



Kevin Petrinec

shows, appeared on local television and been quoted in newspapers on behalf of professional lawn care.

"We have our backs against the wall," he says. "We've had to be-

come media savvy in a hurry and, obviously, we have to continue to be politically active."

Ahead of the game

In this light, NYSLCA initiated its own citizen pre-notification registry last fall, something members had unsuccessfully asked state lawmakers to consider implementing in previous terms. Eleven other states have established similar registries that seem to be working well, Petrinec points out.

"We've been doing a voluntary pre-notification of our customers anyway," says Donald Potentz, Lushlawn, Inc., Buffalo, NY, echoing several other lawn care managers in the state. "The way the new law is

written, I don't know how I could do it if it passed in our county. We would probably go to all granular and do spot spraying where we needed it. Two of our applications are liquid. All granular would be okay, but the results would not be as good." There are several exemptions in the



Donald Potentz

law — for application of granular pesticides and for small spot applications.

Also, homeowners treating more than 100 sq. ft. of lawn area with pesticides must post markers on the day of application, as commercial lawn applicators already do.

It appears unlikely that many county governments will adopt the new law, the cost of enforcement being one sticking point. But even if most don't, lawn care professionals feel political pressure on professional pesticide users will continue.

With that in mind, about 75 representatives met with state lawmakers in Albany

on Feb. 6. The meetings were arranged as part of the New York State Turfgrass Association's second annual Turfgrass Advocacy Day.

—Ron Hall



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People & companies

Landscapers Supply

Corp. appointed **James Kelley** district sales manager.



Pennington Seed

named **Charles W. Lohse** western territory manager for the Profes-

sional Turfgrass Group.

Simplot Partners appointed **Nick Spardy** vice president and general manager, **David Schermerhorn** director of sales and **John Maggiore** national operations manager.

Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products

named **Gregory E. Hyland** chairman and CEO.

Environmental Care named **Thane Issacs**



manager of its Memphis, TN branch.

A time to grow

Troubled boys learn love and responsibility through work at greenhouse

BY JASON STAHL

DENVER, CO — The parallels between life and gardening are endless. To be successful at both, one has to learn how to nurture, care and love. Growth only happens through learning. The more you dedicate yourself to it, the better you get at it.

The connection between growing in life and growing plants wasn't missed by the staff at Colorado Boys Ranch, La Junta, CO, who last year constructed an on-campus green-

house with funding from the Wallace Genetic Foundation. The idea was to teach the residential treatment and education facility's troubled boys the fundamentals of horticulture, not to mention a few life lessons about love, responsibility and commitment.

Rodger Harris, the chaplain at Colorado Boys Ranch and former agricultural business executive, oversees all the love poured into the flowers, vegetables and fruits. In his program, which consists of four classes a day, the



Colorado Boys Ranch chaplain Rodger Harris inspects plants in the new greenhouse while a youth repots a seedling.

boys learn everything from planting and harvesting to putting soil to bed in winter and

harvesting and replanting seeds in winter.

continued on page 24

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Circle No. 114 on Reader Inquiry Card

industry almanac

continued from page 22

"There's something about boys and playing in the dirt. It's therapeutic and relaxing," Harris says. "The greenhouse offers a respite to the boys. They always want to pick the fruit before it ripens, but I tell them to just wait a little longer."

One boy in particular seemed to find his calling on a field trip to Hollar Seeds, a nearby international seed producer and distributor. "He was so impressed by what goes on there that he said he wanted to pursue a career in seeds," Harris recalls. "Up until that time, he hadn't shown much interest in anything. Now, he retains information quite well. He'll go to the greenhouse and say, 'Oh, this is what you talked about yesterday.'"

It turns out that Hollar Seeds is donating

a portion of the sale of its Prairie Fire pepper plant seeds to the program.

"We see this as a perfect relationship," says Charles Thompson, president of Colorado Boys Ranch. "The proceeds of this venture go directly towards helping us maintain our highly successful horticulture program."

Thompson says the boys have already grown some of the Prairie Fire pepper plants, and, given that they're hot, showy ornamentals that contain capsaicin, a hot pepper ingredient that serves as a natural insect repellent, they're finding them the perfect addition to display beds around the ranch.

Through the Colorado Boys Ranch, young men are not only learning more about themselves but learning a trade. Some are being taught how to operate the ranch's big



Boys at the greenhouse learn how to properly care for plants.

John Deere skid steer loader. Others are tasting homegrown vegetables for the first time as a result of their efforts at the greenhouse. Undoubtedly, some will become productive members of the Green Industry.

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Circle 115

Deere adds McGinnis Farms; buys Great Dane

MOLINE, IL — Deere & Company (NYSE: DE) announced Jan. 4 that it acquired McGinnis Farms Inc., headquartered in Alpharetta, GA. The company — a full-line supplier of nursery stock, landscape supplies and irrigation products throughout the Southeast — recorded sales of \$150 million in 2000. Founded in 1987 by Stan Walker, McGinnis Farms has locations in 10 states.

FdG Associates, a New York-based investment firm, and a group of McGinnis managers are the current company owners selling the company to John Deere.

"Our customers benefit as we further extend our reach to landscape and irrigation professionals in the \$100 billion market known as the Green Industry," said John Jenkins, president of Deere's Worldwide Commercial and Consumer Equipment Division.

David Werning, a 24-year veteran of Deere and president of McGinnis Farms, told LM that the acquisition shows Deere's commitment to providing "additional services" to the professional landscape market.

"Certainly, this is a new direction for John Deere," said Werning, "but there is a lot of synergy in this decision and there's a lot of expertise in the management at McGinnis." He said the McGinnis management will stay in place, and that Deere looks forward to partnering with other manufacturers, like irrigation companies.

More mowers

On Dec. 18, 2000, Deere announced the purchase of the Great Dane Power Equipment Company. The mower manufacturer is headquartered in Jeffersonville, IN, and will become part of Deere's Worldwide Commercial & Consumer Equipment Division.

"Great Dane gives us the opportunity to go after the commercial mower segment that we traditionally have not been strong in," says Greg Doherty, general manager of Turf Care Facilities for John Deere.

Great Dane, which was incorporated in 1996 by Dane Scag, had nearly \$23 million in sales in 1999. Scag will remain with the company and will focus on research and de-

velopment of new commercial mowers, says a release from Deere. The company will continue to manufacture and distribute equipment under the Great Dane brand.

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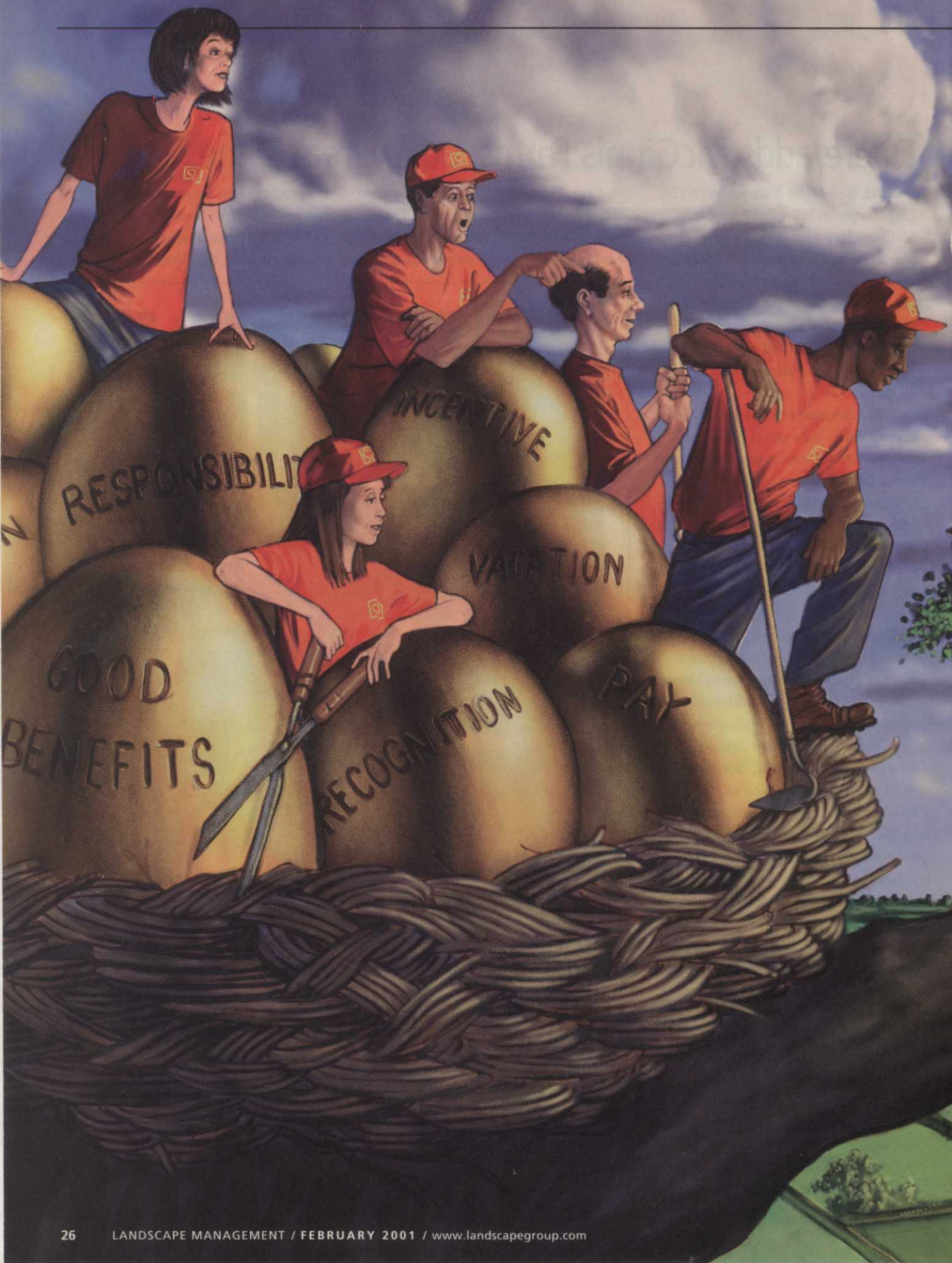


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An illustration on the left side of the page shows several people in green shirts and brown pants standing on a large, woven nest of sticks. One person is jumping off the nest, another is running, and a third is hanging upside down from the edge. The background is a cloudy sky. Below the nest, a large tree trunk is visible, and in the distance, there's a small house and a landscape with green fields and trees.

HOW TO RETAIN employees

By identifying and addressing your employees' needs, you'll give them a reason to spend their career with you

BY JASON STAHL / MANAGING EDITOR

What's more difficult: finding good employees or keeping them? Some might say finding them, but it's becoming almost as difficult to keep them. The day you take it for granted that your good employees will stay with you is the day you can kiss them goodbye. There are lots of opportunities and employees can afford to be choosy. If you have a program geared toward keeping employees happy, bravo. If you don't have a program, or if you have a program but aren't giving it 100%, you could learn a thing or two from the managers and employees we interviewed for this article. Some have been with their companies for over 15 years; others have just started. If you're not willing to listen to them, you've already taken your first step toward losing employees.

Treat me right

Most employees we talked to said being "treated right" was the reason they have stayed at their companies. In some cases, fair treatment outranked compensation, but that's because some employees felt that not getting a raise was an example of not being "treated right." But most agreed being "treated right" means more than getting fairly compensated — it's being recognized and having a say in every day events.

"What's kept me here the longest is the owner," says Jerry Harrison, director of operations and six-year veteran of Greater Texas Landscapes, Austin, TX. "I like the manner in which she (Debby Cole) treats people."

Bill Schultz, a 16-year customer service representative for One Step Tree & Lawn care, North Chili, NY, emphasized that nice treatment from his boss, Bob Ottley, had to do with his lengthy tenure. "Bob's a nice guy to work for," Schultz says. "He makes it fun to work here. Also,

he relies on our opinions and lets us try out new ideas."

Francisco Aguirre, an irrigation technician who has 5 1/2 years of service with Del Conte's Landscaping, Fremont, CA, received the "Iron Man" award from his company last year, but that's only one reason he's content with his job.

"There are a lot of good op-



Francisco Aguirre

portunities here," Aguirre says. "Also, the company pays attention to its employees and likes to teach everyone equally on training and safety issues."

Movin' on up

If only employee retention was as easy as giving out awards, pats on the back and discussion forums. No matter how much recognition an employee gets, there are no substitutes for compensation and promotion. Almost all of the employees we interviewed said that if they had never received a single raise during their time with their company but were consistently recognized, they wouldn't stay. Apparently, recognition without raises is not recognition.

Chris Ashby, 29-year-old vice president of operations for Carver's Lawn and Landscape, New Castle, DE, wouldn't think of leaving his company now that the prospect of ownership sits on the horizon. He started in 1995 as a landscape designer, then became general manager in 1997.

"My goal now is to purchase the company," Ashby says.

And if an employee feels that he or she has gone as high as possible, he or she is likely to leave for greener pastures. "I don't want to push spreaders my whole life," Schultz says. "I want to move up, not sideways."

Starting out

When Kurt Bland graduated from North Carolina State University last spring, he was aggressively recruited by major land-

scape companies. With a double major in agricultural business management and horticulture science, plus the experience of having worked for his father's landscape company, Bland Landscaping Co., Apex, NC, since he was young, he could choose whoever he wanted.

Bland had many conditions a company had to meet for him to consider spending a long time there. "First, I didn't want to work for a company whose mission it was to be the biggest in the country," he says. "Second, it had to provide me with an opportunity to grow through self-enrichment. I also wanted someplace where I wasn't just a number and where I could have lots of fun."



Kurt Bland

Direct and indirect compensation was also a concern for Bland. When he chose to work as a division manager for Del Conte's Landscaping, the company didn't have a 401K plan. In fact, he asked several employees why they were leaving, and they said it was because of the lack of long-term security, i.e. a 401K plan. He asked his boss, Tom Del Conte, if he could take the first step toward establishing one, and Del Conte said yes.

"The positive attitude my boss had toward my idea was a great influence on me," he says.

continued on page 32

6 things employees need

- **Compensation:** "You have to be competitive."
- **Recognition:** "Recognition will pay off 1,000-to-1 over compensation, maybe 10,000-to-1. People want to be recognized when they get results."
- **Fun:** "Fun is the biggest differentiator of all six employee needs. Make yourself the "CFO" — Chief Fun Officer. Find someone in your company who likes to put fun things together and start a regular program."
- **Personal growth:** "Buy a book or two from *Businessweek's* bestseller list and give them to an employee. Even if he or she doesn't read them, at least you showed you care about their personal growth."
- **Challenge:** "We all need challenges. Find something you enjoy doing and do it forever."
- **Convenience:** "Don't hire people who have a one-hour commute to work. If you can, set up their hours so they're not fighting traffic — instead of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., make it 6 a.m. to 3 p.m."

This information was taken from a talk entitled "The Landscape Contractor's Toolchest" given at the Green Industry Expo by Craig W. Kramers, President & CEO of Corporate Partners, Inc., a consulting firm headquartered in McDonough, GA. 770/389-8511

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