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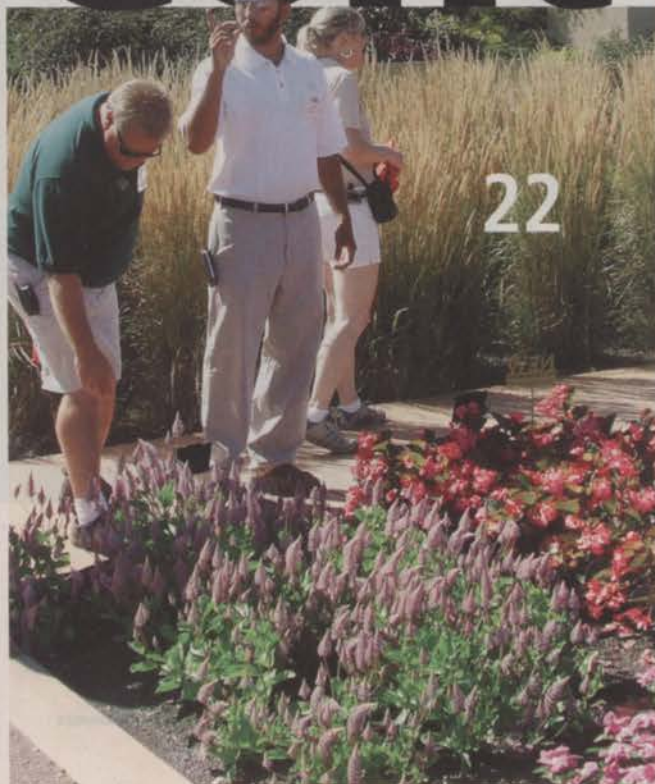
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Editorial staff

Editor-in-Chief	MARTY WHITFORD / 216/706-3766 / mwhitford@questex.com
Editor-at-Large	RON HALL / 216/706-3739 / rhall@questex.com
Managing Editor	DANIEL G. JACOBS / 216/706-3754 / djacobs@questex.com
Associate Editor	MIKE SEUFFERT / 216/706-3764 / mseuffert@questex.com
Senior Science Editor	KARL DANNEBERGER, PH.D. / danneberger.1@osu.edu
Art Director	CARRIE PARKHILL / 216/706-3780 / cparkhill@questex.com

Reader advisory panel

DEBBY COLE	Greater Texas Landscapes / Austin, TX
WAYNE VOLZ	Wayne's Lawn Service, Inc. / Louisville, KY
JOHN GACHINA	Gachina Landscape Management / Menlo Park, CA
BILL HOOPES	Grass Roots Training / Delaware, OH
ROB SANTO	Garrick-Santo Landscape / Malden, MA
FRED HASKETT	US Lawns / St. Louis, MO
LARRY IORII	Down to Earth Landscaping / Wilmington, DE
TODD GRAUS	Green Turf Landscapes / Worland, WY
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JACK ROBERTSON	Jack Robertson Lawn Care / Springfield, IL
DR. BARRY TROUTMAN	ValleyCrest Companies / Sanford, FL
BRIAN VINCHESI	Irrigation Consulting / Pepperell, MA

Business staff

Group Publisher	KEVIN STOLTMAN / 216/706-3740 / kstoltman@questex.com
Admin. Coordinator	PETRA TURKO / 216/706-3768 / pturko@questex.com
Production Manager	AMBER TERCH / 218/279-8835 / aterch@questex.com
Production Director	RHONDA SANDE / 218/279-8821 / rsande@questex.com
Audience Development Manager	ANTOINETTE SANCHEZ-PERKINS / 216/706-3750 / asanchez-perkins@questex.com
Assistant Audience Development Manager	CAROL HATCHER / 216/706-3785 / chatcher@questex.com

Advertising staff

Cleveland Headquarters	600 Superior Ave. E., Ste. 1100, Cleveland, OH 44114
Associate Publisher	PATRICK ROBERTS / 216/706-3736 Fax: 216/706-3712 proberts@questex.com
Regional Sales Manager	DAVE HUISMAN / 732/493-4951 Fax: 732/493-4951 dhuisman@questex.com
Account Manager	KENDRA KOVALYCSIK / 216/706-3763 Fax: 216/706-3712 kkovalycsik@questex.com
Account Executive	ANNETTE MCCOY / 216/706-3746 Fax: 216/706-3712 amccoy@questex.com
Account Executive, Classifieds	KELLI VELASQUEZ / 216/706-3767 Fax: 216/706-3712 kvelasquez@questex.com

Marketing/magazine services

REPRINTS	landscapemanagement@reprintbuyer.com / 800/290-5460 x100
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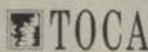
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Water's price vs. worth

BY RON HALL / Editor-at-Large

Benjamin Franklin is quoted as saying, "When the well's dry, we know the worth of water."

But are we beginning to get a truer appreciation of the worth of water now that some of our proverbial wells are drying up?

In researching this month's articles focusing on landscape irrigation I found myself grappling with just this question. In a society that generally equates value with price, how do we gain a real-market appreciation for our fresh water?

Curiously, part of the problem with our fresh water resources is the perception that they'll always be available. That, with few exceptions, they'll be affordable, if not free for the taking. We stick our straws in our rivers, lakes and aquifers and suck out what we want and use it as we wish with little regard to the true value of these resources.

What about that water bill that arrives in our mailboxes every month? What are we paying for if not water? I decided to find out, starting with my water bill.

An employee at a local water department explains that my most recent monthly water bill of \$50.15 reflects a core charge of \$27.90 for sewer and \$22.50 for water that my household used — approximately 300 cu. ft. (2,250 gallons). If we used more we would pay \$4.35 for each additional 100 cu. ft. (748 gallons). This amounts to less than a nickel a gallon.

Doing some quick calculations, I determine that buying 100 gallons of water in gallon jugs at

my local supermarket (OK, the jug says "spring water") at \$1 a gallon would cost \$100. Assuming I pay "airport" prices of \$2.50 per 16-ounce plastic bottle for that same 100 gallons, I would be forking over \$2,000. Ouch.

What, then, is the true cost of potable fresh water, whether we buy it in 16-ounce plastic bottles or we irrigate our lawns and landscapes with it? Obviously the price varies so dramatically that it's foolish to try to link what we pay for it with its value to us.

Unlike the price of any other valuable commodity, such as a barrel of crude oil that's established daily and recognized worldwide, fresh water's price seems to be barely factored into its worth.

What most of us are paying for when we turn on our showers or start up our sprinklers are the energy costs of extracting the water from its source, and treating and delivering the water. We're paying for the maintenance and repair of water lines and infrastructure, and the salaries and benefits of the water plant employees.

What other natural resource do we extract from our environment and have such a difficult time matching its price with its true value? This, despite water being so incredibly essential to our existence as well as our livelihoods?

It's our hope that the information we provide in our ongoing coverage of irrigation offers a deeper understanding of our role in using our fresh water resources wisely.

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

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In the Know

BUSINESS NEWS YOU CAN USE

Walker Mfg. reunion draws thousands

FT. COLLINS, CO — When Bob Walker speaks about the Walker family he might be talking about his remarkable immediate family. Or he might be referring to the “family” of employees, customers, suppliers, distributors, dealers and other associates that have made Walker Manufacturing’s mowers recognized worldwide.

On the first two days of August, both families joined in a giant celebration on the grassy 40-acre site of the company headquarters for the second-ever Walker Family Reunion.

But this was no ordinary celebration. Originally planned to mark the manufacture of the company’s 100,000 mower, it also became the celebration of the all-too-brief life of a talented young family member.

Just one week before the reunion, Daniel Max Walker, the 22-year-old son of Dean and Suzanne Walker, died unexpectedly in his sleep of an aortic aneurysm. Dean, Bob’s brother, is the head of

the company’s design and development. It was obvious that the immediate family members felt the loss deeply and drew upon their strong Christian faith and the support of the thousands of visiting guests and friends to carry on.

And carry on they did, in a spirit of thankfulness and grace.

In an understandably emotional welcoming address, Bob Walker, with his immediate family seated behind him on the huge stage that dominated the grounds, dedicated the reunion as a celebration of his nephew’s life. A remarkable young man, Dan had graduated just months before from Olivet Nazarene College, Bourbonnais, IL, where he had earned a degree in mechanical engineering and had captained the football team. (Country music star Pam Tillis, who performed at the reunion, graciously dedicated her performance to Dan, as well.)

In addressing the more than 3,000 people enjoying the family’s hospitality, Walker praised the company’s 170 employees who, collectively, average seven

years’ tenure with the company. He said the company uses only full-time, year-round employees. “We feel it’s better to manage inventory rather than to manage people’s lives,” he said.

Walker said the company maintains a conservative fiscal approach to business and reinvests profits in capital improvements, including state-of-the-art manufacturing equipment and additional floor space.

Walker emphasized the company will remain independent and family-owned. He said management is developing a succession plan so the transition to the next generation of Walkers will be smooth.

“As long as we’re a family in the manufacturing business, we intend to keep manufacturing here,” he said.

“We’re a company that acknowledges God’s help in reaching this point in our journey,” he told the huge crowd gathered in rows of folding chairs in front of the stage under the blue Colorado sky.



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LEGALLY Speaking

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



Q | A competitor is claiming I falsified information about my experience on an advertisement. How can I substantiate the claims I use in my advertisements?

A | Does the competitor specify what it is about your advertisement that may be false or misleading? If it relates to work or projects you have performed, you can anticipate such claims and try to establish extra credibility by having testimonials from previous customers posted on your Web site. Testimonials from third parties are an excellent way to establish your own credentials when they are provided by customers who have actually used your services and who are willing to provide statements without compensation.

If the competitor is claiming there are factual inaccuracies in your ad — such as how long you have been in business, the size of your business or the types of

services you perform, for example — you might consider a letter to the competitor providing further information. It is one thing for a competitor to write directly to

Find Ken Morris's podcast on record retention at www.landscapemanagement.net/Podcasts

you claiming your advertisement is false, but if the competitor publishes (in the legal sense) his opinion of your ad or tells third parties your advertisement is false, then you may have a claim for slander, libel or disparagement.

The competitor's claims may raise questions with current or future customers, and your business may be seriously harmed if such claims are false and continue unchecked. Your reputation may be damaged. In that case, you need to consider whether to retain an attorney to represent you.

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

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

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START	END	JOB CODES	JOB SITE/PROJECT	HOURS
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Tues.	5:30			8
Wed.	4:00			8 1/2
Thurs.	8:00		Crestview	8 1/2
Fri.	4:00			8 1/2

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Displays the total time worked by each employee

Mountain View LANDSCAPE

Bill Owen
Time card for: Monday, September 13, 2008 - Friday, September 17, 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	-	-	-	7:38	7:49	15:47
		7:38	7:35	7:53	7:58	7:49	38:53

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CPSC courts controversy with athletic turf findings

This summer, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) released a report of its findings regarding its investigation into athletic turf and its link

to lead. The agency concluded that the risk of exposure to lead was minimal.

The industry heaved a sigh of relief – and continued touting the benefits and

safety of synthetic turf. The industry maintains that athletic fields using synthetic turf get more frequent use because wet weather and drainage problems are not as large of an issue. They also dramatically reduce maintenance and water costs.

But U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal severely criticized the study. Both maintain the study, which used just 14 samples, is inadequate and too flawed in its execution to proclaim that synthetic turf is "safe for all ages."

"There is a clear and present danger that municipal and state decision makers, as well as parents and citizens, will rely on this unconscionably deficient report," Blumenthal said. "It is replete with unsound scientific methodology and conclusions, and unreliable findings."

"The CPSC review of artificial turf safety focused entirely on the issue of lead contamination from artificial blades of grass," he continued, pointing to the study's lack of scrutiny of the use of crumb rubber in many of these fields. At press time, Blumenthal was directing the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to start its own synthetic turf study.

The Synthetic Turf Council (STC), which represents the industry, responded by announcing its own voluntary lead reduction standards. Rick Doyle, president of STC, cited several recent studies supporting the CPSC's conclusions.

"Our industry has worked hard to remove lead from more than 90% of pigments used to color synthetic turf. Now, the STC plans to reduce lead levels in the remaining 10% of all colored fibers that still require lead chromate to meet the consumer's demand for long-term colorfastness," he adds. For more information, visit www.syntheticurfCouncil.org.

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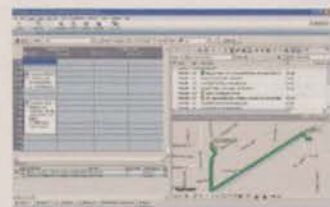
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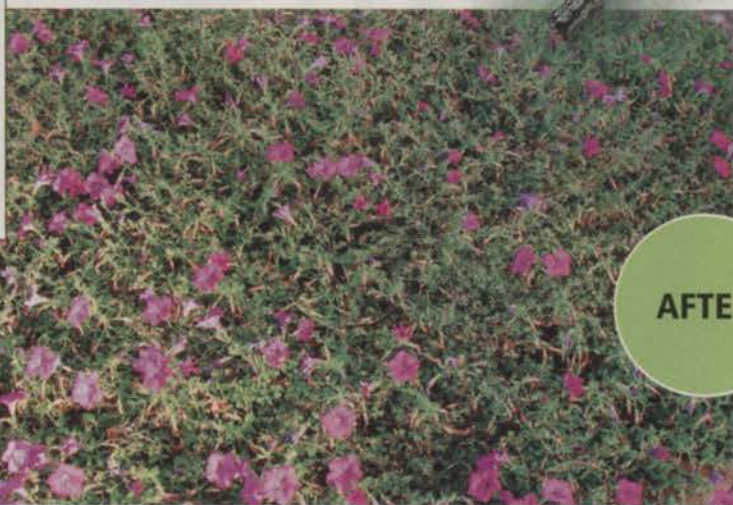


BEFORE

Problem Just a few days ago a bed of petunias was loaded with masses of flowers. Now there are very few. And the flowers that remain appear very unhealthy.

The cause

Rapidly disappearing flower is most likely the result of one or possibly two insects — the flower bud worm and/or the cutworm. This problem, which seems to have gotten worse in the past three year, occurs mid-late in the season and seems to strike like lightning. The flower budworm is a bit sneakier as it cuts a hole in flower buds and eats the flower before it open, leaving a green bud on the plant. The cutworm feeds primarily on the flower petals. In either case, careful monitoring of the plants and flowers for signs of chewing and or frass (bug poo) on the foliage are good indicators you have a problem.



AFTER

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

Solution

Control measures you use to control caterpillars should be effective with this pest as well. Make sure to get thorough coverage and always read the label and follow all listed instructions.

Arizona sheriff raids business

Local news outlets report search warrants were served late last month at both business locations of Artistic Land Management. The offices are in Mesa and Gilbert, AZ.

According to the Arizona Republic, approximately 29 individuals were arrested: "Of the arrested, 20 were suspected of identity theft for using false Social Security numbers and other documents, and the other nine were detained for possible immigration violations, Sheriff Joe Arpaio said."

But the East Valley Tribune recently completed a special investigation to see whether the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office is going too far in its zeal for arresting illegal immigrants — to the detriment of lengthened response time to official emergencies. In a five-part series titled "Reasonable Doubt," the paper examined the overtime costs and a "dropping arrest rate" being experienced by the department. Visit www.eastvalleytribune.com/page/reasonable_doubt to view the series.

Artistic Management employee Luis Juarez told the Republic that "workers were handcuffed with plastic zip-ties while deputies checked for documents. Those who could prove they were in the country legally were released, while others were put on buses and taken away, he said."

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GOLF



LAWN



NURSERY



ORNAMENTAL

PARTNERS

Discounts, timely delivery and better selections unite

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS
MANAGING EDITOR

IT WOULDN'T BE SURPRISING if landscape contractors felt a little like the pretty girl before the school dance.

The professional landscape market is one of the fastest-growing segments of the color market. That fact has not gone unnoticed by breeders and growers, who are courting potential Green Industry partners like never before.

In the past few years, breeders and growers have increased their focus on professional landscapers, providing a barrage of marketing materials, information and events designed to increase awareness of their offerings. Big box retailers average 2% to 3% annual growth in ornamentals while the landscape segment offers 8% to 12% annual color growth, says Ball Horticulture's Jeff Gibson. Landscapers get new flowers and promises of discounts, just-in-time delivery and increased varieties, plant versatility and availability. It's little wonder that landscapers' dance cards are filling up fast with potential color partners.

Luring landscapers

As the object of desire, landscapers are in a unique position to take advantage of new opportunities. It might be an invitation to visit a seed propagator's trial site to learn about the latest variety.

"It's all about being on the cutting edge," says Bruce Hellerick, senior horticultural specialist for the Brickman Group. Becoming more educated on new color varieties gives landscapers upfront knowledge of innovative plants that are more disease- and insect-resistant, drought tolerant and/or require less pruning. It also exposes landscapers to a palette of new



PHOTO BY: MARTY WHITFORD

IN color

landscapers, breeders and growers



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shades and shapes to improve their landscape designs and bottom lines.

Having knowledge of the latest colors is key but having access to the new plants precisely where and when you need them is equally attractive. Many growers now are willing to deliver product directly to landscapers' job sites on the days they need them. Jack Barnwell's close relationship with Proven Winners helps him customize orders to fill his needs.

"I can get hundreds of hanging baskets and large amounts of material, specifically grown for me," says the owner of Barnwell Landscape and Garden Services, Mackinac Island, MI. "I can design all my own hanging baskets and planters and really customize what I want for these different jobs — and have it all grown specific to each job."

A healthy relationship with growers



Jack Barnwell designs color for many hotels on Mackinac Island.

"People are surprised when you explain to them how big the landscape industry really is," says Polly Bailey-Rule, CLP, landscape account manager for Four Star Greenhouse, one of the three entities comprising the Proven Winners brand. "Most people's perception is the industry is made up of two guys in a pickup truck. It's the same on the landscape side, looking at the greenhouse end of things.

"Partnering in colors is going to open all our eyes to just how

The challenge, Gibson adds, is educating landscapers that a plethora of new color options exist and it's well worth their efforts to look into them and into partnering closer with growers and breeders. Like the contractors they're trying to reach, there is another driver pushing growers to increase their contact with contractors. Consumers are spending less on color, and growers face increasing competition for those dollars from big box retailers.

"The garden centers are having a tough time of it," Hellerick notes. "The industry went, 'Aha, there's this whole group of landscape people out there who buy thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of flats of flowers a year. We've not even tapped into that.'"

Breeders face their own challenges. "The seed industry is shrinking," says Jessica DeGraaf, product support specialist for Benary. "We're fighting for somebody else's piece of the pie. When you start looking at a lot of the growers we're selling to, they're realizing the contractor market is huge and the potential is huge."

For those reasons, breeders and greenhouse owners are working together to educate contractors about everything from the new varieties to how to develop their own color offerings.

"We're focusing on helping our landscape companies become successful using higher-quality varieties that might get

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We're going to help improve their businesses and ours.

— JEFF GIBSON, landscape business manager, Ball Horticulture



and breeders creates other opportunities. Landscapers whose long-term contracts with clients enable them to place orders that match a grower's schedule can expect more variety, healthier plants grown to their specification and, perhaps, discounts of 10% or more on their advance purchases.

Growers, breeders benefit too

Oddly enough, considering how closely tied their businesses are, professional landscapers and the growers and breeders understand very little about one another.

big we are and how much more we can do together by understanding what the other guys are doing and why they're doing it," Bailey-Rule notes.

One goal, says Gibson, landscape business manager for Ball, is to get the two sides to come to a meeting of the minds.

"If we can help both parties better understand the (other's) issues, in the long run, we're going to help improve their businesses, and ours in the process," Gibson says. "We have a vast array of plant material for use. The palette could be considerably expanded."



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passed by for the off-the-shelf, standard same old thing," says Steve Zylstra, owner of Zylstra Greenhouses, Kalamazoo, MI.

And it's been a learning experience for all involved.

"It's a tough market to nail down," says Jonathan Bardzik, director of marketing for the American Nursery & Landscape Association (ANLA). "These folks are all different sizes. They have different structures. It's unclear on how to get to those (contractors) to promote new introductions, which is pretty much what (breeders and growers) are trying to do."

A blossoming model

Traditionally, breeders sell to the thousands of growers around the country. While that number is daunting, it is nothing compared with the tens of thousands of landscape contractor companies. Deciding how to reach them poses a host of new challenges.

Not surprisingly, breeders and growers are targeting the biggest players first. They're using the methods you might expect — catalogs, direct-mail marketing, newsletters and Web sites — but they're also reaching out in new ways.

Goldsmith Seeds has chosen the direct approach, bringing growers and key

customers to its Landscape Week, which is filled with educational sessions, a review of new and future releases, and recreational activities including some golf and a little fine dining. The most-recent event included seminars on designing beds, colorscaping under drought conditions, the symbolism of color, and insects and disease problems. One of the most valuable presentations is the viewing of future color.

"We had a presentation on new varieties," says Dean Bemis, account manager for Gilroy, CA-based Goldsmith. "Every year we have anywhere from 10 to 50 new introductions."

About 30 landscape contractors and growers attend the annual event (launched in 2007) to absorb information and return to their operations filled with ideas on improving sales and service through new colors.

"I (presented) a report for our account managers to show them some of the new things that are coming down the pike, some of the things just released to give them some ideas on color combinations," says Linda Horn, director of marketing for Total Environment Inc., Edmond, OK. "It was really beneficial for me to go see the trials. It gives you a much broader



People are surprised
...how big the
landscape industry
really is.

— POLLY BAILEY-RULE,
landscape account manager,
Four Star Greenhouse



scope of what's out there to use."

Four Star hired Bailey-Rule to fill a newly created position that would target the landscape contractor segment.

"I'm doing an incredible amount of marketing, building relationships between Four Star/myself and the landscape industry," she says. "We have joined local landscape associations, are participating in the trade shows and will be hosting the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association's field day next summer. We've also had a Landscape Day in our gardens."

Four Star isn't just bringing growers and contractors together. In some cases, the firm is reaching out to the contractors directly. Bailey-Rule is working with Barnwell Landscape and Garden Services on Mackinac Island in Michigan to supply plants.

"This is the first time that Four Star will be selling directly to the professionals putting the plants into the ground," Bailey-Rule says. "Their needs are different than growing liners and selling them

continued on page 28



Contractors take a look at plants during a Four Star Greenhouse Landscape Day in August.



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continued from page 26
to wholesale growers."

For Barnwell, the new approach holds huge benefits.

"Being able to communicate with my growers, and to customize size and plant developments before they come up here is ideal, so I can make sure certain gardens are peaking and looking exactly the way I want them to, when I want them to," says Barnwell, who is responsible for many of the properties at the summer resort community.

Benary also is working with growers to help them reach the professional landscaper market.

"We do a large sampling program — that was new this year," says DeGraaf. "We focus on two or three key items, and we make sure all of our key growers are sending it to their landscape contractor customers."

With some 30 trial sites around the U.S., the company hopes to invite contractors around the country to see what's new and available in their markets. The company also plans to have a Benary sales representative talk directly with interested landscapers.

Why it works

No matter how well wined and dined they are, landscapers aren't going to take a week out of their busy schedules if there is no benefit. Having the opportunity to talk with non-competing peers is another color partnering incentive.

"A lot of folks talked about different problems that they had in the field," says Total Environment's Horn. "Others shared how they solved them. It was beneficial. I never felt threatened from someone stealing our ideas."

Goldsmith has 30 acres of color growing at its Gilroy, CA, facility. Part of it is used to present row-by-row comparisons of Goldsmith varieties next to

competitors.

"I call it, 'The good, the bad and the ugly.'" Bemis teases. "Sometimes we look great; sometimes just OK, and sometimes we just don't measure up. The real competition for business is not in the relationships we have with our competitors and our customers — it's in the varieties. If the varieties are good, they will sell, and they'll be successful."

Goldsmith has conducted two Landscape Weeks, the most recent in July. It has committed to at least three more through 2011.

"That way, we hope to have in our basket of landscape market contacts around 150 to 250 individuals and companies we can call on a first-name basis," Bemis says. "We depend on one thing over everything else: In our industry, it's a relationship business. If you have a good relationship with the management of large landscape companies, when you have something good, they're more than happy to give (a new variety) a try."

Mutual benefit

For these programs to work long-term, there must be mutual benefit. Breeders and growers hope to expand their businesses; landscapers get access to new varieties and discounts on advance purchases. But it goes beyond the money.

"We realized these people learn more from one another than they will from us," he continues. "If we provide a great forum for that exchange of ideas, they'll go back and say great things about the week — as well as remember our varieties and what they'll do and won't do."

Developing better relationships also can improve other areas of the business. Now, when contractors place orders, the plants often are delivered to their companies' yards, where they might sit



Crew members from Acres Group install some color from Ball Horticulture.

for several days. With growing color relationships, that is beginning to change.

"More large commercial growers are organizing the plant material according to how the landscaper would like it delivered to each jobsite," Ball's Gibson says. "The amount of time from the greenhouse grower's door to the professional landscaper's jobsite might be a matter of hours."

The takeaway

While breeders and growers are focusing their attention on the larger players, that doesn't mean smaller contractors can't get in on the action.

"Visit every one of your garden centers within 20 miles to see what's new," Hellerick offers. "And if there is something new that you've never seen, buy a couple plants and install them. Find a client who likes to be on the cutting edge, and trial them there."

Small or large, contractors can expect to hear more from breeders and growers.

"Our future is dependent on making sure landscape professionals are knowledgeable about our products and see and harvest the blossoming opportunities in the color market," Gibson concludes. "That's why we are chasing after this segment — together." **LJM**

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Effective turfgrass irrigation

PART TWO — A SPECIAL REPORT BY RON HALL

Rising to the challenge

Drought and government regulations force contractors to think more carefully about how they deal with limited water supplies.

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We strive to educate diverse audiences about smart water use through white papers and summits related to global water issues. We've also designed classroom curricula to help teachers and students better understand water's role both economically and ecologically.

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Rain Bird's deep-rooted commitment to innovative products and technologies is at the very core of *The Intelligent Use of Water* philosophy. We pioneer new technologies and craft the critical components for truly state-of-the-art systems – giving each customer a fully integrated irrigation solution.



By Dave Johnson

Director of Corporate Marketing
Rain Bird Corporation

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Government, utilities and industry seek common ground to conserve our fresh water.

A growing 'Sense' of cooperation

The U.S. EPA's WaterSense partnering program offers the Green Industry a path to more efficient irrigation products and services.

The flow of innovation from irrigation suppliers will change the face of landscape irrigation. As these technologies are developed, tested, brought to market and — this is the essential piece to the puzzle — accepted and implemented in an intelligent way on landscapes, they promise significantly more efficient water use.

It's no exaggeration to suggest that this is essential to the long-term vitality of the Green Industry.

In light of the incredible pressure being put on our nation's freshwater resources by population growth and continuing urban development, it's safe to say these technologies are arriving none too soon. Agencies in practically every corner of the U.S. are straining to meet increasing demands for treated potable water. This is especially true during periods of peak water use. Not coincidentally, this is generally when landscape water use is greatest.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says that residential landscape irrigation accounts for between 30% and 70% of potable water use during these periods. This varies, of course, depending upon climatic conditions.

This is the second in our three-part Water Wise series focusing on our limited fresh water resources and its effect on the Green Industry. For last month's stories, visit www.landscapemanagement.net.

But because the EPA (and local water purveyors) are convinced that as much as half of this water is wasted, agencies and other rule-makers look first to the Green Industry for relief when public water supplies are tight. It's difficult to argue with their reasoning: When supplies are threatened, because of drought or system malfunction, they're faced with the unenviable but easy choice of providing water for drinking and sanitation over using water for turfgrass and ornamentals.

It starts with calls for voluntary conservation by the public and industry. If this fails to achieve the desired savings, mandatory landscape irrigation restrictions are implemented. Outside

watering may be banned altogether as a last resort.

Predictably, this has damaging — and often disastrous — consequences for living landscapes and for businesses involved with growing, selling, installing and maintaining turfgrass and ornamentals.

But the Green Industry has learned that playing the blame game only worsens these situations.

Encouragingly, government agencies, water purveyors, irrigation manufacturers, retailers and the many segments of the Green Industry are coming together. Sensing the seriousness of the water situation, they're beginning to cooperate and make

SWAT'S ROLE IN IRRIGATION EFFICIENCY

Smart Water Application Technologies (SWAT) is an effort you may not recognize, but you should. SWAT is a national partnership created to promote landscape water use efficiency through the application of state-of-the-art irrigation technologies. It operates under the umbrella of the Irrigation Association (IA), and focuses its efforts on product categories targeting both the residential and commercial markets.

It is made up of water purveyors, irrigation product manufacturers and irrigation and landscaping professionals, all of them working to identify and quantify technologies that make landscape irrigation more efficient.

Brian Vinchesi, CID, is the chairman of SWAT, a position he has held since its formation in 2002. He is also president of Irrigation Consulting Inc., Pepperell, MA, and a former president of the IA.

Vinchesi explains that SWAT was initially formed at the request of water purveyors to evaluate the attributes and efficiencies of the various climate-based ("smart") irrigation controllers that began appearing on the market about 10 years ago. It has since started the process of developing testing protocols to investigate the performance of soil moisture sensors and rain sensors.

To date, the initiative has looked

at 14 controllers and recently finished drafting the seventh protocol for this testing, which is undergoing review for comments. SWAT is measuring two controller performance attributes: irrigation adequacy and irrigation excess. In other words, they're quantifying how well each controller meets the watering requirements of landscapes, and how much excess water is applied, if any.

After the review is complete, the revised protocol is expected to go to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense program.

"SWAT protocols are anticipated to be the basis for WaterSense outdoor irrigation product labeling specifications," explains Vinchesi. "Climate-based controllers are expected to be the first irrigation products that are labeled."

SWAT is also developing testing protocols for soil moisture sensors and rain sensors in its efforts to identify products that offer water-saving efficiencies. These

investigations are not as far along as the work on controllers.

Vinchesi says SWAT selects product categories based on:

- ▶ their ability to improve the efficiency of an irrigation system;
- ▶ their availability in the residential and commercial markets;
- ▶ their adaptability with new or existing sprinkler or drip irrigation systems; and
- ▶ their ability to improve the water efficiency of a system without negatively impacting a customer's landscape.

"Another big part of SWAT is to try to get these products into the market," adds Vinchesi. "You can develop the best products in the world, but if nobody buys them, they're not going to save us any water."

To learn more about SWAT, visit www.irrigation.org/SWAT/Industry.

"SWAT protocols are anticipated to be the basis for WaterSense outdoor irrigation product labeling specifications."

— Brian Vinchesi



consensus-based decisions regarding intelligent water use. This is happening at the regional, state and national levels.

Let's take a look at what's happening at the national level, where a relatively new initiative from the U.S. EPA is gaining momentum. It promises to have a profound effect upon landscape irrigation and, by association, the entire Green Industry.

Making 'Sense'

In 2003, a group of stakeholders came to the EPA to discuss starting a water efficiency program. In June 2006, that program became a reality with the launch of WaterSense, a partnership program sponsored by the EPA. The goal of the program is to increase the adoption of water-efficient products and services by consumers and organizations. This program seeks to increase water efficiency both indoors and outdoors.

WaterSense is employing three strategies as it focuses on landscape irrigation, says EPA official Stephanie Tanner, who spoke at the recent Toro WaterSmart Symposium "Success without Excess III":

1. improving efficiency of irrigation;
2. increasing the public's awareness of water-efficient products; and
3. increasing and promoting water-efficient landscape design practices.

"Current activities center on labeling certification programs for irrigation professionals (in partnership with the Irrigation Association), partnering with certified irrigation professionals to advance water-efficient irrigation, and developing technical specifications for irrigation products such as controllers and soil moisture sensors," Tanner explains.

Tanner, who manages the development of water efficiency and performance specifications under WaterSense, says the program's current focus is on labeling certification programs for professionals that emphasize water-efficient techniques and technologies.

So far, five programs have earned the WaterSense label, four of them in partnership with the Irrigation Association (IA): Irrigation Designer, Irrigation Contractor, Landscape Irrigation Auditor and Golf Irrigation Auditor. The fifth program is the North Coast Water Conservation Group's Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper. At press time, there were more than 500 WaterSense partners, according to the WaterSense Web site, www.epa.gov/watersense.

Irrigation professionals who meet the program's criteria can use the WaterSense



ONE INCH OF WATER PER WEEK

One inch of water a week is generally recommended for maintaining a viable landscape including turfgrass, trees and flowers. But what is one inch of water? The following conversions make this clear:

One inch of water (applied or rainfall)

On 1,000 sq. ft. = 634 gallons

On 1 acre = 27,200 gallons

On 1 sq. mile = 17.4 million gallons

partner logo on outreach material and use a variety of program templates and brochures in conjunction with their marketing. These aids will help them differentiate themselves from their competition, says the EPA.

Also, landscape and irrigation professionals should be aware that green building programs have begun specifying WaterSense irrigation partners. They include the U.S. Green Building Council's new construction rating system and the National Home Builder's draft National Green Building Standard.

WaterSense is also working with many industries, focusing again on the irrigation industry, to develop criteria for water-efficient, high-performance products.

For products to be considered for program labeling, Tanner says they must:

- ▶ be about 20% more efficient than conventional products;
- ▶ be able to realize water savings on a national level;
- ▶ be appropriate for use everywhere, even if it's not in common practice; and
- ▶ provide measurable water savings.

"We don't label individual products, but develop criteria for product categories," says Tanner, adding that the EPA looks to industry to identify, develop protocols and evaluate the attributes of products within particular categories.

WATERY PLANET

70% of Earth covered by water



97.5% is salt water

2.5% is fresh water

"Third-party certification is required for WaterSense products," she adds. "We will be working with these (irrigation) manufacturers more directly to help them integrate into the certification process."

The WaterSense program, now in just its third year, has made big strides in labeling indoor water-saving products such as high-efficiency toilets and faucets. As it continues to investigate other indoor plumbing categories, it has ramped up its efforts to identify and label irrigation products, as well.

"It takes time to get an industry to agree on how the products should be tested and for manufacturers to agree that the tests it comes up with are fair," Tanner says.

WATER EQUIVALENTS

Making sense of water measurements in the real world

One cu. foot =	7.48 gallons	28.317 liters
One cu. yard =	202 gallons	764.5 liters
One cu. meter =	264.2 gallons	1,000 liters

The good news, given the seriousness of the nation's fresh water issues, is that the process is under way and the irrigation industry, including the Irrigation Association, is a full partner in its success. **LM**

AUSTRALIA'S 'SMART' CONSERVATION EFFORT

Water Services Association of Australia — jointly developed the Smart Approved WaterMark water-saving labeling program. In 2005, their program, commonly referred to as WaterMark, was written into the National Water Initiative, the country's policy for water. In 2006, it received a grant from the federal government to increase its awareness with the public.

WaterMark drives outdoor water conservation by:
▶ promoting products and services

that help conserve water;
▶ helping consumers understand often-complex water conservation measures; and
▶ championing innovative solutions for sustainable water use around the home.

WaterMark accredits products and services that have been tested and deemed to conserve water by panels of independent technical experts. The testing is rigorous, and products and services are compared against sets of established criteria. Products and services passing muster get a license to use the WaterMark logo for two years.

The two-year provision is not the only difference from the similarly

aimed U.S. EPA WaterSense program. For example, WaterMark focuses strictly on outdoor water savings, but the range of products it accredits is broader to include categories such as car washes and pool covers as well as gardening and irrigation.

In the short time since its inception, WaterMark has gained broad-based support from water utilities, government departments, retailers and from service providers.

After gaining acceptance and participation from industry and retailers in 2007 it was finally confident that it had enough accredited products in the commercial pipeline to make a concerted effort to educate the public about its mission and the importance of the WaterMark logo. Public awareness has grown thanks to widespread coverage in TV, radio and print media.

Ultimately, the goal of WaterMark (and its sister program aimed at indoor water conservation, Water Efficiency Labeling and Standards or WELS) is to educate the public that water conservation is a sustainability issue, and it's not just about crisis management.

To learn more about Smart WaterMark, or to see the categories and products that have gained its accreditation, visit www.smartwatermark.org.



Slightly smaller in size than the U.S.'s contiguous 48 states, Australia is the driest inhabited continent on the planet — and one of the most urbanized.

Because of this, and because extended droughts regularly threaten water supplies to its major cities, conservation is a huge issue on the continent. In most respects, Australia has been proactive in achieving conservation, as evidenced by decreasing per capita demand for urban domestic water over this past decade. Most of this has come from indoor water use savings.

In recent years, conservation efforts have focused on outdoor water use, as well. Recognizing this, in 2004 four associations — the Australian Water Association, Irrigation Australia, Nursery & Garden Industry Australia and





The challenge of managed water

Slowly emerging from its worst drought ever — a calamity still gripping the southwest corner of the state — the Green Industry in and around Raleigh, NC, is adjusting to a world of tightly managed municipal water.

This is a relatively new phenomenon for the East, especially North Carolina.

"The restrictions right now are manageable," says Kurt Bland, general manager of Bland Landscaping Co., a 32-year-old, \$10-million-plus company headquartered in nearby Apex. Homeowners can now water either two or three times weekly, depending upon the community, he says.

He and others in the Green Industry believe restrictions on the use of municipally supplied water for landscape irrigation are likely to become the norm and not the exception in their part of the state. This is something the industry is adjusting to. Just seven months ago, local officials threatened most irrigation with municipally supplied potable water would be banned. But local lakes, the region's primary supply of domestic water, refilled after a wetter-than-normal spring.

"In February, we were being told that we will not have irrigation systems operating on potable water in 2008," says Bland. "All of a sudden it was raining and people were saying, 'We want flowers.'"

But the negative effects of the drought (coupled with a stalled housing

Green Industry contractors in North Carolina are adjusting their businesses to meet what they see as ongoing restrictions on outdoor watering.

market) are still being felt. The state's Green Industry is far from returning to "business as usual."

In terms of landscape irrigation, it's not likely that will happen anytime soon.

Apart from the water restrictions that local and regional authorities imposed, which are likely to become year-round, Gov. Mike Easley this summer signed a bill giving the state the power to order water restrictions. The law allows the state to order local or regional water providers to ratchet up to a more severe level of restrictions. Also, the bill requires local authorities to file drought conservation plans with the state. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources could reject plans that it believes wouldn't save enough water.

Bland says his family-run business lost "tens of thousands of dollars" in installations this past fall thanks to overly strict irrigation restrictions and "shattered customer confidence." Even so, it kept some of that business going by trucking reclaimed water to clients' landscapes. Some communities offered

reclaimed water free as long as landscapers took a two-hour educational course and had their trucks examined and properly marked. But hauling reclaimed water was an expensive proposition. Fuel and labor costs added up quickly, says Bland.

"I'd rather take a hit on the bottom line than not have a top line," he says.

"With the drought last year, our installations and the irrigation business slowed dramatically," adds Chris Lambert, sales manager of Carolina Outdoor Care, Raleigh. "We had a significant amount of revenue we had to replace. We've had to change."

Lambert beefed up the company's maintenance division to generate revenue. "Fortunately, we also had some good relationships in the commercial

Chris Lambert



A MODEL FOR CONSERVATION IN THE EAST?

The City of Cary is a perennial selection by national magazines as one of the most livable cities in the United States. With Raleigh, the state capital, nearby and surrounded by Duke University, North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina, Cary is ideally located for growth.

The entire region experienced incredible development in the past decade, with Cary in the forefront — thanks, in part to the presence of The Research Triangle Park, the region's economic driver. The RTP is an enclave of high-tech research and development with more than 150 operations employing 39,000 people on 7,000 acres (most of it pine woods) just off I-40.

Cary also leads the region's population growth and development. Its population grew by 43,000 in 1990 and now exceeds more than 114,000. Planners expect it to double again within the next 20 years.

Development and concerns over meeting future needs, as much as the region's periodic droughts, drive the city's aggressive water conservation efforts. Cary's palette of regulations governing the use of city-supplied water for landscape irrigation is more representative of those in place in cities in the arid U.S. Southwest rather than in the usually verdant East. After all, Cary and surrounding communities average 44 inches of precipitation annually. And even during last year's devastating drought, that part of North Carolina received 36 inches of precipitation. Compare that to the 12 inches of rain that Los Angeles averages annually.

Here are the measures directed at landscape irrigation that Cary has instituted to conserve water:

- ▶ A **tiered water rate**. The more municipally supplied water that you use, the more you pay. For homeowners, the cost goes from a minimum charge of \$3.28 per 1,000 gal. to a maximum of \$10.83 per 1,000 gal.
- ▶ A **"turf buy back" program** offering homeowners a one-time incentive of \$500 to replace their fescue lawns with warm-season turfgrasses that the city says are more water-efficient.
- ▶ Readily **available reclaimed water** for landscape irrigation, either in bulk or through approximately 20 miles of pipeline across several different sections of the city. Cary was the first city in the state in 2001 to pump treated wastewater to homes and businesses for landscape irrigation.
- ▶ **Separate meters** required for indoor and outdoor water use.
- ▶ Water and sewer **"development fees"** for new construction to offset the infrastructure costs of serving new development. The development fee for a new 2,500 sq. ft. home is \$5,281; for a new 150,000-sq.-ft. office building, it's \$130,230.
- ▶ Aggressive **ongoing public education** focusing on outdoor water conservation.

Landscape professionals say that Cary is far from the easiest city in the region in which to do business. But they also admit the city has been the most progressive in terms of educating its residents to water conservation.



market. That's helped us to cover our overhead and keep moving," he adds.

When the region's installation business dried up, Carolina Outdoor Care lost two irrigation technicians. Lambert now takes on more of that part of the business. This season, bulk of his irrigation business has been servicing and repairing systems that sat idle through the drought, he says.

Erich Kolb and a partner founded Triangle Green Scene in 1993 and has guided it through several droughts.

"A little bit of drought and hot sunny



PHOTO COURTESY: WHITE OAK LANDSCAPING & IRRIGATION

When John Feagans and Ryan Jones started White Oak Landscaping and Irrigation, Clayton, NC, 10 years ago, they never dreamed they would be installing rainwater harvesting systems. This season they were — more than a few.

Rapid urban development in and around Raleigh, the state capital, is now straining the region's ability to meet its potable water demands. Everyone's eyes are now open to the region's water challenges as a result of the drought of 2007 that prompted severe watering restrictions.

PHOTO COURTESY, TRIANGLE GREEN SCENE

weather is good because everybody starts thinking about putting in an irrigation system. But this drought was bad," says Kolb. "My phone quit ringing for new irrigation systems." Although not as dramatic, calls for other services such as fall aerations and overseeding also declined.

"We looked for alternative services rather than plant and irrigation sales. We marketed more hardscaping. We looked harder at our maintenance," he adds.

Kolb says he feels the recent drought marks a turning point for the region in terms of residents' heightened per-

ception of water conservation and of the importance of efficient landscape irrigation.

"I'm confident we'll see a lot more installations again. People have busy lifestyles and they want their homes to have all the features, and they expect to have irrigation," he says. "But I think you'll see people wanting better-designed systems. They're getting more concerned about water and how they're using it. I think contractors are going to have to become more professional.

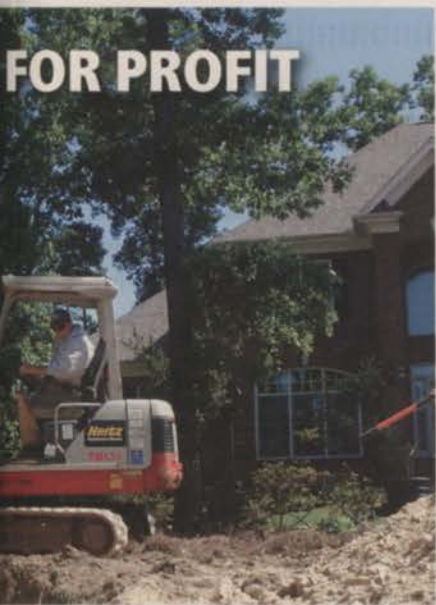
"I think you will see people wanting better-designed irrigation systems."

— Erich Kolb



"The drought has made everybody in this business think and readjust," adds Kolb. "And that's just what we're doing too." **LM**

FOR PROFIT



"Once the irrigation started getting shut down we had a meeting in the company to talk about ways we could serve our customers and generate income for the company," says Feagans. "We researched rainwater harvesting and determined it was something that we could do. Within three weeks we went from getting the idea to having five people sitting in a classroom learning all we could about installing these systems."

Company management spent weeks researching the Internet for suppliers and vendors. Then it got as much formal

training as it could before it began offering a service new to the region.

"We worked through what we were going to do with rainwater harvesting in the office a hundred times before we ever went out on a site," says Feagans.

The results so far have been modest but encouraging.

"It's not enough to support the whole company," he says. "But I think it's starting to take off."

Feagans says that customers generally want rainwater harvesting systems for their trees, shrubs and landscape beds more than for their turfgrass. They like being off public water systems, and the availability of a free source of water when they want it for whatever reason.

"The systems usually don't provide enough capacity to keep the grass happy but they can keep the expensive landscape plants alive during a drought," he says. "We can always reseed and re-establish the grass once the rain starts."

White Oak Landscaping & Irrigation installs a variety of systems. It depends upon the size and layout of the customers' property, the amount of capacity they want and, of course, their budget.

"People don't like being told they can't use their water at all," says Feagans. "If they have a 3,000-sq.-ft. roof area, we can give them 1,500 to 2,000 gallons of

water every time we get an inch of rain."

The smallest system they offer provides 500 gallons of water capacity. "That's about as small as you're going to go," he says. "I can't imagine doing the plumbing and installing a cistern and pump for anything smaller than that." As a point of reference, the cost of a 2,500-gallon system for a customer runs in the \$6,000-\$7,000 range, "a big pill to swallow," he admits. But, like him, many property owners are beginning to realize that the availability of public potable water for landscape irrigation is going to get more restrictive — and expensive.

"People are going to start paying a premium for irrigation water," says Feagans. "This region is going to continue growing and developing, and water is going to get more precious here."

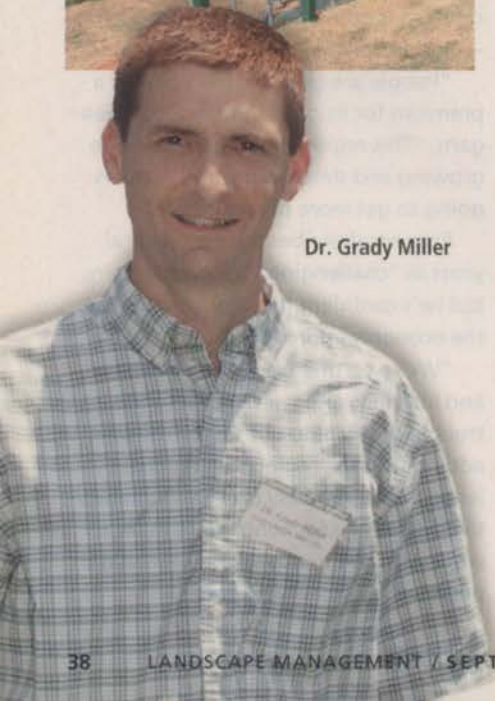
Feagans describes the past several years as "challenging" for his company, but he's confident it will grow again as the economy improves.

"We're certified irrigation designers and installers and we've gone to the trouble of learning our trade," he says, adding that the region's water challenges will ultimately provide a competitive advantage for contractors that can work with communities and their water purveyors in conserving water.



Using science to aid water policy

NCSU researchers are taking the mystery out of landscape irrigation with a multi-year study.



Dr. Grady Miller

Plants don't waste water; people do. That's one of the mantras of irrigation designers and installers.

It's not that homeowners and property managers intentionally waste water, especially if it costs them money. It's just that few of them are aware about how much, when and where, when it comes to landscape irrigation. Some irrigate on the premise that if a little water is good, more water is great.

Their understanding of automatic systems is generally not much better. It's often best described as "set it and forget it."

A small team of North Carolina State University professors is in the middle of a three-year study to take the mystery out of watering turfgrass for property owners. They've set up a research project to quantify how much water is needed to keep turfgrass healthy and attractive. They're also evaluating what types of irrigation management systems work best for their region.

"It's a two-fold study," says Dr. Grady Miller, professor and extension specialist. "We're testing technology, but we also have the turfgrass telling us what to expect. For example, just because one technology might put out less water, if the grass looks bad, that technology will not be acceptable to a homeowner."

"We want a technology that doles out the water as the plant needs it and is efficient in doing that — while still maintaining acceptable turf quality."

The NCSU team's findings to this point suggest that keeping turfgrass healthy and attractive doesn't require as much water as most property owners seem to think. Irrigating two days a week works fine, even during the mid-South's hot summers.

"There is no reason to water every day," says Dr. Garry Grabow, assistant professor of biological and agricultural engineering.

Grabow, Miller, Dr. Rod Huffman, also a professor of biological and agricultural engineering, and crop sciences professor Dr. Dan Bowman installed

5,000 sq. ft. of turf-type tall fescue sod at the university's Lake Wheeler Turfgrass Field Laboratory in the fall of 2006. They divided the turfgrass into 40 experimental plots and began watering it with 160 sprinkler heads controlled by an automatic irrigation system.

Some plots are watered daily; others are watered once or twice a week. All the watering is done between 12:30 a.m. and 6 a.m. daily.

All of the irrigation systems have rain shut-off switches — a valuable and inexpensive system feature that more than pays for itself in water savings, the researchers say.

"We're comparing the irrigation technologies against the standard type of operation," says Grabow. "We'll also compare how much water they use and what we think the turf required. We'll also compare the turf quality."

So far, the researchers have been most impressed with the results obtained by using soil moisture sensing. It has delivered the best combination of turf quality and water savings to date. The soil moisture sensors, placed five inches below grade in the plots, activate irrigation when soil moisture drops below a pre-set level. Once the soil moisture increases to the desired level, the system turns off.

"It did not apply the least amount of water," Grabow admits. "But it applied what I would consider the right amount of water to provide good quality turf."

The researchers are also evaluating satellite-controlled irrigation control, which uses weather data to determine evapotranspiration to provide a measure of when to water. It, too, has shown promise, and the researchers are tweaking the system to see if they can get just the right amount of irrigation to maintain turf quality in their region of the country.

As team members evaluate various irrigation systems and measure irrigation frequencies and water use, they're also rating the condition of the turfgrass. They're rating it visually on a scale of 1 to 9, and measuring its canopy temperature as it relates to each irrigation program.

Regardless of the potential water savings, property owners are not going to embrace any irrigation system if it



The project at the NCSU Lake Wheeler Turfgrass Field Lab seeks practical information concerning turfgrass irrigation. 1 Dr. Bir Thapa with soil-water moisture probe. 2 Back side of controller box with atmometer (left) and weather station (right). 3 Dr. Grabow at the controls of the "on-demand" system that NCSU is evaluating. 4 Grad student Arjun Vasanth installs a soil-water sensor.

doesn't deliver an acceptable quality of turfgrass, says Grabow.

The NCSU research project has attracted the attention of officials from several communities in and around the region.

"We are working closely with several municipalities," says Grabow. "We want to make sure they make policy that is scientific and is based on sound science."

He adds that, based upon what the researchers ultimately find out, local water providers may want to consider incentives for property owners to purchase technologies that offer the best combination of water savings and acceptable turfgrass.

"Some of these technologies may be able to almost take the untrained homeowner out of the irrigation equation, regardless of whether they have restrictions," explains Miller. "Perhaps it's a sensor that will override the controller and keep the irrigation from coming on when the soil moisture is adequate, but wait until the next available cycle, which might be a day or two later."

"We see a lot of people who have an irrigation system installed but when the installer leaves that might be the last time they worry about it until there's a problem," he adds.

The Center for Turfgrass Environment Research and Education at NCSU is funding the research effort. **LJM**



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we know the worth of water.”

— Benjamin Franklin



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The bright lights of Louisville

BY MIKE SEUFFERT / Associate Editor

Whether you're a veteran or a first-timer to the annual **GIE+EXPO**, Oct. 23-25, you'll discover that Louisville is in the midst of a renaissance. Build some extra time into your trip to really enjoy this vibrant city on the Ohio River. It has a lot to offer in addition to the GIE+EXPO's vast array of outdoor power equipment and its many educational and networking opportunities. Start with Fourth Street Live! the city's mecca for shopping, nightlife, restaurants, dancing and even bowling. Still, if you think you've "Been there, done that," check out these attractions.

1 Louisville Slugger Museum. It's hard not to notice the six-story-tall baseball bat in Louisville's famous "Museum Row" in the West Main District of downtown. If you haven't been there, take the tour and find out exactly how a tree falling in the forest gets into the hands of your favorite Major Leaguers. If you have seen the tour, you still

might want to check out "Play Ball, Mr. President," a limited-time exhibition just in time for the upcoming presidential election that celebrates the rousing and historic connection between our national pastime and the Oval Office. The exhibit closes Nov. 9. sluggermuseum.com

2 Churchill Downs. Host of the most famous two minutes in sports, Churchill Downs kicks off the horseracing season with The Kentucky Derby. But even though that's held the first Sat-



urday in May, you can still get an up-close look at all the action through the Barn

and Backside Tour at Churchill Downs. Get there early, as museum tour guides take up to 12 guests on a one-hour tour of Churchill Downs' barn and stable areas. As an added bonus, if you are still in town, the fall racing season kicks off on Sunday, Oct. 26. derbymuseum.org

3 Speed Museum. Not an homage to NASCAR, the Speed Museum is home to a permanent collection of more than 12,000 pieces on display that span 6,000 years of history. Pieces range from ancient Egyptian artifacts to contemporary art. Running through the end of the year is the exhibit "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness: American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery." speedmuseum.org

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4 Muhammad Ali Center / Frazier International History Museum. These are



two cultural landmarks not to be missed. The Ali Center heralds the life and ideals of world-famous boxer Muhammad Ali, a Louisville native. The center, located in the West Main Street museum district, has interactive exhibits, galleries and public educational programs. The Frazier Museum takes visitors on an unforgettable journey through 1,000 years of history — with interactive displays, multimedia presentations and costumed interpreters. alicenter.org and fraziermuseum.org

5 Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft. Nearby Valhalla Golf Club is hosting the Ryder Cup golf tournament this month, and the city is celebrating with 18 Art Holes at the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft through Oct. 31. Art-

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Top 5 places to dine

Again, any of the restaurants along Fourth Street Live! are perfect for entertaining yourself, clients and friends, and for networking. But you'll find plenty more unique Louisville dining options around town.

- 1. Blue Dog Café and Bakery.** This artesian bakery, with its \$50,000 Spanish wood-fired oven, set a new standard for quality bread in Louisville. Perfect for breakfast or lunch, the bistro-style restaurant has an European feel to it, particularly in quality. 502/899-9800
- 2. Avalon.** Located in the heart of the eclectic Highlands district, Avalon offers American cuisine with a creative twist, award-winning wines, warm and attentive customer service and an atmosphere that will energize anyone's night out. Open for lunch or dinner, indoors or out on the patio. avalonfresh.com
- 3. Lynn's Paradise Café.** Unique and quirky, Lynn's Paradise Café offers "down home" cooking, wacky decor and genuine Southern hospitality. The fun and family-friendly atmosphere, the World of Swirl gift shop, and its central "Louisville-Highlands" location have made the café a popular destination. lynnsparadisecafe.com

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ists, architects, engineers, Boy Scouts and more are creating 18 fully functioning and unusual putt-putt courses open to the public for entertainment. mellwoodartcenter.com



6 Louisville Zoo. The zoo is always a fun stop, and if you bring your family to town, you won't want to miss the World's Largest Halloween Party running Oct. 23-26. The party is a not-too-scary Halloween event for everyone. It features larger-than-life costumed characters, fanciful storybook scenes and trick-or-treating for the 11-and-under set. louisvillezoo.org

7 Six Flags Kentucky Kingdom. Speaking of Halloween, Six Flags (found right outside the convention center and expo area) hosts Fright Fest throughout October. Come for the rides in the day; stay at

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4. Seviche: A Latin Restaurant. Seviche restaurant has only been open for two years, but in that short time, chef/owner Anthony Lamas has been honored with accolades, including "Best New Restaurant" and "Best Restaurant in Louisville." The house specialty is its namesake (also spelled cerviche), a South American dish consisting of raw seafood marinated in a mixture of spices and citrus juices that "cook" it. A sister restaurant, Seviche: A Latin Bistro, opened in 2007. sevicherestaurant.com

5. Lilly's Bistro. Admired both locally and nationwide, Lilly's food continues to be innovating and inspiring, celebrating the freshness of regional produce. The food is styled from Chef Kathy Cary's own Kentucky heritage and the foods of the American South. lillyslapeche.com

Plus, while you're in Louisville, you can't miss the chance to have a drink at the Seelbach Hotel, enjoy the famous "hot browns" at the Brown Hotel, sip a mint julep and make your way across Kentucky's Bourbon Trail. Plus, there's plenty more to explore and find. The fine folks at the Louisville Visitors Bureau are ready to help you make this year's GIE+EXPO your best trip ever. Visit www.gotolouisville.com.

And don't forget, GIE+EXPO has lined up its usual array of fantastic entertainment, including live concerts on Fourth Street Live! from 38 Special and Lonestar this year. Visit www.gie+expo for details.



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Arysta LifeScience

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night for the ghosts and goblins, as the park is transformed into a haunted house. sixflags.com/kentuckykingdom

8 Glassworks. Located next door to the Louisville Slugger Museum is

another hot attraction. Glassworks is the only facility of its kind in the country, bringing together an array of glass artists and galleries in one location. Visitors will experience a rich



portrayal of the magic, mystery and beauty of glass. Tour the flameworking, ar-

chitectural glass and glassblowing studios, and learn about the extensive variety of artistic glass-working techniques through the demonstrating artists. Try your hand at creating your own work of glass art with advice from the resident artists. Saturday, Oct. 25, Glassworks will host The Great Pumpkin Blow from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

louisvilleglassworks.com

9 Belle of Louisville. The steamer Belle of Louis-

ville, a national historic landmark, and the riverboat Spirit of Jefferson serve as the western anchor of the city's award-winning Waterfront Park in downtown Louisville.

On Saturday, Oct. 25, The Belle of Louisville hosts its last Oktoberfest cruise of the season. The three-hour cruise includes a delicious German-style buffet and special entertainment.

belleoflouisville.org

10 Hidden Hill Nursery. Here's a special tenth attraction just for the

landscape crowd, Hidden Hill Nursery & Sculpture Garden is a unique mini-arboretum, sculpture gallery and unusual plant nursery in southern Indiana, about 8 miles from Louisville. Founded by longtime Louisville newspaper columnist Bob Hill, Hidden Hill offers whimsy, fun, puns, an outdoor model train, great benches and fountains, exotic trees and shrubs and lots of solitude in a rural setting. If you can find it, admittance is free. Here's a hint to finding it: Visit www.hiddenhillnursery.com. If traveling with a group, call ahead at 812/280-0347. **LM**



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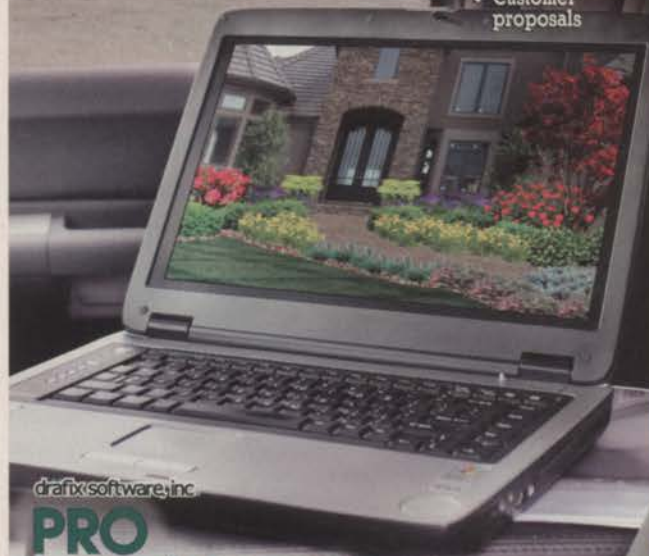
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Lawn Care Pro

BUSINESS

LM'S OPERATOR OF THE MONTH



Jon Cundiff »

Co-owner, Weed Man, Kansas City BY JAMES E. GUYETTE

Jon Cundiff, co-owner with his wife, Vicky, of Weed Man Kansas City, hit the ground running at age 16 with his first Green Industry position — serving under the legendary George Toma on the Kansas City Royals and Chiefs ground crew.

"George taught us a lot of lessons," Cundiff says. Most importantly, Toma instilled in his young charges the notion of "what it took to be the best." This entailed "that you had to do your job and then some; success came to those who persevere and pay attention to detail."

Cundiff has scored with those concepts over the years through active participation in industry organizations.

"I may be prejudiced, but I believe association involvement is the best thing you can do to grow as a professional in your industry," he says. "The networking amongst your peers is worth every penny you invest. You will learn valuable lessons as well as develop long-lasting relationships."

You were selected as a PLANET "Trailblazer" to assist other up-and-coming Green Industry participants. How has this worked out for you and your students, and what lessons have you gained from the experience? The Trailblazer program is one of the best values PLANET offers. It gives an opportunity to network with other professionals on a one-to-one basis. Interestingly, I learn as much from the

people I work with as they learn from me. We continue to visit from time to time. Networking within PLANET is the biggest asset it has to offer.

What led you to start your own business?

I had worked for a couple of other lawn companies in the area after the stadium. I always wanted to be an entrepreneur.

How do you motivate your employees to provide the necessary customer service?

Every company has a culture, either positive or negative. As leaders, it is our job to provide a positive company culture. This, in turn, transcends to professionals on the front line to carry that culture into the field and provide positive experiences for customers.

What has been the impact of the slowing economy on your customer base? How have you been able to retain your clients?

The lawn care sector traditionally has fared well through slow periods in the economy. As long as customers continue to feel the value of our service, there is a place for us.

What is the impact of higher fuel prices on your business? Obviously, gasoline prices have caused a major concern in the industry. I think as professional business people, we have to look at all avenues to reduce waste and be more efficient.

AT A GLANCE

- Founded: 1987
- Number of outlets: 1
- Employees: 20
- Education/certifications: Bachelor's of science degree in marketing; Master Lawn and Landscape Professional (MLLP)
- Industry involvement: Served as president of the Mid America Green Industry Council (MAGIC), and was also president of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA). He currently is on the Professional Landcare Network Governance Committee in addition to being a PLANET "Trailblazer."
- Business outlook: "Be positive and never stop trying to improve."
- Personal highlights/hobbies: Personal highlight was serving on the PLCAA Board of Directors; hobbies include golf and other sports.
- Family: Married to Vicky, who co-owns the business, for 24 years; twin boys Brandon and Cameron Cundiff
- Web site: www.weedmanusa.com

What are the biggest challenges going forward for the Green Industry? We need to keep promoting our industry to recruit quality people. Gas and fertilizer prices, and the economy as a whole, are sizeable challenges we will face well into the future. Legislative issues continue to be an area of concern. We also need to keep promoting the value we bring to homeowners on a daily basis. We are a great industry and have a great story to tell.

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

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Some of our normal routines are not necessary every visit.

Labor's quality side key

BY BRUCE WILSON

High quality and high profit margins go hand in hand if you properly manage your crews on job sites. The biggest key is prioritizing work around the key quality drivers.

Our maintenance crews become creatures of habits. They get into routines, and are very good at doing the same things each week on their weekly visits.

This can be good and bad. Quality probably will be good if they have everything in the way of job requirements in their routines and have enough time to complete them. But unfortunately, things do come up that upset routines: A piece of equipment might malfunction. A crew member might not show up. The property might suffer vandalism, vehicle damage or malfunctioning irrigation.

Most of our crews do not adjust well to these disruptions, and sometimes entire jobs are impacted. Some struggle for weeks trying to get back "on routine." In the meantime, quality suffers.

However, if your managers are on top of their jobs, and trained to expect the expected, they can jump in and fix a lot in a hurry. The key is to repriori-

tize all tasks, focusing on those that best strengthen each client's perception of high quality.

Examine and redefine routines

Some of our normal routines are not necessary every visit. The challenge is training your crew leaders to recognize this, and make the right decisions as to which tasks remain essential and which ones can be delayed a until the next visit.

Crew leaders often end up being lead workers, operating large mowers and not seeing the whole jobs and prioritizing the work when they arrive at the job sites.

Field managers must have effective feedback systems from their crew leaders, letting them know when they did not complete the field work or when something unexpected triggered a delay.

Also, field managers must visit their jobs as frequently as practical — with their crews present.

They should walk the jobs with their crew leaders and coach them on how to set these quality-driven labor priorities.

While time-consuming, these processes are essential to training crews on better managing and monitoring labor. To ignore the quality side of the labor issue is a huge gamble.

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





Business Benchmarking

BUSINESS

CLOSING TIPS

Marketing and sales are **NOT** the same thing.
Marketing creates leads;
sales closes opportunities.



Sales growth drives success

BY KEVIN KEHOE

Almost every business hurdle can be pole vaulted with increased sales volume. Revenues drive up leverage ratios faster than any cost reduction. Each **leverage ratio*** has revenues in the numerator. Increase revenues in relation to labor, overhead and equipment costs (the denominator), and the ratios rise quickly.

Most companies do not have robust enough marketing and sales functions. They invest more in operations/production functions than they do in marketing and sales. By the way, marketing and sales are not the same thing. Marketing creates leads; sales closes opportunities.

Many customers are lazy and ignorant — lazy in the sense that they don't want to work hard to make a purchase, and ignorant in that they often are uneducated about what they are buying. With this in mind, your integrated marketing-and-sales strategy must:

- ▶ **Maximize positive touches.** Frequent contact and message simplicity minimizes the customer's work to find and understand you.
- ▶ **Differentiate by selling a "program."** Solution-based programs maximize customer education and risk awareness.
- ▶ **Communicate related services to existing clients.** Regular news increases referrals and makes it easy for customers to remember you first when their needs expand.

The 3 Ps

Sales strategy focuses on the 3 Ps: price, pipeline and process. The reality is that customers do not care about your costs. They care about what they pay. Keeping this in mind:

- ▶ **Price competitively in every market segment.**

Deploy a pricing model that enables you to maximize closing rates and profit at the same time. It makes no sense competing in a segment where you are consistently the highest-price vendor. It is a waste of time and money.

- ▶ **Manage your sales pipeline ruthlessly.** Too much sales time is misapplied in low-value activities. If there are 50 sales hours per week for a full-time person, manage every one of them.

▶ **Professionalize the sales process.** Selling is not about throwing a number at a customer and defending it. Selling is a process of making a friend, and educating a lazy and ignorant buyer. Knowing how to do this is part science, part art — and very trainable.

Do not get fixated on selling at a pre-determined gross margin percentage. This creates enormous price inflexibility. Instead, focus on selling enough gross profit dollars. After all, dollars pay expenses, not percentages.

In a down economy, your best investment is in sales and marketing. Nothing solves a profit problem like more sales.

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

***NOTE:** Revisit the leverage ratio definitions in the July and August issues of this column.

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PROVEN SOLUTIONS

Don't just accept the first right answer.
Dig deeper into the root cause
of the waste and fix it.



Are you processing lean?

BY JIM PALUCH

Most problems and waste in companies occur when processes are not clearly defined and communicated in ways that allow people to work smarter. Be hard on your processes and soft on your people. Most employees want to do good jobs and will help their companies improve if they are just given opportunities, respect and recognition.

Value versus waste

To begin to understand lean, an understanding of value and waste must be realized first. Value is whatever the customer is willing to pay for, while waste is everything else.

You might be saying, "I can't deliver the value without all of the other stuff." That is half correct — and that is why *some* of the other stuff is called necessary waste. But a working smarter company will find ways of identifying and eliminating the unnecessary waste.

What is the customer willing to pay for (value)? All the customer wants is a beautiful-looking landscape and lawn with no problems.

What is everything else (waste)? Loading trucks, cleaning equipment, sharpening blades, transportation, edging beds, dumping debris, hiring and training employees, creating contracts, running copies, etc. Everything listed here is a process. In future columns, I will address process mapping, but for now, just

know each of these things are processes necessary to delivering the value. And within each process, there is waste that needs to be identified and eliminated.

Hard on processes

In a lean culture, being hard on the process has several key points. The first is using lean tools to dissect and analyze each process to the point where waste is identified and actions are taken to eliminate it.

Don't just accept the first "right" answer. Dig deeper into the root cause of the waste and fix it.

Never be complacent. Instead, commit to continually improve each process over and over again.

Soft on people

I recently toured the Toyota plant in Georgetown, KY, and was amazed with the culture. They give recognition for everything from perfect attendance to great solutions. They respect every opinion and give employees the opportunity to stop the assembly line any time if they think there are better ways of doing things.

What have the employees given in return? They produce a car every 55 seconds, up to 2,000 a day. They have thousands of employees with perfect attendance each year, and more than 100 employees who have not missed a day since the plant opened more than two decades ago. Are you beginning to process lean yet?

— *The author is president of JP Horizons Inc., and has partnered with Ariens and hundreds of other companies to develop the Working Smarter Training Challenge.*

To learn how you can benefit from being involved in the program, visit www.jp horizons.com and explore.

MONTHLY CHALLENGE

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Are you easily offended?

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS / Managing Editor

I have to confess to being a little confused. I don't know if my opening sentence to this month's cover story is inappropriate. It's certainly not meant to offend. The goal was to be engaging, entertaining and to draw you in to the story and make you want to read further. I realize that the vast majority of our readers are male so there is less of a chance of angering someone than if the article appeared in, say, *O, the Oprah Winfrey* magazine.

But that's not really the point. If it's offensive, it shouldn't appear anywhere. And herein lies my confusion. Is what is funny to someone and offensive to another truly offensive? Does the problem lie with the intent or the inference?

Living in Northeast Ohio, I'm a fan of the Cleveland Indians. Every season, a few people stand with their signs protesting the name and Chief Wahoo, the long-lasting caricature that for decades has appeared on all types of merchandise. The name, the story goes, was meant to honor Louis Sockalexis, a Native American from the Penobscot tribe and one of the team's legendary players. So if the intent was to honor, where's the slight?

In this politically correct (a phrase I've come to despise) world, intention doesn't seem to matter. If someone is offended, the offense must be rectified. While he's not been officially banned, the image of Chief Wahoo shows up on fewer items than it once did. Only decades of tradition and the anger of tens of thousands of fans keeps the team name alive.

Recently, a Kentucky man and long-shot gubernatorial candidate, Otis "Bullman" Hensley was arrested

after making a joke in a local grocery store. A woman with two young daughters was outraged when he offered "to trade her a fattening hog for those girls." He meant it as both a compliment and a joke (the phrase is a generation's old Appalachian jest). She called the police. Was it in poor taste and boorish — yes. Was it inappropriate — perhaps. Was it criminal? No.

Our company's employee handbook has an entire section on harassment (as do most companies these days). It specifies inappropriate behavior — verbal, non-verbal and physical. I'd like to think that reasonable adults can work together, joke together, have fun and know not to cross "that line." We often tease each other about a "Page 5" violation — named for the spot in the handbook outlining the harassment rules and policies.

If I make a joke that causes a problem, I might get named in the lawsuit, but no one's going to collect millions from me. That's coming from the company. That is the key nightmare managers face and the reason for employee handbooks, lawyers and sensitivity training.

My point? Truly offensive behavior and harassment don't belong in the work place. But when does boorish become insensitive and insensitive become illegal? I'm not sure, but I do know you'd better have detailed employee policies and procedures in place to cover your a... Make that protect your business.

.....
Contact Dan at
216/706-3754 or e-mail at
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In this politically correct world, intent
doesn't seem to matter





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A villa in the sun

A journey to Italy inspires a homeowner and challenges his landscaper to bring a little of Old Tuscany to the Old West.

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS /
Managing Editor

Law restricts the amount of turfgrass for use in a landscape. This project uses none at all.

Thousands of people visit Europe every year and return home with souvenirs and photos of their travels. For one Nevada resident, though, that wasn't enough: He wanted to bring home the look and feel of the Italian countryside.

With photographs in hand and a clear vision, the homeowner approached Dan Bishop, chief operations officer of D&K Landscape, Las Vegas, and expressed his desire for a landscape that reminded him of his recent journey.

Bishop, along with Pete Battisti, D&K's design development manager, worked

with the owner and the homebuilder to create a plan that would make any Italian feel like he was looking at the motherland. Perched on a hill, the corner lot in Henderson, NV, transformed from an arid turfless plot into a Tuscan villa complete with grapevines and a stone archway — resembling an actual surviving remnant from an allied World War II bombing run.

"A lot of homeowners don't have any ideas," Bishop says. "They kind of know what they want, but they don't know how to interpret it. We were lucky enough to start with a good base, have a good client with some great ideas. We got to take our paintbrush over them."

D&K's brush strokes filled the canvas with a number of points of interest.

Grapevines hang in the atrium
continued on page 62



ROUND

2



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JOHN DEERE

continued from page 60

next to the fountains. There is a breeze-way, with (Lady) Banks rose climbing to a second-story casita. Leave that area and you pass the pool "and there's this amazing built-in barbecue that leads to



that stone archway," says Bishop, who expects D&K to record revenue of \$9.5 million this year.

The arch resembles a building bombed in WWII. A fountain is the atrium's focus.

The archway was one of the most difficult challenges. The company only had the homeowner's photos to go on. Bishop turned to a stonemason the company uses to create the structure.

"We ended up incorporating that into the back yard," Bishop says. "It is identical to the actual structure that was overseas. It turned out really well."

Through the archway, a visitor travels over a bridge that spans a dry riverbed complete with pieces of pottery. A little further on is another seating area. Continue through the north side of the property, where D&K installed pavers that trace a meandering walkway past a wall fountain. A different style of pavers was used to create the driveway.

The company created a number of focal points around the home. And

continued on page 64

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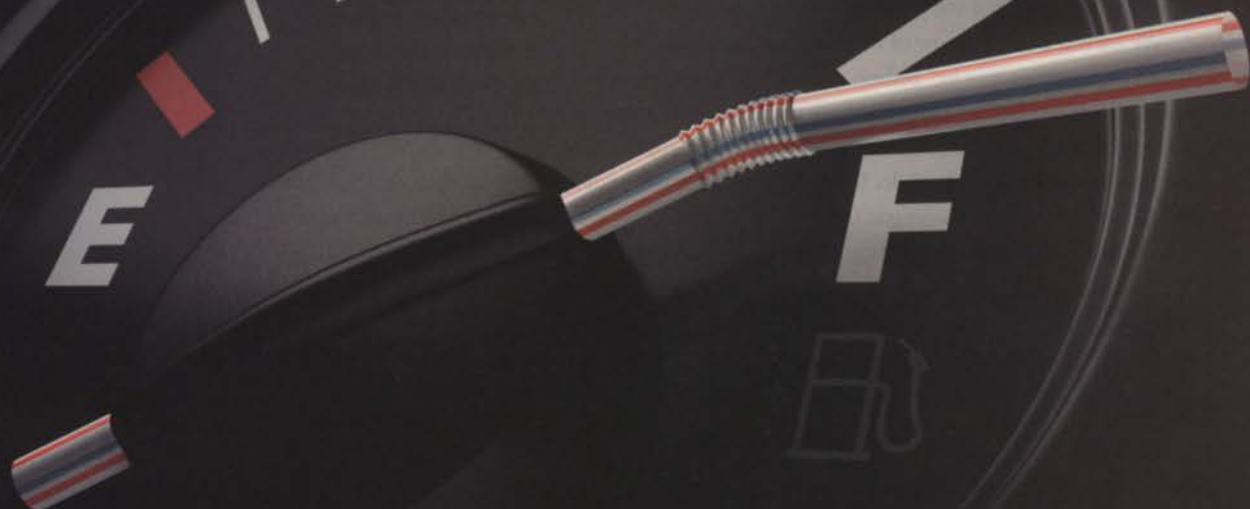
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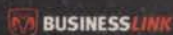
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continued from page 62

because the homebuilding and landscaping coincided, Bishop and Battisti were able to work with the homebuilder to ensure that everything meshed.

"You could pull up a chair and sit in one of six different places on this property and feel like you're in a (different) tranquil environment," Bishop says. "You don't feel like you're in Las Vegas when you're on this property. It seems like something out of the Mediterranean."

Tiered plantings

Early on in the project, D&K installed a double boulder retaining wall to work within the property's massive slope.

"We carved a bottom row of boulders and then tiered it off and put another row in," Bishop explains. "In that row, we made some nice planting beds. We have the rosemary creeping over the boulders. It layered the front yard. It was the foundation for what we were able to do. Once we designed that boulder wall, the ideas were coming at us."

D&K did much of the hardscaping and all of the softscap-



Stone work on the outdoor kitchen and pavers marking pathways through the property complement the color and style of the materials used to build the home.



ing, using some 15 different species of trees and plants.

In many of the plantings, D&K was able to use authentic Italian materials, including cypresses, olive trees and crepe myrtles. Other times, D&K was forced to substitute native vegetation.

"We were able to use a significant amount of hardy plant material that does well in this valley," says Battisti. "We were able to make that connection while giving the property an authentic look. That was my biggest challenge — to correspond plant material that does well to promote the longevity of this project. Another big challenge was giving the appropriate aesthetic, to really convince the client of the type of plant material we use in this valley. We did a successful job in the way the lot was set up."

Among the native plantings D&K used are Japanese boxwoods for hedging, Russian sage as accents on the hillside, mock orange, Indian hawthorn, star jasmine, lantanas, heavenly bamboo, rosemary, red fountain grass, Vitex and chaise trees.

Because the company was able to create a site without turf (laws in the state limit turf), the project earned recognition at the 2008 Southern Nevada Water Authority Landscape Awards. The Nevada Chapter of American Society of Landscape Architects honored the landscape with the Award of Excellence.

It's not about the awards for Bishop and Battisti, though they use the project to show potential clients how beautiful turfless landscaping can be. For Battisti, who is studying for his Landscape Architecture licensing test, it's about working with a vision and creating something that will continue to delight for a long time.

continued on page 66

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The pool with an infinity edge is surrounded by the many varieties of plants used in the landscape. Stones used in the retaining walls match those in the steps and home.



continued from page 64

"Landscape really is a living thing," Battisti says. "The beginning has to have a vision to be a successful project. It doesn't stop there; it has to trickle all the way to the end. Because that landscape is a living thing, you have to be flexible to change with the landscape as it gets older so the quality of the project really doesn't go south." **LM**

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The design

The Miami homeowner wanted a tropical resort-like oasis in which to relax and entertain.

Project Requirements

- Budget range: \$400,000 to \$450,000
- Provide a peaceful environment
- Integrate existing vegetation with new plantings



BEFORE

Project Specifics

- Lagoon-style pool
- Outdoor kitchen
- Raised spa

ABOVE The spa features a vanishing edge spilling over a natural stone face.

RIGHT Selected plant material included a combination of native and exotic species. **INSET** The site provided a blank slate with little more than some mature vegetation.



ABOVE The grid patio not only offers a classic look, it's a good way to reduce runoff.

LEFT Font Designs implemented a solution that included a beach-entry, lagoon-style pool.

BELOW LEFT While a cascading water feature is a highlight of the pool, the firm also designed a raised spa that connected to an outdoor kitchen structure that was built on the site.



Project Principals

- Designed by David Font, Font Designs, Coral Springs, FL www.fontdesigns.net
- Font Designs' many services include landscape and hardscape design, urban planning, irrigation planning, golf course and recreational facility design and streetscapes. With extensive experience in the design of resorts and hotels, the company is known for delivering resort-style living environments.

COOL-SEASON turf disease control

Practical strategies for preventing and controlling common diseases of Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass and turf-type tall fescue BY HENRY WILKINSON, PH.D.

The nights are finally cooler and the grass is growing again. It's time to refresh your plant pathology knowledge. You don't want to get caught by a tough disease — or an even tougher customer unhappy about a diseased lawn.

The key to good turf management (not to mention retaining lawn care customers) is to sustain a consistent quality. This means having a management program that discourages problems like disease.

History as your guide

Perennial patch diseases include take-all patch, summer patch, necrotic ring spot and zoysia patch. If you had these diseases last year, you will very likely have them this year as well. All of these diseases start their yearly development when the soil temperature (at 1-in. soil depth) is about 65°F to 70°F and the soil is moist (irrigation or rain). This is right about now for most readers. However, this is *not* when you or your customer will see the disease:

- ▶ **Take-all patch** starts about May, and you will see it in June.
- ▶ **Summer patch** starts in May, but you may not see it until July, August or September.
- ▶ **Necrotic ring spot** starts in May, but you will see it in September.
- ▶ **Zoysia patch** starts in November and becomes visible in April and May.

Lethal leaf diseases include Pythium

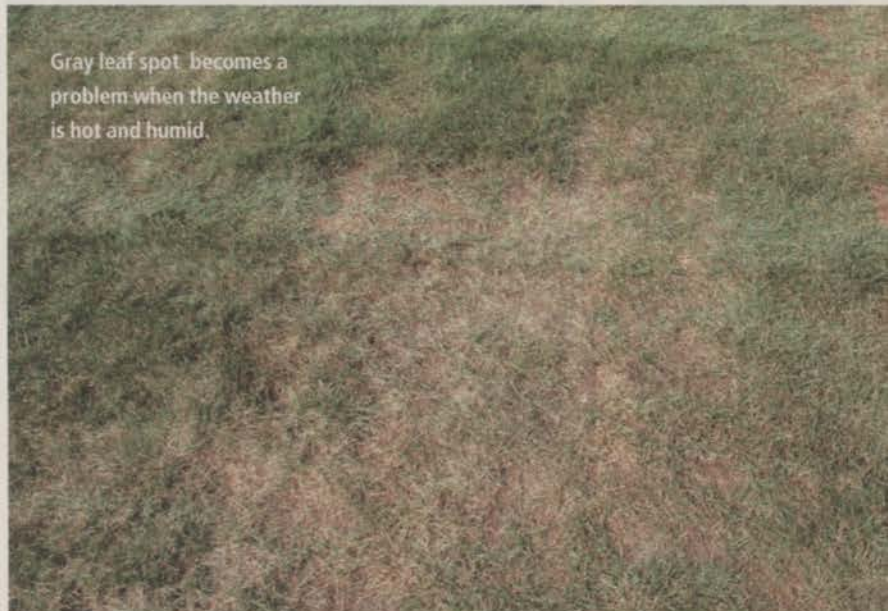
blight and gray leaf spot (GLS). If you had either of these diseases last year, you know that they can kill turf. Will they occur this year? That is mainly dependent on the prevailing weather conditions and health of your turf in July, August and September.

Pythium will attack turf that is rich in nitrogen, when the weather is very humid, calm and hot. Until those conditions develop, you can relax — but keep your eye on the weather.

GLS is mainly a problem on ryegrass. If you have ryegrass, you can relax until the weather in late August and September becomes very hot and humid. Be vigilant: GLS is fast and furious once it starts.

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Gray leaf spot becomes a problem when the weather is hot and humid.



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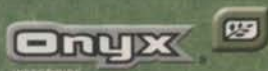


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Non-lethal issues

Non-lethal leaf blights include leaf blight, dollar spot and brown patch. Rarely a season goes by that these foliar blights don't develop. Their individual severity will change each year, depending on the weather and conditions of your turf. However, these diseases don't develop in the crown or roots, and thus are not going to kill your turf. They do cause the turf to be ugly, and they must be managed — but you can do a good job with them.

Leaf blight is most common in damp, dense turf and is most noticeable in April through June and September through October. Dollar spot does best in warm, humid conditions and in turfgrass with nitrogen levels. You can find it anytime from May to October. Brown patch is a disease the blossoms in hot, humid weather and is most prevalent in July and August.

Fairy rings are often more unsightly than damaging. There are hundreds of different types of fungi that cause them. Most of them live in the thatch produced by turf, or they grow from buried organic debris (tree roots and wood). They're perennial, and once you have one they will continue to grow each year. It is difficult to manage them. The fungi that cause them are tough, and they live in the soil. Fungicides only slow them down for



Fairy rings (upper left) are often more unsightly than damaging. Dollar spot can occur anytime from May to October.

a while. The best advice: Explain to your customer that they are natural and will not kill the lawn. You can do the following, but full success is not guaranteed.

To combat fairy rings, consider applying a 1/2-in.-thick layer of natural soil over to them and aerify affected areas. If the ring goes dry, apply a wetting agent to increase water infiltration.

For most readers, you can expect to deal with only four or five of the above diseases.

It's unlikely for you to have to deal with take-all patch, as it only affects bentgrass. GLS only affects ryegrass, and leaf blights are generally short-term and only develop under prolonged cool/wet conditions in the spring.

Know what diseases you are likely to have to deal with, well before they show up.

continued on page 75

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Watch the weather

If you are a turf or landscape manager, it's hard to overemphasize the importance of developing a clear picture of the weather conditions. The growth of turf is directly affected by heat and moisture, and to a lesser extent by fertilization. The most important of these three factors is heat (measured as temperature).

Likewise, the most important factor in determining whether a disease will develop in a turf is heat, so measure it!

To get the best "picture" of the turf's thermal condition:

- ▶ Measure it yourself. Don't rely on TV

or Web weather conditions.

- ▶ Measure the temperature 1 in. below the soil surface or at the base of the leaves.
- ▶ Measure the temperature at about 11 a.m. One hour either way is acceptable, too.
- ▶ Consult the "Temperature" chart with this article to see which diseases might become a problem.

Know your turfgrass

If you want to sustain your career with the best accounts, then you need to understand how turf grows during any given year.

The degree of growth and the exact

CHART 1: Temperatures when pathogens START attacking turf

Disease name	Activation temperature (°F)	Infection site (Where to measure)
Anthraxnose	46-61	base of leaves
Brown patch	80-95	base of leaves
Dollar spot	61-77	leaves
Fairy rings	61-87	thatch layer
Gray leaf spot	85-90	lower leaves
Gray snow mold	32-55	lower leaves
Leaf blights	61-77	leaves
Necrotic ring spot	45-61	roots
Nigrospora blight	61-77	leaves
Pink snow mold	55-68	lower leaves
Powdery mildew	61-77	leaves
Pythium foliar blight	86-100	leaves
Red thread	61-77	leaves
Rusts	61-95	leaves
Smut	50-75	leaves
Summer patch	68-70	roots
Take-all patch	55-60	roots
Yellow patch	46-61	crowns & lower leaves
Yellow ring	61-77	thatch
Yellow tuft	46-61	crowns & leaves

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length of the growth periods vary from year to year and from location to location; but, in general, this is how Kentucky bluegrass (KBG) grows. This chart tells you, the turf manager, when the grass will grow out of a disease and when it will not.

For example, in July and August, a lawn with summer patch is going to recover very slowly because the roots and leaves are also growing very slowly. Adding more water, fertilizer or fungicide at this time is a waste of money, and is bad for the environment. The time to push turf for control of summer patch is April through June.

Have a strategy

Don't wait until disease is developing in your customer's lawn. Predict it, and mark it down on your calendar.



Brown patch (left) is most prevalent in July and August. Summer patch (above) is best controlled April through June.

Identify on your office calendar when each of the four or five main diseases you battle are likely to develop. If they do show up, mark that on the calendar, too.

Once you know which diseases are likely to develop in your area, plan a control strategy:

A preventative chemical program is your best option for controlling take-all patch, summer patch, necrotic ring spot and zoysia patch. These are the killer, soil-borne diseases. Each of them starts to develop on the roots in the spring. (You cannot see this.) If you had one of these diseases last year, don't hesitate to start a preventative program.

Good cultural practices will go a long way in controlling Pythium blight, leaf blight, dollar spot and brown patch. Here are some suggestions:

- ▶ Apply only about 1/2-lb. of fertilizer every two to three weeks.
- ▶ In the case of slow-release products, use no more than 1 lb. every three weeks.
- ▶ Use a balanced fertilizer, or at least one that has N and K in it.
- ▶ Avoid fertilization if the average daily temperature is above 90°F or the night temperature is above 80°F, and the humidity is above 90%.
- ▶ Mow the grass frequently to maintain your normal height of cut.
- ▶ Aerify in the spring.

As you continue to fine tune your disease management program don't hesitate to talk to your friendly turf pathologist. **LM**

— The author is a professor of plant pathology at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, IL. Contact him at hwilkins@uiuc.edu.



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Corporate video blogging is the latest method to grab the attention of both employees and customers.



Candid camera handy

BY TYLER WHITAKER

Are you tired of boring company meetings? Are corporate e-mails going unread? Efficient communication is the backbone of successful, growing organizations. But when traditional forms start to break down, consider using video to communicate with your employees and customers. What better way to get your point across than an up-close-and-personal video from you?

We live in the YouTube generation. Watching video on your computer is fast becoming a daily activity. Your employees are watching everything from Olympics reruns to fountains of Diet Coke powered by Mentos. Let's face it: Video makes even the most mundane events fun and captivating. So why not insert your corporate messages, announcements and training into this constant video stream?

Corporate video blogging is the latest method to grab the attention of both employees and customers. The good news is that producing videos is easier than ever. For most internal office videos, all you need is a webcam like the Live! Cam Optia AF from Creative or the QuickCam Pro 9000 from Logitech. With a webcam, you can send thank-you and follow-up videos to your top sales prospects.

Creating simple office video memos and announcements is also easy using either the free Windows Movie Maker or iMovie on the Mac. For more advanced internal corporate announcements and memos, these simple software packages guide

you through each step of the process, from shooting and editing the video, to adding titles and credits.

For a more professional look and the ability to shoot video away from your desktop, you will want to upgrade to a digital video camera. The sky is the limit when considering video cameras, but you might consider something like Sony's Handycam HDR-SR12. With 120 GB of storage and a 3.2-in. touch screen, this camera will be perfect for shooting your next training session or job site. The higher the onboard memory, measured in gigabytes (GB), and video resolution, measured in megapixels, the better.

Spreading the word

Once you have finished editing the video, the next step is to distribute it to your employees and customers. The first rule to video distribution is: Do not send it as an e-mail attachment. Video is large. Sending it in e-mail just results in lengthy downloads and serious disruptions in e-mail productivity.

There are a number of sites like YouTube.com, Vimeo.com and Seesmic.com where you can upload your videos. The key is linking your corporate videos via your Web site, intranets and e-mail.

One of the best uses for video is for employee training, orientation and frequently asked questions. Using video in your business has never been easier. All you need is a camera, a computer and a free account with an online video sharing website, to capture improved productivity and communication.

— 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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can back in and out of tight places and make turns quickly. This mower has pistol grip control, is offered with a 15- and 17-hp engine, a 5.2-gal. fuel tank and a choice of 32-, 36- or 48-in. mower deck. Adjustable spring tension on the drive pulleys assures maximum power get to the drive wheels.

Contact Wright at 301/360-9810 or www.wrightmfg.com

Walker

The Walker by Walker is a compact, mid-size, walk-behind mower. The 15-hp Kawasaki engine with full-pressure lubrication delivers the power needed to run all Walker side-discharge and mulching decks up to 56 in. — the same full-floating decks that are run on the Walker Rider also mount on the walk-behind, including the deck tilt-up function. Like the Walker Rider, a casting tail wheel on the tractor allows the deck to move independently with flexible deck suspension and spring counter-weighting. A simple forward speed control system and easy-to-use steering controls eliminate thumb locks. Two HydroGear integrated, zero-turn transaxles allow maneuvering into tight areas, trimming close and finishing jobs in one pass.

Contact Walker Mowers at 800/279-8537 or www.walkermowers.com



Bob-Cat

The rugged Bob-Cat hydraulic-drive, walk-behind mower offers exceptional control and productivity with the speed and power to cut up 6 mph with any of its three deck configurations. Fixed and float side discharge decks come in 36-, 48- or 54-in. sizes. Easy-to-use SoftGrip fingertip controls require minimal pressure, and its dual hydraulic pumps with wheel motors allow independent power to each wheel for superior control and maneuverability. The Bob-Cat Hydro is available with a 15- or 17-hp Kawasaki V-Twin air-cooled gas engine (electric start is also available on the 17-hp model). Optional grass catchers, mulching kits and stripping kits are also available.

Contact Bob-Cat at 866/469-1CGC or www.bobcatturf.com

Honda

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Hustler TrimStar Hydro WalkBehinds finish jobs fast, leaving lawns beautifully manicured. The TrimStar's full-floating decks leave uniform, perfectly cut, striped and flawlessly finished grass. The mowers also can cut hours off time-consuming mowing jobs with their patented H-Bar Plus steering systems. With H-Bar, the mower glides over the grass, tightly controlled without effort, steered and slowed without strain, as cruise control holds the TrimStar Hydro at the user's chosen speed. Accessories include a deck-mounted catcher, mulch kits and Roll-On striping sulky. **Contact Hustler Turf Equipment at 800/395-4757 or www.hustlerturf.com**



Better Outdoor Products

Better Outdoor Products introduces a 32-in. hydro walk-behind to its line of Quick mowers. The Quickie 32 is compact, lightweight and easy to maneuver through gates and tight spots. It features a deep tunnel deck, reinforcing deck strut rods, hydrostatic drive, greaseable spindles, comfortable hand controls and is available with Briggs or Kawasaki twin-cylinder engines. Better Outdoor Products provides a 1-year commercial warranty. The mower measures 40.5-in. by 66-in. by 36-in.

Contact Better Outdoor Products at 866/290-7295 or www.betteroutdoor-products.com

John Deere

Equipped with 48- and 54-in. mower decks and powerful engines, the John Deere commercial walk-behind mowers offer the heavy-duty features to withstand tough commercial applications. The 7H Series provides infinitely variable mowing speeds and an immediate positive reverse for various mowing conditions. The foundation of the commercial hydrostatic walk-behind mowers is the John Deere 7-Iron II deck. Deere also offers a two-year, bumper-to-bumper commercial mowing warranty.

Contact John Deere at 800/537-8233 or www.johndeere.com



Toro

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

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Contact Ferris Industries at 800/933-6175 or

www.ferrisindustries.com

Great Dane

Great Dane's Scamper Hydro walk-behind commercial lawn mower has patented drive levers that allow for easy, one-hand trim-

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ming. Available with a 15- or 17-hp engine and 36- or 48-in. deck, the short overall length of this mower easily maneuvers between trees and makes for easy loading on trailers. The Scamper Hydro features dual 10-cc hydraulic pumps and motors; an extra-wide wheel stance for hillside stability; a single-action throttle control lever; patented drive levers for one-hand trimming; and excellent left-side trimming ability.

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Cub Cadet

Tougher than the bolted design found on many mowers, Cub Cadet Commercial walk-behind mowers feature fully welded, one-piece engine platforms and mowing decks.

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Contact Cub Cadet Commercial at 877/835-7841 or www.cubcadetcommercial.com



Dixon

The Dixon WalkAbout series mowers — available in belt drive manual gear selection or full hydrostatic models — come with a choice of 36- or 48-in. commercial-grade cutting decks and pistol style control systems. The mowers feature five-speed peerless manual transmission, with a shift lever conveniently located by operator's knee. The Walkabout mowers are powered by a 15- or 18-hp Kohler Command Pro engine.

Contact Dixon at 800/264-6075 or www.dixon-ztr.com

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Contact Grasshopper at 620/345-8621 or grasshoppermower.com



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Contact Mustang Manufacturing at 507/451-7112 or www.mustangmfg.com

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High-tech/high-touch launch

BY MARTY WHITFORD / Editor-in-Chief

Life's landscape, chock-full of peaks and valleys, is best traversed together. That's why we're launching *LM Landscape Makeover*, a video podcast program where we can join forces to show the world our community's commitment to giving back.

Debating next summer, *LM Landscape Makeover* podcasts will document how landscape, design-build, irrigation and lawn care professionals are coming together to help families in need. The inaugural episode of *LM Landscape Makeover* will feature our "Green Industry Givers" partaking in a comprehensive home-and-yard renovation already in the planning stages (search for HUGE Heart Home Makeover on www.Cleveland.com for details). We hope to tag team on a few *LM Landscape Makeover* projects each year.

The 1st Family

Over the past two decades, Adam Gaspar helped nearly a dozen families renovate their homes free of charge. Gaspar doesn't regret for a moment his lifetime spent putting others first, but the Clevelander is a little worried for his close-knit clan these days.

A few days after last Thanksgiving, a doctor informed the now-42-year-old father of six, ages 11 to 21, that he has a terminal brain tumor. The doctor gave Gaspar six to 12 months to live — and that was with brain surgery, chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

"I always enjoyed helping others work on their homes and yards. It just never crossed my mind that I wouldn't have the time to work on our property," Gaspar says.

I'm a little biased about the Gaspars being worthy of our first *LM Landscape Makeover*. (Gaspar's been my friend since the first grade). But you don't have to just take my word for it. ABC's *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition (EMHE)* selected the Gaspars as one of just 25 finalists from more than 4,000 Ohio applicants. On April 21, EMHE filmed the family for three hours.

The EMHE visit was a ray of sunshine in an otherwise gloomy week. A few days before the visit, 18-year-old Monika Gaspar was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS). Two days after the camera crew left, an oncologist informed her dad — just five months into his battle — the tumor had spread to the pons area of the brain stem, which regulates breathing, and he gave my buddy one to four weeks to live.

That was April 23, and I'm happy to report that with a lot of prayers and heroic battling, The Big Guy (6 ft., 8 in.) continues to prove his doctor wrong.

In July, EMHE selected another worthy Ohio family. We're now seeking commitments of money, materials and labor to make over the Gaspars' home, turf and landscape. Please email me for details.

"It would really mean the world to me if we could lift this huge burden — the disrepair of our home and yard — off Ann's shoulders," Gaspar says of his wife. "She'll have enough to handle with five of our six children still in school."

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LM Landscape Makeover will document how Green Industry professionals are coming together to help families in need.



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