

MARCH 2010

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BUSINESS BREAKTHROUGH

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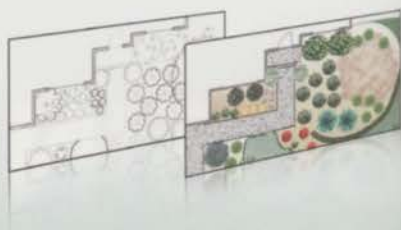
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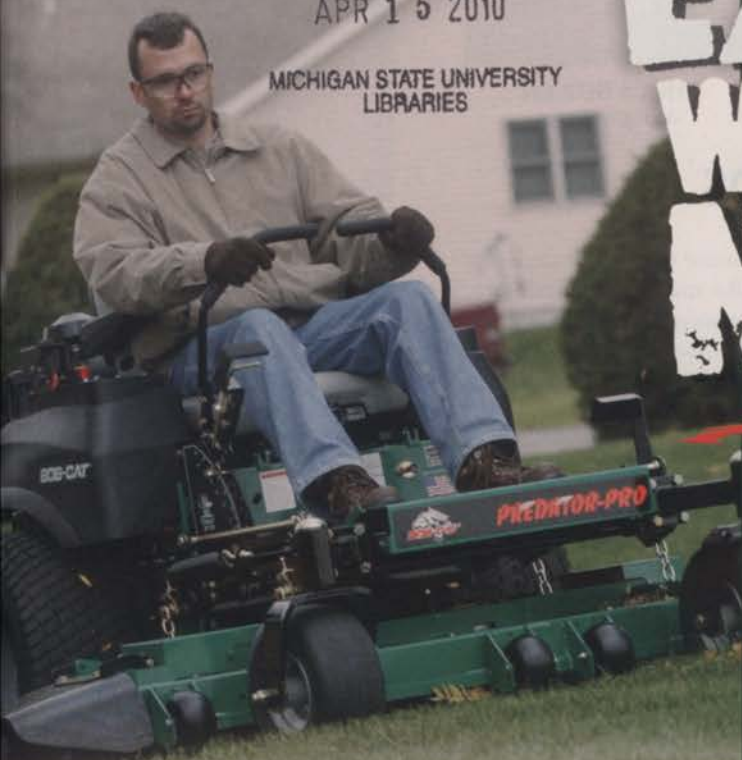
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CHUCK BOWEN
Managing Editor

Relying on relationships

B&L Landscaping has been around for a long time – more than three decades. The company, based in suburban Detroit, started like many in the industry, with a couple of push mowers and a truck. Today the company pulls in \$6 million a year and employs more than 100 people in season, with divisions for landscape construction, maintenance and snow and ice management.

It's no surprise that the economic downturn hit Detroit and its suburbs hard, and B&L's margins on landscape installations took a hit, too.

To adjust, the company shifted its focus to more commercial and sustainable work – installing live roofs, rain gardens and bioswales – and reevaluated its relationships with nurseries, growers and other suppliers to save money and enter niche markets.

Dick Angell, director of landscape construction, and Larry Yaffa, vice president, say those relationships not only helped them enter those niche markets, they allowed them to. If B&L didn't have great rapport with places like Christensen's Plant Center – which let them hold more material longer – and Reed Perennials – which custom grows plants for rain gardens and bioswales – the company wouldn't be in the markets it is today.


Every business in the green industry relies on its suppliers to succeed; you can't sell landscaping, mow turf or push snow without quality plant materials, mowers and plows. But in a tight economy, those relationships can become strained.

Part of B&L's success is that it kept open lines of communication when payments from its customers slowed down. And, more importantly, Angell and Yaffa realized that they weren't alone – that their suppliers were partners in their business, not just folks who grew plants.

"We try to use the word 'team.' We're all in this thing together. People are starting to understand that. If we all want to stay in business, and move forward and have positive results, we need to work together," says Angell.

B&L is the subject of this month's cover story, "Business Breakthrough," on page 34. That story is the first installment of 2010 Breakthrough, an ongoing series of success stories from the green industry.

Each month, *Lawn & Landscape* and its sister publications serving the horticulture industry – *Nursery Management and Production*, *Greenhouse Management and Production*, *Garden Center* and *Golf Course Industry* – will profile businesses that have found success by working across the industry.

How are you working across the green industry to succeed in 2010? Send me your story at cbowen@gie.net or call 330-523-5330 and you could be featured in an upcoming issue of *Lawn & Landscape*. 

“ We try to use the word ‘team.’ We’re all in this thing together. If we all want to stay in business, and move forward and have positive results, we need to work together.”

– Dick Angell, B&L Landscaping

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OPEN-MINDED MANAGEMENT

I hated to see all of the negative response from the sidebar "Shooting an Elephant" (October 2009). I am an avid hunter who feels no desire to hunt in Africa. However, I do understand game management. It is unfortunate that some of your readers took such great offense to the article. Hopefully these same great landscapers are managing their pest populations and weed populations with more of an open mind. It will be their loss to no longer receive your magazine, as it provides valuable business tools and insight.

Wade Evans
Owner
Dreamscapes
Baton Rouge, La.

CHANGE CONGRESS' MIND-SET

We always see news stories about how Congress wants to come down on con-

tractors who hire undocumented workers. The funny thing is, in all my years of operating as a licensed contractor, neither I nor any of my colleagues has operated this way.

What I do see a tremendous amount of in the market is the homeowner hiring these guys. I have seen so many projects that have been improperly conceptualized and implemented with the cheapest type of material and the weakest procedures, it really has come to the point of being pathetic.

I sound like a broken record every time I am asked to evaluate these situations and yet I don't see any change in the public's perception of what a quality-oriented, tax-paying, job-creating entity provides.

Congress wants to keep applying the burden on the contractor. They can't accept responsibility for the misguided bills they promote and the

lack of enforcement of the laws that are in place.

Until we manage to change the mind-set of these folks and make them understand that it is the public who is trying to avoid paying all of the taxes that are applied to the contractor and businesses, we as professionals will continue to suffer from both ends of the spectrum, from the undocumented worker and the cash-strapped public.

Scott Korba
Owner/operator
SK Landscape Design & Installation
San Jose, Calif.

CORRECTION

The location of Fallen Leaf Lawn & Yard Care, was incorrect in the October 2009 State of the Industry Report. It is in East Haven, Conn., not Stamford, Conn.

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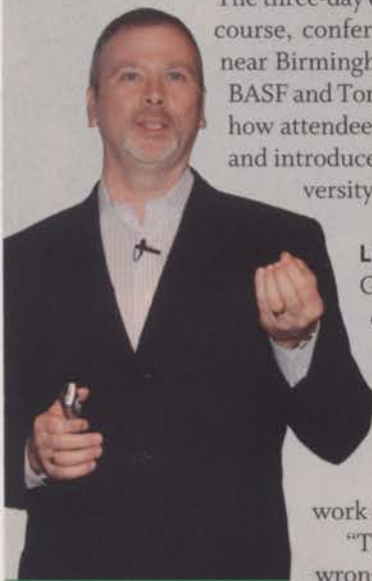
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Sustainable leadership

The second annual Green Industry Grad School educated attendees on how they could run their businesses better and introduced fertilizer research from the University of Florida. BY CHUCK BOWEN

Nearly 50 lawn care and landscape contractors gathered in the hills of Sylacauga, Ala., in late December to attend the second annual Green Industry Grad School, presented by Agrium Advanced Technologies.

The three-day event was held at FarmLinks, a golf course, conference center and research facility near Birmingham that Agrium co-sponsors with BASF and Toro. The event's speakers touched on how attendees could run their businesses better and introduced fertilizer research from the University of Florida.



Jeff Korhan

LEADING IN LEAN TIMES. Marty Grunder, who spoke twice at the event, told attendees that the current economy was no reason they couldn't do great work. The key to succeeding, he said, was to make sure you treat your own people well and that you do better work than your competition.

"Too many of us are going down the wrong road – looking for the silver bullet to shoot out of the gun," Grunder said.

"If you want your people to treat your customers like kings and queens, it goes without saying that you have to treat them like kings and queens."

Owners and managers should ask about their employees; be interested in them. How did their kids' soccer game go on Saturday? Did they do anything fun for their birthday? Do you even know it was their birthday?

He asked if, as 2010 gets closer, if the audience had definite goals for their businesses, and solid plans for getting there. You don't need a lot – in fact, you just need two or three – one for sales, one for improvement. Wandering isn't going to make anyone's business grow. "If you don't have some goals, get some," he said. "What's your Super Bowl? What does winning look like?"

To keep employees motivated, remember you're both an owner and a team member. That means plowing snow with them or helping run a crew when you're short-handed.

FERTILIZER UPDATE. John Cisar, turfgrass program coordinator and professor of environmental horticulture at the University of Florida, Gainesville, told attendees that their work managing turf is key to maintaining a healthy environment.

"As fertilizer managers ... we need to fertilize that turf properly. Fertilizer management and proper nutrition is a key to sustainability," Cisar said.

To ensure healthy turf, he suggests these levels of nutrients:

- 2-3 percent nitrogen in the turf tissue;
- 0.3 percent phosphorous;
- 1 percent or greater potassium; and
- Strive for a 2-to-1 ratio of nitrogen to potassium.

But that work is getting harder, Cisar said. Turf managers in Florida especially have faced increasing regulatory pressure from all sides. Local governments have limited the application rates of certain chemicals, instituted blackout dates and curtailed the locations where fertilizer can be applied. Contractors need to work with their local governments to educate them about the importance of healthy turf. "We can't even put phosphorous in levels that God would put it on in the rainfall," he said.


WORKING ONLINE. The event's third speaker, consultant Jeff Korhan, spoke on the importance of developing an online presence for your company. Local businesses are well-positioned to use the Web to connect with their communities and strengthen relationships with their existing clients. "Just having a presence puts you ahead of 50 percent of your competitors. Doing it well puts you in front of most of them," he said.

He suggests companies work on monitoring their brand online and learn the language of the Web. The more you can communicate on these kinds of platforms, the better. **L**

The author is managing editor of *Lawn & Landscape*. Send him an e-mail at cbowen@gie.net.



Bryan Gooch, Agrium Advanced Technologies



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New England Grows sees 3 percent spike in attendance

Mother Nature cooperates to help more than 13,000 industry pros take in new products, plants and ideas.

BY YALE YOUNGBLOOD

Cooperative weather and an enhanced education program teamed to boost New England Grows' 2010 attendance to 13,044, eclipsing the 2009 turnout by 3 percent. Landscape contractors, growers, retailers and educators joined more than 600 exhibitors for the conference, held Feb. 3-5 at the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center.

This was the 18th anniversary of the Northeast's premier horticulture trade show, a conference with a definite landscape bent. Last year, a portion of the prospective turnout was missing as steady snow plucked away many contractors who also offer winter snow removal services. With mostly sunny skies, there were no such diversions this year.

There were two other likely boons to attendance, as well. Some 100 of the vendors promoting products and

“We are all quite pleased with this year's turnout and this year's show in general.”

Jon Ciffolillo, president,
New England Grows

services at the show were new to the event, meaning attendees had plenty of fresh products to enjoy. Also, show organizers put special emphasis on a solution-based educational program that featured 30-plus seminars led by



Jeff Hodgson, Chicago Weather Brokerage president, outlines the risk mitigation benefits of CME snowfall contracts during an "Ask the Experts" session at New England Grows in Boston. The show drew more than 13,000 attendees this year.

noted speakers from all segments of the industry. Talks focused on innovation, emerging trends and research finds, as a "Who's Who" speaker lineup updated New England industry professionals on a gamut of plant-, retail- and landscape-related topics.

The 2010 speaker roster included sustainability expert Tom Wessels, landscape specialists Craig Ruppert and Larry Weaner, trend expert Suzie McCoy, merchandising guru Pete Lockett and John Backert, director of horticulture at Churchill Downs.

The best-attended sessions included: "Living Walls: The Next Generation of Green Space," "Retail Merchandising: Mavens, Magic & More!," "Using Annual Color to Add Interest to the Landscape," "Great Plants for Challenging Conditions," and "Delivering Better Water Management with Sustainable Garden Design."

Plus, for the first time, the event featured "Ask the Expert" mini sessions, during which extension personnel, university faculty from around the country and GIE Media editors traded notions with show-goers at opposite ends of the convention center. The interactive learning opportunities drew a steady stream of visitors.

GIE Media editor Mike Zawacki led

"Building a Landscape Business During Tough Economic Times" and "Maintaining Quality Golf Course Conditions in a Down Economy." Fellow GIE Media editors Kelli Rodda (*NMPro Magazine*) and Yale Youngblood (*Garden Center Magazine*) discussed nursery and retail matters, respectively. Jeff Hodgson, Chicago Weather Brokerage president, discussed CME snowfall contracts during his talk, "Mitigating the Risk of Snow Removal."

"This is a unique event," said New England Grows' president Jon Ciffolillo, MCLP of Greenscapes, Taunton, Mass. "Every year, thousands of green industry professionals come to Boston to experience New England Grows where they find the best new ideas, the finest networking opportunities and the most innovative solutions in the marketplace today."

"We're all pleased with this year's turnout," Ciffolillo said.

New England Grows is an educational partnership between the New England Nursery Association, Massachusetts Arborists Association, Massachusetts Association of Landscape Professionals and Massachusetts Nursery & Landscape Association. Its co-sponsor network includes 40 allied green industry organizations. **1**

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Combined PLANET events open to record attendance

LAS VEGAS – PLANET's combined Executive Forum and Summer Leadership events, held in February, saw the installation of the association's 2010-2011 board.

Sabeena Hickman, PLANET's CEO, said the event – sponsored by Caterpillar, Vermeer and John Deere – had 250 registrants, and that the association sought "economies of scale" for its members, many of whom usually attend both events.

As part of the meeting, the association installed its new board of directors, who start their 2010-11 terms May 1. David Snodgrass, president of Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers, Portland, Ore., was named president.

"You have served the association well," Snodgrass said of outgoing president Bill Hildebolt's tenure in the position, citing his emphasis on increasing the industry's professionalism. "You are that professional. You've been a great example to our industry and to me."

The board presented Hildebolt with

a pin recognizing his year of service and two round-trip plane tickets to anywhere in the country.

"On this journey, I've seen PLANET blossom into one of the biggest associations in the green industry," Hildebolt said. "It has been a great journey. I have truly received more than I have given."

Snodgrass asked members to envision an association with 10,000 members, and what that would mean for the group's clout in Washington. "I've always believed that anything is possible if you think it and you give it attention," Snodgrass said. "So, hold on to that thought."

He said PLANET – which formed in 2004 when the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA) and the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) merged – still needed the legacy leaders from those organizations to remain strong. "ALCA and PLCAA had magic. It was special ... it set us apart and let us do amazing things. PLANET has its own magic."



David Snodgrass (left) and Bill Hildebolt

Snodgrass' goals for the coming year are to advance professionalism in the industry, grow the membership, re-engage with legacy leaders and give each of the association's specialty groups more of a voice.

"My dad gave me two gifts – one was enthusiasm and the other was optimism, and I plan to bring both of those to PLANET," Snodgrass said.

The association's 2010-11 executive board comprises:

- David Snodgrass, president, Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping & Garden

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- Bill Hildebolt, immediate past president, Nature's Select Premium Turf Services, Winston-Salem, N.C.

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- Michael Byrne, Hunter Lane, South Hamilton, Mass.
- John Gibson, Swingle Lawn, Tree and Landscape Care, Denver
- Norm Goldenberg, TruGreen Companies, Memphis, Tenn.
- Fred Haskett, U.S. Lawns of West and St. Charles County, Defiance, Mo.
- Kurt Kluznik, Yardmaster, Cleveland
- Jen Lemcke, WeedMan USA/Turf Holdings, Oshawa, Ontario
- Chris Raimondi, Raimondi Horticultural Group, Ho-Ho-Kus, N.J.
- Barb Scheibe, WLCA, Waukesha, Wis.

• Ken Taylor, John Deere, Cary, N.C.

• Roger Phelps, Stihl, Virginia Beach, Va.

Hickman said Executive Forum and Summer Leadership would also be combined next year at Amelia Island, Fla., Feb. 16-20. – *Chuck Bowen*

A walk in the woods: Johnson to hike the Appalachian Trail

Brad Johnson was thinking recently about what he might do if he retired, and the first thing that popped into his head was to take a hike along the Appalachian Trail.

The Appalachian Trail stretches 2,100 miles from northern Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine, and sees more hikers quit than finish. Johnson, 56, plans to start in May, after his son graduates from high school, and finish well before Oct. 1, when the trail closes.

New Holland launches contest to find the country's best landscaper

RACINE, Wis. – One talented landscape contractor will win a New Holland skid-steer loader at the 2010 GIE+EXPO show.

New Holland Construction is sponsoring the 2010 Landscaper's Challenge, a nationwide contest to find the best design/build project of the year. A semi-finalist will be chosen each month from April through September.

The grand prize winner will be selected from the semi-finalists and announced during the first day of the GIE+EXPO show, held Oct. 28-31 in Louisville, Ky.

"New Holland has focused on the landscaping industry ever since we introduced our first skid steer in 1972," says Dave December, marketing manager for New Holland Construction. "This contest illustrates our deep commitment to the hard-working landscape contractors in the field every day. Our machine's life and carry capability are a great asset to any company's design/build operation."

Each monthly winner will have their design/build project highlighted in an issue of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and receive \$250 worth of New Holland merchandise.

The grand prize winner will receive a New Holland L170 skid steer loader worth more than \$32,000.

To enter, and for complete contest rules, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com and click on the Landscaper's Challenge logo.



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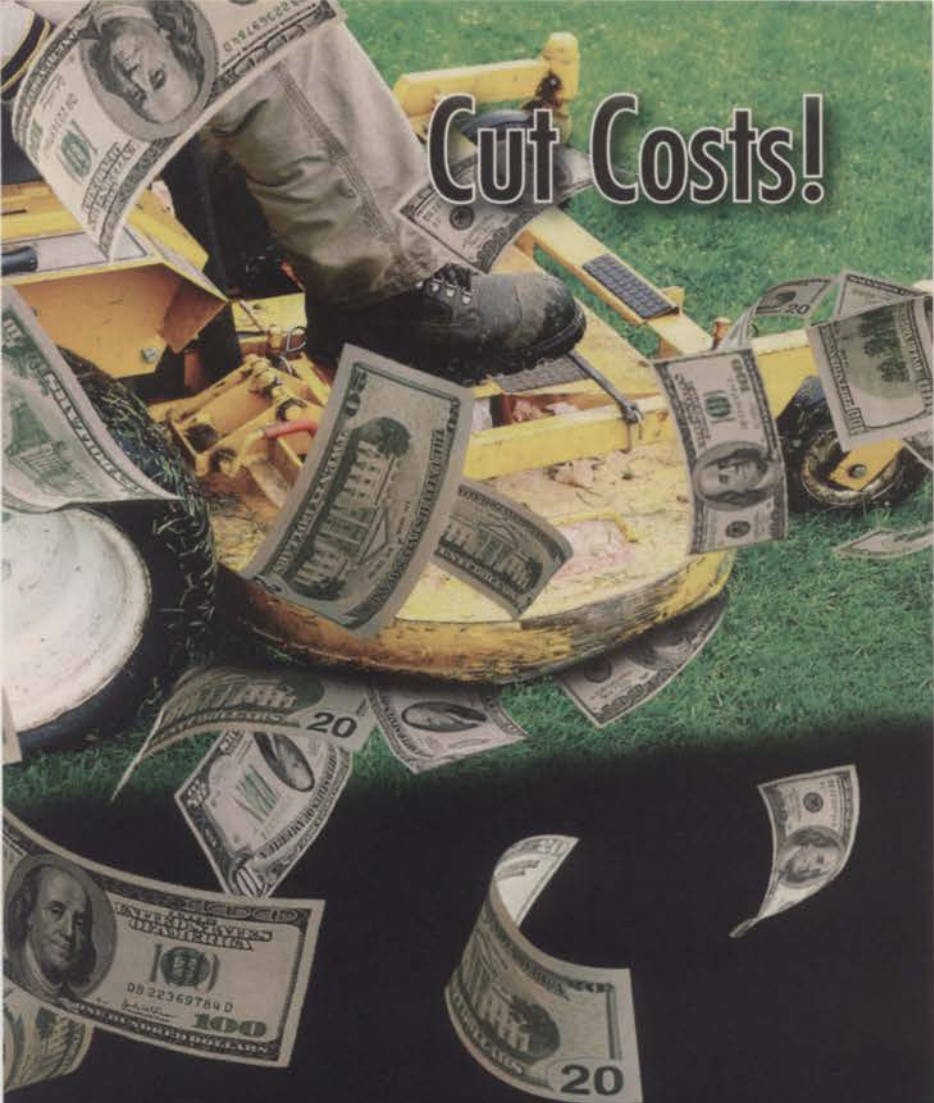


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NEWS

"It's something I did all the time as a kid," Johnson says of his time spent hiking in the Rockies as a child.



Johnson

As part of the trip, Johnson is raising money for several charities, including Tulsa Habitat for Humanity, the Salvation Army and Young Life Tulsa. He is also seeking additional sponsors. His goal is to raise \$100,000 – half as donations and half as matching funds from his own company.

Johnson says that he's not worried about leaving his employees during the busy summer season. "If I've done my job right, they should do just fine."

Besides, he says, he plans to leave the trail every few days to find an Internet connection, read reports and blog at www.at2010tulsa.com

Donations are tax deductible, and customers who donate also receive a discount on future services. – Chuck Bowen

Celmer retires from The Davey Tree Expert Company

KENT, Ohio –Ken Celmer, senior vice president for the company's residential/commercial services, has retired from The Davey Tree Expert Company effective Jan. 1.



Celmer

Celmer has held the position since 2000.

"Throughout the years Ken has been an employee of Davey, he has provided consistent leadership and commitment to the people working within the R/C service line and has been a valuable ambassador for the Davey Company within the industry," said Davey Executive Vice President Pat Covey.

Celmer began his Davey career in 1971 as an apprentice on the Indianapolis Power and Light account. He transferred to R/C services later that year and was promoted to positions of increasing responsibility for the residential division,

CONTRACTOR NEWS

High Desert Landscape & Design

has been selected for the 2009 Best of Las Vegas Award in the Landscaping category by the U.S. Commerce Association (USCA).

Atomic Irrigation, Santa Monica,

Calif., completed an irrigation project at Fort MacArthur Air Force Base in San Pedro, Calif. The project included a new irrigation system design that saves money on water usage, protects existing investments and achieves sustainable water management.

Aquascape has acquired Aqua Rock Fountain Kit, Shakopee, Minn., a manufacturer of natural stone water

bubbler fountain kits.

Arborwell, Ickes Tree Service, Enviro Tree Service, Integrity Tree Service, The Tree Mann and Bozeman Tree Service have joined HMI's authorized member network.

Houston-based wholesale nursery distributor **Newton Nursery** has announced new ownership. The nursery also changed its name – paying homage to its roots – to The New Nursery.

HighGrove Partners, Austell, Ga., and Ed Castro Landscape, Roswell, Ga., received PLANET's 2009 Environmental Improvement Award.

including Indianapolis district manager, area manager for Midwest operations, operations manager, vice president eastern operations, vice president and general manager.

Celmer is a former member of the board of trustees of the Cleveland Botanical Gardens and is a land management committee member for the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests.

Celmer is a graduate of Southern Illinois University with a bachelor's and master's degree in forestry.

Briggs & Stratton introduces four new single-cylinder engines

MILWAUKEE – Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power has added four new Vanguard single-cylinder engines with gross horsepower ratings ranging from 5.5 to 10 horsepower.

The engines represent many new features specifically designed to address the top worksite challenges cited by end-user customers and OEMs: heavy dust, lack of regular maintenance, filtration issues and oil dilution during transportation.

During transport, engines are subjected to vibration, which can cause fuel to

flow through the engine and into the oil. Fuel in the oil drastically reduces viscosity, resulting in more friction, increased wear and shorter engine life.

Vanguard engineers researched and created an integrated switch that simultaneously shuts off the ignition and the fuel. This patent-pending innovation, called the TransportGuard system, ensures that fuel stays where it belongs and helps eliminate fouled plugs, hydraulic lock, cylinder wash down and crankcase oil dilution caused by transportation, the company says.

In addition to solving oil dilution issues, engineers designed each component and integrated technology to raise durability and reliability standards, the company says.

"Our approach to product development is to stay connected to the customer," said Dan Roche, marketing manager, Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power.

Each area of the engine has been designed to address durability and reliability challenges. A high-mounted canister-style air cleaner has 27 percent more filter area than competitor units, the company says. An all-metal fuel tank reduces emissions, saves fuel and is mounted directly to the engine block. And heat-treated PTO bearing races ensure long-lasting equipment performance.

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NEWS

T-Zone herbicide receives New York and California registrations

T-Zone Broadleaf Herbicide for Tough Weeds is now registered in California and New York. T-Zone use in New York is limited to one broadcast application per year and does not include Nassau and Suffolk counties. Introduced in August 2009, it is now registered in all continental states and Hawaii.

T-Zone It contains triclopyr, sulfentrazone and phenoxies, which provide control of broadleaf weeds in cool-season turfgrasses. Weeds controlled include ground ivy, oxalis and black medic.

Ariens acquires Kee Mower brand

BRILLION, Wis. – Ariens has acquired the intellectual assets of the Kee Mower brand of products.

The high-wheel walk-behind mowers are used by rural property owners, landscape contractors and municipalities to cut underbrush, remove heavy overgrowth of tall grasses or weeds, and conduct tight trimming around and under structures such as fences.

The company plans to sell Kee Mowers under the Gravely brand of products available through independent power equipment dealers.

"We plan to rationalize the product line-up with input from our dealers to ensure we have the right specifications for the market," says Dan Ariens, president. "Because production of these products stopped nearly eight months ago, we also will have to take some time to re-establish the supply chain."

Ariens will produce the Kee products at its manufacturing facility in Opp, Ala. The company did not acquire any product inventory as part of the sale and, therefore, will not be able to fill any outstanding orders that may exist.

Kee Mowers have a 50-year history in the outdoor power equipment segment. The products were most recently manufactured by Hoffco Power Equipment.

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PEOPLE



Lish



Miller



Key



Smith

Profile Products has named **Scott Schnitta** market development manager.

Joe Broyles has been selected by the New York State Turf & Landscape Association as its person of the year. Broyles, senior regional account manager for Plant Health Care, will accept the honor at the association's spring meeting.

Aaron Majors, of Cagwin & Dorward in Novato, Calif., has passed the Certified Landscape Professional test and is nationally certified.

BASF Professional Turf & Ornamentals has added four new employees to its team effective immediately.

Business Manager **Brian Lish**: strategic account manager for national golf, lawn and landscape, **Derek Miller**; and Senior Sales Specialists **Chris Key** and **Jonathan Smith** have been hired.

Syngenta has named **Dan Steltz** market manager for lawn and landscape.

Steltz will be responsible for all Syngenta marketing programs and initiatives for the company's lawn care, ornamental production and vegetation management customer groups.

Brickman Group buys The Green Plan

GAITHERSBURG, Md. – The Brickman Group has acquired The Green Plan, based in Broomfield, Colo.

The Green Plan's two locations, north and south of Denver, will join Brickman's four existing branches in Denver, Englewood and Colorado Springs. Last fall, Brickman acquired Boston-area D. Foley Landscape.

"I realized that in order to grow the company further, it meant either re-tooling the business model completely or partnering with a larger company," says The Green Plan owner Jeff Pope, who acquired the business in 1996. "In my search for that partner, I found Brickman was the absolute best fit for my people and my customers. From a service perspective, it just made sense. Brickman's culture matches our own, and the company brings processes and resources that will enable my team to continue to grow, while providing unparalleled service to our clients."

"We're excited to have the Green Plan's team join our Colorado operations," says Mike Bogan, Brickman's senior vice president. "I am confident that Jeff Pope and his leadership team, working alongside our current Brickman team members, will help establish

Brickman as the market leader and provider of choice in commercial landscape management in Colorado."

Pope and his management team will remain in their current positions, continuing to serve existing clients, adding in Brickman clients and growing the market into the newest division of Brickman.

Dynapac USA to become part of Atlas Copco sales organization

COMMERCE CITY, Colo. – Effective Jan. 1 Dynapac, a company within the Atlas Copco Group, will become fully integrated into the sales organization for all Atlas Copco construction products sold in the U.S. market.

The integration allows Atlas Copco to maximize efficiencies and manage costs by sharing its business structure with Dynapac, the company said.

Over the long term, this means Atlas Copco and Dynapac customers will have access to more complete product lines and an extensive parts inventory and distribution system, the company said.

The Atlas Copco companies sell construction, drilling, compaction and paving products.

View an interactive demo at www.rainbird.com/WR2



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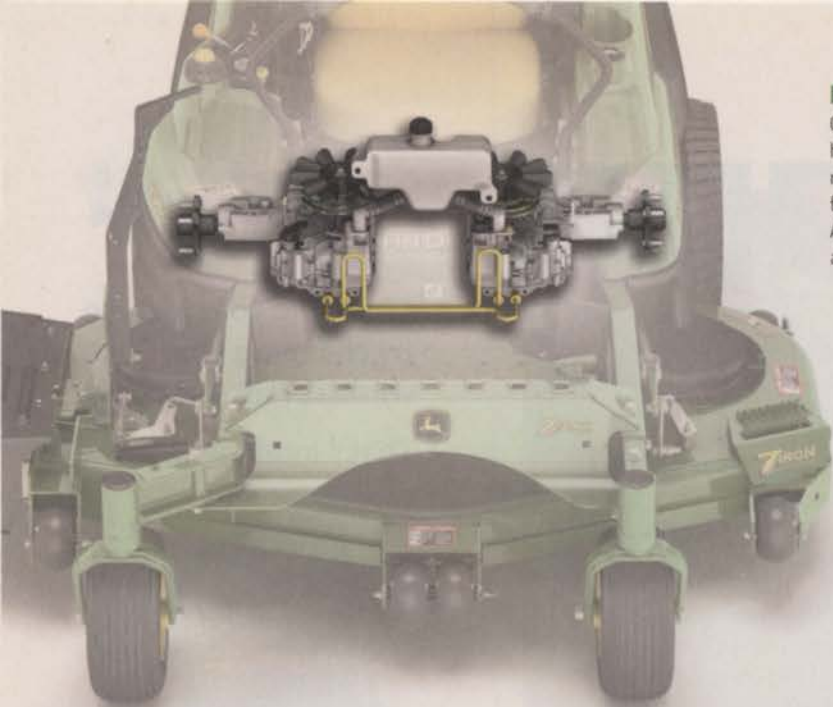
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Height-of-cut Adjustment Dial

Our exclusive HOC dial allows you to set the cut height with just the twist of a dial. The simple mechanical design ensures superior performance and long life. A transport lock keeps the deck in place when loading and unloading. And the cut range is 1.5 to 5.0 inches at $\frac{1}{4}$ in. increments.



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Need to mulch one pass and side-discharge the next? This patented deck allows you to do just that by simply pulling a lever from your seat. By shifting the lever to mulch position, the moveable gate closes off the discharge chute and the smooth moving baffles close off cutting chambers to maximize mulching performance.

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They're both plastic, but there are big differences between debit and credit cards.

By William J. Lynott

The **debit** DIFFERENCE

Cash may not be obsolete, but it's clearly taking a back seat these days to those little plastic rectangles found in just about everyone's wallet or purse. For years, they consisted of just one type: credit cards. Now, a newer version, the debit card, is proving to be even more popular. While the two have similarities, there are some very important differences to keep in mind.

Debit cards' popularity can be traced, at least in part, to the catastrophic debt load that millions of undisciplined credit card users brought on themselves. Therein lies the principal difference between credit cards and debit cards. Each time you use a credit card, you are incurring debt. You have a choice of paying off that debt in full each month, or you may pay it off over a period of time, plus (sometimes oppressive) interest.

When you make that purchase with a debit card, you're using your own money, which is withdrawn from your checking account. This arrangement has proven attractive to those consumers who lack the self discipline to limit credit card purchases to amounts they can pay off in full each month — no debt, no interest charges.

Even if you aren't aware of it, there's a good chance you have a debit card in your wallet or purse right now, since many bank ATM cards are programmed to have debit options. While this may well be a satisfactory arrangement for many, the use of debit cards brings with it a number of important disadvantages that you should keep in mind.

LESS PROTECTION AGAINST FRAUD. Consumer liability for credit card fraud is limited to \$50. For example, if

you notice suspicious charges on your credit card statement, the credit card company is obligated to investigate, provided you send in a written request within 60 days.

On the surface, debit card fraud liability is also limited to \$50, but you must notify the bank within two days of noticing the fraudulent charges. After two days, your liability increases to \$500. After 60 days, your entire account balance could be at risk.

Some, but not all, banks are adopting voluntary plans to limit customer liability to \$50. However, there is no federal law requiring them to do so.

MERCHANT DISPUTES. If there is a dispute regarding a purchase you make with a debit card, you are in a weaker position than you would be with a credit card. Since the merchant already has your money when you use a debit card, the merchant will keep that money during whatever time it takes to resolve the dispute. It will only be returned when, and if, the dispute is settled in your favor.

RISK OF EXPENSIVE OVERDRAFTS. When you use a debit card, it can be difficult to keep track of what you purchased unless you are diligent in recording each transaction in your checkbook. A single mistake on your balance can result in spending money you don't have, leading to costly overdrafts.

Pressures on their bottom lines in this economy have caused many banks to institute an entire line of new and increased service fees. One of these is the fee for overdrafts. Many banks now charge \$35 for an overdraft, even for a purchase of just a couple of dollars.

That fee can go even higher for multiple overdrafts. So if you accidentally make two or more overdrafts, you'll be hit hard with those fees.

NOT HELPING YOUR CREDIT HISTORY. When you use a credit card, transactions and timely payments are reported to the credit agencies, helping to improve your all-important credit score. Transactions and payments made through debit cards are not reported to the agencies, thus they have no effect on your credit.

With credit scores carrying ever-greater importance in your financial life, building good credit is critical in building a solid financial foundation. Responsible use of your credit cards can improve your credit rating.

That, in turn, will improve your chances of obtaining favorable credit terms, low interest rates and low fees for automobile loans, mortgages and personal loans. Debit cards are no help in this regard.

BOTTOM LINE. If you find it difficult to control your spending, if you have a history of running up large balances on your credit cards, paying minimum payments and incurring oppressive interest charges, you are a prime candidate for switching to debit cards.

On the other hand, if you have the self-discipline to keep your spending under control, spending only enough that you are able to pay off the full balance each month, you may want to take a second look before using a debit card for your regular purchases. **L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Abington, Pa. He has 40 years experience in business management and financing.

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A fresh set of eyes

There's been discussion among my business-owning friends about what this year will bring. Entrepreneurs are concerned, and rightfully so. Only recently has it seemed like the folks in Washington are paying attention to small business owners. We're told all the time how important we are, but actions speak louder than words. If you're like me, you just want government to leave you alone and let you run your business the best way you can. That's the foundation to the free enterprise system. However, I might make you mad at what I'm about to say.

Don't feel sorry for yourself or complain; it doesn't help. I feel all of us have an obligation to our families, our teams, our communities, our country and ourselves to do what we can *right now* to make our businesses better. You can't just sit back and wait for the economy to get better, you – you – have to take some dramatic steps right now to improve your organizations and be ready for the recovery. In the next two years we're going to see our businesses doing a lot better and smart owners are looking for ways to improve right now. Someone in Washington once said, "Never waste a big crisis." I agree with that when it comes to business. You need to examine your business, or better yet have someone else look at your business and tell you what they think needs improvement.

I recently read a fascinating story in the *The Wall Street Journal* about Mary Ann Mauldwin, a 57-year-old former middle school teacher who Roush & Yates Racing Engines hired five years ago to help improve their NASCAR

team. You're probably wondering what the folks at Roush & Yates thought when they heard she was hired. What does a 50-something teacher know about NASCAR? I've been to several NASCAR races; they are an amazing lesson in branding, entertainment and business. Suffice to say, you don't see too many 50-year-old-teacher-looking ladies at these races. But, the fact Mary didn't know a whole lot about NASCAR was the reason Roush & Yates hired her.

We've become conditioned to our environments and need some outside help.

Mauldwin's work with the NASCAR team has been incredible. She has a degree in mechanical engineering and English and was a successful operations management consultant before she joined Roush & Yates. She loved teaching young people so she did that for a while before getting into NASCAR. Sometimes help can be found in the strangest places.

Here are some of Mauldwin's accomplishments:

- She implemented a new parts inventory control system that has been 100 percent accurate after five audits;
- She took what was a loser – old parts – and turned it into a lucrative profit center selling refurbished parts to other race teams and fans; and
- She teaches operations management to 100 employees.

I know many landscapers are

NASCAR fans; I am. The sport is fascinating. I have learned a lot from watching them in action. It seems to me that NASCAR, maybe more than most other sports, seems to have a holistic approach to the sport. They just want to win and will employ whatever tactic they can to get better – even bringing in former teachers who don't know the difference between "a piston and a connecting rod," as Mauldwin said in the article.

It is a lesson that another set of eyes on your business is always good. Sometimes those of us with all the experience can't see what's possible. We've become conditioned to our environments and need some outside help. Instead, what we need to focus on is getting better. The more efficiently we can operate, the more profits we can put in our back pockets. Every angle you can pick up is another penny in the profit column.

This month, find someone from a different line of work to look at your business. Maybe you could talk to your local university's engineering department and ask someone to look at your operation and make suggestions to improve your processes. Maybe you could ask a local successful warehousing company to send their best warehouse person to your shop and consult with you on how your space could be better utilized. Maybe you could ask your team for help.

It all boils down to wanting to get better and then not letting your ego get in the way. No one likes to be told they're not good at something; I know that. But if the truth helps, shouldn't you listen? **L**



MARTY GRUNDER

is a speaker, consultant and author, and also owner of Grunder Landscaping Co. in Miamisburg, Ohio. Reach him at marty@gie.net or via www.martygrunder.com.

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Live & Learn

by Lindsey Getz

Leave it to the pros

Steve Schrader started leaning on professionals and stopped leaving money on the table.

A mistake Steve Schrader made more than two decades ago still has an effect on his company.

Schrader, president of Bio Green, a Virginia-based lawn care and landscape provider started off focused primarily on residential properties. His partners did the company's books and taxes in-house, believing they were fully capable of handling these administrative tasks on their own. "We pretty much operated out of cardboard boxes and files, but we thought we had everything down," he says.

Unfortunately, that wasn't the case. "Today, more than 20 years later, we're still shoring up the underpinnings of the company because of it. Things aren't as solid as they should be," he says.

After six or seven years in business, the company was growing but there wasn't much to show for it. That's when Schrader got serious about finding a good accountant. Shortly after, he also hired a part-time bookkeeper. But even after bringing in this new employee he was reluctant to relinquish total control of the company's payroll. That changed when his new bookkeeper asked if she could handle billing for the sprinkler department, which Schrader says was failing to perform to expectations.

The company had been focused on the lawn care side of the business.

"But with my bookkeeper taking over, within two years (lawn care) was making as much as the (irrigation) installs," Schrader says. "I made her full-time and now I rely heavily on her for her expertise."

Today, Schrader, whose business brought in \$3.4 million in revenue last year, doesn't make a move without consulting his bookkeeper, accountant, and even his litigation and tax attorneys. He just wishes he had these professionals on board with him from the get-go. "It's frustrating to look at all the money that was lost or unaccounted for," he says. "We paid too much in taxes and made other mistakes that lost us money."

Many owners believe the expense of bringing in these business professionals isn't worth it, especially considering they won't always be needed. Schrader disagrees. "If you know a truck can handle 350 lawns but you have 450 lawns, you're going to buy another truck to grow your business – even though it will sit sometimes. You should look at these professionals the same way. They are another tool in your belt. Even though there will be times when they are unused, they are worth the cost in growing your business. If you find professionals that have your best interest at heart, you will save so much money that it will easily make up for the cost of hiring them."



Schrader

Schrader adds that having hired professionals to handle finances has freed up his time. It's a fact other business owners should consider. "If you're a good landscaper, but you're also managing the financial side of your business, then you are torn between two time-consuming jobs," he says. "You need to be out in the field, training guys and ordering materials, but all the while pulling at your sleeve and taking away your attention is the fact that the checkbook is off by \$50 or that Mrs. Smith owes you a lot of money. Hiring a professional to handle that – and one who really excels at it – not only frees up your time but benefits your business." For Bio Green, one of the benefits has been a high credit rating. "Today we have a great track record of making payments because I have someone in charge of that now," Schrader says.

Learning the importance of having a bookkeeper and other professionals on staff was a painful but critical lesson, Schrader says.

"There's no question that your business will grow much faster if you have financial professionals looking out for you," he says. **L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Royersford, Pa.

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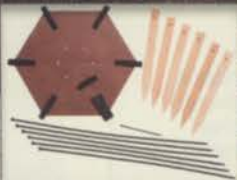
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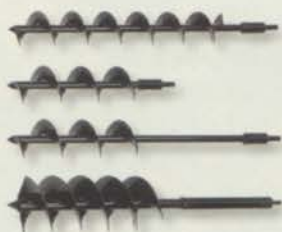
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92962
20-8 oz. bags

\$112⁹⁵



1618

Forestry Suppliers Landscaping Tablets

- For 1-gallon size plants and larger nursery stock
- 500 21 gram Tablets

92959
Landscaping
Tablets

\$62⁹⁵



7013

Green Lawnger™ Turf Colorant

- Restores green color to dormant or discolored turf
- Control color shade by the amount applied
- One gallon covers 4,000 to 12,000 square feet

77006
1 Gallon

\$56⁹⁵

77007
2.5 Gallons

\$132⁵⁰



6651

Mulch Magic®

- 1/2 Gal. Jug
- Bring the color back to faded mulch
- Mixing 3 to 4 oz. of Mulch Magic® in a gallon of water will treat 200 to 400 square feet of mulch

77000
Bright Brown

\$33⁵⁰

77001
Dark Brown

\$33⁵⁰

77002
Red

\$33⁵⁰



1791
Barnel® Ultra Reach® Pruners

- Cuts up to 5/8" in dia.
- With interchangeable pruner and pruning saw
- Self-oiler, aluminum construction, shock absorbing spring, and a comfortable handgrip

81170 5' Pruner/ Pruning Saw	81160 6'-10' Pruner/ Pruning Saw
\$59⁹⁵	\$108⁵⁰



8345
Barnel® Ultra Reach® Telescopic Lopper

- 1-1/2" Cutting Capacity
- Extends from 6' to 8'
- Lightweight extruded aluminum construction

81169 Telescopic Lopper
\$109⁹⁰



3755
Corona® 12" Compound Action Tree Pruner

- Die-cast zinc alloy head
- 15" Fully heat-treated, Teflon™-coated steel saw 1" dia. cutting capacity
- Lightweight fiberglass pole telescopes to 12'

81155 12" Tree Pruner
\$46⁷⁵



3787
Jameson Telescoping Pole Saw Package w/Saw & Pruner Kit

- 6' to 12' Double Lock® Telescoping Pole with female ferrule
- JA-14 Pruner with adapter and rope
- One 13" Tri-Edge saw blade with pole saw casting and adapter

80159 Telescoping Pole Saw Package
\$142⁵⁰



1786
Felco® Model 2 Hand Pruner

81130 Model 2
\$42⁵⁰



1795
Corona® Ergo-Action Hand Pruner

81125 Model BP3640
\$16⁹⁵



1739
Corona® 13" Pruning Saws

81262 Plastic Handle	81272 Wooden Handle
\$24⁹⁵	\$24⁹⁵



1742
Corona® 7" Folding Saw

81269 7" Folding Saw
\$20²⁵



1786
Felco® Hand Pruners

81126 Model 160S, 7.9" L	81127 Model 160L, 8.7" L
\$27⁹⁵	\$27⁹⁵



7014
Corona® StrataShear™ Bypass Loppers

79052 2-1/2" cut, 26" long	79077 2-1/2" cut, 32" long
\$56⁷⁵	\$59⁹⁵



8563
Lesche™ Digging Tool

33488 7" x 1-3/4" blade
\$41²⁵



8728
Leather Sheath/Holster

57386 Leather Pruner Holster
\$9⁹⁵

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was: \$102.50
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1846

D.B. Smith Field King™ Deluxe Sprayers

- Positive, palm-activated trigger with lock
- In-line poly filter protects trigger and nozzle from clogs
- Viton® gaskets and seals
- 24" Long spray wand
- 50" Reinforced hose

13398 4-Gallon
\$76⁹⁵



1839

SPO® Triple Function Backpack Sprayer

- 4-gallon capacity
- Triple Function Pump™ safely provides higher pressures to 150 psi
- Large 6" tank opening
- Ergonomic pump handle
- Brass spray wand with 42" hose
- Adjustable nozzle stream to a mist

13699 4-gallon
\$169⁹⁵



7193

Chapin ProSeries™ Backpack Sprayers

- 4-gallon capacity
- Viton™ seals, 20' poly wand, 48" hose, brass nozzle, multi-use nozzle tips, 4" wide filtered tank opening, and padded shoulder straps

13327 Piston	13328 Diaphragm
\$73⁵⁰	\$75⁹⁵

solo



1854

Solo® 454, 456 & 457V Hand-held Sprayers

- Spraying pressure up to 45 psi
- Viton® seals and O-rings
- High-density polyethylene tank
- Multifunction safety valve to relieve excess pressure

13396 Model 454, 1 gallon	13384 Model 456, 2.25 Gallon	13397 Model 457V, 3 Gallon
\$35⁵⁰	\$39⁵⁰	\$45⁹⁵



7238

SP Systems® Industrial Hand-held Sprayers

- Designed to spray for over 10 minutes with only 40 pump strokes
- High-grade Viton® seals throughout
- Heavy gauge 20" brass wand with adjustable nozzle
- Working Pressure: up to 120 psi

13251 1-Gallon	13252 2-Gallon
\$65⁹⁵	\$68⁹⁵

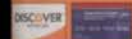


8273

Sideswipe® Pro Herbicide Applicator

- Selective application of herbicides
- Wets evenly without drift
- Top shield protects desirable plants and shrubs during application
- 32 oz. (1 liter) reservoir handle
- 1,800 sq. ft. coverage area

18025 Sideswipe Pro
\$38⁵⁰



4339

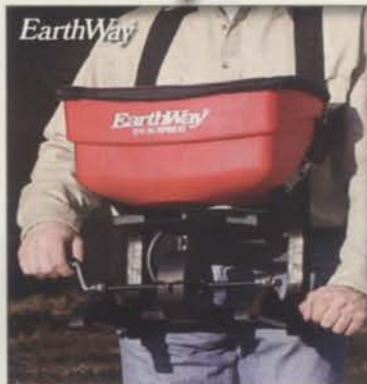
Spyker® Model 98 Stainless Steel Spreader

- 110 lb. Capacity
- Stainless steel hopper, enclosed metal gears, a one-piece welded stainless steel frame
- 5/8" solid stainless steel axle
- 13" x 5" pneumatic tires

68993

Model 98
Spreader

\$434⁰⁰



2113

EarthWay® Model 3200 Shoulder Spreader

- 25 lb. (17.3 liters) Capacity
- Rustproof poly hopper and chassis
- The fully enclosed high-speed gear box with zinc-plated steel axle provides years of trouble-free use

69013

Model 3200
Spreader

\$83⁹⁵



1935

Model 3100 Shoulder Spreader

- 40 lb. Capacity
- Lays 8'-12' swath
- Criss-cross shoulder straps provide even, steady, comfortable support
- Bottom support plate spreads load evenly across your lower abdomen

69009

Model 3100
Spreader

\$114⁵⁰



4467

Razor® Pro Herbicide

- 41% Glyphosate Isopropylamine Salt (Compare to Roundup® Pro)
- Ideal for use in post-emergent weed control in industrial sites as well as forestry, turf, vegetation management, and ornamental areas

17121

2-1/2 Gallon
Container

\$71²⁵

Cannot be sold
in CA, MA, VT, WA.



8333

Gilmour High Rise Telescoping Sprinkler

- Sprinkler head has 3/4" NPT connection to base
- Mounted on a three-legged telescoping tripod which reaches a height of 58' with coverage up to 8,500 sq. ft. at 90 psi

67739

High Rise
Sprinkler

\$71⁹⁵



6648

Treegator®

- Reinforced, UV treated 10 mil polyethylene
- One holds 20 gallons and drips 6 to 10 hours
- Fits tree 1" - 4" in dia.
- Heavy duty nylon zippers, polypro straps, and heat sealed edges
- 5 Year Warranty, Made in U.S.A.

79128

Treegator

\$21⁵⁰

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more!

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3744

Landscape Trailer Accessories

- Secure a variety of tools and equipment to your trailer!
- Constructed of heavy duty black powder-coated steel and include mounting hardware
- Made in the USA.



4503

Polymer Trailer Tongue Box

- High-density polyethylene
- Integrated hinge and a zinc-plated hasp latch
- 18" x 20" x 36"

93810
Polymer
Tongue Box

\$119⁰⁰



3744

Lockable Trimmer Rack

- Holds three trimmers
- For open trailers

94700

\$167⁰⁰



3744

Multi-Rack

- Secure your trimmers, chain saws, or blowers
- Rubber straps included
- For open or enclosed trailers

94701

\$47⁹⁵



3744

Backpack Blower Rack

- Rubber strap included
- For open or enclosed trailers
- Not for STIHL® BR400

94702

\$47⁹⁵



3744

Water Cooler Rack

- Accommodates most standard size coolers
- Straps included
- For open or enclosed trailers

94703

\$46⁶⁰



3744

Gas Can Rack

- Holds one 5-gal. or two 2.5-gal. polymer cans
- Strap included
- For open or enclosed trailers

94704

\$52⁹⁵



3744

Trimmer Line Spool Bracket

- Holds one 3 lb. spool
- For open or enclosed trailers

94706

\$21⁹⁵



3744

Hand Tool Rack

- Holds up to six straight handle tools
- Rubber grommets
- For open trailers

94705

\$83⁹⁵



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3718
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35013
Model MP301
\$103⁷⁵



1567
Rubbermaid® Water Coolers

31137 5-Gallon	31138 10-Gallon
\$35⁵⁰	\$68⁹⁵



5751
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• 8-1/2" x 11"
49247
Pack of 200
\$28⁹⁵



8284
CARB Compliant No-Spill® Fuel Cans

93329 2.5 Gallon	93330 5 Gallon
\$19⁹⁵	\$30⁹⁵



6024
Oak-n-Ivy® Tecnu® Cleanser

25330 12 oz.	25328 32 oz.
\$9⁹⁵	\$16⁵⁰



6002
Sun-X SPF 30 Sunscreen

25301
50 Towelettes
\$31⁹⁵



8559
Heavy-Duty Hand & Surface Cleaner

33313
Cleaner Wipe
\$12⁹⁵



3485
Elvex® Blue™ PVC Earplugs

94167 With Cord, Box of 100 pr	94129 Without Cord, Box of 200 pr
\$26⁷⁵	\$24⁹⁵



2055
Elvex® Trix Safety Glasses

23287 Clear Lens	23288 Gray Lens
\$2⁷⁰	\$3⁰⁵



2058
Plant Stress Detection Glasses

23380
Plant Stress Glasses
\$24⁹⁵



4204
Quietunes™ 666R Radio Earmuffs

94126
Rechargeable AM/FM
\$96⁹⁵



8347
Barnel® Spring Bucket

35980
22" x 26"
\$31⁹⁵



8049
Professional Tool Sets

67202 148-Piece	67220 170-Piece
\$99⁹⁵	\$117⁵⁰



1116
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8242
Rust-Oleum® 17 oz. Inverted Tip Marking Paint

• Additional colors available
57149 Safety Red
57151 Fl. Orange
\$4⁷⁰



7009
AMS One-Piece Step Probe

77636 Step Probe
\$71⁴⁰

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2128

Green Garde® JD9-C High Pressure Spray Gun and Root Feeder

- Maximum Spraying Pressure: 1,000 psi.
- Stainless steel construction, chemical-resistant Viton® inner seals and a fully adjustable nozzle
- Heavy-Duty Root Feeder penetrates the tree's root zone up to 10" deep

13617 JD9-C Spray Gun	13615 Flooding Nozzle	13618 Optional Root Feeder
\$144 ⁹⁵	\$20 ⁵⁰	\$259 ⁹⁵



2125

Arbor Care 15-8-4

- Provides a continuous steady source of slow release nitrogen from methylene diurea (MDU) along with soluble, non-chloride potassium
- Extends three to six months depending on the soil and climate conditions
- No danger of phytotoxicity
- No special agitation is needed
- Compatible with fungicides, herbicides and insecticides

92909 2-1/2 Gallon
\$49 ⁹⁵



2126

Autumn Care 6-12-12

- Provides a high ratio of Phosphorus and Potassium in solution for fall fertilization of trees, ornamentals and vines
- Contains 40% Slow Release Nitrogen (MDU - methylene diurea) with an extremely low salt index
- Compatible with fungicides, herbicides and insecticides and can be mixed and sprayed in one application.

92910 2-1/2 Gallon
\$45 ⁹⁵

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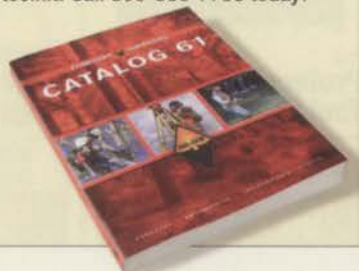
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ROBIN WHITE-MOORE is president of Moore Motivation, Columbus, Ohio. She can be reached at moore@gje.net or through www.mooremotivationllc.com.

Horse – and business – sense

In 2007, I spent some time in Quito, Ecuador. While there, my sister and I went on a horseback ride in the Andes Mountains. I had not been on a horse in more than 18 years and I was nervous. I got an old, stubborn horse called Buck.

Before I hopped on, I had a talk with Buck. I whispered in his ear "OK, Buck. I just want to get back to this stable alive," patted him nicely and hopped on. We were going to be on a narrow cliff that had an edge with a 3,000-foot drop or more.

We stopped for a moment to take a break and the guide told us that the horses are so conditioned to these paths, they wouldn't even need a rider to show them their way since they have been doing this for years. They do the same thing every day, so they could get themselves back to the stable without help if they needed to.

Many of us have been faced with an employee like Buck from time to time. We condition him on the skills to perform day in and day out, year after year. We train people so much that they can do their jobs without us pulling their reins to get them to respond.

Often, there are employees who we feel we are fighting against. They kick, buck back, don't get along with the others, then run away and create more

problems, leaving us to deal with it. Here are some steps to focus on to prevent those negative situations:

BOND WITH YOUR PERSONNEL. We need to take the time to get to know all employees, even if they are stubborn. We spend eight hours a day with them and we expect a lot out of them.

When recruiting, ask situational questions. Put candidates in a scenario to find out if they can solve problems, make decisions and think on their feet. After all, this is what we want them to be able to do on their own. Don't ask them what their strengths are. Make them show you.

Once they're your employees, if they continue to be stubborn, have a talk. Praise their good points. Hold them responsible for their negative behaviors.

SHOW THEM THE WAY. Talk to them. Train them. Track their progress. You shouldn't have to be by their side every step of the way for them to perform at their highest level. If you feel they aren't doing what you expect of them, you have to pull back on the reins a bit and regroup. You are creating leaders.

EXPRESS YOUR EXPECTATIONS. Face your challenges, whether they are your

people or communication mishaps – you cannot assume your staff thinks like you do. Have productive meetings to see the vision of your managers and communicate effectively with the entire company. Everyone needs to see the vision to reach it.

REAP THE REWARDS. Happy employees will give you happy results. The most important factors that most people want from their work are to feel a sense of purpose and to feel understood, respected and that they are heard.

What are you doing on a daily basis to promote this?

CONCLUSION. You put your most important decisions in the hands of your staff on what feels like a cliff with a 3,000-foot drop. Some days you feel like you are walking on the edge with them. Other days you have confidence they can make it back to the stable on their own.

As for my ride with Buck that day, I talked with him and praised him. Every once in awhile I had to tug him to get back on the right path. We did fine that day and I made it back to the stable safely. I realized we can condition even the most stubborn employees. We may not be able to change them, but we can have a fun and successful ride. **L**





Jim Calhoun left the high-tech world 30 years ago, started his own one-man landscape lighting business and never looked back.

CHANGING GEARS

30 years in the tech industry laid the foundation for a successful foray into landscape lighting for Jim Calhoun.

After three decades in the semiconductor industry, Jim Calhoun started his own one-man landscape lighting business. Since 2003, he's been the owner of Northern Lights in Mountain View, Calif. *Lawn & Landscape* caught up with him to talk about what he's learned about dealing with clients and selling projects after 30 years in the technology industry and how he uses that to stay successful in the green industry.

Where did you work and what did you do there?

I worked in the semiconductor industry, specifically in quality control. I did that for just shy of 30 years. Back then, Intel was in the adventure of the microprocessor. A semi conductor is basically the heart of the computer age that we live in. I worked for several companies: 10 years at Intel, 13 at DuPont and then a few startups in between.

Describe a typical day at Intel or DuPont.

A typical day was meetings. Planning strategies, dealing with minute problems. In quality control, my job was to address the quality issue internally, but also externally with our clients, with our customers. I would be in a room with unhappy clients most of the time, because they didn't call me in to tell me

everything was running right. Or that they wanted to move in a new direction, or a new specification.

At the other end, I would don a smock, go inside a clean room, peer into a microscope and look at a particular problem at a micron level. It's smaller than a hair. Down to the tenths of microns. It's small stuff.

What prompted the move from DuPont to the landscaping industry?

I didn't have a pension plan, and felt that I was going to have to fend for myself in retirement. I wanted to go into business for myself to hedge my bets. In 2002 I started to do some work in the landscape lighting business. In 2003 I got laid off. I was smiling because I never would have pulled the trigger and started my business. God closes one door and opens another, you know?

How did you start?

My wife was a landscape designer. She was going to a class in San Diego, and didn't understand the math, the voltage, whatever. We went down there. It was all the math and controls and the design, too. This stuff is fun. I started reading, buying some fixtures and aiming them around, finding people who need this stuff.



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PERFECTION
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Eric Larson, Green Systems Turf Management
Site: Astor's Mansion
Newport, Rhode Island

With contracts for many of the world's most famous mansions, Eric Larson faces customer expectations that are as high as the real estate prices. So when ground ivy, clover and other tough weeds started showing up, he turned to 4-Speed XT. Its combination of four active ingredients makes weeds 'Deader. Faster.' For more on 4-Speed herbicide brands, and more of Eric Larson's story, go to www.nufarm.com/us.

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Calhoun: "When I push the switch, the lights turn on, there's a pause and then the customer says 'Wow.'"

Semi conductors seem like a world away from landscape lighting. How are the two jobs different?

Not at all. In one sense, they're different. One is outdoors, one is subject to the elements. It's a lot less stress. It's a lot simpler than other things that I've been in. The things that are alike is that my understanding of the client is light years ahead of my competition's understanding of the client. I work by myself, and by the time I leave, I know where the hidden key is, I know where the cats are, the kids; everybody knows me. Sometimes they give me hugs when I come back. It creates a tremendously great environment.

I learned how to dance in front of the clients, not over-commit, to be reasonable but show responsiveness. It has really taught me to under-commit and over-deliver.

It's the opposite with my competition. Those client skills are why I'm successful today.

Also the attention to quality: I don't just take the manufacturer's word for it. I get out the microscope, so to speak. I look at the product and the method of installation. I look at it in great detail. They appreciate the obvious effort and the care I put into their lighting system. That came as a direct result of the years of quality control.

What skills or lessons did you bring

from that career that benefit you as a contractor?

The most valuable thing is my interactive skills with the client, because it parallels exactly when I went to a client. We have a product that we're going to sell you, the quality level that's required, and being easy to understand without boring them to death. I'm selling myself - 'Hey. This guy knows what he's talking about.' Giving them that feeling without being condescending. Responsiveness. All those things came out of interacting with the customer in my previous work.

Now, I do a lighting demonstration. It's much like a presentation, but instead of standing up at the front of the boardroom and using a slide show, I'm standing out in front of the customer and I'm holding a remote control of my lighting system. I have the sensitivity to understand where their interests lie. I know how to shut up. You might not be able to believe that, but you're not my client. *[laughs]*

Do you miss that line of work?

Zip. This is immediate gratification. When I push the switch, the lights turn on, there's a pause and then the customer says "Wow." And I break out in goose bumps.

In quality control, I was either dodging bullets or heavily stressed to create something out of nothing. And quality programs sometimes ran for two or three years and you never knew whether you made an improvement or not.

The semi-conductor industry is a charged industry. Delivery times were tracked by hours. You get an order, you crank it up, manufacture it and deliver it in a matter of hours. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were at stake. If you made the wrong decisions, you'd also be out of a job. So, don't miss it.

Any final thoughts?

I'm a baby boomer, and so I go way back

BETTER RESULTS



4-Speed™ XT Saves Contracts

APPLICATION RATE:

1.3 oz/1,000 sf of 4-Speed XT plus spreader-sticker (1 oz/gallon finished spray)

APPLICATION EQUIPMENT:

LT Rich Z-Sprayer, 1/3 gal spray tips

TIMING:

July 13, 2009

SUMMARY:

"This was not ideal herbicide application timing for ground ivy control, but we still had great results on it and all the other weeds on the 4-Speed XT label. As a result, we saved several contracts. We'll be using a lot more 4-Speed XT and other Nufarm products in the future."

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3' to 25' Variable Spread Width
4.0 GPM Pump
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Up to 1 Gallon per 1000 capacity
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16" Front Tires
20" Rear Tires
16 HP Electric Start Engine
Locking Caster System
5 Gallon Gas Tank

Z-SPRAY

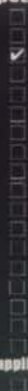
Competitor A

Competitor B



✓ Z-Max & Intermediate

✓ 50 on Z-Max



not applicable



not applicable



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INTERVIEW



Calhoun relies on demonstrations to sell his landscape lighting systems.

with the old traditional parents who went through the Depression. Now I'm reading about myself, and people are re-inventing themselves. I have effectively reinvented myself as far as how I make my money. It is a very rewarding kind of thing. I really feel blessed that this is working out the way it has.

I'm not driving fancy sports cars, but I'm living comfortably. That transition is on a lot of people's minds. In the old days, my dad was a business man himself, but the typical person of my father's era went to a company and stayed there for 30, 35 years. During my work time, that's the way it was. Now, you're moving into new jobs - it's not even enough to go from one company to another. You have to go to another career.

My dad was in livestock and agriculture. He owned and was in partnership and worked for a variety of livestock auctions. He owned the cows. He would buy and trade anything. He went into land. He had a store that he built and rented out to a guy. He owned that damn thing for 15 years. We still own the building. We're reaping the rewards every month from his shrewd thinking.

He was a wheeler-dealer. One thing I learned from him: I was selling a car, and my neighbor wanted to buy. I wasn't going to charge him much, because I hated to ask for much money from a neighbor. He said, "If you can't do business with your friends, who can you do business with?" He meant you should only be doing business with people you like. Make friends with every person you deal with. (L)

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The author is managing editor of *Lawn & Landscape*. Send him an e-mail at cbowen@gie.net.

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BUSINESS BREAKTHROUGH

B&L Landscaping partners with distributors and growers to stay competitive and grow into new markets. BY CHUCK BOWEN

Brian Yaffa started B&L Landscaping, Oak Park, Mich., more than 30 years ago with a couple of push mowers and a truck. Now, the company pulls in \$6 million a year and employs more than 100 people in season, with divisions for landscape construction, maintenance and snow and ice management. But when the economy hit Detroit and its suburbs hard, and B&L's margins on landscape installations took a hit, too.

To adjust, the company shifted its focus to more commercial and sustainable work – installing live roofs, rain gardens and bioswales – and reevaluated its relationships with nurseries, growers and other suppliers to save money and enter niche markets.

"We try to use the word 'team.' We're all in this thing together," says Dick Angell, director of landscape construction. "People are starting to understand that.

If we all want to stay in business, and move forward and have positive results, we need to work together."

WHAT THEY LOOK FOR. Angell and Yaffa say they look for flexibility when establishing a partnership with a plant material supplier. Margins grow ever smaller, and any wiggle room the company can provide on pricing and payment schedules is appreciated – especially when B&L's own customers are slow to pay.

"We don't consider ourselves a bank," Angell says. "They understand that we really don't like to pay them until we get paid."

Also important is the quality of the plant materials delivered, and the people caring for them, Angell adds.

"It's a living, viable product. If it gets mistreated ... we have to warrant it and it can be pretty roughed up," he says.

“We try to use the word ‘team.’ We’re all in this thing together. People are starting to understand that. If we all want to stay in business, and move forward and have positive results, **we need to work together.**”

Dick Angell, B&L Landscaping

2010



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B&L Director of Landscape Construction Dick Angell, right, and Vice President Larry Yaffa look for quality – in plants and people – from their suppliers.



LEARN FROM B&L Download samples of letters B&L sent to suppliers and vendors to negotiate better terms, customer sell sheets that outline the company's value proposition and watch a video tour of their Oak Park, Mich., facility at www.lawnandlandscape.com/2010breakthrough.



COVER STORY

And he's not interested in someone just selling him plants. He wants someone who understands their end use, and how to work around problems. If the nursery doesn't have the exact specimen he needs, he'll ask what they have that's close enough to fulfill the design.

"Architects want to see material," says Larry Yaffa, vice president. "We walk with our customers and go over how they care for it, where it's come from, its background. A good nursery ... helps us on the backside with warranty situations, so people are receiving quality product. If they're just pushing material through the yard ... it could be a detriment to us."

ONHOLD. During the construction boom, many landscaping companies couldn't

keep enough plants on hand. Now, with building slowing down, having all those trees and shrubs on hand is a liability. So, B&L reached out to its suppliers and asked if they could change the system. Instead of having a nursery drop-ship plant material or asking B&L to keep it in its own holding yard, the company asked if suppliers would hold materials until B&L is ready to install them.

"We really work with them on changing around their philosophies," says Yaffa. "They're looking at their operation as more of a holding situation than they were before. It's a new thought process for us all. Before, we had it in a holding yard for ourselves. Now, everybody's looking to the wholesalers and the growers to more of that for us. Obviously, that makes for good relationships."

B&L works with about 15 growers and nurseries and last year spent about \$500,000 on plant materials. Angell says the company started asking about changing logistics a few years ago, when freight prices spiked. And sitting down with suppliers has proven beneficial – Yaffa says the money saved by having Christensen's Plant Center, Plymouth, Mich., hold plant material has given him room in his profit margins to be more competitive on bidding certain jobs.

"For the most part, we wouldn't be who we are without them. That's one of the biggest things that's very important – the relationships with all the vendors we have ... landscaping or parts – are key elements of our business," Yaffa says. "To be able to provide the quality product we're looking for in the time-

Grower's perspective: **CUSTOM GROWING**

Reed Perennials has worked with B&L Landscaping for more than a decade, and custom-grown wetland plants like swamp milk weed, sedges and ornamental grasses for the company for four years. Twenty percent of the business is custom growing, and co-owner Tim Ashley says the relationship has been good for him and his Fowlerville, Mich.-based business. Here's how the process works. – As told to Chuck Bowen

B&L usually works with an architect who will specify certain plants, perennials they want to put in an installation based on color scheme or ease of care in location, or a theme.

Some of the time, quite a few of the items are a stock item we grow and have on hand at all times. Some of the things we do part of the time, some of the time it is a strictly custom-grow type of thing.

I think that by working with a reputable landscaper, which they are one of the most reputable in the area, there's mutual respect for the other guy's opinion. A lot of times they'll hit me with a variety of perennial they're looking for that isn't going to work. I'll tell them that, and (B&L director of landscape construction Dick Angell is) open to that and trusts my judgment.

Sometimes an architect will get an idea for an installation variety that isn't suitable for the climate zone or a designer variety that's hard to get or out of the budget. It's nice working with somebody that trusts your judgment. Some landscapers will say they don't care; it's what the specs say.

Working with someone like that – custom growing – it's really given me an insight into pushing something a little quicker than it normally would grow and given me an appreciation of how long some of this stuff takes to produce when I'm in a pinch.

We typically need a three- to five-month lead time. I can go as short as 60 days. I've discovered ways to push it a little bit without

compromising the quality of the plant. You add a little bit of heat and ventilate and do a little balance, you get quicker growth without the floppiness that might occur. You use additional fertilizer, increase the daylight length with artificial lights.

We're getting into some pretty large jobs, some have a finite timeline, so you're just forced to go into some of these quick growth situations.

There's been a big shift to native species as opposed to all the fancy cultivars that are abounding. Things like native purple coneflower, butterfly weed, false indigo, Joe Pye weed, blue flag irises, cardinal

flower, lobelia, native Rudbeckia, liatris and a few grasses, like prairie dropseed and little bluestem.

The thing with custom growing is you know that that product is sold. You're not producing for a spec market. We sell to landscapers and to garden centers. The only way to get garden centers to preorder is to heavily discount the stuff. With custom growing, you know when that plant goes into the pot, it's sold.



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COVER STORY

liness that we need it, that's built on relationships. Timing, payment – it's a total package."

B&L's 2010 strategy is to increase sales from referrals and find niche businesses where it can stand out. To that end, the company has built a strong business in rain gardens, wetlands remediation and other sustainable services for large commercial clients. Yaffa says the specialized skills required in that niche mean the competition there isn't as fierce as, say, commercial maintenance, and more business comes from referrals.

"We're trying to find any avenues that we can get an insight into and not battle against 20 other 30 (other companies)," Angell says. "We know that price is important. We are really trying to sell value. After last year, a lot of clients are starting to see that. They went with low price, and they got what they paid for."

CUSTOM OPERATIONS. One of the main reasons B&L has been able to focus on sustainable services is Jim Ashley, who owns Reed Perennial Farms with his wife, Cheryl Reed. The two companies have worked together for more than a decade, but the Fowlerville, Mich.-based grower has been producing custom-ordered wetland plants for B&L rain garden installations for four years.

B&L just finished building eight such gardens for the city of Auburn Hills, and all the plant material was custom grown. Reed also supplied the materials for four boulevard islands in Pleasant Ridge – projects the company might not have undertaken if it didn't have a reliable material source.

"It's just a phone call and he gets things going," Angell says of working with Ashley. "He'll set stuff aside. That's just the relationship we've got. He's right on time planting. The stuff he's growing he knows he can sell. I knew I had somebody backing me up who could do it."

And, Angell says, all he had to do was ask. "I asked if he'd be willing to do it. He said, 'You bet.' If you don't ask the question, you'll never get an answer," he says. **L**

The author is managing editor of *Lawn & Landscape*. He can be reached at cbowen@gie.net.

Distributor's perspective: HOLDING YARDS

Eric Joy, sales manager at Christensen's Plant Center, Plymouth, Mich., has worked with B&L Landscaping for six years. The re-wholesaler and distributor has 26 employees and sources plant material from 30 states and two provinces – from British Columbia and California to its own growing operation down the road. Christensen's now holds plants for B&L longer, which lets the landscaping company be more aggressive with pricing. Joy described how the arrangement works. – as told to Chuck Bowen

We do it several different ways. We'll bring in job-specific materials and hold them for B&L. We have 37 acres, and a 16 acre field where we'll hold materials. We can hold them for months. They're balled-and-burlapped trees we'll auger into the field and re-ball them if we need to.

We've always done it in one way or the other. It was, in the past, inadvertent. As the jobs became larger and larger, contractors couldn't hold enough material in their own yards, so it was difficult to hold material on projects.

We developed a system. It's pretty simple. We write up material on a sales order, which commits it in our inventory. We tag all the trees with labels that have the customer's name, order number and ship date. That makes them easy to find; customers know exactly what trees they're getting. An architect can look at the exact group of trees for his project.

Obviously, knowing what we're going to sell in advance helps any business. If I could get every customer to do this ... what business wouldn't like that? It also helps us with inventory.

If someone calls up and says, 'In two weeks, I need 100 whatever,' I can then plan to bring in that material two days before they need it. The time I have to hold it and care for it and pay for it is reduced. It just lets me plan.

B&L Landscaping found success in niche markets like rain gardens when its landscape installation business took a hit.



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Marketing matters

Smart spending and creative strategies for reaching customers will stretch a marketing budget.

When the budget is tight, marketing is often the first line item slashed to save money. But without a smart strategy for promoting your business to potential customers, how will you revive revenue or grow the company?

You don't have to spend a fortune for effective marketing. "If you create opportunities for people to learn about what you do, that doesn't cost a lot," says David Moss, founder and creative director, MossMedia, based in Cleveland. "Look for ways to position yourself as a thought leader in a casual, unpredictable setting."

Grassroots efforts go a long way toward winning referrals, which is how most landscape firms gain new business, according to a *Lawn & Landscape* 2009 State of the Industry Survey. Ninety-five percent of respondents said customer referrals are their No. 1 marketing tool. But Moss suggests that this word of mouth can be taken one step further. "Landscapers have a lot to share – tips, tricks," he says. "Those things are viral."

When people find interesting information, they pass it on. If your company supplied that entertaining info-byte, then you've just marketed your business to a new audience, Moss points out.

"Every landscaper who is an owner, a foreman or a team lead is a teacher, and they're learning stuff every day and have a lot of information to offer the public," he says. Why not partner with a community center to present landscaping seminars? "You get 20 people in a room and talk about the value of landscaping. Maybe offer them a free assessment if they attend the presentation."

Moss points out that educational forums are also great opportunities for a company to position itself as "green" and discuss how cultural practices are inherently eco-friendly.

Even better, you don't need a venue or live audience to teach others. Webinars are a grassroots way to hold "class" online, exploit yourself as an expert and give people the power to pass your message on – for free.

"Get someone to videotape you – ask a student to edit it," Moss suggests. "Post the webinar on YouTube and link it to your Web site to create more awareness and visibility."

Today, many people search online for service providers, and the green industry is working hard to get its message out on the Web. More companies will depend on their Web sites for marketing in 2010 (46 percent) compared to 2009 (39 percent). And businesses will focus more on their searchability on the Internet in 2010 (21 percent) compared to 2009 (15 percent).

Moss points to pay-per-click online advertising as an inexpensive way to test online marketing. "Guerrilla marketing is about creativity, the unexpected, doing more with less, maximizing your surroundings," he says.

This month, *Lawn & Landscape* spoke to three firms to learn about the marketing strategies they implement to stand out from the crowd, make new contacts and keep the old. **L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Bay Village, Ohio.





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SMALL

BY KRISTEN HAMPSHIRE

Stick to your guns

Education and reliable, constant communication pay off with customer retention and referrals.

Albert Godec calls his marketing strategy "laid back," and the way Rundo Tree Surgeon reaches out to customers hasn't changed all that much in the last 20 years.

With a solid customer base of about 3,000 people who would prefer to read a snail-mail newsletter than figure out

how to view bills or communications online, the old-fashioned way, has worked just fine for Rundo Tree.

"We make sure to stay in touch and build relationships with our existing customers, and we work with local nurseries and other experts, maintaining good relationships with them," Godec says, noting that referrals from industry peers is a source of new business.

Godec doesn't make cold calls. The company doesn't plaster fliers around neighborhoods. "We use a lot of snail mail," he says, adding that the marketing program is focused on making renewal easy. "People want to know their problems are going to be handled."

To reassure customers that Rundo Tree Surgeon is the best company to

rescue trees, Godec creates a newsletter one to three times a season – the frequency depends on how busy he is. Content educates clients about tree pests and keeps them up to date on bark beetles, which are a concern in the surrounding mountain communities and ski areas near Colorado Springs. These newsletters serve as a sort of Farmer's Almanac, informing people about what tree conditions to expect because of weather or other variables.

Godec isn't ready to shift this paper communication to e-mail just yet. "Just last year we finally started getting requests to get information electronically," he says, noting his older customer base is more comfortable with the phone and personal contact.

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That's why he maintains his costly advertisement in the Yellow Pages – his No. 1 annual marketing expense at \$12,000. "It's huge," Godec says. "It seems to get more and more expensive, and I think the results we get from it have been reduced. That's where we need to make the biggest change in the next few years."

Godec has maintained the price of his ad for the last two years, but he isn't sure if the cost-per-customer-acquired is worth the investment. Advertising this way seems more an obligation than a strategy. "But there is still not a better, more clear-cut alternative," he says.

"I could spend \$5,000 here and \$4,000 there and easily spend more than \$12,000 and still hit the same number of people," he adds.


In general, Godec doesn't hear a lot of noise from competitors, and he doesn't compete with large, national firms. "We're all fairly local and we have our own local networks and so forth," he describes.

Still, moving into the online era, Godec is working on getting the company Web site up and running before the season breaks this spring. He's hoping

this will be one more way for customers to converse with the company. Maintaining a relationship-based focus is important, he says.

That's why Godec will continue reaching out in small ways that go over big with customers, such as involvement in civic groups and maintaining a good rapport with the city forester's office.

"They are not out there giving referrals to people, but they certainly aren't steering people away from us either," he says.

Ultimately, Godec's marketing focuses on a more universal mission. "We work to be good community stewards," he says. 

The author is a freelance writer based in Bay Village, Ohio.

Rundo Tree Surgeon

Principal: Albert Godec, president

Location: Colorado Springs, Colo.

Established: 1976 **2009 Revenue:** about \$750,000 **Customers:** 90 percent residential; 10 percent commercial

Services: comprehensive tree services

Employees: 9, on average

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MEDIUM

BY KRISTEN HAMPSHIRE

A non-traditional approach

Marketing with 'wow' factor and careful timing of traditional advertising keeps customers calling.

Timing is everything, and the same is true in marketing. So Jack Robertson Lawn Care touches customers just when they're thinking about the outdoors, and reminds prospects to call for service when they're most likely to be tuned in to lawn care.

March means bus-bench advertising, which Robertson has done since 1988. "When people see those benches go up, they know spring is around the corner – they're an icon in town," says the Springfield, Ill.-based firm's president. In his 34 years in business, Robertson has learned nontraditional approaches yield the most response.

"We have spent and wasted a lot of money in a lot of different ways to market," Robertson says. "I would suggest that we pretty well tried most everything that would be normal and feasible in the lawn care industry, other than telemarketing."

The bus-bench ads are simple – logo, "call for estimate" and phone number. And they're strategically placed in areas where Robertson wants to pick up business. He only advertises this way for a short time in late February and March when residents are beginning to think spring, or at least long for it.

Jack Robertson Lawn Care

Principal: Jack Robertson, president
Location: Springfield, Ill. **Established:** 1977 **2009 Revenue:** more than \$1 million **Customers:** 95 percent residential; 5 percent commercial
Services: full service lawn care
Employees: 12 in season; 6 full-time



Jack Robertson swears by nontraditional marketing methods.

Robertson does use traditional forms of advertising, but he is selective and strategic. Take newspaper advertising. "You have to do enough newspaper advertising to make an impact," he says. "If it's little and cheap, it won't work."

He applies the same attitude to radio marketing. Drive-time is the ideal window for people to listen, but that's also the most expensive ad slot. Robertson has learned that Sunday afternoons elicit Monday calls for service, and the time slot is a lot less expensive. "If you get a nice Sunday in March and it's 50 degrees outside, you are not staying at home," he remarks. "You are in the car. And you're listening to the radio."

Meanwhile, the company's primary marketing focus is on retaining existing customers, and this is accomplished through the Turf Times, a fact sheet containing trends and information for

customers that is distributed at the time of application. These informative leave-behinds are updated weekly throughout the growing season so lawn care customers never get the same message twice.

"The best thing you can do in a business of any size is retain your customers," Robertson says. "We communicate with our customers more than the average company, and that is one way we hope to retain them as best we can."

Give-aways keep these touch-points fun for Robertson. Several years ago, the company distributed plastic logo cups to customers who received estimates. This was before those plastic cups cropped up everywhere, he adds. "We would see those cups three, four, five years down the road in people's houses," he says. Now, customers get a reusable shopping bag with the Robertson Lawn Care logo at the time of estimate.

Come renewal time in February/March, customers receive a packet full of information and an invitation to the Robertson Lawn Care office to pick up a free rain gauge. It's a simple gesture, and inexpensive. But it lures people to visit the company's headquarters, which Robertson is quite proud of. "We want them to know where we are," he says.

Every year, 200 long-standing customers get a special treat. In 2009, Robertson sent these loyal clients a thank-you card at Thanksgiving time with a coupon to pick up a free pumpkin pie at the office. He was overjoyed with the response. Most people guess that about 30 people picked up pies, he says. Not even close. "One hundred and eight pies got picked up - that is a lot," he says.

In fact, that's more than a 50 percent return rate if you translate that thank-you marketing tactic to direct mail stats, which are generally 1 percent. And Robertson has launched traditional direct mail campaigns in the past. "It can be efficient, but for us it hasn't been nearly as efficient as it used to be in the old days," he says.

The "wow factor" is effective. After all, how many companies in town have a truck with a huge grub on the hood and detailing that's "NASCAR-ed up," Robertson points out. Just one truck is decked out, and every year that vehicle is placed on a different route to mix up the exposure.

"The key is to spend marketing dollars as wisely as you can," Robertson



March means bus-bench advertising for Robertson Lawn Care.

says, noting these fearless advertising strategies work best for his company. He won't cut his 4 percent marketing budget this year.

"It's the most interesting part of the business," he says. **L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Bay Village, Ohio.

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Wed							8 1/2
Thurs							8 1/2
Fri							8 1/2

EMPLOYEE: *Bill Kemp* TOTAL HOURS: *41 1/2*

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Orchard Job	Planting	-	-	-	7:58	7:48	15:47
		7:38	7:35	7:53	7:58	7:48	38:53

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LARGE

BY KRISTEN HAMPSHIRE

People FIRST

A focus on employee engagement makes marketing stronger.

The marketing strategy at Ryan Lawn & Tree is all about the people. President Larry Ryan focuses on recruiting motivated workers – the company is 70-percent employee owned, so for the right people, there's opportunity to grow and prosper. He commits to employees' success and encourages them to grow their own routes. Each employee sets a goal at the beginning of the season and bonuses are awarded to those who meet their growth targets.

This is marketing. And though it's warmer and fuzzier than a splashy billboard ad or catchy radio spot, Ryan says a focus on people is how business expands – the ultimate goal of any marketing campaign.

Ryan, a forester by trade, recalls 10 years he spent in the restaurant business before launching his company in 1987. "We spent 5 percent of our total gross dollar volume on marketing," he relates. "I thought, you spend this much money on TV and coupons to get people to come into your restaurant to try you out. But you don't spend anything on your people, so when customers do come into your store, your people disappoint them with the experience. It seemed backwards."

That's why Ryan focuses on giving customers strong, personal experiences, and he does this by encouraging employees to engage with clients – smile and say "hi" to the neighbors (a sales lead), make suggestions to improve a property's appearance, simply show up on time in a clean truck with a positive attitude.

Charged to grow their routes, Ryan's employees go out of their way to mar-

ket the business in a grassroots way. They are prepared with yard signs to let neighbors know who performed the work. But aside from the trucks and signs, they let the work they do speak for the company.

Meanwhile, Ryan says community involvement positions Ryan Lawn & Tree as a trusted organization. For 20 years, the company has donated a weed-and-feed service to a school auction. "Years of doing that has cemented our reputation as a company that is committed to the community," he says.

That worked more effectively than the \$20,000 Ryan spent on a radio advertising some years ago when he was breaking into a new market. "We got almost no phone calls," he says, quickly adding that he knows radio works. "But it sure didn't work in a new market for us. I thought we've got to try it – maybe we can blow the doors off. Radio seems to work better when people already sort of know about you."

Another popular method larger firms use to market to new customers is to pay customers for referrals. Ryan Lawn & Tree began doing this, figuring they'd bring in even more referrals than they already did. They dole out \$25 for each referral, but Ryan says fewer people pass referrals to the company now.

"You almost create a mind-set where a person thinks the only reason a friend referred them is for the bonus money," he says, relating to Time Warner's customer referral deal and an office manager that wanted everyone to sign up with the cable provider. "Once we figured out there was a bonus, then the service wasn't attractive to us."



Ryan Lawn & Tree

Principal: Larry Ryan, president

Location: Kansas City, Mo.

Established: 1987 **2009 Revenue:** \$14.5 million **Customers:** 80 percent residential 20 percent commercial

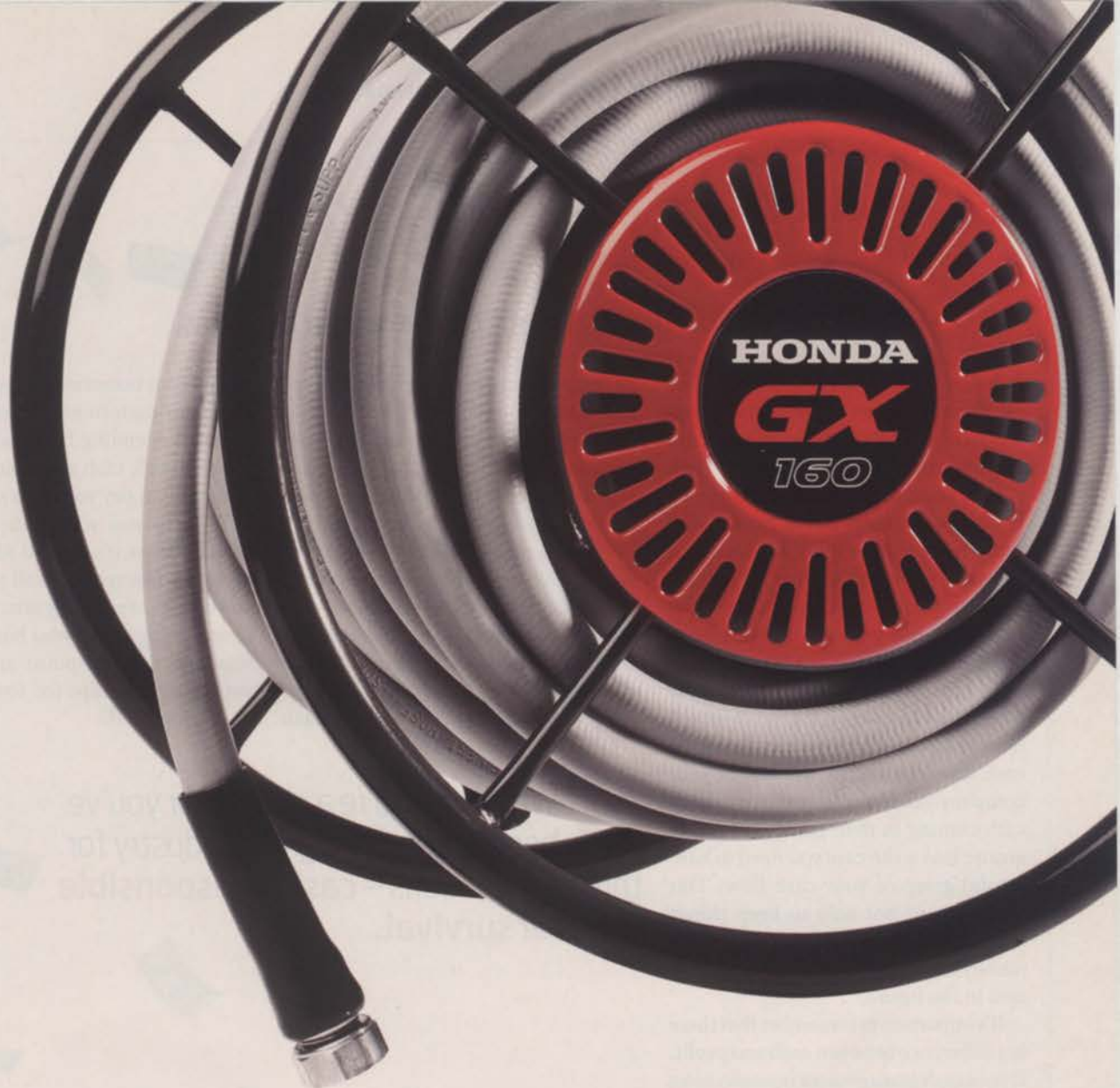
Services: full-service lawn care, tree, irrigation **Employees:** 135

Direct mail has also not been nearly as effective for Ryan Lawn & Tree as sticking to the basics of people and giving back. However, one campaign that did work was last year, when the company sent out an evaluation with a \$10 gas card incentive. Ryan estimates 30,000 to 40,000 people responded to that survey, costing the business upward of \$400,000. Because the company isn't running this campaign in 2010, the marketing budget will decrease about 20 percent. Currently, the company dedicates about 1 percent of the budget toward marketing efforts.

In the end, Ryan prefers to go back to the basics, and this method has proved itself through the company's aggressive growth.

"We try to be visible, proactive and help people out," Ryan says, noting employees speak at garden club meetings, they are involved with their churches and other civic groups. "You can't help enough. If you give without the attitude, you'll get something back." **L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Bay Village, Ohio.



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Hustle and flow

How solid cash flow management can save your business.

Whether you're a startup or you've been around the green industry for three generations, cash is responsible for your survival.

The amount of cash the owner of a landscape business has at his disposal often reflects the overall health of the company. You can survive for a while without profits, but if you don't have money coming in the door, you're doomed to fail.

To give your landscape business the best possible chance for survival you need to have sufficient control over the cash flow coming in and out of your company. Obviously, you want more cash coming in than going out, but to ensure this is the case you need to have a solid grasp of your cash flow. This is important not only to keep things running, but also if you plan to borrow money or expand your landscape operation in the future.

It's important to remember that there is a difference between cash and profit. If poor cash management is reason most businesses ultimately fail, then poor cash flow is why the majority of start-up businesses don't make it to their first anniversary.

Some examples of the cash flow that will be coming into your landscape business include:

- The payment for maintenance, design/build and other landscape services from your customers;
- Any bank loans that you may have taken out;
- Interest that you collect on savings and investments; and
- An increased bank overdraft or loan.

Some examples of the cash that will be going out of your landscape business include:

- The purchase of any plant materi-

als, equipment or chemicals your business needs;

- Any repayments of loans that your business may have;
- Taxes – income, worker's compensation and property;
- Your payroll, property rent and all of your daily operating expenses; and
- Reduced overdraft facilities.

Cash flow depends on the timing and amounts of money flowing into and out of the business each week and month.

To establish a solid flow of cash

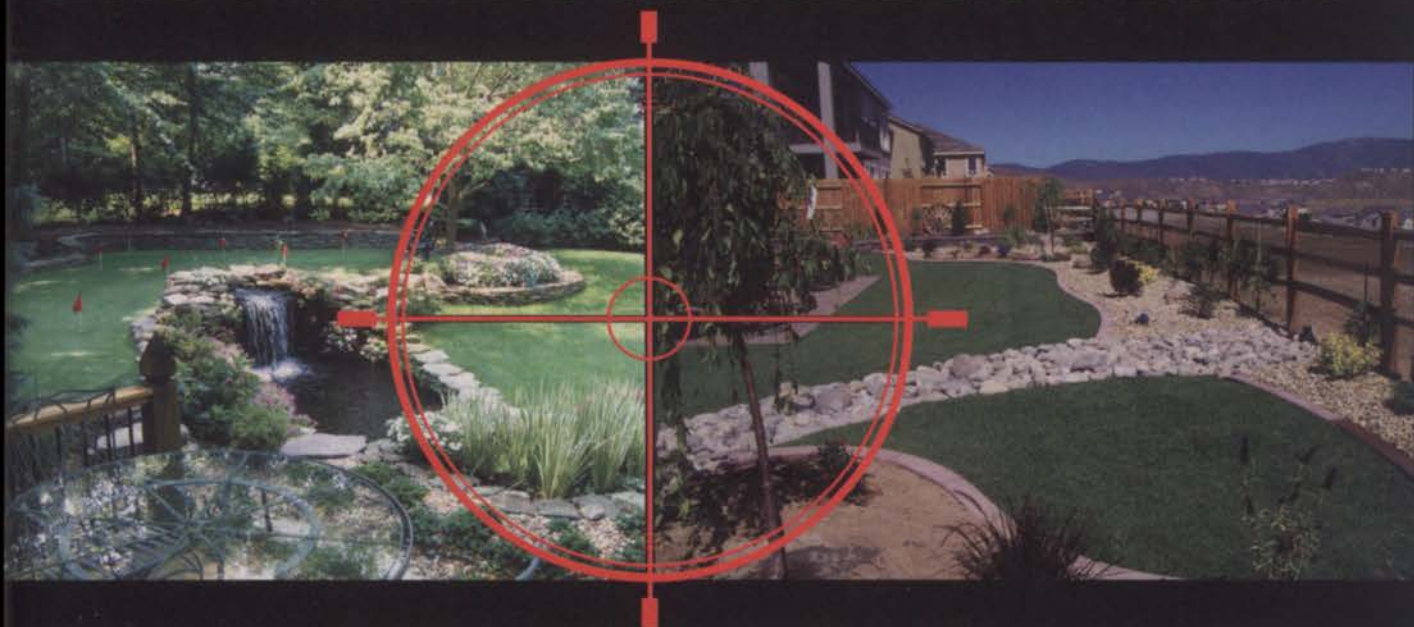
within your business you need to ensure that your pattern of income and your business spending habits allow you to have enough cash available as well as allow you to pay your bills on time.

To help you with your cash flow management it's a good idea to keep an up-to-date record of all of your cash so you can see exactly what is coming in and going out of your business. This way, you can pinpoint areas where your cash flow dips too low and work to improve it. **L**

“ Whether you're a startup or you've been around the green industry for three generations – **cash is responsible for your survival.** ”



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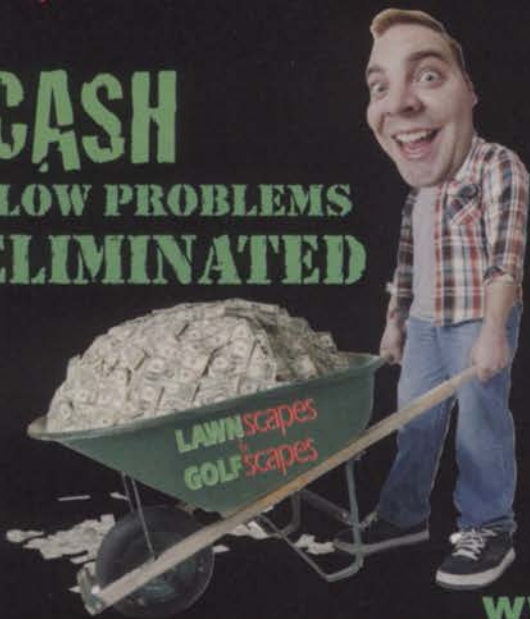
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Successful selling

Mining your best customers through integrated services By Tom Crain

Google “integrated landscape management” and you’ll find LawnTailors consistently landing near the top of the page. Look for any advertisement or printed piece pushed out by LawnTailors and you’ll find “integrated landscape management” branded alongside its name.

Jarlath Connolly brought this carefully-orchestrated marketing strategy to LawnTailors when he rejoined his father’s landscape company seven years ago as president. He continues to focus sales efforts on upselling these services to the company’s loyal customer base.

“After spending a dozen years as vice president of sales and marketing for a start-up software company, and growing my horticultural chops at UMass’ Green School for Horticulture where all I heard was integrated solutions and IPM, it was a natural philosophy to bring this new branding strategy to my dad’s landscaping business,” he says.

Over the years, Connolly finds it holds up well. “It’s the right approach in terms of what’s right for the landscape,” he says. “Simple example: the appropriate timing of fertilization applications with mowing and irrigation. It’s right for the client. They want the one-stop-shop convenience and the reduced budget that results from having one vendor.”

THE 80/20 RULE GETS MIXED REVIEWS.

This business strategy is nothing new. In fact, it goes back more than 100 years when Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto created a mathematical formula to describe the unequal distribution of wealth in his country, observing that 20 percent of the people owned 80 percent of the overall wealth.

Over the years, this viewpoint has been refined by economists and business strategists to become what is popularly known as The 80/20 Rule.

This states that 80 percent of your revenue will come from the top 20 percent of your customers. But not all experts agree that this strategy is prudent.

“I don’t like 80/20,” says Judy Guido, president of Guido & Associates, a Moorpark, Calif.-based business consulting firm for the green industry. “It can be a very dangerous principle.”

Guido, who works with clients on mergers and acquisitions, would rather see them with a more balanced portfolio, which demonstrates stability.

For example, if a company has four different markets, Guido would like to see 25 percent of the revenue coming from each market and spread over several good customers in each market. When Guido examines an acquisition, she doesn’t want to see one client, or a small concentrated group of customers, generating most of a contractor’s revenue. That is too much of a business risk, she says.

“Diversification in customer base, along with a variety of good customers, makes for a healthy business,” Guido says of a solid client portfolio.

“Anyone can cut grass, but the profitability comes in when landscapers devise the right packaging systems with

A balanced and diversified client portfolio is a key element to every successful company. Landscape contractors should consider a mix of commercial and residential clients.





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the right message to upsell their customers," says Alan Rigg, president of 80/20 Sales Performance, a Scottsdale-based sales management company.

Kim Demott, president of The Power of No, a St. Louis-based sales management company, believes there are only two ways to improve your topline: Sell more to your existing customer base and/or steal your competitors' customers. Cementing your relationship with existing clients is easier than stealing, Demott says.

EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY. Get in front of your existing customers whenever you can, Demott says. "Make telephone calls to them," he adds. "Knock on their doors. Ask them if they are satisfied. Provide windows of opportunity by listening to them. If they tell you something like, 'Our current landscaper can't get to us for three weeks,' then there's your window of opportunity."

Being proficient at property analysis and identifying problems increases your reputation and credibility in the eyes of your customers, Demott says. "When this is securely in place, your competitors can't dislodge you," he says.

Most experts agree on the old adage that acquiring new clients costs far more than keeping an existing one and selling additional services to them.

Here's how LawnTailors upsells its clients on additional services. First, dedicated account managers conduct in-person visits, horticultural monitoring and quality control surveys.

Then, as part of their duties, they respond to additional requests from clients. By noticing potential problems in the landscape, they share their ideas on what additional services may be required. Field specialists also suggest opportunities to the account managers based on their involvement in the accounts, as do crew leaders who make

recommendations from their weekly or daily service visits.

MANY WAYS TO DO IT. Pudenz Irrigation, Eau Claire, Wis., went one step further in pushing integrated services to their current customers. "When we started our company, we were strictly lawn irrigation contractors," explains Hanna Pudenz, who co-owns the company with her husband, Ross. "We designed, installed and serviced lawn irrigation systems for years, unable to take advantage of additional service requests."

Two years ago, they purchased a lawn care company in their area, GrasScapes Lawn Services, to add eight additional services, including mowing, snow removal and weed control, for their existing irrigation customers. Likewise, they added irrigation services to GrasScapes' existing lawn care customers.

"Selling the lawn care services to our existing customers was much easier and

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more cost effective than getting new customers in irrigation," Pudenz says.

After completing one season servicing GrasScapes clients and gaining their trust, Pudenz sent its first direct mail piece to both its irrigation customers and lawn maintenance customers explaining its expansion and bundling of services. Within a few months, Pudenz had a 30

percent return on clients who wished to upgrade their services even without price reductions for bundling services.

"When clients get more value at less cost than they can get elsewhere, they are going to keep coming back," Connolly says. "We chose to invest heavily in this model years ago and it is paying significant dividends. Clients win when

they consolidate services like this because they get more value at less cost."

Minneapolis-based EnergyScapes made a bold toward integrated services. For years, it had been one of the pioneering landscaping companies bringing sustainable landscapes to upscale suburbanites and inner-city homeowners with a "going green" consciousness.

Douglas Owens Pike, CEO – in this case, the chief ecological officer – is banking on the fact that the years of quality service and personal client interaction will give his company an opportunity to extend to all of his customers other maintenance needs, including home exteriors and hardscapes.

"It's still too early to tell if this strategy is working, but based on the inquiries and customer requests over the years, it makes sense to pursue this," Owens Pike says.


He will provide these integrated services through qualified subcontractors with whom he has established working relationships.

LOYAL CUSTOMERS AREN'T ALWAYS GOLD. Business strategists caution that every customer, long-term or new, still need to be evaluated regularly.

"You should always be looking at your portfolio of customers, and evaluating their value to your organization," Guido says. "You need to prune your high-maintenance clients who tend to drag you and your profits down."

Today's economy has forced many to step down a few rungs on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Demott says. "When you are starving, you can't say no to any business," he says. "Until you are reaching capacity or fulfillment of obligations, you shouldn't say no to any business."

Demott admits that he can't put out the same just-say-no message in 2010 as he did a few years back.

"The message is the same," he says. "It's now just a matter of loosening up the adjustment on the filter." 



Pudenz



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Real World Leadership

It has never been more critical to have real leaders to help your company navigate today's economic reality.

BY BILL ARMAN



It has never been more critical to have real leaders to help navigate businesses through the many obstacles that we are facing with today's economic reality.

Businesses scrambling to adjust, there is pressure to perform at new levels and we are being pulled in several directions. So why do some companies falter in times like these and why do some companies flourish? The answer often rests at the feet of the leader.

The root cause for success or failure is a result of the leadership of the organization. So let's look at what real leaders need to do to best position their organizations for success in today's reality.

MANAGERS VS. LEADERS. Are you leading your organization or are you just managing the day-to-day tasks as they arrive at your door? The first step to become a real leader is to get real with yourself. Take an honest look at yourself and see if you spend more of your time leading or managing.

Read the following list of traits for managers and leaders. Choose which sentences best describe you.

- Managers get tied up with administering; leaders innovate.

- Managers spend more time maintaining the business; leaders develop it.
- Managers focus on systems; leaders focus on people.
- Managers rely on control; leaders inspire trust.
- Managers look at behavioral action; leaders engage in emotional connection.
- Managers have a short-range view; leaders have a long-range perspective.
- Managers ask how and when; leaders ask what and why.
- Managers use authority; leaders use influence.
- Managers delegate to people; leaders motivate employees.

So where do you stand right now? Do you spend more time and energy managing or are you rising above the day-to-day encounters and leading your organization?

GET A REAL PERSPECTIVE. Once you have an idea of your leadership strengths and weaknesses, try having some of your people rate you in these same areas. Compare them with how you perceive yourself as a leader. Try to get some

input from different levels of your organization: your leadership team, your administrative/sales team, your foremen/supervisors, and from your coach or advisory board.

RATE YOUR COMPANY, TOO. After you have clearly identified your strengths and areas for development, see how they match up with your organization's key measurable performance areas. These are how you define your company's success, and can include:

- revenue growth;
- gross margin;
- client satisfaction/retention;
- safety;
- quality of work; and
- key employee retention.

LINK YOUR SKILLS. Now look at how well your organization is performing in these areas and where your skills or areas of development are helping – or hindering – in achieving your organization's success.

Are you encouraging innovation? Or are you stuck doing things the way you have always done them? Are you trying to do all of the sales efforts yourself, but, in reality, you lack solid sales skills? Is your gross margin slipping, or have you implemented great ideas to increase them? Are your people empowered and coming up with excellent solutions or are they waiting for your orders before making any moves?

CONCLUSION. Understanding what skills and behaviors you as the leader currently have and which ones need to be changed or development can help your organization thrive in today's challenging reality. And you'll be there leading the charge. **L**

The author is the head harvester at The Harvest Group. Send him an e-mail at barman@gie.net.

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Meetings can actually become time well-spent – time that increases employee productivity, participation and innovation.

A new way to meet

How to fix common meeting pitfalls to make your team more productive.

BY KIMBERLY DOUGLAS

It's Friday afternoon, and your team is filing into the conference room, mumbling and grumbling as they take their seats for yet another meeting. An hour passes and the meeting comes to a much-anticipated end, leaving everyone involved wondering why the meeting was held in the first place. After all, the usual suspects dominated the discussion, and the same ideas that came up

in last week's meeting were once again batted around. No one seemed to write anything down, and no one agreed to put anything discussed into action. If this kind of ineffective meeting sounds familiar, you're not alone. It's a problem that plagues many organizations – but it's also one that can be remedied.

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STRATEGIES

of it should be wasted in meetings that seem to go nowhere or that are plagued by conflict or lack of participation. If leaders know how to conduct better meetings, those meetings can actually become time well-spent – time that increases employee productivity, participation and innovation.

In too many companies, meetings have become a way for leaders and their employees to simply go through the motions. Having a meeting, in and of itself, is not a bad idea. In fact, meetings can be the most engaging and thought-provoking times of the day for leaders and team members alike. The key is avoiding those pitfalls that sink a meeting's productivity. If all this sounds too familiar, check out these common meeting pitfalls and how you can fix them.


➤➤ **WHAT'S THE POINT?** A common problem with many meetings is that they're scheduled with seemingly no clear objective in mind. Run through a pre-meeting checklist before putting it on everyone's schedule. First, ask yourself whether the meeting is even necessary. Could the information you want to provide be just as easily presented in an e-mail? What do you want to accomplish with the meeting? Will reaching that accomplishment really require a group decision? If you ask yourself these questions and decide that you do need to have the meeting, next consider who should attend. Design an agenda for the meeting, and clearly communicate any prep work that needs to be done by the participants beforehand.

➤➤ **WHERE'S THE AGENDA?** Remember the last time you actually received an agenda in advance of a meeting? Likely, you immediately had a higher perception of whether that meeting was going to be a waste of time or not. Once you know who will be attending the meeting, you need to finalize the agenda. A quality meeting agenda includes:

- The date, time and location of the meeting;
- The meeting's objectives;
- Three to six agenda items, accompanied by how long they'll take to discuss and who the discussion leaders will be; and
- A clear explanation of the prep work that should be completed before the meeting.

Note that it is OK to use standing agenda items from meeting to meeting – such as company overview, industry trends, strategy discussion, review of metrics, results and problem solving – as long as you also include the length of time allotted for each item and who will be leading the discussion. Send the agenda out as far in advance of the meeting as possible, and then re-distribute an agenda/meeting reminder 48 hours prior to the meeting.

➤➤ **CONFERENCE ROOM OVERCROWDING.** Would you attend a meeting if you didn't know why the meeting was being held and why you, in particular, were invited? Often, too many people who don't have a clear understanding of what role they are supposed to play are invited to meetings. Those in attendance need to know if you want them to be an expert, an influencer or a decider.



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STRATEGIES /// Tactics for managing day-to-day operations

Keep the number of "required" attendees as small as possible. And if critical members can't attend, consider postponing the meeting until they can. Having a meeting without all of the right brains present can cause just as many delays and productivity problems as postponing the meeting a couple of days. Finally, use the following litmus test. Ask yourself: Will this meeting be the best use of this person's time, given our objectives? If you answer yes, then it's highly likely that person should be there.

Or, use a meeting cost calculator, which allows employees to privately enter in their salaries and the meeting length to calculate how much it is costing the company for them to be in a given meeting. It is a powerful tool that can promote individual productivity because it reminds everyone involved of the financial significance of the time spent in the meeting.

>> THE MEETING LASTS FOREVER.
Now, that might be an exaggeration, but that exact thought will be crossing the minds of those attending a meeting that seems to be going nowhere. When the eyes of attendees start wandering to watches in an attempt to see exactly how much time they've spent in the meeting and to estimate how much more time will elapse before they can get back to their long to-do lists, you're in trouble.

Providing a meeting agenda will go a long way toward solving this problem. When attendees know exactly when a meeting will be over, they won't spend their time internally speculating about when they can leave. Create a reputation for yourself as being a meeting leader who starts and ends on time, every time. And if you do need to extend the meeting's length, ask the group's permission before doing so. The ideal maximum

meeting length is 60 minutes.

Use time boxes for each agenda item. That means a certain amount of time is allotted for each agenda item. Bring a kitchen timer that you can use to enforce the time limits.

>> THE MEETING IS A FREE-FOR-ALL.
Anyone who's ever attended a meeting or led a meeting knows that it doesn't take long for things to get off track. The best way to avoid losing control of the conversation and the meeting as a whole is to set some conversational ground rules – everyone participates, or don't ramble – right away. Make it clear to those in attendance that the ground rules will be used to ensure that everyone's time is well-spent.

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they are the most important people in the room, have the best ideas and have a comment to make on every subject. Your conversational ground rules should help keep your big talkers in line, but there are other ways to ensure that one person doesn't dominate.

First, don't let big talkers sit at the front of the room or the back center of a U-shape. This definitely gives them a feeling of being on stage. In fact, you may even want to use assigned seating for the meeting.

>>> CONFLICT KILLS PRODUCTIVITY.

Keep in mind is that effective meetings aren't necessarily free of conflict. In fact, conflict can be a good thing, and it should be valued by those attending any given meeting. The key is not letting it get out of hand.

Try viewing conflict as "creative abrasion," a phrase coined by the president

of Nissan Design International, Jerry Hirshberg. Here's a metaphorical explanation of how it works: Picture two tectonic plates on the Earth's surface – your way and my way, perhaps – grating against each other. Many people know that when this kind of friction occurs between plates, earthquakes often ensue. But what happens when these two plates – or viewpoints – come together? If the environment is right, they create a mountain – a third viewpoint that is a product of the first two approaches and that is grander, loftier, and more powerful than either one was on its own. In other words, conflict is turned into synergy.

If – or when – things do get heated, ask everyone to take a break for a couple of minutes to think things over. Reinforce the ground rules and ask team members to listen to each other and consider what a possible compromise

might be. Remind everyone of the meeting's ultimate goal and ask, given that goal, how you all can move forward to achieve it. You might hear from your team that more information needs to be gathered. That would make for a good reason to stop the meeting right then and set a date for a future meeting.

If the knowledge is in the room, it's likely people just aren't listening to each other.

>>> WHO'S MAKING THE DECISIONS?

So your meeting is nearly over, you've discussed everything on the agenda, and you're ready to send everyone on their ways. Unfortunately, no one is quite clear about what they're supposed to be doing or who is going to make that decision. As the leader, you don't have to be the one making all of the decisions, but you do have to make sure the decision-making process is

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STRATEGIES /// Tactics for managing day-to-day operations

clear to everyone.

Make sure everyone understands who will be making the final decision from the get-go. The quickest way for a leader to lose his team's respect is for him to make a decision that his team thought they would be making. If you just want your team's input and will be making the final decision on your own, let them know that ahead of time. They will be happy to weigh in and will feel good that you respect and want their opinions.

>>> NO DECISIONS ARE CAPTURED. Too often, meetings end and everyone simply goes back to business as usual without putting anything that was discussed in the meeting into action, or without even knowing what they personally should do.

If you keep the format for capturing what went on in the meeting simple, you have a much greater likelihood of

getting it done and getting it distributed quickly. There is no simpler way to record what went on than by writing on a flip chart the who, what and by when outcomes of the directives discussed in the meeting.

>>> EVALUATIONS ARE NOT DONE. For many organizations, meetings have simply become something that employees feel like they have to get through.

They think that all they need to do is sit through the meeting, and then they can get back to the task at hand. A great way to ensure that this isn't the mindset of those in your organization's meetings is to do proper meeting evaluations.


Have everyone assess the four Ps:

- Progress. Are we achieving the goals we set out?
- Pace. Are we moving too fast or too slowly to achieve those goals?


• Process. Are we using the right tools/methods?

• Pulse. How is everyone feeling – frustrated, satisfied, energized?

>>> CONCLUSION. A team meeting can be very productive. Unfortunately, too many organizations meet for the wrong reasons or have simply fallen into a going-through-the-motions meeting style.

By implementing a few simple tools, you can breathe life back into your meetings. Give these strategies time to take hold, and you'll find that your meetings can become times of trust building, problem solving and collaboration that will energize your employees and give way to innovation that will greatly benefit your company as a whole. 

The author is president of FireFly Facilitation and author of "The Firefly Effect."



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Behaving better

How to create standards of behavior that boost customer satisfaction and profitability. By Quint Studer

Consider the things your employees do that you wish they wouldn't – forgetting to turn off cell phones during design meetings, aggressively sharing political or religious views with employees and customers or being terse with potential customers on the phone. None of these behaviors come from bad people, but they *are* bad habits that irritate customers and coworkers alike.



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If you assume there's nothing you can do about such all-too-human flaws and foibles, think again. You can legislate good behavior – and what's more, the vast majority of employees will be glad you did.

Don't assume people will feel you're infringing on their rights when you create a set of behavioral rules. Most

of them are as irritated by the offenders as you and your customers are. Besides, most people appreciate having official guidelines – it eliminates their own confusion as well as that of their coworkers.

You might assume that, say, knocking before entering someone's office is a common-sense behavior. But it's not

always. For people who grew up in a family with lots of siblings, few bathrooms and even fewer boundaries, knocking on doors might feel like a needless formality. In other words, common sense is a subjective concept, depending in part on an individual's background. Still, it's very important that every employee display behavior that's consistent with company standards and aligned with desired outcomes.

Obviously, you want employees to leave a positive impression on customers. And it's also important for morale to have everyone behaving in appropriate ways. Employees who frequently behave in ways that their coworkers deem inappropriate are certainly not contributing to a happy, unified, productive team. And here's the real bottom line: If you don't spell out which behaviors are acceptable and which are not, you can't hold people accountable for them.

The best way to get a handle on people's behavior is to develop a "Standards of Behavior" contract and have everyone, from CEO to receptionist, sign it. This document can address any and all aspects of behavior at work: from interaction with clients to phone etiquette to "good manners" (knocking on doors) to "positive attitude" markers (smiling or saying thank you).

Interested in creating a Standards of Behavior contract for your company? Try the following tips:

Seek input from all employees in creating the document. Put together a Standards Team to spearhead the initiative and create the first draft. Be sure everyone has a chance to review the document and provide input before it's finalized. You want to create buy-in, and that requires companywide participation.

Align desired behaviors with corporate goals and desired outcomes. Look at your organization's long-term goals and areas that need improvement. You must be able to measure the success of your standards by seeing an impact in many of the key metrics of your operation, whether those are increased customer satisfaction, reduced rejects or other measures.



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Be crystal clear and very specific in your wording. Don't write "display a positive attitude." Do write "smile, make eye contact and greet customers by name." Don't worry about insulting people's intelligence. For instance, if you don't want common "slang" phrases used with customers, you need to identify them right up front. For example, try this phone etiquette directive: *Avoid phrases like "OK," "Yeah," "Hold on," "Honey" and "See ya."*

Hold a ceremonial Standards of Behavior roll out. Once you have finalized your Standards of Behavior document, it's time to implement it. Hold an employee forum or companywide meeting in which you introduce the standards and distribute pledges for everyone to sign. You might want to create an event around your CEO and leadership team signing the pledge. You may even hold activities designed to educate employees about some of the points. Make it fun. But *do* have everyone sign a pledge – it's amazing how much more seriously people take rules when they've signed on the dotted line.

Hold people accountable when they violate a standard. Make sure all employees know they'll be held accountable for the behaviors outlined in the Standards of Behavior document. Then, just do it. *How* you hold them accountable is up to you. Sometimes a simple meeting in which you show an employee the signed pledge and point out her error is sufficient. Other times, you might need to write her up or take more drastic disciplinary measures. But one thing is clear: The Standards of Behavior pledge gives you something to hold people accountable to. It's worth implementing for that reason alone.

Create a designated Standard of the Month. Every month, highlight a specific standard. This will boost awareness of the standards in general and will get people thinking about how that specific one applies to their daily lives. Let's say, for example, that you decide to focus on your policy for dealing with disgruntled customers. At the beginning of the month, a reminder e-mail detailing the policy is sent out. Next, you might ask

employees to write up real-life or hypothetical scenarios in which they must deal with angry or dissatisfied customers. Finally, you might hold a companywide forum in which you recruit people to act out both sides of a conflict: the disgruntled customer and the employee trying to repair the situation.

Update the Standards of Behavior.

someone, there will be no doubt in his mind what you expect of him. If he is going to have trouble meeting your standards, you will probably know during the initial probationary period.

Just knowing that a Standards of Behavior document exists – and knowing that their signature is affixed to a pledge to uphold it – is enough to keep employ-

“Common sense is a subjective concept, depending in part on an individual's background.”



The standards are dynamic and will need to be updated from time to time. One or two directives may not work as intended and may need to be changed. You may also discover new standards that need to be added as your company grows and evolves in new directions. Make changes as necessary.

Have new applicants sign it right up front. Before you even interview prospective new employees, have them read and sign your Standards of Behavior. You will be able to eliminate people from the race up front if they visibly balk at conforming to your corporate culture. But more important, when you *do* hire

ees on their toes. It creates an extra boost of awareness that affects day-to-day behavior. It creates the same behavior expectations for the entire team. Best of all, it functions as a tidal pull on problem employees, bringing them up to a higher level of performance.

Obviously, when overall performance improves, so does the quality of your company, the satisfaction level of your customers, and – last but not least – your bottom line. **L**

Studer is the author of "Results That Last: Hardwiring Behaviors That Will Take Your Company to the Top." He can be reached through his Web site, www.studergroup.com.

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Kick it into gear

Leadership strategies to beat fear, stress and the economy

By Jon Gordon

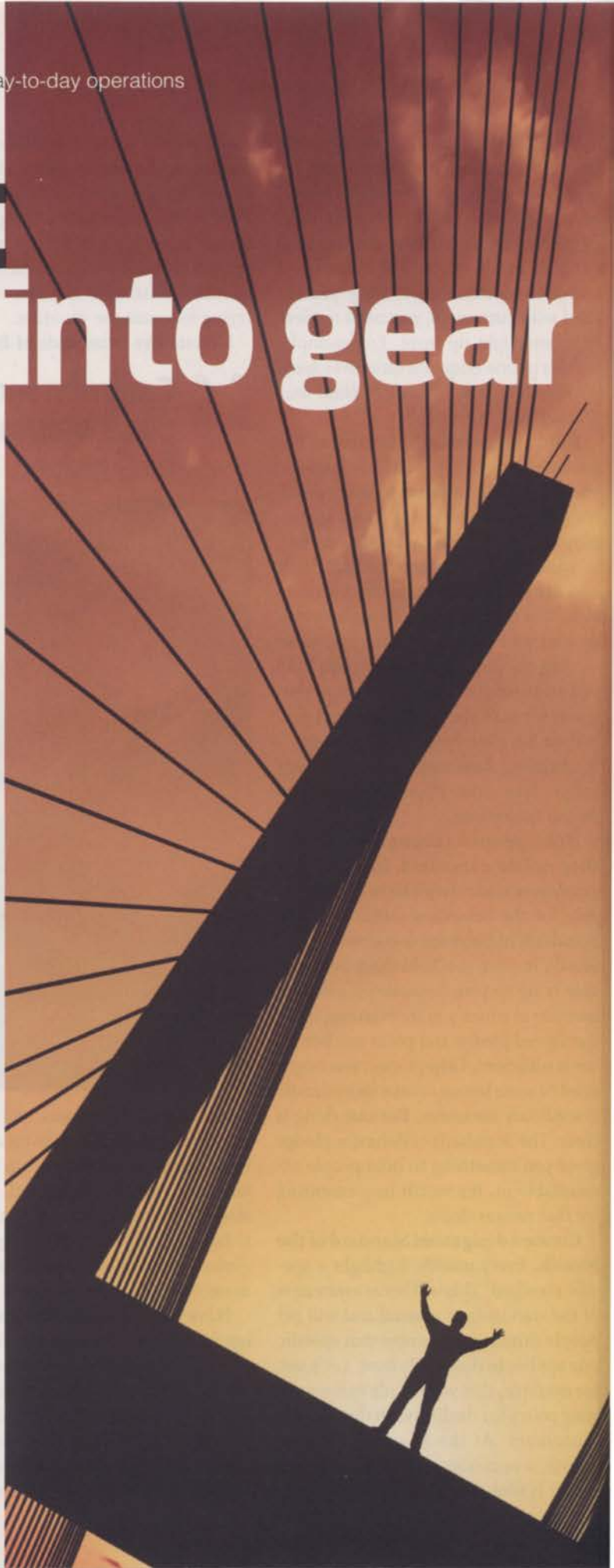
There's no doubt about it: the past year or so has been a lean time for most companies. And while there's hope that the worst (economically speaking) might be behind us, we aren't out of the woods yet. The dark days of the recession have spawned a troubling new issue, one that could cripple organizations even as we head into recovery. The looming problem? A widespread loss of employee engagement.

Even if companies haven't literally lost their employees, many have lost them psychologically. And if leaders don't strive to change that – to create a positive culture that energizes people – there will be dire consequences.

Tired of working more hours for less pay under the threat of termination, many Americans have mentally checked out of their jobs. They are simply doing what they need to hang on until something better comes along. In fact, a recent study by the Workforce Institute at Kronos shows that in organizations that have experienced layoffs, 40 percent of employees report that their productivity has suffered. Of that 40 percent, two-thirds believe morale has been negatively impacted and that they aren't as motivated as before.

It doesn't take a genius to figure out this atmosphere is not conducive to an organization's success, now or in the future. But with limited funds and deadlines that still need to be met, what's a leader to do? For starters, you must focus on winning in the workplace if you want to win in the marketplace.

For leaders, now is the time to improve your company's culture and get inside your employees' heads. You need to personally make sure your company is a place where people want to work.





You can allow the current economy to crush your morale, confidence and spirit, or you can choose to proactively shape your organization into one that is positive, resilient and prepared to take on challenges. Here are nine strategies to boost morale and engagement in the current economy.

1 FOCUS ON PEOPLE, NOT NUMBERS.

True, there are a lot of numbers to worry about – investments, the bottom line, next quarter's profits (hopefully) – and it's easy to become fixated on those figures. If your brain is spinning with strategies on how to stay out of the red, take a step back and remember that your company isn't what shows up in the spreadsheets – it's the finance people themselves, the mowing crews and the salespeople and support staff. Ultimately, an organization's success is determined by the moods, innovation, energy, thoughts and behaviors of the people who work there.

2 PRACTICE POSITIVE LEADERSHIP.

And no, "positive leadership" doesn't simply mean the absence of overt negativity. It means remaining purposeful in the face of adversity. While it's important to acknowledge the obstacles your organization is facing (after all, no one really respects a naïve Pollyanna!), don't dwell on them in meetings or in individual conversations, and don't bring up bad news before you've pointed out one or two things that are going well. Instead of being disappointed by where you are, optimistically focus on where you are going.

Right now, negativity and fear are probably knocking your people off balance. It's a scientifically proven fact that the nature of our thoughts affects our lives in tangible ways. I firmly believe that if you think your best days are behind you, they are. However, if you think your best days are ahead of you, they are.

Therefore, it's time to regroup, refocus, and unite your people to create a winning mind-set, culture and positive team environment. Remember, culture drives behavior. You win in the office

first. Then you win in the marketplace. With a winning team you create strength on the inside that can withstand the negativity, naysayers, and adversity on the outside.

3 FILL THE VOID. These are uncertain times. Employees are questioning how their industries and jobs will be impacted by the current economy. They're unsure about what actions to take. Unfortunately this uncertainty creates a void, and my theory is that where there is a void, negativity will fill it. In the absence of clear and positive communication, people start to assume the worst, and they will act accordingly.

As a leader, you must personally meet with your employees and continually communicate, communicate, communicate. You must be seen and heard, and you must also hear and see. If you always fill the void with positive communication, then negativity and fear can't breed and grow.

4 MAKE TRANSPARENCY THE NORM.

After all, the more you communicate, the more you foster trust, and the more loyalty is built. Talk to your team members often, and let them know where they stand. Encourage your managers and supervisors to do the same. Host frequent town hall meetings in which you listen to employees' fears, concerns, and ideas, and share your vision for the future.

5 GET RID OF BAD EMPLOYEES.

Tell energy vampires, "It's time to get on or off the bus." No matter how many pep talks you give or good behaviors you model, your efforts won't go far unless everyone is on the same page. That's right: everyone. You might be tempted to think that a few non-conformists and cynics won't prove to be a major problem if the majority of your people begin to share in your positive vision, but you'd be wrong. I call those who are a constant source of negativity "energy vampires" because they suck the energy and life out of everyone around them. Their presence pollutes the waters and can have a highly detrimental effect

on the team's morale, confidence, and overall performance.

Once you've identified the naysayers on your team, gently approach them and give them a chance to get on the bus and share in a positive vision. However, if these energy vampires refuse to get on board, then you must get them off the bus. There are no ifs, ands or buts about it. Even if your biggest complainer happens to be your highest performer, his negative energy outweighs his positive contributions. Once again, it's crucial to remember that culture fuels performance and results. One cancer cell can multiply to destroy the body.

6 FORBID COMPLAINING. All complaining. Yeah, that'll happen when pigs fly, you're probably thinking. Successful organizations with great cultures focus on solutions, not on complaints. The rule is simple. Let

your employees know that they are not allowed to complain unless they also offer solutions.

Remember, banning complaints is tough love for the good of the whole organization. When you boil things down, complaints are just noise and nothing more – but each one does represent an opportunity to turn something negative into something positive. Turn your employees from problem-sharers to problem-solvers – it'll make an unbelievable difference in your company's atmosphere, and it will lead to new ideas, innovations, and success.

7 TEACH PEOPLE TO BE HEROES. Both heroes and victims get knocked down. The distinction between the two groups lies in the fact that heroes get back up while victims simply give up. Help your employees to realize that they are not victims of circumstance.

Rather, remind them that they have a high focus of control – in other words, they have a significant influence over how things turn out.

Goldfish let fear paralyze them, but sharks choose to swim ahead, believing the best is yet to come. Faith and belief in a positive future lead to powerful actions today. Learn the Positive Shark Formula: Events (E) + Positive Response (P) = Outcome (O). True, you can't always control the events in your life, but you can control how you respond to these events – and your response determines the outcome.

In a rapidly changing world, it's important to choose faith over fear. The two share a future that hasn't happened yet. And the main thing that separates them is hope, or a lack thereof. Faith believes in a positive future and creates heroes, while fear believes in a negative future and creates victims. Think about

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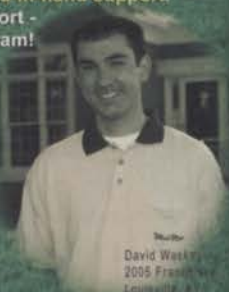


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it. The rest of your life hasn't happened yet. Why not choose to believe that good things are coming your way?

8 FOCUS ON THE SMALL WINS. The key is to always place your attention on those little, ordinary, non-spectacular wins that add up to big successes. My credo is to expect success, look for success, and celebrate success. When you focus on small wins, you gain the confidence to go after and create the big wins. It's the same advice I give to NFL teams as well as to Fortune 500 companies.

Keep in mind that employees might currently be discouraged or burnt out right now, so make sure to really highlight and celebrate the small wins in order to foster loyalty, excitement, and confidence.

After all, championships are won as the result of many small wins.

9 PUT SHARKS IN KEY POSITIONS. When the economy was thriving, it didn't matter as much if key employees turned in a mediocre performance. Now, that isn't the case. Look at your team and figuring out which people display the characteristics of driven, go-get-'em "nice sharks," and which are "goldfish," or more natural relationship managers.

Your sharks are the people you need in sales or business-driving positions. Your goldfish, or relationship managers, are better suited to answering phones, taking orders, and cultivating customer goodwill. People who aren't in the right positions won't thrive – and your organization will constantly find itself struggling. Too many organizations have relationship managers in sales positions, and that's why they aren't thriving. Put your people in the right positions and allow them to do what they do best – and

they will help your company to perform its best.

These are uncertain times, and no one can predict what the future will look like. Realistically, even if you devote yourself to helping your employees think their best and be their best, some might still find themselves better suited to positions outside your company. That's OK.

The main thing is emphasize to your team that the world is full of opportunity for those who are willing to stay positive, work hard and find it.

Ultimately, by filling the voids with positive leadership, positive communication, and positive action, there is one thing you can be certain of – a future in which your organization is stronger, wiser, and better than it is today. **L**

The author is a consultant and speaker. He wrote "The Shark and the Goldfish: Positive Ways to Thrive During Waves of Change."



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Join the club

How one company has found a different approach to gaining referrals. BY LINDSEY GETZ

In tight economic times every referral counts. Tim Johnson, owner of West Michigan Home and Lawn Care in Grand Rapids, has found a unique way to gain those referrals. About two and a half years ago Johnson joined the Grand Rapids chapter of the worldwide business networking and referral group Business Network International (BNI). It's been a wise move for his company.

The group works like this: Once a week all of the members meet for about an hour and a half. Each member gets a minute or two to give a little commercial about their business in front of the group – perhaps focused on a certain service they're pushing at the time. Then the group has the opportunity to offer referrals if they know anyone who might be in need of that service.

"Right now it's snow time for us so that's what we're pushing," says Johnson. "We're looking for plowing referrals."

The catch is that each chapter only allows one person per professional specialty. Johnson, whose business does 90 percent commercial work and brings in around \$500,000 annually, attends meetings as a professional for both snow and lawn care. As the professional for both of those areas, he's locked in – as long as he keeps up with his membership. Other lawn or snow professionals who wanted to join would be referred to another chapter or could start their own.

In addition to attending the weekly meetings, the only other requirement of the group is annual dues of \$350 and quarterly dues of \$50. But Johnson says the business he's gotten through the group easily covers the dues. He says he

has secured anything from a \$40,000 referral down to a \$100 referral – but in these trying times every little bit counts. On average, he says, he gets one referral from each meeting.

Once Johnson began getting referrals from BNI members it started snowballing. "Sometimes the hardest thing is just getting into the business circle," he says. "This group helped me get into these small circles, and once you're in, the referrals keep coming. That first referral gives you another one, then you get another from that, and it just keeps going from there."

Because the group is invitation-only, the other benefit of the referrals that Johnson receives through BNI is that they are high quality, and as a result, many do turn into jobs. New members can only be invited to join by an existing member as long as no other member of the group already represents that specialty. Johnson was invited to join the group by the professional he uses for printing. BNI does ensure that new members are reputable with an application process including references that are checked by a membership committee. This helps keep referrals professional.

In addition to being a gold mine for referrals, the group has been beneficial to Johnson in other ways. Working on the "commercials," for instance, has

helped him better pitch himself and his business.

"Every week you're learning to promote a different part of the business to generate new referrals," Johnson explains. "Some weeks you'll give a certain pitch and it won't get you any referrals, and that becomes a learning experience, too. Maybe you didn't sell the idea well enough."

"It becomes an opportunity to figure out what people want to hear from your sales pitch," he says. "That's something that helps me outside of the networking group. The group has definitely been a good fit for our business and I've been glad that I got involved." **L**



Business Network International (BNI) helps business people generate quality referrals.

The author is a freelance writer based in Royersford, Pa.

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Buying and selling a business: Part III

In this economy the merger, acquisition and divestiture (MAD) market is alive and well. Here's the first of two methods that I'll share if you're looking to sell. I call it the gross profit margin (GPM) evaluation model.

THE REAL WORLD. As its name suggests, this model uses GPM to value the goodwill or blue-sky portion of the value for a service business. Service companies normally sell for one year of gross profit margin for the blue-sky portion of the company. Assets (office equipment, inventory and accounts receivable) and liabilities (loans, accounts payable) are handled separately from goodwill.

The GPM model, based on past sales, is an excellent way to value a service business with good historical documentation. Three to five years of financial statements are available and complete. Analysis of the financial statements determines that the internal ratios and percentages within them are consistent and in line with industry benchmarks. Customer records and files are complete and in good order.

After the appropriate documents are signed and/or exchanged, evaluate the company's goodwill by reformatting three years of the seller's profit and loss statements by putting them in the format of a P&L statement.

First, calculate the gross profit margin. Second, calculate and verify the items in cost of goods sold, and general and administrative overhead costs. This will accurately determine the company's ratios and cost percentages, check them for internal consistency and compare them to industry bench-

marks (see figure 1).

Determining the gross profit margin for smaller (up to \$1 million in annual sales) target companies isn't always as easy as it sounds. Often the owner's salary is not a fair market value (FMV) salary. Also, it's usually not split between the field and G&A overhead accurately. As a result, the GPM is distorted.

First, determine the fair market value for the owner's time for actually working in the field. Simply multiply the owner's hours working in the field by a FMV labor gross rate. This normally is the rate for a crew leader or a little higher.

BASED ON FUTURE SALES. It's not uncommon that good historical documentation is unavailable for evaluating the goodwill value of companies with less than \$1 million in annual sales. Here, you base the price to be paid for the goodwill portion of the company, not on the gross profit margin of past sales, but on future sales.

Even if thorough documentation is available, many buyers prefer this method for new ac-

quisitions, as it provides the seller with an incentive for staying with the buyer and maximizing sales. This method also appeals to many buyers because it's "self-funding." This means a percent of new sales is paid to the seller, in addition to any salary or other compensation. If there are no new sales, there's no payment. However, if sales increase above historic levels, the seller has the opportunity to make more than if the goodwill was based entirely on historic sales.

Read the first two parts of this series at www.lawnandlandscape.com/webextras.



THE PAYOUT. The goodwill payout is usually spread across three to four years. Payment for equipment and any other assets are usually paid upon the consummation of the deal. I've seen the payment percentage structure for goodwill vary.

The incentive to the seller is to help the new owner sell as much as possible to maximize the goodwill payment, which is not a set amount. **L**

Figure 1: GPM Benchmarks for Green Industry Businesses

Benchmark GPM ranges for all green industry market segments in non-recessionary times are as follows:

MARKET SEGMENT	GPM %
Residential installation (all types)	30 to 40%
Commercial installation (all types)	20 to 30%
Maintenance, commercial and residential	30 to 40%
Tree work	30 to 40%
Fertilizations and insecticides	50 to 65%
Irrigation service	45 to 55%
Outdoor lighting	40 to 50%
Christmas decorations	40 to 50%

This article was adapted from James Huston's books "A Critical Analysis of the MORS Estimating System" and "How to Price Landscape and Irrigation Projects." For a free audiobook version (plus shipping) of "MORS," visit www.jrhuston.biz.



JIM HUSTON

runs J.R. Huston Consulting, specializing in green industry consulting. Reach him at 800-451-5588, huston@gie.net or via www.jrhuston.biz. To purchase his book, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com/store.

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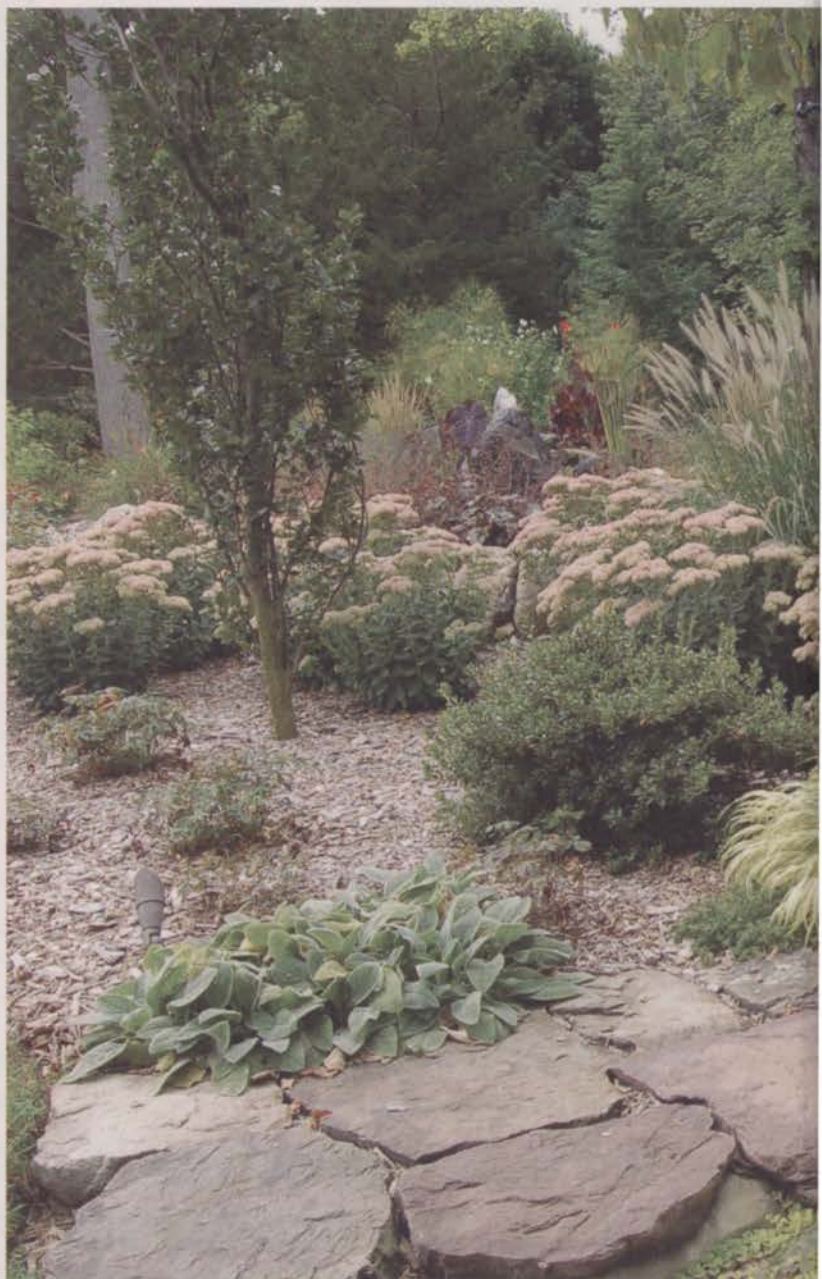
A homeowner's wishes for his 15-acre property turned into a wealth of opportunity for two companies hired to transform and manage a portion of the large estate.

BY LINDSEY GETZ

When the owner of a 15-acre estate on Long Island's "Gold Coast" wanted to transform a somewhat-barren property into something he could enjoy, it brought together two landscape businesses to do the work. Donald G. Namias, president of Dawnsapes, in East Northport, N.Y., joined forces with an old friend from college, Warren Hertzberg, president of Executive Plant Service.

The owner of the property wanted to walk his land regularly, but found that most of it was unmanaged and in need of care. Namias and Hertzberg developed the idea of creating a walking trail in an area that already had an existing blackberry and raspberry patch.

"We focused on about an acre and a half of semi-wooded property that we decided to turn into an 'edible walkway,'" Namias explains. "The project called for several small natural trails winding through woody plants, shrubs, specimen trees and a variety of fruits. We built on the idea of the existing berries by adding some seedless grapes, blueberries, strawberries and several





Top left: A number of trees were brought in to complete the project.

Top: Contractors brought in their own soil mix to combine with the site's existing soil, which was not conducive to growing many of the new plants used in the project.

Left: The project called for several small natural trails winding through woody plants, shrubs, specimen trees and a variety of fruits.

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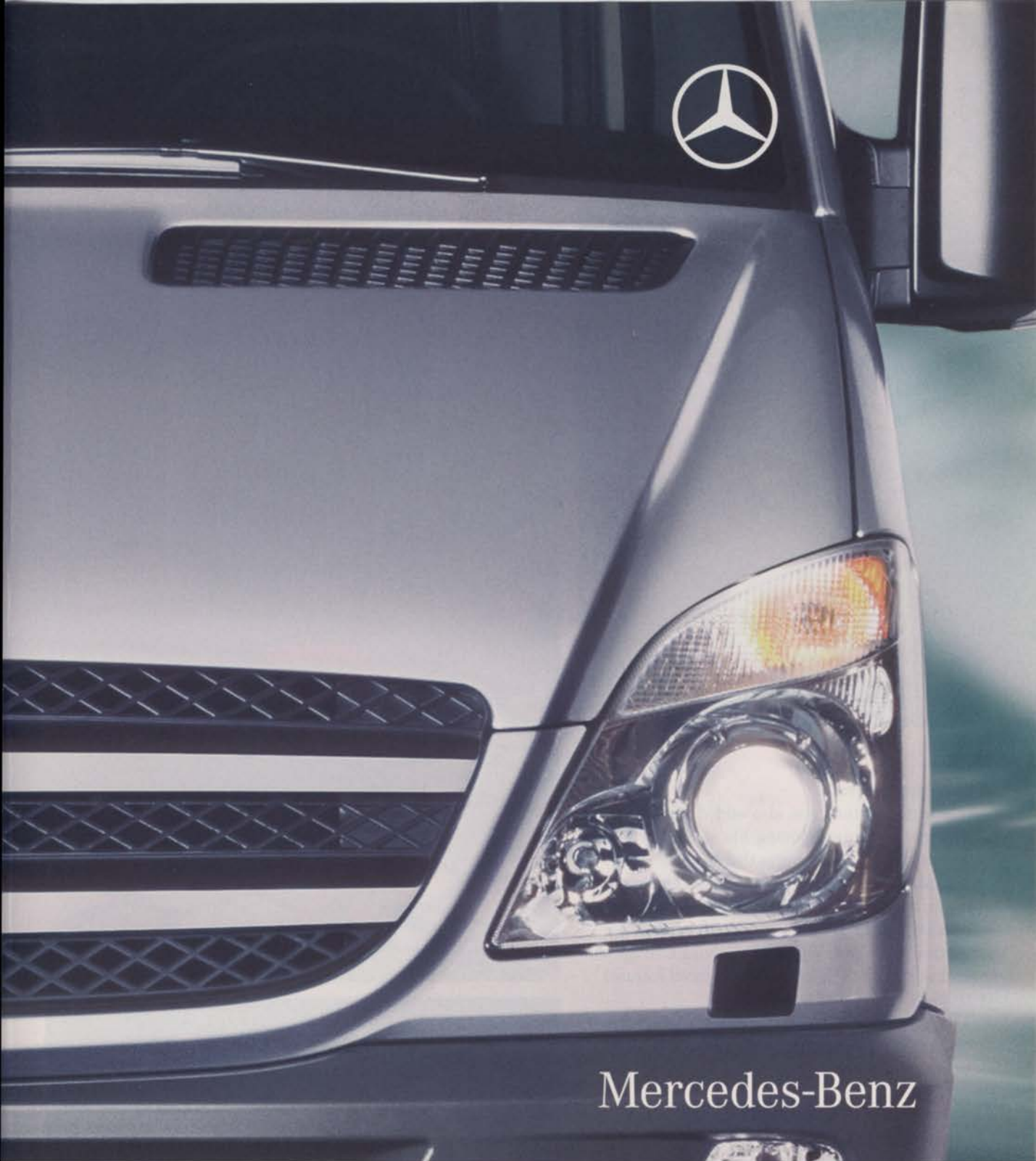
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*Based on a comparison of the Automotive News classification of full-size commercial vans.



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small apple trees.”

A water feature was also added for the homeowner to enjoy during his strolls. It was constructed in a grassy area that had been hit by lightning, clearing away several trees and creating an opening. The bubbling rock water garden uses lava rocks of different heights taken from Mount St. Helens, with water flowing through a recharge basin. The surrounding gravel features tropical seasonal annuals.

In addition to the edible walkway and the water garden, the team also focused on improving other areas of the property. The neglected land

Top and top left: In addition to the edible walkway and the water garden, the team also focused on improving other areas of the property. Here, statues look out from a garden and chairs wait on a new patio.

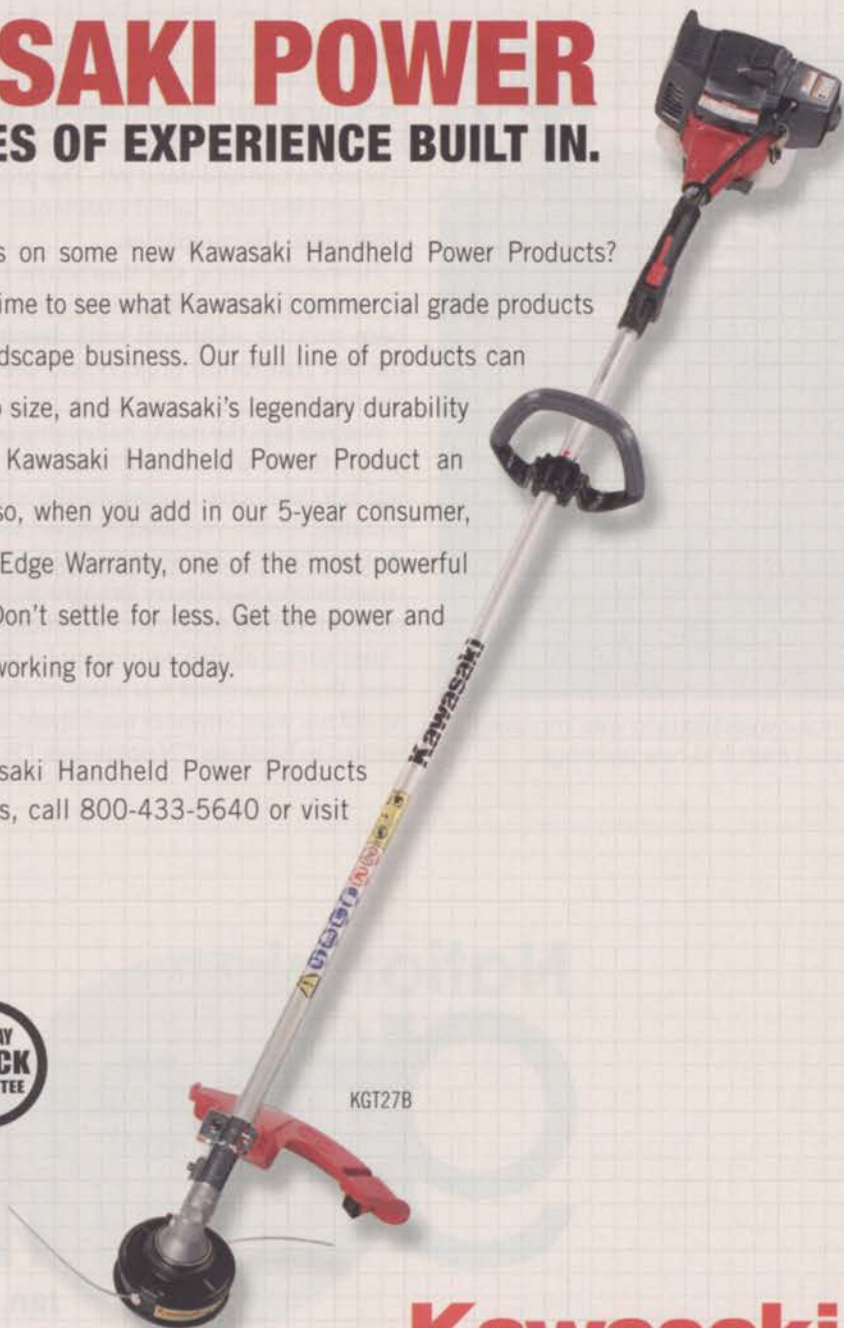
Right: Workers stand in one of their large hand-dug holes.



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Once-neglected land was improved with a path and new plantings.


was in need of some cleaning up and a variety of new plantings were installed including several thousand daffodils and hyacinth. Because of the size of the land, it wasn't a one-and-done job. The project provided some initial maintenance business to the companies.

However, since the downturn in the economy, the companies have not been back for additional work despite the fact that future projects had been discussed.

Namias says the most challenging aspect of the job was the land itself, which was not conducive to growing the new planting. It was a very hard, compact soil that was likely made worse by the heavy construction machinery brought in to build the 12,000-square-foot-plus home. "After having all that equipment on the land, the homeowner was adamant that he did not want anymore machinery, so we had to hand dig," Namias says. "We

hand dug holes with picks and metal bars that were big enough to hold eight to 10 men. We then brought in our own soil mix to mix with the existing soil and have had great success with that." And in addition to these larger holes, smaller holes were also dug to address some previous drainage issues.

The work was time consuming and laborious, but the end result was impressive. Namias says having a partner on this job was a wise move.

"Two heads are better than one for a large project like this," he says. "We worked as a team in trying to come up with very interesting plant material and some unique ideas – not something standard. Our forte is plant material selection and planting in just the right place. Working together we were very successful on this estate project." 

The author is a freelance writer based in Royersford, Pa.

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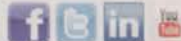
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Product Number	Description	Decimal Range	Stakes/ Piece	Stake Size	Approx Lbs Ea
1014	10' x 14ga x 4" Steel Edging	.0817 - .0677	4	12"	11
1012	10' x 12ga x 4" Steel Edging	.1126 - .0966	4	12"	15
1011	10' x 1/8" x 4" Steel Edging	.1276 - .1116	4	12"	17
1007	10' x 3/16" x 4" Steel Edging	.1873 - .1713	4	12"	25
1014-6	10' x 14ga x 6" Steel Edging	.0817 - .0677	4	16"	15
1012-6	10' x 12ga x 6" Steel Edging	.1126 - .0966	4	16"	20
1011-6	10' x 1/8" x 6" Steel Edging	.1276 - .1116	4	16"	24
1007-6	10' x 3/16" x 6" Steel Edging	.1873 - .1713	4	16"	38
1025	10' x 1/4" x 4" Steel Edging	.2487 - .2568	4	12"	35
1025-5	10' x 1/4" x 5" Steel Edging	.2487 - .2568	4	16"	44
1025-6	10' x 1/4" x 6" Steel Edging	.2487 - .2568	4	16"	52

Commercial Tree Rings

Product Number	Description	Decimal Range	Stakes/ Ring	Stake Size	Approx Lbs Ea
14TR2	2.5' Diameter 14ga Tree Ring-1 Piece	.0817 - .0677	4	12"	10.5
14TR3	3' Diameter 14ga Tree Ring-1 Piece	.0817 - .0678	4	12"	13
14TR4	4' Diameter 14ga Tree Ring- 2 Pieces	.0817 - .0679	7	12"	17.5
14TR5	5' Diameter 14ga Tree Ring- 2 Pieces	.0817 - .0680	8	12"	21
14TR6	6' Diameter 14ga Tree Ring- 2 Pieces	.0817 - .0681	8	12"	26

Steel Specification:

Approximately 5/64" through 1/4" thick (see decimal range)

Hot Rolled low carbon steel ASTM-A-36, ASTM-A-283, ASTM-A-569

Hot Rolled steel is soft enough to bend flat on itself in any direction without cracking, ductile enough for shallow drawing. Surface has normal mill oxide. The smooth deoxidized matte finish gives an excellent base for paint. Conforms to a minimum ASTM A366-with carbon content held to .10 maximum. These materials meet or exceed ASTM and ASME specification. Material is hardness tested to maximum Rockwell of 70 and maximum Webster rating of 15, approximate Brinell hardness is 137. Tensile strength ksi is 58 to 80; yield strength ksi is 36 minimum.

Paint Application:

Electrostatically applied powder coating specially formulated to withstand extended outdoor exposure. This coating is ideally suited for lawn and garden equipment, fencing, playground and recreational equipment.

Colors include green, brown and black.



COMPANY INFO

Company names and headquarters: Dawnscapes, East Northport, N.Y., and Executive Plant Service, in Commack, N.Y.
Annual company revenues: \$200,000 to \$450,000
Client/Service Mix: 10 percent commercial and 90 percent residential
No. of employees: 4 to 12, depending on project size

FEATURED PROJECT

Total project size: 6 acres of the homeowner's 15-acre property

Total days on the job: 52 (project completed over a two-year period)

Total design hours: 60

Estimated project cost: \$375,000

Final project cost: \$475,000, after design reviews and requested upgrades

Key plant materials used: Paper bark maple, dawn redwood, Japanese cryptomeria, crape myrtle, upright beech, Oregon grape holly, rose of Sharon, oak leaf hydrangea,

blue mist shrub, sweet box, witch hazel, tickseed, purple cone flower, Lenten rose, purple coral bells, hardy geranium

Fruits used: Apples, raspberries, currants, grapes, blackberries, blueberries and strawberries

Key hardscape materials: Moss rock, lava rock, Long Island boulders, Pennsylvania stepping stones, baby river round gravel and assorted mulches

Equipment used: Skid-steer loader, backhoe, dump trucks, stump grinders, and chippers. Eighty percent of the project was completed using hand labor with ball carts, shovels, rakes and pick axes

Subcontracted services: Irrigation and electrical

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COMPANIES OFFER ANNUALS

Check out these new bedding plants from breeders around the world. BY DAVID KUACK

AGASTACHE

The **Acapulco** series is part of the Ecke Flower Fields' low-maintenance Painted Dunes Collection. Colors include **Salmon & Pink**, **Orange**, **Rose** and **Yellow & Pink**. These extremely fragrant plants attract butterflies and hummingbirds delivering outstanding performance in mixed containers or when planted in mass in the landscape.

ALSTROEMERIA

Lilian is the latest addition to Van Zaten Plants' **Princess Lilies** line. The compact plants can be used in containers and in landscape beds. **Lilian** produces 2½- to 3-inch lilac flowers on 10-14 inch tall plants.



ANGELONIA

The **SunDancer** series is a member of the Ecke Painted Dunes Collection. Vigorous and free-branching, the plants' upright habit adds height to combinations. Available in **Pink**, **White** and **Purple**, these heat-loving plants extend the summer season.

Hort Couture's **Applique** series has three varieties (**Blue**, **Pink** and **White**) that are compact with medium-sized flowers. They are well-branched, making for very full plants.

BRACTEANTHA

The **Dazette** series from Oro Farms offers three colors (**Yellow**, **Orange** and **White**), that were selected under high heat and humidity conditions to produce plants with narrower leaves and excellent branching. Plants, which can be grown pot tight, produce many flowers just above the foliage. They are ideal for 4- and 6-inch pots as well as in mixed containers or color bowls.



Petite Beauty from Ecke has all the great qualities of the **Outback** varieties with petite yellow flowers. This variety was selected due to superior performance characteristics in the greenhouse and the garden. Exceptional heat tolerance makes it ideal for summer sales. Perfect for production in smaller pots (4-inch and up), plants grow 8-10 inches tall in the garden.

CUPHEA

Cuphea llavea 'Flamenco Jive' from PlantHaven was specifically bred for compact habit, high flower volume, large upright facing flower presentation and a long flowering season. Plants produce large flowers with dark cerise petals and a darker purple center and smooth light green leaves. Plants, which reach 16 inches tall and wide, do best in full sun in a well-drained soil.

Cuphea hyssopifolia Border series from Skagit Gardens has two varieties that produce multitudes of prominently displayed miniature flowers above their finely textured foliage. Much more compact than other cupheas, and with a distinctly rounded form well suited for containers and landscape beds. **Magenta** produces bright magenta flowers on 6-inch tall plants. **Southern** displays light violet flowers on 8-inch tall plants.



Cuphea ignea Matchmaker series from Kieft-Pro-Seeds includes **White**, **Scarlet** and **Pink**. These compact plants reach 8-10 inches tall and wide. The plants have a long flowering period and a self-cleaning habit with wide climate acceptance.



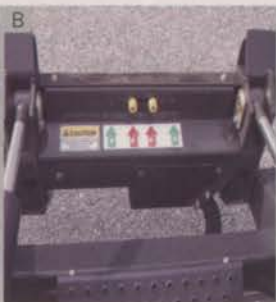
The **Vienco** cuphea series from GGG International contains seven colors. Plants have decorative growth and large flowers. They make the perfect container plant for hot weather.

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PICKING PLANTS

CYPERUS

Proven Winners has added two plants to its **Graceful Grasses** collection. *Cyperus involucratus* **Baby Tut** has a distinctive color, texture and performance. This petite, upright Egyptian papyrus is a fast grower, reaching 18-24 inches tall and 30-48 inches wide. It is perfect for water gardens, patio pots, and beds.

Cyperus papyrus **King Tut** is a distinctive plant with large heads of pendulous leaves. Its greenish spikelets can measure 1-inch across. This upright plant reaches 48-72 inches tall and wide. It can be used in water gardens or as a centerpiece in large patio pots and beds. Both plants take full to partial sun.

EUPHORBIA

The new **Breathless** series from Ball FloraPlant includes the only red-flushed leaf form **Blush** and a better branching **White**. Plants are durable, low-maintenance and long-lasting in containers and in-ground plantings. These versatile, heat-tolerant, fine-textured varieties fill in fast developing into stocky, mounded plants. They display a showy mass of self-cleaning flowers all season long in all summer conditions. Plants are suitable for 4½- and 6-inch pots and gallons. Plants reach a height of 8-15 inches and spread of 20-28 inches. They can be planted in full sun to partial shade.



Euphorbia '**Hip Hop**' from GroLink has a full, mounding habit and is heat- and drought-tolerant. It has nice green foliage and non-stop white flowers. It is an excellent annual for the landscape or in combinations for the spring or mixed with poinsettias for Christmas sales.



GAURA

Papillon Pink is part of Ecke's low-maintenance Painted Dunes Collection. It is a great landscape plant and the perfect addition to combination planters. The variety has been a strong performer in field trials everywhere and is easy to produce.

GOMPHRENA

Gomphrena globosa **Las Vegas** series from Benary comes in three vibrant colors: **Pink**, **Purple** and **White**. Plants reach 16-20 inches tall and are ideal for 4½-inch pot production. The series is heat- and



drought-tolerant with a quick crop time (nine to 11 weeks) making it versatile in the landscape throughout the country.

Bright pink flowers cover *Gomphrena leontopoides* **Balboa** from EuroAmerican Propagators from spring to frost. It provides an immense display of color combined with fuzzy, linear foliage. This full sun plant is hardy to USDA Hardiness Zones 8-11.



American Takii has expanded its gomphrena color choices with the introduction of the **Audray** series. Joining Bicolor Rose (now **Audray Bicolor Rose**) are **Pink** and **Purple Red**. The series can be used both for garden and cut flower use. The Audray series can withstand hot and humid conditions. Plant height is 30-40 inches.

IPOMOEA

Sweet Caroline Sweet Talk series from Green Fuse Botanicals includes **Light Green** and **Purple**. A subseries of the Sweet Caroline series, plants have a thin palmate leaf form. Their mounded growth habit and fine texture give the plants great landscape appeal.




The **Bright Ideas** series was bred by Floranova and is being offered exclusively by Oro Farms. The three varieties, **Rusty Red**, **Lime** and **Black**, were bred to be naturally compact without the use of growth regulators. This series can be used in pot tight accent plant programs as well as in combinations without taking over the pots.



Illusion is a new series from Proven Winners with two introductions. **Emerald Lace** has deeply dissected, emerald green leaves. **Midnight Lace** has deeply dissected, dark purple leaves with magenta venation. Both varieties have a strong mounding habit and can be used in hanging baskets, containers and the landscape. They reach 8-10 inches tall and 24-36 inches wide. They do best in full sun to partial shade.

MARIGOLD

Taishan, available in **Gold**, **Yellow**, **Orange** and a **Mixture**, from PanAmerican Seed delivers season-long landscape performance with high-impact color. Their dwarf habit offers better branching to provide full, lush plants that perform



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PICKING PLANTS

longer. Short peduncles and thick stems mean less breakage in shipping. Plants reach 10-12 inches tall and 8-10 inches wide in full sun. Taishan was a top performer and survived the humid, summer heat in Beijing, China for the 2008 Olympic Games.



Gold and primrose have been added to **Discovery Mix Improved** from Benary. These colors are not available separately. Discovery offers a compact habit with tight flower heads, increasing their resistance to Botrytis.

NEW GUINEA IMPATIENS

SunPatiens from Sakata, the only impatiens for the full sun, adds two new colors to its **Compact** series (**Magenta** and **Deep Rose**). **Spreading White** has also been added to the series. In addition to full sun tolerance, the plants require minimal care in the garden and provide an abundance of color until the first hard frost.



Rose, **Appleblossom** and **Orange** expand Selecta's **ColorPower** series to 18 colors. This uniform, early flowering, medium-vigorous series produces large flowers and has excellent summer performance.



PANSY

Mammoth is a new F_1 series from Goldsmith Seeds. The uniform, extra-large-flowered plants are strong branching and quickly fill the pot. They are stretch resistant under warm conditions and provide robust garden performance.



The large flat flowers offer maximum visual impact. The series includes 11 separate colors and two mixtures.

The new **Inspire** series from Benary combines all of the benefits of the company's well-known FamaX series with the newest genetics. The series features a total of 24 clear and blotch colors, short flowering windows between colors and extreme cold tolerance. Plants have short flower stems and a compact growth habit making them suitable for both northern and southern climates.

The new **Sense S₁** pansy series from Floranova has 13 colors and a mix. The series is very uniform in flowering time and habit. Bred for high density production, Sense plants stay compact for extended shelf life.

Deep Blue/Blotch is the newest addition to Kieft's **Promise** series. It is early for both spring and fall. The compact plants produce large 3½-inch flowers. It has excellent garden vigor and good winter hardiness.

Syngenta adds to its **Colossus** series with **Lavender Medley**, **Lemon Shades**, **Pure Rose**, **Rose Medley**, **Tricolor** and **White w/ Purple Wing**. The plants produce extra-large, upward facing 3½- to 4-inch blooms on a tight habit.



They provide a superior shelf life at retail that doesn't stretch during warm conditions. Colossus is perfect for spring, summer or early fall production.

Syngenta's **Delta** series adds the new colors: **Premium Primrose w/ Blotch**, **Premium Marina** and **Premium Violet** and **White**. The Deltas offer extra-early flowering for spring production and outstanding heat tolerance for summer production. This free-flowering series over-winters well and rebounds from severe weather quickly. There are now 21 Premium colors.

Strawberry Cream and **Rising Sun** are new to Syngenta's **Designer Collection**. This collection of unique novelty colors offer surefire retail appeal. The solid landscape performance makes Designer Collection perfect for both spring and fall sales.

Takii introduces **Yellow with Blotch** and **Frosty Blue** to its F_1 **Nature** series. There are now 21 varieties in the series. Plants are compact, very vigorous and extra floriferous providing long lasting color in mass plantings, mixed containers, as well as in pots and packs.



The series has extremely strong landscape performance, rebounding quickly from rain and freezes.

Hem Genetics **Cello** series has two new colors (**Azure Blue** and **Beaconsfield**) and three improved varieties (**Pure Light Orange Improved**, **Pure Deep Orange Improved** and **Light Blue Improved**).

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PICKING PLANTS

PHLOX

Dummen's new **Phloxy Lady** series has four cultivars (**Cherry Red, Pink, Burgundy** and **White**). Plants display very early flowering with extended flower power into the summer. They have a round compact habit with strong roots and good branching. Plants are cold tolerant making them excellent for outdoor production.



Flurizon is offering the *Phlox paniculata* **Junior** series in six colors. Plants have been bred to be naturally short, reaching 12-18 inches tall. Plants are easy to grow and well-suited for 1-gallon container programs. The series is a great addition to border plantings or in combination pots. The plants flower every year and are hardy to USDA Hardiness Zone 4.

Proven Winners has two additions to its **Intensia** series. **Orchid Blast** produces orchid pink flowers with a hot pink eye. Plants reach 10-12 inches tall and 12-18 inches wide. **White Improved** has been improved for better habit and performance. Both varieties are heat and humidity tolerant, have strong mildew resistance and bloom until first frost.

SALVIA

Salvia hybrida '**Wendy's Wish**' from PlantHaven produces large clusters of brightly colored fuchsia flowers surrounded by mauve colored calyxes. Flower stems are dark maroon. The conical-shaped mid-dark green leaves have serrated margins. A tender perennial, it's hardy to USDA Hardiness Zones 9-11. '**Wendy's Wish**' matures to about 30-40 inches tall by 30 inches wide. It takes full sun to partial shade.



The **Puebla** series of *Salvia greggii* from Ecke is part of the Painted Dunes Collection. Colors include **Cherry, Light Orange, Rose** and **White**. Plants flower from spring to fall with best results in the warm days of summer. In full sun, their fragrance attracts hummingbirds and butterflies. Plants can be grouped as a focal point for high-stress landscape areas or in mixed containers.

Lavender is the newest addition to Green Fuse Botanicals' *Salvia farinacea* **Cathedral** series. The early flowering plants produce flowers with a silver/lavender tone. It has a compact growth habit like the other varieties in the series.

VINCA

Cora Cascade F₁ trailing vinca series from Goldsmith Seeds is available in five colors and a mixture. The series has patented resistance to aerial Phytophthora. The vigorous trailing plants thrive in heat and humidity and fill landscape beds and hanging baskets. Plants are covered with large blooms so there are no bald spots.



Boa is a new F₁ trailing vinca series from Floranova available in six colors (**Red, Rose, Peach, White**, with limited availability of **Peppermint** and **Burgundy**) and a mix. Plants exhibit a vigorous trailing habit and large flowers.



Apricot is a new vibrant addition to the Floranova **Cobra** F₁ series. It produces large flowers with overlapping petals to maximize the impact.

Light Blue is the newest addition to the Syngenta **SunStorm** series that is early flowering with excellent branching making it great for packs and small pots. The series uniform flowering across all colors makes programming easy, with no growth regulators necessary because of their compact habit.

ZINNIA

Zahara Starlight Rose from PanAmerican Seed with its white flowers with rose stripes is the first bicolor zinnia in this series. It is a 2010 All-America Selections winner and 2010 Fleuroselect Novelty. Color pattern varies by environment, with the best color occurring under high light, good fertilization and cool nights. Plants are disease-tolerant and heat-loving and produce flowers that are 20 percent larger than other commercial varieties. It reaches 12-18 inches tall and wide.

Sakata has added **Yellow** to its All-America Selections and Fleuroselect Gold Medal winning **Profusion** series. This new variety is consistent with the rest of the series, offering a compact, uniform plant with strong disease resistance throughout the year. **Yellow** offers bold color and its self-cleaning habit and high heat tolerance makes it an excellent landscape choice for arid regions.



The author is editor of *Greenhouse Management & Production*. Send him an e-mail at dkuack@gje.net.

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The way forward

It has been only recently that we have heard the term “water management industry” to describe the work we do on turf and landscapes. There has been a rapid shift in the baseline of what is expected from landscape contractors.

Many contractors go out the door in the morning to do what they did yesterday. And what they did yesterday was a business model built primarily on turf care, with everything else considered an extra. Doing irrigation typically meant installing sprinklers and maybe a timer. In many cases, the timer was installed and left in the default program and the entire landscape was irrigated as if it were one crop. Likewise, our industry, without hesitation, embraced any product that accelerated production and decreased labor cost, regardless of its attributes.

Those days are over. There is increased demand on a water supply that is unreliable and finite. As a consequence, fundamental notions of water rights have changed. This has led to increasingly stringent mandates about water use. Federal, state and local governments are now directly involved in mandates about water use, and in many cases prescribe the type and nature of products that can be used in irrigation systems and in the landscape.

All over the country, there is talk that the use of potable water on the landscape will end in the not too distant future. In the

past, water management in the landscape industry was rarely a priority. Now the contractor that does not understand the critical importance of correct pressure, spacing and active management of irrigation schedules tailored to different crops, and who doesn't factor in weather, soil type, slope and precipitation rate, will not be able to compete. This depth of knowledge will be the minimum to play the game, never mind winning it.

The way forward for any contractor who wants to secure his

decisions, as opposed to product-generated decisions. The foundation for any landscape is the soil, and the contractor that can build the soil in a cost-effective way without negatively impacting the local ecology will succeed.

Understanding the impact of landscape management practices on the environment was not even a consideration until recently. Performance-based contracting will make the contractor accountable for the lifetime of the product used in the landscape. In other words, if the chemical you

This industry has to put **environmental metrics** to what it does. To do anything less will be to fail the communities we serve.

future must include education and training of his staff, as well as their ability to communicate and educate their customers about the complexities of local mandates, and the environmental consequences of products used in their landscape. Gone are the days of a simple reliance on a product or product line. The future is about performance-based contracting.

In addition to training staff about the principles of water management and educating the client, another key for contractors is to learn about the ecology of the areas they work. This knowledge should inform many of the key decisions made about the landscape. It is the ecology that should inform landscape management

used on Tuesday to control aphids shows up in the nearby fishing hole on Sunday, you will be responsible for the consequences. Again, the contractor who can educate the customer about the changes in cultural practices that makes the landscape more beautiful and environmentally friendly is the contractor who will be positioned for long-term success.

Changes in the environment and society have demanded a water management industry. This industry has to put environmental metrics to what it does, while taking a holistic and integrated approach to soil and irrigation. To do anything less will be to fail the communities we serve. **L**



JOHN OSSA

is the owner of Irrigation Essentials, a Web-based irrigation resource and consulting firm located in San Rafael, Calif. Reach him at john@irrigationessentials.com or via his Web site at www.irrigationessentials.com.

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Paver Patio Design

How to create an outstanding project

BY SUSAN SCHLENGER

Apaver patio design is one of the most popular types of patios. This is due to the fact that they are relatively reasonably priced and come in a wide array of color sizes, textures and options.

As with anything else in the area of landscape design, a paver project can be mediocre or outstanding. So what makes a patio of landscaping pavers one that you remember?

The truth is, there isn't any silver bullet to great patio design. There are many ideas that will help create that special project for your clients.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT COLOR. Choose a color that coordinates well with your customer's home, since the patio will most likely be up against the house.

Bring some sample pavers to your meeting, and bring quite a few of one color. Look at them up against the house and see which looks best.

Using contrasting colors and different sizes helps make your installation stand out.

PAVER SHAPES MATTER. The geometric pattern of the pavers should blend well with any other surrounding patterns.

For example, if the house is brick, choose a shape or shapes that will be a nice contrast. Don't duplicate the brick shape or it will be boring. I have found that using different shapes together provides interest and looks well with brick and wood siding.

Mixed grays seem to work well in many different landscapes. If you are doing a waterfall, it's easy to blend the gray color with natural looking landscaping boulders.

ADD A BORDER OR OTHER DESIGN. A border along a patio is called a soldier course. This helps to frame the patio just like in a picture. Sometimes a circle design can be added in an interesting location. Many pavers come with matching circle kits with sizes that can be adjusted to fit your particular installation.

INCLUDE OTHER INTERESTING ELEMENTS. Think beyond the traditional patio set-up. Consider adding a seatwall, which will provide lots of additional seating and look great, also. Or add a pond nearby or right up against the patio. Even a single fountain looks interesting. If the project budget allows it, add a pergola over part of the patio. As another option for shade, you can plant a tree in the patio with a circle cut out to allow for growth. **(L)**

The author has a degree in landscape architecture from Rutgers University. She can be reached at schlienger@gie.net. To see more of her work, visit www.landscape-design-advice.com.



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BEFORE YOU BUY

4 STEPS TO FIND THE BEST WORK TRUCK FOR YOUR COMPANY.

BY BOB JOHNSON

As vocational trucks continue to grow in complexity and sophistication, landscaping companies are under increasing pressure to maximize their vehicle investments.

Your due diligence should start well before a new work truck is ordered. No longer is it prudent just to buy what you've always bought. To keep your vehicle maintenance and operation costs down, you need to do some homework before making another call to your truck dealer.

Start by establishing and following a logical design process, as outlined here in four steps. Taking a systematic approach to specifying a new work truck makes it easier to ensure that the truck meets your needs.

1 DETERMINE WHAT YOU NEED THE TRUCK TO DO. Start by asking yourself what the vehicle will be used for. Exactly what will you haul with it? How far will it be driven and how often? What special circumstances will your drivers/operators encounter and how often? Don't just say, "I need a pickup truck." Really explore what that pickup truck has to do in order to be most productive.

For example, does your truck need to haul equipment? Does the operator need to be able to get equipment on and off the truck frequently? Do you need to haul material to job sites? What kind of material are you hauling and how much? Will the truck have different uses at various times of the

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STRATEGIES

year? (For example, will it be used to plow snow in the winter?) How many workers will the truck carry regularly?

Think about the environment in which the vehicle will be driven and used. Consider how available features can improve or hinder operator productivity. Spend some time looking at the performance of the trucks you have now. Talk to your vehicle operators and maintenance crew to see which trucks and equipment they prefer, and why.

2 THOROUGHLY EXPLORE TECHNICAL DETAILS TO ACHIEVE YOUR VEHICLE GOALS. Now that you've identified what you want the vehicle to do, it's time to figure out how to make it happen. For example, if you have determined that the truck needs to carry a half dozen walk-behind mowers, defining how big those mowers are will impact the vehicle's bed size, and how much the mowers weigh will affect the vehicle's payload requirements.

Questions to ask include: What are your performance requirements, such as speed with a full load, braking considerations and fuel economy? What type of truck body and/or special equipment is needed? Be sure to account for the size of special equipment to be upfitted to the chassis, the weight of these components, cargo storage needs, component installation requirements and operational requirements (e.g., power sources for equipment, equipment access, etc.). What payload weight and volume will the vehicle have to carry? What are the dimensional requirements, based on the size and shape of materials to be transported? For many vehicles, accessory items like generators, hose reels and compressors must also be taken into account. Your local vehicle equipment distributor can be a useful resource in this process.

Need some help?

The National Truck Equipment Association (NTEA) offers its members free access to extensive vehicle engineering, specification and design resources.

The NTEA's engineering staff can explain best practices for specifying chassis, selecting truck bodies and equipment for specific applications, performing weight distribution calculations and conducting accurate payload analysis.

The NTEA also keeps members abreast of important regulatory changes, including federal motor vehicle safety standards, Canadian motor vehicle safety standards, CDL licensing requirements and federal lighting regulations.

A wealth of free information is available at www.NTEA.com. These materials include a directory that lists hundreds of suppliers that have products available for installation on work trucks, a glossary of industry terms and several articles about vehicle specifying.

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3 **FACTOR IN VEHICLE OPERATING CONDITIONS AND ENVIRONMENT.** Consider how often the vehicle will be driven in the city, on the highway, off-highway and in combination. Will it be used predominantly in level or hilly terrain? Also evaluate its operational cycle, including desired cycle time and daily hours of operation.

Other factors to consider include loading cycle, climate/weather and maintenance. These work environment elements will help determine the correct selection of engine, transmission and other components.

For example, if the vehicle will be used in temperatures above 90 degrees for an extended period of time, you may want to upgrade the engine and transmission cooling systems, select high-temperature-rated tires and specify deeply tinted glass in the cab. In a very humid climate, you may

“ No longer is it prudent just to buy what you’ve always bought. You need to **do some homework** before making another call to your truck dealer.

choose to relocate air system tanks or use remote drain systems to facilitate manual draining, install upgraded air dryers and specify heated mirrors and windows.

4 **REVIEW THE MAINTENANCE HISTORIES OF EXISTING VEHICLES IN THE FLEET.** Look for common failure patterns to see if there are areas where vehicle specifications may need to be upgraded. Typical high-maintenance areas include

suspension systems, front-end/steering, brakes, engines, transmissions, differentials and vehicle frames. Going through this process can also alert you to other potential issues within your operation.

If a particular truck has higher maintenance costs than similar vehicles in the fleet, that truck’s driver may be responsible. A high incidence of repeat repairs within a short period of time may indicate poor maintenance and repair procedures.

Trucks are crucial to the success of your landscaping business. Take time and make the effort upfront to add vehicles to your fleet that have been properly selected and equipped to best meet the needs of your business – now and in the future. Your employees, maintenance providers and bottom line will all benefit. **L**

The author is director of fleet relations for the National Truck Equipment Association.



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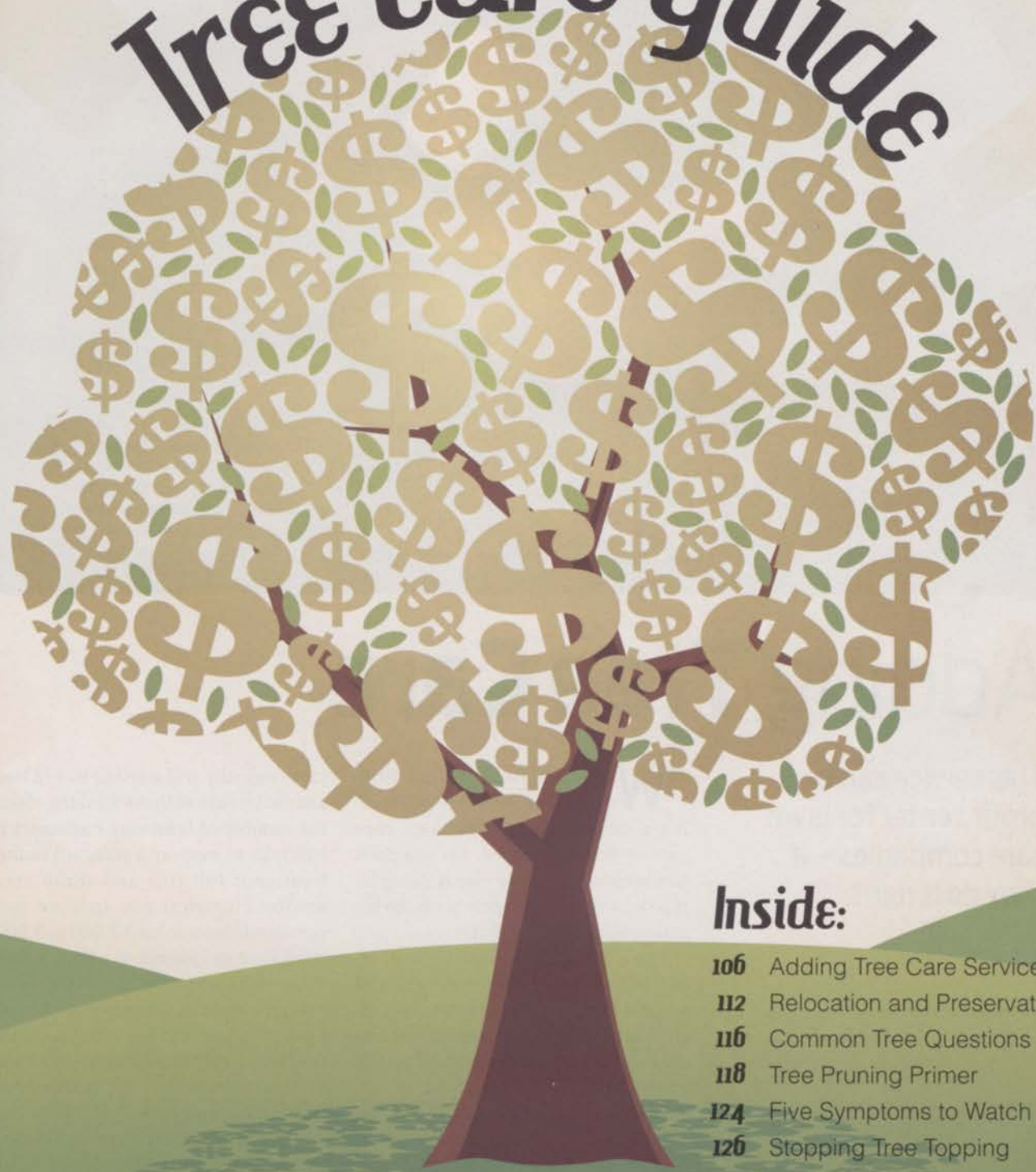
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Inside:

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- 116** Common Tree Questions
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- 126** Stopping Tree Topping



Adding tree care services to your business can lead to increased revenue, enhanced profitability and employee retention, as well as increased customer convenience, satisfaction and loyalty.

Adding Tree Care

This service can be a profit center for lawn care companies – if they do it right.

BY ELLIOTT SCHAFFER

“Why should I add tree and shrub care to my lawn care service?”

It’s a common question lawn care owners ask themselves. Do you do it just because everyone else is doing it? If so how do you compete with the big companies in the market?

There are many reasons to do it, including increased revenue, enhanced profitability, employee retention, increased customer convenience, satisfaction and loyalty, and referrals, just to name a few.

But doing it the right way and for the right reasons is critical to avoid taking time away from and your eye off your lawn care business. Too often, a lawn

care company will attempt to add tree and shrub care without thinking about the number of lawn care customers it will take to support a standard multi-treatment full tree and shrub care service. Historical data indicate that you should have at least 2,500 to 3,000 lawn care customers to afford a tree shrub truck and a dedicated tree shrub person. At best, 10 percent of your lawn care base will buy a full program tree and shrub care service within the first two years. That’s only 300 tree and shrub care customers.

If you have fewer than 2,500 customers or if you cover a very large geographical area, then you need to

“ Historical data indicate that you should have at least 2,500 to 3,000 lawn care customers to afford a tree shrub truck and a **dedicated tree shrub person**.

start thinking beyond *traditional* tree and shrub care service and begin offering options that both you and your customers can live with.

PROGRAM OPTIONS. Here are some options to the traditional tree and shrub care service that you might consider when marketing to your lawn care customers:

- Offer two ornamental fertilizations (three in the South/Pacific Northwest);
- Two fertilizations (three in the South/Pacific Northwest) and one major targeted pest; or
- Offer two fertilizations (three in the South/Pacific Northwest) plus perimeter pest control.

The advantages of offering just ornamental fertilization are that it's not complicated, very easy to sell, no licensing required, no expertise required, no capital expenditure plus the ease of scheduling around your lawn care treatments. You must, however, communicate to your lawn care customers that no pest protection is offered and no ornamental diagnosis is offered.

In parts of the country where you have an obvious awareness for an insect pest you can take advantage of the "ick" factor and add a foliar spray (or maybe a soil injection/drench) to the ornamental fertilization. The "ick" factor includes pests like Japanese beetles, bagworms and tent caterpillars.

The advantages of adding a targeted pest with high awareness to the ornamental fertilization are; it's not complicated, very easy to sell, no real expertise required, no capital expenditure, however licensing is required.

More and more lawn care companies have added perimeter pest control to their service offerings. Another tree and shrub idea is to include adding fertiliza-

tion of the foundation plants to your perimeter pest control program.

If you are already doing perimeter pest control, then why not offer to fertilize the foundation plants at the same time or as a separate visit? This gives you the potential for greater long-term profitability tied in with a more easily understood pest service.

OTHER OPTIONS. There are a whole host of other service options that can be offered as stand-alone treatments or as part of any tree and shrub care package. These include micro trunk injections to large trees for insect, disease

or nutrient problems anti-desiccant sprays, deer repellants, dormant oils, chemical "sucker" control, ornamental bed weed control, vertical mulching/aeration, pruning of small ornamentals or compost tea treatments.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS. Recognize also that there is potential for greater long term profitability with a full program tree and shrub care service, and it also affords the customer the best ornamental pest protection. However, you will need a person "knowledgeable" in tree and shrub care. You will have to purchase a tree and shrub vehicle, invest in additional training and, most importantly, manage the tree and shrub care service in such a way that it does not divert your attention as an owner away from your core lawn care business. The

FULL PROGRAM ASSUMPTIONS

If you believe the only way to expand is to add the traditional tree and shrub care service (four to eight visits per year) then there are a few time-tested assumptions that need to be believed:


- A minimum of 3,000 lawn care customers
- First year tree/shrub customer count 200-300
- Average \$300 annual revenue per customer
- First year gross sales revenue of \$60,000-\$90,000
- First year net revenue of \$35,000-\$60,000
- First year expenses
 - Payroll 30%-35%
 - Truck 10%
 - Chemicals 5%-10%
 - Advertising 2%-10%
- First year direct margin of about 35%-40% (Based on incremental revenues and existing overhead)
- New tree/shrub sales will be about 5%-10% of your existing lawn care customer base
- Close Rates (to your lawn care base);
 - 40%-50% on direct mail
 - 17%-25% on telemarketing leads
 - 12%-15% on unsolicited estimates to existing lawn care customers
- Stops per day, predicated on density:
 - Fertilization 13-15
 - Leads run 15-25
 - Foliar sprays 15-18

larger your lawn care customer base the quicker your tree and shrub care service can reach a critical mass.

MARKETING YOUR SERVICE. Marketing tree and shrub care services must be only to your lawn care base. But be

careful not to market to your entire lawn care base, especially if it is for full program tree and shrub care. Density is the key to profitability. Also, focus on the areas with the highest incomes unless it is just a one- or two-visit option like fertilization.

Consider doing your marketing outside your traditional lawn care windows so as not to take attention away from your lawn care business. Surveys have shown that you can generate half of your tree and shrub care inquiries January to June and half from July to November.

Consider a summer or fall launch of your tree and shrub care services. Use your office personnel to generate leads when customers call in during the season. Be certain to have plenty of sandwich bags in the trucks to leave the “ick insects” with the customers. Advertise your tree and shrub offerings on your return envelopes. 

The author is president of Environmental Horticultural Services in Dublin, Ohio. He can be reached at eschaffer@gie.net.

RISKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are some things to consider carefully when thinking about adding tree care services:

- Set proper expectations. Customers often think they are getting a gardener.
- Have a knowledgeable tree/shrub account representative.
- It is a consultative service – you need to work in partnership with your customers.
- Leave good reports and landscape tips.
- Focus on actual replacement costs (average landscape value is \$15,000 to \$30,000).
- Don't spread too thin; take one opportunity at a time.
- Set realistic goals for your new service.
- Measure the results and capture information.
- Remain committed.
- Most importantly, your lawn care business must be fundamentally sound before you start a new tree/shrub division.

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Relocation & Preservation

A Floridian developer hires a team of arborists and landscape architects to take on a massive tree relocation and preservation project. By Lindsey Getz

When developers Castle & Cooke set out to establish a green development within Oakland Park, nestled between the towns of Oakland and Winter Garden, Fla., one of their primary goals was preserving the Park's natural tree canopy. This was no small undertaking. More than 50 large specimen trees were selected to be relocated or preserved in order to accomplish this goal.

Oakland Park has been certified as a green community by the Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC) and all of the homes being built there will be required by deed restriction to be certi-

fied "green" by the FGBC, as well. The 10-year building project will ultimately result in a community of more than 750 homes. John Rinehart, vice president of Castle & Cooke, says preservation of the canopy was a top priority because of the effort to create a green and sustainable development.

"That included preserving natural resources to the extent possible," Rinehart says. "As we developed plans for this project, we focused on avoiding what trees we could, and where it wasn't practical to avoid them, we marked them for relocation."

A team of ValleyCrest arborists and landscape architects from Glattig Jackson Kercher Anglin were responsible for identifying the trees for preservation and relocation. "From a green standpoint, I think it shows a big commitment on Castle & Cooke's part to take the time to hire consultants and do all the reconnaissance work," says Donald G. Wishart, principal, Glattig Jackson Kercher Anglin. "Identifying all the trees and relocating them or working around them rather than just bulldozing definitely shows commitment to the sustainability cause and it's the kind of

The trees selected to remain on the property were chosen based on the character they added to the land. Wishart said they created an "authentic timelessness" for the community – something that couldn't be achieved by starting out with brand new plantings.





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developer we as a company like to be associated with."

The biggest task in examining the trees, one-by-one, was determining which were the best candidates for relocation and which would help develop character by staying in place. That required surveying the trees in terms of size and condition, as well as their aesthetic appeal. Trees marked for relocation, and those chosen to remain, were hand-picked by the teams involved, after approximately two weeks of site survey.

Those chosen to remain greatly enhanced the landscape. "The trees help create an authentic timelessness for the community and you get that impact from day one rather than starting from scratch with all brand new trees," says Wishart. "They provide shade on hot days and give off a lot of character. That goes a long way in 'place making' for the family-oriented community that Castle & Cooke wanted to create."

The Oakland Park canopy was com-

PROJECT DETAILS

Number of trees: More than 50 specimen oaks for the preservation/relocation effort, predominantly Live Oaks (*Quercus Virginiana*)

Species used: The Phase 1 parks and open space landscape is composed of predominantly native species, including more than 15 species of trees/palms and more than 35 species of shrubs, groundcovers, native grasses and wildflowers.

The landscape design included species common in the native landscapes of central Florida such as Live Oak, Laurel Oak, Longleaf Pine, Sabal Palm and Bald Cypress trees.

The shrubs, groundcovers, native grasses and wildflowers included species such as Beautyberry, Dwarf Simpson Stopper, Walters Viburnum, Southern Wood Fern, Saw Palmetto, Muhly Grass and Cord Grass and wildflowers such as Narrow Leaf Sunflower, Rosinweed and Blanket Flower.


Time needed: The relocation project, from the design and field reconnaissance work to the physical relocation and establishment took two years.

Equipment used: A mechanical root pruner to detach roots on preserved trees that were impacted by construction, and to prune all of the trees that were relocated. Cranes, lulls and skid steer loaders to move trees.

Micro- or macro-injection treatments: Applied a yucca mixture with micro elements to help increase and maintain moisture levels at the root zone and promote root development.

This majestic live oak tree is estimated to be nearly 300 years old, but it wasn't the biggest one relocated. That one was 60 feet tall and weighed more than 50 tons.



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posed exclusively of oak trees. Wishart says this is a more "bullet-proof tree," so they were fairly well-suited for surviving relocation. And they have other benefits, as well.

"In Florida, live oak trees have a really long life," Wishart continues. "And they have a beautiful, umbrella-like canopy. From a park setting, they are the perfect tree because the broad spreading canopy allows for play areas and outdoor dining and picnic areas under the shade."

There were some particularly special trees in the bunch. One tree Castle & Cooke is very proud of, which they kept on site, was a majestic live oak tree estimated to be nearly 300 years old. Also notable, of the trees that were relocated, was the largest tree in the group. It was 60 feet tall, two feet in diameter, and weighed more than 50 tons. This tree required a 300-ton crane to lift and

move it to its new home, a quarter-mile from where it sprouted.

In combination with moving and preserving the trees, from a landscape design and installation standpoint, Castle & Cooke also focused on native and/or drought-tolerant plants. "The landscape is not what you might typically see in a community because we were interested in doing more than just ornamental plantings," Rinehart says. "We also restored some of the nearby shoreline, stabilizing the ground. Once we had it under control we planted literally thousands of native plants that are doing remarkably well today."

In 2008, the tree relocation and preservation project was awarded Florida's "Best Project" at the annual Trees Florida conference. The conference, co-sponsored by the Florida Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture, the Florida Urban Forestry Council,

the Florida Division of Forestry and the University of Florida Extension Service, is an opportunity for arborists, landscape architects and tree suppliers to hear about the latest trends and trade current research.

At press time only one tree from the project had been lost, and the teams involved in the relocation are confident about the future of the rest. ValleyCrest monitors the trees weekly and will continue to do so until the survival of the trees is assured. Though it's been a multi-year undertaking, Rinehart says that Castle & Cooke has no doubt that their time and effort spent on these trees has been worth it. "The value of some of our trees at Oakland Park is priceless," he says. "There is simply no amount of money you could spend to acquire trees like these." [®]

The author is a freelance writer based in Royersford, Pa.



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Common tree care questions

Be a resource for your customers with these tree care tips.

BY CHUCK BOWEN



Schaffer

Landscapers don't have to necessarily offer tree and shrub care to answer homeowners' questions about what's happening with their ornamentals.

"As long as you can communicate with your customer... you're going to have client retention," says Elliott Schaffer, certified arborist and founder of Environmental Horticultural Services in Dublin, Ohio. "As long as you can help solve their problems... You want to be preemptive and notice these things and tell the customer."

Plants encounter two problems: biotic – caused by living organisms such as fungus, nematodes, insects, bacteria or mites; and abiotic – caused by physical or chemical damage, temperature and moisture extremes and planting.

For example, a client with eaten hosta, a browse line on evergreens and bark damage from rubbing means you have deer, which is a biotic problem.

On the other hand, abiotic problems are sometimes harder to diagnose and remedy. Schaffer gave the following examples and possible solutions.

SOIL COMPACTION. Contractors need to recognize the visual cues that are being presented to them. For example, everything a home builder can't – or doesn't want to – haul away, he'll bury. So, if you find a 4-foot-wide by 7-foot-long rectangular spot of dead turf, it's most likely not a disease. It's probably just a buried door.

But problems with trees or shrubs from buried cast-offs are harder to pinpoint because the damage doesn't show up for a year or two after planting. By that time, homeowners aren't thinking about

when the house was built.

Similarly, roots growing close to the surface are an indication of soil compaction. When they see roots above grade it means the soil is too compacted for the roots to grow underground. Instead, the roots grow up to get the oxygen they need. "Roots, whether it's turf or ornamentals, need oxygen," Schaffer says. Contractors can trim up to one-third of the roots off a healthy tree. But if you can't cut the roots, consider mulching the base of the tree.

POOR DRAINAGE. One symptom of wet mulch is vomitoria fungus – so named because it resembles throw-up. It's always present in hardwood mulch, but you'll see it flower when the mulch is too moist. "It doesn't hurt humans, but it is an indicator that this mulch is too wet. Either thin the mulch or change the irrigation," Schaffer says.

He recommends contractors carry a soil probe to assess the moisture content underneath plants.

HEAT DAMAGE OR SCORCH. This is seen most often on the margins of leaves and needles, where water has to travel the farthest, and on plants with immature root systems. Plants can sustain heat damage from the hot hoods, motor vehicle exhaust or even asphalt applied in the summer.

If the tips of conifer needles are green, then the plant is getting enough water. And if the internal needles are brown, then the tree is just dropping some leaves that it doesn't need anymore, Schaffer says.

FREEZING DAMAGE. Evergreen trees and shrubs express winter freeze damage

around the same time as a homeowner's first or second lawn care application. The leaves on deciduous plants will turn black or tree bark will burst.

Schaffer recommends technicians keep their eyes open while driving to each account.


"On your way to the property, look around," he says. "Is it just your client or the whole neighborhood?"

Communicate to homeowners who have relocated from a vastly different hardiness zones that they can't expect the same results from the same plants. "Make sure the plants you have are right for the market," Schaffer says. "The plants you grew in Buffalo don't grow here in Tuscaloosa."

HERBICIDE DAMAGE. As chemicals become more advanced, Schaffer is seeing less tree and ornamental damage from herbicides applied to turf.

However, if a homeowner believes your latest application killed his burning bush, look around for weeds. It's easier to kill weeds than it is to kill established shrubs and trees. If there are still weeds around a damaged plant, then the problem wasn't the chemical you applied last week. Be aware that aphids, thrips and freezing temperatures can cause damage with similar looking symptoms.

To learn more about specific tree care problems, lists of deer-resistant plants and to find materials suitable for use as customer handouts, check out the extension offices at land grant universities.

Also, you can find a clearinghouse for extension sites at <http://extension.unh.edu/cesites.htm>. 

The author is managing editor of *Lawn & Landscape*. E-mail him at cbowen@gie.net.





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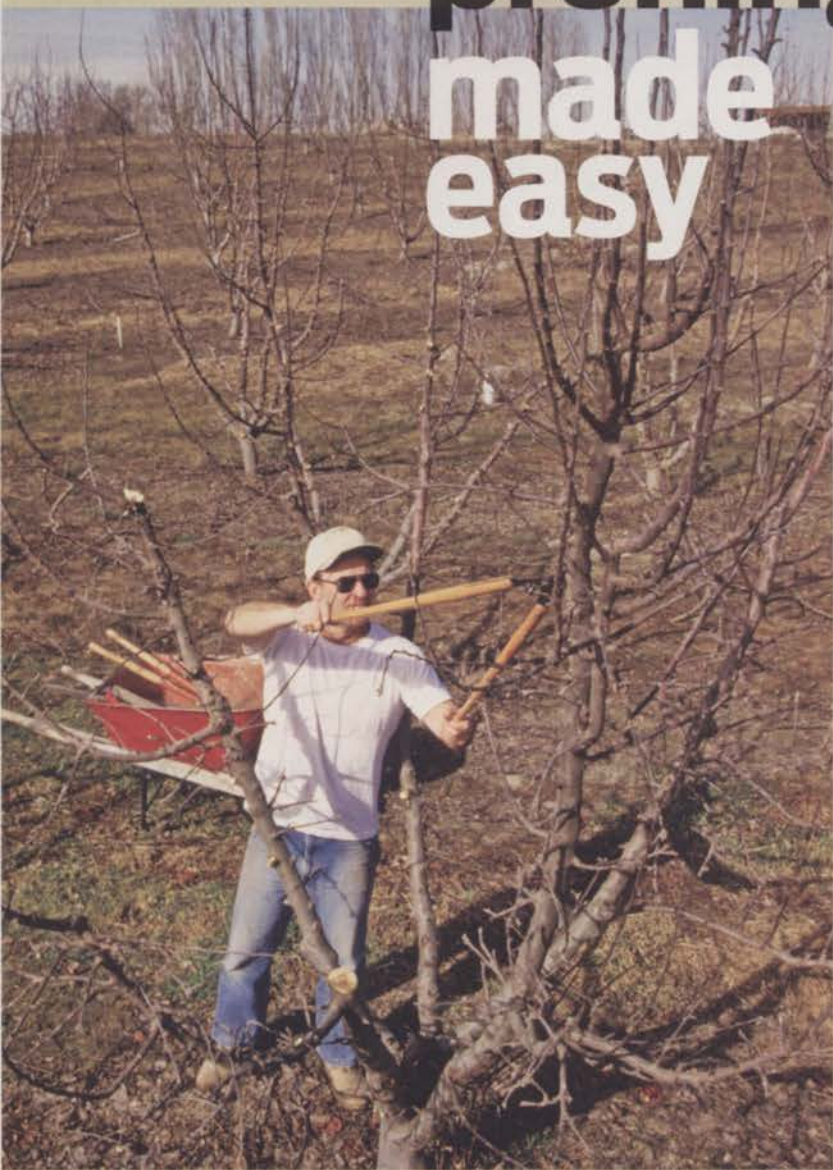
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Tree pruning made easy



Simple techniques
can save trees.

BY JAMES ROBBINS

I clearly remember listening to a lecture by Alex Shigo in 1977 and being captivated with the “new” concepts and terminology such as CODIT, branch collar and branch bark ridge.

Our thinking about tree pruning, wound treatment and other arboriculture practices took on a paradigm shift. Shigo and his associates developed some beautiful illustrations to summarize these concepts.

I have been asked to give many talks about tree pruning to a variety of audiences. Over time, I have tried to develop simple analogies to help audiences grasp the concept of the importance of the location of the pruning cut on a limb in relation to systems associated with the branch and the trunk.

The goal was to easily convey to the audience how the location of the pruning cut could impact tissue/systems associated with the trunk and branch. Pruning cuts made too close to the trunk – flush cuts – make wound closure more difficult.

Pruning cuts made too close to the trunk – flush cuts – make wound closure more difficult and can impact trees’ tissue and systems.

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Fig. 1: Plan a proper pruning cut to minimize impact



With the bark removed, underlying wood (xylem) patterns somewhat show areas for branch, branch collar and trunk tissues.



This overlay illustrates "utility pipes" associated with only trunk tissue (the main building).



This overlay illustrates "utility pipes" associated with only the branch tissue (a new wing of building).



This overlay shows combined "utility pipes" and an area in the branch collar region where interaction might occur. "Valves" can be used to represent compartmentalization.



This dashed red line outside of the branch collar (the shaded region) indicates the position for a proper pruning cut that will minimize impact on trunk tissues.

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TREE CARE GUIDE

I developed a series of slides to visually capture the concepts of making a proper tree pruning cut, but I still saw sleepy eyes in the audience.

My next iteration was to ask the audience to visualize water-tight doors in a naval ship. It seemed like most folks had watched a movie with a boat being hit by a torpedo and sailors rushing to close doors to save the sinking ship. I mention that rushing to close the water-tight doors is analogous to a tree walling off, or compartmentalizing, wounded areas in a plant. Audiences seemed comfortable with that analogy.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE 'BUILDING.' In telling the story about proper tree pruning cuts, I recently developed the storyline that asks the audience to imagine the building they are in and the utility services (e.g., electrical, plumbing or heating and air). It's easy for people to visualize that if you add a wing to a building, that the wing will have its own utility services, but at some critical, overlapping point, the utility services from the main building (trunk) and the new wing (branch) will make connections or interact.

It is then easy to ask the audience to imagine how cutting utilities in the wing should have minimal impact on the main building; however, if we cut utility systems in the overlapping area (branch collar) we can impact systems associated with the main building.

From that storyline, I started to develop visual aids to support the story. I was fortunate years ago to find a piece of wood in my woodpile that almost showed the concept without any graphics magic.

From that base piece of wood, graphic artist Chris Meux developed graphics overlays to accompany the building utilities story (see Figure 1 on page 120).

The story and images may not clearly tell a person exactly where to make the proper pruning cut on their trees, but they at least make them pause to consider how the location of their cut may impact the tree overall. (L)

James Robbins is professor of horticulture at the University of Arkansas.

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Focus on tree care

5 SYMPTOMS you should not ignore BY SALLY MURDOCK

You know there are health symptoms people should not overlook. Well, it's the same for trees. Trees often display key symptoms indicating that serious problems exist or could develop if ignored.

Here are five symptoms to look for on your clients' properties:



1

YELLOWING AND PREMATURE LOSS OF LEAVES IN SUMMER

Yellowing and loss of leaves on the interior portions of the crown may simply be indications of water stress (too little or too much) soil moisture. These symptoms commonly occur on birch, maple, tulip tree and other shallow rooted plants. In some cases, these symptoms may be an early indication of a root or soil disorder that is inhibiting water uptake.

2



OBSCURED ROOT COLLARS

Most trees, even young ones, exhibit a distinct, visible flare where the stem (trunk) joins the root system. If this flare is covered by soil or mulch, then disease, girdling roots and insect infestations are more likely to occur. If this condition is allowed to continue untreated and disorders develop, the interruption of water flow from the roots to the branches will lead to the crown's decline. Once the crown is affected, remedial treatments may be unsuccessful in arresting the failure. So, inspecting this critical region for disorders is important. Excavation of the buried root collar is a priority.

3



'BLEEDING' ON STEMS AND BRANCHES

Wet spots on branches and stems indicate sap flow from wounds that could have been created by insect borers, disease pathogens or environmental disorders. The sap may be colonized by bacteria and other microorganisms resulting in a discolored flux that may have a sour odor.

4




DELAYED BUDBREAK

Trees initiate new growth in spring depending on species, weather conditions and the health status of the individual plant. If a plant seemed later than usual breaking bud and if the resulting new growth appears sparser than normal, this could indicate a root or vascular disorder. However, keep in mind that delayed bud-break and a sparse crown are expected on newly planted trees.

5

PREMATURE AUTUMN COLOR AND LEAF DROP

Trees under stress will frequently develop autumn coloration early and cast their leaves prematurely. This condition is most commonly associated with serious root and soil disorders but also can be caused by vascular diseases and certain boring insects.

Trees are an essential element to the beauty of your clients' landscapes. Help ensure their health by identifying these symptoms early and consulting a certified arborist should treatment be needed. 

The author is a marketing associate for Bartlett Tree Experts.

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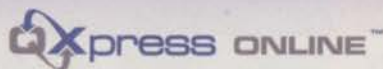


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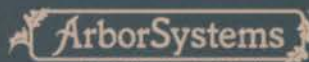
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Save trees by stopping tree topping

The practice can be a short-sighted strategy.

Large, mature trees may require pruning if they interfere with utility lines, block important views, grow too close to buildings or encroach on neighboring trees.

Topping, also referred to as heading, stubbing, rounding or dehorning, is the drastic removal or cutting back of large branches in mature trees, with little regard for location of the pruning cut. This practice was formerly thought to be a good way to reduce the height of trees considered too large for a particular site.

In addition, stimulation of new, vigorous growth associated with topping was viewed as beneficial to the tree. However, professional arborists and tree-care practitioners now realize that topping can create a host of problems for trees and for people coexisting with them. Proper early training, selective branch thinning or entire tree removal should be favored over the detrimental practice of topping.

TOPPING IS HARMFUL. Topping injures trees in many ways. By removing a major portion of the canopy, the delicate balance between foliage and the remainder of the tree is upset. Through the process of photosynthesis, leaves manufacture chemical energy required by the tree for growth and maintenance of branches, trunk and roots. With large portions of leaf surface area removed, a tree's energy-producing potential is se-

verely reduced. Large reserves of stored energy in many stems and branches also are lost when trees are topped. These imbalances can lead directly to decline and death or can make the trees susceptible to invasion by canker and root-rot diseases.

Bark suddenly exposed to the sun after topping often is damaged by sunscald, and may become diseased, further weakening the tree.

Large branch stubs that result from topping are open invitations to insects and wood-rotting pathogens. In particular, opportunistic pathogens find the living, but virtually defenseless, stub an inviting and plentiful source of food.

Unable to receive substantial amounts of energy from other parts of the tree, stubs lack the capacity to wall-off or compartmentalize the wound, allowing decay-causing organisms easy access.

Once decay has entered the branch stub, it may progress into the main trunk, eventually killing the tree and creating a hazardous situation for people. Coating large branch stubs with a wound dressing is ineffective in stopping the entry of decay-causing organisms.

Topped trees frequently produce vigorous regrowth, called water sprouts, just below the pruning wound. These rapidly growing shoots can have very weak attachment to the remaining stub, making topped trees highly vulnerable to wind and ice damage.





Topping, also referred to as heading, stubbing, rounding or dehorning, is the drastic removal or cutting back of large branches in mature trees, with little regard for location of the pruning cut.

Regrowth resulting from topping also is very succulent and is generally more susceptible to attack from insects and certain disease-causing pathogens, particularly those responsible for fire blight. Certain species of beech, maple and oak fail to produce any vigorous regrowth after topping. Without adequate foliage regrowth, these trees rapidly die.

Utility companies frequently practice topping to alleviate tree interference with overhead power and communication lines. However, a topped tree often will regrow to its original height faster and with greater density than a tree that has received proper pruning.

Because the results often are short-lived, topping actually is a more costly solution to the problem of interfering trees than crown reduction by thinning. Topping also disfigures the tree and ruins its aesthetic value in the landscape. Topping replaces a tree's natural beauty and form with unsightly branch stubs, conspicuous pruning wounds and a witch's broom form of branch regrowth. Trees planted to provide lifetimes of pleasure and beauty are transformed into landscape liabilities.

ALTERNATIVES TO TOPPING. Of course, many problems can be avoided if large-growing tree species are not planted where they will interfere with power lines, street lights or buildings in the first place. Pruning properly sited trees

then becomes a matter of simply maintaining tree structure, form, health and appearance. There are many excellent smaller trees that work well in urban sites or anywhere potential obstructions exist.

When the size of a tree's crown must be reduced, thin out selected branches by removing them back to their point of origin, or prune to a side branch of sufficient size to assume dominance. Crown reduction is preferred over topping because it results in a more natural appearance and increases the time before pruning is needed again by reducing growth of weakly attached water sprouts.

Crown reduction, however, still results in large pruning wounds that may lead to decay in major branches. Therefore, the best solution is to remove the interfering tree and replace it with one that will fit within the given space.

The proper time to begin training a tree is when it is young. If, due to poor tree placement, improper species selection or improper early training, a large tree must be topped to reduce its size, removal would be the more practical solution. **L**

Jeff Iles is extension horticulturist and Mark Gleason is extension plant pathologist, Iowa State University.

This article was adapted from an Iowa State University Extension publication ("Topping — Tree Care or Tree Abuse?", SUL 7); www.extension.iastate.edu/store/ListItems.aspx?Keyword=sul%207.



The Game Changer

Debuting this winter, CME snowfall contracts can help snow contractors offset the risk associated with unpredictable snowfall totals. BY MIKE ZAWACKI

It's been a while since a product had the potential to be a real game changer for the snow and ice removal industry.

In December, derivatives exchange CME Group introduced new snowfall contracts that will allow contractors to manage their financial risk related to unpredictable U.S. snowfall totals.

So what does this mean for the average snow contractor? Well, CME snowfall contracts will enable snow fighters to offset the financial loss of an underwhelming, or an excessive, winter.

"In a nutshell, CME snowfall contracts are a tool – just like a v-plow or a box spreader – that will allow contractors to do their jobs better and stabilize their profit margins," says Jeff Hodgson, president of the Chicago Weather Brokerage, a firm that specializes in solutions for enabling companies to manage their exposure to unpredictable weather and who is actively brokering these new CME snowfall contracts to contractors in the snow and ice removal market.

Hodgson sat down with Mike Zawacki, editor of *Snow Magazine*, *Lawn & Landscape's* sister publication, to answer some of the common questions he's been encountering from the professional snow removal market.

So how would CME snowfall contracts work for the average snow removal contractor? Conceptually, the idea is pretty simple.

Pay-per-push and/or hourly business runs the risk of too little snow. If it doesn't snow, you don't service your accounts and thus your billing/revenue suffers. Therefore, you would want to purchase CME snowfall contracts that pay out in the event monthly and/or seasonal snowfall totals are below a predetermined level.

Conversely, all-inclusive business has an unlimited risk to the upside in the event your area is hit with a tremendous amount of snow. CME snowfall contracts can then be purchased on the upside to achieve a payout if it snows above a predetermined level.

Very interesting. For snow contractors is there a minimum spend level? Presently, there is not a minimum dollar value, but rather a minimum number of contracts one must buy/sell.

Transactions must be equal to or greater than 20 contracts. Therefore, if each contract costs \$1,000, the total transaction size is \$20,000. If the contract costs \$6,000, the transaction size would be \$120,000.

CWB is working diligently on designing a solution to trade this market on a smaller scale. We hope to have this rolled out for winter 2010-11.



Hodgson

This sounds an awful lot like insurance. And hasn't this been tried before in the industry?

The concept is similar in nature to insurance in that it offers companies protection from adverse conditions, weather in this case. Frankly, I have always thought of insurance as protection from something you did not want to happen. In this sense, CME snowfall contracts are very similar to insurance.

Pay-per-push business has a risk of too little snow and seasonal accounts have the risk from too much snow. This product offers a cost-effective solution to protect your business from what you don't want to happen. CME exchange traded snowfall contracts – binary options – are an entirely new concept. By having a product trade on the world's leading and most diverse financial exchange you avoid counter-party risk and have a competitive bidding process for the best price. Additionally, unlike insurance this offers professional snow contractors much greater flexibility to trade in and out of positions.

This product has only recently debuted in the industry. How has it been received so far? I have been amazed at how quickly snow contractors not only see the value in the risk management opportunities within the contracts, but also in how it becomes an advantage to their business.

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business world has become commoditized whereby companies seem to compete merely on price. This product enables a company to grow its business in a risk-managed environment all the while offering its clients a competitive price. Because of this, I believe we will see exponential growth in this product for next winter as many companies in-

corporate CME snowfall contracts into their bidding efforts.

These contracts deal with snowfall accumulation. Ice is a big part of many contractors' winter business. Do the contracts also take ice into consideration? Yes, snow and ice are components of the measurement stations. Many contractors have asked if

there is an ice factor built into the measurement process, such as a half-inch of ice equates to 12 inches of snow, but that is not the case.

Snow and ice measurements are factored in on a gross basis. Those payer-push and/or hourly businesses that purchase downside protection from low levels of snow can benefit due to an increase in ice over snow. They will be servicing their accounts for deicing needs yet profiting on their snowfall contracts. However, this would not be beneficial to all-inclusive accounts that have purchased upside protection from too much snow.

When you talk with snow contractors about CME snowfall contracts, what are their top questions? The obvious question is how much the contracts will cost and how many they should purchase. Many companies have not quantified their weather-related exposure. What does 1 inch of snow mean to your company – is that \$10,000 of profit or \$100,000 of profit?

Educating the marketplace on the tradable snowfall market is a two-way effort. Contractors enlighten me on their business and I am showing them how the deployment of CME snowfall contracts can be incorporated into their business.

It's all about transferring risk to normalize your revenue stream and predictability of earnings.

Any recommendations for contractors? It's important to know your numbers – risk, revenue, margins, fixed costs and variable costs. Only when you have a handle on your numbers will you know whether CME snowfall contracts make sense for your business. **L**

The author is editor of *Snow Magazine*. Send him an e-mail at mzawacki@gje.net.

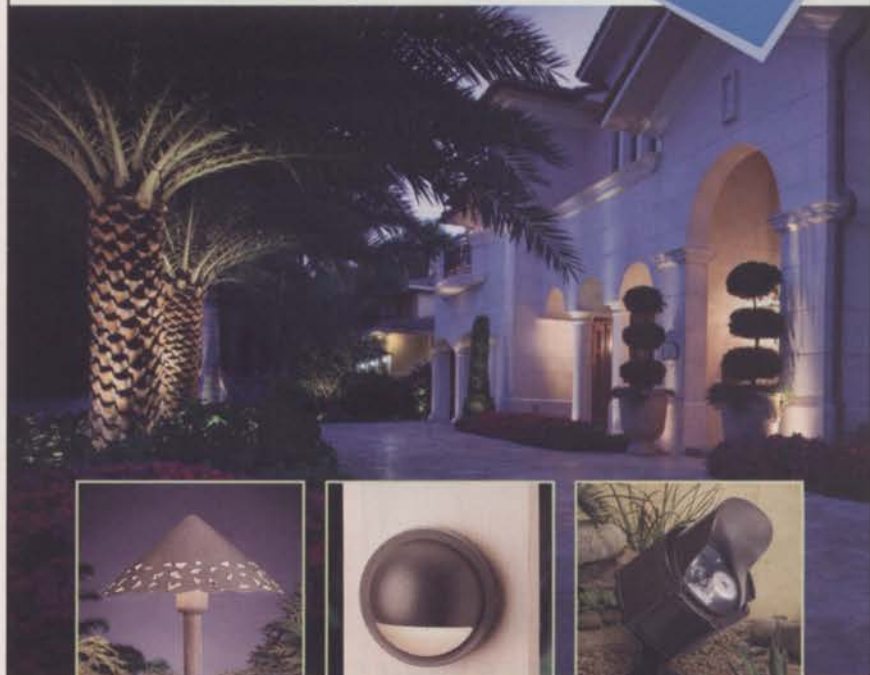
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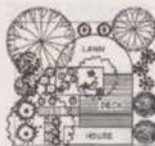


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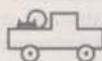
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Carson by Oldcastle Precast Enclosure Solutions	www.oldcastleprecast.com/enclosure-solutions	114	88	New Holland Construction	www.newholland.com	89	75
Chicago Weather Brokerage	www.cwbrokerage.com	117*	93*	Northern Turf Equipment	www.northernturfequipment.com	57	45
Clip Software	www.clip.com	123	99	Nufarm	www.nufarm.com	30, 31	28, 29
Collier Metal Specialties	www.colmet.com	86, 131	74, 113	Oregon Fine Fescue Commission	www.oregonfinefescue.org	11	15
Converted Organics	www.convertedorganics.com	33	32	PBI/Gordon Corp.	www.pbigordon.com	16, 95	19, 78
Corona Clipper	www.coronaclipper.com	108	85	Pine Hall Brick	www.pinehallbrick.com	63	50
Danuser	www.danuser.com	66	54	Pivo Trim	www.oregonchain.com	75	68
DIG Corporation	www.digcorp.com	43	37	Plant Health Care	www.planthealthcare.com	64	52
Dixie Chopper/Magic Circle	www.dixiechopper.com	23	25	Primera Turf	www.primeraturf.coop	121	96
DuPont Professional Products	www.proproducts.dupont.com	103*	83*	PRO Landscape/Drafix	www.drafix.com	2	10
Earthway Products	www.earthway.com	122	98	Quali-Pro	www.quali-pro.com	113	89
Echo	www.echo-usa.com	64	51	Rain Bird	www.rainbird.com	15, 17, 19, 140	18, 20, 23, 115
Ensystem	www.ensystem.com	79	70	Real Green Systems	www.realgreen.com	62	49
Exakttime	www.jobclock.com	45	59	Red Max (Zenoah America)	www.redmax.com	93	77
Exmark	www.exmark.com	65	53	RND Signs	www.rndsigns.com	52	41
Ferris Industries	www.ferrisindustries.com	37, 39	33, 34	Savalawn	www.savalawn.com	125	105
First Products	www.1stproducts.com	74	66	Sidewalk Sleever	www.sidewalksleeper.com	68	61
Forestry Suppliers	www.forestry-suppliers.com	27	27	SourceOne (Plugr)	www.sourceonex.com	14	17
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Go iLawn	www.goilawn.com	8	13	Tafco Equipment Co.	www.tafcoequip.com	18	21
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Hustler Turf Equipment	www.hustlerturf.com	101	81	Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting	www.vistapro.com	70	57
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K&M Manufacturing	www.tractorseats.com	123	102	Western Nursery & Landscape Association	www.wnla.org	86	73
Kawasaki Motors	www.kawpower.com	85	72	Westheffer Co.	www.westheffer.com	32	31
Kichler Lamp and Lighting	www.kichler.com	130	109	Wright Mfg.	www.wrightmfg.com	59	46
L T Rich Products	www.z-spray.com	32	30				

* Denotes regional advertising

The 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver wrapped up at the end of February, and close observers – at least those with an eye for plants – would have spotted the green bouquets handed to the medal winners at the podium.

The Vancouver Olympic Committee ordered 1,800 of the bouquets, which contain, according to *Canadian Florist* magazine: green hypericum berries, green spider mums and broad leaf greens. The foliage consists of leatherleaf fern, loops of monkey grass and aspidistra leaves.

Here's a list of facts about the bouquets:

- The inspiration behind the Vancouver 2010 athlete floral bouquets is to showcase flowers and greenery grown in British Columbia and Canada.

- For the 2010 Winter Games, 1,800 bouquets in total will be made with 1,707 awarded to athletes (1,055 Olympic and 652 Paralympic).

- The bouquets are presented to the top three athletes by members of the international sport federations shortly after they compete. The bouquets are designed to showcase British Columbia and Canada and be taken home by the athletes as a cherished keepsake, or tossed to spectators

who are cheering them on.

- The athlete bouquets are a required element for Victory Ceremonies by the IOC at all Winter Games. At Summer Games, medal-winning athletes receive a bouquet as well

as an olive wreath. Under IOC technical and protocol rules, the bouquets must be 20 to 30 centimeters long and about 25 centimeters in diameter.

- Organizing Committees are encouraged to design and use plants that represent the region where the games are being held.

- Flowers and greenery with little fragrance and pollen count are generally preferred since they lessen the chance of allergic reactions. VANOC wanted to wrap the bouquets in dried cedar but learned some people



OLYMPIC FLOWERS

can have severe reactions to the oil found in the bark, so the idea was nixed.

- Long stems of grey and white pussy willows, known for their furry catkins, that grow wild across the country were also considered but dropped because of safety issues – when a bouquet is tossed into the crowd it could cause injury if it contains pointy materials.

Greener and smarter

A new study shows that being outside and around the natural world improves our ability to think. The basic premise is that nature – filled with things like trees, flowers and birds – captures our involuntary attention; you don't have to stop and think about everything you see. This allows our attention to refresh itself in a way and gives your prefrontal cortex a break.

Walking through a crowded city – or, one could argue, working in your office – you're required to constantly think about everything: avoiding obstacles (traffic), ignoring the irrelevant (the radio) and trying not to get lost (where'd I put that GPS?).

Here's the abstract of a new paper in *Psychological Science*, by Marc Berman, John Jonides and Stephan Kaplan:

"Attention Restoration Theory (ART) provides an analysis of the kinds of environments that lead to

improvements in directed-attention abilities. Nature, which is filled with intriguing stimuli, modestly grabs attention in a bottom-up fashion, allowing top-down directed-attention abilities a chance to replenish.

"Unlike natural environments, urban environments are filled with stimulation that captures attention dramatically and additionally requires directed attention (e.g., to avoid being hit by a car), making them less restorative.

"We present two experiments that show that walking in nature or viewing pictures of nature can improve directed-attention abilities as measured with a backwards digit-span task and the Attention Network Task, thus validating Attention Restoration Theory."

The study – "The Cognitive Benefits of Interacting with Nature" – will be published in a forthcoming edition of *Psychological Science*.

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