old story. I think the most difficult thing that we face, and have faced for years, is finding a labor force.

It's very difficult to

find Americans that want to do labor jobs.

It's becoming increasingly difficult to use the legal programs that are in place, because of regulations and such, and to import labor from other countries. So I think labor continues to be the biggest challenge.

What is the eventual solution to that problem, then?

I think we need to continue supporting these schools that teach horticulture and landscape contracting, work on getting young people involved in the industry and excited about working outdoors and realizing that our industry is a great career.

What is your typical day like running OLA?

I don't have a typical day. Every day is so different.

We do have a small staff, so one day I can be helping with a mailing that has to get out – kind of all hands on deck to put it together – and the next day I can be in Washington D.C. speaking with a senator.

So, every day is different,

and I love that there is a lot of variety in the different things that I do.

I guess you've learned to be flexible?

Yes, very flexible, very flexible. But as I said, I enjoy the variety that there is no typical day.

What has been your favorite part about working in the green industry?

Oh, the people. There are just great people in this industry, really down-to-Earth, friendly people.

And I think people are happier in this industry. They get to work outdoors and make our environment more beautiful for everyone to enjoy.

What is the best advice you've ever received?

That is a tough one. But I guess I would have to say be honest, because then you never need to keep track of your story.

You always know what you said and to whom because it never changes. L&L

Read more from Munley, including here 2009 leadership profile, at www.lawnandlandscape.com, search "Munley."



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