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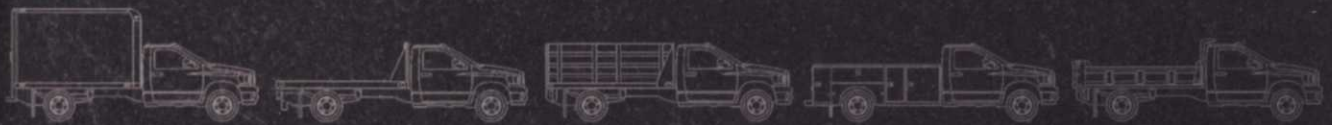
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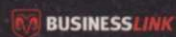


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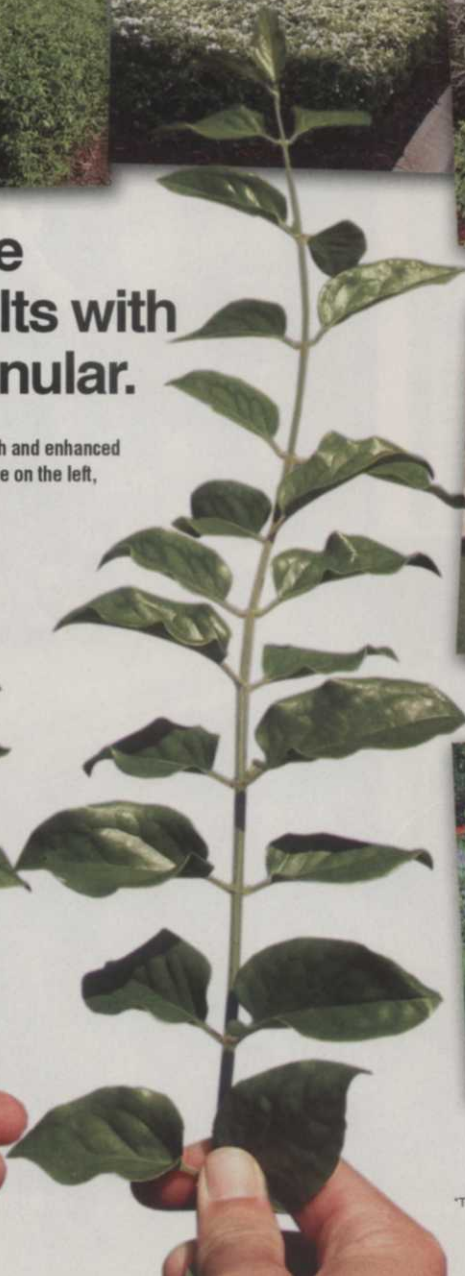
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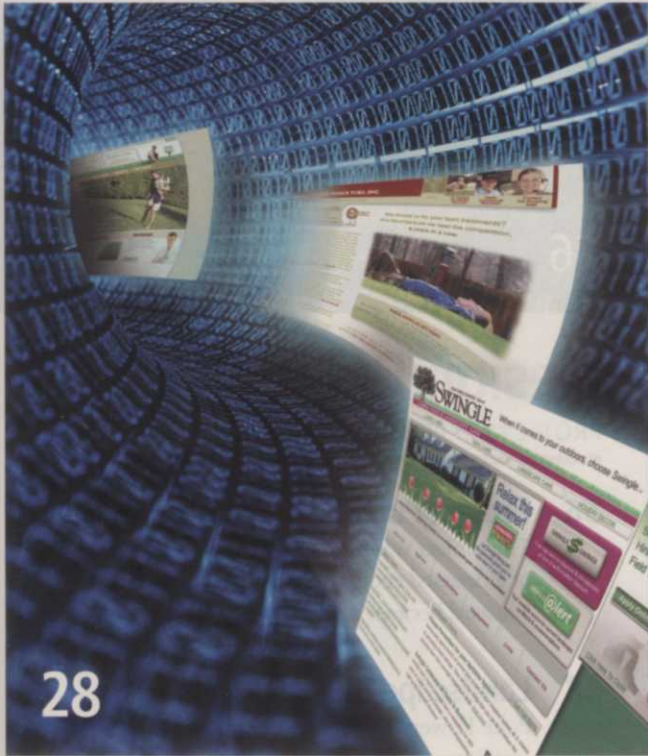
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COVER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY LISA LEHMAN;
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»Readers respond

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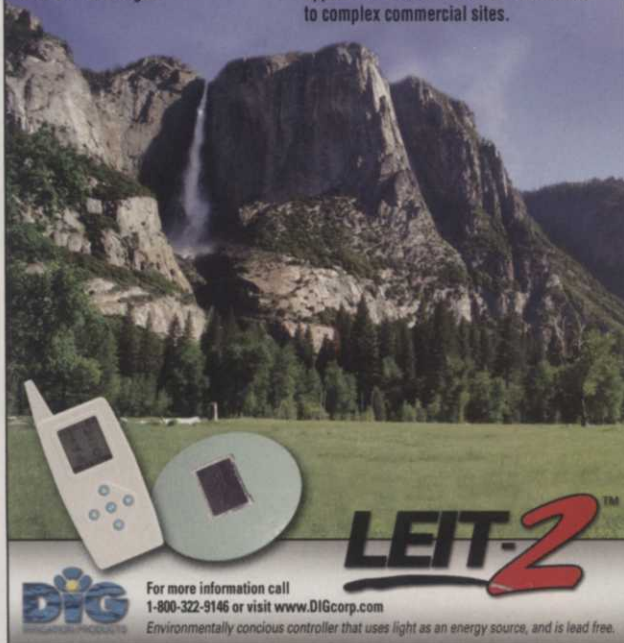
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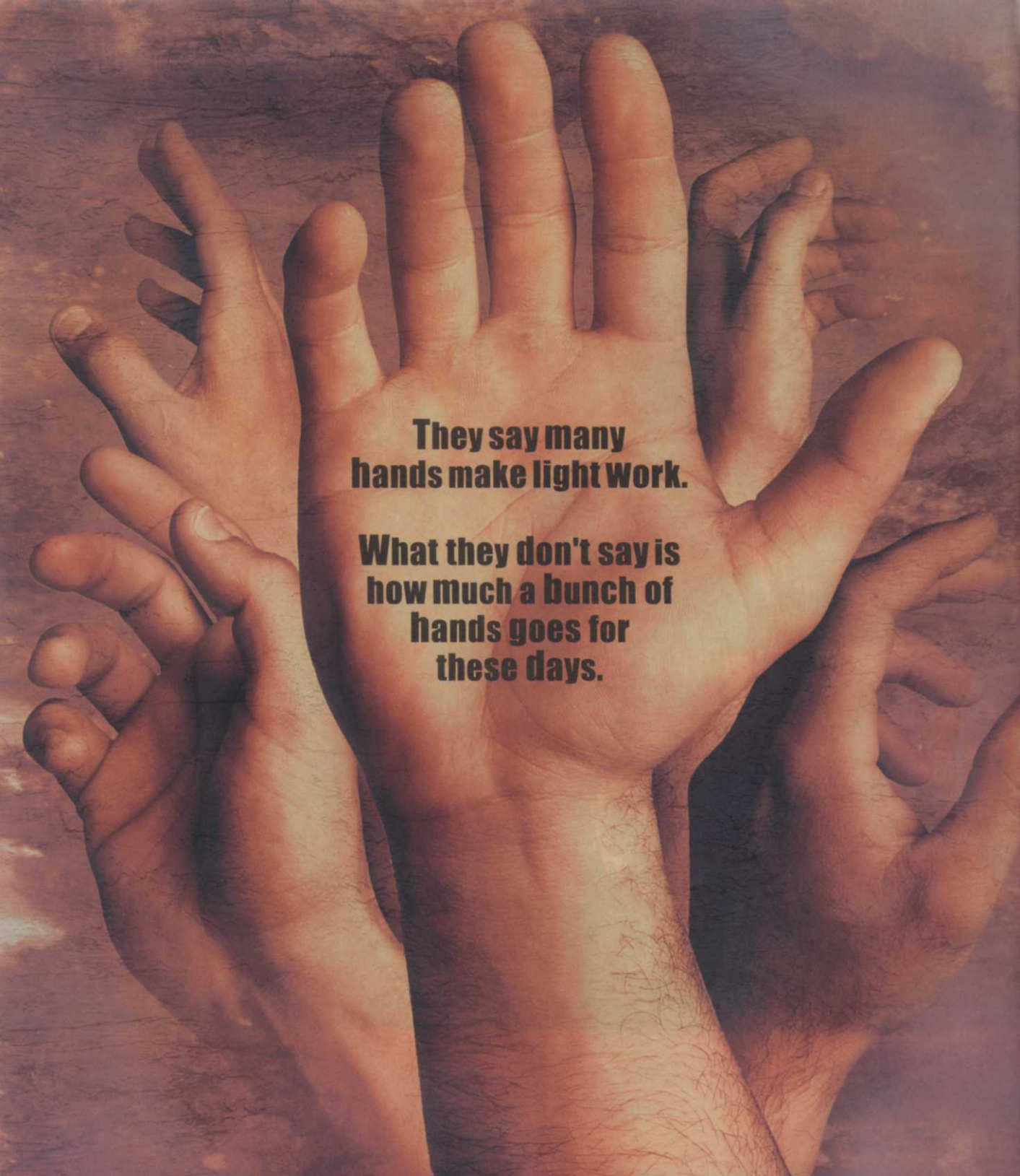
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H-2B not a long-term solution

BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

Hispanics operating commercial mowers were a novelty in our neighborhood a generation ago. In fact, I recall one owner laughingly disparage the quality of work being done by a competitor's foreign-born workers.

That same owner, whose company has doubled in size, now relies upon foreign-born workers himself. He praises their work habits at every opportunity.

Even taking into account the phenomenal growth in demand for landscape and lawn services the past 15 years, our industry's growing reliance on "imported" seasonal labor is troubling.

No, I'm not dissin' the H-2B program. It's one of the few government programs that works. The program allows foreign-born, unskilled workers to come to the United States to work seasonally in jobs U.S. workers shun. That number, at least until Sunday, Sept. 30, is the 66,000 established in 1991, plus any workers participating in the program the previous three years. The great majority of seasonal workers follow the rules, meaning the program contributes barely a blip to the problem of illegal immigrants.

H-2B is not the problem. But our dependence upon it is becoming one.

As long as we rely so heavily on immigrant labor we'll be dependent on the aegis of federal lawmakers. That's not a comforting thought for an industry that by most estimates should continue growing into the foreseeable future. So, what to do?

It's to the industry's benefit to support compre-

hensive immigration reform, including AgJobs for our nursery industry. And, yes, as things are now, we definitely need a seasonal, unskilled guest worker program and its returning worker clause. ANLA and PLANET work for both and take the broader view in this effort to ensure that the industries they represent continue to get adequate access to labor.

Maryland-based Save Small Business organization, a coalition of H-2B users, is focused more narrowly on expansion of H-2B and reauthorization of the returning worker clause.

Both work in our interests.

Even so, many of us will eventually have to learn to compete and be profitable without basing our success so heavily on immigrant labor. To continue to prosper regardless the whims of Congress in regards to immigration we will have to:

- do a better job of making our industry more attractive as a career opportunity to young people,
- right-size our operations for maximum serviceability and profitability rather than building revenue for revenue's sake, and
- mechanize wherever possible.

We shouldn't count on the government to continue to provide us with an avenue to a continuing stream of inexpensive labor. That would be unwise.

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

H-2B is one of the few government programs that works the way it's intended



It's easy to overlook the people backing up an organization because they do not directly put money on the bottom line.



Remember to include staff

BY BRUCE WILSON

All companies have administrative and support staffs. All companies need administrative and support staffs. Motivated and innovative administrative staffs make a difference in top tier companies.

While probably few would argue with this, not many focus much attention on their administrative and support staffs. Recently, I had an experience that I must share because it was powerful.

I was consulting with a company for the first time. As usual the first things are the tour and the introductions. I was impressed at the positive attitudes of employees as I was introduced and felt the company had a good working environment and culture.

It's the little things

Lunch time came around and I had a unique experience. The owner ordered in lunch (not uncommon in the interest of time) but what was uncommon it was served in the administrative area of the company where the support staff worked and we (the senior managers, owner and I who up until now were talking behind closed doors) sat down and had a casual conversation with the administrative staff.

What a lively group. We talked about where people lived, hobbies and other things, but we also talked about answering the phones, how to work

and get other things done while responding to customer calls etc. The owner explained why the consultant was here and the continuing improvement efforts of the company. He went in and out of the room doing things, not at all concerned about what the subject matter was.

The benefit

I was impressed by the fact that even though this was the stressful spring start up of the season, the company had increased sales considerably and the inbound calls were very high, the staff thrived on it. They laughed and took pride in how they were able to roll with it, maintain a high level of customer support, remind the forgetful supervisors and managers to return calls.

After the lunch, I had a few minutes to reflect and realized that things like the lunch I just witnessed and enjoyed, was one of the reasons this company prospers. The administrative staff was included in an important process, they talked to the consultant, they talked freely with the owner and shared their thoughts and they felt that they really were important and made a difference. Inclusion made them feel that way.

It is easy to overlook the very important people backing up an organization because they do not directly put money on the bottom line. But, indirectly if they are motivated they can and do make a big difference.

— 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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372:16
238:49

Total hours: Irrigation
Total hours: Placing Sod

38:53

Hours Bill Owen worked last week

611:05

Total hours to date:
Crestview

WEEKLY TIMECARD

NAME: *Bill Owen*

DATES: *13-17*

	START	LUNCH	END	JOB CODES	JOBSITE/PROJECT	HOURS
Mon.	7:00	1/2	3:30		Brentwood	8
Tues.			3:30			8
Wed.			4:00		▼	8 1/2
Thurs.			4:00		Crestview	8 1/2
Fri.	▼	▼	4:00		▼	8 1/2

SIGNATURE: *Bill Owen*

TOTAL HOURS: *41 1/2*

GUESSWORK

Employee Report

Owen, 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
			12:41 PM	3:22 PM	Irrigation	2:41 7:38 hours
Tue	8/14	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:07 PM	Irrigation	4:55
			12:43 PM	3:23 PM	Irrigation	2:40 7:35 hours
Wed	8/15	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:02 PM	Irrigation	4:50
			12:46 PM	3:49 PM	Irrigation	3:03 7:53 hours
Thu	8/16	Crestview	7:17 AM	12:19 PM	Placing Sod	5:02
			12:50 PM	3:46 PM	Placing Sod	2:56 7:58 hours
Fri	8/17	Crestview	7:13 AM	12:07 PM	Placing Sod	4:54
			12:44 PM	3:39 PM	Placing Sod	2:55 7:49 hours

SIGNATURE: *Bill Owen*
Signature Owen, Bill

Total 38:53 hours

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In the Know

BUSINESS

NEWS YOU CAN USE

PLANET & ANLA endorse immigration deal

BY MIKE SEUFFERT / Associate Editor

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Since the Border Security and Immigration Reform Act of 2007 was announced on May 17, the bill has been debated, praised, tabled, criticized, died and reborn once again.

At press time, the fate of the bill is unknown, though Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) said that the bill's future would be decided by July 4.

A deal to consider 20 new amendments to the bill, split evenly between Democrats and Republicans, gave hope that a compromise could be reached, but as McConnell said on CBS' Face the Nation, "It's hard to know whether the votes will be there to pass it or not."

Both the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) and the American Nursery & Landscape Association have endorsed the bill as the best opportunity for permanently addressing the landscape industry's labor shortage and the problems

with the H-2B program.

The bill would extend the repeat-worker exemption under the H-2B program until the H-2B program sunsets and a new Y-2B seasonal-worker program comes into effect after certain border security and enforcement triggers are met. The Y-2B program would also have a permanent repeat-worker exemption. The initial cap for the Y-2B program is 100,000, but it can expand to 200,000 according to the bill's market-based regulator formula.

According to Craig Regelbrugge, ANLA's vice president for Government Relations, already this year, 1,169 immigration-related bills have been proposed in states and municipalities. This is more than twice the 570 bills proposed in 2006. Experts suggest that failure to achieve comprehensive reform will open the floodgates to non-federal action, much of it targeting employers and the immigrants they employ. "We will all be well-served by a system that is fair, rewards work, and restores the rule of law," said Regelbrugge.

Husqvarna aids new landscape program

NELSONVILLE, OH — Beginning in fall 2007, Hocking

College in Nelsonville, OH, will offer a landscape management curriculum with Husqvarna assisting in its development.

Husqvarna will offer financial support and scholarships. In addition to providing materials and curriculum input, Husqvarna is encouraging student recruitment with additional financial support, scholarships and industry promotions.

U.S. Lawns named Top Ten Franchise

ORLANDO, FL — U.S. Lawns, with more than 170 franchised offices in 30 states, has been picked by *Success Magazine* as one of the "Top Ten Franchises of 2007." The company, along with nine others, has been singled out due to its potential to be a lucrative venture for those who want to be their own bosses, but with the added support that comes with a franchise. U.S. Lawns was also recently included among *Entrepreneur Magazine's* listing of "Best Franchise Opportunities."

Efco offers 'No Fear' warranty

WOOSTER, OH — Emak USA, manufacturer of Efco brand power equipment, announced its new "Five Year No Fear" warranty. The warranty offers five year consumer and two year professional coverage for all 2- and 4-cycle chainsaws and lawn and garden products. Visit www.efcower.com.

[CLIPPINGS]

PLANET offers legislative update

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) is tracking the following legislation, which will be discussed at Legislative Day on the Hill, July 15-17, 2007 in Washington, D.C.

Clean Water Act: H.R. 2421 would expand the regulatory reach of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and could affect pesticide applications near bodies of water.

Worker Protection and Pesticide Record Keeping: Known as the NOURISH Act of

2007, the bill alleges that farmer workers suffer high rates of "toxic chemical injuries." The bill would substantially expand to the scope of pesticide record keeping requirements for both general-use and restricted-use pesticides.

Employee Free Choice Act: According to PLANET, EFCA would increase the power of union bosses, which could lead to greater and easier unionization efforts, affecting your employees.

John Deere donates equipment for Greensburg tornado victims

MOLINE, IL — When a massive F5 tornado demolished Greensburg, KS, on May 4, the town was left with huge piles of debris to clear away before rebuilding could begin. That's when John Deere and Murphy Tractor — a Deere construction equipment dealer with locations in nearby Wichita, Ulysses, Great Bend, Topeka and Dodge City — stepped up to the plate with the donation of a 624J loader equipped with a grapple bucket and an 850J Waste Handler Dozer.

"The devastation in Greensburg is just immense, and this equipment was sorely needed," said Tom Udland, president,

Murphy Tractor in Wichita. "We're glad to be in a position to help our neighbors as they clean up and begin to rebuild their community."

This equipment is a part of the fleet that has removed more than 5,000 loads of debris from the area. The 624J helped pick up splintered wood from houses and trees for transfer to the landfill. The 850J waste handler helped move large loads into the burning pile.

The 624J is the most productive machine at work in Greensburg, according to Martin Miller, public affairs manager for the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT).

"With the grapple attachment, this machine actually can pick up nearly a truckload of material in one scoop. It's much more efficient than anything else on the street out there," Miller said.



LEGALLY Speaking



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

Q | The local union is active in our business. What do we have to watch out for if the union starts getting involved with our employees?

A | The National Labor Relations Act provides employees with the right to participate in a union, as well as the right to refrain from any activities involving a union. The NLRA gives employers and supervisors the right of free speech to talk to employees about their unions, their concerns and their rights. As an employer, however, you cannot threaten, interrogate, promise or spy on your employees as those are Unfair Labor Practices under the Act.

Q | How can I let me employees know that unions will not be tolerated?

A | Quite simply, you can't. If you say things like, "This is our company and we don't allow union activity on our premises," or "If the union gets in here, there will be no more overtime" then you are violating sections of the National Labor Relations Act and may be investigated.

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.

In the Know

Connecticut bans pesticides on school grounds

HARTFORD, CT — Over the vigorous objections of the Connecticut Grounds Keepers Association, Connecticut state legislators passed a bill ushering in a ban on chemical pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and insecticides on elementary and middle school grounds.

On June 18, Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell, at a ceremony at East Hartford High School, signed the bill into law.

"This law will help protect the health of more than 100,000 Connecticut middle school students," Governor Rell said. "While pesticides are known to be detri-

mental to people of all ages, we must take extra precautions to ensure that our young people are protected from potential harm."

The new legislation extends a previous bill passed in 2005 that banned the use of lawn care chemicals on preschool and elementary school grounds. The new restrictions go into effect in October, although the chemicals will be allowed for use on playing fields until July 2009. Professional applicators who break the law may be fined up to \$1,000, jailed up to 30 days or both, the law says.

The bill passed 140-9 in the House and 35-0 in the Senate.

In spite of the overwhelming support the bill received, Dick Tice, executive director of the Connecticut Grounds Keepers Association, remains convinced the law is not a good law.

"The entire concept behind the bill has been based on emotional rhetoric that has no basis of fact involved," he said. "This bill imposes on the people of Connecticut the wishes of a very vocal and intimidating few. All discussion on scientific data has been ignored."

Aquascape contractors build pond for NASCAR's Richard Petty

ST. CHARLES, IL — Bruce Berry, Aquascape Inc., and several Certified Aquascape Contractors (CAC) worked together to build a pond for NASCAR legend Richard Petty at his home in North Carolina on May 2, 2007.

Bruce Berry from My Pond Store in Reidsville, NC, met Petty's operations manager, Johnny Cline, at a home show and a week later, was on Petty's schedule

for a design consultation. His portfolio, presentation, pond knowledge, and CAC status won him the job.

"Richard and his wife Linda wanted a water feature around the pavilion for entertainment purposes," Berry said. "His

Richard Petty celebrates his home's new pond.



only other request was to make sure we didn't harm his oak tree. He gave us full design privileges."

The group installed a 13 ft. by 20 ft. pond with a 17 ft. stream and

waterfall, with a negative edge and 7 ft. by 9 ft. lower bog. Berry incorporated some large boulders from the Petty farm into the design, along with 25 tons of stone and gravel from Greystone in Sequatchie, TN.

Berry couldn't imagine a better job for Aquascape and a group of CACs to participate in, so he invited them to make the trek to Level Cross, NC.

"It's the camaraderie of the CACs that makes our program so strong," Beaulieu said. "I don't know of any other group that would drop what they're doing in the middle of the busiest time of year and go to North Carolina to build a pond for free."

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Circle 117

In the Know

People & companies



The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) certified **Bayer Environmental Science** sales representatives **David Crank** and **Michael Owen** as ISA Certified Arborists.

Dow Agro-Sciences named **Matt Benson** as North America Market Sell and U.S. Business Services Leader.



Savio Engineering Inc. of Albuquerque, NM, promoted **Rob Kashauer** to vice president of operations.



Craig R. Cowden has been named president of **Horizon Horticultural Group**, based in Vero Beach, FL.



BASF Professional Turf & Ornamentals appointed **Travis Klosterboer** as sales specialist for Texas, Oklahoma

and New Mexico. **BASF** also named **Todd Burkdoll** to market development specialist supporting turf & ornamental markets in the Western United States.

Paul G. McDonough joined **The Davey Tree Expert Co.** as manager, product sales and marketing.

Bob Maffei, owner of **Maffei Landscape Contractors** in Mashpee, MA, was selected by the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce to receive a Build a Better Mousetrap Award from Cape Cod SCORE.

Scott Todd joined **Valent Professional Products** as national business manager.



Stuart J. Sperber, **Valley-Crest Co.** co-founder and vice president, received an Honorary Doctor of Science Degree from the College of Agriculture at **Cal Poly Pomona**.

Warren Seifert is **Target Specialty Products'** new representative for the northern California nursery and landscape markets.



BEFORE



Problem Some landscape contractors plant trees without cutting twine or pulling back the burlap around the base of the tree. Is this a problem?

The cause There is a misunderstanding that the twine and burlap will just "rot and go away," and this simply is not what happens. The twine and burlap covering creates an almost water proof barrier, which retains moisture against the bark of the tree causing the bark to rot and restricts plant growth.

Solutions

The key to ensuring a healthy start for any tree planting is to make sure that it receives adequate moisture. But leaving the twine and burlap around the base are not the only mistakes.

1. With a few exceptions, always cut the twine and pull back the burlap from base of the tree.
2. Make sure the root flare of the tree is level to slightly higher than the soil grade. This will assure that you are planting the tree at the correct depth.
3. Do not place "extra soil" on top of the root ball. This will only create more problems. Instead remove the excess soil from the site or spread out the soil on the surrounding turf area.

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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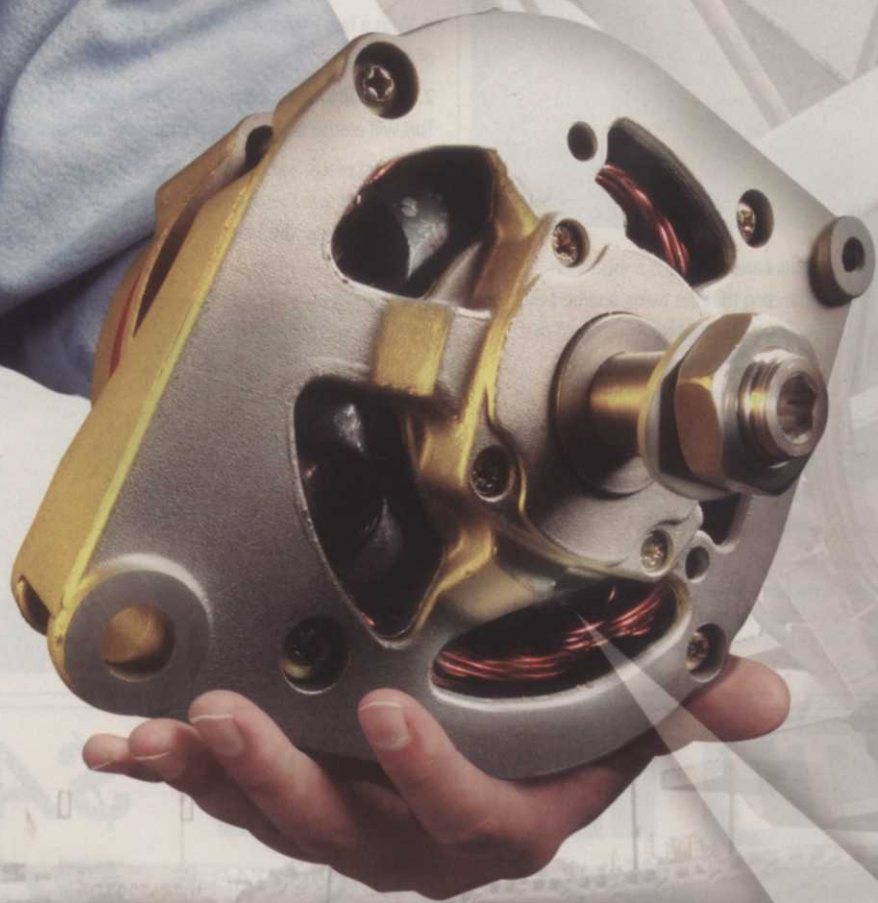
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Digital Dazzle

THE WORLD IS ONLINE. Can you afford not to be there with your own unique online strategy? A strategy designed to attract attention? Showcase your company's services? Reduce your marketing costs? Build customer loyalty?

Five e-marketing building blocks to attract prospects, turn them into loyal customers and keep them asking for more **BY TOM RYAN**



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The short answer: Absolutely not.

The good news is building a killer online strategy isn't as difficult as you might think. In fact, if you follow five simple suggestions, you will build a strategy that will return many times the initial investment in time and money. But first, why the fuss over online?

The Commerce Department reports retail sales included \$29.3 billion in e-commerce transactions in Q4 2006, an increase of 6.3% over Q3, even while retail sales in general dropped .2% in the same period. In fact, non-travel e-commerce spending for 2006 was \$102 billion, up a whopping 24% since 2005 (according to Comscore.com). According to an October 2006 Forrester Research report (*U.S. eCommerce: Five-Year Forecast And Data Overview*), non-travel online retail revenues will top the quarter trillion dollar mark by 2011.

The driver of this growth? There are roughly eight million Web shopping households. The number keeps growing.

Landscape and lawn care pros simply must pay attention to these numbers.

People not only buy online, they research products and services, analyze opportunities and form impressions online before they buy off line.

As the population's comfort level with buying and researching online has grown, consumers have come to expect businesses to provide the needed functionality.

Becoming part of the global \$7 trillion e-commerce marketplace increases revenues and lowers costs without a major outlay of capital.

3 TIPS FOR BETTER ENEWSLETTERS

- 1** **TIME YOUR EMAILS.** Avoid sending newsletters out on Friday afternoons or Monday mornings. Tuesday morning to mid morning is an excellent time to send out emails.
- 2** **CONTENT IS KING.** A compelling subject line, particularly on emarketing pieces, is vital. Describe or promise a benefit to the reader in the subject line. Be brief. The newsletter is going to get read or deleted based on the power of the subject line. Give it impact and serve a need.
- 3** **BE CONCISE.** Compelling, consistent, continuous and clear content are the cornerstones of effective communication. This holds true in every case, including emails, newsletters or the content on your Web site. Just because you're communicating digitally doesn't mean to get sloppy or take short cuts at the readers' expense. Respect the intelligence of the people visiting your Web site and receiving your digital correspondence.

— Judy Guido

The big five

An online business strategy goes far beyond having a Web site. Most Web sites are no more than online brochures. An online business strategy focuses on capturing a greater share of the growing market of people who research and shop online. Accordingly, an effective online business strategy incorporates these five components:

1. Email marketing. The Internet has dramatically lowered the cost of maintaining contact with prospects and customers. Email, in particular, is an effective, low-cost way to increase sales and customer loyalty. It's crucial to capture the email address of every customer and everyone who visits the Web site.

Update hardcopy forms completed by customers and prospects to include a request for email addresses. Ensure people their email addresses will not be shared outside the business. Then enter the addresses into customer and prospect databases.

Once addresses have been captured, send regular communication (monthly or quarterly) to build relationships with

prospects and customers, encourage repeat business and engender loyalty. The cost of generating additional business from an existing customer is always less than finding a new customer. In particular, use email to:

- ▶ Announce specials and seasonal campaigns.
- ▶ Remind customers of needed follow-up work.
- ▶ Send seasonal gardening tips or other helpful information. It costs next to nothing compared with printing and mailing hard copies.
- ▶ Provide coupons and special discounts. Customer loyalty and rewards programs have become extremely popular outside the travel industry.

According to recent statistics 92% of businesses online actively use customer loyalty programs to increase their customer base. This usually involves giving away freebies or free promotional gifts as well as more personalized service. People love to feel special.

2. A dynamic, interactive Web site. Web sites must engage customers and be interactive. This includes functionality that

enables visitors to contact the business via the Web site. Encourage customers to submit their landscaping needs, ideas and requests for bids online and give them a prompt response on what the job entails. The greater the ease with which people can communicate via the Web site, the greater the landscaper's competitive advantage. Keep the Web site updated.

Include photos of recent work in the updates, but always obtain customers' permission in writing before posting photos of their property online.

3. A commercial gateway. A Web site becomes a commercial gateway where

people can transact any business they would otherwise transact in person or over the phone. Moving key functions such as customer service, database management and accounts status online lowers cost and increases satisfaction. Today, many people prefer to have their bills emailed to them or simply review them online, together with the ability to pay online.

"Giving clients the ability to pay through your Web site is an excellent way to build relationships and improve cash flow," says Traver West, national sales manager with Web site Pros, an international company that has built over half a million Web sites since 1999.

"Provide password-protected online access to accounts where people can pay their bills with credit cards, whether for regular maintenance service or new installations. Most e-commerce platforms have security and password protection built in," he adds.

4. Visibility. Even the best designed Web site won't make money for a business if prospective customers can't find it. If the site does not show up on the first page in a keyword search, its chances of being seen are slim to none.

"If you focus only on general keywords such as 'landscaper,' your site

continued on page 32

GUIDO: HARNESS THE POWER OF THE 'MOUSE'

"You need to have a specific strategy for the Web," says Judith M. Guido, principal of Guido and Associates. "Building an intelligent Web strategy will save you considerable time and money, and yield measurable profitable results. Anything that you can do with traditional marketing can be done on the Web at a fraction of the cost."

For cost-conscious contractors, other than word-of-mouth referrals, the Web is the fastest, least expensive marketing tool that you can use. And Guido says the Web is an excellent source for referrals. (Guido calls it "word of mouse!") You can use it for everything – sales, events, recruiting, promoting, news events and research.

"It's the multipurpose low-cost solution, she says. "People have access to it 7 days a week, 24 hours a day."

Many companies have a Web site,

but that's not enough, she says. When company owners complain to her that nobody uses their Web sites, she usually responds, 'Just because you build it, doesn't mean people are going to come.' She says most sites developed by landscape companies are grossly under-used and under-visited because consumers don't even know they're there.

She suggests including the "critical pain points" relevant to your services in your web content. In turf it may be grubs, fire ants or disease. When a client has that problem, the client is going to type that word in to a search engine to find a solution. You want your company to appear at the top of the list, this is called search engine optimization.

"One of the other essentials is on the design," she says. "So many people want animation, flashy stuff. People use the Web for three critical reasons. One is to find out about you. They place very high value in convenience, ease of use and speed. You don't want something that takes forever to open or download. You don't want something to be so cluttered

or a site that's difficult to navigate."

Generally this means getting a professional designer. "Unless you've got a really good writer, have somebody who specifically knows e-marketing to write the content for your site. It's going to be different than the content that you put in a brochure or in other pieces. It's got to be quicker, condensed and targeted, and a faster read," says Guido.

The site must be dynamic, meaning the company can change the content.

And make sure the site is updated. "There is nothing worse for a client to come back to the Web site and see the same old content," she says.

A company's Web site is one tool that at-a-glance reflects its brand and communicates its identifiable difference.

"We want people to buy from us and refer us. If they're buying or not buying, we always want to be top of mind. It is one of the critical top-of-mind tools because on a monthly basis, on a weekly basis, we can stay in touch with our customers," says Guido.

— Dan Jacobs

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continued from page 30

will be one of hundreds of thousands returned by search engines," says West. "Using more specific key words, such as your area of specialization, is a good place to start. Particularly important are geographic locators that identify the areas where you do business."

Search engine optimization programs are an excellent tool to identify areas of a Web site that need attention. The program may suggest key search words or 'meta tags,' which are not visible to the naked eye, but are in the code, which makes them searchable and indexable by search engines. "A search engine optimization program also weighs the relevancy of your title bar and how that relates to the content on the home page. If the two items correlate closely, the search engine

Newsletters can offer regional industry information, such as the Swinglexpert or other helpful tips, such as this piece from Allentuck Landscaping.

deems that the Web site reflects accurate information in reference to the terms a searcher has entered," West notes.

In addition, West recommends investing in a pay-per-click program, a sponsored link that will put the site in the top few of any online search. "Many companies claim they can get your company placed on the first page," he says. "But that's tricky business because search engine positioning is an ever-moving target. The only way to guarantee your

position on a results list is through a pay-per-click program. You pay only when a customer clicks through to your Web site. You can set a specific budget each month with the search engine. When it's exhausted, your listing will be removed for the remainder of the month and then reinstated the following month. Or, you

continued on page 34



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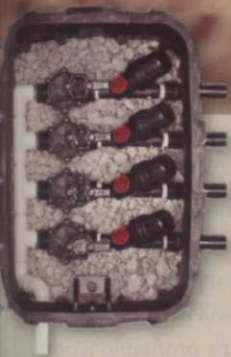

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continued from page 32

can leave the budget open and pay for all the clicks you received at the end of the month. Paying for placement at the top of the list can be expensive, prices drop dramatically for placement in third,

fourth or fifth position, which may be just as good for business."

5. Online Yellow Pages. As people become more comfortable using the Internet, more and more potential buyers are also using online Yellow Pages to look

for businesses in their local area.

"Keep in mind that a Web site is not simply a virtual brochure or business card," says West. "It is the face of your company vis-à-vis all those people who are more comfortable exploring your services in a non-confrontational manner, that is without picking up the phone or visiting a brick-and-mortar office. Your information should be presented in a way that engages the reader and includes a call-to-action. There are many landscape professionals vying for the consumers' money and the better you can position yourself online, the more likely it is that you will attract customers."

West stresses that a good online presence that is marketed well should make money for the business, and is not just another bill to pay. "Make sure you choose an experienced company to create and support your online business strategy," he says.

Marketplace survival

Survival of the fittest is as much about businesses as it is about the evolution of species. Businesses, which are reluctant to change their ways and adapt to the new marketplace, risk being eclipsed by more agile competition. In the fast-changing world of e-commerce, there is no such thing as business as usual. Only those willing to embrace the new technologies and take advantage of all the Internet has to offer will survive. Equally important, entering the profitable world of e-commerce begins with a conceptual change: Realize that it's not about having a Web site. It's about having an online business strategy. **LM**

— The author is director of marketing with International Profit Associates Inc., which provides comprehensive business consulting services and business valuation services.

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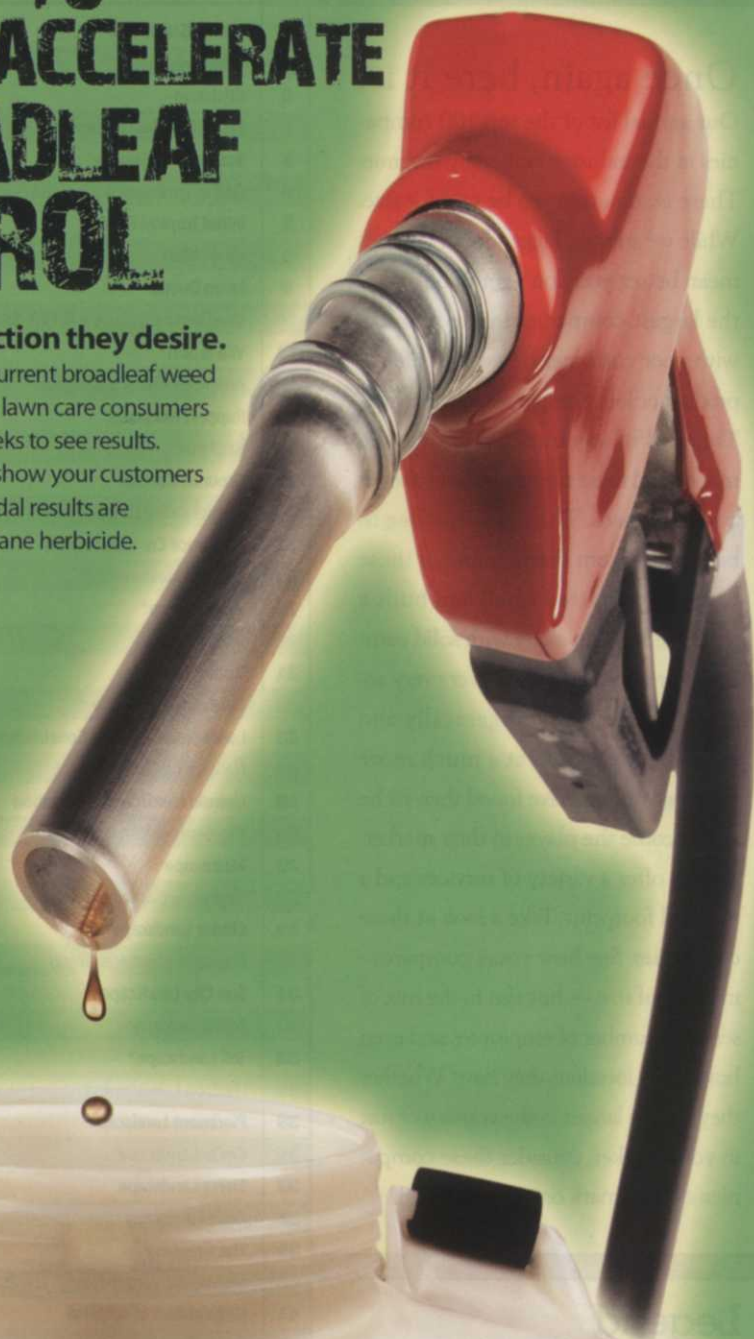


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Once again, here it is:

Our annual list of the top 100 companies in the industry ranked by revenue. There is something to be said for size. While we submit, bigger doesn't always mean better, you don't get to be one of the largest companies in the industry with poor customer service, an inferior product or lousy employee relationships. The goal of any business is to make money, and these companies have shown a special knack. There is something to be learned from them. Some of these companies started small and built a strong reputation along with solid earnings year after year toiling over every account. Others grew organically and through acquisition at a much more rapid pace. Some have found their niche and become the player in their market. Others offer a variety of services and a national footprint. Take a look at these companies. See how yours compares - in terms of size — but also in the mix of services, number of employees and even how many locations they have. Whether they are the largest in the country or just in your market, consider these companies a benchmark or perhaps a goal.

Legend

*: 2006 numbers

MN: Maintenance

DB: Design/Build

IR: Irrigation

F: Fertilizer application

SR: Snow removal

OTHER: May include arbor care, landscape construction, retail/nursery, shrub maintenance, wholesale, holiday lighting, interiorscaping, structural pest control, grounds maintenance, golf course maintenance, composting, recycling, erosion control, property management

	Company	Headquarters	Services (by %)
1	The TruGreen Cos.*	Memphis, TN	MN 28, F 59, SR 1, Other 12
2	ValleyCrest Cos.	Calabasas, CA	not reported
3	Brickman	Gaithersburg, MD	MN 85, DB 10, SR 5
4	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	Kent, OH	not reported
5	Scotts Lawn Service*	Marysville, OH	F 100
6	Gothic Landscaping	Valencia, CA	MN 11, DB 50, IR 39
7	Initial Tropical Plants	Riverwood, IL	MN 80, DB 20
8	Weed Man	Mississauga, ON, Canada	F 100
9	Lawn Doctor	Holmdel, NJ	IR 1, F 90, Other 9
10	OneSource Landscape & Golf Services*	Tampa, FL	MN 75, DB 10, IR 2, F 3, SR 1, Other 9
11	Vila & Son	Miami, FL	MN 16, DB 2, IR 12, Other 70
12	American Civil Constructors	Littleton, CO	MN 35, DB 60, SR 5
13	Ruppert Nurseries	Laytonsville, MD	MN 20, DB 65, SR 2, Other 4
14	SavATree	Bedford Hills, NJ	MN 100
15	Grounds Control	Phoenix, AZ	MN 40, DB 50, IR 10
16	Chapel Valley Landscape*	Woodbine, MO	MN 35, DB 30, IR 10, SR 5
17	The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin	Middleton, WI	MN 20, DB 38, IR 2, Other 35
18	Autumn Landscaping*	Englewood, CO	MN 10, DB 30, IR 30, F 5, SR 20, Other 5
19	Acres Group*	Wauconda, IL	MN 42, DB 45, SR 23.5, Other 35
20	Jensen Corp.	Cupertino, CA	MN 32, Other 68
21	Tropics North	Homestead, FL	MN 45, DB 50, IR 5
22	Cornerstone Tree Farm	Dade City, FL	MN 20, DB 40, IR 10, F 5, Other 25
23	Landscape Concepts Construction*	Richmond, IL	MN 10, DB 83, IR 3, F 1, SR 3
24	Nanak's Landscaping	Longwood, FL	MN 67, DB 13, IR 11, F 6, Other 3
25	Lipinski Landscape & Irrigation	Marlton, NJ	MN 24, DB 20, IR 2, SR 54
26	The Groundskeeper	Tucson, AZ	MN 60, DB 30, Other 10
27	Mainscape	Fishers, IN	MN 66, DB 15, IR 5, F 6, SR 6, Other 2
28	Cagwin & Dorward	Novato, CA	MN 65, DB 24, IR 9, Other 12
29	Clintar Landscape	Markham, ON, Canada	MN 40, DB 5, IR 5, SR 50
30	Ecoscape Solutions Group	Huntsville, NC	MN 12, DB 61, IR 18, Other 9
31	Sun City Landscapes*	Sun City, NV	DB 100
32	Teufel Landscape*	Portland, OR	MN 20, 15
33	Toll Landscape*	Lambertville, NJ	MN 8, DB 92
34	Denison Landscaping	Ft. Washington, MD	MN 8, DB 15, IR 10, F 1, SR 1, Other 65
35	Piedmont Landscape	Chamblee, GA	MN 45, DB 40, IR 10, F 5
36	CoCal Landscape	Denver, CO	MN 40, DB 39, IR 10, F 2, SR 9
37	Sierra Landscape	Palm Desert, CA	MN 10, IR 40, Other 50
38	Dixie Landscape	Miami, FL	DB 82, IR 18
39	The Greenery	Hilton Head, SC	MN 60, DB 25, IR 7, Other 8
40	Metroplex Garden Design Landscaping	Dallas, TX	DB 100
41	NaturaLawn of America	Frederick, MD	F 95, Other 5
42	Mission Landscape	Santa Ana, CA	MN 80, DB 20
43	Chalet Nursery	Wilmette, IL	MN 15, DB 43, F 2, Other 40
44	Spring-Green	Plainfield, IL	not reported
45	Landscape Concepts	Grayslake, IL	MN 45, DB 19, IR 10, F 3, SR 20, Other 3
46	Scott Byron & Co.	Lake Bluff, IL	MN 30, DB 70
47	Dennis 7 Dees	Portland, OR	MN 18, DB 38, IR 18, SR 26
48	Complete Landscaping	Bowie, MD	MN 51, DB 30, IR 6, F 5, SR 8
49	Countryside Industries	Wauconda, IL	MN 15, DB 65, IR 5, F 5, SR 10
50	Sebert Landscaping	Bartlett, IL	MN 30, DB 30, IR 5, F 5, SR 15, Other 15

Locations	Employees (full time / part time)	Revenue (in millions)	Principal	Web site / E-mail
390	20,860 FT/2,512 PT	1.5 billion	Dennis Sutton, Pres	www.trugreen.com
105	10,000 FT/105 PT	870*	Burton S. Sperber, CEO	www.valleycrest.com
130	1700 FT/6000 PT	600	Scott Brickman, Pres/CEO	www.brickmangroup.com
6	6000FT/600 PT	467	Karl Warnke	www.davey.com
not reported	not reported	245	Tim Portland, Pres	www.scottslawnservice.com
8	1500 FT	169.4	Michael Georgio, CEO	www.gothiclandscape.com
40	1,200 FT/100 PT	112	Jeff Mariola, Pres	www.initialplants.com
110	750 FT/2500 PT	95 Canadian	Michael Kernaghan, CCO	www.weedmancanada.com
493	6200 FT	95	Dez Rice, Pres/Owner	www.lawndoctor.com
not reported	1,200FT/200 PT	78	William LeBaron, Mktg Dir	www.one-source.com
5	700 FT	74	Juan Carlos Vila, Pres/CEO	www.vila-n-son.com
7	250 FT/250 PT	57	Todd Williams, VP	www.acconstructors.com
9	450 FT	54	Craig Ruppert, CEO	www.ruppertnurseries.com
20	450 FT	54	Daniel Van Garrenburg, Pres	www.savatree.com
5	1,000 FT	50	Todd Huston, VP	www.groundscontrol.com
4	300 FT/200 PT	49	James D. Reeve, Pres/CEO	www.chapelvalley.com
2	200 FT/425 PT	46	Bliss Nicholson, Pres	www.thebrucecompany.com
1	550 FT	44	Mark Robinson, Owner	not reported
4	106 FT/605 PT	42.5	not reported	www.acresgroup.com
5	268 FT	41	John Vlay, CEO, Pres	www.jensencorp.com
9	300 FT	40.5	Charles Gonzales, Pres	www.tropicsnorthinc.com
5	200 FT/20 PT	40	John Faulkner, Pres	www.cornestonetreefarm.com
3	260 FT	40	Peter DeVore, Pres	www.lccon.com
4	450 FT/200 PT	38	Sampuran Khalsa, Pres	www.nanaks.com
1	125 FT/15 PT	37	Robert Lipinski, Chairman	www.lipinskilandscape.com
7	700 FT	36	Anil Hiremath, CEO	www.groundskeeper.com
11	377 FT/11 PT	36	David and Zygmont Mazonowski, Owners	www.mainscape.com
15	424 FT/3 PT	35.1	Dennis Dougherty, Pres/CEO	www.cagwin.com
24	175 FT/375 PT	35 Canadian	Robert Wilton, Pres	www.clintar.com
4	300 FT/3 PT	35	Tony Pope, CEO	www.ecoscape.com
1	420 ft	35	Louie Polish Jr., Owner	www.suncityls.com
3	306 FT/173 PT	35	Larry Teufel, Pres	www.teufel.com
14	74 FT/173 PT	35	Mark Culchia, Asst VP/Dir	www.tollandscape.com
not reported	185 FT/135 PT	34	John Denison, Pres	www.denisonlandscaping.com
300 FT/50 PT	3	34	Phil Walters, Principal	www.piedmontlandscape.com
4	250 FT/300 PT	33	Tom Fochtman, Jesus Medrano, Owners	www.cocal.com
1	290 FT	32.5	George Gonzalez, Pres	www.sierralandscape.com
4	318 FT	32	Jeff Reamer, Pres	www.dixielandscape.com
8	410 FT/15 PT	31	Berry Edwards, Pres	www.thegreeneryinc.com
1	36 FT	30.7	Ken Coggins, Andrew Haynes	www.gardendesignlandscaping.com
65	12 FT	30+	Philip Catron, Pres	www.nl-amer.com
8	475 FT	29	David DuBois, Pres and CEO	www.missionlandscape.com
3	100 FT/250 PT	27	Larry Thalmann III, Pres	www.chaletnurseries.com
78 franchises	not reported	26.3	Tom Hofer, CEO	www.spring-green.com
6	not reported	25	Michael Kerton, Pres/Owner	www.landscapeconcepts.com
1	95 FT/200 PT	25	Scott Byron, Pres	www.scottbyron.com
1	270 FT	23.5	David Snodgrass, Pres	www.dennis7dees.com
2	98 FT/211 PT	22.7	Don Stelfox, Owner	www.completelandscapingservice.com
1	50 FT/350 PT	22	Robert L. Adelizzi, Pres	www.countrysideindustries.com
1	50 FT/200 PT	22	Jeffery Sebert, Pres/Owner	www.sebert.com



	Company	Headquarters	Services (by %)	Locations	Employees (full time / part time)
51	Benchmark Landscape Cos.	Poway, CA	MN 25, Other 75	3	275 FT
52	Sunrise Landscape	Tampa, FL	MN 25, DB 60, IR 15	1	125 FT
53	WH Canon	Romulus, MI	MN 25, SR 5, Other 70	not reported	225 FT
54	Fairco Inc.	Scottsdale, AZ	MN 55, DB 45	3	250 FT
55	David J. Frank	Germantown, WI	MN 42, DB 38, IR 4, F 3, SR 9, Other 4	6	185 FT/260 PT
56	Highridge Corp.	Issaquah, WA	MN 20, DB 58, IR 22	1	250 FT/PT 1
57	Realty Landscaping	Newtown, PA	MN 30, DB 50, IR 19, SR 10	5	100+ FT/100+ PT
58	Northwestern Landscape	Puyallup, WA	MN 70, DB 30	4	225 FT/100 PT
59	McFall and Berry	McLean, VA	MN 69, DB 21, F 6, SR 3, Other 10	5	150 FT/120 PT
60	Western DuPage	Naperville, IL	MN 26, DB 70, SR 4	2	35 FT/15 PT
61	Senske Lawn & Tree Care	Kennewick, WA	MN 21, IR 3, F 41, SR 2, Other 33	6	200 FT/100 PT
62	BIO Landscape & Maintenance	Houston, TX	MN 25, DB 43, IR 9, F 3, Other 20	1	320 FT
63	Outside Unlimited	Hampstead, MO	MN 5, DB 75, IR 15, SR 5	2	180 FT/100 PT
64	Florida Landscape Service	Orlando, FL	MN 7.5, DB 54, IR 32, Other 6.5	3	120 FT
65	Swingle	Denver, CO	IR 4.5, F 46, Other 48.8	2	210 FT/7 PT
66	Gachina	Menlo Park, CA	MN 60, IR 15, Other 25	3	260 FT
67	ArtisTree	Venice, FL	MN 50, DB 30, IR 10, F 10	3	300 FT/50 PT
68	Christy Webber & Co.	Chicago, IL	MN 42, DB 46, SR 12	2	42 FT/170 PT
69	Girard Environmental	Sanford, FL	MN 25, DB 45, IR 22, F 5, Other 31	not reported	150 FT
70	Dora Landscaping	Apopka, FL	MN 5, IR 10; Other 85	1	75 FT
71	Proscape	Orlando, FL	MN 57, DB 25, IR 11, F 7	5	200 FT
72	Greenerlandscaping	Lowell, MA	MN 20, DB 40, IR 20, F 1, SR 20	3	95 FT
73	James River Grounds Mgmt	Glen Allen, VA	MN 74, IR 3, F 2, SR 1, Other 21	4	88 FT/166 PT
74	Lambert Landscape	Dallas, TX	MN 31, DB 55, IR 1, Other 13	1	110 FT/3 PT
75	Santa Rita Landscaping	Tucson, AZ	MN 5, DB 36, IR 10, Other 49	1	160 FT
76	Complete Property Maint.	Coconut Creek, FL	MN 67, DB 12, IR 3, F 3, Other 15	2	250 FT/30 PT
77	Stay Green	Santa Clarita, CA	MN 75, Other 25	6	180 FT
78	Basnight Land & Lawn	Chesapeake, VA	MN 40, DB 40, IR 10, F 5	1	95 FT/85 PT
79	Lied's	Sussex, WI	MN 23, DB 65, F 2, SR 4, Other 6	1	190 FT/40 PT
80	Naturescape	Muskego, WI	MN 8, F 80, 2 SR, Other 10	14	140 FT/10 PT
81	Parker Interior Plantscape	Scotch Plains, NJ	MN 60, DB 10, Other 30	1	180 FT/20 PT
82	Southview Design	Inver Grove Heights, MN	DB 90, IR 10	1	30 FT/70 PT
83	Mickman Brothers	Ham Lake, MN	DB 30, IR 20, Other 50	2	110 FT/200 PT
84	Mill Brothers Landscape & Nursery	Fort Collins, CO	MN 25, 37.5 DB, IR 30, SR 7.5	1	25 FT/110 PT
85	ILT Vignocchi	Wauconda, IL	MN 30, DB 60, IR 5, SR 5	2	36 FT/175 PT
86	Plantique	Allentown, PA	MN 10, DB 77, IR 4, F 3, SR 2, Other 4	2	110 FT/ 20 PT
87	Tomlinson Bomberger	Lancaster, PA	MN 20, DB 23, F 55, SR 1, Other 1	not reported	95 FT/5 PT
88	Pacheco Brothers	Hayward, CA	MN 65; DB 15, IR 5, F 5, Other 10	4	110 FT/3 PT
89	Carol King Landscape	Orlando, FL	MN 65, DB 22, IR 5, F 3, Other 5	1	125 FT/45 PT
90	John Mini Distinctive Landscapes	Congers, NY	MN 40, DB 39, IR 1, Other 20	1	70 FT/50 PT
91	Perficut Lawn & Landscape	Des Moines, IA	MN 20, DB 30, IR 15, F 15, SR 15, Other 5	1	35 FT/70 PT
92	Maffei Landscape	Mashpee, MA	MN 56, DB 40, IR 2, F 1, SR 1	1	75 FT
93	All Around Landscaping	Springdale AR	MN 19, DB 63, IR 17, SR 1	1	120 FT
94	Angler Environmental	Manassas, VA	MN 5, DB 95	3	60 FT/4 PT
95	Dworsky Services	Gardena, CA	MN 60, DB 30, IR 10	3	150 FT/25 PT
96	Green Acres Services	St. George, SC	MN 15.5, DB 50.5, IR 34,	1	85 FT
97	Hoffman Landscapes	Wilton, CT	MN 46, DB 52, SR 2	2	FT 70
98	Akehurst Landscape	Joppa, MD	MN 42, DB 22, SR 28, Other 8	7	not reported
99	Trees on the Move	New Berlin, WI	MN 10, DB 50, SR 20, Other 20	1	45 FT/40 PT
100	Jacobsen Landscape Design & Const	Midland Park, NJ	MN 30, DB 50, IR 8, F 3, SR 9	not reported	35 FT/50+ PT

Revenue (in millions)	Principal	Web site / E-mail
22	John Mohrs, Pres	www.benchmarklandscape.com
22	S. Hughes, Pres	www.sunriselandscape.com
21	William Canon, Pres	www.whcanon.com
21	Gene Bearinger, Pres	www.fiarco.com
20.1	David Frank, Pres/CEO	www.davidjfrank.com
20	Michael Bushmaker, Pres	www.highridge.com
20	Clifford L. Greer, Pres/Owner	www.realtylandscaping.com
19.9	Jonathan Bartels, Pres	www.nwco.com
19.7	Mark McFall, COO	www.mcfallandberry.com
19.5	Steve Brodt, Pres	www.westerndupagelandscaping.com
19	Chris Senske, Pres	www.senske.com
18.9	John Robert, Pres	www.biolandscap.com
18.5	Michael Martin, VP	www.outsideunlimited.com
18	Donald O'Hara, Pres	www.floridalandscapeservice.com
17.5	Thomas Tolkaacz, Pres	www.myswingle.com
16.5	John P. Gachina, Owner/Pres	www.gachina.com
16	Joe Gonzalez, CEO/Owner	www.artistree.com
15.6	Christy Webber, Pres	www.christywebber.com
16	Richard Girard, CEO	www.girardonline.com
15	Jim Oyler, Pres	www.doralandscaping.com
14.3	Larry, Michele, Keith O'Dell	www.proscape.biz
14	Jeremy McSorley, Pres	www.greenerlandscapinginc.com
14	Maria Candler, Pres	www.jrgm.com
14	Daniel L. Morgan, CEO	www.lamberts.net
14	Brian Ham, Pres	www.srlandscaping.com
13	Larry Elsterg, Pres	no Web site
13	Rich Angelo, Pres	www.staygreen.com
12.5	Kent Basnight, Pres	www.basnightlandandlawn.com
12.5	Tom Lied, CEO	www.lieds.com
12.2	Todd Furry, Pres	www.naturescapelawncafe.com
12	Richard Parker, Pres	www.parkerplants.com
11.5	Ross Iverson, Pres	www.southviewdesign.com
11	John Mickman, Pres	www.mickman.com
11	Kevin and Andrew Mill, Co-owners	www.millbrothers.com
10.13	Donna Zych, Pres	www.iltvignocchi.com
10.1	Michael McShane, Pres/CEO	www.plantique.com
10	Clark Tomlinson, Pres	www.tbll.com
9.8	George Pacheco, Pres	www.pachecobrothers.com
8.5	Jerry Bachand Pres/CEO	www.carolingscapes.com
8.5	John Mini, Pres/Owner	www.johnmini.com
8.4	Kory Ballard, Pres	www.perficut.com
8.3	Robert Maffei, Pres/CEO	www.maffeilandscape.com
8	Michael Steenbergen, Pres	www.allaroundlandscaping.com
8	Lee Goodwin, Don Seaborn, Principals	www.anglerenvironmental.com
8	David Dworsky, Pres/CEO	www.dworsky.com
7.9	Geore E. Moore Jr., Pres	www.greenacreslandscapes.com
7.5	Michael Hoffman, Pres	www.hoffmanlandscapes.com
not reported	Brian Akehurst, Pres	www.akehurst.com
7	Gary McHugh, Pres	www.treesonthemove.com
6.6	Glenn Jacobsen, Pres/CEO	www.jacobsenlandscape.com



Dominant 3

Companies from three states make up 36% of this year's LM 100 list — Florida, Illinois and California. Florida, one of the fastest growing states in the United States, placed 13 companies on our revenue list. Illinois was next with 12 (most of them in the Chicago region) and California contributed 11 companies. In the East, smallish but densely populated New Jersey had a high concentration of big revenue landscape/lawn service companies with five.

Still looking good

The landscape/lawn service market for U.S. contractors remains strong. Industry leaders continue ratcheting their sales into positive territory (5%-15%) annually. Readers are enjoying a business environment that continues to offer opportunity. Competitive? You bet. Most regional markets are a dog-fight, but the business is there for the operators with effective marketing plans, aggressive sales, strong administrative systems and efficient customer service.



Talk back

We want to know what you think of our LM 100 list. Want to see more or different service breakdowns? Want to sound off about the pros and cons of big vs. small? Please email Managing Editor Dan Jacobs at djacobs@questex.com.

Hate RIFAs but embrace the profit

BY NANCY SCHWARTZ

Red imported fire ants are spreading at the same time that homeowners are embracing their properties as outdoor living and entertaining space, and outdoor youth sports are exploding.

Fortunately, you, the lawn care professionals, have many excellent products to control these fearsome pests and do it profitably.

Red imported fire ants were accidentally introduced in Mobile, AL, in the 1930s, and are now established in 15 states, primarily across the South and in parts of Arizona and California. Isolated infestations have turned up as far north as the state of Delaware.

They can (and often do) affect outdoor leisure and entertaining, which is increasingly popular with the value of products and services purchased in the lawn and garden/outdoor living market between \$60 and \$65 billion dollars annually.

Many homeowners look to lawn care professionals to help keep their lawns beautiful and pest free. These pros have a clear opportunity to benefit from these trends and expand their services in fire ant control. There's no reason they can't establish themselves as fire ant control experts and gain the rewards of a growing business opportunity. Here are some tips.



Two landscape trends are clashing – people's love of the outdoors and the spread of fire ants. Lawn care pros can aid the former by controlling the latter

Don't limit yourself

First, look behind the strictly residential market. Commercial opportunities, such as municipalities, school districts, parks, playgrounds and sports fields are all areas needing fire ant control. Almost any public turf area, especially those frequented by children and senior citizens, is a candidate for fire ant services.

Customers can have many different expectations and needs around fire ant control, so ask the right questions up front and customize your solutions.

Are your customers environmentally conscious or chemically sensitive? Choosing a bait treatment might be most suitable as lower rates of active ingredients are typical. Does your customer have plans for an outdoor graduation party this weekend? For these customers, choosing a product that

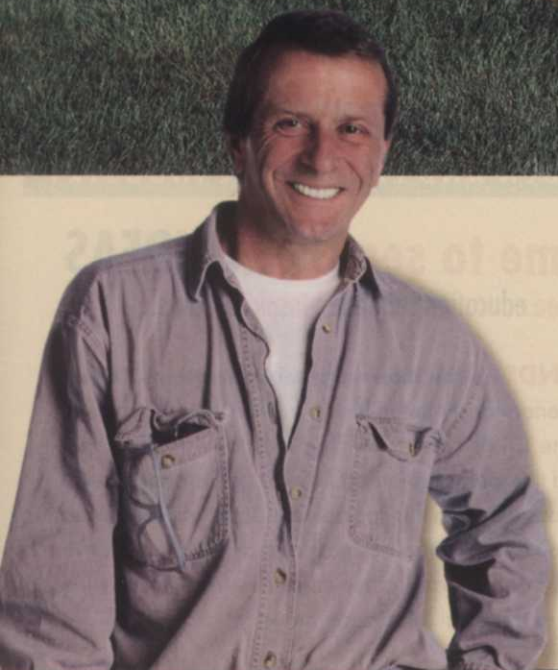
provides fast control is your best choice.

Recognizing the income bracket of your customer is also key in selecting the right product. Some fire ant treatment options may be cost-prohibitive to lower income homeowners. But don't lose the revenue associated with fire ant control by letting your customers resort to do-it-yourself methods. Instead, consider less expensive alternatives as long as you don't sacrifice the effectiveness of the treatment.

Calculate your ROI

When evaluating your options for fire ant control, remember to keep in mind all the variables that may impact your costs. Fire ant control, like any other service, must provide you with an acceptable return on

continued on page 44



WHEN MY CREWS AND CUSTOMERS ARE HAPPY, I'M HAPPY.

"VERSA-LOK is my crews' first choice in retaining walls. Not only are they easy to install, but they're easy to modify on site so that any design challenge can be met without the need to order special pieces. Also, VERSA-LOK's solid-unit durability makes it less susceptible to damage before, during and after construction. So when the phone rings, my customers are calling for new work, not repairs. I eliminate headaches by including VERSA-LOK walls in my bid packages—and it helps me build a better bottom line."

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Circle 124



Know your enemy

A red imported fire ant (RIFA) colony consists of eggs, brood (larvae and pupae), polymorphic workers (which are sterile females), one or more reproductive queens and winged males and females. Winged individuals are most abundant in the late spring and early summer, but may be found any time of year. Winged forms are reproductives and an individual colony will produce more of one sex to minimize interbreeding.

Mating flights usually occur in mid-morning one or two days after a rainfall when temperatures are above 72°F and the wind is light. Males fly first and await females in the air, where mating takes place. After mating, the male dies and the female sheds her wings and searches for a suitable nesting site. The new queen excavates a brood cell one to two inches below the soil surface. The queen does not forage for food; rather she relies on fat reserves and the energy acquired by absorbing her wing muscles to survive until her first workers take on the task of colony maintenance.

Queens initially lay 10-15 eggs and workers develop in about

TOTAL ANNUAL LOSSES DUE TO FIRE ANTS

Total: \$5 billion
Repair and replacement: \$3.5 billion
Treatment: \$1.35 billion
Medical/Veterinary: \$50 million

one month. The first workers (called minims) are very small due to the limited amount of energy devoted by the queen to their development. Minims open the brood cell and begin foraging for food. Larger workers are produced within 30 days and the workers then divide labor by age. Younger workers care

for developing brood. Middle-aged workers maintain and defend the colony. The oldest workers forage for food.

Fire ants are extremely efficient foragers. This is why fire ant bait application rates are so low - typically 1.5 lbs. of product per acre. Within six months, several thousand workers occupy the colony and a "mound" is readily visible. As the colony matures, the polymorphic nature of the worker becomes apparent. The largest workers can be 10 times the size of the smallest workers. The queen lives up to seven years and produces an average of 1,600 eggs per day. At maturity, a monogynous colony can consist of 250,000 ants.

- Dr. Chuck Silcox, Global T&O Product Development Manager, DuPont Professional Products



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continued from page 40

investment (ROI). Factor the cost of the product, your costs for labor and the number of applications required to achieve year-long control.

Once you have chosen your solution,

remember to track your rate of callbacks. Initially the product that offers the lowest cost solution may look like the best option. But if it results in callbacks, you may not be saving anything in the long run.

MORE INFO

Landscapemanagement.net Visit here for more information on fire ants, and an about a fire ant species that's causing problems in the NE.

Considering that the average callback could cost between \$50 and \$80 depending upon your hourly charges for labor, reducing callbacks

can add up to considerable savings.

It's always important to understand your competition. In many cases, it is another lawn care professional. But don't overlook competition in other areas. Often a homeowner may choose between services from a lawn care professional, services from a pest control company that offers lawn care services or do-it-yourself options. Understanding your competition will help you to position yourself as the expert in lawn care as well as the expert in fire ant control.

Educate your customers

The Internet offers customers more information than ever before. Many homeowners with fire ant problems have already done some research and may have already been exposed to fire ant advertising from your competitors. When possible, arrange personal visits with prospects to explain the details of your treatments and share your knowledge of fire ant behavior.

Sharing the magnitude of fire ant damage with potential customers is another way to show the value of your services. Painful fire ant stings may be the most talked about and most emotional impact of fire ants, but damage caused to electrical equipment as fire ants move into circuit breakers and other electrical devices is also significant. Total losses are estimated at \$5 billion annually including medical treatment and the cost to repair or replace electrical equipment. **LM**

— The author is the Marketing Manager, Turf and Ornamentals, DuPont Professional Products. Contact her at Nancy.schwartz@usa.dupont.com

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1 Worksaver stump grinder

Worksaver's Model SG-26H SmoothCut hydraulic skid steer stump grinder cuts from 18 in. above ground to 10 in. below with a swing arc of 45 degrees and a maximum horizontal cut of 28 inches. The SG-26H model is designed to fit a "universal" skid steer quick-attach hitch system and uses hydraulic controls for easy operation. The SG-26H has replaceable carbide-tipped bolt-in cutting teeth and hardened bushings with grease zerks at major pivot points for increased reliability. The cutting wheel delivers a smoother cutting action. **For more information contact Worksaver Inc. at 217/324-5973 or www.worksaver.com/ / circle no. 250**

2 Green Pro ShaftDrive

Green Pro Services has added its ShaftDrive System technology to its newest professional model spray rig, the Titan, eliminating smaller pony motors on multiple pump rigs. Benefits include noise reduction and harnessing the greater power of the engine by utilizing the PTO. The ShaftDrive System uses no belts or pulleys. Pumps are energized by flipping a switch on the curbside control center, reducing response time in case of emergency. The system is available for a wide range of pump sizes and is virtually maintenance free. **Contact Green Pro Services at 800/645-6464 or visit Web site www.greenproservices.com/ / circle no. 251**

3 Club Car's Carry-All

Club Car's Carryall 295 4x4 series commercial utility vehicles are equipped with powerful engines, on-demand all-wheel-drive capability and a host of industry-exclusive features. The Carryall series boasts a fully-automatic hydraulic-powered quick-change attachment system and features Club Car's IntelliTrak true-all-wheel-drive system. By continually sensing driving conditions, it automatically engages and disengages all-wheel-drive without requiring the driver to stop, shift gears, push buttons or lock differentials. **For more information contact Club Car, a division of Ingersoll Rand, at 800/258-2227 or www.clubcar.com/ / circle no. 252**

4 Cat C-Series skid steers

Four new Caterpillar C-Series skid steer loaders — 246C, 256C, 262C, 272C — offer features such as electro-hydraulic joystick control of the hydrostatic drive system and electronic torque management for smooth operation and high productivity. Operator comfort is enhanced with features such as an optional sealed and pressurized cab and an optional air suspension seat. Additional options, such as High Flow XPS hydraulics, expand versatility and enable customers to customize the machines. Rated operating capacities range from 2,150 lbs. to 3,250 lbs. **For more information contact Caterpillar at 309/675-5175 or www.cat.com/ / circle no. 253**

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Circle 130

The cell phone companies have finally built out their 3G wireless data networks to the point that having "everywhere" Internet access is a real possibility.



Internet for road warriors

BY TYLER WHITAKER

One of the biggest half-truths about the Internet is that it's everywhere. Sure, you can email scientists at McMurdo station in Antarctica or read about the water supply in Mumbai, India. And now NASA has plans to extend the Internet into deep space. The world has never been so closely knit. So, if the Internet is everywhere, why is it so hard to find a decent connection on the road? At least, that's what I used to think.

How many times have you been on the road only to find that your hotel doesn't have Internet or the connection doesn't work? Or worse, you're in between meetings and you urgently need to find a place to check your email for the latest sales proposal and directions to your next appointment.

The old way

In the past, my solution involved mentally cataloging every WIFI hotspot and Internet café along my route, just in case I needed to pop in with my laptop to get online. I've also resorted to paying anywhere from \$10 to \$25 to access an airport's wireless Internet for only 20 minutes of work. It's times like those where highway robbery seems like child's play. But, I'm happy to report that I've found a better way. The cell phone companies have finally built out their 3G wireless data networks to the point that having "everywhere" Internet access is a real possibility.

The new way

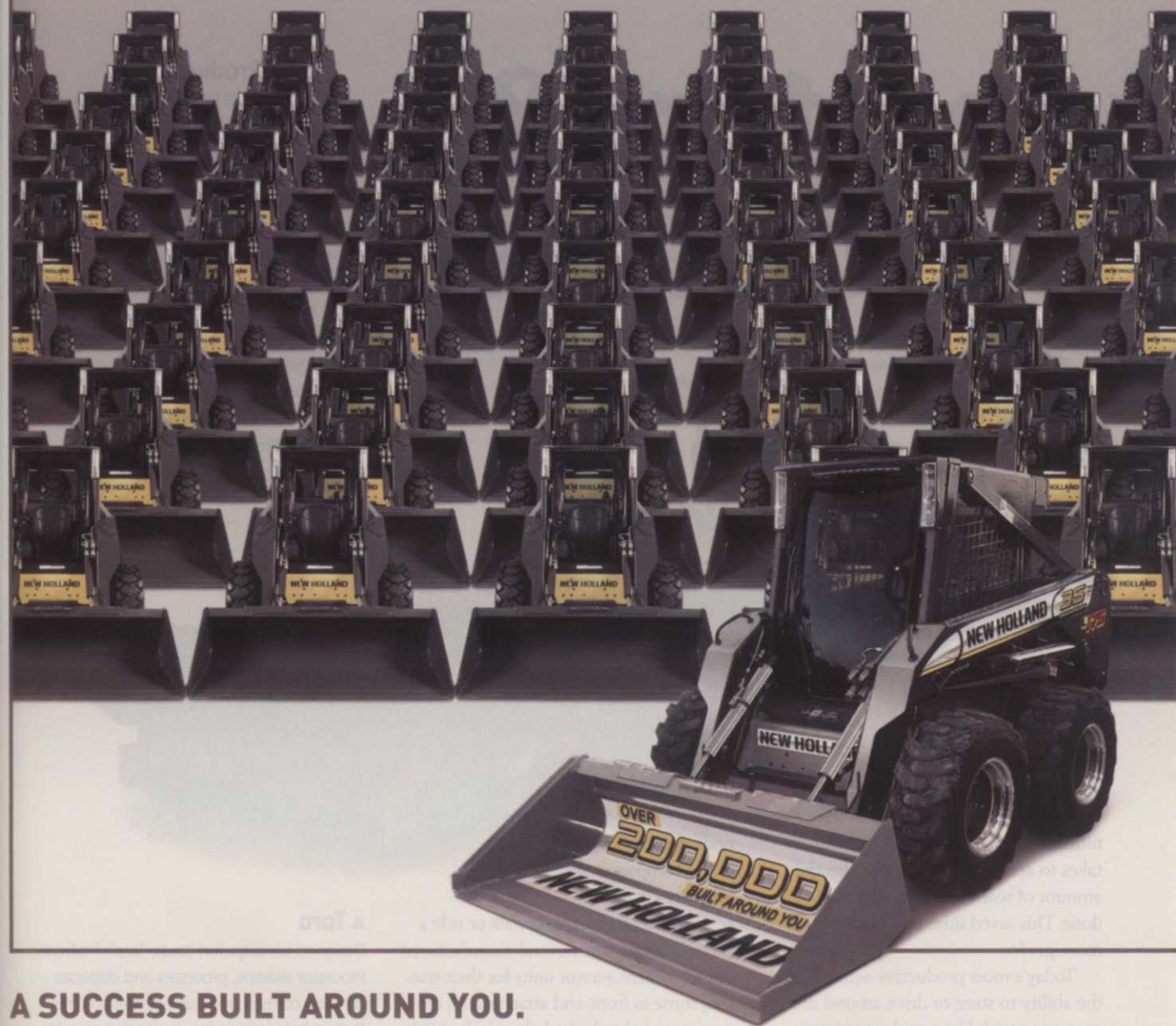
For those of you that haven't heard about the latest 3rd generation (3G) wireless networking technology, it creates a high speed Internet connection using cell phone technology to link mobile users to the Internet up to 20 times faster than dialup. It's great news for businesses with traveling employees. Instead of paying for Internet in hotels and airports, you can get them a wireless data plan for roughly \$60 a month. And they can use it wherever they are and as much as they need.

All it takes to get connected is the right hardware. Most cell phone providers (Sprint, AT&T and Verizon) are offering the hardware at a discount when you sign up for the service. The hardware is either a removable PCMCIA card that inserts into your laptop or a small device with a USB connector. After installing the software, you should be up and running in no time. A third option is also available on the higher end smart phones where you can connect your cell phone to your laptop via USB cable or wirelessly using Bluetooth. I use this option with my phone and laptop. It's simple and easy since I don't need any cables or additional hardware.

While the current 3G networks don't have the same coverage footprint of the traditional cell network, they are in nearly all of the primary and secondary markets. For most business travelers that's enough. So go ahead and try it. After your first experience doing email on a long taxi ride to your hotel, you'll be hooked.

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

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Aerators & Dethatchers

One of the easiest ways for contractors to increase profitability is to expand their service

offerings. Aeration and dethatching are popular service additions, as they allow contractors to perform additional services for existing customers.

Aeration is traditionally one of the toughest, most physically demanding lawn care jobs. But, it's becoming less demanding thanks to new equipment options that have significantly reduced not only the time it takes to aerate a property, but also the amount of work it takes to get the job done. This saved time and work equals more profits.

Today's most productive aerators offer the ability to steer, or drive around the property, much like a mid-size mower, according to Scott Kinhead of Turfco Direct. For instance, Turfco's TurnAer 4 and 6 walk-behind aerators use a differential drive system, which eliminates the need to stop and lift the tines out of the ground to turn the machine. Kinhead says that the new machines are up to 30% more productive, and crews experience less back strain and fatigue.

The DiffDrive system also allows users to transform a TurnAer walk-behind aerator into a ride-on style machine in sec-

onds, courtesy of the company's TurnAer Chariot.

But you don't have to walk or ride a sulky to aerate turf. Several manufacturers offer excellent aerator units for their tractors, some as front-end attachments, others as tow-behinds. And, there's the Little Wonder Stand-Aer, a ride-on unit that can be turned like a zero mower when non-aerating and a 24-in. radius with the tines in the working in the ground.

Like any other piece of grounds care equipment, assess the properties you or your crews will be improving, do some demo's if you can, check with other users of the equipment you're eyeing, then pick the product that best fits your needs.

— Matt Gersib, Public Relations Counselor, Swanson Russell Associates



First Products

First Product's AERA-vator stirs and loosens the soil beneath the sod without destroying the turf on the surface. The UA80 has an 80-in. swath for golf courses, athletic fields and larger landscapes. The UA60 has a 60-in. swath for midsize jobs, like a baseball field and larger landscapes. The AE40L has all the features of the larger ones yet it's the most compact, with a 40-in. swath. The AE-40E features an open frame for better tine and rotor visibility.

For more information contact First Products at 800/363-8780 or www.1stproducts.com/ circle no. 254

▲ Toro

Designed for large turf areas, Toro's ProCore Processor sweeps, processes and disperses aeration cores in one quick operation. This feature helps return the course to a playable condition in substantially less time, and with less stress. The 70-in. processing width of the ProCore Processor provides full-width dispersion of processed material. Aeration cores are pulverized into fine particles with carbide-tip blades and a 35-hp Briggs & Stratton Vanguard engine. This provides even and thorough distribution of the material to the playing surface.

For more information contact The Toro Co. at 800/803-TORO or www.toro.com/ circle no. 255



▲ SourceOne

There are now five models of SourceOne Plugger walk-behind turf aerators with 22- to 30-in. aeration widths. Pluggers are the only reciprocating aerators outside the golf industry, giving general contractors the same deeper, cleaner holes from spoon tines engine driven into the ground. No add-on weights or water drums. Plugger aerators are lightweight and highly maneuverable. Low maintenance design on 22- to 30-in. walk-behinds has a dual V belt drive. A 30-in. hydrostatic profes-

sional unit is also available and can be used with a Plugger Step Saver sully.

For more information contact Source One at 888/418-9065 or www.plugger.com / circle no. 256

Protero

Protero's new Pro Rake front-mount dethatcher is commercial-grade rugged and economically priced. The Pro Rake dethatcher features sealed ball bearing wheel pivots, innovative spring coil tines and an easy lift mechanism. With 12- and 6-in. modular extensions, the Pro Rake can fit all mower decks from 36 to 72 inches. Optimal dethatching action is achieved with free motion of the tines in special brackets. Spaced spring coils result in maximum sideways flexibility of tines for minimum lawn damage in turns and maximum spring life.

For more information contact Protero at 866/476-8376 or www.proteroinc.com / circle no. 257



▲ SISIS

The SISIS Aer-Aid System gives the turf a blast of air as it aerates, combating surface compaction. The cam trigger system ensures that the air is always expelled at the bottom of the tine penetration, ensuring a targeted, precise and constant working depth, variable up to a maximum of five in. Working at 6-in. spacing, the air is introduced at a rate of 3 cu. ft. per minute.

For more information contact SISIS at 864/843-5972 or visit www.sisis.com / circle no. 258

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LM Reports



▼ Husqvarna

Husqvarna's AR25 offers an aerating width of 25.5 in., and features a 4.0 hp Honda engine with two detachable 36-lb. weights. The patented free-wheel design and a seven-tine cutting deck allow operators to work without losing speed on tight corners, while minimizing turf damage. The rear-wheel controls can adjust up to three inches in depth with coring spoons or optional spike and slicing blade reels that are capable of aerating a wide range of grass and soil conditions.

For more information contact

Husqvarna at 800/HUSKY62 or visit www.usa.husqvarna.com / circle no. 259



▲ Walker Manufacturing

The PerfAerator is a front-mounted aerator attachment designed for Walker mowers. The PerfAerator delivers a 41.5-in. path, and uses a camshaft design for driving tines 2.5 in. deep into soil with no added weight needed. The PTO-driven tines engage and disengage easily to skip over sprinkler heads and sidewalks without slowing down. The 12-tine set is also easily raised with a lever and locked in a secure transport position.

For more information contact Walker at 970/221-5614 or visit

www.walkermowers.com / circle no. 260

BLEC

The Blec Groundbreaker relieves compaction down to 10 inches. Available in 40-, 60-, 80- and 100-in. working widths, they are powered by a heavy-duty pto drive system with overload clutch. Pre-formed skids positioned

between the blades minimize surface disturbance. Skids control blade-digging depth from 3-10 in., adjusted by screw.

For more information contact BLEC 888/325-BLEC or www.blec.co.uk / circle no. 261

Turfsaw

The bucket-mounted TurfSaw will turn any front-end loader into an aerator capable of performing inverted aeration. Unlike other aerators, TurfSaws use the forward motion of your tractor (the faster you drive, the deeper you drive the blades in) combined with the front axle weight of the loader to apply a penetrating force in excess of a ton. TurfSaws can remove as much soil as a corer, leave no post clean-up of plugs, perform better at higher working speeds, and leave no bottom or lateral compaction due to their scooping action.

For more information contact TurfSaw Enterprises at 866/735-4437 or www.turfsaw.com / circle no. 262

Wikco Industries

Model 300 or 600 core plug aerators can be pulled by an ATV, garden tractor, turf truck, tractor or commercial mower. Available in 30- and 60-in. widths, they aerate a maximum of four in. Each unit has replaceable tine wheels (four on model 300, eight on model 600); each section has 10 tines. All-steel construction for commercial and professional use.

For more information contact Wikco Industries at 402/464-2070 or www.wikco.biz / circle no. 263

Redexim Charterhouse

Redexim Charterhouse is now offering new heavy duty models of their popular Verti-Quake rotary decompactors: the new Verti-Quake 2516 and 3822. The Verti-Quake is a rotary aerator that de-compacts the soil using a set of rotating steel blades. As these blades cut cleanly through the soil, they create a wave action that shatters compacted areas and opens up the subsoil. The Verti-Quake 3822 can work at depths up to 15 inches with little or no surface disruption.

For more information contact Redexim Charterhouse at 800/597-5664 or www.redexim.com / circle no. 264



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▲ Dry-Ject

The Dry-Ject process aerates and amends soil on sports fields, golf courses or landscapes in one hour. Using high-pressure water, it creates 12-in. aeration holes that are instantly filled with sand to improve soil quality. Penetrates to 10 in. Allows deep-root injection of soil amendments, insecticides, fertilizers or fungicides while rejuvenating the lawn with water.

For more information contact Dry-Ject at 800/270-8873 or www.dryject.com / circle no. 265

John Deere

The 2006 model of the John Deere Aercore 800 aerator features a belt-drive coring system, a mechanical transmission and an electro-hydraulic lift / lower system. The Aercore 800's Flexi-Link coring system increases productivity by absorbing the forward motion of the aerator, keeping the tines perpendicular to the turf while the machine is moving. The Aercore 800 uses a mechanical transmission with four aerating speeds and a 31.5-in. coring width.

For more information contact John Deere at 800/537-8233 or www.deere.com / circle no. 266

Turfco

Turfco Direct has introduced its new Front Traction drive for its TurnAer 4 and TurnAer 6 aerators. The new Front Traction drive significantly increases traction and control available during machine transport and while loading onto a truck or trailer. Constructed of long-wearing rubber, the Front Traction drive replaces the typical nylon drive drum with three (TurnAer 4) or four (TurnAer 6) high-traction tires. In addition to the traction enhancements, the Front Traction drive also provides smoother, more refined operation on paved or concrete surfaces.

For more information contact Turfco at 800/679-8201 or www.turfco.com / circle no. 267

Classen / Little Wonder ▶

The Little Wonder Stand-Aer SA-25 Aerator from Classen permits the operator to steer, turn and aerate non-stop without raising tines out of the ground. Features include: hydrostatic forward and reverse drive, aerating speed of 4.7 mph, ZTR turning radius



(non-aerating), 24-in. approximate turning radius (aerating), and tine and tire drive with separate throttle controls.

For more information contact Classen at 877/596-6337 or visit

www.littlewonder.com / circle no. 268

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Step 2

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Step 3

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Circle 136

Get a Grip

TECHNOLOGY

MONEY MANAGEMENT

It's easy to see how a company could benefit from utilizing rental equipment.



Why buy?

BY ALLEN SPENCE

Man, I hate to pay \$450 for this machine. I'll only use it a couple of times a year. But what else can I do? I wish there was another choice."

How many times have you heard or asked that yourself? Well, maybe there is another option. Have you considered renting? There are reasons why renting equipment may be a better option for some pieces. Let's explore the most common.

Maintenance costs

Equipment that is purchased, used and then stored is rarely a good idea. Lack of use usually equals increased maintenance and repair costs. An infrequently used piece of equipment will likely require repairs once it's hauled from the shed. The carburetor may dry out; the fuel system components may get gummed up with gasoline residue.

Labor costs on a fuel system cleaning can get out of hand quickly. Many shops won't repair, they only replace gummed up carburetors, dried out and sludged-up fuel lines, and varnished fuel tanks. Now, we have spent many dollars, several times a year.

Time management

When you're making trips back and forth to the repair shop and/or the storage shed you're losing billable hours or at least time that could lead to better productivity. You can be using this time doing the many other important tasks that really need your undivided attention. We really don't need any unnecessary additional work during a busy workday, do we?

Storage space

Why pay for storage on items that sit idle most of the time? Many of us can find a better use for money than renting a room full of air. Think about it, the majority of space inside our storage shed is unused.

Decreased operating costs

When we factor in the amount of finances spent on the above mentioned items, then add them to the costs for normal wear and tear, preventative maintenance and so on, it's easy to see how a company could benefit from utilizing rental equipment. Get referrals and read the rental contract carefully. You will be responsible for improper use and abuse of the equipment.

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

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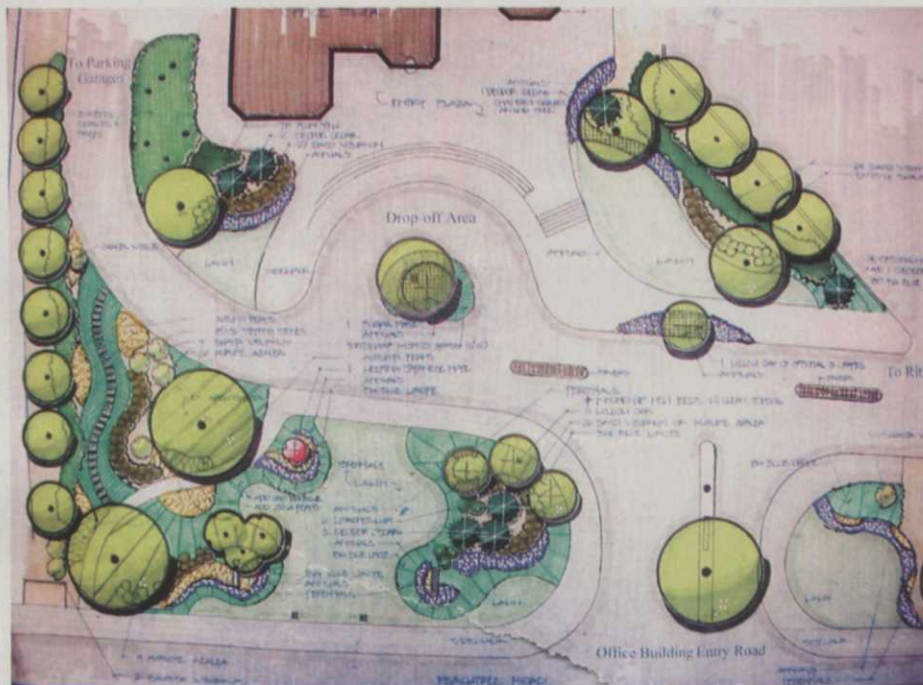
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The design

An updated look to the landscape of a downtown Atlanta office building

The site before construction

The project was brought about by the removal of a diseased century-old oak tree deemed "hazardous" because of its 60% core decay.



Project Requirements

- Commence the tree removal project at 6 p.m. Friday and end Monday by 6 a.m., to avoid traffic congestion. (The process required lane closures.)
- New trees had to be installed by the end of Day One.
- Police were hired to keep protesters at bay regarding the tree removal.

Project Specifics

The goal was to make the landscape dramatic and eye-catching, using mature trees to replace the void left by the removal of the 80-ft. oak.



ABOVE Flowing bed lines sweep up and over newly created earth berms. The red foliage of the 6-ft. dissectum maple bounces across to the loropetalums, creating a contrast to the cedars.

RIGHT A new 8-ft. sugar maple anchors the drop-off planting island. Annual color was increased two-fold at this critical entry point to the office tower.





Along the path to the adjacent bus stop, existing plants were integrated with ferns and flowers to give the feel of a shaded garden walk.



BEFORE

LEFT This "before" view shows the scale and prominence the oak tree commanded. The diseased tree was contributing to turf problems.

BELOW With the old oak gone, the light conditions changed drastically. Color and scale were added with 6-ft. willow oaks, 20- to 26-ft. Deodar cedars and low groundcovers with a colorful burst of annuals to provide an appropriate base.



AFTER

Project Principals

- Scapes, LLC, Atlanta, www.scapesgroup.com
- Landscape Architects: Jim Lesti, Pete Wilkerson
- Services include commercial and residential design, installation, construction and maintenance.
- Budget for this project: Between \$25,000 and \$100,000

This project was a Grand winner in PLANET's 36th annual Environmental Improvement Awards program. For more information on the program, visit www.landcarenetwork.org.

Small space, big design

Limited space and working around a construction schedule required creativity and quickness for this award-winning landscape.

BY JANET AIRD

The owner of the Pulte Lowery Residence wanted a landscape that matched the home's beauty.

Start with a small, triangular urban lot with a view of a neighbor's 3-car garage, time constraints and a construction crew still building the house. Add a landscape architect and a landscape contractor with imagination and tenacity, and what do you get?

The Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado (ALCC) 2007 Award of Excellence for landscape construction of a single-family residence.

"Brian Pulte, the homeowner, is an interior designer," says Paul Hartmann, president of Changing Landscapes, Boulder County, CO, which installed the landscape at the Pulte Lowery residence. "He wanted something to match his creativity on the outside."

It's the third landscape he and landscape architect Tom Altgelt, of Altgelt



and Associates, have collaborated on for Brian Pulte.

Hartmann's company has been in business in Boulder County since 1986. Altgelt worked on landscape design projects in Germany, Saudi Arabia and New England before establishing his company in Denver in 1995.

Small but mighty

Altgelt was faced with "a tiny, intensely urban lot" of less than 1,000 sq. ft., on flat, level land and a large house in the early stages of construction. He took into consideration a wall that would be built, the view of the neighbors' homes, where storm water would drain and how the homeowners would move through the yard.

Then he asked the same questions he always does before he begins a design: What is the space that's formed? How do you make something special?

"We ended up planting a veritable forest of trees and rocks," Altgelt says. "In the middle of this forest we set up stepping stones in a stream. They brought the garden to life."

With each of these elements — water, stone and plants — you're creating a composition, Altgelt says. In this landscape, water trickles down from the top of a 10-ft. tall boulder into a small pond. A stream dotted with steppingstones runs to the back of the house. Thirty tons of boulders look as if they've tumbled naturally onto the site. Large trees will soon screen the lot from neighboring houses. And a 10-ft. wall blocks the view of the neighbor's garage.

Hartmann's biggest issue was working around the contractor. His crew needed to install elements of the water feature before the contractor built a fence.

Within a week or two, Hartmann says, his 6-man crew had moved a crane onto a neighbor's property and used it to set the 10-ft.-tall and 11-ton boulder in place. They dug up the pond area and put the liner down. Then they ran into their next

The landscape contractor had to work around building contractors that were still constructing the home. A 10-ft. boulder anchors a small pond in the back yard.



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challenge: getting the rest of the 30 tons of stone into such a small space. "Sometimes when you bring huge rocks into a tiny space you create a kind of magic you can't get any other way," Altgelt says. "You have no concept of the tiny size of the lot. It's creating a new reality."

The final touch

Once the work was done, the crew back-filled the whole area so the building of the house could continue. They covered the boulders to protect them from splashes of stucco and cement that might come from the the construction.

The rest of the job took a month or so, Hartmann says, including drilling a hole in the 10-ft.-tall boulder and running a pipe to the top to create the waterfall.

Water was a crucial element in the

project. Changing Landscapes specializes in installing water features. Altgelt says his work in Germany and Saudi Arabia were good preparation for designing for water.

"Water is the biggest potential liability issue," Altgelt says. He must "sculpt the site" properly so storm water drains away from the home.

Finally, they added the plants. The lot is thick with trees, especially evergreens, and Canadian redbud, which are very sculptural, Altgelt says. They also planted perennials, "the soul of the garden." In addition to having flowers, some of them turn beautiful colors in the fall.

When the work was done, says Hart-

These stepping stones across a small stream lead through the backyard are some of the 30 tons of stone used in the project.



mann, "The homeowner was thrilled."

Altgelt credits Hartmann for its success. "Paul is a real craftsman. He understands we're not just pushing stuff around. He has a real spiritual understanding."

Challenges can often be a good thing, Altgelt adds. "Often it's the constraints that you don't like that lead you to your best work." **LJM**

— The author is a freelance writer living in Altadena, CA. She can be reached at janet.aird@earthlink.net.



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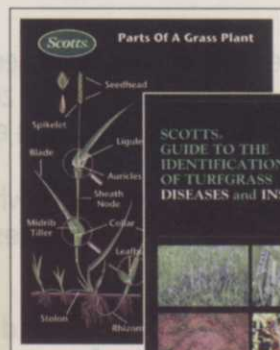
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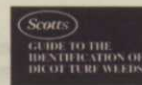
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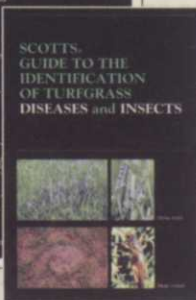


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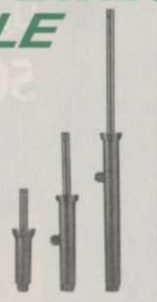
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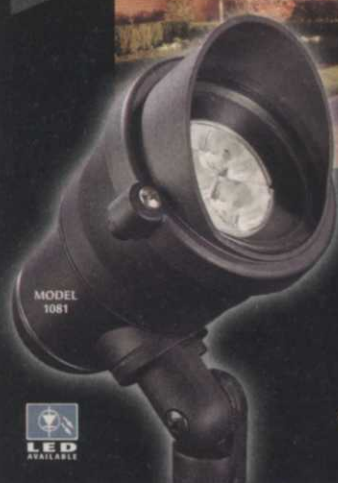

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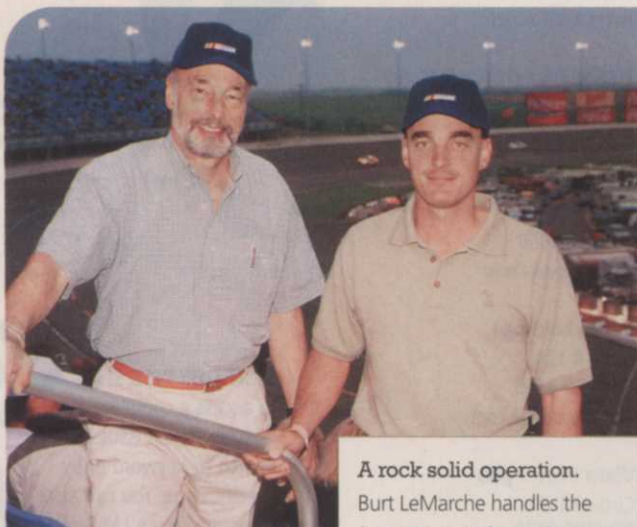
First he raised a son. Now the two are nurturing a business together

BY JANET AIRD

Businesses are often handed down from father to son. With LaurelRock, owned by Dickson LaMarche and his son, Burt, there was no reason to wait until the elder LaMarche was ready to retire. In fact, working together led to a flourishing design/build and maintenance operation.

Dickson, a landscape architect, started his company, Dickson LaMarche Landscape Architects, in 1975. Later, he added a construction management division to control the installation of his designs. Burt joined him as co-owner in 1993, they called the new company LaurelRock.

Dickson became CEO and manager of the design/build side, and, Burt, president and manager of the maintenance division. Burt is a Certified Landscape Professional and Accredited Connecticut Nurseryman, with a degree in horticulture, a Custom Grounds Supervisory License



and certificates in arboriculture, estimating and irrigation installation.

"My father plays a supportive, hands-off role," Burt says. "We have a great relationship because of that."

Burt built the installation division, and when clients asked for the service, he created the maintenance division. This gives Dickson more control over the way his designs are implemented and allows the company to build long-term relationships.

"It's like two companies

A rock solid operation.

Burt LaMarche handles the financial end of LaurelRock, the the business he shares with his father.

side-by-side," Burt says. "My end of the business is accomplishing what he'd always wanted to develop. His is providing the work so my end can grow."

They complement each other on the administrative side also. Burt handles the financials and Dickson the marketing and people side.

"I frequently go to a job and clients tell how much they enjoyed meeting my father," Burt says.

Every project begins with a design by Dickson. Burt does the estimating and makes sure the intent of his father's designs comes through.

The company provides two levels of maintenance. The basic landscape management level includes lawn maintenance and seasonal cleanups. The more intensive fine gardening includes weekly monitoring of plant health, hand-weeding the planting beds and tending to indoor conservatories.

LaurelRock has begun to offer NOFA's (Northeast Organic Farming Association) certified organic lawn maintenance. "I think we'll be doing more," Burt says. "I think most of us are in this because the environment is important to us."

The company puts in year-round seasonal displays, from spring bulbs to summer flowers, to corn stalks and pumpkins in the fall and winter holiday decor. And they recently built a 7,000 sq. ft. garage, where they clean, refinish and store clients' lawn furniture during the winter.

The success of the company is due in large part to their synergistic, symbiotic relationship, Burt says.

"He sets it up well for me. I try to live up to it." **LM**

— The author is a freelance writer living in Altadena, CA.

She can be reached at janet.aird@earthlink.net.

►► **Location:** Wilton, CT; **Founded:** 1993; **Expected revenues:** \$3 million; **Business mix:** 50% design/build, 50% maintenance; **Full-time employees:** 37 (12 year-round, 25 seasonal); **Clients:** 98% residential

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