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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SNOW &amp; ICE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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# Editor's Focus

## First Things First

*We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children. – Native American proverb*

Last month we revisited the first 100 cover profile subjects to appear on the cover of our magazine. This month, Bill Jones and his company, Terra Systems, kicks off the second 100 profiles (page 30), and his environmental focus earns him this symbolic position.

Terra Systems is an organic lawn care company – the first one to appear on our cover – and that's one of the reasons we wanted to profile it. Now, it has never been our policy to endorse companies or products, and we're not going to change that philosophy. There are benefits to using both organic and synthetic products in a lawn care program, as long as they are used correctly. But starting on our second 100 cover profiles a few months after embarking on a new millennium seemed like an opportune occasion to highlight what likely will be an emerging trend in the industry in coming years – heightened environmental awareness.

Don't get me wrong – I'll be the first person to talk about how cautiously lawn and landscape professionals already treat the environment. And I'm a believer in the value of certification, licensing and ongoing training for all levels of the industry. But the fact of the matter is that the environmental groups that create public pressure and initiate legislation are not going to disappear. As long as pesticides are applied to the earth, people will protest. And I doubt we will ever convince these individuals that pesticides aren't the problem – people who don't know how to use pesticides are the problem.

So, we must continue to demonstrate our environmental sensitivity to the general public. For some companies, organic lawn care might be the answer, although there is no reason to think a traditional lawn care program isn't or can't be environmentally friendly. Companies that use pesticides, however, must commit to using them responsibly. That means being licensed. That means understanding and adhering to integrated pest management. That means training technicians. Most of all, that means putting the environment first.

The lawn care industry continues to grow at a healthy pace, but we all recognize that many people still equate lawn care products with environmental damage. This isn't necessarily true, but these opinions will only be mitigated through a commitment by lawn care professionals to doing their job the right way every day.

*Bob West*

# Lawn & Landscape

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# Market Trends

## INSIGHTS ONLINE

### Are Your Clients Spoiled?

On the Lawn & Landscape Online bulletin boards, contractors get a chance to network with each other. And every once in a while, the conversations get quite interesting – particularly when contractors talk about meeting “special” client demands.

According to one Lawn & Landscape Online user: “I’ll do pretty much anything my customers want as long as they pay me what I want for the work. They are the boss and I want them happy. I even taught one man how to launch and navigate his boat.”

Some other out-of-the-ordinary client wishes contractors shared include:

- Can you change the oil in my car?
- Can you build me a shed?
- Can you paint my house?
- Can you give my dog a bath?
- Can you polish my silver?
- Can you retrieve my wallet from my sunken ski boat?
- Can you let my kids help you with the landscaping?

If you have an experience dealing with unusual client requests, fax your story to Nicole Wisniewski at 216/961-0364 or e-mail it to [nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com). To see the full conversation on the Lawn & Landscape Online bulletin boards, visit [www.lawnandlandscape.com/bullframe.asp](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/bullframe.asp).

## Shop TALK

EQUIPMENT/EQUIPMENT ACCESSORY	% CONTRACTORS WHO PLAN PURCHASE IN NEXT 12 MONTHS	AVERAGE PLANNED EXPENDITURES IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS
Riding mowers	20.2%	\$13,417
Walk-behind mowers	5.8%	\$5,596
Spray tanks/units	13.2%	\$6,700
Spreaders	12.5%	\$777
Aerators	6.3%	\$3,706
Trucks	35.1%	\$34,162
Trailers	19.0%	\$9,122
Snow removal equipment	11.5%	\$7,695
Skid-steer loaders	10.3%	\$24,818

Credit: Research USA

When the time comes for equipment shopping, contractors know what they need, especially after a productive season ends and one of their mowers or trucks has seen its fair share of repairs, and is starting to look – and act – rundown.

Fortunately for equipment manufacturers, contractors spend quite a bit on new product purchases. According to a Research USA survey of 1,000 industry professionals, *Lawn & Landscape* readers spent more than \$3.5 billion on equipment and plant material purchases last year. Eighty-nine percent of responding contractors noted that they purchased at least one piece of equipment or equipment accessory in 1999. Some of the most popular items for purchase were trucks, hand-held power equipment, walk-behind and riding mowers, and computer software.

## INDUSTRY NEWS

### Troubles at TruGreen

**D**OWNERS GROVE, ILL. – Industry scuttlebutt in recent months carries a common theme – life is not rosy at TruGreen LandCare. The industry’s primary consolidator showed the first signs of challenges associated with assimilating more than 100 acquisitions into one organization when it reported that its second-quarter earnings were lower than expected for this year, and earnings for the entire year 2000 aren’t likely to meet earlier estimates.

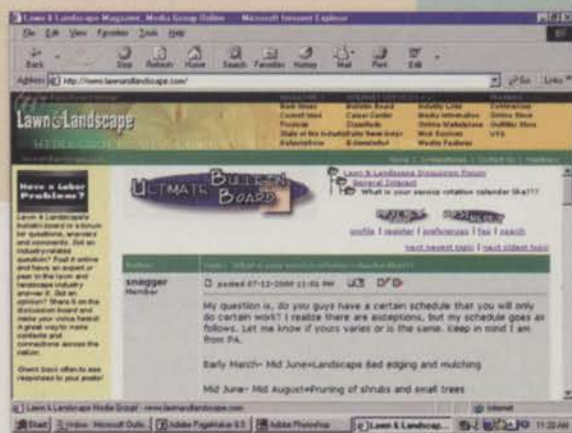
“The process of bringing over 100 separate business units into one company is taking longer than we anticipated,” noted C. William Pollard, ServiceMaster chairman and chief executive officer. “Performance issues and additional investment costs in integrating landscape services, combined with lower than planned sales and higher fuel and other operating costs in TruGreen lawn care, were the major causes for our lower than planned second-quarter results.”

In addition, there was a management change as Paul Anderegg, who had been president of TruGreen LandCare, was

(continued on page 18)



Dave Slott,  
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TruGreen-  
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# Market Trends

(continued from page 8)

## IN THE NEWS

### EPA Eyes Diazinon

GREENSBORO, N.C. – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) wants to complete its reassessment of organophosphate products by the end of this year, and diazinon is next in line.

Novartis Crop Protection, producer of the popular insecticide, has more reason to be optimistic about the eventual fate of its product than Dow AgroSciences, Indianapolis, Ind., had when it watched the EPA reassess chlorpyrifos (marketed as Dursban). While Dow AgroSciences ultimately lost the right to sell Dursban in the lawn and pest control markets, EPA's preliminary reassessment found that granular diazinon products have an acceptable margin of safety. "Also, the agency determined that no dietary or ground water sourced drinking water concerns exist for the product," according to a release from Novartis.

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## Calendar of Events

**SEPT. 15-16** Tennessee Nursery & Landscape Association Trade Show, Nashville, Tenn. Contact: 931/473-3951.

**SEPT. 15-16** The New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association Certified Landscape Technician Short Course, N.J. Contact: 201/703-3600.

**SEPT. 16** Certified Professional Landscape & Certified Landscape Technician Interior and Exterior Exams, Mequon, Wisc. Contact: 800/395-2522.

**SEPT. 16** Certified Professional Landscape & Certified Landscape Technician Interior and Exterior Exams, Gainesville, Fla. Contact: 800/395-2522.

**SEPT. 19-21** Turf and Landscape Field Days, Blacksburg, Va. Contact: 540/231-5897.

**SEPT. 21-23** Florida Nursery & Allied Trade Show, Orlando, Fla. Contact: 407/295-2994.

**SEPT. 22-23** Certified Landscape Technician Exterior Exam, Spokane, Wash., and Milton, Ont. Contact: 425/385-3333 and 905/875-1805.

**SEPT. 23** Certified Landscape Technician Interior and Exterior Exam, Kirtland, Ohio. Contact: 800/395-2522.

**SEPT. 24** Missouri Landscape & Nursery Association Field Day, New Franklin, Mo. Contact: 816/233-1481.

**SEPT. 26-27** National Buildings and Grounds Maintenance Expo, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact: 702/893-9090.

**SEPT. 26-27** Landscape Ontario Garden Expo, Toronto, Ontario. Contact: 905/875-1805.

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# Market Trends

(continued from page 10)

Not all of the news was good for Novartis, however. When EPA requested more data for some uses of the product, the company elected to withdraw those uses, including indoor and greenhouse applications.

However, this action shouldn't be construed as an indication of diazinon's future, according to Pat Willenbrock, diazinon market manager and home and garden product manager for Novartis. The company now can put dollars that would have been spent to continue research on indoor uses of diazinon toward additional research efforts on exterior applications, which represents a considerable portion of diazinon sales, Willenbrock explained.

Novartis has requested a meeting with EPA to continue the dialogue about diazinon, and Willenbrock expects to have it scheduled by Sept. 30. The company has also developed a Web site - [www.cp.us.novartis/diazinon](http://www.cp.us.novartis/diazinon) - to keep lawn care operators and diazinon users updated on its research and its dealings with EPA.

## People

Zeneca Professional Turf Products named **Deborah Meier** as North American technical manager and **Kimberly Kangan** as Western region product service representative.

Bayer Corp. appointed **Dan Carrothers** head of marketing for the GPC unit. **Phil McNally** will transition to field research and development representative for the Western United States. **Chuck Silcox** was hired to serve as field research and development representative for the Northeastern United States.

RainBird's Landscape Drip Division named **Dave Palumbo** as Xerigation Specifications Manager in Southern California and **Felicia Abai** as Xerigation Specifications Manager in Northern California.

Arbor Care, a tree care service of Environmental Care, promoted **Jim Walsh** to East Coast Chief Technology Officer.

**Chuck Barber** and **Ibsen Dow** joined Nature Safe's sales team as regional sales managers.

OSRAM SYLVANIA's general lighting division realigned management positions. **Tim Lesch** is vice president of sales for Industrial & Commercial Lighting; **Ken Schedin** is vice president of sales for consumer products; **Tom Grover** is vice president of SYLVANIA Lighting Services.



Lesch (top),  
Silcox (bottom)

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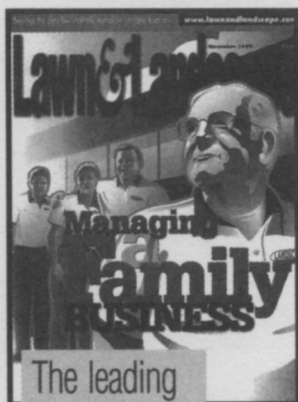
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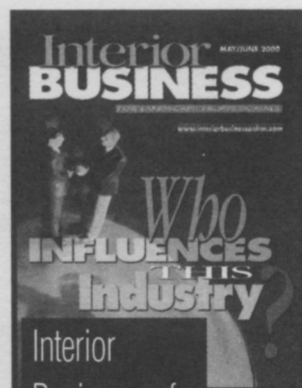
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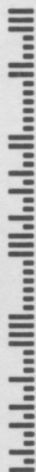
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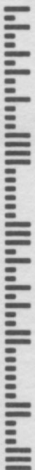
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## CONSOLIDATION

### J.R. Simplot Acquires ABT

BOISE, Idaho—J.R. Simplot Co. has finalized its expected purchase of the turfgrass seed and specialty distribution assets of AgriBioTech, Las Vegas, Nev. (ABT) to increase its increasingly powerful position in the turfseed market.

The acquisition will become a part of Simplot Turf & Horticulture, the turf and horticulture group of the agribusiness corporation. The divisions before the acquisitions in Simplot Turf & Horticulture included Professional Products and Jacklin Seed.

The deal was negotiated through ABT's court-appointed reorganization consultant, Development Specialist Inc. following ABT's Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing in January. The ABT purchase had been bid on by both Simplot and Kenneth Budd, former president and chief operating officer of ABT, however, the purchase by Simplot is now official, according to the company.

This deal concludes the five-year rollercoaster ride of ABT, a company that barged on to the scene in the turfseed industry in 1995 with an aggressive acquisition plan. ABT had acquisition goals of 45 percent marketshare or \$500 in annual revenue by this year, but that success never materialized. ABT management came under extensive fire as the company's stock price continued to decline, and class-action lawsuits were filed on behalf of shareholders in dozens of

states. Eventually, the company found itself out of cash and with little choice other than to sell the business and pay off its debt.

Terms of Simplot's transaction include the production and marketing rights for a number of turfgrass seed varieties, various international production contracts as well as ownership of several distribution locations.

Additionally, Simplot has acquired three of ABT's distribution locations in Phoenix, Ariz.; Florence, Ky.; and Las Vegas, Nev. **LL**

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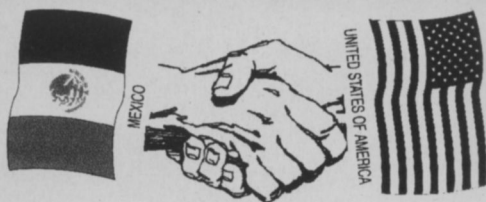
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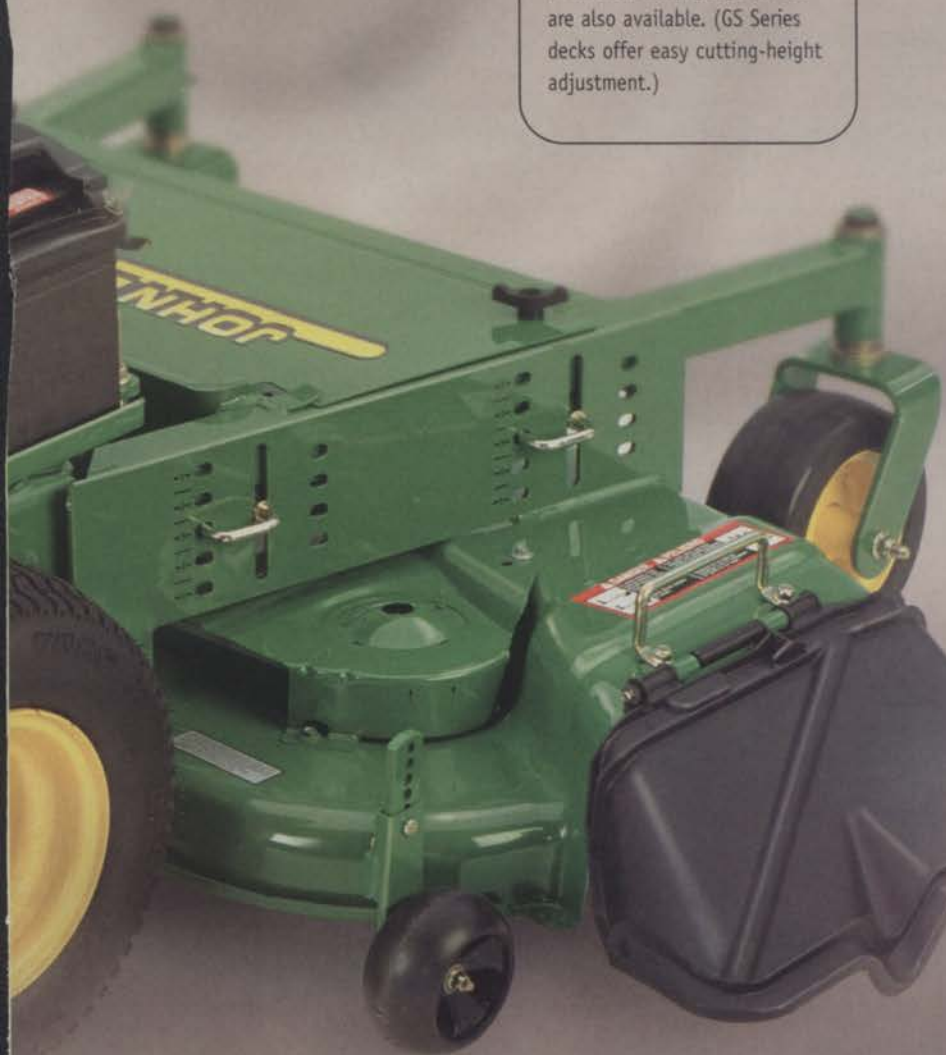
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# Market Trends

## TruGreen (continued from page 8)

re-assigned to vice president of sales and marketing. Dave Slott, president and chief operating officer of TruGreen-ChemLawn since 1996, and Don Karnes, who preceded Slott in that role and has spent the last four years overseeing ServiceMaster's Consumer and Commercial Services division, have assumed greater roles at TruGreen LandCare.

The company reported that TruGreen-ChemLawn showed "modest revenue increases and slightly lower profits, primarily attributed to lower-than-planned volume in its full-service program and higher operating expenses." In particular, increased fuel prices and a lack of available telemarketers challenged the company through the first half of the year 2000 as it was generally unable to grow its customer base.

There were some positive signs from the landscape side of the business as TruGreen LandCare reported double-digit revenue

gains from internal and acquisition sources, although they were mitigated by "a significant decline in operating income reflecting slower than anticipated integration of the landscape platform initiative and higher labor costs," according to a company release.

Matthew Litfin is a financial analyst with William Blair & Co., New York, N.Y., a financial investment firm that is among the largest ServiceMaster shareholders. Despite recent problems, he remains optimistic about the company's future. "The issues the company laid out to [investors] in a recent conference call can't be resolved in a two-month period, but my money is on those guys to turn it around," Litfin said.

"I like that they're in the landscape business," he noted when asked if the LandCare USA acquisition appears to have been a mistake by ServiceMaster. "There are synergies between lawn care and landscape, and they needed to start targeting the commercial customer who offers better customer retention,

better margins and deeper pockets."

Litfin also believes TruGreen LandCare has a unique position in the industry and competitive advantages from a marketing standpoint. "This may be a three-year integration process rather than a one-year process, but I do think this will be a growth business," he said. "They've bobbled the ball a little bit, but they haven't fumbled it."

Slott and Karnes have spent more time in TruGreen LandCare branches in recent weeks as the company identifies problem areas. And, at least for the short term, acquisitions are on hold. "We're always open to opportunities, but right now the focus is on integrating the operations we have," noted Claire Buchan, a spokesperson for the company.

Meanwhile, ServiceMaster stock was trading at \$9 per share at presstime, which represents its lowest level in the last year. When ServiceMaster purchased LandCare USA in November 1998, its stock was trading for more than \$21 per share. — Bob West

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# In Minor's League

What can I do when my landscape maintenance customers constantly expect services that are not within the parameters of their contract?

This is more likely to happen if you are operating under a specification-based contract as opposed to a performance-based contract. In every contract there are written parameters you have to follow. However, in a specification-based contract you typically perform services based on an agreed upon schedule. For example, if you specify that you are going to mow 34 times then anything over and above that would be considered an extra.

In a performance-based contract, the agreement typically states that the landscape will look good at all times regardless of the time it takes to perform the various services.

I suspect the scenario you refer to relates to specification-based contracts and is a result of the customer's desire to increase the number of intervals in the contract. For example, the customer might want additional mowings or trimmings, or even additional services like irrigation repairs or spray applications. The key here is managing your customer's expectations. Doing that is the responsibility of the customer's account manager.

Such situations can occur because customers often judge our performance when negative things happen in the landscape that are either beyond our

control or are not covered in the scope of the contract. You or your manager needs to proactively address these issues with the client before they are addressed with you. Additionally, document your position in writing and keep copies of all correspondence, such as quality control reports signed by the customer, letters, faxes or e-mails.

And remember that many people that you deal with on a daily basis either did not negotiate their contract or may not know what is in the contract. You have to diplomatically address these issues in a positive light to satisfy the customer. Understand that their goal is to have a beautiful landscape at all times regardless of the cost. But they may be at a disadvantage because their supervisor may not be willing to spend the money it takes to achieve their goal. Empathy is critical here. You have to make them believe you are part of their team and that you want to give them the best value for their landscape investment.

Then you need to get them to empathize with you and your company. Let them know you would love to have unlimited specifications and funds to always have a clean, green and weed-free property. Citing examples of other high-profile properties with seemingly unlimited budgets who achieve these goals often helps. Then give them ways to solve their problem.

- If the problem is an interval-related issue, communicate up front when their service is due. If you always know there is a particular problem, jot the customer a reminder each month about the problem or at least let them know during your quality control visits. In effect, you are managing the customer's expectations by doing this.

- Offer additional services for the client with a bid. Again, be proactive. Depending on the situation you might be able to offer a discount for this service. Make sure you put the bid in writing so your clients can share it with their supervisors. Remember, their goal is to look good to their bosses or clients. Having a proposal on file shows that they're on top of things.

- Trade out some services that have less impact on the property. Experience will allow you to determine what is needed and what is not needed.

- As a last resort, you could give the service away. Be careful in doing this, however, because you can create future expectations of the same. However, if you are dealing with an important client or you think you can "make it up" in other areas, this is an option.

Ultimately, if you know your customer, understand their needs, empathize with them and proactively manage their expectations, this problem can be minimized. ■

## Editor's

## Note



*David Minor was founder and former president of Minor's Landscape Services, a \$12-million company in Fort Worth, Texas, that he sold to TruGreen-ChemLawn in 1998.*

*In addition to serving the industry as a consultant and speaker, Minor is professor and director of The Entrepreneurship Center at The M.J. Neeley School of Business at Texas Christian University.*

*Readers with questions they would like to ask Minor can fax them to Lawn & Landscape at 216/961-0364 or e-mail them to [bwest@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:bwest@lawnandlandscape.com).*



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# Minding Your

# Business



## Learning To Let Go

**D**o you wear many hats within your company? If so, you are like most small business owners in the landscape industry. In fact, most owners have so many responsibilities, they do not have enough time to work on the business. Instead, they spend most of their time working within the system.

Running a business is like coaching a team. Can you imagine trying to play a game and coach at the same time? On the field, a coach cannot see everything that is going on around him or her. From the sidelines, however, they have the opportunity to look at the team as a whole and find strengths and weaknesses. The same holds true for running a business. As an owner, you must conduct yourself as a coach every day. For most small business owners, this is an extremely difficult task. It is easier to do something yourself than to coach or train others to do the same task. The problem is, this draws the owner back onto the playing field and keeps him or her from actually coaching.

**TAKE A STEP BACK.** Through motivation and training, employees will be able to assume more responsibility, allowing owners to spend more time on planning, organizing and running the business.

To become a good coach, we need to start with ourselves. We have to look at what we do on a daily basis that restricts us from spending more time coaching others. Most likely, you will find that you are spending too much time tending to tasks that can be addressed by other employees. And, in many cases, these are smaller, less important jobs that could be easily delegated to foremen or supervisors, such as handling customer communication, reviewing invoices and scheduling crews.

As owners, we need to focus on the pressing responsibilities of planning, organizing and motivating others. If we can train others to perform the smaller tasks, we will have more time to focus on the pivotal issues associated with running a business.

A good owner has the ability to step back, look at their business and determine the responsibilities of each position within the organization. Once we determine what tasks we can delegate to capable employees, we have to set aside time to train them to perform those tasks. This tends to be the most difficult step in the process and can take longer than performing the actual task. But remember, we are making an investment that produces great returns in the long run. The time spent today will reward you with more free time in the future.

Once we relinquish some of our responsibilities, we must stay committed to our goal of delegating tasks. Consistently monitor progress with weekly staff meetings to determine whether the training was successful. The goal is to continue the training until the employee(s) demonstrate the ability to perform the task. While doing this, we need to be careful – we cannot fall back into the trap of reassuming responsibility for the tasks that we delegated. If you find that the person you trained is not performing well, you have to assess your training process and provide additional guidance.

Stay committed to the process. We have the tendency to give up too easily and revert back to old ways. In that case, the owner is back on the playing field missing out on what is going on around them. When working with smaller contractors, I have had numerous employees tell me they wished the owner would let go of some responsibility. In most cases, they feel strongly that they can perform certain tasks better than the owner. If you feel you are wearing too many hats and do not have time to work on your business, take a few minutes to look at your company. Ask your employees what tasks they feel they could take on, train them and let them give it their best shot. You might be surprised with the results. Hopefully, you will have more time to work on your business instead of being caught up in it.

– Tim Lynott

*The author is a consultant with Landscape Consulting Services, 1357 Splashing Brook Court, Eldersburg, Md. 21784. He can be reached at 410/795-6248.*

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# In Your Turf

## MARKET REPORT

# Growers Talk Turf

Mother Nature can deal a risky hand to turf growers no matter how the deck is cut. Temperamental weather conditions can trump careful planting, and extreme temperatures—in this year's case, a dry spell—can fold a promising harvest.

Turfseed farmers might wonder if they are gambling with tarot cards instead of the standard four-suit deck.

Unpredictability might be the only constant, but following last year's exceptional crop, this year's turfseed harvest remains strong and the market steady, with the exception of some swelling prices.

*This year's warm, dry weather caused some varieties of turfseed crop to produce reduced seed yields. Photo: L&L staff*



### WORKING WITH WEATHER.

Weather is one variable that determines the quality and quantity of a turfseed crop. This year's hot temperatures prior to harvest minimized the yield somewhat, observed Dan Hemshorn, production agronomist, Seed Research of Oregon, Corvallis, Ore. He reported that this year's yield falls 10 to 30 percent below average.

"The Pacific Northwest had some of the warmest weather on record in June when many of our cool-season grass seed crops were pollinating," Hemshorn noted. "This caused some of the earlier seed heads to mature quickly and become more prone to seed shatter at swathing time, reducing seed yields. Seed filling was dependent upon the amount

*(continued on page 26)*

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Keith Macdonald's work crews at Bridgewater State College campus swear he's a master spy, or psychic. "He knows when we've sprayed off an area with Finale<sup>®</sup> Herbicide without us even telling him," said a crew member "sometimes only 24 hours after the job's done." Keith laughs. "When it gets busy and I can't check with everyone, I simply drive around and see the results. It only takes a day or two for Finale to work. A month later, the area's still clear." But it wasn't always so easy. As assistant facilities director on the Massachusetts campus, Keith used to use the leading systemic herbicide. "It took 2 weeks before I knew I had a take," he says, "drove me crazy." Keith also likes Finale's ability to create perfectly clean edges around beds and baseball fields. "It's the no-creep feature," he says, "the one my crews apply to me."

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# In Your Turf

of soil moisture present, and fields with less soil moisture had a lot more light seeds that will be removed when the seed is cleaned."

Though hot temperatures reduced perennial ryegrass and tall fescue yields, the market for these varieties will not suffer, assured Tom Stanley, marketing manager, Turf Seed, Hubbard, Ore. The turfseed supply will not leave contractors empty handed, he said.

"We will see rising prices on tall fescue due to a short Kentucky 31 crop," Stanley added. "It's all been weather related," he explained, noting that last year's Kentucky 31 crop produced about 130 million pounds of seed, while this year's harvest leaves growers with between 50 and 60 million pounds.

Other varieties are not exempt from weather adversity, he continued. "I can't think of any cool-season species that have completely escaped yield reduction due to weather. Bermudagrass production might be OK - that's a warm species."

Despite a climbing thermometer, ideal harvest conditions prevented potential

swathing delays and allowed windrows to "dry nicely to facilitate excellent combining conditions," Hemshorn added.

**JUGGLING THE QUANTITY.** The Kentucky 31 shortage leads buyers to tall fescue varieties for alternative turfseed. This variety's drought-tolerant characteristics also are appealing to customers who plant in dry climates, Hemshorn detailed. As mentioned, this yield is slightly below average, but certainly will handle absorption from a weak Kentucky 31 crop, he noted.

Fine fescue crops closely mimic last year's yield, but the large carry-over from last year has been consumed, leaving minimal inventory entering the 2000 season, so here, too, prices will climb, he predicted.

Besides this year's forecasted popularity of tall fescues, turfseed demand trends fueled by continued strong housing starts and sod production favor Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass, Stanley noted. "Bluegrass consumption is much stronger than it was a year ago."

Glenn Jacklin, senior vice president, Jacklin Seed-Simplot Turf and Horticulture, Post Falls, Idaho, predicted an overproduction of perennial ryegrass the next couple of years due to planting increases and AgriBioTech's recent bankruptcy.

"That leaves a lot of inventory out there," Jacklin commented. "To what degree remains to be seen. The liquidation, the seed hitting the market - that picture will play itself out, but [ryegrass abundance] definitely will have a downward pressure on all markets."

A hefty perennial ryegrass supply will offer consumer benefits, Stanley pointed out. Specialty varieties will be available at reasonable prices - an attractive advantage for this year's buyers, he added.

"These elite varieties are going to offer an exceptional value for the dollar spent because of the big supplies and the reduced price," Stanley explained. "They provide better turf quality and better disease resistance, which results in reduced pesticide use, and they are a darker green color."

"One of the varieties has improved salt



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tolerance, which is excellent for those who use effluent water for irrigation," he added.

**PRICING ON DEMAND.** Pricing is a little stronger this year, however, in a world market, cost depends on supply and demand, Hemshorn stressed. Promotional ef-

Hemshorn explained.

Rod Ross, sales and marketing representative, Cibiko International, Halsey, Ore., noticed a slight decline in customer orders this year, and with a buffering Canadian creeper crop, the market could see some change, he said. "This year, with things be-

**SEEKING OUT QUALITY.** Slightly steeper prices might influence buyers to shop for less expensive seed. But bargain seed is not such a deal when it compromises quality, Hemshorn warned. Contractors should request a seed analysis before purchasing to find out the true contents of their investment, he said.

"One should always be careful and evaluate a seed analysis to see that results meet their specifications and that seed is a certain quality so they have proof that it doesn't have noxious weeds in it," he advised. "Sometimes there is confusion that certified seeds are perfect. They meet requirements, but still can contain noxious weeds."

Labels listing seed as "variety not stated" or "vns" are questionable and possibly can contain forage grasses, Stanley warned.

Hemshorn added that better seed increases chances of better establishment, so customers are wise to spend a few extra dollars. Quality seed more likely will sprout, no matter the hand Mother Nature deals. —

Kristen Hampshire



**"Elite perennial ryegrass varieties are going to offer an exceptional value for the dollar spent because of the big supplies and the reduced price."**

**—Tom Stanley**

forts by the Oregon Seed Council opened doors for turf sales in China, where moderate seed purchase orders trickle in each year, he said. Domestic purchases will support the market as well, despite heavier seed costs.

"Prices have increased at the grower level, and certainly the demand will be a function of what the market will bear as far as cost,"

ing a little slower, it's hard read the market," he noted. "I don't see a dramatic downturn. Last year we had an above-average utilization of turf grass, and it's rare to see that continue for two years in a row."

For the most part, a thriving economy creates a healthy demand, and this year's seed supply will suffice.



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# PACK



by Bob West

# Organic GROWTH

Bill Jones didn't grow up in a landscape or nursery business. He didn't work his way through high school and college by mowing lawns. In fact, Jones didn't know he was even interested in the lawn care industry until he read about it in the morning paper.

"I was working for AT&T and I was in a hotel one night," he recalled. "I opened up my door in the morning and picked up the complimentary copy of *USA Today* that hotels give you."

Jones turned to the opinion pages and found two contrasting articles on pesticides. "The point of one of the articles was that if the soil is conditioned correctly and you can get Mother Nature more in tune, you'll find that a lot of the lawn problems – weeds, diseases, insects – are much less common and you won't need pesticides," Jones noted. "That really piqued my interest."

Jones spent the next two years researching the lawn and landscape industry and studying horticulture at a local community college. Then he and a friend took the plunge, and Terra Systems was born in 1992 in Charlotte, N.C. "We both had a sales background, so all we knew was that we wanted to be extremely professional off the bat," Jones said. "We got our logo, brochures and two new trucks because we wanted to give the appearance that we were more than two guys and two pickup trucks."

Eight years later, the company is nearing the \$800,000 mark in annual sales, and, most importantly to Jones, it has never lost that sense of professionalism.

**GOING TO MARKET.** Like most businesses, Terra Systems struggled in the early going. Jones noted that during these days the company developed a strong marketing emphasis. "In the first few months, we had nothing but time on our hands so we drove around neighborhoods and put brochures in people's mailboxes," he said. "The key was that these brochures weren't just a bunch of Xerox copies. They were nice pieces that were professionally printed and conveyed a sense of professionalism."

The company didn't consider every phone call from an interested homeowner a new customer, however. "We started a policy from day one that we still follow today, and that is to require people to make an appointment with us before we'll take them on as a customer," Jones said. He believes that the best customers are those who are well-educated and have the most realistic expectations, and the best way to get customers who understand lawn care is to communicate with them.

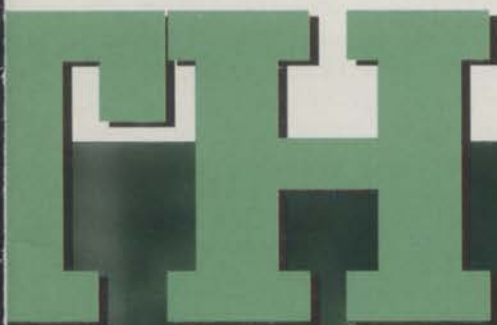
"Requiring these appointments also differentiated us from our competition, who was just going around hanging price quotes on front doors, and helped us build relationships," Jones added. "We had to have these relationships and customers' respect because we charge more than anyone else in our market. We wanted these people to feel like they knew us."

*Bill Jones pays regular visits to area garden centers to acquaint them with his company and build his referral business.*  
Photo: Stephanie Chesson

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*Terra Systems offers an organic approach but credits a customer-service focus for its success.*



## **TERRA SYSTEMS**

**LOCATION:** Charlotte, N.C.

**FOUNDED:** 1992

**SERVICES:** The company earns all of its revenue from residential customers. Seventy-eight percent of revenue is from lawn care work and 22 percent is from tree and shrub work.

**1999 REVENUE:** \$700,000

**2000 EXPECTED REVENUE:** \$805,000

**NUMBER OF CUSTOMERS:** 1,600

**AVG. SQUARE FOOTAGE OF PROPERTIES TREATED:** 6,000

**YEAR-ROUND EMPLOYEES:** 10

**SEASONAL EMPLOYEES:** 8

## **THE PHILOSOPHY**

**MISSION STATEMENT:** Provide superior lawn, tree and shrub care. We will provide our services with a dedication to honesty, integrity and responsiveness to every client. We believe that our natural organic turf and shrub care programs are designed to provide the highest lawn quality possible without compromising the environment.

**FUTURE CHALLENGES:** Our challenges are keeping and developing good employees into professional service providers, responding rapidly to clients' needs and concerns, marketing efficiently and offering cutting-edge service and products.

## **THE PRESIDENT**

**Bill Jones**

**BACKGROUND:** Grew up on a peach farm. Then worked in a sales capacity for AT&T for five years. Founded Terra Systems in 1992.

**At a  
Glance**



After the initial appointment, Jones expected to keep customers by providing quality results and exceptional service. "We make sure we have a technician on the property the day after someone signs up for our service," he related. "That kind of service goes a long way because no one offers that."

The growth has been slow but sure for the company – 10 percent in 1999, a budgeted 15 percent growth in 2000. Many companies sing the praises of referral work since these customers tend to be more quality focused than price oriented, and Jones said growing without referrals would be a chal-

lenge. "Referrals lead to 60 to 70 percent of our business, and that's because doing a good job and answering people's questions goes a long way. Plus, we ask for them constantly."

"Ask for the business" is what salespeople are told, and Jones does this by sending customers a postcard twice a year – right before the company is about to begin a selling season – and offering them one free application for each referral they provide.

"We've spent tons of money on things that don't work, like home and garden shows and television or radio advertising, and now we're not spending much money on something that works great," Jones said. "We probably spent \$30,000 to \$40,000 last year for television commercials, but that shotgun approach wasn't nearly as successful as we've been this year, in which we're more focused and we'll probably spend \$12,000 to \$14,000."

Jones explained that he doesn't have a set dollar amount or percent of sales that he budgets for marketing each year, but he believes in formulating a marketing plan at the beginning of each year and adhering to it. "We have an annual marketing plan that outlines all of our marketing efforts for a coming year," he explained. "The plan also explains everything that we need to do for each marketing effort, so that way everything gets done on time and we don't have to worry about shooting from the hip."

Jones also thinks companies should make paying as easy as possible for customers in order to be truly service oriented. "Before we start the season or start selling a service, such as aeration, we send out a letter to all 1,600 of our customers with a mail-back envelope and we offer them a 5 percent pre-pay discount," he noted.

Despite added costs and giving up a percent of revenue, Terra Systems also accepts credit card payments to cater to customer needs. "We're a service business, so we have to make things as convenient for clients as we can," Jones remarked, disputing the supposed negatives associated with accepting credit cards. "I'd be happy if I could get all of my clients on credit cards. It's worth the 2 percent to get paid when you do the work."

**THE ORGANIC DECISION.** Terra Systems has been providing organic lawn care since day one. Jones explained that the

(continued on page 34)

## [Lush, green, results]



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**Baronie Kentucky Bluegrass:** An outstanding variety that has excellent spring green-up and holds up well under summer heat. An aggressive variety that grows short and slow to reduce clippings volume and overall maintenance.

**Barrera Tall Fescue:** Barrera is very dark green in color with slow vertical growth, that will match well with other dwarf cultivars. Shows good tolerance for low mowing and excellent winter color, plus brown patch and leaf spot resistance. Barrera scored high in turf trials from Delaware to Washington State.

**Tracer Tall Fescue:** The culmination of a long selection process concentrating on low growing, slow growing, fine-leaved, very dark green plants

that can tolerate low mowing. Tracer has performed well in a variety of locations and climates. With its low-mowing ability, Tracer is an excellent choice for sport fields, golf courses, and other applications where short turf is desirable.

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## Cover Story

(continued from page 32)

company's organic focus helped gather customers early on, but that's not a key selling point for customers today. "When we got started, we got customers because of our organic approach," noted Jones. "No one knew who we were back then, so why else would they pick us? Now, organics may get us in the door, but we get more business just from referrals."

"For the most part, the bottom line with customers is results," he continued. "If we don't produce, they'll call someone else. My customers generally believe in the organics, but if we don't make their lawn green, then they are off the program."

The results he needs to deliver might arrive more slowly with an organic approach than with synthetic pesticides, but Jones believes the organic products, combined with a mandatory soil test for new customers and an annual lime application, promote long-term plant health. "In all of my readings and

(continued on page 36)

If you operate a truly customer-focused company, then you need to provide them the services they want. That's the case for Terra Systems, Charlotte, N.C., and the company responds by offering its lawn care customers four different bi-monthly plans to choose from: Basic, Plus, Season Plus, Systems Elite. The programs are priced differently, and each one includes:

- Early spring organic fertilization
- Late spring organic fertilization
- Early summer, low-nitrogen fertilization
- Late summer lime application
- Fall organic fertilization
- Late fall organic fertilization

The Plus program adds weed control applications in rounds three and five. The Season Plus program adds postemergence broadleaf weed control and preemergence applications in rounds two and three. And the Systems Elite program calls for monthly visits, fall aeration and seeding in addition to the aforementioned services.

"The philosophy behind having different services is that we want to offer the level of service that our customers want," noted Bill Jones, president. "We go all the way up to the Systems Elite plan, which is really for the customers who are so demanding that you almost want to fire them. But this gives us a way to deal with them." — **Bob West**

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**FIRST TO START. LAST TO QUIT.**



## Cover Story

(continued from page 34)

research, the deal with organics is not only feeding the grass but also building up the flora and fauna that make the soil a healthy environment," he explained. "Organics do that because the nutrients are released from the fertilizer pellets as the fungus and bacteria break down the product."

Terra Systems incorporates some synthetic pesticides in its mix – fungicides for brown patch and occasional spot treatments of lawns – and it follows a true Integrated Pest Management approach with tree and shrub care work. "The only spray trucks we have are our two tree and shrub trucks, but

those technicians get out at a property and do inspections, and they only spray if they find a problem," Jones emphasized.

Jones said customer education plays a major role in satisfying customers, and that begins with the first meeting. "We ask new customers to give us at least one year on their property, and I think that should be true for any lawn care company," he noted, adding that building strong relationships with customers increases Terra Systems' chances of a long-term service agreement. "If there is a problem, call us and let us try to fix it before you switch to someone else."

Terra Systems strives to develop relationships with its customers through regular communication by distributing newsletters at each service call and maintaining consistency with the same technicians serving a particular property. "The keys to our success have been our availability to our clients and the fact that we're honest with them about the results they can expect and what they need to do to care for our lawn," Jones related.

Not surprisingly, Jones sees his team of technicians as the key to his future. "We need to keep our employees longer and keep them running the same route," he recognized. "The longer I can keep them in their territories the better they perform. Their routes get tighter, cancellation rates go down and production goes up."

Concerned with maintaining customer satisfaction and high-quality service, Jones continues to examine whether or not the company should further expand its services. "I think we've gone about as far as we can without getting into something totally new like landscaping," he explained. "I know we're giving away thousands of dollars by not offering landscaping, weed control in beds, irrigation, mulching and so on, but that's not the work we do."

This is why Jones isn't going to force the expansion issue. He knows that companies don't please customers by using a staff whose skills are spread too thin. "The other side of offering new services is that you can't be everything to everyone, and you see plenty of companies who do too much and fail," he added. "So it's a matter of delivering what your clients want."

*The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.*

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by Kristen Hampshire

# MANAGING THE Majors



*Large-scale installations demand extra planning, preparation and people to secure big-time results.*

A conductor waves a baton from the podium, eyes fixed on a half-moon formation of musicians, each plucking and blowing and tapping their instruments to create an infusion of sound—a major work.

In this concerto, however, the landscape contractor plays the role of director, the crew stars as players and instruments range from mowers and mulchers to excavators and skid steers.

Like symphony conductors, contractors who tackle major installation projects must complete the construction before receiving applause, and with large-scale jobs this includes scheduling, materials, financing, subcontracting and satisfying customers who make substantial investments.

"What becomes important for a piece to come to life is the orchestration of the music and the director—the timing and interpretation," compared William Wandsnider, president, William J. Wandsnider & Associates, Menomonee Falls, Wis. "A lot of elements go into that—how I coordinate with my tradesmen, my regular crew and the owner of the project. These are all things that are involved."

Some contractors define major installation projects by dollars, but other considerations include the exposure and visibility of the project, the importance of the client to a company's long-term growth and the complexities involved if a job requires a variety of tasks, like installing a pond or pouring concrete.

"A large project is a difference between building one single component and only being concerned about what component works vs. being concerned about how all of these individual components are puzzle pieces," Wandsnider noted. "You get a project that has a million trees to plant and that's major. You get a project that's lighting, irrigation, masonry and electrical and these are two very different types of projects."

With proper planning, adding large installation projects to a company's repertoire provides contractors with a balance of long- and short-term accounts. In the "Major Installation Medley," this planning process unfolds in several movements and success depends on fine-tuning, smooth transitions and most importantly, skilled players.

**MANAGING OBSTACLES.** Bringing a major installation project to life involves tackling issues  
*(continued on page 40)*



*Large installation projects require more equipment, manpower and supplies, making advanced planning a crucial prerequisite to a successful finish.*



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## Major Installations

(continued from page 38)

contractors might not confront while working on smaller accounts. While weather, labor and materials are common variables, large-scale ventures augment these roadblocks. Add traffic, municipal regulations, scheduling and financing to the mix, and contractors have a full plate when it comes to organization and planning.

"On larger jobs, accessibility can be a big issue," commented Steven Buck, president, Buck & Sons Landscape Service, Amlin, Ohio.

Streets might need to be closed for the project to run efficiently, which could require advertising the closing in advance or having flaggers on the site to direct traffic.

In addition to transportation setbacks, financing a large project can be a challenge, noted David Fernandez, president, Cayuga Landscape Company, Ithaca, N.Y.

"Whenever there is an increase in business there is an increase in cash flow problems," he explained. "If you are doing a larger volume of business you will need

"If we have **control** over **our own destiny**—if we are the **site contractor**—things get done much better, **easier** and **smoother**." — **David Peabody**

more money to finance your labor in cash money that has to be in your account. The payments you are receiving from the owner may take three months or more."

Obtaining a bank loan is one way to meet financial needs, he added. Additional administrative issues also crop up when dealing with large accounts.

"There's usually a greater level of formality required in the job management process," he pointed out. "You may need a bond to take on the job, and you have to send formal submittals for the different materials to the landscape architect. You have to rely on a trail of memos to help with the many changes that may happen within the course of the job. You have to have good communication with the crew, since there are more people working with you, and you need to have a way to get information transmitted in between."

**SEQUENCING CREW.** More work means more crew members—and more need for communication and efficient scheduling to complete a job. Boosting labor on a project by subcontracting and escalating crews increases the importance of contact between team players, emphasized David Peabody, owner, Peabody Landscape and Construction, Columbus, Ohio.

Known for completing large projects, such as Heritage Lakes golf course community in Hilliard, Ohio, and Cherry Valley Lodge, a circular building with a courtyard, pond and gazebo in Newark, Ohio, Peabody said the key to avoiding communication blunders is organized project management. This means dealing with scheduling complications, which can make a seemingly clear-cut job rather hectic, he commented.

(continued on page 42)

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**USE READER SERVICE #26**

## Major Installations

(continued from page 40)

"Communication is key, and it's a matter of keeping up with it," he stressed. "There's project management that's involved, which is writing a lot of letters and documentation, constantly taking photographs and e-mailing information."

Peabody organizes his crew for large projects in a pyramid, with crews reporting directly to a job site where there is a lead foreman to oversee the technicians and a project manager to track progress. Ideally, he dedicates the majority of job responsibilities to in-house crews.

"If we have control over our own destiny—if we are the site contractor—things get done much better, easier and smoother," he pointed out.

Buck echoed this point, reserving subcontractors for special needs, like roofing or electrical wiring. "We try to do everything in-house, that way we feel like we can control the quality," he said. "We do combine [crews], but we have special crews where all they do is the larger projects."

Relying solely on company crews is not always an option, and in this case companies subcontract to meet project deadlines or beef up a crew that is spread too thin. Ed Watters, president, Watters and Chatham, Rome, Ga., subcontracts nearly 15 percent of his work—\$300,000 of the company's \$2.2 million in revenue so far this year.

"We become the general contractor over all these different subcontractors," he explained. "That's one big challenge because it's very time consuming from the designer's standpoint. We need to be spending most of our time designing and selling jobs for our crews, but so much of the subcontracting is vital to creating the proper space for our plantings."

Concrete work, major grading, retaining walls, driveways, lighting and swimming pools are some of the tasks Watter assigns to subcontracted crews. At times, this presents scheduling and commu-

- Allow time for proper planning between when the contract is signed and when you begin work.
- Investigate possible pitfalls, including accessibility issues, seasonal considerations, company finances and materials acquisition.
- Determine labor needs—whether or not specialized crews, subcontractors or additional technicians are necessary to complete the job on deadline.
- Organize labor on a job schedule board, so crewmembers understand the goals, target dates and tasks.
- Communicate frequently so crewmembers, subcontractors, project managers and customers are aware of the progress and project needs.
- Follow through with maintenance practices according to the contract.—**Kristen Hampshire**

## Large Leads for Major Projects



## Major Installations

nication chaos—a contractor can't prioritize a subcontractor's schedule, and sometimes the workers aren't at the job site when they are needed the most, he said.

"We have to call them at home at night or early in the morning, and it's hard to get them off a job to bid another job," he mentioned. "Or another builder may have them laying brick on the house and I need them laying brick on a patio. We really try to give them as much notice—the more notice I can give them, the better."

Watter organizes his labor force so the designer becomes the project manager over subcontractors. This manager designs and sells to the client, coordinates and oversees subcontractors and corresponds with the in-house project manager when additional crews are needed.

"We know the exact number of man hours that we are going to need for each separate task, and we book the crews out on the schedule board," he said, adding that his own 70 employees are divided among 15 crews. If the distance to a job site is greater than 35 or 40 miles from the office, crewmembers stay in a hotel on work nights.

"In Atlanta the traffic is horrendous, so by doing this, our indirect time goes to zero," he rationalized.

Devising a solid chain of command for crewmembers can mellow scheduling headaches that stem from juggling subcontractors, crews, deadlines and materials shipments. While some companies organize dedicated crews, others mix it up. Wandsnider uses a combination approach, drafting key technicians from each 2- to 3- man specialized crew to create a team.

"Each crew has a key lead person, a fairly key second person and a third person who may swing around multiple crews," he explained. "Rather than having a key foreman with five men underneath for large jobs, I may have four key foremen with their helpers underneath and one person that works on the scheduling aspect of things and can be the general overseer of the jobs," he explained. "It is more efficient."

**MINDING MATERIALS.** Part of managing an efficient operation depends on availability of supplies at the job site. Materials that arrive too soon must be stored and risk damage before installation. Materials that arrive too late cause a project to lag. So how can contractors cope with a variable that often they cannot control?

"One of the things we did last year was to go back to the plant broker to cut down on our freight bills, our inventory, and have multiple people on our lot loading, unloading and ordering," Watters described. "Now we go to the broker, pay 10 to 15 percent more for the plants, but then have them when we want them where we want them and at the quality we expect."

For other landscape contractors, dealing with plant material on a job site presents more of a challenge. Peabody pointed out that scheduling conflicts often interfere with materials installation. "You might have to remobilize several times, and that's what seems to be the largest problem," he added.

Allowing a window of time between signing the contract and beginning the work provides the opportunity for companies to plan for these details. Buck said he prefers four weeks to two months time prior to beginning the project.

"Some of our landscape contracts will start within the next 10 days, so we always make sure we remember to read specifications up

(continued on page 97)



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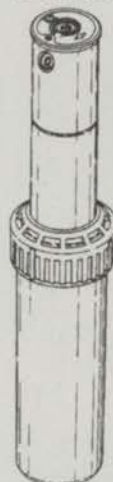
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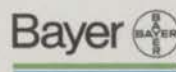
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**USE READER SERVICE #32**



## Mowers

by Kristen Hampshire

Take these tips from the trade to keep equipment in prime condition.

Mower maintenance extends the life of equipment, ensures top-notch performance on the job and helps contractors deliver quality customer service. Photo: Toro

# Mind Your MOWER

A man in a red shirt and blue jeans is kneeling next to a red Toro commercial mower, working on the engine area. The mower has a black Toro logo on the fuel tank and a large black engine. The man is focused on his work, with his hands near the engine components. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

Contractors don't schedule downtime on their agendas, and they don't plan for the hours that mechanical repairs can sponge out of their workday. When the mower isn't running and the timecard is, landscape companies sacrifice productivity and profit.

"For a commercial mower to go down, that would be like being laid off," compared Maria Nicholson, technical adviser, Snapper, McDonough, Ga.

Mower maintenance can prolong the life of the machine and save the company some bills. Regular equipment care is an appointment contractors should make and keep to ensure their capital investments last, Nicholson stressed.

"If that machine goes down or if it blows an engine because of lack of maintenance, that's a lot of money," she added. "Parts can be expensive, but not nearly as expensive as labor."

Staying on top of simple tasks, like changing oil, sharpening blades and checking tire air pressure, is a small price to pay compared to steep hourly rates at a dealer repair shop. Frank Patane, owner, Golden Gate Landscape Management, Santa Rosa, Calif., allots 45 minutes per mower each week for maintenance, similar to scheduling an extra job, he said. In this time, technicians can accomplish a couple oil changes and blade sharpenings.

"Time is the largest cost," he calculated. But keeping up with basic mower care is a necessity contractors can't afford to ignore.

**DAMAGE DOCTOR.** "Maintenance is like taking a physical," related Ken Taylor, manager of the commercial business unit for Husqvarna, Charlotte, N.C. "For a product to last as long as possible, getting the machine to operate at its optimum level is important. A

(continued on page 48)





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USE READER SERVICE #48



## Mowers

(continued from page 46)

figure 1 use on a preventive maintenance campaign is about 5 percent of the purchase price. Contractors who perform regular "check-ups" on mowers can avoid large invoices from doctoring equipment. A Snap-per maintenance guide cites dirt as the primary "pathogen" that contaminates oil and clogs air filters, resulting in less clean air

circulation in the engine, which makes mowers difficult to start and inefficient to run. And because of the nature of the environment where equipment is operated it is nearly impossible to prevent air-borne dirt particles from saturating a mower's organs, according to the guide. Companies that allow damage to continue will pay the price—

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getting a machine to

operate at an **optimum**

level is important." — **Ken**

**Taylor**

repairs due to air filter and oil neglect generally are not covered by engine warranties.

Servicing basic components takes little time and decreases risk of engine failure, Nicholson added. "Most commercial cutters spend time on maintenance daily—[upkeep] doesn't take much time."

**THE BASICS.** Minutes dedicated to mower maintenance should address necessities such as changing the oil, lubricating fittings, checking drive belts, sharpening cutting blades, cleaning or changing the air filter and checking the tire air pressure, Taylor suggested.

On riding mowers, he suggested checking castor swivels. And whether it be a walking or riding hydraulic unit, hydraulic oil needs to be changed annually to ensure clean, fresh lubrication in the engine."

Oil changes topped the checklist for most contractors—every 50 to 100 hours is a target mark, Taylor recommended. Mowers that drink dirty oil suffer, burning up the engine, he added. "If you hold up water that hasn't been purified, you see junk. Do you want to drink it or do you want a nice, clean glass?"

Consequently, engine manufacturers have little sympathy for oil-related damages.

"Warranties are rejected usually for two reasons," said Tom Dibble, supervisor of technical services for Kawasaki. "First, lack of lubrication if the oil is way too low. Second, dirt ingestion because an oil filter was not maintained. [Negligence] has been known to cost people an engine or two."

Commercial engines can last several thousand hours depending on care and use, Dibble estimated. Contractors accented the importance of tire air pressure and sharp cutting blades. These performance-oriented tasks determine a cut's appearance, Patane noted.

"Sharpening blades increases the life of the mower and makes the lawn look better,"

(continued on page 50)

USE READER SERVICE #29





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USE READER SERVICE #113



## Mowers

(continued from page 48)

Patane said. "Another performance issue is proper tire inflation pressure to keep the mower level. If one side is lower, it makes for a funky cut," he said, adding that contractors should recognize that the front tires on walk-behind mowers have a higher pressure than back tires and adjust accordingly.

Patane covers these basics in employee

training and requires technicians to block time for these needs, adding that it is obvious when a technician skips these steps.

"Common sense" care includes keeping machines out of the elements, Nicholson said. Also, a trouble-shooting tactic that does not require time or tools is one many are guilty of skipping: reading the owner's manual.

"It's not keep-awake stuff," Nicholson admitted, "but [manuals] have so much information. So often, a buyer doesn't read the owner's manual, and it costs them parts."

**TAKING RESPONSIBILITY.** So who is responsible for mower attention? Who maintains? Who repairs? Some lawn care companies split the duties, dedicating daily and weekly needs to technicians while outside repairmen handle complications that surface. Other operations hire in-house mechanics to service equipment.

"Both the mechanic and employees are responsible," Taylor said. "[Maintenance] is like driving a car—is the owner or the mechanic who takes care of the car responsible? Make sure the operator is familiar with the equipment, whether or not it is running well or pulling one way or the other. The operator can do a quick walk-around to ensure the mower is set up properly."

Taylor suggested stocking basic parts such as blades, belts, wheels, batteries and spark plugs, to solve minor blunders. He also recommended miscellaneous hardware to assist with "non-mechanical" service. He rationalizes this by "looking at things that can keep mowers running or that stop them."

Hiring in-house mechanics can be a financial strain for many companies, especially if repair is their sole responsibility, Taylor commented. Often, dealers are the most economical service source.

"I base it on revenue," he explained. "If you have to pay technicians \$25,000 to do the job right, for that person to do some of the functions a retailer would do on service, you would have \$50,000 and then another \$15,000 in shop equipment. You're going to have a \$100,000 investment in the technician, shop and special tools to work on the equipment. If you have that kind of investment, what type of return does it take?"

Besides the investment involved, the credibility of employees, technicians and mechanics a contractor hires is critical, Nicholson added. Essentially, a company's profit lies in their hands, and speedy service is key.

"Since these units are the contractors' bread and butter, dealers will do anything they can to get them in and out the door," Nicholson noted. "The mechanic might not know what is wrong and end up on the

(continued on page 51)



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USE READER SERVICE #10



# September 2000

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

## **S8 Growing with Snow**

*D. Foley Landscape is stepping up its approach to snow and ice management.*

## **S16 Symposium Success**

*Hungry to network and share industry knowledge, SIMA members took the East Coast by storm during the third annual Snow and Ice Symposium.*

## **S20 Clearing the Way**

*Skid-steer loaders plow through cold-weather conditions.*

## **S26 Snow Equipment Buyers' Guide**

*This issue features a comprehensive listing of snow plow manufacturers and their products.*

## **S32 New Products**

*The latest offerings in snow and ice removal products.*

### **ALSO IN THIS ISSUE...**

## **S4 SIMA Says**

## **S6 SIMA News**



Dan Foley,  
D. Foley  
Landscape

Photo:  
Darryl  
Leitsinger





## New Look, New Direction

As our organization enters its 5<sup>th</sup> year of existence, we are excited by the changes that have happened over the years. And more changes will certainly occur as our association learns more about how to better serve those that work within our industry.

I am particularly excited by the changes that have taken place with our industry magazine over the past few months. Some won't even notice that a change has taken place. However, it was time to take our magazine to another level. After much thought and considerable investigation, it was decided that a change in publishers was necessary in order to eventually achieve the goal of having a stand-alone magazine.

Bob West and GIE Media have long had a reputation for being progressive, aggressive and patient. Considerable discussion and interaction between Bob, Tammy Higham, myself and the SIMA Board proved to us that GIE Media would be an outstanding partner in order to achieve the goals that have been set forth.

Now, with a new name (*Snow Business*) and a new publisher (GIE Media) our association is forging ahead in a continuing effort to be the leader in the snow and ice industry. Green industry professionals know and recognize that *Lawn & Landscape* magazine is the premier publication in the green industry. SIMA is proud to be associated with such a fine group of professionals.

Bob and his team have committed to learning volumes about the snow and ice industry, how it operates and how they can better serve our industry in the same vein as SIMA. They have committed GIE Media to becoming our partner in growth – for the good of the industry as a whole, for SIMA and for *Snow Business* magazine. Ultimately, snow and ice professionals will be the beneficiaries of this partnership.

The steady growth of SIMA, from a germ of an idea back in the early 1990s, to its current status as the industry's voice, is quite satisfying and fulfilling for those of us that were there at the beginning. *Snow Business* is the next step in that growth. This magazine is for everyone in the snow and ice industry – not just for plowing contractors, vendors or equipment dealers. Anyone who is associated with what we do is a part of it. We want to supply information to all those who fight snowstorms and ice events to keep roadways, parking lots and sidewalks safe for others to use. *Snow Business* magazine will be that vehicle.



John Allin,  
Board President, SIMA

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## General Membership Meeting

SIMA's general membership meeting was held Thursday, June 1<sup>st</sup> at the Holiday Inn By the Bay, Portland, Maine. Business discussed included the announcement of our Fourth Annual Snow & Ice Symposium, which will be held June 7 - 9, 2001, in Denver, Colo., and for the first time will include an equipment exhibition.

SIMA recognized and congratulated volunteers that worked on the video committee. It was announced that the video was completed and ready for purchase. The association also thanked Western Products and Fisher Engineering for their generosity and continued support of SIMA. It was announced that it is our desire to produce a series of training videos and would welcome any vendors that were interested in sponsoring one.

In other meeting business, board member Tom Yackley, Yackley All Weather Service LTD., was re-elected to a three-year term that will expire July 1, 2003.

## SIMA Portfolios

You asked for it and you got it! At the symposium we thanked each of our speakers by presenting them with a SIMA Portfolio. Many of the attendees asked how they could purchase one and now they're available for \$35. The portfolios are black with a leather SIMA patch on the front. They zipper close, contain an 8½" by 11-inch writing pad and a calculator. There are plenty of pockets for papers, business cards, etc. If you would like to order one, call SIMA at 814/835-3577.

## Third Annual Snow & Ice Symposium

Once again, the symposium will go down as a big success! Offering his assessment of the show, Mike Anderson, Snow Pros, Hammond, Ind., wrote, "I don't know how anyone could consider this symposium any less than a complete success! I recognize and appreciate all the hard work you guys did to pull this off. You can count on my participation in Denver next year."

In addition to numerous educational sessions (many of which are available on audio cassettes), this year's trade show featured 24 exhibitors, including Bobcat Co., Boss Snowplows, Coastal Metal Fabrication, Cryotech, Dow Chemical, DTN, Fisher Engineering, General Chemical, Ice Ban, International Salt Co., Ledex, Loftness Snowplowers, Odin Systems, OnSpot of North America, Ossian, Pro-Tech Sno Pusher, Shindaiwa, Sno-Way International, Snowman Snowplows, Swede-Attach and Western Products.

Many companies donated prizes that were awarded at the symposium. Among the dozens of prizes won:

- Ron Dawson, Aspen Snow Removal, Glenwood, N.J., and Mike Anderson, Snow Pros, of Hammond, Ind. both won polyurethane cutting edges donated by MTS
- Jeff Tovar, Tovar's Snowplowing, Elgin, Ill., won a Power Broom donated by Shindaiwa
- Andrew Muller, Aspen Snow Removal, Glenwood, N.J., won a blower also donated by Shindaiwa
- Lynn Booe, Frederick Brothers Corp., Chicago, Ill. won an 8-foot Sno Pusher donated by Pro-Tech. **SB**



*Next year's show will take place on June 7 - 9, 2001, in Denver, Colo. This will be our first equipment show and the number of exhibitors is expected to double. Exhibitor prospectuses have been mailed and spaces are sure to sell out quickly. If you know someone that you would like to see exhibiting, be sure to tell them about the show, or better yet, have us mail them a prospectus for you!*

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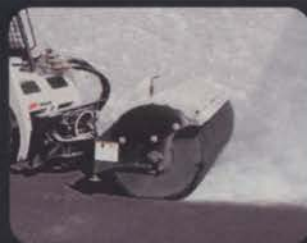
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USE READER SERVICE #12



**BY CYNTHIA GREENLEAF**

*D. Foley*

*Landscape*

*is stepping up*

*its approach to*

*snow and ice*

*management.*



# Growing WITH Snow



## VITAL STATISTICS...

### D. FOLEY LANDSCAPE

**HEADQUARTERS:** Walpole, Mass.

**FOUNDED:** 1987

**PRIMARY SERVICES:** 75 percent commercial landscape maintenance; 15 percent commercial landscape installation; 10 percent snow and ice management

**1999 REVENUE:** \$1,725,000 (a 58 percent increase over 1998)

**2000 REVENUE GOAL:** \$2,000,000 (a 16 percent increase over 1999)

**SNOW SETUP:** During a typical storm, D. Foley operates 4 snow throwers, 1 tailgate spreader, 9 plow trucks and 1 skid-steer loader with a "V" plow. In addition, the company currently subcontracts for 3 hopper spreaders, up to 8 plow trucks, 2 skid-steer loaders and up to 3 rubber-tired backhoe/loaders.

**COMPANY HISTORY:** Dan Foley said he always knew he wanted to own his own business, "so he found something he loved and went for it," starting D. Foley Landscape during his sophomore year of college. No typical landscape contractor, Foley has a bachelor's degree in entrepreneurial studies and an associate's degree in horticulture.

Dan Foley's changed his mind about the snow business. While once considered a necessary evil that New England contractors like himself moaned and complained about, snow and ice management has become an obvious way of growing his successful landscape maintenance business.

According to Foley, president and owner of D. Foley Landscape, Walpole, Mass., snow was once just a service offered to even out the seasonality of landscape work. Now it's a "fourth season business with excellent gross profit margin potential," he related.

**APPROACHING SNOW PROFITABLY.** Foley's change of mind is in part due to networking with contractors who have made snow and ice management an impressive profit center. These snow success stories have inspired Foley to rethink his landscape-centered business strategies. "We're not afraid to admit we've been stagnant in the way we've looked at the snow and ice business," he said. "We have been reasonably conservative in that we really wanted to control quality and only wanted to take on the snow work that we could manage comfortably."

In the not-too-distant past, D. Foley's standard approach to snow and ice management has been to use its landscape client base to bring in snow work, which can be detrimental in terms of cultivating new business, according to Foley. "We've turned away clients for snow plowing," he admitted. "And saying 'no' to a client is not a good thing."

The company has even followed an unofficial rule that it only plows for landscape clients and even then, performs snow and ice removal only after starting with landscape work. "We basically were limiting the amount of snow work that we would accept," Foley noted. "This would cause us to say 'no' to certain landscape clients and simply try to help them find someone."

He added that in the past, his company has also always been careful not to take on too much "off season" work to avoid jeopardizing the quality of its landscape services.

With a revised snow plan in place, however, Foley said he wouldn't be at all surprised if the company's snow business grew from its current 10 percent of the company's annual revenue to 30 or 40 percent within the next few years, with just a little more effort than the company has made previously. "It's scary to think our snow work could be any percentage we want it to be, since in the past we have aimed for little or no growth in our snow business," Foley admitted, adding that in the past three to



Account managers John Dinsmore and John Murphy (left to right) lead D. Foley Landscape's crew of 12 year-round and 15 seasonal employees.  
Photo: Darryl Leitsinger



five years, however, the company has become much better at building its business through the use of subcontractors.

This season, D. Foley plans to treat snow as its own business and use a more aggressive approach to sales and marketing. "The first step is to talk to existing clients

and prove that we can take on more work," Foley said. "We're going to do more with our existing client base and begin with clients whose plowing areas fit a certain profile in terms of size, property type, and equipment and labor needs."

Reversing its standard approach, D.

Foley also wants to consider eventually marketing just its snow services in order to grow its landscape division. "We have never really marketed snow removal services to our clients," Foley said. "In fact, one might say that we have done the exact opposite by either directly or indirectly steering clients to use someone else."

Expanding the snow side of the business fits into D. Foley's plan to grow the company 15 percent to 20 percent consistently every year. "We want to double in size every four to five years," Foley said. "We don't want to let up on that goal until we can't do it."

**SNOW SPECIFICS.** D. Foley follows a guiding philosophy for snow and ice management during its typical eastern Massachusetts season of approximately seven events. "The key is to control everything that's in your control," Foley observed. "There's so much you can't control, so you'd better be in a position to adapt. You can't control the weather, but you can be prepared."

To ready for these unpredictable variables, the company is highly organized and follows a carefully written protocol or as Foley put it, the "McDonald's approach to snow plowing." These guidelines indicate everything from snow plowing "do's and don'ts" and safety precautions to required pre- and post-storm maintenance for all equipment. The company also has established a call-in procedure to dispatch its snow crews as soon as possible when a storm hits. "That first communication is critical," Foley pointed out.

The company's snow preparations begin in early September with employees reviewing snow work orders kept on file for every client. Essential to meeting a client's specific needs, these orders keep track of detailed information, such as hours the customer operates, emergency phone numbers, areas that need to be treated first and any other special requests. The work orders also contain a map of every property D. Foley maintains, indicating essential plowing information such as speed bumps or raised manhole covers locations and where snow can be placed.

Training for both employees and subcontractors is another critical component of

(continued on page 12)

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## COVER STORY

(continued from page 10)

D. Foley's snow program. "We try to prepare them as much as possible and go through what a typical storm would be like," Foley said. Training topics include safety issues, equipment use and snow plow operation. The company will also conduct preseason on-site training at its properties.

To prepare for a worst-case scenario, such as a broken spreader or a damaged plow, Foley has a part-time mechanic on call during storms to take care of emergency repairs as well as a parts supplier readily available via pager, he related. The company also keeps basic parts in stock, such as extra belts, pumps, pins and light bulbs and even has a backup pickup truck available for plowing if necessary.

**SUCCESS WITH SUBCONTRACTORS.** A team of dependable subcontractors is an essential component of Foley's snow operation. "I like the idea of building our business with

(continued on page 14)

## ON-SITE SERVICE

D. FOLEY LANDSCAPE sees a real future in providing landscape maintenance and snow removal to private schools and corporate properties. So much so that it has recently launched a division devoted to on-site management, aptly named "CampusCare."

The company's foray into direct report-type site management was a response to a demand for heightened customer service from its larger clients, according to Dan Foley, president, D. Foley Landscape, Walpole, Mass. "We realized that sometimes our largest sites weren't getting the level of detail we thought they deserved," he said. D. Foley already serves five on-site maintenance clients — one college, one corporate campus and three condominium complexes — and hopes to attract more as the new dedicated division launches its marketing efforts.

To qualify for CampusCare, a property must fit a particular profile, Foley pointed out. Criteria include significant turf acreage (generally about 20 acres); an area suitable for setting up an on-site trailer for equipment and vehicle storage; and most importantly, the site must have complex needs and/or detailed service requirements.

Generally, "our decision on whether to market or implement our on-site management program is driven by the size of the landscape, the intensity/frequency of various weekly services, and the complexity of services," Foley said. "Therefore, it may not simply be driven by the acres of lawn area." Snow and ice management promises to play a pivotal role in this program, since there is always a demand for this service on high maintenance commercial properties, Foley noted. A personal touch is even guaranteed, as several of his site managers operate the plow trucks themselves on their particular property. — *Cynthia Greenleaf*

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(continued from page 12)

quality subcontractors," he said, pointing out that subcontractors are an effective way to build his snow business without being limited by available resources. No matter how big his company is, with subcontractors, "we've got the ability to do the work," Foley said. "We can manage the process for

our clients and not plow every flake of snow ourselves." In the future, he said he'd like to see his in-house snow management capabilities and use of subcontractors grow in direct proportion to each other.

Foley added that no matter how many subcontractors he brings on, his employees

will always play a key role in snow management as his business expands. "Some people have been successful subbing it all out and just being in the office. But we want to be out there with them," he said.

**OUT IN THE OPEN.** One of the most distinct aspects about D. Foley is its open book management. Foley first considered this approach three years ago as a way to hold employees more accountable for the company's performance in everything from using equipment carefully to getting a job done right the first time without having to make a callback. "I was frustrated that our people didn't understand how their actions affected the company," Foley said. "People were just doing their jobs but not really driving the company's performance."

As part of its open book management, D. Foley shares financial information with all employees on every aspect of its business – from maintenance and enhancement work to construction and snow management. These numbers are discussed weekly during D. Foley's "company huddle" every Tuesday morning. Shown in three formats: "plan/budget," "current projection" and "actual," these numbers – depicted both numerically and graphically – are posted on a large scoreboard in the shop for everyone to see, Foley said.

"We are forecasting the future rather than reviewing the past," he observed. "It really helps us drive the business. Our goal is to have employees think and act like business owners with a direct line of sight on how their individual performance effects the company," he said, noting that this tell-all approach has forced his company to have good financial and business plans in place. He's also seen teamwork and morale improve substantially. "Before employees would complain about how things were without making changes," he said. "Now, everybody's stepped it up."

As his company grows, Foley is committed to continuing open book management. "Open book management is our future. We are a better company now that our employees are informed," he said. "There's absolutely no way I would ever go back." **SB**

The author is a Contributing Editor to Snow Business.

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USE READER SERVICE #15



BY CYNTHIA GREENLEAF



Bobcat Company was one of 24 exhibitors at the symposium's first-ever trade show.

# Symposium Success

*Hungry to network and share industry knowledge, 165 SIMA members took the East Coast by storm during the third annual Snow and Ice Symposium.*

On all accounts, SIMA's latest Snow and Ice Symposium, held in Portland, Maine, June 1 through 3, was a success. Highlights included the debut of SIMA's official "Basic Snowplowing Techniques" video. Tammy Higham, SIMA's executive director, was pleased the video came through just in time for this year's show. "We've been waiting for the video for an entire year," she noted. "We really were biting our nails since we wanted to have it for this year's symposium."

Video sales are going well thus far and have exceeded everyone's expectations, Higham observed. "We knew that (videos) were wanted since we've had a lot of requests," she said. "But no one expected to have been this successful."

In light of this warm reception, SIMA plans to eventually offer two additional training videos: intermediate and advanced snow plow-

(continued on page 18)



The SIMA show gave snow removal experts such as ProTech's Dave Manning (far left), Lipinski Snow Services' Mike Sullivan (left) and Pro Scapes' Rick Kier (below) a valuable opportunity to talk shop.



The symposium featured a talk on snow event management by Allin Companies' John Allin (above) and started off with a tour of Fisher Engineering's new manufacturing plant in Rockland, Maine, where attendees shared a laugh during a break (left).



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## SYMPOSIUM REVIEW

(continued from page 16)

ing techniques to pick up where the first video left off, according to Higham.

The show's "snack and chat" breakfast round tables were also a conference highlight, despite the pressure on sleepy attendees to "share thoughts very early in the morning" Higham said, noting that the symposium was an invaluable networking opportunity. "There was an unbelievable amount of information shared," she observed. "Contractors really used every minute of the (show's) three days."

While all the sessions were well-attended, the symposium's most popular offerings included a talk on marketing plowing services by Chris James of Chris James Landscaping, Midland Park, N.J., and Mike Anderson of Sno Pros, Hammond, Ind., and a session on using subcontractors with Mike Sullivan, Lipinski Snow Services, Mount Laurel, N.J., according to Higham, based on feedback she received after the show.

Sno-Way's Dwayne Schauler (near right) talks snow with an attendee at the trade show, which featured table top displays.



Another well-received session featured University of Wisconsin professor of engineering Donald Walker on effectively using deicing chemicals and abrasives. Walker delivered two talks, both to a packed house, Higham noted, adding that she wasn't surprised at the level of interest in Walker's session. "Contractors are al-

ways looking for the most effective products, what's new and how they can learn more about it and be more productive with their time."

With this year's symposium a wrap, SIMA's looking forward to the fourth annual show, to be held next year in Denver, Colo., June 7 to 9.

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USE READER SERVICE #17



BY KRISTEN HAMPSHIRE

# Clearing THE Way

*Skid-steer loaders plow  
through cold-weather conditions.*

Cold fronts bring more than dropping temperatures and wind-chill factors. For snow removal contractors, Winter Wonderland's not-so-wonderful ice, sleet and snow spark winter plowing business.

These conditions might call for an alternative to pick-up truck plowing – or at least a helpful addition to shave time and frustration off a pile of snow-clearing concerns. Many contractors are considering snowplows for skid-steer loaders to get detail plow jobs done quickly and carefully.

"You name it, you can do it with a skid-steer," noted Mario Perricone, owner of Pennicone Brother Landscaping, Northbrook, Ill.

That includes clearing large snow-filled parking lots, maneuvering between parked cars and trimming curbs. Attaching a snowplow to a skid-steer means adding versatility to clearing methods and reducing winter weather hassles.

**CLEARING THE WAY.** Sturdy, compact and maneuverable, skid-steers are built to withstand challenging conditions which makes them ideal for snow removal. Snowplows on skid-steer loaders offer increased strength and precision when plowing, and are a convenient addition to a contractor's snow-clearing regiment.

"Where the skid-steer shines is maneuverability," emphasized Jerry Holman, sales manager for Stonebrooke Equipment, Minneapolis, Minn. "They are used a lot for clearing whole parking lots or in conjunction with a truck. While a truck is good for long passes, a skid-steer is ideal for going between cars, trimming parking lot islands, running curb lines, trimming light poles, clearing loading docks and handi-



Plowing with a skid-steer loader allows contractors improved maneuverability, access to cramped areas and sturdy clearing power.

capped parking stalls. Any area that is tight or restricted with lots of obstructions – that's where the skid-steer is worth its weight in gold."

A skid-steer loader's mobile qualities are ideal for snow removal on bike paths, contained spaces around buildings, areas with sharp corners or parking lots. The only disadvantage is frigid temperatures, which can be remedied by heating the cab.

Actually, adding heat to the cab is the only necessary winterizing procedure, and even then, this ergonomic addition is optional, he mentioned.

Skid-steers are especially helpful in high-traffic parking lots where clearing the surface is a priority, Holman added. Certain winter weather conditions, however, can make this task challenging or nearly impossible for some plowing methods. The full down pressure of a skid-steer – when the front wheels are elevated, shifting weight to the plow – scrapes ice, hard-packed snow and freezing rain from surfaces with clearance that can't be achieved by other clearing methods. This down pressure clears away more of Old Man Winter's leftovers than the gravity down from a pick-up truck, he pointed out.

When a large snowfall blanketed Perricone's area, his residential accounts were knee-deep in accumulation and his contractors were relieved that their equipment could plow through the problems, he said.

"Instead of cleaning the driveway two or three times and getting to a limit where the snow plow could not push more, we used a skid-steer with a plow," he explained. "With a

*(continued on page 22)*



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USE READER SERVICE #18



# SKID-STEER PLOWS

(continued from page 20)

skid-steer, you can get rid of all of the snow in one sweep."

For Perricone, and other contractors who use skid-steers to plow, "a single sweep" means a time savings, which allows his employees to service accounts efficiently. Using a skid-steer also maximizes landscape construction equipment, which saves money, he added.

Clearing goes more than one way when

**PACKING MORE POWER.** Skid-steers stand up to large quantities of snow – engineering details enhancing their performance ability. Certain features are key for skid-steer plows, as the equipment withstands more weight and pressure from both the machine and the volume of materials pushed. Holman refers to his skid-steers as "tanks," and this tag is not far off the mark.

Plows attached to skid-steers should be

curved plow blade, he explained that a 14-inch radius curl on the moldboard moves more snow.

"Visualize if you pushed a sheet of plywood down the parking lot," he compared. "A 6-foot-wide sheet of plywood would take 80 horsepower to push. The snow is not going to be cooperative – it's going to bunch and come off of the blade like a rock. But with a tight curl on the moldboard, as snow comes up it goes into a natural rolling motion and actually looks, from the operator's position, like a rolling log at the end of the blade."

More snow can be pushed aside more quickly because operators are not dealing with an immovable block of snow that can result from plows with standard 17-inch curl radiuses, Holman noted. A 45-degree contact angle on the blade caters to snow clearance better than typical vertical set-ups used in similar conditions.

(continued on page 24)

**"THERE'S A LOT OF WEAR AND TEAR THAT OCCURS WHEN PLOWING THAT DOESN'T EFFECT A SKID-STEER." — MARIO PERRICONE**

using a skid-steer, Holman mentioned. Operators can spin 180 degrees, angle the plow in the opposite direction and plow the other way going backwards. The long arms on the machine allow snow to pile higher, scraping off more accumulation from the pavement for clear car and pedestrian paths.

constructed with qualities that will hold up to rigorous activity. A heavy weight is important, for starters. Most skid-steer plows weigh 100 pounds per foot of width, compared to the 50 to 75 pound weight of traditional plows, Holman said.

Recognizing the importance of a sharply

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# SKID-STEER PLOWS

(continued from page 22)

Another important feature for skid-steer plows is what Holman calls a trip-cutting edge. On traditional plows when the blade hits a manhole cover or curb the blade falls forward and has to be reset before the operator can continue. With the trip-cutting edge, the bottom of the blade trips rearward instead, so false tripping, when the machine catches on snow obstacles, does not occur.

"Like anything, you can use a shoe-string budget, but the performance will be limited," Holman added. Traditional plows can be attached to skid-steers, but they do not offer some features like a tight mold-board curl, a trip-cutting edge or down pressure, so attaching them to a skid-steer is less effective.

In addition, environmental-resistant cylinders and a long-lasting finish on the plow increases equipment life, as most contractors rely on outdoor storage for their machinery, Holman said.

**ADDING TO THE MIX.** Skid-steers are a valuable snow-clearing alternative, however, they are not a replacement for common methods, such as pick-up truck plowing or using a bucket, blower or broom. Each tactic is designed for certain tasks, and while skid-steers are ideal for some plowing projects, they are cumbersome on other jobs.

"Everything has a place," Holman reminded. "There are things a truck will do better – a big open lot with long passes where it can go faster. It's not fair for me to say this revolutionary device makes everything obsolete. But if a snow storm starts at 10 tonight and lasts until midnight, speed is the name of the game, and if you're going to make any money, you've got to get out there and get the job done. On a skid-steer loader, the angling snow blade will get the pavement clear twice as fast."

Brad Wise, district manager of The Davey Tree Expert Co., Kansas City, Mo., added that though he can cite situations

where shoveling or using a pick-up plow is more efficient, the benefits of a skid-steer plow outweigh the downfalls. His skid-steer loader has been wearing a plow during winter months for two years.

"The main benefit is the zero-turn of the skid-steer," Wise stressed. "A skid-steer will turn on a dime – they're just quicker."

"As long as you've got an intelligent driver," he added, quickly. "You've got to trust the guy behind the wheel, because he can do lots of damage."

Just as skid-steers are sturdy, strong tools, they can be dangerous because they are so powerful. But, as Holman pointed out, there is very little chance an operator will damage the vehicle. Pick-up trucks are more likely to endure dents and dings while on the job than stubborn skid-steer loaders.

"If you are trying to do detail work with a pick-up truck and you hit something, the repairs will cost you money," he explained. "If you get a little too close to the light pole

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you're trimming, then you've caused a lot of damage. The skid-steer, on the other hand, is kind of like a little tank – you really have to do something wild to put this machine out of business." The peace of mind that comes with knowing that equipment

wear and tear that occurs when plowing that doesn't effect a skid-steer." He has depended on his skid-steer to service plowing accounts for 18 years, and his only gripe is transporting the machinery to the plowing site in a trailer. Even then, time is saved

steer loaders are an option that need to be looked at very closely."

Since skid-steers share a universal mounting, plows are interchangeable, and the optional attachments available to combat various winter weather situations cre-

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can stand up to rough riding makes the job less stressful, he said.

Perricone echoed that durable skid-steers ease doubts over whether or not a machine will survive rugged conditions.

"You're not breaking a transmission, going through u-joints, brakes or front-end suspensions," he listed. "There's a lot of

upon arrival, he said.

The advantages of plowing with skid-steers are not necessarily well known, Holman admitted, noting "word has not gotten out."

"There's a whole lot of people who have not thought of using a plow on their skid-steer loader," he said. "And when you can clear twice as much pavement, I think skid-

ate a versatile "toolbox" for contractors. No matter the make, this attachment can be added to a contractor's inventory.

"This is definitely a new dimension in plowing," Holman asserted. **SB**

*The author is a Contributing Editor to Snow Business.*

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*The following pages feature a comprehensive listing of snow plow manufacturers and their products.*

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www.grasshoppermower.com

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www.henderson-mfg.com

### HINIKER COMPANY

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www.lexindustries.com

### MEYER PRODUCTS

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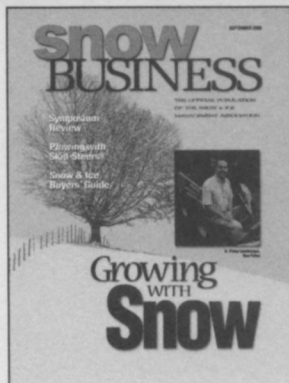
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12	32	52	72	92
13	33	53	73	93
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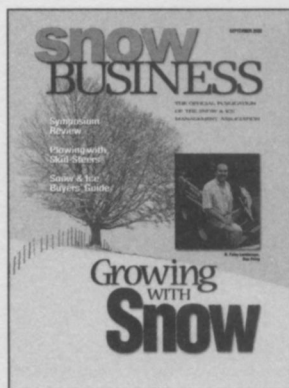
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<b>ARCTIC EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURING</b>							
78"	78"	25"	12-gauge	68"	500	Fixed	No
84"	84"	27"	10-gauge	73"	639	Fixed or Detachable	Yes
90"	90"	27"	10-gauge	78"	654	Fixed or Detachable	Yes
96"	96"	27"	10-gauge	83"	669	Fixed or Detachable	Yes
102"	102"	27"	10-gauge	88"	690	Fixed or Detachable	Yes
Commercial							
120" XHD	120"	36"	10-gauge	104"	1,120	Fixed	No
90"	90"	29"	3/8"	78"	688	Fixed or Detachable	Yes
			U.H.M.W. poly				
96"	96"	29"	3/8"	83"	698	Fixed or Detachable	Yes
			U.H.M.W. poly				
102"	102"	29"	3/8"	88"	743	Fixed or Detachable	Yes
			U.H.M.W. poly				
108"	108"	29"	3/8"	94"	755	Fixed or Detachable	Yes
			U.H.M.W. poly				
<b>BLIZZARD</b>							
810	8' - 10'	31"	12-gauge	120"	980	Power hitch	Yes
800	8'	31"	12-gauge	96"	750	Power hitch	Yes
760	7' - 6"	28"	12-gauge	90"	550	Power hitch	Yes
<b>BOBCAT COMPANY</b>							
7'	84"	28"	steel	73"	620	N/A	N/A
8'	96"	28"	steel	83"	660	N/A	N/A
<b>BOSS SNOWPLOW</b>							
Straight blade	7'6", 8', 8', 8'6", 10'	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Multi-position	7'6", 8'2", 9'2", 10'	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Skid Steer	5'5", 7'6"	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>COASTAL METAL FABRICATION (DOWNEASTER)</b>							
Diamond	N/A	2" to 32"	N/A	6.5'-9'	500 - 750	Frame	Yes
Blizzard	N/A	28"	N/A	8'-10'	750	Frame	Yes
<b>CURTIS INTERNATIONAL</b>							
15P7	N/A	24"	3/16 poly	73"	460	Hitch N Run	N/A
15P75A	N/A	28"	11-gauge	79"	695	Hitch N Run	N/A
15P75	N/A	28"	11-gauge	79"	750	Hitch N Run	N/A
15P8	N/A	28"	11-gauge	85"	765	Hitch N Run	N/A
15P9	N/A	28"	11-gauge	95"	795	Hitch N Run	N/A
<b>DANIELS</b>							
Wing Plow	N/A	31" or 41"	7- or 10-gauge	12', 14', 16', 18', 20', 24'	1,550-4,300	Quick disconnect or Bucket mount	N/A
Pull Flow	N/A	19"	3/16" steel	70', 80', 90', 96'	250 to 350	Speed hitch	N/A
<b>EXCEL (HUSTLER)</b>							
4000/3000	N/A	N/A	N/A	60"	N/A	N/A	Yes

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<b>FEC</b>							
1400	N/A	21.5"	N/A	60"-96"	450-525	Skid-steer	N/A
1500	N/A	31.75"	N/A	84"-144"	1135-1446	Small industrial wheel	N/A
6400	N/A	28"	N/A	60"-100"	385-714	Skid-steer	N/A
<b>FISHER ENGINEERING</b>							
LD Series	6' 9" / 7' 6"	23"	14-gauge HS	68"/73"	525/635	Detachable	Yes
RD Series	7' & 7' 6"	26"	11-gauge	73" & 78"	710 & 715	Detachable	Yes
HD Series	8' & 9'	29"	11-gauge	83" & 94"	855 & 925	Detachable	Yes
EZ-V Plow	8' 6" & 9' 6"	28 1/2"	12-gauge	93"-96"	920	Detachable	Yes
Municipal	9'/10'	34"	11-gauge	94"/104"	1,690/1,790	Detachable	Yes
<b>GRASSHOPPER</b>							
480	N/A	N/A	N/A	48"	154	Front Mounted	N/A
482	N/A	N/A	N/A	60"	168	Front Mounted	N/A
V Plow	N/A	N/A	N/A	60"	166	Front Mounted	N/A
<b>HENDERSON MANUFACTURING</b>							
Patrol Wing	8'6"-12'6"	30"	10-gauge	varies	1,500-1,755	N/A	N/A
One Way	11'-12'	30"-50" (intake) 50"-78" (discharge)	10-gauge	9'-10'	1,850-2,150	N/A	Yes
Mid-Mount Wing	6'-8'	27"	10-gauge	varies	1,020-1,080	N/A	Yes
<b>HINKER COMPANY</b>							
1851-V	8 1/2'	30"	11-gauge	88"	890	Drive-in Quick Hitch	Yes
2752	7 1/2'	30"	12-gauge	77"	708	Drive-in Quick Hitch	Yes
2802	8'	30"	12-gauge	82"	721	Drive-in Quick Hitch	Yes
2852	8 1/2'	30"	12-gauge	87"	746	Drive-in Quick Hitch	Yes
2902	9'	30"	12-gauge	92"	759	Drive-in Quick Hitch	Yes
3800-C	8'	30"	12-gauge	82"	800	Drive-in Quick Hitch	Yes
<b>HOLLAND EQUIPMENT</b>							
	6'-12'	24"	Steel/poly	N/A	580-2,500	Truck or loader	Yes

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MODEL	LENGTH	MOLDBOARD HEIGHT	MATERIAL	PLOWING WIDTH*	COMPLETE WEIGHT (LBS.)	MOUNTING TYPE	REMOVABLE LIGHTS & POWER
<b>KUBOTA</b>							
T2083	42"	11.4"	Steel	36.4"	55	Quick attach	N/A
T2748	48"	17"	Steel	41.5"	130	Quick attach	N/A
FZB2019	60"	17.5"	Steel	51.9"	245	Quick attach	N/A
GF2748	48"	18.3"	Steel	42.3"	90	Quick attach	N/A
BX2763	60"	18"	Steel	52.5"	205	Quick attach	N/A
G2001	48"	18.5"	Steel	42"	145	Quick attach	N/A
TG2754	54"	17"	Steel	46.7"	165	Quick attach	N/A
B2765	60"	21"	Steel	52.5"	285	Quick attach	N/A
L2072-1	72"	20"	Steel	62.5"	N/A	Quick attach	N/A
<b>LEDEX INDUSTRIES CORP.</b>							
Loader	N/A	50"	10-gauge	10' to 24'	2,430-4,140	Fast connect	N/A
Backhoe	N/A	36"	10-gauge	10' to 14'	1,365-1,705	Fast connect	N/A
Skid Steer	N/A	36"	10-gauge	6' to 12'	660-1,120	Fast connect	N/A
Pick-Up (rubber or steel edge)	N/A	24"	10-gauge	8' to 9'	485-745	Fast connect	N/A
Dump Truck (medium or heavy size)	N/A	36"/50"	10-gauge	9' to 10'/10'-12'	1,650-2,160	Fast connect	N/A
Ag Tractor	N/A	36" or 50"	10-gauge	8'-18'	1,365-2,820	Fast connect	N/A
<b>MEYER PRODUCTS</b>							
Steel plow (15 models)	6' to 11'	23"-34"	7 to 14 gauge	64" -114"	360-1,520	Varies	N/A
Max plow (12 models)	6 1/2' to 10'	23"-30"	3/8" Poly	69"-103"	400-1,222	Varies	N/A
2200 Magnum	90"/96"/104"	30"	11-gauge	83"/93"	699-738	Conventional	No
2300	90"/96"	27 1/2"	11-gauge	80"/83"	734-748	Supermount	Yes
2300 Magnum	90"/96"/104"	30"	11-gauge	83"/93"	744-782	Supermount	Yes
<b>NORTHMAN SNOWPLOWS</b>							
1200-Sport Utility	78"/84"	24"	16-gauge	75"/80"	425-440	Supermount	Yes

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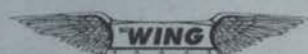


# BUYERS' GUIDE

MODEL	LENGTH	MOLDBOARD HEIGHT	MATERIAL	PLOWING WIDTH*	COMPLETE WEIGHT (LBS.)	MOUNTING TYPE	REMOVABLE LIGHTS & POWER
<b>NORTHMAN SNOWPLOWS</b> (continued)							
2200	90"/96"	27½"	11-gauge	80"/83"	690-704	Conventional	No
2200 Magnum	90"/96"/104"	30"	11-gauge	83"/93"	699-738	Conventional	No
2300	90"/96"	27½"	11-gauge	80"/83"	734-748	Supermount	Yes
2300 Magnum	90"/96"/104"	30"	11-gauge	83"/93"	744-782	Supermount	Yes
<b>PRO-TECH SNO PUSHER</b>							
SP Loader	10' to 30'	50"	3/16" steel	Fixed 90 degree pusher	2,200-4,500	Patented Quick Change Attachment System	N/A
FOP-Foldout	16', 18' or 20'	50"	3/16" steel	Fixed 90 degree pusher	3,650-4,450	Patented Quick Change Attachment System	N/A
BSP- Backhoe	10', 12' or 14'	38"	1/8" steel	Fixed 90 degree pusher	1,300, 1,450 and 1,600	Patented Quick Change Attachment System	NA
SSP-Skid-Steer	6', 8', 10' or 12'	38"	1/8" steel	Fixed 90 degree pusher	650, 800, 950 and 1,100	Bolt-on/Interchangeable OEM coupler	NA
<b>SNO-WAY INTERNATIONAL</b>							
L-1872, L-1880, L-1890	6', 6'8", 7'6"	18"	Lexan	63"-90"	376-405	EZ-pin	Yes
L-2469, L-2480	6'8" - 8'	24"	Lexan	60"-78"	495-558	EZ-pin	Yes
L-2490	6'8"-7'6"	24"	Steel	70"-78"	555-570	EZ-pin	Yes
S-2480/S-2490	7'6"-9'	25"	Lexan	78"-94"	598-645	EZ-pin	Yes
L-2590, L-2596, L-25108	7'6"-9'	25"	Steel	78"-94"	611-660	EZ-pin	Yes
S-2590, S-2596, S-25108	8'3"/9'1"	28"	Steel	87"-98"	792/822	EZ-pin	Yes
V-2899/28109							
<b>SNOWMAN SNOWPLOW</b>							
Power Angle	6½"/7½'	23"	12-gauge	6'/7'	450/470	2" receiver hitch	Removable power unit
Single Cylinder Spreader	6'-8 ½'	23"	10-/12-gauge	N/A	450-500	2" receiver hitch	Removable power unit
Compatible	7'-8 ½'	23"	10-gauge	N/A	528-545	2" receiver hitch	Removable power unit

\* at full angle

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MODEL	LENGTH	MOLDBOARD HEIGHT	MATERIAL	PLOWING WIDTH*	COMPLETE WEIGHT (LBS.)	MOUNTING TYPE	REMOVABLE LIGHTS & POWER
<b>STEINER TURF EQUIPMENT</b>							
BD248	48"	19"	steel	48"	160	Quick hitch	N/A
BD260	50"	19"	steel	60"	185	Quick hitch	N/A
BD358	58"	21"	steel	53"-58"	248	Quick hitch	N/A
<b>STONEBROOKE (SNOW WOLF)</b>							
Ultra Series (7 models)	72" to 108"	28"	11-gauge	60" to 90"	677-857	Skid steer	N/A
Pro Series (4 models)	60" to 96"	30"	12-gauge	52" to 82"	515-650	Skid steer/compact tractor	N/A
<b>SWEDE-ATTACH</b>							
FB1200	4'	33"	steel	4'	300	Quick coupler	Yes
FB 1800	6'	35"	steel	6'	470	Quick coupler	Yes
FB 3400	11'	39"	steel	11'	1,650	Quick coupler	Yes
<b>WALKER MANUFACTURING</b>							
Dozer Blade	19"	18"	10-gauge	46"	90	Front mount	N/A
<b>WESTERN PRODUCTS</b>							
Sport Utility	6 1/2'	23"	16-gauge	70"	425	Detachable	Yes
Standard	6 1/2'-7 1/2'	26 1/2"-27"	11-gauge/ 3/8" poly	68"-78"	560-614	Detachable	Yes
Pro	7 1/2'-9'	28"	11-gauge	78"-93"	695-750	Detachable	Yes
Pro Poly	7 1/2'-8'	29"	3/8-inch poly	78"-83"	730-745	Detachable	Yes
MVP V-plow	8 1/2'-9 1/2'	28 1/2"	12-gauge	94 1/2"	880/1,049	Detachable	Yes
Heavy Weight	9'/10'	33"	7-gauge	98"/109"	1,277/1,335	Detachable	Yes

\* at full angle

## EDITOR'S NOTE:

Snow Business attempted to contact and include all manufacturers of snow plows. A company's inclusion or exclusion in this guide should not be viewed as a comment on its products. Industry products such as snow throwers and spreaders will be featured in upcoming issues.



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- Moldboard resistance to ultraviolet rays prevents fading, cracking and deterioration

Circle 1 on reader service card



## HINIKER COMPANY C-PLOW

- Combines conventional and backdrag plowing systems
- Plows with normal hydraulic angling and spring-trip moldboard functions



- For backdragging, upper part of moldboard hydraulically folds over, creating a rear facing backdrag blade
- Optional clip-on box ends attach with two pins each, forming a "snowbox" for cleaning in both forward and reverse operation
- 8 feet-wide, fitting most domestic  $\frac{3}{4}$ - and 1-ton 4-wheel-drive trucks

Circle 2 on reader service card

## SWEDE-ATTACH GAL-V DROP SPREADER

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- Suitable for front or back of skid-steers, tractors and other carriers either by itself or with a snow plow

Circle 3 on reader service card



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  - A free floating spinner head remains horizontal as body is raised to ensure proper feed rate and pattern disbursement
  - Powered by dual 12 volt DC motors
- Circle 4 on reader service card**

## TORO COMPANY SNOW COMMANDER SNOW THROWER

- Combines single-stage and two-stage snow thrower designs
- Features "Power Propel" self-propelling system for easy handling
- Operates by pulling back on handle



- No lifting or pulling the machine required to start
  - Equipped with GTS R-Tek 2-cycle, 7-hp engine
  - Features 24-inch clearing width
  - Three curved rotors expel consistently smooth snow stream
- Circle 5 on reader service card**

## CURTIS TRACTOR CAB SNO-PRO 3000

- Suitable for 4 x 4, 1/2- and 3/4-ton vehicles
  - Attach with "Hitch-N-Run" method
  - 79- to 95-inch full angle plow width
  - Features low profile, dual halogen lights with combination park and turn signal lights
  - Blade markers for improved visibility
- Circle 6 on reader service card**

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Circle 7 on reader service card

### MEYER PRODUCTS MINI JR. SPREADER

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material  
• In-cab speed control allows a variable spreading pattern of 3- to 30-feet

- Attaches to a standard square channel trailer hitch

Circle 8 on reader service card

### SNOW WOLF PLOW

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- Full down pressure to deal with ice
- Spring-loaded trip edge

Circle 9 on reader service card

SB

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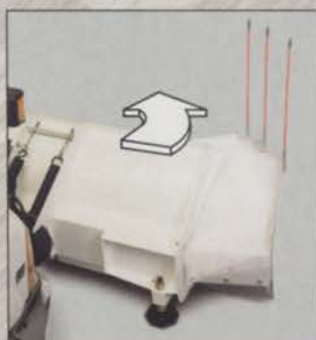
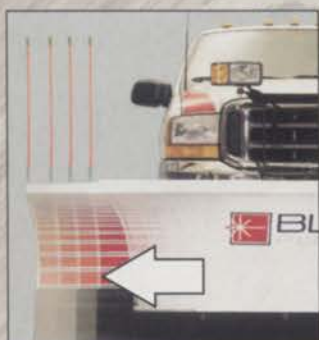
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(continued from page 50)

phone talking through the problem. A dealer will get the mower back up and running."

**TIME TO RETIRE.** Despite thorough maintenance regimens, mowing miles eventually cost contractors more than they want to spend on parts and repair services. The point when it is time for a mower to retire from the fleet varies among companies, Nicholson said.

"A lot of it depends on how many hours are on [the mower]," she said. "Some people that have them for 10 years, and others change them like a leased car."

A three-year benchmark—after 1,000 to 2,000 hours of use—often signals the end of a mower's prime, Taylor noted, adding that mower life beyond a three-year trade out is a winning situation for the contractor.

Patane's equation for mower replacement is when a repair costs more than half of the mower purchase price. "If everything else is in good shape, we can pop a new engine in there and get a couple more years out of it," he

said. "Even if you use preventative maintenance at five years, there is a point where these components will start costing money."

But mowers can age gracefully if cared for properly, Nicholson reminded. "We have units that have been out there since the 1950s,

and it is no more unusual than seeing a car from the 1950s. This means the mower has been maintained and taken care of." **LL**

*The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.*

TASK:	25HRS.	50HRS.	100HRS.
Oil		x	
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Spark plug			x
Fuel filter			x
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Lubrication points	x		

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USE READER SERVICE #33



by Nicole Wisniewski

*Manufacturers are developing safer and more user-friendly ways to deliver pesticides.*

# Pesticide PACKAGING Pointers

Ninety-five percent of Michael Scott's jobs involve residential liquid pesticide applications. Scott, lawn care manager, Excel Lawn Care, Merrimack, N.H., knows what pesticide formulations he likes to handle based on ease of use.

"We use an emulsifiable concentrate that comes in a plastic jug," Scott said about the formulation that contains a liquid active ingredient, petroleum-based solvents and an agent that allows the pesticide to be mixed with water and emulsify. "If we don't use a whole batch one day, we can leave the product in the truck overnight and reagitate it the next day without having to worry about powders or dusts that have settled to the bottom of the tank."

Michael Hornung, president, Valley Green, St. Cloud, Minn., on the other hand, uses water-soluble packets (pre-measured packets of powder pesticide that dissolve instantly in water) for 90 percent of his preemergent herbicide treatments. "The product doesn't have the odor of an emulsifiable concentrate and it's easy to work with," Hornung explained.

Pesticide packaging and formulation preferences differ from contractor to contractor, but what remains constant is the importance of considering safety when buying and using pesticides. Now, manufacturers are making pesticide use safer with improved packaging.

**THINKING OF YOU.** While thinking about the type of packaging a pesticide comes in isn't at the top of contractors' to-do lists, they should rest easy knowing that manufacturers are designing packaging with ease of use and safety in mind.

One way this is being done is through the development of packaging that eliminates or minimizes contractors' potential for exposure during the mixing process, pointed out Jim

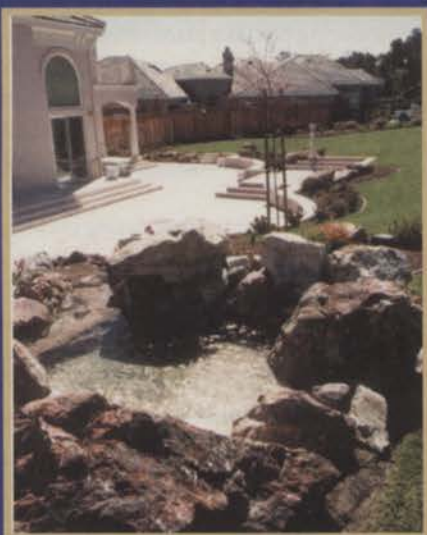
*(continued on page 54)*



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## Pesticide Packaging

(continued from page 52)

McGreevy, manager of the packaging technology group, Bayer Corp., Pittsburgh, Pa. Creating packaging concepts, such as water-soluble packets and liquid dose dispensing bottles, is one way manufacturers are minimizing contractors' pesticide exposure.

"Anytime pouring is required, the chances of spilling or splashing increase," McGreevy said, explaining that dose dispensing bottles allow the product to be poured from the bottle in measured increments.

"With dose dispensing bottles, accurate measuring can take place without having to pour the pesticide into another jug – eliminating an extra step in the process," added John Thomas, sales manager for the turf and ornamental and pest group, BASF, Research Triangle Park, N.C.

To protect contractors during the buying process, special seals now are on most packages to alert contractors to products that have been tampered with, McGreevy pointed

(continued on page 56)

**S**ometimes in the haste to get to the revenue-producing part of the day, contractors forget to make sure they are storing their pesticides safely. Despite the fact that an increasing number of the products in their pesticide arsenals are now packaged in pre-measured doses, and that the solvent systems of many liquid pesticides have been improved, the fact remains that these are still toxicants that must be stored, transported, handled and applied with extreme care and great respect.

The following pesticide storage safety checklist can help landscape contractors reduce the potential for liability in their operations.

1. Is the area kept neat and clean? Is the area well-ventilated?
2. Are emergency numbers prominently posted?
3. Is the area free of open flames, and away from heaters?
4. Do you issue your oldest stock first (first-in first-out)?
5. Are all containers identified with their original labels?
6. Are all pesticides in their original containers?
7. Are herbicides stored separately from insecticides?
8. Have all empty containers been triple rinsed and held for proper disposal?
9. Are dry formulations stored on pallets or otherwise above floor level?
10. Are adequate absorbent materials and clean-up equipment readily available?

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## 10 Tips for Safe Pesticide Storage

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The Leading Edge.

\*Source: Kline & Company report, US Acre Treatments by Turf Management.

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## Pesticide Packaging

(continued from page 54)

out. These include tamper-evident closures with bands that break when opened or foil inner seals applied to the neck finish of bottles that have to be removed prior to pouring the product. "If a seal is broken before use, the product should be returned," he said.

Other warning signs that products might not be fit for purchase include liquid around container lips, odd deformities in containers

that signal a temperature or storage problem, granules falling out of holes in bags and product packages that are covered with the dust of other products that ripped open on the pallet, Thomas added.

**JUST ADD WATER.** Water-soluble packets also can eliminate extra steps in the mixing process. The packets, which come in pre-

measured doses of dry products, can be dropped directly into spray tanks, McGreevy explained. Because water-soluble packets are sensitive to moisture, they are placed in foil envelopes and then packaged in cardboard boxes.

This extra packaging, however, is what makes a water-soluble packet 20 to 30 percent more expensive than the same amount of product packaged as an emulsifiable concentrate, commented Curtis Clark, business development and marketing manager, Riverdale Chemical Co., Glenwood, Ill. "The majority of the marketplace is not willing to pay for these packets even if they save mixing time."


But some contractors do appreciate the ease of use associated with water-soluble packets and don't mind paying the extra money for them. "As far as measuring is concerned, you don't have to even think – you just add the packet to a tankful of water every 1,100 square feet," Scott said.

One disadvantage of water-soluble packets is the product's capacity for reagitation. "The powder will settle to the bottom of the tank overnight and I worry about how well the powder gets re-dispersed through the water during reagitation," Scott said.

Hornung echoed concern about reagitating powder pesticides, but said he bought a spray tank with mechanical agitation to ease his anxiety. He also fills his tanks partway to provide extra room for reagitation the following day. "I try to add specific amounts based on the pre-measured packets, always leaving room for reagitation in the tank," Hornung explained.

Another important aspect to remember when using water-soluble packets is that they might not dissolve completely in colder water temperatures based on the terms on their labels.

"A water-soluble packet isn't a cure-all," Thomas explained. "Sometimes the bags don't break down and clog the spray nozzles."

"When using any pesticide, contractors should read labels and make sure they are using the appropriate temperature of water and the appropriate safety gear," Clark added. "Just because water-soluble packets are easy to use does not mean they shouldn't be handled safely." 

*The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.*

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# Irrigation Design

by Nicole Wisniewski

*Contractors can save installation systems' lives by focusing on proper design techniques.*

The realization that irrigation design specifics are not on key in the middle of a system installation can be a frustrating experience, Bob Giordano pointed out.

"Irrigation design is the weakest area of the entire industry," said Giordano, North Bay irrigation manager, Cagwin & Dorward, Novato, Calif., explaining that a poor design can delay an installation a few days or even a few months, depending on how tight a contractor's job schedule is. "Forty to 50 percent of the designs we get in are done poorly. This can be a nightmare during a busy summer."

Dave Daniell agreed. "The only problem that can delay an installation is getting out in the field and realizing that something is wrong with the design—either there are too many heads on one valve, slope elevation wasn't taken into consideration or sunny and shady areas of the site share the same zone," said Daniell, vice president, Heads Up Landscape Contractors, Albuquerque, N.M. "Correcting the mistake is always time consuming and costly."

Bad irrigation design also costs the client money. "If a system is designed poorly, especially the system hydraulics, repairs will need to be made more frequently, including valve replacement from excessive wear and plant material replacement if an ornamental or turf suffers as a result of bad head spacing," Giordano said. "Poor irrigation system design threatens the entire life of the system."

(continued on page 60)

## Dodging DEATH by Design



Making site visits prior to designing irrigation systems can enable contractors to spot severe elevations or obstacles that can affect spray patterns.

Photo: Rain Bird



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## Irrigation Design

(continued from page 58)

By following proper procedures, such as making site visits and calculating pressure correctly, contractors can extend irrigation systems' lives and save themselves and their clients' time and money.

**BAD TO THE BONE.** A poor irrigation system design can be spotted a mile away.

**"In the future, if computer software manufacturers make design software easier to learn and use, we may try it." – Bob Giordano**

The first sign of faulty design is dead plant material, Daniell pointed out.

"If Kentucky bluegrass doesn't get watered properly, it shows with splotches and

dry spots," he said. "Head-to-head coverage is essential when irrigating turf."

Improper design also can be easily red-flagged the moment a system begins running. One hydraulic-related aspect of a system that accentuates poor design is excessive misting from sprinkler heads, Giordano mentioned. "Excessive system pressure is released through mist from sprinkler heads," he explained. "This usually reflects a contractor's inability to calculate system pressure correctly. He or she probably guessed that using two heads on every section is the safe alternative. By doing this, he or she has under-designed the irrigation system, which means 50 to 60 pounds per square inch (psi) of pressure is being emitted through each pop-up spray head when only 25 psi per head is needed."

In drip irrigation, which is difficult to botch, according to Daniell, contractors tend to run a pipe too long, which can squelch the

water supply for plants at the end of the line. "If you run water through a long stretch of pipe, friction will eventually slow it down," he said. "When using ¾-inch poly pipe, the furthest spray head should be no more than 200 feet from the valve."

When water audits are conducted, Giordano said most contractors are shocked at the distribution uniformity that results. This number – calculated as a percentage – indicates how closely the driest area compares to the average precipitation rate of the irrigated area. It also can indicate poor irrigation design. "Distribution uniformity should be at 60 to 80 percent," Giordano stressed. "Most of the time, the number that comes up is much lower than that – 35 or 40 percent on average. This low number means there is a design problem somewhere in the system."

**FORGET-ME-NOT.** Just as flawed designs can be spotted effortlessly, remembering the

(continued on page 65)

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# SCHEDULE-AT-A-GLANCE

## Sunday, October 8

8:30 AM	Business Strategies Golf Tournament (Buses depart hotel)
5:00 – 7:00 PM	Registration Desk
5:00 – 7:00 PM	Attendee Welcome Center

## Monday, October 9

7:00 AM	Registration Desk
7:30 AM – 9:00 AM	General Session <i>Jerry Gaeta, Vander Kooi &amp; Associates</i> 10 Rules for Financial Success
9:10 AM – 10:30 AM	General Session <i>George Koziarz, Koziarz &amp; Associates</i> Effective Budgeting Techniques in the Real World
10:50 AM – 12:00 noon	General Session <i>Robert West, Sr., West &amp; Co.</i> Organizing Your Business to Take Advantage of Tax Savings Opportunities
12:00 – 1:00 PM	Networking Lunch
1:15 PM – 2:30 PM	Speaker Roundtable Session
2:45 – 5:00 PM	Sponsor Product Showcase
5:00 – 6:30 PM	Welcome Reception

## Tuesday, October 10

7:00 AM	Registration Desk
7:30 AM – 9:00 AM	General Session <i>Robert West, Sr., West &amp; Co.</i> Planning for the Financial Future – Yours and Your Company's
9:10 – 10:30 AM	General Session <i>George Koziarz, Koziarz &amp; Associates</i> Structuring Effective Employee Compensation Packages
10:50 AM – 12:00 noon	General Session <i>John McCarty, KeyBank</i> Building Beneficial Banking Relationships
12:00 – 1:15 PM	Lunch On Your Own
1:30 PM – 3:00 PM	General Session <i>Pam Jordan, Acquisition Strategies</i> How to Properly Value Your Business
3:20 – 4:30 PM	General Session <i>Tom Dyle, U.S. Lawns</i> Balance Sheet Management: Don't Eat Your Seed Corn

## SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8

### 8:30 AM

Business Strategies Golf Tournament  
Golf Club of Illinois  
(Buses depart hotel promptly at 8:30 AM)  
**Sponsored by Woods Equipment**

### 5:00 – 7:00 PM

Registration Desk

### 5:00 – 7:00 PM

Attendee Welcome Center  
**Sponsored By Hunter Industries**

## MONDAY, OCTOBER 9

### 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Registration Desk

### 7:00 – 8:00 AM

Continental Breakfast  
**Sponsored By U.S. Lawns**

**Morning General Session Sponsored By Irritrol**

### 7:30 – 9:00 AM

Opening Session

### 10 Rules for Financial Success

**Jerry Gaeta**  
Vander Kooi & Associates

Every successful business has in place a set of rules for operating at maximum efficiency. These rules allow a company to function consistently and to remain on the right track. These rules are rooted in day-to-day operations and if not properly followed, can have a significant impact on a company's financial well-being. In this valuable session, you'll review 10 valuable rules for financial success. You will learn how to prepare your operations to maximize results and how to manage your company's financial future so it doesn't manage you.

### 9:10 – 10:30 AM

General Session

### Effective Budgeting Techniques In the Real World

**George Koziarz**  
Koziarz & Associates

Effective budgeting is a critical skill for any lawn and landscape contractor looking to keep a company moving forward. An accurate budget helps managers properly forecast labor and material costs, develop realistic sales numbers, determine compensation packages, maintain positive cash flow year round and build a foundation for future growth. In this information packed session, you'll review the steps required to effectively prepare a budget for your company or business division. You'll learn how to identify weak spots on a balance sheet and what steps to take to turn those areas into positives.

### 10:30 – 10:50 AM

Refreshment Break

### 10:50 – 12:00 noon

General Session

### Organizing Your Business to Take Advantage of Tax Savings Opportunities

**Bob West, Sr.**  
West & Company

The success of your business will require you to pay several forms of tax. Three of those taxes – payroll taxes, income taxes, and estate taxes – can be effectively reduced with timely and continual tax planning. The opportunity for such tax planning begins with selecting the best form of organization for your business and exists throughout each year as you continue to decide how to withdraw the income that your business is generating. You have options and effective tax planning requires that you understand those options. Should you be incorporated? What is the difference between a limited liability company and a corporation or a partnership? How can you withdraw earnings from your business so as to minimize your payroll tax and income tax liabilities? This program will discuss questions such as these and will also present some simple ideas for designing a financial reporting system for your business that can provide you with the information you need to make these decisions.

### 12:00 – 1:00 PM

Contractor Networking Lunch  
**Sponsored By Aventis**



## 1:15 – 2:30 PM

### Speaker Roundtable Session

Join the speaker faculty of Business Strategies 2000 for a series of informal roundtables designed to answer your important financial management questions. This is a great opportunity to tap into the expertise of our speaker faculty and network with other contractors.

**Sponsored By Century Rain Aid**

## 2:45 – 5:00 PM

### Sponsor Product Showcase

Kick the tires, look under the hood and fire up the engine at the Business Strategies Sponsor Product Showcase. Join fellow attendees and take a look at the latest equipment, product and service offerings from the sponsor partners of Business Strategies.

## 3:00 – 3:30 PM

### Refreshment Break

**Sponsored By Ewing Irrigation**

## 5:00 – 6:30 PM

### Welcome Reception

**Sponsored By John Deere, Aquascape Designs and Lawn & Landscape magazine**

## TUESDAY, OCTOBER 9

## 7:00 – 4:00 PM

### Registration Desk

## 7:00 – 8:00 AM

### Continental Breakfast

**Sponsored By Super Lawn Trucks**

### Morning General Session Sponsored By Shindaiwa

## 7:30 – 9:00 AM

### General Session

### Planning for the Financial Future – Yours and Your Company's

**Bob West, Sr.**

West & Company

You will devote much of your adult life to the task of building a business – a source of financial security for your family. But, without effective planning, at your death, much of that financial security may go to the government and not to your family. This program will explain, in simple terms, how the federal estate tax is computed as well as some steps that you might take now to significantly reduce the amount of *your* assets that will pass to the government. You will learn why all of your assets should NOT be owned "jointly" with your spouse, and how you might use trusts to properly structure your estate. This program will discuss "living trusts" and how the relatively simple task of creating a *family limited partnership* might save your family hundreds of thousands of dollars in estate and income taxes.

## 9:10 – 10:30 AM

### General Session

### Structuring Effective Employee Compensation Packages

**George Koziarz**

Koziarz & Associates

In today's tight labor market, comprehensive and innovative compensation packages are a selling point for retaining current or attracting new employees. Companies in all areas of business are becoming more creative in the compensation packages they offer employees. And while most compensation programs are still geared toward providing employees with additional income, items such as health care benefits, flex time, day care and tuition reimbursement are rapidly appearing as a standard part of employee compensation packages. All of these items carry with them a price tag that employers must fit into the company budget. In this session, learn how to determine the best methods for structuring compensation programs that benefit your employees and stay in line with your budget.

## 10:30 – 10:50 AM

### Refreshment Break

**Sponsored By John Deere**

## 10:50 – 12:00 noon

### General Session

### Building Beneficial Banking Relationships

**John McCarty**

KeyBank

Establishing a strong relationship with a bank is essential for any business hoping to expand its operations and its revenue base. Whether seeking financing to purchase new equipment or build a new company headquarters or looking for capital to acquire another company, you need a banking partner who knows your business. But how do you establish such a relationship? This session will take the mystery out of how to build a beneficial relationship with your banking partner. Learn the steps you need to take before approaching your banking partner to properly position your company's financial status. And discover what services a bank can offer you to help drive your company's growth.

## 12:00 – 1:15 PM

### Lunch On Your Own

### Afternoon General Session Sponsored By Echo

## 1:30 – 3:00 PM

### How To Properly Value Your Business

**Pamela Jordan**

Acquisition Strategies

Whether you're in the market to buy or sell, determining the true worth of your business is paramount to your success. In this helpful, hands-on session, you'll be presented with the tools to work through the process of valuing your business. If you're exploring acquisition, discover what resources you bring to the table. If you're selling, learn how to accurately present your business's potential to possible buyers and how to negotiate for the best price. No matter what your business goals, you can't afford to miss this informative and practical session.

## 3:00 – 3:20 PM

### Refreshment Break

## 3:20 – 4:30 PM

### Closing Session

### Balance Sheet Management: Don't Eat Your Seed Corn

**Tom Oyler**

U.S. Lawns

Solid financial management and close control of the balance sheet are at the top of the list of challenges experienced by business owners. In dealing with these elements, owners must make decisions daily which impact both the short-term and long-term growth of a company. For advice on making the right choices for your business, join us as we examine the three phases of business development (the Growth stage, the Maintenance stage, and the Mature stage) and the owner behavior that guarantees a bountiful return.

## Business Strategies Golf Tournament

**Sunday, October 8**

**8:30 AM (Buses depart hotel)**

**Sponsored by Woods Equipment**

Test your golf skills at the Lawn & Landscape Business Strategies Golf Tournament at the challenging 6,511 yard, par 71 Golf Club of Illinois – rated as one of Chicago's Top 10 Public Courses by *Chicagoland Golf Magazine*. The tournament format is a scramble with the winning team taking home special prizes. Cost for the outing is \$80 and includes greens fees, cart rental, practice balls, lunch, prizes and transportation to and from the course. **Advance registration and payment is required – no on-site registrations accepted.** Registration deadline is **September 28, 2000.**



# Conference Registration Form

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October 8-10, 2000

Wyndham Northwest

Chicago, Illinois

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**By Fax:** Complete form and fax, with credit card information, to 216/961-0364

**On-Line:** At [www.lawnandlandscapeconferences.com](http://www.lawnandlandscapeconferences.com)

### Confirmations

All registrations postmarked by September 22, 2000 will be acknowledged by mail.

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Date Received \_\_\_\_\_

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## Discount Travel Information

Lawn & Landscape has arranged for special discount airfares for the attendees of the Business Strategies Conference. To take advantage of these discounts please contact AAA Business Travel at 800/999-0038 between the hours of 8:00 AM – 5:30 PM EST.

## Hotel Information

A block of rooms has been reserved for Business Strategies Conference attendees at the Wyndham Northwest Chicago. Attendees should make their reservations directly with the hotel on or before **September 14, 2000** to receive the special conference room rate of **\$118** per night (single/double). Please ask for the Lawn & Landscape Business Strategies conference rate. For reservations call the Wyndham Northwest Chicago at **630/773-4000** or **800/996-3426**.

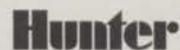
## Airport Transportation

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## Cancellation/Substitution/Refund Policy

All cancellations must be made in writing. A full refund will be accepted if postmarked by September 22, 2000. Those received seven to 14 days before the conference are subject to a \$50 cancellation fee. No refund less than seven days before conference. Attendees can notify *Lawn & Landscape* at any time that another individual will attend the conference or social events in their place.

## SPONSOR PARTNERS





**S**kipping a step in the design process is the worst mistake a contractor can make, according to Bob Giordano, North Bay irrigation manager, Cagwin & Dorward, Novato, Calif.

To help contractors prevent future design disasters, Giordano and Mark Attard, sales manager, Spartan Irrigation, Lansing, Mich., share their steps for an accurate irrigation system design:

1. Obtain a site utility plan and a landscape plan.
2. Obtain or draw a plot plan to scale. Check the plot plan against the site and develop a site-grading plan.
3. Determine the water source. This is dependent on the project. If the water is coming from the city, find out if a separate water meter can be obtained for the system to avoid sewer taxes on that water. If the water is coming from a well, establish the size, location and

how many gallons per minute (gpm) of water at a certain pressure the well will produce for the system. If the water is coming from a stream, lake or river, know the land elevation and the water flow so the right pump can be selected.

4. Select sprinkler heads, determine proper head spacing and place the heads onto the design.

5. Determine available gpm of water.

6. Section and zone out the system.

7. Determine the static pressure. Remember to multiply the static pressure by 90 percent, which will give you the pressure you should design to and will allow room for changes and/or additions to the system.

8. Determine the piping route and the physical section separations.

9. Run a preliminary pressure loss calculation.

10. Complete the design piping with lateral pipe sizing using the 3- to 5-feet-per-second rule so the water speed in the system is smooth. — Nicole Wisniewski

## The Definitive Design

## Irrigation Design

(continued from page 60)

appropriate elements involved in proper design to avoid these pitfalls is not difficult.

One of the biggest and most irresponsible mistakes contractors make when designing an irrigation system is failing to visit the site. Without seeing the site, contractors don't know whether severe elevation or obstacles affecting spray patterns need to be addressed. "A large tree will restrict the spray on a spray head causing dry spots," Daniell remarked. "Contractors receive a site plan, design the system without actually visiting the property and don't realize that their design doesn't address these types of site problems."

When elevation is severe on a site, the lateral lines of an irrigation system need to run perpendicular to the slope to prevent flooding and drainage problems, Giordano explained. But without visiting the site, elevation issues aren't brought to an irrigation contractor's attention.

A site visit also gives contractors the op-

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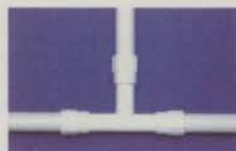
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## Irrigation Design

portunity to separate areas of severe shade or sun into different zones so the plant material in those areas receive the right amount of water. A sunny area will always need more water than its shady counterpart. Similar requirements are true of the west vs. the north side of a building, Daniell said.

While on the property, checking and com-

paring the measurements of the plan to the actual site also can save contractors time. "If you're off just a couple of feet, the plan design can change drastically," Giordano pointed out.

On high-traffic commercial sites, protecting bubblers or sprinkler heads from vandalism is another design element that contrac-

tors tend to forget, Daniell commented. "If you're using bubblers, you may want to put them in a box or container where they are hidden from the public or put a lock on them," he said. "Another option is setting spray heads down lower to save them from being kicked or hiding them so they are more difficult to access."

In new construction areas, Daniell said another key to proper design that contractors overlook is pressure at the point of connection. "Contractors have the tendency not to think about the future of irrigation systems," he explained. "Often, in new areas, pressure will be high, and then as the area is built up and there are more water users, the pressure goes down. Contractors tend to design a system for high pressure and when more people are using that water source, the system doesn't work well because the system pressure has been thrown off."

A few other aspects of irrigation systems contractors tend to forget during the design process, according to Jeff Lovell, design manager, Century Rain Aid, Madison Hts., Mich., include:

- Water source locations and capacity
- Power availability and voltage
- Exact project boundaries (what is being watered)
- Type of soil on the site (sandy soil needs more water than clay soil)
- Existing sleeve locations
- Project schedule (landscape, grading, utility and concrete)
- Existing site utilities

**SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS.** For contractors who do a large percentage of in-house irrigation designs, design software can be beneficial, providing automatic counts of items, such as control valves, heads, piping and total materials used. A clean, color-coded, computer-generated design that some software generates also can function as a helpful selling tool. "Computer-aided drafting visuals are cleaner than those that are hand-drawn," said Mike Clark, construction manager and former irrigation manager, The Brickman Group, Long Grove, Ill. Curved lines, however, are harder to draw with software, Clark added.

Daniell has been using design software for approximately five years, and the time he

(continued on page 97)



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**USE READER SERVICE #46**



## Winter Preparation

by Ali Cybulski

*In any climate, plants may die or be damaged if landscape contractors ignore essential overwintering tasks.*

Winter in northern climates can have devastating effects on plants. Possible damage includes frost heaving, sun scald on thin-barked trees, browning foliage, flower bud death or injury, or root death.

Many landscape managers turn to overwintering to keep plants dormant while protecting them from severe cold and excess transpiration. "There is a significant range of temperature that the plant can survive given it has enough time to go through the chemical processing before winter," said Steven Rodie, associate professor/landscape horticulture specialist, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Neb. "The healthier the plant is in the summer and through the end of fall, the better it will adapt to the process to get ready for winter."

In any climate, if landscape contractors neglect to prepare plants for winter, they may find dead or damaged material on their clients' properties. And no landscape is safe – both new and established plantings can become winter's prey. "Once new landscaping is in for two or three years, many people think it's going to take

care of itself," said Jeffrey Skelton, landscape architect, Frank Otte Landscape & Design, Louisville, Ky. "But plant loss and severe damage is done to existing material that has been in for several years."

**PLANT INJURIES.** The extent of winter injury can be difficult to determine and may only be exhibited as delayed bud development or slightly reduced growth. Other times, plant injuries are more obvious. "The biggest problem is the drying out of the plant, which typically means you get dieback and the tree can't support whatever grew the year before," Rodie said. "You can also get some root death. Overall, you can lose some of the new growth. And any time a plant is in stress, this also opens up bug infestations and diseases."

Ohio State University extension reports the two main types of winter injury are freeze damage, which occurs when temperatures decrease rapidly and plant cells freeze, rupture and die, and desiccation, which occurs when evergreen plants lose water to the atmosphere

(continued on page 70)

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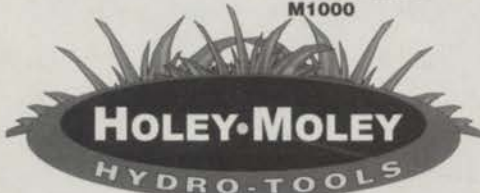


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## Winter Preparation

(continued from page 68)



Cutting back mums (above), in addition to mulching, are two tasks that landscape contractors typically complete in autumn as part of the overwintering process.

faster than the roots can absorb and replace it. On needle evergreens, desiccation injury shows up as yellowing or browning needles during winter or early spring, and on broad-leaf evergreens, typical injury is scorched or brown foliage, according to Bruce Spangenberg, extension educator, horticulture, University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill.

**PROTECTION STRATEGIES.** Preparing material for winter often involves mulching, watering, applying chemicals, fertilizers or burlap wrap.

Generally, contractors include these overwintering services as part of landscape maintenance and include charges as part of regular maintenance fees. Skelton said his company charges according to time and materials. The average overwintering job, he reported, takes two or three people working two to three hours.

Here are some common overwintering tasks and how to best complete them.

**Mulching.** A blanket of mulch maintains a more even soil temperature and retains soil moisture, helping to reduce plant loss and injury from frost heaving. Mulching is ideal for every kind of plant, Rodie enthused.

"If the mulch is organic, it will break down and amend the soil," he said, adding that he recommends peat moss, compost or wood chips, which break down over time. Rodie suggests putting down a 2- to 3-inch layer of organic mulch.

Peggy Campbell, director of education, Molbak's, Woodinville, Wash., recommends compost mulch to prepare landscapes for Pacific Northwest winters. Compost mulch helps prevent pansy diseases, which tend to be a problem in the region, she said.

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## Winter Preparation

(continued from page 70)

Generally, mulching should be done before the first chance of freezing, Rodie said. "For us, this is probably in mid- to late October, when the irrigation systems are turned off, but there are still warm, windy days and a lot of sunshine after this," he explained. "If you wait to mulch until the ground is frozen, getting water into the root systems is more difficult to do."

Ben Lowell, co-owner, BJL Landscape, Denville, N.J., always mulches recently planted material before winter arrives. "Other than that, we give clients detailed care information, and if there are problems with the plants, we tell them to call us," Lowell said.

**Watering.** An effective way to slow desiccation is to make sure plants get plenty of water in the fall, which will also encourage growth. "Most residential clients think plant growth stops totally (in winter)," said Greg Fracker, co-owner, BJL Landscape. "While there is no growth above ground, the plant is still growing below ground."

Plants must enter winter with enough moisture in the ground, especially conifers or broadleaf evergreens, Rodie said. "We had a severe drought [in Nebraska] last year through the fall and winter, and you can see damage even on plants that have been in the ground for four or five years," he said.

Irrigation systems often do not adequately meet the water needs of the material, Rodie noted. "Many times, contractors put in spray irrigation as opposed to drip, but I don't think the spray can really soak the root ball as well as it needs to be," he remarked. "The ideal situation is to walk from plant to plant and directly saturate with a gallon or 2 at the roots."

While retaining soil moisture is important, soil should not be soggy. Excessive moisture may lead to root rot, which can be fatal to perennials, Rodie said.

**Antitranspirants.** Because soil moisture in winter can freeze, plant roots cannot absorb what is lost and the foliage desiccates, turns

browns and can drop. Applying an antitranspirant reduces damage to foliage. This can be especially effective in windy sites, Rodie reported.

"Antitranspirants reduce some of the moisture loss from conifers and broadleaf evergreens, especially when they are first planted," he said. "I've also seen people put up a sheet of burlap with stakes to cut the wind down. The sheet of burlap forms a wall and cuts the wind."

Lowell uses either an antitranspirant or burlap to protect rhododendrons, which tend to dry out. He said both methods have effectively reduced loss or damage.

**Burlap wraps.** A wrap of burlap or canvas can offer plants protection from desiccation and drift from deicing salts applied to driveways and streets. The recommended technique is to wrap the "bodies" of the evergreens without covering the top because some light is still needed during winter for growth.

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## Winter Preparation

(continued from page 72)

Still, Rodie has observed that the jury's out on wraps. "Burlap helps protect bark when trees are transplanted," he said. "But if you're trying to prevent sun scald, you may get a lot of heat gain on the bark on the southwest side of a property and, at night, the air gets real cold. If you get enough warmth in tissues, the bark will freeze and crack at night."

Some people like to wrap the trunks of shade trees, but research is unclear as to whether that helps, he said.

Some contractors, he said, make the mistake of leaving burlap on year round. "Some trees have the capability to conduct photosynthesis in their bark," he said. "If you take a small tree and wrap it, they have less opportunity to produce food for themselves."

**Other tasks.** Sometimes Skelton uses a "winterizer," or a low-nitrogen fertilizer, to feed roots during winter months. "We have to be careful with that so that we do not put too much down to promote growth," he said.

Rodie warned not to fertilize too late in the season. "If a high-nitrogen fertilizer is put on in a warm fall, you get a lot of extra plant growth late in the year," he said. "This is not good because the growth won't harden off in time and the plant can get a lot of freezing death or dieback."

Perennials or annuals generally don't need much special attention, but some caution not to plant them too late. Smaller plants that haven't had a chance to root properly may frost heave, Lowell said.

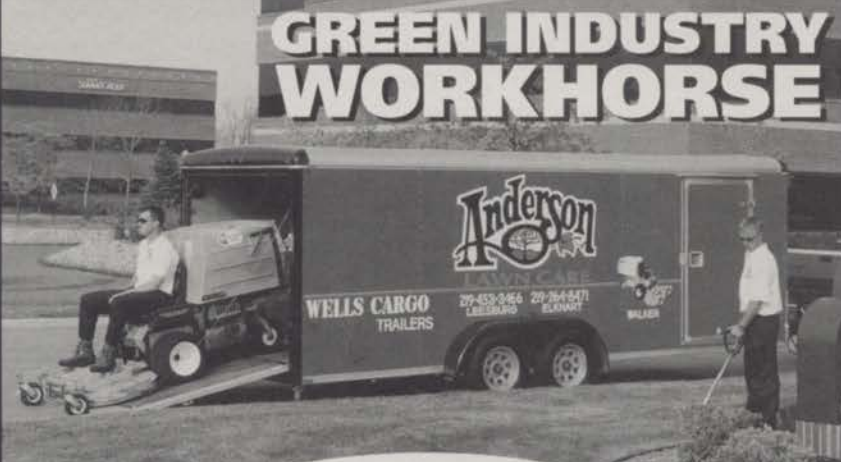
Rodie advises planting perennials in the Midwest before early September. "If you can't plant perennials by early September, you risk not getting them established before the weather gets too cold," he said.

In warmer regions, winter preparations are often limited. Andee Bechtold, president, Longhorn Maintenance, Allen, Texas, said taking steps to protect plants can be more damaging than not protecting them. "Our sun can be hot enough to suffocate the plant under the protection we use from the cold," she said.

For successful overwintering in any area, plants must be cared for properly all year, Rodie said. "Overwintering is about how the plant is planted and year-round maintenance more than anything else," he said. **ll**

The author is Associate Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

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# Products

## Precision Laboratories Delux™

- Biodegradable activator surfactant and ammonium sulfate premix
- Enhances performance of generic glyphosate and certain postemergence herbicides
- Ties up antagonistic hard water ions and provides ammonium ions for improved herbicide uptake by targeted weed plants in stressful growing conditions
- Safe to sensitive turfgrass species
- Use with phenoxies and generic glyphosate herbicides to improve control
- 2.5 gallon containers

Circle 205 on reader service card

## Worksaver Adapter Attachment



- Designed for skid steers with quick-attach system
- Front mount permits Category I, 3-point implement or attachments such as bale spears, forks and blades to be mounted quickly and efficiently
- Bushings for Category II attachments provide 3-point adapter attachment

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## Echo PE-2601 Power Edger

- Echo 25.4cc, dual ring piston engine with Pro-Fire Electronic Ignition, purge pump and all-position diaphragm carburetor
- Features vibration-reducing engine mounts with cushioned left and right handles, heavy-duty wheel height adjustment and 21.6-ounce fuel tank
- Equipped with an 8-inch blade, edger weighs 13.5 pounds

Circle 207 on reader service card



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This month's features, plus exclusive online stories, industry databases and more are at [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com).

## COMING SOON:

### Web-based Tele-seminar On Grub Control



Log on to Lawn & Landscape Online in November for a live, interactive

Internet-based program for turf managers. Join university entomologists David Shetlar, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, and Dan Potter, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky., for a multimedia presentation covering current trends in grub control. This online event is conducted through a partnership between RohMid, the Lawn & Landscape Media Group and *Golf Course News*. Stay tuned to Lawn & Landscape Online for more details.

## Weekly Features

**Plant of the Month** – Author Barbara Ellis provides information about pennisetums, also called fountain grasses, in September's online exclusive.

**Novartis TechNotes** – Learn weekly tips, soil temperatures from around the U.S., bug activity maps, growing degree days and more in this weekly department.

**GreenSearch PeopleSmarts** – Find information on the diminishing industry labor force in an article titled "HELP WANTED! The Honeymoon Truly Is Over" in this month's GreenSearch feature.

**ALCA Driver Safety Toolbox Talks** – ALCA explores safe passing techniques this month, including three circumstances in which a driver should never pass. Find the above features at [www.lawnandlandscape.com/weeklyindex.asp](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/weeklyindex.asp).

## Exclusive Online Features For September:

The industry's premier Web site brings you the following features in September:

**Fall Prevention Of Weeds** – Discover advantages of treating broadleaf weeds with herbicides in the fall.

**How To Take A Good Soil Sample** – Learn when, why and how to conduct soil samples, and where to take sample material to be tested.

**Tree Leaves: Bag 'em Or Mulch 'em**

– Contractors discuss methods they practice when mowing Autumn leaves.

**Contractor Profile** – Learn how a fellow landscape company is making its mark in the industry through innovative business practices.



## ONLINE Contents

Check the following links to discover the tools available on Lawn & Landscape Online that will help you stay on top of the latest industry news and grow your business:

**Daily News** – Catch daily industry news.  
[www.lawnandlandscape.com/news.asp](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/news.asp)

**E-newsletter** – Receive breaking industry news in your e-mail inbox.  
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**Bulletin Boards** – Discuss hot-button issues with fellow industry professionals.  
[www.lawnandlandscape.com/bullframe.asp](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/bullframe.asp)

**Online Marketplace** – Obtain contact information and the latest products from industry suppliers. [www.lawnandlandscape.com/marketplace.asp](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/marketplace.asp)

**Virtual Training School** – Training information for lawn and landscape professionals. [www.lawnandlandscape.com/virtualschool.asp](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/virtualschool.asp)

**Weekly Poll** – Vote on industry-related topics and compare your answers with others.  
[www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com)

**Events Calendar** – Locate industry events across the country.  
[www.lawnandlandscape.com/calendar.asp](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/calendar.asp)

Please e-mail your comments to [shunsberger@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:shunsberger@lawnandlandscape.com). Enjoy your visit to Lawn & Landscape Online! Lawn & Landscape Online is: Scott Hunsberger, internet editor ([shunsberger@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:shunsberger@lawnandlandscape.com)) and Sydney Work, web department manager ([swork@gne.net](mailto:swork@gne.net)).



# Products

## BOMAG Vibratory Tampers for Compacting Soil

- Designed to compact cohesive, semi-cohesive and granular soils
- Travel speeds of 62.3 to 65.6 fpm and impact forces of 2,630 to 3,485 pounds
- Standard operating rate is 9 inches for the BT50 model and 11 inches for the BT60 and BT65 model
- 4 interchangeable shoe sizes
- Optional 6-inch extension foot for utility work
- No mechanical linkage in engine; features low center of gravity
- Anti-vibration handle
- Features a tamping foot's high-strength polyethylene honeycomb construction absorbs shock
- Foam-insulated, high-density plastic air filter cover reduces dust intake and decreases noise levels by up to 6 decibels
- Externally-mounted electronic ignition system and specially designed fuel tank
- Corrosion-free leak and rust-proof tank equipped with built-in fuel filter and engine oil measuring and mixing thread on the cap
- Impulse style carburetor reduces wear and repair

Circle 208 on reader service card

## Salsco 525 Strawblower



- Two triple "B" section belts and trouble-free jackshaft arrangement separates engine from reverse shock load
- 65-foot straw discharge
- Can process 3.3 bales per minute
- Available in skid and trailer mount

Circle 209 on reader service card

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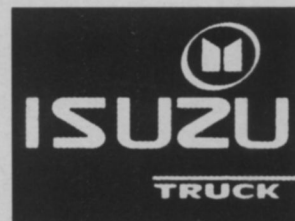


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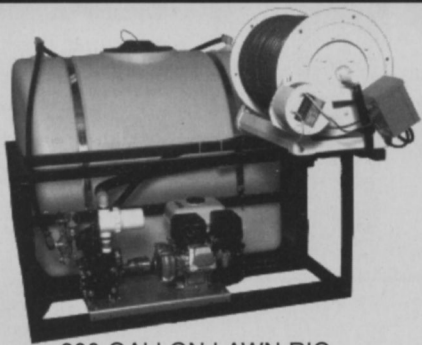
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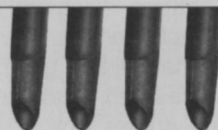
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# Products

## Hunter I-60 Low Pressure Rotor

- Rotor provides 50 to 66 feet of irrigation coverage
- Designed to operate at 40 to 60 psi with-

out a booster pump

- Features a 3-inch pop-up height, available in a full circle or adjustable arc model (40-360 degrees)
- Features a single nozzle precision distribution control system with gear-driven diffuser pin



- Durable stainless steel riser stands up to harsh soil conditions, has six color-coded nozzles, self-adjusting stator, heavy-duty gear drive, drain check valve checks up to 10 feet of elevation change

**Circle 210 on reader service card**

## Roadrunner "C" Series Grader-Spreader-Maintainer Blades

- Suited for skid steer and compact tractors
- Dual blade configuration eliminates washboarding, ruts and potholes
- Side panels return material to graded area
- Spreads and levels topsoil, aggregates and millings
- Highly visible blades
- Long skid bar also helps prevent dipping and gouging

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LAWN & LANDSCAPE

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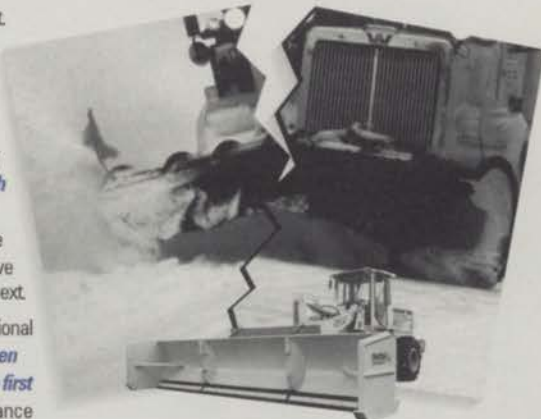
When the snow flies, you have to act fast. In less than five minutes, you can connect a Pro-Tech Sno Pusher to your backhoe, skid steer or loader and be on your way to clearing snow. Not only will you get started faster, but you'll also finish quicker: *the Sno Pusher removes as much as 500% more snow* volume than conventional blades or buckets. So while your competition is still out plowing, you've already finished the job and are on to the next.

The Sno Pusher is priced well below traditional plows and snow attachments. It's a *proven investment that pays for itself within the first snow season*, and offers lower maintenance costs, and increased productivity. It's safe, too. Rubberized cutting edges, angled wear shoes that ride over curbs and obstructions, and an engineered breakout system help avoid site and equipment damage. Bottom line, the Sno Pusher means business — *more business, more satisfied customers, and more profits* for you.

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Place your order for a Sno Pusher by October 30, 2000 mention code **LL9A** to receive a free Sno Pusher Carhartt® jacket, plus a free rubber replacement blade for skid steer owners, or a free chain and binder kit for backhoe and loader owners.



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SEPTEMBER 2000

85



# Products

## Wells Cargo LS Series Landscape Trailer

- Features a heavy-duty anodized aluminum roof cove
- Flow-Thru side vents
- Side entry door with cam lock
- Frame crossmembers on 16-inch centers
- Aluminum tread plate fenders
- Corner post stabilizer jacks
- 3/4-inch pressure treated plywood floor
- Slip-resistant extruded aluminum ramp edge protector
- Includes 3/4-inch pressure-treated plywood ramp deck
- Rear ramp door with spring assist
- 3/8-inch sidewalls constructed from pressure-treated plywood

Circle 212 on reader service card

## MAJOR Pick-Up Broom

- Broom is designed for use on skid-steer loaders
- Industrial-strength broom cleans streets, sidewalks, parking lots and other concrete or asphalt surfaces
- Hopper opens hydraulically for easy disposal
- Single lever control system allows



user to control broom activation and hydraulic dumping

in a single motion

- Custom-sized models available

Circle 213 on reader service card

## Rain Bird Pressure-Compensating Screens

- Fine-mesh screens can reduce water pressure fluctuations
- Fits Rain Bird 1800 Series plastic nozzles, including MPR, VAN and U-Series strips and bubblers
- Restricted flow shortens nozzle radius for greater flexibility
- Color-coded for easy identification
- User can retrofit by replacing regular screen with PCS screen
- Match with various nozzle types for short-throw and reduced-radius spray patterns and flush-mounted bubblers
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Circle 214 on reader service card

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Our field vacuums combine impressive power, large capacities, ease of use and long-term reliability.

The Brouwer BV85 Vac, the largest capacity vacuum unit of its kind, is ideal for fast, economical cleanup of large turf and hard surface areas. It's easy to maneuver the BV85, bringing its wide pickup head (up to 120 inches) and powerful suction fan to bear on any kind of debris.

Unloading is easy, thanks to its hydraulically driven conveyor.

The mid-size Brouwer BV138 Vac is designed for hard-to-reach areas that require a compact, maneuverable machine. The BV138 features heavy-duty impeller fans, creating a mulching effect on debris before it enters the hopper to significantly increase capacity. And, the BV138's hydraulic lift makes unloading simple.

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Model BV138 features hydraulic lift unloading

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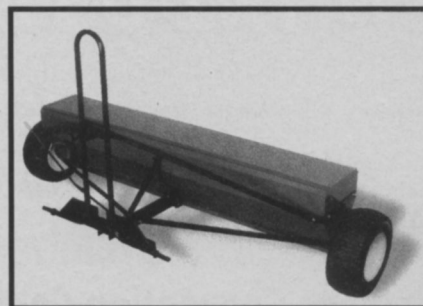
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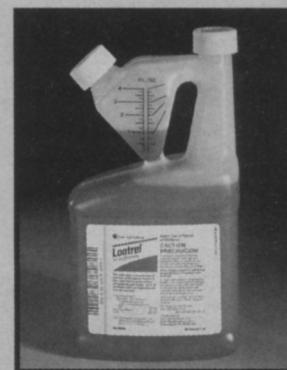
- Easily calibrated for spreading small quantities

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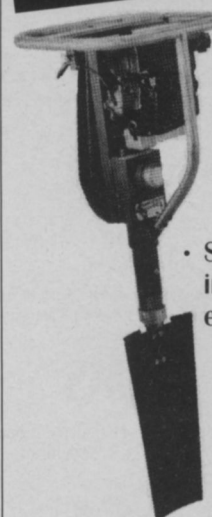
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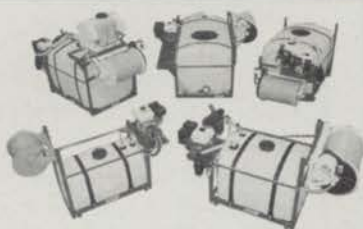
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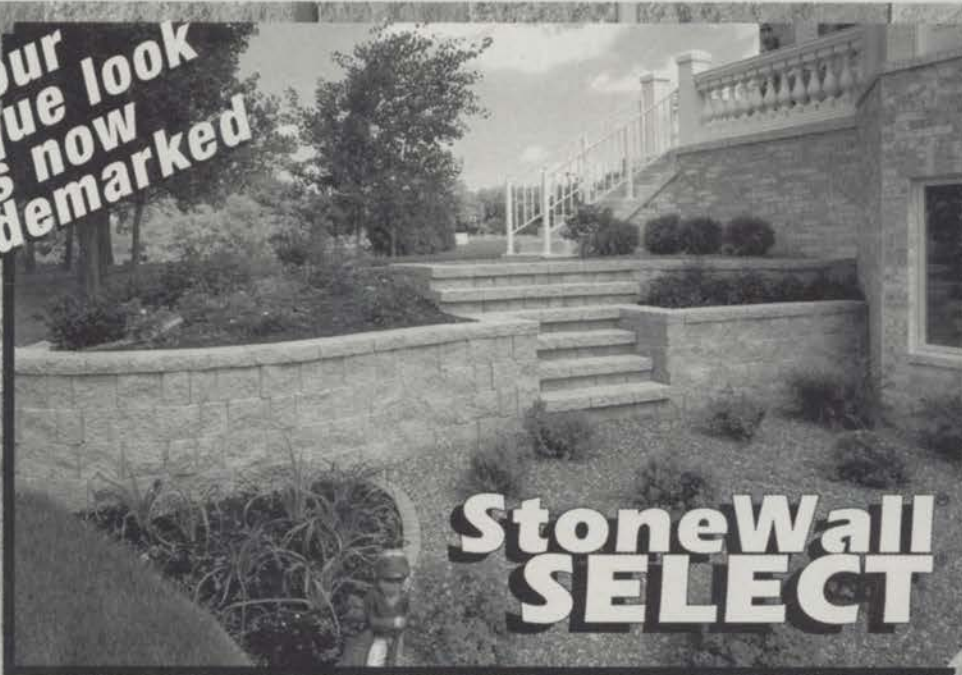
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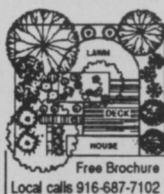
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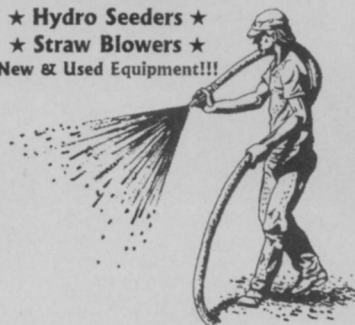
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## Major Installations

(continued from page 43)

front so if we need to we can jump right on it," Buck noted. "Sometimes the preparation work in the beginning is easy. But if we have to mobilize and acquire materials, that can take a lot of time."

**THE MAJOR ADVANTAGE.** Despite obstacles that deter some contractors from taking on major installation projects, scheduling large-scale ventures can fatten the company bank account, increase name recognition throughout the community and create a balance between long- and short-term projects.

"Larger jobs are generally easier," Fernandez commented. "There is less overall set-up time and handling of warranty issues involved, and the job close-out overall is easier. Having one meeting with one landscape architect one afternoon is easier than walking around with 20 different people on 20 different afternoons."

Compared to smaller accounts, some contractors agree that large projects operate more efficiently. These customers generally have fewer detail-oriented concerns, which smoothes communication lines.

"One picky homeowner can obsess about details whereas landscape architects and engineers can't spend a lot of time worrying about that," Fernandez explained. "Larger projects are all specified with written details in a plan and the maintenance period is usually covered and talked about when doing the contract."

Though large projects are appealing, Fernandez will not take on more than a couple of them every year—small jobs are equally important. Wandsnider added that blending large and small jobs builds a desirable work calendar.

"From a company perspective, a mix is imperative because it gives us a chance to have jobs that are ongoing and ones that you are in and out on," he identified. "You have a mix of dynamics of people and cash flow. Larger installation projects require less time on the contractor's part for the amount of dollars that is being worked with."

A variety of projects produces a synchronized work calendar much how a diverse ensemble creates harmonious music. And naturally, practice will make perfect. **LL**

*The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.*

## Irrigation Design

(continued from page 66)

saves is substantial—30 to 40 percent—when compared to hand drawing. "We still hand draw designs for our residential customers, though," Daniell pointed out. "Homeowners respond better to hand drawings."

Using design software isn't for everyone. In his 25 years of designing irrigation systems for residential properties, Bob French, owner, French Landscape Irrigation, Edmonds, Wash., has found most design software cumbersome and inconvenient. "It takes so long to use," he said. Unless he has time during winter months to learn a new software package, French said he would rather design the old-fashioned way: with a paper and pencil.

Giordano agreed. "In the future, if computer software manufacturers make design software easier to learn and use, we may try it," he said.

**PAYING THE PRICE.** Generally, a design's value should be built into the total cost of an installation job or billed separately. Either way, in order to emphasize a design's value, its monetary worth should be pointed out during the estimation process, Clark advised.

The average homeowner with a property under 1 acre in size will pay anywhere from \$300 to \$1,000 for the irrigation design alone, Giordano said, based on man-hours involved and project difficulty.

Water supply also affects a design's cost. "The water supply for an irrigation system isn't always coming from the city meter," Giordano said. "Depending on the size of the property, the city meter may not supply enough water to irrigate the property in a 24-hour period. Looping the main lines or providing holding tanks with pumps will cost more money. If there is a lake nearby, though, the fee to draw an unlimited amount of water from the lake may only be \$100 or \$150 per year. This would bring costs down. The water source is an obvious place to start when design is concerned, but some contractors still skip this step in the process."

"Design is an important step," Giordano continued. "Contractors shouldn't short cut the design." **LL**

*The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine. Cynthia Greenleaf, Associate Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine, also contributed to this article.*

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## How We Do It

# Fleet Safety at J.R. Thomas Landscaping



Safety has always been a priority at J.R. Thomas Landscaping. Until a few years ago, however, we had no formal safety program in place. The company decided this was insufficient and implemented an ongoing safety program.

First, we consulted with other contractors. Referring to parts of their manuals that pertained to our operation, we compiled our safety manuals – one for safety and health and one for fleet safety.

Employees receive copies of the manuals for their records. They also sign that they have read and understand the content and purpose of the safety manuals, and this signature page is stored in their personnel files.

We hold safety meetings on a weekly basis where the basics of working safely are emphasized. We believe that if a company demonstrates its total commitment to safety, employees will, in turn, practice that commitment.

A motor vehicle report is generated and reviewed by our insurance agent on any potential company vehicle driver, and anyone not cleared as an authorized driver does not drive a company vehicle. Once our insurance company approves a driver, the operations manager teaches them to drive a truck. Employees can pull trailers only after driving a truck is mastered. Specific trucks also are assigned to specific drivers so they are familiar with their vehicles and

can identify potential problems.

Space in our load-out area is limited, so everyone must be aware of equipment location and purpose. The yard can be hectic, so we emphasize awareness. One person directs traffic flow so the load-out process does not stagnate. Each truck has an alarm that sounds when backing up, and there is always a person behind the truck to help guide the driver.

Before the trucks leave the shop, the drivers walk around them checking for potential problems. They check tire pressure, trailer hookup and make sure equipment is properly strapped down. They also make certain that tools and wheelbarrows are secured and plant material, mulch, soil and compost are covered with a tarp. Lights, brake lights and turn signals also are examined.

Once on the road, the passenger is an extra set of eyes for the driver. We stress keeping a low volume on the radio and being aware of the surrounding traffic. Speed is not as important as safety.

Our crews are trained to report accidents immediately to both the office and police. If a truck breaks down in traffic, we immediately call the local police department to help direct traffic until we can get a tow truck to the scene.

Once we arrive at the job site, safe parking is important. If we know that we'll be parking on the street, we carry orange safety cones. If we are operating equipment on the street and there are "blind spots" because of other parked vehicles, another crewmember will alert the equipment operator of when it is safe to move. At the end of the workday, the driver circles the truck once more before they leave the job site.

Truck and equipment maintenance is an important factor in fleet safety. Tires are regularly checked for proper inflation and wear. Oils and fluids, headlights, brake lights, taillights and turn signals also are checked regularly. If a defect is discovered, a "trouble report" is written and the errant piece of equipment is removed and serviced immediately.

Our fleet safety rules state: "Success demands philosophy, principles, goals, technical and management support, education and a total commitment from all employees."

– Steve Jancsics

The author is operations manager at J.R. Thomas Landscaping, Loveland, Ohio.



## FIVE Keys to Fleet Safety Programs

1. Review drivers' motor vehicle reports and have your insurance company approve truck drivers. Then assign a specific truck to a specific driver.
2. Have one person directing the flow of traffic so that the load-out process does not stagnate. Also, have that passenger be an extra set of eyes on the road.
3. Before a truck leaves the shop, walk around the truck and check for potential problems.
4. Train crews to report accidents or breakdowns immediately to the office and the police.
5. Regularly and properly maintain trucks and equipment.



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