

## SOUTHEAST

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

## WEST

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

# Expanding footprints

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

## New Jersey Best Lawns, Sprinklers & Fencing

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

## Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care

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

## Ruppert Landscape

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

## Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/ Greater Texas Landscapes)

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

## The Brickman Group

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

## Merit Service Solutions

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

## Webb Landscape

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

# GROW getters

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

## The Grounds Guys

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

## Heron Lawn & Pest Control

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

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

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

## Munie Greencare Professionals

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

## Harvest Landscape Enterprises

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

## Hittle Landscaping

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

# In case of downtime.

## NeverStop™ Loaner Guarantee. Standard on our new Commercial Mowers.

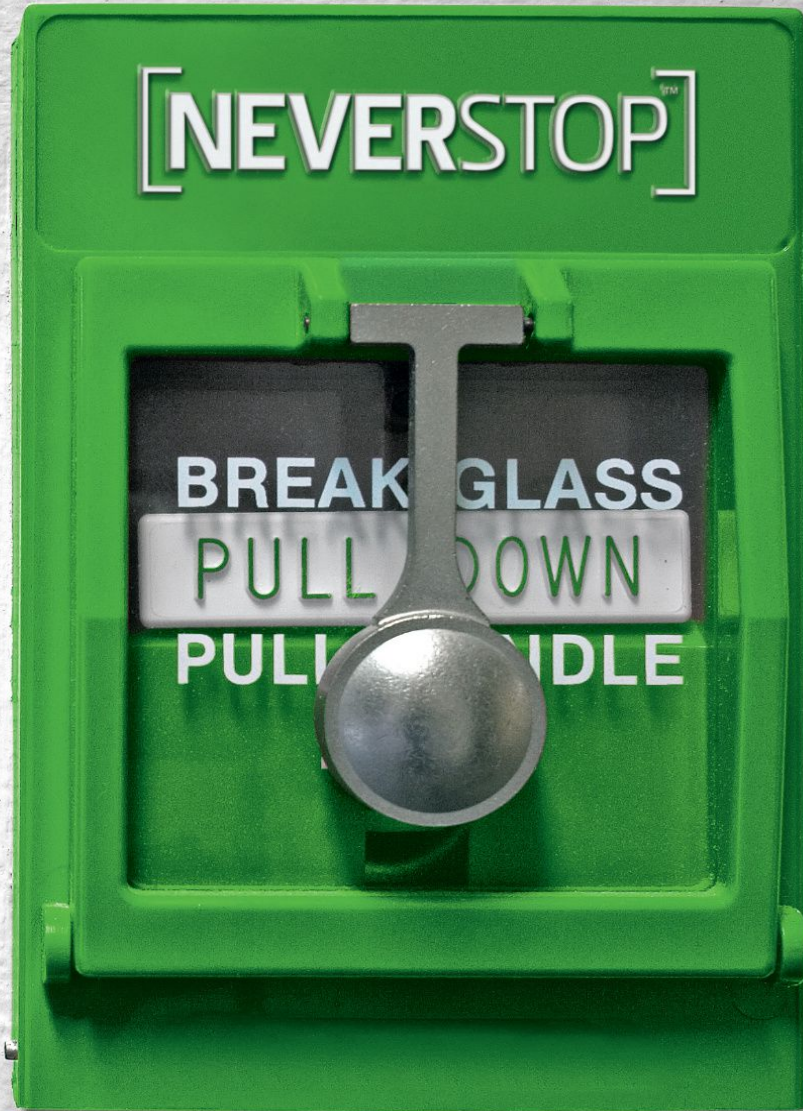
When you purchase any new John Deere ZTrak™, QuikTrak™, or Walk-behind mower, you get something more than just a phenomenal mowing machine. You also get the peace of mind that comes with our NeverStop™ Loaner Guarantee, standard with every new John Deere commercial mower. In the unlikely occurrence that your mower should need servicing under warranty, you'll receive a free loaner from your John Deere dealer\* if it takes 24 hours or longer. So say goodbye to downtime. With NeverStop, you don't have to stop.

### Keep Mowing

\*Program available only at participating dealers and dealer participation will vary. Loaners used for residential purposes provided within 72 hours. Some conditions and restrictions apply. Additional program offerings available for an added cost. See participating dealer for complete details and program offerings.

\*\*Offers available from March 04, 2014 through July 26, 2014. Subject to approved installment credit with John Deere Financial, for commercial use only. Up to a 10% down payment may be required. Taxes, freight, setup and delivery charges could increase monthly payment. Some restrictions apply, so see your dealer for complete details and other financing options, including financing for Consumer use. Available at participating dealers.





[JohnDeere.com/MowPro](http://JohnDeere.com/MowPro)

# LESSONS LEARNED

WE ASKED LEADERS  
FROM LM 150 COMPANIES:

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





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

## Crunch your numbers before the bid.

No. 98

Earthtones Landscaping  
Midlothian, Texas

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Chris Lee, president  
EarthWorks*

“Make sure systems are in place.”

*Stewart Hanson, president  
Arteka Cos.*

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

*Matt White, president/CEO  
Caretaker Landscape &  
Tree Management*

## Delegate day-to-day operations.

No. 95  
 Cleary Bros. Landscape  
 Danville, Calif.

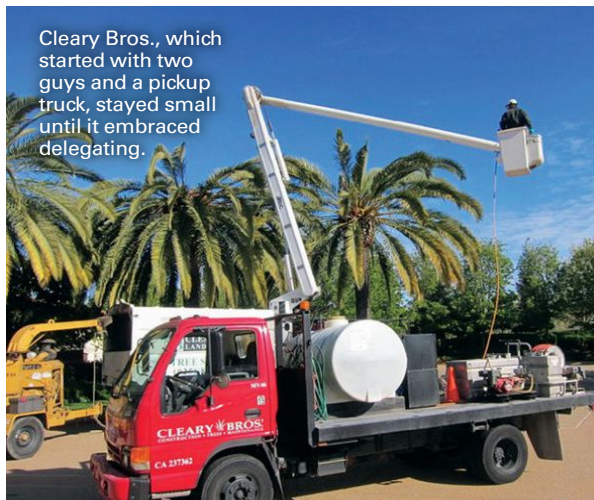
*Cleary Bros. Landscape has served the San Francisco area for 27 years, specializing in commercial maintenance. Composed of 175 employees and with brothers Martin and Mike Cleary at its helm, the firm is optimistic about 2014, with the exception of drought-related restrictions. It recently rolled out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



**Martin Cleary**

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

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



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



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

### When did the light bulb come on?

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

### How did you go about changing your ways?

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

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

### What was the most difficult adjustment?

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

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

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

### How do you avoid going back to your old ways?

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



## Think smaller; focus on specific client segments.

No. 131

Carol King Landscape Maintenance  
Orlando, Fla.

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

"**H**indsight is 20/20, and I'm always brighter after the fact.

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



Bruce Bachand

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brian DuMont, president/CEO  
Yard-Nique



## DOES YOUR COMPANY HAVE ANY NEW PROGRAMS OR INITIATIVES?

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

*Gene Grant, CEO  
Grant & Power Landscaping*

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

*Chris Joyce, president  
Joyce Landscaping*

## Spend more time developing systems.

No. 149  
Emerald Isle Landscaping  
Denver

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Rory Lambertson

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

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