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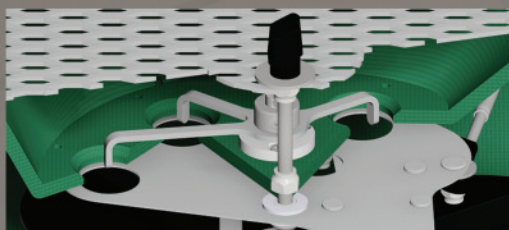
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## People power

The Greenery CEO  
**Lee Edwards** shares  
his 45-year-old  
company's secret to  
success: empowering  
employees. p. 28



**STEP BY STEP**  
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# CONTENTS

JULY 2018 • VOL 57, ISSUE 7



## ON THE COVER

The Greenery CEO Lee Edwards shares his 45-year-old company's secret to success: empowering employees.

28

## NEWS + HOW-TO'S

### 12 Recommender

What backpack blower is your go-to?

### 12 Issue Brief

BY BOB MANN

### 14 Step by Step

How to perform rejuvenation pruning.

### 16 New Stuff

Six products and services that are fresh to the market.

### 18 SafetyWatch

Loading and operating limits.

## PROFIT CENTERS

### 20 Turf+Ornamental Care

Landscape pros discuss the latest fungicide trends.

Find out why modern fungicides are more effective (page 20).



### 22 Mowing+Landscape Maintenance

How reallocating labor can help combat workforce shortages.

### 24 Design/Build+Installation

A look at one company's successful generational transition.

### 26 Irrigation+Water Management

Tips and tricks for proper irrigation startups and shutdowns.

## BUSINESS INSIDER

### 36 Business Basics: People

How to attract the best employees.  
BY MEL KLEIMAN

### 38 Let's Grow

Why the newest data protection rules matter for your company.  
BY SHAUN KANARY

### 40 Case Study: Our Way

How one company generated fresh ideas and created employee buy-in.  
BY CASEY PAYTON

An inside look into the landscape market's latest products (page 16).



## IN EVERY ISSUE

### 4 Online Now

### 6 Editor's Note

BY MARISA PALMIERI

### 8 Big Picture

Lifescape Colorado, Denver

### 42 Product Focus

Mower attachments + accessories; compact excavators

### 47 Classifieds/Ad Index

### 48 Backstory

Blake Shelton, owner; Blake Shelton Landscaping, Franklin, Tenn.  
BY SARAH WEBB

ON THE COVER: PHOTO BY MIRANDA OSBORN, CAMERAKOALA.COM

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➔ Sure, 401(k) plans are top of mind for most business owners when it comes to looking for the best retirement plan option, but the alternatives—Safe Harbor 401(k), SEP IRAs and Simple IRAs—offer some nice perks as well. Think you have a good grasp on these other options? Head over to **LandscapeManagement.net/WebExtras** to test your knowledge on the benefits and limitations of these alternatives.



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# EDITOR'S NOTE

**MARISA PALMIERI**  
EDITOR

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



## HEADQUARTERS

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

## EDITORIAL STAFF

**Editor** Marisa Palmieri  
216/706-3764 | mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net

**Managing Editor** Abby Hart  
216/706-3756 | ahart@northcoastmedia.net

**Associate Editor** Sarah Webb  
216/363-7932 | swebb@northcoastmedia.net

**Art Director** Tracie Martinez  
216/280-6127 | tmartinez@northcoastmedia.net

**Graphic Designer** Courtney Townsend  
216/363-7931 | ctownsend@northcoastmedia.net

**Digital Media Content Producer** Kelly Limpert  
216/363-7933 | klimpert@northcoastmedia.net

## ADVERTISING STAFF

**Group Publisher** Bill Roddy  
216/706-3758 | broddy@northcoastmedia.net

**Associate Publisher** Craig MacGregor  
216/706-3787 | cmacgregor@northcoastmedia.net

**Eastern Regional Sales Manager** Dan Hannan  
216/363-7937 | dhannan@northcoastmedia.net

**Western Regional Sales Manager** Jake Goodman  
216/363-7923 | jgoodman@northcoastmedia.net

**Account Manager** Chloe Scoular  
216/363-7929 | cscoular@northcoastmedia.net

## BUSINESS STAFF

**Administrative Coordinator** Petra Turko  
216/706-3768 | pturko@northcoastmedia.net

**Sr. Marketing & Event Manager** Michelle Mitchell  
216/363-7922 | mmitchell@northcoastmedia.net

**Marketing & Event Manager** Angela Gibian  
216/363-7936 | agibian@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

## MARKETING/MAGAZINE SERVICES

**Reprints & Permissions** Brett Petillo  
877/652-5295 | bpetillo@wrightsmedia.com

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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

**Director of Audience Engagement** Bethany Chambers  
216/706-3771 | bchambers@northcoastmedia.net

**Editorial Directors** Marty Whitford & Marisa Palmieri  
216/706-3766 | mwhitford@northcoastmedia.net  
216/706-3764 | mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net

## It's time

I can vividly recall sitting next to Bob Dolibois, retired executive vice president of the American Nursery & Landscape Association (now AmericanHort), on a bus ride at an industry event in May 2007, days after the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 was introduced in the Senate.

This bill—which was viewed as a compromise between both parties, thanks to its path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants and its provisions for border protection—*had* to pass this time around, he said.

Otherwise, it would be more than five years until we'd see a legitimate immigration reform bill again. "That's a long time," I remember thinking, and I questioned whether or not it could happen sooner. Dolibois explained that it was unlikely a president would support a touchy subject like immigration reform in his or her first term.

“Isn't it reasonable to expect our elected officials to make laws that are effective and don't hinder economic growth?”

The 2007 bill was introduced in the Senate in May, but it was never voted on and effectively died in early June. Another bill, brought to the floor after then-President George W. Bush's urging, met a similar fate later that month. In 2013, during President Barack Obama's second term, the Senate passed an immigration bill, but the House did not act on it.

Here we are 11 years after that bus ride with no comprehensive reform, no permanent fix to the H-2B visa program and an administration that appears to be bent on an enforcement-only plan, going as far as separating immigrant parents from their children at the border.

An early June raid by Immigration and Customs Enforcement at Corso's Flower & Garden Center in Sandusky and Castalia, Ohio, has been on my radar because of its industry connection and its proximity to where I live. When I first heard about Corso's, I had the same thought AmericanHort expressed in a June 8 statement posted on its website: "It is ironic that this latest enforcement action coincided with a U.S. Department of Labor announcement that there are about 400,000 more job openings than there are job seekers to fill them."

The unemployment figures don't justify employing undocumented workers—and I'm not advocating for people to break the law. But they do shed light on our broken system. For continued prosperity, we need people in our country who want to work. Isn't it reasonable to expect our elected officials to make laws that are effective and don't hinder economic growth?

I can't say it any better than AmericanHort: "We can and must do better. Congress has, for decades, sidestepped the urgent need to fix a broken system. It's time that our enforcement resources are targeted toward true threats, and that well-functioning immigration and work visa programs allow our industry to achieve its economic potential." 🙏



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# Q+A

### What's your best advice for working with residential customers?

#### Landscape Professionals

**Richard Bare**

Arbor-Nomics Turf  
Norcross, Ga.

"You'd better  
have the patience  
to handle them;  
otherwise,  
you'll be in the  
loony bin."

**Bill Bemus**

Bemus Landscape  
San Clemente, Calif.

**Chris Joyce**

Joyce Landscaping  
Cape Cod, Mass.

"You need  
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McKay Landscape Lighting  
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Upper Saddle River, N.J.

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# BIG PICTURE

## SOUTHERN REVIVAL

**LOCATION** Denver

**COMPANY** Lifescape Colorado

**THE DETAILS** Maintaining the style of this 1920s home and finding materials to blend with its architecture was a must for this project.

The client's wish list included a dining patio with a fireplace and pergola; a full outdoor kitchen; a spa; removing the tree hedge along the back of the property, while still screening the parking area; retaining turf areas for the client's dogs; and incorporating formal plantings, lighting, gas lamps and garden boxes. The project took place in three phases over three consecutive summers.

With a little luck and a lot of hunting, Lifescape secured reclaimed brick that matched the style of the home and married the brick patterns and design with the home's architecture. The team successfully navigated the project—and city and zoning laws—and coordinated with a wide variety of tradespeople.

The project earned Lifescape Colorado a 2017 Grand Award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program.

**PHOTO** Antiqued doors lead into the dining patio area, which features upright evergreens and a beautiful stone fountain surrounded by a pebble inlay.

*See more photos from this project at [LandscapeManagement.net/BigPicture](http://LandscapeManagement.net/BigPicture).*

PHOTO: DAN DEGRUSH





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RECOMMENDER

ISSUE BRIEF

STEP BY STEP

NEW STUFF

SAFETYWATCH



## STAY ORGANIZED

**A**t ASI Landscape Management in Thonotosassa, Fla., the human resources team uses an HR software tool to stay organized when it comes to employee information.

The program, Bamboo HR, tracks employee records like benefits and time off, and it has employee onboarding features.

"It's an electronic filing system for each and every employee," HR Generalist Cindy Lara says. "Eventually, we're trying to go paperless with everything except legal documents. We want this program to store all the employees' information."

Lara says she loves how much time it saves her versus using paper files. She also likes the software's ability to add custom fields that are pertinent to ASI's business. For instance, the company tracks employee shirt sizes within the software. When it comes time to reorder uniforms, Lara can quickly pull a report rather than ask all 100-plus employees what size they need.

Another feature Lara lauds is the ability to track licenses and certifications. For example, she can export a list of which employees are approved drivers, their driver's license numbers and license expiration dates. She also has created alerts to let her know when employees' licenses and certifications will expire, so she can alert them and let their managers know they'll need renewals for insurance purposes.

The HR team also pulls data from the system for work anniversaries, birthdays and much more.

"We're trying to tweak it and use it more for what it's worth," Lara says.

**"We want this program to store all the employees' information."**

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## RECOMMENDER

# What backpack blower do you recommend and why?

Landscapers recommend backpack blowers that are lightweight and efficient.



## CHAD JONES

OWNER/OPERATOR, C-JONES LAWN & TREE  
WINTER HAVEN, FLA.

"The Echo 770 has incredible power, is very comfortable, always reliable and incredibly light. They help our crews work more efficiently. We have owned every major brand of backpack blower over the past 14 years, and these are the only model we purchase now."



## SCOTT STILWELL

OPERATIONS PROJECT MANAGER,  
CUSTOM LAWN CARE  
FAYETTEVILLE, ARK.

"Stihl BR 600. They are easy to maintain, comfortable and the crews approve. If the man running the machine doesn't feel good about the machine, you will not approve of his quality and productivity."

## ISSUE BRIEF



BY BOB MANN

The author is director of state and local government relations for the National Association of Landscape Professionals.

## RENEW AND REMEMBER

Each July, members of the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) head to the sacred grounds of Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia for NALP's Renewal & Remembrance event. Hundreds of volunteers, many of them families, fan out across the cemetery to apply lime, core aerate lawn areas, install irrigation, plant flowers and cable, brace and trim trees. Those who have participated in this event will tell you they found it incredibly moving and cannot wait to do it again, but words sometimes fail them when they try to describe why.

Two years ago during the event, my daughter and I were part of an aeration crew that was working in Section 34, a hilly area of the cemetery where thousands of headstones flowed out in each direction. Curiously, three stones stood alone at the top of the hill. As an American history buff, I couldn't help myself—I had to read the inscriptions. There, standing watch over those below him, was John Pershing, General of the Armies during the First World War. Next to him were two of his grandsons, also Army officers, one of which was killed in action during the Vietnam War. Few soldiers before or since have been as revered as Black Jack Pershing, and to spend a few moments watching my daughter aerate the lawn at his final resting place was special, to say the least.

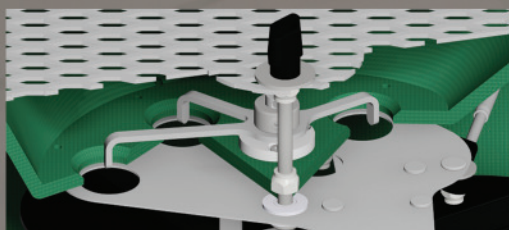
Sometimes I think that we expend too much time and energy on whatever crisis is in front of us: not enough labor, too much regulation, another machine broken. For one morning a year, those who rest on the Virginia side of the Potomac River remind us that it's an incredible privilege to live in a free country. 🇺🇸



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## STEP BY STEP

# How to perform rejuvenation pruning

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

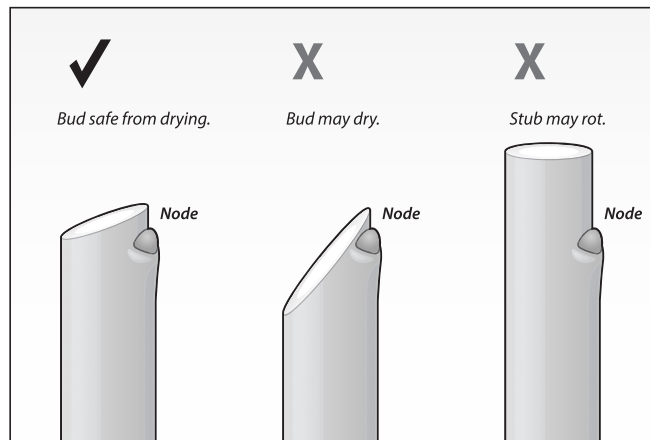
**D**eciduous shrubs require maintenance pruning to keep them healthy and in scale with their surroundings. Two techniques—extensive and gradual rejuvenation—are used to restore old, overgrown shrubs that are otherwise healthy. After rejuvenation pruning, a shrub regrows from its roots, becoming a compact, youthful plant with maximum bloom. This method is preferred for many flowering shrubs because it's quick and easy and provides positive results. Rejuvenation pruning is typically performed every three to five years when a shrub begins to look gangly and woody.

Before attempting rejuvenation pruning, contractors should be sure the plant species will respond well to drastic pruning. Some of these plants include multistemmed shrubs, such as hydrangea, forsythia, cane-growth viburnums, honeysuckle, lilac, barberry and flowering quince. The preferred time for rejuvenation pruning is just before bud break in early spring. Heavily pruned shrubs will need extra care. Before pruning, it's also a good idea to consider a shrub's new appearance and the impact it will have on the landscape.

Spring flowering shrubs will not bloom the year of rejuvenation. Shrubs with a lot of dead branches will not respond well to rejuvenation pruning. If more than one-third of the branches are woody and without healthy foliage, the shrub will probably not respond.

Follow these steps to properly perform extensive or gradual rejuvenation pruning. 📌

SOURCE: Virginia Cooperative Extension; Colorado State University Extension

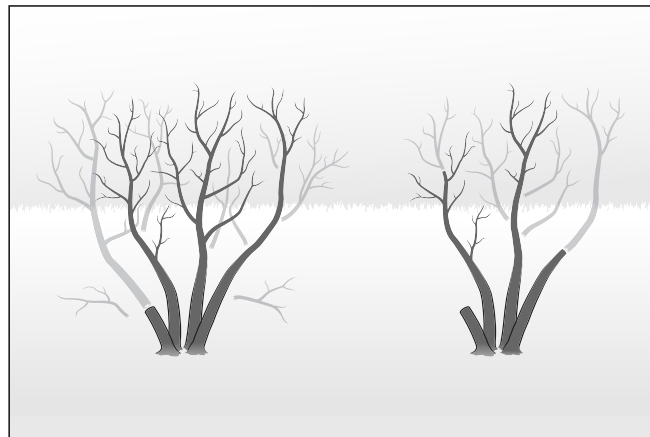
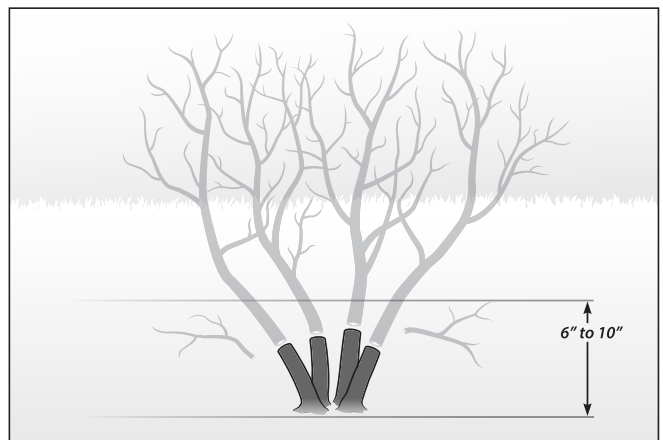


## STEP 1

Become familiar with proper pruning angles to avoid damaging the plant.

## STEP 2

For extensive rejuvenation, completely remove the entire plant 6 to 10 inches above the ground using heavy lopping shears and a pruning saw. Healthy shrubs will respond by sending up new shoots.



## STEP 3

For gradual rejuvenation, remove one-third of the oldest, unproductive branches. The next year, take half of the old, lingering stems. In year three, prune out the remainder of the old branches. While this takes longer to complete, the shrub stays more attractive throughout the process.



# PERFORMANCE AND PROFITABILITY



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\*Based on U.S. Data study by Wiese Research Associates, Inc. Market Share and Additional Equipment Study (February, 2016).



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# NEW STUFF

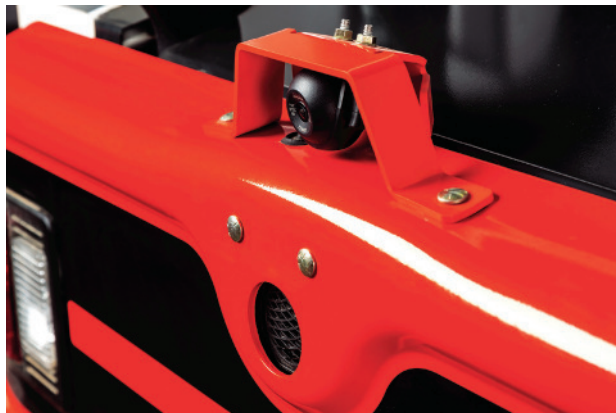
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3



2



## 1. MP815 ROTATOR

**COMPANY:** Hunter Industries

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

A new addition to Hunter Industries' MP800 series, the MP815 features a 0.8-in.-per-hr. matched precipitation rate, an expanded radius range of 8 to 16 ft. in two models and an adjustable arc range from 90 to 210 degrees and full-circle 360 degrees. The MP800 series will maintain all the benefits of the MP Rotator's patented design, ensuring healthy, water-efficient landscapes, according to Hunter.

## 2. REAR CAMERA KIT

**COMPANY:** Bobcat Co.

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

Available for Bobcat's skid-steer and compact track loaders, the kit offers the operator a continuous rear view of the machine. It includes a 4.3-in. LCD color monitor with an LED backlit screen, wiring harness, mounts and a tailgate-mounted camera offering a 118-degree horizontal viewing angle and 89-degree vertical viewing angle. The camera and display are shock- and vibration-resistant. The system is integrated into the loader, activated when the ignition is turned on and runs continuously as the loader moves in forward and reverse.

## 3. RB-80 AND RB-100S SPREADERS

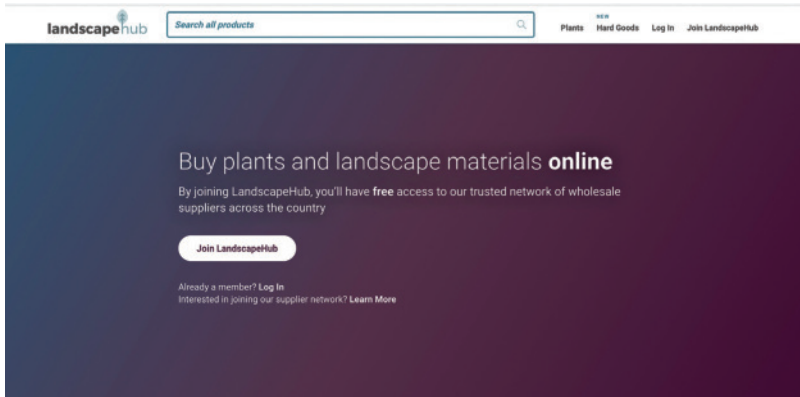
**COMPANY:** Echo

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

Featuring sturdy steel frames and maintenance-free gear casing, the RB-80 (pictured) and RB-100S are intended for turf applications such as seeds, fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, as well as for free-flowing materials such as ice melt. The oversized hopper's patented auger helps clumps of material flow. An easily adjustable, four-pattern spread control mechanism comes standard and enables the user to employ a standard full spread, a left pattern spread, a right pattern spread or a narrow spread.



4



6



5



### 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](https://LandscapeManagement.net/tag/product-news).

## 4. LANDSCAPEHUB PLATFORM

**COMPANY:** LandscapeHub

**URL:** [LandscapeHub.com](https://LandscapeHub.com)

An online, business-to-business marketplace for plants and landscape products, LandscapeHub was created for both buyers and suppliers. The platform is free to buyers, and suppliers pay a transaction fee when a sale takes place. Buyers request an invitation that gets approved by LandscapeHub's operations team. Suppliers are vetted by the company's three market managers.

## 5. GHX 200 POLE HEDGER

**COMPANY:** Greenworks Commercial

**URL:** [GreenworksCommercial.com](https://GreenworksCommercial.com)

The GHX 200 brushless pole hedger produces five times less vibration than gas-powered competitors, according to Greenworks. It includes 20-in. laser cut dual action blades for a 19-mm cut capacity; a direct-drive brushless motor delivering 3,600 strokes per minute; an articulating head with seven adjustable settings from 45 to 90 degrees; an instant-on start switch and variable speed trigger; and a fixed 205-cm shaft. It also uses a proprietary Greenworks Commercial 82-volt lithium-ion battery.

## 6. FLEX GOLD VIVID SERIES LED LAMPS

**COMPANY:** Unique Lighting Systems

**URL:** [UniqueLighting.com](https://UniqueLighting.com)

Available in two adjustable color types, the Flex Gold lamps drop into most Unique Lighting fixtures, as well as other major outdoor lighting brand fixtures. The Vivid CCT is a white lamp with an adjustable temperature, enabling the natural tones of outdoor elements to show at night and during the day, while the Vivid RGB lamp is an adjustable color-changing lamp that adjusts between red, blue, green and yellow. The Flex Gold Vivid mobile app for color adjustments is available for Android and iOS systems.



## SAFETYWATCH

### UNDERSTAND LOADING, OPERATING LIMITS

**There's a limit to what machines can lift. These limits are different with every machine and attachment. For example, the limit of pallet forks and small landscape buckets is different because with pallet forks, the load is farther away from the loader itself. A skid-steer loader operates under the same principle.**

Every skid-steer has a rated operating capacity (ROC), which is the weight the loader arms can handle to any lifting height. If the machine can lift material off the ground—but not more than a foot or two—this means the load exceeds the machine's ROC. You can still work safely with the pallet, but you can't move it more than a couple of feet.

A skid-steer also has a tipping capacity: Any weight greater than this amount will generally tip the machine forward, or the machine will simply

not be able to lift it. The tipping capacity is usually about twice the weight of the ROC. Tipping forward presents many potential hazards, so it's important to avoid tipping.

There are also other variables that can affect the limits, such as the ground's slope. For example, if you're transporting a load on sloped ground and driving on a hill, the load is more likely to tip than if you're on flat ground. Avoid high lifting when you're not on flat ground.

Experienced operators go very slowly and cautiously when they have a load that may tip the machine, and they always keep the load close to the ground. Newer operators should ask a supervisor or experienced coworker what is safe to carry.

#### WATCH AND LEARN

Visit [LandscapeManagement.net/SafetyWatch](https://www.LandscapeManagement.net/SafetyWatch) to view a video about loading and operating limits and use it as a training tool for your team.

SOURCE: Greenius



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DIVISIONS IN  
THE BLACK

TURF+  
ORNAMENTAL CARE

MOWING+LANDSCAPE  
MAINTENANCE

DESIGN/BUILD+  
INSTALLATION

IRRIGATION+  
WATER MANAGEMENT

## NEXT GEN

Learn how K&D  
Landscaping is growing  
while transitioning to  
the second generation.

➤ PAGE 24





## TURF+ORNAMENTAL CARE

# Focus on fungicides

Developments in the fungicide market lead to effective products for lawn care professionals. **BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER**

**F**or many lawn care operators (LCOs), fungicide applications are an add-on service for their customers battling turf diseases. It's important for LCOs to stay up to speed on new products, regulations and customer expectations to ensure they are using the right products as efficiently as possible.

"The fungicide market is always changing—and for numerous reasons," says Paul Giordano, a Bayer Green Solutions Team specialist. "More often than not, it's dramatically changed by environmental regulation and newer, better chemistries being developed. Sometimes it has to do with emerging diseases or widespread changes in management practices. And other times, the market is forced to adjust to evolving customer expectations or awareness."

### WHAT'S NEW WITH FUNGICIDES?

One of the newest developments in the fungicide market is the introduction of succinate dehydrogenase inhibitor (SDHI) fungicides, says Lane Tredway, technical services manager for Syngenta.

Using new technologies, manufacturers have rejuvenated an old class of chemistry to develop fungicides that are more effective than their predecessors at controlling a wide range of turf diseases. Syngenta's newest SDHI product is Velsista. Other SDHIs labeled for turf include Prostar 70WG (Bayer), Kabuto (PBI/Gordon Corp.), Indemnify (Bayer), Xzemplar (BASF) and Emerald (BASF), according to Penn State Extension.

"We now have a much better understanding of how these fungicides work and exactly where the target is in the pathogens we are trying to control," Tredway says. "That knowledge lets us design a molecule that would penetrate the site more effectively and be more potent and has allowed us to optimize the active ingredient for the pathogens we are trying to control."

While SDHI fungicides have been used in the golf course market for several years, Tredway says their adoption has been a bit slower in the lawn care market because the existing quinone outside

inhibitor fungicides still perform well. But he warns that it's inevitable that turf diseases will eventually become resistant to the products that are currently available. From a resistance management standpoint, he says it's important for manufacturers to stay ahead of the curve in the search for new chemistries and for LCOs to understand how to use them.

"We need to think about resistance management and working other chemistries into a program approach when it makes sense from a performance standpoint," Tredway says. "We are always looking for something new that can meet an unmet or anticipated need."

### EFFECTIVE COMBINATIONS

Rick Fletcher, technical services manager for turf and ornamentals at Nufarm Americas, says another emerging trend in the fungicide market are combination products that are adaptable



## NEWSPEED

### SAVATREE ACQUISITION

SavATree, No. 16 on the 2018 LM150 list, acquired 404-CUT-TREE in Norcross, Ga. This is SavATree's first

branch in Georgia, opening up a new region for the Bedford Hills, N.Y.-based company. Terms were not disclosed.

### NUFARM'S EPA REGISTRATION

Nufarm Americas has been granted U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registration for its Sure Power selective herbicide.

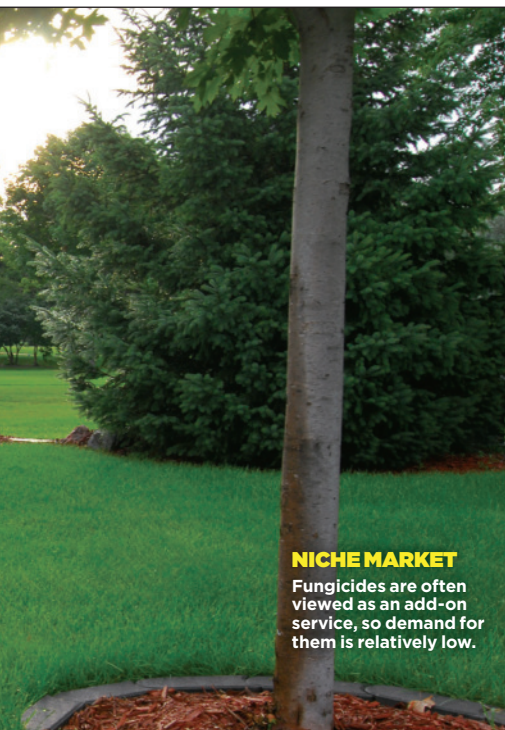
The product offers early-season and late-season control of more than 250 weeds.

### SAFER PLAY PRODUCT LINE

Branch Creek, a subsidiary of SynaTek

Solutions, launched its Safer Play line of turf and lawn products, designed to protect lawns and turf from weeds and insects, without the need to use EPA-registered pesticides.





#### NICHE MARKET

Fungicides are often viewed as an add-on service, so demand for them is relatively low.

to granular delivery methods. These products combine one or two plant movement strategies—such as an upward systemic and a local penetrant—to provide better control of an array of diseases.

“Combination products are required for the ‘shotgun’ or ‘silver bullet’ approach and add the benefit of resistance management if different modes of action groups are used,” Fletcher says. “LCOs typically look for a product that will cover a multitude of potential problems. Systemic and local penetrant-type products are often used because of adaptability to granular applications that are later watered into the root zone by the homeowners or site managers.”

Giordano agrees. “We tend to see that many of the newest products on the market incorporate multiple active ingredients to ensure a broad spectrum of diseases are covered during any given period of disease activity.”

With these new products that offer broad spectrum control, Tredway says LCOs can get the same outcomes with one product that used to require several products and tank mixtures.

He explains that the active ingredient in Velistra can help control a range of diseases at the same time. “This will allow LCOs to get the job done more efficiently,” Tredway says.

Regulations and consumer demand also impact the fungicide market. Fletcher says fungicide treatments are typically viewed as add-on services for higher-end lawn care companies, so the market for these products is relatively small. In addition, regulations and ordinances continue to limit the market’s expansion, so fungicides are not typically a chemical manufacturer’s primary focus in the lawn care market.

“The reason manufacturers don’t develop more is that they cost a lot of money and the market is small,” Fletcher says. “From a regulatory point of view, I don’t see any huge changes allowing more disease management products to come to the home lawn market. You’ll still get one or two fungicide products introduced that make sense and meet regulatory hurdles, but I don’t see that door being flung wide open.”

Along these lines, Giordano says many lawn care companies are seeing their customers become more conscientious of the products used on their lawns and landscapes and demand more responsibility and accountability when it comes to environmental stewardship. Because of this trend, LCOs may consider how to communicate the benefits and features of new “ecofriendly” active ingredients. As biologicals and alternative options for disease control continue to play a role in management programs, Giordano adds that customer expectations will likely need to be adjusted because these products often don’t deliver the same efficacy that their synthetic counterparts do, particularly when it comes to spectrum and duration of control.

“We’re heavily invested in research on biological solutions for the green industry and will continue to innovate in this space for years to come,” he says. “This is particularly important given the reality of losing some trusted tools and older chemistries to regulatory and local ordinance restrictions in the lawn care segment.”

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

## FUNGICIDES IN THE FIELD

Caleb Ault, owner of UltraGreen in Little Rock, Ark., offers fungicide treatments as part of his lawn care program. When purchasing his fungicides, Ault looks for products that offer broad-spectrum control so he can treat as many different diseases as possible. In addition to traditional fungicides, Ault also uses Holganix, an organic, plant-based product that incorporates soil microbes, microbe food and nutrient enhancers to build resilient plants and healthier soils in his lawn care program. For Ault, this process is an “insurance policy” for his customers because his ultimate goal is to improve the overall health of the soil to eradicate and prevent diseases in the long term. UltraGreen is a \$3.2-million company that provides 78 percent lawn care and 22 percent other services to a 98 percent residential clientele.

“Fungicides are great and they do work—but they are more about a temporary fix. You have to apply them month after month, year after year,” Ault says. “We want to try to make the soil healthy, get the pH right and give the turf an opportunity to recover. It’s a process and it’s a challenge to deal with disease.”

While fungicides are a critical component to his lawn care program, Ault says the products are often misunderstood by the average lawn care customer. Selling fungicide services can be difficult because of the need to apply the product every three to four weeks, depending on the situation.

“Selling a fungicide as a ‘cure all’ is a misconception that’s hard to overcome,” Ault says. “The chemical manufacturers do a good job of educating, but more educational pieces for homeowners about why this product is only going to work for 15 to 21 days and why we have to perform multiple applications would be helpful.”



## MOWING+LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

**CUT BACK**  
Serpico is reaping the benefits of trimming low-margin accounts from its portfolio.

# Making the most

**Serpico Landscaping is taking a different approach to the workforce shortage by reallocating labor from low-margin accounts to more profitable work.**

BY MARISA PALMIERI



**B**ased in the San Francisco Bay Area, Serpico Landscaping has struggled to hire people—due in part to the region's economic growth that has created some of the highest wages in the country. President Peter Novak says hiring and retention have been challenging for many years, but the struggle has intensified over the last several years.



Peter Novak

“Demand has driven wages way up,” he says, noting the company pays \$16-\$17 per hour for even an entry-level laborer. “Eventually, even if you do all the normal things for recruiting, you still tap out.”

The Hayward, Calif.-based company's business is 64 percent mowing and landscape maintenance, 20 percent design/

build and installation, 9 percent irrigation and 7 percent tree care.

Last fall when planning for 2018, Novak and his management team decided to stop fighting the tough labor environment and embrace it instead. Rather than continually adding new accounts, expanding their footprint and offering more services, they decided to focus elsewhere—on improving their profitability.

“After reviewing gross margins on our accounts, we saw there was an opportunity to do some hard pruning and to prune out the low-margin accounts, remove them from our portfolio and reallocate that labor toward higher-margin work,” Novak says.

The goal is to improve the overall profitability of the company. The by-product of this effort is “finding” workers among the people the company already employs.

The management team decided it would “take the hit” and terminate several undesirable accounts from each of its four locations in March, then gradually add back more profitable accounts over the course of the year.

Serpico, which did \$10.6 million in 2017, expects to grow about 6 percent in 2018, even with the strategic revenue reduction in March.

### HOW THEY DID IT

There are two reasons to terminate accounts, in Novak's view.

“No. 1, if it's a toxic account or No. 2, if the margins are very low and we could reallocate the labor and be instantaneously more profitable,” he says.

For its maintenance accounts, Serpico has contracts with 30- or 60-day termination clauses, so the company told the clients it was dropping in January

## NEWSFEED

### PERC'S INCENTIVE PROGRAM

The Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) added 69 mower models to the

list of OEM dealer-converted units eligible for the Propane Mower Incentive Program. The program offers up to

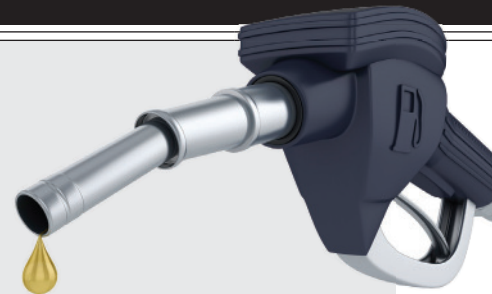
\$1,000 for each approved OEM dealer-converted unit or dedicated propane mower and \$500 for each qualified propane mower conversion kit. New additions include

zero-turn, stand-on and walk-behind models from Ferris Mowers, Snapper Pro and Bradley Mowers.

**ECHO ADDS TO X-SERIES LINE**  
Echo expanded its X-

Series line with the addition of two new products: the BRD-2620 bed redefiner and PPF-2620 power pruner. Both products will be moving into the dealer network soon, Echo said.





## Fuel solution

One shift Serpico Landscaping made several years back increased service time and prevented employees from being poached by competitors.

"People would walk up to them at the gas station and say, 'We have an open position and if you show up tomorrow, we'll pay you a dollar more an hour than what you're making,'" President Peter Novak says.

The change? The company stopped sending crews to gas stations and instead hired a mobile fueling company that tops off all vehicles and gas containers on-site several times a week.

The main reason for the change was the result of a study Serpico's management team did on nonproductive time. It measured the time employees spent driving to the gas station, filling up and getting drinks and snacks every morning for several months.

The average was 30 minutes or more of nonproductive time spend fueling up per route per week.

"If there are two or three guys in a truck, you can do the math," Novak says. "It adds up fast when you have 80 crews."

By hiring the mobile fueling firm, Serpico's cost of fuel remained flat, but there was a big savings realized in the time reinvested back into the routes and a reduction in employees being approached at gas stations by competitors, he says.

and February that their contracts would end in March.

Prior to doing so, the management team worked with branch managers and account managers to identify which accounts they would let go.

"Once we briefed them on our intentions, they were able to kick their ideas over to us, and we did an analysis to prove which were the lowest-margin accounts," Novak says. "Involving them in that process got their buy-in and got them ready when the time came to reallocate the labor."

It's still early, but the results have been good so far, Novak says.

While this tactic hasn't solved the company's labor challenge 100 percent, the company did free up several full-time equivalent employees in each location, relieving the pressure to hire in the busy spring.

"I'm not sensing the team is having many of the same stresses as other years," he says. "Those folks were already here and working for us. We didn't need to recruit for them."

Additionally, they didn't have to onboard or train them.

"We didn't need to do any of those initial things you'd do with a new recruit," he says. "It's as simple as making a scheduling change."

The process also required setting parameters for future maintenance account sales. Novak set a target gross margin range the company must achieve on new maintenance work the team bids.

"It's really about whether a property is right for us," he says. "We know who we are and what we do, so it's about finding our target client who is going to be a good partner with us."

### ADVICE FOR OTHERS

When it comes down to it, landscape


companies should be in business to be profitable, Novak says.

"Low bidding accounts at a zero margin or at a loss just to get market share—I don't know that that's going to be a winning strategy for anybody out here," he says. "I encourage anybody looking to maximize the efficiency of the talent they have on board to measure their maintenance accounts."

Maintenance accounts are like an annuity, he points out, but that's only a good thing if they're sold at a good margin.

"Know the gross margins for all maintenance accounts," he says. "That means knowing labor, revenue and materials for each account."

Though Serpico's labor reallocation has been focused on maintenance, Novak says this approach can apply to any kind of landscape work—irrigation, enhancements, tree work and more.

"The No. 1 expense is labor, No. 2 is most likely fuel and No. 3 is materials and debris or refuse costs," he says. "Anybody who's in this business and not paying attention to those things is probably not going to be in business for long." 



### LOWER STRESS

Serpico's labor reallocation relieved some of the pressure that comes with hiring during the busy season.



## DESIGN/BUILD+INSTALLATION

# Family matters

**K&D Landscaping strives for a successful generational transition.** BY SARAH WEBB



**A**s children, the White siblings—Justin, Shane and Kelsie—weren't sure they wanted to take over K&D Landscaping. Their parents, Kendall and Dawn, started the company in 1986, expecting it to be little more than a side venture.

"We all had different ideas of what we wanted to do when we grew up," Justin White says. "We grew up on a farm and were very active in 4-H and raising animals."

Now, the three siblings hold leading roles within the company: Justin as

CEO, Shane as COO and Kelsie as vice president of marketing and social media.

Why the change of heart? "As we got into high school, we started to work for my father in the summer," Justin White says. "For me, I started to fall in love with landscaping and transforming someone's yard or business property from weeds to a beautifully landscaped place."

With Justin and Shane at the helm, the Watsonville, Calif.-based company has grown from about \$1.5 million in 2011 to \$5.5 million in 2017. "Our purpose is to raise the bar in the landscaping

industry," Justin White says. "We ask, 'If K&D disappeared tomorrow, what would be missing from the industry?'"

K&D offers 20 percent maintenance, 70 percent design/build, 5 percent irrigation and 5 percent tree services to a 60 percent commercial, 10 percent residential and 30 percent governmental clientele.

### KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

Kendall White still works full time for the company as president, but he's taken on more of a supporting role since Justin White became COO in 2011, then CEO in 2015. Dawn White retired in 2015.

Kendall White was supportive of his children entering the company, but he didn't hand it over haphazardly. Justin White says his father expected him and his brother to start from the bottom as laborers, then foremen, before working up to management.

Once they made it to management, Justin White says determining roles came naturally.

"My dad did a good job of helping us get into roles that catered to our natural strengths," he says. "I become more of the visionary, while Shane took on more of the operations and execution mindset. The main thing is it's all give and take. You've got to let people make decisions



Every K&D Landscaping employee undergoes rigorous application and training processes.

## NEWSFEED

### NALP AWARD ENTRIES

The National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) is now accepting entries

for its 2018 Awards of Excellence program. The early bird deadline is July 1, and the regular deadline is

Aug. 6; entry fees are \$399 and \$499 per each submission, respectively.

### JD EXTENDS WARRANTY

John Deere extended its machine warranty

on all Commercial Worksite products from one year to two years. This coverage includes new compact track loaders, skid-steer loaders, compact wheel loaders and

compact excavators. The standard warranty now promises that Deere will fix any defects in materials or workmanship for two years after delivery or 2,000 hours.





#### FAMILY FOCUS

All three White siblings have some hand in K&D Landscaping. From left to right: Justin, Shane and Kelsie White.

and trust each other.”

Nonetheless, the White brothers understood that working with family comes

with its own set of challenges. In 2015, they enlisted the help of a business coach who specializes in family-operated companies.

The brothers meet separately with the business coach for an hour each week. They meet together with the coach once a quarter for a two-day planning session.

Justin White says that any time he and his brother don't see eye to eye on a business matter, they'll call on their coach to step in and mediate.

“Our coach usually helps us see it from a different perspective and helps us get through the more challenging decisions,” Justin White says.

#### BUMPS ALONG THE WAY

Despite K&D's current success, the company encountered several challenges along the way.

For example, the 2008 recession forced K&D to drop down to a skeleton crew and subsist on public works projects—until the government's public works funds also dried up in 2010.

The low point came when the company dropped down to about \$1 million in 2010 from \$1.5 million in prerecession 2007.

Justin White says the company's saving grace during that low period was its maintenance work, which generated enough revenue to cover fixed monthly costs.

“It's been a business model for us,” he says. “Now it's a matter of being diversified and not getting any more than 25 percent of our revenue from any one sector of the market. Right now, we're really pushing maintenance, but it's a bit of a concern because we're going so heavy in the design/build.”

Even though 70 percent of K&D's revenue currently stems from the design/build sector, Justin White says he feels more comfortable knowing it's broken up between residential, commercial and government accounts.

Like many other landscape companies, Justin White says K&D struggles with finding and retaining the right people.

“We're looking for people whose purpose is to service and enhance other people's lives,” Justin White says. “We're looking for people who are going to come in and love what they do.”

To ensure applicants will be a good fit, K&D vets them during a thorough selection process. The company gives applicants a behavioral analysis test, performs background checks and calls at least two references.

For the behavior analysis, the company benchmarks applicants' answers against those of its top 10 employees, who were also asked to take the test. K&D has tried out multiple behavioral tests but has yet to settle on one ideal assessment, Justin White says.

Upon hiring, new employees undergo rigorous training.

Each new hire has 90 days to work with his supervisor to check off 50 items on a training checklist. The items include equipment training, installation techniques, vehicle operation and filling out paperwork.

“We put it on our newer employees' shoulders to go out and learn this stuff,” Justin White says.

K&D also attempts to create a family atmosphere, he says. If that's not enough, it also pays employees what Justin White says is 20 percent more than the competition.

#### BRINGING IT FULL CIRCLE

Despite the challenges, K&D has managed to double its revenue every year for the past three years. Looking forward, Justin White says the plan is to grow the company to \$7.5 million in 2018 and to \$30 million in 2030.

## Goodwill marketing

Each month, K&D Landscaping volunteers time and resources to beautify a nonprofit organization within the community.

“It's given us a lot of satisfaction to give back to the community that's supported our company for the last 30 years. It's also given us a lot of exposure,” says K&D Landscaping CEO Justin White. He adds that 80 percent of K&D's workflow stems from referrals.

The beautification campaign began in January 2017 when the company volunteered at a local church.

K&D spends about 2 percent of its annual revenue on marketing. The beautification efforts account for a large chunk of those dollars.

The company promotes the projects on Facebook and asks people to vote for a nonprofit whose landscaping could use a face-lift.

Once an organization is selected, K&D donates \$1,500 to \$2,000 toward the project and sends an entire crew to the site for a full eight hours.

To help support the beautification campaign, the company also receives donated materials from its suppliers, which include Ewing Irrigation and Vision Recycling.



**GIVING BACK**  
K&D Landscaping crews beautify a school in Watsonville, Calif.



“One of my other long-term goals is to become a case study for how to successfully transition a company from its founder to the second generation,” he says. “I hope to bring this full circle within the next 10 years.”



## IRRIGATION+WATER MANAGEMENT

# From start to finish

Proper irrigation startups and shutdowns are important for ensuring your clients' systems run smoothly.

BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER

For an irrigation system to run properly throughout the warm summer months, it's important that it's turned on and off correctly at the beginning and end of each season. No one knows this better than Tom Horn, president of All-n-One Outdoor Solutions in Jefferson City, Mo., and a trainer for Rain Bird.

"The importance of a proper turn-on is to make sure there are no leaks, that the coverage is giving proper distribution uniformity and that the controller is set properly," says Horn, whose \$1.5-million company offers 70 percent irrigation services, 20 percent lawn maintenance services



### SMOOTH START

Successful irrigation startups require patient technicians who check every head.

and 10 percent lighting services to a 65 percent residential, 35 percent commercial clientele. "The winterization is important to make sure the piping and all other components are not damaged due to freezing water."

Horn says in the Midwest, irrigation system startups typically begin in mid-March or after the last frost. Shutdowns should be completed no later than mid-to-late October, or by the first of October in northern states, to prevent damage to pumps. Backflow-type systems are more tolerant of freezing temperatures, so shutdowns can take place closer to late November, he adds.

For Horn, knowledge and experience are crucial for contractors performing irrigation system startups and shutdowns. He recommends all technicians—especially those new to the field—receive best practices training before each season begins.

"I encourage my service techs to be patient and to test and touch each head," he says. "If contractors physically go to each head, observe it and make sure it's working properly, that ensures the customer is getting a quality activation startup and shutdown."

Horn recommends the following steps for proper irrigation system startups and shutdowns.

**KNOW-HOW**  
Technicians should receive training on best practices before the start of each season.

## NEWSPEED

### SITEONE CONTEST

SiteOne Landscape Supply is teaming up with Hunter Industries and FX Luminaire to

give away a pro fishing experience. Landscape contractors who purchase Hunter and FX Luminaire products at

SiteOne locations from June 1 through Aug. 10 automatically receive an entry to win the chance to compete in a Pro-Am Tournament during the 2018 Toyota Bassmaster Angler of

the Year Championship, which will take place Sept. 20-23.

### SMART LOGIC COMPATIBILITY

Toro's SMART Logic is now compatible with Google Home and

Amazon Alexa devices. SMART Logic enables customers to control their irrigation, outdoor landscape lighting and other landscape features via a smartphone, tablet or computer.



## SYSTEM STARTUPS


- ✓ **1.** Turn on and test the backflow preventer.
- ✓ **2.** Verify that the mainline pressurizes and stabilizes. Flush the mainline for five minutes to clear any debris that may have accumulated while the system was shut down.
- ✓ **3.** Turn on the irrigation controller and do a test of each active irrigation zone. Run each zone for at least three minutes to allow rotors time to do a full rotation. Observe the pattern each irrigation head is covering and verify that the nozzle is not obstructed or damaged. Also look for leaking around the wiper seal of the stem.
- ✓ **4.** Check the controller settings and schedule to ensure it's set correctly for the time of year. Check that any sensors (rain, soil or flow) are working properly.
- ✓ **5.** Look for any landscape plants that may be blocking the pattern of the irrigation heads due to growth.
- ✓ **6.** Consider the age of the system, how long it has been installed and the efficiency of its components. Make recommendations on what the cost benefits would be if the components were upgraded to higher-efficiency versions.
- ✓ **7.** If working with a pump system that uses a centrifugal pump for the water supply, prime and test the pump systems. Flush the lines to remove any algae buildup.

## SYSTEM SHUTDOWNS

- ✓ **1.** Turn off the water supply to the irrigation system.
- ✓ **2.** Turn on a zone to open the control valve to allow the water to be purged.

- ✓ **3.** Connect the air compressor line to the mainline, usually at the backflow preventer or pump. Pressure at the air compressor should be regulated around 60-70 psi. Do not blow high pressure air through the backflow preventer; it can damage the internal check valves of the device.
- ✓ **4.** Observe the water coming out of the irrigation heads until a slight mist or fogging occurs, and then move to the next station or zone. Be aware that the compressed air is extremely hot and can cause damage to valves if continued for long periods of time.
- ✓ **5.** After all the lines are cleared, turn off the air.

- ✓ **6.** Turn off the controller.

- ✓ **7.** If the controller is exposed to cold weather during the off-season, leave it plugged in to allow the LCD display to maintain current through it. The LCD display may be damaged if the controller is unplugged.
- ✓ **8.** If a pump is being used, make sure the pump is drained and the suction line and foot valve are removed. Disconnect power to the pump. 



Tom Horn

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

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# PEOPLE POWER

The Greenery CEO **Lee Edwards** shares his 45-year-old company's secret to success: empowering employees.

BY **ABBY HART** | LM MANAGING EDITOR

**Hilton Head Island, S.C., conjures up thoughts of relaxing getaways at coastal resorts on beautiful beaches.**

**For The Greenery's CEO, Lee Edwards, Hilton Head Island has been about the people and the relationships that have helped his company grow from a small family business with six employees to where it is today—a company that is poised to make \$65 million.**

The Greenery is celebrating its 45th anniversary this year as well as its 10th year under an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP). Under this plan, the company's 806 full-time employees share in the growth of the \$65-million business.

"We're in our second generation of ownership, and it's been 10 years of success now, so that's something we're very excited about," Edwards says.

## A LOOK BACK

Ruthie and Berry Edwards started The Greenery in 1973 with the purchase of a small nursery retail space on Hilton Head Island.

"The 1970s and early 1980s was when Hilton Head was really being developed a lot," Edwards says. Resorts began dotting the coast, and Edwards' parents saw the need for a landscape company in the booming vacation community—and the opportunity to scale up and meet that demand.

Today, the company has grown to 14 branches, completing both commercial and residential maintenance and construction, on the

coast of South Carolina and in Savannah, Ga. The company still operates a retail center on Hilton Head, and it does \$1.7 million in business.

When The Greenery was just starting out, Berry Edwards hired a few landscape architects, who then built relationships with the developers of some of the local resorts.

The large resort clients and residential communities in South Carolina have proven to be lucrative relationships for The Greenery and have been clients for years.

The mid-1990s saw increased development off of Hilton Head. Sun City was an age-restricted retirement community consisting of 8,000 homes, which spurred other development on the island. The Greenery was a part of the Sun City development from the beginning and to this day covers maintenance for the 14,000-acre community.

The Greenery added other residential communities to its construction and maintenance roster, such as the 2,600-acre Savannah Quarters, which includes 1,000 residences and even larger communities, such





Lee Edwards, CEO  
The Greenery,  
Hilton Head  
Island, S.C.

as Daniel Island and the 20,000-acre Palmetto Bluff project.

Part of maintaining these major relationships over the years is being flexible and collaborative, especially when some of its long-standing clients experienced some financial problems.

Edwards says that during the 2008 recession, a few of The Greenery's clients, including Savannah Quarters, explained that their accounts would have to go up for bid.

"We said, 'Wait, wait, wait—we've been here with you through the good times, and we'll be here for you in the bad times. Let's figure out what your budget is and we'll figure out a way to meet it,'" he says.

*Continued on page 31*

## BUSINESS BREAKDOWN

**COMPANY:** The Greenery

**HEADQUARTERS:** Hilton Head Island, S.C.

**BRANCHES:** Hilton Head Island, S.C. (3 branches - including a retail garden center); Hardeeville, S.C. (2 branches); Palmetto Bluff, S.C.; Sun City/Bluffton, S.C.; Charleston, S.C. (3 branches), North Charleston, S.C.; Beaufort, S.C.; Seabrook/Kiawah Island, S.C.; Savannah, Ga.

**FOUNDED:** 1973

**REVENUE:** \$62.6 million (2017); \$65 million (projected for 2018)

**SERVICE MIX:** 78% mowing+landscape maintenance, 19% design/build+installation, 3% turf+ornamental care

**CLIENT MIX:** 90% commercial; 10% residential



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— ENGINES —







*Continued from page 29*

The Greenery went to its other clients with the same message, and Edwards says those clients appreciated the proactive gesture.

Unfortunately, Edwards' company hasn't been immune to economic downturns either.

"The same goes for those relationships within our company," he says. "(During the 2008 recession), we had to go to people—and long-term people who'd been doing a great job—and say, 'Hey, we have to tighten up our belts, we all have to take a pay cut or we need to reduce costs or reduce benefits.'"

The company also moved staff around to different departments. Though it wasn't welcome news that company-wide pay cuts and changes were on the horizon, Edwards says people were thankful they still had jobs, and The Greenery lost very few team members during the recession.

## TAKING OWNERSHIP

As Berry Edwards approached retirement, he began to look for a way to reward his team, especially those who had remained loyal when times were tough. Establishing The Greenery as an ESOP helped accomplish this goal.

The company began the process of becoming an ESOP in 2003 and completed it in 2007.

"If people own a part of something or have a stake in it, they'll do a better job," Edwards

says. "They'll work harder, they'll work smarter and they'll treat it like they own it—they'll take better care of the equipment, they'll take better care of their clients."

The employee-owners are aware of the stock price and have been motivated by seeing the price go up year after year. "It's

gone up every single year, even during the recession. That's not easy," Edwards says.

In addition to employee stock ownership, The Greenery matches 401(k) with company stock. For every dollar that employees put in, up to 3 percent of their salaries, they get a dollar of stock. The next 2 percent is matched 50 cents on the dollar.

"We've had some phenomenal growth in the last 10 years, and really a lot of it is due to us being an ESOP company," says Bill Davoli, The Greenery's COO.

*Continued on page 32*

### OWNING IT

The Greenery is 100 percent employee-owned and also matches 401(k) with company stock.

**"IF PEOPLE OWN SOMETHING OR HAVE A STAKE IN IT, THEY'LL DO A BETTER JOB... THEY'LL TAKE BETTER CARE OF THEIR CLIENTS."**

—LEE EDWARDS

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*Continued from page 31*

In fact, Davoli says that's what appealed to him when he came to The Greenery in 2008, from his position as manager for ValleyCrest in Charleston, S.C.

With a background in management companies, landscape company mergers and acquisitions, and owning his own landscape company in Florida, Davoli has seen the industry from all sides.

"The Greenery being an employee-owned ESOP company is probably the best structure for our industry," he says. "We don't have a third party or a private equity fund that we need to worry about making certain earnings per quarter, or driving our share price or giving out dividends."

Davoli says that the ESOP is the company's No. 1 recruiting tool and notes that the ownership interest makes employees more likely to stay with the company.

"You have to do more than just provide a strong compensation plan to retain good employees," he says.

## RETHINKING RESIDENTIAL + LABOR

Ninety percent of The Greenery's business is commercial, but it's the residential side of the business that is unique. It caters to 700 residential clients on Hilton Head Island and 140 in nearby Palmetto Bluff and will bring in approximately \$5 million this year.

Residential is challenging, Edwards acknowledges. He credits the company's ability to scale residential to his team providing a superior quality of work and creating good relationships with clients.

A significant change was made to the residential production process over the last year.

"We used to have an account manager do everything—he was the client's sole contact, and he would deal with the crew—and the enhancement crew, the irrigation guy and the chem guy, and so on," Edwards says.

Finding account managers who were up to the task of communicating with clients as well as training and managing field crews was difficult. And what if the account



### SMART GROWTH

The Greenery looks to keep growing by 5 percent yearly, while remaining profitable.

manager left the company, was promoted or changed roles?

Then a new employee would face the steep learning curve of becoming acquainted with new properties, clients and crews.

Over the last year, The Greenery has moved to hiring account managers whose focus is the client and production managers who are in charge of training and managing the crews. The account managers and production managers work in tandem to ensure that clients' needs are properly communicated and their jobs well executed.

"We've been fine-tuning (this process), and we're finding it's humming along fairly nicely now," Edwards says. "We've seen other companies do this on the commercial end. We've found that if there's a change, there's not quite as much disruption."

Aside from this strategic change in the production structure, the company has gotten creative in other areas. When it comes to filling out its staff, rather than using the H-2B visa program, like many large landscape firms, The Greenery began recruiting in Puerto Rico three years ago.

The company stopped using the H-2B program in 2008. "The program had already become unreliable, overly burdensome and obviously headed for further deterioration," Davoli says. "I didn't want our company's most critical resource to be dependent on something we could not control. So, we invested in developing alternative solutions."

Since Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory, Puerto Ricans are American citizens and don't require visas to work in the U.S.

The company recruits in Puerto Rico independently. It repays the cost of airfare to South Carolina for workers and provides housing for the first six months of their employment.

### WEB EXTRA

Find out other ways The Greenery is diversifying its recruitment efforts and attracting top talent. Visit the Web Extras section at [LandscapeManagement.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net).



### OUTSIDE THE BOX

The Greenery has changed its hiring practices and recruits new workers from Puerto Rico.





"In fact, on Hilton Head, where the housing market is so difficult, we actually went and bought a bunch of condominiums so they can live there. We take care of the housing and transportation," Davoli says.

According to Davoli, the Puerto Rico recruitment has proven to be very successful, and the new crew members have been beneficial to the team.

Since the beginning of the recruitment program, Davoli estimates that 75-80 out of 120 total workers have remained with the company.

"We've had a lot of guys that have come here thinking they might want to be seasonal, but they end up staying and working for us permanently," he says. Most of the new workers typically move out on their own after six months and bring their families from Puerto Rico to live with them.

## FUTURE GROWTH

With The Greenery's commercial sector thriving, a solid residential maintenance division and strategic plans for hiring workers in place, Edwards is looking ahead to the future.

The company has been growing at a 7 percent clip, but Edwards hopes that it grows at 5 percent per year moving forward. This would allow The Greenery to achieve manageable and sustainable growth, without growing beyond its capabilities and becoming less profitable.

He says the company likes being on the coast of South Carolina, but would like to open another branch outside of its current footprint in the next few years. The ultimate goal would be to eventually cover the whole state.

Aside from expansion and ensuring the company remains profitable for its employee-owners, The Greenery's purpose statement drives the work and the team. "Enhancing people's lives through beautiful landscaping—that's why we do what do," Edwards says.

The core of that purpose statement means that the people behind The Greenery work for themselves, each other and their clients.

"You've got to engage these people and pat them on the back when they need it and show them what they're doing: Going out and creating beautiful landscaping and making people happy," Edwards says. "That's a noble cause." 🌿

## Equipped for success

The Greenery's growth and emphasis on profitability has brought about changes in other areas of the business, such as equipment.

Formerly relying on ride-on lawn mowers, the company has made the switch to stand-on models. "It gives the guys the ability to get on and off and pick up trash," says Bill Davoli, The Greenery's COO. "I think it's a more productive mower."

He says that the stand-on mower gives workers a better perspective on their production and provides a better-looking cut. Over the course of three years, The Greenery has switched out almost all of its ride-on mowers to Wright X Series stand-ons.

The company also has changed its trucks. "We used to use all Ford F250 pickup trucks and now we're rolling out all four-door F350s as the production truck, and they actually support the hauling capacity (better)," says Davoli.

"We've also changed a lot of our high-end resorts and high-end (property owners' associations) to all battery-powered, hand-held equipment—that includes blowers, line trimmers, edgers, shears," he says. "We've completely changed those out where now the only gas-powered equipment is the actual production mower."

According to Davoli, the switch to Stihl battery-powered equipment has been an additional change that's been beneficial for workers and customers.

"The clients love the fact that it's not as noisy," he says. "That's a big plus and a sales tool. Our guys like it because it's actually less taxing. It's a slightly lighter piece of equipment because the battery is on your back, so you're holding a lighter piece of equipment when you're doing the work. We've found that we've increased production and client satisfaction by going to those."

"And you save gas," he says. "Battery charge is a whole lot cheaper than buying fuel for your equipment."



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## MAGNETIC APPEAL



Mel Kleiman shares how to attract—and retain—the best of the best.

 **PAGE 36**



# Be a magnetic employer



**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).

**U**nemployment is at record lows, and there are more jobs available than there are people to fill them. Given this scenario, it's no surprise that the most pressing concern for business owners and managers nationwide right now is how to find the new hires they need and keep the good people they have.

So, how can forward-thinking employers successfully compete for the best employees in this challenging environment?

A few exemplary organizations have shown the way. Costco, Google and REI are just a few well-documented examples, but there are innumerable smaller, regional, entrepreneurial endeavors as well. Besides their success, they all have one thing in common—and it's not paying top dollar.

These employers attach unusual significance to the hiring process. They carefully assess the traits a person needs to be successful in

**“Magnetic companies have carefully constructed an image that naturally attracts the best.”**

the position and determine which traits can be taught and which cannot. Because of this, attitudes and personality traits are more highly valued than education and experience. In other words, the emphasis is on how people think, not what they know.

These “magnetic companies” have carefully constructed an image that naturally attracts the best people. Commonly, the perception is that the work will be fun or challenging—or both—and that management respects, rewards and empowers employees.


Magnetic companies use specific systems and procedures to ensure they attract, select and retain the best—and repel the rest. And if they

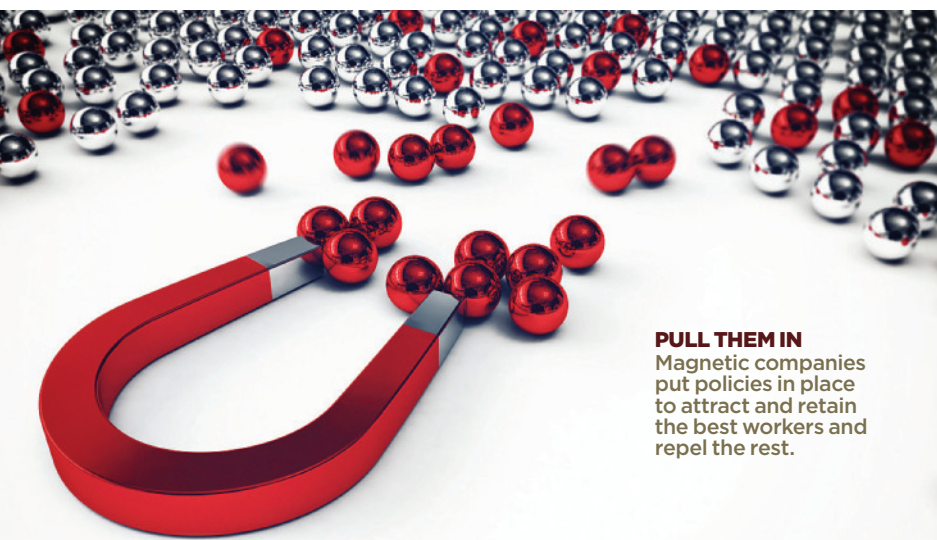
do make a hiring mistake, they fix it immediately. They do not tolerate mediocrity.

The systems they use also ensure their jobs are easy to apply for, but tough to get. These firms don't just put out the “now hiring” sign and hope for the best. Because they recognize that almost all the good people who want to work are working, many companies have installed 24-hour job hotlines and online application forms so working people can apply at their convenience. Many conduct interviews on weekends or after hours. Never satisfied, they're always looking for better ways to make it easy to apply, and they never stop recruiting—even when they don't need new hires—because they know they will someday soon.

Magnetic companies make their jobs tough to get. They know exactly what they need in terms of mental and physical capacities, attitudes, personality traits and skills—and they never lower the bar. Whenever possible, these firms hire for attitude and train for skills. If they can teach someone with the right attitude, they'll hire that person over another who already has skills but who also has an attitude problem.

Tough hiring standards also minimize turnover, so magnetic companies are able to consistently deliver quality customer service, decrease hiring expenses and compete effectively on the basis of service, not just price.

Can your company become magnetic? Absolutely. It doesn't require extraordinary spending or even a lot of time—once you have a system in place. All it really takes is some planning, commitment and follow-through. 



**PULL THEM IN**  
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# GDPR, data protection and your landscape company



**BY SHAUN KANARY**

The author is director of demand generation for Kuno Creative, a digital marketing agency. A green industry veteran, he's also an adjunct professor of marketing at Baldwin Wallace University. Reach him at skanary@gmail.com.

**F**or those old enough to remember Y2K, and the worry that came along with it, the recent buzz around the General Data Protection Regulation Act (GDPR) and Facebook's Cambridge Analytica scandal may have you feeling a bit of déjà vu. While we made it through 2000 without our computers coming alive and terminating us, the recent changes to the GDPR—and data protection in general—can hurt our companies if ignored.

## DATA SECURITY IN THE CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICA ERA

With the recent scandals that have rocked Facebook to its core, data security has become a hot topic as consumers and governments look to protect individuals. For the most part, the internet has been considered the “Wild West,” a harsh frontier with few rules and reckless companies running rampant.

Protecting consumers' personal data has become increasingly complicated over the past several years with platforms developing different methods to collect consumer data. Some platforms such as Facebook have even allowed third-party applications to

collect data on consumers, as well as people they're connected to. In 2018, data collection has become big business, with “data mining” firms making a fortune collecting your behaviors, interests and other information to sell to marketers on the internet.

## THE GDPR: EUROPE'S ANSWER TO DATA PROTECTION

The GDPR is a European Union law protecting people from companies collecting and misusing their data. Even though the GDPR is a European law, all companies worldwide that handle the data of European Union consumers must adhere to its strict rules and regulations. These include but are not limited to:

- Deleting consumer data when an individual no longer wants a given company to have it;
- Prohibiting third-party companies and applications from handling a company's consumer data; and
- Notifying website users if tracking “cookies” are being used and giving them an option to prevent this.

## WHY YOUR (U.S.) BUSINESS SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE GDPR

The GDPR was enacted in Europe, but it won't be long before similar laws are passed in the U.S. Data protection is a matter every company with a website or social presence should be concerned about. Here are three ways your green industry company can protect itself and the data of your customers:

- **Review and update your security measures and policy.**


Disclaimer: I am not a lawyer. It's important that you review your

company's data security policy and procedures with a lawyer, making sure that the way you store your consumers' data is compliant with current laws. Every time you collect information from consumers—whether it's an email or credit card number—you put your business at risk if this information is misused or stolen. Furthermore, if you are planning to run digital ads, a privacy policy is a must for several platforms before you can even start.

- **Make your website and emails “permission based” and transparent.**

Collecting data in forms on your website and sending email campaign blasts may not seem like a big deal. However, under the GDPR, consent needs to be explicit, clear and specific. In a sense, your forms and emails need to be permission based, letting consumers know exactly how you intend to use their data and whether you plan to send them emails for advertising purposes.

- **Update your privacy and data policy online, allowing consumers to see it.**

A privacy policy should be a staple of every website, and updating an older policy to account for the GDPR is a must. A quick Google search will show hundreds of results for free templates, but each privacy policy should be reviewed with an attorney and customized to your specific needs. Work with your staff to ensure they understand how to properly store consumer data, as well as how to properly remove it if asked by a customer. 





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**CASE STUDY: OUR WAY**

# Ideas galore

A “Shark Tank”-style event helped one company generate innovative ideas and get buy-in from the team. **BY CASEY PAYTON**



**T**he team at Timberline Landscaping in Colorado Springs, Colo., created an in-person opportunity for employees to pitch ideas to help the company grow strategically.

Sound familiar? The company modeled the initiative after the hit TV show “Shark Tank,” on which entrepreneurs pitch their business ideas to celebrity business people in an effort to get them to sign on as investors.

At Timberline, the ideas were so good that the company had a difficult time narrowing them down to the ones they wanted to implement, according to Stephanie Early, Timberline’s chief strategic officer.

The “Shark Tank” concept came about after Timberline partnered with a consulting firm, on a yearlong strategic planning journey. Early says Timberline’s management team sought a way to involve team members from all levels of the company in the process of idea generation and execution.

The company hosted a leadership training meeting that lasted several days. Team members learned about strategic planning and strategic and innovative thinking, Early says. The leadership training was offered for leadmen on up. Eighty Timberline employees participated in the session.

“The three days of training wrapped up with our ‘Shark Tank’ presentation in which everyone had a chance to present ideas on ways they’d like to see the company grow,” Early says. Some ideas related to company culture,

others touched on sales and some addressed productivity.

After all 30 concepts were shared, a blind, companywide vote was taken to reduce them down to the six ideas that would be presented before the five C-suite executives—also known as the “sharks.”

From there, the C-suite executives selected four initiatives to pursue.

The four ideas chosen include a Spanish/English culture initiative that would focus on better integration of the Spanish-speaking crew members (with English classes as an option); the creation of the company’s own material yard; a production team focused on efficiency strategy; and “Timberline You-niversity,” the company’s training initiative, which focuses on building a career pathway for company team members.

After the C-suite selected the four initiatives, Early says the company took volunteers who were willing to help implement the ideas.

There are now four “Shark Tank” committees, one for each initiative chosen. The committees initially started meeting biweekly but have since scaled it back to monthly.

Early says crew members can leave the field to attend the committee sessions, which are typically held close to the end of the day.

At press time, the company was about to launch its first English class. About 35 people are signed up to take English classes—10 in an intermediate class and the rest in a beginner-level class. The class is geared toward landscape-related terms and basic conversational skills.

Though the company is still working on getting these initiatives underway, Early says the team is discussing making “Shark Tank” a regular occurrence—possibly as often as twice a year. She says it never hurts to generate new ideas. In fact, managers kept the list of the initial 30 ideas that were presented.

Early says the biggest investment for the “Shark Tank” initiative has been time, such as the three days of leadership and strategy training.

Her advice for a company looking to do something similar is to invest in its people. She says if Timberline’s management hadn’t involved employees in training that focused on how to think innovatively, the “Shark Tank” idea may not have been so successful.

Early also says it’s important to recognize that quality ideas come from anywhere—and it’s vital to include field staff in the efforts to implement them.

“By the time (employees) presented to us, they had all their ducks in a row,” Early says. “The ideas that came out of it were fantastic.”

**Timberline employees present new ideas and initiatives to management.**

Payton is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia.

## BUSINESS BREAKDOWN

**COMPANY:** Timberline Landscaping  
**HEADQUARTERS:** Colorado Springs, Colo.  
**EMPLOYEES:** 150  
**ANNUAL REVENUE:** \$15 million  
**CLIENT MIX:** 80% commercial, 20% residential  
**SERVICE MIX:** 65% design/build + installation, 35% maintenance



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## MOWER ATTACHMENTS + ACCESSORIES

### AERA-VATOR

**COMPANY:** Grasshopper Mower

**URL:** GrasshopperMower.com

The PTO-driven AERA-vator aerates and loosens compacted soil in one-quarter of the time, using one-quarter of the labor compared to walk-behind units, Grasshopper said. It eliminates cores and increases water absorption in the root zone. Oscillating steel tines deep fracture hard, dry soil to create a resilient surface and improve permeability and drainage, said the company.



### THATCH, GROOM 'N' SWEEP PACKAGE

**COMPANY:** TurfEx

**URL:** TurfExProducts.com

TurfEx's Thatch, Groom

'N' Sweep package is designed for zero-turn mowers.

The attachment can be converted from a sweeper to a dethatcher without the need for additional equipment. Available in both 48- and 60-in. widths (models MT480 and MT600, respectively), the attachment features a universal mount that fits the form of most major manufacturers' zero-turn mowers. It also includes two rows of brush sections, which can be replaced with spring-mounted tines to turn the sweeper into a dethatcher in minutes.



### VENTRAC BOOM MOWER

**COMPANY:**

Ventrac

**URL:** Ventrac.com

For use on Ventrac's 4500 front PTO tractor,



Ventrac's boom mower is connected to the front of the tractor. It's foldable, attaches or detaches easily, can operate on turf without damaging the surface and provides a 9-ft.-plus reach. The double-action, 3-ft., sickle bar cutting head can be operated in a vertical position. The machine can be used to mow steep ditches, reach under fences and guardrails, cut vegetation around water and trim hedges, shrubs and tree branches along trails, pathways or roads.



### GRANDSTAND POWERED BAGGER ATTACHMENT

**COMPANY:** The Toro Co.

**URL:** Toro.com

Compatible with the GrandStand and GrandStand Multi-Force stand-on mower product lines, Toro's powered bagger attachment features a 10-cu.-ft. capacity. The compact design of the side-mounted soft twin bagger and vertically mounted blower allow for easy maneuverability in tight spaces and maximum visibility. Additionally, the top cover of the bagger attachment opens easily for simple access to the bags, and the quick release design allows the operator to switch from bagging to side discharge.



### MICHELIN X TWEEL TURF AIRLESS RADIAL TIRE

**COMPANY:** John Deere

**URL:** Deere.com

The Michelin X Tweel Turf tires cut down on downtime and are nearly maintenance free, according to the company. Available as a stand-alone item or with new John Deere 900 Series ZTrak or R Series QuikTrak mowers, the tires offer greater performance, increased uptime and a lower cost of ownership, the company says. They also provide uniform cut quality, enhance operator comfort, increase productivity and minimize the cost and time spent on repairs and maintenance.







### **FERRIS SERVICE JACK ACCESSORY**

**COMPANY:** Ferris Mowers

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

Ferris' new jack accessory can lift up to 2,000 lbs. and provides a 15-in. maximum extension. It features a steel construction and durable powder coat. It has a fast lift rate with minimal crank force, and the adjustable receiver allows the jack to be easily removed or stored on a machine, according to Ferris. A pivoting foot keeps ground contact during lifts to ensure safe operation.



### **A38 SPYKER SPREADER MOUNT**

**COMPANY:** Walker Manufacturing Co.

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

Walker's A38 spreader mount allows contractors to mount a Spyker S80-12010 Pro-Series Spreader to a Walker mower. No tools are needed to secure the spreader to the carrier frame of the 42-, 48- or 52-in. gear-driven decks. The front mount position delivers precision performance while conveniently placing spreader controls within the operator's reach, according to Walker.



### **FOUR-STROKE OILS**

**COMPANY:** Husqvarna

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

Husqvarna's four-stroke oils can be used with commercial zero-turn and walk-behind mowers. Reformulated using high-quality base stocks, the four-stroke range provides enhanced viscosity retention and protection, easier starting, less oxidation and fewer deposits, resulting in less wear and longer engine life, according to Husqvarna. Made specifically for Husqvarna products, the formulations also deliver lower operating temperatures and greater detergency inside engines.



## **COMPACT EXCAVATORS**

### **TB235-2 COMPACT HYDRAULIC EXCAVATOR**

**COMPANY:** Takeuchi

**URL:** [Takeuchi-US.com](http://Takeuchi-US.com)

Takeuchi's TB235-2 is a 3.5-ton compact excavator with an operating weight of 7,474 lbs., a dig depth of 10 ft., 7.7 in., a maximum reach of 17 ft., 3 in. and a breakout force of 9,127 lbs. Additionally, the TB235-2 includes a 24.4-hp engine that requires no additional exhaust after-

treatment systems. The operator's station is spacious and features an automotive styled interior with a multiinformation display.



### **R-SERIES E85 COMPACT EXCAVATOR**

**COMPANY:** Bobcat Co.

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

The R-Series E85 excavator features a nondiesel particulate filter, turbocharged Doosan engine with increased horsepower and an integrated rear counterweight design that enhances the machine's stability. An optional automatic heating and air conditioning system provides complete control over the cab climate. Strengthened hinges and latches and more ridged and aligned panels reduce vibration in the cab. Additionally, the compact excavator offers increased floor space and additional glass surface area, including an improved top window and narrower side pillars for better visibility.





## U27-4 TIGHT TAIL SWING EXCAVATOR

**COMPANY:** Kubota

**URL:** KubotaUSA.com

Kubota's U27-4 features adjustable auxiliary flow hydraulics, an auxiliary diverter valve and two-speed automatic downshift travel. The powerful and well-balanced arm and bucket design allows the operator to dig faster, deeper and more efficiently, Kubota said. The machine provides a bucket digging force of 7,014 lbs. The large cab features a wide entrance, a lot of leg room, more floor space and a user-friendly front meter panel. An enclosed cab option with heat only is also available.



## 30G COMPACT EXCAVATOR



**COMPANY:** John Deere

**URL:** Deere.com

An updated version of John Deere's 27D model, the 30G compact excavator features increased lift capacity and improved breakout forces, according to John Deere. It includes a third service door, mechanical pattern changers and hand-controlled proportional auxiliary hydraulics. A solution in the three to four metric ton class, the 30G also features a 9-ft., 2-in. dig depth, quick couplers and proportional auxiliary hydraulics plumbed to the end of the boom. Aftertreatment is not necessary. Comfort components include heating and air conditioning, a new seat with adjustable wrist rests and foldable travel pedals.

## 45Z-1 ZERO TAIL SWING COMPACT EXCAVATOR

**COMPANY:** JCB

**URL:** JCB.com

JCB's 45Z-1 zero tail swing compact excavator features a transport weight of 9,700 lbs. and can be towed behind a pickup truck without a CDL (subject to local regulations). A 48-hp JCB by Kohler engine produces 166 ft-lbs of torque, and the upgraded hydraulic system delivers 8,542 lbs. of bucket breakout force and 4,945 lbs. of dipper breakout.



## CX30C COMPACT EXCAVATOR



**COMPANY:** Case Construction Equipment

**URL:** CaseCE.com

With an operating weight of 6,020 lbs. and a 24.8-hp Tier 4 Final engine, the CX30C compact excavator provides a bucket digging force of 4,520 lbs. The machine also features an adjustable boom offset for precision in congested areas. An auxiliary hydraulic system with standard proportional controls, a shut-off valve and easy-to-select joystick control patterns offer increased productivity, according to Case. The CX30C may be towed by a pickup, without the need for a CDL (subject to local regulation).



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Chevrolet.....	CV2-1
Cleveland Brothers .....	27
EcoLawn .....	46
Exmark .....	15
GIE+EXPO .....	7
Go iLawn.....	18
GPS Insight .....	37
Isuzu .....	CV4
John Deere .....	10
Kawasaki.....	30, 31
Kershaw & Lashus, P.C.....	Cover Tip*
Kifco .....	44
NaturaLawn .....	46
NE CAT Dealers .....	39*
National Association of Landscape Professionals .....	34, 39*
PBI-Gordon Corp.....	5
PermaGreen Supreme.....	13
Pike Creek Turf.....	46
Progressive Insurance.....	4
Project EverGreen.....	41
Quali-Pro .....	CV3
RISE .....	46
Turfcu.....	Bellyband*, 3

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# BACKSTORY

INTERVIEW BY SARAH WEBB



## Blake Shelton



**OWNER**  
**BLAKE SHELTON LANDSCAPING**  
**FRANKLIN, TENN.**

**EDUCATION**  
Centennial High School  
Franklin, Tenn.  
Class of 2005

**WORK EXPERIENCE**  
**2005-present**  
Blake Shelton Landscaping  
Franklin, Tenn.  
Owner

"My wife, Annah, and I have Tennessee Titans season tickets, so we like to go to those together. I have a Titans tattoo on my back—that's how much I love them."

"I started cutting my neighbors' yards in 2002. I used to push mow from 2002 to 2005."

"I've never worked for anybody else. If I want to go see my kids and my wife, I can just get in my vehicle and go. I like the freedom and flexibility of (owning my own business)."

"I get it every day. I'll see people get really close to my van and start taking pictures. I've thought about buying one of those Blake Shelton poster board faces and putting it in my van."

"In 2005, I was mostly doing lawn care and maintenance. In 2007, I went to the Rain Bird school in Chattanooga, Tenn., and learned about irrigation. The lawn care industry is an easy-entry business and has gotten so competitive. I thought, 'I have to be different,' so I branched out and started doing irrigation and lighting."

"I collect football helmets. My stepson (left) and I also like to ride dirt bikes. And my family and I like to go camping a lot."

"My favorite song is 'Red Red Red Redneck' ('Boys 'Round Here'). When people tell me to sing a song since I'm 'Blake Shelton,' that's the one I start singing ... I'm actually in his video for the song, 'Heavy Lifting.' Blake Shelton's manager called my mom and asked if I could be in the video. My business wasn't anything then. At that point, it was just that we had the same name."

**SHELTON'S WORDS OF WISDOM** "Communication is the key to everything." • "If you don't have time to do something or are overbooked, always return someone's call and let them know what's going on." • "Everyone has flaws, and you always have to protect yourself and your family."







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