

JUNE 2015

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"I don't try to do everything in one day. I know my big picture and I do one thing each day to work toward that big picture and somehow I do hit those targets."

— Tracy Lee Sewell



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Cover image courtesy of Gwinnett Technical College

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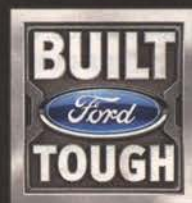
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COMMERCIAL VEHICLES



ONLINE CONTENTS

Check out what's new online from **LAWN & LANDSCAPE**.

TAKE ME TO THE TOP



LAST MONTH WAS OUR 2015 TOP 100 ISSUE, where we not only gave you a list of the highest-grossing-revenue companies, but also featured stories on some of those businesses. We've created a

one-stop-shop for all things Top 100, including previous lists and links to virtual tours we did of four companies last year. Visit bit.ly/LLTop100 to get a recap of the largest companies in the industry.



Major gas retailers plan expanded E15 availability

GASOLINE RETAILERS KUM & GO AND SHEETZ announced recently that they will sell E15 fuel in three new states and 125 stations, Reuters reported. The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute and other trade groups have been trying for several years to prevent the blended fuel – which contains 15 percent ethanol – from coming to market. Research has shown that the higher level of ethanol can damage or destroy engines that aren't designed to run it. Visit bit.ly/LLe15gas for the full story.

Employee retention

FIVE YEARS AGO, WE COVERED THE TOPIC OF RETAINING EMPLOYEES. Visit, bit.ly/retain2010 to find out if you use the same methods now, or maybe you have drifted away from a tried and true strategy and need a refresher.



Show us what you've got

We want to see your beautiful projects and how you make them come to life. Join us on Instagram at @lawnlandscape and use #lawnlandscape to show off your teams and their hard work. We'll even give you a look at some of the behind-the-scenes action here at L&L.

And speaking of showing off, we're looking for your best tips and tricks for staying efficient. Whether it's getting out the door on time in the morning, tightening up routes or closing deals, tell us how you trim the fat. Just use #landscapehacks on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram to share your best practices. You could be featured in a future issue of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

THE SPOKEN WORD



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Below are just a few of the great podcasts on our Lawn Care Radio Network. Visit, bit.ly/lcrnweb to listen to all of them, or visit, bit.ly/lcrnnetwork to subscribe for free on iTunes.

How to sell your company

Bringing in good employees can be tough – but you can get better quality hires when you show off how your company cares for the team. Jason Cupp, former business owner and now growth consultant, talks with Editor Chuck Bowen about making the right connections. bit.ly/lcrnself

Branch out

No one wants to book a job and then show up with no plants to put in the ground. And with more jobs available, there can be less plant material around when it's needed. Bud Powell, vice president of sales and marketing for PlantBid, talks about how reaching out by using technology can help. bit.ly/lcrnbranch

The state of social media for business

It's not a bad thing, but Landscape Leadership's Chris Heiler says the buzz of social media has worn off a bit for companies. Heiler gives tips on how you can still use it to market your company, and discusses some other trends he sees happening in 2015. bit.ly/llsocialmedia

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EDITOR'S INSIGHT

What do you think? Email me at cbowen@gie.net.

These kids today

It's official: Millennials now make up the largest chunk of the American workforce. According to the Pew Research Center, this group of 18-to-34-year-olds represents 53.5 million employees, and that number is only going to get bigger. What's more: Millennials have even infiltrated the highest levels of *this very magazine*.

Generational conflicts are real. My grandparents complained about my parents' generation, who then complained about my generation, and I complain about my kids' generation (but not my kids – my kids are angels). And while real, those differences between generations can help you more than they hurt you.

This summer, a new crop of Millennials graduated and entered the landscape industry. They are talented, excited and ready to make a difference. Finding students to profile for the cover story was easy. Choosing just six was very difficult.

So how can you attract the best and brightest landscapers coming out of places like BYU and Cal Poly and Michigan State? Well, we asked them for you.

As part of our continuing effort to help you find and keep good employees, we

surveyed students from landscape and horticulture programs across the country. Not surprisingly – if you read up on the general behavior of Millennials – what they want is a chance to do work that helps people. A big salary or company truck didn't top the list of desired perks.

The landscape students we surveyed said the most important thing they're looking for in a place to work is a positive culture. More than half said upward movement is important, and more than a third want flexible hours and a chance to have a positive impact on the environment.

But the best way to hire these students is to get on their radar at the National Collegiate Landscape Competition. Put on every year by the National Association of Landscape Professionals, the event brings together the smartest and most enthusiastic landscape students from all over. As they say, it's best to hunt where the deer are, so plan now for a couple days at Mississippi State next March and bring your business cards.

I'm a Millennial, as you can probably tell by the photo up there in the corner, but I don't speak for the rest of the 75 million members of my generation. I can, though, speak from



my own experience that I find it much more rewarding to get an email from a landscaper saying the latest issue helped him solve a problem than I do seeing my direct deposit post to my bank account on the 15th.

And while I appreciate the paycheck, it's not what gets me out of bed in the morning. What I love most about this job is that I get a chance every day to work with really smart and creative people, and have the opportunity to help others.

These kids today are ready to make the landscape industry even better. Now's your chance to hire them. – *Chuck Bowen*

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Enrique Herrera, left, and Jorge Aguirre are part of Serpico's team that volunteers its services at George Mark Children's House.

A place to breathe

Serpico Landscaping services a location where nature serves as a much-needed calming influence. **By Brian Horn**

"Oh no! Not if I can help it."

That was Sharon Serpico Hanson's reaction in 2009 when she saw a news story about George Mark Children's House in the greater San Francisco area having to close for funding reasons.

The next day she called the organization and said Serpico would care for their grounds for free, which the company has been doing since April of 2009.

George Mark Children's House is a nonprofit organization that operates a pediatric palliative care center. The 15,000 square-foot house sits on 5 acres of land and helps families with

sick children live in a more relaxed environment.

"Every child has what would be considered a life-limiting illness," says Ken Sommer, director of advancement at the house. The home has three different programs:

- **Respite care** – This gives a break to families who have to provide constant care for their child. "The child will stay here for anywhere from a weekend to a couple of weeks," Sommer says. "The mom and dad know that the medical needs for the child will be taken care of and then maybe they can have a night off."

- **Transitional care** – The child has a life-limiting illnesses



Have you completed a charity project you are proud of or helped out your community in another way? Email Managing Editor Brian Horn at bhorn@gie.net to be considered for coverage in a future issue of Lawn & Landscape.

and they've been in the hospital for an extended period of time. They no longer have to be in the acute hospital, but they're not quite ready to go home or the family isn't ready for them to come home. "We'll take them here, continue for some treatments, could be chemo or something like that, and then the real beauty of it is we'll help train the parents how to take care of that child," Sommer says.

- **End of life care** – "That's typically about 25 percent of our patients," he says.

Sommer says in 2010 the house closed for six months, and is doing better now financially, but still not completely out of the woods. That's why Serpico's volunteer work is so important, along with the physical improvements they do to help the patients and their families.

"They are here every single Tuesday with their crew of guys who do an impeccable job of maintaining the grounds," he says. "So having the beautiful scenery outside the windows is very settling and relaxing, but likewise, getting our kids and families out into this beautiful environment – again, it just helps the mind, body and spirit."

A couple of years ago, Serpico Hanson says the company wanted to have a different branch do the work to spread the costs around, but that disappointed the current crew.

"That crew came to their manager and said, 'Please do not take this account away from us. We want to continue doing this. This is about why we come to work. It's so important to us.' And I get emotional just even thinking about that because it's absolutely the core of the values that we talk about at Serpico," she says.

Carson Brown, a branch manager who works on the property, recalls a time he was about to do a quality inspection and his crew stopped him and asked him to avoid a garden. From a distance he could see a family consoling each other.

"Before I left, we were approached by a person from the group that was gathered," Brown says. "She stated how much they appreciated us not working in this area while they were there and that they were going inside."

"She also told me that they love the gardens and use them all of the time to gather themselves. It means a lot to me that these gardens means so much to the families and that Serpico has become a known member of this great place."

Brown also says he feels a personal connection to the house.

"I have friends and family who have lost children and it is unimaginable the grief they deal with," he says. "It is truly a tranquil setting where they can meditate or just enjoy not being restricted to their rooms."



Left: Grasshopper Lawns gave a Pennsylvania soccer field a proper spring start up, including aeration and seeding, fertilizing, weed control and liming.

ABOVE: Bartlett's Maryland branch passed out seedling trees to groups in the area.

The industry celebrates Day of Service

Taking place on Earth day, the national event had nearly 60 registered projects.

As a way to celebrate Earth Day and unite the green industry around giving back to the community, NALP's annual Day of Service took place on April 22, with nearly 60 registered projects done in 24 states across the U.S.

Started in 2009, a total of 1,000 projects have been completed by 16,000 volunteers for a value of \$4 million.

Using the hashtag #PLANETDOS, companies tweeted pictures of crews and projects throughout the day as jobs were completed. Lawn & Landscape has compiled a number of the projects.

AmericanHort – Ohio

In honor of Earth Day, AmericanHort maintained the landscape outside of the company's office. Two honeybee hives were installed and plans were made to incorporate a pollinator garden into the landscape when the weather gets warmer. Staff also planted a new tri-colored beech tree and cleaned up litter around the neighborhood.

Bartlett Tree Experts – Maryland

As part of Day of Service, Bartlett passed out seedling trees to students, community groups and local reforestation efforts.

Bland Landscaping – North Carolina

Bland's estate gardening team did a workday with the farmers at Burkett Farm. The floriculture and account managing team donated design and install of annuals for a project. On the following day, various team members donated two home landscapes for Habitat for Humanity of Wake County.

Grasshopper Lawns – Pennsylvania

The company donated time and services to a local soccer field, McDade Park, in Scranton. Grasshopper Lawns gave the field a proper spring start up, including aeration and seeding, fertilizing, weed control and liming.

► For more pictures of other projects done for Day of Service, head to NALP's flickr page.

Milosi Landscape – Tennessee

Milosi provided landscape services to the Hendersonville Public Library. The company refurbished the landscape, including plant bed maintenance, shrub and tree pruning, new mulch, weed control and plant health care. A sensory garden for the children's area was also installed.

GrowinGreen – North Carolina

GrowinGreen partnered with the Victory Junction Gang Camp to prep the camp's entrance for campers arriving this season. Victory Junction enriches the lives of children with serious illnesses by providing life-changing camping experiences that are exciting, fun and empowering, at no cost the children or their families.

ASK THE EXPERTS

For more news, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com

Q: What are your recommendations for developing an effective safety and health training program?

A: 1) Create safety and health policies and procedures.

This should include management's full commitment to a comprehensive safety and health training program for all employees. Policies should be written and shared with all employees, especially during your new worker orientation.

2) Identify all regulations and laws related to worker safety and health that impact your firm.

These may be local, state or federal regulations that you will need to comply with.

3) Identify all hazards that may expose your employees to injury or illness.

Rank the identified hazards based on work environments, equipment, chemicals, etc. Ranking these hazards helps you prioritize the time available for worker training.

4) Develop and deliver training based on the prioritized hazards identified in Step 3.

Include selecting training materials from reputable providers like NALP, insurance companies and universities (Kansas State, Ohio State, etc.). Also ensure that all training is documented regarding date, topic and presenter and is signed off on by all attendees. Documentation of training is important if you are subjected to an inspection.

5) Evaluate all safety and health programs using a minimum of post-tests to determine if the trainees learned from their training programs. You may



stand the training and you may need to take into consideration Latinos' culture and beliefs about safety and health issues. One example is eye protection and the need for certified eyewear.

During a project I conducted in the Chicago area, Latino workers were very concerned about the appearance of their eyewear and often resisted protective eyewear in place of more fashionable sunglasses.

It was an uphill battle, but most workers were willing to wear the new generation of eyewear that meets the ANSI Z-87.1 (2010) standard.

Depending on your equipment, there are many items that can create hazardous work conditions unless your employees are adequately trained and follow your safety procedures at all times. You may need to develop employee remediation practices for those workers who refuse to follow the firm's safety rules.

And remember, all of the components of your safety and health program must be in written form to avoid an inspector writing you up for failure to have a written safety program (a common citation issued by OSHA).

Sam Steel, safety adviser
National Association of Landscape Professionals

ASK THE EXPERTS is brought to you in partnership with NALP, the national association of landscape professionals. Questions are fielded through NALP's Trailblazers, the industry's leading company mentoring program. For more questions visit www.landscapeprofessionals.org.

5 STEPS TO STAYING SAFE

also include a brief pre-test to determine their knowledge level before the training was delivered and compare it to your post-training results. If the training evaluation indicates shortfalls, retraining may be required on a group or one-on-one basis.

Landscape work involves the use of some type of equipment or tools depending on the services provided.

Lawn maintenance, for example, often requires using commercial equipment such as zero-turn mowers or larger mowing equipment. It is important to include the various

types of equipment under the equipment listing.

Zero-turns have proven to be very dangerous for untrained workers using them at work sites with uneven terrain, drop-offs and water-retention areas.

Zero-turns and other commercial equipment can be quite noisy. Personal protective equipment in the form of hearing protection is very important and should be part of the training for all equipment.

Proving training in both English and Spanish is critical if some of your workers are not fluent in English. They need to under-

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HIT THE BOOKS

WE SURVEYED HORTICULTURE STUDENTS

on a number of items, including what family and friends thought of a green industry major. You can find more results from the survey on pg. 46.

➤ DID YOUR PARENTS/GUARDIANS QUESTION YOUR ABILITY TO MAKE A CAREER OUT OF A GREEN INDUSTRY MAJOR?

YES: **24%**
NO: **76%**

COMMENTS:

- My father didn't think there were any jobs. Joke's on him because I found one before graduating and will make enough money to move out and be independent.
- My parents thought I couldn't take the hard work that goes into certain green industry jobs.
- They worry about the off season when grass doesn't grow.
- Being a female in the green industry, they felt like I wouldn't be able to perform with the men or that an employer wouldn't give me a chance.
- It was one my dad always compared to why I should go to college, so I wouldn't have to do that kind of work every day.

COMMENTS:

- My father was a building planner for the county and knew this was a good choice.
- They aren't familiar with the industry, but they have been coming around and becoming more proud and interested as they've been more exposed. They think it is pretty cool now.
- My mother has always been supportive of my decisions for the career path I am on. After having seen what all there is to offer in the green industry, I think she feels better now than when I initially started.
- My parents trusted in my decision to join this industry. They are big believers in the service industry because of the potential jobs that are created and the opportunity for one to own their own business. **L&L**

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THINGS THAT MAKE YOU GO 'HMM'

'VE BEEN REALLY BUSY THE PAST SIX MONTHS TRAVELING AROUND, helping landscapers grow their businesses and working hard to grow my own. As I reflect back on some experiences I have had (I put them all down in my journal so I remember), I felt compelled to share what I saw in hopes of teaching in the process.

I upgraded my cable at my house to the mega-super, duper fast one – no new cables, just a flip of a switch and, presto, my internet goes so fast when I order from Amazon, the package is in the mailbox in 10 minutes. (Okay, just kidding about the last part.) The thing that is interesting about Time Warner Cable is if you call to report a problem, you get put on hold; if you call to add new service or buy new things, you can talk to someone right away. Hmmmmmm.

I took my family on vacation to the Key Largo Marriott. It was, without question, the worst Marriott I have ever been to in my life. The rooms we had for my family were dirty and worn out. I specifically requested adjoining rooms so I could keep an eye on my teenagers, but that didn't happen. We were on opposite ends of the hotel. The entire staff we encountered, with the exception of Simon, Luz and Barbara, was grumpy, rude and disengaged. I asked to speak

to David, the manager, and I asked for him to call me. I never heard from him. I did see him on the way out with a couple boxes of Dunkin' Donuts for his team. Donuts aren't going to help them; leadership will. After two nights, we moved to another Marriott on Hollywood Beach, Fla., and it was lovely. Same brand, two totally different experiences. Hmmmmmm.

I had one of my ACE groups into Dayton for a meeting. I took them to Firebirds, a new restaurant by my

office I like. One of my ACEs, John Richter, from Birmingham, Ala., said in his lovely Alabama accent, "Oh man, the Firebirds by us is terrible; we won't go there." After John and my other guests ate at Firebirds, they were happy and agreed "my Firebirds" is a good one. Same restaurant, different experiences. Hmmmmmm.

In the last year, five of my landscaper clients have traveled to Dayton, Ohio, to have their truck beds built by the little company that

does all of ours. We have a pretty slick set up they are copying. Even though there are tons and tons of bed manufacturers, these landscapers come to Dayton, Ohio. One of them came all the way from Oregon and spent three days driving the thing home. Hmmmmmm.

Folks, at the end of the day, we all have a product to offer. For the most part it's pretty easy for the competition to copy your products, your plants and materials, use the same equipment and trucks as you and even hire some of your team away from you. However, it's impossible for them to duplicate and copy the way you treat your clients, which is a direct result of the culture you have at your organization. It's not what one person does that can make or break the successful landscaper, it's what all of you can do together focused on an end goal, a vision, a desired outcome, your ideal state.

Your job as a leader is to make sure that when a client needs service, you deliver it in such a way they say, "Man, I am glad they're my landscaper" and not, "I really wish I wouldn't have done this project with them." Your job as a leader is to walk around your business and get out on jobsites. You can't sit in your office and hope things are going well. Get out and make certain.

Your job is to make sure your offering is consistent. If you have branch locations, they all need to perform at a high level, not just some of them. And your job is to be so good at your work, people will stand in line, bring you in from two towns over, and pay you to do what you do because you do it better than anyone else in your marketplace. Quit competing on price – compete on service and quality. That's the zone to be in. **L&L**

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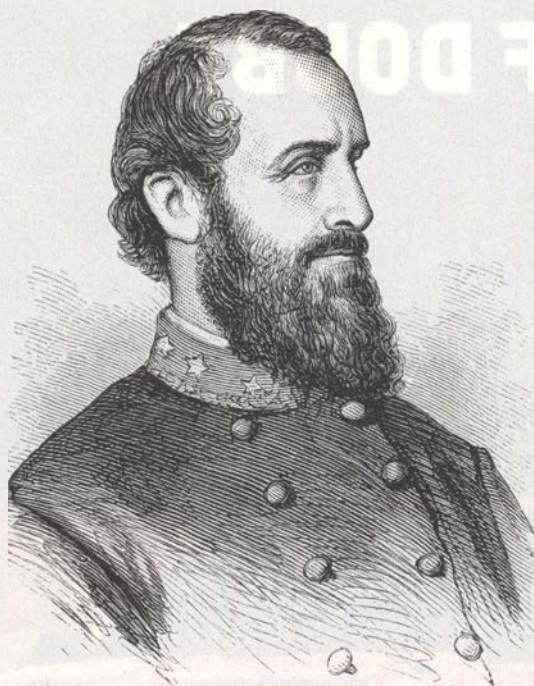
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STONEWALL JACKSON

WANDERING IN THE FOG

STONEWALL JACKSON WAS ONE OF THE GREATEST MILITARY GENIUSES TO EVER COME OUT OF WEST POINT. He was

meticulous with the details in his preparation for battle. He could zoom out and almost instantly understand a battlefield's numerous threats and opportunities.

Unfortunately, for all of his brilliance, he was extremely headstrong and often kept his troops in the dark regarding important battlefield details.

My mind drifted to my clients and what I tried to do for them in my seminars, workshops and consultations. I attempt to quantify and measure the business process and utilize this information by means of easily understood metrics.

The whole purpose of this process is to minimize risk and maximize certainty in a business. I use two tools for doing so. The first is the annual budget (the big or strategic picture). The second is individual pricing scenarios for a company's services and projects (the little or tactical picture).

DIG DEEP. The previous day I had worked with my client Jim Webb. Jim is the president of Valley Landscape Service in Jackson, Wyo. As we had done for the previous 10 years, Jim and I sat down and prepared his 2015 annual budget. Using 2014 data from QuickBooks as a point of departure, we projected 2015 revenue.

Next we calculated material, field labor, field labor burden, equipment, rental equipment and subcontractor costs for all his profit centers. We then calculated his general and administrative (G&A) overhead costs for the year.

This annual budget process took us 2-3 hours and it gave us the big picture for 2015. We had measurable sales goals, costs and projected net profit margins for each division. If something went wrong in a division, we could analyze the data and determine what went wrong and why.

Once we had the annual budget (the big picture) in place, we then reviewed Jim's pricing for all of his services (the little picture) to include irrigation service, mowing, fertilization,

cleanups, fine gardening and so forth. When reviewing each service, Jim and I scrutinized each cost to ensure they accurately reflected the costs for Jim's company.

This process gave us unit prices for services sold by the man-hour (mowing, cleanups, irrigation service, etc.) and those sold by the material unit. Jim had pricing worksheets going back almost 10 years. We could review them and see how his pricing had evolved over the past decade.

It was a tedious process. However, once completed, Jim had accurate prices for all of his services which not only included healthy net profit margins but also accurately reflected costs specific to his company. In addition, Jim had quantifiable and easily measured hourly, daily, weekly, monthly and yearly revenue goals for each member of his team.

If Jim's crews hit these benchmarks, the company would be profitable as projected. If they did not hit these benchmarks, Jim and his team had the data to analyze what went wrong and then make the appropriate adjustments.

SMART BUT SILENT. General Jackson was a brilliant tactician. His analysis of both big picture and little picture events was superb. Sadly, as he was scouting for the battle of Chancellorsville, Va., his scouting party inadvertently rode their horses in front of the Confederate battle lines.

When Jackson's party turned to cross back through those lines in the dark, friendly forces thought they were being attacked by Union cavalry and they opened fire. Jackson died May 10, the victim of "friendly" fire and, you could argue, the self-inflicted fog of war.

Too often, contractors, while brilliant in some areas, grope around in the fog as they are oblivious to threats that loom in the dark. Proper analysis of both big and little picture details is critical. Doing so provides the data that everyone in a company can use to improve the operation.

Not doing so keeps everyone in the dark. Jackson learned the hard way that keeping subordinates in the dark can be costly. Fortunately for green industry contractors, shooting yourself in the foot is a form of friendly fire that costs you money and not your life. **L&L**



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BY BROCK McREA

HIRE POWER is a monthly column designed to help you recruit, hire and retain the best talent for your company. We've got a rotating panel of columnists ready to give you practical, tactical advice on solving your labor problems. Email Chuck Bowen at cbowen@gie.net with topic ideas.



GET TO THE GOOD STUFF

IT'S HARD ENOUGH TO CREATE A JOB DESCRIPTION, POST IT AND THEN REVIEW APPLICATIONS. And yet, you haven't even gotten to the most important part – the dreaded interview.

To me, interviews are dreaded by most because they are hard to do and most hiring managers and supervisors are afraid of making the wrong hiring decision due to lack of information they are getting from their interviews.

You may be asking how it's possible to go through an interview and still not know anything about a candidate. Well, the next question to ask yourself is what kind of questions am I asking? Are they traditional yes or no questions that lead to a yes or no response, or are they open-ended questions that help you get a real life example from the candidate?

To take the dread and guess-work away from interviewing, we should be asking open ended questions and using a proven technique called behavioral interviewing (BI). So what does this mean

to you as a hiring manager or supervisor?

Behavioral interviewing is also known as competency-based interviewing or targeted selection. It focuses on questions that delve into candidates' past behaviors. These questions are designed to get the candidate to develop stories to illustrate that they have the necessary skills for the position and or employer.

The behavioral interview technique is used for many reasons, but the main reason is because past behavior predicts future success. It's also used as an indicator of personal traits and characteristics. When asking the right questions and listening to a candidate's answers it will help you look at their thought process and problem solving skills.

Looking at behavioral interviewing more closely, there are three basic steps to follow.

The first thing you need to do as a hiring manager or supervisor is nail down the skills and qualifications that you are looking for in an applicant that will have them do well in the position

they are interviewing for. You can find these in your job descriptions or, more importantly, your current employees. Next, write open-ended questions based on the requirements and skills you've identified. These questions will get the applicant to talk about their experiences where they were successful or not successful in the past. Lastly, if you feel the applicant didn't answer the question fully, you can use probing follow-up questions to get more information.

When creating your behavioral interview questions there are some basic recommendations to consider. First, these are almost always written as open-ended questions. This is to ensure that the applicant provides a description of past behavior and experiences, not a simple yes or no answer or canned answer.

Because the questions aren't asked in a yes or no format, there is no one right answer. The applicant is simply describing a past experience. In addition, the questions are geared towards past performance, allowing the applicant to relate what they actually did in a situation rather than a made-up answer.

There is a common tool called the S.T.A.R. method that is used to create effective behavioral interview questions. S.T.A.R. is an acronym that represents what you are asking the applicant:

- **Situation** – Tell me about a time...
- **Task** – Where you had to problem-solve with a group...
- **Action** – What role did you play?
- **Results** – And what was the outcome?

Now let's say the applicant did not specify what role they played in the group. An example of a follow-up question might be, "What was your specific role in the group?"

As you can see, a well-written behavioral interview question based on the role you are interviewing for can provide great information on a person's past successes. Spending extra time to create these types of questions for each job will improve your chances of hiring the right person for the job and the company culture.

Mastering the technique of behavioral interviewing will be sure to get you more excited about interviewing once you see the positive results. **L&L**

The author is a recruiter at Swingle Lawn, Tree and Landscape company in Denver.



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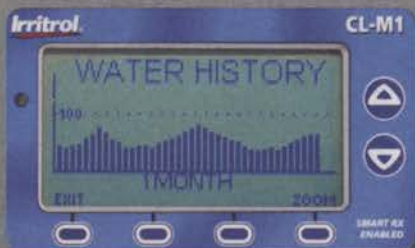


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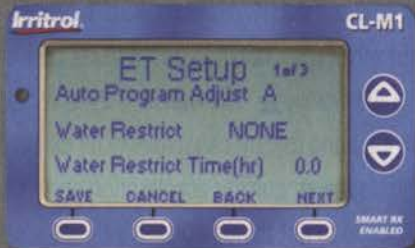
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FROM GAMING TO GREENING

Roxy Wolosenko hit reset and quit her desk job designing popular video games to start a career outdoors.

By Brooke N. Bates

As a computer game designer, Roxy Wolosenko spent her days at a desk creating virtual environments for simulation games like the popular series *The Sims*. On weekends, she couldn't wait to get out in the real world to do something more tangible, like gardening.

She started taking some graduate-level landscape architect classes through UC Berkley Extension, but didn't finish. "I was making good money with a good career in computer game design," Wolosenko says, "so I thought, why jump ship?"

COMPANY PROFILE

Eventually, she got tired of sitting in front of a computer all day and took the leap. She left gaming and started Roxy Designs in Moraga, Calif., to focus on landscape design. She soon realized design alone wouldn't pay the bills like it did in

the digital world, so she got her contractor's license in 2007 and hired a crew to handle the installs.

"We started with small jobs, mostly just planting and some irrigation, and then as the business grew, we took on more of the

full installation," she says. "We got more involved in concrete, retaining walls, drainage and construction."

Since 2007, Roxy Designs has grown about 10 percent annually, and generates revenue of \$750,000. Wolosenko plans to add another maintenance crew to her team of 10 employees this year. And to build a successful full-service landscaping firm, Wolosenko had to overcome some obstacles. Fortunately, she'd already conquered some of them in the gaming world.

"Computer game development was a completely male-dominated field, and now I'm a female-owned business in a mostly male-owned business world," she says.

"If a job requires construction, there's an assumption that I don't know what I'm doing. There's a double standard that women know flowers but they don't know drainage. One of the lessons I learned in my previous career was that I can do it just as



If you have a well-designed garden, Wolosenko says it shouldn't require very much maintenance in the long run.

well as the men." To prove she could cut it in landscaping, Wolosenko borrowed a lesson from her career designing video games.

"A game's success is about the way it connects with the people who play it," she says. "Similarly, you can apply that same psychology to understand who your clients are. Some clients just want a pretty landscape to look at; other clients want to get out there and start a vegetable garden. Understanding the dream people have for their experience is what allows you to create a good garden – or, conversely, to design a good game."





Pathfinder
(shown)



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CLIENT COMMUNICATION. Listening is the key to understanding what clients want. The problem is that most clients don't often have the design vocabulary to explain what they want, so there's some decoding involved.

"When people want a design, what they do is they describe a feeling, an activity and then a style," Wolosenko says. "What's critical is listening – not telling them what you think they want to hear, but listening – and then trying to come up with ideas from your own experience and testing to see if they resonate with them."

For Wolosenko, listening is an iterative process of observing how clients react to suggestions. When she mentions the popularity of vegetable gardens, for example, she'll get one of two reactions: "Yes, that's exactly what I want," or, "That's what supermarkets are for." By floating ideas, understanding what gets traction and building on those, Wolosenko learns about clients' dream environments.

"People have a hard time coming up with ideas on their own, but they're very good at reacting to pictures, so engage them in that way," Wolosenko says.

"I've put together plant palettes on Pinterest, and people can look at the plants instead of looking at little circles on a top-down plan. Giving them pictures so they can see how they would see it if they were standing there, that helps connect the dots."

APPLYING TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE. But listening to clients is only half the battle, because you can't always do what they ask. The hardest part is aligning what clients want with what's sustainable in California, Wolosenko says. For example, clients might show her pictures of their dream gardens – in much wetter climates like England or Japan.

If she can't give them that exact Japanese garden, she can design a space with the same feeling. "It's designing the right kind of garden for where we live. It's conserving water and putting plants in that fit the spot at the mature size, not at baby size," Wolosenko says.

"A tremendous amount of it has to do with



Roxy Designs has grown about 10 percent annually, and owner Roxy Wolosenko plans to add another crew to her team of 10 employees this year.

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MAINTAINING WHAT YOU'VE BUILT

Since Roxy Design launched as a landscape contracting business with design/build services in 2007, clients have been asking owner Roxy Wolosenko for more.

"They kept asking me to come back and spruce up their gardens or just help them, because they hired people who didn't really know what to do with the native or Mediterranean plants I installed," she says.

A couple of years ago she added maintenance, and now it is 10 percent of her service mix. Just as a contracting license gave her more control to bring her designs to life, handling the maintenance allows Wolosenko to keep her designs pristine as gardens grow and fill in.



Wolosenko designs gardens that require as little maintenance as possible. While some of her clients need weekly lawn maintenance, most only require her crew to come out monthly.

At first, Wolosenko just started maintaining the gardens she installed for existing clients. Now, clients seek out Roxy Designs for installations explicitly because the company can keep the landscape looking great with long-term maintenance, she says.

While a few clients require weekly lawn maintenance, most of Wolosenko's clients only need monthly visits. Wolosenko selects drought-tolerant plants instead of large patches of lawn and installs efficient irrigation systems. She also selects plants that will fit the space at their mature size so they don't need to be pruned often. "You really don't have to do that much maintenance if you have a well-designed garden," she says.

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deep plant knowledge, what goes with what, and what can be substituted for a particular look or feel.”

Wolosenko’s goal is to design gardens that require as little maintenance as possible. Water is everyone’s top concern in drought-stricken California, so Wolosenko approaches each job with conservation in mind. After selecting native plants, she implements drip irrigation, or systems with high-efficiency rotors and smart controllers that adjust automatically based on weather conditions.

Currently, she’s converting a pool into a rainwater collection system for a client. As a master gardener in Contra Costa County, she often gives free educational lectures about conserving water through simple landscaping tips, like adjusting irrigation controllers for each season instead of setting and forgetting.

“If you’re not installing drought-tolerant



landscapes, putting in as little lawn as possible and selecting plants that don’t require water, then you’re doing a disservice to your clients,” she says.

“I try to talk my clients out of planting large lawn patches or riparian species, and talk them into more drought-tolerant plants. Some clients don’t care, but I want to feel like I’m contributing to positive change in the world.” **L&L**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ROXY DESIGNS

“

IF A JOB REQUIRES CONSTRUCTION, there’s an assumption that I don’t know what I’m doing. There’s a double standard that women know flowers but they don’t know drainage.

– Roxy Wolosenko, owner, Roxy Designs

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CAUGHT ON CULTURE

How successful landscape firms get their seasonal and full-time employees to live the company values.

By Kristen Hampshire

Posting a mission statement to the lobby wall or defining core values in a company brochure are one thing. But culture is living those words in the field, and employees are responsible for executing “who you are” as a landscape professional. Establishing a strong culture can be a challenge in a seasonal industry because employees regularly come and go. How can you ingrain your company spirit in workers that may only be with your firm for several months?

Meanwhile, growing companies are constantly integrating new employees into the mix, and “training culture” isn’t easy. You can’t roll out a manual and test new team members to make sure they’re “ingrained.” Creating culture takes time, dedicated leadership that sets an example and, above all, consistency.

This month, Lawn & Landscape spoke to three firms about how they maintain a strong culture while integrating seasonal workers, interns and new employees.

ABOVE: As a way to build a fun culture, Turfscape organizes a company Olympics where branch teams compete.

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TAKE-AWAY TIPS

BE CONSISTENT.

"Do not waver from your core values," Gear says, adding that when employees understand expectations and recognize they will be rewarded for meeting goals, they work together and the culture benefits.

TOSS THE BAD APPLES.

Often, employees who do not fit in with the culture weed themselves out by underperforming, resulting in disciplinary action and termination, or they leave because they don't want to adhere to the standards. But don't ignore "bad apples." "Either try to fix the problem or get rid of the problem," Gear says.

MAKE THE MISSION CLEAR.

The mission statement at T.R. Gear is posted on the lobby wall for everyone to see. "We live by it," Gear says. The mission sets the tone for the company culture. Leaders demonstrate the mission in the field, and employees follow the example.

Setting an example

A culture clash is ultimately the reason why Thomas Gear founded his business, T.R. Gear Landscaping, 35 years ago. He spent a year working for a large commercial landscape contracting company that focused more on quantity than quality. "They had no interest in doing anything unless it was the fastest, cheapest way," Gear says.

"I started this company with the culture of doing things right, treating customers and employees right," Gear says. "And I never looked back."

Culture is an aspect of the working environment that employees "see and feel right away," Gear says, and that's because managers live the company mission and set the example for all workers at T.R. Gear, whether they're working at the company for the summer season or full-time.

Employees who adopt these habits and mesh with the company culture are rewarded with incentives, including opportunities to advance and share in the company's profits when financial goals are met.

One key component of T.R. Gear's company mission is to "provide a corporate culture based on integrity and continuous improvement processes that enable employees to achieve personal and career goals."

"When employees are at the technician level, we talk to them about what they need to do to become crew leaders, and from there we let them know how they can get to the supervisor

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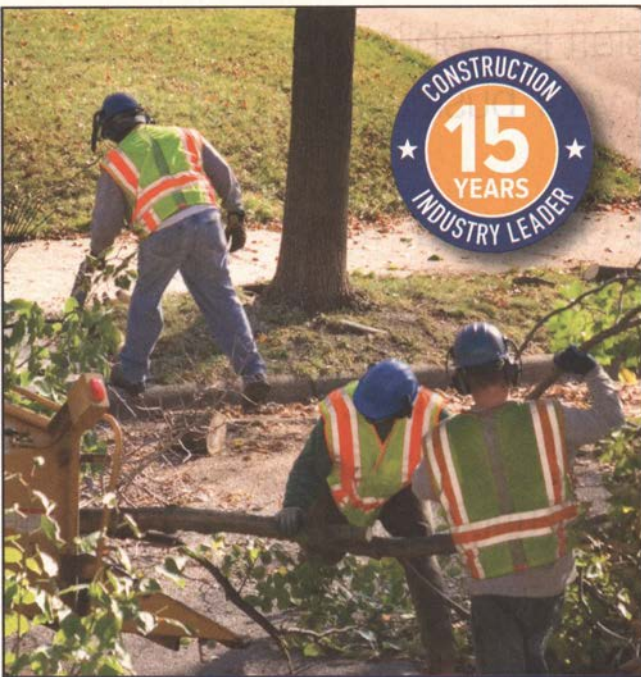
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FORMULAS for SUCCESS

level and then account manager," Gear says.

Showing employees a career path is a big part of the culture at T.R. Gear because workers know their commitment to the company's success will pay off personally and professionally. For example, during the snow season there are "add-ons" to pay for working at night, serving on a sidewalk crew, and managers can earn a commission based on the snow department's gross margin.

"We share a percentage of our profit with people so we are all working for the same reasons: to give our customers excellent service and create a strong business," Gear says. "All of that feeds back into the culture."

These incentives help weed out the bad apples who are not focused on performance, Gear says. A common work ethic and aligned vision creates a stronger team. That includes seasonal workers, who are given uniforms and treated with the same respect as full-time employees.

"They are trained by our people who know our culture and when they come in, they are part of the team," Gear says.

Contagious culture

The cult-like culture that Jim Collins describes in his book "Good to Great" is the type of environment you'll find at Turfscape. "People want to feel like they are part of something bigger than themselves, and culture is what grabs people. They want to be a part of it and they want to stay," says George Hohman, who started the busi-

ness 27 years ago while he was in college.

Today, Turfscape has three locations: North Canton, Twinsburg and Avon, Ohio. And, every year, Turfscape brings in about 35 H-2B workers, some of whom have been coming to work at the business for the last 14 years.



George
HOHMAN

"They got in on a Saturday night, and we had a big welcome party for them. They had been traveling on a bus for two to three days to get back up to us," Hohman says. "We include them in everything we do, from company meetings to the events we host during the year."

The company even holds a Turfscape Olympics, where branch teams — full-time and seasonal employees — compete and have fun. H-2B employees who are bilingual help each other out by translating during events and meetings, Hohman says.

Integrating all employees into the culture is a matter of living the core values, which are the "DNA of the company," Hohman says. The five core values are: to do the right thing, be humbly confident, compete in everything they do, have fun at work and have "Turfscape passion."

"When we interview people we are gauging them against these core values, and we retain and promote people based on how they measure up to those five values," Hohman adds.

At company meetings, managers and employees share "core values stories" that illustrate examples of how team members show Turfscape passion in the field.

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FORMULAS for SUCCESS

TURFSCAPE

George Hohman,
founder and president

LOCATION:
Bath Township, Ohio

ESTABLISHED:
1988

EMPLOYEES:
35 H-2B workers,
45 seasonal American workers,
80 full-time employees

2014 REVENUES:
\$8.5 million

CUSTOMERS:
100% commercial

SERVICES:
Landscape maintenance,
snow and ice management

TAKE-AWAY TIPS

WELCOME THEM BACK.

H-2B workers at Turfscape are part of the family. Rolling out a red carpet welcome with a picnic and showing them they are valued goes a long way toward building an integrated team during the summer season, Hohman says.

REWARD 'CORE' BEHAVIOR.

When employees are living the core values in the field, Turfscape rewards them with incentives. During staff meetings, team members share ways they set a positive example in the field. "We are always encouraging staff to recognize others who are serving as examples of what being a Turfscape employee is all about," Hohman says.

REINFORCE VALUES.

New employees enter the business on a continuous basis, so reaffirming core values is critical. "It may feel like you are repeating yourself, but it's necessary," he says.

"Turfscape passion is always willing to do what it takes and helping others out," Hohman says, adding that this is often best demonstrated during winter when multiple-day snow events take a toll on the team.

"It's about sleeping on the air mattress at the shop so you can get ready to go back (and plow) that night – and it's about the person who takes the new Turfscape employee under his wing," Hohman says.

Employees who join the team feel the dedication of other employees at Turfscape, and they follow suit. "We have a lot of people who come to us from other companies and maybe they were not as dedicated to providing emergency services like snow, but when they come to Turfscape and see how many people here are dedicated to it, that attitude becomes contagious," Hohman says.

Hiring passionate players

Landscape design is more than a career – it's a calling. And it's hard work. That's a message that's illustrated to candidates seeking employment at Hidden Lane Landscaping & Design in Herndon, Va., where a strong work ethic and personal accountability contribute to a culture in which employees can make a difference at the company.

"When someone says, 'This is what I always knew I wanted to do,' we know they will fit in with everyone else here," says Peter Murray, who started working at

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Peter Murray, president

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EMPLOYEES:
25

2014 REVENUES:
About \$3 million

CUSTOMERS:
100% residential

SERVICES:
Landscape design
and installation,
garden maintenance

TAKE-AWAY TIPS

HIRE FOR CULTURE.

Hidden Lane only hires recent college graduates because Murray wants fresh talent that he can mold to succeed at his company. "We can develop them in our way," he says.

TELL YOUR STORY.

During interviews, Murray shares his work background and how he grew the business. He wants to inspire candidates, but also to help them understand that everyone at Hidden Lane works hard to get where they are today – including the owner.

CHECK YOURSELF.

As an owner, are you setting the right example for staff? "Are you coming into work with a positive attitude? Are you looking out for employees' best interests? If they make mistakes, do you back them up and help them by making it a learning experience?" Murray asks.

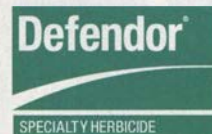
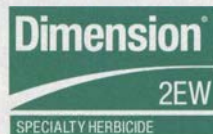
Hidden Lane in 1982 out of college and took ownership of the business in 1994.

When Murray interviews young professionals, whether for an open position or internship opportunity, he begins by sharing the company history. Then he talks about his own climb at the business. "I let them know that I started out just like them, as a graduate out of college doing design work, and I gradually learned more and more about the business and took care of my clients," he says. "I want them to know that this wasn't easy for me. I had to work to get where I am today."

As a result, new employees know what to expect when they come to work at Hidden Lane – a rigorous schedule, many responsibilities and rewarding work. "Our average employee has been with us for 15 years, and that's really important from a culture standpoint," Murray says. Training and mentoring begins on the first day of employment.

New hires are partnered with seasoned employees and rotate throughout the company to different departments so they can learn the ropes. They see how staff serves clients and solves problems. "Employees are going to learn the culture by watching what you are doing, not hearing what you are saying," Murray says.

Ultimately, culture is the living part of the company's mission statement. The words inscribed on a sign in the lobby or posted on a website only mean something if employees make it real. "We are passionate about what we do and have that attitude that if you do something you love, it doesn't feel like work," Murray says. **L&L**



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WE SPEND A LOT OF WORDS AND PAGES EACH MONTH IN LAWN & LANDSCAPE FOCUSING ON WHAT CURRENT CONTRACTORS CAN DO TO IMPROVE THEIR BUSINESSES AND, IN TURN, HELP THE INDUSTRY.

But, right now, there are students and recent graduates who will be the ones carrying the industry. They'll be the professionals building companies with great customer service and engaged employees. We've found six students and recent graduates who will do their best to make sure landscaping is a desirable career and a valuable service. It's not just their high GPAs, but the stories they tell about what this industry means to them. Their mix of intelligence and passion for improving the environment makes them great ambassadors who will represent the industry as a professional one to those inside and out. ♦

OPPOSITE PAGE: Molly Palmer, Kansas State University. **CLOCKWISE, STARTING AT TOP LEFT:** Michael Sciardi, University of Florida; Eric Anderson, Brigham Young University (Idaho); Zach VanDyke, Michigan State University; Matt Case, Alamance Community College; and Tracy Sewell, Gwinnett Technical College. **INSIDE:** We polled 180 students about their perspective on a future in the industry. Turn to pages 14 and 48 for the results.



Eric Anderson

BYU, Idaho (graduated 2015)
Major: Horticulture, emphasis
on design/build and
maintenance
GPA: 3.8

{More than mowing}

The landscape industry has more to offer than jobs cutting grass. Brigham Young University – Idaho graduate Eric Anderson wants to help make that known to the masses.

"I have a passion for the industry and the industry is moving toward being more known for what we do," he says.

"People don't realize that when they're at their desk job and all stressed and take their lunch break, they go out to a landscape and take that for granted as a stress reliever. What I'd like to make an impact on is helping people understand what we do and why it's so important."

Anderson graduated in April of this year, majoring in horticulture with an emphasis on design/build and maintenance.

When he first started school, Anderson didn't know what he wanted to choose as a major. To help figure it out, he took almost every intro class he could, settling on veterinary science. However, after shadowing a vet on the job, he realized he didn't like it at all. He also signed up for intro to landscape design, which was much more to his liking.

Anderson got design experience at the horticulture department's campus garden. Each semester students get a project – installing pavers or a water feature, for example – and build it as a class.

"We're able to get a hands-on experience with the equipment we're using," he says. "A lot of schools don't really get that extra hands-on experience that we got. Like the landscape maintenance class, we're able to get on a lawn mower and actually use all that maintenance equipment. Learning the proper way of doing it and getting the application correct helps."

In 2014, Anderson interned with ValleyCrest in the San Francisco Bay Area, getting to experience different areas of the landscaping industry from maintenance to irrigation to sales. His time in California had the opposite effect of the ill-fated vet visit.

"When I was doing my internship, I felt like this is something I can actually do and enjoy the rest of my life," he says. "It helped me develop my opinion a little more, building confidence in my major."

His time with ValleyCrest from May through September of 2014 built confidence with them as well. Following graduation, Anderson started as an account specialist in the irrigation department at that same branch.

As someone who didn't know what he wanted to do when he started college, Anderson says students should go for what they're passionate about.

"I feel like a lot of people are trying get rich quick schemes that are high-paying, but what matters most is what you're passionate about and what you're good at," he says. "If you like being outside and working with plants, go for it. Do what you want to do."

– story by **KATIE TUTTLE**



Matt Case

Alamance Community
College, senior
Major: Horticulture
technology
GPA: 3.25

{A green industry 'fix'}

The transformation from broken to fixed, from overgrown to manicured, from empty to brimming with plants is what really gets Matt Case.

"I love the gratification you get when you leave a property and you have a finished product, and everything looks nice and in its place," says Case, who discovered a niche for "repair" when he was a boy helping his great uncle restore cars in their garage.

Case thought he'd pursue a career in automotive mechanics until he got a part-time job in high school working for a landscaper. Immediately, he was hooked on the feeling. "I got that same gratification. The effort you put in just makes you feel good," he says.

So, Case dove into landscaping and ramped up to full time after high school. He decided to pursue a horticulture degree at Alamance Community College in North Carolina, about a 50-minute drive from where he lives now in Bear Creek.

Like many students balancing work and school, Case took on the course load that he could while maintaining a landscaping job and even adding to his schedule with a full-time position working at a lawn and garden store, getting education in the field as he completed coursework.

For a year, Case worked as a horticultural grounds worker at the North Carolina Zoo while still attending classes and helping the landscaper who gave him his first job in high school. Case admits the schedule has been rigorous, and after three and a half years in his associate's degree program, he has a few classes left to complete before earning his degree in applied science horticulture technology.

Meanwhile, Case found an opportunity that meshes his love for mechanics and passion for the green industry. Eight months ago, he began working as a full-time mechanic for Ruppert Landscape in Laytonsville, Md. "There is a lot of variety," he says. "I work on the whole fleet – I get to work on the small Toyota pick-ups, Bobcats, zero-turn mowers, two-cycle equipment."

Case showcased his talent for small engine repair at NALP's National Collegiate Landscape Competition the past two years, walking away with second place Superstar last year and third place Superstar this year. He has also won first place in plant installation and small engine repair.

As a student beginning a career in horticulture, Case says he didn't realize the variety of opportunities he could pursue. Wrenching on cars with his great uncle as a kid, he never thought he'd be a small engine mechanic, but the path makes perfect sense.

Today, Case continues to work hard every day to continue his education while learning in the shop. "This is what I really enjoy doing," he says.

– story by **KRISTEN HAMPSHIRE**

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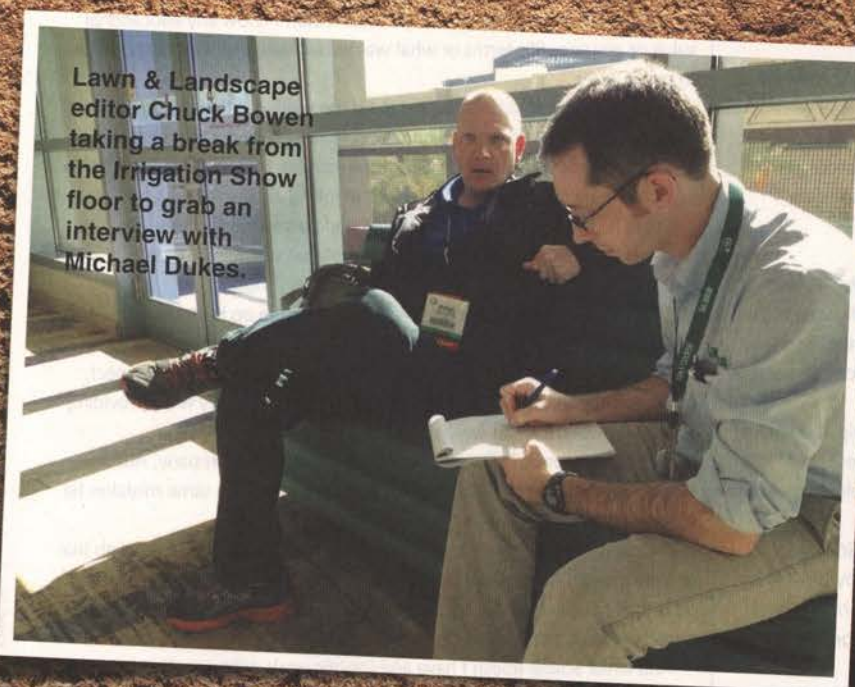
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Lawn & Landscape digital content editor Kate Spirgen on location at Renewal and Remembrance in Arlington, Va.



Lawn & Landscape editor Chuck Bowen taking a break from the Irrigation Show floor to grab an interview with Michael Dukes.



Molly Palmer

**Kansas State University
(graduated 2015)
Major: Horticulture, landscape
design specialization
GPA: 3.7**

{Plants over pets}

"I was always outside as a kid," says Molly Palmer, remembering childhood days in the garden with her grandparents. Little did she know that her time toiling and tinkering in the landscape were the seeds of a career in horticulture.

In fact, Palmer went to Kansas State University as an animal science major, planning to be a veterinarian. But the classes just didn't click. "I wasn't enjoying it," she says. "I took some career placement tests here on campus and everything pointed to horticulture."

Palmer, a recent graduate, says the people are what make the green industry so engaging and special. "Anyone who is in this industry just loves it and is very hard-working," she says. "And everyone is really comfortable and, I think, laid back – and I really like that."

Easing into her new major as a sophomore, Palmer dug in and joined the university's horticulture club, serving as vice president and leading a campaign to create a park-like outdoor space in front of Throckmorton Hall, where the horticulture classes meet. "We knew we wanted a space where any student could go outside and eat lunch or just enjoy it and hang out with friends," she says.

Palmer had a hand in the design and plant installation, and she led the charge in raising funds, launching a brick campaign where alumni were invited to make donations. The club raised \$8,000. "Several alumni wrote notes about what they were doing today, so we got to learn more about them, and we shared what we were doing in the department and on campus," Palmer says.

Again, it all goes back to good people.

"I'm really interested in working with people and for people," Palmer says of how she hopes to make an impact in her green industry career. One day, she hopes to work in public horticulture. While she thoroughly enjoys design and the opportunity to work with clients to create spaces, she enjoys a balance of outside time.

She gained some experience doing this during an internship at Botanica, a public garden in Wichita, Kan. "I was basically a gardener there, and I rotated throughout the garden and also helped coordinate volunteers and do general maintenance," she says.

Before graduation, Palmer secured a position working for Rothwell Landscape in Manhattan, Kan., a landscape company owned by brothers and alumni of Kansas State. "Landscape design is a culmination of art and science," Palmer says. "You get to work with plants and arrange them in an artistic way."

– story by **KRISTEN HAMPSHIRE**



Michael Sciardi

**University of Florida, senior
Major: Landscape and
Nursery Horticulture
GPA: 3.92**

{Second time around}

Those stereotypes about not being able to make a living as a landscaper extend all the way down under.

"People used to laugh at me back at home when I used to say 'I have a lawn and landscaping business,'" says Michael Sciardi, a native of Australia and a current senior at the University of Florida. "They thought I wasn't making any money."

Well, they thought wrong. After four years of owning the business, he was pulling in enough revenue to hire four employees. But he decided to sell it to join a friend who was going backpacking through Europe.

"I was only 21 and I thought I was invincible, so I decided to sell it," he says. While he may have sacrificed a salary to go on the trip, he gained a lot of good life experiences, and it forced him to grow up, he says.

Oh, and he also met his future wife, Caley, who is studying to be a vet at UF, while on a bus tour in Berlin. After moving to Jacksonville, Fla., to be with her, he decided to go back to school and learn about the business side of owning a landscaping company.

"I just knew how to cut grass," he says. "I didn't know any educational value or any scientific terms or what was wrong with plants or grass or how to prune a tree."

But going back to school proved to be more difficult than he thought. Because he'd dropped out of high school to run his landscaping business in Australia, he had to first get his GED, then earn his associate degree at Santa Fe community college in Florida before enrolling at UF.

While he chose to major in landscape and nursery horticulture, he minored in agribusiness management to get that valuable business background.

"It is extremely important to have this knowledge on business management because running a landscaping business is not just about plants, turf and trees," he says. "Without attention to the business aspect, many companies have closed their doors even though they were providing an excellent landscaping service."

Sciardi is currently in the process of starting another company, Aussie Landscape Management, and doesn't plan on making the same mistakes he did in Australia as a teenage business owner.

"When operating my business in Australia, I educated myself through trial and error when running the business aspect of my company," he says. "With no formal education in the business industry, I approached all new business aspects with almost a sense of blindness."

And while Sciardi doesn't have any specific goals right now that he'd like to reach with his business, he knows he only wants to provide maintenance, plant installation and small tree pruning, while subbing out chemical work.

"I'd rather be professional in three or four aspects," he says, "then try to do to aspects and not be an expert at any of them."

– story by **BRIAN HORN**

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COVER STORY



Tracy Lee Sewell

**Gwinnett Technical College
(graduated 2015)
Major: Landscape design/
urban agriculture
GPA: 4.0**

{One crop at a time}

Tracy Lee Sewell wants you to eat your veggies. To be more accurate, she wants to design you a landscape full of produce. The recent Gwinnett Technical College graduate, known to most as Tylee, plans to start her own firm as a landscape designer, creating edible landscapes for residents and restaurants in Georgia.

Sewell, a self-confessed plant addict and former elementary school art teacher, always had a green thumb, but she fell in love with the horticulture industry when she and a colleague started a teaching garden.

"That was the moment when I realized how important growing food in the landscape was for children," she says. "That's the year that I really decided this is what I love to do."

Two years and a divorce later, she moved from Virginia to Georgia and decided to go back to school to pursue her dream full time. Although her family was telling her to take advantage of the fact that she could retire in a few years if she went back to teaching art, Sewell wanted to make a different kind of impact.

Not exactly sure what she wanted to do with her degree, she took a sustainable urban agriculture class and realized that she could incorporate food into the landscapes she wanted to design. "I fell so hard that I ended up staying in the program," she says.

She's now the campus farm manager, leading a team that cultivates more than 3 acres of fruits and vegetables. The produce has been used by the school's culinary department and the team is working on approval to sell to faculty, students and the community. They'll also be donating a portion to a local food pantry.

While she loved teaching children about growing their own food, Sewell wants to influence their parents to make a bigger impact.

"It's not going to happen just by the children going home and telling their parents, 'Oh, we ate great radishes today!' You have to hook the parents."

Sewell hopes that edible landscaping will not only change the way people plant, but the way people eat and feed their children. She wants to teach people one crop at a time, the same way she learned all about growing.

"If you add one new thing or two new things – if you grow it on your balcony or in your backyard, you start finding recipes for that thing, then you want another thing and another thing," she says.

A busy farm manager, volunteer and student with a 15-year-old daughter, she managed to maintain a 4.0 GPA in her major.

Sewell manages to get it all done by taking it one step at a time. And she's always focused on her goal of designing beautiful, sustainable and edible spaces.

"I don't try to do everything in one day," she says. "I know my big picture and I do one thing each day to work toward that big picture and somehow I do hit those targets."

– story by **KATE SPIRGEN**



Zach VanDyke

**Michigan State University
(graduated 2015)
Major: Horticulture
GPA: 3.45**

{Bleeding green}

Something different every day – that's life in the green industry. And Zach VanDyke has been immersed since he was 12 years old when his dad bought him a commercial mower. Dad's advice: Start mowing and you'll make some money for a vehicle.

"That's what dad did in high school and college, and for a while he owned his own lawn care company," VanDyke says. His father would drop him off at accounts and wait in his truck while VanDyke mowed lawns in and around his hometown of Fremont, Mich., an hour north of Grand Rapids.

By the time VanDyke was 16 and purchased a truck, he had about 60 clients and his homegrown operation continued to expand. Then, he secured a job at Mellema Nursery. "I grew to love the plants and the nursery life," he says. VanDyke worked with shrubs in the retail division, caring for the plant stock. He eventually became the foreman of the landscaping division, running two crews.

When the time came to declare a major at Michigan State University, VanDyke knew horticulture was the answer for him, but a great deal of his learning has happened outside of the classroom. He was an officer in the campus horticulture club as the green industries representative, serving as a liaison between the students and companies in Michigan and beyond.

Van Dyke headed up the donations committee for the club's annual spring show and plant sale, spending up to 40 hours during the busy week before the show acquiring plants from local companies. He used that type of motivation to earn first place awards in NALP's National Collegiate Landscape Competition in 2015 in the construction cost estimating event and in landscape maintenance operations.

VanDyke has also taken on leadership responsibilities outside of school. During an internship with Drost Landscape, he managed a crew for a portion of the summer.

The experience at this high-end design/build firm in Northern Michigan turned VanDyke on to creative possibilities in the green industry. "I got to see projects that I would never dream of," he says.

VanDyke says he hopes that he can bring his interest in systems and processes – finding ways to do it better – to a fulfilling career in the green industry. "Ever since I was young, I have always been very driven, and I've had the opportunity to meet a lot of people and learn how to do things different ways," he says.

"I want to bring my knowledge and experience to think about different, more efficient ways to do things. I think that's my true talent – and I'd love to implement that in a way that can benefit the whole industry."

After graduation this spring, VanDyke went back to work for Mellema Nursery where he will manage crews and continue caring for plants.

"I just love working in the green industry so much; I couldn't care less where it is. I can't think of anything I'd love to do more," he says.

– story by **KRISTEN HAMPSHIRE**

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You're all wrong

Horticulture students aren't letting misconceptions about their major stand in the way of living their dream.

Story and sidebar by Brooke N. Bates

Though students have different reasons for seeking degrees in the industry, they're all passionate about the opportunities that led them here.

But that passion is sometimes met with confusion from those who only view landscaping as mowing lawns. In fact, the idea of making a career in horticulture was even foreign to many of those working at it now.

"When I graduated high school, I had no idea what I wanted to do," says Jordan Poole, who recently graduated from Hinds Community College in Jackson, Miss., with a degree in landscape management. "I was going to mow grass until I figured out what I wanted to do. I never knew it was so much bigger than the neighborhood kid pushing a mower."

Poole has thought of starting his own business, but first, he wants to work his way up to production manager at a national company.

Friends and family support his path but worry how he'll make a living in the off season, which is a common sentiment.

"When I tell people I'm a horticulture major, they're surprised that it's a major," says Conner White, who's studying the landscape maintenance option with a business minor at Kansas State University.

"They don't think you can really develop a career out of it, but you can."

When Ruth Morgan told her family she was going back to school to study landscape design after a 40-year career in textile design, they were similarly bewildered.

"I don't think my siblings had any idea what scope the landscape industry encompasses,"

says Morgan, who graduates from Alamance Community College in July with a major in horticulture technology. "They didn't really know anything about the design aspects or other career paths that were possible."

"The misconceptions are that it's mostly low-level jobs and labor." **L&L**

4 STEPS TO BUILD A GREAT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM: For tips on creating a talent pipeline for your company, visit Lawnandlandscape.com

FUTURE DEMANDS

While a positive company culture is what students look for most in potential employers, there can be a number of components that build that culture. Here are a few must-haves for those entering the industry. For more results from our survey on what horticulture students look for in a company, turn to pages 14 and 48.

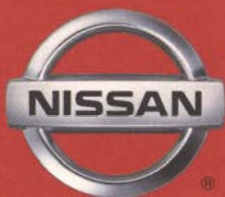
PAY AND BENEFITS. Nearly half of the landscaping students surveyed said money will affect their job search – ranking it third. They expect steady pay increases as well as benefits like health insurance. But it's not about the numbers as much as an underlying commitment to take care of employees.

"The people out there sweating in the hot sun are making the money for the people sitting in the office," says Jordan Poole, who recently graduated from Hinds Community College in Jackson, Miss., with a degree in landscape management. "When you're just a guy on the lawn crew and they don't take care of you the way you feel like you should be taken care of, (that's what makes you feel) overworked and underpaid."

FLEXIBILITY. Students understand that hard work and long hours are part of this business, but they don't want to be workaholics. About 33 percent of students, according to our survey, demand flexible schedules to allow work-life balance. As they start families, they want employers to be sensitive to their priorities outside of work.

"I don't want to see a culture where business comes first and family takes the backburner," says Chris Lambert, a student at Brigham Young University in Idaho, with a wife and three children younger than 4 years old. "The more flexible you are with your employees, the more willing they'll be to give back to you. If my boss says, 'It's OK that

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you need to leave early,' then I'm more willing to work extra hours, because you're willing to work with me."

OPEN MINDS. If contractors hope to harness the energy of younger employees, they'd better be willing to listen. "Companies need to be open to suggestions," Poole says. "I did an internship with a major company, and there were so many things I knew could be done more efficiently, but they weren't open to it because they liked the way they did things. It's hard for me to enjoy my work when I feel like I'm working twice as hard to get the same result."

Young landscapers understand technologies and approaches that could simplify certain tasks. Contractors should embrace this innovative spirit, not buck it.

"Some companies want to do the same things the same way, over and over again, but as technology improves and education improves, the industry changes and there are different ways of doing things," Lambert says. "A company that's not willing to learn from recently educated individuals would be a deal-breaker for me."

The next generation strives to make work easier – not out of laziness, but ingenuity – to improve efficiency and sustainability.

"I WANT A HIGHER POSITION BECAUSE OF MY EDUCATION, AND I UNDERSTAND THAT I'M GOING TO HAVE TO WORK ON A CREW FIRST."

– Jordan Poole, a recent graduate of Hinds Community College in Jackson, Miss., with a degree in landscape management

the Minnesota National Guard. "We like to work hard, but we will do anything possible to make work easier on ourselves. So listen to your workers."

"They can come up with something more efficient and less time-consuming, saving money on the job to make more profit at the end."

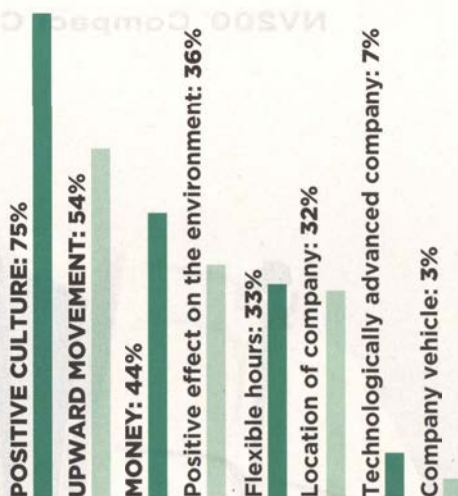
GROWTH POTENTIAL. Listening to employees' ideas makes you attractive to young landscapers, but actively developing employees by offering continuing education and growth opportunities makes you irresistible. Upward movement is the second-most important attribute students seek, according to our survey.

"Not being able to move up in the company would be a deal-breaker," Poole says. "I want a higher position because of my education, and I understand that I'm going to have to work on a crew first. But I want the opportunity to work on the crew, then run the crew, then run the crew managers. I want to be able to move up." **L&L**

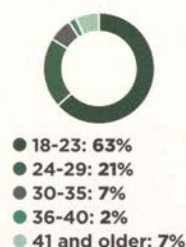
WE SURVEYED 180 STUDENTS majoring in a green industry related field about different aspects of a career in the industry (60 percent male, 40 percent female responded). Most respondents were ages 18-23, sought a positive company culture in a future employer and either want to own their own company or eventually work in a senior role at a company.

► Turn to pg. 14 for more findings from the research.

What are the top three attributes you look for in a potential employer?



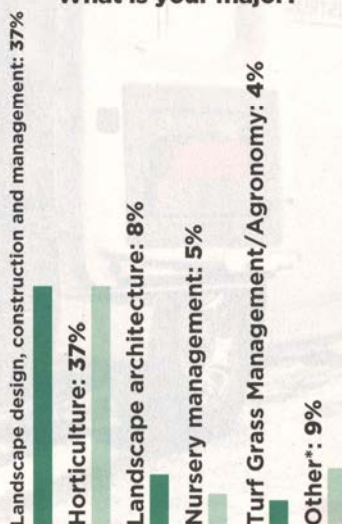
How old are you?



Do you own a company?

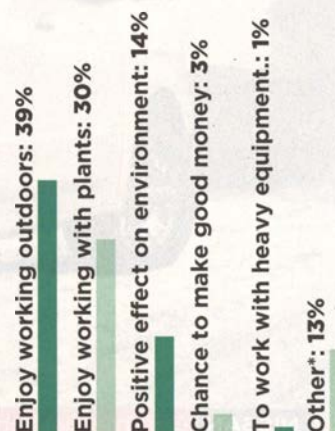


What is your major?



* Other responses included a number of double majors: Environmental science and landscape management; landscape and turf grass management

Why did you choose to major in the green industry?



* Other responses included: Want to start my own business out of school, to explore hydroponics, interested in organic farming and alternative economic models

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L I F E - L I K E



P R O P O S A L S

Landscapers improve efficiency
and increase sales with design software.

By Stacie Zinn Roberts

Sitting in a cozy living room in northeastern Wisconsin, Gerry Andrews, president of Landscape Associates of De Pere, taps his iPad and watches his prospective client's eyes light up. Gone are the days when Andrews had to tote flat paper drawings to a client meeting to show examples of his company's work. Now he shows his clients 3D color renderings that bring his portfolio of designs to life.

"They sit up and take notice," Andrews says. "They know automatically that they will

.....

ABOVE: A 3D color rendering can help increase sales by showing your customers what the landscape will look like with and without different options.



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understand what we're talking about. Most people don't know or don't get a 2D plan drawing. As soon as we output it into the 3D they say, 'Oh that's what that is!' They get it. It's huge." So huge, in fact, that since Andrews' firm began using landscape

design software six years ago as a part of a first-meeting sales process to demonstrate its portfolio, its sales close rate has increased a full 25 percent.

Now instead of closing just half of presentations made, Landscape Associates of

De Pere closes 75 percent of its prospective customers. And that's just for customers shown sample work during the initial consultation. The close rate for clients shown a 3D rendering of their own project is nearly perfect at 99 percent.

Andrews' company does more than 200 drawings a year, but only about 20 percent of the client projects actually go into the 3D design stage.

"The 3D drawing is really just a sales tool that we reserve for only those projects where we need that kind of communication," he says. He won't use 3D for a simple foundation planting job, but he will for a complex \$20,000 job.

Andrews uses DynaSCAPE landscape design software and Google SketchUp to convert the plans into 3D.

In Eden Prairie, Minn., Joe Schroeder, landscape manager, serves as a designer, bidder and estimator for Neil's Outdoor Services. He's been using PRO Landscape design software for more than a decade.

"Design software helps to close deals, giving the client an exact design and scale drawing, not something sketched up on a napkin," Schroeder says.

Todd Bangs, operations manager for Windswept Gardens in Bangor, Maine, has experience the same success with the software as Schroeder. "I feel it helps the customer actually see what the finished project will look like. With traditional 2D flat hand work, it's hard to get the picture into the customer's head." Bangs' company uses Univision 3D Landscape Creator from Unilock.

Before he used design software in the sales process, Bangs says he'd present to customers by showing them photos of similar projects or ideas.

Now, he does rough sketches based on the customer's ideas to use as a guide for his work with the software. At the next meeting, he'll present a digital vision.

"When someone sees their yard all done on the screen, it sells itself," Bangs says.

IMPROVING EFFICIENCY. "With the company growing, I am trying to incorporate (software) designs on most projects. This gives the job

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foreman exacts on what the job consists of, and to-scale measurements on how to install," Schroeder says. Andrews says pricing jobs designed in the software is also easier, and more accurate, which in turn saves money and adds profitability to the bottom line.

"A major benefit of the software is in the estimating after design. A click at the bottom gives you all your take off and totals, so it makes ordering and pricing much faster and



Of the 200 drawings Landscape Associates does a year, 20 percent go into the 3D stage.

easier," Bangs says. Andrews says using the digital software for sales actually does make the rest of the process more efficient. "We do the take-off of the plans and go over into estimating. That way, we're more accurate. You can have the computer count up the square footage of the lawn and drop that into estimating."

Another helpful feature is the "ability to make changes quickly and efficiently," Schroeder says.

"The speed you can make changes is a huge plus over the traditional pen and paper. In just a few seconds it can be switched up, made bigger or smaller. Anything is easier to change," Bangs says.

"Now drawing on the computer is so much faster and especially as we work with clients and make changes, it saves so much time. We can just change a few things and we don't have to start over," Andrews says. "If we want to give people options, it's so easy to have it on the computer to switch between to present options to a client."

An added bonus to easy changes is the ability to demonstrate those differences to clients – which can increase sales. "It just makes a connection with the customer and

helps us to up-sell items because they see it with all the 'bells and whistles' then, with just a click of the mouse you can start taking them away," Bangs says.

Andrews says using design software in every stage of the sales and construction

of a job has completely revolutionized his business. "Sales are better, accuracy is better, profitability on jobs is better," Andrews says. "Why would you ever go back?" L&L

The author is a freelance writer based in Mount Vernon, Wash.

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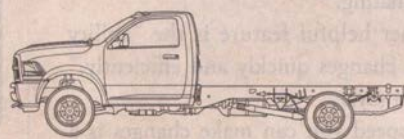
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Drafix PRO Landscape Version 21

The pitch: Version 21 of PRO Landscape contains more than 13,000 images, and the updated library contains new plant material for all climate zones, hardscapes, water features and lighting.

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- New pencil sketch and blended water-color symbols and patterns give designers eight pre-set color render modes to quickly create color CAD drawings.
- Version 21 also includes new features



such as an enhanced edit menu, auto-save feature, legend options, improved backup utility, symbol array offset tool and an update check tool.

For more information: Drafix.com



Describeit

The pitch: Describeit is a sales tool that allows landscape contractors, designers and salespersons to create detailed proposals on site or in the office.

- Your client can ask questions directly through the platform.
- Cost for a single user is \$30/month and the cost for multiple users starts at \$150/month.
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For more information: Describeit.com

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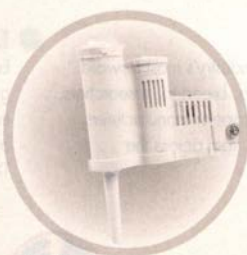
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DESIGN SOFTWARE



DynaSCAPE Design version 6.4

The pitch: DynaSCAPE Design 6.4 allows designers to produce landscape designs in hand-drawn quality black and white.

- DynaSCAPE users can now organize their figure library as they see fit to access figures and symbols in the order they prefer.
- This update improves operation of the software on Windows 8.1.
- The software is now compatible with the latest version of SketchUp.

For more information: Dynascape.com



Idea Spectrum Realtime Landscaping Architect

The pitch: Realtime Landscaping Architect includes everything you need to create plans, 3D presentations and CAD drawings of your landscape designs.

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- The program can switch between 2D and 3D views as you design.

For more information:

Ideaspectrum.com



Vectorworks

The pitch: The Vectorworks 2015 software contains more than 100 updates and new features in the areas of architecture, BIM, urban planning and entertainment design.

- The product line includes Vectorworks Designer, Architect, Landmark, Spotlight, Fundamentals and Renderworks.
- In previous versions, 64-bit was only available in the platform's photorealistic rendering engine, Renderworks, but has now been integrated throughout the entire Vectorworks 2015 product line, providing designers with the ability to handle larger projects, as well as better performance and stability.

For more information:

Vectorworks2015.net



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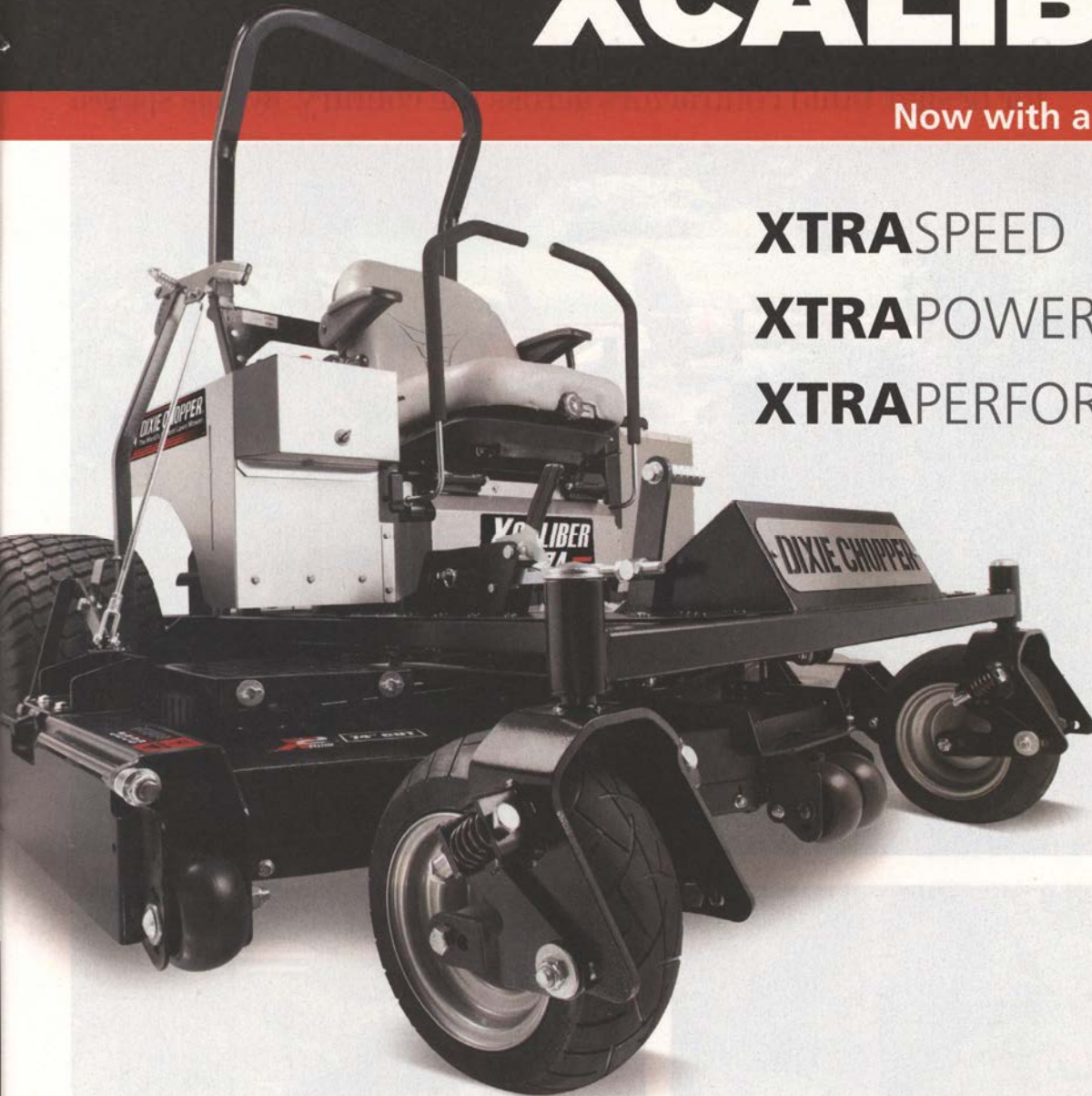


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Consumer confidence is rising and backlogs are getting bigger for design/build contractors across the country. By Kate Spirgen



RIPE for the picking

LANDSCAPE COMPANIES FROM COAST TO COAST HAD A GREAT YEAR IN 2014, and while most say that the market has still not fully recovered to pre-recession numbers, things are looking good. Consumer confidence is on the rise, and coupled with a healthy housing market, jobs are really starting to take off.

Mirror Landscapes in Dixon, Ill., grew 10 to 15 percent last year, with most of the new work coming from the design/build side of the business.

"When we were looking at jobs and talking to customers, there was definitely a little bit more confidence – a little bit more willingness to spend more money," says Operations and Sales Manager Jason Hemmer. "We actually had one very large job that probably wouldn't have happened a couple of years ago with the way the economy was."

A willingness to spend has led to comfortable backlogs and good profit margins for most, giving them a strong foundation for a great 2015. Of 160 respondents to our survey, 96 percent say customer confidence is either strong or average, and 26 percent have a backlog of five weeks or more.

Companies are still struggling to find and keep talent on their teams, and to educate customers about the value of the work they do in order to charge reasonable prices, but in general, things are looking up.

A STRONG MARKET. As the economy and the housing market recover, customer confidence is up from coast to coast. With more money to go around, projects are increasing in numbers and in scope.

"The area we're in is very agriculturally based and so last year was a real good year for farm prices, so that always helps us," says Dave Wright, president at Kimberly Nurseries Landscape & Irrigation in Twin Falls, Idaho.

A solid year for farmers, plus a generally improving local economy has his company already 10 percent ahead of budget for the year. Many contractors report that their customers are staying in their homes longer and investing in projects they've had to put off due to the financial crisis in 2008. Homeowners seem to be leaning toward backyard renovations to enjoy the time they spend at home.

ProGreen Lawn and Landscape in Birmingham, Ala., is up about 18 percent over 2014, which CEO Wade Horton says is due to increased consumer confidence. His company deals mainly in high-end residential accounts, and he says he sees people updating and investing in the homes they're in. "They might have had a mediocre backyard before and now they want an ultimate backyard that's as nice as can be because they're going to stay there another 20 years," he says.



To learn more about the state of the design/build industry, including the most popular design elements and projected revenues, see our exclusive research on pg. 66. For more photos of design/build projects by landscapers in this article, turn to pg. 68.

When we were looking at jobs and talking to customers, there was definitely a little bit more confidence – a little bit more willingness to spend more money.

– Jason Hemmer, operations and sales manager, Mirror Landscapes

STAYING ON TREND.

Gone are the days of the basic hot tub and flat patio designs. Nowadays, homeowners want to bring the indoors out, and they're asking for fire pits, outdoor kitchens and other elements to turn their backyards into more enclosed outdoor living areas.

"What we're working on now is a lot of intimate home space for people, so things like fire pits, water features, pergolas – things that really add character to their outdoor living space," Wright says.

For Bahler Brothers in South Windsor, Conn., patios, walk-

How would you categorize customer confidence in your market?



- Strong – 53%
- Average – 43%
- Weak – 4%

ways and retaining walls have been the staple for 30 years, but landscape lighting has recently seen a lot of growth. The company added residential putting greens to its offerings this year and has gotten a great response.

"We had quite a few people requesting it last year, so we started doing some research and figuring out this might be a little niche we can carve out for ourselves," says Jen Kloter, landscape designer and salesperson, noting that it's a natural fit since the artificial turf goes on the same base as pavers. "It's a good fit for the type of client that we're going for."



How to hire construction crews

Good help is still hard to find (and to keep), but there are ways to do it. Look for a good attitude and a willingness to learn, landscapers say. Some experience is nice, but many say they would prefer not to hire employees that could bring bad habits to the shop.

As a growing company, Hiner Landscapes had 100 percent turnover last year – twice. Owner Matt Hiner says it was the hardest year he's gone through. Jobs that should have taken two weeks were taking four. The labor shortage in Colorado Springs made it easy for employees to chase that extra dollar an hour, and because Hiner was locked into contracts with existing labor rates, he was stuck.

"This year, I just didn't play around with it," he says. "I raised my rates and I've since hired guys that are much more expensive than I'm used to but it's what I had to do." His bids have increased about 5 percent to deal with the increased cost.

He built his budget around the increased labor costs, stuck to his guns on pricing and hasn't seen an impact on sales because of it.

Greg Omasa, founder of Omasa Landscaping in Hadley, Mass., has been in business for 36 years and says he never steals employees from other companies. He prefers to teach his crews the right way to do things from the start. And with the University of Massachusetts and the Stockbridge School of Agriculture right next door, he's looking to hire more people with some college background.

Mike Iatona, vice president of operations at Desperate Landscapes in Dunmore, Penn., goes through around a dozen

employees a year, but now he has a good crew of four guys – all referrals – he can rely on to get the job done right. The crew is almost like family now. He'll fire up the grill and throw a few steaks on after work on Fridays. "They are employees; that's first and foremost," he says. "But we treat them good and they treat us good so that's really it."

Treating people the right way is also key for Rich Schipul, president of Designing Eden in Connecticut. He tries to make sure his estimates are realistic so he isn't acting as a task master.

And it's crucial to show crews that they're not only appreciated, but there are opportunities for them to grow with the company. "I think it's important to see that there's room to grow," says Kevin O'Brien, landscape designer with Lifestyle Landscaping in Ohio. "It's not a dead-end company; it's not just a job."

Younger customers are leaning toward low-maintenance and sustainable options like pollinator-friendly plantings. They don't want their mom and dad's garden. Instead, they're looking for an easier option. "They feel

like they're contributing to a bigger cause and maybe that's part of it," says Kevin O'Brien, landscape designer with Lifestyle Landscaping in North Ridgeville, Ohio. "I think with that age group, they want to make sure

that the money they're investing is at least perceived as serving a greater good."

In Colorado Springs, Colo., Matt Hiner, owner of Hiner Landscapes, says his company is putting in a lot less grass than

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DESIGN/BUILD UPDATE

before. "We're high plains desert here so everybody is trying to follow xeriscape rules," he says. "Long gone are the days when you put down grass because that's what you do. Water is such a precious commodity here that people don't want to waste it."

EDUCATING THE CUSTOMER. One of the biggest challenges for companies offering design/build services is showing potential customers the value of what they're buying. With all of the do-it-yourself shows on TV, plus competition from "fly-by-nighters," as Mike Iatona says, an emphasis on quality craftsmanship is key.

The biggest challenge right now for Iatona, vice president of operations at Desperate Landscapes in Dunmore, Penn., is customer perception. Potential clients either think a project will be too expensive for their budget, or people who think the price is much higher than it should be.

He gets around the problem by giving free estimates, then spelling out the price line by line with the client. "There's really no way around it other than 'Here's the price,'" he says. "Education is the biggest key."

Wright uses advertising and social media to show customers the value of what he does. Existing clients are all asked

to take a survey once their projects are complete and Wright shares the results that show high satisfaction and good value for the dollar spent. He also shares written testimonials from happy clients with potential customers.

In Ohio, O'Brien also tries to show the care and passion he and his team have for their work. Rather than showing potential clients what his company does, he tells them why. He uses the company blog, social media and marketing to showcase his team and humanize the work, which helps the company find the right kind of customer—one who isn't just focused on a cheap price.

"It gets people to get to know them so we're not necessarily showing built patios anymore; we're kind of showing our people and why our people are excited about what they do and that excitement kind of translates to the job," he says. **L&L**



ABOVE: Stone paver patios ranked at the top of the list of design elements requested by customers this year. **BELOW:** Also high on the list were pergolas, retaining walls and firepits. Turn to pg. 66 for more.



They might have had a mediocre backyard before and now they want an ultimate backyard that's as nice as can be because they're going to stay there for another 20 years.

— Wade Horton, CEO,
ProGreen Lawn and Landscape

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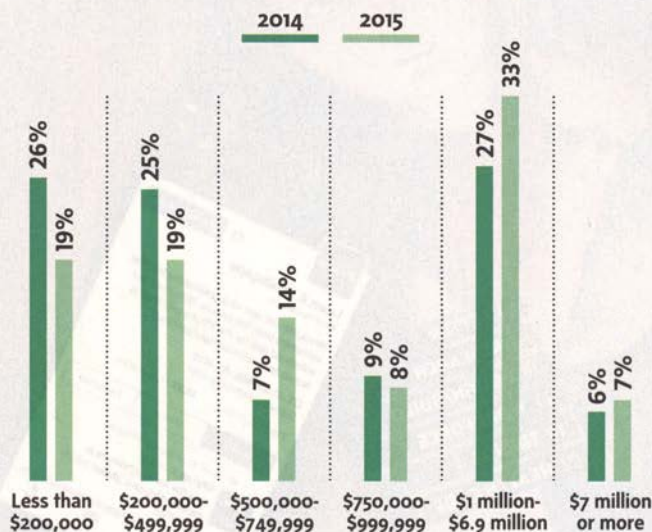
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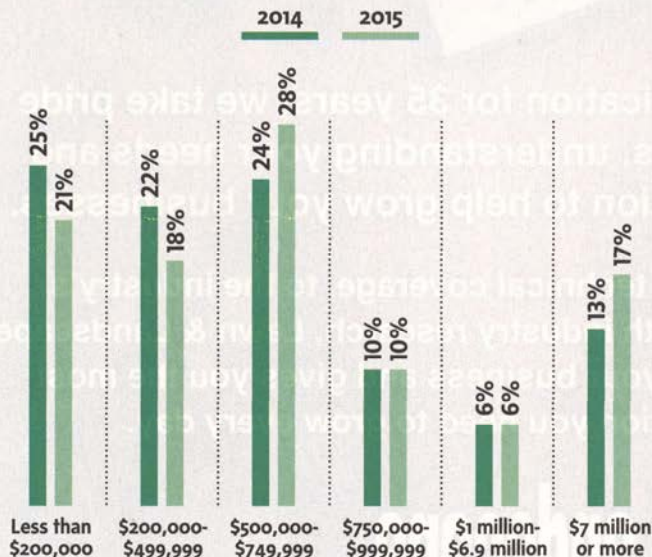
Design/build is on the rise

We asked 160 landscape contractors about the state of their design/build business this spring. The responses were overwhelmingly positive with good backlog and high levels of customer confidence in the market, as well as revenue growth in 2015. Top challenges include finding good, reliable employees, low-cost competition and managing customer expectations.

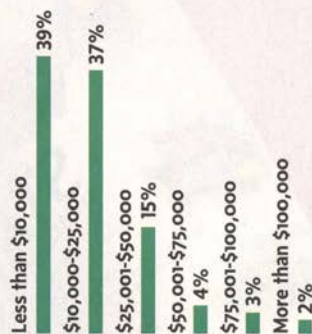
What is your company's overall gross revenue for 2014, and what's your company's projected overall gross revenue for 2015?



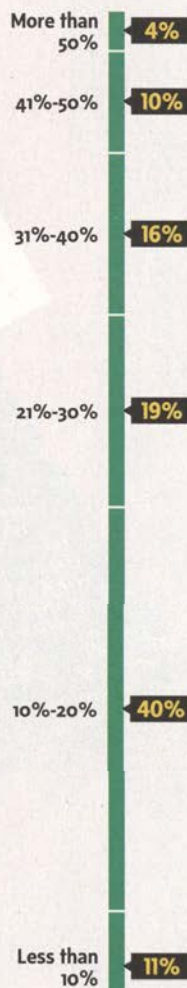
What is your company's construction or design/build revenue for 2014, and what is your company's projected construction or design/build revenue for 2015?



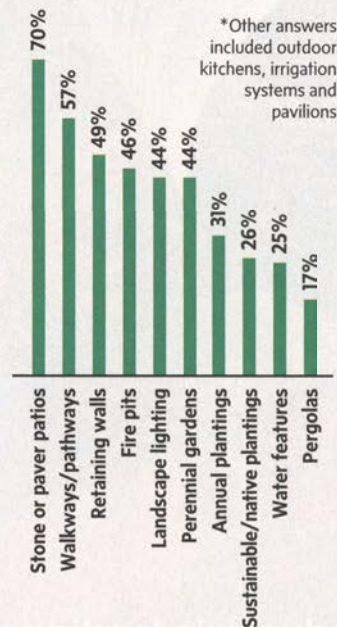
What's the average price for a design/build job for your company?



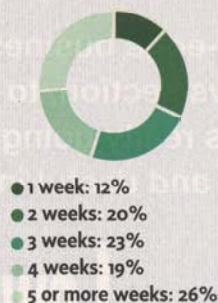
What's your average gross profit margin on design/build or construction work?



What were your customers' most-requested design elements last year? These are the top 10 responses:



What is your backlog for construction projects going into the 2015 season?



How does your backlog compare to the same time last year?





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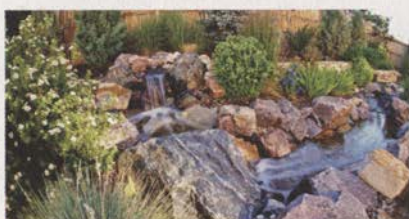
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READY TO ROLL

These compact tractors can come in handy on your next design/build project.



1. John Deere 3038E

The pitch: The 2015 John Deere 3038E compact utility tractor features customer-driven updates.

- The 3038E is equipped with emissions-compliant Final Tier 4 engines with 37.3 (27.4 kW) horsepower.
- A hydrostatic transmission with Twin Touch pedals makes it as easy as pressing a single foot pedal to go forward and another foot pedal to go in reverse.
- Four-wheel drive comes standard on the 3038E. To get the most versatility, the machines can be equipped with the John Deere iMatch Quick-Hitch.

For more information:
JohnDeere.com

2. Kioti DK "10" Series

The pitch: Kioti Tractor's new DK "10" Series includes six new tractor models: the DK4510, DK4510H, DK5010, DK5010H, DK5510 and DK5510H.

- The engines gross 45 to 55 horsepower and are available with a synchro or H-shuttle transmission.
- The new DK's fuel filter, oil filter, coolant reservoir, dipstick and fuel tank are all accessible from one side for easy access.
- The models are equipped with standard features such as 4WD, rear differential lock, adjustable RH lift link, wet disc brakes, front work lights and auto power take-off (PTO).

For more information:
Kioti.com

3. Kubota L2501

The pitch: The new Kubota L2501 compact tractor features a 24.8 horsepower Kubota diesel engine, a larger chassis, cleaner emissions and modern styling.

- The transmission delivers four main-shift speeds in two ranges for high and low, for a total of eight forward and four reverse speeds.
- The gear drive transmission models come in two-wheel drive or four-wheel drive, and the optional hydrostatic transmission offers simple forward and reverse change and 3-range shifting
- The L2501 complies with the latest EPA emissions regulations without the need for a Diesel Particulate Filter (DPF).

For more information:
Kubota.com

4. Mahindra USA eMax

The pitch: The eMax sub-compact tractor is available in three open-station configurations: eMax 22 Gear, eMax 22 hydrostatic, eMax 25 hydrostatic and one cab eMax 25 hydrostatic.

- The sub-compact tractors feature more built-in weight and larger tires.
- Has a loader lift capacity at 900 lbs., and a 1,320 lbs. 3-point lift capacity.
- Comes with the option of 22 and 25 horsepower, Tier 4-compliant diesel engines, with a lower rated engine RPM for better fuel economy, longer life and less noise.

For more information:
Mahindrausa.com

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EXTRA-SENSORY PRECIPITATION

Landscapers can save water with data-driven irrigation. **By Anne-Marie Hardy**

Efficient irrigation doesn't always mean watering less. It means watering plants according to their needs. Integrating irrigation sensors into a system makes it more responsive, and contractors can more intelligently monitor and manage how the landscape uses water.

"The purpose of a sensor is to give the necessary water that the plant requires, not what

it then has a reference point of where to get back to."

WEATHER SENSORS. Evapotranspiration (or ET) sensors determine when to irrigate by monitoring four weather characteristics: solar radiation, wind speed, temperature and humidity. This

the contractor thinks the plant needs," says Brad Adams, Irrrometer factory sales representative. "A sensor acts like a translator, telling the end user whether the area needs to be irrigated or not."

KNOW YOUR SENSORS.

Irrigation system sensors monitor four key areas: rain, soil, weather and flow. The most common are rain shut-off sensors. A disk inside collects and absorbs water. When it swells to a certain size, the device trips a switch, shuts down the entire system and prevents further irrigation until the disk dries up.

SOIL SENSORS. These devices work in a similar way to rain sensors – they trip the system when a maximum level of moisture is reached – but are calibrated to the specific needs of plant material and soil types. So, a system with multiple sensors can understand that a light rain is enough for the shrubs, but still allow zones in the lawn to run.

"You are basically teaching (the system) what is the maximum moisture level," says Burnett Jones, senior marketing manager for Toro. "Once you calibrate,

information is then used to determine the area's evapotranspiration rate and then exactly how much should be added back via irrigation.

"ET sensors is where contractors are making the real gains," says Richard Restuccia, vice president, landscape solutions, Jain Irrigation. "They soon learn that if you apply water properly to the landscape, your landscape thrives, it looks better. I always go back to the analogy of hunger. If I could be fed so I never got too hungry or too full, boy would I be a lot more productive of a person."

FLOW SENSORS. Primarily used on large, commercial properties, flow sensors can alert the contractor to sudden changes in flow rates and shut down the system if too much water is moving through too fast – preventing erosion, flooding and high water bills.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES. One of the risks with sensor responsive water management is that the contractor is largely dependent on the irrigated system functioning effectively.

"If you have a very old irrigation delivery system, undersized, or bad sprinkler heads, then the irrigation will not be very uniform," Adams says.

"Dry spots show up that much quicker when irrigating based on the sensor. It is easy to point a finger at the controller or the sensor. That's not the problem. The problem is that the delivery system needs to be either repaired or even replaced."

Jones agrees, stating that when contractors start to use sensors, they find the areas of weakness in the system that may have been previously masked. It is easy to dismiss this "new finding" on the sensor, but in most cases, the dry areas are directly related to inconsistencies in the irrigation system. **L&L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Ontario, Canada.



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LANDSCAPE INVADERS

A guide to invasive species researchers are watching now, and what you need to know in order to manage them.

By Kristen Hampshire



THEY COME BY BOAT, TRAVEL BY PLANE, NESTLE IN SHIPPING CRATES AND BURROW INTO THE SOIL OF IMPORTED PLANTS. Exotic species of pests travel to the United States and slip through ports of entry in spite of rigorous federal inspections, and once “exotics” get a foothold in a region and proliferate with no natural enemy to control their expansion, they can pose a threat to plants in the landscape – and in agriculture and our forests. Then, they become “invasive species.”

“What makes species invasive is that nothing preys on them – nothing kills them, nothing eats them, so they get all the food they want,” says Dan Suiter, a professor of entomology at the University of Georgia College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences.

Over time, natural enemies emerge and can gradually control invasive species. Nature takes its course. But before that happens, invasive species can destroy desirable plants, trees and turf if left to their own devices.

Invasive species are especially a problem in states like Florida, where Steven Arthurs, assistant professor of entomology at University of Florida, says invasive pests enter the state at a rate of two new species per month. (That’s up

from an average of one.) “They largely come in from the plant trade,” he says, adding that the best efforts to keep them out of the country just aren’t enough.

So that makes identifying invasive species and controlling them a priority. Some invasive species can be managed with insecticides and other lawn care products, while other pest control requires removal of infected plants or turf.

Arthurs recommends landscapers take a diligent course of action that begins with reporting the pest to a local extension by taking photographs (close up and long distance), and collecting a sample (if possible) to send to a lab, where the pest can be properly identified. “If it is a new species, the government

might want to take over and eradicate it,” he says.

That has been the case when treating the Asian longhorn beetle, says David Shetlar, en-

tomologist known as the “Bug Doc” at The Ohio State University. This pest has been a threat in New York and Massachusetts, and along the eastern seaboard. “The federal and state governments have identified territories where they go in and do treatments to eradicate it,” he says of the elimination process.

This can involve removing trees in the affected zones, and treating areas in the perimeter. Landscapers who treat properties without taking the case to a local extension agency could be unintentionally thwarting the eradication effort, Shetlar says.

So, first identify, then understand the proper course of action for managing invasive pests. Here is a cheat sheet to identifying “nasties” that are causing a

The Asian longhorn beetle has been a threat all along the eastern seaboard of the U.S. Invasive species often enter the country through the plant trade, despite the best efforts of government regulators.

What makes species invasive is that nothing preys on them – nothing kills them, nothing eats them, so they get all the food they want.”

– Dan Suiter, professor of entomology, University of Georgia College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences

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INVASIVE SPECIES

problem now, how to spot an infestation and what courses of action are appropriate for controlling damage. For more information, always consult with a local extension office.

KUDZU BUG. In 2009, pest control operators cited cases of the kudzu bug on the sides of homes and cars, and some genetic research uncovered that the pest was probably related to a group of bugs from Japan. And there happened to be a direct flight from Japan to Atlanta at that time, Suiter says.

By June 2010, the kudzu bug was infesting soybeans in northeast Georgia and South Carolina. "It became a tremendous soybean pest," Suiter says.

As the name implies, the preferred host plant is kudzu. They peak in early spring when kudzu emerges, and as the kudzu grows in summer they are less of a problem in the landscape as they nosh on their favorite plant. In the fall, they become a problem again.

The problem for homeowners comes when kudzu bugs overwinter and burrow into cracks and crevices in the home, or underneath the bark of trees. They reproduce on legume plants, but you'll find them hanging out on non-hosts like oak and pine trees and azaleas. The bugs are a nuisance, leaving behind a rust-colored stain and unpleasant odor, Suiter says.

Herbicide treatments can be effective in kudzu patches, before the kudzu bug overwinters and heads to the home to cause a nuisance. The pest is mainly a problem in



KUDZU BUG



EMERALD ASH BORER



BROWN MARMORATED STINKBUG



ASIAN CITRUS PSYLLID

the Gulf-coast states and north up into Tennessee, the Carolinas and parts of Virginia.

EMERALD ASH BORER. The old EAB is still a concern in the Midwest and Eastern states, and its trail runs all the way west to Colorado, Shetlar says. Adults are a bright metallic green, a half-inch long and begin their damage in the top third canopy of ash trees. They progress downward until the tree is bare from leaf drop.

Symptoms include bark splitting, and underneath the bark you'll find serpentine galleries (trails) and D-shaped exit holes. A side effect is increased woodpecker damage as the birds work to extract the insects.

"We grossly underestimated the power of this insect's ability to expand its range," Shetlar says, adding that the initial infestation of a tree is often missed for a couple of years until real damage sets in.

"In the third year you see significant die-out in the middle of the tree, and that is often when treatments get started, and by that time you may have lost half of the tree."

If emerald ash borer is within a 20-mile radius of your area, treatments are recommended to prevent infestation as opposed to curative treatment.

Property owners will have to decide whether to continue the treatment investment, in spite of the fact that the tree may not be recoupable if damage was identified too late; or carefully take down and replace the tree. Control methods include soil drench, basal spray and trunk injection.

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INVASIVE SPECIES

BROWN MARMORATED STINK BUG. These sucking bugs can build up significant populations on a variety of ornamental trees, including butterfly bush, fruit trees, berries, grapes, citrus, avocado and more – up to 60 host plant species. The bug feeds on the fruit, causing damage. You'll spot this pest on the east and west coasts, says Mark Hoddle, biological control specialist and principle investigator at University of California Riverside.

The pest is a nuisance to homeowners when it migrates indoors during winter and goes outdoors in summer and destroys backyard crops. The stink bugs have shield-shaped bodies and are about 15



ONLINE: For more on invasive species such as the tulle mealybug, rugose spiraling whitefly and polyphagous shot hole borer, visit Lawnandlandscape.com

mm in length. Their piercing-sucking behavior leads to distorted fruit and fruit drop. They can contaminate grape vines and leave behind a strong odor.

Insecticides have proven effective, according to the University of California Riverside, though further research to identify control is ongoing.

ASIAN CITRUS PSYLLID. This citrus-grazing pest is persistent in Florida and Southern California in commercial groves and on ornamental citrus trees in home lawns. "It likes to feed on the flush growth, causing leaves to curl up. It's nasty looking," Hoddle says.

"The bigger problem is that the psyllid spreads a bacterium that kills citrus." Once infected with the bacterium, a citrus plant will die within five to eight years.

"The disease has killed 50 percent of the citrus trees in Florida, and we recently found it in Southern California," Hoddle says.

"Some experts suggest that if a cure is not found in five to 10 years, Florida may not have a commercial citrus industry. It is that bad of a problem."

Asian citrus psyllid is often identified when a tree is already dying. Its leaves become yellow.

The nymphs produce a toxin, causing the flush tips of leaves to die back or become twisted. The leaves then do not expand normally.

The psyllids vector is a bacterial disease that causes mottling of leaves and affects fruit maturation.

Control through pesticide can reduce the problem, but there is no "cure" for the disease. **L&L**

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CUT THE OVERGROWTH

There's more to trimmers and edgers than just making a yard look nice. **By Katie Tuttle**

While some contractors are probably using the same tools homeowners can pick up at any home supply store, it's important to consider your options and what will work best for your jobs.

"There is a difference between a commercial product and a residential product," says Linda Beattie, public relations specialist with Schiller Grounds Care, the parent company to Little Wonder. "There are some products that are built for heavy duty daily use which you might find with a landscaper or groundskeeper, but it differs from the homeowners who may trim their hedges maybe five or six times a season."

TRIMMERS

CORE. MTD Products acquired CORE Outdoor Power Equipment in January,

and the company is offering CORE products, including the CGT400 Trimmer and the Elite E400 Trimmer.

CORE (Conductor Optimized Rotary Energy) technology features a power cell to provide the operator with a gas-free alternative to fuel. The CGT400 has a runtime equal to one tank of gas, while the Elite E400 has a runtime equal to two tanks of gas.

"It is truly made to displace gas," says Lincoln Jore, CORE co-founder.

DEWALT. If a job requires you to cut through a heavy amount of growth, you might consider DeWALT's string trimmer, which features a gear drive transmission that increases torque, allowing you to plow through without slowing down.

"What's the most important for (users) is always the power, the run



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TRIMMERS & EDGERS

● For a more in-depth look at the mentioned trimmers and edgers, visit Lawnandlandscape.com



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Turfco Edge-R-Rite II Edger

time and the durability," says Product Manager Jola Wodka. "With the technology built into the string trimmer, we answer and manage all three of those."

Another feature of DeWALT's string trimmer is impact-resistant Xenoy housing, which has the ability to be flexible material. "Those tools get mishandled quite a bit in operation and transportation," Wodka says. "They can take some impressive shock absorption."

If a DeWALT string trimmer happens to fall off a truck, or if there's some bending of the material, it will return to its regular shape and form.

LITTLE WONDER. The

company offers hedge trimmers as either commercial electric or gas-powered. The double-insulated housing of the engine now allows the trimmers to cut hedges up to a half inch thick. The gas engine trimmers can cut hedges up to a full inch thick, making both trimmers a good option for when a job requires more than just hedge upkeep.

STIHL. In 2014, STIHL launched the FF94R, a two-stroke mid-range trimmer. Prior to that, most of STIHL's trimmers had four-cycle engines. But according to Marvin Mathwig, a product manager for STIHL, some people

weren't comfortable with a four-cycle machine.

Because of this, STIHL now has three different options for its customers: four-cycle, two-stroke and lithium ion battery. "We're trying to expand to all three to get the landscaper what they need, prefer, are comfortable with, as well as what their clients are demanding," Mathwig says.

EDGERS

LITTLE WONDER. Little Wonder's stick blade edger is a wheeled unit, featuring a four-cycle engine.

"It's a dedicated straight line edger for large commercial properties or along long walkways," Beattie says. "It'll

edge up to 90 feet per minute."

Little Wonder also has a bed shaper, a specific type of edger able to handle curves and serpentine shapes. It can cut around tree rings and along oblong, arced beds, working at a rate of up to 100 feet per minute. Because of the concave blade, the shaper takes out one long strip of sod.

"Ours is more of a bed refiner, but it edges, it shapes, it also trenches," Beattie says. "You can do it in forward or reverse. But the beauty of it is with the concave blade, you can have a strip of sod to throw in a truck and you're done."

STIHL. The company has completely updated its edgers, with the first ones being shipped out in December and January. The highlight is the weight-reduced gear boxes and reflectors.

"We've reduced the weight by about 9 ounces or so," Mathwig says. "What that means is a better power to weight ratio, which is really important to our professional customers."

Another updated feature is the switch from a closed guard to a professional design open guard on the curve chap machines. The pro chap units used to have a lip that prevented material from freely falling out.

The open guard minimizes clogging.

TURFCO. Turfco introduced its Edge-R-Rite II Edger to the market two years ago. The edger now comes with an optional 30-degree tree ring blade. The blade minimizes root damage as it makes a finished edge around beds, similar to an edge made with a spade.

"We started offering this option because a lot of our landscaping customers want to use the edger around existing flower beds and bushes," says Will Haselbauer, regional sales manager for Turfco. "There are a lot of jobs you can use it for, depending on what blade you're using."

Along with the 30-degree tree ring blade, Turfco also offers a right angle blade, for edging and installation around flowerbeds and baseball diamonds; a v-trencher, for removal of turf along hard/paved surfaces such as sidewalks and curbs; the circular blade, which cuts through overgrowth a rotary can't handle and a sod cutter, which cuts a 3-inch strip of sod and is useful for installing concrete or wood edging.

The Edge-R-Rite II Edger features a Honda 4-horsepower engine and an oscillating blade, which allows the edger to cut without throwing debris. **L&L**



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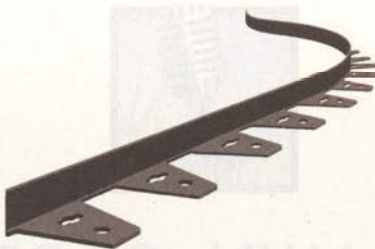
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Surefootedging.com



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For more information: Permaloc.com

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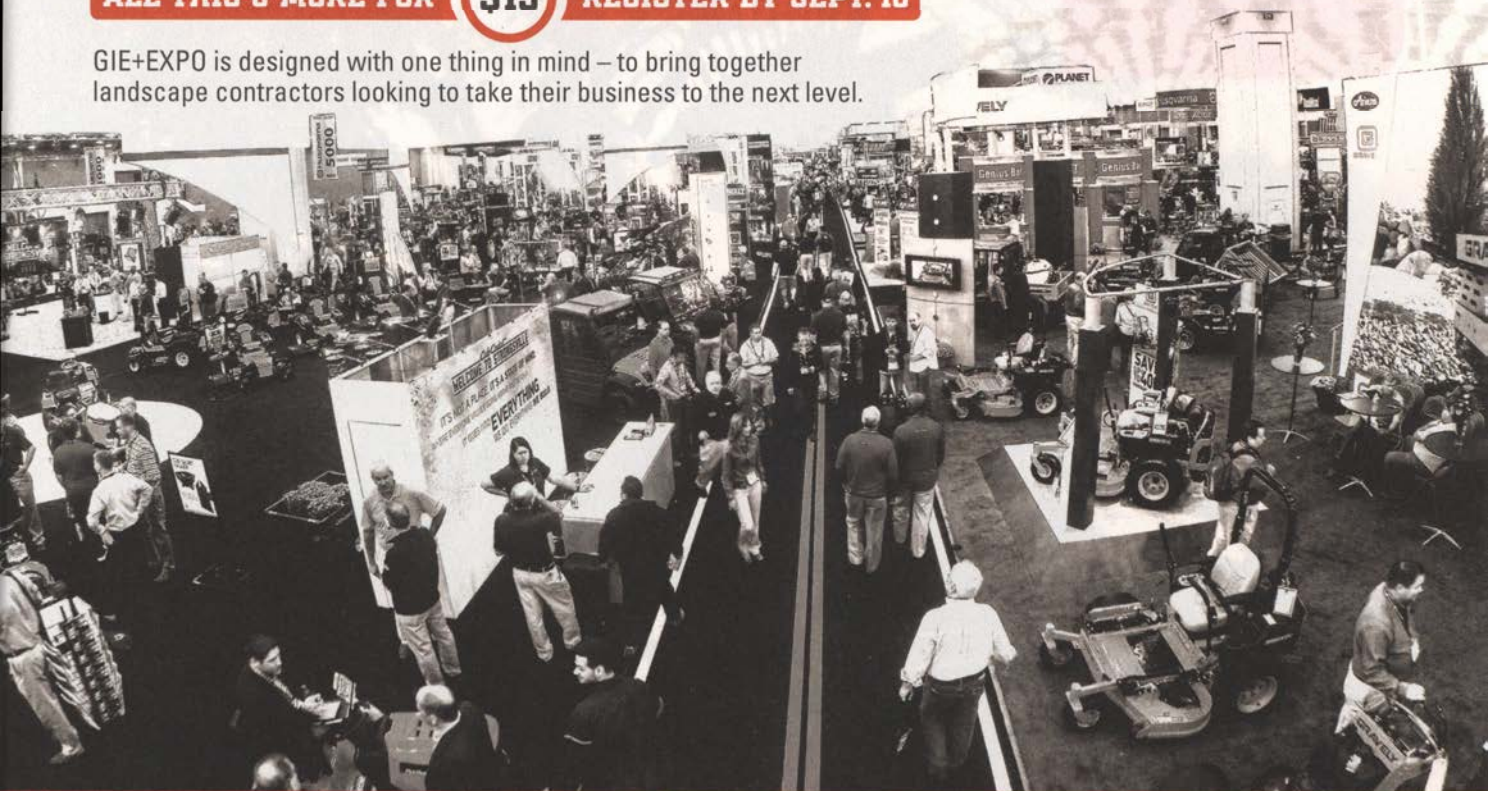
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THE BEST DEFENSE

DIVERSIFYING YOUR CONTRACT PORTFOLIO CAN MINIMIZE THE RISK OF A TRICKY WINTER. | 88

Greenwise Organic Lawn Care uses its shoveling muscles
for a more eco-friendly approach. | 92

Bring on the snow with these new products. | 98

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Limit risk with diversification

BY MIKE CALLAHAN

Snow and ice removal companies that are able to diversify their contracts stand out in their markets, and this is true in my own market, Rochester, N.Y.

I work each year to procure a well-rounded portfolio including the following contracts: prepaid with unlimited trips, prepaid retainers (set number of visits with per trip fee thereafter) and per push contracts (with a minimum trip requirement).

Last season's portfolio includes 575 residential prepaid

contracts and 70 commercial contracts, which generated \$400,000 in snow revenue. Our business model requires residential customers to pre-pay in full without a discount for the snow season.

This diversification has allowed me to cover fixed and variable costs throughout the year as well as remain liquid and create



Mike
CALLAHAN

a predictable net profit margin regardless of snowfall.

The prepaid residential contracts allow for enough cash to support payroll for large storms, negotiate the best price on rock salt and they provide ample cash flow to accommodate for slower paying commercial clients. These contracts also guarantee profit in the event of a light winter. My main source of profit exists within my commercial contracts.

To plan for each year, I use the historical snowfall averages, job costing data and average plow runs data from the northeast region. By using these averages and tracking production rates for our equipment, I have been

able to create predictability in our profit margins.

I continue to analyze the percentages of each type of contract as the overhead recovery model changes as the company grows. It is critical to adjust these percentages to achieve profit goals.

HIRING. Managing a diverse portfolio means managing multiple employees and subcontractors. Unfortunately, the seemingly endless winter led to higher than usual burnout rates and therefore, turnover rates.

I attempted to combat this issue by providing training, standardized processes and procedures, and an incentivized pay

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structure. Instituting a standard training model of online videos and on-the-job training allowed for quick and predictable onboarding.

Having clearly documented job descriptions, including a list of responsibilities and clear expectations, was crucial to success.

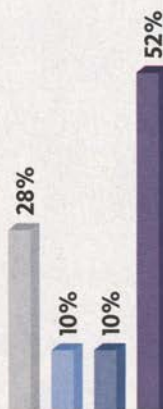
Furthermore, I offered a one-time incentive payment tendered at the season's end in addition to weekly pay for those who persisted through the season.

Employees earned this incentive payment, which averaged approximately an extra dollar per hour of pay, if they worked for the duration of the season.

Subcontractors' first payment

CALLAHAN'S LAWN CARE & PROPERTY MAINTENANCE PORTFOLIO PERCENTAGES IN 2014-15

- Prepaid Residential Contracts
- Unlimited Commercial Contracts
- Per Push Commercial Contracts
- Commercial Contracts (17-Trip Retainer and Per Trip Overage)



installment for the year was held by the company until the end of the season to ensure commitment for the season.

SUPPLIES. The biggest challenge this season was ensuring ample rock salt and bagged ice melt

during a declared salt shortage. It was necessary to have enough liquid cash on hand to pre-purchase all bagged ice melt prior to the start of the season.

Prepaid contracts helped offset these costs. These contracts specifically included a clause to

guard against the increase in salt prices. Contrary to popular belief, this practice does not hinder acquisition of contracts as we solidified 575 accounts prior to the season and had a waiting list of approximately 450 accounts.

Ultimately, I had to allocate a large enough rock salt allotment to last the whole season.

When salt supplies started to dwindle, I made sure to expand and stock our salt bins to secure enough rock salt at the budgeted price to finish the season. **L&L**

The author is owner of Callahan Lawn Care and Property Maintenance. He has been in the snow business for more than 15 years.

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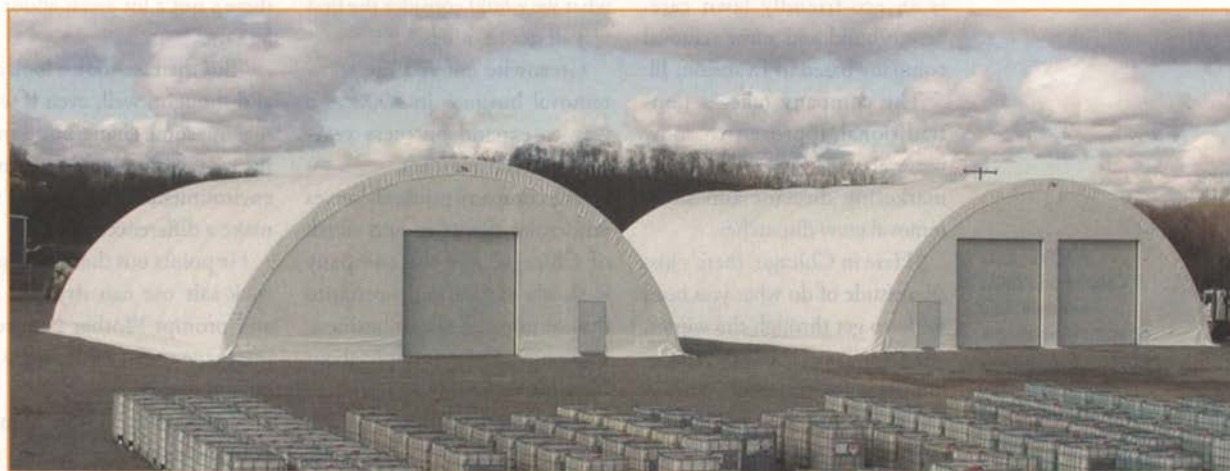
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A GREEN AND WHITE MIXTURE

Greenwise Organic Lawn Care uses a non-traditional approach to its snow removal services.

BY HOLLY HAMMERSMITH



Chicago winters are harsh. Snowfall is frequent and winds off of Lake Michigan add an extra chill to the air. But Greenwise Organic Lawn Care has found a way to add a touch of “green” to even the whitest winter day.

Greenwise, founded in 2006, is an eco-friendly lawn care, design/build and snow removal company based in Evanston, Ill.

The company takes a non-traditional approach to snow removal, says Michael Kormanik, marketing director and snow removal crew dispatcher.

“Here in Chicago, there’s just an attitude of do what you need to do to get through the winter, and then worry about the consequences later,” he says.

“So you just see the road salt getting dumped on everything, just landscapes getting torn up by plows and hardscapes getting

damaged, and it just wasn’t really what we would consider the best way of doing things.”

Greenwise entered the snow removal business in 2008 as a way to expand business year-round in the snowbelt.

The company primarily serves residential clients in and north of Chicago, but the company is slowly expanding more into the commercial side of business. Right now, business is split about 70 percent residential and 30 percent commercial.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE. Greenwise trucks use biodiesel fuel,

which is a renewable fuel source. Additionally, they do not use traditional rock salt which, while cheap, can damage lawns, sidewalks and tender pet paws.

“In the snow removal business, because it’s more of an emergency service, traditionally, there’s not a lot green about it,” he says.

“But then we took a look at it and thought, well, even if we’re making some changes and making it more sustainable and more environmentally friendly, it will make a difference.”

He points out that traditional rock salt use can dry out soil and prompt Mother Nature to intervene and try to remedy the situation.

Her remedy? Often dandelions, which are a natural soil aerator – but are often considered weeds.

ABOVE: Jose Caballero is snow removal field operations manager at Greenwise Organic Lawn Care. The company began offering snow removal services in 2008 as a way to become a year-round business.



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COMPANY PROFILE

Instead, Greenwise uses a more environmentally friendly deicer product. Crews will shovel snow as much as possible rather than use snow blowers. When teams are more attentive when removing snow, less deicer is needed.

FLEXIBLE SERVICE PLANS. Some clients only want snow removal when there is a lot of snowfall.

They often opt for a 10-pass package. If it snows a little and they do not want the crews

out, they can call and alert Greenwise not to come to their residence.

Other clients do not want to deal with any snow removal on their own – no matter how little – and pay a flat fee for a season-long pass, which offers unlimited snow removal.

“Any time we come out and there’s more than an inch of snow, we do the clearing,” Kormanik says. “They pay a flat fee, and we come out as often as needed.”

Last season, there were 23 incidents in which more than an inch of snow fell. And most incidents were higher, around 3 to 4 inches.

“That was definitely a money saver for folks last year,” he says.

BUILDING A CLIENT LIST. Many of the Greenwise snow removal clients are the same

ORGANIC DIFFERENCE, SAME PRICE

After some initial trial and error, managers at Greenwise Organic Lawn Care determined they could operate a green snow removal service – and at a profit.

Today, snow removal makes up 11 percent of the company’s \$2.3 million in annual revenue says Michael Kormanik, marketing director and snow removal crew dispatcher.

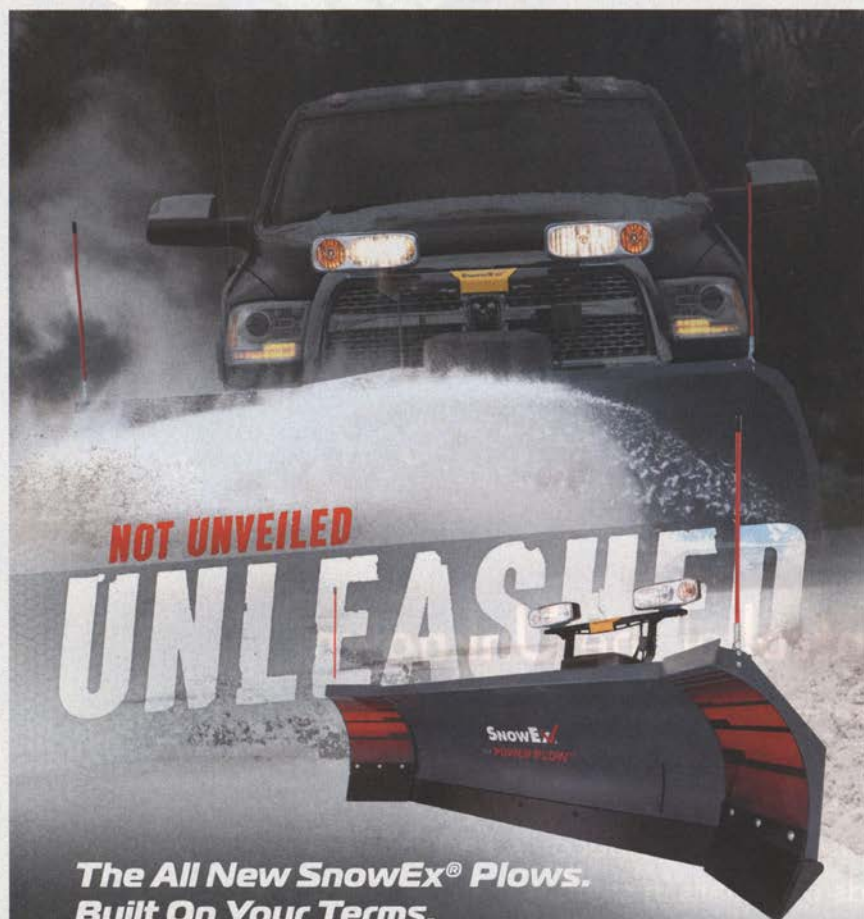
“Even with organic lawn care, you don’t need to cut corners to still make a profit, and you don’t need to do things irresponsibly,” he says. “We’re growing every year.”

Labor-wise, Kormanik says the company uses more manual labor to remove snow than traditional companies. However, these employees mostly work year-round.

About 30 employees of the company’s 50 make up the snow crew at Greenwise – which operates routes in a strategic and cost-effective manner.

Rock salt is cheaper than the de-icer product Greenwise uses, but the company uses far less product. In the end the cost evens out, Kormanik says. Avoiding the use of heavy equipment means there is less chance for damage and repair to a property or landscape.

“It’s almost along the lines of the measure twice and cut once sort of the thing. If you do it right the first time, you’re saving money right there,” he says.



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clients that hire the company for lawn care or design/build work, Kormanik says.

Additionally, maintaining a high rating on Angie's List has been a positive for promoting the company, as have client referrals netting

customers a \$50 credit in "green bucks" toward a future service. The company also offers one free visit for clients who pre-pay for services before November 1.

On the business side, Greenwise can

better manage cash flow, and plan ahead for the necessary supplies, equipment and manpower needed for the upcoming snow removal season.

"We went into the summer (last year) knowing that we had snow clients already signed up and committed, and then we start in the early fall just reminding people that, as much as you don't want to think about it, you live in Chicago, and there's going to be a winter," he says.

OPEN COMMUNICATION. The snow removal service at Greenwise mirrors its customer service philosophy for lawn care, where communication is paramount.

"One of the reasons why people would come to us if they weren't a client already was they had a bad experience with the service they got from other snow removal companies, and a lot of that was really just the communication," Kormanik says.

"They didn't know if they were a client still. Sometimes they'd sign up, and they would never hear from the snow company."

Greenwise offers service alerts via email to clients to let them know the snow routes are activating soon and when they can expect to receive service.

Another alert tells them crews have left the building. Email alerts are also sent out in advance of the arrival of a front of inclement weather.

The company also has a snow removal phone number that is answered 24/7 during a snow event. Lastly, being flexible helps keep clients satisfied, he adds. Kormanik says they have also personalized their service at Greenwise.

If a client is nine-months pregnant and needs to go somewhere, the company will work with the client to try and prioritize service. Similarly, service may be prioritized for a church or pastor on a Sunday morning.

"Here in Chicago, when it snows, it snows, and it's not just a little ice on the ground," he says. "It locks you in, and people have to be places." **L&L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

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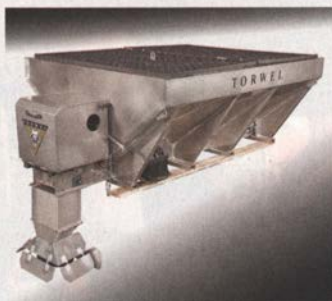
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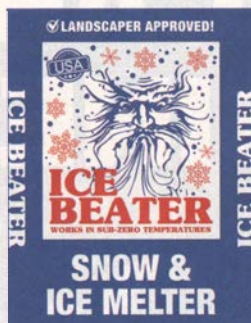


ACE TORWEL'S 10-FOOT ECONOMIZER

The pitch: ACE Torwel's snow and ice management division has a 10-foot Economizer spreader for long bed trucks.

- The Economizer V-box spreaders are lightweight and feature 304 stainless steel construction.
- The new 10-foot Economizer mechanical drive unit is powered by a 9 hp Honda gas engine with an in-cab panel control operating electric start, choke and throttle flow speed.
- The 10-foot Economizer second power option is with truck PTO hydraulics (hydra-spread) and has a quiet dual hydraulic drive system all controlled in-cab.

For more information:
Acetorwel.com



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The pitch: Brody's Ice Beater is sized to fit broadcast and handheld spreaders.

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- Ice Beater is colored light blue to help you see where it has been spread.

For more information: Brodychemical.com

PRO-TECH BUCKET CLAMP

The pitch: The Bucket Clamp is a new custom connection option for the Sno Pusher product line.

- This new connection eliminates chains, shackles and loose ratchet binders that can be difficult to maintain.
- It decreases the average connection time and gives operators a new level of control when clearing snow.
- It replaces the post-style connection found on standard rubber edge loader and backhoe models. The customer simply ratchets the clamp's jaws to the bucket.

For more information: Snopusher.com



SNOWEX AUTOMATIXX

The pitch: The Automatixx power-assisted attachment system is a feature standard on the new line of SnowEx truck-mounted plows.

- The attachment system uses a simple process, which can be completed entirely from the driver's side of the vehicle.
- The system includes removable receiver brackets, which provide good ground clearance when the plows are detached from the truck.
- The Automatixx attachment system is found on SnowEx POWER PLOW, SPEEDWING, Heavy-Duty, Regular-Duty and Light-Duty snowplow models.

For more information: Snowexproducts.com



STEINER SNOW BLOWER ATTACHMENT

The pitch: The Steiner snow blower attachment has the power to clear snow from sidewalks, driveways and lots.

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For more information: Steinerturf.com

State of the ASCA

BY KEVIN GILBRIDE

The mission of the Accredited Snow Contractors Association (ASCA) is to establish programs for snow and ice management companies to influence those who affect this industry. Those outside influences include the insurance world, where rising premiums make it difficult to do business in our industry, legislative bodies, where poor laws allow for crazy insurance claims that raise premiums, and property owners and property man-

agers, who are our customers and cannot differentiate (or don't care to) between professional snow and ice management companies and those that are not professional.

To accomplish this goal, the first thing we needed to do was create a way for snow and ice management companies to prove



Kevin
GILBRIDE

they had taken their industry back, taken control of their own destinies and proved they were controlling the risks they should be controlling.

This is the first of the four pillars we founded the ASCA on. It was the creation of the first-ever set of written industry standards – the ASCA's Industry Standards, which earned accreditation by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

The second accomplishment and pillar was the creation of ASCA Certified education (ASCA-C). This education proves to the outside world that you and your employees have been educated on the Industry Standards

and the topic of risk management in general. To date, more than 300 individuals have become ASCA-C and the number is growing on a weekly basis.

The third pillar was creating a quality management system that is third-party verified to prove not only that you were educated on the Industry Standards, but that you implemented them into your business model. For this, we worked with ANSI again, through a partnership they have called the ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB). Through ANAB we used the ISO 9001 Quality management System and added the customized snow industry requirements.

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The snow portion is called SN9001. This quality management system proves that you have the processes and procedures to ensure service quality and that you have implemented the industry standards into your business. ISO9001 and SN9001 are the ultimate proof that you are managing risk in your business and that you are doing things

to protect yourself, your company and your clients. In the event of a claim against you, you can provide the insurance company the information needed to defend you.

At this time, 10 companies have earned their ISO9001 and SN9001 certifications. However, there are dozens more actively working through the process. Those that have taken on this process have found that they are already 80-95 percent of the way to compliance when they start.

There is an assumption that this is overly complicated, but many contractors have found they are already doing most of what is needed to comply. These first three pillars are about the snow and ice management industry taking control of its own destiny.

The first sign that this was working came last August when an A-rated insurance carrier began providing credits on its snow insurance policies to companies that were ASCA-C and even larger credits for ISO and SN 9001 companies.

The fourth pillar is working toward positive legislative change. To influence elected officials to enact legislation to protect this industry, we have been working diligently at the federal level to support tort reform and reduce frivolous lawsuits. We are not the only professional organization supporting this.

As a matter of fact, organizations across the country, including the NFIB, actively support this legislation. At this time, it is in committee at the House of Representatives and beginning to move. We are working at the state level to enact change there as well.

We are seeing the industry take advantage of our work to get the insurance world and legislative bodies to recognize snow contractors for responsible business practices and an elite level of professionalism. To be more effective we need more of you involved in representing your industry.

As we continue our quest to influence legislative bodies on the state and federal levels, the more professional snow and ice managers involved, the better our chances of achieving success. **L&L**

The author is executive director of ASCA.



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INSURANCE

Liability Insurance For Your Work

Most insurers will not provide coverage for damaged lawns as a result of **your work** as defined in all standard General Liability policies. If your tech is negligent, the product applied is improperly mixed or agitated, a rogue employee intentionally damages the yards, or perhaps the lawn was not properly diagnosed, there is no coverage for the damage done to the customer's lawn as a result of **your work**. Some insurers call this the business risk exclusion.



Other common endorsements that have been added to General Liability policies in the past such as the Pesticide-Herbicide Applicators endorsement and various forms of Contractors Limited Worksite Pollution endorsements will not cover damages to your customer's lawns based on the issues discussed above and damages caused as a result of **your work**.

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ATTENTION DESIGN/BUILD CONTRACTORS!

Lawn & Landscape is looking for the best design/build companies in the industry to submit the best work they've done in the 7 different categories below. All we need are a few photos along with some information on why you are submitting this project for the particular section. Once we've gathered all the entries, the L&L team will select which ones will be featured in Lawn & Landscape magazine. The winner from each section will receive a \$25 gift card to Lowe's.

THE CATEGORIES ARE:

1. Front door/entryway
2. Patio (no pool)
3. Pool
4. Driveway
5. Outdoor kitchen
6. Rain garden
7. Xeriscape

HOW TO ENTER:

Send two to three high resolution photos (7X5 or bigger at 300 DPI) and 300-400 words describing your project with details like: Why you chose to submit it, challenges on the project and how you overcame them, how long the project took, etc.



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TIPS FROM THE TOP

Interviewed by KATE SPIRGEN

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HARVEY MASSEY

CHAIRMAN AND CEO, MASSEY SERVICES

I've been in the business over 50 years. I went to work in the pest management industry.

I had thought initially about eventually getting out of the lawn business, but I was \$4 million in debt with two kids in college and one going into high school. I decided I couldn't afford to lose the revenue and whatever profitability existed.

So I decided to start managing it and really spending some time with it and as a result, I liked it. I liked the business; I understood more about it and as a result of that we decided to stay in it and make an investment in it.

By and large we were maintaining and decided to take an approach with our whole

LOCATION

Orlando, Fla.

TOP 100 RANKING

18

2014 REVENUE

\$64.1 million

lawn care business – try to figure out ways to environmentally and economically reduce the consumption of water and the waste of water on the maintenance and irrigation of landscapes.

We've had 30 consecutive years of increased

profitable revenue. We've never had a year when we've been down. This recession was the deepest, but this was the third one that we've gone through in 30 years.

I made a talk to an MBA graduating class at Rollins College and I said, "You can't manage what you don't know." So I guess the question is: What is it you need to know? And I told them the three things you must know in every business. You must know why people buy

from you. Two, you must know why people don't buy from you. And three, you must know when people do buy from you, why do they cancel?

When a young banker asked me about retiring I said, "And doing what?" He just said, "Well anything you want to do." And I said, "Well, hell, I do that now."

We've never contributed less than 50 cents on a dollar to our 401(K) program and we've done that for 25 consecutive years. I said to our employees, "What I want everybody to clearly understand is we have the ability to do this and we do this not because of what you do, but how well you do it."

We don't have a lot of turnover in our company. We've just got people who have been with us a long time so what I'm most proud of, and what I get most of the compliments about our business, is our people.

I don't spend a lot of time looking back. I really don't. And I've made a lot of mistakes. None have been fatal – factually, financially, business-wise or personally. I've been married to the same lady close to 52 years.

The best advice I got was this: There never has been, isn't today and never will be, a business model that's permanent. The market never stops changing. The consumer never stops changing. And you never stop asking yourself, "who are my customers, where are my customers and what is it that they want, need and expect?" Your job is to make those transitions and modifications and alterations to deliver that. I think that's the reason we've grown for 30 years. We embrace change.

I believe we're going to continue to grow and we're going to continue to grow profitably. That's the confidence that I have in our people, in our business and the model that we operate from. The anticipated challenges would be to some extent the unpredictability of the economy. **L&L**

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