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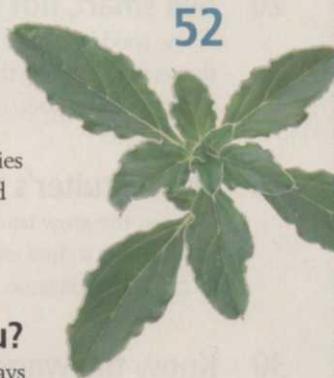
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BUSINESS

WHO'S WHO IN LM



"Recruiting is like looking at a people puzzle every day," says Californian **Christine Kratcoski**. She left the roller coaster recruiting world of Silicon Valley in 1999 (before the bust) and began networking with savvy landscape company owners and managers. Since founding Landscape Career Search, she's been busy matching qualified personnel with companies that need managerial talent. "The exciting part of the work is when a candidate and company are a fit," says Christine. Learn what a professional recruiter can do for your company on page 26.

David Gardner, an assistant professor of turfgrass science at The Ohio State University, is a member of the board of the Ohio Sports Turf Manager's Association and a frequent speaker at industry events. This friendly and knowledgeable turf received his B.S. and M.S. degrees from Iowa State University, and his Ph.D. in turfgrass science from the University of Illinois. He provides an excellent overview of pre-emergent weed control, starting on page 52.



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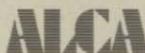
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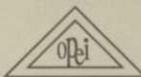
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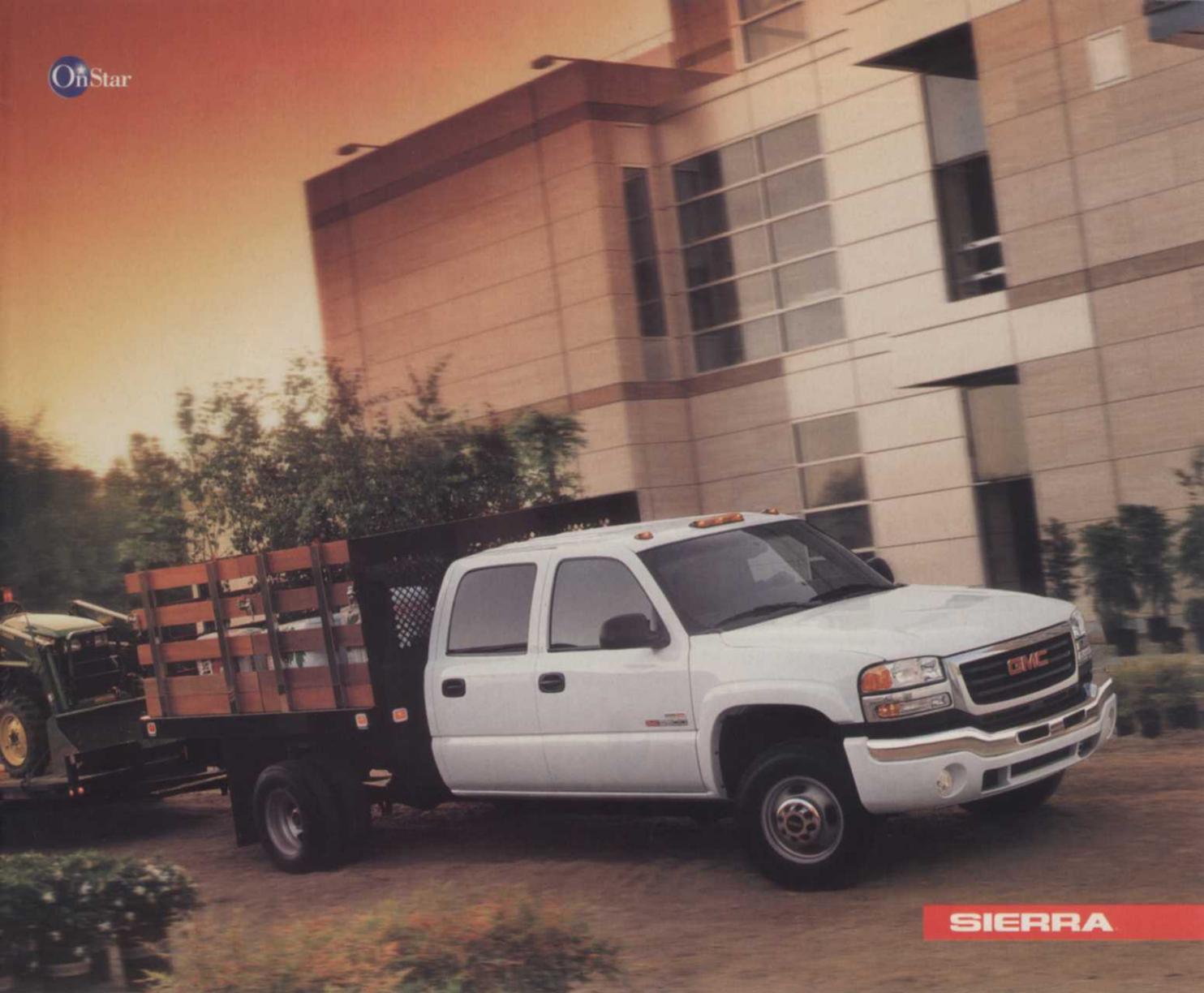
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We'll share keys to success

BY RON HALL / Editor-in-Chief

“**T**here's no such thing as a free lunch.” We're all familiar with the saying, and experience has taught most of us how true it is. To get something, you have to give something first. It's the law of reciprocity; it's as fundamental as gravity.

In that spirit, we're seeking your help on a project we're convinced will benefit you greatly. Give us some of your time and we promise to give you a report that you can use to measure your company against the rest of the industry. Or, at least, that portion that most closely resembles your particular market niche.

Inside this issue you'll find a 4-page questionnaire that we're asking those of you offering contracted services (landscape, lawn services, irrigation, etc.) to fill out and return to us. The instructions are on the survey. It should take you about 15 minutes to complete.

Find where you stand

The purpose of the survey is twofold, the first, obviously, to collect important but general information about the health and growth of the contractor/service provider segments of the Green Industry.

The more important reason for this particular exercise (and the payoff for those of you that help us) is to identify those specific factors that characterize growing, healthy landscape and lawn service companies. In other words, what does a successful, profitable company do differently from one that isn't as successful or profitable? With your help, we're certain we can identify the most important ones.

Is it training? Budgeting? More efficient use of labor? Does association membership and participation

make a difference? Certification? What types of marketing does the thriving company use?

This is an admittedly ambitious project, but one that this industry has needed for a long, long time.

Partnering for results

To lessen the chance of us jeopardizing the results of the survey with any bias, as unintentional as it might be, we've hired Cleveland-based MPI, an independent company that specializes in discovering and quantifying industry benchmarks. MPI, which helped design the survey, will tabulate and analyze the data.

Please fill out the survey. You can also find and fill it out online at www.landscapemanagementsurvey.com (Code LMBS2005).

If you provide us with your data (all information is completely confidential and not shared with any third party), we'll provide you with a free Executive Summary of the data early this spring. It'll contain a description of the practices and metrics that define successful landscape/lawn service firms.

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What does a successful, profitable company do differently from one that isn't as successful or profitable?



Employees are often sent to industry meetings or shows for the wrong reasons, such as that they worked hard and deserve a perk.



Max out industry meetings

BY BRUCE WILSON

Now is the time of year when there's an abundance of industry meetings and trade shows. Most of these meetings have educational components that can help you supplement your own in-house training. Here are some ideas to help you get the most out of these meetings.

Be choosy

First, be selective in choosing which meetings work for you and your employees. Look through the agenda for meeting topics that match up with training needs for you or your other company employees.

Next, decide who should go to the meeting from your company. This may

sound basic and common sense, but my experience has been that people aren't always selected for the right reasons.

A common example is that an owner may send a hard working employee to a conference as a perk or reward.

After deciding who can benefit most from the experience, you can further leverage the opportunity by requiring that the attendee take notes and come back and walk other employees through the training. This does two things, the first being the obvious one of

leveraging the training across more people. It also makes the attendee pay more attention and makes sure that they can repeat what they learned.

It pays to network

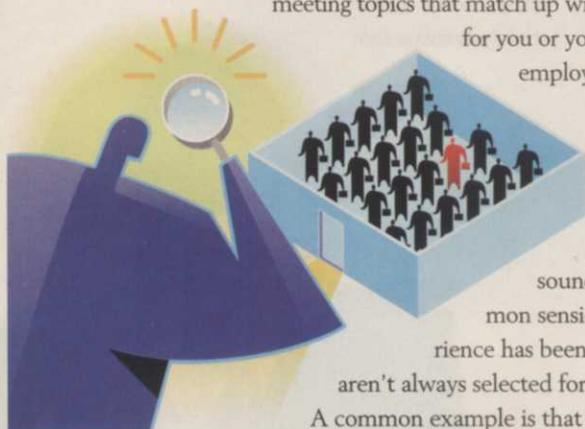
Another benefit of these training meetings is that they're great for networking. Try to encourage your employees to mix with employees from other companies. They can then talk about common issues and pick up some helpful ideas. This is probably harder in locally run events because of competitive reasons limiting sharing, but it never hurts to ask.

If you implant the concept of getting meetings like these to pay for themselves, it's more likely that employees will be looking for that idea or two that can save enough to pay for the cost of the meeting.

Another source of outside training is directly from your suppliers. Most irrigation and chemical and fertilizer suppliers put on seminars from time to time. They're also willing to come to your facility to train your employees. They benefit by talking about their products and you benefit by learning how to use them. You just need to make the effort to coordinate them. Make the arrangements in the slower season when you have time so that you gain the best advantage.

As you can see, training like anything else takes some planning. Take advantage of the things that are out there and you can improve your training results dramatically.

— *The author is a partner with entrepreneur Tom Oyler in the Wilson-Oyler Group, which offers consulting services. He is also the Director for the Symbiot Landscape Network. Visit www.wilson-oyler.com.*



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In the Know

BUSINESS

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Stoltman named publisher of *Landscape Management*



CLEVELAND, OH — Kevin Stoltman was recently named publisher of *Landscape Management* magazine.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to lead *Landscape Management* and look forward to the challenge," said Stoltman, who joined Advanstar Communications and the magazine in 2000 as the midwest sales representative. He served in that capacity until 2003 when he was promoted to associate publisher of *Landscape Management* and its sister publication, *Golfdom*.

Stoltman, a graduate of the University of Toledo, started his career in 1994 at Meister Publishing, where he served as Great Lakes sales representative, Midwest sales representative and national account manager for *Greenhouse Grower*, *Ornamental Outlook*, *American Fruit Grower*, *American Vegetable Grower*, *Florida Grower* and *Productores de Hortalizas*.

"Landscape Management is dedicated to becoming the premier information resource."

Tony D'Avino, general manager of Advanstar's Portfolio Group, including *Landscape Management* and *Golfdom*, lauded Stoltman's commitment to partnering with industry suppliers and leaders.

"Businesses in our market have many choices for continuing education, and *Landscape Management* is dedicated to becoming the premier information resource," said D'Avino. "Kevin has been

an important advisor to the strategies that the magazine has employed, and he is ready to take the leadership role. I am confident in his abilities and look forward to working with him in his new role. Kevin will work closely with Editor-in-Chief Ron Hall and Associate Publisher (and *Golfdom* Publisher) Pat

Roberts to execute our strategic plans and growth initiatives."

Added Editor-in-Chief Ron Hall: "Kevin Stoltman's knowledge of the industry and his professionalism will greatly benefit *Landscape Management* in its mission of helping our readers toward greater heights of success and customer service."

Industry mulls H-2B strategies

BY RON HALL / Editor-in-Chief

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Many U. S. businesses that depend upon seasonal immigrant labor will not be getting the workers they need in 2005. The annual cap for H-2B visas was reached on January 3. That means that any petition for H-2B workers not received by the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services by the end of that business day won't be processed. Last year, the cap was reached in early March, creating a hardship for many landscape company owners.

The only remedy that labor-starved businesses (landscape companies are high on that list) can work for is action by Congress to allow more seasonal non-agricultural workers to enter the country legally.

As *Landscape Management* goes to press this month, it has learned representatives from the Green Industry and H-2B labor providers will be gathering at the offices of the American Nursery and Landscape Association (ANLA) on January 12 to formulate an action plan. The next day, they will be part of a larger meeting, adding their voice to those of other industries suffering from labor woes.

"Last year there were three or four different groups out there with three or four different messages, confusing the minds of many on Capitol Hill," says John Meredith, ANLA Director of Legislative Relations.

"There are far more workers that are not going to get workers this year that got them last year," added Meredith. "People are more willing now to sit down and try to solve this. They recognize that next year it's going to be even sooner in the fiscal year when the program (H-2B) gets shut down."

"A lot of our members are trying to figure out where their applications (H-2B) are in the process," added Thomas Delaney, legislative voice of the Professional Landscape Network (the new name of the merged ALCA/PLCAA, see page 18). "They're asking, 'Is my paperwork in the mill?'"

Delaney said even though President George W. Bush favors immigration reform, there is a lot of opposition within Congress to raising the cap. Opposition to increased immigration — including the guest worker program — is organized and strong.

Sure Thing #1:

A HAPPY DOG WAGS ITS TAIL.



Lauded for protecting historic area

BY RON HALL / Editor-in-Chief

WILLIAMSBURG, VA — Protecting and beautifying a region of historical significance earned ServiceMaster LawnCare of Williamsburg the 2004 Environmental Improvement Service Award. The annual award is sponsored by *Landscape Management* and PLCAA (now a part of PLANET) and presented during the Green Industry Expo each November.

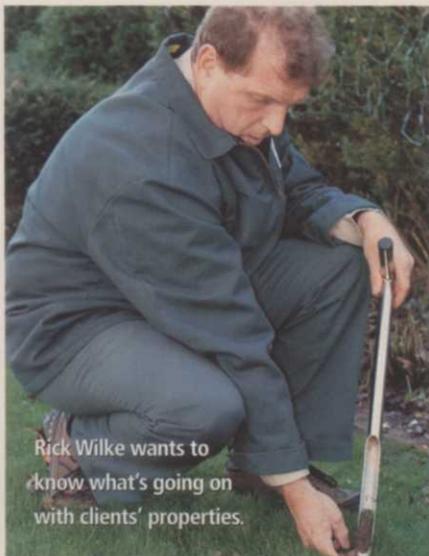
The lawn care company's primary market area is James City County and York County. The region is the site of the first permanent English settlement in the United States. (James City is the original name of Jamestown.) The region also boasts Historic Williamsburg, the recreated 18th Century Mid-Atlantic community.

Today, growth is the operative word on the history-rich peninsula in southeastern Virginia. Longtime residents there can thank businesses lured by the state's low workers' comp and unemployment insurance rates. And, depending upon their mindset, they can either thank or curse an influx of Yankees migrating from colder climes.

Sassia Niederste-Hollenberg, General Manager of ServiceMaster LawnCare of Williamsburg, points to the large number of new homes in the company's market area. Many of the

newcomers bring their love of cool-season grasses with them, but the area is better suited to bermudagrass and zoysiagrass, says Sassia, an idea the company promotes.

The 13-year-old ServiceMaster franchise regularly tests the heavy clay soils of client properties. In most cases, the tests indicate sufficient phosphorus, so the company uses fertilizers containing balanced levels of nitrogen and potassium for most of its 2,400 customers, she explains. The company also pro-



Rick Wilke wants to know what's going on with clients' properties.

vides tree/shrub fertilization/pest control and turf aeration and seeding.

Company owner Rick Wilke and Sassia partner with local agencies in region-wide water conservation initiatives while also conducting client and community education efforts, including:

- ▶ working with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to develop and implement its "nutrient management plan" to protect the region's water supply.

- ▶ becoming a county "Water Smart Partner" and donating materials, time and expertise to promote responsible water usage in James City County, which relies upon an underground water supply

- ▶ presenting at fall seminars aimed at educating homeowners on proper product and water use within their landscapes.

Virginia Governor Mark R. Warner and Secretary of Natural Resources W. Tayloe Murphy, Jr., presented Wilke and Sassia with a special "Stewardship Virginia" certificate of Appreciation, this past summer.

Governor Mark R. Warner lauded their conservation efforts this past summer.

[CLIPPINGS]

LESCO, Agrisel USA left out of LM issue

CLEVELAND, OH — The editors of LM offer an apology to LESCO and Agrisel USA for omitting them from the December 2004 Green Book issue. To learn more about LESCO, a leading supplier and partner to the Green Industry for more than 40 years, visit www.lesco.com. LESCO now has more than 250 Service Centers. Agrisel's product line is available at www.agrisel.com.

Feds boost \$\$ for turfgrass research

BELTSVILLE, MD — The recently approved national appropriations included new funding for turfgrass research. Kevin Morris of the National Turfgrass Federation, Inc., reports that the bill provides for an additional \$275,000 for research at Beaver, WV, and Logan, UT. Turfgrass research is now funded within USDA-ARS at \$760,613, which also includes the \$485,613 restored for the current research position at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C.

Havener expands its distribution

BRADLEY, IL — Havener Enterprises, Inc., manufacturer of Mower Sulky, has teamed with Sunbelt Outdoor Products for distribution in North Carolina and South Carolina.

New Pursell plant to double output

SYLACAUGA, AL — Pursell Technologies' newest plant has begun production to meet demand for the company's polymer coating technology for horticulture and professional turf market segments. The new facility will double the firm's production capability.

continued on page 16

Sure Thing #2:

CHILDREN WALK THROUGH PUDDLES.



In the Know

Steiman to lead SIMA in 2005

ERIE, PA — Alan Steiman, Northboro, MA, is the 2005 president of the Snow & Ice Management Association (SIMA), and Bob St. Jacques, Windsor, CT, is the vice president. The two were recently elected by SIMA's 11-member board.

Steiman has been in the snow and ice management business for 30 years, working with his landscape and masonry businesses in the off-season. He has been a member of



SIMA since 1998, and on the Board of Directors since 2003. St. Jacques has steadily grown his landscape and snow and ice management company for 25 years.

"My goal is to support and improve the snow plowing industry," said

Steiman. "I'm honored to accept this new position and look forward to building on SIMA's strong foundation as we continue to move ahead."

continued from page 14

FMC partners with Wilbur-Ellis

PHILADELPHIA, PA — FMC Corp. recently announced its partnership with Wilbur-Ellis Company to commercialize Portfolio 75 DF and Crossing 75 DF, new herbicides with registration received from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to control many weeds and maintain bare ground on railroad rights-of-way (Crossing 75 DF), as well as on highway, roadside, industrial areas, fence rows and other non-crop sites (Portfolio 75 DF). The dry flowable formulations contain 75% of the active ingredient sulfentrazone, and represent a new class of residual chemistry for the industrial vegetation management.

Aquatrols unveils new headquarters

PAULSBORO, NJ — Aquatrols celebrated its 50th anniversary with the construction of a new corporate headquarters here. The new facility features technologically advanced lab facilities to support ongoing R&D, as well as expanded shipping and receiving capabilities.

Schiller Pfeiffer acquires Classen

SOUTHAMPTON, PA — Schiller-Pfeiffer, Inc., manufacturer of the Little Wonder and Mantis brands, acquired Classen Manufacturing in Norfolk, NB. The purchase includes all Classen Manufacturing. The Norfolk manufacturing facility, which employs 25, will continue the manufacturing of Classen products. Classen products will maintain the Classen Manufacturing brand name and will be sold through Schiller-Pfeiffer's established distribution network and Classen's strong rental associations, said a release from Schiller-Pfeiffer.

[CLIPPINGS]

People & companies



Bayer Environmental Science named **George Raymond** western sales representative, covering

northern California for the golf team, and coordinating lawn/landscape activities in the western states.

Lifestyle Landscaping promoted **Greg Stout** to PlantCare Manager.



Profile Products LLC hired **Walter Butman** as its new vice president of distribution and international sales.

Tecumseh Power Company named **Jim Doll** Product Line Manager for Walk Behind Mower Engines.

Skinner Nurseries hired **Josh Bare** to handle outside sales for the Atlanta/Athens area.



Hunter Industries appointed **Guy Collins** Sales Manager I, responsible for

contractor, specification, golf course, municipality, and casino sales through Hunter's exclusive distribution network. His territory will cover Las Vegas, Southern Utah, and the Colorado River district.



BASF Corp. appointed **Philip Donahoo** sales specialist for the company's

Turf & Ornamental business in southern Florida

and **Fred Eckert** Turf & Ornamental sales specialist for Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.

The Irrigation Association appointed **David F. Zoldoske**, director of the Center for Irrigation Technology, president.



Stiles Landscape named **Howard Greenstein** Senior Area Manager.

The ServiceMaster Co. promoted **Dennis Sutton** to COO and interim president of TruGreen ChemLawn.

Shindaiwa named **Bertil Albing** as the new Product/Technical Specialist for Europe.

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It's the Professional Landcare Network!

The long awaited name of the new association formed by the merger of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America and the Professional Lawn Care Association of America has finally been announced, and it is...drumroll please...the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET).

"We are so excited about this name choice," said Jason Cupp, CLP, Board of Directors, member and marketing chair for the Professional Landcare Network. "It conveys the many disciplines of our new membership."

The new Green Industry Association represents more than 4,000 member companies and their more than 100,000 em-



PLANET

Professional Landcare Network

ployees. Merger talks between ALCA and PLCAA began more than two years ago, with the idea that the consolidation would provide a stronger voice and increased lobbying capabilities for the new organization, as well as expanded member benefits and services.

Members of both associations approved the merger by a wide margin in

voting early this past fall. While the headquarters will be in Herndon, VA, the association will retain a location in Marietta, GA, site of the former PLCAA offices.

"This is an exciting time in the Green Industry," said Cupp. "When we went through the branding initiative two years ago, our goal was to be the voice of the Green Industry."

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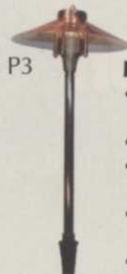
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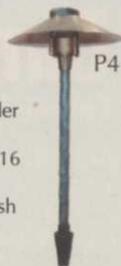


PATH LIGHTS



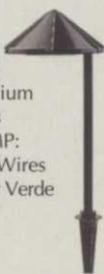
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Isuzu celebrates 20th anniversary

BY JASON STAHL

SCOTTSDALE, AZ — When Isuzu Truck first came to the United States in 1984, it sold 143 units. In 2004, the company sold 27,000 units.

But a tremendous increase in sales wasn't the only reason to invite over 550 dealers, media members and Isuzu staffers to the desert Nov. 15-17 for educational classes, riding demos and social functions. Isuzu was also celebrating the fact that it has been the leader in low cab forward trucks since 1986 with a 70% market share, and doesn't have plans of relinquishing that position anytime soon despite a rapid increase in competition.

Perhaps the biggest point of pride for Isuzu was having stormed back recently from the brink of bankruptcy.

"We lost \$400 million and had \$1 billion of debt," CEO Yoshimoto Utaka told guests at the gala dinner. "In four years, however, we have cut that debt in half. In addition, we posted a \$750 million profit last year and have increased our stock price tenfold."

Utaka emphasized that Isuzu, with the creation of Isuzu Commercial Truck of America, will increase their investment in the U.S. market. He also said Isuzu engineers are currently working on finding ways to meet the tougher emissions requirements coming in 2007 and 2010, as well as developing hybrid diesel engines and alternative fuel trucks.

New products introduced at the show were:

► **N-Series:** The appearance of these trucks has been freshened up for better

styling and more operator comfort. One functionality enhancement is a new tachometer to aid Power Take Off (PTO) operation. Also new for 2006 is the availability of an NPR diesel model with 12,000 GVW rating certified for all 50 states.

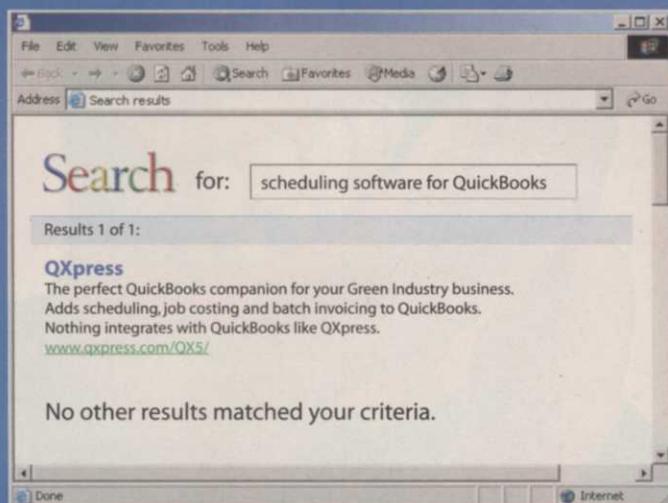
► **H-Series:** This all-new series with con-



Vice President of Marketing Todd Bloom unveils one of Isuzu's new trucks.

ventional cab features the HTR (Class 6), HVR (Class 7) and HXR (Class 8) models, available in three-person regular cab and six-person crew cab configurations.

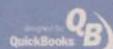
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Circle 111



CEO Yoshimoto Utaka addresses the media during Isuzu's press conference.

Sell smart,

A few good landscape contractors reveal the secrets to selling their service

BY JASON STAHL / Managing Editor

not Slick

The secret to being a successful salesperson in the landscape industry? There might be a few, but most of them are things we already know but, because of time constraints or overall negligence, fail to do. There's no secret to the following landscape professionals' methods, just hard work and diligence.

Communicate with customers

Communicating with customers sounds like common sense, and it is, but it's not something that everyone does well. David Pitchford has it down pat. The owner of Baton Rouge Lawn Pro/Weed Man /Landscape Resources, Inc. has been dealing with a steady stream of residential customers since 1986, and he knows that keeping an open

line of communication with customers at all times is crucial to picking up extra sales.

"Take advantage of whatever opportunity there is to communicate with your customers, because it always seems like we pick up a sale from that," Pitchford says.

At a recent company meeting, Pitchford asked his team why people call his company in the first place. The answer? Because they have a project that they want someone else to do to save them from having to do it. "So any time we can provide a service that would be valuable to them and save them time, whether it be a lawn application or mowing grass or servicing a sprinkler



David Pitchford



Jeff Haynes

system, we take advantage of that," Pitchford says.

Pitchford's firm is located in Louisiana, not normally known for frigid temperatures. But that didn't stop him from using a recent cold front to sell some extra business. He and his sales crew called their customers and asked if they wanted their irrigation systems winterized. Surprise, those calls led to more business.

"They said, 'Oh yeah, I've been meaning to call you because I need my beds done as well,' or whatever," says Pitch-

ford. The lesson? You never know what your clients need or when they might need it, so keeping in regular communication ensures they'll let you know...or a random call might just jog their memory.

Sometimes it's tough to keep in constant communication with clients. When things get busy, it's not as easy to see new potential sales opportunities. But Pitchford says it comes down to planning to avoid this pitfall.

"We talked about our sales goals this year, and our approach was to have people in place at the right time of year," he says. "You have to plan out your production schedule. You have to be able to get work done in order to sell it."

Jeff Haynes, Pitchford's sales manager, says that it's not only about the amount of calls you make to cus-

tomers but how fast you return them.

"Response time is everything," Haynes says. "We have an office manager that answers the phone and responds to calls. Within three hours of someone calling, I'm responding to their call. Within 24 hours I'm at their house looking at the proposed project."

Haynes says there's no project too small, either. He returns a call no matter what the proposed work is because of the results it brings. "I think it does get us a lot of business because I hear repeatedly from people who say, 'You're the first person who called me back.'"

Jim Weidner, owner of Weidner Lawn & Landscape, North

Ridgeville, OH, agrees that responding to an inquiry quickly is essential to sealing a potential sale. He goes so far as to say that that action forms the beginning of trust between the salesperson and the client.

"When you get back to them in a timely manner, they have trust right away," Weidner says. "If my office manager has to call me and I have to return the call on my cell phone, I get back to them fast and do a quick qualification."

Another surefire way of increasing sales? Do quality work. "Referrals are huge for us," Weidner says. "Make sure people are happy about the work you did, and they'll refer you to friends."



Jim Weidner



Billy Simms

what we said we'll do. Our competition is pretty vigorous, and many times our cus-

tomers will tell us we're \$1,000 more than another guy. But I tell them you get what you pay for."

Billy Simms, the manager of Baton Rouge Lawn Pro's new Weed Man franchise, echoed Haynes' belief that being honest and sincere is the way to go. The way he accomplishes that is by being himself. Whereas some salesmen might try to be something they're not by stretching the truth and doing whatever it takes to close a deal, Simms finds that being true to himself works best.

continued on page 24

Dirt disease

BY JIM PALUCH

This is a virus you want to catch...and maybe you already have it. Some of the symptoms are:

- ▶ You're not able to drive past a construction site without stopping to see who the contractor is.
- ▶ Driving through a residential development, you're compelled to stop by newly constructed homes in hopes of meeting the owners or builder.
- ▶ Your creativity is in overdrive and you're able to open doors to new potential clients that want to work with you.
- ▶ You've inspired other members of your team to seek out opportunities that you can transform into sales.

▶ Your sales career is more of a sport than a job and you're focused on achieving your sales goals.

If you can relate with one or all of these, don't call a doctor. Pick up the phone and set your next sales appointment because you have the passion needed to succeed in today's market.

Having both sold landscape services and, for the past decade and half, trained some of the best salespeople in the landscape industry, I see these characteristics and more. The best salespeople know they can either settle for being an "order taker" or be a professional that seeks out opportunities to turn into sales.

The order taker is sitting back waiting for things to happen. They'll complain in a slightly "spoiled child" way how unfair everything is: the market, the competition's low prices, the time constraints they have because of production incompetence, and life in general. Their sales career is a roller coaster ride of excuses and near misses that usually doesn't change as they move from company to company trying to find the one that will "support them." If you think about it, this is the person that needs to see a doctor.

Opportunity seekers create revenue for their company, a great experience for their client, an atmosphere of

teamwork within the company and a great lifestyle for themselves and their families. They're consistently open to new ideas and stretching beyond their limits, and they know that their success is preceded by hard work.

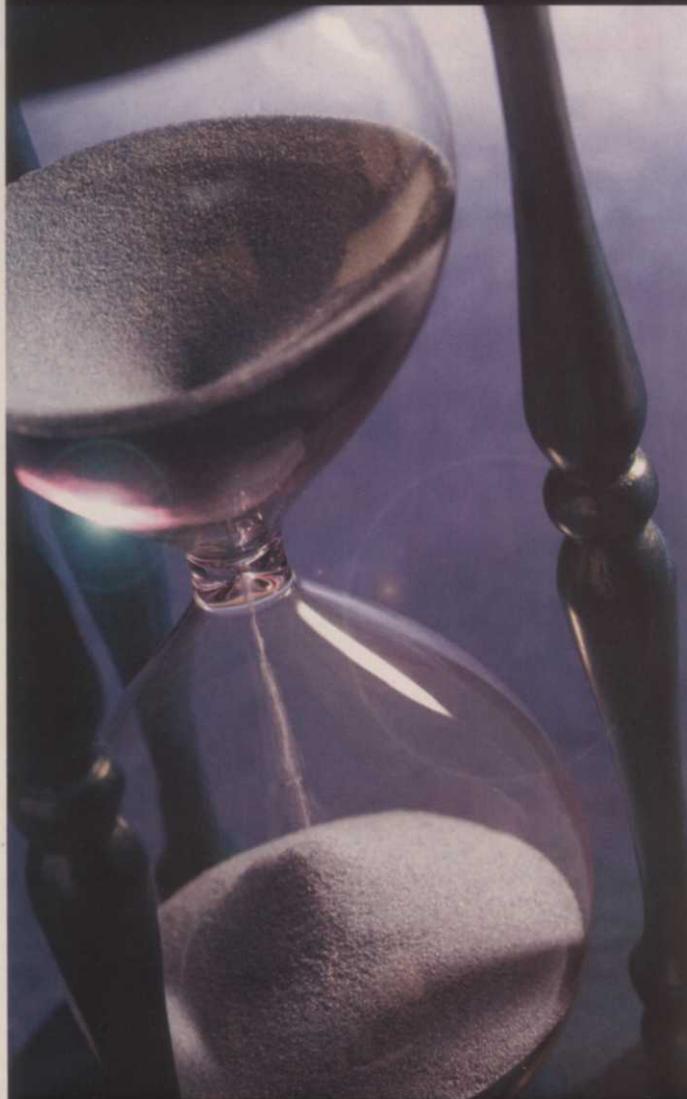
The great thing about dirt disease is it can be caught by simply making the decision to catch it. The decision to take action and make something happen is only an instant away. . . CATCH IT!

— Jim Paluch is president of JP Horizons and has been helping individuals and companies excel in the Green Industry since 1989. Visit their Web site at www.jp horizons.com.

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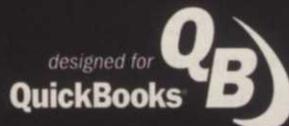


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See system requirements for version information

continued from page 22

"I don't change from the time I get out of my truck to the time I go to the door to the time I come back to do a lawn application," Simms says. "I'm personable, honest and straightforward, and I answer my phone all the time. And when I ask people how they're doing, I really want to know and I really care."

This may sound like touchy-feely nonsense to some salespeople, but Simms claims it's an essential step to building trust with a client. He admits there are some customers who put up a wall and resist his

relationship-building efforts, but for those who welcome it, it's a win-win situation.

"I tell them that they're my eyes and we're a team and I need your feedback," Simms says. "I give them my card and tell them to call me to send complaints or compliments. Sometimes they call me just to chat like friends. And when you become their friend, it's pretty hard for them to fire you."

Adhere to systems

The bigger your company is, the more systems you have to put in place. Just ask Todd Witherspoon, Vice President of Sales for Countryside Landscaping, a 150-employee, \$10 million company based in Charlotte, NC.

"We are very system and procedure oriented here, and those systems ensure that proper execution exists and accountability

exists," Witherspoon says. "The same thing is expected from both operations and sales — executing and being accountable and how to do a job from a technical standpoint."

Those systems exist for good reason. Salespeople in general, Witherspoon believes, are "big picture" people and don't always want to follow through on details following a sale. Having systems ensures that they do. "And we hold each other accountable here," Witherspoon says.



Todd Witherspoon

One thing Witherspoon has learned is that salespeople must not be discour-

aged by the word "no." "If you're in sales and can't handle rejection, then you're in trouble," he says. He likens salespeople to comebacks in the NFL. A comeback is going to get burned by a receiver every so often, but to be effective the next play he has to forget about it. A salesperson must also have a short memory when it comes to failing to seal a deal.

Witherspoon also says that "order takers" described in Jim Paluch's sidebar located on page 22 won't survive in his company or even the landscaping business in general because "we're not selling gadgets, we're selling a service." As such, following up with customers is essential to building relationships with them.

"The opportunities will be there if you're out there and find yourself in the right place at the right time," Witherspoon says. "And a lot of it has to do

Take a picture



Joe Skelton

The following is an example of what it means for a salesperson to seek opportunities and think of creative ways to make a sale. At last year's ALCA Sales & Marketing Symposium, Joe Skelton, former owner and president of Lifescapes, Inc. and current landscape industry consultant, stressed the importance of selling "extras," or services provided that aren't in the base contract and therefore are an additional charge to the customer. "It's possible to sell as much as 50% of your base maintenance contracts in 'extra services' (not including color)," Skelton said. Enhancements are a win-win for you and your customer when:

- ▶ they're perceived as a "value-added" service
- ▶ they improve the property's marketability (help increase occupancy)
- ▶ they're proposed "pro-actively" — not as a result of a complaint
- ▶ they're presented as creative ways to lower long-term maintenance expense
- ▶ the client is able to plan them into their budget.

Skelton suggested taking pictures of various spots on a site that can be improved and putting those pictures in a simple album with brief descriptions of the enhancement suggested. Then, show the album to the property manager for an effective presentation. But first, follow these steps for a proactive site analysis program:

- ▶ Determine when each property manager must submit their budgets for the coming year
- ▶ Schedule a meeting with the property manager (well in advance) to discuss his goals and objectives/likes and dislikes
- ▶ Conduct a thorough site inspection, paying particular attention to problem areas and opportunities for improvement
- ▶ Prepare a professional presentation book with photos and descriptions of each area to be improved
- ▶ Describe the problem, the solution, potential savings, and the budget for each area
- ▶ Presentation should offer recommendations in a pick-and-choose approach

If this isn't getting off your duff and creating your own destiny, then we should all just quit sales and join the circus.

— JS

with how excited you act about your company."

Witherspoon also believes in making it work no matter what. Whereas some people might turn work away because they're concerned they can't do it, he chooses to take it on aggressively.

"I want to seize the opportunity and bid the work, and operationally we'll figure it out and make sure everyone is on the exact same page," he says. "The idea is to create capacity with systems and procedures." **LJM**

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The recruiter's role

Why on-the-grow landscape companies seek outside help to find experienced managers BY CHRISTINE KRATCOSKI

Editor's note: The first in a series of articles on staffing. How to find top managers. Recruiting top performers. Keeping top performers. The author, a top recruiter, tells how to improve personnel management to attract and retain more qualified employees.

In 1999, I began offering management recruiting services to the commercial landscape industry after years in the same capacity in Silicon Valley. Unlike my experiences in high-tech there, I began hearing words like loyalty and longevity to profile company cultures and candidates.

My first impression was that I'd joined a vibrant, expanding industry where employee loyalty is rewarded with employer loyalty. That initial impression was refreshingly correct.

Goal: hire key managers

I recently met with the owners of a successful California landscape construction and maintenance company. Two years ago, the owners employed my company to help them find and hire key managers. The company bills more than \$50 million annually and it's still growing.

During the meeting, the senior manager informed me that out of the 22 people placed through my company, 15 continued to be employed for more than a year.

The senior manager thought this was unsatisfactory. Based on current trends, I thought that this was an average ratio of retention. I asked if he knew the percentage of new employees his company retained for more than a year. He didn't. Why were our viewpoints so different?

From my perspective of having worked with many landscape companies, I had seen the pool of qualified management personnel shrink. Simultaneously, the number of jobs requiring management and/or leadership skills continues to grow. It has become an employees' market. This happens when an industry grows in quantum leaps. This is what I witnessed in Silicon Valley in the early '90s.

My client, like many other companies, is accustomed to an employers' market, with abundant hiring choices. This is when employee loyalty thrives — fewer jobs, fewer choices.

Another multi-million-dollar landscape company recently hired a top-notch manager for one of its high profile divisions. The company was sure it had secured an excellent manager.

Less than six months later, the manager gave notice and moved on to a competing company.

Of course, this turnover is damaging to employee moral, client relationships and bottom-line revenue. The senior managers re-examined their hiring practices...but is it possible to screen out everyone who might consider better opportunities in a booming industry?

Why did the new-hire leave? The position he left was an excellent match with growth potential. Was his primary motivation more money? A better benefits package? Is that greed, or is that what the market will bear?

No guarantees

My company, Landscape Career Search (a division of Career

continued on page 28





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Circle 114

continued from page 26

Climbers), was employed to search for other candidates. One of my clients said he was ready to make a career change. I introduced the candidate to the company. The senior managers put him through a rigorous interview and screening process. At the end of the process, the candidate was still breathing, received an offer and accepted it.

Can I guarantee that he'll stay? In today's work environment, there are no guarantees. Even so, most managers that I've worked with in this industry reward loyalty with loyalty.

The commercial landscape industry is an exciting frontier

whose growth has caused an explosion of open positions to fill. It's time to think out of the box, seek long-term solutions and be creative and competitive to attract and retain all levels of management candidates.

There are plenty of guys with shovels and lawnmowers in landscaping, but the bar has been raised for what's required of managers or supervisors, indeed for a commercial landscape professionals, in general — college degree in related field, profit and loss responsibility, articulate bilingual professionals with field and personnel management experience who can drive the business upward, who can run systems.

What all employees desire

These basic needs are consistent with all employees at all levels that I have worked with the past 15 years, across the board in all industries, in all economic climates.

- ▶ Fair compensation with timely reviews
- ▶ Timely opportunities to promote
- ▶ Respect on the job

- ▶ Clear communication
- ▶ Appropriate materials and manpower to do the job professionally
- ▶ Reasonably stable work environments
- ▶ Challenges appropriate to the employee's skill level
- ▶ A sense of achievement
- ▶ A healthy work environment

— CK

In a matter of six or seven years that I've recruited in the commercial landscape industry I've seen it becoming as sophisticated and cutting-edge as Silicon Valley was in the '90s. Companies that frowned upon using outside recruiters are finding the need outweighs

their ability to procure the right people for every open position they must fill. **LMI**

— *The author specializes in recruiting and career counseling for the landscape industry.*

Contact her at

Christine@LandscapeCareerSearch.com.



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Know the wage-hour law

Landscape contractors' failure to comply can be costly

BY BARBARA MULHERN

You're a busy landscape contractor who keeps written records of the hourly wages you pay. But one day, an employee files a complaint alleging that he wasn't paid all of the wages he was due. Before you know it a U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Wage-Hour Division investigator is knocking at your door. Much to your surprise, the inspector finds that you violated the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) by:

- failing to pay that worker and others for the time spent at the start of the day loading a company truck with tools, then driving it from the dispatch yard to the job site
- failing to pay that worker and others for the time spent waiting for the rain to

stop or a mower to be repaired before re-suming work

- requiring that employee have certain tools before coming on board (where the cost of the tools in effect cuts into the employee's minimum wages or overtime pay in the first week of his or her job)

- improperly classifying that worker, who also fills in as a crew leader, as being exempt from overtime pay.

Add up all of these mistakes, multiply

them by the number of workers who weren't properly paid for all "hours worked" over the last three years (the length of time you're liable if you're found to have "willfully" violated the FLSA), and you have an extremely costly problem on your hands.

"If you're sued by a disgruntled employee, these cases will often be brought as a collective (class) action, and other workers have the option of 'opting in,'" Attorney Monte Lake of McGuiness, Norris & Williams, LLP in Washington, D.C. says. "Class action suits under the FLSA are the fastest growing area of federal employment-based class actions."

Lake, who serves as a consultant on labor and employment issues to the

continued on page 32

Wage-hour investigation tips

Editor's note: This checklist was prepared with the assistance of Attorney Chris Robinson of Fisher & Phillips LLP in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

- Know that U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) wage-hour investigators don't have to give you advance notice of an audit — and are likely to show up during the busiest part of your season.
- Ask the investigator if he or she could come back a few days later. State

that you're willing to cooperate, but don't initially give out any information. The extra time will give you a chance to make sure your records are in order.

- Make sure the person really is a DOL wage-hour investigator. Ask to see the person's photo ID, then call his or her office to confirm identity.
- Find out why the investigator is there. Ask if it's because of a complaint;

continued on page 32

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of the
species.**



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Count on it.



continued from page 30

American Nursery & Landscape Association, adds that it's not unusual for wage settlements alone — not including attorneys' fees — in these cases to total "hundreds of thousands, if not in the millions of dollars."

Other wage-hour problems

There are a number of reasons why landscape contractors should pay close attention to wage-hour law. In addition to potential FLSA violations and resulting lawsuits, industries with what DOL calls "low wage workers" are "one of our primary focuses (nationwide)," John McKeon, regional administrator for the South-eastern Region of DOL's Wage-Hour Division, says.

"It's (landscaping) an industry that hires fairly low-wage workers who tend to be recent immigrants. These people can be taken advantage of. They may not be documented, and may not understand the laws," he says.

In the Southeastern region of the country, McKeon says the most common wage-hour problems DOL is finding among landscape contractors are:

- Requiring workers to report to a central location at 7 a.m., load the truck with tools, then drive the truck to the job site. "The employer is starting the clock when they get to the job site. But once they're required to be there (at the central location), they have to be on the clock. It's the same at the end of the day," he says.

- Being "engaged to wait." A mower or other machinery breaks down and the employee has to wait for it to be repaired. The employer doesn't (but must) count this time as "hours worked," McKeon says.

- Failing to pay workers for the time spent driving from one job site to another job site. "Some employers are docking them for that half hour of driving time,"

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if so, get as much information as you can about the complaint. Also find out which specific statutes are involved.

- ✓ Train your employees in advance on who to contact should a government investigator show up. Be sure they know which persons are authorized to give out information on behalf of your company.
- ✓ Know what information you legally do and don't have to provide to the investigator. Just because an investiga-

tor asks for certain information doesn't necessarily mean you're required to provide it.

- ✓ Be certain that all DOL-required posters, including the current Fair Labor Standards Act–Federal Minimum Wage poster, are posted in a location that's readily accessible to employees.

- ✓ Contact a professional with expertise in this area of the law if you're faced with a DOL wage-hour investigation.

— BM

he says.

Some of these cases are resulting in back wage payments "in the \$80,000 to \$90,000 range," McKeon says.

Attorney Chris Robinson of Fisher & Phillips LLP in Fort Lauderdale, FL, who specializes in wage-hour law, says that "the biggest focus in the class action litigation today is "off the clock" time — employees are saying that they worked more hours than are on the time sheets."

"Engaged to wait" time and travel time are two of the major problem areas Robinson sees among landscape contractors. A landscape contractor, he says, will require workers to ride in company-provided transportation (rather than take their own vehicles to the job site), but will fail to pay them for that travel time. "The transportation has to be voluntary, or the FLSA requires you to pay them for the entire travel time," he says.

Another problem area, Lake says, arises when landscaping is only part of your business. If you run a nursery operation, for example, it's important that you not intermingle your field crews with workers from the landscape portion of your business, he says. That's because your field crews who are doing "agricultural" work (as defined by the FLSA) will qualify for the FLSA's agricultural exemption from overtime — but

your landscaping crews will not. If you're in a "crisis" situation, Lake says, you might need to shift a few workers from production agriculture into landscaping work. If you do that, though, it's important to know that those shifted workers aren't exempt from overtime.

Robinson and Lake have this advice:

- **Make sure you have certified time sheets.** "Have your employees sign them at the end of every pay period, saying that the hours reported are true and complete," Robinson suggests.

- **Have a clear, written policy on transportation.** If it's voluntary, state that. "Make it clear to your supervisors, foremen and workers, and be sure it's applied consistently," Lake says.

- **Keep good written documentation.** "Make sure your written records are clear, accurate and consistently done," Lake says. At a minimum, records required under the FLSA should be kept for three years, both Lake and Robinson say.

- **Become familiar with the requirements of the FLSA** and with your state wage-hour laws, which may be stricter than the federal law. **LM**

— The author is ALCA's Safety Specialist and a freelance writer who lives in rural Belleville, WI. Contact her at bamu100@aol.com.

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Landscape

MANAGEMENT

Dear Landscape Professional:

Landscape Management is embarking on a groundbreaking research project to compile the largest body of operations knowledge available on landscaping contractor performance and best practices. Key findings from this effort — the 2005 *Landscape Management* Benchmarking Survey — will be reported throughout the year, enabling executives and entrepreneurs like you to compare your facilities to industry norms and, ultimately, gain a competitive edge. But for *Landscape Management* to help you, you need to help us.

Your anonymous participation is critical to the success of the 2005 *Landscape Management* Benchmarking Survey, and we are providing various ways for you to participate by February 15, 2005:

Complete the survey that is inserted in this month's issue, and then return by mail to *Landscape Management*, PO Box 630, Worthington, OH 43085-0630 or fax to 614-802-2309.

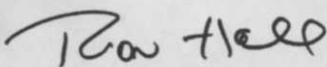
Go to www.landscapemanagementsurvey.com, log in with the password LMBS2005, and take the survey online. At the secure survey website you can also print a copy of the survey, fill out by hand, and return by mail or fax.

Your facility will directly benefit from your participation — in appreciation of your time and effort, *Landscape Management* will send you a complimentary Executive Summary detailing all benchmarking results. Simply complete the survey and then, separately, mail a postcard to *Landscape Management*, Executive Summary, 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130-3369; please include your name, title, company, address, and email address on the postcard. Or you may request a summary by sending an email to LMSummary@advanstar.com, noting your name, title, company, and address.

Please remember that all responses to the survey are anonymous. When submitting a survey, you are not asked to identify your name, company, or facility (information cannot be connected to a specific location) and only groupings of data will be reported. To ensure the anonymity of your responses, do not mail the postcard with your questionnaire.

Thank you for participating in the *Landscape Management* Benchmarking Survey. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 440-891-2636.

Sincerely,



Ron Hall

Landscape Management
Editor-in-Chief

2005 Landscape Management Benchmarking Survey

Please provide a response to each question based on a **single location/facility** — answer for the location where you work or, if you are a corporate executive, answer for a location that is representative of your company *or* encourage all of your locations to complete and return the survey. If you do not know the answer to a question or if a question does not apply or is unclear, simply leave that answer blank. **Your responses will remain anonymous.**

PROFILE

1. Please describe your location as one of the following? (check one)

1. Independent company
 2. Corporate branch location
 3. Franchise location

2. In which state is your facility located? _____ 2

3. How many years has your facility been in operation? _____ years 3

4. What is the approximate annual revenue of your facility? (check one)

4. Less than \$50,000
 5. \$50,001 - \$100,000
 6. \$100,001 - \$250,000
 7. \$250,001 - \$500,000
 8. \$500,001 - \$1 million
 9. \$1.1 million - \$5 million
 10. \$5.1 million - \$10 million
 11. More than \$20 million

5. Please indicate your service volumes as a percentage of:

	% of Revenues	% of Profits
a. Turf maintenance (e.g., mowing, aeration)	% 5	% 12
b. Chemical application (turf and ornamental)	% 6	% 13
c. Design services	% 7	% 14
d. Landscape installation/renovation	% 8	% 15
e. Construction/hardscape	% 9	% 16
f. Snow and ice management	% 10	% 17
g. Other	% 11	% 18
Total of above percentages should =	100%	100%

HUMAN RESOURCES & SAFETY

6. How many full-time employees (FTEs)? a. In-Season _____ FTEs 19 b. Off-Season _____ FTEs 20

7. What percentage of in-season workforce is represented by: (as % of FTEs)? _____

a. Laborers _____ % 21
 b. Applicators _____ % 22
 c. Crew leaders _____ % 23
 d. Supervisors _____ % 24
 e. Designers _____ % 25
 f. Sales persons _____ % 26

8. What percentage of in-season workforce are considered temporary employees? _____ % 27

9. What is the facility's annual labor turnover rate for the most recent year?
 (annual voluntary and involuntary separations as a percentage of typical staffing levels)..... % 28

10. Please indicate: a. Employment change for calendar year 2004 vs. 2003 (check one in row a)
 b. Anticipated employment change in calendar year 2005 vs. 2004 (check one in row b)

	Decrease 11% or more	Decrease 6 - 10%	Decrease 1 - 5%	0%	Increase 1 - 5%	Increase 6 - 10%	Increase 11% or more
a. 2004	<input type="checkbox"/> 29	<input type="checkbox"/> 30	<input type="checkbox"/> 31	<input type="checkbox"/> 32	<input type="checkbox"/> 33	<input type="checkbox"/> 34	<input type="checkbox"/> 35
b. 2005	<input type="checkbox"/> 36	<input type="checkbox"/> 37	<input type="checkbox"/> 38	<input type="checkbox"/> 39	<input type="checkbox"/> 40	<input type="checkbox"/> 41	<input type="checkbox"/> 42

11. What is the approximate spending on training as a percentage of the total labor budget? _____ % 31

12. What are the average annual hours of formal training received by each employee? (check one)

32. Less than 8 hours
 33. 8 - 20 hours
 34. 21 - 40 hours
 35. More than 40 hours

13. How are employees primarily trained? (as % of training hours)

a. Company-offered classroom	_____ % ³³
b. Off-site classroom	_____ % ³⁴
c. On-the-job training	_____ % ³⁵
d. Web-based training	_____ % ³⁶
e. Other	_____ % ³⁷
Total of above percentages should = 100%	

14. What are the approximate average wages (hourly rate without overtime) for:.....

a. Laborer	\$ _____ ³⁸
b. Foreman	\$ _____ ³⁹
c. Field supervisor	\$ _____ ⁴⁰

15. What percentage of training hours are dedicated to safety? % ⁴¹

16. Please indicate the following safety rates for the most recent year:

a. OSHA-recordable injury and illness cases	_____ ⁴²
b. OSHA-recordable injury and illness cases with days away from work, job transfer or restriction....	_____ ⁴³

OPERATIONS

17. Which of the following practices occur at this location? (check all that apply)

⁴⁴ <input type="checkbox"/> Association membership	⁴⁵ <input type="checkbox"/> Employee empowerment	⁴⁶ <input type="checkbox"/> Benchmarking
⁴⁷ <input type="checkbox"/> Environmentally sensitive practices	⁴⁸ <input type="checkbox"/> Tradeshow attendance	⁴⁹ <input type="checkbox"/> Open-book management
⁵⁰ <input type="checkbox"/> CLP certification	⁵¹ <input type="checkbox"/> CLT certification	⁵² <input type="checkbox"/> None of these

18. How much progress has your facility made toward being a market leader in your area? (check one)

⁵³⁻¹ No progress Some progress Significant progress Market leader

19. What are the following financial measures as a percentage of net revenue? (indicate % for each category)

a. Cost of sales/services (labor, materials, overhead)	% ⁵⁴
b. Sales and marketing expenses	% ⁵⁵
c. General and administrative expenses	% ⁵⁶

20. What are the following costs-of-sales components as a percentage of revenue? (indicate % for each category)

Note: The sum of all percentages to the right should be approximately equal to the percentage assigned to #19a above.

a. Direct labor	% ⁵⁷
b. Ornamentals, seed, and sod	% ⁵⁸
c. Landscape materials/hardscape	% ⁵⁹
d. Fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, etc.	% ⁶⁰
e. Overhead (e.g., indirect labor, vehicle expenses, utilities)	% ⁶¹

21. Do you have a formal budget established for 2005? (check one) ⁶²⁻¹ Yes No

22. Please indicate: a. Revenue change in 2004 vs. 2003 (check one in row a)
 b. Anticipated revenue change in 2005 vs. 2004 (check one in row b)

	Decrease 11% or more	Decrease 6 - 10%	Decrease 1 - 5%	0%	Increase 1 - 5%	Increase 6 - 10%	Increase 11% or more
a. 2004	⁶³⁻¹ <input type="checkbox"/>	² <input type="checkbox"/>	³ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁴ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁵ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁶ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁷ <input type="checkbox"/>
b. 2005	⁶⁴⁻¹ <input type="checkbox"/>	² <input type="checkbox"/>	³ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁴ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁵ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁶ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁷ <input type="checkbox"/>

23. What are the approximate sales per employee for the most recent fiscal year? (include all employees, not just direct labor) \$, , 000 per employee ⁶⁵

24. How has sales per employee changed in the past year? (check one)

⁶⁶⁻¹ Decreased more than 10% Decreased 6 - 10% Decreased 1 - 5% Stayed the same
⁵ Increased 1 - 5% Increased 6 - 10% Increased more than 10%

25. Has your facility been negatively impacted by any of the following? (check all that apply)

⁶⁷ <input type="checkbox"/> Noise regulations	⁶⁸ <input type="checkbox"/> Emission regulations	⁶⁹ <input type="checkbox"/> Water restrictions
⁷⁰ <input type="checkbox"/> Chemical/pesticide regulations	⁷¹ <input type="checkbox"/> Non-point source runoff	⁷² <input type="checkbox"/> None of these

26. Please indicate your average measures for the following:

Measure	Current Year	3 Years Ago
a. Number of accounts covered in a typical day	73	74
b. Route cycle time (average time spent per account)	hrs 75	hrs 76
c. Time to respond to/return customer calls	days 77	days 78
d. Customer call backs due to customer complaint (as % of total customer visits)	% 79	% 80
e. On-time service rate (% of accounts serviced according to scheduled)	% 81	% 82
f. Customer retention rate (% retained from previous year)	% 83	% 84

CUSTOMERS

27. Please select the *top three objectives* that best describe the focus of your market strategy: (check three)

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 85 Low cost | <input type="checkbox"/> 86 Innovation | <input type="checkbox"/> 87 Full service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 88 High quality | <input type="checkbox"/> 88 Service and support | <input type="checkbox"/> 90 Total value |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 91 Customization | <input type="checkbox"/> 92 Fast delivery/response | <input type="checkbox"/> 93 Specialty expertise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 94 Technical knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> 95 None of these | |

28. What percentage of sales are accounted for by the following markets? (% of sales volume)

Residential single homes	% 98
Condos, apartments, homeowner associations	% 97
Commercial single-unit establishments (not industrial)	% 98
Commercial complexes, corporate campuses, office parks (not industrial)	% 99
Industrial	% 100
Public sector (e.g., parks, schools, government property)	% 101
Other:	% 102
Total of above percentages should =	100%

29. What is the hourly rate charged to customers for the following services?

	Current year \$ per hour	Previous year \$ per hour
a. Turf maintenance (e.g., mowing, aeration)	\$ /hr 103	\$ /hr 104
b. Chemical application (turf and ornamental)	\$ /hr 105	\$ /hr 106
c. Design services	\$ /hr 107	\$ /hr 108
d. Landscape installation/renovation	\$ /hr 109	\$ /hr 110
e. Construction/hardscape	\$ /hr 111	\$ /hr 112
f. Snow and ice management	\$ /hr 113	\$ /hr 114
g. Other	\$ /hr 115	\$ /hr 116

30. Please: (1) Indicate the percentage of advertising/marketing expenses for each method: (note % for each method)
(2) Rate the effectiveness of each method: (check one in each row)

Method	1 (record % for each row)	2 (check only one in each row)		
		Not effective	Somewhat effective	Highly effective
a. Newspaper	% 117	118- <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
b. Door hangers/flyers	% 119	120- <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
c. Telemarketing	% 121	122- <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
d. Direct mail	% 123	124- <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
e. Yellow pages	% 125	126- <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
f. Work-in-process signage	% 127	128- <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
g. Referral discounts	% 129	130- <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
h. Other:	% 131	132- <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Total of above should =		100%		

PURCHASING & SUPPLIERS

31. How have the following costs your location is charged changed in the past year? (check one in each row)

	Decreased 11% or more	Decreased 6 - 10%	Decreased 1 - 5%	0%	Increased 1 - 5%	Increased 6 - 10%	Increased 11% or more
a. Chemicals	133- <input type="checkbox"/>	2- <input type="checkbox"/>	3- <input type="checkbox"/>	4- <input type="checkbox"/>	5- <input type="checkbox"/>	6- <input type="checkbox"/>	7- <input type="checkbox"/>
b. Seed and sod	134- <input type="checkbox"/>	2- <input type="checkbox"/>	3- <input type="checkbox"/>	4- <input type="checkbox"/>	5- <input type="checkbox"/>	6- <input type="checkbox"/>	7- <input type="checkbox"/>
c. Ornamentals	135- <input type="checkbox"/>	2- <input type="checkbox"/>	3- <input type="checkbox"/>	4- <input type="checkbox"/>	5- <input type="checkbox"/>	6- <input type="checkbox"/>	7- <input type="checkbox"/>
d. Hardscape	136- <input type="checkbox"/>	2- <input type="checkbox"/>	3- <input type="checkbox"/>	4- <input type="checkbox"/>	5- <input type="checkbox"/>	6- <input type="checkbox"/>	7- <input type="checkbox"/>
e. Equipment	137- <input type="checkbox"/>	2- <input type="checkbox"/>	3- <input type="checkbox"/>	4- <input type="checkbox"/>	5- <input type="checkbox"/>	6- <input type="checkbox"/>	7- <input type="checkbox"/>
f. Fuels	138- <input type="checkbox"/>	2- <input type="checkbox"/>	3- <input type="checkbox"/>	4- <input type="checkbox"/>	5- <input type="checkbox"/>	6- <input type="checkbox"/>	7- <input type="checkbox"/>
g. Insurance	139- <input type="checkbox"/>	2- <input type="checkbox"/>	3- <input type="checkbox"/>	4- <input type="checkbox"/>	5- <input type="checkbox"/>	6- <input type="checkbox"/>	7- <input type="checkbox"/>
h. Labor	140- <input type="checkbox"/>	2- <input type="checkbox"/>	3- <input type="checkbox"/>	4- <input type="checkbox"/>	5- <input type="checkbox"/>	6- <input type="checkbox"/>	7- <input type="checkbox"/>

32. Please indicate your level of capital-equipment spending (as a percentage of sales) for 2004: % ¹⁴¹

33. What is the anticipated change in capital-equipment spending for 2005? (check one)

- 142- Decrease more than 10% 2- Decrease 6 - 10% 3- Decrease 1 - 5% 4- Stay the same
 5- Increase 1 - 5% 6- Increase 6 - 10% 7- Increase more than 10%

34. Through which channels do you primarily purchase capital equipment? (check all that apply)

- 143- Manufacturers direct 144- Manufacturer reps 145- Distributors 146- Used-equipment markets
 147- Dealers 148- Home center/big box retailers 149- Online 150- None of these

35. Does your company rent or lease any of the following equipment? (check all that apply)

- 151- Excavators/backhoes 152- Haul trucks 153- Pickups/SUVs 154- Loaders
 155- Stump removers 156- Tampers 157- Chippers 158- Trenchers
 159- Dump trucks 160- Skid steers 161- Bulldozers 162- None of these

36. Please indicate the level of computer/technology spending (as a percentage of sales) for 2004: % ¹⁶³

37. What is the anticipated change in computer/technology spending for 2005? (check one)

- 164- Decrease more than 10% 2- Decrease 6 - 10% 3- Decrease 1 - 5% 4- Stay the same
 5- Increase 1 - 5% 6- Increase 6 - 10% 7- Increase more than 10%

38. To what degree has the use of each technology below improved your profitability? (check one in each row)

Technology	Not in use	Plan to use	In use and no improvement	In use and some improvement	In use and major improvement
a. Design software	165- <input type="checkbox"/>	2- <input type="checkbox"/>	3- <input type="checkbox"/>	4- <input type="checkbox"/>	5- <input type="checkbox"/>
b. Global positioning system (GPS)	166- <input type="checkbox"/>	2- <input type="checkbox"/>	3- <input type="checkbox"/>	4- <input type="checkbox"/>	5- <input type="checkbox"/>
c. Wireless communications	167- <input type="checkbox"/>	2- <input type="checkbox"/>	3- <input type="checkbox"/>	4- <input type="checkbox"/>	5- <input type="checkbox"/>
d. Contact/sales-automation software	168- <input type="checkbox"/>	2- <input type="checkbox"/>	3- <input type="checkbox"/>	4- <input type="checkbox"/>	5- <input type="checkbox"/>
e. Inventory/parts management software	169- <input type="checkbox"/>	2- <input type="checkbox"/>	3- <input type="checkbox"/>	4- <input type="checkbox"/>	5- <input type="checkbox"/>
f. Website	170- <input type="checkbox"/>	2- <input type="checkbox"/>	3- <input type="checkbox"/>	4- <input type="checkbox"/>	5- <input type="checkbox"/>
g. Email communications	171- <input type="checkbox"/>	2- <input type="checkbox"/>	3- <input type="checkbox"/>	4- <input type="checkbox"/>	5- <input type="checkbox"/>

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

39. What factors below are most likely to hamper your profitability in the coming year? (check all that apply)

- 172- Ability to find labor 173- Ability to develop leaders 174- Retaining employees 175- Insurance costs
 176- Government regulations 177- Maintaining adequate cash flow 178- Increased competition 179- Fuel costs
 180- State of the economy 181- Keeping competitive pricing 182- Unmanaged growth 183- None of these

Thank you for completing the survey. Please return your anonymous survey by **Feb. 15, 2005**. Mail your completed survey to Landscape Management Survey, PO Box 630, Worthington, OH 43085-0630 or fax to 614-802-2309.

Inside the Owner's Head

BUSINESS PERSONALITY PROFILE

Tom Conway, Jr.

► Smithfield Gardens, Inc.

BY JASON STAHL / Managing Editor

Tom Conway, Jr. owns Smithfield Gardens, Inc., a \$3.1 million retail nursery and landscape design/build company located in Suffolk, VA, that has been in business for 32 years. About 45% of the company's revenues come from the retail nursery, while 55% come from residential design/build. The company, which has 65 employees, also does a little pruning and mulching for select design/build customers. Sales are projected to be \$3.3 million in 2005.

So what's a science guy doing in landscaping?

It's a long story. I earned a Bachelor of Science in physics and chemistry in college and had been working at Smithfield Gardens since high school to make extra money. I didn't think of horticulture as a way to make a living, but then again I didn't realize how big the industry was. After I graduated from college, I moved back to the area and Smithfield asked me to work for them. I was ready to take a job out of state, but they really wanted me. They asked me if I had ever considered working in this field, and I said yes but I still went to school for six years.

How did you pull a Donald Trump on them?

I told them there had to be a future for me at Smithfield, so we sat down and developed a sketch of the potential the company had for me. I saw a lot of things that needed to be improved, like the fact that

there was no budget. After two years, I accomplished some goals and learned a lot about business, particularly retail. At the time, the retail nursery was doing \$350,000, but I felt we could do \$700,000. I told the owners that if we reached that goal, we would need to talk about me owning a piece of the company and how I could affect the future of this business. So we developed a 5-year plan that detailed how I would own all or part of the business within two to three years.

How does your science background help you in landscaping?

It helps most when I talk with clients. When people talk about landscaping, they don't think about soil and hardscaping. They think you just put plants in the ground. But you have to make sure everything is correct so the plants do fantastic. Since I have a science background, I'm able to talk about soil structure or drainage and also share that with the installation crews so it helps raise their level of awareness.

Are you more environmentally sensitive because of your science background?

Definitely. We're located in coastal Virginia, so we specialize in a lot of projects that are in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. In our process of site evaluation and installation, we consider runoff and what kind of plants we're putting in and whether or not they're sustainable. If clients ask for particular

plants, we tell them our experience with those varieties and let them make the decision. We want to build a relationship that lasts more than a generation.

How big do you want your company to grow?

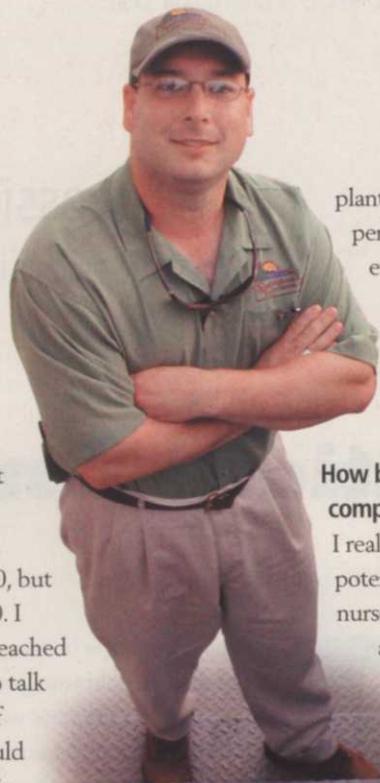
I really feel the growth potential is in our retail nursery. Everything in our area is building toward us, so we feel we can grow it to \$2 million within five years and grow design/build to \$3 million. We feel it'll be

tough, but if we work our plan and the economy stays good, we're confident that we can hit it. Everything comes down to the budget — can you physically produce "x" amount with your current resources?

What one thing guides you in running your business every day?

I tell people that when they're in any situation, use your instincts. I feel that people are inherently good and they're giving you the proper information, so go on that presumption. You're not going to feel that you're being taken advantage of in that situation. If a family loses the roof over their head, that's a problem. If they lose a tree, big deal. It's not rocket science. So do whatever it takes to make what we're doing methodical, and we know that we can make it work for them and for us.

— Smithfield Gardens, Inc. participates in JP Horizons' People Solutions programs. To learn more visit www.jp Horizons.com or call 877/574-5267.



We need passion for our business,
but passion isn't enough. We also need
applied knowledge.



Attention! Time for war

BY ED LAFLAMME

I see many landscape business owners doing things the same old way, putting up with the same old frustrations, working hard and not thinking about tomorrow. Their only concern is to get through another day.

Is this you? If you don't love what you do, maybe it's time for a change. But, if you love what you do, whether you've been in business for two years or 20, it's time to declare war. Make your declaration and begin putting together your battle plan.

Choosing your weapons

The "war" idea came from a friend, Mark Stevens, who's writing a book with the title, *"Declare War on Your Business,"* soon to be released. He founded MSCO, a prominent marketing company in New York that helps both national and international companies to more effectively market, sell and deliver their products and services.

He wants his clients' marketing dollars to count, their revenues to grow and their margins to increase. What a concept! I can hardly wait for this book to be released. (If you're interested, visit www.msco.com for further information.)

What comes to your mind when you read the words, "declare war on your company"? For me, it stirs passion for improving. The words are a call to action. But, as we all discover, passion isn't enough to build and sustain a successful company. We also need applied knowledge. Like soldiers, landscape company owners must couple their passion with their experience and knowledge and use this mixture in a logical, directed strategy.

But there's a catch. Most landscape company owners *are* their businesses. What that means is that they have to get out of the proverbial "box" and become aware of what other successful companies are doing in their market area and also around the country.

Here is a 10-point battle plan that will lead to victory in the war to building a successful company.

1. Join and participate in associations. Start at your local or regional level but also join The Associated Landscape Contractors of America (www.alca.org).
2. Subscribe and read the trade and business magazines. They offer a wealth of business-building information and news.
3. Pay an annual visit to at least one successful operation that's similar to or larger than yours.
4. Partner with a respected consultant. He or she will assist you in reaching your goals, and shorten the time that it takes to achieve them.
5. Become certified. It's a great learning experience, and it demonstrates your proficiencies to others.
6. Network with other non-competing companies. Share what you've learned with others.
7. Hire a personal business coach.
8. Find a mentor who's older and wiser to share their wisdom with you.
9. Mentor others. By teaching you'll be taught.
10. And, for heaven's sake, learn and understand your financials.

These steps will take time to accomplish, so tackle them one at a time. And remember to check out the book, *"Declare War on Your Business,"* by Mark Stevens.

— The author is a consultant, speaker, author and president of Grass Roots Consulting. He can be reached at ed@grassrootsconsulting.com or 203/225-0807.

Innovations keep landscape drip contractors in the green.

By SheriLynne Hansen



Mike Scheck, Naturalistic Gardens

Anything that can help save time, conserve water, trim costs and increase reliability is bound to make landscape drip contractors sit up and take notice.

Rain Bird® has turned more heads than any other landscape drip equipment manufacturer, continuing the company's time-honored tradition of producing product innovations that make a contractor's job easier and more profitable, while using water intelligently. In the spring of 2004, Rain Bird introduced Easy Fit Compression Fittings (coupling, elbow, tee, adapters and a flush cap) that produce over 160 different configurations and are compatible with any manufacturer's 1/2" tubing (16-18mm outside diameter).



Just a few months after the industry welcomed the Easy Fit Compression Fittings, Rain Bird presented another innovation: Low Flow Control Zone Kits, designed specifically to work in low-volume applications. The kits feature Rain Bird's new Low Flow Valve, the only valve that always seals water-tight, despite particles that clog other valves. The Low Flow Valve not only prevents water waste that comes from weeping valves but also the loss of valuable time for contractors.

Mike Scheck of Naturalistic Gardens in Alpharetta, Ga., was immediately interested in the new Rain Bird Low Flow Control Zone Kits when he first heard of them. "I'm definitely one of the first to try a new Rain Bird product," he said. "I think they have the best quality products on the market."

Mike understands that the patent-pending double-knife diaphragm is the key to the Low Flow Valve. It lifts higher to let more debris through at lower flows, plus the diaphragm will seal completely, even if a

particle is present. Tests show the PGV and 2500 TF valves will both clog when the water isn't filtered, while Rain Bird's Low Flow Valve seals firmly every time under the same circumstances. This gives Mike extra confidence on the job.

With the Low Flow Valve, it's proven you no longer need to filter the water before it enters the valve. You can put the filter downstream of the valve and no ball valve is needed. Mike sees this as a significant advantage, both in time and cost savings.

The other advantages to these Low Flow Control Zone Kits are their reliability, simplicity and convenience. Citing the complex installations that he handles on a daily basis, Mike said, "I think this is something that can suit every need."

The revolutionary Low Flow Valves are matched with Rain Bird filters and pressure



regulators that contractors already use and trust for optimum reliability. For added convenience, Rain Bird offers four different Low Flow Control Zone Kits, so there's one that is just right for any given installation.

"I'm very particular about the products I install, and Rain Bird is fantastic," Mike concluded. "If it wasn't, we wouldn't be using it."

From the first name in landscape drip irrigation.

Only one valve eliminates weeping on the job.

Patent-pending double-knife diaphragm always seals completely despite sand, sediment or other particles in the water.

Install Confidence: Install Rain Bird® Low Flow Valves.



Now Rain Bird Control Zone Kits are available with a new Low Flow Valve designed specifically for landscape drip installations. With an innovative double-knife diaphragm, this valve handles flow rates down to 0.2 GPM without filtration. Compared to the PGV and 2500 TE, only Rain Bird's new Low Flow Valve always seals completely, despite particles in the water. It won't waste water, and it won't waste your time.



I found out that listening to others and acting upon ideas and recommendations was, by far, the most important thing to do to keep employee morale up.



How to keep the best ones

BY ERNIE PYLE

Employee morale is a concern to any company hoping to retain its most valuable resource — its employees. Most of us have lost valuable employees or, at the very least, sensed that our companies weren't operating at the level we desired due to low employee job satisfaction.

As an account manager for Heaviland Enterprises,

Inc., Vista, CA, I'm constantly challenged to keep employee morale up and associates satisfied. I first had to examine my own personality to see if there was a way to adapt it to the personality and culture of our associates. In the process, I discovered that listening to employees and acting upon their ideas and recommendations was extremely valuable.

A good way to start this process is to send out an anonymous survey to all associates to help determine the level of employee morale. Keep it simple. Ask open-ended questions. Post the results afterwards and act upon what it reveals, especially any shortcomings. If you don't act, you may do more harm than good because the employees will see you weren't serious.

Create one-on-ones with key personnel. Meet in a comfortable setting and show a genuine interest in their families and hobbies. Let them talk. Most will speak honestly and frankly about the efficiencies and inefficiencies of field personnel and what they like and don't like. You want to build a trusting relationship, one that gives employees a desire to keep developing.

Spend time training your associates through field seminars, technical classes, English classes and safety demonstrations. You will soon identify associates willing to take the next step. They're your future leaders.

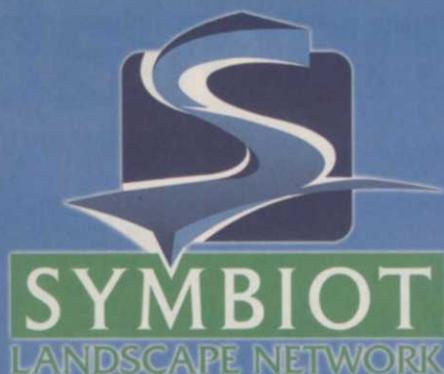
In today's competitive environment, it's vital to maintain a stable, well-trained and satisfied work force. Coming in to work each day should be rewarding, even if it's not always fun.

— *The author is an account manager for Heaviland Enterprises, Vista, CA. He can be reached at epyle@heaviland.net.*

Tips to make employee morale soar

- Offer base wages and benefits that match or exceed competitors'.
- Greet associates each morning with a smile if not a warm handshake.
- Give pats on the back at the end of the day for jobs well done.
- Treat the crew to lunch occasionally.
- Surprise associates at the end of a tough day with cold drinks, ice cream.
- Have an end-of-week barbecue.
- Train crew leaders to be able to develop their own schedule of daily tasks.
- Recognize outstanding employees or outstanding efforts in your company newsletter.
- Provide associates with resources or locations of resources to help improve their lives.
- Put on some lively cultural music when the crews arrive for work.
- Provide incentive pay for special projects.
- Write a short handwritten thank you and mail it to the associate's home.
- Recognize associates' birthdays and work anniversaries.
- How about a company picnic?
- Organize a company soccer game.
- Develop a company emergency loan program.
- Buy a gift card for anyone going above and beyond the call of duty.
- Send a welcome package to the home of an associate celebrating the arrival of a newborn.
- Maintain an anonymous suggestion box for associate recommendations.

How To Stay Ahead Of The Competition.



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Robert Taylor

*Owner, BIO Landscape & Maintenance
SLN Sales Partner*

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Innovations

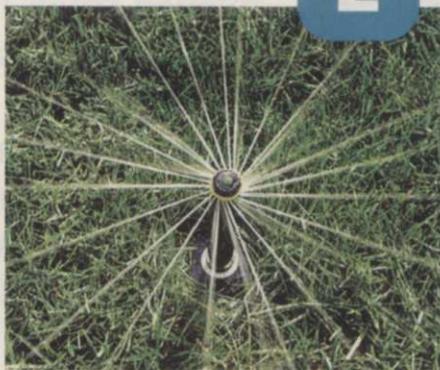
TECHNOLOGY HOT NEW PRODUCTS



1



3



2



4

1 Quite a load

Ingersoll-Rand offers a powerful series of backhoe loaders featuring upgrades to its existing backhoe loader line. The BL-275 side-shift, BL-370 center-mount, and BL-570 center-mount B-Series are all equipped with the standard Bob-Tach attachment mounting system and standard auxiliary hydraulics with two-way flow for both the loader and backhoe. Inertia-welded cylinders that offer a smoother operating experience are standard throughout the backhoe loaders, as are JIC fittings on tube lines and hoses and standard-sized skid-steer loader tires. All also feature Kubota engines: 32 hp for the BL-275, 46 hp for the BL-370 and 56 hp for the BL-570.

For more information contact Ingersoll-Rand at 877/472-7263 or www.irco.com / circle no. 289

2 Let it rain

The new rotary nozzle from Rain Bird allows irrigation professionals to more easily achieve higher efficient water distribution from 13 to 24 ft. The rotary nozzles have multiple rotating streams that uniformly distribute water throughout the radius range. They have a low precipitation rate of 0.60 in./hr., are designed to fit on Rain Bird spray heads and offer design flexibility since they can be zoned with Rain Bird 5000/5000 Plus MPR rotor nozzles. Rotary nozzles are available in 13- to 18-ft. and 17- to 24-ft. fixed-arc models at quarter, third, half, two-thirds, three-quarter and full circle patterns.

For more information contact Rain Bird at www.rainbird.com / circle no. 290

3 Ride on

Turfco Direct's new TurnAer 26 Chariot ride-on aerator system takes aeration to a new level of ease and productivity. Designed for commercial use by lawn care professionals, the Chariot features a heavy-duty, low-profile steel frame with wide-set pneumatic tires for a smooth, stable ride. The Chariot can be easily disconnected from the TurnAer 26, allowing it to function as a walk-behind for better maneuverability in tight spaces. Additional features include weighted transport drums, folding multi-height handle, 2.75-in. coring depth, 4-hp Honda engine, sealed self-aligning bearings, 359 ft. per minute transport speed and spring-assist lift.

For more information contact Turfco Direct at 800/679-8201 or www.turfco.com / circle no. 291

4 A slim fit

Bobcat's new MT55 mini track loader can go just about anywhere at 41.5 in. wide (less bucket), but its wider tracks lower the machine's ground pressure to 4.1 psi. The MT55 also features a turf-friendly lug track that distributes the operating weight of the 2,679-lb. loader over a larger area, reducing ground pressure and minimizing damage to landscapes. The MT55 has a 550-lb. rated operating capacity, and the rubber-track undercarriage also provides improved traction and better flotation. Other features include a 23.5-hp liquid-cooled Kubota diesel engine and 18 different attachments operated easily with 12 gpm of auxiliary hydraulic flow and 2,900 psi hydraulic system.

For more information contact Bobcat at 866/823-7898 or www.bobcat.com / circle no. 292

BAHIA AMBUSHED!

As the Green Guardians began to infiltrate the secret testing grounds of EverRide on Tuesday, one Guardian met with unexpected resistance.

"One of our Amazon warrior heroines was briefly detained today by security forces as she penetrated the perimeter of the EverRide compound," a government blade told members of the press corps.

Met with gasps of horror, he assured the press that things were still going as planned. "It was only a minor setback, and Bahia is fine. She wrestled with the death machine for a few moments, subdued it with a choke hold to its roll bar, engaged its integrated parking brake and slipped into the shadows of the treeline before it could engage its sinister cutting blades," he said.

The Guardians, who work for the Federation for Overthrowing EverRide (F.O.E.), are on a mission to destroy the world's most efficient turf machines — preferably without breaking a nail in the process.

The Daily Rescue

BY THE GRASS, FOR THE GRASS



Download Green Guardian
and EverRide screensavers
at EverRide.com



COMMERCIAL POWER

Engine maintenance is key to prolonging the life of your engine. To keep your engine in peak condition, follow these top 10 service points:

1. **Engine Oil** – Check engine oil with each use, and change oil after every 25 hours of engine use, or every 50 hours if the engine has an oil filter (replace filter also).
2. **Air Cleaner** – Air cleaners should be checked after each use, and serviced (or replaced, depending on type) every 25 hours.
3. **Cooling Fins** – The engines on the majority of outdoor power equipment are air cooled, meaning that cool air must pass over the fin of the engine block to cool the engine. Compressed air is the best way to remove debris from the cooling system. Be sure to wear eye protection while doing this part of the maintenance.
4. **Spark Plug(s)** – Inspect and/or replace after 100 hours of use.
5. **Engine Speed** – Check and reset engine top no load speed at least once per season. Consult equipment manuals or contact your supplier to verify what the correct speed should be.
6. **Fuel/Fuel System** – Inspect fuel after each use to verify that the proper fuel has been used in the engine and that it is fresh. Replace the fuel filter annually.
7. **Clean the Engine/Equipment** – Clean dirt and debris from the engine and equipment after each use.
8. **Starting System** – After each use, inspect the manual starter, including the rope, grip and starter operation. On electric start engines, check the battery (for charge and/or leaks), battery/cable connections and interlock switches (for proper operation).
9. **Valve Adjustments** – Check annually, or every 300 hours, whichever comes first.
10. **Exhaust System** – After each use, visually inspect the muffler body, deflector and spark arrestor (if equipped) for damage, proper fit and/or leaks.



*By Mark Nelson,
Product Service Trainer,
Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power*

From the Shop

TECHNOLOGY HIRING A PRO

As the equipment we use to meet our customers' demands gets more sophisticated, we need better trained technicians.



Some good tipoffs

BY HARRY SMITH

What does a good technician look like? That's usually the second question I get from prospective employers. The first is, "Where can I find a technician?" (I'll address that in a subsequent article). Sometimes this second question isn't asked directly, but I hear its echo in the laments about the last few alleged equipment techs that went through the owner's or manager's shop.

Eager to keep learning

As the equipment we use to meet our customers' demands gets more sophisticated, our need for better trained technicians increases. The primary prerequisite for the job is the ability to learn. Just as you can't learn it all in this field, you can't learn it all today and coast through tomorrow. The best technicians are ready to learn or, better yet, eager to learn.

Another critical skill that's frequently overlooked is the ability to organize. Many mechanically adept individuals continually lose valuable time searching for misplaced tools, parts and service manuals. I've taught several hundred technicians over the last 13 years. The outstanding technicians with the most efficient and productive shops

keep their work areas clean and organized. They pay attention to workflow and always seek ways to save steps and time. They always want to know how the latest technology works, what's likely to break, and how to troubleshoot and repair quickly.

Why organization matters

So how do you hire this kind of technician? There are several ways to test for the aptitude you need. I learned early in my career as a shop owner to look at a prospective technician's toolbox. Look not only at what's in the toolbox but how it's organized. A neat, well organized tool box is a good sign. I once hired a guy who had little more than three air wrenches and several pairs of lock grip pliers in his toolbox. Thankfully, he quit my company and later became a successful sales representative for a fastener company.

Tour the shop with your prospect and ask for suggestions about organization. What does the prospect see and suggest? A good candidate will have good ideas about improving shop efficiency. Be sure to ask questions about the technician's previous shop layout and efficiency. Experience still counts, but organization and learning ability are more important than ever. Interview carefully and good luck.

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

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Circle 122

The landscape/lawn service industry, in general, has a lot of catching up to do; it's not as computer savvy as it should be.



It's time we caught up to IT

BY TYLER WHITAKER

I recently worked with a company that needed to distribute a database of new customer leads to its account managers. They were using printed leads to record their notes. A staff person, earning \$20,000 annually, then entered the data into the database for reporting purposes. The system worked, but it wasn't efficient or cost effective.

By spending \$5,000 on computers and software to distribute the leads and collect the sales notes, the company began saving \$15,000 a year in staffing costs alone. This is just one example of what today's technology can mean to your business, specifically in terms of time and labor, our two most vital variables.

Don't get scared

Don't let the words Information Technology (IT) scare you. In spite of computer viruses, spam e-mail and consultants that seem to speak another language, IT helps our operations be more efficient, deliver products and services faster, and provide better visibility into our daily operations. We will realize these benefits without sacrificing the bottom line. We just need to acquire a better knowledge of technology and begin to use it effectively. It's all a matter of sophistication.

A friend recently described sophistication to me as "drawing a bright line between what you know and what you don't know." Achieving a higher level of sophistication starts by identifying the gaps in your knowledge and skills and then finding smart people to help you fill those gaps. Only then do we start to get a better understanding of possibilities.

Let's catch up

Some of you are still wondering about or, perhaps, struggling with some of the technologies available to help run your systems. The landscape/lawn service industry, in general, has some serious catching up to do; it's not as computer savvy as it should be.

This doesn't appear to be from lack of desire. Our failure to incorporate this technology into our operations and to use it effectively is a by-product of: **1.** not understanding what's possible, and **2.** the addiction to urgency that leaves many landscape business owners and managers too little time to become educated on the technology advantages.

Too often, many of us in the Green Industry throw man-hours at problems instead of solving them with the right technology. Or, we fall into the trap of technology deployed for technology's sake. These "latest and greatest" solutions take precious time and resources to roll out. Equally frustrating, we find that they solve only part of the problem and often create others.

Today's technology is a tool; it can be a great tool. But like any tool, we have to find and apply the right technology to the tasks that it's meant to perform. It's my job to help you do this.

Technology enables us to take our businesses to the next level. Each month in this column, I'll help describe what we can expect from the technology that's available to us today and its importance to the success of our businesses.

Stay tuned, keep reading and welcome to the technology of the 21st century.

— Tyler Whitaker is the Chief Technology Officer for Symbiot Business Group (www.symbiot.biz).

Contact him at twhitaker@symbiot.biz.

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Patent #'s 5,484,501; 5,330,828; and Patent Pending

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What's new this month at the Online Learning Center: *First Aid & Safety Course*

Go online to www.greenindustryhub.com and get free access as a regular subscriber to this online community focused on education, information sharing and professionalism. Or, join the Hub as a Premium Subscriber and get immediate access to more than 44 online courses on business management, personal development and workplace compliance issues. Here's what the Green Industry Hub has to offer:

Green Industry University – 5 free courses for all registrants; Premium Subscribers can access more than 44 courses on industry, business and management topics. Industry-specific courses are based on ALCA's acclaimed Certification program study curriculum.

Course of the Month – All registrants access this month's Course of the Month for 30 days – then it enters the library available for Premium Subscribers.

Resource Center – Green Industry topic discussion forums, industry calendar, news and more are available here.

Compete & Win Game – You and your employees can compete to win serious industry prizes in this learning game.

Share & Compare – Check your operations with the industry's best practices. You can connect with other non-competitors in ongoing networking groups as a Premium Subscriber.

Skills Assessment – Measure your strengths and weaknesses, as well as your employees' skills with this useful management tool. Premium Subscribers can match skills assessments to job searches and resumes.

The Green Industry Hub also offers job and resume postings, an online store to purchase ALCA and related products, and a Trophy Case where you and your employees can show off your educational achievements.

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**New this month:****First Aid & Safety**

A key cost for many Green Industry managers is the cost of safety, especially when those costs are reflected in higher insurance and workers' compensation premiums, time lost off the job when a worker is injured, training and learning-curve costs as replacement workers fill that void, and many other related costs.

This new one-hour course will help landscape owners, managers and employees prevent medical emergencies. This interactive, online course helps prepare green industry professionals by teaching strategies for dealing appropriately with medical emergencies on the job, before medical help arrives. This is must-know safety material, based on the ALCA Certification program training materials. Anyone who must be prepared on the job to assist in an emergency can benefit from this course. Anyone preparing for the ALCA Certification examinations can use this course as a study material.

In addition to comprehensive coverage of first aid basics. This course overviews the three key elements needed for safety in landscape and green industry work:

- Prevention
- Preparation
- Response

The coverage focuses on ways to be prepared in the event of an emergency, characteristics of common emergency situations and actions that could be taken in the event of any of the common emergencies. Safety concerns such as using equipment, proper safety gear, lifting techniques and more are covered.

Throughout the one-hour course, users can benefit from audio and visual elements, as well as short review quizzes of the material to reinforce the presentation. Owners and managers can use this course as a basic introduction to specific methods and training materials they introduce in the field.

Also Debuting in January:

- Turf Chemical Applications
- Plant Selection and Planting Techniques

This month's Compete & Win Game prizes provided by:

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For a free or Premium subscription to the Green Industry Hub, visit www.greenindustryhub.com or call toll-free 877/745-2745. Large group discounts are available by calling 800/745-7219 x147.

For more information on sponsoring Green Industry-specific courses on the Hub, contact Kevin Stoltman at 800/225-4569 x2772 or email: kstoltman@advanstar.com

A preemergence control primer

Many aspects of turfgrass management have changed over the years. However, despite the availability of effective herbicides for nearly 40 years, crabgrass (*Digitaria spp.*) and other annual grasses continue to be successful weeds of turfgrass areas.

Most of the blame for this can be placed on the weeds themselves. Several annual weeds of turfgrass have extended germination windows, making it difficult to effectively control them with a pre-emergence herbicide. And it has only been in the last 10 to 15 years that reliable post-emergence materials have been available for these weeds. By following a few simple steps, you can maximize your chances of success against annual grassy and broadleaf weed problems.

Start with good turf

The best defense against weeds, especially annual grasses and broadleaf weeds, is a dense turfgrass stand promoted by proper management. Choose the most appropriate species and cultivars for your site and management situation. Then, practice good mowing, fertilization and irrigation management supplemented with cultural practices, disease and insect management as

Simple yet effective strategies to control annual grassy and broadleaf problems

BY DAVID GARDNER

necessary. In doing so, you can increase the turfgrass plant's ability to out-compete germinating potential weeds for light, water and nutrients.

Despite your best efforts to manage your turf, you may have some areas that are prone to annual grass and broadleaf infestation. While weed seeds may be dispersed over considerable distances by a variety of means, a good percentage of them will fall in the immediate vicinity of the mother plant. Recognizing these areas and mapping them will allow you to concentrate your weed control efforts. This can be helpful if you're attempting to reduce your use of herbicides due to budget and/or labor limitations.

I.D. the weed target

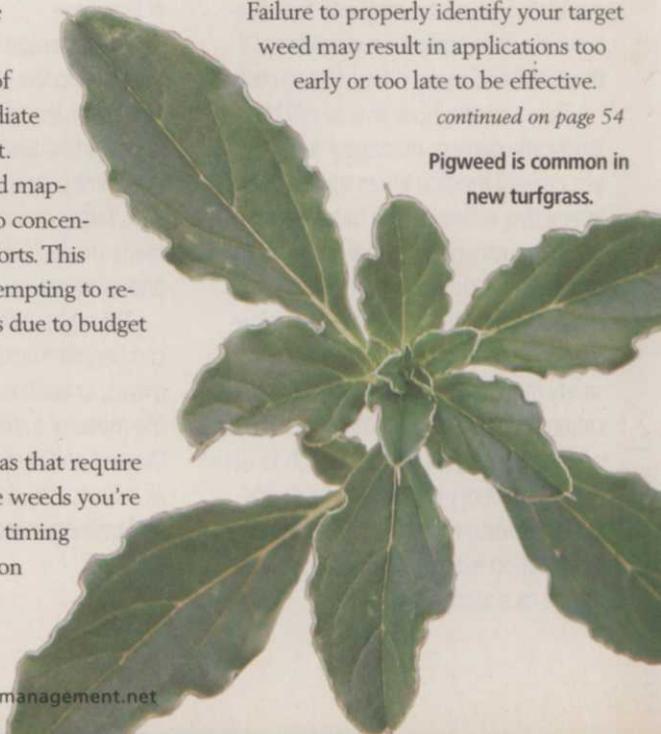
When determining the areas that require treatment, also identify the weeds you're attempting to control. The timing of your herbicide application may vary, due to the weed species you target. For ex-

ample, smooth crabgrass (*Digitaria ischaemum*) will begin to germinate when soil temperatures are in the upper 50s for a few consecutive nights. In contrast, many other grassy weeds, such as goosegrass (*Eleusine indica*), germinate later in the season when soil temperatures are in the upper 60s to low 70s.

Failure to properly identify your target weed may result in applications too early or too late to be effective.

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Pigweed is common in new turfgrass.



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If you apply too early, the herbicide may dissipate before the end of the weed's germination window. If you apply too late, you won't, in most cases, effectively control already emerged weeds. If your primary weed problem includes summer annual broadleaf weeds and you're attempting to control with pre-emergence herbicides, timing may also become an issue.

Choose the product

After a flurry of new product releases in the late 1980s and early '90s, development of new pre-emergence herbicide chemistries has been relatively slow. While there are some promising herbicides in development, most of them are post-emergence materials. There are nine herbicides and one natural product labeled for pre-emergence weed control in northern turfgrass.

Benfen and bensulide are two of the industry standards. Each material has been labeled for more than 30 years. They're both generally less expensive than newer chemistries. However, their soil residual activity may be shorter, resulting in an increased chance for late-season breakthrough. Control of crabgrass with these materials is generally good; goosegrass control is fair. Bensulide is important for golf turf. It's one of the few materials labeled for use on putting-green-height bentgrass.

Oxadiazon may be your best option if goosegrass is more of a problem on your

sites than crabgrass. It provides good control of crabgrass, but even better control of goosegrass. It has a longer soil residual and is more selective for this weed. Oxadiazon is also labeled for control of oxalis, spurge and purslane, three late-germinating summer annual broadleaf weeds.

Pendimethalin, prodiamine and dithiopyr are three materials that became available for turfgrass in the late 1980s to early 1990s. Each of these materials provides excellent control of crabgrass and good to excellent control of goosegrass. In university trials conducted throughout the 1990s, these materials generally traded off as the top performer, and all provide greater than 90% control of crabgrass in most situations. They have longer residual activity than benfen or bensulide, decreasing the risk of late-season breakthrough. Like benfen, pendimethalin and prodiamine are dinitroaniline herbicides.

These materials can be easily identified due to their bright yellow or orange color. While highly effective, staining of hard surfaces with these herbicides can be a concern.

Another dinitroaniline material used in turf is trifluralin. It's marketed in a combination product with benfen that's safe for use on cool-season turf. Note that straight trifluralin products aren't safe for use on cool-season turfgrass.

Dithiopyr is labeled for use on greens-height bentgrass. It's also unique in that it affords some early post-emergence



Oxalis, which reproduces by seed, can be found in most of the eastern, central United States.

control, as well as being effective as a pre-emergence material. This makes dithiopyr an excellent choice for those areas where some crabgrass has already begun to germinate.

Another advantage of pendimethalin, prodiamine and dithiopyr is that they're each effective on a wide range of annual broadleaf weeds. In addition to oxalis, spurge and purslane, these herbicides are effective against knotweed. Prodiamine and dithiopyr will also control pigweed, and dithiopyr will control black medic. Timing becomes an issue, though. If these materials are applied early enough to control knotweed, they may only be marginally effective against late-germinating grassy and broadleaf weeds.

While the aforementioned herbicides also control some broadleaf weeds, there's one product, isoxaben, which is labeled solely for the control of annual broadleaf weeds. In fact, 40 species are listed as controlled on the label. Most uses of this product are as an over-the-top material for landscape beds. However, the product is registered for use in turfgrass. If annual broadleaf weeds are your biggest problem, this may be a product worth investigating.

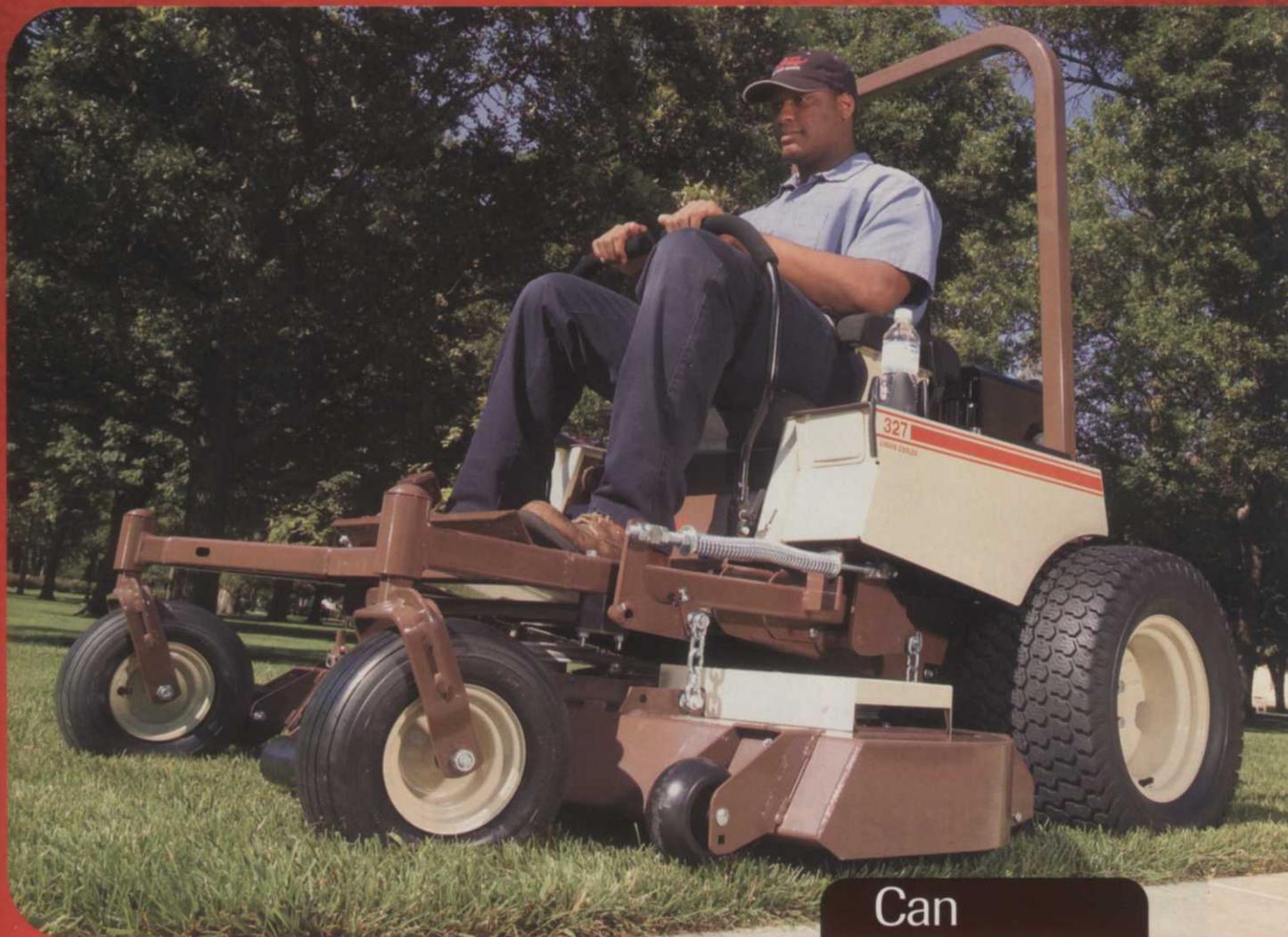
While we recommend that cool-season grasses be established from seed in the fall, invariably some spring seeding is required. This can be difficult due to, among other things, competition from annual broadleaf



Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea* L.) can be bothersome in thin or newly seeded turfgrass areas.

continued on page 56

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Your Next Mower

Circle 126

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and grassy weeds. If you're establishing an area from seed, the only appropriate choice for pre-emergence control of annual grasses is siduron. When used according to label directions, siduron will provide some control

of crabgrass and other annual grasses while not harming the establishing turfgrass.

In some parts of the country, laws or ordinances are being passed banning the usage of chemical pesticides. In these areas, or if you have clientele who are more inter-

Weeds in color

"Color Atlas of Turfgrass Weeds" is an excellent resource for a turfgrass pro. This book's colorful pictures of all major turf weeds (grassy and broadleaf) and authoritative text make weed identification a snap. It also offers solid advice on weed control. A joint effort by L. B. McCarty, J. W. Everest, D. W. Hall, T. R. Murphy and F. Yelverton, it's available from Wiley Publishers. Visit the Web site www.wiley.com.

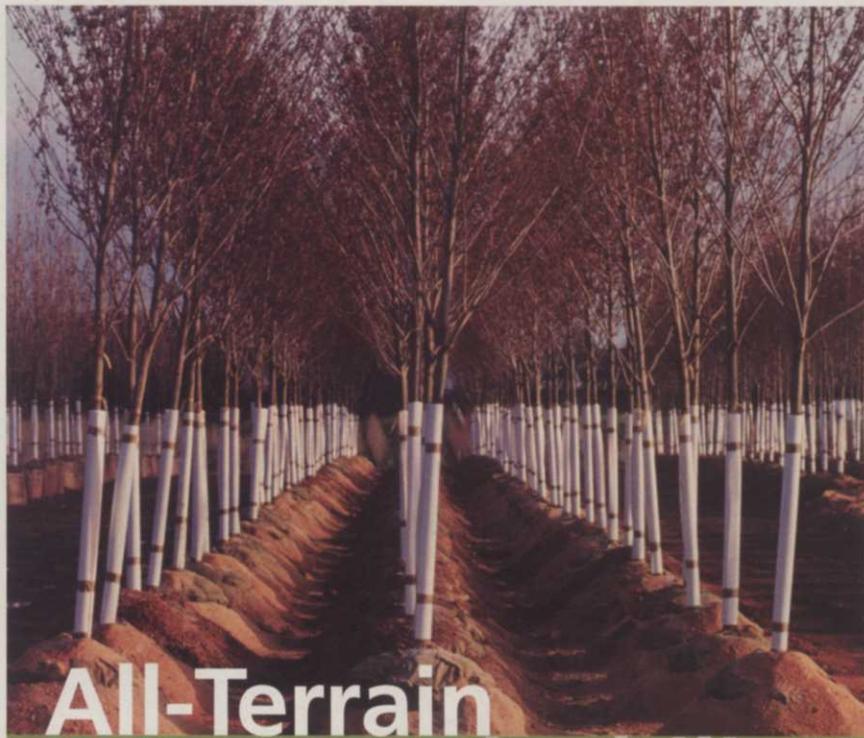
ested in natural weed control options, corn gluten meal is a good option for weed control. A by-product of the wet milling process and an ingredient in animal feeds, its herbicidal properties were discovered by accident in the late 1980s.

Corn gluten meal contains a higher concentration of bioactive dipeptides, such as alanine-alanine, that are thought to affect cell division in the root tips of germinating plants in a manner similar to some of our conventional herbicide chemistries. Corn gluten meal also contains 10% nitrogen by weight. It's available primarily through online and mail order sources.

Control of weeds with corn gluten meals during the first year of use tends to range 40% to 50%. But, in the second and subse-



Post-emergents are often used on black medic.



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Circle 127

quent years of use, control of crabgrass can be as high as 90%, and rival that of pendimethalin, proflumicarb or dithiopyr.

Be thorough

After choosing a herbicide, the next step is to apply the material in the most effective manner and at the right time of year. Uniformity of application is critical. If an area is missed, there will be no effective barrier to weed seed germination. On the other hand, overlap may result in undesirable root pruning or even stand thinning depending on product used and/or species and cultivar of turfgrass.

Calibrate your sprayer and apply sufficient liquid to ensure adequate coverage. Many of these materials are also available as a granular. When using these materials, follow label directions as to when and if to



water in. Generally, these materials require water in order to disperse particles over the soil surface and establish an effective pre-emergence barrier.

Henbit thrives in cool, moist areas and can be bothersome in thin turf.

Note the required period after treatment before reentry and any site or use restrictions. If you have any plans for spring seeding, you should be aware of the required time interval before seeding. Even if you have used the product in the past, it's a good practice to read the label. Labels change periodically, and some things on the label may vary among formulations of the same active ingredient. **LM**

— *The author is an assistant professor of Turfgrass Science at The Ohio State University. He can be reached at 614/292-9002 or gardner.254@osu.edu.*

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Paver work for you?

This Michigan contractor says you can do it, but why not partner with a specialist and leave the liability to them?

BY RON HALL / Editor-in-Chief



You don't tackle a big brick paver job without the right equipment.

Matt Caruso and his team looked down a mile of winding, crumbling road and considered the challenges. Then they tore into the job. Over a period of about 30 days this past fall they turned that ribbon of disintegrating asphalt into what is, in many respects, a community showcase. This road-reconstruction, known as the Harvard Drive project, involved the placement of no less than 90,000 sq. ft. of pavers; it wasn't the easiest job, not by a long shot.

Hardscaping is hot

Landscape Management magazine's recent reader surveys show that hardscaping is hot. If you're a maintenance company that does some installation to keep customers satisfied, or if you're an installation

company wanting another service to increase your revenues, hardscapes might be your ticket. Be aware, though, that it takes talented employees to build hardscapes. Also, liability is always a concern.

A good starting point for adding hardscapes to your portfolio of services might be pavers. They come in many sizes and shapes, and, considered in light of other types of construction, are relatively easy to incorporate into a design and install. So easy, in fact, that just about any half-handly homeowner can build their own walkway or patio with them, assuming the homeowner has the time. Therein lies the rub. Households with professional people never have the time for these types of projects.

Matt Caruso at Decra-Scapes, Inc., Sterling Heights, MI, specializes in hardscapes. He's been installing them for more than a decade. The work looks easier than it is, he says, especially big or complicated hardscapes.

His advice: partner with someone who's done this work before.

"This is specialized work. Any general landscape company considering a project like this

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The shifting and unstable soil required extra prepping.

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(Harbor Drive) should think about establishing a relationship with a quality hardscape contractor before they attempt the job themselves," says Caruso. "I believe their profits, in most cases, will be higher and their liabilities much less."

Equipment needs

Certainly, the Harbor Drive project wasn't one that an inexperienced contractor or one without the proper equipment would want to tackle.

Harbor Drive is a 15-ft.-wide road that bends through a quiet enclave just north of Detroit. The road is bordered on one side by small homes and a canal and on the other side by homes and Lake St. Clair. The soil beneath the road is shifty and unstable.

You just don't throw hand labor at a project like this. You bring in equipment, big tough equipment, to get the job

done as efficiently and quickly as possible. Time is money.

Caruso's team (often as many as seven workers were on the job at a time) used a Probst PaverMAX VM 203 and a SandMAXX to position and seat the approximately 90,000 sq. ft. of UniLock 8cm Anchor-block pavers.

The \$300,000 project didn't go perfectly, few projects ever do. "I'd like to have a process for everything we do, but that's difficult for a custom design/build hardscape business, especially the design part. You can't spell out every little detail for the designs that we do," says Caruso. "We have to rely on our team's skills to make on-site and on-the-job adjustments." In this case it meant working around and directing vehicular traffic.

"The site is tight with more than 80 homes, mostly retirees and stay-at-home moms with busy schedules, and we had to maintain traffic throughout the

Winter paver do's and don'ts

BY TOM COSTELLO

While pavers admittedly don't get used as much in winter as the rest of the year, a lot of customers will want them maintained just the same. Snow removal, ice build-up and staining are all potential headaches with your new pavers. Here are some do's and don'ts of caring for your brick paver patio, driveway or sidewalk.

Shovel or plow? The surface of pavers can be scratched. The material they're made of is soft and can't take the harsh steel blades of a snowplow. You can shovel your pavers, but use a lighter touch.

How about a snowblower? Use one with rubber edges. This will do a good job of removing the snow without scratching the surface of your pavers.

How do you prevent ice buildup? Keep the paver clear of ice and snow and throw down calcium chloride. You can apply it prior to a snowfall and prevent buildup of up to three inches. Reapply if or when it's washed away

from thawing snow or rain. Calcium chloride is also a good choice since it won't kill your grass like salt will.

De-icing chemicals or salt? Don't use salt. Most pavers are a concrete product and salt eats concrete. Use calcium chloride.

What about sealing a paver patio? Yes, it will enrich the color of the bricks, leaving a wet look and increase the life of your pavers by offering UV protection.

How do you prevent your pavers from cracking or pulling up? Install them properly in the first place and you have a better chance of keeping paver surfaces smooth and even. Water from thawing ice or snow that isn't draining properly can seep between the pavers, refreeze and expand causing cracks.

How else to prevent winter paver damage? Install a heated driveway or sidewalk element. These strips are placed under the sand and pavers during installation and are controlled by a thermostat. They keep the driveway and sidewalks snow and ice free all winter long.

— *The author is founder and president of Costello Productions, Delaware, OH. He can be reached at 614/798-0711 or www.costelloproductions.com.*

entire project. Because of the many bends in the narrow road, we were only been able to put down about 4,000 square feet a day," he explains. "With ideal conditions, a skilled operator should be able to

put down between 8,000 to 10,000 square feet a day."

Desk jobs don't cut it

Caruso founded Decra-Scape, Inc. in 1993, just a year or so

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continued from page 60
 after splitting from a friend that got him into the landscape business in the first place. Acknowledging that his former partner did him a great favor by luring him away from a desk job ("Not my cup of tea") at DuPont Automotive, Caruso nevertheless says this of business partnerships — "It's better to date before you get married." He's happier running his own show. He's a hands-on kind of owner.

"I built picnic tables out of my mother's garage for extra money when I wasn't playing high school sports," he recalls. "After three years in the U.S. Army with the 82nd Airborne Division, I pursued a degree in accounting."

But it wasn't until he got into landscaping and started growing Decra-Scapes that he felt he had found what he really wanted.

Almost from the get-go, he's concentrated on hard-scapes. "We're very good at it. We're very focused," he says. "We have certified installers on staff and we're very involved with the Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute (ICPI). I sit on the Board of Directors on the local level for The Great Lakes Regional Chapter of the ICPI."

Caruso points to his employees as the strength of his company, and also as his biggest business challenge.

"As our team members become more seasoned, they get better and better. The challenge is to get them to that point.

This is a physically demanding business and it takes a certain kind of employee to make it work," he says.

"We're building educational programs to help team members advance, to help them understand that what they're doing can be more than just a job — it can be a career. We paint the picture, but the choice is theirs."

His company's expertise in installing landscapes and fea-



tures such as custom brick pavers and retaining walls fuels Caruso's ambition to grow his company substantially larger.

"In the next three to five years, I want to have five more locations in Michigan, each operating at no less than a million dollars in sales revenue. Eventually from there, I want to move out into the region and then nationally," he says, realizing that the cost in terms of his personal time will be high.

"I've been able to get away a little more each year as we've



Because of conditions, including traffic control, the Decra-Scape team could only install 4,000 sq. ft. of pavers daily. But when the mile-long project was done, this lakeside community just north of Detroit had a beautiful road.

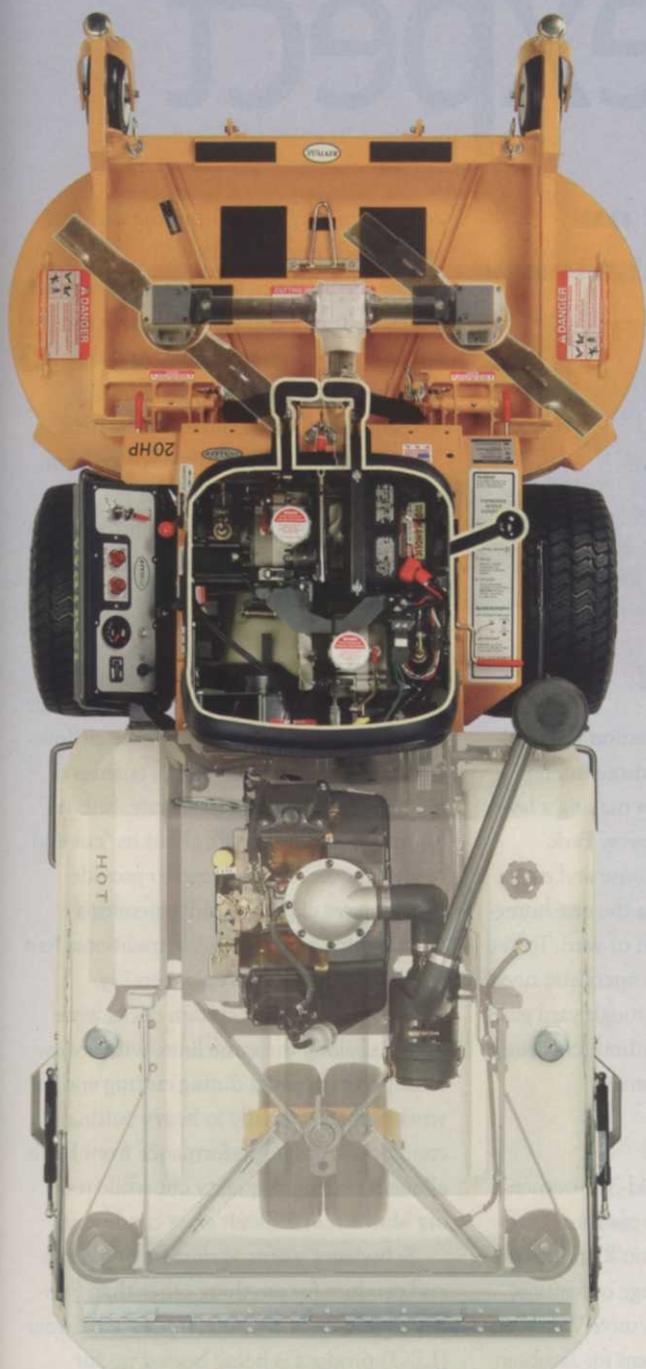


grown. I spend as much time as possible with my family. Shannon, my wife, and I have three children, Brittney 12,

Heather 10, and Nicholas, 7. They're very active and growing quickly. I want them to know their dad." **LJM**

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What to expect

Zero-turn mower engineers focus on speed, maneuverability and attachments to keep sales hot

BY CURT HARLER

Maneuverability is the name of the game with zero-turn mowers. Speed is a close sec-

ond. Functionality rounds out the big three advances landscapers can expect in future models. In addition to a trend toward smaller, more compact zeros, look for units that leave a lawn that says the homeowner and landscaper care about aesthetics.

Streaking and scalping are definitely out, while ability to handle more tasks is in.

Need for speed

"The industry is going to high-speed mowing with a high quality cut," says James Burnside, Product Manager/Turf for Kubota.

He says landscapers should be on the prowl for mowers that will travel at 8 mph and still leave a manicured look. That might be a couple of years off. At the moment, manufacturers have machines that move at 5-6 mph with a fine cut. "Our next step is 7 mph and a great cut," Burnside says.

Companies like Exmark, the market leader in commercial zero-turn sales, will steer a landscaper who wants to cover big acreage at high speed to their 7-acre-per-hour LazerZ.

Dixie Chopper promotes its Xtreme Mowchine with capability to mow grass at



15 mph. Some skeptics question the quality of its cut. However, it's more intended for mowing large areas than making a lawn look like the outfield at Fenway Park.

For landscapers in the home and estate business, the Fenway look is the one homeowners want for their patch of yard. To get that manicured look, landscapers also need units that can maneuver through yard gates and close to flower beds without creating a puree of daffodils and begonias.

More power, innovation

"With horsepower in the mid-30s, tremendous maneuverability, and a platform that's as close to a tool carrier as you'll find, zeros are going to add a whole range of features," says Dennis Schwiieger, Executive Vice President of Business Development for Jacobsen.

Schwiieger says that there's little to building a zero beyond a frame to carry an engine and hydrostatics — both of which are supplied to everyone in the industry by a handful of good manufacturers. Barriers to entry are low, and innovative ideas for

zeros seemingly spring from the turfgrass at each industry trade show.

For several years, sales have increased at a 20% compounded annual growth rate with over 200,000 units sold. And they'll continue strong, bolstered by growing demand from home and estate owners.

"Zeros will eventually displace lawn tractors," Schwiieger predicts. He sees zeros with trailer hitches, light-duty blades, snowblowers, leaf brooms, and even backhoes.

Beautiful cut

But cutting well is the heart and soul of the zero. The design trend to get more airflow circulation through the blades enables a higher quality cut at a faster rate. Kubota, for example, likes to talk about its "cut and re-cut" system. It's designed to provide smaller grass clippings and generates a cleaner appearance than the traditional "cut and throw" system, its engineers say.

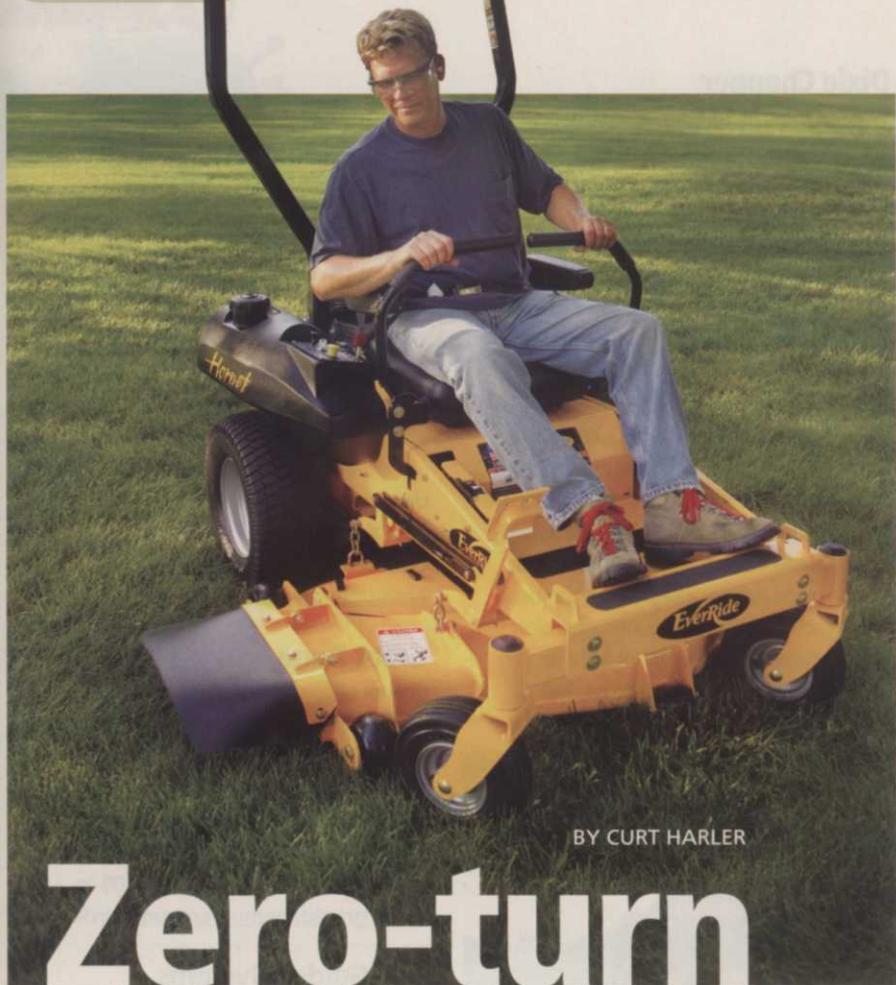
Husqvarna's Tunnel Ram decks were designed along the same lines, with a view to disperse clippings during cutting and to work better, especially in heavy cutting conditions. A high-performance front baffle allows a premium-quality cut while reducing blowout in difficult grass conditions.

Schwiieger warns against buying a low-end product for anything other than Sunday use. Even Bob-Cat's large estate owner (LEO) product is being beefed up for 2005 as the Predator-Pro. "We see more utility being built into these zeros,"

Schwiieger says. **LM**

— The author, a frequent contributor based out of Strongsville, OH, can be reached at

curt@curtharler.com



BY CURT HARLER

Zero-turn mowers

Auburn Consolidated Industries ▲

The EverRide Hornet comes with either a 48- or 52-in. deck. Both the 19-hp and 23-hp units have narrower wheel base, smaller deck size and weighs less than the EverRide Warrior.

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Bush Hog

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Buying tips

- ▶ Is it a true zero? Can it turn in its own length?
- ▶ Is the fuel tank large enough?
- ▶ Is the deck height adjustable in fine increments?
- ▶ Blade tip speed is a good indicator of "oomph"
- ▶ Gas or diesel?
- ▶ Check the unit's traction, a key point on zeros
- ▶ Anti-scalp rollers are worth the added cost
- ▶ Width is important. Compact zeros will pass through a 36-in. gate
- ▶ Don't go too wide...over 70-in. mowers are tough to trailer
- ▶ Can you get a full line of attachments?
- ▶ How good is your local dealer's shop?
- ▶ Resist the temptation to buy horsepower — buy utility

Swisher

Swisher's zero-turn radius mower is available in 36-, 42- and 50-in. mowing decks. 350-degree turning radius. Three models include 14-hp with 36-in. mowing deck; 18.5 hp with 42-in. deck; and 22 hp with 50-in. deck.

Contact Swisher at 800/222-8183 or www.swisherinc.com / circle no. 263

Country Clipper

The Boss with either joystick or traditional 2-stick operation. Powered by a Kohler 27-hp Command Pro engine with a heavy-duty canister filter, it can cut up to 10 mph. The front of the full floating deck mounted to the pivoting axle gives the Boss a true articulating deck that virtually eliminates gouging, scalping.

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Cub Cadet Commercial

The MTD Z-Wing 48 is the first commercial zero with a folding deck. Operator drives through a 36-in. opening by touching a switch. Ten engine choices from 23-33 hp and four engines, including Kohler, Kawasaki, Generac and Honda. M-60 and M-72 with 5.5 in. wider rear wheel base for better hillside handling.

Contact Cub Cadet at 877/835-7841 or www.cubcadetcommercial.com / circle no. 265

Dixon Industries

The 72-in. commercial SilverTip equipped with extra-large hydraulic drive systems features Parker pumps and wheel motors along with Dixon Blue synthetic oil. Canister-style high capacity air filters improve air flow and increase hours between filter changes. Heavy duty 11-gauge 3-blade deck with TunnelForce design has a large discharge chute for superb cut and distribution of clippings. Fusion high-lift blades increase blade life and remain sharp longer.

Contact Dixon at 800/264-6075 or www.dixon-ztr.com / circle no. 266

Encore

The Z-60 is powered by a 25-hp Kawasaki that produces 8.5 mph ground speed. The Z-60 has a 60-in. 10-gauge skirted deck and 19,000 rpm blade tip speed. All Z-series mowers available with optional collection system, mulcher, knobby or bar lug tires.

Contact Encore at 800/267-4255 or www.encoreequipment.com / circle no. 267

Dixie Chopper

Want to mow at 15 mph? Dixie Chopper's Xtreme Mowchine is powered by a 32-hp (990cc) air-cooled Guardian engine. Riding on Turf Boss tires, the 60-in. model does 7.27 acres per hour, the 72-in. cuts 8.73 acres. Its 14-gal. fuel capacity keeps it running.

Contact Dixie Chopper at 765/246-7737 or www.dixiechopper.com / circle no. 268

Yazoo/Kees

Mega-Max series large-frame, mid-mount zeros. Rugged cutter deck constructed with 7- and 10-gauge steel. Available in either a 61-in. or 72-in. deck. Advanced spindle assemblies, durable casters, handle extension kit, unique blade design, integrated drum brake, easy-reach controls, premium suspension seat.

Contact Yazoo/Kees at 877/368-8873 or www.yazookees.com / circle no. 269



Bad Boy

Bad Boy Advanced Operator System Series 6000 and 7200 zeros feature the Vanguard 31-hp air-cooled B&S Big Block engine. Mowers feature 10-gal. fuel capacity, full-suspension seat with adjustable control for operator weight, as well as an adjustable back which can be tilted forward and backwards. "Swing-away" deck provides access to mower components in seconds, simplifying cleanup and maintenance, reducing downtime for commercial users.

Contact Bad Boy at 866/622-3269 or www.badboymowers.com / circle no. 270



Exmark

The LazerZ SX available with 60- or 72-in. Ultra-Cut deck options. The 2005 unit relies on the Vanguard 31-hp Big Block V-twin engine. Drive train features high-capacity, fan-cooled hydraulic pumps and large-displacement wheel motors. Unit can cut seven acres per hour. Quick-Lift deck assist standard on 72-in. model.

Contact Exmark at 402/223-6300 or www.exmark.com / circle no. 271

Great Dane

Chariot LX available with 25-, 26-, 27- and 28-hp engines and choice of a 61- or 72-in. cutter deck. Quick 1-5 in. cut height adjustment without tools. Twin lever or optional wrap-around transmission controls available. Multi-adjustment suspension seat standard.

Contact Great Dane at 812/218-7100 or www.greatdanemowers.com / circle no. 272

Self-Guided Systems

The SGS Hybrid-Z38 is the first zero-turn robotic mower for the professional landscaper. Powered by a 9-hp Honda engine, it has three 12.5-in. blades and a mulching deck that can cover an acre per hour. The 4.5-gal. tank gives 12-hour mowing time. Sensors detect obstacles and unit moves around them. It stores that part of property in memory so it can avoid them the next time.

Contact Self-Guided Systems at 248/853-1001 or www.selfguidedsystems.com / circle no. 273

Howard Price Turf Equipment

Zeros featuring 52-80 in. cut widths and 23-36 hp engines. The new 360Z features flexible 80-in. wing cutting unit and mows up to 6.4 acres an hour at 8 mph — 34% better than 60-in. deck. The 21-in. wing trims under trees, shrubs.

Contact Howard Price at 636/532-7000 or www.howardpriceturf.com / circle no. 274

continued on page 68

19 out of 20

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* Results based on 2004 Wiese Research Associates survey conducted with landscape professionals.

www.exmark.com



Best-Selling Brand of Mowing Equipment for the Landscape Professional

Circle 132

LM Reports



continued from page 66

Gravely

Gravely's 44Z zero-turn with 44-in. cutting width and a 17-hp Kawasaki twin engine. Seven gauge cutting deck with quarter-inch spindle reinforcement, maintenance free spindles, and Hydrogear commercial pumps and wheel motors. Unit covered by two-year manufacturer's warranty, operates at 9 mph forward speed and has a 7-gal. fuel capacity.

Contact Gravely at 800/472-8359 or www.gravely.com / circle no. 275

Jungle Jim

The Spitfire 52 hands-free, foot-controlled zero comes with three-bladed decks on 52-in. or 61-in. models. Comes with 23- or 25-hp twin Kohler or Kawasaki electric-start engines. Dual fuel tanks have 14-gal. capacity. Travels 11 mph forward.

Contact Jungle Jim at 888/844-5467 or www.junglejimsap.com / circle no. 276

Kubota

The ZD-Pro Deck matches with the ZD21 and ZD28 mowers. The 7-gauge steel deck offers excellent cutting performance in all grass varieties and conditions. The shaft-driven, low-noise ZD Pro Deck available in a 60- or 72-in. width. Cutting height can be adjusted from one to five inches in half-inch increments.

Contact Kubota at 888/458-2682 or www.kubota.com / circle no. 277

Husqvarna

Tunnel Ram decks for performance on heavy cutting properties. Available for the intermediate zero-turns, full-frame zero-turns or broad-area zero-turn riders, they feature triple-rolled edges and 7-gauge tunnel/side skirts.

Contact Husqvarna at 800/487-5962 or www.husqvarna.com / circle no. 278

Walker

The Walker Riding Mower is one of the most compact zero-turn radius mowers available.

Size and maneuverability fit the work of mid-size walk-behind mowers with the increased productivity of a rider. Seven tractor models are offered from 13-26 hp with gas or diesel engines, and eleven mower deck sizes range from 36-74 in. with grass collection, side discharge or mulching capability. All decks tilt up to 90 degrees for easy maintenance and compact storage. Model MT is powered by a Kohler 26-hp electronic fuel injection engine option.

Contact Walker at 800/279-8537 or www.walkermowers.com / circle no. 279

John Deere

The 997 Diesel Z-Trak is the newest member of the Deere zero family. Designed for heavy-duty commercial use. Powered by a 31-hp, 3-cylinder, liquid-cooled Yanmar engine. Choose a 60-



or 72-in. side-discharge deck or 60-in. rear-discharger. Standard heavy-duty canister air filter system, hydraulic PTO clutch, 12-gal. fuel tank.

Contact John Deere at 800/537-8233 or www.johndeere.com / circle no. 280

B&H Manufacturing

The Schweiss mid-mount zero-turn comes with 50-, 60- or 72-in. decks. Units are powered by 25-hp Kohler Command engine. All decks offer high blade clearance, assuring that clippings are easily ejected. The 11-gal. tank keeps mower going all day.

Contact B&H at 800/240-3288 or www.bhmfmg.com / circle no. 281



Gizmow Power Lawn Equip.

Gizmow's Formula is the first and only commercial mid-Z mower with front wheel steering. The patent pending system links the front wheel angle with the independent rear wheel power. Delivers unprecedented hillside control without crabbing or sliding. Mow closer to walls and fences, tighter around trees and plantings, and faster over rough and uneven terrain. Intuitive control system literally eliminates turf tear.

Contact Gizmow at 866/463-2628 or www.gizmow.com / circle no. 282

Rich Manufacturing

Versatile Rich mower converts zero from a rider to a walker. With either the 17 V-Twin Kawasaki or V-twin Kohler engine with 12-volt electric-start. Attachments include snow blade, aerator, dethatcher.

Contact Rich at 765/436-2744 or www.convertiblemower.com / circle no. 283

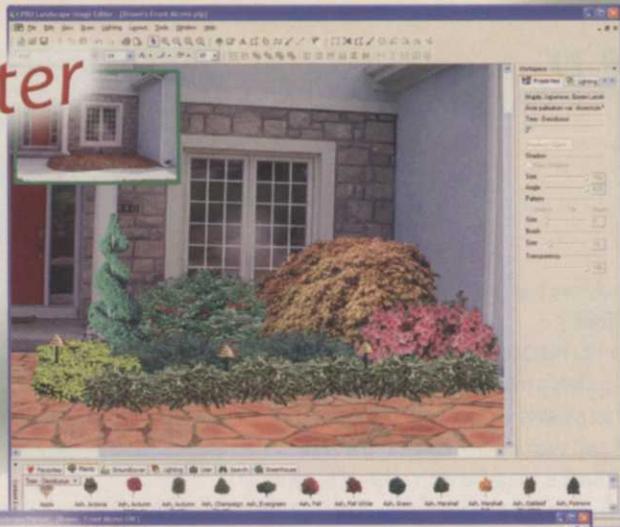
Woods

The F-Series Mow'n Machines (F21D, F23, F25, F25L) come with a 21-hp Kubota liquid cooled diesel engine, a 23-hp Briggs & Stratton gasoline engine, a 25-hp Kohler gasoline engine, or a 25-hp Kubota liquid cooled gasoline engine. These finish mowers have a variety of optional attachments from snow throwers to dozer blades and cutting decks in a range of sizes, making them ideal all weather, multi-purpose tools.

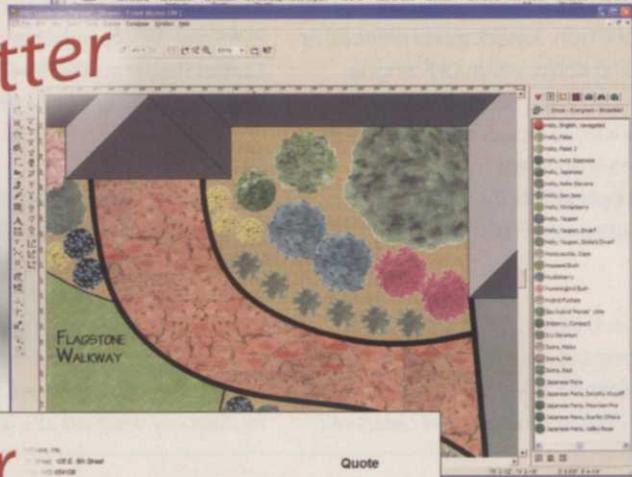
Contact Woods at 866/869-6637 or www.woodsonline.com / circle no. 284

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Quote

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 Quote Date: November 09, 2003
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 Expiration Date: December 09, 2003
 Name: Sherry Front House
 Proposal Name: Sherry Front House
 Proposal #: 2004-003

Version Number: 1

Item	Qty	Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Estimated Price
00010	1.00	1 Gal. Holly, Blue Prince	1.00	\$80.00	\$80.00
PL041	3.00	Each Mountain Concrete	3.00	\$16.00	\$48.00
19802	1.00	1" P. Service, Albino Sand	1.00	\$80.00	\$80.00
04174	3.00	3 Gal. Junco, Blue Chip	3.00	\$30.00	\$90.00
04180	3.00	3 Gal. Junco, Blue Chip	3.00	\$30.00	\$90.00
19876	2.00	2" P. Hards, Japanese Laurel	1.00	\$20.00	\$20.00
PL038	3.00	Each Hards, Phoenix	3.00	\$16.00	\$48.00
14070	1.00	1" P. Cornus Hybrid	1.00	\$20.00	\$20.00
04001	220.00	220 Papyrus Blotchk	220.00	\$5.00	\$1,100.00
04001	1.00	1" P. Flagstone	1.00	\$100.00	\$100.00
Totals:				\$2,312.00	
Tax Amount:				\$0.00	
Tax:				\$964.17	
Total:				\$3,276.17	

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 Circle 133

LM Reports

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Snapper

Snapper Pro FastBack product line offers commercial cutters a mid-priced zero-turn. Choose among six models — four with twin stick control and two with joystick control. The twin stick FastBack is available with a 19-, 21-, or 25-hp Kawasaki OHV V-twin engine or a 27-hp Kohler OHV V-twin. Joystick model offers either a 23- or 25-hp Kohler V-twin OHV engine. They come with a 48-, 52- or 61-in. seven-gauge steel welded mower deck, steel stabilizer bars and anti-scalp rollers.

Contact Snapper at 888/762-7737 or www.snapper.com / circle no. 285

Hustler

Hustler Super D Diesel is powered by a Cat 3013C engine and has the only hydraulic drive in its class. Features 60- or 72-in. side-discharge decks. Free-floating mower uses 3 blades with



center blade to the front. Has folding, 2-post ROPS and stabilizer rollers at the rear of unit.

Contact Hustler at 800/395-4757 or www.excelhustler.com / circle no. 286

Scag

Turf Tiger has low center-of-gravity, maximum maneuverability and positive traction on all kinds of terrain. Its quick ground speed (10.5 mph on smaller models, 12 mph on models 29 hp and larger!) and 10 gal. fuel capacity get work done fast. Double tube frame and tough drive shaft system ensure reliable service. Specially designed 52-, 61- or 72-in. Ad-

vantage deck insures maximum airflow for a faster cut and no double cutting, even in tall, tough weeds. Engine choices range from 23- to 35-hp.

Contact Scag at 920/387-0100

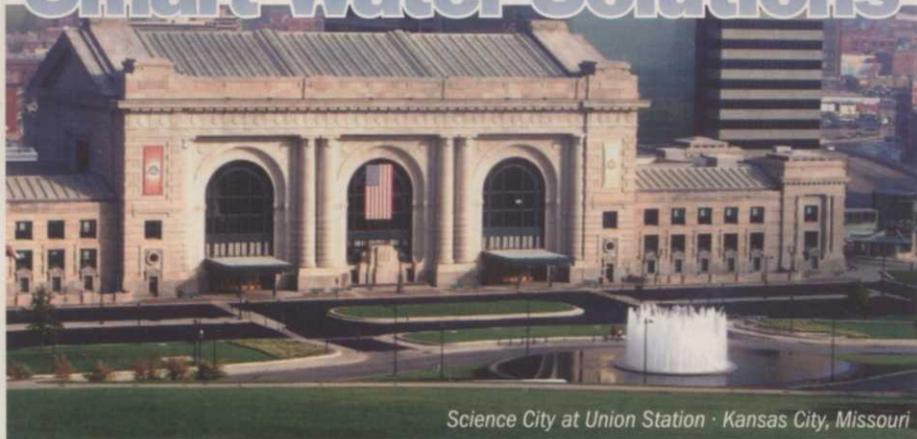
or www.scag.com / circle no. 287

Toro

Z Master Z500 series mid-mounts available with engine options including 20-, 23-, 27-, 28-hp Kohler; 25- and 27-hp liquid-cooled Kawasaki. Seven-gauge steel Turbo Force decks in 52-, 60- and 72-in. widths. Adjustable discharge baffle allows on-site fine-tuning to match mowing conditions. Rubber discharge chute provides exceptional dispersion, resists damage.

Contact Toro at 612/888-8801 or www.toro.com / circle no. 288

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Property at a glance

Location: Dallas, TX
 Grounds Supervisor: Brian Gerberich
 Category: Urban University Grounds
 Total budget: \$83,500
 Year site built: 1924
 Acres of turf: 4.5
 Acres of woody ornamentals: 1.8
 Acres of display beds: .1
 Total paved area: 6 acres
 Total man-hours/week: 120

Maintenance challenges

- ▶ Urban environment
- ▶ Alkaline Texas clay requires soil amendments
- ▶ Working around student pedestrian traffic

Project checklist

- Completed in last two years:
- ▶ Planting of 37 new trees
 - ▶ Design and installation of terraced bed with two stone walls
 - ▶ Design and installation of new landscape in front of 90-year-old campus building

On the job

Three full-time staff

Dallas Theological Seminary

2004 PGMS Grand Award Winner for Urban University

Stealing is wrong no matter where it takes place. But the criminals who have made off with more than 40 shrubs over the last two years at Dallas Theological Seminary must have a particularly heavy conscience. After all, this is a place that has the mission of "preparing Godly servant-leaders."

Theft is just one challenge that Director of Maintenance Operations Brian Gerberich and his small but resourceful crew have to deal with. The highly alkaline Texas clay requires the addition of soil amendments, and working around thousands of students is never easy. Events like commencement and Spring-Fling that feature a Texas-style barbecue, petting zoo and other activities and games are fun for the guests, but provide additional work by the grounds staff before and after.

Located just 1.5 miles east of downtown Dallas, the Seminary counters its urban environment with 4.5 acres of



Brian Gerberich (inset) and his three staff members keep 4.5 acres of turf lush and green.

bermuda and St. Augustine grasses, as well as two acres of ornamental and seasonal color and half an acre of Asian jasmine, mondo grass and liriopie groundcover. The highlight of the campus is the more than 325 trees representing 35 different species, including 37 specimens planted within the last two years by Gerberich and his crew.

"The trees and the grounds provide an important part of the initial impression our guests from across the country and around the world receive of Dallas Theological Seminary," says Gerberich.

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 2005 winners will be named at the annual meeting of the Professional Grounds Management Society in November. For more information on the 2004 awards, contact PGMS at: 720 Light St. • Baltimore, MD 21230

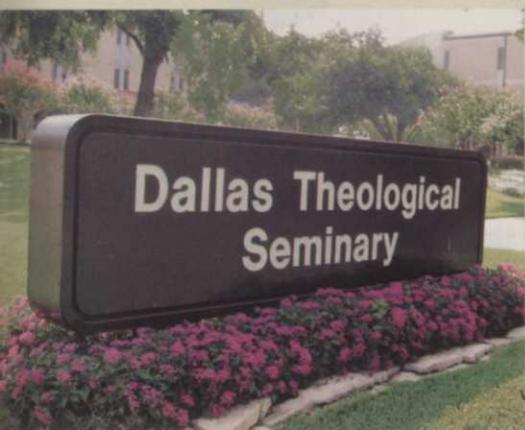
• Phone: 410/223-2861. Web site:



With a budget of \$85,500, the grounds crew provides students of the Dallas Theological Seminary with beautiful places to study and relax.



More than 375 trees and 1.8 acres of woody ornamentals dot the campus, requiring 120 man-hours per week.



Products

RESOURCES TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Short and sweet

Shindaiwa's new AHS2510 short-shaft articulated hedge trimmer is equipped with a fuel efficient, high-torque 1.1-hp engine and has an overall length of 65 in. for trimming low hedges, brush and groundcover. It employs an articulating gear case that rotates 130 degrees and has nine cutting positions. Shindaiwa StaySharp chrome-plated blades cut with more precision and stay sharp longer. Powered by C4 Technology, the AHS2510 combines the best of both worlds: the lightweight, high-torque, multi-position characteristics and great throttle response of the 2-cycle, and the low noise, improved fuel economy and reduced exhaust gas emissions of a 4-cycle.

For more information contact Shindaiwa at 800/521-7733 or www.shindaiwa.com / circle no. 250



Spray away

Hunter Industries introduces Pro-Spray Fixed Pattern Nozzles, a new collection of spray nozzles available in the most popular arc patterns. These nozzles feature the popular female-threaded design for compatibility across most brands. Five different radius ranges (8, 10, 12, 15 and 17 ft.) are available, each including a radius adjustment screw for fine tuning and Hunter's improved system of color coding for quick and easy radius identification. The spray patterns of the nozzles feature precise edges, the result of a consistent trajectory from all sides that assures uniform coverage across the entire pattern.

For more information contact Hunter Industries at 760/744-5240 or www.hunterindustries.com / circle no. 251

Like a rock

Rock Jaw is a steel attachment that allows landscape contractors to move and place rocks with unparalleled precision. It chains onto any heavy equipment with lifting capacity (loader,

backhoe, tractor) and clamps onto a rock of up to 4,500 lbs. Installation usually takes less than 20 seconds. It has double rows of ridged "teeth" that hold the rock as it's lifted and

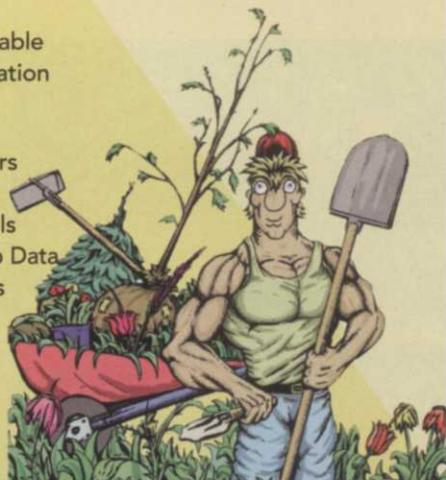
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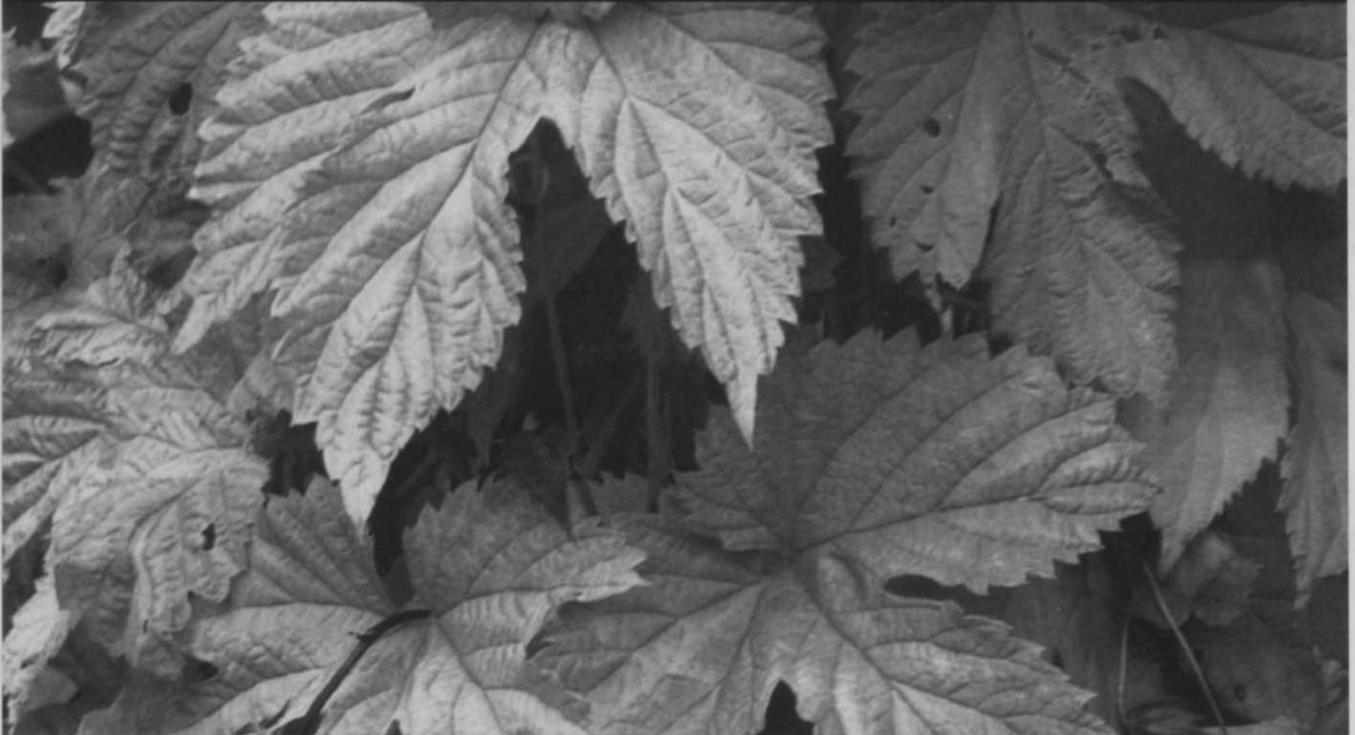


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Products

continued from page 74

moved, and it opens to a width of 52 in. Rock Jaw also lets installers rotate rocks 360 degrees to present their best face.

For more information contact Rock Jaw at 800/314-5582 or www.rockjaw.com / circle no. 252



Wheelin' and dealin'

Yanmar's model V4A-5 compact wheel loader, rated at 7,376 lbs. operating weight, offers class leading lift capacities of 4,134 lbs. (full lift) and 6,945 lbs. (low lift) with smooth hydraulic performance. This versatile unit is powered by a Yanmar TNV series diesel engine rated at 36.5 hp and is fully emission compliant. Single lever operation features "auto-leveler" which places the bucket level on the ground. Two-mode control allows the operator to select fully automatic shifting or a fixed speed mode for low travel speed operation in restricted areas. Rear axle oscillation traverses and delivers smooth power over uneven ground while reducing operator fatigue.

For more information contact Yanmar at 847/541-1900 or www.yanmar.com / circle no. 253

Surging ahead

PBW/Gordon Corp. has received EPA acceptance for a new water-based

broadleaf herbicide formulation containing the active ingredient sulfentrazone. Called Surge, it will be marketed under Gordon's Pro-Form brand with a new blue checked flag label. Visual results appear in 24 to 48 hours, and dead weeds in about two weeks. The company also claims that Surge is particularly good in warm weather and excels in control of summer weeds such as spurge, knotweed, oxalis and dandelion. The new formulation is designed for use on residential and commercial turf. Adding phenoxy actives with dicamba broadens the weed control spectrum and adds systemic activity to the contact activity of sulfentrazone for multiple modes of action.

For more information contact PBI/Gordon at 800/821-7925 or www.surge.pbigordon.com / circle no. 254

Brush it off

The Sisis Flexibrush is designed for fast, effective brushing on large areas of natural or synthetic turf. There are six sets of independently floating "V" section brushes, divided into three sections which also float. This allows the brush to follow ground contours and enables a better dispersal of top-dressing materials. The two outer sections fold for transport and storage. Stands are also supplied for storage.

For more information contact Sisis at 864/843-5972 or www.sisis.com / circle no. 255

Keep on truckin' ▲

Monroe Truck Equipment announces the newly created Chevrolet Kodiak-GMC Topkick pickup truck. To develop this special version of the C4500/C5500, MTE worked with GM to give customers



the ultimate Class M/V pickup. This vehicle has an 8-ft. steel dually pickup box and tailgate featuring custom composite side panels and protective Rhino interior lining. This design is also ideal for MTE's Kodiak/Topkick Extended Cab and Crew Cab. What makes this truck unique is the combination of the powertrain, which consists of a Duramax diesel engine or an optional 8.1 gas engine with an Allison transmission.

For more information contact Monroe Truck Equipment at 888/878-8777 or www.monroetruck.com / circle no. 256

Water savings wonder

Valvette Systems Corp., manufacturer of the LittleValve line of sprinkler parts and fittings, announces that recent testing showed water savings of 7% up to 47% are achieved when using just a 15-ft. nozzle in conjunction with LittleValve parts. Because LittleValves are immune to high pressures, the company can publish its testing results and precipitation rates at both 30 and 55 psi. Because they override pressures from 140 psi up to 165 psi, they don't need pressure-compensating screens, PCDs, in-stem pres-



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Circle 149

Products

sure regulation, or in-line pressure regulators at the beginning of the system. The substantial savings in water is due to an increase from 30% to 80% in higher uniformity rates over standard nozzles.

For more information contact Valvette Systems at 866/200-8590 or www.valvettesystems.com / circle no. 257

Root for these rotors ►

Toro introduces the TR Series of rotors to give irrigation contractors the flexibility and watering precision for varying landscape applications. The rotors cover a 25- to 77-ft. area, include easy adjustment, Smart Arc and slip clutch to protect against vandalism and 5-in. pop-up to clear tall grasses.



The TR50 easily adjusts from 30 to 360 degrees and covers a 30- to 50-ft. radius. In full-circle mode, it rotates in only one direction to avoid the risk of spray overlap when reversing. The TR50XT offers Toro's X-Flow shutoff device and Trjectory adjustment, which enables the adjustment of spray anywhere from 5 to 25 degrees to correct for trees, fight the wind or water slopes — without changing out nozzles.

For more information contact Toro at 800/664-4740 or www.toro.com / circle no. 258

Simplified skid-steer

New Holland introduces two new skid-steer loaders, the LS185.B and LS190.B, rated at 2,500 and 2,800 lbs. operating capacity. The new models feature a new, simplified power train design, are Tier II certified and incorporate features for increased productivity and performance. At 78 gross hp, the LS185.B represents an



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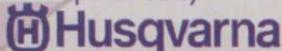
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26-28 WinterGreen Horticultural Conference /

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27 Northeastern Pennsylvania Turf Conference /

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1-2 Tennessee Grounds Management Short Course and Trade Show /

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9-12 Low Voltage Lighting Conference /

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16 15th Annual Nevada Landscape Association Trade Show & Conference /

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16-18 Middle Atlantic Hardscaping Trade Show /

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22-23 Connecticut Grounds Keepers Association Turf Conference & Trade Show /

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22-24 Hardscape Expo & Conference /

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28 Southeast Regional Conference /

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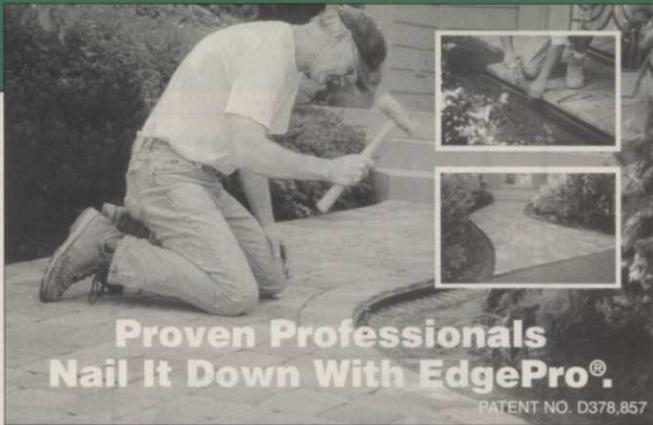
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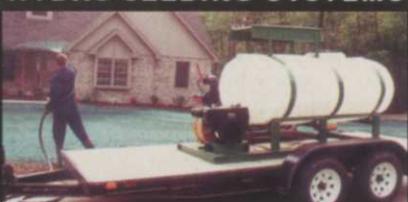


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Statistics

RESOURCES

INDUSTRY TRENDS BY THE NUMBERS



ILLINOIS GREEN INDUSTRY GROWING

- 2003 combined product and service sector sales (plant product sales, landscape, lawn, arboriculture and interiorscape service receipts, and end-user payrolls paid to grounds and maintenance employees): **\$4.7 billion**
- 1999 combined product and service sector sales: **\$3.9 billion**
- Growth: **20%**, or **5%** annually over the past four years
- 1999-2003: Product sector firms decreased by **1%**
- 1999-2003: Service sector firms increased by **13.8%**

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- 68% of IYP users make or intend to make a purchase, driving sales both online and in stores.
- For every consumer dollar spent directly online, at least \$1.70 is spent offline after doing online research.
- Search advertising is the most effective and boasts the strongest measurable results.
- Online advertising is growing faster than any other form of advertising (43%), which all are on a downward revenue trend.
- In a recent consumer search behavior study conducted by BizRate.com, 75% of respondents stated that comparing prices and/or merchants was their favorite aspect of shopping online.
- 74% percent of the BizRate.com survey respondents said that they perform local searches.

WHAT'S IN, WHAT'S OUT FOR GARDENING IN 2005



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Tropical gardens.

Romantic.



Do it all yourself.

Chemically dependent gardening.

Cottage gardens.

Pedestrian.

SOURCE: GARDEN MEDIA GROUP

SOURCE: GARDEN MEDIA GROUP

10 STATES WITH LARGEST POPULATION INCREASES*



* Population increases are in millions

STATE	APRIL 2000	APRIL 1990	# INCREASE	% INCREASE
Arizona	5.13	3.66	1.47	40%
Colorado	4.30	3.29	1.01	31%
Georgia	8.19	6.48	1.71	26%
Texas	20.85	16.99	3.86	23%
Florida	15.98	12.94	3.04	23%
North Carolina	8.05	6.63	1.42	21%
Washington	5.89	4.87	1.02	21%
California	33.87	29.76	4.11	14%
Virginia	7.08	6.19	0.89	14%
New York	18.98	17.99	0.99	6%

SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF CENSUS. COMPILED BY NAHB ECONOMICS.

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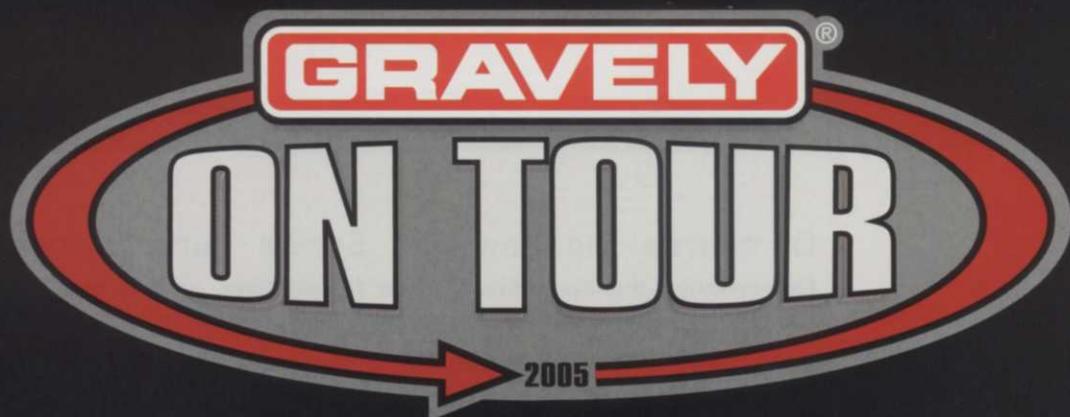


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3/01/05 Frankenmuth, Mich.
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