

JULY 2019

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THE

WATER

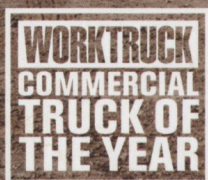
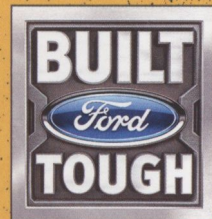
ISSUE

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THE WATER ISSUE

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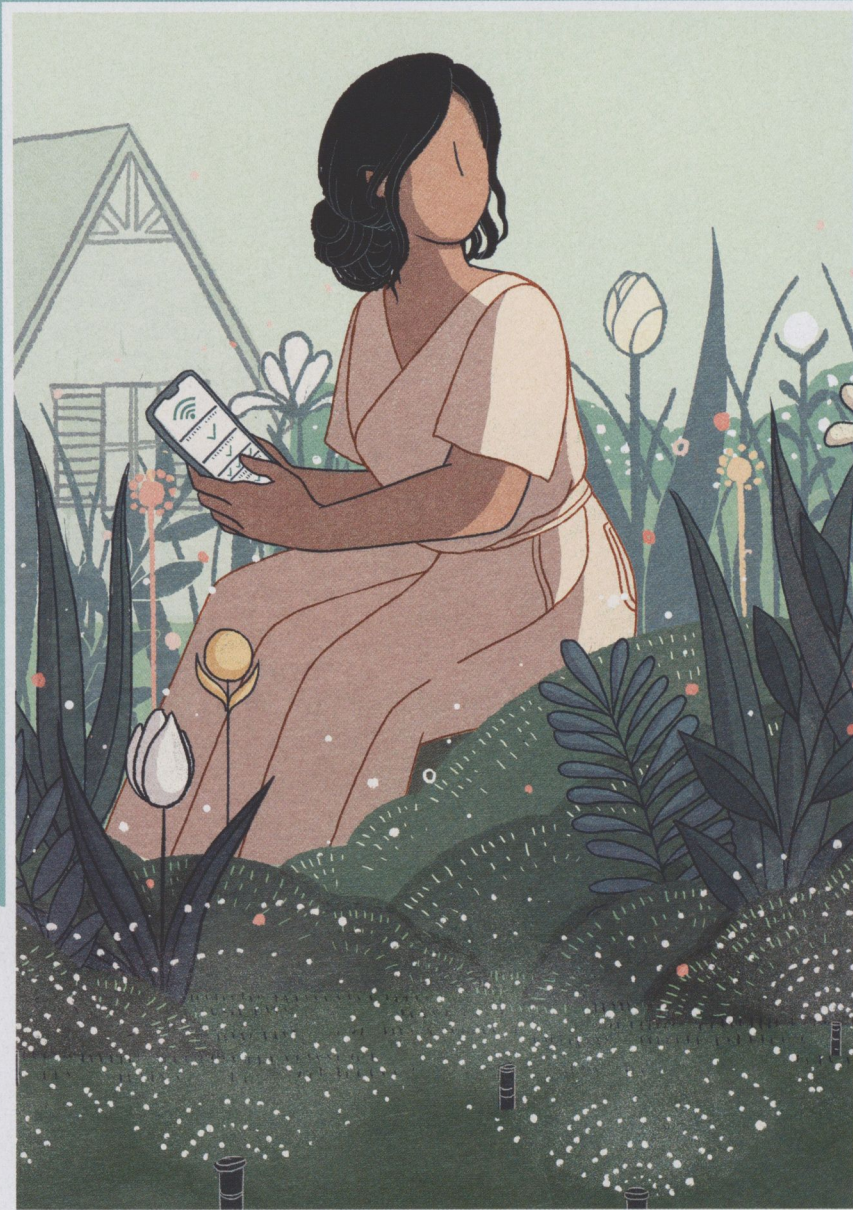
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➔ Nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen can promote excessive plant growth. Pg. 38

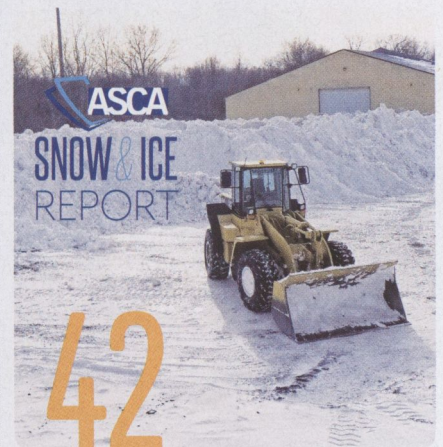
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Brian Horn
Editor, Lawn & Landscape

Maybe you have already invested in a software program but want to learn about it, or you have no clue where to start – you'll find a home at this conference.

Coming soon

If there is a word I hear more than “labor” when it comes to this industry, it’s technology. Now that word can mean many things to many people. Everything from software, to drones, to battery-powered equipment, it’s a word with many layers – all layers that people in this industry are increasingly curious about.

A few months ago, we hosted a virtual conference which featured landscapers presenting on how they integrated different technologies into their companies. We had almost 700 people sign up to attend. It was a sign to us that the people in this industry want to learn more about the topic.

So, from February 19-21, we’ll host our inaugural Lawn & Landscape Technology Conference in Orlando, Florida. The conference will focus on presentations from green industry professionals about how they have become more efficient by using different technologies.

Whether it’s going paperless, getting buy-in from employees on new software, or converting to an all-electric crew, the conference will give you the opportunity to learn first-hand from landscapers how to make a change.

Maybe you have already invested in a software program but want to learn about it, or you have no clue where to start – you’ll find a home at this conference.

What will be most valuable is the networking that will take place. Like-minded people from the industry will be in one place and have the opportunity to share ideas with each other on a specific topic.

You can meet people from similar-size companies, who aren’t a competitor, and pick each other’s brains on what challenges and solutions you’ve found with products or approaches.

There will also be an exhibit space where you can speak with vendors and learn about what they have available.

You can turn to pages 8 and 9 to see our ad announcing the event. We’ll have more details at lltechconference.com in the near future.

We are all really excited here at Lawn & Landscape to be able to bring focused education on a topic you want to learn more about.

We hope to see you in Orlando this February.
– Brian Horn

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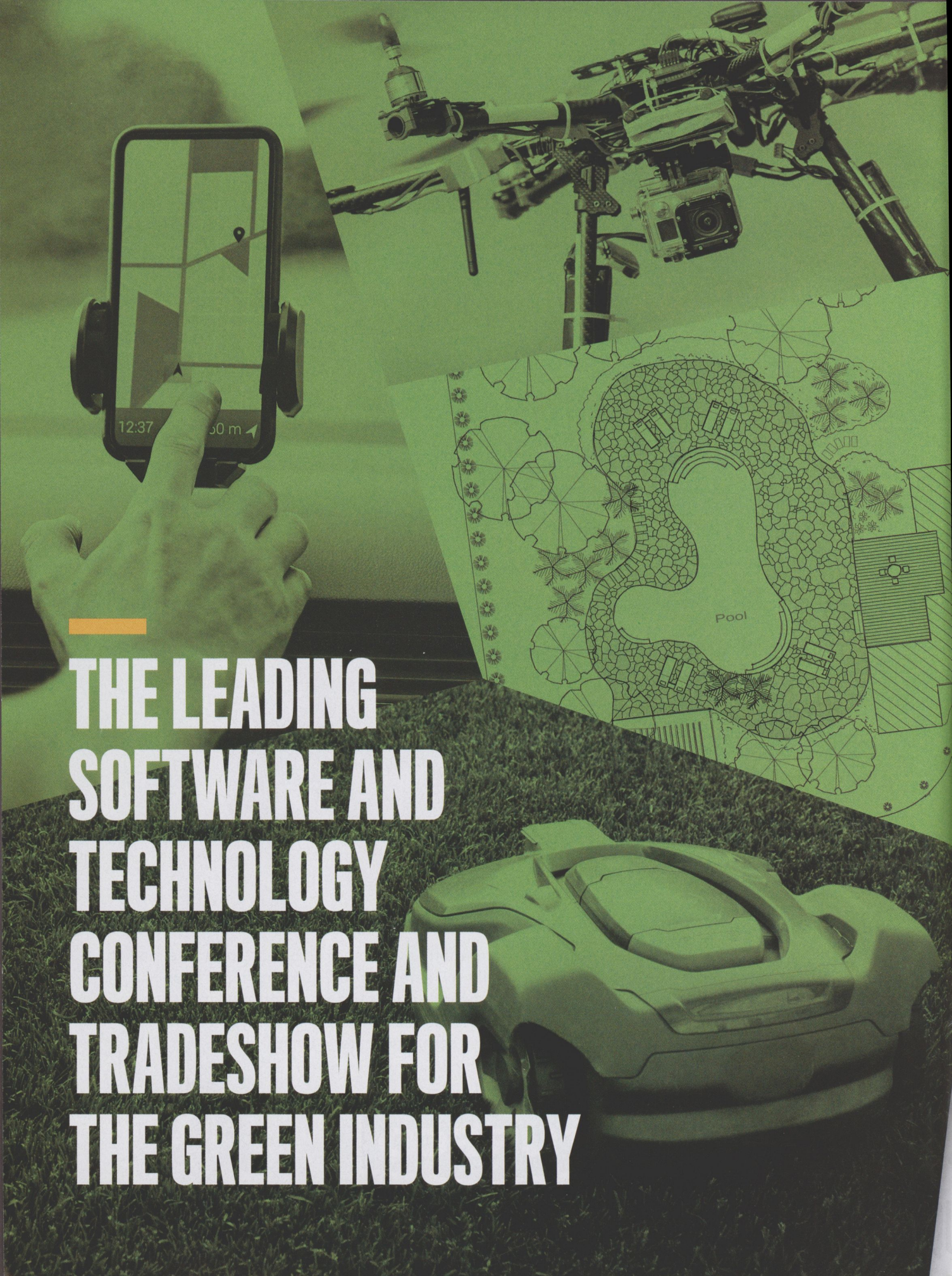
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FIVE THINGS YOUR WEBSITE SHOULD SAY

Changing the way you look at your website's content can position you as a leader among your competition. **By Lauren Rathmell**

At Lawn & Landscape's 2019 Top 100 Executive Summit, Marcus Sheridan said that 70 percent of the clients you meet with have already decided if they're going to buy your service.

Sheridan, a full-time professional speaker and also the co-owner of IMPACT and River Pools and Spas, encouraged attendees to consider a different approach to marketing their services. Simply put, the work in closing sales and building relationships starts on your website. If you think like a consumer, you'll realize buyers care about five key things:

1. Cost
2. Problems
3. Comparisons
4. Reviews
5. Getting the best

"Your site content should be 80 percent aligned with those big five," he said. These topics move buying decisions no matter what the industry is.

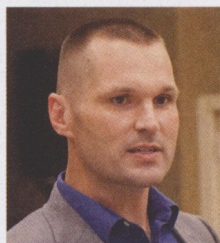
If your site content doesn't answer those questions for the buyer, you're missing out on potential sales. Here's a few tips from Sheridan to make your website a channel for landing more sales. With these in mind, he says he was able to make River Pools and Spas the most trafficked pool installation website in the world.

ADDRESS THE COMPETITION.

This might seem counter-intuitive, but providing your site visitors with a clear depiction of your competitors will position you as an expert in the field. Sheridan created an article detailing his biggest pool installation competitors. Instead of looking at it like free publicity for the competition, the page views showed he was getting his audience's attention.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM.

It may help to address some of the negatives of the services you



MARCUS SHERIDAN, THE CO-OWNER OF IMPACT AND RIVER POOLS AND SPAS, SAYS THINKING LIKE A CONSUMER WILL HELP YOU BUILD BETTER RELATIONSHIPS AND CLOSE SALES ONLINE.

offer. For the green industry, this could mean not shying away from the negative press surrounding chemical use in lawn care.

KNOW WHAT PEOPLE ARE SEARCHING FOR. If you have an idea of how your potential clients are searching for services online, you can cater your web content toward those searches. Sheridan said searches have shifted toward more “me” specific queries. For example, your audience is starting their search with “should I,” “can I,” or “do I need” phrases.

BECOME THE MOST TRUSTED VOICE IN YOUR MARKET. “If they ask, you’d better answer,” Sheridan said. If not, the potential customer will go somewhere else.

YOU NEED MORE CONTENT. Sheridan shared a statistic showing people who read 30 or more pages of a website will buy the service 80 percent of the time. 30 pages may seem like a lot, but Sheridan also suggested having a role in your business strictly for content creation.



ASV DEBUTS NEW CTL AT PRESS EVENT

The VT-70 High Output machine is the company’s second vertical lift compact track loader.

By Jimmy Miller

GRAND RAPIDS, Minn. – Over two years removed from producing its first vertical lift compact track loader, ASV has done it again with its VT-70 High Output machine.

The CTL was debuted at the company’s first ever press event in May. Production Line Manager Buck Storlie said ASV had plenty of radial-track models – seven to be exact – but wanted

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to expand its vertical track offerings to help people with high-lift applications. He also said this project took roughly 12 months to complete, though ASV did already have its VT-70, which it launched in 2017, as the starting point for designing the new High Output machine.

“That middle segment of vertical lift track loaders, we see the numbers out there,” Storlie said. “It’s a high-volume class of machines. There’s a lot of guys in that.”

ASV will start production on the VT-70 High Output this month and customers must ask their dealers about a retail price. The model is powered by a 74.3 horsepower, turbocharged Deutz engine and has a more comfortable cab than its predecessor. The VT-70 High Output vehicle’s rated operating capacity at 50 percent is 3,325 pounds and offers a tipping load of 6,650 pounds.

The 15-foot track is entirely composed of rubber compound and co-polymer cords, plus it’s shaped with all-purpose treads to withstand work in any condition. Staying true to its “All Seasons Vehicles” brand name, the machine is built to withstand a range in temperature from -30 degrees Fahrenheit to 118 degrees.

Storlie said the company has plenty of clients in Texas and a surprising amount in places like Australia, but they also designed the vehicle to withstand cold conditions like those often found at their 65-acre test facility in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The machine offers a side-by-side cooling system with its radiator and oil cooler.

Storlie said they also have

designed their machines to limit damage to the ground, as the VT-70 High Output machine produces 4.6 psi in ground pressure.

At one point during the press presentation, Storlie showed a video of one of their older machines doing a 360-degree spin on his own backyard turf to prove he’s not worried about damage.

“Following (the original VT-70), we started looking at, ‘How can we continue to improve this?’” Storlie said. “We’re looking at a new engine configuration, more cooling to cool the increased horsepower, and more reliability testing to make sure the machine is capable of taking the things you throw at it.”

NICE TO MEET YOU. On one of its slides during the press event, ASV displayed its full business timeline, detailing each step of a tumultuous journey.

“One of the biggest questions that we get when we go into a show or another event is, ‘Who are you people?’” said Justin Rupp, the company’s vice president of sales and marketing.

Forgive them for being confused. In a way, the press event also marked an informal reintroduction to the ASV brand. It’s been a winding path for the company, which first launched 35 years ago but was purchased by Terex in 2008. ASV absolved its branding to become a part of Terex’s company. In 2014, that acquisition became a joint venture with Manitex, and a year later, ASV was able to bring back its original brand name.

“So at this point, we’re kind of responsible for our own destiny,” said Regan Meyer, ASV’s dealer development and marketing

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manager. "That can be a really scary thing, but it can be a really empowering thing, too. There's a lot of pride, there's a lot of fun in having that ASV brand name back again."

Meyer said the company has always had loyalists dedicated to ASV through all the name changes and rebrands, plus she said ASV is particularly appealing to the small business market. She said the company had no dealers in 2015 when they reintroduced the brand, but now they're up to roughly 280 and counting.

"There's a lot of white space left in the country we have yet to cover," Meyer said. "If a dealer isn't within an hour radius of you, it's hard to get the product, so we want to eliminate those hurdles, get it where people can buy it, as fast as we can."

RISE PRESIDENT AARON HOBBS RESIGNS

Hobbs started his career at RISE in state government affairs but has been president since 2010.

Aaron Hobbs, the president of Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, announced his resignation in June via an email sent to RISE members.

"It has been a pleasure and honor to work with, and for you, this past decade. We've grown our industry, faced many challenges, and enjoyed many successes," Hobbs wrote in the email. "You have a great team to carry you into the future beginning with your peers serving on the Governing Board and Strategic Oversight Council and the staff team in Washington."

Hobbs started his career at RISE in state government affairs and was then selected to serve as president in 2010, taking over for longtime leader Allen James. During his tenure, Hobbs created a strategic plan that has guided the organization's tactical investments for the past five years. Hobbs helped lead the RISE team's development of the DebugtheMyths campaign, the ANDnotOR campaign and helped sharpen the issues management focus on for specialty pesticides and fertilizer.

The RISE Governing Board has named

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IN 2010, HOBBS WAS SELECTED TO TAKE OVER AS PRESIDENT AFTER LONGTIME LEADER ALLEN JAMES.

a transition committee that will be working with CropLife America to evaluate ways to enhance the service provided to RISE Members and the specialty pesticide and fertilizer industry.

“As public challenges to our industry’s ability to do business continue to grow, our need to work more closely, and more effectively, has never been greater,” members of the RISE Governing Board wrote in an email. “We welcome your thoughts as we move through this process and look forward to hearing and sharing more with you during the RISE annual meeting in August.”

YELLOWSTONE ACQUIRES TEXAS COMPANY

The Top 100 company added Native Land Design to its portfolio.

Yellowstone Landscape acquired Native Land Design earlier this year. The move expands Yellowstone’s growth opportunities in Austin, Houston, and McAllen, Texas.

“I met with a lot of great people during the process and Yellowstone stood out,” said Native’s founder, Ben Collinsworth. “We have very similar operations, people, software, processes and priorities. We are all very excited to continue in this journey with Yellowstone and believe we will be able to mutually benefit each other for years to come.”

Native Land Design focuses on commercial properties and was founded in 2001 with current revenue around \$15 million and a staff of 250 people. All employees at Native were retained following the move and there is no brand change for Native currently underway.

Late last year, Yellowstone acquired Somerset Landscape & Maintenance, a \$30-million company based in Chandler, Arizona. Yellowstone ranked No. 5 on Lawn & Landscape’s Top 100 list with 2018 revenue of \$230 million. Yellowstone is based in Palm Coast, Florida, but has multiple locations.

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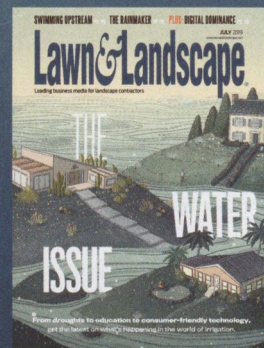


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continue to serve the Milwaukee market.

Joe Kujawa will serve as a member of Wilson's senior team and will be responsible for helping Bruce Wilson & Co.

bring to life the goals outlined for strategic growth across all its service offerings. He will also provide executive leadership in implementing a growth vision for peer

group education events and industry relations. He will consult with snow market leaders on winter services strategies and companies facing the unique challenges of a family-owned business.

"We are all delighted to welcome Joe to our team as we work together to bolster our expertise and strengthen our position as one of the top-ranked growth consultants in the green industry," said Bruce Wilson, the company's lead growth strategist. "Joe's own experience in CEO peer groups, his formidable industry relationships, and his depth of expertise will help us serve our clients in whatever capacity we can be most useful – whether as a trusted advisor to CEOs and leadership teams or as a hands-on coach."

"Making this career move aligns my personal beliefs with an organization that values and facilitates learning, and the transformational power continuous improvement has on the business environment," Joe Kujawa said. "I'm excited to be using my experience to help other snow and landscape companies inspire their teams, achieve their goals, and connect people, processes and technology to improve their financial performance."

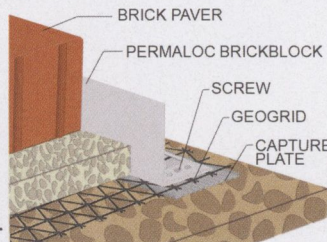
In addition to Joe's contributions to the landscape and snow industries, he serves as planning commissioner for the Village of Elm Grove, Wisconsin, and is a former member of the board of directors for the Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts in Brookfield, Wisconsin.

He will also be part of Bruce Wilson & Co.'s column in Lawn & Landscape, which you can read in this issue on pg. 20. **L&L**



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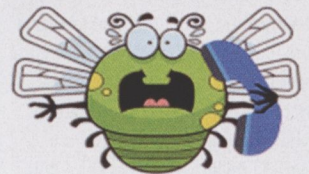


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A MILLION MORE

I LITERALLY JUST GOT OFF THE TELEPHONE with a young green industry entrepreneur. We'll call him George. He's been in business for five years and has one two-man mow crew and one two-man enhancement crew. His complaint was that he wasn't making any money and that he could barely make payroll.

George talked with my assistant, Ashley, last week and she set up today's telephone consultation as he thought that he could not afford to have me consult with him on-site. (Actually, he couldn't afford not to work with me, otherwise he'd probably be out of business by the end of this year). Ashley gave me some preliminary information about George and his company. I immediately knew what the problem was and was looking forward to working with this young man. I also knew that if George would implement what I told him, it would put an extra \$1 million in his pocket within the next 12 to 15 years.



JIM HUSTON runs J.R. Huston Consulting, a green industry consulting firm.

I asked George if he was married, had a significant other or a girlfriend. The answer to all three questions was "no." I told him that was a good thing because he couldn't even afford Happy Meals at McDonald's if he went on a date.

The good news was that, if he did what I told him to do, he'd be able to go on a very expensive date. I knew that a turn-around for him was possi-

ble because he was in a great market near Washington, D.C., and the same changes have helped hundreds of other green industry contractors improve their bottom line.

HOW IT WORKS IN THE FIELD. I started with his single two-man enhancement crew. **His pricing needed to be as the chart to the left shows.**

ANALYSIS. I told George that he needed to charge \$1,100 per crew day or \$550 per man-day. That translates to \$55 per man-hour or \$110 per crew-hour. And he needed to charge \$55 per man-hour for all twenty man-hours. This would give him a 20 percent net profit margin which was realistic for this kind of work in his market. If he needed to get a bit more competitive, he could drop his man-hour rate to \$50 or \$100 per crew-hour or \$1,000 per crew-day.

George told me that he was already charging \$55 per man-hour. But as it turned out, he was only charging \$55 per man-hour for 8 man-hours per day per man, not 10. He was not charging for two crew-hours per day or \$220.

2.0 MHRS PER DAY X 2 MEN X \$55 = 2.0 X 2 X 55 = \$220 PER DAY

CONCLUSION. George and I spent about an hour on the telephone. To his credit, he had a good man-hour rate as long as he was charging the client for all 10 man-hours per day per man. But he wasn't. He was underpricing his enhancement crew by at least \$200 per day. Let's see now.
\$200 PER DAY X 22 DAYS PER MONTH X 9 MONTHS = \$39,600 PER YEAR

Add in a similar shortfall for his mowing crew.
\$39,600 X 2 = \$79,200
\$1,000,000 ÷ 79,200 = 12.6 YEARS

In a little over twelve years, George would make an extra \$1 million. He'd not only enhance his clients' property, but he'd also enhance his bottom line if he implements what I showed him. With an extra \$1 million in his pocket, he not only could afford a high-maintenance girlfriend, he could also afford me.

Not bad for a one-hour phone call.

Contact me at the email address below for a free copy of the worksheet that I used to calculate the rates in this article. **L&L**

Contact Jim Huston at jhuston@glmedia.com

Crew average wage	\$17.50	
10% overtime factor	\$1.75	
10% Rick factor	\$1.75	
Sub-total	\$21.00	
25% Labor burden	\$5.25	
Sub-total	\$26.25	
x by 20 man-hours/day	x 20	Crew paid for 10 man-hours/day
Sub-total	\$525.00	Cost of field labor with burden/day
F-250 crew truck w/ trailer	\$112.00	\$14/hour x 8 hours/day
Edger, trimmer or blower	\$10.00	\$5/hour x 2 hours/day
Sub-total	\$647.00	Total direct cost (TDC)/day
G&A overhead cost/man-hour	\$240.00	\$12 OPH x 20 man-hours
Sub-total	\$887.00	Break-even point (BEP)
20% net profit margin (NPM)	\$222.00	
Daily Crew Rate	\$1,109.00	Call it \$1,100 per crew day

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SUCCESSFUL SUCCESSION

• **THERE ARE MORE THAN JUST FINANCIAL ISSUES** to consider when transitioning a family business. Beyond the mechanics of how to transfer ownership or sell the business to the next generation, the real challenge for a parent is less about the logic than the emotion. Owners tend to kick the can down the road and assume they can work it out when the time comes. This can be very frustrating and unfair to the next generation as well as to the business itself.

The best successions are a result of good planning, open communication among all parties and understanding everyone's expectations. Many business owners assume that one of their children will take over the business in the future. Before getting emotionally invested in this outcome, make sure that this is their dream as well.

ENGAGE ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

This step is critical. These include children working in the business (regardless of role), children not in the business and even their spouses. Grandchildren and other close relatives may also be considered depending on their age and career goals.

As one of the primary stakeholders, you will want to address all concerns, regardless of whether or not you agree with them. Be prepared



JOE KUJAWA is a senior facilitator with Bruce Wilson & Co. and former owner of a family business.

to deal with issues including equal versus fair, egos, money, family dynamics and timing, among others.

Many owners have the bulk of their wealth tied up in the business and everyone will have a different view on what they think is fair. You will need to reconcile how the owner gets paid for the business so that they can afford retirement, how wealth is transferred from the company to their estate to be shared by all the children, and how to not hamstring the next generation by removing all of the cash from the business so it can keep going strong.

BE FLEXIBLE AND DEFINE ROLES.

The transition plan should include a timeline with room for flexibility. Many owners have been known to agree to a deadline only to find out they are not ready to let go when the time comes. While the final decision on timing comes down to the current owner, they must recognize the impact a delay has on the business and the family.

Buyers must realize they can't force an unprepared seller; buyers get to decide if it is worth the wait. It is best to define clear roles and responsibilities for both generations. These definitions should evolve over time, giving increased responsibility and authority to the next generation. It helps prepare them for leadership by giving them training, tools and skills needed to be successful, and it allows the exit generation an opportunity to build trust in the new team while gradually reducing their daily responsibilities.

CONSTANTLY COMMUNICATE.

Throughout the process, communication is critical between generations and stakeholders. It can also

be helpful to find a trusted friend or colleague to review ideas or concerns. Several of my peer groups have multiple family businesses in the same group going through the transition simultaneously. A very healthy dialog happens between the owners in sharing their challenges of the transition and of the next generation sharing their frustrations transitioning into leadership.

Transition meetings scheduled away from the office with an outside facilitator or continuity consultant can be a great way to minimize frustrations by identifying and resolving conflicts and issues, tracking progress and adjusting the plan as necessary.

Family-owned businesses are the backbone of the landscape industry. Transitioning from one generation to the next presents even more challenges than a typical ownership change. Following these guidelines won't eliminate all problems and hurt feelings, but it should help minimize them. **L&L**

“**TRANSITIONING FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT PRESENTS EVEN MORE CHALLENGES THAN A TYPICAL OWNERSHIP CHANGE.**”

Contact Joe Kujawa at bwilson@gjmedia.com

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CONTENT MARKETING

• **WHETHER YOU'RE BUILDING OR RE-DESIGNING** your company website, there's more to the project than meets the eye. A shiny new home page, flashy photos and clever headlines are the wrapping paper to your website. However, the "content" found on your home page and linked areas of your website represent the prized gift. And it will be coveted as the gift that keeps on giving as long as you care for it.

Keeping your website relevant and current is a never-ending challenge. It requires long-term thinking, and, contrary to popular belief, there's no silver bullet. It takes creativity, attention to detail, consistency and substance. It's called content marketing.

Content marketing includes the creation and sharing of online content or stories such as videos, blogs, and social media posts.

It does not explicitly promote your company brand; rather, it's intended to stimulate interest in your products or services. Useful content to attract and retain your target audience should be a core essential of your company's marketing efforts.

Ultimately, you're providing information to help your prospects and customers solve issues or fill needs.

WHAT IS AND ISN'T CONTENT MARKETING?

Content marketing is:

- Educational. It's not about the products the company sells, coupons, etc.
- About your audience...what do they care about?
- Consistent.



CINDY CODE focuses on marketing and public relations for the Harvest Group.

Content marketing is not:

- Product brochure and/or product descriptions.
- Static.
- Focused on making sales.

Content not only reinforces your company's message and demonstrates your expertise to current and potential clients, but it can also deliver additional benefits.

- Content can give you a recruiting edge
- Content can help boost company morale
- Content opens up lines of communication
- Content fosters trust

7 KEYS FOR EFFECTIVE CONTENT MARKETING

1. Create a plan for a targeted audience:

Rather than leaping in feet first, take time to identify your target audience. Is your company focused on residential, commercial or both?

What do you want your prospects and customers to know about your business? How are you solving problems for your audience? Before you begin, create an editorial calendar with a list of topics and where and when you will post them.

2. Learn where and when to post:

Building your website content takes priority over social media content. Your first priority is to make sure your website reflects your story and your "why." That's because all of your marketing efforts should drive leads back to your website.

3. Quality over quantity: It's not a numbers game. Perhaps you'll start with one to two new website posts a week to give you experience and confidence then grow from there. The more good content that appears on your website, the more you'll have to work with for your social media posts.

4. Experiment and mix up your social media content:

Spice it up. Studies show that people frequent social media to be entertained. Even when posting about topics that seem less than exciting, you can still make them stand out. Use photos, videos, links, surveys, polls and questions.

Engagement is an ongoing task. You can't post 1 or 2 items and expect to have success. Make it a priority.

5. Focus on people, not search engines:

Often, businesses spend too much time trying to beat the search engine algorithms. Focus your time and energy on creating intelligent content that appeals to your customers.

6. Optimize your content with key words:

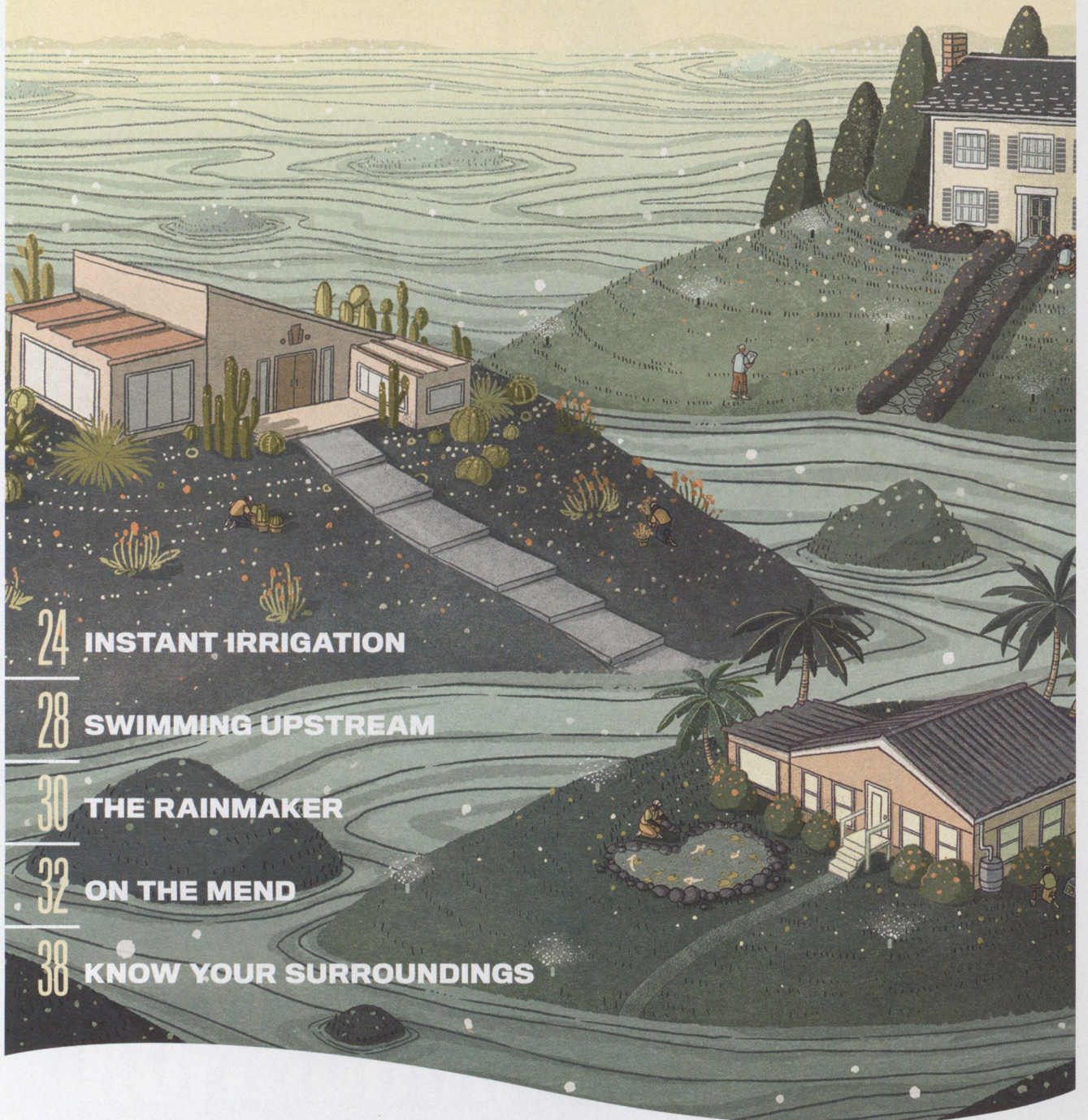
Key words are those that you identify internally and through research as the best key words to drive traffic to your site. Using these words consistently but not excessively will help your website gain more attention and click throughs.

7. Test, analyze and improve: Measure your contents' success against business drivers; things that matter to the success of your business. Create something people like and click on and they'll want more.

Remember, it takes time, attention and dedication. Don't continue to think you can get by without a content marketing strategy. It's clearly needed in today's marketing world. **L&L**

Contact Cindy Code at harvest@giemedia.com

THE WATER ISSUE



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The advanced irrigation technologies designed for large, commercial properties and golf sites have seeped into the residential space with simpler-to-use platforms.

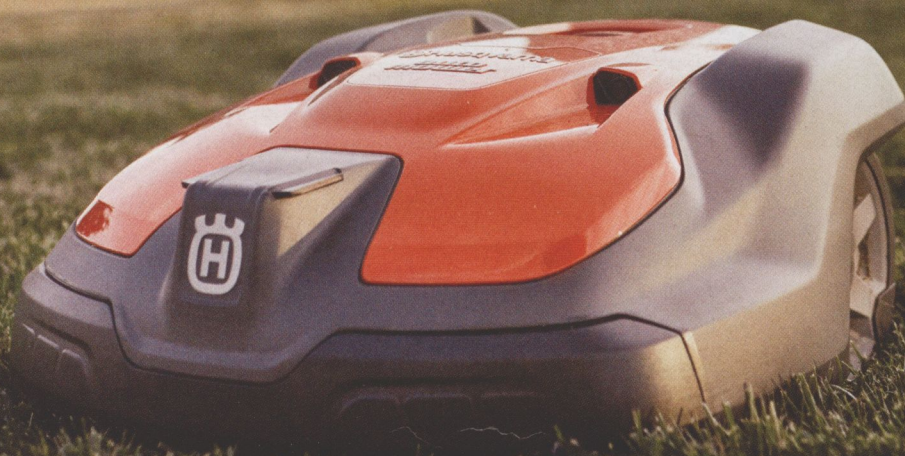


INSTANT IRRIGATION

Story by **Kristen Hampshire** • Illustration by **Christina Chung**

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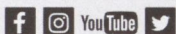


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READY WHEN YOU ARE



YOU KNOW WHO'S STANDING at your front door because your smart doorbell shows you. Fido won't go thirsty because you received an alert that the dog dish is empty that triggered a refill. Your laundry is washed – the machine just texted an update to your phone.

And, more good news, you saved your customers 40 percent on their water bills this year because of a smart irrigation controller with connected components that shut off the system based on soil moisture and weather conditions.

For some time now, remote access with Wi-Fi enabled irrigation controllers has been the norm in the golf and commercial space. But now, homeowners with modest-sized residential lawns can affordably connect their sprinkler system controllers with technology platforms that give them a similar power to adjust run times and identify system problems.

“Everyone wants to manage their lives remotely,” says Ben Sacks, associate product manager of controllers at Hunter Industries. “Irrigation contractors have a huge opportunity to sell the dream of controlling and managing your irrigation system from your phone.”

From soil sensor technology to connected flow sensors, and dashboards that give irrigation contractors tools to remotely managing customers' sprinklers, the world of Irrigation IoT (internet of things) is now available and affordable for homeowner clients. Irrigation contractors can provide more responsive, thorough customer service when their clients are on board.

“We are seeing technology that was expensive technology in the golf, agricultural and commercial markets get refined and drop into the residential segment,” says James Harris, global product manager of IoT controllers at Rain Bird. “As technologies continue to improve, it becomes more affordable for homeowners to have advance benefits.”

SMART SOIL SOLUTIONS. Soil science and soil awareness is the next frontier in the residential space, says Orion Goe, Toro's marketing manager for commercial and residential irrigation.

Soil moisture technology is an expected practice in the golf and sports field spaces. “Professional grounds managers have been using soil moisture sensors for a number of years to look at soil temperature, mineral content, soil moisture and a number of variables that, while important, probably is information overload for the residential customer,” he says.

Not to mention, the technology was cost-prohibitive for a typical homeowner until recently, when simplified and connected soil sensing technology came on to the market. “Now, soil sensor technology has reached a scale where it is accessible and cost-effective for residential contractors and their homeowner customers,” Goe says.

Goe calls soil moisture information a “vital sign” of turf health. It's a sign that most homeowners completely ignore because residential customers generally base their opinion of turf health on grass color. But what lies beneath, as irrigation contractors know, can significantly alter how often an irrigation system actually needs to run.

So, there is a significant potential for residential customers to save on water bills if

their system is detecting soil moisture levels and adjusting run times accordingly.

When smart soil sensors were implemented on customers' irrigation systems – turning the water on or off based on data – customers' average annual water savings was 25 to 35 percent. Savings were a bit less if the system already had a weather station in place.

The sensor is wirelessly connected to the irrigation controller, and an irrigation contractor can simply push it into the ground with no digging required. Installation is simple, and the information is power.

"When we know how the soil is doing, we have a better indication of turf health, which helps contractors better manage the turf and save water," Goe says.

KNOW THE FLOW. Flow sensors that were previously reserved for larger commercial properties have come down to the residential market, and Harris says this is an untapped opportunity for irrigation contractors and their homeowner clients. "With a (connected) flow sensor, a controller can be notified of the average amount of flow that should be going through the system, and when it knows that average, it can monitor for situations where that amount is lower or higher," Harris says.

High flow can indicate a leak or break. Perhaps a component is dislodged or broken. "This can waste a lot of water, and on top of that, it can damage property," Harris says.

A controller with a flow sensor can detect high/low water flow and react by shutting down specific, affected zones. "We have tried to design the flow sensors so they are very simple to use," Harris says. Basically, once connected to the controller, the flow sensors "memorize" the flow for each water station. After this initial setup, which happens automatically, the system begins monitoring flow.

"So, it's easy to be use, and it's almost an insurance policy against high-water events," Harris says. "Contractors should make sure that customers are aware of flow sensors because it's a real benefit, and it can help contractors improve their relationships with customers."

CONNECTED TO SAVINGS. Wireless water management is not only accessible for homeowners – it's the way of the future, and can be a major labor-saving, efficiency tool for irrigation contractors. Sacks points out that contractors can market system upgrades to customers, who will realize an ROI because during the course of a year, those who adopt these technologies see big savings on their water bills.

"It's a paradigm shift," Sacks says, adding that there are some potential obstacles to implementing wireless irrigation systems. Namely, when connectivity to Wi-Fi is spotty, homeowners might require a Wi-Fi booster or extender, or they might need to reposition a router to improve a connection.

ON CALL, REMOTELY. Not only do smart irrigation upgrades save water and give customers a real-time connection to what's going on with their systems, but contractors can generate more revenue when clients adopt the technology. Irrigation technicians can manage multiple properties from a single platform, Sacks says.

"You can see all of your customers at a glance," Sacks says. "The system has visual indicators so you can see Mr. Smith's residence is red and that means you need to send him a text or email and say, 'Check your router or controller,' or you can send a notification that his system has high flow. You have the ability to gather information

about each individual property." Some homeowners might want to control their own systems and appreciate the notifications. Others prefer an irrigation contractor to field and act on the alerts, and this is possible. Systems can be adjusted remotely.

"The ability to monitor and interact with a system remotely from off-site via a phone, tablet or computer is a big step forward," Goe says. "In essence, you can do everything remotely that you would do on location, save installing new hardware. You can program systems, check their status – those capabilities are literally in the palms of a contractor's hands, and that is a value-added piece for homeowners."

Goe likens it to a virtual checkup. Rather than spending time on a site that's up and running efficiently, they can focus on areas that require improvement for saving water and improving plant health.

Contractors can be first to recognize an issue rather than waiting for a customer call. "It's valuable when a contractor can say, 'Hey, I noticed something is happening to your irrigation system, can I come out?'" Goe says, "as opposed to a homeowner calling to say, 'Something's wrong with my system. You need to come out.'"

"This technology positions irrigation contractors to be the best service providers they can be," Goe says. "We're all in business to help homeowners so they can enjoy their landscapes." **L&L**

The latest smart controllers can be paired with soil monitors and flow sensors to provide clients and techs with all the information they need remotely.





Contractors and educators alike are trying to find ways to properly teach irrigation methods to college students.

JUST A FEW WEEKS AGO, Kansas State’s Cathie Lavis addressed a room full of homeowners and contractors to give them the basics on irrigation work.

Lavis says – pun intended – that she was trying to “water down” the presentation to make sure nothing went over anybody’s head. The information she shared would give them enough background knowledge to keep their lawns green and that’s about it. But some of the contractors seemed to already know how to do what Lavis told them, and they clearly had worked in the industry for several years and had plenty of experience.

Yet what Lavis could still teach them was equally important, and when questioned about it, it was something the contractors weren’t confident in answering. Lavis says many of them all knew the how – but the why they did each step was lost.

“I always tell my students if you know how to do something, you’ll have a job,” Lavis says. “If you know why, you’ll be the owner or the boss.”

Lavis teaches landscape management at Kansas State, including an irrigation basics course that’s mandatory for each student. They cover as much basic information as she can cram into a semester and it still feels like it’s not enough time to dig deep. Lavis says it’s essential information for any of her students because “pipe doesn’t know where it is.”

In other words, it doesn’t matter if you manage a golf course, a nursery, or maintain residential lawns. You’ve got to know enough of the basics to field questions from clients and best serve them.

“Of course, you can learn these things (in

swimming UPSTREAM

Story by **Jimmy Miller**

Most horticulture programs only touch on irrigation basics, this despite the fact there are plenty of jobs in irrigation available for graduates.

Walla Walla Community College is one of the only colleges or universities in the country that offers a specialized irrigation degree.

LEFT: Students learn how to install drip irrigation with a hands-on exercise.



the field),” she says, “but you’re going to be way ahead if you know the why’s.”

A LIMITED CHOICE. Lavis says her students that expressed interest in irrigation tech work are usually recruited aggressively. But students who want to actively seek out a degree specialization in irrigation management have limited choices: They could go to Walla Walla Community College in Washington or Modesto Junior College in California, which just launched its new program.

And that’s about it, Stockdale says.

“We wrestle with, ‘Why aren’t people beating down the door?’” says Dave Stockdale, the director of Walla Walla’s Water & Environmental Center. “Any of the students we graduate get picked up instantly with jobs.”

Walla Walla offers a variety of programs relevant to irrigation, but its irrigation management degree is a two-year Associate’s degree that’s focused on training people to work in agricultural, residential and commercial careers. The college has offered the program

since 1977 and students must be physically present in class to attend.

However, the school also just started its short certificate program that students can take online this fall. Stockdale says it focuses on five key areas: irrigation principles, fluid dynamics, pump applications, drip irrigation and irrigation design. At the end of the full academic year – which is how long it’ll take for students to complete the course – there’s a capstone project that must be completed to receive the certificate.

This could be good for incumbent workers who want to further their irrigation education, Stockdale says. The online component, though rigid in class sequence, allows for more flexibility in scheduling as students can do this on their own time.

Students will send photos and videos of them implementing the knowledge from online courses to professors for homework assignments, so Stockdale says students will still receive the hands-on experience required to learn irrigation techniques.

KNOWING THE MARKET. Lavis agrees that there are plenty of open irrigation jobs, but she also thinks another part of the problem is that students don’t know those jobs exist.

“When most students come into our program specifically or they’re on the K-State campus and they hear about horticulture, most of them have no idea of the opportunities,” Lavis says. “Most parents, when they sit in my office, are flabbergasted when I say, ‘Your student will probably get at least six job offers and will make a good living.’”

And for those who are getting into irrigation anyway, Stockdale says prospective students are just learning on the job instead of in the classroom. While they both acknowledge there are some benefits to this experiential learning, Lavis says students are missing a tremendous amount of knowledge by not taking the degree and going into the field anyway.

“There’s a lot of people that think, ‘I don’t need a college degree for that. Why would I spend all that money?’” Lavis says. “So it’s (about) refreshing people on why that college degree is valuable.”

Lavis says contractors should work with universities and high schools to show the job opportunities available in the field. She also recommends attending events like the National Collegiate Landscape Competition to specifically talk about career opportunities.

Stockdale says irrigation is more complicated than people realize, so they’re often overwhelmed early in their careers as irrigation technicians because they didn’t spend enough time learning about the principles that could be taught in classes. If they took the chance on that education though, Stockdale says he’s confident they’d pick up the necessary information to work at and possibly lead successful companies.

“I think there’s more to it than people realize, which is why people aren’t pursuing (education),” Stockdale says, “but if they pursue it, they’ll realize they can become an expert and a leader in an industry that is still growing.” **L&L**



the RAINMAKER

An Illinois contractor invented his own stormwater management system to collect and harness the power of rainwater.

Story by **Arricca Elin SanSone**

There are plenty of options to manage stormflow, but McClain says his system is the only one that will pay you back with rainwater harvesting.

IN 2003, Kevin McClain started examining the available stormwater management systems that his company, Southside Landscaping, were required to use on construction projects and found them lacking. "I felt there were some real improvements that could be made to what was out there," he says. "Some of the things I began recommending to the engineers on specific sites were implemented, but I felt I had more to bring to the table."

Specifically, McClain installs his recently patented invention, the Storm Water Interceptor.

McClain began educating himself in the fields of civil engineering, fluid processing and soil science in an attempt to understand how to best manage stormwater. "In most states, you're mandated legally to manage stormflow. You have to do something. You can use a pond, permeable pavers, a bioswale, rain garden, or other choices to minimize the impact of the site," McClain says. "But rainwater harvesting will pay you back. That's the only system that will do so."

What really pushed him to focus on rainwater harvesting and stormwater management was a trip out west in 2005. "I visited a preserve for the wild American Mustang in South Dakota, and I saw how the Cheyenne River that passes through the area was silty and turbid due to environmental damage," McClain says. "They were trucking water in for these horses from Wyoming. It was an eye opener. I felt I had to do something."

McClain started designing his Storm Water Interceptor shortly after that. The system collects rainwater from the roof or areas such as permeable paved surfaces. Water is then directed into large underground storage chambers. The tanks range from 5,000 gallons to 742,000 gallons, with 15,000 to 21,000 gallons being an average size. After filtering, the collected water is used for irrigation. For



Following a trip to a wild American Mustangs preserve in South Dakota, McClain educated himself in civil engineering, fluid processing and soil science to invent the Storm Water Interceptor.

every gallon of water that goes through the irrigation system, 65 percent is recaptured into underground storage within 24 hours.

The entire system is fully automatic, as are its supporting subsystems, which McClain also developed. This includes components such as underground tank disinfection, above-grade water disinfection and automatic irrigation head cleaning. Control panels monitor issues like water purification and, as necessary, manage movement of water to irrigation or stormwater management.

While irrigation manufacturers have focused on making systems as efficient as possible, McClain says his system is an alternate approach. "Our initial product, rainwater, is free. We clean it up, we use it for irrigation, we collect it again, and we clean it up and use

it again. So, we're saving domestic water fees and taxes and reducing the amount of water on the stormwater discharge side," he says.

What McClain says is particularly noteworthy about his system is the patented bounce water filtration system. "Bounce filtration is unlike other filter methods; it uses water velocity and water movement to filter rainwater," McClain says. "Bounce filtration is the key to rainwater harvesting. If you can't get the water clean enough to use, there's no sense collecting it in the first place."

McClain's company designs and builds all components for each system in-house. To date, he's installed more than 30 systems for projects ranging from athletic fields to private residences. He believes that single-

Continues on pg. 62

ON THE MEND

It's still unclear how contractors will approach their work in states like California and Utah, where droughts have ended – for now.

Story by
**Lauren Rathmell
and Jimmy Miller**

Illustration by
Christina Chung

DESPITE THE FACT CALIFORNIA

lifted its statewide drought designation earlier this spring, California Landscape Contractors Association's Sandra Giarde says it'll still be business as usual for landscapers.

Giarde, the CLCA executive director, points out that parts of California are already teetering back on the edge of a drought again. Laws have yet to change that were put into place to conserve water during the drought, such as rules against hosing down concrete sidewalks. Those bans will only slowly be lifted by each municipality over time, if they're even lifted at all. And though the governor's announcement that the drought concluded marked an official end to one of the driest times in the state's history, Giarde says landscapers factor drought into everything they do.

"For us in landscaping, water conservation is a way of life. A declaration of the governor doesn't really change anything about what we do," Giarde says. "Our members very smartly realized that drought in California is pretty much a new normal."

This year's winter was wetter than usual for most of the country, and Paul McFadden says California was no different. McFadden is the president of the California Agricultural Irrigation Association, as well as the director of purchasing at RPO Water, which installs irrigation systems in California. He says the snowpack in the Sierra Nevada Mountains offers 33 times more coverage this year than at this time last season. Some communities have even had to release water in their reservoirs just to make room for some of the snow melt.

"There's a lot of snow in the mountains, so that's a good sign for the West, not just California," McFadden says.

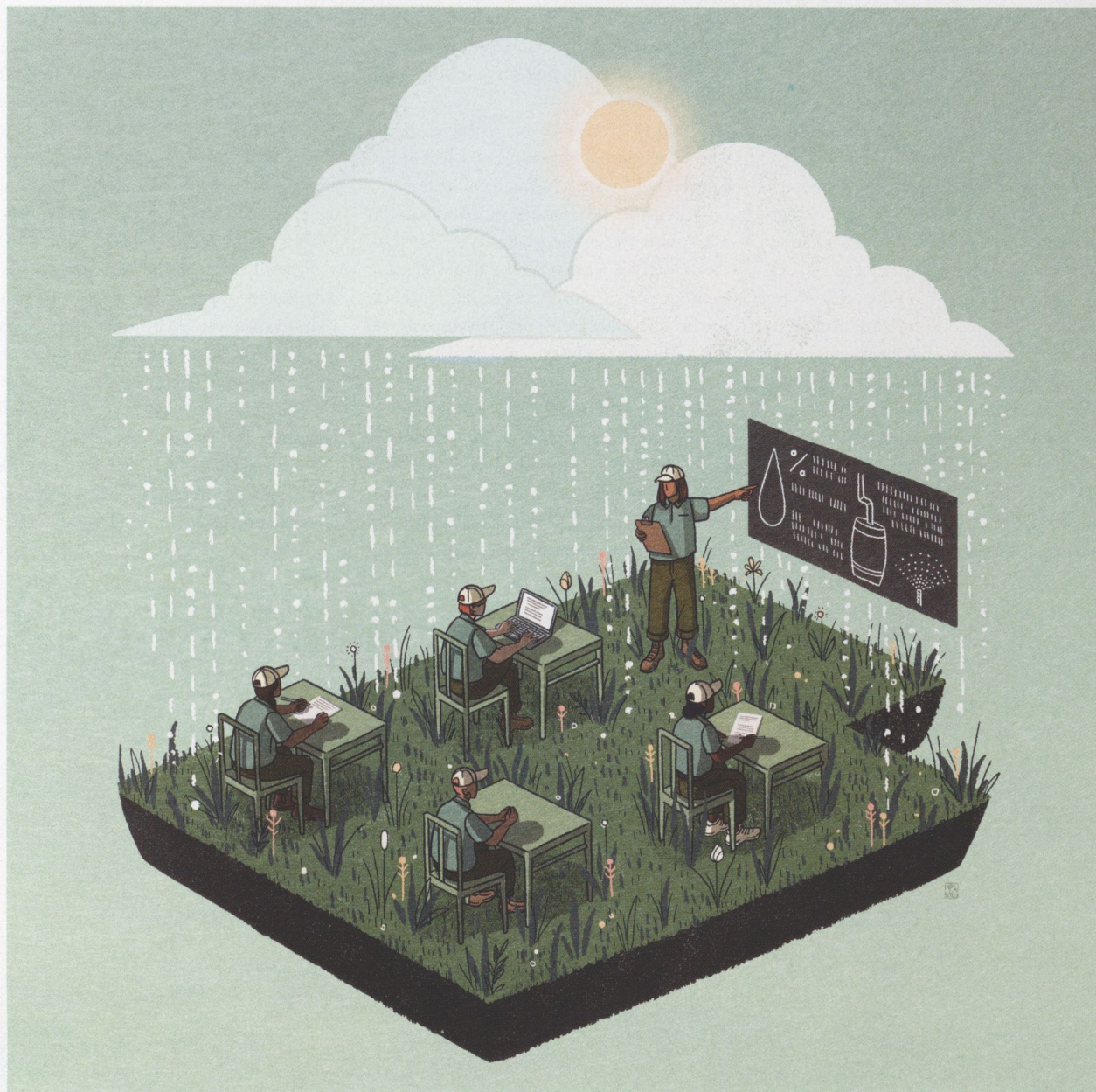
California isn't the only state that lifted its drought designation earlier this year. Utah moved off the drought designation in April, this despite the fact the 2017-18 water year was among the driest ever in the state, according to an ABC report.

That same report also showed 73 percent of the state under a severe drought, 47 percent under an extreme drought and 7 percent under an exceptional drought in October 2018. Local landscape contractor and business owner Alec Naylor said at one point, an entire city shut down their secondary water system – used for landscaping purposes – a month early because of a severe shortage.

In September of 2018, six counties were in a state of emergency with local reservoirs sitting at an average of only 57 percent full.

Fast forward six months, and the drought was officially cancelled. Good snowpack in the mountains helped to restore moisture to some of Utah's driest areas, and rising temperatures encouraged runoff and precipitation in Utah's valleys.

Though the droughts are over, contractors know they could find themselves right back amidst a drought at any time in the near future.



Though the droughts are officially over, the effects linger into the summer work season for contractors, especially as they could find themselves right back amidst a drought at any time in the near future.

A POLITICAL PUSH. McFadden says in general, the issue of water infrastructure being

ignored for so long might have been most problematic during the drought. He says some estimates show that older pipes beneath the ground leak over 10 percent of the water brought through them, meaning it's being absorbed back into the dirt.

Among other issues, McFadden believes that infrastructure had never been on the

forefronts of anybody's minds until the drought became historically long.

"It's not a glitzy or sexy project to talk about. 'We're going to put new canals in,' nobody wants to talk about that," McFadden says. "But we're going to build a high-speed bullet train from one end of the state to the other for \$100 billion, that gets people's attention."

McFadden says the state noticed its heat signature rise once turf was removed, so while he believes water was likely conserved by taking this drastic measure, the long-term unintended consequence was contributing to warmer temperatures.

In Las Vegas, the city is paying homeowners to get rid of their lawns and replace them with artificial grass to save water. McFadden says this is a hypocritical practice.

"It looks really good to take (a) lawn out and replace it with rock, but don't touch the casinos because that's a big tax revenue for us and the state," McFadden says. "It's a political football, but I think it's driven some technology improvements on the irrigation side for homeowners. It certainly has for agriculture."

Like McFadden, Giarde is unsure how many people will turn back now and replant their lawns with the drought's official conclu-

sion. Some clients didn't want so much turf, some want native plants and some are leaning into their environmental surroundings with bare front yards.

"You're always going to have clients who turn around and say, 'Yes, I live in Los Angeles but I want a lush, green, lots-of-turf English garden,'" Giarde says. "And you can meet with those clients and you can talk about lots of ways that can be achieved using techniques, irrigation strategies, current tools and products that are available to you that will still minimize the water use."

COMMON GROUND. Naylor, owner of Naylorscapes based in Sunset, Utah, says his business grew up with the drought. He started Naylorscapes about 10 years ago when the drought had just started to get bad and he says his company has been pushing

for smart water use ever since.

"We have no plans to change how we operate," he says. Naylor has worked to educate clients on common myths: A popular one he battled is that more grass means less maintenance, because "all you have to do is mow." A larger issue centered around clients asking to use culinary water for their sprinkler systems instead of the secondary water from the city.

"They hear that the secondary water is what causes diseases or staining or they don't want to clean out their filters," he says. And, of course, he explained to his clients that less grass is less maintenance.

"The more grass you have, the more time you spend on a weekly basis. You have to mow it, you have to water it, you have to fertilize it. You have to go through and fix any dry spots," Naylor says. "And at the end of the year you spend, I'm going to say two



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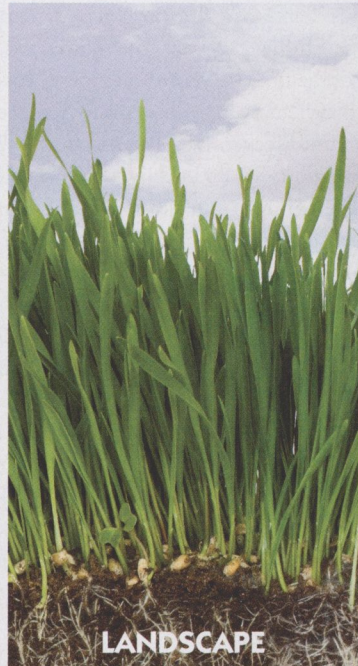
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to three hours or even more, maybe three to four hours a week just on the grass.”

Naylor also tries to encourage his clients to install drought-resistant landscapes through education. “Ninety-five percent of the time, it’s an eye-opening experience for (the customer),” he says. He also does his part to keep up on the latest water conservation efforts by attending educational seminars and meetings.

“We keep ourselves educated on the subject and that’s the most important tool that we have,” Naylor says. “(We’re) constantly changing to be able to adapt to the weather conditions that are around us.”

Naylor has created some hard and fast rules to accommodate the lack of water. For example, the company simply won’t install grass in park strips, the area between a sidewalk and a street. “You can’t just install what the customer wants (during a drought),” he

says. Only smart controllers are installed on irrigation jobs, and the company installed a drip irrigation system that will only water plants in a flower bed, avoiding water being wasted on ground covers.

“Sprinkler system designs have made a 180 in the area in the last 20 years,” Naylor says. “Luckily, we were able to take advantage of that from day one to make sure that we made it a priority that all of our sprinkler systems are well designed and very efficient.”

City officials are spending more time patrolling for code violations like watering outside time restrictions, and Naylor says he’s seen more citations being issued.

The company plans to continue their water smart, drought tolerant practices even with the drought technically over.

“When we do have a good year for water like we have this year, it seems to me that

people kind of forget about years past, so I still plan to go forth with the other water conservation efforts,” he says. “It’s up to landscape contractors to implement these practices in their business. We have a kind of responsibility in the industry to be at the forefront of this issue, not only in Utah, but across the United States. We need to keep up on education in the subject.”

In the long run, Naylor says it’s the businesses that recognize their role in the environment that will withstand the test of time – and Mother Nature.

“The contractors that do keep up the education and keep up the efforts are going to be the ones that make it in the long run,” Naylor says. “Because Utah is a desert state and always has been, and we’re just lucky enough some years to have more water than usual.” **L&L**

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By leaving a large strip of unmowed native plants around a waterbody, surface water runoff can be slowed and filtered before it enters the water.

KNOW YOUR SURROUNDINGS

A healthy body of water begins on the land around it.

Story by **Paul Conti**

WHILE ALL LAKES, stormwater ponds, wetlands and fisheries are susceptible to water quality problems without proper management, the cause of these issues doesn't always originate within the body of water.

Pond maintenance companies know that these complications often begin outside of the water. During precipitation events, water follows the course of gravity, either seeping into the earth to replenish groundwater or running across the ground as surface water runoff. The area of land that directs flowing water to lakes and ponds is called a watershed. As water travels across the watershed, it picks up and carries whatever is in its path, which can pose an enormous threat to your waterbody.

UNDERSTANDING EUTROPHICATION.

Surface water runoff often carries fertilizers, animal waste, loose soil and organic matter like leaves and grass clippings, plus other debris. Upon entering a waterbody, the undesirable nutrients that comprise these substances are released into the water, initiating a dangerous cycle: Nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen can promote excessive plant growth and algae blooms.

As large volumes of plants and algae decompose over time, they are transformed into sediment and release additional nutrients into the water. Increased sediment levels

further decrease water depth and volume. As depths become shallower, sunlight is able to penetrate throughout the entire water column, which warms the water and fuels additional plant and algae growth through photosynthesis. This entire process is known as eutrophication. When the process is further expedited by human activities like urban development and pollution, it's often referred to as cultural eutrophication.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS. The eutrophication cycle does not just pose a danger to the long-term health and aesthetics of your waterbody; it also creates potentially deadly conditions for fish and small beneficial organisms. During plant decomposition events, dissolved oxygen in the water column is consumed by bacteria. When dissolved oxygen is consumed at high rates, fish and other aquatic organisms will become stressed and can even die. Shal-

BEFORE



AFTER

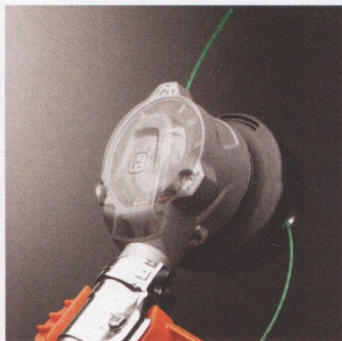


Shoreline protection and restoration along with being proactive about aeration, nutrient remediation and water quality testing can lead to successful freshwater management.

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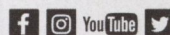
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THE WATER ISSUE

low waterbodies, particularly in the summer, are at the highest risk due to the inability of warm water to hold dissolved oxygen. In order to protect lakes, stormwater ponds and other aquatic resources from the negative effects of eutrophication, communities should always be cognizant of surrounding land use practices – starting around the shoreline of your waterbody.

SLOWING DOWN. Establishing and maintaining a vegetative buffer is highly important in protecting a waterbody from surface water runoff and outside contaminants that tend to promote eutrophication. By leaving a large strip of unmowed native plants around a waterbody, surface water runoff can be slowed and filtered before it enters the water. Many of the nutrients in the surface water runoff will be taken up by rooted plants in the vegetated buffer. Vegetative buffers produce long, deep roots, which are also extremely important in stabilizing banks and preventing erosion.

If erosion problems cannot be solely addressed with a beneficial vegetative buffer, several methods can be employed to help repair and stabilize your bank. Some property managers find success by installing rip-rap, deflectors, erosion mats and plantings along the shoreline to hold sediment in place. Coconut “coir” logs can also provide short-term shoreline stability. However, one of the latest and most comprehensive restoration methods is the introduction of a bioengineered living shoreline, which utilizes a biodegradable woven mesh that is anchored to the earth and filled with soil to rebuild and stabilize eroded banks for several years.

Depending on your state’s permitting requirements, sediment that has accumulated locally in the pond can be dredged and placed inside the woven material. Grass or other plants are then planted on top, ensuring protection from erosion in the future. This both reclaims lost water depth by removing excess sediment and rebuilds and stabilizes the shore bank, allowing for optimal aesthetic, recreational and ecological use.

BE PROACTIVE. Shoreline protection and restoration are critical aspects of a successful freshwater management program, but they will not alone ensure your long-term goals are achieved. In order to maintain a healthy waterbody, one should also maintain a healthy watershed by limiting fertilizer use, confirm septic systems are functioning and properly dispose of pet waste, leaves and grass clippings. Proactive measures, like aeration, nutrient remediation and water quality testing should also be taken within the waterbody to further prevent ongoing problems.

BECOME THE TEACHER. The last piece of the puzzle is education. Educate your clients about the direct impact they have on surrounding aquatic resource and the small steps they can take to prevent algae and aquatic weed growth. By taking a proactive, custom aquatic management approach – designed with the help of a professional lake manager – you can reduce eutrophication and prolong the health, beauty and function of your lake or stormwater pond for years to come. **L&L**

Paul Conti is an environmental scientist and regional manager with SOLitude Lake Management.

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THE CASE FOR SNOW RELOCATION

Consider these scenarios when removing and relocating snow piles for a client. **By Jerry Schill**

If a commercial client has limited space for storing and/or staging snow or large piles, then they need to be aware of the unsafe conditions these piles pose to the general public. These heaping mounds of snow and ice provide contractors with an opportunity to offer hauling and relocation services to move these piles to another location on their property or offsite to a snow disposal facility.

Here are three scenarios to point out to property owners that help make the case for snow pile relocation and removal.

UNWANTED ATTENTION. What may seem like innocent winter fun could be a death trap for children and even adults. Although they may look hard and sturdy, large snow piles contain soft spots or pockets of air that can lead to sink holes. Kids, especially, can fall in, causing the pile to collapse, trapping them and leading to suffocation. If they survive, long-term exposure can result in hypothermia.

Furthermore, while building snow forts and making snow angels in piles at the apron of condo or apartment complex driveways, children typically do not pay attention to vehicles and snowplows as they approach. It's very difficult for drivers to see over piles while children are playing. They often have to plow into the pile to move snow away from the street. The result is often a serious injury to anyone on the pile.



Removing and relocating snow piles can avoid potential hazards on properties.


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OPERATIONS



Removing large snow piles can help prevent refreezing issues, which pose significant dangers to pedestrians as the area becomes slick.

PILE PLACEMENT. In the event of a snow storm, plow trucks should be cautious about what areas snow is piled to avoid creating potential hazards. Piles should be away from stop signs, fire hydrants, street corners, driveway aprons and handicap accessible locations.

They should also be kept as far away from entry and exit points of buildings in the event of an emergency. These piles make entering and exiting a facility extremely difficult and unsafe for EMS providers when responding to emergency calls. The relocation or removal of these piles alleviates any possible obstruction of signage or lot entryways.

REFREEZE. Throughout the day, the sun heats the surfaces around the pile causing them to melt. The water generated from these piles will naturally make its way to a low spot or drain. As the sun sets temperatures begin to cool, this creates refreeze and icy conditions. As a result, parking lots, sidewalks, driveways and roadways can become extremely slick and dangerous to pedestrians.

When possible, piles should always be placed close to the high side near a drain to capture the

water as it melts. As a precautionary measure, the area around the piles may need to be salted to eliminate slippery conditions. Again, removal of these piles mitigates the potential for refreeze and conditions for an unnecessary, and avoidable, slip-and-fall incident.

Properties such as condominiums, townhomes, apartments, retail and even large manufacturing and industrial sites that operate 24/7 all benefit from snow removal, relocation and hauling services.

With this in mind, these three real-world scenarios make a solid case for contractors to work with clients to address these potential problems, either at contract time or during the snow season if unseasonable winter conditions result in a large number or sized snow piles on a property.

Typically, I provide these services upon client request and charge based on a time and material basis. I prefer to do the work in off hours (typically overnight) and use large semi and tri-axle trucks as well as front-end loaders to load, move, and stack snow and ice material. **L&L**

Jerry Schill is president and co-owner of Schill Grounds Management.

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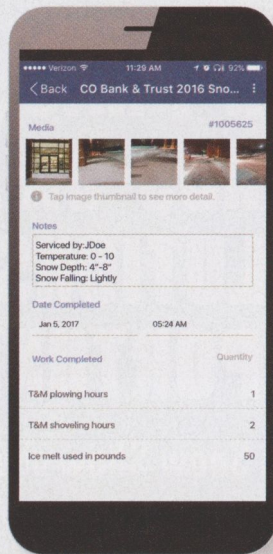
Founder, DTSI Software

1 What is FieldVision by DTSI Mobile Snow Removal software?

A: FieldVision by DTSI is a mobile application that runs on both iPhone and Android phones. FieldVision enables field crews to document their snow removal operations with before and after photos and video and to record the details of the services performed. The services can be viewed as they are being performed and automated notifications can be setup to notify your clients of services as they happen. FieldVision maintains a complete history of all services performed on a property so that the service records can be retrieved at any time. All services recorded by field crews are stored in the cloud so there is no expensive hardware to buy and manage. FieldVision can completely eliminate manual paperwork and will work for any size company.

2 Why should I use it for Snow Removal operations?

A: The two biggest problems for snow removal contractors are lawsuits from slip-and-fall claims and the problem of getting paid for all of the work you do. FieldVision solves both problems by having



crews take before and after photos of all services, recording the services performed and any materials used, recording the weather conditions and other site conditions that are crucial to proving that you did the job according to the scope of work. With the information collected by FieldVision you can prove to your clients that you did the work and you can protect your company and clients from slip-and-fall lawsuits.

3 What is the cost of the software?

A: FieldVision is the most economical and yet productive mobile snow removal software



available. Depending on the features you want to use, the cost is between \$50 and \$200 per month for your entire company (including vendors and customers). There are no additional per-user fees, no setup fees and no long term contracts required.

4 Can I customize FieldVision for my company's specific needs?

A: Yes. Not every company operates the same way so FieldVision was designed to be fully customizable. Whether you provide services on a per-service basis or on a time and materials basis or both, you can easily custom-

ize FieldVision to suite your company's needs.

5 How can FieldVision save time and make my company more efficient?

A: With the FieldVision Management Console, your staff can drastically reduce the time it takes to review your crews work and generate customer billing and crew/vendor payment reports. You can easily generate invoices and send them directly to QuickBooks. One large FieldVision user reports that it used to take three people over a week to process and invoice the snow paperwork for one thousand snow removal services. Now, with FieldVision, it takes only one day for one person to process the same number of services!

6 Is FieldVision only for Snow Removal services?

A: No. FieldVision is used by a wide range of companies that perform other services when they are not doing snow removal operations. Because FieldVision is so easily customized it is used by many other types of service companies in the fields of landscaping, janitorial, HVAC, roofing, property management and others.



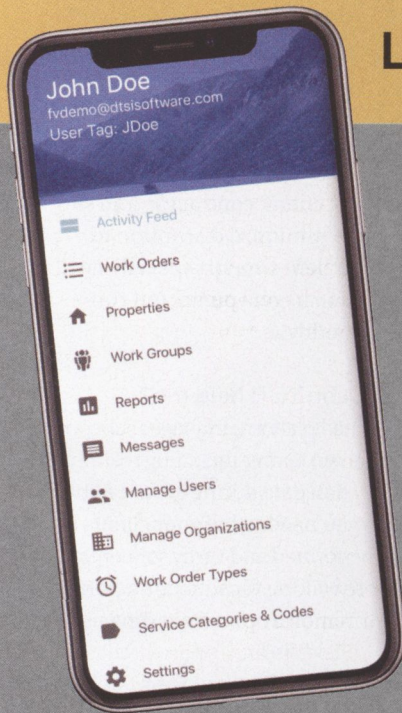
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KELLY FOSTER, Owner,
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Q&A WITH THE EXPERT

SNOW+ICE MANAGEMENT PLATFORM

Q&A WITH KEVIN SPEILMAN

Founder, YETI Snow + Ice Management System and CEO, Cassian Commercial Services

1 What are the primary challenges facing snow removal contractors?

A: We know from experience just how challenging snow and ice management is. From dealing with extreme weather events, seasonal labor requirements, and exposure to significant liability, it's more like fighting fires than mowing lawns.

2 What makes YETI stand out from the crowd?

A: Built by seasoned snow contractors, YETI's integrated

software platform has been designed to help you effectively manage the inevitable challenges of winter before, during, and beyond the season. YETI facilitates pre-season site inspections, site map creation, and route planning. Its advanced real-time planning dashboard gives ops teams critical data and the flexibility to reallocate resources and modify plans to ensure your success during highly stressful events. YETI also manages scheduling, billing, subcontractor invoicing, and payroll—it's a full cycle solution.

3 Does YETI reduce liability risks?

A: YETI significantly reduces exposure to slip fall claims by delivering service verification using GPS, photos, and geofencing. This combined with weather forecast tracking provides invaluable data to protect against claims.

4 What ROI can I expect?

A: YETI users have reported savings of thousands of dollars in missed revenue and improved operational efficiencies in their first season. Its pricing model is based on the number of sites managed—cost per site can amount to less than a cup of Starbucks coffee per month. And protecting you from slip-fall claims can save you hundreds of thousands of dollars.

5 How long does it take to get YETI set up?

A: Subscription to YETI includes tools, training, and support. We take care of importing client, employee, equipment, contractor, and site information for you to minimize disruption to operations, and your client support specialist will work with you real-time to get you up and running quickly and smoothly.

6 I subcontract, can YETI help me?

A: YETI's integrated platform manages subcontractors just like your own teams, including real-time crew reports and location data during events. It then provides the details you need to bill your clients as soon as the work is performed and verify subcontractor invoices. No more waiting for subcontractors—you'll have the information at your fingertips.

7 In the summer my company does landscaping, can YETI work for both?

A: YETI is fully customizable and can manage services you perform during the rest of the year, such as landscaping, construction, and more.





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YETI snow management system, built by experienced snow contractors, has all the bases covered—*we get your business*. YETI makes building accurate site maps and route planning quick and simple—making you and your crews readier than ever for snow season. And when it's time for action, YETI's advanced real-time dashboard gives your ops team full control to react swiftly and move resources where and when they are needed—snow season no longer has to mean chaos.

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ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?

You won't leave the 2019 Snow Show with dull information.

By Kevin Gilbride

Like with a lot of things nowadays, there are some everyday business terms that just seem out of place in today's modern world.

Take the phrase "trade show," for example. Those two words conjure up images of bored conventioners slowly proceeding up and down aisles to collect mundane product literature that, frankly, bores them to tears. In fact, their attendance is likely just an excuse to get away from the office for a few days. Viva, Las Vegas!

I don't know of any organization or professional association that puts on "trade shows" anymore. And if they do, then they'll be going the way of the dinosaur before too long.

Industry groups, like the Accredited Snow Contractor's Association (ASCA), are more interested with providing its attendees with an "experience." We fully understand your time is a precious commodity and there needs to be a return on your investment to warrant your attendance. It's a tall order to meet, therefore the event must not only meet, but exceed expectations.

That's why the 2019 Snow Show in Pittsburgh is an experience like none other. Let me lay a few highlights out for you.

EDUCATION. The Snow Show has three rooms dedicated to education. Seminars, classes and panel discussions are going on concurrently. The topics address the issues you're talking about and look to troubleshoot the problems and obstacles you're facing heading into Winter 2019-20.

The educators are a mix of industry experts, academics and professional snow and ice contractors. These people come directly from the frontlines of our industry and they provide real-world solutions to your problems.

The courses and discussions are designed to be both interactive and hands-on. They adapt to address the relevant and relatable issues those in attendance need answers to.

CERTIFICATION. This is the only time of year when you can, in the course of two days, earn your ASCA-C certification onsite. You will return home with your certificate. Likewise, those who are already ASCA-C can earn credit toward their recertification.

EQUIPMENT & TECHNOLOGY. This year's Snow Show exhibitors aren't simply

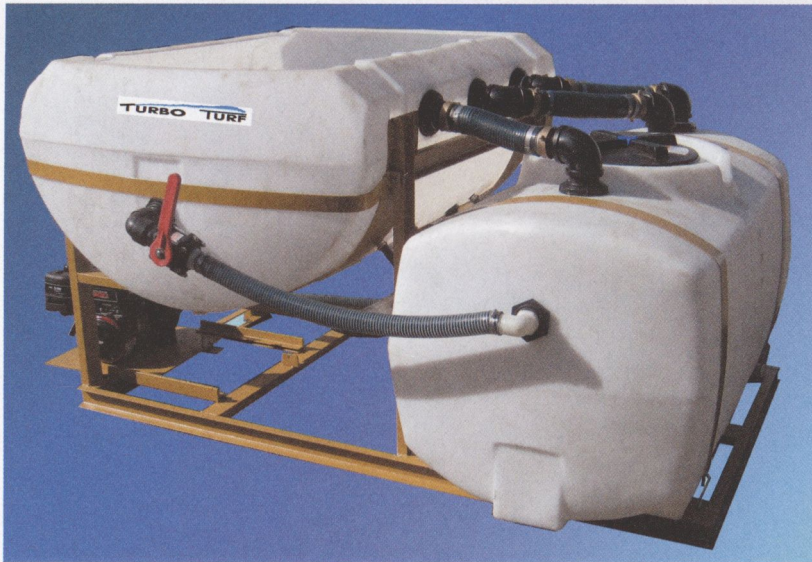
“We fully understand your time is a precious commodity... the event must not only meet, but exceed expectations.”

manufacturers and industry suppliers. They're partners in snow and ice management. Their role is to outfit you with the tools, technology, insight and expertise you need to manage winter services and mitigate risk. With a hardy handshake you enter their world, so take advantage of everything the exhibit hall experience offers.

NETWORKING. No "trade show" offers the unprecedented opportunity to meet and talk to industry colleagues who share like-minded goals and objectives.

Are you a relative newcomer to the industry? Your fellow contractors in attendance will welcome you with open arms. An industry veteran? No worries. There more than enough professionals with a few years under their belts to celebrate, commiserate, and converse about the topics and challenges that are uniquely yours at this point in your career.

So, if you're not yet registered that attend the 2019 Snow Show, there's still time. It's not until the 30th and 31st of this month. Simple enter ascasnowshow.com into your browser and join the Snow Show experience. And if you're within a few hours of downtown Pittsburgh, onsite registration is also available. **L&L**



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QUITE THE JOLT



Electric equipment has come a long way in the past decade, and contractors use those advancements to offer more options to customers.

By Robin Roenker

ABOVE: Kelly Giard started Clean Air Lawn Care in 2006, and the company has since grown to 46 locations nationwide.

Firms that specialize in using electric landscaping equipment – from mowers and trimmers to blowers and edgers – feel the choice isn’t just good for the environment. It’s also good for business.

“I think there’s endless potential,” says Kelly Giard, CEO of Clean Air Lawn Care in Fort Collins, Colorado. “I think consumers are waking up to the healthier lawn approach, and I think it’s a trend that a lot of people are starting to believe in.”

A GROWING INDUSTRY. When Giard started Clean Air Lawn Care in 2006 – which now has 46 locations nationwide – launching an all-electric lawn care business was anything but mainstream. “We were definitely the ‘black sheep’ of lawn care a little bit. It was considered extreme at the time,” he says.

Instead of traditional, gas-powered lawn equipment, Clean Air Lawn Care uses only zero-emission, electric equipment run on batteries that charge via solar panels embedded on company trucks.

In the early days of the business, “the biggest hurdle was just getting consumers to understand they had a choice,” Giard says.

Over time, though, customers’ demand for more environmentally friendly lawn care options caught up with Giard’s vision, and as a result, the company has grown quickly. It plans to open 10 more franchise locations this year alone.

In Maryland, Lyn DeWitt, founder and owner of Solar Mowing, has found she doesn’t need to do any traditional advertising. Instead, customers who want more environmentally-friendly options seek her out, specifically because she uses non-traditional equipment.



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WALK THE WALK: Giard says some clients will want to see a company that's fully committed to sustainability.

"I have a waiting list of people wanting our services if we ever decide to move outside our current service area," says DeWitt, who operates within a five-mile radius of her home near Bethesda, Maryland. "I think there's a great, pent-up demand for this."

RECENT ADVANCES. The industry seems to be taking note of the growing electric demand.

Equipment availability and capacity have come a long way, to the point where some electric equipment is comparable to its gas counterparts.

"The electric mowers available on the market have improved significantly," DeWitt says. "They're more durable than they used to be. They don't break as often. They last longer."

Battery advancements have been another big key to making electric lawn care more practical. Giard says the move to larger

capacity lithium batteries has allowed them to operate each truck daily with four batteries instead of 20. Meanwhile, DeWitt's noticed the time-saving benefits of making the switch as well.

"When I started, the mower batteries took about 10 hours to charge," DeWitt says. "Now they take a half hour and they last four times as long."

MAKING THE SWITCH. A good place to start a conversion would be switching out your trimmers and blowers. Giard says those implements have fully closed the gap to match their gas counterparts in performance with routine yard maintenance.

Giard says that moving into the electric niche may require an all-or-nothing approach in order to attract customers who commit to environmentally sustainable lawn care.

"If you want to go after that niche customer, they want you to walk the walk. You can't just dabble and have one truck with electric equipment, but four others that are gas," Giard says.

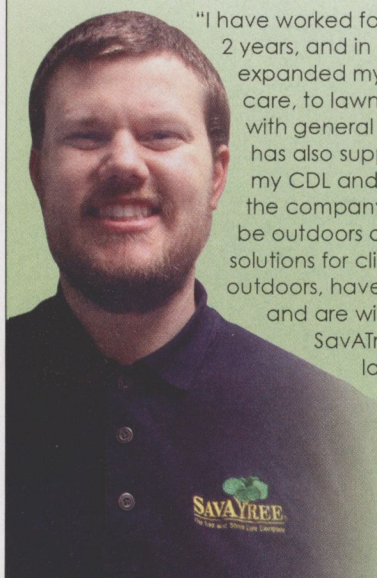
Both Solar Mowing and Clean Air Lawn Care complement their use of electric equipment by following organic lawn care principals.

DeWitt mows high and leaves the clippings, for example, while Giard's firm offers organic weed control and fertilization. In this way, their companies appeal to green-conscious customers who want to extend their sustainability beyond their home and daily purchases and into their lawns.

"We're catering to customers who want a Whole Foods-like experience, but in terms of their lawn care," Giard says. **L&L**

The author is a freelance writer based in the Northeast.

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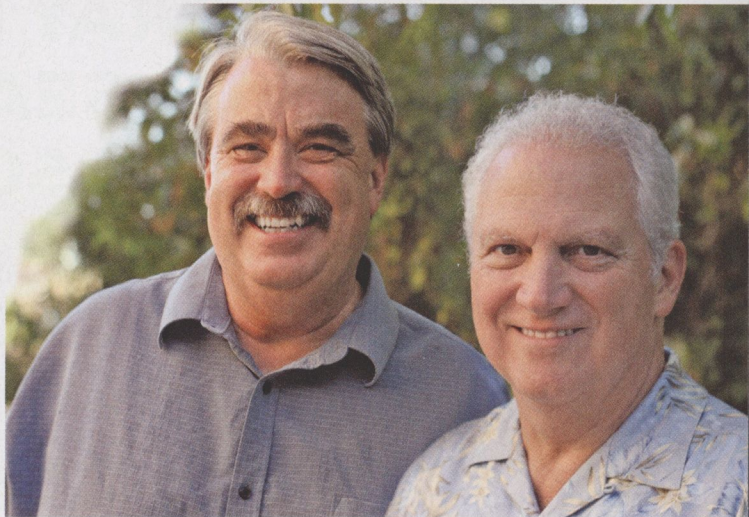
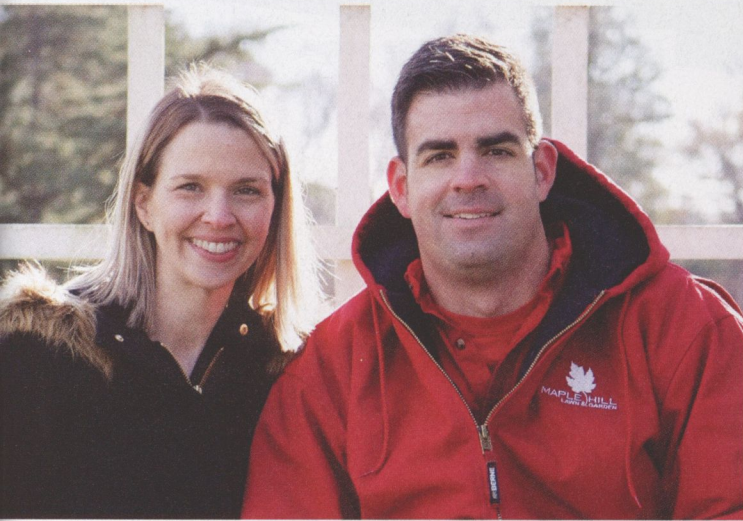


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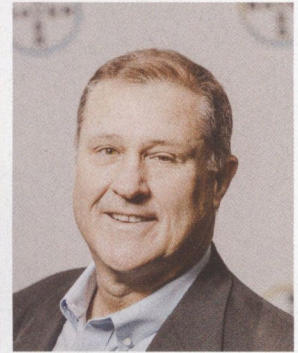
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Q&A with the Experts

MANAGING GRAY LEAF SPOT IN COOL SEASON AND WARM SEASON TURF

THE PROBLEM

Cool Season: The hot and humid weather of July often brings disease issues in cool season lawns. The summer of 2018 was particularly challenging with the disease gray leaf spot causing significant damage across much of the Midwest and Northeastern parts of the United States. Gray leaf spot is caused by the fungal pathogen *Pyricularia grisea*, a fast growing and fast killing organism that can wipe out large stands of perennial ryegrass, tall fescue, and more recently, fine fescue turf stands.

Warm Season: Gray leaf spot is a common problem on St. Augustinegrass lawns but generally is not overly damaging unless the turf is newly established, stressed from poor management, poorly located or exposed to long periods of warm wet weather. Instead, it causes the turf to become chlorotic (yellow), causing cigarette burn-like lesions on leaf blades. The disease is first seen in areas that remain moist for extended periods such as shaded areas.

WHEN TO EXPECT IT

Cool Season: Gray leaf spot infection can occur at temperatures as low as 68° F, but is favored by temps between 82°-90° F with extended periods of leaf wetness and high humidity. The unique weather patterns last year created almost a “perfect storm” for gray leaf spot in August and

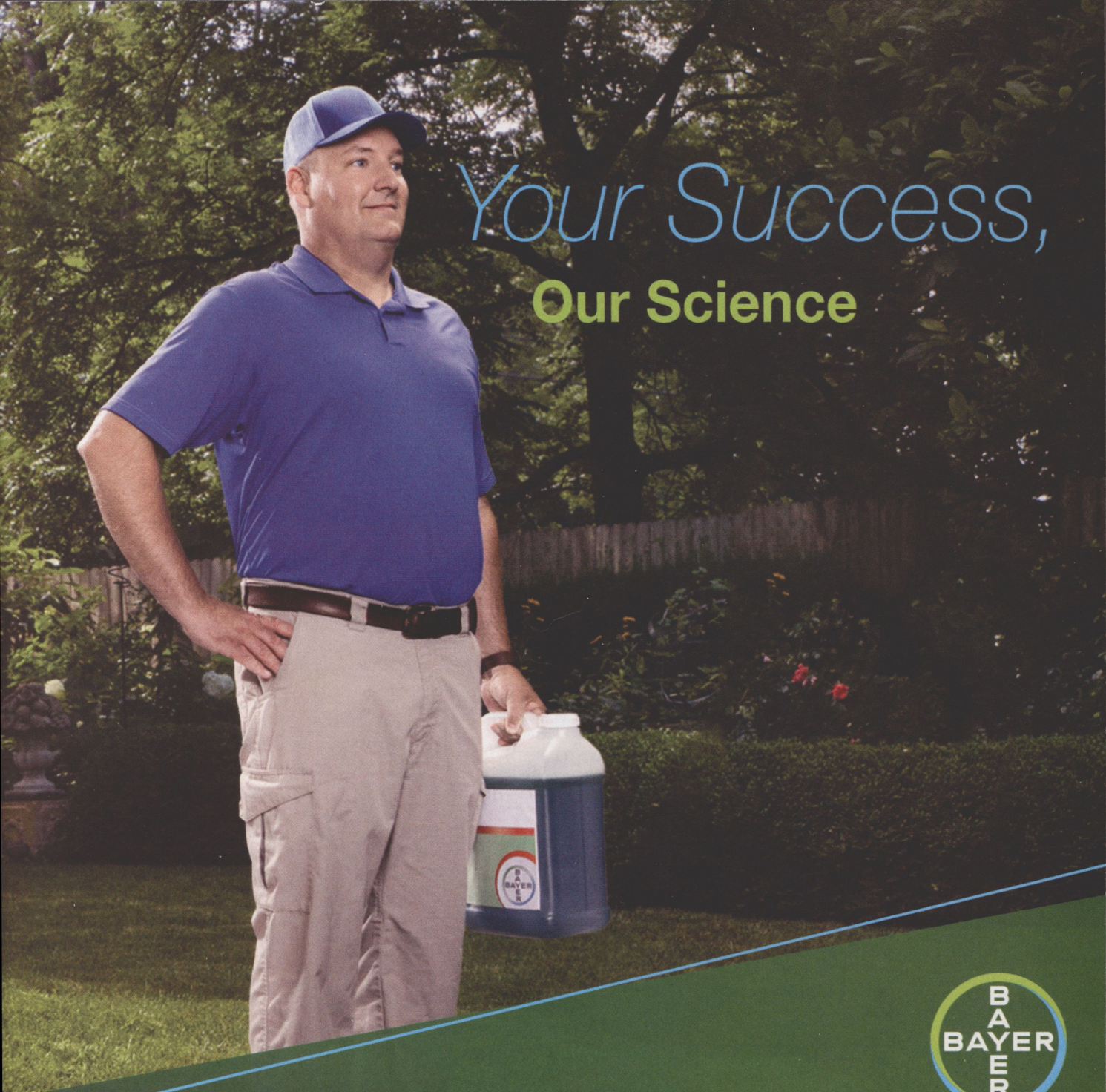
September. The disease was diagnosed by turfgrass pathologists farther north than ever before. This posed obvious challenges for turf managers unfamiliar with the disease, leading to reactionary and curative approaches, which are usually met with minimal success.

Warm Season: Wet summer months are also the time of year that gray leaf spot affects St. Augustinegrass. St. Augustinegrass that is grown in the far south can experience gray leaf spot much earlier, generally beginning in June. Coincidentally, this is also the time of year when increased rainfall and high relative humidity occurs, creating conducive conditions for disease.

THE SOLUTION

Cool Season: The best approach in managing gray leaf spot is an integrated one that incorporates cultural practices, such as minimizing nitrogen and limiting irrigation and leaf wetness in the late summer. In areas that have already been affected, interseeding or re-establishing with tolerant varieties of perennial ryegrass or tall fescue should help delay outbreaks or mitigate damage. Along with sound cultural management, preventive control with fungicides like Armada® 50 WDG is critical in areas with traditional gray leaf spot activity. Early preventive control should begin in early to mid-July depending on location. Ensuing applications should be made at 14-28 day intervals while weather is conducive to outbreaks. Armada provides dual-action control with two effective active ingredients and serves as a great foundation for broad-spectrum disease control in both lawn and landscape scenarios.

Warm Season: Similar cultural programs hold true for St. Augustinegrass, with regard to reducing irrigation as much as possible during warm, wet periods. Also, do not over-fertilize St. Augustinegrass with nitrogen and minimize stressful herbicide applications during periods of disease outbreak. Improving air circulation through limb pruning is also helpful. Ultimately, fungicides such as Armada, can help suppress gray leaf spot outbreaks, with re-applications every 14 to 28 days, depending on disease severity and weather conditions.



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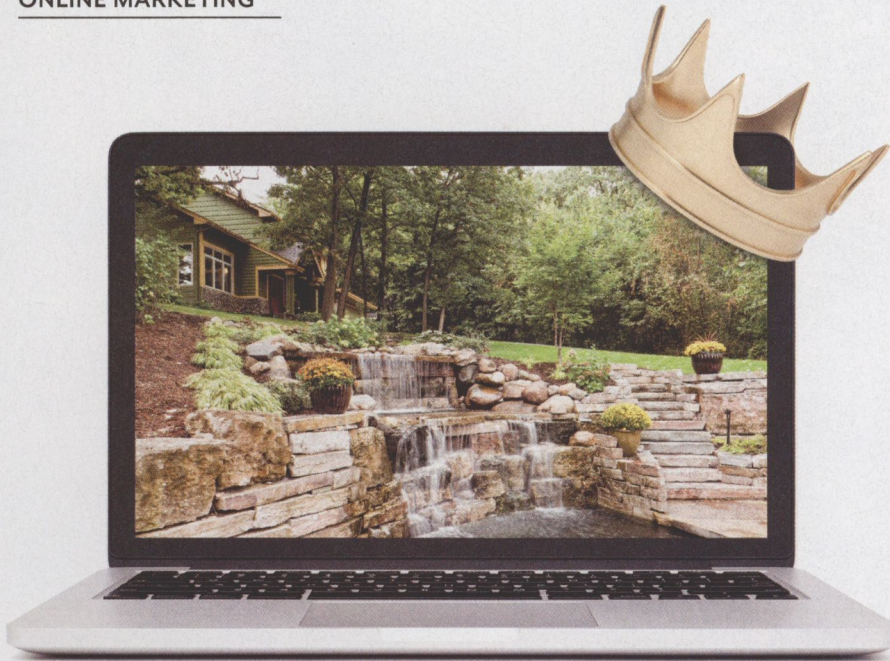
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JH: It places you on the map at the top of search results which accounts for almost 35 percent of all clicks. Do the same thing for Bing and as many other directory websites out there, but stick to the free ones.

The keywords you want to rank for typically include “near me” or “in/near (your city).” The more signals you can give Google and Bing that you service a specific area and have taken the time to add your business listing to multiple sites, the more likely Google will think you’re one of the most reputable landscapers in your area.

Just be sure to have all of your listings consistent. If your business name is Joe’s Landscaping on one site, don’t use Joe’s Landscaping LLC on another. If your address is 1804 Tremont Street on one, don’t use 1804 Tremont St. on another. Inconsistency produces a lack of credibility with search engines.

JJ: It’s free at google.com/business. Your Google My Business listing is what helps you show up on the Map results when potential customers – or employees – Google you. Selling landscaping is very visual, so show your customers what they want to see by uploading quality photographs. In addition to professional photographs of your landscape design projects, also upload photos of you and your team in uniform and photos of your branded vehicles and signage.

Remember, even referrals and potential employees will Google you before they contact you, so put your best photos forward. Be sure to prune your listing. If you don’t offer a service anymore, or don’t want a certain type of project anymore, remove that from your listing.

After you’ve claimed and verified your Google My Business listing, hustle to get at least 10 reviews from your best clients. Having a strong review average on your Google listing not only helps you rank higher on Google when people search “best landscapers near me,” they also help seal the deal for referrals.

2. WHAT’S THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MARKETING TOOL?

PH: You can really grow your business with

DIGITAL DOMINANCE

From websites to social media, use these tips to get the most out of your online marketing approach. **By Brian Horn**

Lawn & Landscape connected with three digital marketing professionals – Pam Haskell, owner of Chili Pepper Design; Jake Hundley, CEO and digital strategist at Evergrow Marketing; and Jack Jostes, president and CEO of Ramblin Jackson – to get the lowdown on how to approach online marketing in 2019.

1. WHAT’S THE FIRST STEP A LANDSCAPER CAN TAKE TO IMPROVE THEIR ONLINE PRESENCE ON THEIR OWN?

EDITOR’S NOTE: All three said “claim your Google My Business listing,” so this answer has been edited to avoid some redundancy.

PH: If you’re not familiar with what (Google My Business) is, it’s the business listings that show up on the right-hand side of Google’s search results.

Claiming your company’s listing takes minimal time and effort, but it has so many benefits for people searching for businesses like

yours. By registering, you’ll probably see an increase in your website’s ranking with Google (this is unconfirmed with Google, but we’ve seen it happen for a lot of our customers).

Google My Business listings also do wonders for local search traffic. When someone searches ‘landscaping company near me,’ you’ll be listed.

The best part of these listings? They’re completely free. You can also add as many photos, videos and updates as you like (the more, the better). All of this is something you can do yourself – it’s basically like free advertising that you have complete control over.

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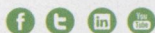
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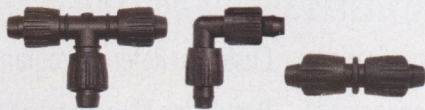
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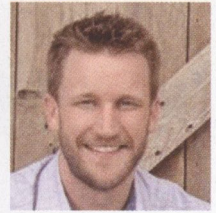
ONLINE MARKETING



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social media by increasing customer trust and confidence. Social media is a fantastic marketing tool that really helps you connect with potential customers – it feels completely one-on-one from their perspective.

Social media marketing can be split into two categories: paid and free. Under the free category, you want to update your profiles every day (or every other day) with relevant and engaging content. You can network with potential partners, suppliers and local events profiles to gain more exposure for your brand. One of the most important factors for social media success is to reply to people that comment on your updates.

We always recommend people invest in retargeted social media advertising. Retargeted advertising is incredibly effective. Basically, when someone visits your website, they're then shown your ads when they're browsing the sites you've paid for retargeting on.

JH: As a teaching tool for your customers. Social media isn't meant to close sales, it's meant to create a community around your business. Give people a reason to follow your Facebook or Instagram page. Nobody wants a sales pitch on these platforms.

Show helpful tips on how to care for your new sod installation or how to spot tree diseases. This will keep people interested in what you have to say while keeping your brand name top-of-mind.

Don't be afraid to do DIY videos. If people are going to do it themselves, they're going to learn how to do it. They might as well learn it from you. Don't let them learn it from someone else. When they come across a task that's out of their wheelhouse, you'll be the first person they call. You can also just take videos of your crew working hard on a property. Green Again Lawn out of Olathe, Kansas, does a great job sharing videos like this as well as DIY videos on their Facebook page.

JJ: The most effective way for landscaping companies to use social media as a marketing tool is to have your employees help produce Instagram video and photo content on their smartphones during projects.

Making short, smartphone videos, Instagram stories and photos along the way – a little bit every day – can make a big impact online. It's really easy to kill two birds with one stone by syncing your Instagram with your Facebook so your posts show up in both places.

Landscapers with a slow winter can make the most of the offseason by producing social media content that will be shared later.

Winkler Lawn and Landscape (**IG:@WINKLERSLANDSCAPE**) in Platte City, Missouri, takes advantage of the winter time by recording videos for an "Ask A Landscaper" series. Common landscaping questions are answered by the owner and lead staff in short, one-minute video clips that are then posted to



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YouTube and scheduled to go out months later in the spring using a program called Later.

When using Instagram, use hashtags for your ideal customers neighborhoods, suburbs and cities. For example, if you target Houston, you could add the hashtag #houston to your posts.

3. WHAT'S A COMMON MISTAKE YOU SEE LANDSCAPERS MAKE WHEN IT COMES TO ONLINE MARKETING?

PH: We see a lot of landscapers running into the same issue – pumping money into online marketing but then neglecting their website.

If someone that's interested in hiring you sees this amazing marketing campaign, they'll go and look you up. If your website hasn't been updated in the last five years, they're not going to follow up with you. The only thing worse than an old, outdated website is not having a website at all.

Companies need to present a professional, cohesive brand experience. You need to be showing that you care, from your website to your aftercare service. This is a detail-oriented industry and customers expect a modern, mobile-ready website that answers all their questions for them.

JH: They don't commit. They might try it once, not see good results, then swear it doesn't work.

Online marketing sees better response rates than door hangers. Door hangers typically have less than a 1 percent response rate while digital marketing hovers around the 5 percent range with completely optimized strategies being able to hit the 20 percent range.

If your brand doesn't have much of a presence online, then you're not going to get much better response rates. Online campaigns aren't created, they're optimized, which requires commitment and a willingness to learn and improve.

Traditional marketing results are based on the individual campaign. Digital results are based on continuous optimization and more refined targeting.

You may consider word-of-mouth having the best return, but that's also what Google reviews are for.

If you decide to hire an agency or freelancer to help you, be sure to familiarize yourself with the terminology and understand important KPIs for you. Clicks to your site are not as important as form fills, emails and tracked phone calls.

JJ: The most common online marketing mistake I see landscapers make is simply not doing any online marketing at all.

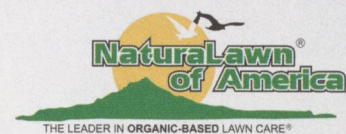
"I can't hire anyone to do the work... so I don't need to do any online marketing" or "90 percent of my business comes from referrals, so I don't need to do any online marketing" are things I hear many landscapers say, often during a conversation about how they're not making enough profit or attracting the right types of clients.

What many landscapers don't realize is that potential employees are looking for landscaping jobs online, and part of the reason you could be having trouble hiring is because your online presence is seedy.

If the only thing you're doing for marketing is waiting for word-of-mouth and you don't have the sales or the type of leads you want, it's time to invest in online marketing. **L&L**

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Continued from pg. 31

family residences are a particularly strong market for continued expansion; the ones he has installed are on homes in the \$3- to \$8- million range.

Installation of a complete system on a job of this nature runs about \$25,000 to \$35,000. Estimated cost recapture typically occurs in about six years. "One of the benefits with this system is that the money you'd spend on irrigation from May to September is going into recovering the cost of the system," McClain says. "There's no watering bill and no watering bans when you're using reclaimed water."

McClain has been working with a number of builders in his area

who implement the system into their projects. He says his crews can assemble the average 18,000-gallon system in 16 days from start to finish, including irrigation startup. He bulks up his crews from six employees to nine from April to November to tackle the increase in installations.

McClain plans to continue to develop subsystems and would eventually like to sell the patent to a company that's as passionate as he is.

"When I first started, I knew I had a mission, but I didn't know how complicated it was going to be. It was years of trial and error," he says. "But I felt I had to do something for the planet." **L&L**



The system uses a bounce water filtration system that uses water velocity and movement.

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Jackson Chandler

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

brings you the perspectives of horticulture students and insights into the future of the industry.

By Lauren Rathmell



Jackson Chandler has always loved being outside. He particularly enjoyed working with the environment and making landscapes healthier and more enjoyable. His uncle, an arborist, helped him get his foot in the door and start taking a more serious approach to the industry.

He enrolled in classes at Brigham Young University and has been active with his time as a student. He served as a teaching assistant for an arboriculture class and has an internship with Bartlett Tree Experts under his belt as he graduates.

"I just like being hands-on and outside," Chandler says. "And interacting with other living things that aren't necessarily people."

Chandler was also awarded one of Lawn & Landscape's horticulture scholarships last year. The Richard Foster Award honors outstanding students planning careers in the landscape, lawn care or horticulture fields.

As he settles into the professional side of the industry, Chandler hopes that the different segments in the green industry will start working together.

"One of my hopes is better collaboration and communication with other aspects of the industry. Like more well-rounded workers," he says. He'd also like to see improvements made to education.

"I know recently there's been a lot of news about injuries and deaths in the tree care industry," he says. "And that's just really sad and hard to see. I think as education improves, then the industry will be better as a whole and particularly will be safer."

Chandler hopes more communication and collaboration will open the doors to better education not just for industry professionals, but customers and clients as well.

"People get frustrated when their trees die because they're watered as often as the grasses,"

he says. "So I think if landscapers educate their clients that all our trees are different, and if arborists can understand that people care about their lawn as much as they care about their trees, then I think that we could help minimize those problems and challenges that lead to misunderstandings."

He's also excited about the advancements being made to equipment and technology. Chandler says he hopes to continue to see improvements made in terms of making labor easier.

"There's a lot of emphasis towards making a lot of difficult things easier on our bodies," he says. "Especially that physical labor stuff that can really hurt a person right there, that can lead to a potential career shortage."

Chandler plans to graduate in December with a degree in environmental science and currently works as an arborist. He said he's learned a lot about the future green industry work force from his peers.

"For me and a lot of my peers that I'm going to school with, we're just really excited to make changes in the world and try new things and just really look at what we can improve and how we can do things differently," he says. "Everybody I know that's going into the green industry is just really excited to work and be creative." **L&L**

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