

SEPTEMBER 2011
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Lawn & Landscape

Leading business media for landscape contractors

THE
SALES
ISSUE

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Key decisions, pg. 52

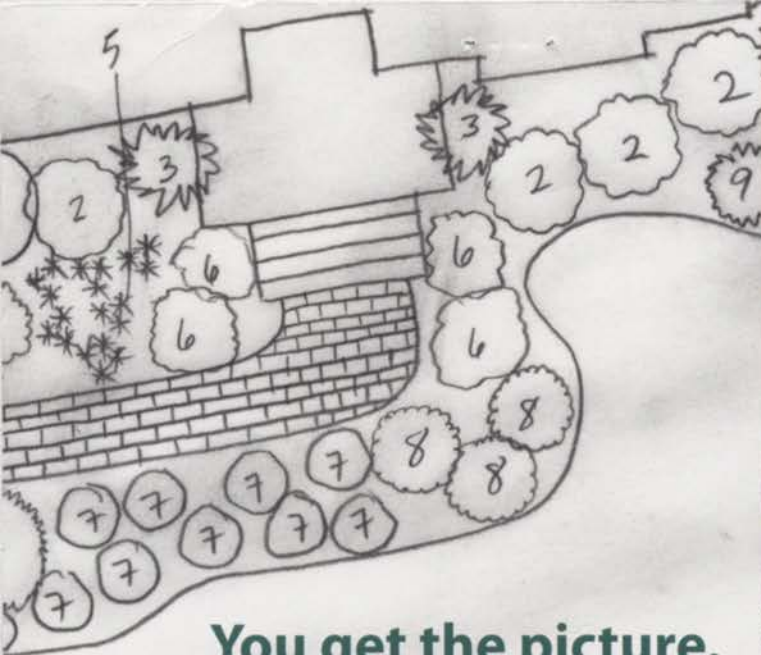
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Saying no, pg. 71


EARTH, TURF
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steal these sales ideas

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
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steal these sales ideas

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THE SALES ISSUE

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


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ONLINE Contents

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

Around the Horn

Since our goal here at *Lawn & Landscape* is to give you tips and ideas to run your business better, we want you directly communicating with each other. So we're starting "Around the Horn" where every month we'll pose a question in the magazine, as well as on our Facebook (www.facebook.com/lawnandlandscape) and Twitter (@lawnandlandscape) pages. You can answer on either one of those pages or email lleditors@gie.net. We'll post some of the best answers online and in print. – Brian Horn



HERE'S THIS MONTH'S QUESTION. **Do you attend the GIE+EXPO at the end of October? Why or why not?**



ATTENTION TWEETS

The team at *Lawn & Landscape* wants to meet you, so we're planning a Tweet Up at GIE+EXPO. Keep an eye on our Facebook and Twitter pages for further details.



Check out the latest multimedia from *Lawn & Landscape*

Branded plants

Is production going up, and what varieties are hot sellers in the market these days?
bit.ly/brandedplants



Color rules

Faith Savage from Syngenta Flowers shows off lantana and cyclamen varieties.
bit.ly/syngentaplant



MasterTag talks color

Gerry Giorgio explains how color displays increase sales for your business.
bit.ly/mastertag



TOP TWEETS

Some stories our Tweeps liked:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A recommendation from the *Lawn & Landscape* blog about how to improve the interview process
bit.ly/fieldquestions

SOME FAVORABLE TAX BREAKS END THIS YEAR

Take advantage of these tax-savers before they're scheduled to expire.
bit.ly/endtax

RUPPERT CONSTRUCTS SOLAR FARM

The project will cost a little more than \$1 million dollars.
bit.ly/ruppertsolar



SO LONG, PAPER

John Newlin went paperless at his irrigation company – and saved his business.
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A fresh start

I've always thought of the fall as the real start of the year. Here in Ohio, you can't really tell the difference between the cold, dark time of December and the cold, dark time of January, so New Year's has never felt like much of a time of change.

The fall, for me, has always been a time to start new things. I got married in the fall. My two daughters were born

in the fall, and the oldest just started kindergarten. It's a time of fresh starts, new projects and big changes.

But these changes haven't always been good. This fall marks the 10-year anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks. This summer, I attended a talk from Richard Picciotto, commander of the 11th battalion of the New York City Fire Department. Picciotto has the honor to have evacuated the World Trade Center twice – first in 1993 and again in 2001.

I watched the live coverage 10 years ago, glued to the television with everyone else in the country, but to see the devastation again and hear Picciotto describe the sheer horror he saw brought it all back, and then some.

I have a cousin in the Marines, and several friends in other branches of the military. I support what they do, but if I had my way, I'd have them stateside and not getting shot at in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Capt. Picciotto's message this summer was simple: After the Sept. 11 attacks, the country came together to heal, repair

and fight back. Since then, we've lost a lot of that feeling, he said. He's right.

Sept. 11 was a lot of things to a lot of people, but for me, it's always been a reminder of how short life can be. You never know what will happen or how the course of global events can impact your daily life. We can't change what happened 10 years ago, but we can change and improve what we do tomorrow.

“After the Sept. 11 attacks, the country came together to heal, repair and fight back. We've lost a lot of that.

So take some time this fall and see what you can start to improve – not just your own space, but that of those around you.

It's an uncertain world, and whether it's yourself, your family or your business, the next few months can be a time of great changes. I hope they're all for the best. – Chuck Bowen



See my video blog at www.lawnandlandscape.com.

Lawn & Landscape

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Fred Titensor, Manager
Valley Implement, Preston, ID



Fred Titensor sells and services equipment and machinery to about 1,000 customers in the ag business and believes in "doing transactions over the hood with a handshake." He rarely visits his West Motor Co. dealership because his BusinessLink dealer knows Fred's time is valuable and always comes out to see him. When Fred wanted to fly 30 customers to a combine factory, he asked if he could rent a couple minivans to take them to the airport. "They said 'we got you covered' and the next day they had a fleet of minivans there for me."

With his free BusinessLink membership, Fred gets priority service for the Dodge and Ram trucks that he considers his lifeline. These trucks live a hard life, but so far he hasn't had to take advantage of the shuttle service, 24/7 towing or options for free loaner vehicles.

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Swingle sees early increase in holiday lighting sales



DENVER – Swingle Lawn, Tree and Landscape Care has seen businesses along the Colorado Front Range getting an early jump on outdoor Christmas lighting and holiday décor plans.

In the months of June and July, Swingle's lead requests were up 50 percent and sold work was up more than 10 percent.

The company's marketing pieces have generated leads, and many of those resulted in sales made earlier than last year, said President John Gibson, who attributed the jump in activity to a mix of heightened focus on the company's part and clients' interests in holiday displays.

"We don't usually see quite this much volume this early in the year," said Tom Tolkacz, CEO of Swingle. "Businesses are seeing the benefits of custom lighting displays and many are under increased pressure to set themselves apart during the competitive holiday season."

A percentage of Swingle's increased sales have come from lighting themed around Halloween, special events taking place

in the fall and even scheduling and design for the residential sector. Swingle's award-winning outdoor holiday lighting displays include Blossoms of Light and Trail of Lights for the Denver Botanic Gardens.

"Consumer interest and acumen in commercial lighting displays has grown commensurate with their popularity," said Swingle's Director of Sales and Marketing Aaron Dennis. "Our lift in bid requests is principally from townships, cities and retail shopping centers seeking to give shoppers a reason to come to visit their merchants and to refer others to do so as well.

"The overall increased use and established success of professional holiday decor as a marketing tactic means expanded displays and increased customization from our existing customers, and new market entry from businesses and organizations who, to date, have done it themselves but now are lost among the larger, more prominent and more striking professional displays."

– Carolyn LaWell

EPA bans sale, use of Imprelis

WASHINGTON – The Environmental Protection Agency banned the sale, use and distribution of DuPont's Imprelis after further investigation into the products linkage to injured trees. The agency's ruling in early August came a week after DuPont suspended sales of the product.

The EPA continues to investigate whether the incidents of browning and curling is the result of product misuse, inadequate warning and use directions on the product's label, persistence in soil and plant material or other possible causes.

DuPont, which is also investigating the matter, started a return and refund program and set up a hotline and website in order for consumers to report problems.

In a letter to consumers announcing the sales suspension, DuPont's Global Business Leader, Michael McDermott, said, "We sincerely regret any tree injuries that Imprelis may have caused, and will work with you and all of our customers to promptly and fairly resolve problems associated with our product."

The product return and refund program cover all partial containers and all pack sizes of Imprelis.

The hotline (866-796-4783) and website (imprelis-facts.com) offer additional sources for Imprelis updates and allow consumers to report problems they've encountered after using the product.

DuPont's efforts and the investigations are in response to reports of, according to DuPont, injuries to Norway spruce and white pine trees in the Minnesota, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Wisconsin geographic band. McDermott said that the company has engaged with 20 independent, certified arborist companies to work with anyone who has claimed damage from the product.

Multiple lawsuits have been filed against DuPont, charging that the company was negligent or reckless in putting a new weed killer on the market.



READ ON

For the latest Imprelis news, including the most recent letter from DuPont and a guide to Imprelis-related injuries produced by Michigan State University, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com and search "Imprelis."



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Vila & Son ceases operations

MIAMI – In the midst of selling the company, Vila & Son ran out of cash and ceased operations.

“We had a couple of offers, but unfortunately we ran out of money before the prospective buyers could finish their due diligence,” said Alan Goldberg, who joined the company in March as its chief restructuring officer. “The company has ceased operations and is in the process of closing down.”

The company’s last day of operation was Aug. 5. At the time, it had about 500 employees, Goldberg said.

About a dozen employees remain with the company and the legal process of officially closing could take six months to a year, said Goldberg, who also owns Crisis Management, Inc.

“A lot of employees have gone with the companies that have taken over some of our jobs,” Goldberg said, adding one of those companies is Terra Bella, a construction company based in Jupiter, Fla.

Vila & Son was heavily reliant on the construction market, in addition to offering maintenance, irrigation, tree care and lighting services.

“That’s tough on a company,” Goldberg said to

Lawn & Landscape in July. “Construction, mainline construction, went down and landscape construction went down.”

According to *Lawn & Landscape’s* Top 100 list, Vila & Son posted revenue of \$62.5 million in 2008, \$53.8 million in 2009 and \$45.9 million in 2010. This year, Vila & Son ranked 18th on the list of the largest companies in the industry.

In a letter to customers dated Aug. 5, Juan Carlos Vila, who founded the company in 1984, said “After 28 years of doing business in the landscaping industry we have had the opportunity to



Vila

create meaningful relationships through our commitment to do whatever it takes to earn the loyalty of our customers and employees. This

commitment has been tested by financial distress; we have worked closely with the bank and other entities to keep Vila & Son providing services to those who, like you, have trusted us with the honor to serve you.

“We did everything we could to stay in business, but today Vila & Son had to stop operating.”

Goldberg said Vila is no longer with the company.

– Carolyn LaWell

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Atlanta, GA October 12, 2011	Buffalo, NY December 13, 2011	Baltimore, MD February 1, 2012
New Orleans, LA October 18, 2011	Philadelphia, PA December 14, 2011	Columbus, OH February 7, 2012
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St. Louis, MO November 8, 2011	Orlando, FL January 5, 2012	Denver, CO March 7, 2012

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U.S. Lawns adds six franchises

ORLANDO, Fla. – Continuing an aggressive expansion as it celebrates its 25th anniversary, Orlando-based U.S. Lawns added six new franchisees to its network of more than 240 landscape-management franchises nationwide.

The company has brought on nearly two dozen franchisees during the past 12 months and currently operates in all 48 contiguous states.

The newest group of franchisees recently completed training at U.S. Lawns' home office in Orlando. The training consisted of classroom and field training in all areas of commercial landscape management. U.S. Lawns regional franchise advisers were assigned to each new franchisee and will work closely with the owners during the start-up months and provide ongoing, one-on-one training in both business planning and agronomics.

"These new franchisees are crucial additions in our efforts to create the nation's top commercial landscape-management network," said Ken Hutcheson, U.S. Lawns president. "As with all our franchisees, we will continue to mentor and support them as they grow and provide the outstanding commercial landscape-management services U.S. Lawns is known for nationwide."

U.S. Lawns' new franchisees are:

- Elizabeth and Freddy Villegas, Lubbock, Texas
- Patrick Murphy, Farmington Hills, Mich.
- Terry Engler and Justin Nelson, Wichita, Kan.
- Kent Smith, Brooklyn Park, Minn.
- George and Stacy Guthrie, Montclair, Va.



DID YOU MISS IT?

When *Lawn & Landscape* interviewed Hutcheson in May, he reflected on a quarter century of growth and how he plans to nearly triple the company's revenue. To read the interview, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com and search "U.S. Lawns."



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—Chris Paisley
*Mariani Landscape
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Thousand Cankers disease moves east

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) confirmed a case of Thousand Cankers in



Thousand Cankers causes branch dieback.

Virginia. For several years, Thousand Cankers has been causing widespread decline and death of walnut trees in Western states. This confirmation marks the disease's first appearance east of Knoxville, Tenn., where it was detected in 2010.

The discovery was made in Richmond, Va., when two Bartlett Tree Experts arborists noticed decline and dieback symptoms consistent with the

disease on a group of black walnuts on a client's property.

"Knowing how important rapid detection and communication of the disease would be to help prevent its spread, we immediately contacted our Plant Diagnostic Clinic," said Alan Jones, an arborist and division manager at Bartlett Tree Experts. "With their help in collecting samples from the declining trees, a positive identification was made quickly."

According to the VDACS, Thousand Cankers is caused by a fungus that is vectored by the walnut twig beetle. Adult beetles bore through the bark and deposit eggs. As the larvae hatch, they tunnel through the tree, introducing the fungus and causing cankers under the bark.

The result is branch dieback, decline and eventual death of the tree.

Effective controls for the disease have not been developed.

>>>**CONTINUAL CARE:** Bartlett Tree Experts cares for the trees that will be planted in the plaza of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum. See the story on pg. 80.

Four Star hosts Landscape Day

CARLETON, Mich. – The threat of inclement weather could not keep a crowd of landscape professionals away from the 4th Annual Landscape Day at Four Star Greenhouse. The rain held off long enough for everyone to enjoy the gardens, dinner, helicopter rides and lots of networking.

The display gardens at Four Star are a stop on the Michigan Garden Tour,

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The display gardens at Four Star Greenhouse are a stop on the Michigan Garden Tour.



Toro hires new CFO

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – The Toro Co. has elected Renee J. Peterson to the offices of vice president, finance and CFO.

Peterson will report to Michael J. Hoffman, chairman and CEO, and succeeds Stephen P. Wolfe, who will be retiring after more than 25 years with the company.

Peterson, 50, joins Toro from Eaton Corp. There she most recently served as vice president, finance and planning for that company's truck and automotive segments, which had revenues of nearly \$4 billion over the past 12 months.

"Renee's extensive financial leadership experience in global businesses and proven track record in process improvements and cost controls will serve us well as we drive profitable revenue growth," Hoffman said. **L&L**

a coordinated open house of leading young plant growers across southern Michigan. Guests were able to explore the display gardens on their own or with the guidance of the new Display Garden Coordinator Pat Siebel. More than 20 in-ground landscape beds feature the new Proven Winners and Proven Selections plants for 2012.

A tour was also available of the green-

house facilities and growing operation.

Stacey Hirvela from Spring Meadow Nursery presented a talk on "Ten shrubs that are better than what your competition uses – but won't take you out of your (or your customer's) comfort zone." She explained why ColorChoice varieties of plants widely used in the landscaping are a better choice – habit, flowers, seedless, disease resistance.

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EuroAmerican hosts landscapers

The Proven Winners partner put together three days of industry education in Southern California. By Chuck Bowen

BONSALL, Calif. – EuroAmerican Propagators, part of the Proven Winners plant brand, hosted landscapers, greenhouse growers and garden center operators at its Bonsall, Calif., headquarters earlier this summer.

The second annual event brought together about 100 green industry professionals during three days of education.

During the landscape day, Curtis Brooks, a production specialist with the Brickman Group, explained how he and the company's San Diego branch worked with Proven Winners to renovate and redesign the gardens at the Hotel Del Coronado, one of the first of Proven Winner's Signature Gardens.

Brooks and the team at EuroAmerican worked with staff at the Del for a year and a half to put together a plan to redo the hotel's once-famous gardens. In recent years, the landscape had been "piece-mealed" and was in disarray – 70 varieties cobbled together without an apparent plan, Brooks said.

The team at Brickman renovated the hotel's Windsor Lawn area, which had very compacted soil (it hosts receptions during the season and doubles as an ice rink in the winter months).

"We took baby steps at the Hotel Del," Brooks said, describing his efforts to renovate the gardens and introduce branded plant material. "Their budget is very tight. (The project) was a great way to be proactive with the client."

The project was a pilot for Proven Winners, which has recently made efforts to court landscape contractors. The company, a partnership of EuroAmerican Propagators in California, Four Star Greenhouse in Michigan and Pleasant View Gardens in New Hampshire.

OWN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD. Contractors in attendance also heard Shirley Bovshow outline her tips for landscapers to target their marketing efforts to individual streets. Bovshow hosts garden/landscape TV show "Garden Police."

Bovshow said that landscapers can make their clients feel special, satisfy the curiosity of the neighbors and leverage their body of work to get more business. Here are her suggestions:

1. Create an online photo album on Photobucket, Flickr, etc. that your client can share with their friends and family



Siena Randall of EuroAmerican and Curtis Brooks of Brickman talk during landscape day.

Visit www.lawnandlandscape.com to watch videos that explain Brickman's work on a Proven Winners Signature Garden, a primer on PW's plant trialing process, and an outline of the succulents in PW's collection.



to update them on before and after, as well as status of the job.

2. Shoot a "nosey neighbor" video update. It doesn't need to go viral worldwide, just up and down the street. Push it out through social media outlets.

3. At the beginning of the job, or the day before you start, introduce yourself to four neighbors. Talk about the hours your crews will be there, the noise. Give them a one-sheet with your website, a before and after picture and your cell phone number. That way they call you with complaints – not the HOA.

4. Create an artistic garden plaque if the HOA won't allow signs. Name the garden, include the year and (smaller, tastefully) your company's name.

5. Throw a garden party when the project's complete. Ask your client to invite their friends and neighbors to check out the new installation. Ask a vendor to help spring for the food and drink. On the way out, hand everyone a small potted plant with your business card in it. **L&L**

The author is editor of *Lawn & Landscape*. He can be reached at cbowen@gle.net.



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PLANET members gather for annual Renewal & Remembrance and Legislative Day on the Hill.

Capital effort



By Carolyn LaWell

WASHINGTON – Green industry professionals from across the country gathered in the nation's capital for a day of service at Arlington National Cemetery and a day of discussion about industry issues on Capitol Hill.

PLANET's annual Renewal & Remembrance and Legislative Day on the Hill events took place July 24-26 and brought more than 400 individuals to Washington. The Irrigation Association and Tree Care Industry Association partnered with PLANET to host this year's event.

Renewal & Remembrance started with a ceremony to recognize the reason for gathering – to honor the men and women who fought for our country. Then the 395 adults and 58 children who participated spent the day – in the sweltering heat – caring for and cabling trees, pruning, liming, mulching, planting and aerating at Arlington National Cemetery. The gift was valued at more than \$200,000, and in the 15 years PLANET has hosted the event, more than \$2 million has been contributed.

"We are signifying our continued commitment to honor the men and women to whom we owe our liberties and freedom," said Walter Wray, PLANET member and chairman of the event. "By contributing to the environment at this sacred place, we are giving back to the many heroes and their families. Our members consider it a privilege to be able

Renewal & Remembrance by the numbers

- 395 adults and 58 children participated
- 101 companies represented
- 28 states represented
- 30 area captains
- 120 tons of lime applied to 271 acres
- 30 acres of turf aerated
- 24 yards of soil installed
- 24 yards of mulch applied
- Four trees installed
- 1,381 perennials planted
- Six trees pruned, cabled and bracing installed
- Lightning protection installed on seven trees
- The Columbarium and Receiving Vault irrigation systems were updated

More than 400 individuals participated in PLANET's Renewal & Remembrance program at Arlington National Cemetery. The day began with a ceremony and then participants got down to work.





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Renewal & Remembrance attracted 101 companies. Participants laid lime, aerated turf and mulched and planted flower beds.



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--Andy Klasons, Andy's Lawn & Landscaping

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--Jan Rubey, Rubey Lawn Care, LLC

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--Brian Ernst, Green Masters

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to lend our time and talents to such a worthwhile project."

Nufarm, which has been attending the event since the start and is a sponsor, was represented by 32 people – employees and their families. Nufarm Vice President of Sales Sean Casey said not only does it allow the company to give back, but it allows employees who are based across the country to bond.

"We do it as a team, so it gives the team some bonding time," he said. "This allows them a chance to work together and for one purpose."

For Legislative Day on the Hill, approximately 170 participants attended a breakfast to hear Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-OR) and then navigated the Capitol's grounds, meeting with state representatives and senators to discuss the greatest issues affecting the green industry.

Among the big topics of the day: H-2B guest worker program, EPA WaterSense program, H.R. 872 and Reducing the Regulatory Burdens Act of 2011 (see Issue Briefing, pg. 26).

Groups spent the day talking with legislators and their staff members from nearly a dozen states.

"Two things are gained when you take time to come down here," said Nancy Sadlon, executive director of the N.J. Green Industry Council, who attended the event for the fifth year and met with a handful of her state politicians. "You actually get to realize that your voice can make a difference and you do have access to your legislators. And there is nothing better than face-to-face communication to explain how a bill or legislation impacts your company or your industry personally." L&L

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

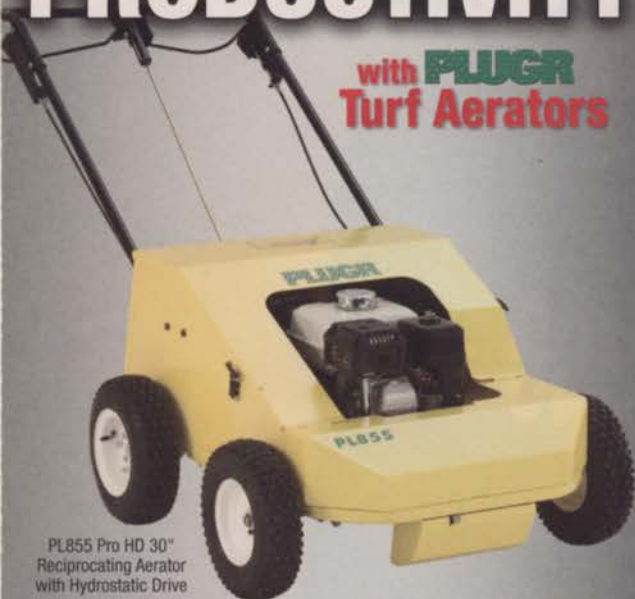
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L&L ON THE ROAD



A group from Colorado prepares for a day on Capitol Hill.

Issue briefing

Here is a more in-depth look at some of the issues Legislative Day on the Hill participants discussed with their representatives and senators.

EPA WaterSense. In 2009, the Environmental Protection Agency WaterSense program released specifications for single-family new homes to be labeled "water efficient." A key component of the criteria is to meet one of two options for outdoor landscape design: Use a clearly defined water budget tool or restrict turfgrass to 40 percent of the home's landscapeable area, regardless of the location, climate and geography of the house.

PLANET and other associations are concerned about the one-size-fits-all turfgrass restriction and believe it will negatively affect the landscape industry and local environments. While the program is voluntary, PLANET said other governing bodies are adopting it as rule.

PLANET has urged the EPA to support only the water budget language. The congressional authorization of WaterSense has been introduced in the House of Representatives and PLANET has asked legislators to remove the turfgrass restriction from the bill.

H-2B visa program. The Department of Labor ruled companies in the landscaping industry must raise the wage of H-2B workers by \$3.60 per hour starting Sept. 30. PLANET contends the cost to employers will actually be much higher than just the wage increase once other associated costs are factored in: labor increases for similarly employed and more experienced American workers, additional payroll costs, workers' compensation insurance and overtime costs.

The H-2B Workforce Coalition

estimates the rule will result in annual increases of between \$100,000 and \$400,000 for businesses that use the program.

A second proposed rule by DOL would make the program more expensive and complicated to use, according to PLANET. The rule would require employers to leave the job open for American workers up to three days before the H-2B worker arrives. There is opposition to the rule because employers have already assisted with the visa process and paid for transportation, housing and other fees, but then may have to turn the H-2B worker away at the last minute if an American worker is found. PLANET has encouraged the DOL to rescind the final wage methodology rule and the proposed rule.

H.R. 872 – Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act of 2011. This legislation clarifies that duplicative Clean Water Act permits are not needed for pesticide applications approved by the EPA. The legislation passed the House with bipartisan support in March and PLANET is encouraging the Senate to follow suit.

A court decision will require applicators to have National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Systems Permits (NPDES) for pesticide application to, over or near water beginning Oct. 31.

According to PLANET, the ruling will require a great deal of paperwork and reporting requirements, make the process complicated and costly and create confusion about which applications actually require permits. In the end, it could leave applicators vulnerable to lawsuits.

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Husqvarna unveils new R&D center

The facility will house walk-behind, ride-on and handheld products. By Brian Horn



Blowers are one of the many products that will be focused on at Husqvarna's new Research and Development center. The building features 32,000 square feet of lab test space.

CHARLOTTE N.C. – Husqvarna invited *Lawn & Landscape*, and other media outlets to its Research and Development center just outside of Charlotte recently to give media members a tour, and a chance to try out some of the company's newest products.

The R&D Center focuses on walk-behind, ride-on and handheld products, and all aspects of product engineering, including both new product development and existing product support.

Products include riding mowers, zero-turn mowers, walk behind lawn mowers, tillers, snow throwers, trimmers, blowers, chainsaws and hedge

trimmers that are built at multiple plants across the world.

Both gas and electric products are addressed at the facility.

“Our new R&D facility allows us to test all elements – design, physical build and usage testing – to ensure the utmost integrity of our commercial products in an effort to provide the best product we can to professionals,” said Jim Parello, marketing manager at Husqvarna.

“Commercial landscaping and landscapers are and will continue to be a major focus for our company.”

The building is big enough to house almost 200 people and features 32,000

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square feet of lab test space and approximately 100,000 square feet in office space. Husqvarna will look to recruit talent from the area by working with the 36 colleges and universities in North Carolina.

The core teams working out of the building include: industrial design, advanced purchasing, manufacturing engineering, CAD rendering, prototyping and analysis, testing, product design and certification testing. The newer products media members were able to use included, zero-turn mowers, chain-saws, tractors and trimmers.

In the field, we raced through obstacle courses using tractors and zero-turn-mowers (and all lived to tell about it) and it gave media members a feel for what landscapers do on a daily basis. Although, we hope you weren't popping wheelies like one writer did. **L&L**

Bobcat hosts **Editor Boot Camp**

The manufacturer invited media to Fargo to test the M-Series line. By Carolyn LaWell

FARGO, N.D. – *Lawn & Landscape* was one of eight magazines invited to attend Bobcat's first Editor Boot Camp in Fargo, N.D., to test the latest M-Series line of compact equipment.

The M-Series, which launched in the spring of 2009 with segments of equipment rolling out ever since, made enhancements in the categories of performance, comfort, uptime protection, serviceability and controls.

Day 1 was a rundown on loaders and attachments. Bobcat product managers gave an in-depth presentation and demonstration on the improvements to skid-steer and compact track loaders and then gave attending editors the chance to take over machines and dig in the dirt – well, mud because Fargo received nearly four inches of rain the day before.

Among the features tested in the

different pieces of equipment were the controls. While standard control remains popular among Bobcat buyers, the skid-steers and compact track loaders also come with two other control options: Advanced Control System, which allows operators to switch between two control styles with just a flip of a switch, and Selectable Joystick Controls, which gives full-hand control of all machine functions.

Day 2 was a lesson on excavators. Editors toyed with the latest features and different attachments. A feature that comes standard on all M-Series excavators is the auto idle function. The engine automatically idles when machine functions are not used for more than four seconds, which lowers noise and makes it easier to communicate on the job site, or, in the editors' situations, yell for help on how to work a machine.

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60% A *Business Insider* survey found 60% of businesses considered their Groupon experience a success. But more than half said they don't want to run another Groupon deal, and half said they would not recommend Groupon to another small business.

3%

American employers are expected to raise wages an average of 3 percent in 2012, according to a new survey by consulting firm Mercer. Top-performing workers can expect even larger raises at 4.4%. "Employers realize that in order to hang on to their best employees, they're going to have to reward them," said Catherine Hartmann, a principal with Mercer's rewards consulting business. "And while non-cash rewards, such as training and new opportunities, enhance retention, base pay is still the most important element of the employment deal."



55% While 55% of households with a lawn or garden planned to use weed control on their lawns this summer, that number is down 5% from 2010, according to the 2011 Early Summer Gardening Trends Survey. Other findings: the number of households that planned to use insect control in 2011 remained at 40%, but reseeding lawns jumped 10%, meaning 36% of households planned for the lawn treatment.



WEEKEND!

2%

Apparently the Monday blues aren't a myth. A Gallup-Healthways poll conducted from January 2008 through June 2009 found that American's happiness levels stay even during the workweek. The change comes Saturday and Sunday. ***Weekend socializing boosted the respondents' aggregate happiness by 2%.*** The reason? According to the data, it was more time – about 1.7 hours daily, on average – spent with family and friends.

\$50 million

The USDA allocated \$50 million, which is provided by the **2008 Farm Bill**, for projects that prevent the introduction or spread of plant pests and diseases that threaten U.S. agriculture and the environment. "USDA is continuing its partnership with states, industry and other interested groups under the 2008 Farm Bill to prevent the entry of invasive plant pests and diseases, quickly detect those that may slip in and enhance our emergency response capabilities," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.



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Greenscape, Holly Springs, NC

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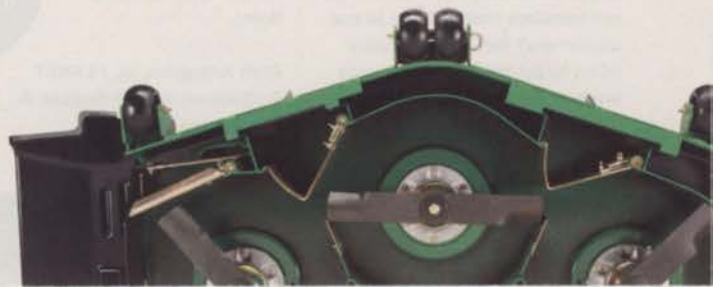
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JOHN DEERE





EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION AND EXEMPT WORKERS

ASK THE EXPERTS is presented in partnership with PLANET's Trailblazers On Call program. Trailblazers are industry leaders who volunteer their time and expertise to give back to the industry.

Q. How can I improve employee retention without spending a great deal of money on additional benefits?

A. First and foremost, you must remember that your employees are as important as, if not more important, than your customers. One good employee can help you keep a customer for life and one bad employee can cause you to lose it all.

Your employees have more potential contact with your customers than any other person on your team.

We teach our staff that the customer is important, but if you don't treat your staff as if they are important, how do you think they will translate that attitude to our customers? We in the industry often forget that our employees are how we deliver service to the customers and are a very

important part of our customer service process. You should always say "good job" or "thank you" on a regular basis. I have read numerous surveys that say getting appreciative responses from management is the No. 1 item employees look for.

Give them gift cards for finishing a project under budget, turkeys for Thanksgiving, or send them birthday cards and put them on your company's mailing list for Christmas cards.

Offer a restaurant gift card for the crew that performs the most every month. All of these items are inexpensive, and you would be amazed at how receptive the staff would be to receiving them.

Rich Arlington, III, PLANET Trailblazer, Rich Arlington & Associates

Q. In our company, the nonexempt employees get paid overtime at 150 percent of their regular pay rate for all the hours they work over 40 in a week. We exempt employees do not get paid overtime. We often work just as many and sometimes even more hours than they do. But they often make more money on the paycheck than we do. Why don't exempts get compensated for their overtime hours?

A. There are two answers: the Federal Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and the definition of what you get paid for.

FLSA. The FLSA requires all employees in the United States to be paid overtime. But, it then declares that there are four categories of employees who are exempt from that overtime requirement. Those employment categories are executive, administrative, professional and some sales (and, in some cases, certain categories of employees in computer work). All other employees (nonexempts) must be paid overtime.

What do I pay you for? Hourly paid (nonexempt) employees are paid to surrender control of their time to the employer. The employer must pay for all the time surrendered. If the employee comes to work and stands in one place all day doing nothing, you still must pay for the time that employee has surrendered to your control. His position description is basically a list of functions he must perform. You would judge his performance on how well he carried out those functions. You would terminate him for failure to perform those functions properly.

Salaried (exempts) employees are paid to produce a predetermined end result. They are expected to be more focused on achieving

that end-result by using their professional judgment and knowledge. There is much less focus on how they choose to do what they're doing or how long a specific process takes. All these things may be relevant, but much less so than with the nonexempt worker. The exempt employee has much more freedom to act and is expected to make decisions about significant things.

For example:

One manager may be a very good delegator and may accomplish the end results you specified by selecting, training, developing and assigning the right people to the right work and managing the process.

A second manager may be a totally dedicated employee who works 15 hours a day for seven straight days to accomplish the same end result.

Both, however, will be focused on achieving that end result. The job description of the exempt employee will generally include



an overview of the working environment, the nature and scope of the position, and how the job relates to other staff members. But, it focuses on the (usually) four to eight accountabilities that comprise the end results you desire from this position. You would evaluate the performance of the exempt employee by the delivered results of those accountabilities, whether those results took 40 or 65 hours a week to produce. The primary reason you would terminate the exempt employee is the failure to accomplish the required end result.

You're either paid for surrendering your time or delivering results. You can't have it both ways. **L&L**

William Cook, PLANET HR Consultant

Have a question for the experts? Send it to llexperts@gle.net.

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ArmorTech TEB 360 Foliar Fungicide

The pitch: United Turf Alliance has introduced ArmorTech TEB 360 Foliar Fungicide containing the active ingredient tebuconazole.

- ArmorTech TEB 360 controls brown patch, dollar spot, Fusarium patch, gray leaf spot, gray snow mold, summer patch and other diseases.
- In ornamentals, TEB 360 is effective against anthracnose, black spot, leaf spots, powdery mildew, rust, scabs and southern blight.
- Packaged in a 4 x 1-gallon case, TEB 360 contains 3.60 lbs. of tebuconazole per gallon.

For more information: www.utaarmortech.com



Redexim North America Turf Stripper 2000

The pitch: The Turf Stripper 2000 is a machine used to mow, level, de-thatch and renovate turf areas using a rotary action that removes material and deflects it onto a conveyor to be carried away.

- The custom blades can be adjusted in small increments.
- An option verti-cut blade kit can be installed in place of the standard blades when the machine is to be used for verti-cutting common areas.
- The machine can also be an effective method of harvesting sprigs when trying to introduce bermuda and other grasses to new areas.

For more information: www.redexim.com



Wright Aero Core Deck

The pitch: Wright Manufacturing has developed a new deck design that is standard on all Wright Stander X and Sport X mowers.

- The new Aero Core deck's space-saving design increases deck strength, while recessed caster wheels result in a more compact footprint and improved agility.
- Anti-clumping baffles in the Aero Core deck prevent debris build-up at the discharge chute.
- Air-tapered blade surfaces create pressure to pull grass up for a cleaner, more uniform cut.

For more information: www.wrightmfg.com



Bayer Armada Fungicide

The pitch: Armada fungicide was recently changed from a wettable powder in a water soluble packaging to a water dispersible granule.

- Armada 50 WDG provides disease control for turfgrass and landscape ornamentals.
- Contains the active ingredients Triadimefon and Trifloxystrobin, and provides a broad spectrum of activity against most turf and ornamental diseases in northern and southern climates.
- Controls turf diseases such as brown patch and dollar spot for up to 28 days.

For more information: www.BackedbyBayer.com



Earth & Turf Clamp-on Forks

The pitch: Earth & Turf, LLC has released the Economy 800 lb. Capacity Clamp-On Forks, a match for many small compact tractor loaders.

- These small, clamp-on bucket forks give compact loaders additional versatility.
- The design of the forks makes them especially easy to install and to remove.
- No bucket alterations are necessary and they will not damage buckets, if properly installed.
- Tine length is 32 inches, and they weigh 70 lbs per pair.
- List price per pair is \$269.

For more information: www.earthandturf.com



Acuity Brands Tersen Ratio 1.5

The pitch: Acuity Brands is expanding its LED Outdoor Walk application portfolio with the introduction of the Tersen Ratio to serve the nighttime needs of pedestrians outdoors.

- Tersen Ratio 1.5 is a luminaire supporting 48 LED diodes that produce illumination equivalent to a traditional 175-watt metal halide lamp.
- Its "finned" shape serves as a heat sink as well as an architectural statement, making it useful for outdoor parking lots, walkways and mixed-use applications.
- The luminaire achieves a 50,000-hour life at 1,000 MA with 70 percent lumen maintenance.

For more information: www.acuitybrands.com/outdoor





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NEW PRODUCTS

Classen Turf Rake Line

The pitch: Classen has expanded its turf rake line by adding two new spring tine models, the TR-20RH with a Honda GX160 engine and the TR-20RB with a Briggs & Stratton Intek 850 engine.

- New spring tine reel models are more forgiving on lawns that have in-ground sprinkler systems or other permanently installed objects in the turf.
- The new Classen TR-20R can be used for those areas where flail reel or slicer blade reels are too aggressive.
- The new reel features 104 individual spring tines that are surface-treated to provide more than 50 percent added strength and tine life.

For more information: www.classenturfcare.com



NORDOT Adhesive

The pitch: NORDOT Adhesive #34P-4 from Synthetic Surfaces is a new, one component outdoor adhesive that was designed to install and/or repair synthetic turf and other outdoor surfaces in widely variable and sometimes hostile weather conditions.

- It fills the need for a versatile adhesive which allows the outdoor installation and repair season to expand from only "fair weather" days to year-round.
- Surfaces that benefit are: playgrounds, landscaping, rooftops, airports and lounging areas.
- Can be applied to a dry or damp surface at any outdoor temperature.
- After curing, it is durable both above ground and under water.

For more information: www.nordot.com



Pearl's Premium

The pitch: Pearl's Premium Lawn seed, needing only one quarter the nutrition of other types of grass, can thrive and stay green year-round with a lesser amount of organic fertilizer than chemical fertilizers.

- The seed is the result of approximately eight years of research and development.
- Grows at one quarter the rate of blue grass, requiring mowing only once a month rather than every week on average.
- With 12-inch roots, the grass seed needs no chemical fertilizer and rarely needs water once established.
- More than 8,000 people in 46 states have already grown Pearl's Premium lawns.

For more information: www.pearlspremium.com



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Every month our columnists give their take on a common topic. Last month they wrote about the best advice they've received. This month it's the one change they would make to the green industry.



Make a **WISH**

Marty Grunder



If I could change one thing in the green industry, it would be the professionalism of the industry. Hold on, don't go berserk on me. As a whole, our industry is professional but I feel we still have room for improvement.

The entry into our line of work is easy and will most likely always be easy. Get a business card printed and buy a wheelbarrow and a shovel and you're in our business (for the most part). I started out that way; many of you reading this column started out that way. But along the way what drove us to success was a commitment to excellence.

The first landscaping jobs I did were not well done. In fact, to be honest with you, they were terrible. I have a hard time thinking about how awful they were. But gradually I learned a ton. And I learned by reading, going to seminars, networking with other landscapers and reading this magazine.

Today, I'm proud to say the work Grunder Landscaping Company does

is high quality. I proudly show my friends, family and clients photos of our work today.

The success our company has had and will have is rooted in our high standards – high standards for all that we do. We select high quality people, plants, equipment, processes and the like. Twenty-seven years later, we ought to do something right. Our competitive advantage is our high standards. And yet, we still have so much we can improve. We're nowhere near where we could be, and I firmly believe because of our commitment to excellence, we'll be a much better organization in 10 years. And there lies the one thing I'd change about the green industry if I could.

I see some landscapers who just don't care. They don't care about the quality of work they do. They don't care about the quality of people they hire. They don't care about how they look, how their equipment looks and they sure as heck don't care what the public thinks of them.

On one hand, I'm glad for the minority that operates that way. It makes those of us who do it right look that much better.

However, if I had a choice, I'd like to see consumers know all landscapers are professionals. I'd like for all of us to be fanatics about doing everything we do the best possible way. I'd like to see us have the commitment to excellence that I see from many physicians or the commitment to excellence I see in the U.S. military.

I know the one thing I would like to see changed about our industry is impossible to ever see happen. And I can deal with that. However, I won't quit trying to get better, and I'll study amazing landscaping companies like Lambert's in Dallas and Mariani's in Chicago and other companies like Apple and Zappos and keep on improving.

A commitment to excellence makes one a winner in the green industry. I only wish everyone saw it this way.

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



Jeff Korhan

When I started my landscape business in the late 1980s, I was knowledgeable about business, reasonably confident with horticulture, but completely ignorant about how this industry works.

Nevertheless, I discovered the advantage of not knowing much about an industry is that it enables you to look at everything with fresh eyes. Sometimes being a little ignorant of the right or best way to accomplish an objective forces you to innovate and develop better solutions.

My suggested change for moving the green industry forward during these challenging times, or any other, is the same as that for virtually every other industry of small businesses – be a little ignorant once in a while. Let me explain what that means.



GET OUTSIDE OF THE GREEN INDUSTRY. One of the ways to make your business stronger and more sustainable is to occasionally get outside of your comfort zone to network and learn from others. Do you attend the same conferences every year and find your returns are diminishing?



Then shake up your approach to those events.

I'm attending the annual convention of the National Speakers Association for the eighth consecutive year, so I'm trying something new to make the most of my investment. I've gone through the entire list of 2,000 attendees and highlighted all of those I want to meet and why, so that I am prepared when I see them in the hallways.

Have you considered attending new events outside of the green industry? Later this year, I'll be attending The Blogworld Expo. The attendees will range from marketing agencies and technology geeks to mommy bloggers. Other than a mutual interest in blogging, we'll be fairly ignorant of our respective industries.

And that's exactly why I'm attending. Ask yourself what your business most needs right now and find an event where you can learn new skills, expand your circle of friends and develop fresh perspectives to share with your team.

SEEK BETTER THAN BEST PRACTICES. Business consultants love to talk about best practices, and indeed if you follow them you may well succeed. Though there are risks. When you blindly adopt industry best practices, you may be taking on methods that may soon be outdated and also not particularly relevant to your unique business circumstances.

Be a little ignorant – trust your intuition. Challenge those best practices with what has been working for you.

When my landscape business was young and I was still naïve about the green industry, we managed to do quite well. Then somewhere along the line I began to follow the crowd – and soon became one of them. As a result, we lost our edge with our customers. When things got especially tough after Sept. 11, 2001, we reverted back to practices that had served us well from the beginning.

The renewed focus turned our company around.

A little ignorance never hurt anyone. In fact, it may be just what your business and this industry needs right now.

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

Jim Huston



If I could change one thing about the green industry, what would it be? I'd introduce mandatory education, training, certifications and licensing for the purpose of professionalizing the industry and increasing the survival rate of those entrepreneurs entering into it. We need a better approach for "growing" green industry personnel into balanced professionals who are proficient at running all aspects of their businesses. I know this wouldn't be popular but sometimes what's best doesn't garner the most votes. Come to think about it, my mother didn't consider my vote when it came to my attending grade school. It may be 50 years too late but, "Thanks, Mom!"

I once heard someone say, "You shouldn't go into business, you should grow into business." One potential advantage of buying a franchise is that there is a track record of success that can be readily passed on to the franchisee. Training and assistance are available to someone new to the business. Also, the franchisor has a vested interest in the success of the franchisee. The more successful and profitable the franchisee is the more successful and profitable the franchisor is. It reminds me of the Yiddish proverb, "The right hand washes the left. The left hand washes the right. And both hands wash the face."

BARRIERS TO ENTRY. Barron's Dictionary of Business Terms defines barriers to entry as "conditions making entry into certain businesses extremely difficult. These include high funding requirements, high technological or trade learning curves, unknown or little-known business practices, tightly controlled markets, stringent licensing procedures, the need for highly-skilled or trained employees, long lead times and specially designed facilities."

The barrier to entry into the green industry is perhaps one of the lowest of all the industries. I have numerous, successful clients who started their businesses with nothing more than the proverbial pickup truck and lawn mower when they were in their teens. They survived and did well. But for every one that made it, I bet there were dozens who did not. Today the green industry is flooded with new "entrepreneurs" who got down-sized, laid off or let go by their employer

INDUSTRY VOICES

John Ossa

The green industry is undergoing a period of rapid change brought on by a confluence of events. Environmental concerns, water shortages and an increasing regulatory environment demand that contractors and groundskeepers act on more science-based information and become more knowledgeable. An area of critical concern for our industry is landscape water management – effective scheduling of irrigation.

The issue boils down to a lack of grounding in the fundamentals of “what happens” when we irrigate. What we are trying to irrigate is roots. If we irrigate in a way that encourages and produces more and deeper roots, we will have healthier and more resilient plants.

It is helpful to understand the limitations of the hardware. For many years, we have used fixed sprays, impact heads, rotors and multi-stream nozzles – spray irrigation hardware of various configurations. They all share some key constraints. There is overspray onto non-landscape or a majority of a given area is over-irrigated to get the least “overlapped” area an adequate minimum of water.

When over spraying and over irrigating most of an area, we are waiting for the “right amount” of water to infiltrate and move down through the root zone. While waiting for water to move down, the saturated surface area excludes oxygen and induces stress. This is an environment ripe for soil pathogens like Pythium or Phytophthora to develop.

When water does move down, it can be called gravitational water. Proper irrigation scheduling hopes to stop that downward percolation at the limit of the root zone. This is difficult to do since spray heads all basically work by a cycle of flood/dry, flood/dry. Gravitational water occurs because the soil cannot “hold” all the water – there is such a concentration (flood) of water that it fills available pore spaces and is pulled by gravity.

For our industry to grow it may need to embrace irrigation without flooding, or creating excess gravitational water. Working with nature is to use the forces at work in nature. Sub surface irrigation delivery hardware supplies a low rate of irrigation output, so the soil through the principle of capillarity will move the water against the force of gravity – upward – and in a manner that matches the output to what a given soil type can hold. These unfailing principles at work in nature, combined with reliable distribution hardware, provide the opportunity for extremely high irrigation efficiencies.

How much water a given soil can hold, and how long to irrigate before water becomes gravitational water is “knowable.” With training like the California Landscape Contractors Association’s Water Management Certification Program, which teaches science-based concepts, and new high-efficiency irrigation hardware, the green industry will continue to evolve and provide solutions that communities are seeking.

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



due to the current economy. They bought a mower, repaired an irrigation system for a neighbor or installed some pavers for a friend, and, bingo, they’re the new business on the block.

MEASURE ONCE, CUT TWICE. Many new green industry entrepreneurs never make it past their first year or two. They epitomize the carpenter’s adage, “Measure once, cut twice. Measure twice, cut once.” Due to lack of training and education and inexperience, they have time to do it over but they don’t have time to do it right in the first place. This costs them time, money and, for many, their jobs. If doctors, nurses, dentists, paramedics, etc., got into the medical profession the way that landscapers, irrigators and arborists get into the green industry, we’d all be dead.

Preparation and constant training is the key. Our Marine Corps drill instructors constantly hammered into us, “The more you sweat in peacetime, the less you’ll bleed in war!” They were right. Unfortunately, there is little preparation required to get into the green industry. It’s like you’re handed a rifle and the next thing you know, you’re on the front lines. This is not good! A little training would go a long way at improving your survival rate.

THE SOLUTION. While they’re not perfect (nor popular), licensing, certifications and re-certifications, seem to be the way to “bootstrap” and professionalize the green industry. Many of our state and national associations are moving in this direction and meeting with success. However, it takes a village. Well, maybe not a village, but a concerted effort by all facets of our industry. Contractors, state and national associations, manufacturers, suppliers, schools, state and federal legislators and consultants all need to cooperate and reinforce training, education and high professional standards.

Compulsory education, training, certifications and licensing may not be popular but it would probably be the best thing to happen to improve the green industry and the survival rate for contractors. **L&L**

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



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Alan Beaulieu

Leading INDICATORS

Cut through the noise and get a grip on a rocky economy with one of the country's top economists. By Chuck Bowen

Financial markets are making huge gains and losses seemingly at the same time, rocking investor and consumer confidence. The Fed has pledged to keep interest rates at historic levels for the next two years. Congress has solved the debt ceiling crisis – for now.

What does this mean for small business owners? How can you sort it out?

Well, it helps if you can call an economist. Alan Beaulieu is half of the twin-brother team that runs ITR, an independent economics firm in Boscawen, N.H. He works with the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, giving advice to the folks who make a lot of the iron in your shop.

"It's not just the economy. It's what do you do with this information. There must be some purpose to it," Beaulieu

“Right now, it's gotta be about competitive advantages. It's gotta be making sure you have trained people, customer service has gotta be better than anybody else's. That takes money. It takes effort.

says. "A lot of people can talk about what they think The Street's gonna do, but if it happens, what does that mean you should do with that information?"

Lawn & Landscape caught up with Beaulieu this summer at OPEI's annual meeting to see if he'd share his insight on the future of the U.S. economy, and what factors the average contractor can watch to accurately predict what will happen next for his own business.

Do you have any broad predictions for what the economy's going to do in the next year?

Next year's gonna be another year of economic expansion. It'll be scary.

Both political parties are gonna make it scary. And I'm not doing this to push people one direction or the other. And in the process we're going to forget that there are a lot of things going right. And there are still opportunities and businesses can move forward, and the world's not ending in November 2012.

And the people that can remember the things that are going on right, the people that can remember that customers will be buying, the housing market will be soft, yes, but it'll be better than '11. More people have jobs in '11 than had them in '10. People who keep all

that in mind will find that they will be growing their businesses in 2012.

It's basically a function of tuning out the noise and tuning into the realities of the world around us. The thing we can do is turn off our TVs and radios. [Laughs.]

Can you give our readers a longer-term outlook on things?

Well, let's keep it to the five year. We

always tell people to stay tuned. And we continue to watch the road signs and continue to watch what's going on, so they gotta stay focused. But right now, it looks like '13, the first half of the year, the economy basically plateaus. By the middle of the year, it tips over into recession the second half of '13.

And the recession will last for a good part of '14 if not all of '14.

It won't be a steep recession. That's probably the thing I'd emphasize if I were you is that people will think recession, they will think the last one we just went through. But that was the Great Recession. It's not the same thing. There are still things you can do. You still can remain profitable.

You have to know when it's gonna happen so that you can prepare for it, and there are different things to do to prepare.

Right now, it's gotta be about competitive advantages. It's gotta be making sure you have trained people, customer service has gotta be better than anybody else's. That takes money. It takes effort. It takes CEO involvement.

One of the three big things for 2012 is that you have competitive advantages, customer service, which is a function of marketing and advertising after that. And then you have very well trained employees.

So if a business owner has any lingering fear or concern about a recession coming around the corner again, what can he



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INTERVIEW

do to prepare? Is there anything he can keep in mind to ward it off?

Yes. Learn what to look for, and then keep looking at them. I have a list of seven things: money supply, corporate bonds rate-of-change, U.S. leading indicator, purchasing managers index, retail sales, employment and non-defense capital goods new orders.

Because they won't lie to you. And so you don't ever need to be surprised again.

But we get those leading indicators, and we let thousands of people know what's goin' on so they don't ever have to have that. It's like an MRI, you know? You don't have to wonder if there's anything growing, because you've just been tested.

You don't have to wonder if there's a recession coming, because it's always been tested. No worries.

What else should a landscaper keep an eye on?

Well, that list of seven would work for them as well. More specifically, the non-residential landscape contractors are gonna watch local or regional vacancy rates and office buildings, commercial buildings, as they see those vacancy rates creeping up, obviously that's an easy tell that there's gonna be an impact on their business.

And the non-financial side, they're just gonna be looking at personal wealth. They're gonna be looking at – it's not gonna be so much housing occupancy, because a lot of the homes that are empty weren't hiring them to begin with. It's just gonna be a function of household net worth.

It's gonna be a function of if the stock market's doing well, people will spend money on a landscaper. Those would be

the two things I'd start with those guys. Use those barometers. And those are easy to find.

Previously you mentioned consumer confidence is not a good leading indicator.

It's useless. [Laughs.] It used to be incredibly important. If you look at the data over the last 10 years or actually 20 years at this point, it does not help you see the future.

It just tells you how people are feeling today. But there's no predictive ability to it. People wanna think there is, because it seems pervasive.

I look at it in terms of housing, they look at it in terms of retail sales. And you look at it in terms of what people are actually doing. There's no connection. L&L

The author is editor and associate publisher of *Lawn & Landscape*. Email him at cbowen@gje.net.

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The impact of business cycles

Editor's Note: This is an excerpt from the first chapter of "Make Your Move: Change the way you look at your business and increase your bottom line" by Alan & Brian Beaulieu. Email lleditors@gie.net with your own leading indicators for a chance to win a copy.

The Impact

Cycles are important because the economy goes through ups that are favorable for growing business and downs in which business disappears. If business operators understand where they are in the business cycle, they can make the most of the conditions that lie ahead. How well they prepare depends on knowing where they are in a cycle, the type of cycle involved, and reading the road signs to the future.

We have identified four phases within each business cycle: Phase A, B, C and D. Since each phase of the cycle has its own strengths and traps, businesses must use management tactics that are specific to each phase to ensure their prosperity. The four business cycle phases are:

Phase A - Advancing. The economy is on the upswing; advancing toward better days.

Phase B - Best. Business conditions are booming.

Phase C - Caution. The economy is still

growing, but at a slower pace. Phase C is the most profitable phase of the business cycle, but it is also time to become more conservative in your planning.

Phase D - Danger. The downgrade stage. People are depressed. It is time to keep the powder dry and be ready for action!

When the business cycle is just beginning to turn up, companies that are not convinced that the demand for their items will rise usually are reluctant to increase the factors of production needed to make the most of the rising trend. And, when increased demand comes, they won't be able to satisfy it or they will have to run out and buy what they need at a time when it will cost more for overtime, etc. If you can't see the coming rising trend, you won't be in position to fully capitalize on this golden opportunity - in fact, you may even lose out to more far-seeing competitors.

When the business cycle is down, it becomes even harder for business because everyone hopes the downturn will be brief.

Many organizations suffer by not acting quickly enough in:

- Laying off employees.
 - Shifting to strong cash positions.
 - Decreasing inventory levels.
 - Watching their receivables, credit, and debt.
 - Looking hard to be sure return on investment will justify all capital expenditures.
- Business leaders who don't pay attention to business cycles are likely to be swept along with the herd. They'll lose control of their direction, be forced to move with the pack and could be consumed in the frenzied stampede. Many will be trampled. As they're left broken and bleeding, they still won't have a clue as to what happened. They'll claim that no one could have foreseen it; that their downfall came completely out of the blue - which simply isn't true. Since business cycles are telegraphed at least a year in advance, they should have paid attention and should have known what changes were at hand.

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THE
SALES
ISSUE

steal these sales ideas

Five landscapers share their best sales secrets.

by Kristen Hampshire

Every landscaper has a different style when it comes to selling work. Some are high-end with glossy garden photo displays. Others sketch up ideas on the back of a napkin. Some live for the chase and love to pitch ideas on the fly. Others are great closers. Whether you're the main salesperson at your company or you have a great staff, you need to keep that pipeline full of work to keep growing.

We spoke with five landscapers across the country and asked them to share their secrets to selling success. Read on and please, steal one of these ideas – or all of them – for your own company. – *Chuck Bowen*

Earth, Turf & Wood

Headquarters: Denver, Pa.

Employees: 15

2010 Revenue: \$1-2 million

Service breakdown: 100% residential

Market conditions: There's a different vibe this year in Lancaster County, Pa., and Jarod Hynson, president of Earth, Turf & Wood, says his business is "definitely busier." In fact, when we talked to him in June, he had sold out for the rest of the summer. "The market seems to be fairly sustainable," he says. "We live in a semi-conservative area, so we see that (potential clients') funds are still there."

Sales strategy: Hynson is not interested in being everything to everyone. In fact, when industry colleagues suggested years back that he expand his services and diversify, he decided not to take their advice. "It's impossible with the size of our business to be good at every single service, so we are strictly design/build for high-end residential clients," he says.

Client education is an important part of the sales process, and Hynson presents prospects with a workbook that takes them through the design/build process.

Idea to steal: Focus on what you do best and teach clients how you work. By doing this, Earth, Turf & Wood's sales are up 54 percent from last year and 2011 is the third biggest growth year in the company's 12-year history. "We have a good enough reputation that clients return to us," Hynson says. "While there is a recession, when push comes to shove, I believe our clients want the job done correctly and they realize the value for the dollar in a well-built, constructed back yard."





Client education is an important part of Jarod Hynson's sales process. He presents prospects with a workbook that takes them through the design/build process.





Turf Tamer

Headquarters: Fort Payne, Ala.
Employees: 38
2010 Revenue: \$1.7 million
Service breakdown: 58% residential; 42% commercial

Market conditions: Lee Buffington, president, sees an uptick in residential construction and a desire by homeowners to maintain the property they've got. "More homeowners are not selling or building new homes, they're keeping what they have and enhancing it," he says. But, the sales cycle is growing "further and wider" than ever before and more educated buyers who surf the Web are now tougher negotiators.

Sales strategy: People buy from people they like and trust. That's why Buffington reminds designers and salespeople to give presentations with passion. "We want to

generate excitement and that desire for the client to experience what we put on paper," he says. "At the end of the day, if you can't get the client in the game, they will continue to sit on the sidelines and look at your proposal or go to someone else."

The best way to keep the momentum: Present designs immediately after they are complete. "You'll never be more excited than the minute you finish a design or proposal," Buffington says.

Idea to steal: Never take a lead for granted, and be the first to follow up. "Speed kills," Buffington says, noting that as time elapses between the initial inquiry and follow-up, the chances of securing that business fade. "Every lead that comes in, we approach with a sense of urgency to close the deal," he says.



Coastal Greenery

Headquarters: Brunswick, Ga.
Employees: 40
2010 Revenue: \$2.1 million
Service breakdown: 60% residential; 40% commercial

Market conditions: Jeffrey Johns says coastal regions are the last to feel the recession and the last to recuperate. In 2007 and 2008, "business was still booming for us," he says. Today, foreclosures populate the beach community and the housing market is not picking up. The good news: Johns notices that clients are spending more money on landscape enhancements this year.

Sales strategy: After a revenue slide of 18 percent in 2009, Johns decided the company needed a fresh start, laser focus and new branding strategy.

The solution: diving into maintenance, putting design/build and lawn care on the back burner and hiring a graphic design firm to help with a new logo, marketing strategy and Web presence.

Finally, after 17 months, the investment

and energy in this project is beginning to pay off. That was after Johns increased his marketing budget to 2 percent of the company's gross sales. Direct mailers, newsletters and post-cards consume the bulk of the budget. "It's consistently putting Coastal Greenery in prospects' hands," Johns says.

Idea to steal: Johns hired an outside salesperson who focuses only on prospecting and securing business.

"He's out there in the community 100 percent of the time, building relationships, looking for prospects and gaining maintenance contracts," Johns says. "That was a huge move."

Visibility is the key to capturing market share. "We like to be seen on that property every week from an account manager standpoint," Johns says.



DiSabatino Landscaping

Headquarters: Wilmington, Del.
Employees: 45
2010 Revenue: \$5 million
Service breakdown: 99% residential; 1% commercial

Market conditions: Demand for services is up, but there are fewer companies out there playing the field. "Things have thinned out over the years," says Chris DiSabatino, president, speaking of the Pick-Up Joes that flooded the market in 2008 and 2009. "There are only so many good players in the market that have the capacity to do the work."

DiSabatino maintained its workforce so it can handle the volume coming in the doors these days. "Last year was better than 2009, and this year is better than 2010," he says.

Sales strategy: DiSabatino stays in constant contact with existing clients and harvests referrals from this base. Plus, the company has diversified and has four key divisions: landscaping, hardscaping, masonry and tree care. "We cross-market those services," he says. This year, DiSabatino brought on a sales trainer to teach landscape designers a sales game plan. "Our landscape designers are very creative-minded people, and they may not have the desire to sell - it's just part of their position," DiSabatino says. "A professional sales trainer is really helping them with their sales skills."

Idea to steal: Focus on the client and take that first impression seriously. "We put the spotlight on clients instead of us and our company," DiSabatino says. "We really listen to find out what the client is looking for so when we do present an idea or a design, it's dead on."

Plus, DiSabatino's employees are always dressed sharply in uniforms, they drive clean vehicles and they show up to appointments on time. "You only get one shot at making a first impression," he says.

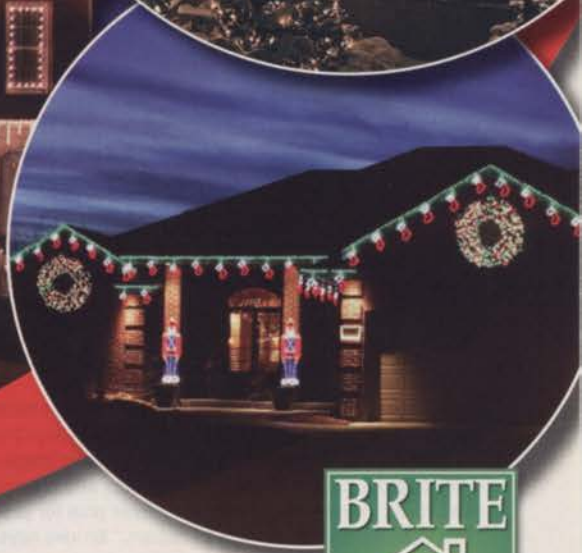
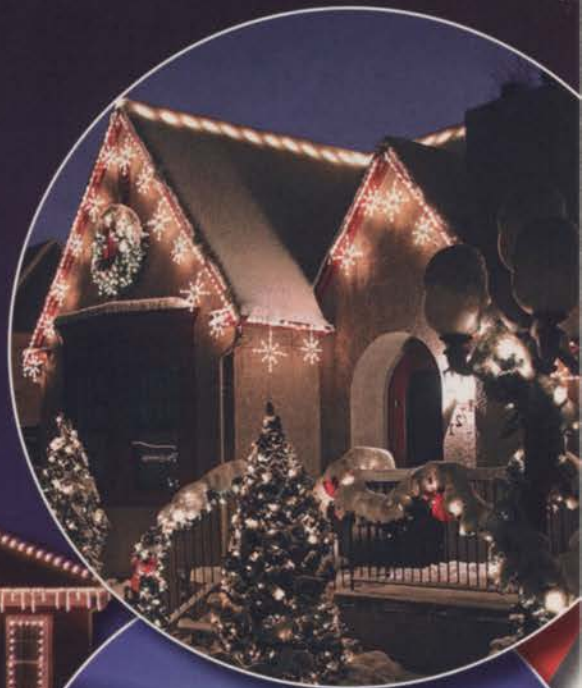


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Jay-Crew Landscape

Headquarters: Muncie, Ind.

Employees: 30 (peak season); 7 (year-round)

2010 Revenue: \$1.5 million

Service breakdown: 60% residential; 40% commercial

Market conditions: The Midwest economy has been "beat up pretty good," according to Jason Brooks, president of Jay-Crew Landscape. With the deterioration of the automotive industry and lagging manufacturing, many homeowners are jobless and focused on more dire expenses than landscape maintenance – like paying their mortgages. However, there are pockets of hope. One of those is greater Indianapolis, where Jay-Crew has expanded to capture more business. "For us, a 45-minute drive down the road gets us to Hamilton County, one of the fastest growing areas," Brooks says.



Sales strategy: By setting sales goals and tracking progress, Jay-Crew's sales force is held accountable. Before, Brooks' philosophy was that as long as everyone was working hard, the company was on target. "Our eyes have been opened and it makes a difference when individuals and the company sets goals." Weekly sales meetings keep everyone on track. It's all about creating a plan and executing it.

Idea to steal: The city where Jay-Crew is headquartered has a population of about 60,000 people. For years, Jay-Crew was churning out \$1.5 million in revenue. But when Brooks was ready to grow, he looked beyond city limits and expanded his sales force's territory so they had a larger pool for prospecting. "This year, we are on track to \$2 million," Brooks says. **L&L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Bay Village, Ohio

3 sales sins

Keep your calls focused and profitable with these strategies. By Monroe Porter

1. You talk too much.

When a contractor tells me they hired a guy with the perfect sales personality, it scares me to death. One of the greatest myths regarding sales is that good sales people are blessed with the blarney stone and are talkers. Selling is a skill of listening, not talking. Ever notice the more the customer talks, the more the customer buys. People like to feel understood and know you are listening to them. Listening and connecting with people builds trust. Intelligent introverts can make great salespeople.

Too many people confuse selling with social niceties. Being nice to people is important but will someone really pay a premium for your services because you both like the same sports team or think it is hot outside? I doubt it. Selling is about communicating value to your customer. You can't communicate value until you know what they want.

Spend the first 5-10 minutes of each sales call asking broad questions. Try to find out what is driving the project. Are they going to move? Do they entertain a lot? Do they like to piddle around in the yard or hate yard work? Dig, dig and dig a little more. The more information you gather, the better.

2. You don't listen.

Most of us think of ourselves as not being judgmental, but when it comes to your trade, you are probably more prejudice than you realize. As you walk up the driveway, have you ever thought of what would look nice and started developing ideas? Probably so, and that is prejudice. You have no idea what the customer wants, and here you are working on the project. The more technical, prideful and competent you are in your profession, the more prejudiced you might be. Even if you are correct, you must first listen and educate the customer prior to dumping your ideas on them.

I walked into a hardware store to buy a drill bit. A young man with a trainee badge approached and eagerly took me to the appropriate area to demonstrate a specially tipped bit that could be used hundreds of times before dulling. It was normally \$24.99 but was only \$18 today. My reply was that I had a \$2 hole. He looked at me like I was crazy and reinforced what a good deal this was as I could use it hundreds of times. I replied, not for me, as I only needed to make one hole. People buy drill bits for the kind of holes they need, not the actual drill bit. There is no way to know their need unless you ask.

3. You don't ask.

Most contractors don't want to seem pushy. That is understandable but asking for the order is not pushy, it is just common sense. When you walk into a restaurant, does the waiter ask what would you like to order? Sure he does. When you walk up to a hotel counter, does someone ask if you would like a room? Sure they do. You don't think they are rude or pushy. You went there with that purpose in mind. You are a contractor. People called you because they had a need. Simply ask, "Would you like for us to put you in our schedule?" **L&L**

The author is president of PROOF Management Consultants and PROSULT Networking Groups. He can be reached at mporter@giemedia.com.

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Decisions, decisions

These key choices you should be making can maximize your company's potential. By Brian Horn

OK, so you are at the top of the food chain – you're running the show and everyone looks to you to make decisions. But there are some choices you aren't making that could be hindering your company's success. Marty Grunder spoke at a conference in Dayton, Ohio, about some key decisions you should make to boost your sales.

FIND OUT WHAT YOUR CLIENT WANTS.

Grunder saw an ad for a car wash with a cafe in it. It sounded like a good idea, so one Saturday he took his car there to get it washed. Except, the place was

“How can you expect your people to treat your clients like kings and queens if you're not treating them like kings and queens?” Marty Grunder

closed. A car wash closed on a Saturday? Grunder went in the next day and found out the car wash was closed for religious reasons. Grunder says there's nothing wrong with closing for religious purposes – Chick-fil-A closes on Sundays and makes it work.

“But, if you're a brand new upstart and you're going to close on Saturday, you've got to make sure that you understand who your customer is. You can't just have this 'Build, and they will come mentality' and just think you're smarter than everybody else,” he says.

ASK FOR THE SALE IN A NICE WAY. While it can be frustrating, Grunder says cold calling potential customers helps move a business forward. “I'm amazed at how many sales people today haven't made

a decision to ask for a sale,” he says. Grunder says he also looks to his current customers to find other customers. “You go and you ask other happy clients to help you find more,” he says. “They like to do that, if you've done a good job.”

But no matter who you are asking for business, you have to ask nicely because people want to *buy* something, not be *sold*, Grunder says.

DELIVER AS PROMISED, AND THEN SOME.

Grunder says he is amazed that some companies make a sale and then think they have it all figured out. You do everything possible to get a client – late

meetings, returning their calls immediately – but as soon as you have them signed, there are no more late night meetings and the return call can wait until tomorrow.

Grunder says he tries to continually validate for the customer why they chose his company. Once he has the client signed, “that is when the selling really starts,” he says.

HAVE A PASSION TO FOLLOW-UP. Grunder and his company sometimes get carry-out lunch from Bob Evans. And every time they do, the manager calls around 2 p.m. to make sure everything was good. Normally, 2 p.m. isn't a busy time at a restaurant, so instead of taking a break, the manager makes the courtesy call.

“Companies that understand that the

customer is boss, they don't sit around reading magazine on sports or things like that,” Grunder says referring to a manager's downtime. Grunder also stresses to employees the importance of following up with customers.

“The follow-up part is important,” Grunder says. “It's a slow process that you need to go through on a daily basis.”

UNDERPROMISE AND OVERDELIVER.

There's nothing wrong with under promising. In fact, it works in your benefit.

“If you think you can be there next Wednesday, tell them you'll be there next Friday,” Grunder says. “Think about how you can position yourself so that you are underpromising and over-delivering.”

Grunder says the concept of doing a little bit extra is here to stay for a while because the customer has the upper hand. He says you can do little things like sending a customer an article in the newspaper you thought would interest them, or sending them a birthday card.

And don't limit doing a little extra for just customers. You also have to take care of your internal customers. Grunder has employees fill out questionnaires where they write down their favorite hot or cold drink. That way, if Grunder is driving to a job site, he can bring the appropriate beverage.

“How can you expect your people to treat your clients like kings and queens,” Grunder says “if you're not treating them like kings and queens?” **L&L**

The author is associate editor at *Lawn & Landscape*. You can reach him at bhorn@glie.net.



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THE
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Shoestring marketing

Five fast and cheap ways to increase your sales. By William J. Lynott

Today's economy is rippled with uncertainty. One day, consumer confidence is up and things look promising. The next day, bad economic news casts a dark cloud over the outlook. In uncertain times like these, it may seem natural to pull in your horns – take shelter until things look more promising. But, that's exactly the wrong thing to do.

There are still plenty of potential customers out there. Right now, your smartest move is to ratchet up your marketing efforts while your competitors are slacking off. When the smoke clears, you'll be stronger than ever and your competition will be wondering what happened.

Here are seven ways to help build your landscaping business on a tight marketing budget.

Use the telephone wisely.

Independent studies consistently show that the telephone remains one of the most underused business tools. In one study, researchers called 5,000 Yellow Page advertisers to say, "I saw your Yellow Page ad. How much does your service (product) cost?"

The responses clearly indicated lost opportunities. More than 78 percent didn't bother to ask for the caller's name. More than 55 percent took eight rings or more to answer.

According to the researchers, many spoke so rapidly that the caller had a difficult time understanding what was said. Less than 10 percent answered the phone in a way that made the caller feel welcome.

To harness the power of the telephone as a potent business tool, you must regard every ring of the telephone as a marketing opportunity.

Chances are that all or most of the callers to your number will be met with an answering machine message. That makes your outgoing message a critical marketing tool. Here's how to make best use of it:

a) Speak slowly and clearly. Your own voice is usually best because it gives a personal touch to a personal business. If you're not happy with the sound of your own message, don't hesitate to use someone else whose voice may be more businesslike.

b) Thank the caller and say that you're sorry that you're not available to answer personally, but that you will return the call promptly.

c) Perhaps most important of all, never fail to get back to every caller, existing customer or prospect. Failing to answer phone messages is a certain way to alienate customers and prospects.

Use cross promotion.

Landscapers are ideal candidates for cross-promotion – an inexpensive and effective way for non-competing businesses to help each other.

Here's how it works: John, a landscaper, works out a cross-promotion arrangement with Jim, a plumber in the same town. Each agrees to hand out brochures or business cards of the other's business to each homeowner they visit. The cost? Nothing more than the cost of printing.

Combinations for cross-promoting are limited only by the participants' imagination. Cross promotion may include such tools as window signs or posters, discount coupons or personal referrals.

Put networking to work for you.

People prefer to do business with people they know. If you need a plumber, an attorney or any professional, who are you most likely to call?

A stranger from a listing in the Yellow Pages, or someone you know – perhaps a neighbor or the friendly fellow you met at last week's Rotary meeting?

Service organizations such as Kiwanis, Lions or Chamber of Commerce are populated with entrepreneurs and professional people, and most are as anxious to meet you as you are to meet them.

Capitalize on your flexibility.

In good times, it's easy to stick to the tried and true – the most profitable and most familiar projects. In times like these, flexibility could be your most valuable asset.

To keep you and your staff busy and avoid layoffs during slow times, it may be necessary to take on jobs at rates that don't satisfy your usual standards of profitability.

On a temporary basis, less profitable work is better than no work at all.

Grab your share of the best publicity – free publicity.

Advertising professionals know (but usually won't admit) that free publicity is generally more effective than the best paid ads.

Most prospective clients will be far more receptive to a simple news item about your business than a typical advertisement.

So, how do you go about getting a piece of the free publicity pie?

First, you need to learn what makes a good story. Then you need to learn how to sell it your local news media.

Your news item doesn't have to be of monumental importance to gain a free spot in the media, it just has to be "newsworthy."

That simply means there is something about your or your business that the public might find interesting. Here are some newsworthy story ideas about your business:

- Employee news – Many neighborhood papers run columns dedicated to residents of the community. Such things as hirings, promotions and special awards are ideal candidates for submissions to these columns. Another area of interest is employees who have performed public service to the community.

- Your own activities and accomplishments – Don't be shy when it comes to publicity for you or your business. If you're involved in community service, invited to speak to a local service club, have an unusual hobby or operate your business in an unusual way, don't hesitate to grab a spot on the free publicity bandwagon.

To get free publicity for your business, you have to go out and seek it actively.

The media isn't going to come looking for you. While it isn't necessary to have a "contact" in the local press to get your share, it doesn't hurt. That's another reason to put networking to work for you.

Shoestring marketing techniques such as these may not seem as challenging or exciting as other methods for building your business, but they can be an effective and inexpensive way to add dollars to your bottom line in this tough economy. **L&L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Abington, Pa.

Turn to page 71 and learn why you should tell some prospects "no."



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Through America in Bloom, cities collect and share their success stories.





By Chuck Bowen

Why it matters: **America in Bloom**

Anyone who works in the green industry can testify to the power of plants to bring people together. Whether it's a patio garden, a city park or local flower sale, if you bring out enough plants, people will want to gather.

Ten years ago, a group of green industry leaders got together to form America in Bloom, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting nationwide beautification through education and community involvement by encouraging the use of flowers, plants and trees. Since its beginning, AIB has awarded 185 cities across 40 states for improving their landscapes and green spaces.

"America in Bloom testifies to horticulture's importance in the lives of the citizens of every community. We know there are positive economic, environmental, sociological, and psychological impacts when a city adopts the AIB program as its own," writes Marvin Miller, president of AIB's board of directors, in the group's latest annual report. "Mayor after mayor has told us that the program unifies the city into a real community in ways never thought possible."

So why should America in Bloom matter to you? As a green industry professional, you already understand the value of plants – from a business and a lifestyle perspective. But sometimes your clients and your community need a little help articulating that value. A program like AIB helps remind folks just how much flowers and trees and maintained landscapes improve not only the aesthetics of their city, but also their quality of life.

"For 60 years we've been in the community; we want to be a part of the community in every way we can," says Dave Wehmeyer of Hillermann Nursery & Florist in Washington, Mo., who participated in AIB. "Anything we can do to promote landscaping and the joy of nature is what we want to be about."

For Wehmeyer, the most fulfilling part of participating in the program was the increased aesthetic awareness for his community.

"People started noticing our multitude of parks, the downtown plantings and landscaping, and the landscaping around our public buildings," Wehmeyer says. "Not only did the people notice these things, but they wanted to help in making them more beautiful. AIB also taught us a lot about what we can improve upon in the years to come in order to create an even more beautiful city."

The supplement that follows is a partnership between GIE Media's Horticulture Group, AIB and its parent organization, OFA. Read on to learn more about how AIB works, companies like Hillermann that have participated and how the program can benefit not only your community, but your bottom line.

I'd also like to thank our inaugural sponsors – Becker Underwood, Danziger Flower Farm, Farmtek, Spring Meadow Nursery, Summit Plastic and Suntory Flowers Unlimited – for their support of this project. ✿



Chuck Bowen
Editor and Associate Publisher
Lawn & Landscape



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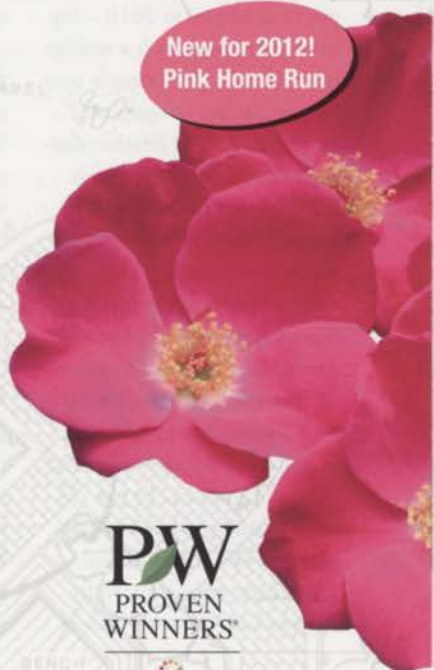
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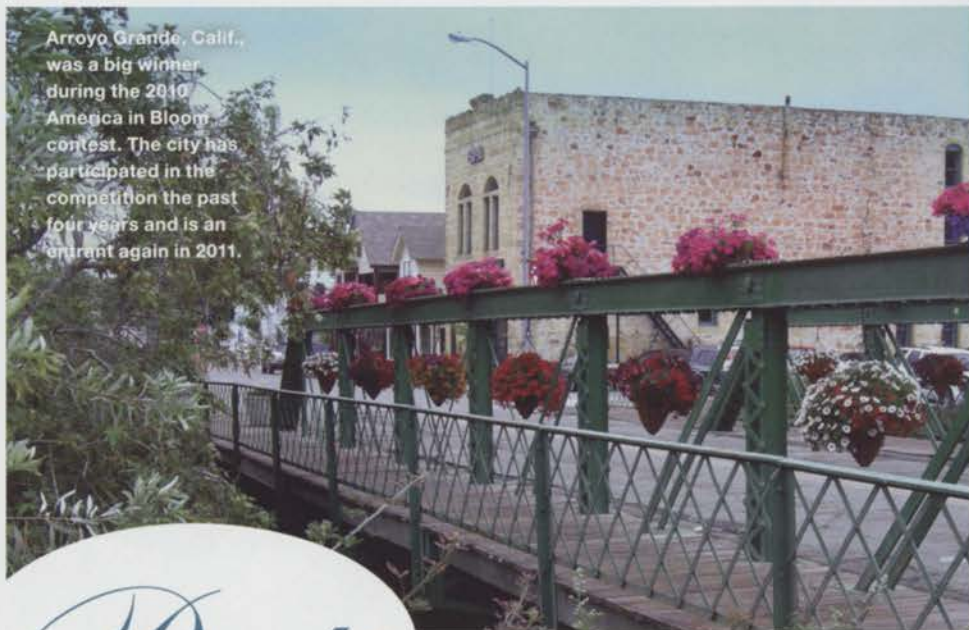
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**PORTRAIT
OF A CHAMPION**

Here are the highlights of Arroyo Grande's award-winning effort during the 2010 America in Bloom contest:

- Bob Lund won the second annual John R. Holmes III Community Champion Award, which was presented at the America in Bloom symposium and awards program Oct. 2 in St. Louis.
- Arroyo Grande also won the "Population Category Award" for cities with 15,000 - 25,000 residents. Special mention was noted in the "tidiness" category.
- Arroyo Grande received the "Community Involvement Criteria Award."
- The Arroyo Grande in Bloom video won the YouTube Video competition. AGIB received a \$500 award. To see the video, visit bit.ly/arroyoalb

Arroyo Grande, Calif., was a big winner during the 2010 America in Bloom contest. The city has participated in the competition the past four years and is an entrant again in 2011.



Patience pays

After many years of playing the game, this California town won big.

You have to give the folks of Arroyo Grande, Calif., this: They aren't a bunch of quitters.

After entering the America in Bloom contest four years in a row, Arroyo Grande finally got to celebrate in 2010 – big time. The town with a smidge more than 17,000 people won its population category and received a special citation during the competition, which annually awards noteworthy beautification efforts by cities across the country.

The California town bested three other cities in its population category and took the National Criteria Award for Community Involvement in competition with all of the contest's entrants. To top off the reward for the townfolks' patience and perseverance, a YouTube video created by Arroyo Grande town leaders

was named best video by AIB. And Bob Lund, chairman and co-founder of Arroyo Grande in Bloom, earned a special award for community service.

It's little wonder city officials have decided to enter again in 2011.

"Winning is wonderful, but that's not why we do it," Lund said in an interview with the Santa Maria Times after city officials received the good news from America in Bloom. "What we do is for the benefit of the community – and for the volunteers. Winning is the icing on the cake."

In the 2010 competition, Arroyo Grande competed against Addison, Texas; Junction City, Kan.; and Webster Groves, Mo., in its population category of 15,001 to 25,000. The vying cities in this category and in all the population categories – 26 commu-

nities in all – devoted better than a year to beautifying their regions in preparation for two-day visits by America in Bloom judges. The panel toured each town and met with city officials, residents and volunteers.

Ultimately, the judges rated the participants in eight categories – community involvement, environmental awareness, floral displays, heritage preservation, landscaped areas, tidiness, turf and ground covers and urban forestry – across three sectors – municipal, residential and commercial.

Where this California town was concerned, victory was a team effort. Arroyo Grande in Bloom had 160-plus volunteers, who collaborated to clean the city, plant flowers and spruce up landscaping. Then they had to maintain

everything in anticipation of the judges' visit.

As noted, Arroyo Grande will compete in the 2011 America in Bloom contest, which will feature 22 cities across the nation and which will mark the 10th annual contest for the organization. 🌸

For more information on the contest and on AIB in general, visit www.americainbloom.org.

The author is editor and publisher of Garden Center Magazine. He can be reached at yyoungblood@gie.net.



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Laura Kunkle

Perfect partners

By Yale Youngblood

The ABCs on how OFA and AIB – and you – can shape the country's landscape.

Earlier this month, Laura Kunkle, director of communications and membership at OFA, talked about how her organization and AIB continue to work with horticulture professionals, particularly retailers, to take beautification efforts to the next level.

America in Bloom and OFA have created a dynamic partnership. How did that come to fruition? OFA has been actively involved in America in Bloom since its inception. OFA's then executive director, Dennis Kirven, and I were on the industry task force that was developed to create AIB. At that time OFA was simply providing minimal administrative support to the task force to help move the process forward. OFA's involvement grew after 2001 when America in Bloom went from a "what if" idea to an

actual organization. It is a 501c3 charitable entity with official bylaws, governance structure and operating policies and procedures. Since the organization was legally formed 10 years ago, OFA has provided full management services to AIB, though OFA provides this service as an in-kind contribution to AIB.

What are some of the programs AIB has in place?

This is AIB's 10th anniversary of planting pride in America. The most visible part of AIB is the contest. In it, communities participate in friendly challenges and are evaluated by a team of professionally trained judges in eight criteria: floral displays, landscapes areas, urban forestry, turf and groundcover areas, environmental awareness, community involvement, tidiness and heritage preservation. Awards are presented each year to winning cities during the annual educational symposium. More than 22 million people in nearly 200 cities have been affected by AIB through the contest and evaluation process.

The contest provides a unique way for retailers to connect with their community. By being actively engaged in a local AIB effort, retailers can highlight their commitment to community development, earn goodwill and sell more plants. There is a step-by-step guide on the AIB website (www.americainbloom.org) that illustrates how to get involved in AIB.

But AIB is more than the contest. The organization is touching millions of people each year through its robust website that has research about the economic and health benefits of horticulture and resources to help communities develop

beautification programs. This information is available to everyone; retailers, in particular, should use this information to showcase to their customers the importance of flowers, plants and trees to their quality of life. The website is a great resource for educational information to be shared with customers.

AIB has a year-long webinar series occurring right now. Topics include showcasing the power of horticulture, helping communities get grants for beautification initiatives and finding volunteers to jumpstart a city's program.

We are excited about the 10th anniversary edition of the "Best Ideas" book that was published in July (See excerpt on Page S14). This award-nominated book series spotlights more than 2,000 of the best ideas from AIB cities over the past decade. It's an amazing publication that beautifully illustrates how AIB is connecting people to horticulture.

The educational symposium and awards program is the highlight of the year for many. AIB communities join together for three days of learning, idea sharing, networking. This year's symposium will be Oct. 6-8 in Washington, D.C.

Where is the partnership between OFA and AIB headed in the future?

AIB is an industry-led and supported program that OFA is proud to be associated with. OFA's board of directors and staff are fully committed to supporting AIB as it begins its second decade of planting pride in America. 🌸

The author is editor and publisher of Garden Center Magazine. He can be reached at yyoungblood@gie.net.





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Team effort

Hillermann Nursery & Florist helps its town gear up for AIB

By Sarah Martinez and Heather Taylor

In its mission statement, Hillermann Nursery & Florist in Washington, Mo., vows to deliver a “wow” experience. It’s that same desire to make an impact that prompted the garden center to get involved with America in Bloom. Dave Wehmeyer with Hillermann’s was a driving force behind the city’s AIB initiative. He learned about the program through a friend, Bill Ruppert, who was in charge of the AIB program in Kirkwood, Mo.

To get Washington, Mo., involved, Wehmeyer, Sandi Hillermann-McDonald and Scott Hillermann invited Ruppert to a city council meeting to introduce the program and push for Washington’s participation.

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Hillermann Nursery & Florist held many of the communities America in Bloom meetings and sponsored a Residential and Commercial Curb Appeal Competition to promote AIB involvement.

Once city officials were on board with the project, a whirlwind of activity began.

Wehmeyer agreed to co-chair Washington's AIB effort with Washington's parks director, but when the director resigned to go accept his dream job, much of the responsibility fell to Wehmeyer.

He didn't bear the weight alone. AIB's slogan is "planting pride in our communities," and Wehmeyer saw that phrase turn into reality throughout the town of about 14,000 residents.

"Nobody realized how much area the Parks Department has to maintain," Wehmeyer says. "The volunteers were amazed how much grass there is to cut and how many trees there are to mulch. People said, 'I would love to be out there helping them, I could plant flowers or adopt a park.' ... It brought awareness to the community."

Wehmeyer's role in the company's landscape division made him a valuable resource to the city for the contest.

Wehmeyer offered this breathless rundown of the to-do list:

"I orchestrated meetings, got people involved and informed, helped to form committees, worked with committee members on the AIB book, communicated with a local print shop to create AIB shirts that were used as a fundraiser, contacted organizations to form volun-

teer groups for planting and maintaining city spaces, designed new annual beds and large combo pots, and planned the judge's itinerary with Mayor Sandy Lucy and Ralph Gildehaus."

AIB judges review and evaluate each community in eight categories: tidiness, environmental awareness, community involvement, heritage preservation, urban forestry, landscaped areas, floral displays,

and turf and ground cover areas.

Using that criterion, judges will evaluate efforts made by three unique sectors: municipal/public properties, commercial sector, and private properties/citizens.

Making it happen. Hillermann Nursery & Florist itself was also very involved in the process. The facility was used for many of the meetings and for the AIB judge's farewell dinner. The garden center also sponsored a "Residential and Commercial Curb Appeal Competition," and ran plant sale specials to promote AIB.

"The (store's) advertisement of AIB and the residential and commercial

competition caused an influx in people wanting to plant color," Wehmeyer said.

Hillermann Nursery & Florist provided the signage used to identify the monthly winners of the Residential and Commercial Curb Appeal Competition. They also presented winners with a \$25 gift card. The competition ran from April to October, resulting in \$350 worth of gift card contributions.

Behind the scenes, Wehmeyer and others were working hard to win over the AIB judges.

"There was a lot of time involved, but having great committee members and the ability to communicate through email is a must," he said. "My amazing committee members helped to make AIB in Washington a great event that was well worth the necessary time requirements."

Garden- and civic-oriented organizations were mobilized to clean up, plant and rejuvenate areas around the city. Some participants were so dedicated that they were making last-minute adjustments while they donned their Sunday best, moments before the judges arrived.

The judging happened in early July and, from what Wehmeyer can tell, they were impressed by the city's showing.

“AIB also taught us a lot about what we can improve upon in the years to come in order to create an even more beautiful city.”

"Washington has a lot to offer: a state-of-the-art wastewater treatment system, our parks, a state-of-the-art recycling center, the planting itself and our urban forestry division, which planted a lot of native plants," he said. "The judges were impressed with all the different areas in town where we have planted flowers."

Other features that likely helped bolster the city's score included a healing garden in the courtyard of a doctor's office building and a paved walking and bike trail. A possible con was the lack of plants by the city's riverfront, which is due to flooding in the past few years.

Reaping the benefits. While everyone waits until the awards ceremony in October to learn the results, Wehmeyer can reflect on the benefits of being involved with the program.

The overall effort to beautify the community inspired individuals to want to enhance their own spaces. Wehmeyer believes this motivation could have led to a few new customers at Hillermann, or existing customers buying more materials than normal.

While the boost was welcomed, Wehmeyer points out that it wasn't why the company wanted to participate.

"For 60 years we've been in the community; we want to be a part of the community in every way we can," he said. "Anything we can do to promote landscaping and the joy of nature is what we want to be about."

For Wehmeyer, the most fulfilling part of participating in the program was the increased aesthetic awareness.

"People started noticing our multitude of parks, the downtown plantings and landscaping, and the landscaping around our public buildings," he said. "Not only did the people notice these things, but they wanted to help in making them more beautiful. AIB also taught us a lot about what we can improve upon in the years to come in order to create an even more beautiful city."

Wehmeyer recommends AIB to any landscape company that's looking for greater involvement in the community. The payoff comes in many forms in the community, from people discovering parks to a greater interest in maintaining what's in front of them.

"Any time you can draw awareness to landscapes and people take pride in their community, it's a win-win situation," he said. "People will buy more, but also they will see the improvement (in the community) and say 'that's great, I should do more in my yard.' It's a lot of fun, and it's neat to see everyone work together and have a common goal like that."

Sarah Martinez is managing editor of Garden Center Magazine; Heather Taylor is a freelance writer based in Lakewood, Ohio.

EIGHT CRITERIA JUDGED IN AMERICA IN BLOOM

Tidiness: Green spaces, medians and boulevard strips, streets, sidewalks, curbs, ditches, road shoulders, signage, scrap yards, unattended and vacant lots, buildings, garbage receptacles and disposal, lack of weeds and noxious weeds, litter, dog fouling, notices/posters, graffiti, vandalism, general maintenance of the hardscape.

Environmental Awareness: Sustainable development: Policies and bylaws, waste reduction, sanitary landfill, hazardous waste collection, sewage disposal, transfer/recycle stations, recycling, composting, integrated pest management (IPM), water source and conservation, naturalization, air quality issues, environmental clean up activities, controlled burns, environmentally friendly transportation.

Community Involvement: Citizen involvement in projects for the betterment and enjoyment of the community; AIB committee, horticulture/garden clubs, 4-H, school children, seniors, service groups; volunteers involved in long and short term projects and recreational programs.

Heritage Preservation: Museums, archives, history books and interpretative programs; policies and bylaws; resource availability; preservation and restoration of buildings, homes, churches, cemeteries; heritage sites and/or monuments; heritage parks, gardens and trees; artifacts; historical society; heritage advisory committee, etc.

Urban Forestry: Written policies, by-laws and regulations, long and short term plans; distribution, variety and suitability of trees; new plantings; urban tree program; qualified personnel or access to trained individual(s); inventory or database; frequency of surveys; care and maintenance programs; preservation of heritage trees and woodlots; scheduled succession plantings.

Landscaped Areas: Overall design and suitability for location/use; native and introduced materials; good use of design principles (i.e., balance of plant material and constructed elements; tasteful integration of hardscapes; lighting; art elements; high standards of maintenance; site rejuvenation and rehabilitation.

Floral Displays: Arrangement, originality, distribution, location, diversity, balance, harmony, high quality maintenance, flower beds, carpet bedding, containers, baskets, window boxes, good use and integration of annuals, perennials, bulbs, and ornamental grasses.

Turf and Ground Cover Areas: Quality of turf as well as use of naturalization, ground covers and wildflowers; good turf management practices; sport fields, athletic parks, and other active and passive recreation areas maintained to appropriate specifications.

For more information, visit www.americainbloom.org.

Editor's Note: The following are excerpts from "Ten Years of Best Ideas From American in Bloom Towns and Cities."

Looking good

By Evelyn Alemanni

As we travel across America, some towns are more striking than others. They appear cleaner, prettier, more welcoming. We may feel comfortable in their ambiance without knowing exactly why. These are the places where we want to spend time, maybe even relocate there. Chances are these towns are some of the many America in Bloom (AIB) participants.

Our country is experiencing a resurgence of citizens who want to be actively involved in their communities, addressing many urgent needs. America in Bloom is providing the framework to get the job done. This book is the work of many contributors: AIB judges, board members, and the many talented, hard working people who are passionate about making their hometowns better. They live in towns and cities like yours and have generously shared their best practices for you to dream about, adapt, and even improve. Here, nearly 200 towns ranging in size from Shippshewana, Indiana with a population of 536 people, to Chicago, Illinois, with nearly three million, share their best ideas. These ideas have been culled from ten years of evaluations written by America in Bloom judges who have visited each community and from the profiles towns submit as part of their application.

Through America in Bloom, cities collect and share their success stories. Some clean up blighted neighborhoods.



Residents in America in Bloom cities are making the place where they live as good as it can be.

Others preserve historic buildings. Some work to retain community character in the face of dramatic growth. Others recognize the power of flowers to attract tourism and make their citizens proud. Many towns are doing similar things; we have attempted to showcase what's unique. Through partnership, collaboration, cooperation and empowerment, people in America in Bloom cities are making the place where they live as good as it can be. Some of our towns have written poignant articles for this book about what the America in Bloom experience has meant to them; I hope they touch you as deeply as they did me.

This book is organized by the eight criteria on which towns are evaluated: floral displays, landscaped areas, urban

forestry, turf and groundcovers, heritage preservation, environmental efforts, community involvement, and tidiness. We hope this format will make it easy for you to see what towns your size are doing. But don't stop there – towns and cities of all sizes are doing things that you might like to try in your hometown.

As with any book, it is more meaningful when the concepts are explained by an expert, first hand, in relationship to your situation. ✿

The author is editor of "Ten Years of Best Ideas From American in Bloom Towns and Cities."

To buy this book, visit www.americainbloom.org and click on "Participation Toolbox."



By Dr. Charles R. Hall



Plants bring communities together

In today's challenging economic climate, community leaders are seeking new ways to attract and retain citizens, develop prosperous economies, add intellectual capital, and create jobs.

The drivers that create emotional bonds between people and their community are consistent in virtually every city and can be reduced to just a few categories. Interestingly, the usual suspects – jobs, the economy, and safety – are not among the top drivers.

Rather, people consistently give higher ratings for elements that relate directly to their daily quality of life, including such things as an area's physical beauty, opportunities for socializing, and a community's perceived level of openness to all people. Each of the known quality of life dimensions (usually defined as social, physical, psychological, cognitive, spiritual, and environmental well-being) are impacted by various stimuli, but remarkably, all of them are impacted in one way or another by the efforts that communities put forth in ensuring green spaces and managed landscapes (comprised of flowers, shrubs, trees, and turfgrass) remain a vital part of their local infrastructure. In other words, plants provide multiple benefits to communities in terms of local economic contributions, various environmental amenities (ecosystems services), and human health and well-being paybacks.

For example, some of the economic benefits of green spaces, parks, and other managed municipal landscapes are that the beautification of these areas draws customers to shopping districts, reduces shopper stress while they are there, enhances overall curb appeal for local businesses, boosts

apartment and commercial building occupancy rates, increases revenue from tourism, creates local jobs (from various landscape design, installation, and maintenance activities), increases residential and commercial property values, and even reduces the costs of street repairs from the reduced temperatures resulting from shaded roadways and sidewalks.

While the list of environmental amenities, otherwise known as ecosystems services, is quite exhaustive, it is impressive to consider a mere subset of them—carbon sequestered; oxygen generated; wildlife attracted; biodiversity enhanced; heat islands offset; air, noise and glare pollution reduced; soil erosion mitigated; storm water runoff more efficiently handled; wind damage minimized; and the reductions in energy use that arise from the temperature buffering that plants provide around buildings.

Needless to say, many of these environmental amenities translate into substantial economic contributions to local economies as well. While these economic and environmental benefits may not come as much of a surprise, the plethora of health and wellbeing benefits might. Peer-reviewed research has documented people's ability to concentrate in their work environment when it is enhanced by the presence of plants and flowers. Children learn faster and are less distracted in plant-filled environs as well, and plants have even been documented to reduce stress levels, hypertension, and ease the effects of attention deficit disorder.

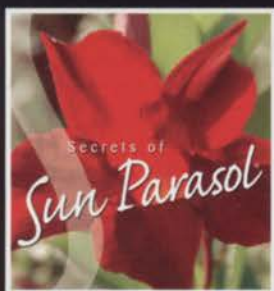
Anyone who has given/received flowers

or plants as gifts knows the joy and excitement they generate; these powerful emotions carry over to beautified landscapes as well. Parks, botanic gardens, and other urban green spaces favorably impact people's health (and reduce health care costs) by providing them with an inexpensive and convenient recreational service. Another health-related benefit is derived from the accelerated healing that occurs during hospital recovery periods when patients are exposed to flowers and potted plants in their rooms, but as importantly, when they have views of beautiful landscape areas around the hospital.

If you would like to learn more about these and other plant-related benefits, please visit the "Benefits of Plants" resource area of AIB's website (go to www.americainbloom.org, then click on Community Resources and then Benefit of Plants). ❁

The author is Ellison Chair in International Floriculture, Texas A&M University Department of Horticultural Sciences and AIB Board Member.





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Say the word

Two letters can make your business operate a lot more efficiently.

By Kim DeMotte

How do your salespeople spend their days? Do they spring into action at the behest of every prospect who shows the slightest glimmer of interest, buying plane tickets, doing research, writing proposals, wining and dining? Are most of these prospects really likely to say yes? And are they prospects whose “yes” you really want? This last question may seem bizarre to many 21st century professionals desperate for every scrap of business in a lean and mean marketplace. It’s the one question that should guide every move your team makes.

You can’t afford to spend your time and resources on the wrong types of customers. Don’t just ask yourself if you *could* do business with a prospect. Ask yourself if you *should* do business with him. Will that customer advance your company in the direction you want it to go?

The truth is that you should be seeking to *disqualify* prospects up front so you won’t waste time on someone who just isn’t right for your company. There’s a big difference between your *next* customer and your *next best* customer. Realize this and you’ll see why success is not based on what you know; it’s about what you *no*.

In other words, you should listen for the “no” at the earliest point possible so you can move on to bigger, better, more suitable prospects. Here are some tips.

MAKE THE PARETO RESOLUTION. You’ve probably heard of the Pareto Rule: 80 percent of your income will come from 20 percent of your customers. How would life be for you if ALL your custom-

ers were like your top 20 percent today? Well, your company would probably be leaner, more agile and more efficient. Instead of hiring more salespeople to get more business, you’d teach your current team to filter out the silt that comprises your current 80 percent.

You’d grow quickly toward your goals because every new customer would fit your predetermined parameters. There would be less wheel-spinning and more

“You can’t afford to spend your time and resources on the wrong types of customers.

getting on with business. Life would be more fun. Making the Pareto Resolution simply means deciding to leave anyone who looks like your ho-hum 80-percenters behind in the creek while you continue your relentless search for gold.

DECIDE WHO YOU DON’T WANT. Here’s where the rubber meets the road. You must set the parameters for identifying someone who is not worth spending your sales resources on. For a real-life example of this process, let me share a story.

Recently I had the privilege of working with the international sales team of Autodesk’s Consulting Group in San Rafael, Calif. I was brought in because their vice president of sales has the challenge of raising the department’s sales to \$150 million and simultaneously improve its margins from the 15 percent range to the 30 percent range. Autodesk doesn’t have a market penetration problem.

They are in virtually every Fortune company in the U.S. But the consulting

group does have limited resources and they need to be able to pick and choose what business supports their revenue growth and margin requirements, and figure out what to do with the projects they choose not to undertake. After working with them for a day, they got clarity among themselves as to what was and what wasn’t going to support the collective goals of the group.

For example, they decided what would

never be acceptable business for them and what would always be acceptable business. That left a family of business in between that needed some filter parameters - such as “referenceability,” “repeatability,” “leading edge technology,” etc. And they agreed that they would assign scores to these parameters and projects that totaled a minimum amount that would be accepted (on a case-by-case basis), and those that did not would be sourced elsewhere.

Prior to this exercise, the team would struggle to decide what to take and what not to ... and what to do with what it did not take. At the conclusion of this meeting, it was now clear that 80 percent of the proposals would fall into either definitely yes or definitely no (and so required little or no analysis), and the remainder had clear parameters for deciding yes or no. **L&L**

The author is the founder and managing partner of Power of No, a St. Louis-based firm specializing in improving corporate sales and management effectiveness.



Machines and money

A fleet of equipment and vehicles that won't break will save you downtime. Learn some of the best purchasing strategies from these three landscape professionals. by Kristen Hampshire

Downtime is a killer. When equipment is laid up in the shop waiting for maintenance, it's like having an entire crew call in sick.

You scramble to find a "fill in" and take a productivity hit as you realign schedules and cobble together a fast Plan B to get the day's work done.

"In the service business, you can't get that downtime back," says Tim Schnabel, president, Aggeland Green Lawn & Tree Care in Colorado Springs, Colo., and College Station, Texas. "You have to buy the right equipment that gets the job done most efficiently with the fewest headaches and problems."

Buying smart takes some practice, and most of us make mistakes before we figure out the art and science of purchasing. We have preferences for certain lines/brands, and there are numbers to crunch.

But if you're in the buying mode these days, Todd Pugh says equipment dealerships are ripe with promotions. If you have the cash or you can get financing, you can get some pretty good deals," says the founder and CEO of Todd's Enviroscares in Louisville, Ohio.

This month, *Lawn & Landscape* spoke with three firms to learn their equipment best practices and winning purchase strategies.

A unified approach

Todd's Enviroscares

Todd Pugh, founder and CEO **LOCATION** Louisville, Ohio **ESTABLISHED** 1996 **EMPLOYEES** 125 **2010 REVENUES** \$8.6 million **CUSTOMERS** 20% residential; 80% commercial **SERVICES** design/build, maintenance, irrigation, lighting

Flexibility is the underlying theme of equipment purchase decisions at Todd's Enviroscares in Louisville, Ohio. Rather than setting a stringent budget and buying schedule for adding mowers or hand-held equipment to the fleet, Todd Pugh keeps the plan loose.

"We need to be quick to make decisions," says Pugh, founder and CEO of the company he started when he was 14 years old. (He incorporated in 1996.) "In the past, we could sit and actually project and budget our equipment needs – we could say, 'We are going to add three mowing crews and this is how much equipment we will need.'"

Today, Pugh might need to add a couple of crews mid-season. Commercial clients are waiting until last minute to contract work in order to save money. Contract administrators have been laid off. There are national buying groups making decisions. But despite all this, business moves much faster today, Pugh says.



Pugh

That's why Enviroscares runs unified fleets – same color mowers, same truck brand, same name on hand-held equipment. "That way, we can create stronger vendor relationships, training time is reduced because the guys are used to the same controls and operations and there is less stocking of parts," Pugh says.

Buying the same lines from the same dealers improves purchasing efficiency. And that means Pugh can make last-minute decisions to support business growth that occurs mid-season, or any time, for that matter.

Of course, equipment purchasing wasn't always so organized at Enviroscares. Pugh says there is a learning curve, and when he first got into the business he bought any equipment that was a good deal. "I had Isuzu trucks, Chevy trucks, International trucks," he says. "As your business begins to grow, you end up working around your fleet of equipment – 'We need this truck on that job' – because the vehicles are so different. But they were a good deal."

A fleet of disparate mowers and a mishmash of vehicles got Pugh through the early years, until he could begin unifying his fleet. Before, "We were working around dinosaur-type



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equipment that I was emotionally attached to," he says, recalling his first vehicle: a Ford 3000 tractor and loader with a 10-foot flatbed trailer. "I didn't have my driver's license yet, so I drove that all through town."

Pugh rotates his trucks – there are 65

of them – every seven to 10 years, or every 100,000 to 150,000 miles. He made an arrangement with his dealer to trade in mowers every two or three years. "He is basically setting a guaranteed buy-back price, so you could consider that a lease," Pugh says.

Meanwhile, paying attention to details ensures that Enviroscares' fleets work hard for the business. Three mechanics work for Pugh, and they handle all mower repair and truck maintenance. (Once the business hit \$1 million, Pugh decided to hire the first service technician.) "You need a mechanic when your landscape guys are doing repairs when they should be landscaping," he says.

He switched to synthetic oil in vehicles and equipment, which costs more but requires fewer oil changes – less product, less labor. The company has an on-site fuel station, and employees are responsible for cleaning equipment and vehicles daily and ensuring proper tire pressure.

Equipment is the No. 2 expense after labor at Enviroscares, so managing the expense is critical to the company's success, Pugh says.

"Equipment is a huge factor in the profitability of the business," he says. "Once you decide on your fleet, you have to be disciplined and stick to your plan."

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QUICK TIPS

Work a deal. Talk to vendors about buy-back agreements and opportunities to trade in equipment after a certain number of years/hours. Pugh found that hours are the real determining factor of when it's time to trade in equipment. "For us, the best useful life of a mower is before it hits 1,200 to 1,400 hours," he says.

Stay nimble. Plan a budget for equipment, but know your numbers so you can add equipment mid-season if necessary. "It's not uncommon for us to add two or three maintenance crews after the season starts," Pugh says. He knows this means two or three more trucks, mowers and hand-held equipment sets.

Hire a pro. Because Pugh is mechanically inclined, he performed much of the maintenance until his company was large enough to support hiring a technician. Today, he manages the three technicians because he feels comfortable under the hood (or deck). "You could set yourself up with a local vendor that will do all mower repair," he says. "If I was strictly a businessperson who managed a landscape firm, I would consider that option."

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Tim Schnabel, president **LOCATION** College Station, Texas; Colorado Springs, Colo.
ESTABLISHED 2002 (Colo.); 2008 (Texas) **EMPLOYEES** 15 **2010 REVENUES** \$950,000
CUSTOMERS 90% residential; 10% commercial **SERVICES** lawn care, tree and shrub care

Moving to ride-on spreaders has made a significant impact on technician fatigue, employee retention and overall productivity at Aggieland Green and Integrated Lawn & Tree Care. The labor-saving equipment doesn't completely replace manual spreaders, but it allows a technician to complete three to four times more work in a single day.

"We are fresh at the end of the day, where traditional methods run us ragged," says Tim Schnabel, president of both Aggieland Green in College Station, Texas, and Integrated Lawn & Tree Care in Colorado Springs, Colo. "While ride-on spreaders require more technical skills, having them in the fleet attracts a higher-quality employee that really finds the equipment is a challenge they enjoy."

At about \$9,000 per ride-on (Schnabel pays cash), this is not a purchase he makes on a whim. "We look at ratios," he says, noting that overtime hours and the concentration of customers in a given area of town are analyzed. "We look at how well we have grown in that current year, and if those factors push us toward maxing out technicians, then we will add another vehicle."

Generally, Schnabel adds one vehicle per location per year to its fleet. "We are pretty aggressive when it comes to making sure that we have the right vehicle and equipment," Schnabel says. And the company doesn't leave buying decisions to chance. Before purchasing the first ride-on, Schnabel visited with companies that used various types of ride-on spreaders. "We were able to talk to their technicians, and work on the equipment," he says.

He discovered a preference for the zero-turn hydrostatic, ride-on spread-

ers with more customization options. Since moving to ride-on spreaders, the company has also invested in ride-on aerators. And, Schnabel has also changed up his vehicles by purchasing a 14-foot box truck that is customized with a back-mounted ramp and side doors that open up for loading product by forklift. "We are protected from rain, from theft, from all of the elements," Schnabel says.

Schnabel says over the years he has learned to buy equipment based on efficiency because downtime is futile. In the past, the older trucks technicians once drove required less productivity and frequent trips back to the shop for repairs. "We always look for equipment that will make us the most money in the long-term," he says.



Schnabel

QUICK TIPS

Verify online sellers. Be careful who you buy from online. Schnabel got burned by an eBay retailer who took off with a wired payment for an all-terrain vehicle (ATV), which the company uses for some of its spray applications and winter plowing. "If we had to do that over again, we would have talked over the phone and we would have used a credit card instead of wiring money," he says.

Try before you buy. Talk to colleagues about the equipment they use and see if you can watch it at work. By learning from technicians already using ride-on spreaders, Schnabel made a more educated purchase decision.

Seek out innovation. Schnabel's first question when considering a new piece of equipment: Will it make me more productive? Check into labor-saving equipment and truck configurations that can make your job easier.

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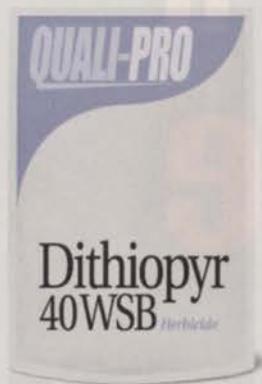
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with Jerry Corbett



Quali-Pro Technical Services & Product Manager



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Accountability rules

AgriLawn

Roger Jacobi, president **LOCATION** Oklahoma City **ESTABLISHED** 1991 **EMPLOYEES** 33 **2010 REVENUES** \$3.5 million **CUSTOMERS** 95% residential; 5% commercial **SERVICES** lawn care, pest control and plant health

Roger Jacobi doesn't buy iron unless there's cash in the bank to pay for it. "We don't want to go into debt to buy a piece of equipment," he says. So he conducts a cost analysis before heading to the dealership. Because the economy in his region has been more buoyant the last several years than other areas of the country, Jacobi hasn't stalled any buying decisions.

But he plans on getting up to 12 years from each truck, and pumps on spray rigs are rebuilt each year to keep them in tip-top shape. "We used to wait until we had a problem with a pump, but in our case, it's easier to rebuild them every year to prevent something from happening in the field," he says, relating how keeping pumps in stock and backup equipment available in case of a breakdown prevents downtime.

What Jacobi stresses at AgriLawn is equipment accountability. All equipment is barcoded and each piece "belongs" to a truck. "We know at any time which truck is missing equipment and every piece is tracked for repair that way," he says.

A white board in the shop notifies managers if there is a problem with any equipment or vehicle. "We work hard to make sure that employees know it's their responsibility to communicate issues," he says, noting that accountability is emphasized at team meetings.

As for purchasing decisions, Jacobi sticks to the same brand equipment so he can minimize the number of parts he stocks. A fleet/facility manager manages all preventive maintenance, and Jacobi's goal is to maximize the life of all equipment and vehicles — and when he does buy, to bring in a few at a time.

Jacobi is careful to consider the

long-term before driving any vehicle off the lot. The last time the company purchased three trucks, Jacobi decided to buy diesel models. At the time, diesel cost less at the pump. "Even though we knew we would pay more upfront for the trucks, we figured we would save money fueling up," he says.

"The following year, diesel prices ended up being higher than gasoline, and it has been that way ever since," Jacobi says. "We learned not to be short-sighted when making decisions like that."

It's time for Jacobi to retire some of his 12-year-old vehicles in the fleet. But those trucks won't go to waste. "We'll put some trucks into other uses — such as making an aerator truck out of older trucks," he says.

Being resourceful speaks to accountability. "We make sure any buying decision makes financial sense," he says. **L&L**



Jacobi

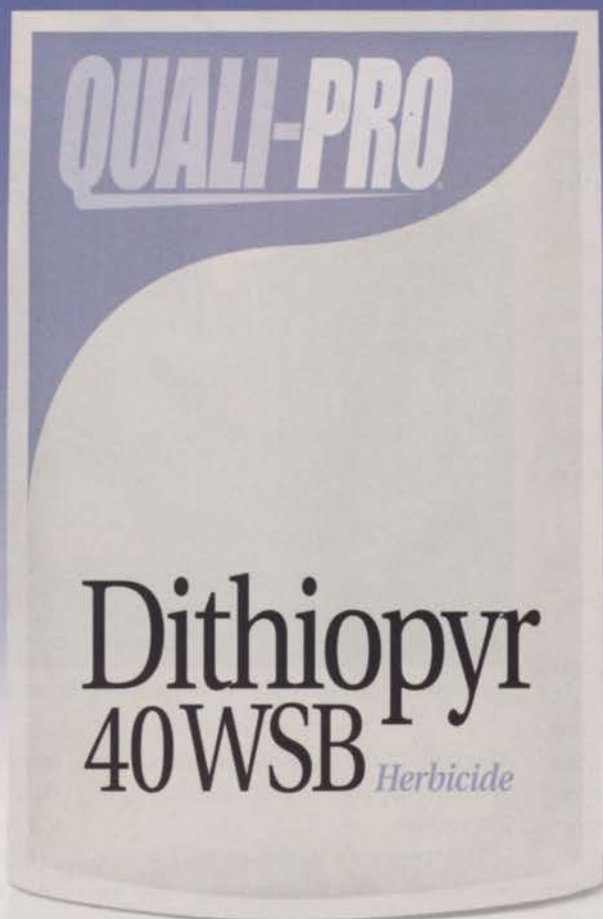
QUICK TIPS

Emphasize accountability. Employees at AgriLawn take responsibility for their equipment because that's part of their job, and Jacobi communicates this regularly.

Be consistent. By purchasing the same brands of equipment, Jacobi can minimize the number of parts he keeps in-house — and he likes to have an inventory of spare tires, pumps for spray rigs and other commonly used parts. "That way, if we have a breakdown, we can get a (pump) back on a truck in under an hour," he says.

Buy in a bundle. Jacobi likes to buy a few trucks at a time rather than making single purchases. That way, he can consolidate the time it takes to outfit the truck properly for lawn care routes.

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Not your **average trees**

Bartlett is maintaining the “world’s most cared for trees” at Ground Zero. By Brian Horn

While the still-being-constructed World Trade Towers signify closure and new beginnings for many, there were other signs of life around that area – trees. And the maintenance of those trees has been done by Bartlett Tree Experts.

The company became involved with the project in the summer of 2007, and since then has been responsible for every facet of care for the 500 trees. Wayne Dubin, Bartlett vice-president/division manager refers to the trees as “the world’s most cared for trees” because of the high amount of attention they’ve received.

“We have a board certified master arborist who is out in the field monitoring these trees on average four days a week,” Dubin says.

“We are sampling the water throughout the course of the season through the irrigation system, and we’re sampling soil and custom blending fertilizer for each tree based on the origin of the tree from a nursery standpoint because they all have different soil profiles.”

About 220 of the trees were planted in time for the ceremony commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks. The company has been caring for the trees at the holding yard for four years, and the planted trees at the 9/11 plaza since August of last year.



Environmental Design in Houston is responsible for moving the trees to the site.

About 40 of the trees will be planted in Shanksville, Pa., where United Flight 93 crashed.

The trees are a single species, swamp white oak, which Dubin says was selected because “it’s a tough tree and it doesn’t have any meaningful insect or disease problems, and it was felt that it would be very adaptable to an urban environment.” The only tree that will be on the plaza other than the oaks is the “Survivor Tree,” a Bradford Pear that survived the Sept. 11 attacks, he says.

The company also installed moisture sensors in 25 percent of the trees’ root balls in the holding yard, and those sensors reported back to a computer and monitored which root balls were becoming dry.

“Those sensors provide us with historical data in terms of soil temperature and soil moisture levels for all of the

trees over the course of the four years they’ve been under our care at the holding yard,” Dubin says.

Bartlett also has an online log that they’re required to keep so that the owners and people close to the project can go on any time and look up the history of any particular tree in terms of its performance.

“The level of sophistication – we made sure that we did things that we wouldn’t normally have done to ensure that the trees were getting the very finest care,” he says.

“It’s a great honor to be associated with a project where we can help people get some peace from a tragedy that for all of us as Americans was unspeakable and unimaginable,” Dubin says. **L&L**

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



Nearly 500 trees for the 9/11 Memorial were kept in New Jersey under Bartlett’s care.

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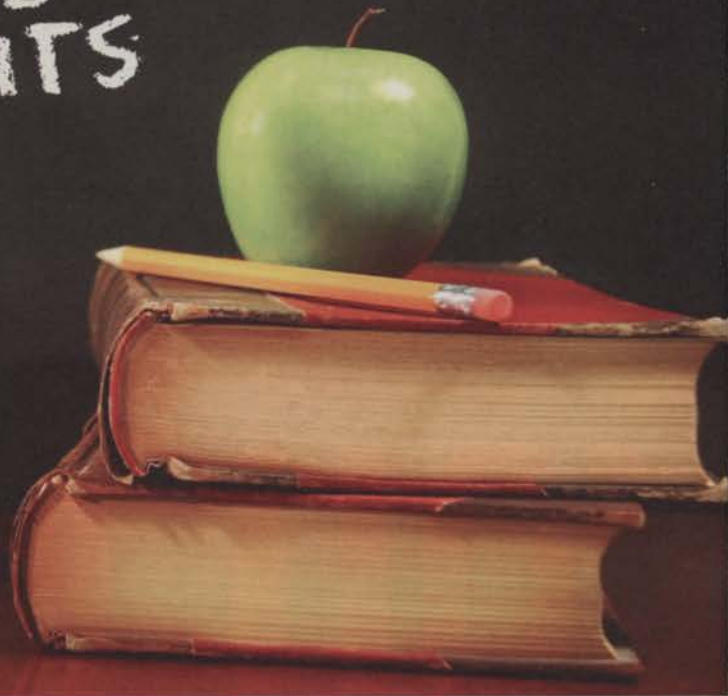
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THE STATE OF HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENTS

Many horticulture programs across the country face budget cuts and declining enrollment. Here's how you can help shore up the green industry's foundation.

By Carolyn LaWell



Earlier this year, *Newsweek* listed the Top 20 most useless degrees. And sitting close to the top at No. 2 was horticulture. (Don't feel bad, journalism was No. 1.)

The ranking was based on data that included the industry's median starting salary (\$35,000), median mid-career salary (\$50,800) and percentage change in the number of jobs from 2008-2018 (-1.74). And the ranking reiterated many of the reasons university and college horticulture programs say they're having trouble attracting students – the public's perception is salaries are

too low and a degree is, well, useless for a career that could involve planting and mowing.

"Parents are sending their children to business school – the business schools are swelling," says Roger Harris, professor and head of the horticulture department at Virginia Tech University. "There's a perception that people don't know what horticulture is ... and there's a perception that they can't make a good living, which is totally false. Our students are making near the top of the college, as far as starting salaries. They're working for competitive companies."

“Parents are sending their children to business school – the business schools are swelling.” Roger Harris, Virginia Tech University

ADVANCING PROGRAMS. As federal and state budgets were cut, it's no surprise the trickle-down effect of that tightening hit hard many universities and colleges. Hort programs have seen budget cuts as high as 19 percent. Those who haven't seen decreases have worked with flat budgets, which essentially equates to a reduction.

The cuts have meant the loss of faculty, extension and research programs. It's meant horticulture departments merged with other departments. And it's meant an increasing number of programs have looked externally for non-state sources of funding.

For example, at Penn State, tree care companies and the fruit and vegetable industries have helped pay

either for teachers' salaries or operating expenses. A trend Rich Marini, professor and head of the horticulture department, hopes the rest of the industry catches on to.

"The nursery and landscaping industries have been almost totally non-supportive in the past," he says. "I think the future for the landscape and nursery programs at most universities (is) as tenured track people retire, they will probably be replaced with – as long as we have enough students – instructors, nine-month appointments, instructors with one to three year contracts."

The changes in recent years haven't all been gloom. Departments retooled to meet the needs of incoming students and the industry.



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EDUCATION

Enrollment numbers

Here is a breakdown of undergraduate student numbers for the schools we spoke with. Note: the list is an apples to oranges comparison. For example, Brigham Young is strictly landscape management, while Colorado State is horticulture and landscape architecture.



Brigham Young University expects fewer than 200 students in its landscape management program for the upcoming schools year. In 2003, it had about 75 students.

Colorado State University has seen a stable number of about 400 students over the years.

Michigan State University's enrollment has declined from 146 in 2005 to 110 in 2010. It's two-year program had 112 students in 2005 and 70 in 2010.

Texas A&M University has about 200 students in its horticulture major and eight years ago it had about 140.

Penn State University's horticulture program has been declining for nine years and has about 45 students. It's landscape contracting program has stayed steady with about 120 students.

Virginia Tech University has about 85 students compared to about 150 15 years ago.

A glimpse of how things have changed in the last decade: Michigan State University added a Sustainable and Organic Horticulture concentration. Virginia Tech's landscape contracting students receive a minor in entrepreneurship.

Colorado State University changed the name of its landscape horticulture major to environmental horticulture and added a landscape business concentration. Why the change?

"There were two main reasons: One was that name better reflects the nature of the program in a broader sense," says Steve Wallner, professor and head of the department. "When you're talking about the curriculum and what those students are interested in and hope to wind up doing, it really is all about outdoor spaces and outdoor environments, so environmental horticulture made sense from that point of view. Secondly, we thought it would be more appealing to students from a recruiting sense."

Texas A&M University designed a degree with less science and more business and design skill emphasis in hopes to draw more students to the program. "The biggest change in the last five years has been our new BA degree program which has brought in some talented students that we would not have attracted previously," says Tim Davis, former head of the horticulture department.

Of the schools *Lawn & Landscape* spoke with, the answers about whether the student population was decreasing or increasing were mixed. Many department heads said their horticulture majors have declined in enrollment, but landscaping majors or concentrations in landscaping, viticulture, enology and organic ag have held steady or increased. (See sidebar above.)

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“There is more big players nationally or even regionally that now have resources to do recruiting.”

Kory Beidler, The Brickman Group

nationally or even regionally that now have resources to do recruiting, where maybe 10-15 years ago there were only a few of us that really could spend the money or have the resources to go after colleges,” Beidler says. “Now they have a representation (at colleges and job fairs), so that’s why the competition has increased.”

Another trend companies have seen is a change in graduates’ expectations.

Beidler says he has seen an increase in the number of students interested in design, estimating or management jobs right after graduation, but there are only so many of those positions available, and especially within a commercial landscape maintenance company like Brickman.

“There is less eagerness among current college graduates to go into more physically demanding jobs,” says Gordon Ober, vice president

of recruiting and development for the The Davey Tree Expert Co. “Many of today’s college students are also not as eager to work longer hours or pick up and move far away from home. Also, upper ranking students are not as willing to start at the bottom to learn the business and work their way to the top. They want a defined, short-term roadmap for advancement up and out of production positions. They expect to start as management trainees, account representatives/managers or supervisors.”

Still, those in the industry say the quality of student being produced is still high.

Brett Lemcke, vice presi-

dent of R.M. Landscape and chairman of PLANET’s Student Career Days says the students he runs into at the annual event and at job fairs are the ones companies want to recruit because they show a real effort and enthusiasm for the industry.

“The quality (of students) is very strong,” he says. “They’re new to the industry, so they have a lot to learn but, at the same time, they’re willing to learn. They understand why we’re all here and what the business is about.”

Experience in the form of internships is one thing Beidler and Ober say they wish more graduates had on their resumes. The solution

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to that is two parts: Colleges requiring students perform internships in the field before graduating and more companies offering the opportunity.

William Vance Baird, professor and chair of Michigan State University's Department of Horticulture, says internships should extend to high school students, which would give them an early experience and connection to the industry.

"Most of our students get interested in majoring by having some positive contact with horticulture," he says. "The best recruiter is someone who gives them a chance to do something more with plants than dig holes and/or pull weeds all day; then they see that this can be a career. If companies can provide summer employment for high school students that is varied in scope and includes a few days shadowing the bosses, for example, or a trip to an industry event like an expo or a field day, it can really open their minds to what is possible."

“Students are interested in making the world a better place, making a difference.”



William Vance Baird, Michigan State University

ATTRACTING STUDENTS.

Many of the barriers the industry faces when it comes to attracting young people aren't new. And some department heads and industry folks say even if an influx of students were interested in the industry, depending on their concentration, there may not be jobs. Still, moves need to be made to change the perception and draw more students to the industry.

From the university and college perspective, they're trying to brand the industry as technical and professional and with resurgence in all things organic and eco-friendly, departments are pushing the message that the horticulture industry is a steward of the environment. They're not only going after high school students but those already on campus that are undeclared.

"Students are interested in making the world a better place, making a difference," Baird says. "Stress the

positive contribution to the environment and quality of life made by our industries."

But they can only do so much without the industry's help. Many department heads say higher starting salaries would help. As well as the industry playing a larger role in helping high school students – or even younger – understand what it is the industry does.

Marini says when he arrived at Penn State he thought he had an easy recruitment solution, just visit high school science classes and college fairs.

"I quickly found out that we weren't allowed to do that," he says. "There are so many college recruiters attending high schools trying to recruit students that the high schools limit the number of times any university can visit them. So if Penn State can only go into a high school once, they don't want the head

of the horticulture department going."

There are initiatives taking place with high school and middle school students – PLANET is involved with Future Farmers of America and has put together recruiting pieces and worked with state associations to promote the green industry – but every company can be part of the process, Lemcke says.

"Contact local horticulture programs or get into high schools and just talk about, as business owners or managers, the success you have, how fun and creative your jobs are and start pushing (the industry) that way," Lemcke says. "As industry people, if we can go after (schools) and say, 'Hey, I'm available, sign me up for whatever,' that would help with momentum, getting people on board and filling up these classrooms." L&L

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

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A designer's viewpoint for hardscape contractors

Chad Watkins shares ideas at Hardscape North America.

By Peter Chakerian

You've got a great hardscape idea, an excellent concept and a solid budget with which to execute.

But what happens if the designer and contractor teamed for the project aren't, well, working together?

Chad Watkins, president/principal of Foley, Ala.-based Watkins Acy Strunk (WAS) Design, has an opinion. Quite a few, actually.

And if you're headed to Hardscape North America in October, you're likely to get an earful and eyeful from him and his PowerPoint.

Watkins is one of the planned speakers for the show, which is held in conjunction with the GIE+EXPO in Louisville, Ky.

His session, "A Designer's Viewpoint for Hardscape Contractors," follows three case studies that utilized segmental retaining wall and concrete unit paving products.

Watkins explores the design and construction process with the goal of "showcasing the designer's perspective on how to execute great projects as a team," says Watkins, a registered landscape architect.

"It's a whole lot easier and

more effective to talk about this stuff with my hands," Watkins says with a laugh, calling in from his Foley office. "But I do think the subject matter translates without that for many people.

"There's a narrative and expository presentation to these projects, and the challenges and successes speak to them from different viewpoints. That's a difficult thing to portray, I guess. But that's the goal for my talk."

Watkins says that his presentation is carrying a "tongue-in-cheek working title of 'Just Make Me Look Good,' and should clock in between 60 and 75 minutes," he says.

"I'm discussing segmental retaining walls and unit pavers in design from a designer's perspective and about how critical it is for designers, contractors and vendors to work together for the success of the project," Watkins adds.

"That's how the business thrives and future opportunities come about."

His goals for the talk? To increase participants' understanding of the design phase of the projects discussed, the understanding of their roles in a project from the designer's perspective and to get a good handle on the "project dynamic."

Watkins says that everything from differing agendas to a total lack of communication – and almost anything that one can think of in between – "really can cause a project to suffer."

He says the talk covers project design phases, material procurement, construction, project synergy ("or lack thereof," he says) and how budgets, timelines and personalities impact each of these phases.

Watkins also says that a keystone to the talk is why team synergy matters.

"Everyone needs to be on the same page," he says. "Or the finished product may look like no one was."

In Watkins' three case

A lack of communication between parties involved in a hardscape job can cause projects like these pictured on the right to suffer and take a long time to complete.





study projects, he plans on "covering mostly the good that comes from these relationships, but the bad and ugly are represented as well, in an effort to show designers just how these projects can move along the right and wrong way.

"To adequately achieve design vision, it's important to overcome your challenges – which come up as early as design and product selection," he says.

Watkins plans to illustrate his points through discussions of particular WAS projects and their respective dynamics.

These include:

- The Barber Marina in nearby Orange Beach, Ala., "which explored many different options" during the design process.
- A beachfront Hampton Inn, which "adapted material selections due to product dynamics" during the procurement process.
- And the Heritage Motor Coach/Recreational Vehicle Resort and Marina "that required precision and craftsmanship in construction execution."

"We think it does well to show designers how projects move along," Watkins says. "Usually, we're the first to interact with the owner, and of course, the better it goes on the last project, the more likely we are to be the champion to get the next project.

"People pay us for design, we try to execute every time," Watkins says. "If I can't get a shot on a project, or something goes wrong, isn't installed properly or is discarded or ignored, the

consequences can be huge for a business."

Watkins describes himself as "one of those kids who grew up on a working farm" and, in his words, "I really didn't like it very much."

With little appeal in his then-vocation, he started a lawn business as a teenager and got busy – so much so, that his business quickly evolved into landscaping, which then helped pave the way toward being a landscape architect. He saw each step critical to his evolution.

From there, Watkins started drawing. After he finished with schooling, he began practicing landscape architecture, he started his own firm five years ago with business partners Jared Acy and Troy Strunk "and we've been planted on the Gulf Coast ever since," he says.

Watkins Acy Strunk (WAS) Design, is a landscape architecture and land planning firm that offers a wide range of professional design services to the Gulf Coast region.

The services range from "conceptual design through construction documentation

and observation," Watkins says.

WAS Design "offers site, amenity, and landscape design, land planning and marketing graphics," says Watkins. Their projects range from commercial and industrial, to community design and residential.

Watkins doesn't forget where he came from: he's still a silent partner in a landscape company, and he says that having design and maintenance in his background "helps a great deal in offering a real, well-rounded perspective on what we try to accomplish on each side of the business."

He also believes that added layer of knowledge, expertise and awareness may have helped the company during the down economy.

"We've stayed in business through the recession, so I would consider our business very successful," he says.

"We've had quite a few competitors that aren't around anymore, quite frankly."

The author is a freelance writer based in Bay Village, Ohio.

Going to the show?

2011 Hardscape North America and GIE+EXPO will co-locate again in Louisville, Ky. The shows will be held Oct. 27-29 at the Kentucky Exposition Center.

PLANET will also host its annual Green Industry Conference at the Louisville Marriott Downtown and Kentucky Exposition Center from Oct. 26-29 in Louisville.

For more information and to register:

- 2011 Hardscape North America, visit www.hardscapena.com
- GIE+EXPO, visit www.gie-expo.com.
- Green Industry Conference, www.landcarenetwork.org/events/GreenIndustryConf/

Staying a cut above

Bill Gardocki will give landscapers some insight on how to succeed in the hardscape world at the GIE+EXPO. By Brian Horn



Sub-base and base compaction with the correct equipment will help insure quality installations on a job.

For 10 years, Bill Gardocki thought he was doing things the right way at Interstate Landscape in New Hampshire. That was until he took a class on cutting pavers, which was an eye-opener. Turns out, Gardocki wasn't doing work as efficiently as he could. After he would mark pavers for cutting, he would cut them with a table saw. But the teacher didn't even own a table saw, which shocked Gardocki. The teacher used a technique called "cutting in place," which changed a lot for Gardocki.

"When I started doing that, I was cutting literally hundreds and hundreds of hours a year out of our labor in cutting," he says. "It completely transformed my business into a much more efficient business because of the technique of cutting in place."

Gardocki will be sharing his knowledge on compaction and cutting, along with other lessons in hardscape work during his talk, "Grow Your Business through Paver Installation," at Hardscape North America, which is held in conjunc-

tion with the GIE+EXPO. He's scheduled to speak Thursday, Oct. 28.

"Once I understood compaction and cutting, I bought all new equipment and I completely changed how we did those two chores and it completely changed the efficiency on my crews," he says.

When it comes to compaction, the key is having some way of measuring the compaction that you've done on your site.

"Ninety-nine percent of contractors I talk to have no way to measure the compaction they've done on the site," he says. "So they don't know if they've over compacted or under compacted and anywhere from 90-95 percent of failures that occur on a hardscape project occur because of improper compaction."

"So if you've got 90 percent of your failures occurring because of one specific task, and you're not testing that task, how do you know if you're going to have a failure or not. Efficiency wise, if you're not testing that, then you're really rolling the dice as to whether you are going to

get call backs or not."

Gardocki will also talk about forming a hardscape crew. You'll need someone who is ICPI and NCMA certified. You can hire someone already certified or send someone to take the classes to become certified.

"(That way) if they are going to be doing any retaining wall installation, they're not going to be putting themselves in jeopardy of liability because they don't have guys that truly understand the geometry and so forth of where they can get themselves in trouble with retaining walls," he says. "Certification to me is extremely important for the hardscape crew."

A landscaper should also have someone on the crew who has worked in the hardscape industry.

Gardocki says a landscaper should look for someone who's been a laborer on a crew for a couple of years and wants the chance to be a foreman. Joining local landscape associations to build relationships is a good way to recruit talent, Gardocki says.

"So, the real safe way is to have someone that you've known put the word out," he says. "It's very difficult finding an employee like that just cold out of an ad in the newspaper. Gardocki will also talk about how to select materials for a hardscape job."

"Don't mix and match paver thicknesses on the job site," he says. "When selecting pavers, and if you're going to be mixing colors and mixing styles, try to always maintain the same thickness in your paver selection."

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



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Bobcat S750 Skid-steer Loader

THE PITCH: Lifting and loading with Bobcat's new S750 skid-steer loader is easier and faster because the machine achieves maximum reach at full lift height.

- The S750 delivers 11 feet of vertical lift – 3.5 inches higher than the S300 it replaces.
- Features a 23-gallons-per-minute standard hydraulic flow – 11 percent more than the S300.
- The S750 has an operating weight of 8,730 lbs, a rated operating capacity of 3,200 lbs and is powered by an 85-hp turbo-diesel engine.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.bobcat.com

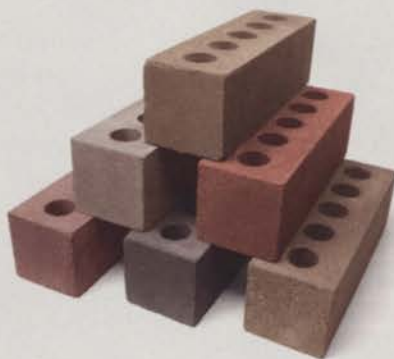


Permeable Retaining Blocks

THE PITCH: Pacific Interlock Pavingstone's new Permeable Retaining Blocks were developed at the request of a city planner that had a specific need for this product.

- The water will percolate directly through the retaining blocks and not just through the seams or gaps.
- The permeable retaining blocks are available as a tumbled or standard block and have certain advantages over the non-permeable version.
- They are available in 15 standard colors plus many custom colors too.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.pacinterlock.com



CalStar Bricks

THE PITCH: Bricks from CalStar Products offer a clay architectural facing brick, but with a significantly reduced environmental footprint.

- CalStar's production process generates 85 percent less CO₂ and uses 85 percent less energy than traditional fired clay while incorporating 40 percent recycled content.
- Through beneficial reuse of fly ash, a byproduct from the utility industry, CalStar is able to avoid energy-intensive kiln firing.
- Bricks are available in a range of colors across North America and Qualifies for LEED on applicable projects.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.calstarproducts.com



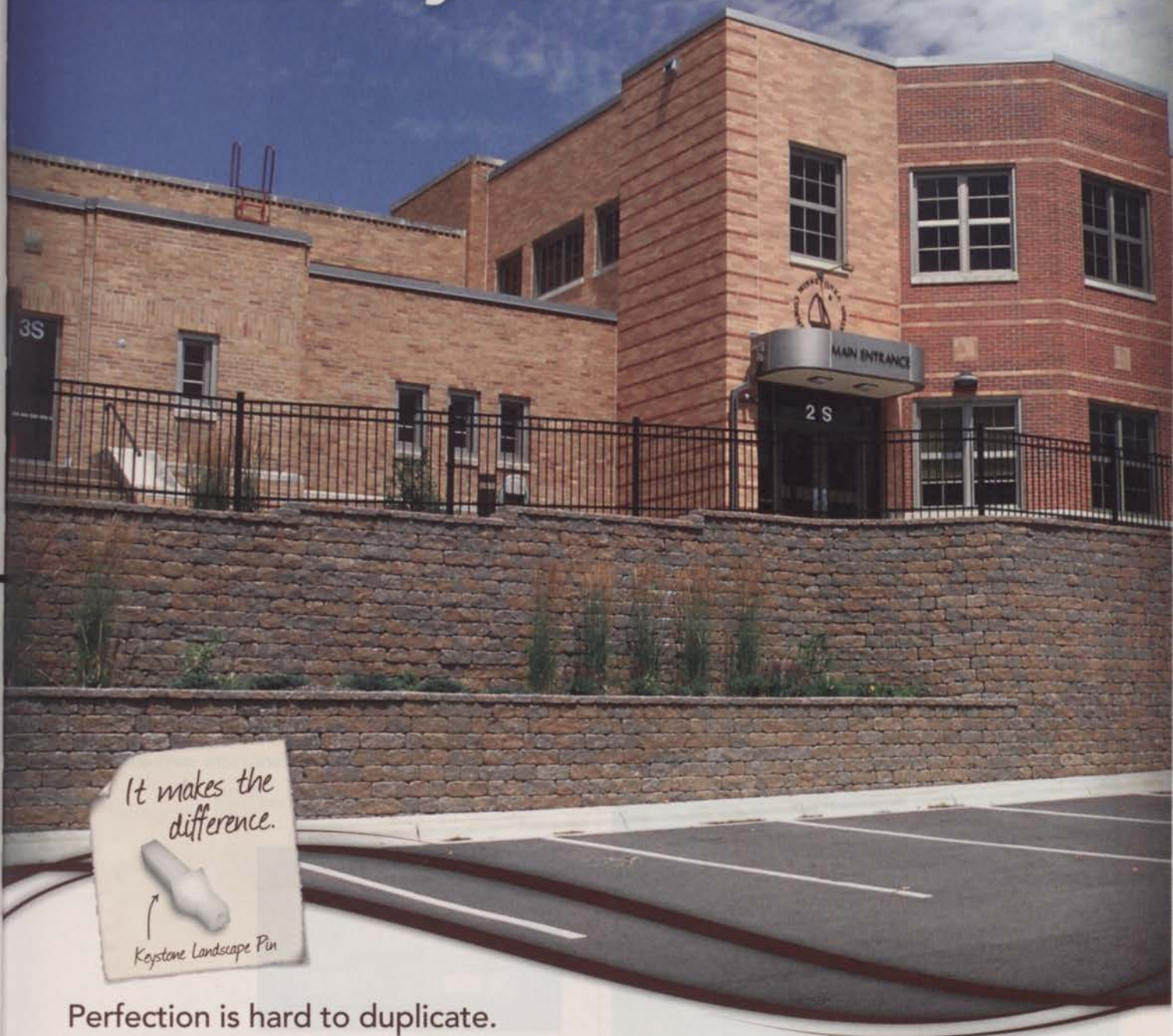
BelAir Wall

THE PITCH: BelAir Wall offers a solution for residential and light commercial retaining and freestanding wall construction where aesthetics are a key consideration.

- The multi-piece design and blended colors offer an alternative look to traditional retaining wall blocks.
- BelAir Wall 6-inch units may be used alone or in combinations with 3-inch units in applications ranging from curves to corners, terraces to raised patios or steps to columns.
- You can install the BelAir Wall free-standing wall system in a random pattern using any combination of units.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.belgard.biz/belairwall.htm

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Mezzo Pizza Oven

THE PITCH: The wood-fired pizza oven is sturdy and offers a large cooking surface.

- Offers 810-square inches of cooking area.
- Has an arched-roof design similar to old-fashioned, traditional ovens.
- Comes with plenty of thermal mass.
- Constructed of reinforced refractory concrete and assembly is simple.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.stoneagemanufacturing.com



RoofStone Roof Pavers

THE PITCH: RoofStone is an accessory for walkways and patios integrated into LiveRoof installations.

- Pavers measure 1 foot wide x 2 feet long x 4 inches tall.
- The pavers feature built-in pedestals with water channels, so no separate pedestal system is required.
- The surface is concrete with recycled content varying by color.
- Available in six colors: Sage, Light Reflective, Mocha, Charcoal, Beach Sand and Red Brick.
- The top edges are beveled to prevent chipping.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.liveroof.com



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Diamond Blades

THE PITCH: Dtec has added a new line of diamond blades for gas-powered cut-off saws to its Superior series.

- The 12- and 14-inch Superior blades offer a segmented rim style and specially-designed features.
- The blades are able to cut steel, concrete pavers, masonry block and brick, as well as granite, stone and tile.
- Incorporates a reinforced flange to ensure the sturdiness of a thicker blade.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.affinitytool.com



Vista's 4260 Series Hardscape Lights

THE PITCH: A compact design makes this light series versatile.

- The compact design (6 inches long x 1 inch wide x 7/8 inch tall) makes it easy to hide.
- Removable flange plate allows unit to be firmly anchored into masonry or paver installations.
- Impact resistant lens protects LED emitters.
- Supplied with all mounting hardware and connectors.
- Available in 15 different powder-coated finishes, plus natural brass, antiqued brass, copper or stainless steel.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.vistapro.com



New Holland Compact Track Loaders

THE PITCH: The three New Holland 200 series compact track loaders were designed based on customer input.

- The self-leveling bucket allows attachments to maintain the preset location throughout the lift cycle.
- The C232 has a bucket breakout force of 8,585 lbs.
- The C227 is rated at 70-hp with a rated operating capacity of 2,700 lbs.
- The ground-level service checkpoints are easy to access and grouped together, and the new flip-top cab tilts forward for complete component access.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.newholland.com



Ashbash Home Fire Pit

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

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.volcanogrills.com



Kichler Design Pro LED Light

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

- A slim 2/3-inch profile and low heat output.
- The fixtures use 75 percent less energy than traditional incandescent/halogen lighting.
- The wet-location-approved fixtures are available in three finishes (aluminum, copper and brass), and three sizes – 6.9 inches, 12.9 inches and 18.9 inches.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.landscape-lighting.com



Case Construction C Series Excavators

THE PITCH: The C Series full-sized excavator line features three new models, featuring increased fuel efficiency, productivity and improved serviceability.

- The new Case CX250C, CX300C and CX350C excavators replace models in the company's B Series product line.
- Features Tier 4 Interim-certified cooled exhaust gas recirculation (CEGR) technology that burns cleaner.
- Delivers 177, 207 and 266 net hp (132, 154 and 198 kW), respectively.
- The cabs are up to 25 percent larger, and feature a narrow wire side-screen design that improves operator visibility.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.casece.com

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SNOW PRODUCTS

Arctic Snow and Ice Control Products Compact-Duty Plows

The pitch: Compatible with small skid-steers, compact tractors and small wheel loaders, the CD plows can be used for clearing small parking lots, sidewalks and larger driveways.



- The Sectional Sno-Plows feature a sectional moldboard design.
- Each 24-inch-wide section is equipped with its own spring-loaded trip edge and polyurethane cutting edge.
- Each section can move up and down independently, enabling the plow to remove snow in dips and depressions.

For more information: www.sectionalplow.com

Pro-Tech Sno Broom Attachments

The pitch: As a complement to its line of Sno Pusher containment plows, Pro-Tech introduces five new Sno Broom attachments for skid-steers and compact tractors.



- Skid steer models are available with 60-, 72- and 84-inch broom widths and come with a universal coupler for attaching to equipment with various hydraulic flow ratings.
- The PTO-driven tractor model is 84 inches wide and is designed for machines with at least 30 hp.
- Other standard features include storage stands, high-density poly bristles and a 155-degree brush hood.

For more information: www.protechcorp.com

Sno-Pro Front End Loader Plow Blades

The pitch: Curtis Industries has introduced a line of Sno-Pro front end loader plow blades, which offer advantages over bucket plowing.



- These blades feature a 30-degree hydraulic angle and four heavy duty trip springs.
- Sno-Pro front end loader blades are made with heavy-duty 11 gauge powder coated steel, and an extended 4-foot push frame for added durability.
- Blades are available in 5-8-foot models and are recommended for tractors and skid-steers up to 47 hp with quick-attach front mounting adapters.

For more information: www.curtisindustries.net

Stainless Steel Tailgate Spreader

The pitch: The spreader is designed to spread deicing materials while meeting the demands for efficiency and dependability all winter long.



- Available with a 6- or 9-inch auger.
- The tailgate spreader also features a full opening bottom trough hinged on the body side for easy accessibility and clean out.
- The direct drive design minimizes maintenance and allows independent control of the auger and spinner.

For more information: www.crysteel.com

DriftBuster Snowthrowers

The pitch: PTO-driven DriftBuster snowthrowers for Grasshopper's full line of True ZeroTurn mowers deliver no-clog performance.



- A discharge spout controlled from the operator's seat rotates a full 180 degrees to deliver snow up to 30 feet away.
- Available in 48- and 60-inch models.
- An optional steering lever-mounted joystick control allows effortless lifting of the auger and rotation of the chute from inside.

For more information: www.throwmoresnow.com

Go iLawn Snow Proposal Builder

The pitch: The Snow Proposal Builder provides a single estimating source for contractors to go from property measurements to proposal in one online application.



- Within minutes Go iLawn users can assign weather events, equipment, production rates, materials, site photos and more to sidewalk and parking lot measurements.
- Users can export proposal data to an Excel spreadsheet or PDF completing the proposal for customer approval.
- Additionally, users have the ability to include terms and conditions, service descriptions, contract start and end dates, a signature acceptance page and a company logo.

For more information: www.goilawn.com/pb

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SNOW PRODUCTS

KIOTI Snowblowers Attachment Line

The pitch: Kioti Tractor has expanded its popular implement and attachment lines with three front mount snowblower models.



- The new implements are designed to fit Kioti's entire CK line of compact tractors ranging from 20 to 35 hp, as well as their DKSE models in the 40- to 50- hp range.
- All of the new front mount snowblowers are powered off the tractor's mid-mount PTO and are secured to a special sub-frame that includes a quick attachment system.
- Adjustable lateral skid shoes are standard on the KS66-220FM and KS72-220FM, while offered as an option on the smaller KS54-180FM model.

For more information: www.KIOTI.com

Hiniker V-plows

The pitch: The new VF series flare-wing trip-edge V-plows from Hiniker feature deep-curl flared wings, providing the capacity to cast deep snow far and high.



- Double-acting hydraulic cylinders provide positive hydraulic control of mold-board positioning, whether plowing forward or backdragging.
- Also available in a conventional level-top configuration, the new VF series is available in 8.5- and 9.5-foot widths.
- The pinch-free pivot point is located 9 inches above ground level, for improved protection from higher obstacles such as curbs and parking barriers.

For more information: www.hiniker.com

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SNOW PRODUCTS

EDGE Snow Blower Attachments

The pitch: The new EDGE Snow Blower attachments by CEAttachments have been redesigned with improved features for advanced performance and serviceability.

- Features a hydraulic motor and cylinder for controlling the chute rotation and deflector angle.
- A hydraulic motor delivers increased torque in the 280-degree chute rotating function, while a hydraulic cylinder provides durable and proficient control when angling the deflector.
- Other new features include the auger paddle design which has been modified for more efficient transfer of snow to the fan, and a bolt-on fan cover has been added for easy serviceability.

For more information: www.ceattachments.com.



V-Maxx 8550 High Output Spreader

The pitch: The pitch: The new SnowEx unit is built for snow and ice professionals looking to spread high volumes of sand in one pass, rather than making multiple passes to achieve a heavy application.

- Offering a 2-cubic-yard hopper capacity, the V-Maxx 8550 features a new transmission with a gear ratio of 40:1.
- This allows the unit to spread 295-680 pounds of material per minute (3.6 to 8.3 cubic feet per minute).
- The separate spinner and auger speed settings maximize efficiency and can be used to adjust the spread width from 6-40 feet.

For more information: www.trynexusfactory.com



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Stephen R. Covey

THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE

By Matt LaWell



EDITOR'S NOTE:

To help out busy contractors, each month throughout 2011, *Lawn & Landscape* will run a review and synopsis of a business book – either from the accepted literary canon or a more modern classic. The ninth installment is Stephen R. Covey's **"The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People."** The rest of the year's reading list includes:

The Prince

Niccolo Machiavelli

Marketing Warfare

Al Ries and Jack Trout

See You at the Top

Zig Ziglar

The E-Myth Revisited

Michael Gerber



Good to Great

Jim Collins



The Essential Drucker

Peter Drucker



Getting Things Done

David Allen



Outliers

Malcolm Gladwell



Linchpin: Are You Indispensable

Seth Godin



How To Win Friends and Influence People

Dale Carnegie



212° the extra degree

S.L. Parker



So many numbers swirl around Stephen Covey. There's the number 78, for starters, which represents his age. There's the number 52, as well, which is the incredible amount of grandchildren he and wife, Sandra, have thanks to, here comes another number, their nine children. But only one number really defines Covey. You probably know it.

Seven. As in "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People."

Covey released that book, the third of 10 he has written during the last four decades, back in 1989, almost a quarter of a century ago. It spawned numerous sequels, including "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families," "Living the 7 Habits" and, yes, "The 8th Habit." For a while during the early 1990s, professionals tucked their 7 Habits Daily Planner under their arm or in their briefcase. (Those are still available, by the way, in case you prefer paper to a BlackBerry.) One book spawned an industry.

But the original still sells the best and remains the most important in the group. Why? The habits are simple – be proactive, begin with the end in mind, put first things first, think win/win, seek first to understand then to be understood, synergize and, in the end, sharpen the saw – and they work. There's plenty of practical advice in that first book, too. Here are – one more number alert – five bits:

Start with yourself. Covey has long talked about looking inward, at your character and principles and values, before looking out toward others. If you want to run a more successful business, be the sort of person who generates positive energy, who listens, who looks for solutions. The same idea applies if you want a happy marriage or pleasant children or, well, just about anything. "If you want to be trusted," Covey writes, "be trustworthy."

Admit your mistakes. Botch a job? Lose a customer? Squander an opportunity? The immediate pain and embarrassment is probably pretty high, even for the biggest of businesses. But admitting your mistakes and moving on through the learning process can be far more beneficial, even a bit of a salve. "The proactive approach to a mistake," Covey writes, "is to acknowledge it instantly, correct it and learn from it. This literally turns a failure into a success."

Be involved. This one is pretty simple. "Without involvement, there is no commitment," Covey writes. "Mark it down, asterisk it, circle it, underline it. No involvement, no commitment." If you're involved in a project, you'll be committed to it. If you're committed to it, so will others. Show up. Get to work.

Be able to manage yourself. The great challenge of every work day, every work week, even every work month and year and, yes, career, is to be able to manage time. There's a finite amount of time, after all, and being able to manage it really is outside of what Covey refers to as our Circles of Influence. "Rather than focus on things and time," Covey writes, "focus on preserving and enhancing relationships and on accomplishing results."

And be a teacher. You learned plenty when you were in school. Ask any teacher and they'll likely tell you they learn the material right along with their students, no matter how many times they might teach it. Take that same approach with your own work and education, whether it's in the classroom or out in the field. "Read with the purpose in mind of sharing or discussing what you learn with someone else within 48 hours after you learn it," Covey writes. "Shift your paradigm." **L&L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.



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HOW TO:

Enter the corporate estate market

Nothing good comes easy, and that holds true for getting corporate estate clients, says Shannon Mitchell, project landscape architect for Mariani Landscape. "We've been trying to get into that more and more but it's a very tough market because a lot of companies, they've got restrictive budgets

for landscaping," Mitchell says. "So you need to be able to know who your competition is and really whether or not some of the other corporate places you are going after were worth it."

While it can be a tough market to break into, corporate estate work can generate

a steady stream of work. "With corporate estates specifically, they generally have lots of buildings. They typically have more than one office, and if you get in good with them in one office, you do a good job the first time around, there's going to be repeat work there that you can hold on to." - Brian Horn



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The more you can offer the better - like being able to offer design/build at the same time as maintenance as a way to spruce up a building. "There are design opportunities where you can say - this area here isn't looking that great, why don't we offer up some opportunities or suggestions on how we could resolve this from a design standpoint," Mitchell says.

2

Competitive pricing and knowing your competition are important when looking for corporate jobs. That means keeping your ears open and staying in tune with what your competition is doing. "You just hear by word of mouth what some of the pricing is that they're offering," he says. "And when you do that you can decide whether or not it's actually worth it to get into that arena."

3

Offer unique suggestions to problems. If a company has a drainage problem in a parking lot, you might offer them the suggestion of permeable pavers. "Let's say it's a company that works in something to do with the green industry. You're helping the environment, plus it looks good from a company standpoint because you are selling those types of products," Mitchell says.

4

Know what you can offer and what others can't offer, and then play up what you can offer. When you get a chance to present to a potential client, you want to stress your strengths. "A lot of these companies, they are prestigious companies and sometimes they don't always have the budgets to do real big landscape projects, so you need to be able to know what you are good at," he says.

5

You have to go to conferences that potential clients might attend. "For example, I do a lot of hospital care work so I go to a lot of hospital conferences on design for new hospitals and healthcare systems," Mitchell says. "It's going and meeting these people and dropping a card here or there saying, 'Let's get together sometime for lunch.' It goes a long way."

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Leaf spot

Proper maintenance and resistant varieties can stop turfgrass from spotting. By Carolyn LaWell



Whether warm-season or cool-season, many grasses are susceptible to the group of fungus that creates leaf spot diseases.

In warm-season turfgrasses, the disease is more of a cosmetic issue than a real health danger, and, to a lesser degree, the same is true in cool-season grasses, says Austin Hagan, professor and extension plant pathologist at Auburn University. But once

the dark brown spots take over a leaf, it can cause it to die and eventually thin the turf. "The problem you run into when you thin the turf is you tend to have invasion of weeds, so that creates another problem," Hagan says.

Lawn & Landscape spoke to Hagan about how to identify, prevent and control leaf spot diseases in turfgrass.

HOW IT FORMS. A wet-dry

weather cycle produces ripe conditions for the fungi to actually fruit.

"If you have a nice, generally summer weather pattern where you get periodic showers, those are the periods when you're more likely to see leaf spot develop," Hagan says. "If you have continuous rain, you might not see as much disease as you might if you just get that rain cycle, and a few dry days and then

back to rainy weather. At the same token, if it's really dry, almost nothing will happen, it will suppress the disease."

The fungi usually survive year to year in thatch or leaf debris, and under wet-dry conditions will produce spores or conidia, Hagan says. When there is a change in relative humidity, the spores move up the leaf canopy and fall on the leaf through air current.

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PLANT DISEASE PROFILE

"If you get at least 12 hours of leaf wetness, then the spores germinate and then the fungus moves into the leaf and begins to attack the leaf tissue," he says. "After about 10 or 12 days, you'll see a distinct leaf spot form in that area."

The cycle will continue to repeat itself as long as the conditions are right.

IDENTIFICATION. Leaf spot symptoms will vary depending on the type of grass in which the disease is found.

Generally, a dark brown margin with a tan center forms and the remainder of the leaf may have yellowing, Hagan says.

"Then, if you get enough spots on the leaves, those diseased leaves will wither and die," Hagan says. "From a distance, what you tend to see is the grass will thin out – that's a good way to describe it – or fade out."

PREVENTION. Over the years, leaf spot resistant turfgrass varieties – from Kentucky bluegrass to bent grass to tall fescue to Bermuda grass – have been developed and gone a long way to suppress the diseases.

"If someone was looking to establish a new turf or lawn, the ideal method of control would be, in the first place, simply to establish one of

these varieties that are considered to be resistant to leaf spotting and melting out," Hagan says.

Of course, there are general turfgrass management practices that can decrease the odds of the disease forming. Hagan says those include: mowing at the proper height, ensuring optimal fertility, making multiple light applications instead of one single high-rate application, irrigating every five to seven days as long as the turf growth is maintaining sufficient water and collecting clippings.

"Normally I'm not that worried about collecting clippings, but if they do have an active disease issue, it's

probably a good idea to go out there and collect the clippings," he says.

CONTROL. There are numerous fungicides available to control leaf spot diseases in different turfgrasses. Because of the variation in grasses and geography, it's best to consult a local extension agent on what products are most effective in that area.

"The best type of program is basically a preventative program where you're out in front of the disease and you simply prevent it from developing," Hagan says. **L&L**

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

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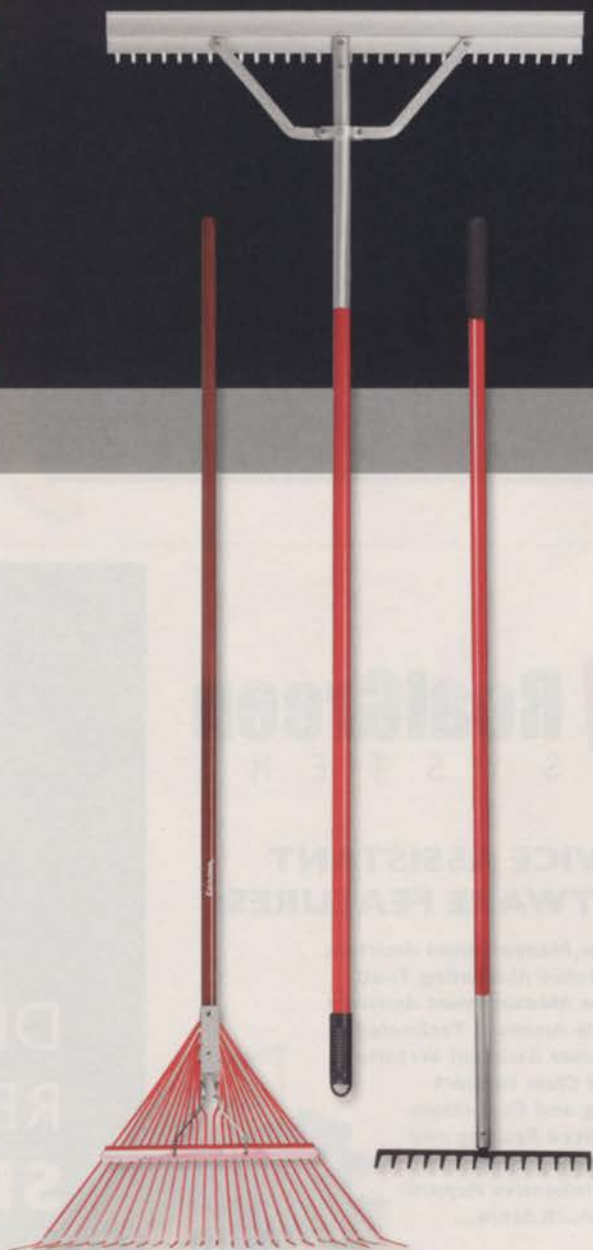
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Moles

Physical traps are more effective than chemicals in controlling these pests. *By Dustin Blakey*



When you dedicate time and effort into maintaining a beautiful landscape, it can be disheartening to see that hard work torn up by moles' enthusiastic tunneling. The frustration moles cause is immense, and, as a result, incites people to try a wide array of techniques in an attempt to eliminate moles from a landscape. Unfortunately most methods employed are ineffective.

While there are seven species of moles in the U.S., the most common species in the landscape is the eastern mole (*Scalopus aquaticus* L.). Its range is the eastern portion of the country. Some portions of the eastern moles' range overlap with pocket gophers' range. It is essential to differentiate the two pests in order gain control.

UNDERSTANDING MOLES. Pocket gophers are rodents that create large irregular mounds. Unless the soil is shallow, the tunnels used by this pest are exca-

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PEST PROFILE

vated below the ground and remain unseen. There will often be a plug to one side of the tunnel. Gophers eat plant material, so if chewed roots and missing plants are observed, then the problem is not moles.

A mole will spend most of its life underground feeding on invertebrate animals living in the soil. Its diet sharply reflects the diversity of the fauna found in its environment. In Arkansas, moles primarily feed on earthworms and insects, but elsewhere grubs may be the principal source of nutrition. Moles lack the dental structure to chew plant material for food, and,

as a result, subsist strictly as a carnivore.

This has important control implications as most bait on the market cannot be consumed by moles.

CONTROL MEASURES. By far the most effective, consistent control technique of moles is trapping. Trapping moles is not hard, but it does take some practice to find a good place to set a trap. The key to successfully trapping a mole is to locate a tunnel that is revisited often.

These tend to be below the surface, but are not necessarily deep. In Arkansas, we find this sort of tunnel about 4-6 inches below ground, but

this varies by region.

Because tunnels are important in food collection, moles keep them open and clear. Mole traps work by using a blockage to a tunnel as a means of triggering a trap. Air flow, foreign objects and light may cause a mole to dig around a trap. As a result, soil makes the best blockage.

There are several traps available. The most common type used by professionals is the scissor trap. The scissor trap is widely used and has performed well in tests. Scissor traps are set into the ground around a tunnel blocked by soil.

Another effective method of mole control is the use of

soft, worm-shaped baits. To properly use these also requires locating revisited tunnels and careful placement. Because they are poisonous and require nearly the same work as setting traps, these are best used in locations where traps cannot be visible such as golf courses and along public paths. Mole baits are not legal for use in many states.

With some persistence, it is possible to eliminate moles in your landscape. At first expect a 30 percent success rate with your control attempts, but over time this will improve. **L&L**

The author is county extension agent for Sebastian County, Ark.

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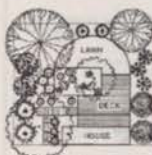
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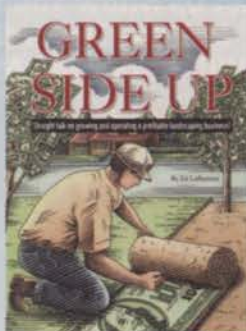
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Glenn Jacobsen

President, Jacobsen Landscape Design and Construction



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

I'm pretty much doing what I've done for the past 25 years.

I am more active in PLANET now. The opportunity was there to be more involved, and I got back on the board.

I was on the board in '04 and '05 when ALCA merged with PLCAA, and then I was off for about five years, and then they asked me to be back on – I'm actually on what they call the management team.

So, I reengaged on the board level this year. PLANET is where I see leaders. That's where my learning curve is and it has been for about 15 years.

That's one of the reasons I am involved with PLANET and back on the board and involved with the management team because I am

there with national leaders that I highly respect and I learn from them.

What trends are you seeing in the industry?

From a consumer point of view, maintenance in our area is still very vibrant compared to construction, but that's the nature of the economy. I wouldn't really call it a trend. It's just because of the economy.

I was just down at Day on the Hill. One thing, as I've gotten older, I realize how legislative things can affect the business. That's one thing I've learned, is how important it is to have representation with the government on a national level, especially with some of the restrictions that are being put on now – the immigration reform and H-2B, the clean water act and some of the stuff that is being proposed now.

There was somebody there and he struck my ear when he said that when all of us went into being landscapers or lawn maintenance people, nobody wanted

to be a politician. But, unfortunately, we have to deal with it sometimes. But that struck me as true because that's the last thing I wanted to do was be a politician or be involved with the political scene.

But it's important with all the regulations and restrictions that are being put on the green industry.

Can the restrictions be a good thing for the industry?

I think it's good within reason or with a balance. I understand the importance of having regulations, but I think the government has to hear what small businesses are saying.

I think there is a huge disconnect between some of the small businesses and some of the larger government. But regulations are necessary to a certain degree, but they have to take into account the small business viewpoint of things.

What are your thoughts on H-2B?

We've been H-2B users for over 10 years and it's obviously becoming more restrictive the past two.

Especially with this latest

go around with the Department of Labor, and I'm very familiar with it. We still want it and need it for our company because we do not have a local labor workforce. We've tried and we advertise. It's hard to find American workers that want to do the kind of work that we have in the green industry on a seasonal basis.

Like I said, we've been doing it and with that the American workforce is affected because my American workforce is supervisors, and managers and crew leaders. If I can't find the labor workforce or the crew leaders of the H-2B people, then it affects everything.

What would you say to someone who says the industry needs to pay more to attract Americans?

That's a good point, but will people work for more and still do the kind of work we need them to do?

Like I said, in our area, the American workforce isn't here. And will the consumer pay more? Then you get down to the economics of that. Will the consumer pay more in a competitive market? **L&L**



Read more from Jacobsen, including his 2009 leadership profile, at www.lawnandlandscape.com, search "Jacobsen."



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