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2011

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JANUARY 2011  
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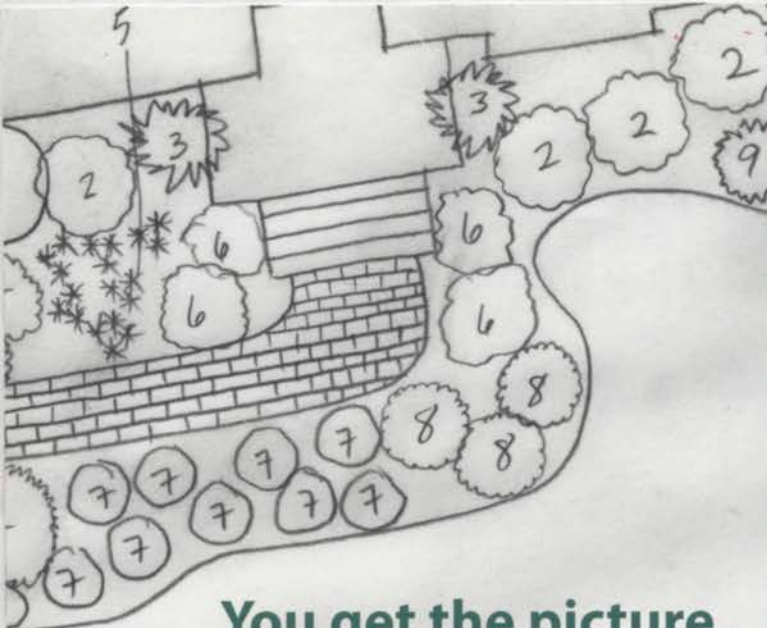
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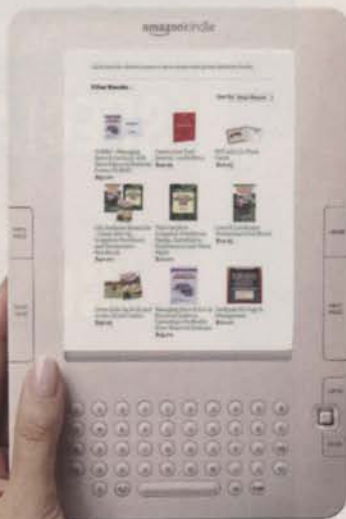
Check out what's now online from *Lawn & Landscape*.

## New online store launches

As part of a new series we're launching in this month's issue, we've developed a new online store in partnership with Amazon. Check out page 68 for the first installment of **Business Bookshelf**, where our editors offer up CliffsNotes on the top books on business, management and success.

As you build your own winter reading list, check out [www.lawnandlandscape.com/businessbookshelf](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/businessbookshelf), where you can order hard-copy or Kindle versions of all 12 books we'll be profiling in 2011. The new store also gives you access to tons of other green industry resources, including estimating software, laptops and segment-specific handbooks.

And, as always, our original online store is the best place to pick up technical must-haves like "Green Side Up" and our "Technician's Handbook." Visit [www.lawnandlandscape.com/store](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/store) to learn more and pick them up today.



## New videos at [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com)



### Snowy winter has landscapers seeing green

This winter's blizzards have helped companies with snow removal services climb out of the red.



### John Ossa reviews new products and technology at the IA Show

The owner of Irrigation Essentials offers insight on his first impressions of the 2010 IA show and new technology in the industry.



### Michigan landscapers discuss the benefits of using propane-powered equipment

Jesse and Hilary Trück from Pristine Green give background on why they use propane.



### Top executives discuss how to be a better leader

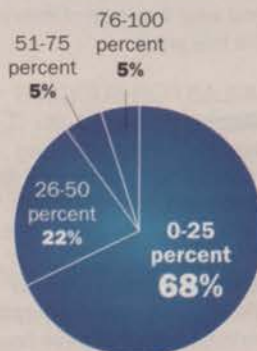
Jack Welch, Mel Karmazin, Isadore Sharp and others share lessons on money, business and leadership.



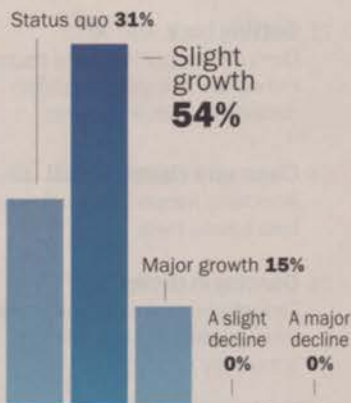
## ONLINE POLL

POLL RESULTS

How much of your business comes from snow removal?



What do you expect from your business in 2011?



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## Ask, and listen

One of my favorite books is Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People." I read it every year, and still find something useful every time I pick it up. Carnegie offers up several principles – ostensibly for salespeople – that apply to most every professional situation.

His fourth secret for success in business and life is to be a good listener and

encourage others to talk about themselves. He provides a very vivid, if somewhat off-putting, example to drive this home:

"Remember that the people you are talking to are a hundred times more interested in themselves and their wants and problems than they are in you and your problems. A person's toothache means more to that person than a famine in China which kills a million people. A boil on one's neck interests one more than forty earthquakes in Africa."

Famines and boils aside, our cover story this month is a special report on what customers want from their landscape companies in 2011. While I think it's a pretty good list, I'll freely admit that not every one is going to apply to every one of your customers.

But I know one surefire way you can figure out exactly what each and every one of your clients, former customers and prospects wants from you.

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A person's toothache means more to that person than a **famine in China** which kills a million people. A boil on one's neck interests one more than forty earthquakes in Africa.

Mrs. Smith just canceled her lawn care contract? Ask her. Interested in getting business from that new office park by the airport? Ask.

But that's just the first part. The second – and much more important – step is to actually listen to what they say. Most people will be fairly clear about what they want from your company if you give them the time to tell you.

I make my living asking people questions and listening to what they say, so it's pretty easy for me to encourage you all to do the same.

But consider this: According to our 2010 State of the Industry Report, 74 percent of readers experienced customer cutbacks last year. There's a reason for that, and there's only one way to figure it out. – Chuck Bowen



See my video blog at [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com).

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## ValleyCrest acquires 2 large Florida companies

CALABASAS, Calif. – ValleyCrest Landscape Companies expanded in the Florida market with the announcement it merged with Nanak's Landscaping and Raymow Enterprises.

Orlando-based Nanak's Landscaping, which has five Florida locations, and Tampa-based Raymow Enterprises, which has operations in eight locations, have joined ValleyCrest's existing network of more than 30 Florida branches.

Combined, the deals will increase the size of ValleyCrest Landscape Maintenance nearly 10 percent overall and add substantially to ValleyCrest's market presence in Florida. ValleyCrest now employs more than 3,100 people in the state and serves more than 2,700 customers in Florida communities. Terms of the transactions were not disclosed.

"These are two superior landscape firms that have proven track records over an extended period of time for exceeding customer expectations in Florida communities important to ValleyCrest," said Richard A. Sperber, president and CEO of ValleyCrest.

"While the majority of our growth still comes organically, our 61-year track record of success makes ValleyCrest an ideal company for other landscape firms looking to join forces. We have a unique success rate integrating companies into ours because we work hard to understand what has made these companies successful and leverage these capabilities into our existing operations to make us both better."

Founded in 1973 by Sampuran Khalsa and Mahan Kalpa Khalsa, Nanak's Landscaping is ranked as the 34<sup>th</sup> largest landscape company nationally and one of the largest independent operators in Florida, according to *Lawn & Landscape's* Top 100 list. The company earned its respected position as a landscape leader by building strong partnerships with customers in the central Florida markets of Orlando, Tampa and Sarasota, as well as the northeast markets of Jacksonville and St. Augustine.

Founded by Ray Bradley in 1985 when he was 12 years old, Raymow Enterprises is ranked as the second largest landscape company in the Tampa market behind ValleyCrest, according to the *Tampa Bay Business Journal*. Raymow's current service region spans five counties, offering a wide range of landscape services, capabilities and responsive crews.



## Davey Tree's relocation business merges with Environmental Design

KENT, Ohio – The Davey Tree Expert Co. has entered into an agreement to merge its tree relocation business into Environmental Design and enter into a strategic marketing alliance allowing the companies to cross-market in certain areas of the country.

"It involves marketing the service nationwide through the Davey tree and landscape experts, which means our Davey operations across North America will refer business to the new partnership," said Sandra Reid, manager of corporate communications and marketing at Davey Tree.

Davey's large tree moving division had 20 Houston-based employees. Several of the employees have been offered other positions within Davey and others will be offered positions within EDI, Reid said.

"We are excited about the possibilities that will be realized by combining our tree relocation activities and look forward to our collaboration with Davey to deliver superior aftercare for our tree relocation projects," said Tom P. Cox, EDI president.

"We have always respected Environmental Design's tree relocation expertise and innovation," said Karl J. Warnke, Davey chairman, president and CEO. "This partnership allows both EDI and Davey to benefit from the combined experience of both companies and the support offered by Davey's extensive network of tree and landscape experts."

Davey Tree was ranked fourth in *Lawn & Landscape's* 2010 Top 100 list with more than \$550 million in 2009 revenue

and approximately 7,000 employees.

EDI does not release financial information, but has completed large projects at the San Diego Zoo and Pebble Beach Golf Links. – *Brian Horn*

## CLCA names legislator of the year

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The California Landscape Contractors Association handed out its first Legislator of the Year Award to Jose Solorio.

Solorio, a California state assemblyman and chairman of the state assembly select committee on regional approaches to addressing the state's water crisis, was selected for the award based on his commitment to protect the state's water resources.

"For CLCA and the landscape industry in California, water management is about both supply and stewardship," said Robert Wade, president, Wade Landscaping based in Newport Beach, and CLCA's president-elect. "Assemblyman Solorio has established significant and often ground-breaking legislation on water



Solorio

as a matter of public policy – a commitment we believe is the cornerstone to a more sustainable future for all Californians. This year, Jose supported water conservation through his rainwater harvesting initiative and fought for improvements to the state's water infrastructure through the passing of last year's water bond."

"I am deeply honored to receive the Legislator of the Year award," Solorio said. "CLCA's





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goals align closely with my own in terms of ensuring that all Californians have access to clean, safe water."

## Kinsella Landscape wins New Holland challenge

LOUISVILLE, Ky. – Beating out firms from across the country, Greg Semmer and Kinsella Landscape took home a brand new skid-steer loader at the 2010 Landscaper's Challenge awards.

The contest, which was sponsored by New Holland Construction, sought to recognize the best design/build projects in the country.

Kinsella Landscape was chosen from the field of six semi-finalists by Lawn &

For a video slideshow of the winning projects, including before and after photos, and an interview of Kinsella Landscape winning at the GIE+EXPO, go to [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com).



Greg Semmer and Kinsella Landscape beat out six semi-finalists to win a new skid-steer.

Landscape's panel of industry judges on the merits of its design, overall appeal, material selection and workmanship.


"Our entire team at Kinsella feels very grateful and honored to be receiving the grand prize for The 2010 Landscaper's Challenge-sponsored by New Holland. It was a total team effort from the designer to the production

team," said Greg Semmer, Kinsella Landscape president. "In these hard times, it's crucial for everyone to keep striving for quality and use of better practices in the green industry. For us, winning this skid-steer validates the belief that quality and service are still the most important values of a company." – Chuck Bowen

## Ohio Turfgrass Conference draws more than 2,000 people

COLUMBUS, Ohio. – Approximately 2,400 turfgrass professionals visited the Ohio Turfgrass Conference and Show in Columbus in early December. Professionals could attend numerous educational sessions, along with the trade show, which featured more than 100 companies spread across 25,000 square feet of exhibit space.

The conference featured educational sessions on adding snow service to your business and increasing your profits by





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selling enhancements.

Robert Smart, Rich Arlington & Associates, said those adding a snow removal service, or those currently providing it, get in trouble because they don't know how much to charge. Smart said to look into setting up a production rate pricing system to help establish what you have to charge to make a profit.

You also need to integrate contracts into your business if you want to succeed, he said. But, give customers a number of contract-types to choose from, so they don't feel that the contract is being forced on them.

Representatives from TruGreen, The Brickman Group and Grasshopper Property Maintenance in Ohio told attendees that getting face-to-face meetings with customers is the best way to sell them additional services.

They said to find out what is important to the customer because a service disliked by one customer, might be loved by another. In addition, you have to follow-up with customers to build a solid relationship because the proactive approach takes the onus off the customer. If the customer wasn't happy with the service, they have to make the phone call, which could be a nasty one, and that is a situation you want to avoid.

Other highlights of the annual event included;

Mark Grunkemeyer, Buckeye Eco-Care, received the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation (OTF) 2010 Professional of the Year Award.

Todd Voss, Double Eagle Club, received an OTF 2010 Professional Excellence Award.

Former state Sen. Sue Morano, received an OTF 2010 President's Special Recognition Award.

OTF presented \$20,500 in scholarships to 14 students from turf and landscape programs at colleges around Ohio and Kentucky.

Clark Kellogg, TV color analyst, gave the conference Keynote Address: Be a Difference Maker.

More than 100 hours of educational programming offered topics on golf turf, golf course management, sports

turf, lawn and landscape, irrigation, sod production, environmental issues, mechanics and more. — *Brian Horn*

## SavATree merges with Chicago-based Autumn Tree Care Experts

BEDFORD, N.Y. – SavATree, a provider of tree and shrub care services, has merged with Autumn Tree Care Experts.

"We share many similarities in culture, in particular our dedication to providing exceptional customer service and expertise. It's a natural fit," said Dan Klindera, president of Autumn.

Founded by Matthew and Veronica Dziedzic in 1979, Autumn Tree Care Experts offers tree pruning and fertilization, disease diagnosis and treatment, pest management, cabling/bracing and pre/post construction consultations.

SavATree is ranked 17<sup>th</sup> on Lawn & Landscape's Top 100 list, with 2009 revenue of \$49 million and 430 employees.

"We are thrilled to partner with a company who, like us, strives to sustain the environment. Both organizations have been at the forefront of environmental awareness for over two decades," said Daniel van Starrenburg, president of SavATree. *L&L*

## NEW HIRES

**Tim Baskerville** has returned to Ruppert Landscape as branch manager for the North Carolina Landscape Construction Branch.

**Rick Whitman** has accepted the position of operations manager for Ruppert Landscape's Maryland Landscape Construction Branch.

**Chad Forcey** was hired by the Irrigation Association as state affairs director.

**Randy Ratcliff** was hired to SynaTek's technical sales team.

**Warren Clark** was hired by Jacobsen as director of new product development.



Baskerville



Whitman

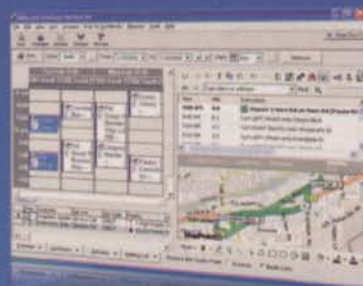


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# Generous helpings

The team at Design Landscape helped turn dirt into dinner. By Bo Gemmell

When Brian Locks, vice president and co-owner of Design Landscape in Las Vegas, heard that a well-known food bank wanted to turn a dirt lot into a sustainable garden, he took action.

"As soon as we heard about that, we jumped on the idea and got over there," he says.

"We met with Three Square food bank and the family who was going to be donating the materials."

Design Landscape specializes in tropical and desert landscapes, synthetic turf, putting greens, paver patios and walkways, xeriscape conversions, lighting and irrigation. This project allowed them to expand into desert gardening.

To simply plant the fruits and vegetables in the arid Southwest soil wouldn't be viable, so Design Landscape had to come up with another solution. "The soil out here isn't very good in the desert,

so it was crucial that we put the raised beds in, bring in some nice top soil and give it a chance for the fruits and vegetables to take well," Locks says.

Design Landscape built the planter boxes for the six raised beds out of Trex, a composite decking material made from wood and recycled plastic.

It took the seven-person crew about a week to construct the planter boxes off-site and then bring them over, but they also had to worry about irrigation.

Locks says it took another week to design and build an irrigation system that would relocate water 700 feet.

**THE BENEFITS OF HELPING.** Three Square's website describes the organization as a food hub where food can be collected and distributed.

Locks says that Three Square is a well-known pres-



(L-R) Le Gordon Bleu volunteer chef, Bransen Locks, Chance Poe and Brian Locks celebrate at the community garden kickoff event.

ence in the community, so working together has helped Design Landscape's image in the Las Vegas Valley.

Not only has the association benefited Design Landscape, but the charity work brought tangible business as well.

Locks says a couple people have since inquired about building sustainable gardens in their backyards.

"I know an executive chef who was talking about building a couple of these gardens at their house," he says.

But aside from any positive press the company might receive from the good deed, it all comes back to helping those around them who are less fortunate.

"Hunger has impacted so

many families," Locks says.

"As a Las Vegas-community resident, I have seen first-hand the tremendous impact the Three Square organization is having on the fight against hunger, and the ability for our company to share the same vision that 'no one in our community should be hungry' and support those efforts is very rewarding." L&L

The author is an intern for Lawn & Landscape.



Design Landscape in Las Vegas installed raised garden beds for Three Square food bank.



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



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## Survey finds economic improvement for landscape architecture firms

Even if at a slow pace, landscape architecture firms are seeing work pick up as economic recovery trends move in a positive direction.

The American Society of Landscape Architects *Business Quarterly* survey found more than half of the landscape architecture firm leaders that responded reported steady or increased billable hours and inquiries for new work. The numbers, from the third quarter of 2010, represented three straight quarters of positive findings.

According to the survey, **65.5 percent of firm leaders reported steady or above billable hours.** Along those same lines, 69.9 percent reported steady or higher inquiries for new work.

"We continue to see incremental signs of improvement, like work from projects originally put on hold due to the recession," said ASLA Executive Vice President and CEO Nancy Somerville. "However, firms face significant hurdles due to lack of project financing and heavy competition for a still small new business pool."

The most recent findings also represent the **fourth time in the previous five quarters where firms reported average or above average levels of work.**

However, the optimism has not transferred into new jobs, as firms take a wait-and-see approach. Only 14.6 percent of respondents said they planned to hire in the fourth quarter, which is down from 17.3 percent in the second quarter, but up from 11.8 percent in the third quarter of 2009.



## Recession causes hardships for more than half of Americans

Talk of the recession has dominated conversations for years now and nearly everyone has been affected in some way. But the number of Americans who lost ground compared to those who held their own during the economic downturn is roughly the same.

A study by the Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends project found **55 percent of Americans faced a mix of hardships, usually a combination of unemployment, missed mortgage or rent payments, shrinking paychecks and shattered household budgets.** That means 45 percent of the country was largely free of such difficulties.

The survey found Americans largely fell into the "lost ground" or "held their own" categories based on where they lived. Easterners were significantly more likely than residents of the South, West or Midwest to have done well during the economic downturn. Also Republicans and college graduates were defining characteristics of those who better weathered the storm.

## Homeownership rate lowest since '99

Foreclosures and a weak buying market have sent homeownership spiraling down to its lowest rate in more than a decade.

The U.S. Census Bureau said the **homeownership rate for the third quarter of 2010 was 66.9 percent.**

The results are flat with the second quarter of 2010 and match the fourth quarter of 1999 – the last time the rate dipped below 67 percent.

Homeownership rates by region were: 63.9 percent, Northeast; 71.1 percent, Midwest; 69.1 percent, South and 61.3 percent, West.

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## GETTING UNSTUCK, AND THE FINER POINTS OF EMPLOYEE TERMINATION

**ASK THE EXPERTS** is presented in partnership with PLANET's Trailblazers On Call program. Trailblazers are industry leaders who volunteer their time and expertise to give back to the industry. Have a question for the experts? Send it to [lexperts@gle.net](mailto:lexperts@gle.net).

### Q. My company is stuck and not growing. What can I do to jump-start growth?

**A:** Often when a company is stuck, it means that internally some changes have to be made.

For example, if an owner is in the field and has been relying on a ringing telephone to keep him busy, then creating a marketing plan may start to grow the business. But, he should not expect to get immediate results from marketing. It is a long-term endeavor that takes some time to rev up. The owner or salesperson may need to get out in the community more and network.

Most businesses get the majority of their work from five to 25 relationships. The owner/salesperson needs to work these relationships and build new ones. It's been my experience that it's better to hire a professional salesperson to help grow the

business; someone whose sole focus is to go out and sell. Companies already have people selling, but they are not professional business developers.

When you hire someone from outside the industry, since they cannot be over reliant on their technical knowledge, they must possess great sales skills to succeed. There are many variables that go into growing your company; for example, the quality of your leads. Better qualifying of your leads will create time to spend with better leads, past customers and key centers of influence in your community.

One of the most important aspects of growing your business is to identify the product or service you sell that drives the growth and profitability of your entire company.

This is called your hedgehog concept, a term coined by Jim

Collins, author of "Good to Great." For a client of mine in New York, its hedgehog is its lawn care services. Even though it does all kinds of landscape and design/maintenance, it finds that the more lawn care it sells, the more it sells of everything else.

For any company looking to grow, the owner must get very clear on which part of the company is making money and focus on growing the more profitable service(s). If no part of the business is profitable, then it is important to first figure out what is hindering proper margins and profitability. Get profitable first, and then grow.

**PLANET Trailblazer**  
Jeffrey Scott, Landscape  
Success Systems

### Q: How should I conduct an employee termination meeting?

**A:** Though extremely stressful, this type of meeting is best conducted in a concise and straightforward fashion focusing on three goals: (a) presenting documented evidence that warrants employee termination, (b) minimizing the likelihood

of a wrong termination claim and (c) showing appropriate respect to the employee during this difficult event. The following five-step sequence outlines the basic process to help ensure a successful employee termination meeting:

**Meeting Preparation.** Never conduct a termination alone; always have a witness in the room with you at all times. Have all administrative forms and documentation at the meeting. Do not lie to the employee or stretch the truth; always show the employee respect. The meeting should not exceed 20 minutes.

**The Decision.** Remain calm and confident and maintain appropriate eye contact with the employee. The less said, the better the result will be. Once the employee arrives, explain the purpose of the meeting. Following are two examples of statements you can use:

Statement 1 (for a chronic performance problem): "As you know, you and I have had several meetings over the past several weeks/months to discuss your performance-related issues (e.g., interpersonal skills, accuracy of work). Despite that coaching, your performance has not improved to the required level of your position. As a result, today will be your last day of employment with this company."

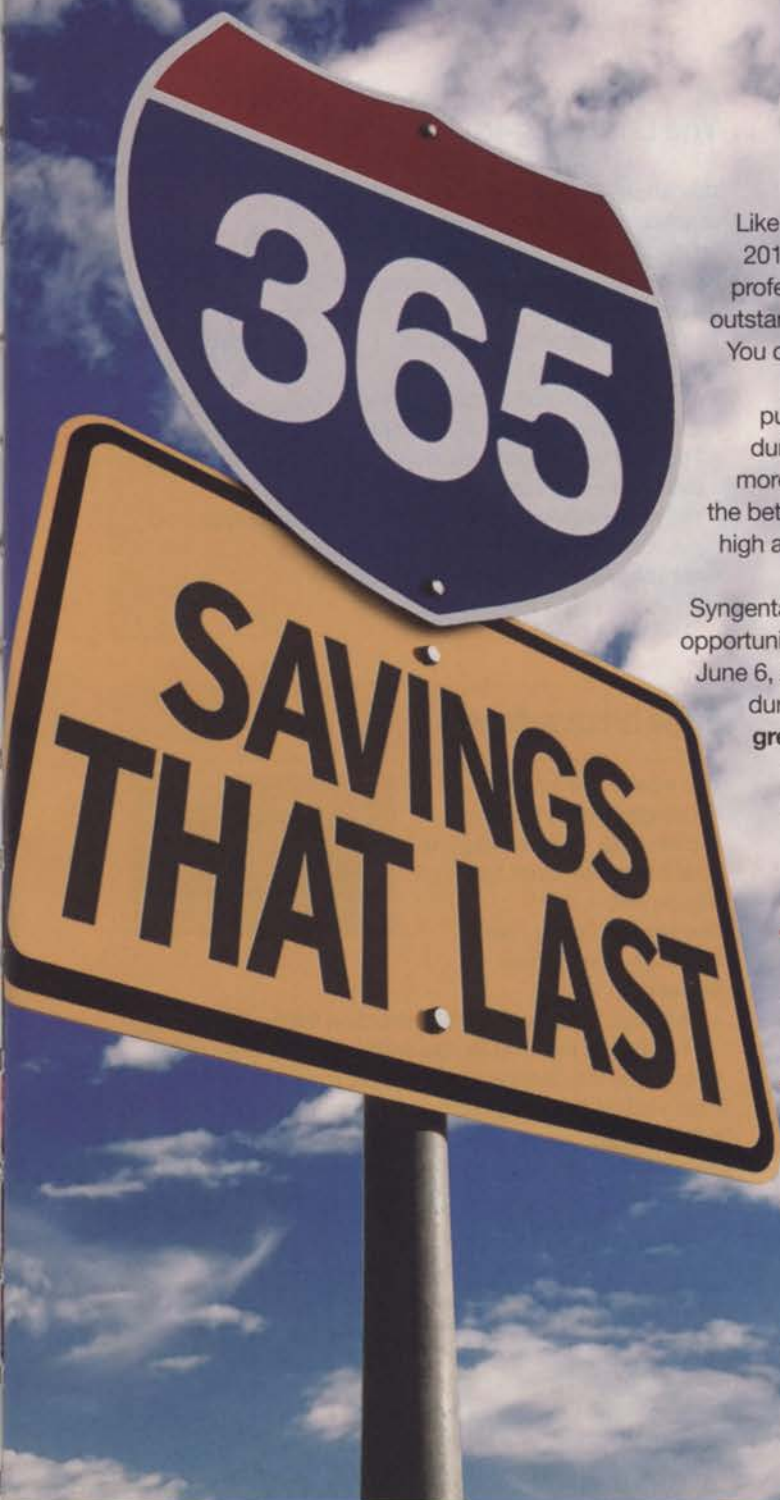
Statement 2 (for a major policy violation): "An investigation has provided us with evidence that you violated company policy (e.g., sexual harassment, alcohol use, timecard fraud) on (specify date). As stated in the employee handbook that you signed on (specify date), that policy violation has the consequence of employee termination. As a result, today will be your last day of employment with this company."

Steven Cesare, Ph.D., Industrial  
Psychologist  
The Harvest Group

For the next three steps in the termination process, visit [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com) and search "Ask the Experts."







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## NEW PRODUCTS

### Trimec 1000 herbicide

**The pitch:** This proprietary formulation contains MCPP, dicamba and two forms of 2, 4-D: DEA (diethanolamine) and DMA (dimethylamine).

**The target:** Lawn care operators

**Specs:**

- The combination of these two forms of 2, 4-D resists crystallization for more complete plant absorption.
- Classified as a "mixed amine" by university researchers.
- Has low odor.
- Can be used in most cool-season and warm-season turf-grass areas.

**Contact:** [www.pbfgordon.com](http://www.pbfgordon.com)



### The Dual plug-in

**The pitch:** The Dual plug-in for the I-Core controller creates a two-wire alternative for designers and installers who may have shied away from more exotic control systems.

**The target:** Lighting contractors

**Specs:**

- A Dual output module can be inserted in the output slots of any I-Core controller.
- The Dual system can operate up to 48 zones via a single pair of wires, at distances up to 7,500 feet.
- The system includes the DUAL48M decoder output module, which is added to the I-Core controller.

**Contact:** [www.hunterindustries.com](http://www.hunterindustries.com)



### Case pallet forks

**The pitch:** The pallet forks are specially designed for Case skid-steers and compact track loaders.

**The target:** Design/build landscape contractors

**Specs:**

- The pallet fork assemblies are available with either 48-inch or 42-inch tines.
- Tines come in a choice of heavy duty, rated to 5,500 pounds, or standard, rated to 4,000 pounds.
- The frame's mounting angle assures proper forward tilt for loading and rollback for transporting loads.
- Offers ample room between the frame and the cab, providing easy access to and from the cab.

**Contact:** [www.casece.com](http://www.casece.com)



### Edge hitch adapter

**The pitch:** The adapter is designed to help move implements, trailers, wagons, boat trailers or other types of equipment.

**The target:** Design/build landscape contractors

**Specs:**

- Features a heavy, steel construction frame measuring 17.5 inches high, 46 inches wide and 12 inches deep.
- Reduces the chance of equipment damage by having full view of the equipment as you are moving it.
- The adapter uses a Class 3 receiver and will fit on any skid-steer loader with a universal mount.

**Contact:** [www.ceattachments.com](http://www.ceattachments.com)



### Knaack jobsite storage products

**The pitch:** Knaack jobsite storage products are now manufactured using a powder paint process, offering more benefits than its previous liquid enamel paint.

**The target:** Green industry contractors

**Specs:**

- The new powder paint process offers end users improved corrosion resistance, abrasion resistance, scratch resistance and paint film thickness.
- The process covers all of the company's jobsite products.
- The testing on the process improvement used methods defined by ASTM International.

**Contact:** [www.knaack.com](http://www.knaack.com)



### Netafim Techline EZ

**The pitch:** Designed for labor-savings, Techline EZ irrigates a 1,800 square-foot shrub or planting area.

**The target:** Irrigation contractors

**Specs:**

- Dripper spacings are placed at 12 and 18 inches for uniform water application to the root zones.
- The single on-surface looped layout can be installed within an hour and can be covered with mulch or other ground cover.
- The drip system ensures greater water savings and presents greater profit opportunities for irrigation contractors.

**Contact:** [www.netafimusa.com](http://www.netafimusa.com)





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# What consumers want



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Every month, our columnists give their take on a common topic. Last month they predicted what contractors could expect in 2011, and this month, it's what consumers want.

## Marty Grunder



**H**ere's how you can find out exactly what your clients want. It's a big secret so don't tell anyone, OK? The secret is you **ASK THEM!** I know, pretty simple advice this month.

However, while the process of finding out what a customer wants is very simple, implementing it is tough. I suppose one could consider it easy if you're committed to improving your business and growing profits. Let's talk a little about what to ask your clients and how to ask them.

First of all, let's talk from a macro level. I tell all the landscapers I work with to ask their clients three specific questions. They are as follows: **What should we keep doing? What should we start doing? And what should we stop doing?** Any time you have a chance

to meet with a client, ask them these questions.

Smart landscapers don't spend the winter sitting around; they use the winter to address all the things the busy growing season doesn't allow time for. Strategic acts, like meeting with all your top clients and asking them these questions, are smart business practices. Meet with as many clients as you possibly can.

Doing so will show you where you have work to do and you'll bond with your clients and show them through your actions that you care.

Don't see the value of meeting with clients? How would you feel if the local truck salesman that you work with came to see you and asked you how they could improve their business? How would you feel if the local restaurant you eat at five

times a week invited you to a meeting, served you a free dinner and asked you what they could do better?

I hope you get the point. There is a lot that can be learned from talking to our clients. Asking them what you should keep doing, start doing and stop doing is one of the best ways to find out what they want.

On a micro level, we find out what our clients want by asking them specific questions in our initial meeting. I am amazed at the number of sales professionals that go right into making suggestions and assuming they know what the client wants before asking questions. When you go to the doctor, she doesn't take a look at you and say, "I know what you've got; take this." That would be irresponsible, right? A doctor sits down with you and asks questions, usually lots of them. Then, and only after many questions, does the doctor prescribe any treatment or diagnosis? Even then, they often do more tests to be sure.

Sales professionals need to spend a lot more time asking questions to ensure they are getting to the root of the problem (pardon the pun) and delivering exactly what the client wants.

Success is a marathon, not a sprint. Get a dialogue going with your clients – ask them what you can do to improve. Go slowly with your prospects and clients. Work to ensure accuracy in the definition of the problem.

Make sure you are delivering exactly what the prospect and client want by asking them. When you find out what the client *really* wants, you will improve.

**MARTY GRUNDER** is a speaker, consultant and author; he owns Grunder Landscaping Co. See [www.martygrunder.com](http://www.martygrunder.com); mail [marty@gje.net](mailto:marty@gje.net).





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## Jim Huston

Consumers are often difficult, if not impossible, to figure out. What exactly do they want? What are they looking for? You may not know what consumers want, but that makes it even more important that you, the contractor, know what you want. The following grid may help you figure out how to approach consumers, both residential and commercial. You need to "profile" your customers and build a base with ones that appreciate both your quality level and your price. You have to do your homework, and you need to know what your type of customer looks like and what they want.



### What consumers want grid

	Reasonable Price GRID #1	Lowest Price GRID #2
High quality & service	Negotiates work	Competitive market
	Repeats business	Many bidders
	Loyal customer	Margins very tight
	D/B and enhancement work	Typical commercial work
	Values relationship	Lowest Price GRID #4
	Margins reasonable	Low bid takes all
Low quality & service	Reasonable Price GRID #3	Not loyal
	Uninformed/ignorant consumer	Fuels "lowballers"
	Unscrupulous contractor	Bottom feeders
	Margins may be high	Contractor is desperate
		Margins below BEP

Consumers don't always want high quality/service, and a reasonable price. Probably most do not. Your job is to find customers who do value these qualities and who fit the profile in grid 1. This is a marketing issue. Marketing is all about finding customers who appreciate both your level of quality/service, and your price. Needless to say, this is a particularly difficult task in the current market.

Successful contractors, especially ones in the current economy, are constantly grooming their client list. They are weeding out the clients who are *too* price conscious. Most importantly, they are paying attention to the clients who want a high level of quality/service, and are willing to pay for it. These are the best clients, the easiest to work with and the most profitable ones for you.

Your objective should be to have 90 percent of your clients fit into grid 1. You'll find that most of your "problem" clients will fit into grids 3 or 4. Identify them and eliminate them by raising their price. Don't try to explain or justify your price, just increase it and "let your price do the talking."

You may not be able to figure out exactly what a particular consumer wants. However, you can know what you want. If you do your homework and "profile" your customers, you'll simplify your life and make more money. You'll actually do less work and make more money. That sounds like a recipe we can all live with.

**JIM HUSTON** runs J.R. Huston Consulting, a green industry consulting firm. See [www.jrhuston.biz](http://www.jrhuston.biz); [mail\\_huston@gie.net](mailto:mail_huston@gie.net).

## John Ossa

Today's consumer has an outlook that has been shaped by a number of economic and social influences. Foremost is a level of price consciousness that has heightened during the past two-plus years due to the implosion of the national economy. Consumers in all sectors, whether commercial-institutional, public sector, residential and resort, are extremely conscious of price.



Consumers who want to engage about price are far more conscientious about analyzing what goes into a proposal and are more diligent about seeking metrics that will verify the return on the investment. In other words, they want to understand the true cost of ownership of the product or service and parse the difference between price and value.

To even get to the table and have an opportunity for a proposal and price discussion, reliability and a good reputation are requirements. These qualities go hand in hand, have always been important and remain the entry point for any vendor. What goes into these qualities can be summed up by the simple mantra of "do what you say you are going to do, when you say you will do it."

A notion that has changed in recent years, and has evolved as a result of free trade practices, is the idea that quality always costs more. Today's consumer does not necessarily believe that quality always costs more, and, in fact, other industries have begun to demonstrate that quality products and services can be available at

(continued on page 24)



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## Jeff Korhan

**C**onsumers are people first. They all share a desire for human interaction – relationships with other people. Relationships are more important today than ever for small businesses. Thanks to social networking, every individual is now a brand. The power of these personal brands is the relationships they have with each other and your company.

**EXPECTATIONS.** As a green industry business seeking to establish relationships with more consumers, the obvious challenge is to understand what they want and if that is congruent with what you want. The only way to learn this is to interact with them. Engage them in conversations, and, if possible, invite them to collaborate with your team. You will be amazed at how they will jump at the opportunity and how much you will both learn.

Nobody enters into a relationship expecting anything less than what they want. Your customers expect your company to provide excellent products and customer service. This is why it is vital to establish a practice of understanding their needs, recording the particulars and then analyzing these expectations, as they will change over time. The more you know, the more you can continue to grow.

In addition to traditional methods, today you have more communication tools available to accomplish this than you could possibly use, with most of them being free. This includes LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and other social networks. One of my personal favorites is Mailchimp, which is an electronic newsletter service that allows your customers to easily share your message with new prospects – their Facebook friends.

### RELATIONSHIPS.

Your customers have most likely chosen to work with you because they know something about you that makes them comfortable. Why do they like being your customer? Find out what that is and record it so that everyone in your company has access to it. If there was a referral involved, this is a valuable interrelationship that should be respected.

This is one of the reasons why social networking is such a game changer for businesses. What your company has to say is far less relevant than what friends are saying to their friends – and they are doing it at a rate of an hour a day on Facebook. Get to know Facebook better.

**FRIENDS.** There is an expression that friends do business with friends. While this is sometimes true, it is more likely that your customers just want to be friendly – to have an uncomplicated relationship with you or your staff. Most consumers have moderate expectations. They pay their bills on time, and, for this reason, it is easy to take them for granted. Don't.

Use technology and especially the social networks to occasionally reach out to your customers to let them know how much you appreciate their business. Thank them for their loyalty. Regardless of their expectations and the depth of your relationship with them, I believe there are very few customers that get tired of hearing these words: "Thank you for your business."

**JEFF KORHAN** is a speaker, consultant and top-ranked blogger on new media and small business marketing at [www.jeffkorhan.com](http://www.jeffkorhan.com); mail [jkorhan@gie.net](mailto:jkorhan@gie.net).



(continued from page 22)

highly competitive prices. This new awareness on the part of the consumer is leading green industry service companies to sharpen and refine their service delivery, while squeezing every drop of excess cost out of their production.

Another requirement for today's consumer is speed of execution. It may be a reflection of the notion of "time poverty" that is becoming more prevalent in our society, but, once the buying decision is made, the consumer wants it now.

Also, once you are under contract, there is an expectation that as a vendor you will be proactive about identifying problems or situations that require remedy and bring forward solutions to the issue. It is a real source of irritation for the customer to have to bring an issue forward for resolution, when the topic at hand is in your area of expertise.

In a market that is price driven, yet expects quality, reliability, speed of execution and comprehensive solutions, there is a premium on being able to differentiate your service or product.

Consumers are bombarded with information – the challenge is to rise above the noise.

The business that will gain traction with consumers is one that makes its strengths tangible, creates a sense of immediacy and connects with that customer and clearly communicates a true understanding of the customer.

**JOHN OSSA** owns Irrigation Essentials, a web-based irrigation consulting firm. See [www.irrigationessentials.com](http://www.irrigationessentials.com); mail [ossa@gie.net](mailto:ossa@gie.net).



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**Mike Rorie** shares what he learned transitioning from his own company to working for a national player, and now as an industry supplier.

## A full industry **EDUCATION**

By Carolyn LaWell

**M**ike Rorie finds the roles of decision maker, chief influencer and vision setter the most comfortable. So much so that last summer he left a position as vice president at The Brickman Group for the title of CEO at a much smaller company.

Rorie's desire to lead roots all the way back to his founding of Groundmasters in Cincinnati in 1979. In 27 years, he grew the one-man business to a 500-employee regional landscaping company. When he sold Groundmasters to

Brickman in October 2006, leading was all he'd known.

But after four years with one of the biggest landscaping companies in the country, he missed the driver's seat and left Brickman and landscape contracting for his current position as partner and CEO of Cincinnati-based GIS Dynamics, which produces the Go iLawn and Go iSnow mapping software. With 10 employees, Rorie once again finds himself at the helm of a young company hoping to become a grow-

Mike Rorie is partner and CEO of GIS Dynamics, which sells geographic information systems and software.



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# Talkin' Tech

with Jerry Corbett  
Quali-Pro Technical Services & Product Manager



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Comments or questions?  
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## INTERVIEW

ing enterprise.

"It's nice to be back in a smaller business where you can meet with everybody that is involved, discuss, investigate, make a decision and then go ahead and implement it," Rorie says. "You can handle all of those pieces of the puzzle very quickly."

Lawn & Landscape caught up with Rorie to discuss what the transition process was like when he sold his company and then moved to the supplier side, and what advice he has for other contractors facing similar situations.

### Why did you decide to make each career move?

With Groundmasters it was a great financial opportunity to validate the growth of the business and to sell the business. Beyond financially, it was a great opportunity to see and participate in a larger company at a high level. I got to do both of those things – I got to liquidate an asset I spent almost 30 years building and had the proof or validation of the achievement that the business had undergone. Then I got to come in on the ground floor of a national company at the highest level.

Going from Brickman to GIS, I did take about nine months to make that decision, working with both businesses for that period of time and deciding do I really want to leave something I love, which is the landscape contracting industry, to become a supplier to the industry for the sake of having my own business again. Ultimately, the answer became yes.

### What advice do you have for contractors looking to sell their companies?

One, I would say are you emotionally ready to work with other people of your level or greater? As a small business owner, if you're bought by a mid-size or large company, you are going to have someone else involved in the direction and the ultimate decision making. If you're looking for that help, if you're looking to join an organization that has a lot of things figured out that you haven't been able to achieve on your own yet, than that can be a very positive

and powerful opportunity and one of the hidden gains of selling.

Secondly, you want to make sure you're ready emotionally because you can't go back once you sell. Beyond the fact that you're probably going to sign a non-compete for three or four years, it would be difficult to wait that length of time and then build the business back. Some people do it – it would depend on how old you are and how much energy you have to go do that again.

You want to make sure the time is right, because you can sell all the time. Some times are better than others, but, at the end of the day, the reality is you can always sell the business. If you're not certain you're ready, I would wait. I would try to get as much information and have a lot of dialogue on what it's going to be like after you sell, before you sell, so you're going into it as knowledgeable as possible.

### What questions should you ask someone who wants to buy your business?

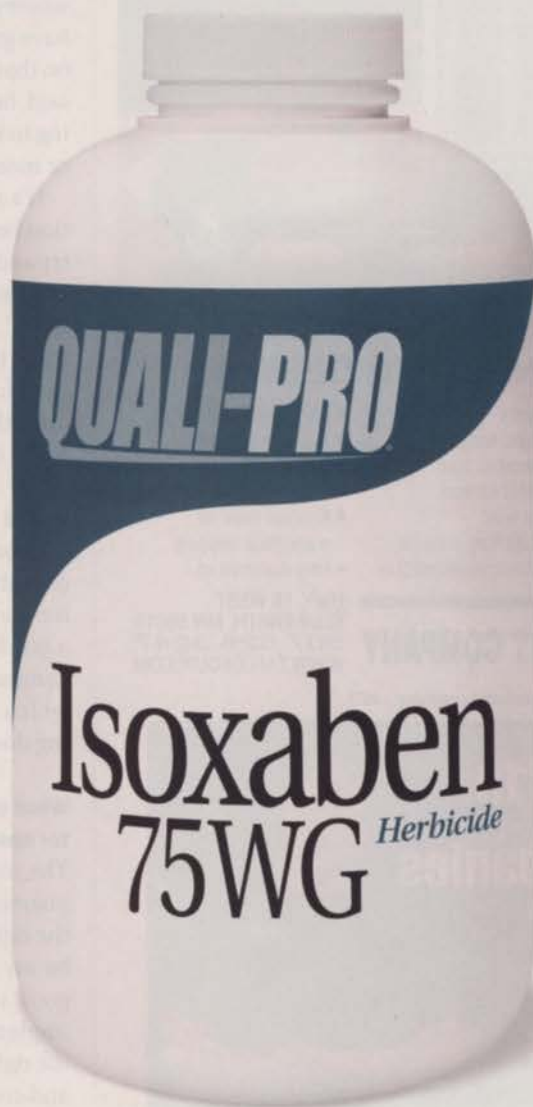
Some of those would certainly be the employee policies. You have a management team, and you're going to want to know how your employees are going to be governed in the new company, so you're going to want to know firsthand where you fall in relationship to that. Customer policies – you're probably used to handling customers a certain way. When there's a resolution needed, you're going to want to know how that is going to be handled. Employees and customers are going to be very big.

Is there any additional opportunity for you? Are you coming in at the level that you're at and is that the level that you're going to stay at? It's not likely they can promote you or pay you more without the business growing significantly and you having a significant part in that or why would they be rewarding you.

That would all go in with where they're taking the company. What is the plan for the company? Are you going to continue to grow it? Are you going to regionalize it and go to new cities, therefore create a lot of additional opportunity? Or is it to stay local?



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## INTERVIEW

### What advice do you have for contractors looking to transition to the supplier side?

If you're going to get out of contracting for whatever reason ... becoming a supplier can have great insight. There are a lot of people on that side that use to be in contracting that said, hey, I think selling to contractors is going to be easier than becoming a contractor or more rewarding.

It's a natural evolution and a good evolution because of your insight with the industry and you being able to identify, 'Hey, this is a great product or service that contractors need.' That was a big part of my decision. I saw the validity of what GIS is providing; therefore, this should be a successful enterprise that contractors will want to purchase on an ongoing basis.

### Would you have done anything differently?

I probably would have just stayed longer, I probably would have run Groundmasters for another five or eight years. I deem that a good thing, not a regret. I just make that comment from an educational standpoint, which is one you can't make without having done it.

### What one thing from your years as a contractor has helped you on the supplier side?

The importance of a good strategy or good planning, and then making sure you have the right people on your team – those would be my long-term takeaways. Do we have a good strategy? Do we have a good plan to implement the strategy? And do we have the right people with us – skills, competency and commitment to fulfill the plan and the strategy? Because it takes all of that.

### Anything else you would like to add?

One thing I have learned being a supplier is no matter what product you have for contractors, the ability to gain contractors or sell your product or service is largely the ability for somebody to be willing to change their behavior – unless you're just selling them a different lawn mower or a different truck. That really is the challenge – can you get people to want to change their behavior? L&L

The author is an associate editor at *Lawn & Landscape*. You can reach her at [clawell@gie.net](mailto:clawell@gie.net).



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Lake Norman, NC	2004	2010	6
Lancaster, PA	2001	2010	9
★ Madison, WI	2001	2006	5
Main Line, PA	2002	2010	8
Roswell, GA	2002	2008	6
St. Louis, MO	2001	2007	6
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# **SPECIAL REPORT:** **What Customers Want**

Here's what to expect from clients and  
what they expect from you in 2011.





ROB JOHNSON



**A**s you prepare for the coming season and the coming year, it's never been more important to get in front of your customers and ask them intelligent and targeted questions. And while differences exist from region to region and market to market, there are certain trends that hold true across the country when it comes to what clients want from their landscape or lawn care company.

In this special report from *Lawn & Landscape*, our editors worked with green industry consultant Judy Guido to bring you a list of the top eight things consumers want in 2011. During a period of 18 months, Guido surveyed a group of 450 people – property managers, building owners, investors, facility managers, apartment owners and homeowners – to find out what was important to them about their landscape and the company they hired to maintain it.

On the following pages, we'll walk you through the broad trends and perspectives these groups offered, and how you can take advantage of them in 2011. – *Chuck Bowen*





### Someone to help them out

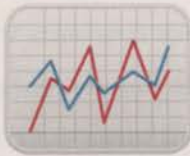
Consumers want to know that the companies they hire do right by their communities. They're concerned not only about what you sell and how, but also about how you give back to the community, and what causes you support. Lawns by Yorkshire recently signed up with the New Jersey Nets to plant three trees locally for every three-pointer the team sinks. The program got the company national press attention, a huge spike in website traffic and opened doors to meetings with executives from companies like Vonage and CB Richard Ellis.



**HOW YOU USE IT:** If you don't already, donate to a local charity or community organization. Participate in PLANET's Day of Service and beautify an area park or median. A day of donated time and materials can go a long way in the minds of your current and potential clients.

### A low risk

The economic crush has really made risk a four-letter word. Homeowners facing the prospect of stagnant or slashed incomes and property managers with reduced budgets want you to be a sure thing. Companies are being asked not just for prices, but proof of licenses and resumes of their leadership team. It's not only that you know how to do the work, but do you have the credentials to back it up? Prove it. One Iowa landscaper won a major snow removal contract because he is a certified snow professional and was able to answer a barrage of specific questions on the materials he used.



**HOW YOU USE IT:** Know your company and your sales pitch frontward and backward. Be able to clearly demonstrate – and communicate – that you know what you're doing. Be ready to bring in your team of experts – designers, horticulturalists and other certified professionals – to meet with clients and allay their concerns.

### Clear lines of communication

Everyone, it seems, has e-mail, a smartphone and a never-ending desire to be in immediate contact with you when they have a question or problem.



**HOW YOU USE IT:** Ask your client what methods of communication they prefer, and the frequency they want. Make sure your account managers understand this and follow through.

### Transparency

Customers expect a clear message when it comes to pricing, contracts and information on your company. They may have been burned by fly-by-night contractors and want to make sure you have enough cash to keep the lights on and will stick around until the job is finished. Landscape companies across the country have been asked by clients to develop intranets and dashboards, so the property managers can follow projects closely and on their own schedule.



**HOW YOU USE IT:** Make sure you present yourself and your company professionally and don't dodge questions about your background or firm's history. Keep your trucks clean and shirts tucked in, spell check your proposals and carry the requisite insurance.

### Someone they know

Americans are angry with corporate executives, Wall Street and all things big after the economic meltdown. Farmer's markets and the home gardening movement have grown dramatically in the past few years. A full-service Iowa company advertises at an affordable price with its local minor league hockey team and gets regular exposure to 4,000 fans (read: potential customers) where they're comfortable and open to messaging.



**HOW YOU USE IT:** Draw on your local roots, history and community connections to market your smallness. Offer to plant and tend food gardens for your clients, sponsor the local farmer's market or the local sports team.





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### Someone to be green

It's no surprise that *green* is a big buzzword for everyone in 2011. Clients want to be sure your technicians aren't harming their water supply, pets or children. Researchers call this a *save our society* impulse. And LEED and the Sustainable

Sites Initiative are creating a demand for green projects. While construction design firms have seen a 12 percent drop in revenue, green project revenue overall has risen by 16.8 percent (all while the top 10 largest design firms have experienced a 42 percent increase in growth),

according to data from McGraw-Hill. Additionally, while the top 400 contractors have seen their top lines decrease by 14 percent, revenues from green projects have increased by 11 percent.



**HOW YOU USE IT:** Offer green construction services – green roofs, rain gardens or bioswales. Drive a hybrid, and have your employees drive them. Print your flyers on recycled paper. Don't greenwash your company, but be sure to communicate the benefits you and your services provide to the environment. Check out Project EverGreen for marketing materials and messaging.

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### To feel at home

People are spending more time at home with trusted colleagues and with friends where they feel safe. Consumers are reinvesting in their local areas. This helps validate Guido's predicted 12 percent increase in retro-fitting and renovation jobs that are expected to take place nationwide in 2011.



**HOW YOU USE IT:** Position your company as one that creates calm green spaces for families and employees to be happy and productive.

### A good price

Let's face it, to many homeowners or property managers facing tighter and tighter budgets, everyone cuts grass, or fertilizes or installs irrigation systems the same way. And for some, the only thing that's going to change their mind about which truck pulls up that week is the bottom line price.



**HOW YOU USE IT:** Know your numbers, and be clear about why you charge what you do. Keep things fair, but competitive. Do you maintain lots of industry certifications? Do you hire only experienced, trained employees? Only use branded products? Tell clients this – they may be inclined to spend more for a high-quality service.



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Here are some examples:

### Boomburbs

The power parents! You are in your mid-30s to mid-40s, you are highly educated, highly successful in your career and you make bank. You also make jellyfish costumes out of streamers and garbage bags for the 4th grade production of "The Little Mermaid." You've got kids in school and they dominate your free time and your wallet. You drop most of your dough on toys, sports equipment, flat-screen TVs, family vacations and video games.

### Senior Sun Seekers

The snowbirds! Break out the playing cards and the SPF, your golden years are all about sun. Your budget may be tight, but that doesn't stop you from migrating between houses depending on the weather – while there, you like to invest in fixing the place up. You love eating out as well as painting, and gardening. You're very fit and active and also active in your community – belonging to local fraternal orders and participating in charities. You love the great outdoors, and are a frequent visitor to national parks and also like to hunt and fish.

### Main Street USA

It's the Griswolds! You are solidly middle class, average in your late 30s, own a house and most of you have kids. You're very family oriented. You've got a solid job (which you NEED because braces, piano lessons and summer camp are not cheap). You watch your pennies and tend to prefer frugal activities like home movie night or board games. When you travel, it's all about the munchkins – theme parks and national parks (Walley World!) You enjoy working on your home and your lawn. You enjoy eating out when not savoring the latest installment from the Jelly of the Month Club. Also, you own cats (don't let them near the Christmas lights!).

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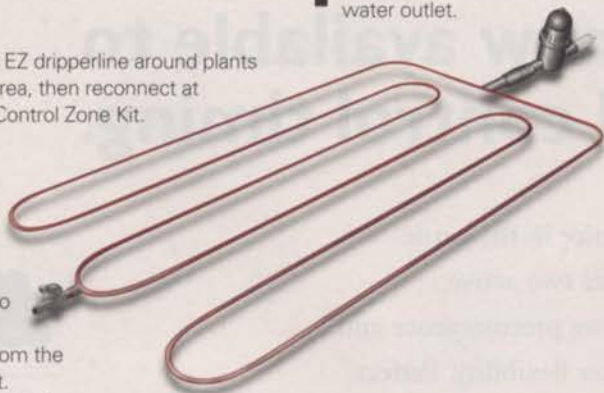
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# Ring in change

Adapting to their changing markets, these landscape firms rebranded, revamped and retrained to stay competitive.

By Kristen Hampshire

Change or die. The mantra sounds harsh, but successful companies embrace opportunities and branch out. Ambitious owners are willing to try something new that pushes normal boundaries. Change is good, and there's nothing like a challenging economy to force businesses to try something new.

Take D&K Landscape in Las Vegas where Donnie Garritano, president, shifted gears completely, abandoning core commercial construction bid jobs for more creative work: a park, playground and leisure division.

"This company had enormous growth in commercial construction, real estate properties and housing developments, until that came to a screeching halt," Garritano says, classifying the Vegas market as "the bigger they are, the harder they fall."

Today, D&K is a completely retooled business with a robust and growing government/municipal customer base, continually expanding maintenance division and an owner who is excited about thinking out of the box.

This month, *Lawn & Landscape* spoke with Garritano and two other industry pros to learn how they gained focus and grew their businesses.



## High design

### Earth, Turf & Wood

Jared Hynson, president **LOCATION** Denver, Pa. **ESTABLISHED** 1999 **EMPLOYEES** 12 year-round **2010 REVENUES** more than \$1 million **CUSTOMERS** 100% residential **SERVICES** high-end landscape design/build

Jared Hynson heard that high-end design/build was a tough market to crack, but that didn't discourage him. "And when someone says it can't be done, that fuels my fire to work even harder," says the president of Earth, Turf & Wood, Denver, Pa.

So as many companies began to phase out their design operations, trading construction for maintenance services that promise repeat billing, Hynson took a different route.

For the last few years, his firm has focused on building prestigious outdoor

rooms for wealthy clients. And that's all. "I'm a firm believer of do one thing and do it well," Hynson says.

The proof that this laser-sharp focus really works is in the numbers. Earth, Turf & Wood is coming off its biggest growth year in 10 years and grew by 20 percent. That's partly because projects have increased in size between \$100,000 and \$300,000. Hynson's largest job was almost \$1 million.

The company has narrowed and deepened its design/build operation: Compared to five years ago, the firm does fewer jobs that cost more. Back then, projects averaged \$25,000 to \$40,000 and Hynson's team would complete 50 to 100 of them per year. Now, Earth, Turf & Wood may complete outdoor spaces for 16 to 20 clients – but the price tags on those projects have at least

quadrupled.

Comprehensive, complicated design projects demand an in-house registered landscape architect, Hynson says. "We are dealing with bigger projects that are more integrated and there are changes continually throughout the project," he says.

"We need to be able to send a set of plans to our office where the architect is and she can quickly redo a sketch or meet with a client on site."

As Earth, Turf & Wood transitioned, its team of employees has evolved to provide the company necessary skill sets, such as foremen working as project managers. "They make decisions, order materials and meet with clients on a weekly basis," Hynson says.

Hynson seeks high-caliber employees, and his company mandates random drug testing. Recruitment involves a criminal background check.

The quest for quality starts with



Hynson



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the landscape plan but extends to the worksite and how employees represent the firm. Hynson forbids smoking and foul language.

To stay trendy and sharpen skills, Hynson invites consultants who specialize in hardscape, lighting, water features and other services to present workshops.

"We can roll open our plans and say, 'What if we did this, or that,'" Hynson says. That said, Hynson encourages his

team to leaf through magazines and to identify workshops of interest.

Staying ahead of the learning curve is critical for a company that wants to continue attracting premium clients.

But Hynson doesn't spend needlessly. He has always operated with a frugal mind, purchasing used trucks and building the company while staying debt-free.

"When the economy does dry up and you have to sharpen your pencil, you

## Visible change

### Bertog Landscape

Robert Bertog, president **LOCATION** Wheeling, Ill. **ESTABLISHED** 1974 **EMPLOYEES** 30 year-round/90 peak season **2010 REVENUE** \$6 million **CUSTOMERS** 50% commercial (including HOAs); 50% residential **SERVICES** design/build, maintenance, irrigation, lighting, snow removal

Marketing is often the first budget line item slashed when a landscape firm needs to reign in expenses. But it's the last area to cut if you want to stay on the front line. Robert Bertog decided last year was prime time to revamp his company's brand, from a website redesign to a fresh look for its 70 trucks.

"With the downturn in the economy over the last couple of years, now more than ever we felt the need to make our

### QUICK TIPS

**Define your target.** "Don't tell me what you do, tell me who you're going after," Hynson says, noting that contractors should be able to sum up their ideal customer in 10 sentences.

**Know your price.** "We have the cream of the crop working for us, so I can't make money on small builds," says Hynson, explaining why his company targets the high-end customer. An average project is \$140,000.

**Run lean.** "You don't need all the bling to make money," Hynson says. His trucks have at least 100,000 miles on them, and he runs a business free of debt.

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presence known through branding and getting our name out there," says Bertog, president, Bertog Landscaping, Wheeling, Ill.



Bertog

Bertog comes to the green industry with a finance background. "I'm a numbers guy," he says. "I could see the economy turning."

Specifically, he noticed clients were backing off on some services. Many were looking for areas to cut back, and Bertog was pushed into the price-pusher arena, where he doesn't like to play. So he needed to begin showing customers and prospects the value by ramping up his company's presence.

"We geared our marketing to meet the type of clients we currently have and to attract more of that type," he says of his 50/50 residential/commercial customer

base, which consists mostly of single-family properties and homeowners' associations.

One of the company's first initiatives was giving trucks – their on-wheels advertisements – a fresh look. Bertog wasn't changing any of the services the company offered, but he felt a need to more clearly communicate the firm's core competencies, which were bullet-pointed in white and yellow on the company's green trucks.

The company revisited its website, which Bertog says "was more of a glorified PowerPoint presentation." Now, the site includes better graphics and it is easier to navigate. It also showcases complete projects and news. "We try to update it more often with what's going on in our company, such as awards or other accomplishments," he says. One person in the firm is assigned with

website-update responsibilities so the task remains a priority.

Meanwhile, Bertog Landscape started a Facebook page and posts updates several times weekly. "Social media is the wave of the future, there's no way around it," Bertog says, adding that, in general, doing business online is critical for sustaining customers who are accustomed

#### QUICK TIPS

**Market strong.** "If there is ever a time when you can't cut marketing, it's in a down economy," Bertog says.

**Be consistent.** Before, Bertog says the company's marketing efforts were all over the place. "We tried one idea, and then two months later we tried another idea," he says. Refine your message and stick to it.

**Hire a pro.** Consider consulting with a marketing professional to develop a well-rounded program, Bertog says.

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to getting what they want instantly online. As with the website, Bertog's team constantly updates the Facebook page with photos, such as a crew installing a sprinkler system. To generate new business, Bertog Landscape built cold calling into the sales team's program. "That has opened some doors," he says, noting that salespeople work to find contacts for property managers at HOAs and building engineers at corporate campuses. "We'll send them information on our company – and we have gotten some calls back," Bertog says.

These efforts have breathed new business into the firm, and customers are interacting online and notice the polished trucks, Bertog says. "We've received e-mails from clients that have been around for years – things like a quick note that says, 'We like the new look,'" he says.

## Winning play

### D&K Landscape

Donnie Garritano, president

**LOCATION:** Las Vegas **ESTABLISHED:** 1996

**EMPLOYEES:** 75-80 **2010 REVENUES:** \$6.5-

\$7 million **CUSTOMERS:** 75% commercial;

25% residential **SERVICES:** commercial maintenance, design/build, playground and park, seasonal gardener

There was a rumor that D&K Landscape went out of business. Competitors who sat at the bid table with Donnie Garritano wondered where the D&K team was – why they weren't bidding on these large, commercial construction projects. For 13 years, this work had represented most of D&K's business.

Not anymore.

"We don't even accept bid invitations," says Garritano, president of the

Las Vegas-based firm.

Today, D&K is much more service based, after shifting its commercial work from construction to maintenance (though the company does some commercial design/build), and adding a couple of fresh divisions that are bringing the business new clients in the government/municipal world. Especially with the federal government kicking dollars toward parks projects, Garritano says his new park, playground and leisure division will thrive. The average price of a project is \$25,000 for upscale installations at schools, parks, daycare centers and other facilities..

Garritano says the new service opportunity was presented at the right time. He was approached by a playground equipment manufacturer called Landscape Structures to be a distributor.

(continued on page 60)

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## «INSIDE:

Top 10 ornamental pests, pg. 3  
Adding mosquito services, pg. 6  
Why insecticides fail, pg. 10

A SUPPLEMENT TO

# Lawn & Landscape

# 2011 Pest Control GUIDE

Learn what pests to watch for, how to add pest control services and why what you're applying isn't working.



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# TOP 10 ornamental pests

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Always read and follow pesticide label directions. State pesticide laws vary so be sure that products are labeled for use in your state. Non-mention of a particular product does not necessarily imply it is ineffective.

By Chuck Bowen

Dr. Dan Potter gives LCOs a quick primer on the biology and control of the top 10 ornamental pests for 2011.

**B**agworms and borers. Mites and moths. Lawn care operators have a lot to worry about when it comes to turf, but the threats don't stop there. There's an army of insects waiting to infest some of the key trees and shrubs on your client's property.

At the GIE+EXPO in Louisville, Ky., last October, Dr. Dan Potter, a professor of entomology at the University of Kentucky, walked attendees through his top 10 list of worst pests for ornamentals. Here's his list of the most-wanted insects, and how to control them.

## « 10. Web-making caterpillars

The Eastern tent caterpillar is the first one to show up, usually in March or April. It makes a compact silk nest in a branch crotch and defoliates wild and ornamental cherries, crabapples, and related trees.

Fall webworm makes a loose nest over the whole end of a branch from mid-summer to fall.

Mimosa webworm webs together leaflets on honey locusts and mimosa.

**Control:** Prune out or hand-remove nests that can be reached. Use a long pole to dislodge tent caterpillar nests, or blast them out with a water hose. Don't try to burn them out – no matter how cool it might look, Potter says. Reduced-risk caterpillar insecticides include spinosad, indoxacarb, chlroanthraniliprole, or *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt). Pyrethroid sprays, or injecting trees with abamectin are highly effective, but neonicotinoids are not very active against caterpillars, Potter says.

## 9. Bagworms »

Bagworms resemble pine cones and typically, clients don't recognize them as an insect problem until the damage is done. "Evergreens don't recover well from defoliation," Potter says. Females lay eggs inside the bag in autumn and the egg masses overwinter in the old bags on the tree until hatching the following spring. The male is a furry moth.

**Control:** Handpick the bags off branches, especially in late fall, winter, and early spring. If spraying, target bagworms when they are newly-hatched and small – in late May or June. See insecticide suggestions for web-making caterpillars.

## 8. Gypsy moth caterpillars »

These exotic pests were brought over by an ill-guided if industrious person in the 1860s to jumpstart a U.S. silk industry. (It didn't work; they got loose and now they're a big problem.)

**Control:** Spray egg masses with horticultural oil or scrape them off and destroy. Insecticide-treated or sticky tree bands intercept some larvae crawling up the trunks. Do not apply stickum directly to the bark, Potter says. See insecticide suggestions for web-making caterpillars.







## « 7. Sawflies

You'll always find sawfly larvae clustered on evergreens, where they chew branches to nubs. Their winter pupal cases look like beans, and you can tell them apart from a caterpillar because they have six or more pairs of fleshy bumps on the abdomen (caterpillars have 2-5 pairs). "They won't leave much of a Mugo pine behind when you have an outbreak," Potter says.

**Control:** Prune out clusters of larvae or hand pick them. Spinosad, pyrethroids and neem-based products will control sawflies. Smaller larvae are susceptible to insecticidal soap, but Bt is not effective against sawflies, Potter says.

## 6. Lacebugs, leafminers and psyllids

Boxwood leafminers hollow out leaves like pita bread, and boxwood psyllids suck the juices from new growth causing rosettes of cupped leaves. The damage is done in early spring, and hard to fix by the time it is visible.

Other leafminer-susceptible species include birches, American holly, and magnolia. Lace bugs cause stippling and bronzing can be identified by the shiny black fecal spots they leave on leaf undersides. They are especially damaging to azaleas and hawthorn.

**Control:** Soil-applied systemic nicotinoid insecticides applied in early spring are effective as a preventive treatment.



## 5. Spider mites »

These "nasty little creatures," as Potter refers to them, are more closely related to spiders than true insects. They drain individual plant cells of their chlorophyll with needle-like mouthparts, which renders leaves stippled and off-color. To find them, beat foliage over a sheet of paper on a clipboard; they'll be about the size of the period at the end of this sentence. They like burning bush, roses, Freeman maples, spruce, boxwood and other species.

**Control:** They're not susceptible to most insecticides – in fact, treatments with nicotinoids may increase their egg production. Use a registered miticide instead.



## 4. Japanese beetles »

These are Potter's favorite insect, and they eat nearly everything they come into contact with – 300 plants on the menu – "skeletonizing" leaves. But they'll starve before they'll eat red maples, dogwoods or tuliptrees, Potter says. The beetles are the adult version of grubs, and are worst in the summer – June through mid-August.

**Control:** Traps attract more beetles than are caught and may make matters worse. Chlorantraniliprole (non-toxic to bees) or pyrethroids will do the trick. Carbaryl works, but is hazardous to bees and may increase mite problems, too.



For a list of best and worst plants for Japanese beetles, visit [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com) and search "beetle menu."

## 3. Scale insects »

Armored and soft scales encrust branches and bark of plants, sucking juices and causing crown thinning and dieback. Soft scales produce copious honeydew, essentially "sugary diarrhea" that coats leaves and bark, attracts wasps and promotes growth of black sooty mold, Potter says. Ants often tend soft scales for their secretions – it will taste like maple syrup.

**Control:** If spraying, monitor for crawler hatch. You can time it with the bloom dates of certain plants. Your county agent may have a specific calendar. Residual sprays with pyrethroids will intercept crawlers before they settle; horticultural oil or insecticidal soaps will control active or newly-settled crawlers hit by the spray. Research by one of Potter's students showed that excluding ants with a banded trunk spray or sticky band can significantly reduce soft scale infestations by preventing tending, allowing natural enemies like lacewings to gobble up the scales.





## 2. Borers in trees and shrubs >>

These insects are especially bad in transplants or stressed trees. There are two types: clearwing borers (adults are wasp-like moths) that push sawdust out of bark, and flat-headed borers (adults are beetles) that leave a D-shaped hole in trees. Females lay eggs on bark or under bark flaps. Symptoms include thin crowns and dieback, and girdling in the branches.



**Control:** Plant well-adapted species and cultivars and minimize tree stress. Avoid trunk wounds, which attract the egg-laying female. Preventive bark sprays with pyrethroids and anthranilic diamides work well for clearwing borers; pyrethroid bark sprays or systemic nicotinoids work on flat-headed borers, Potter says.



Learn how three companies successfully added perimeter and structural pest control to their service mix at [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com). Just search for "pest control."



## 1. Emerald ash borer >

"If you don't have it, you're going to get it. It's a nightmare," Potter says. If landscape trees are not protected, you can "kiss your ash goodbye."

This pest attacks all ash trees, healthy and sick alike, causing canopy dieback and death, suckering, and D-shaped holes in bark.

**Control:** Contact your county agent or state extension entomology specialist for status of EAB in your area. Emamectin benzoate treatments – either via basal drench or injection/infusion – have shown to be effective for up to three years. Systemic nicotinoids also can be used.

The author is editor of *Lawn & Landscape*. Send him an e-mail at [cbowen@gie.net](mailto:cbowen@gie.net).

BAGWORM – ERIC R. DAY, VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY, BUGWOOD.ORG; EAB – DAVID CAPPAER MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY BUGWOOD.ORG; EASTERN TENT CATERPILLAR – RONALD S. KELLEY, VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF FORESTS, PARKS AND RECREATION, BUGWOOD.ORG; GYPSY MOTH CATERPILLAR – SCOTT BAUER, USDA AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE, BUGWOOD.ORG; SPIDER MITES – FRANK PEARS, COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY, BUGWOOD.ORG; STANDING DEAD ASH – JOSEPH O'BRIEN, USDA FOREST SERVICE, BUGWOOD.ORG

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# From sprinklers to sprayers

By Kelly Pickerel

An irrigation company finds success after adding a mosquito control side business in Minnesota.

What do you do when everything you use to rid your property of mosquitoes fails? Start up your own mosquito management company, of course!

That was the original thought process behind Tom Olson and Russ Jundt buying into the Mosquito Squad franchise in their area of Minneapolis. The pair already had an irrigation company established but knew that a mosquito management service was needed in the area, especially for use at their own homes.

"We kept noticing a pervasive need for mosquito control that wasn't being addressed anywhere else," Olson says.

“They’re thrilled that they’re not getting eaten away out there.”

— Jim Bever Jr., Bever Landscaping

"We had spent a lot of money on a lot of gadgets that don't really do what they say they're going to do, and they end up in a big pile in the shed."

The pair ran across the Mosquito Squad franchise in the early days of the concept. Finding it intriguing, they flew to Charlotte, N.C., in 2006, and





Mosquito Squad partners with landscape design/build firms to place spraying systems seamlessly in the landscaping project.

**Company name:** Mosquito Squad of Minnesota **Principals:** Tom Olson and Russ Jundt **Location:** Minneapolis **Year founded:** 2006 **Employees:** 8 **Customer breakdown:** 95% residential; 5% commercial **Services offered:** barrier sprays, tick control automatic misting systems

became an influential part in developing the current Mosquito Squad franchise model. They're now owners of Mosquito Squad of Minnesota, and own the rights to all squads throughout the entire state. They've sold different areas to other teams, and now focus primarily on the Minneapolis-St. Paul and surrounding resort and vacation areas.

**STARTINGUP.** Olson says the Mosquito Squad franchise was a great option for him and Jundt because of the low start-up costs.

"The initial investment in hard assets, such as equipment, is low with respect to other businesses," he says. "But like with any business, your success depends on how you handle customer service and how you make people feel when you interact with them."

At first, it was difficult to get customers interested in mosquito services.

Olson says the toughest thing about being in something new is how much education is required for the public. At first, many people were skeptical of the new services, but Olson says once a few clients develop, the rest just falls into place.

"They're just so pleased with what you do, and the referrals are unbelievable," he says. "We're focusing on education and getting face-to-face with folks. We do home shows and state fairs, explaining what we do and how it works. The opportunity to get face-to-face is far better than anything else."

**SERVICE BREAKDOWN.** Mosquito Squad of Minnesota has three types of services. Its most popular is a basic barrier spray program. Field technicians go out to each property every three weeks during the summer and treat foliage with products that will kill the mosquito as it comes in and harbors in the area.

Olson and Jundt pride themselves in also offering alternatives for customers who prefer a greener route. This service focuses more on repelling the insects. "Certainly with the rise in the green movement and social responsibility, (all-natural alternatives) are growing in our business," Olson says.

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If a summer-long treatment isn't practical for some customers, they can opt for a one-time application, which Olson says is perfect for outdoor parties and weddings.

"We come out one week before (the event) and treat the property," he says. "We look for an 85 percent reduction on the property, and we usually meet that or do better."

Mosquito Squad also offers a tick control program. Olson says many customers have concerns about Lyme disease, so the technicians target developing, immature ticks before they reach the adult stage and attach to humans and pets.

The final service offered is an automatic misting system. It's permanently installed and uses models placed strategically around an outdoor living environment, like a pool or kitchen area. The nozzles will mist for 30 seconds each night, spreading a small amount of product.

"It has phenomenal efficacy for the consumer," Olson says. "It's normally for people who are considering or in the middle of a landscaping project and



Mosquito Squad of Minnesota offers services to control mosquitos and ticks.

making a significant investment in the backyard."

**PARTNERING WITH LANDSCAPERS.** Mosquito Squad of Minnesota has partnered with landscape design/build firms that fit its view of good outdoor living. A

designer will create a plan for the landscape and then Mosquito Squad will put in spraying systems and specify it to the landscaping company's program.

"It's seamless," Olson says of the partnerships. "It's beautiful how it all works out. We're giving (customers) something they don't have or hadn't thought of. It's a win-win for both of us."

Bever Landscaping has been partnering with Mosquito Squad of Minnesota since the beginning. Landscape designer Jim Bever Jr. says the designers try to make the most out of the customer's landscaping project, and don't want the space going unused if a family is plagued with flying pests. If the customers plan on spending a lot of time outside, Bever will immediately suggest Mosquito Squad's services.

"We try to blend (Mosquito Squad) right into what we do with our landscaping," Bever says. "It is a nice added feature so you can extend your time outside and enjoy the landscaping or lighting that you just spent money on. It's that added value they're looking for."

Bever says the response from custom-

## SMALLER STEPS

If starting a franchise isn't practical, there are manufacturers out there that provide materials as a simple add-on option for businesses.

CareFree Lawn Sprinklers near Chicago chose to add mosquito misting services to its already successful irrigation company. Jim Lawler, co-owner of CareFree, says that when the economy took a turn for the worse a few years ago, he knew approaching something new could only help his 24-year-old business.

"This was a natural item for our clientele," Lawler says of misting. "People had spent a lot of money on their backyards, and they want to be able to enjoy them year-round."

Lawler and co-owner Mike Strick did some research, knowing that there would be specific licensing they would have to go through to handle pesticides, and ultimately decided on using MistAway Systems, a manufacturer of products that also provides industry education.

"MistAway Systems was very helpful. They (didn't) try to sell you a franchise, and they provide all the education you would get through a franchise, while walking you through a business model," Lawler says.

At first, those at CareFree were just as skeptical as their customers of mosquito services.

"I installed the system at my house one year before we went public, and we were completely floored with the results," Lawler says. "We know we can do sprinklers, but we didn't want to roll something out to our customers if we didn't believe in it. And the proof is in the pudding, as they say."

After two years of installing misting systems, CareFree has branched out from just approaching existing customers through e-mail blasts and billing inserts and now has advertisements on the back doors of its 30 service vehicles. It also has a presence at local home improvement fairs.

"It didn't set the world on fire," Lawler says of CareFree's first years with the service. "But there's been considerable growth. There's a big education curve with the public, but once they figure out what it is, it's pretty well accepted."





Russ Jundt (left) and Tom Olson founded Mosquito Squad of Minnesota in 2006. All of their technicians are licensed and trained on how to handle pesticides.

ers has been positive.

"They're thrilled that they're not getting eaten away out there," he says. "Overall they're very pleased and satisfied that they can enjoy the outside and not the inside when it's beautiful outside."

**CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS.** Everyone involved with the Mosquito Squad franchise must get licensed in the state it's practicing in. Olson and Jundt work with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and everyone on staff has a license. They must be trained on how to store, handle and dispose pesticides. There are also rules about how to notify surrounding locations that treatments are to be made and when notification is necessary.

"There is some background work before heading out (on site)," Olson says. "It's very necessary to keep regulatory control in the industry, for everyone's safety."

In 2008, Mosquito Squad was bought by Outdoor Living Brands and joined Outdoor Lighting Perspectives and Archadeck as an outdoor living pow-



erhouse. Olson says the new family of franchises has provided great advice for his individual franchise.

"Coming in early, we were able to help develop the company and the best practices for our procedures which are used today across the company," he says. "(Outdoor Living Brands) is able to provide a tremendous amount of support for marketing and web development. It's all the things you look for in a franchise."

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

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# Bugging out

By David Shetlar

There's more than one reason why insecticides fail – and it's not always resistance.



**W**hen a product doesn't work and the lawn care operator is sure that the label instructions have been followed accurately, the first thoughts are those of pest resistance. Resistance and resistance management is very important when dealing with fungicides and certain insect/mite pests that often require multiple applications in a season or during the growing of a crop.

But when it comes to the insects and mites that attack ornamental plants and turf, resistance is actually a fairly rare event.

Many of the newer insecticides and miticides tout long residual action, so the applicator may not pay as much attention to his application timing. He might be mixing two or more products that actually counteract one another. Or, he might be spraying the right stuff, but in the wrong place or on top of a thick layer of thatch.

Here are seven important areas to watch.

## 1. TIMING IS STILL IMPORTANT.

While it is true that many of our newer insecticides have very long residual action, optimal timing of an application to get the maximum amount of pesticide to the target pest is extremely important.

When dinotefuran first hit the market for scale control, entomologists were saying that you could apply it almost any time in the season and expect excellent scale control. However, field usage demonstrated that timing was still important. The product is rapidly taken up by the plants, but it also degrades relatively rapidly. If you make the application in the summer, when some scales stop feeding, the residues may be gone by the time that the scales resume feeding in the fall.

## 2. APPLICATION TECHNIQUE IS IMPORTANT.

When I ask lawn care folks, "When was the last time you calibrated your fancy ride-on spreader-sprayer," I often get silence or blank looks. While you can cover large areas in a short period of time with these spreaders, the area covered isn't always evenly covered. Like all spreaders and sprayers, they have to be periodically calibrated. This issue is also important for the older hand-pushed spreaders and hand-

walked sprayers. Technicians often walk briskly early in the morning and right after lunch, but they can be fairly slow before lunch and late in the day. These applications can vary as much as 20 percent, sometimes more.

Some insecticides have active surface residues and others have translaminar systemic action. If the pesticide is only active on the surface onto which it is sprayed, a spray on the upper leaf surface won't kill aphids or lace bugs on the lower leaf surface. You will actually have to spray up to hit the lower leaf surfaces. If the insecticide is absorbed into the leaf tissues (translaminar systemicity), only the upper leaf surface needs to be hit, as the aphids and lace bugs will ingest the pesticide as they feed.

## 3. TANK INCOMPATIBILITY IS IMPORTANT.

There are two main types of tank incompatibility: chemical and formulation. Chemical incompatibility means that the chemistries of the materials being mixed either degrade or deactivate one or more of the ingredients. Formulation incompatibility means that the special surfactants, suspending agents or dispersants reacted to cause one or more of the chemicals to drop out of suspension (resulting in settling





residue or surface layers) or grease-ball (glob together into gunky messes that foul the spray system).

**4. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN APPLICATION IS IMPORTANT.** Insecticides intended to do their work in the soil-thatch zone of turf need to be watered into this zone. On the other hand, surface and translaminar insecticides need time to dry on leaf surfaces or penetrate the underlying tissues. Providing sufficient time for these events to occur is important and the applicator may need to turn off irrigation systems or wait until after expected rainfall events.

**5. FORMULATION AND SHELF LIFE ARE IMPORTANT.** As more and more of our insecticides and miticides go off patent, we see more generic formulations. Be sure to verify the efficacy of the formulation you buy – granular products shouldn't blow away and liquids should suspend easily. And consider the technical support behind the product you're purchasing. If it doesn't work, who can you call for help?

When purchasing liquid formulations, ask to see a container of old product. If it appears to have considerable settled residue in the bottom, shake it three to four times. If the stuff in the bottom doesn't go into suspension rapidly, then you know that this formulation has a relatively poor shelf life.

Ask your vendor for shelf life information on products you are considering. Some common grub insecticide granules have a shelf life of about 18 months. Old product that has no active ingredient, no matter what the price, is no bargain. It's better to try and purchase sufficient product for a single season than having lots of products resting on the shelves through the winter.

**6. PEST PRESSURE CAN OVERWHELM THE BEST INSECTICIDES.** Remem-

## FAILURE FAQs

Save yourself some time and headache when trying to solve an application failure with these questions from David Shetlar.

1. When was the application made and what was the target pest?
2. How was the application made? (spread, spray, drench, injection, etc.)
3. If a liquid application, what else was in the tank?
4. What were the post-application activities? (irrigation, sunlight, rain, etc.)
5. Was the product a name-brand or a generic?
6. When had the product been manufactured?
7. What was the estimated pest pressure?
8. If in turf, how much thatch is present?

ber that no pesticide will be 100 percent effective 100 percent of the time. Consider a grub insecticide that gets 90 percent control. With populations of 50 grubs per square foot hot spots, if you kill 90 percent, you will still have five grubs per square foot. While this is not enough grubs to cause visible turf damage, it is sufficient to encourage skunks, raccoons or armadillos to forage. In areas where you have very mobile pests, like the fall webworm on trees, you can treat the first generation and have excellent control, but the second generation of moths can fly in from surrounding areas after your effective residues have disappeared. In turf, this is a common event with sod webworms, armyworms, cutworms, chinch bugs and the annual bluegrass weevil. All these pests have multiple generations and they can be very mobile during the season.

**7. THATCH IS IMPORTANT.** Thatch is that somewhat forgotten sponge that has plagued turf managers for years. Where conditions are right (e.g., turf species, heavy clay soils, no earthworms, heavy fertilizer, etc.), thatch can rapidly

build up on top of the soil and this organic layer can act as a blotter paper to stop any pesticide from getting to the soil-thatch interface. Loose thatch, like that found in dense St. Augustine grass, can also serve as a hiding place for southern chinch bugs and hunting billbugs. This kind of thatch also binds insecticides, making them relatively inactive.

**WHERE PESTS ARE RESISTANT.** With all that said, we do have some turf and ornamental pests that are known to be resistant. There are areas in Florida and Texas where the southern chinch bug has demonstrated resistance to pyrethroid insecticides and they have overcome the genetic resistance of some St. Augustine grass cultivars. Why? It appears that some lawn care companies were applying the same insecticide five to seven times per season. Multiple generations of a pest exposed to the same insecticide will soon result in resistance.

Entomologists are strongly recommending resistance management techniques – alternation of insecticide modes of action and reducing the numbers of applications in a single season.

We also have whitefly and twospotted spider mite resistance in ornamental trees and shrubs. Why? These are the same pests that attack greenhouse plants where they are commonly subjected to the same pesticide, repeatedly, without rotation of chemistries. When these resistant insects and mites are shipped out on bedding plants or other nursery stock, they can establish in our landscapes. Basically, they come to our landscapes already resistant. In this case, it's not the fault of the landscape manager. On the other hand, if you try a pesticide on these kinds of pests and you don't get control, don't go back with the same material. You will need to switch to a different chemistry and see if that is effective.

The author is professor of urban landscape entomology at The Ohio State University.





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# It's Top 100 time.

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It may be winter now, but August will be here soon enough, and with it *Lawn & Landscape's* annual Top 100 list. See if you have what it takes to make the cut.

## TOP 100 LIST

To be included in *Lawn & Landscape's* listing of the industry's top companies by revenue, please submit your data by **FRIDAY, MARCH 18**. Enter by faxing this form to Editor Chuck Bowen at 330-659-0823, e-mailing it to [cbowen@gie.net](mailto:cbowen@gie.net) or mailing it to Lawn & Landscape Top 100, 4020 Kinross Lakes Pkwy., Suite 201, Richfield, OH 44286.

### COMPANY INFORMATION

Company name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year founded: \_\_\_\_\_ #of locations (including HQ): \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_  
HQ street address: \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
Person submitting the form: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
Company website: \_\_\_\_\_  
Year-round Employees: \_\_\_\_\_ Seasonal Employees: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Employees: \_\_\_\_\_

#### SERVICES BREAKDOWN

(AS A PERCENT OF 2010 REVENUE)

**PLEASE INDICATE "O" FOR ZERO OR "N/A" IF THE SERVICE OR CLIENT TYPE DOESN'T APPLY.**

Maintenance (mowing, trimming, etc.) . . . . . %  
Chemical Lawn Care/Fertilization . . . . . %  
Landscape Design/Build/Installation . . . . . %  
Irrigation Installation/Maintenance . . . . . %  
Interior Landscaping . . . . . %  
Snow Removal . . . . . %  
Tree Care . . . . . %  
Structural Pest Control . . . . . %

**TOTAL . . . . . 100%**

#### CLIENT BREAKDOWN

(AS A PERCENT OF 2010 REVENUE)

Commercial Revenue: . . . . . %  
Residential Revenue: . . . . . %  
Other (Specify: \_\_\_\_\_) . . . . . %

**TOTAL . . . . . 100%**

#### REVENUE INFORMATION

2010 revenue (Please specify American/Canadian):

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

2010 revenue was up/down \_\_\_\_\_ % from 2009

2011 revenue will be up/down \_\_\_\_\_ % from 2010

#### MANAGEMENT TEAM

Owner/President \_\_\_\_\_

CEO \_\_\_\_\_

General manager \_\_\_\_\_

Technical/Lawn care mgr. \_\_\_\_\_

Maintenance mgr. \_\_\_\_\_

Design mgr. \_\_\_\_\_

Installation mgr. \_\_\_\_\_

Other (specify title) \_\_\_\_\_

**Bonus Question**

**What's the best advice — in your business or personal life — you've ever received? Who gave it to you?**

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**What unique initiatives has your firm undertaken recently? (attach additional pages if necessary)**

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(continued from page 46)

Garritano's sales force that typically did commercial landscape construction now focuses on this division. "We had to learn a whole new trade," he says.



Garritano

And these aren't your typical jungle-gym setups. For example, a half-million dollar project the company is completing at Nevada's Nellis Air Force Base combines natural and manufactured play elements: shade structures, trees, sand boxes, grassy knolls, stepping logs and other features, Garritano says.

To accommodate this new department, Garritano had to reduce and retrain his workforce. He also ramped up his maintenance team by hiring in customer-service oriented talent. Some of his employees shifted departments as the company wrapped up construction projects and ramped up its seasonal gardener service, a quarterly offering that includes pruning, irrigation system checkups and other tasks.

"This service gives customers a resource. With this program, they can pick up the phone and call us," Garritano says, relating how residential customers in his area tend to mow their own lawns (if they have turf), so rolling out this "extras" service has appealed to clients.

Meanwhile, the playground division has introduced other federal project opportunities, Garritano says. "Now, the landscape business is riding on its coattails," he says of the park installations. Overall, the maintenance division at D&K continues to grow. Being forced to think outside of the commercial bidding arena to develop business has stoked creativity at D&K.

Being forced to think outside of the commercial bidding arena stoked creativity at D&K. Now, the company is rolling out its own iPhone application called Landscape Creative, a maintenance management tool for consumers and property managers. The application includes a plant identifier and other features, and it can send out real-time alerts. The corresponding website will include how-to videos and editorial.

All this change in the past few years has encouraged Garritano to think of his company as much more than a service-provider. "You can't be afraid to leap and do something differently," he says. **L&L**

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

### QUICK TIPS

**Accept change.** Garritano could have continued bidding commercial projects and losing profits. Rather than remaining a commercial construction firm, he tried to stay ahead of the curve.

**Take chances.** When D&K was approached by a playground manufacturing company to become a distributor, Garritano jumped on the chance to launch a new department.

**Reposition your people.** Garritano's favorite bit of advice is to take your greatest assets (people) and direct their energy toward your biggest opportunities, not your biggest problems.



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## Making it rain

Three contractors in drought-stricken California share how they've successfully marketed their irrigation services – and how you can, too. By Lindsey Getz

Though California has been plagued by drought, some forward-thinking contractors have found that the key to successfully selling irrigation services is to emphasize water conservation. Marketing water management has helped these businesses thrive, even during the economic collapse, and it's a lesson anyone selling irrigation services can learn from.

"In this economy contractors are crying there's no work, but I'm keeping as busy now as I did five years ago," says Mike Garcia, owner, Enviroscap in Redondo Beach, Calif. What's Garcia's trick? He says he's learned that clients will spend money if it means saving money in the long run.

"I'm looking at the trends and have found that wherever people are hurting, if you're able to offer a solution, that's where you can make a business."

That trend right now is water conservation, and Garcia has focused on

rainwater harvesting, something he says may be initially costly to install, but a justified expense when you consider that the price of municipal water will only continue to rise.

To demonstrate its power, Garcia converted his own backyard swimming pool into a rain-harvest collection system complete with pondless waterfall.

**“Wherever people are hurting, if you're able to offer a solution, that's where you can make a business.”**

— Mike Garcia, Enviroscap

He uses the harvested water to keep his landscape green year round and says that instead of needing 12 months of tap water to keep his landscape alive, it now only requires two months. And by unplugging his pool pump, he cut his electric bill \$100



De Lany

per month.

The innovation is drawing attention, even without a lot of marketing effort. "Right now, because it's such a new concept, people are just dropping by and it's spreading by word of mouth," he says. "Municipalities, garden clubs and even television crews have come by, just to see the new technology. I'm currently giving bids out."

Garcia has also put together a YouTube video to share the process with his clients. Facebook has also proved to be a great marketing tool to share photos and information. And Garcia says that in order to entice residential customers, he throws in a little pump or builds a small waterfall for aeration, but mostly to add some aesthetic appeal. "People have a hard time with the idea of paying a lot of money for something that's underground, which they can't see," he says. "So I tie in a little waterfall and they really feel like they're getting something out of it. It adds a little appeal to the backyard."

**BECOME CERTIFIED.** For Tom De Lany, CEO of ACLS, in Fresno, Calif., becoming certified through California Landscape Contractors Association's Water Management Program four years ago has made all the difference in this economy. "I found right off the bat that we started picking up maintenance accounts because of the fact that we could show charts that demonstrated the clients' water savings," De Lany says. "Just through that alone, we probably picked

up close to \$100,000 a month in extra maintenance work."

ACLS is picking up new accounts as well as getting additional work with existing accounts by going back to retrofit large commercial properties. Jamie Rust, the company's general manager, says that on a recent job for a large hospital they were able to save the client about



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## MARKETING IRRIGATION

a third of its water consumption by installing new nozzles and web-based controllers. "It was a big initial expense but they're looking at a return on investment in about two and a half years," he says.



Rust

De Lany says the main reason the company was able to pick up that large maintenance account, which brings in about \$20,000 a month, was by touting their expertise in water conservation during the pre-bid walk-through. "In this day and age, most landscapers who aren't certified are overwatering," De Lany says. "We were able to show (the client) charts that demonstrated just how much we could save them."

Being able to show the client water savings with the use of charts can drive home the effort. Tom Ellington, president of Bayscape Management, in San

## A New Tool

The California Landscape Contractors Association recently launched the CLCA Engine, a new online water management tool that can help monitor clients' water usage and keep them on budget. At press time, the new engine had only been live for about four months but had already gotten a lot of positive feedback.

Prior to the launch of this newer tool, the CLCA offered a different version, but users were complaining of issues with the software. So, the association redeveloped a whole new site with the help of some input from those users.

The engine can calculate a budget for each property simply by entering some key data – area irrigated, the type of irrigation system and the meter type being used. Contractors will also need the site's ZIP code to generate ET data.

"Once you have all the information together, it's a really simple process," says David Silva, CLCA's water management certification program manager.

A graph tool also makes it easy for the client to visually see their budget's status. "We have a very nice printer-friendly version of it," Silva says. "It will print in PDF format and gives the client the quick bottom line as to how the site is doing. They're also able to view a monthly history."

The site is designed to be automated and helps users save time. "We're trying to make it easier for companies that have multiple sites in the water management certification program," Silva says. "We have some contractors that have 30 or 40 sites in the program so this makes it easier for them to keep track of all that data and to quickly see what last month's readings were – whether they were over or under budget."



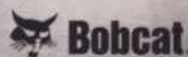
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## MARKETING IRRIGATION

Jose, Calif., has been using the CLCA's online water conservation tool (see "A new tool," page 64) to help monitor his clients' water usage and uses the printed out charts to demonstrate how it's keeping them on budget.



Porter

"In the past there were some similar tools available but the industry was not as concerned about water conservation as they are today and the technology has greatly improved," Ellington says. "There's been an evolution toward wanting to save more water since the population is growing but water availability is not. It's becoming critical to find ways to conserve."

ACLS also markets its water services with cold calls. "Whether I'm visiting a commercial building or an apartment complex, I'll always bring up our division of certified water consulting," says the company's business development manager Gary Porter. "I'll bring up not only the savings involved but also the emotional connection – the fact that I'm concerned about my grandkids and their grandkids because there's only a finite amount of water. If we don't apply ourselves and make use of these new technologies, we won't have any water left. It's a very scary prospect."

But one of the most successful marketing efforts the company has made is hosting seminars where property managers and other management personnel can learn about the opportunity to conserve water. "It raises the bar," De Lany says. "Whereas they may have just seen us as a mow-and-blow landscape company, they now see us as a more professional outlet that also offers water audits. We've had tremendous feedback."

**GET ON BOARD.** Though contractors in drought-stricken states are more apt to be committed to water conservation efforts, the contractors we've interviewed all stress how important it is for everyone to become more water conscious. "Go through the certification and training that's offered in your area," Ellington says. "We're seeing this become a requirement for public works contracts – where you'll actually have to be a certified water auditor to even bid certain jobs. From a public works standpoint, in the future you may potentially not be able to bid those jobs if you don't get certified."

De Lany says when he first became certified people asked him "Why?" Now people are wishing they'd done it sooner themselves. "If you're not already, get on board," he says. "It's a lot like the price of gold – don't you wish you bought it 10 years ago? Water really is the new gold." **L&L**

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

To learn more about how Garcia converted his swimming pool to a rainwater collection system, visit [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com) and search "Enviroscape."





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Maurice Dowell, president of Dowco Enterprises, started a book club for his management team.

## READING LIST

How 30 minutes a week can improve and focus your company.

By Chuck Bowen

For a half hour once a week, eight people gather in a tiny conference room in the suburbs of St. Louis to talk about a book.

The book and the topic changes every week – sometimes it's sales, sometimes its customer service – but the goal is always the same: improve the way things work at Dowco Enterprises, Inc.

Maurice Dowell, president of the Chesterfield, Mo.-based landscape and lawn care company, started the book club two years ago as a way to develop the members of his management team.

"It's done wonders for us. It really has," Dowell says. "It helps us understand concepts. It's like growing together. It's like having a brother or sister or sibling, you have people to help reinforce those ideas and principles."

The club also acts as a litmus test. It's a requirement for anyone on the management team, and if you can't find 30 minutes a week to sit down and discuss it, maybe you're in the wrong position.

"It really helps give clarity to contributing team members," Dowell says. "It's sort of a filter to see if you're on board or not."

So, was it easy to get his team to support the idea? "No, they didn't want to do it," Dowell says, laughing. But, part of the management team's mission is to grow themselves professionally, and this program fits that bill.

"I hate to say it, but that was the attitude. It's like medicine, (or) you're going to school. One of our key deliverables is growing yourself. This is one of the ways we fulfill that goal. ... It's part of what they do to be a member of the team. I think most people look at it as an opportunity."

Whatever the reading level, Dowell recommends contractors pick books that mirror their strategic goals for the year – sales, marketing, customer service, etc.

"Everyone on the team is not on the same level, so it becomes challenging when you've got to put together a book that will excite and stimulate an office management member as well as a key account manager. It's been interesting finding the right book and the right format. For them to sit down and read Jim Collins just isn't going to happen. We have to find that sweet spot."

**TWO YEARS LATER.** Since starting the book club in 2008, Dowell says he's seen his management team become closer, and he's gained a better understanding of them.

"We've come out with a oneness – a very strong team spirit, and a better understanding of each other," he says. "That's the most important tangible benefit of these: You really see what makes the wheels turn, how individuals think outside the box. ... You understand how they do what they do in a work environment. Once you sit and contribute, banter and share ideas, you get a clear understanding of the individual you're interacting with on a daily basis."

Setting out two years ago, that level of understanding wasn't even on Dowell's radar. "It was more of a tangible thing; we could reach out and touch some really powerful concepts and it would help, but I didn't realize the human factor."

The author is editor and associate publisher of *Lawn & Landscape*. Send him your favorite book title – business or otherwise – at [cbowen@gie.net](mailto:cbowen@gie.net).





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## EDITOR'S NOTE:

Dowell's book club approach is laudable, but not everyone has the time to read everything they want. So, to help out busy contractors, each month, *Lawn & Landscape* will run a review and synopsis of a business book – either from the accepted literary canon or a more modern classic. The series starts with Michael Gerber's **"The E-Myth Revisited."** The rest of the year's reading list includes:

### Good to Great

Jim Collins

### The Essential Drucker

Peter Drucker

### Getting Things Done

David Allen

### Outliers

Malcolm Gladwell

### Linchpin

Seth Godin

### How to Win Friends and Influence People

Dale Carnegie

### 212: The Extra Degree

Sam Parker

### 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

Stephen Covey

### The Prince

Niccolo Machiavelli

### Marketing Warfare

Al Ries and Jack Trout

### See You at the Top

Zig Ziglar

# THE E-MYTH REVISITED

By Matt LaWell

**Y**ou might say that Michael E. Gerber has lived a charmed life. Whatever he has wanted to do during his last 73 wandering years, he has done. And whatever he has done, he has done well.

As a boy, Gerber studied music and played the saxophone. Some said he played it brilliantly. As a young man, he lost interest in college and dropped out after a year to focus on poetry and art.

He joined the Army for a stretch, but came home to care for his mother. He rode around Europe on a motor scooter and soaked in the continent's cultures. He sold encyclopedias door to door across America for much of the 1960s.

During his 30s, Gerber turned his attention to contracting and construction, and studied the trade until he got it right, often working alongside men half his age.

Later, on the brink of 40, he landed in Northern California at the birth of the technological revolution and, after years of learning about what worked for businesses of all sizes, was welcomed as a consultant by some of the first companies in Silicon Valley.

And that consultant work is, more or less, what Gerber has been doing for the last 30 or so years. He founded his own company, E-Myth

Worldwide, and authored more than a dozen books, including "The E-Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It." (The E in E-Myth stands not for *electronic*, but for *entrepreneur*.)

Along the way, business owners heralded Gerber as an expert and a guru. He has helped so many companies – more than 65,000 across 145 countries at last count – and so many of his business principles are available in the wildly successful "The E-Myth Revisited." Here are a few of them.

**All of us have multiple personalities.** We all have an inner entrepreneur, manager and technician. The entrepreneur is the visionary, the manager is the organizer and the technician is the one who goes out and does the work. If those personalities were balanced, we would be efficient, but they're not. For most of us, it's about a 10-20-70 split, with a heavy emphasis on doing the work. Try to stay balanced.

**Your business can be as big as you want it to be.** Only you, as the owner of your company, can limit its growth and its size – and most owners do that by shrinking away from the unknown. The key is to step

outside of your comfort zone and stay there.

**Have an entrepreneurial perspective.** How will your company work? How will it produce results that lead to profits? What is its future? And how can you get there? If you view your business as a job, rather than as a business, it will never be anything other than a job.

**Plan every aspect of your business.** The key to building your business – and, perhaps, ultimately selling it for a healthy profit – is to plan every last detail for the future. What are your business goals? Who are your customers? How can you better benchmark information? Without a plan, you have no business. And without a business, all you have is a job.

**Work on your business, not in it.** Your business is not your life, nor should it be. So many owners work 12-, 14-, 16-, even 18-hour days during the first months or years after opening a new business, immersed in every angle. But after a while, you need to step back and become less of a technician and more of a manager. Make your business tick, rather than doing the ticking yourself.

*The author is a freelance writer in Cleveland, Ohio.*

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## Getting back

**Don't get caught in double trouble. Here's how to handle retaliation complaints from employees.** By Steven Cesare, Ph.D.

This is the third in a series of the top 10 most serious HR mistakes landscape contractors make. To read previous installments, visit [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com) and search "Cesare."

**T**he financial costs associated with retaliation against those employees who file discrimination complaints can be even more serious than the original claims themselves. To make matters worse, employment lawyers have publicly stated that retaliation law is the "new frontier" in the employment discrimination arena. To prove this point, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) reports that retaliation lawsuits have risen steadily over the past several years and are now the second most popular charge filed against employers, right behind racial discrimination and slightly ahead of sexual discrimination.

This article presents industry-specific examples of retaliation and how to best handle them.

**OVERVIEW.** An employer may not fire, demote, harass or otherwise retaliate against an employee for filing a charge of discrimination, participating in a discrimination proceeding or opposing any illegal employment practice (e.g., 1964 Civil Rights Act, OSHA, Americans with Disabilities, Fair Labor Standards Act). This means that if an employee in-

forms an employer of an illegal human resources activity or participates in a formal investigation related to discrimination, and the employer responds by mistreating the employee, the employer may be committing retaliation.

If a foreman is fired for filing a complaint for not being paid for working over time, the employer's action could be viewed as retaliation. In addition, forcing someone to be on call every night or demoting them after they filed a complaint could also be considered retaliation. Any sarcastic remarks an employer makes to someone who filed a complaint can also be considered retaliation.

With those examples in mind, it is important to note that even if the employer is found liable for the initial complaint (e.g., discrimination, OSHA violation, Fair Labor Standards Act), the employer can face additional penalties due to retaliation. These financial penalties commonly include: paying back wages, reinstating the employee, reimbursing the employee for attorney

and expert witness fees and taking other steps to provide necessary relief.

**DEFINITION.** Retaliation is legally established against an employer when three conditions are met:

- 1) A person engaged in a protected activity that was in opposition to discrimination, or participated in a covered proceeding.
- 2) The person suffered an adverse employment action that was contemporaneously or subsequent to the protected activity.
- 3) A causal connection exists between the protected activity and the adverse action.

To help landscapers protect themselves against these lawsuits, those three conditions are explained below and online.

*Protected activity* means opposing any unlawful discrimination practice or participating in a proceeding designed to investigate any discriminatory action.

Thus, any employee who either opposes a discriminatory practice or participates in a formal proceeding investigating a discriminatory practice (e.g., files a charge of discrimination) is protected by federal law.

An adverse employment action typically is a managerial response intended to keep someone from opposing a discriminatory practice, or preventing someone from participating in an employment discrimination proceeding.

Common adverse actions include denial of promotion, refusal to hire, demotion, termination, personal or professional threats, negative performance appraisals, harassment or other unfavorable treatment intended to deter people from pursuing their rights. **L&L**



Cesare

The author is an industrial psychologist with the Harvest Group, a landscape consulting group. Send your questions to [cesare@gle.net](mailto:cesare@gle.net).

For the full article, visit [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com) and search "Cesare."





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# Clean up a chemical spill

## Accidents happen.

Here's how to best handle them.

**L**awn care companies truck a lot of material around their territories, and not just equipment. Each truck, van and backpack sprayer is loaded with herbicides, fertilizer or other materials that you don't want anywhere but in that tank or on that turf. But, techs can get rear-ended, or drop a sprayer and end up applying the materials where you don't want them. Here are **five tips** on how to handle a chemical spill. – Chuck Bowen



1

Each vehicle should have an MSDS for all materials on board, and a spill response kit that contains gloves, goggles, absorption materials and other clean up equipment like a broom and dust pan. Train techs monthly on how to use these.

2

In the event of a spill, use the absorption sock, pillow or dam to contain the material. These devices use things like crushed corn or clay to soak up as much as 200 gallons of liquid.

3

Contact the office to let them know what's happened. Depending on local regulations and the size of the spill, you may also have to contact state or local environmental agencies.

4

Once you stop the leak and have everything contained, it's time to clean. Absorption socks can be incinerated or shoveled into bags to be discarded safely. Sweep up any dry material into approved containers.

5

Fill out an incident report. Record the who, what, where, when and why so any questions later on can be easily answered.



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**JOHN DEERE**



# Dancing in circles

Though the cause was misguided, there is a wealth of knowledge about fairy ring.

By Brian Horn

It's not often that a plant disease is associated with dancing fairies, but that's the case with Fairy Ring.

"The formation of dark green or dead turf rings and the seemingly sudden appearance of a circle of mushrooms gave rise to the lore that fairies danced inside the rings," says Deborah D. Miller, plant pathologist and senior diagnostician for the Davey Institute.

But there are no fairies dancing in these rings. It's a much more practical explanation. "Fairy rings are caused by a group of soil-inhabiting fungi in the class Basidiomycetes," she says.

"These fungi grow in turfgrass where there is an even distribution of nutrients in the soil or thatch and are associated with sandy soils.

"When fairy rings develop, three basic things can be done: excavate the affected turf and soil area, apply fungicides or appreciate their aesthetic beauty."

Miller says multiple season observations need to be made before a type of fairy ring can be assigned because not all symptoms may be apparent in one year.

Ring shape (i.e. circular patch, wavy-shaped) and size

vary according to the fungal species. All turfgrass species are affected and scientists have classified these rings into three visual types based upon symptoms.

Type 1 rings have a dead zone of grass with one or two zones of darker green grass growing adjacent to the circle. Type 1 rings are considered the most serious type of fairy ring.

Type 2 rings form a single ring of dark green, stimulated grass. No dead zone of grass is formed. Basidiocarps may or may not be produced. When the weather is hot and dry, Type 2 rings may develop into Type 1 rings. This may induce locally dry spots and accumulations of toxic levels of ammonium.

Type 3 rings often have no apparent effect on grass growth. Basidiocarps appear in a ring or an arc.

"Most fungi produce basidiocarps in mid-to-late spring or in late summer to early autumn, following periods of rain or heavy irrigation," Miller says.

Mycelium – threads of the fungus – can penetrate into the soil to a depth of 8 inches. The fungi expand outward until something like a lack of food, a sidewalk, flower bed



Managing fairy ring can be time consuming and costly, and sometimes it can be hard to spot.

or another fairy ring impedes its growth, Miller says.

"Multiple fairy rings can become established in the same area," she says. "However, when the rings intersect, they do not overlap, but produce a scalloped pattern due to an antagonistic effect."

While you might think fairy ring is easy to spot, Miller says clusters of mushrooms growing in the turf may not be the beginning of a fairy ring, but could be colonizing buried organic debris.

"A ring pattern of damage from winter injury and/or snow molds can mimic fairy rings," Miller says.

Managing fairy ring can be a time consuming and costly activity, Miller says.

You should remove woody roots and limbs prior to turf site construction.

Avoid using soil mixes containing a high composition of undecomposed organic materials, and reduce thatch accumulation by vertical cutting. Because some species are poisonous, remove basidiocarps where children or pets are present.

Where basidiocarps are considered a nuisance, re-

move by raking or mowing, Miller says. To mask the dark green rings of some fungal species, apply a light application of nitrogen or iron.

"However, this can increase the incidence of other species, such as *Tricholoma sordidum*," she says. "Core aeration and watering can reduce the hydrophobic effects of the mycelium in the root zone.

Physically remove turf and soil from affected areas."

Miller says, fungicides are effective in managing some fairy ring species fungi.

"Soil drenches should penetrate to a minimum depth of 4 inches to reach the mycelium growing in the soil," she says.

The following active ingredients are currently labeled for fairy ring control: azoxystrobin, flutolanil, hydrogen dioxide, pyraclostrobin, polyoxin D; triadimefon, azoxystrobin + propiconazole.

"Using a surfactant or wetting agent can increase efficacy of the fungicide," Miller says. **L&L**

The author is an associate editor at *Lawn & Landscape*. Send him an e-mail at [bhorn@lle.net](mailto:bhorn@lle.net)

For a Spanish-language version of this page, visit [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com) and search "plant disease profile."





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# Mosquitoes

How to achieve better control of this pesky flying insect. By Carolyn LaWell

**T**here are more than 3,000 mosquito species in the world. And though only a dozen or two dozen species that are important to humans live in one given area, unfortunately for us, the elimination of the mosquito is impossible. So *Lawn & Landscape* spoke with David Shetlar, professor of urban landscape entomology at The Ohio State University, about the life of mosquitoes and, most importantly, how to control them from taking over yards.

**BIOLOGY.** Mosquitoes have a complete life cycle and spend much of the beginning stages in water.

"The mosquito adults lay their eggs either in soil or areas of water that will be flooded with rain water, or they may lay their eggs directly on temporary pools of water," Shetlar says.

That means streams, lakes, rain gutters, bird baths and tires. Anywhere water is held will allow for the eggs to hatch, turn into larvae and then into pupae.

"Most of the larvae feed primarily on bacteria and algae that grow in the stagnant water," Shetlar says. "Depending on the species, it may take them anywhere from about seven to 20 days to complete their larval development and then pupate. The pupa also stays in the water. It's a funny looking thing – it looks like a comma and it flips around in the water. The larvae ... they'll jerk back and forth and go down to the bottom of the water. Because of that jerky action they're called wigglers."

Once developed, the pupa will rise to the surface of the water, slip its exoskeleton and out comes an adult mosquito. The males feed

primarily on nectar and plant secretions. The females, in order to produce eggs, must grab a blood meal from the narrow range of animals its species feeds on.

The lifespan of the adult mosquito is unknown. It could be days or several months depending on the species. Some even overwinter, Shetlar says.

"You might wonder where in the world they overwinter," Shetlar says. "They find tree holes that are protected, or what happens in our urban habitats is they fly down in the storm sewer. ... Since the storm sewer doesn't freeze in the winter time, they can survive the freezing. Then next spring, when it warms up, they fly back out, take a blood meal and lay eggs wherever they can find temporary water."

**CONTROL.** Landscape con-

tractors and LCOs can help reduce their client's mosquito population several ways, including using preventative measures against developing or adult mosquitoes.

"Just monitoring standing water in a yard is the best way to reduce the local mosquito population," Shetlar says.

Backyard water features, kiddie pools, plastic sand boxes – surfaces filled with standing water can be a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

"One of the things we often suggest to landscapers is if they are putting in water features in people's back yard, check periodically to make sure the water is flowing," Shetlar says.

If it's not possible to eliminate the water, biological controls can be used to kill developing mosquitoes. *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* or BTI produces a strain of bacteria that the larvae find toxic. It can be found in granular or brick products.

If an invasion of mosquitoes has already begun, a commercial insecticide application can be sprayed on leaves, shrubs and trees to provide for temporary relief. Mosquitoes tend to land on plant surfaces before humans, but the insecticides tend to only last a few days.

A final, if less scientific, recommendation is using a fan.

"Mosquitoes don't like wind," Shetlar says. "If you get an airflow of about five to six miles per hour, they won't fly in those conditions." **L&L**

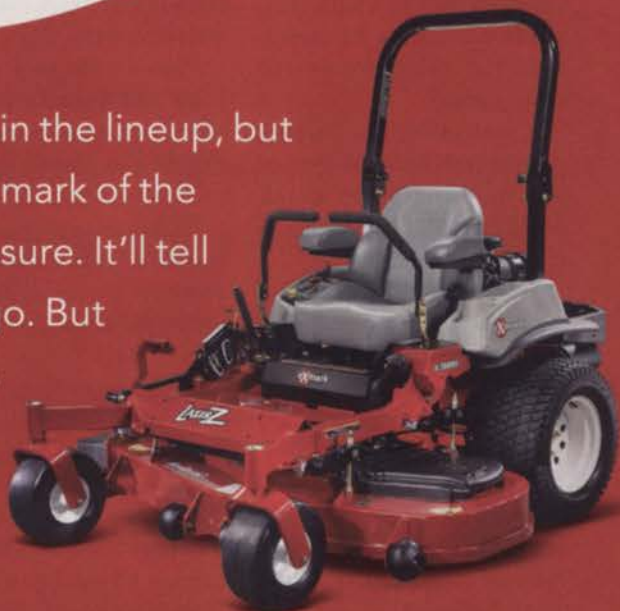
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## COMPACT EXCAVATORS



**Compact equipment has allowed A. Perrone and Sons to become more efficient and expand its business.** By Lee Chilcote

**W**hen James Perrone started working for his father's landscaping company nearly 20 years ago, they had 14 employees.

Since then, A. Perrone & Sons Inc. Landscaping and Irrigation has downsized considerably to four employees, while expanding its operations and making forays into new markets.

A specialist in creating ponds and water features, Perrone attributes much of this success to the use of compact equipment.

"We wouldn't be where we are today without it," says Perrone. "Using two or three guys and Bobcats is just more efficient – and machines are never late for work."

Perrone purchased a bulky front loader in 1993, yet soon found that the machine was difficult to maneuver in the small backyards of northern New Jersey, where his com-

pany is based.

The metal track also tore up turf and driveways that had to be replaced. That's when Perrone discovered compact equipment, and never looked back.

He now uses a walk-behind track loader, track loader and excavator every day.

They've allowed A. Perrone and Sons to increase efficiency, reduce overhead, extend the season and take on new projects.

"We need equipment that works in large yards in rural communities, as well as small yards in urban neighborhoods," says Perrone, whose office is located 15 miles away from New York City. "Compact equipment allows us to do both."

Perrone uses the three machines simultaneously, taking advantage of their complementary features.

He uses the walk-behind

track loader to move boulders in small yards. At only 36-inches wide, it's the perfect machine for such spaces.

The track loader has an 8-foot-wide bucket, making it just the right size to fit inside of a fenced-in back yard. As such, it only requires Perrone to remove a single section of an 8-foot fence, if anything.

The biggest benefit of using compact equipment, Perrone says, is that it saves both time and money – cost savings that he can then redirect back into his company.

"On a rainy day, I don't



James and Anthony Perrone Jr.

have to look for things for my machines to do, unlike with employees," says Perrone. "There's less overhead as a result."

Perrone's compact equipment "can pretty much work through anything," he says – including the first snowfall.

"We'll keep on working until there's snow covering the ground, and we're back out on the job in early spring. We'd never be able to do that without these machines."

His fleet of compact machines has rubber tracks, rather than metal ones, and that means less damage and clean-up for Perrone.

Finally, Perrone's compact equipment also allows him the ability to take on different kinds of projects when business is slow.

"If I have some down time and a buddy calls me, I can do another project, such as digging an addition, with this equipment," he says.

One thing that's surprised Perrone is how much he's been able to maximize the use of his smallest piece of equipment – the walk-behind.

"I bought it for small backyards, but now I'm finding that I use it more than my other machines," he says.

Compact machines have helped Perrone to tap into a niche market for pond and waterfall projects – a market that, he says, is expanding.

Owners are investing more in their homes because they can't afford to spend money on vacations, he says.

"Having a water feature in your backyard," Perrone says "is like a staycation." **L&L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.



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# Chemical defense

## Manufacturers weigh in on the use of plant growth regulators in lawn care.

By Carolyn LaWell

In today's world, efficiency counts. It counts when it comes to streamlining operations and, ultimately, boosting the bottom line. The use of plant growth regulators for lawn care hasn't grabbed the focus of many manufacturers, but those who are making products say when it comes to PGRs, landscapers are getting creative with mixes and cutting down on time spent in the field. *Lawn & Landscape*

asked PGR manufacturers what's new and what's expected in the future.

### What is new in the plant growth regulator segment for lawn care operators?

S. Gary Custis, manager of field research and technical services, PBI/Gordon Corp.: There are no new actives that have come on the market. What we see is companies taking existing actives

and blending them either as a premix, or end users are making tank mixes to combine the actives. Trinexapac-ethyl can now be purchased as a generic product.

**Roger Storey, vice president of turf and ornamental, SePRO Corp.:** The use of plant growth regulators by lawn care operators today is relatively low. There are existing plant growth regulators that could help reduce the costs associated with trimming of shrubs and hedges and mowing turf grass. SePRO's focus in the lawn care and landscape maintenance market has been on the landscape plants, specifically with (flurprimido

as a granular) PGR, for use on established shrubs and hedges to reduce the cost of pruning and trimming.

There are many large landscape maintenance companies that are using PGRs in a program approach on landscape plants, and realizing significant economic benefits as well as sustainable benefits such as improved plant health and reductions in irrigation, fuel, emissions and plant material sent to landfills.

From a development standpoint, SePRO is working on a PGR ... for edging/banding applications to turf which will reduce the frequency of string trimming along fences sidewalks and structures.



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### What are you hearing from customers?

**Custis:** Lawn care companies are re-looking at existing products and finding new ways to use them.

**Storey:** Customers who have initiated PGR programs have communicated great success improving their profitability, but it does require the landscape company to more intensively manage their crew's time spent on each property.

The reduction in time to trim a property due to the PGR can be very apparent and significant, but the biggest opportunity is then reallocating that labor to a different property and not wasting that

labor savings. Reallocating the labor can help the landscape maintenance company expand their customer base.

### What new technologies or application methods exist?

**Custis:** The latest application method for a PGR is the use of (diethylaluminum-sodium) for fruit suppression on ornamentals. Applicators can either bark band or use the material as a drench at the root flare and prevent nascent fruit on trees such as olives and sweet gums. By using this method versus spraying the canopy of the trees, applications can be made without the major inconvenience of having cars moved, shutting down streets

or working at night.

**Storey:** Prior to (flurprimido as a granular), the only PGR option for established landscape plants were products applied as a foliar spray. The product is applied as a granule application ... to the drip line area of landscape plants. A granular PGR product provides the end user an application technique that is familiar, doesn't require mixing and is easy to apply.

### Where do you see this segment five years from now?

**Custis:** I think one of the major drivers will be the price of gas and labor. When the gas price went up in 2008-2009, many companies relented at

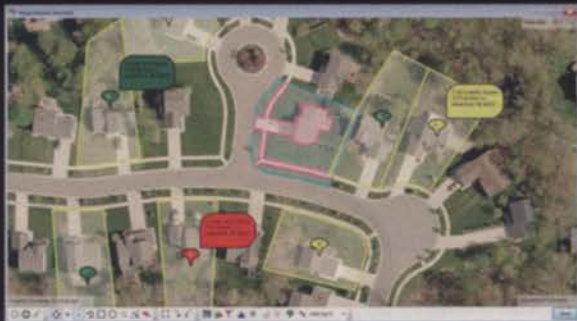
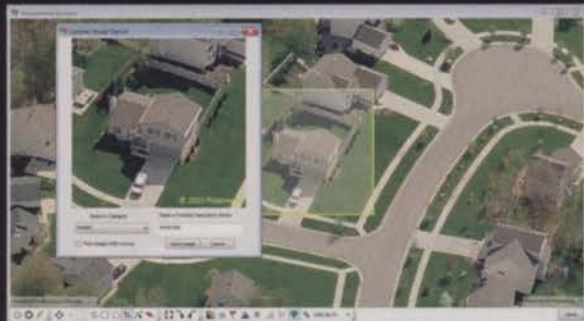
the use of PGRs. Many states are looking at noise restrictions, which may limit the amount of mowing or trimming that can occur. By the use of PGRs, these operations can be cut in half.

**Storey:** I believe that in five years we will see more companies that have adopted PGRs as viable tools that allow them to better schedule and manage the maintenance of both landscape and turf grass. ... When used correctly, PGRs can be a great labor savings tool that can positively impact a company's revenue and bottom line. **L&L**

The author is associate editor of *Lawn & Landscape*. Send her an e-mail at [clawell@gie.net](mailto:clawell@gie.net).

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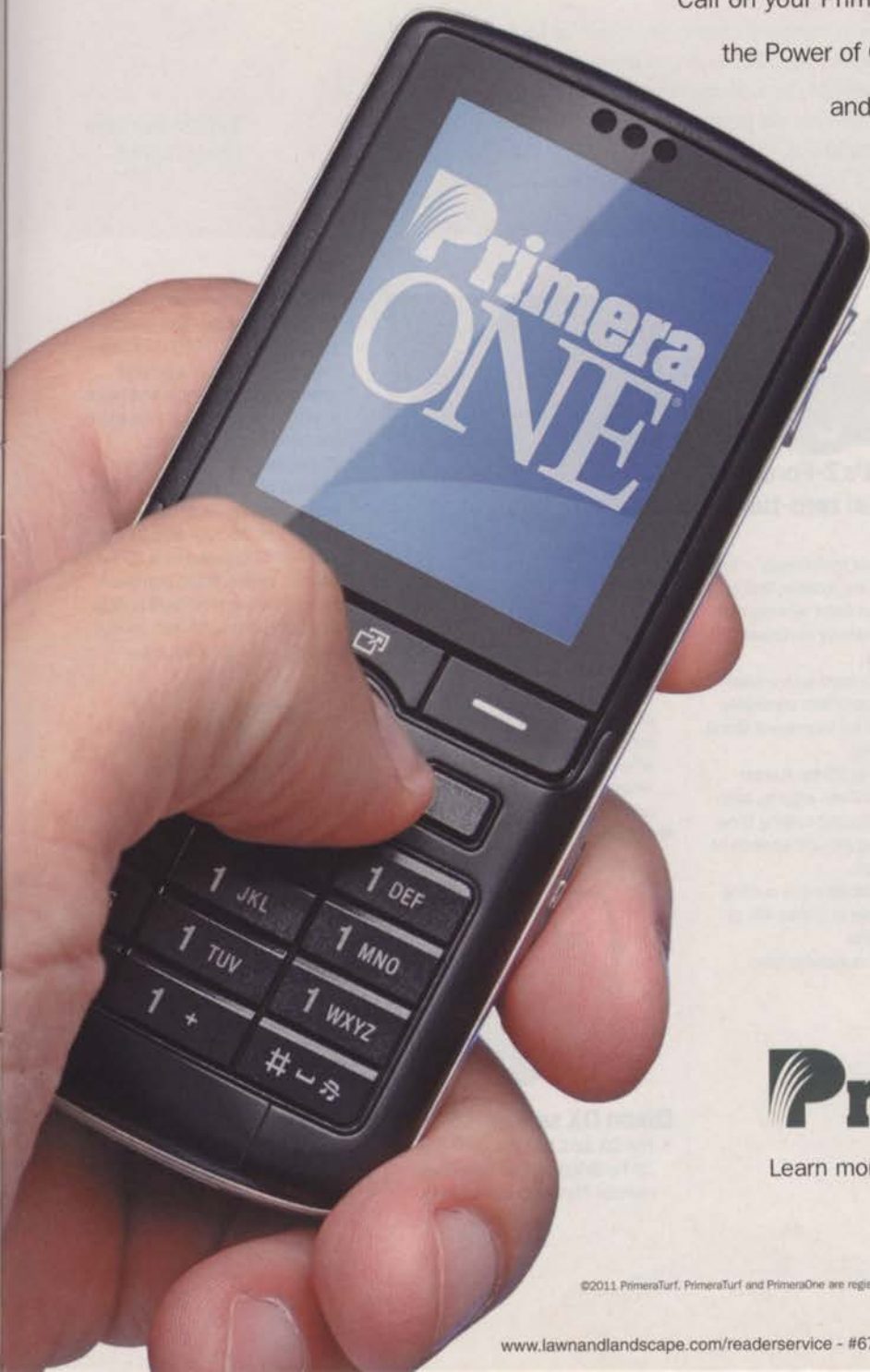
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A round-up of what's new in the world of zero-turn machines.

# New and improved

The zero-turn mower is the backbone of any mowing operation. If you're looking forward to what's new in the zero-turn mower world for 2011 or if you missed what came out in 2010, we've got you covered. Here are some of the latest innovations and updates from mower manufacturers. In addition, see our sidebar on propane mowers on pg 88.

To submit new product information for inclusion in an upcoming issue of *Lawn & Landscape*, send your information to Editor Chuck Bowen at [cbowen@gie.net](mailto:cbowen@gie.net).

By Brian Horn and Carolyn LaWell



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(continued on page 90)



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##### Acer dissectum 'Inaba shudare'

Red-leafing, mounding 6' tree with branches or can be used in a small container to 4' tall. Large, deeply lobed leaves can turn red and burnish with and warm red color throughout the growing season.



**Acer dissectum 'Orangeola'** - Red  
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#### FALL SHOW STOPPERS

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##### Acer palmatum amoenum

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



##### Acer dissectum 'Red Dragon'

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



##### Acer palmatum linearilobum

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



#### WINTER WONDER

##### Acer palmatum 'Beni kawa'

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

##### Acer palmatum 'Sango kaku'

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



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## ZERO TURN MOWERS

### Propane popularity

More landscapers are moving away from gasoline mowers.

Just three years ago, those searching for a propane riding mower had really only two options. But consumer demand for equipment powered by alternative fuels has opened up a whole new market.

In 2010, 12 major manufacturers were selling more than 29 propane models, says Brian Feehan, vice president, Propane Education Research Council. "The product availability has grown tremendously just in the past few years."

What's fueling the sudden rise in propane's popularity? The sustainability factor.

"We believe it's becoming more popular because of the environmental sustainability that you achieve with propane but at an economical cost," Feehan says.

Hilary Triick has used propane for almost a year at Pristine Green, the landscape maintenance company she co-owns with her husband, Jesse, in Byron Center, Mich. She says the switch has reduced her operation's fuel and maintenance costs. Triick says she paid about \$7,200 a piece for two 60-inch Turf Tracers, about \$170 for trimmers and \$150 for blowers, all of which were equipped for propane.

"Propane gives off 60-70 percent less smog forming emissions than regular gasoline," she says. "We reduce our carbon footprint by cutting carbon monoxide emissions by 60 percent and other toxins and carcinogens like benzene and toluene by 96 percent." Rolling off those numbers, Triick has been able to successfully promote using propane to her customers.

One of the few challenges Triick has come across in operating her equipment on propane is finding commercially operated products that run on the fuel. She says that can be solved through conversion systems like Alt Fuel (AltFuelconv.com).

Finding places to buy propane can also pose a challenge, but propane is actually abundant, says Feehan, adding that fact needs to be better communicated. PERC provides propane to 670,000 forklifts every day, and uses the same business model to deliver propane to landscapers.

Also, those looking for propane locations can use a smart phone app from the U.S. Department of Energy.

Another propane deterrent is that equipment costs more than conventional equipment, though its overall life-cycle usually provides the user pay-back, Feehan says. The economies of scale should tip the costs lower as the use of propane equipment continues to rise.

Not only is PERC working with engine suppliers and manufacturers to produce new equipment, but there has been a rise in the number of contractors retrofitting their own equipment with propane tanks.

"I think now that the educational materials are starting to pop up around the industry, people are starting to be more interested and will start to convert equipment," Triick says.



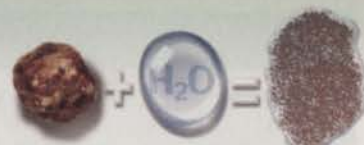


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## ZERO-TURN MOWERS

(continued from page 86)



### Exmark Vantage

- Features an ergonomically designed steering system and self-compensating suspension to make standing more comfortable for the operator.
- Powered by an 18- to 24-hp Kawasaki V-Twin or 25-hp Kohler Command Electronic Fuel Injection Pro V-Twin engine.
- 52-inch UltraCut Series 4 cutting deck.
- Speeds up to 8 mph forward and 4 mph reverse.
- Adjustable platform for mowing hill sides and fold up ability allowing for walk-behind functionality.

Contact: [www.exmark.com](http://www.exmark.com)



### Ferris Evolution Line-up

- Two years after introduction, Evolution has five models.
- Available from 19- to 27-hp with forward speed up to 10 mph.
- 36-, 48- or 52-inch mowing decks.
- For mowing in tight places or highly landscaped areas.

### IS 2500Z Line-up

- 3-cylinder, in-line diesel engines with cast iron blocks.
- A 20-hp model with 52-inch iCD cutting system, 24-hp model with 61-inch iCD cutting system and 24-hp model with 52-inch iCD cutting system.
- Four-wheel suspension.

Contact: [www.ferrisindustries.com](http://www.ferrisindustries.com)



### Grasshopper

- FrontMount models with the T6 and G2 drive systems feature standard QuikAdjust Tilt steering levers with a 9-inch adjustment range.
- A new winter enclosure for use with snow removal implements on 700 and 900 Series FrontMount models, also features contoured styling with doors on both sides and is pre-wired for installation of optional lights, heater and wiper.
- MidMount model 226V equipped with a 26-hp Professional Series V-Twin engine.
- Parker commercial-grade pump and wheel motor drive system offers heavy load bearing capability with CoolTemp HydroMax hydro fluid and filtration.

Robotically-welded and fabricated 5-1/2-inch-deep cutting decks provide wide-pattern side discharge with optional mulch and PowerVac capability.

Contact: [www.grasshoppermower.com](http://www.grasshoppermower.com)



### Gravely Pro-Ride mowers

- Features a high volume tunnel deck suited for mowing tall, thick, or wet grass.
- Made of heavy-duty 7-gauge welding construction, the tunnel deck features a 149-square-inch

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## ZERO-TURN MOWERS

discharge opening, overlapping blades and baffle-free front design.

- The Pro-Ride features a 66-inch deck with a 31-hp Kawasaki FX engine and is also available with a 54- or 60-inch deck and a 27-hp Kawasaki FX engine.

### The ZT42 zero-turn mower

- Delivers with its 12-gauge, stamped steel Xerator Deck.
- The newly-designed handle bars are a one-piece cushioned, fully tubular design that can be adjusted in three different directions to ensure a comfortable fit for any size operator.
- Features a 42-inch cutting deck and a 22-hp Kawasaki V-Twin engine.

Contact: [www.gravelly.com](http://www.gravelly.com)

### The Husqvarna P-ZT

- Heavy-duty chassis, 1/4-inch thick cutting deck and heavy-duty spindles.
- Integrated transmission reduces



chance of parts being exposed to the elements by enclosing them in an easily accessible area under the seat.

- Kawasaki and Briggs & Stratton engines, ZT3400 transmissions and land speeds up to 9 mph.

Contact: [www.husqvarna.com/us](http://www.husqvarna.com/us)

### Hustler X-ONE

- 48-, 54- and 60-inch side discharge decks with VX4 technology and 54-inch or 60-inch rear discharge decks.
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### Hustler Super Z

- 60-, 66-, or 72-inch side discharge deep deck with VX4 technology and 60- or 72-inch rear discharge.
- Kohler or Kawasaki engines up to 37 mph.
- Industrial grade pumps and motors.
- SmoothTrak Steering for responsive precise control.

Contact: [www.hustlerturf.com](http://www.hustlerturf.com)



### John Deere Z700 ZTrack Series

- 7-Iron II mower deck with mowing speeds up to 10 mph.
- 400-pound towing capacity.
- Pneumatic front tires, high-back bucket seat with armrests and rollover protect structure and easy-grip turning height-of-cut adjustment for improved comfort and convenience.
- Less expensive and fewer features than ZTrack PRO Series.

Contact: [www.deere.com](http://www.deere.com)

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## Project EverGreen: Continuing to Make a Measurable Difference

By Norman Goldenberg, President  
Project EverGreen Board of Directors

Just six years ago, with the support of our contributors, staff and industry partners, Project EverGreen launched an effort to preserve and enhance green spaces in our communities for today and future generations.

We remain committed to winning the hearts and minds of consumers by using local grassroots efforts to carry the resonating message about green spaces throughout America—ultimately sustaining the vibrant green industry that makes it all possible.

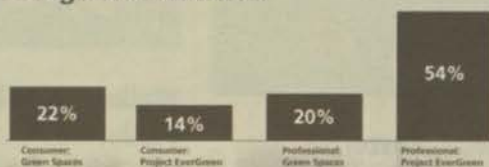
### Highlights:

- The Milwaukee EverGreen Zone launched with landscape personality, Melinda Myers, as spokesperson.
- Our third EverGreen Zone launched in North Carolina in Spring 2010.
- We officially launched Project EverGreen in Canada.
- Green industry companies are now including the Project EverGreen logo into their business and marketing materials.
- A new hosta named for GreenCaare for Troops goes on sale this summer.
- We continue working closely with other green industry associations to help educate consumers about how we are positively impacting green spaces.
- Holiday CD by Little Chicago is a big hit nationwide.

### EverGreen Zone Grassroots Education Program Returned in Akron, Ohio and launched in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 2009

Independent research verifies that we continue to increase consumer awareness about the benefits of green spaces. By educating consumers through EverGreen Zones, we are changing consumer attitudes.

#### Change in Awareness:



### GreenCare for Troops Continues to Grow

- The total number of families grew by 21% in 2009.
- The total number of volunteers grew by 20% in 2009.
- Approximately 9,200 military families and more than 2,400 volunteers are involved.



### Help Us Spread the Good News About "Managed Green Spaces"

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## ZERO-TURN MOWERS



### Scag Cheetah

- Two-speed heavy-duty hydraulic drive system.
- Adjustable operator suspension system.
- 61-inch or 72-inch Velocity Plus cutter deck.
- Ground speeds up to 16 mph.

Contact: [www.scag.com](http://www.scag.com)



### Snapper Pro – S75x

- 20- or 26-hp Kawasaki engine and industrial two-stage air cleaner.
- Individual hydro-gear pumps and wheel motors.
- ICD cutting system with 52-inch deck.
- 10 mph ground speed.

Contact: [www.snapperpro.com](http://www.snapperpro.com)



### Toro Z Master G3 propane-powered mowers

- Offers ground speeds up to 11.5 mph.
- Single propane tank holds 43.5

lbs. of liquid propane mounted behind the seat.

- Propane-powered mowers have deck sizes of 60 or 72 inches.
- Similar benefits of the Z Master G3 series: height-of-cut system gives operators 1- to 5-1/2-inch cuts in 1/4-inch increments.

Contact: [www.toro.com](http://www.toro.com)



### Walker Super B Diesel Model MBSY

- Diesel option of the popular Super B.
- Fitted with Yanmar's 23.6-hp "Minimax" engine.
- Meets Tier 4 exhaust emission regulations.

- Engine package includes an oversized, heavy duty radiator with self-cleaning fan and rubber isolation engine mounts.

Contact: [www.walkermowers.com](http://www.walkermowers.com)



### Wright Commercial Products Stander X

- Combines a quick cut height adjustment and floating deck.
- Available with a 48-, 52- or 61-inch deck.
- Cut speed of 9.5 mph.
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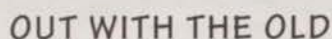


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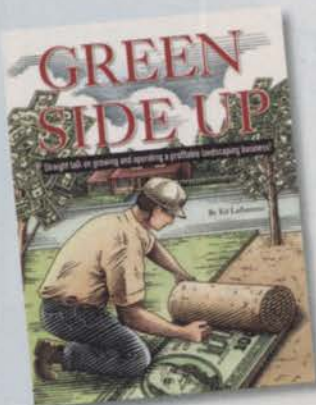


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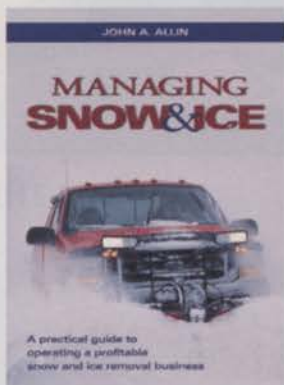
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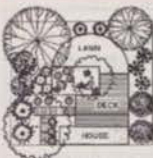
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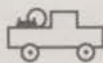
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# Jennifer Lemcke

COO, Weed  
Man USA

**What have you been up to since you won your award in 2008?**

We've really been working hard at creating an online presence. So, just to kind of put it into perspective, at Weed Man one of the things, as a franchising organization, we have what's called the National Ad Fund. In the past, because we didn't have a critical mass of franchises across the U.S., they were taking back that National Ad Fund and putting it at a regional level.

From 2008 until now, we have collectively gathered those dollars and now are really working on pushing our branding at a national level. So, that's kind of what I've been focused on is developing and expanding our brand and really, we've been doing a lot of stuff online, and some other things we've been doing, as well, to help support the brand and help support the marketing efforts at the local level.

When I say developing an online presence, in the past, what we had was a national website and all of our franchisees were tucked into this one website.

We recreated and developed a brand on a national website. But, what we did was, every single franchise got their own website so that they could expand our footprint. We went from one website to over 100 websites representing the Weed Man brand. ... What we really want is for the franchisee to attract people online at a local level.

**What is your take on how the industry will recover from the economic troubles of the last couple of years?**

I think companies need to work smarter. You hear all about the sustainability, and that's really what it all means is working smarter. It's hard (to say) because our company has not been hard hit. The lawn care segment of our industry is typically not hit hard by recessions. We are a low-ticket item. We are able to protect and create curb appeal for consumers at a low

cost, so it's not usually something that people drop in the green industry. A lot of times they drop adding that pool, they'll drop that big landscaping job, they'll drop maybe removing trees or changing things up, but they'll keep their lawn care services.

I'm on the PLANET board, and I can see what's going on. The hardest hit is the design/build group. They need to find recurring revenue. To weather this storm, they need to figure out a service that they can offer through maybe diversifying and offering a more rounded service to their customer, but think in ways that will create recurring revenue.

Then that way you aren't fighting to get the customer, or if one customer goes away, it's not your entire business. I'm not saying just diversify into everything. Be smart about your diversification and look for things that create recurring revenue for your company.

**What kind of advice would you give someone who is starting a landscaping company?**

What's your mission and what is your vision? What do

you want to be as a company? Who are you? What type of culture do you want to develop in your company?

What kind of employees do you want to have representing your company? Stay true with that.

If you are new to the industry, I would definitely develop relationships with your vendors, with some of your competitors, with some of the people that are in the industry. Get involved in your state and national associations. Make sure to lean on your vendors because vendors nowadays aren't just supplying product, they are supplying all kinds of different services that you can't even imagine.

I would recommend not being cutting edge. Especially landscapers, they tend to get caught up in a sales pitch and all of a sudden they've got 10 new pieces of equipment that create scheduling issues for them, routing issues, nothing's the same so it becomes very hard to train their employees on how to do quick fixes.

They end up having to hire mechanics on staff just because they have all these different types of machinery and no one knows how to fix it. So I would stay a little bit below the radar. You want "new," but do it smart. L&L



Read more from Lemcke, including her 2008 Leadership profile, at [www.lawnandlandscape.com/leadershiplessons](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/leadershiplessons).





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