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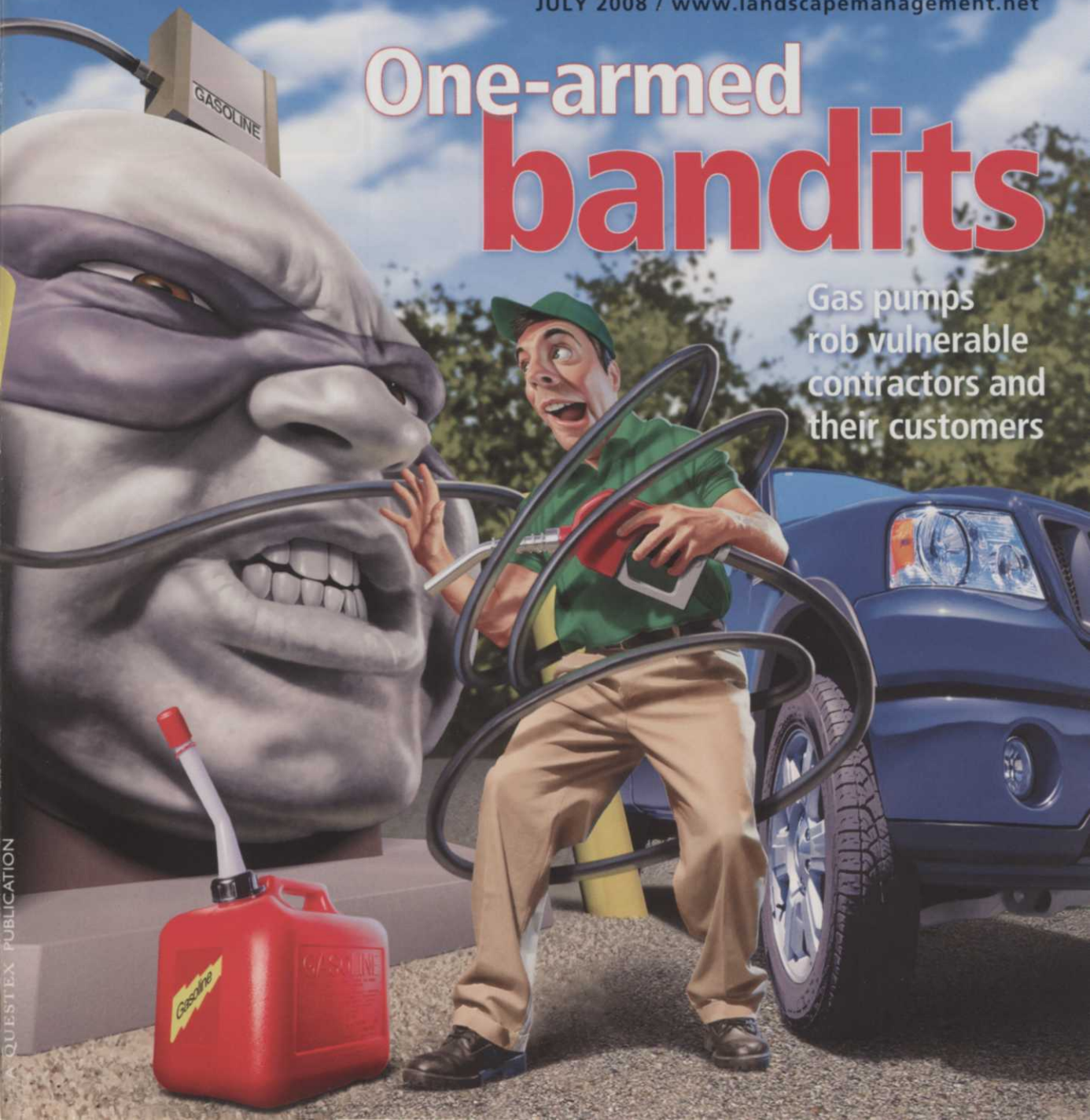
MANAGEMENT

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One-armed

bandits

Gas pumps
rob vulnerable
contractors and
their customers



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A blue Ford Super Duty truck is shown from the front quarter view, parked on a concrete surface. The truck's grille features the Ford logo and the words "SUPER DUTY" in chrome. The background is a massive wall of stacked bags of "PORTLAND CEMENT". The text "Cement your reputation." is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

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Getting up close

A recent Field Day, sponsored by Turf Merchants Inc., allowed attendees to inspect different species and varieties firsthand. Read about this year's crop at www.landscapemanagement.net.

» Special issue

We may be stuck dead center in the middle of summer, but it won't be that long before the snow starts flying again. It will soon be time to start planning for the winter season. Look for *Landscape Management's Snow & Ice Guide* next month.

» Overheard

A common mistake that people make when trying to design something completely foolproof is to underestimate the ingenuity of complete fools.

— Douglas Adams, author of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

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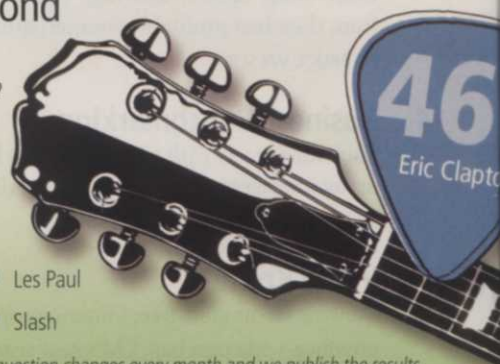
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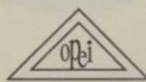
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Knowledge gap threatens us

BY RON HALL / Editor-at-Large

Pity poor turfgrass, the most misunderstood — and too often denigrated — landscape plant in the United States.

We walk on it. We play on it. We admire it. And most of us earn our livelihoods taking care of it.

Perhaps you've noticed that a growing number of our friends, neighbors and customers are questioning whether its benefits outweigh its environmental costs. That's not something we want to see grow.

The fact is, the U. S. public — while appreciative of lawns, parks and sports fields — knows little about turfgrass and what it takes to properly maintain it. Most homeowners don't know bluegrass from ryegrass, and too often over-water and over-apply product. The implications of this knowledge black hole for our industry and our environment are enormous.

In 2004, researcher Cristina Milesi calculated there are about 40 million acres of "lawns" in the United States. She used census data, satellite images and aerial photographs to come up with the figure, which amounts to about 2% of U.S. land surface in the 48 contiguous states.

The report she authored, published in the journal *Environmental Management* in 2005, focused on the impact of turfgrass on our environment. It discussed what she considered to be the good and the not-so-good effects of so much turfgrass.

On the positive side, she reported that turfgrass, apart from its aesthetic benefits, is an incredible "sink" for carbon dioxide. It accounts for 5% of the carbon

dioxide absorbed by all plants, removing enormous quantities of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. Most of us also recognize that turfgrass combats soil erosion, recycles rainwater and recharges aquifers, cools our urban environments and captures dust. That's just the short list of its attributes.

Milesi's report wasn't as flattering in addressing our water use on lawns (238 gallons of water per person per day, it claimed) and the environmental effects resulting from the runoff of lawn chemicals into streams, ponds and lakes.

Tack on the 800 million gallons of gasoline she estimated are required to mow turfgrass in the United States each year, including the emissions released into the atmosphere, and the report is far from being a glowing endorsement of our industry's most ubiquitous and important plant material.

This ambitious report makes more than a few broad assumptions that most knowledgeable people within the turfgrass industry would dispute.

What it says more than anything else, though, is that there's a huge need to educate the public about turfgrass, and especially on "best practices" in its establishment and care.

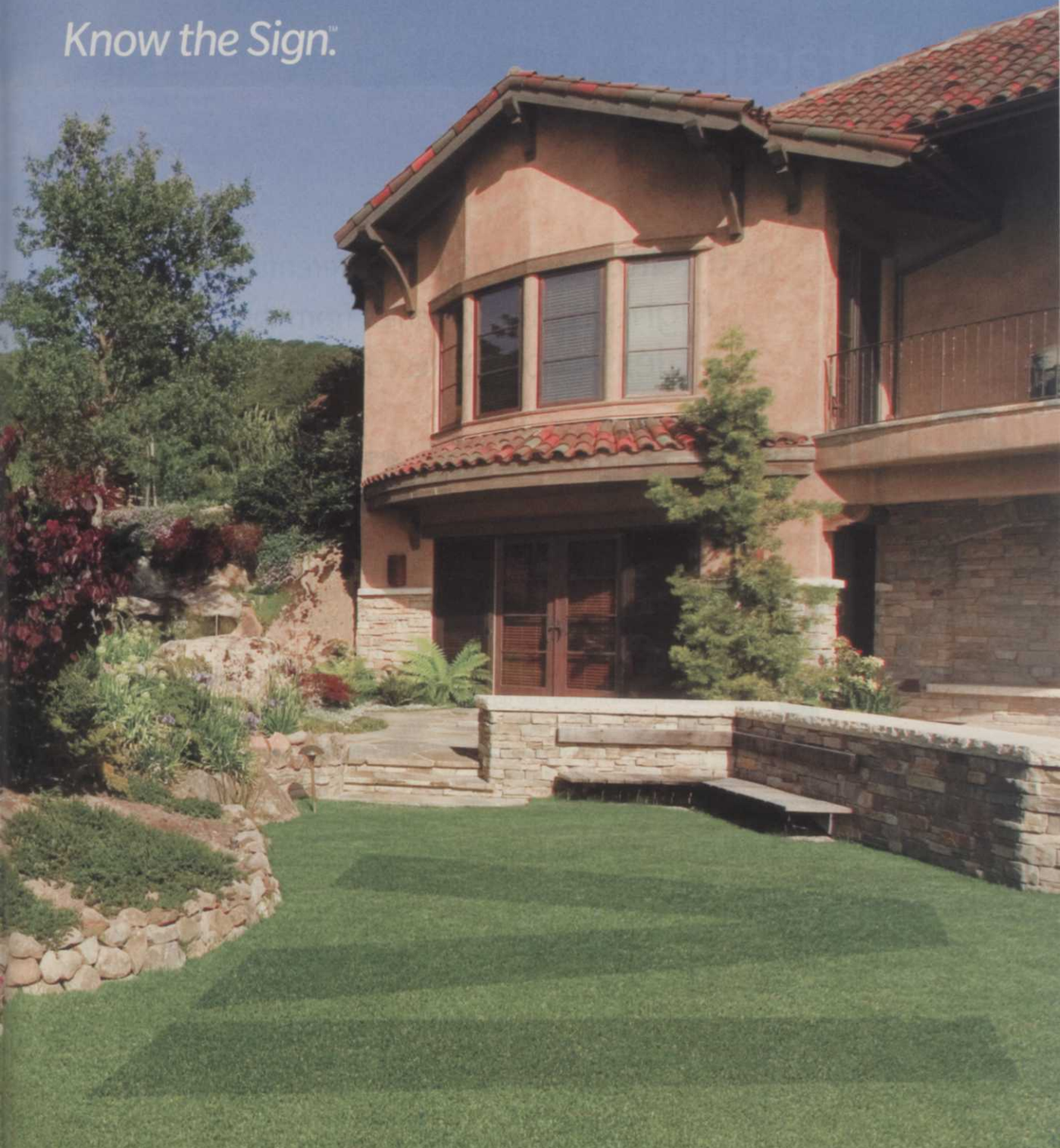
If we don't do a better job of this, there's no doubt in my mind we're going to find turfgrass to be a smaller and smaller part of our lives — both professionally and within our society. The loss to our industry and our environment would be staggering.

Contact Ron via e-mail at rhall@questex.com

The public, by and large, knows little about turfgrass selection and proper care in terms of mowing, irrigation and chemical use.



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It's the little things that differentiate high-profit companies from their less-profitable counterparts.



Building a profit culture

BY BRUCE WILSON

I have been observing companies closely during the last six years, and I've become keenly aware that high-profit companies not only price their work right and are efficient, they also do many other little things to differentiate themselves from less-profitable companies.

In most markets, there is not a big difference in what top-tier companies charge. They draw from the same labor pool and pay about the same. They use similar equipment, so it would seem that they would make the same money. Not true at all.

There are little things in the culture of the more profitable companies that help them maximize profits:

▶ **They have an instinct for margin aggression.**

That is, they instinctively look for ways to pick up a dollar here and a dollar there. They see opportunity and they act. This happens at many levels.

▶ **They attend meetings.** At the meetings, they pick people's brains looking for little things other companies do that, if incorporated into their operations, would help them save labor or other costs. Then, they implement and follow up to make sure they keep doing it. Many companies pick up great ideas, but never get them implemented.

▶ **They manage costs closely and are disciplined in their spending.** They make sure expenditures are justified. If they buy something to save labor, they quantify it and make sure it's worth the investment.

▶ **They stamp out waste.** They hold people account-

able for not wasting. They do not over-order. You do not see dead plants in their yards.

▶ **Their facilities are organized for efficiency.**

These facilities are usually clean, with everything in its place.

▶ **They are meticulous planners and schedulers.**

This is a major factor in profitability and eliminating waste.

▶ **They share the appropriate numbers with the people who influence them.** They also incentivize their people to hit targets.

▶ **They build annual plans and budgets.** More importantly, they stick to them throughout the year.

▶ **They stress efficiency.** Ownership walks the talk and takes a leading role.

▶ **They have excellent communication channels.**

This also goes hand-in-hand with effective chain-of-command discipline.

Many companies do some of these things, but do not do them all consistently. The profitable companies build a strong discipline and accountability about these things, and there are consequences for not doing them.

At these organizations, employees are trained to use their time wisely and not waste other people's time. They have fun, work hard and enjoy being successful. There is a strong sense of purpose in these successful companies, created by leadership that keeps people focused on the right things.

They do not tolerate non-team players.

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

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Timing is everything

BY KEVIN KEHOE

Having been involved in both buying and selling a business, I can say with certainty that a seller will always get the best price in a "seller's market." We are in one now. The time is right if you are a seller. But you must have your financial house in order — and be emotionally prepared for the process and the change of life a sale brings.

In past articles, I outlined three key ratios that will drive your earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) to industry benchmark levels. These ratios demonstrate your financial house is in order, and they are great bargaining chips when you negotiate your multiple.

Believe me, the multiple is very negotiable. In fact, multiples have ranged from two to 10 times EBITDA in the last 18 months.

What makes your multiple so variable and negotiable? The No. 1 answer is the number of potential buyers interested in your business. The true value of any business is what a buyer will pay for it. Multiples heat up and rise, and cool off and fall in a manner not unlike home values.

The No. 2 driver of the multiple is the management team. No. 3 is revenue size. No. 4 is a revenue mix of at least 60% maintenance to 40% construction. My point is that you need a strong and coherent story to negotiate a better multiple. That story must start with EBITDA and be backed up by

management, revenue and mix. A better story lowers the risk for the buyer. Lower risk equals higher multiple. Make no mistake: When negotiating price, the buyer is trying to push as much risk back to you by lowering the price. I would. Wouldn't you?

Fold or hold?

You should sell when the timing is right, your financial house is in order and you are emotionally ready. Get a professional to work it through with you. Do not convince yourself you can negotiate effectively on your own behalf and get the highest multiple.

A good buyer is a smart buyer. He (or she) will know more about the process than you. He has done deals many times, and you will most likely only do this once. In addition, you are much more emotionally invested than he is. This always works against you. The buyer is not going to do you any favors; he is — as he should be — looking out for his own best interest.

Negotiating a deal requires knowledge and a dispassionate approach because so many things can change throughout the process. Timing is indeed everything, but you also want a "good" buyer. A good buyer may not always give you the highest price, but he will give you the best overall deal. In the end, it is not the price that matters, but how much you walk away with.

Please check out www.kehoe.biz for more info on this topic. You can also complete the 2008 Benchmark survey at the Web site.

— The author is the owner-manager of Kehoe & Co.
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BUSINESS NEWS YOU CAN USE

Mowing lawns guilt-free

ALEXANDRIA, VA — Healthy turfgrass can capture up to four times more carbon from the air than is produced by the engine of today's lawnmowers, according to a new study from the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI).

Research from Dr. Ranajit Sahu, an independent environmental and energy expert and University instructor, shows that responsibly managed lawns sequester, or store, significant amounts of carbon — more than offsetting the environmental impact of mowing. The findings are based on several peer-reviewed, scientific studies where carbon sequestration had been measured in managed and unmanaged turfgrass. The report is available at www.opei.org/carbonreport.

"We were unsure about the study's outcome, but existing data shows that a net carbon benefit exists from well-managed turfgrass, such as the typical

American lawn," said Sahu, who reviewed existing data to determine the carbon sequestered by turfgrass, such as household lawns, golf courses and sports fields, as well as wild grassland systems. "When you take care of your lawn and promote a healthy root system, your lawn acts as a carbon sink, pulling and storing away carbon."

The report, titled "Technical Assessment of the Carbon Sequestration Potential of Managed Turfgrass in the United States," assesses the carbon benefit of well-managed turfgrasses that are cut regularly and at the appropriate height, fed with nutrients, such as grass clippings, watered in a responsible way, and not disturbed at the root zone.

"It turns out that you can reduce your carbon footprint right in your own backyard," said Kris Kiser, vice president of public affairs for OPEI. "Mowing grass



MANAGED TURFGRASS REDUCES YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

and pruning shrubs and trees keeps plants in a growing state. This, in turn, ensures they are actively pulling carbon dioxide — a greenhouse gas — from the air."

"Your lawn, if managed properly, can be essentially a decent foot soldier in our quest to reduce our carbon footprint," added Sahu. "The key is to actively manage your lawn to improve its carbon intake, and not letting it 'go to seed' and into a 'dormant state.'"

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Ontario imposes pesticide ban

TORONTO — Ontario joined Quebec in banning the sale and cosmetic use of pesticides. More than 80 ingredients and 300 pesticide products will be prohibited once the ban is fully implemented next spring, which supporters say will give Ontario the toughest rules in North America. But critics say the move will actually weaken existing anti-pesticide rules across the province.

The province will only allow pesticides to be used in farming, forestry or for health and safety reasons, such as controlling mosquitoes that can carry

diseases like the West Nile virus. Unlike Quebec, Ontario municipalities are forbidden from enacting tougher anti-pesticide rules. Plus, the new provincial regulations overrule tougher municipal pesticide bans that have already been passed.

However, the province is also able to regulate what pesticides are sold, something municipalities don't have the power to do. The province is still considering banning the popular herbicide 2,4-D, which has been deemed safe by Health Canada.

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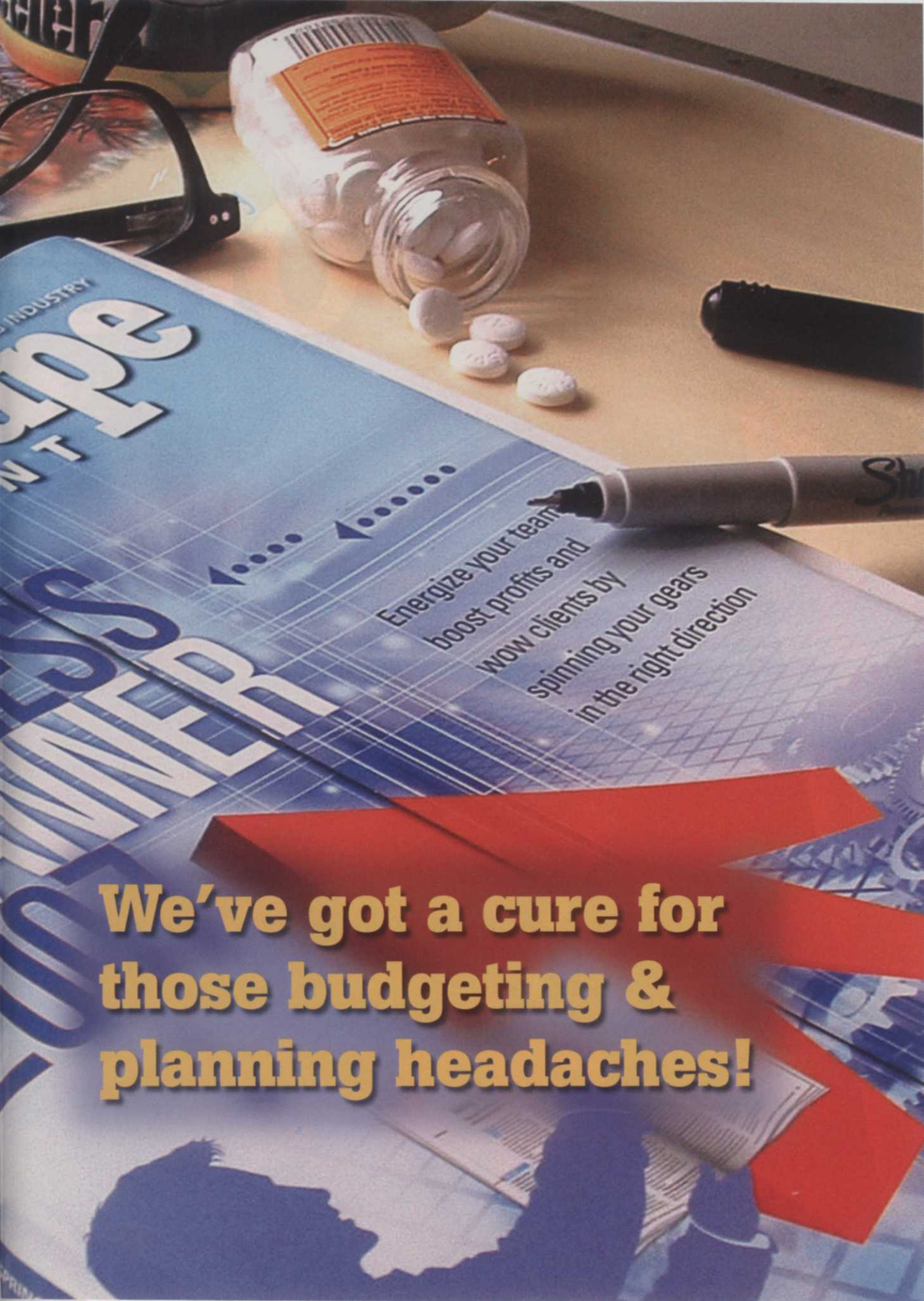
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BUSINESS PLANNER 2009

This October, *Landscape Management* presents you with its one-of-a-kind issue designed to make the budgeting and planning process pain-free. You'll be relieved when you read the relevant editorial including coverage on surviving in a bad economy, P&L do's and don'ts, employee stock ownership plans, estimating and bidding strategies, how to be a better manager and more.

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





INDUSTRY

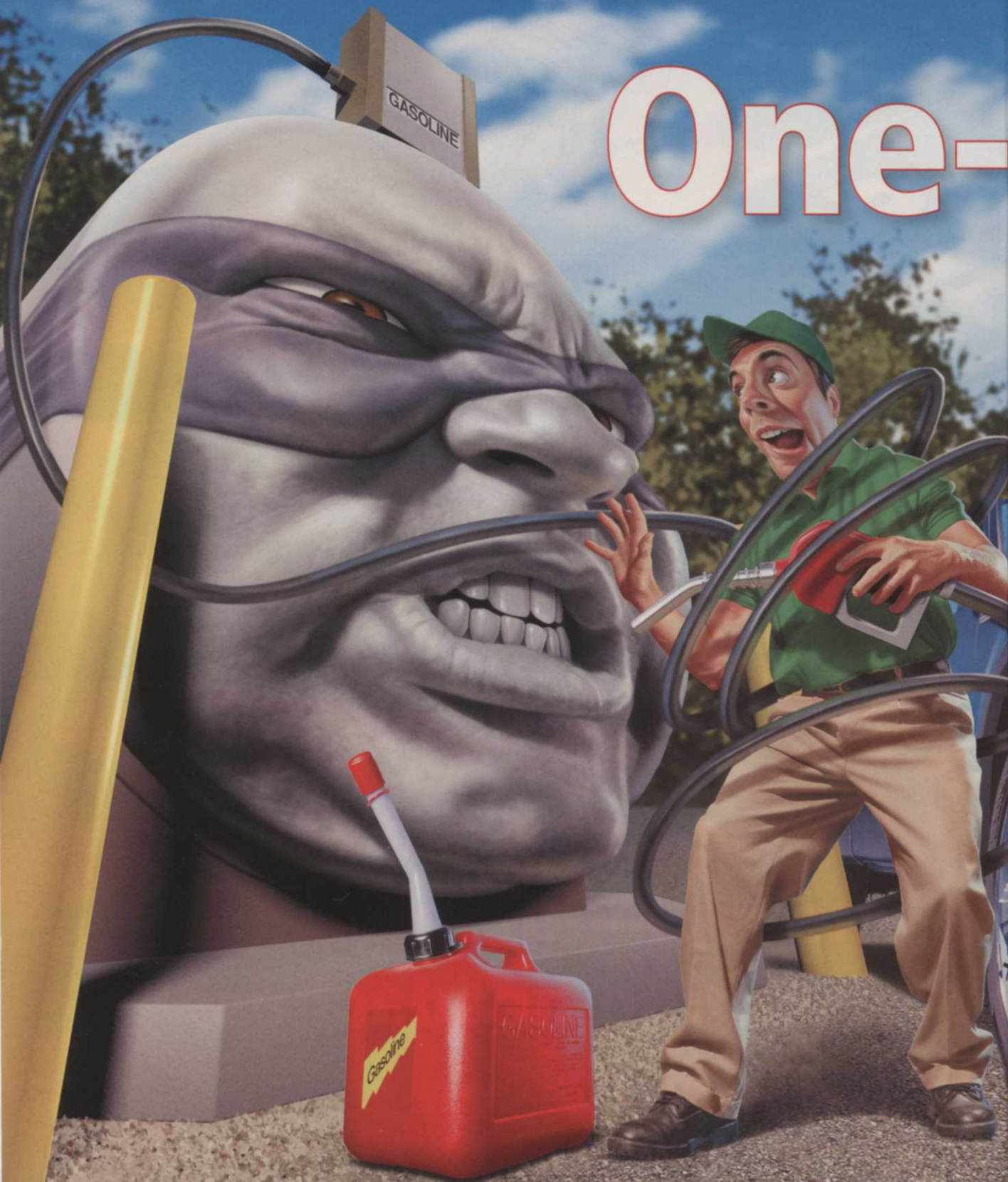
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armed bandits

GAS PUMPS ROB VULNERABLE CONTRACTORS AND THEIR CUSTOMERS

BY MARTY WHITFORD / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

It wasn't the best of times, but it sure wasn't the worst of times, either. It was summer 2006. The U.S. dollar was weakening, but still 25% stronger than today compared to the euro. The thought of equally exchanging U.S. and Canadian quarters in a poker game was still preposterous. Sales of existing and new homes were beginning to dip, but that was expected following five consecutive years of unprecedented growth, and home sale prices were still holding strong. Grocery store bills were still manageable: A dozen eggs cost 50% less than today, a gallon of whole milk 67 cents less. ▶▶

PART I

Perhaps most notably on a daily basis to American consumers and business owners — particularly landscape professionals — regular unleaded gas cost \$2.60 per gallon (\$1.50/gal. less than today) and diesel was a bargain at \$2.91/gal. (\$1.80/gal. less than today).

"For years, I dreamed of starting a landscape design/build company," says Keith Oetjen. "I waited until June

2006 to partner with someone (Lane Manning) and take the leap. The economy was slowing, but was still strong. No one predicted all of this.

"The perfect storm wiped out our company, Manning Design LLC in Mesa, AZ," Oetjen says. "June 2006 marked the beginning of a two-year free fall in home sales. The gas pumps finished us off two years later. We were OK with \$2 to \$3 per gal., but not \$4/gal."

No time for dreams

This May, Oetjen met with his former employer, Jeff Berghoff, president and CEO of Berghoff Design Group in Scottsdale, AZ. After a few weeks of discussions, Oetjen rejoined the \$15.5 million-a-year landscape design/build company as a lead designer/project manager. Berghoff Design assumed one of the defunct company's truck leases and purchased some of its equipment, but Oetjen's still paying dearly for his pursuit of the American Dream.

"I'm still paying about \$5,000 per month for some office equipment and one of the five trucks I couldn't sell, as well as for our office and yard leases," Oetjen says. "But I can finally sleep at night, knowing all of the burden doesn't

continued on page 24

I wasn't the first and I won't be the last small landscape company to fall victim to these head-turning gas prices.

— Keith Oetjen, lead designer/project manager, Berghoff Design Group



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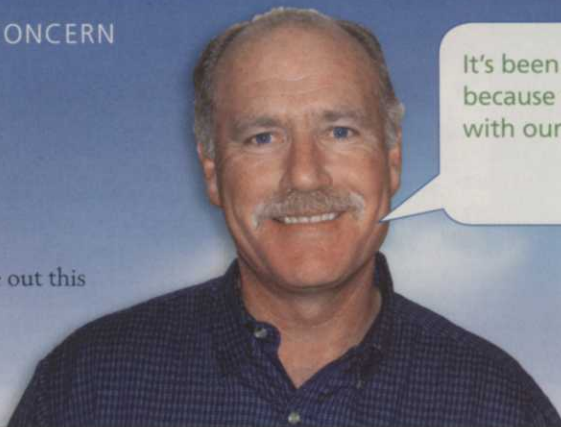
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continued from page 22
fall on my shoulders.

"Berghoff Design can ride out this storm because of its years in business, name recognition, size and diversity of serv-



It's been equally **hard on our employees** because their pay hasn't kept pace with our **soaring gas and food prices.**

— Tom Fochtman, co-owner/
vice president, CoCal Landscape

ices — its 200 maintenance accounts help offset this design/build downturn," Oetjen adds. "I wasn't the first and I won't be the last small landscape company to fall victim to these head-turning gas prices. These are turbulent times, and small businesses are particularly vulnerable."

Surviving the stranglehold of today's overbearing one-armed bandits (aka gas pumps) requires more than flexible, realistic budgeting and across-the-board cost controls. For 85% of landscape professionals, it mandates enacting fuel surcharges and/or raising rates — despite customers also falling victim to the gas bandits and suffering daily reductions in discretionary income and purchasing power.

The big squeeze

Berghoff Design is one of the so-called fortunate ones. It buys fuel in bulk from a distributor half a mile from its yard, saving 50 to 60 cents/gal. Oetjen's company didn't have such an option. Even so, Berghoff Design is spending about \$6,000 more per month than last year to fuel its 65 vehicles and equipment.

"Fuel has always been a high-impact line item on the cost side of the ledger, but today's gas prices are putting the big squeeze on landscape companies and our customers — and it will get worse before it gets better," adds Sherm Fields, president of Wauconda, IL-based Acres Group (\$45.9 million in 2007 revenue, 275 company vehicles).

Denver-based CoCal Landscape (\$32.23 million in 2007 revenue) spent \$1.015 million on fuel last year — \$255,000 more than in 2006 — but this year's gas price hike makes last year's look like a molehill, says Tom Fochtman, co-owner/vice president.

continued on page 26

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EMPLOYEE TIMESHEET

NAME: Bill Kemp DATES: 11-15

DAY	START	LUNCH	END	JOB SITE	WORK DONE	HOURS
MON	7:00	1/2	3:30	Brentw		8
TUE			3:30			8
WED			4:00	↓		8 1/2
THU			4:00	Crestv		8 1/2
FRI	↓	↓	4:00	↓		8 1/2
Employee Signature: <u>Bill Kemp</u>						TOTAL HOURS: <u>41 1/2</u>



Reality?

Employee Time Card

Displays the total time worked by each employee



Mountain View
LANDSCAPE

Bill Kemp

Time card for: Monday, August 11, 2008 - Friday, August 15, 2008

Jobsite Name	Cost Code	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Total
Brentwood Job	Irrigation	7:38	7:35	7:53	-	-	23:06
Crestview Job	Placing Sod	-	-	-	7:58	7:49	15:47
		7:38	7:35	7:53	7:58	7:49	38:53

Bill Kemp
Bill Kemp

Regular Hours: 38:53
Overtime Hours: - 0 -
Double Time Hours: - 0 -



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continued from page 24

"It's been equally hard on our employees because pay hasn't kept pace with our soaring gas and food prices," Fochtman adds. "To curb the negatives, in late June we moved to four 10-hour days in our

maintenance division. Our people appreciate the gas savings from reduced travel time, as well as three-day weekends."

Surcharging to survive

In July 2007, Acres changed language in

PUMPING UP RATES

74%

are adding **fuel surcharges** to their invoices.



11% are raising their prices.

15% are opting not to charge customers more during this economic downturn.

— LM ONLINE SURVEY, MAY 2008

its new contracts, adding a flat-rate fuel surcharge once a gas price trigger was reached. Fields won't disclose the surcharge or trigger price, but says it was hit in January and doesn't recoup half of the company's added fuel costs.

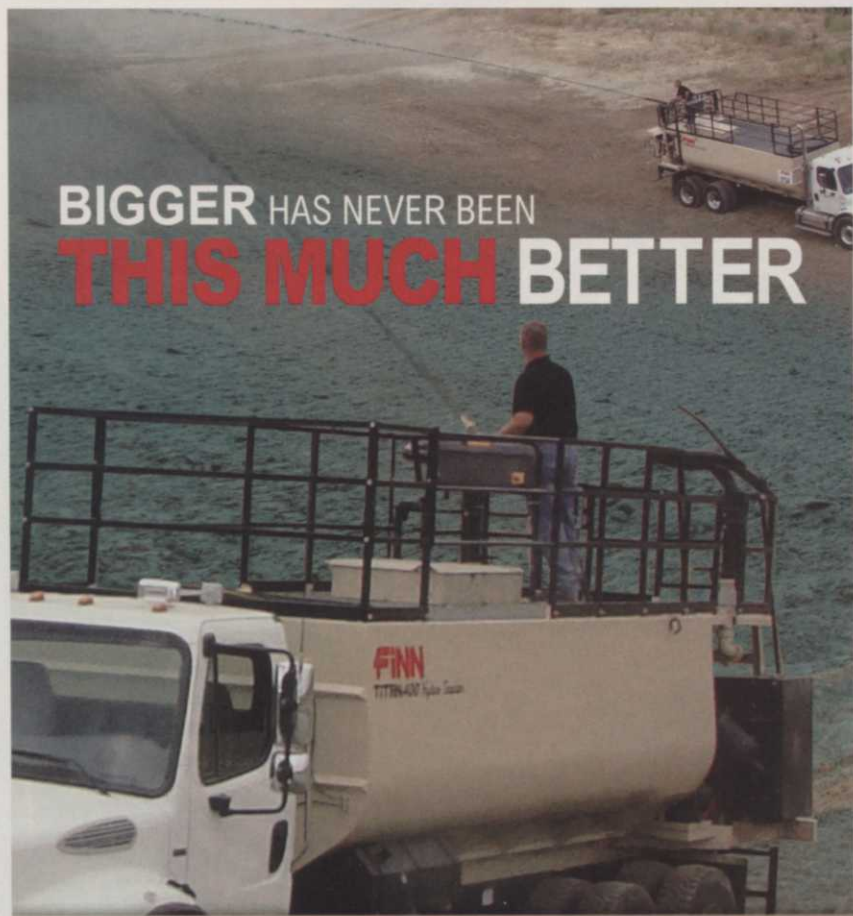
"You have to be really smart to stay in business today," Fields says. "Times like these require good planning and employee buy-in — our people have to act as if they are paying for the fuel to operate our vehicles and equipment. But these times also require that we better understand and sell our full value, which includes passing along sizable surcharges and cost increases to customers."

American Civil Contractors, based in Littleton, CO, did likewise, but Vice President Todd Williams says some customers won't pay it.

"Compounding matters, we budgeted fuel costs at \$3 to \$3.50/gal. this year," Williams says. "We're paying \$4/gal. now and are told \$5/gal. might be just down the road, so we're going to look a little stupid at year's end."

Some companies' crystal balls are a little more clear. In 2002, about five years before most, Orlando-based Carol King Landscape Maintenance added a clause to its maintenance contracts al-

continued on page 28



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SIPHONING MARGINS

National averages: retail fuel prices

	6/27/08	6/27/07	\$ Hike	% Hike
Regular Unleaded	\$4.07/gal.	\$2.98/gal.	\$1.09	37%
Diesel	\$4.76/gal.	\$2.91/gal.	\$1.85	64%

— AAA'S DAILY FUEL GAUGE REPORT

continued from page 26

lowing it to add fuel surcharges to bills.

"We waited five years — until it got really bad — to start adding fuel surcharges," says Bruce Bachand, vice president and chief operating officer of the \$8.3 million-a-year company. "These gas pumps have their far-reaching tentacles in almost everything now."

Pricing matters

Fuel costs diverted 4.3% of BIO Landscape and Maintenance's 2007 revenue, and the Houston company expects fuel expenditures to take away 5.2% of sales this year.

"This year, our fuel bill will be \$1.2 million — more than double what it was in 2005," notes BIO President Robert Taylor. "It was impossible to have budgeted high enough to accommodate these fuel prices. We're increasing rates mercilessly in every year of our maintenance contracts and adding a surcharge option so we don't lose too much ground."

Although 74% of those responding to a recent *Landscape Management* online survey say they are enacting fuel surcharges, some aren't heading down that road.

Sposato Landscape Co. in Milton, DE, is raising rates on a case-by-case basis as opportunities arise and contracts expire. Tony Sposato, president of the \$10.5-million-a-year company, doesn't believe fuel surcharges will stick. Even if they do, he says they likely will hinder customer relations more than general price increases will.

"Last year, fuel costs were just less than 1.7% of revenues. This year we budgeted 1.85%, but they'll be about 2.2%," says Chris Davitt, president of Laytonsville, MD-based Ruppert Nurseries (\$55 million in 2007 revenue). "Luckily, we had the opportunity to reprice most of our jobs that were up for

continued on page 30



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continued from page 28
renewal this year.”

Tom Shotzbarger, GM of Lancaster, PA-based Tomlinson Bomberger Lawn Care & Landscape, says the company projected to pay \$3.20/gal. for the 30,000 gal. it will use this year. A June 12 fuel delivery for two 10,000-gal. tanks averaged \$4.04/gal.

“As a matter of integrity, we won’t charge a surcharge on existing contracts, but we are increasing pricing on all new business 3% to 5%,” he says.

“On top of these record-high gas prices, we’re down 1.2% in revenues year to date and we projected 10% growth,” Shotzbarger adds. “As a result, we’ve had periodic layoffs and decreased work

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Paying beyond the pump

As if the double whammy of escalating fuel prices and an ice-cold housing market weren’t enough, contractors are suffering significant price increases on fertilizer and PVC tubing used for irrigation, while also absorbing substantial surcharges and price hikes on everything transported to and from their yards.

Business consultant Bruce Wilson, a partner with the Wilson-Oyler Group, says petroleum is used to manufacture fertilizer and PVC piping, which explains why costs on many of these products have risen 20% to 40% in the past six months. Wilson says deliveries of plant materials other supplies often have 5% or greater fuel surcharges.

“We’re paying \$200 more per dumpster collection than two years ago, and a load of trees from the Midwest now costs \$800 (30%) more,” adds Tom Fochtman, co-owner and vice president of Denver-based CoCal Landscape. “I signed a check yesterday on a load of rock that had a 16.5% fuel surcharge.”

“Tell me about it,” says Dennis Sutton, president and chief operating officer of Memphis, TN-based TruGreen’s \$1.1 billion-a-year Lawn Care division. “Fertilizer costs are up 36%. We’ll spend \$20 million more on fertilizer this year than we did last year.”

—MW



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- Successful strategies and fresh approaches to business obstacles.
- Relevant tools and job aids to share with your clients and colleagues.

GIC is held in conjunction with an expanded GIE+EXPO, an international trade show that attracts 20,000 attendees and features a 20-acre outdoor demonstration area, and more than 500 indoor exhibits. The indoor exhibits are open throughout the conference, and many companies will supplement their indoor booths with three days of demos.

Admission is included with your GIC registration.

NEW THIS YEAR! GIC presents a new certification track! Increase your marketability in a competitive marketplace through professional certification. Take advantage of this one-stop learning opportunity!

NEW THIS YEAR! Ask the Experts: Come by and ask some of the industry's most seasoned minds your most challenging questions!

NEW THIS YEAR! Exhibit Hall Learning Center: Watch live demonstrations on the show floor — an interactive opportunity to observe how-to applications and experience valuable training.

FREE CONCERTS!

THURSDAY,
OCTOBER 23 | 8:00 PM

38 SPECIAL

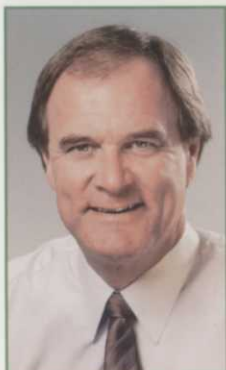
With Special Guests, The Briggs Bluesbusters, 6:30 PM
Presented By:
Briggs & Stratton



FRIDAY,
OCTOBER 24 | 7:30 PM

LONESTAR

With Special Guest, Candy Coburn, 7:00 PM
Presented By:
Ariens, Gravely & Stens



GIC KEYNOTE

Thursday, October 23, 5:00 p.m., Louisville Marriott Downtown

Former Super Bowl-winning Head Coach of the Baltimore Ravens (1999–2007) Brian Billick scored a remarkable feat: guiding the Baltimore Ravens — then a recent expansion team — to victory at Super Bowl XXXV in only his second year as head coach. In 2006, he led the Ravens to their best regular season (13–3) in franchise history. The team's remarkable transformation under Billick has earned him a reputation for being an expert motivator and strategist, qualities he imparts to audiences to put them on the path towards success.

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Leadership
Customer Service
Design/Build/Installation
Landscape Management
Lawn Care
Spanish Language
Safety
Industry Recruiting



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22

9:00 a.m.–Noon	Concurrent Workshops
9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.	PLANET PAC Golf Outing
1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.	Concurrent Workshops
1:30 p.m.–4:30 p.m.	Tour sponsored by J. Thomas
5:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m.	First Timer's/Conference Orientation
7:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m.	Welcome Reception sponsored by Cub Cadet Commercial
8:00 p.m.–10:00 p.m.	Auction

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23

7:00 a.m.–8:30 a.m.	Breakfast With Champions sponsored by Weed Man USA
9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.	GIE+EXPO
9:30 a.m.–11:00 a.m.	Concurrent Sessions
2:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m.	Concurrent Sessions
5:00 p.m.–6:30 p.m.	PLANET Keynote Session with Brian Billick, Former Super Bowl-winning coach
6:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.	Specialty Group Receptions
8:00 p.m.–10:00 p.m.	Concert on 4th Street — 38 Special

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24

7:00 a.m.–8:30 a.m.	Breakfast With Champions sponsored by Dow AgroSciences LLC & Mulch Mule by Green Industry Innovators
9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.	GIE+EXPO
9:30 a.m.–11:00 a.m.	Concurrent Sessions
1:00 p.m.–2:30 p.m.	Concurrent Sessions
2:45 p.m.–4:15 p.m.	Concurrent Sessions
6:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.	Faculty Forum sponsored by John Deere
6:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m.	Student/Employer Roundtable Recruiting Session
8:30 p.m.–10:00 p.m.	Concert on 4th Street — LONESTAR

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25

7:00 a.m.–8:30 a.m.	Breakfast With Champions sponsored by Caterpillar
9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.	GIE+EXPO
9:30 a.m.–10:30 a.m.	Concurrent Sessions
10:45 a.m.–11:45 p.m.	Concurrent Sessions
1:00 p.m.–2:00 p.m.	Reports to Leadership
2:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.	PLANET Board of Directors Meeting
1:30 p.m.–5:30 p.m.	Certification Exam
6:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.	Awards Reception sponsored by Husqvarna
7:30 p.m.–10:30 p.m.	Awards Banquet



TOPIC-SPECIFIC ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS: Breakfast With Champions. This fun and highly energetic PLANET tradition features over 80 different roundtables facilitated by experts in the field. Come prepared to learn and share knowledge, methods, and procedures with your peers. We have created an ideal forum for green industry professionals to learn, exchange ideas, and have some fun! **Register early — this is an immensely popular event and will sell out! Registration for this event will provide breakfast on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday!**

EVENT SPONSORED BY    

WELCOME RECEPTION & LIVE AUCTION: Get in on the bidding competition for hot products to benefit the PLANET Academic Excellence Foundation and PLANET legislative activities. You'll have a blast with veteran auctioneer and PLANET member Harry Collins while you bid on items such as trips, sports memorabilia, and a large variety of hot products. Don't miss the excitement! Doors open Wednesday, October 22 at 7:00 p.m.

RECEPTION SPONSORED BY 

AWARDS RECEPTION & BANQUET: Join your peers at this event in recognition of those who have worked tirelessly to raise industry standards. This exciting banquet will honor all award recipients of the past year, from the prestigious Environmental Improvement Award and Safety Recognition to the Lifetime Leadership Award. Mingle with innovators and those who give back to the green industry through hard work and dedication to improvement. Don't miss this evening filled with good food and good people who positively contribute to the green industry.

RECEPTION SPONSORED BY 

HOTEL INFORMATION

PLANET headquarters hotel

Louisville Marriott Downtown

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Louisville, KY 40402

Reservations: Call the Louisville Housing Bureau at (800) 743-3100 or visit LandcareNetwork.org. The Housing Bureau's hours are Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from noon to 4 p.m. Eastern time. Please use the PLANET special, member-only access code when making reservations. Currently the PLANET room blocks at the headquarter and overflow hotels are sold out on most nights. This can change daily. Please book the closest available hotel to the Marriott offered by the Housing Bureau and then check back periodically if your dates have opened up at your preferred hotel.

RENTAL CAR INFORMATION

Rental car discounts are available with PLANET membership:

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October 22-25, 2008 • The Louisville Marriott Downtown and Kentucky Expo Center

1 REGISTRANT INFORMATION

For EACH registrant from the same company, please copy this form and fill out separately for each person. Please send the forms together with payment.

YOUR NAME: _____
 (as it should appear on badge)

TITLE: _____

COMPANY: _____

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CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

E-MAIL: _____

PHONE: () _____

FAX: () _____

SPECIAL NEEDS: Please indicate any special needs: _____

- THIS IS MY FIRST GREEN INDUSTRY CONFERENCE
- PLEASE SEND CERTIFICATION INFORMATION

2 CONFERENCE AND GIE+EXPO REGISTRATION FEE

Fees include your entire conference participation, welcome reception, all educational sessions, and GIE+EXPO admission with the exception of ticketed events (see #3). Please check appropriate box.

	EARLY BIRD (BY 9/5)	REGULAR (AFTER 9/5)
PLANET MEMBER CONFERENCE FEE		
1 person	<input type="checkbox"/> \$265 each	<input type="checkbox"/> \$315 each
2 people (same company)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$255 each	<input type="checkbox"/> \$305 each
3 people (same company)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$245 each	<input type="checkbox"/> \$295 each
4 people (same company)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$235 each	<input type="checkbox"/> \$285 each
5 or more people (same company)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$225 each	<input type="checkbox"/> \$275 each
STUDENT/FACULTY		
Member	<input type="checkbox"/> FREE	<input type="checkbox"/> FREE
Nonmember	<input type="checkbox"/> \$70	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
NONMEMBER CONFERENCE FEE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$465	<input type="checkbox"/> \$515
PLANET MEMBER DAILY FEE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$135	<input type="checkbox"/> \$165
NONMEMBER DAILY FEE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250	<input type="checkbox"/> \$300
Indicate which day you will attend:		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/> Friday
		<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday
SUBTOTAL REGISTRATION FEES	\$	\$

CANCELLATION POLICY

We understand that events occasionally occur that prevent you from attending the conference or an event for which you may have already registered. If you find that you are unable to attend, you may:

- **Send a substitute.** Substitutions may be made at any time, even on-site. Please contact PLANET prior to the conference or go to the PLANET on-site registration desk.
- **Request a refund.** We will gladly issue a refund provided cancellation is received on or before October 3, 2008. Cancellations will incur a \$50 processing fee.

After October 3, no refunds will be given.

3 EASY WAYS TO REGISTER

ONLINE: GreenIndustryConference.org

FAX: (703) 736-9668

MAIL: Mail registration form with payment to: Professional Landcare Network
 950 Herndon Parkway, Suite 450 • Herndon, VA 20170

QUESTIONS: Call (800) 395-2522 or e-mail events@landcarenetwork.org

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- COLLEAGUE RECOMMENDATION PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT BROCHURE MAGAZINE AD PLANET E-MAIL I AM A REPEAT ATTENDEE

3 TICKETED OPTIONAL EVENTS

These are optional activities during the conference with additional fees. (Please check all appropriate boxes.)

	EARLY BIRD (BY 9/5) MEMBER	NONMEMBER	REGULAR (AFTER 9/5) MEMBER	NONMEMBER
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2008				
Morning Workshops (9 a.m.-noon)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$80	<input type="checkbox"/> \$120	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> \$140
Please check the morning workshop you wish to attend (check one workshop only)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Workshop A – Marino	<input type="checkbox"/> Workshop C – Laflamme			
<input type="checkbox"/> Workshop B – Sessions	<input type="checkbox"/> Workshop D – Scott			
Afternoon Workshop (1 p.m.-4 p.m.)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$80	<input type="checkbox"/> \$120	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> \$140
<input type="checkbox"/> Workshop E – Avera				
Tour	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90	<input type="checkbox"/> \$60	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
PAC Golf Outing — please see information in brochure or contact Tom Delaney at tomdelaney@landcarenetwork.org				
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2008				
Breakfast With Champions (All Three Days)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2008				
Awards Banquet	<input type="checkbox"/> \$65	<input type="checkbox"/> \$95	<input type="checkbox"/> \$85	<input type="checkbox"/> \$115
SUBTOTAL TICKETED EVENTS	\$		\$	

4 JOIN PLANET OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW!

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5 PAYMENT

Subtotal REGISTRATION FEES (#2)	\$
Subtotal TICKETED OPTIONAL EVENTS (#3)	\$
Subtotal PLANET MEMBERSHIP DUES (#4)	\$
TOTAL	\$

Enclosed is my check for \$_____ made payable to PLANET.
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- Please accept my voluntary tax deductible contribution to the PLANET Academic Excellence Foundation (PLANET AEF) in the amount of \$25, or other amount of \$_____ (make check payable to PLANET AEF).

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PHOTO CREDITS

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Above, left to right: courtesy of James Moses; courtesy of Greater Louisville Convention & Visitors Bureau; courtesy of Dan Dry.

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continued from page 30

weeks to 32 hours in our lawn care and tree/shrub divisions. If and when the business comes back, we'll bring all of our guys back, all back up to 40-hour weeks."

Nathan Dirksen, construction manager for Dennis 7 Dees of Portland, OR, says the \$24 million-a-year company expects a 40% higher fuel bill this year.

"We did surcharges two years ago, but went away from that pretty quickly," Dirksen says. "Now we take care of matters by building it into our costs. It's a more-comfortable sale than surcharges, and our customers won't expect money back if you-know-what freezes over and gas prices ever drop."

Equal opportunity offender

Dennis Sutton, president and CEO of Memphis, TN-based TruGreen's \$1.1 billion LawnCare division, says the gas bandits are pocket-picking the big guys just as often, if not more.

"We have the third-largest fleet in America, behind only FedEx and UPS," Sutton says. "With 8,000 trucks on the road, our fuel costs will rise \$9 million this year alone — or probably more than \$12 million if you include TruGreen's \$400 million LandCare division."

Bruce Wilson, a partner with the Wilson-Oyler Group, says some landscape companies are bidding 10% less this year, even

2-PART SERIES

In August, we'll conclude our "One-armed bandits" editorial series by exploring other self-defense strategies landscape professionals are using to survive gas pumps' stranglehold.

though their fuel costs are up 30% to 50% (depending on location and fuel-type mix). Some see rate reductions as the only way to win and keep business in such tough times.

"My biggest concern is that some in our industry don't know where or how hard these fuel cost increases are hitting them, and they're not passing them on to their customers," American Civil Contractors' Williams says. Williams isn't alone. "We're seeing some national companies coming in and bidding 20% to 30% less to gain and keep a foothold in our market," concurs Joe Gonzalez, president/owner of Venice, FL-based ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design. "Meanwhile, fuel costs are robbing us of 1.2% more of our revenue than they did last year.

"Whether one goes the surcharge route, the price increase route, both routes or none, we as an industry have to be very careful not to prey on each other — no matter how tough it gets. We're taking a beating at the pumps. If we turn on each other now, it will set us — that is those of us that survive — back decades." **LIM**

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BUSINESS

LM'S OPERATOR OF THE MONTH

Jack Robertson »

President, Robertson Lawn Care

BY JAMES E. GUYETTE

Jack Robertson's marketing savvy and personal drive help keep his business going strong.

Robertson earned a spot in lawn care lore when he was among the first in the Green Industry to offer giveaway promotional items emblazoned with the company logo. He remains an avid promoter of his company, always looking for unique ways to advertise.

Robertson Lawn Care (Springfield IL) has achieved continuous annual growth since he purchased the enterprise from a relative in 1977. On a Sunday in March 2006, the company's office building was destroyed by a tornado. By noon on Wednesday, he was back servicing lawns — thanks to cell phones, a friend who donated temporary office space and Robertson's indomitable, can-do spirit.

You were one of the first lawn care operators (LCOs) to introduce handout products. How effective have they been at attracting new customers or keeping your name in front of the community?

We got the idea from (the people at) Royals Stadium. (Now the Ewing M. Kauffman Stadium; premium beverages were served in plastic cups sporting the baseball team's logo.) At the end of the game, fans took them home. We thought if it works for them, it will work for us. We handed out thousands of them.

It's a cumulative effect of everything that we do. We also advertise on radio,

TV, newspapers and bus stop benches. It's another tool in the tool box to keep the branding in front of the customer.

You've said that you have a 90% customer retention rate. What are some of the key strategies for keeping your clientele? Don't promise any more than you can deliver; that starts the relationship off on an even keel. Do what you promise and don't make the customer wait. We can't always solve the problem today, but we can do something about it — even if we just go out there and look, and talk to them.

How do you retain your employees?

We give them the freedom that they pretty much control their own destiny. They always have the flexibility to do what they need to do (for family events such as children's soccer games, etc.). Work's important, but it's also important that they can do what's important and needed for their families.

You've said that your late father was your most important mentor. What are some of the things he taught you? He sold hearing aids for 40 years. I went to the bank with my father to buy the (lawn care) business from my brother-in-law.

I had sold a few accounts one day and I came home early. He said, "Things are going well, huh? That means you have to go out and sell more." He told me to



GROWING IN STYLE

- **Founded:** 1977
- **Employees:** 12
- **Education/certifications:** Bachelor's degree in agronomy from Western Illinois University.
- **Industry involvement:** Served on the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) board of directors for six years.
- **Business outlook:** Consecutive increases in sales over each of the 31 years in business; includes the four acquisitions of other operations.
- **Family:** Wife Debbie and children Andy and Samantha all work in the business, conducting management-oriented tasks.
- **Web site:** www.robertsonlawncare.com

keep at it, particularly when things are going well; that's when you should keep going forward with it.

What are some of the biggest challenges facing the industry going forward? The first and foremost challenge is the high price of everything. Regulation can be a challenge for us, but overall the industry is going forward. We need new products that are as safe as they possibly can be.

Also, your potential workforce is dwindling. It appears there are less people today who are interested in getting their hands dirty working in the great outdoors. **LM**

—The author is a Cleveland-based freelance writer. Contact him at jimguyette2004@yahoo.com.

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Time out (of the office)

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS / Managing Editor

Several years ago, my mother-in-law passed away unexpectedly. She didn't have a lot of money, but that never stopped her from squeezing every last ounce of joy out of the time she had. That realization hit home during the days of mourning following her funeral.

We were visited not only by her many friends, but also people from the many organizations to which she belonged. She developed deep, lasting bonds with nearly everyone she met. We marveled at her ability to maintain these relationships when — to be shamefully honest — it always seemed like she was involving herself only with our lives and our children.

To honor her memory and her spirit, my wife and I purchased the "Broadway" theater season series, (a favorite of hers) and we've continued to every year since. (Feel free to make jokes about my manhood. I can take it.)

Her untimely passing taught us something else, too: Life is too precious to spend most of it behind a desk. Work is important, and without it we couldn't afford to spend time away. But I've met too many business owners who won't take vacations.

No matter how busy or important you think you are, you need to spend time with your family, time away from your enterprise. If you've created a situation where leaving your business for a week would spell disaster, then to be brutally blunt, you're a bad manager, a poor delegator and self-delusional.

It's nice to feel important and needed. My family recently returned from a nearly three-week visit to

Israel. A small part of me hoped for just a little disaster awaiting my return to work. I longed to hear someone say, "Thank goodness you're back. The place nearly fell apart while you were gone." That didn't happen, of course, and although I'd like to think everyone was a little more challenged by my absence, the magazine still went on without me.

You need time away from the office for your mental health — and I'm sure the mental health of your employees wouldn't suffer after a week without the boss. You simply can't give your all to your business without losing your edge, suffering diminished skills and becoming a less-effective owner and manager.

Biggest loser update

A few months back, I wrote about a contest between Editor-in-Chief Marty Whitford and me. We're vying to see who can lose the most weight by the end of the year. To date, I've lost 1.15%. Not where I'd like to be, but headed in the right direction. And Marty's made the competition an easy one so far. He's actually added 2.9%.

Thanks to those of you who have offered their support and words of encouragement. Now, if you'll excuse me, Marty and I have to hit the gym.

Contact Dan at
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e-mail
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Blooming deadline

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS /
Managing Editor

A homeowner asks for an enormous amount of work and a demanding schedule to ensure the landscape is ready in time for his 50th birthday.

Guests were brought to the home in rented limousines, where they were greeted by showgirls who ushered them along a red carpet to the party. No, it wasn't the Academy Awards. The Glastonbury, CT, homeowner was celebrating his 50th birthday and was throwing a blast befitting his first half-century. And he wanted a landscape to match the lavishness he felt the occasion deserved.

Flash back a couple of months to when Mark Babineau, owner and presi-

dent of B&B Landscaping & Design, and Rob Harrison, sales manager, provided their bid for the project.

"We presented the quote to the client, he said 'no.'" Babineau explains. "We went back with a revised number to get the job done a week later. He still said 'no' and still put it out to bid. About a month later, he called and said, 'I need you to do the job because I think that you're the only group that can deliver the product on time.'"

The problem: More than a month had passed since the original bid; the deadline for the project — Oct. 1, the

date of the party — was only eight weeks away. It would be a tight fit for the company, which expects to end the year with around \$6 million in revenue.

"This was a fast-paced job with a tight deadline," Harrison says. "There was no room for error or time for mistakes. Everybody worked very well together — under pressure — completing the work on time, creating a showpiece."

The project included a two-story mahogany deck, a half-scale replica of the pool at the Delano Hotel in Miami Beach, FL (work done by Aqua Pool &

continued on page 40





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**THE
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DESIGN/BUILD

continued from page 38

Patio), an outdoor kitchen complete with pop-up plasma screen TV, numerous plants and trees and even repainting the house.

The kitchen included a 58-in. Viking



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grill, three under-counter refrigerators, an ice maker, garbage disposal and running water.

B&B installed trees and plants, including 250 chrysanthemums for the party.

"At the start of the project, we had 15 masons and skilled laborers on site," Harrison says. "The last two weeks, we had 30 of our best team members on-site to complete the hardscaping, outdoor kitchen area, landscaping, lighting, a batting cage and sod restoration. In the eight-week deadline there were 20 to 30 other contractors on site completing (other projects)."

B&B installed 250 chrysanthemums to beautify the place for the party. The company is still responsible for maintaining all plant materials and the irrigation system.

"There were some large tree specimens placed at the back side of the pool area," Harrison says. "There were a lot of small plantings on the entire property area. We did the front landscape as an add-on with two weeks to go."

B&B used 140 tons of natural stone for the veneer of the walls surrounding the property. Crews installed 2,700 sq. ft. of pathways, paving surfaces and counter tops using bluestone and granite. Each stone was custom cut to fit.

Darlene Dumaine, APLD, lead designer at B&B Landscaping, designed everything from pool location and deck layout, to the walls, kitchen area, walking surfaces and landscaping.

"Believe it or not, there were not a lot of glitches," Harrison says. "The neighbors were good. Everyone parked

continued on page 42

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DESIGN/BUILD



Bluestone with granite comprise the dance floor (inset). A pop-up plasma TV in the outdoor kitchen.

continued from page 40
on one side of the road. It couldn't have gone much smoother for the deadline and weather working in our favor."

The initial bid for what was originally just a backyard project was \$160,000, Harrison says, but like many jobs, the homeowner kept adding things along the way. The final bill for B&B's work was \$500,000. Add another \$250,000 for the pool and the cost of the party itself, and the homeowner probably spent around \$1 million for his 50th birthday — much of which he wouldn't see the next day. At least he'll have the pool, kitchen and beautiful landscape to remember it by. **LM**

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Project Portfolio

DESIGN/BUILD

STRUCTURE RELOCATION / TRAFFIC FLOW / DRAINAGE

The design

A large shoreline residence takes a step back, so to speak, to expose more green space.

Project Requirements

- Budget range: \$100,000 to \$500,000
- Compensate for septic system change
- Colorful, yet private environment



Project Specifics

- Move the home back 12 ft.
- Create loop driveway for better traffic flow
- Improve upon runoff system

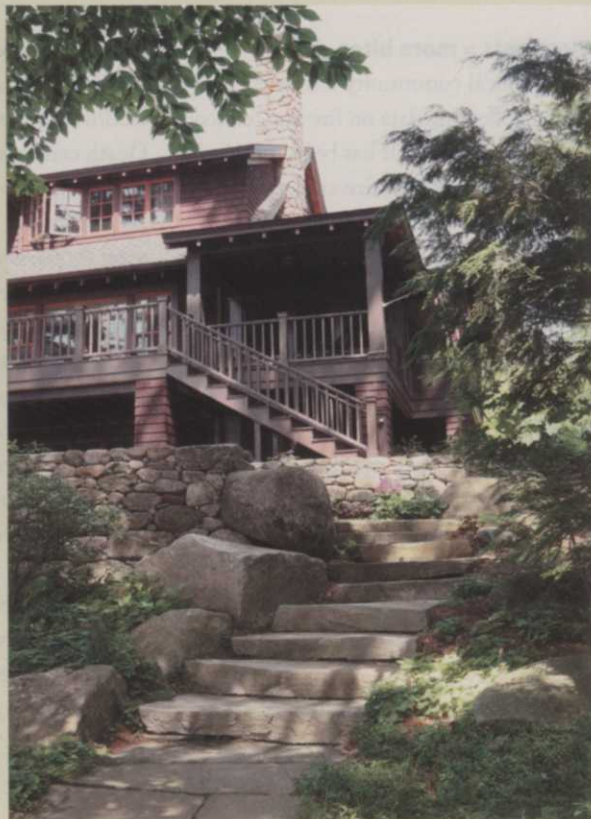
ABOVE As a result of these design changes and attention to detail, the clients enjoy added privacy, a colorful raised planting bed, and drainage that is more readily directed away from the house.

RIGHT Careful coordination of the tank and field location within the loop ensured seamless integration into the landscape — and improved vehicular circulation.



ABOVE Placing a 5,000-sq.-ft.-plus home on less than 1 sloping acre, with a 50-ft., no-build lakeside setback and aggregate, 50-ft. side setbacks, presented a great challenge.

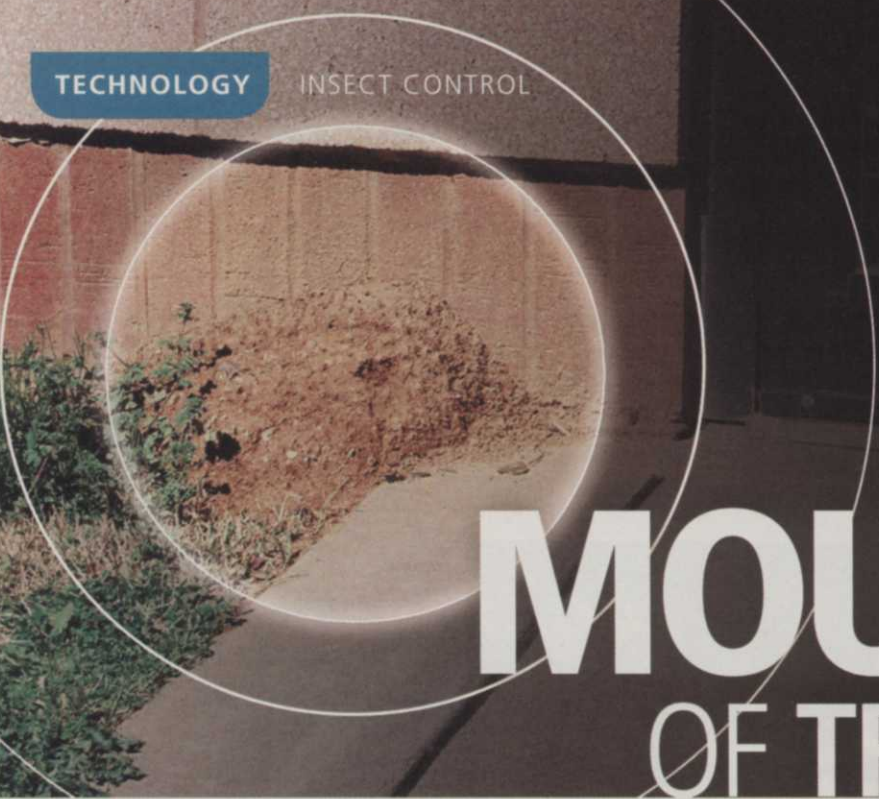
LEFT Roof and surface runoff are allowed to infiltrate invisibly into strategically located drywells and natively vegetated, level spreaders.



Project Principals

- Designed by Greg Grigsby and George Pellettieri, Pellettieri Associates, Warner, NH, www.pellettieriassoc.com
- House constructed by Talbot Builders; dock by Watermark Marine Construction. Other suppliers include Millican Nurseries, Chichester, NH, and Flynn Stone, Lakewood, PA.

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.



Fire ant mound located against the exterior brick wall adjacent to a door at an elementary school.

MOUNDS OF TROUBLE

The red imported fire ant (RIFA) entered the U.S. through the port of Mobile, AL, sometime during the late 1920s to early 1930s. Since then, RIFA has spread across

the South and is now found from the Carolinas to California. It is estimated RIFA currently inhabit more than 300 million acres in the U.S. today — a landmass nearly twice the size of Texas.

What may be a more alarming statistic, though, is that since RIFA's introduction into the U.S., about 80 human deaths have been attributed to the pest. These cases all occurred outdoors, but more recently there have been reports of increased indoor RIFA-related incidents.

Of concern to lawn and turf professionals is the possibility of being held liable in these cases, because they may provide some level of fire ant control services.

Mounded nests are commonly built in lawns and garden areas surrounding structures — both residential and commercial. As such, it is likely that some may look to the lawn and turf professional for fire ant management services.

Red imported fire ants are an increasingly serious problem — and potential business liability — in several states. BY PAUL J. BELLO

More ants = more bites

The medical community has recently begun collecting data on fire ant-related injuries to humans. It has been reported in the Southeast that fire ants sting an estimated 14 million people each year.

A survey in Texas reported that about 79% of Texans have been stung by fire ants.

In South Carolina, a survey of more than 1,200 healthcare professionals estimated that more than 33,000 people seek medical attention for fire ant stings, and 660 of these people are treated for anaphylaxis. This severe reaction, although relatively rare, is usually the cause of death in fatal RIFA incidents.

Fire ants present a serious hazard

Fire ant stings are dangerous because of the venom injected into the victim that causes pain, swelling and other local

effects, plus the possible severity of the individual's allergic reaction. Susceptible victims may suffer anaphylactic shock. Death can occur in sensitive individuals, including the very young or elderly.

LM's sister magazine, *Pest Management Professional*, reported that in 1998 approximately 660,000 people were stung in South Carolina. About 33,000 of these individuals required medical attention, with 27 patients hospitalized.

Sources report that from about 5 million to 14 million Americans are stung each year, and that anaphylaxis may occur in from 0.6% to 6.0% of individuals who are stung.

The number of the serious fire ant cases are relatively few, but the historical record indicates that the incidence of these cases may be growing and worthy of the industry's full attention.

continued on page 48



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TECHNOLOGY INSECT CONTROL

continued from page 46

Protect your customers, protect your business

Because of the nature of their work and expertise, lawn and turf management professionals may be the first to detect RIFA activity at an account. The pest management industry has recently seen an increase in the number of RIFA-related cases, and some of these cases have resulted in multimillion-dollar awards and

settlements. Of concern is that these cases may spread to include lawn and turf management professionals as well.

Lawn and turf professionals may be able to protect their business interests by:

- ▶ Eliminating fire ants from their general service contracts;
- ▶ Using a separate contract for fire ant service; and
- ▶ Upgrading their fire ant service protocol.

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Identifying RIFA

Although the red imported fire ant (*Solenopsis invicta*), or RIFA, is common in 12 Southern states, it is new to California and has recently been found infesting numerous residential and commercial areas in Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and to a lesser extent, San Diego counties. The spread of these ants has largely been a result of the movement of infested soil to uninfested areas.



Editor's Note: Below are excerpts from a description from the University of California's Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program.

RIFA workers vary in size (1/16- to 1/5-in. long) and are dark reddish brown. Unlike the southern fire ant (*S. xyloni*) and harvester ant (*Pogonomyrmex californicus*), RIFA can quickly produce many nests and colonize a yard.

While there are several characteristics that distinguish RIFA from other ant species, one way to recognize this pest is to observe its aggressive behavior when its nest or food source is disturbed, or from its painful bite and sting.

In areas that are not disturbed, RIFA typically make dome-shaped mounds that are about 18 in. across and about 8- to 12-in. tall. They resemble large gopher mounds or look like crumbly earth with small holes; these mounds readily distinguish RIFA colonies from other ant colonies. Nests of the native southern fire ant, for instance, are usually irregular and consist of scattered soil with multiple obscure entrances.

Unlike the other ant species mentioned, RIFA tend to build nests in open, sunlit, grassy areas that are typically irrigated. They will readily run up any object that touches their mound, whereas the other species are much less aggressive. Because RIFA often build their nests in turfgrass areas, frequently the mounds have been mowed and are nearly flat, appearing as soft, loose dirt that obscures the grass and looks like a bald spot in the turf.

In some instances, RIFA do not build mounds, but nest in places such as rotten logs, walls of buildings, or under sidewalks.

Source: www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/IPMG/PESTNOTES/pn7487.html



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continued from page 48

One of the most important reasons for having a separate fire ant service contract is so the contractor can include special language to support the fire ant service protocol and require certain key

cooperation points from the customer. While fire ants may be eliminated from the general pest service contract, contractors also need to include a disclaimer that clearly communicates the contract does not include fire ant service.

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Casting of the underground nest tunnels of a fire ant mound casted by Dr. David Williams of USDA, Gainesville, FL.

Recommendations **today**

"Recommendations for Prevention and Management of Fire Ant Infestation of Health Care Facilities" (J. Goddard et. al) was published in the *Southern Medical Journal* in 2002. The report provides information and recommendations for physicians, healthcare facility managers and pest management professionals. Because RIFA mounds may be found in the landscape, several of these recommendations are applicable to lawn and turf professionals as well. In fact, it is possible that these published recommendations will be cited by a claimant in the event of future litigation.

Some of the published recommendations for healthcare facilities include:

- ▶ Negotiate a contract with pest control service, providing monthly inspections of grounds and interior of facility, treatment

These recommended procedures serve to bolster the overall RIFA management program and, by having them included in the contract, help to ensure the necessary cooperation from the customer.

In addition, it may pay in the long run to be proactive when it comes to RIFA.

"While there is no legal duty to do so, the adoption of a fire ant awareness program may be one of the more wise things a company can do," says Cliff Slaten, founding partner of Montgomery, AL-based firm Slaten & O'Connor, which specializes in representing the pest management industry. "Having made an effort to inform the customer about the hazard of fire ants will help strengthen the professional's position in the event of a claim. Plus, it will help customers have a better understanding of the fire ant hazard so they can make a better informed purchase decision."

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as required, and emergency service within 24 hours when requested.

- ▶ Weekly inspection of grounds and facility by facility personnel.
- ▶ If ants are found within 25 ft. of the building, notify pest control service and require perimeter treatment within 24 hours, with one-week follow-up.
- ▶ If ants are found indoors, notify pest control service and require response within 24 hours, documentation of extermination of ants in rooms and inspection of facility for active ant nests. Also require daily inspection by the pest control service for one week.

Interested readers can get a copy of this publication by visiting www.medscape.com/viewarticle/438229.

— PB

In addition to offering an awareness program, lawn and turf professionals should be on the lookout for the presence of fire ant mounds when conducting their services of the exterior grounds. If any are discovered, they may inform

the account or conduct a suitable treatment as appropriate for that account. **LM**

— The author is an independent consultant. He can be reached at pbelloconsulting@earthlink.net or 770/500-0460.

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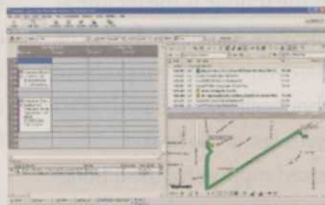


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Consider using the latest and greatest mobile phone technology as a strategic competitive differentiator.



New handheld technology

BY TYLER WHITAKER

Have you ever won a big contract while in your car? Or solved a “deal killer” problem from the airport? Being able to communicate with your team anywhere is no longer a luxury, and staying up on the latest mobile tools can give you a strategic advantage over your competitors.

iPhone 3G

The big news in the mobile industry this month is the July 11 availability of Apple’s new iPhone 3G cell phone. This phone combines several new features to rival the functionality of your laptop. The first and foremost is support for high-speed 3G data networks. With three to four times the download speed, your Web browsing and e-mail just became a whole lot faster.

Another big feature of the iPhone is the inclusion of GPS and a number of new location-based services. Need to find the closest hardware store? No problem.

For me, the best part about cell phone-based GPS is the ability to track employees out in the field.

Loopt.com has announced support for the iPhone. This free service allows you to share your location, status and photos with your fellow employees and be alerted if they are nearby. With Apple also introducing support for Microsoft Exchange, Word, Excel and PowerPoint, the company is making a strong case of business users to adopt the iPhone. And at a new price tag of \$199, the iPhone is affordable for sales reps, field service teams, and remote or home office workers.

Qik.com

One of the most exciting technology developments in the cell phone market is the ability to stream video right from your phone. Qik.com is a service that enables you broadcast video from your cell phone directly to the Internet. The software downloads to your phone and configures it to send the video in real time to Qik.com for anyone to view. You can even embed those videos into your own Web site.

What I find most intriguing about Qik.com is its speed and ease of use. Imagine field service reps showing you the problems in real time with a streaming video. No longer do you need to send a supervisor out to determine the right solution. Anyone involved in a project can view the video in real time and chat online with other viewers.

Another use is to document worksite conditions and work completed. Shooting a quick and easy video, which is then automatically stored online, can save you time and headaches if legal or billing conflicts arise later in the project. These videos can also show potential clients your company’s creative ideas, attention to detail and quality workmanship. Qik.com has also announced support for the iPhone.

As your business grows, consider using the latest and greatest mobile phone technology as a strategic competitive differentiator. Knowing where your employees are and what challenges they are facing in real time can mean the difference between good and excellent customer service.

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



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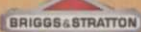
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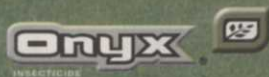
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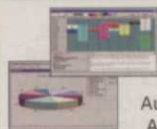
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Don't buy business — earn it

BY MARTY WHITFORD / Editor-in-Chief

Sitting in a row boat with his buddy, a man points to a yacht and says, "I've bid against that guy a thousand times, and I always come out on top."

Robert Taylor, president of Houston-based BIO Landscape and Maintenance, shared the above tale of twisted perspective with me while we were discussing the impact of record-high gas prices and how companies should and should not try to offset them. Underselling yourself and our industry is an absolute "should not" if you wish to weather today's turbulent storms.

But business consultant Bruce Wilson says many companies in our industry are doing just that with their knee-jerk reactions to mounting competitive pressures. Despite absorbing fuel charges that, on average, are 33% to 50% higher than last year — as well as a host of other surcharges and price increases on everything from ornamentals and aggregate to waste management services to fertilizer and PVC tubing for irrigation — Wilson says, "many landscape management companies actually are bidding 5% to 10% less on projects this year."

All of us need to remember that not only is it OK to make money, but a healthy profit is good for us, our employees, the industry, and yes, even our customers. If our businesses fail to consistently earn healthy profits, we will lose the resources we need to attract, train, equip and retain "A" players. If

we undersell ourselves, our people and companies will fail to reach their full potentials. If we don't net what we're worth, we'll be worth less and less to our customers.

Sure, competition is fierce and price is, and always will be, a major factor in purchasing decisions. But price isn't everything.

Previously having been self-employed for five years, I've been there. I know all about sometimes feeling a grave need to compete on price — to buy business at almost any cost. But the bottom line is that when we're "competing" on price alone (or even foremost), we're not really competing. We're just beating ourselves.

Instead, if we listen *a lot more closely* to each customer's specific needs and hand tailor the development and delivery of our products and services to meet those, we will build monumental value into our business relationships. And if we build that value, they will come — and they will pay more, most without hesitation.

Not only must we do a better job adding value into our bids, contracts and business relationships, but we also must *raise* prices — even and especially in this down economy. Do we want to ride out this storm in row boats or yachts?

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Perennials and annuals border a grass-covered pathway. Photo by: iStock International Inc.

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Reach Out

MyFolia is a social network — like Facebook or MySpace — designed for gardeners. It won't replace good market research, but it's certainly an interesting piece of the puzzle. MyFolia users can create a profile on the site, add gardens and keep a journal of their gardening progress. It can be used to track plantings and tasks, and keep a wish list of plants users would like to grow but haven't yet.

All of this could be done offline, so what's the big deal? MyFolia allows users to share all or part of their information with one another. They can post questions to the community, create their own interest groups and upload photos of their plants. The culmination of this information forms a centralized gardening database that continues to grow. The site can group users by the USDA Growing Zone they're in, the type of garden they grow or the plants they are growing. This makes it easy to see what is popular among gardeners in various growing zones.

Anyone can join, so you could have instant access to MyFolia members. Ask them questions that will help you market and install plants, start a group of your own or become a recognized expert on the site by answering other members' questions. Though still in public beta testing mode, the site presents a number of opportunities for landscapers.

While you're online, check out Blotanical (www.blotanical.com) and You Grow Girl (www.yougrowgirl.com), which, along with MyFolia, are award-winning interactive garden sites. Blotanical is a directory of gardening blogs and You Grow Girl is an online community targeted toward "a new style of gardener" with a contemporary approach.

The Internet has proven to be a great resource of information for years, of course. But as community-based "Web 2.0" technologies filter into the green industry, the Web becomes another avenue to interact with clients, potential clients and partners.

Regards,

Jamie Gooch

Managing Editor
jgooch@questex.com

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Get your business to measure up

► COMMENTARY FROM ANLA

How do you get your staff to take better care of your tools and equipment? You either talk to them about the replacement value (“You forget one more shovel on the job site and it’s coming out of your paycheck!”), or you offer an incentive for achieving a measurable goal (“If we go 30 days without scheduling any repairs on the mower, you get a \$50 bonus.”).

Look at it another way: What we measure, we value. Our industry seems to suffer from a lack of measurement. How often do your customers tell you that plants are too expensive, or that they really don’t want to pay for good soil prep? After all, if the tree dies, it’s your problem. And, how often does a general contractor come back to you and say that the budget has been cut because they ran out of money putting up the building?

Measuring Value

Our industry has long bemoaned the difficulty of increasing the perceived value of our products and services. One solution is to skip perception and go straight to measurement. ANLA is partnering with two current efforts to do just that.

The first effort is the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SSI) being spearheaded by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. The goal of this project is to define stringent standards that allow site developers to pursue a voluntary certification for their landscape, just as builders can obtain the LEED sustainable certification for buildings. In fact, the end goal is to roll the SSI standards into the LEED certification. When that happens, developers, municipalities and builders supporting the “green building” concept will receive credit for including full-scale landscaping in their plans and projects — from the very beginning of the project. In those instances where green buildings are mandated or receive special tax treatment, our industry’s products and services will benefit exponentially.

The Worth of Planted Live Goods

The second project ANLA is partnering with will directly monetize the value of the landscape. That’s right,

you will be able to place a third party-verified value on plants.

Over the past five years, ANLA and our members have worked with Horticultural Asset Management (HMI) to develop a national database of plant value, creating the ability to give a dollar value to plants and project the increase in value over time. We have now accomplished this goal.

Here’s why it matters. Several insurance companies have begun offering custom-written insurance coverage. This coverage will reimburse a landowner for the full dollar loss of plant material due to acute weather, fire and other named perils.

These policies are already being actively sold to “high-end” estate owners and is becoming available to other landowners such as golf courses and arboreta. The Golf Course Owners Association is developing an insurance program for its members based on this coverage.

ANLA has also endorsed this program, Live Asset Insurance, for insuring nursery and greenhouse crop production against acute weather events and other perils. It is currently offered in 18 Southern states, with the remaining states coming online by December 2009.

With this program, the value of plants, over time, can be measured. And, regardless of whether your customers buy insurance for their landscape (which they can — Live Asset Insurance is available to homeowners and commercial properties), its value can now be measured and begin to gain the status of other home upgrades like their kitchen and bathroom, or a work of art.

Soon, the landscape will be on equal footing with the building or home. And that is a very good thing for your business and our industry.

Bardzik is ANLA’s director of marketing and industry relations. For more information, visit www.anla.com.





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Green industry partnering = great industry success

> COMMENTARY FROM OFA

You have heard me (and others) use the term “green industry.” Why do we choose such a broad term instead of the standards like floriculture, horticulture or landscaping?

Perhaps when you learn that the American Nursery and Landscape Association (ANLA) is holding its annual meeting in conjunction with the OFA Short Course this month, the concept will make a little more sense. Both organizations share a commitment to retail and landscape consumer plant sales. The co-located meetings are a conscious effort to inspire greater success for the entire industry — a combined green industry attitude instead of separate nursery, greenhouse, garden center and landscaping communities.

A Holistic View

For many years now, the lines between the “disciplines” of our industry have been blurring. Remember when nursery growers only produced trees, garden centers only sold plants and landscapers only offered planting services? Who can say that anymore?

A holistic view focuses less on our differences and more on how we can work together to increase the proverbial pie for everyone.

Thanks to specialized techniques and inputs, as well as increased motivation from shrinking margins, industry professionals have added products and services their parents never considered. Greenhouse growers are now producing woody plants indoors; garden centers are starting landscaping divisions; and nursery growers have branched out into cut flowers, perennials and anything else that will make a profit.

The key that solidified the green-industry concept for me was seeing “cross-pollination” among traditionally separate lines. When greenhouse and nursery businesses started to realize they actually share a common goal — increasing

consumer plant sales — my concept of the industry started to blur. Maybe the best example from my own back yard is when greenhouse growers started investing in better plant tags to increase garden center sales. Convincing customers to buy plants may seem like a retailer’s job, but growers realized the more plants sold at the garden center, the more plants they could grow and ship. It’s a classic win-win.

With this kind of convergence becoming more commonplace, many of us have started to view all our segments as a factor in a united green industry — a holistic view that focuses less on our differences and more on how we can work together to increase the proverbial pie for everyone.

Joining Forces

Both OFA and ANLA have members whose business activities include landscape design/build, garden retailing, and growing under glass, in containers and in the field. In addition to supporting a more cohesive industry, holding the conferences together just made sense. “Both of our memberships are selling products through the same supply chain to the same consumers,” said Bobby Barnitz, OFA’s president, “which makes this a natural partnership.”

Because the two conferences overlap, event opportunities are expanded for both memberships. All attendees will be able to participate in co-sponsored educational sessions, shop at the all-industry trade show, and network with key business leaders from across multiple disciplines.

“OFA has long supported ANLA’s government advocacy efforts, which address issues like labor and immigration reform that affect both our memberships,” added Dwight Hughes, ANLA’s president. “We welcome this opportunity to work together and expose our leadership to the impressive education and trade show OFA puts on each year.”

The 2008 OFA Short Course, held July 12-15 in Columbus, OH, will attract approximately 10,000 visitors from around the world. Green industry leaders will take advantage of more than 130 educational sessions, experience the 1,500-booth trade show, and experiment with a new way to define their industry.

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



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Take 8 steps toward building better brand loyalty

Nearly six out of 10 new businesses fail before the fifth year. The odds of achieving long-term success are already stacked against you before you can even say, "Open for business." Why do some succeed and others fail? How do the survivors identify, attract and keep good customers?

The key to success is marketing strategies that get new customers in your door and keep them coming back. The following marketing mandates will help your business not only survive, but thrive.

1 Identify your customers. Who are your most valuable customers? Understanding your products and services is important, but understanding what your customers value and why are equally important. Don't assume you already know. Ask them.

2 Don't wait for your customers to tell you what they're looking for — ask them. Imagine that you're sitting with your five most significant customers. What questions would you ask them? Compile a list of key questions to help you define your customers and their needs. Ask them individually or through surveys or focus groups.

3 Who's your competition? Identify several companies that also prove similar products or services. Discover their benefits to current and potential customers

and compare your message, value proposition and target audience. Now ask yourself, "What sets me apart?"

4 Build professional partnerships. Seek out businesses that target similar companies, but not ones that directly compete against you. Look to build partnerships with companies whose strengths and weaknesses complement and balance yours. A strong marketing alliance reduces risk, shares costs and improves time to market.

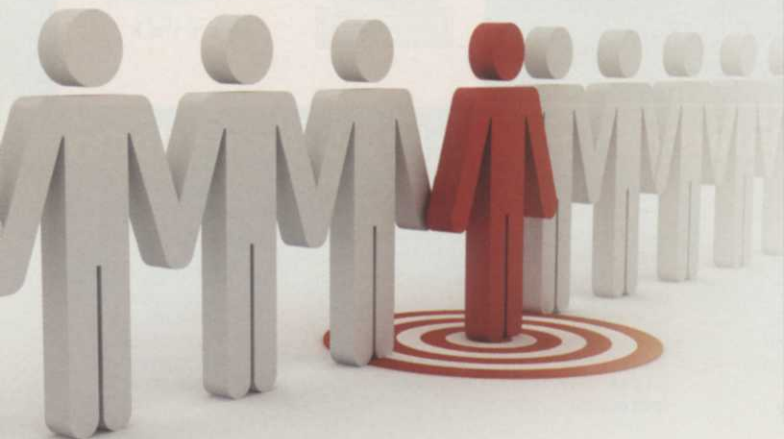
5 Is your perception realistic? Discover how your customers and prospects really perceive you. Branding is the impression you present to every customer — and it involves more than a nice logo and catchy tagline. Be sure to include your message in everything you do. Ask your customers, "What's the first thought that comes to your mind when you think of our company?"

6 Prepare a strong elevator pitch. Next time you find yourself in a room with key prospects, help whet their appetites with a succinct, well-thought-out description of your business and goals.

7 Align marketing programs to meet sales goals. Sales and marketing have to work together to support growth. Develop a marketing program based on how many sales leads you need to generate and how long that process will take. Be proactive in planning your marketing strategy to generate critical, bottom-line sales results.

8 Harness your passion as a strategy. Even the most successful companies have their share of ups and downs. How will you use your passion to get through the rough patches? List 10 reasons why you feel passionately about your business. Post the list where you'll see it every day to remind yourself why you're going to work. These 10 reasons will keep you motivated on the good days as well as the bad ones!

Gilhooley, MA, is president of Gilhooley Consulting Inc., Loveland, OH. For more information, visit www.gilhooleyconsulting.com or e-mail her at mjg@gilhooleyconsulting.com.



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How do I identify winter disease damage?

Q Some of the lawns I manage get a disease in the winter, which I suspect is snow mold. How do I identify and control the disease? — PA

While there are many winter diseases, gray snow mold (typhula blight) and pink snow mold (fusarium patch) are particularly common throughout the U.S. They can occur side-by-side in the same lawn. Management may be similar; however, there may be different fungicidal options. Therefore, it is useful to distinguish the two snow molds.

Gray snow mold caused by the *Typhula ishikariensis* (contains tiny black sclerotia) and *T. incarnata* (small red sclerotia) pathogens typically damage turfgrass blades only. It survives in thatch as sclerotia during the summer months. In late fall sclerotia produces mycelium, which in turn produces spores, thus spreading the mold. Mycelium and/or sclerotia infect turfgrass when snow accumulates on unfrozen grounds and grass, and serves as a good food for the fungal agents.

Pink snow mold caused by *Microdochium nivale* may initially look white, and at maturity produces a pinkish-colored mycelium. Unlike gray snow mold, it does not produce sclerotia for survival. Rather, the mycelium becomes dormant during unfavorable periods. Cool, wet weather promotes rapid spread, typically occurring from fall to spring. Dry, warm weather causes the fungus to revert to its dormant stage. Pink snow mold can infect turfgrass blades, tillers, and crowns — resulting in distinctive patches that may require overseeding.

Affected lawns generally recover in the spring. Cultural management options include mowing at 1.5 inch or less into late fall until the turf stops growing. Avoid snow compaction, as this helps the mold fungi to establish and remain active. Another important cultural management procedure is soon after the snow melts in the spring, rake matted grass. This encourages new growth development. Because thatch can increase the potential for many diseases including snow molds, consider de-thatching, particularly if diseases persist.

Generally speaking, fungicide applications are not needed unless there is a history of extensive snow mold. Otherwise, the cultural practices discussed above should be sufficient.

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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> RESEARCH

Michigan Completes Survey for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

The Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) concluded its intensive survey to detect Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), an exotic and invasive forest pest in the northern Lower Peninsula. MDA inspected more than 20,000 hemlock trees growing on 4,300 acres in the Petoskey area looking for signs of HWA.

"Despite regulatory and inspection efforts, the sheer volume of plants and plant products commercially shipped into our state inevitably results in the movement of plant pests," says Don Koivisto, MDA director. "Strong early detection programs and aggressive responses are required to ensure the viability of Michigan's forest and agricultural ecosystems."

The survey was part of a joint effort by MDA, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and Michigan State University, after HWA was confirmed at five locations in Harbor Springs in 2006 and 2007. Removal and destruction of infested hemlock, multiple insecticide treatments of adjacent trees, and additional detection efforts preceded the surveys completed this month.

DON'T MISS!

> SAVE THE DATE

The **OFA Short Course and 2008 ANLA Annual Meeting** kicks off July 11 in Columbus, OH.

The **2008 ONLA Landscape Awards Program** project entry forms and rules and regulations are complete. The entry deadline is Sept. 5, 2008 at 5 p.m.

The **Indiana Nursery and Landscape Association** is celebrating its 75th anniversary July 31 to Aug. 1, 2008.

> YOUTH OUTREACH

Art of Green Spaces Winners Announced

Why do green spaces matter? Patricia Boh, Nicholas Hobbs and Evie Nyerges answered that question through poetry, painting and mixed-media artwork, and won their age categories in Project EverGreen's inaugural Art of Green Spaces Competition. Project EverGreen partnered with the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Western Reserve and the Western Reserve Academy to bring attention to how important green spaces — specifically, lawns, landscapes, gardens, parks and sports fields — are to Akron, Ohio's environment, economy and quality of life.

Project EverGreen, a national non-profit public service organization, presented each winner with \$100 and an award commemorating his or her achievement.

Project EverGreen designated Akron as its first Evergreen Zone city in 2008 and has

developed a number of projects to inform consumers about the benefits of managed green spaces.

From left, Nicholas Hobbs and Evie Nyerges with Project EverGreen's Jacquie Mazziotta.



> EDUCATION

MSU Graduation Ceremony Held in China for Turfgrass Students

EAST LANSING, MI — For 24 Michigan State University students who participated in a U.S.-China collaborative turfgrass management program, commencement was all about location: Beijing. The Chinese students were the first graduates in an MSU college-level commencement ceremony at an international location.

The ceremony at the Beijing Forestry University Library Auditorium included the conferral of degrees by Jeffrey Armstrong, dean of the College of Agriculture and

Natural Resources. The students are part of the American-Sino Turfgrass Education Program in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.



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ColorBlaze™ Royal Glissade™ is one of six Coleus varieties chosen for Proven Winners® new ColorBlaze™ Collection based on vibrant color and exceptional performance in all regions. This plant has light green leaves with dusty rose flecks, and will reach a height of 24-30" and will spread to 12-16". It is a late flowering variety that will hold its form throughout the season. Great in containers or in the landscape. Full sun to part shade.



Fiber Optic Grass is one of five distinctive plants chosen for the Proven Winners® Graceful™ Grasses Collection based on color, texture and performance. This plant offers a mounded habit, with a height of 8-12" and a 10-12" spread. It is a bright green grass with small flowers at the end of each stem. It does great in water as a marginal plant or in moist conditions. Full sun to part shade.



Lo & Behold™ Blue Chip is the first miniature butterfly bush! Blue Chip is just 24-30" tall, and blooms all summer and into fall—without deadheading! Fragrant Blue Chip is an adaptable, deer resistant plant with plenty of retail appeal. It's great in landscapes, too. Available exclusively from Proven Winners® ColorChoice® Gold Key growers.

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PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

- Extensive outdoor amenities: pool, kitchen, lounge area, etc.
- A rose garden
- Cool color palette

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

- Blending very different styles together
- Extensive septic and drainage lines
- Local regulations limiting the amount of impervious materials

BY BRIDGET WHITE

Fueled by a nearly year-round growing season and a long tradition of gardening, the South is becoming one of the hottest areas to find landscaping trends, with young designers like Julie Liles leading the way.

Despite being plagued by a severe multi-year drought, the Southeast has seen the spread of multimillion-dollar homes continue to increase — along with correspondingly large landscapes. Through innovative products, a balanced use of color and a distinct design aesthetic, Liles has found a way to tap into this high-end market and continue to grow her business in a down economy.

A Balancing Act

The Witek residence was a challenge from the very beginning of the project, as the husband favored formal elements and the wife leaned toward an English country look. Aside from the logistics of accommodating a full request list (a pool long enough to swim laps, an entertainment area including an outdoor kitchen, a child- and dog-friendly design, and a specified color palette), Liles had to find a way to balance very different customer requests.

“We started out with the front being a little bit more formal and the back being more informal, with perennial beds and roses and things like that,” explains Liles. “What I ended up doing was marrying those two together more by using common

elements such as low hedges or the cool color palette that you find in both styles.

"I actually use a lot of the formal mixed with the informal," Liles adds. "For example, using an evergreen with a defined shape as a backdrop and mixes of seasonal color in the forefront."

By using a balanced plant palette that blends formal with informal, green with color, Liles avoids what she calls the "Disney World effect" — so much activity that the eye is overwhelmed. Liles consistently uses evergreens in at least half of her designs, adding punches of color to draw the eye to a focal point and where it will have the most impact to justify the added maintenance.

The Dirty Details

Clients don't like to have to worry about the details of their landscape: how things work, the complexity of fitting disparate requests into a cohesive design, or even the ever-increasing local ordinances governing landscaping. But these dirty details of everyday life are a major consideration for those on the other side of the shovel, so to speak.

In the Southeast, where water has been a precious commodity for the past few years, new ordinances concerning water usage and environmentally friendly practices are being passed with increasing regularity. In Liles' own area of Raleigh, NC, a focus has been placed on controlling the

1 Despite a drought, high-end construction continues throughout the Southeast for those who can navigate water restrictions.

2 With strict local restrictions on the impervious surfaces allowed, Liles created stepping-stone paths whenever possible.

3 The pool shape was dictated by the clients' request for a large pool balanced by sewer and irrigation line layouts.

4 Liles added secluded seating areas and minor focal points at strategic places throughout the design.



amount of impervious materials included in new construction and landscapes. The effort is meant to control runoff. Liles says that in most cases, she can fairly easily comply with the laws using careful planning and alternative materials.

"Either you have to go to the homeowner and say 'This is the magic number we have to stay at or under,' or we have to use a material that will allow the water to seep through," she explains. "Most often we use what is called 'pervious pavers' that have holes in them, or maybe a design that incorporates a little notch in each paver so that when they are all laid together, there are actually holes throughout the entire system."

Another alternative that is rapidly becoming popular with high-end landscapes is a free-rain system. Using a series of pipes and catch basins, runoff is collected from all impervious surfaces, including the roof, and funneled to an underground storage tank. This "gray water" can then be used for applications such as irrigation — not only beating the requirements limiting impervious materials, but also allowing practically unlimited irrigation during drought-induced water restrictions.

While Liles' role in the free-rain system is only that of an intermediary, she believes her knowledge of innovative products cement client relationships and lead to the referrals that have become the lifeblood of her business.

Bridget White is a freelance writer based in New Orleans. Her specialties include horticultural writing, marketing and communications. She can be reached at white_bridget@bellsouth.net.

5 By joining the outdoor kitchen and pool area, Liles was able to create a dynamic entertainment area with double impact in a smaller space.

6 Color is nurtured throughout the growing season with the help of a "free rain" system that collects and stores runoff for irrigation.





8



9

SELECTED PLANT LIST

Calibrachoa Superbells
Daylilies
Dragonwing Begonia
Dwarf Butterfly Bush
Geraniums Maverick
Lavender
Leucantherum Becky Daisy
Roses: Climbing and Knock-Out
Russian Sage
Verbena
Wave Petunias
Wisteria
Yarrow

PROJECT PRINCIPALS

> **Landscape Company:**
Carlson Design Inc.
> **Designer:** Julie Liles
> **Staff Required:**
Approximately eight laborers for several months
> **Project Budget:**
\$175,000

7 White lounge chairs around the pool added a blank background for the landscape instead of fighting against it.

8 Liles' biggest challenge on this project was combining the disparate tastes of the homeowners. Her final design incorporated elements of both formal and English Country to satisfy both clients.

9 By using color at focal points such as doors and garden rooms, Liles controls what she calls the "Disney World Effect" of overwhelming the eye.

A LOOK Ahead

LEARN WHAT SOME OF THE TOP HORTICULTURISTS SEE AS THE HOTTEST PLANT TRENDS FOR 2009. BY CATHERINE EVANS

With the wild-weathered spring behind us, it's time to look to the future. While this year's spring rush is still fresh in your mind, ask yourself what you can do next year to make your customers happy and increase profits. One of the best ways to do that is to keep up with plant trends and identify ways to incorporate them into your customers' landscapes.

Yes, it's only July and selecting your plant palette for 2009 is a little far off, but with the weather changing so quickly these days and the demand for beautiful landscapes coming in earlier and earlier; being prepared is a must.

This summer you can go out and get a good idea of what types of landscapes

people developed for their homes this year. You can learn what can be improved and what you can do to spice it up for next year. This is the time to be planning out all of the amazing designs your clients are going to be looking for so that you can give them that gardening magazine look they always wanted.

Livescapes talked to industry experts to get their thoughts were on the subject. Covering the spectrum from trees to ornamentals to annuals, our experts tapped into their knowledge of trends at home, abroad and from outside the industry to put you ahead of the game ... and you might be surprised by how much overlap you'll see across different categories.

Catherine Evans is a Chicago-based freelance horticultural writer. She can be reached at cateevans@yahoo.com.





ANNUALVIEW



> BIG, BOLD FLOWERS: The dainty little flowers that make gardens look like a Monet painting have been replaced with larger flower sizes for color and greater visual impact. Think: Gazania, osteospermum, arctotis, geraniums, New Guinea impatiens and hibiscus.

> BRIGHT, VIBRANT COLORS: The days of muted pastels have also moved on, following a trend in the fashion industry toward hot colors. Think: Geraniums, New Guinea impatiens, hibiscus, gazania, vinca (upright, not vine), lantana, verbena, osteospermum (the new colors are really making an impact), petunia, nemesia, etc.

> ARCHITECTURAL PLANTS, POTS AND ACCESSORIES:

A strong emphasis will be placed on the use of high-end containers and combination planters. Think: cacti, succulents, anigozanthos, orchids, bromeliads (not only in outside settings, but also in the home), banana, cana and other tropical, large-leaf type plants (alocasia, calocacia, etc.).

> FOLIAGE: Some of the most popular foliage plants are mentioned above, but also think: coleus, ipomea and alternanthera.

> VERTICAL GARDENING: Use of space is critical in the small gardens typical of many homes these days. Use window boxes and high-end, tall pots to move plants up to more visible levels and bring additional impact in the garden. Lots of trailing things to help here like ivy geraniums and more.

> OUTDOOR ROOMS: The garden is becoming even more of an extension of the house to be used, decorated and incorporated into everyday life.

— Trends compiled by Jack Williams, International Product Manager, Ecke Ranch.



PERENNIALVIEW

LIKE MANY segments of the floriculture industry, the rate of growth of perennial sales has declined somewhat over the past couple of years. However, this decline is significantly less than other market categories. With the longevity and added value of perennials, there is certainly continued interest to supply flowering perennials.

Succulents and cacti continue to peak the interest of consumers. Another area of opportunity is the production of perennials for green roofs, which offer aesthetic, environmental and financial benefits. Perennials with low water requirements and drought tolerance will also continue to be in high demand.

High quality, blooming plants combined with mass displays of color and accents of garden furniture and hard goods will focus customers on backyard lifestyles and are keys to successful perennial marketing programs.



Be creative with presentation, displays and mixed containers [for your clients]. Perennials are forever!

— Trends compiled by Paul Pilon, horticultural consultant and owner, Perennial Solutions Consulting.





TREES & SHRUBS VIEW

ONE THING we have worked with for quite a while — and it's continuing to grow — is gardening for wildlife. Not just birds, bees and butterflies but bats and frogs — developing a habitat for all those guys.

One of the other important things is drought tolerance: plants that will handle arid as well as seaside conditions. And certainly many locations throughout the United States require fire-tolerant plantings (see related article on page 24).

Fragrance is still a huge deal in woody ornamentals where we want the impact of [a pleasant smell] to come through [in the garden].

Edibles that people can incorporate into their regular garden are important because so many of these plants have a multi-season uses, which is part of what consumers want in a garden. Blueberries have great fall color and make a great back drop for other plants in the summer, and of course you get berries in the spring. Citrus can not only work in warmer areas but in containers where they can be moved in and

out. So edibles of any kind for woody ornamentals are nice to include; they really round out a garden because they offer so much more.

Sculptured/structural-type plants inside or outside of containers help to define the landscape as an outdoor room. And we are seeing more of this sort of thing where plants are considered art and compliment the outdoor room phenomenon. A structural component can be used in a smaller garden or a very large garden whether it's a patio or a condo entry way.

Dwarf plants work well because of their ease of maintenance and plant habit. Put a dwarf plant where it is going to make an impact at the



door or define an area or a walkway. Dwarf conifers often get overlooked because they do not flower, but when they turn a new color in the spring they have that soft texture. Plus the coloring is very electric with the blues, greens, yellows and oranges of the different conifers, and that can add to the spring color while it forms a really great plant background.

— Trends compiled by Ruth Estrada, New Plants Coach, Monrovia Growers. 🌿



Fight FIRE with Landscaping

BY JANET AIRD

HOW TO HELP PROTECT YOUR CLIENTS' PROPERTIES FROM WILDFIRES.

Landscapers can play a vital role in protecting their clients' homes from wildfires. When you design and maintain a fire-safe landscape — or firescape — you interrupt the paths that wildfires would take and limit the amount of fuel available to them. You also give firefighters space to fight the fires.

Most homeowners don't want a completely fireproof landscape, though, says Owen Dell, a Santa Barbara, CA-based landscape architect who has been firescaping for 20 years.

"The ideal fire-safe landscape is concrete," Dell says. "Once you leave that ideal, you start adding fuel." The key to a beautiful and fire-resistant landscape is balance, he says. "Put in plants that are as reluctant to burn as possible and keep the property clean."

Kinds of Fire

Wildfires spread in predictable ways. Crown fires leap from treetop to treetop and can move through an area in about 30 seconds, says Michele Steinberg, Firewise Communities support manager for the National Fire Protection Associa-

tion. Their flames can ignite any flammable material in their path — including homes. If the flames are close enough, structures can ignite from the heat alone.

Burning embers called firebrands break away from crown fires and are also very dangerous, says Douglas

Kent, a landscape architect who has been firescaping since 1995.

"Firebrands are the things to defend against," Kent says. "They can blow a mile ahead of the fire." When they land on a flammable roof, they can grow until they erupt into flames.

Ground fires burn through grasses and groundcovers. Although they travel more slowly than crown fires and firebrands, they spread easily and can climb up trees.



This diagram shows thinned trees in the four firescaping zones.

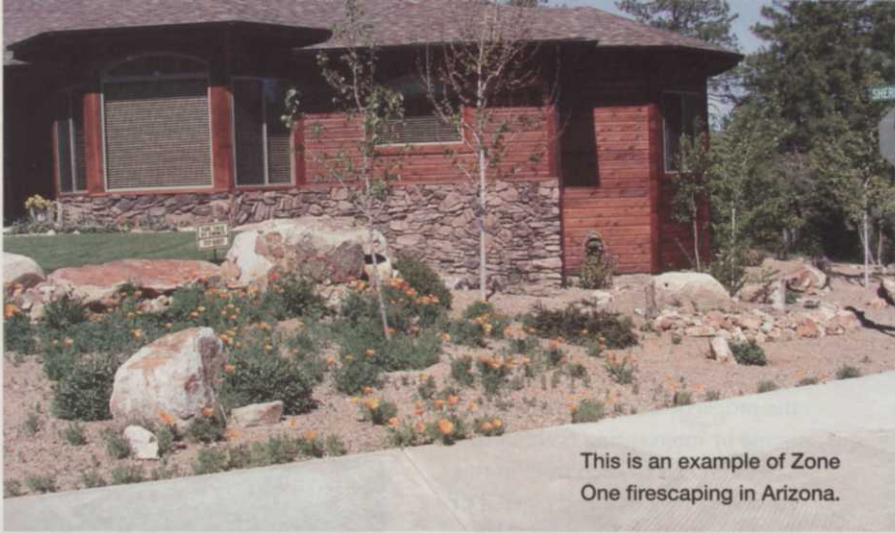
Design

Firescaping consists of up to four zones of defensible space around a home. They're progressively less fire-resistant as they radiate out.

Placing the right plants in the right places is critical to firescape design. If they aren't in the right place, they won't do well and you'll end up with dead, flammable material, Dell says. Choose plants that suit your climate and the location in which you plant them. Put them in groups with the same requirements for light, soil type and water.

Although the plantings in each zone are different, the principles are the same. To stop ground fires from spreading, group plants in small beds or "islands." Separate them with wide paths of noncombustible materials such as stepping stones, compacted soil, gravel or decomposed granite.

Group plants of similar heights together to avoid "laddering," which



This is an example of Zone One firescaping in Arizona.



Firescaping design features include low-growing, well irrigated plants, a wide path and a low wall to reduce slope near the house.



allows fires to leap from groundcovers to shrubs up to the crowns of trees. Because larger vegetation produces larger flames, space taller plants farther apart than shorter ones.

Plant trees so their canopies will be 10 ft. apart at maturity, and away from power lines. Some experts recommend pruning trees to 10 to 20 ft. above the ground to avoid laddering, but this harms the trees, Kent says: "The lower branches cause the trunk to gain in girth. When you 'limb up,' all the plant's energy goes up, and it's easy for the tree to topple in the wind." Instead, keep all flammable material, including vegetation, away from the tree.

In the Zones

Firescaping is designed in zones to provide fires with less fuel as they approach homes.

> **Zone One** is within 30 ft. of the home. "If a home has a 30-ft. clearance, it has a 70% chance of survival," Kent says.

Vegetation in this zone should be able to withstand firebrands and heat as high as 1,100°F. Most of the vegetation, says Steinberg, "should be small plants that will wilt with fire, not burn." Use plants that have big, glossy, fleshy, waxy leaves, such as succulents, calla lilies, privets and camellias, or a high salt content, like saltbush.

Don't plant any vegetation under eaves, where flames and heat can collect, Steinberg adds, or near vents, where heat can radiate into the house. Experts usually recommend planting only small trees in Zone One and keeping the crowns at least 10 to 15 ft. from rooflines, but both Dell and Kent disagree.

"Trees have inherent qualities we

maintenance

wouldn't want to be without," Dell says, noting that they create beneficial microclimates, reduce the need for summer cooling and add beauty to the property. They also may protect a home by intercepting firebrands.

It's crucial to keep trees in this zone well-irrigated and cleared of dead vegetation, however. Also, don't plant grasses or plants with fine leaves and hairs, low moisture and the tendency to accumulate dead leaves and stems. Other plants, such as pines, conifers and chaparral contain volatile oils. "They literally add fuel to the fire," Dell says.

Irrigate to keep plants moist, but don't overwater, which ultimately adds to the fuel load. Drip irrigation is best where plants are widely spaced. Kent recommends using soaker hoses on trees and shrubs, and overhead irrigation on groundcovers. Keep flammable materials such as propane tanks and firewood out of this zone.

> **Zone Two** is between 30 and at least 50 ft. from the home. On



A typical Zone One firescape consists of mostly low-growing shrubs and wide paths.

slopes, add 10 ft. to this zone for every 10-degree change in slope.

This "greenbelt" should be relatively open, to stop a ground fire and allow accessibility in case of fire. Plant mostly drought-tolerant groundcovers and succulents, and some shrubs and trees in widely spaced groups. Use wide paths and drip irrigation.

> **Zone Three** lies between 50 and at least 100 ft. from the home.

This zone slows fires and stops grasses and seeds from spreading into Zone Two. Use larger native trees and shrubs here. Keep them widely spaced, thinned out and interspersed with lower plantings. Don't irrigate plants once they're established.

> **Zone Four**, which is more than 100 ft. from the home, meets wildlands. Use native vegetation that has been thinned to reduce the severity of fires. Do not irrigate.

Slopes

Slopes significantly affect the size of wildfires' flames, Kent says. "For every 10% increase in the slope, the flame length doubles. Groundcovers produce a 4-ft. flame on flat ground, an 8-ft. flame on a 10% slope and up to a 20-ft. flame on a 30% slope. This can get into any tree. Flame lengths can be 50 ft. on a hill."

If the property is on a slope, build retaining walls to reduce its steepness, he says. Plant groundcovers to stop erosion. When the slope is far enough from structures, native plants are especially useful, both for slope

stability and wildlife habitat. Drip irrigation is usually best because it causes less runoff and erosion.

Structures and Hardscape

If you're building structures such as sheds, fences, walls, patios, trellises and gazebos, use construction methods and materials that resist combustion, including concrete, stone, brick, steel and tile. Design driveways wide enough to provide easy access for fire engines.

Maintenance

Maintenance is critical in firescaping. Keep the property clear of all flammable material, including debris, invasive plants and weak, dead and diseased plants and branches. Thin overgrown vegetation. Mow grasses to about 3 inches high. Cover wood piles.

Keep plants healthy. "The health of the plant is paramount," Kent says. "Plants that are water-stressed, pest-infested or too old are more likely to catch fire."

Prune dry material from woody perennials and shrubs. Prune trees to reduce twiggy growth, maintain the separation between tree canopies and keep branches from overhanging the roof. Do not top trees, which causes excessive, weak growth and adds to the fuel load.

"Nothing will make a property fireproof," Dell says. "Everything will burn. But there's a lot of evidence that firescaping really works." 🌿

FIRESCAPING RESOURCES

> Owen Dell, County Landscape and Design

www.owendell.com

> Douglas Kent and Associates

www.anfractus.com

> *Firescaping: Creating Fire-resistant Landscapes, Gardens and Properties in California's Diverse Environments*, Douglas Kent, Wilderness Press

www.wildernesspress.com

> Firewise Plant Lists (by state)

www.firewise.org/usa/fw_plantlists.htm

> Firesafe Council

www.firesafecouncil.org/education/firesafegardens.cfm

> East Bay Municipal Utility District

www.ebmud.com/conserving_&_recycling/conservation_publications/firescape_booklet.pdf

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DRIP is Hip

BY KEN KRIZNER

The state of Colorado annually receives an average of 14 to 15 inches of natural precipitation, and most of that is in the form of snow in the spring. Such a small amount of precipitation forces landscape contractors to be as efficient as possible when it comes to irrigation.

The need for efficiency is why the overwhelming majority of irrigation projects in Colorado are drip irrigation.

"Colorado has some unique challenges," says Matt Edmundson, vice president of marketing and finance, and co-owner of Arbor Valley Nursery in Brighton, CO. "There is some form of drip irrigation in 95% of the irrigation jobs where there is any tree or shrub planting included."

While drip irrigation's market acceptance began in areas where water conservation has been a major issue, such as Southern California and the Southwest U.S., more recently the market has grown, says James Podein, marketing manager of the Landscape Drip Division for Azusa, CA-based Rain Bird Corp. The Southeast, Northeast and Northwest regions of the country are currently showing the strongest growth in drip irrigation.

"In these regions, the knowledge and expertise with drip irrigation is behind but it is growing," Podein says. "Some contractors understand that drip irrigation is a growing trend and are becoming more knowledgeable."

He adds that drip is becoming an accepted form of

THE POPULARITY OF DRIP IRRIGATION GROWS IN COLOR AND ORNAMENTALS USES.

irrigation in such applications as plant and flower beds, bushes and ground cover.

Installation and Maintenance

Drip irrigation is a system where the water runs through pipes or tubes to a small device, called an emitter, which dispenses water onto the soil surface at a low rate. The water is almost immediately absorbed into the soil.

Because water sits 1 to 2 inches below the soil surface there isn't as much evaporation while it soaks in, compared with an overhead sprinkler system. In overhead systems, a percentage of that water vaporizes while it is airborne and additional droplets are blown away by the wind.

Once the water is in the soil, capillary action will move it sideways so it will wet an area usually about 24 to 36 inches in diameter around the emitter.

Drip irrigation is a more targeted system, applying water in proximity to the plant's root zone.

While a good sprinkler system is about 75% to 85% efficient, a correctly installed drip system typically exceeds a 90% efficiency rate, meaning there is a 5% to 15% sav-

ings in water usage, says Jess Stryker of Ventura, CA, who has written a tutorial on drip irrigation (irrigationtutorial.com).

Like any irrigation system, landscape contractors can take a drip system, install it incorrectly and it will perform poorly.

"Some people think you can just throw it together and have a great system operating efficiently," says Ed Martin, associate director of programs and irrigation specialist at the University of Arizona. "If the emitter isn't just right, it could put out too much or too little water. The margin for error is much less."

In a drip irrigation system, tubing distributes water from the source to various parts of the landscape. The drippers are small emitters installed on the tubing, and they deliver water to each plant.

Tubing is laid out across the yard to connect a landscape. One length of tubing, known as a circuit, can serve many plants.

One common mistake in installing a drip irrigation system is placing emitters too close together, Stryker says.



They should be kept at least 12 inches apart in sandy soil and between 18 and 24 inches apart in clay soil.

On larger plants, multiple emitters are recommended. A large tree, for example, might need up to six emitters spaced 24 inches apart around the drip line.

Components of a drip irrigation system are small — the tubing, for example, can be one-quarter inch in diameter — meaning they could break easily.

It is also easy to install a drip irrigation system and forget about it, which could be a problem. As plants grow, the amount of water applied needs to be adjusted to ensure they are getting the proper amount. And as the seasons change, the amount of water applied must also

be altered so plants aren't getting as much in the winter as they do in the summer.

It's also important to know the type of water going through the system. Since drip irrigation is a low-pressure system, silt can settle in the tubes and impede its efficiency. Water high in calcium or bicarbonates can also clog the tubes.

"Small tubes are by far the biggest maintenance headache of a drip system," Stryker says. "It is a good idea to flush out the tubes once a year."

Benefits to the Environment

High-value plants that are prone to breed fungus if they receive too much water would benefit from a drip irrigation system, Arbor Valley's Edmundson says.

There is also the advantage of being able to inject fertilizer into a drip irrigation system and deliver it directly to the plant's roots zone.

"You're putting the fertilizer right where you need it instead of spreading it over an entire area," Martin says. "You can reduce the amount of fertilizer in the environment."


Each plant, tree or shrub has unique requirements, and the ability to create a high-value landscape that is a mix of different items, each having different water requirements, is an important part of the business.

Drip irrigation can meet varying watering requirements because multiple tubes can be hooked to different valves.

"You can give each plant the exact amount of water each needs," Stryker says.

With a growing focus on water conservation, drip is becoming a popular method of irrigation. With the correct design and installation, a drip system can provide significant water savings when it is used in the right applications. There are also savings in energy costs, as well, since a drip irrigation system is low pressure. Drip systems use 12 to 15 lbs. per square inch of pressure, compared with 30 to 40 lbs. per square inch for a sprinkler system.

Edmundson says water conservation will continue to grow as an issue nationwide. At the same time, contractors will still have high-value landscape projects to produce and maintain.

"People are going to have to look at the most efficient way possible to maintain their landscape investment," he points out. "Drip irrigation is definitely a solid investment." 



THE SMALL tubes and emitters of a drip irrigation system can clog and break, but the extra maintenance of a drip system is offset by up to a 15% savings in water usage.

Greener than

MOSS IS BECOMING A LOW-MAINTENANCE, ECO-FRIENDLY TREND IN LANDSCAPE DESIGN.

BY HEATHER PITTINGER,
CONTRIBUTOR

Have you ever taken a blender to an installation? Perhaps the appliance is put to good use (with some margarita mix) after the job is finished, but chances are you don't have it on your standard equipment checklist.

More's the pity, because an application slurry literally mixed in a blender can yield a gorgeous swath of moss on rocks, outdoor furniture, sculptures or just about anywhere else you slather it.

"The slurry gives decent results, but the transplant method for moss yields even better retention rates," says Heidi Masucci, operations

manager for Moss Acres. "Using our water-retention gel, Hortasorb, also helps the transplant take hold and keeps it in place."

Moss Acres is a direct result of actions taken by now-retired horticultural professor Dave Benner. As a child, Benner was given hedge-trimming duty, a task he detested and swore he would never do as an adult. Benner made good on his no-yard-work vow years later when he purchased 2.5 wooded acres in New Hope, PA, part of the Pocono Mountain region, in the early 1960s. He decided to replace his grass with moss to simplify things.

"He read up on the research available at the time, and decided the best approach was to lower the pH level in the firm, compacted soil," explains Masucci. "He cleared the grass and put down a layer of sulfur."

The first year bombed. But Benner didn't give up. His patience was rewarded in year two, with an even, "green sheen" of moss present across his property.

Over the next 30 years, Benner perfected the no-maintenance process: In the fall, he puts netting down to catch leaves that settled onto the moss. He rolls up the leave-filled netting into compost, which fertilizes the moss the following season.

His family grew up and left home, but son Al saw the business potential beyond the decreased yard work. About 10 years ago, Al convinced his father to start Moss Acres as a moss supplier and product distributor. Dave is currently chairman and Al is president of the privately owned company, which is headquartered in northeastern Pennsylvania.

In addition, the elder Benner

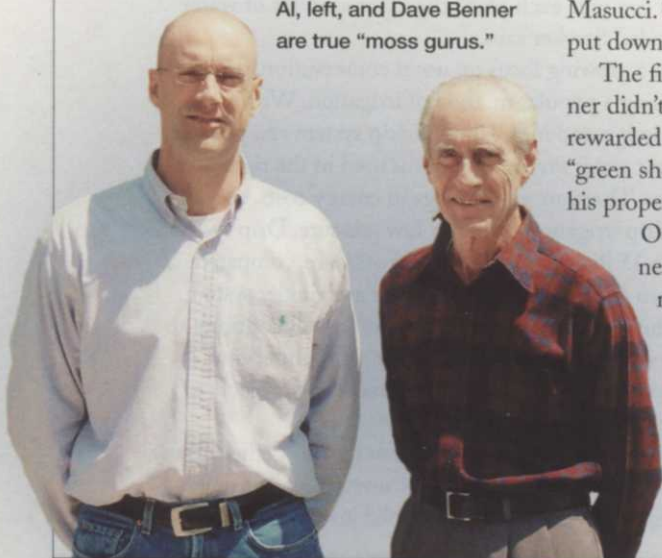
GET TO KNOW MOSS

Four popular moss species include:

1. Fern Moss (*Thuidium*): Because of its low-profile growth habit, fern moss makes an excellent alternative ground-cover for shaded areas or pathways where it is difficult to grow grass. Its neatly tailored, medium-green look can accentuate other, smaller woodland shade gardening plants and ferns that grass would obscure. It also offers a high transplant rate.

2. Rock Cap Moss (*Dicranum*): Like fern moss, rock cap moss can be used to add color and interest to the tops of rocks, boulders or walls, or as a complement to water garden ponds. It often is used to cover large areas of exposed soil in shady areas, offering easy transplant and a dense, medium- to dark-green texture.

Al, left, and Dave Benner are true "moss gurus."





Moss is particularly popular in Japanese garden design.

3. Hair Cap Moss (*Polytrichum*): Sporting a brilliant pine green, hair cap moss has soil-anchoring structures that closely resemble and function like roots, prefers medium shade to partial sun, and likes sandy soil.



4. Cushion Moss (*Leucobryum*): Both hair cap and cushion moss provide exceptional contrast in color, texture and growth habit. They are popular for use in rock, water and Zen garden design, or in conjunction with flatter-growing fern moss. Cushion moss prefers sandy soil. It likes shade, but can tolerate partial sun. Like its name implies, cushion moss grows into a rounded shape — and offers a light green color with a silvery-white sheen.

Source: Moss Acres

offers personal tours of his large “woodland garden” at the New Hope location. Limited to 16 people per tour, and only available during the month of May (peak wildflower season for his area), it’s become a local attraction. A visitor center is in the works, along with Japanese and water gardens to showcase Moss Acres’ products.

“It really hits a nerve with everybody, especially because it’s an environmentally responsible approach,” says Masucci, who notes the absence of mowers, fertilizers and herbicides makes it a very appealing option for green-minded consumers. “It’s so much easier to do, and a lot of people are getting into it. We’re taking orders every day.”

While moss thrives best in deep shade and humid areas, it takes virtually extra no watering or mulching — yet another eco-friendly benefit. It’s also making an appearance on structures, as part of “living walls” or



Placing netting over the moss catches leaves for composting.

“living roofs,” Masucci says. “There are different techniques, but the concept is the same,” she adds. “In Japan, moss is really catching on and designers here in the States are starting to incorporate it in their Japanese Zen gardens.”

Moss Acres has supplied moss for installations ranging from standard homes and businesses to even cemeteries and large-scale projects. The company recently supplied the moss for an installation at the *New York Times*’ Manhattan headquarters, as a backdrop to its auditorium.

“Moss offers that tranquil, back-to-nature feeling,” Masucci concludes. “I think it will continue to gain in popularity.” 🌿

Posh spice

Proven Winners' new *Oso Easy Paprika* is a low-mounded rose with loads of spicy, reddish-orange single blooms accentuated with a bright yellow eye. The glossy green foliage emerges with attractive hints of red in the new growth. Starting out as a beautiful paprika and fading to coral with a golden sun in the center, it shines from summer to frost. Only reaching about 12 to 24 inches and hardy to Zone 5, it thrives in both mixed borders and containers and does not need sprayed like other roses. **For more information, visit www.provenwinners.com.**



Demure gold

Novalis' new box honeysuckle, *Lonicera edmee gold Briloni*, adds a touch of gold to any shade garden. Edmee Gold's multiple layers of golden branches host tiny, delicate leaves. The adaptable shrub can be used as tall ground cover under large trees, and can even add to a winter garden with its architectural silhouette. It thrives in well-drained, organically rich soil with protection from afternoon sun. **For more information, visit www.plantsthatwork.com.**



Tropical punch

Goldsmith's new series, *Pentas lanceolata* Starla Pentas, is available in deep rose, blush, pink, white and red — with new lavender and Appleblossom available in 2009. While it loves warm, humid climates, Starla's strong vigor makes it versatile all across the regions. It handles the stress of cool Northern nights and hot Southern days with ease. The large, long-lasting tropical flowers are held above the foliage, and can attract butterflies and hummingbirds. The pentas reaches 14 to 18 inches tall and 16 to 20 inches wide. **For more information, visit www.goldsmithseeds.com.**



BIGger is better

It isn't begonias as usual when it comes to **Benary's** new BIG Begonias. From traditional shade to full sun, BIG Begonias provide a show of color. Contrasting with the glossy leaves are the BIG's large 2- to 3-inch flowers. In addition, rather than setting seed, the low-maintenance plants discard their old flowers — giving them a fresh, clean look. Planted after the spring's last frost, they will flower continuously until frosts arrive in the fall. **For more information, visit www.benary.com.**

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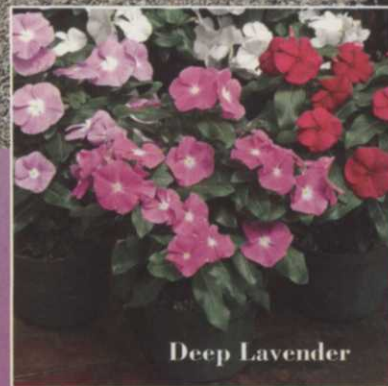
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Mexico and Japan: Patent Pending.
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Pretty and practical

Stepables' *Origanum vulgare* Aureum is a drought-tolerant, golden marjoram species that boasts pink/purple blooms in summer months. Its leaves can be used as a cooking ingredient, a medicinal herb, a butterfly attractant or a deer repellent. It's often used for pathway plantings to create an oregano scent when walked on or to show off golden foliage near other perennials. **For more information, visit www.stepables.com.**



Smooth and spirited

Terra Nova's new alum root, *Heuchera* Southern Comfort, offers creamy-white flowers that erupt in late summer. Its huge leaves change from cinnamon-peach to burnished copper to amber as the season progresses, offering year-round color. The lush, mounding plant thrives in moist, well-drained soil in Zones 4-9. It's been bred to perform well in Southern humidity, as well as in the Midwest, Northeast and Northwest. Its finish time to 4 inches is four to six weeks. **For more information, visit www.terravanurseries.com.**



Expanded series

For the 2008/09 season, **Selecta First Glass** is redefining its *Dianthus caryophyllus* pot carnations by improving several of its SuperTrouper varieties and adding new bi-colors to the program. It's reintroducing its Purple, Velvet Red, Sun Yellow and Lilac on Purple SuperTrouper varieties, and is adding to the line the bi-colors Red on Pink, Black on Cherry, Silver Pink, and Velvet on White. These fragrant, evergreen perennials are frost-hardy, thriving in full sun or partial shade and in well-drained soil. **For more information, visit www.firstclassplants.com.**



Cool-season color

The cool color season is right around the corner, and **Ball** offers an array of sizes and varieties — from big Matrix and XXL pansies, to the medium-sized Panola series, all the way to the petite petal power of Sorbet violas. Matrix, a large-flowered fall pansy, features strong plants with big blooms in clear colors, plus novelties like Matrix Morpheus (pictured). **For more information, visit www.ballhort.com.**



Prevent overwatering

With a patented Precision nozzle and valve, **Underhill's** new CoolPro professional nozzle kit creates a water pattern that applies 4 to 6 gallons per minute within a 25-ft. radius. This cooling mist helps prevent wilting, yet does not interfere with the speed of play. The ergonomically designed handle valve provides an easy grip and adjustable on/off control. Zinc and aircraft aluminum are incorporated into the solid metal design for greater durability.

For more information, visit www.underhill.us.

Eco-friendly

Monrovia Organics is a new line of premium soil mixes and organic fertilizers. Each contains a proprietary formula of 12 different strains of mycorrhizae, which create filaments or threads that are actually extensions of the root systems — enlarging the surface-absorbing area of the roots by as much as 100 times. In addition, the packaging for the soil mixes are made from 10 percent post-consumer recycled plastic, and the fertilizer packaging is fully compostable.

For more information, visit www.monrovia.com.



Low-flow irrigation

Jardinier Corp.'s patented Surface Flow technology is suited for turf irrigation where runoff or overspray is an issue. The system takes advantage of the wicking action inherent in straw, thatch, stolons, sponges and other porous materials, and is based on the idea that a single point of watering at the surface of the soil spreads out across the connected porous material and distributes water evenly. The end result is a reduction in water usage of up to 50 percent, with no water runoff. The system can be installed new or retrofitted into existing systems and designs.

For more information, visit www.jardiniercorp.com.

Fertiboost gains distributor

Horizon has partnered with **Landscape Injection Systems (LIS)** to be the exclusive distributor of LIS Fertiboost fertilizer injectors in the 10 states Horizon serves.

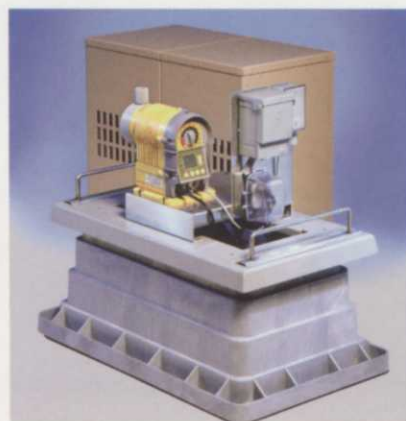
Fertiboost systems are engineered individually to meet customers' specific requirements and needs, ensuring complete compatibility and consistent performance. Horizon acts as the single point of contact for the contractor in the installation and servicing of the system, including the quote, start-up and continued service.

For more information, visit www.horizononline.com.



VFD pumps

Rain Bird Corp.'s newest variable frequency drive (VFD) commercial pump stations, the D-Series, feature a backlit, tricolor, monochrome touch screen for ease of use. Rain Bird's central control software results in a completely integrated system that communicates in real time for efficiency and flexibility. And like all Rain Bird pump stations, the D-Series features powdercoating on all pipes and manifolds — ensuring corrosion protection for a longer service life. For more information, visit www.rainbird.com.



newproducts

Multi-tasking pruner

Leatherman Tool Group

introduces the Genus pruner multi-tool, featuring stainless steel bypass pruners on an anodized aluminum body. It also boasts an industry first: an ergonomic, rotating and locking handle that stores a full set of professional tools. Just push the button, flip the handle around and you'll find a knife, Phillips screwdriver, sprinkler-head adjustment tool/flat screwdriver, bottle opener and saw. The tool includes a diamond-coated file that doubles as an open-end wrench to adjust the pruner nut when necessary. Genus also features replaceable cutting blades and spring, a heavy-duty nylon sheath and a 25-year warranty.

For more information, visit www.leatherman.com.



Ergonomic tools

A new series is being added to the existing Groundbreakers line by **V & B Manufacturing Co.:** The green, vinyl Soft-Grip on each tool's hickory handle is designed to increase comfort and provide firmer control while further reducing handle vibration. The Soft-Grip series is available on V & B's 16-inch mini-tiller, mini-pick and mini-axe, as well as its 26-inch Handy Mattocks tiller, pick and axe models. For more information, visit www.vbmf.com.



Old World style

A new line of decorative, wide-body Tuscany Vases from **Backyard Pool Products.com** is comprised of four large sizes, each available in a choice of five earthy colors: terra cotta, granite, millstone, sandstone and blackstone. Ranging in height from 14 to 42 inches, the vases have the look of heavy ceramic but are made from lightweight-yet-durable polyethylene. The vases can accommodate small trees, bushes, floral and a wide variety of other plantings; when filled, they can also serve as security bollards in parking lots and on sidewalks.

For more information, visit www.backyardpoolproducts.com.

moreinfo

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KING TUT® *Cyperus papyrus* – a Proven Selections® variety



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