



FIRSTCUT

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2010: A Turf Odyssey

After talking to so many industry experts on the oil and water conundrum and its affects on the landscape industry, particularly how conserving these two resources is leading some groups to point to turf and plants as the problem, I started having nightmares.

I pictured vast hillsides of turf and trees — lush and vibrant green — reduced to dusty, barren mounds. No turf for cooling and erosion control. No trees for shade. No plants creating texture, depth and color. Brown for miles. Heat radiating off of concrete. Dry air. Labored breathing; oxygen seeming scarce.

Our industry — extinct.

And then I woke up.

First of all, for full disclosure, I should mention that my husband watches a lot of science fiction. So, yes, this dream could have been conjured up from thoughts of *Dune* in my subconscious. But I still couldn't help but wonder: In a time where plants and turf are constantly being attacked as supposed water and energy hogs, is there a possible future in this picture?

And I'm not the only one having nightmares.

PLANET president Bill Hildebolt recently highlighted a similar realization in his March 2010 *PLANET News* letter. He detailed travels to China where at one point under Mao Zedong's leadership, the country rid itself of turf and other landscaping the Marxists considered capitalist trappings. The countryside was a moonscape — nothing was green. The air, he said, was so full of dust and dirt with rampant pollution he could actually taste it.

Then, as Georgia was suffering a severe drought in 2008, contractor Jim McCutcheon remembers going to a meeting to discuss landscape water use limitations. One contractor drove to the meeting in his landscape truck. But fearing the end of his business as a result of sever water restrictions, plastered over his company logo he put a sign that read "EXTINCT."

But, "don't panic," McCutcheon says. The industry's problem — and the reason myself and others are letting science fiction get the better of us: We've lost confidence. We're constantly under attack, and this economy has taken the fight out of us as we focus on keeping our businesses on track.

To regain focus, Hildebolt says the biggest defense is a solid offense. Collect the positive facts about landscaping and, armed with that, your reputation and photos of the work you've done (as well as a list of references from happy clients), stand proud and confident that in your work you make the world a better place — one landscape at a time.

As Bert Swanson of Swanson's Nursery Consulting says in the June 2010 issue of *MNLA's The Scoop*: "Plants are not ornaments; plants are a necessity." He says contractors should continue to tout plants as "environmental, energy saving, soil stabilizing, phytoremediation and, yes, even sustainable."

So, in sci-fi words everyone can understand: "May the force be with you."

Landscape Management

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