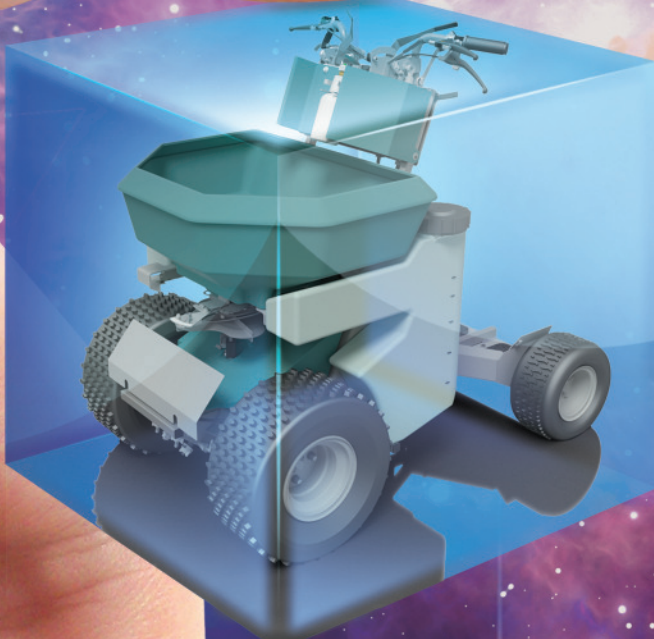


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Paul Fraynd (left)  
and Hugh Morton,  
owners of Omaha,  
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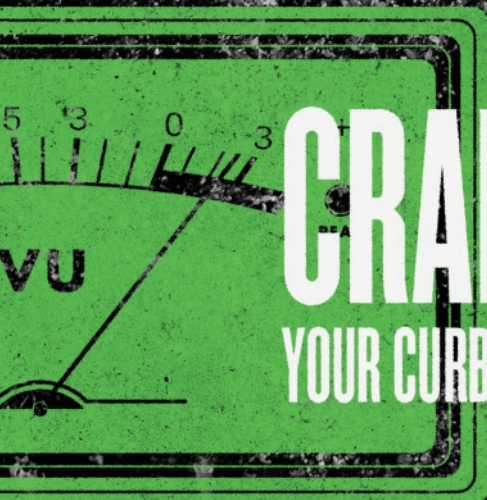
## COMMITTED TO THE CORE

Establishing a purpose  
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them—drives growth at  
Sun Valley Landscaping.

July 2015

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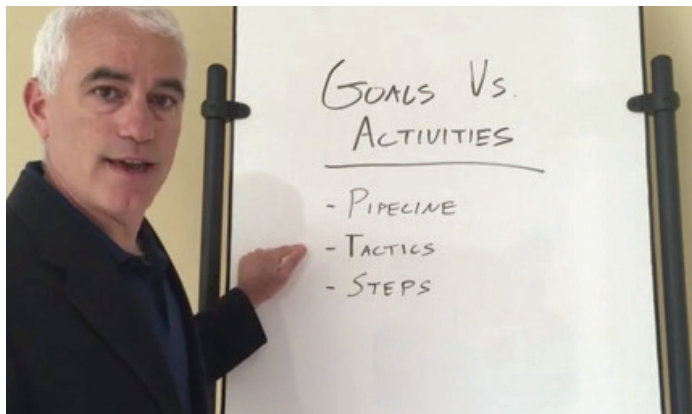
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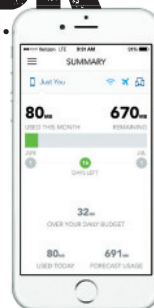


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# EDITOR'S NOTE

**MARISA PALMIERI**  
EDITOR

Contact Marisa at 216/706-3764 or  
mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net

## “How can I help?”



I just committed 20. What does that mean, exactly? I made an online pledge to volunteer 20 hours of my time by the end of 2015.

If Sun Valley Landscaping—the company featured in this month’s cover story—has its way, my volunteer time will be just a fraction of the 10,000 hours people will rack up under a campaign called Commit20, which it launched this year to celebrate the company’s 20th anniversary.

As I write this, some of my colleagues are committing a few hours of their time, helping install landscape beds at a Project EverGreen project, led by Yardmaster in Cleveland. I couldn’t be there with them because, ahem, I’m on deadline, but I do plan to complete my Commit20 hours, nevertheless.

How could I not do my part, after reading the inspiring stories in this issue, including Sun Valley’s efforts and those of the winners of the 2015 National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) Community Stewardship Awards, featured in our supplement this month?

On my own, I can’t build an outdoor classroom, like the team at Jacobsen Landscape Design & Construction has done. I can’t renovate a baseball field, like the Ewing team did; and I can’t fund and build a Habitat for Humanity home, like LawnAmerica has done—twice. But here’s what I can do.

I can be a better PTA parent at my daughters’ school, meaning I’ll give my time rather than just pay my annual membership fee.

I can commit to volunteering monthly, rather than sporadically, with my coworkers to serve lunches at the Bishop William M. Cosgrove Center in Cleveland.

I can schedule my annual trip to volunteer at the NALP Renewal & Remembrance event at Arlington National Cemetery.

And I can get in touch with an organization I’ve been meaning to contact for the past few weeks: the Ohio Fallen Heroes Memorial. Located near Columbus, Ohio, this memorial is a beautiful tribute to the men and women in uniform from Ohio who’ve been killed defending our country since Sept. 11. My husband and I took our daughters there on Memorial Day this year.

When we were planning our trip, I noticed their website had some broken links. “Someone should fix those,” I thought. Why not me? I can certainly give them a few hours of my time to help update their website or do whatever else they might need me to do.

Opportunities to help pop up all the time, but then life gets in the way before we take action. But my pledge to Commit20 will remind me to stop saying “Someone should...” and start saying, “How can I help?”

This issue of *LM* is packed with ideas for ways you can get involved in your community from our Editorial Advisory Board (page 7), in the cover story about Sun Valley Landscaping (page 26) and from the winners featured in the supplement (starting after page 32). If you need even more inspiration, check out Commit20.com. And don’t forget to make your pledge while you’re there. 

**Correction:** Massey Services was mistakenly omitted from last month’s *LM* 150 Top 25 listing in the Irrigation + Water Management category. The company reported \$7,124,480 in this category, which puts it at No. 4. The editors regret the error.



### HEADQUARTERS

1360 East 9th St., Suite 1070,  
Cleveland, OH 44114

### EDITORIAL STAFF

**Editor** Marisa Palmieri

216/706-3764 | mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net

**Associate Editor** Dillon Stewart

216/706-3756 | dstewart@northcoastmedia.net

**Art Director** Tracie Martinez

216/363-7924 | tmartinez@northcoastmedia.net

**Graphic Designer** Courtney Townsend

216/363-7931 | ctownsend@northcoastmedia.net

**Digital Media Content Producer** Allison Barwacz

216/706-3796 | abarwacz@northcoastmedia.net

### ADVERTISING STAFF

**Publisher** Bill Roddy

216/706-3758 | broddy@northcoastmedia.net

**North American Sales Manager** Craig MacGregor

216/706-3787 | cmacgregor@northcoastmedia.net

**Account Manager** Jake Goodman

216/363-7923 | jgoodman@northcoastmedia.net

**Account Executive Classifieds** Kelli Velasquez

216/706-3767 | kvelasquez@northcoastmedia.net

### BUSINESS STAFF

**Vice President, Sales** Patrick Roberts

216/706-3736 | proberts@northcoastmedia.net

**Administrative Coordinator** Petra Turko

216/706-3768 | pturko@northcoastmedia.net

**Manager, Lawn Care Forum** Ryan Bockmuller

216/706-3772 | rbockmuller@northcoastmedia.net

**Marketing Manager** Scott Gebler

216/363-7932 | sgebler@northcoastmedia.net

**Manager, Production Services** Terri Johnstone

216/978-9622 | tjohnstone@northcoastmedia.net

**Senior Audience Development Manager**

**Antoinette Sanchez-Perkins**

216/706-3750 | asanchez-perkins@northcoastmedia.net

**Digital Operations Manager** Bethany Chambers

216/706-3771 | bchambers@northcoastmedia.net

**Web Developer** Jesse Malcmacher

216/363-7925 | jmalcmacher@northcoastmedia.net

### MARKETING/MAGAZINE SERVICES

**Reprints & Permissions** Brett Petillo

877/652-5295 | bpetillo@wrightsmedia.com

**Circulation List Rental** Antoinette Sanchez-Perkins

216/706-3750 | asanchez-perkins@northcoastmedia.net

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### CORPORATE OFFICERS

**President & CEO** Kevin Stoltman

216/706-3740 | kstoltman@northcoastmedia.net

**VP, Finance & Operations** Steve Galperin

216/706-3705 | sgalperin@northcoastmedia.net

**VP, Graphic Design & Production** Pete Seltzer

216/706-3737 | pseltzer@northcoastmedia.net

**Editorial Director** Marty Whitford

216/706-3766 | mwhitford@northcoastmedia.net

## EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

# Q+A

### What are the best ways for landscape/lawn care companies to give back to their communities?

"Any landscape project for city/state parks, botanical gardens, battered women's shelters, poor areas for the underprivileged homeowners—things like that."

#### Landscape Professionals

**Richard Bare**  
Arbor-Nomics Turf  
Norcross, Ga.

**Bill Bemus**  
Bemus Landscape  
San Clemente, Calif.

**Chris Joyce**  
Joyce Landscaping  
Cape Cod, Mass.

**Adam Linnemann**  
Linnemann Lawn Care & Landscaping  
Columbia, Ill.

**Jerry McKay**  
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3PG Consulting  
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Trumbull, Conn.

**Jody Shilan**  
FromDesign2Build.com  
Upper Saddle River, N.J.

**Bruce Wilson**  
Wilson-Oyler Group  
Scottsdale, Ariz.

#### MORE ONLINE

See more great advice and complete answers from our Editorial Advisory Board in the online version of this feature at [LandscapeManagement.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net).

"Each year we go to the schools and talk on the importance of Earth Day. We hand out plants to the students to the home and plant with mom and dad."

"Involve your constituents, including clients, in this discussion and see what ideas they come up with."

"Every school in every town has a limited budget but has outdoor projects to do."

"We try to pick a nonprofit every other year that could use our work (lighting) and do a job that would have a sizable impact that would bring more attention to their cause."



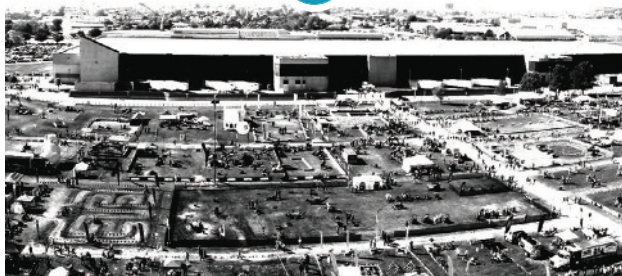
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# Look-at Me Now

DAVID BERTO



**No matter which industry you're working in, there is always a common goal that needs to be achieved – and it's none other than boosting your company's productivity, efficiency and sales. For David Berto, owner of KingCal Properties & Maintenance and Aim General Contracting, this goal has become more than achievable – especially within the last few months.**

## Tell us about Kingcal Properties & Maintenance and Aim General Contracting.

Our mission is to provide our customers with professional lawn care, snow maintenance and construction services. In a nutshell, we exist to attract and maintain customers. When we adhere to this maxim, everything else falls into place, and our services exceed the expectations of our customers.

## Can you describe and list the services that your company specializes in?

Kingcal and Aim General proudly provide the following services to our clients: lawn maintenance, irrigation systems, floral arrangements, hardscaping, softscaping, excavation, line painting, asphalt repair, snowplowing and office and industrial renovations.

The challenges we were faced with were common to most companies in this line of work...the cost of labour being the largest with equipment costs a close second.

With the implementation of LMN software we could fully realize our actual costs versus the adage of *"I hope we make enough on this project"*. We see how important items such as overhead recovery and replacement budgets for equipment play in our companies.

If you peel the onion back far enough, which LMN does in great fashion, transparency does exist; not as a buzz word or punchline in negotiations but in a reliable clear understanding for clients on why you charge what you charge.

## Do you have a success story you can share with us?

We are now comfortable letting our employees know how we operate and how we make money. We can justify their wages and show them how they can earn more by adhering to our timelines for projects while dramatically reducing the unproductive time. When you have employees subscribe to your vision and projections the company is destined for success.

LMN (or what we like to call, 'Look-at Me Now') has provided the base and true characterization of Kingcal and Aim General with our makeover or transformation from the 'Curly, Larry and Moe show' to a mathematician, statistician and executioner.

The success we have achieved is substantial, as we have streamlined our operations by



*Our roles have truly been re-vitalized and energized like a shot of Viagra to both Kingcal and Aim General. We went from an outlook of "Freedom 105" to "Freedom 55".*

re-focusing our efforts, strategies and long term planning with a solid platform of technology through LMN Estimating and LMN Time.

## Changing companies and employee attitudes is difficult. What was the key to your company's successful changeover?

LMN has provided us with the ability to respond to changing attitudes, especially accountability, by specifically zeroing in on our clients' interests and projections for the aesthetic improvement of the properties. On top of this, we can distinguish our organization from others by guaranteeing our level of transparency, professionalism and proficiency.

LMN's online tools and training modules are fantastic. They illustrated how certain sections of the programs operated with great detail. We have probably logged a few hundred man hours watching the various modules on [www.LearnLMN.com](http://www.LearnLMN.com) – which is "Landscaping porn" as my wife calls it.

We attended the No More Guessing 2 day workshop this past February, as well, we signed up for the free LMN Boot Camp at the LMN headquarters. It was extremely well organized and the food was great. We really enjoyed being able to network with other similar businesses while addressing our common issues.

## If you could 'forecast the future' – what do you see down the pipeline for your company?

The future is extremely bright now that we have fully subscribed to the LMN 'basket of knowledge'. Our fear of bidding for tenders is now gone. We are no longer concerned about job costing Xas all of the guesswork has been removed. It's just a matter of illustrating the timelines and costs to clients in a clear transparent and confident way.

Our estimating and job costing through LMN has also allowed us to rest comfortably at night knowing that we did it right and the days of dropping your price to get the work are over.



## How have the LMN TIME & QuickBooks app been valuable resources for your company?

The LMN Time and QB Sync modules are incredible. For the first time in our company's history we are able to see exact job profitability on every deal. What an eye opener!

The programs merge beautifully and the exactness of the time spent, equipment used and material breakdown provide us with a high resolution view of the company's performance.

Our employees are fully committed to this system. With LMN Time, we were able to justify the purchase of a couple of iPhones to give

to key employees to embrace the module. They love the reduction of paperwork and the quality of the reports available.


The staff and support team has been amazing. I am sure that we took up a substantial amount of time asking questions and figuring out how the Estimating module, Time module and integration with QuickBooks fit together. Whenever we reach an impasse, the LMN team are quick to jump on line and take control of our system to work it out. Thank you very much LMN for enduring our beat down.

Kingcal Properties & Maintenance and Aim General Contracting are incorporated companies that were formed in 1996, and are owned equally by Kevin Comacchio, Anthony Garito and David Berto. David shared his personal experience using LMN and how it has helped strengthen his company's outlook for the future. For more information please visit: [www.kingcal.ca](http://www.kingcal.ca).

Developed by landscape contractors for landscape contractors, LMN's online tools, systems, workshops and training modules offer one-of-a-kind access to drive productivity and profit. LMN proudly offers budgeting software, estimating software and mobile timesheet software, giving business owners the unique ability to convert their company into a profitable landscaping business. For more information please visit: [www.golmn.com](http://www.golmn.com).

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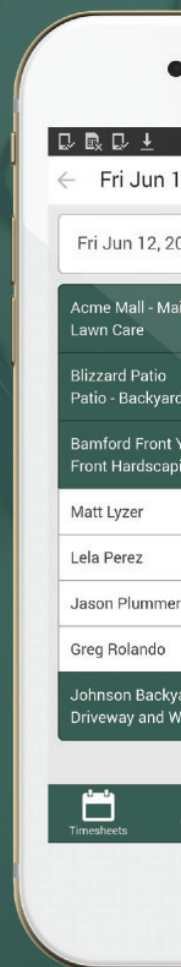
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RECOMMENDER

ISSUE BRIEF

STEP BY STEP

NEW STUFF

SAFETYWATCH

## DECLINED



One way to efficiently boost profits is to eliminate costly fees that detract from the bottom line. That's what the team at Arbor-Nomics Turf in Norcross, Ga., did last year when it analyzed its credit card fees and opted to dial back its acceptance of American Express.

The result? An extra \$10,000 in profit last year.

It was COO Josh Bare's idea to "look into all the nooks and crannies of the company" to see where it could find savings, said CEO Richard Bare. They got the idea to stop taking American Express, considering it charges more than 3 percent per transaction—nearly 1 percent more in fees than Visa, MasterCard or Discover.

"They are small fees, but with 20,000 properties they add up like grains of sand making a beach," Richard Bare said.

Such savings could make an impact even for companies with fewer customers. Arbor-Nomics also found "free money" by renegotiating the fees it pays the middlemen: credit card processing companies.

"It's been 10 months now, and we've cut back AmEx 75 percent with the corresponding savings," Richard Bare said, adding the plan is to cut out AmEx completely by the end of the summer. "We get very few complaints."

“We tell clients we're just trying to keep our prices low. They understand that.”

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JOHN DEERE

## RECOMMENDER

# Handheld equipment:

## Which do you use and why?



Husqvarna recently added two new products to its 500 Series: the 525L Trimmer (pictured) and the 525HF3S Hedge Trimmer.



**JASON NUGENT**  
OWNER, ADAMAH LANDSCAPE SERVICES  
RAEFORD, N.C.

"I prefer Stihl everything on my trailer. It has the power and reliability I need, whether it's a trimmer, edger, blower or saw. I think their equipment represents a great value for the price, given how long it will stand up to heavy use."



**KEVIN BELAND**  
OWNER, ILAWN  
GAINESVILLE, FLA.

"I use Echo mostly. I have an Echo SRM-210SB hedger and a PB-260L backpack blower, a SRM-261T trimmer, a PE-280 for edging and a CS-310 chainsaw. What I like most about these products is how long they last without needing to be replaced for brand new ones. I've never had any major issues or repairs besides just general tune-ups every now and then."

## ISSUE >>> BRIEF




BY SABEENA HICKMAN

The author is CEO of the National Association of Landscape Professionals.

## HOW THE DROUGHT IN THE WEST AFFECTS EVERYONE

**E**ven if you don't live in the Western states, you've heard by now about the severe drought and the historic water restrictions ordered by California's governor.

So why should you care if your area is doing just fine? Well, most regions suffer drought at one time or another. Many clients are more in tune to these types of issues now and want expert advice on how to save water in their landscapes and how to choose the plants that will survive more severe climate swings. As stewards of the environment, it's important that we as an industry offer clients wise counsel. Talk to them about water-saving techniques and smart irrigation, talk to them about choosing the best plants for their climate and the importance of planting them in the most suitable sites in their yard so they need less watering. Educate them about how grass and plants react to short-term droughts and how they bounce back afterward. It's also important to stress the benefits that grass, plants and trees provide by decomposing pollutants, dissipating heat, lowering allergy-related problems, reducing home cooling costs and acting as a fire barrier.

Also, pay attention to environmental issues at the local and state level. When officials discuss regulations that affect your care of the landscape, get involved, help educate them or contact your state or national association for assistance. Your work plays a vital role in the environmental health of your community. You have an important role as an educator to help get the word out that landscape professionals are making a difference when it comes to smart, sustainable landscapes. 

A person wearing a green hoodie and a black baseball cap is seen from behind, working on a wooden fence. The fence is made of horizontal wooden planks. In the background, there is a large agave plant with thick, pointed leaves. A small red and orange flower is visible near the base of the agave. The scene is outdoors with a clear blue sky.

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## STEP BY STEP

# Calibrate a broadcast spreader

**T**o make sure your clients get good results, properly calibrate your broadcast spreaders.

You'll need an open turf area, tape measure, flags, scale, bucket, calculator, pencil and paper. First, adjust the spreader to the recommended settings on the product's label.

- Place the bucket on the scale, and record its weight.

Then, pour the product in the bucket until there is 20 pounds of the product (just as an example). So, if the bucket weighs 2 pounds by itself, the scale will show 22 pounds. With the hopper closed, pour the product into the spreader.

- Measure a 50-foot linear strip of turf, and flag the starting and ending points. Put the spreader a few feet before the starting flag, and walk with it at your normal application pace. Once you reach the start line, open the hopper and continue to walk at that pace. As you pass the end point, close the hopper.

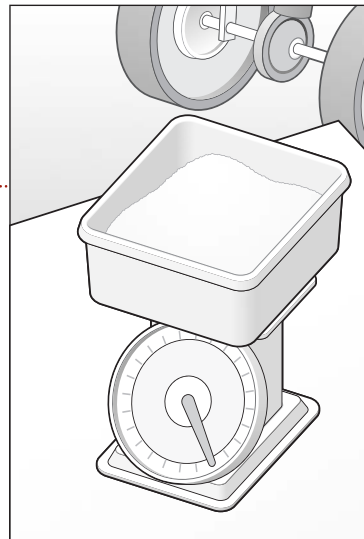
- Pour the remaining product from the hopper into the bucket and weigh it, subtracting the weight of the bucket. Then, subtract that number from 20 (your original quantity) to get the amount of product used. Also, measure the spread width.

- For this example, the fertilizer is 20-10-10 (N-P-K), and the application rate is 1 pound N per 1,000 square feet. Turn the N into a percentage, so it would be 20 percent (0.20). To see how much fertilizer you need to apply 1 pound of N per 1,000 square feet, use Formula 1 (at right).

- Now, determine the product weight that must be applied during the test run to have the spreader deliver 5 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Say the spreader used 2 pounds during the test with a spread width of 12 feet. Multiply the spread (12) by the strip length (50), and you have a 600-square-foot test area. Then, plug the numbers you have into Formula 2 (at right). If not enough of the product was applied (like in this example, since we had 2 pounds used), adjust the hopper openings. Repeat the test until you get the correct result. ➔

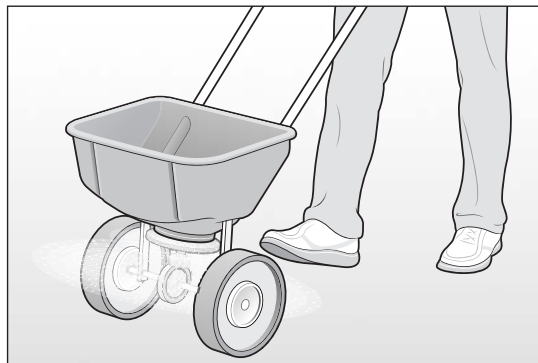
## STEP 1

Weigh the product in a bucket and pour it into the hopper, with the spreader set to the product's recommended settings.



## STEP 2

Push the spreader 50 feet with the hopper in the open position, and close it after walking that distance at your normal pace. Pour the remaining product back into the bucket on the scale.

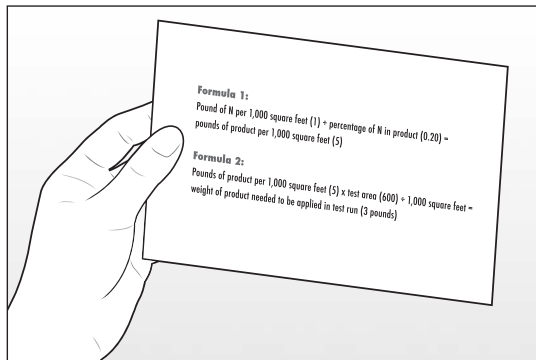


## STEP 3

Use these two formulas to see if you need to increase or decrease the amount of product being applied, and adjust the hopper openings accordingly:

**Formula 1:** Pound of N per 1,000 square feet (1) ÷ percentage of N in product (0.20) = pounds of product per 1,000 square feet (5)

**Formula 2:** Pounds of product per 1,000 square feet (5) x test area (600) ÷ 1,000 square feet = weight of product needed to be applied in test run (3 pounds)



SOURCES: Penn State & University of Minnesota Extensions

## DOWNLOAD IT

Visit [LandscapeManagement.net/StepbyStep](http://LandscapeManagement.net/StepbyStep) to download a PDF of this page to use as a training tool for your team.

# NEW STUFF



## CHECK OUT MORE NEW STUFF ONLINE

To stay up to date on all the latest landscape industry products and services, visit [LandscapeManagement.net/tag/product-news](http://LandscapeManagement.net/tag/product-news).

### 1. SS600/SS1000 STAINLESS STEEL TAILGATE SPREADERS

**COMPANY:** Hiniker

**URL:** [Hiniker.com](http://Hiniker.com)

Hiniker designed these stainless steel tailgate spreaders for optimal control. The “no-dribble” bubble auger design stops the flow when the auger stops. The brushed-finish 304 stainless-steel hoppers are available in 6 and 10 cubic ft. capacities. An optional swing-away hitch provides easy access to the truck bed and tailgate.

### 2. HTA 65 POLE PRUNER

**COMPANY:** Stihl

**URL:** [StihlUSA.com](http://StihlUSA.com)

Powered by 36-volt, lithium-ion battery technology, this cordless pole pruner is designed to save users time and money by eliminating the need for gasoline and two-cycle oil. Its variable speed trigger starts the machine with a squeeze and allows the user to control the chain speed for accuracy. The pruner runs on a brushless, commercial-grade, high-torque electric motor designed to supply power without excessive noise and vibration. The engine runs at full strength until the battery is depleted—typically lasting 40 minutes.

### 3. CAPSTONE COPING UNITS

**COMPANY:** Willow Creek Paving Stones

**URL:** [WillowCreekPavingStones.com](http://WillowCreekPavingStones.com)

The CapStones coping units, made from cast concrete, are cheaper and lighter than real stone, the company says. For a natural stone look, the cap units are designed with chiseled edges and come in canyon gray or desert brown. Willow Creek says its products are built to stay durable and maintenance-free, even through the harsh freeze-thaw cycle of Midwestern climates.

## SAFETYWATCH

➔ This photo was staged to show several safety hazards or dangerous work habits. How many can you identify? Flip to page 55 for a list of potential hazards.

### DOWNLOAD IT

Visit [LandscapeManagement.net/SafetyWatch](http://LandscapeManagement.net/SafetyWatch) to print a PDF of this page. Post it at your facility and encourage your employees to challenge their hazard-spotting skills.

*Ed. Note: Thanks to Schill Grounds Management in North Ridgeville, Ohio, for participating in our SafetyWatch photo shoots. Schill and LM do not practice or condone the unsafe methods demonstrated during photo staging.*



PHOTO: LAURA WATLO BLAKE

### WHAT WE SAY TO CUSTOMERS

Some Otto Luyken Laurel, Fothergilla major Mount Airy, Orange Storm Flowering Quince and Cotoneaster Hessei would look great.



### WHAT THEY HEAR

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## GET THE BUZZ

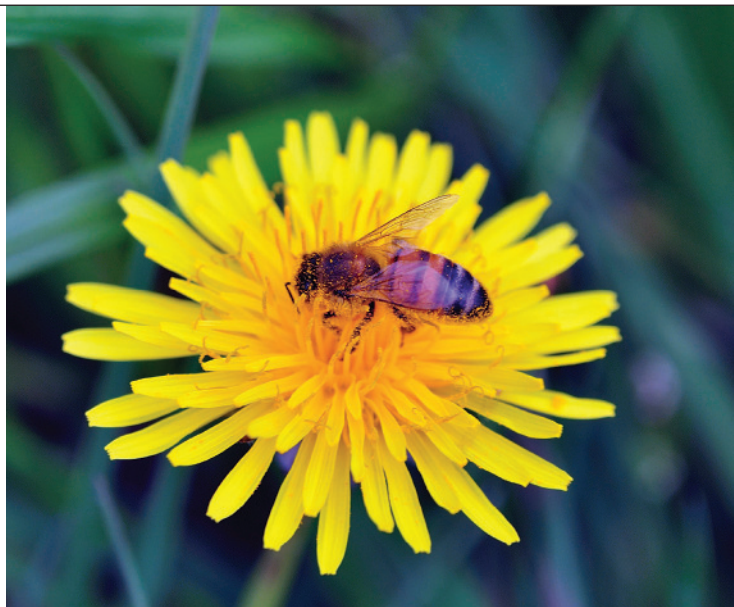
The federal government's pollinator plan is just one thing that may affect insecticide trends in years to come.

▶ PAGE 18



# Tweaks and combos

Regulations and lack of new chemistry are driving changes to insecticide product offerings. **BY LAUREN DOWDLE**



**A**fter a few slow years without major changes, the insecticide market is starting to experience an overhaul to meet new government requirements. But these guidelines aren't the only changes lawn care operators (LCOs) are seeing.

Here are trends, concerns and what's to come in the future for insecticides.

There have been about two active ingredients released in the past five years, although the majority of changes are refinements within current modes of action, says Rick Fletcher, technical services manager turf/ornamentals for Nufarm.

"All we've really had are a lot of tweaks with the existing modes of action to add different chemical structures—but

not changing the modes of action," Fletcher says.

### CHANGING RULES

There is also more of a focus on using insecticides that are "environmentally friendly." Pushing this trend forward are the recently released pollinator regulations.

Tasked by the White House to create a strategy that would promote pollinator health, a task force led by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released guidelines concerning neonicotinoids in May.

"Pollinator awareness will be in the forefront in the next year or two," Fletcher says. "The changes haven't played out yet, but it will change what people do. There will probably be label changes and every-

thing possible to avoid direct contact with pollinators. It will change our world."

With the regulations possibly limiting what products can be used, LCOs want to make sure they'll still have access to effective chemicals, says Harold Enger, LIC, director of education at franchisor Spring-Green Lawn Care Corp. in Plainfield, Ill.

"The biggest concern for a lot of us is losing valuable tools like neonicotinoids," Enger says. "You're not supposed to put down neonicotinoids on flowering plants, but the lawns you're treating shouldn't have those plants on them, anyway."

No matter where operators are located, they need to become familiar with the new regulations, he says. Enger encourages LCOs to

join their state trade organizations or national ones like the National Association of Landscape Professionals to stay on top of news and have their voices heard.

### TOP INSECTS TO CONTROL

Beyond pollinators, there are other insects causing concerns. Although it varies by region, two insects creating some issues for LCOs lately are chinch bugs and white grubs, experts say.

"White grubs continue to be the primary concern of LCOs, simply because they are so devastating if the population goes unchecked," says Aubrey Ammon, executive manager, PBI/Gordon Corp.

With more LCOs diversifying their businesses, they're now also faced with tree and shrub insects.

## NEWSFEED

### FRANCHISE NEWS

Weed Man was named to the Forbes list of "The Best Franchises to Buy." Weed Man is



ranked No. 10 in the less than \$150,000 category. It's the only green

industry franchise that made the list.

### NEW FORMULATION

FMC released the water-soluble, liquid herbicide Solitare WSL, which it said offers increased application

efficiency and controls 40-plus weeds.

### FUNGICIDE RECALL

NovaSource, part of Tessenlerlo Kerley, voluntarily recalled batches of the turf fungicide ArmorTech ALT

70 and Viceroy 70DF.

An investigation revealed a trace amount of the herbicide sulfometuron methyl in the fungicide. For more information, users may visit [alt70info.com](http://alt70info.com) and [viceroyturfinfo.com](http://viceroyturfinfo.com).

## ← POLLINATOR PLAN

The White House released a federal strategy on pollinator health in May, which is expected to affect insecticide trends.

"The crape myrtle bark scale is becoming a problem in the south central U.S.," Ammon says. "The ficus and rugose spiraling whiteflies are a constant problem in the Florida market, while the Emerald Ash Borer is a growing concern in the Midwest and north central U.S."

Emerald Ash Borers are still causing problems because of the approach many municipalities are taking.

"You can protect against them but that costs money," Fletcher says. "Several cities and towns are either taking the ostrich approach—sticking their heads in the sand, pretending they don't have a problem—or waiting un-

til the tree can't be saved or has died."

### IN THE FUTURE

Since discovering new chemistries is driven by the pharmaceutical market and then passed down to agriculture, it takes longer for the new formulations to reach the lawn care market, Fletcher says.

He predicts LCOs will see tweaks to products with existing modes of action.

"We'll be looking for better selectivity and environmental profiles," Fletcher says. "You'll probably see more combination products with two or three modes of action."

Smaller packaging may be another trend on the rise, and that's welcome news to Enger. "When a new product comes out in a gallon container and you only need 1/4 ounce per 1,000 square feet, you don't want to have to spend all of that money on it if you haven't used it before," Enger says.

Going forward, Jason Bishop, regional manager for King Green in Gainesville, Ga., would like to see manufacturers lower prices for new releases.

"New products have increased cost, while older products are staying affordable," he says. King Green is a lawn care com-

pany with about \$11 million in annual revenue.

Having more efficient insecticides that are environmentally friendly is also something Bishop hopes to have in the future—and that's the direction the industry is headed.

"There are many quality choices for insect control in the turf market, but there haven't been many advancements as of late," Ammon says. "However, new products entering the market in the next few years will be low-use-rate formulations that have less impact on beneficial insects." 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Alabama.

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## MOWING+LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

# How to pay by piecework

Some companies advocate paying by the man-hour rather than an hourly rate. See why. **BY DAVE TUCKER**

**P**iecework is paying your employees according to the work they accomplish, instead of paying them for the time it takes to do the work.

At CLIP Lawn Care, each job our company performs is rated in credits or man-hours. Each hour one employee works on the job is considered one man-hour. This means if we rate a property to take one hour for two employees, it has a man-hour rating of two hours. If we estimate a property to take 30 minutes for two employees, it has a man-hour rating of one hour. At the end of the pay period, each employee is paid for the work he accomplished.

Piecework aligns your goal with your employees' goals so everyone wins. Your employees will now want to be as productive as possible so they can make as much money as possible.

With piecework, you are no longer paying your employees by the hour, and you definitely aren't paying them a salary, so how do you manage payroll? Explained below are a couple different methods I have found work well. First, note that I'm not a lawyer, and my ideas

are not guaranteed to work with the laws of every state.

### MINIMUM WAGE

The first legal issue to consider is employee wages. It is important to make sure you pay your employees *at least* minimum wage. Piecework employees almost never make below minimum wage, but in the rare case your employee is scheduled to receive a paycheck below minimum wage, you can just change it and pay him or her minimum wage for the amount of time he or she worked during that pay period.

Even on piecework, you always need to track how long your crews are in the field. This way, you always know how much time properties actually take and have a constant record of your employees' work. This tracking is easy to do with the right software.

### OVERTIME

The federal and state governments require us to pay at least minimum wage and to pay 1.5 times the hourly rate for all hours worked over 40



hours in a given week. Check your state labor laws to be certain of your rules; regardless, you can still pay "overtime" with piecework by changing your employees' hourly rate. Here's how it works.

When you pay your employees using piecework and overtime is included, you have three variables: hourly rate, hours worked and overtime. We can't change the hours worked, and we can't change the overtime factor, but we can change the hourly rate.

Let's see how this would work at ABC Lawn Care if Joe completed 50 man-hours in one week.

We want to pay Joe \$10 per man-hour produced, so his total income

## NEWSPEED

### NEW SUSPENSION

Toro's new MyRIDE suspension system, available on select Toro Z Master zero-turn mowers, features a fully

suspended operator platform that isolates the operator from



the rest of the machine. The system also features adjustable rear shocks.

### SOUTHEAST GROWTH

Yellowstone Landscape Group acquired

Perimeter Landscape Management's Atlanta and Lake Oconee, Ga., operations. Terms of the sale were not disclosed. Perimeter, which has an annual revenue of about \$4 million, retains its location in Augusta, Ga.

### REBRANDING

TruGreen LandCare dropped the first part of its name, rebranding to LandCare. A new logo and color (tangerine) also debuted. The company's trucks and trailers will be orange.

from working this week is \$500. However, Joe was clocked in for a total of 45 hours. So, according to the government, Joe needs to be paid 40 hours straight time and 5 hours overtime at time and a half. Take Joe's 45 hours and separate them into 40 hours of regular work and 5 hours of overtime.

When you pay overtime, you are paying your employees 1.5 times their pay rate for the hours they worked over 40 hours. So, all you need to do is take the 5 hours of overtime and multiply it by 1.5 to determine that you can treat it like 7.5 hours of regular work time. Then, you add the 7.5 hours to the 40 hours of straight time for a total of 47.5 hours.

Now, go back to the amount that you owe Joe based on piecework: \$500. Divide this \$500 by 47.5 hours (the total of Joe's regular and overtime hours) and you get an hourly rate of \$10.53 per hour. If you "change" Joe's pay rate to \$10.53 per hour, he'll make \$500 this week—exactly what you wanted to pay him based on his piecework hours.

You can check your work by calculating backwards. If Joe were paid \$10.53 per hour, he would have made \$421.20 ( $\$10.53 \times 40$  hours) for his straight time and \$78.98 ( $\$10.53 \times 7.5$  hours) for his overtime, which would equal \$500.18, approximately \$500. Because there is rounding involved, you might come out a few cents over or under, but you get the idea.

If you decide to use this method, when you transition over to the piecework system and also when you hire new employees thereafter, have your employees sign an agreement that states their hourly rate will change from week-to-week depending upon their productivity.

#### TRAVEL TIME/SHOP TIME

The employees don't make money unless you're making money. You already calculated into your customer pricing all the travel time and overhead. If you


simply divide the price of the job by the man-hour rate you want to make, you will know the amount of time the guys can spend getting to, unloading and loading, performing the job and returning to the shop.

You may get pushback on not paying for shop time, travel time and down time. Let me encourage you: Don't give in. You want your workers to be partners with you. They need to understand the same thing you do: Getting the work done is the only thing that pays. This concept is key to piecework's success. Don't pay if you aren't getting paid.

Now, I will give you the exception to the rule. There will be times when you might pay one or two guys to do some work that's not tied to productivity, such as changing oil. Sometimes you

need to choose the guy who has the right skills and pay him straight time to change the oil, perform inspections, do minor repairs and more.

The best way to set it up is to agree on a set amount of time for these predictable jobs and pay the set amount of time you agreed upon, regardless of the time it takes him. He will work faster, and you won't have the nagging feeling that someone is milking the clock on your dime.

Piecework may require a different mindset when you do payroll, but it's perfectly legal and provides amazing results that are well worth the effort. 

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Tucker is president of CLIP Lawn Care AND CLIP Software. He's the author of "Lawn Maintenance and the Beautiful Business: Getting Your Employees to Pull with You," from where this article is adapted. Reach him at [thebeautifulbusiness.com](http://thebeautifulbusiness.com).

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## DESIGN/BUILD+INSTALLATION

# Doing what's right

**A New York landscape company makes a name for itself by putting its region's pristine waterway first.**

BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER

**M**ore than 90 percent of DeFranco Landscaping's clientele is located on or near Lake George, a 32-mile-long watershed located at the base of the Adirondack Mountains in northeastern New York. Nicknamed "the Queen of American Lakes," its water is classified by the state as "AA-Special," meaning it's pristine enough to drink. But pollutants from erosion and stormwater runoff, as well as threats from invasive plant species, are starting to take their toll on Lake George's superior water quality. So, the DeFranco Landscaping team is on a mission to turn things around, doing its part to protect the region's ecosystem while stressing the importance for others to do the same.

"Our company tries to take a leading role in protecting Lake George," says Anthony DeFranco, son of company founder, David, and a manager at DeFranco Landscaping. "We think about what would happen if the water quality of Lake George deteriorates to the point where people don't want to come here or have homes here. The economy would fall apart. It's a good business model to protect that resource."

David DeFranco, a former science teacher, started the Hague, N.Y.-based company in 1984 with a goal to provide high-quality customer service while protecting the beauty of Lake George. While DeFranco grew up in the business, he took time off to earn an engineering degree and start a consulting business. He came back to DeFranco Landscaping in 2010. As a licensed engineer and an expert in stormwater

design and permitting, DeFranco has used his skills to help the firm stand out as one of the premier landscaping companies in the basin, recognized for its dedication to preserving the natural ecosystem.

DeFranco Landscaping specializes in stormwater management, erosion control and native plant installations. Among other services, the company installs shoreline buffers, rain gardens and vegetated swales that help protect the shores of Lake George from erosion and minimize sediment, nutrients and other contaminants by filtering the runoff before it enters the lake. The company's service breakdown is 60 percent maintenance and 40 percent design/build, provided to a 70 percent residential, 20 percent commercial and 10 percent municipal clientele.

Lake George is heavily regulated, DeFranco says. For example, in 2011, the Town of Lake George passed a law prohibiting phosphorous fertilizers along the shorelines of Lake George. A similar phosphorous ban became New York state law in 2012. Boats must now be inspected by vessel technicians before each entry into the water to prohibit the transport of aquatic invasive species into the lake. DeFranco says that because of his company's sustainable practices, it has already been in compliance with most of the regulations that have arisen.

"Many environmental groups around the lake have recognized that our firm is unique in that we have a licensed professional engineer involved with many of our projects from the start, as well as having a certified nursery and landscape professional and a trained erosion and sediment

**PRESERVE IT**  
A native plant shoreline buffer along Lake George in New York.



## NEWSPEED

### D/B SYMPOSIUM

The National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) will host an education



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONALS

symposium for landscape design/build professionals in Boston,

Aug. 9-11. Attendees also may attend a facility tour at ND Landscape and a self-guided living walls tour.

### RATING SYSTEM

Green Business Certifi-

cation (GBCI) acquired and relaunched the SITES sustainable landscapes rating system. Some of the credits for sustainable landscape performance have been developed in alignment

with similar credits in the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system, a widely-used green building program.

PHOTO: DEFranco LANDSCAPING



## Au naturel plantings

When it comes to using native plants, DeFranco Landscaping has an award-winning track record. In 2010, the company, based in Hague, N.Y., received the Frank Leonbruno Memorial Lake Stewardship Award from the Lake George Watershed Coalition for its use of native plants in shoreline buffers and rainwater gardens around Lake George, one of the most pristine bodies of water in the U.S.

"We strive to look at every new property as an opportunity to correct the past problems and install new measures to help minimize stormwater runoff and pollutants from entering Lake George," says Anthony DeFranco, a company manager. "I knew we were doing the right thing, but I didn't know we were going to be recognized for it."

To use native plants successfully, DeFranco has a few suggestions:

- **Do your research:** Nearly every region of the country has an environmental group or agency that can recommend plants native to the area, DeFranco says. There is also a lot of regionally-based information available online.
  - **Start small:** DeFranco recommends first taking on a small project and learning from its results. There isn't a lot of information readily available about native plant design guidelines, so trial and error can be key, he adds.
  - **Protect from pests:** The deer population can be rough on native plants, particularly types of ivy and yews, a fact DeFranco says to be mindful of to prevent a client's landscape from becoming "deer food."
- Using native plants that require less water and less fertilizer is a growing industry trend that doesn't just makes good business sense but good environmental sense, too, he says.
- "It makes sense to move away from irrigating big lawns to a more sustainable approach," he says. "That's what we have to do to get away from some of the bad things we've done in the past."

control manager on staff," DeFranco says. "Our firm believes that having another level of credentials helps distinguish our business from the rest, while it also pushes the local horticultural industry to improve in what we all do."

Although specializing in lake-friendly practices has helped the company find a niche in an otherwise competitive industry, it hasn't come without its challenges. DeFranco says the company's philosophies have attracted a few employees, particularly college students who "want to feel like they are making the environment better," but the company still struggles to find quality staff. It also has to interact with potential customers who may not agree with or understand its eco-minded approach to lawn maintenance and request traditional methods to achieving a perfect lawn.

"It's a double-edged sword because people still call us wanting fertilizer and a weed-free lawn," he says. "It's difficult for us because we put a line in the sand. We get more phone calls than you would think from people wondering why we can't do certain things."

"Some customers do become more knowledgeable and educated about it and understand that, yes, that's not the best thing to do for the lake," he continued. "But still there are some 'old-school' people who don't believe that the situation is as bad as we think it is."

DeFranco Landscaping's alternative approach to lawns is also influencing other area landscape companies. A few years ago, most people weren't thinking about the impact that phosphorous fertilizer was having on the rest of the ecosystem, but that mindset is beginning to change, DeFranco says. And that, he adds, is a really good thing.

"We partner with environmental groups on a lot of things, so the word is out there that we are in this with them and are trying to do the right thing," DeFranco says. "It also helps to encourage other businesses in our field to step up to the plate and say, 'They are doing the right thing, why aren't we?'"

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





**↓ INSTALL IT**  
David DeFranco, Randy West and Jesse Clark construct a flagstone walkway.



# Shades of gray

Options for water reuse in the landscape. **BY MARISA PALMIERI**

**W**ith the West's drought—and California's historic response to it—making national news, the seeds of water conservation have been planted in the minds of homeowners and property managers nationwide. Irrigating with graywater is an opportunity for contractors 1). to potentially provide services for clients or 2). simply to educate them. Here's an introduction to some options.

	Details	Good for...	Regulations?	Business opp?
<b>Laundry</b> 	In "laundry to landscape" systems, the washing machine drain hose attaches to a diverter valve, allowing homeowners to switch the flow of graywater between the sewer/septic and the graywater irrigation system. It directs water through 1-in. tubing with ½-in. outlets pointing water to specific plants.	Watering trees, berries, shrubs; larger perennials or annuals	State and local graywater laws and policies vary. Check to see if restrictions apply in your area.	Installing systems; educating clients
<b>Showers</b> 	Showers create a lot of relatively clean water. Gravity-based and pumped systems are possible. Branched drain systems, where graywater flows through drainage pipe by gravity, are effective.	Irrigating the root zone of trees or large perennials	State and local graywater laws and policies vary. Check to see if restrictions apply in your area.	Installing systems; educating clients
<b>Sinks</b> 	Kitchen sinks are a source of a fair amount of water, usually very high in organic matter (food, grease, etc.). Since bathroom sinks don't typically generate much water, they can often combine flows with the shower water. Sink water systems are prone to clogging.	Draining into mulch basins, where organic matter may collect and decompose; draining to a large plant or two	Sink graywater systems are not allowed under many graywater codes, but they are permitted in some states, like Washington, Oregon, Arizona and Montana.	Installing systems; educating clients
<b>Rainwater harvesting</b> 	Rainwater harvesting systems—not technically "graywater" but still an opportunity for reuse—collect and store rainfall for later use. When designed appropriately, rainwater harvesting systems slow and reduce runoff and provide a source of water.	Irrigating landscape plants and fruits and vegetables. Use a first-flush diverter to minimize the introduction of additional pollutants from the roof to plants.	Some states may have laws that prohibit rainwater collection. Check to see if restrictions apply in your area.	Selling and installing rain barrels/cisterns; educating clients

**SOURCES:** Greywater Action, "The Water-Wise Home: How to Conserve, Capture, and Reuse Water in Your Home and Landscape," Environmental Protection Agency

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# COMMITTED TO

A full-page photograph of two men standing outdoors in a grassy area with trees in the background. The man on the left has blonde hair and a mustache, wearing a dark blue polo shirt and light-colored trousers. The man on the right has dark hair and is wearing a grey polo shirt. Both shirts feature the Sun Valley Landscaping logo on the left chest. They are both smiling at the camera.

**Establishing a purpose  
and values—and living by  
them—drives growth  
at Sun Valley Landscaping.**

**BY MARISA PALMIERI**

# THE CORE

## BUSINESS BREAKDOWN

**COMPANY:** Sun Valley Landscaping

**LOCATION:** Omaha, Neb.

**REVENUE:** \$3 million in 2014;

\$3.6 million projected for 2015

**PROFIT CENTERS:** 24% mowing+ landscape maintenance; 4% turf+ ornamental care; 38% design/build+ installation; 9% snow+ice management; 25% landscape supply

**CLIENT MIX:** 33% commercial; 67% residential

**EMPLOYEES:** 35 full-time equivalent; 32 seasonal

**FOUNDED:** 1995; Sun Valley Hardscape Design merged with Omaha Friendly Services in 2012

His top prospect was Fraynd.

The pair had developed a rapport over the years. Morton was a supplier to Fraynd, and they subcontracted services to each other from time to time.

Over the years, Morton came to appreciate Fraynd's business acumen, and Fraynd was impressed by Morton's technical expertise and experience.

"For growth, I knew I had to take a stronger role in landscape design and installation and in the people,"

**P**aul Fraynd and Hugh Morton have a challenge on their hands. They want to hire a best-in-class staff so they can grow their company. At the same time, they need to expand their operation to attract great people.

"Applicants say, 'I want a company that treats me right and gives me an opportunity to grow,'" Fraynd says. "So if we want great people, we have to grow. We won't be able to get the top talent if we're not growing and providing more opportunities."

Some might call it a paradox. Others would say it's growing pains. Whatever you call it, the owners of Omaha, Neb.-based Sun Valley Landscaping aren't letting it slow them down. They've grown their company about 25 percent per year since merging their two firms in 2012. And they plan to double in size by 2018, despite their people challenge. With a company purpose and set of core values driving everything they do, the Sun Valley Landscaping owners are proving they're committed to their staff, clients and community, and it's paying off.

### INDUSTRY BEGINNINGS

During his freshman year at Creighton University, Fraynd and his roommate started a business to provide maintenance services, including lawn mowing, with a \$50 garage sale mower. It was the ultimate business school lesson for the budding entrepreneur.

"I got a lot of out my education and my business by doing them at the same time," Fraynd says.

In 2002, he officially founded Omaha Friendly Services, and after

graduation in 2003, his business blossomed with the help of his father as a partner. After five years, it was generating about \$1 million in annual revenue.

Meanwhile, Morton, a Utah State University engineering grad, had discovered his passion: landscape design and installation. After working for a landscape firm in Omaha for about a year after graduating in 1995, he hooked up with Don Shrack, a local businessman with about 5 acres on his hands. The pair started up a landscape supply yard and design/build business, called Sun Valley Hardscape Design, on the site of Sun Valley Landscaping's current home.

Sun Valley suffered a loss when Shrack died in 2006.

At the time, the business was doing about \$1 million in revenue.

"That was about as much as one person could do," Morton says. "So I started looking for a business partner."

### WALKING THE TALK

At Sun Valley Landscaping, the leadership team talks a lot about the company's core values and purpose. But they don't just talk. They use these tools throughout the company to help staff members make decisions. They discuss them at every team meeting. They're displayed on the office wall. They are as follows.

*Purpose: "Landscaping is our life. We wake up every day with the hope that we can allow others to enjoy the outdoors as we do. From initial contact to a job well done, we have structured our business around our clients, their experience and their interaction with their very own piece of the outdoors."*

"We call this concept 'Landscapes for Life,' and we use that tagline everywhere," co-owner Paul Fraynd says. "It's how people use their outdoor space that's most important. It's the memories made in the garden that stick with you. We extend this concept to our employees' experience working here and how they interact with the outdoors at work and in their free time."

*Core Values: "People come first. We do it right (the right way). It's all about the experience. We take care in the craftsmanship. Everyone is an owner."*

"They're our promise to our employees, the community and our clients," Fraynd says.

### Purpose:

*"We wake up everyday with the hope that we can allow others to enjoy the outdoors as much as we do."*



Morton says. After his partner's passing, he was too bogged down by running every other aspect of a small business.

Those details, it turns out, are Fraynd's specialty, so Morton approached him about merging.

The merger took about two years, as they worked out details small and large, such as name, roles, how to buy out Fraynd's father and more.

By that time, Omaha Friendly Services was grossing about \$2 million

#### WEB EXTRA

Visit the Web Extras section at [LandscapeManagement.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net) to learn more about Sun Valley's key performance indicators, marketing programs and vision for its property.

per year. It was growing fast but not making a ton of profits. Sun Valley, on the other hand, had healthy profits but was stagnant

size-wise. The time was right, and the men recognized they shared a vision, values and interest. Not to mention, each business served a different niche. Together, they made a full-service firm.

Today, the partners have their roles distinctly defined, with Fraynd overseeing sales/marketing, finance, human resources and the maintenance division. Morton runs the design/build division, manages the design team and heads up the supply yard.

#### DREAMING BIG

Although the company retained the Sun Valley name from Morton's original enterprise, it was a new company and a new culture.

To ensure they were on the same page as they rebranded, Morton and

Fraynd turned to the one-page strategic plan concept from the book "Mastering the Rockefeller Habits" by Verne Harnish. Fraynd got the idea to use this tool from his brother, who had success with it in his job turning around public schools.

"Most business books are theory or an idea to use, but this one, you can take it and boom," Fraynd says. "There's your strategic plan."

This exercise prompted the partners to lay out a set of goals the company is now striving to meet. For starters, Sun Valley plans to double in size by 2018, reaching \$6 million in sales. The firm's "big hairy audacious goal" is to some day be considered a top landscape company in Omaha, a model for the industry and a destination company employing 50 full-time team members.

Putting these things down on paper is "eye opening," Fraynd says, explaining that doubling in size will mean going from 13 to 30 managers and having around 30 trucks.

"It's crazy when you start to look at it," he says. "So what do we need to do to get there? The main answer is we need people that believe in the values and the goals of the company, who have the ability to get us there. The owners aren't going to get us there. We can't control a \$6 million business. We need managers and systems that can do it apart from us."

Specifying the goals forced the company to map out how it would achieve long-term objectives versus getting caught up in day-to-day details.

"That's what we've been focusing on: Changing our perception from a short-term, head-down, get-through-the-season mentality to 'How are we going to get there?'" Fraynd says.

One way Sun Valley is doing so is by breaking its larger goals up into smaller targets. For example, it's in the midst of a baseball-themed contest to motivate the staff to gross \$417,000 during June and July. The goal is tacked up on the wall, and financial progress is visible to everyone who wants to see it, as Sun Valley is an open-book operation.

"Everyone's shooting for it," Fraynd says. "If we hit it, we'll take everyone out to a day at the ballpark with at least one family member."

#### THE SUN VALLEY WAY

The one-page strategic plan also made the owners articulate Sun Valley's core values and purpose (see sidebar on page 27). Those, collectively, have influenced the company culture, aka "The Sun Valley Way."

Many companies have mission statements or values, but the key for Sun Valley, Fraynd says, is talking about them, actually believing them and "using them to teach" the team.

The first year after the merger, there was a lot of "we" and "they," Fraynd acknowledges. "Once we put this stuff in place, it was 'The Sun Valley Way,' and we're all in this together," he says.

**SUPPLY SIDE**  
Sun Valley's 5 acres include a hardscape supply yard.

Morton adds that it's fulfilling to see the core values at work. For instance, team members bring in clients' trash cans from the curb. They pick up their newspapers from the sidewalk. And if there's ever a question about whether the company should fix something for a client, the staff takes a look at the values and the answer is almost always, "We should fix it."

"When you see the guys using the values to answer questions, the business tends to run itself," Morton says.

That brings us back to the Sun Valley "people" predicament: needing great people to grow and needing growth to attract great people. Culture is just one way Fraynd and Morton make sure they're hiring the best.

Other tools they've implemented to attract and keep top performers—defined as "people who can do great work without being supervised"—include a structured hiring process, Winslow personality profiles and a stepped up recruiting process.

"Recruiting is just as important as marketing; you never stop doing it," Fraynd says. "It took me a long time to realize that."

Sun Valley is always advertising its career opportunities, and Fraynd interviews an average of one person per day. One thing that's not negotiable, when it comes to hiring, is an employee's passion for the outdoors.

"If they fit our values and have that passion, that's what we're looking for," Fraynd says. He adds that he's changed his thinking about hiring people with industry experience. For example, the company's production manager had no prior industry experience, although he was a proven leader.

"It's interesting that it's easier to teach him the industry versus how to be a manager," Fraynd says. "To do things 'The Sun Valley Way,' we need people who are smarter than us. We all have strengths and weaknesses, and we need to hire people with strengths we don't have."

**WHAT'S WITH THE 'STACHE?** The photo shoot for this story coincided with "growing season" for Mustaches for Kids Omaha, a nonprofit Paul Fraynd participated in for the second year.



"There are about 150 of us, and we raised \$280,000 in one month for children's charities," he says. "The mustache is just a good conversation piece so we can tell people we meet about it."

Little things show their efforts are proving effective. Morton shares an anecdote about overhearing a positive comment about the company culture during a meeting held at Sun Valley by one of its employees who participates in a women's landscaping group called Divas of the Dirt. "There's a little bit of me that enjoys when people come in here and they say, 'This would be a fun place to work,'" Morton says. "To hear that or see that on people's faces, it makes me proud." ☺

## #COMMIT20

When the Sun Valley Landscaping owners and Director of Business Development Ashly Neneman realized 2015 was the company's 20th anniversary, they wanted to do something big. They were inspired by a conversation they had last fall at a dinner at the GIE+EXPO trade show in Louisville, Ky., where several of their peers were discussing how individual companies can help raise the profile of the green industry. Their conclusion? Landscape companies can elevate the entire industry by being leaders in their own communities.

That same week, several Sun Valley staff members were participating in a service project back in Omaha. They texted Neneman and co-owner Paul Fraynd photos of their work, sharing their pride and how much fun they had.

Not long after, Neneman came up with the Commit20 concept to challenge employees to volunteer 20 hours of their time to causes of their choice to celebrate the company's milestone anniversary. The company took the concept a step further and extended the challenge to clients, partners and the entire Omaha community.

The program quickly became a lot of work, so Sun Valley brought on an intern to help manage the website, social media and other details surrounding the campaign.



"I would have never thought in a million years I would have hired an intern to head up a community outreach effort," Fraynd says. "I've never been more proud of anything in my 14-year career as this campaign."

No surprise, Sun Valley set an ambitious goal of getting 500 people to donate 20 hours each for a total of 10,000 volunteer hours by the end of the year.

"The purpose is to track the impact that a small group of people can make," Neneman says, adding the website has a feature for

**Sun Valley staff have volunteered at several projects this year.**

participants to log their hours, submit photos and more. "It really stems from one of our core values, 'It's all about the experience.' You can donate money to any cause, but when you're volunteering, you're out there interacting with people."

Neneman would really like to see the campaign hit its goal of 10,000 hours logged.

"But I think the fact that when we meet people at networking events and tell them about Commit20, they're just blown away that a little landscaping company has come up with this idea and is getting its employees involved. So that's already a success to me."





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BUSINESS BASICS: PEOPLE

LET'S GROW

CASE STUDY: OUR WAY

## CAMERA READY?

Live streaming and microvideo services may be the things you need to incorporate video into your marketing plan.

▶ PAGE 49



# Good isn't good enough



**BY MEL KLEIMAN**

The author is the founder of Humetrics. He helps companies build high-quality, frontline, hourly workforces. Reach him at [mkleiman@humetrics.com](mailto:mkleiman@humetrics.com).

**A**s the economy expands and the labor pool contracts, the No. 1 concern of many North American business owners and managers is how to recruit and retain a quality workforce. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that, while the total population of those 65-plus will increase by about 38 percent over the next 10 years, the 18- to 24-year-old group will stay about the same. Additionally, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, demand for grounds maintenance workers will increase by about 13 percent between now and 2022.

With escalating competition for the best of a shrinking labor pool, the employers who will come out on top won't be those who are just "good." Good isn't good enough anymore. According to *Fortune* magazine: "The single best predictor of overall success is the ability to attract and retain talented people." So, what can you do now to ensure your organization not only survives but is able to thrive in the years ahead?

Here are a few ideas.

## EMPLOYEE RECRUITING

**Define your unique employment proposition.** Come up with your list of the top 10 reasons great people should want to work for you. The easiest way to do this is to ask your best people why they hired on, why they stay and what they like about their jobs and the company. Then, to recruit the best, broadcast this information far and wide.

**Paint the picture on the box.** You can't hit the target if you don't know what it looks like. Have you defined the

mental and physical abilities, attitudes, personality traits and skills needed for an employee to be successful in your organization? Once you have, all applicants should be measured against these criteria so you don't waste time on anyone who wouldn't be a good fit. (And no matter how difficult recruiting becomes, never lower your standards because it would be tantamount to shooting yourself in the foot.)

**Do it daily.** Recruiting is like bathing. To be effective, you have to do it every day. Always be looking for your next great hire, whether you need someone now or not. Then, when you do have a need, you won't have to resort to desperation hiring. Invite former good employees to come back. Start an employee referral reward program and deliver the reward on the day the new person starts (not 90 days later). Advertise regularly on Craigslist.


## EMPLOYEE RETENTION

**Conduct stay interviews.** Exit interviews are too little, too late. Save yourself the headache of having to conduct an exit interview in the first place by regularly sitting down with the people you'd hate to lose. Find out how they're doing, if there's anything you could do to make their jobs easier and what, if anything, would cause them to leave. Also, do they have any concerns or ideas to improve things? Employee

retention is a matter of continuously re-recruiting your good people, and the only way to do it right is to religiously solicit employee feedback and input.

**Stay competitive.** If one of your best employees resigned for a 50-cents-an-hour raise, what would you do? If you'd offer to match or better the offer, give this person that raise now—before this unhappy scenario happens. If you do, you'll be a hero and earn a great deal of loyalty. Whereas, if you're pushed into it later, that employee will always be tempted by slightly higher offers.

**Employees first, customers second.** When you take good care of your employees, they take excellent care of your clients. Research proves that retention and productivity increase dramatically when the workplace offers employees respect, recognition, rewards, rules, relationships and fun. If you can make work fun, you'll have a surefire competitive recruiting edge, and it's not that hard to do. Challenges, goals, camaraderie and celebrating successes are fun and foster dedicated teamwork.

No, good isn't good enough any longer. It's time to step up your game because now, besides attracting and retaining customers, it's up to you to attract and retain the best employees to keep those customers and grow your business. 

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# Helping hands

**T**he National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) Community Stewardship Award recognizes the association's members that have demonstrated leadership through their dedication and contribution to the good of the community.

Community stewardship is demonstrated by participating in community service projects. These projects may be industry-related, such as Green Care for Troops or improving or maintaining public or school gardens, or non-industry-related, like raising funds for nonprofits or participating in food drives. The common denominator among the winners is the organization's consistency over at least a three-year period.

*Landscape Management* is the media sponsor for the Community Stewardship Award and is pleased to showcase these award winners within the pages of this supplement to inspire other landscape industry companies to make their own community contributions.

Above (Clockwise from top right): Staff from Ewing Irrigation Products sod a baseball field and install new irrigation at Sunshine Acres Children's Home in Mesa, Ariz., in 2013. Children and other community members get involved in turning vacant lots into gardens with help from Zaretsky & Associates' Project Scion. Inspired by Renewal & Remembrance at Arlington National Cemetery, members of the Association of Montana Turf, Ornamental & Pest Professionals launched a Summer Field Day on the state level.

**ON THE COVER:** Photo ©istock.com/PeopleImages

## INSIDE

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**Association of Montana Turf,  
Ornamental & Pest Professionals** ... **\$12**  
STATE ASSOCIATION

**Ewing Irrigation Products** ..... **\$13**  
SUPPLIER

**Editor's Note** ..... **\$15**

# GIVING BACK. THINKING FORWARD.

The Toro Company congratulates each of this year's Community Stewardship Award winners. Their service has made a real difference, and they inspire us all to do more.

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**Rob Little, Director of Marketing**  
Residential & Landscape Contractor Division  
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# Domino effect

**With Project Scion, Zaretsky & Associates shows how transformative gardens and landscapes can be.** BY BETH GERACI

**V**acant lots dot the landscape in Rochester, N.Y.'s slums like one lost opportunity after another. But a closer look reveals progress.

Progress, it turns out, has a name. It's Project Scion.

Project Scion is the brain-child of Bruce Zaretsky and Sharon Coates of the Macedon, N.Y., landscape design firm Zaretsky & Associates, and their friend Pietro Furgiuele. Three years since its birth, Project Scion is transforming Rochester's urban landscape one community garden at a time. In the process, it's galvanizing inner-city residents and filling them with pride.

"We do not just go into these neighborhoods and build the gardens for the neighborhood," says Coates, the company's vice president.



"The residents build the garden with us so that they have pride of ownership."

Since the program launched in 2012, the gardens have become "places of peace and respite in areas severely lacking in both," Coates says.

The green space creates positivity in these neighborhoods that's contagious. "We noticed soon after completing our first garden that the neighbor two doors down painted their porch," says Zaretsky, the company's president. "Then another planted flowers. This domino effect is what we are after."

## Changing the landscape inside and out

The city of Rochester several times has recognized Zaretsky & Associates for enhancing the region through green space and integration. In places where vacant lots once stood now are farmers

markets, gardens, graffiti-art benches, totem poles, a chess table and even a free lending library.

**Zaretsky & Associates' Project Scion transforms urban areas with gardens.**

Coates and Zaretsky feel a deep responsibility as successful business people to help those less fortunate than themselves, and their desire to share is the driving force behind Project Scion.

"We are fortunate to earn a nice living in our community and feel that since we can, we should give back to that community," Coates says.

Zaretsky & Associates focuses on gardens, because as landscape designers, that's where their expertise lies. But they also like the therapeutic nature of gardens, which have been shown to reduce stress, lower blood pressure and promote healing.

"There are studies showing also that inner-city areas that have trees and gardens have a reduced rate of violent crime," Coates adds.

## AT A GLANCE

**COMPANY:** Zaretsky & Associates  
**LOCATION:** Macedon, N.Y.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- Launched Project Scion to turn vacant lots into gardens and green spaces in Rochester, N.Y., with the help of residents.
- On many occasions, donated time, labor, materials and money to Lollypop Farm, the Humane Society of Greater Rochester.
- Completed various other design and installation projects for nonprofits, schools and other community organizations over the years.

### **‘Do the right thing’**

Coates and Zaretsky reflect fondly on the company’s first volunteer project. It was in 1998 at Crestwood Children’s Center, an outpatient facility for children with emotional and social problems.

Using donated materials and labor, the Zaretsky & Associates team created an outdoor waiting room at the children’s center. “It was a place for them to escape the stress, as well as wait the many hours it sometimes took for their children in therapy,” Zaretsky says. “We received tremendous feedback as to how wonderful people thought the garden was,” Zaretsky adds. “It helped them.”

Nearly 20 years later, Zaretsky & Associates has cemented its relationship with residents by its community involvement.

With Project Scion, “we can walk into these impoverished neighborhoods long after doing the gardens and be received by the local residents with warmth and love,” Coates says. “It has also helped us to recognize that in the end, people have a lot in common.”

There’s no doubt the company is noticed for its efforts. And while its volunteerism doesn’t necessarily bring it a deluge of business, “maybe our community consciousness tips the scales” every once in a while, Coates says.

Zaretsky & Associates doesn’t have a formal policy on volunteering. It doesn’t require its team members to volunteer, but when workers do participate, they’re paid for their time.

“We don’t have a real official policy. Just do the right thing,” Zaretsky says. “Help if you can. We never say no.”

**Local residents  
install pavers at  
Project Scion:  
The Orchard.**



The Decorated Family Program is just one part of Green Oasis’ service efforts.

# Let the light shine

**From holiday light displays to fashion show fundraisers, Green Oasis is brightening lives however it can.** BY BETH GERACI

**F**or military families, the holidays can be particularly stressful. After all, decorating often isn’t a top priority when a loved one is deployed.

The staff members at Green Oasis by Greener Grass Systems, based in Eau Claire, Wis., know this. They have been brightening the lives of military families at Christmastime for a decade, surprising them with free, elaborate light displays at their homes every holiday season.

Over the past 10 years, more than 15 families have benefitted from Green Oasis’ participation in the Christmas Décor Decorated Family Program. And while the national program typically is limited to military recipients, Green Oasis extends the service to families enduring prolonged sickness or great loss.

“We ask for nominations and consider all the families,” says Green Oasis Vice President Julie Bollinger. “It’s pretty difficult to choose one family, so we have decorated for more than one family for the past few years.”

Most of the beneficiaries are families with a deployed loved one, for whom maintaining a sense of normalcy during the holidays can be a struggle.

“Although the season can be challenging, they feel the true spirit of Christmas through the giving of our services,” Bollinger says.

### Benefitting the community

While the Christmas Décor Decorated Family Program garners Green Oasis the most publicity, the company’s giving hardly stops at large-scale holiday lighting displays. Its list of charitable projects is so long, it’s easy to lose count.

There’s the annual Easter egg hunt benefitting the Boys & Girls Clubs of Eau Claire; the annual geranium fundraiser for Women of the Valley in Chippewa Falls; ornament sales for the Eau Claire and Chippewa Humane Society; and flower donations for moms in women’s shelters, just to name a few.

“We have something running at all times,” Bollinger says.

The company hosts several free events at its Green Oasis Gardens, a cross between a boutique and



high-end garden center, and word is getting out. “We decided these events should benefit the community, so admission for those events is usually a donation for a benefactor organization,” she says.

The Green Oasis annual Easter egg hunt benefitting the Boys & Girls Club has been especially successful. “We ask people to bring in school supplies to participate,” Bollinger says. “We get so many supplies, they fill up the back of a pickup truck.”

### A strong foundation

Green Oasis by Greener Grass Systems has a good reason for focusing on community service. Julie and her husband, company president Wayne Bollinger, have been part of the northwestern Wisconsin community for more than 35 years. It’s a loyal community, one that stood shoulder to shoulder with the Bollingers when their offices were destroyed by a fire Sept. 11, 2009.

The Bollingers were determined to rebuild, and residents supported them every step of the way.

“Community service is one of our core values and has been since the day we started in business,” Bollinger says. “We see giving back to the community as part of that promise. After the fire, we were overwhelmed by the support we received from customers, businesses, residents, even our competitors. This strengthened our commitment to supporting the community all the more.”

The company, formerly known as Greener Grass Systems, first used the Green Oasis name after the fire, when it opened its garden center. It wasn’t until this January, however, that it changed the name of its service operation to the Green Oasis name to better describe its current services.

The company initially specialized in irrigation and lawn care. It later diversified with landscaping, maintenance and snow removal. The Green Oasis name better reflects that diversity, Bollinger says.

With the Bollingers leading the way, the name also stands for altruism. Green Oasis employees are encouraged to engage in their communities. They bring project ideas to their managers whenever they recognize a need in their own worlds. And while there isn’t a formal selection process for choosing which projects get attention, if a project is close to a staffer’s heart, it will be considered, Bollinger says.

Even more giving is in store for Green Oasis this year. In October, the company expects to host its second annual fashion show fundraiser for breast cancer research, featuring survivors as models.

“As a business, we have a social responsibility. It’s just a given,” Bollinger says. “Every day we can go to bed feeling really good about everything that we’ve done that day. That is what motivates us, the positive impact we can have on the community as a whole on a daily basis.”

**Green Oasis donated a lighting installation for a military family in Eau Claire, Wis.**

### AT A GLANCE

**COMPANY:** Green Oasis by Greener Grass Systems

**LOCATION:** Eau Claire, Wis.

#### HIGHLIGHTS:

- Donates several large-scale holiday lighting installations annually to military families through the Christmas Décor Decorated Family Program.
- Has a long and diversified list of other donations and service projects over the past few years.
- Recommitted to community service after receiving so much support following a company fire in 2009.

# A giving state of mind

**In one New Jersey community, a big company is making a big difference.** BY BETH GERACI

It's been nearly 14 years since 9/11. For many people, life has gone on. But in some places, like Midland Park, N.J., just 20 miles outside New York City, the loss still feels fresh.

When Glenn Jacobsen, LIC, owner of Midland Park-based Jacobsen Landscape Design & Construction, was asked about his company's latest volunteer efforts, he had to go back a few years, because it was a 2012 project his company was involved with—a 9/11 garden memorial at a neighboring firehouse—that set the standard.

Mark Milidantri, LIC, landscape design/sales at Jacobsen, designed and coordinated that 9/11 project.

"We were contacted by the local fire department to design a 9/11 memorial garden," he recalls. "They had acquired a six-foot, 2,800-pound piece of steel from the World Trade Center, and they wanted to include it in a memorial."

## AT A GLANCE

**COMPANY:** Jacobsen Landscape Design & Construction

**LOCATION:** Midland Park, N.J.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- Undertakes a handful of volunteer project every year, often providing labor, materials and equipment.
- Encourages employees to volunteer at least one day per year.
- Has engaged with more than 33 nonprofits over the last decade.

The company lifts in equipment for improvements at Eastern Christian High School.



Over two months, the Jacobsen team enticed local landscape contractors and contractors from other trades to donate their time and talents to the garden's creation. "It was an easy sell because of the proximity of the community to New York," Jacobsen says.

In the end, more than 25 companies collaborated on the memorial tribute to the area residents, firefighters and first responders lost on 9/11.

Valued at more than \$30,000, the garden is circular, with the steel as its centerpiece. "We had competing companies working together on this project, and that was pretty fulfilling," Jacobsen explains. "It was a neat concept, and it worked."

About 300 people attended the garden's dedication ceremony. It was an emotional commemoration highlighted by bagpipers and the unveil-



ing of the World Trade Center beam.

"Designing this memorial garden, being able to rally our competitors and get everybody together for this common cause, it was truly gratifying," Milidantri says.

## A group effort

Over the past 10 years, Jacobsen Landscape has engaged in projects with 33 nonprofits and charities,

The Jacobsen team poses for a photo at the Shiloh Bible Camp project.

including family and youth organizations, schools, churches and community centers.

Employees, too, are paying more attention to needs in their own neighborhoods and bringing their own ideas to the table, Milidantri says. The management team used to select the projects. Now employees are driving change. For example, Project Supervisor Matt Touw, LIC, had a passion for his alma mater, Eastern Christian High School. And for eight weeks last summer, the Jacobsen crew and partners from 10 companies worked to make Touw's vision for an outdoor classroom a reality.

Most materials for the project were donated by area suppliers and vendors, and the contractors involved were Eastern Christian alumni. While Jacobsen's labor on the project can be valued at \$6,000, the large-scale project in all was worth about \$40,000. The outdoor classroom seats about 30 students. The site also features an area for socializing, a large patio and a garden used to grow vegetables for the community.

Coordinating the contractors and student volunteers wasn't easy, Jacobsen says, nor was transporting materials into and out of the building. Logistically, he says, "it was a challenging project, but we made it happen."

### Giving ingrained in company culture

While Jacobsen Landscape has been committed to community service since its origins, it reinvigorated its dedication to the cause in 2007, executing one big project annually in the style of "Extreme Home Makeover." But there were inherent logistical challenges to that. Eventually, the company took on smaller projects that required fewer people on a team and found its rhythm.

As company owner, Jacobsen asks his employees to devote at least one day a year to community service, and between 60 and 90 percent of them oblige. The company values volunteerism because its leaders—Jacobsen and his wife, Melissa (CFO)—value volunteerism. "It starts with me and the management team," Jacobsen says.

On the job, employees get a "feel-good feeling" from helping others on a project, Jacobsen says. Even Milidantri says the 9/11 garden filled him with pride and made him feel responsible for something meaningful. Projects always boost morale, he says.

Customers, meanwhile, see the company supporting the community and identify it as a business that cares. "The biggest benefit is we're known as giving back to the community," Jacobsen says. "People like doing business with a company that's community minded."

# Hometown heart

**For Tulsa-based LawnAmerica, no local need is too big or small to fill.** BY BETH GERACI

**L**awnAmerica's impact is rooted in much more than the lawns of Tulsa, Okla.

The company's altruism seeps into every crevice of the community, sustaining Tulsa's disadvantaged in countless ways. Recipients of LawnAmerica's generosity can be found in Habitat for Humanity homes. In shelters for the abused and homeless. At the Little Light House preschool for kids with special needs. And at the company's farm, where it empowers local foster children with life skills.

And that's just the start. LawnAmerica donates 3 percent of its gross sales annually to local nonprofits, schools, churches and families in need. It does so through cash, in-kind donations and donated services. In 2014, LawnAmerica had \$6 million in sales and gave \$180,000 back to its community.

"We have always believed that giving back to the community we live in is just part of why we exist as a company," says LawnAmerica President Brad Johnson.



Last summer, the LawnAmerica team sponsored and staffed a charity lemonade stand.

That philosophy stems from the influence of parents, friends, books and education.

"But having been a business owner for 30 years now, for me, my Christian faith has from day one been part of our values, and continues to be," Johnson stresses. "The older I get, the more I see that business, and life, is not all about us. It's more about others and serving them."

### Lemonade aid

For hours every Wednesday last summer, in the heat, in the rain, LawnAmerica employees were mad at work pitching lemonade. Theirs was no ordinary lemonade stand, either. It was a Keith's Ice Cold Lemonade Stand, one of many across Tulsa raising funds and awareness for a \$24 million building expansion at the Little Light House, a charity LawnAmerica has supported for more than 25 years.

When it was all over, LawnAmerica had raised more than \$18,000 in contributions for the Little Light House and donated an additional \$10,000 of its own.

"Construction on the expansion has begun," Johnson says now of the impact the fundraiser had,

"building more classrooms so that the hundreds of kids on the waiting list will soon have a school to go to."

Working the lemonade stand was just one of LawnAmerica's meaningful 2014 community service projects. For the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Day of Service, the entire LawnAmerica staff—45 of them—went to work at Johnson's alma mater, Will Rogers High School. LawnAmerica donated \$6,000 in materials and 200 man-hours to renovate the school's front lawn and install new landscaping.

"It's now more of an inner-city school, so it was a meaningful project for me," Johnson says. "The building itself is beautiful and on the National Register of Historic Places, but the grounds needed some work."

### Betting the farm

Three years ago, Johnson and his wife, Becky, moved to a 20-acre farm 30 minutes outside Tulsa, fulfilling a longtime dream of settling in the countryside. The unique property was already set up for a horseman's lifestyle, with a barn, riding arena and pasture. The problem was, the couple aren't riders themselves.

"It wasn't long before I started to ask myself how we could share this beautiful farm and outdoor setting with others," Johnson says. "It leads back to the stewardship question, of using what God has blessed us with to help others and make a difference in our world."

The Johnsons, drawing on their advocacy of kids over the years, began hosting foster children and youth in need at the farm, rallying volunteers from their church for help. But a visit to the nonprofit Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch in Oregon last June was the true catalyst for change, inspiring Johnson to make a nonprofit of the farm.

### AT A GLANCE

**COMPANY:** LawnAmerica  
**LOCATION:** Tulsa, Okla.

#### HIGHLIGHTS:

- Donates 3 percent of annual revenue to those in need.
- Created a nonprofit farm with LawnAmerica profits to benefit foster children.
- Has funded and built two Habitat for Humanity homes, among many other projects, over the years.

When 20 acres adjacent to the Johnsons' farm came up for sale last year, LawnAmerica was quick to purchase them, naming it Oh Be Joyful Farm.

Currently, two families with kids from the foster system live on Oh Be Joyful Farm. And this summer, LawnAmerica began hosting kids from a local shelter for foster children there. Through horseback riding, goat milking, berry picking, woodworking, hiking and fishing, LawnAmerica intends to enrich the lives of the foster children.

"Our goal is to teach these kids some basic people and business skills they can take with them to the workplace in the future," Johnson says. "Getting kids out in the country, working with animals and plants, getting dirty, all these things can be great tools in healing and building hope into children's lives."

Throughout the summer, Oh Be Joyful Farm volunteers will work with foster children on the farm. Such opportunities enrich volunteers' lives just as they enhance the lives of the recipients, Johnson says.

"I think giving back helps cultivate the caring culture we try to build here at LawnAmerica," Johnson says. "It's not about us. It's about helping others, in whatever we do."



# A greater meaning

**In the Treasure State, one association is enriching the lives of veteran families, the hungry and the young.** BY BETH GERACI

In Montana, where the population hovers around 1 million, people have to drive far to make a difference. And those in the landscape industry do drive far—up to eight hours, in fact—every year to honor veterans.

In an annual outing inspired by Renewal & Remembrance, the annual landscape industry volunteer event at Arlington National Cemetery, the Association of Montana Turf, Ornamental & Pest Professionals (AMTOPP) has groomed two Montana cemeteries alternately every year for the last 10 years.

Called Summer Field Day, the event is held every August at one of two Montana veterans cemeteries: the Columbia Falls Veterans Home, Hospital & Cemetery in Columbia Falls, Mont., and the Eastern Montana State Veterans Cemetery in Miles City, Mont.



As with Renewal & Remembrance, “we prune, fertilize, mulch, kill weeds, do any type of maintenance,” says Kari Brittain, the longtime, now former executive director of AMTOPP.

All materials for Summer Field Day are donated by distributors, and equipment is loaned by participating landscape firms. Together, volunteers enhance grounds, remove declining trees, prune, fertilize, groom beds, control weeds and more.

The monetary value of the cemetery projects typically ranges from \$4,000 to \$6,000 annually. Since Summer Field Day began, the association has donated about 600 man hours and \$15,770 in materials to the cause.

“It feels awesome to give to people who have sacrificed so much for us,” Brittain says. “It’s an honor for us to be able to do that.”

Every year since its inception,

**AMTOPP members spruce up veterans cemeteries at its annual Summer Field Day.**



Summer Field Day attendance has grown. Last year, about 20 people participated at the Columbia Falls Veterans Home, Hospital & Cemetery. What started as simply fertilizing and mowing around headstones has become “a little bit more involved,” Brittain says.

In a meaningful tribute, the association now plants a tree at Summer Field Day each year, and it’s planted by a tree grower who is a veteran. The association then commemorates the day with a special plaque.

In addition to the heartfelt nature of the project, says Charles Cherry,

## AT A GLANCE

**COMPANY:** Association of Montana Turf, Ornamental & Pest Professionals

**LOCATION:** Missoula, Mont.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- Conducts annual Summer Field Day to care for veterans facilities
- Mobilizes members for group activities like food drives, despite the long drives required to participate in events.
- Funds three 4-H Club scholarships to encourage green industry service projects.

who organizes the Miles City event and owns the Miles City business Evergreen Landscaping & Liquid Lawn Fertilizer Service, “networking together as a group lets us form a tighter bond.”

Cherry says his own experience with Renewal & Remembrance gave greater meaning to his involvement in Summer Field Day. At least two AMTOPP members continue to attend Renewal & Remembrance annually, usually the association’s president and vice president.

### Digging deep to make it happen

Mobilizing for a volunteer event in Montana is much more labor intensive than it would be in a more populous state. It takes effort. And the association, in the midst of its 25th anniversary year, has shown it has as much staying power as it does altruistic chops.

It coordinates its statewide volunteer efforts through mailed newsletters, emails and phone calls. And in a world where electronic communication is the driver, it’s not so in Montana, where snail mail reigns.

“A lot of our members do not have email addresses, so we depend a lot on paper,” Brittain says.

The association uses that paper every year to organize an annual food drive that it has strengthened in the last three years.

“We felt that we needed to do a better job in the last few years, so we really promote it, and whoever brings the most food gets a free membership for the following year,” Brittain says.

In 2014, Jason Stringer, an arborist with Tree Amigos in Great Falls, Mont., offered customers a 10 percent discount if they donated food. Consequently, Stringer brought to the association’s annual conference 958 pounds of food, helping the association generate 788 more pounds of food than it did during the previous year’s drive.

The association’s members also fund three youth scholarships: two \$250 4-H Club scholarships that center on green industry projects like community gardens and tree plantings, and a \$500 scholarship to a college-bound student. “The goal is to promote the green industry in the state of Montana and to encourage kids to think about improving their communities and how they want to do that,” Brittain says.

Brittain says the association’s members strive to make a difference in whatever they do. “A lot of us volunteer doing other things,” Brittain says. “I really hadn’t done a lot of volunteering until I was part of AMTOPP, but once I started volunteering, I saw I could make a difference.”

# Giving a mile

**Whether running for autism or pitching in on pro bono projects, Ewing’s community service has some serious legs.**

BY BETH GERACI

For years, Phoenix-based Ewing Irrigation Products has made a difference through projects big and small. The company has renovated a baseball field for foster kids and orphans, installed irrigation for people in the military and organized staff to run the Phoenix marathon annually to raise money and awareness for Autism Speaks. When given the chance to help, Ewing takes it, enriching the lives of many, in Arizona and beyond.

### Affected by autism

In 2009, Ewing employees ran the P.F. Chang’s Rock ‘n’ Roll Arizona Marathon & 1/2 Marathon in Phoenix to raise money for Autism Speaks. It started an annual tradition, one by which Ewing has raised more than \$200,000 to date in support of autism research and programming.

Many team members at Ewing Irrigation Products have been affected by autism through friends and family, including Ewing’s leadership. Given that personal connection to autism, it’s no wonder Ewing’s turnout at the 2014 run—nearly 700, including employees and guests—was so high.

Ewing began sponsoring employees and their family members in the race in 2005, first to encourage



Ewing staff renovated the backyard of a family with a child with autism.



greater health throughout the company, says Warren Gorowitz, vice president of sustainability for Ewing. But in 2009, the race became a vehicle for fundraising, as well.

Gina Schroeder heard of Ewing's autism advocacy and, in April 2014, wrote to the company with her own touching autism story. Her story centered on her toddler son with autism and her husband, who worked six days a week.

"Her husband spent his day off doing yardwork so that their son had a nice outdoor space to connect with nature," Gorowitz says. "Gina came to us seeking a solution so her family could spend more time together and her son, Brendan, would have a safe place to play outside."

Ewing's Arizona Regional Manager Jake Ray came up with a solution: artificial turf. He got a vendor to donate the artificial turf, and four Ewing employees installed it for free.

"The employees involved with helping Gina and her family had spent some time learning about her through her blog before they even met her," Gorowitz says. "Because of what they read, they were touched and inspired to get product donated and do the installation for free. The people involved in the installation were able to walk away that day feeling like they really made a difference in this young family's life."

### Taking PRIDE

Ewing employees also make a difference in the lives of children. In April 2013, 350 Ewing workers helped renovate a baseball field at Sunshine Acres Children's Home in Mesa, Ariz. Sunshine Acres provides children who are separated from their parents with a safe place to stay. Ewing redid the baseball field, installed drip irrigation and donated \$75,000 worth of materials toward the project.

The Sunshine Acres project was what Ewing calls a PRIDE project, an acronym the company uses internally to describe its culture and approach to business. It stands for performance, responsibility, integrity, development and excellence.

"We had been participating in large-scale community service projects for years, mostly in collaboration with other industry organizations," Gorowitz says. "And we decided to make it our own so we could choose projects that were closely aligned with our core values of water efficiency, sustainability, education and family."

PRIDE projects also give Ewing employees from across the country a chance to collaborate while

giving back, Gorowitz adds.

In April 2014, more than 300 Ewing employees gathered at St. Philip the Apostle Catholic School in Dallas, Texas, for another PRIDE project. They were there to renovate a sports field, build a patio that featured lighting and a sound system, and plant garden beds to be used for hands-on classes.

Ewing donated \$100,000 in materials for the project, but it's tough to put a value on the overall project, Gorowitz says. It was a large-scale job that involved several collaborators—including Ewing vendors and customers who donated time, labor and equipment.

"It's not part of our policy; it's just a part of our culture," Gorowitz says. "Our annual PRIDE project is our capstone effort. However, we participate in many service projects as sponsors, materials providers and volunteers across the country each year."

Ewing workers often immerse themselves independently in stewardship initiatives in their own communities, and many even spearhead projects. The service mindset at Ewing trickles from the top down, beginning with the company's ownership.

"As much as we do for the communities that we are part of around the country, we also devote the same care and attention to the employees and families that make Ewing successful," Gorowitz says. "We take care of our own, as well, in times of need. We rally as one big family, and (as an employee) you know that you have the support of leadership and your peers, no matter what part of the country they live in."

### AT A GLANCE

**COMPANY:** Ewing Irrigation Products  
**LOCATION:** Phoenix

#### HIGHLIGHTS:

- Raised more than \$200,000 for Autism Speaks by encouraging employees and guests to participate in the P.F. Chang's Rock 'n' Roll Arizona Marathon & 1/2 Marathon in Phoenix.
- Completes an annual PRIDE project, an acronym the company uses internally to describe its culture. It stands for performance, responsibility, integrity, development and excellence.
- Supports projects on the branch level, where regional and local employees work to do their own volunteer projects to help the community.



# Chain reaction

BY MARISA PALMIERI

**O**ver the last three years, as I've been involved with the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) Community Stewardship Awards program, one thing has remained constant: the committee members' focus on inspiring others.

This awards program is an initiative of the association's public relations committee. It was created to bring awareness to the good works done by many companies in the green industry. The goal is to share the message that companies of any size can make a difference. In fact, this supplement was initiated to do just that—get the word out and inspire others.

A few months ago, after we wrapped up judging for this year's Community Stewardship Awards, I happened upon a tragic but inspiring story about the power of one company's generosity.

In October 2012, Richard Specht and his wife, Samantha, lost their 22-month-old son, Rees, to a drowning accident in their backyard pond. The Spechts, who have three other children, live in Sound Beach, N.Y.

"It happened two days before Hurricane Sandy," Specht, a teacher, told *Yahoo Parenting* in April. "Then we went through the storm and lost our power for two weeks and it was a nightmare on top of a nightmare."

The shining light amid their sorrow were the people who came "from all over" to help them. One of those helpers was Bill Kelly of Kelly Brothers Landscaping in Coram, N.Y. The company fixed up the Specht's yard—gratis—filling in the pond, removing a gazebo, and grading, seeding and sodding.

There were others who helped the Spechts who, like Kelly Brothers, wouldn't accept repayment, so the family decided to "pay it forward." They created a nonprofit called Rees Specht Life. The organization's flagship program is the distribution of Rees Specht Life cards, which read: "Possession of this card is a solemn promise to pay it forward and perform a random act of kindness..."

To date, nearly a quarter million cards have been distributed by the organization and others. The hope is the cards' recipients will, in turn, carry out a good deed and a chain reaction will occur.

Just one example of the power of Rees Specht Life's mission and paying it forward is the story that caught *Yahoo Parenting's* attention, and mine, in turn.

Specht received an email from a server at a Times Square restaurant with a photo of a receipt showing a \$3,000 tip on a \$43 tab. It was accompanied by a note to the server explaining the Rees Specht Life initiative. It turns out the big tipper is a former student of Specht's. He's also a Broadway performer and he wanted to "pay it forward" to a restaurant worker who's always shown him kindness.

"We lose track of the fact that it's the small things we do that cumulatively make a difference," Specht told *Yahoo Parenting*. "I want people to focus on those small acts so we can regain that sense of community and compassion and respect."

There's no doubt Kelly Brothers Landscaping had no idea it would be one catalyst in a massive chain reaction of giving.

"I just wanted to do *something*," Kelly told me. He was working for the Specht's neighbors at the time of the accident and heard about what happened to Rees. "I was heartbroken. I just wanted them to feel good about their place."

He didn't do it for recognition or an award. He just did what he believed was the right thing to do.

That's the most inspiring story there is.

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Reach Palmieri at [mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net](mailto:mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net).



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**LET'S GROW**

# Video *saved* ~~killed~~ the landscape marketer



**BY SHAUN KANARY**

The author is director of marketing for Weed Pro in Sheffield Village, Ohio, and adjunct professor of marketing at Baldwin Wallace University.

**M**eerkat. Periscope. Vine. Instagram. Sounds like I've lost it and have started speaking in tongues, huh? But these words are not gibberish. In fact, they're the latest craze in social media video services. More importantly, these video-based platforms are just a few of the free tools you can use to help promote and sell your green industry services.

Social media video marketing is one of the most effective ways to market your business. How effective? According to the Online Publishers Association, 80 percent of Internet users recall watching a video ad on a site they visited in the past 30 days. Of that 80 percent, nearly half took action with that brand after viewing the video. How's that for effective?

Marketers are increasingly using these formats to display their products to consumers, allowing consumers to experience them. This approach allows a consumer to feel comfortable with an expensive purchase, reducing buyer's remorse. That's why it's so important to show off your landscape products with small, bite-sized videos that add "life"

to your company's visual masterpieces.

So what are these tools, and how do they work?

**WE'RE LIVE!** Meerkat announces your live stream to your Facebook followers.

## LIVE STREAMING

Meerkat and Periscope are apps that make your mobile phone a live broadcasting machine. Both services connect with your Twitter account, allowing your followers to watch live broadcasts of your videos for free. Periscope now allows you to connect your cell phone number instead of a Twitter account; Meerkat now connects to your Facebook account.

In addition to live video streams, users who are watching your streams can ask questions and comment with you and your viewers. This tool takes live broadcasts and turns them into interactive sessions with consumers.

Live video streaming gives you the opportunity to give your consumers a look into your world. Have a beautiful job you just completed? Do a Meerkat/Periscope tour around all the great features of your job. Encourage consumers to ask questions regarding the design and installation methods. The opportunities are limitless, and interactive video will allow your clients and prospects to become engaged with your brand.

While both live-streaming video services provide a similar service, Periscope offers a few more features, such as 24-hour replay, allowing visitors to view saved video for a day, providing data on viewers and giving users the ability to watch broadcasts on desktop browsers. That said, due to its Facebook integration, I have a Meerkat account, too. I alternate using the two platforms to engage both Twitter followers and Facebook followers.

## MICROVIDEOS


Maybe live streaming isn't your thing, but you realize videos are too

important to be ignored. Consumers not only love videos, but the stats prove they like them short. That's why Instagram and Vine are great platforms to start crafting short, powerful, videos.

When Instagram started, it was merely a photo-sharing social media channel that was an "artsy" alternative to other platforms, allowing users to add filters to photos.

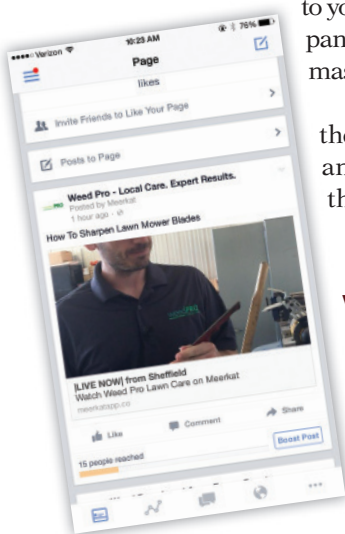
Facebook, which bought Instagram in 2012, brought video to the platform in 2013, allowing users to upload three- to 15-second videos directly to the platform and to share them on their Facebook feeds. So in addition to your beautiful photos, you can share short videos of your landscape projects effortlessly, adding cool visual filters to get your projects to "pop."

A smaller social channel, Vine, allows you to upload two- to six-second video clips to Twitter or Facebook. Vine allows users to hold down the record button; it stops filming when users removes their fingers, allowing you to make cool stop-motion videos.

Additionally, Vine videos are "auto-looped," meaning they'll repeat over and over again until the user stops watching. While six seconds doesn't seem like enough time to film anything useful, featuring small clips in your Twitter and Facebook feeds can help drive engagement with your audience. With Twitter's backing, you can be sure that Vine will continue to add features that make it a viable service for years to come. 

## WEB EXTRA

Visit the Web Extra section at [LandscapeManagement.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net) for five ideas to market your green industry business with these tools.



**CASE STUDY: OUR WAY**

# CEO school

**One North Carolina company taught a college landscape student an ultimate lesson.**

BY CASEY PAYTON

**W**hen the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) hosted its 39th annual Student Career Days at North Carolina State University in March, nearby Greenscape decided it wasn't enough to just attend or have a booth at the career fair this year.

The execs at Greenscape, based in Holly Springs, N.C., wanted to find a way that the 800-plus students participating in the national collegiate landscape competition could really get to know their company. That's where the idea for #CEOcamp was born.

"Daniel Currin, our CEO, was talking to a recent graduate and asked what kind of swag students might like to see," says Casey Reagan, the company's marketing director. "The grad told him students already have all the swag. They don't need that stuff. What they want is a job."

That got Currin to thinking. How could he show students what it really meant to be the leader of a landscape company? The answer was giving his job away to a student to show them what a typical day was like. So Greenscape decided to launch a contest with the winner taking over as CEO for two action-packed days at company headquarters.

"The idea was to show the winner everything that went into being the CEO for a large landscape company," Reagan explains. "Client meetings, financials and even what it means to be part of an executive team."

The contest was simple. Students who came to the Greenscape career fair booth got a pair of heart-shaped green glasses and were encouraged to take and post selfies on Instagram using the hashtag #CEOcamp. The picture that got the most "likes" would be the victor.

There were nearly 100 Instagram posts with the hashtag. The winner was Scott Mendenhall, a senior in the Horticulture and Landscape Architecture Department at Oklahoma State University at Stillwater. He racked up more than 200 "likes."

Mendenhall flew into Raleigh in April to begin his two-day itinerary as CEO. Greenscape covered his flight and accommodations and paid him a stipend—a prize package totalling about \$900. It was a busy schedule to say the least. He toured the operation, met with clients, delved into the company's financials and contributed to an executive committee meeting.

"It wasn't necessary a typical day since we packed so much in at once, but running a landscape company does have many facets and I think it was eye opening for Scott to see that," Reagan says.

In fact, Mendenhall says he didn't realize the level of business savvy and financial knowledge that went into being a landscape company CEO. He walked away with an important lesson.



Left: The winning pic. Above (from left): Keith Updyke, Scott Mendenhall and Daniel Currin.



"I discovered I need to spend some more time learning about the business and financial side of things because my knowledge in those areas is lacking,"

Mendenhall says. "I also need to do more to become a better leader and gain more knowledge in as many areas of the industry as I can so that I too can make the best decisions possible in helping our industry grow."

And really, that's what this whole venture was about.

"Greenscape is passionate about developing emerging leaders in the green industry," Currin says. "We wanted to step it up and do something that nobody else was doing. We felt this was something unique—something that would engage the students and really get them interested in learning more about the industry in a way that just attending Student Career Days could not." 📍

Payton is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia.

## BUSINESS BREAKDOWN

**COMPANY:** Greenscape, including three Weed Man territories

**LOCATION:** Holly Springs, N.C.

**ANNUAL REVENUE:** \$14 million

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**CUSTOMER MIX:** 60% commercial; 40% residential

**EMPLOYEES:** 180

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## CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT



### 26G COMPACT EXCAVATOR

**COMPANY:** John Deere

**URL:** JohnDeere.com

The John Deere 26G compact excavator's 20-hp engine meets Tier 4 Final emissions standards with no operational interruptions. The new cab door design

improves entry and visibility. The redesigned cab features more floor space for improved operator comfort, and a larger front window improves visibility.

### POSI-TRACK COMPACT TRACK LOADERS

**COMPANY:** ASV

**URL:** ASVLLC.com

The first Posi-Track models to be relaunched under the ASV brand include the RT-30, RT-60 and RT-110—a small, medium and large compact



track loader, respectively. A specially configured RT-110/F is also available; it is based on the standard RT-110 but is equipped for high-production brush cutting and forestry work.



### S725TX MINI SKID-STEER

**COMPANY:** Vermeer

**URL:** Vermeer.com

The Vermeer S725TX features a 750-lb., SAE-rated operating capacity with a 2,145-lb. tipping capacity. A 24.8-hp Kubota Tier 4 Final engine features four cylinders, producing more torque for improved productivity in tough ground conditions. The S725TX is available with either the standard 9-in. track or the narrower 7-in. track option.



### MT52 MINI TRACK LOADER

**COMPANY:** Bobcat

**URL:** Bobcat.com

Although just 3 ft. wide and 6 ft. long, the MT52 boasts a 520-lb. rated operating capacity. It also features a turf-friendly lug track

that distributes the 2,506-lb. loader over a larger area, reducing ground pressure and minimizing damage to landscapes, paving stone and other established surfaces.

### 903C COMPACT WHEEL LOADER



**COMPANY:**

Caterpillar

**URL:** Cat.com

With a standard operating weight of 9,150 lbs. and powered with a 42-hp Cat C2.4 engine,

the 903C's design focuses on operator comfort and safety, ease of operation and simple routine maintenance. Its universal-type (skid-steer-type) coupler and auxiliary hydraulics offer user versatility.



### 3CX BACKHOE LOADER



**COMPANY:** JCB

**URL:** JCBNA.com

The 3CX backhoe is equipped with four-wheel drive as standard and a limited slip differential to ensure traction. Two-wheel drive can be selected to reduce tire wear while roading. An in-cab 12V power source allows operators to charge phones and use various accessories.

## >> AERATORS



### RECIPROCATING AERATORS

**COMPANY:** Billy Goat

**URL:** BillyGoat.com

Billy Goat's reciprocating aerators include the PLUGR 18-in., the PLUGR 25-in. mechanical or hydro-drive models, and the 30-in. Hydro. Reciprocating aerators allow for in-ground turning; have fewer tines (vs. drum aerators); and feature variable aeration density that produces two to 10 times more holes per pass, Billy Goat says.



### 30-IN. STAND-ON AERATOR

**COMPANY:** Toro

**URL:** Toro.com

Featuring ground speeds of up to 7.5 mph and the ability to adjust plug length on the fly, Toro's 30-in. stand-on aerator also includes an ergonomic foot pedal that raises and lowers tines easily. The floating operator platform isolates vibrations, reducing operator fatigue.



### LAWNLAIRE V

**COMPANY:** Ryan

**URL:** RyanTurf.com

Featuring a 26.5-in. swath, the Lawn Lawnaire V with Easy Steer Technology has a redesigned tine assembly that allows users to steer the unit without taking the tines out of the ground. It even aerates along curved planting beds and around trees.



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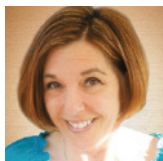
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## SafetyWatch list of hazards

The list of hazards in this photo includes but is not limited to:

- Lack of safety vest;
- No cones/traffic-control devices; and
- Equipment/gas can hanging off trailer.

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responses with the online version of this story.



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# BACKSTORY

INTERVIEW BY MARISA PALMIERI



## Mike Rorie

**PRESIDENT  
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"The name of my first company was Maintenance Service Inc. We changed it to GroundMasters around 1982 because we wanted a name that resonated more with landscaping."



"It took us 10 years to do \$1 million in revenue in a year."

"We've accomplished another successful small enterprise, for which I give 90 percent of the credit to the girls (daughters Alle Fairhurst and Rachel Rorie.)"



"My wife Angela and I enjoy traveling together. We golf year round and we like to boat."

"Accountability, even on the most basic level, is something that I carried forward. We heard about it if we missed something."



"Being in an industry the second time where you have so much industry equity, it's a whole lot easier. It's a lot of work, but there's no trial and error."

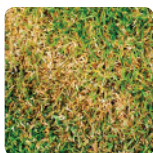
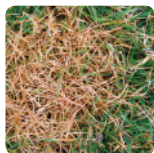
"I enjoyed seeing how a half-billion dollar company was structured and how they went about managing and making decisions."

"Some of my (former GroundMasters) managers convinced me to do it again, which is a little bit crazy, but I've agreed."

### WORDS OF WISDOM

"Get the best people you can, provide them the best opportunity, hold them accountable and they'll take care of the customer." • "Somebody's gotta be in the crow's nest looking out while people are delivering the daily, weekly and monthly promises made. When you're down there with them, you're not spending any time on the business." • "Networking is the most underrated, undervalued benefit that anyone in leadership or management of a company can do. You can find out almost anything through networking with your peers and other business leaders."

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