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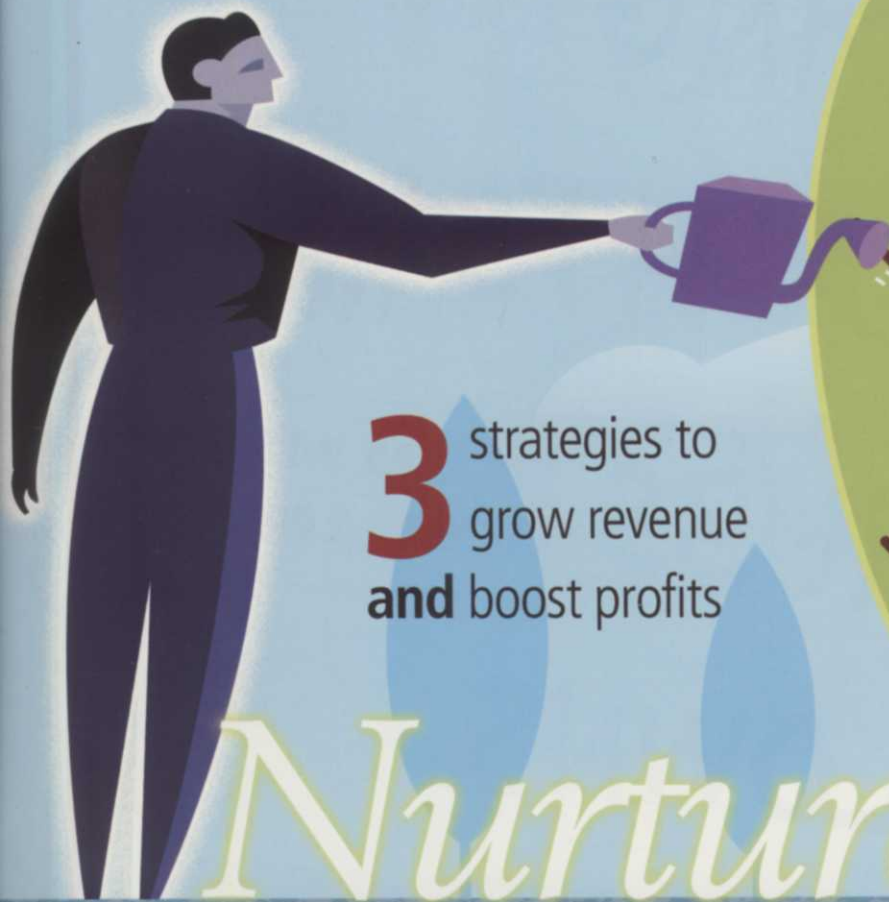
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Circle No. 103

# Landscape MANAGEMENT

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## ■ Outsourcing for survival

Veteran grounds manager Milton "Dusty" Hallman, CGM, tells when it's best to let go

■ **Turfgrass: new stuff**  
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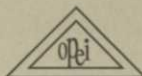
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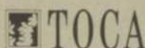
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## on the record

BY RON HALL / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

# Seasonals deserve basic dignities, too

**I** don't want to live in the same neighborhood with a house lodging 26 seasonal laborers. You probably don't either.

Authorities removed the men from a single house in a Midwestern city this past July 31, said newspaper reports there.

They also removed 90 other Mexican men living in seven nearby houses. The 120 men work for a landscape company.

### This is reality

Authorities condemned the houses (seven of the houses were reportedly owned by the landscape company and the eighth was being leased) and ordered the workers' employer to fix them up before they would allow the workers to return, the newspaper reported.

A spokesman for the company told the newspaper that no more than 20 workers lived in any of the houses at one time. His company, he said, had tried to make another 12 houses available to the seasonal workers, but zoning laws prevented that.

The company moved its laborers into two- and three-bedroom apartments with no more than two men to a bedroom. The apartments cost \$700 a month each. The newspaper article said the workers paid the company \$30 per week for lodging, and the company paid the difference.

### Not so clear-cut

It would be easy to accuse the landscape company of taking advantage of its employees. However, few issues — and particularly this one — are as clear-cut as they seem at first. Foreign-born seasonal workers are

one of the realities of U.S. industry. Landscape companies, indeed many segments of the U.S. economy, need this source of manpower.

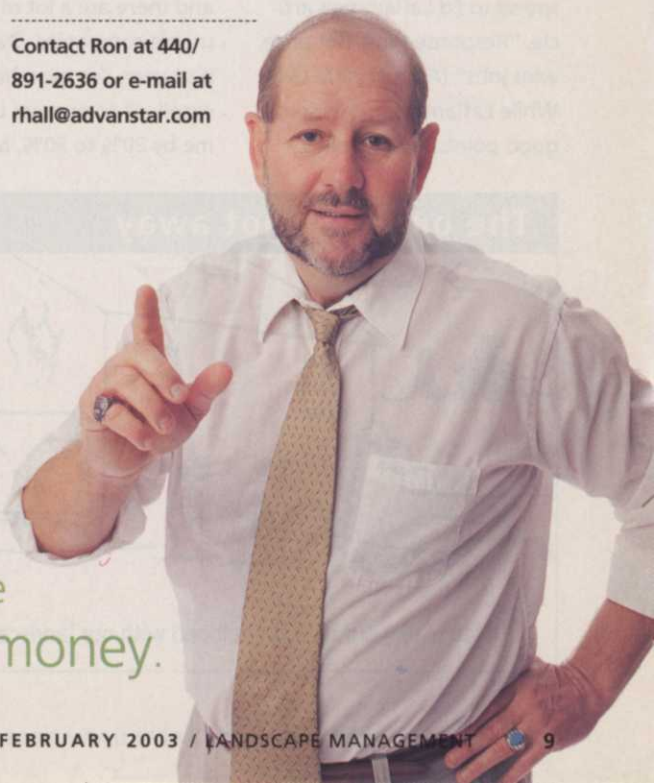
These workers journey north for one reason — to earn money. Most return to their homes in Mexico or elsewhere to be with their families at season's end. Their families count on the money they bring with them.

Company owners greatly depend on these workers, and they count on many of them to return each spring. Few would risk losing hard-working employees in mid-season by making conditions intolerable for them.

Even so, U.S. companies employing these men to work eight to 10 hours a day, often six days a week, are responsible beyond job and safety training. That includes providing them with basic health care and also with clean lodging in neighborhoods close to grocery stores, laundromats and public transportation.

Nobody expects employers to "baby-sit" these men, but it's to everybody's advantage that they instruct them about U.S. customs as well.

Contact Ron at 440/  
891-2636 or e-mail at  
rhall@advanstar.com



Hispanic workers, many leaving their families for eight months, make the journey north for one reason — to earn money.

# let's hear it

YOUR OPINIONS, COMMENTS, & QUOTES

## Improve safety, too

Bruce Wilson's "Best Practices" article on training (Oct. 2002 *LM*) was helpful, especially where he pinpoints what training should do: improve efficiency, improve quality and prepare a person for promotion. That gives you a standard by which to measure the efficacy of your training. I would, however, add "improve safety" as that is so often what we're training our employees to do.

— Dave Cragoe  
Cragoe Pest Services, Inc.  
Thousand Oaks, CA

## Being first counts for nothing

Your publication definitely sets the industry standards, and I've enjoyed it for the last several years. But I have to respond to Ed Laflamme's article, "Response time, not price, wins jobs" (August 2002 *LM*). While Laflamme makes some good points, his overall

scheme is dead wrong. I don't know about the rest of the country, but in our area (Oakland County, MI), being first counts for nothing.

Unfortunately, the only item that matters in today's economy is price. Unless you're working on referrals, price is king. If you're first with the bid, you have only set the price for the next company to undercut it.

In the past year, we've really seen changes in our area. We used to receive jobs based on the fact that we were the most professional company around. We had office managers that handled the phones, the most advanced design programs, professional bids and extensive reference lists.

We live in an area where there's a big market for high-end residential landscaping and there are a lot of reputable companies. Over the past year, I've even had some excellent companies underbid me by 20% to 30%, and it

seems like the majority of clients we've made appointments with this year all want to cut corners.

I get tired of reading articles where everyone thinks they have "the system" to getting new business. The reality of today's economy is, how much can I get for the lowest price?

— Joe Holder, President  
Classic Landscape Design, Inc.  
Rochester Hills, MI

## Attitude determines altitude

After reading Ed Laflamme's article on response time, I'm glad someone agrees with me. I've been beating that drum in my community for some time.

I work for a municipality, and I'm often faced with a situation where the lowest bid wins. Well, it's not price that determines the best vendor/contractor for me in most cases. It's attitude that determines altitude. Are we hungry for the business, hungry enough to be ready to work? Hungry enough to respond to the mundane jobs as fast as we would the classy, high-profile, more lucrative jobs?

I don't place bids, but I receive many. I look for the guy who knows what he's talking about and pays attention to what I need, even if what I said isn't in their vernacular. I also look for someone who doesn't try to baffle me with baloney, who

gives me options and is ready to get busy.

I'm often under the gun to get projects done, and I want a contractor who understands my priorities. If he doesn't show up on time or ready to work, he's history!

— Marsha Doyle, Director  
Parks & Recreation Department  
Lamar, MO

## Don't limit growth

I enjoyed reading Mike Rorie's article on team building (July 2002 *LM*), but I only agree in part with his assertion that a landscape company should generate 70% to 80% of its revenues from its core business.

This is a great idea to help focus your company and target your efforts on your strengths, but this focus may limit growth and venturing into new business development. A company that only focuses on its core may be unwilling to allocate resources into new services or expand into new markets. In turn, they may never capture market share from competitors or increase revenue from services outside the core.

Satisfying your customers and exploring the idea of adding or eliminating services should also be a core business practice.

— Nick A. Fabrizio, Ph.D.  
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**JOHN DEERE**

# inside the owner's head

BY RON HALL / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

## Family first, business second

**M**ark and Jennifer Clark are starting their third year as owners of Clark Landscape Group, Inc. They're also expecting their third child in April. Mark says that 2003 will be challenging. That goes for the landscape business, too.

Clark Landscape targets its landscape management services mostly in Research Triangle Park/Chapel Hill, NC, an area with an incredible concentration of high-end commercial, industrial, retail and residential properties. That region of the state has more than its share of excellent landscape service providers, too.

While the demand for landscape services, particularly maintenance, remains high there, competition for properties is starting to get brutal.

"There's a tremendous amount of price pressure in the marketplace," admits Mark.

### People come first

That's one reason, but not the only one, why Clark says he is building his company from the bottom up. He's embarked on an ambitious program to train his team, eight employees plus his wife and himself. "It's better for us to grow our people before we concentrate on growing sales," Clark says.

Clark says he learned that lesson after working in a variety of landscape-related positions.

He grew up and worked on his family's nursery/landscape business in the mountains of North Carolina and helped pay for his studies at North Carolina State University (where he met his wife) by working on a grounds crew. He followed that with six

years at Bland Landscape ("one of the best contractors in the state") and stints as the Southeast sales rep for The Dutch Bulb Company and managing a branch for a national landscape company.

### Time to give it a go

With that kind of experience, Clark and his wife started their own business. Mark manages and sells; Jennifer, with her business training, handles administration.

"I'm a conservative person," admits Clark. "We run a lean and mean operation with minimum overhead. I've seen how overhead can kill a business."

Clark says he's not particularly interested in growing into a much larger company. Not yet anyway. Profits are what he seeks.

The biggest challenge to his company? "Not letting my mouth override my rear end," says Clark — learning to say "no" to

"We don't want to outgrow our personnel, and we have to stay on top of our numbers."

— Mark Clark

work that doesn't fit his company's goals. "We cannot be everything to everybody," he says. "We don't want to outgrow our personnel, and we have to stay on top of our numbers."

What's the most important lesson he's learned so far in his varied Green Industry career? Actually, there are two, says Clark.

"Our involvement with the Owners' Network and with ALCA has allowed us to meet people who share valuable infor-



## Clark Landscape Group

### ▶ AT A GLANCE

**Clark Landscape Group, Inc.**  
Monroe, NC

**Owners:** Mark & Jennifer Clark

**Year founded:** 1999

**2002 gross revenue:** \$700,000

**Employees:** 10

**Primary service:** Commercial maintenance

mation with us," he says. "Everybody should take advantage of resources like these. It's like having an informal board of directors."

On a more personal front, he says he's determined to spend more time with his family.

"While I was working for other people, sometimes my career came before my family," he says. "That's not a mistake I want to make again."

— Clark Landscape Group participates in The Owners' Network, a program created by JP Horizons, Inc. Visit the Web site [www.owners1.com](http://www.owners1.com) or call 877/574-5267.

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No, you don't have to provide every employee with a script to memorize or drill them on the intricacies of making cold calls. But you should begin the process of convincing everyone on your team that their livelihoods and careers, including yours, are tied to sales. Get this message across now spring production explodes.

Start by insisting that each employee become familiar with the features that set your company apart from the competition. Every employee must know and be able to describe the services your company provides — all of them — and how each service benefits customers.

### Communicate with customers

Keep in mind that your field technicians have the most contact with your customers, meaning they also have the greatest opportunity to boost sales. But too often they're so focused on providing service that they run away from the extra sales they could be generating by recommending improvements or extra services to property owners.

Encourage your technicians to take an extra 30 seconds to go up to a customer's door, ring the bell and let the customer know of the service that's been completed. If nobody's home, have them leave a short, friendly note. They can write it on the invoice or on a piece of company literature. You'll be surprised how much a note like that is appreciated.

Here are some tips to get the process going:

- 1 As the owner, rethink the way you think about sales. Share responsibility with the rest of your employees. They should be aware that their careers are dependent upon sales, too.
- 2 Educate all of your employees on your company's key selling points, such as the experience of your staff, your program, your equipment, or your guarantee.
- 3 Train on rainy days. Do some role playing. Have a technician or office person take the role of a customer and another the role of a salesperson. Do the same thing with a complaint. Have some fun with it.
- 4 Praise people who have good attitudes and retrain or remove those who don't.
- 5 Keep score. If you have several people out making sales, regularly update the results on a big board.
- 6 Reward winners. Money is a motivator, but there are other ways to reward a successful sales effort. Competition is a great motivator.
- 7 Don't forget the person who answers the telephone at your company. Empower them with information to turn complaints into something positive with statements such as, "It sounds like you have an insect (crabgrass, etc.) problem. We'll have a technician come out and take a look."

Selling is convincing customers that your company is better and different than your competition.

Remember, if you're in the lawn care business, you have to be in the sales business, too. If you don't focus on sales, you're not going to have any lawns to take care of or any customers to service.

— The author is a regional director with Lawn Doctor, Inc. He can be reached at [davidnewman@lawndoctor.com](mailto:davidnewman@lawndoctor.com).





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# industry almanac

NEWS YOU CAN USE

## Deere acquires The Treehouse

ALPHARETTA, GA — John Deere Landscapes ([www.johndeerelandscapes.com](http://www.johndeerelandscapes.com)) purchased all 10 locations of The Treehouse, a major Florida distributor of trees and nursery stock. John Deere Landscapes now has 40 branches in Florida and more than 250 locations throughout the United States and Canada.

## The Pattie Group expands

RUSSELL, OH — The Pattie Group's 35th year in business will see the addition of a third location. Long a fixture in northeastern Ohio, the award-winning company announced that it's opening a location in Avon, OH, to better serve Cleveland's growing western suburbs. For more information visit [www.pattiegroup.com](http://www.pattiegroup.com).

## Aquascape Designs in retail

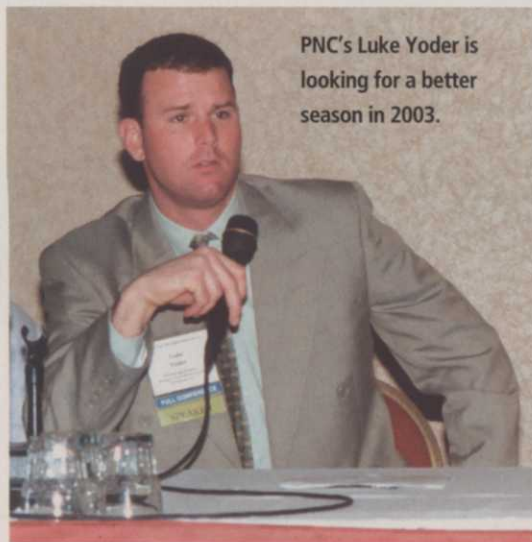
BATAVIA, IL — Aquascape Designs, Inc. ([www.aquasapedesigns.com](http://www.aquasapedesigns.com)) purchased Water Creations, Inc., Des Moines, IA, which manufactures the NurseryPro line of pond equipment sold to consumers through retail outlets.

## BASF Weed Guide coming

Do you or your techs need help in identifying weeds? The March issue of *Landscape Management* will contain a 24-page guide that will help you manage weeds.

[CLIPPINGS]

## Tragedy and recovery at PNC



PNC's Luke Yoder is looking for a better season in 2003.

BY RON HALL

SAN ANTONIO, TX — Keep everything in perspective. When talented young grounds pro Luke Yoder looks back on the 2002 season, that's the lesson he'll remember.

Yoder, head groundskeeper for the Pittsburgh Pirates at new PNC Park, was one of five Major League-level turf pros sharing their biggest job challenges this past season. Their presentation kicked off the 14th annual Sports Turf Managers Conference here, Thursday, Jan. 16.

Joining Yoder on what turned out to be a fascinating question-and-answer session were: Eric Hansen, L.A. Dodger Stadium; Ross Kurcab, CSFM, Invesco Field at Mile High, Denver; Jay Warnick, CSFM, Seattle Seahawks; and Mark Clay, SMG, Jacksonville Jaguars.

While some of the challenges were predictable to anyone who manages turfgrass fields — battling unfavorable weather, field overuse, difficulty transitioning ryegrass from bermudagrass — the audience of 600 men and women learned of a tragedy beyond the scope of most of their experiences. That was the tragic death of two popular

grounds crew members on the eve of baseball's opening day.

### Tragedy strikes

The tragedy happened in Pittsburgh, literally in the shadow of the city's beautiful new PNC. The driver of an SUV ran a red light and struck a vehicle killing two of Yoder's crew members as they were coming to work the day before the Pirates opened the 2002 season.

"Suddenly, something that was so important five minutes earlier took a backseat," said Yoder. "It caused all of us to look

at things a little differently — like doing the best that we could do on our jobs without taking our jobs home with us every night."

The Pirates grounds crew dedicated the 2002 season to their popular coworkers. And, as it turned out, it was a season that required an incredible amount of cooperation among crew members, a union group that Yoder inherited with the opening of PNC in April 2001.

While Yoder admitted he was apprehensive about managing a Teamster union crew (he and his two assistants are the three youngest members of the grounds team), his uncertainty turned to respect. He said the grounds crew, many of whom had been on the job for 10 years or more, embraced the responsibilities associated with maintaining the new sand-based baseball field.

It was a good thing they did, said Yoder. The unseasonably cold and wet spring played havoc with the first quarter of the season, causing the Pirates to suffer 22 home rain delays and his crew to tarp the field on 67 different occasions during the season.



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## NY group builds united front

BY RON HALL

The New York Alliance for Environmental Concerns (NYAFEC) is a new organization representing the Green Industry in the ongoing legislative and regulatory tug-of-war for reasonable pesticide laws in the Empire State.

NYAFEC is gearing up to respond to activist pressure on lawmakers to outlaw or severely restrict pesticide use for "aesthetic" reasons. New York's anti-pesticide groups, not satisfied with the compromise 48-hour notification law approved

in 2000, are also lobbying to allow municipalities to write their own pesticide legislation, an echo of what is happening in Canada's Quebec Province.

With a \$2 billion '03 budget shortfall and a \$10 billion deficit in '04, it's not clear how much attention lawmakers will pay to pesticide legislation. If past sessions are an indication, pesticide laws will be on the agenda. The 2002 session saw NY lawmakers look at 80 pesticide-related pieces of legislation, says NYAFEC Treasurer Mike Maffei, a golf course superintendent in Brewster, NY.

As NYAFEC keeps one eye on Albany, it works with the state's 62 counties in response to the 2000 law aimed primarily at the lawn application industry. That law allows each county to decide if they want to enact 48-hour neighbor notification; six have. "We're still very active, primarily in the upstate counties, to stop neighbor notification. The battle has pretty much shifted to the individual counties," says Larry Wilson, Director of NYAFEC. Wilson, who owns and operates Lawrence Landscape Design, Yonkers, says that Responsible Industry



Larry Wilson

for a Sound Environment (RISE) is helping to track the issue through its "County Watch" program.

Some of the organizations supporting NYAFEC, says Wilson, include the New York State Turfgrass Association, the New York State Nursery & Landscape Association, the Metropolitan Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Brooklyn Landscape Gardeners, the New York State Turf and Landscape Association, and others.

To learn more about NYAFEC, e-mail [nyafec@optonline.net](mailto:nyafec@optonline.net).

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## STMA honors best fields

**SAN ANTONIO, TX** — The Sports Turf Managers Association honored its "Best Field" winners for 2002 at its annual conference here in mid-January. They were:

► **College/University Baseball Field of the Year:** *Raymond H. "Hap" Spuhler Field* — George Mason University, Fairfax, VA; Michael W. Sullenberger, Sports Turf Manager

► **High School/Parks Baseball Field of the Year:** *Eagle Park* — Arlington Baptist School, Baltimore, MD; Andrew Gossel, Head/Athletic Field Maintenance

Boys' A.D., P.E. Teacher

► **Professional Baseball Field of the Year:** *Slugger Field* — Home of the Louisville (KY) Bats; Thomas R. Nielsen, Head Sports Turf Manager

► **High School/Parks Softball Field of the Year:** *C. Moore Field* — Putnam City West High School, Oklahoma City, OK; Rick Newville, Coach

► **College/University Softball Field of the Year:** *Pioneer Field* — Texas Woman's University,



Tom Nielsen's Slugger Field, Louisville, KY, is tops in the pros.

► **Parks/High School Soccer Field of the Year:** *Danny Cunniff Park* — Park District of Highland Park, IL; Ted Baker, CSFM, Superintendent of Parks

► **College/University Football Field of the Year:** *Folsom Field* — University of Colorado/Boulder; Jason DePaepe, Athletic Field Manager

Denton, TX; Robert Trevino, Landscape Supervisor

► **College/University Soccer Field of the Year:** *Reeves Field* — American University, Washington, DC; Nick Gammill, CSFM, Sports Turf Manager

► **High School/Parks Football Field of the Year:** *Chapman Field* — Cumberland Valley School District, Mechanicsburg, PA; James L. Koontz, Grounds Supervisor

## People & companies

**Bobcat Company** named **Mike Ryan** President. He succeeds **Jim Sharp**, who recently became president of Ingersoll-Rand's construction equipment business.



Marc Bowers

**Finn Corp.** named **Marc Bowers** Vice President of Marketing, **Mel Love** National Rental Manager, and **Jeff Clouser** Northeast Territory Manager.

**FMC Corp.** hired **Dr. John Long** as Product Development Manager for its Specialty Products Business (SPB) and **Felicia Boone** as Assistant Product Manager. The company promoted **Amy Gabrielian** to Marketing and Software Solutions Business Manager and **Jim Walter** to Marketing and Business Development Manager.



Dusty Sparks

**Yazoo/Kees** and **BlueBird** of the Electrolux family named **Dusty Sparks** Sales Manager.

**Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products** appointed **Howard May** Senior Vice President of Operations.



**BASF** appointed **Jeff Barnes** Biology Project Leader — Fungicides.

**Schiller-Pfeiffer, Inc.**, manufacturer of Mantis and Little Wonder branded landscaping and gardening power equipment, promoted **Steve Christie** to plant manager.

The **Green Industry Expo Board** announced its 2003 slate of officers and directors at its November meeting in Nashville, TN. Serving for the 2003 term are: President **Ken Taylor** (PGMS), Husqvarna Forest & Garden Company,

Charlotte, NC; Vice President **Tom Davis** (ALCA), Bozzuto Landscaping, Laurel, MD; Secretary/Treasurer **Gerald Grossi** (PLCAA), Arborlawn, Lansing, MI; Directors **Roger Braswell** (ALCA), Power-House Equipment Inc., Fort Mill, SC, **Jon Cundiff** (PLCAA), Weed Man, Inc., Lee's Summit, MO, **Mike Dietrich** (PLCAA), LESCO, Inc., Bay Village, OH, **Steve Glover** (ALCA), Symbiot Business Group, Salt Lake City, UT, **Kevin O'Donnell** (PGMS), Villanova University, Villanova, PA, and **George Van Haasteren** (PGMS), Dwight-Englewood School, Englewood, NJ.



# Leadership Jam tour kicks off with a 'whoop!'

BY JASON STAHL

**ST. AUGUSTINE, FL** — Everyone heard it, but only about 35 people knew what it was. A loud noise that shook the World Golf Village Renaissance Resort on the morning of Jan. 28, 2003.

It was first heard at around 5:30 a.m., when the CAT scan crowd rolled out of bed for their pre-dawn jog. Then, it was heard again about an hour later. A loud "Whoop! Whoop!"

Was it a flock of some exotic birds that had somehow found their way into the hotel? The front desk staff must have been scratching their heads. But everyone attending the Leadership Jam knew what it was...because they had caused it.

Just as Jim Paluch had instructed the day before, the Leadership Jam attendees woke up, tugged their ear lobe and shouted, "Whoop! Whoop!"

It was the ultimate compliment to the leader himself, who was on the first leg of the Leadership Jam tour presented by the Associated Landscape Contractors of America, sponsored by Husqvarna, created by JP Horizons, and supported by *Landscape Management*. The whooping will continue in 2003 in Oakland (Feb. 10-11), Dallas (Feb. 28-March 1), Indianapolis (March 3-4), and Providence (March 7-8).

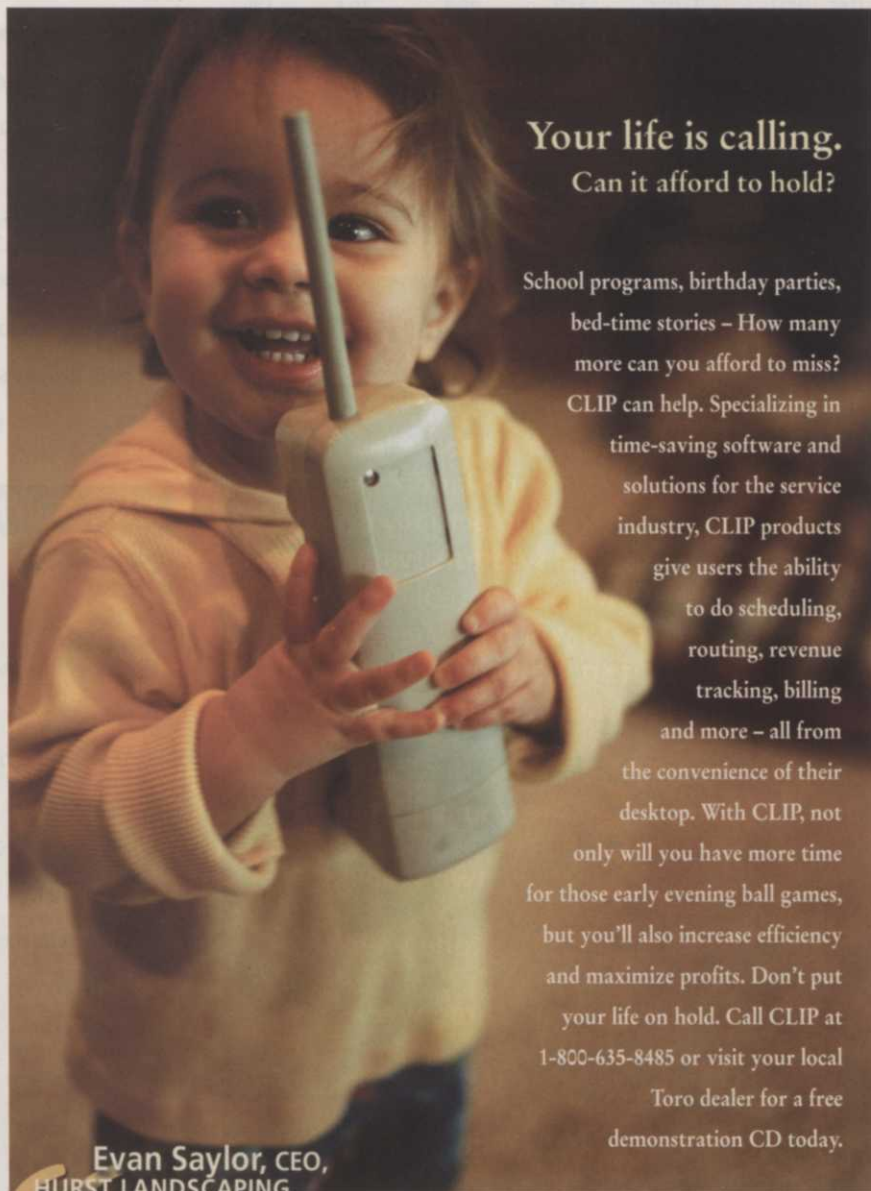
Attendees spent two high energy days watching inspirational and sometimes hilarious movie clips, setting goals, developing personal mission statements and understanding what "builders" and "destroyers" are. Attendees of the



Jim Paluch fires 'em up.

Leadership Jam also acting out skits showing how to overcome challenges and take advantage of opportunities for leadership with customers, employees and finances.

They were also treated to top-notch talks by Bob Coulter, Jud Griggs, Kevin Van Dyke of Skinner Nurseries and Brian Gardner of Husqvarna.



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# statistics

INDUSTRY TRENDS BY THE NUMBERS

## HOUSING PERMITS AUTHORIZED\*

Period	United States	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
Dec. 2001	1,702	170	369	767	396
Dec. 2002	1,880	173	405	851	451
% Change	10.5%	1.8%	9.8%	11.0%	13.9%

\* thousands of units per year

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU & U.S. DEPT. OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT

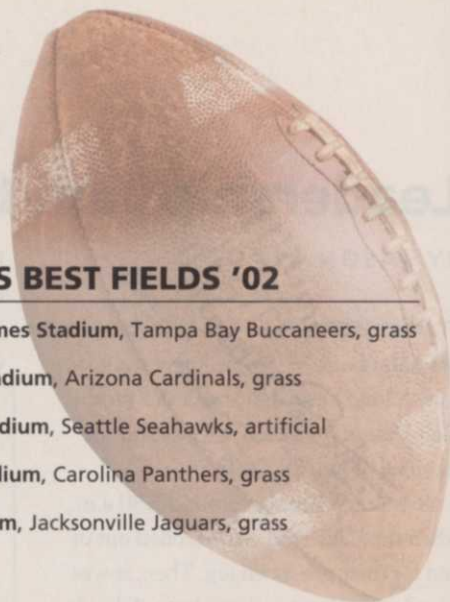
## Survey says...

**Q** There are rumored to be lawn care operators and landscape company owners who actually do take vacations. LM's editors wanted to find out if these folks were real or just mythical beasts. Do you take a vacation each year, and if so, how much? Here are the results of our latest online poll.

27%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Are you kidding?
23%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	...two weeks
16%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	...one week
14%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	...three weeks
10%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	...>three weeks
10%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	...<one week

Percentages based on 215 responses

Log onto [www.landscapemanagement.net](http://www.landscapemanagement.net) and answer our online survey. We publish the results here monthly.



## NFL'S BEST FIELDS '02

- Raymond James Stadium, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, grass
- Sun Devil Stadium, Arizona Cardinals, grass
- Seahawk Stadium, Seattle Seahawks, artificial
- Erickson Stadium, Carolina Panthers, grass
- Alltel Stadium, Jacksonville Jaguars, grass



## NFL'S WORST FIELDS '02

- Veterans Stadium, Philadelphia Eagles, artificial
- Giants Stadium, New York Giants/Jets, grass
- Paul Brown Stadium, Cincinnati Bengals, grass

SOURCE: NFL PLAYERS ASSN. SURVEY OF 1,280 NFL PLAYERS

## UNIT SHIPMENTS MODEL YEAR BASIS

(SEPT.-AUG.)

	Forecast	
	2003	2004
Walk-behind powered mowers	5,962,980	5,879,525
Percent change	2.1%	-1.4%
Rear engine riding mowers	86,801	74,625
Percent change	-18.5%	-14.0%
Front engine lawn tractors	1,398,939	1,399,529
Percent change	4.1%	0.0%
Riding garden tractors	166,930	163,543
Percent change	8.9%	-2.0%
All riding units	1,652,670	1,637,697
Percent change	3.1%	-0.9%
Tillers	436,483	393,518
Percent change	10.9%	-9.8%
Commercial intermediate walkers	42,941	43,630
Percent change	2.6%	1.6%
Commercial riding mowers	122,303	125,551
Percent change	4.3%	2.7%

SOURCE: OUTDOOR POWER EQUIPMENT INSTITUTE

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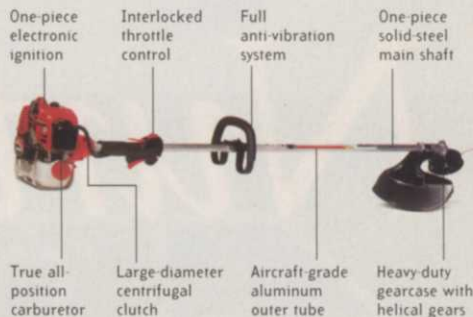


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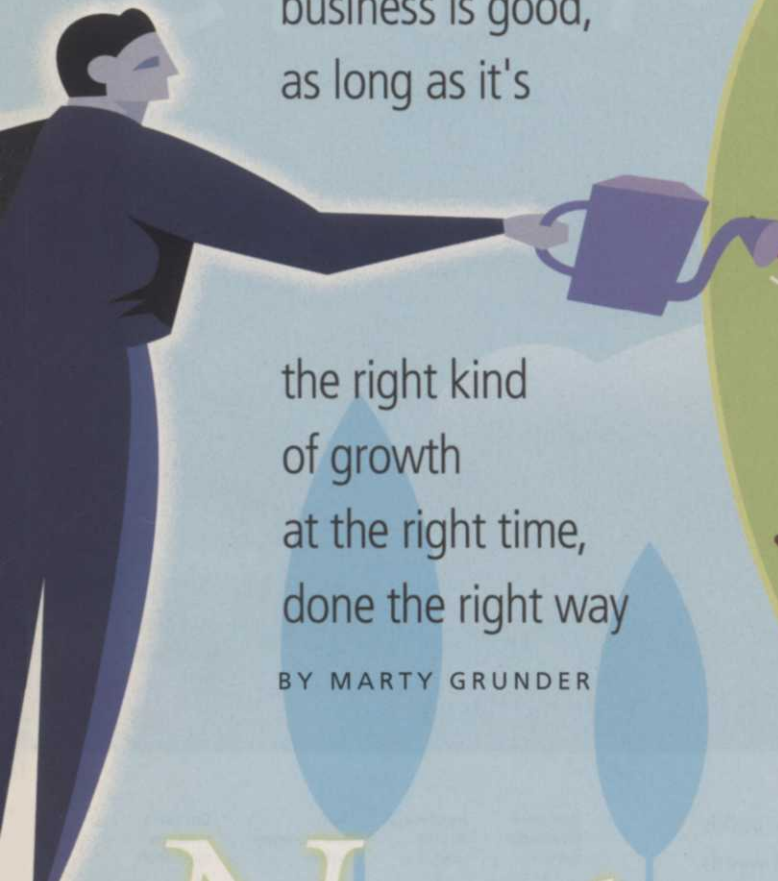
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Growing your  
business is good,  
as long as it's

the right kind  
of growth  
at the right time,  
done the right way

BY MARTY GRUNDER



**M**any entrepreneurs think they have to grow the sales of their company to be successful. I've fallen into that trap as well. We entrepreneurs conclude that if we grow the gross sales of the company, we'll automatically make more money.

I've worked with companies that gross \$600,000 a year that make more money than other companies grossing millions. There's an expression you may have heard about business that goes like this: "Don't tell me how much you're grossing, tell me how much you're keeping." And that is the challenge most entrepreneurs face.

There's nothing wrong with growing the sales of your firm — just make sure it's the right type of growth at the right time, done the right way.

**Too quick, too soon?**

In my experience, many companies grow too quickly. They grow just to grow, and the entire company is stretched to levels that tax the people, the systems and the finances. The worst thing that happens is

# Nurture growth

that the company can't deliver on service promises, and clients become upset and end up going with another contractor. Not only do those clients quit doing business with these companies, they tell all their friends, neighbors, family and anyone else who will listen how bad their experience was. This isn't good for business.

The best way to grow a company is one happy client at a time. It's human nature for people to tell others about the great job a company did for them. So, in my opinion, if you have the customer satisfaction systems in place and your finances prove that if you grow you'll make more money, then let's grow! If this is the case for you, here are three things you can do to grow your company:

► **Expand your services.** If you're a installation contractor and you're not offering maintenance services to your client base, you have a huge opportunity to grow by just offering those services to your existing client base. Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric, made that company (and himself) a fortune by getting it in the service and maintenance business. Your clients who bought your landscaping services can easily be sold on maintenance services to "protect their investment" or to "keep their investment looking its best." Your clients bought once from you, they trust you, and in most cases are more than willing to let you care for what you installed.

The other advantage to offering maintenance services is the fact that every time your crew shows up at their place, it's easier for clients to remember and think of you in a time of need. Who do you think they'll call if they want some new trees next spring? They'll most likely call you because you're their landscaper. If you

## Three ways to grow

- 1 Expand your services.** Offer maintenance services if you don't already, but remember: before you add any service, commit to being able to perform the service at a high level.
- 2 Expand locations.** It's risky, and don't do it until you have at least 15% market share in your current territory.
- 3 Buy another company.** Only for seasoned entrepreneurs who have a good handle on their finances.

don't offer maintenance, you're giving your competition a foot in the door of your customers. Savvy businesspeople know how to convert small maintenance accounts into bigger and better things.

By offering maintenance services you increase the value of your company and make it more marketable to others should you decide to sell the firm. Why? Each of those maintenance accounts is like an annuity. You show up, do a good job, send a bill and renew the contract each year — continuing revenue, the best kind.

Accounting firms sell for much higher prices than legal firms. Why? Because of the nature of the work and its reoccurring activity. You may not see your accountant once a month or quarter, but certainly regularly. We only see attorneys when we need them. Hence, accounting firms' revenue is much more predictable.

There are many other services you can add to your list as well, such as nightlighting, water gardens, pavers, seasonal color, holiday decorating and expert pruning. Keep in mind, though, that you need to be able to perform those services at a level that will impress your clients. Always look for ways to be the best you can be. Service and quality sell,

and both are remembered long after the price is forgotten.

► **Expand locations.** Many mature companies have squeezed their market dry, have a hefty market share and look to other cities to grow. This is a risky way to grow and not one that's recommended for small business owners. Few businesses under \$5 million in revenue can justify starting up another location. You know how hard it is to get everybody in one office on the same page — now try two.

Some people have an urge to get another location because it's a romantic and exciting thought to have your name up in lights in another town. But are you really ready for that? You need to find out what the market for your services is in the town you're currently in and not even think about opening another location until

Don't tell me how much you're grossing. Tell me how much you're keeping.

you have at least 15% of the market share in your location. Many small business owners open another location only to close it a short time later.

Be careful if you're thinking about growing your company by opening up another location. Your accountant and board of advisors should be a big part of a plan like this.

► **Buy another company.** This is a growth strategy that has become popular, but I'm somewhat indifferent to it. I believe it's a good growth strategy for seasoned entrepreneurs who have a

# You need \$\$ for growth

BY RON HALL/  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cash. Moolah. Dough. If your goal is to grow your company's revenues significantly, you will probably need more of it than you realize. How much? That depends upon how much you plan to grow. The operative word here is "plan."

Increasingly, landscape and lawn care company owners realize that they can increase their chances of achieving long-term success — including significant growth if that's what they want — by mapping out long-term goals through strategic planning. The topic of strategic planning is beyond the scope of this article; the point is that you should have a plan to grow.

"Sometimes growth just happens because your market sort of forces it to happen," said Charlie Bowers, Garden Gate Landscaping, Inc., at the Associated Landscape Contractors of America Conference this past November. "There is plenty of business out there, and a lot of time you don't pay enough attention to your people, to your cash flow or your budgeting. You discover that you've doubled your business but you're not making any money."

In other words, planned growth is better for your company's bottom line than growth that...well, just sort of happens. Even before you start planning, however, it's a good idea to ask yourself these questions:



Charlie Bowers

- ▶ Do I really have a passion to grow my company?
  - ▶ As the owner, do I have the management skills or training to drive a larger operation?
  - ▶ If I don't, can I acquire them?
  - ▶ Will I be able to relinquish some control of the business to others?
  - ▶ Is my company's basic structure sound enough to allow growth?
  - ▶ Are my company's estimating, scheduling and production systems accurate, efficient and duplicable?
  - ▶ Do we have systems in place to track and score our efforts?
  - ▶ Can we attract and train the extra management and staff that a larger operation will need?
  - ▶ Does our market area offer enough service opportunities to absorb our growth goals?
- Finally, the question that many owners overlook that ultimately becomes the biggest challenge and threat to their growth plans:
- ▶ Do I have (or can I acquire) the cash to fuel the extra business that I want to attract?
- While a company owner might rely upon his/her firm's current cash flow to fund growth, that's a gamble.
- "If you don't have the cash, it's going to be very tough to grow because you are always looking for the next piece of change to come in the door to meet payroll, buy the extra truck or build the extra crew," said Bowers.

complete and thorough handle on their finances.

Lawn care companies and maintenance companies have done well by acquiring other companies. A few landscaping companies have done well by acquiring other landscaping companies. In any situation where you're considering buying another company, make certain some good people are coming along in the deal. We can buy trucks, computers, buildings or equipment, but we can't buy people. Good, strong human talent is the key to any successful business.

For those of you who are considering growing this way, be sure you hire an accounting firm and a law firm that have experience buying Green Industry companies. Also, talk to others who have done what you're trying to do. There are many mistakes others have made you can learn from.

Before you acquire another company, consider spending the money you were going to spend on an acquisition on marketing and on systems at your own company. Chances are if you spent that money on improving your own company, you might be able to attract more business than if you bought someone else.

## Get a business plan

If you're planning on growing your company, get a business plan. The sad but true tale is that most entrepreneurs spend more time planning their vacations than they spend planning their businesses and where they want the business to go. Don't let that be you. Planning can and will make a difference in the success of your business. Pie in the sky talk is just that — talk. When you write things down, they become real and you're able to see the holes in your logic, and then act upon them.

Let me offer an example. I was working with a landscaper in New York last year. It was a nice company with sales of \$500,000. The owners, a young and ag-

Good, strong  
human talent is key  
to growing a  
successful company.

gressive husband and wife team, wanted to grow the business to \$1 million the next year. They had 10 employees and six trucks. I pointed out to them that to go to \$1 million, they would need 11 or 12 trucks and 20 employees. They followed my logic and seemed a little less enthusiastic about growing.

They really became worried when I told them they would need one of those new employees to be a salesperson and asked them if they thought they could keep their quality and service at its current high level. They soon realized that their "pie in the sky" plan was a bad one. We adjusted their growth projections to \$620,000, or a 20% growth plan, and then sat down and did a plan to make that work. They ended up hitting \$640,000 and improving their profitability by 1.5% over the prior year. Plus, they had fun and kept their clients happy — the latter being the best barometer of a successful company. The old adage "fail to plan, plan to fail" is one of the more factual statements you'll hear.

**Exceed clients' expectations**

Growth is not a bad thing. It's good — as long as it's the right kind of growth, done the right way, at the right time. Don't forget: the best way to grow a company is by working hard to exceed the expectations your clients have for you and then asking them if they know other people who could use your services.

— Marty Grunder is the founder and president of Grunder Landscaping Co., a na-

tional award-winning company in Dayton, OH, with annual sales of more than \$2.4 million. He is also founder of The Winner's Circle, a consulting company offering expert

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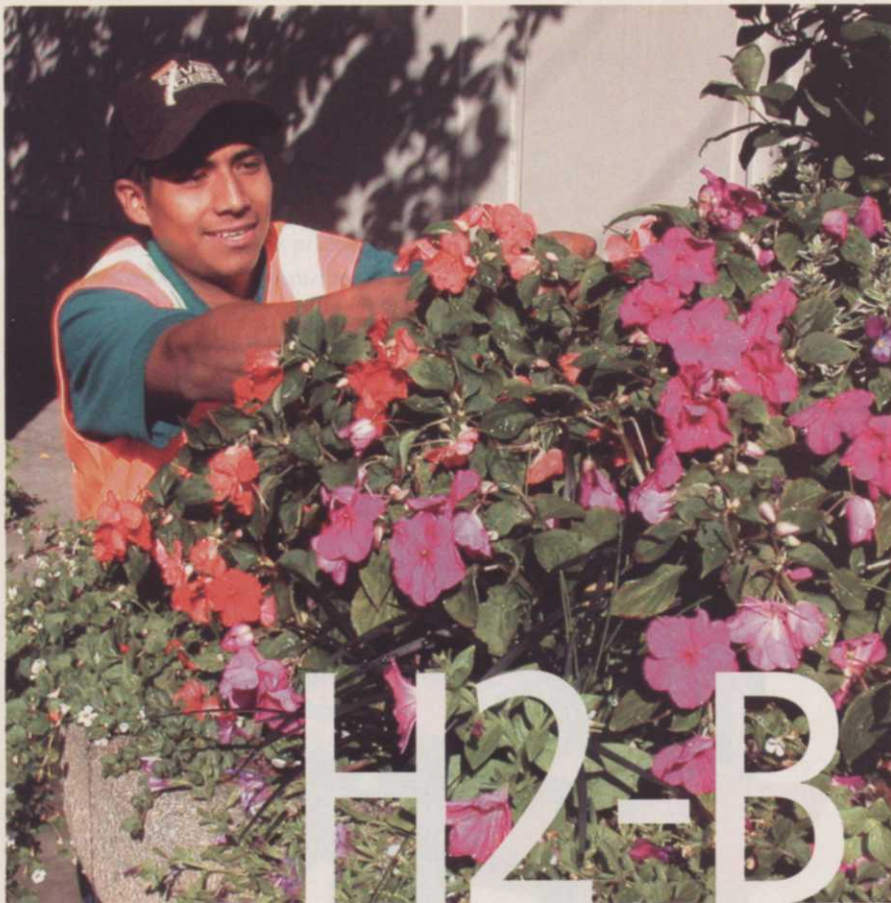
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AN ARIENS COMPANY

Circle 113



## Respect and fair treatment is key to getting the most out of international employees

BY D. DOUGLAS GRAHAM

The Brickman Group strives to make foreign workers feel welcome, and staffers are trained to facilitate that goal.

"We do as much as possible to make our foreign workers feel comfortable," Taylor says. "Our training program is bilingual, and Spanish-speaking staff members work closely with the workers at every opportunity. We encourage our foreign workers to take classes in English, and, in the case of promising employees, sometimes pay the tuition ourselves."

Informal training plays a part, too, Taylor says. Outdoor events like barbecues are tied to general branch meetings, where everyone gets to know each other a little better. "The idea is to keep the lines of communication wide open," he says. "We make a point of talking with all of our employees, and we want them to talk with us."

### A paperwork nightmare

There are two sets of laws for working with foreign-born employees. The first is a set of legal guidelines known as H2-B. The second is the unwritten law code a landscaper or any other employer should follow to keep his overseas employees as happy and productive as possible.

H2-B is a government program that stipulates the laws governing the hiring and maintenance of foreign workers. It states that a total of 66,000 foreign-born workers can be legally imported annually. The workers are hired on a "seasonal" basis, and must return to their country of origin after

*continued on page 32*

# H2-B training strategies

**A**s most landscape professionals know, hiring foreign-born laborers is often crucial to a company's ability to grow, or even just survive.

Landscape companies, especially larger ones, frequently hire foreign-born laborers for seasonal maintenance work. They mow, trim, edge, prune and blow debris from walkways and roads. Many help to install or build landscapes, some being skilled at stoneworking or installing patios or pavers.

While most foreign laborers working for

U.S. landscapers hail from Mexico or some other Latin American country, an increasing number are coming from parts of Africa and Eastern Europe.

### Comfort and communication

"We have hired Hispanic laborers for many years," says Bob Taylor, regional manager for The Brickman Group, Langhorne, PA. "We have an infrastructure in place for managing them. Communication is the biggest hurdle you run into when working with foreign nationals, and Brickman has people on staff with fluency in Spanish."





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*continued from page 30*

nine months. Minimum compensation, which is set by H2-B, tends to be at least a dollar more per hour than minimum wage. Depending on the region, most landscapers pay their H2-B employees roughly \$7.50 to \$8.50 per hour.

Some landscapers complain about H2-B because, like most government programs, it can be a paperwork nightmare. A great deal of time, effort and irritation must often be invested to get foreign workers into this country and back home again.

Rather than muddle through this ordeal themselves, many companies contract with agencies to go through it for them. The same agencies often recruit foreign workers and connect them with U.S. employers.

**Looking after their needs**

But dealing with H2-B is probably the easy part. Overcoming cultural and linguistic barriers can often be more difficult to handle if one isn't properly equipped.

Many overseas workers have no fluency in English, and, apart from the superficial indoctrination they receive from their own popular media, are unfamiliar with American culture. Landscapers who work regularly with foreign nationals understand this and take steps to cushion the impact of culture shock, some of which is inevitable even for workers on their second or third U.S. stint.

Like The Brickman Group, Munie Outdoor Services, Caseyville, IL, regularly imports foreign workers through H2-B, and has an infrastructure in place for managing them and looking after their needs.

According to Human Resources Manager Dianna Logan, the company works with a recruiter in Mexico and an American company paid to do the legal and paperwork legwork on Munie's behalf. Once



Most foreign laborers don't want to do anything but work, so give them plenty of opportunity for overtime.

the workers are hired, they live in an apartment owned by the company and charged a nominal fee for its upkeep. Transportation is provided to and from the complex, and workers are offered 45 to 50 hours per week with overtime when appropriate.

"We train our workers thoroughly using bilingual personnel and video instruction," Logan says. "We also orient our American employees about working with Hispanics. That's a big part of the process. You have to

make sure everyone gets along together, and to do that they have to know one another as individuals and culturally.

"Last year we brought in 50 workers through H2-B," adds Logan. "Some worked in our construction department, which builds golf and sports fields.

Others did maintenance work on golf courses, or at businesses where we have contracts. We also use several of the H2-B workers for staffing needs of our government contracts."

**Assume nothing**

It's vital that an apartment be put in order before the arrival of the workers. Basic furnishings should be supplied along with food, which will vary depending on the occupants' nationality.

It's also important to orient new employees to the apartment's amenities. A few workers may have grown up in primitive

conditions where plumbing and electricity were not available. A flushing toilet may be a novelty to some, so all should be shown how this miraculous device functions.

Check on your tenants at least once a week, and inspect the real estate regularly and thoroughly. Confusions, problems, even disasters may develop if you don't, and this need not apply exclusively to appliances.

"We had some Afrikaners working here this summer," says Jim McCaskey, vice president of The Pattie Group, a high-end residential design/build landscape firm in Novelty, OH. "Parts of South Africa are just like the States, so these kids didn't have that much trouble adjusting. They were thrown by the tax system, though. South Africans pay less income tax than we do, and the boys got a little sticker-shocked when they saw how much loot was being siphoned out of their checks."

**Know their culture**

Some employers take their new foreign-born employees to dinner at least once during their stay to help them feel safe and comfortable. Doing a little research on their culture is a good idea as well.

If your workers are from Mexico, find out where the Hispanic community is in your area, i.e. where the Spanish-speaking churches are, where Spanish-language newspapers can be bought, and where the restaurants are that cater to people from

*continued on page 34*



Dianna Logan

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continued from page 32

Latin America. Anything you can do to make the cultural transition easier for your employees they will much appreciate, and

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## Welcome, friends

Welcome your foreign labor like they're friends, and treat them with the respect you'd show to your own family. They'll respect you back if you:

- ▶ Recognize and respect their cultural traditions.
- ▶ Keep them busy and give them lots of overtime.
- ▶ Make them feel like family.
- ▶ Involve them in company parties, meetings, etc.
- ▶ Give them opportunities to advance in their job.

should be characterized by courtesy and respect. Foreign workers are no different than anyone else in this respect. Treat them right, and they will almost always return the favor.

"About 90% of the people who come here via H2-B are Hispanic," says Bob Wingfield of Amigos Labor Solutions, Inc., a private agency working on behalf of American companies in need of seasonal foreign help, home-based in Dallas. "When workers come to this country from Mexico, their sole ambition is to work, and they do that very well. This is the reason companies hire them in the first place. They know Hispanic workers will give them more than their money's worth.

"Some companies, a very few thankfully, don't treat their foreign help very well, and that is the cardinal sin when dealing with them," Wingfield adds. "A Mexican worker will be no more inclined to take abuse than anyone else. One day he'll just up and leave. Another mistake that companies make is not working their workers enough. These guys will work 50 to 60 hours a week if you let them. They have a real work ethic, and most really don't want to do anything else but work when they're here. Give them plenty to do, it's what they want, but you should pay them the overtime they deserve, too." **LJM**

— The author is a freelance writer based in Manchester, MO. He can be reached at 636/527-0458.

Circle 115

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# Seed ... finally!

**T**hink of establishing bermudagrass on a commercial property or repairing a bermudagrass sports field and the question typically asked is, "Sod or sprigs?" Now

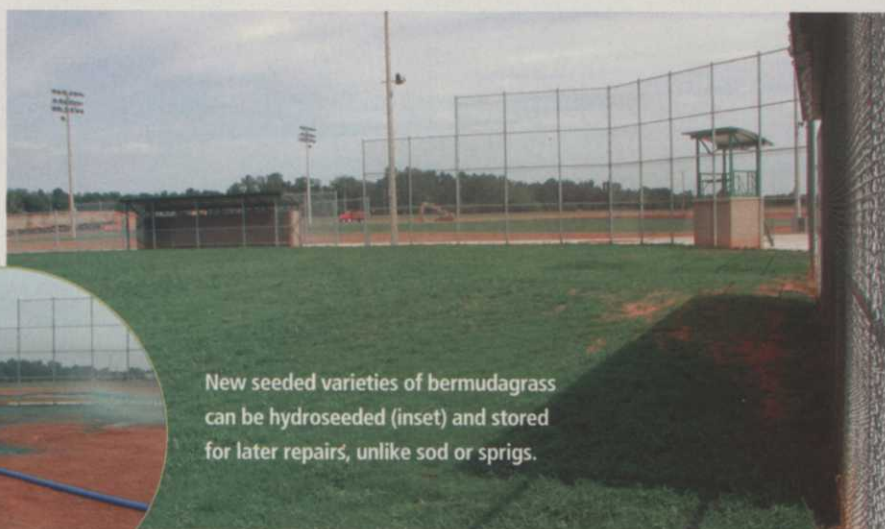
there's a third option — seed.

The latest generation of high-quality bermudagrasses established from seed possesses many of the qualities once only seen in vegetative varieties — finer leaf texture, high density, dark green color, improved cold or drought tolerance, to name a few. (To review varieties and their performance in the 1997-2001 national bermudagrass trials visit the Web site [www.ntep.org](http://www.ntep.org)).

To date, however, few landscapers, professional lawn care providers or grounds managers have embraced bermudagrass established from seed, mostly because they're unfamiliar with it. That will change.

"It's been a push to get people to use them," says Dr. Charlie Rodgers, Research Director for Seeds West, Inc., Maricopa, AZ. This is due in part to limited seed production and availability, he says. Seed producers, however, are rapidly ramping up research efforts and production in anticipation of growing demand.

"I think that we've just barely scratched the surface with seeded bermudas," says Dr. Leah Brillman, Research Director for



New seeded varieties of bermudagrass can be hydroseeded (inset) and stored for later repairs, unlike sod or sprigs.

## Advances in turfgrass breeding provide an option beyond sod or sprigs for establishing bermudagrass

BY RON HALL/ EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Seed Research of Oregon, Halsey, OR. "As more people use them, that will provide more incentive for companies like ours to work on them and improve them."

### A big improvement

Seeded bermudagrass itself is not new, not the type referred to as "common" or "Arizona common." Grown in the arid Southwest, it's been available for the past 80 years or so. It's generally used for purposes such as erosion control or forage.

The "improved" varieties have re-

sulted from breeding work carried out mostly within just the past 15 years. Seed marketers realize they fill a valuable niche in the commercial turfgrass market. Almost every major seed company now promotes at least one variety of seeded bermuda.

Bermudagrass as a species is the most widely used warm-season turfgrass in the world. There are good reasons for its popularity, says Dr. Wayne Hanna, research geneticist with the USDA Agricultural Re-

*continued on page 38*



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*continued from page 36*

search Station, Tifton, GA. He points out that bermudagrass:

- ▶ is relatively easy to establish,
- ▶ grows quickly,
- ▶ is hardy,
- ▶ tolerates traffic,
- ▶ and survives in a broad range of environmental conditions.

Hanna, in fact, has developed several successful varieties that must be established by sod or sprigs, including the popular variety TifSport. In a species that possesses incredible genetic diversity, these varieties are sterile. There's an advantage to that, says Hanna. "Every plant out there is identical. The turf is very uniform and its weed potential due to seed production is lessened."

You can store seed and  
keep some on hand  
to make repairs.

— **Melodee Fraser,**  
**Turf-Seed, Inc.**

Indeed, the work done in the 1950s by the late Dr. Glenn Burton in Tifton, GA, in developing stable, vegetatively propagated bermudagrass turfs continues under Hanna. It has been of immeasurable value to the warm-season turfgrass industry.

#### **User-friendly product**

The seeded bermudagrasses have their advantages, too, including convenience.

"A landscaper or sports field manager can store seed, and they can also have seed on hand to make repairs as they need to make them," says Dr. Melodee Fraser, who heads the warm-season turfgrass breeding effort in Roleville, NC for Turf-Seed, Inc.

Besides being easier to handle than sod or sprigs, it requires less ground preparation than, say, sprigging or sodding, particularly in turf renovation projects.

But, because seed production is generally sparse on the newest varieties, they're pricey compared to cool-season varieties that set more seed per plant and are farmed on a much larger scale. Production of the improved seeded grasses is confined, for the most part, to Oklahoma, southwestern Arizona and California's Imperial Valley.

The work involved in breeding qualities that most of us desire in a turfgrass into top-rated seeded varieties has been impressive, involving equal measures of science and dogged determination by plant breeders such as Dr. Arden Baltensperger, formerly of New Mexico State University (NMSU), and Dr. Charles Taliaferro and Dr. Dennis Martin of Oklahoma State University (OSU). Other turfgrass breeders are adding their efforts to improving seeded bermudas.

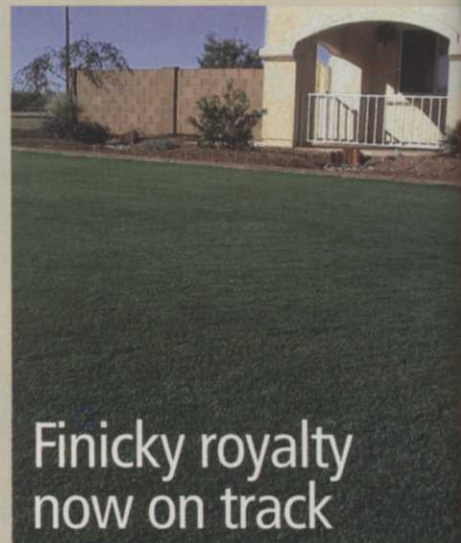
#### **Research continues**

"We began work at Oklahoma State in the late 1970s with the objective of determining if we could develop bermudagrass varieties that had cold hardiness and economic seed production capability," says Taliaferro.

The first result of that work was the development of Guymon, a variety that has shown excellent cold tolerance, an essential trait for turf managers in the so-called Transition Zone. Guymon, released in 1982, was too coarse-textured for turf use, but has been widely used for erosion control and pasture. Yukon, released in 1997 and licensed to the Johnston Seed Company, Enid, OK, and Seed Research of Oregon, has the excellent cold tolerance of Guymon but much higher turf quality.

"The development of turf-quality seeded bermudagrass varieties has required

*continued on page 40*



## Finicky royalty now on track

Getting Princess 77, the high-ranking hybrid bermudagrass from Seeds West, Inc., into production was almost as big a challenge as developing the variety in the first place. Almost, but not quite.

Dr. Arden Baltensperger worked for more than a decade to perfect this particular variety, but unlike other turf-type bermudagrass varieties, seed production fields of Princess 77 had to be established vegetatively from two self-incompatible but cross-fertile parent clones planted in alternating rows.

This practice is expensive and takes time compared to the way bermudagrass is usually produced. Also, since the variety's best seed yields are considerably lower than those of other bermudagrass seed varieties, Seeds West had to plant many more acres to meet production goals.

Another complication was the size of the seed; there are 2.2 million seeds (unhulled) per pound. The company had to develop new methods of post-harvest handling and seed conditioning. Seeds West says that it has overcome all of these obstacles.



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continued from page 38  
substantial effort, but it's been done in a relatively short time," says Taliaferro, who also developed the variety Riviera, which

was licensed to Johnston Seed in 2001. (Through an agreement with Johnston Seed, Seed Research of Oregon also markets Riviera.)

"Traditional plant breeding is time-consuming. Recurrent selection is a powerful breeding tool for improving quantitative traits in populations, but it takes four to five years to complete one cycle of selection," explains Taliaferro. "A selection cycle encompasses identifying good plants in a population, extracting those and intercrossing them. Then you grow out a new population for a new cycle of selection."

"The breeding of seeded turf bermudagrasses in Oklahoma and elsewhere in the United States, didn't begin in earnest until the mid 1980s," he adds. "I believe we've made a great deal of progress in not an unreasonable length of time. In fact, a short time."

I could spend another career or two working on these.

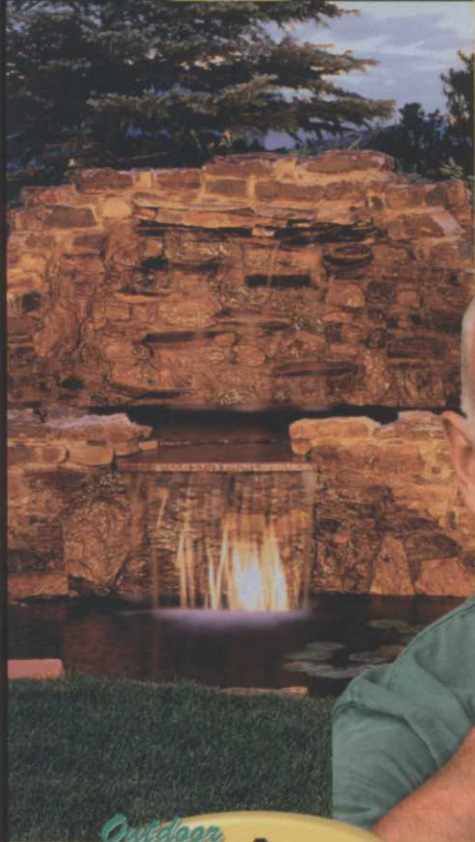
— Dr. Taliaferro

Dr. Arden Baltensperger, who released NuMex SAHARA in 1987 and ignited interest in seeded bermudagrass, says that his breeding efforts have focused on developing varieties with increased density, finer leaf texture, shorter internode length, drought tolerance and lower water use. He maintains (and turf trials bear him out) that he's succeeded on many of these counts, particularly in appearance and water use, in his decade-long efforts to develop the variety known as Princess 77.

Where do the small group of scientists involved in improving bermudagrass varieties go from here? They keep working.

Dr. Brillman at Seeds Research of Oregon says that varieties with better leaf spot and disease resistance would improve their popularity in the humid Southeast, an area

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also being investigated by Dr. Fraser at Turf-Seed's North Carolina farm.

Part of Taliaferro's breeding effort also focuses on the development of clonally propagated hybrids better adapted to the transition zone climate.

"There's a lot we can still do with bermudagrass. There is a lot of diversity within the species and we haven't been working with bermudas that long," adds Charlie Rodgers of Seeds West.

Says Taliaferro, "We've been seriously involved with the breeding of seeded bermudagrasses for just 17 years. I could spend another career or two working on these." **L.M.**

— To comment on this article, contact Ron Hall at [rhall@advanstar.com](mailto:rhall@advanstar.com).

## Seeded varieties dominate new trials

The number of seeded bermudagrasses evaluated in the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) keeps growing. During the round of NTEP testing that concluded in 2001 ([www.ntep.org](http://www.ntep.org)), cooperators at various locations around the



Dr. Brillman sees more use for seeded bermudas.

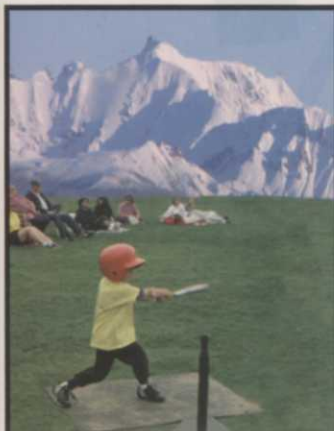
country evaluated 28 varieties of bermudagrass — 18 seeded and 10 vegetative types.

A new bermudagrass test was started this past season with 42 entries — 29 seeded and 13 vegetative. Some of the entrants are commercially available, some are "experimentals" and may or may not make it to market. Each

entrant is evaluated regularly for about 10 different characteristics generally considered to be desirable. The evaluations take the form of numerical ratings so that the varieties can be compared against each other from location to location.

The first official data from the test will be available in spring 2004. The new turfgrass plots must be given time to establish before they can be fairly evaluated.

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BY KATHERINE WOODFORD

**W**ater conservation is a reality to many Americans. City, state and federal government officials are addressing how to handle the future of our water supply, and the irrigation and landscape industry is catching the brunt of the fallout.

low volume irrigation was an efficient method of irrigation years ago. Aggressive technology brought drip irrigation out of the fields and into the mulch beds of both commercial and residential landscapes.

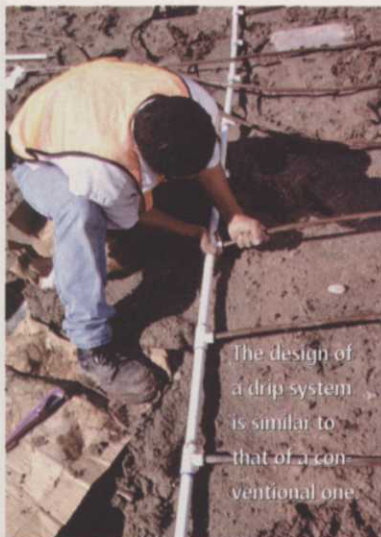
### Drip to the rescue

In many areas of the country, drip irrigation, or low volume irrigation, is the only form of irrigation allowed. Drip irrigation is the process of providing water directly to the plant's root zone via slow application. It eliminates the problem of root exposure to drought or saturated conditions by maintaining an optimum level of moisture in the soil, which significantly improves the "quality of life" of the plant.

The agriculture industry proved that

In addition to offering an alternative yet permissible means to water landscape plantings, drip irrigation creates a healthy growing arena for plants. Water is applied only when and where it's needed, runoff isn't an issue, and there's less transpiration from the leaves and less evaporation from the soil. And because only the roots of desirable plants are watered, weeds don't receive the nourishment received from conventional watering systems.

*continued on page 44*



The design of a drip system is similar to that of a conventional one.

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**Kubota**

continued from page 42

### Designed for conservation

The design of a drip irrigation system is similar to a conventional system, but the formulas to calculate the spacing of emitters and the number of emitters needed per zone differ slightly. For example, rather than thinking in terms of gallons per minute, the contractor computes in gallons per hour, which is also a case in point of the water efficiency of drip irrigation systems.

Drip systems call for a controller, backflow device, pressure regulator and electronic valves, but that's where the similarity in materials to a conventional system ends. The installation of a filter is a requirement to prevent clogging of the emitters, where a filter for conventional systems is often an option.

When designing the system, the contractor should plan for the plants' future growth, while also keeping in mind that the client will most likely add to his landscape. Some contractors suggest lengthening the watering time as the plants mature. However, a professional contractor will add emitters to the existing line, if feasible, or install additional zones as the plants mature and the landscape exceeds its present size.

After installation of the control zone, the contractor lays tubing or drip line along the base of the plants and then flushes the lines to remove dust and debris. Next, he inserts the drippers or emitters into the tubing no more than 12 inches from the root of the plant. Depending on the size of the plant and amount of water required, he can use micro tubing connected to the regular tubing to add the necessary additional emitters around the base of the plant.

With drip systems, the contractor has the choice of burying the tubing or leaving it on the soil's surface and covering it with mulch. If buried, a six- to eight-inch trench is sufficient, six inches from the plant's roots. He leaves the ends of the



Once the lines are completed, the installer can flush them out and check the emitters.

tubing unburied to allow for periodic flushing of the line.

After completion of the lines, the contractor flushes the lines again and checks the emitters for proper operation. He uses galvanized tie-down stakes to "staple" the tubing to the ground. The majority of drip systems are mulch-covered rather than buried. The recommendation is to let the system operate for two weeks to a month, then check the emitters and watch for plant stress. If all seems in working order at the end of the month, flush the system again and at that time cover with mulch.

### The good with the bad

A drip irrigation system has many selling points for irrigation contractors. It presents them an opportunity to set their company above the competition, earning the reputation as an "install all" company that can save their clients money. They also come across as the company with aggressive ideas towards water efficiency in times when water restriction is a high priority.

Drip irrigation systems are easy to sell when contractors emphasize these points in a simple, no fuss presentation to the client:

- ▶ No water is wasted in non-growth areas

## Drip irrigation terminology

**Anti-siphon valve:** Plastic or brass valve used to control the flow of water in one direction. Another use is to prevent backflow of water into potable water supply.

**Controller:** A programmable clock to allow each zone to operate on a separate length and time of day.

**Drip irrigation:** Any type of irrigation system that applies water to the soil slowly, currently the most efficient irrigation technology in terms of both water and energy use. Used in all areas except turf.

**Drip soaker tape:** A thin wall drip line with drippers pre-inserted in

and soil is maintained at an optimum moisture level, resulting in less soil evaporation from the elements. Also, proper balance of air and water is maintained in soil at root level, creating ideal growing conditions for all plants, causing deeper roots to be formed and establishing healthier plants with less stress during drought and days of extremely high temperatures.

▶ Water is applied when and where it's needed only, preventing: runoff, areas of standing water, soil erosion and overspray onto highways and sidewalks, which can be dangerous as well as annoying. There is no damaging spray on fencing, buildings or windows either.

▶ Drip irrigation prevents water loss from leaf evaporation, mist and wind interference.

▶ Obviously you will not need to repair or move sprinkler parts or heads, and drip irrigation does not interfere with landscaping since it's hidden under mulch and windows.

Another benefit is that there's no brown spots on roses and other plants caused by fungus because leaves never get wet from irrigation.

continued on page 48

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\*1997 National Bermudagrass Trials 2001 NTEP Final Report Table 1A

\*\*Univ. of AZ 2000 Masters Thesis by Sean Reynolds

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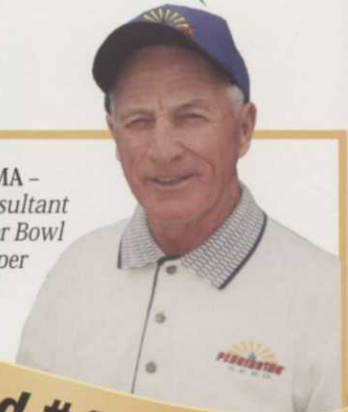


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- George G. Toma

**Mean Turfgrass Quality Ratings of Bermudagrass Cultivars  
Grown At Nine Locations In The U.S. 1/  
Maintained Using "Schedule A" \*\*  
1997-2001 Data  
Turfgrass Quality Ratings 1-9; 9=Ideal Turf 2/**

Name	AZ1	FL1	MD1	MS1	NM1	OK1	SC2	VA1	VA4	Mean
* Princess	7.0	6.5	6.4	6.4	6.8	6.4	6.8	5.9	6.2	6.5
* Tifsport (Tift 94)	6.8	6.2	5.8	7.2	6.9	7.1	7.5	4.6	6.1	6.5
* Tifway	7.0	5.7	5.8	7.3	6.9	7.0	7.6	4.5	6.0	6.4
* Riviera (OKS 95-1)	6.7	5.8	6.5	5.9	6.8	6.9	7.0	5.8	6.1	6.4
* TifGreen	6.2	3.9	6.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.2	4.6	6.2	6.1
* Savannah	5.4	4.3	5.7	5.2	5.9	5.8	5.9	5.1	5.8	5.4
* Southern Star (J-1224)	5.4	4.6	5.6	5.2	5.8	5.3	5.7	5.0	5.7	5.4
* Arizona Common	5.0	3.4	4.6	4.6	5.5	5.4	4.9	4.4	4.9	4.7
LSD Value	0.5	0.8	1.2	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.2
C.V. (%)	11.0	20.4	23.6	8.5	13.0	10.0	8.9	21.1	9.3	14.0

\*Commercially Available in the USA in 2002.

1/ To determine statistical differences among entries, subtract one entry's mean from another entry's mean. Statistical differences occur when this value is larger than the corresponding LSD value (LSD 0.05).

2/ C.V. (coefficient of variation) indicates the percent variation of the mean in each column.

\*\* Schedule A - 1/2-3/4 inch mowing height  
3/4-1 lb. N/1000 ft<sup>2</sup>/per growing month  
Irrigation to prevent visual drought stress  
Mowing frequency 3-5 times per week

1997 National Bermudagrass Trials  
2001 NTEP Final Report Table 1A  
† Univ. of AZ 2000 Masters Thesis by Sean Reynolds





the line at specific spacings such as six, 12 or 18 inches.

**Drip tubing:** Tubing without pre-drilled holes used to run drip irrigation.

**Emitter or dripper:** A term used with drip irrigation. The emitter, or dripper, is a small device that controls the flow going to the soil. Emitters come in many different flow rates and styles.

**Filter:** This is a necessity of all drip systems and is placed at the beginning of the system to protect the small orifices of drippers from clogging.

**GPH (gallons per hour):** This is the unit of measurement for low volume irrigation heads.

**GPM (gallons per minute):** This is the unit of measurement for standard sprinkler heads.

**Hard pipe system:** A drip irrigation system built similar to a conventional system. After installing PVC pipe, a riser is installed and a drip or micro head connected to the riser. This is a permanent system and, under normal circumstances, breakage by landscaping maintenance isn't an issue.

**Inline self contained tubing:** Low volume tubing with emitters built in, spaced according to the landscape requirements. It can be installed above or below the soil's surface. Some contractors prefer this because it's one piece of tubing, which is easy to place around bedded areas and requires little maintenance.

**Laser drilled soaker hose:** A quarter in. micro tube with laser cut holes at pre-set spaces.

**PC dripper:** A pressure compensating dripper that allows long pipe runs with equal water flow at any pressure between 10 and 50 PSI.

**Pressure regulator:** A regulator that controls and reduces the amount of pressure that enters the system to the recommended operating pressure for a drip irrigation system.

**PSI (pounds per inch in static water pressure):** This is the unit of measure for the pressure in pipe.

**Trickle irrigation:** Another name for drip irrigation.

**Valve:** An electric valve that turns each zone on and off as directed by the controller.

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March 1

**Indianapolis, IN**  
March 3 & 4

**Providence, RI**  
March 7 & 8

*continued from page 44*

Of course, it was never the intention for drip irrigation to replace conventional irrigation, and there are some disadvantages to drip over conventional:

- ▶ The drip tubing is vulnerable to damage from pets, rodents and insects. Also, the orifices of the emitters are so small that a filter is always required to prevent possible clogging.
- ▶ Also, a pressure regulator is a requisite on all systems.
- ▶ Keeping the system running is critical since drip irrigation puts out less water to each plant than a conventional system.
- ▶ Troubleshooting a system isn't accomplished by "sighting" each zone because you can't see the system working.

A drip irrigation system has many selling points for landscape contractors.

**Trouble ahead**

Proper installation of a drip irrigation system will lessen the risk of problems popping up. The following is a troubleshooting list:

**Clogged drippers.** As a rule, using a filter avoids clogging problems. While the water is on, hold a finger over the dripper outlet for a few seconds. The back flushing normally takes care of the clogging. If multiple drippers are clogged, check for a break in the line.

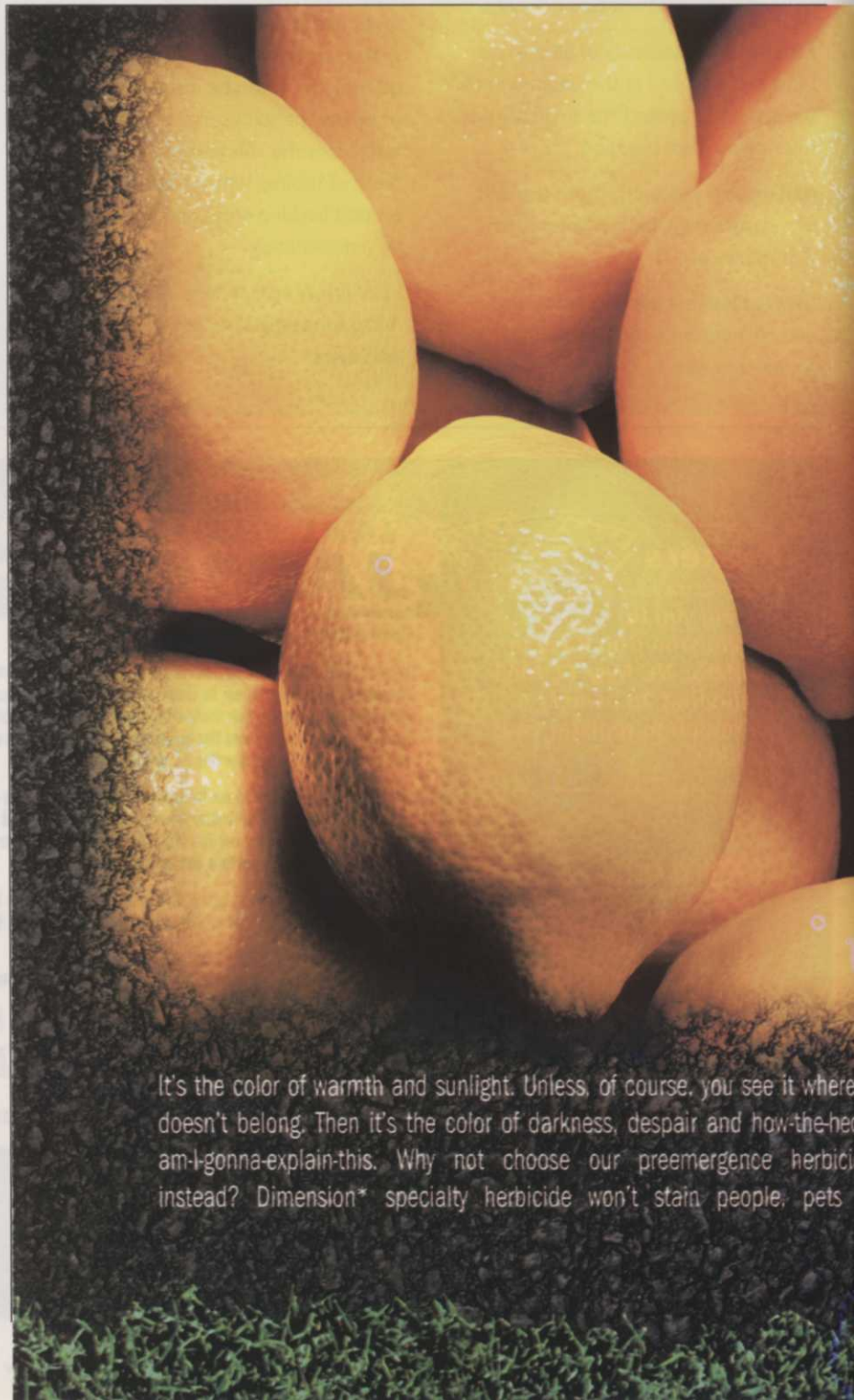
**The dripper has an uneven flow, or no flow at all.** Broken line, clogged filter, clogged dripper, faulty dripper or the pressure is too high or low. The solutions are to check the drip line, clean or replace the screen filter, replace or clean the dripper or adjust the pressure regulator.

**The dripper has an uneven flow or no**

**flow at the end of the drip line.** Too many drippers on the drip line. Add more drippers or add another line.

**The dripper keeps popping out of the drip line.** Defective pressure regulator,

drippers installed improperly, punch was faulty or worn, or the pressure is too high. Replace the pressure regulator, check or repair drippers, plug faulty hole with goof glue, and replace or clean the punch or re-



It's the color of warmth and sunlight. Unless, of course, you see it where it doesn't belong. Then it's the color of darkness, despair and how-the-hell-am-I-gonna-explain-this. Why not choose our preemergence herbicide instead? Dimension\* specialty herbicide won't stain people, pets

A 6-8 in. trench is sufficient for buried lines, which should be 6 in. from the plants' roots.



## Tips for new drip installers

Allow the dripper tubing to sit in the sun to make it easier to spread out.

To make the 1/4-inch micro tube extra pliable for inserting the 1/4-inch barbs, dip the tubing in warm water.

Use pressure regulators #4, #5 or #8 to reduce high pressure, installed after the filter. The ideal working pressure is 20 psi, but most pumps will work between 15 and 30 psi.

When there are runs longer than 400 ft., use pressure compensating emitters.

place faulty pressure regulator.

**The fittings have separated from the drip line.** Fittings improperly installed. Placement of tubing wasn't far enough inside the compression fitting. Reinstall the fittings.

**Hard water caused calcium deposits in drippers.** Remove dripper and soak for one hour in a chlorine solution.

**Plants appear stressed.** Clogged drippers, kinked line, broken line or inadequate watering run time. Check drippers, repair line or adjust watering run time.

During the final walk-through with the client, explain the necessity of winterizations, spring start-ups and minor monthly maintenance. Offer a maintenance contract at half off the total price the first year, with automatic renewal.

Many contractors find this a lucrative sideline to their installation business. Once they install one system in a neighborhood, if they're good marketers, they generally install systems for other homeowners on the block. With maintenance contracts for these customers, the contractor can schedule a crew to service a whole neighborhood in one morning. Contractors can come back time and time again to perform:

**Monthly maintenance.** After the first month's flushing, check the filter monthly. Cleaning will depend on water quality. Also,




# Some things are supposed to be yellow.

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equipment. But it will deliver long-lasting prevention of crabgrass, *Poa annua* and several broadleaf weeds, including spurge and oxalis. All with an application window so wide, it even offers early postemergent crabgrass control.

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inspect for clogging of drippers and tubing. The water quality determines the frequency of flushing, but three times a season is sufficient. Always flush the tubing after repairs.

As the plantings in the landscape mature or the homeowner adds to the landscape, the system should grow accordingly. As part of the monthly maintenance, make

sure to contact the client about a contract for any necessary additions to the system.

**Winterization.** Winterization of a drip irrigation system follows a similar initial procedure as that of a conventional irrigation system. If compressed air isn't used, the contractor should install a drain port at all the low points in each zone. Follow the same preliminary procedure for a drip irrigation system as for a conventional irrigation system. Then, blow out each line and leave all drain ports open, regulating the air pressure according to the drip line specifications.

## The problems that dogged drip irrigation are a bad memory.

**Spring startup.** Flush the lines, then close the drain ports and check the emitters for malfunction. Go through the landscaping with the client. If additions are necessary, get approval to put together a contract package and call with a date for the work to be completed.

When manufacturers first introduced drip irrigation on the commercial and residential market in the 1980s, many contractors were dissatisfied with the results. This credibility issue continues to plague drip irrigation as experienced contractors train new contractors. However, technology has improved, and the problems that dogged drip irrigation are a bad memory.

A contractor can install a complete system of drip irrigation, excluding the turf areas, or he can integrate drip zones into a conventional system with the drip lines placed on separate valves. Drip irrigation is a profitable tool to use to grow business. **LMI**

— The author is a Green Industry and freelance business writer based in Moneta, VA. She can be reached at [www.katherinesbylines.com](http://www.katherinesbylines.com).

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Circle No. 123

## Property at a glance

Location: Palm Beach, FL

Staff: Golf & Grounds

Category: Hotel, Motel or Resort

Total budget: \$2 million

Year site built: 1896

Acres of turf: 140

Acres of woody ornamentals: 6

Acres of display beds: 40,000 sq. ft.

Total paved area: 14 acres

Total man-hours/week: 1,760

## Maintenance challenges

- ▶ Intense salt air breeze
- ▶ Maintain immaculate & manicured gardens & grounds 365 days a year
- ▶ High traffic guest playground

## Project checklist

Completed in last two years:

- ▶ Addition of 10,000 perennials and tropical plants
- ▶ Grounds restoration following countless hotel room reservations
- ▶ Addition of landscape beds following golf course renovation

## On the job

- ▶ 40 full-time staff, 9 seasonal employees, 3 licensed pesticide operators

# The Breakers

## 2002 PGMS Grand Award Winner for Hotel, Motel or Resort

Grab a frosty beverage, sit back, and think of The Breakers. Located in Palm Beach, FL, on the Atlantic Ocean, the place just makes people want to relax. Well, at least the non-hired help.

The Golf & Grounds staff doesn't really have time to relax as it must keep 500 container gardens, five miles of formal hedge, 35,000 annual flower display beds, and the rest of the 140-acre property impeccable 365

days a year. Flowers must be blooming every single day to provide a show for every single guest — what the staff calls "The Wow Factor."

Danny Miller, director of Golf & Grounds, goes about his job slightly different than other grounds professionals.

"I look at the property as a work of art, and try to combine art with Mother Nature," says Miller, who's been at The Breakers since 1995. "Also, we don't just do maintenance here but constantly try to improve the product and keep our crews motivated."

Miller designs all of the gardens at



Director of Golf & Grounds Danny Miller (left) considers his work art, including the mowing of the croquet lawn (above).



The Breakers, and because he pursues art as a hobby outside of work, he can actually draw sketches of the ideas himself for presentation. Themed gardens on the property include the Herb Garden, the Tropical English Garden, and the Children's Secret Garden, which features a 1,400-ft. orange jasmine hedge maze.

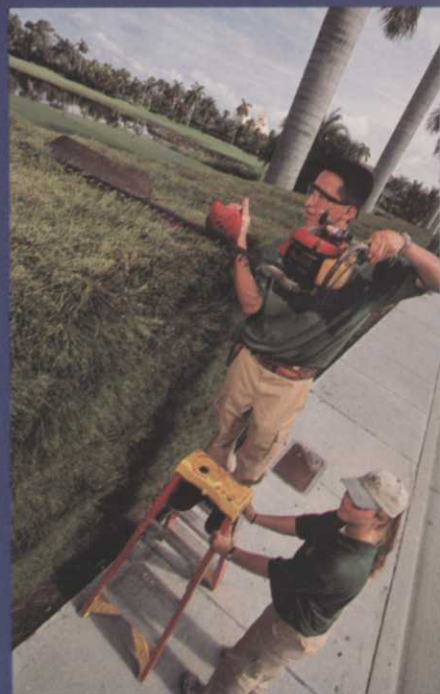
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MANAGEMENT

Editors' note: *Landscape Management* is the exclusive sponsor of the Green Star Professional Grounds Management Awards for outstanding management of residential, commercial and institutional landscapes. The 2003 winners will be named at the annual meeting of the Professional Grounds Management Society in November. For more information on the 2002 Awards, contact PGMS at:

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The front lawn display (above) is bordered by low sculpted triphasia hedge. At right, workers maintain five miles of formal hedge.



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BY CURT HARLER

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- TC21 has three ranges, for

## The real buzz on tractors

Any time a landscape professional is in the market for a new utility tractor, the "old boy" network starts to buzz.

User experience is great, but an objective test of the machinery is better. The State of Nebraska requires that any current tractor model sold in the state must have a performance test completed according to OECD Codes or ASAE/SAE Standards. The Nebraska Tractor Test Laboratory carries out those tests. But the information is available to anyone.

Known as The Nebraska Tractor Tests, they're done at the University of Nebraska Tractor Test Laboratory (<http://tractortestlab.unl.edu>). A good bit of data is available free, and there's a nominal fee for complete test results. While farm tractors dominate the results on nearly 2,000 tractors checked, there is plenty of information of interest to landscapers. Check it out.



# Leadership insights

GROWING GREEN INDUSTRY LEADERS

SUPPLEMENT TO LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

## Start your season!

For Chapel Valley Landscape Co., planning, preparation, communication and follow-up drive a successful spring

BY SHERRI L. BARTIN

### 1 Ensure the return of your work force.

"We put a lot of time and effort into building and training our employees, and their return year after year is critical for our success. Sharing this with them on an individual and personal level lets them know we value them as individuals and their contribution to the company," says Terri Feldhaus, director of human resources.

### 2 Share the vision.

As employees return or join the company, we provide a strong company orientation. The managers and human resource staff meet with each crew to review our company's vision and goals. We re-train on the importance of customer service and quality workmanship.

### 3 Get crews comfortable with the company.

All new employees tour all of the company's facilities, meet key managers and supervisors and learn who they should go to when various problems arise. New employees are responsible for setting up private "interviews" with key managers. They meet with the man-

ager and ask questions about their role and that department's role, and how the employee might interact with them. This is critical to establishing more personal relationships and makes crew members feel more comfortable when they need to interact with another department.

### 4 Take care of the details.

Human resources outfits each crew member with proper uniforms and explains how to properly clean and store uniforms. They review health insurance coverage and work with each employee to start or reinstate their insurance. They work with employees who might need assistance with housing or transportation.

### 5 Finalize maintenance contracts.

Encourage your sales team to have 95% of new and renewal maintenance contracts signed no later than the end of February, allowing the spring schedule to be planned before the rush begins. Chapel Valley CEO James Reeve says, "We get a firm schedule in place before the rush of the spring clean-up and mulching. This

*Continued on page 3*

## From the front lines

### Create a culture of encouragement

Employers use many methods to attract future leaders to the green industry, but many say the first, and most important, step is creating an atmosphere that will allow those leaders to learn and thrive. Without a clear vision and an energized culture, even the best recruiting tactics might not land a company its next superstar.

"Creating a culture that attracts people toward fulfillment of a vision is just not that simple. You must provide an environment that encourages people to take initiative," says David Pitchford, of Baton Rouge Lawn Pro in Louisiana. "People want to lead if given the right kind of urging support. Showing potential employees that you care about their future and are willing to train them and help them prosper is a good start."

Hiring potential leaders is one thing, keeping them is another.

"Creating a workplace that encourages the development of future leaders and that fosters and encourages employees to step out and be leaders is vital," says Bruce Sheppard of Tara Holding in Ontario.

Marty Yenawine, manager of Ashland, MA-based Riverside Tree & Landscape Co., agrees: "Creating opportunity within our organization to be recognized for demonstrated skill makes the difference between indifference and true accomplishment." ■

Related story, page 7

"Leaders are visionaries with a poorly developed sense of fear and no concept of the odds against them. They make the impossible happen."

— Dr. Robert Jarvik, pioneering heart surgeon



# Running LAPS

BY JIM PALUCH / PRESIDENT JP HORIZONS

## What does a leader look like?

**"I** need people that will lead." You can hear that statement from about every landscape business owner, general manager, foreman and supervisor.

Everyone is looking for the individual that will step up and take the responsibility to make decisions, take action and get results. Everyone is constantly looking for the magic formula to find leaders or to create them from their current employees. The fact is that there is no magic formula to leadership development. The commonality of all organizations that have mastered growth and profitability is that the owners have set an example in leadership.

In studying landscape companies, there is a truth that cannot be denied in developing the organization of leaders. This truth is simply this: Your crew is a direct reflection on you. Your team is looking at you to see what a leader should look like. The publisher of my books, Charlie "Tremendous" Jones, tells the story of disciplining his young son, Jerry. "Jerry, it is about time you started acting like a man," Charlie told him in his "manly" voice. His son responded innocently by asking, "I will Dad. What is a man supposed to act like?" Charlie knew at that moment he wasn't setting the right example.

If a leader's focus is to develop leaders, would those individuals who work for you and me know what a leader should look like? Have we stood tall and gained the respect of those who depend on us to lead the way? That can only be answered by standing in front of the mirror and looking into the eyes of the person claiming to be a leader.

Set the first example of leadership and delegate. The manager who has to do it all is just that — a manager. You

### BOOKSHELF

"Growing Dreams," by Jim Paluch, was first presented as a series of articles in PRO and chronicles two brothers, Oscar and Curtis, and their quest to own a prosperous professional landscape company. The series was so well-received that it prompted Paluch to compile the first novel written with a landscape company as the backdrop. "Growing Dreams" is full of content and practical ideas as it systematically introduces the concepts of organizational excitement, a blueprint for every owner to use to energize their company and team.



"Growing Dreams" \$11.96 (plus tax for Ohio residents) and \$3.95 for S&H.

lead when you allow others to take on the responsibility of doing what you could have done but chose not to. Follow up what's been delegated. This holds the individual or team accountable. Accountability can seem brutal at times; but without it, you enable people to accept mediocrity, and the mediocre individual never becomes a leader. As accomplishment and success come to those individuals or team members and they are allowed to take on responsibility, a natural tendency to learn develops. Team members realize that to succeed, they must learn or pay the consequences of falling short of what they are being held accountable to do. The desire to learn becomes a natural evolution in the growth of leadership.

The next step in this evolution is the desire to teach. Just as your leadership skills become honed when you start to develop and instruct potential leaders,

your leaders will emerge as they begin to teach and develop those looking to them. Imagine the synergistic force that takes place in a company, family, team and nation when the desire to teach is in full motion. Imagine, also, the personal satisfaction for the leader who stays humble as those looking at his or her example grow and set the example for those coming after them.

The final and probably most important step in leadership development is continuing to learn. The instant you stop learning, you take on a manager's role — doing only the things expected of you. Several years ago, I attended a panel discussion at a landscape state association meeting. On stage were five owners of well-respected companies, and they were asked questions about their success. An audience participant asked: "What would you say was the most important thing to do to become a leader in an organization?" All five said the same thing, "Read books!" They talked about ideas they discovered and how they helped them become better leaders. They discussed how their organizations were reading books and leaders were emerging. Continuing to gain knowledge is important to leadership development.

What does a leader look like? Look in the mirror and see if you can see a great example of one. ■

*Jim Paluch has been energizing the green industry as an author, speaker and consultant for more than 15 years. He is the creator of the Leadership Jam and Leadership Advancement Program, Training Challenge, Sales Jam and Owners1 Network. For more information, visit [www.jp horizons.com](http://www.jp horizons.com) or call 877-JPH-JAMS.*



**Chapel Valley owner J. Landon Reeve, CCLP, and Terri Feldhaus, director of training and human resources, prepare the teams for a hands-on training day for all 350 employees. The day was devoted to training all employees on how to achieve the company's commitment to quality workmanship.**

*Continued from page 1*  
allows us to evaluate and reallocate labor and equipment needs to optimize the schedule and service to the customer."

**6 Training, training, training.** Use the winter months to train and re-train supervisors and crew leaders. Establish a training schedule to review company systems, paperwork and safety procedures, proper equipment usage and maintenance, and company policies. When work crews return in the spring, supervisors and crew leaders can retrain their teams with up-to-date information. Brett Kesteven, operations manager for commercial maintenance observes, "We used to have a very high rate of equipment damage or failure. We figured out our crews had not been completely trained on how to properly use and maintain the equipment. Once we began training and re-training each spring on proper usage of each piece of equipment, the problem was all but eliminated."

**7 Build a safety-conscious culture.** As crew members return, they participate in safety meetings that cover everything from the use of protective eyewear to proper lifting techniques to safely backing up a vehicle.

**8 Get your equipment in top-notch shape.** Our shop is in full

swing repairing equipment, overhauling engines and painting. All trucks, trailers and equipment are repainted where needed to maintain the professional image of our well-known fleet of green trucks and trailers.

**9 Know thyself (and get caught up on all the small details).**

Estimating and operations teams analyze performance data, plan and strategize, and tend to details like updating submittal portfolios for the upcoming year. Major projects from the past year are evaluated to determine any areas that could have been handled more efficiently. Final follow-ups and as-built drawings are completed and provided to clients.

**10 Know thy customer.** The single most important thing to prepare for the start of the season is to ensure a strong relationship and good communication with every customer. Every Chapel Valley supervisor and crew leader visits their job sites before any new work is done. They walk the site and review the scope of work in detail. Most importantly, they meet with the property manager or site manager to review expectations, establish a positive relationship and communicate the Chapel Valley commitment to total customer satisfaction. ■

*Sherri Bartin is director of marketing for Chapel Valley Landscaping Co.*

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#### 6 Soar like an eagle

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### ALCA TOOLKIT

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- Great Game of Business/Scoreboard.

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# From the ground up

Since coming to the United States from Cuba, Juan Carlos Vila has done “Whatever it Takes” to achieve the American dream

BY CHERYL HIGLEY

**J**uan Carlos Vila left Cuba in 1980 with his family and little else. Once he arrived in the United States, it didn't take long for Vila to begin realizing his American dream.

With little money and a language barrier to overcome, Vila found work in a south Florida company. After only one year, he was ready to make it on his own. He and his father started a nursery in the Homestead, FL, area, and became incorporated in 1984. From that small start, Vila & Son Landscaping Corp. has grown into a \$34 million company that includes a nursery, tree farm, landscaping company and three branches.

Vila says the initial struggles he faced helped him grow. Along the way he has used those experiences to set a shining example of leadership for the more than 420 people that he sees not as employees but as family.

## “Whatever It Takes”

Vila's mission statement is “Whatever It Takes.” In the beginning, he didn't have

### Leading by example

What does it take to be a leader? For Vila & Son Landscaping Corp. founder Juan Carlos Vila, it includes:

1. Learn to trust and delegate
2. Be hands-on
3. Communicate
4. Set daily goals and do “Whatever it Takes” to achieve them
5. Be enthusiastic and motivate your employees
6. Commit to your employees and your clients



Juan Carlos Vila founded Vila & Son Landscaping Corp. with his father in 1981. It has since grown into a \$34 million company.

a choice. Whether it was estimating, driving to sites, planting, or collecting on the accounts — he did it all. While he is great at delegating, if something needs done, Vila will jump in and do it.

“We've been doing whatever it takes since the beginning. We continue to practice that, and it has been a big part of our success. Our customers see and appreciate that commitment,” he says.

### Family first

“My work and my family are the two most important things,” Vila explains. He has put those two together to form a company that is family oriented. At Vila & Son Landscaping Corp., people come first.

“I stay in touch with the employees, and we let them know we are only a phone call away if they need some-

thing. That is very important to them,” Vila says. “When we hire someone, we don't offer them a job. We offer them a career and stability for their family.”

### Communication and commitment

According to Vila, communication and commitment are at the heart of every successful leader.

“I believe in communication. I don't have to be at a job site at 5 a.m., but I am. I greet the employees and let them know I'm there for them. I try to set a good example. I've been very hands-on since the beginning. I try to be enthusiastic and motivated so they see my commitment to our success. If they see my vision and I challenge them to follow that vision and become part of the family, it will help them succeed as well,” he says. ■

# ALCA offers win-win situation

BY CHERYL HIGLEY

Seeking a way to build your leadership skills? Honing those skills while giving back and making a difference can be achieved by participating in industry associations such as the Associated Landscape Contractors of America.

"There is no better way to see the inside workings of an industry than to become active in association leadership. You can learn a lot more by doing than by being a spectator," says Kurt Kluznik, CCLP, of Painesville, OH-based Yardmaster, Inc. "If you want the industry to change, to improve, to become more professional and to generate more rewards, then make the commitment to be involved. Chances are you'll be doing something you enjoy anyway."

Networking, learning and exchanging ideas can help your business, and serving on committees offers the opportunity to expand your leadership horizons.

Kluznik has been an ALCA member for nearly 25 years and has been active in committee membership for more than 10. Currently a member of the board of directors, he says his leader-

ship skills have been developed by learning how to accomplish tasks by and for his industry peers.

"We're all used to paying people to get things done, which can create a false sense of importance and following. When other volunteers and industry experts validate your ideas and collaborate with you, self-esteem is enhanced as well as other leadership behaviors such as people skills, communication, etc.," he says.



Kurt Kluznik

Kluznik has seen how other companies are managed, things that have been tried and worked or didn't work. He has met new employees, industry consultants, new colleagues and professional speakers through the ALCA network.

Like Kluznik, Maria Candler, CLP, of James River Grounds Management, Inc. in Glen Allen, VA, has experienced first-hand the benefits of serving as an ALCA committee chair.



"The networking opportunities have been amazing," she says. "I have had the opportunity to build my public speaking skills and leadership abilities by being involved in and chairing several committees. We have been involved with ALCA for about seven years, and I owe our company's professional image, consistent growth and profitability to our relationships made through ALCA."

According to Debra Holder, executive vice president of ALCA, the involvement of industry colleagues is an important ingredient to making the organization so strong.

"The green industry has such giving people, and their involvement not only helps ALCA but the industry," she says. "Whenever someone shares their time, whether it's mentoring an emerging owner, working on a committee or serving on the board of directors, that provides a tremendous benefit."

For more information on becoming involved in an ALCA committee, call 800-395-2522 or visit [www.alca.org](http://www.alca.org). ■

## Preparing the Thrival Campaign

- 1 Name the campaign:** Give it a name or battle cry that the team can rally around. This is how to refer to it and ask a leader about it.
- 2 Just a detail:** Add the leader's name.
- 3 The specific result:** A culture of energy and well-being begins with the focus on a specific result. The specific result is written in a positive affirmation, focused on a specific fundamental business issue and is a challenge to the leader to accomplish.
- 4 Dynamic Action #1:** This is the foundation that the other actions build on. It is written in a positive affirmation and has a clear completion point to it.
- 5 The "Who":** Who will assist you with this dynamic action?
- 6 The "When":** After the dynamic action is written, follow it with a date, which creates a sense of urgency and accountability.
- 7 Dynamic actions completed:** This is a time for celebration when the final action is completed and the specific result is achieved. The leader has systematically completed a plan. The specific results produce the culture of energy

**THRIVAL CAMPAIGN**

CAMPAIGN \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIFIC RESULT \_\_\_\_\_

	Action	Who	When
Dynamic Action 5:		---	---
Dynamic Action 4:		---	---
Dynamic Action 3:		---	---
Dynamic Action 2:		---	---
Dynamic Action 1:		---	---

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Company: \_\_\_\_\_

The Thrival Campaign is a form used in JP Horizons' Leadership Advancement Programs to help leaders learn and understand the process of turning ideas into action. Download the form at [landscapemanagement.net](http://landscapemanagement.net).



# By the numbers

BY DAVID ZERFOSS / PRESIDENT HUSQVARNA

## Vision, mission & values

**H**usqvarna is pleased to sponsor the ALCA Leadership Advancement Program. To thrive in today's economy, those of us working in the green industry must further develop our leadership skills and adopt winning attitudes. The ultimate goal, of course, is to be more successful in everything we do.

Over the years, I have found that the surest path to success is a singularity of focus. At Husqvarna, we keep our focus sharp by insisting that all our actions, decisions and planning are guided by our corporate vision, mission and values, as well as Husqvarna's own "BE-Attitudes." At this point, you may be thinking, "These are things that only big companies need to worry about." In a way, you're right. But how do you think small companies become big ones?

Think about your own business for a moment. How was 2002 for you? How about the last five years? What's in store for 2003 or the next five years? Are your customers satisfied? Are your employees committed? Is your company growing as it should? Do you have programs in place to foster continuous improvements in quality, expertise and customer service? If you were able to answer these questions, you are already thinking about the right issues, and your commitment to these details can only be strengthened by developing statements of mission, vision and values for your own company. Let's take a look at those concepts, using Husqvarna as an example.

### Purpose

**Husqvarna: "For our customers, associates and stockholders to grow and prosper."**

### Husqvarna's BE-Attitudes

- BE** customer focused (internally and externally).
  - BE** positive.
  - BE** compassionate and respectful.
  - BE** a good listener.
  - BE** forthright and communicate thoroughly.
  - BE** honest and trustworthy.
  - BE** on time.
  - BE** professional.
  - BE** cooperative.
  - BE** responsible and follow through completely.
  - BE** flexible.
  - BE** low maintenance.
  - BE** part of the solution.
- = BE-ing a LEADER!**

This is where it all starts. Why does your company exist? That's the fundamental question you must be able to answer before you can address anything else.

### Vision

**Husqvarna: "To be the No.1-selling brand in the commercial and premium consumer OPE market in each of our product categories."**

Your company's vision is where you want your company to go. It's a simple, focused and ambitious statement that paints a vivid portrait of your company in the future. When developing your own vision, aim high. Think about future

possibilities and breakthroughs, results beyond what you typically get or expect. Your vision should be the unreasonable target in the distance that you consistently aim to achieve. What do I mean by "unreasonable"? Take the example of John Kennedy declaring the United States would put a man on the moon within the decade. At the time this was a very unreasonable goal given the current scientific knowledge. Yet, the world marveled the day that Neil Armstrong walked on the moon.

### Mission

**Husqvarna: "To provide and support the infrastructure necessary to achieve our purpose and vision."**

Simply stated, your mission is how you achieve your vision. It signifies your company's commitment to do the necessary things to get ever closer to that target you established for yourself when you developed your vision. When you consider decisions such as whether to acquire new equipment or to invest in additional training for your crews, ask yourself if those decisions are consistent with your mission and, ultimately, how it will impact your company's pursuit of its vision.

### Values

**The eagle eyes integrity above all else.**

**Husqvarna's EAGLE Values:**

- Exceed Expectations
- Attitude of Serving Others
- Growth – Professional and Personal
- Learning for a Successful Future
- Environmental Responsibility
- Speed – Respond Quickly and Effectively

Everyone at Husqvarna strives to be like the eagle – majestically soaring each day to new heights and proudly representing



**Husqvarna President Dave Zerfoss congratulates an employee who has excelled in the pursuit of the company's EAGLE Values.**

the best in everyone. Your company's stated values should outline the type of working culture you desire. The values you choose for your company set the stage for you and your employees to always be at their best. By consistently adhering to your company values, you

and your team are uniquely equipped to make decisions that support your mission and help you achieve your vision.

Finally, I encourage you to take a look at the Husqvarna BE-Attitudes. These 13 simple statements go beyond our corporate values and let our entire company know, in great detail, how we are expected to treat our customers, our co-workers, our vendors and everyone else we come in contact with.

No two companies go about this the same way, but there's no denying how powerful and effective statements of vision, mission and values can benefit your company. Do what works best for you, but do it. Take a moment to sit down with the leaders in your company and think about future opportunities for your company. Develop a vision statement, a mission statement and a set of company values that are unique, personal and far-reaching.

Writing these statements down, however, is just the start. Without communication, follow up and commitment, they are just so many pretty words. Share them with everyone in your company and make them conspicuously visible at all times. Then periodically revisit your company's actions, decisions and progress to see how you're doing. Most of all, lead by example; your personal commitment to these principles will be contagious.

May you grow and prosper and achieve unreasonable future possibilities! ■

## How can the landscape industry find and attract future leaders?

- 1** Weekly newspaper advertisements — whether or not you have openings ... Seek people that want to learn, even if they don't have industry experience ... Job profile. (Ed Romm, K&D Lawn Care Service, Norfolk, VA)
- 2** Establish and maintain meaningful relationships with university professors who promote your company to the students and provide interviewing opportunities to graduates. (LeeAnn Fox, One-Source Landscape & Golf Services, Inc., Tampa, FL)
- 3** Seek employees who exhibit the following traits: Attitude, initiative, ability to communicate, work ethic and high values. I felt I could train most other skills, but it is darn near impossible to instill those five things in people. If they have those attributes, they will become great leaders! (Jud Griggs, JP Horizons, Naples, FL)
- 4** Buy out a small company ... student career days ... clear and very specific job/career descriptions along with an organizational chart. (Mike Russo, Russo Lawn and Landscape, Inc., Windsor Locks, CT)
- 5** Future leaders for our company are developed through good recruiting practices. This is done by finding the best young superstars in our business or in the local community college system. It takes a lot of work to find a great leader. (Bob Franey, Total Landscape Inc., St. Louis, MO)



“Be proud of the industry we are in and represent, and future leaders will find you. We are not an industry of Moms & Pops anymore. We are big business. The best recruits are the people you deal with every day who believe in offering customer service that is second to none.”

— William Ten Eyck, Regional Manager, Skinner Nurseries



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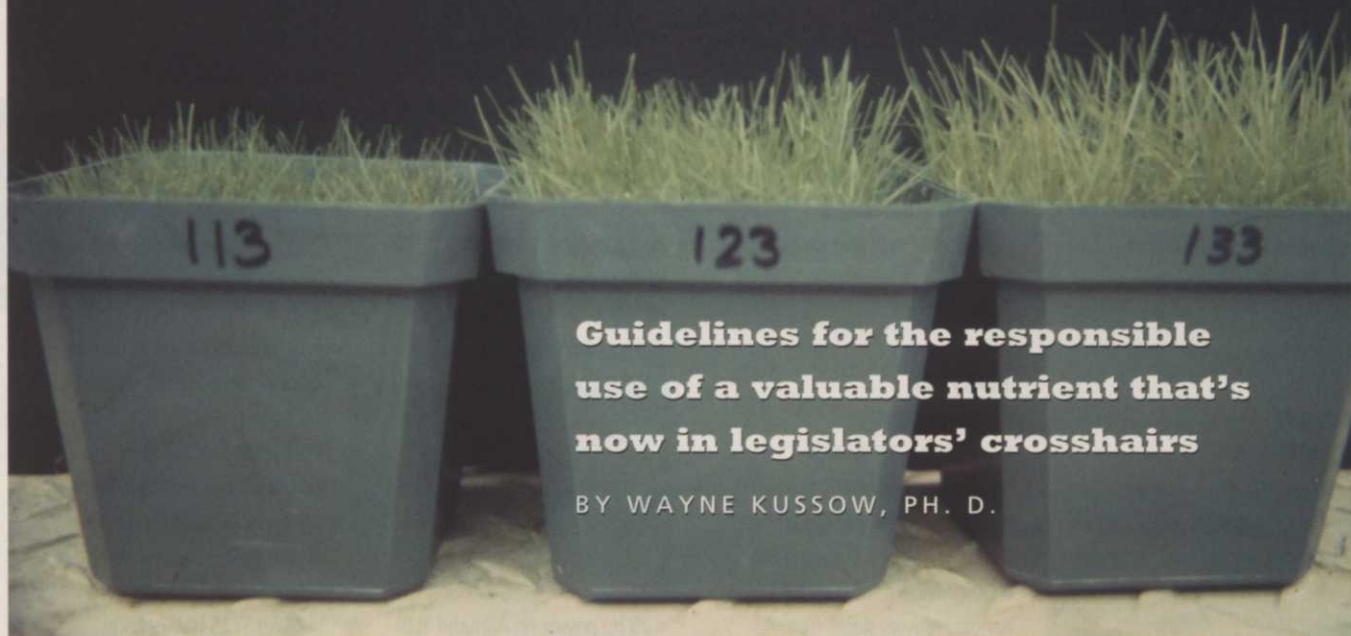
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# Phosphorus

## fact & fiction



**Guidelines for the responsible use of a valuable nutrient that's now in legislators' crosshairs**

BY WAYNE KUSSOW, PH. D.

Figure 1. Phosphorus deficiency (left) and phosphorus sufficiency (right) in turfgrass.

**C**lassification of phosphorus as a primary plant nutrient is well deserved. Energy-rich phosphate bonds are what fuel the metabolic machinery of plant cells. A limiting supply of the nutrient invariably slows growth of all the turfgrass plant's organs — shoots, roots, tillers, stolons and rhizomes. In fact, it's a slow-down in growth that's the first symptom of phosphorus deficiency in turfgrass. The grass typically has a dark green color, but just isn't growing as fast as it should (Figure 1). In cases of even more severe deficiency, red

pigments begin to accumulate in the leaves, and they develop a purplish coloration.

### A strong start

Phosphorus deficiency in turfgrass is most readily seen during its establishment. While plant seeds are typically high in phosphorus, turfgrass seeds are so tiny that young seedlings quickly exhaust the seed supply. They're then dependent on fertilizer and soil to meet their phosphorus needs. If these phosphorus supplies are inadequate, the grass is slow to establish (Figure 2), resulting in thin stands prone to invasion by weeds and washing

by heavy rains. The answer to this problem is starter fertilizer.

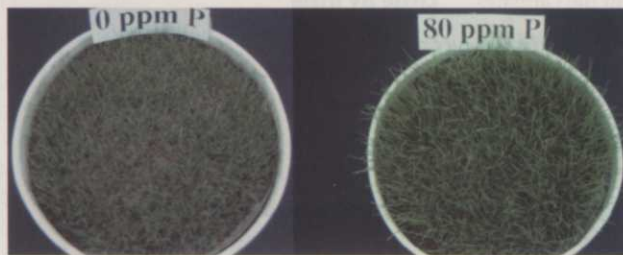
In most cases, applying turf starter fertilizer at the rate of 1 lb. N/M (M = 1,000 sq. ft.) will suffice. Typical grades of starter fertilizer are 13-26-12, 21-28-7, 16-25-13 and 6-12-8. Thus, at 1 lb. N/M, you're applying 1.3 to 2 lbs. P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>/M. If you know or suspect that the soil is low in phosphorus, increase the rate of starter fertilizer application to 1.5 lb. N/M.

The rate of starter fertilizer application



Figure 2. Effect of starter fertilizer phosphate on turfgrass establishment. No starter fertilizer was applied to the plots in the upper left and lower right corners.

Figure 2a. Importance of starter phosphate during turfgrass establishment. Note the difference in turfgrass growth with adequate levels of phosphate.



#### How much is enough?

Determining whether the existing levels of soil phosphorus are adequate can only be done through testing.

One testing option is

is but one part of the task of meeting the phosphorus requirements of turfgrass seedlings. The other part is soil placement. The fertilizer phosphate needs to be in the immediate vicinity of the seedling's juvenile root system. Lightly raking the starter fertilizer into the soil is all that's required. Incorporating the fertilizer to greater depths reduces its effectiveness unless you increase the application rate accordingly.

Deep placement without a rate increase results in a reduction in turfgrass root development. This can be seen in Figure 3, where the same rate of starter fertilizer was incorporated to different depths in the soil.

There are instances where turfgrass response to starter fertilizer phosphorus may not be seen. This arises when the soil or topsoil brought in has high levels of soil test phosphorus. As a general rule, when the soil contains two to three more times soil test phosphorus than is needed by established turfgrass, the chances of seeing a response to starter fertilizer phosphorus are low.

If, for example, the soil testing labora-

tory you patronize says that 20 ppm (40 lb./acre) soil test phosphorus is adequate for established turfgrass, then about 60 ppm is adequate for establishment. Why this difference? It's the result of established turfgrass having a dense, fibrous root system that's efficient in taking up soil phosphorus. Juvenile turfgrass root systems need time to develop capacity to effectively forage for soil phosphorus.

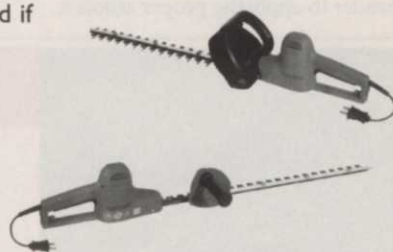
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to collect grass clippings and have them analyzed. Lawn turfgrasses almost invariably display visual signs of phosphorus deficiency when the clippings contain 0.25% phosphorus or less. But there's a "critical nutrient range" wherein the grass doesn't exhibit visual deficiency symptoms and will produce additional growth if the phosphorus supply is increased.

The critical range for most lawn grasses is 0.25% to 0.35% phosphorus in the clippings. Turfgrasses whose clippings contain more than 0.35% phosphorus are adequately supplied with the nutrient. While clipping analysis can signal the need for more fertilizer phosphorus, it doesn't give us a notion of how much to apply. That type of information can only come from soil testing.

The recommendation here is that you utilize the services of a local soil testing laboratory. They're familiar with the soils and turfgrasses in your area and should therefore be able to provide you with the best recommendations possible.

Let's assume your soil tests indicate a need to make adjustments in the phosphorus levels. Most labs will indicate how much phosphorus is required to adjust the soil from the existing to the optimum level. To follow such a recommendation, you have to purchase a phosphate fertilizer and calibrate a spreader to apply the proper amount.



### Little by little

A simpler approach, which entails gradual adjustment of soil phosphorus, is based on the fact that lawn grass clippings contain a remarkably constant ratio of N to P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> to K<sub>2</sub>O. That ratio is 4:1:3. This tells us that when lawn clippings are removed, this is the ratio in which these nutrients are being removed and have to be replenished if soil tests are to be kept reasonably constant.

On the other hand, applying phosphorus with a fertilizer whose N:P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> is not close to 4:1 will either result in a buildup or depletion of soil test phosphorus. Applying fertilizers with N:P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> ratios of, say, 3:1 or 2:1, contain more phosphorus than the grass will utilize and will gradually increase soil levels of the nutrient. Ratios of greater than 4:1, such as 6:1 or 10:1, will have the opposite effect on soil phosphorus.

Utilizing this fact allows us to adjust soil levels of phosphorus simply by choosing

Figure 3. Influence of the depth of starter fertilizer placement on turfgrass growth during establishment.

and applying a fertilizer with the proper ratio of N to P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>. Keep in mind that fertilizer ratios are calculated by dividing the fertilizer grade by its lowest number. For example, a fertilizer with a grade of 24-6-12 has a ratio of 24/6: 6/6:12/6, which is 4:1:2.

This approach to adjusting soil test levels of phosphorus works fine when lawn clippings are being removed. In many instances, clippings aren't being removed from lawns and some phosphorus is being recycled. Then what's the amount of phosphorus required to make adjustments in soil levels of the nutrient?

The graph in Figure 4 gives us a good first answer to this question. The graph was

*continued on page 60*



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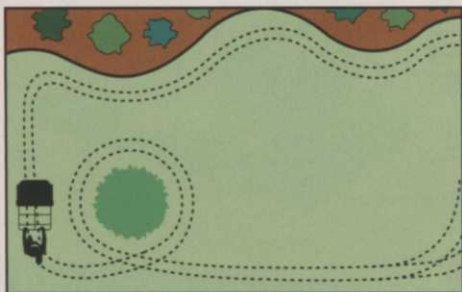
  
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developed with data collected from a Kentucky bluegrass lawn established on a silt loam soil in southern Wisconsin that received 4 lb. N/M/season.

The graph tells us that, under these conditions, it takes about 1 lb. P2O5/M per year to maintain soil test phosphorus levels when clippings are removed, but only one-half this amount, or 0.5 lb. P2O5/M per year, when clippings aren't removed. These numbers will change somewhat depending on soil type, the annual N rate and geographic location, but provide a good starting point in deciding how to manage soil phosphorus on lawns. The indications are that applying more than 0.5 lb. P2O5/M/season where mulch

mowing is practiced will gradually increase soil test phosphorus. Applying less than this amount will have the opposite result.

**The blame game**

Effective management of phosphorus in lawns is not only good for the grass but essential for lawn care professionals. Whether it's true or not, phosphorus in runoff water from turf has been fingered as one of the causes of the degradation of the quality of surface waters in urban areas.

Recent legislation in Minnesota now bans phosphorus use on lawns with high soil phosphorus in the seven county area surrounding metropolitan St. Paul and Minneapolis. An exception is made for starter fertilizer. Numerous small commu-

nities scattered around the Midwest have passed similar ordinances. In Wisconsin, the intent is to require that any five or more contiguous acres of turf be fertilized according to soil tests. No phosphorus applications will be allowed where soil tests are high or excessive.

The concern is how quickly soil phosphorus will be depleted to the point where supplies are insufficient for maintenance of high-quality turf. The graphs in Figure 4 address this concern.

Per those graphs and for the conditions under which they were developed, soil P declined 4.5 ppm per year when clippings were removed and no fertilizer phosphorus was applied. The comparable figure when

continued on page 62

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clippings weren't removed was a decrease of 1.8 ppm P per year. We find that many of our lawns have soils tests in the range of 60 ppm while we consider 20 ppm optimum. Under these circumstances, the soil P can be allowed to decline about 40 ppm without experiencing a reduction in turf quality. Dividing this 40 ppm by a decrease of 4.5 ppm per year when clippings are removed suggests we can go about eight years without applying phosphorus. With clippings returned, the figure is 40/1.8, or 22 years. I wouldn't wait that long in either case. Rather, I'd test the soil every three to four years and track the rate of decrease in soil test phosphorus for my particular situation.

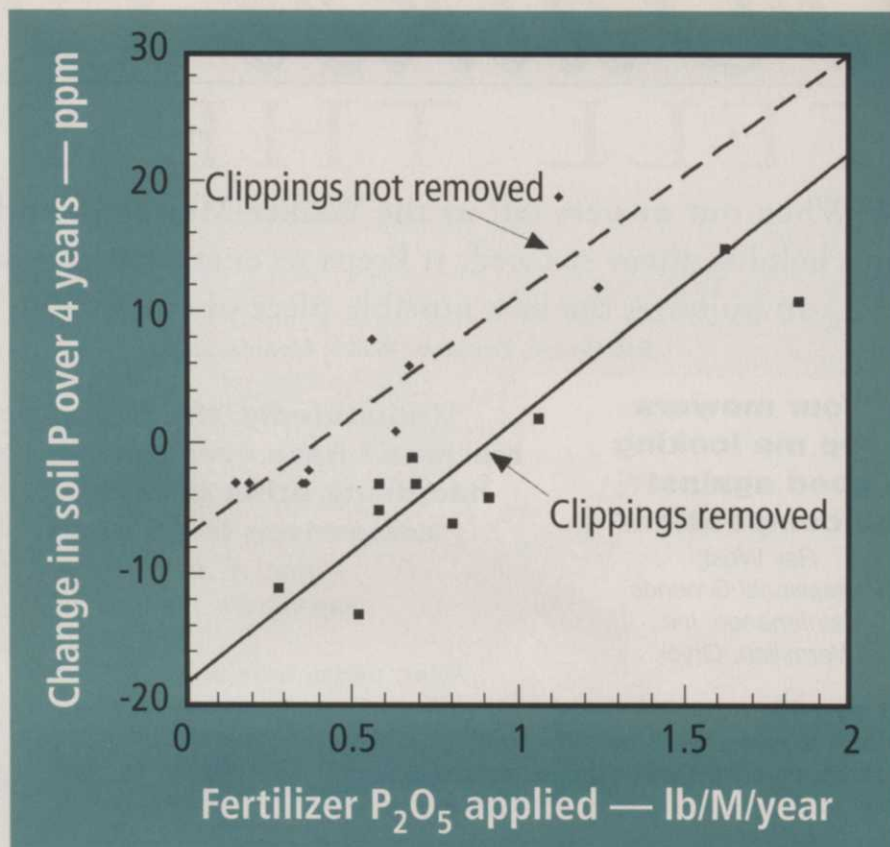
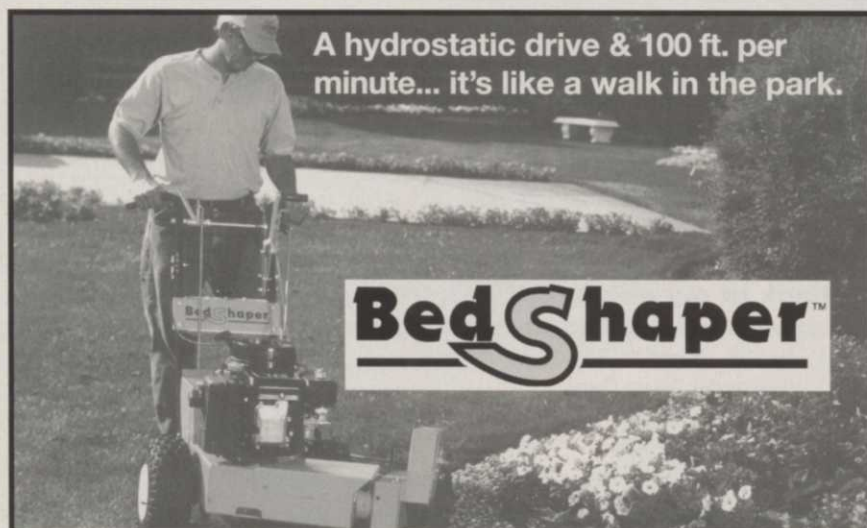


Figure 4. Influence of the annual rate of phosphorus application on the changes in soil test phosphorus after four years for a Kentucky bluegrass lawn with and without clipping removal.



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Circle 129

#### Break with tradition

The tradition of always applying fertilizers that contain phosphorus is a deeply ingrained practice. This leaves many people concerned that not applying phosphorus every year will cause turf quality to decline.

Where soil phosphorus levels are high, there's no increase in clipping phosphorus when fertilizer phosphorus is applied. In this case, applying phosphorus is a waste and not an environmentally sound practice.

The growing trend in regulation of phosphorus use on turf is a clear signal that the turf management industry needs to be prepared to react in a safe and positive manner. **LM**

— The author is a professor in the Department of Soil Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He can be reached at 608/262-2633 or [wrkussow@facstaff.wisc.edu](mailto:wrkussow@facstaff.wisc.edu).





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Circle No. 131

# solutions center

FLEET MANAGEMENT

## In with the



### This business owner relies upon professionals to buy and sell his vehicles for him

**J**eff Corcorran doesn't have time to deal with every aspect of his business. The president/owner of Landscape Management Services in Houston directs a company that manages more than 100 commercial and residential accounts. Its 85 employees generate annual revenues exceeding \$3 million.

The last thing he needs to worry about is when to sell his old trucks and buy new ones to maintain his fleet of 20 vehicles. He leaves it up to a company like Enterprise Fleet Services that

knows all about "cycling," which is the term the fleet management industry uses for knowing when to dispose of older vehicles.

"We not only save considerable dollars, we save considerable time by outsourcing to fleet management experts," says Corcorran.

#### **The problem: old, unreliable vehicles**

The poor economy combined with a soft used car market has caused many business owners and fleet managers to hold onto older vehicles longer. But higher maintenance and fuel costs, frequent breakdowns and

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**Company:** Landscape Management Services

**President:** Jeff Corcorran

**2002 gross revenue:** \$3 million plus

**Employees:** 85

**Services:** Design/build, maintenance, plant care

**Customer mix:** 55% residential, 45% commercial

expired warranties are more counterproductive in the long run due to missed appointments and lost productivity.

#### **The solution: cycling**

How and when a company decides to sell its vehicles depends on time of year, mileage, vehicle type, age and maintenance history.

"A good way for a business owner to determine how and when to sell vehicles in its fleet is by performing a vehicle analysis that looks at each vehicle in the entire fleet and how the company uses its vehicles," says Steve Bloom, vice president of Enterprise Fleet Services, which specializes in serving businesses with 15 to 125 vehicles. "From that analysis, the strongest time of the year to re-market or cycle is determined for each vehicle."

Many fleet services companies have vehicle replacement cycling systems that ensure vehicles are replaced at appropriate intervals to achieve optimum performance and the best resale value. Specially trained re-marketing professionals can help business owners take the guesswork out of this process. These programs consider everything from future trends and the current used car sales market to vehicle warranties, mileage and the possible wear and tear a business will inflict on a vehicle.

"By looking at and reviewing automotive trends throughout the year and analyzing how each customer uses their vehicles, it is possible to take the guesswork out of the process," says Bloom. **LM**

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Circle 140

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*continued on page 68*

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# products



continued from page 66

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For more information contact Dakota at 800/477-8415 or [www.dakotapeat.com](http://www.dakotapeat.com) / circle no. 263

## Blow it away

Husqvarna's 155Bt backpack blower features 183 mph maximum air velocity to make short work of leaves and grass clippings. The trigger throttle is conveniently located on the tube, and a padded harness with load-reducing hipbelt offers operator comfort.

For more information contact Husqvarna at 800/487-5962 or [www.husqvarna.com](http://www.husqvarna.com) / circle no. 264

## Protect those plants

Nemasys from Becker Underwood protects plants from fungus gnat (*bradysia* species) larvae, which can cause devastating damage by attacking roots. The company claims that it's easy to apply, completely safe to use, and isn't EPA regulated because it poses no threat to

people, plants or beneficial insects.

For more information contact Becker Underwood at 800/232-5907 or [www.beckerunderwood.com](http://www.beckerunderwood.com) / circle no. 265

## Tech protection

NSN, The Toro Company's technical support network for irrigation central control system customers, is now shipping Toro central controller computers pre-loaded with Microsoft Windows XP and Phoenix FirstWare cME solution as a first-of-its-kind disaster recovery software product family. This means a backup "image" of their original operating system and application files is stored in a highly-compressed format in a special area of the hard drive, protected from viruses, software corruption, etc.

For more information contact Toro at 888/676-8676 or [www.toro.com](http://www.toro.com) / circle no. 266

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Tailgate Assist System

US Patent 6,126,223



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Circle 141



# events

WHAT, WHEN & WHERE

## February

**17-18 Landscape Design Workshop /**  
Lincoln, NB; Nebraska Nursery and Landscape  
Association; 402/554-3752

**18-22 Cornell University Short Course  
— An Organic Approach to Turf  
Management /** Long Island, NY;  
607/255-1792

**19-20 WinterGreen Expo & Conference /**  
Warrensville Heights, OH; Ohio Landscapers  
Assn.; 800/335-6521

**19-21 LCA Winter Workshop /** Bethesda,  
MD; 301/948-0810; [www.lcamddcva.org](http://www.lcamddcva.org)

**21-26 Western Canada Turfgrass  
Association Conference & Show /**  
Kamloops, British Columbia; 604/467-2564

**21-23 National Floriculture Forum /**  
Columbus, OH; 614/292-3708;  
<http://hcs.osu.edu/opgc>

**22-2 Southern Spring Show /** Charlotte,  
NC; 704/376-6594

**24 Southeast Regional Conference /**  
Suffern, NY; New York State Turfgrass  
Association; 800/873-8873; [www.nysta.org](http://www.nysta.org)

**24-28 Indiana-Illinois Turfgrass Short  
Course /** Willowbrook, IL; 765/494-8039

**24-28 Turf and Landscape  
Management Short Course /** Louisville,  
KY; 502/425-4482

**25-27 Western PA Turf Conference &  
Trade Show /** Monroeville, PA; 814/863-3475

**25-28 TPI Midwinter Conference /**  
Birmingham, England; 800/405-8873

**26 New Jersey Landscape 2003 /**  
Secaucus, NJ; New Jersey Landscape  
Contractors Association; 201/664-6310

**26 Connecticut Turf & Landscape  
Conference /** Hartford, CT; 203/699-9912

**26-28 TPI Midwinter Conference /**  
Birmingham, England; Turfgrass Producers  
International; 800/405-8873; [www.turf-grassod.org](http://www.turf-grassod.org)

**28-1 Ecological Landscaping Winter  
Conference and Eco-Marketplace /**  
Boxborough, MA; 978/425-0101

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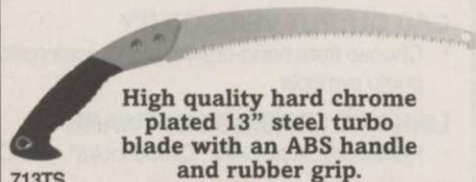
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## March

**3-7 Virginia Turfgrass Council Short  
Course /** Charlottesville, VA; 540/942-8873

**4-5 Spring Training Conference /** Aurora,  
CO; Colorado Association of Lawn Care  
Professionals; 303/850-7587

**4-5 Ohio State University Sports  
Turf/Athletic Field Short Course /**  
Columbus, OH; 614/292-4230

**5-6 MDLA Trade Show and Convention /**  
Novi, MI; Metropolitan Detroit Landscape  
Association; 800/354-6352

**5-9 Wichita Lawn, Flower and Garden  
Show /** Wichita, KS; 316/721-8740

Circle 139



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February 2003

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**LANDSCAPING/GROUNDS CARE FACILITIES**

- 05  290 Sports Complexes
- 06  295 Parks
- 07  305 Schools, Colleges & Universities
  - Other Grounds Care Facilities (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPLIERS AND CONSULTANTS**

- 08  355 Extension Agents/Consultants for Horticulture
- 09  360 Sod Growers, Turf Seed Growers & Nurseries
- 10  365 Dealers, Distributors, Formulators & Brokers
- 11  370 Manufacturers
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Which of the following best describes your title? (fill in ONE only)**

- 12  10 **Executive/Administrator** - President, Owner, Partner, Director, General Manager, Chairman of the Board, Purchasing Agent, Director of Physical Plant
- 13  20 **Manager/Superintendent** - Arborist, Architect, Landscape/Grounds Manager, Superintendent, Foreman, Supervisor
- 14  30 **Government Official** - Government Commissioner, Agent, Other Government Official
- 15  40 **Specialist** - Forester, Consultant, Agronomist, Pilot, Instructor, Researcher, Horticulturist, Certified Specialist
- 16  50 **Other Titled and Non-Titled Personnel** (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**3. SERVICES PERFORMED (fill in ALL that apply)**

- 17  A Mowing
- 18  B Turf Insect Control
- 19  C Tree Care
- 20  D Turf Aeration
- 21  E Irrigation Services
- 22  F Turf Fertilization
- 23  G Turf Disease Control
- 24  H Ornamental Care
- 25  I Landscape Design
- 26  J Turf Weed Control
- 27  K Paving, Deck & Patio Installation
- 28  L Pond/Lake Care
- 29  M Landscape Installation
- 30  N Snow Removal
- 31  O Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**4a. Do you specify, purchase or influence the selection of landscape products?**

58  Yes 59  No

**4b. If yes, indicate which products you buy or specify: (fill in ALL that apply)**

- 32  A Aerators
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- 34  C Chain Saws
- 35  D Chipper-Shredders
- 36  E De-icers
- 37  F Fertilizers
- 38  G Fungicides
- 39  H Herbicides
- 40  I Insecticides
- 41  J Line Trimmers
- 42  K Mowers
- 43  L Snow Removal Equipment
- 44  M Sprayers
- 45  N Spreaders
- 46  O Sweepers
- 47  P Tractors
- 48  Q Truck Trailers/Attachments
- 49  R Trucks
- 50  S Turfseed
- 51  T Utility Vehicles

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**5a. If so, how often do you use it?**

54  A Daily 55  B Weekly 56  C Monthly 57  D Occasionally

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101	113	125	137	149	161	173	185	197	209	221	233	245	257	269	281	293	305
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104	116	128	140	152	164	176	188	200	212	224	236	248	260	272	284	296	308
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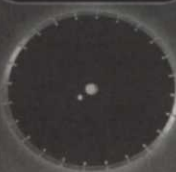
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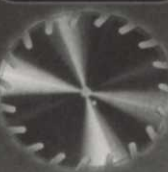
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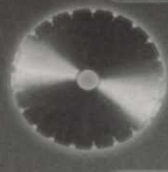
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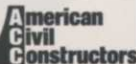
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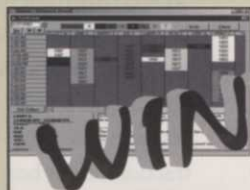
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# best practices

GUIDELINES TO HELP AN INDUSTRY GROW

## growth

### Five proven steps to build upon

BY BRUCE WILSON

In the landscape maintenance business, whether it's commercial or residential, good work and good customer service will lead to many growth opportunities. The business will receive plenty of growth opportunities from happy customers' referrals, and supplementing those referrals with a consistent sales effort will give the company good growth momentum. Of course, a new business doesn't have a large customer base, so sales growth needs a boost from a strong sales effort at the outset.

Here are five ways to grow your landscape maintenance business:



#### 1 Build route density.

In the maintenance business, route density is the key to profitability. Building your business exclusively on referrals is dangerous. In order to grow, you end up taking all or most referral business. Referrals don't always come in from a tight geographic area, so density isn't maintained.

#### 2 Profile and target the most profitable customers.

Not all customers are equally profitable. Some customers spend more on enhancements than others. Profile your customers regularly and monitor profitability. Which is your most profitable segment? Is it offices, homeowners' associations or hotels? Which segment gives you the most enhancement sales per contract dollar? You should know this and sell accordingly.

#### 3 Build your bench.

Preparation for growth is crucial. Many companies pass on growth opportunities because they don't have the staff to take on new growth. The best companies don't miss growth



Bruce Wilson

opportunities because they build their bench and have people ready to handle those opportunities.

#### 4 Build cash reserves for growth.

Another impediment to growth is lack of capital. It's important to build your cash reserves so that when growth opportunities arise, the company has the capital to fund growth. My partner, Tom Oyler, refers to this as "not eating your seed corn."

#### 5 Maintain a consistent sales effort.

The fifth growth principle is to maintain a consistent sales effort. Companies tend to drop their sales effort when growth stretches them. When they need sales again, they start over with their sales effort. This doesn't work. It takes time to build up sales traction, so it's best not to lose it. I believe in continuing to sell. If you get more work than you can handle, start selectively dropping unprofitable customers for profitable ones.

I once read or heard from someone that the key to

growth is to remove the barriers to growth. If you think of it this way, you eliminate the two things that prevent you from growing: lack of people and cash. Plan ahead for people development and manage your finances so you have the capital to grow. The key is fiscal discipline and maintaining profitable customers.

### Sound off

Share your growth story with our readers. Contact Managing Editor Jason Stahl at [jstahl@advanstar.com](mailto:jstahl@advanstar.com). We'll consider it for a future issue of LM.

To comment on this month's "Best Management" column by Bruce Wilson, contact him at [bwilson@wilson-oyler.com](mailto:bwilson@wilson-oyler.com). Bruce spent 30 years with Environmental Care, Inc., before partnering with Thomas L. Oyler to form the Wilson-Oyler Group, which offers consulting services ([www.wilson-oyler.com](http://www.wilson-oyler.com)).

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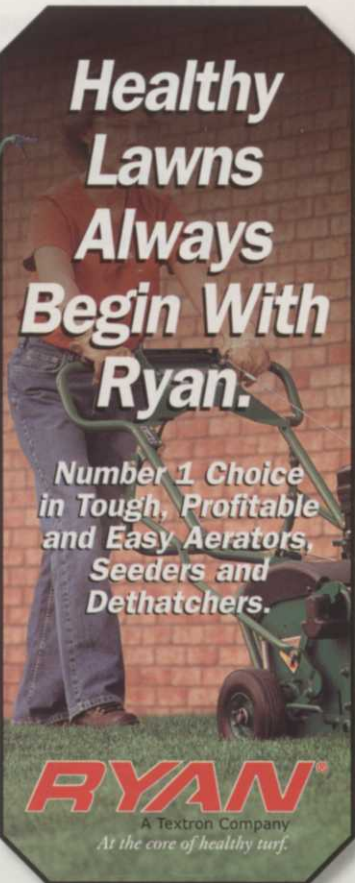


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