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Circle 101

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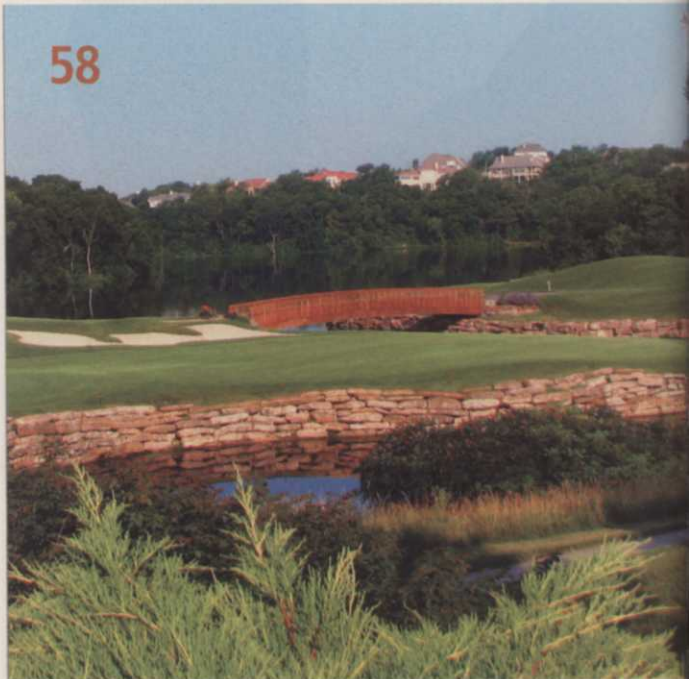
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Contact us

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»Special issue

It's time to start preparing for next fall's snow and ice strategy. Check out LM's online archive of snow and ice management articles. Click on the link in our navigation bar.



»Readers respond

Whether your goal is to win the lottery, cash out on a slick TV game show or build business the old-fashioned way, it seems everyone wants to join the million-dollar club. Motivated by this month's cover story on breaking the \$1 million barrier, we asked online readers, **how long did it take your company to make its first million in revenue?** Here's what you said:

35%	We don't know when we'll hit \$1 million	9%	We're happy with the size we are now
15%	More than 10 years	7%	Between 6 and 10 years
12%	5-6 years	7%	1 year
11%	3-4 years	5%	2 years

Want to weigh in? Our survey question changes every month and we publish the results here. Visit www.landscapemanagement.net to voice your opinion.


»Overheard

"We've got a game on."

— American Nursery and Landscape Association Sr. Director of Government Relations and Research **Craig Regelbrugge**, referring to the mid-May Senate push to vote on comprehensive immigration reform.

For LM's complete immigration coverage, visit www.landscapemanagement.net and search for "immigration."





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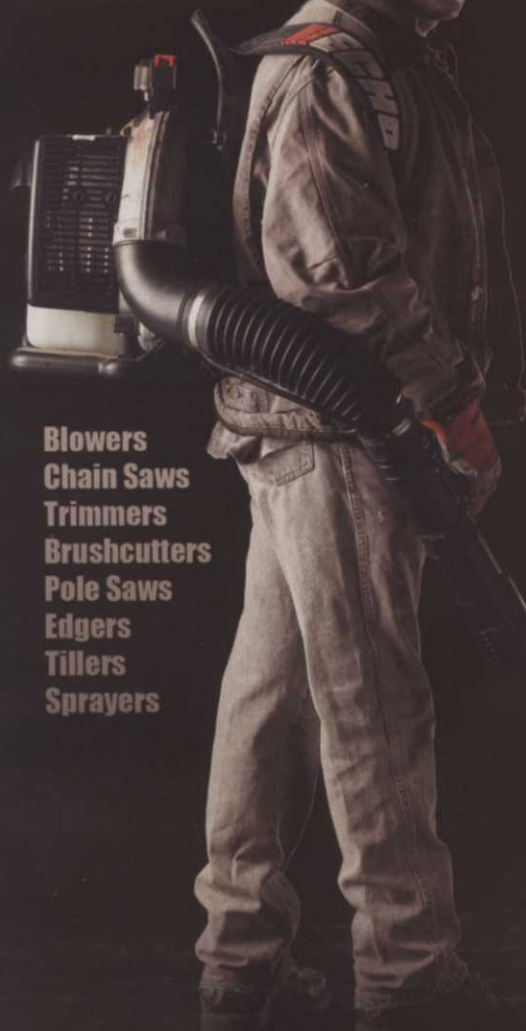
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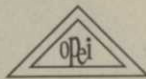
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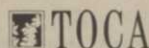
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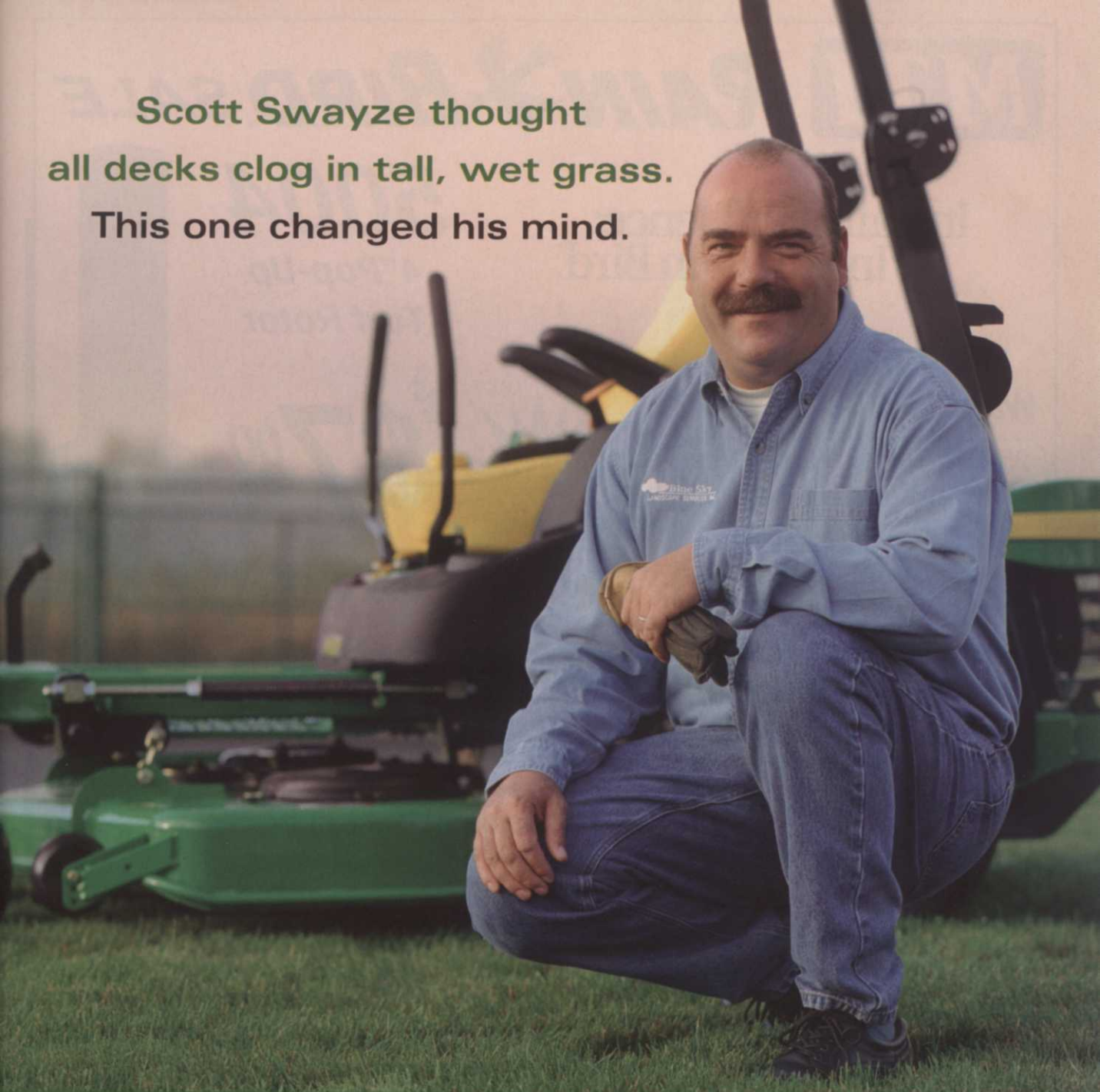
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Lessons from a winemaker

BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

I often buy my wine in a liter box at the neighborhood Kroger store. Judge for yourself my level of sophistication in regards to fine wine.

That said, I recently spent several days of learning and sharing with a group of other industry communicators in California's Napa Valley wine country. It's a beautiful valley. What struck me most about the experience, apart from the sight of vineyards extending up the sides of green, mist-draped mountains, were the subtle differences in the wines. Even a neophyte like me could taste them.

How could there be differences, I wondered? After all, the wineries were sometimes separated by no more than a mile or three. The grapes, basically the same varieties, grew in the same

soils and the winemakers used what appeared to be similar production techniques. Then, thanks to a tiny winemaker, I had one of those "Aha!" moments. It literally tip-toed into my consciousness after a third tasting during the final stop of our trip. The daughter of a former Bracero worker from Mexico delivered my moment of clarity. (The Bracero Program is a previous generation's migrant guest worker program.)

Amelia Moran Ceja came to California at the age of 12 in 1967 with her family, poor immigrants from Mexico. At the time none of them spoke English. In 1980 she married Pedro Ceja. The two of them had

worked in the same vineyards as teenagers. In 1983 they, with the help of other family members, acquired land in the Valley and began planting and lovingly tending their own vines.

Today Amelia Ceja is president of Ceja Vineyards, a 133-acre spread in the valley that produces grapes for other wineries but each year also makes about 10,000 cases of its own distinctive wines. These are award-winning wines.

Why are Ceja's wines different from other wines produced in the Napa or nearby Sonoma Valley?

The answer hit me like a brick on the head. The answer was standing in front of me — Amelia Ceja herself. As this dynamic woman described each of the four wines she shared with us, the force of her personality caught us up in a whirlwind of excitement and anticipation. We could literally taste her energy in the wines.

That was it. The Ceja family — Amelia, Pedro and his winemaker brother Armando — willed their family's personality into their wines, much as the other winemakers in the valley produced offerings with their own unique personalities.

Personality and passion — that's what distinguishes one company from another, whether it's winemaking, publishing or maintaining a client's property.

Contact Ron at 216/
706-3739 or e-mail
rhall@questex.com.



Amelia Ceja, right, shows off her vineyards' grape varieties.

Personality and passion — that's what distinguishes one company from another.



The most important goal is to develop a coaching / mentoring culture where people train their own replacement so they can move up in the organization.



Managers: Grow your own

BY BRUCE WILSON

Practically every company I talk to is having a tough time attracting the talent they need to meet their growth needs. Some can't even staff properly for current sales levels. This is a problem, which if not solved, will limit the growth of companies. This is particularly critical at middle management levels.

Many companies reluctantly resort to calling headhunters. Their results are mixed. It's not that headhunters are not competent; there is just a shortage of qualified people in the industry. Nearly all companies are growing.

Chart the future

I think the solution has to be to grow your own people.

It starts with doing a needs assessment. Build out a current organization chart and then make another projecting out what your company will look like in the future. What management people will you need in two, three and five years?

Once you have done that, look at the people you have in the company. Do you have people with the potential to assume those positions? Obviously, they will need coaching and mentoring, possibly some

outside training, but do they have potential? Do they have the desire? Do they seem like they are willing to do what it takes to rise to the next level?

When you hire new people, regardless of what position they are filling, think future. Do they appear to have upside potential? You must hire with that being a key requirement.

Make cultural changes

To attract the best people, you must be able to demonstrate a career path for new hires. You must be able to show them that your company has a training plan that will help them develop into a more valuable employee. That must permeate your company culture.

I believe the most important goal is to develop a coaching / mentoring culture where people train their own replacement so they can move up in the organization.

This is not simple and takes constant work. It requires an investment in time and discipline to make it happen. I truly believe the cost is minimal compared to what you will spend on trial and error hiring and recruiting through headhunters. It will not replace having to go out into the market to fill positions, but it will minimize your dependence on hiring from the outside.

Include in your recruiting process a good intern program so that you have a base for attracting good, upwardly mobile talent and it will round out your grow-your-own-company culture.

The author is a partner with entrepreneur Tom Oyler in the Wilson-Oyler Group, which offers consulting services. Visit www.wilson-oyler.com.




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Never forget to let the trainee know what he or she is doing right. If you're talking only about what went **WRONG**, the message is, "you are a loser."



Teaching beats telling

BY BILL HOOPES

It's the heat of the season and production pressure can make it tough to schedule pure training time. In past columns, I've encouraged the use of "small bite" training in the form of Monday morning meetings and tail gate sessions.

To really change behavior, your training technique must be more than effective in the classroom; it must be easy to use on the job. Recently, working in the field with a new hire, I was reminded of the necessity to teach, not tell. As I attempted to explain what seemed like a simple task, I recognized the unmistakable stare of a new employee who had no experience and didn't really get my message. In a hurry, I said, "just do it the way I told you to." For the second time, the new person failed to properly perform the task. I realized I had forgotten a cardinal training rule that it's always better to teach than to tell. I hadn't taken time to demonstrate the expected performance and relied on words to communicate.

Every now and then I remind myself that most of us are visual learners. Experts show that as much as 85% of our knowledge is gained visually, while only about eight percent comes through the spoken word. In sales training sessions I have often taught learners that words create pictures and that communicating on the phone requires the effective use of language and speaking skills. But there is no question that showing beats telling every time.

Here is a simple process you can use to train effectively; I call it the AC/DC process.

- ▶ **Activity performed.** Assuming the trainee has received proper advance instruction, have the trainee perform the task or activity.
- ▶ **Critique.** Observe the action, reinforce proper procedure, identify any changes needed.
- ▶ **Demonstrate.** Perform the proper procedure for the trainee. Show, don't just tell.
- ▶ **Critique.** Again, observe and critique. Be sure you reinforce proper procedures. Explain and demonstrate any corrections indicated.

That's AC/DC. It's a training/coaching process that's easy to remember, easy to use.

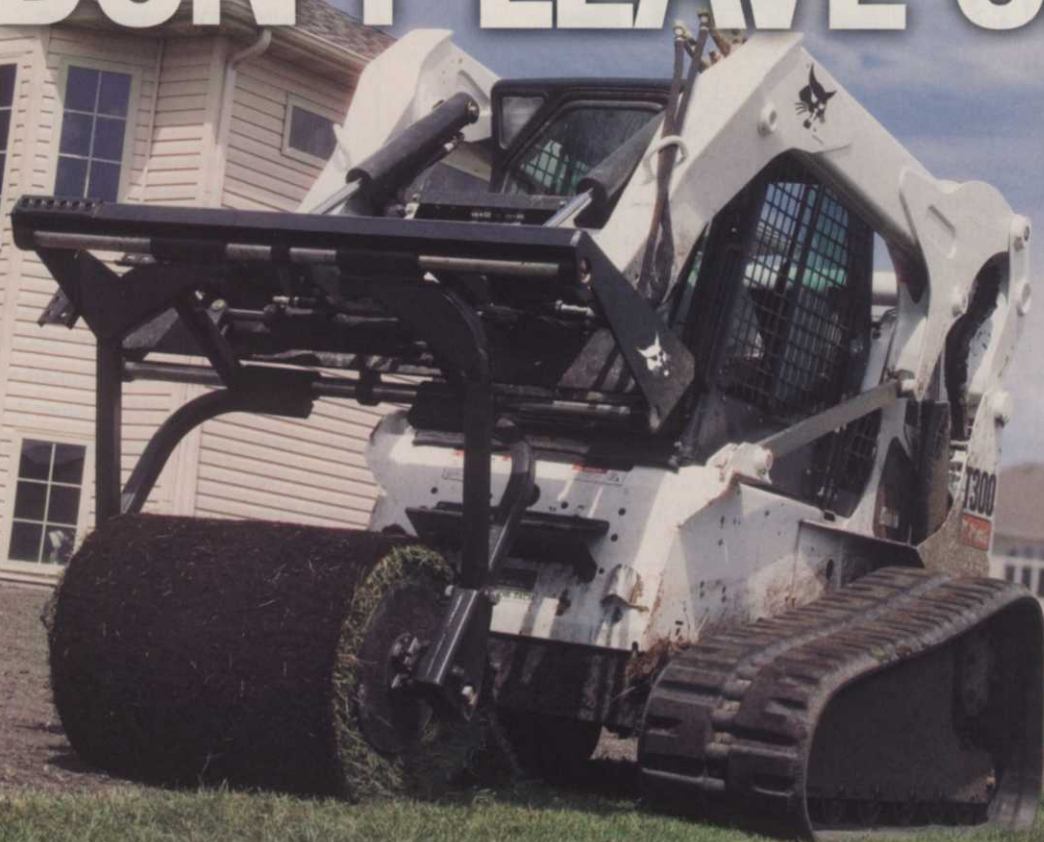
Just a note about the critique. Never forget to let the trainee know what he or she is doing right. If you're talking only about what went wrong, the message is, "you are a loser". Complimenting satisfactory performance is important to keep the message positive. Remember, when a trainee feels they are making steady progress, they will be motivated to continue learning. That, of course, is the objective.

Next month, we'll explore training techniques that will help get your crew through the hottest two months of the season, July and August.

But why wait? Start thinking now about the need to plan and show your concern for the physical condition of your crew and how you can minimize the impact of summer's heat and humidity.

— *The author is founder of Grass Roots Training in Delaware, OH. Contact him at hoopes@columbus.rr.com or visit www.grassroots-training.com.*

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23 **L**andscape Management magazine is partnering with the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) on a special Grassroots Lawn Care Forum on Sun., July 23, in Washington, D.C. The free event precedes PLANET's annual Legislative Day and Renewal & Remembrance event at Arlington National and Old Congressional Cemeteries on July 24.

"If you're planning to attend the Arlington event, get to D.C. a bit earlier to be a part of the Forum," said LM Editor in Chief Ron Hall. "These issues are affecting the professional lawn care community and the speakers will give practical strategies for dealing with them."

Solutions sought

The Forum will feature presenters from Canada and the United States, focusing on building strategies for meeting challenges in the lawn care industry, such as pesticide bans, IPM and neighbor notification laws.

Stacey Pine from RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) will

also discuss RISE's role in responding to "grassroots" pesticide-related issues.

The Forum will take place from 2 to 5 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Capitol Hill, the host hotel for the Arlington event and PLANET's Legislative Day on the Hill that follows on Tues., July 25.

We hope to see you at the Forum and joining others the next day in improving and beautifying the grounds at Arlington National and Old Congressional Cemeteries.

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tape and podcast the event, allowing Web users to download the video presentations from www.landscapemanagement.net. Editors will produce a White Paper detailing the Forum proceedings, also available via LM's Web site.

Make your travel plans now.

SPEAKER LINEUP

► **Stacey Pine**, grassroots specialist for RISE and **Frank Gasparini**, RISE director of state affairs, on taking action locally in response to pesticide issues

► **Ken Pavely**, program coordinator for the IPM Council in Canada

► **Kenneth D. Morris, Esq.**, on pre-emption in the United States and Canada

► **Jennifer Lemcke**, COO Turf Holdings, Inc., on doing business in the face of pesticide bans

► **Greg Adams**, President One Step Lawn Care, on the New York State Neighbor Notification law

► **Richard Tice**, executive director of the Environmental Industry Council, on the politics of pesticide use on school and public grounds

PLANET / ANLA agree to break off merger negotiations

HERNDON, VA — The Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) and the American Nursery and Landscape Association (ANLA) have decided not to proceed with plans to merge the two organizations.

"We have decided that it is in the best interests of the memberships of both organizations not to merge at this time. The PLANET Board of Directors is focusing on alignments that are still being solidified coming out of the PLCAA/ALCA merger of 2004," said PLANET President John Gibson, CLT, Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care.

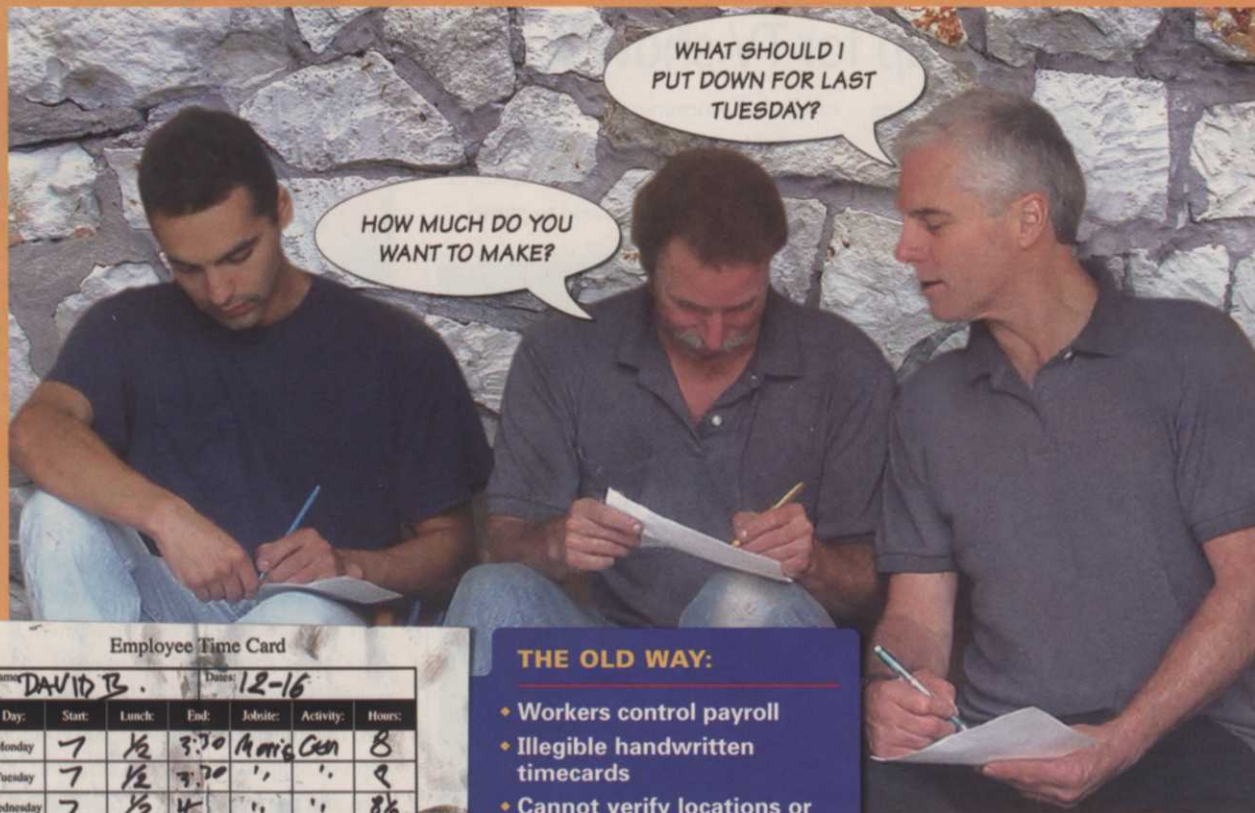
The merger task force began considering the creation of

a single, national industry trade group in 2005.

ANLA President Buzz Bertolero, of Navlet's Garden Centers, said, "Our thorough investigation substantiated the potential of an ANLA-PLANET merger, and we plan to continue working together as Green Industry associations and re-examine this possibility in the future. . . In the meantime, the two organizations intend to remain aligned in delivering services, expanding public outreach, and exerting political influence."

Jointly, the ANLA and PLANET represent more than 6,000 Green Industry business professionals nationwide.

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Day	Start	Lunch	End	Jobite	Activity	Hours
Monday	7	1/2	3:30	Morris Gen		8
Tuesday	7	1/2	3:30	"	"	9
Wednesday	7	1/2	4	"	"	8 1/2
Thursday	7	1/2	4	"	"	8 1/2
Friday	7	1/2	4	"	"	8 1/2

Employee Signature: *David B.* Total Hours: **41 1/2**

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Employee Report

Jobite Name: **Morris Property** Date Range: **6/12/2006 through 6/16/2006**

Day	Start	End	Activity	Hours
Mon 6/12	7:08 AM	12:05 PM	Irrigation	4:57 hours
	12:41 PM	3:22 PM	Irrigation	2:41 hours 7:38 hours
Tue 6/13	7:12 AM	12:07 PM	Irrigation	4:55 hours
	12:43 PM	3:23 PM	Irrigation	2:40 hours 7:35 hours
Wed 6/14	7:12 AM	12:02 PM	Irrigation	4:50 hours
	12:46 PM	3:49 PM	Irrigation	3:03 hours 7:53 hours
Thu 6/15	7:17 AM	12:19 PM	Planting	5:02 hours
	12:50 PM	3:46 PM	Planting	2:56 hours 7:58 hours
Fri 6/16	7:13 AM	12:07 PM	Planting	4:54 hours
	12:44 PM	3:39 PM	Planting	2:55 hours 7:49 hours

Employee total **38:53 hours**

Signature: *David Burns*
David Burns

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In the Know

Antwaine Walker (left) and Steven Hamilton load plant materials into a wheelbarrow for easy moving.



MORE INFO

Landscapemanagement.net Visit for more photos from Hinds Community College's trip to Louisiana and a link to ABC's coverage.

Students clean up for TV show

RAYMOND, MS — When college students pile into trucks and drive through the night they're usually headed to spring break. That wasn't the agenda for a group

of Hinds Community College landscape management students, faculty and alumni. They packed eight trucks full of tools and equipment instead to partici-

pate in an ABC *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* project to revitalize a park in the Hurricane Katrina-ravaged St. Bernard Parish city.

The Hinds volunteers worked for three days to landscape the 22,500-square-foot Vista Park and plant more than 15 pallets of sod and more than 2,000 trees, shrubs and ornamental grasses. They directed volunteers, operated machinery, and assisted in the demolition of ballpark fences and a batting cage, and the installation of playground equipment, fountains and a bike path.

"Our landscape management department students were leaders on the site," said Martha Hill, chair of the school's landscape management department. Hinds' Landscape Management Club, which does fundraisers throughout the year, covered expenses.

Even though ABC showed only a quick shot of the Hinds crew during the TV broadcast, it was still a once-in-a-lifetime experience for the students, who worked 12-hour days and spent nights camping at a local landscape company.

"This was a time to help get communities and lives back together," said student Joe Bracy. "I learned about teamwork and working together and that a plan can come together in 48 hours."

PLANET first approached Hill with the opportunity to participate.

"Our students had a blast and learned more in three days than an entire semester in a classroom," said Hill.

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'Captured' rain next big thing?

BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

SAN DIEGO, CA — Rain harvesting is widely practiced in many parts of the world. It's making a comeback in home design in the United States because of growing concerns over the availability and quality of fresh water.

Rain harvesting is the act of collecting runoff storm water from what a multitude of surfaces and storing the water in or below-ground tanks. The stored water can then be pumped from the tanks and used for irrigation, Terry J. McMains explained to more than 200 attendees at the recent American Society of Irrigation Consultants (ASIC) Conference here in May.

McMains, president Aqua Harvest, Santa Fe, NM, keyed his talk on how water design is being redefined in new home construction in some regions of the arid Southwest. For instance, Rancho Viejo de Santa Fe, a master planned community in northern New Mexico, implemented rain harvesting systems as a standard on every home built, roughly 120 per year, he said.

The water is being used for landscape irrigation. Even with xeric landscapes the rain harvesting systems were able to reduce the amount of fresh water used by approximately 30%, which spread out of hundreds of homes, results in millions of gallons of water saved each year, he said.

Other municipalities are mandating or encouraging the design and construction of rain harvesting into new property developments, McMains said.

Costs of rain harvesting sys-

Terry J. McMains says water harvesting is catching on.

tems depend largely on the amount of storage needed and project layout. The water can also be used for a multitude of non-potable uses other than irri-

gation including flushing toilets, washing clothes, and providing water for evaporative coolers.

Rain harvesting will become a part of how we consider building sustainability in future projects, said McMains.



MORE INFO

Landscapemanagement.net Visit for more from Terry McMains on the topic of water harvesting.

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Circle 116

In the Know

People & companies

Mark Merrick has joined **Syngenta Professional Products** as a field sales representative for the turf and ornamental team. Merrick will serve customers in Maryland.



Stephen Whitley is **Target's** newest account representative for the golf, sports turf and landscape market in southern

California. His territory includes Los Angeles and Orange counties.

DuPont Professional Products named **Mark Coffelt** global development

manager, focusing on the pest management, lawn care and golf industries.

Cleary Chemical appointed two new turf and ornamental technical sales representatives: **Peggy Clanton** for Georgia and the western half of South Carolina, and **Jeff Briggs** for North and South Carolina.

Brad Cahoon, an outstanding high school senior from Hurricane, Utah, was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship from the **Irrigation Association** Education Foundation through the Future Farmers of America program.

Swanson Russell Associates (SRA) has selected **Danny Schumann** and **Kelsey Brown** as the 2006 recipients of the Gus Swanson Memorial Communications Scholarship. The statewide scholarship competition, in its fifth year, is designed to help foster excellence in marketing communications.



BioSafe Systems appointed **Michael DeRubbo** as horticulture and turf outside sales representative for ZeroTol, GreenClean and TerraCyte.



Monty Bayer has accepted the role of U.S. marketing director and will manage the marketing specialists for the U.S. Crops, Specialty and Turf & Ornamental businesses for **Dow AgroSciences**.

American Nursery and Landscape Association (ANLA) member **Ed Rosenthal**, founder of **Florikan**, was recently presented the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Gulf Guardian Award, recognizing Florikan's effort to reduce potential runoff of nutrients with the development of Staged Nutrient Release Fertilizer.

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RISE sharpens focus at local level

WASHINGTON, D.C. — It's often said that all politics are local.

That's becoming increasingly true of the debate over the use of professional lawn care products as well, said Allen James, president of Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE), a national association representing the interests of specialty pesticide and fertilizer suppliers.

That fact hasn't gone unnoticed by RISE that historically as concentrated its efforts at the national and state levels.

At the recent '06 Media Summit sponsored by BASF, James told approximately 40 writers and editors that RISE recently enlisted Stacey Pine to deal with "grassroots" issues. She

will manage industry issues at the municipality level in cities and towns across the country. Pine was most recently vice president of government affairs for the Cumberland County (NC) Business Council.

"The specialty industry is growing and continues to develop new technologies that enhance safety and minimize environmental impacts," said James. Yet the industry faces increasing scrutiny and criticism at the local level.

"Anti-technology activists are shifting the debate to state and local levels where emotion, not science prevails" he added. Their tactics include attempting to erode public confidence in science and regulations by generating fear in the public's mind.

Local politics often move rapidly, and a small but vocal minority can shape local laws and regulations. James alluded to the growing number of municipalities in Canada that have banned or severely restricted the use of lawn care products.

"Our strengths are in our numbers and commitment to advancing safe and necessary technologies," he added. "Communication is essential to our efforts."

Stacey Pine will manage grassroots efforts for RISE.



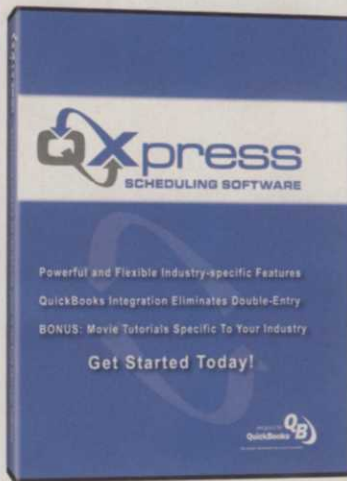
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Water features

► Ongoing customer support, satisfaction critical

BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

The sound of gently splashing water delights a growing number of residential landscape customers. Landscape contractors are well aware of this. They're cashing in on this growing market segment by designing and installing decorative ponds and streams.

For the consumer this has turned out to be both good and bad news.

While the technical details of installing these features shouldn't challenge the experienced and detail-oriented landscape contractor, the question of whether a contractor should offer the service at all may hinge on the question of their commitment to ongoing support and maintenance.

Will the pond builder be willing to provide ongoing customer support, which often requires special knowledge of aquatic ecosystems? Will he be available as a resource for the questions that the homeowner/client will have about pond care?

Dave Jones, co-owner along with wife Gloria of The Pond

Professional, Woodstock, GA, claims that too many contractors are building landscape ponds that will fail, usually within the first year after installation. The majority of the failures are due to careless or inexperienced installations, he says. In most cases, the contractors are off to the next job and the frustrated homeowner ends up having to seek help elsewhere.

This inattention to detail and follow-up has created a strong demand for the services offered by the Jones' company. They now spend most of their time repairing, renovating and maintaining ponds, a big change from several years ago when most of their company's revenue came from designing and installing water features.

"Installing a beautiful, healthy pond is not just a matter of digging a hole and putting a liner in it," says Jones, who founded the International Professional Pond Contractors Association (IPPCA) several years ago to raise standards within the pond building segment of the landscape industry. (For more information visit www.ippca.com.)



Pond associations offer services

There are at least two associations that offer advice and provide support for people who design, install or maintain landscape ponds.

The National Association of Pond Professionals (NAPP) is dedicated to the advancement and promotion of the pond and water feature industry through education, communication and cooperative partnerships. It is based in Epworth, GA. To learn more visit www.nationalpond-pro.com or call 706/258-3534.

A newer organization is the International Professional Pond Contractors Association (IPPCA), formed less than two years ago. The IPPCA is a source for reliable information for consumers and professionals alike.

Additionally, it serves as a conduit for contractors and manufacturers to exchange information and input on new products, product improvements and exchange notes from the field. The IPPCA offers certification at two levels — Certified Professional Pond Contractor (CPPC) and Certified Master Pond Contractor (CMPC). For more information visit www.ippca.com or call 866/484-7722.

Obviously, any contractor considering designing and installing landscape water features should assess their ability to please the customer, including providing ongoing maintenance and customer support.

Yes, a properly designed and constructed landscape water feature requires little maintenance

apart from checkups and periodic cleanups. But it will require maintenance.

"The landscape contractor needs to understand that he needs the same understanding of the functions of the aquatic environment as he does of soils and all the factors that influence the health of landscape plants," says Jones. **LJM**



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BREAK THROUGH

Bill Leidecker of Five Seasons Landscape Management, Inc. in Reynoldsburg, OH, admits that his company grew "stupid fast." The company began operations in 1998, reached \$1 million in sales by 2000 and soon grew to \$3.5 million.

"I wouldn't say we were working for free, but everything we were making was going back into the business," Leidecker says. "Growth is expensive. It's just been the last couple of years that cash flow is starting to catch up."

Five Seasons has leveled off a bit, with \$4.3 million in sales in fiscal year 2005. The company is now averaging a reasonable 10% growth per year.

"As any company grows, you understand it more. So then when you are growing, you're growing smarter, you know what your capabilities are and hitting your sales goals with revenues that are intentional," Leidecker says. "Once you have that knowledge to back you up, and correct the mistakes you made in the past, it doesn't take many more sales to grow the next 5% or 10%."

Not so fast

It may go against logic, but sometimes the best way to get past that \$1 million barrier is to slow down.

"You have to be careful not to grow too fast," says Bill Cox of Lawn Management Co., Inc. in Houston. "Don't take on too much business too quickly. It can put a strain on your operations and affect the quality of your work."

After starting in 1990, Cox's company is approaching \$5 million in revenue this year. He says it took his company about 6-7 years to reach that \$1 million mark.

"You have to set the values and culture of your company. Concentrate on doing what you say you'll do," Cox says. "If your emphasis is all on sales, on getting to \$1 million for the sake of getting to \$1 million, customers will know that."

"It's the service end that makes a difference. If you take care of the customer, the customer will take care of you. They'll be better than any salesman you can hire."

▶▶ Bill Leidecker says it takes a while for cash flow to catch up with rapid growth.

With apologies to Regis Philbin, who doesn't want to be a millionaire? The \$1 million mark is the first major milestone that many small or young lawn care and landscape companies strive for. But that \$1 million mark is also right around the point where many companies start to plateau, running into infrastructure, cash flow and personnel obstacles.

With the right skills, training and equipment, anyone in this business can get to that \$1 million point. But it takes hard work, real insight and a good business plan to do it profitably and put you in position to grow to \$2 million, \$5 million and beyond.

Just like in life, there are no shortcuts to success in this business. That is, unless you're also really good at answering trivia questions on game shows.



Getting past the **\$1 million** barrier

When Terry Delany of AAA Lawns in Fayetteville, AR, started his company in 2001, he was offering any service he could provide. But after crunching numbers in 2004, Delany found that his most profitable business was by far commercial maintenance. With Northern Arkansas in a growth spurt, he felt that focusing on commercial was the way to go.

"Five years ago we were doing everything," Delany says. "Now we're ready to cross the \$1 million barrier doing 95% commercial maintenance. Once we made the decision to go that way, it took us nearly a year to pare down the residen-

already working at capacity.

"We spent a lot of money those first few years trying to be everything to everybody," Delany says. "We have a lot of equipment we don't use because we're not doing residential anymore. We don't do irrigation, but we are stuck with a trencher."

Cox mentioned that his company was pulled into interior plant maintenance based on customer requests, even though he didn't have much experience in it.

"You can be pulled into a number of direction because customers ask for it," Cox says. "If you diversify too much and

don't have the right people in place, you won't be successful.

"Find what you are best at and do it to the best of your ability. Not only will you grow, but you'll grow smart."

Letting go

Somewhere around the \$1 million mark, owners can no longer do it all by themselves. Between handling sales, managing

the office and working

in the field, owners would have to put in 18-20 hour days to get it all done.

"What you have to do is

tial side. You can't just drop half your business and pick it up overnight."

Though the commercial side is a lot more competitive, Delany says the only thing that is limiting him from growing his sales higher is labor. He actually had to stop selling because his employees were

decide what you want to do — what you do well — and hire others to handle everything else,” Leidecker says. “It was at about \$1 million when I needed to come out of the field and focus on sales and administration.”

But letting go is easier said than done. For owners who have micro-managed every aspect of a company since its birth, there’s a tendency to hold on too long.

For Delany, it took some prodding from his employees to let go a little. “If you have the right people in place, they don’t want you looking over their shoulder all day. Let them do the job you hired them to do.”

By not delegating, an owner can get so caught up in the day-to-day operations that he does not have time to look toward the future and develop goals and a strategic plan to get the business there.

Cox says he didn’t hire another sales person until last year for his 16-year-old company. Though he says he might have

grown faster with another salesperson, he thinks of business as a three-legged stool of sales, financial and operation. Sales was the area he was strong in, so he brought in others on the financial and operations ends. The important part was keeping that stool balanced so the company wouldn’t fall over.

“You have to sometimes bite the bullet and hire in those people to do the jobs you can’t do yourself,” Cox says. “We finally brought in a human resources person and another salesman. Overhead has gone up a lot. It’s a struggle, it’s a challenge, but you have to take the risk and go for it if you want to grow.”

So when do you bring in that additional person?

“A year before you need him,” Cox says. “The person is going to flop for a year before he gets the hang of a job.”

Cox also mentions not to be afraid to ask for help. Bringing in a consultant to



▶ **Bill Cox of Lawn Management in Houston** believes growth comes only after you prove you can deliver service.

take a look at your business from an outside perspective can help you find opportunities and develop plans for the future.

“None of us are smart enough to build a \$5, \$10 or \$15 million business all alone,” he says. “There are people out there who can give you the advice you need to do things better. Use them.”

Banking partners

As Leidecker said earlier, growth can be expensive. That is why it is important for any small business owner to be on good terms with his or her bank.

“The banks have to be your business partner. You can’t not grow because you don’t want to borrow money,” Cox says.

continued on page 30

ESTABLISHING A SECURE FUTURE:

Creating strategic plans for sales and marketing growth

BY STEVEN A. COHEN

The following steps for developing sales and marketing strategic plans will help you get to \$1 million in annual revenues and beyond — profitably.

- 1 | Review the structure and goals of your marketing and sales plans.
- 2 | Define your marketing and sales growth strategies.
- 3 | Develop an organizational chart of each department’s structure.
- 4 | Identify your markets, both current and future.
- 5 | Identify your target client groups.
- 6 | Develop sales territories for your staff.
- 7 | Ask how can you reach your target client groups. What are the specific methods that you will use?
- 8 | Identify how you’ve gotten lead information and new ways to get leads.
- 9 | Develop methods for “closing a deal” as they apply to each of your target client groups.
- 10 | Discuss market share for each sales sector. Make future projections.
- 11 | Project sales for your company by overall division for the current fiscal year and for the near future.
- 12 | Review your marketing materials and the success rate of each.
- 13 | Determine the best choices in terms

of marketing materials for your target client groups.

14 | Consider ALL planning steps in terms of your budget for each department.

The key is to tailor your goals with your desired markets in mind. You may wish to delete, add to, or reorganize some of the steps suggested above. Or, you may wish to establish a calendar for reviewing your organization’s progress at meeting targeted goals. Devoting time now to implementing sales and marketing strategies should help you establish long-term, stable growth for your company’s future.

— *The author is a principal with GreenMark Consulting Group, Inc. a national Greensnow Industry company that helps small- to medium-sized firms grow to the next level. Contact him at steven@greenmarkgroup.com or visit www.greenmarkconsultinggroup.com.*



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continued from page 28

Delany says that when he started his business he was begging and pleading with the bank to get the funds for each new truck. But since the beginning, each month he's made it a point to go to the bank with his profit and loss statement and show the bank where he is and where he is going. Now the bank gives him whatever he needs because it is no longer such a risky proposition to lend out money. It also helps that Delany has never missed a payment.

With that kind of relationship, both sides profit in the end.

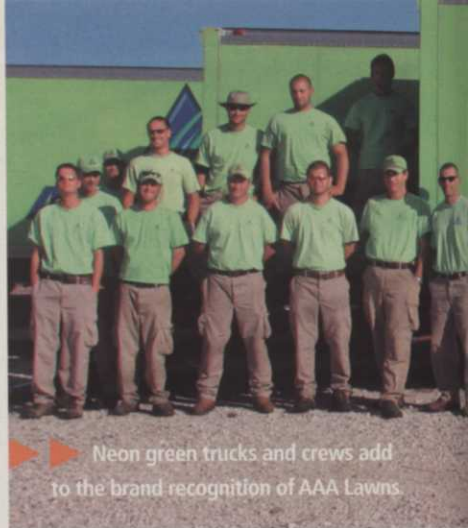
Set yourself apart

There's very little barrier to entry in the landscaping business. That is why it is so crucial to set your company apart from

the competition if you want it to grow. Cox says his company worked hard at building a professional reputation. The company does a lot of work at its home office, then invites potential clients to visit. He also hosts an annual Garden Party in November, giving tours, food and a flat of flowers to customers.

"The office works as a marketing tool. It shows our clients we aren't some fly-by-night company that works out of someone's garage," he says.

For Delany, green has led to green. His marketing budget is non-existent. But what he did was paint each of his 11 trucks a bright neon green that stands out on the road or parked at a customers' facility. "It cost \$2,000 to paint the first truck. My partners thought I was crazy," Delany says. "Everyone recognizes us now. People



Neon green trucks and crews add to the brand recognition of AAA Lawns.

think we have 30-40 trucks out there."

Leidecker added one other key to getting your business past the \$1 million barrier. Not only does a business have to get the job done, but it also needs to get paid.

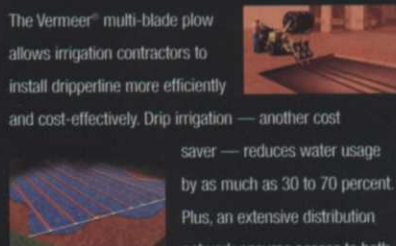
"This business has seen a lot of guys who know what they are doing operations-wise go out of business," he says. "They don't send out invoices on time, don't make payroll and the business fails. You can sell \$1 million, but if you don't collect it you don't have a business." **LM**

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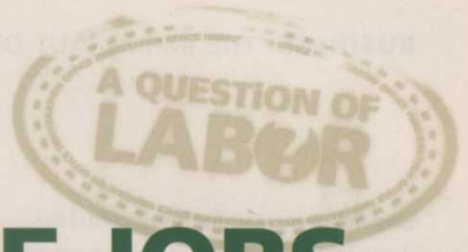
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DOING THE JOBS

Americans WON'T

Green Industry employers struggle to staff crews locally

BY STEPHANIE RICCA / Managing Editor
AND MIKE SEUFFERT / Associate Editor

Some people, politicians and pundits dismiss the idea that there are jobs Americans won't do. But from Joe Drake's experience it's true.

Drake runs a \$2 million full-service landscaping company in Auburn Township, OH — J.F.D. Landscapes. For several years, because he's been unable to meet his staffing needs locally, Drake has brought in foreign workers through the H-2B guest worker program.

The notion that Americans won't take entry-level landscaping jobs — forcing employers like Drake to seek good workers elsewhere — is a polarizing factor in the immigration debate. Growing landscape and lawn maintenance companies need reliable employees to push mowers, lay sod, spread mulch and plant, but the amount of work often exceeds the number of willing local workers.

Local efforts didn't pay

H-2B wasn't Joe Drake's first choice. He tried recruiting and placing newspaper ads and all the other normal avenues to find employees. But he always came up short.

So when Drake was offered a chance to bring in American workers in the most desperate need of jobs, he volunteered.

In the late 1990s, as a member of the Ohio Landscape Association, Drake partnered with the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority in a program called Parkworks. The program helped train jobless or low-income people from Cleveland for jobs in the landscaping industry.

The CMHA provided transportation to Drake's workplace in the suburbs, about 40 minutes away. Their van could hold 15 people but they never got more than two or three workers each day. And those who did come rarely lasted more than a few days.

They said the work was too hard, or that it was too hot outside. Some admitted they could earn as much collecting welfare checks than earning it themselves.

"This was a couple of years ago, and I was paying \$8-\$10 an hour," Drake says. "But it wasn't feasible for the program to go on. I can't run a business if I don't

know if I have any workers who are going to show up."

The program only lasted a few weeks before all sides gave up on it.

This year Drake will get about nine workers through H-2B.

"All these jobs were supposed to be career positions, progressing from laborers to managers" Drake says. "It's sad, but we just can't find the people and we can't afford to pay someone \$20 an hour to mow grass."

Cultural shift?

Situations like Drake's beg the question, why won't Americans take these jobs? Is the physical labor too much? The pay too little? According to Mike Zohns, it's a combination of factors.

"This challenge has been around for a long time," says Zohns, a professor in the horticulture and crop science department at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. In his more than 30 years with the university, Zohns has seen firsthand how job trends ebb and flow.

"Locals often don't relish the opportunity," Zohns says. "For whatever combination of reasons, many don't want to work outside, they want to drive fancy cars and live in nicer places. There's nothing wrong with wanting that, but a lot of people want that sooner rather than later."

With fewer untrained people entering Green Industry jobs, Zohns sees a huge



demand every year for his qualified students. While students trained in horticulture and landscaping programs do pay their dues in the hot sun for low pay, they often begin their careers in what Zohns calls "custom entry-level" positions. This means grads may start out at low wage — but on the fast track to middle management thanks to their education.

That still leaves a lot of slots for seasonal crew members. For most employers, it's simply more efficient to fill the spots with people who will show up willing to work. That usually translates to immigrants here on temporary visas.

Proof in numbers

Before an employer can receive authorization to get temporary workers, he or she must demonstrate proof that the local job

market isn't meeting the company's needs.

That's not as easy as it sounds, according to Bob Wingfield, founder of Amigos Labor Solutions Inc., a Dallas-based agency that processes H-2B workers for Green Industry businesses nationwide. As part of the H-2B application process, employers file a form with the State Workforce Agency (SWA). To follow the process, employers must run a local ad for three days advertising the job openings. At the same time, the SWA searches its local databases for names and contact information of people seeking jobs, which it passes on to the employer, who must contact the candidates and follow up with interview requests.

The process can last at least two weeks, Wingfield says, and rarely yields good results.

"This year we ran 300 newspaper ads

looking for 4,500 employees," he says. "Less than 200 names came to employers from the different states, and less than 100 people were hired from those names. This amounted to more than \$350,000 worth of advertising."

This, Wingfield says, is often proof enough for the employers he represents that local Americans won't take these jobs.

"In this business, you have to be efficient. And you've got to have the workers," Joe Drake says. "These [H-2B] workers are reliable, they're hard working, and they are taking jobs that Americans don't want to do." **LM**

This article is the third in *LM's* series, "A Question of Labor," investigating all sides of the H-2B immigration issue. For complete archives, visit www.landscapemanagement.net.

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2 Spread the wealth

SpreadEx's LG 375 commercial-duty granular spreader attachment spreads seed, fertilizer and control products. Standard with a 10-ft. control cable, the spreader's material flow gate calibrates material flow. This allows the operator to distribute the right amount of material for each individual application. An adjustable deflector allows for spread pattern manipulation. Designed to work with service vehicles including riding mowers, the spreader comes standard with a 2-inch receiver hitch mount. Optional 3-point hitch, drop utility and trailer mounts are also available.

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3 Quick change

Grasshopper's QuikConverter mounting system lets you apply Grasshopper's True Zero-Turn capability to turf renovation. You can remove the mowing deck and install implements in minutes without tools. The single power unit accepts multiple implements, including Grasshopper's 40- and 60-in. AERA-vators, which eliminate cores and fracture hard, dry soil combinations without irrigation; and shielded sprayers for controlling drift by containing chemical spray within the spraying chambers for on-target applications.

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4 Lots of options

JRCO Inc. manufactures a line of heavy-duty attachments for commercial mowers. All seven front-mount products attach with clevis pins to the JRCO universal mount bar. The electric broadcast spreader (pictured) has a 120-lbs./ 2.2 cu. ft. capacity, an electronic speed control to regulate spread width and a unique control to center the pattern. Other JRCO attachments include a tine rake dethatcher, zero-turn sprayer, hooker aerator, leaf blade plow, V-broom sweeper, transporter, snowplow and blower buggy carrier.

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COMMERCIAL POWER

Relationships – Customer, Technician & Dealer

It's no secret that a qualified technician can be worth his weight in gold. He keeps equipment running, which translates into productivity and profitability. A relationship that's often overlooked is the one between the professional customer and the equipment dealer. Without a strong bond, both sides can suffer setbacks.

The professional customer normally cannot wait for repairs and needs to keep the equipment running at all times. This translates into the professional calling the dealer for technical assistance so he can repair his own problem, possibly arranging for emergency repairs, and for obtaining parts quickly.

A commercial dealer needs:

1. An individual on staff with good communication and technical skills to assist the professional customer information over the phone or by the Internet.

2. A dealer service coordinator that understands what repairs require immediate attention verses those that can wait a little while. This may require scheduling their own dealer technicians to work different shifts, and arranging transportation to get a customer's unit into the shop.

3. A part department that stocks roughly 90% of required repair parts. If a part is not in stock, professional customers expect to have the part delivered to them in one or two days.

The support systems available at a dealer are critical to most professionals who buy equipment. If the professional customer cannot obtain the backup support needed, they will look at other brands of equipment that have good support systems in place.

A dealership that supports the professional customer will end up with a win-win situation.



By Mark Nelson, Master Instructor, Briggs & Stratton Customer Education

From the Shop

TECHNOLOGY AIR: KEEP IT CLEAN

The engine requires 15 parts of air for each part fuel. Those numbers should hammer home the importance of air filtration.



Keep 'em breathing

BY HARRY SMITH

After writing several articles about air including one on air wrenches and one on tire pressure, someone pointed out that I had not commented on air filters and engine air filtration systems. So here is another article about air.

Air filters and air filtration systems are frequently neglected. Many operators do not notice the slow degradation in engine performance as the air filter clogs. I have frequently found clean, recently replaced fuel filters and completely clogged air filters on units with a running problem. Someone only thought about half of the system. If you remember these numbers you will be less likely to overlook air filter and intake service. Commit 15:1 to your memory. The engine requires 15 parts air for each part fuel. That means fifteen times as much air as fuel.

Many of the larger multi-cylinder engines found on turf care equipment have a Donaldson brand air filter system or a similar system provided by the engine manufacturer. These multistage systems can run many hours without service. Smaller engines usually have a system devised by the manufacturer. These will require more fre-

quent service. Both systems do the same job. They provide the right volume of filtered air to the engine. A filtration system that is restricted by dirt and chaff will lead to premature engine death. The engine goes rich from lack of air. Or worse, a hole or tear is sucked in the filter media. Now either can wash down the cylinder from an over-rich condition and you get a lack of lubrication seizure or dirt is ingested through the hole in the media. That erodes the cylinder and piston surfaces leading to loss of compression, power and eventually worn rings that stick and seize the pistons. Neither condition promotes a desirable result. Engines and engine overhauls are expensive and time consuming.

A strange thing can happen with overzealous air cleaner service. If the air filter canister is opened too frequently and without sufficient caution then dirt caught in the trap area can fall into the intake hose. It is not wise to disassemble air filter containers too frequently. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for frequency and correct procedures. The very act of checking the air filter can lead to dirt ingestion. The law of unintended consequences still prevails. Read the owner's manual and keep your engine air clean.

— The author is turf equipment professor at Lake City Community College, Lake City, FL. Contact him at smith@lakecitycc.edu.



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Your perfect 'employee'

BY TYLER WHITAKER

Nearly 10 years and several companies ago I was locked in a battle to convince our CEO that we needed a Web site. I was armed with demographics, growth statistics and project costs. He contended that the Internet was just a passing fad. Luckily, with the help of colleagues, we overcame his objections. The result was a Web site that became a successful sales tool. It helped us differentiate from our competition.

Today the Web is a mainstay of marketing and sales. You can find and buy anything online. But first you have to find what you're looking for before you can buy it. So how can you make it easier for customers to find your company's Web site? Here are several ideas that will put your Web site on the map.

1. Content. Content. Content. Your site must contain information that consumers are looking for — "how to" guides, landscaping tips and tricks, and suggestions for planning the perfect backyard. The successful marketer will use this content to layer in a healthy measure of, "Why should you use our company." Content is what brings people back.

2. Inbound and outbound links. I'm reminded of the classic movie *Miracle on 34th Street*. In this movie, Kris Kringle, posing as Macy's department store Santa, generously directs customers to competing stores that carry special hard-to-find toys, resulting in higher sales and customer goodwill. I'm not suggesting that you link to your direct competitors.

But exchanging links with other local businesses and associations is a good way to increase your site traffic.

3. Search engine optimization. Chances are customers will find your site from a search engine. That means you want the highest listing in search results you can get. Moving your site higher in the search results can be confusing. Search engine optimization (SEO) is becoming something akin to rocket science. But rest easy, if you've focused on quality content and links, the hard part is behind you.

Make sure the search keywords your potential customers will use are found within your Web content. That way search engines will see that your site pertains to what people are searching for. Another key item is the number of quality inbound links to your site. Your most valued inbound links will be from high-profile sites within your industry. Another option is to hire a company that specializes in search engine optimization. They have experts in fine-tuning your site to get the highest ranking possible.

If all else fails, you can buy paid placement advertising on all major search engines. Google has one of the most flexible and easy-to-use systems. Sign up online, pick the search keywords you want to advertise with and set your budget. They even have the ability to target your ads geographically.

Your Web site is an employee that works night and day, weekends and holidays. Spend time making sure it delivers the message and results you want.

— *The author is chief technology officer for the Symbiot Business Group. Contact him at 801/307-0730 or twhitaker@symbiot.biz. Visit his blog at www.tylerwhitaker.com.*

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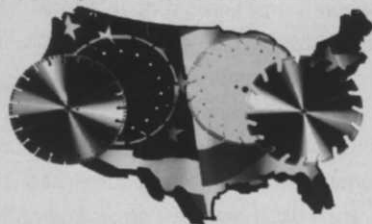
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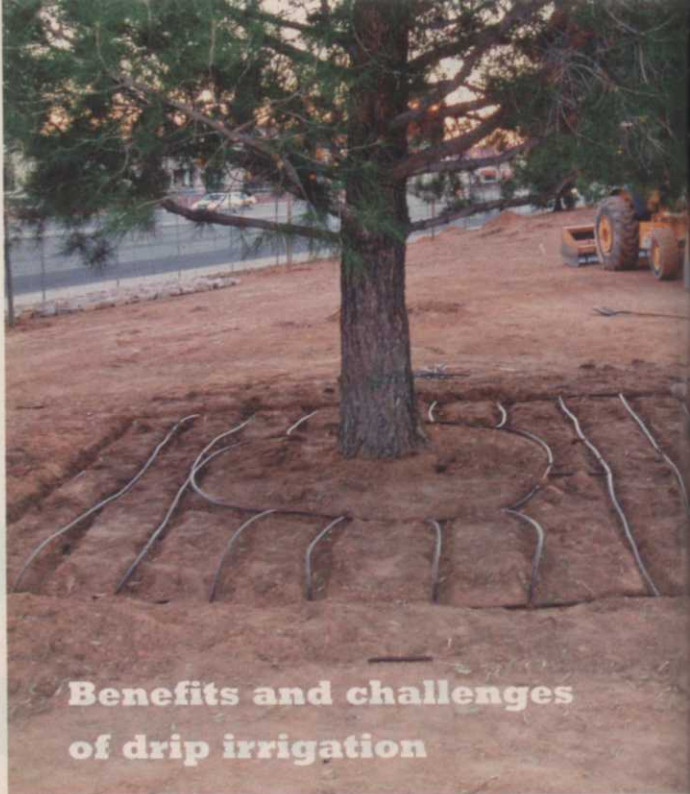
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Good to the last drip?



Benefits and challenges of drip irrigation

BY JOE FORTIER

Drip irrigation is a great tool in landscape care. For many properties or areas, drip is the best way to keep turf and ornamentals healthy, lower irrigation water costs, reduce the number of callbacks and control maintenance costs.

Let's take a closer look at drip including its benefits and challenges. For the sake of the discussion of benefits, let's agree that systems are properly installed and scheduled. That said, many of the problems that contractors have with drip are usually the result of poor site selection or improper installation, scheduling and/or maintenance.

Control zone kits save time, money

BY DAVE LAYBOURN

Ask a group of irrigation contractors the following question: "What is important to my business?" One of the top responses you're likely to hear will be "saving time." Hearing these responses, irrigation manufacturers developed the control zone kit, a key product in drip irrigation that includes an automatic valve, filter and pressure regulator. These components are packaged together, making it simpler for designers and contractors to be sure that the right components are in place to reduce installation times and significantly cut chances for errors and callbacks.

Control zone kits are designed and engineered to help contractors guarantee successful *continued on page 46*

The benefits

■ Reduced water costs:

Optimal amounts of water go directly to a plant's roots, reducing evaporation and eliminating overspray. Drip can reduce water use in an area by 60%.

■ **Better plant vigor and more blossoms:** Optimal balance of moisture and oxygen around plant roots promotes plant growth and health.

■ **Fewer weeds and pests:** Because areas outside the irrigated root zones remain dry, so weeds have less water to grow. Drip irrigation can reduce the stress on landscape plants, decreasing their vulnerability to insects. By keeping a plant's foliage dry, invasion by water-borne pests (especially fungi) is reduced.

■ **Easily modifiable:** Systems can be modified to accommodate changes in landscape planting, meeting the varying water needs of different plants in a single landscape.

■ **Ideal for slopes and difficult soils:** The slow rate of water release allows moisture to soak into the soil reducing runoff. Drip emitters reduce the loss of water percolating beyond the plant's root zone in sandy soils.

■ **Easily added to existing landscapes:** Drip can be installed on or near the surface without damaging existing plant roots. Flexible poly tubing or inline drip tubing can be covered with mulch and can be installed on existing piping.

■ **Where it's needed:** With drip you don't flood a street or sidewalk with irrigation water. Line-source drip irrigation installed in turf and shrub areas with proper soil conditioning reduces overspray outside the landscape area.

■ **Windy sites:** Because drip irrigation applies water directly to the soil, little water is lost on windy days.

continued on page 46



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INFO

Landscapemanagement.net For more from Dave Laybourn on control zone kits, click on the June cover from the *LM* home page.

continued from page 44

drip installations. Installed at the beginning of each drip zone, control zone kits start with an automatic valve for on/off control. Next in line is

a filter to ensure the water is kept clean. Finally, a pressure regulator is included to prevent drip components from operating at high pressures, which will shorten the life of drip components and can lead to premature replacement. Also, high pressure in a drip system can cause fittings to blow off, which can waste water and wash out expensive plant material.

With several packaging options available, control zone kits provide contractors significant installation savings since they no longer have to buy parts separately. Many contractors say their workers no longer waste time searching through boxes because they already have everything they need in the kit.

Today, contractors save even more time and effort because some newer control zone kit models come pre-assembled. "Because they are already assembled, the new kits are a definite time saver during installation and have resulted in faster production rates and better reliability," says Al Luchterhand, owner of Sun City Landscapes in Las Vegas.

Saving time means more than just making the installation quicker, it also means reducing errors and callbacks. "When I use a kit, I don't have to worry about whether the job was done right," says Mark Bridges of Pavilion Landscaping in Palm Springs, CA.

— *The author is product manager for Rain Bird Corp's Landscape Drip Division. For the complete article, visit www.landscapemanagement.net*

continued from page 44

The challenges

Problems with drip irrigation usually result from improper design, installation or maintenance. Oftentimes these problems result from people not paying attention to or understanding the details.

■ **Control valves:** Control valves have different minimum flow requirements. Some control valves have a minimum flow requirement of 0 gallons per minute (gpm) up to 5 gpm or more.

The minimum flow requirement can affect the control valve closing. If a control valve has a minimum flow requirement of five gpm and your drip irrigation system is 1.2 gpm (80 gallons per hour or 80 one-gallon-per-hour emitters) the valve may not always close. Unnoticed, 1,728 gallons of water can be wasted daily.

A stuck control valve can release too much water. That may weaken or kill plants and cause runoff and unnecessary water costs. Also, an incorrectly sized control valve may work, but the diaphragm can wear out four to five times faster.

■ **Too few emitters:** Plants can't develop sound root systems without the proper number of emitters, a big problem on slopes where plants are used to help stabilize the soil. Trees need a sound, deep (18- to 24-in.), widespread root system, especially in windy areas.

Trees need water to live. It is estimated that mature ash trees in Las Vegas, NV, in can use more than 400 gallons of water per week during the heat of the summer. If you have only eight 2-gph emitters on

continued on page 48

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TECHNOLOGY

continued from page 46

the ash tree, you will have to run the system 25 hours. That's not an option. You must install enough emitters around a plant to meet its water needs.

■ **Plants in zones:** Lawn, shrubs, annuals and trees need their own stations or zones. Different plant materials have different root zone depths and water requirements. They must be irrigated in different zones.

■ **Hydraulics:** You will need to calculate the pressure loss in a drip irrigation system. Many drip systems don't have any water at the ends of the line because of friction loss in the piping, piping size, or too many emitters on small tubing.

■ **Landscape conversions:** Many water districts encourage property owners to remove turfgrass in favor of xeric landscapes in order to save water. The conversion process can be disastrous for plants in or around the former turf area. Likely some of their roots extended into the soil under the turfgrass and they were getting some of that irrigation water. These plants may also suffer from soil compaction and root disruption caused by the removal equipment.

It can take up to five years to kill a tree in some conversions. Protect the roots of valuable trees and other ornamentals during the conversion process and they need to be watered for the plant to remain healthy.

Drip irrigation, when it's designed, installed, and maintained correctly, creates an efficient irrigation system, a healthy and beautiful landscape and it will increase a property's use and enjoyment. Like any irrigation system, if done wrong. It can be your worst nightmare. **LM**

— Joseph H. Fortier, ASIC, CIC, CID, CGIA, CLIA, is the president of Mojave Water Management. He is president of the Southwest Chapter of the American Association of Irrigation Consultants and can be contacted at fortier@mojave.biz.

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Vehicle shown with equipment from an independent supplier. See the owner's manual for information on alterations and warranties.

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Utility vehicles

BY JASON STAHL

the Polaris Lock & Ride cargo system to easily carry and organize equipment. Like previous Ranger 6x6 vehicles, this EFI model provides on-demand 6-wheel drive and independent center and rear axle suspension.

For more information contact Polaris at 800/765-2747 or visit www.polarisindustries.com / circle no. 255

John Deere ▼

The 2006 John Deere Gator High-Performance (HP) Series utility vehicles are now tougher, more off-road capable and more comfortable. A new standard Operator Protective Structure (OPS) with lap and shoulder belt enhances operator protection. Users benefit from an improved suspension that offers a more comfortable ride during normal off-road use. An optional heavy-duty front suspension kit is also available for full cab machines and/or front-blade use. A redesigned Tier II diesel engine offers superior performance and a quieter ride for operators of the Gator HPX 4x4 diesel.

For more information contact John Deere at 800/537-8233 or visit www.deere.com / circle no. 256



Toro ▲

Toro introduces three new attachments for its Workman utility vehicles. The Patriot Lift attachment for the heavy-duty Workman is designed for pruning and other jobs that require the ability to safely work aloft. The lift is powered by a 12-volt permanent magnet motor/pump, and the aluminum walk through bucket has a working height of 23 ft. with a side reach of 11 ft., 6 in. The mid-duty Workman features a 16-hp Briggs & Stratton engine and up to 1,650 lbs. total capacity. The heavy-duty Workman features a

26.5-hp Briggs & Stratton Daihatsu engine and up to 2,600 lbs. total capacity.

For more information contact Toro at 952/888-8801 or visit www.toro.com / circle no. 254

Polaris

New in 2006 is the Ranger 6x6 EFI off-road utility vehicle that delivers the payload of a full-size pickup truck with the off-road traction of a Polaris ATV. It features a 40-hp liquid-cooled Polaris Liberty 700cc parallel-twin engine that can handle a payload of 1,750 lbs. It also comes with



LM Reports



Bobcat ▲

Bobcat's 2200 4x4 utility vehicle features the IntelliTrak 4x4 drive system that powers all four wheels. Not having to stop or shift gears to engage and disengage 4-wheel drive means time saved on the job. Travel up to 25 mph and choose either gas or diesel power.

For more information contact Bobcat at 701/241-8700 or visit www.bobcat.com/ / circle no. 257

Steiner

The versatile UtiliMax is a utility vehicle and tractor combined. It has more than 25 Quick-Hitch attachments. A liquid-cooled 34-hp turbo diesel engine provides plenty of power. Comfort features include a tilt steering wheel, easy on/off access, and user-friendly controls.

For more information contact Steiner at 888/922-TURF or visit www.steinerturf.com / circle no. 258

Snapper ▼

Snapper's Turf/Trail Cruiser utility vehicles offer power, payload capacity and comfort. The engine is a 480cc, 16-hp Briggs & Stratton V-twin with tuned exhaust. Payload capacity is 900 lbs. and towing capacity is 1,000 lbs. A 1,500-watt onboard generator comes standard on some models. Comfort controls with



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high-back seating make a long day a little shorter. A front-mount electric winch comes standard on the Trail Cruiser.

For more information contact Snapper at 888/762-7737 or visit www.snapperpro.com/ circle no. 259

Kawasaki

The Mule 3010 Trans 4x4 allows the driver to transform it from a 4-passenger 4x4 to a 2-passenger 4x4 with an extended cargo bed. It has a cargo capacity of 400 lbs. in 4-passenger mode, and 800 lbs. with the cargo bed extended forward. It can also tow up to 1,200 lbs. with an optional towing hitch. Braking power is provided by four hydraulically operated, self-adjusting drum brakes sealed for protection. 23-inch tires provide maximum traction over all surfaces.

For more information contact Kawasaki at 800/661-7433 or visit www.kawasaki.com/ circle no. 260



Land Pride ▲

The new 10 Series Treker takes traction capabilities to another level. An auto-lock rear differential senses wheel slippage, instantly locking the differential for traction capability. The rear differentials also have built-in overrunning clutches to minimize turf damage. Four-wheel independent suspension offers a smooth ride, and the cargo box design has a ribbed bottom and removable sides for

flatbed capability. It also features a 20-hp V-twin air-cooled Honda engine and comes in 2- or 4-wheel drive.

For more information contact Land Pride at 888/987-7433 or visit www.landpride.com/ circle no. 261

Cub Cadet

The Big Country 4x2 poly bed is a lighter model that features all the durability of Cub Cadet's other utility vehicles. A 9.5-hp Kawasaki OHV engine mixes get-up-and-go with a smooth ride, and a 13-cu.-ft. bed has the largest capacity in its class. Two-wheel drive with differential lock delivers additional traction through unstable conditions. Rack and pinion steering makes maneuvering easy under all conditions. Trail tires come standard, and ground speed maxes at 18 mph.

For more information visit Cub Cadet at www.cubcadetcommercial.com/ circle no. 262



CONTROL OF BROWN PATCH ON TURF-TYPE TALL FESCUE

TREATMENT	RATE oz/1000 sq ft	APPLICATION INTERVAL DAYS	% BROWN PATCH 6/29/2004
Untreated	—	—	48.0
Insignia	0.50	14	0.0
20 WG	0.90	28	1.5

Cooperator; Dr. H. Couch, Virginia Tech – 2004
 Variety: Turf type tall fescue
 # Applications: 3 (14-day)
 Application Dates: 3 Jun, 15 Jun, 29 Jun
 Spray Interval: 14 or 28
 Spray Volume (gal/1000 sq ft): 1.1

Partial data shown.

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Club Car ▼

The Carryall 294 features a powerful 20-hp Honda gas or Kubota diesel engine and fully automatic IntelliTrak system featuring automatic 4-wheel drive, automatic high/low gearing, and automatic front and rear differ-



Consumers drive UTV developments

The utility vehicle market is growing, but the growth is more robust on the consumer side, not the commercial side. So says Lynette Hart, senior product marketing manager of utility vehicles (UTVs) for John Deere, who sees the current breakdown as 60% consumer and 40% commercial.

"The commercial person still needs UTVs but there are just more consumers coming in," Hart says.

Because of the shift from a commercial-based market to one that's consumer-based, there are more recreational users, who are becoming more attracted to UTVs because of the increasing number of options they have. As such, Hart says the "power sports people" who traditionally have manufactured all-terrain vehicles or ATVs have entered the market, emphasizing such things as 4-wheel drive, off-road features and high performance.

"More consumers are also going for the side-by-side option," Hart says, referring to the ability of two people being able to sit side by side in a utility vehicle. "And, as people get older, they want more functionality and more fun."

Of course, this is a positive development for commercial users who can take advantage of UTVs' increased performance and comfort. This is why Hart sees Deere and other UTV manufacturers continuing their focus on the market.

"We started this market and, of course, we'll keep investing in it," she says. "Are we going to chase every little trend? Probably not. But we will try to bring exciting new developments to the market every year."

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LM Reports

ential lock. The 15-cu. ft. cargo bed features a standard 800-lb. load capacity and 1,050-lb. high capacity option. Heavy duty all-terrain or mud tires are the buyer's choice.

For more information contact Club Car at 800/258-2227 or visit www.clubcar.com/ circle no. 263

Columbia ParCar

The Scout S10G is tough enough for expansive job sites and rugged terrain yet gentle on groomed turf. Aggressive tread tires allow for "go anywhere" scouting. An optional heavy-duty front rack increases the rated capacity to 1,000 lbs. It also features a gasoline engine and rear tubular steel bumper with integrated receiver hitch.

For more information contact Columbia at 800/222-4653 or visit www.parcars.com/ circle no. 264



Kubota ▲

The RTV900's robust 21-hp, 3-cylinder, water-cooled Kubota D902 diesel engine can power you in, over, and through rugged, off-road terrain. An extra large cargo bed features a hydraulic lift system for easy dumping by simply operating a single lever. Off-road driving requires split-second decision making,

which is what the fully hydraulic power steering offers. The variable hydro transmission provides unmatched climbing, pulling and braking on hills. A long wheel base, wide-treaded tires, and 7.4 in. of clearance allow the RTV900 to go anywhere.

For more information visit Kubota at www.kubota.com/ circle no. 265

E-Z-GO

With a 16-hp, 480cc, V-twin engine plus on-demand locking rear differential, the ST-480 is ready to tackle those big tasks. It features a top speed of 17 mph, 800-lb. payload capacity, 500-lb. maximum bed load, and flexible dent resistant cowl.

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TECHNOLOGY HANDHELD BASICS

The most important
tool you can have for
a piece of equipment is
the owner's manual.



Work it, own it

BY ALLEN SPENCE

Owners manual? You mean there is an owner's manual for a hedge trimmer?" How many times have I heard that statement? Yes, there is an owner's manual for hedge trimmers and every piece of handheld equipment you purchase. I often tell my students that the most important tool they can have for a piece of equipment is the owner's manual. Let's take a look shall we?

Page one begins with this statement in bold print: "Allow only persons that have read and understand this manual to use the hedge trimmer. To receive maximum performance and satisfaction from your hedge trimmer it is important that you read and understand the maintenance and safety precautions enclosed before using your new hedge trimmer."

So often we forget about the manual, hand this expensive equipment over to our crew and expect it to last forever.

Next time you make a handheld equipment purchase, pay attention to the manual. All the information you'll need is right there in one place.

► **Safety precautions:** This area is all about operator safety. Proper clothing,

transporting, eye and ear protection and refueling instructions are here.

► **Fuel:** Keep this page marked as your reference for gasoline octane rating, oil mixture ratio, oil classifications, hot fueling, minor servicing, and the selection, care and storage of mixed oil.

► **Starting instructions:** This section is especially useful for your newer employees. They'll refer to it for the proper way to hold the trimmer while starting, operating the choke and fuel bulb, setting the throttle, excessive idle time, cold starting procedure, warm starting, stopping and what to do if you flood the engine.

► **Minor maintenance:** You'll need the manufacturer recommendations for air filter service, carburetor adjustments, pull start repair, spark arresting screen cleaning, spark plug replacement and cleaning, gearbox maintenance, and sharpening.

► **Service schedule:** The chart will tell you how often each component of the machine needs service. Daily, weekly, problematic and yearly maintenance schedules are charted here.

Finally, the equipment's model number is located on the cover. We do know how important that number is, don't we?

— The author is turf equipment management instructor at Hinds Community College in Raymond, MS. Contact him at haspence@hindsc.edu.



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Shadow Glen the Golf Club

2005 PGMS Grand Award Winner for Golf Course

Property at a glance

Location: Olathe, KS
Grounds Supervisor: Monica D. Higgins
Category: Golf Course
Total budget: \$1.35 million
Year site built: 1989
Acres of turf: 135
Acres of display beds: four
Total paved area: 270,000 sq. ft.
Total man-hours/week: 992 in season

Maintenance challenges

- ▶ Harsh terrain
- ▶ Deer and other pests
- ▶ Working around guests
- ▶ Special events

Project checklist

- Completed in last two years:
- ▶ Restoration of prairie area
 - ▶ Water gardens refurbished

On the job

- ▶ 15 full-time staff, 14 seasonal workers, four licensed pesticide applicators (includes Grounds and Golf Course Maintenance Divisions)

Before Shadow Glen the Golf Club in Olathe, KS, was named "Best New Course of the Year" in 1989 by *Golf Digest* and later one of "America's Great Courses" in 1995, the site was a rock quarry in the wooded hills of Eastern Kansas.

Though the quarry is gone and in its place are 250 acres of greens, tees, fairways, roughs and native areas, the steep ravines, slopes and wooded bluffs still pose a challenge to Grounds Maintenance Manager Monica D. Higgins and her staff of two full-time and two seasonal employees.

"The terrain makes the course difficult to maintain," Higgins says. "You have to be careful when mowing slopes to avoid scalping the grass or turning equipment over. A lot of the mowing has to be done manually instead of on a larger piece of riding equipment."

Yet that sloping terrain is part of what makes Shadow Glen special, Higgins says. The golf course is surrounded by natural areas that are filled with woody ornamentals, native grasses and wildflowers.

"We've established buffer zones on all sides so the golfers cannot see the houses

nearby. Golfers really feel like they've gone away to a beautiful, natural environment," she adds.

Along with keeping the native grasses and trees in shape, Higgins and her crew also care for 45 landscape beds and plant more than 4,000 spring bulbs, 3,500 annuals and perennials and 400 trees and shrubs each year.

The color beds, with tulips and daffodils in the spring, enhance the greens of the golf course, and annuals like Lantana Landmark Peach Sunrise and Supertunia Mini-Strawberry Pink-Veined brighten sunken patio areas.

All this is done despite constant battles with weather, 20,000 visitors each year with 7:30 a.m. tee times and hungry deer looking for plants to munch. The harsh slopes and steady winds make irrigation a tricky business.

"Our personnel are required to have many skills beyond the typical plant, mow, blow and spray," Higgins says. "We also maintain water gardens and native plant areas, repair sprinklers, install rock work, maintain interior and exterior tropical plants and even do flower arrangements for special events."

Editors' note: *Landscape Management* was the exclusive sponsor of the 2005 Professional Grounds Management Awards for outstanding management of residential, commercial and institutional landscape. Winners are recognized at the annual meeting of the Professional Grounds Management Society in November. To learn more about the annual awards program contact PGMS at: 720 Light St.,

Baltimore, MD 21230 • Phone: 410/223-2861 • Web site: www.pgms.org

PGMS **Landscape**
MANAGEMENT



Grounds Manager Monica Higgins makes sure the color is lively and fresh at Shadow Glen Golf Club in Olathe, KS. Built on the site of a former rock quarry, the many slopes on the course make mowing and irrigation on-going maintenance challenges.



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For more information contact PBI/Gordon at 800/821-7925 or visit www.pbigordon.com / circle no. 267



Web tracker

Link It Software Corp. launched a new Web-based service, EZ Maintenance Web (EZM Web), for scheduling, tracking and managing maintenance for any type of equipment and any type of vehicle, plus full inventory control from anywhere in the world where there is an Internet connection. Based on Link Software's Windows network-ready EZ Maintenance software, EZM Web is designed to support large companies with hundreds of employees and multiple offices, as well as smaller firms with just a few pieces of equipment or vehicles to manage.

For more information contact Link It Corp. at 661/310-2283 or visit www.ezm-web.com / circle no. 268

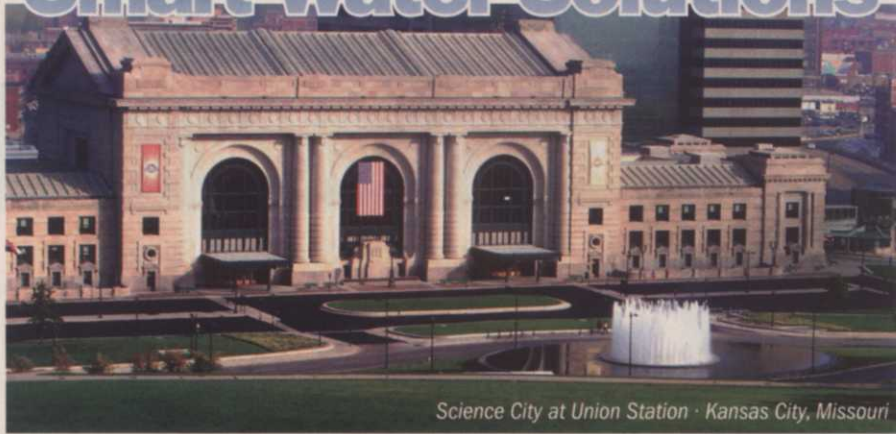


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For more information contact Jacobsen at 888/922-TURF or visit www.bobcatturf.com / circle no. 270

RedMax's extreme trimmer

RedMax's new EX224015-BC commercial trimmer/brushcutter has a split shaft and both the upper and lower driveshafts are made of solid steel. This design allows the trimmer/brushcutter to be interchanged with RedMax pole saw, edger and long reach hedge trimmer attachments. The Strato-Charged two-cycle engine has fewer moving parts, requires no valve maintenance and uses less fuel than traditional two-cycle engines.

For more information contact RedMax/Komatsu Zenoah America Inc. at 800/291-8251 or visit www.redmax.com / circle no. 271

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Oly-Ola Edgings, Inc.'s Bulldog-Edg is a seriously tough paver restraint for hardscape projects like patios, driveways and walkways. Constructed from heavy-duty rigid black vinyl that is 100% recycled, Bulldog-Edg combines

the material's toughness with its flexibility, making it perfect for containing brick pavers, patio blocks, cobblestones and loose materials like gravel or bark. Specially designed "key-hole" cuts make the product flexible enough to make curves without cutting or snipping, and durable enough to make a



clean hardscape edge. Non-bending steel anchor stakes eliminate gaps, frost heave and callbacks to contractors.

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Products



25-gallon sprayer

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Onset Computer Corp.'s SolarStream Satellite is a new, satellite-based wireless transceiver designed exclusively for HOBO Weather Stations. With SolarStream Satellite, users can remotely access HOBO Weather Stations and Micro Stations deployed anywhere in the world covered by the U.S. ORBCOMM satellite network. The transceiver enables users to download weather station data, view real-time graphs, adjust sample rates, check battery status and verify station operation.

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For more information contact Phoenix Environmental Care at 229/245-8845 or visit www.phoenixenvcare.com / circle no. 275

Shorter sprayers



Hunter Industries introduced 2- and 3-in. versions of the Hunter Pro-Spray for applications in shorter turf height regions. The new 2- and 3-in. Pro-Sprays have the same solid construction and features as their larger siblings, but have been developed to fill a specific niche in the Southwest U.S. and other areas where hard, impacted soil and short turf heights are common.

For more information contact Hunter at 760/744-5240 or visit www.HunterIndustries.com / circle no. 276

Power sweeping

The new Jonsered PB2125C power broom is a split-shaft model, capable of accepting other various optional attachments. Powered by Jonsered's 24.5cc, 1.2 hp high-torque engine, the power unit drives a 22-in. flexible rubber fin sweeper. The shafts can be quickly and easily decoupled without tools for convenient storage and transport. Optional additional attachments include a grass trimmer, pole saw, cultivator and extended reach articulating hedge trimmers.

For more information contact Tilton Equipment at 877/693-7729 or visit www.tiltonequipment.com / circle no. 277



Husqvarna turns up the pressure

Husqvarna introduced four new pressure washers: the 5525PW, 6026PW, 9030PW and 1335PW. The pressure washers feature Honda and Subaru Robin engines, and the pumps feature brass



heads and thermal relief valves. Additional standard components include a 50-foot industrial-grade quick connect hose, an adjustable pressure regulator, and detergent injection, as well as 10-in. pneumatic tires. The washers provide pressure ranging



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Mini-skid system trailers

Compact Power, Inc. is offering five new different trailer packages for its Boxer BRUTE, Boxer and Kanga Kid products. The trailers are designed to house a variety of attachments while still leaving enough room to maneuver the mini-skid on and off the trailer. The system trailer is a tool kit on wheels that includes up to 10 attachments plus the machine in the same package. The trailer is equipped with receptacle areas for each attachment, with chains and binders to keep the attachments in place. Trailer sizes range from 5 by 8 ft., 5 by 10 ft. and 4 by 7 ft. For more information contact Compact Power at 800/476-9673 or visit www.cpiequipment.com / circle no. 280

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For more information contact Barreto Manufacturing at 800/525-7348 or visit www.barretomfg.com / circle no. 281



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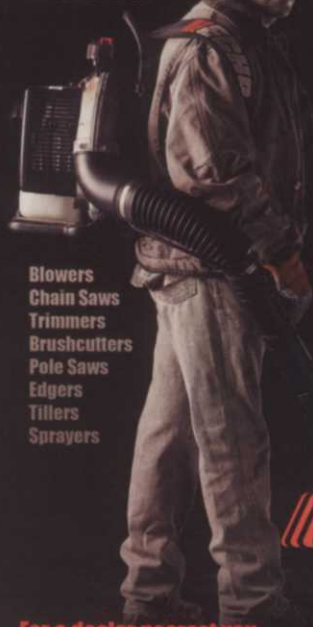
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Events

RESOURCES

WHAT, WHEN & WHERE

June

14-17 Snow and Ice

Symposium / Hartford, CT, Sponsored by Snow & Ice Management Association, 814/835-3577, www.sima.org

21-25 ANLA Retail Roadshow

/ New England, Sponsored by American Nursery & Landscape Association, 202/789-2900, www.anla.org

21-24 Southeast Greenhouse Conference & Trade Show /

Greenville, NC, Sponsored by Southeast Greenhouse Conference & Trade Show, 800/453-3070, www.sgcts.org

22-23 ITODA Distributors Management Forum /

Long Branch, NJ, Sponsored by Independent Turf and Ornamental Distributors Association, 814/238-1573, www.itoda.org

22-24 OPEI Annual Meeting /

Carlsbad, CA, Sponsored by Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, 703/549-7600, www.opei.org

July

2-16 ANLA Legislative Conference and Annual Meeting /

Vail, CO, Sponsored by American Nursery & Landscape Association, 202/789-2900, www.anla.org

12-15 CLCA Summer Family Extravaganza /

San Diego, Sponsored by California Landscape Contractors Association, 927/830-2780, www.clca.org

16-22 Association of Professional Landscape Designers (APLD) Annual Conference /

Philadelphia, Sponsored by Association of Professional Landscape Designers, 717/238-9780, www.apld.org

6-22 Perennial Plant Symposium and Trade Show /

Montreal, Quebec, Canada, Sponsored by Perennial Plant Association, 614/771-8431, www.perennialplant.org

18-21 TPI Summer Convention & Field Days /

Memphis, TN, Sponsored by Turfgrass Producers International, 800/405-8873, www.turfgrassod.org

23-25 PLANET Legislative Day on the Hill /

Washington, D.C., Sponsored by Professional Landcare Network, 800/395-2522, www.landcarenetwork.org

25-27 Penn Allied Nursery Trade Show (PANTS) /

Atlantic City, NJ, Sponsored by Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association, 717/238-1673, www.pantshow.com

27 Midwest Regional Turf Field Day /

West Lafayette, IN, Sponsored by Purdue Turf Program, 765/494-8039, www.agry.purdue.edu/turf/index.html

29 - August 2 ISA Annual Conference and Trade Show /

Minneapolis, Sponsored by International Society of Arboriculture, 888/472-8733, www.isa-arbor.com

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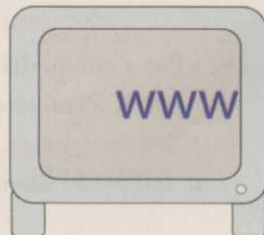
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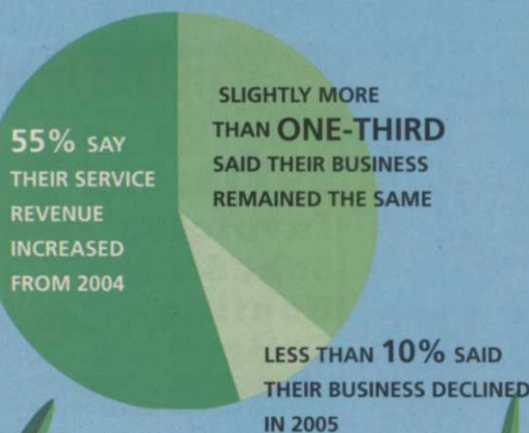
Last year we asked subscribers to describe the progress they felt they were making toward a leading position in their respective markets. The majority of those readers responding to our survey said they had made "some progress."

	NUMBER	PERCENT
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Some progress	217	50%
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SOURCE: 2005 LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT BENCHMARKING SURVEY

IN THE GREEN

Most professional lawn care operators saw revenue increases in 2005. Here's the breakdown:



SOURCE: SPECIALTY PRODUCTS CONSULTANTS, LLC 2005 STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF THE U.S. TURF AND ORNAMENTAL PESTICIDE MARKET. WWW.SPCCRESEARCH.COM



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Homeowners place a high value on green spaces, not only for their personal property but for their cities too. An online real estate Web site listed its version of the Top 10 Greenest Cities, paying attention to clean air and water, parks and greenbelts, reliable public transportation and renewable energy. They are, in no particular order,

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- ▶ Austin, TX
- ▶ Minneapolis
- ▶ Boulder, CO
- ▶ Burlington, VT
- ▶ Madison, WI
- ▶ New York, NY
- ▶ San Francisco
- ▶ Santa Monica, CA
- ▶ Chicago

SOURCE: MOVE.COM

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91 million U.S. households, or 83%, participated in one or more types of do-it-yourself indoor and outdoor lawn and garden activities in 2005. The National Gardening Association, authors of the survey, attribute this record number in part to strong sales of new and existing homes.

SOURCE: NATIONAL GARDENING ASSOCIATION 2005 NATIONAL GARDENING SURVEY

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Respond to your customers

This is a pop quiz on your knowledge of good service practices. Please select one answer only from each of the following questions:

1. In one survey, 42% of large organizations in the U.S. typically respond to customer e-mail inquiries within:

- a. one hour
- b. 12 hours
- c. 24 hours
- d. 1 week

2. About 88% of U.S. customers expect to get a response to their e-mail inquiries within:

- a. one hour
- b. 12 hours
- c. 24 hours
- d. 1 week

If you haven't guessed the answers, both are 24 hours. You can see the disparity between what customers expect and what most organizations provide. And this data is from 2005. Most customers probably want even quicker response now. The survey also shows a trend of slower responses from organizations to customers — not a good sign.

Stereotypes have a reason

The same business survey that gave us these numbers also says in 2005, 36% of organizations failed to respond at all.

There's the old bromide that consumers can call five landscapers (or plumbers or other contractors) and only one or two will respond. In my experience, this



Susan Porter / Associate Publisher/Executive Editor
sporter@questex.com

is true and I suspect it is the experience of many homeowners. I realize this time of year is a pressure cooker, but customer response is something you cannot afford to overlook.

When you consider how much time, effort and money goes into the effort to set your company apart from its competition, build a reliable reputation, attract the "right" type of client (usually "high-end residential") and encourage them to take action by inquiring about the services, the failure to respond makes no sense.

Even if your operation is set up to respond to your customers, is it on your terms or theirs? Do you wait three or four days before you return the call? Do you get around to e-mails once a week? That may not be soon enough for many consumers in today's environment of instant gratification and information. Ask them for their preferences, and revise your practices accordingly.

If you really can't respond quickly, especially during the crunch season, tell customers the truth. One of the best voicemail messages I've heard in this industry explains that it's a small company, the owner is out working all day, and he will respond that night or at least within 24 hours. And he does.

That's all you need to do:
Be honest and follow through.
Set realistic expectations, then meet them. It takes some effort but it shows who comes first — the customer.

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Having an online presence is a must to attract and retain customers today

By **Jamie J. Gooch** / Contributing Editor

Your clients and potential clients are online. Sixty-eight percent of men and 66% of women use the Internet, according to The Pew Internet & American Life Project. The study also estimates that the percentages of American men and women who earn more than \$75,000 a year and are online are 90% and 95%, respectively.

How do you ensure your Web site gives a professional impression to your visitors and meets your needs? The first step is to give your site focus.

"The goal of my site is to engage people and keep them engaged by making them a client or an interested person who will either become a client or tell someone else," says Jeff Korhan, president of Tremendous Landscape Co., Plainfield, IL. "A Web site reflects on your company. It's no different than your trucks or your marketing materials. An amateurish Web site makes you look like an amateur."

"Ask yourself: 'What's the primary action I want visitors to take?'" advises Judy Guido, president of Guido & Associates, Moorpark, CA. "Most people use it as a digital brochure, but it can be so much more. It should have multi-tiered functionality."

What to do

There are several must-have Web site features for landscape design-build companies, according to Guido, including:

- Photographs that show off your best projects, with before and after shots.
- A listing of awards, industry association memberships and community involvement activities.
- A database function to collect names and contact information for use in future marketing campaigns, to send surveys or to distribute e-mail newsletters.
- A media area containing press releases and articles published about your company by local and national press.

- Information that educates visitors about your company and the industry.
- Links to other sites.
- Continuity, clarity and consistency with your company's other marketing materials.
- A way to contact you on every page.

Korhan's site, Tremendous.com, features all of the above. "You really need to show Web site visitors how you do things and what's it like to work with your company," he says. "I spend a great deal of time on our brand — the awards we've won, our philosophies, what we do in the community. I also talk about our stability, and I like to include testimonials. Those really speak for you."

A newsletter sign-up function is particularly valuable to Korhan because it is a way to pull people in who might not be sure about the company.

"Now you have a chance to educate them and make them sure you're the right company for them," he says, adding that even if they don't become customers, he's still contributing to a professional industry image. "I don't mind do-it-yourselfers sucking me dry for information. It takes 30 minutes to type up tips and send it out to everyone, and the DIYers will tell others who are interested in our services."

What not to do

Before you jump in with both feet, have a Web site plan. Just like a landscape, changing the design of a Web site after it's built is difficult and expensive — and doesn't always yield the best results.

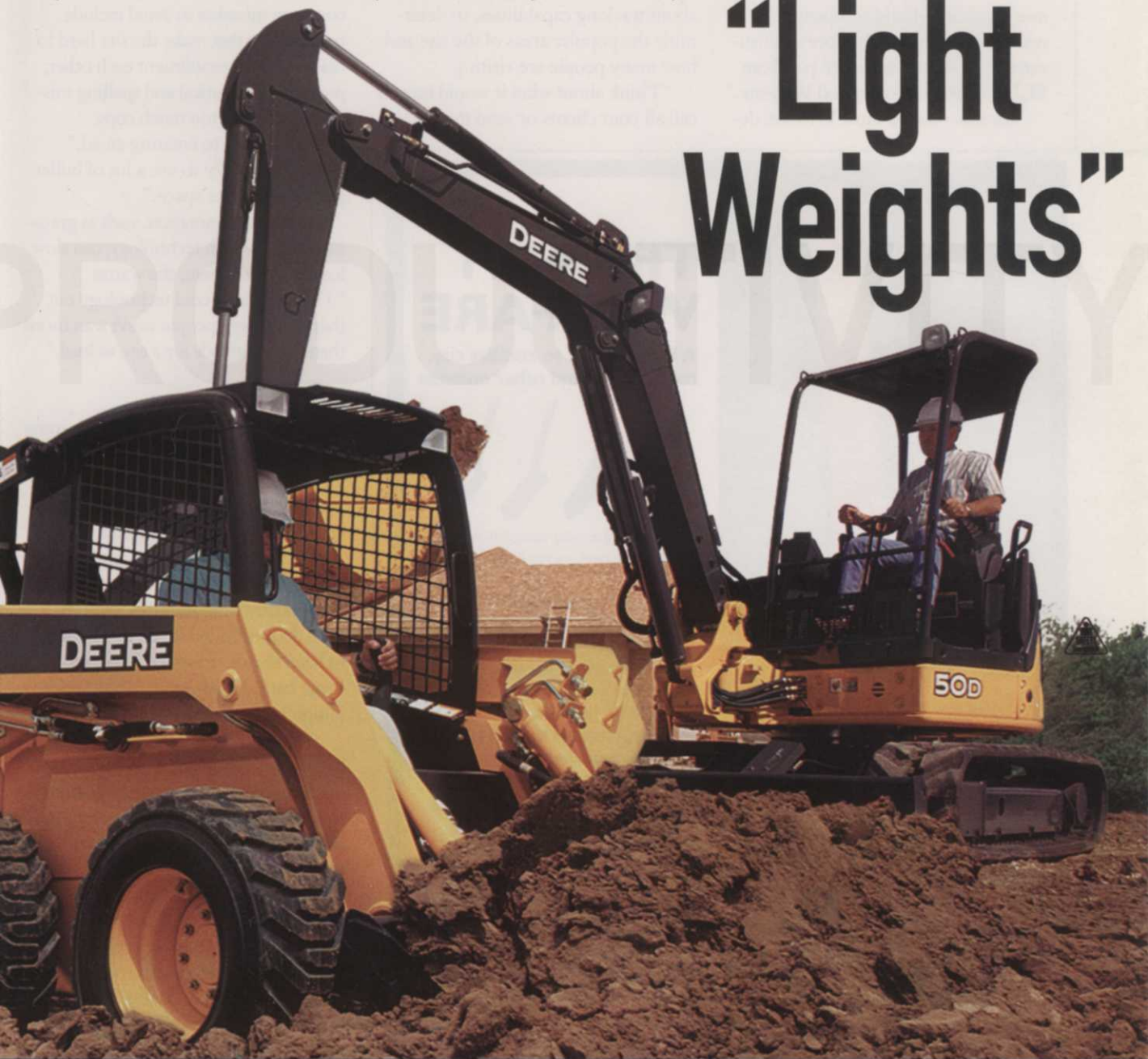
Many design-build professionals look at some poorly made do-it-yourself landscapes and wonder why the owners didn't hire a professional. The same might be said of people looking at your Web site if you don't hire a professional. Even if you have a staff that has the skills to create a Web site, do you want to take their time away from their other responsibilities?

Continued on page 6



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Continued from page 4

"You can get a Web site done for as little as \$1,000," says Guido. "But the average design-build company will need something a little more sophisticated. You should expect to pay from \$1,750 to \$4,000 for a good Web site."

For that money, most Web site de-

signers will include meta tags and other ways to ensure the site is picked up by major search engines. Also ask about tracking capabilities, to determine the popular areas of the site and how many people are visiting.

"Think about what it would cost to call all your clients or send them a

postcard," Korhan says. "You can do that quickly and easily online."

When it's time to add content, some common mistakes to avoid include using colors that make the site hard to read or don't compliment each other, posting grammatical and spelling mistakes and using too much copy.

"It's similar to creating an ad," Guido says. "Try to use a lot of bullet points and white space."

Too much animation, such as gratuitous use of Flash technology, can slow loading times down, she warns: "There's a lot of cool technology out there, but most people won't wait more than a few seconds for a site to load."

Care and feeding

Once the site is built, you can save some money if you keep it updated yourself. However, schedule updates frequently, because like any marketing medium, its content can grow stale quickly.

"Changing the site and updating it is everything," Korhan says, noting that his firm does monthly updates. "We do most of it ourselves. You need to keep the site fresh so people will come back. Updating it also helps keep it high in the search engine results."

Although it can be easily overlooked when putting together your marketing program, site promotion should be an essential component in every facet of your campaign.

"People create sites and don't promote them, then wonder why they're not getting any hits," says Guido. "Put your Web address on corporate communications, letterhead, invoices, purchase orders, trucks, T-shirts and signs. Let employees know. Tell everyone. Include it on your voicemail and in your phone system for people on hold." ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION on building a Web site, check out Judy Guido's columns in the March and April editions of our new e-newsletter, LDB Solutions, which is available at www.landscape-design-build.com/solutions.



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CIRCLE NO. 106

Different is King

Increase profitability by separating yourself from the competition

By Jeff Scott / Contributor

In the last issue, I discussed how becoming “King of the Mountain,” or creating a desirable market niche that no one else owns, allows you to charge higher margins and fend off low-ball competition. I explored the first factor that helps you get there: Create a unique selling point. In this article, I’ll explain the other two criteria: having the highest market share in that niche and filling an unidentified need in the marketplace.

What mountain can you claim that has the highest market share, and what is the process for figuring that out? Here is the process we used:

1. Pull your management team together, or a group of employees who understand your company strengths, your customers and the market.
2. Identify the different mountains that you are playing on. Where are you on that mountain? Do you already have highest market share with one of your products? If not, explore how to think about this. Take night lighting as an example. Who in your market offers this service? Who is king of this



STRUCTURE YOUR MARKET STRATEGY as carefully as you do your landscape plans.

mountain? What is your market share vs. everyone else? Do you offer something unique in night lighting that no one else does? Do this exploration with each of your products and services you sell.

3. Explore areas in which your company excels. If you redefined the market with that uniqueness, would you have the most market share? For example, Christmas Décor was not the biggest in night lighting, but wanted to become the biggest in holiday lighting. It redefined the market and created a new niche on a national level.

4. Take a fresh look at your product offerings. Is there a set of services and products that you can

Continued on page 10

INCREASE PROFITS, PART 2 of 2

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Continued from page 8
 bundle together in a new way? Can you bundle a new service to your existing service that makes you unique, and would thus give you highest market share? For example, a pool water delivery company recently began “chemically balancing” the water be-

fore delivery. This company took a commodity, was the first to do something unique that many pool builders and homeowners want, and created its own new mountain.

5. Sharpen your focus: Are you king of two mountains? You might think this is good if you are making high margins



GROW YOUR NICHE and nurture it into its full potential.

in both areas. But are you really getting the most profit and growth possible? Generally, when a company tries to conquer two mountains at the same time, its employees get confused, its customers may get confused, and worse, its market gets confused. Consider dropping one niche altogether, or combining your two niches into one, so you can focus on promoting a singular voice. If you sell to two completely different groups of customers and have two completely separate divisions, you need to do some soul-searching to see whether this really works for you. It is hard for management to grow two different kinds of companies well.

The unidentified need

Filling an unidentified need automatically makes you unique and first to market. So if you can pull off this last criterion, you will hit a home run.

A great example of a company that did this is Starbucks. It saw a need with people who wanted a European café experience, a sense of community and more sophisticated coffee and espresso drinks. Starbucks has since fulfilled that need — globally and on practically every street corner.

A great industry example of this is Classic Garden Design in Wilton, Conn. There was a largely unmet need for creating and maintaining perennial gardens in the market, as well as many wealthy homeowners who wanted the service but didn't know where to get it. So this company formed a specialized service to meet this need. It is a great concept, because

Continued on page 12

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CIRCLENO. 101

Continued from page 10

once you have captured the client's heart and soul, there are many other garden and landscape needs you can fulfill.

Reality check

If you feel you already own a mountain and yet you can't get enough margins to make an outstanding profit, or even a decent profit, there is obviously something wrong. Your production may be out of whack. Or you may have made the common mistake of being stuck in the middle, where you are neither low-cost producer (a la Wal Mart) nor highly differentiated (a la Starbucks). You are in Death Valley, between the mountains.

Some companies make the mistake of trying to solve this problem by making it up in volume. This is dangerous, because it is all too easy to sell too much of a money-losing product



A MAIN FOCAL POINT, similar to landscape design, is necessary to grow your personal niche.

— and still end up losing money.

You need to re-evaluate your marketing and make sure you are true to your mountain. My advice is to re-explore all three criteria and get some outside help, someone to question you on the validity of your assumptions.

But once you are king of a mountain, you need to let everyone know it. Incorporate the essence of your new mountain and everything it stands for into all your communications and customer touch points, including uni-

forms, letterhead, trucks, customer phone greetings, etc. This is critical to the ultimate success of your King of the Mountain strategy. This is both fun and challenging to implement. Good luck! ■

Jeff Scott is co-owner and president of client relations for Glen Gate Pool & Property, Wilton, CT. He has his MBA and regularly speaks on "The Six Marketing Secrets You Won't Learn in Business School." Contact him at JeffS@glengatecompany.com.

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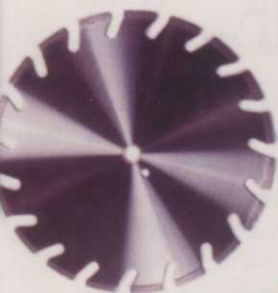
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CIRCLE NO. 111

HOW TO Install a public drip irrigation system



Water conservation is important to government agencies and homeowners alike. Drip irrigation systems can help reduce the amount of water applied. In addition, runoff and evaporation is reduced because the water is applied slowly, allowing it to percolate through the soil.

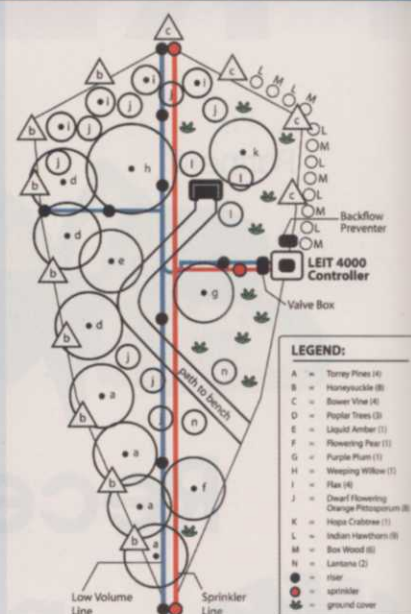
Conventional drip systems use 1/2-in. poly tubing, with a variety of outside diameters, as the mainline and 1/4-in. feeder lines extend to each plant. This is great for the homeowner, but is not necessarily an ideal solution in a park or other public setting. Public spaces that have high traffic benefit from streamlined systems that have fewer parts so they aren't as susceptible to damage from traffic, cultivation and vandalism.



5 For plants that are randomly dispersed, run 1/2-in. poly tubing to the area to be irrigated. Insert 1-gph pressure-compensating emitters directly into the main line close to the plants. Use two emitters per shrub, one on each side of the plant and about 10 in. to 12 in. apart. Take care not to place an emitter where it will dispense water into the crown of the plant, as this can cause crown rot.



6 Drip line can be used when watering row plantings or plants in close or predetermined spacing. It is exceptional for watering around trees. When looped around the root line of a tree, it effectively saturates the entire root ball. DIG's Earthline PC drip line is extruded tubing with self-contained pressure compensating emitters inserted inside the tubing wall at preset intervals of 12, 18 and 24 in. Because the emitters are lodged inside the tubing, it reduces maintenance.



1 A planting and irrigation plan helps the installation process every step of the way. Evaluating the dimensions of the property to be irrigated and the plants used in the landscape will help determine what emitters to use, and how many. Always allow for future growth and/or expansion.



7 One of the most important steps in installing a drip system is flushing the main line and the drip line before pressurizing the system. Open the ends and flush the lines by allowing the water to run through the system and out the end for a few minutes. This will wash out any soil or debris caught inside the line during installation. These particles could get caught in the small orifices of the emitters and compromise flow.



2 The head assembly, or a drip zone, consists of a valve, filter and pressure regulator. It is a series of in-line components that are connected together and installed at the beginning of the system. These components are necessary to use with drip systems to keep the water supply clean and the pressure down to acceptable levels (between 20 and 30 psi).



3 Separating the low-volume line from the sprinkler line will allow for more flexibility when programming the controller. Separate zones can be programmed to run schedules tailored to the plants in each section. Use PVC pipe as the main lateral for both the low-volume and sprinkler lines.



4 Multiple risers should be placed on the low-volume line for flexibility during installation. The risers should come up just inches above the ground. Attach an elbow to the riser and tighten by hand. Attach a T to the elbow. Insert 1/2-in. poly tubing into each side of the T and run it as the main line toward the plants to be irrigated.



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HOW TO Install public drip irrigation CONTINUED

Ideas that work:

■ Reducing the number of parts in the system will help minimize vandalism and maintenance. Insert emitters directly into the 1/2-in. poly tubing or use drip tubing with emitters inserted in the wall of the tubing.

■ Various emitters are available that deliver between 0.5 and 4 gph. Evaluate the plants to be irrigated and the soil type to determine what emitters to use. For example, soil that is more densely packed, like clay, will require emitters below 1 gph to allow the water to percolate down.



8 Close the ends using an end cap to pressurize the system, pushing water to the emitters and out to the plants. Check the system to make sure that it is working correctly.



9 Secure the 1/2-in. poly tubing with stakes to hold it in place.

10 Cover with mulch to minimize vandalism, and to achieve greater water savings and weed control.

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CIRCLE NO. 106

PAIR THE

Right Plants

WITH THE Right Pots



In fashion, it's the accessories that can really dress up an outfit. Jewelry, scarves, belts and handbags are typical accessories, and they can be readily changed for a new look. In the garden, it's containers.

Container planting has become considerably more exciting in recent years. For those with smaller yards, gardening with containers is often a necessity. And with the huge trend to create an outdoor living space and spend more time outside the home, lots of consumers are adding style to their gardens with dazzling container plants.

Uncontained sales potential

Landscape professionals have a tremendous opportunity to get their clients excited about containers. The potential for incremental sales can be significant. Suggest to your clients that they think of containers as a way to transform the look of their yard throughout the year, changing out the plants for various seasons: hollies and conifers in the winter, bursts of flowering color in the spring and brilliant foliage in the fall. Tender plants can provide inter-

est during warmer weather and then easily be moved indoors for overwintering.

"Containers allow gardeners to abandon their zone and grow whatever they like," said Nicholas Staddon, director of new plants for Monrovia Growers, Azusa, CA. "We have seen a huge increase in sales of plants destined for containers — patio trees, espaliers and topiaries, but also lots of tropicals, grasses, perennials, bamboos and dwarf varieties of trees, such as citrus."

Staddon points out that Monrovia has greatly increased the varieties of plants offered in patio tree shapes — everything from *Abutilon*, *Hibiscus* and *Lantana* to *Loropetalum*, *Hydrangea* and *Bougainvillea*.

Container and plant choices

There are many containers in the marketplace right now, from brightly colored glazed pots and modern metals to the more traditional terra-cottas.

Metallic pots reflect modernism's clean lines

Continued on page 20

URN POTENTIAL In styles ranging from traditional to modern, down-home or exotic, containers are becoming a hot commodity in landscape design.

Continued from page 19
and industrial materials. Planted with care, their shapes can enhance the minimalist spaces of a modern home and garden. Fill them with upright reed-like growers or bamboos for a living column of texture. Good choices include Variegated Century

plant, Banana Split Soft Leafed *Yucca* or Jack Spratt *Phormium*. Bring out the architectural value of a stark metallic pot with rosette-shaped succulents. Try a top dressing of finely ground green or blue recycled glass gravel for a jewel garden like no other. Bright colored glazed pots make a



bold statement. Fill several smaller pots with small plants for potent foliage color and close-up interest. Silvery Sunproof Lilyturf or Golden Variegated Sweet Flag are ideal.

A large glazed pot can carry the theme of a tropical paradise, no matter what growing zone you're in. Create a tropical style with large leaf plants like banana, *Canna* or bird of paradise. Choose palms or bamboo for height and vary foliage colors. Select exotic flowers, like passion flowers, *Mandevilla* and *Abutilon*.

Another dramatic look for a large glazed pot is to go with an Asian-inspired design. Horsetail reeds, *Nandina* Sienna Sunrise and bright blooming azaleas lend an Asian feel. Choose strap-leaf plants for exotic textural interest and under plant them with ground cover roses or creeping juniper. Setting the pot in a sea of jet-black beach pebbles adds drama to the presentation.

Topiaries look stunning in Mediterranean terra-cotta containers. There are so many options with plant materials and the variety of shapes beyond the traditional poodle or spiral. For example, Monrovia's Italianate Collection blends shapes and styles to evoke the precision and elegance of traditional villa and chateaux gardens. Thanks to uniformity of growth, you



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can create identical compositions and use them to flank an entry window or fountain for balance. Or line them up a sweeping staircase to emphasize an architectural design.

Evergreen foliage makes innovative topiary forms as attractive in winter as in summer. Drought-resistant cypress and junipers not only look great as topiaries, but defy water rationing requirements. Mint julep juniper has brilliant mint-green foliage, and its compact habit makes it a good choice for topiary. Planted in a terra-cotta jardiniere, a topiary is a portable sculpture for a terrace, patio or foundation bed.

Recreate the elegance of an English manor with a pedestal urn, a towering accent that will add instant style to a shaded garden or tree dell. Celebrate the Victorian love of boxwood and formal evergreen shapes. Green Tower or Faulkner varieties of boxwood are excellent choices. Insert brightly splashed Japanese painted ferns to ensure a lush color-rich appearance. You can even feature shrubs, such as exquisite heavy-blooming *Camellias*. To balance height, simply add some long trailing vines or groundcovers.

"If you think of containers as the fashion accessories of the garden, you can really add pizzazz and an ever-changing look," Staddon says. "Ap-



BRIGHT SPOTS Colorful pots perk up a neutrally hued area.

proach every container as though it is a blank canvas. Be bold, innovative and make the most of foliage shape, color and texture, as well as blooms and fragrance." ■

To see more examples of container ideas, visit www.landscape-design-build.com.

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light, eliminating the need to run protective conduit. The 2-conductor cable comes in 8-, 10- and 12-AWG wire gauges with maximum operating voltage of 30V. Cable is available in 250-, 500- and 1,000-ft. spools.

For more information, circle #201

Copper elegance

RSL, Professional Landscape Lighting, presents its solid copper series, many of which are also available in brass or aluminum. The G262C (pictured) is designed to delineate a driveway, pathway or planted area. Other



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CIRCLE NO. 103

designs include traditional and contemporary shapes, as well as a bullet style for up or down lighting foliage. For more information, circle #202



Petite lights pack punch

Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting introduces a line of "mini-bullets"—small-scale versions of its up light series. The compact line delivers a full-sized light's level of illumination, yet presents a smaller fixture profile. They are designed to highlight special garden features or for use in courtyards, walled gardens or other smaller areas. For more information, circle #203

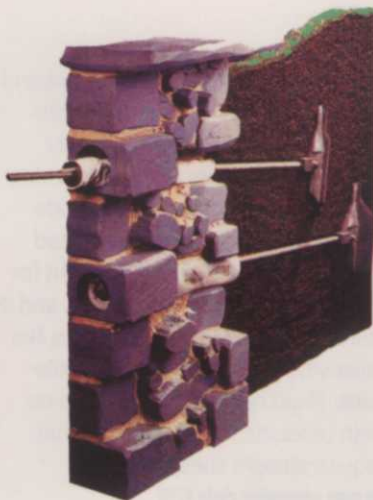
Lighting, in bloom

Evergreen Outdoor presents a new floral-style cast aluminum path light, Model S222. The fixture is designed to resemble a trumpet flower, 8 in. wide by 6 in. deep, and sits on a curving "stem" with leaves.



The 29-in.-tall light features a powder-coated textured finish and is available in bronze, black, verde or rust.

For more information, circle #204



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CIRCLE NO. 113

CIRCLE NO. 116

Continued from page 23

historic nature of the project has to be preserved. The versatile system offers a solution tailored to meet the specific requirements of each structure, regardless of sand, gravel, clay, limestone or even broken brick or stone ground conditions.

For more information, circle #205

Paving options

Dimex LLC presents two new additions to the EdgePro Paver Restraint product line. With a 1.25-in. vertical wall height, EdgePro Low Profile is designed for thinner paving applications,

including 40-mm wet cast pavers and flagstone. It can also be used with standard 60-mm concrete or clay pavers for installers who prefer more of an exposed edge to the outside course. EdgePro MAX is designed with a 2.75-in. vertical wall height for 80-mm concrete or clay pavers, and its sturdy profile supports large jobs like driveways and commercial installations. Rigid options are available on both products for installations that require straight lines.

For more information, circle #206



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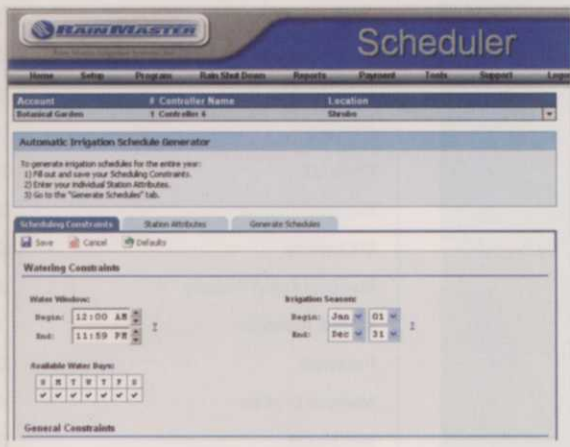
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For more information, circle #208

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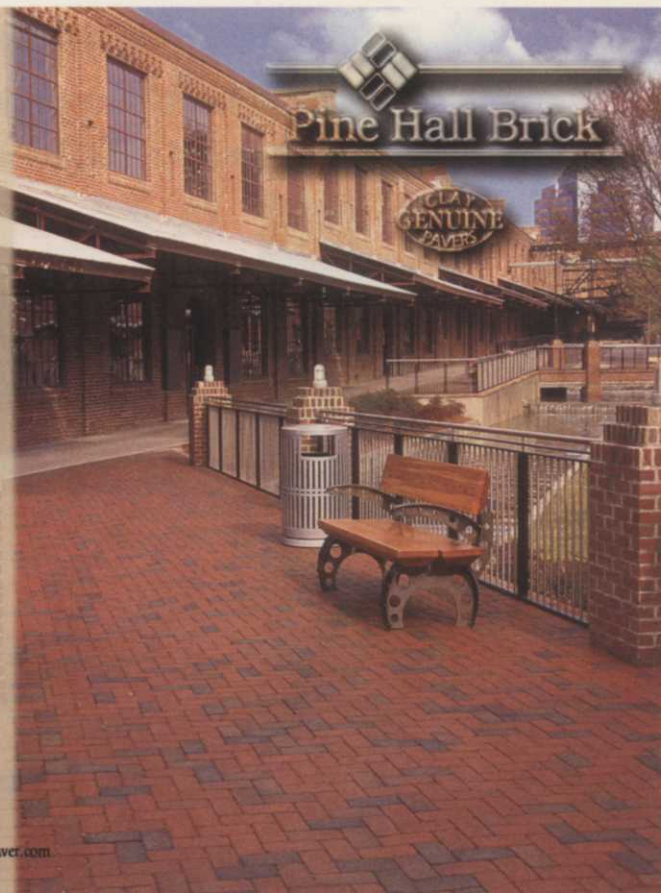
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