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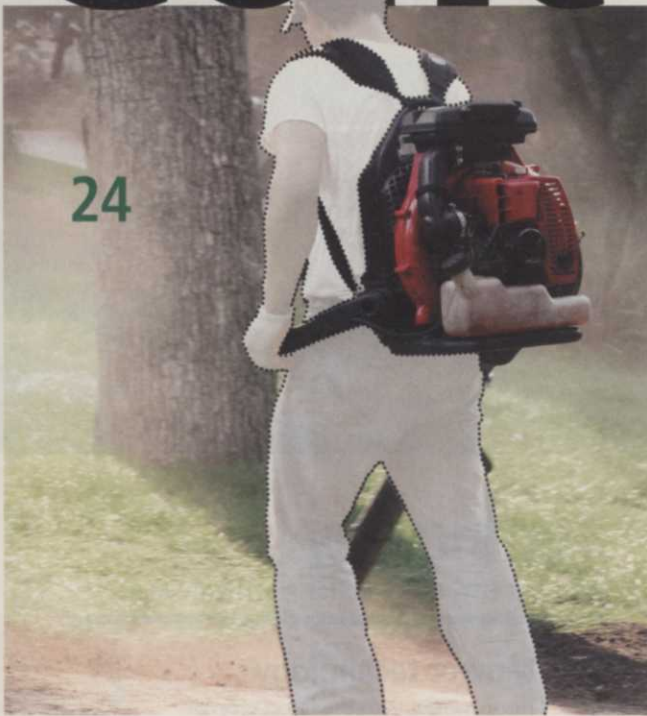
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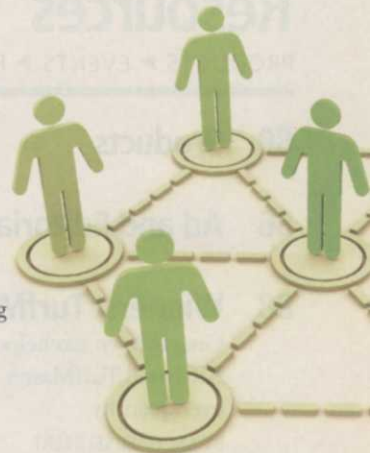
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Rely on regional trade shows

Landscape Management's Senior Science Editor Karl Danneberger explains why state and regional turfgrass conferences are still important tools for contractors: The next time you attend a state turfgrass conference, be reminded that your presence not only helps you to grow as a professional but also contributes to the wellbeing of the industry.

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» Readers respond

What do you think about **global warming** and its impact on the landscape industry?

19% We're already seeing its effects with droughts and temperature swings

15% Global warming is a bunch of bunk

5% The consequences are unknowable right now

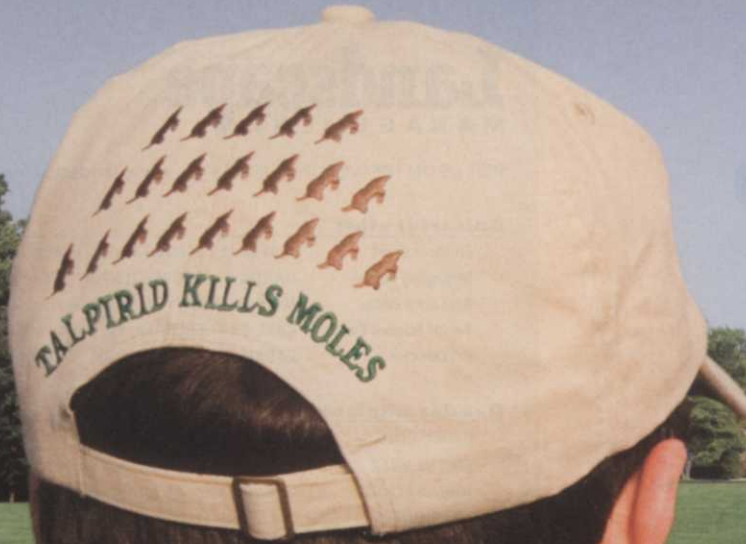
12% If global warming happens, we will adapt and continue to grow

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» Overheard "Do you want the Army Corps of Engineers regulating your birdbath?"

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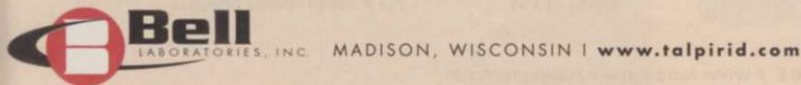
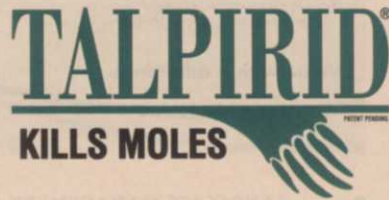
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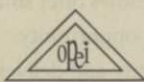
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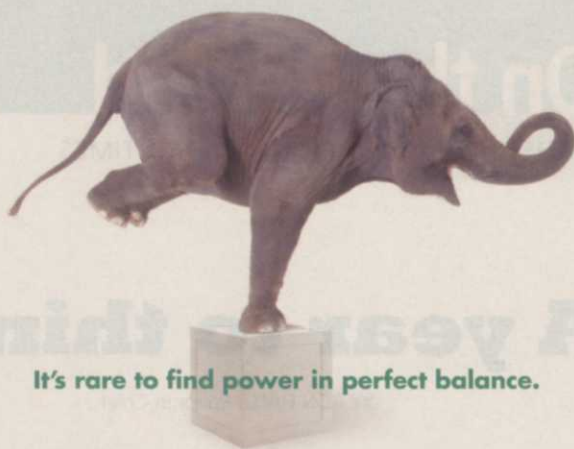
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A year to thin the herd

BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

If you weren't running a business in 1990-1991 or 1979-1982 you may not believe with what I'm about to tell you. Read on anyway.

On a recent 9-day stretch I met with dozens of landscape and lawn care business owners. It was enlightening and, in spite of the crowded flights, enjoyable. During the 5,000-mile hop-skip-and-joint to Chicago, Florida (several stops) and Kansas City, I spoke to and traded thoughts with several groups of contractors.

These conversations convinced me that this season presents the toughest business environment many of you have ever faced, especially if you started your businesses within the past 10 to 15 years, a "boom" time for our industry.

Let's face it, we've had one heck of a run. Our industry has more than doubled in size, both the number of contractors and revenues, since the mid 1990s. Many experienced owners, however, remember when times weren't so good.

Are the good times over? For many of you, yes. Some of you will fail. Others will survive the year (barely), and will learn painful but valuable lessons. Still others, swimming against the broader economic current, will prosper.

My view of 2008 is colored by memories of the 1990-1991 downturn, the severe recession in the late 1970s and late-night conversations with experienced owners. After a beer or two their "real" concerns surface, not only about their own operations, but they fear many less inexperienced owners are cruising on autopilot, convinced that ongoing growth and profitability are inevitable.

They're not many will discover.

Owners that have been counting upon Congress to fix and expand the H-2B seasonal guest worker program now realize this — with a vengeance.

Contractors tied to the coattails of regional and national homebuilders woke up to this reality earlier, months ago, in fact.

Just about every landscape maintenance contractor in markets where the design/build business has slowed due to languishing new home construction is expecting more intense competition from that sector this season.

But, like the stock market where perhaps the sanest advice is to "buy when blood is flowing and sell when trumpets are blowing," hard times offer smart, tightly run companies even greater opportunity.

That's when great owners identify and deliver more of their company's most profitable services to their most profitable customer segments.

That's when they get rid of the junk in their businesses, the under-used equipment, the marginal services and customers.

That's when they shed "C" employees and pick up "A" employees. Good talent will be available.

That's when they buy up struggling competitors, often at bargain prices, and expand into surrounding markets and add services.

While every economic downturn thins the herd of inexperienced, inefficient and under-capitalized companies, it presents smart owners with even greater opportunity.

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Awareness of social architecture leads to building or healing a company's interpersonal interactions.



Managing social architecture

BY BRUCE WILSON

Over many years of building and observing businesses, I have gained a great appreciation of the effect of social architecture on the ability of a company to be successful. It's a piece of the business puzzle that makes or breaks businesses.

While you may argue the execution of things like finance, sales and operations are critical to success, and they are, you can undo the whole thing with poor social architecture.

Leaders are constantly on the lookout for behaviors that demotivate their teams.

So what is social architecture? It's, essentially, how companies behave. It's how the owner affects the company through his or her habits, communication skills, leadership abilities and other behavioral tendencies. It encompasses things like accountability, discipline, planning or the lack there of. It's passion, trust, commitment or the lack there

of. While there are many aspects to this, a single breach, such as lack of organizational trust, can render a whole team of excellent people ineffective.

Many behaviors dictate social architecture, such as an owner violating the chain of command by going directly to people in the company. By bypassing department leaders the owner renders them ineffective. Another undesirable "sacred cow" is the veteran employee who is no longer effective but remains in a position that de-motivates others. A leader's lack of organization can create stresses on the team that causes members to give up or not take initiative. There are many examples.

Some companies have a social architecture, which deals with problems by first assigning blame, a blame culture. This causes people to hide problems and they become bigger problems.

Awareness of social architecture and the effect on the company leads to building or healing a company's interpersonal interactions. It may be hard to approach some of the behaviors that affect social architecture, but they must be addressed. Behavior must be managed and adapted to the desired company culture.

Leaders must always be aware of social architecture. They must be observant and look for indicators of how organizational behavior is either hurting or helping their companies, and then discourage the harmful behavior and encourage desired behavior.

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



The best-in-class benchmark establishes a kind of gold standard that is attainable for the majority of companies in the industry.



Welcome to benchmarking

BY KEVIN KEHOE

A best-in-class company is defined as the benchmark – the top 5% of all companies in an industry. This new column will discuss the performance and practices of best-in-class companies – what they do and how they do it.

We will define best-in-class performance in terms of financial results for labor, overhead, equipment, and profit and loss percentages.

We segment best-in-class companies into Design/Build, Landscape Construction and Maintenance. The table below highlights the P&L benchmarks for these segments. It establishes a gold standard attainable for most landscape firms.

Benchmarks are points of comparison. They: (1) assess operating strengths and weaknesses (2) budget and set objectives (3) establish the basis for a business valuation.

- 1 Assess operating strengths and weaknesses to identify sources of profit leakage:** Conduct a line-by-line comparison of your numbers with the best-in-class numbers. Identify the variances to see shortcomings. Use my chart of accounts (www.kehoe.biz/greenresearch.htm), as a guideline.
- 2 Budget and set objectives to close the leaks:** You must project a pro forma budget based on the benchmark ratios and percentages, and find ways to live within that revenue and cost budget. This process forces hard decision making.
- 3 Establish a basis for business valuation to maximize your return on investment:** The value of your business is based on profits and a multiple of these profits. Increasing profits and this multiple are critical. You will always have greater impact on the value of your business by increasing the multiple. This means you need to execute a few critical strategies versus a long list of trivial tactics to drive up this multiple.

Use the benchmarks as a starting point to focus your team on doing the things that matter. All the rest is noise and distraction.

Use the benchmarks as a starting point to focus your team on doing the things that matter. All the rest is noise and distraction.

— The Author is the owner-manager of Kehoe & Co. Contact him at kkehoe@earthlink.net.

BEST-IN-CLASS COMPANIES

| | Design Build | Maintenance | Construction |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Revenue | \$9,237,736 | \$6,078,608 | \$11,073,197 |
| Material | 2,106,790 [23%] | 488,292 [8%] | 3,647,486 [33%] |
| Labor | 1,716,650 [19%] | 2,105,445 [35%] | 2,041,531 [18%] |
| Subs | 1,225,443 [13%] | 388,554 [6%] | 1,275,848 [12%] |
| = Total Direct | 5,048,883 [55%] | 2,982,291 [49%] | 6,964,865 [63%] |
| Gross Profit | 4,188,853 [45%] | 3,096,317 [51%] | 4,108,332 [37%] |
| – Indirect Cost | 1,090,209 [12%] | 1,078,653 [18%] | 1,158,929 [10%] |
| – G&A Cost | 1,761,551 [19%] | 1,026,908 [17%] | 1,574,757 [14%] |
| = Net Profit | 1,337,093 [14%] | 990,756 [16%] | 1,374,646 [12%] |

The above figures represent the best-in-class companies responding to *Landscape Management's* 2007 Benchmarking Survey. These are the 2006 numbers by category of each individual gold standard company.

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Irrigation Association show

Contractors around the country face significant water management and legislative issues.

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS

It's a question that landscapers don't want to ask. But if drought persists in the Southeast or spreads to other regions, what will they do when watering limits become outright bans and water is restricted for anything other than human consumption?

It's a question that wasn't asked too loudly at the International Irrigation (IA) Show in San Diego last month, but it was asked. And it was answered.

"Bankruptcy is a pretty common word in Georgia business right now," said Andrew K. Smith, external affairs director for the Irrigation Association.

If other areas don't prepare they could suffer similar difficulties.

"Water supply issues are appearing in areas that have no significant history of such events," Smith says. "Unfortu-



Andrew K. Smith

nately, Georgia is suffering extreme circumstances that others may find themselves in, and I hope we can all learn from their experience... Water use planning is a critical element missing from many state and regional

agendas. If we do not encourage and participate in such planning as an industry, we're doomed to suffer significant economic impact when stress on water supplies worsens.

What it boils down to, says Smith, is that organizations, even those in non-drought areas need to conserve water when they have it. Food, drinking and sanitation will always come first. Without water, landscaping and irrigation in particular, are "dead in the water."

And that concern became the impetus for IA's new vision, mission and unifying statements. The statements and the plan to implement them, prepared in 2007, was presented to the IA membership at the meeting.

continued on page 17

[CLIPPINGS]

Toro nabs Turf Guard technology

BLOOMINGTON, MN — The Toro Co. acquired Turf Guard wireless monitoring technology from J LH Labs. The Turf Guard system measures soil moisture, salinity and temperature through buried wireless sensors that transmit data to a web-based interface for analysis. The purchase of Turf Guard systems strengthens the company's irrigation offerings, and reinforces a long-term strategy to invest in technologies to help customers manage water issues.

Novozymes acquires Philom Bios

SALEM, VA — Novozymes Biologicals completed the acquisition of Canada-based Philom Bios. The inoculants company will become the cornerstone of Novozymes' BioAgriculture business. "This is a strategy we have been developing since the beginning of 2006 when we planned our entry into the organic and sustainable agriculture market," said Novozymes Biologicals' President Ted Melnik.

Bayer's Ronstar label revised

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC — Ronstar herbicide now may be used on residential landscapes for pre-emergent control of annual broadleaf and annual grassy weeds. The label revision was recently approved by the EPA, announced Bayer Environmental Science. Ronstar is available as wettable powder, flowable or granular formulations, and on numerous fertilizer plus herbicide formulated products.



Actors Ed Begley Jr. and wife Rachelle Carson Begley sign photos. Right, the Hydro Rain funny car was a big hit with attendees.



Solution

In this situation we need to take what we have and make improvements without spending any money. We need to remember we're in the "Beauty Business." Our job is to make the landscape look beautiful. In this case, the straight lines of the field are boring and convey an image of just another field. By simply changing the mowing patterns and

Problem The client has a large field that is mowed once a year. Company owners don't have any more money to spend, but they want the site have more curb appeal. What would you recommend?



creating long curvaceous beds lines we take an ordinary uncared-for field and turn it into a work of art. It's still the same field but we have introduced visual movement, which creates a more interesting landscape. This mowing pattern change also projects an image of a professionally managed field for passers by. Doing this is certainly simple, easy and cheap to do.

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

continued from page 16

Most organizations have vision and mission statements. The IA's entries are straightforward: The vision — "Be the recognized authority on irrigation," and the mission statement — "Promote efficient irrigation." But it's the unifying statement that separates the IA from other organizations.

A unifying stand

The IA has more than 1,700 members and comprises several groups each with its own aims. They could not always agree on goals for the organization. They



Tim Malooly

settled, instead on a unifying statement — "Ensure water is available for irrigation for future generations."

From those three ideas, the IA developed four initiatives, each with its own strategies for implementation.

The first initiative focuses on resources and the second initiative examines education and certification. The third initiative looks at marketing and communications, and the last initiative involves government and public affairs. All agreed these are necessary.

In other news from the meeting:

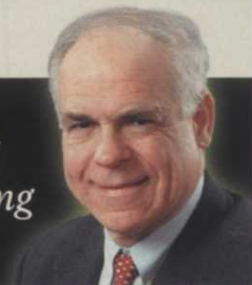
Tim Malooly, president of Irrigation by Design in Plymouth, MN, became chairman of IA's ambassador program, a product of the Contractors Common Interest Group meetings, which he had chaired since 2002.

Malooly's goal is to get more people involved in the organization as ambassadors — representatives who serve as liaisons between the association and its members. "A trade association is not a savior for the industry," he says. "It's a forum for the industry to help itself."

Malooly has a few people in place, but would like to add at least 160 more. These ambassadors would disseminate information from the board to members in their regions and serve as conduits to deliver concerns back to the board.

In the Know

LEGALLY Speaking



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

Q | A recent local newspaper voted my company as #1 in the area. Can I reference the award on my advertisements, business cards and trucks?

A | Yes, but I would recommend that you first contact the newspaper to find out more about how they did the evaluation. You should find out the criteria they used, how large a geographic area their survey covered, whether the paper engaged an outside professional survey firm to conduct the evaluation, whether this was the first time they had done this survey and will this be a continuing annual evaluation. I would recommend you find out these background matters in order to be more informed as to how to position this reference to their evaluation and what to say. It may be, for example, that the newspaper will make suggestions or provide information that might be useful in your own advertisements referencing this number #1 rating.

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.

People & companies



Ewing Irrigation President **Douglas W. York** was inaugurated as the 2008 Irrigation Association president during the International Irrigation Show in San Diego.

Project EverGreen appointed **Chris Kujawa** of **Kujawa Enterprises Inc. (KEI)**, to lead the organization through 2008 as president of the group's board of directors. Project EverGreen also expanded its Board of Directors to include **Katie Bromm** of **Hines Horticulture**, **Nick Cashier** of **Cub Cadet**, **Bill Nicholson** of **Garick Corp.** and **Dale Siems** of **Sherman Nursery**.

TruGreen chief financial officer **Steve Martin** has been named senior vice president and CFO for **The ServiceMaster Co.** Martin is succeeding vice chairman and CFO **Ernie Mrozek** who is retiring early next year.



Borst Landscape and Design welcomed designer **Terry McMahon** to its design team. McMahon holds a B.S. in Landscape Architecture from Cook College.

Southland Landscape Corp. promoted **Brian Pottieger** to vice president of business development. It also recently hired **John Carter Jr.** as business development rep.

Green Industry associations create national career Web site

ROSEVILLE, MN — Twenty-seven associations across the country united to develop a national Green Industry careers Web site, designed to spark interest in the variety of positions that the industry offers — from landscape design to horticultural production.

Initiated by the Minnesota Nursery & Landscape Association (MNLA) and the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), the site is set to launch in the summer of 2008. The founding partners were joined by 25 state associations and two national association sponsors, the American Society for Horticultural Science (ASHS) and the American Nursery & Landscape Association (ANLA).

"MNLA volunteered to take a leadership role in this project because our members have identified workforce development as one of the primary challenges the Green Industry faces in

the decades to come," said Bob Fitch, executive director of MNLA. "We need to do a better job of selling our story of the great opportunities there are to enhance the environment and our country's quality of life by choosing a career in the Green Industry."

High school students are the new Web site's target market, but the site will also contain residual information for parents, teachers and guidance counselors. Research, including focus groups and surveys, is currently being conducted to obtain a Web site name that will resonate with these audiences.

"This site will serve as the access portal to the many Green Industry career resources and will enable a single platform across all dimensions of the Green Industry," said Tanya Tolpegin, CEO, PLANET, "We are proud to partner with other associations across the country to make this Web site a reality."

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WEEKLY TIMECARD

NAME: Bill Owen DATES: 11-15

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

SIGNATURE: Bill Owen TOTAL HOURS: 41 1/2

GIVE THEM THE JOBCLOCK.

Employee Report

Owen, Bill Date Range: 2/11/2008 through 2/15/2008

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

Signature: Bill Owen Owen, Bill

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In the Know

Now is the time to consider selling your business

Landscape Management recently recorded a podcast with industry expert and columnist Kevin Kehoe about exiting and selling your business. Here's part of what he had to say.

LM: Considering the current economic conditions, is now a good time to think about selling your landscape business?

Kevin Kehoe: It's a great time to look at selling your business. It is probably better than it was in the late 90s at this point. There's a lot of money out there chasing very few good deals. So if an owner is thinking about exiting, now is a great time to actually consider that.

These conditions will probably last another three to four years.

A lot of the large operating companies in the industry have a lot of money and there's a lot of private equity that's very interested in the industry because

they like the margins of the business. Quite frankly, they like grounds maintenance companies the most because it provides them with low-risk, pretty-good recurring revenue.

I tell my clients if you're a good manager and you want to leverage your business and stay in the game and grow your company and take some of your money off the table, now's a great time to do it. It probably hasn't been better than this ever.



For more from Kevin Kehoe on Strategies for exiting/selling your business, check out his podcast at www.landscapemanagement.net and click on "Podcasts."

Worlds apart, but together on global warming

BY CURT HARLER

NEW ORLEANS — In some circles, global warming has become more of a conservative/liberal litmus test or social dividing point than an aspect of scientific research. However, the presidents of two nations facing widely divergent climates agree that global warming is a real problem and will have huge impact on water used in all aspects of the Green Industry.

Iajuddin Ahmed, president of Bangladesh, and Olafur Grimsson, president of Iceland, addressed the issue at the gathering of the International Annual Meetings of the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of America in New Orleans.

"Climate change is real," Ahmed said, noting that water stresses will be in-

creased both for irrigation and for drinking water. Ahmed is a former soil science professor at Dhaka University and studied soils at the University of Wisconsin.

In a separate talk, Grimsson declared the debate "more or less over."

There was no question that Grimsson, Ahmed and most of the audience of soil scientists see the United States as the bull in the global warming china shop. Each of the presidents said they face visible signs of climate change in their own countries.

According to the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Arctic and coastal areas in tropical Asia (including Iceland and Bangladesh) are extremely vulnerable to projected climate change and its impacts. The debate about climate change is about the future of energy and how the preservation of land and cultivation can help to prevent disas-

ter climate change, Grimsson noted.

"Iceland has shown how this can be done by transforming its energy system from being primarily dependent on coal and oil to being the leading clean energy country in the world," he added.

Grimsson has promoted cooperation among countries in the northern regions of the world. "Today, in just my lifetime, we have gone from a nation using 80% coal and oil to almost no coal and little oil," he said. "(All) of our electricity is hydro or geothermal. I don't accept the argument that Iceland is a special case."

Grimsson called on students, especially those in crop and soil sciences and political science, to lead the change. "It is your future," he said.

Ahmed worries that 11.5% of his nation could be under water by 2100 if warming continues unchecked. "The whole south of Bangladesh will be drowned," he stated.

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BY CHARLES SIMON

What now?

SMART STRATEGIES TO SURVIVE AND PERHAPS EVEN PROSPER IN SPITE OF THE DELAY OR LOSS OF H-2B WORKERS

THE SAVE SMALL BUSINESS ACT is tangled in the complicated and politically contentious immigration issue. Chances for its passage by Congress and an expansion to the H-2B seasonal guest worker program, one of its main features, look dim. This is bad news for hundreds of landscape company owners. It means that they will start this season with more jobs to do than with employees to do them.

"Everybody is still hoping that something can be passed and, as it has been done in the past, can become retroactive so that owners can start working on their applications and getting their workers," says Thomas Delaney, director of government relations for the Professional Landcare Network.

"The reality is that nothing has changed. The only thing that has changed is that the second half cap (33,000 H-2B visas) has been reached. That has put more owners in pain mode," he says.

continued on page 26



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H-2B worker availability

To be clear, there are still H-2B workers available in 2008. In fact, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced Jan. 2 that it had received a sufficient number of petitions to reach the congressionally mandated cap (33,000) for second half of Fiscal Year 2008.

According to the USCIS Web site (www.uscis.gov) the agency will continue to process petitions filed to:

- ▶ Extend the stay of a current H-2B worker in the United States;
- ▶ Change the terms of employment for current H-2B workers and extend their stay; or
- ▶ Allow current H-2B workers to change or add employers and extend their stay.

Because of the failure of Congress to renew the Save Small Businesses bill none of the “returning” workers, those not counted against the cap, will be allowed to work in the United States. This, in effect, means that there stands to be approximately 55,000 fewer H-2B workers in 2008. Last year there were about 123,000 workers allowed in on H-2B visas.

What it means to you

Understandably many contractors are not happy.

“The Congress of the United States has failed to do their job in supporting a very large segment of the small business core of this country,” says Fred Haskett, managing partner of U.S. Lawns, West St. Louis, MO. “They’re interested in their jobs. They’re not interested in my people’s jobs or my vendor’s jobs.”

Still, Haskett considers himself lucky. “We just were told, a couple days before Christmas, that our second two visa applications had been processed and had been approved, prior to the cap being reached,” he says. Even though he has H-2B workers coming, they’re not expected until April, which presents significant challenges.

“It’s going to be very disruptive in the start up phase,” Haskett says. “Depending on when they get here, it could significantly affect our first mowing cycles. Our spring cleanups, mulchings, things like that we generally do in February and March into early April, are going to be disrupted. We’re going to have to do them with temps, or we’re going to have to start earlier and they’ll run way late getting them done.” He

also expects his overtime budget to double for the first five months of the season. And even with those challenges, Haskett still considers himself fortunate.

“We’re the lucky company. My agent told me they got a little more than half but not quite two-thirds of their visas through before the second cap for the April (arriving workers),” he says. “Somewhere between a third and a

half of my agent’s clients got nobody.”

If you’re one of those companies, what now?

Living without H-2B workers

Don’t procrastinate. Start planning now if you’re facing worker shortage. You have a short window of opportunity to work out your plan.

Start by assessing the potential damage to your company. View the situation realistically. For example, “I will lose two of my best grass cutting crews. Or I will lose three laborers on my pavers crew.”

In addition to putting the “Help Wanted” sign in your window, consider these suggestions:

- 1 Bulletproof your best customers**, by doing their work first and giving them extra attention. If you haven’t been tracking each client for profitability, shame on you. Go over your clients’ accounts to better identify the “keepers.” Do this before spring erupts.

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7 survival tips

- 1.** Increase customer contact and communicate more than ever, “Is everything OK?”
- 2.** Make an emergency employee list, perhaps friends who can pitch in for a Saturday.
- 3.** Create a picture book with photos of properties and special attention areas, which is very helpful when instructing new employees.
- 4.** Inform vendors and let them know to call you before allowing new guys to charge to your account.
- 5.** Train, train, train. Don’t assume anything. Go over each step until the new workers understand.
- 6.** Keep a disaster recovery kit – everything you need in a box in case the new drivers have an accident.
- 7.** Improve your communication systems. Get a phone for every driver.

— CS



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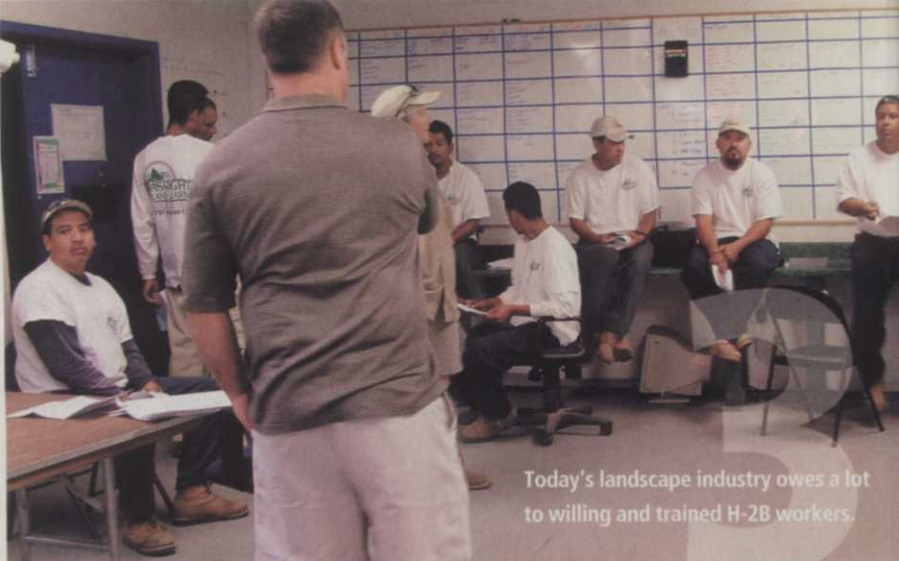
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2 Focus on your most profitable service lines. If you've been struggling to make a particular service profitable, consider dropping it or selling it. There's no reason to be "dabbling" in a particular service if you're short staffed. If you feel it still has potential, add it back into your company at a future date.

3 Train like you've never trained before. Knowledgeable and well-managed crews perform significantly better than poorly trained and/or poorly supervised crews. As obvious as that is many companies still fail to provide employees even the most cursory understanding of what they're to do and neglect to set guidelines on how to do it efficiently and safely.

4 Reduce your workload by dropping unprofitable or troublesome customers. Almost all companies have at least a few marginal customers. They include perpetually late payers, whiners or they could be just outside of your company's service area, making them expensive to serve. You might have been better off passing them off to another service provider long ago anyway.

5 Do only the work that must absolutely be done, but do it well. Regardless of your circumstances, your



Today's landscape industry owes a lot to willing and trained H-2B workers.

word and reputation are still your most valuable assets. Will some of your clients let you postpone your most labor-intensive projects until you can get out of the hectic spring season? Are you confident enough about getting these projects done even then to offer a modest incentive to reward their patience?

6 Crunch time means longer hours, longer days. Remember when you started your business and worked six 10-hour days on a regular basis? (Perhaps you still do.) Can you count on your remaining employees or those you hope to add to work six 10-hour days to make up for your labor shortfall?

7 It might be time to consider raising prices to cover the rising cost of fuel and almost every other product or material you use. Yes, raising prices is a tough call. But overtime costs may force your hand because you will have fewer employees doing more production. Keep in mind, few of the small owner/opera-

tors in your market use H-2B workers, so they'll see your scaling back as an opportunity to pick up some of your business. The same goes for larger established companies that have their full complement of labor. Combat this by doing great work and stressing value, value, value.

8 Mechanize for more efficiency. This doesn't mean going out and buying equipment that you may use occasionally. It may not mean buying, at all, but rather leasing or renting. Resist impulse purchases. Unfortunately, there's no piece of commercial equipment yet that can mow a property, load itself onto a truck and go on to mow the next property. The same goes for stick trimming and cleanup. But tasks like mulching and most construction tasks can be done more efficiently with the right equipment.

9 Unload your junk. How about unused or rarely used equipment in your maintenance yard? Is it just taking up space? The same goes for unproductive or unreliable employees? Are they just taking up space and, worse yet, costing you money? It's tough shedding people when you're already short-staffed? But it's worse to carry dead weight or a troublemaker.

10 Get the "help wanted" word out. The slowdown in the construction trades means there is a growing supply of work-tested employees without regular paychecks. How can you make your job descriptions attractive to them? Chances are you'll have to pay them more than you used to paying.

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The ripple effect

Unfortunately, the labor shortage that many companies expect will create a big ripple in the entire industry — from customers to product manufacturers.

“I talked to a mowing dealer who said that 90 days ago he had \$750,000 in advance orders for equipment,” Haskett says. “He said more than half of that has been cancelled in the last two

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Items to include in your emergency plan

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM? DEFINE THE CRISIS AS PLAINLY AS POSSIBLE.

X number of seasonal workers will not show up

HOW WILL THIS CRISIS CHANGE YOUR BUSINESS IN THE SPRING? WHAT IS THE IMPACT?

- ▶ Will not be able to meet contracted obligations
- ▶ Will not be able to accept new business
- ▶ Will need to spend money to find and train new workers

WHAT WILL YOU DO? DESIGN A SOLUTION.

- ▶ Talk to your customers
- ▶ Protect the best customers, drop the worst customers
- ▶ Use every way to find new workers
- ▶ Do only what absolutely must be done
- ▶ Plan for six 10-hour days with the crews you have
- ▶ Raise your fees
- ▶ Let your congressmen hear your disappointment

MAKE IT WORK. IMPLEMENT YOUR SOLUTION.

- ▶ Set a timeline
- ▶ Be disciplined
- ▶ Training and safety are important

KEEP YOUR CURRENT WORKERS. GET ACCEPTANCE FROM EVERYONE.

- ▶ Define how long this problem will last.
- ▶ Explain that overtime will be mandatory for a while.
- ▶ Ask for their help with extra responsibilities for a while.

WATCH OUT FOR QUALITY AND SAFETY. MAINTAIN YOUR STANDARDS.

- ▶ Training is more important than ever
- ▶ Emphasize safety above all
- ▶ Be on top of every job
- ▶ Visit properties frequently to check the work quality of your new employees.

— CS

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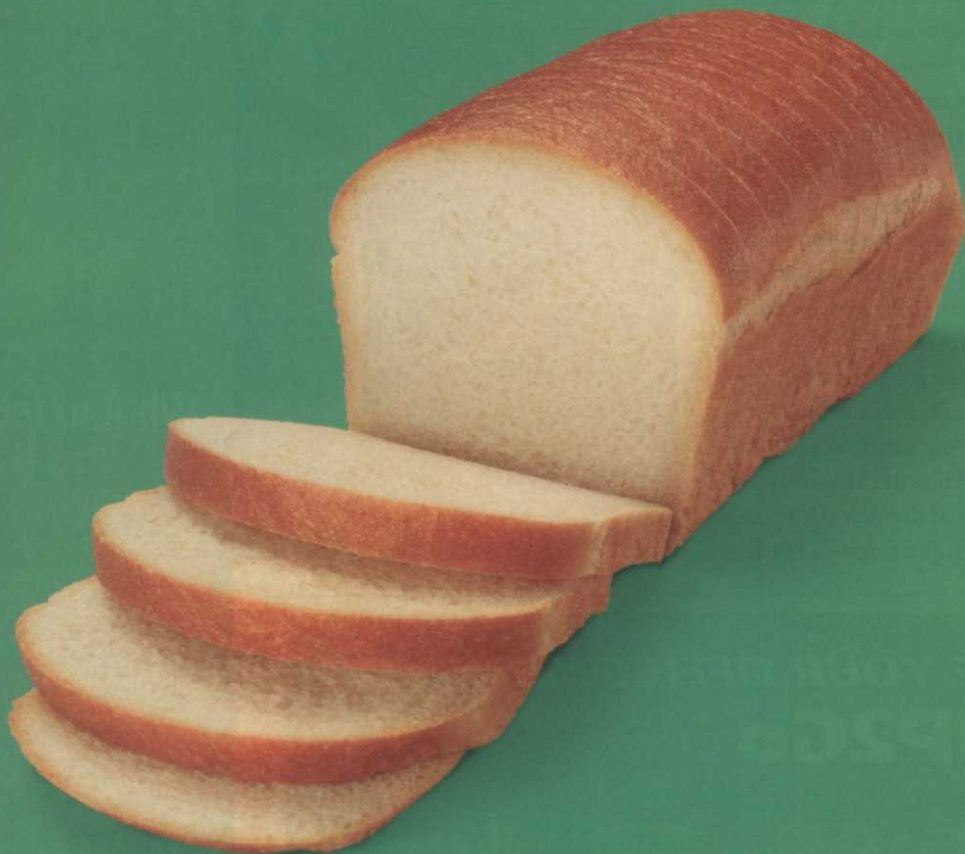
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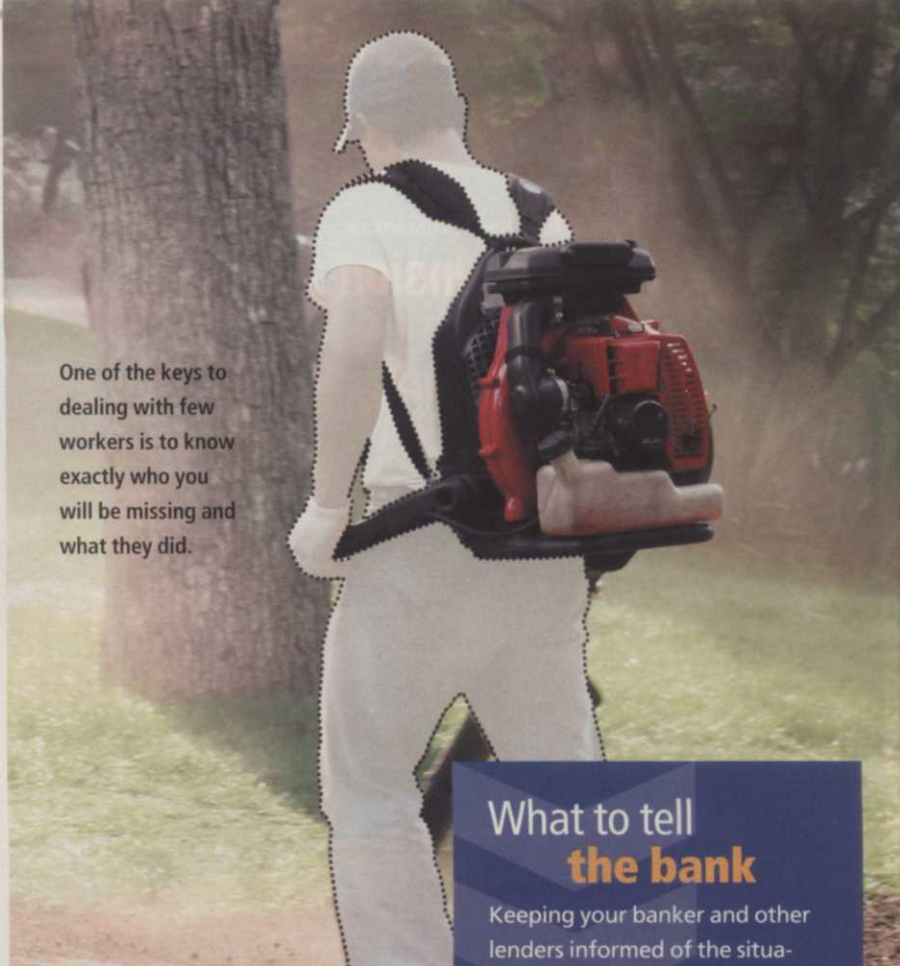
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weeks. I had two trucks on advance order. I have cancelled those. I had some equipment, a trailer and all the associated equipment to go with that to set up a new crew. I've cancelled that.

"I can't conceivably utilize capital to add equipment, when I don't know if I'll have people to use the work. Our purchasing budget has been zeroed out. We will only buy on an emergency basis this year. That's where the negative effect is going to be on the economy.

"The effects are going to be felt beyond the landscape to many different segments, including suppliers and estate management. Things like this are really hard to calculate at this point. It's going to be the most challenging year I've had

One of the keys to dealing with few workers is to know exactly who you will be missing and what they did.



What to tell the bank

Keeping your banker and other lenders informed of the situation can make cash flow easier in April and May. Explain that circumstances beyond your control will use a good part of your cash flow to resolve. Let your lenders know now that you may be at their door in the late spring asking to pay interest only on your debt. Your banker would much rather see you through this one time, congress-caused crisis, than have you default and fall into bankruptcy later in the year.

— CS

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in the business in probably 30 years."

Many of you in the landscape services industry have faced larger challenges and have succeeded anyway. The approaching shortage of workers is a crisis that will test your creativity and resilience. By building and implementing a plan now, you can still have a strong 2008. **LM**

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

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Pet waste removal

► Jacob D'Aniello of DoodyCalls sees pet waste removal as a perfect, and profitable, add-on service for landscape and lawn care professionals.

BY MIKE SEUFFERT /
Associate Editor

Jacob and Susan D'Aniello have a sense of humor about what they do. And what they do is doo-doo. The D'Aniello's run DoodyCalls, a full-service pet waste removal franchise based in Charlottesville, VA.

In a tribute to the classic comedy *CaddyShack*, a video hosted on the company's

Web site (and on YouTube) called "Scooping the Poop" walks through a day in the life of a DoodyCalls technician. The film's climax comes when the technician stops for a break, grabs a chocolate candy bar and takes a bite, to the horror of a misinterpreting onlooker.

But the service itself is no joke. Since the D'Aniellos started the company in 2000, charging roughly \$15 per month to keep a yard clean, DoodyCalls has expanded to 26 franchisees and will take in more than \$2 million in revenue in 2007. If all goes according to plan, they will have 275 franchises by 2011.

"Between balancing family, demanding work

schedules and increasingly long commutes, people are too busy to deal with the mess themselves or simply don't want to," Jacob says. "Pet waste removal service eliminates one of the most unpleasant and time consuming aspects of dog ownership by offering weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, and one-time cleanings to 'scoop the poop' at reasonable rates.

"DoodyCalls' goal is to be the number one franchise in the business of 'number two,'" he adds, not joking.

A natural fit

Jacob believes that pet waste removal is a natural add-on service that can be offered by professional landscape and lawn care contractors.

For one, landscapers target the same busy, middle-to-upper class client who Jacob believes would use the service.

"Landscapers find dog waste a nuisance and it creates a mess on their equipment and their clothing," Jacob says. "By adding on a DoodyCalls franchise to their existing landscaping business, landscapers are able to reduce waste from

their client's properties to make their landscaping duties more efficient and create added profit by providing an extra year-round service."

For lawn care professionals, it's a natural selling point because the dog waste can create brown spots on the lawn from excess uric acid. Plus, it's simple to add the service because, let's be honest, scooping poop isn't exactly rocket science.

Besides residential yards, DoodyCalls cleans and disinfects common areas for homeowners associations and other commercial accounts, such as playgrounds, pool areas, paths, or any place dogs 'do their thing' to help keep communities sanitary and safe.

"Going the franchising route makes sense because of the support systems already in place," Jacob says. "The support and marketing materials that DoodyCalls provides its franchisees allow the professional landscaper to focus upon the important aspects of their work, up-sell their existing clients and effectively spend their time mining new ones."



DoodyCalls workers visit clients' properties as often as once a week.

BY THE NUMBERS...

40%

Percentage of American households that have a pet.

\$41 billion

Amount ▲ Americans spend a year on their pets.

Number of dogs in the U.S. ▼

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Count on it.

How do you react when landscaping companies equal in size and experience say your uniforms are in bad taste and your shop is too messy? Do you listen and take action. Or take it as an insult?

It happened to Tom Fochtman, co-owner of CoCal Landscape, based in Denver. For him, the criticism was far from offensive. "The next day we had a clean shop," Fochtman says. "This year we went with the best uniforms in our history."

But Fochtman's critics weren't just any contractors from the sidelines. They are among five landscaping companies involved in "The Next Level Network," a peer-networking group that meets three times a year to discuss everything from snappier uniforms to obtaining legal workers. In a unique way, "The Next Level Network" allows the nation's top landscape management company owners to act as a board of directors for each other and exchange ideas and feedback on issues within the industry.

"It was the drive of the idea," says Fochtman, who took the concept of peer networking and approached Bruce Wilson, a business consultant, to facilitate the group. Fochtman also got in touch with Dave Daniell, who at the time was co-owner of Heads Up Landscape Contractors in Albuquerque, who had been involved in peer groups before and was looking to join a new one.

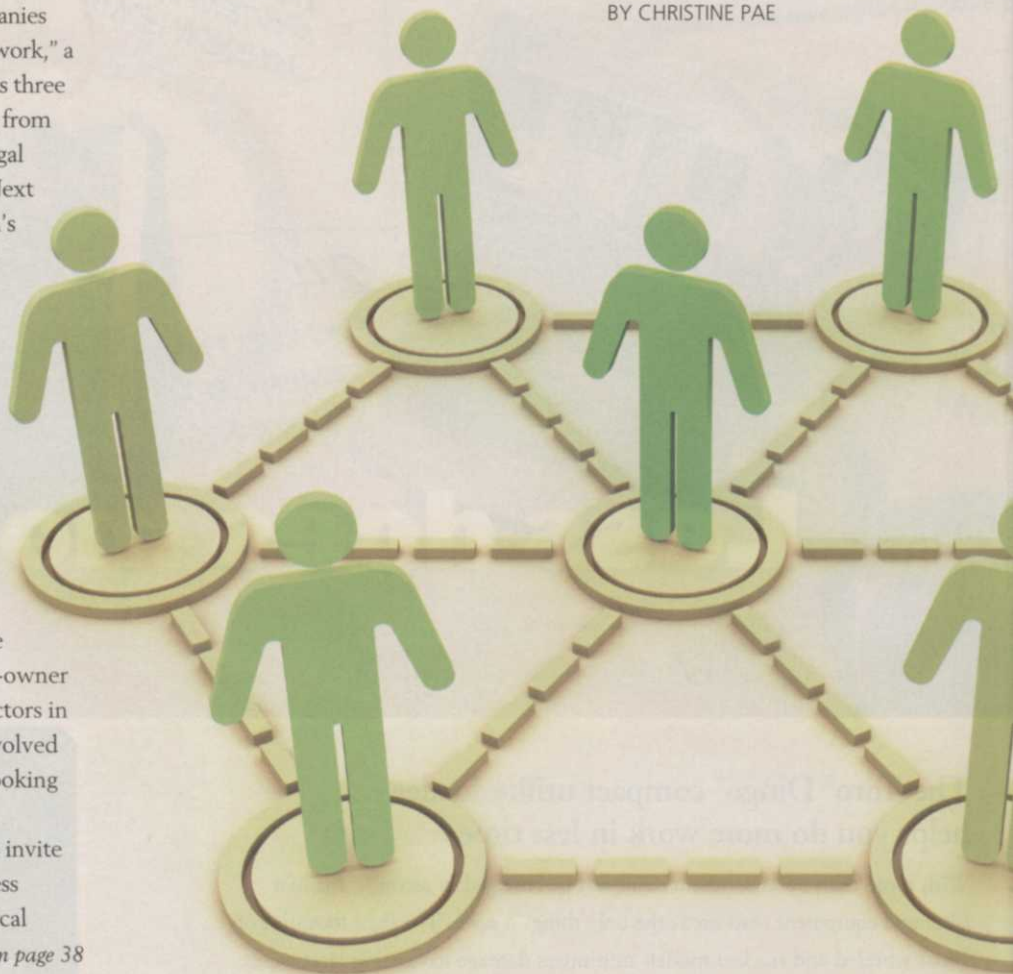
For one thing, they wanted to invite contractors based on their business model, ownership and geographical


continued on page 38

POWER UP WITH peer networking

Follow the example of "The Next Level Network" and build your own small group of non-competing owner/advisors

BY CHRISTINE PAE





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The Right Way To Treat A Tree



continued from page 36
territory. Namely, gather a band of contractors from different markets whose primary services included landscape maintenance and construction. The three invited a list of potential contractors and soon enough, HighGrove Partners in Austell, GA, Pine Ridge Landscaping in Chantilly, VA, and Vila & Son Landscaping, headquartered in Miami, FL, joined. The owners first met for a kickoff meeting in January 2004 to brainstorm bylaws and the mission of the group and by the following May, "The Next Level Network" held its first official meeting.

What competition?

Geographic location, Fochtman knew, was an important factor in who could be

involved in the peer group. Obviously the contractors didn't want to be competing for business, the reason why one is based in Colorado while the others do business in other regions of the United States. "We weren't worried about chasing business because we operated in different markets," Fochtman says.

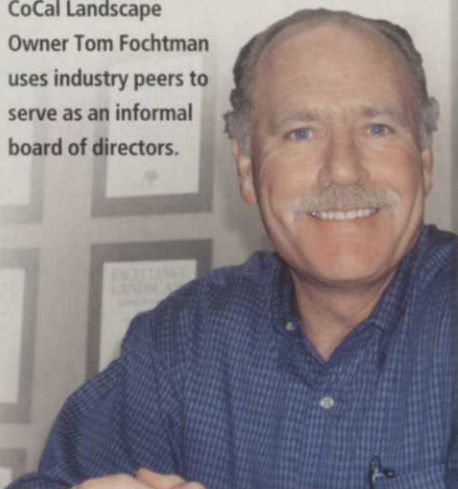
And it wasn't because the owners wanted to be elitist that they kept the group small. There's a limited amount of time at their meetings, which take two days. Also, Wilson, the "Next Level Network's" business facilitator, likes to cap those involved in the group at six companies.

"We feel that [with] more than six, you couldn't really give the companies enough time in a 2-day period to cover everything," says Wilson.

Each company gets about two hours to cover a range of company issues while the host company gets extra time.

And with these meetings comes serious homework. Every meeting requires *continued on page 40*

CoCal Landscape
Owner Tom Fochtman uses industry peers to serve as an informal board of directors.



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continued from page 38

lots of preparation, the owners say. Wilson asks for financial benchmarking information and topics for discussion about six weeks prior to each meeting. At the meetings, strategy feedback and

best practices recommendations are swapped. By the end of the each session, owners commit to make positive changes within their companies by the next meeting. This aspect of preparing for the meetings adds an important ac-

countability factor to those in the group and is the core of "The Next Level Network's" value and success.

"You don't want to get advice from people you respect like this and four months later, come back to say you didn't do anything with the good ideas they gave you," Fochtman says. "That would be embarrassing. If you have not followed up in your commitments, it's not good. It's kind of like failing your father, because we respect each other so much."

Collectively, the revenue of all five contractors is valued at nearly \$200 million, according to the company owners in the group, and many of the companies have at least 200 employees. That all groups are somewhat equal in scale and experience is also a part of the "The Next Level Network's" design. This allows the companies to relate to each other better than if a contractor from significantly smaller revenues came into the scene.

"You just need to find somewhat a like-kind business where you can communicate at the same level," Fochtman says. "A \$5 (million) or \$3 million contractor will struggle to advise a \$20 million contractor."

Not a perfect fit for all

Joining a networking group may not produce winning results for all contractors. Not only does peer networking entail serious commitment, it's pricey as well. There's the issue of hiring a facilitator and paying for travel expenses. Both should be taken into consideration. Also, participants must open all facets of their business operations openly and honestly at the meetings.

All work and no play?

Fortunately, the peer group also recognizes that a couple of days' worth

continued on page 42

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continued from page 40
 of hard work deserves a day of play. The third and last day of the meeting is dedicated to leisure and was originally intended to break the ice between the contractors who were just becoming

acquainted with each other. Two years later, members of the peer group have developed a sense of camaraderie out of the extra day, which in the past featured deep-sea fishing, river rafting and golf. "As we've been together for two

years, we're more comfortable with each other. It opens up conversation, breaks down barriers," says Wayne Shively, co-owner of Pine Ridge Landscaping.

Contractors involved in "The Next Level Network" recommend other companies get involved in peer networking groups, considering the amount that gets accomplished after the meetings. "Each meeting we take something away to fine tune our companies," Shively says. "Anytime you can get together with other companies that aren't competing and share best practices and learn from each other, it's the only going to help us improve."

In networking, we trust

In addition to the exclusivity and company profile of the groups involved, trust must also play a major role. Companies involved in "The Next Level Network" share confidential information and those involved in the group abide by the rules to keep information within the group only.

"If someone breached it, it would be time for a serious conversation," Daniell says. "I have to trust. It's kind of like having kids. You give them trust until they give you reason not to trust them."

With trust, effort, preparation and zeal, contractors involved in "The Next Level Network" have garnered measurable improvement in their business operation.

"We're getting thousands of dollars of advice of some of the greatest minds in the industry, in my opinion, counseling us," Fochtman says. "Where else could we get advice like that?" **LM**

— *The author is a freelance writer from New York City who is now finishing her Masters degree at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. Contact her at c-pae@northwestern.edu.*

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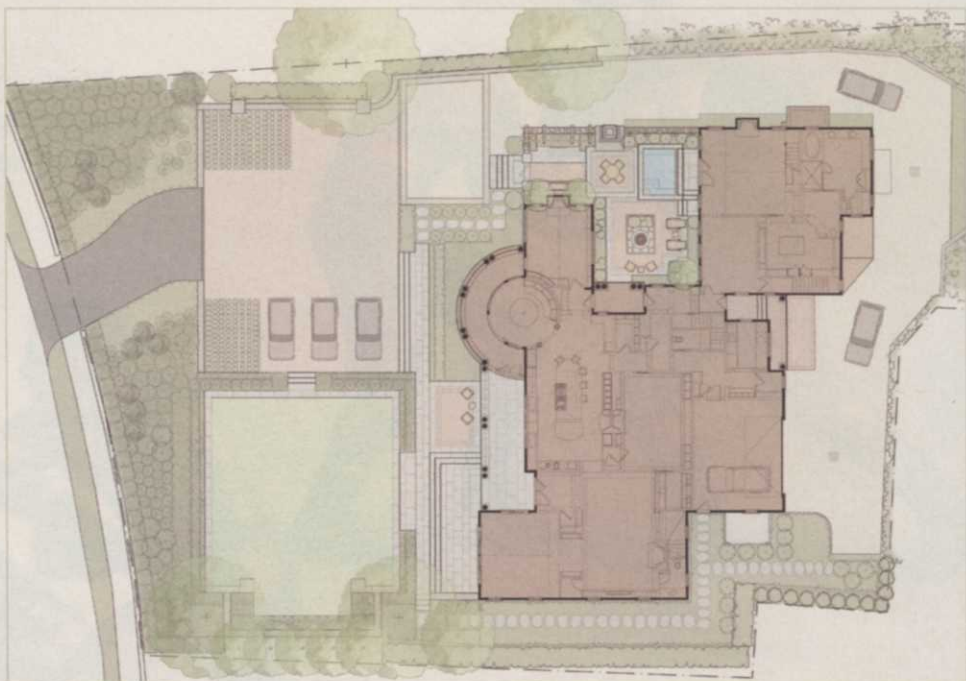
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The design

An outdoor living area that complements the home, the property and the natural environment.

Project Requirements

- Optimize irrigation and drainage systems.
- Install radiant heating in concrete areas.
- Complete the project on the 1/5-acre property within six months, working around the house renovations also taking place.



ABOVE All pavements including driveway, entry monolithic steps and terrace, include a radiant heating system.

RIGHT The fountain/water feature doubles as a spa.

Project Specifics

The lake house was rehabbed as a retreat, with outdoor surroundings to match.



RIGHT The pergola was created by Liberty Cedar, West Kingston, RI, www.libertycedar.com.





ABOVE, LEFT AND BELOW Because of the home's close proximity to Crystal Lake in Newton, MA, all site drainage and run-off was collected and routed to cisterns and drywells. The cistern system is used to supplement the irrigation system. All winter water run-off is captured and overflows to site drywells.

INSET An outdoor living area was created, including a gas-fired Italian pizza oven.

Project Principals

- Designed by Keith LeBlanc Landscape Architecture, Boston, www.kl-la.com
- Installed by Robert Marzilli, R.P. Marzilli & Co., Medway, MA www.rpmarzilli.com

The staff of R.P. Marzilli & Co. includes licensed landscape professionals, stone masons, project managers and designers. Services include masonry, horticulture, tree moving, site development, hydroseeding, irrigation, site lighting, fencing, and pool, pond and waterfall installations.

This project was a Distinction Award winner in PLANET's 38th annual Environmental Improvement Awards program. For more information on the program, visit www.landcarenetwork.org.

Bill Goddard is willing to spend extra time to get the job done right – even if it's measured in years.

"Typically our clients

would have homes all over the world," Goddard says. "With the unrest and the hassle of traveling, they don't want to travel anymore. I tell them, 'This is your home, not mine.' While they give me a lot of leeway because we

want the creative, we work with them."

That also means spending time on very big projects. Goddard, owner of GCS, won't look at a project of less than \$1 million. He and his 12 employees only work on two projects at a time and typically spend two to four years on site.

The Hovatter estate near Sacramento encompasses 44 acres, and GCS has spent nearly four years making seven of those acres suitable to host large charity events or quiet evenings for two in the backyard pool.

"In our projects, how it looks at night is almost more important than how it looks in the day," Goddard says. "A lot of my clients work many hours and they only see it at night."

The project

When GCS began work on the site it contained an old vineyard, a walnut orchard and a 3 1/2-acre man-made trophy bass lake. The landscaping work began around the time the house was being built.

"We bring an office trailer on site that has our management design team," Goddard says. "We bring a portable concrete batch plant. The only thing we sub out is electrical and pool plaster. Otherwise we do everything from underground grating, hardscape, softscape – you name it we do it."

The company started by pulling out the old vineyard and putting in a new one, exchanging tokay grapes for cabernet sauvignon. That also required the transfer of some mature live and valley oaks. GCS brought in a 96-in. spade and worked for two

continued on page 48

The Hovatter estate

GCS' customers may live the jet set life, but the company works hard to ensure when clients are at home they're able to relax in luxury.

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS / Managing Editor

Although the company didn't build the house, GCS constructed the front and rear entries as the home was being erected to ensure uniformity.



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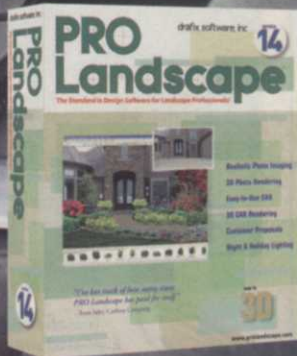
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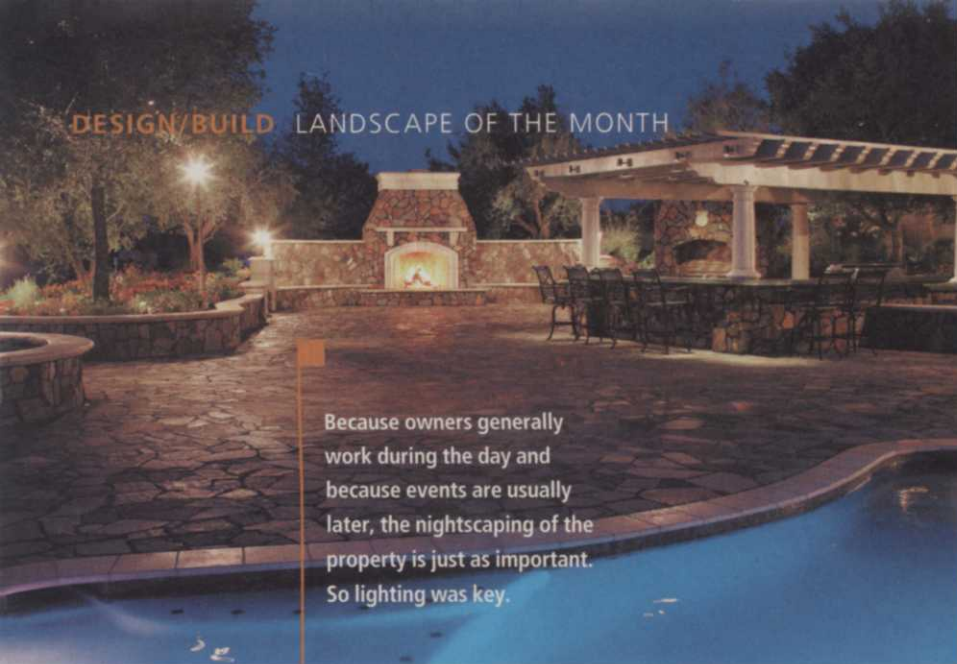
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Because owners generally work during the day and because events are usually later, the nightscaping of the property is just as important. So lighting was key.



continued from page 46
weeks to move those trees.

"We have our own spade that will handle a 3 1/2-in. caliper tree," Goddard says. "We moved hundreds of trees there. We brought in two dozen specimen oaks

that weighed as much as 22,000 pounds each. There are hundreds of trees on the property. At one time we brought in 45-year-old olives (trees) that we hand dug out of an old grove. We brought in two dozen."

GCS is finishing the final two of five phases. This phase includes the pool and barbecue/arbor area.

Hardscape

The focus of the landscape is 1,500-sq.-ft. pool with a water slide, spa, fire pit, 13 springs, a fog machine, a grotto that holds up to six people and waterfall that contains about 250 tons of rock. The biggest rock is about 20,000 pounds. Water flows at a rate of 1,200 gallons per minute.

"In the pool we've got laminar flows – that column of water that comes in that doesn't break," Goddard says. "We've got a sand beach on the lake."

When you spend as many as four years on a site, no detail gets missed. GCS put misters on top of the arbor. The granite around the barbecue is four layers thick and has unique detail. The interior of the fireplace is four and a half feet wide and has a spit that can handle a 160-lbs. pig.

"We do the fire brick in two different colors and a

unique pattern," Goddard explains. "The perimeter walls are all at seat height. They can comfortably entertain 150 people around the barbecue. In a charity event, they could have 600 people on site and not have a problem."

This attention to detail is possible because the company picks projects carefully. When the inevitable change in plans or unexpected problem arise, GCS can handle the problem.

"Because we bring our design and management staff on site and I'm on site on every project on every day, we work right through challenges," Goddard says. "Anything that comes up we instantly modify to get through that. We stress that to our clients. They don't have the traditional delays with us because of the way we do things."

The patient contractor

Goddard's attention to detail and his patience are virtues he's shown throughout his working life.

continued on page 50

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DESIGN/BUILD LANDSCAPE OF THE MONTH

continued from page 48

He earned his California contracting license nearly a quarter of a century ago in anticipation of one day getting into the business for himself. He spent 22 years in sales and marketing, and was on the road as much as 90% of the time during the last 17 years in that position. He says he got very tired of airports, hotels and suitcases. Seven years ago, he felt it was time to use that contractor license.

When he started his career as a contractor, Goddard made the decision to focus exclusively on large projects, such as the Hovatter estate. His clients' properties are typically valued between \$5 million and \$25 million.

There is something to be said for having clients who don't need to worry about housing slumps or down economies. There's also something to be said for designing and providing landscape projects that figure into the seven figures.

In seven years in business he's never had to move beyond a 25-mile radius of his Lodi, CA-based headquarters.

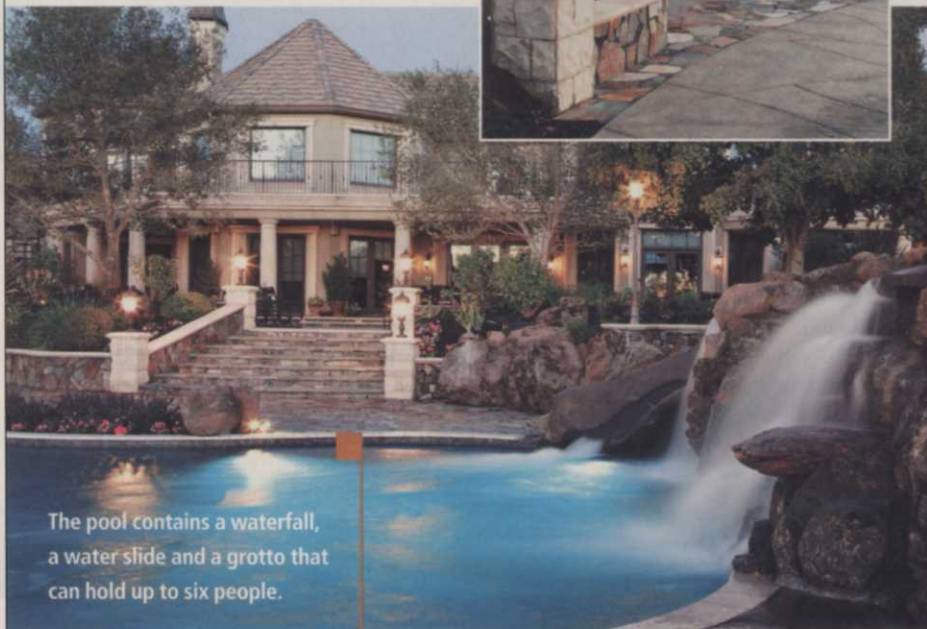
"Part of the reason I picked this niche in the market is I viewed it as recession

resistant," he says. His timing, it turns out, has been faultless.

"I've got the greatest crew in the country," Goddard says. "We don't hire anybody in the trade. We train from the bottom up. My guys came in with few skills. We spend a lot of money to train them in-house. We send them to conferences to train, and we have suppliers and manufacturers come in and train them.

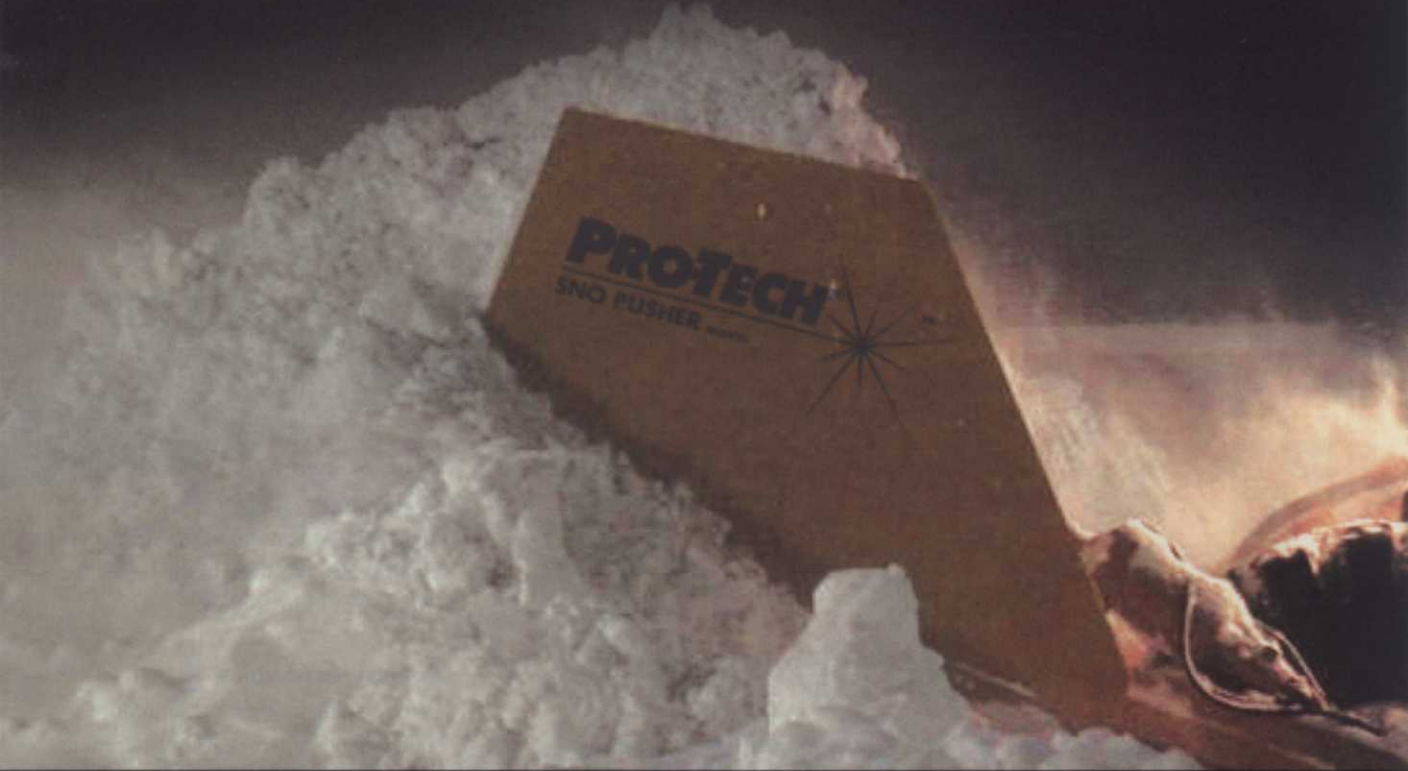
"I don't want poor attitudes or poor construction practices. Our clients pay for us to do it the right way. We over-engineer and over-build everything we do because that is what our clients demand. They want the highest quality."

And that's what they get. Goddard said his company was the highest decorated water feature builder in the world this year. **LM**



The pool contains a waterfall, a water slide and a grotto that can hold up to six people.

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Rent FOR SUCCESS

Whether it's to save money or offer a new service, leasing may be a better option than buying. BY BETH ANN SCIALABBA

For many landscapers, it's difficult to keep up with growing trends and customer demands. Maybe they're looking to move a tree or install an outdoor kitchen. You could handle the job with the right piece of equipment. It's just not part of your arsenal. And you can't justify a new purchase; you just don't have enough projects to make it profitable.

With too few jobs to finance the purchase, specialized equipment to keep a business on the cutting edge, simply can't be justified. But if you avoid the

job all together you're throwing money to competitors because you don't have the proper tools to fulfill customers' needs. To avoid losing lucre, consider renting equipment.

Think of it this way, renting is another way of staying within your budget, a particularly difficult task, especially when you're responsible for hiring, planning, selling, maintenance and the myriad of never-ending responsibilities owners face daily.

For a landscaper just starting out his or her business, delving into the rental option may be the way to go. Tom

Snow, a commercial landscape equipment salesperson at Valley AG & Turf in Halifax, PA, has been in the landscape equipment industry for 23 years.

Not just for newbies

"We're going to see more and more startup landscapers renting equipment as they expand their businesses," Snow says. They may not have the equity or capital to invest in a piece of equipment costing thousands of dollars.

Recognizing that "cash is king," having a more flexible flow of money to work with, startup businesses are often better served by investing in products, marketing and other useful avenues.

But renting landscape equipment isn't just for new business owners. Snow says that renting is "a great way for landscapers to try out a new piece of equipment they're thinking about purchasing down the road."

Many landscapers don't have the equity or want to make the investment on equipment they're not certain will make money for the business in the long term. Renting is a way for owners to test the permanence of a piece of equipment they'd like to purchase, as well as using the equipment for a specific job or a one-time project. It can also help determine if the equipment satisfies customers' expectations.

Weighing options, many business owners have found renting is the better alternative. It allows for flexibility within a budget. In many instances, landscapers have enjoyed the ability to eliminate maintenance costs, save on interest payments, salvage storage space for other equipment and products, and avoid transportation costs.

"For someone who's just starting their business, renting is definitely a financing option they want to look into and continue until they're able to purchase or finance a piece of equipment," explains Rocco Femano, a regional director for Lawn Doctor Inc.

The option to rent equipment also allows an opportunity for aspiring entrepreneurs to invest in and startup their landscape business.

Rentals allow flexibility

"Rental rates, of course, vary because of the size of the equipment, but common landscaping tools are available to rent for four hours up to several years," Snow says.

Femano agrees: "It's great for building a business — pulling up to service a customer's lawn with several pieces of equipment looks very professional in the eyes of a consumer."

As renting equipment gains popularity within the Green Industry, the best way to search for companies who rent landscape equipment is on the Web, and contacting your local business network or another landscape professional. **LM**

— The author is a freelance journalist from Freehold, NJ. Contact her at bethannscialabba@yahoo.com.

Why rent landscape equipment?



- 1 Conducive to a tight budget, especially for landscapers who are new to the industry and building their businesses
- 2 Large or rarely used equipment is easily accessible for short-term projects
- 3 Eliminates costs for business owners to repair and maintain the equipment, transportation and storage
- 4 No uncertainties about having to tack on interest to a purchase
- 5 Best way to determine if equipment is right for your business and satisfies the needs of the customers

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New mower technology



There may not have been any product innovations as dramatic as, say, a full-scale hover ride-on zero turn mower at this year's GIE+EXPO. But what the editors of *Landscape Management* saw there were a lot of refinements and improvements that will make this latest crop of lawnmowers more productive, easier to service, easier to control, more comfortable and provide a better cut than ever before. With that in mind, here are the **five top new mower trends** that we see in the 2008 model year.

Alternative fuel sources

With oil hovering around \$100 a barrel, gas prices are hammering away at landscape profits. Mower manufacturers saw this coming and began offering more diesel-powered models several years ago. But even this hasn't been enough to keep fuel costs under control.

With that in mind, The Toro Co. announced that all of its 2008 diesel-powered commercial mowers will be biodiesel-ready.

Biodiesel is an alternative fuel source derived from biological sources that are biodegradable and non-toxic. Emissions from bio-fuels and biodiesel blends are lower than petroleum-based diesel fuels making them more environmentally friendly. Toro's 2008 models will be

equipped to operate on biodiesel fuels up to B20, which is a mixture of 20% biodiesel and 80% petroleum diesel fuel.

Biodiesel-ready models will include the 2008 Toro Z Master Z580-D Series and Z590-D Series zero-turn riding mowers. As part of this initiative, Toro also created biodiesel upgrade kits for diesel-powered Z Master mowers produced prior to the 2008 model year.

Edrick Funk, marketing manager for Toro's Landscape Contractor Equipment line, explains that pure biodiesel has about 5% to 8% less energy, but better lubricity and more complete combustion can make the energy output of a biodiesel engine only 2% less per volume when compared to petroleum diesel.

"Landscape contractors who tested biodiesel-powered Z Master zero-turn

mowers noticed little, if any, reduction in mowing performance," Funk says. "With properly equipped mowers and fuel that meets industry specifications for B20 biodiesel, any equipment operator can enjoy this cleaner-burning, renewable fuel source."

For those landscape professionals who have "green-conscious" customers, Dixie Chopper and EnviroGard have introduced propane-powered mowers in recent years. With propane, there is up to a 60% reduction in smog-forming emissions and 80% reduction in toxic emissions compared with diesel and gasoline fuel. Meanwhile, propane is on average 30% less expensive than gasoline or diesel fuels. The savings are increased with no spillage, theft, or contamination concerns that occur with other fuels.

continued on page 56

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continued from page 54

More power, smaller package

With zero-turn mowers getting bigger and tougher, it is taking a more powerful engine to get the job done. Kawasaki is responding by adding the new FX series of engines specifically for the commercial market.

Two new big-power V-twin engines are available for ZTR's up to 72-in. deck width: the 34-hp FX921V and the 37-hp FX1000V.

The FX Series engines are compact, 90° V-twins with a displacement of 999cc's. They feature hemispherical



Kawasaki's FX engine series is designed for today's more powerful mowers.

combustion chambers and three valves per cylinder, with Kawasaki's

advanced, overhead v-valve technology that provides low emissions, high power and smooth operation.

The new engines provide greater power while also providing cleaner emissions and better fuel efficiency, meeting current and future emissions standards.

Providing great power with a compact design is Yanmar's new Yanmar MiniMax Series Engine for lawn and garden equipment. With the new cylinder body design, the MiniMax is able to achieve higher output despite the compact size. Furthermore, the compact size and universal base attachment design means that the MiniMax is an easy replacement.

The 3TNM68, the first in the series to be released, is a 0.784 liter three-cylinder Tier IV compliant engine with Yanmar's proprietary indirect injection technology to achieve low fuel consumption and low emissions. This ultra compact and high performance engine also employs Yanmar's latest structural technology to achieve low vibration, noise and size.

continued on page 58

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3

Durability

Who says all zero-turn mowers are alike — apart from their color, that is?

Certainly not John Deere.

The new Z-Trak Pro 800 series offers mowing contractors four new and unique features, helping make mowing more efficient and more profitable, says Marketing Manager of Commercial Products Gilbert Pena.

The new Z-Trak Pro 800 Series includes five models with a variety of deck sizes. A new 31-hp Kawasaki engine option delivers 14% larger displacement and a 40% larger hydraulic pump, which boosts mowing speed up to 12 mph.

The 7-Iron Pro deck, now in its 3rd generation, features full-wrap reinforcement and double-captured anti-scalp wheels. That durability is enforced with

the I-beam constructed cast iron caster arms, cast iron front caster forks and no-flat front caster tires.

These mowers also feature a less complex design for increased dependability. The number of moving parts in the hydraulic system have been cut by two-thirds, and 50% of the electrical switches are gone, too. By changing over to a vertical shaft engine, Deere engineers were able to remove 41 parts from the mower deck and drive system.

Other new models that focused on increased durability include:

> The Tank Recon from Cub Cadet Commercial is designed for medium-to-large businesses looking for the durability and key features of The Tank at a competitive value. The Recon features a pivoting front axle, tapered roller bearing spindles, a fully welded steel frame,



Walker's Super B offers a 27-hp engine and 9 mph speed.

high-back suspension seat and dual five-gallon fuel tanks. In addition, the series offers a drive system with Kanzaki Pump and White Wheel Motors for high performance, handling and durability.

> Walker's Super B front-cut zero-turn has the speed and price tag of a mid-mount with the design of a front-cut. It features Walker's comfortable steering configuration, high-quality cut and a tilt-up deck and body. The 60-in. side-discharge deck is 5 in. deep, uses maintenance-free blade spindles with ball bearings and a manual deck height adjuster.







continued on page 60

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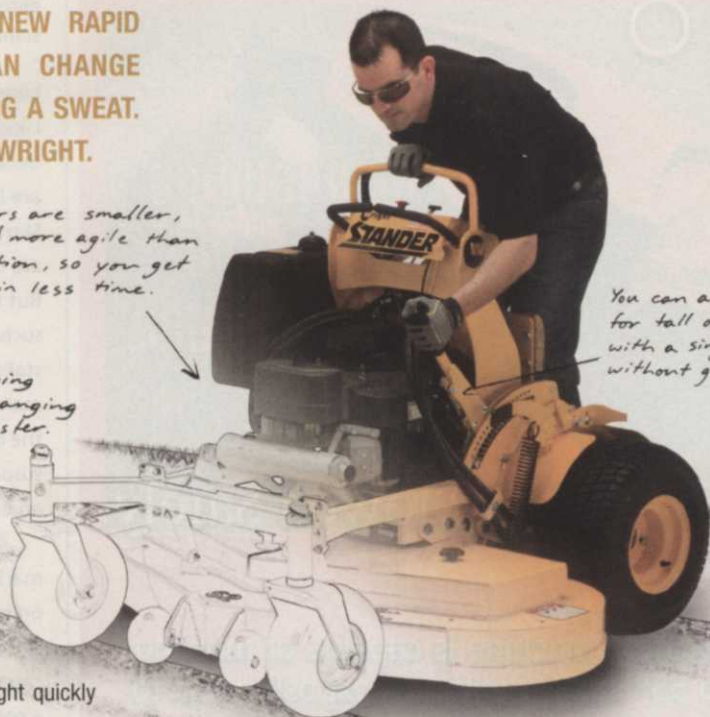
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Standing up

In 2006 Wright Manufacturing introduced its line of traditional mid-mount zero-turn lawnmowers. While Wright knew its line of Standers were popular with its customers, the reaction to its mid-mounts still came as a surprise.

"We found our customers were even more passionate about our original Standers than we were," says Bill Wright, president and CEO of Wright Manufacturing. "They knew us for our Standers and they wanted to



keep standing with us."

With that in mind, Wright has launched the new Stander ZK, which offers the productivity of a mid-mount rider with the

Wright says stand-ons could enter the prosumer market.

benefits of Wright's traditional Stander. Like a rider, the Stander ZK comes in deck widths from 52 in. to 72 in., which are larger than Wright's traditional Stander. Decks are also deeper, wheels are larger and fuel capacity is greater. But the ZK also offer stand-on benefits, such as low center of gravity for hillside stability, shorter overall length for added maneuverability, and the ability for the operator to just step off the spring suspended stand-on platform in case of emergency or to pick up debris.

Also seeing growth in the stand-on market, Toro is developing a new stand-on mower due to be released in 2008 for the 2009 model year. This mower will cater to landscape contractors who seek a compact, maneuverable stand-on machine that minimizes operator fatigue through exceptional handling, enhanced operator comfort, and ease of use.

According to Funk, stand-on mowers are becoming more mainstream because of the advantages they provide, such as increased visibility and speed compared to most mid-size walk-behinds and zero-turn riders. The compact design often permits more mowers to fit on a trailer.

"We really see this as an increasing and growing market for landscape contractors," said Funk. "It's become mainstream with contractors and homeowners. And there's a lot of opportunity for innovation in this product line."

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55°

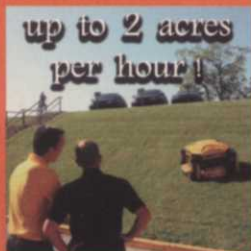


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5

A closer shave

Just like men's razors have gone from one blade to two-blades to three to four to vibrating — all in the pursuit of the closest shave possible — new mowers are constantly innovating to give the best trim around edges, gardens and fences. Check out the trimming innovations on these new models:

> The **Ventrac MR740** triplex reel mower attachment is designed to be the ultimate trim and surround mower. With a 74-in. cut width and variable-speed hydraulics, the Ventrac MR740 includes many features to ensure superior, low-maintenance performance. When powered by the all-wheel-drive Ventrac 4200 tractor with 31-hp turbo diesel engine, the MR740 can be operated continuously on hills and slopes up to 30 degrees.

> **Husqvarna** introduces the **Combi-Deck** with improved mulching capability. Decks are constructed of 7-gauge stamped steel and protected by an additional side reinforcement bar. The deep, optimized shape is designed to maximize mulching capability while allowing trim cutting on both sides of the deck at all times.

> **Lastec's** new 80 and 100 Series mowers feature four or five 21-in. articulating decks that follow the shape of the ground, delivering a precise cut. Both feature gas and diesel engine options up to 36 hp and have a side reach of over 20 in. to reach under obstacles and trim closer.

> **Yazoo/Kees** introduced eight new models into its 2008 Max 2 and Mid-Max series line, all featuring molded rubber discharge shields to allow closer trimming without damage to the shield, trees



Dixon's Grizzly ZTR with a molded rubber discharge shield

or fences. Cutting deck improvements include a welded reinforcement strip on the deck's front edge for added durability, thicker anti-scalp roller bolts to resist bending and a new maintenance-free double ball bearing deck idler arm.

> **Dixon's** Grizzly and Kodiak ZTR mowers will include molded rubber discharge shields and retractable seat belts for 2008. The discharge shield flexes to impacts and allows closer trimming without damage to the shield, trees or fences. The retractable seat belts provide for greater safety, comfort and convenience.

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Get a Grip

TECHNOLOGY EQUIPMENT PLAYGROUND

Getting stuck indoors allowed me to examine some of the software offered for sale to dealers and companies.



Going to plan 'B'

BY ALLEN SPENCE

A 20-acre playground. I must have described GIE+EXPO's outdoor exhibit space that way to my students at least a dozen times in the week leading up to the Green Industry's largest show of the year. Anticipation. Licking my lips and checking my blood pressure, I had it bad.

That event is my one chance to operate different types of equipment that I have never used, never been exposed to; some of it I had never even heard of.

And, as many of you know, it rained, continued raining and then rained some more.

But all wasn't lost. I spent plenty of time on the inside of the huge exhibit hall looking at equipment and visiting with representatives from many companies. People were more than happy to show me their new and exciting equipment and what it could do.

I saw accessories for handheld equipment I haven't had the opportunity to examine before. Many of these were not new products, just new to me.

Getting stuck indoors also allowed me to examine some of the software programs offered for sale to dealers and

companies. Quite a few showed promise, and I encourage you to research the different types out there. I confess, I'm a novice when it comes to doing anything with a computer other than word processing and cruising the Web. I would have to hire someone to operate some of these systems, or walk me through them. This might negate any savings the software provided, but that doesn't mean they don't have value for those of you with a little more computer savvy.

Four things at GIE+EXPO that I intend to explore further:

1. Speed-loading trimmer heads. Where were these when I was learning how to reload a spool?
2. Easy-start features on small engines — an operator's dream or a technician's downfall?
3. The difference in 4-cycle engine designs from manufacture to manufacture. I do have a favorite, but are we saving the user money or just increasing maintenance costs?
4. Look for articles about emissions standards and 4-cycle engines in the future.

Stay tuned; there's a lot I want to share with you from the GIE+EXPO.

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

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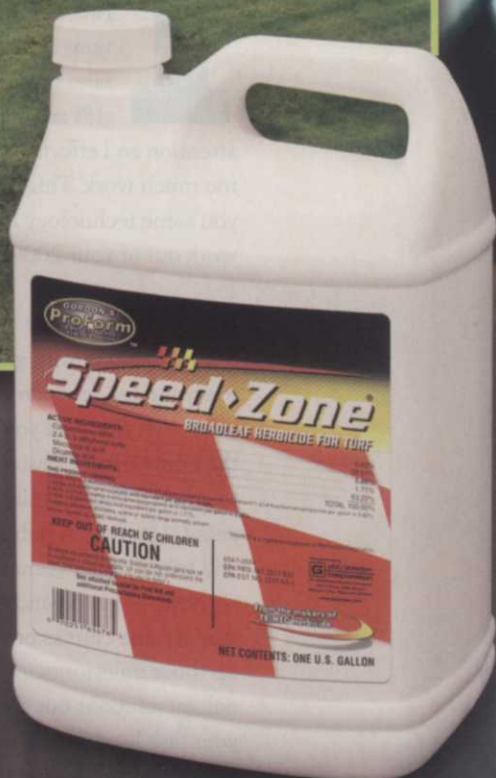
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Make this the year that you achieve your goals. Just remember that a little technology used in the right way can make all of the difference.



Tech for reaching '08 goals

BY TYLER WHITAKER

I really don't believe in New Years resolutions, unless it involves food, fun and a warm beach somewhere in the Pacific. I think the problem with resolutions is that losing weight, growing sales revenue and increasing net margins are fulltime jobs requiring constant attention and effort. Unfortunately that sounds like too much work. This month, I want to share with you some technology ideas that may help take the work out of your 2008 goals.

Let everyone know

Start by getting your goals out in the open where everyone can see them. If you have an internal company Web site, post your goals front and center on the home page. Consider posting them on your blog too. And if you're really serious, add them to your email signature. A public declaration of your goals will solidify your commitment and gather support.

Next — get organized. Break your goals into manageable chunks or milestones. And then break up those milestones into tasks. Several great technology solutions out there can help you manage your task lists. One of the simplest and most readily available tools is Microsoft Outlook. You can setup tasks with due dates and reminders. Simple online tools Tadalist.com and Voo2do.com will also help you manage your task list. Prioritizing your list can be a pain. These tools should make that job a snap.

Sometimes your goals include a partner, team or

your entire business. For larger projects consider using BaseCampHQ.com. It has the ability to manage larger multi-person projects. You can assign tasks to people, share documents, post notes on virtual white boards, and chat online. Basecamp minimizes the overhead of project management, leaving you with more time to get things done.

More online aids

Once you've organized your goals into easy-to-manage tasks, get to work. Use the tools above to collaborate with your team and track your progress. Also check out Twitter.com, an online communication tool that lets you both send and receive short messages via the Web or your cell phone. It's great for status updates between project team members when they're in the field.

And then there's Google Calendar that works like any other calendaring program. But since it is Web based you can share your calendars with others regardless of their location or software preferences. By allowing your team to edit and update your project's shared calendar, you can avoid a lot of busy work trying to avoid scheduling conflicts. Keeping everyone on schedule is a key to success.

Yogi Berra once said, "If you don't know where you're going, you'll end up someplace else." Make 2008 the year that you achieve your goals. Just remember that a little technology used in the right way can make all of the difference.

— 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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Compact Utility Tractors

A compact utility tractor itself isn't anything really special. It's the attachments that make these machines a useful and versatile part of your fleet.

Typically ranging from 20 hp to 50 hp, a compact utility tractor fits the need for large mowing or small- to medium-sized design/build jobs that don't require equipment, such as a skid steer. Compact utility tractors below 40 hp are often equipped with both a mid-mounted power takeoff (PTO) and a standard rear PTO to put the umph into the attachments.

With the right attachments, the tractor is most often used for mowing grass, digging and trenches, moving materials, clearing snow and pulling trailers.

Common attachments include a front-end loader, backhoe, box blade, grader blade, yard rake, post hole digger, rotary cutter, a mid- or rear-mount mower, broadcast seeder, tiller and trencher.

Compact utility tractors can range from a basic model for \$10,000 to up to \$30,000 for one with all the available features and attachments. Important considerations when purchasing at a compact utility tractor include:

▶ Is there a cost-savings of owning a compact utility tractor and attachments compared to other machines that per-

form similar functions? Be sure you need a tractor, not just a specialized tool.

▶ How much horsepower do you need? Too much wastes gas, too little hurts performance. Often the PTO hp is more important than engine hp.

▶ If you are using a front-end loader with the tractor, consider lift height, reach, digging depth, lift capacity and breakout force.

▶ Hydrostatic transmissions make the operator's life simpler, but add complexity to maintenance.

▶ 2-wheel or 4-wheel drive? Front wheel drive offers superior pulling to rear-wheel drive.

▶ If you're going to be switching tools frequently, find a machine with a quick-attach system.

The following are just a few of the manufacturers offering compact utility tractors to the landscape market. Bobcat has also announced plans to offer a line of compact utility tractors in 2008.



continued on page 70

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LM Reports

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Cub Cadet/Yanmar

Cub Cadet Yanmar's Sc2400 Sub-Compact Tractor is designed for those users wanting more power and versatility than a garden tractor, but who are not quite ready for a bigger compact utility tractor. The Sc2400 features a "Shift-On-The-Go" transmission that allows operators to change ranges without stopping the tractor. Additionally, the Sc2400 features sturdy grab handles on both fenders as well as one above the control panel, allowing users to easily and safely enter and exit the operator's station. The Sc2400 is also equipped with integral front-facing work lights, positioned just beneath the tractor's two 30-watt halogen headlamps. The Sc2400 is powered by a 3-cylinder liquid-cooled, 24-hp Yanmar diesel engine.

Contact Cub Cadet/Yanmar at 877/CUB-5055 or www.cubcadetyanmar.com / circle no. 250

Kioti

Kioti's DK45SE HST (hydrostatic transmission) tractor simplifies the operation of the tractor and improves productivity. Kioti's DK45SE HST has a lifting capacity of 2,493 lbs. and is designed with a 3-point hitch for easy mounting of attachments or implements. This enables the tractor to complete a variety of tasks such as augering, trenching, mowing, tilling, digging, plowing and clearing brush. The DK45SE HST 4-cylinder

tier III diesel engine offers 45 gross hp at 2,600 rpm and a maximum travel speed of 17.7 mph.

For more information contact Kioti Tractor 877/465-4684 or www.kioti.com / circle no. 251



Ventrac

The Ventrac 4200VXD series of compact tractors enhances maneuverability and stability by conforming to the contour of the terrain. Operators can choose either gas or diesel, liquid-cooled engines ranging from 27-hp to a 31-hp TURBO Diesel. The machine weighs in at less than 1,600 lbs. Ventrac offers more than 30 available attachments designed with Ventrac's Minute Mount System. The system allows you to simply drive up and get attached to the implement of your choice in about a minute or less. Ventrac's patented S.D.L.A. control, located next to the operator, allows for easy control of speed, direction, lift and auxiliary function all with one hand.

Contact Venture Products Inc. at 866/VENTRAC or www.ventrac.com / circle no. 252

Husqvarna

Husqvarna's LS Series tractors offer superior performance, ergonomics, style and durability. All the units with 46-in. or greater widths have welded, reinforced cutting decks with Air Induction mowing technology that produces a



professional quality cut and is designed for longevity. The decks are easy to maintain with the built-in deck wash system, allowing users to simply connect the garden hose to wash the underside. For user comfort, the LS series has a 15-in.-high back seat, ergonomically arranged controls, and step-through design. Four deck gauge wheels prevent scalping of grass in uneven terrain. The LS series' six models range from 18 hp. to 27 hp and decks from 42 in. to 54 in.

Contact Husqvarna at 800/HUSKY-62 or www.usa.husqvarna.com / circle no. 253

Mahindra USA

Mahindra USA introduced two new models to its 25 series of tractors – the 5525 2WD and 6025 2WD models. The 25 series is a line of 2-wheel-drive tractors for heavy-duty applications. These rugged and economical utility tractors range from 35 hp. to 59 hp. The 5525 and 6025 models are 4-cylinder tractors with 4-stroke, direct injection, water-cooled diesel engines. The new models offer lift capacity of 3,525 lbs. Standard features on these models include hydrostatic power steering, three piece extendable front axle, differential lock, swinging drawbar, sliding seat with armrest, rear work light, ergonomic controls and pedals and foldable ROPS.

Contact Mahindra USA at 800/887-2286 or www.mahindrausa.com / circle no. 254

Compact Power Inc. (CPI)

The design of the Powerhouse TLB-325 tractor loader backhoe from CPI ensures a rugged, dependable backhoe with phenomenal digging power and big machine features. Engineered with operators, owners and servicemen in mind, the new TLB-325 Tractor



continued on page 72

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TURNAER 4

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Loader Backhoe offers long life, exceptional performance and easy serviceability. Faster cycle times, a roomy operator area and precise, easy joystick controls put a passion for power at your fingertips.

Contact Compact Power Inc. at 800/476-9673 or www.cpiequipment.com / circle no. 255

Ditch Witch

The Ditch Witch RT55 tractor is a high-performance unit that successfully bridges the gap between mid-size and compact equipment. It features an integrated front cast weight that reduces counterweight

requirements and helps provide superior balance when running attachments. Its quiet, 60-hp, 2004-compliant Deutz engine produces cleaner emissions and minimal noise. This enables the operator to work longer hours in congested urban areas. The RT55 offers backhoe, reel carrier, trencher, vibratory plow, and a combination trencher/vibratory plow attachments. It is designed primarily for

work on utility, telecommunications, and landscape/irrigation projects.

Contact Ditch Witch at 800/654-6481 or ditchwitch.com / circle no. 256

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TORO

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LM Reports

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Snapper

Snapper's new subcompact garden tractor features a 27-hp diesel engine and four wheel drive. The Briggs & Stratton 27-hp Vanguard diesel is a workhorse of an engine that provides the power needed to tackle most any task. A 3-cylinder, fuel-injected engine, the Vanguard diesel offers power and durable operation with higher torque, better fuel economy and extended maintenance intervals. A Tuff Torq K92 transmission provides plenty of hydraulic capacity for powering the tractor and large attachments like a front-end loader. The GT600 features a 54-in. deep-profile mower with anti-scalp rollers for a precision cut without scalping.

Contact Snapper at 888/SNAPPER or www.snapper.com / circle no. 257



With a maximum loading height of 90 in., the 1/3-cu.-yd. loader bucket is able to dump loads where other compact tractors cannot reach.

Contact Allmand at 800/562-1373 or www.allmand.com / circle no. 258

Allmand

The 3,115-lbs. Allmand TLB-220 heavy-duty compact tractor loader backhoe features a Robin EH65D air-cooled gasoline engine generating 20.5 hp at 3,600 rpm. TLB-220 features 2,875 lbs. digging force as well as an 8-ft.-4-in. digging depth. The backhoe's dual cylinder, 180-degree hydraulic cushioned swing allows precise work in tight areas. The unit's loader has a lift capacity of 1,700 lbs. and 2,600-lbs. breakout force.



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LM Reports

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Terramite

Terramite's T7 compact tractor loader backhoe handles the toughest jobs without digging into your profit. The T7 is standard with a 26-hp Kubota diesel engine, extended reach arms for a dump height of 96 in., high capacity front loader bucket for faster cycle time, center mount steering, Super Terra Grip front and rear tires for better traction and maneuverability, dual front curl cylinders and 180-degree swing.

Contact Terramite at 304/776-4231 or www.terramite.com / circle no. 259

New Holland

New Holland's U80 tractor loader offers 75 hp, an operating weight 10,347 lbs. and .85-cu.-yd. bucket capacity. New Holland tractor loaders are designed to provide outstanding visibility, giving the operator



a virtually unobstructed view of the entire machine. These tractor loaders feature: Best-in-class hitch performance with the extra-durable three-point manual hitch; electro-hydraulic differential lock with activation switch in the loader control lever; ground clearance of 11 in.; flat deck design for impressive visibility; and durable 4-speed conventional torque converter transmission.

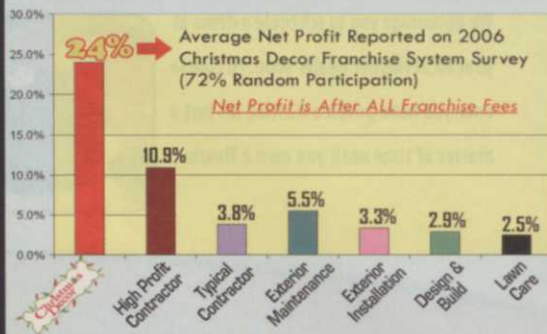
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John Deere

John Deere's 3000 TWENTY Series offers four models ranging from 30 hp to 44 gross hp with Yanmar Tier II-compliant diesel engines and turbocharged performance. The eHydro transmission provides infinite speed selection and unmatched productivity with no clutching or shifting required. Patented features such as Load-

Match, MotionMatch, SpeedMatch, the new performance tracking system — an automotive-style diagnostic control center — provides operator convenience. The available iMatch 3-point hitch allows implement switching in seconds without leaving the tractor seat. These tractors come "loader ready" with standard Dual SCV, loader joystick and four wheel drive.

Contact John Deere at 800/537-8233 or www.johndeere.com / circle no. 261

Montana Tractors

Montana Tractors offers a wide range of compact and utility tractors with models ranging from 23 hp to 70 hp. Montana tractors are available in compact 4-wheel-drive models and utility models with a choice of 2-WD or 4-WD. The utility models offer a choice of open station with rollover protection system or wrap-around, high-visibility Big Sky Cab. Some models feature infinite speed hydrostatic transmissions. Montana Tractors offers an expanding line of implements including front-end loaders; scrapers; pallet forks; rotary cutters; finish mowers; rear tillers; rear blades; yard rakes; box blades; post hole diggers; augers; spreaders; discs; dump trailers; wagons and backhoes. Contact Montana Tractors at 800/872-1910 or www.montanatractors.com / circle no. 262

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How to read fertilizer labels

Your guide to choosing the right product and saving money in buying fertilizer

FRED HULME, PH.D.

The most important rule to follow is using any chemical products is to always "read the label." In many cases the label is the law. Off-label usage, particularly of pesticides, is illegal and could lead to serious legal liabilities.

While fertilizer application practices are far less regulated (at least right now), the information on the outside of a bag tells you a great deal about the results you can expect.

Unfortunately, many landscapers don't take time to scrutinize the label and buy the wrong product or misuse it. The information on the label isn't just hype or a tangle of indecipherable statistics; it can help you choose a better fertilizer or improve the efficiency of your current fertilizer.

Depending on its type and brand,

there may be a variety of information provided on both the front and back of a fertilizer bag. While the law mandates that some of this information be listed, many companies provide tips and suggestions to optimize your fertilizer program.

A look at the label

The Association of American Plant Food Control Officers (AAPFCO) is a coalition of state and federal officials who work with fertilizer companies to regulate what information by law is required to be on a fertilizer bag's label and the standard format for displaying this information. The AAPFCO is concerned with ensuring companies meet the specified nutrient levels or support any other claims made on the label. It requires each bag of fertilizer to clearly display: brand, grade (N-P2O5-K2O analysis – e.g. 20-10-20), guaranteed analysis of all essential nutrients, name and address of the fertilizer company (registrant) and directions for use.

The Guaranteed Analysis (G.A.) allows you to judge different fertiliz-

ers on an apples-to-apples basis. This analysis clearly states what nutrients are being claimed and from which form they are derived. Other key elements of a G.A. include:

- ▶ Nitrogen system: the percentage of nitrate N, ammonical N and urea N
- ▶ Designation of water soluble or insoluble nutrient sources that tells you how available nutrients might be
- ▶ Chelated or other micronutrient sources.
- ▶ All of the nutrient raw material components used to make the fertilizer (listed in the "derived from" statement.)
- ▶ The percentage of ingredients guaranteed to be slow-release, which is only required for coated or slow-release fertilizer products. This gives you an estimate on what portion of the product will give you sustained feeding of turf and landscapes. It's the basis for any longevity claim on the label.
- ▶ A complete label is required even if a product is sold as a custom-blended



product. A custom-blend by definition is a formulation made on request specifically for only one customer.

Other claims

Additionally, if fertilizer is combined with pesticide, insecticide or herbicide, the product is then considered a pesticide, insecticide or herbicide, and its label must contain all the required information, precautions and warnings listed on the active ingredients label. On such products, the label is the law, and it is essential that users read the label thoroughly to ensure correct and safe application. Fertilizer regulators may step in when companies claim that a fertilizer possesses non-nutritive benefits, such as fighting disease, promoting health or acting as a growth regulator. If these companies cannot support these claims with credible research, they may be forced to retract their claims and may face fines.

Directions for use

The required information in the "directions for use" statement is subject to less industry standardization. Some labels include almost no information on product usage, while others are quite comprehensive. Here are some of the useful features you might find on the back of fertilizer bags:

► **Fertilizer selection for specific situations.** Products may have plant-specific names or purpose-driven names. There are many theories about plant nutrition and fertilizer selection. For most landscape situations it is best to test the soil first to see what nutrients are lacking. Then based on plant type, age of planting and other factors the correct fertilizer formulation and rate should be applied.

► **Suggested rates for specific plant types or situations.** These suggestions are starting points, and if coverage per bag is stated on the label, it is tied back

to these rates. Fertilizer companies may base these values on in-house research or published data, but environmental factors — irrigation water quality, production practices and plant needs — impact the success of your fertilizer program. Ultimately one should scrutinize rates in terms of lbs. of N (or other nutrients) applied per 1,000 sq. ft. The applicator can only determine the best rate for his or her situation with well-designed trials with controls in place. There may be limited spreader information on the bag. If you're unsure, call the company or do some calibrations to make sure you're applying the recommended rates.

► **Mixing and application instructions.** If you're using a water-soluble fertilizer supplement, there are comprehensive

mixing instructions on the back of most bags. There is a lot of confusion about how to mix water-soluble fertilizers to deliver the correct concentrations. Concentrations are specific weight-to-volume mixtures. Professionals applying this type of product need to measure the volume of their stock tanks and weigh out the fertilizer when mixing up a fresh batch or their results will be inconsistent. Soluble salt (or EC) values are provided according to target ppm N concentrations to help users check their mixing accuracy and injector efficiency.

► **Other important values.** Labels should state the potential acidity/basicity. This indicates how acidic or basic the raw materials of a fertilizer are and are predictive values for how a fertilizer might

act on the root zone when used repeatedly over time. High potential acidity fertilizer tends to depress growing soil pH over time, depending on the lime applications, soil texture and structure, irrigation water quality and plant type.

► **Handling/storage/health and safety instructions.** Products should provide guidance on storage and whether protective equipment or procedures are required. Some products may be labeled as oxidizers, which may require special shipping, handling and storage requirements. There should be a link on the bag label about how to obtain MSDS sheets and what to do if there is product spill or what happens if product is inadvertently ingested.

► **Contact information.** Look for infor-

The information on the label isn't a bunch of hype or a tangle of indecipherable statistics; it can help you choose a better fertilizer or improve the efficiency of your current fertilizer.

mation about customer service contacts, technical support and the company's Web site to answer product questions before you use it.

The information on fertilizer product labels is there to help you select the right fertilizer and get the best possible results. As with any product label, the mantra for fertilizer users should always be, "Read the Label." By reading and following a well-constructed fertilizer label before using the product inside, you can avoid many potential problems and select the best fertilizer for your particular application. **LM**

— The author is Director of Technical Services, Scotts Professional Horticulture Americas. Contact him at fred.hulme@scotts.com.

Products

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New chemistry here

DuPont has submitted registration applications to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for DuPont Acelepryn insecticide, the first insecticide in the new anthranilic diamide class of chemistry. Acelepryn has been developed to provide control of white grubs and other key insect pests for the golf and lawn markets. Acelepryn contains the new active ingredient DuPont Calteryx insecticide, and will offer turf professionals consistent performance, low application rates plus an excellent toxicological and environmental profile. DuPont Acelepryn has been classified as a reduced risk insecticide by the EPA.

Contact DuPont Professional Products at 888/6-DUPONT or www.proproducts.dupont.com / circle no. 265



Turf renovator

Cub Cadet Commercial's new line of turf application equipment includes the TR20 Turf renovator. This self-propelled unit serves as a seeder, slicer or verticutter and promotes germination by accurately dropping metered seed into soil, allowing 40 high-carbon steel blades and two full-width brushes to perform. With easy-to-use controls, the TR20 Turf Renovator gives professionals good seed-to-soil contact at a maximum forward speed of 2.5 mph and reverse speed of 1 mph.

Contact Cub Cadet Commercial at 877/835-7841 or

www.cubcadetcommercial.com / circle no. 266

Deere skids

Two new additions to the John Deere Skid steer family — the 313 and 315 — feature the same unified design as the rest of the

line and continue the 300 Series advantages of superior stability, visibility and serviceability. These two models are compact and maneuverable, yet powerful with rated

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operating capacities of 1,300 and 1,500 lbs. Features like 10-by-16.5 in. tires for traction and flotation, heavy-duty drive chains that never need adjusting, and best-in-class visibility provide safety while operating in tight spaces. These new models have standard machine widths of 59 inches.

Contact John Deere at 800/537-8233 or www.johndeere.com / circle no. 267

Design software

Drafix Software PRO Landscape design suite Version 14 includes many new features and enhancements for landscape designers, contractors and architects. PRO Landscape offers design flexibility with realistic photo imaging, 3D photo rendering, easy-to-use CAD and 3D CAD rendering. Version 14 of

PRO Landscape now contains more than 6,000 of the industry's best quality images and includes RealDWG from Autodesk, which allows PRO Landscape users to import and export to

and from the latest AutoCAD formats with ease, even AutoCAD 2008. Version 14 also offers new hardscape tools, new coloring options and enhanced 3D capabilities.

Contact Drafix Software at 800/231-8574 or www.prolandscape.com / circle no. 268

Protect transplanted trees

Bayer's CoreTect tablets are a new treatment technology that combines the power of Merit insecticide with a fertilizer in convenient, easy-to-use tablets. Studies have shown that the survival and growth rates of transplanted trees are significantly increased when CoreTect tablets are used at planting. When plants are under stress, photosynthesis, water use and respiration become inefficient.

CoreTect systemically triggers enzymatic pathways that produce antioxidants, resulting in better stress defense and more efficient use of nutrients and water.

Contact Bayer Environmental Science at 800/843-1702 or www.BackedByBayer.com / circle no. 269



Vermeer mini-skid

The new Vermeer S400TX mini skid steer features a 23-hp gas engine, which produces 15% more horsepower than competitive models. Two joysticks, which control transport and boom/bucket motion, can be operated while holding onto an integrated hand-grip bar. Ground drive is controlled by a single joystick, and provides a smooth range of motion while operating the unit. The S400TX produces only 3.8 psi ground pressure and a hydraulic flow rate of 11.5 gpm. The S400TX delivers a tipping capacity of 1,430 pounds with a rated operating capacity of 500 lbs. and a maximum 69 in. lifting height.

Contact Vermeer Manufacturing Co. at 888/VERMEER or www.vermeer.com / circle no. 270

Diesel engine series

Yanmar introduced the "MINIMAX" series diesel engine for lawn and garden equipment, small agricultural machines, utility vehicles and compact generators. The 3TNM68 model is the first in



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Products

this series released. This 784cc 3-cylinder Tier-IV-compliant engine utilizes Yanmar's proprietary indirect injection technology to achieve low fuel consumption and low emissions levels. The engine block for this ultra compact and high performance power plant employs Yanmar's latest structural technology to achieve low vibration, noise and size. **Contact Yanmar America at 847/541-1900 or www.yanmar.com / circle no. 271**

Zahn trenchers

The new Zahn series of trenchers from Ditch Witch consists of three power units and compatible front ends. One of these machines is the Zahn R300, which is designed to be more powerful, more productive and faster than any trencher in the 30-hp class. The Zahn R300 power unit includes a Kohler gas engine, operator's console



and articulation joint that enables the front end to perform like a dedicated unit. The 2-wheel-drive R300 powers two types of front-end trenchers, while its 4-wheel-drive InterChange counterpart accepts up to seven types of front ends: trencher, plow, dumper, tiller, backhoe, stump grinder, and a tool carrier that can drive more than 40 quick-change attachments.

Contact Ditch Witch at 800/654-6481 or ditchwitch.com / circle no. 272

Caterpillar skid steers

The new Caterpillar B2 Series of skid steer loaders and multi terrain loaders feature an improved operator station, an advanced hydraulic system and a wide range of standard features and options designed to meet a



variety of production and comfort requirements in the compact machines. High-performance power trains provide high engine horsepower and torque, allowing part-throttle operation for lower sound levels and fuel consumption. The eight machines in the series have rated operating capacities ranging from 1,400 lbs. to 2,500 lbs. Caterpillar ToughGuard hoses are used for all lift, tilt and auxiliary circuits. They are approximately 20 times more resistant to abrasion than standard hoses and provide improved machine reliability.

Contact Caterpillar at 888/OWN-A-CAT or www.cat.com / circle no. 273

T2 T-Bar controls

The Toro Company has introduced new T2 T-Bar controls on its line of floating-deck, hydrostatic-drive, mid-size, walk-behind mowers. The new controls incorporate a split version of the classic T-Bar operation with the addition of dual-reference bars for more precise maneuvers, making Toro mowers easier to operate and giving operators a leg up on productivity. The T2 T-Bar Hydro uses straightforward control logic — push to go forward, pull back for reverse — that makes the controls easy to understand and master. The decreased activation force reduces operator fatigue, while the layout of the controls allows the machine to be operated with one hand when necessary.

Contact Toro at 800/348-2424 or www.toro.com/professional / circle no. 274



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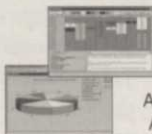
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Greg Korzen has helped build up Little Rock, AR-based TurfMaster by believing in quality over quantity.

BY MIKE SEUFFERT /
Associate Editor

When Greg Korzen started at TurfMaster in Little Rock, AR, around 2000, one of the suggestions he heard was that he would earn respect from his clients if he showed up to the job dirty.

"So, I'm trying to get a \$25,000-\$30,000 contract, and I'm going to show up in dirty clothes? No way," Korzen says. "Typically, people don't think of landscapers as professionals. They think it's a job they can do. I try to break the mold. It starts by dressing to impress."

When he came to Little Rock, Korzen brought the professional mentality he learned from his family's nursery and landscape business in northern Virginia, where he previously ran

the company's wholesale nursery.

His employment with TurfMaster was his first employment outside of the family business. That didn't last long.

Let's get it on

"With some companies, there's this low-key, laid-back mentality, and I came here with a go-getter attitude — setting goals, saying, 'Let's do this, let's do that,' says Korzen. "It's not having a big-head, but big ideas. And within six months, Dave (Dave DeBlock, the owner who Korzen is buying out) gave me the opportunity to be the vice president of the company."

Since 2000, the company grew its revenue from about \$300,000 to \$2.5 million in 2007. Three maintenance crews expanded to 40 employees spread into four



The Dream Team

(Top row, from left) Scott Moore – Landscape Supervisor; Greg Korzen – President; Danny Noble – Turf Management Supervisor; (Front row, from left) Michael Adams – Irrigation Supervisor; Jason Moore – Landscape Management Supervisor.

full-service divisions during peak season — landscape management (maintenance), design/build/installation, irrigation, and turf & ornamental control.

"You've got to have the foundation set, and number one is the guys here," Korzen says. "Each of our officers oversees a division. They get things accomplished the way they need to be accomplished."

"I'm really so proud and lucky to work with such great guys. When I started, some of them didn't like to meet with customers. Now they're the first ones in line selling and meeting with people."

Built by customers


Korzen says TurfMaster has been able to grow without advertising, even to the point of eliminating Yellow Pages ads. Its network of clients has been built by word of mouth.

"We strive for quality. With that comes a price," Korzen says. "We don't just go out there and pick up anything we can. I'll tell potential customers up front — whether it's a \$5,000 job or \$50,000 job — 'If you're just looking for price, you've called the wrong people. I am not going to harm our reputation or the quality of our work just to get work.'"

"One thing I've learned, and by reading *Landscape Management*, is we that must service our customers to death. That's what we do," he says. "We don't want to be labelled as a landscape company. We want to be known as a service company." **LM**

►► **Location:** Little Rock, AR **Founded in:** 1992
Employees: 40 (16 ft, 23 pt) **2007 Revenue:** \$2.5 million
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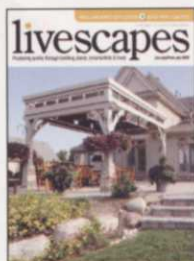
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Splashes of color liven up a hardscape. Photo courtesy: Grunder Landscaping Co.

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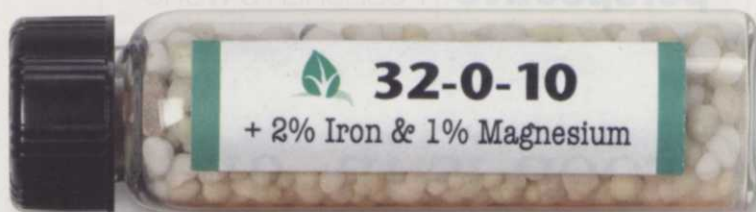
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Green is in, are you?

As we head into the new year, it's human nature to look back on what we've accomplished and look ahead to what 2008 will bring. For the landscape industry, despite the housing market bust, 2008 will bring a lot of opportunities. One such opportunity is the continuing trend of environmental awareness by U.S. consumers.



V Savvy landscape companies will take advantage of consumers' increasing environmental awareness.

It's hard to go a week without seeing a global warming or climate change headline. Last year's reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the science behind global warming led the charge. Al Gore and Ed Begley, Jr. began popping up on television screens across the country, putting familiar faces on scientific data. The December 2007 climate change talks in Bali kept the media's attention focused on the environment — and that media attention is unlikely to wane this year or next. While other data may put some of the global warming conclusions into question, the reality is that many consumers think humans have a negative impact on the environment.

A December 2007 Forrester Research report shows 41% of U.S. adults surveyed are concerned about the environment. What's more, the research firm says 12% of U.S. consumers are already willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products.

And if they're willing to pay more for "green" products, would they be willing to choose an environmentally friendly landscape company over one that didn't market itself as environmentally conscience? Landscaping is the most obvious direct link to the environment for homeowners. If they're concerned about the environment, wouldn't they want their environmental efforts to start at home? It all starts with education. From manufacturers to service providers, we need to teach our customers that sound practices are the greenest solutions.

Add in the fact that landscape companies can make a real difference when it comes to the environment, and you've got all the makings for a meaningful trend toward environmentalism in the landscape industry. From high-tech water-saving irrigation devices to rain gardens to green roofs, landscapers are in a position to make America "greener." Savvy companies will take advantage of the trend, not only to gain a competitive advantage, but to continue to be good stewards of the environment.

Regards,

Kevin Stoltman
Group Publisher
kstoltman@questex.com

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H-2B: Woe are we!

> COMMENTARY FROM ANLA

As you may have heard, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) bureau announced on Jan. 3, that it had received enough petitions to reach the congressionally mandated H-2B seasonal and temporary worker program cap for the second half of fiscal year 2008, which begins April 1. With the second half 2008 cap of 33,000 visas met, all petitions for new H-2B workers received after Jan. 2 will be rejected.

The simple fact that the cap has been exceeded so quickly, as our executive vice president Bob Dolibois stated, “is an irrefutable affirmation of ANLA’s efforts to increase number of H-2B guest worker visas available to support the American economy and landscape and nursery businesses.”

Practically, it means that tens of thousands of experienced seasonal landscape workers may not be able to return to their jobs. It means that businesses may be forced to downsize or close, affecting their American workers, their tax contributions to local communities, and the ripple economic effect that comes from their purchase of local supplies and services.

Shying from Controversy

If Congress intended to design an approach to shrinking the American economy, it is well on the way. Frankly — no one wants to talk about this. If Congress wanted to encourage illegal immigration, the best way to do so is to force law-abiding workers who have been coming through just about the only legal channel to either lose their economic lifeline or cross illegally and take their chances.

Why hasn’t Congress acted yet? There is broad bipartisan support for the Save Our Small and Seasonal Businesses Acts (H.R.1843 and S.988). Yet, as program users are learning, guest worker programs are controversial stuff. In the case of the H-2B cap relief measure, organized labor has lined up as a major stumbling block. Labor holds the view that guest worker programs empower the employer too much, and can suppress wages and undermine working conditions for Americans. We counter that few Americans are looking for seasonal jobs, that seasonal

foreign workers support full-time American jobs, and that the program has wage and labor protections. But this is not necessarily a debate where folks want to know the truth. So the unions want to hold the measure hostage until they get wage and labor protections concessions.

Other opposition comes from the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, which is reluctant to allow any narrow immigration-related measures to move through Congress alone. They are advocating for at least a somewhat broader approach to immigration legislation. Labor and the Hispanic Caucus together have had the power to hold Leadership back from moving on the H-2B return worker measure.

Some in the H-2B user/provider community are bewildered that H-2B — a small business issue — is getting caught up in the immigration debate. That’s a rational view, but folks, our political system doesn’t always operate in the realm of the rational. To illustrate, NumbersUSA, one of the leading immigration restrictionist groups, has trained its guns on the H-2B program as an assault on the American worker. To think that the debate can be reframed and isolated from immigration in time to do any good is to shovel sand against a swift tide.

Keep the Pressure on

That isn’t to say we give up. There is enormous and growing pressure to pass the H-2B returning worker exemption. We need to keep that pressure up, with weekly calls and faxes and emails to Congress asking, “have you gotten the job done yet? Here are the consequences if you don’t.”

With such pressure, it can happen, perhaps sometime in February or March. Obviously, the later it happens, the more chaotic the spring season. Sooner is better. How might it happen? Legislative strategy and packaging are ultimately going to be a Democratic leadership call. If an opening is created, and if the fix is clean enough (meaning, concessions to unions are limited and won’t cripple the program) we need to run for it, run in a hard and unified fashion. We may only get one chance.

Regelbrugge is vice president for government relations, American Nursery & Landscape Association, www.anla.org.



A punch of color can make a positive first impression

> COMMENTARY FROM OFA

Color design saturates every corner of our lives — from the clothes we wear to the electronics we purchase to the items that decorate our homes. While most people don't stop to think about how much color impacts their lives, those of us in the green industry know that color sells, especially when it comes to real estate. Whether you're preparing a home to go on the market or installing seasonal color for a corporate client, color can benefit not only your bottom line but your client's as well.

Consider the following:

- > Landscaping can add between 7% and 15% to a home's value.
- > Homes with "excellent" landscaping can expect a sale price about 7% higher than equivalent houses with "good" landscaping and nearly 12% higher than homes with "average" landscaping.
- > Landscaping can bring a recovery value of 100% to 200% at selling time.
- > In one study, 99% of real estate appraisers said landscaping enhances the sales appeal of real estate.

The reason landscaping has such an effect on property value is that it's often the first thing a person notices about a building or house. A well-planned, beautiful landscape implies that the home's interior is just as tidy, stylish, and interesting as the yard outside. And while green might be one of the hottest colors in modern design, when it comes to landscaping, color is a crucial part of making the most powerful first impression.

The Benefits of Color

According to a study conducted by the Color Marketing Group, a non-profit association that predicts and tracks color trends, as much as 85% of a consumer's purchasing decision is based on color and packaging. If you think of landscaping as packaging for a building, then how can you use color to enhance that packaging and ultimately the building's value?

The Color Marketing Group has well-documented cases detailing the benefits of color. In one case study,

General Motors replaced a standard gray automotive paint color with a new hue-shifting color that allowed a \$995 premium and increased color penetration by 1.7%. In another example, Procter & Gamble designed a new container for Febreze Air Effects to mimic the light, subtle, and airy fragrances of the product line, engaging the customer and increasing customer purchase by an undisclosed percentage.

Expand Your Color Palate

Regardless of what emotion you are trying to evoke or the type of impression you are trying to create, there are plenty of annual and perennial plants to accomplish the job. The important thing is to keep your palate varied and choose the right color both for your client and the specific job.

While many people believe that color rules were made to be broken, there are some generally accepted color stories that can help you get started if you need direction. For bold statements, hues such as reds, oranges, and yellows quickly grab attention. Pastel colors fit better with a cottage look and nostalgic landscapes. Contemporary or modern homes can sustain a wide

Homes with "excellent" landscaping can expect a sale price about **7% higher** than those with "good" landscaping and **nearly 12% higher** than homes with average landscaping.

range of colors from bold, primary color schemes to trendy colors such as brown and bright pink.

But really, the color scheme you use matters much less than the fact that you've added color to your project. Once you do, you'll quickly learn the power of color to make great first impressions that increase property value, create happy clients, and make your bottom line a bit "greener."

Holmes, CAE, is executive director of OFA. For more information, visit www.ofa.org.



Networking now: from the back 9 to the web, it's all about links

In order to determine exactly what networking means, let's go to the good old Webster's Dictionary and get on the same page: "Networking — The exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions."

The meaning is still as broad as it was when my dictionary was published in 1997. What's changed are the staggering options for various platforms of information exchange that weren't imaginable 10 years ago. Bottom line: Networking is a vital tool for gathering information, talking to the right people and achieving your goals. It's an essential for any successful business — but boy, has the landscape changed.

Before you head out to the blogosphere or the local golf courses, know your objectives. Are you trying to drive more traffic to your website, engage numbers on your blog, get a specific contract signed, increase margins or gross revenue by a particular percent? Know your end game.

Listen and Learn

Before fear and desperation creeps in, start listening. Find out what customers want instead of trying to get them to take what you need to sell. If you don't add value to your customers' operations, you won't be successful in the 21st century marketplace.

Don't let yourself get discouraged. If you can't immediately measure your results, keep investigating new ways and places to make contacts and exchange ideas. There are more networking opportunities today than ever before.

Going Old School

Studies have shown that only about 5 to 10% of all new jobs are posted in the classified ads or on the Internet. The other positions are filled by word of mouth.

How clients or business contacts react on the golf course can clue you in as to how they deal with business situations. You can learn how they handle playing with partners, how they talk to employees by how they talk to a caddy, whether they compliment your good shots or whether they're so competitive that they don't notice anything else, how angry they get or how happy they

get. It can even indicate how they would deal with management — whether they try to make excuses for how they're playing.

The Online Universe

Blogs and fresh website content are critical to effective networking. It is essential that you constantly update your site content because search engine algorithms will rank your company, in part, on the sheer volume of fresh content you are posting. Content is king! If you can't write it all, hire someone. The volume of fresh material is very important if you care about where you sit on that search engine results page.

Refreshing content on your blog or website, posting on someone else's blog or simply supplying industry articles that will be linked somewhere is a powerful and effective tool for networking. Your search engine ranking is directly tied to the amount of authored links you have on the web. Post new entries at least three times a month to show that you're committed.

The following are a few keys to securing more "link love" with your on-line content:

- > Classify your specialty. Include a tagline on your blog or web site's banner so its subject can be quickly recognized.

- > Demonstrate that you're current on hot topics. For example, relate a recent news item about your area of expertise to a project you completed and link to evidence of your work.

- > Avoid too much personal information.

- > Contribute to other blogs. Insert a link to your blog to increase your traffic.


Networking is a 24/7 job. In today's culture, you are missing opportunity if you stay only on the golf links, or only engage in an online viral campaign. The optimal networking campaign means attending your child's Cub Scout pack meeting as much as engaging in search engine optimization. Actual and virtual face time is equally vital.

Gilhoolley is president of Gilhoolley Consulting, Inc., Cincinnati.

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How can I control broadleaf weeds? Stop grubs?

Q This year we had severe problem with lots of grassy and broadleaf weeds. Particularly in new customers' properties, weed problems are number one. Our major problem is nutsedge, crabgrass and a number of difficult to control weeds like oxalis and speedwell. Can you recommend products which will take care of all of these? — PA

This year many places in the Northeast experienced severe crabgrass problems. To manage nutsedge, crabgrass and most of the difficult weeds, such as oxalis and speedwell, consider using an herbicide called O-4. It contains quinclorac, sulfentrazone, 2,4-D and dicamba. Reports indicate that this herbicide can be applied in spring and fall to actively growing broadleaf weeds as compared to summer months. Fall applications provide good control of winter annuals and perennials such as henbit, chickweed, clover and ground ivy.

Reports indicate treatments done as late as in September can provide good control of nutsedge, crabgrass and a number of difficult broadleaf weeds. Repeat treatment as needed.

Always read and follow label directions.

Q A number of our customers' properties have severe grub problems. Another problem is lawns damaged by skunk or raccoons in search of grubs. We have used Merit in summer with good results. Our question is what to expect from Merit treatment in the fall? Would it be beneficial in controlling grubs then? If not, we will use Dylox as a rescue treatment. How quickly can we expect the grubs to die and hopefully minimize the animal damage? — OH

There are many different species of white grubs that can cause severe damage to turfgrass. In your area, Japanese beetle, European chafers and Masked chafers are probably the most common white grubs. Grubs feed on turfgrass roots at the soil and thatch interface and are difficult to manage. Although there are many

insecticides — such as Merit, Mach-2, Dylox and Arena to name a few — that are labelled for grub control, we will limit the discussion to Merit and Dylox, the ones you have mentioned.

Affected areas may appear to be under drought stress due to heavy grub infestations. Affected turfgrass can be pulled back like a carpet. Often grub infestations may not result in noticeable injury in lawns. Problems become more noticeable when animals such as raccoons, skunks, moles or opossums dig or pull the turfgrass in search of food.

To develop a good management strategy, it is important to identify the target grub species and understand their biology. Refer to your extension publications to learn about grubs. The majority of the grubs in your area have a one-year lifecycle.

If you apply Merit insecticide in the fall, it may not provide adequate control because you would be dealing with late second- or third-instar grubs. These grubs go down deeper in the soil for overwintering as the temperature gets colder. The insecticide has to be ingested for grub control. For better control with Merit insecticide, the treatments should be applied between mid-June and mid-August. This preventive application is targeted against young larvae as they hatch from eggs laid in late summer.

Since you are experiencing animal damage to your clients' turf and extensive grub infestation, your best option is to provide a rescue treatment using insecticides such as Dylox or Arena. Reports indicate that Dylox insecticide can work as a rescue treatment. The product needs to be ingested by the target grubs. The performance may vary depending upon the grub species and/or the formulations of Dylox being used. Generally, if the product moves to the target grubs and if they ingest 70 to 80% of it, control can be achieved within two weeks. Post watering or rainfall after treatment is beneficial for grub control.

Read and follow label directions for best results.

Rao is manager of Research and Technical Development for The Davey Tree Expert Company, Kent, OH, and supervises research conducted by The Davey Institute.

>> ASK DR. RAO If you've got a question about tree, ornamental, or turf care that you'd like answered by Dr. Rao in an upcoming issue of *Livescapes*, send them to brao@davey.com.

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PRUNE TREES PROPERLY

BY JANET AIRD

Trees are different than other plants in a landscape, says Tchukki Andersen, a certified staff arborist at Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA), which provides training and certification for tree care workers.

"Trees are part of the landscape, but we need to treat them differently than the rest of the landscape," she says. "When things go wrong with trees, they can go really wrong."

Reasons to Prune

Removing a hazard is the first reason to prune a tree. The health of the tree and aesthetics are the others. No matter what the reason, though, make sure you have a permit if the city you're working in requires one and follow the regulations carefully.

Storms can cause trees to be-

come hazardous, but so can changing their environment, for example, building a patio or a swimming pool nearby. It's important to inspect trees regularly, and especially after storms. Remove all branches that could fall and cause injury or property damage. Trim branches that block sight lines on streets and driveways. Branches that grow into utility lines also pose a hazard, but they should be removed by an arborist who's trained to work near electrical hazards.

Even the healthiest trees can be damaged by a storm, disease or insects, but trees that are well pruned are more likely to withstand them. Pruning for health begins when saplings are still in the nursery. This is the best time to establish a tree's structure, Andersen says.

Structural Pruning

Many trees have co-dominant stems, branches of approximately the same size that are connected at a V-shape and grow out of the same union in a tree. They're held together by bark, not wood, so the joint is very weak.

"Trees need to be trained early into a U-shape or subordinate V-branches," she says. "The U-shape allows more space in the middle, and the branches are attached by wood." You can also remove some branches from one co-dominant stem to reduce its growth and allow the other stem to become dominant.

Young, vigorous trees are better able to handle limb removal than older, slower-growing ones. Still, it's best to remove less than 30% of the crown, she says. "The more foliage

continued on page 14

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continued from page 12

you remove, the worse off the tree will be."

Most larger and older trees need some crown thinning, usually to maintain their structure or to rejuvenate them. Reduce foliage by no more than about 15% to 20% each growing season. The next year, remove no more than another 15% to 20%. Rejuvenating a tree can take five to seven years, she says.

Remove branches that are dead, diseased, insect-infested and broken, and ones that cross or rub another branch. Then selectively remove smaller branches — up to 2 inches in diameter — to increase light penetration and air movement through the crown. Prune from the outside in, she says, so you don't end up removing the interior foliage and leaving foliage

only on the outer branches.

Pruning larger limbs is often a case for "the trained eye of an arborist," she says. In fact, Andersen adds, "Whenever you need to get on a ladder, it's best to call an arborist."

Pruning for aesthetics enhances trees' natural shapes and branch structures, especially trees that do little self-pruning.

"It all comes back to the tree species," she says. "Sometimes we just need to leave trees alone and let them be what they want to be. If you're pruning mature trees once or twice a year, or if power lines run through the tree, the tree is probably in the wrong place."

When to Prune

When it comes to pruning specific kinds of trees, all trees are different and all sites are different. "A lot depends on the health, size and species of the tree, the time of year and prior pruning," Andersen says. The only hard and fast rules are: Don't top trees and don't cut the roots."

Some trees, like conifers, are really good at pruning themselves, she says. They shade their lower branches, which then die and snap off. If the dead branches become a hazard, prune them off any time.

The best time to prune hardwoods is when they're dormant. You can see their structure, and the wounds close better in the next growing season. This helps protect them from diseases such as fireblight.

It's also usually all right to prune them in early summer, after the spring rains have stopped and when the flow of sap has slowed. But avoid pruning trees at this time if they're susceptible to diseases, for example, elms, and oaks in areas where oak wilt exists.

Trees with showy flowers are also

best pruned when they're dormant. Trees that flower in early spring can be pruned right after they flower. To increase the size and decrease the number of flowers or fruit the next year, prune after the buds have set.

Trees seal their wounds with sap, gum and resins to protect themselves from pathogens. It's usually better to allow trees to heal naturally than to use pruning paint.

Pathogens spread easily on pruning tools. When you're pruning a tree you think might be infected, sanitize your tools after cutting each branch by immersing them in either 70% denatured alcohol or a solution of one part liquid bleach and nine parts water for one to two minutes. Clean them with soap and water after each use.

If you're interested in upgrading your tree care skills, TCIA has many courses, from pruning, insect problems, diseases, fertilizing and safety to certification and accreditation.

"We recommend that landscapers become certified arborists," she says. "It raises their level of professionalism and the level of confidence property owners have in them." 🌿

Aird is a freelance writer based in California.

HOW TO PRUNE

Prune at a node, the point where one branch attaches to another. Make your first cut just outside the branch bark ridge, which forms in the branch crotch and around part of the stem. Angle down away from the stem to avoid injuring the branch collar, the 'shoulder' or bulge at the underside of the base of the branch. Cut as closely as possible to the stem in the branch axil, the angle where the branch joins the stem, but outside the branch bark ridge. This allows the wound to seal most quickly.

Pruning too closely to the stem (flush cuts) may cause the stem tissues to decay. Pruning too far from the stem leaves stubs, which may cause the branch tissue to die,

suckers to sprout and insect and disease damage, all of which may cause hazards in the future.

Source: USDA Forest Service website





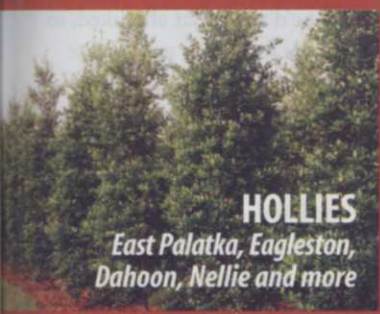
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an architect, she had a very strong sense of what she wanted for the property.

"She just didn't have a strong background in landscape design, and she didn't know plants well," explains Hubner. "She had a big stack of ideas; things that she'd seen that she liked, so it was very easy for me to get a sense of her taste and style. She was very contemporary and used a lot of strong, saturated colors in her house. From the initial meeting when I asked her to show me what she liked, I knew that if I used those colors in the landscape she would be happy with the plant choices."

But having an artistic client wasn't all easy. While an architect client can better visualize concepts and might be open to more cutting-edge designs, they also tend to have their own vision for the finished product — and it likely doesn't account for the realities of living materials. As we all know, landscape design, unlike any other art form, has to be realistic as well as creative. However, through careful plant selection, Hubner was able to translate the owner's vision into a workable plant palate.

Strategic Placement

With a small budget and limited planting area on a lot dominated by a large home, each element of Hubner's design had to be carefully thought out for maximum impact. Standard obstacles such as screen-

1 Patches of annuals in saturated colors were used throughout the landscape as low-cost focal points.

2 The property owner contracted for a concrete-block retaining wall flanking the front walkway.

BY BRIDGET WHITE

After working with one of her projects through three owners and as many landscape visions, Kathy Hubner probably knows the site better than any of the owners. Initially hired by the first owner/architect during construction, Hubner created a landscape master plan that addressed specific owner requirements and included multiple implementation stages to keep the budget low. But before the final stage could be implemented, a new owner came in with a new vision.

While the property is now on its third owner in less than 5 years (with rumors of a buy-back by a previous owner), Hubner's knowledge of the property, her ability to adapt the landscape to the current owner's style, and her strategic use of color have turned a single, small job into a constant source of revenue.

An Educated Client

With most projects, the hardest part of the design is figuring out what the client really wants. That was not a problem with this project. Since the original owner was

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

- > Add almost instant shade.
- > Screen unsightly views of the neighbor's house.
- > Use low-maintenance and drought-tolerant plants.
- > Create play spaces and incorporate space for a future pool.
- > Highlight intense, saturated color, including heirloom plants from the owner's mother.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

- > Small lot with large 3-story house
- > Neighboring houses were very close and shared a driveway
- > Poor site drainage, grading and irrigation
- > Very limited budget

ing unsightly views caused by a too-close neighbor were heightened by planting spaces as small as 5 ft. In this instance, giant timber bamboo grew completely vertical to provide the necessary screen within a few years while taking up very little space. Plus,

the bamboo quickly provided shade to allow plants such as wandering jew, canna lily and philodendron to thrive.

“So that was one solution,” says Hubner, “add in a little more planting space, and the result is incredible. It’s this lush jungle look that just erased a whole bunch of eyesores. Within the backyard, we used fast-growing ornamental trees, taller palm trees and large, box live oaks to get the instant shade she wanted.”

The goal in the front yard was to trick the eye into thinking there was more annual color than there was. Hot pink petunias were planted in front of white artemisia and red yucca. Together, the small planting of annuals and showy perennials make a big color statement.

“That’s a design trick I use often,” Hubner says. “People get busier and busier. They still want the annual color but don’t want the time it takes. So you build a backdrop of perennial color and interest and accentuate that with annual color. It works every time ... even for the most discerning of clients.”

White is a freelance writer living in New Orleans.



PLANT LIST

In addition to a variety of new and existing trees, multiple varieties of drought-tolerant foliage plants and a large stand of giant timber bamboo, the following annuals and perennials added splashes of color to make the landscape really pop.

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Kalanchoe | Lantana |
| Geranium | Bougainvillea |
| Viola | Hibiscus and Hibiscus Sinensis |
| “Pink Carpet” Petunias | Duranta |
| Russelia | Plumbago |
| Canna Lily | |



PROJECT PRINCIPALS

- > **Landscape Company:** Gill Landscape Nursery
- > **Designer:** Kathy Hubner
- > **Staff Required:** five or six full-time employees for two weeks of installation
- > **Project Budget:** \$25,000 initial budget, some plants (including a box live oak tree) were gifted from relatives

3 After construction, pink petunias and layered perennials were added for maximum impact.

4 By re-using existing plants and containers, project cost was controlled while the landscape offered continuity between old and new.

5 The final design relied heavily on fast-growing foliage plants to create a tropical feel in the backyard play area.

6 Strategically mixing annual color with perennials created a low-maintenance landscape yet still offered visual interest.



Landscapers See Opportunity in the Sky

BY BRIAN ALBRIGHT

Landscapers spend a lot of time looking down—understandable, since their livelihoods are linked to the soil. But Kurt Horvath, owner of Intrinsic Landscaping in Glenview, IL, has his head in the clouds these days. Horvath is one of a growing number of landscapers specializing in the design and construction of green roofs, those eco-friendly islands of greenery that dot formerly drab roofscapes around the world.

GREEN ROOFS PRESENT OPPORTUNITY, CHALLENGE TO LANDSCAPE COMPANIES

According to Green Roofs for Healthy Cities (GRHC), the North American industry association, green roof installations in 2006 were up more than 25%, representing more than 3 million sq. ft. For intensive green roofs, which incorporate larger plants, the growth rate was 110% during the same period.

Horvath's company, which includes a nursery and two landscaping divisions, was contracted to install its first green roof in 2000. More than 100 installations later, he has built a new business focused on rooftop projects, as well as a subsidiary that manufactures and distributes green roof components.

"Those installations have been



INTRINSIC LANDSCAPING has installed green roofs on schools (below), its corporate headquarters (right) and the city's recycling center. Chicago is a pioneer in green roofs, largely because of the city government's support for green roofs.

a mix of anything and everything," Horvath says. "If you can put it on a roof, we're there."

There is expected to be significant opportunity in the green roof market as more and more businesses and homeowners look for ways to reduce their impact on the environment, but do your homework before leaping into a project. Unlike traditional installations, or even simple rooftop gardens, green roofs require a wide variety of expertise, ranging from horticulture to structural engineering.

"There's more to green roofs that meets the eye," says Steven Peck, founder and president of Green Roofs for Healthy Cities. "There are a lot of ways to mess up a green roof. It's a living system. It's very important to follow the lessons we've already learned to make sure it doesn't leak, that the plants survive, and that you get the maximum benefit for your climate."

Green Roof Benefits

Green roofs can range from smaller plantings on residential homes to the massive, 10.4-acre "living roof" at Ford Motor Company's historic River Rouge Plant in Dearborn, MI. Building owners in-



A VIEW of ASLA's green roof from a nearby building (above). **SILENE CAROLINIANA** give the "south wave" of ALSA's green roof a burst of color at the beginning of spring.

stall the roofs for a variety of reasons, ranging from concerns about the environment to simply providing usable green space for their employees or tenants.

There are also hard-dollar benefits. It's estimated that green roofs can last up to twice as long as conventional roofs by protecting the roof membrane. Depending on the size of the building and the climate, these roofs can also help keep buildings cooler in the summer, and even insulate against noise.

One of the most significant benefits, though, is the reduction in stormwater runoff. Depending on the plants and depth of the growing medium, these roofs can retain 70 to 90% of precipitation in the summer. Green roofs can potentially reduce flooding and sewer overflow, as well as act as a natural filtration system.

In 2006, the American Society of Landscape Architects installed a green roof on its downtown Washington, D.C., headquarters, and closely monitored its effects on temperature and stormwater runoff. According to a report issued in September 2007, the roof retained nearly 75% of all precipitation, and lowered the roof air temperature by as much as 32° in the summer, compared to a neighboring tarred roof. Engineering analysis showed that

the roof's extra insulation lowered energy usage in the winter by 10%.

Construction Tips

There are two basic types of green roofs: extensive (which include shallower soil depths and smaller plants), and intensive (with larger plants and deeper soil). While designs vary, green roofs typically include a waterproofing membrane and some sort of lightweight growing material. As an example, the green roof installed at 1425 K Street in Washington, D.C., includes a waterproof membrane/root barrier, a 2-inch layer of polystyrene insulation, a layer of geo-textile filter fabric, and an inch-thick drainage mat, topped off with 3 inches (33,000 lbs.) of engineered soil held in place with a loosely-woven jute mat.

The roofs also have to be properly contained on all sides, either using the existing features of the roof or specially designed barriers, a structural element sometimes overlooked by inexperienced architects. "I don't know how people can overlook containment, but sometimes they do," says Sarah Murphy, green roof program coordinator with D.C. Greenworks, the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that spearheaded the K Street project and installed the city's



PHOTOS COURTESY: INTRINSIC LANDSCAPING



installation

first green roof in 2001. "Sometimes we're asked to come in and bid on a green roof after most of the construction and water proofing is done. Often, there are design elements we would have handled differently had we been involved sooner. Since we're designing after the fact, it's not ideal and often more expensive."

A green roof is not a simple undertaking, which is why the GRHC has put such an emphasis on cross-industry training and collaboration. Landscape companies have to work hand-in-hand with roofing specialists, architects and engineers to avoid structural damage, leaks and poor plant performance.

When Intrinsic Landscaping (founded in the late 1960s by Horvath's father) was contacted about its first green roof, Horvath spent a lot of time researching the concept. "I talked to all of the other trades, and



tried to understand where we would start and where we would finish," Horvath says. "It took a lot of time to really understand how the cranes work, what the limits are, and what kind of water proofing membrane we needed to use."

Rooftop Plantings

The type of plants will vary by climate, the slope of the roof, and the expected maintenance program. Many green roofs are designed so that they don't require any irrigation, so hardy plants are common.

Research conducted in Portland, OR, by the Bureau of Environmental Services found that Sedums, sempervivum and ice plants were successful on green roofs because of their tolerance of heat and cold, and minimal irrigation requirements. At the ASLA green roof (which included some experimental plantings), hardier Sedums (*Sedum album*, *Sedum reflexum*, *Sedum spurium* and *Sedum sexangulare*) did better than others (*Sedum lanceolatum* and *Sedum stenopetalatum*) on the extensive portion of the roof. Flame Sumac, Smooth Sumac, Trumpet Vine and Pasture Rose thrived on the intensive portion of the roof. Other perennials that thrived included Nodding Onion, Thread Leaved Tick Seed, and Butterfly Milkweed.

Green roofs can also host fairly large trees, depending on the building's design and the construction firm's ability to actually move the trees to a rooftop. "If the climate can support a particular species of tree, there's no technical reason why you can't have all of those trees on rooftops," Peck says. "But you have



THE REEVES CENTER'S green roof in Washington, D.C., takes shape over time.

to know what it will weigh when mature, how much water it needs, wind uplift, knowledge of the root system, and what kind of containers you can use."

Maintenance varies depending on the type of roof and its uses. For roofs that aren't visible from the street, and not otherwise accessible, maintenance could simply entail occasional irrigation and pest management. "If no one can see it, does it matter if it's weedy?" Horvath says. "That's a matter of opinion."

When necessary, low-grade or organic fertilizers are recommended since there is less soil present to absorb the chemicals. "We've seen some scenarios where contractors treat the roof just like grade landscapes, and misuse chemicals," Horvath says. "You have to do the research and be environmentally responsible."

GRHC offers a training and accreditation program to help members of the landscaping industry better understand how to install and maintain a green roof. The organization has delivered its Green Roof Design 101 course to more than 3,000 industry professionals, and also offers courses on design and implementation, waterproofing and drainage.

"We're pulling this knowledge together," says Peck. "Our industry is so new that you really can't find the information anywhere else." 🌱

RESOURCES

> **Green Roofs for Healthy Cities:** Includes a member directory, information on training and accreditation programs, and updates on the group's annual conference. The sixth annual International Greening Rooftops for Sustainable Communities Conference will be held April 30 to May 2, 2008 at the Baltimore Convention Center & Sheraton Inner Harbor Hotel. www.greenroofs.org

> **ASLA Green Roof Project**
www.asla.org/land/050205/greenroofcentral.html

> **Emory Knoll Farms:** This site also includes links to green roof equipment suppliers, organizations and other resources.
www.greenroofplants.com

> **Greenroofs.com**
Publishes an online directory of manufacturers and suppliers, as well the Greenroof Projects Database.

> **World Green Roof Infrastructure Network (WGRIN)**
www.worldgreenroof.org

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northwest

NATIVE LANDSCAPING

Botanical Developments Completes North Rim Park

BEND, OR — Drake Design Group (DDG) and Botanical Developments, both affiliates of Brooks Resources Corp., recently completed the North Rim Park project. DDG designed the park to match with the community's architectural guidelines, which includes the incorporation of native landscaping.

The park features native plantings and rock outcroppings, along with erosion control elements to help stabilize the area.

"We specialize in working with the native plants and creating projects that really fit with the high desert environment," says Project Manager Ron Kidder. "North Rim is committed to preserving the natural landscape of the area, and we feel that North Rim Park really epitomizes this goal in many ways."



> DROUGHT

FNGLA Addresses Drought Issues

In light of recent drought conditions in the state, the staff of the Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA) has been meeting with the executive directors and top officials of the South Florida and Southwest Florida Water Management Districts to push for 60-day exemption periods for all new landscapes, as well as funding for consumer marketing to promote proper planting during dry periods.

According to FNGLA Executive Vice President Ben Bolusky, the association has urged Florida Governor Charlie Crist to work with his colleagues, state and federal agencies to conserve water in Lake Okeechobee as well as Georgia's Lake Lanier (metro Atlanta is North Florida growers' major market). For more information, visit www.fn gla.org.



southeast

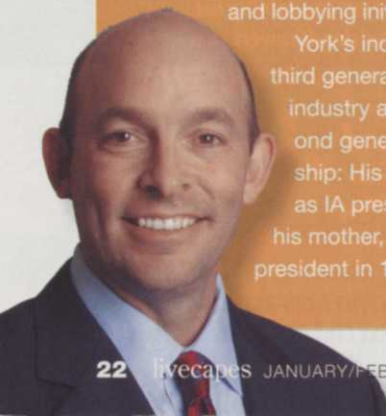
southwest

> PEOPLE

York Inducted as IA President

PHOENIX — Ewing Irrigation President Douglas W. York was inaugurated as the 2008 Irrigation Association (IA) president during the International Irrigation Show in San Diego. As president, York says he will concentrate on education, active membership involvement, and lobbying initiatives.

York's induction marks a third generation of irrigation industry advocacy, and second generation of IA leadership: His father, Ray, served as IA president in 1986; and his mother, Sue, served as IA president in 1998.



> INTERNET

U of I Debuts Hortanswers Site

URBANA, IL — A new website allows horticulturists to gain information about plant pests, diseases, and performance in the USDA hardiness zones 4, 5 and 6.

"Hortanswers," online at www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/hortanswers, is designed to provide basic information about disease and pest problems, plus determine the right plant for the right place, says Greg Stack, U of I Extension horticulture educator and one of the site's designers. Originally conceived by former U of I Extension specialist Bruce Pallsrud, the site was developed by Jane Scherer, U of I Extension urban program/Web coordination specialist, along with Stack and fellow Extension horticulture educators James Schuster, Maurice Ogutu and Sharon Yiesla.

"Because of its complexity, it took several years to develop," says Stack. "The result is an extremely valuable site."



midwest



Double the Color

Calibrachoa cultivar MiniFamous Double Blue from **Selecta First Class** is part of a double flowering series that includes three colors on trailing 4-inch-tall plants. The annual performs well in sunny baskets and containers. **Circle #200** for more information.

Double the Fun with Fiesta Double Impatiens

Fiesta double impatiens from **Ball Horticultural Company** display big, beautiful, fully double blooms from installation until the first frost. These well-branched plants fill in fast for quick landscape color. Fiesta varieties are "self-cleaning" and easy-care: there's no need to remove old blooms or pinch the plants back to keep them lush and full.

Circle #199 for more information.



High Contrast

Like the original green-leaved Nonstop Begonias, **Benary's** Nonstop Mocca offers large, 10-cm. double flowers in brilliant colors that stand out against the deep bronze leaf. Six colors are in this Begonia tuberhybrida series: Orange, Deep Orange, Scarlet, White, Yellow and its newest, Pink Shades (pictured).

Circle #197 for more information.



An Award Winner

Goldsmith Seeds' Asti White Osteospermum recently won a 2008 AAS Award. As the first Osteo from seed available in separate colors, this plant is heat- and cold-tolerant. It blooms all season long and is versatile for spring, summer and fall.

Circle #196 for more information.



Pink as a Daisy

Molimba Pink from **Proven Winners** features mounds of single pink blooms. The 14- to 24-inch plants should be spaced about a foot apart. They can bloom from planting to the first hard frost and don't require deadheading. The Marguerite Daisies should receive full sun. They can be planted in landscapes or containers.

Circle #198 for more information.



Watch Out for Avalanche

Using inter-species breeding, Avalanche Petunia from **Bodger Seeds** has a more spreading habit, better recovery from rain, and lasts longer in the garden.

They are recommended for containers, baskets and beds. The Avalanche series provides earlier blooming baskets and pots, are uniform in habit across all 10 colors and produce a mounding plant before they begin to trail. In beds they will spread to 3 feet.

Circle #195 for more information.

Feeding Contained

MIXED CONTAINER FERTILIZATION REQUIRES SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

BY FRED HULME, PH.D.

As everyday life becomes more hectic and complicated, many consumers are retreating from the time and worry associated with traditional gardening in soil beds. This has led to an explosion in container culture, especially promoting the use of mixed containers that offer instant gratification, variety, flexibility and aesthetic appeal. These items can offer an ever-changing season-long display that can be moved around the landscape area and have dramatic visual impact from day one. Unfortunately, many consumers overlook the extra care involved with proper watering and fertilization of these containers.

There are several basic types of fertilizers available for landscape use including water soluble fertilizer (WSF) and controlled release fertilizer (CRF). WSF may be in granular or powdered form. These fertilizers dissolve in water and instantly supply a veritable buffet of nutrients. However, the effect of each application is not long-lived, and WSF is best used when constantly supplied with each watering or at least

as frequently as possible. CRF's are generally coated to ensure a consistent and predictable supply of nutrients throughout the growing season, and because of this, they offer a high degree of plant safety. With CRF

the entire fertilizer dose for a crop is applied only once at the beginning of crop production. This one application continuously feeds plants over an extended period of time.

Soilless System Needs

Plants growing in soil beds have the moderating influence of mineral soil to help them thrive throughout the growing season. Mineral soil will hold and supply many nutrients, remain fairly stable throughout the season and can hold significant moisture, allowing ornamental plants to survive periods of drought. As consumer preference switches from garden beds to mixed containers, the growing media generally used is "soilless," comprised of peat moss, composted bark or perlite, for example. While these manufactured growing mixes are excellent for quickly, efficiently and consistently raising ornamental crops in greenhouses and nurseries, they do not hold nutrients or water for long periods very well, and can almost be considered hydroponics systems.

In greenhouse production, plants may receive a constant diet of a WSF that is fitted to the irrigation water and provides all the essential nutrients. However, when plants leave the protected environment of the nursery, water and nutrients often take a back seat to other considerations. Many garden centers can provide little care, especially if plants remain there for long periods and consumers may never feed these plants at all after purchasing them. In many cases, frequent feeding with WSF at the necessary concentrations is not a viable practice. Many mixed container plant species are heavy feeders and vigorous growers. Inadequate fertilization will quickly lead to nutrient deficiencies and a decline in appearance.

This presents an opportunity for landscapers. Consumers are buying bigger and showier mixed containers every year. Usually, these containers are quite expensive to purchase, and their quality will quickly decline if they are not fed properly.



CONTAINER CULTURE is growing in popularity due to its convenience, but containers require special fertilization considerations.

Controlled Release Benefits

The use of CRFs can be an effective and economical solution to this problem. CRFs are very easy to apply. Fertilizer prills (or particles) can be blended into the growing media at planting or can be top-dressed on the growing media surface once the container is placed in the landscape. The product begins to activate very quickly, and within a week, the CRF will begin to dose nutrients to the root-zone.

After applying a CRF, the consumer only has to keep the container sufficiently watered. For the small cost of the fertilizer dose and the labor to initially apply it, landscapers can ensure mixed containers have adequate nutrition to reach their full potential throughout the growing season. CRFs also help maintain better foliage color and bloom production due to constant, uniform feeding.

Key considerations for CRF product selection and use include:

- > Nutrient content, including micronutrients.
- > Homogenous nature of the product — is it blended or are all particles the same?
- > Stated longevity of the product — does it match your growing season?
- > Appropriateness of the rate for intended crops and application.
- > Other fertilizer sources — is a WSF also being used?
- > Growing media make-up — tighter mixes should have lower rates.
- > Plant types.

Combination Programs

So what is the best fertilizer method for maintaining mixed containers? Some researchers have reported that using combination fertilizer programs (a low-to-medium rate of CRF, along with supplemental applications of lower concentrate WSF as needed) can round out a potentially inefficient fertilizer program. Even if the current program contains only WSF, combination fertilizer programs with both WSF and CRF can be beneficial and certainly increase customization potential.

- > For landscapes that contain many crops types, one simple WSF program can be used on all plants; then CRF can meet the additional needs of heavy feeders or plants with special fertilizer requirements.
- > WSF can be used to spoon-feed specific nutrients (like iron) or acidify containers when needed.
- > CRFs provide a base feed when one can't use water solubles — during cool, cloudy weather (no need to



irrigate), or when there is no time to irrigate or mix up fertilizer solutions.

- > CRF will help maintain root-zone nutrient levels during periods of frequent and heavy rains.

- > Since CRFs are coated, the use of them in the garden can help minimize nutrient run-off into the environment compared to liquid feeds only.

The Scotts Company recommends landscapers choose a WSF program for mixed containers based on a complete water test. The CRF component should provide a steady and extended release of N-P-K, Mg and minor elements. Match CRF longevity with growing temperatures and desired delivery time. In most cases, a CRF with eight to nine months of longevity will perform well in the landscape. Refer to the label for specifics.

Recommended rates:

- > Use the **low CRF** rate for salt sensitive, tender species such as fuchsia, begonia, fern and impatiens; bedding plants; high water retentive media; minimal leaching.

- > Use the **medium CRF** rate for more vigorous species and heavy feeders such as trailing petunia, with low water-retentive media (containing coarse bark) or in situations with frequent leaching.

- > **WSF concentrations** need to be lowered when used in combination with CRF. Reduce your constant feed to 50 to 75 ppm for bedding plants and 100 to 150 ppm N for flowering pot crops and baskets.

By following these suggestions and tips, you can provide your clients with mixed containers that provide consistent beauty to their landscapes throughout the growing season. Remember, when using any fertilizer, it's best to study the product and consult with the manufacturer for optimum results. 🌱

Hume is director of Technical Services for The Scotts Company, Marysville, OH.



PERENNIAL PLANTINGS will help filter out any runoff before it reaches the storm drain.



WHEN EXCAVATING a rain garden, be sure to leave a lip of soil on the downhill side of the newly dug swale.

A Perennial Po

BY ROBERT SCHEYER

Can curbside perennial gardens improve water quality? Environmental and community groups, and even City Hall, are adopting a landscaping technique called “rain gardens” to find out.

Rain gardens are curbside perennial plantings that trap what the Environmental Protection Agency calls “non-point source” water pollution. Non-point water pollution is runoff from impermeable surfaces that collect dirt, fertilizers, chemicals, oil and bacteria. It is simply what accumulates in the normal course of property ownership among responsible people. These same property owners are organizing themselves to reduce this source of pollution by having eco-friendly rain gardens installed. It’s a win-win proposition for communities and landscapers.

An Idea is Planted

Rain Gardens were first conceived in 1990 by Larry Coffman who was heading up Maryland’s environmen-

CURBSIDE PERENNIAL GARDENS TRAP POLLUTION

tal programs. He was investigating cost effective, low maintenance methods for improving water quality in local watersheds. With the help of his staff, they came up with the idea of “bioretention,” or capturing storm runoff in plant systems.

“I began to realize that we could use the functions of the upland ecosystem to treat storm water runoff,” Coffman says. “One other fact that influenced my thinking was the studies we were getting back on BMP (best management practices) efficacy. They showed there were major problems with cost, maintenance and operations. So, I got the idea of designing the green space in a parking lot to treat the runoff.”

In 1997, in cooperation with the University of Maryland, Coffman

and his staff began testing for the most effective design.

“Since then, we have improved the design and learned about the whole new world of the complex and wonderful plant/soil/microbe ecosystem,” Coffman says, “and how to use nature to protect nature and make things prettier too.”

The term “bioretention gardens” was a little clumsy, so Coffman coined the term “rain gardens.”

Proper Placement

Coffman’s final design emphasizes location, location, and location.

A rain garden must catch and hold water runoff before it gets into a storm drain. So, wherever storm water runoff collects or flows is a prospective site. Likely sites include the bottom of a hill or ravine; or on a slope through which water flows.

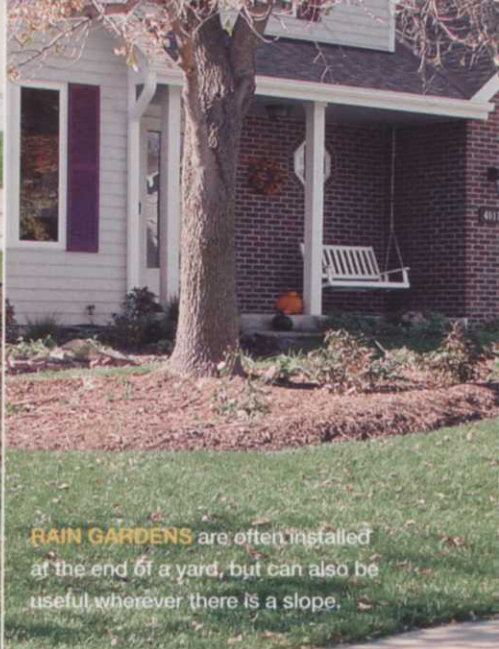
Other important considerations are size and shape. A Rain Garden should be about 20% the size of the roof, patio, or pavement area draining into it. In most cases, this will be between 100 and 300 sq. ft. The shape should be both ascetically pleas-



CLOSE-UP of the lip of soil that is key to trapping runoff



TILL IN soil amendments before planting.



RAIN GARDENS are often installed at the end of a yard, but can also be useful wherever there is a slope.

verhouse

ing and appropriate to catch water runoff. Although, since site selection is the key, even a small garden, when properly placed, has an impact.

Installation Tips

Once the proper location, size, and shape are determined, a concave depression or “swale” is dug. This differs from a typical perennial garden. A concave depression is necessary to collect the runoff.

Some of the soil excavated from the site is used to form a soil “lip.” This is built up on the downside sloping edge of the depression, next to the place to be planted. The resulting dig should leave a 6- to 12-inch bowl-shaped depression in the ground. This often means that some dirt will need to be excavated and hauled away. Soil amendments, such as sand, compost, and peat moss, are tilled into the bottom. Plants are dug in and the area is mulched.

Costs vary according to the property’s soil type, the size of the landscaped area and the types of plants chosen. Clay soils at the bottom of a slope can add to the

cost significantly because they need drain tiles to increase the rain garden’s effectiveness.

Depending on the region, landscapers typically charge \$10 to \$12 per sq. ft. to install a rain garden.

Rain garden maintenance is easier than a typical perennial bed since no fertilization is required, and the area collects needed water for plant establishment. The property owner may need to water it occasionally and weed it.

Catching on

Environmental advocacy groups have formed to promote rain gardens. They come together through websites, newsletters and town hall meetings to raise awareness of rain gardens’ benefits to a community’s water quality and attractiveness.

The city of Lincoln, NE, has begun funding rain gardens. Lincoln’s Public Works and Utilities Department has earmarked \$70,000 in EPA grant money to install rain gardens on homeowner’s properties. Essentially, they are paying homeowners to landscape their property.

“The Nebraska Environmental Protection Agency gives us grant money every year to improve a watershed’s water quality,” says Amanda Meyer who oversees the project for Lincoln’s Watershed Management Division. “Communities have been installing these rain gardens to prevent non-point source water pollution with varying degrees of success, so we decided it was worth investing in.”

Meyer stresses that the importance of the program is to “reduce water runoff into the local Holmes Lake Watershed,” which carries the majority of these non-point source water pollutants.

EPA’s grant money will cover the cost of about 20 gardens, which is a far cry from the number needed to make a measurable impact. So, what is Meyer’s barometer for the program’s success?

“We don’t expect a significant reduction in non-point pollution right away,” Meyer says. “Basically, we hope to promote community awareness that this type of pollution can be controlled using rain gardens.”

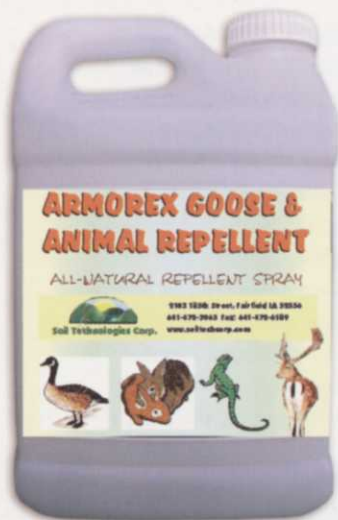
Raising awareness is good place to start. Rain gardens can increase business for landscape companies and protect their local watersheds. 🌿

Scheyer is manager of GardenScapes, a landscaping company in Lincoln, NE.

Repel Nuisance Wildlife

Armorex Goose Repellent's dual modes of action are based on smell and taste, so persistent geese and other pest animals undeterred by the odor get a taste of mildly irritating hot pepper extract. This aversive conditioning assures that they do not re-enter the area, often for up to one month. The liquid concentrate product is 100% biodegradable and has a pleasant scent to people.

Circle #194 for more information.



Path and Flood in One Outdoor Lighting Perspectives (OLP)

introduces BB7 Flood, a half-hood that directs 180° of light to a path on one side and 180° of flood lighting on the other. The fixture is designed for special applications in which flood and path lighting are needed in adjacent locations, such as walls or outdoor features. The light features copper and brass construction, no-corrosion stainless steel sockets and a 20-watt halogen bulb.

Circle #193 for more information.

Extend Insect Protection, Fertility

Bayer Environmental Science's CoreTect tablets are now available for use during tree and shrub installation or on established plants. They are a new treatment technology that combines the power of Merit insecticide with a fertilizer in convenient, easy-to-use 2.5-gram tablets.

Circle #192 for more information.



Natural Fertilizer

As an alternative to traditional chemical fertilizers, **Organica** Plant Growth Activator Plus uses 54 strains of naturally occurring, beneficial soil bacteria, fungi and actinomycetes — as well as humic acid, kelp, B complex vitamins, biotin, folic acid and natural sugars to help plants reach their full genetic potential. It's available in two forms: One is mixed directly with the growing medium and the other, which contains glucose, is mixed with water and applied as a sprench.

Circle #191 for more information.

moreinfo

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FALL COLOR

PW 'LIMELIGHT'
 PROVEN WINNERS® *Hydrangea paniculata*
 'Limelight' pp#12,874,
 cbr#2319

Hardiness: Zone 3
Size: 6-8' Tall by 6' Wide
Site: Full Sun to Part Shade
Maintenance: Minimal.
Attributes: Large, full soft green flowers are held upright on strong stems. A hardy, reliable bloomer, 'Limelight' is ideal for low maintenance hedges and cutting gardens. Thrives in full sun without wilting.



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