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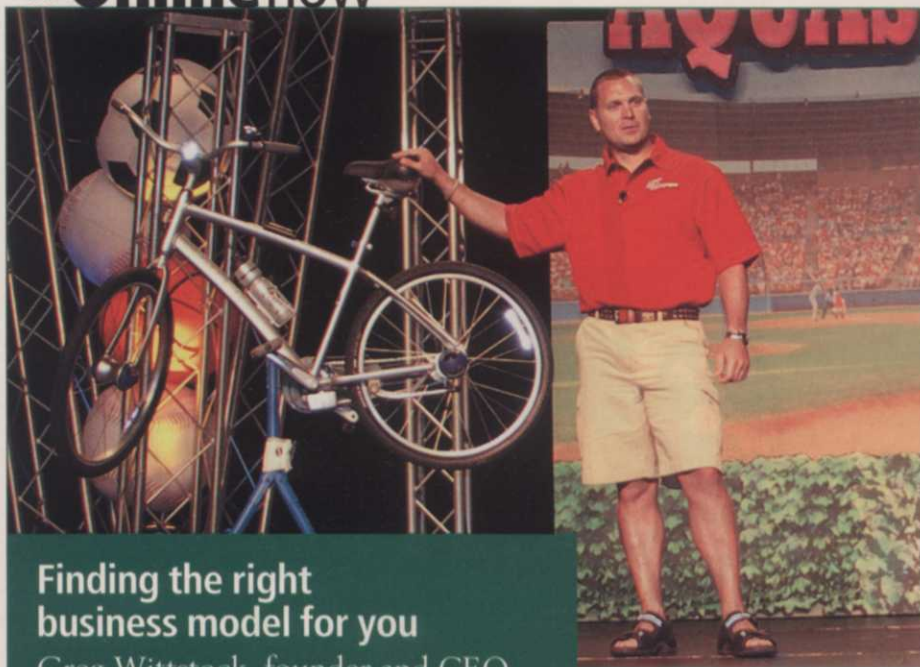
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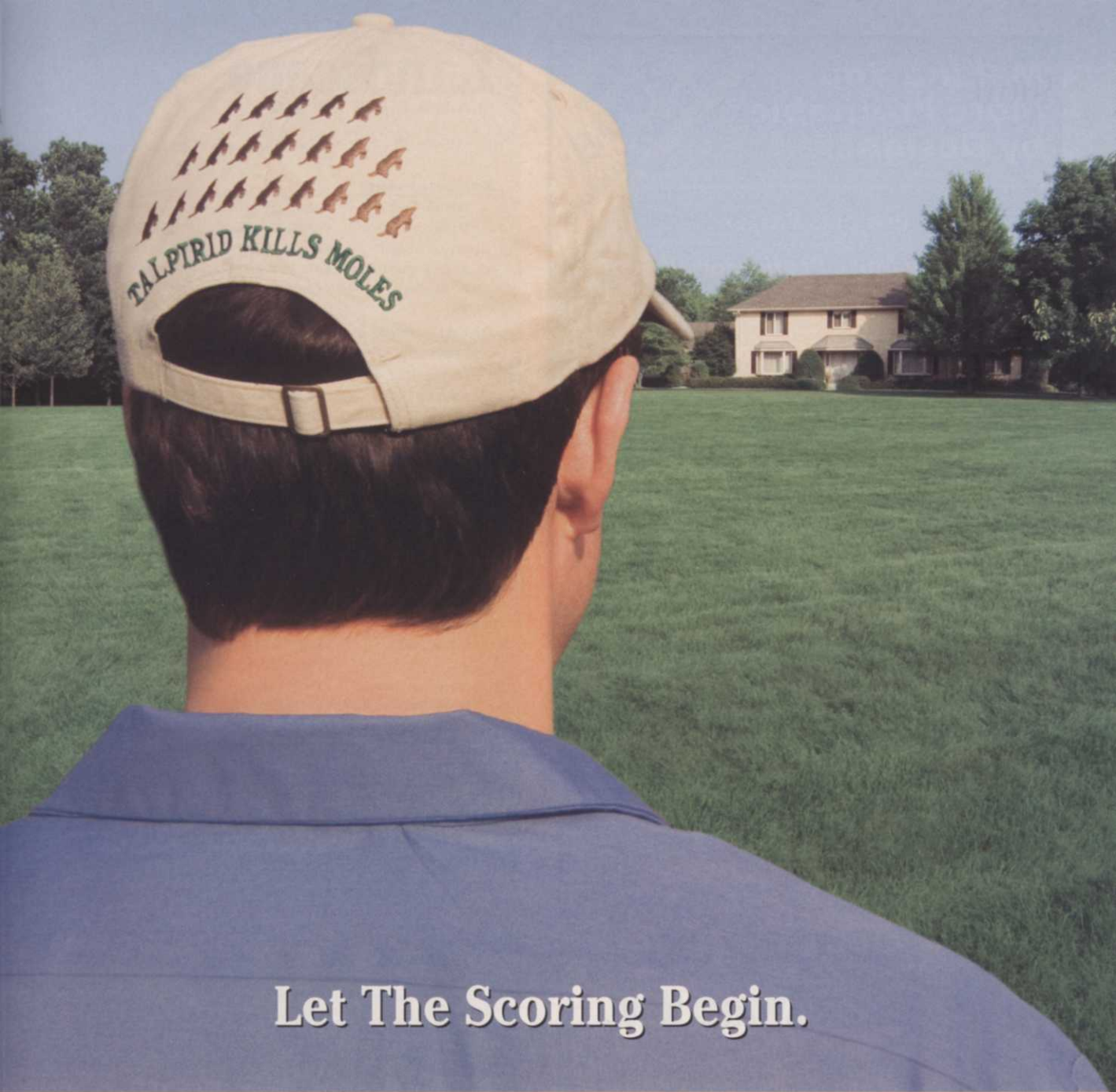
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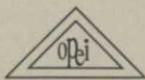
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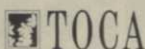
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“Families” in the business

BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

The concept of the family business is engrained in the American business psyche. Most of us view it as almost a sacred institution.

We have a picture in our minds of the husband and wife taking their meagre savings and starting or buying a tiny enterprise, perhaps keeping the cash they receive for their efforts in a cigar box, and doing the books in the evening after they've tucked the kids into their beds and the television has been turned off.

OK, that's admittedly a bit over the top. But, in many instances, maybe *just* a bit.

Even after more than two decades reporting on the landscape and lawn service industries, I'm still delighted to hear the stories from successful owners about how they started in the business “by mowing yards” or, in the case of lawn care, “fertilizing lawns” for ChemLawn or some other big company. A common thread in almost all of these accounts is an initial lack of capital and, more often than not, business experience. But, to the person, these owners soldiered on and learned, both from their mistakes and from others.

Other dreams to follow

Many of these owners are now in their 40s, 50s and some are even more experienced. Some tell me they're looking to the day when they can do something else, follow other long-held dreams. They realize — as we all do — the day will come when they will decide to (or have to) move on. Many of them have sons and daughters working in the family

businesses. This makes for fascinating and challenging dynamics, a topic that our editorial staff finds has decided to pursue with continuing coverage in this and future issues.

The boss and the kids

Indeed, this month's cover article looks into how the two generations — the “boss” and “the kids” — view their respective roles in sustaining the family business. Some of the things we reveal in the article might surprise; others likely you're experiencing yourselves, regardless of whether you're “the boss” or “the kids”.

And while we're on the topic of family businesses, especially those with fathers and sons working hand-in-hand, the editorial staff extends a sincere apology to Dickson DeMarche, FASLA, and his son, Burton DeMarche, CLP, principals in The LaurelRock Company, Wilton, CT.

A recent article within our pages featuring that excellent company contained several serious factual errors. We regret the errors as we, and the industry in general, regard LaurelRock as one the most respected and creative landscape companies in New England and the Northeast. We hold the DeMarches, father and son, in highest regard.

Contact Ron at 216/
706-3739 or e-mail at
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I'm still delighted to hear the stories of how you started your family businesses





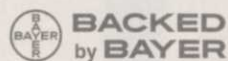
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The most important principle of customer relations is that you are building a trust relationship.



Beware the trust busters

BY BRUCE WILSON

Most contractors would agree that customers most often become dissatisfied over communication issues. Yet, it remains a problem for most companies. It is evident in many of my consulting assignments companies are very weak when it comes to preparing their account managers or other primary communicators on the best way to successfully communicate with their customers.

Best practices

Identify the way to communicate with each individual customer. Today, some prefer regular e-mail for day-to-day communication and less frequent face-to-face interaction. Others want to see you. Know your customer.

Treat your customer's time like it was your own. Have a plan for every meeting. Make sure the customer receives value. For a meeting have an agenda in mind. How will you provide value to the customer for meeting with you?

Return calls promptly; if you do not connect, do not be content to leave a message. Follow up again if the customer does not return your call.

Communicate problems to the customer before

they call you. A simple call to let them know you visited the property and noticed a problem and you are taking care of it is better than having them call you to find out what is wrong. That is being proactive. If they call you it is reactive when you respond.

Do not avoid problems. They do not go away. Address them early before they get bigger.

Avoid trust erosion

The most important principle of customer relations is that you are building a trust relationship. When a customer hires your company he is doing so because during the selling process you developed organizational and personal trust. Little things start to erode trust. Beware of the "Trust Busters":

- ▶ Making excuses
- ▶ Failing to follow up with commitments
- ▶ Not returning calls promptly
- ▶ Over promising/under delivering
- ▶ Inconsistent explanations of issues
- ▶ Not being prepared for meetings or walk-throughs

Owners and managers must train their first line communicators with the communication skills and information to help them to be effective at their jobs. Many in the position have personality styles that avoid confrontation. They will then avoid tough customers. They need coaching and mentoring as to how to deal with the difficult customer. Left to their own devices they will fail.

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



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In the Know

BUSINESS NEWS YOU CAN USE

Landscape & lawn care spending hits new record

SOUTH BURLINGTON, VT — A market research study by the National Gardening Association (NGA) found that homeowners spent a record \$44.7 billion to hire professional lawn and landscape services in 2006. These services include lawn care and landscape maintenance, landscape installation and construction, tree care services and landscape design services.

The survey also found that 30% of all households nationwide, or an estimated 34.5 million households, hire at least one type of lawn and landscape service.

"Over the past five years we have seen the number of households that hire professional lawn and landscape services increase from 22% of households, or 23.8 million households, in 2001 to 30% of households, or 34.5 million households, in 2006," says Bruce Butterfield, research director at the NGA.

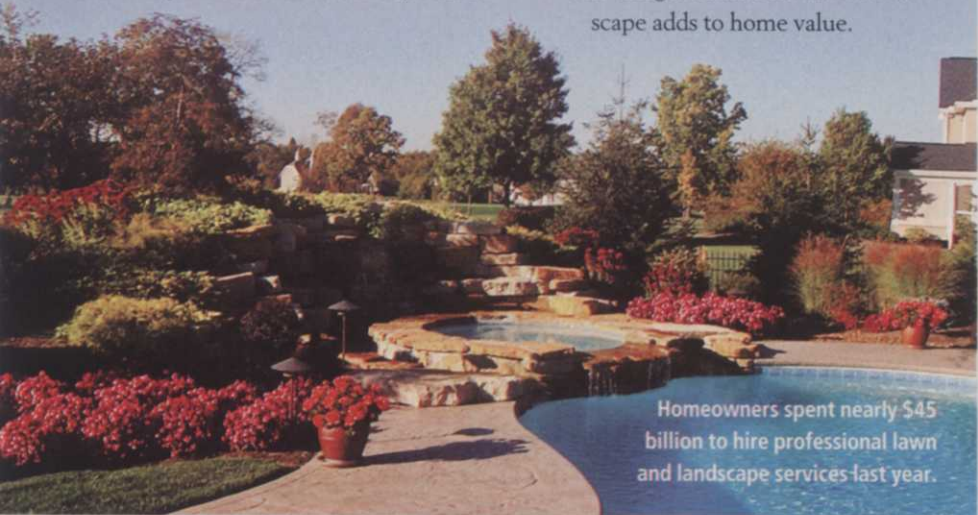
The Residential Lawn and Landscape Services and the Value of Landscaping survey was conducted in June 2007, for NGA by Harris Interactive Inc., with a

representative sample of 2,663 households nationwide. Types of residential lawn and landscape services hired:

- ▶ Lawn care and landscape maintenance services were hired by 27.8 million households.
- ▶ Landscape installation and construction services were hired by 6.9 million households.
- ▶ Tree care services were hired by 11.5 million households.
- ▶ Landscape design services were hired by 2.3 million households.

"The increased use of lawn and landscape services over the past five years reflects the fact that homeowners appreciate the many benefits of a well-designed and maintained home lawn and landscape but may not have the time or inclination to do this work for themselves," said NGA President Mike Metallo.

The study also researched how customers find services, what the most important factors are in hiring a contractor, customer satisfaction, the benefits of a well-done landscape, and how much a well-designed and maintained landscape adds to home value.



Homeowners spent nearly \$45 billion to hire professional lawn and landscape services last year.

Toro acquires Rain Master

BLOOMINGTON, MN. —

The Toro Co. acquired Rain Master Irrigation Systems, a manufacturer of irrigation controllers based in Simi Valley, CA. The purchase of Rain Master will help strengthen the company's position in the central controller market and enhance its established distribution network.

Bobcat sold for \$4.9 billion

HAMILTON, BERMUDA —

Ingersoll-Rand Co. agreed to sell its Bobcat, Utility Equipment and Attachments business units to Doosan Infracore for \$4.9 billion. The businesses manufacture and sell compact equipment, general-purpose light construction equipment and attachments. In 2006 these businesses collectively generated \$2.6 billion in revenues.

VENTRAC earns excellence in exporting honor

ORRVILLE, OH — Venture Products, manufacturer of VENTRAC products, was honored by Ohio Governor Ted Strickland with the 2007 Governor's Excellence in Exporting Award. The awards program recognizes companies that demonstrate outstanding performance in exporting or heighten awareness of exporting as a vital component of Ohio's economy. During the past three years, VENTRAC's export sales have increased yearly at a rate of 32%.

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NAME: *Bill Kemp*

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TUE			2:30			8
WED						8 1/2
THU			4:00	Crestview		8 1/2
FRI			4:00			8 1/2

Employee Signature: *Bill Kemp* TOTAL HOURS: *41 1/2*

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Employee Report

Kemp, Bill Date Range: 10/15/2007 through 10/19/2007

Day	Date	Jobsite	Start	Stop	Cost Code	Hours	Total
Mon	10/15	Brentwood	7:08 AM	12:05 PM	Irrigation	4:57	
			12:40 PM	3:22 PM	Irrigation	2:41	7:38 hours
Tue	10/16	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:07 PM	Irrigation	4:55	
			12:46 PM	3:03 PM	Irrigation	2:40	7:35 hours
Wed	10/17	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:02 PM	Irrigation	4:50	
			12:46 PM	3:46 PM	Irrigation	3:03	7:53 hours
Thu	10/18	Crestview	7:17 AM	12:19 PM	Planting	5:02	
			12:50 PM	3:46 PM	Planting	2:56	7:58 hours
Fri	10/19	Crestview	7:13 AM	12:07 PM	Planting	4:54	
			12:44 PM	3:39 PM	Planting	2:55	7:49 hours

Reality Check

Signature: *Bill Kemp* Kemp, Bill

Total 38:53 hours



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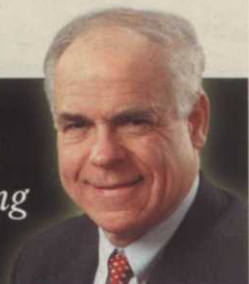
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In the Know

LEGALLY Speaking



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

Q Are there special protections for employees over 40?

A Yes. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act protects individuals aged 40 or older and covers both employees and job applicants. Its offenses cover conduct in hiring, firing, promotion, laying off, compensation, training, job assignment and benefits.

Q During interviews, I often make notes of my opinions. Can those be used against me in court?

A You bet. Comments on note pads about the "old man" you just interviewed, or the need for "new blood" in a performance review, or "all the dead wood" are all problematic.

Q We had a discrimination case in which an employee testified against us. What can we do about that?

A Nothing. Everything should remain business as usual. If you try to retaliate against an employee for making a discrimination complaint or testifying in a discrimination case, you open yourself up to another lawsuit.

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

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

Engledow explains its operations to PLANET symposium participants

CARMEL, IN — A considerably smaller number of guests toured their facilities than the last time the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) had a major event in Indianapolis — but the group was just as appreciative.

The Engledow Group opened its headquarters and walked 34 guests through its operations just prior to the PLANET Specialty Symposium in late August.

About five years earlier, as part of a Green Industry

Conference, the Engledow Group hosted more than 600 landscape and lawn service company owners and managers in a similar event. The memory of that event had President Jim Engledow shaking his head. He commented that he still doesn't know how his team pulled off that earlier facility tour, in particular the logistics involved with transporting so many guests between the company's several locations.

In addition to its headquarters, the company maintains an 8-acre nursery, and maintenance and installation branches on the south side of Indianapolis and another in Columbus, IN. The building that serves as company headquarters also houses its Interior, Irrigation and Special Events divisions. A former factory, Engledow moved into the spacious, modern structure in 1994.

The Engledow Group is a unique company in many ways. While it started 75 years ago serving the residential market, it's only been recently that it returned to that niche with its



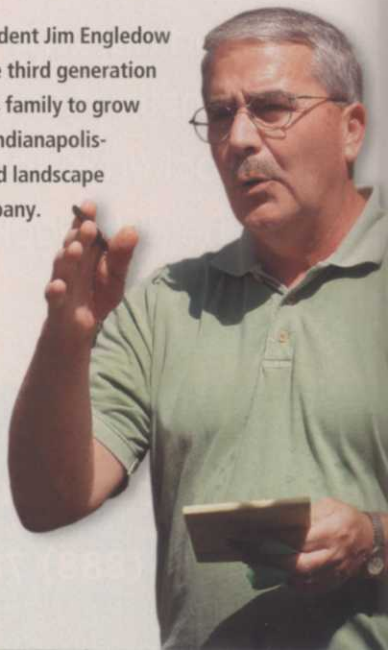
high-end Estates business, said the company president. In addition to maintenance and installation, the com-

pany has irrigation, and robust interior and events businesses, including holiday decorating.

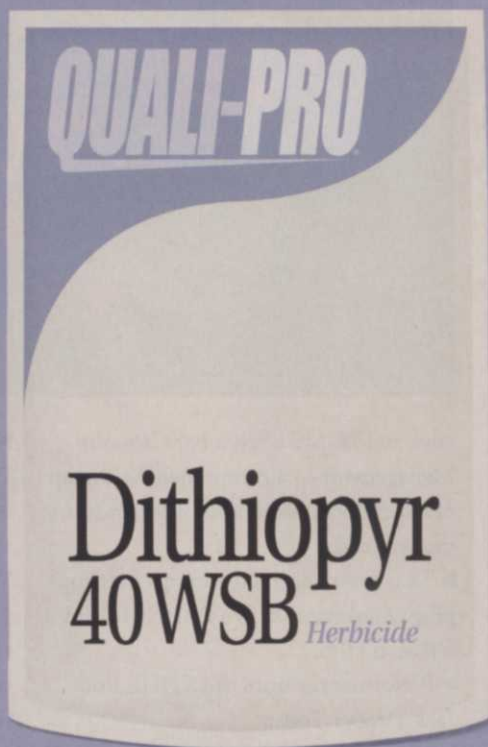
"We're proud of our facilities," offered Engledow, the third generation of the family to head the company. "We hope that you learned a few things today."

The group enthusiastically responded that it had.

President Jim Engledow is the third generation in his family to grow the Indianapolis-based landscape company.



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In the Know

Green Industry & Equipment EXPO demo area sold out

LOUISVILLE, KY — By mid-August, the 19-acre outdoor demonstration area at the first-ever Green Industry & Equipment EXPO (GIE+EXPO) had already been completely reserved. The three-day demonstration features more than 170 exhibits, just steps away from the 650 indoor exhibits. Free trams sponsored by Cub Cadet will transport visitors between the indoor exhibits and the demo area.

GIE+EXPO 2007 will be held in Louisville at the Kentucky Exposition Center, October 25-27.

Show Director Warren Sellers said, "There's no better way to compare products than to get your hands on the controls and see what the equipment can really do and how it feels. Dealers and professional users will be the first in the world to preview and use most of these products."

Other features of the upcoming show include:

▶ PLANET's Green Industry Confer-



Contractors can test equipment on site at the Louisville event.

ence and PGMS's School of Grounds Management — a comprehensive lineup of educational sessions for green industry professionals;

▶ Two free concerts featuring chart-topping entertainers Three Dog Night and Diamond Rio;

▶ Performances from the STIHL Iron-Jack Timber Team;

▶ Networking events;

▶ The Dealer Experience – A Guide to Profitability;

▶ Giveaways, including \$20,000 toward the purchase of a new truck in the Trucks of the Industry Giveaway.

Pre-registration for a three-day pass to GIE+EXPO is \$10 per person. The tradeshow admission for those who register onsite will be \$50. To register online, go to www.gie-expo.com.

Project EverGreen to showcase Wheelbarrows art display at GIE

NEW PRAGUE, MN — Project EverGreen has announced a new challenge for the upcoming Green Industry & Equipment Expo (G.I.E.). "This will be 'the Year of the Wheelbarrows' at G.I.E.," said Den Gardner, executive director of Project EverGreen. "Everyone who participates will be given a child-size wheelbarrow, courtesy of John Deere, and challenged to decorate it in a way that depicts their company's efforts to enhance green spaces at home, work and play."

Gardner said that the Wheelbarrows challenge is designed to parallel Project EverGreen's Shovels event, which gained major attention at the 2006



G.I.E. "Last year, some 27 Green Industry manufacturers, distributors and service providers accepted our Shovels challenge," he said. "This year we are looking for even wider participation. It's an opportunity to

create unique art that conveys the positive role the green industry plays in our environment, lifestyles and economy."

For more information contact Project EverGreen at 877/758-4835 or www.projectevergreen.com. To make the display possible, participants are asked to donate \$1,000 toward the mission of Project EverGreen.

Almost 30 Green Industry members participated in last year's Shovel challenge.



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* Based on GVWR ranging from 14,001 lbs. (class 4) to 19,500 lbs. (class 5). Excludes other GM vehicles.
† Based on a comparison of a 2008 Chevy Kodiak C4500/C5500 2WD 60" CA to 2008 Ford F-450/F-550 2WD 60" CA.
Vehicle shown with equipment from an independent supplier. ©2007 GM Corp.

 **AN AMERICAN
REVOLUTION**

A little WaterSense will go a long way

EPA-initiated program will recognize and label water-efficient products; certify irrigation system designers, installers and auditors

BY BENJAMIN H. GRUMBLES

You sold your client on the design. They're in love with the perennials, and you have the perfect balance of patio and lawn. The new irrigation heads are placed discreetly among the ground cover. Now, to test the sprinklers. What if only a trickle of water comes out?

This scenario may not be as far-fetched as it sounds. At least 36 states will suffer some sort of water shortage, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, and recent climate change reports predict droughts in more unexpected places. Although the U.S. population has doubled in the past 50 years, our demand for water, a finite resource, has tripled. As populations continue to grow, our thirst for water will increase even more, stressing existing systems and causing water districts to scramble for new sources.

Nationwide, landscape irrigation is estimated to account for nearly one third of all residential water use, totaling more than 7 billion gallons per day in the commercial and residential sectors. In communities where water supplies are in jeopardy, landscape irrigation is often the first area targeted for restrictions.

Focus — residential irrigation

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is helping address the future of our nation's water supply. And the landscaping community can play a big role in ensuring that supply is sustained. Incorporating water-efficient



techniques in your projects can save water and provide a beautiful, sustainable landscape for your clients. To aid consumers and professionals riding this wave of more efficient water use, EPA launched WaterSense, a partnership and labeling program that identifies high-performance, water-efficient products. Additionally, WaterSense is labeling professional certification programs such as those for irrigation system designers, installers and auditors that meet EPA's specifications. Professionals who complete these certifications may become WaterSense partners.

Experts estimate that more than 50% of residential irrigation water is lost due to evaporation and runoff, or improper watering, system design, installation or maintenance. As a landscape professional, you already understand the damage that can result from improperly placed, programmed and maintained irrigation systems—under-watering, over-watering, or worse yet, destroying plants and eroding soil in a carefully constructed plot.

Putting efficiency to the test

The EPA WaterSense labels for irrigation professional certification programs that highlight water efficiency. Through a public stakeholder process, EPA developed criteria for programs that certify professional competency in irrigation

system design, installation/maintenance and auditing. To qualify for the label, programs must evaluate proficiency through examinations and be subject to independent oversight. Each certification program tests for specific water-efficiency capabilities:

- ▶ Irrigation design professionals with WaterSense certification can tailor irrigation systems to the surrounding landscape and local climate conditions.
- ▶ Installation and maintenance professionals with certification can select the appropriate equipment, site layout and proper scheduling for optimal irrigation system performance.
- ▶ Audits conducted by irrigation system professionals with certification can identify systems that are distributing water unequally or inefficiently and determine how to improve performance.

This past February, EPA approved two certification programs sponsored by the Irrigation Association (IA)—Certified Irrigation Contractor and Certified Irrigation Designer—to receive the WaterSense label.

To make it easy for landscape professionals and consumers to identify more water-efficient irrigation designers and contractors, EPA is partnering with these individuals upon successful completion or renewal of a WaterSense labeled certification program. Irrigation professionals who have recently completed a WaterSense labeled certification program are invited to become WaterSense partners and demonstrate that they are helping to reduce the demand on our water supplies. WaterSense irrigation partners benefit from being listed on EPA's national Web site registry and receive tools to help educate their customers on the

continued on page 24

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importance of using water efficiently on their lawns and landscapes.

EPA publishes a list of WaterSense irrigation partners on its Web site, www.epa.gov/watersense, to help landscape managers and customers find solutions that make sense — not only for their lawn or garden, but also for their wallets and the environment.

Thinking outside the hose

What's next for the program? WaterSense recognizes that landscape irrigation is only one part of saving water outdoors. It is equally important to consider aspects such as water-efficient landscape design, water-efficient plant palettes and landscape professional certification programs. In the future, EPA plans to evaluate other professional landscaping certifications that impact outdoor water use.

WaterSense is also conducting research and evaluating opportunities for labeling several irrigation technologies such as irrigation controllers and soil moisture sensors. Advanced irrigation controllers use local weather and landscape conditions to tailor irrigation schedules to actual conditions on the site or historical weather data. Soil moisture sensors operate only when irrigation is needed. These technologies, give us the potential to greatly reduce water waste and inefficiency across the country.

EPA encourages the landscape industry to embrace the water-efficiency movement and program. As pressure grows to increase efficiency for landscape water use, WaterSense is working to provide organizations and professionals with the tools to be more efficient while still providing customers with healthy, beautiful landscapes.

— *The author is Assistant Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Water*

People & companies



Dow AgroSciences has formed an Urban Pest Management business that combines its pest management unit with its turf, ornamental and technical products division. For the new division, Dow named **Mark E.**



Neterer T&O national accounts manager, **Mike Lees** as a product technology specialist and **Nikki Hall** as product communications manager.

Syngenta Professional Products named **Robert Goglia** as market manager for lawn care. Syngenta also named **Dave Ravel** golf market manager, and **Todd Loecke** Midwest sales manager and Diana Nesbit Northern California territory manager.

ServiceMaster's Group President **Katrina Helmkamp** will leave the company to pursue other interests. Helmkamp had oversight responsibility for the Terminix and TruGreen business

units which will now report to **J. Patrick Spainhour**, chief executive officer of ServiceMaster.

IronPlanet has named **Gregory J. Owens** chairman and chief executive officer of the organization. Owens will also join the company's Board of Directors.

Brent Mecham, a Colorado water conservation specialist and longtime irrigation instructor, has been named **Irrigation Association** industry development director.



Pierre Pereira joined **Billy Goat Industries** as vice president of sales and marketing.

Jeff Korhan, president of **True Nature Inc.** and owner of **Treemendous Landscape Co.**, has been named to the Chapter Leadership Council for the National Speakers Association (NSA.)

BASF partners with Farmlinks

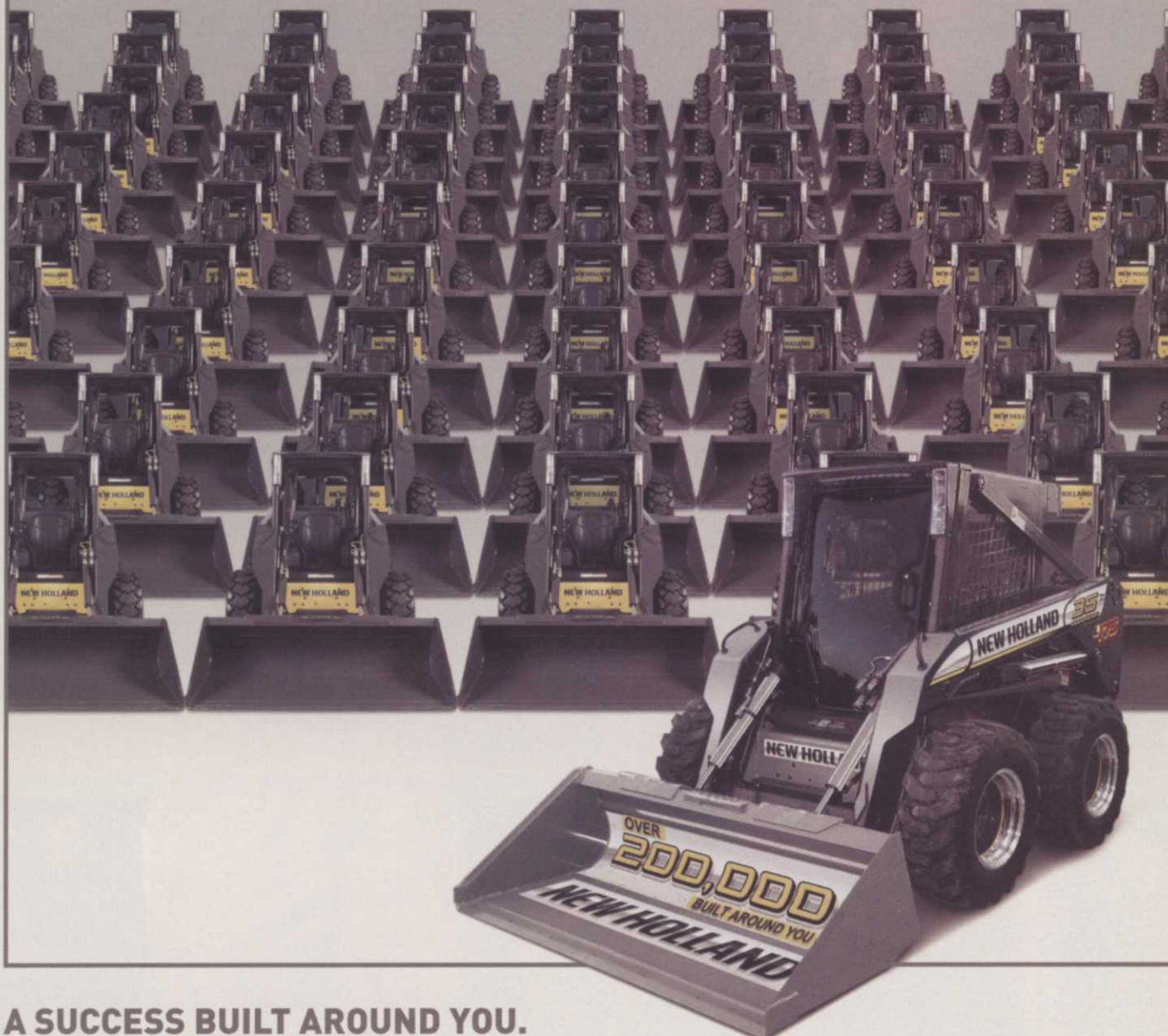
RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC — BASF Turf & Ornamentals has entered into a marketing partnership with FarmLinks, based in Sylacauga, AL.

As a new cornerstone partner, BASF will benefit from having a controlled, showcase environment in which to research and test products, and the only research facility of its kind in the industry. BASF will invite 400 turf professionals each year to FarmLinks, which has already begun using BASF solutions.

"Reaching turf professionals in this intimate environment, physically demonstrating best chemical practices and listening to the needs and concerns of these customers is a tremendous business and relationship opportunity," said Toni Bucci, business manager for BASF Turf & Ornamentals. "In addition to showcasing BASF product innovation, we're able to listen to feedback from participants so we can better meet their current and emerging pest issues."

"Through our ongoing research, we know that turf professionals are looking for easy-to-use chemical solutions that offer better value, and there is an enormous demand for information to help them select solutions to meet their turf and ornamental challenges," said Erle Fairly, president of FarmLinks. "We are confident that this relationship with BASF will provide a tremendous value to us and to the more than 1,200 professionals who visit our property each year."

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BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

Youth *will serve*

AS EASTERN LAND MANAGEMENT PASSES ITS 30TH
ANNIVERSARY, ITS FOUNDER, BRUCE MOORE SR.,
LOOKS TO HIS SON TO KEEP THE DREAM ALIVE

The “firsts” in every person’s life are rarely forgotten — that first grade school crush or that first car. If you’re a landscape company owner, chances are you remember that first truck you bought when you got into the business.

“It was kind of a yellow, a weird color,” recalls Bruce Moore Sr., president and founder of Eastern Land Management (ELM), Stamford, CT. Moore remembers that first truck, a 1976 Ford F250. The truck’s cost: \$6,600. How could he forget that? Like most people, he started his business with mountains of ambition and hope, a little trepidation and even less cash.

Fast forward 30 years and Moore is running one of the most respected landscape companies in the Northeast. He’s active in his community and in trade associations and by most accounts is considered the owner and operator of a successful small business. He’s also committed to being a good father to his son and daughter. The daughter is a teacher, the son, Bruce Jr., an employee. And if the plan works out as it’s being drawn up, he will some day be the operator of ELM. ▶▶



PHOTOS BY RICHARD FREEDA / WWW.RICHARDFREEDA.COM

It won't be as easy as just turning over the keys to the car to the teenage son, the father realizes. Business is a lot more complicated than that. Transitioning from one generation to the next brings up a host of complicated issues.

"He thinks a lot like I did when I was his age," muses Moore. "But there is a different set of issues now. Now, we

never experience. In the landscape business, that beginning is often on the production end of a commercial mower, as was the case with Moore, who started out mowing residential lawns.

But Moore had a head start. Soon after graduating from Bryant

► To read about transitioning your business from one generation to the next, turn to page 30

He credits a combination of factors for the early survival and growth of his company he founded, including a list of prospects shared by

an uncle who co-owned a pool construction company. That got him started, but other factors quickly, and somewhat unexpectedly, assumed greater importance.

"Soon after I started the business there was an exodus of corporate headquarters from Manhattan to our city," recalls Moore. "Stamford had been a manufacturing town and there was a lot of property available." (Stamford is located in the southwestern corner of the state.)

As he looked around he realized that there were no companies targeting this growing segment of the maintenance market. It didn't take him long to shift his efforts toward that market. Donning a suit and tie, he knocked on the doors of facility and property managers.

"They were kind of shocked to see a landscape guy dressed like that," says Moore. "For a couple of years we were

continued on page 50

HE'LL BE SWINGING A 300-POUND MONKEY. WHEN I WAS HIS AGE I WAS ONLY SWINGING A 50-POUND MONKEY.

have 40 full-time employees. He will have the advantage of taking over an existing business, which means he'll be swinging a 300-pound monkey. When I was his age I was only swinging a 50-pound monkey."

There are many things business owners never forget, both the good and the not so good. An owner always remembers the first days of his or her business, something subsequent generations can

College in Rhode Island (now Bryant University), he was hired and got valuable management training from Bartlett Tree Expert Co., headquartered in his hometown of Stamford. He followed that with field and sales experience managing Bartlett Tree's Columbus, OH, office. Even so, he admits he had no experience starting his own company, which he did in 1976 when he and his wife returned to Connecticut.

Family considerations and

taxes

A 2003 study conducted in part by Loyola University and Kennesaw State University on American family businesses found that the leadership of almost 40% of family-owned businesses will change hands within the decade. More than 56% of CEOs will retire within this time. Of the CEOs expected to retire or semi-retire within this time, only 58% have chosen a successor. This lack of a chosen successor will define the business' survivorship. In other words, will it live on and continue the legacy or not?

Why are transfers between relatives not occurring in family-owned businesses? Often it's because no chosen successor has been identified or family acrimony exists. However, another reason businesses do not survive from generation to

generation is due to the associated transfer taxes.

You must plan to ensure the successful transfer of the owner's interest to relatives during his or her lifetime. Regular valuations of the business in combination with tax-planning strategies allow transfers to occur with minimal tax consequences. In incremental amounts, a valuation also enables transfers to occur with negligible estate tax implications.

— By Erin Hollis, AVA, SM&AA, CBC, MBA, Director of Valuation Services, Accountancy Associates, LLC, a related company of International Profit Associates and Integrated Business Analysis (IPA-IBA). Visit www.ipa-iba.com

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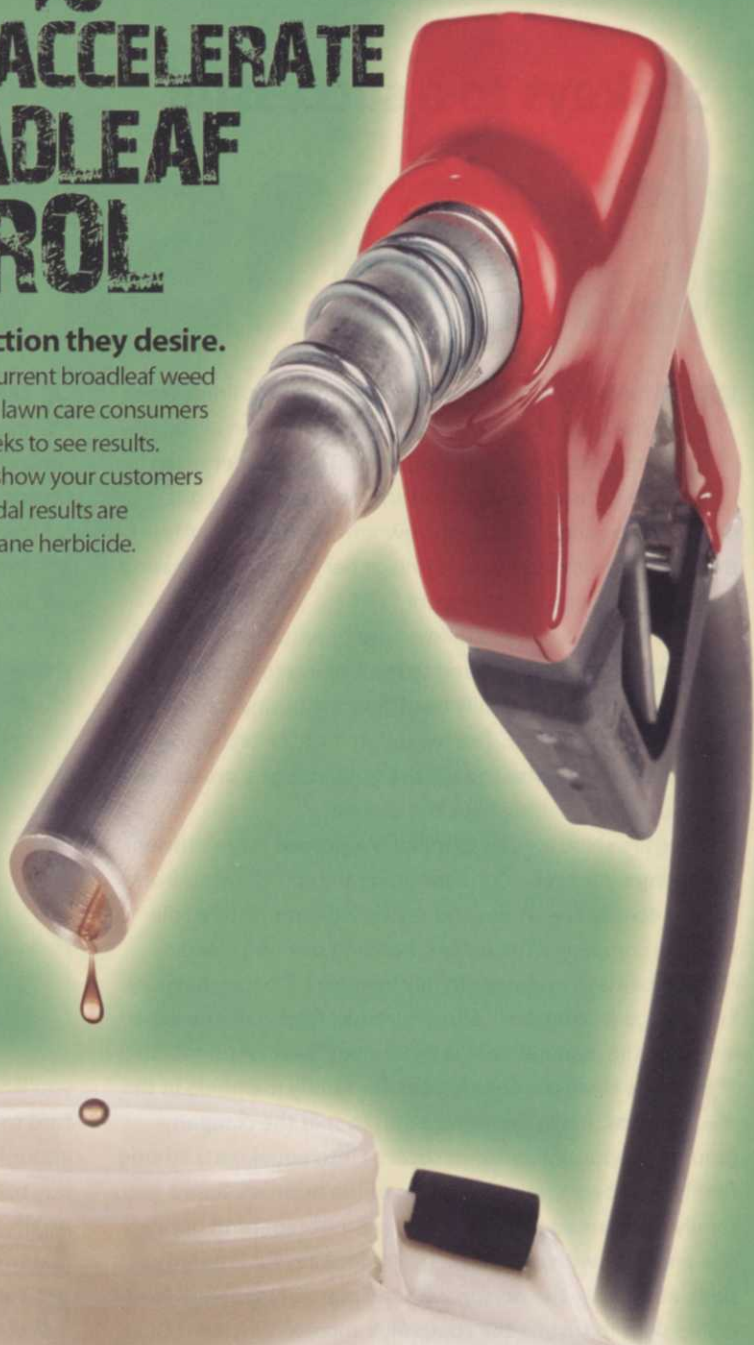


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Six keys to a successful transition

The Baby Boomer owner of the family business views the business differently than, say, the son or daughter that works in the business. The founder often sees the business in a much more personal light. Often, the business defines the owner/founder's life. And that's apart from providing for his or her continuing financial welfare and eventual retirement.

For that reason — and many more practical ones — both generations must understand that it's going to take time — years, in fact, to successfully transition the business from one generation to the next. The transition must be orchestrated. Almost always it's wise to seek the guidance of a professional that's knowledgeable about the process.

Here are six strategies to make the process more efficient.

1 Change your role. Consider gradually withdrawing from day-to-day operations and taking a bigger-picture role with the company. That means, handing over increased responsibilities to younger family members. Do they have the knowledge (operational, administrative, financial), the experience and the management skills to meet these responsibilities?

2 Create clear-cut descriptions for family members in the business. Resist the temptation to split the company (and the responsibility for its success) into equal parts among family members that are working in the business. Assess each family member unemotionally — without regard to gender, age and time with company. You're looking for is talent, skills, abilities — the person with the management and leadership skills to sustain the company's success. You learn this by giving people real responsibilities and real challenges long before you plan on turning over the company.

3 Strategize and build a plan. Regular meetings with family members to discuss and plan the company's direction are essential to a successful transition. Yes, we all know that families are about love, acceptance and giving but these meetings should be focused on accountability, performance and attention to detail.

4 Outside management a better choice? Not every family member working in a family business wants to assume control of the business. Or is ready to run the business. Professional non-family managers may be the key to a successful transition.

5 Provide for your financial security. Most owners pour much of their business revenues back into their com-

panies. Companies must have working capital to grow. Taking money back out of the business can get tricky for the owner as he/she transitions the business to sons or daughters. This requires lots planning prior to taking money from the business. If you're the owner, ask yourself, "How much money am I going to need?" Then, of course,

 **MORE ONLINE**
www.landscapemanagement.net/Familybusiness
 Learn what parents and children had to say about family business at the OFA Short course in a class conducted by business consultants Gary Hudson and William McCurry.

you'll have to determine how much the company can afford to give. You'll need an extraction plan. Are you leaving enough money in the company for the next generation to buy back your portion of the company once it takes over? Again, wise owners seek the assistance of a knowledgeable and trustworthy financial advisor.

6 Time for a lengthy vacation? OK, the transition is complete and the next generation is in charge. Sure, you'll be around if they need some advice, but it's their business to run now. If you've groomed it to succeed and you're comfortable with the financial arrangements, maybe it's time for you and your spouse to take a lengthy vacation, an extended absence, away from the company. Sometimes this is the best way to let the rest of the company (including the now-in-charge family members) know that there's new leadership in place.

— RH

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continued from page 28

the only business in our market offering that kind of service." Of course, that couldn't last, but it lasted long enough for ELM to gain a reputation for quality work and a solid position in that market.

As the commercial business grew, ELM hired additional employees and broadened its range of services beyond commercial maintenance, eventually adding installation, construction, snow management and holiday lighting. The company has grown to 43 employees and about \$3 million in sales annually.

But there have been some serious financial and operational bumps along the way.

Moore looks back on his firm's golf course construction experience in the 1990s as a good learning experience — but certainly not a wise one, at least not as it was implemented.

"We ended up doing a lot of work," he says. "Actually it took off quite well. But we didn't have the management or the reporting systems in place. And we lost focus on the maintenance business."

HE TELLS ME HE LOVES THIS BUSINESS EVEN THOUGH I CAN TELL HE SOMETIMES GETS FRUSTRATED JUST LIKE WE ALL DO.

That experience was one of several that convinced him to pay more attention to systems and financials. He sought help from consultant Frank Ross, Ross-Payne & Associates Inc., Chicago, and other knowledgeable Green Industry experts to get a better handle on his company's financials and to refocus his business. "That was one of the best things I've ever done for the business," he says.

Today, 30 years after starting ELM and 56 years old he realizes it's time to plan for a new phase of his life; it's time



Bruce Moore Sr. has handed duties to his son, but has yet to turn over the business

to begin redefining his role in his landscape company. No, he stresses, he's not planning on retiring, not anytime soon anyway. And he's not planning on selling the business, although he's had offers.

The founder's plan is to gradually turn more of ELM's operation over to son, Bruce Jr., 24, who began taking on more responsibility in ELM soon after earning a business degree from Curry College in Boston. Business degree or not, the younger Moore has been learning the business from the ground up, first by running a maintenance crew and,

a lot off my plate in terms of dealing with customers."

To make the eventual transition more efficient and more likely to succeed, both father and son have been participating in "family business" gatherings at the University of New Haven. Each month owners meet there as a group and discuss common related to the business. The sons and daughters of the owners, the heirs, meet and network in a separate group.

Also, the father and son meet each Friday morning for breakfast in a nearby restaurant. "If there's anything going on between the two of us, we can clear the air," says the company president. "I think it's been a healthy mechanism to facilitate communication between us.

"It gets kind of fragile sometimes. The biggest challenge is separating the business and the family relationships. That requires a high level of mutual trust."

While the elder Moore says that he's always around to lend a listening ear, he tries not to offer too much unsolicited advice or guidance as his son gains experience and, hopefully, knowledge and confidence in running the family business.

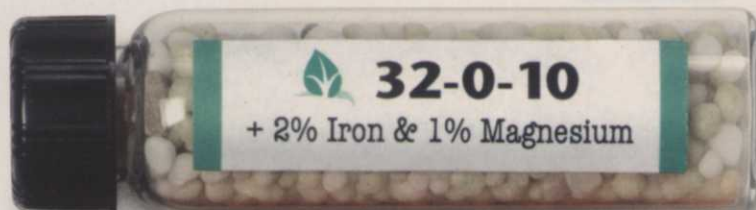
"I want him to learn, and that means sometimes making mistakes," says Moore. "But I don't want him to make the same mistakes that I have made; that way we can both learn from the mistakes." **LM**

most recently, as an account manager overseeing five maintenance and two enhancement crews. With additional training and experience — concentrating on sales and marketing — the elder Moore is eyeing the day when his son is ready to assume more responsibility in ELM's business development.

"I urged him to look at other things, but he tells me he loves this business even though I can tell he sometimes gets frustrated just like we all do," says the father. "But I do appreciate that he's taken

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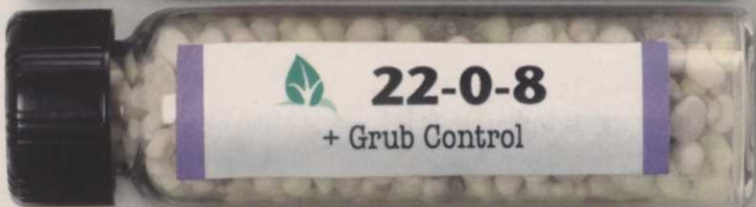
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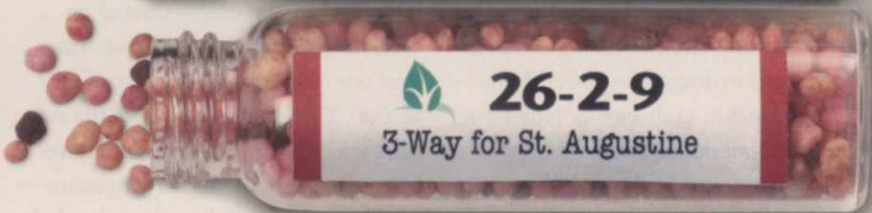
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BEWARE

the Credit Card Monster

Strategies to wring value from your credit cards without getting you (or your business) in financial trouble

BY WILLIAM J. LYNOTT

Credit cards offer landscapers a tempting source of financing. Some say they wouldn't be around today if they hadn't maxed-out a few credit cards. Still, credit cards present serious risks for contractors in need of operating funds. Some experts compare credit cards to drugs: They offer short-term pleasure in exchange for long-term pain. Without doubt, once the Credit Card Monster gets his hooks in you, it can be painfully difficult — and sometimes impossible — to free yourself.

Millions of business owners are in over their heads with credit card debt, and many others are taking their first steps down the road to financial oblivion.

Undeniably, credit is important in our society. Without credit, many of our small businesses would not exist. Without credit, most Americans would have no hope of ever owning their own homes or automobiles. Without credit, the quality of life for most people would be far less attractive.

But credit as we know it today has its dark side as well.

Credit cards carry special risks for those who lack the self-discipline to use credit wisely. A pocket full of credit cards can sweep even business owners up in the illusion that they have more money than they actually have, and that's where the trouble begins.

In 2006, the average outstanding credit balance per household, with at least one credit card, was in excess of \$8,000. That's more than triple the average balance in 1990. Even with a lower balance, minimum monthly payments — usually about 2% of the outstanding balance — will barely cover interest charges and minimal new purchases. Thus, for many, the debt will become a lifetime obligation. No wonder 1.8 million Americans declared bankruptcy in 2006.

The credit card folks are so good at what they do that they've managed to put 1.5 billion cards in circulation in America. That's almost five cards for every man, woman and child in the United States.

An average of 12% interest on that typical balance of more than \$8,000 comes to nearly \$1,000 per year in in-

terest charges that won't buy a single piece of power equipment or make one payment for supplies or payroll. What's worse, those figures are only averages. Millions of Americans are mired even deeper in a financial quagmire, with little or no hope of ever getting out unless they change their ways.

Still, credit cards in themselves are not harmful. In fact, used skillfully they can be an important financial plus for the typical landscape professional.

Minimum payment trap

According to the Federal Reserve, Americans are now carrying more than \$750 billion in revolving credit card debt. That's not the amount being charged every month; it's the outstanding balances on which cardholders are paying interest. Moreover, according to a report by Cambridge Consumer Credit Index, 47% of the people who paid less than the full amount on their credit card bills recently, made only the minimum payment due.

After a brief respite resulting from a slow economy over the past few years, credit card interest rates have begun to climb skyward again. An interest rate of 18% on that average balance would come out to about \$1,500 — about \$125 per month just to pay the interest.

What's worse, the above figures are only averages. Millions of families and

continued on page 54

**"We forget that the life cycle
and the water cycle are one."** — Jacques Cousteau



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continued from page 52

business owners have sunk far deeper into the financial abyss, with little or no hope of ever getting out unless they drastically alter their lifestyles. Even more frightening, it would seem that just about anyone is a potential victim.

Kathy McNally, Ph.D., vice-president of the National Foundation for Credit Counseling says, "Credit card debt is an equal opportunity problem. It crosses over all income levels, ages, races, geographic areas and educational levels."

Use credit wisely

Like credit in general, credit cards in themselves are not harmful. In fact, used skillfully they can be an important financial plus for a landscape contractor. Here are seven steps to help you use credit to your advantage while avoiding the clutches of the Credit Card Monster:

► **Keep no more than two credit cards.**

The more credit cards you have in your wallet or purse, the more difficult it will be to keep an eye on your total debt.

► **Use other people's money to make your routine monthly purchases.** Whenever possible, don't charge more than you can pay off in full when the bill comes at the end of the month. When you pay the full balance on your bill each month, you are taking advantage of an interest-free loan from the card issuer. That's a huge financial advantage.

Remember: Every time you pay off the full balance at the end of the month, you have borrowed someone

else's money at no interest to make your purchases.

Paying less than the full balance on a monthly credit card bill is the first step on the road to oppressive interest charges and unmanageable debt. It is far wiser to postpone the purchase of a non-essential item than to extend an invitation to the Credit Card Monster to sneak into your life.

► **Carry a reasonable amount of cash to pay for small purchases.** Financial counselors know it's harder to make frivolous purchases when we reach into our pockets for cash. Credit cards makes it too easy to lower our financial inhibitions. Small purchases made regularly can grow quickly to mammoth proportions.

► **Know the costs of credit.** Know about annual fee, the exact interest rate you'll pay and any charges for overdue payments or going over your credit limit.

► **Shop around for the best deal.** Compare credit card offers for the deal that's right for you. Take advantage of such features as a low interest rate, no annual fee, rebates, points or airline miles bonuses.

► **Check your credit report annually.** Contact one of the three major credit reporting agencies each year to get a free copy of your credit report. You can order your free report at www.annual-creditreport.com.

Keeping an eye on what other people are saying about your credit standing is

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The National Foundation for Credit Counseling is the nation's oldest and largest non-profit organization providing education and counseling services on budgeting and credit with nearly 1,500 member agency locations across the United States and Puerto Rico. Many NFCC member agencies use the Consumer Credit Counseling Service trademark. To contact the NFCC member office nearest you, call toll-free from a touch-tone phone 1-800-388-2227 or visit the NFCC Web site at: www.nfcc.org.

a good way to stay on top of your credit behavior. It also allows you to make certain that your record does not contain any errors that could limit your ability to get credit in the future.

► **Focus on needs, not wants.** You don't have to buy everything you think you can afford for your business or your personal needs. Spending to satisfy impulses or gain "status" is often the first step toward unmanageable debt.

Do you really need a larger house or a luxury car? Smart consumers live a little below their means and bank the extra money. This is one of the basic secrets to accumulating wealth.

Careful observance of these suggestions for sensible credit card use will go a long way toward keeping you firmly in control of your own financial destiny. **LM**

— The author is A freelance writer specializing in business. Contact him at lynott@verizon.net.

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YOUNG

and on the *fast track*

Michigan student Brad Naebeck says being his own boss is the only way to go in the landscape business

BY ANITA C. STUEVER

Brad Naebeck, six years old, started mowing his family's 3-acre lawn. He may not have known then what becoming an entrepreneur meant, but he knew that he wanted to be his own boss.

"I wanted to have a source of income, be my own boss, run my own schedule and be responsible for my own mistakes," he says. Now a student at Michigan State University he's on his way.

At age 12 the son of Michael and JacLynne Naebeck began operating his own turf-care business. In the spring of 2000, with equipment borrowed from his father (who also provided transportation), he started managing and servicing his own properties. His first outside account was a local cemetery.

He soon expanded his after-school, weekend and summer business, Season

to Season Landscape Solutions, to nine accounts. During Michigan winters, the teen offered snow plowing and firewood cutting. By the time he was old enough to drive, Naebeck had saved enough money to purchase a 16-ft. trailer.

Unlike many of his classmates, the new driver wasn't saving for a hot car.

He'd set his eyes on a 60-in. zero-turn mower, which he purchased with a loan cosigned with his father.

Getting recognized

The Saline FFA Chapter member was named national winner of the Turf Grass Management — Entrepreneurship proficiency award program at the 79th National FFA Convention in October 2006 in Indianapolis. John Deere, as a special project of the National FFA

Foundation, sponsored the award. Naebeck *continued on page 58*

Naebeck learned how to sharpen and balance mower blades on a MagnaMatic 8000 in his Saline (MI) High School.



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PROVEN SOLUTIONS

continued from page 56

was awarded \$1,250 in cash awards, plaques and a 10-day travel seminar to Costa Rica.

Earlier in 2006, Naebeck had been named Michigan's state winner, as well as runner-up to Michigan's FFA Star in Agribusiness. He competed against state winners chosen from the 52 state FFA associations. He believes the variety of services he offers and his investment in his own equipment gave him the edge over other candidates.

His inventory includes more than \$20,000 in commercial turf equipment, including a 52-in.-cut Toro zero turn and new Stihl trimmers and edgers. It didn't take him long to start thinking about working more efficiently, as he continually improved his production and service quality. He sought ways to boost acres mowed per hour, lift his average hourly profit and decrease days down because of equipment breakdowns. All the while he instituted systems to work more safely and improve customer service.

Refining a business

Naebeck's growth comes in large part because of his attention to detail, such as loading and unloading equipment, and the mowing sequence to get the best results while using his time efficiently.

"Time is money," Naebeck says. And learning the fine points of customer relations has been on-the-job training, he stresses. "A consistent, high-quality job every time is a critical factor in profitability," he says.

To gain professional experience, learn new techniques and keep busy while building his own business, he has also worked for large lawn-care contractors. The experience has been valuable to his business, but has confirmed his decision to remain his own boss.

Naebeck hires his father when he



Since this photo was taken Naebeck, because of growth, added a new Toro 52-in. zero-turn mower. He also purchased all new Stihl trimmers and edgers.

needs reliable help. He doesn't want to "be concerned with having to redo work done by inexperienced workers." He relies on third-party references, word-of-mouth advertising and posting of business cards as his major advertising methods.

Still a student, Naebeck professes "over-advertising" would result in more accounts than he could serve at a professional level. He believes serving customers well and maintaining personal communication to gauge the level of customer satisfaction is the key to keeping accounts. Satisfied customers are his best advertisement. Naebeck realizes that staying in business means doing business right.

"I'm constantly seeing other companies fizzle out," he says.

Continuing to learn

Naebeck focused his high school agriscience studies on the landscape and turf management course offered by the South and West Washtenaw Consortium at Saline High School, Ann Arbor.

"Agriscience classes taught me the technical aspects of the business — how to make a lawn look beautiful, keep it healthy, price it and identify grasses and other plants," Naebeck says. FFA "showed me a lot of responsibility and how to deal with people."

His agriscience teacher and FFA advisor, David Mellor, taught him "definitely

not to give up, not to listen to what other people think, to go for what I think is right."

At the high school level, Mellor teaches classes that prepare students for immediate entry into the Green Industry or college programs in golf course management, commercial or sports turf management, nursery operation or landscape design and construction. Students learn how to set up their own turf or landscape business, operate commercial landscape power equipment, survey land, design a landscape plan using traditional and computer-aided design methods, prepare a budget and bid proposal, keep business records and construct a landscape project. His students gain skills in landscape plant identification, pest management and plant care.

Mellor's students complete a Green Industry internship called a Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) program. SAE provides real-world application of concepts and principles learned in the agriscience classroom. Students have opportunities to explore careers, gain professional experience, earn money and develop managerial skills, while working toward their educational and career goals. Working in combination, the three components of agricultural education — supervised agricultural experience, classroom education and FFA — provide students with an advantage in the job market, in attaining scholarships and

college enrollment, in starting their own businesses and in developing a plan for success in life

FFA is a national organization of nearly 477,000 students preparing for leadership and careers in the science, business and technology of agriculture. The number of members preparing for careers in the growing Green Industry is one reason the organization is no longer called Future Farmers of America.

Naebeck, a 2006 graduate of Saline High School, is majoring in the 2-year Sports and Commercial Turfgrass Management program at Michigan State University. This past spring he worked as an intern on the University of Michigan grounds crew. Within five to six years he hopes to have expanded his business to a full-time venture with year-round services.

Until then, he'll work as a supervisor for a large landscape services company to gain further experience. He can't shake that entrepreneurial spirit.

"Don't get too big too fast. Start at the bottom and work your way up."

"I plan to keep it going and get big enough that I won't have to have another job," says Naebeck.

When asked what advice he would give young entrepreneurs, Naebeck said, "Don't get too big too fast. Start at the bottom and work your way up. You won't have the right equipment, and you'll have too much debt."

Naebeck says he learned his book-keeping skills through reading and studying examples from industry publications. He credits his father for teaching him

money-management skills and how to maintain equipment. Naebeck not only has a jumpstart on his career, he has earned enough money and scholarships through his part-time business to pay for most of his two-year college education.

That's a considerable accomplishment for a lad who began as a 6-year-old mowing mom and dad's lawn. **LM**

— The author is a freelance writer who lives and works in Battle Creek, MI.

Contact her at astuever@comcast.com.

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BUSINESS

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Mosquito control

► With people spending time outdoors and their concerns over West Nile Virus growing, misting systems may be a good way to make some extra money.

BY JANET AIRD

When you're a landscaper in the mosquito control business, clouds really do have silver linings.

"It used to be that when it rained, we couldn't get work. Now when it rains, we get work," says Andy Vande Hey, owner of Vande Hey Co., a landscape firm in Appleton, WI.

The company's services range from design/build and landscape maintenance to exterior lighting and, for the past six years, mosquito control. They work in most of the state and part of Michigan.

More homeowners are concerned about mosquitoes because of West Nile Virus and because they're spending more time outdoors, Vande Hey says. He has used various mosquito control products and sold them retail for years. The breakthrough products for him are based on pyrethrins, a synthetic product that's similar to the insecticide

from chrysanthemum flowers. Pyrethrins work, he says. "It's the same product as in flea and tick shampoo for dogs. You just mix it with water, spray and the mosquitoes drop."

He uses one pyrethrin-based product for a one-time spray, for example, when customers are having a party. He uses another in a mosquito control system, called MistAway.

System installs

The misting system dramatically reduces the number of mosquitoes on a property, Vande Hey says, and training to install it is basic. Still, "you can't just go in and throw

these systems in."

His outdoor lighting crew does the installations because they're familiar with cabling and installing wires. Irrigation installers could do it just as easily, he says.

The system includes a large drum that contains water and the solution, a pump, an agitator that mixes the solution, and a timer. Lines connect the drum to stainless steel nozzles around the perimeter of the property. Homeowners set the timer according to their need.

"When you install the system properly, you don't know it's there," Vande Hey says. The installers start up the system with water, so they don't deal with any chemicals. Once it's installed, it's easy to maintain.

Although the company already has a pesticide license, they have to pay an additional \$50 when maintenance people spray, Vande Hey says, even though pyrethrins "aren't even close to some of the things that are sprayed for insect infestation."

A carefully designed and installed mosquito misting system is not easy to spot.



Benefits

It's a good retail business, he says. When customers need more solution, they buy it from the Vande Hey garden center and refill the drum themselves.

But demand for the system hasn't been as great as Vande Hey anticipated. In the last few years the dry weather has kept the mosquito population down. During mosquito season, from June to September (usually), they install only a handful of units each year.

"In the northern states it would be difficult to recoup costs if you had to buy all the equipment you'd need," Vande Hey says. "It needs to be an add on."

In states that are getting a lot of rain, like Texas, though, he says, business is booming.

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

She can be reached at

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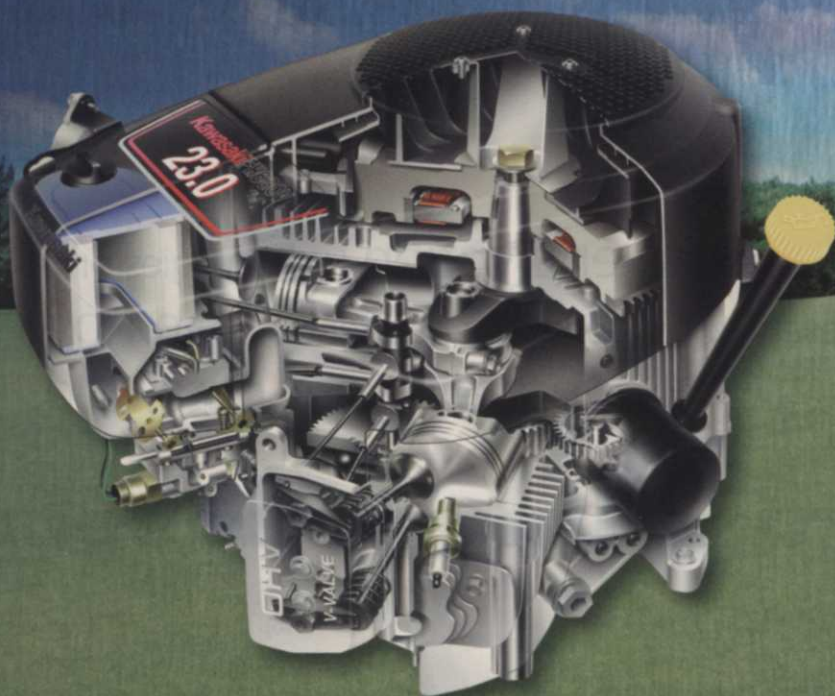
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Data encryption technologies once reserved for government agencies can now protect your data, too.



Safeguarding your secrets

BY TYLER WHITAKER

When it comes to data encryption, I imagine myself as the spy James Bond protecting national security secrets. Or I'm Tom Cruise viewing top-secret "Mission Impossible" briefings that will self-destruct in five seconds. Cloak and dagger dreams aside, using data encryption technologies once reserved for elite government agencies is now not only common but also good business practice.

Your data is valuable

Years ago, to keep company data safe, we installed locks on the door to the computer room. A good dead bolt lock has helped many systems administrators sleep well at night. Then came computer networks and the Internet. Overnight, physical security was not enough. Anyone with access to the network could hack our computer systems and gain access to sensitive company data.

Out of necessity, the computer security industry was born and gave us everything from firewalls, to anti-virus software, to intrusion detection systems. These are all good solutions, but often times they are not enough.

I know what you're thinking, "My business doesn't have any national security secrets to protect." While that may be true, don't underestimate the value your company data holds or the damage that could be done through its misuse. The

top three pieces of data worth protecting are 1) company financial records, 2) employee payroll and benefit records, and 3) customer sales information.

Keeping data secure

So what can I do to protect my business? It starts with basic computer security involving firewalls, strong passwords, anti-virus software, etc. But on top of that, consider using data encryption to protect the data itself. Data encryption is not new. Caesar had his cipher for passing information to his generals. Da Vinci wrote in a mirror image script to protect his manuscripts from being read. Today, we too have solutions to protect data from use when it has fallen into the wrong hands.

Two vendors to look at are PGP (www.pgp.com). PGP, which stands for Pretty Good Privacy and the free open source solution from TrueCrypt (www.truecrypt.org). While not as feature rich as the PGP, you can't beat the price.

Be advised, there is a downside to data encryption, starting with complexity. These solutions are getting easier to use, but it's one more thing to install and configure. The second downside is key and password management. In this digital age, if you lose the encryption key to your data, that data is gone. Keeping a copy of your encryption key or password is something you simply can't take lightly. But I think you'll agree; in spite of the downside, it's better to have your data protected.

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

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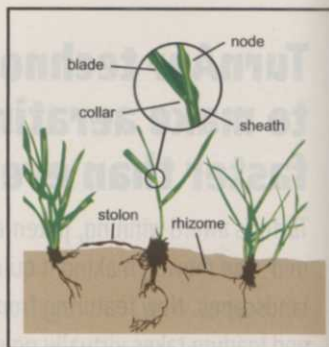


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LM Reports

TECHNOLOGY

YOUR GUIDE TO PRODUCT RESEARCH



Zero-turn mowers

Landscaping is intended to be creative, so lawns take many shapes. As a result, there is no one-size-fits-all lawnmower today. To increase mower versatility, manufacturers are applying zero turning radius technology to a number of different mower designs. Fast, ergonomic and easy to handle, zero-turns improve productivity, which leads to increased profitability.

Hal White, Wright Commercial Products vice president of sales and marketing, says zero-turn technology is now available in standing, stand/sit and walk-behinds, as well as traditional zero-turn designs. Manufacturers have begun offering mid-mount models whose profiles are lower than traditional zero-turn mowers. White also notes that manufacturers are adding models with smaller deck widths for tight yards and hard to reach areas.

The Stander stand-on, zero-turn mower is a popular model for small, hilly properties. Some operators prefer the option of sitting or standing, offered by the Sentar zero-turn. Even so, the traditional riding zero-turn, available in dozens of sizes and with a range of different features, remains incredibly popular with landscape professionals.

With so many styles of zero-turn mower, White advises operators to establish a relationship with one or more service dealers who will let them try before they buy. A test drive is the best way to get to know a mower's features.

White says that mowing contractors should equip their trailers with the most versatile mowers for the subtleties of each lawn design on a route.

— Duane Pancoast, Public Relations Counsel, The Pancoast Concern Ltd., Victor, NY

◀ Lastec

Lastec's 2861AGC is the first 61-in. commercial articulating rotary mower. This 61-in.-wide mower features three fully articulating 21-in. decks that can eliminate turf damage and scalping caused by rigid decks. All points of articulation on the three 21-in. decks come standard with urethane bushings to eliminate wear points on the decks and require no greasing as on other decks. The mower features a modular baffling system that allows the deck to be a true rear or side discharging deck that can also be set up to mulch.

For more information contact Lastec at 317/892-4444 or www.lastec.com / circle no. 254


Wright

With cutting widths up to 61-in., Wright Manufacturing's Sentar zero-turning-radius mower can cover a wide area with the agility of a standup as well as the power and comfort of a sitdown. The padded seat with mono spring suspension folds out of the way, allowing for more room on trailers. Cut height can be adjusted rapidly and easily from the driver's seat or standing platform. Operator Balance Control (OBC) lets the operator shift his weight instantly as terrain changes. The 2-cylinder, 19-plus-hp engine powers the Sentar up to 11 mph forward and 5 mph in reverse. Fuel tank capacity is 10.7 gal.

For more information contact Wright Manufacturing at 301/360-9810 or www.wrightmfg.com / circle no. 255



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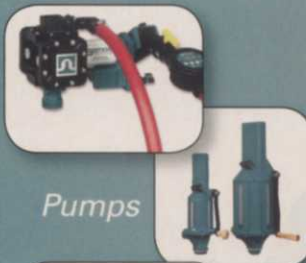
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Great Dane

Available with a 25-hp Kawasaki engine or a 27-hp Kohler engine and a 52- or 61-in. deck, the Great Dane Brutus zero-turn mower is a more powerful, more comfortable riding lawnmower.

This machine comes complete with twin 12-cc hydraulic pumps, a solid-shaft deck spindle and a cushioned full-suspension, high-back operator seat with twin lever between-the-legs transmission controls.

For more information contact Great Dane Mowers at 402/274-8600 or www.greatdanemowers.com / circle no. 256



Ferris

Ferris's IS 500Z has individual pumps and wheel motors for improved performance and less downtime. Available in 44-in. cutting width, a foot-operated deck lift provides the operator with variable cutting heights from 1.5- to 4.5-in.

Powered by a 24-hp Briggs & Stratton Extended Life Series engine, the moving deck is made from 10-gauge steel, featuring over-lap welded corners, double thick top



and double reinforced side skirts. Available accessories include the FAST-Vac double bagger collection system, stripe kit, hitch kit, mulch kit, arm-rests and flat-free tires.

For more information contact Ferris Industries at 800/933-6175 or www.ferrisindustries.com / circle no. 257

EverRide

The EverRide Warrior boasts a 66-in. deck with a 27-hp Kohler engine. This zero-turn rider is known for its wide height of cut range, pivoting front axle and EverFlow Tunnel Deck, which features a 149-sq.-in. discharge opening, overlapping blades and baffle-free front design. With the large deck size — more deck outside the tires — and the Warrior's trimming ability

is now one of the best in the industry. The Warrior is also available with a 54- or 60-in. deck and a 25-hp Kawasaki engine.

For more information contact EverRide at 402/274-8600 or www.everridemowers.com / circle no. 258



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Anteater (30,000 BC)



Frying pan (1847)



Blowtorch (1926)



Magnifying glass (1977)



Garden hose (1984)



Conventional fire ant formula (2005)

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Cub Cadet Commercial

Cub Cadet Commercial has enhanced The TANK series to include a 2-pedal deck lift; one pedal to lift and lock, the other to release and lower; a conveniently located parking brake with effortless engagement; a standard, fully adjustable suspension seat with arm rests and a standard, foldable ROPS. The gas and diesel premium engines range from 23 hp to 37 hp. Additionally, the

Command Cut System has improved durability, reduced maintenance and a cleaner overall cut. The TANK includes Dual SmartJet high-pressure deck washing system; larger rear rollers; and a twin pulley drive belt tensioning idler.

For more information contact Cub Cadet at 877/835-7841 or www.cubcadetcommercial.com / circle no. 259



typically strain conventional gas mowers. With 12-gal. fuel capacity and 11.2-mph ground speed, these machines help operators stay in the field and productive. The Z595-D is equipped with Toro's TURBO FORCE cutting deck, featuring Toro's patented adjustable baffle, allowing operators to fine-tune the performance for maximum productivity.

For more information contact The Toro Co. at 800/348-2424 or www.toro.com / circle no. 261

Hustler Turf Equipment

The Hustler Mini Z 48/54 boasts lots of horsepower, quality of cut and simple maintenance. Features include: welded steel decks; 20-in. drive tires, 13-in. caster tires; Hydro-Gear ZT 2800 hydrostatic transmissions for true zero-turning-radius; 10-gal. fuel capacity with built-in sight line; Smooth-Trak steering with automatic park brake system; 48- or 54-in. side-discharge/mulching decks; optional catchers and snow-removal attachments; and optional certified, foldable ROPS.

For more information contact Hustler Turf Equipment at 800/395-4757 or www.hustlerturf.com / circle no. 262



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Grasshopper

Grasshopper's compact FrontMount 600 Series mowers feature: unique in-line T-Drive system with pumps-in-reservoir design that transmits more engine power to the mowing deck; commercial-grade 16-hp Briggs & Stratton Vanguard, or 20-hp Kohler Command Pro horizontal-crankshaft, V-twin, gasoline engines; front-mounted 44-, 48- and 52-in. DuraMax decks raise vertically for space-saving transport or storage, and convenient underside access; PowerFold/Electric Height Adjustment available on 48- and 52-in. DuraMax decks; and side discharge or convert to optional Down Discharge mulching or PowerVac collection with same DuraMax deck.

For more information contact Grasshopper Co. at 620/345-8621 or www.grasshoppermower.com / circle no. 260

Toro

Toro has equipped its 52- and 60-in. Z595-D Z Master models with a 25-hp Kubota liquid-cooled diesel engine able to power through the toughest turf conditions that



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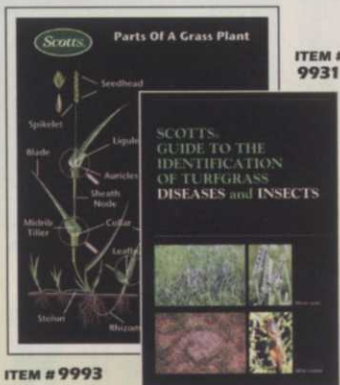
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Husqvarna

Powerful but compact in size, Husqvarna's iZ5223T intermediate zero-turn mower offers maneuverability and efficiency for professional use. Powered by a 23-hp Vanguard engine and featuring a 52-in. deck, the iZ5223T offers ground speed up to 9.5 mph and a productivity rate of up to five acres per hour. The Tunnel Ram deck allows operators to work with increased speed and precision in heavy cutting conditions. The deck features fully baffled 10-gauge steel with rolled front edge and 7-gauge steel side skirts.

For more information contact Husqvarna at 800/HUSKY-62 or www.usa.husqvarna.com / circle no. 263

Walker

Equipped with 13- to 31-hp engines, Walker mowers give landscape professionals the ability to maintain any small or large property. Decks range in size from 36- to 74-in., and configurations vary between grass handling, side discharge, and mulching. Various attachments are also available; bringing any year-round project down to size. A popular component of the Walker is its ability to handle grass, leaves, small twigs and other debris through its patented grass-handling system (GHS). This exclusive system offers a powerful vacuum action, clog resistance, and high capacity without the bulk of typical grass catcher attachments.

For more information contact Walker at 800/279-8537 or www.walkermowers.com / circle no. 264

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LM Reports



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John Deere

The John Deere 737 and 757 Mid-Frame Z-Trak mowers can handle small, tight spaces as well as open fields. Their strength begins with a single-piece tubular-steel frame. Operator comfort is assured when you add

up the low center of gravity, a standard deluxe seat, right-hand console controls and the foot-assisted dial height-of-cut adjustment. Regular service is made easy with a flip-up footrest, a tilt seat and removable grille. The 23-hp 737 and the 25-hp 757 both feature a horizontal-shaft, air-cooled Kawasaki engine. Both models can accommodate either the 54- or 60-in. 7-Iron II mower deck.

For more information contact John Deere at 800/537-8233 or www.johndeere.com / circle no. 265

Yard Shark

Yard Shark commercial zero-turn mowers feature a stable, low-center-of-gravity design for good performance on slopes. The unobstructed, low-profile fenders allow close trimming around bushes and low-hanging branches. Designed for easy handling and



maneuverability, Yard Sharks will also mow up to 11 mph. Additional features include a high-lift, long-throw Turbo deck, which is welded 7-gauge steel. The deck is fortified with a 1-in. reinforcement from the trim to discharge side and triple-layered 7-gauge steel at the chute. A deluxe suspension seat is standard equipment. 51- and 60-in. models are available, with a choice of Honda or Kawasaki engines.

Contact Yard Shark Mowers at 800/447-1152 or www.yardsharkmowers.com / circle no. 266

Simplicity

The new Simplicity ZT4000 zero turn mower features 4-wheel independent suspension, dual pumps and wheel motors, a 24-hp overhead valve engine and a fabricated mower deck. The 4-wheel independent suspension — rear-wheel IS Independent Suspension and front shocks — increases mowing productivity and operator comfort. The ZT4000 comes equipped with a 24-hp Briggs & Stratton Extended Life Series V-twin OHV engine. A three-blade, 44-in. fabricated mower deck with rollers and a series of front gauge wheels assures a high quality of cut.

For more information contact Simplicity Manufacturing at 262/377-5450 or

www.simplicitymfg.com / circle no. 267



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Snapper Pro

The 355Z Series zero-turn mowers from Snapper feature a powerful 24-hp engine, a rugged transmission, heavy-duty spindles, a tubular steel frame and either a 44- or 50-in. deep-profile mower deck. A Briggs & Stratton ELS (Extended Life Series) engine delivers 24 hp and comes equipped with an advanced debris management system, chrome rings and valves, platinum plugs and full pressure lubrication with a spin-on oil filter. The 355Z touts forward speeds of 0-7 mph and twin lever steering.

For more information contact Snapper Pro at 800/935-2967 or www.snapper.com / circle no. 268

Bad Boy ▶

Bad Boy's 60-in. deck Lightning Z combines power and strength with a high horsepower-to-weight ratio, a 32-hp Big Block Vanguard, the Swing-Away design and the EZ-Ride system. The Swing-Away design opens the entire operating system up for easy maintenance and clean-up. Virtually every serviceable component is accessed in seconds. With Bad Boy's independent front and rear rubber compression shocks, you're able to mow faster over uneven terrain for longer periods.

Contact Bad Boy at 866/622-3269 or www.badboymowers.com / circle no. 269



Dixie Chopper

The Dixie Chopper Propane LP 3000 is not a conversion kit, but the first production mower of its type—designed specifically for propane. Available in both 60- and 72-in. cuts, it features a specially designed 30-hp Generac engine that offers all the power and compression of a traditional gasoline-powered mower. A 72-in. deck model can still cut a football field in less than 10 minutes.

For more information contact Dixie Chopper at 765/CHOPPER or www.dixiechopper.com / circle no. 270

Gravely

Gravely's line of Extra Durability zero-turn mowers (XDZs) is aimed at improving up-time for landscape contractors. With an overall 30% increase in durability, the XDZ units are available in the 144, 148, 152 and 160 models of the Gravely 100 Series; and the 252, 260 and 272 models of the Gravely 200 Series. The XDZs feature improvements to the subsystems critical to commercial cutters: ground drive, electrical, deck drive and deck. The result is cooler hydraulic temperatures that aid in longer pump and motor life, longer belt life, increased durability to the deck in high-wear conditions, and electrical systems designed to eliminate corrosion and downtime.

For more information contact Gravely at 800/472-8359 or www.gravely.com / circle no. 271



Country Clipper

Available in 60- and 72-in. steel welded deck cutting widths with a 37-hp Kawasaki engine, Country Clipper's BOSS SR-1205 offers a stand-up deck, for ease of maintenance and changing or sharpening of blades. The BOSS SR 1205 is offered in both the patented point-and-go joystick or the traditional dual-lever steering. Mowing speed reaches 11 mph.

For more information contact Country Clipper at 800/344-8237 or www.countryclipper.com / circle no. 272



Kubota

Kubota Tractor Corp.'s ZD-300 series of zero-turn commercial mowers includes five different models. The new models feature energy-efficient Kubota diesel engines: the 21-hp ZD321; the 26-hp ZD326; and the ZD331 with 31 hp. These engines are designed to produce higher torque to aggressively take on heavy mowing jobs for extended periods. They use as much as 30% less fuel than gasoline engines; have fewer emissions; and operate more quietly. Each model features dual fuel tanks with 11.9-gal. fuel capacity.

For more information contact Kubota at 888/458-2682 or www.kubota.com / circle no. 273

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Bob-Cat

Bob-Cat Predator-Pro Series mowers are high-output zero-turn commercial mowers built tough with the features professionals need. The Predator Pro Series comes with a choice of 52-, 61- or 72-in. cutting decks and multiple engine options that include a 26-, 33-hp Generac V-Twin — or 26-hp, 37-hp Kawasaki engines. The mowers are also equipped with a large 12-gal. fuel tank, fully adjustable suspension seat, anti-scalp rollers, DuraDeck molded rubber chute, and extreme discharge system.

For more information contact Bob-Cat at 866/469-1CGC or www.bobcatturf.com / circle no. 274

Scag

Scag now offers its Turf Tiger zero-turn mower in a diesel model. The 25-hp, liquid-cooled, 3-cylinder Kubota diesel engine offers the commercial operator incredible power and increased fuel efficiency. The 61-in. Velocity Plus cutter deck high-velocity discharge, plus a top quality cut, even at faster ground speeds. The double tube steel main frame gives the mower strength and durability.

For more information contact Scag Power Equipment at 920/387-0100 or www.scag.com / circle no. 275



Exmark

The Lazer Z series now features the Triton high-capacity cutting platform. All components of the Triton platform are designed to work together for greater flexibility in a variety of conditions. The Triton series includes the Lazer Z and the Lazer Z XS, with decks of 60, 66 and 72 in., as well as the Lazer Z HP, with decks of 46, 50 and 56 in.

For more information contact Exmark at 402/223-6300 or www.exmark.com / circle no. 276

Bush Hog

A new steel Two-Post Roll Over Protection System (ROPS) as well as other accessories have been added to Bush Hog's M2000 Commercial Series. It can be repositioned without tools for convenience in moving on and off enclosed trailers and for storage. A more economically priced Rigid Two-Post ROPS is also available for operators not needing clearance in enclosed trailers or storage.

Other, easy-to-install Bush Hog accessories include striping rollers and a hitch kit.

For more information contact Bush Hog at 334/874-2700 or www.bushhog.com / circle no. 277

Encore

Encore's popular X-Treme line is now available in deck sizes of 48, 52 and 60 in. Designed for power and versatility, the X-Treme line features bigger tires, heavy-duty pumps and wheel motors powered to mow at 10 mph. They are available with 19-, 23- and 25-hp, air-cooled Kawasaki engine options for respective deck sizes, as well as an economical Briggs & Stratton in 20- or 25-hp versions.

For more information contact Encore Power Equipment at 800/267-4255 or www.encoreequipment.com / circle no. 278



Yazoo/Kees

The Yazoo/Kees ZMKH61252 Mid-Max zero-turning rider's full-floating cutting deck is constructed of 10-gauge steel with reinforced 7-gauge side skirts. Heavy-duty blade spindles feature greaseable tapered roller bearing construction for longer life. All Mid-Max mowers offer a low center of gravity and wide wheel stance for increased stability and smooth performance. The units feature quick-lift cutting height adjustment with standard foot assist, dual 5.6 gal. fuel tanks and up to 10 mph ground speed.

For more information contact Yazoo/Kees at 877/368-TURF or www.yazookees.com / circle no. 279

Bunton

With deck options as slim as 36 in., the Bunton Rocket zero turn rider will slip through narrow gates and let you mow in hard-to-reach areas. Features include: Heavy-gauge deck for durability; molded rubber discharge chute that bounces back from hard knocks; anti-scalp rollers on 52- and 48-in. models; adjustable arm rests, panel mounted choke, 12V accessory outlet for MP3 player or cell-phone; and quick Lift foot pedal to raise and lower deck on the go.

Contact Bunton at 866/469-1CGC or www.buntonturf.com / circle no. 280

Dixon

Dixon's Grizzly family of zero turning radius (ZTR) mowers feature five models with Kawasaki and Kohler engine options ranging from 25 to 30 hp and cutting decks measuring 52 to 72 in. The ZTRs can reach top speeds of up to 10 mph and feature the HFS three-blade cutting deck with 11-gauge steel construction and 1/4-in. reinforced front, side and spindle areas, plus heavy-duty anti-scalp roller mounts. Deck height is adjustable from 1.5 – 5.5 in.

Contact Dixon at 800/264-6075 or www.dixon-ztr.com / circle no. 281



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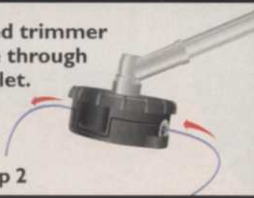
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TECHNOLOGY TRACK YOUR COSTS

Many companies know to the penny how much money is spent in maintenance and repairs. Can you?



Record it, file it

BY ALLEN SPENCE

That machine must be eating those things; I swear I bought six of them yesterday.

Sound familiar?

Maybe you need to come up with a way

to control the cost of items your crews regularly use. What you're *actually* spending on parts and supplies might surprise you. Many companies can tell to the penny how much money is spent in maintenance and repairs for every piece of equipment. Can you?

Do you keep records of every piece of equipment you own? In a file you need to place your purchase contract, warranty paperwork, a copy of the owner's manual (in a location where everyone can refer to it) and a maintenance log.

The maintenance log can be as simple as writing on the inside panel of the folder. Some people use a small notebook and others a commercially available receipt book. Use whichever one works for you. The log should contain the model, serial number and type or code number of the piece of equipment and the same numbers for the engine if it is different than those of the equip-

ment. Also, list the part numbers for the items you regularly use, such as spark plugs, air filters and trimmer heads. (Yes, some people are using computers to do this, but what do they do when the computer crashes?)

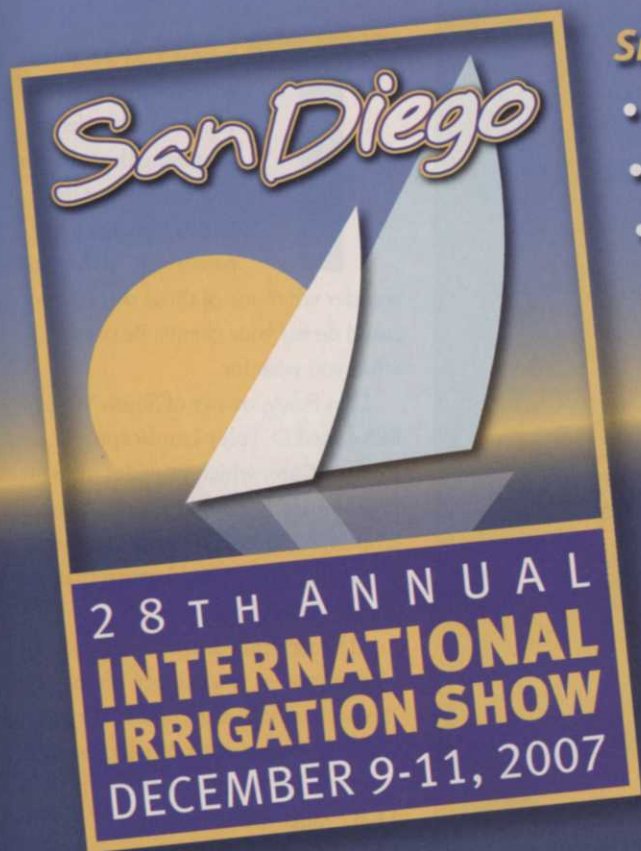
Record in the log the dates of service and the activity performed each and every time the equipment is repaired or maintenance is performed. Don't forget to log and put in the same file all receipts for work performed either under warranty or out of warranty. In addition to maintenance tracking, it's also wise to include parts purchased, fuel used, mixing oils and other equipment-specific information.

You're creating a document that can be used to track the costs of purchasing, using and maintaining the equipment. This log helps you decide when to replace a piece of equipment, whether or not the type or model is the correct one for the job, and what type of service and reliability the machine has. It may also help you when or if you decide to resell the equipment to someone. Many times knowing a machine's history can help in the selling process.

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

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Foley uses riders like this Husqvarna BZ7234TD mower, which has a 72-inch cutting width to service commercial accounts.



BIG mowers

Bigger may be better, but really big may not be very efficient

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS / Managing Editor

There is a certain inherent appeal to mowers with really big decks. Watching the folks on golf courses cut long fairways in just a few passes may make you wonder what one of those machines could do for your clients. Be careful what you wish for.

Dan Foley, owner of South Walpole, MA-based D. Foley Landscape and CampusCare, which provides mowing for commercial properties and private schools, has used 100-in.-cut mowers — the big boys — and learned that bigger isn't always better.

"The natural tendency is to go to the biggest mower you can get," Foley says. "So we looked at the golf industry to see what they were using. We looked at the sports turf industry. We went up to an 11-ft., range-wing mower."

But really big isn't always really good. A couple of things come into play when you buy such specialized equipment. The first is capacity utilization. If you buy a mower for one account, and it sits for the rest of the week you're not using the equipment efficiently. That leads to several things which may not be so good for your business, says Foley.

"You start looking for work to keep that mower busy. That's not necessarily a great strategy, because it might pull you into something that really doesn't match the kind of work you're looking for," says Foley, whose company should gross \$4.5 to \$5 million this year. The company, which sits a stone's throw (or perhaps a Tom Brady pass) from Gillette Stadium, employs 38 during the peak season and between 14 and 18 during the winter.

Another problem that may arise with under-utilized equipment is that you may need special routing arrangements

to move the mower to sites that cannot fully cut the lawn, Foley says.

"The third issue is you start using it in areas in which it's not really best. The wings get picked up, and you're mowing with the front deck, which is only a 70-in. cut or so anyway."

And don't forget transport. You may need to purchase a specialized trailer or truck just to move the big mower. Ouch, that's going to add to expenses.

Big but not too big

Foley is taking his company through an ongoing "lean" program. The goal is to make the company more efficient. To that end, Foley wanted to use mowers 80% of the time during the work week. The question he asked was, "How small do we have to go to still make that work?" The company settled on 61-in. and 72-in. riders.

"That's kind of what we've hedged back to the middle on," says Foley. "We've got some mowers that aren't that much bigger than typical. We're using them in a well organized way, usually combined with other mowers on the trailer."

Foley does see two areas where the biggest cutters make sense — specialized sports turf mowing and where you have a route that allows you to move it (daily) and it's really working at high capacity.

Neither of those were the case for Foley so the company sold its 11-ft. mower in 2006.

"We tracked the hour meter," he says. "We tried to look at how many hours a week that mower was working. When it was working, we asked the operator to give us feedback. We asked him, does he always have the wings down, so he's really mowing at 11 feet, or was he actually picking up and moving to mow really at a 70 to 80-in. width anyway."


"We decided not to add more big

mowers and instead add more in the 61-in. to 72-in. range, which are the traditional riders," Foley says. "We looked at their ability to 'grass cycle.' We looked at ground speed. We look at how easy it was to adjust the cut height."

The dealer relationship

There are other factors to consider if you're considering putting down big money to buy a large mower.

"If you simplify and you standardize, then training gets easier, stocking



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Circle 138

Foley once used this John Deere mower with a 128-in. cutting width.



parts gets easier, maintaining them gets easier," Foley says. "If you buy one big 11-foot mower and it breaks down, and you've got it maximized on a schedule of high utilization, you can't just throw a 61-inch mower into the fleet to

replace that 11-foot cut. You better have a dealer relationship that they'll have a demo, a back up unit or a loaner. You can buy a \$40,000 mower, you work it real hard and it has a problem. All mechanical things have problems once

in awhile. You'd better have a real strong back-up plan. We did."

Even if you do have a good relationship with that dealer, you might be in competition for that backup unit.

"The landscape market is not a big market for these mowers, not these big specialized mowers," Foley says. "If it goes down and a golf course's goes down, sometimes a dealer might be more motivated to send the loaner over to a golf course because the course is buying a couple every few years.

"When you buy a specialized mower, make sure they have a plan when it needs service or when it goes down. You can't throw a bunch of small mowers at replacing it."

Foley learned that a good relationship with the dealer is important for other reasons, as well.

"We were always looking for the new, cutting-edge evolution in equipment," he says. "Whether it was through our personal desire or a manufacturer coming out with something a little different, we ended up with six different mower brands and two servicing dealers. It became difficult to manage.

"We have assessed minimizing the number of different brands that we use and partnering with that manufacturer. We're at the size now that we have our own fleet department or finding a dealer that we can partner with.

Sometimes you can so focused on the newest cutting-edge mower, whether it's big or small, you end up with one or two in your fleet, but you don't really have a dealer relationship that's strong. It ends up hurting the overall effectiveness of that mower." **LM**

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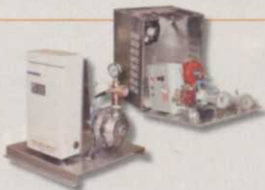
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PREPARE YOUR TURF FOR WINTER

BY KATHIE KALMOWITZ, PH.D.

**Practical fall
fertility and weed
control strategies
to keep turfgrass
healthy heading
into next season**



Fall fertility will go a long way in preparing turfgrass for next spring and summer.

Turfgrass stressed from poor cultural or pest management practices in the summer can cause problems that will linger into the following growing season. Fall is the optimum time for lawn care and grounds professionals to make a successful spring transition.

The first step to ensure healthy turf growth in the spring is to take stock of fertility rates and nutrient loads going into the winter.

Stimulate cool-season grasses

High temperatures, heat stress and drought cause cool-season turf to thin during the summer. Turf professionals should stimulate active growth of these grasses with a complete fertilizer from August through September, and pay special attention in charging the nitrogen rates. As evening temperatures begin to cool below 70 F, increase nitrogen rates from below 5% to greater than 16%.

continued on page 90

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continued from page 88

Deliver half the nitrogen source in a slow-release form, such as sulfur-coated or urea-based nitrogen. Fertilizers based solely on ammonia nitrate nitrogen will release too quickly, making them unable to spread the turfgrass fertility needs through the winter. If you experience lots of rain, periodic liquid fertilization that includes an iron source may be helpful.

Before purchasing fertilizers, check the label to determine if both the source of nitrogen (ammoniacal nitrogen, urea or sulfur-coated urea) and percentage (16%, 19%, 22%, 34%, etc.) satisfies the cool-season turfgrass needs for the fall.

If you're reseeding thinned turfgrass stands in late August through October, consider delaying complete fertilization



Fall is the optimum time for lawn care and grounds professionals to make a successful spring transition.

until the new stand has grown-in and you've mowed several times. This will help avoid disease problems that can occur while daytime temperatures are still high.

In this situation, consider a liquid foliar starter fertilizer lower in nitrogen and higher in phosphorus and potassium to encourage root growth.

Winterize warm-season turf

In areas where warm-season turfgrasses go dormant or are susceptible to periodic low winter temperatures, begin to

slow the turfgrass growth and prepare to 'winterize' in August. Reduce but do not eliminate nitrogen rates. This helps maintain but not push excessive new top growth. A balanced fertilizer should be in the range of 5-10-20 or 5-10-31 where phosphorus (i.e., 10) or the potassium source (i.e., 20-31) are a ratio of elements that promote strong roots for the fall and winter months.

Mechanical & cultural controls

► **Aerification:** Core removal through aerification promotes air circulation in the soil's root zone. Aerification reduces the amount of thatch while follow-up verticutting removes the thatchy material, providing an even surface. Try to complete aerification by early August as warm-season turf as growth slows and it needs to recover before dormancy. Weed growth may also follow due to the increased light penetration to the soil. Raising mowing heights will help reduce weed-seed germination.

► **Overseeding.** In warm-season grasses, a lawn care operator or sports turf manager needs to determine if an active, green-growing surface is desired through the winter months. If so, overseeding with a cool-season grass should take place from August through October, typically the best month to overseed in most regions.

Overseeding in warm-season turf can be more stressful and problematic as the practice will affect both fertilizer forms and the timing of a pre-emergent herbicide application. Carefully select the amount and type of nitrogen levels in starter fertilizers

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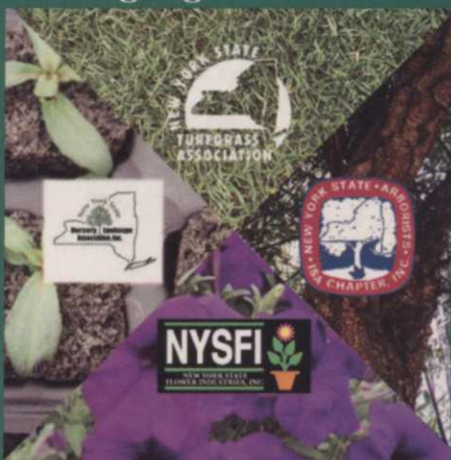
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Circle 142



to avoid stimulating late-season growth of the warm-season turfgrass.

For cool-season turf, fall seeding re-establishes the turfgrass stand after it has thinned during hot summer months. When well timed, the reseeded stand establishes good root growth and a dense canopy prior to the onset of limiting, cooler nighttime temperatures.

Chemical controls

If you've chosen not to overseed warm-season turfgrass, it is recommended to apply a pre-emergent herbicide to prevent winter annual broadleaf weeds and grasses including annual bluegrass, also known as *Poa annua*. Although *Poa* can germinate over several months, the greatest flush has been documented in early fall. In non-overseeded Bermudagrass, apply a pre-emergent from August to October. Pre-emergent herbicides such as the dinitroanilines (DNA), dithiopyr, or the pre-post product pronamide should be applied two to four months prior to, or two to four months after, if overseeding. Always consult specific product labels for herbicide restrictions, rates and use sites.

Several post-emergent herbicides are available for use on Bermudagrass for control of *Poa annua* and include: rimsulfuron, foramsulfuron, atrazine, simazine and sulfentrazone.


When a dense stand of cool-season grass is established in a timely manner and appropriately fed, winter weed control may not be necessary. As the months progress, broadleaf weeds may develop and are easily controlled with a number of liquid post-emergent herbicides. A 'weed and feed' post herbicide plus fertilizer can be applied in the spring if a granular product is favored.

Whether you're maintaining warm-season or cool-season turfgrass, develop a preventative plan. If you don't have

healthy turfgrass during the active growing months, you'll have to deal with replacing turf and even greater pest pressures when spring arrives. Begin with establishing fertility to promote a healthy stand of turf and follow-up with

the appropriate cultural and chemical controls to keep healthy turfgrass through the winter. **LM**

— *The author is Technical Specialist, BASF Turf & Ornamentals. Contact her at kathie.kalmowitz@basf.com.*



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The design

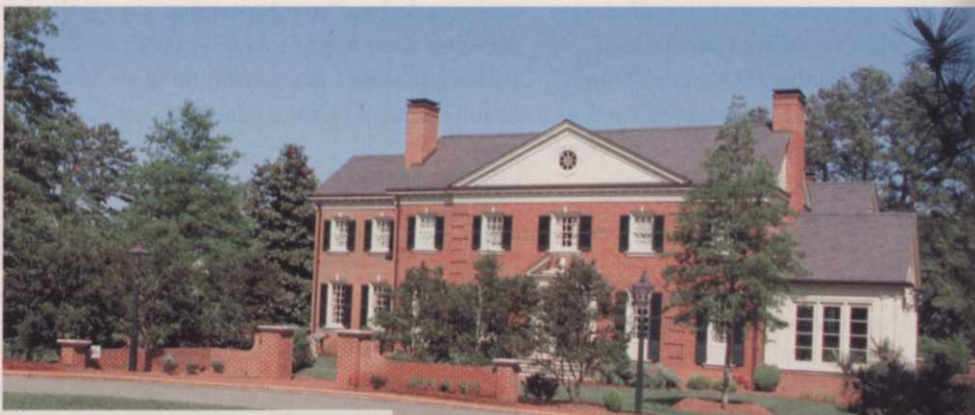
A formal, high-maintenance landscape for a Southern residence – one that offers an exquisite experience of sights and scents.

Project Requirements

- Seamlessly integrating a variety of smaller gardenscapes.
- Creating a formal setting that is still usable for the residents (and their pets).
- Working with others to ensure the amount of pruning and other demanding responsibilities would be met.

Project Specifics

The goal was to create a “a study in tension and release, where tight-clipped formality meets managed exuberance.”



ABOVE Great care was taken to design and create a lush, elegant and inviting landscape.

INSET Spilling espalier softens a fountain in a sea of fescue. Efficient irrigation and close-quarter integrated pest management (IPM) are keys to success for this account



ABOVE The hornbeam allée was pleached and pollarded at the pool. The turf, less than eight feet from the water, contrasts nicely against white concrete decking.

LEFT This rose will drape across the arbor to drip petals on the pool entry as the landscape evolves.



ABOVE Bland Landscaping manages a small collection of hybrid teas for cutting with Witherspoon Rose Culture.

INSET Hugging the outer edge of the drive, magnolia, laurel and tea olive screen the property line. The resulting cadence of elemental repetition gives lush texture and 3-season fragrance.

BELOW Annual color dots the site, highlighting rich detail.



Project Principals

- Tom Bland, Bland Landscaping Co., Apex, NC, www.blandlandscaping.com
- Services include commercial and residential landscape design, installation and management. The company takes particular pride in its environmental initiatives, which include fueling its diesel trucks and machinery with B20 bio-diesel; recycling the scrap metal generated from operations (including canned beverage consumption); recycling all office paper and cardboard; recycling waste oil, contaminated fuels and other lubricants; and purchasing power tools that run on hybridized 4-mix engines instead of traditional 2-cycle engines for more torque and less noise, hydrocarbons and fuel consumption.

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

Growing together



BEFORE

Trust became the cornerstone that allows DeSantis Landscapes to provide services to the same estate for nearly three decades.

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS / Managing Editor

oyalty is tenuous. Headlines are filled with reports of companies unexpectedly dismissing employees by the hundreds. And employees are often quite willing to

jump to a competitor for a few dollars more a week.

Customers are no exception. Just because you've been taking care of a property for several years doesn't mean you won't get a call from a client thank-

ing you for your services and letting you know you're no longer needed. That's why it's all-the-more special DeSantis Landscapes has established a relationship that's lasted more than 30 years. The Salem, OR-based maintenance, installation and irrigation company was founded in 1974 by patriarch Tony DeSantis, who is now retired.

Just a couple of years into operation he started doing some work for a couple on their small quarter-acre property. In 1978, the couple (who prefer not to have their name mentioned in this article) moved to 4-acre property and suddenly had the means to really explore landscaping opportunities. That began a three-decade relationship that has matured along with both DeSantis and the landscape.



Building upon trust

DeSantis Landscape not only performs maintenance on the property, the company has also installed and maintains irrigation along with several seating areas and beautiful private spots.

But it wasn't always so easy.













"We actually worked for them when they lived up the street in a smaller home," Tony explains. "At the time the property being maintained was pretty small, maybe a quarter-acre landscape."







(Main photo and right) DeSantis installed hundreds of flowers, built a number of private areas and pathways on the 4-acre property. (Before) Much of the property went unlandscaped for years.

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

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Circle 144

After buying the property it took the couple a few years to decide what to do with it. They hadn't worked with DeSantis long enough to have developed a strong level of trust.

"We were pretty young, pretty new in the business. They were young, and pretty recently wealthy," says Tony.



"They were guarded about people trying to take advantage of them. That put strain on the relationship for two to three years. Then they started to realize that we wanted to be partners. We wanted to be long-term service providers for them."

And that's just what has happened.

"It's pretty rare that you have a client that trusts you implicitly," Tony says. "Of course, we do everything we can to preserve that. It's well worth the time and the effort, even though sometimes

A sloped property with creeks that tended to overflow required irrigation and retention walls around the property. (Below) The grounds are interspersed areas that allow visitors to rest and enjoy the beauty.



you have to work through tough times."

DeSantis Landscapes has done several renovations and made numerous improvements to the property over the length of the relationship. It continues with DeSantis Landscape crews on the property four times a week, with Office Manager Ken DeSantis talking to the owners weekly.

Projects grow in scope

The family that owns the estate certainly saw the value of the ongoing relationship. As it blossomed, the variety

continued on page 99





continued from page 96

and number of projects the company provided grew right along with it.

"The basic property was a small grassy area and some shrubs and some mature trees," Tony recalls. "There are a number of those original mature trees still on the site. We did everything from major drainage work. There were a number of springs on this property. We've had to manage the drainage for that and of course, installing irrigation throughout for turf, trees, shrubs, some drip systems for hanging baskets – major all-around irrigation. There is lots of lawn area.

"The rest of the property is a mix of perennials, shrubs and trees and some formal plantings in a few areas. But the site is mostly a pretty natural setting," he adds. "We tried to maintain that with fairly natural plantings that accent that setting. There is a creek running through that property. We've tried to blend the landscape to fit a natural setting, which the owners like too."

Crews are on the property four days a week tending the turf, flowers and to check the numerous hardscapes on the grounds.

Some of the landscape the DeSantis Company installed has been directed more to family fun and relaxation, such as an artificial putting green, a sports court and, more recently, several other structures – small pavilions, sitting areas and a timber frame pavilion.

No landscape is without challenges and this one has its share, including creeks that flooded and washed out the pathways snaking through the grounds.

"We replaced a lot of that pathway with stone," Tony says. "Those are large projects. Because there is also slope on the property. We've been adding – almost every year – some new stone walls to create a more easily maintained and more beautiful property."

Two years ago, the company revamped the irrigation system there. "It's now a Hunter IMMS, which is a



centrally controlled irrigation system," says Dean DeSantis, president. "Here in our office we can pull up a screen, and change settings, turn off a zone or turn on a zone. It also notifies us if there are any breaks in any lines. We immediately can identify the zone where the break is happening so we can shut it off quickly."

"It's a high-tech system," Dean adds. "One of the reasons they like it was because it's environmentally friendly, it makes irrigation more efficient and it drastically cuts down on the number of service calls to the system."

In addition to the irrigation, DeSantis installed lights around the property.

"The landscape lighting is spectacular," Dean says, "It's very dramatic lighting. We've had lighting reps come out and use it in their marketing materials."

Because of the size of the property, there's always work to be done. Sometimes DeSantis make the suggestions, other times the property owners do.

"There was an area of lawn that was too shady. It didn't do well. The owners wanted a horseshoe pit," Ken says. "We picked that location to get rid of the wet

DeSantis is cataloging the estate's hundreds of plants and trees, which are treated without synthetic fertilizers.

soggy lawn and put something in there that didn't require sunlight. A horseshoe pit turned into a very nice rockwork sitting area, with walls and perennials around it. Those types of projects tend to pop up every year or so."

One thing the company is doing is cataloging all the plant materials. There are hundreds of varieties of flora on the grounds, and the task of tracking it all was taken on by one of the company's employees. She's got four or five pages of handwritten notes and is not even halfway completed, Ken DeSantis says.

"Most of it is native or at least



acclimated to the area," he says. "One of the most spectacular features of the property is a cedar planted in the late 1800s. It's about 150 feet tall. It's next to the house. It's gorgeous. The tree is monitored to make sure no dangerous branches are going to fall."

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Sustainable landscape

The good will the owners of DeSantis Landscapes have built with their clients extends beyond the projects they do. It's also seen in the materials and manner in which they carry out the work.

"A couple years ago when we first decided we wanted to use the sustainable approach, we approached the family with our ideas and plans of taking their property to a more sustainable level," Ken says.

"They were very excited about that. They're a family that likes to recycle anyway. It fit with the landscape. We started doing it; it's been a great opportunity for us to try things out and see the successes that we've had."

"The property, health-wise, hasn't looked better in many, many years. The homeowner has noticed that," Ken adds.

DeSantis uses biodiesel fuel in its diesel trucks and equipment. Workers use four-cycle blowers. They allow for lower emissions and a lower decibel level than the two-stroke that is more common in the industry. Noise is a concern for neighbors when the company's crews are on site four days a week.

The company also switched to green power in the office. Quieter machines and a green office helped the company earn Oregon's first commercial ecological landscape business designation.

"The property looked good to begin with, and it looks better now," Ken says. "We stopped using synthetic fertilizers and synthetic pesticides out there. We pretty much went cold turkey out there and started using the organics, compost

tea applications. We do three to four applications a year out there depending on the location.

"We've seen a dramatic increase in the health and the visual aesthetics of the property." **LM**



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Circle 147

Fall heralds *new* performers

The latest from breeders give landscapers new flower varieties to offer their clients.

BY CHRISTINE KELLEHER

Fall flowers provide a last hurrah of color in the landscape before winter. And nothing can provide more instant or long lasting color throughout this season than asters, chrysanthemums and dendranthema. Breeding efforts in these crops bring added value for consumer and commercial installations.

Chrysanthemums reign as queen of the fall, and Prophets series garden mums, with breeding focused on keeping quality and durability, set the standard. Colors include the rich hues of red, orange, bronze, yellow and gold that mirror the changing autumn color palette to pink, purple, coral, salmon and white.

They're versatile and available in range of sizes from 6 in. to gallon pots, bushel baskets, hanging baskets and many other decorative containers.

The popular Prophets and newer

European collection of Prophets garden chrysanthemums provide a succession of color that's fresh all fall. Key breeding objectives for the Prophets series focus on plant habits that are full, round mounds or sphere shapes loaded with flowers that demonstrate improved keeping quality in the landscape. Keeping quality includes color and flower form retention, along with tolerance to fall wind and rain.

From early to late fall

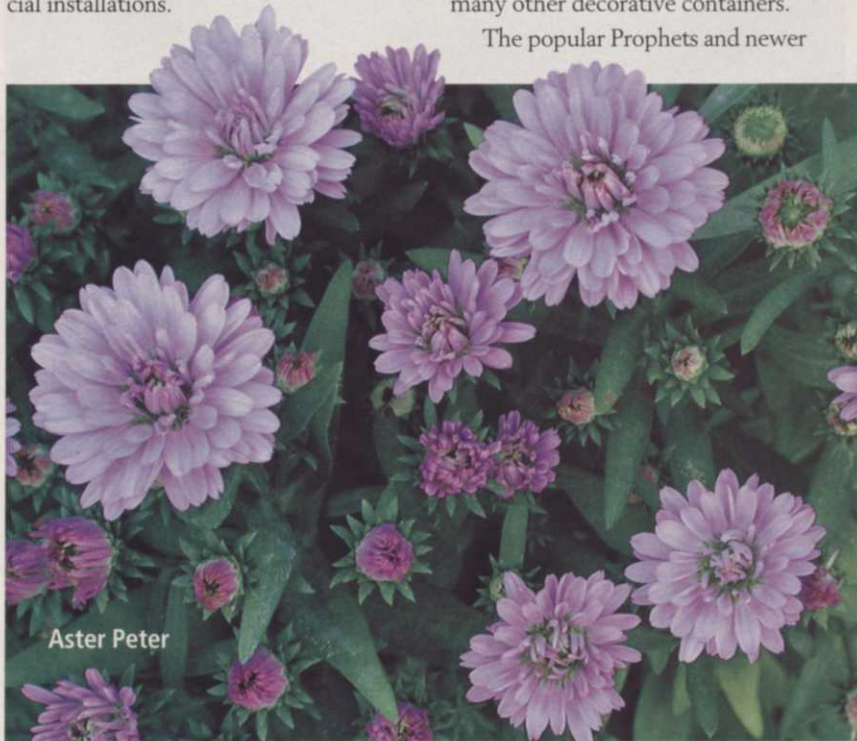
These plants are available in a broad spectrum of natural-season flowering times from early September through October. The garden mum season is even extending into early August through improved varieties that perform well in grower summer-shaded programs.

New varieties to look for this fall are *Jolly Cheryl*, a rich, red decorative; *Cool Cheryl*, a white two-tone; and clear yellow *Sparkling Cheryl*.

Offshoots of the two-tone lavender decorative *Cheryl*, these new additions complete the family, which also includes two-tone dark lavender *Regal Cheryl* and *Spicy Cheryl*, a two-tone orange. Plant them together in the landscape for an outstanding show of late-season color, with flowering starting in early October.

European collection of Prophets varieties feature fantastic sphere-shaped

continued on page 104



Aster Peter

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Plant care and maintenance *tips*

The beauty of all these plants is that they have similar cultural needs and offer showy, low maintenance color for the fall landscape.

- ▶ **Earlier fall planting is better.** Plant in the ground at least six weeks ahead of the first hard freeze.
- ▶ **Fertilize and water well after planting.** Do NOT fertilize plants in bloom; use only clear water.
- ▶ **Plant into properly conditioned, well-drained soil.** Keep the soil moist as fall approaches. September and even early October can be dry.
- ▶ **Asters and dendranthema are hardy perennials.** Garden mums are considered to be tender perennials and, as such, need a little extra care. Temperature is not the only factor in their overwintering success. If plants remain wet over winter, the crowns will rot. Therefore, the planting area must be well drained. Conversely, if the area is too dry or windy, plants will dry out and die. Apply mulch after the ground has frozen in the late fall and early winter. It is also helpful to protect tender new growth from hard, late-season frosts by using a protective cover and not cutting stems back until spring. — CK



Garden Mums Jacqueline

continued from page 102

habits covered with hundreds of blooms. New are *Jacqueline* and *Theresa*, flowering in mid September, and *Ashley*, which flowers in early October. *Jacqueline* is a two-tone lavender decorative that won't fade out to white with age. *Theresa* features large 2-in. daisy blooms that can develop as a unique two-tone color, especially in the heat. *Ashley* is an attention getting orange with a decorative flower form.

The new dendranthema Igloo series from Blooms of Bressingham is a breeding breakthrough for the genus. The older dendranthema Sheffield varieties pale by comparison. *Rosy Igloo*,

New plants

GARDEN MUMS/BLOOM DATES

- Alisha (lavender daisy, Sept. 28)
- Ashley (orange decorative, Oct. 5)
- Bonnie (red daisy, Sept. 13)
- Cool Cheryl (white, two-tone decorative, Oct. 6)
- Darlene (purple decorative, Sept. 18)
- Jacqueline (two-tone, lavender decorative, Sept. 16)
- Jillian (lavender decorative; Sept. 11)
- Jolly Cheryl (red decorative, Oct. 8)
- Mary (yellow decorative, Sept. 25)
- Phyllis (coral daisy, Sept. 10)
- Sly Jenna (red decorative, Sept. 24)
- Sparkling Cheryl (yellow decorative, Oct. 5)
- Theresa (lavender daisy, Sept. 19)
- Wilma (white decorative, Sept. 27)

ASTERS

- Henry III (dark purple, double, Sept. 23)



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Sunny Igloo and *Warm Igloo* are truly hardy perennials, tested for USDA Hardiness Zones 5 to 9. All feature identical domed habits with masses of uniformly flowering, duplex daisy blooms beginning in mid-September the first year and mid-August the second year. Gardeners love the set-it-and-forget-it landscape performance, with no pinching need to maintain their wonderful shape.

Asters are generally known for their very early fall color and blue color range, a hue not found in chrysanthemums. The new aster Royalty series now offers later-flowering varieties with showy double blooms. All varieties in the three-color mix offer a more compact habit

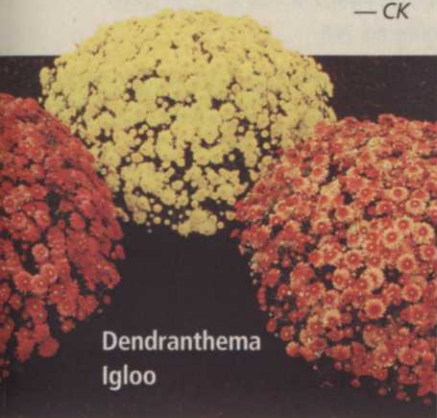
Marie III (pink, double, Sept. 21)
Peter III (light blue, double, Sept. 23)

DENDRANTHEMA

Rosy Igloo (red duplex daisy)
Sunny Igloo (yellow duplex daisy)
Warm Igloo (orange-bronze duplex daisy)

Flower mid-Sept. 1st year; mid-Aug. 2nd year
Dates given are approximate for northern U.S.

— CK



Dendranthema
Igloo

and similar or faster natural-season flowering than any other double-type Asters on the market. *Henry III*, a dark purple, and *Peter III*, a light blue, bloom September 23 in the North. *Marie III* features pink flowers and blooms September 21.

Flowering in the South for all will be seven to 10 days earlier. **LM**

— *The author is marketing manager and does public relations for Yoder Brothers Inc. She can be reached at KellehC@yoder.com.*

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Products

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Aquascape AquaBasin

Aquascape's all-new AquaBasin is made out of black high-density polyethylene with a double-wall construction and an octagon shape, allowing for maximum strength when installing and back filling into the ground. The AquaBasin measures

45-in. front to back and left to right with a depth of 14-in. and will hold 75 gallons of water. There is a pre-cut hole in the bottom for easy access while attaching the plumbing and two 9-in. by 12-in. grated doors on the top, one on each side that allows for multiple pump locations along with easy access to the pump.

For more information contact Aquascape 866/877-6637 or www.aquascapeinc.com / circle no. 285



Vinyl Tree Guards

A.M. Leonard's Vinyl Tree Guards offer economical and optimal protection of a growing tree's trunk. These guards are easy and quick to install on any species, protecting against mishaps with a trimmer, mower or other equipment. The A.M. Leonard Vinyl Tree Guards are white in color to reflect summer sun and prevent sun scald, which

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Miller-Leaman Inc.'s stainless steel Thompson Filters prevent sprinkler nozzles and micro-drip emitters from clogging in various irrigation applications. The efficient filters feature a large conical screen element, offering substantially more screen surface area versus traditional y-strainers and basket strainers. The filters are available with a variety of screen mesh options, ranging from large perforated hole-openings down to approximately 60 micron. As liquid enters the bottom of the filter housing and flows upward, heavier particulate is accelerated downward into the large debris reservoir at the base of the filter. The particulate is then flushed from the reservoir via the 1.5-in. flush port.

For more information contact Miller-Leaman Inc. at 800/881-0320 or www.millerleaman.com / circle no. 289



reduces damage to the tree; punched with holes for air and moisture circulation, fighting mold and mildew growth; weather resistant and durable for long-lasting protection and an extended life of the tree.

For more information contact A.M. Leonard at 800/543-8955 or www.amleo.com / circle no. 286

Pequea C-Series dump trailers

Pequea's C-Series line of dump trailers includes three models with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) ranging from 2,999 lbs. to 14,000 lbs. Designed for light-duty hauling, the C500 doubles the carrying capacity of pickup trucks with a 5-ft. by 8-ft. box. A two-way gate and rub-rail system make security, transport and dumping simple. The C1500, with a 6.17-ft. by 10-ft. box and 10,000 lbs. GVWR, is an all-purpose hauler. Split- and landscape-gate options make the unit ideal for transporting equipment, landscape and construction materials. The commercial-grade C2500 stabilizes dumping on rough terrain and handles uneven loads with its scissor lift system.

For more information contact Pequea 866/684-0393 or www.pequea.com / circle no. 287

Top tractor ▼

KIOTI's DK90 tractor features a 90-hp, 268-cu.-in. turbo-charged Perkins diesel engine and 16 synchro shuttle gears. The most powerful tractor in KIOTI's lineup, the DK90 gives more power to the front end loader and all the other implements, which attach easily to a stabilized, telescopic three-point hitch. The DK90 one lever joystick simplifies loader control for the operator. In addition, the rear differential lock, auto PTO switch, wet disc brakes and on-demand, electric control, four-wheel drive are all standard features. The fully enclosed cab comes with deluxe suspension seat, power steering and tilt wheel to minimize operator fatigue while digging, raking, tilling or mowing.

For more information contact KIOTI at 877/465-4684 or www.KIOTI.com / circle no. 288





Historic lighting

Sun Valley Lighting introduces Shorewood, a classically styled lantern designed to enhance historic restorations and new commercial projects. Shorewood can be wall- or pole-mounted and features an integral, self-contained ballast compartment with "quick disconnect" capability. This allows the electrical module to be unplugged and replaced in seconds during routine servicing or maintenance. The luminaire is UL-listed for damp or wet locations and houses lamps up to 250 watts. Shorewood features a rounded dome and curved base with vintage detailing.

For more information contact Sun Valley Lighting at 800/877-6537 or www.sunvalleylighting.com / circle no. 290

Backpack blower

Husqvarna's new 150BT backpack blower, the intermediate-sized option in the product line-up, is powered by Husqvarna's low maintenance X-TORQ engine, which delivers increased power and reduces fuel consumption and emissions. The 50-cc engine



produces an air speed of 180 mph and an airflow of 494 cfm through the tubes. The 150BT blower is equipped with Husqvarna's LowVib anti-vibration system. The 150BT features a rigid backpack frame with thick padding, wide contoured shoulder straps for a comfortable fit, and a hip belt to reduce stress on the back.

For more information contact Husqvarna at 800/HUSKY-62 or www.usa.husqvarna.com / circle no. 291

Rodent Rocks

J.T. Eaton has become the exclusive distributor of the Rodent Rock bait stations. The

patented plastic stations are designed to have the look and texture of granite, slate or sandstone rocks, thus blending in with the

landscaping while protecting it from rats and mice. The stations are secured to the surface by the PermaTite bait stakes, made exclusively for Rodent Rock stations, by liquid adhesive or by a 15.5-in. cable stake. Each station is capable of holding more than 1 lb. of bait.

For more information contact J.T. Eaton at 800/321-3421 or www.jteaton.com / circle no. 292



Tractor series

McCormick International USA has entered the compact tractor market with the introduction of the CT Series. The four tractor models range from 28 to 47 hp with three transmission options, including a 12+12 and 16+16 synchro-shuttle or 3- and 4-speed hydrostatic transmission. The tractors are powered by a fuel-efficient 4-cylinder Mitsubishi diesel engine. With up to 2,756 lbs. of lifting capacity and 8.2 gpm of hydraulic flow, the CT Series can power a wide range of attachments.

For more information contact McCormick International USA at 866/327-6733 or www.mccormick-intl.com / circle no. 293

Irrigation kit

Underhill introduces MicroEase, a new series of pre-packaged micro-irrigation kits for small area landscaping. First in the series, the MicroEase Small Area Kit (ME-8SS-PK) streamlines installation of low volume systems by including all components necessary for irrigating planter boxes, hanging baskets or containers. Underhill's Small Area Kit includes 25 6-in. spikes, each featuring an 8-stream pattern with adjustable flow and radius. The flow adjusts up to 14 gph and ra-



dus adjusts from 0 to 3 ft. The Small Area Kit has a precipitation rate of 3.5-in. per hour.

For more information contact Underhill at 866/863-3744 or www.underhill.us / circle no. 294

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nutritious soil means landscapers can plant densely to create a floral mass of color. The basic Yard Yog is 5.5 in. in diameter and 48 in. long. Landscapers simply arrange the Yogs wherever they intend to grow plants; wet them thoroughly; then cut slits in the canvas and place seedlings in the slits.

For more information contact Yard Yogs at 800/578-7197 or www.yardyogs.com / circle no. 295

California registration

DuPont Professional Products' Provaunt insecticide, featuring a new chemistry and mode of action for controlling caterpillars and other key turf and ornamental pests, is now registered for use in California. Indoxacarb, the active ingredient in Provaunt, features a unique mode of action that leverages an insect's own enzymes to convert to the MetaActive compound. The active ingredient has been classified as reduced-risk by

the EPA and there is no required buffer zone for applications around water.

For more information contact DuPont Professional Products at 888/6-DUPONT or www2.dupont.com / circle no. 296





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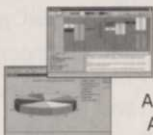
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LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT (ISSN 0894-1254) is published monthly (12 issues per year) by Questex Media Group, Inc., 306 W Michigan St, Suite 200, Duluth, MN 55802. **Subscription rates:** one year, \$49, two years \$69 in the United States & Possessions; \$79 for one year, \$115 for two years in Canada and Mexico; all other countries \$150 for one year, \$225 for two years. For airmail delivery, include an additional \$75 per order annually. Single copies (pre-paid only): \$8 in the United States; \$10 in Canada and Mexico; \$15 all other countries. Back issues, if available: \$16 in the U.S.; \$20 in Canada and Mexico; \$30 all other countries. Add \$6.50 per order for shipping and handling. **Periodicals postage paid** at Duluth, MN 55806 and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Please send address changes to Landscape Management, P.O. Box 5057, Brentwood, TN 37024-5057. Canadian G.S.T. number: 840 033 278 RT0001. Publications Mail Agreement Number 40017597. Printed in the U.S.A.



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Winners

RESOURCES

SMALL/MID-SIZED COMPANIES TO WATCH

TLC Total Lawn Care

The proper can-do attitude makes this company a real winner.

BY MIKE SEUFFERT /
Associate Editor

What makes a winner stand out from the competition?

For Gerry Bower, president of TLC Total Lawn Care in Weslaco, TX, the answer is total attitude.

For this Winners section, here at *Landscape Management*, we highlight small to mid-sized companies that are doing something special to set them apart. With anticipated 2007 revenues of about \$600,000, Bower's company might be the smallest Winner yet. But that doesn't stop him from thinking big.

Several months ago, as *Landscape Management* was conducting its LM 100 survey of the biggest companies in the industry, Bower submitted an entry that said, "When I came across your survey, I felt I should give you a heads up. We're not there...yet. But look for us. And though we aren't the biggest, we are one of the best."

"We at TLC developed a mission statement that we live by – to exceed our customers' expectation in the quality and professionalism



of our service," Bower continued. "We provide an excellent working environment for our employees and a positive return on investment for all shareholders. If we can live up to this mission statement, we will succeed. I look forward to being interviewed when we are on the top of your list."

Getting started

A transplanted Canadian, Bower came to Texas with a background in the manufacturing industry. Seeing a need for landscape maintenance services, he began TLC on the side in 2000 with a couple of partners. Less than two years later, he bought his partners out. By 2003, he decided to make TLC his full-time job.

A winning attitude.

Gerry Bower, president of TLC Total Lawn Care strives to exceed customers' expectations.

Since then, Bower's grown from four guys and one truck doing \$100,000 in business to 11 employees doing \$600,000. About 60% of the business is in maintenance, 35% in fertilizer application and 5% in irrigation.

"Every day we're learning and growing," says Bower. "We've made quality our number one priority. If I look back at our work in 2000, I can't believe the garbage we did. Now, we're getting compliments from other guys in the industry who say, 'Your lawns are looking better than ours.' For us, that's the ultimate compliment."

Planned growth

Bower says he's on his way up thanks to membership in the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), which provides ideas on how to run his business.

"PLANET has allowed me to meet and get close to the top people and companies in the industry and find out exactly what they are doing to be so successful," Bower says. "I have not found a single PLANET member who hesitates to help us achieve better practices."

For now, Bower says his goal with TLC is to add a couple of guys and trucks. Ultimately, Bower does want to see TLC on the LM 100, but he knows that growth must be planned. He will not take every job that comes his way for the sake of revenue. He knows that to succeed he must be profitable as well.

"I just want this company to be huge – I want to always have this feeling that the possibilities are endless, that we can reach whatever goals we set out," Bower says. "I've learned so much in just a few short years, and I have the confidence that you need to go out and take chances and succeed." **LM**



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