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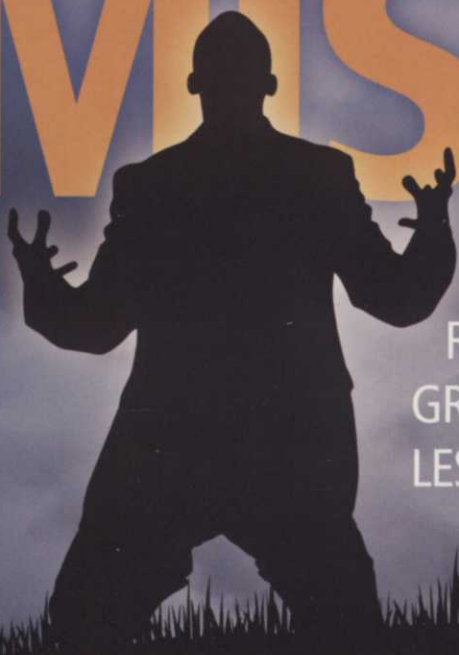
MANAGEMENT

AUGUST 2007 / www.landscapemanagement.com

“Misunderstanding
the cost of doing
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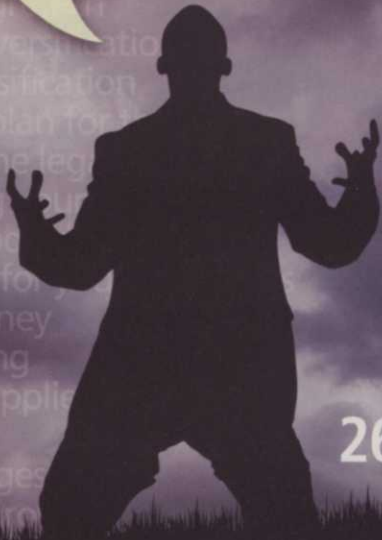
BUCKLE UP

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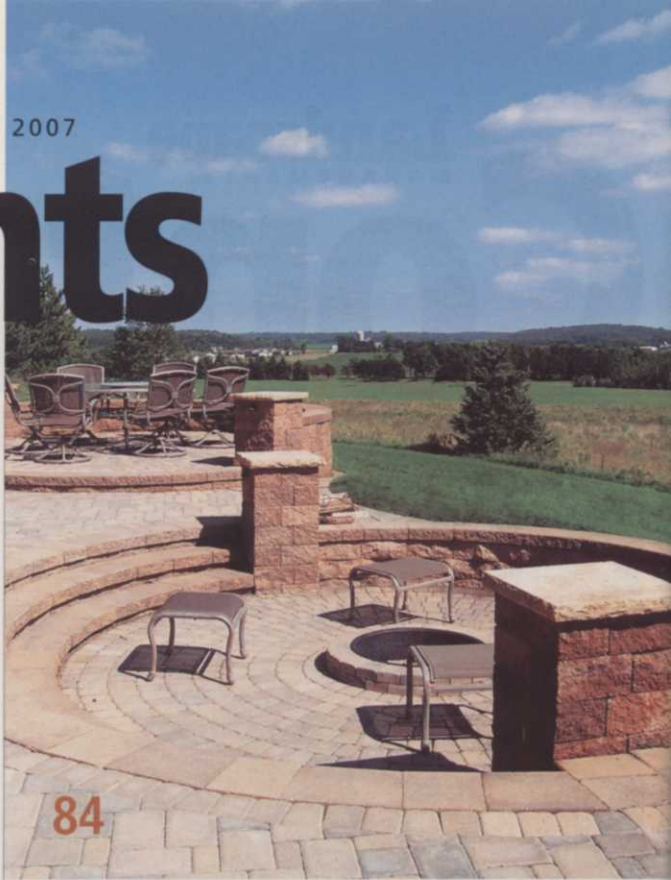
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OFA Short Course

Did you miss the OFA Short Course in Columbus, OH, last month? In case you couldn't make it to the show, which *Tradeshow Week* recently named as one of the Top 200 largest trade shows in the U.S., *Landscape Management* and *Livescapes* have you covered. We're bringing coverage from OFA directly to you.

» Readers respond

Is the market you serve becoming more "green?" We're wondering if you're adding on services, such as organic or natural turf/landscape care, or are getting more questions and requests from customers on "green" practices or products.



42%

We practice and promote environmentally friendly services.

32% Yes, we see some interest in our market.

21% This "green" thing is overblown.

5% It's not an issue in our market.

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

» Special issue

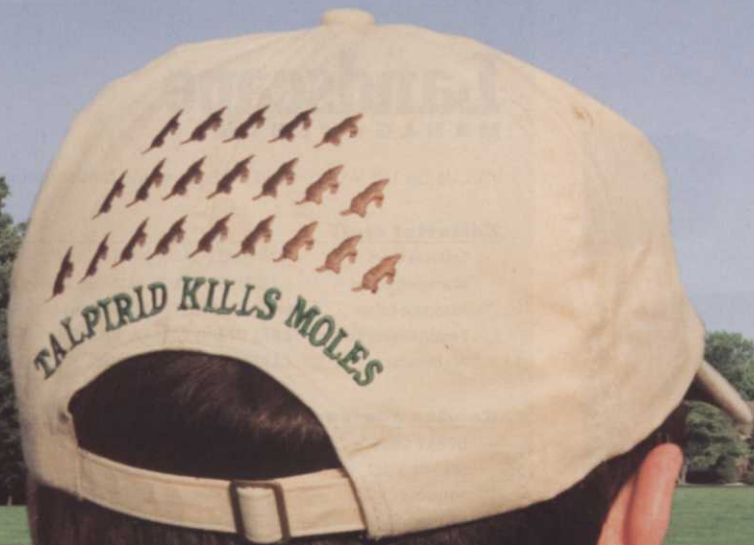
Renewal & Remembrance at Arlington National Cemetery & Legislative Day on the Hill. Members of the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) completed landscaping projects at America's most sacred ground before visiting legislators on Capital Hill to voice their opinions on issues critical to the Green Industry.



» Overheard

"The democratic leadership is not going to impeach Bush; they're going to turn him into a piñata."

— **Mort Kondracke**, co-host of FOX-TV's *The Beltway Boys*, during a presentation to contractors during PLANET's Legislative Day on the Hill.



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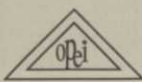
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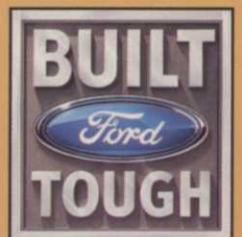


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How else can we serve?

BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

While the slumping housing market hasn't been good news for landscape contractors, and in particular companies specializing in design/build, it hasn't stopped our industry's growth either.

Certainly, it's slowed the pace of our growth by more than a click or two. And, if the slump continues or gets worse (and it may), that will slow us down even more. But the possibilities for the landscape service industry remain bright, at least for the next several years because of what I refer to as the three "D's". The first is demographics, the do-it-for-me boomers. Then there is the smaller next generation of dual-wage-family, on-the-go professionals. The third "D" is disposable income. If you think there's a shortage of that, visit any popular amusement park or entertainment venue this summer.

The housing malaise has caused many of us to reconsider or mix of service offerings, with a pronounced shift towards maintenance and landscape remediation.

Others are looking for services they can profitably add, or as separate businesses run and managed under essentially the same management and location. Many added lawn care via a Weed Man franchise these past few years, for example.

That's the exciting part of our industry, the diverse and seemingly ever expanding variety of services we can offer our customers. There's no rigid definition of what a landscape contractor is or can

offer. Only our imaginations limit new opportunities to improve properties and enhance our customers' enjoyment of outdoor spaces.

How many of us, a generation ago, envisioned outdoor kitchens and backyard entertainment centers becoming such popular landscape items? Waterfalls? Home sports courts? Synthetic turf?

(For that matter, how many of us a generation ago imagined regional landscape companies growing to \$10 million and more in annual revenues doing relatively basic property maintenance?)

Yes, home prices have fallen steeply in some markets. And analysts say the situation isn't going to improve soon. In fact, it may worsen before it gets better, perhaps the second half of 2008, predict experts that watch that market.

The home building slump is the reality, and it's a drag on our growth, a sobering reminder that markets shift and those of us that supply and service these markets must be equally nimble.

If you've been too busy working in your business this season (and not "on" it), slow down, talk to other non-industry professionals in

your market and begin planning for 2008. You may want to readjust your service offerings to reflect what's sure to be a different market next year.

Contact Ron at 216/
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Only our imaginations limit new opportunities to improve properties



The advantage of specialized crews is that they should be good and efficient at what they do.



Special or full-service crew

BY BRUCE WILSON

The debate goes on about whether it is better or more efficient to have specialized crews that mow, prune and detail, or is it better to have one full-service crew that does everything? There is no right answer to this question. Both can work effectively and both have their problems and limitations. So what are the pros and cons?

Full service crew

The main advantage to having one crew responsible for the maintenance functions on a job site is that there is clear accountability. If while mowing something is broken crew members are more likely to fix it. The crew leader is responsible for everything.

You also make a single visit to do all functions, therefore there is a potential for less travel time, which is costly. Some customers however feel they get more for their money if you are visiting two or more times with different crews to do different functions.

You may need more equipment because all crews will need all the equipment necessary to mow, trim and other tasks they're required to do. This can be a disadvantage.

Training your crews to be expert at everything poses more of a training challenge than using specialized crews that need only to be trained in their specialty. Some employees prefer more varied work while others prefer to be specialists.

Specialized crews

The primary advantage of specialized crews is they're specialized and should be very good and efficient at what they do. They should be set up equipment-wise to focus on their area of expertise, whether it's mowing, detail or pruning. Training is easier with these crews since they're trained to do one thing.

A potential disadvantage is that a mow crew may walk right past a big weed by the front door of the client's property because that is the detail crew's responsibility. Customers have little patience for the "it's-not-my-job" excuse.

Another disadvantage is the extra travel time required for more than one crew to visit a site. This may more than offset any efficiency gained through specialization. So what is the right answer?

It is dictated by the make up of the work you have. It may also be a combination. Companies that mow large turf areas with big mowers like to keep them running. So it makes perfect sense to have large areas mowed by a specialized crew.

On the other hand, if job sites are small, the full-service crew would be more practical and efficient.

To me, the devil is in the details. You must understand the job requirements, density issues, training issues and equipment capitalization issues. Then you make a decision on what makes the most sense for satisfying the customer needs first and your operational preferences second.

— 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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In the Know

BUSINESS NEWS YOU CAN USE

Renewal & Remembrance

Hundreds of PLANET members return to Arlington National Cemetery and donate their time, energy and equipment

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS / Managing Editor

Patricia Burleson's son finished his basic training two weeks before 9/11. He was in Washington D.C. when American Airlines flight 77 struck the Pentagon killing 184 people. A member of the 3rd U.S. Infantry, the young man was part of the recovery team for those who died in America's capital that day.

Burleson, vice president/production coordinator of Estate Gardeners Inc. Elkhorn, NE, came to visit her son at Christmas that year and the two spent a lot of time at Arlington National Cemetery.

Burleson returned to Arlington this year as she did last year to give back to those who have given their lives in service to protect this county. Burleson was part of Renewal and Remembrance, a program started 11 years ago by members of the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET). Hundreds of Green Industry business owners, workers and their families came to Washington to provide landscaping services for Arlington and Historic Congressional Cemetery, which turned 200 years old this year.

Burleson spearheaded the donation of 850 perennials, trees and shrubs for Renewal and Remembrance. Teams worked around at seven planting loca-



The contribution in time and labor to Arlington amounted to about \$250,000.

tions in the two cemeteries installed 80 trees including crepe myrtle, white pine, arborvitae, American holly, kwanzan cherries and bald cypress at seven planting locations.

Green Industry volunteers also limed 270 acres of turf, renovated the green space around the visitor center and the grounds, provided tree protection services and completed several lighting and irrigation projects.

"We had the privilege to give back; we have an opportunity to give back and to experience the gift of giving," said Jim Martin, president of PLANET. "As you work today reflect on how significant it is to give back."

Cat launches safety Web site

PEORIA, IL — Customer Safety Services, a division of the Caterpillar Technology & Solutions Division, has launched SAFETY.CAT.COM, a new Web site promoting the safety and health of everyone in, on or around Caterpillar products. For the first time, Caterpillar videos on walkaround inspections and operating tips are available on demand from one online source.

[CLIPPINGS]

Brickman acquires CES

EDISON, NJ — The Brickman Group acquired New Jersey-based Control Environmental Services (CES). CES is one of New Jersey's leading providers of landscape and irrigation design, and maintenance services with additional operations in Long Island, Atlanta, Jacksonville and Miami. CES President Mike Stewart will join Brickman in a senior leadership role.

New turfgrass producers selected

AVON PARK, FL — Environmental Turf, Inc., selected Best Florida Sod and Gulf Kist Sod as licensed sod producers of UltimateFlora Zoysia, a turfgrass developed by turf breeders at the University of Florida. UltimateFlora Zoysia requires less water and fertilizer than St. Augustine. The grass can survive on as little as 1/2 in. water per week and has natural defense systems to withstand periods of drought.

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NAME: Bill Kemp DATES: 13-17

DAY	START	LUNCH	END	JOBSITE	WORK DONE	HOURS
MON	7:00	1/2	3:30	Brentw.		8
TUE			3:30			8
WED			4:00	↓		8½
THU			4:00	Crestv.		8½
FRI	↓	↓	4:00	↓		8½

Employee Signature: Bill Kemp TOTAL HOURS: 41½



Reality?

Employee Report

Kemp, Bill Date Range: 8/13/2007 through 8/17/2007

Day	Date	Jobsite	Start	Stop	Cost Code	Hours	Total
Mon	8/13	Brentwood	7:08 AM	12:05 PM	Irrigation	4:57	7:38 hours
			12:41 PM	3:22 PM	Irrigation	2:41	
Tue	8/14	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:07 PM	Irrigation	4:55	7:35 hours
			12:43 PM	3:23 PM	Irrigation	2:40	
Wed	8/15	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:02 PM	Irrigation	4:50	7:53 hours
			12:46 PM	3:49 PM	Irrigation	3:03	
Thu	8/16	Crestview	7:17 AM	12:19 PM	Planting	5:02	7:58 hours
			12:50 PM	3:46 PM	Planting	2:56	
Fri	8/17	Crestview	7:13 AM	12:07 PM	Planting	4:54	7:49 hours
			12:44 PM	3:39 PM	Planting	2:55	

Signature: Bill Kemp Kemp, Bill

Total **38:53 hours**



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In the Know

LEGALLY Speaking



BY KENNETH D. MORRIS, ESQ. L.L.C.

Q On a "to-do" list for good corporate policies, what should we be doing?

A First, preserve the at-will relationship. Avoid promises about job security. Second, regularly review and evaluate the performance of employees. Third, document performance reviews and warnings with file memoranda which the employee reads and signs.

Fourth, do not make promises or assurances the company cannot keep. Fifth, if there is misconduct, make sure the employee has been warned and has had a chance to correct the problem before the discharge occurs. Sixth, if your company has written procedures, follow them.

Seventh, your company needs to take consistent action in similar situations and avoid favoritism. Eighth, supervisors and managers must be trained to watch their language. Calling an employee "babe," does not help your defense. Ninth, never take action out of anger. If you must, send the employee home first. Tenth, use your good judgment: ask if the your conduct will appear reasonable to a jury of the employee's peers.

Kenneth D. Morris, a Philadelphia-based attorney with more than 30 years corporate and law firm experience, offers information on industry legal issues in each issue of LM. Contact him via www.kenmorrislaw.com.

Note: The above should not be interpreted as offering legal advice in any jurisdiction where such practice is not authorized. Engage competent counsel familiar with your jurisdiction when legal issues arise.

Contractors flock to Pondemonium 2007

BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

ST. CHARLES, IL — More than 1,000 pond builders, predominately contractors, flocked to this city located 35 miles west of Chicago for the annual Pondemonium. St. Charles (now officially designated the "Water Garden Capital of the World") is the headquarters for Aquascapes, Inc., the originators and sponsors of Pondemonium.

During the week the visiting contractors toured the company's "green" headquarters (LEEDs Silver Status), participated in educational sessions, shared experiences and techniques and, of course, built ponds.

This year the big news at Pondemonium came in a package of three — the naming of a new company president, the announcement that the company was going to distribution as it phased out its mail order business and the introduction of a smaller water feature aimed at the "sweet spot" of the residential market — a product that could be installed by two people (even homeowners) within a couple of hours. Attendees were told they could install the product, the Aquabasin, and sell it for about \$3,000 and make a very tidy profit.

Aquascape founder Greg Wittsock ("The Pond Guy") introduced T.D. Decker as the new company president. Wittsock said he became acquainted with Decker through church, and in conversations was impressed with his vision and business knowledge.

"I'm an organization builder," said Decker, a West Point grad and former U.S. Army helicopter pilot. During his post-military career, he has run four different companies, the latest being a \$3 billion hedge fund.

"We already have the team on board," Decker told the audience that filled the cavernous Megacenter at the Pheasant Run Resort. "We don't have to bring in anybody to move forward."

Decker said he was delighted to join the Aquascapes' team because of its incredible culture, its potential for continued growth and it offered him an opportunity for more "balance" in his life — the chance to spend more time with his four school-age children, who attend local schools.

During his keynote, Wittsock also said that Aquascapes is transitioning away from its mail order business (approximately \$10 in annual revenues) and building its distribution. He said that in 2006 the company had 71 distribution points across the country, which had grown to more than 370 "access points" by mid July.

He said the decision was made by the company's leadership team because it felt that distribution gave contractors more access to its products, and it gave

Aquascapes a better handle on training product purchasers to "build ponds the right way."

Greg Wittsock, right, introduces new president T.D. Decker.



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BUILT AROUND YOU

Don't give up on guest worker reform

BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

COLUMBUS, OH — While it seems that Congress has driven a stake into the heart of comprehensive reform for years to come? Even so, keep the pressure on for guest workers, advised Craig Rugelbrugge, vice president of government relations for the American Nursery and Landscape Association (ANLA). He

made the plea at the OFA Short Course here in mid July.

Rugelbrugge said comprehensive immigration reform became

Craig Rugelbrugge



“radioactive” because of widespread anti-immigrant activity.

While comprehensive immigration reform may not be addressed again by Congress for years to come, the industry can expect plenty of other immigration-directed action. It may be aimed at specific provisions, such as extending the H-2B returning worker provision or provisions for stricter enforcement. “There will be a tremendous amount of pressure to step up enforcement,” predicted the ANLA spokesperson.

Equally worrisome, the industry should brace for increased immigration action by state and local lawmakers, he said. According to a report released by the National Conference of State Legislatures in April, “state legislators in all of the 50 states had introduced at least 1,169 bills and resolutions related to immigration or immigrants, more than twice the total number of introduced bills (570) in 2006.”

“If it (immigration reform) is dead for this year, it’s dead for this Congress,” said Rugelbrugge. If that’s the case, comprehensive reform probably may not be considered again until 2009 because it will be sidetracked with the approaching presidential campaign season.

And, it’s uncertain if the issue will be high on the to-do list of a new president. The issue may not be seriously debated until 2010, he opined.

“We can’t afford to wait,” he said.

He urged the audience of nursery/greenhouse owners to continue to speak out for immigration reform by:

- ▶ Talking to their Congressional leaders locally and in Washington D.C.
- ▶ Speaking to and educating local groups, such as local service clubs and chamber of commerces
- ▶ Speaking out in their local newspapers,
- ▶ Working with their local industry associations to speak with a united voice.

OPEI tackles environmental issues at annual meeting

PALM BEACH, FL — The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) is taking an assertive and active role in working with its members, government agencies, and other organizations to find ways to pursue safe and environmentally friendly solutions.

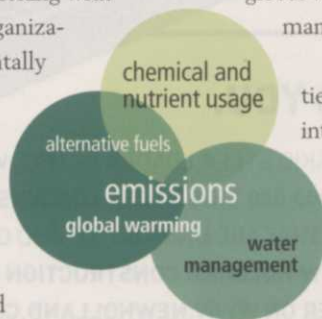
At the association’s 55th annual meeting, held June 22-23 in Palm Beach, FL, Fred Whyte, OPEI’s immediate past chairman and president of Stihl, Inc., commented, “Our industry has made great strides in contributing to environmental solutions through cooperation and support with all phases of EPA emissions regulations. With new EPA Phase 3 regulations, ground supported exhaust emissions will be reduced an additional 35% of current levels by 2010.”

According to Bob Hove, OPEI Board member and senior vice president of John Deere, OPEI is developing position papers and public policy statements on a number of

high priority issues including alternative fuels, emissions, global warming, chemical and nutrient usage, water management, and more.

As part of its ongoing environmental activities, OPEI also recently supported an amendment introduced by Senator Jim DeMint (R-SC) to the Senate’s Energy and Natural Resources Committee’s (ENRC) Energy Bill (S 987) requiring federal agencies to study the impact of “mid-level” blends of ethanol gasoline (ethanol levels between 10% and 40%). The amendment was unanimously approved by the ENRC.

The OPEI has also helped to spearhead the Alliance for a Safe Alternative Fuels Environment (ALLSAFE), a new coalition of consumer and user groups and manufacturing associations to help assure the safe and successful introduction of new bio-based fuels.



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In the Know

Ariens employees conduct 1,000th kaizen event

BRILLION, WI — Ariens Company employees recently conducted the 1,000th kaizen event aimed at reducing waste within the operation. This milestone represents participation by 665 employees for total work hours of about 280,000 since 2001.

A kaizen event is a week-long exercise that involves a group of employees evaluating a single process using lean tools to understand the current state of the process, eliminate non-value-added efforts and establish a new model for work.

"This has truly been an employee-driven process. The effort and energy that has gone into 1,000 kaizen events is incredible," said Dan Ariens, company president. "Employees have not only created a culture of continuous improvement, they have sustained it."

The company has experienced an annual 15% productivity gain on average since implementing lean management principles in 1999.



Willie Nelson MOWS grass too!

Country music legend Willie Nelson and his wife Annie were recently in Salem, OR, to support an expansion of an Oregon commercial biodiesel facility. There, he met the team from DeSantis Landscapes, which has been using biodiesel in all of its diesel trucks and equipment since April 2005. Pictured with Nelson (from left) are Dean DeSantis, Ken DeSantis and Tom DeSantis.

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BEFORE

Problem A client wanted to improve the appearance of the fall mum display at the property entrance, which previously was not "dramatic" enough.

Solutions

There are many ways to improve this fall mum display. This month, you can do almost anything and it will be an improvement!

1. Buy quality "cushion shaped" mum plants. A quality plant will look like you have just placed a mounded pillow on the ground.

2. The plant should have flowers from the top of the plant to the ground level. Reject plants that look like tall cylinders with flowers only at the top!

3. Install mums when they are 10% to 25% in color. (Unless requested by the client). Plants are easier to move at this stage with less breakage. Also planting at

this stage will give the client the experience of seeing the plants go from green to full color.

4. Tilt the plants on the outside row to create a more aesthetically pleasing presentation.



AFTER

Every day you see horticultural problems. Sometimes the solution is obvious, but others are much more difficult to solve. Brickman Group Senior Horticulture Specialist H. Bruce Hellerick tackles these issues each month in Problem Solver. He can be reached at Hellerick@BrickmanGroup.com

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In the Know

People & companies



Catherine Fuhrman joined **Advan LLC** as product manager to help drive the introduction and management of new third-party crop protection products.



Jeffrey P. Lange recently joined **Dewberry's** Leesburg, VA, office as senior landscape architect.

FECON named **Anthony Nikodym** as regional manager for the Western Canadian market. The company also added **Darden Whitaker** as customer services manager.



Bayer Environmental Science named **David Spak** (left, top) as biological development manager. He is responsible for managing Bayer's turf and ornamental biology team at the Development and Training Center in Clayton, NC. Bayer also named **Richard Rees** as product development manager for fungicides and plant health.



J.J. Mauget Co. named **Marianne Waindle** to the newly created position of director of new product development. She was previously Western region sales representative.



DuPont Professional Products added **Nick Grisafe** to its sales

team as West Coast sales representative for the landscape, golf and pest management industries.

Aquascape, Inc. promoted **Sue Soderberg** to national sales director.

NUVIS, a landscape architecture and planning firm headquartered in Costa Mesa, CA, is opening an office in the Scottsdale/Phoenix, AZ, area and has hired **Bonnie Kehoe** as the division director.



David Feist joined **Nufarm Americas, Inc.** as a U.S. product manager. He will be based in Ft. Collins, CO.

Rain Bird Corp. promoted **Barbara Booth** to group director and **Michael Roberts** to director of its Golf strategic business unit (SBU).

STIHL Inc. announces changes in its sales and product management team: **Kent Hall** moves to product manager for the chain saw line; **Marv Mathwig** takes the position of product manager for power tools; **Joe Hickey** is the product manager for industrial products and accessories; and **Steve Parmentier** has been named strategic accounts manager.

Target Specialty Products named **Kurt Smith** as its southern Nevada business manager in conjunction with the opening of a new facility in Las Vegas. **Tony Brooks** was named Las Vegas branch operations manager.



Ruppert Nurseries added **Megan Carmody** as an accounts payable specialist.

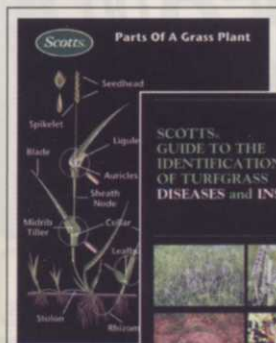
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MY GREEN INDUSTRY BUSINESS OWNERS GROWING THEIR COMPANIES AND BIGGEST MISTAKE

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS / Managing Editor

You dream big.

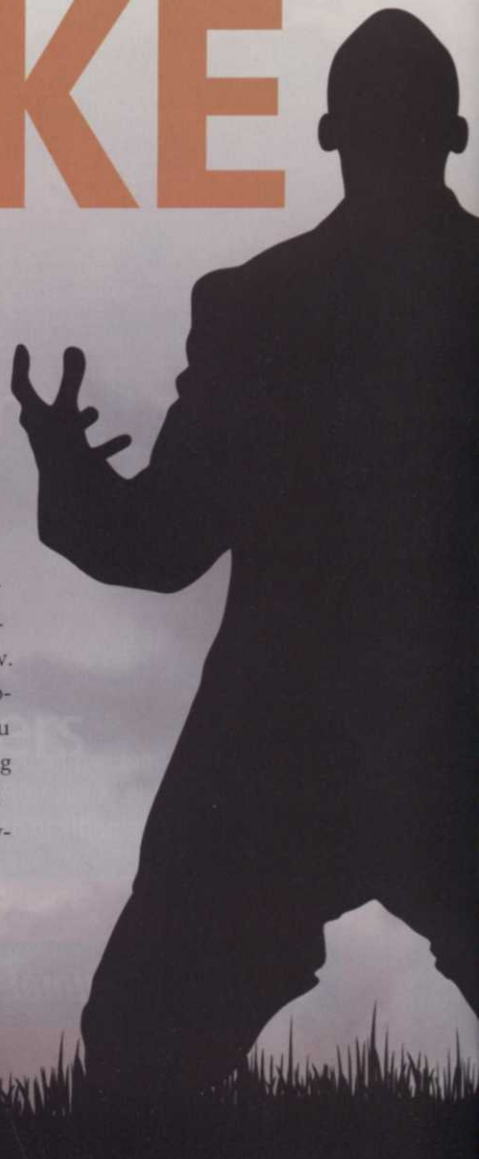
Any person with the entrepreneurial bug envisions one day knocking Bill Gates and Warren Buffet out of their spots as the richest Americans. What they don't often consider are the bumps, bruises, missteps and gaffes along the way. Gates had them. Buffet had them. Rockefeller, Carnegie and Ford had them.

Let's face it. The contracting business has very little barrier to entry. As Brian Yaffa, owner of B & L Landscaping put it, "We have a saying around here, 'Anybody can become a landscaper as long as you have a trailer hitch.'" A guy making \$8 or \$10 an hour may wake up one day wondering why he's working so hard to make money for a guy who spends most of the day sitting behind a desk. He buys

a mower, a few assorted pieces of equipment, gets his brother-in-law to sign on, slaps a magnetic sign on the side of his pickup and suddenly there's another competitor in town.


But it takes more than the materials to run a business especially once the enterprise begins to grow. You hire new people – if you can find them – and suddenly you have to worry about cash flow. When do purchase a new piece of equipment, before you bid the job or after you get the work? And where are you finding the time to work on that proposal when you've got to finish a full day's work anyway? Slowly it dawns on you; that guy behind the desk wasn't putting his feet up reading the paper all day long.

Yaffa puts it another way: "Are we in the landscaping business? Are we in



REFLECT ON THE STRUGGLES THEY FACED THE LESSONS LEARNED ALONG THE WAY.

“Misunderstanding
the cost of doing
business...”



the accounting business?
Are we mechanics? We
have an 18,000-sq.-ft.
shop with six mechanics.
What business am I really
in? I don't know anymore.”

The cost of doing business

Yaffa's Oak Park, MI-based B&L Landscaping (the L stands for his son Larry) is looking to expand, which may require bringing in new people (he would also be very willing to consider being acquired by a larger entity). And whether it is equipment or people, there is a cost of building a business. Most owners don't consider that.

“Our dilemma is, do we hire two or three more people at 50 grand a year to do this?” he asks. “If we have to pay

them a couple of hundred thousand dollars, that means we have to do another million and a half dollars for it to work. Being able to spend time with clients or be able to look for new clients is time consuming and very, very costly,” says Yaffa, whose company does between \$6 million and \$7 million a year.

“The biggest mistake I've ever made, and I think it's really traditional to every landscaping company, is to not know your real cost of doing business,” he says. “Our industry is probably as bad as any.”

David Rykbost, president and owner of Dave's Landscape Management Co. echoed that sentiment.

“Getting your estimating, your budgeting and all that right should really be the first step,” says the 32-year, Hudson-MA-based landscape veteran. “To be charging the right amount of money, covering all your costs, your overhead, your equipment costs, is absolutely critical. Hiring H-2B and keeping out

of trouble, buying another business – it doesn't really matter if you don't have the money to survive because you aren't charging the right amount.”

The right kind of diversification

There is a lot of competition in Yaffa's Detroit market and competitors are willing to cut rates just to keep the doors open. Yaffa understands, but balks at the concept.

Customers are getting more estimates, and if one company offers to do a job for \$100, someone else will come in at \$90 and a third for less than that, he says.

“When is it that we're going to be able to make money again?” he says.

“The people in the Detroit area are just killing the market. We're fighting tooth and nails for jobs. Of course you're going to tell somebody you can do a job for \$500 less. Theoretically, somebody can shave my \$10,000 job down to \$7,000 by the time they get all those estimates.

“The biggest mistake that we all make in this industry is not taking some little piece away and diversifying,” he says.

And for Yaffa diversifying is not talking about your menu of services. “One of the biggest mistakes guys make is not finding some niche that they are particularly good at, and sticking with it,” he says. His diversification is something else all together.

“I wish I had done it 30 years ago,” he says. “An old man told me, ‘Brian,

WHY BUSINESSES FAIL

BY KEN GAEBLE

Ironically, the main reason is that the business owners didn't take the time to learn why most businesses fail before they ventured into a new business. Here are six common pitfalls that can lead to business failure.

1 LACK OF PLANNING. Successful small businesses don't just happen. They are the result of intentional and well-executed business plans. Many entrepreneurs are so eager to get started that they neglect business planning and jump in headfirst with little more than a dream and an idea. If you have already started your business and don't have a business plan, your first priority should be to get one. Fast!

2 INADEQUATE FUNDING. Another common reason for small business failure is a lack of adequate funding, especially during the critical start-up period. Inadequate funding severely limits your capacity and threatens your ability to grow beyond the initial stage of life. If you have done your homework properly, you should know how much money it will take to launch your business. Resist the urge to start until you have obtained all of the funding you know you need to do it right.

3 BAD MARKETING. It's possible to create a business that sells the best product at the best price and still fails because no one knows it exists. Getting the word out about your product is critical if your business is going to have any

chance of becoming the thriving venture you think it can be. If you don't know anything about marketing, get help from someone who does.

4 UNRELIABLE SUPPLIERS. You can't sell what you don't have. Maintaining proper levels of inventory is directly proportional to the quality of your relationships with reliable suppliers. Developing effective supply channels takes time, but if you are having problems with a current supplier, don't cross your fingers and hope things get better. Seek out new supplier relationships and make the switch quickly.

5 STAFFING IMBALANCES. Labor is the biggest expense for most small businesses. Therefore, it only makes sense to make sure your company employs the right amount of people. Too many employees and you'll be forced to carry around dead weight. Too few employees and performance will suffer. Striking the perfect balance isn't easy, but the rewards are well worth the effort.

6 INEFFECTIVE SALES PERFORMANCE. Sales are a key element in the success of any businesses. Poor sales, on the other hand, are an indication that your business might be in jeopardy. Maintain a close eye on sales patterns and trends, and hire the best sales staff you can afford to keep the money rolling in and your company rolling on to the next level.

— Gaebler is president of Gaebler Ventures, a private equity firm and business incubator based in Chicago.

Visit www.gaebler.com for more information.

take some of your money and go out and buy a corner anywhere, and it will be worth money someday.' If I listened to him and I'd bought a piece of property 50 miles from here at \$3,000 an acre, it could be worth \$700,000 an acre today. But I had to go out and buy another truck."

Make it legal (or cover your...)

There was a time (or maybe we just like to think there was) when you look a man in the eye, shake his and take him at his word. Do that today, and you'll likely find yourself wondering where it all went wrong.

Rykbost recounts a time when he

purchased a tractor from a guy going out of business.

"I didn't hire a lawyer to draft anything up," he says. "We just wrote up our own agreements. I wrote the check to the leasing company thinking this paid off his lease, and I'm good to go. He would tell you one thing with an honest looking face one day and would do the opposite thing the next day."

The man neglected to tell Rykbost about a general lien on him, and the

"Failing to cover the legal issues..."

DAVID RYKBOST
president and owner,
Dave's Landscape
Management Co.



continued on page 30

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“Don’t go outside your area of expertise...”

continued from page 28

leasing company was looking for more. “The leasing company said, ‘We appreciate that \$15,000 check, but you owe us a whole bunch more, or we’re going to come get your tractor.’”

Rykbost ended up negotiating a settlement with the leasing company, and he kept the tractor. He also came away a bit wiser.

Know your niche

After more than 13 years in business, Ed Anewalt, owner of Anewalt’s Landscape Contracting in Bernville, PA, faced “the biggest opportunity,” and decided to buy a garden center and nursery, the seeming perfect complement to his design/build, maintenance and lawn care operation.

Despite warnings from his wife, who came from a family of retailers, Anewalt went ahead with the purchase.

She told him, “If you do retail, you’ve got to be married to retail. It’s got to be your baby. If you can’t dedicate that time, you’re not going to make it.’ How true that was,” he says.

The first challenge was having two separate locations.

“Even though they were only two miles apart, I felt like a ping-pong ball between the two locations,” Anewalt recalls. “It was a difficult feat to manage both locations.”

And things were going to get worse.

“In my 19, going on 20 years of business that would be the biggest mistake — assuming that we could take a retail garden center business and make it work when the previous owner had trouble,” Anewalt says. “I was overly optimistic. It began to consume us.”

A severe drought in 2002, left the retail business hurting. With retail sales down and inventory high, Anewalt’s was in trouble. A snowy winter helped generate enough revenue to keep the busi-

ness afloat, but a cold wet start to 2003 sealed the retail operation’s fate.

“Had I had not made the decision to close (the retail center), it probably would have wiped us out of business,” Anewalt says. “The failure was diversifying into a unknown area without proper research. “We always try to remain focused on the core aspects of the business. Stick to your niche, do what you do well and not have too many avenues.”

By all accounts Kurt Kluznik has a highly successful enterprise. But as the president of Painesville-OH based Yardmaster Inc. says, if he were doing it all over again he might handle things differently.

“We do residential work on a variety of scales, from small projects to huge projects,” Kluznik says. “Commercially we do the same thing – design/build as well as bid work. And we do a lot of commercial maintenance. We’re trying to serve, essentially, four different markets, five different segments of the market. If I had to do it over again, I probably would discipline myself to be more focused on one or two markets.

“We do so many different things it’s hard on your resources to be as efficient as you could be. It’s also confusing to the marketplace. Some people see us as a commercial maintenance company; some people see us as a residential design build company; some people see us as a commercial bid installation company. It’s harder to have a perception in the marketplace and leverage that perception if you’re in so many markets.”

Kluznik has been in the Green Industry for more than 30 years, and when he started it wasn’t unusual to delve into so many aspects of the industry.

“Back in the 70s when I started my business, there were a lot of companies that even had garden centers or nurseries

ED ANEWALT
owner, Anewalt’s
Landscape Contracting



and even did more things than we do,” Kluznik says. “As my business was growing, I was spinning off some of the different services that we provided. I would have pruned faster and focused more.”

Fight for it

Kluznik learned another lesson along the way. It costs a lot more to find a new customer than to keep an existing one. It’s worth fighting for your customers.

“Being in this area for 30-some years, we’ve got good market penetration,” Kluznik says. “But I see accounts that we had at one time and either lost them to price increases or to a competitor. That might be an area I would do differently.”

And fighting for customers is something he approaches differently now.

“We look at the value of the lifetime of a customer more so now than we did in the past,” he says. “Especially now with a downturn in the economy, you fight very hard not to lose an account or try to jump through hoops even when a customer is asking the ridiculous. We’ve always delivered good customer service, but we were more willing to walk away from some customers or not fight for them because we knew we could replace that job.” **LM**

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Scheduling for success

Easy-to-implement strategies to tame the morning madness and get crews out of the yard and onto your customers' properties BY CHARLES SIMON

You may think you have everything set the night before, but there are always snags the next morning that change the work, routes or schedules. A truck won't start. A mower has a flat. A trailer's brake lights don't work. A driver doesn't show. Whatever you call it — the morning madness or the 7 a.m. circus — congratulate yourself for getting your crews out and on the road each day.

Scheduling and routing for a landscape contractor is the process of getting the right work orders for the day on the clipboards and in the best order for each crew.

Each morning brings unique routing and scheduling challenges. You visit different customers each day, but each

job takes a different amount of time, some jobs require special equipment and some customers have special requests. All information must be considered and communicated to your drivers. Then, once you send the crews on their way, you try to keep them on schedule.

There's no substitute for being prepared the night before. Print or write out work orders in advance. We use a work order form for each job. Each evening we pick and

An abbreviated version of a very simple but effective spreadsheet that shows customers, the services they receive, when they receive them and the charges for each service. You must have a system to track the work.

TIP Print pictures of the property and work spot sites using a digital camera and attach them to the work orders whenever possible.

choose from the pile of work orders to create the best route for each crew. Even though our mowing routes are set for the season, we still review the lists each day. For example, we will add a work order for a dead plant removal to the mowing crew that services that customer. Crews return

their mowing work order forms and other work orders each evening with time-spent recorded. If there was a rain delay and some of the day's mowing is pushed to the next day, it's noted and the next day's schedule is adjusted. Every few weeks we check the actual routes by plotting them on MapPoint. The plotting is automatic with our passive GPS system and gives

Customer	Spring cleanup	Spring cleanup fee	Mowing weekly service
Smith	Mar-07	\$345	Weekly
Johnson	Mar-07	\$150	Weekly
Williams	Mar-07	\$170	Weekly
Jones	Mar-07	\$175	Weekly
Brown	Mar-07	\$110	Weekly
Davis	Mar-07	\$265	Weekly
Miller	Mar-07	\$245	Weekly
Tilson	Mar-07	\$285	Weekly
Moore	Mar-07	\$220	Weekly
Smith	Mar-07	\$345	Weekly
Johnson	Mar-07	\$150	Weekly
Williams	Mar-07	\$170	Weekly
Jones	Mar-07	\$175	Weekly
Brown	Mar-07	\$110	Weekly
Davis	Mar-07	\$265	Weekly
Miller	Mar-07	\$245	Weekly
Tilson	Mar-07	\$285	Weekly

7 KEYS TO EFFICIENT routing/scheduling

us an image of each truck's route. It's fast and easy and usually shows the crew is taking the best path.

If you are like us, you have almost the same mowing customers as last year. Additions to the route are easy. Every Monday it's the east side, Tuesday across the river and so on. The routes get tough when customers request service on a day the crews are not in their neighborhood, when they have special requests and when crews choose their own routes.

It takes discipline to keep your crews on track. We now tell our customers we will make special visits for additional work only on their regular day. This doesn't always work, but when it does, our scheduling is more efficient.

One of our crews liked to drive by the high school each afternoon on the way back to the shop. It was out of the way and through slow traffic. We discovered this "scenic route" with a passive GPS report. Another crew liked to stop at the local Dairy Queen for an ice cream treat. There were three problems with this stop — 1.) we don't pay for eating ice cream, 2.) it was way off the route and 3.) the parking lot was small for our truck and trailer.

Checking the actual routes taken by each crew paid off when we found a crew backtracking. Instead of taking an efficient circular route, the driver would return to the main road and double back. This route added extra time

1 Keep it simple. The best software packages are easy to learn, friendly to use and dependable. Ask your friends, advisors and even competitors for recommendations. Talk to people who have efficient systems.

2 Break the bad habits quickly. A driver can increase the length of the route with a few extra turns. Use a passive GPS (no-monthly-fee type) to check on your driver's paths periodically. One quick look at the map and you know if your drivers are using the best routes.

3 Strive for high route density. Have the most efficient routes by accepting customers in your service area only. Your routes will be unprofitable if the jobs are too far apart.

4 Log the time spent on each job. You may be landscaping, but you are really selling time. Keeping track of time spent at each account is critical to your profitability. It doesn't have to be a perfect system or exact, but you do need to keep careful records of time spent.

5 Open and close efficiently. It's sometimes overlooked, but use your scheduling and routing skills to get the crews in and out as quickly as possible. Aim to make your opening and closing as well-planned and efficient as your daily routes.

6 Use a double check. Use any type of system to make sure you've done every job you have been asked to do and that no work orders have been lost. Being 100% dependable is a great way to keep your accounts.

7 Reduce go-backs and callbacks. Do everything possible to avoid go-backs by having your trailer filled with just about anything you could ever need on the road. When a customer calls you back with a problem, consider going yourself. It shows you care and keeps crews on schedule.

— CS

Pruning -- first visit fee	Fall leaf raking and cleanup -- first visit	Fall leaf raking and cleanup -- first visit fee	Turf application -- first visit	Turf application - first visit fee	Irrigation system startup	Irrigation system startup fee	Annual display installation	Annual display installation fee
			May-07	\$86	Mar-07	\$518	May-07	\$1,585
			May-07	\$43	Mar-07	\$255		
			May-07	\$44	Mar-07	\$263	May-07	\$2,134
					Mar-07	\$165	May-07	\$1,198
			May-07	\$66	Mar-07	\$398	May-07	\$3,200
			May-07	\$71	Mar-07	\$428	May-07	\$3,925
					Mar-07	\$518	May-07	\$1,585
			May-07	\$43	Mar-07	\$255		
			May-07	\$44	Mar-07	\$263	May-07	\$2,134
					Mar-07	\$165	May-07	\$1,198
			May-07	\$66	Mar-07	\$398	May-07	\$3,200
			May-07	\$71	Mar-07	\$428	May-07	\$3,925

every day and was stopped.
(See map images on page 38)

Our turf application and irrigation crews have schedules that change each day. We still sort the work orders and set the route daily, but we also have the small Garmin StreetPilot c340 (no monthly fee variety) voice direction units in each truck.

These units allow real-time routing changes for lost drivers, detours and new customer's locations. The driver enters an address and the StreetPilot directs them with the best route. It calculates and creates new directions

continued on page 36

A simple technique that works

If your routing and scheduling routine lacks order consider using this easy-to-implement 4-Box Method. It will start putting some sanity into the routine.

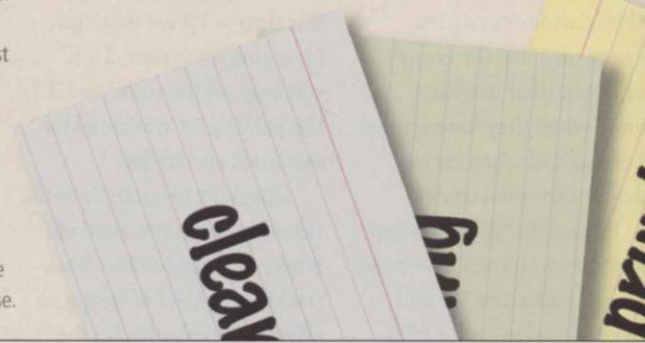
Write each job on a 3X5 index card. Green colored cards for mowing, yellow for shrub pruning, blue for clean ups and white for special projects. The cards dropped in the "Work Box" are sorted daily for each crew.

This method is straightforward, efficient, is easy to understand and works every day. Work scheduled for later in the season goes in the "Future Work Box."

TIP Whatever software system you choose—keep it simple. Think about the four boxes when you evaluate software. The software package should share information and have clear interaction between the boxes. If you cannot identify the "boxes" when you test the system or do not easily understand how the "boxes" work together, it may not be the program for you. Some software packages try to do too many things and you can end up with a system only one person can understand and use.

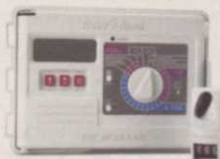
When the job is done write a note on each card with the date, crew and time spent before leaving the property and drop it in the "Bill-It Box" in the truck. At the end of the month sort the cards in the "Bill-It Box" by customer name and hand write individual invoices.

Copies of the invoices are placed in the "Pay-Us Box" and removed when the check comes in. — CS



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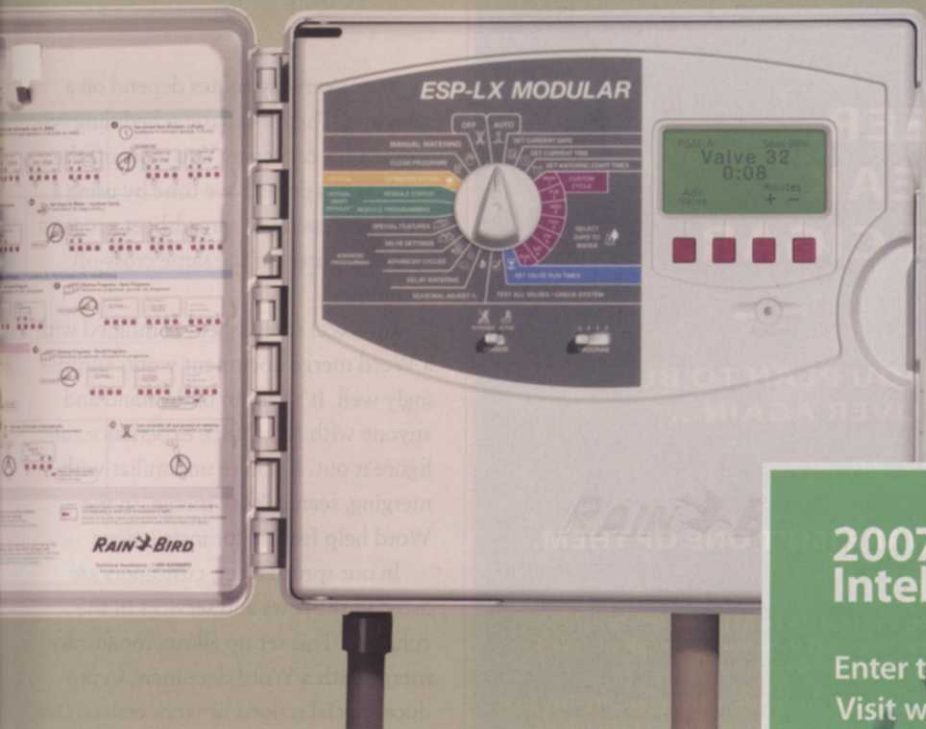
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continued from page 34

based on the truck's actual location and destination.

The number of calls to the office asking for directions has dropped to almost none. The time saved both in the office

and on the road has more than paid for the Garmin StreetPilot. *(A word of caution: Don't take the recorded voice literally. It does not always indicate the best route, but it really helps when the driver gets in the general neighborhood.)*

ROUTING/SCHEDULING tool kit

- ✔ Software list
- ✔ MS Office, especially Excel and Word
- ✔ QuickBooks
- ✔ Passive GPS by Geotab – no monthly fee
- ✔ MS MapPoint (included with Geotab system)
- ✔ Garmin StreetPilot c340 – no monthly fee

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Your everyday routes depend on a schedule. The most basic scheduling system is a list on paper. You cross off the work as it is done. Save time by using a word processing or spreadsheet program on a computer for the same cross-off technique.

An Excel spreadsheet combined with a Word merge document works surprisingly well. It's easy to understand and anyone with MS Office experience can figure it out. If you're unfamiliar with merging, search "data merge" in the Word help feature for instructions.

In our spreadsheet, customers are listed in the rows and services in the columns. This set up allows for an easy merge with a Word document to produce special reports or work orders. *(See sample template, an abbreviated version on pages 32 and 33.)*

Once the work is completed it can be entered into QuickBooks or other accounting package.

You can save even more time by using a database program that links with QuickBooks and other accounting packages. These programs create records for each customer and produce reports and work orders in almost every way imaginable.

TIP Make the descriptions in QuickBooks' Item List exactly the same as your spreadsheet service description. This makes easy data entry and allows any person with QuickBooks skills, even a temporary employee, to help out at the end of the month.

continued on page 38

Circle 123

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www.cubcommercial.com *See your local Independent Retailer for warranty information.

continued from page 36

TIP Beware of do-it-all, enterprise-type programs. The complexity can be overwhelming. Some require special classes just to learn basic operation and modifications can be costly. You increase your business risk with software programs that very few workers in your community know and understand.

Some offer load leveling, map checking, routing assistance and allow hand-held and active GPS inputs.

Keeping your crews on their route and finishing on-time can be improved if you think ahead. Here are some think-ahead solutions to help keep your crews on schedule:

► **Reward workers that show up each day.** Your planned schedule and routes are dependent on everyone showing up for work. Reward workers that show up on-time each workday for a month with a nice end-of-month gift. If they make a full season with perfect attendance give them a very generous end-of-season reward.

► **Keep spare belts, blades and tires on each trailer.** A broken belt can bring the crew back to the shop and throw your schedule into overtime. Make sure each trailer has spare belts, blades, tool kit, fire extinguisher and safety kit. It just takes one quick belt change that keeps you on schedule to pay for all of the spare belts on your trucks. Don't forget spare tires, jack and changing tools for the truck and trailer.

► **Choose a mower manufacturer and stick with it.** If you use mowers from the same manufacturer your crew becomes familiar with the machines and will work efficiently with a spare. They're more apt to stay on schedule if they're comfortable with the replacement machine.

► **Include a turf repair kit in each trailer.** You can keep your customers happy, reduce callbacks and avoid sending a repair crew by keeping 5-gallon containers of top soil, tackifier and some grass seed.

When a crew creates a lawn, creates a spin mark or sees damage caused by others, the repair can be made at once, in a few minutes.

► **Create a complete spare trailer.** We're working towards a completely outfitted spare trailer. Right now it's got some old but still-working string trimmers, our retired mowers, and spare parts. The tools are loaned when needed and when a trailer breaks down, we're ready to go.

► **Add an oil spill kit.** A small oil or gasoline spill can delay a crew. Consider including a small spill kit with absorbent mats and sand so a crew can clean up quickly.

► **Reduce loss with enclosed trailers.** You may be able to reduce theft by using enclosed trailers. All of us have lost a machine or know of a friend that has lost equipment. No other event can



Using a passive GPS system helps managers keep track of the routes crews take each day. Having that ability lets you know if crews are taking the most efficient routes.

reek as much havoc as having equipment lost to theft, either in the yard overnight or during the day from the trailer.

A job well done
Scheduling and routing has two main parts, creating the daily work lists and putting them in the best order. There are programs and systems that can help,

but no program, no matter how sophisticated, can match your knowledge and common sense. When the last truck pulls out of your lot each morning give yourself credit for a job well done. **LM**

— The author is a certified landscape professional and manages an East Coast landscape operation. Contact him at cs@charlessimon.com.

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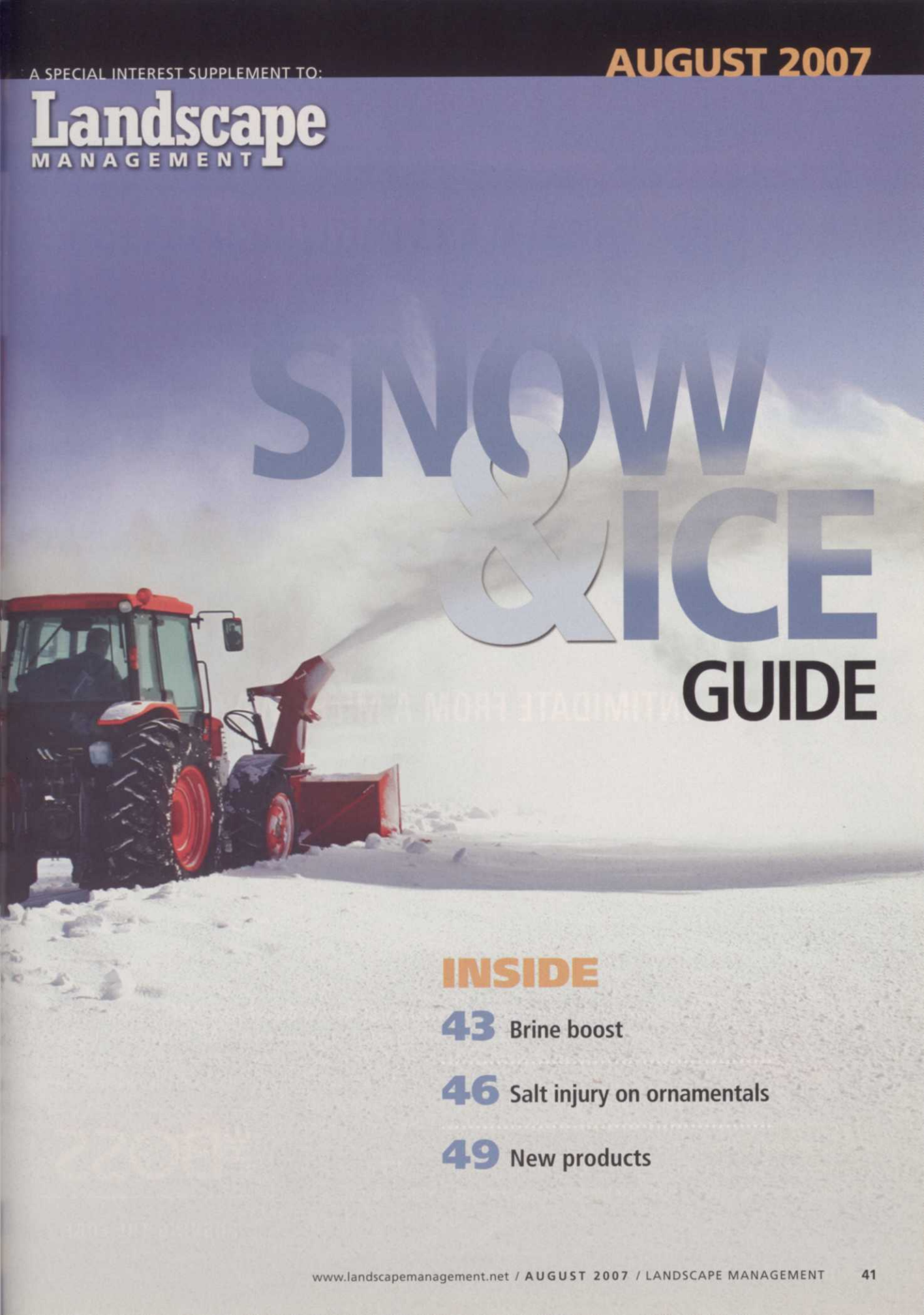
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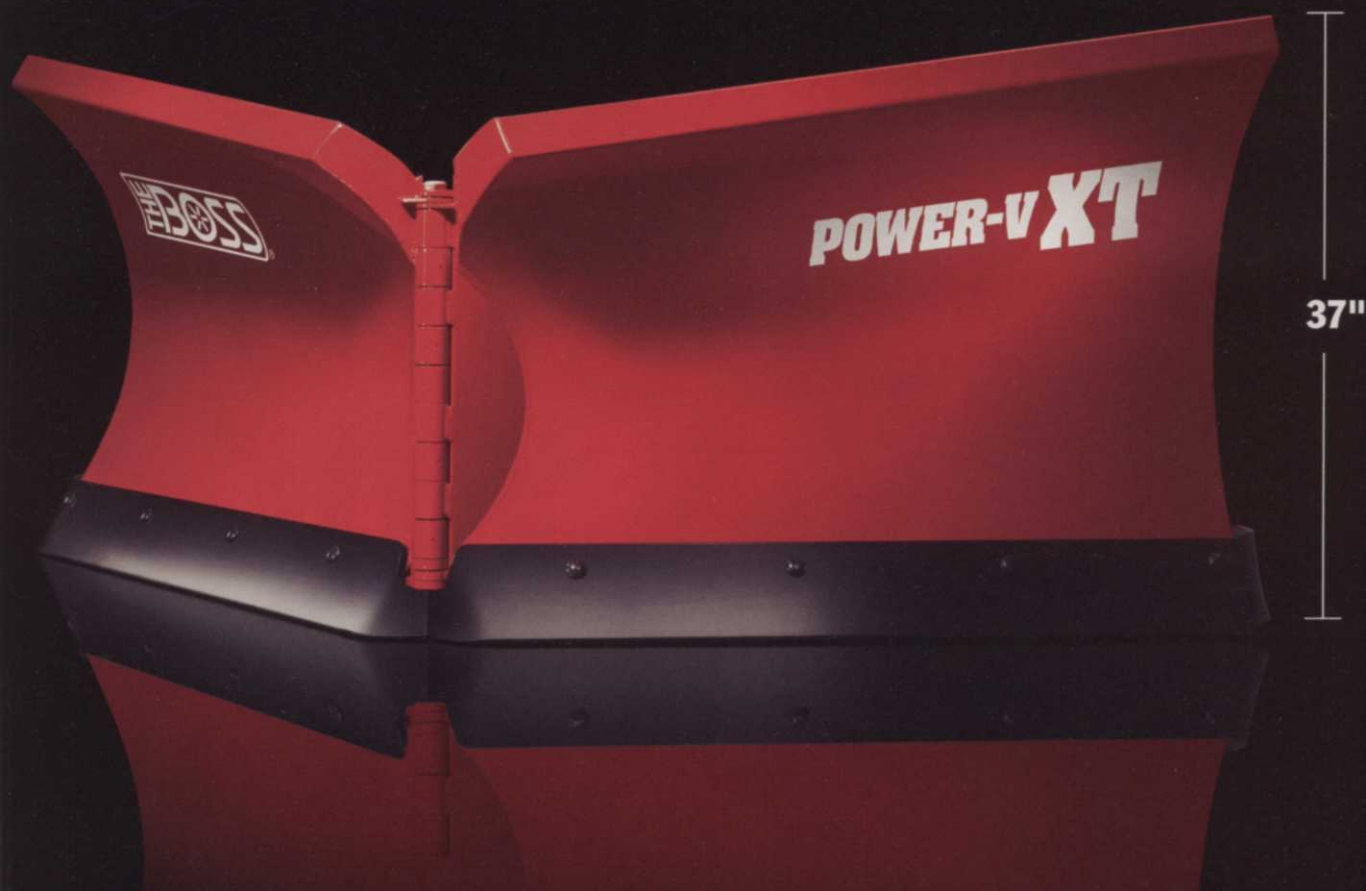
SNOW & ICE GUIDE

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PUSHING THE EDGE



A V-box style spreader has hoses leading to the tank that holds the brine near the truck's cab. The nozzles spray in a fan pattern directly onto the driving surface.

Brine boost

The trend toward wetting materials and surfaces to improve winter maintenance success

BY MARK HALL



When it comes to winter maintenance, most private contractors have the "standard" equipment – a

plow on the front of their pickups and a spreader on the back. For years, this combo has been all a contractor needed to cater to most customers. In recent years,

there has been a trend toward understanding the science of snow and ice control.

At one time, it was enough for contractors to simply push the snow out of the way and spread a layer of rock salt down on the ice layer below. And if that didn't do the trick, the answer was more rock salt. Little thought went into the chemical reaction that occurred between the deicing agent and the ice.

In recent years, with increasing customer demands for more effective ice control, the trend has been toward more scientific responses. The plow and spreader are still staples of the industry, but it's the materials being spread that are more sophisticated. Each material offers different benefits in terms of the application, weather conditions and the spreader being used, which requires the contractor to be more sophisticated. This trend toward a more scientific response continues with the growing use of liquid deicing agents for pre-wetting spreading materials and anti-icing surface treatments.

What is pre-wetting and anti-icing?

The practice of pre-wetting and anti-icing could be deemed the newest "old" technology used to combat snow and ice. The idea has been in practice for years by municipalities, but its implementation has yet to become common amongst the private sector.

The principles are simple. Pre-wetting involves the use of a liquid chemical or salt brine solution applied to a deicing material before it is spread.

Anti-icing is similar, but the brine solution is sprayed directly onto the driving or walking surface. These practices are relatively basic, but the benefits are considerable.

Pre-wetting material

One big problem associated with spreading bulk materials is its tendency to bounce off the roadway during application or to be swept away by wind or traffic before taking effect. Some people address this by spreading much more than is

typically necessary, assuming that enough will remain to do the job. This is crudely effective, but it wastes material, is expensive and is not good for the environment.

Continued application problems eventually led to the practice of pre-wetting the spreading material.

The logic behind this approach is quite simple. If the salt is wet, it's more likely to cling to the target surface instead of bouncing or blowing away.

When first tried, operators used water to saturate the materials after they were loaded into the spreader's hopper. Given the hazard of the load freezing, most now use a part-brine, part-water solution to wet the material. Some people still wet the material as it's loaded into the hopper, but most use equipment that sprays the brine onto the material as it hits the spreader's spinner. This results in a more uniform application of brine.

Also, pre-wetting deicing materials results in faster dissolving of snow/ice. Generally, the melting potential of deicing materials is determined by the agent's ability to attract sufficient moisture from the environment, which then forms a liquid brine. Simply, a mixture of water and the active deicing material, brine lowers the freezing point of water and then begins to melt the surrounding snow/ice.

Using granular deicers alone is fine – if the conditions are right. But if temperatures drop below freezing, typically there is no moisture on the target surface and salt alone is ineffective. However, pre-wetting the salt ensures that enough moisture will be present to facilitate the melting process.



A pre-wetting system can be used to wet the spreading material in the chute before it hits the distribution spinner on a spreader. (Left) A closeup shot of the pencil-spray nozzle setting.

Anti-icing the road

Beyond the benefits of pre-wetting materials, this same practice is finding success with applications addressing surfaces before a winter weather event – otherwise known as anti-icing.

Anti-icing is an attempt to keep the bond between ice and pavement from forming in the first place. This involves the application of a brine solution directly to the sidewalk, parking lot, driveway or road before, or at the very beginning of, a storm.

The primary benefit of anti-icing is the prevention of snow and ice bonding with the surface, which simplifies plowing efforts. This means less time spent plowing and reduced wear and tear on equipment, resulting in happier customers and less maintenance for the contractor.

Another advantage of anti-icing with brine is that it absorbs into the pavement, staying in place, as opposed to granular materials that don't naturally adhere. Because of this, pre-wetting surfaces can be done up to five days before a winter weather event and, as long as it doesn't rain, the chemical remains in place and effective. And the ability to schedule applications before an actual weather event means more potential business for the contractor. Equipment manufacturers are also step-

ping up to the plate to deliver better application options. Now available is equipment that offers the ability to either pre-wet the material or anti-ice the application surface – or to do both at the same time – all in one package.

Equipment evolves

Manufacturers are developing equipment with multiple spray nozzles to address specific application challenges. Some sprayers offer the ability to switch to a high-volume, or "pencil"-spray, nozzle. This addresses areas where snow pack has already occurred. The goal is to break through the snow pack and deliver brine solution to the surface below. As the snow and ice begin to melt, the brine will spread out and eventually break the ice/road bond between the two pencil lines, making plowing much easier.

Given this emergent equipment development from manufacturers, it's evident that pre-wetting and anti-icing are growing trends. Additionally, several companies have surfaced in recent years offering new types of brine solutions. The message is clear – wetting materials and surfaces are ideas that are far from "all wet." **LJM**

— The author is director of marketing and sales for SnowEx.

"If I only had one plow in my fleet, it would be a Hiniker C-Plow. The C-Plow is so effective on driveways. With the C-Plow, you can get within six inches of the garage door. That means you don't need to shovel. You can just back drag snow out into the street and push it up into the boulevard. What a time saver. A 20-minute driveway doesn't take more than 5 minutes now!"

Mark B. • MGB Services • Madison Lake, MN

HINIKER C-PLOW

Convertible Snow Plow.



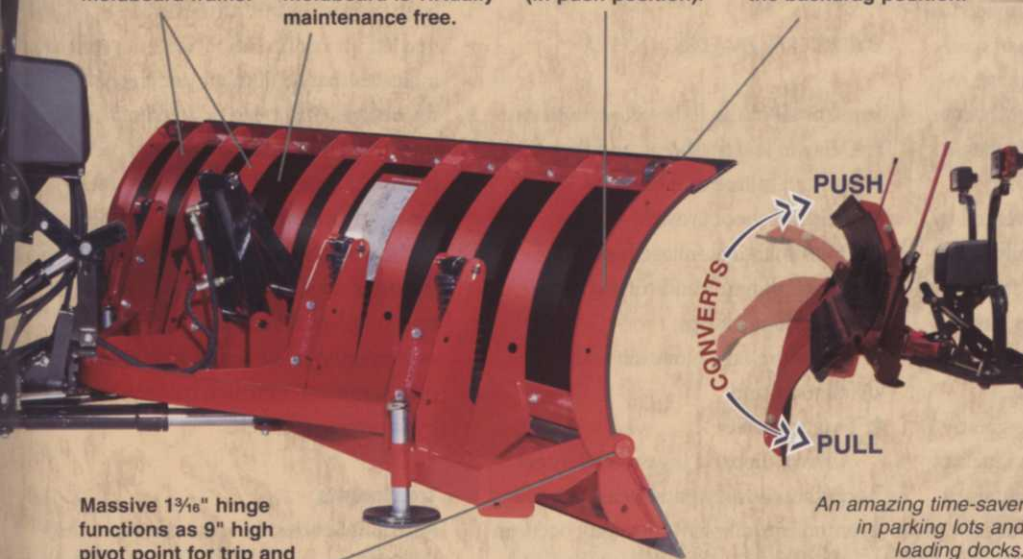
The Hiniker C-Plow offers the heavy-duty performance and strength of a conventional plow with the added versatility of a high performance backdrag plow. Now you can plow loading docks, residential driveways and congested parking lots faster than ever. The Hiniker C-Plow actually converts from a conventional plow into a backdrag plow with the push of a button, letting you remove more snow from tight areas quickly and easily!

10 Laser-cut ribs strengthen the moldboard frame.

Durable, low-friction HMW polyethylene moldboard is virtually maintenance free.

Full 30" moldboard height (in push position).

Upper cutting edge aggressively cleans in the backdrag position.



Massive 1 3/8" hinge functions as 9" high pivot point for trip and backdrag functions.

An amazing time-saver in parking lots and loading docks.



Full-featured conventional plowing with the C-Plow in **push** position.



C-Plow in **pull** position makes backdragging driveways a breeze.



The Hiniker Line

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C-PLOW



STRAIGHT BLADE



SCOOP PLOW



V-PLOW



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Salt injury on ornamentals



alt (sodium chloride) applied as a deicing agent on streets and sidewalks causes severe damage to

many species of roadside and lawn ornamentals. Damage results when salt, dissolved in runoff water, is leached into the root zone or when it comes in contact with foliage and branches in the form of spray created by passing vehicular traffic. Naturally occurring saltwater and heavy applications of low-grade agricultural fertilizers having high salt indices can cause severe injury in the same manner as deicing salts.

Plant sensitivity to salt varies greatly among species and among individuals of the same species. Many ornamentals exhibit a very high degree of tolerance while others, particularly shallow-rooted species and evergreens, are readily injured. Injury depends on the concentration of salt in the soil or on the foliage, and symptoms are usually evident only after salt has accumulated to a toxic level.

Symptoms

Symptoms of salt injury may not always be well-defined and often resemble those caused by other adverse environmental factors, particularly drought or air pollution.

Affected plants commonly exhibit

Better selection leads to stronger flowers

BY BRUCE R. FRAEDRICH, PH. D.

some or all of the following symptoms:

- ▶ Delay in leaf budbreak and flowering;
- ▶ Stunted foliage and buds;
- ▶ Reduced shoot growth;
- ▶ Tip or marginal foliage browning;
- ▶ Crown thinning and tufting of foliage at branch tips;
- ▶ Premature fall coloration and defoliation; and
- ▶ Twig mortality.

Crown dieback, invasion by insect borers and weakly pathogenic fungi, and eventually total plant mortality occur in severe instances. Symptoms are most severe on plantings closest to, or on the downward slope from, the salt source. Injury is most pronounced on the side of the plant facing the salt source and on lower branches, particularly evergreens.

Effect on vegetation

Salt is reputed to "burn" or desiccate roots and foliage with which it comes in contact. This results from the natural movement of water or sap from an area of low salt or ionic concentration within plant cells to one of higher concentration in the

soil or on foliar surfaces. Injury due to desiccation is particularly severe during dry periods when soil moisture or atmospheric humidity is limited.

Other pathogenic roles of salt have been suggested, but further study is needed for confirmation. Recent research indicates that sodium and/or chloride ions themselves may be toxic to plants in quantity. The former element particularly is suspect since, unlike chlorides, which are highly mobile and readily translocated to the leaves where they are shed; sodium is extremely static and will accumulate in soil and plant tissue. High sodium concentration in plant tissues may alter a plant's mineral nutrition balance and inhibit protein synthesis.

Treatments

Resistant Species: In areas subject to deicing salts or natural salt spray, injury can be minimized by proper initial selection of planting stock. A partial listing of commonly planted, resistant species is included on the attached page. State extension services or the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories can provide a more complete listing for a given area.

Cultural Practices: Calcium chloride, an effective deicing agent which is much less toxic to plants, should be substituted for sodium chloride on pavements around ornamentals whenever possible. Large scale use of calcium chloride, however, is



prohibitive due to its higher cost and difficulty in application and storage. Other materials including sand and urea are valid, but less effective, substitutes for sodium chloride.

Diverting runoff from salted pavements away from existing plantings is helpful in preventing salt injury. Similarly, protective barriers of burlap, polyethylene, wood, etc. will help prevent salt spray from coming into contact with foliage and branches.

Anti-desiccants reportedly act as a barrier to salt spray; however, results thus far have been extremely variable and inconclusive.

Recognized cultural practices including fertilization, mulching, watering heavily during dry periods and thinning the crown to a level in balance with the ability of the root system to support it will help alleviate salt injury. Care should be taken to select only those fertilizers with low salt indices, which are suitable for ornamentals. The Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories' Technical Report CP-1.3 outlines requirements for tree and shrub fertilizers.

Gypsum: Gypsum (calcium sulfate), a naturally occurring compound native to the Southwestern United States, has long been used in agriculture as a source of calcium and sulfur and as an amendment to improve soil structure. Recently, gypsum has been found to counteract salt in-



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BC Ministry of Transportation, BC, Canada
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Circle 129

SNOW & ICE GUIDE

jury by reacting with toxic sodium ions present in soil and rendering them unavailable to the plant. The negatively charged sulfate ions in gypsum bond with the positively charged sodium ions

to form sodium sulfate, a highly soluble salt that is readily leached from soil. The remaining positively charged calcium ions are free to bond with negatively charged clay molecules, thereby acting as

Species tolerant to salt

DECIDUOUS

Norway Maple *Acer platanoides*

Horsechestnut *Zdsculus hippocastanum*

Paper Birch* *Betula papyrifers*

Hawthorn *Crataegus* spp.

Russian Olive *Elaeagnus augustifolia*

Ash* *Fraxinus* spp.

Honey-loucst *Gleditsia triacanthos*

Mulberry *Morus* spp.

White popular *Populus alba*

Quaking aspen *Populus tremuloides*

Black Cherry* *Prunus serotina*

White Oak *Quercus alba*

Red Oak *Quercus borealis*

Black Locust *Robinia pseudoacacia*

Weeping Willow *Salix* spp.

EVERGREEN

Juniper *Juniperus virginiana*

Blue Spruce *Picea pungens*

Mugo Pine *Pinus mugo*

Austrian Pine *Pinus nigra*

* *Intermediate to Tolerant*


— BF

a "binding agent" between soil particles and resulting in increased soil permeability and aeration.


Gypsum can be surface-applied with a lawn spreader or applied via deep placement in the same manner as granular fertilizers. Recommended rates vary between 20 and 40 lbs. per 100 sq. ft. of soil surface, depending upon salt content and soil texture. Gypsum is commercially available from many farm and garden centers. **LM**

— *The author is a Plant Pathologist with Bartlett Trees Experts and heads up its Research Laboratory and Arboretum in Charlotte, NC. For more information visit*


www.bartlett.com




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50% faster than its predecessor, plus it's more reliable and simplified for easier service. The unique controls can hydraulically lock the blade wings together to move both wings simultaneously without pushing multiple buttons. Fisher's proven trip-edge design protects the plow and truck in all blade positions. The Fisher XtremeV is available in 7-, 8- and 9-ft. widths in stainless or Storm Guard powder-coated steel.

For more information contact
www.fisherplows.com / circle no. 252

See the light

Superior Signals' Meteorlite High Intensity LED Modules feature an encapsulated power supply eliminating the need for an external power source. The SYLED03 and SYLED04 modules feature three or four high-intensity 1-watt LEDs with multiple flash patterns. Both units are sealed to keep moisture out and have a simple 2-wire installation. The units, available with amber, blue, clear or red LEDs, use either 12 or 24vdc. The modules have a 5-year limited warranty and meet SAE J1318 and E13 specifications.

For more information contact 800/447-3693
or www.superiorsignals.com /
circle no. 253



Skid-steer tires ▲

McLaren Industries introduces the NU-AIR AT, a new all-terrain tire for skid steers and backhoes. The NU-AIR AT combines the cushioned ride of pneumatic tires with the durability of solid tires. Featuring strategically placed holes throughout its sidewalls, the NU-AIR AT is resistant to cuts and snags in severe operating conditions. Unlike fully pneumatic tires, the NU-AIR AT will not flatten.

For more information contact 800/836-0040
or www.mclarenindustries.com /
circle no. 250

Spray valves

The new SAFI Compact Modular 12-volt DC electric valves for mobile spraying equipment

are now available in the United States. All connections are retained by stainless steel U clips for easy removal and reassembly. Features include full flow valves up to 2-in. for gravity flow; impact-resistant plastic; corrosion-resistant, maintenance-free plastic construction; fast shutoff; suitable for use with magnesium chloride, brine/salt and urea.

For more information contact 888/638-2828
or safivalvesusa@aol.com /
circle no. 251

Going to the xtreme

The Fisher XtremeV takes V-plow efficiency to the next level with re-designed blade, hydraulics, electrical system, controls and lights. The hydraulic system is



SNOW & ICE GUIDE

Trip-edge Vs

Hiniker Co.'s new line of high-performance trip-edge V-Plows are designed to provide improved performance and smoother operation in commercial applications. The high-clear-

ance trip-edge design provides enhanced protection to the new 9000 series V-plows. Because each side of the plow trips independently, tripping action is much smoother than with



most v-plows. The 30-in.-tall moldboard features a low-friction, high-density polyethylene surface that is corrosion-free and dent-resistant. For more information contact 800/433-5620 or www.hiniker.com / circle no. 254

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* Introductory offer

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Blizzard spreader

Enhance ice control efficiency with the Blizzard LP-8 tailgate spreader. It features a low-profile design for better rear visibility and an 8-cu.-ft. poly hopper that holds up to 400 lbs. The 1/3-hp 12-volt motor is mounted inside a sealed housing for rust and corrosion protection. The steel auger and agitator feature a tough, baked-on powder coat paint finish. Designed for trucks with a Class IV trailer hitch and 1,000 lbs. tongue rating, the receiver hitch allows easy mounting and removal.

For more information contact

www.blizzardplows.com / circle no. 255

MVP for efficiency

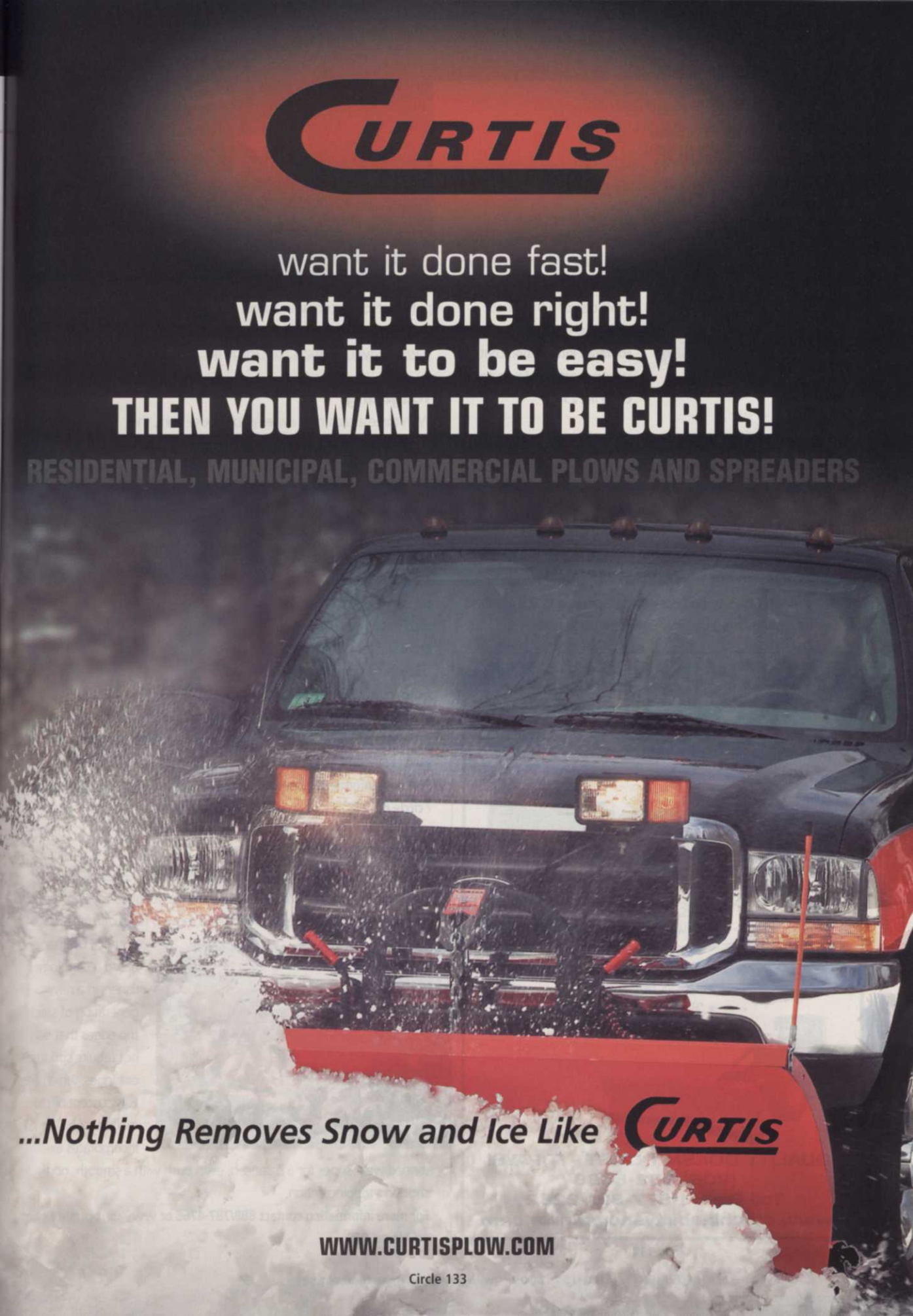
The Western MVP Plus V-plow is available in 7-, 8- and 9-ft. sizes in both steel and poly. It features a fast, simplified and reliable hydraulic system that produces top operating speeds for increased plowing efficiency. Each wing incorporates a trip-edge for added protection—especially in the scoop mode. Standard double-acting cylinders hold the wings

continued on page 52

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SNOW & ICE GUIDE



continued from page 50
firmly in place for clean, efficient back dragging. Western Nighthawk halogen plow lights deliver unmatched nighttime illumination.

For more information contact www.westernplows.com / circle no. 256

Economical hydraulics

The Meyer E-70 Out-Front Hydraulic System, designed to be easily installed on a wide variety of medium-duty vehicles, is ideal for contractors who want to affordably add a plow to vehicles that do not have central hydraulics. The system includes a large translucent reservoir for easy filling and the ability to check the oil level at a glance; use of No. 10 cartridges and solenoids with half-inch hoses to provide maximum flow and operational speed; and the ability to remove the plow without disconnecting the hoses, eliminating the



potential for oil contamination.

For more information contact 216/486-1313 or www.meyerproducts.com / circle no. 257

Tailgating

With three attachment systems to choose from, the TGS 1100 Tailgate Salt Spreader from BOSS is easy to attach and comes with several standard features. The model features an 800-lb. (11-cu.-ft.) capacity, so operators don't have to add material as often. Features include an adjustable feed gate; a solid poly hopper cover for greater durability; stabilizer arms that prevent the spreader from moving from side-to-side; adjustable material deflector that makes changing material spread patterns fast and easy; variable speed control with blast feature & overload protection; 12-in. poly spinner; and 2-year limited warranty.

For more information contact 800/286-4155 or www.bossplow.com / circle no. 258



In a scrape

Pro-Tech Manufacturing & Distribution offers Sno Pusher IST (Ice Scraping Technology), the first steel trip edge designed for Sno Pushers to incorporate the longevity and limited moving parts of rubber edge

pushers. Urethane-based technology ushers in a new generation of steel trip edges that do not require springs or hinges, which are very susceptible to malfunction. The IST incorporates extended wear shoes for a balanced, even push with a smooth, non-shocking tripping action.

For more information contact 888/787-4766 or www.snopusher.com / circle no. 259



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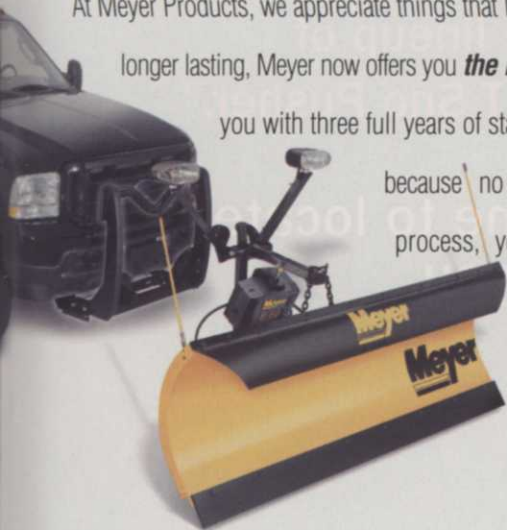


Easter Island

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At Meyer Products, we appreciate things that last a long time. And to prove our plows are more reliable and longer lasting, Meyer now offers you **the industry's best warranty**. The ROC Solid Warranty provides

you with three full years of standard coverage and five years on structural steel*. No one else makes this promise because no one builds a better plow. With our **Reliable Over-time Construction** manufacturing process, you get a plow that's built better and lasts longer. Visit us at www.meyerproducts.com to learn more about Reliable Over-time Construction.



Working over time. **Meyer**

Circle 134

*New Plow systems must be registered online at www.meyerproducts.com within 60 days of purchase to receive coverage on years 3 through 5.

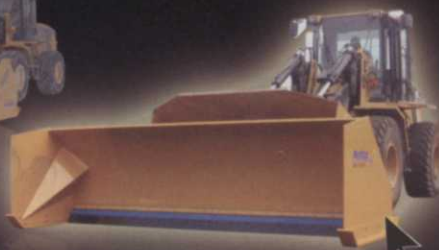
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When it comes to gadgets, the first thing to remember is not to break the bank.

Cool gadgets for summer

BY TYLER WHITAKER

As we enter the dog days of the summer, only the latest gadgets can help take my mind off the heat. So, check out this cool list of the latest and greatest electronic gizmos. I'm sure you'll find one that sparks your interest.



1. Apple iPhone. What gadget list would be complete without the new iPhone from Apple? The hype surrounding this little gadget is off the charts. After playing with one, I understand why. It boasts a 3.5-inch (diagonal) widescreen multi-touch display that responds to your touch like a dream. This clean and elegant design offers full Internet access via built in Wi-Fi and the AT&T edge network. I only wish Apple had upgraded the Internet connection from AT&T's edge network to their higher speed 3G data network. I guess they have to save something for version 2.0. I say, upgrade the network and throw in a built-in GPS, and I'm sold.



2. Yaesu VX-7R hand held amateur radio. Whether you call it amateur or ham radio, you'll be pleased to hear that policy changes from the FCC have opened the airwaves to the common man. Gone are the days when you needed to understand Morse code to use this kind of technology. You still need to pass the written exam to get licensed, but the technology in the Yaesu VX-7R radio makes it all worth it. This small radio can tune in all of your amateur



VHF/UHF bands as well as local police, shortwave and even TV transmissions. The VX-7R allows you to talk with your friends around the world using its WIRES repeater-Internet linking system. With its big LCD, dual receivers and small mobile form factor, you'll forget CB or FRS radio solutions.

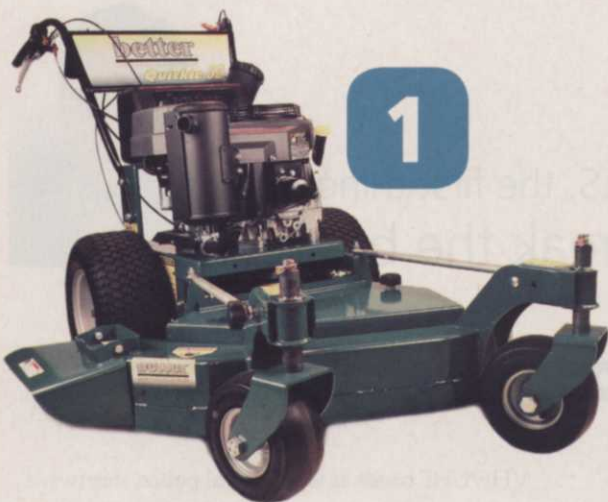
3. Vector 400-watt power inverter. Recently I took a road trip with my family. And being on the open road for several days is always a good excuse for being unplugged and out of contact. At least that's what I thought until I found the Vector 400-watt power inverter. This little unit converts the 12-volt DC power from your car battery into 120 volt AC power for all of your gadgets. Just connect it to the accessory outlet or directly to the car battery. It's got plenty of power to run your laptop, TV and more. I can tell you from experience that this type of solution works great when paired with a laptop and wireless data network connection. Having your passenger seat navigator using Google maps can really come in handy when stuck in traffic.

When it comes to gadgets, the first thing to remember is not to break the bank. Because we all know that once you buy one gadget, you'll be hooked. So do your homework by searching for these online. There are plenty of deals to be found, if not on the units themselves, at least on the accessories. And before you know it, you'll be beating the heat with some fun technology.

— The author is a freelance technologist focusing in business automation. Contact him at 801/592-2810 or visit his blog at www.tylerwhitaker.com.

Innovations

TECHNOLOGY HOT NEW PRODUCTS



2 Aloft

1 The Quickie

Better Outdoor Products introduces its new 32-in. hydro walk-behind to its line of Quick mowers. The Quickie 32 is compact, lightweight and easy to maneuver through gates and tight spots and features a deep tunnel deck, reinforcing deck strut rods, hydrostatic drive, greaseable spindles, comfortable hand controls and is available with Briggs or Kawasaki twin-cylinder engines. Better Outdoor Products provides a 1-year commercial warranty. The mower measures 40.5-in. by 66-in. by 36-in. (chute up).

For more information contact Better Outdoor Products at 866/290-7295 or www.better-outdoorproducts.com / circle no. 260

2 Clothianidin insecticide

Arysta LifeScience announced plans for clothianidin, the active ingredient in ARENA Insecticide, for turfgrass. Pending label registration, the company will continue to market clothianidin in new turf insecticide premixtures under the ALOFT brand name, in granule and sprayable formulations. Combining the enhanced systemic and curative properties and residual of clothianidin with another compound in ALOFT premix formulations will provide turf managers with two ways to protect against insect pests.

For more information contact Arysta LifeScience North America at 800/358-7643 or www.arysta-na.com / circle no. 261



3 Compact Stander

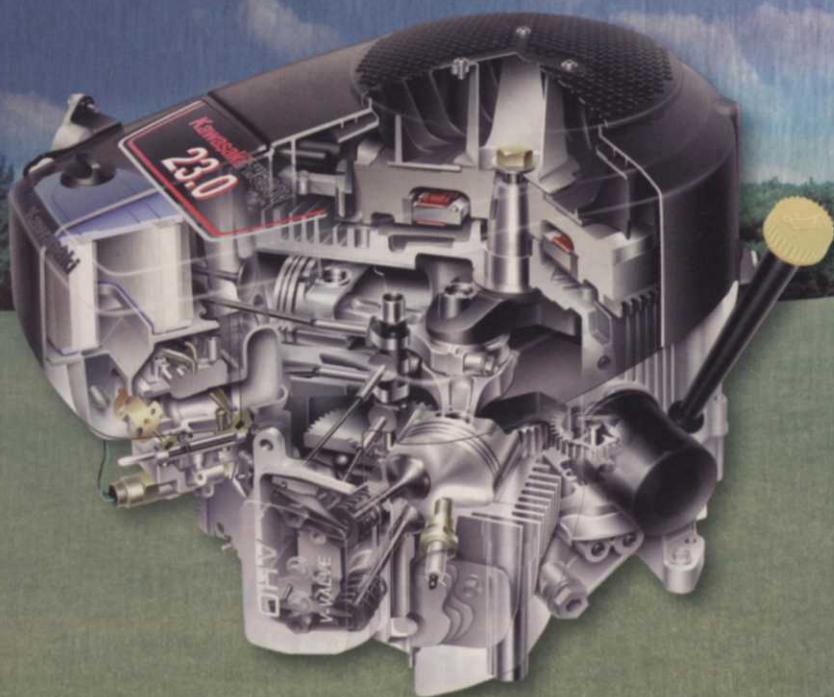
With the Wright Stander's new 32-in. mowing deck, operators can now drive the new compact, zero-turning radius mower through gateways, and mow right up close to fence lines and other obstacles needing to be trimmed. Driving from the standing position, operators can shift weight instantly as terrain changes and simply step off in problem situations. The Stander's deck is made of 7-gauge steel with flare flow design and a 3/4-in. steel buttress plate on the deflector side.

For more information contact Wright Manufacturing at 301/360-9810 or www.wrightmfg.com / circle no. 262

4 Push more

The new Bobcat T320 compact track loader is for operators who want to do more — push more, dig more and grade more. This vertical lift path loader features a significantly larger engine and a 3,200-lbs. rated operating capacity, making it the largest compact track loader manufactured by Bobcat. Its 92-hp liquid-cooled diesel engine has more horsepower to perform better in nearly every application. The T320 excels at using high-flow Bobcat attachments such as the forestry cutter, Brushcat rotary cutter, stump grinder and chipper.

For more information contact Bobcat Co. at 866/823-7898 or www.bobcat.com / circle no. 263



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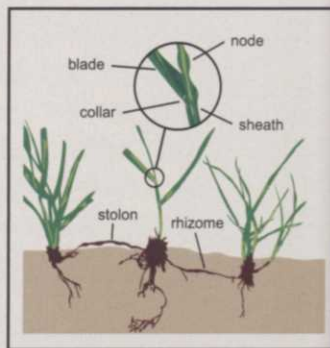


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launched just last year, is a kind of Lawn Care U without the frat parties. It's a great chance to soak up science and business, confer with



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WE JUST MAKE YOU EXPERT-ER.**

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YOUR REP.**



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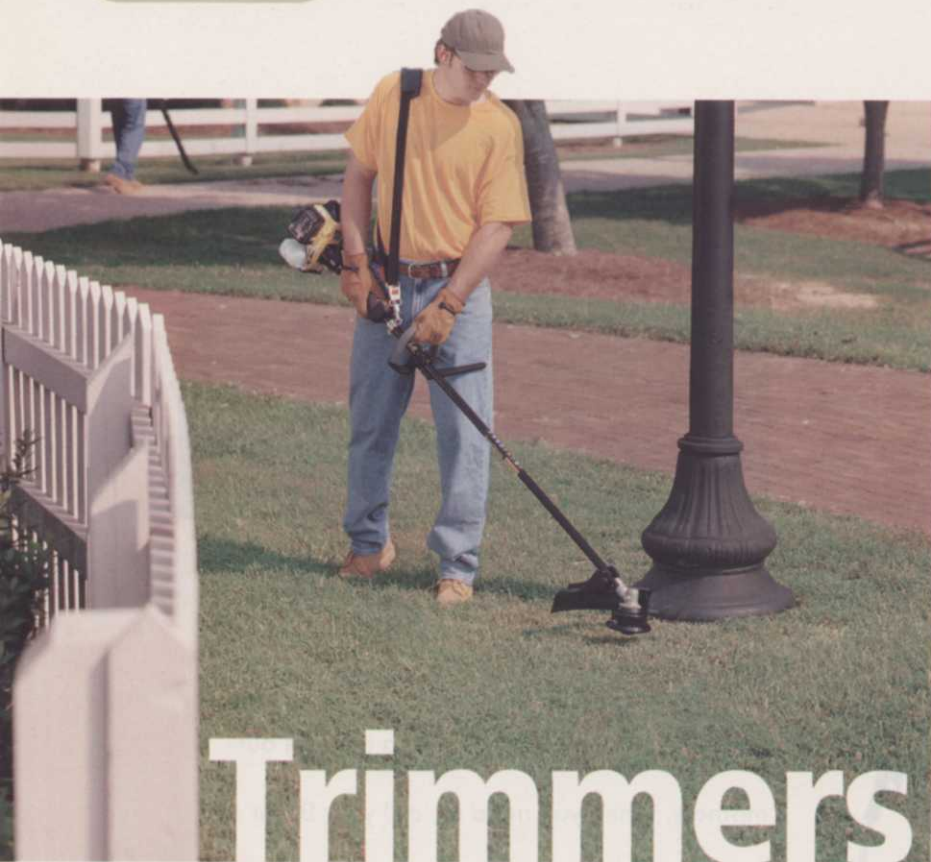
Bayer Lawn Care Institute

No school colors.
Except maybe green.

LM Reports

TECHNOLOGY

YOUR GUIDE TO PRODUCT RESEARCH



Trimmers and edgers

Over the past several years, the market for handheld trimmers and edgers has changed significantly. New technology has responded to the demands of the marketplace to create the next generation of products.

According to Jeff Nesom, product group specialist for Husqvarna, when it's time to select a trimmer or edger, there are several important factors to consider.

"First, determine how the equipment will be used," Nesom says. "Whether your needs are heavier duty commercial applications or residential projects on smaller lots, make sure your choice is the right fit."

If you have questions, Nesom recommends consulting with your local certified equipment dealer. As part of that discussion, Nesom offers this list of additional features to evaluate.

■ **Fuel consumption:** New engine technology can reduce fuel consumption without sacrificing power. With the rising costs of fuel, a 10% to 20% reduction in consumption can result in significant savings over the course of a year.

■ **Emissions control:** Some new models can reduce emissions up to 60%, which benefits the operator, the working environment, and the customer.

■ **Noise reduction:** To address concerns about noise, many newer models have

additional baffling or other components around the engine.

■ **Sufficient power:** Trimmers need higher power to handle thicker grasses or weeds. Make sure the product starts easily and accelerates rapidly for maximum efficiency.

■ **Vibrations:** The unit should have an efficient vibration-reduction system to make it easier to control and less tiring to operate.

■ **Comfortable operation:** Make sure the trimmer is easy to handle and maneuver, with ergonomically designed controls.

■ **Low weight:** A lighter unit causes less fatigue, so compare the weight with the power to determine a favorable ratio for your application.

After making your choice, take the time to read and understand the operator's manual and always wear the proper clothing and protective gear.

With the variety of products and features available, choosing the right trimmer can be challenging, adds Nesom. However, matching the right product to the task will ensure that you'll select a model that effectively meets your needs.

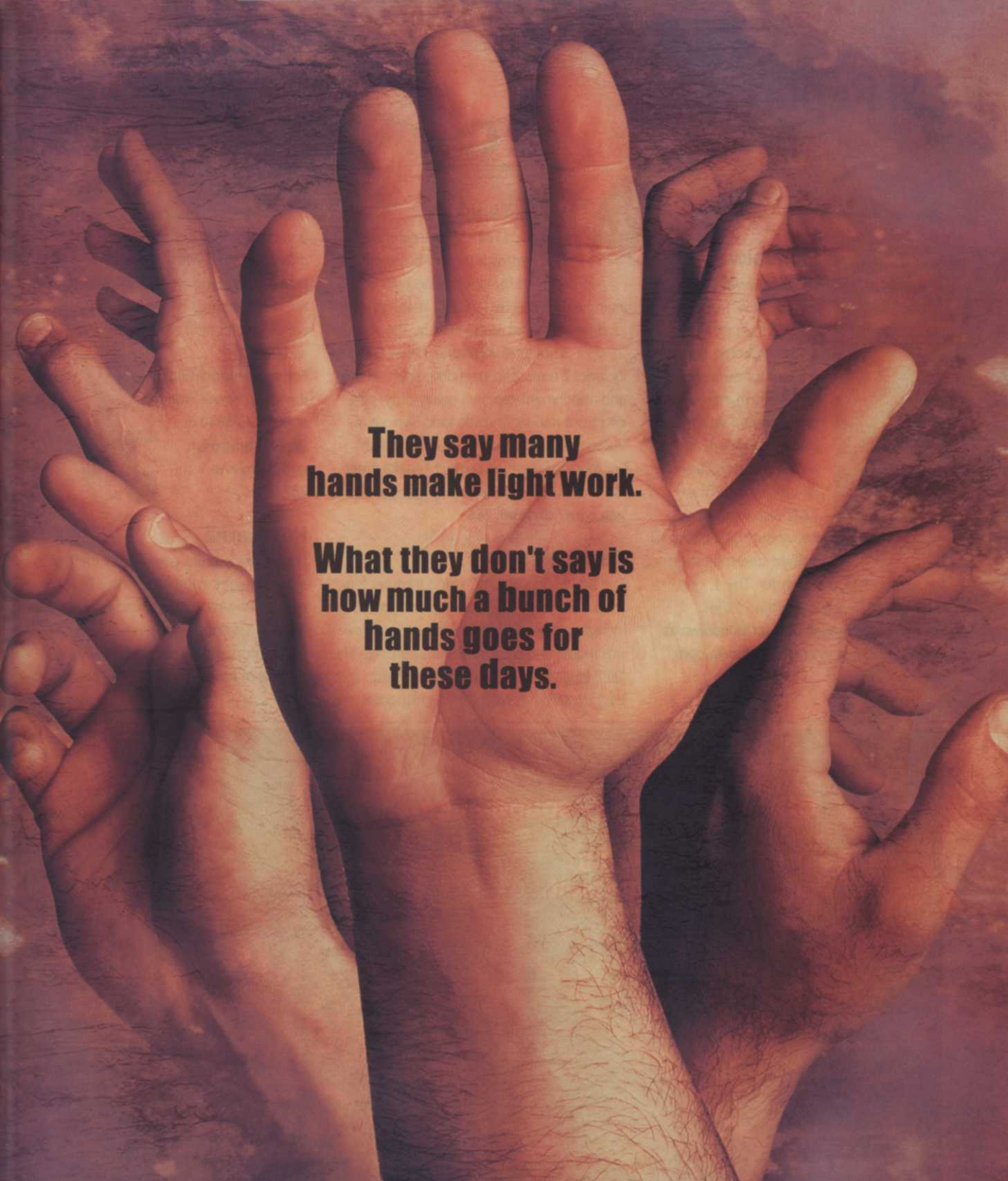
— Jim Kapp, Associate Director, Public Relations, Strata-G Communications

▲ John Deere

Features of the John Deere XT14LE Line Trimmer include: 25.6 cc, low emission, M-Series engine for efficient, quiet, and long-lasting use; solid steel, straight, 59-in. shaft for reduced vibration and increased durability; 17-in. cutting swath; commercial EZ Load string head provides fast, accurate line feed for increased productivity; anti-vibration clutch housing, anti-vibration front handles, and over-molded throttle for comfortable operation; and low 12-lbs. weight.

For more information contact John Deere at 800/503-3373 or www.johndeere.com / circle no. 264

continued on page 62



**They say many
hands make light work.**

**What they don't say is
how much a bunch of
hands goes for
these days.**

Sprayable PREEMERGENT BROADLEAF Herbicide

Fact is, hand-weeding can strangle your profits in no time. Maybe that's why so many nursery operators are opting for the proven, long-lasting weed control of Gallery® specialty herbicide. Gallery effectively controls 95 species of broadleaf weeds – including chickweed, spurge and oxalis – for up to eight months. And Gallery can be used on 440 field-grown and 230 container-grown ornamentals. Gallery can also be applied in an over-the-top application on more than 400 ornamentals. This year, take a hands-off approach to weed control with Gallery.

Saves on Labor Costs.

 Dow AgroSciences
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www.dowagro.com/turf 1-800-255-3726

LM Reports

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Shindaiwa

The Shindaiwa T242 features a 2-stroke engine with 2-piston ring; a 4-bolt chrome-plated cylinder for durability and performance; a full anti-vibration system for all day operation, and an advanced electronic ignition system. The T242 also features a heavy-duty gear case and splined steel mainshaft

for a smooth power transfer. The 1.1 hp, 23.9 cc T242 weighs less than 11 lbs.

For more information contact Shindaiwa at 800/521-7733 or www.shindaiwa.com / circle no. 265



Tanaka

Tanaka's TBC-260PFL extended reach grass trimmer / brush cutter is designed for landscapers over 6 ft. 5 in. in height. The TBC-260PFL features a 71-in. drive shaft and is powered by Tanaka's 25 cc, 1.3 hp PureFire engine. Other features include: 7 mm, solid steel drive shaft; blade and attachment capable; heavy-duty, padded front handle; throttle lock; 5-in. semi-automatic cutting head; 13.2-lbs. weight.

For more information contact Tanaka America, Inc. at 253/333-1200 or www.tanaka-usa.com / circle no. 266

Kawasaki ▶

The Kawasaki KBL27BC string trimmer features lightweight, 2-stroke power, has 25% increased fuel efficiency compared to previous model and is CARB Tier III approved. The TJ27 engine has a 26.3cc displacement, is easy to start, has crisp throttle response, low

noise, and low vibration. To improve durability, it features a heavy-duty crankshaft with roller main bearings, chrome cylinder with two-ring piston, a heavy-duty felt panel air filter, and easy-access air filter cover.

For more information contact Kawasaki Power Products at 800/433-5640 or www.kawpower.com / circle no. 267



Husqvarna

Husqvarna's 326Lx commercial trimmer's lighter weight, combined with a high-torque engine, ensures high production with less fatigue. The loop handle is rubber-coated for comfort and can be adjusted without the use of tools. The 326Lx can also be fitted

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LM Reports



continued from page 62

with an optional J-handle for use with a blade. To increase durability, the 326Lx, a hard chromium plated cylinder bore, forged connecting rod and three-piece crankshaft are used.

For more information contact Husqvarna at 800/HUSKY 62 or www.usa.husqvarna.com / circle no. 268



Turfco

Featuring a Honda 4 hp engine, a heavy-duty arm and large sealed bearings, the new Edge-R-Rite II Bed Edger from Turfco Direct provides operators with increased durability and easier maintenance. The Edge-R-Rite II offers oscillating blade cutting action and debris management, combined with numerous blade options for versatility.

For more information contact Turfco at 800/679-8201 or www.turfcodirect.com / circle no. 269

ECHO

The SRM-261T trimmer from ECHO features 50% more cutting torque than standard ECHO trimmers, for trimming and cutting in thick regional grasses and brush applications. The SRM-261T features a 2-stroke 25.4 cc Power Boost Tornado engine. Additional features include a 59-in., 4-layer flex cable drive to provide strength in tough applications, a 19.6 fl. oz. see-through fuel tank, and a debris shield with a built-in cut-off knife for optimum line length.

For more information contact ECHO Inc. at 800/432-ECHO or www.echo-usa.com / circle no. 270

Vandermolen

Vandermolen's Windmill Brushcutters are powered by Kawasaki engines. Models L2815K and L4320K have 28.1cc and 43.2 cc engines, respectively. All models are equipped with loop handle and 9-in. safety bar to protect the operator from kickback. Machines are equipped with 5-in. tap feed head with dual monofilament lines, a 10-in. 8-tooth weed blade and a 10-in. 80-tooth saw blade.

For more information contact Vandermolen Corp. at 973/992-8506 or www.vandermolencorp.com / circle no. 271



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BlueBird ▶

BlueBird's BedBug is powered by a 5.5-hp Honda GX engine. The centrifugal clutch supplies reliable power via a heavy duty chain drive. Cutting depth is adjustable from 2 to 4 in. The handle-mounted release lever allows you to alternate between transport and operating position. Unlock the rear wheels for full steering mode to create curved bed shapes or lock the rear wheels to ensure a straight edge.

For more information contact BlueBird at 800/808-BIRD or www.bluebirdintl.com / circle no. 272

Ariens

Ariens string trimmers clear a wide 22-in. cutting path and are also designed to help hard to reach spots under bushes and fences, with a trimming head that pivots up to 15 degrees to the left and right. This model also features a 6-hp Tecumseh Centura engine, a 14-gauge steel deck, large diameter spoke wheels and a multi-position ergonomic handlebar.

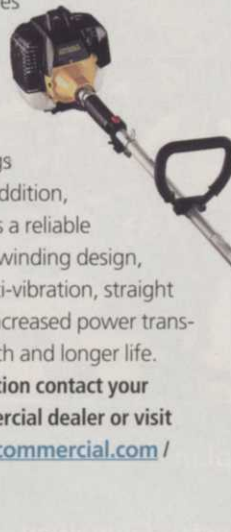
For more information contact Ariens Co. at 920/756-2141 or www.ariens.com / circle no. 273



Cub Cadet

The Cub Cadet Commercial ST 35 string trimmer is engineered for reliability, power and safety. It comes with a 34.4cc, heavy-duty Shibaura engine and gearbox with dual shaft bearings for durability. In addition, the ST 35 features a reliable bump head, anti-winding design, and a 71.5-in. anti-vibration, straight shaft design for increased power transfer, extended reach and longer life.

For more information contact your Cub Cadet Commercial dealer or visit www.cubcadetcommercial.com / circle no. 274



EFCO ▲

The 8250 IC ERGO trimmer from EFCO is powerful and easy to control with its balanced weight and ergonomic handle. This 1.2 hp/25.4 cc trimmer has a heavy-duty three-piece crankshaft and forged connecting rod, and a nickel surface treated cylinder for long life. A solid steel drive shaft mounted on five internal self-lubricating bushings prevents impact stress and vibration. The 8250 IC ERGO features a longer 1-in. diameter aluminum outer shaft for less weight and improved working positions.

For more information contact EFCO Corp. at 800/800-4420 or www.efcower.com / circle no. 275

E-Z Trench

The Bedscaper bed edger is one of the most maneuverable bedder/trencher machines on the market. Caster steering makes cutting graceful curves easy and allows a turning radius of less than two feet. The blade design will cut

harder soils, pulverize the cuttings, and bevel the bed edge to the foliage



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Frying pan (1847)



Sodium bicarbonate (1886)





while cutting a clean well-defined vertical border. Its unique design also augers soil towards the center of the bed out of the trench.

For more information contact

E-Z Trench at 843/756-6444 or

www.eztrench.com / circle no. 276

Jonsered

The Jonsered GC 2125 is a 25.4cc straight shaft trimmer offering a 43% higher power to weight ratio over the model it replaces. The trimmer features a flanged bevel gear design that eliminates grass winding. Engine construction includes an aluminum alloy crankcase, chrome-impregnated cylinder and 3-piece forged crankshaft.

The GC 2125 is grass blade-ready with an integrated barrier bar and dual-use safety



guard suitable for both blade and trimmer head.

For more information contact

Jonsered at 877/693-7729 or

usa.jonsered.com / circle no. 277

Honda ▶

The HHT355 hand held trimmer is the most powerful trimmer in Honda's lineup. The HHT355 uses Honda's 360o inclinable GX35 mini four-stroke engine known for its low noise level, low vibration level and ease of starting. In addition, Honda trimmers do not require the mixing of gas and oil, which provides for reduced emissions, increased efficiency and a reduction in opportunity for operator error.

For more information contact

Honda Power Equipment at 800/426-7701 or

www.hondapowerequipment.com / circle no. 278



Brown Manufacturing

The TrenchMaster Model F-780H & F-990H BEDEDGER with the BEDMASTER rotor is a lightweight mini-trencher for defining beds or installing plastic or steel edging. The 8-hp Honda engine provides the power needed to trench

in the hardest clays and the steerable rear wheels make the fancy curves and tree rings easy. The Model F-780H & F-990H BEDEDGER performs the same functions as the F-702, but the extra horsepower makes the tougher jobs easier.

For more information contact Brown Manufacturing at 800/633-8909 or

www.brownmfgcorp.com / circle no. 279

Solo

Solo's line of brush cutters and string trimmers range from the SKM 105L Trimmer — a 9.5-lb., 25-cc curved-shaft trimmer with loop handle — to the SKM 141 Trimmer — a 22.7-lb., 40-cc, flex-shaft backpack trimmer with loop handle, 3-tooth blade and stringhead.

For more information contact SOLO at 757/245-4228 or

www.solousa.com / circle no. 280



Blowtorch (1926)



Shoe (1954)



Newspaper (1962)

LM Reports

STIHL ▶

Powered by a 31.4 cc STIHL 4-MIX engine, the STIHL FC 100 curved shaft edger is one of the most powerful edgers on the market. The FC 100 uses the 4-MIX lubrication technology that requires a 50:1 fuel mix ratio, there's no separate oil supply to maintain. The edger's adjustable depth wheel allows operators to vary the depth of cut for a wide range of applications, while its heavy-duty skid plate protects the gearbox from wear.

For more information contact STIHL at 800/GO-STIHL or www.stihlusa.com / circle no. 281

RedMax

The RedMax BCZ2401S 11.1-lb. trimmer is designed for moderate trimming and clearing. It is equipped with RedMax's PT104 Plus bump and go head, which is molded of heavy duty nylon with a metal insert in the tap knob for less wear and abrasion. RedMax's 9.5-lb. TR2300S string trimmer is equipped with RedMax's powerful, 21.7-cc, pure 2-cycle engine. It has fewer moving parts than a 4-cycle engine, increas-



ing reliability and reducing maintenance, especially valve maintenance.

For more information contact RedMax at 800/291-8251 or www.redmax.com / circle no. 282

Hoffco-Comet

Both the straight edged SE-101 and Edge'Ntrim, ET-101, have 9-in. 4-stare blade to reduce vibration, cut true and provide durability. Choose B&S 3.5-hp HP IC, or 5-hp; or Honda 4-hp engine. Preset memory pin on ET-101 gives adjustment for nine cutting depths. Both models come with ergonomic handles and super grips, and 4-wheel stability with 8-in. heavy-duty wheels for every terrain

For more information contact Hoffco-Comet at 800/999-8161 or www.hoffcocomet.com / circle no. 283

Little Wonder ▶

Little Wonder power edgers are engineered with tough steel frames, cast iron cutter head housing, 10-in. reversible blades, and cutting speed up to 90 ft. per minute. The units are user-friendly with

fingertip controls and a ratchet-arm height adjustment system for fatigue-free operation. Little Wonder offers three models: 4-hp Pro Honda (#6232), 3.5-hp Pro Briggs (#6032) and a 3.5-hp Pro Briggs IC (#6132). All Pro Edgers feature dual-drive belts, a 1 9/16-in. cast iron locked cutter head and steel hubbed wheels.

For more information contact Little Wonder at 877/596-6337 or www.littlewonder.com / circle no. 284



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Filling a toolbox

BY ALLEN SPENCE

I know some of you read the headline and said, "Tools, that's what goes into a toolbox," right?

There are other useful items that fit into that toolbox sitting on the bed of your truck or enclosed in your trailer. Actually, to call it a toolbox is not giving it its due. That little box can hold so much more than tools. Many other items can be put in a toolbox so they are readily available and safely out of sight from the undesirables that seem to always be around.

There are a couple of obvious items (a poncho and a large box of medicated powder) in addition to the normal, small hand tools needed to perform general work on the equipment. They include spark plug sockets, regular sockets and drivers, screwdrivers, files, something to cut string and rope with, a ball peen hammer, penetrating oil, cleaning spray, some combination of wrenches and pliers.

A quick rummage through my toolbox will also find string trimmer line, an extra trimmer head, a replacement blade for the edger and extra spark plugs for the one crewmember that always floods the trimmer or saw engine.

For the larger equipment you might have an extra blade for the mower, a clean air filter, spark plugs, some electrical wire for small repairs, electrical tape and maybe a drive belt for the blades.

I know you have a first aid kit in there too, right? Large and small bandages, disinfectant, burn cream, and eyewash are must-haves in the kit.


Owner's manuals should also be stored in the box. Keep them together in a plastic bag, so when you call your dealer about a replacement part you can give him or her the correct nomenclature instead of saying "I need the 'whatyoumacallit' located close to the 'thingamajig' over by the battery." That greatly reduces the frustration both you and the dealer have.

What's in your toolbox is likely different from what is in mine. Do a quick inventory of what you have. Compare it to what you use, and see if you have what you need. Leaving a job site, driving to the dealer and waiting in line, only to see the technician install a spark plug and crank your flooded piece of equipment, can lead to loss of income, frustration and even loss of a customer.

— The author is turf equipment management instructor at Hinds

Community College in Raymond, MS.

Contact him at haspence@hindsc.edu.



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CURING SUMMER PATCH WOES



Garry and Doug Struyk, the father and son team running Struyk Turf.

BY TIM LONDERGAN

Garry Struyk got into the lawn care business two years after serving as a marine sergeant in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968. His marine experience changed his life.

"It instilled in me a commitment to excellence in all facets of life. These are the keys to the success of our business," he says.

Struyk built upon these principles as he constructed a business plan for Struyk Turf Maintenance Inc., a granular-based turf fertilizer application company.

Soon after establishing his company in 1970 in Council Bluffs, IA, Struyk enlisted the help of close friend and fellow lawn care operator Joe McDermott, owner of Loveland Lawns in Omaha, NE.

"I had been friends with Joe's son growing up. When I came back to the area, we began talking about my idea to open a lawn care operation," explains Struyk. "Together, we developed a 5-step program that we felt would offer my clients the greatest benefit at the most reasonable price."

Aside from "a few tweaks," Struyk's 5-step pesticide application program remains intact today.

Nearly four decades later, Struyk Turf has seen its share of growth, and his

Struyk Turf's knowledge-based lawn care solved turf problems caused by Iowa's heat and humidity

son, Doug, is now a co-owner.

The company employs seven veteran, full-time applicators. Posting annual revenue of more than \$600,000, Struyk Turf serves 1,400 properties within a 60-mile radius of Council Bluffs – stretching west to Omaha, NE, and north to the Missouri Valley.

"In addition to being state licensed, our guys regularly attend educational seminars to get acquainted with the newest innovations in lawn care," says Struyk.

That knowledge was put to the test last summer (2006) when the region faced "the hottest summer ever in Iowa," says Struyk.

Problem: Summer patch erupts

"The combination of high temperatures and humidity, along with residents over-watering their lawns late in the day, created a haven for disease," recalls Struyk. "As conditions intensified, we began receiving calls from customers whose lawns had become overrun with summer patch."

Struyk knew he needed a proven fungicide that would effectively manage the disease at a reasonable cost that he could pass along to his customers. "We researched several options and after careful consideration, we decided to use Armada fungicide to combat the summer patch," explains Struyk.

Solution: Curative applications

"We applied Armada fungicide at 1.2 ounces per 1,000 sq. ft. in mid-July on 20 properties with severe summer patch," notes Struyk. "Following the first application, the fungicide achieved complete control of the summer patch on all 20 properties." Impressed by the fungicide's efficacy, Struyk incorporated it into his company's program this spring.

"We've seen its abilities in response to active disease, and we're eager to see it perform as a preventive application," he says. **LM**

— The author is with Tierney Communications, Philadelphia. Contact him at tlondergan@tierneyagency.com

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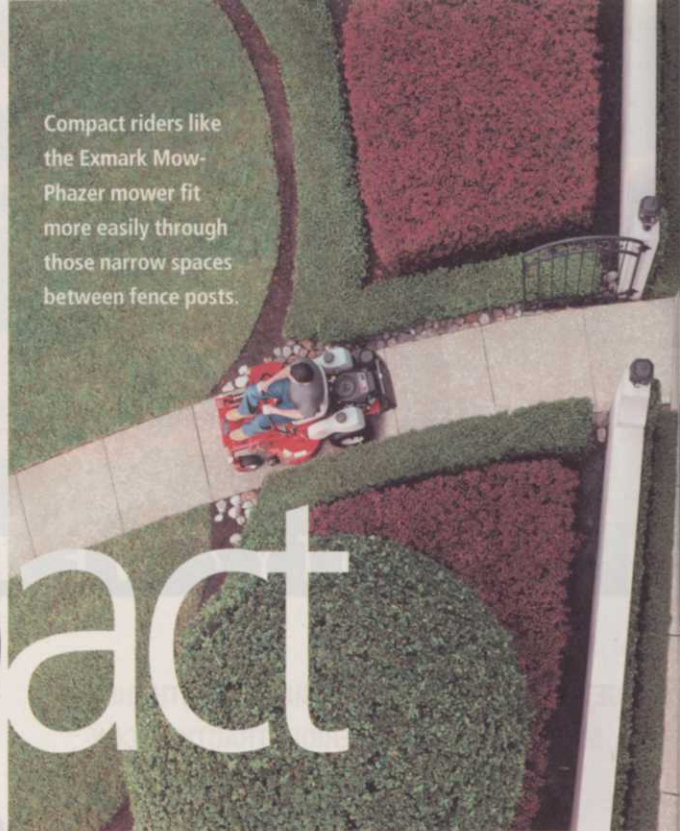
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CONSIDER THE compact

Compact riders like the Exmark Mow-Phazer mower fit more easily through those narrow spaces between fence posts.



When serving a customer means squeezing through a gate, it pays to have a compact mower

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS / Managing Editor

I've talked to guys who have said, 'I won't even take a yard if they've got a 36-in. gate. I just find somebody else.'

Like other tools it's a matter of preference and need. Clustering the properties of a particular neighborhood of similar-sized small lots or that has gates into a single route allows the efficient and profitable use of a compact. Many contractors fit a compact onto their trailers for those odd jobs or smaller properties, even on a route of larger jobs. But if it spends too much time on the trailer because the times of use are few, then it may not be worth the investment.

Again, it comes down to knowing your costs and serving clients in the best and most efficient way.

Most mower manufacturers offer compact models so there's lots to choose from.

What to look for

Here are a few things to consider. The first factor is the deck size, but weight is another consideration, says Raney. Many residential areas don't want a large mower on the property, but are willing to allow the smaller compact mowers.

Cloutier lists the following as the key factors to consider:

continued on page 76

Jokes aside, there is something to be said about a man and the size of his mower. And it might just be: Bigger isn't always better. A 60-in.-deck mower may make quick work of most properties, but throw in a fence with a 36-in. gate and you can stop a crew dead in its tracks. And does a larger, production unit make sense for smaller residential properties?

One option for keeping the work flowing smoothly is the compact riding mower.

"The rule of thumb is, you want the largest deck you can fit into an area comfortably," says Ken Raney, advertising manager, Hustler Turf Equipment. "Some properties you're going to have to get that through a gate. That's where the compact mowers come in."

Or as John Cloutier, marketing manager for Exmark

Manufacturing Co. says, "Utilized in the correct applications, compact riding machines can safely cut large amounts of grass in less time."

There's no universal standard for what classifies a mower as a compact, but there are a number of generalizations. For example, mowers with decks under 40 inches are usually classified as compacts. They are lighter in weight and generally have fewer attachment options than their bigger brothers.

Whatever the configuration, the use is pretty much the same, to have a ride- or stand-on option that fits into those tight spots in which the bigger mowers cannot maneuver.

"It really depends on the contractor," Raney says. "We've talked to a lot of guys who will only do certain types of properties because that's what their equipment fits.



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Hustler's Mini Z mower skirts the edge where a mower with a larger deck would fear to tread.

continued from page 74

- ▶ The design of smaller deck machines gives operators the ability to fit through small gates and have access to fenced-in areas, and are more maneuverable.
- ▶ Compact riders are roughly the same size, weight and cost versus a comparable hydro walk-behind unit.
- ▶ Increased riding mower productivity results in increased revenues and profit versus a walk-behind.
- ▶ Improved employee comfort and morale.

Disadvantages

A compact isn't the machine

to use for large projects with no width impediments. But there are a few other factors to consider.

"Key purchase consideration with a compact rider will be the terrain of the properties you maintain," Cloutier says. "Compacts by nature have reduced tractor widths. As a result, hillside traction and stability of these units may not be to the levels achieved with full-size riders. Whenever there are any terrain gradients beyond 15 degrees, we strongly suggest mowing these properties with a walk-behind product." **LM**

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Wading through water weeds

Use an integrated approach when managing weeds and algae in lakes and ponds

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS / Managing Editor

Aquatic weeds can ruin more than the view. Besides pushing out native plant species, aquatic weeds like Hydrilla can invade lakes and retention ponds hampering businesses that rely on the water and even dropping property values for homes and residential communities.

And it's those homes and communities that may be responsible for making the problem worse.

"You've got a constant influx of fertilizer, which basically causes a lot of problems that affect lakes and waterways," explains Craig Smith, aquatics business manager for Phoenix Environmental Care. "Nutrient loading

causes algae blooms and even worse can encourage the growth of exotic aquatic plants, like Hydrilla. These weeds are problems; there are health issues involved as far as being a breeding ground for mosquitoes. There's a decrease of water quality from an overgrowth of exotic weeds."

Chemicals are part of the solution, Smith says, stressing the word "part." Different weed problems and different sites may require different management options, often in combination.

"There are several ways that maintenance activities go on," Smith says. "There's manual labor where it's best to remove

overgrowth of weeds. Sometimes there are not chemicals that are effective in controlling all problems. Usually an integrated management program is used where sometimes mechanical or manual is used in conjunction with a specific herbicide or algaecide applications."

Chemical options available to landscapers looking to rid ponds and lakes of algae and aquatic weeds are limited, at least compared to weed control in turf and landscapes. "There're less than a dozen approved aquatic products," Smith says. "So, all those tools are very important."

Regular maintenance

While contractors can apply a pre-emergent herbicide to diminish the onset of particular weeds, that's not an option for controlling weeds and algae that infest our ponds and lakes.

"There is nothing that can be done on a preventative basis," Smith says. "There are no products that can be applied that are going to stop weeds and algae from coming up in a lake. You have to maintain things as they become evident. It's usually best to start a maintenance program at the first signs of an algae bloom or exotic plant infestation."

Just like on land, chemical re-
continued on page 80

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continued from page 78

sistance is an issue to keep in mind when treating unwanted vegetation in water.

"Resistance management certainly needs to come into play," Smith says. "When you have so few tools, it's important to rotate products that are used. Use combinations of products that are available. There are a few new chemistries that are being worked on right now, but for the most part the industry has had only a handful of active ingredients that are labeled for aquatic use."

Read and follow the label

Regulations for applying aquatic products vary by state. As with using all chemical control products, the label is the law. Some products require that they be applied by certified applicators

only; some do not. Most are easy to use, and commercial applicators should have no trouble using them properly if they follow label directions precisely. Even so, in many cases they should be prepared to respond to consumer concerns.

"Everybody is very sensitive about water," Smith says. "As sensitive as society is getting about 'what is that spray going on my lawn?' you can imagine how scary some people think it is to see somebody spraying an unknown mixture into their lake. There's a lot of public perception that comes into play. In reality, it's extremely difficult to get a project registered for aquatic use. For that to happen they must have an extremely wide margin of safety for humans and wildlife."

That said, it's vitally important for



Aquatic weeds can ruin a favorite spot for fishermen and others who enjoy the water.

contractors to know and follow local laws. Also, keep in mind that many universities have experts on staff that can help identify

problem vegetation and suggest best management practices. And, of course, manufacturers and suppliers of chemical control products are eager to provide whatever information is required to ensure the best, most efficient and most environmentally friendly treatment success.

When in doubt about a particular treatment or management strategy, ask. **LM**



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2007

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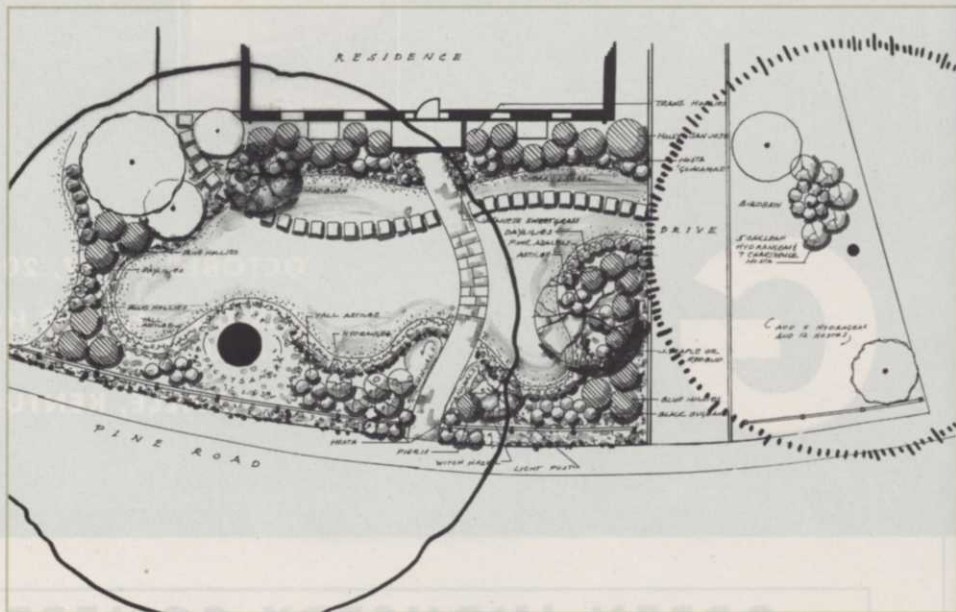
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The design

Improving the curb appeal of a Philadelphia-area classic colonial-style residence.

The site before construction

An extremely dry yard with an aging flagstone walkway.



Project Requirements

- Improve the yard's irrigation.
- Offer easier access to the driveway from the home's entrance.
- Preserve the property's large Norway maple, which previously had been difficult to underplant.

Project Specifics

The goal was to make the landscape appealing with plantings both lush and shade-tolerant.



ABOVE Fencing bordering the front garden enhances the curb appeal. Note the addition of low-voltage landscape lighting.

LEFT The path continues through lush plantings – now that an irrigation system has been installed to remedy the extreme dryness of the property.





BEFORE

ABOVE A wider flagstone pathway now extends from the front door area to the street, while additional flagstone stepping stones create a walkway from the front porch to the perennial garden area and driveway.

LEFT This "before" view shows the deteriorating flagstone walkway and lackluster landscape



Care was taken to incorporate existing trees into the new design.

Project Principals

- Burke Brothers Landscape Contractors, Wyndmoor, PA, www.burkebrothers.com
- Landscape Designer: Laurie Clabbers
- Services include commercial and residential landscape design, installation and renovation. The company offers low-voltage lighting installation, custom flagstone and paver walks, terraces, stairs, patios, retaining walls, boulder accents, rock gardens, cobblestone driveways and edging, as well as water features such as fountains, ponds, streams and reflecting pools.
- Budget for this project: Less than \$25,000

This project was a winner in PLANET's 37th annual Environmental Improvement Awards program. For more information on the program, visit www.landcarenetwork.org.

The Score Residence

Learning what these homeowners really wanted gave Villa Landscapes the direction to building an award winner

BY JANET AIRD

A fire pit and the nearby dining area highlight the new backyard area of the Score home.

It's amazing how concrete blocks and pavers can transform a difficult backyard slope.

At this home in St. Croix County, WI, wide steps interspersed with planters filled with colorful flowers lead down to a patio with a sunken, circular fire pit and a raised, circular dining area. The multi-level design won first place in the Inter-

locking Concrete Paver Institute's National Concrete Paver Design Contest.

Jim Christensen, senior landscape architect for Villa Landscapes in Oakdale, MN, created the design.

"In my mind, hardscape is the backbone of a landscape," Christensen says. "We focus on it first."

Before Christensen begins a design, he talks to the homeowners about their visions for the landscape and shows them examples of other landscapes to give them more ideas. Occasionally they want something that Christensen knows won't work. He'll "diplomatically discuss" it with them, he says.

He asks about the number of people they'll entertain and how they'll move

continued on page 86

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continued from page 84

around in the space. Then he moves on to the aesthetic qualities, for example, how best to integrate the landscaping with the architecture of the house and if existing trees can be incorporated into the design.

"If you listen well to the thoughts and insights of the homeowner, you can readily come back with a design they like." In this case, he says, "The husband had a comprehensive vision for the design. His thoughts were considerably grander than typical."

A low, curving wall with three tiers of steps and landings is offset with planters.

It's a fairly substantial-sized house, he says, with a walk-out floor level plan. There's an eight to 10 foot grade change from

the front to the back of the house.

Christensen's design begins with a low, curving wall on the driveway side of the yard, where the slope is gentle. It meets three tiers of steps and landings offset with planters brimming with colorful plants. Columns capped with natural stone stand on each landing.

The steps lead down to a large patio behind the house, which features two smaller, circular patios. One of the smaller patios is a sunken fire pit with steps leading down to it and built-in seating around it. The other is a slightly raised dining area.

The materials

The design called for about 2,000 sq. ft. of Versa-Lok retaining wall units for the walls, raised patio base, columns and steps, and about the same amount of pavers for most of the paved areas. They used different Versa-Lok products for the fire pit and the dining area and some of the paved areas.

Christensen chose these products, he says, because of their versatility. Its

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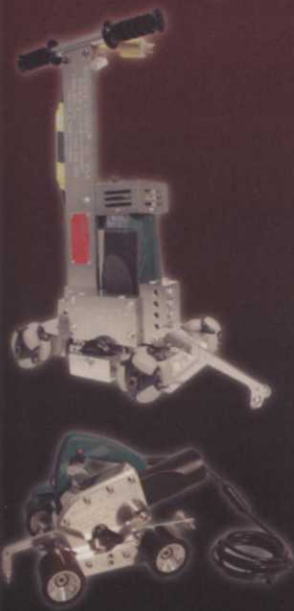


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continued from page 86

variety of sizes, colors and textures suit a wide array of home styles and characteristics, and can be used for virtually any surface, including retaining walls, stairs, landings, benches and planters.

Another advantage of these retaining walls, Christensen says, is that they provide “sleep insurance” in the event of heavy rainstorms.

Hardscape is the backbone of a landscape. We focus on it first.

“Water is a critical element for any retaining wall,” he says. As with other retaining walls, a layer of gravel under the soil behind the wall allows storm water to penetrate into the ground, but there’s another element, too. Unlike many other retaining walls, these blocks are connected with pins instead of mortar. This allows storm water to infiltrate

through the joints in the wall.

This system also gives the walls some flexibility, which lets them withstand minor earth movements like freezing and thawing more easily than blocks connected by mortar.

The work

Christensen is the project manager and quality control rep when his designs are installed. He visits the sites every day.

On this project, the crew ran into their first problem right away. Usually, after the builders dig out the soil for the basement of a house, they take it away, Christensen says. At this house, the builder left a huge pile of unconsolidated fill behind the house. As soon as the crew got rid of that, they had a second unwelcome surprise.

“Once we dug the fill soil out, we found that the foundation soil for the patio was bedrock eight to 10 inches deep,” Christensen says. “We had to excavate a lot of bedrock and put in the base material. In the 38 years that I’ve been a

Villa Landscapes used a Versa-Lok solution to create the three tiers of steps to lead up the slope in front of the home.

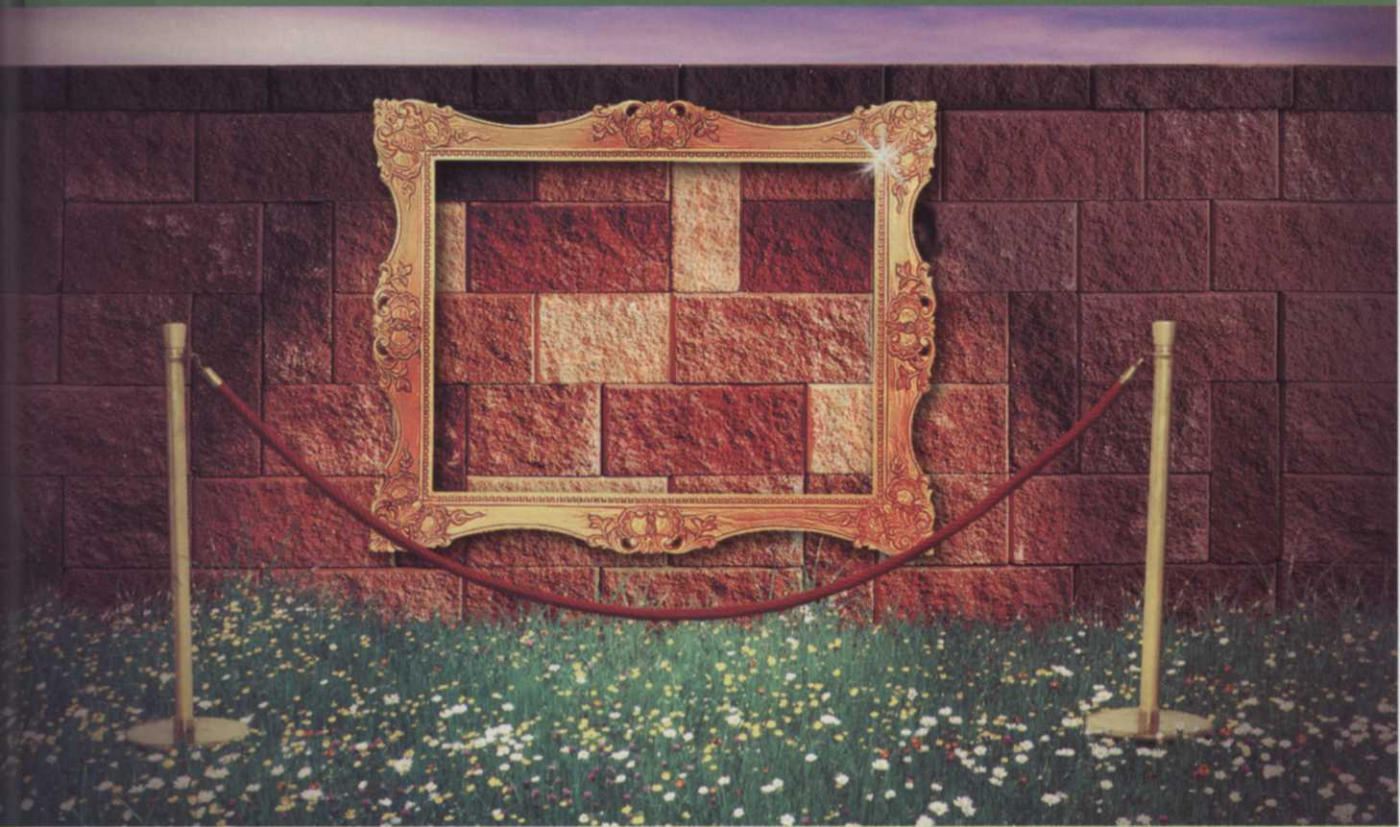
landscape architect, this is the first time I’ve encountered that. It’s a local oddity.”

The results

The project took about 10 weeks, and cost about .07 cents for each brick, block and paver, Christensen says. Both the husband and the wife who own the house made significant contributions to the end result.

“I have to credit this homeowner,” Christensen says. “He’s one of the most visioned landscape-developing homeowners I’ve ever dealt with. He was understanding, cooperative and considerate of unforeseen circumstances. The wife has a substantial green thumb. Her commitment to the establishment and care of the plants has made our construction look much better. It was a delightful experience for the designer, the homeowners and the installation staff.” **LM**

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Night lighting offers landscaping contractors a highly profitable business opportunity BY BRUCE BOYERS

In the last 50 years, an ever-expanding number of property owners have been posing the question: Why not continue this gorgeous display into the night? Many turn to landscaping professionals to install outdoor lighting—and the wise among the landscapers have been turning these requests into very profitable ventures.

"About 13 years ago, I was working for a landscape nursery, doing landscape design and installation," says Frank Douglas, a landscaping designer in Tallahassee, FL. "I had a landscaping client who said that she wanted to do some lighting. It started a whole line of business that's led up to making \$180,000 (the first year), and will probably top \$200,000 (last) year."

Douglas has found landscape lighting to be very economical in terms of cost of doing business.

"In contrast to landscaping which requires an awful lot of overhead in terms of trucks and equipment and manpower, lighting is very, very low overhead," he

says. "You just need a pickup truck with a little ladder rack or a pipe rack on top, enough just to get your supplies around. I've gotten to where I can install a \$5,000 system in a day with one helper."

Finding a partner

Douglas works primarily with Nightscaping, which has been in the business for some 40 years. The company deals directly through a network of distributors and landscapers such as Douglas, which they find preferable to selling direct to the public through home-improvement stores or other retail outlets.

"We work very closely with the contractor in the beginning," says Ron Pinnell, Nightscaping representative. "We usually have a one-on-one game. Many times we'll go out with them on their first job, help them with the design, and do whatever we need to do to sell the job."

When Douglas started up, he needed a little help designing and installing his first job. He'd never performed electrical work, so he relied on folks from Nightscaping for advice. When they flipped

the switch on that first installation, he knew he had a new service to offer.

"That first night when the lights came on, my jaw dropped and I said, 'This is for me; this is going to be great,'" he says.

Douglas started off performing lighting jobs on the weekends as a side business in addition to his landscaping. At the time, lighting was not at all common in Tallahassee, but he found that after completing a few jobs, word spread, others started observing the installations, and the business continued to grow. Now Douglas says he doesn't have to "sell" jobs at all; they call him after seeing another of his installations and being referred to him.

Becoming an expert

To further enhance his education after that first job, he enrolled in the company's Nightscaping University, a week-long training performed at their factory. During this training, Douglas learned a great deal about design and installation, and much more.

"There were discussions of nighttime photography, technical and marketing



Whether it's an entryway or a garden path, lighting adds beauty to a home and revenue to contractors.

eye and an ability to properly install our landscape lighting."

Through their product quality, extensive training and support, Nightscaping has formed long-term relationships both with contractors and distributors. They

have many who have been partnering with them for 20-plus years, all with the common goal of satisfied and happy customers. **LMI**

— The author is a freelance writer based in Glendale, CA.

issues, and how to expand your client base," Douglas says. "In addition to the technical information, the thing I really enjoyed was the round-tables with other contractors from all over the country, in which we could compare stories and swap ideas, share opinions, ideas and knowledge."

After 5 years of continued expansion, Douglas came to work as a landscape designer with Tallahassee Nursery, bringing the lighting business with him. Now instead of a side venture, it was incorporated into the nursery's many landscaping offerings.

It wasn't long before he found yet another way to generate income from landscape lighting—maintenance. It being in his best promotional interest to make sure an installation looked perfect with no burned-out bulbs, he decided two years ago to implement a maintenance program. He sent out a mailing inviting his customers to sign up; the majority of them did, and he hired on extra help to service them. Most customers are on a quarterly program—every three months, the maintenance worker checks over a system, makes sure all lights are connected, working and are aimed correctly.

Even if they don't have electrical expertise, landscape designers such as Douglas can learn to become night lighting experts.

"We like to associate ourselves with those in the landscaping industry, including contractors, designers, and irrigation and sprinkler professionals," says Pinnell. "They seem to have a design

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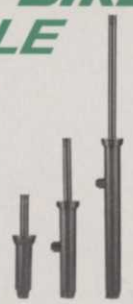
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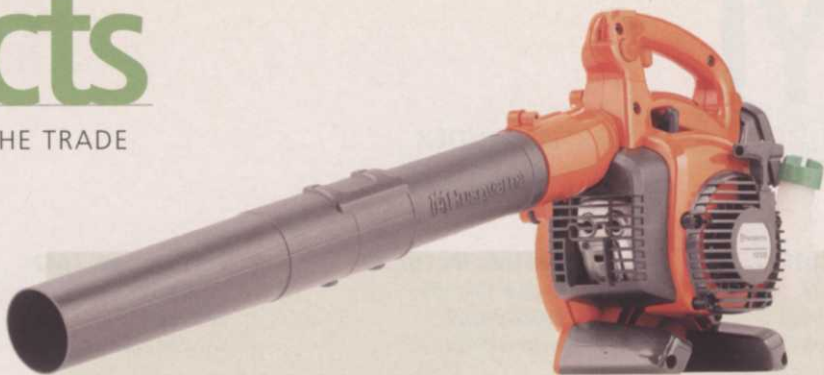
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The Greenwood Group

The Schepis family faces the challenge of fast growth

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS /
Managing Editor

Peter Schepis got the news from his doctor in 2004. It was a brain tumor. After successful surgery on the benign mass Schepis returned to work at the large Midwest commercial landscape company. But his employer had other plans for the 30-plus-year Green Industry veteran. And he and the employer parted ways.

Bound by a non-compete clause in his contract Schepis was unable to work in the commercial portion of the industry he knew so well. Consequently, he, his wife and two sons, Pete Jr. and Nick, started the The Greenwood Group, a residential landscape company headquartered in Chesterfield, MO. Pete focused on the big picture looking for ways to grow the company while his wife, Joan, saw to the accounting.

"Pete's the backbone of the company. He's been in this industry. He lives and



A group effort.

Owner Joan Schepis (front right) helped make family enterprise into a thriving full-service operation.

breathes it every day," says Joan, who owns the company. "I was working full time during the day, coming home at night doing the Greenwood Group books,"

The company posted \$50,000 in revenue in 2003, but by 2005 that figure had risen to \$400,000 and to \$1.1 million a year later. That was when Joan quit her other job and focused her attention on the family enterprise.

"We had too much vol-

ume coming in; I couldn't do two jobs successfully," Joan says. "I needed to concentrate where my interests were."

As the company has grown, the family has grown the team. The company now employs 25 H-2B workers and nearly 50 people overall. Rapid growth can be scary, which is why Joan steps back every so often to see how the company has changed.

"It is amazing," she says. "We started with one truck, our own pickup truck, with a couple of mowers. We rented a storage unit as we acquired more equipment. From there we bought a piece of property."

Pete now fully recognizes that there is a difference between owning a company and

being a manager within one, even a top-level manager

"My wife will tell you, I sit here some days, she'll say, 'You're acting just like so and so that you used to work for,'" Pete says. "I'll say, 'I'm seeing it his way now.'" The newfound perspective, he believes, gives him better insight into the employee-employer relationship.

"I am on the opposite side, and we are seeing it from a different point of view," he says.

The owners of Greenwood Group are looking to move to a 6-acre site because the non-compete agreement was up in 2005, and the family plans to grow the commercial side of the business. They've already made good that desire with the first eight new commercial accounts adding \$1 million in revenue to the coffers.

"We want the jobs we can park our trucks at all day long, and keep a crew there because the cost of fuel is killing us, as it is everybody," Pete says.

And if things work out as planned, it just might mean the Joan and Pete will have even more growth to manage, something they recognize as a huge challenge. **LM**

►► **Online:** www.thegreenwoodgroup.net

Location: Chesterfield, MO **Principals:** Joan Schepis, president; Pete Schepis, vice president **'06 Revenues:** \$2.2 million



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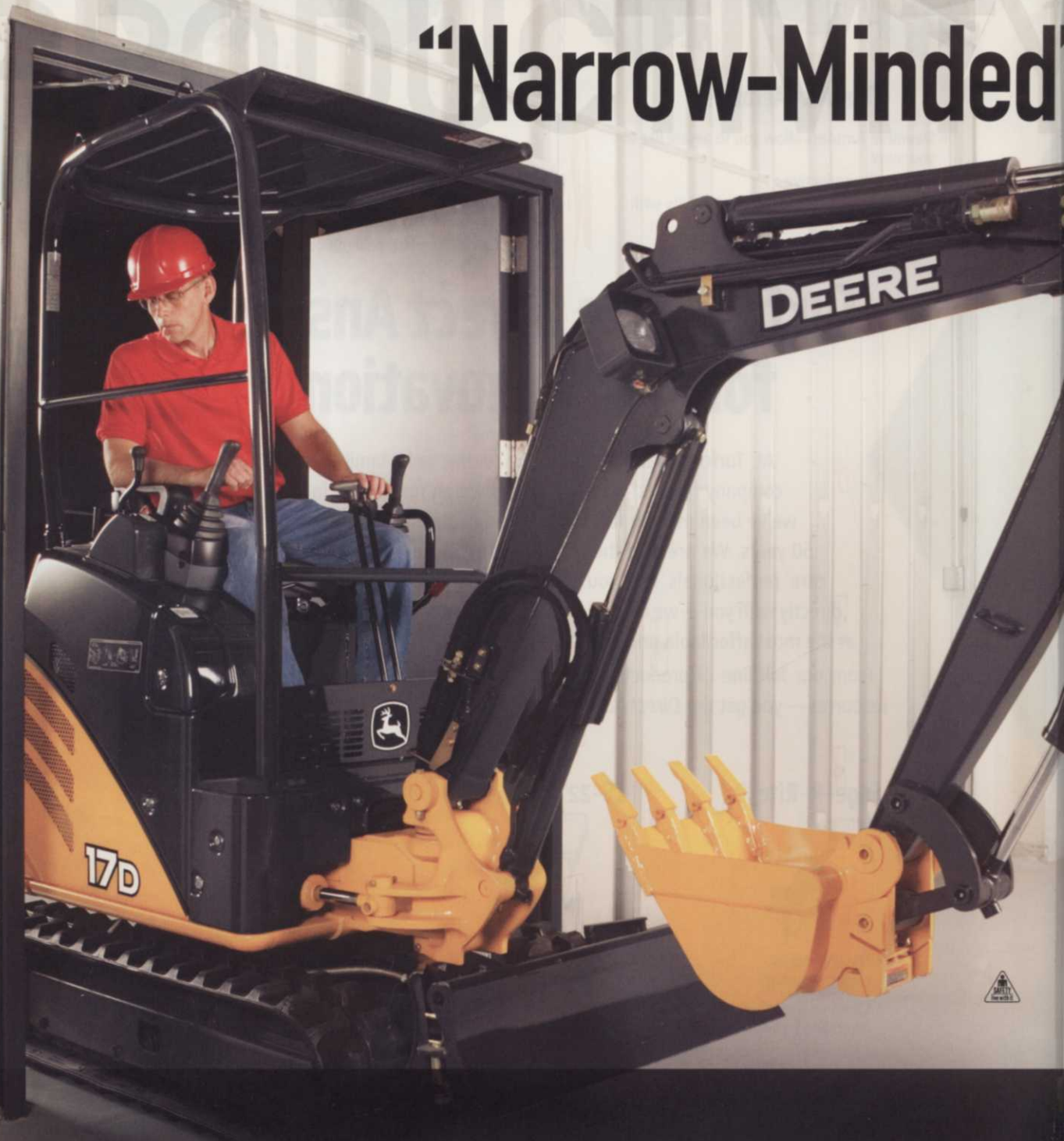
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