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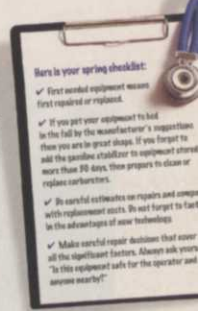
You must approach your fleet just like the triage doctor or nurse approaches patients during a disaster. You cannot take care of it all at once, so prioritize your needs.

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COVER PHOTO BY: BETSY HANSEN; WWW.BETSYHANSEN.COM

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### TOCA attendees experience South's charm

SAVANNAH, GA — Live oaks and magnolias dominate Savannah's historic squares and green spaces. Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association members enjoyed the city's gates, ghost stories and gardens.

## » Readers respond

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14%

Local communities are considering restrictions and we're starting to get worried.

34%

Water is not an issue with our customers and we don't expect it to be any time soon.

8%

Who cares? Global warming will melt the polar ice caps and the coasts will be flooded anyway.

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## » Special issue

Ever wonder how your operation is stacking up profit-wise with other similarly sized landscape or lawn service operations in your region of the country? Look for *Landscape Management's* exclusive benchmarking survey coming in August.



» **Overheard** "It is time to permanently protect workers and small businesses, so that we do not have to fight year after year for temporary fixes!"

— Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-MD) on the seasonal worker legislation under consideration by the Senate.



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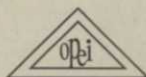
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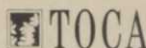
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## Livescapes debuts in July

BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

**V**icky, my lovely wife of 38 years, is a gardener. Few things give her greater pleasure than tending her flowers and her small decorative trees and shrubs. When we moved into our white frame home in 1975, it was surrounded only by grass. Over the years she has dug out more and more of our lawn and replaced it with flowers of every variety and color. I can now mow our grass with a simple reel mower (no motor, no gasoline) in 15 minutes.



For Vicky, gardening is a deeply personal experience. On many occasions I've overheard her console a particular struggling plant the same as she would an ailing friend.

"*You don't look very happy there. I think you need more sun,*" she says with genuine concern as she rescues a spindly plant from beneath a spreading lilac. Spade in hand, she tenderly works the uncomplaining "friend" into a nearby sunny mixture of topsoil and compost.

"*Ah, now you'll be happier,*" she whispers with hopeful satisfaction.

It's not likely many of you professionals talk to plants, at least not in front of clients. For one thing, you don't have time. You and your crews are busy beautifying clients' properties with trees, shrubs, annuals and perhaps even perennials.

Those of you that have told us that you install plant material for your customers will be delighted

(as will Vicky) when you receive the inaugural issue of *Livescapes* next month. It will arrive in your mailbox with our July *Landscape Management*, the issue that features our LM-100 report of the biggest landscape and lawn service companies in North America. At this point, *Livescapes* is being mailed as a supplement to *Landscape Management*. There will be three issues in 2007. It will come more frequently in '08.

It's our sincere desire that this colorful new supplement will quickly become your primary source of information to the incredible world of landscape color and plant material.

Award-winning Green Industry writer and editor Jamie Gooch has been hard at work making this new supplement the industry's most authoritative link between plant developers, growers and your contracting businesses. Knowledgeable of both the landscape and plant nursery industries,

Jamie is just the right person for the job. He's looking forward to hearing from you. Share your experiences and story ideas with Jamie. Contact him via email at [jgooch@questex.com](mailto:jgooch@questex.com).

Meanwhile, get ready for *Livescapes* arriving next month. The wife Vicky (aka the person who talks to plants), says that ... finally we're publishing something that *she*, too, can get really excited about.

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It is not enough to tell them once or do a lean event and develop a new process and expect everyone to follow it.



## Get out and see for yourself

BY BRUCE WILSON

**I** know right now many companies are looking at “lean” management practices to improve efficiency and reduce waste. Some are having success with it, but like anything else it takes time and effort and we are all busy, especially during the active growing season.

Most companies I have worked with on productivity improvements come to realize, if they just get out of their offices, go out on the jobs and see what their crews are actually doing, they will find that getting back to some of their own basics will go a long way toward improving quality and productivity. Most companies have developed efficient practices over the years — only to find that as they grow these practices are not uniformly adopted throughout their operations.

As a result, crews develop their own habits for doing the work. They usually work hard, but when you watch them, you realize if they just did the basic things the way you wanted them to, they would be much more efficient.

The crews also spend a lot of time doing things that do not need to be done every week. They do this out of habit, and then run out of time for other really important things. Your

quality can be compromised because employees are not prioritizing what should be done.

Your account managers also may not be spending enough time focusing the crews on doing the right things. They get busy fighting fires and do not execute their roles in managing crew efficiency. Once you get out and see what is really happening, you come to realize that you really do have a lot of wasted motion in your operations. It is much more difficult to develop the right working habits in your people than you would think.

Here is where accountability becomes pivotal to success. It is not enough to tell them once or do a lean event and develop a new process and expect everyone to follow it. It does not stick. The old habits return.

The process you must follow begins with the rollout of your best practices and is followed with getting your entire management team out watching people work and making sure they do it the way you want. Hold employees accountable. Over time you are forming new habits, ones that are more efficient and, hopefully, you end up with crews doing the right things for your customers and improving the quality.

You need to develop a culture that is focused on efficiency and uniform operational best practices through out. Combine that with a culture of accountability and your efficiency and quality will both improve.

— *The author is a partner with entrepreneur Tom Oyler in the Wilson-Oyler Group, which offers consulting services. Visit [www.wilson-oyler.com](http://www.wilson-oyler.com).*



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# In the Know

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NEWS YOU CAN USE

## Immigration compromise to affect Green Industry

**W**ASHINGTON, D.C. — The Border Security and Immigration Reform Act of 2007 was announced in an afternoon Senate press conference on May 17. The sweeping compromise immigration reform legislation known as S.1348, if enacted, would be the most extensive overhaul of the nation's immigration laws in decades. Many Green Industry priorities are included in the bill. These include:

- ▶ The AgJOBS agricultural worker reforms that create a streamlined guest worker program and allow the most experienced farm workers to remain working while they earn legal status. Also, the agricultural provisions would be exempted from the "triggers" border security measures, which delay implementation of most other provisions of the bill.
- ▶ H-2B program reforms exempting

most returning seasonal workers from counting against the annual cap on visas, and allow the program to expand to meet market conditions. While the existing H-2B program would eventually sunset, it would be replaced by a new "Y-2B" visa for seasonal work up to 10 months per year. The program would have an initial cap of 100,000 with more flexibility to meet market demand.

The bill would phase in new employer requirements to electronically verify the eligibility of prospective employees.

"Ten years into our effort to achieve labor and immigration

reform, we are encouraged by the announcement of the new White House/Senate compromise," said Craig Regelbrugge, vice president of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs for the American Nursery and Landscape Association (ANLA).



## Ingersoll Rand puts Bobcat up for sale

**HAMILTON, BERMUDA** — Ingersoll-Rand Co. is looking to unload its Bobcat and other construction-related businesses. The company's options may include an outright sale of the businesses or a spin-off to shareholders.

For full-year 2006 these businesses collectively generated approximately \$2.6 billion in revenues. The company expects to conclude the process in the second half of 2007.

"Our Bobcat, Utility Equipment and Attachments businesses no longer fit Ingersoll Rand's long-term strategy," said Herbert L. Henkel, chairman, president and chief executive officer. "The eventual outcome of the process will be the strategic repositioning of Ingersoll Rand away from a capital-intensive, heavy-machinery profile."

According to a report from Bloomberg, declining sales at Bobcat spurred a 14% drop in first-quarter profit at Ingersoll-Rand, as a slowdown in U.S. housing construction hurt demand for machinery. In February, the company agreed to sell its road building-equipment unit for \$1.3 billion to Volvo AB as it seeks purchases in the industrial, climate-control and security areas.



## Two win Project EverGreen awards

**NEW PRAGUE, MN** — Project EverGreen has named Verandah, Bonita Bay Group's master-planned community near Fort Myers, FL, and Evergreen Marriott Conference Resort/Stone Mountain Golf Club near Atlanta as winners of the 2007 "Because Green Matters" award. "Selecting two Because Green Matters winners is a first in the history of this award," said Den Gardner, executive director of Project EverGreen.

## John Deere/LESCO merger approved

**CLEVELAND** — John Deere completed its acquisition of LESCO, the Cleveland-based supplier of lawn care, landscape, golf course and pest control products. LESCO shareholders approved the merger on May 3 with approximately 78% of the voting shareholders approving the agreement. In February, Deere agreed to buy LESCO for \$14.50 a share, or about \$135 million.

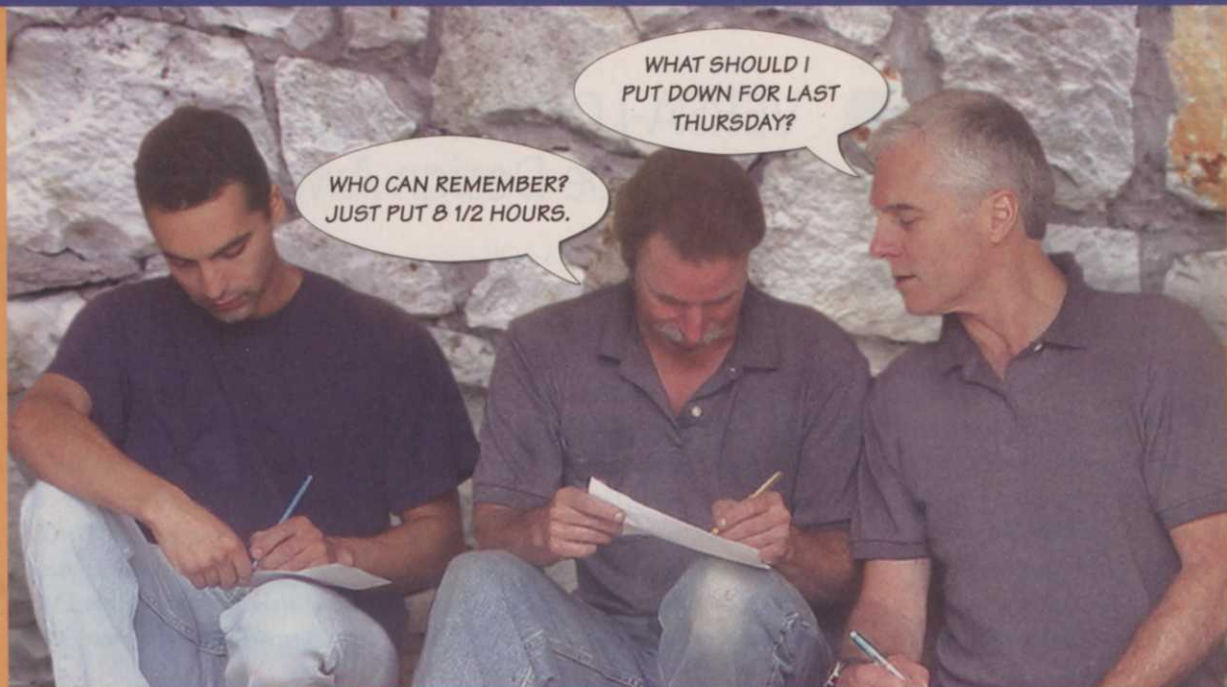
## Toro launches ToroUsed.com

**BLOOMINGTON, MN** — Toro has launched [www.toroused.com](http://www.toroused.com), a one-stop Web site for pre-owned Toro turf equipment located at Toro distributors. The site includes off-lease inventory through the Toro Financing program, trade-in equipment and demo equipment.

CLIPPINGS



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Employee Time Card

Name: DAVID B. Dates: 6/11-15

Day	Start	Lunch	End	Jobsite	Activity	Hours
Monday	7	1/2	3:30	Brentwood	Irrigation	8
Tuesday	7	1/2	3:30	"	"	8
Wednesday	7	1/2	4	"	"	8 1/2
Thursday	7	1/2	4	Crestview	Planting	8 1/2
Friday	7	1/2	4	"	"	8 1/2

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

Employee Report

Burns, David Date Range: 6/11/2007 through 6/15/2007

Day	Date	Jobsite	Start	Stop	Cost Code	Hours	Total
Mon	6/11	Brentwood	7:08 AM	12:05 PM	Irrigation	4:57	7:38 hours
			12:41 PM	3:22 PM	Irrigation	2:41	
Tue	6/12	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:07 PM	Irrigation	4:55	7:35 hours
			12:43 PM	3:23 PM	Irrigation	2:40	
Wed	6/13	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:02 PM	Irrigation	4:50	7:53 hours
			12:46 PM	3:49 PM	Irrigation	3:03	
Thu	6/14	Crestview	7:17 AM	12:19 PM	Planting	5:02	7:58 hours
			12:50 PM	3:46 PM	Planting	2:56	
Fri	6/15	Crestview	7:13 AM	12:07 PM	Planting	4:54	7:49 hours
			12:44 PM	3:39 PM	Planting	2:55	
<b>Total</b>						<b>38:53 hours</b>	

Signature: *David B.* Burns, David

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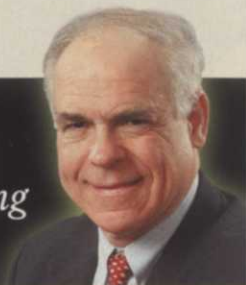
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## In the Know

### LEGALLY Speaking



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

**Q** I have tried to correct the bad behavior of a difficult 60-year-old employee but every time I talk to him he accuses me of age discrimination. Is there anything I should do before I fire him to protect myself?

**A** Yes. First, you need to set up a company-wide training program covering behaviors on the job. This would cover the various forms of discrimination and what does, and does not, constitute discrimination. For each employee, you should maintain a program of *candid* written yearly reviews. If the employee is not performing satisfactorily, he/she should be told the basis for your view and given an opportunity to correct the performance. Your candid review should be placed in the employee's personnel record, together with the action taken. A second review should also take place. It will be difficult to fire someone for poor performance if the record of job reviews reflects glowing appraisals and consistent increases in salary. If the employee claims that you fired him because of his age, you need to demonstrate the record shows both fairness on your part and consistent reviews reflecting the basis of poor performance ratings.

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](http://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.

## VERSA-LOK names 2006 Landscape Design Award winners

**OAKDALE, MN —** VERSA-LOK awarded two grand prizes for its 2006 Landscape Design Contest.

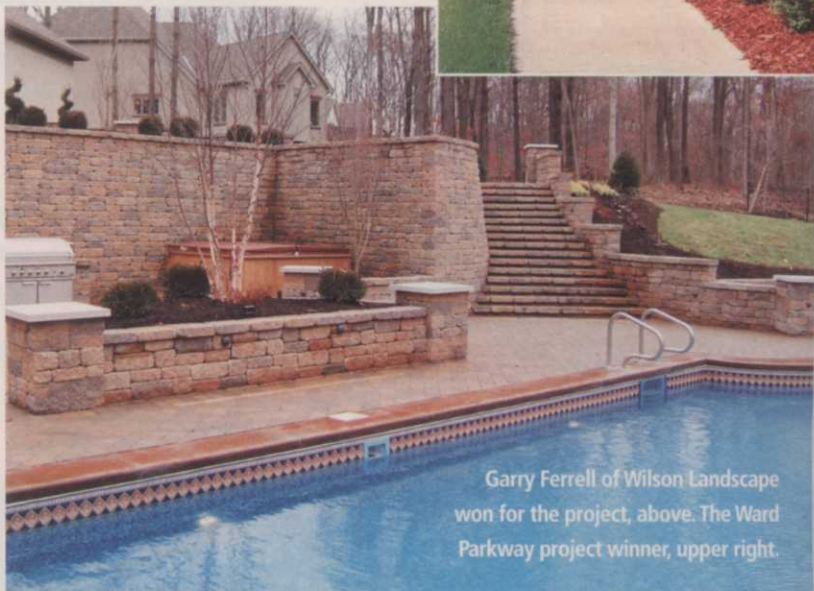
The renovation of Ward Parkway Shopping Center in Kansas City, MO, won top honors for Chad M. Porter, design team leader with Shafer, Kline & Warren Inc. of Overland Park, KS. Porter's extensive use of the company's Weathered Mosaic retaining walls in the landscaping of an inviting entranceway and perimeter walls for the mall that fit in beautifully with adjacent residential areas.

Garry Ferrell, landscape designer with Wilson Landscape Associates of Columbus, OH, took home a first-place award with an expansive residential project that incorporated everything from a curved staircase that sweeps into an 11-foot retaining wall to a freestanding outdoor gas fireplace—all built with the company's Mosaic.

"The quality of the entrants this year was outstanding," said company presi-

dent Todd Strand. "We simply couldn't decide between the top two contestants, so we decided to double the prize money and award two first-place winners and two runner-ups. It really speaks to the caliber of landscape designers and contractors out there using Versa-Lok."

Each first-place winner received \$5,000; runners-up won \$500 each. Versa-Lok is now accepting entries for the 2007 Landscape Design Award. Visit [www.versa-lok.com](http://www.versa-lok.com) for more details.



Garry Ferrell of Wilson Landscape won for the project, above. The Ward Parkway project winner, upper right.

# Homeowners recognize value of experienced lawn care

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC — When it comes to the health and maintenance of their lawns, many homeowners believe there to be no substitute for professional experience. With the arrival of spring, a lush lawn is top-of-mind – and homeowners know just who to call.

In a recent nationwide survey conducted by International Communications Research, 400 homeowners currently using lawn care services were polled to determine the motivating factors behind their decision to hire a lawn care service provider. In the majority of surveys, there was a significant emphasis on "experience."

Results indicated that 90% of those

polled cited the knowledge and extensive qualifications of lawn care companies to identify and properly treat for pests as key factors in their decision to hire the service provider. In technical aspects, 86% of homeowners surveyed believe that lawn care companies are better qualified to apply fertilizers and pesticides.

"Lawn care professionals receive significant training before attaining industry certification to be a licensed turf care practitioner," says Tom Shotzbarger, of Tomlinson Bomberger Lawn Care and Landscape Inc. "It's this experience that

**86%**

of homeowners believe that lawn care companies are better qualified to apply fertilizers and pesticides

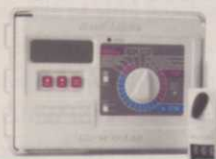
customers value most and a significant factor in which services they go with."

"The aesthetic and financial value found in the health of a homeowner's lawn requires an acute attention to detail in order to maintain," he added.

The telephone survey, conducted in June 2006, was developed by the Bayer Lawn Care Institute. The Bayer Lawn Care Institute was founded in order to provide lawn care professionals with access to information and resources that would enhance the quality of services provided to their customers.

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**BEFORE**

**Problem** This was a new job site. The client was unhappy because the flower display did not look full and had no impact. What would you recommend?

**The cause** When working with signs the flower display should be designed to compliment and direct one's eye to the sign. In this case there were not enough flowers to really create a full display. Also, they had used two different colors of mulch and the soil had not been well prepared.

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](mailto:Hellerick@BrickmanGroup.com)

### Solutions

1. The quickest fix is to completely remove the bed and replace the whole area with turf (seed or sod) leaving a one-foot mulch strip along the sign to protect the sign from mowing & edging operations.
2. Remove everything and replace with a low-growing evergreen ground cover. This option would create more seasonal interest through the year and possibly maintenance needs until the ground cover was well established.
3. We chose to extend the turf area by thoroughly preparing the soil and then seeding the area. This is an irrigated site so enough moisture was assured. A much smaller but highly visible flower bed was created, the soil thoroughly prepared and planted with a bright yellow pansies to draw attention and contrast the blue sign.



**AFTER**

## Florida counties approve fertilizer/water restrictions

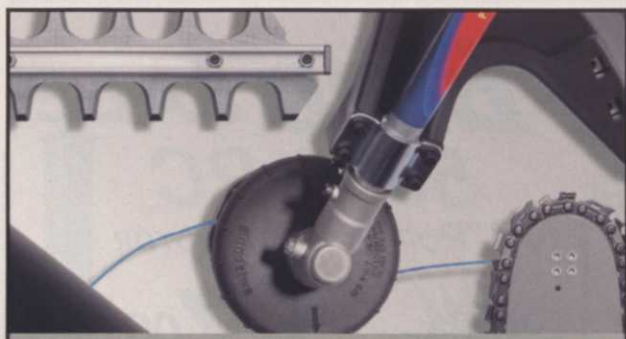
**SARASOTA, FL** — Sarasota County passed an ordinance regulating fertilizer use near rivers, streams and beach areas.

The ordinance provides for fines of up to \$500 and 60 days in jail for violators. The ban was approved because of the recent red tide blooms and concern about water quality and the need to keep the Gulf of Mexico cleaner.

The ban does not include some of the guidelines contained in another, more-strict ordinance proposal. The other version prohibited the use of fertilizer within 25 feet of a body of water and also prohibited fertilizers containing phosphorous.

In addition, with recent rains doing little to alleviate drought conditions, the South Florida Water Management District's (SFWMD) Governing Board declared an extreme water shortage for eastern Broward and Palm Beach counties, placing the two southeast coastal counties in modified Phase III water use restrictions.

"Unfortunately, South Florida is facing one of the worst droughts on record," said SFWMD Executive Director Carol Ann Wehle. "Four of our coastal wellfields are at risk of saltwater intrusion, and we need to do more to protect our regional water resources."



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# In the Know

## People & companies



**BASF Professional Turf & Ornamentals** appointed **Karl J. Kisner** as marketing

manager. Previously, Kisner served as senior marketing manager for BASF Professional Pest Control.



**Canyon Communications, Inc.**, of Mesa, AZ, promoted **Jared Bodnar** to vice presi-

dent. In the new position, Bodnar will be actively involved in decisions regarding

the advertising/public relations agency's future strategic direction, client services, new business development and personnel.



**Dow Agro-Sciences** named **Saumya Verma** as the new sales repre-

sentative for the turf and ornamental market in Virginia, Delaware, Maryland and eastern West Virginia. Verma replaces **Bill Davis**, who has recently retired.

**Terri Berkowitz**, membership

and marketing manager of **Turfgrass Producers International (TPI)**, is leaving after almost 20 years of service.

**Betsy Elizabeth Mote**, executive secretary and co-owner of **Senna Tree Co.**, passed away March 17, 2007. She was 46 years old.



**Hunter Industries** added **Eric Simmons** as national sales representative. He will handle

specification sales and support duties for the Great Lakes region.



**Iveco Motors of North America, Inc.** appointed **Ted Bregar** as general manager.

**Netafim USA** of Fresno, CA, named **Russell Clark** as the new market manager for the Landscape & Turf Division, and **Robert Best** as the new Landscape & Turf District sales manager.



**Will Harrison** is **Target's** newest account representative for the vegetation management and landscape markets in southern California.

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# TOP 10

## Landscaping & garden trends for '07

**DENVER** — The Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado (ALCC) is sharing its top landscape and garden trends for 2007.

**1. Sustainable gardens** — Homeowners are looking for landscapes that conserve water, use locally produced or recycled materials and employ environmentally responsible maintenance practices.

**2. Multicultural style** — Consumers are incorporating landscapes influenced by other cultures (e.g., Italian, French, Mediterranean or Middle Eastern style gardens, courtyards and fountains).

**3. Scaper planning** — The continued boom of scrapers and pop-tops in Colorado's older neighborhoods creates the need for proper planning and planting to ensure the landscape is as functional and attractive as the new or remodeled home.

**4. Merging interior and exterior design** — Outdoor living continues with a strong emphasis on creating a cohesive flow between interior and exterior spaces. Outdoor rooms meld colors, textures and styles with a home's indoor spaces.

**5. Big impact for small spaces** — Smaller yards cause homeowners to make the most of their space by enhancing privacy, selecting plant material designed for small spaces and maximizing functionality.

**6. Attractive xeriscape** — Years of continuous drought raised awareness about water use and made Xeriscape more than a passing fad. Consumers continue to request stunning plants and hardscape elements that minimize water use.

**7. Exterior lighting** — Homeowners want to extend enjoyment of outdoor spaces into after-dark hours. Hard-wired lighting illuminates gardens, trees and nighttime activities while enhancing security.

**8. Water features** — Trends include installing several water features throughout the yard, as well as pond-less features and fountains to enhance sight and sound.

**9. Landscape makeovers** — The reality TV craze to refurbish homes and landscapes has spilled into the mainstream. Consumers are looking to refresh a landscape with new decks, patios and gardens.

**10. Planning is in** — Homeowners are looking at blueprints to help them design their landscapes by creating garden plans or hiring professionals to create yards that fit their lifestyles and budgets.

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# PEOPLE PO



+ **MIKE SWAGGERTY**  
Central Florida Division Manager



+ **BEAU BOHANNAN**  
VP Gulf Coast



+ **HOLLIE ANDERSON**  
VP North Florida

+ **RAMONE VILLA**  
Director of Human Resources



PHOTO BY: BETSY HANSEN

# POWER

# plus

Even in a company that features solar power and a fleet of hybrid vehicles, it's the **managers** that are energizing **Nanak's Landscaping's** successes



+ JONI LUCE  
Manager Business Development



**THE ALUMINUM LADDER PROPPED AGAINST THE EAVE OF THE BUILDING** leads to a view of the building's solar panels. The Florida heat and the prospect of the climb dissuade me against the effort. My host on the tour of his company's Orlando-area equipment/job-staging yard is Mike Swaggerty, Central Florida Division Manager of Nanak's Landscaping. He's friendly and obviously proud of the order within his yard; the trucks and trailers being serviced with mili-

itary efficiency, the uniformed employees busy at their tasks

Much of the headquarters roof here is covered with 20.1 kW Solar PV System that supplies electricity to the 19-year-old building. When the sun is shining (as it does 300 days per year, says the Orlando Chamber of Commerce) and the building is at rest, its meter runs backwards and sends electricity back into the grid. The system, which became operational in January, garnered the company positive local press, and — thanks to an \$80,000 Alternative Energies Technologies Grant and a 35% federal investment tax credit — it's been a financial win, too. The company invested a total of \$30,000 of its own money on the \$160,000 project and is getting a 15% return on the investment annually. "That's pretty good," says President Sampuran Khalsa. His disarmingly blue eyes remain calm and

BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

fixed, but an impish smile plays out (and is almost hidden) beneath his luxurious white beard.

The real story here though, insists Khalsa, is the company's managers. From the field foremen who are encouraged and trained to become account managers, (so that they can then manage three foremen and crews themselves) to the regional vps, who oversee multi-million-dollar branches. That's the



"electricity" that power's the company, whose four Florida locations will generate north of \$35 million in revenues this year. About 75% comes from commercial maintenance.

But the company's managers are hardly as unique as

Sampuran Khalsa himself. Growing up in a military family, he surfed as a boy in Hawaii and remains an avid surfer. He left Massachusetts for Florida in 1973 and started a small landscape company that for several years focused on design/build. But he and his partner shifted to maintenance about 20 years ago. At about \$1 million in revenues, he called in Frank Ross, a financially-astute, Chicago-based

*continued on page 28*

**AT A GLANCE**

**Nanak's Landscaping**

**Owners/President:**  
Sampuran Khalsa

**VP/General Manager:**  
Mahan Kalpa Khalsa

**Year incorporated:** 1978

**Headquarters:** Longwood, FL

**Locations:** 4 (Orlando, Jacksonville, Tampa, Sarasota)

**Tampa Regional VP:**  
Beau Bohannon

**Jacksonville Regional VP:**  
Hollie Anderson

**Orlando Branch Manager:**  
Mike Swaggerty

**Sarasota Branch Manager:**  
Ed Coil

**2006 revenue:** \$33 million

**Predominant service:**  
Mowing/maintenance

**Year-round employees:** 460

**GOING FROM 15 TO 50 (mpg that is)**

Instead of pickup trucks and SUVs, regional and operators managers at Nanak's Landscaping drive hybrid electric/gasoline Toyotas. Irrigation technicians drive fuel-efficient Honda Scions. In the last two years, the company has switched out 30 vehicles.

"Obviously, we just couldn't take a 300-vehicle fleet and snap our fingers and buy a whole new fleet," says President Sampuran Khalsa. "You have to manage our way into a change like this."

He says he started thinking about his company's vehicle fuel costs during the fuel spike following Hurricane Katrina in late August 2005. Why do managers need to drive pickup trucks that get 15 miles per gallon when their main responsibilities are to visit customers and manage crews, he wondered?

"At \$3 a gallon, that's wasteful, so we made changes and now some of our hybrids are getting 50 miles per gallon and some of the other vehicle are getting 30 miles per gallon."

Khalsa says the decision was made after some hard figuring with a sharp pencil showing that the fuel efficiency of the new vehicles would, in the long run, pay off for the company.

(Note: Each Prius that was purchased and put in service prior to 9/30/06 was eligible for a \$3,150

federal income tax credit. The tax credit has been reduced and is now \$787.50 for each Prius purchased until Sept. 30, 2007. Source: [www.fueleconomy.gov](http://www.fueleconomy.gov). Online sources say the base price of a Prius is about \$23,750.)

He admits the switchover was "a bit of a culture shock," but managers have embraced the new vehicles. Moreover, buying the hybrids signaled to the rest of the company that Nanak's was serious about conserving energy.

"It's almost become a game now to see who can get the most miles per gallon, and it has translated out to all the other vehicles on the road," says Khalsa. Employees realize that if they do simple things, such as keeping tires inflated to the correct pressure and "driving with a light foot," they can make a big difference in fuel costs, he says.

Beau Bohannon, regional vice president is taking the fuel conservation effort one extra step at his Tampa branch. He's been experimenting with a fuel additive that he claims gives his fleet vehicles an extra two to three miles per gallon.

"Remember, I have 70 trucks on the road," says Bohannon. "We're buying a lot of gasoline each week. If we're getting an extra two miles per gallon per truck throughout my whole fleet, we're saving a lot of money."

In the end, the decision to go to hybrids and other fuel-efficient vehicles "is the right thing to do," Khalsa says. But the more immediate reason for the switchover has been to eliminate waste and control fuel costs.

The company president was the first person within Nanak's to give up his SUV in favor of a Prius two years ago. — RH





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## SYSTEMS KEEP CASH *flowing*

*continued from page 26*

consultant. "He (Ross) has been sort of a guiding force and has helped us put together our accounting systems, our budgeting processes and all of those sort of things," says Khalsa, who invites Ross back for annual planning.

That, it turns out, was the first of many great and occasionally serendipitous "people" decisions he made over the years, admits Khalsa.

"I decided early in the business that I needed to be able to attract people who had an entrepreneurial spirit and, frankly, were good enough to run their own companies," says Khalsa, who incorporated the company in 1978 and remains its president. (His partner for many years, Mahan Kalpa Khalsa, serves as vp and general manager.) "We've been successful at that. Some amazing people have staked their careers here."

Hollie Anderson joined the company 19 years ago, just months after graduating from the University of Florida. She and Scott Ketchum, senior operations manager, have grown the company's Jacksonville branch from six or seven employees to the largest commercial maintenance operation in far northeast Florida with almost 300 employees.

"I'm a stickler for customer relationships," says Anderson, in a disarmingly soft south-Georgia accent that can almost make you forget her reputation as an astute and detail-oriented administrator and sales person. "In my mind the customer is always right and it's up to us to make the customer happy.

"What makes us stand out is customer service and I always tell my staff to handle customers' questions quickly and professionally, including

*continued on page 30*

Hurricane Charley ravaged central Florida in August 2004, the first of four hurricanes to pound the state that year. Charley beat down structures and landscapes in a swath from the Gulf Coast's Port Charlotte to Daytona Beach on the Atlantic.

In spite of being in Charley's murderous footprint, and losing power for more than a week, Nanak's Landscaping kept on working, thanks to the company's administrative staff.

"We didn't have power for a week so we got a generator from a neighbor and plugged our server into it," recalls Frank Lubinskas, CFO. "We had wires running out the door to the generator, and it was hotter than Hades in here. Some of the people brought tiny lights so they could see as they worked. We never missed a payroll."

Without efficient administration a company's systems can disintegrate into spastic inefficiency. When this happens money that should be used for salaries, equipment or, perhaps, expansion seeps through financial fissures and is forever lost. Nanak's CFO is not about to let that happen. Outgoing and engagingly open, Lubinskas loves three things about business (although not necessarily in the following order) — mutually beneficial business deals, robust cash flow and practical, workable systems. In the case of systems, Lubinskas developed many of Nanak's.

"There are a lot of little places where money can leak out of a company," says Lubinskas, who joined the company in 1988 just after it moved into its present headquarters in a neat office park just northeast of Orlando. He left in 1992 to pursue other business opportunities but returned to the company in 1999. The company's been on a roll since. Actually, it's been on a nice roll for longer than that, but it's rolling smoother since Lubinskas returned, says President Sampuran Khalsa.

Lubinskas has "old-fashioned" ideas when it comes to money. Example: he believes that a company should get paid and paid promptly for the services it provides to clients. Not only does he believe that, but, working with sales, he's developed systems to consistently make it happen.

"We have an incredible turn-around on cash," he says. "I'm extremely high on cash management. We have perfected systems that result in a 23 DSO (days sales outstanding). Our customers pay us quickly and when they don't pay us quickly we call them and ask them why they haven't paid us quickly."

Similarly, Lubinskas says his company prefers to deal with suppliers that give it a 2% "early pay" (within 10 days) discount on purchases. Many do. ▶▶



"I'm extremely high on cash management," says Frank Lubinskas, CFO, "We know how to get cash in the door."

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*continued from page 28*

returning phone calls the same day, if that's possible," she adds.

Each of the company's branches has some leeway in terms of training and operations, which Khalsa believes gives managers the opportunity to experiment and innovate. "I've always felt the team approach works a lot better than an authoritarian, top-down style," he says.

Take employee training, for example. The programs at the branches are different but their goals are the same – employee safety and building employees' skills.

The Tampa branch, run by Beau Bohannon, takes a "rodeo" approach to training. Every several months the branch's 200-plus employees spend a Saturday in day-long training, cycling through seven hands-on learning stations.

"Our goal is to get the great majority of our people doing things the right way and the same way all the time," says Bohannon.

non. "Then when new people come into the organization they will see and can follow what the group is doing."

Bohannon was brought on board the Nanak's Landscaping team 13 years ago, mostly because of his love of mentoring younger talent. He relishes the role, and a wide grin creases his face as he talks about two young foremen that his branch is mentoring to become account managers. Part of their extra responsibilities is to head up the branch's weekly safety meetings.

By contrast, the Jacksonville branch recently installed its first dedicated, full-time training manager who also some human resources functions. The manager meets with a different group of six or seven foremen each workday at 6:40 a.m. to review company procedures. In the 20-minute meetings, the manager and the foremen discuss a range of pre-determined topics, from time sheet procedures to employee safety to customer communications.

◀ ◀ But, it's the company's 401k program, eligible to all fulltime employees with one continuous year of service, and the system he devised to track and record each man-hour worked (to the tenth of an hour) into a virtually hands-off payroll system that seem to excite him most.

Most fulltime employees of the company participate in the 401k and have seen their investments grow due to a diverse selection of strong mutual funds. "It (the 401k) has helped us to retain good people," says the CFO.

Similarly, the proprietary spreadsheet that Frank created over the years gives the company the capability for a one-day turnaround for payroll, and has virtually eliminated under- and over-payments.

"Within our payroll system we have the ability to bring valuable information in on weekly basis, and very efficiently," explains Lubinkas. "We know within a couple of days whether we hit our budget or not on each particular job. And if we didn't hit our budget, we start looking at what happened."

The company's internal information systems allow branch and operations managers to easily access any job cost reports, invoices, personnel files, expenditure reports as well as reports on work with outside contractors.

Ultimately, all of the meaningful financial data (man-hours worked, job costing, etc.) is rolled into the company's weekly reports and gives managers the information they need to view performance job by job.

"We can tell real quick if we're making money on a job," says Lubinkas. "We can tell within two days if we made money on the job or not." — RH

New hires are trained in groups, as needed, in equipment operation, company procedures and in safety.

Since account managers typically manage just three crews, and each crew has a foreman and a lead man, the account managers have time to monitor each job in terms of man-hours and customer satisfaction, and the foremen pass on what they've learned to crewmates.

The career path at Nanak's is clear and open, even to crew members.

For example, Jay Jerrigan started as a gardener with the company and is now the sen-

ior operations manager at the Jacksonville branch.

"When somebody is ready to step up we give them the opportunity," he says.

What's in store for Nanak's Landscaping for the future?

More growth, says Khalsa, who says he feels responsible for continuing to offer career opportunities to managers and other employees that stay with the company.

"Florida is growing like crazy," he grins through his incredible beard. "Development is springing up all over the place. We couldn't ask to be in a better place based on the need for what we do." LM



Jay Jerrigan, left, sr. operations manager, makes sure the North Florida crews are ready to go each work day.





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# Innovations

TECHNOLOGY HOT NEW PRODUCTS

1



2



3



4



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The Bobcat tree fork attachment is ideal for landscapers and nurseries that must frequently transport balled, potted and burlap-covered trees and decorative landscape rock, or any contractor who must move heavy odd-shaped objects. Operators can quickly attach the tree fork using the Bob-Tach mounting system. The attachment offers a stationary right arm that can be mounted in two positions for optimizing the size of objects the tree fork attachment transports. The left arm opens and closes via a hydraulic cylinder, enabling the attachment to carry objects between 7-in. and 36-in. wide.

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You must approach your fleet just like the triage doctor or nurse approaches patients during a disaster. You cannot take care of it all at once, so prioritize your needs.



## Spring triage

BY HARRY SMITH

**I**t is spring again. The rush is beginning. Will it be as crazy as last year? What could you have done over the winter to smooth out the spring demand?

The first thing to think about as you come out of the winter slow down is your equipment condition. If you have kept up with your preventive maintenance then you know what needs rebuilding and what needs replacing. Winter is the best time to get this done, but if spring slipped up on you again all is not lost. Triage is the answer.

You must approach your fleet just like the triage doctor or nurse approaches patients during a disaster. You cannot take care of it all at once, so prioritize your needs. What is mission critical? What tasks must be done first in the spring? What equipment is needed for these tasks? If you have a big demand for spring fertilizing and weed control, then your spreader and spray equipment is your first priority.

If your primary concern is mowing, then concentrate on the mowers and trimmers. Do not forget to service those trailer wheel bearings, be sure to inspect all your pneumatic tires for cuts and cracks and inflate them to the recommended pressure. You can bet those tires lost air over the winter. If you had winter down time and your equipment sat unused for more than 30 days, you may be faced with a lot of carburetor cleaning unless you used gasoline stabilizer in the fall.

Sometimes a carburetor cannot be economically salvaged. Watch replacement cost versus repair cost. You usually cannot spend an hour of labor rebuilding

a \$60 weed trimmer carburetor with a \$20 repair kit. It is the triage concept again. Save what you can save economically and replace the rest. A backpack blower that needs a carburetor overhaul, new straps, hose and back pad may need to be replaced especially if you replace an older, noisier unit with a new reduced decibel model. If safety, noise and/or performance is an issue then factor that into your replace or repair decisions.

Have a productive spring.

— The author is turf equipment professor at Lake City Community College, Lake City, FL. Contact him at [harry\\_smith@juno.com](mailto:harry_smith@juno.com).

### Here is your spring checklist:

- ✓ First needed equipment means first repaired or replaced.
- ✓ If you put your equipment to bed in the fall by the manufacturer's suggestions then you are in great shape. If you forgot to add the gasoline stabilizer to equipment stored more than 30 days, then prepare to clean or replace carburetors.
- ✓ Do careful estimates on repairs and compare with replacement costs. Do not forget to factor in the advantages of new technology.
- ✓ Make careful repair decisions that cover all the significant factors. Always ask yourself, "Is this equipment safe for the operator and anyone nearby?"

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Linux has a lot of good things going for it. But when it comes down to making the decision for your office there are several things to consider.



## Is Linux right for you?

BY TYLER WHITAKER

Just the mention of the Linux operating system generates blank looks in most circles. It has long been the domain of computer scientists and long-haired techno-geeks. The recent decision from computer retailer Dell Inc. to start offering computers with Linux preinstalled is a watershed event for Linux, making it a viable replacement for Microsoft Windows XP and Vista. But are you ready to switch your office to a new operating system and applications?

The first thing to understand about Linux is that we are really talking about a family of different operating systems all stemming from Unix. At first glance, it might seem like there are hundreds of versions and brands — some offered as free “open source” solutions supported by communities of developers and others low cost commercial products with options for customer support. Dell has settled on a version of Linux called Ubuntu, which is one of the most polished and user friendly. Another version that rivals Microsoft Windows in functionality is Novell’s SUSE Linux.

### Why Linux?

The biggest reason to switch may be the cost. Going with Linux on new desktops in your office could save hundreds of dollars per PC. When you look at the cost of a new operating system from Microsoft plus Microsoft Office for basic office productivity software, you can easily see where free open source software is really attractive. Most desktop versions of Linux boast a slew of free software to help you do

everything from reading e-mail to Web surfing to creating documents, spreadsheets and presentations.

Linux has a lot of good things going for it. But when it comes down to making the decision for your office there are several things that you need to consider. First, do you have any special software that you use and can it run on Linux? Second, does your IT staff or consultant understand and have the skills to support Linux? And third, can your staff make it up the learning curve of a new operating system and new applications? Depending on your answers to these questions, Linux may be a great move or a money pit.

### Linux on the Web

Linux is an interesting business tool if used in the right places. I’ve been using Linux in the Web server environment for years. It’s stable, fast and efficient. And I’d dare say that most of your Web sites are running one version of Linux or another. I’ve looked into using it as a desktop replacement several times and can honestly say that for basic desktop functionality I think it may be the right low cost solution. The challenge is always when I need a business specific application to run. Unfortunately, most commercial software is only now starting to support Linux. But the time is coming.

As Linux vendors gain experience with business users, their features will become easier to use and smooth the learning curve to where Linux is on the level as an alternative to Microsoft Windows.

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



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# PGRs

## save labor

**Because plant growth regulators retard growth of ornamentals, contractors get more work done with fewer employees**

BY B. TODD BUNNELL, PH.D. AND SHANE BARNEY



Plant growth regulators can greatly reduce the amount of trimming needed.

1. An untreated wax leaf ligustrum.
2. A wax leaf ligustrum treated with Cutless at 7 lbs/1,000 sq ft. at 21 weeks
3. And one treated at 14 lbs/1,000 sq ft.

Landscape professionals continually seek unique solutions for the biggest challenge facing their industry, which is labor. One such solution is the incorporation of plant growth regulators (PGRs) into their maintenance program for landscape ornamentals. PGRs can serve as a supplement to a company's labor force, allowing the company to do more with less.

### What are PGRs?

A plant growth regulator is defined as any substance or mixture of substances intended, through physiological action, that accelerates or retards the rate of growth or maturation of plants. PGRs have been around for decades and have been used to selectively regulate the growth of plants across many market segments including: turfgrass, greenhouse ornamentals and, in recent years, landscape ornamentals. In landscape ornamentals, they're applied to plants primarily to suppress or reduce vegetative growth in order to minimize

cost and labor associated with pruning or trimming. Currently, three PGRs are labeled and registered for use to suppress vegetative growth on established landscape ornamental plantings — Atrimmec, Embark and Cutless Granular.

Embark from PBI/Gordon (active ingredient, mefluidide) suppresses growth by interfering with cell division. This foliar-applied product is also used on turfgrass for shoot growth regulation and seedhead suppression. PBI/Gordon says that the product suppresses growth in ornamentals for up to eight weeks, depending on the species.

Atrimmec, also from PBI/Gordon, contains the active ingredient dikegulac-sodium, which also suppresses growth by interfering with DNA synthesis and cell division. Again, uniform application is required of this foliar-applied product. The company says that Atrimmec suppresses growth for up to 12 weeks, again depending on species and rate applied. It adds that the product enhances the appearance of ornamentals by promoting branching,

*continued on page 40*









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SunPatiens do best in full sun or half day sun
-  6 great colors of SunPatiens are available coast to coast at The Home Depot garden centers



continued from page 38

giving shrubs and bushes a fuller, more compact shape.

Cutless Granular, from SePRO Corp., contains the active ingredient flurprimidol, which interferes with the biosynthe-

sis of gibberellic acid (GA), a plant growth hormone responsible for cell elongation and division. Flurprimidol reduces shoot growth and internode length in landscape ornamentals. Cutless Granular is delivered to plants via a granule applied



▲ Many end-users have seen an increase in flowering following applications of Cutless Granular. ► By suppressing vertical shoot growth, plants treated with PGRs exhibit a more compact growth form and often possess darker green foliage

uniformly within the drip line of landscape ornamentals. Granular applications ease worries about spray drift and require only a spreader, so they are easy to use. Cutless Granular has demonstrated growth suppression up to six months, says the company.

**Benefits of PGRs**

The primary benefit of using a PGR on landscape ornamentals is to manage plant growth to minimize and reduce costs and labor associated with pruning or trimming. PGRs are most effective when applied close to a time of pruning; therefore using a PGR should extend the length of time between future pruning events.

Length of residual growth regulation varies depending on plant species, climate, as well as other factors, including soil type. Therefore, PGRs, will reduce the time and labor involved in pruning and maintenance of landscape ornamentals. Similar results have been duplicated in the field by end-users.

"Our records show that in years past we had an average of 10 to 13 and up to 15 guys on a single bed and trim crew," says Mark Baker of Baker Landscaping, Delray Beach, FL. "You go out there today; that crew has seven people on it. We may add two more if it gets busy, but those five extra guys add up quick."

"After the first application I'm saving money, says Mark Boettger of The Marco Island Marriott Beach Resort in Marco Island, FL. "The one application saved me three months of trimming. That's hourly time. That's a lot of money. We used to have four guys trimming constantly during the summer months, constantly trimming, trimming, trimming. If we had



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something pop up it took one guy a couple hours to clean it up."

In addition, research has shown that clipping yields can be reduced, and less trimming means fewer clippings and there are real costs associated with hauling debris away from the job site.

Baker was able to reduce trimming waste by more than 30%, he says.

"You figure 30 or 40 yards a day you don't pay dump fees on, let alone the guy raking it up and humping it to the truck," he says. "It's an overall savings of \$400 per day. Multiply that over six heavy growing months, that's \$400 a day for 180 days."

In simple math that's approximately \$72,000.

Lastly, the effect on worker safety is also felt when trimming stress and

requirements decrease. "Almost every one of our injuries is the result of somebody being careless with a pair of hedge trimmers," says Baker, a Cutless user. "We haven't had an injury like that in 10 or 11 months. We're just doing less trimming."

With the challenges landscape professionals are facing in today's difficult labor environment, think of PGRs as a labor supplement, not only to make up for labor shortages, but to increase the productivity of trimming/pruning crews. What could your crew be doing instead of pruning? Mark Baker is sold on the advantages of PGRs.

"Every one of our crews has got two buckets of Cutless and two shakers on their truck. We use it on every property, high-end residential routes and commercial properties."

Fortunately, for the landscape professional, there are many tools available for landscapers to regulate the growth of established ornamental shrubs and hedges. When used properly and effectively, they can provide labor savings with the added bonus of more attractive plants in the landscape. **LM**

— Todd Bunnell, Ph.D.







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Turbo TeeJet® Induction 	---	Excellent		Turbo TeeJet® 	Excellent	Excellent	
AIC TeeJet® 	Good	Excellent		XP BoomJet® 	---	Very Good	

-  Very Fine
  -  Fine
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  -  Very Coarse
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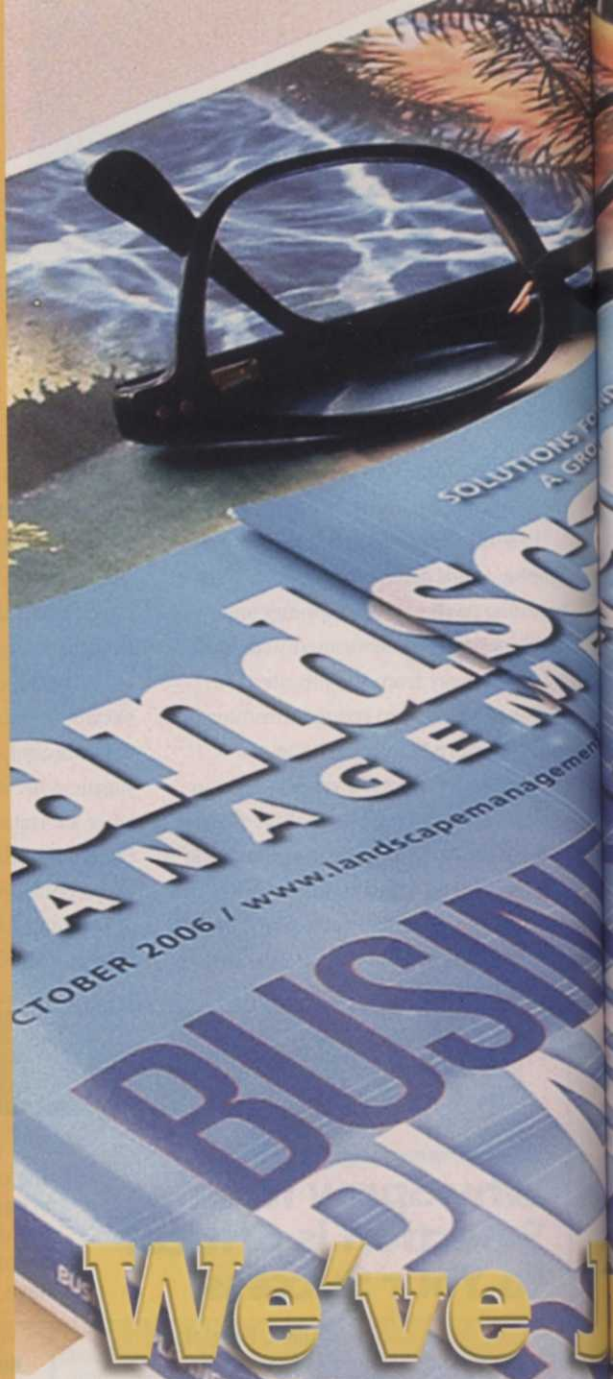
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# BUSINESS PLANNER 2008

**T**his October, *Landscape Management* presents you with its one-of-a-kind issue designed to make the budgeting and planning process pain-free. You'll be relieved when you read the relevant editorial including coverage on marketing techniques that work, setting sales expectations, adding new money-making services, recruiting and training, and getting working capital to grow your business.

For advertising inquiries, please call your sales manager or Publisher Kevin Stoltman at 216-706-3740. Not only is this issue the most valuable ad buy of the year, the *Landscape Management* Business Planner receives bonus distribution at Green Industry & Equipment Expo in October.



**We've  
a Cure  
Budget  
Head**

A collage of business-related items. At the top, a clear pill bottle lies on its side with several white pills scattered on a light-colored surface. To the left, a pair of black-rimmed glasses is partially visible. In the center, a black Sharpie marker and a grey Sharpie pen are positioned. Below them, a blue magazine or brochure features a grid pattern and the text "Energize your team, boost profits and wow clients by spinning your gears in the right direction". A large, 3D red arrow points towards the bottom right. The background is a mix of blue and white tones with various patterns and text fragments.

# Best Found for Those ing and Planning ches...

# Mycorrhizae:

## Insurance for your plantings

These tiny little fungi can make a mighty big difference in promoting landscape plant survival and health

BY KRISTI WOODS, M.S., AND MIKE AMARANTHUS, PH.D.

**W**e purchase insurance for our cars, our houses, and ourselves. What about for the trees and shrubs you install? Naturally you want your landscape installations to have the best opportunity to succeed. You choose healthy stock plants, insure proper planting depth and choose the ideal location.

However, after you leave the job site, care of the plant is often then left to the property owner, and here is when most plants fail. Plants succumb for a variety of reasons including over- or under-watering, shock of transplant stress and lack of proper nutrition. Wouldn't it be great if you could leave behind something that would help insure against common plant neglect? This is where mycorrhizae play an essential role.

### We are fungi

Mycorrhizae are specialized fungi that form mutually beneficial associations with plant roots. They help increase establishment

and growth, greatly extend the roots' surface area and provide resistance against stress. The presence of mycorrhizae results in healthier plants.

Typically, both the plants and mycorrhizal fungi benefit from their association with each other. This functional give-and-take relationship provides a carbohydrate source for the mycorrhizal fungi, which is what they need to grow and explore the soil resource. The plant, in turn, benefits from improved nutrient and water uptake, carbon acquisition, phytohormone pro-

duction, salt tolerance and resistance to pathogens.

Mycorrhizae actually alter the relationship between the plant's roots and the soil, increasing the roots' ability to absorb phosphorus and nitrogen, critical nutrients for plant growth and stress physiology.

Mycorrhizae form an association with more than 400,000 different plant species, ranging from primitive plants to more advanced species. The nature of the association depends upon the species of plant and fungus involved as well as the environ-

mental conditions. Forming with approximately 95% of all land plants, mycorrhizae are found in a variety of ecosystems and plant communities. About the only terrestrial setting in which they do not occur are where plants are absent.

### Mr. Outside; Mr. Inside

While mycorrhizae are classified into seven major groups characterized by key morphological features of the root-fungus association, the two most common groups are ectomycorrhizae (colonize outside) and endomycorrhizae (colonize inside). Ectomycorrhizae colonize outside root cells and can produce a mushroom, puffball or truffle "fruiting body" above or below ground. Ectomycor-

*continued on page 46*



A flourishing landscape two months after using mycorrhizal inoculants at planting.

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*continued from page 44*

rhizae form associations with trees such as pines, birch, oak, walnut, willow and beech. Ectomycorrhizae create a sheath of hyphae (fungal cells), increasing the root surface and volume around the plant root and make it harder for fungal or bacterial diseases to penetrate.

Arbuscular mycorrhizae, or endomycorrhizae, colonize inside root cells. An endomycorrhizal association is traditionally characterized by two structures: vesicles and arbuscules. Vesicles are used for the storage of carbon. Arbuscules are where the nutrient exchange between the fungus and plant actually takes place. Endomycorrhizae form beneficial partnerships with 70% of all plant families, including flowering plants, annuals, grasses and select trees such as maple, magnolia and dogwoods. Endomycorrhizae are critical to plants commonly used in landscaping; therefore, the world would be significantly less colorful without them.

Endo and ectomycorrhizal fungi similarly produce an abundance of tiny threads or "hyphae" that spread from the roots themselves into the surrounding soil. These tiny threads are critical for getting plants established by extending the effective absorptive area of the roots system away from the plant and into soil at the planting site.

There are a number of

commercially available endo and ecto mycorrhizal inoculants. These inoculants come in various forms, including dry soluble powders, granular pills, tablets and pre-inoculated soil media. Plants can be inoculated via numerous methods such as soil drenching, liquid injections, granular incorporation and vertical mulching.

#### Put 'em to work

Applying a mycorrhizal product to established or newly transplanted plants can result in a range of benefits to the plant's health, such as increased water uptake, increased resistance to insect pests and diseases, increased nutrient accumulation, and increased transplant survival.

► **Insurance against under-watering.** After the mycorrhizae colonize the roots of a plant, the fungus then grows throughout the surrounding soil and forms an extensive cobweb-like network that explores a larger soil volume than normal roots. These special fungi can increase the ability of the roots to access water in the small areas between soil particles because they are smaller about 1/10 the diameter compared to roots. The ability of mycorrhizae to enter small areas can increase absorption several hundred to several thousand times compared to roots alone.

► **Insurance against poor nutrition.** Mycorrhizae increase uptake of phosphorus and other tightly bound nutrients

#### Finding a mycorrhizae solution



Plants fail for a variety of reasons including over- or under-watering, shock of transplant stress and lack of proper nutrition.

Fungal absorbing mycorrhizal threads like those above form mutually beneficial associations with plant roots. They help increase establishment and growth, greatly extend the roots' surface area and provide resistance against stress. The presence of mycorrhizae results in healthier plants.

Choose a product based on the tree or shrub being planted and their mycorrhizal status. Most companies offer an all-in-one product containing both ectomycorrhiza and endomycorrhiza to make the decision easy. For a complete list of trees, shrubs and annual plants and their mycorrhizal status please visit Mycorrhizal Applications at [www.mycorrhizae.com](http://www.mycorrhizae.com).

to the roots by secreting enzymes in the root zone that unlocks these important minerals. With the enhanced nutrient uptake, mycorrhizae encourage flowers to grow more quickly and efficiently, extending the growing season or providing fruiting trees with earlier yields. An increased growth rate of the root and shoot means plants grow larger, with healthier root zones.

► **Insurance against transplant stress.** Plants colonized by mycorrhizae produce larger, more extensive root systems. This highly developed root system greatly reduces drought stress on the plant since it absorbs moisture more effectively. Inoculated plants also produce new root structures called "feeder roots." The increased surface area provided by the mycor-

rhizae and their associated threads in inoculated plants increases the ability of plants to become established.

Insuring against some of the main homeowner and business owner miscues by using mycorrhizal products is another method landscapers can use to further their business dollar. If a customer is satisfied with your one year guarantee not only will the landscaper be less likely to have to replace plant stock saving money the customer will spread the word encouraging business to grow. **LM**

— Mike Amaranthus is president at Mycorrhizal Applications Inc. He can be reached at [info@mycorrhizae.com](mailto:info@mycorrhizae.com).

Kristi Woods is a research associate with Novozymes Biologicals, Inc. She can be reached at [KYW@novozymes.com](mailto:KYW@novozymes.com)



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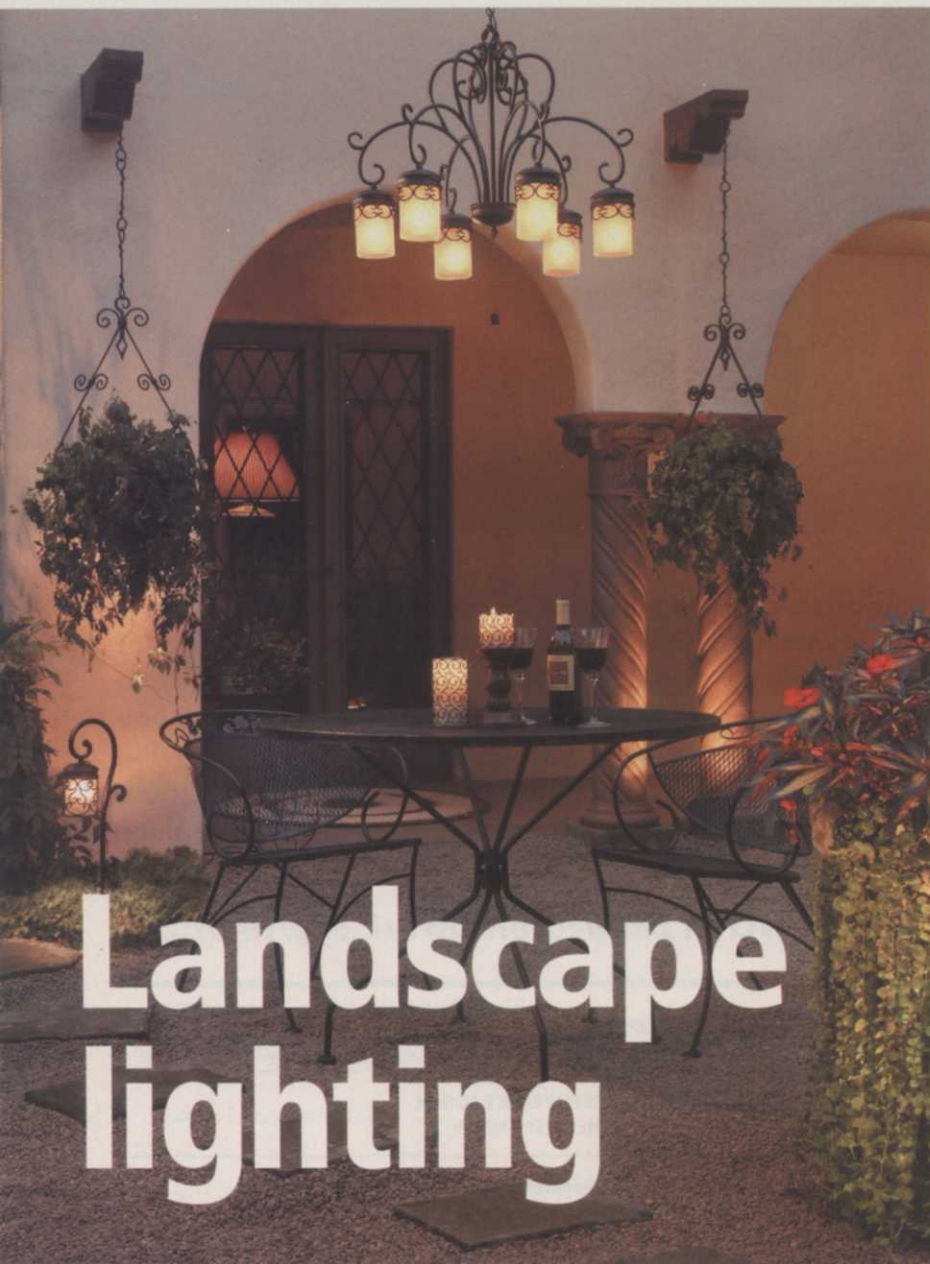


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## Landscape lighting

**T**he growth in outdoor living is skyrocketing, whether consumers can enjoy outdoor living spaces for two months or 12. In the latest outdoor makeovers, indoor style has fast become an outdoor phenomenon, from growth in exterior kitchens to advancements in lighting solutions.

"As consumers continue to 'nest' within their homes, outdoor sanctuaries have become the new 'it' rooms," said Jeff Dross, Kichler Lighting senior product manager. "Just as they complement their indoor décor with matching accessories, homeowners are looking to bring those techniques outdoors. Landscape lighting is an easy way to build that cohesion."

Fortunately, outdoor lighting has evolved to complement a variety of tastes, and fixtures normally found inside the home are now found outdoors. This includes everything from coordinating table lamps to outdoor chandeliers to lit birdbaths, all durable enough to withstand the elements.

To help your customers set the scene, Kichler Lighting suggests the following lighting tips:

- 1 Coordinate styles for a cohesive look.** Matching deck lights, path lights, garden accessories and other fixtures helps create a cohesive look that enhances the investment and heightens enjoyment.
- 2 Create a focal point that highlights the outdoor motif.** Just as a chandelier creates focus indoors, build a centerpiece outdoors. Homeowners should think about where they'll be spending the most time. If they'll be spending a lot of time on a covered outdoor patio, outdoor chandeliers create a beautiful focus.
- 3 Install outdoor sconces.** Sconces have long framed large rooms and doorways indoors. Why not apply the same concept outdoors? With matching chandeliers, these outdoor-friendly pieces take exterior living to the next level.
- 4 Use outdoor lamps for atmosphere.** For a flexible look, outdoor portable lamps are the perfect option. U.L. listed for wet locations, there's no need to bring them indoors when it pours.

— Maria Burk, Lighting Systems Marketing Manager, Kichler Lighting

*continued on page 50*

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## LM Reports

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### Dreamscape Lighting

From Dreamscape Lighting, Nalu is a sculptural formed illuminator that uses either a halogen or LED light source to provide general accent illumination on architectural hard-scape or landscape vegetation. Nalu combines a unique sculptural profile with two available lampings. The illumination that beams from Nalu's cylindrical aperture has a complete eco-friendly dark sky cut-off, providing lighting without glare or source identification. While the current LED version of Nalu meets the most stringent standards for energy conservation, Dreamscape is now in development with a leading LED manufacturer to apply the most advanced LED technology to this product.

For more information contact Dreamscape Lighting at 323/933-5760 or [www.dreamscapelighting.com](http://www.dreamscapelighting.com) / circle no. 254

### ALLSCAPE

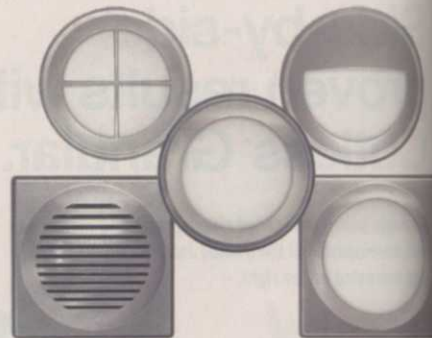
ALLSCAPE's SL-23 and SL-24 models are suited for all weather, climate and pedestrian-traffic conditions, and are designed to illuminate building and grounds signage; trees, shrubs and landscaped features; accenting pathways, walkways and driveways. The SL-23 is an in-ground fixture that can be specified for in- or mid-ground mounting. An advanced LED model is available. SL-24 is an aboveground model shaped like a mini bollard. SL-23 and SL-24 are characterized by dual composite housings, which offer resistance to corrosion, the effects of UV radiation, climates and storms. A range of light-source

options may be specified: incandescent, compact fluorescent, high-pressure sodium, metal halide or a cost-effective three-lamp LED unit.

For more information contact ALLSCAPE at 800/854-8277 or [www.alllighting.com](http://www.alllighting.com) / circle no. 255

### Lumière

Lumière has introduced a new family of architectural step lights offering durability, exceptional performance and aesthetics for commercial, institutional and residential applications. Called the Rio Series, the petite step lights are available in 5-in. or 7-in. round or square forms, and feature several fascia designs and lamp options including LED. Rio's available models include: Open with diffused lens, Cross/Guard with diffused lens (pictured), Eyelid with diffused lens and Louvered with clear lens. The low profile, transitional




styling features no visible fasteners and provides seamless integration with architectural styles of all kinds. Modular design elements facilitate fast, foolproof installation in drywall, concrete pour or brick/masonry.

For more information contact Lumière/Cooper Lighting at [www.lumierelighting.com](http://www.lumierelighting.com) or [www.cooperlighting.com](http://www.cooperlighting.com) / circle no. 256

### Orbit/Evergreen

Orbit/Evergreen introduced a new series of "sand-finished" landscape lighting fixtures for use in low voltage installations. Model S126, for example, is a 12-volt uplight that features a textured sand finish designed to complement contemporary architecture. Constructed from sturdy cast aluminum, Model S126 is typically used to highlight specimen trees and

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# LM Reports

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other landscape details. The fixture is additionally available in black, bronze, rust and verdigris. Model S126 has a rotating hood with key-knuckle for precise, on-site adjustments. A reinforced ground stake is included for additional support. It can handle up to 50-watt lamps.

For more information contact Orbit/Evergreen at 800/90-ORBIT or [Catalog32@orbitelectric.com](mailto:Catalog32@orbitelectric.com) / circle no. 257

## Hadco

Hadco has made technological advances to make its outdoor architectural lighting products longer lasting, energy efficient, safer, and easier to install and maintain. Hadco's "Optical Rib" technology maximizes the amount of light that is directed downward, while also providing new levels of light disbursement to virtually eliminate glare. Another advancement from Hadco features products that do not require tools for routine maintenance, improving speed and ease of component replacement and maintenance. Hadco also re-designed its new LED fixtures from the ground up to eliminate heat problems. This extends the life of the LED designs, up to a projected 14 years.

For more information contact Hadco at 717/359-7131 or [www.hadco.com](http://www.hadco.com) / circle no. 258



## FX Luminaire ▶

FX Luminaire introduced its specialty line of low voltage landscape lights – the ResistentPilotare. The MR-16 based RP can be configured to wall wash from tight spaces with a spread beam or provide a long narrow projection of light for a tall palm – even after installation. FX offers a whole range of accessories to allow the lighting designer to shape, color and glare control light for maximum effect. With the variety of cowl-ing and lamp options the RP has to offer, this subterranean fixture will meet any landscape lighting needs.

For more information contact FX Luminaire at [www.FXL.com](http://www.FXL.com) / circle no. 259

## Kichler ▼

Kichler's LED accent fixtures offer five watts of warm, white light with low energy use — 40,000 hours of life, or on average, 18 years of consumption. Kichler's LED products are small in profile for use in tight spaces, and the



entire system is connected to a direct burial LED 40 watt driver, then wired into a low-voltage transformer. The line also offers faceted hexagon fixtures for better wedging between rocks. Available in die-cast aluminum or polymer options for underwater use, the LED products can be used for up or down detail lighting, near or underwater, staked, or flange mounted for deck and rail light. They are offered with a complete line of accessories, including colored lenses in blue, amber, green and red.

For more information contact Kichler at 866/558-5706 or [www.kichler.com](http://www.kichler.com) / circle no. 260

## U.S. Architectural Lighting

U.S. Architectural Lighting's Trilux architectural lighting fixture features a modular design that allows a wide variety of fixtures to be created from three basic body styles. This interchangeability of basic parts, plus a wide range of mounting options, optical choices and field-adjustable precision aiming, give Trilux design flexibility in both commercial and residential installations. A gleaming anodized aluminum finish is standard on Trilux fixtures. Polyester powder-coated finishes are available, along with customized colors. All Trilux fixtures can be precisely aimed through the use of a Tri-Axis Light Directional System, which is field adjustable on two axes, and has

continued on page 54

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# LM Reports

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a tool-less adjustment on the third rotational axis.

**For more information contact U.S. Architectural Lighting at 800/877-6537 or [www.usaltg.com](http://www.usaltg.com) / circle no. 261**

## Savio ▶

Radiance Outdoor Lighting from Savio enhances the mood and extends the hours of water garden enjoyment. Radiance LED

lights can be added as accents in or out of the water. LED lights emit almost no heat, are energy efficient and deliver brightness and longevity. The powerful, submersible Radiance Halogen lights cast bright halogen light, providing dramatic lighting for waterfalls,

ponds and landscapes. Radiance Halogens have reinforced glass lenses and offer more intense illumination than LED light. Both come with 20-ft. cord length. Connect to an existing low voltage lighting system or use Savio's 20 watt transformer and 3-way splitter

**For more information contact Savio at 505/217-2854 or [www.savio.cc](http://www.savio.cc) / circle no. 262**



## Vista

Vista's 2165 Copper Path & Spread Light is an architectural grade path light that may be used to provide a light source for the illumination of pathways and garden beds. The standard copper finish will weather in time to a patina of Verdegri finish. The 2165 low voltage copper path light fixture is constructed of spun, solid copper and is equipped with Vista's Turn-To-Lock solid brass lamp base, making lamp maintenance simple and tool-free. A frosted, optical quality, Pyrex lens safeguards the lamp and optics.

**For more information contact Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting at 800/766-8478 or [www.vistapro.com](http://www.vistapro.com) / circle no. 263**



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# Get a Grip

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## Tools or gadgets?

BY ALLEN SPENCE

**W**hile I was at the International Lawn, Garden and Power Equipment Expo in Louisville this past fall I saw many different types of handheld equipment, tools and attachments. Most of these were designed and marketed towards companies that maintain the properties of residences and commercial businesses.

### Useful tools

Manufacturers now offer equipment that has multiple attachments, designed to allow the unit to perform multiple tasks. By changing attachments you can trim hedges, sweep, edge sidewalks and drives, and prune, all with only one engine or power source. The end user spends less money on those pieces of equipment that are used sparingly.

Be sure to research the different attachments out there before you buy. There are many different attachments depending upon the manufacturer, so you need to see which one fits your needs the best.

Of course one operator's tools are another operator's gadgets. There were several pieces designed to make the operator's life easier. For example, one attachment

clamped onto the bottom of the trimmer shaft and had a wheel, which looked like those found on the bottom of in-line skates. But, this wheel can be rotated so it is more comfortable for the operator. The wheel rolls along the surface of the earth and allows the trimmer to be held at a constant angle. This is supposed to result in a more level cut with less scalping. It could also be used with an edger.

Another tool with a harness with a cable system assists the operator in holding the weight of the trimmer. The goal here is to create less fatigue and increase operator comfort.

### Is this multi-tasking?

I also saw a device that bolts to the mower and holds the trimmer in place. This allows the operator to perform more than one operation while seated on the mower.

Engineers are forever creating clever devices to make work easier and more efficient, which of course, lead to more productivity and higher profits. Many, no doubt will do just that. Others just aren't practical. My advice, try it out before you buy. It may be a useful tool. Then again, to you, it may just be a gadget.

— The author is turf equipment management instructor at Hinds Community College in Raymond, MS. Contact him at [haspence@hindscc.edu](mailto:haspence@hindscc.edu).



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# Project Portfolio

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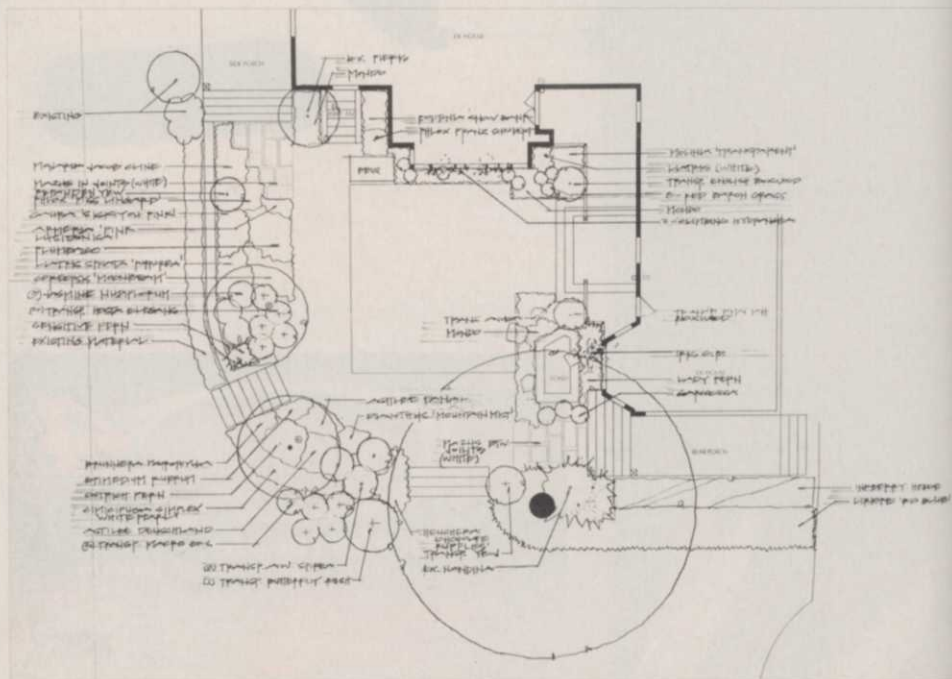
TERRACE RENOVATION / POND / HEIRLOOM GARDEN

## The design

A rear bluestone terrace renovation on a longtime customer's new "dream home" is enhanced with a harmonious landscape.

## The site before construction

Although the site had "good bones," interior additions to the newly acquired home's study and kitchen signaled a need to address the crumbling terrace and spruce up the gardens.



## Project Requirements

- Revise access to the front porch and new house entrance.
- Renovate both an existing "frog pond" as well as steps down to the back gardens and garage.
- Conduct plant editing and soil amendments, plus add perennials, shrubs and trees to enhance the Victorian-style garden.

## Project Specifics

The goal was to preserve intact portions of the bluestone terrace, steps and plant material, while making repairs and additions that appeared to match seamlessly with the original.



**ABOVE** The terrace plantings were planned to allow framed views of the multi-acre back gardens, also designed and planted by the Jackson team.

**RIGHT** An existing water feature was restored with a new concrete pond. Salvaged pond equipment, bluestone caps and boulders were reused. The client's bronze frogs waded from the side.





**ABOVE** The repaired bluestone steps are flanked by rejuvenated, hand-graded planting beds of new butterfly bush, heuchera and astilbe, mixed with transplanted Spirea and yew shrubs. This “before” shot shows the terrace and plantings before the additions and revisions to the home’s entrances.

**LEFT** The steps were repaired, and low flowering groundcover is encouraged on this rarely used exit to the back garden.

### Project Principals

- Bob Jackson Landscapes, Owings Mills, Md., [www.bjl-inc.com](http://www.bjl-inc.com)

- Landscape Contractor: Bob Jackson

Services include design, installation and construction, and maintenance.

This project was a Merit winner in PLANET’s 36th annual Environmental Improvement Awards program. For more information on this program, visit [www.landcarenetwork.org](http://www.landcarenetwork.org).



# The Palmer Residence

Enchanted Garden Landscape  
carves an award-winning landscape  
out of the Arizona mountains.

BY MICHAEL SEUFFERT / Associate Editor

After more than three years of construction, thousands of hours of labor and a team of about 50 employees, city officials came out to examine the Palmer residence project completed by Enchanted Garden Landscape, Inc. and could only ask, "What did you do here? It doesn't look like anything was done."

Which was exactly the point.

Nestled into south side of the Black Mountains in Carefree, AZ, the Palmer residence looks as though it's a part of the natural landscape, as if hundreds of years of winds and rain carved the home out of the mountain.

"The site was designed not to have a disconnect between the home and the unique site it was placed on," says Donna Winters, landscape architect and owner of the company. "From the ground textures, to the natural on-site soils, to the boulder work to the landscape elements, we made sure that no one would ever be able to tell what our imprint was.

*continued on page 62*

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The Palmer residence landscape is dotted with amenities like a swimming pool, spa, fire pits, patio and butterfly and hummingbird gardens.

*continued from page 60*

"What makes the site so dramatic is how completely sensitive and integrated it is to its surroundings," she adds.

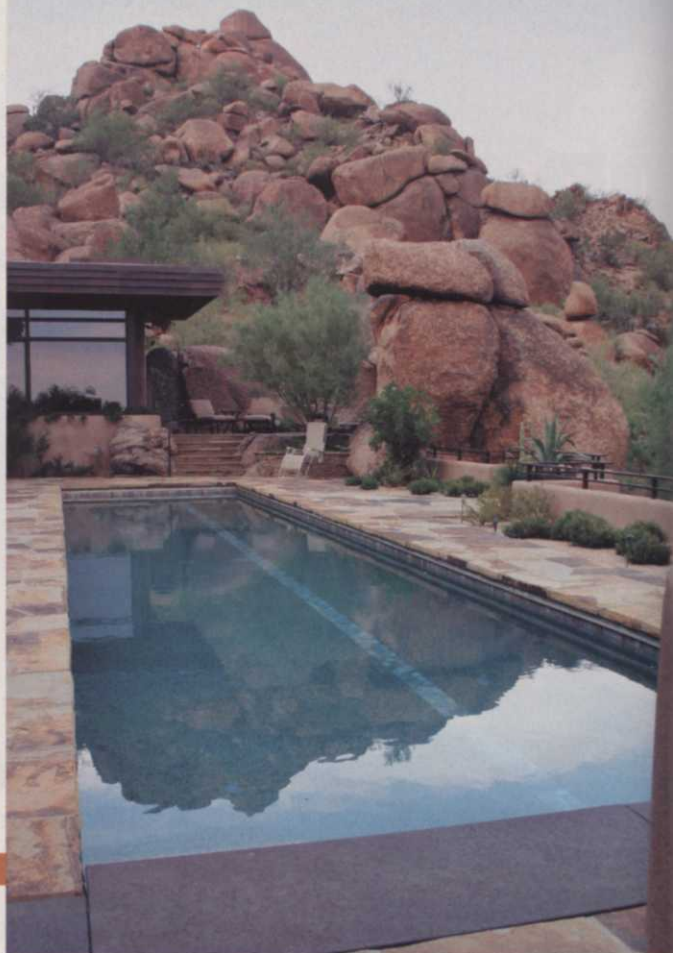


### Rocky start

Boulders the size and quality of what you'd find at Arizona's famous Boulders Resort cover every inch of the terrain. From the very beginning of the project, Enchanted Garden was involved in the site context. Teams went into the property and harvested the native vegetation and terrain. They also extensively photographed the site, so when it was time to put in the rock and boulders back in, they could authentically place the outcroppings in their original form.

"We were acutely involved in constructing a good infrastructure with the builders of the home," Winters says. "This site required us to drill boulders, pin boulders, and to safely integrate these large outcroppings with the home. There were a lot of logistic issues. There were places where we had to crane in trees and boulders before the walls of the home could go up.

"Ultimately, we brought in more than 14 semi-loads of boulders,



matching the curvature, texture and colors to make it as natural looking as possible," she adds.

To navigate through such a steep landscape, Enchanted Garden built carved natural stone steps between layers of terraces and retaining walls of stone. These terraces provide areas to sit and rest, as well as a passageway for the homeowners to stroll through the gardens and experience the unique surroundings.

As a plus, the stone steps also make it easier for Enchanted Garden to continue to maintain the site's landscape, lighting and water features.

"We designed the infrastructure to be easily maintained," Winters says. "We were able to make the right decisions and implement the right kinds of plans so that when it rains, for instance, we're not sweeping up granite that's run off the mountain."

### Honor the mountain

Winters describes the Enchanted Garden team's efforts as "honoring the mountain." Every detail of the project puts authenticity at the forefront.

"A large picture window looks out over a garden and lets the homeowners capture the whole mountainside," Winters says. "We built a water feature for the garden, but we didn't try to alter the terrain, alter the rock. We let the natural layers and striations of rock dictate which pieces we were going to leave exposed and which we were going to chisel down, so you'd never

*continued on page 64*



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continued from page 62  
 be able to tell where the mountain stopped and where the water feature began. It just looks like the water comes out of crevices between rocks."

Enchanted Garden also honors the mountain with natural xeriscaping. Along with the natural plantings that the team harvested and saved, the site contains large creosote bushes, and ironwood trees that grow naturally on the Black Mountains. Closer to the home, they incorporated salvias, chuparosa, as well as specimen cactus, such as Argentine Giant, San Pedro and Arizona Organ Pipe

"We take into account not only the type of plant, but the exposure and water needs of the plant," Winters says. "We believe in an area where we have to be responsible stewards of the desert, that these actions are going to pay off for our clients in



The arid desert conditions made it necessary to look at naturally sustainable plantlife and landscape design.

the long run when water issues are even more highlighted than they are today."

For its efforts, the Enchanted Garden's Palmer residence was honored as a 2005

Presidential Award winner from the Arizona Landscape Contractors' Association.

"This was just such an amazing project for everyone involved," Winters says. "We had dedicated water teams, lighting teams, craning and boulder teams — we specialize our teams so that they can really stretch their creative and technical envelope every day on projects just like this.

"To us this isn't just about installing plants, lights and water features that just anyone can install. To us this is an art form." LM

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Artificial turf moves from sports fields onto properties traditionally maintained by landscape pros

BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

# Synthetic turf sprouts on home lawns

**E**ach spring the Walt Disney World's EPCOT International Flower & Garden Festival erupts in a spectacle of color, texture and design. Meticulously designed beds of riotously colored flowers, mostly annuals, frame the attractions and cover almost every patch of EPCOT's World Showcase that isn't paved. Themed topiary and, in one landscape, a realistic model railroad chugging through a miniature mountain village add a whimsical air to the floral wonderland.

But this past spring one special festival attraction, a grass-like synthetic turf children's playground, didn't require any particular knowledge of horticulture. This display drew youngsters by the dozens, but it was the grass-like surface, installed

by a company called ForeverLawn, that grabbed the attention of adults. Curious, many of them bent over to feel the texture of the surface and others walked on it as they followed children or grandchildren to colorful playground equipment. Most visitors seemed pleased with the appearance the feel of the fake grass.

Move over ornamentals, turfgrass, pavers, patios, outdoor kitchens and everything else landscape contractors install and maintain for customers — make room for synthetic turf.

## Business is booming

Synthetic turf for residential and commercial properties is here and it's hot. How hot?

"I've heard numbers of 20 to 30 percent for the industry," says Dale Karmie,

who, with his brother Brian, owns Albuquerque-based ForeverLawn Inc., which has been expanding at an 80% clip these past three years, he says. "I think it will continue to grow for the foreseeable future," Karmie adds.

More than a dozen international, national or multi-regional companies sell, and in many cases install, synthetic, and not just for sports fields either, although that's where it receives the most publicity.

Indeed, the rate that synthetic turf is replacing natural grass in big-name stadiums and small-town sports parks worldwide has been astounding, impacting every level of competition from pee-pee to professional. FieldTurf, the industry leader, has installed about 2,000 synthetic athletic turf fields itself. Credit several factors for synthetic's

*continued on page 69*

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[www.challengerind.com](http://www.challengerind.com)

### DuraGrass Companies Inc.

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866/841-5638; [www.duragrass.com](http://www.duragrass.com)

### EnvyLawn

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706/278-7707; [www.envylawn.com](http://www.envylawn.com)

### EasyTurf Inc.

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866/EasyTurf; [www.easyturf.com](http://www.easyturf.com)

### FieldTurf Inc.

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[www.fieldturf.com](http://www.fieldturf.com)

### Global Sports Systems Inc.

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### IntelliTurf, Inc.

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Many synthetic turf suppliers offer easy-to-follow guidelines or training for installations and maintenance.



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Synthetic turf is a natural for areas that are costly or difficult to mow and maintain.

erly, it will affect their appearance and functionality. Leaves should be blown or raked off, dust or dirt rinsed off with water. If there's heavy traffic, it should be groomed occasionally to keep it standing up and looking nice

using a stiff bristled broom, leaf rake or power broom."

How big synthetic turf becomes in the landscare market is hard to predict. But if it approaches the popularity it enjoys in the sports market, the impact will be huge. **LM**

*continued from page 66*

newfound popularity — much improved fibers and backing, the addition of "infill" crumb rubber material for added softness and, of course, aggressive marketing.

#### At a home near yours?

With the sports field market in hand, synthetic turf suppliers eyes home owners and commercial property owners as its next big market. They say that synthetic is a great alternative to turfgrass on properties where it's difficult to grow natural grass, such as heavy shade or where its difficult or too expensive to maintain grass. Regions with water restrictions are strong synthetic markets, as well.

"We have about 30 dealers across the country," says ForeverLawn's Karmie. "Many of these dealers supply product to landscape contractors, as well as supplying whatever supplies are needed and they provide training and support."

#### Pros and cons

Artificial turf has its advantages and disadvantages when it comes to turfgrass. On the plus side, it doesn't require fertilizers or water to sustain it, and it doesn't have to be mowed, obvious financial and labor savings. But since it's not living and transpiring it does not provide the cooling effect of a healthy lawn. On a sunny day it's hotter, sometimes much hotter, than real turfgrass. Also, it's far from maintenance free, which to the contractor, could offer another potential service opportunity.

"They should be maintained," says Karmie. "If they're not maintained prop-

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# Products

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## Over the hedge

Husqvarna's new 123HD60 hedge trimmer is a dual-sided trimmer designed for the active consumer or light-use commercial operator. The 123HD60 is equipped with Husqvarna's exclusive LowVib anti-vibration system, which allows for ease of operation and better control by isolating the power head and the cutting deck from the handles, resulting in less vibration transmitted to the operator. Ergonomic in design and lightweight at just 11.2 lbs., the 123HD60 is powered by a 22.5-cc, two-stroke engine. Additionally, the front handguard, blade protector and throttle lock help to maximize the protection for the operator.

For more information contact Husqvarna at 704/597-5000 or [www.usa.husqvarna.com](http://www.usa.husqvarna.com) / circle no. 264



unrolls automatically as the machine is driven backward. The quick-change cap that mounts on the end of the silt-fence holder includes a spring-loaded plate that ensures proper tension so the roll won't unwind unintentionally.

For more information contact Bobcat Co. at 866/823-7898 or [www.bobcat.com](http://www.bobcat.com) / circle no. 265

## Stainless steel rotors

The Toro Co.'s new top-of-the-line, commercial-grade TR Series Stainless Steel rotors are designed to satisfy the most challenging irrigation installations. The TR50 and TR70 offer unbeatable durability and a number of compelling features with a full 5-year commercial-grade warranty. To increase the strength of the TR Series, the nozzle assembly and riser are encased in a stainless steel sleeve. It also sports a locking cap to protect it from vandalism. The full 5-in. pop-up is an excellent feature for clearing tall turf. The below-grade mount also adds greater safety by eliminating the potential for falling directly onto a sprinkler.

For more information contact Toro Irrigation at 800/345-TORO or [www.toro.com](http://www.toro.com) / circle no. 266

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For more information contact FMC Professional Solutions at 800/321-1362 or [www.fmcprosolutions.com](http://www.fmcprosolutions.com) / circle no. 267

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continued on page 72



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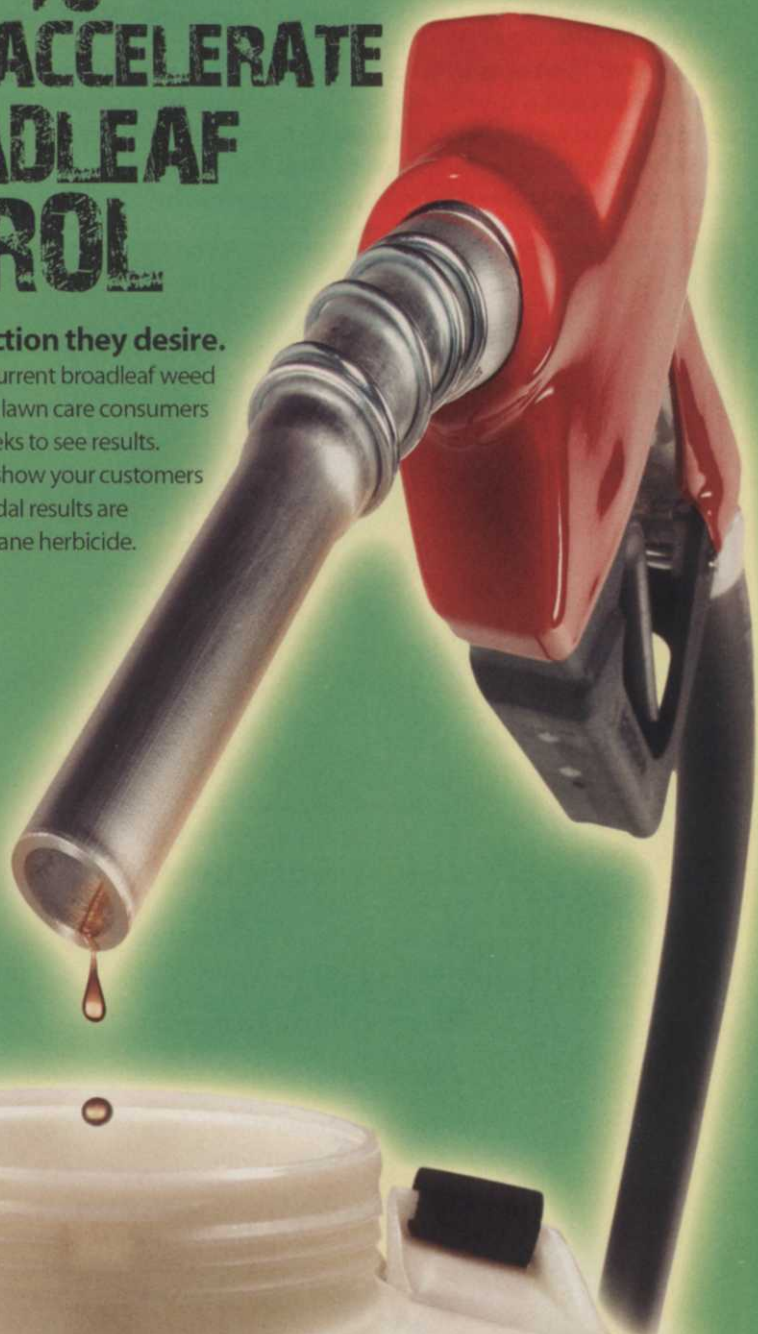


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continued from page 70

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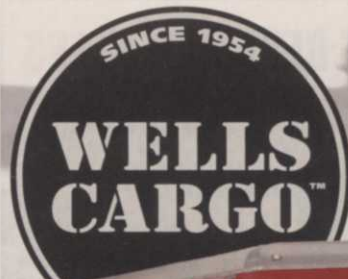


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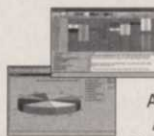
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## Mystic Water Gardens

From model to a model business, owner creates romance in water and stone

BY JANET AIRD

Steve Sandalis's transition from modeling on the covers of romance novels to designing ponds and waterfalls isn't as much of a stretch as it seems. He learned construction from his father and uncles, who were contractors, and he built his first pond in his own back yard.

"I love the outdoors," Sandalis says. "I love water and creating beautiful sanctuaries for people. It's a wonderful way to make a living."

These days, as the owner of Mystic Water Gardens, Sandalis designs and installs ponds and waterfalls for residences and commercial properties. He also builds 'pondless waterfalls', where the water goes into a gravel basin and is pumped back to the top.

Projects range from small ponds built in a day to installations that take up to six months. He has designed a 35-ft. high waterfall for a retreat center, a 60x60-ft. swim pond with a 100-ft. stream for a vineyard in Malibu, and a

pond inside the Los Angeles Convention Center for the California Landscape Contractors Association 2007 Landscape Industry Show.

### An ecological approach

The company donates ponds to schools, so kids can learn about ecosystems first-hand, Sandalis says. Every pond that Mystic Water Gardens builds creates its own ecosystem.

"We work with Mother Nature, not against her," he says.

He and his team are careful to locate the ponds far enough away from trees so they don't damage the roots. They build shelves into them, giving beneficial bacteria places to grow, fish to hide, and aquatic plants places to cling to. Once the ponds are filled, he adds the beneficial bacteria, which remove chlorine and other chemicals.

They usually put in enough aquatic plants to cover 40-50% of the ponds' surface, Sandalis says, which reduces the amount of algae. Last, they add goldfish, koi, frogs and



### A model company.

Former model Steve Sandalis (second from left) leads the Mystic Water Garden team.

turtles. In larger projects, they add other kinds of fish as well.

And then the ponds are left almost entirely alone.

"These ponds are very low maintenance," Sandalis says. "They never need chemicals. Most of maintenance is emptying the skimmer net."

### A safe haven

The unfortunate side of this ecosystem is that the fish are prey for the frogs and turtles, as well as for raccoons. Sandalis has this covered, too.

"We create caves and tunnels for the fish to hide in," he says. If the pond is big enough, the turtles don't eat the fish. Raccoons can't reach the fish."

Mystic Water Gardens has

already won awards for its designs: three last year alone from the CLCA. One of the awards was for the swim pond for the Malibu project.

Sandalis says he was glad to leave the fickle world of modeling and acting behind.

"In the entertainment industry, whether or not you get a job can depend on the color of your hair," he says. "But when you own your own business and you're skilled and a hard worker, you control your destiny." **LM**

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

She can be reached at [janet.aird@earthlink.net](mailto:janet.aird@earthlink.net).

►► **Locations:** Encino and Fresno, CA; **Founded:** 2001; **Expected revenues this year:** \$1.5 million; **Business mix:** 90% design/build, 10% maintenance; **Full-time employees:** 9

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