

PESTICIDE PIPELINE > LAUNDRY TO LANDSCAPES
BRICKMAN/VALLEYCREST: CULTURE CLASH?

Landscape Management

**LESSONS
LEARNED**

FROM THE
INDUSTRY'S
LARGEST
COMPANIES

LM 150

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NUMBERS**

**Establish a
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**Recurring
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**THINK AND ACT
SMALLER THAN YOU ARE**





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Landscape Management

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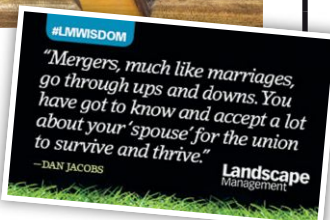
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ICYMI: *Landscape Management* nabbed 11 honors at the 25th annual Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association (TOCA) meeting, held May 5 to 8 in New Orleans. View the full list of honors at buff.ly/RL48U7.



#LMWISDOM: We rolled out a new social media campaign, pulling quotes from articles in our archives and giving you the link to the original story. Spread the snippets of wisdom with your own followers using the hashtag #LMWISDOM. Read the article this quote references here: buff.ly/1gnl3rl



Facebook Feature QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Equipment purchasing—buy or lease?

- » **Nathan Appleby:** Buy with cash. Rent as needed. Stay out of debt.
- » **Jason Cupp:** It all depends on the equipment, the company, the cash flows, the ROI, the terms of the purchase vs. lease vs. cash and the beginning and end value...
- » **Derek Belden:** Leasing commercial trucks makes sense when you are putting a lot of miles on it in a short time.
- » **Adam Gunn:** Purchase with a buy-out option.



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Guided learning

It's been said many times that there are no shortcuts to success. Yet, it's graduation season, a time when universities and high schools (heck, even kindergartens) parade in well-known speakers to impart wisdom upon their graduates. Many of these speeches draw upon the life experiences of the presenter and offer knowledge from a learn-from-my-mistakes perspective. After all, isn't that the advice we all want to know when we look to someone who we consider a success? We want insight on how they got where they are today and if there are any ways we can succeed faster, easier or less painfully.

It reminds me of the song "Ooh La La" by the Faces. The chorus says, "I wish that I knew what I know now / When I was younger."

That song, circa 1973, is not even remotely about business. (In case you're unfamiliar, it details a grandfather's advice about women to his grandson.) But every time I hear it, it reminds me of the readers of *Landscape Management* and how many people's questions are similar. "What mistakes am I making that I could be avoiding? Am I doing things right? Should I be doing something differently? What do others know that I don't know?"

Those kinds of questions are why we decided to formulate the coverage for our 2014 *LM150* list of the industry's largest companies around a "Lessons learned" theme.

So, as we collected data for this year's report (starting after page 20), we asked the leaders of *LM150* companies,

"What would you have done differently *then*, knowing what you know *now*?"

We received many great responses, which we share with you in the pages of the *LM150* supplement. There's guidance about carving out a niche and acting smaller than you are (see page S15). There's an item on the importance of consistent marketing and building a strong brand (S17). There are powerful stories about the need to delegate and set up processes (S14 and S16) and much more.

But a few folks, like NaturaLawn of America's President Phil Catron, surprised us by saying they wouldn't change a thing.

"There's a purpose for having a learning curve and growing from the decisions you make over the years," Catron says.

It may sound like he's avoiding the question, trying to get off the hook, like the grandfather at the end of "Ooh La La" who says, "Poor young grandson, there's nothing I can say / You'll have to learn, just like me / And that's the hardest way."

We disagree with the grandfather. We believe you *can* learn from others' stories. (And don't worry, we got Catron to share some sage advice.) The tips you take in from other companies' tales might not be shortcuts to success, but at least they can be guideposts along the way.

We hope there's at least one lesson you can learn here to improve yourself or your company. Or maybe you have another one to offer? Email me at mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net and we'll find a way to share yours, too.

Washington firm begs for workers

BY SARAH PFLEDDERER

Lance Forsee might be the first panhandler to bum a resume off a passerby instead of a buck.

As a new employee recruitment technique, the president of Colonial Lawn & Garden took to the streets begging for folks to apply to job openings at the Yakima, Wash.-based company. He carried a cardboard sign and all.

A little more than a week later, a stack of 200 completed job applications sat in his office.

"It's been unbelievable," Forsee says. "We were just trying to stir up interest and get people in the door. Where were these 200 people before this campaign?"

Desperate times call for desperate measures

Fed up with failed attempts to attract candidates through traditional means, such as classified ads, job fairs and a few social media posts, Forsee grabbed a cardboard box out of his garage and had an office administrator write a message on it. "Desperate business owner will give \$ + benefits to outstanding workers! Every employee helps! God bless," it said.

He pulled on an old business suit, and with cardboard sign in hand, strutted down the sidewalk to an intersection in town where an employee snapped a few photos and posted them to Facebook May 7. The whole ordeal took about 30 minutes.

He went out two more days—once for an hour and then for an hour and a half—and each time Forsee had a few flyers in hand with the job descriptions and his business card. He'd direct passersby to the office to fill out applications, or some people handed him their resumes on the spot.

By that time his efforts had "gone viral." ABC News caught on as well as a local news station, which deemed his tactic "reverse panhandling."

"Ninety nine percent of people get it," Forsee says. "When I first went out there standing on the street corner with my sign, I saw through the eyes of somebody on the other side of the cardboard. I felt like I was that person."

The perspective

He had six job openings paying \$10 to \$12 per hour, depending on experience. Plus, he offers health insurance, paid holidays and paid vacation.

"The folks we have are great," says Forsee of his 25 employees. "We just need more of us. We're trying to grow, not just survive."



Landscape contractor Lance Forsee netted 200 job applications with his unconventional recruiting tactic.

A 29-year-old company, Colonial Lawn & Garden specializes in maintenance and lawn care for residential clients. It has an annual revenue of more than \$2 million.

Forsee's struggle has been getting people to apply for his company's jobs, primarily the 20- to 30-year-old demographic. He speculates the younger group is more attracted to technology-driven fields and "shying away from the getting-your-hands-dirty type."

Also, hiring practices have gotten stiffer than when he started out at age 19. Colonial Lawn & Garden requires employees to hold a valid driver's license and be a legal citizen. It also conducts random drug screenings.

Hitting the streets has paid off in at least one hire—for a clerical position—with several more expected this month.

Forsee says many candidates from the campaign were outside of the Green Industry. The clerical hire is one example.

"She would not have been likely to consider my company or industry otherwise," he says. "We used to hire for the skill. Now we hire for the person, not someone who has experience. We're looking for quality people with work ethic. They can learn the skills necessary to be successful in the Green Industry."

The panhandling ploy has offered a solution to the hiring obstacle, Forsee says, and added he likely will do it again.

"It's one of those things that could become cliché, the 15 minutes of fame thing," Forsee says. "I don't want to make it cliché, but why not? I would encourage somebody in another community to try it. See what will happen."

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Virginia buttonweed
Mouseear chickweed
Spotted source

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BESTPRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

The author, of the Wilson-Oyler Group, is a 30-year industry veteran. Reach him at bwilson@wilson-oyler.com.

Merger anxiety

The Brickman Group/ValleyCrest Landscape Cos. merger is on everyone's mind. Is this a game changer, I'm asked? Or, as in the past with LandCare USA and ServiceMaster, will it be a mess?

One thing is certain: What this represents as a potential industry pivot point has been a long time coming.

Since the high level of merger and acquisition (M&A) activity in the late '90s, the Green Industry has experienced gradual but fundamental changes. The last 15 years have seen a new type of leader and owner. Instead of "grown-up gardeners" (as ValleyCrest's late founder Burton Sperber called horticulturists who moved into management), the people running many landscape companies today entered the industry from various paths. Some come from business schools, management consulting firms and from other businesses.

Other segments related to ours, including our customers and vendors, are complex institutions with big picture world views. Being on Wall Street's radar is good for us and it will up our game.

The upside and downside

The outlook is positive if landscape CEOs are thinking of an exit strategy within the next three to five years. If you're a middle-market business owner, if you've spent years building your business and are at a crossroads or if you're raising capital, this move could have an upside.

It also will change the way the industry hires by reinvigorating, if not redefining, recruiting and staffing strategies. Companies will look at potential new hires from management disciplines and other areas of study (marketing, finance, urban development and environmental science), in addition to the traditional hort and ag route that always will be the foundation of our operational expertise. Plus, college career counselors will take landscape contracting seriously as a career.

On the downside, the merger limits the number of buyers for companies looking to sell. There no longer will be two big players competing for acquisition targets, which may hurt owners looking to exit soon.

It also creates an absence of horticultural knowledge at the top. Investment companies are running ValleyCrest and Brickman with a financial mindset that demands quarterly performance. Any lack of passion toward the work our companies do could be an opportunity for smaller companies with a longer-term view on plant health and environmental beauty. Clients care about service and quality and a customer-centric focus could be lost in the shuffle.

A new, larger national company pushes smaller companies to adjust the way they approach customer service, proposals, pricing and model their operational efficiencies to compete.

What you need to know

All landscape companies will need to expand their recruiting sources to include more candidates with business degrees along with hiring traditional candidates, who are in short supply anyway.

All landscape companies will have to consider some of the same metrics investment bankers watch. They'll need to make smarter purchases. Many contractors love equipment—sometimes the bigger the toy the better. Investment bankers look at the return on the investment of all capital.

All landscape companies that spend their marketing dollars in a knee-jerk manner will have to rethink their approach. Firms run by finance experts make strategic marketing investments aimed at driving profitability and sales. And they measure ROI.

All landscape companies will face increasing demands in all directions. A major shift from this merger will require companies to improve productivity, increase performance and understand where they're making their greatest profits. Some of the work companies like the least may be the most profitable, and some of the work they love the most might not be as profitable. Since service lines compete for capital to grow, moving forward, companies will have to invest in the most profitable segments.

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THE BENCHMARK

JEFF HARKNESS

The author is owner-manager of 3PG Consulting. Reach him at jeff@3PGconsulting.com.

Timing is everything, but be careful

Right now your phone probably is ringing with every “business broker” and “deal guy” saying they have a deal for you. Sound familiar? Are you ready to sell? The industry has been buzzing as word spread about a mega deal between ValleyCrest Landscape Cos. and the Brickman Group.

The fact is activity is picking up and so are business valuations. What information can you trust? How do you evaluate a “sale” pitch for your company?

Ask for help and, as the economy continues to improve, think about a 12- to 24- month window for planning an exit. Here are several factors to consider.

Revenue: Business mix still matters. More than 60 percent of your revenue should come from maintenance and turf care contracts. This includes enhancement sales for contract customers. Sales need to be trending up, and you should have retention better than 85 percent. It’s important to be able to present department financial statements showing revenue and expenses. Depth in your sales team (i.e. salesman besides an owner) and a strong customer relationship management (CRM) system are big pluses.

Earnings: An adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization plus add-backs (EBITDA) of 15 percent or better puts you in the driver’s seat. This equation is easy to define with the right guidance. It’s important to understand what “add-backs” are legitimate and defensible. You must “recast” your operating profit for each fiscal year, including the most recent trailing 12 months. Your 2014 and 2015 projections must be defensible. This means don’t tell me you’re going from an adjusted EBITDA of 12 percent to 18 percent in one year.

Strong balance sheet: Low debt and strong working capital will enhance the amount of total purchase price you net. Capital more than a working capital requirement (5 percent to 8 percent of revenue) could be added to your purchase price. This is a highly negotiable item, and it’s often where sellers leave money on the table.

Don’t underestimate the negative impact of an old fleet and worn equipment. Buyers will cut some or all of a depreciation expense (add-back) if they need to make large purchases to update your fleet and equipment. You should spend a minimum of 2 percent to 3 percent of revenue on fixed assets to maintain a good fleet, etc.

Secondary markets: Small- to medium-sized markets (think: Nashville, Tenn.; Greenville, S.C.; Charlotte, N.C.; Richmond, Va.; and Cleveland) are getting interesting and could be attractive to the right buyer. Less competition from the “big boys” on labor resources, pricing and quality makes operating a branch or satellite in a smaller market more appealing. Don’t discount your opportunity to get something done just because you’re not in Texas, Florida or California.

Cost of procrastinating: For those of you who believe your window is three to five years until you get out, consider and calculate what you gain in dollars by operating longer. Items that may cost you purchase price dollars in a deal with bad timing include: tax increases, erosion of valuation multiples, fuel cost increases, insurance issues, a singular buyer and limited availability of labor to support growth.

Continued role of owner: Plan to sign an employment agreement for one to three years. It’s important you’re ready to work for the buyer. Smooth customer and employee transitions are a must and you’ll be the person expected to help. This is mentally exhausting, and you’ll have different opinions and philosophies. Don’t underestimate the difficulty of this task. Your deal structure will be key for peace of mind.

Exiting your business is emotional and difficult. Assemble a plan that quantifies your options and takes emotion out of the equation. Now is the time to get started with a simple business valuation and net cash projection. Deal structure is vital, meaning when and how you’ll get your money and with what strings. Timing is everything, as they say, but be cautious of jumping in if you don’t understand the game or know your company’s value equation.

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NORTH

Weed pictured: Curly dock

- ▶ Postemergent herbicides are most effective in spring or fall (preferred).
- ▶ Use higher rates when hard-to-control species are prevalent, when applications are made in late summer or to mature weeds or during periods of drier weather. Spot treatments with products containing triclopyr ester are particularly effective during these times.
- ▶ Use amine-based formulations of 2,4-D when temperatures are high and volatility is a concern.
- ▶ Do *not* apply herbicides when the turf is stressed. Extreme weather conditions may inhibit the product's performance.
- ▶ Depending on the level of infestation, multiple applications may be needed for complete control. Two applications—two to four weeks apart—are ideal.
- ▶ Avoid overwatering. Excessive moisture encourages weed growth and germination. Curly dock and sedges thrive in these conditions.
- ▶ Aerate in spring or fall.



SOUTH

Weed pictured: Dollarweed

- ▶ Most postemergent herbicides are more effective when applied to weeds that are young and succulent.
- ▶ Early-winter applications target winter annuals. Spring or summer applications control weeds actively growing during these seasons. Fall is a good time for applications to perennial or biannual weeds.
- ▶ Do *not* apply herbicides when the turf is stressed. Extreme weather conditions may inhibit the product's performance.
- ▶ Adjuvants improve herbicide coverage and help penetrate the waxy leaf surfaces of species like broadleaf plantain and dollarweed. Be cautious with these additions to ensure they do not increase the potential for turf damage.
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- ▶ Aerate in late spring or early summer.

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BY JAMIE BREUNINGER, DOW AGROSCIENCES TECHNICAL LEADER

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Brickman/ValleyCrest: Culture clash?

As the two largest landscape companies work toward merging into one, the rest of the Green Industry is a split crowd sitting on the sidelines. Some spectators are biting their nails out of nervousness, while others have pulled up a seat, waiting to pick up employees and customers from the deal.

Many questions remain about the joint Brickman Group/ValleyCrest Landscape Cos. entity. The news of their merger came in late May, after a month of rumors about such a deal. Questions include: Can such a large national company flourish? Is this merger comparable to the failed TruGreen LandCare marriage? How will the culture mesh?

Landscape Management tracked down a few former employees of ValleyCrest and Brickman, among other professionals, for their reactions to the deal and to gauge the challenges and opportunities.

TruGreen LandCare comparison?

A few former employees and professionals compared the Brickman/ValleyCrest deal to ServiceMaster's merger

A look at their cultures, what defines a national company mentality and TruGreen LandCare comparisons. BY SARAH PFLEDDERER

of LandCare USA with its commercial landscape maintenance business to form TruGreen LandCare in 1999.

The Brickman/ValleyCrest merger trumps the size of the TruGreen LandCare one, forming a nearly \$2 billion company versus one with about \$500 million in annual revenue. But the latter transaction involved integrating several companies instead of just two, says Judy Guido, founder and principal of Guido & Associates, who was CMO of LandCare at the time.

LandCare was made up of multiple companies, she says, creating the struggle of integrating many cultures and personalities. It was an even greater challenge than the overlap of personnel and territories, adds Guido, who also previously served as an executive at

Environmental Industries (ValleyCrest's name before rebranding in 2002). On top of that, TruGreen's commercial maintenance business also was a roll-up of many companies.

"A culture is the personality of a company, made up over time by multiple stakeholders and experiences and is embedded into the DNA and fabric of the organization," Guido says. "When you merge multiple strong, independent and intelligent cultures, there's bound to be a convergence of intense passion, ideation, conflict and excitement."

The difficulty perhaps was too much. Private equity firm Aurora Resurgence Group purchased TruGreen LandCare from ServiceMaster for \$37.8 million in 2011. ServiceMaster valued the 1999 merger at \$250 million.

Internal challenges: Different cultures

Not surprisingly, observers are questioning how Brickman and ValleyCrest will merge their cultures.

Brickman, former employees say, is a process-driven organization. ValleyCrest is built on an entrepreneurial mindset, prior staffers say.

Bill Colletter, Southeast regional business development manager for equipment manufacturer Ariens Co., had two stints at ValleyCrest, working in business development from 2002 to 2004 and 2007 to 2009. He left to become a partner at Landscapes USA, and he credits the professional development opportunities he received at ValleyCrest with helping him do that.

He further praises the organization for “working on their business and not in their business.”

Backing his outlook is Don Crawford, resident regional director of grounds at SSC Service Solutions in College Station, Texas. Crawford worked as a branch operations manager for ValleyCrest’s maintenance division in Chicago for three years. He says the company’s systems and capitalization, plus its reliance on consultants and former staff from McKinsey & Co., drove its financial success over the last 10 to 15 years.

He also recalls an unflattering part of the entrepreneurial-driven culture: That is, “making money” is a priority above all else.

Mike Rorie, CEO of GIS Dynamics, the parent company of Go iLawn in Loveland, Ohio, says that type of mindset goes hand in hand with being a national player.

“The national idea is a good one, but in reality you can’t respond to the needs [of customers] as effectively as a scaled regional player,” says Rorie, who sold his company, GroundMasters, to Brickman in 2006. “It’s the difference in having one owner who is committed to their business versus a group of investors and a decentralized management team.”

Rorie stayed on as a division vice president at Brickman until 2010. In that time, he found his regional leadership style wasn’t fit for a national level. Operationally, he had to make changes

to do things “the Brickman way.”

“Eventually everything was different,” he says. “We lost a lot of focus on what we did best.”

Yet, Rorie says Brickman’s processes and eye on costs and measuring, plus its organizational structure—its national, regional and branch levels and the personnel who communicate between them—are what make the company successful.

Phill Sexton, founder and managing director of consulting firm WIT Cos., recalls Brickman’s standard operating procedures being a large part of the organization when he worked there for 11 years. For some of his tenure, he says, the company empowered him with responsibility, similar to how some people describe ValleyCrest’s ownership culture. He left in 2011 from the role of corporate director of national snow operations when there was talk of private equity group KKR acquiring the company. (It did in November.)

“The culture was beginning to change,” Sexton says. “It seemed the writing was on the wall that, that sense of ownership, at least on my level, wasn’t going to be the same.”

Bob Grover, president of Pacific Landscape Management in Hillsboro, Ore., knows what that’s like. He was a regional manager for TruGreen at the time the company merged with LandCare. Before that he worked for 15 years at Northwest Landscape Industries, which was acquired by TruGreen. He left TruGreen LandCare in 2000 because it took on a different business model, he says.

He spent his days focusing on “financial methods,” working numbers, instead of enjoying the reasons he went into the industry, which are landscaping, plants and helping customers. Adding to that, he was losing a local focus.

“We lost that local control and ability to deal with local problems,” Grover says. The company solved problems on a national level without consideration of differing markets and customers, he adds.

Now, Grover wears the hat of a regional competitor with sympathy for the employees in the middle of the Brickman/ValleyCrest deal. His concern for them is the overlap of markets and job roles.

EXEC’S VIEW

Landscape Management conducted a joint Q&A with Brickman CEO Andrew Kerin and ValleyCrest CEO Roger Zino about the merger. Kerin will become CEO of the yet-to-be-named joint company.

Zino will serve as vice chairman.

Here are a few key points:

- Kerin sees potential for organic growth and said the company will consider strategic acquisition opportunities.
- No members from the companies’ founding families will be involved in the joint entity’s operations, although both retain some ownership.
- The landscape market is in a good position. “People are building again. People are improving again. There’s a greater commitment to great landscapes out there than we’ve seen in years,” Zino says.

For the full interview, visit buff.ly/1r1dsn9.



Andrew Kerin



BRICKMAN



Roger Zino



ValleyCrest
COMPANIES

It turns out there will be nil overlap in his market, as Brickman has a presence there but ValleyCrest does not. Now, Grover has only two national competitors, TruGreen LandCare and the new Brickman/ValleyCrest entity, whereas before ValleyCrest could have entered as a third national competitor.

“I really think it impacts us very little,” Grover says. “We’ve even talked that it’s a positive. We’ve always said ValleyCrest will get here someday.”

Sexton also shed light on the positives of the merger.

“A lot of people like to hate the Brickmans and the ValleyCrests of the world, but it’s important for us to keep in mind that we need them to be successful,” he says. “If the biggest player isn’t able to grow, then it hurts the entire industry. If the biggest player isn’t successful, then the industry isn’t.” **LM**

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6/4	Jim Huston , Consultant, <i>J. R. Huston Consulting, Inc.</i>	Estimating the Right Way	<i>Sponsorship Available</i>
6/11	Demi Fortuna , Vendor/Contractor, <i>Atlantic Water Gardens</i>	Make Easy Profits with Waterscaping	<i>Sponsorship Available</i>
6/18	Jim McClintock , Vendor, <i>Company 119</i>	The 411 on Internet Marketing	<i>Sponsorship Available</i>
6/25	Brett Kelly , Vendor, <i>DASSO XTR</i>	The Other Hardscape—Wood Decking	<i>Sponsorship Available</i>
7/2	Kevin McLaughlin , Vendor, <i>MAC Events</i>	Successful Event Marketing	
7/9	Marcus vandeVliet , Consultant, <i>MV Consulting</i>	Strategic Planning for Growth	

ABOUT THE HOST

Jody Shilan, MLA is an award-winning landscape designer and former landscape design/build contractor, who has sold tens of millions of dollars of design and installation work throughout his career. He now uses his 35+ years of experience to coach other landscape contractors how to easily and dramatically increase their sales by following his unique landscape design/build sales process. He does this through public speaking, private consulting, group workshops and his “exclusive” members-only website www.FromDesign2Build.com.



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SERVICE SEGMENT SNAPSHOTS

*What's in the
pesticide pipeline?
We surveyed chemical
manufacturers to
find out.* PAGE 56

Survey says...

A consumer study conducted by home improvement website Houzz unveiled good news for the landscape profession.

By MARISA PALMIERI



Houzz unveiled findings from its third Houzz & Home Survey, including homeowners are optimistic about the housing market, which is driving renovations.

The annual study covers historical and planned projects, the motivations behind these projects and the impact of the economy on home remodeling, building and decorating plans.

The research yielded data at the national, regional and metropolitan area level, which Houzz used to examine regional differences in priorities and spending. The survey was emailed to registered Houzz users between January and March. It garnered 135,000 respondents in the U.S.

1 In demand. While bathrooms and kitchens are the most popular renovation projects again this year, 30 percent of homeowners planning projects in the next two years plan to hire a

64% Percent of those who did landscape work to their home in the past five years and added a new lawn, plants or trees.

landscape professional. Adding to the attention on the Green Industry, patio or landscape addition or renovations have been among the top five projects completed in the past five years, with 22 percent of homeowners having completed one at an average cost of \$9,545. Those who remodeled the exterior of their home in the past five years were most likely to add a new lawn, plants or trees (64 percent); a new deck or patio (46 percent); grading/leveling/terracing of yard (32 percent); new fencing (29 percent); new structure like a shed, pergola or arbor (24 percent).



21% Amount of Millennials who are likely to install a fire pit versus 16 percent of older groups.

2 Age differences. When it comes to outdoor projects, Millennials are less likely than older age groups to build a new deck or patio (39 percent versus 46 percent), a new structure like a shed, pergola or arbor (18 percent versus 24 percent) or install new irrigation (16 percent versus 21 percent), but are most likely to install a fire pit or other fire feature (21 percent versus 16 percent).

3 Planning horizons. From initial research to the start of constructions, homeowners spend six months to more than a year prepping for renovation projects. At the top of the spectrum are custom home builds, averaging 12.6 months. Patios/landscapes take about 6.6 months to plan, the same stretch as siding, media room and garage/carport projects.

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6.6 The average number of months homeowners take to plan a patio/landscape project.



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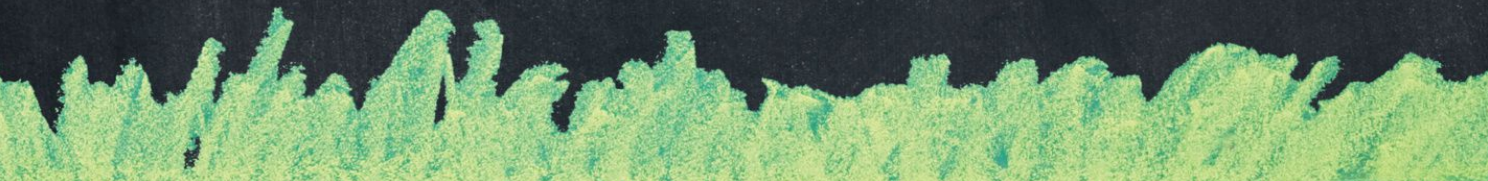
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Learning from history



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YOU'RE LIKELY FAMILIAR with the quote, "Those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

In this year's LM150 issue, we have the opportunity to learn a bit of history from the executives of the top companies in the industry and to find out what they know now that they wished they had known when they started their businesses.

Many of you started your businesses with a truck, trailer, mower, hand tools and, most importantly, a passion for creating, beautifying and maintaining outdoor living spaces. From those humble beginnings you have grown your business into the trusted brands in the markets you serve today.

Founded in 1837, Deere & Co. came from a similar evolution: A one-man blacksmith driven by core values of integrity, innovation, commitment and quality that has evolved into a global corporation, employing more than 60,000 talented people worldwide.

Over the years, we all have faced business challenges and then reflected upon the lessons we've learned from the school of hard knocks. Yet through these challenges, we've refined our businesses by moving and molding with the times and taking advantage of new opportunities while building and growing our businesses, our people and brands along the way.

Through the years, we've learned we need to provide you, our customers, with more than quality products. We need to be there to support your business needs, before and after the sale, through our experienced John Deere dealer network and give you access to the most extensive factory-trained service technicians and knowledgeable staff in the industry.

We've also learned that product uptime is critical to your business, so we've created programs like the NeverStop™ Loaner Guarantee and Parts OnSite™, so you'll have those essential parts right where you need them. In addition, we know cash-flow management is vital to any business, so we offer a range of finance options through John Deere Financial.

Yes, we've learned a lot since 1837, but one thing has never changed. That is our commitment to providing our customers with innovative products, support and integrated solutions to help their businesses grow and prosper.

Our industry has emerged from one of the toughest economic times in recent history to one that is projected to prosper for the foreseeable future. No wisdom is gained without the journey, and great challenges provide even greater opportunity to learn and increase your business savvy.

So, let's all take a look back at our individual and collective history, then turn our eyes to the future with newfound knowledge to make our businesses even greater!

Have a prosperous 2014.

Sincerely,
Ken Taylor, LIC
General Manager
Corporate Business Division

LM 150 RANKINGS

		Headquarters	2013 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change from 2012	% Projected Change for 2014	FTE/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm/ Res/Gov
1	ValleyCrest Landscape Cos.	Calabasas, Calif.	\$992,000,000	13%	NR	NR	100/0/0
2	The Brickman Group	Rockville, Md.	\$920,000,000	2%	NR	NR	NR
3	TruGreen	Memphis, Tenn.	\$896,000,000	-8%	NR	NR	18/82/0
4	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	Kent, Ohio	\$713,848,000	5%	5%	7382/112	0/0/0
5	Scotts LawnService	Marysville, Ohio	\$323,900,000	2%	NR	2500/NR	0/0/0
6	Bartlett Tree Experts	Stamford, Conn.	\$197,000,000	8%	8%	1500/25	20/75/5
7	U.S. Lawns	Orlando, Fla.	\$145,295,000	13%	10%	1300/650	100/0/0
8	Weed Man	Mississauga, Ontario	\$133,833,477	28%	15%	800/2700	5/95/0
9	Gothic Landscape	Valencia, Calif.	\$101,500,000	13%	5%	1200/0	90/0/10
10	Ambius	Des Plaines, Ill.	\$100,000,000	0%	1%	NR	100/0/0
11	Lawn Doctor	Holmdel, N.J.	\$96,863,790	3%	4%	1000/NR	5/95/0
12	Ferrandino & Son	Farmingdale, N.Y.	\$88,000,000	35%	40%	325/0	100/0/0
13	Yellowstone Landscape Group	Bunnell, Fla.	\$83,713,000	-2%	2%	1200/200	85/5/10
14	Ruppert Landscape	Laytonsville, Md.	\$82,408,000	14%	27%	825/25	85/0/15
15	Merit Service Solutions	Marlton, N.J.	\$81,000,000	33%	31%	130/135	96/0/4
16	SavATree	Bedford Hills, N.Y.	\$75,000,000	3%	10%	634/130	20/80/0
17	Mainscape	Fishers, Ind.	\$59,505,300	21%	15%	850/150	100/0/0
18	Marina Landscape	Anaheim, Calif.	\$58,000,000	16%	12%	610/0	30/0/70
19	Clintar Landscape Management	Markham, Ontario	\$56,700,000	10%	8%	200/400	100/0/0
20	Massey Services^	Orlando, Fla.	\$54,921,690	10%	15%	1449/0	13/87/0
21	Meadows Farms	Chantilly, Va.	\$48,500,000	0%	5%	150/350	8/90/2
22	NaturaLawn of America	Frederick, Md.	\$45,999,004	10%	3%	377/36	5/95/0
23	Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/ Greater Texas Landscapes)	Tucson, Ariz.	\$44,983,474	0%	18%	750/85	75/0/25
24	Lucas Tree Experts	Portland, Maine	\$44,000,000	13%	8%	490/0	86/7/7
25	Acres Group	Wauconda, Ill.	\$43,925,000	13%	7%	105/650	95/2.5/2.5
26	Denison Landscaping	Fort Washington, Md.	\$42,500,000	0%	1%	255/200	88/12/0
27	Spring-Green Lawn Care Corp.	Plainfield, Ill.	\$41,826,514	7%	10%	105/390	7/91/2
28	Jensen Corp.	San Jose, Calif.	\$41,600,000	11%	5%	324/0	65/25/10
29	OneSource, an ABM company	Tampa, Fla.	\$40,000,000	0%	2%	600/100	90/0/10
30	The Greenery	Hilton Head Island, S.C.	\$37,800,000	10%	12%	550/95	76/17/7
31	Mariani Landscape	Lake Bluff, Ill.	\$35,585,000	12%	9%	129/353	13/87/0
32	Christy Webber Landscapes	Chicago, Ill.	\$35,500,000	14%	6%	400/450	64/22/14
33	Cagwin & Dorward	Novato, Calif.	\$31,200,000	2%	5%	350/0	NR
34	Sebert Landscaping	Bartlett, Ill.	\$31,000,000	21%	12%	60/300	90/5/5
35	Mission Landscape Cos.	Irvine, Calif.	\$30,831,246	12%	12%	560/0	100/0/0
36	Garden Design	Farmers Branch, Texas	\$30,000,000	50%	20%	41/0	40/60/0
37	Dixie Landscape	Medley, Fla.	\$28,930,000	22%	15%	255/0	NR
38	Terracare Associates	Littleton, Colo.	\$28,806,940	13%	6%	364/108	46/1/53
39	Gothic Grounds Management	Valencia, Calif.	\$28,499,619	0%	9%	400/50	93/2/5
40	Reliable Property Services	St. Paul, Minn.	\$27,100,000	34%	10%	65/300	100/0/0
41	AAA Landscape*	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$27,000,000	8%	NR	NR	NR
42	Bemus Landscape	San Clemente, Calif.	\$26,000,000	24%	10%	400/0	98/1/1
	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	San Antonio, Texas	\$26,000,000	-4%	0%	250/150	75/10/15
44	Ryan Lawn & Tree	Overland Park, Kan.	\$25,900,000	10%	10%	205/15	5/95/0
45	Chalet	Wilmette, Ill.	\$25,542,145	7%	3%	159/119	0/100/0
46	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	Woodbine, Md.	\$25,250,000	8%	12%	230/100	60/35/5
47	The Schumacher Cos.	West Bridgewater, Mass.	\$25,100,000	18%	5%	210/0	51/49/0
48	The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin	Middleton, Wis.	\$25,005,000	-12%	-10%	86/270	80/20/0
49	Berghoff Design Group*	Scottsdale, Ariz.	\$25,000,000	0%	NR	NR	NR
50	McFall & Berry Landscape Management^	Annandale, Va.	\$24,947,860	8%	8%	120/160	100/0/0

LEGEND NR = Not reported; * Indicates projected revenue reported in 2013; ^ Indicates a portion of reported revenue was removed (such as structural pest control, termite control or other non-Green Industry service).

		Headquarters	2013 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change from 2012	% Projected Change for 2014	FTE/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm/ Res/Gov
51	Nutri-lawn Corp.	Toronto, Ontario	\$24,850,000	4%	5%	NR	10/90/0
52	Southern Botanical	Dallas, Texas	\$23,908,360	47%	20%	133/85	38/62/0
53	Landscape Concepts Management	Grayslake, Ill.	\$23,722,277	7%	12%	70/320	94/1/5
54	Russell Landscape Group	Dacula, Ga.	\$23,450,000	6%	1%	275/150	100/0/0
55	Girard Environmental Services^	Sanford, Fla.	\$23,402,030	19%	14%	320/60	100/0/0
56	Environmental Management (EMI)	Dublin , Ohio	\$22,500,000	6%	5%	105/210	85/5/10
	Scott Byron & Co.	Lake Bluff, Ill.	\$22,500,000	2%	5%	90/150	2/98/0
58	Gachina Landscape Management	Menlo Park, Calif.	\$22,219,970	6%	13%	318/32	45/40/15
59	James River Grounds Management	Glen Allen, Va.	\$21,374,621	5%	8%	137/240	95/0/5
60	Rotolo Consultants (RCI)	Slidell, La.	\$21,000,000	-4%	65%	125/90	70/0/30
61	Clean Scapes	Austin, Texas	\$20,717,000	-6%	21%	216/83	88/0/12
62	Gibbs Landscape Co.	Smyrna, Ga.	\$20,460,715	9%	5%	283/0	57/43/0
63	Teufel Nursery	Hillsboro , Ore.	\$20,395,426	10%	10%	265/0	95/5/0
64	McHale Landscape Design	Upper Marlboro, Md.	\$20,200,000	-2%	0%	195/0	0/100/0
65	Pierre Landscape	Monrovia, Calif.	\$20,155,000	-10%	10%	200/0	70/30/0
66	Senske Services^	Kennewick, Wash.	\$19,888,000	5%	8%	200/100	25/70/5
67	Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care^	Denver, Colo.	\$18,896,027	-3%	7%	155/56	28/67/5
68	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting	Germantown, Wis.	\$18,800,000	8%	10%	250/50	65/20/15
	DLC Resources	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$18,800,000	4%	6%	295/0	100/0/0
70	Naturescape	Muskego, Wis.	\$18,588,779	1%	5%	195/10	10/85/5
71	Angler Environmental	Warrenton, Va.	\$18,497,192	38%	10%	110/0	50/1/49
72	Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers	Portland, Ore.	\$18,283,000	9%	5%	199/49	50/43/7
73	The Grounds Guys	Waco, Texas	\$18,200,000	112%	43%	NR	60/35/5
74	ISS Grounds Division	San Antonio, Texas	\$18,000,000	10%	10%	190/40	55/5/40
75	Heads Up Landscape Contractors	Albuquerque, N.M.	\$17,600,000	10%	6%	220/80	80/5/15
76	TBG Landscape	Whitby, Ontario	\$17,435,000	5%	5%	70/25	0/25/75
77	Clarence Davids & Co.	Matteson, Ill.	\$17,400,000	14%	2%	100/150	90/5/5
78	Landscape Workshop*	Birmingham, Ala.	\$17,000,000	5%	NR	NR	NR
79	Benchmark Landscape	Poway, Calif.	\$16,963,488	7%	5%	200/0	100/0/0
80	High Tech Landscapes	Branchburg, N.J.	\$16,948,955	7%	8%	28/305	60/32/8
81	Yard-Nique	Morrisville , N.C.	\$16,750,225	14%	22%	190/100	95/5/0
82	Stay Green	Santa Clarita, Calif.	\$16,658,473	-3%	2%	232/2	78/0/22
83	Designs By Sundown	Englewood, Colo.	\$16,000,000	20%	20%	100/50	10/90/0
84	Landscape Specialists	Lake Forest, Calif.	\$15,600,000	0%	19%	300/0	95/0/5
85	ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	Venice, Fla.	\$15,572,300	10%	10%	185/65	72/28/0
86	Integrated Landscape Management^	Tempe, Ariz.	\$15,567,511	8%	8%	220/0	100/0/0
87	Lambert's	Dallas, Texas	\$15,360,000	15%	12%	149/0	5/95/0
88	Greenscapes of Southwest Florida	Naples, Fla.	\$15,200,000	1%	4%	236/0	100/0/0
89	Complete Landscaping Service*	Bowie, Md.	\$15,000,000	-4%	NR	NR	NR
90	Munie Greencare Professionals	Caseyville, Ill.	\$14,985,000	13%	10%	125/100	94/6/0
91	Sposato Landscape Co.	Milton, Del.	\$14,900,000	11%	13%	200/44	75/25/0
92	HighGrove Partners	Austell, Ga.	\$14,850,000	3%	11%	150/40	98/1/1
93	Hittle Landscaping	Westfield, Ind.	\$14,843,622	18%	10%	130/55	65/33/2
94	LMI Landscapes	Carrollton, Texas	\$14,500,000	9%	45%	200/67	100/0/0
95	Cleary Bros. Landscape	Danville, Calif.	\$14,300,000	17%	11%	175/10	85/5/10
96	Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management	Gilbert, Ariz.	\$14,200,000	43%	30%	230/0	100/0/0
97	PROscape*	Orlando, Fla.	\$14,000,000	1%	NR	NR	NR
98	Earthtones Landscaping	Midlothian, Texas	\$13,200,000	110%	40%	40/23	80/20/0
99	Becker Landscape	Indianapolis, Ind.	\$13,100,000	23%	5%	100/20	95/5/0
100	EarthWorks	Lillian, Texas	\$13,000,000	0%	10%	175/100	95/0/5

		Headquarters	2013 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change from 2012	% Projected Change for 2014	FTE/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm/ Res/Gov
	North American Lawn & Landscape	Charlotte, N.C.	\$13,000,000	1%	3%	300/10	95/5/0
	Engledow Group	Carmel, Ind.	\$13,000,000	0%	5%	110/90	75/25/0
	Harvest Landscape Enterprises	Anaheim, Calif.	\$13,000,000	10%	12%	345/0	80/0/20
104	Perficut Cos.	Ankeny, Iowa	\$12,800,000	5%	8%	85/60	85/10/5
105	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	San Diego, Calif.	\$12,500,000	0%	12%	185/0	67/0/33
	Stockner's*	Rockville, Va.	\$12,500,000	21%	NR	NR	NR
107	Blondie's Treehouse^	Mamaroneck, N.Y.	\$12,350,000	8%	10%	100/20	40/55/5
108	Arteka Cos.	Minneapolis, Minn.	\$12,265,200	20%	10%	20/100	80/10/10
109	John Mini Distinctive Landscapes	Congers, N.Y.	\$12,219,000	13%	10%	71/54	99/1/0
110	Greenscape	Holly Springs, N.C.	\$12,099,315	12%	2%	110/17	53/47/0
111	Dora Landscaping Co.	Apopka, Fla.	\$12,000,000	30%	10%	50/10	75/15/10
112	Santa Rita Landscaping^	Tucson, Ariz.	\$11,904,000	28%	10%	125/0	65/30/5
113	Lawn Dawg	Nashua, N.H.	\$11,829,816	14%	13%	57/82	5/95/0
114	ProGrass	Wilsonville, Ore.	\$11,500,000	0%	0%	182/0	50/50/0
115	Hoffman Landscapes	Wilton, Conn.	\$11,400,000	12%	7%	105/0	10/88/2
116	Southview Design	Inver Grove, Minn.	\$11,200,000	13%	14%	33/72	5/95/0
117	Andre Landscape Service	Azusa, Calif.	\$11,058,433	4%	5%	230/0	95/5/0
118	American Landscape Systems	Lewisville, Texas	\$11,000,000	2%	9%	NR	50/0/50
	CoCal Landscape*	Denver, Colo.	\$11,000,000	10%	NR	NR	NR
120	Heron Lawn & Pest Control^	Apopka, Fla.	\$10,995,060	22%	26%	165/0	2/98/0
121	LegacyScapes	Groveland, Fla.	\$10,983,000	28%	49%	61/41	90/0/10
122	Kujawa Enterprises (KEI)^	Oak Creek, Wis.	\$10,617,750	22%	0%	36/74	93/2/5
123	Ecoscope Solutions Group	Huntersville, N.C.	\$10,500,000	18%	20%	83/41	97/2/1
124	Webb Landscape	Bellevue, Ind.	\$10,300,000	8%	9%	100/50	35/65/0
125	Coast Landscape Management	Napa, Calif.	\$10,000,000	19%	25%	137/0	63/1/36
	American Civil Constructors*	Littleton, Colo.	\$10,000,000	0%	0%	NR	NR
	Creative Environments*	Tempe, Ariz.	\$10,000,000	0%	0%	NR	NR
	Parker Interior Plantscape	Scotch Plains, N.J.	\$10,000,000	-10%	20%	100/15	98/0/2
129	Basnight Land & Lawn	Chesapeake, Va.	\$9,987,635	7%	13%	80/53	76/24/0
130	Gardeners' Guild	Richmond, Calif.	\$9,905,000	5%	15%	135/10	70/25/5
131	Carol King Landscape Maintenance	Orlando, Fla.	\$9,577,000	1%	3%	139/38	66/5/29
132	The Spencer Co.	Houston, Texas	\$9,484,954	-12%	5%	170/5	100/0/0
133	Joyce Landscaping	Marstons Mills, Mass.	\$9,460,000	19%	10%	115/10	15/85/0
134	Schultz Industries	Golden, Colo.	\$9,234,510	-6%	18%	98/62	80/0/20
135	Lawn Ranger	Eden Prairie, Minn.	\$9,100,000	23%	15%	74/111	88/3/9
136	Native Land Design	Cedar Park, Texas	\$9,048,664	-1%	14%	140/29	89/1/10
137	Tomlinson Bomberger^	Lancaster, Pa.	\$9,028,440	12%	-2%	105/73	37/63/0
138	Signature Landscapes^	Reno, Nev.	\$9,022,918	20%	10%	106/98	NR
139	Canete Landscape & Snow Management	Wayne, N.J.	\$8,939,184	10%	6%	15/50	75/25/0
140	Eastern Land Management (ELM)	Stamford, Conn.	\$8,700,000	37%	15%	25/45	100/0/0
141	Pacific Landscape Management	Hillsboro, Ore.	\$8,678,652	18%	15%	98/25	100/0/0
142	New Jersey Best Lawns, Sprinklers & Fencing	Lakewood, N.J.	\$8,660,000	9%	15%	22/78	2/90/8
143	Providence Landscape Group	Charlotte, N.C.	\$8,500,000	14%	15%	80/40	90/5/5
	The Pattie Group	Novelty, Ohio	\$8,500,000	0%	7%	55/35	10/90/0
145	Executive Landscape	Fallbrook, Calif.	\$8,100,000	10%	10%	125/0	50/10/40
	Grant & Power Landscaping	West Chicago, Ill.	\$8,100,000	16%	10%	18/85	40/60/0
147	Mountain High Tree, Lawn & Landscape Co.	Lakewood, Colo.	\$7,908,714	2%	10%	85/2	28/68/4
148	Dobson's Woods & Water	Ocoee, Fla.	\$7,750,000	25%	25%	75/0	75/15/10
149	Emerald Isle Landscaping	Denver, Colo.	\$7,555,529	51%	33%	105/70	90/5/5
150	Outside Unlimited	Hampstead, Md.	\$7,200,000	22%	5%	55/36	85/5/10
			Total: \$7,668,025,804	Avg: 12%	Avg: 11%		



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GETTING SCHOOLED

A look at the numbers behind the largest 150 firms in the landscape and lawn care industry. BY **MARISA PALMIERI**

The Green Industry's largest 150 firms, ranked by annual revenue, grossed a total of \$7,668,025,804 in 2013 sales. That's a 0.2 percent drop from last year's list, despite the list's bottom threshold bumping up to nearly \$7.6 million from \$5.4 million last year.

The average LM150 company grew 12 percent in 2013 over 2012; these firms expect to grow 11 percent next year. Most companies on the list grew (121), 13 reported no change and 16 contracted.

The big three

We attribute some of the \$22 million decline on this year's list to TruGreen's 9 percent revenue dip (more than \$80 million) from 2012 to 2013. This drop knocked TruGreen down from the top slot to third, making way for ValleyCrest Landscape Cos. to move from No. 3 to first on the list. The Brickman Group still secures its No. 2 spot from last year.

Speaking of the LM150's big-three firms, since late last year they've been making news, which will shake up next year's list. For starters, ServiceMaster said in November it would spin off TruGreen and it completed the transaction in January. The move is expected to give the lawn care giant the time and focus it needs to turn around its business, which has lost 500,000 customers since 2010. Private equity firm KKR acquired Brickman in November. In May Brickman said it would merge with ValleyCrest. This deal creates a nearly \$2 billion national landscape company.

BE ON THE 2015 LIST

Should your company be on the LM150 list of the industry's largest companies, ranked by revenue? If so, please contact Editor Marisa Palmieri at mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net to be notified in early 2015 when the submission period opens. We encourage companies with \$5 million-plus in annual revenue to enter.

LM150 FIRMS' 2013 REVENUE GROWTH

SHRUNK IN 2013

11 PERCENT

HAD NO CHANGE

9 PERCENT

GREW IN 2013
80 PERCENT

COMBINED 2013 LM150 REVENUE

\$7,668,025,804

Methodology

LM sought submissions from landscape industry companies in print, on LandscapeManagement.net, via email and over the phone from January through May. Companies submitted data through an online form. LM editors compiled the results and, where applicable, removed non-typical Green Industry revenue sources from the totals reported by the companies. For example, we omitted revenue from structural pest control and termite services.

We estimated revenue for firms we couldn't reach that shared projected 2013 revenue data for last year's list. Additionally, LM editors calculated the figures for growth rates, the service segment revenue charts, the customer mix revenue charts and the regional charts from the data submitted. LM

The **LM150**'s leaders in client mix, service segment and geographical regions.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Not all companies reported customer mix, service segment and regional data. Dollar amounts calculated by LM from data provided.

COMMERCIAL

1	ValleyCrest Landscape Cos.	\$992,000,000
2	TruGreen	\$161,280,000
3	U.S. Lawns	\$145,295,000
4	Ambius	\$100,000,000
5	Gothic Landscape	\$91,350,000
6	Ferrandino & Son	\$88,000,000
7	Merit Service Solutions	\$77,760,000
8	Yellowstone Landscape Group	\$71,156,050
9	Ruppert Landscape	\$70,046,800
10	Mainscape	\$59,505,300
11	Clintar Landscape Management	\$56,700,000
12	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$39,400,000
13	Denison Landscaping	\$37,400,000
14	OneSource, an ABM company	\$36,000,000
15	Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes)	\$33,737,606
16	Mission Landscape Cos.	\$30,831,246
17	The Greenery	\$28,728,000
18	Sebert Landscaping	\$27,900,000
19	Reliable Property Services	\$27,100,000
20	Jensen Corp.	\$27,040,000
21	Gothic Grounds Management	\$26,504,646
22	Bemus Landscape	\$25,480,000
23	McFall & Berry Landscape Management	\$24,947,860
24	Russell Landscape Group	\$23,450,000
25	Girard Environmental Services	\$23,402,030

RESIDENTIAL

1	TruGreen	\$734,720,000
2	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$147,750,000
3	Weed Man	\$127,141,803
4	Lawn Doctor	\$92,020,600
5	SavATree	\$60,000,000
6	Massey Services	\$48,001,557
7	Naturalawn of America	\$43,699,054
8	Meadows Farms	\$43,650,000
9	Spring-Green Lawn Care Corp.	\$38,062,128
10	Mariani Landscape	\$30,958,950
11	Chalet	\$25,542,145
12	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$24,605,000
13	Nutri-lawn Corp.	\$22,365,000
14	Scott Byron & Co.	\$22,050,000
15	McHale Landscape Design	\$20,200,000
16	Garden Design	\$18,000,000
17	Naturescape	\$15,800,462
18	Southern Botanical	\$14,823,183
19	Lambert's	\$14,592,000
20	Designs By Sundown	\$14,400,000
21	Senske Services	\$13,921,600
22	Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care	\$12,660,338
23	The Schumacher Cos.	\$12,299,000
24	Lawn Dawg	\$11,238,325
25	Heron Lawn & Pest Control	\$10,775,159

GOVERNMENT

1	Marina Landscape	\$40,600,000
2	Terracare Associates	\$15,267,678
3	TBG Landscape	\$13,076,250
4	Ruppert Landscape	\$12,361,200
5	Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes)	\$11,245,868
6	Gothic Landscape	\$10,150,000
7	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$9,850,000
8	Angler Environmental	\$9,063,624
9	Yellowstone Landscape Group	\$8,371,300
10	ISS Grounds Division	\$7,200,000
11	Rotolo Consultants (RCI)	\$6,300,000
12	American Landscape Systems	\$5,500,000
13	Christy Webber Landscapes	\$4,970,000
14	Jensen Corp.	\$4,160,000
15	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	\$4,125,000
16	OneSource, an ABM company	\$4,000,000
17	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$3,900,000
18	Stay Green	\$3,664,864
19	Coast Landscape Management	\$3,600,000
20	Gachina Landscape Management	\$3,332,996
21	Merit Service Solutions	\$3,240,000
	Executive Landscape	\$3,240,000
23	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting	\$2,820,000
24	Carol King Landscape Maintenance	\$2,777,330
25	The Greenery	\$2,646,000

BY MIX

MAINTENANCE

1	U.S. Lawns	\$103,159,450
2	Ruppert Landscape	\$44,500,320
3	Yellowstone Landscape Group	\$41,856,500
4	Ferrandino & Son	\$39,600,000
5	Merit Service Solutions	\$38,880,000
6	Mainscape	\$38,083,392
7	Gothic Landscape	\$30,450,000
8	OneSource, an ABM company	\$30,000,000
9	The Greenery	\$27,972,000
10	Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes)	\$24,740,911
11	Gothic Grounds Management	\$22,229,703
12	Mission Landscape Cos.	\$21,581,872
13	Russell Landscape Group	\$19,932,500
14	Clintar Landscape Management	\$19,845,000
15	Bemus Landscape	\$19,760,000
16	DLC Resources	\$18,800,000
17	TruGreen	\$17,920,000
18	Marina Landscape	\$17,400,000
19	Sebert Landscaping	\$17,050,000
20	Christy Webber Landscapes	\$16,685,000
21	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	\$15,907,500
22	James River Grounds Management	\$15,603,473
23	Gachina Landscape Management	\$15,553,979
24	McFall & Berry Landscape Management	\$14,765,060
25	Jensen Corp.	\$14,560,000

DESIGN/BUILD

1	Gothic Landscape	\$65,975,000
2	Denison Landscaping	\$36,975,000
3	Ruppert Landscape	\$32,963,200
4	Garden Design	\$29,100,000
5	Dixie Landscape	\$28,930,000
6	Jensen Corp.	\$27,040,000
7	U.S. Lawns	\$18,888,350
8	Angler Environmental	\$15,722,613
9	The Schumacher Cos.	\$15,562,000
10	McHale Landscape Design	\$15,554,000
11	Southern Botanical	\$15,301,350
12	Meadows Farms	\$15,035,000
13	Scott Byron & Co.	\$13,725,000
14	Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes)	\$13,495,042
15	Christy Webber Landscapes	\$13,490,000
16	TBG Landscape	\$12,204,500
17	The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin	\$9,751,950
18	Santa Rita Landscaping	\$9,424,000
19	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$8,840,000
20	LegacyScapes	\$8,786,400
21	Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management	\$8,662,000
22	Benchmark Landscape	\$8,481,744
23	Yellowstone Landscape Group	\$8,371,300
24	Hittle Landscaping	\$8,163,992
25	Yard-Nique	\$8,040,108

LAWN CARE

1	TruGreen	\$770,560,000
2	Weed Man	\$133,833,477
3	Lawn Doctor	\$87,177,411
4	Massey Services	\$46,180,400
5	NaturaLawn of America	\$45,539,014
6	Spring-Green Lawn Care Corp.	\$40,571,719
7	Nutri-lawn Corp.	\$22,365,000
8	Naturescape	\$14,871,023
9	Yellowstone Landscape Group	\$12,556,950
10	SavATree	\$12,000,000
11	Lawn Dawg	\$11,474,922
12	Heron Lawn & Pest Control	\$9,637,645
13	Senske Services	\$9,492,000
14	Merit Service Solutions	\$6,480,000
15	Mainscape	\$4,760,424
16	U.S. Lawns	\$4,358,850
17	Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care	\$4,199,117
18	OneSource, an ABM company	\$4,000,000
19	Greenscape	\$3,750,788
20	Tomlinson Bomberger	\$3,009,480
21	Clintar Landscape Management	\$2,835,000
22	The Greenery	\$2,646,000
23	North American Lawn & Landscape	\$2,600,000
24	Environmental Management Services	\$2,250,000
25	Gardeners' Guild	\$1,981,000

IRRIGATION

1	Marina Landscape	\$39,440,000
2	Yellowstone Landscape Group	\$12,556,950
3	U.S. Lawns	\$5,811,800
4	Merit Service Solutions	\$5,670,000
5	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$4,680,000
6	Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes)	\$4,498,347
7	New Jersey Best Lawns, Sprinklers & Fencing	\$3,897,000
8	American Landscape Systems	\$3,850,000
9	LMI Landscapes	\$3,625,000
10	Mainscape	\$3,570,318
11	Denison Landscaping	\$3,400,000
12	Earthtones Landscaping	\$3,300,000
13	Southern Botanical	\$2,869,003
14	Clintar Landscape Management	\$2,835,000
15	North American Lawn & Landscape	\$2,600,000
16	Girard Environmental Services	\$2,463,371
17	Dora Landscaping Co.	\$2,400,000
18	Dobson's Woods & Water	\$2,325,000
19	Massey Services	\$2,306,711
20	Gothic Grounds Management	\$2,279,970
21	Bemus Landscape	\$2,080,000
22	Executive Landscape	\$2,025,000
23	OneSource, an ABM company	\$2,000,000
24	Arteka Cos.	\$1,839,780
25	Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers	\$1,828,300

BY SERVICE SEGMENT

BY REGION

(IN U.S. DOLLARS)



NORTHEAST

1	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$94,560,000
2	Merit Service Solutions	\$67,149,000
3	SavATree	\$63,750,000
4	Ruppert Landscape	\$41,204,000
5	Denison Landscaping	\$38,250,000
6	U.S. Lawns	\$29,059,000
7	NaturaLawn of America	\$25,759,442
8	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	\$25,250,000
9	The Schumacher Cos.	\$25,100,000
10	Weed Man	\$20,075,022
11	High Tech Landscapes	\$16,948,955
12	Sposato Landscape Co.	\$14,900,000
13	Meadows Farms	\$14,550,000
14	McFall & Berry Landscape Management	\$14,469,759
15	Ferrandino & Son	\$13,200,000
16	John Mini Distinctive Landscapes	\$12,219,000
17	Lawn Dawg	\$11,829,816
18	Hoffman Landscapes	\$11,400,000
19	Blondie's Treehouse	\$11,115,000
20	McHale Landscape Design	\$9,696,000
21	Angler Environmental	\$9,248,596
22	Tomlinson Bomberger	\$9,028,440
23	Eastern Land Management (ELM)	\$8,700,000
24	New Jersey Best Lawns, Sprinklers & Fencing	\$8,660,000
25	Parker Interior Plantscape	\$8,000,000

MIDWEST

1	Christy Webber Landscapes	\$35,500,000
2	Sebert Landscaping	\$31,000,000
3	Spring-Green Lawn Care Corp.	\$29,278,560
4	Reliable Property Services	\$27,100,000
5	Chalet	\$25,542,145
6	The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin	\$25,005,000
7	Environmental Management (EMI)	\$22,500,000
	Scott Byron & Co.	\$22,500,000
9	U.S. Lawns	\$21,794,250
10	Weed Man	\$20,075,022
11	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting	\$18,800,000
12	Naturescape	\$18,588,779
13	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$17,730,000
14	Ferrandino & Son	\$17,600,000
15	Clarence Davids & Co.	\$17,400,000
16	Hittle Landscaping	\$14,843,622
17	Mainscape	\$13,686,219
18	Becker Landscape	\$13,100,000
19	Engledow Group	\$13,000,000
20	Perficut Cos.	\$12,800,000
21	Arteka Cos.	\$12,265,200
22	Southview Design	\$11,200,000
23	Kujawa Enterprises (KEI)	\$10,617,750
24	Munie Greencare Professionals	\$9,773,671
25	Lawn Ranger	\$9,100,000

SOUTHWEST

1	Gothic Landscape	\$40,600,000
2	Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes)	\$40,485,127
3	Garden Design	\$30,000,000
4	Yellowstone Landscape Group	\$29,299,550
5	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$26,000,000
6	Southern Botanical	\$23,908,360
7	Clean Scapes	\$20,717,000
8	DLC Resources	\$18,800,000
9	Heads Up Landscape Contractors	\$17,600,000
10	ISS Grounds Division	\$16,200,000
11	Lambert's	\$15,360,000
12	U.S. Lawns	\$14,529,500
13	LMI Landscapes	\$14,355,000
14	Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management	\$14,200,000
15	Ferrandino & Son	\$13,200,000
	Earthtones Landscaping	\$13,200,000
17	Integrated Landscape Management	\$13,076,709
18	EarthWorks	\$13,000,000
19	Santa Rita Landscaping	\$11,904,000
20	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$9,850,000
21	The Spencer Co.	\$9,484,954
22	Gothic Grounds Management	\$9,404,874
23	Native Land Design	\$9,048,664
24	Weed Man	\$6,691,674
25	Massey Services	\$2,910,850

SOUTHEAST

1	U.S. Lawns	\$72,647,500
2	Yellowstone Landscape Group	\$54,413,450
3	Massey Services	\$52,010,840
4	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$39,400,000
5	Ruppert Landscape	\$38,731,760
6	Mainscape	\$38,083,392
7	The Greenery	\$37,800,000
8	Meadows Farms	\$33,950,000
9	OneSource, an ABM company	\$33,600,000
10	Dixie Landscape	\$28,930,000
11	Russell Landscape Group	\$23,450,000
12	Girard Environmental Services	\$23,402,030
13	Ferrandino & Son	\$22,000,000
14	James River Grounds Management	\$21,374,621
15	Gibbs Landscape Co.	\$20,460,715
16	Weed Man	\$20,075,022
17	Yard-Nique	\$16,750,225
18	ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	\$15,572,300
19	HighGrove Partners	\$14,850,000
20	North American Lawn & Landscape	\$13,000,000
21	Dora Landscaping Co.	\$12,000,000
22	LegacyScapes	\$10,983,000
23	McHale Landscape Design	\$10,504,000
24	McFall & Berry Landscape Management	\$9,979,144
25	Angler Environmental	\$9,248,596

WEST

1	Gothic Landscape	\$60,900,000
2	Marina Landscape	\$58,000,000
3	Cagwin & Dorward	\$31,200,000
4	Terracare Associates	\$28,806,940
5	Bemus Landscape	\$26,000,000
6	Gachina Landscape Management	\$22,219,970
7	Ferrandino & Son	\$22,000,000
8	Pierre Landscape	\$20,155,000
9	Senske Services	\$19,888,000
10	Gothic Grounds Management	\$19,094,745
11	Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care	\$18,896,027
12	Benchmark Landscape	\$16,963,488
13	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$15,760,000
14	Landscape Specialists	\$15,600,000
15	Cleary Bros. Landscape	\$14,300,000
16	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	\$12,500,000
17	Andre Landscape Service	\$11,058,433
18	Coast Landscape Management	\$10,000,000
19	Gardeners' Guild	\$9,905,000
20	Schultz Industries	\$9,234,510
21	Signature Landscapes	\$9,022,918
22	Pacific Landscape Management	\$8,678,652
23	Executive Landscape	\$8,100,000
24	Mountain High Tree, Lawn & Landscape Co.	\$7,908,714
25	Emerald Isle Landscaping	\$7,555,529

Expanding footprints

Here's how some **LM150** companies are adding to their territories.

New Jersey Best Lawns, Sprinklers & Fencing

The Lakewood, N.J.-based company opened multiple branches to reduce windshield time and improve profitability. Now that it has more locations, its focus turns to maximizing revenue per branch with a new marketing campaign.

Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care

Opening a third branch in Colorado has been difficult with the recent legalization of marijuana there. Commercial properties, being bought up by pot growers, are in short supply.

Ruppert Landscape

Ruppert started taking advantage of the low cost of real estate and historically low interest rates by acquiring its facilities versus renting. The company says this increases employee pride in their facilities due to the continual upgrades at owned facilities.

Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/ Greater Texas Landscapes)

This Southwest-focused company acquired Hadden Landscaping in January to ramp up its coverage of the Dallas-Fort Worth Market.

The Brickman Group

In late 2013, before announcing in May it would merge with ValleyCrest, Brickman bought Dallas-based Metheny Commercial Lawn Maintenance.

Merit Service Solutions

Merit also grew in Texas. In early 2014 it added SunTerra Landscape Services to its ranks. Based in Austin, SunTerra serves more than 400 commercial properties throughout the state.

Webb Landscape

The Bellevue, Idaho-based company expanded into a new territory this year, opening a fourth garden center and growing its maintenance and construction divisions.

GROW getters

Seventy-five LM150 companies grew 10 percent or more, up from 58 on last year's list. Here's what factors are contributing to a few of these firms' expansions.

The Grounds Guys

This landscape maintenance franchise system, founded in 2010, is the fastest-growing LM150 firm for the second year in a row. With its eye on refining financial awareness/accountability, strategic training and systems, the company plans to grow another 43 percent next year.

Heron Lawn & Pest Control

In addition to implementing a new customer management system, revamping its employee rewards program and adding a 401(k) program for 2014, Heron upped its offerings on the pest control side of its business with a wildlife solutions division and a termite initiative.

Overall Rank	Growth Rank	Company	% Revenue Change from 2012
→ 73	1	The Grounds Guys	112%
98	2	Earthtones Landscaping	110%
149	3	Emerald Isle Landscaping	51%
36	4	Garden Design	50%
52	5	Southern Botanical	47%
96	6	Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management	43%
71	7	Angler Environmental	38%
140	8	Eastern Land Management (ELM)	37%
12	9	Ferrandino & Son	35%
40	10	Reliable Property Services	34%
15	11	Merit Service Solutions	33%
111	12	Dora Landscaping Co.	30%
8	13	Weed Man	28%
112		Santa Rita Landscaping	28%
121		LegacyScapes	28%
148	16	Dobson's Woods & Water	25%
42	17	Bemus Landscape	24%
99	18	Becker Landscape	23%
135		Lawn Ranger	23%
37	20	Dixie Landscape	22%
→ 120		Heron Lawn & Pest Control	22%
122		Kujawa Enterprises (KEI)	22%
150		Outside Unlimited	22%
34	24	Sebert Landscaping	21%
105		Stockner's	21%
17		Mainscape	21%
83	27	Designs By Sundown	20%
108		Arteka Cos.	20%
138		Signature Landscapes	20%
125	30	Coast Landscape Management	19%
133		Joyce Landscaping	19%
55		Girard Environmental Services	19%
123	33	Ecoscape Solutions Group	18%
47		The Schumacher Cos.	18%
93		Hittle Landscaping	18%
141		Pacific Landscape Management	18%
95	37	Cleary Bros. Landscape	17%
18	38	Marina Landscape	16%

Overall Rank	Growth Rank	Company	% Revenue Change from 2012
145		Grant & Power Landscaping	16%
87	40	Lambert's	15%
14	41	Ruppert Landscape	14%
32		Christy Webber Landscapes	14%
77		Clarence Davids & Co.	14%
81		Yard-Nique	14%
143		Providence Landscape Group	14%
113		Lawn Dawg	14%
7	47	U.S. Lawns	13%
9		Gothic Landscape	13%
24		Lucas Tree Experts	13%
90		Munie Greencare Professionals	13%
109		John Mini Distinctive Landscapes	13%
116		Southview Design	13%
1		ValleyCrest Landscape Cos.	13%
25		Acres Group	13%
38		Terracare Associates	13%
137	56	Tomlinson Bomberger	12%
31		Mariani Landscape	12%
35		Mission Landscape Cos.	12%
110		Greenscape	12%
115		Hoffman Landscapes	12%
28	61	Jensen Corp.	11%
91		Sposato Landscape Co.	11%
20	63	Massey Services	10%
19		Clintar Landscape Management	10%
22		NaturaLawn of America	10%
30		The Greenery	10%
44		Ryan Lawn & Tree	10%
63		Teufel Nursery	10%
74		ISS Grounds Division	10%
75		Heads Up Landscape Contractors	10%
100		Harvest Landscape Enterprises	10%
118		CoCal Landscape	10%
139		Canete Landscape & Snow Management	10%
145		Executive Landscape	10%
85		ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	10%

Munie Greencare Professionals

The company's increase in 2013 over 2012 was primarily due to the addition of four large maintenance sites. It hopes future growth will come from strengthening management accountability through financial planning, equipment management and production processes.

Harvest Landscape Enterprises

It grew by enhancing its safety programs and establishing a company "bible," detailing every position. Harvest also implemented an iPhone app and custom software to improve efficiency. Employee development is a focus this year.

Hittle Landscaping

The company credits its 2013 growth to a new management structure, additional advertising and human resources initiatives, such as a new-hire orientation and an increased safety focus.

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LESSONS LEARNED

WE ASKED LEADERS
FROM LM 150 COMPANIES:

"WHAT DO YOU KNOW
NOW THAT YOU WISH
YOU KNEW THEN?"





(From left) Jake Elrod, Justin Crocker, Luke Stice and Jon Kirk make up the top management at Earthtones.

Crunch your numbers before the bid.

No. 98

Earthtones Landscaping
Midlothian, Texas

Justin Crocker, president of Earthtones Landscaping, dropped the habit of scratching his head once he picked up the practice of crunching the numbers of a job before bidding on it.

Those numbers include big-picture material and labor costs down to the gallons of gas it takes to travel to a job site and minutes to conduct each service.

Once the company zeroed in on estimating those figures three years ago, it became more selective about the jobs it bid on because it could identify which were money makers and which were not. Foremost, it maximized profits.

"Before, we would be scratching our heads, asking 'Why didn't we make money on that job?'" Crocker says. "It came back to not understanding the numbers of the job. We weren't accurately bidding the job upfront. If I could go back, my No. 1 thing I would tell myself is, 'Know what it costs to put in that job before you sell it.'"

The first step for Earthtones to do that was to stop competing on "going rates" set by the market and instead create stiffer standards for itself. This meant it more frequently walked away from jobs, choosing not to bid on a

project even if it had a fair shot at landing it.

It was scary at first, Crocker says. "I would rather see less jobs that are more profitable than huge sales numbers with weak margins," he says.

He praised Earthtones' maintenance division for how accurately it tracks job costs. The division made a formula, based on the square footage of a property, to calculate the minutes per year it spends on any given job site. From that, it creates an annual report that shows every minute spent on each property for the year.

The key to that formula, Crocker says, is diligently tracking and recording the time spent on a job site so the company has historical data to reference when estimating a prospective job.

"The better we track and document time and materials, the more historical data we have to dig through each year to make sure we are where we need to be to hit our goals," Crocker says.

Putting such an emphasis on tracking means Crocker has slightly shifted his responsibilities in the company, spending less time in the field. While he'd rather be sitting on the seat of mower than in his office chair, he says the shift of duties is worthwhile.

"I realized my role, with the growth inside of the company, is probably spending less time out in the field and more time looking over our books and tracking our costs," he says. "We can't maintain the growth without better tracking and maintaining where our money's going." —Sarah Pfledderer

WHAT DO YOU KNOW NOW THAT YOU WISH YOU KNEW THEN?

"Not all business is good business. We no longer take jobs for the sake of doing work; we take jobs that are within our realm of expertise, profitable and that we are OK attaching our name/reputation to."

Chris Lee, president
EarthWorks

"Make sure systems are in place."

Stewart Hanson, president
Arteka Cos.

"We would have spent more money and hired the right people. We tried to hire people with less experience because they were a less expensive option, and then we'd try to train. But we didn't have the infrastructure that we do today, so often the training never occurred. We set people up to fail."

Matt White, president/CEO
Caretaker Landscape &
Tree Management

Delegate day-to-day operations.

No. 95

Cleary Bros. Landscape
Danville, Calif.

Cleary Bros. Landscape has served the San Francisco area for 27 years, specializing in commercial maintenance. Composed of 175 employees and with brothers Martin and Mike Cleary at its helm, the firm is optimistic about 2014, with the exception of drought-related restrictions. It recently rolled out a new employee-training system to better track employees' progress with their skills and safety training.



Martin Cleary

You said knowing what you know now, you would have been a less critical player to your team when you first started in the industry. What do you mean by that?

When we started, it was just two guys and a pickup truck. As we started getting more employees, I continued trying to cover all

the bases. We had some good people, but we weren't empowering them. If there were any issue, I would handle it. I'd manage all of the equipment, payroll and safety. We bounced along as a small company for some time. I then learned I've only got so much capacity to oversee things. Delegating to people, giving people authority to do things, was really the secret to growth.



Cleary Bros., which started with two guys and a pickup truck, stayed small until it embraced delegating.



At Cleary Bros., managers have the autonomy to choose the best path to solve a problem.

When did the light bulb come on?

Probably 15 years ago or so. I was at a job site working with the crew, and I got hurt. I cut my left thumb with a power saw. I almost cut my thumb off. It was quite an eye-opener. At that point I decided we need to grow and we need to delegate.

How did you go about changing your ways?

It's all about the people we've hired and giving them autonomy to do their jobs. There are certain motivators for people, but autonomy is a huge one, which means allowing them to do what they need to do.

Key for us was we created key accountabilities for our managers. They're given direction on what they need to get done at the end of the day, but they're not given specific direction on how to do it. They get to pick the best path to solve problems. They have responsibilities, but they also have the authority for how to accomplish those responsibilities.

What was the most difficult adjustment?

Giving people authority means you also have to give them the opportunity to make mistakes. If their mistakes are constant, something needs to change.

In what ways did your business benefit once you altered your approach?

Our branch managers were doing problem solving. From my perspective that creates smoothness because if they're not dealing with problems, then it has to go up to somebody. If your day is constantly filled with dealing with problems, that's a pretty chaotic day.

How do you avoid going back to your old ways?

We have our business large enough now to where there's no way I could run everything by myself. I'm not really interested in doing that. —Interview by Sarah Pfledderer

Think smaller; focus on specific client segments.

No. 131

Carol King Landscape Maintenance
Orlando, Fla.

Founded by Bill and Carol King 54 years ago, Carol King Landscape Maintenance primarily caters to commercial clients. The Bachand family purchased the company in 1975, and it now comprises about 140 employees, with Bruce Bachand holding the reins. Its biggest obstacle in 2014 is managing insurance costs due to the impact of the Affordable Care Act. Yet, it's optimistic about increased construction opportunities as the local economy rebounds. It also plans to put a heavy focus on sustainable initiatives as it continues to grow.



to customers, react quicker to their needs and maintain a relationship-based business.

For instance, homeowner associations (HOAs), condominiums and multi-housing sites for the residential side are not prone to being rolled up by national companies because they're all locally controlled.

There are opportunities to target a specific market. Spend your marketing dollars in that one area and become a preferred provider or a boutique company. You've just got to find the one you're comfortable with. It always has to come back to who and what you want to be and where you want to head. You need to make these decisions when you're in the \$1 million to \$2 million revenue point.

You can't get so far out that you've created something you have to keep fueling all the time yet be willing to go backward. I don't know that going backward is ever a sound business strategy. I'm not going to blow up what I have now to go back and do that. I don't think that's good for the family and the investment they've made.

While we have our hands in everything, the company is still successful, still moving forward. We work on the commercial side in HOAs, hotel, commercial industry buildings, facilities, retail and estate-type residential. There are advantages to that, (but) there also are disadvantages when you're trying to be all things to all people. So we focus on what our strengths are. We're a company with local roots, local knowledge, the stability of the same management and ownership. We know the customer and focus on their needs without having such a vast geographic area that you get lost in the shuffle." —As told to Sarah Pfledderer

Targeting a niche may be the key to avoiding competition with large national and regional players, Carol King's Bruce Bachand says.

WHAT DO YOU
KNOW NOW
THAT YOU WISH
YOU KNEW
THEN?

"I would have hired managers from outside the industry earlier."

Keith Rotolo, senior
vice president/owner
Rotolo Consultants (RCI)

"The hardest challenge for any business owner is to let go and trust others to do tasks that you might not think they can do as well. It took me about seven years to understand this concept. Ever since I have it's been a blessing."

Brian DuMont, president/CEO
Yard-Nique

"Hindsight is 20/20, and I'm always brighter after the fact.

As we've morphed into a \$9 million to \$10 million company, we compete on the commercial maintenance side against large, national and regional companies who sell contracts to hotel chains, restaurant chains and large property management groups. It's dawned on me we can't work in certain areas because they're tied up with negotiated relationships. It takes a certain market segment away from you.



Bruce Bachand

Consequently, if we had it to do over again, we might have developed a more niche-related company to have a smaller footprint and closer control. It would have been years ago, probably in the late 1970s or early 1980s.

Companies that accomplish this increase their margins and retain their customers better because of the relationship factor. The one thing the national companies may not be able to do, versus a family business or one-market business, is be close



Spend more time developing systems.

No. 149

Emerald Isle Landscaping
Denver

On track to hit near \$10 million in 2014, Emerald Isle Landscaping credits its success to the systems and processes it added about five years ago—it added an executive team this year to help standardize and streamline those. The 37-year-old company, which employs around 105, has seen significant growth in the past five years, says President Rory Lamberton. It doubled its annual revenue and expanded into five branches in that time. The expansion also landed it on the 2013 Inc. 5000 list of the fastest growing private companies in America.

The biggest challenge of having five branches is delivering the same level of service across the board, making things universal from crew to crew and branch to branch.

We've developed some training implementation and standardization systems to make that possible. It's everything from how the trucks are set up, how the equipment's tied down, how the office is left and the first and last thing done on-site. All of that's a part of a system. Any crew member can move from one branch to another and know how we work in any situation. This gives me the energy to focus on growth and improvement, and it makes it a lot more fun.

As we expanded, we left it up to operations to do whatever they felt like doing as long as it got done. You could see different

DOES YOUR COMPANY HAVE ANY NEW PROGRAMS OR INITIATIVES?

"All employees are now involved in profit sharing, and we increased the company contribution for retirement plans."

*Gene Grant, CEO
Grant & Power Landscaping*

"Every other week the entire company is involved in a quick 'state of the business' meeting related to sales, equipment, potential new hires, etc. This creates a great sense of buy-in at all levels of the company in a way that makes everyone feel like they are part of the process."

*Chris Joyce, president
Joyce Landscaping*

Uniformity among Emerald Isle's five branches has helped the company grow, President Rory Lamberton says.

cultures developing between the branches. We weren't delivering the same efficiency and communication for our customers.

It began as an off-season training, reading things like *The E-Myth* and getting our senior management to understand the value of standardization. From there, it's an ongoing battle. We make repairs to the systems and processes in fall/winter, do all the training and implementation in the spring and monitor it to make sure it's what we planned. We've spent a lot of money and time seeing what works and what doesn't, capitalizing on the lessons we learn along the way.

We've enjoyed some pretty decent growth over the past three years. The retention among our customers, more commercial maintenance, new client lists and stuff like that, that's the easiest way to see things are working.



Rory Lamberton

A lot of our process is drawn from my team of mentors. I'm a member of Vistage, a CEO peer group of similar size companies, not other landscape companies. We meet month to month and work on each other's businesses. It's like a board to hold you accountable. There's sharing of ideas, such as: 'How do you track this? How do you make sure everyone does that? How do you manage multiple locations?' I take from different areas and see what's going to work for our company culture.

Spending time to work on the business like that really does work. Dedicate your time, trust your qualified staff to do their jobs and let them run the business as you work on the strategy. This is why some companies have a problem growing past that entrepreneurial million-dollar range where the founder is involved in everything, saying: 'I can't trust this person to do it my way. They won't do it right.' Until you build and manage those systems, the people you hire are never going to do it your way." —As told to Sarah Pfledderer

Consistent marketing matters.

No. 100

Engledow Group
Carmel, Ind.

It's common for company marketing efforts to go in fits and starts, especially when there's multiple people manning the effort.

That's been the case for the 82-year-old Engledow Group, operated today by second- and third-generation Engledow family members.

There were periods where marketing played a big role, says Marketing Director Joe Judd, who joined the firm in 2012. For example, in the 1960s you could open a Central Indiana newspaper and see an Engledow advertisement. It's also held a strong brand position since the 1970s with its signature lime green trucks.

But by the 1980s and 1990s, marketing efforts tapered off. "At that time we considered ourselves the market leader since we'd been around for so long," Judd says. "We were comfortable with our reputation and other stuff took precedence. In a sense, we became complacent."

However, the increase in competition over the last two decades, plus thinning profit margins due to the Great Recession, prompted Engledow to reevaluate things.

The company hired a consultant in 2010 and 2011. One outcome from that process was to add a marketing person to implement and oversee a marketing strategy. Enter Judd, who'd worked for several ad agencies before Engledow.

"Consistent marketing would have helped us overcome a lot of challenges we're experiencing today," Judd says. "When margins are thin, it's tough to differentiate your products and services. We try to use marketing to show the value behind our services. In a sense, we're trying to take price out of the conversation."

When Judd came on board, he first addressed the website, which hadn't been updated in years. The new site, launched in December 2012, incorporates a blog and other search engine optimization tactics. It also uses an "inbound marketing" strategy. The goal is to draw customers and prospects to its site by providing useful content, such as a free landscaping calendar.

"It's not pushy or aggressive," Judd says. "The goal is to educate people and be the expert. When they're ready to make a decision, we'll be top of mind."

The company also renewed some of its community service efforts. Engledow has long partnered with

Lime green trucks (right) are part of Engledow's brand. Above, a truck from 1932.



nonprofits, but this new approach entailed choosing several that align with company values. Keep Indianapolis Beautiful is one example.

Additionally, the firm gets exposure through a partnership with the local CBS affiliate on a morning show called Indy Style. It's the second year Engledow, which does some digital advertising with the station, has participated in a monthly landscape tips and trends segment. It also posts the video clips on its website and shares them via social media.

The results of the two-year-old marketing revamp are good, Judd says. "It just seems like there's a lot of momentum building in all areas of our business," he says, citing nearly 1,400 Facebook followers (up from zero two years ago), excellent website metrics (a nearly 200 percent increase in traffic in the first year) and good feedback from clients. All this activity has resulted in more than 150 leads coming from the website since its relaunch—compared to none before. Some of those have turned into substantial contracts.

For others looking to assemble a cohesive marketing strategy, Judd offers a few tips, starting with identifying the budget. From there, he'd focus on the website.

"If I was going to spend money anywhere I'd first look there," he says. Whether or not a customer can find you with a simple web search is the first hurdle. From there, he says to explore other advertising avenues, such as Google AdWords or local media advertising partnerships.

"There's no magic bullet when it comes to marketing," he says. "Sometimes people have the mindset that there is and try to make a video go viral, for example. You might get lucky, but I'd rather put energy and efforts into creating a thorough marketing strategy for our business."

—Marisa Palmieri



Joe Judd

Embrace your mistakes. Plus, a few tips.

No. 22

NaturaLawn of America
Frederick, Md.

With 64 branches and sales nearing \$46 million, the NaturaLawn of America franchise system has a thing or two to share about growing a business. Phil Catron, president and founder, has been in the industry since the 1970s, working for large and small lawn care companies before starting NaturaLawn. That said, many of its obstacles are universal, such as regulations regarding material use, finances and more. The 27-year-old company strives to overcome these by making sound business decisions and operating more efficiently.



Phil Catron

What is it that would you do differently then, knowing what you know now?

Friends have asked that same question a couple of times in the past, and I tongue in cheek say if I knew then what I know now, I'd probably screw things up because I'd second guess myself. When

you don't know you can't do something, it's amazing what you can do. But I do have a couple of suggestions, in hindsight, that I'd pass along.

OK, great. Let's hear them.

Trademark your logo and name. It's critical. In a company that's going to be expanding out of the general area and across state lines, it's even more critical that you get it filed through the federal patent and trademark office. You have to actually conduct business across state lines before doing so, and the sooner the better. We started in 1986 and incorporated in 1987. It was about 1990, several years after we began going over state lines, that I called up our attorneys and said, 'Shouldn't we trademark our logo?' From day one we made it known our goal was to franchise. Our attorney said, 'That's probably a good idea.' My jaw dropped. It cost us literally \$1 million in legal fees over the first 10 years we were in business.

When it comes to a trademark, don't rely on your accountant to tell you that you can use your name. Just because a name is available, it doesn't mean you can trade under it. For example, our name is NaturaLawn of America, but we have multiple trademarks. If someone



Focusing on what you do best—turf care, in NaturaLawn's case—is advice its President Phil Catron gives to other operators.

wanted to incorporate as NaturaLawn of Maryland, the state would let them because they're only worried about collecting taxes. But the minute they go to trade under that name, they'll get hit with our trademark letter. There's a difference between incorporating under a name and being able to trade under it. You need to do a LexisNexis search.

The other thing is with partnerships. Have an up-front buy-sell agreement. I had a marvelous partner until he retired. We didn't want our wives to be each others' partners if one of us died. We had a cross-purchase agreement funded by life insurance and stock. I suggest you update it every year. Ask: 'How has our business changed, and how does it affect this cross-purchase agreement? How would the payout be done? How would the business be valued?' There should be a way to evaluate the business so one partner doesn't say it's worth a million and the other says it's only worth \$200,000. It's kind of like doing your last will and testament. Nobody wants to do it, but you need to do it.

Do you have any other advice for small companies?

Never ever run out of cash. And don't confuse profit with cash. You can be very profitable and go out of business because you're out of cash. You can be not profitable and cash rich, which is going to keep you going.

Especially for new operators: Do what you do best and really focus in on that because there are a lot of opportunities to make money. Keeping your money is very hard. You might go out on a lawn and someone might come up to you and say, 'Do you do gutters?' You're looking at it as another \$100, but all of the sudden you find yourself doing odd jobs that don't focus in on the primary goal of your business.

—Interview by Marisa Palmieri

Ramp up maintenance sooner.

No. 64

McHale Landscape Design
Upper Marlboro, Md.



A self-defined “design/build snob,” Kevin McHale didn’t focus on bolstering a maintenance division when he and his brother Steve began McHale Landscape Design 33 years ago.

“We just didn’t see the value of maintenance,” says McHale, president. “We were all about building, designing and constructing things. Maintenance was something somebody else did.”

Which is why after poorly providing maintenance services for two years, the company ditched the segment and referred clients elsewhere.

“We didn’t have the right people in place,” McHale says. “Their background, experience and education were all design/build oriented, and we were asking them to manage maintenance.”

Fast-forward to 2014 and maintenance makes up a quarter of McHale Landscape Design’s \$20 million annual revenue. Today, the company values this service segment from multiple viewpoints: It’s a renewable quarterly and/or monthly revenue stream; it allows the company to be a “single source for residential clients;” it ensures the proper upkeep of a design/build project because the company oversees the overall property; and it’s an easy upsell—McHale estimates 92 percent of its maintenance clients began as design/build clients.

To get to that point required the willingness to learn from its mistakes.

It re-implemented its maintenance division 12 years ago, when it was doing \$8 million to \$9 million in annual revenue. The company used about a decade before

that—after it got rid of its first maintenance division—to reevaluate how to create a profitable recurring service.

Brothers Kevin McHale (left) and Steve McHale

The solution was to create a strategic plan with a focus on better recruiting. This approach included pinpointing colleges with strong landscape management programs rather than landscape architecture programs to onboard qualified maintenance managers. Pennsylvania State University was its prime target, McHale says.

“We personally didn’t have a passion for (maintenance), so we brought the people in that did,” McHale says. “The whole thing for us was to put the right people in the right places so they could succeed. It didn’t become a benefit for our company until we had the right people in place.”

After integrating the maintenance experts, the company learned from its prior mistake and segmented its maintenance and design/build staffs so it didn’t confuse employees’ mindsets and responsibilities.

With that, McHale deems the company’s second stab at the service a success. Maintenance has grown by 20 percent every year for the past five years.

“If we had understood the effect and benefits of a maintenance division earlier, we would have started one earlier,” McHale says. “Once we put together a strategic plan and recruited the right people for the right job, maintenance became a solid, well-functioning part of our business. We just learned that the hard way.” —Sarah Pfledderer

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP BUSINESS OBSTACLES AND HOW ARE YOU OVERCOMING THEM?

“We’re concerned about the impacts of the Affordable Care Act and minimum wage on our long-term contracts. We’re working with our brokers and finance team to determine the impact and our sales teams to determine how to incorporate into our sales price.”

Jon Georgio, CEO
Gothic Landscape

“The cost of fuel/insurance/operating overhead and promoting quality over lowest price. We’re a lean company in every way possible. We encourage clients to do an apples-to-apples comparison of quotes.”

David Frank, CEO/founder
David J. Frank Landscape Contracting

“Rising prices of ornamental trees and plants and an upcoming plant material shortage. We have to make sure we have partnerships with the right vendors to secure material on jobs we’ve already bid and won.”

Michel Sallin, president/CEO
LegacyScapes

Don't ignore attacks on the industry.

No. 113
Lawn Dawg
Nashua, N.H.

Seventeen years ago, Jim Campanella was ready to branch out on his own after working for various lawn care companies in New England. In late 1996, TruGreen acquired Barefoot Grass, where he was the New England regional manager. The company offered him a job in Portland, Maine, but that wasn't where he wanted to be, so in 1997 he started Lawn Dawg with a pickup truck and a telephone book.

Today, his company has 11 locations throughout the Northeast. It grew nearly 14 percent in 2013 over 2012, despite facing challenges due to the Affordable Care Act (it lost its health care plan), staffing shortages and legislative activity threatening use of neonicotinoids and limiting fertilizer inputs.

Thirty-one years ago when I first started in the industry, I'd get in a 600-gallon spray-tank truck and go down the street to spray lawns. People would be flagging us down saying, 'Please spray our lawns.' It was easy. We'd have thousands of leads in a couple days.

Back then, there were no other regulations than to have a license to spray pesticides. You didn't have to leave a flag or notify neighbors.

The industry got so big so fast, it piqued the interest of the activist community, the self-proclaimed environmentalists. Before we knew it, we started seeing legislative activity.

Organizing ourselves better and positioning ourselves as true environmentalists may have prevented much of the negative publicity and legislation we face today. We ignored the activist attacks on our industry thinking it would go away, largely because we were in such high demand.

The Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) was formed (in 1979) with the intent to help fight some of these attacks we were under, but we weren't well organized yet. We stood by our guns and said the products were scientifically tested and we're not hurting anybody. Meanwhile, our opponents were attacking us using emotion. You can't fight emotion with science. It doesn't matter how much



you're speaking the truth, emotion trumps science every time.

Jim Campanella

We should have done a better job positioning ourselves as providing cleaner air, cleaner groundwater and cooling effects through healthy turf.

The biggest compromise we made was the sign postings. We said, 'If that's the worst that's going to happen, we can live with it.' Today, that's still the No. 1 thing we hear, 'If what you're spraying is OK, why do you have to put up the signs?'

I think we're better organized today, but I still don't think we communicate to the general public as much as we should.

In 2010 there was legislation introduced in New Hampshire to ban all aesthetic use of pesticides, similar to what they have in Canada. We did a good job of defeating that bill because we had the science to prove everything was safe to use from chemical manufacturers and Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE). That allowed me as the local guy to appeal with the emotional argument. I could talk about my 25,000 customers that rely on me to manage their green spaces. It was a great team effort and we defeated that bill soundly.

The average operator who gets in this situation should call the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) right away. We can't watch everything because we're out there working every day, but we have an obligation to support the associations that stay in tune as the watchdogs for us. Too many people rely on them but aren't members and don't pay dues. If you're in a state with a state or regional association that can represent you, you have an obligation to be a member.

The other thing is to make sure your legislators know who you are, especially if they're your customers. Communicate with them. Make sure they know that if something comes up about lawn care, they can contact you as an expert."

—As told to Marisa Palmieri

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP BUSINESS OBSTACLES AND HOW ARE YOU OVERCOMING THEM?

"H-2B is probably the biggest uncertainty we face. It appears we'll be OK in 2014 but nothing is certain with this volatile program. We're doubling down our efforts to recruit more homegrown workers, supervisors in particular."

Chris Clifton, president
Southview Design

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continued from page 20

4 Popular projects. Bathrooms and kitchens top renovation project lists again this year among those planning a project, with 26 percent of U.S. homeowners planning a bathroom remodel or addition and 22 percent planning a kitchen remodel or addition in the next two years. Seventeen percent of homeowners are planning landscape additions or renovations and 14 percent are planning deck/porch improvements.

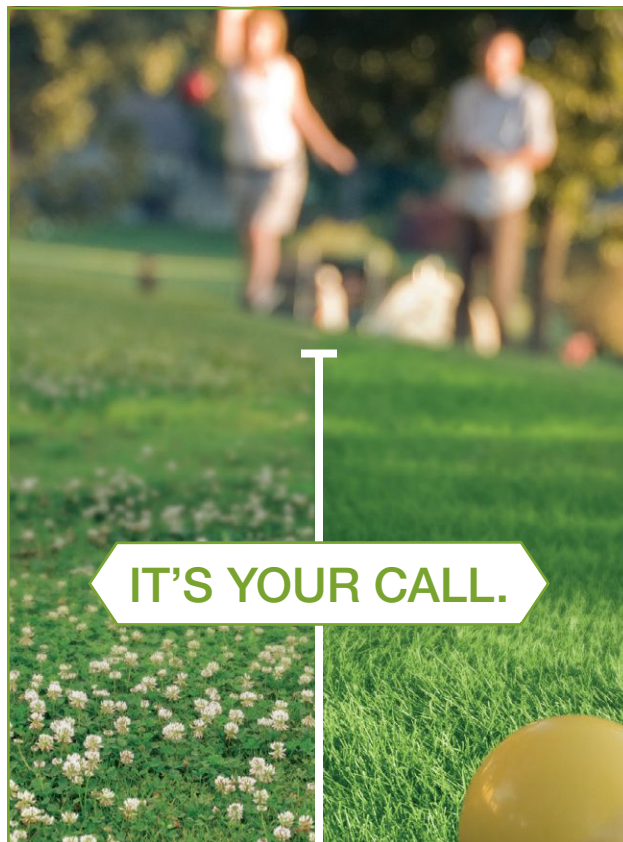
14% Percent of homeowners who are planning deck/porch upgrades.

The Ticker: DESIGN/BUILD

The New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation unveiled its newly constructed Huey Helicopter Plaza in Holmdel, N.J., May 7. The memorial was made possible through the **EP Henry HeroScaping** program, which donated 1,000 square feet of pavers and 1,300 square feet of walls. It stands as a tribute to veterans who served during the Vietnam era.



Case Construction Equipment and **CNH Industrial** participated in the Victory Garden Blitz as part of the Victory Garden Initiative, installing 500 raised-bed gardens for people in the Greater Milwaukee area. In addition to financial sponsorship, Case donated the use of a SV300 skid-steer.



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The Goods: DESIGN/BUILD

BOBCAT CO. E32i AND E35i

These Tier 4 models are additional offerings in the 3-ton class of compact excavators. The E32i (pictured) is a conventional tail swing model and the E35i is a zero tail swing excavator. The company says they're ideal for rental customers and first-time equipment buyers.

FUELTIME

These models feature a direct-inject, 1.7-liter, naturally aspirated diesel engine. →

UPFRONT

The E32i and E35i feature a new forward-mount instrumentation system.

EXTENDED OFFERING

Both machines have an optional extendable, telescoping arm that allows for the use of a hydraulic clamp.



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Going gray

California contractors turn loads of laundry into an irrigation source with the help of an incentive program.

By EMILY SCHAPPACHER

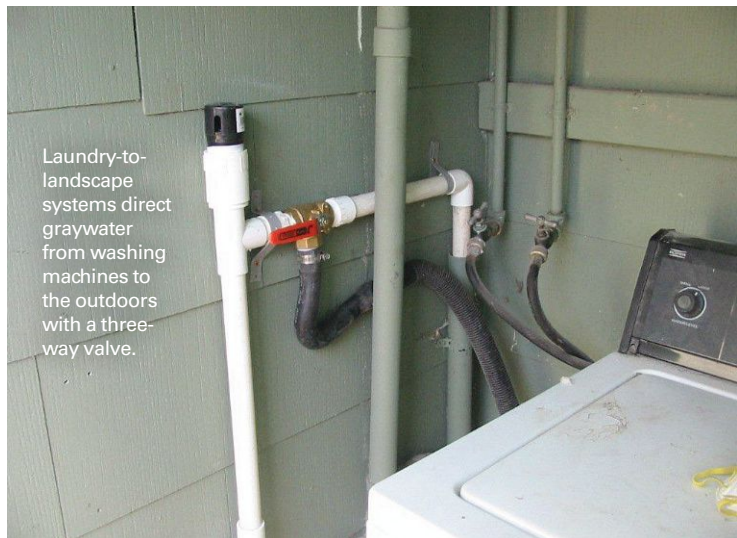
The first graywater systems installed by EarthCare Landscaping in Cupertino, Calif., were complex, messy projects. A decade ago in California, graywater—the wastewater generated from a home's washing machines, sinks, dishwashers and showers—was deemed equivalent to sewage, and the state made sustainable-minded homeowners, who saw usable water quite literally going down the drain, jump through complicated hoops to make use of it. Permits, mandated 9 inches of underground tubing and upward of \$6,000 in material costs meant few homeowners could utilize their graywater as a way to irrigate their landscapes and save thousands of gallons of water each year.

"It looked like giant gophers had trashed someone's yard," says Deva Luna, EarthCare Landscaping's horticulturist, manager and principal designer of these early projects. The company has done about a half dozen of them over the past 10 years. "It was kind of alarming how it had to be done."

Since then, some states have come around to the benefits of graywater. After a series of droughts, California changed its graywater standards in 2009, allowing landscape companies to offer low-cost, low-maintenance systems to clients interested in saving water and, ultimately, money. Like with other "green" home improvements, such as solar panels or energy-efficient windows, municipalities even have started offering incentives for homeowners to invest in graywater. The Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) in San Jose, Calif., introduced its Laundry to Landscape Rebate Program earlier this year. Companies like EarthCare Landscaping, a \$1 million firm that offers landscape design, installation and maintenance services to residential clients, now have even more incentive to promote graywater conversions as a water-saving strategy.

"This is tremendous support for the whole process," Luna says. "I've seen such a rise in public awareness."

EarthCare Landscaping hasn't installed a laundry-to-landscape system yet, though Luna is certified by Greywater Action in the installation process and says an average system would require \$100 to \$200 in materials and take a three-man



Laundry-to-landscape systems direct graywater from washing machines to the outdoors with a three-way valve.

crew about two days to complete using simple hand tools. The process is significantly easier than it used to be, Luna says, as laundry-to-landscape systems don't require a permit and the tubing needs to be trenched just 2 inches underground. Pricing the service from the contractor standpoint varies, she says, based on the complexity of the job and the layout of the client's home.

In a laundry-to-landscape system, graywater from a homeowner's washing machine is directed to a specified portion of a landscape through a three-way valve and poly tubing. The graywater is collected in an underground basin filled with mulch; plants are watered using a flood irrigation technique.

Virginia O'Rourke, water conservation specialist for the SCVWD, recommends graywater systems for hardy plants such as fruit and ornamental trees, large shrubs and groundcover. She suggests homeowners use gentle detergents that won't harm the plants.

So far this year, more than 100 homeowners have contacted the SCVWD for information about graywater, about 20 have applied for the \$200 Laundry to Landscape rebate, and more than 40 have signed up for the district's graywater workshops. But regardless of the numbers, O'Rourke is most encouraged by the increased levels of interest and enthusiasm.

"The program will be viewed as successful as long as the district is able to help educate the public," O'Rourke says. "(We) would like to help people understand what graywater is, how (it) can be used, and how to properly install a graywater system."

One challenge of installing laundry-to-landscape systems is projects are site specific, based on a clients' homes and water use. Sherri Osaka, owner of landscape design firm Sustainable Landscape Designs in San Jose, provides consultations to homeowners who are interested in graywater. For a fee of \$250 to \$500, Osaka goes to a client's home and discusses factors such



Deva Luna



The graywater is delivered to an underground mulch basin; plants are watered using a flood irrigation technique.



as the type of washing machine they have, average amount of laundry they do, where the washer is located and which area of the landscape would most benefit from graywater. After analyzing a year's worth of water bills and running some

numbers, she can tell homeowners how much water they could save annually—anywhere from 1,000 to 11,000 gallons—and can then design them a graywater system for a similar fee.

The Ticker:

IRRIGATION

Louisiana, Colorado and the city and county of Denver officially proclaimed July 2014 as Smart Irrigation Month, marking Louisiana's first year to recognize the initiative and Colorado's third consecutive year.



An **Irrigation Association** survey showed irrigation contractors reported sales in 2013 to be greater than 2012. Other findings include the impact of droughts has weakened and "fly-by-night" contractors continue to be a top concern. For more on the survey results, visit buff.ly/RLZC7R.

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The Goods: IRRIGATION

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Osaka is certain the interest in graywater will continue to grow as water becomes a scarcer commodity in California and beyond. While only three of Osaka's primarily residential clients have installed graywater systems in the past 15 years, she currently is working on her first Laundry to Landscape system design. She makes it a point to promote the program to each of her clients.



Sherri Osaka

"California and other parts of the country, too, are experiencing more and more droughts, and graywater is a really great way to help a landscape survive because that water is available even when it's dry," Osaka says. "Graywater systems have become easy and legitimate. It makes sense, and the payback is there."

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Charlotte, N.C.

Big contracts pay off for Lawn Patrol

A Texas company takes a measured approach to growth as it targets muni contracts. *By JONATHAN KATZ*

Tony Conley found a niche for his landscaping business after several years in the industry. When he first transitioned his business, Lawn Patrol Service, to commercial landscaping he tried to do it all.

The company grew too fast and took on unprofitable jobs. Conley adopted a new business strategy that focused on larger municipal and commercial mowing contracts and a more measured approach to growth.

"I learned that you have to pick and choose the jobs," says Conley, owner of the Fort Worth, Texas-based company, which today has a 99 percent commercial customer base. "Make sure your company is the right fit for the job you're bidding on."

The company that Conley and his brother, Michael, started in 1998 with a "mower, Weed Eater and a truck" now generates revenue in the

millions, Conley says, though he declined to offer specifics. Today, Lawn Patrol's service mix is 60 percent landscape maintenance and 40 percent lawn care, irrigation and design/build. It's grown about 20 percent annually since 2004.

The road to sustained growth began about one year earlier. At that time, Conley wanted a more stable annual income, so he switched from primarily residential services to commercial accounts. Residential customers often canceled their service during the winter months. The lull made it difficult for Conley to cover his overhead costs. He sought commercial contracts that he could secure for 12 months or more instead.

Lawn Patrol's first commercial contracts included day care facilities, chain restaurants and an apartment complex. The new accounts provided a steadier stream of income, but

Upgrading equipment helped Lawn Patrol and its owner Tony Conley secure a few big municipal contracts.



The Ticker:

MAINTENANCE

Exmark recalled its Quest ZRT riding mowers, involving 2009 and 2010 model years, due to loss of steering control and crash hazards. There have been nine reported incidents, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.



Cleary Bros. Landscape and The Davey Tree Expert Co. report personnel changes. Cleary Bros. added Hudson Puente as an arborist, while Davey promoted Craig Holcomb to vice president of operations support services.

Kubota Tractor Corp. expanded its Z300 series zero-turn riding mower fleet with the ZD326H, a diesel model with a 72-inch deck.

Conley encountered unforeseen challenges. For instance, his crews faced delays while they worked at the apartment complex because of heavy residential traffic. The constant presence of residents forced workers to shut off their equipment several times throughout the day for safety reasons.

The delays resulted in lost productivity and excess labor costs. Conley also underestimated the need for equipment investments when bidding on the jobs. His crews used 32-inch walk-behind mowers when they first started the commercial accounts. The lack of efficiency from the slower-moving equipment and interruptions from residents resulted in a net loss on the apartment complex account.

"The quicker you can get a job done safely and effectively, the more profit you should be able to make," Conley says.

Realizing he needed an upgrade, Conley invested approximately \$300,000 in new trucks, trailers, zero-turn mowers and handheld units. He also began bidding on more municipal contracts. In the 2004 to 2005 time frame, Lawn Patrol won a three-year contract with the city of Fort Worth park system.

Crews typically spend a day mowing the large-acreage fields, which present fewer obstacles than standard commercial jobs.

"The work we do now is a lot easier to manage because we have seven or eight guys working on one project with a supervisor, so I don't have pieces of equipment running all over town," he says.

GAINING MOMENTUM

The company's reputation has paid off in the bidding process, Conley says. Current and potential commercial and municipal customers now know the company has the equipment and experience to handle large-scale maintenance jobs, Conley says. He added 6-foot and 15-foot tractor mowers so he could service larger sites, such as highway medians and airport projects.

The tractors give Lawn Patrol an advantage during the bidding process because few companies in the Fort Worth area own similar pieces of equipment. The tractors are costly, about \$50,000 to \$70,000 each, but the equipment is worth the investment if the company can land long-term contracts, Conley says. If properly maintained, the machines should last 15 to 20 years.

Three years ago the strategy helped the company win a five-year contract to mow the fields outside the secured area of the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. Lawn Patrol is a subcontractor on the project for TruGreen LandCare. The company had worked with Lawn Patrol in the past and was trying to meet a minority-participation goal. Lawn Patrol was a good fit, as a certified minority contractor through the local chapter of the National Minority Supplier Council, with equipment big enough to handle the job.

Conley purchased its second tractor specifically for the airport project along with a new truck for a total of \$170,000. A dedicated crew of four to five employees works at the site four days a week.

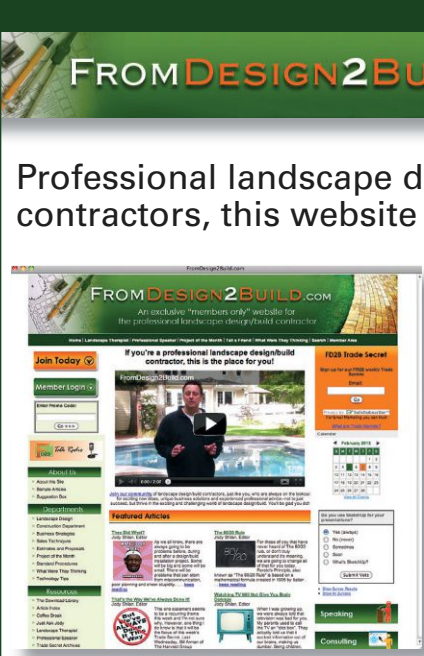
Since entering the municipal contract field, Lawn Patrol has faced some trouble finding enough workers to fill the jobs. The company operates with about 15 year-round employees, swelling to 45 total workers during the March to November busy season. Two years ago, the company began hiring employees through the H-2B seasonal worker visa program to address its hiring needs, Conley says.

The commercial accounts have provided the type of stability Conley was hoping to achieve when he first made the transition from residential services. Companies considering a similar move must move cautiously, he says. In 2005, Lawn Patrol grew by 50 percent, which was more than the company could bear.

"We took on more business than we could handle, we didn't have the employees, we didn't have the financial backing we needed to take it on," Conley recalls. "It was a huge struggle for us."

Today, Conley walks through planning scenarios to ensure he's prepared for new business. When a contract is nearing the end, he looks at how he will allocate crews and equipment depending on whether the client renews the contract.

Katz is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.



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The Goods: MAINTENANCE

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Also known as the Stander I, the new mower is available with a 36-in., 48-in. or 52-in. deck. Engines range from 18.5 to 22 hp.

WEIGH IN

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GO WITH THE FLOW

It's equipped with Wright's AERO CORE technology, providing improved airflow, cut quality and anti-blow out features, the company says.



GET COMFY

The floating standing platform absorbs rough terrain through elastopolymer bumpers that provide a dampened feel similar to a car.



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In the pipeline

LM surveyed chemical manufacturers to provide a breakdown of the pesticide products slated for release in the lawn care industry.

By SARAH PFLEDDERER

PESTICIDE TYPE	NAME	COMPANY	LABELED FOR		PRODUCT TYPE		
			TURF	ORNAMENTALS	NEW CHEMISTRY	EXISTING CHEMISTRY	NEW CHEMICAL COMBINATION
Insecticide	Rycar	SePRO Corp.		X	X		
	XXpire WG	Dow AgroSciences		X	X		
Herbicide	Solitare (liquid formulation)	FMC Professional Solutions	X			X	X
	To-be-named fertilizer plus postemergent granular	The Andersons	X			X	X
	To-be-named preemergent granular	SipcamAdvan	X			X	X
	Specticle Total	Bayer CropScience		X*		X	X
Fungicide	3336EG	Nufarm Americas	X			X	X
	Strobe 50 WG	Quali-Pro	X	X		X	X

*Labeled for "around ornamentals and hardscapes"

PHOTO: ©ISTOCK.COM/ZU_09



ACTIVE INGREDIENTS	TARGET PESTS	ADDITIONAL INFO	EXPECTED MARKET AVAILABILITY
pyrifluquinazon	whiteflies, aphids, mealybugs, chili thrips	Upon contact or ingestion Rycar acts as an immediate stop-feed before eventual death, reducing viral transmission.	2016 or later
Isoclast active (sulfoxaflor)	whiteflies, aphids, mealybugs, lepidopterans, lacebugs, some scales, thrips, leaf-feeding beetles	XXpire WG controls 39 chewing and sap-feeding insects in total with translaminar and systemic activity.	Q3 2014
sulfentrazone, quinclorac	sedges, crabgrass, broadleaf weeds	Solitare will be released in a novel water-soluble liquid formulation.	Q4 2014
Not reported	broadleaf weeds, crabgrass	This product is expected to be packaged in a 40- to 50-pound bag.	Q4 2015
Not reported	grassy and broadleaf weeds	Labeled for use on all major warm season turf, this product will be available in a straight granule or a combination with granular fertilizers. Its target application times are January to March or in the fall.	Q3 2015
indaziflam, diquat dibromide, glyphosate isopropylamine salt	grassy and broadleaf weeds	Specticle Total is labeled for use near landscape trees and shrubs. It is not registered in all states.	Q1 2015
thiophanate-methyl	botrytis, cercospora, powdery mildew, rhizoctonia, thielaviopsis	This broad-spectrum fungicide has preventive and curative properties and a systemic mode of action.	Q3 2014
azoxystrobin	diseases	This is the first post-patent azoxystrobin fungicide in the market, the company says.	Q3 2014

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MARKETWATCH

The Ticker: LAWN CARE

Koch Agronomic Solutions is expected to acquire the assets of **Agrium Advanced Technologies** by the end of the second quarter 2014. Terms of the agreement have not been disclosed.

The Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) was eradicated from an area in Boston, declared the **U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Planet Health Inspection Service (APHIS)**. At just less than four years, the eradication time frame is the shortest in the history of APHIS's National ALB Eradication.

The University of Findlay, based in Findlay, Ohio, is replacing 75 percent of its grass after a chemical similar to Roundup was accidentally applied to the grass instead of fertilizer, according to *The Findlay Courier*.

The Goods: LAWN CARE

C&S TURF CARE 2014 TURF TRACKER TIME MACHINE

The 2014 Time Machine spreaders-sprayer features several upgrades, in addition to coming with a two-year commercial-use powertrain warranty.

POWER PLAY

The machine is powered by Kohler's 15 hp OHV engine and Hydro-Gear hydraulic pumps and wheel motors.

LET'S MOVE

It features zero-turn maneuverability and fits through 36-in. gates.



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THE MISSION

Flip a post-war residence's overgrown, sloping yard into a private oasis.

When this post-World War II tract house in Bethesda, Md., built on a garage and library, among other renovations, Olney, Md.-based Botanical Decorators was called on to ramp up the landscape surrounding the additions. It wasn't as easy as installing plantings to complement the freshly repainted siding and brick, though. The firm removed more than 275 cubic yards of soil and debris and created a private garden.

"The yard itself was a jungle, with 14-foot-tall azaleas engulfing the house and the garage," says Brian Hahn, landscape designer and project manager. "When we first saw the property, the grade sloped right to the rear door, where water would sit for days when it rained." The rear property line was just 38 feet away.

The library addition retained 30 inches of water. Botanical Decorators installed a stone retaining wall to capture another 30 inches.

The sweeping stone walls creates the illusion of space and privacy from the neighbors, too, Hahn says. "The walls provide a backdrop to the fountain, which is centered on the rear window of the library," he says.

The team excavated into the rear of the hillside to build the library addition. It took advantage of topography to create an upper lawn for the resident's dog. The pet also received an air-conditioned doghouse, located beyond the wall in a hidden area behind the renovated garage.

Previously, the old block structure, the garage, was buried into the grade and "leaked like a sieve," Hahn says. "The entire garage was excavated, water-proofed and finished in three-part stucco, along with a new roof and trim."

Botanical Decorators convened with the library architect to redesign the garage and reflect the architecture of the house, down to the detail for the French doors.



PHOTOS: BOTANICAL DECORATORS



3



4



5



6

THE WORK

1 | Nondescript and prone to problems.

This “before” shot illustrates the grade descending into the back of the house and the overgrown plantings.

2 | Elegant and approachable.

The finished project.

3 | Hospitality defined.

Jumbo cobblestone and exposed aggregate inlays compose a walkway to the rear of the house.

4 | Balance.

The garage’s French doors and classic coachman lamps complement simple, clean plantings.

5 | Backyard entrance.

A custom-designed gate serves as an entryway to the backyard.

6 | Garden glitz.

The garden sits behind the pergola, backed by the retaining wall.

For more than 30 years, Botanical Decorators has offered custom residential landscaping services throughout the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. Learn more at BotDec.com.



Going dark

Recessionary circumstances prompted a new service offering for a Michigan contractor.

MICHAEL BEDELL MADE good on a bad situation when the Great Recession hit hard in Michigan, particularly his service area in Milford, Mich. Instead of altogether losing commercial clients who were cutting back or going idle, the owner, horticulturist and landscape designer with Bedell Property Management, developed a service for unoccupied properties or those not generating revenue, known as "dark property management." The add-on assured clients that Bedell was willing to work with those who needed to scale back. He, in turn, retained them in the long run.

"In early spring 2009 my company began offering the dark property management service after a national management company wanted to continue our working relationship but had to reel in their expenses, per their client's demands," Bedell says. "There also was a regional banking firm that was taking possession by default of many larger foreclosed properties in the areas we serviced. We became a valued asset to them as they appreciated our suggestions and guidance with how to handle these unique sites."

Bedell estimates 90 percent of the company's commercial accounts would have qualified as a dark property during the recession. Currently, about 5 to 10 percent qualify.

While the service isn't marketed beyond its mention as a commercial offering on the company's website, Bedell says his firm discusses it with every commercial property manager it meets. It spreads by word-of-mouth referrals from there.

Job sites that receive the dark property treatment are serviced less frequently than other commercial properties. Still, the same crews and equipment are used on the dark properties, and the pricing structure is the same.

"Our direct costs per service generally didn't change, so we used the same pricing structure," Bedell says. "The reduced scope of work was what brought the numbers in line for our clients. We also did become much more aware of our



Michael Bedell began offering dark property management in 2009.

clients' working budgets, especially in terms of landscaping, lawn care and snow plowing."

At the heart of the service is the opportunity to work more closely with clients about budget and scaling services back accordingly.

For many accounts, scaling back simply has to do with frequency. How exactly to scale back differs by site. For the most part, property managers want the "bare minimum," Bedell says. For example, if irrigation systems aren't getting turned on, that equates to less mowing. In some cases, new mulch isn't installed, but existing mulch can be turned over.

"Fertilization and weed control applications were minimal and annual flowers/mum installation work disappeared," Bedell says. "Weeding, pruning and general landscape bed maintenance happened only a few times a year or not at all. Fall cleanups became a one-time occurrence or even pushed off to next year."

While the term dark property management is a guise for service cutbacks, it makes the whole idea more approachable and opens the door for communication, Bedell says. It informs existing and potential clients Bedell Property Management is willing to work with their budget. Bedell suspects it even has earned him some jobs with smaller businesses that otherwise would have assumed the company was out of their budget range. Concurrently, those jobs helped keep his company afloat in some of the toughest times.

"We learned communication can lead to numerous opportunities for growth—even if it means, in this case, 'doing less,'" Bedell says. "By listening to the needs of our clientele, we were able to find a way to continue to work together in a positive manner and alleviate the negative."

Payton is a freelance writer with eight years of experience writing about the landscape industry.

>> SERVICE SNAPSHOT

COMPANY: Bedell Property Management

LOCATION: Milford, Mich.

SERVICE: Dark property management

WHY: The downturn in the economy made a scaled-back service package a necessity.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE: "The negotiation process and crunching the numbers to come up with a win-win scenario, especially with new clients using this particular service," Bedell says.

BEST TIP: "There's adversity; what are you going to do with it? Are you going to turn it into a positive?" Bedell says, quoting Detroit Red Wings Coach Mike Babcock. "Having a positive attitude, being willing to work in niche markets and not being afraid of doing things differently can be your greatest asset."

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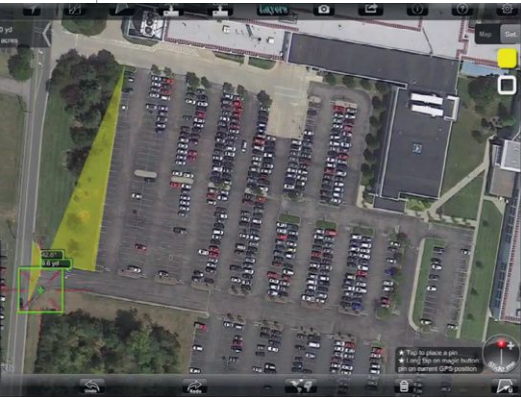
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Landscape Layers

Landscape Layers cloud-based software integrates with the WheelitOff measuring tool app to let professionals create, measure, manage and track proposals in real time. Use the preloaded specifications included or customize your own. The average learning curve is less than an hour, the company says. A five-day free trial is available.

Landscape Layers // [LandscapeLayers.com](#)

Fleetmatics Reveal

Fleetmatics Reveal GPS vehicle-tracking offering is designed to drive savings and improve productivity for mobile workforces. It includes a comprehensive set of features, including native apps for iPhone and Android, designed to provide clear visibility into field activity as well as insight into driver behavior and workforce productivity metrics.

Fleetmatics // [Fleetmatics.com](#)



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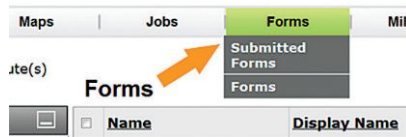
LMN's mobile timesheet software offers simple, easy-to-learn paperless timesheets; live, real-time job hours tracking; GPS-verified time records; and job, employee, billing and payroll reports. In addition, it syncs to QuickBooks for instant payroll and jobcosting data.

Landscape Management Network // [GoLMN.com](#)

Natural Insight

Supporting 40,000 professionals in more than 70,000 locations worldwide, Natural Insight provides cloud-based workforce management software. With HTML5 technology, employees are able to accept work assignments, check in and out with GPS, take surveys and provide visual verification of a job—all on their mobile devices.

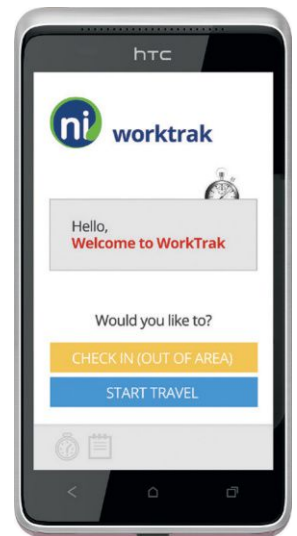
Natural Insight // [NaturalInsight.com](#)



Xora StreetSmart

Xora StreetSmart features enhancements to the Mobile Forms and Mileage Manager apps. Managers can access all submitted form data from a single page, with filters for quickly narrowing in on the desired data, plus the ability to edit or complete partial form submissions. In addition, they can export a PDF of the User Route Map, which displays the actual route of a trip taken compared with the Google Maps suggested route.

Xora, a ClickSoftware Co. // [Xora.com](#)



QuickBooksTrends

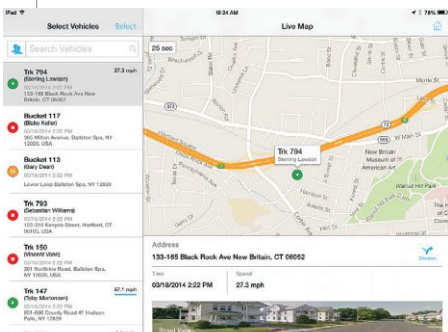
Want to find out how well your competitors are doing? Without infringing on anyone's privacy, the new QuickBooks Trends widget draws on the financial data of more than 550,000 small businesses that use QuickBooks Online to give you a free peek into your competitors' business. Filter data by industry, location and revenue to see the sales growth, ratio of new and existing customer sales, expenses and income by category and more.

Intuit // [QuickBooks.intuit.com/trends](#)

JobFLEX Android app

Based in Michigan and designed by contractors for contractors, JobFLEX released an app that's compatible with all Android 4.0 devices (phones and tablets). It includes a web portal with customer management, scheduling, digital file storage and data export features to keep the back office running as smoothly as the sales process. A free, live demo is available.

JobFLEX // [Job-Flex.com](#)



LANDSCAPE LIGHTING

LED-HL38

The weatherproof LED-HL38 floodlight saves energy while illuminating outdoor signage, architectural details and landscape designs. The 16W fixture replaces 100W incandescent lamps, and has a cool white 4700K color temperature with 800 lumens. The bronze-finish, bullet-shaped head is adjustable with sure-grip locks. It measures 9 in. by 5.5 in. and fits standard mounting units.

Orbit Industries // OrbitElectric.com

2106 Up & Accent Luminaire

Made in America and ideal for landscapes using reclaimed water or with high soil additives, the 2106 Up & Accent fixture combines heavy-gauge



brass and composite materials. Its robust composite knuckle is corrosion-resistant, featuring a polyester powder-painted finish to match the fixture and isolate the metal from the soil. An oversized silicone O-ring protects against dust and moisture.

Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting // VistaPro.com

LuxorWi-Fi

With the FX Luxor app users can control zoning and dimming with iOS and Android devices. The system consists of three parts: the Wi-Fi Module, which links Luxor ZD controllers to iOS and Android smartphones and tablets using the Luxor app; the Light Assignment Module (LAM), which allows smartphone or tablet group assignment of every fixture attached to a Luxor ZD system; and a new indoor mount that allows the Luxor ZD facepack to be remotely mounted inside a home or garage.

FX Luminaire // FXL.com



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UTVS & ACCESSORIES



Brutus

The four-model Polaris Brutus commercial side-by-side utility vehicle lineup offers front-end power take-off (PTO) capability. Using a multilink coil over De Dion rear suspension, the Brutus minimizes suspension sag when the 1,250-lb. capacity rear cargo box is fully loaded. It maintains excellent ground clearance when trailering with its 2,000-lb. towing capacity, the company says. All models feature Polaris' Lock & Ride cargo system and come with a 12-month standard warranty.

Polaris // Polaris.com/Brutus



OxCart

A utility cart designed to move heavy loads with a mower or UTV, OxCart is now available for turf, lawn and landscape professionals. It features an exclusive power-assist lift and reduces dumping effort by up to 90 percent, the company says. Run-flat tractor-grade turf tires move heavy loads rut-free across turf and lawns. The side dump rotates 110 degrees from either direction, making it easy to place heavy loads.

OxCart // OxCart.com

5600 and 5610 Toolcats

The Tier 4-compliant 5600 and 5610 (pictured) Toolcat utility work machines incorporate a non-diesel particulate filter engine solution. They feature a traction control system designed to provide operators with better mobility when ground conditions are conducive to traction loss or the machines' wheels encounter obstructions, such as rocks or debris. Towing capacity for both machines is 4,000 lbs., enabling the efficient transport of trailered supplies and light equipment up to a speed of 17 mph, the company says.

Bobcat Co. // Bobcat.com



Carryall

The Carryall utility vehicle series features 14-hp Subaru engines with electronic fuel injection—boosting horsepower by 30 percent and fuel efficiency by up to 50 percent over previous models, the company says. Rustproof aluminum frames increase durability. An optional track-based bed attachment system accommodates tool holders, water cooler and bucket holders, backpack blowers, tool boxes, etc. Most electric models come with an exclusive combination of an on-board, high-frequency charger with integrated cord retractor.

Club Car // ClubCar.com



Gator

The 2014 John Deere Gator lineup features updates that focus on operator side retention (OSR), winch enhancements and specific performance tweaks to each model category. A net OSR is part of the base configuration for the HPX, XUV heavy-duty and mid-duty models. Stylized poly doors can be ordered in lieu of nets for certain models.

John Deere // JohnDeere.com/Gator



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Chuck Carr

*Business development manager, commercial maintenance
Pierre Landscape, Simi Valley, Calif.*



Who's your mentor? The first guy I worked for in the landscape industry, Mark Jordan. That was 21 years ago when I started with Jordan Landscape in North Hills, Calif. From him I learned basically everything about the business. I went in doing sales and marketing, but I learned the ins and the outs of the landscape maintenance business and about all about the plants in Southern California.

How did you make your way to the landscape industry? My background was sales and marketing; I was director of marketing for the franchisor PIP Printing. We went through a leveraged buyout, and I changed careers. Somebody had told me Mark Jordan was looking for somebody to do sales. After a year I became general manager, and then I became president and CEO. I was there for five years.

Then I went to Environmental Care (now ValleyCrest Landscape Cos.). I was there for two years, and then I left to start my own business, Carr Landscape Management. I did that for 11 years and went back to ValleyCrest for two and a quarter years. I just started this month with Pierre Landscape.

You're president of the California Landscape Contractors Association (CLCA). How long have you been involved there? Back when I was at Jordan Landscape, Mark Jordan sent me up to Lake Tahoe to pick up a state Trophy Award for maintenance. I liked the guys I met there because I was still new to the industry and they were willing to sit down with them and tell me what they knew. The next year I got involved. Then when I started my own business the first two checks I wrote were for my CLCA membership and my workers' comp insurance. In those days, a lot of people used to join just for the insurance. Once you get in you realize the value of networking and referrals.

What are the pressing issues on the West Coast? Water is the primary thing. The new normal in landscaping here isn't big green lawns. It's native plants and sustainability. Gov. Jerry Brown announced recently he wants to take watering down to two days a week from three. For some plants, that's not a problem. For turfgrass, it is. Once you turn off the water, you'll have the unintended consequences of losing major shade trees—that brings fire hazards. And once those are gone, we'll have the heat island effect.

Immigration reform is important for us, being a border state. CLCA efforts are concentrated in the state because the federal level is such an expensive stage to play on. For example, in California they decided giving driver's licenses to illegal immigrants is OK. You can't discriminate against someone who has a driver's license that says he's an illegal immigrant. But it's against federal law to hire him. That's the position business owners are being put in here, and CLCA is working to try to get some type of safe harbor through in Sacramento.



OFF THE CLOCK

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

I have two daughters. My 22-year-old daughter is a dancer/choreographer and my 19-year daughter is a freshman at American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA) in Hollywood. She's also a dance major. A big part of my social life is going to their shows.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM ORIGINALLY?

I was born in Minnesota. My mom was a retail nursery manager when I was a little kid. They're intense gardeners up there. My father worked for Hilton Hotels. When I was 14 we transferred to Indianapolis, and I went to high school there. Then I went to Ball State University. After college I moved out to California, the land of opportunity.

NOW THAT YOU'RE A CALIFORNIA GUY, MOUNTAINS OR OCEAN?

I love the mountains the best. The beach is so congested and crowded in Southern California.

HOW ABOUT FAVORITE TV SHOWS?

I love the comedies "How I Met Your Mother" and "The Big Bang Theory." And "Criminal Minds." Those are the only shows I watch.





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