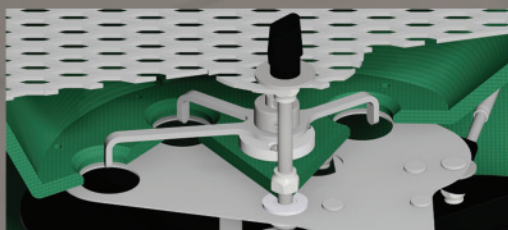


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Mark Smith,
construction and tree
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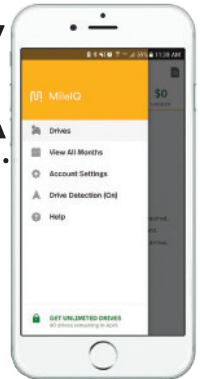
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and seasoned pros who could use a refresher. Do you have employees whose first language isn't English? Our SafetyWatch information is also available in Spanish. Head over to LandscapeManagement.net/safetywatch to check it out.

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PRICE AND PERFORMANCE: FINDING THE BALANCE

ADVERTORIAL

It's a question you have to answer in almost every aspect of business: how to find the perfect balance between price and performance? The low-priced piece of equipment will save you money now, but costs more if you have to replace it too soon. On the other hand, the highest-priced piece of equipment might do little more than cut into your bottom line.

Finding that balance is especially important when choosing a herbicide. Some lower-cost products are tempting because they can be effective in taking out target weeds.

The problem, however, is speed. If a less-expensive herbicide works slower, it can lead to callbacks. Speed makes customers happy, but might hurt your budget.

So how do you choose your herbicide? Unfortunately, there's no single formula to cover every business plan. Only you know your company goals, and you know your customers. It's up to you to figure out how to balance maintaining your bottom line and serving customers who are patient and customers who want weeds dead right now.



One answer from PBI-Gordon: Surge® Broadleaf Herbicide for Turf. Featuring a water-based formulation that won't blow your budget, Surge controls the toughest broadleaf weeds in turfgrass, including knotweed, plantain, oxalis, clover, and dandelion. It works up to twice as fast as traditional 3-way amine products, and Surge is ideal for late-spring and early-summer applications.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

MARISA PALMIERI
EDITOR

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Tendency talk

When I first heard about “The Four Tendencies,” I’m sure I gave an eye roll. Do I really need to take another quiz to give me insight into my behavior and personality?

I’ve taken the DISC, Gallup StrengthsFinder, Enneagram and many other assessments. I find them all very interesting. I’ve learned something from each of them, which left me wondering if I really needed another.

Still, I kept seeing and hearing references to Gretchen Rubin’s “The Four Tendencies” mentioned among friends and colleagues and on social media. I’ve enjoyed her other books, so I thought I’d give it a read. I’m glad I did.

What makes “The Four Tendencies” unique is it distinguishes how people tend to respond to expectations—both outer and inner.

Identifying how you respond to expectations may sound like a strange approach, but Rubin demonstrates how it can be a powerful tool for your personal and professional life. The four tendencies are:

Upholders. This group responds readily to outer and inner expectations.

Questioners. These folks question all expectations; they’ll meet an expectation if they think it makes sense. Essentially, they make all expectations into inner expectations.

Obligers. Obligers meet outer expectations but struggle to meet expectations they impose on themselves.

Rebels. People within this quadrant resist all expectations, outer and inner alike.

In case you couldn’t tell by my skepticism about whether or not I

really needed to take another behavior assessment, I’m a questioner through and through. I feel the need justify all decisions—from major life choices to the tiniest purchases—to myself through exhaustive research and hand wringing. Outer expectations don’t necessarily matter to me, unless I can justify them internally.


Knowing this about myself, I can try to implement systems such as deadlines and limited choices to help me overcome the pitfalls of my tendency, such as analysis paralysis.

Digging deeper, the concept becomes more powerful when I know the categories of those with whom I live and work.

“Knowing other people’s tendencies also makes it much easier to persuade them, to encourage them and to avoid conflict,” Rubin says. “The fact is, if we want to communicate, we must speak the right language—not the message that would work most effectively with *us*, but the message that will persuade the *listener*.”

With that in mind, the author offers these communication tips.

- Upholders want to know what should be done. They value self-command and performance.
- Questioners want justifications. They value purpose.
- Obligers need accountability. They value teamwork and duty.
- Rebels want freedom to do things their own way. They value self-identity.

I encourage you to read the book or tap into its concepts, and imagine how you could work better with your business partner, please your best client or coach your team. 



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LOCATION

Highland Park, Texas

COMPANY Southern Botanical

THE DETAILS This residence was built in 2001 and hadn't been updated since. The clients took on a renovation project of the house's interior, the pool terrace and the landscaping, and they also looked to expand the rear garden for entertaining and build a double-entry drive in the front of the home. For the landscaping, they aimed for a classic garden design with an open feel and clean lines.

The limestone pool terrace posed a major challenge, with 32 tons of limestone needing to be craned in over the existing 8-foot walls surrounding the rear garden. The firm installed subbase concrete with the proper sloping toward drainage inlets to level the terrace.

The design included manicured evergreen hedges and flowering shrubs, and the sleek lines of the terrace were punctuated with synthetic turf. The terrace was roughly doubled in size to better integrate the outdoor living area and allow for more entertaining space.

The project earned Southern Botanical a Grand Award and a Judges Award for 2017 from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program.

PHOTO Asian jasmine frames the pool area and synthetic turf accents the terrace.

See more photos from this project at LandscapeManagement.net/BigPicture.

PHOTO: JAMES WILSON



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some months
are like this,



and some
months
are like this.

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NEWS HOW-TO'S

LANDSCAPE
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VIEWS
AND TIPS

RECOMMENDER

ISSUE BRIEF

STEP BY STEP

NEW STUFF

SAFETYWATCH

24-HOUR RULE



Ben Hardy quickly learned that when hiring field staff, acting fast is essential. Hardy, who leads the talent acquisition practice for consulting and recruiting firm McFarlin Stanford, previously worked in human resources for several landscape companies.

He often found himself in a situation where he interviewed a candidate but had no supervisor accessible and available to interview the person for a second opinion, so he'd send the candidate home and ask them to come back tomorrow.

"By tomorrow they already had an offer somewhere else," Hardy says. "They interpreted the delay as disinterest."

To improve the capture rate of field staff, he refined his interview process to ensure he could make an offer on the same day as the interview—something he calls the "24-hour rule."

For others looking to do the same, Hardy advises landscape contractors to fully understand their wage threshold before the interview begins. "If you need people, you don't want to get hung up on price," he says. Know your negotiating limits and be prepared to make an offer that falls within those.

Next, always have someone available in the office to conduct a second interview on the spot.

Finally, don't wait for someone to pass a background check before you extend the offer. Simply make the offer and set a start date, but make it contingent on passing the background check. Tell the candidate he or she could start earlier if the results come back sooner.

"If you have a sense of urgency and demonstrate you have all your ducks in a row, they're going to be excited to work for you," Hardy says. "If you wait, you're going to miss out."

"If you need people, you don't want to get hung up on price."

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JOHN DEERE

RECOMMENDER

What **irrigation rotors** do you recommend and why?

When used correctly, rotors can save contractors valuable time and resources.



JASON VON ESCHEN
OWNER, VON ESCHEN LAWN & LANDSCAPE
WAGNER, S.D.

"I prefer the Rain Bird 5004 rotors. I have been installing them since 2003 and have had great luck with them. The triple blade wiper seal is amazing compared to other brands that leak all too often."



CHRIS HUSBAND
SPRINKLER NERD, PROQUAL LANDSCAPING
TEMPE, ARIZ.

"It's 2018. Hunter, Rain Bird and Toro all have good rotors. It's about the existing spacings, pressure, slope, soil, programming, nozzle, etc. What I'm getting at is it's about the person, not the product."

ISSUE >>> BRIEF



BY BOB MANN


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

PREEMPTION VIGILANCE

Our ability to control pests on our customers' properties rests upon a very thin tightrope known as pesticide preemption. This preemption means that in 46 states, only the state government can regulate pesticides, providing us with a single, uniform set of rules to follow. In the absence of preemption, antipesticide advocates are mobilizing and using scare tactics to unfairly malign the work we do, and they're lobbying for outright bans on pesticides, both on public and private properties.

For example, beginning this year in Maine, you will not be able to use pesticides in the city of South Portland. Next year that ban will spread next door to the city of Portland. Homeowners, professionals—it doesn't matter. No pesticides allowed, except if you're the city of Portland, which exempted itself from the ban so it could continue to treat its sports fields and golf course. Let that sink in for a few minutes.

I'm sure you're thinking to yourself, "What do I care about what goes on in Maine?" Antipesticide activism knows no political boundaries. At a recent hearing in Massachusetts on a bill that would remove the preemptive power to regulate pesticides, one person testifying pointed to the local ordinances in southern Maine as reason to pass it.

Readers in Ontario will recognize this tactic, too. It was the one used to ban pesticide use in that Canadian province. Activists worked at the local level, passing ordinance after ordinance, until they built up sufficient momentum to convince politicians at the provincial level to ban pesticides for landscape use. You may think you're safe from such threats where you happen to be, but so did the companies in Maine until not long ago. Stay vigilant. 



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STEP BY STEP

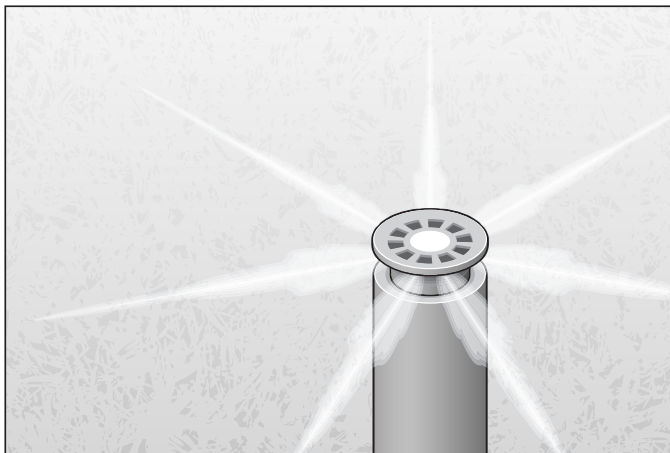
How to aerate properly

As time goes on, soil naturally compacts. Aeration, also called coring and aerifying, perforates the soil to allow air, water and nutrients to reach a lawn's roots. It also removes mild thatch. This helps roots grow deeper, making the lawn more vigorous and drought resistant. Aeration should occur when turf is in its peak growing season so it can recover quickly. This timing is typically in early spring or fall for cool-season grasses and late spring through early summer for warm-season grasses. Lawns with heavy clay soil or those subjected to particularly heavy foot traffic should be aerated once a year. Lawns with sandy soil or with healthy, thriving turf can be aerated every two to three years.

There are a few different tools contractors can choose from when it's time to perform aeration, including a spike aerator or a plug (or core) aerator. While it may seem sufficient to poke holes in the soil with a spike aerator, this process doesn't remove any soil mass and may actually lead to increased compaction near the holes. For the best results, experts say to use a plug aerator, which removes plugs of grass and soil 2 to 3 inches deep and 0.5 to 0.75 inches wide. After aeration is complete, water the lawn well and then continue basic lawn care practices, including fertilizing and mowing. It's also a good time to overseed and top dress the lawn.

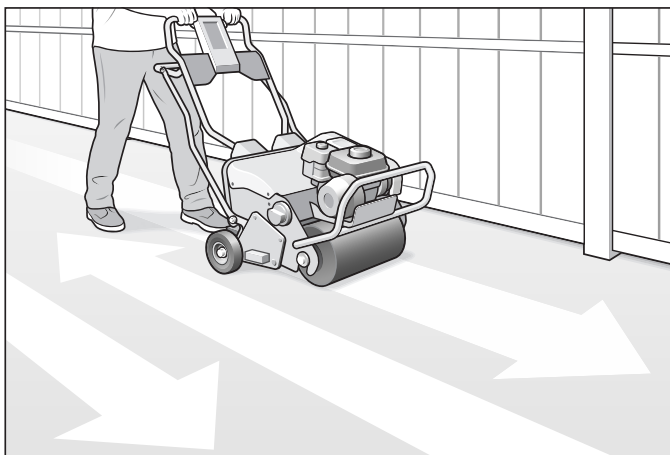
Follow these steps to perform proper aeration. 

SOURCE: The Grounds Guys



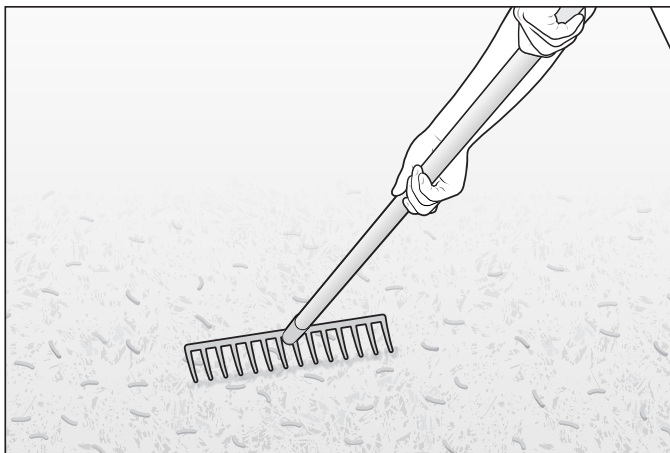
STEP 1

Apply or instruct your clients to apply 1 inch of water to the lawn the day before aeration. Mark any obstacles, such as sprinkler heads and utility lines, to avoid damaging them with the machine.



STEP 2

If soil is lightly compacted, make a single pass over the whole lawn, moving in parallel rows. Make multiple passes over more compacted areas, with the second pass perpendicular to the first.



STEP 3

Allow the excavated soil plugs to dry, and then instruct clients to break them up with a lawn mower or rake to add nutrients back into the soil.

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NEW STUFF



2



3

**1. GRADING BUCKETS****COMPANY:** Bobcat Co.**URL:** Bobcat.com

Designed for Bobcat's E26 through E85 compact excavators, the company's new grading buckets offer increased durability and reliability, maximum digging capabilities and easier clean out when cleaning ditches, backfilling, leveling or grading, according to the company. Available in 36-, 48- and 60-in. widths and equipped with waffle plates, the grading buckets share the same profile as Bobcat's trenching buckets and don't contain internal center gussets. The buckets are optimized to fit the standard clamp and the optional Pro Clamp System.

2. GBB 700 DUAL BATTERY PORT BACKPACK BLOWER**COMPANY:** Greenworks Commercial**URL:** GreenworksCommercial.com

An addition to Greenworks Commercial's 82-v line, the GBB 700 is equipped with two battery ports that come standard with automatic battery switchover. The unit also includes a power station feature, cruise control lever, turbo button, variable speed trigger and an axial fan design. It's powered by brushless motor technology and yields 50 percent less noise and five times less vibration than gas-equivalent products, according to Greenworks.

3. DX CONTROLLER**COMPANY:** FX Luminaire**URL:** FXL.com

A low-voltage lighting controller, the DX controller is operated via a digital facepack. Its capabilities include manual operation, the creation of scheduled programs and the ability to configure astronomical timing for locations in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The controller comes with a full-color LCD display, provides 150- or 300-watt capacities with multitap outputs and is available in powder-coated galvanized steel and stainless-steel options. An optional 9-v battery adapter allows for preinstallation programming.



4. ALEXA-ENABLED CONTROLLERS

COMPANY: Rain Bird

URL: RainBird.com

Alexa commands can be used with Rain Bird's professional series controllers, the ESP-TM2 and ESP-Me, when outfitted with a LNK WiFi Module, as well as with ST8-WiFi controllers offered through retail channels. Users can ask how to start managing their irrigation system; to list available commands, property irrigation zones and watering schedules; and to inquire on watering time remaining and the status of current seasonal watering adjustments. Alexa capabilities are available in the U.S. and Canada.

5. MOBILE CREW TRACKING APP

COMPANY: DynaScape Software

URL: DynaScape.com

Available in the Apple and Google Play app stores, DynaScape's crew tracking app is an add-on to Manage360. It's geared toward foremen and crew leaders. Key features include editable clock in and clock out; crew roster changes on the fly; the ability to track location (GPS-stamped clock in and out), time, materials, equipment and subcontractors; grouped maintenance visits; and crew audit (in Manage360). The app is also available in Spanish.

6. WORKSITE PRO PALLET FORKS

COMPANY: John Deere

URL: Deere.com

John Deere's redesigned pallet forks are available in 45- and 60-in. frames and optimized to work with John Deere G- and E-Series skid-steers and compact track loaders, and L-, K-II and K-Series compact wheel loaders, as well as most competitive models. The new forks feature a brick guard design and new frames with a load-securing "D" ring. The 45-in. frame is available with 42- and 48-in. tines and is rated at 3,750-, 5,500- and 6,200-lb. capacities. The 60-in. frame is available with 48-in. tines rated up to 6,200 lbs.

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.

SAFETYWATCH

TRANSPORTING DANGEROUS GOODS

Anyone who works with dangerous goods or hazardous materials should have transportation of dangerous goods (TDG) training, including employees in shipping, drivers, people who pack and unpack containers and managers who supervise them. There are right and wrong ways to work with dangerous goods. In fact, there may be laws and regulations that cover TDG, depending on where you operate.

If you're involved in TDG, you need to understand these regulations to keep you safe, keep the public safe and keep your company compliant. The consequences—physical and legal—can be catastrophic if you get it wrong.

In Canada, for example, everyone who handles dangerous goods needs to earn a TDG certificate. The certificate is proof that the employee has completed



training and understands how to work safely with dangerous goods.

TDG certificates are valid for 36 months, but they are not transferrable.

If you start a new job, it's smart to retrain with your new company anyway. Sometimes, a new job means working with different materials, vehicles or processes. Your employers are responsible for making sure you understand how things work in their specific industry.

Employers should know that inspectors can request proof of training for their staff. If they receive a request, they have 15 days to show proof that their employees have received appropriate training. Companies must keep copies of certificates on file for five years. Self-employed people can issue their own certificate if they have the appropriate training. They may carry the responsibilities of both an employer and employee.

WATCH AND LEARN

Visit [Landscapemanagement.net/SafetyWatch](https://www.landscapemanagement.net/SafetyWatch) to view a video about the transportation of dangerous goods and use it as a training tool for your team.

SOURCE: Greenius



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PROFITABLE PURCHASES

How contractors find the best equipment for their snow and ice businesses. BY LAUREN DOWDLE

Snow and ice removal is a completely different beast from the rest of a landscape contractor's services. It demands a quick turnaround in tough conditions, requiring companies to have reliable equipment at the ready—because a snowstorm waits for no one.

Beyond being up for the job, the equipment also has to work for the business financially. To ensure their snow equipment is resulting in a profit, these three owners found ways to become more efficient with their purchases.

WORK DOUBLE TIME

It can be difficult justifying a large equipment purchase when it will only be used during the winter months. That's why Kris Holland, owner of Black River Landscape Management in Randolph, N.J., looks for versatile machines or factors the cost directly into his bids.

His \$2-million company provides snow removal, landscape construction, tree and shrub care, maintenance, irrigation, gutter cleaning and lawn care services. The company's snow removal services are 100 percent commercial, maintenance is split evenly between residential and commercial and construction is nearly all residential.

The crews use snow plows, snow blowers, salt spreaders, skid-steers, trucks and compact loaders for snow and ice removal, opting for equipment that also will work for the company's landscape construction services, when possible.

Holland prefers to purchase equipment. However, the company has a rental arrangement with John Deere when it needs a larger piece of equipment, and it'll budget the rental equipment costs into the bid.

"It can feel like shell shock to rent, but you're only responsible for it for a short amount of time. You also don't have to worry about repairing it," Holland says. "It's an especially great way to break into a new property—if it's a new account and you aren't sure if you'll have it beyond one year. If I get the contract back the next year, I'll purchase the one we rented."

The two most important factors to Holland when it comes to purchasing snow equipment are versatility and comfort. "I want my guys to be comfortable," he says. "All of the equipment has a radio, AC and heat. They're spending an immense amount of time in it."

Holland encourages other contractors to take advantage of equipment that has been demoed. "Buy things that are gently used and still have warranties," he says. "Because they were given out to a company for a few hours to try, you can save thousands on it."

He says he's noticed a trend of manufacturers looking to make advancements with their equipment and attachments, including creating snow boxes that can back drag and perform different tasks.



Kris Holland

SNOW+ICE GUIDE

Holland says he's also seeing more contractors using motorized equipment for walkways. "Every day, there's something new to do something better," he says.

PREDICT USE COSTS

At some point, a piece of equipment outlives its profitability and needs to be replaced. Chris Speen, owner of Twin Oaks Landscape in Ann Arbor, Mich., has implemented a process to track lifespan and purchasing costs.

Speen's team offers design/build, maintenance, drainage, irrigation, bed care, fertilizer and snow removal services. With an annual revenue of \$2.4 million last year, the company serves both commercial and residential properties. The company uses snow blowers, plows, trucks, skid-steers, salters and compact utility loaders for its snow removal services.



Chris Speen

It adds new snow equipment every year, replacing pieces when they begin to cost more to service than they are bringing in. Speen uses ProfitLion landscape management software and data history to view and predict key factors that will lead the company to buy other equipment. Speen is also director of sales for ProfitLion.

For example, the company is able to see how long the equipment lasts using historical data and, as a result, how much the piece is costing per year. That helps the team determine how to move forward with future purchases.

"We cost out everything we have and figure out the charge rate on every piece of equipment," he says. "If you don't have that data and just go out on a whim and buy it, you're not going to know what to charge for it. Data is extremely important to be able to predict."

When making a purchase, he also considers the equipment's price, warranties and what others are saying about it. "I'm looking for a brand name that backs the equipment," Speen says.

The company also rents some of its snow removal equipment.

"We do so many homeowner associations (HOAs) that it's better for us to put the rental of the skid-steer in the job as a direct cost," Speen says.



Twin Oaks tries to rent the equipment from landscapers that don't offer snow removal services and aren't using it during the winter months. When that's not possible, the company gets the equipment from rental houses. Speen says he avoids leasing because he can only write off the payment and not the equipment itself on taxes.

MATCH EQUIPMENT TO SITE

For Steve Moore, co-owner of S.A.M. Landscaping in Chardon, Ohio, purchasing decisions come down to what's going to work best for each property.

The \$2.5-million company provides snow and ice management to a 90 percent commercial and 10 percent residential clientele. The company provides snow removal for retail plazas, banks, restaurants, doctors' offices, industrial properties, HOAs, supermarkets, private roadways, hospitals and government sites. It also offers landscape maintenance, design/build, landscape lighting, irrigation, corrective drainage, enhancements and fertilization services.



Steve Moore

During the winter, S.A.M. runs a crew of about 28 to 30 members and uses equipment and attachments including pickup trucks, dump trucks, snow plows, skid-steers, push boxes, wheel loaders, tractors and snow blowers. All of the salt spreaders and dump bodies are made of stainless steel. While the



upfront cost adds up, Moore says it's well worth the investment.

He's a big advocate for buying equipment—as opposed to leasing or short-term rentals—and looks at the machine's reliability, ease of maintenance, history and if it's working for others in the industry.

Price isn't the driving force behind his purchasing decisions, he says. Instead, Moore focuses on quality and dependability. The company has seen significant growth in the snow market in recent years and has purchased snow and ice equipment as needed to match that demand.

"I just want the best of the best," Moore says. "The last thing I want to have to do is take a wrench to it at 2 a.m. in the middle of a snow storm."

An important part of Moore's purchasing process includes looking at the size of the commercial account and its revenue stream to determine the most efficient piece of equipment to manage the property. Moore uses LMN software for the estimating process, crew tracking and scheduling different aspects of the business.

"First things first, I want to know the square footage we are covering," he says. "Secondly, based on the square footage numbers, I look at what type of equipment will be required for the account. Lastly, I figure out the direct cost to the company to purchase and operate the piece or pieces of equipment. At that point, we are ready to provide a solution and price."


Often, price isn't the only factor that determines a big purchase—a machine's quality and dependability are also important determinants.



Moore encourages contractors to look at how the equipment works, how to maintain it and how to service it before making a purchase.

"There's no worse feeling than a breakdown and not understanding how a piece of equipment functions," he adds.

One trend he's noticed with equipment is contractors are starting to make the switch from 7½- and 8-foot straight plows to extendable options. It's all about becoming more versatile.

"Square footage is everything," Moore says. "The more square footage you can cover, the less equipment you need." 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Nashville.

Buyers Products

SIMA SYMPOSIUM BOOTH: 405

Buyers is proud to introduce SaltDogg® Anti-Ice Systems. This brand-new line of brine spraying systems is intended for commercial, municipal and varied use. Buyers engineering has worked to incorporate user-inspired design into a line of anti-ice equipment that is in stock, available and an exceptional value.

Salt prices continue to fluctuate, and now that the benefit of anti-ice brine application has been proven in the municipal market Buyers foresees a growing demand for contractor-ready anti-ice systems. SaltDogg Anti-Ice fills a large gap in the market of readily-available Anti-Ice equipment. It boasts the same availability, quality and value that has built a name for SaltDogg spreaders and SnowDogg™ snow plows.

The new line of spray systems range in capacity from 210 gallons to 1,750 gallons. Larger spray systems up to 3,000+ gallons are available upon custom request. SaltDogg Anti-Ice systems are available with a variety of drives including: Honda® gas engines, pumps driven by a truck's central hydraulic system or self-contained electric pumps for lower capacity systems.

High-density, UV-stabilized polyethylene tanks provide dependable brine transportation. Large format tanks include integrated baffling to reduce "sloshing," reducing undue wear to the vehicle. Hydraulic and gas-powered systems 550 gallons and larger also include standard powder-coated leg frame stands for easy truck loading, unloading and off-season storage. Both PVC single-lane spray bars and multilane stainless steel spray bars are available standard options depending on lane-application requirements.

Systems are available with either manual or automatic application rate control. Automatic systems allow the operator to select how many gallons of



liquid brine should be applied per lane mile. When paired with a ground speed sensor (GPS or vehicle-based) the system will automatically adjust the application rate based on vehicle speed. Manual systems, on the other hand, are solely controlled by the operator. This means the system must be turned on and off and its flow rate must be adjusted manually.

Pictured here is a 550-gallon gas-powered system with a single-lane PVC spray bar and accessory spray hose reel. This size, application-rate and accessory package may be particularly attractive to the commercial contractor looking to move into the brine-application space.

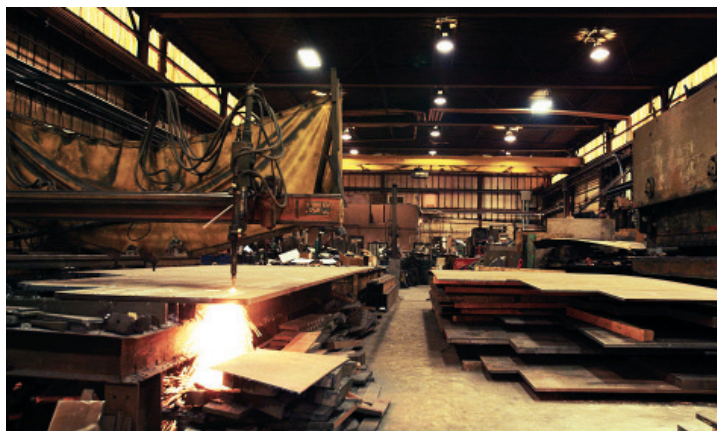


EccoFab

Ekstrom Carlson Fabricating Company, also known as EccoFab, has been working with the snow removal industry for 30 years. We believe in building snow plow cutting edges that outlast most of the competition, allowing heavy-duty crews—like those that support municipalities or large commercial crews—to run longer without change-outs.

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durability, and often exceed those standards when Hardox 500 is used. Every part is custom made according to client specifications, ensuring that cutting edges of any shape and size for all makes and models of snow plows can be replicated based on client designs, at their production facility centrally located in Rockford, Illinois.

EccoFab ships their Hardox wearparts both nationally and internationally. For a free quote or to discuss your specific needs, please contact us at 815-226-1511 or gbauer@eccofab.com. Distributor inquiries welcomed.

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SNOW+ICE GUIDE

PRODUCTS



SCOOP PLOW

COMPANY: Hiniker

URL: Hiniker.com

Hiniker's Scoop Plov provides operators with a cost-effective and

efficient tool for parking lots and wide-area applications, according to the company. With the blade ends at a fixed forward angle of 20 degrees, the Scoop provides a greater snow-carrying capacity than a comparably sized v-plow while still maintaining fullwindrowing capability when fully angled, Hiniker said.



SKID-STEER SNOW BLOWER

COMPANY: Loftness

URL: Loftness.com

Loftness' line of skid-steer snow blowers features a heavy-duty construction for maximum reliability and high performance, according to the company. Providing flow rates starting as low as 15 gpm, the seven available models are offered in 72- (pictured)



to 84-in. widths and come with a universal coupler, single motor design and electric spout rotator. Other standard features include adjustable skid shoes, reinforced body braces and shear bolt protection.

TAILGATE PRO SP-575X AND SP-1075X SINGLE-STAGE SPREADERS



COMPANY: SnowEx

URL: SnowExProducts.com

SnowEx's Tailgate Pro SP-575X and SP-1075X (pictured) single-stage spreaders offer hopper capacities of 5.75 and 10.75 cu. ft., respectively, can apply salt and de-icing materials to roads, driveways, parking lots and recreational paths and feature a redesigned electrical system. Allowing spread width adjustment up to 40 ft., the enhanced spreader control is more compact than previous models and includes LED indicator lights, a digital diagnostic display and auxiliary functionality that allows spreader accessories to be controlled from the cab, according to the company.

ST 131 SNOW BLOWER



COMPANY: Husqvarna

URL: Husqvarna.com

Husqvarna's ST 131 snow blower—a lightweight and compact machine—

features a 21-in. working width and can remove up to 8 in. of snow. The blower's rubber auger is gentle on all types of hard surfaces, the remote chute rotator controls snow distribution and the electric starter allows users to start the engine when connected to a power outlet by pressing a button, Husqvarna said. Additionally, users can adjust the handle bar to three different heights.



DRIFTBUSTER SNOWTHROWERS



COMPANY: Grasshopper

URL: GrasshopperMower.com

Grasshopper's Drift-Buster Snowthrowers, offered in 48- and 60-in. (pictured) options, are power takeoff-driven and feature no-clog, high-speed augers and a manual discharge spout that rotates 180 degrees to throw snow up to 30 ft. The snowthrower retains

zero-turn maneuverability and mounts in the place of a standard mowing deck. Available for all Grasshopper True ZeroTurn FrontMount power units, the machine also features an optional winter enclosure and a heater that provides 16,000 btu/hr.





BY PHIL HARWOOD

The author is president and CEO of Pro-Motion Consulting. Reach him at phil@mypmcteam.com.

Is it time to go “all in” with snow?

There are two types of companies when it comes to snow and ice management: One is “all in,” while the other is not, so there are dramatic differences in the way this segment of the business is handled. I believe fervently in strategic planning, that each company should determine its own fate and no two companies are alike. I also believe that many companies are missing out on a huge opportunity with snow and ice management simply because they’re not “all in.” Just having a toe in the water is much different than jumping headfirst into the deep end of the pool.

I understand why some may be hesitant to go “all in” with snow. I see two types of people when it comes to the winter season. One loves it, while the other does not. There are implications for each. Owners and managers who love the winter are more likely to embrace their snow businesses.

I grew up in the snow belt and was outdoors at every opportunity during the winter. Some of my best memories were made on the ice rink, at a sledding hill and building snow forts. I have always loved the winter, and I would imagine this has made it easier for me to also love the snow business as a profession. Others have had different experiences, which makes it more difficult for them to go “all in” with snow. A rare minority of people have learned to love snow after detesting it previously. Most people either love it or they don’t.

Going “all in” has many benefits. These companies function differently than the rest. They see their snow segment as a year-round business, not as a part-time seasonal service segment. They embrace the year-round approach and industry best practices. They dedicate personnel and financial resources to support this approach. Specific activities are accomplished each month of the year to ensure they are doing all they can do to take care of their snow customers.

During the spring season, one of the most

important snow-related activities is to meet with each snow customer. This meeting involves a thorough review of the past season to listen and learn what went well and what didn’t. Even though this is a basic concept—account management 101, if you will—many companies involved in the snow business fail to hold these meetings. Without taking time to meet with customers, issues are not uncovered, problems are not solved and customers set out to find new providers.

The spring meeting is also the best time to either renew the agreement or lay the groundwork for renewal later in the summer. Many snow customers make their decisions in the spring or early summer time frame, which is great for the “all in” providers who are in sales mode during that period, but it’s not so great for their unsuspecting counterparts who won’t begin to sell snow contracts until the fall.

In addition to the spring meeting, the “all in” companies proactively perform postseason inspections of all their properties. They are intently focused on their customers with high-level account management engagement. This is one small part of the year-round, ongoing approach to their snow businesses. There is something important to do throughout the entire year.

Those who are not “all in” never seem to have time to get back to their snow accounts, even to get a quick look around. They are woefully unaware of the condition of their properties and are left in a reactive position if a customer calls to discuss any issues. Instead of being focused on their customers, they’re focused elsewhere.

I’m just scratching the surface with this topic, but you get the idea. Is it time for you to consider going “all in” with snow? The last thing I’ll say about those who do so is they have much better results than those who don’t. If managed properly, the snow division may be the most profitable segment in your entire business. Are you ready to jump in the deep end? 🐡

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A CLOSER LOOK

Why one plant care
company promotes a
“test-before-treatment”
approach.

▶ PAGE 18

TURF+ORNAMENTAL CARE

Testing before treatment

A look inside one company's thoughtful approach to turf and ornamental care.

BY SARAH WEBB

When Keith Weyrick patronized his local plant diagnostic clinic in 2012, samples in tow, he didn't realize one of the clinic's employees, Ian Maguire, would become his future business partner.

Almost six years later, the pair co-owns Plant Health Care Systems of South Florida, a Miami-based plant care company that's grown into a \$1.7-million organization since its founding in 2013.

"I would take samples to the clinic where Maguire worked, and we struck up a friendship," says Weyrick, who at the time was working for a large turf and ornamental care firm. "We would always talk about the industry."

Around that time, Weyrick and Maguire were both looking for an employment change. Deciding the timing was right, they partnered up.

"There weren't many knowledgeable people in the industry at that time,"

Weyrick says. "Most of the spray guys are really good with grass but not so much with the plants."

A BUDDING COMPANY

Weyrick and Maguire initially began their careers in separate worlds, as a second-generation nurseryman and a photographer, respectively.

Weyrick got his start working for his family's company, Quail Roost Nursery, and later owned a natural lawn care franchise. Maguire began his career as a digital photographer, working at the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Tropical Research and Education Center.

"I started to learn about plants through the lens of a camera," Maguire says. "Through visual art, I gained the knowledge that allowed me to eventually create connections (in the plant world)."

He adds that his 15-year tenure as a photographer allowed him to work in

biological science programs and eventually led him to the job in a diagnostic clinic, where he first met Weyrick.

The pair's first client was Maguire's friend, a landscaper who performed work at an exclusive Key Largo community. He had been unhappy with his previous application company and decided to give Plant Health Care Systems a chance.

Plant Health Care Systems has since grown to 10 crew members serving more than 700 clients. It serves a 100 percent residential clientele. Complete lawn and plant care packages make up 90 percent of its services, while the remaining 10 percent is comprised of either plant care or lawn care packages. The company also offers add-on services, such as aeration.

THE APPROACH

Part of the team's success stems from

Continued on page 20

EDUCATE
Plant Health Care Systems' owners, Ian Maguire (left) and Keith Weyrick (right), work hard to educate both their clients and their technicians.



NEWSPEED

SPRING TOUCH FRANCHISE

Spring Touch Lawn & Pest Control, based in St. Peter, Minn., is expanding its brand and is registered to

franchise in most of the U.S. The company serves more than 10,000 customers in a 60-mile radius in and around southern

Minnesota. The franchise offering features a business concept in the lawn care/landscape services industry with an "affordable entry threshold," said Spring Touch.

WEED MAN EXPANDS

Weed Man USA continues to expand across the U.S. with 29 new territories added in 2017 and a total of three new signed franchise agreements in the

first three months of 2018. It expects to add 37 new territories, totaling 561 territories by year's end and surpass \$100 million in annual sales revenue for the second straight year.

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TURF+ORNAMENTAL CARE

PROACTIVE
Plant Health Care Systems offers its services on an ongoing monthly basis.

Continued from page 18

the company's scientific and preventive approach, which includes the inspection and diagnosis of a property prior to treatment.

"We believe it's important to do an inspection," Weyrick says. "A lot of other companies just pull up, drag out a hose, spray the yard and plants, and then they're on to the next one."

Before performing any application work, Maguire, Weyrick or a thoroughly trained technician takes a walk around the property, identifying plant issues on-site. If a technician is unsure about a problem, he snaps a picture and sends it to the owners.

If a clear diagnosis still can't be reached, the Plant Health Care Systems team takes a sample to a diagnostic clinic.

"We're not just business owners," Maguire says. "Part of our slogan is 'we know,' and we really do know our plants."

The company also promotes a proactive—rather than reactive—method, which involves services on an ongoing monthly basis.

"It's obviously much easier to prevent an issue than to correct it," Weyrick says.

Maguire says the company's other keys to success are constant client communication and collaboration with landscapers who may not offer plant health care services.

Collaborating with other companies has led to more referrals, allowing

Plant Health Care Systems to forgo additional marketing or advertising, according to Maguire.

THE CHALLENGES

Despite the company's open-communication style, Maguire says challenges arise when a customer's perception of the company's service differs from reality.

"We have a clientele who thinks if they throw money at a problem, it will be fixed, but the reality is that plants are like a human body," he says. "When something goes wrong, changes take time."

While the team works hard to educate clients, Maguire says a few clients are unwilling to understand the process is natural and ongoing. In rare instances, he might even suggest artificial turf.

Like many other companies in the industry, Plant Health Care Systems also struggles with finding a labor force.

"We've got a good handle on the landscape and lawn problems, and we can buy equipment all day long, but getting the right people is the biggest challenge," Weyrick says.

To combat this problem, Weyrick says he and Maguire seek out people who demonstrate an interest in the industry and also embody the "three c's": caring, curious and consistent.

"We've been able to attract another level of employee to our company," Maguire says. "Workers might've come to us from other companies because

they'd become complacent or bored and wanted a new challenge."

New employees undergo a rigorous training process, spending up to six months riding along with an experienced spray technician.

To retain the good employees, both owners say they promote ongoing education, such as encouraging employees to go back to school to earn a high school diploma or complete a spray certification exam.

"This is not just a job for (our employees). It's a vocation," Weyrick says. "And they like the fact that they can go to a property, see the improvements and have a positive impact on the client."

Weyrick advises other company owners to always be on the lookout for their next employee.

LOOKING AHEAD

While Plant Health Care Systems has experienced extreme growth periods of up to 300 to 400 percent, Weyrick and Maguire realize such a growth rate isn't sustainable.

They hope to grow to \$2 million by the end of this year and to \$5 million within the next three to five years.

"It starts with setting expectations with your clients, not overpromising and then delivering what you promise," Weyrick says. "If you do those three things, you can build a good business, grow the business and retain your clients long term." ■

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MOWING+LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

How we do it

Two landscape maintenance professionals share their companies' preferred vehicle setups.

BY MARISA PALMIERI



BrightView

BrightView and its predecessors have studied the best truck and trailer setups for years, according to Tim Russell, vice president of operations for the Plymouth Meeting, Pa.-based national company.

Today, the company has boiled down its preferred rigs to a few setups. The first option, which is a “small percentage of the fleet,” is for crews that operate in cities. These are either box or landscaper body trucks with no trailers.

“They’re not hooked to trailers because it’s tough to get around in densely populated areas with a trailer,” Russell says.

The nonurban options are either a F250 pickup truck with a trailer (open or

enclosed) or a stake body dump truck with an enclosed trailer.

Which type of truck a BrightView crew gets depends a lot on its region.

“If it’s in California, what we call the evergreen or year-round markets, generally you’re running the open trailer. In seasonal markets, we run more of the dump trucks with enclosed trailers to keep things out of the elements.”

The trailers are arranged so everything has a designated, secure place and nothing is damaged in transit.



BrightView works with trailer manufacturers to install equipment racks and storage systems in its enclosed trailers. The goal is to keep all equipment secure and organized, so it’s easy to find and not damaged in transit.

BrightView is intentional about their design, Russell says, noting the company works with the trailer manufacturer to install the racking and storage systems.

As for equipment choices, it varies by branch, Russell says. BrightView has national agreements in place with several brands in each equipment category, and it’s up to the branch to make the choice. “Generally, the branch tries to stay within the same manufacturer because it doesn’t make sense to have multiple mower brands in one branch,” he says.

SAFETY FIRST

For the past five years, safety has been a big focus for BrightView when it comes to outfitting its vehicles. This attention has prompted some changes, such as adapting trailers to fit coolers for crews to always have water on hand and having a spot for safety cones accessible from outside, so crews can deploy them as soon as they stop.

“It’s pretty straightforward, but when you really boil it down, it’s making sure everything has its place and is in there safely,” says Tim Russell.



Tim Russell

Beach River Landscapes

In Jacksonville, Fla., Wally Wood, who co-owns Beach River Landscapes with his wife, Leah, runs two trucks. His preferred setup for landscape maintenance is a Chevy Silverado 2500HD with a 7-foot by 16-foot V-nose trailer.

The key to a smooth operation, Wood says, is being organized. He credits his trailers' organization to equipment racks from Green Touch Industries.

"The other thing is the weather absolutely destroys your equipment when it's sitting in an open trailer vs. an enclosed trailer—especially here in Florida with the rain, humidity and the heat."

"Before, I pulled my hair out," he says. "We had standard racks that you can buy from anywhere, but the (hand-held equipment) engines were sitting upside-down and there wasn't a place for everything, so most of the time, stuff was sitting on the floor."

Wood, who runs Scag mowers and a mix of Stihl, Husqvarna and Echo handheld equipment, says he also loves that the racks all lock. He secures his equipment even though it's in an enclosed trailer. Theft is a major concern for him, as a small business owner.

Finally, he favors the enclosed trailers for their marketing ability.

"We hear a lot, 'If your trailers look that good, we assume your work is going to be good,'" Wood says. 📺

Beach River Landscapes' trucks include locking racks, keeping the equipment organized and secure.



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CERTIFIED HYBRID BERMUDAGRASS



The workhorse

Skid-steers and compact track loaders continue to grow in popularity, while manufacturers work to make them faster, more powerful and more efficient. BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER



Skid-steer loaders and compact track loaders (CTLs) always have been true workhorses in the field. As they continue to grow in popularity, equipment manufacturers are working to make these machines faster, more powerful and more efficient for landscape crews to operate.

“For landscape contractors, it’s all about time and labor savings,” says Perry Girard, product marketing manager for Case Construction Equipment, based in Racine, Wis. “Whether you’re working with a skid-steer or compact track loader, landscape contractors need to ask themselves, ‘How can I be doing more with what I have?’”

NEW AND IMPROVED

While both CTLs and skid-steers continue to be popular in the landscape industry, Jason Boerger, marketing manager for Bobcat Co., based in West Fargo, N.D., says he is seeing an increase in contractors updating or adding to their



Jason Boerger

compact equipment fleets with CTLs. He says this trend is because these machines can perform better in soft, wet or sandy ground conditions.

“This is a direct reflection of (landscape companies) looking to extend their working seasons and allowing them to maintain their schedules and stay productive,” Boerger says. “With a tight labor market and strict deadlines, going without a machine or not being able to work because of soft soil can be critical, which is why we think compact track loaders will only continue to increase in popularity in the landscape market.”

Boerger says skid-steer and CTL manufacturers are placing more focus on torsion axle suspension systems and self-tensioning track technology. Last year, Bobcat introduced a five-link torsion suspension undercarriage on its M2-Series T870 CTL. The new undercarriage provides increased durability with a 15 percent increase in diameter to the drive shaft inside the gearbox, and a continuously lubricated outer bearing in the drive motor. An additional fifth link on the rear axle stabilizes the undercarriage to increase machine stability and performance when grading and provides

enhanced ride quality for operators.

“As the torsion suspension undercarriage absorbs stress and vibrations on rough terrain, it provides a smoother ride that operators can feel throughout the machine to enhance productivity,” says Boerger, adding that the undercarriages are designed with a solid cast spindle mount for increased durability. “This design eliminates welds and distributes stress across one seamless piece that has additional metal and strength precisely where it is needed most.”

The five-link torsion suspension undercarriage also features an automatic hydraulic track tensioning system.

“No longer do loader operators need to manually adjust the compact track loader’s track tension with a grease gun,” Boerger says. “The hydraulic tensioning system automatically ensures the proper track tension, thereby increasing machine uptime protection.”

Girard agrees that manufacturers are focused on improving productivity and performance. Case increased the rated operating capacity of its SV340 skid-steer by 400 pounds compared to the previous model, while keeping the same size footprint by designing a more

NEWSFEED

EWING EXPANSIONS

Ewing Irrigation & Landscape Supply opened its first Ewing Hardscape Supply

locations in Arizona and Colorado. The locations include Phoenix; Brighton, Littleton and Eliza-

beth, Colo. Ewing also acquired All Star Materials, a provider of natural landscaping materials, adding three additional Ewing retail locations in Phoenix.

ICPI'S PAVESHARE

The Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute (ICPI) announced the availability of PavShare.org—a free ICPI educational resource—

through the Land8 Landscape Architects Network. PavShare is an open-education resource focused on design education from the perspective of modular pavements.



VERSATILITY
Skid-steers and CTLs are both versatile machines for landscape businesses to consider.



Brandon Barker

purchases, rather than leases, its skid-steers and keeps them for five or six years depending on the level of wear and tear they experience. The machines used frequently for snow removal are replaced sooner because of damage caused by salt and extreme weather conditions. Barker says the company will sometimes rent skid-steers for snow removal to prolong the lives of the machines it owns. J. Barker Landscaping provides 40 percent design/build, 25 percent maintenance, 20 percent snow removal, 10 percent demolition and 5 percent dumpster services to a 60 percent residential, 40 percent commercial clientele.

“Our skid-steers have tended to work out really well for snow,” Barker says. “They are just as fast as a truck and a plow, and they are much easier to maneuver, which allows us to complete jobs in a timely manner.”

Over the years, Barker says he has noticed several new features that have made skid-steers more functional and efficient. For example, backup cameras are useful when working in tight areas or when operators are working alone and don’t have someone to guide them. Keyless start systems make the machines much less prone to theft, especially those that are left on job sites. Barker creates a custom pass code to start the machine, eliminating the need for a key.

“This is a nice option if you are leaving them out on the job site,” Barker says. “We haven’t had any experience with theft, but it’s good peace of mind knowing the machine isn’t going anywhere.”

Barker says skid-steers have also become faster and more powerful, which increases productivity on the job site. His crews are able to do more work with fewer people in less time.

“These machines absolutely save you money on labor,” Barker says. “Where you may have needed three or four

skid-steer with a forklift. With the increasing difficulty of finding good labor in our industry, it’s definitely helped out to make sure you’re getting the jobs done.”

ATTACHMENT ADD-ONS

Attachments are another way Barker’s crews increase productivity with skid-steers. They regularly use a bucket, a forklift and a harley rake but will also rent other attachments when needed for specific jobs.

Boerger agrees that adding attachments increases a machine’s versatility, providing contractors the opportunity to offer additional services.

“Adding attachments to a contractor’s equipment fleet can allow him to expand his service offerings and ultimately become more profitable,” he says. “Whether it be adding an auger to dig holes for posts and trees to a snow blower to extend the season into winter, the attachment versatility of these machines gives contractors great opportunity for growth.”

When purchasing skid-steers, Barker first determines the primary use of the machine. He then says the most important factor to consider is whether his operators, who will be the ones using it on a daily basis, like how the machine performs. Barker works with his dealers to test several different skid-steers on actual job sites to see how they handle and operate before selecting one. He urges contractors to try out different brands because some manufacturers provide better machines depending on the application.

“Price isn’t always a factor because if we know we are buying the right machine for the right application and the operator is comfortable with it, we will get our money’s worth,” he says. “Do your due diligence and research—make sure you’re exploring all of your options, checking out multiple brands and testing out multiple sizes.”

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

LABOR SAVER
Compact equipment improves productivity and can save on labor costs.

guys to move a large tree, you can now use a



PHOTO: J. BARKER LANDSCAPING

IRRIGATION+WATER MANAGEMENT

Facing challenges

Irrigation experts discuss some of the industry's biggest challenges—now and in the future.

BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER

The landscape industry faces its own water challenges, requiring unique solutions that are not always one-size-fits-all. In a recent Irrigation Association (IA) webinar titled “Landscape’s Water Challenges—Solutions from the Experts,” John Farner, IA government and public affairs director, and a panel of irrigation experts discussed some of the industry’s biggest current and future challenges.

The panel included Brent Mecham, IA industry development director; Carlos Michelin, water conservation program manager for the San Diego County Water Authority; and Brian Vinchesi, president of Irrigation Consulting in Pepperell, Mass.

Here’s a condensed version of their conversation.

Q: WHAT DO YOU FEEL IS THE BIGGEST ISSUE OR HURDLE FACING THE LANDSCAPE IRRIGATION INDUSTRY TODAY?

VINCESI: I think it’s geographic, but certainly where I am and in most of the country, it’s regulation. We find that regulation of irrigation is becoming more prolific and more strict. Surprisingly enough, it’s in the areas that have the most water, like New England, that the irrigation regulations are the most strict. In places with less water, like Arizona and Southern California, the regulations are less strict. That’s because in dry areas, like the West, irrigation gets a lot more respect than it does in wetter areas. Regulation throughout the country is the biggest hurdle we will face now and in the future.

MICHELON: From my vantage point, to promote water use efficiency, there are a few key challenges. The first is we tend to relate to irrigation systems only by the mechanical systems that make the water flow, but it’s inextricably linked to the landscape as an interdependent system. There’s more to just understanding how the water flows to maximize water use

WATER RULES
Regulation is one of the major challenges the irrigation industry faces.

efficiency overall. It’s understanding things like what plants are appropriate for the climate and design practices. That’s why we develop programs like the Sustainable Landscapes Program. One of the cornerstones of it is efficient irrigation, but it also brings in all of these other factors.

Another thing that goes with that is workforce development. We need resources to prepare the great men and women who manage our landscapes every day. Programs like our Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper is a great starting point for basic training for anyone who works with irrigation systems.

MECHAM: Sometimes I think we are our own biggest obstacle. What I mean by that is things are changing really fast, and we have been very slow to respond in many cases. One of the challenges I see is there’s some great new technology that can enhance water management, yet our workforce is slow to adopt it and hasn’t fully embraced it or understood how to implement it. The consumer is aware of it, and the marketplace is actually asking for more of it.

We also have an outside influence coming in the form of regulators who say landscapes are using a lot of water, so we need to draft regulations. Sometimes these regulations are stupid because they have a lot of emotion, rather than science, behind them. And once they’re in place, they can be hard to change. Both of those things are happening at the same time and the industry is really struggling to keep up. It comes around to, “How can we become sustainable in what we’re doing?” That’s the request coming from

Continued on page 28

NEWSFEED

ORBIT IRRIGATION STUDY

Orbit Irrigation Products released new survey data revealing Americans’ attitudes

toward water consumption. The findings show that while most people want to contribute to

conservation efforts, they often use more water than they realize.

RAIN BIRD CONTROL ZONE KIT

Rain Bird introduced its fully assembled 1.5-inch inline commercial

drip control zone kit. The kit includes a 15-62 gpm flow rate to cover larger drip zones with fewer components. It’s engineered to minimize friction loss and preserve water

pressure, according to the company. It also features a 1.5-inch large-capacity screen filter, 1.5-inch PEB globe valve and 1.5-inch 40 psi pressure regulator.

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RAIN BIRD®

IRRIGATION+WATER MANAGEMENT

Continued from page 26
regulators and from people who are forward thinking who say we have to be better stewards of our precious resources.

Q: CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE ROLE ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL, THE INTERNATIONAL CODE COUNCIL AND THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF HEATING, REFRIGERATING AND AIR CONDITIONING ENGINEERS PLAY IN THE FUTURE OF THE LANDSCAPE IRRIGATION INDUSTRY?

MECHAM: Most people in the landscape industry know there are certain codes and regulations we have to comply with, such as protecting the potable water supply. That is code that's been in place to protect the interest of the public. With our controllers and wiring, we also deal with electrical code to protect people. So most building codes are about safety and the protection of people.

There is a new kind of code that's come around about protecting the environment, called the green code, which takes the basic codes of protection and safety and expands them to protect the environment. With the green code, they have now gone outside the building envelope and are saying we have to look at the site and what we can do to protect the environment at the site. It gets a little bit complicated because most building officials are comfortable with building codes but are uncomfortable about what is going on with the site. It's been under the jurisdiction of the planning and zoning commissions in the city or county, not the building department. We're seeing a crossover of who has the authority.

Q: GETTING THE PUBLIC TO SEE THE VALUE OF THE LANDSCAPES WE GROW IS A CHALLENGE FACING THE INDUSTRY. HOW DO YOU THINK WE CAN OVERCOME THAT HURDLE?



John Farner



Brent Mecham



Carlos Michelon



Brian Vinchesi

VINCHESE: I think education is the key. You have to educate people on why landscape is important, why maintaining the landscape with water is important and what the environmental benefits are. I think you can also educate them that some regulation makes sense.

For instance, Massachusetts has just finally started to implement some guidelines for rain shutoff requirements. It was passed by legislators four years ago and is just now coming to fruition. Pressure-regulating sprinklers make sense. Smart controllers make sense. With regulations, before you just kill it, look at the technologies out there to save water. Education is key—from the contractor to the distributor to the regulator to the property owner. It all has to come together.

Q: WHAT'S YOUR OPINION ON HOW TO ENSURE THAT OUR WORKFORCE IS KNOWLEDGEABLE AND READY TO DO THE JOB THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE? IS LICENSING THE ANSWER OR IS IT CONTINUATION OF CERTIFICATIONS?

MICHELON: I think certification, or credentialing, is a necessary tool and appropriate resource to recognize and call upon qualified professionals.

It begins from a place of understanding everybody's role in the marketplace as having a common stewardship responsibility. A license or certificate isn't a guarantee that a site is going to be properly designed or managed, so let's look beyond just the certification stuff.

I want to strongly support upgrading the requirements for licensure,

trying to possibly require—where necessary—some type of certification so the people who have boots on the ground are properly trained and vetted. On the flip side, I also want to see more market recognition for those who maintain these high standards. We try to put the spotlight on the best practitioners who meet these standards.

MECHAM: I think it's complicated in the fact that licensing is typically about a company and its ability to conduct business. Certification is about the individual. In many places, you could use both. I think the really good companies understand the value of certified individuals, and they will recognize them with a higher paycheck and find some way to keep these people who know how to do the job. I think there is room in the marketplace for both.

Q: WHAT'S THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY FOR THE LANDSCAPE IRRIGATION INDUSTRY AHEAD OF US?

MECHAM: The biggest opportunity is to become really professional and know what you're doing. The way the marketplace is shifting, you will be rewarded for knowing what you're doing. I think the marketplace is going to start demanding it.

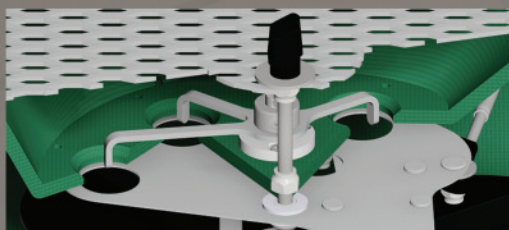
MICHELON: I think it's integration and the spirit of stewardship when it comes to managing landscapes. The opportunity is in trying to integrate with other practitioners so the products and services are presented in a more holistic approach. 

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

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“Coroner releases name of landscaper killed in lawn mower accident.”

“Landscaping employee struck, killed while working.”

“Worker flown to hospital with life-threatening injuries after chainsaw accident.”

There are many reasons landscape companies should focus on creating a culture of safety. The headlines above are just three of them.

If avoiding one of those incidents isn't enough to emphasize the importance of creating a safety culture, consider the law.

- Fines from regulatory agencies; and
- The company's Experience Modifier Rate (EMR), which can drive up insurance rates and also can affect the bidding process. Some clients won't allow bids from customers with an EMR over 1.

There's no doubt that operating a safe workplace can be challenging for landscape companies, which are often small businesses with high employee turnover, running on a seasonal schedule.

In fact, letting training fall by the wayside during the spring rush is one of the biggest mistakes landscape companies make when it comes to safety, says Sam Steel, Ed.D., safety adviser for the National Association of Landscape Professionals.

“I'm always encouraging companies not to put it off just because you've gotten busy,” he says, noting a

Contractors and experts reveal tips for a winning safety culture.

BY LM STAFF

SAFETY CHAMPIONS

Under the “general duty clause”—section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) of 1970—an employer is required to provide employees with a place of employment that is “free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees.”

In addition to making sure all team members go home safely to their families every night, there are financial reasons for implementing a culture of safety. According to insurance company CNA's “Risk Control Industry Guide for the Landscape, Lawn Care & Plant Nursery Industry,” these include:

- Costs of the incident, such as repair costs (direct) or lost time (indirect);

seasonal influx in new employees adds to the risks. “That's when incidents are going to occur. It's a critical time to get training underway.”

Of course, running a safe firm is about more than just training.

“The commonality between safe companies is culture,” says Drew Garcia, landscape division leader for Santee, Calif.-based Rancho Mesa Insurance Services, which has many clients in the landscape industry. “You could

have the best ever written safety program, but if it's collecting dust, it's irrelevant. The companies that are active, always doing fun events and establishing an identity around safety, are the companies that are typically safer. It creates a general awareness, so

employees take pride and believe in what you're doing.”

SAFETY SUGGESTIONS

Steel fields many calls and emails from NALP members about how to improve their safety programs. He says he most commonly recommends that companies conduct regular safety training.

“Ten to 15 minutes weekly is ideal in my opinion,” he says. “A lot of firms do it Monday mornings at 7:30 a.m. before everybody leaves the offices.”

If crews report directly to the worksite, crew leaders should be prepared to conduct training there.

Steel also advises companies to assemble a safety committee, which is tasked with helping management put together safety materials. Committee members should come from



Drew Garcia

Belknap Landscape Co.

When Belknap Landscape Co.'s spring safety meeting routine got a little stale, Mark Smith, Belknap's construction and tree operations manager, tapped outside resources to shake it up.

The company began the annual safety meeting 15 years ago. For many of those years, "It used to be just us as managers standing in front of 75 people and doing this talk," Smith says. "But (the staff) hears us talk and sees us every day, so I thought, 'Let's change this up a little bit.'"

He went to work approaching vendors to be a part of the spring safety meeting. This year's event featured demonstrations, activities and talks from sponsoring vendors Milton Cat Equipment, SiteOne Landscape Supply, Ready Equipment, LRGH-Occupational Therapy, NH DOT Consultants, Cross Insurance and Eversource Power Co.

The vendors donated their time, equipment and an array of prizes, such as Bluetooth speakers, to hand out during the day as participation awards to the 68 team members assembled.

The management team begins planning the annual safety meeting about a year in advance. The company's investment includes the labor cost for the staff for the day. With 68 people attending this year, the total was approximately \$11,000, plus \$1,500 for a catered breakfast and a full lunch for the team and vendors.

"It's just a way to make it a lot more fun, too, with prizes and outdoor events," Smith says. "Most people in this industry aren't in it to sit at a desk all day, so I wanted (the event) to be more relevant. The team then can get out into the fresh air and touch and feel some pieces of equipment and exercise certain practices we've been taught that day."

This year's theme, "A Day in the Life," came from the idea that



SAFETY FIRST
Mark Smith, construction and tree operations manager, Belknap Landscape Co., Gilford, N.H.

all levels of the organization and include the field staff, he says.

"They're the ones who see the close calls every day," he says.

Steel recommends implementing a system where close calls or "near misses" are reported and used to develop future training efforts.

"You don't want employees to be intimidated and feel like they can't report them," he says.

"They could be the next serious incident, so we want to encourage close-call reporting to the safety committee."

Companies also should consider outside resources, like trade associations, regulatory agencies, insurance vendors and extension educators, to improve training efforts, Steel says.

Finally, Steel says companies should take note of and practice the following requirements:

- Identify and document hazards located at worksites.
- Use those site hazard assessments to develop written safety policies. These policies should be shared with employees during their orientation and at ongoing training programs.



Sam Steel

If training appears to be ineffective, consider changing it.

- Ensure all training sessions are documented with trainee and trainer names; training topics; and dates the trainings were conducted.
- Always provide policies, procedures and training in a language that workers can understand.

TAILGATE TALK

Informal safety briefings help ensure everyone is on the same page.



COVER STORY

there's a reason," he says. "You're setting a new standard, and working to make the profile of the green industry better."

If you don't have the budget or the time to invest in a large-scale safety meeting, Smith has a few recommendations for improving your safety program.

Start small. Safety meetings and trainings are crucial, so "don't let money be the determining factor—just start some-

where," Smith says. He also cautions against trying to change everything at once; instead, focus on one or two items you would like to improve and build on those.

Use your resources. Scheduling meetings, trainings and audits with organizations and vendors you already have relationships with can be a useful, cost-free way to ensure safety training is woven into the everyday culture at your company.

Belknap takes advantage of Department of Transportation (DOT) consultant visits. The consultant conducts driver audits and pretrip inspections and reviews DOT laws, since those change regularly. The company also conducts quarterly safety audits with its insurance agent where they analyze data about incidents and near misses.

Belknap also uses free resources on the Tree Care Industry Association's and the New Hampshire Landscape Association's websites as part of its safety programs.

Get creative. When Belknap signs new contracts for equipment, it ensures that the contract includes proper training from the supplier's expert. Smith explains, "It's a win-win. We get the best training possible and there's less reliance on our staff to provide it. The benefit for the company is that they are training our people to run their equipment so we can do more business, which allows us to do more business with them." —Abby Hart

PPE—WHO PAYS?

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is an important safety topic. Consider that an initial 1910.132 PPE citation carries a fine of more than \$12,900.

"This amount can increase manyfold if the cited firm ignores or fails to abate the unsafe condition resulting in the citation," says Sam Steel, safety adviser for the National Association of Landscape Professionals.

So, who pays for it—the employer or the employee? It's a question that comes up time and again on industry forums and at conferences. We asked Steel for guidance.

"OSHA has stated and ruled numerous times that PPE selection and purchase is the responsibility of the employer," he says, noting there are exceptions for certain items like steel-toe shoes and prescription glasses. With prescription glasses, the employer must provide protective eye wear that fits over glasses. "One other exception is worker misuse and/or abuse of the PPE, where the employer can charge the worker for replacement PPE. This must be carefully documented by the employer."

When it comes to selecting PPE, Steel says the choice should be based on the company's work-site hazard audits, where specific dangers like flying debris (eye wear required); excessive noise (hearing protection required); and respirable dusts (respiratory protection required) are identified.

—Marisa Palmieri

Belknap employees fill a variety of professional roles each day, such as driver, landscaper, equipment operator and more.

"We talked about, 'What does the day at Belknap look like?' I asked myself why we're out there and it's to make sure everyone gets home to their families," Smith says.

Belknap, a \$7-million firm that's part of the LandOpt network, does 50 percent maintenance for commercial and residential clients and 50 percent design/build for a mostly high-end residential clientele. Depending on the season, the company employs 85 to 100 people.

Smith noted that in 2017, Belknap's primary workers' comp claims were for poison ivy, small lacerations (such as workers sustaining small cuts from pruning shears) and light muscle strains.

"Those are all things that just occur—and we're doing pretty well if that's what we're dealing with, but there's always room for improvement," he says.

Persistence and consistency also have been key to maintaining a good safety record, according to Smith.

"With safety, some of these changes can be scary to make—for example, going drug-free, as the company did 15 years ago," he says. "You don't know how it's going to be or where you're going to land, but in the end these efforts have improved our culture immensely.

"You have to be confident that some of these changes, as difficult as they may be,

Continued on page 41

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In all things, simplicity

Communication, easy-to-understand programs are keys to business success

By **NICHOLAS STRAIN** Business Director for Quali-Pro Products

From my first job in 1991 at the age of 11, mowing a local law firm's lawn in Frankfort, Ind., to my experience working at Blackhawk Country Club in Wisconsin, John Deere Landscapes and Barenbrug Seed to where I am today with Quali-Pro, there is one thing that has always been important to me: the customer.

The Quali-Pro brand started in the early 2000s with one post-patent active ingredient, Chlorothalonil, and now has grown to lead the industry with access to more than 120 active ingredients. Our motto, "Simply. Grow. Together," is born out of our experience as a small company that grew into the Control Solutions Inc. family and is backed internationally by Adama and ChemChina.

As the business director for Quali-Pro, one of my goals is to continue to develop new, innovative, proprietary chemistries like our nematocide, Nimitz, and to work with existing active ingredients in the industry by developing products like Enclave, our fungicide that combines chlorothalonil, iprodione, tebuconazole and thiophanate-methyl to offer four modes of action, all in one easy-to-use jug. We're also working with existing single active ingredients to simply make them better, like one of our newest herbicides, dithiopyr, which comes in water soluble bags and a liquid formulation.

So, let me ask you: What do you need to make your day-to-day interactions with Quali-Pro and our products simple and convenient?

One thing I've seen is the need to expand our outreach. We are going to be doubling our sales force in the field from the current staff of four area managers that cover the U.S. with eight area managers and one key account manager. This will allow us to support lawn care operators like you, providing education out in the field and being more actively involved in local associations. We will maintain our focus on making our industry programs and the new products we're developing simple to understand.

Our current Quali-Pro area managers have more than 100 years of combined experience in the industry. We also have an in-house research and development department led by Marie Knox, who has a masters in nematology and turf. Our technical services manager, Gary Custis, with his 40 years of experience, works closely with universities to develop new combinations. We've got something big coming out this year that will forever change the LCO market—but I'll let Gary tell you about that himself on page 6.

With mergers over the years, the Quali-Pro brand is still based in the U.S., in Pasadena, Texas, and operated by the founder of Control Solutions, Mark Boyd.



Nicholas Strain was previously Midwest Area Sales Manager. He's based out of McFarland, Wis., where he lives with his wife Lära and their two children, Ellie and Breck. He can be reached at nstrain@controlsolutionsinc.com.

He and Control Solutions Executive Vice President Curtis Clark play a major role in our day-to-day operations and maintain the focus of the company on making all things simple.

Quali-Pro programs are simple. That's echoed throughout the corporate culture here, as you'll hear from Mark and Curtis on the coming pages. Simplicity to us is about understanding your needs and having straightforward programs and products to meet those demands. Let us help you simplify your business with Quali-Pro products. ▲

GROWING NEEDS

Quali-Pro partners with LCOs to meet evolving demands

By LAUREN DOWDLE

It takes a deep dedication to customers, professionalism, quality work, reasonable prices and honest business practices for lawn care companies to succeed in their communities for decades.

A series of bad reviews or costly callbacks can have lasting effects, so it's important for companies to choose a chemical provider that not only meets their product needs, but also shares these values. Those are some of the reasons why many LCOs have continued to turn to Quali-Pro products.

Quali-Pro is a division of Control Solutions Inc. (CSI) — which is a subsidiary of Adama, the fifth largest chemical company in the world. CSI started as Ford's Chemical & Service in Pasadena, Texas, 60 years ago. Mark Boyd, whose family has been in the chemical

business for generations, still runs the company day-to-day.

"The original Ford's Chemical was really a generic company, and we wanted to be more. We wanted to be products that could change the industry. When I formed CSI, we had the vision, but we really didn't know how to get there. It wasn't until we formed the partnership with (Adama) that we knew we could get to where that vision became reality."

"My vision is that we will launch products in the next 5 years that will change the industry."

Mark Boyd
CSI President

Three of CSI's lawn care customers from across the country share why they incorporate Quali-Pro products into their services and how those products have benefited their businesses.

Following the research

Kevin Herrmann, general manager of Fairway Green, which has been in business for 29 years, likes to see how chemical products are performing for other organizations before incorporating them into his rotation.

With locations in Raleigh and Charlotte, N.C., Fairway Green provides lawn care, aeration, tree



History of CSI

Control Solutions Inc., the Texas-based manufacturer of the Quali-Pro brand, is a subsidiary of Adama Agricultural Solutions and ChemChina, which also recently acquired Syngenta.

Ford's is acquired by Roussel Bio Corp.

Control Solutions Inc. is established to distribute Ford's products to the professional and consumer markets.



1958



1989

Ford's Pest Chemical is founded in Pasadena, Texas by the Boyd family.

1998



Fairway Green applies Quali-Pro products to residential and commercial properties in North Carolina.

Results matter

Jason Wistrand, owner of Lawn Creations, has been using Quali-Pro products for about four years. He's been in business for 19 years and has locations in Greenwich and Stamford, Conn., offering lawn care, lawn renovation, tick control, small tree and shrub, core aeration and organic lawn care services. Lawn Creations' customers are 95 percent residential and 5 percent commercial.

Wistrand started using Quali-Pro's fungicide products on the recommendation of their distributor, Metro Turf Specialist in Brookfield, Conn. Quali-Pro's products provided the same control at a better price, Wistrand says.

But there are more reasons to use Quali-Pro products than the lower costs. They also have one of the largest lists of active ingredients registered in the United States.

That's what changed Wistrand's mind. In the beginning, he and the team at Lawn Creations relied on Quali-Pro products when they were in a jam. Now, Quali-Pro has become their go-to provider.

"They met the expectations of what we needed," Wistrand says. "I'm feeling even more confident with them."

Just like any other product LCOs are using, Wistrand says, it's important to evaluate how the

and shrub, mosquito control, disease control and seeding services to a customer mix that's about 80 percent residential and 20 percent commercial. Fairway Green says it is the largest locally owned lawn care company in North Carolina.

Herrmann has been using Quali-Pro products for about 15 years and gets them from distributors Green Resource and Southern Ag. Herrmann bases his purchasing decisions on local research from NC State University to see which formulations work best. Herrmann says he heard about the university using Quali-Pro for research and liked the results it

was seeing.

Being in a market with both warm- and cool-season grasses, Herrmann and his team face unique challenges when it comes to finding the best treatment. One of the main products that has helped them tackle the turf is Quali-Pro's Prodiamine.

"We like the Prodiamine formulation because it seems to stay in suspension longer, and we get fewer callbacks for crabgrass," he says.

His advice to other LCOs looking to purchase lawn care products: Do your homework.

"Look at research, and use the product that works," Herrmann says.

QUALI-PRO

The Quali-Pro brand is integrated into the Control Solutions family.

Control Solutions Inc. celebrates its 20th anniversary with the establishment of a new aerosol and microencapsulation production facility.



2004

2011

2017

2018



Control Solutions Inc. is acquired by Makhteshim Agan (which is now known as Adama).

CHEMCHINA

ChemChina completes purchase of Adama.

“Our portfolio has expanded immensely, and we offer all types of new solutions for our customers.”

Curtis Clark

CSI Executive Vice President

chemicals are performing and if there are more effective options available.

“I’d suggest they look at what they’ve been using and consider using Quali-Pro based on price and control,” Wistrand says. “In our business, we’re results-oriented.”

Exceeding expectations

For Chris Stuhr, owner of A Greener Image Lawn Care in Mound, Minn., switching to Quali-Pro has helped his business in multiple areas. A Greener Image is in its 12th year and offers lawn care and fall aeration services. His customers are 90 percent residential and 10 percent commercial.

Stuhr has been using Quali-Pro products for eight years since he learned about the products from his supplier, Tessman Seed Co. Stuhr started with its herbicide Quinclorac and has now switched over all of his herbicides to Quali-Pro, including its multi-active herbicides 2DQ and 3-D.

CSI is known for creating one-of-a-kind Combination

Chemistry® products that incorporate multiple active ingredients. CSI’s combination products are laboratory tested and quality controlled for proven results.

“The interesting part about Control Solutions is our ability to develop, register and formulate a vast number of new products over a very short period of time,” says CSI Executive Vice President Curtis Clark. “On average we are developing, registering and selling 10-12 new products every year, and we have been doing this over the past decade.”

Gary Custis has a master’s in agronomy and turfgrass from Virginia Tech and 40 years of experience and is technical services manager for Quali-Pro. He says tank mixing doesn’t produce the same results as combination products.

“Our research shows us it’s not the same. Guys start thinking they can throw things in the tank and make it work. In the old days you could get away with that. Nowadays, you have to have an understanding of what’s going on with the plant itself,” Custis says. “I work with all the major universities. The products we bring to market work.”

Custis and his team are always working on new products and he says he has “a new insecticide that is going to totally change how people look at certain insecticides” coming out in the next year.

“The more somebody understands about the product, the better it’s going to work,”

Gary Custis


Quali-Pro Technical Services Manager

Beyond the price and performance, Quali-Pro products also came with another benefit for Stuhr. While 2DQ isn’t advertised as a low-odor product, he says he saw his complaints about a chemical smell after application disappear overnight when he made the switch.

“I have friends in the business who pay extra for low-odor products, so I’ve pointed them to my Quali-Pro supplier,” he says. “You don’t want to get callbacks. I tried it for a season and had zero complaints with the smell.”

As a small owner-operator, Stuhr says he has to compete against other large, nation-wide companies by providing the best results—and that starts with the product he uses.

Stuhr says he also appreciates the level of support CSI provides for its Quali-Pro customers, no matter their company’s size.

“They try to take care of the small customer as much as the big customer,” Stuhr says. “They really care and give everyone a chance to go to war with the same weapon.” 

Q&A

With former LCO, Jake Wylie, now of Quali-Pro

What got you into the green industry?

I come from an agricultural background. My family were all ranchers and farmers just outside of Lubbock, Texas. So, I learned about soil young.

You got your start in the business working with LCOs at the Texas Structural Pest Control Board. Why did you end up forming your own lawn care company?

I was always proactive instead of reactive, and that's where I learned that I really excelled on the lawn care side. I wanted to work for myself. I created a partnership with a friend, and we went out on our own.

How does that experience inform the work you do today with your customers?

When it's your company, you look at every single expense: What's this product going to cost today? A year from now? The worst thing as a lawn care operator is when a distributor rep walks in to talk to you about products when the price point is completely out of your range.

What ultimately made you decide to leave your own business?

You're doing something for seven or

eight years where you have to manage it all seven days a week. I was working evenings and weekends and reaching the point of burnout and still trying to capture enough business to cover benefits. When the opportunity came around to move back home closer to my family, I took it.

How can Quali-Pro make owners' lives easier?

If they can buy a product and get the same amount of control but cut their costs 5, 10 sometimes 15 percent, the lawn care industry is the first to make that change. A single operator doing \$150,000 a year in production can save \$15,000 a year or more with Quali-Pro.

What's the most common misconception about Quali-Pro?

It's that we're just making "me-too" products. That perception is rapidly changing. What attracted me the most to Quali-Pro was the new combination products.

If there's one Quali-Pro product that your customers aren't currently using but should be, what is it?

Taurus Trio G. Fire ants are a huge issue in

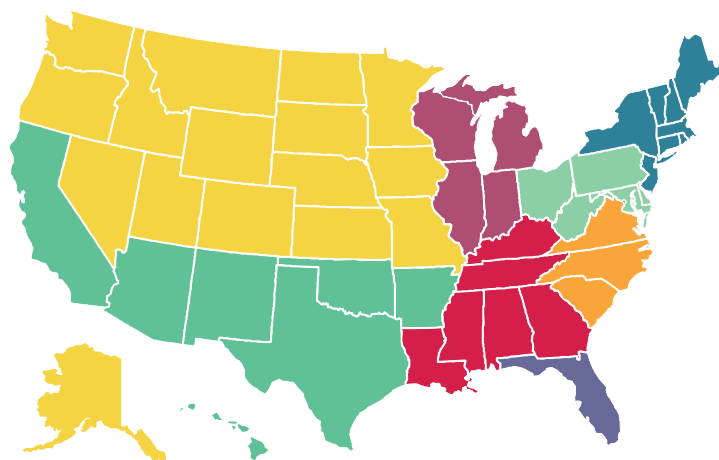


Jake Wylie is now Quali-Pro's Mid-South Area Manager. Wylie is one of three members of the Quali-Pro sales team who previously owned his own landscape company.

my area. Back when I had my own company, I bought a \$600 dual-hopper spreader so I could spread fipronil, but it takes two to six weeks to get control, so then I'd also spread bifenthrin to get quick control. The spreader was a nightmare. It never worked properly. The rates were never accurate. With Taurus Trio G, you have fipronil, bifenthrin and lambda-cyhalothrin, so you're essentially getting three applications in one product.

Where is Quali-Pro going in the future?

We have such a broad portfolio that there's no one key product. If you have a problem, we have a product to solve it. And the newer combination products are really giving us a lot of recognition and are going to open all kinds of new avenues for your business. ▲



For the most up-to-date contact info, visit <https://bit.ly/2HWfBMx>

■ For sales in the Mid-Atlantic states, please contact Business Director for more information.

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QUALI-PRO

Continued from page 32

Curby's Lawn & Garden

When asked about the last time Curby's Lawn & Garden dealt with an accident, Larry Craig, safety and quality control manager, replies "Maybe we had a minor traffic accident more than a decade ago, but it was so long ago, I can't quite remember."

A winner of the National Association of Landscape Professionals' (NALP) 2016 Best of the Best Award, Curby's is located in Gardner, Kan., and was founded in 1984. It's been awarded NALP's Overall Safety Achievement in Gold Award for three consecutive years (2014, 2015, 2016), with additional gold awards in 2007 and 2011, according to NALP.

Other safety awards from NALP include one bronze and four silver Overall Achievement Awards and eight Triple Awards (no injuries and illnesses, no days away from work and no vehicle accidents), among others.

The company employs up to 30 crew members and offers 85 percent design/build and installation, 15 percent irrigation and water management services to an 80 percent residential, 20 percent commercial clientele.

"I think our record just stands on its own," says Craig, who has been with Curby's for more than 20 years. "Everyone just tries to be aware, and it's been drilled into them, so it's automatic every morning."

Craig, who has served as safety manager since 2004, adds safety has always been a top priority for the company.

"Curby himself has always stressed that safety is our No. 1 thing," he says of the company's owner, Curby Hughes.

To ensure all employees—new and seasoned—are on the same page, Craig leads a mandatory safety meeting each month.

If a crew member is unable to attend, the company arranges to

SAFE COMPANY PROFILE



MEET UP
Larry Craig, safety and quality control manager of Curby's Lawn & Garden, conducts a monthly safety meeting.

discuss the information with him at a later date.

Typically lasting about 30 minutes on a Wednesday morning, each meeting takes place in the company's conference room, with a hands-on demonstration in the field afterward, depending on the meeting's topic.

Topics include:

- First aid basics for addressing minor cuts and injuries with first aid kits provided in each company vehicle;
- How to properly back up vehicles, such as trucks, trailers, skid loaders and front loaders, to avoid backing accidents;
- Proper use of hand tools, such as chainsaws and gasoline trimmers, to avoid using or fueling when equipment is too hot;
- Correct trailer attachment technique;
- Avoiding hearing loss and wearing ear plugs when running noisy equipment;
- Good housekeeping for keeping work areas free of clutter and debris; and
- Drug and alcohol awareness, complete with a warning that drug or alcohol use on the job is terms for automatic dismissal.

Craig chooses topics from information he receives from industry magazine articles, Kansas State University (KSU), NALP and gas and electrical companies, among others.

During each meeting, he passes out a handout, with the relevant safety information written in English and Spanish.

The handouts are already translated into Spanish by the source organization, such as KSU, NALP

or industry magazines, when Craig receives them, but Curby's has two bilingual management staff members if further clarification is needed.

"We make copies in English and Spanish so employees can go over it, and if they have questions, they can ask," Craig says. "Having the Spanish copy has always been helpful."

At the meetings, Craig also addresses any safety-related problems that have cropped up within the past month.

"Crews are on board with safety measures, and they take an interest in not wanting to have an injury," Craig says.

He says employees are not offered additional incentives for safe behavior, mostly because crews have learned to demonstrate such behavior on their own.

OSHA'S TOP 10

The following is a list of the top 10 most frequently cited standards following inspections of worksites by federal OSHA for fiscal year 2017. OSHA said it publishes this list to alert employers about these commonly cited standards, so they can take steps to find and fix recognized hazards addressed in these and other standards before OSHA shows up.

1. Fall protection, construction
2. Hazard communication standard, general industry
3. Scaffolding, general requirements, construction
4. Respiratory protection, general industry
5. Control of hazardous energy (lockout/tag out), general industry
6. Ladders, construction
7. Powered industrial trucks, general industry
8. Machinery and machine guarding, general requirements
9. Fall protection, training requirements
10. Electrical, wiring methods, components and equipment, general industry

In addition to the monthly meetings, select staff members attend an annual meeting about digging safety, put on by Dig Safe, a nonprofit clearinghouse that notifies participating utility companies of contractors' plans to dig.


811 is the phone number contractors can call before planning to dig.

Other safety initiatives include supplying each crew member with proper personal protective equipment, including gloves, ear plugs, a reflective safety vest and two pairs of safety glasses—clear and tinted.

Curby's also provides crews with coolers filled with water, especially during hot summer months.

"We want them to know what to watch for with heat strokes and for them to slow down and take a break if they start feeling something," Craig says. "We tell them how to dress for the weather and that they need to hydrate the day before."

For landscape companies hoping to improve their safety records, Craig's advice is to consistently communicate with crews about safety.

"You can't just say, 'Here's a handout, read this and try to be safe,'" he says. "You have to meet with the guys. You have to show them."  —Sarah Webb

COMMON WORKERS' COMP CLAIMS

When it comes to workers' compensation, there are three claim types that occur most frequently, according to Drew Garcia, landscape division leader for Rancho Mesa Insurance Services. He shares those here, along with steps landscape companies can take to prevent them.

Hand, wrist and finger lacerations

WHY IT'S HAPPENING: Workers take their gloves off because they're getting in the way of the task at hand, such as pruning.

HOW TO PREVENT IT: Find a glove that's form fitting, provides protection and still allows the dexterity for workers to do their jobs correctly. A solution may be providing different gloves for different types of work.

Low back injuries

WHY IT'S HAPPENING: Strains occur from pulling or lifting. The two most common times for injuries are early in the morning and right after lunch when the body isn't warmed up, Garcia says.

HOW TO PREVENT IT: Implement a simple mobility stretch program in the mornings before crews begin their physically intense work for the day.

Knee/ankle injuries

WHY IT'S HAPPENING: Workers slip or fall on wet turf or uneven surfaces.

HOW TO PREVENT IT: Garcia has seen companies create solutions such as avoiding slope work in the morning because of dew or designating a specific slope team that is aware of the hazards. For installation jobs, he says it's important to identify hazards like uneven ground with a thorough walkthrough before the workday begins. —Marisa Palmieri



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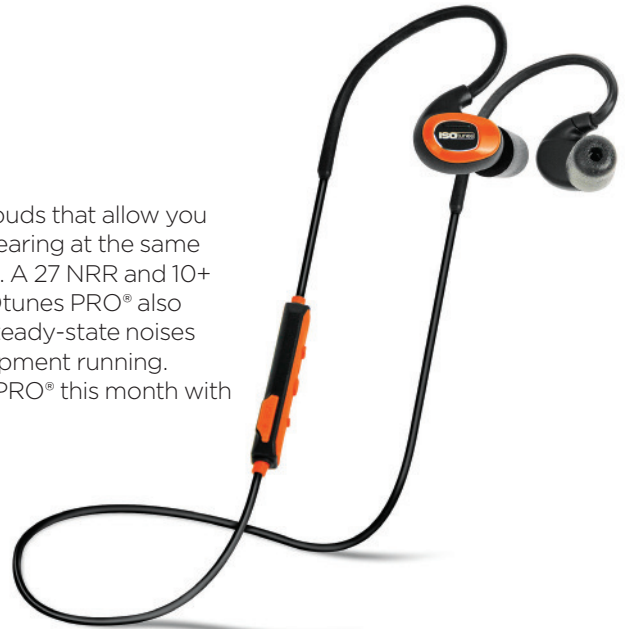
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BUSINESS BASICS: NUMBERS

LET'S GROW

CASE STUDY: ADD-ON BIZ

JUST A MINUTE

Creating a one-minute management report may be easier than you think. Daniel Gordon offers his tips.

▶ PAGE 46

The one-minute management report



BY DANIEL GORDON

The author is a CPA who caters to landscape and lawn care firms. Reach him at dan@turfbooks.com.

When I look at a set of financials, I want to determine within one minute if the company is profitable and if the revenues and expenses are in line with industry standards. So, how do we create such a report?

START WITH YOUR CHART OF ACCOUNTS

Surprisingly, many companies use a generic chart of accounts. These charts are usually created so an accountant can prepare the year-end tax return. The IRS is looking for bottom-line profits to tax. The expense categories it wants broken out are on the tax return. While useful for calculating taxes, these provide little for management reporting.

While preparing tax returns is one use for a profit and loss (P&L) statement, the management information derived from a properly prepared set of financials is extremely important in growing and improving a lawn care or landscape business. As such, your goal should be to determine your true costs by department within one minute of picking up the statement.

GROUP REVENUE BY DIVISION, SERVICE AGREEMENT TYPE

The most important revenue in any service business is recurring revenue. In the landscape industry, because most of us run divisions defined by skill set or marketing groups, we keep those as major headings. The trick is bringing the information and related customer payments and accounts receivable over into a general ledger program such as QuickBooks.

By segregating revenues this way, you can determine the type of work



you're doing and how much you can expect to repeat in the future when budgeting.

GROUP EXPENSES BY DIRECT COSTS, MARKETING COSTS, SALES COSTS AND G&A COSTS

Direct costs are associated with putting a technician on the road or your true operational costs. These costs include technician wages, benefits, payroll taxes and uniforms. The cost of the technician's truck, auto insurance, fuel, materials, etc., are also all direct costs.

Marketing costs include all activity to produce a customer lead, such as advertising in print, online, direct mail, etc. Sales costs are associated with converting those leads into sales. These include salesperson wages, payroll taxes, benefits, sales vehicles and all associated costs.

General and administrative (G&A) costs are those that don't fit into the categories above. Usually, these costs are known as fixed costs and include the costs of running the office and other management costs.

IMPORTANCE OF GROSS MARGINS

Direct costs indicate the cost of your operation. The gross margin, or gross profit, is the revenue minus the direct costs. By looking at the gross margin, we can determine if we are operation-


ally efficient. It also tells us if we have done enough revenue volume to cover our nonoperational costs (i.e. marketing, sales and fixed). It also allows us to show a reasonable profit.

COMPARE RESULTS, COMPUTE VARIANCES

Using the above methodology, you can easily determine your true profitability. You can further benefit by measuring these results against industry benchmarking standards. Many well-prepared P&L statements compare the current year's results against the prior year for the current month and year to date.

The most successful professionals also create an operating budget by month and measure their actual results against the budget.

Once the one-minute P&L statement has been set up with actuals vs. the benchmark column, it's important to see how the actual current year's results match up. I recommend a column showing the variance between the current year's results and the benchmark selected so you can determine if you're ahead or behind the "target." This provides a starting point to ask hard questions about why the company may or may not be measuring up to last year's performance or this year's budget.

Producing a one-minute P&L statement doesn't need to be difficult. General ledger programs like QuickBooks are adapted to generate financial statements that meet the above criteria. A competent CPA can help you set up QuickBooks and take information from your routing program and marry it with QuickBooks to produce the one-minute manager reports. 

DO THE MATH.

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Year-round spring cleaning



BY KEVIN KEHOE

The author, owner-manager of 3PG Consulting, is a 25-year industry veteran. Reach him at kevinkehoe@me.com.

It's the end of renewal season, and spring work is about to commence. While sitting at your desk late in the day, you receive an email. The message is from a customer. It essentially says, "Thanks for your service, but you're fired." After considering some options, like begging or "getting a drink," you might want to consider, "Is this good or bad news?" Certainly, in the short term, it feels like bad news. But is it?

Spring cleaning is a euphemism for clearing out the old to make room for the new. It's a fresh start—a better and more profitable direction. In my last column, I discussed pricing your work to address overhead recovery and market conditions (LandscapeManagement.net/resolve-to-raise-prices). In this column, I'll discuss a method for customer spring cleaning year-round.

Back to that email. Let's start with a simple question: Was the lost relationship a profitable one? Let's define "profitable." A profitable customer is loyal (100 percent retention), delivers a targeted profit margin for the services provided (gross profit percentage) and purchases additional work (upsell percentage).

Was this customer relationship profitable? If it was, then losing it is bad. If it wasn't, then it's not so bad. If you don't know, then you have a bigger problem. And if you don't know for this one customer, you have to wonder how many other customers might leave you one day or how many are merely revenue providers costing you more than they contribute. Here are three steps you might practice year-round to ensure your relationships are good ones.

KEEP SCORE

Before renewing any relationship, understand customer profitability. To do this, you need the information below—at a minimum. In the example below, the customer

relationship appears to be profitable. It meets the three requirements: retention, margins and purchases. Keep in mind that you should not only address low-profit relationships, you should also address high-profit relationships. Relationships where you are making far above a target margin are also at risk from a lower-bid competitor.


REVIEW MONTHLY

The account manager is responsible for the relationship. To manage it, he or she must be on top of it. To ensure this is the case, you should monitor the activities that drive relationship profitability: renewals, site inspections and upselling. A simple report will provide the snapshot you need to work with your account manager. For example, it could list the number of site inspections planned and completed by month, along with actual and target dollar amounts for work proposed and sold.

DO SPRING CLEANING

The final step is spring cleaning. Using data, you can now take the necessary actions to manage relationship profitability. I will discuss these specific steps in my next column.

Spring cleaning is essential to managing your net profits. Unprofitable relationships bleed your margins in many ways. As for the results of cleaning house, if it comes to "firing" a customer instead of them firing you, I can say your people will thank you for losing that kind of customer, and your cash flow will thank you as you open up the potential for selling more profitable work.

My philosophy has always been, "Work with people who appreciate your work and respect your need to make a profit." The best and most honest relationships in life and business are profitable—for both parties. 

Example:

YEAR	Contract			
	ACTUAL REVENUE	ACTUAL INCREASE	ACTUAL GROSS PROFIT	TARGET GROSS PROFIT
2015	\$25,000	5%	48%	45%
2016	\$26,000	4%	46%	45%
2017	\$27,000	4%	48%	45%

Upsell				
ACTUAL SELL RATE	TARGET SELL RATE	ACTUAL REVENUE	ACTUAL GROSS PROFIT	TARGET GROSS PROFIT
23%	25%	\$6,250	48%	50%
28%	25%	\$6,500	48%	50%
25%	25%	\$6,750	47%	50%

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CASE STUDY: ADD-ON BIZ

Bioretention areas are mandated by sewer districts in some places, like St. Louis.

An opportunity in bioretention

Local regulations led to a new service offering for Bluegrass Landscape & Snow Management.

BY CASEY PAYTON

New regulations from the local sewer district on adding bioretention areas to make up for lost green space inspired Bluegrass Landscape & Snow Management, based in Bridgeton, Mo., to make the leap into the field. It's been a big investment of both time and money to get into bioretention—but it's been paying off.

Chris Darnell, business development and marketing manager for Bluegrass, says because of these new requirements, bioretention is a service poised for growth. The Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District regulations say any new property that's displacing green space must make up for it because dirt, oil or trash that collect in parking lots or other hardscaped areas can be carried

by stormwater runoff into a storm sewer—eventually reaching local bodies of water. Biore-

tention areas prevent that runoff. These depressed landscape zones include vegetation, organic soil and a graded filter of sands and gravel below the soil for proper drainage. The areas contain a perforated underdrain pipe beneath the filter to ensure the area drains properly and an overflow structure to handle water from larger storms.

Darnell says the company first got involved with bioretention about three years ago. Bluegrass has primarily offered bioretention maintenance—39 of its customers have one or more bioretention areas, totaling about 126

bioretention ponds—but it plans to get into more installations. The company has marketed the service through video, its website, blog posts, brochures and a direct mail postcard.

To get started, the company sent one of its employees, Shonda Lucks, to North Carolina State University to complete a Stormwater BMP Inspection & Maintenance Certification. The first certification involves two days of training, with additional two-day recertification trainings every two years. Lucks is now in charge of the company's bioretention department, performing all inspections, creating work orders, selling new maintenance plans and training crew members.

The service has required a lot of training to ensure the areas are maintained properly. Because bioretention areas are so expensive to install, it's imperative that maintenance mistakes are not made, Darnell says. For instance, a common landscape mistake might be confusing native plants for weeds and pulling them out as a result. It's essential that staff are trained to know the difference between the two.

Darnell says the investment to get involved with bioretention hasn't been small. The company has likely invested as much as \$50,000, including marketing materials, training resources for Lucks and other crew members and educational materials to help customers understand the purpose of bioretention areas.

As the service becomes increasingly in demand, Bluegrass is seeing


that investment pay off.

The biggest challenge is keeping up with ever-changing information.

"What we knew three years ago has already changed so much," Darnell says. "Whether it's best practices or specific requirements—that information seems to always be evolving. But keeping up with what's new is critical."

While it requires diligence, Darnell says this service addition has been valuable for the company. It's a niche that many companies have not delved into, and it's made Bluegrass a "single-source provider," which was a goal.

"Being able to handle all of our customers' needs from A to Z is incredibly important to us," Darnell says.

"The client doesn't have to create more relationships or seek help elsewhere when we can do it all." 

Payton is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia.

BUSINESS BREAKDOWN

COMPANY: Bluegrass Landscape & Snow Management

HEADQUARTERS: Bridgeton, Mo.

SERVICE: Bioretention

REVENUE: Undisclosed

EMPLOYEES: Approximately 120

SERVICE MIX: 55% maintenance, 30% snow, 15% landscaping (including 3% bioretention)

CUSTOMER MIX: 100% commercial



WEB EXTRA

Visit the Web Extras section at LandscapeManagement.net to view an explainer video Bluegrass Landscape produced about bioretention areas.

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PRODUCT FOCUS

ZERO-TURN MOWERS

← Z500 ZERO-TURN SERIES

COMPANY: Husqvarna
URL: Husqvarna.com



Husqvarna's new Z500 zero-turn series consists of eleven products (Z554 pictured) and features a weld-rein-

forced 2- by 3-in. tubular

steel frame, 7- or 10-gauge cutting decks and 10-in. diameter spindles, all protected by Husqvarna's 5-year limited commercial warranty. Operator improvements include an automatic parking brake, an easy-to-fold rollover protection system and easy-to-view deck height adjustment. The mower offers tool-less fasteners, sealed and labeled fuse boxes and easy access to all major components. The Z500 series also features a colored fuel gauge.

↓ F320Z WITH OIL GUARD SYSTEM

COMPANY: Ferris
URL: FerrisMowers.com

The Ferris F320Z with the Oil Guard System by Vanguard is powered by either a Vanguard Big Block or Big Block EFI engine. The Oil Guard System saves contractors up to 60 percent cost on oil maintenance per unit, per season, according to the company. The mower features large 26-in. drive tires, a premium high-back adjustable suspension seat and heavy-duty components, such as Hercules II cast-iron spindles.



ARTICULATING ZERO-TURN COMMERCIAL MOWERS

COMPANY: Lastec
URL: Lastec.com

Lastec's commercial lineup of zero-turn articulating mowers come in 61- and 73-in. articulating decks and are available in gas and diesel engine options. (The Articulator 2561c is pictured.) With 12 degrees of up/down articulation, three 21- or 25-in. welded steel mowing decks can approach contours from any angle without turf damage or scalping, Lastec said. The mower also features a heavy-duty fabricated frame and a powder-coat paint finish.



TITAN HD 20000 SERIES

COMPANY: Toro
URL: Toro.com

The Titan HD 2000 Series includes the MyRide suspension system. MyRide allows for five-point adjustment on the rear shocks and features a suspended operator platform delivering 3 in. of travel, isolating the operator from the rest of the machine and reducing impacts, bumps and vibrations. Powered by a Toro V-Twin 708cc, 24.5-hp engine, the mower is available in 42-, 52- and 60-in. (pictured) Turbo Force cutting decks, can hold up to 7 gal. of fuel and reach ground speeds of up to 9 mph.



PREDATOR-PRO RS MOWER →

COMPANY: Bob-Cat
URL: BobCatTurf.com

Bob-Cat's Predator-Pro RS mower includes improved rider comfort, discharge design, maintenance access and more, according to the company. The mower features the new AirFX commercial cutting deck, which offers a deep deck profile for ultimate vacuum and gapped baffles for efficient airflow. It's backed by a 6-year/2,750-hour limited warranty and is the flagship machine on the RS line of mowers from Bob-Cat.



SKID-STEERS



M2-SERIES SKID-STEER LOADER

COMPANY: Bobcat

URL: Bobcat.com

The M2-Series skid-steer loaders offer enhanced performance, operator comfort and visibility features for increased operator productivity and improved machine uptime protection, according to Bobcat. The machine features an automatic ride control option. Front and rear cab isolators, door seals and side screen dampers reduce vibration and noise, Bobcat said. Additionally, a new top window improves visibility with a 34 percent increase in open area, beneficial when loading material into high-sided trucks. An optional side lighting kit is also available.



RS-75 & VS-75 SKID-STEER LOADERS

COMPANY: ASV Holdings

URL: Asvi.com

ASV Holdings' large-frame, radial-lift RS-75 and vertical-lift VS-75 skid-steer loaders feature 10.5 in. of ground clearance and 24-degree departure angles. Optional two-speed drive allows for speeds as fast as 11 mph. Both units include a 74-hp diesel engine that produces 192 ft-lbs of torque. The VS-75 features a 3,500-lb. rated operating capacity (ROC), while the RS-75 has a 2,600-lb. ROC. The RS-75 has a 10.4-ft. lift height, and the VS-75 has a 10.8-ft. lift height.



320G & 324G MIDFRAME SKID-STEERS



COMPANY: John Deere

URL: Deere.com

The John Deere 320G and 324G (pictured) midframe skid-steers offer a powerful tool for any job. At 69-74 hp (52-55 kW), both models are powered by Yanmar FT4 engines and offer flexible control choices, including standard manual or electro-hydraulic ISO joystick. Additionally, breakout forces and auxiliary flow improve attachment performance, according to the company.



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RESOURCES

[Coming in June]

Stay tuned for
LM150, our list of the
largest landscape
companies, ranked
by revenue.

Every year, the LM150 list ranks the biggest companies in the landscape industry. Data collection is well underway, and next month we'll share the



list, plus a few stories about firms that made the rankings. Check out the list online at LandscapeManagement.net/LM150 or in print to see who made it, and what you can learn from the companies on the list.

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BACKSTORY

INTERVIEW BY ABBY HART



"I love being on the water, being outside and enjoying warm weather. That's why I moved to South Florida."

Darren Gruner

PRINCIPAL
TOTALSCAPE DESIGN
HOST
TURF'S UP RADIO
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA.

EDUCATION

Cherry Hill High School West
Cherry Hill, N.J.
Class of 1982

Burlington County
Community College
Mount Laurel, N.J.
1993-1995

WORK EXPERIENCE

1977-2016
Kentucky Blue
Principal
Lindenwold, N.J.

1990-1993
Dolcis Shoes
Assistant Manager
Manager
N.J., Pa., and Del.

2010-present
Turf's Up Radio
Host
West Palm Beach, Fla.

2012-present
TotalScape Design
Principal
Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

"I took pre-med in college, paying my own way through school with the money I was making doing what I truly loved: landscaping. I soon realized that I would be happier staying true to who I am, and that I should follow my own dream, not the dream my parents had for me."

"I lived in the Northeast, and as a result, Kentucky Blue was seasonal, so I had to take on other work during the off-season. I learned a lot about how to manage a business, manage people and how to deal with all kinds of different customers."

"As the host of Turf's Up Radio, I got to interview pro golfer Guy Burrows, Shannon Easter, director of golf maintenance at Broken Sound Country Club in Boca Raton, Fla., and Russ Britton, CEO of Mirimichi Green at the PGA Allianz Championship last season."



(With daughter Jessica, 23, and son Michael, 18): "Jessica 'The Juice' will graduate in a year with her bachelor's degree in education—she wants to teach early childhood development. She's a great role model, and I'm so proud of her. Michael is graduating high school this year and has accepted a football scholarship to Ursinus College. He's got a great head on his shoulders."



"I taught myself to be better in business throughout the years."

"I want to make sure that our station touches everybody who loves the outdoors, no matter what it is, and I wanted to be able to talk in layman's terms."

"When you look out your back window, I want that to be a picture of your dream. I want to create a path for you to walk through that picture and be in that picture."

WORDS OF WISDOM "I keep the phrase 'I can't' out of my vocabulary." • "Even when I was a kid, I helped my competitors. I always shared my industry knowledge, and I knew that while I was teaching other people, it would help me to be better in my own business and I loved that. It's a big reason why I started Turf's Up Radio." • "Don't let others define who you are." • "Strive to be a leader in your industry." • "Be focused and driven and never give up."

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KubotaUSA.com



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