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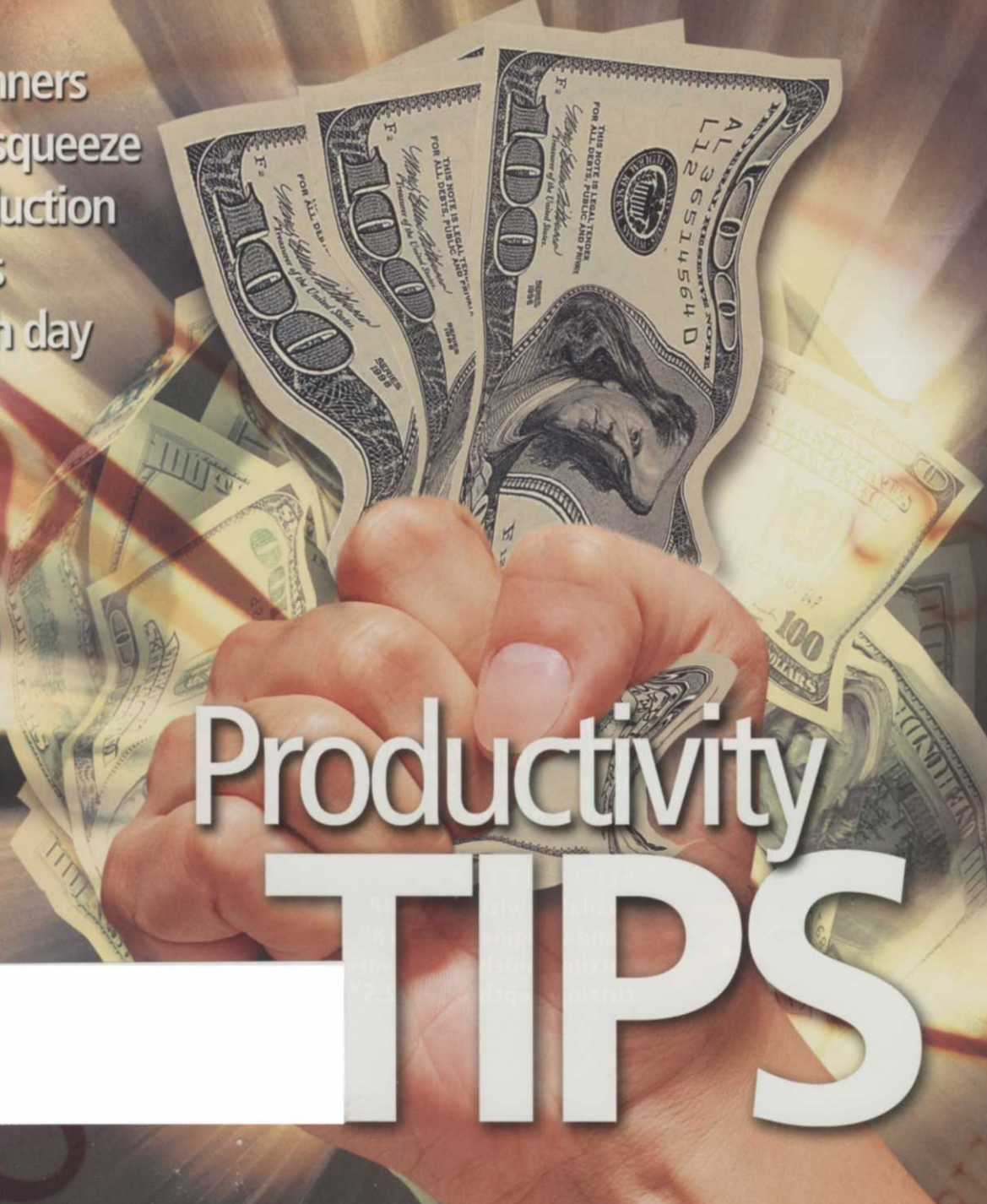
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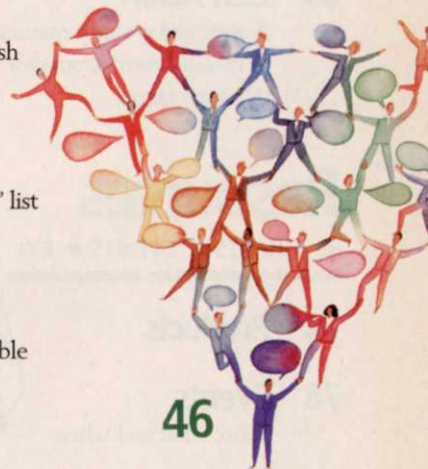
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Contributors

BUSINESS

WHO'S WHO IN LM



Mike Archer is a Market Development and Research Coordinator for Milorganite with more than 30 years of experience in the fertilizer industry. In his spare time, he enjoys photography, hiking and personal work trips to Central America. As he says, "When you drink as much coffee as I do, you go directly to the source." Mike provides a detailed overview of granular fertilizers starting on page 52.

Bob Coulter is "the man" when it comes to understanding people. For 22 years, he served as a coach and people developer for the hospitality industry, including playing key leadership roles for ClubCorp, Marriott and Radisson.

Whether it was on the front lines with customers or in the boardroom, Coulter's been there, done that. This past year he joined the JP Horizons team. Turn to page 26. We're sure that you'll appreciate his "dashboard" take on business management.



Crystal Rose-Fricker is President of Pure Seed Testing, Inc., Vice-President of Research for Turf Seed, Inc., and Corporate Secretary and Treasurer for HybriGene, Inc. She earned her B.S. in Crop Production and her M.S. in Plant Breeding at Oregon State University. As president of Pure Seed Testing, Inc., Rose-Fricker oversees one of the country's top private turfgrass breeding programs. She has developed or co-developed more than 173 turf and forage grass cultivars. Her primary research activities involve developing cool-season turfgrasses with improved disease resistance and resistance to abiotic stresses, including salt and herbicides. Crystal joins with colleague Dr. Melodee Fraser (below) to explain their unique program on page 36.

Whether it was on the front lines with customers or in the boardroom, Coulter's been there, done that. This past year he joined the JP Horizons team. Turn to page 26. We're sure that you'll appreciate his "dashboard" take on business management.

Dr. Melodee Fraser holds more degrees than a thermometer. On her resume is a B.S. in Turf Management from Mississippi State University, an M.S. in Turf Management from Mississippi State University and a Ph.D. in Turfgrass Breeding from Rutgers University. As Director of Research-East for Pure Seed Testing, Inc., Rolesville, NC, her primary research has focused on the development of tall fescue cultivars with improved resistance to brown patch. She has also pursued the development of improved turf-type cultivars of bermudagrass and zoysiagrass, and the evaluation of creeping bentgrass, Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass germplasm for use in the southeastern U.S.



Danny Miller has been the Director of Golf & Grounds at The Breakers in Palm Beach, FL, for eight years. In his long grounds career he's directed maintenance operations for not only 5-star and 5-diamond resorts but historical landmark properties. Danny has earned so many grounds awards that he's running out of wall space. The key?

"Treat your grounds like a work of art," he says. You'll see what he means on page 68 of this issue.

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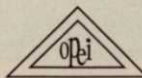
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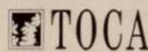
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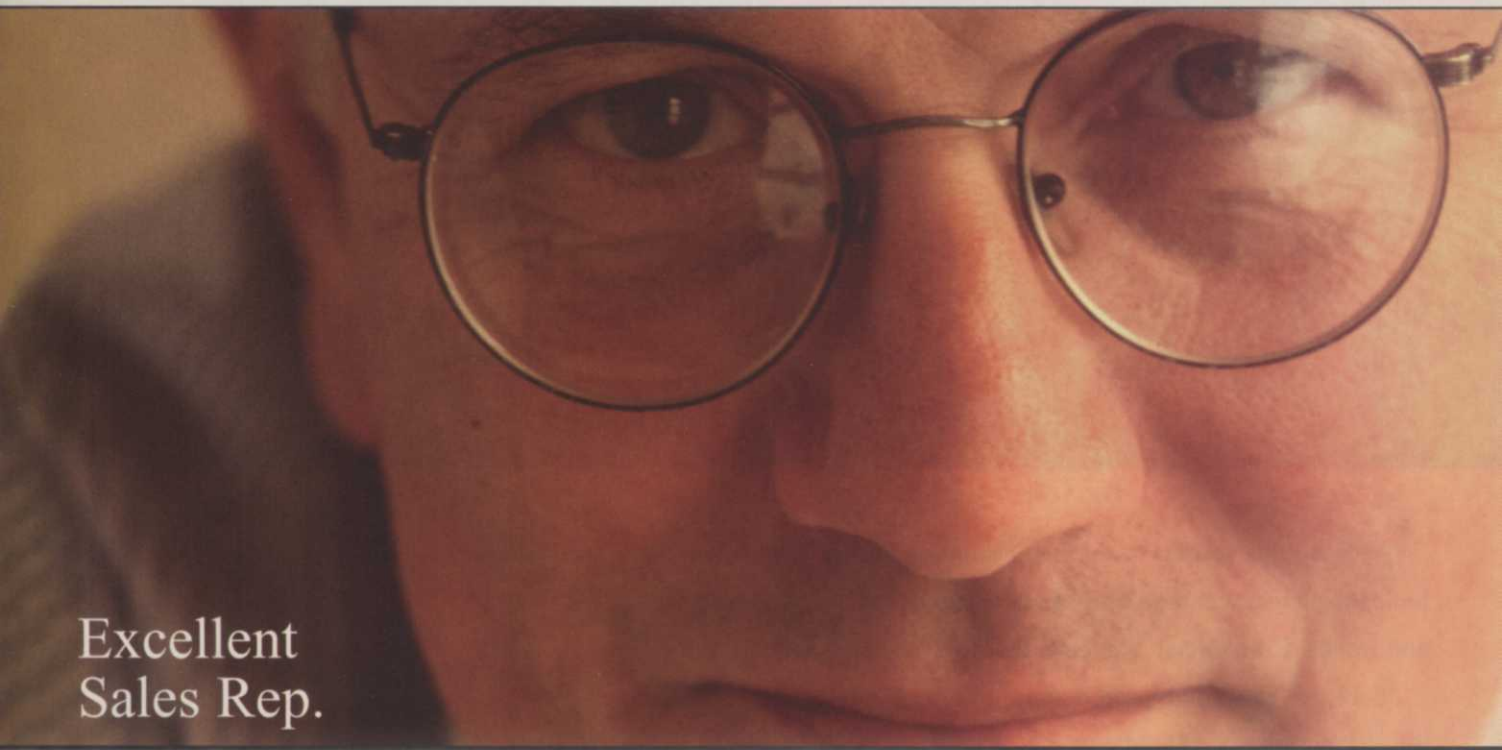


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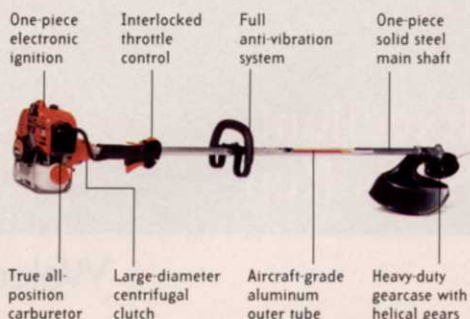


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New tricks for this old dog

BY RON HALL / Editor-in-Chief

When we approached chief designer Lisa Lehman about making several structural changes to *Landscape Management*, she said: "The only reason to make changes would be to improve the magazine."

We kept coming back to that statement as we examined changes that would make this publication even more valuable to you, our readers and our friends.

First, we felt we needed to better package and label the various sections of the magazine. Designer Carrie Parkhill turned her considerable creative energies to the task. We think she's done an excellent job of organizing and freshening the magazine's appearance. But, yours are the opinions that matter most.

Also, discover several new columns within our pages, including one focused specifically on lawn care applicators and featuring the words of respected PLCAA members. Also, our new "From the Shop" column will offer information on equipment, including maintenance and repair tips.

Finally, we hope you enjoy the "Innovations" page that leads off our technology coverage each month. This page spotlights new equipment or products that will make a difference in your operations

So, you see, an old dog like us can still learn new tricks. Old dog, you say? Well, not exactly, but we've been around a while.

A little history

With this issue, *Landscape Management* starts its 42nd season. No other business publication serving the professional landscape, lawn care and grounds markets can

make that claim. Have we changed over the years? You bet. If you were in the Green Industry in January 1963, you would have received the magazine with the title, *Weeds and Trees*. A few years later, its focus was broadened and it was renamed *Weeds, Trees and Turf*.

In fact, it wasn't until 1988 that it got its present name. I remember the discussions surrounding the name change well. "If it ain't broke, why change it?" said one manager. "The name *Landscape Management* better reflects the changing industry," insisted another.

At day's end, everyone agreed that it was time to say goodbye to the old and hello to the new. We bid adios to *Weeds* and focused on the rapidly expanding landscape and lawn service contracting markets.

Some people claim that "time marches on." They're wrong. Time rockets on. Or, at least it seems that way as our industry grows and evolves, meaning that we, like you, have to keep growing and adapting.

Change for change's sake? No. We change to make ourselves or our products and services better.

The one thing that won't change, however, is our commitment to bring you — in print, through our e-mail newsletter and online at www.landscapemanagement.net — the best mix of business and technical information to help you and your operation succeed.

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We, like you, have to grow and adapt to meet customers' changing needs.



Inside the Owner's Head

BUSINESS

PERSONALITY PROFILE

Mark Pendergast

► Salmon Falls Nursery & Landscaping

BY JASON STAHL / Managing Editor

Mark Pendergast is owner of Salmon Falls Nursery & Landscaping, a \$3.6 million landscape design/build and irrigation company located in Berwick, ME. Pendergast is a member of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America and JP Horizons' Owners' Network.

Tell me you don't work more than 50 hours a week at your age?

I wish I could. But yeah, it's 70 to 80 hours per week in peak season. I'm always either at the shop or at a job site. One of my personal goals is to get my life straightened out as far as balancing my lifestyle. I feel that owners generally spend too much time at work. I've been divorced for a few years now, and working too much was part of it. It's tough to be a business owner, a father and a husband all at the same time. My family has definitely paid the price. I've changed with my daughters, though. We spend more quality time together by going on vacations and things like that.

Are your daughters involved in the business?

No. I have three of them, Amy, Leah and Emily, aged 26 to 21. They're welcome to be in the business some day, but I don't push them to do it. Right now, they're doing their own thing. One's in Australia studying to be a chiropractor. Leah is studying landscape design at the University of Maine at Orono.

Have you ever run into Stephen King up in Maine?

No, but my daughters have. I heard he was in the hospital again for pneumonia. I don't really read his books, either. I read business and motivational books like "Who Moved My Cheese?"

What sort of things are you doing to grow your business?

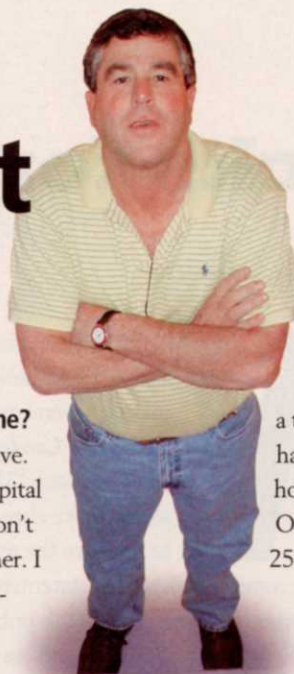
We're looking at some human resources people to help us part-time. Plus, we hired JP Horizons and are using an advertising agency to help give us a consistent look from business cards to the sign out front to the lettering on trucks. We're also looking at growing our irrigation division and doing more high-end garden maintenance.

You guys don't mow?

I don't like it. It doesn't get my juices flowing so it would be hard for me to motivate others to do it. That's the way I've grown the company; if something doesn't motivate me, it just doesn't work.

What do you like to do in the few precious minutes you have for yourself?

I do a little snowmobiling and fly-fishing. I guess snowmobiling is sort of dangerous, but that's the thrill of it. There are miles of trails that go from where we live up to Canada. As far as fly-fishing goes, it's just relaxing. We go up to a camp in Wilson Mills, Maine and just hope to hook some big ones.



How competitive is your market?

It's very competitive. There's lots of growth going on, and lots of landscapers coming into the market. A company with our overhead can't compete with a two-man operation that doesn't have health insurance. That's when a homeowner has to make a decision. Our company has been around for 25 years, and we're going to be around for another 25 years. If we screw something up, we fix it.

Over the years, has it gotten easier for you to run your business or harder?

It's easier because we're smarter. For instance, if we're in a competitive bid situation we know where we're going to stand because we know what we have to do to get the job and we know the risks. We know we're not going to get all the jobs we bid; if we did, we'd have a problem.

Will you be on an island in a few years, sipping a mai tai and working on a tan?

No way. I'll always want to be involved in my business to some extent. But I definitely want to step back some day and hand it to my employees — maybe 20 years from now. I could see slowing down a little, but I've seen too many guys who retire fully and go to hell in a handbasket. Staying involved in your business keeps you young and keeps your mind engaged. You interact with young people, and you're loving them and fighting with them at the same time, and it's a good thing.

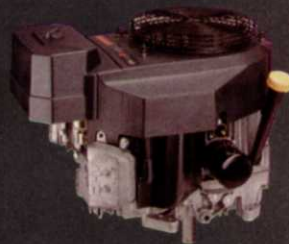
— Salmon Falls Nursery & Landscaping participates in JP Horizons' People Solutions programs. To learn more visit www.jp Horizons.com or call 877/574-5267.



It's OK to cry. Who wouldn't? There you were, just humming along, getting the job done so you could get to the baseball game tonight. Then you heard that awful silence. The good-for-nothing engine in your mower quit. Done. You've had relationships that have lasted longer, and that isn't saying much. So now you're stuck with a piece of equipment that won't budge and a half-done job. Your crew isn't thrilled either. If a Kawasaki engine was powering your mower, you'd still be humming along. Thinking about the game. Because Kawasaki engines are seriously durable. Everyone in the industry knows Kawasakis are unstoppable, job after job, season after season. Well, everyone except the poor schmucks who aren't using them. So go ahead, let it out. Maybe they'll hear you all the way over at the baseball field.

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In the Know

BUSINESS

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Need talent? You better get crackin'

BY RON HALL / Editor-in-Chief

Do you think that Ohio State football coach Jim Tressell or Michigan's Lloyd Carr sit in their offices waiting for the next All-American quarterback to knock on their doors and say, "Well, here I am"?

Recruiting is a big reason why these two programs finish in the Top 10 in the annual football polls, which brings us to this year's approaching 28th Annual ALCA Student Career Days — or any of the other many regional job fairs where eager students are seeking employment, perhaps even careers.

More than 800 students from about 50 colleges will participate at the ALCA event, March 25-28 at Columbus State in Columbus, OH. More than 100 landscape companies looking for talent will be there, too. The event starts with five workshops and a round of site tours; then the real fun begins. The students compete in 25 Green Industry events. (www.alca.org)

Don't wait until the ALCA Student Career Day in March to start a recruiting process.

But, if you're waiting until March to hire a young person with the potential to be your next designer or branch manager, you'll be sorely disappointed. The best talent is identified and recruited long before that.

"There's huge competition out there for



The skills competition at ALCA's event is fierce. So is recruiting. Left, Tom Davis, Bozzuto Landscaping, talks up his company.

schools, preferably close to your operation since many students aren't eager to relocate, not right away anyway.

► Become a resource for educators and students. Offer materials that can help them. Share your estimating and account/project management print material with educators. Provide company

newsletters and ask that they be posted. Open your operation to site tours. Some firms even plan open houses and invite students. Others offer scholarships or intern opportunities.

"The more often a student recognizes a company's name, the more familiar they become with that company and the better chance of them applying for full-time work when they graduate," says O'Neill.

people who are in college and who have committed to pursue an education to become a professional in this industry," says veteran Columbus State educator Steve O'Neill. He offers these pointers for getting the good ones:

► Concentrate on students at schools whose programs match what you're looking for (design/build, nursery, landscape architecture). Get involved with several

Sure Thing #1:

**THE SUN
WILL RISE
TOMORROW.**



In the Know

Environmental efforts pay off

JACKSONVILLE, FL — Too seldom does the public think of the environment and lawn care in the same context. This is unfortunate. Pro-Lawn Plus, Inc. demonstrates

Creating hope from tragedy

Creating something life affirming and meaningful from a heart-breaking tragedy must be among life's stiffest tests. The family of lawn care operator Nick Dennis is facing such a trial with the recent death of their 17-year-old son. The family responded by establishing a scholarship fund in his name to help other students.

This past November, *Landscape Management* magazine presented Pro-Lawn Plus, Inc. with PLCAA's Environmental Service Award along with a \$500 check.

Two weeks later, we learned of the death of Nicholas S. Dennis, son of Nick and Susan Dennis and brother of Amy Dennis. We also learned that the family had used the \$500 award to establish a scholarship in his name at Bishop Kenny High School in Jacksonville. Friends and associates contributed to the fund, as did student groups at Florida State University where Amy Dennis is a student.

"If everything works as we have planned, an academically eligible, financially encumbered child will attend Bishop Kenny High School next year with this effort and hopefully go on to have a successful and joyful life," said Nick Dennis.

Those wishing to contribute to the Nicholas S. Dennis Memorial Scholarship may do so by contacting *Landscape Management* at rhall@advanstar.com or jstahl@advanstar.com.

that that should be every LCO's goal, and earned PLCAA's 2003 Environmental Service Award for its efforts.

"Because of the energy of its president Nick Dennis, this company shows how a progressive application company can be applauded for its efforts on behalf of the environment, rather than criticized," said Ron Hall, Editor-in-Chief of *Landscape Management* magazine. "Dennis is committed to his customers and to the environment as evidenced by the safeguards and processes regarding chemical product use, including insisting that clients' properties receive only what they need in the way of treatments. Significantly, he also lent his time and efforts to the small group of like-minded industry members in helping to develop a set of best management practices (BMPs) for the Florida green industry."

In fact, much of the BMPs, adopted and endorsed by state officials for the protection of Florida's water resources, mirror policies that Pro-Lawn Plus employees have been following ever since the company's founding more than 20 years ago.

That effort, drawing upon BMPs from PLCAA as well, and guided by Erica Santella, Regional Technical Director for Tru-Green, resulted in the publication in 2002 of *Florida Green Industries Best Management Practices for Protection of Water Resources*.

"What Nick brought to the table in countless hours of meetings and negotiations was invaluable," said his business partner Michael Feely. "He put selfish considerations aside and revealed, in the presence of competitors, Pro-Lawn's company policies, procedures, training programs and corporate philosophy.

"He did it to show government entities that the industry is responsible and dedicated to preserving the environment. He did it to show that high standards can be set and met."

People & companies

Barenbrug USA has promoted Divesh Singh to Director of Research.



Hunter Industries presented Russell Mitchell with its Edwin J. Hunter Achievement Award. Hunter CEO Richard E. Hunter made the presentation to the irrigation designer and praised Mitchell's leadership and lifetime service to the landscape industry. Mitchell was one of the founders in 1970 of the America Society of Irrigation Consultants (ASIC).

Encore Manufacturing Co. has



appointed Doug Tegtmeier (far left) to president and Bob

Reed to general manager.

Ruppert Nurseries promoted Jorge Torres to assistant nursery manager.

Schiller-Pfeiffer, Inc., manufacturer of Little Wonder and Mantis Landscaping & Gardening Power Equipment, promoted Jeff Marcinowski to manager of engineering & product development.

Environmental Designs, Inc. hired Myles Tangalin as senior landscape architect, Devon Hukill as manager of the firm's Landscape Enhancement Division, and Leigh Anderson as manager of marketing.

BASF Corp. named William Strickland senior marketing manager, Rich Kalik national accounts manager, Greg Thompson regional sales manager, Northern U.S., and Bryan Brochin marketing associate.

Sure Thing #2:

**WATER ROLLS
OFF A DUCK'S
BACK.**



TPI prez frets over artificial turf, water

ROLLING MEADOWS, IL — Ed Zuckerman, president of Turfgrass Producers International (TPI), identified artificial turf and water shortages as two of the turfgrass industry's biggest challenges in 2004.

"An influx of artificial turf, along with the continuing water shortage, are two large and expanding issues TPI is addressing on behalf of the entire turfgrass industry," Zuckerman said. "We in the turfgrass industry must deal with water shortage issues beginning with local and national coalition building to combat repercussions from drought."

One coalition is the Evergreen Foundation (www.evergreenfoundation.org), a new group effort comprised of representatives from most Green Industry associations and many supplier companies. Evergreen's goal is to address the many issues affecting the Green Industry, and to promote the public's appreciation of turfgrass and horticulture.

The issue of artificial turf seems to be growing again, particularly at the college



Ed Zuckerman

and professional sports level. The installation of the new synthetic fields known as "infill" systems has slowed a decade-long trend to natural grass playing fields. These new artificial field systems contain sand, crumb rubber or a combination of the

two within the artificial turf fibers, and are marketed as offering many of the advantages of turfgrass but allowing more play with less maintenance.

Other issues impacting turfgrass production include real estate interest rate levels and high insurance costs. "Workers' compensation and general liability insurance cost rates are up 100% compared to a few years ago," said Zuckerman, owner of Delta Bluegrass Company, Stockton, CA.

He urged fellow sod growers to investigate alternatives in response to these new costs. "I feel this is an opportunity to expand installation services at my company by looking internally to handle the jobs instead of hiring an outside firm," he added. To learn more about TPI, visit www.turfgrassod.org.

CLIPPINGS

EPA green lights Dow's Spotlight

INDIANAPOLIS — Dow

AgroSciences LLC has received registration from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for Spotlight specialty herbicide, a post-emergence herbicide for improved clover control and control of other annual and perennial broadleaf weeds. Spotlight is labeled for use on established turf, including residential lawns, golf courses, parks, sport fields, sod farms, commercial sites and other commercial turf areas.

Monument gets EPA label OK

GREENSBORO, NC — The U.S. EPA granted registration of Monument herbicide for post-emergence weed control use in commercial turf markets, including golf courses, sod farms and commercial property management. The active ingredient in Syngenta's Monument, trifloxysulfuron sodium, provides excellent control of sedges and green kyllinga in the warm-season turfgrass species, including bermudagrass and zoysiagrass.

Irish/Toro host youth

SOUTH BEND, IN — Several Big Brothers Big Sisters youth and their mentors became a part of Notre Dame football and also learned about professional groundskeeping this past fall, thanks to The Toro Company

The youth's weekend started at a Friday ND football coach's lunch where the youths met the staff and football players. Then they were treated to a tour of the stadium, including getting some personal attention from the grounds crew, which was preparing the playing field for the next day's game with Brigham Young University.



On Saturday, the children and their sponsors received free tickets (including snacks and souvenirs) and cheered as

Notre Dame, in its 2003 home finale, defeated Brigham Young University by a count of 33-14.

"This was really a dream event for these children," said Deborah Burrow, executive director, Big Brothers Big Sisters of St. Joseph County (IN). "The gift provided by Toro will have a long-lasting impact on these children."

The Toro Company (www.toro.com) is the exclusive provider of grounds maintenance and beautification equipment for the University of Notre Dame athletic facilities.

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Productivity TIPS

10 WINNERS

Getting more out of every hour of work — aka “productivity” — may be as close to a magic bullet for business success as you can get. We spoke with some of your colleagues and compiled a quick list of 10 things they do to improve productivity — tips you should consider for your business.

TIP 1: Night moves

“Eliminate the morning circus by taming the animals the night before,” says consultant Jack Mattingly. “When you load at night instead of in the morning, several things work to your productivity advantage. In the evening, your people are eager to go home and have their dinner; they will get a move on to finish the task. You force your-

Check out what your colleagues and competitors are doing to squeeze more production and profits out of each day

BY GEORGE WITTERSCHEIN

self to get organized the night before, eliminating the need to shoot from the hip the next morning figuring out what your people ought to be doing.”

Mattingly (jkmattingly@comcast.net) has been in the landscape business since 1976 as a contractor and, since 1996, as a Green Industry management consultant based in Woodstock, GA.

TIP 2: The ‘toybox’

Dwight Hughes founded Dwight Hughes Nursery, Cedar Rapids, IA, in 1978. The

and trailer setup. It holds virtually every piece of equipment that we need on the job site, and it travels to every single job. My guys refer to it as ‘the toybox,’” says Hughes. “When they get to the job site, they pick and choose which ‘toys’ they need out of the box for that particular project. Everything has its place, and everything is in its place. The guys return the tools to their places so that, from a time management standpoint, the next time that they try to retrieve that object/tool, they know exactly where it is.

“The truck is a 330 Peterbilt with a 20-foot gooseneck trailer. It hauls two tractors and all the various implements. All the different tools are in shelves, pockets and compartments,” Hughes adds. “People know where things are by memory because management and employees sat down as a team with the design engineer



\$850,000, seven-employee business performs a variety of landscaping services (including running a nursery to supply itself) for a 50-50 mix of residential and commercial employees.

Hughes, an equipment innovator, is passionate about using technology for productivity.

“We have a new tool truck

from a trailer dealership and came up with the concept. Every person in our organization had a say in how this was going to be implemented.”

TIP 3: GPS — it works!

Employees at Landscape Maintenance LLC, founded by David Goodman in 1984, navi-

gate via satellite for better efficiency. The \$1.3 million company's 29 employees perform design/build and maintenance, plus irrigation repair and misting services from Phoenix, AZ.

"All of our fleet trucks have Global Positioning System (GPS) boxes in them," says Goodman. "The system lets us tune in on a PC and look at a

display of where all our trucks are within a 700-foot range. We also type in the addresses of all of our customers, fast food restaurants and gas stations, and it remembers them as landmarks for locating our trucks.

"Instead of giving latitude and longitude, it gives us the name of the nearest customer or landmark to the truck. It also

tells us what time they stopped the truck, what time they started it up again, how fast they were traveling and how many miles they drove from one location to another," explains Goodman.

"The system is detailed to the point where there's no getting around it," adds Junior Gonzalez, Director of Maintenance Operations. "It runs 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. And the crew can't turn it off; they would have to vandalize the vehicle to do that. The GPS system encourages good trip planning practices by getting them to understand the need to plan the shortest trips between two points."

"We print out our reports and do some one-on-one training," he continues. "'This is how your truck moved today.' 'Here's how you could have done it more efficiently.' And it's very clear on the reports. Or we can ask, 'Why were you at the fast food restaurant for 90 minutes?'"

TIP 4: Blades to give you an edge

Roy Megli, owner/operator of Megli Lawn Care, Sterling, IL, has been mowing professionally for more than 30 years, so he knows what it means to cut clean and fast. His operation mows for just about everybody — parks, boulevards, factories, home lawns, you name it.

About seven years ago Megli



started tinkering with some blades off an agricultural disc mower, and he asked himself, "Why not for turf?" Modifying the blades, he came up with a disc mowing system that replaces a mower's standard rigid blade with four free-swinging knives. He field-tested his system on his own mowers, and he claims it's changed the way he cuts grass...for the better.

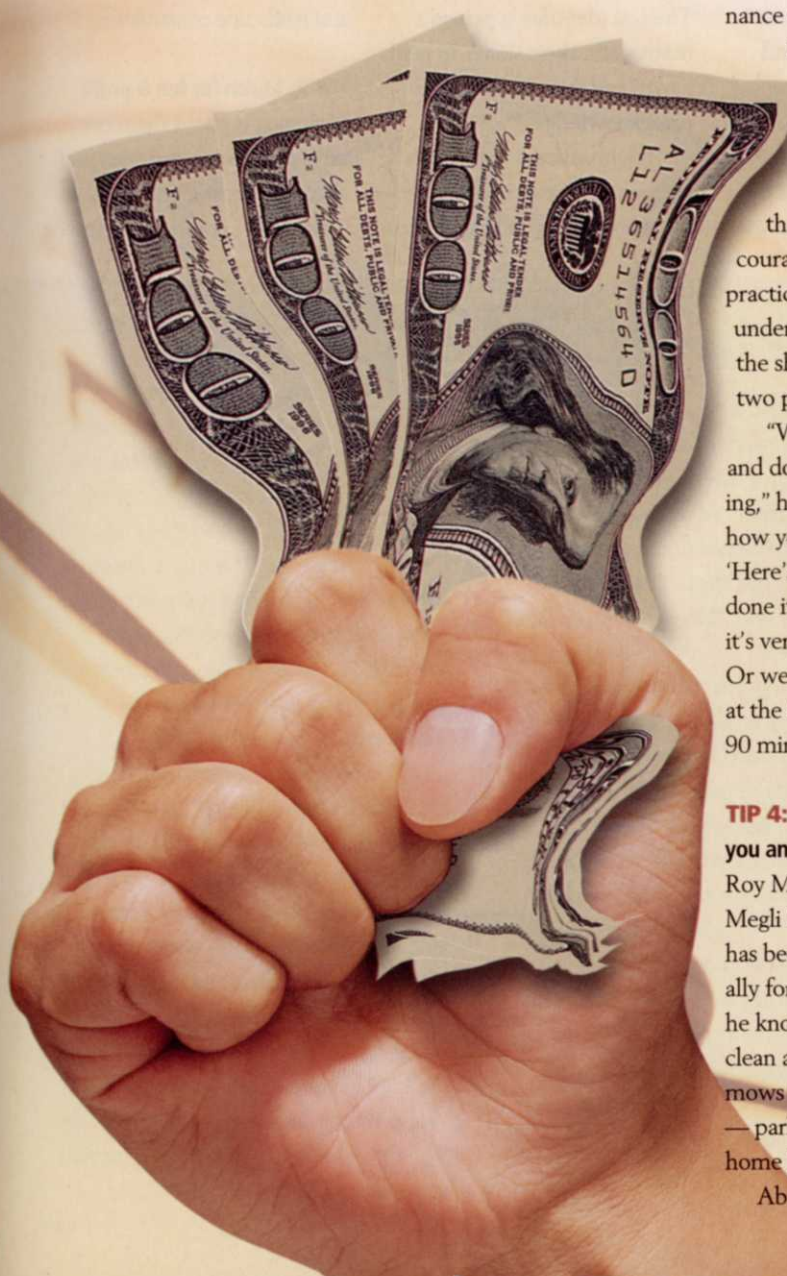
Megli says that his blades cut the grass finer, remain sharper and keep mower decks cleaner than traditional blades. The free-swinging knives remain balanced and lengthen spindle bearing life too, he insists.

The mowing contractor-turned-inventor now sells and markets his blades through his sister company, Meg-Mo Systems. He says he can supply disc blades for any make of commercial mower. Check out www.meg-mo.com if you're curious.

TIP 5: Production rates, my friend

Matt Caruso's 25 employees serve high-end residential and commercial customers efficiently because they carefully determine just how long each project should take before starting it. The company bills about \$2 million annually.

Develop and thoroughly understand your own particular



productivity rates, stresses Caruso, who started Decrascape in Sterling Heights, MI, 15 years ago. He does, and he uses that knowledge in billing, bidding and in providing feedback to his employees about their job performance.

"When they go out on a job, they aren't only expected to perform the day's work but to complete the different tasks in certain time frames based on past performance statistics," Caruso says. "That's where the productivity gains come in. You and your people know from experience how long a

certain task should take, so you have targets."

Caruso says this knowledge is vital to any service company that wants to remain competitive and profitable.

TIP 6: Processes save time

"Whether it's sales or payroll or employee hiring or recruiting, there are a lot of processes that businesses use over and over," says Tony Bass, founder and president of Bass Custom Landscapes, Bonaire, GA.

"These processes are really time-consuming. My tip is to have a defined process in place



for finding employees," says Bass. "We do. Our process includes an established method for finding potential applicants, plus a sub-process for screening, including a basic skills test. The test identifies a person's math skills, their ability to read a map and their basic horticultural knowledge.

"It's productive use of management's time to identify people who aren't good candidates

prior to doing the interview so you can rule them out and save yourself a bunch of time."

Bass founded his operation in 1987. It bills just under \$3 million annually in lawn services and landscape construction.

TIP 7: Mulch for fun & profit

Mulching is about the most time-consuming and least profitable job most landscapers do

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Productivity a people thing

Communication and employee motivation are every bit as vital to improving the productivity of your operation as a new piece of equipment or your processes.

So says Marty Grunder, the well-traveled Green Industry consultant who also runs a \$3.5 million landscape company in Dayton, OH.

"A lot of us think, 'If I buy a piece of equipment it will help my productivity.' But in my experience, if you don't have the attitude fundamentals in place, all the equipment in the world won't help your business be more productive," says Grunder.

"If the operator of that expensive piece of equipment has a horrendous attitude and doesn't understand the reasons behind what he's trying to do, the money spent on that equipment will probably have been wasted.

"Make sure everybody understands the mission. It's hard to get excited

about the work if you think it's just cutting grass. For example, somebody once asked a room full of firefighters what their mission was. The wrong answer was, 'We put out fires.' The right answer was, 'We save lives endangered by fires.'

"Translating this to the Green Industry, the wrong answer is, 'Digging holes and planting stuff.' It should be, 'Improving the quality of people's lives and enhancing their enjoyment of customers' property with beautiful landscaping.'

"Put yourself in the shoes of your employees. Who would you rather work for, the employer who believes we install shrubs or the employer who believes we enhance our customers' lives with awesome landscaping and superior service that makes them jump out of their socks?

"The objective here is to gain your employees' emotional buy-in. Then it's



Marty Grunder

easier to get them motivated to pursue productivity improvement measures."

You do this with effective communication, says Grunder.

"Don't just say, 'Go plant this tree,'" he advises. "Instead, try, 'We plant trees in

this fashion for the following reasons: if we do it right, we won't have to come back a second time, plus the tree will grow and make our customers' lives better.

"Too many contractors say, 'Grab a shovel and start digging.' I recommend you let them know what the plan is and what you're trying to do. By that I mean communicate the plan, something like, 'Our goal this week is to have gross sales of x dollars and also 220 billable man-hours.'"

Grunder relies heavily on meetings. He tries to keep meetings focused on a single theme, and sets out a 15-minute egg timer in plain view to keep himself on time.

— GW

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— that is, if they do it manually. Some are subbing out the work to blower truck operators, and others are mechanizing the process with a tool known as a Mulch Mule.

This is an aluminum trailer-type unit developed by Todd Pugh, who runs \$3 million Todd's Enviroscapes in north-east Ohio. It's becoming increasingly popular with maintenance companies in and around Ohio because it dramatically increases the amount of mulch that a three-person crew can put down in a day. Pugh claims it increases mulching efficiency by about three times.

"The faster we can get the mulching done and get into the higher profit items such as putting fertilizer down, starting a renovation or doing enhancements, the better off we are," says Pugh. With the "mule" you can unload the mulch (or whatever material you need to transport to a job site) from the front chute or the back swing gate.

Pugh also uses his units to haul plant material from the nursery to job sites and, in the fall, he attaches a leaf vacuum to them for yard cleanups. The units come with an electric tarp. For more information visit www.mulchmule.com.

TIP 8: Have fuel, will work

Tim Lake, Dublin, GA, founded T. Lake Environmental Design 13 years ago. He and his 18 employees generate just over \$1 million doing

design/build, and also high-end residential and commercial landscape maintenance.

In addition to loading his trucks in the evening, Lake's maintenance fleet carries its own fuel. "Our maintenance people have SuperLawn trucks that carry gasoline and premix, enough for a week's worth of work by our mowers and small hand-held equipment," explains Lake. "Normally these guys don't have to fuel more than once a week. They can refuel their mowers and hand-held equipment on the site instead of making multiple trips to the gas station or back to the shop."

Lake also creates productivity improvements with the layout of his depot. "In the evening, we park our trucks close to the place where the employees come in to get their work orders. The trucks are lined up and ready to go the next morning. When guys arrive, they grab their worksheets and are off," he says.

TIP 9: Time-saving trailer

When the maintenance crews for Foegley Landscape, Inc., head out for a day's work, they take "a scary amount of equipment," says owner/operator John Foegley. So it's vital that the right pieces are on the trailers and are secure, accessible and ready for action.

Foegley's company, based in South Bend, IN, met this need by designing a combination

open/cargo box trailer called a Versa-Trail.

"Tools are no longer loaded and unloaded two or more times every day," says Foegley, whose father started the landscape company in 1975. "Tools secured in the enclosed cargo box are less likely to be lost or stolen. Specific tools are easily accessible because they're not buried under a tangle of other tools."

Foegley says the multi-functional trailers have helped his company "experience a dramatic improvement in productivity." He says his trailers are usually configured for hauling plants and bulk material but that the sides can be removed if his crews need to haul a tractor or skid steer. The Versa-Trail, shown for the first time at the recent Green Industry Expo, drew a lot of attention.

To learn more about this trailer, visit the Web site for Cronus Technology, www.cronustechnology.com, a sister company to Foegley Landscape.

TIP 10: Gas 'em up, head 'em out

Bill Coleman, owner/president of Crabapple, Inc. in Alpharetta, GA, wants his company's fleet fueled and ready the night before the next day's tasks.

"We spoke with a local fuel company and had some tanks installed at our site. The fuel

company provides the tanks, and we built a concrete pad for the installation," says Coleman. "We have four 2,000-gallon tanks, two for diesel and two for gasoline, plus a smaller tank for mixed gas.

"Before departing for the day, each supervisor places a sign on the dashboard saying 'fuel' or 'no fuel.' This flags us to gas up the trucks that need fuel, and in turn we get rid of major portions of our 'morning circus' by eliminating the fueling activity from the morning.

"There still remained the issue of employees expecting to get their breakfast. I decided to



make a breakfast available to them at our site at no cost to myself. So I contacted a local guy with a canteen truck who sells coffee and breakfast items directly from his vehicle. He brings his truck by at 6:30 a.m. It gets him customers, and it saves us time," says Coleman, whose 85-person operation does about \$5 million annually in landscape services. **LM**

— *The author is a frequent contributor to LM. He can be reached at grbwitt@aol.com.*

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Focus on your business 'gauges'

Here's a model to score your three key business drivers: customers, employees and financials

BY BOB COULTER

Landscape and lawn service company owners typically spend each workday keeping a number of balls in the air, in most cases too many. Do you often feel like you need an extra hand so that you can juggle faster?

Whoa, slow down. Maybe you're caught up in too many of the small, day-to-day decisions of your company's operation. Remember, you're the owner, right? You're the driver, the person behind the wheel. You're the guy or gal who steers your business in the right direction and keeps it on the smooth pavement.

And like any responsible operator, you focus your attention on the direction you want to go, regularly checking your gauges to make sure your company is running smoothly. Did we say gauges? You bet.

Gauges are good

You need gauges to keep track of your three key business drivers — your customers, your employees and your financials. With gauges, you can more easily monitor and focus on the status of these three building blocks of your success. Let's switch analogies to explain this better.

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Dashboard gauges for key business drivers

The Owners' Network participants established these nine gauges that make up the dashboard or score-board. They focus the owner and the entire company on the key things that create breakthrough performance.

Customers:

Retention — Top companies retain their customers to build great loyalty and reduce marketing expenses

New sales — You must add new customers to your base business to replace those who are lost and for it to grow

Quality/survey results — Keep tabs on what customers think about the quality and value of your service

Employees:

Retention — By retaining key employees, you achieve better stability, maintain important customer relationships and enhance business efficiency

Training — Improving the skills of your employees puts your company in a better position to achieve its profit and growth goals

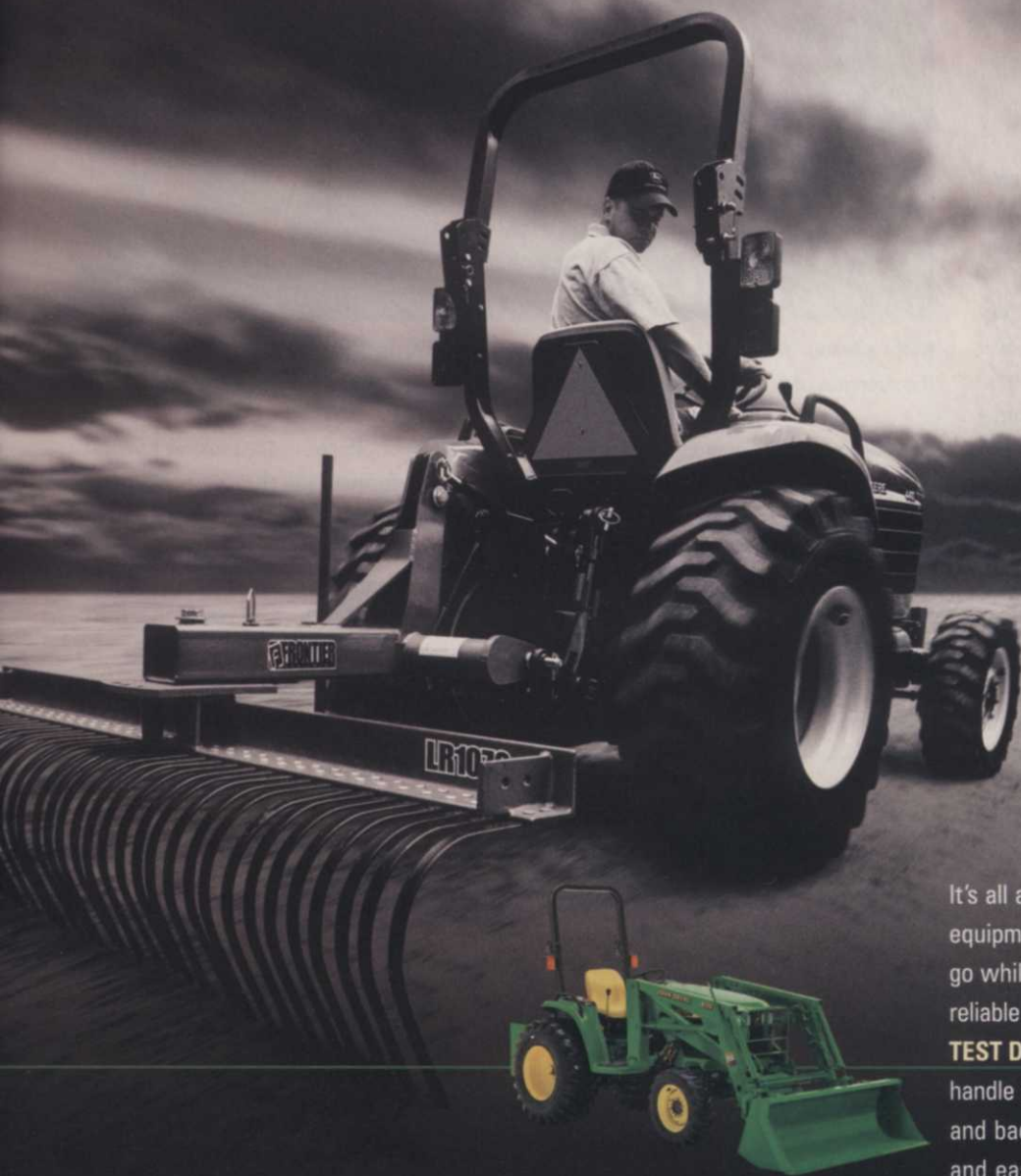
Productivity — Employee efficiency reflects directly upon your company's profit margin and its ability to compete in the marketplace

Financials:

Cash flow — You need to manage the cash flow of your business to maximize its potential

Revolving budget — Creating and using a business plan and budget provides your company with a road map for managing its key elements

Net profit — Get the dollars to the bottom line by managing the margins, controlling costs and leveraging the business



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JOHN DEERE

continued from page 26

Look at your company as a three-legged stool, with the legs being its customers, employees and financials. Neglect to place the right amount of attention on any one of them and your operation will wobble. Sure, your company can get temporarily out of balance because of a temporary crisis, sometimes because of the talent it has and sometimes because of the nature of the marketplace. Eventually, however, your customers, your employees and your financials all must be given their due if you want your operation to deliver consistent performance.

In an Owners' Network Face to Face meeting this past September, about 50 landscape and lawn service company owners participated in site tours and dissected



At the site tour of Dan Foley Landscaping, Owners' Network members were challenged to identify the strengths of the company's key business drivers and suggest improvements.

two successful Boston-area companies, ND Landscaping and Dan Foley Landscaping. The goal of the exercises was to identify the strengths of the companies' key business drivers and to suggest improvements.

The owners of the two companies graciously opened their operations and allowed us guests to do real life case studies. Both companies set up stations where their

employees offered inside looks at how they track performance in their particular areas of responsibility — accounting, human resources, maintenance, construction, shop management, etc.

We toured each company during the morning and spent each afternoon discussing and debating what we had observed and heard. Each site tour ended

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What visitors told their hosts

Some suggestions that the Owners' Network participants made to strengthen the key business drivers of host companies during this past fall's site tours:

- ▶ Ensure a clear accountability for all the profit centers
- ▶ Strengthen bilingual communication to improve productivity

▶ Get everything ready for work crews the night before and developing the systems that reduce lost hours at every level of the company

- ▶ Make money at what you are best at. Create a niche that you can produce effectively and make a higher margin
- ▶ Control overtime through monitor-

ing and drive accountability for it to the foreman level

- ▶ Have the right people in the right jobs
- ▶ Improve the morning routine to reduce lost production time
- ▶ Standardize equipment to reduce maintenance costs and downtime
- ▶ Improve trailer efficiency
- ▶ Increase knowledge of staff on what a win looks like for them

with us critiquing the host company and brainstorming about how it could improve its three key business drivers.

Ask questions

For many years, owners have been looking for ways to measure how their companies are performing. An excellent place to start is by asking the questions: Are we winning with our customers? Do we have the right employees doing the right tasks? What is the state of our financials?

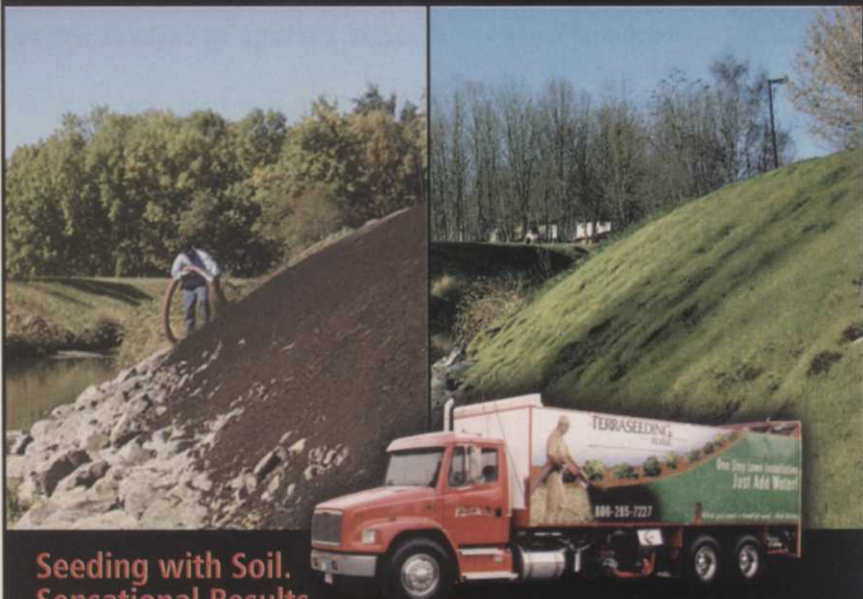
But that's not enough. You have to keep score, meaning you have to install the gauges. This will give you strategic advantages because it allows you to assess your company honestly and to compare it against industry standards and key competitors. More importantly, it gives you a basis for making strategic changes or adjustments.

By keeping an eye on the scorecards (gauges) built around your customers, your employees and your financials, you ensure that every unit is working in the same direction, while motivating employees, improving reward systems and enhancing company culture.

When organizations get clarity of direction, they elevate their performance. By focusing attention on the key drivers of success, owners set expectations for future performance, measure progress, reward top performers and hold everyone accountable for the results they produce. The dashboard gauges provide the foundation for assessing progress. **LM**

— The author is an associate with JP Horizons and can be contacted at bob.coulter@comcast.net. To learn more about the Owners' Network, visit www.jp horizons.com.

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Boys and their toys

Bidding for the landscape maintenance of a large commercial development can be a grueling process. But it doesn't compare to being chased by an

enraged elephant.

Just ask Mark Wehinger. At home in Dublin, OH, Wehinger wields much power as president of \$12.5 million Environmental Management Services, Inc. But he found out last summer that that power is reduced to nothing in the African veldt.

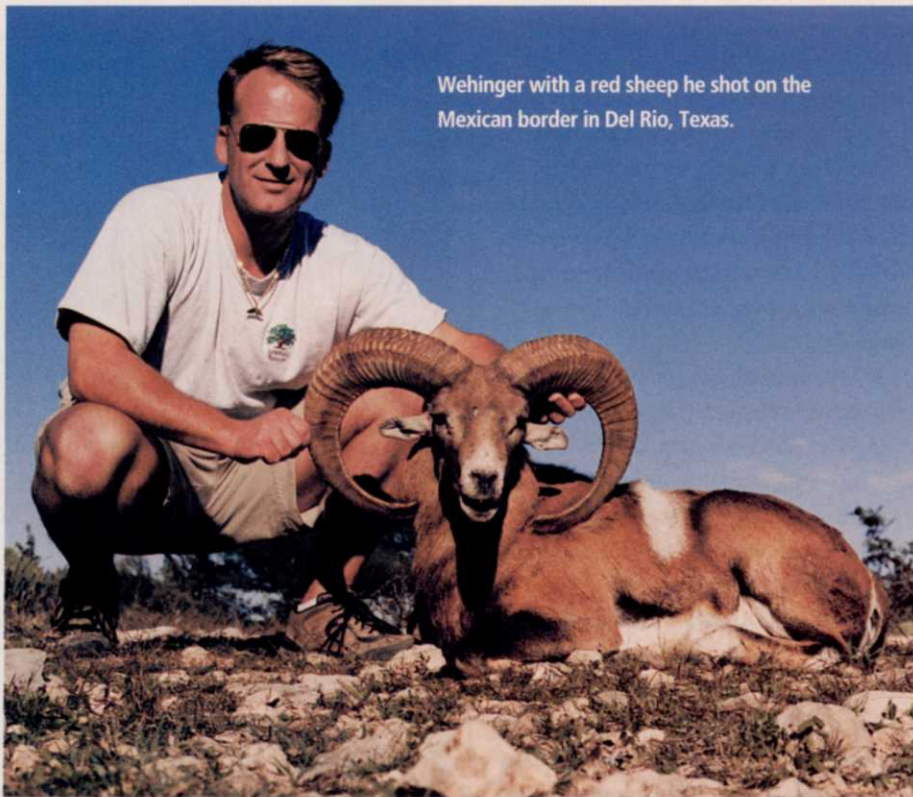
The elephant, which Wehinger was hunting, had finally had enough. "He chased me for 100 yards, and was actually on my heels within 10 yards," Wehinger says. "I was zigzagging to avoid it. But that's the thrill."

And Wehinger knows thrills all too well. He estimates he's been charged by a dozen different elephants over the last seven years, during which time he has averaged six hunting trips per year. He enjoys hunting elephants so much that he's set on doing it now every year.

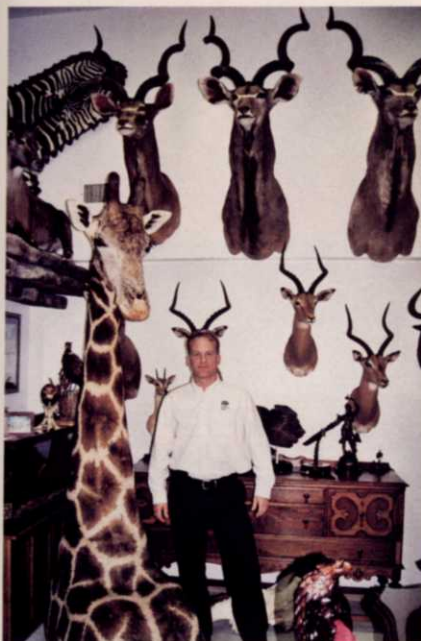
"It's the ultimate hunt," Wehinger explains. "It's the most dangerous and most difficult animal to hunt. And there

These landscape company owners are living proof that hard work does reap grand rewards

BY JASON STAHL / Managing Editor



Wehinger with a red sheep he shot on the Mexican border in Del Rio, Texas.



Mark Wehinger

Company name: Environmental Management Services, Inc.

President/Owner: Mark Wehinger

Location: Dublin, OH

Founded: 1992

2002 gross revenues: \$12.5 million

Employees: 230 peak season

Customer mix: 90% commercial

Services: Full service

comes a point when you start only wanting to hunt animals that hunt you back.”

Wehinger began hunting small game with his father at age 10. From the beginning, he dreamed of hunting bigger animals, and his success as a businessman has recently allowed him to do that. The African safaris, Wehinger says, have been a special treat. “I met a man 15 years ago who booked safaris, and I told myself if I ever had enough money I’d hunt in Africa.”

Now, he’s essentially brought Africa home with him. Winger has 100 mounted heads in a 2,200-square-foot trophy room at his home and 250 mounts in his office. The trophy room is decorated in an African theme and features heavily reinforced walls (for the mounts) as well as a large bar, big-screen television and pool table. The mounts include 150 different species of

Wehinger’s trophy room at home showcases over 100 heads that help him relive his hunting experiences.

game, including elephants, cape buffalo, leopards, crocodiles, hippos, kudus, elands, water bucks and more. Because he hunts so much, Winger has to make choices when it

comes to calling his full-time taxidermist.

“It comes down to how much room you have,” he says. “If it’s an unusual species then you try to have the whole

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Circle 121

body mounted. Common ones you just have shoulder-mounted. You get them mounted because it's nice to relive the experience."

Wehinger almost loves the tools he uses to hunt as much as the animals he goes after. He has a collection of 170 hunting rifles, some of which are so valuable his insurance company won't cover them unless they're stored at all times in a locked gun safe.

No overnight deal

Hold the envy, though — none of this happened overnight. Wehinger emphasizes that to make any business successful, a person must first be willing to make sacrifices.

"People say I wish I had that — until I tell them how I got it," Wehinger says. "I paid myself \$20,000 a year for the first five years. All of the high level people in the company made more than I did. Most of the profits went back into the cash flow so we could continue expanding. It's only after you grow to a certain point that things settle down and you get paid better."

Of course, it also depends on the growth mode an individual wants to pursue. Wehinger was interested in huge growth right away — 40% a year. That's why he chose to give himself a paltry salary.

"But if you're on a slow growth mode you can pay yourself more," Wehinger says. "If you want to grow fast, though, without being leveraged to the hilt, you pay yourself just enough to get by."

Only 11 years after its inception, Environmental Management Services grosses \$12.5 million. Now, instead of the 40% Wehinger used to seek, he now shoots for 4% to 8% annual growth. What Wehinger and his company have always sought is employee happiness, which in turn brings customer happiness. That's why employees of his company are rewarded for everything from having perfect

driving records for one year to staying injury-free for one year.

"Plus, based on the profitability of the company, we hand out bonuses at Christmas," Wehringer says. "We also pay our employees roughly one dollar per hour above the going rate so that we can recruit the best employees in the city. We take care of our employees, and they in turn take care of customers."

Water aficionado

The year was 1976. Wild Cherry's "Play That Funky Music" was probably blasting out of the radio when Mike Rorie was on deck cleaning his 1972 19-1/2-foot Sea Ray he bought for \$4,000.

Three years later, he would found Groundmasters, Inc., the company that allowed him to buy a boat last June that made the ol' Sea Ray look like a bathtub toy. The new "boat" is a \$500,000 Fantasy Custom Yacht. To him, the move upward has been a natural progression.

"I'm very goal-oriented," Rorie says. "That's how we've been able to go from a \$5,000 boat to a \$500,000 yacht. I've probably gone through 25 boats. It's all equally proportionate."

Proportionate to King Kong, maybe. Rorie's new 102-foot-long, 20-foot-wide toy features, among other things, four bed-



Rorie's \$500,000 Fantasy Custom Yacht, a natural progression, he says, from the 19-foot Sea Ray he bought in 1976.

rooms and three baths, a saloon, hot tub, 50-in. satellite plasma entertainment center with DVD, surround sound, sub woofer and 50-disc stereo system, and granite countertops throughout. The top deck runs the whole length of the boat and features a 42-ft. covered roof. On top of this deck is a third deck Rorie jokingly calls the "heliport for the future."

If the yacht itself isn't enough to keep one amused, Rorie has a pair of jet skis tied on the back for added fun. And there's plenty of water to explore — he docks it on Lake Cumberland in Jamestown, KY, which, at over 100 miles in length with more than 1,200 miles of shoreline, is one of the largest manmade lakes in the United States. If he doesn't feel like captaining the yacht about or playing on the jet skis, he can always go for speed on his other boat: a 33-ft. Formula with twin 496-cubic-inch fuel-injected engines.

Even though Rorie is at the helm of a \$16 million operation, some might worry about such lavish purchases affecting the company's bottom line. But Rorie is quick to note his purchases weren't made with company funds.

"Ultimately, your people shouldn't feel like your lifestyle has anything to do with

continued on page 34

Mike Rorie

Company name: Groundmasters, Inc.

President/Owner: Mike Rorie

Location: Cincinnati, OH

Founded: 1979

2002 gross revenues: \$16 million

Employees: 240 peak season

Customer mix: 100% commercial

Services: Commercial landscape management and installation

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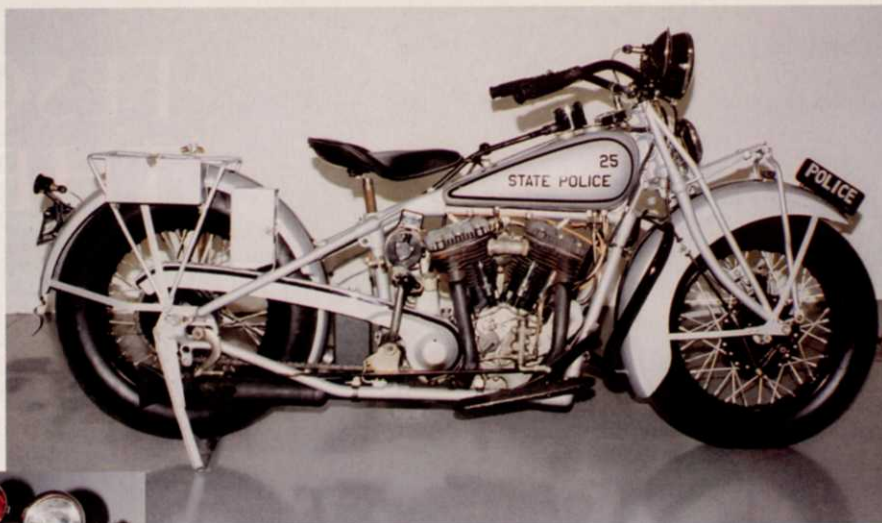
continued from page 32

how much they'll get paid or how much they can achieve," Rorie says. "Our company is profitable, and people are paid at or above competitive levels. There may be owners of smaller companies whose lifestyle is preventing good employees from getting paid what they deserve or preventing the company from going forward, but we're not in that category.

"A good deal of the industry could find themselves in that situation if they value themselves with what they feel they're worth at the company's expense," Rorie adds. "It's good to keep things in moderation."

As Rorie has rewarded himself handsomely, so does he feel that employees should also share a piece of the success. Groundmasters' profit-sharing plan, he says, comes straight out of the bestselling book, *"The Great Game of Business."*

"Rewards require competency and the fact that you achieved rewards through profits," he says. "A lot of businesses aren't focused on competency or the ability to earn profits, which means there's a lot of wasted energy out there."



Despite the fact that this is the only Maine State Police motorcycle in existence, Hemingway rides it with abandon.

"We have several high wage earners in our company," Rorie continues. "We run open book management so people know what we earn from the managerial level up. The more we earn, the more we distribute, and everyone knows that."

Born to ride

Booth Hemingway scoffs at the idea of staring at his vintage motorcycles on display at some museum. One gets the impression he'd sooner sell his landscape company and enter the boutique business than put his bikes behind glass.

"They're meant to be ridden," he says flatly.

And ride them he does, usually on weekends. That includes the 1934 Indian Chief Maine State Police motorcycle valued at over \$40,000. It's the only Maine State Police motorcycle in existence. That's probably the reason he watches the speedometer when riding it.

Hemingway also owns a 1941 Indian Scout Army bike that the Russian army had used in World War II. This motorcycle isn't as rare as his other one, and, Hemingway laments, isn't in its original condition.

"The first motorcycle show I went to for Indian motorcycles, I pulled in and saw the exact same bike in original condi-

tion," he says. "A bike like that is more valuable if unrestored. Plus, there's a certain sense of satisfaction of owning an original bike."

Rounding out Hemingway's "wheel" collection is a 1980 BMW 6 Series Coupe, a 1972 Suzuki TS250 motorcycle and a 2004 BMW 1150 GS street trail bike. "That's the bike to own if you're going to travel the world," he remarks. "You can go off road with it."

Hemingway has his eyes set next on a Ducati motorcycle, a real crotch rocket that can reach speeds of over 130 miles per hour. But he'd never push it to its limit. "I'd never go that fast. I'm only part crazy."

Aside from the 1934 Indian Chief, most of the wheels in Hemingway's collection aren't very valuable. He collects the other bikes and cars for "nostalgia." Besides, he doesn't yet consider himself in the class of business owner who can buy just about anything he wants. The winter season puts a dent in his cash flow. Snow removal efforts only bring in half the income the company needs. So while he enjoys collecting bikes and cars, he must be reasonable with his purchases.

"I'm staying at \$50,000 or less," he says. "I also look for bargains. If my business made money year-round I might be able to afford more, but even then you have a responsibility to educate your kids and set up your retirement." **LM**

Booth Hemingway

Company name: Piscataqua Landscaping Company, Inc.

President/Owner: Booth Hemingway

Location: Piscataqua, NE

Founded: 1979

2002 gross revenues: \$2.1 million

Employees: 38 peak season

Customer mix: 55% commercial, 45% residential

Services: Full service

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Circle No. 113

Turfs for many challenges

BY DR. MELODEE L. FRASER AND
CRYSTAL ROSE-FRICKER

When it's time to finish a landscape construction project by installing the turf, do you think about the research and development that went into that bag of seed or pallet of sod? Have you ever considered that a plant breeder had specific management challenges in mind when he or she was developing that turfgrass? Turfgrass breeders work on many projects with many species, but the goal is always the same: to minimize the management inputs that will have to be put into the turf.

Tremendous progress has been made in breeding grasses for turf. Some characteristics have been relatively easy to improve and the benefits are easy to see. Others are more difficult.

New advances

Darker green varieties require fewer nitrogen fertilizer applications to look attractive. Lower-growing varieties reduce mowing frequency. Higher density varieties provide less room for weed encroachment. Vari-



Greenhouse salt baths test turfgrasses' response to high salinity levels.

Industry's demands for turf to solve key management issues drive turfgrass breeders to keep coming up with "new and improved" grasses

eties that contain fungal endophytes have improved insect resistance. Newer advances in turfgrass breeding are producing exciting results: varieties with improved heat tolerance, disease resistance, salt tolerance and herbicide tolerance are examples. How are these varieties developed?

Some of the turfgrass breeding projects

we conduct at Pure Seed Testing, Inc. are described in the following paragraphs.

Pure Seed Testing, Inc. operates two research farms where turfgrass breeding projects are jointly conducted — one in Oregon and the other in North Carolina. The warm, humid climate in North Carolina

continued on page 38



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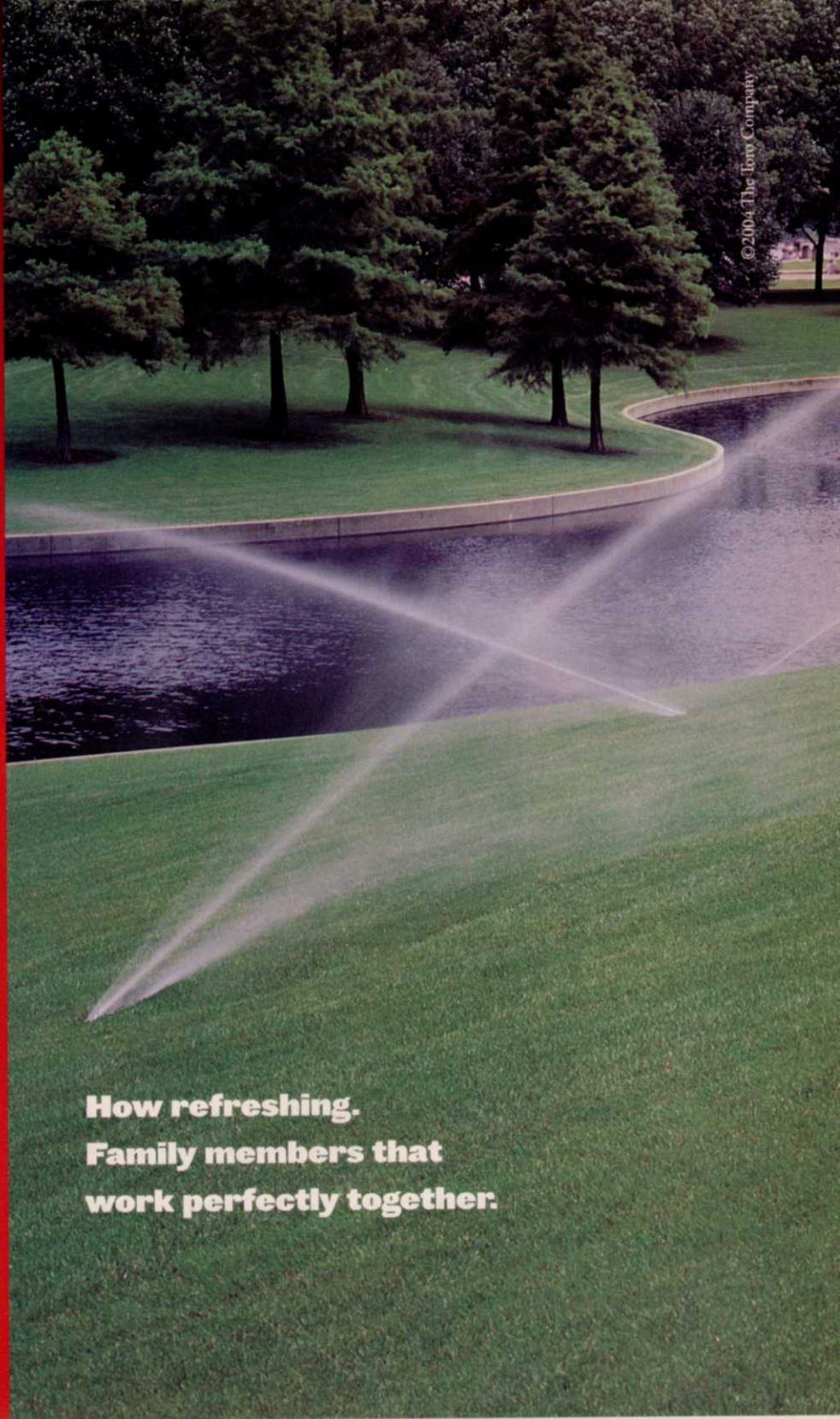
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Circle No. 114



Count on it.

continued from page 36

allows for selection of cool-season turfgrasses with improved heat tolerance to summer diseases. Simultaneously, the Oregon environment allows for evaluation of turf quality and improvement of seed yield and seed production disease resistance. An example of the success of this cooperative breeding program is a project dedicated to improving brown patch resistance in tall fescue.

The primary disease that attacks tall fescue in its major use area is brown patch. Caused by an aggressive fungal pathogen, *Rhizoctonia solani*, brown patch is most problematic in warm, humid weather.

While brown patch can be controlled with fungicides, it's often used in lower maintenance areas where preventive fungicides aren't routinely applied. The best control for this disease, therefore, is genetic resistance in the tall fescue host.

At our North Carolina research farm, tall fescue turf trials are planted each fall. During the summer, these trials are managed to encourage brown patch disease development. The trials are evaluated for disease symptoms throughout the summer and plots with little or no visible disease symptoms are identified. Plants are dug from these plots and are planted into spaced-plant nurseries, in Oregon, where they can be evaluated for seed yield potential and seed production diseases like stem rust.

Plants with good disease resistance and yield potential are allowed to interpollinate. Seed is harvested and used to plant turf trials in Oregon again the next fall. The turf plots in North Carolina are managed to encourage brown patch development, and the turf plots in Oregon are rated for overall turf quality.

This cycle is repeated until varieties that



maintain good brown patch resistance, turf quality and seed yield are identified.

Pass the salt

Salt tolerance is becoming increasingly important in many turfgrass situations. More turf areas are being irrigated from poor quality or effluent water sources. Many sites, such as seaside and roadside turfs, come into direct contact with salt or salt-water. Turfgrass varieties with salt tolerance are valuable for these sites and should help reduce maintenance costs.

We've been studying genetic salinity tolerance in several turfgrass species since 1995. In greenhouse salt baths, turfgrasses are subjected to high salinity levels created with a synthetic ocean mix. We have conducted trials with all cool-season turfgrass species and Bermudagrass.

Plants that survive at high salt concentrations are selected from these greenhouse trials and are crossed with one another. Resulting seed is used to establish turf evaluation, seed yield and additional salt screening trials.

Tall fescue undergoes salt screening trials to test its performance against high salinity levels.

We have developed at least three perennial ryegrasses that can survive 17,000 ppm as whole

plants in an ocean bath. We have also learned that some varieties can germinate with saline water and others can't. Charger II had an 84% germination rate at 10,000 ppm. "Moonlight" and "North Star" were the top Kentucky bluegrasses out of the Commercial NTEP that tolerated 10,000 ppm for three months. "Tar Heel II" and "Pure Gold" were the top tall fescues that tolerated 25,000 ppm for two months.

Herbicide tolerance

We've also been working on the development of herbicide tolerant turfgrass varieties for more than a decade. Through conventional breeding techniques, cool-season turfgrass plants have been selected for genetic tolerance to one or more of the following herbicides: diclofop, glufosinate, glyphosate and imazethapyr. Individual plants are sprayed with various rates of herbicide at different stages of the plants' development. Surviving plants are selected and crossed with one another. Seed is sub-

continued on page 40



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continued from page 38

sequently harvested and used to start a second round of selection for herbicide tolerance. This cycle continues for a

number of generations until a variety with herbicide tolerance is developed.

Once a turfgrass variety has been determined to have valuable improved charac-

teristics, seed of the variety must be increased to make the variety available to the turfgrass management customer. The breeder produces a small amount of breeder seed, which is planted to produce a generation of foundation seed. Foundation seed is planted to produce certified seed.

A turfgrass manager can assure herself/himself of high quality seed by purchasing seed that has a blue certified seed tag on the container. This is your assurance that you're buying the variety that the breeder originally developed and that the quality of the seed product is high as well.

The future looks bright for turfgrass managers with several choices available. The turfgrass seed or sod purchaser should try to be aware of the special beneficial traits some varieties have compared to the "beauty contest" winners in some data sets, such as disease resistance, drought tolerance or improved summer or winter performance. Some new releases from Pure Seed Testing for the future will include a salt tolerant bermuda and a glyphosate tolerant Kentucky bluegrass.

Years of development

It takes years of dedicated observation, selection, breeding and evaluation research to develop an improved turfgrass variety. A turfgrass manager can reduce turf maintenance expenses by using improved varieties.

University turf trials and the data published by the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (www.ntep.org) are good places to research new varieties. Review turf trial data, work with a reputable seed or sod supplier and purchase high quality seed products to ensure the success of your next turfgrass installation or maintenance project. **LW**

— Fricker serves as Director of Research-West for Pure Seed Testing, while Dr. Fraser is Director of Research-East. They can be reached at 503/263-0742.

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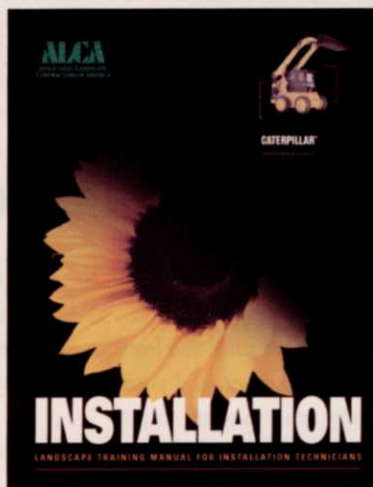
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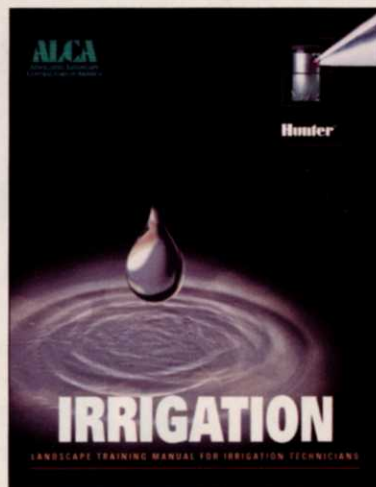
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A client told me that landscapers don't plan because they're addicted to the adrenaline rush of doing everything at the last minute.



Skip the adrenaline rush

BY ED LAFLAMME / Guest Columnist

Do you put things off until the last minute, forcing yourself and your staff to scurry around to try to get everything done? When the last item has been tackled "in the nick of time," you pat yourself on the back and praise yourself and your staff for a job well done. But you vow to never procrastinate again.

What a rush

One of my clients told me that landscapers don't plan because they're addicted to the adrenaline rush of doing everything at the last minute. That's something I can relate to. I still remember when the last load of sand desperately needed for one of our accounts was still not delivered as snow began to fall. Yikes!

Yes, when I owned my company it was no different. The larger I grew, the larger the "sea of details" became. What made it particularly difficult for us in New England was the constant change of seasons.

Those in the snowbelt know that there is a lull in winter which makes the spring that much more difficult, as the company is "reborn" after a long winter's nap. So much has to be accomplished in so little time. If any of the many important details are forgotten and not addressed during the winter, the spring startup could be a real problem.

For example, one spring we forgot to order and buy uniforms for the new employees. This was embarrassing because we often talked up how our people are "clearly identified by our distinctive uniforms."

Does this sound familiar to you? If so, perhaps I can help you by telling you how we resolved our own problem. I created a calendar of events, a revolving "to do" list. It's simple and takes surprisingly little time.

Create a calendar

Here's how to do it: Project-manage your company like you would a large landscape job. When you have your weekly staff meetings, keep a list on a calendar of the items that need to be done on a recurring basis. List the item, start date, completion date and who's in charge of the initiative. There's plenty of project management software, from simple to extremely complex, to help you accomplish this if you're interested in going that route.

Start your staff meetings with a brief review of the items. Look for potential "showstoppers." Be sure not to miss any starts, and take deadlines seriously. It's as simple as that. But from my experience, companies large and small are guilty of not having this type of process.

If you think this would help your company, then add one more New Year's resolution to your list and create your own "calendar of events." At the end of one year, you'll be surprised to see the dozens of items on your list. Once you have one year's history established, the benefits of your past documentation will be amazing. This process will help you manage your company more efficiently and in a more organized manner. And if you miss the adrenaline rush, take up race car driving or something.

— *The author built and operated the largest landscape company in Connecticut before selling it in 1999. He now operates Grass Roots Consulting, Inc. He can be reached at ed@grassrootsconsulting.com.*

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Time to get everything ready for the upcoming season, from your finances to your service objectives.



Your lawn care “to do” list

BY EWALD ALSTADT

Finalize business plans for the upcoming lawn care season and review everything in your business from financial planning and business development to technical and service objectives. The Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) offers the following checklist to help you start the new year off right:

Financial planning

- ▶ Review all expenses and determine what your major costs will be (personnel, equipment, office space). Measure these expenses against your revenue from the previous year to determine if your revenue level is enough to maintain profitability.
- ▶ Examine any outstanding receivables from the previous year and determine what can be done to improve your collection and invoicing processes. Update and train your employees on the new procedures.
- ▶ Revisit your vendor relationships. Can you save money by using different vendors?

Customer/community relations

- ▶ Communicate with your customers regularly. Customer retention is the foundation of a healthy lawn care business. If you don't have systems in place to stay in contact with all of your clients, implement them.
- ▶ Be a good corporate citizen. Join local business and civic organizations to stay involved in the community that supports you. Join lawn care industry trade associations such as PLCAA or your state or regional group.

These organizations will lend credibility and provide you with access to best practices information.

- ▶ Develop a plan to deal with customer complaints. No matter how much you pay attention to customer service, complaints will occur. Train your staff on how to properly deal with customer service issues.

Technical

- ▶ Stay current on new products and lawn care protocols as they become available. Advances in technology make it easier than ever to serve your customers.
- ▶ Train your personnel on new products and procedures. They need to be aware of safety concerns associated with any new practices.
- ▶ Implement only technologies that are safe, efficient and make it easier for you to deliver a superior finished product to your customers.

Servicing

- ▶ Review service routes and schedules for the most efficient use of company travel time, and allow for the addition of services and customers when planning routes.
- ▶ Examine the previous year's production/performance statistics to determine ways to increase production and decrease costs.

These are just a few simple pointers to consider when planning for 2004. Additional resources and tips on ways to manage and grow your business are available at PLCAA's Web site, www.plcaa.org.

— Ewald Alstadt, President-Elect of PLCAA, is Director of Operations at Lawn Doctor corporate offices in Holmdel, N.J. He's a seasoned professional with more than 22 years of experience in the lawn care industry.

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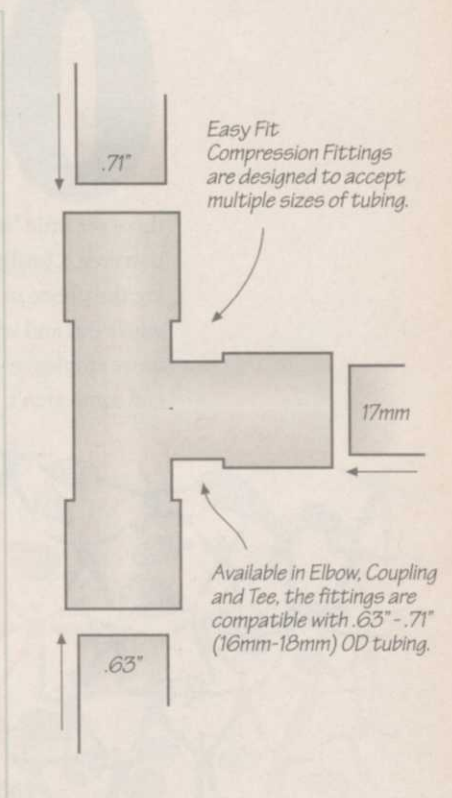
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A company with good **accountability** has clear policies for how things are to be done, and **everyone** is expected to follow those policies.



Hold people accountable

BY BRUCE WILSON

One of the most significant shortcomings of many companies is their inability to hold people accountable. It shows itself in many ways, some of them quite subtle. Sometimes things that seem minor are a sign of a bigger problem.

For example, in many offices there are little "in or out boards" posted by the reception area. Usually they're there for the person answering the phone or greeting guests to know who's in and who's out and when they'll return. In my experience, some employees are pretty good about keeping this up and some aren't. If a company allows some to do it and

some to not do it, they undermine their culture of accountability. They send the message that it's okay not to follow a procedure set up to enhance company performance.

It starts at the top

How should a company build more accountability into its organization? It starts at the top. The owner must see this as being an important element of company culture.

The owner must be accountable to the same things that he or she expects others to be accountable to.

Job descriptions should be clear in what the expectations are for each position. The "key results" part of the descriptions should be measurable. The organization chart should be clear in outlining chain of command.

A company with good accountability has clear policies for how things are to be done, and everyone is expected to follow those policies.

There's also a culture of doing things right the first time in a culture of accountability. It isn't okay to occasionally get sloppy. High standards are set, and work is performed to those standards. The standards are clear, and, if not met, immediate corrective action is taken.

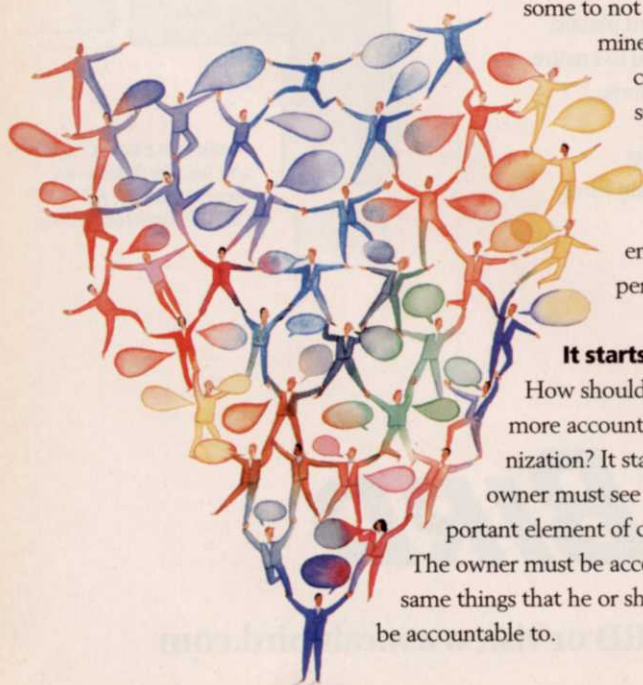
Killing the culture

Conversely, there are some things that kill the accountability culture. One is procrastination in taking care of problems. Little excuses creep into holding people to company standards. "People are tired, it has been a long summer, etc."

Another excuse is just being too busy. Everyone is so busy they don't have time, so little things slip, then big ones slip and accountability is shot.

Don't mix "blame" with accountability. If the culture shifts to one of "blame," there are some bad outcomes. Two big problems result in a "blame culture": One is that people don't want to do things for fear of making a mistake, and the other is problems get covered up instead of being solved.

— *The author spent 30 years with Environmental Care, Inc. before partnering with Green Industry entrepreneur Tom Oyler to form the Wilson-Oyler Group, which offers consulting services. Visit www.wilson-oyler.com.*

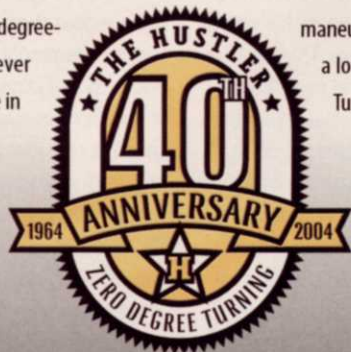




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1

1 Irrigation controls 101

Rain Bird's new online tutorial for the ESP-LX+ Series Irrigation Controller will help contractors train employees and it will also reduce callbacks by providing homeowners with step-by-step answers to many common controller questions. The tutorial features an easy-to-use "virtual" controller. Basic programming and operation tasks are clearly explained, including how to set the time and how to modify irrigation systems. It also provides an overview of controller scheduling and a helpful glossary. For more information visit www.rainbird.com/ circle no. 297



2

2 Big Block party

Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power put some muscle into its new line of Vanguard V-Twin Big Block air-cooled and liquid-cooled commercial engines. The 25- to 35-hp engines offer more horsepower for commercial applications and feature an advanced debris management system to allow them to run cooler and cleaner. A new intake and exhaust system with a large-column muffler provides quieter engine operation. For more information contact Briggs & Stratton at www.commercialpower.com/ circle no. 298



3

3 One smart system

As a standard feature on all 100 and 200 Series Gravely riding mowers, the Eye-Q Productivity System does everything from assessing equipment maintenance needs to analyzing time management. Monitor average cutting speed, locate jobs automatically and track individual hour meters for ignition time, engine time and PTO time. In addition to optional sensors available, including GPS and temperature, there's also a wireless remote download module called Scanmate that allows an individual to manage relevant information from a personal computer. For more information contact Gravely at 888/852-3390 or www.gravely.com/ circle no. 299



4

4 New Kubota UV arriving in Feb.

Look for Kubota's first ever utility vehicle, the RTV900, in dealerships in Feb. 2004. It combines Kubota diesel engineering with a matched transmission and hydraulic power steering. It also boasts a braking system that never allows it to enter a free-wheel status when traveling downhill. This UV features 4WD with a 2WD selection, front and rear wet-type disc brakes and is powered by a Kubota three-cylinder, liquid-cooled diesel engine rated at 22 PTO hp. Equip it with more than 25 accessories. For more information contact Kubota Tractor Corp. at 888/458-2682 or visit www.kubota.com/ circle no. 300

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Oil analysis isn't a substitute for timely oil changes. It's a tool for the preventive maintenance-oriented fleet manager.



Is there a magic oil?

BY HARRY SMITH / Guest Columnist

There seems to be as much mystery surrounding motor oils today as there was around patent medicines in the 1890s. Many are billed as miracles in a jug.

The arrival of synthetic motor oils increased the confusion. So what's the truth? Or is there any truth to be found? What works and what doesn't? Is there an economic advantage to using these lubricating elixirs?

When I'm asked about synthetics, "magic" motor oils and the boring old standard motor oils, there's usually a question hidden behind the question.

What about brand "X"? Will it really keep the engine running after it's drained from the sump? What about "Y"? Does it really reduce friction and add horsepower? All of these questions have a common denominator. The real question seems to be, "Can I skip or eliminate oil changes if I use one of these oils?" The short answer is "no."

A little logic

Here's a quote from Briggs & Stratton, the folks who have probably built more engines than anyone. "Use of synthetic oils does not alter required oil change intervals." It doesn't take a huge leap of logic to surmise that any oil you put in a Briggs & Stratton engine falls under the same rule. If you pay \$5 for a quart of oil instead of \$1.50 and the change interval is the same, then there's no cost savings.

The next question is the concept of "added horsepower" and increased durability. My personal experience suggests that engines that have their oil changed at

the recommended intervals don't have durability problems. On the question of increased horsepower, most "evidence" is anecdotal. There are usually no replicable scientific experiments that prove more than tiny horsepower gains. If a unit is underpowered, then you have an engineering or engine selection error. Oil won't fix it.

So what oil do you use in those air-cooled and small water-cooled engines? Just look in the owner's manual or go to the engine manufacturer's web site. Some of the recommendations can be confusing. Some engines can use multigrade oils and some can't. Generally, older engine designs require 30 weight API J specification oils. Newer engine designs can accommodate multigrade oils. Don't guess — look it up.

It's magic

So is there any magic? Actually, there is. If you're operating a large fleet and want predictive information on how your engines are doing, then set up an oil sampling plan. Find a reliable testing lab and work with it to set up a sampling program. The folks there will keep you informed about engine condition. Their information will help you spot potential bearing failures, silica ingestion and antifreeze in the oil before a catastrophic failure occurs. These labs can analyze motor oil, hydraulic oil and gear oil. An early warning of a potential failure in an expensive hydrostatic transmission will pay the lab cost for many years.

Remember, oil analysis isn't a substitute for timely oil changes. It's a tool for the preventive maintenance-oriented fleet manager. It's more reliable than "magic" oils.

— *The author is the turf equipment professor at Lake City Community College, Lake City, FL. He can be reached at Smithh@lakecitycc.edu.*



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Granular fertilizers

— old friends revisited



cal. But by combining slow, moderate and fast release nitrogen elements into your fertilizer blend, you can reduce the chance for losses. Plus, you minimize the hours spent spreading fertilizer.

Nitrogen fertilizers are classified by their release patterns. Many factors influence the release rate: granule size, type of coating, soil temperature, soil moisture and environmental factors. Because of this, given release rates are relative. They're usually judged against the release of the very fast release nutrients: urea, ammonium sulfate and ammonium nitrate.

Nitrogen fertilizers are classified into several categories:

► **Water insoluble nitrogen (WIN).**

These types have the slowest release rate of nitrogen fertilizers on the market today. Nitrogen releases slowly through microbial action or very slow water dissolution. Leaching losses are minimal, if they occur at all. They have a low salt index, thus are nonburning and safe to use near sensitive roots and species. They don't degrade their release rate through blending and handling.

► **Slowly available water soluble nitrogen (SAWSN).** These types release nitrogen faster than WIN products. This class includes, but isn't limited to, coated nitrogen products.

► **Coated nitrogen.** These types are

Granular fertilizers are the "old folks" of the industry. They seem to have been around forever, and, in fact, have been. Why? Because they're easy to manufacture, store and handle. Also, because of the millions of tons used in agriculture, they're relatively inexpensive. Last but not least, they can be blended into custom mixes to fill your exact needs.

After World War I, manufacturers fine-tuned their ability to manufacture dry fertilizer. At the same time, research funding at land grant universities was increasing. This research showed the value of sound fertilizer programs for raising crops. Increased fertilizer use on crops led to more tons being manufactured with a resulting drop in price.

This work led to questions about the exact fertilizer needs of turfgrasses. During the early 1920s, O.J. Noer, an employee of

This practical guide reviews the basics of turf fertilizers and which to use for your properties

BY MIKE ARCHER

Milorganite and a University of Wisconsin student, carried out the first scientific work concerning turf fertility. His work continues to be the basis of sound turf fertilizer programs today.

Growing plants use nitrogen in relatively high amounts compared to other nutrients. Nitrogen is also lost to the atmosphere and leaching, and is consumed by soil microbes. Nitrogen management is one of the most critical aspects of your fertilizer program.

Ideally, in order to get the best results from nitrogen fertilizer, you would apply a small amount every day. Not very practi-

coated with waxes, paraffins or other materials such as sulfur. These coatings are either slowly soluble or insoluble in water and are often used in combination. They can be applied less frequently than water soluble products and still achieve good growth and greening response. Leaching losses can be greater than WIN sources, but are much less than water soluble sources. Poor and rough handling can crack coatings, causing faster release. Blenders often consider coated nitrogen products to provide intermediate release.

► **Fast release** (water soluble) **nitrogen.**

These types release nitrogen to the soil immediately upon application, given adequate moisture. Because they release nitrogen faster than plants can use it, they're also highly susceptible to leaching. They can also cause plant leaf burn if applied to wet plants. Frequent, small applications are the best if these products are used alone.

Blenders often mix different nitrogen ingredients. This results in a final fertilizer that's a mixture of slow, intermediate and quick release nitrogen. This allows the applicator to enjoy the benefits of quick greening along with longevity of response.

This is particularly true when fertilizing sandy soils, which are problematic due to their inability to hold nutrients. They require a high degree of nitrogen management. Fertilizer blends that contain WIN, coated and other slowly available nitrogen sources are highly recommended for these soils.

However, this comes with a price. As a rule, the longer that nitrogen takes to release, the more it costs. This increased cost is offset by less application labor, less opportunity for leaching and nitrogen loss, and continual turf greening.

Phosphate fertilizer sources

Phosphorus is an essential component for plant growth and is critical in the energy cycle of plants. Rapidly growing plants

need relatively high amounts of this nutrient. These plants also tend to have poorly developed root systems. Therefore, it's critical that phosphorus be placed near the roots so plants don't exhibit the purplish color of P-deficient plants.

Although phosphorus is essential, you usually only need to add small amounts to the soil. Only when you're seeding, transplanting or sodding would you normally add more than a maintenance amount. Phosphates don't readily move through the soil. Therefore, loss occurs through erosion and removal of plant tissue. Similar to potassium, when you mulch clippings, you're recycling phosphates to plants.

Easy on the budget

The most economical source of phosphate fertilizers are the ammoniated phosphates. They contain between 10% to 18% nitrogen and 46% to 52% phosphate. Blenders commonly utilize ammoniated phosphates as their nutrient source.

Because phosphates tend to not move through the soil, place them near roots.

When you're seeding, sodding or transplanting, add phosphate fertilizer to the soil at rooting depth. To get this essential nutrient near roots of mature turf, apply phosphate fertilizers immediately after aeration before the holes fill up.

Potassium fertilizer sources

Proper potassium levels increases the disease resistance, tillering and general growth of plants. Potassium attaches to clay particles and doesn't easily leach, so sandy soils require a higher degree of potassium management than other soils. Using coated potassium fertilizer on sandy soils shows promise.

There are two major sources of potassium fertilizer: chlorides (muriate) and sulfates. Chlorides have a high salt index, so use caution when placing them near seed or young seedlings. Sulfates, while still having a relatively high salt index, are less damaging to sensitive tissue. Potassium sulfate and potassium-magnesium sulfate fertilizers are also excellent sources of readily available sulfur.

COMMON FERTILIZER TYPES	
Nutrient	Examples of Fertilizer Sources
Water insoluble nitrogen (WIN)	Methylene urea (portion of total N) Biosolids Organics (Blood meal, feather meal, etc.)
Slowly available water soluble nitrogen (including coated slow release fertilizer)	Methylene urea (portion of total N) Coated urea
Fast release nitrogen	Urea Ammonium sulfate Ammonium nitrate Potassium nitrate Methylene urea (small portion of total N)
Phosphate	Ammoniated phosphate (10-52-0, 18-46-0) Triple super phosphate (0-44-0, 0-46-0) Organics (Bone meal)
Potassium	Muriate of potash (0-0-60, 0-0-62) Sulfate of potash (0-0-50-17S) Potassium-magnesium sulfate (0-0-22-22S) Organics (sunflower fly ash, etc.)

In the early years of fertilizer blending, segregation of different ingredients was common. Only by purchasing a homogeneous manufactured fertilizer could a customer be assured of getting a quality product. Over time, it was found that making sure ingredients were similar in size eliminated this problem.

Blenders have since used different systems, most notably and recently the Size Guide Number (SGN) and Uniformity Index (UI), to size their ingredients. This allows blends to compete in quality with homogenous fertilizers, and gives a numerical value to an ingredient's size. It eliminates confusion as to the meaning of "mini," "micro" and "fairway."

The SGN is a measure in millimeters (mm) of the diameter of each individual granule. A small number, such as 90, indicates a small granule of 0.90 mm diameter. This would typically be a Greens Grade size. A larger number, such as 160, indicates a granule size of 1.60 mm diameter. This would typically be a fairway sized granule. Generally, a larger granule is less expensive than a smaller one. Fertilizers with a small SGN provide for more granules per square foot, which is important for positive, consistent results when fertilizer is used as a carrier for water insoluble pesticides.

The UI is a measure of how uniform this granule size is. A higher UI indicates a higher degree of uniformity. This leads to less segregation, better spread patterns and more consistent results. Ask your dealer about these measures and what they mean for your clients' properties.

Application

Before applying fertilizer to any large area, sample and analyze the soil. Soils that have been mixed due to construction make it especially difficult, if not impossible, to know the nutrient history of the area. A soil analysis will indicate current macronutrient

and, if requested, micronutrient levels, pH, organic matter content, liming needs, the amount of salt in the soil, soil texture and other information.

Armed with your soil analysis and knowing what you're growing, requirements of the property owner and the budget you're working with, your fertilizer supplier can then give you the best program for successful, consistent results.

Spreading

Before you can accurately spread any fertilizer, you need to calibrate your spreader for that specific fertilizer. Many factors affect spread patterns: the type of spreader, use and abuse of the spreader, walking speed, obstacles in the yard such as trees and walks, and differences in fertilizer products and how they flow are just a few.

Proper calibration of your spreader saves you money and helps make sure that the fertilizer you apply gets the results you expect.

Spreader calibration

If the fertilizer you're using gives a recommended opening, start with this.

Using the formula above, calculate the amount of fertilizer you need for a given area, such as 200 sq. ft. Begin fertilizing, starting along an edge and continuing until the spreader is empty.

Measure the area covered. If you covered the exact area you calculated, write down the spreader setting for that fertilizer and continue spreading. If you covered less area, close the spreader gate slightly and re-calibrate. If you covered more area, open the gate slightly and re-calibrate.

Sweep or blow off any fertilizer that gets

Do the math

It's easy to calculate the amount of fertilizer to apply. Let's look at an example:

Nitrogen required ► 0.75 lb. N per 1,000 sq. ft. turf

Fertilizer used ► 6-2-0 Milorganite

Formula:

$$\frac{\text{lb. nutrient required per 1,000 sq. ft.}}{\text{percent of that nutrient in the fertilizer}} = \text{lb. fertilizer required per 1,000 sq. ft.}$$

Example: $\frac{0.75}{0.06^*} = 12.5$ lb. per 1,000 sq. ft. of a 6-2-0 fertilizer required to give 0.75 lb. N per 1,000 sq. ft.

Thus, a 50-lb. bag divided by 12.5 lb. per 1,000 sq. ft. = 4,000 sq. ft. covered per bag

(*the % nitrogen in a 6-2-0 fertilizer)

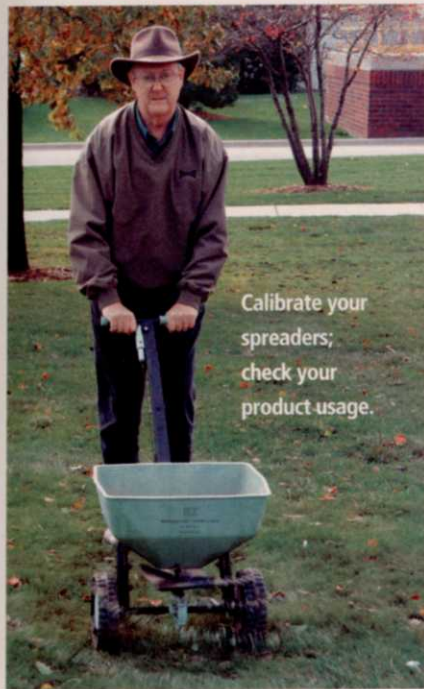
on concrete, pavers or other impervious surfaces. Some iron-containing fertilizers will stain. If this is a concern to you, check with your supplier for products that don't stain.

Make sure you don't spread fertilizer near or into water. Both nitrogen and phosphate fertilizers will pollute water, causing excessive algae and water plant growth. This damages sport fish populations and detracts from the recreational value of the lake or stream.

After you're done with your spreader for the day, clean it. Oil any parts that the manufacturer recommends. Store your spreader where it won't be damaged. Sounds simple, but throwing it on the back of a truck can damage the impeller or change the gate setting. If nothing else, it definitely doesn't give a professional appearance to your name on the door of the truck.

Buying granular fertilizer

When buying granular fertilizer, understand the "Guaranteed Analysis" statement on the package. This is a legal document that describes, in technical terms, the fertilizer in that package. A manufacturer may represent a product to contain a large amount of slow release nitrogen, but if the label states that only 4 out of 22 units of nitrogen are slow release, you can decide if that's what you're looking for.



Calibrate your spreaders; check your product usage.

The rest of this statement describes each component of the fertilizer and who is guaranteeing the analysis. If you have questions about the Guaranteed Analysis statement, contact your supplier or the fertilizer manufacturer for help. Another source is your local state Agriculture Department representative.

Second, note the size of the granule you're purchasing. If you're spreading a nonwater soluble pesticide impregnated on a fertilizer, you'll need to use a product with a small SGN for best coverage and weed control. Again, talk to your supplier or manufacturer for help.

Third, check the condition of the fertilizer when you get it. If it's already lumpy or otherwise out of condition, send it back. Store fertilizer in an enclosed area, with at least a roof to keep rain off the bags. Even plastic bags have air holes, which are placed in them to aid in filling. Also, remember that coated fertilizer ingredients lose their integrity when you handle them roughly.

Finally, granular fertilizers offer you a great value. Review this discussion when you're looking at our program, talking to your suppliers and looking for economical ways to satisfy your customers. **LMI**

— The author is a research coordinator for Milorganite with more than 30 years of experience in the fertilizer industry.



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Buying tips

- ▶ Seek input from employees who will be using them
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- ▶ Limit manufacturers/models for ease of maintenance, parts
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- ▶ Hot selling 40-in. models suited for short runs, estate use
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- ▶ Check attachment, accessory availability before buying

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continued on page 60

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Circle 125

LM Reports

continued from page 56

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For more information contact Bush Hog at 334/874-2700 or www.bushhog.com / circle no. 271

Exmark

New LazerZ with 23- or 27-hp twin-cylinder Kohler, 52-, 60- or 72-in. UltraCut deck options, speeds to 10 mph, cuts six acres per hour; Quick-Lift deck assist standard on 72-in. model.

For more information contact Exmark at 402/223-4010 or www.exmark.com / circle no. 272



Auburn Industries ▲

Warrior model 54-in. deck, powered by 4-stroke, 25-hp OHV Kawasaki, 0-12 mph forward, 0-4 mph reverse, 12-volt electric starter, 12-gal. gas tank.

For more information contact Auburn at 402/274-8600 or www.everride.com / circle no. 273

Husqvarna

The iZ6123 features an electric start 23-hp Kawasaki V-Twin engine with a 61-in. deck, and has six adjustable anti-scalp rollers and



23-in. rear tires. A ground speed of up to 9.5 mph offers a productivity rate of up to five acres per hour.

For more information contact Husqvarna at 704/597-5000 or www.husqvarna.com / circle no. 274

Great Dane

Chariot LX available with 25-, 26-, 27- and 28-hp engines, 61- or 72-in. deck, 1-5 in. cut height adjustment without tools, twin lever or optional wrap-around transmission controls; multi-adjustment suspension seat comes standard, 8-gallon fuel tank.

For more information contact Great Dane at 812/218-7100 or www.greatdane.com / circle no. 275

Lastec

Mowers with articulating decks, 72-in. or 96-in. units, 28-hp or 32-hp diesel, 29-hp water-cooled gas or 28-hp air-cooled gas engines available, wings articulate up to 13-in. on smaller unit, 26 in. on larger ones.

For more information contact Lastec at 800/515-6798 or www.lastec.com / circle no. 276

Wright

Stand or sit on Sentar, a compact sit-down zero with 42-, 58-, 61-in. decks adjusting to 1 in. to 5.25 in., several OHV twin-cylinder engines available, 16cc Hydro pumps, twin oil filters, high-capacity oil cooler.

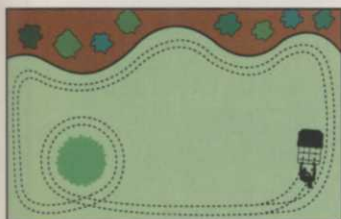
For more information contact Wright at 301/360-9910 or www.wrightmfg.com / circle no. 277

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The TurnAer 26 was also showcased in the December 2003 issue of *Lawn & Landscape* as one of "The Hottest Products of 2003."

What Our Customers Are Saying...

"I am very pleased with the Turfco TurnAer 26. The machine is beyond compare! I am just thrilled that I found the right machine. I put the machine to hard work for four weeks and it stood up to the test."

*Joyce Pells
Natural Lawn of America
Akron, Ohio*

"The TurnAer was so easy to run the guys did not mind running it every day. Also they were 30% more productive, even on the hilly lawns with lots of beds. The simple, easy-to-use controls and the brake assisted turning make it a nice machine to operate."

*Scott Brown
Lawn Co.
Atlanta, Georgia*

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LM Reports

continued from page 60

Dixon Industries

New styled ZTR-pro series ZTRs, 2700 features 60- or 72-in. cut, 27-hp Twin Kawasaki gas engine, two 11.5-gal. fuel tanks, "big rig" seat suspension reduces fatigue, attachments with automotive-type receiver hitch.

For more information contact Dixon at 800/264-6075 or www.dixon-ztr.com / circle no. 278

Sutech

Two Stealth-Z mowers available: SSZ3401 with Kawasaki 15-hp engine, or 17-hp SSZ4201, floating cutter decks in 34- or 42-in. widths, high-back seat with arm rests, parking brake and engine hour meter.

For more information contact Sutech at 888/536-8368 or www.sutech.com / circle no. 279

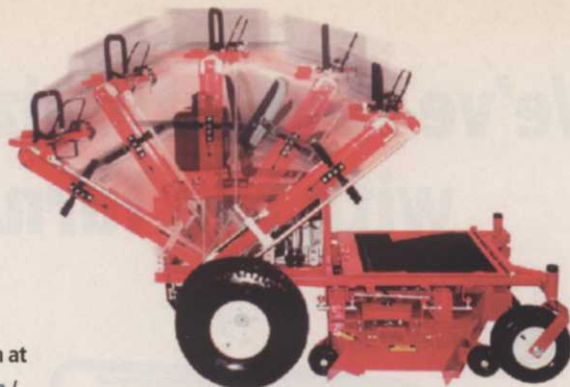
Hustler

Hustler Z features 60-in. deck., 23-hp Kawasaki engine, 6 anti-scalp wheels, mowing heights 1-5 inches in quarter-in. increments

For more information contact Hustler at 800/395-4757 or www.excelhustler.com / circle no. 280

Rich Manufacturing ▲

Versatile unit converts zero from a rider to a walker, 17 V-Twin Kawasaki or V-twin Kohler engines, 12-volt electric-start engines, attachments include snow blade, aerator, dethatcher.



For more information contact Rich Mfg. 765/436-2744 or www.convertiblemower.com / circle no. 281

Howard Price

Blazer 360Z-80 with 80-in. cut, mows 6.5 acres per hour at 8 mph, flotation for dips with wing operation to 20 degrees, reaches under bushes and shrubs, keeps branches away from operator, 25-hp Kawasaki engine or 24-hp Honda.

For more information contact Howard Price at 636/532-7000 or www.howardprice.turf.com / circle no. 282

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Circle 127



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Your Next Mower

LM Reports

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Dixie Chopper ▲

New Supreme Series features three zeros, each cuts 7 acres per hour, Kohler 28-hp on the 60-in. and 72-in. models, Generac 32-hp OHV on SP3200-72 with 72-in. deck, Velvet Touch Control system that extends drive life.

For more information contact Dixie Chopper at 765/246-7737 or www.dixiechopper.com / circle no. 283

Toro ▼

Standard folding ROPS on Toro Z Master Z500 series mid-mounts, 20-, 23-, 27-, 28-hp Kohler; 25- and 27-hp liquid-cooled Kawasaki, 7-gauge, high-strength steel Turbo Force decks available in 52-, 60- and 72-in., adjustable discharge baffle allows on-site fine-tuning to match mowing conditions, rubber discharge chute provides exceptional dispersion, resists damage.

For more information contact Toro at 612/888-8801 or www.toro.com / circle no. 284



Snapper ▲

FastBack zeros with 48-, 52- or 61-in., 3-blade decks, 19-, 21-, 25- or 27-hp Kawasaki or Kohler engine with twin stick controls or 23- or 25-hp Kohler engine with joystick control, dual path hydrostatic drive systems, two 6-gallon fuel tanks, 23- or 24-in. 4-ply Kenda Super Turf drive tires, three 6-point mounted spindles are field serviceable

For more information contact Snapper at 888/762-7737 or www.snapper.com / circle no. 285



Kubota ▲

ZD-28F largest in ZD Series, 28-hp, liquid-cooled, 3-cylinder, key start, diesel engine, one-piece hydrostatic transmission, 60- or 72-in. decks with 3 blades, two-hand, lever speed control.

For more information contact Kubota at 888/458-2682 or www.kubota.com / circle no. 286

Jacobsen

Z-FastCat ES, 42- and 48-in. 10-gauge cutting decks, 25-hp Kohler Command V-Twin OHV gas engine, 7.4 bushel clipping collection system, lever-style steering, high-back vinyl seat.

For more information contact Jacobsen at 866/522-6273 or www.jacobsen.com / circle no. 287

Encore

Z-60 adds 60-in. deck to Z-series, 19,000 fpm blade tip speed, 25-hp Kawasaki gives 8.5 mph ground speed, optional collection system, mulcher, knobby or bar lug tires.

For more information contact Encore at 800/267-4255 or www.encoreequipment.com / circle no. 288



Jungle Jim

Spitfire hands-free, foot-controlled zero, 3-bladed decks on 52-in. or 61-in. models, 23- or 25-hp twin Kohler or Kawasaki electric starts, dual fuel tanks have 14-gallon capacity, 11 mph forward, 4-6 mph reverse.

For more information contact Jungle Jim at 888/844-5467 or www.junglejimsap.com / circle no. 289

Gravely

New 34Z zero-turn fits through 36-in. gates, 34-in. cut, 15-hp Kawasaki twin engine operates at 9 mph forward speed, Hydro-Gear commercial pumps and wheel motors, 7-gal. fuel capacity.

For more information contact Gravely at 800/472-8359 or www.gravely.com / circle no. 290

Ferris Industries

New IS 5000Z 4-wheel front IS independent suspension, 61- or 72-in. deck, 31.5-hp Cat diesel or 34-hp Daihatsu gas engine, adjustable steering control levers, twin 6.5-gallon tanks.

For more information contact Ferris at 800/933-6175 or www.ferrisindustries.com / circle no. 291



Woods ▲

Mow'n Machine's new 5-in. deep MX deck, 18,400 fpm blade tip speed increases unit's capacity, 4 engine choices, 11-gallon fuel capacity, 10 mph maximum transport speed.

For more information contact Woods at 866/869-6637 or www.woodsonline.com / circle no. 292

Scag ▲

Scag Wildcat has 61-in. deck, 27-hp Kohler, 24x12-12 drive tires with 6-in. caster wheels, self-adjusting belt systems, ground speed of 10 mph.

For more information contact Scag at 920/387-0100 or www.scag.com / circle no. 293



Grasshopper ▲

PowerFold electric height adjustment gives deck lifting, electric height adjustment, 52- and 61-in. 34 Series Grasshopper FrontMount Decks, single-switch control of both cutting height and deck lift functions, infinite range of cutting heights from 1 in. to 5 in. without leaving operator's seat, deck rotates upright for cleaning, maintenance, blade work.

For more information contact Grasshopper at 620/345-8621 or www.grasshopper-mower.com / circle no. 294

Yazoo Kees

6 new Mid-Max models, 18-hp B&S, 19- or 23-hp Kawasaki or 23-hp Kohler, 42- to 61-in. cutting widths, quick-lift deck adjustment cuts from 1.5 in to 5 in., collection system, strip kit, mulch kit available.

For more information contact Yazoo/Kees at 877/368-8873 or info@yazookees.com / circle no. 295

Swisher ▶

Mid-mount mowers in 36-, 42-, 50-in. decks, twin hydrostatic transmissions, electric clutch, infinite cutting height adjustment from 1.5 in. to 3.5 in., padded high-back seats, twin comfort grip control levers.



For more information contact Swisher at 800/222-8183 or www.swisherinc.com / circle no. 296

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Circle 129

U. of Arkansas / Ft. Smith

2003 PGMS Grand Award Winner for School or University Grounds

Property at a glance

- Location:** Fort Smith, AR
- Grounds Supervisor:** Steve Dobbs
- Category:** School or University Grounds
- Total budget:** \$405,884
- Year site built:** 1952
- Acres of turf:** 30
- Acres of woody ornamentals:** 1.3
- Acres of display beds:** .54
- Total paved area:** 41 acres
- Total man-hours/week:** 425

Maintenance challenges

- ▶ Heavy compacted soil with poor drainage
- ▶ Extensive routine pruning
- ▶ New construction sites with campus growth

Project checklist

- Completed in last two years:
- ▶ Two perennial gardens
 - ▶ 75th anniversary bed
 - ▶ Formal garden seasonal color

On the job

- ▶ 10 full-time staff, 6 seasonal employees, 3 licensed pesticide applicators

If Steve Dobbs ever runs into trouble on the job, it won't be from lack of experience. The grounds manager for the University of Arkansas worked for an extension service for 14 years as a horticultural agent and state consumer horticultural specialist. Then, after his father's unexpected death, he went back to the family farm in Sallisaw, OK, to run his own landscape maintenance and nursery business.

"I interviewed for my current position because it was very enticing due to the fact that it involved everything I had done on a grander scale," Dobbs says.

Grand indeed. A project that has Dobbs really excited is the creation of a botanical garden and arboretum. "I'm truly a gardener and a plant person, so to be able to help design this has been very rewarding," he says.

What doesn't excite Dobbs much is the amount of construction occurring on campus, leaving the ground around the foundation of buildings compacted and lacking in adequate topsoil. The school recently evolved from a community col-



Keeping 30 acres of turf green and healthy during ongoing construction is Steve Dobbs' biggest challenge.



lege to a university, so enrollment has increased and new construction is everywhere.

With the many challenges he faces, Dobbs focuses on getting his staff to understand the basics. "Making sure we're following soil test results, mowing at the proper height, watering less often and more in-depth, those kinds of things," he explains.

"My staff is my greatest resource and commodity, and I try to provide them with the tools and the education and training to do the job," Dobbs adds.

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 2004 winners will be named at the annual meeting of the Professional Grounds Management Society in November. For more information on the 2003 awards, contact PGMS at: 720 Light St. • Baltimore, MD 21230

PGMS Landscape
MANAGEMENT

• Phone: 410/223-2861. Web site:
www.pgms.org



Training for the 10-man grounds crew focuses on horticultural basics.



Dobbs' love of plants shows in the formal gardens and seasonal displays. His biggest thrill so far at the university has been helping with the design of the botanical garden.





Last resort

More than simply landscape maintenance, resort grounds require something unique.

A key indicator of a company's prosperity is the condition of the grounds. If a business is declining, the first cuts are usually made to grounds maintenance. On the other hand, if a business is thriving, that success is reflected by the beautiful landscaping.

Consider the hospitality business and factor in a world class resort. The only cuts you want performed are to the formally sheered hedges and lush lawns. One of the primary goals toward a hotel's success is to sell room nights and get people in the rooms. The goal for the grounds should be to get guests outside to lounge by the pool and spa, play golf, stroll the gardens, meditate and bask in paradise.

A seasoned grounds manager reveals secrets to making resort grounds a 'work of art' BY DANNY MILLER

A resort is a guest's playground. Over 500,000 guests may experience a luxury resort in one year. This includes members, hotel guests, conference groups or social groups and their catering events. Everything is in presentation, and the first impression should make a lasting impression.

From the moment a client turns into the entrance, you want to project an image of paradise and sophisticated class in a formal, traditional setting. There must be much more thought given to the grounds than just trimming and weeding and turf and ornamentals. The work-of-art philosophy, the "wow" factor, must be apparent.

Lawns should look like carpet; hedges must be perfectly sculpted; color brightens

all the right places and every square inch of property has to be immaculate. Your goal as the manager is to create an environment that stimulates the senses by using plant combinations pleasing to the eye and fragrant as guests stroll courtyards and garden walks. Blend in the sound of trickling water from a fountain or wind chimes in the breeze. Offer a taste of potted herbs or tropical fruit. This all helps to create special memories for countless visitors.

Imagine how many people are moved by such ambiance. Achieve such an environment, and former guests can't help but be taken back to the fond times they had at the resort when they're back home and

continued on page 70



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JOHN DEERE

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catch a scent of jasmine in the air. Strive to create photo opportunities at every angle, every backdrop.

But let's not forget we're talking about a high occupancy resort here, a place that's similar to a high-traffic theme park. Lots of people mean lots of trash, so maintaining showcase gardens and grounds can't be the only thing on grounds managers' agendas.

Cleanliness comes first

The number one priority in resort grounds maintenance is cleanliness. All litter, including every single cigarette butt, must be picked and disposed of immediately. At The Breakers, Palm Beach, FL, trash cans are emptied every hour at the beach, pool decks and retail areas. This is done for every guest or for the one time that a Mobil or AAA inspector pays a visit to scrutinize the service and cleanliness of public space.

Janitorial coverage is important and essential seven days a week, sun up to sun down. Maintenance around busy activities and meeting schedules calls for thorough coordination and continual adjustment. Communication is paramount. When it's time for tree trimming, seal coating parking lots, overseeding or replanting annual display beds, first check hotel occupancy. Then check arrivals, departures, group conference activity, tennis play and golf tournaments.

Who needs to be informed? Everyone from activities and concierge personnel to sales and security. Each vacation day and event must be carefully orchestrated to insure a flawless stay. Maintenance workloads can be quite extensive, and every attempt must be made to appear invisible. As much as we would like to preach about low maintenance, the reality is that the guests who play here expect "Eden." Therefore, you must provide a botanical showplace and formal gardens.

The 'wow' factor

The biggest difference between resort grounds and just plain old 'grounds' is the 'wow' factor. The 'wow' factor is achieved through instilling in your staff the belief that grounds is a "work of art," and that there's more to a grounds operation than just mowing and trimming. At The Breakers, the grounds staff strives to combine art with Mother Nature.

Every time a guest rounds a turn while touring the grounds, your goal should be to make him or her stop and promise to create a permanent picture in their minds of what they're viewing so they can recall it when they get home and relive the experience.

It's not the easiest thing to do. What goes hand-in-hand with this "grounds as art" philosophy is not just doing maintenance but constantly trying to improve the product

Stellar staff

It takes a quality staff to maintain high profile properties in the most unobtrusive manner. Hire people who share the resort's values, people who are genuine and fit into the service or hospitality culture. Look for landscape maintenance skills and horticulture education, but also the unique trait of being naturally service oriented and considerate.

People who are hired to work on the grounds staff not only have to be gardeners but "hoteliers." They must enjoy serving the guests, greeting them, holding the

and keep crews motivated.

Flowers must be blooming every single day to provide a show for every single guest. Water should be trickling somewhere, and color and fragrances should arrest the guest in certain places. The goal is to affect all of their senses to create unforgettable moments. And it sounds like a cliché, but you truly must think "outside the box" in order to accomplish this.

doors open, assisting them when they need directions or selling them on a restaurant while simultaneously cleaning and meticulously manicuring the flora and fauna. They must become walking information centers, able to point the guests in the direction of all restaurant outlets and meeting rooms. Regular briefings should be held to allow staff to share ideas and information, announce the week's occupancy and prepare the property accordingly. Staff should role-play guest interaction to prepare them while onstage.

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The
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(2004)

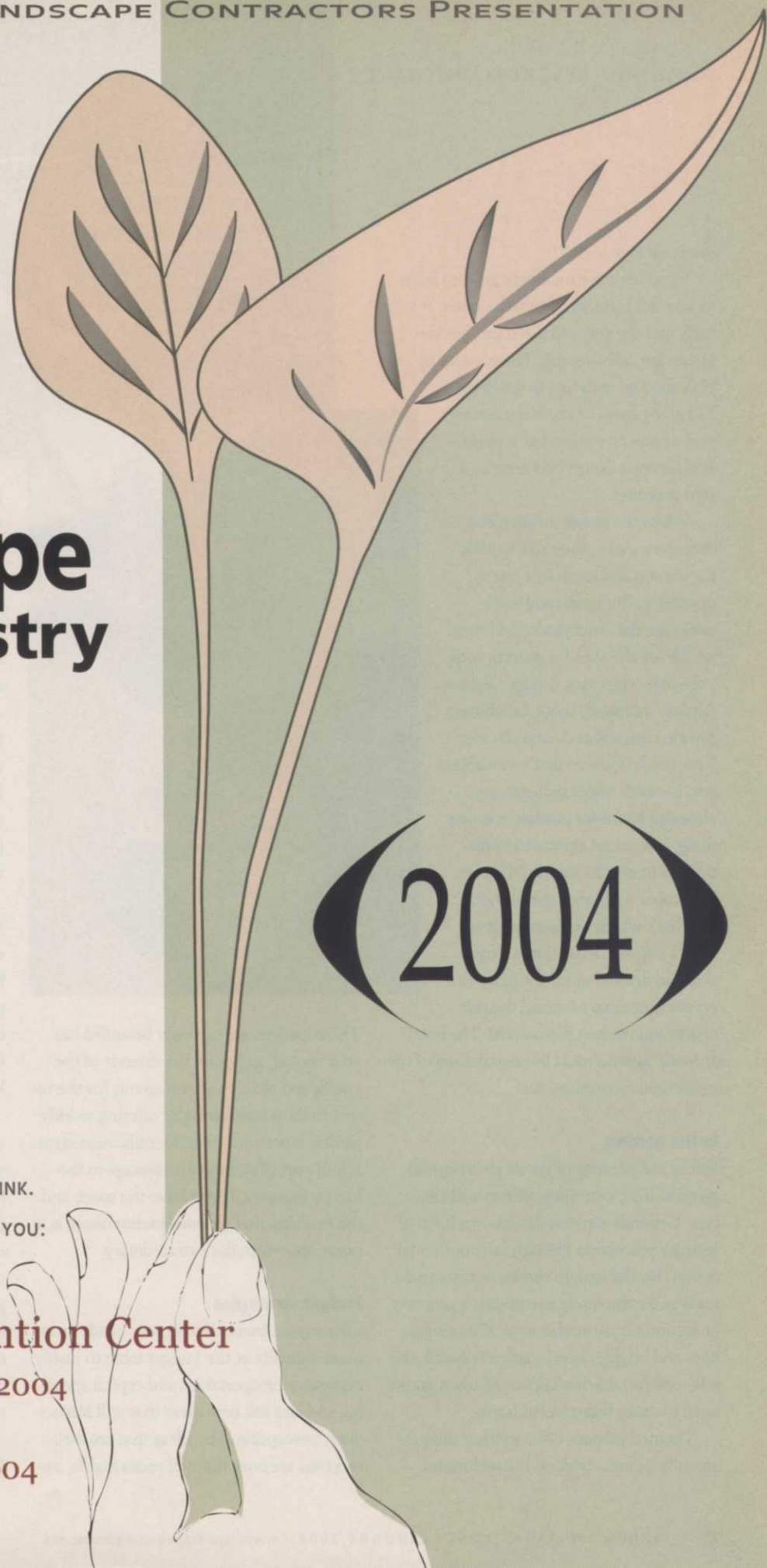
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Grounds crew members need to learn to interact but also learn to be quiet. It's early and the sun will rise soon, but the guests are still sleeping. There's a lot of cleaning and watering to get done, and all by hand because the operation of power equipment is prohibited before a designated time at mid-morning.

When the guests awaken and members arrive, they aim to soak up the sun and sand. But just as popular as the beach and pool decks are the courtyards and lawns, which are the sites for petting zoos, volleyball, carnivals, outdoor dinner parties, weddings, tents, car shows, private concerts and even circuses. Every inch of space that's available gets booked. Maintaining these close-cut lawns for aesthetics is one thing, but sound agronomic practices must also factor into the care to combat wear and compaction.

That's why it's so important to have a trained, skilled, knowledgeable and flexible team. Turfgrass expertise is necessary beyond the golf course and croquet greensward. The hotel grounds' lawns should be an extension of the manicured recreational turf.

In the garden

Safety and security of guests goes beyond gated entries, patrolling officers and cameras. Grounds can practice its own form of security protection through environmental design. Border hedges can serve as natural walls and completely encompass a property or section off particular areas. Clean sight lines and bright, cheery gardens provide the safe, comfortable feeling out-of-town guests need to make them feel at home.

Themed gardens offer another unique amenity in lush, tropical microclimates.



To achieve ideal resort grounds, it's essential to have professional, properly-trained crew members.



These gardens are not only beautiful but educational, and peak the interest of the young and old. It's advantageous for the resort to showcase extras by offering weekly garden tours with plant identification signs. It's all part of striving for leverage in the luxury industry. If you have the space and the fundamental grounds maintenance is in place, showcase the extraordinary.

Budget strategies

Like any business, department heads must meet annually at the budget table to justify maintenance operations and capital spending and also sell new ideas that will impact guest perception. The ideas that are well-received are ones that sell room nights, im-

pact Mobil or AAA standards, improve morale or make for a safer environment.

You need to first be sure that the "trucks and trains," your staff's tools and equipment, are in the best condition possible and make their job easier. The equipment also has to look presentable and professional, and be safe for them and the guests.

The extras? If you can justify the grounds' special amenities, then get your activities and marketing team on board. Demonstrate why and how they can impact guest perception. Remember, the guests who pay here play here and are always looking for vacation value.

Think of other hotel improvement projects that you can piggyback such as a renovated outlet that would provide a bigger bang effect with the addition of container gardens and various furnishings to an adjacent terrace. Container gardens alone can transform a stark area of pavement into a beautiful and inviting spot.

Many resorts, pool decks and terraces are positioned on the coast. Salt air can be extremely high and can dehydrate the toughest salt tolerant plant material. Display a variety of rotating container garden color that can be moved in and out. You cannot have a sign posted reading, "Dear guests, we're sorry that there are no flowering plants due to high winds." They don't care for excuses. Just do what it takes to provide impeccable service and the ultimate product, "A work of art." **LJM**

— *The author is the Director of Golf & Grounds at The Breakers in Palm Beach, FL.*

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- Atlanta – February 19
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Products

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In the spotlight

Dow AgroSciences LLC recently received registration from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for Spotlight specialty herbicide for improved clover control and control of other annual and perennial broadleaf weeds. The herbicide is labeled for use on established turf, including residential lawns, golf courses, parks, sports fields, sod farms and commercial sites. As an ester-based formulation, it's labeled for use on warm- and cool-season grasses.

For more information contact Dow at www.dowagro.com / circle no. 250



Royal flush

Valvette Systems' "Fabulous Flushing Cross" is a new versatile sprinkler head tool that makes it easy to retrieve the pop-up riser stem when it snaps back into the housing. Also, it enables you to keep all the water you flush inside the planter and direct the flow wherever you want, plus blocks dirty water from washing back into the open riser stem. It works on most male and female plastic pop-up heads, and includes a 1/4-in. Allen wrench and a screwdriver. It also has connections for a 3/4-in. coupling for remote flushing.

For more information contact Valvette at 866/200-8590 or www.valvettesystems.com / circle no. 251

Rack 'em up

Havener Enterprises' new equipment guard trailer racks feature a multi-purpose holder, a backpack blower holder, a 3-tier trimmer/brushcutter rack, a hand tool accessory rack, a water

Who's the boss?

Sarlo Power Mowers is introducing Weedboss hand-held trimmers to its family of power equipment. These trimmers are the first to be powered by the Briggs & Stratton Fource four-cycle engine. The engine features a lubrication system that provides 270-degree continuous operation and 360-degree intermittent operation. The engine also allows for easy starting, more power across a wide range of speeds, no more mixing of gasoline and oil, and reduced emissions. Three models will be available in spring 2004: curved shaft, straight shaft and brushcutter.

For more information contact Sarlo at www.weedboss.com / circle no. 252



cooler rack and a portable hand tool rack. These affordable, high-quality racks protect and secure valuable equipment. All models are powder-coated and install in just minutes.

For more information contact Havener Enterprises at 888/852-3390 or www.mowersulky.com / circle no. 253

Out in front

The Kubota GF 1800 front mower features excellent mobility on slopes and in soft ground conditions. Lock in the GF 1800's 4-wheel drive on-the-go by depressing the 4-wheel drive lock pedal and return to two-wheel drive with a touch of the release pedal. The 18-hp diesel engine provides high torque for tough mowing jobs. Kubota's Three Vortex Combustion System (TVCS) results in superb fuel economy, cleaner exhaust and quieter operation.

For more information contact Kubota at 888/458-2682 or www.kubota.com / circle no. 254

At long last

FMC introduces TalstarOne multi-insecticide flowable labeled for lawn application, ornamentals and trees, and general pest control applications. It replaces TalstarF insecticide/miticide as a true insecticide/miticide because its active ingredient, bifenthrin, has long-lasting residual control. It has no odorous or plant-damaging solvents because its formulation is water based and contains no alpha-cyano group. It's nonirritating, nonstaining, has no phytotoxicity and is available in pint, quart and 1-gallon Tip-n-Measure sizes. It

can be purchased from the same authorized dealers offering Talstar brand products.

For more information contact FMC at 800/321-1362 or www.talstar-one.com / circle no. 255

Brush up

Tanaka has added the TBC-600 heavy-duty brush cutter to its outdoor power equipment lineup. A 47cc, 2.4 hp engine features two piston rings and a stress relieved, chrome plated cylinder for long life. Other features include a bearing supported solid steel drive shaft, "low vibe" advanced shaft system, split dual handles, single handle adjustment and double shoulder harness. A BRAIN fully-automatic cutting head comes standard, as does a 10-in., 80-tooth saw blade.

For more information contact Tanaka at www.tanaka-usa.com / circle no. 256



Pass the salt

RZI's decorative Salt Shield, when installed around trees and shrubs on commercial properties, protects them from salt spread in the winter. You would never consider watering shrubs



with a salt mixture, but that's what happens when slush gets pushed over on them by plows. Imagine how much money you could save by

not having to replace these plant materials. Plus, you wouldn't have to keep disrupting properties and lose the uniformity you created in the first place.

For more information contact RZI at 800/704-0893 or www.rzillc.com / circle no. 257

Blow it away

FINN's new enhanced BB605 bark blower, the industry's only 60+ hp, 4.5-cu.-yd. capacity bark blower available for use in trailer or skid applications, has a redesigned hydraulic system to handle greater workloads. It also now offers an optional front feeder conveyor, a new hydraulic option that can be used to feed the machine during operation from a towing vehi-

cle. An optional seed injection feature calibrates seed into compost or topsoil mixes. A hydraulic powered, rear mounted hose reel provides power to coil the 150 ft. of flexible mulch hose.

For more information contact FINN at 800/543-7166 or www.finncorp.com / circle no. 259

Perfect edge

Echo's PE-310 Perfect Edge Power Edger achieves superior edging performance and increased productivity with the addition of the Pro-Torque Gear Case and Open Face Shield. Redesigned to deliver over 30% more torque at the cutting blade, the Pro-Torque Gear Case allows operators to complete edging jobs faster and with less effort, providing the optimum combination of speed and torque for use in any soil condition. It features a 30.5cc dual-ring piston engine, and a diaphragm carburetor ensures the proper mix of fuel and air for optimal engine performance and quick starts.

For more information contact Echo at www.echo-usa.com / circle no. 260

Pump it up

Air-O-Lator Corp.'s Aquarian aerators implement the use of Franklin Electric's submersible motors operating a scientifically designed pro-

What a load

The new Load-N-Tow is the safe and easy way to load and unload small but heavy and awkward equipment and materials. A front gate folds down to form a ramp, making it easy to roll or slide equipment, boxes, bags or loose parts on or off the platform. Raise the ramp and the load is secure for transportation. With its built-in 2-in. sq. trailer adapter receiver, it also provides a secure way to move trailer-mounted equipment around the yard. It comes available in three platform sizes: 42-in. x 42-in., 42-in. x 48-in. and 48-in. x 48-in.

For more information contact Star Industries at 800/541-1797 or www.starindustries.com / circle no. 258



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Products

PELLER, pumping a large volume of water (500 to 2,700 gallons per minute depending on the horsepower). The aerators, available with 0.5- to 3-hp motors, are designed to establish continual pond turnover, introduce oxygen to the water appropriately and in the proper quantity, and eliminate or prevent algae growth.

For more information contact Air-O-Lator at 800/821-3177 or www.airolator.com / circle no. 261

Make a point

HydroPoint's WeatherTRAK technology in Motorola's IR-RInet/ControlPort line of irriga-



tion controllers will provide for automatic daily watering adjustments based on the exact needs of each customer's landscape. It includes a scientifically based irrigation scheduling engine that takes your landscape's specific parameters such as plant type, soil type, sun exposure and

slope and calculates the exact amount of water to apply at the right time.

For more information contact HydroPoint at www.hydro-point.com / circle no. 262

Keep sprinklers safe

Mammoth Grip Sprinkler Spacers create a uniform space between a permanent barrier, such as a sidewalk or driveway, and a sprinkler. Why is this a good thing? It keeps sprinklers far enough away from sidewalks and driveways and also from drifting and moving, reducing the number of sprinklers that crew members damage as they



edge a property. The product comes with a spacer and a stake for ground stability.

For more information call 800/257-2930 or visit www.sprinkler-spacers.com / circle no. 263

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Events

RESOURCES

WHAT, WHEN & WHERE

January

19-20 Nebraska Nursery and Landscape Association Winter Conference & Trade Show / Omaha, NE; 402/450-7192

19-22 Mid-Atlantic Horticulture Short Course / Virginia Beach, VA; 757/787-9451

19-22 Michigan Turfgrass Conference / Lansing, MI; 517/321-1660; www.michigan-turfgrass.org

21-23 Iowa Nursery & Landscape Association Trade Show / Des Moines, IA; 816/233-1481

21-25 STMA Conference & Exhibition / San Diego, CA; 800/323-3875

22-23 Idaho Horticulture Expo / Boise, ID; www.inagrow.org

22-24 Mid-America Green Industry Convention / Kansas City, MO; 816/561-5323

22-25 ANLA Management Clinic / Louisville, KY; 202/789-2900; www.anla.org

23-24 Arkansas Green Industry Professional Landscape & Nursery Trade Show / Hot Springs, AR; 501/225-0029

25-27 North Dakota Nursery and Greenhouse Convention & Trade Show / Fargo, ND; 701/886-7673; www.nurseryman.com

26-27 California Irrigation Institute Annual Meeting / Sacramento, CA; 916/366-9376; www.caii.org

26-28 Central Environmental Nursery Trade Show / Columbus, OH; 800/825-5062; www.onla.org

26-28 Ohio State University Nursery Short Course / Columbus, OH; 800/825-5062

27-29 Midwest Turf Expo / Indianapolis, IN; 765/494-8039; www.agry.purdue.edu/turf-events/expo

28-30 ProGreen Expo / Denver, CO; 800/397-6665; www.pro-greenexpo.com

29 Northeastern PA Turf School & Trade Show / Wilkes-Barre, PA; 814/355-8010

February

5-7 PLCAA Management Forum / Boca Raton, FL; 800/458-3466; www.plcaa.org

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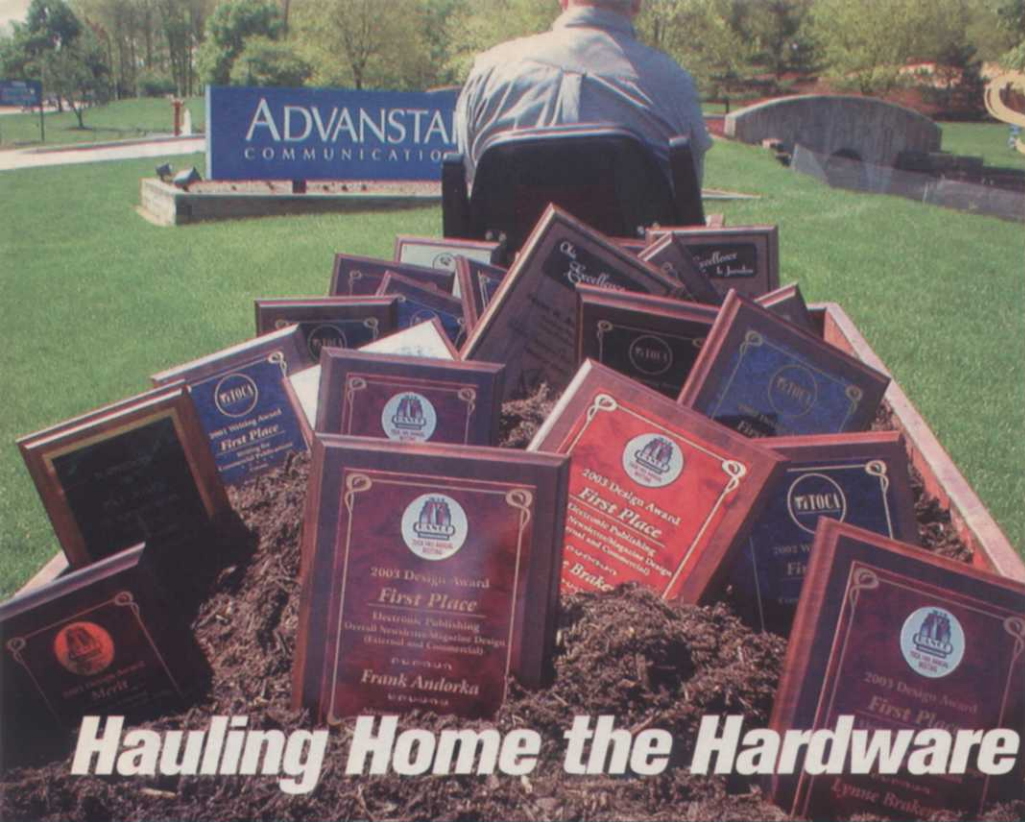
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Best Use of Photography - Printed Magazines

First Place

Carrie Parkhill, Landscape Management, "Lawncare in Nowhere"

Printed Magazines - Overall Magazine Design

Merit

Lisa Lehman/Kim Traum, Advanstar Communications, "Golfdom"

Writing For Commercial Publications, Column

First Place

Pat Jones, Golfdom, "This Turf Disease Can Affect You"

Merit

Jason Stahl, Landscape Management, "Always Listen To Your Mom"

Writing For Commercial Publications, Turf Feature Article

First Place

Larry Aylward, Golfdom, "How The Other Half Lives"

Merit

Larry Aylward, Golfdom, "The Apple Doesn't Fall Far From The Tree"

Writing for Commercial Publications, Business Management

Merit

Larry Aylward, Golfdom, "The Politics of Water"

Writing For Commercial Publications,

Environmental Stewardship Article

First Place

Larry Aylward, Golfdom, "Up a Tree and Loving It"

Writing for electronic web site newsletters/magazines (external and commercial)

First Place

Pat Jones, Golfdom, "To Move or Not to Move"

Printed Magazines - Cover Page Design

Merit

Kim Traum and Dan Beedy, Advanstar Communications, "The Golfdom Report"

Printed Magazines - Two-Plus Page Design, Editorial

First Place

Kim Traum, Advanstar Communications, "Welcome To Golf 2025"

Merit

Kim Traum, Advanstar Communications, "The Golfdom Report"

Electronic Publishing - Overall Newsletter/Magazine Design, (internal and non-commercial)

First Place

Derek Miller, BASF, "Growing Trends" (and Lynne Brakeman, Advanstar, Jennifer Kempes, The Dudnyk Agency)

Electronic Publishing - Overall Newsletter/Magazine Design, (external and commercial)

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TIE: Lynne Brakeman, Advanstar, "Landscape Management.net"

TIE: Lynne Brakeman, Advanstar, "Golfdom.com"

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 850 Other (please specify) _____

2. Which of the following best describes your title? (Fill in ONE only)
 10 **Executive/Administrator** - President, Owner, Partner, Director, General Manager, Chairman of the Board, Purchasing Agent, Director of Physical Plant
 20 **Manager/Superintendent** - Arborist, Architect, Landscape/Grounds Manager, Superintendent, Foreman, Supervisor
 30 **Government Official** - Government Commissioner, Agent, Other Government Official
 40 **Specialist** - Forester, Consultant, Agronomist, Pilot, Instructor, Researcher, Horticulturist, Certified Specialist
 50 **Other Titled and Non-Titled Personnel** (please specify) _____

3. Which of the following services does your company provide? (Fill in ALL that apply)
Maintenance/Services
 A Mowing F Turf Fertilization C Tree Care
 B Turf Insect Control D Turf Aeration L Pond/Lake Care
 J Turf Weed Control E Irrigation Services N Snow Removal
 G Turf Disease Control H Ornamental Care O Other (please specify) _____

Design/Build
 I Landscape Design M Landscape Installation P Irrigation Installation
 K Paving/Deck/Patio Installation Q Other (please specify) _____

4. Type of customer served? (Fill in ONE ONLY)
 A Commercial B Residential C Both

5. Which of the following landscape products do you purchase or specify? (Fill in ALL that apply)
 B Blowers H Herbicides Y Ornamental/Nursery Products P Tractors
 C Chain Saws I Insecticides Z Pavers/Masonry/Bricks/Rocks Q Truck Trailers/Attachments
 U Engines W Irrigation Systems (Hardscape Materials) R Trucks
 V Erosion Control X Landscape Lighting 3 Seed/Sod S Turfseed
 F Fertilizers J Line Trimmers 1 Skid Steers T Utility Vehicles
 G Fungicides K Mowers N Spreaders 2 Water Features

6. My firm's annual revenue is: (Fill in ONE only)
 F More than \$4,000,000 B \$1,500,000 - \$1,999,999 D \$500,000 - \$999,999
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 40 Specialist - Forester, Consultant, Agronomist, Pilot, Instructor, Researcher, Horticulturist, Certified Specialist
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110	122	134	146	158	170	182	194	206	218	230	242	254	266	278	290	302	314
111	123	135	147	159	171	183	195	207	219	231	243	255	267	279	291	303	315
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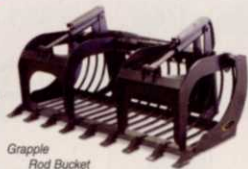
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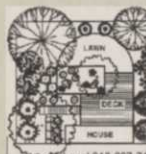
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2003 Finn T-330, 3300 gal. Hydroseeder 300 hours. Trailer mounted @ \$69,000 or without trailer @ \$49,000.

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1999 Finn B-260 Trailer Mulch Blower 300 hours on new Michelin tires. \$28,000.

2002 Bowie 800 gal. Trailer Mounted Hydroseeder Kubota diesel, 3" Honda trash pump, electric hose reel, new Michelin tires. \$25,000.

2002 Vermeer SC1102A Stump Grinder 450 hours, Deutz air cooled engine. \$27,500.

2001 Komatsu PC40MR-1, Zero Tail Swing Mini Excavator on Rubber Tracks 30" bucket, hyd. thumb, 1100 hours. \$35,000.

2001 Bobcat 864G Skidloader Low hours. \$24,000.

2002 Bobcat T-200 Skidloader Low hours. \$29,000.

Bobcat units above each feature 73 HP Deutz oil cooled engine, 18" rubber tracks, Quick Tach frame, aux. hyd.

2001 JD 4700 MFWD Compact Tractor w/460 Quick Tach loader, dual outlets, 12/12 Power Reverser transmission, folding ROPS, 3 PT, 73" Quick Tach bucket. \$19,800.

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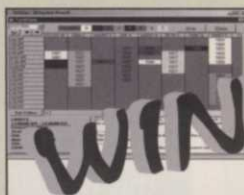
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Statistics

RESOURCES

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Just three to four years ago (1999-2001), many contractors would use a simple multiplier of 3.2 to 3.4 times the labor wage to determine the per hour price for labor-only jobs. Since that time, estimating software and processes have become somewhat more sophisticated. Yet our research shows that the prices calculated by these systems came close to producing about the same price per labor hour. Something has changed in the last two years, however — the multiplier. It's been going down. The 3.2 to 3.4 times labor multiplier has declined as prices have declined. That multiplier is closer to 2.7 to 2.8 times labor in 2003. The chart below shows the profit impact due to this decline. On average, the decline has cost companies 4.5 percentage points of profit. Our research further indicates that about 2 percentage points have been reclaimed by productivity improvements. This still leaves a net 2.5% profit decline. More work needs to be done on productivity.

	'99-'01	'02-'03	'99-'01	'02-'03	
Labor wage	Labor price	Labor price	Labor cost	Labor cost	Profit impact
\$8	\$25.60	\$22.40	31.3%	35.7%	4.5%
\$9	\$28.80	\$25.20	31.3%	35.7%	4.5%
\$10	\$32	\$28	31.3%	35.7%	4.5%
\$11	\$35.20	\$30.80	31.3%	35.7%	4.5%
\$12	\$38.40	\$33.60	31.3%	35.7%	4.5%
Multiplier	3.2	2.8			

SOURCE: KEHOEGUIDO

IT'S A FACT

92% of illegal immigrant apprehensions dropped from 1942-1964 when an immigration program created to allow Mexican workers to enter the U.S. to work in agriculture was widely used.

SOURCE: NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR AMERICAN POLICY

MAKING NEVADA GREEN

Nevada's Green Industry generates more than \$1.3 billion in economic activity annually. Landscape services are the biggest part of this total, which represents both direct sales and secondary impacts. (Figures below in 1,000s.)





Landscape services

Industry components	Direct impacts	Secondary impacts	Total impacts
Economic activity	\$ 486	\$ 358	844
Personal income	279	128	407
Employment (FTE jobs)	12	4	16

SOURCE: NEVADA LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATION

Survey says...

Word is, holiday lighting installation is emerging as a profitable ancillary business, especially for contractors in northern states. LM's editors asked our on-line visitors if this is really true or just so much ho-ho-ho. Here are the results:

- 35%  We're thinking about it
- 32%  We've never considered it
- 24%  We've had a holiday lighting business for awhile now
- 9%  We were into it once, but got out of it

Percentages based on 100 responses

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LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT (ISSN 0894-1254) is published monthly by Advanstar Communications, Inc., 131 W. First St., Duluth MN 55802-2065. **Subscription rates:** one year, \$46, two years \$67 in the United States & Possessions; \$76 for one year, \$113 for two years in Canada and Mexico; all other countries \$148 for one year, \$220 for two years. For airmail delivery, include an additional \$70 per order annually. Single copies (pre-paid only): \$8 in the United States; \$10 in Canada and Mexico; \$15 all other countries. Back issues, if available: \$16 in the U.S., \$20 in Canada and Mexico; \$30 all other countries. Add \$6.50 per order for shipping and handling. **Periodicals postage paid** at Duluth, MN 55806 and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Please send address changes to Landscape Management, P.O. Box 6198, Duluth, MN 55806-6118. Canadian G.S.T. number: R-124213133RT001. Publications Mail Agreement Number 40017597. Printed in the U.S.A.



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