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GROW the MARKET

Find out what the consumer thinks of you and your services, and why they invest in their yards. **26**



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Brian Horn

Editor, Lawn & Landscape

“Only about 7% said they have hired a professional since being at home more, while 19% said they are doing more yard work themselves.”

Brain picking

In 2016, we surveyed homeowners about all things landscaping to get inside the customer's mind. Well, we did it again five years later, and the timing couldn't have been better.

I keep hearing from landscapers who had a great 2020. They partially attribute that to people working from home due to COVID-19 and taking notice of their shoddy landscaping. So, I added a question about COVID-19 into the survey to see if that was the case, along with the other valuable homeowner information we collect. Here are a few takeaways that didn't make the report.

- Regarding that COVID-19 question, we asked, “Thinking about your yard and the increased amount of time you have spent at home due to COVID-19, with which of these statements do you agree?” About 30% said they had become more aware than in the past, while 21% said they are investing in their yard more than before. Only about 7% said they have hired a professional since being at home more, while 19% said they are doing more yard work themselves.

- If you were fired, it was most likely due to the quality of your work than the cost. Second on the list was dissatisfaction with timeliness of the job. Next was “felt I was being taken advantage of/overcharged,” then “found a less expensive contractor. Last on the list was “decided to do the work myself.”

- Consumers' interest in organic lawn care has made a giant leap in five years. Current results show 35% said all of the fertilizer, weed killer and insect control are organic. Only 10% answered the same way in 2016. 21% said none were organic in the current study while 33% answered the same way in 2016.

You can read the full report on **page 26**. I hope the information provided in the report gives you a better understanding of your residential customers and, overall, how consumers view the work you perform. – *Brian Horn*

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5811 Canal Rd., Valley View, OH, 44125

Phone: 800-456-0707 Editorial Fax: 216-651-0830 Subscriptions & Classifieds: 800-456-0707



EDITORIAL

BRIAN HORN EDITOR bhorn@gie.net
 JIMMY MILLER ASSOCIATE EDITOR jmiller@gie.net
 KIM LUX ASSISTANT EDITOR klux@gie.net
 JIM HUSTON, JR. HUSTON ENTERPRISES jhuston@giemedia.com
 BRUCE WILSON & COMPANY bwilson@giemedia.com
 THE HARVEST GROUP harvest@giemedia.com
 KRISTEN HAMPSHIRE CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

CREATIVE

JUSTIN ARMBURGER ART DIRECTOR jarmburger@gie.net

ADVERTISING/PRODUCTION INQUIRIES

CAITLIN MCCOY cmccoy@gie.net

SALES

DAVID SZY PUBLISHER dszy@gie.net
 TRACI MUELLER ACCOUNT MANAGER tmueller@gie.net
 BRIAN MAY ACCOUNT MANAGER bmay@gie.net
 DANNY WALSH ACCOUNT MANAGER dwalsh@gie.net
 RUSSELL WARNER NATIONAL ACCOUNT MANAGER rwarnerg@gie.net

CORPORATE

RICHARD FOSTER CHAIRMAN
 CHRIS FOSTER PRESIDENT AND CEO
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 KEVIN GILBRIDE BUSINESS MANAGER, GIE VENTURES

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FINDING THE GREEN INDUSTRY

Students at a recent NCLC forum talked about ways they feel the industry can better reach their demographic. **By Jimmy Miller**

Michigan State student Emma Brinks says she's already found her reason why she entered the green industry.

"There is something uniquely satisfying about pointing to something and saying, 'I grew that,'" she told her peers during a student forum at the National Collegiate Landscaping Competition.

But while Brinks and the handful of other students have found their "why" in landscaping, the students also said as a whole, the industry is not doing enough to promote itself to their generation. During the 90-minute NCLC session, led by the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Jenn Myers, the students dissected ways landscapers can better reach them.

"I thought horticulture was just gardening and corn," said Bre Craig, also a Michigan State student. She was once in nursing but found a once-surprising calling in the green industry. When she told her mother about studying horticulture, she feared her daughter would be slogging through back-breaking labor every day.

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MOST HORTICULTURE STUDENTS INTENDED TO STUDY SOMETHING ELSE BEFORE DISCOVERING THEIR SCHOOL'S PROGRAM.

"You have to explain to people," Craig says, "and they just have this predisposed stereotype in their head."

MORE THAN MOWING. Jennifer Crocker graduated with a bachelor's degree in liberal arts and worked in human resources, where she found she often interacted with unhappy people. Unhappy herself, Crocker enrolled in her local college, Cuyamaca College, just to take some general education courses like astronomy. While already enrolled, Crocker finally learned by hearsay what the horticulture industry provides.

"Our program is a hidden treasure," Crocker said. "(After I joined), I was going to be a plant lady for the rest of my life."

Myers told the students that at Virginia Tech, her alma mater, only 10% or so of horticulture graduates actually started in horticulture. Instead, they come from other studies – much like Crocker – and discover the job diversity in the green industry.

"This industry is more than mowing lawns," Crocker said. "The big problem in the industry is it's being promoted as, 'You're doing lawn care' or 'you're doing tree care.' I think you can apply it to so many different people."

Crocker suggested industry professionals examine the segments of their industry that can appeal to people from other interest areas. Students interested in science and research, for example, might find plant pathology appealing, or art students might find their footing in landscape design. Even promoting it as a way of helping the environment – given that landscapers are on the frontline of sustainability practices – might be an effective recruiting tool.

Anna Baker, an MSU student, agreed with Crocker. Even having grown up on a cash crop farm, she says horticulture could've been better represented at school career fairs.

"I think there's a disconnect in horticulture programs. It's so much more than landscaping, lawns and turf," Baker said. "We need to be marketing horticulture better."

A BALANCING ACT. Myers said she's noticed younger generations crave a better work-life balance, and in some ways, COVID-19 protocols have given them exactly that. For instance, they show up in staggered start times or report to the jobsite rather than the company headquarters to save time and to keep employees from riding in the same truck.

"All the other industries are going to offer these things," Myers said. "If we get behind and don't take those things into considerations,

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people will go find jobs in other industries. It's as simple as that."

Additionally, inflexibility with female employees is a recurring problem in the industry, Myers said. She pointed out that colleges have an equal male-to-female ratio, and at many, they are even predominantly female. But, despite a workforce shortage in the landscaping industry, there are still far more men working in the field than women.

One of the reasons why is some employees don't have regular access to bathrooms while out in the field. At other companies, MSU student Abby Denning saw that the team uniforms were only designed for men.

During one job or internship interview, Denning said the interviewer asked her if she'd be OK working with some of the guys who were "rough around the edges."

"The question was frustrating," she said.

"It doesn't really matter to me how people appear. I want to work with who they are."

ALL EYES ON THE FUTURE. Denning said people are going to start asking more questions about the industry now since the spotlight is on it.

"There's a growing awareness on the homeowner's side of things because they didn't travel much for COVID," she said. "They were all home."

So, with all eyes on the industry, the students expressed hope that it would start embracing more modern practices, especially on the education side.

Franziska Collier, another student at Cuyamaca, said virtual internships may become an option in the future for segments of the industry that don't require as much field work. Additionally, she believes

teachers should be more open to asking questions about reading material since books can't be updated and some information online is outdated.

"We should be able to question something," Collier said. "Teachers and people in the industry should be open to that."

In the classroom, students said they should be treated as though they're in the field. That means more open-book tests rather than simply memorizing facts – professionals need to look things up all the time, like dealing with certain pests or what to do when a particular issue arises.

"In our industry, it's so important to have an application. You're not going to memorize that unless you have a place to apply that," Baker said. "(At an internship), you're getting so much more than just memorizing facts in your class."

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▶ SAVATREE ACQUIRES KAISER TREE PRESERVATION

This marks SavATree's first Rhode Island office and 52nd branch operation.

BEDFORD HILLS, N.Y. – SavATree acquired Kaiser Tree Preservation of Exeter, Rhode Island. This is SavATree's first Rhode Island office and 52nd branch operation.

Kaiser has been providing a customer base in Rhode Island with general tree care and plant health care services since 1974. Kaiser Tree Preservation built a tick and mosquito control program which will complement SavATree's existing services.

In addition to the current offerings, clients will now have access to a wider range of services including lawn care, additional organic options and consulting services.

"We're very excited to join forces with Kaiser Tree Preservation, a leader in professional tree care in Rhode Island, that has a legacy for outstanding service," said SavATree CEO Carmine Schiavone. "We are confident that our teams are a great fit, and together we will continue to serve our customers to the highest quality standards."

"SavATree shares our same philosophy and commitment to upholding an environmentally responsible approach to landscape care," said Kaiser Founder Herb Kaiser.

"Together, we will continue to provide our customers with top quality services."



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Erik Johnson manages six offices and Nicholas Martin oversees consulting services.

STAMFORD, Conn. – Bartlett Tree Experts recently promoted Erik Johnson and Nicholas Martin to the role of vice president. Johnson manages Bartlett’s five offices in Connecticut and one in central Massachusetts. Martin oversees consulting services for the company.

Johnson first joined Bartlett in 2009. As local manager of the York and Lancaster, Pennsylvania locations, he led these offices to receive their first ever company award for excellence in safe work practices.

In 2018, Johnson broadened his leadership skills when he took on a new role assisting in the management of all of the company’s operations in Connecticut. Since that time, his regional team has continued to grow, expanding its client base and geographic footprint as well as improving sales even through the pandemic.

“It’s not every day that you have the opportunity to make a positive impact while also developing your own career,” Johnson said. “For me here at Bartlett that’s meant not only contributing to the bottom line, but also being given the chance to help others in the company realize their potential.”

Martin began his career at Bartlett in 2011 conducting tree inventories as an inventory arborist and became assistant manager of the Bartlett Inventory Solutions team three years later. When the company began further developing the consulting side of its business, Martin was selected to lead this venture.

“It’s exciting to play such an important role in the formalization and expansion of Bartlett’s Consulting services,” Martin said. “We have a real opportunity to help clients in a new way that still dovetails closely with Bartlett’s core business.”

➔ BILLY ROY "BR" HAYNES LED THE FAMILY BUSINESS FOR 27 YEARS UNTIL HIS RETIREMENT IN 1987.

▶ FORMER LITTLE BEAVER PRESIDENT DIES AT 94

Billy Roy "BR" Haynes passed away on Saturday, March 13.

LIVINGSTON, Texas – Billy Roy (BR) Haynes, loving husband, father and second-generation president of Little Beaver passed away Saturday, March 13, 2021, at the age of 94 surrounded by his family in Livingston, Texas.

Haynes' passion and life's work were in the family business, but he had a diverse range of interests and experiences at the heart of which was service of fellow citizens and country. Haynes was born on Oct. 2, 1926, in Livingston, Texas, to Newman & Lillian (Peebles) Haynes. He grew up in Livingston and graduated high school in 1943.

He briefly attended Texas A&M University, but soon left to join the war effort in World War II. He enlisted in the U.S. Merchant Marines and served in the European theater delivering material to England, Italy and Russia.

After returning to Livingston, he worked as a golf pro at a private golf course before finally joining the family business, Haynes Manufacturing Co. (now Little Beaver) with his father.

Initially working as a salesman, Haynes traveled the eastern and central U.S. selling the company's products, which at the time included a tractor-mounted mower, brush saw, tree girdler and post hole digger. After his father's retirement, he took the reins of the business and looked for ways to grow both the product line and the markets they reached.

Haynes focused on improving the business from a strategic standpoint. Recognizing the potential of the product in a wide variety of markets, from fencing and deck installation to signs and playground installation, Haynes was instrumental in expanding the company's involvement in the rental and fencing industries. Under



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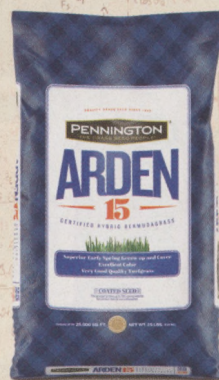
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his leadership, the business was active in industry associations, joining ARA in 1961 and FenceTech in 1972. After a successful 27 years leading the company, Haynes passed the business to his sons, Joe and John, upon his own retirement in 1987.

BR's ambition and knack for business showed itself in every facet of his life. He joined the Livingston Volunteer Fire Department in 1960 and was elected chief in 1963, ultimately retiring from the department in 1977. Under his leadership, the department was brought into the modern era, with new equipment and a new station.

Haynes was also a devoted family man. He and his wife, Fayelene, were married 70 years, and raised five children. The couple traveled extensively throughout the western U.S. after his retirement, enjoying the many National Parks and other scenic areas.

TORO ACQUIRES LEFT HAND ROBOTICS

The acquisition supports the company's technology strategy.

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – The Toro Company acquired Left Hand Robotics. The acquisition supports The Toro Company's strategy of leadership in next generation technologies, including alternative power, smart connected and autonomous products. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

Based in Longmont, Colorado, Left Hand Robotics is recognized for developing autonomous solutions for turf and snow management. Its patent-pending software and advanced technologies for autonomous navigation are designed to


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▶ SENSKE SERVICES ACQUIRES ASSETS OF SUN PEST MANAGEMENT

Founded in 1969, Sun Pest Management provides pest control and lawn care.


KENNEWICK, Wash. – Senske Services has acquired assets of Sun Pest Management in Clarkston, Washington.

Senske is a family-owned provider of lawn, tree, and pest control services throughout the Western United States. Founded in 1969, Sun Pest Management

has provided pest control and lawn care in the Lewis-Clark Valley for more than five decades. Services will continue uninterrupted by the current team of employees doing business as Sun Pest by Senske Services.

Russ Craber, Sun Pest Owner, sought an acquisition partner and felt that Senske would be a good fit for his customers and employees.

“The Senske name is solid regionally, and still expanding with purpose and plan-

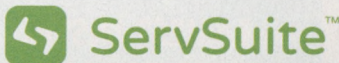


SERVICES WILL CONTINUE UNINTERRUPTED BY THE CURRENT TEAM OF EMPLOYEES.

ning,” Craber said. “I’m glad to give my former employees the benefits that can be provided by a larger entity, and one with a similar culture to our own.”

Clarkston represents the sixth location in Washington for Senske Services.

“We look forward to expanding into southeastern Washington,” Senske President Chris Senske said. “With over 50 years of experience, we are lucky to have their team join the Senske family as we continue to grow and expand.”



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▶ RUPPERT LANDSCAPE OPENS NEW BRANCH IN DURHAM

Sam Wells from Raleigh will lead the branch.

LAYTONSVILLE, Md. – Ruppert Landscape has expanded its landscape management operations to include a new location in Durham, North Carolina. This branch joins two existing landscape management branches in North Carolina, located in Raleigh and Charlotte, and will serve existing customers as well as support new growth in the region.

“Like many of our branches, the Durham office evolved from a satellite operation, and its permanent establishment is a strategic move designed to better serve our customers,” said Fred Key, region vice president in the company’s landscape management division. “When we open new facilities in the regions where our customers’ properties are concentrated, it allows us to be more responsive and efficient in our work.”

The Durham team will be led by branch

manager Sam Wells, who has led the Raleigh team for the past four years and has been with the Ruppert organization for over eight. He holds a bachelor’s degree in applied horticulture science from SUNY Cobleskill and is a landscape industry certified technician (CLT) and certified commercial applicator with over 27 years of combined landscape industry experience.

“Over the past several years, Sam has led the Raleigh team in building strong customer relationships and building a solid team,” Key said. “He has taken on the challenge of opening this new location and expertly navigated the purchase and reconstruction of the new facility and is busy putting together his team. We have complete faith in his ability to get the Durham operation up and running and are excited to see what the future holds for them.”



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▶ MASSEY SERVICES PROMOTES WILLIAMS TO REGIONAL VP

Darlene Williams has been with the company since 1994.

ORLANDO, Fla. – Massey Services recently promoted Darlene Williams to the role of regional vice president, which became effective Feb. 1.

A 25-year veteran of the pest management industry, Williams initially joined Massey in 1994 as a service manager in training. In 1996, Williams was promoted to general

manager of GreenUP Osceola and was promoted to technical training director of the GreenUP division in 1998. Her career advancement continued in 2000 when she was promoted to regional manager of GreenUP's Central Region. Williams was transferred to regional manager of the South Central Region in 2018, the company's largest region.

"Darlene's commitment to total customer satisfaction has been evident throughout her 25 years of service with Massey Services," said Tony Massey, president of Massey

↓
WILLIAMS WILL OVERSEE THE COMPANY'S OPERATIONS IN FIVE REGIONS.

Services. "Her long-term experience in our industry, knowledge in all facets of our business and her passion for training and developing her team has all contributed to her ongoing success. We are excited about Darlene's well-deserved promotion and the great things she will continue to bring to our Central Florida regions."

In her new role as regional vice president, Williams will oversee the company's East Florida, North Central, South Central, Midwest and West regions. **L&L**



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→ **WALTER HAD A FULL-SERVICE LANDSCAPE COMPANY** in Nebraska. Business was good, but he couldn't figure out why his margins were as low as they were. He thought he should have more money in the bank as he ended the year and headed into winter.

He operated with two, three-man residential install crews and four, two-man residential mowing and maintenance crews. All crews worked a 45-hour week for approximately nine months. Install and maintenance crews would sometimes cross over a bit, but the amount of doing so was insignificant.

Walter calculated his labor rate at \$55 per man-hour. He'd aim to bill \$1,000 per day for his two-man maintenance crews and \$1,500 per day for his three-man landscape install crews. The margin added to install materials, he thought, would bolster his bottom line. It was charging the same man-hour rate for both install and maintenance crews that caused a serious problem and eroded his bottom line.

THE BIG MISTAKE. One of the most common mistakes that I see landscape entrepreneurs make is charging the same labor man-hour rate for their maintenance crews as for their landscape installation crews. In most cases, they are charging a reasonably accurate rate for maintenance, but they're underpricing their installation rate. There are a number of reasons why this is often so and why a contractor should be charging \$10 to \$20 more per man-hour for the install crew.

DIFFERENT CREWS AND RATES. The first reason why an install crew is more expensive per man-hour is because install crew members usually are paid a couple dollars more per man-hour. The amount isn't much, but it does account for some of the variance.

The second reason is because the general and administrative (G&A) overhead cost per man-hour for an installation crew member is significantly higher than it is for maintenance crew members. While the G&A overhead costs, as a percentage of sales, are usually the same for a maintenance division as they are for an installation one, it isn't on a man-hour basis. Let me provide an illustration:

Two different companies – one exclusively maintenance and the other exclusively installation – do \$1 million in revenue each. The G&A overhead costs for each run 25% of revenue or \$250,000. (This equal amount of G&A overhead cost at 25% of sales is an accurate figure and is one I've seen in hundreds of companies.) It requires approximately eight full-time field crew members working roughly nine months at 45 man-hours per week to complete \$1 million in installation work. It takes about 16 similar full-time field crew members to accomplish \$1 million in maintenance work. The G&A overhead per man-hour (OPH) calculates as follows:

Installation Company G&A Overhead per Man-hour

- \$1 million x .25 = \$250,000 G&A overhead costs
- 45.0 MHRs per week x 4.333 weeks per month x 9.0 months x 8.0 crew members = 14,039 man-hours
- \$250,000 ÷ 14,039 = **\$17.81**

Mowing and Maintenance Company G&A Overhead per Man-hour

- \$1 million x .25 = \$250,000 G&A overhead costs
- 45.0 MHRs per week x 4.333 weeks per month x 9.0 months x 16.0 crew members = 28,078 man-hours
- \$250,000 ÷ 28,078 = **\$8.90**

As you can see, the G&A OPH for installation work is much higher than it is for maintenance work.

Additionally, the installation man-hour rate should be higher than it is for maintenance because it commands a higher net profit margin. Commercial installation work usually warrants a 12-15% net profit margin. Residential installation work, especially in today's robust economy, warrants a 20% net profit margin. The net profit margin applied to maintenance work usually ranges from 10-12%.

If you review the two MS Excel worksheets accompanying this article on the Lawn & Landscape website, you will see the \$11.63 difference in the two labor rates.

CONCLUSION. Walter's average rate of \$55 per man-hour was actually \$3.64 high for his maintenance crews. However, since his customers were already paying it, there was no reason to change it. On the other hand, his installation rate was \$7.99 too low (\$62.99 - \$55). He should increase it accordingly. Such an increase would add to his bottom line. It could add as much as \$84,128 (10,529 man-hours x \$7.99). I would encourage Walter to make such a change. **L&L**



MAKE SURE TO DO THE MATH WHEN CALCULATING LABOR RATES. Due to several contributing factors, it'll be different for each division. To see how Jim Huston did his math, visit bit.ly/lawnwebextras.



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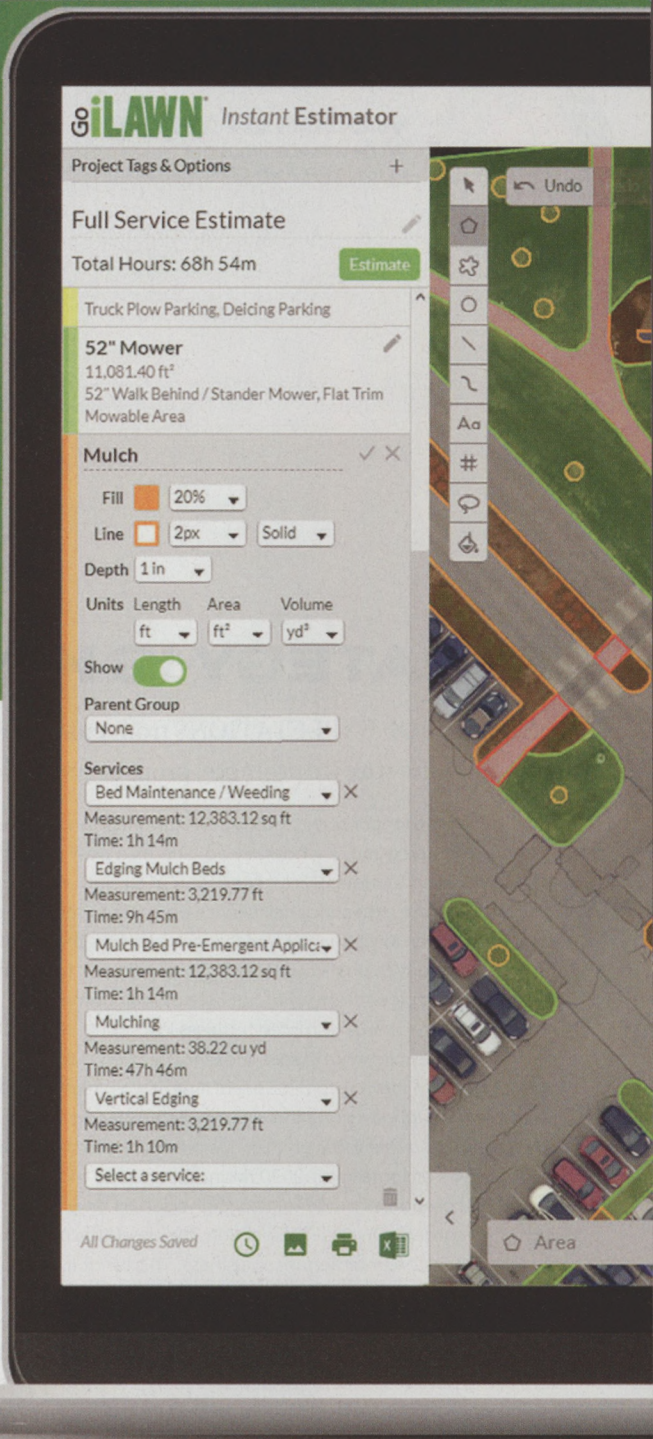
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WORDS OF WILSON
WITH BRUCE WILSON
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WORDS OF WILSON features a rotating panel of consultants from Bruce Wilson & Company, a landscape consulting firm.

STRATEGY IS KING

→ A NEW SET OF EXPECTATIONS from customers is having a game-changing impact on the way we promote, propose and deliver our services.

Customers no longer seek landscape companies to execute tasks or simply be good at what they do. There's a post-pandemic, pent-up demand for not only re-connecting at a relationship level, but customers are expecting their service partners to serve up a winning return on investment. Landscape businesses that cling to their tactically-driven past could lose out to smart and fast-thinking companies that place strategy at the core of their game.

When the coronavirus disrupted business last spring, agile CEOs were building flexible 'what if' scenarios that allowed them to scale, shift or pivot with their customers in real time. It was a smart approach that prevented upheaval and they emerged stronger and better, and with a sharper, savvier focus on their customer's hierarchy of needs.

An analysis of some firms' 2020 financials showed that many landscape companies made tactical gains and hit or got close to short-term targets. On closer inspection, they had little or no strategic growth in their core maintenance business. This is not to say that tactics aren't important, but to generate real growth, strategy is the only way to get there.

Think about strategy as a critical leverage point for profitability in developing new business, for example. Identify the types of customers you want to serve in the future and the opportunities that will bring you success. You should know what your customers want from you that's different from the past and how you can optimize your platform around new paradigms.

Strategy, in this case, should be based on selling profitable work. To do that, you must know what work is the most profitable for your business model and who your ideal customers are since loyalty and retention is important. Also, it's important to know how to make referrals more profitable.

Referrals drive sales for most landscape maintenance business; however, when they are a result of untargeted selling instead of proactive relationship-building, they can be low-hanging fruit for your salespeople. While referrals can be an important byproduct of excellent work, it's also true that referrals can lead to less desirable jobs. When you fill your pipeline with low-hanging leads, you run out of room for high-quality leads and your time and resources are spent

following up on jobs that may negatively affect other areas of your business.

Most landscape companies attract abundant referrals through excellent customer service. But do they capture their fair share of the business that potentially comes from those leads? Sadly, too many of these opportunities are lost due to the transactional nature of some sales teams.

To work leads well, look at the opportunities they present through a strategic lens. Will it be challenging to implement? Does it offer opportunities for scaling, for cross-selling or up-selling? Does it align with density goals, have retention potential or align with your mix?

Get as much information as possible. What are the lead's broad objectives, wants and needs? What was their history and experience with other service providers? How do they feel about landscape value, and what role does sustainability play in their strategic plan?

Most importantly, why would they benefit from what you offer?

CEO involvement in the proposal process can help sales teams win the right kind of business. Proposals can be complex documents, with technical data and supporting information. But the bulk of the proposal should be devoted to what the potential new customer is interested in: his/her return on investment, landscaping and site infrastructure objectives and how your practices and approach can help them achieve a new level of success. Putting their strategy and objectives first will show that you have done your homework and ensure you don't go home empty-handed. **L&L**

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PRIORITIZING SALES STRATEGIES can help you attract better clients in the future and boost your bottom line.



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CREAM OF THE CROP
WITH BILL ARMAN
LEAD HARVESTER

CREAM OF THE CROP features a rotating panel from the Harvest Group, a landscape business consulting company.

IT ALL STARTS AND STOPS WITH THE LEADERS

→ IN TODAY'S CHALLENGING TIMES this rings true more than ever. When the Harvest Group is brought in to help organizations harvest their potential, one of the key areas that is reviewed is how well do the leaders of the organization truly lead? We certainly start with the ownership and then take a good look at the leaders who are currently in place.

With this in mind, perhaps now would be a good time to reflect on how you and your leaders are doing in their roles at your organization. There are many ways to assess leaders. Here are seven areas that are essential for being a solid leader at your organization.

Using the acronym of LEADERS, let's review seven key attributes and qualities of a good leader.

LEADS WITH A CLEAR SENSE OF VISION. People know where the organization is headed. There is a sense of destination and a solid unified understanding of their Why the organization is in existence. This gives purpose and inspires team members to aspire to reach their fullest potential. There is a clearly stated vision, mission and core value statement, along with the company's strategic intent. These are written and clearly understood and embraced at all levels.

ENCOURAGES AND INSPIRES TO ASPIRE. Serve as an encourager to others. Good leaders are even-keeled and enthusiastic about the company's future. Leaders are clearly passionate and positive about the future of the organization and its people. They give plenty of recognition and praise whenever and wherever possible.

ACUMEN FOR BUSINESS. Good leaders are achievement-oriented. They are aware of their marketplace and they adapt to change quickly. They know their numbers and key performance indicators and are decisive when there is need to adjust to the challenges they face. They are always prepared and have options. When they are in doubt or lack knowledge in certain areas, they seek and take good counsel.

DEVELOPS OTHERS AND SELF. Good leaders create and embrace a continual learning culture. They not only have training and development programs for all team members; they also look closely at themselves and have a skill or behavior they are learning to improve. Ask yourselves, what one or two skills or behaviors would be good for you to develop or learn more about that would help you to be a better leader or your organization be more successful? Do you have a professional coach/mentor to help you or your leaders? If not, maybe now would be a good time.

ETHICS, VALUES AND INTEGRITY: BUILDS TRUST. Great leaders

have a clear sense of what is right and are consistent with their actions that adhere to being ethical, living and exemplifying their core values and being honest. Everyone in your organization is consistently treated with dignity and respect. Great leaders serve as excellent examples in words and action/behaviors. A good dose of humility also goes a long way here as well.

RESULTS AND ACTION-ORIENTED. Leaders make sure that all of their leaders have clearly defined roles, goals and activities that are in place and reviewed regularly (at least quarterly and preferably monthly). Relevant goals are written down and understood by all. Results in key areas are tracked, reviewed regularly and accomplished! **Key areas that need special focus include:**

- Recruiting, onboarding, growing and retaining the right people
- Retaining the right clients at the right rate of retention of 90%+
- Working safely (no lost time injury accidents), effectively (quality of work) and efficiently (achieving targeted gross margins)

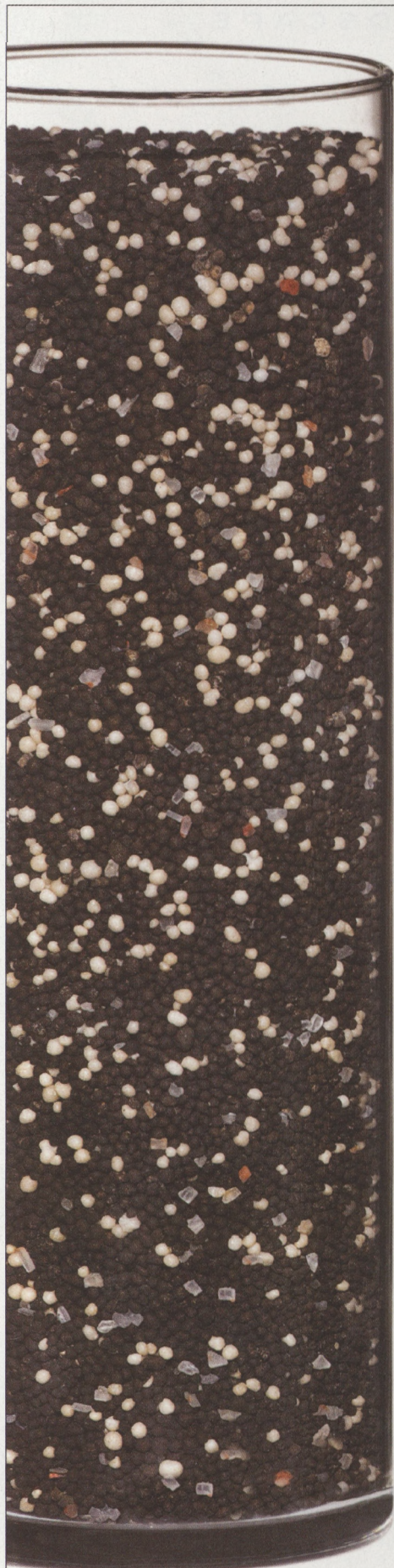
SERVES OTHERS. Great leaders set the tone of serving. They are a positive example of servant leadership. They give their time generously to others within and outside the organization. They pursue the success of others as if it were their own because it often is the case. You are a servant leader when you focus on the needs of others.

With this content in mind, take the leaders self-evaluation at bit.ly/lawnwebextras and see how you rate yourself. Now have some of your leaders do the same evaluation on you!

Remember: It all starts and stops with the leaders! **L&L**

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KEEPING THE ACRONYM 'LEADERS' IN MIND can help you identify what your leaders are doing right and where there's room for improvement. To take the Harvest Group's leaders self-evaluation, visit bit.ly/lawnwebextras.



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Claire Goldman

Principal and head of design and business development, **R&R Landscaping**

Editor's note: Claire Goldman is an active member of the National Association of Landscape Professionals Women in Landscape Network (powered by Bayer) which provides a forum for industry professionals to support each other's professional growth. The Network is free to all industry professionals.

WHEN I WAS A BUDDING LANDSCAPE DESIGNER,

I didn't understand the value of investing in myself as a leader. I never planned to own a company, lead a team or manage people. I just wanted to make outdoor spaces amazingly beautiful! Turns out the joke's on me.

Today, I own a design/build company in Auburn, Ala., and I spend more time developing other leaders than designing dreamy landscapes. Nevertheless, I'm grateful to report that I've found myself surrounded by incredible individuals, including my husband and, collectively, we've built a team that invests in each other every day to elevate the company to new levels.

As a creative person, I'm constantly seeking inspiration. Fortunately, inspiration can be found in every direction. It may be the way a plant grows out of a rock

WOMEN IN LAWN & LANDSCAPE is a column brought to you in partnership with the National Association of Landscape Professionals.

This is the first in what will be a bi-monthly column giving a woman's perspective who is working in the green industry.

in the woods, the sexy twists of an old crape myrtle's branches, or a well-placed specimen drawing the eye right where it was intended; inspiring myself just comes naturally. The challenge of leadership is learning to inspire others. In reality, leadership isn't about you or me, it's about each person on the team.

Effective leadership naturally motivates and empowers team members to give their best without it feeling like you're pulling teeth. A cherished client has quietly demonstrated this caliber of leadership for me. He lives in another state, so our rapport has developed primarily over the phone. In fact, we've only connected in person six times throughout our four years of collaboration.

Nevertheless, it has proven to be one of the most influential relationships of my life. I noticed that no matter how stressful my day was, interacting with him made me better — not just feel better, but want to be better. He never demands excellence, but after talking to him, I always want to give my best. I sought to identify what it is about him that inspires me so much: he's kind, positive, encouraging, funny, wise, and he believes in me more than I believe in myself. Just by him being himself, he makes me want to be the best version of myself.

That's the goal, folks. It may seem effortless, but it takes practice, awareness and accountability to empower the people around you just by being you. It's a process of self-growth that requires more humility than most of us are comfortable with. But by embracing humility, we gain the best form of power — the power to grow other leaders who value each other and make our little piece of the earth a better place.

Who is holding you accountable as a leader? Are you the kind of person who inspires those around you to be the best version of themselves? Are the people within your circle of influence better people because you are in their lives? Simon Sinek says, "Leadership isn't about being in charge, it's about taking care of the people in your charge." His words resonate with me as I think about our team and their families.

It's truly an honor and a responsibility to lead a team and not something to be taken for granted. We can lead the people around us in a way that inspires them to lead the people around them. Whether we lead a crew, a division, or a company; showing our teams how much they are valued and appreciated has the power to change our companies one relationship at a time. **L&L**



See what other attendees had to say about last year's event.

→ **IT WAS SO HELPFUL TO NETWORK AND LEARN ABOUT THE DIFFICULTIES OTHERS ARE FACING WITH IMPLEMENTATION AND HOW THEY OVERCAME THE SAME CHALLENGES WE FACED.”**

KAREN KLEIN

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In 2020, the green industry rose to the challenge of being an essential part of maintaining our landscapes and green spaces during these pandemic times. We were all learning new skills in technology to stay in contact. We found a way to service the growing population shift from urban households to working from home in larger suburban and rural households in need of more space.

We witnessed unprecedented interest in new homeowners investing in their homes and landscaping projects. They took to their gardens and yards for many reasons which fueled demand for landscape services. Today they continue on their yards to gather in small groups or enjoy a quiet oasis to decompress from the workday. Homes with more space and larger landscapes that required regular maintenance

and service. There has never been more opportunity for growth in the green industry.

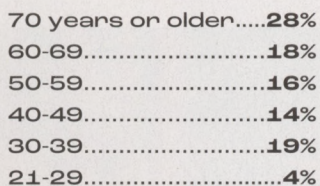
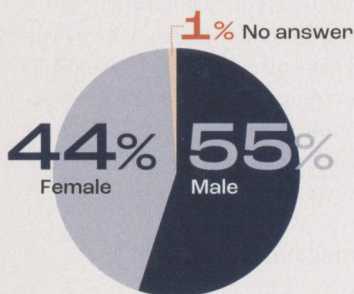
Since 1928, it's been a long-standing heritage at Corona to provide the tools professionals and business owners need to promote growth, maximize efficiency, while sustainably caring for the world we live in. It's why we've helped bring "Grow the Market" to light and provide the tools you need to grow your business, based on solid research. We've been helping since day one and nearly 100 years later, we haven't stopped because professionals rely on Corona tools. We're always ready to go to work when you need us and ready to help you grow your piece of the market.

Clayton Tharrington
Channel Manager - Pro

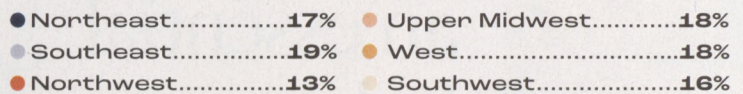
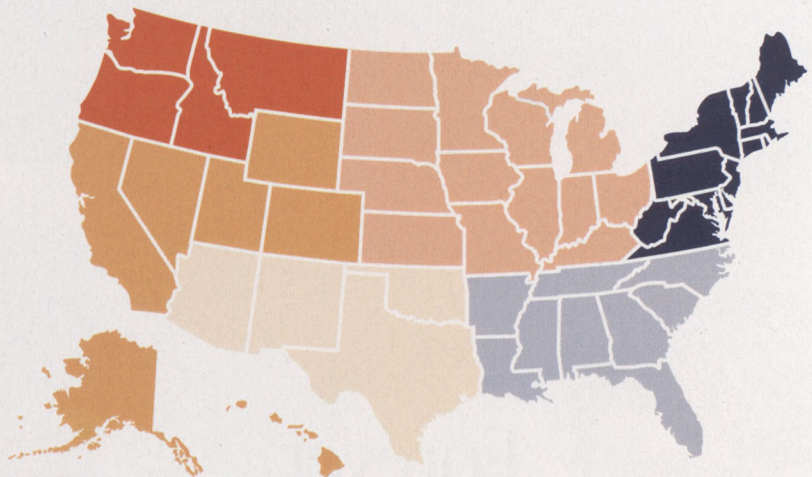
GROW the MARKET

Lawn & Landscape once again is investigating why homeowners spend money with you.

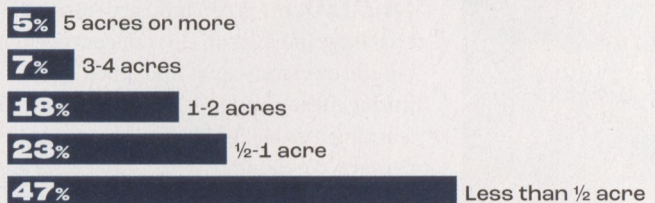
Through our Grow the Market survey, we find out what the consumer thinks of your services in general and dig specifically into maintenance, lawn care and hardscaping/installation. We last published this study in 2016, so we'll compare how things have changed in the five years since the last report. But first, here's a look at the demographic that took the survey.



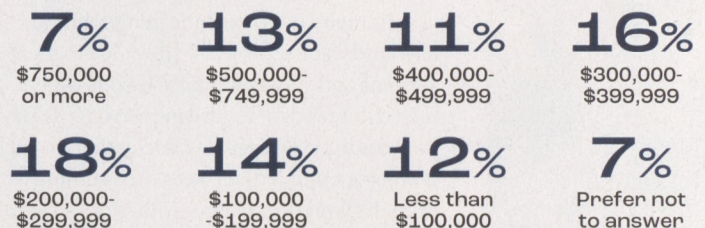
LOCATION OF PRIMARY HOME?



APPROXIMATE AMOUNT OF ACREAGE MAINTAINED (lawn, flowers and shrubs, outdoor living areas, etc.)



VALUE OF PRIMARY RESIDENCE?



Investments & Perceptions



*HOW MUCH ARE THE FOLLOWING MOTIVATIONS TO IMPROVE YOUR LANDSCAPING?

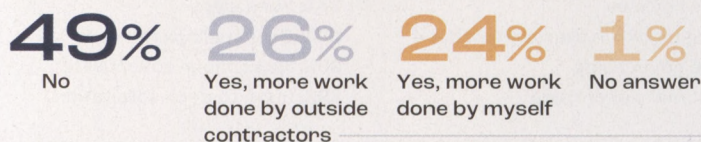
- 80%** The ability to enjoy outside space
- 80%** A sense of personal pride
- 76%** Adding to the home value
- 68%** Having an outdoor entertainment area
- 63%** Addressing a specific problem (disease, insects, etc.)
- 60%** A sense of environmental responsibility
- 55%** Repairing storm damage
- 48%** Fitting in with the neighbors, meeting their expectations
- 45%** Conforming to the homeowner's association standards

*Represents percentage who rated the option influential or extremely influential/agreed or strongly agreed.

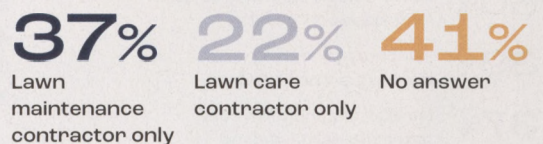
It's clear from the numbers, consumers still value their lawn and landscape as much as they did five years ago – which is a lot. Compared to 2016, the ability to enjoy outside space and a sense of personal pride were the top two motivations to improve landscaping. But the number of people who scored it as influential to extremely influential increased by 12% for both compared to 2016.

Homeowners are also factoring it into their discretionary spending more. About 60% said, compared to spending on vacation, entertainment, etc., that landscaping was important to extremely important. That number was closer to 50% in 2016.

IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, HAVE YOU MADE ANY CHANGES IN HOW MUCH OF THE LAWN CARE AND LANDSCAPING YOU DO AROUND YOUR HOME?



FOR THOSE WHO SAID THEY'VE HIRED A LAWN CARE OR LAWN MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR:

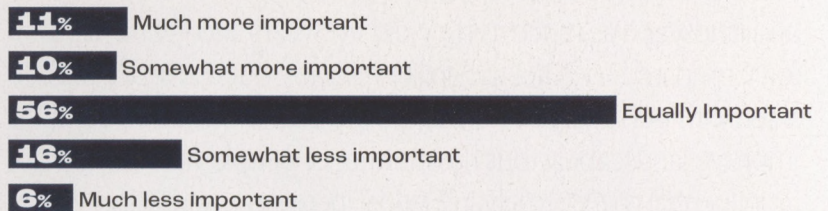




***PLEASE INDICATE YOUR LEVEL OF AGREEMENT WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS**

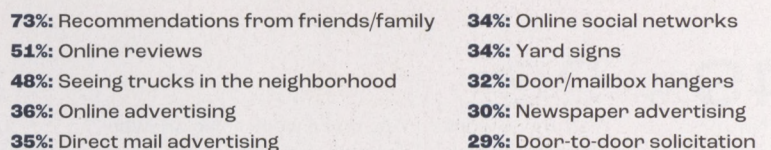
- 75%** Landscaping increases the value of my home
- 67%** If I decide to sell my home, I can make any necessary landscape improvements in a year or less
- 66%** A well-managed lawn and landscape can help improve the environment in my community
- 65%** Landscape installations (planting areas, shrubs, trees, etc.) done by contractors are prohibitively expensive
- 62%** The green space around my home is an important contributor to the environment
- 56%** I think the landscapers I hire are professional businesspeople
- 55%** I enjoy mowing my own grass/maintaining my home's landscape
- 55%** I trust the recommendations I receive from the lawn and landscape contractors I hire
- 50%** I save time hiring a professional landscape contractor
- 39%** I want my yard to be the envy of the neighbors
- 37%** I prefer organic lawn care to traditional programs

COMPARED TO THE INSIDE OF YOUR PRIMARY HOME, HOW IMPORTANT IS IT THAT THE OUTSIDE LOOKS NICE AND THEREFORE IS ENJOYABLE TO LIVE IN?



→ **All of these categories increased** percentage-wise from 2016, but the biggest jump was a four-way tie between seeing trucks in the neighborhood; online advertising, direct mail advertising; and door-to-door solicitation – all four increased by 23%

***WHEN SELECTING A CONTRACTOR(S) TO DO THE MAINTENANCE, LAWN CARE, LANDSCAPING OR HARDSCAPING IN YOUR YARD, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING SOURCES OF INFORMATION?**



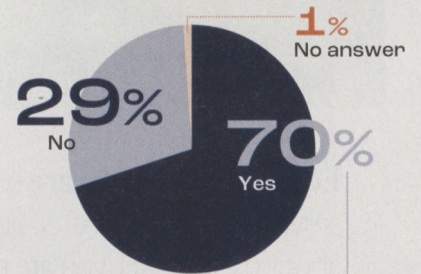


→ About 25% of homeowners have a landscape maintenance contractor working on their lawn, which is close to what the 2016 study found. Of those who do, the NET Promoter Score, which measures customer satisfaction, found 57% as a promoter, while only 17% fell into the detractor category. The remaining 25% were passive.

***HOW INFLUENTIAL ARE THE FOLLOWING AS MOTIVATIONS TO HAVE A LAWN MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR DO THE MOWING, TRIMMING AND EDGING OF YOUR LAWN?**

- 86%** A well-manicured lawn adds value to my/our home
- 83%** The contractor keeps the yard looking better than I/we could
- 59%** Most people in the neighborhood use a contractor
- 58%** I/we have things to do other than spending time working in the yard
- 48%** I/we dislike yard work
- 45%** I/we have health issues that keep us from doing the work

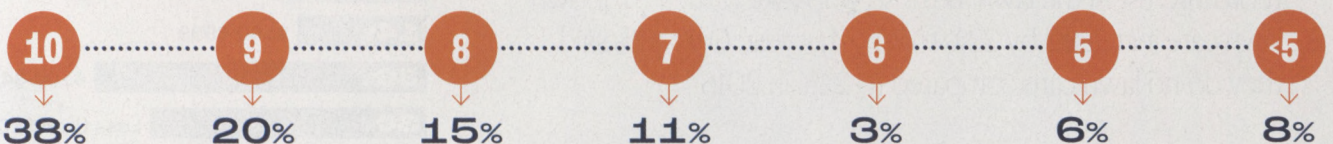
DOES THE LAWN MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR WHO DOES THE MOWING, TRIMMING AND EDGING OF YOUR LAWN DO ANY OF THE OTHER LANDSCAPE/HARDSCAPE WORK FOR YOU?



WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING OTHER YARD MAINTENANCE/UPGRADE ACTIVITIES DOES THE LAWN MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR PROVIDE FOR YOU?

- 56%** Annual or semi-annual activities (mulch, aeration, overseeding, tree/shrub trimming, etc.)
- 50%** Application of fertilizer, weed control, pest control products, etc.
- 32%** Landscaping (new planting areas, planting flowers, shrubs, trees, etc.)
- 12%** Hardscaping (walkways, patios, outdoor kitchens, etc.)
- 10%** Snow and ice removal

HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO RECOMMEND THE LAWN MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR CURRENTLY DOING THE MOWING, TRIMMING AND EDGING OF YOUR LAWN TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS? (10=EXTREMELY LIKELY)



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Education in lawn care seems more important than the services, doesn't it? After all, there could be a lot of questions about the product you are using on a customer's lawn from the customer, and maybe more importantly, from your customer's neighbors. That's not to mention how your technician is setting expectations of what their lawn will look like during treatment. The good news is 83% of those who have hired a contractor said they feel they have been properly educated by their LCO.

You want more good news? In 2016, only 36 were classified as promoters of their lawn care service, but now that number jumps to 50% with only 17% falling into the detractor category.

Some potential bad news: Of the number of people who said they perform lawn care at their home, only 18% have a contractor do it, down from 28% in 2016. However, there is more interest in the lawn as those who take care of their own lawn care increased by 22% to 72% this year. Only 10% said they do no lawn care compared to 22% in 2016.

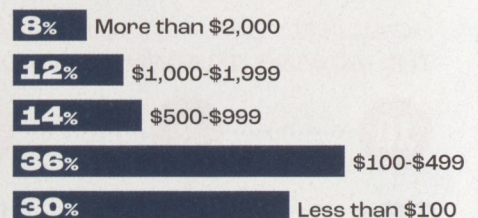
WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUR YARD WHEN YOU HIRE A LAWN CARE CONTRACTOR?

- 53%** Some weeds and insects are OK, as long as the company comes back and re-treats
- 27%** Absolutely no weeds and no insects
- 20%** Some weeds and insects are OK, and the lawn care operator will get to it on the next visit

*HOW INFLUENTIAL ARE THE FOLLOWING AS MOTIVATIONS TO HAVE A LAWN CARE CONTRACTOR APPLY THE FERTILIZER, WEED KILLER AND/OR INSECT CONTROL PRODUCTS?

- 92%** Contractor has the knowledge of which products to use to keep my yard looking its best
- 83%** Contractor gets better results than I/we ever could
- 80%** Contractor has access to more effective products than I/we can get in the store
- 67%** I/we have things to do other than spending time working in the yard
- 62%** I/we would prefer not to be in direct contact with the chemicals
- 59%** Most people in the neighborhood use a contractor
- 44%** I/we dislike yard work
- 41%** I/we have health issues that keeps us from doing the work

HOW MUCH DO YOU SPEND ANNUALLY ON LAWN CARE (FERTILIZER, WEED CONTROL, INSECT CONTROL, ETC.)?





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Design/build contractors should be busy over the next couple of years; at least busier than when we last did the survey in 2016. Back then, only about 25% said they were planning a major hardscape project (adding walkways, patio, outdoor kitchen, etc.) on the property of their primary home in the next two years. Today, almost 40% said they plan on such a project in the next two years. The numbers also reinforce those who plan on a project would be likely to hire you.

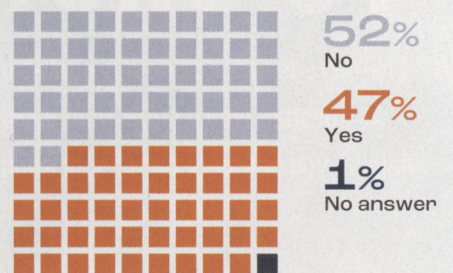
IF YOU ARE PLANNING A MAJOR HARDSCAPE PROJECT, HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO HIRE A PROFESSIONAL CONTRACTOR TO DO THE WORK?

- 50%** Extremely likely
- 29%** Somewhat likely
- 13%** Somewhat unlikely
- 8%** Very unlikely

***HOW INFLUENTIAL ARE THE FOLLOWING AS MOTIVATIONS TO IMPROVE YOUR HARDSCAPE?**

- 80%** The ability to enjoy the outside space
- 77%** A sense of personal pride
- 76%** Adding to the home value
- 66%** Having an outdoor entertainment area
- 48%** Fitting in with the neighbors, meeting their expectations

IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS, HAVE YOU DONE A MAJOR LANDSCAPING PROJECT (added trees, developed new planting areas, replaced a lawn, etc.) ON THE PROPERTY OF YOUR PRIMARY HOME?



SURVEY METHODOLOGY: Lawn & Landscape partnered with Readex research who utilized Dynata's panel, targeting homeowners, aged 18 and older living in the U.S. The survey was fielded between Feb. 9-16 with 576 valid responses. Respondents are adults who own their own homes and are the primary decision-maker when it comes to hiring a landscaper or lawn care operator. **Note:** Not all graphs equal 100%.

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track crews, GPS location, and employee time for lawn, tree, & landscape.



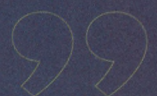
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Keeping up the culture

After 13 years, Diaz Group is still growing by emphasizing self-development in all aspects of the business.

By Kim Lux



As president of the Chicago-based Diaz Group, Rafael Diaz was looking for a better way to manage his stress. He found meditation and became completely captivated by it. When his team noticed, they were quick to laugh.

"It started as a joke," he says. "They used to make fun of me, especially my family. Back when I started my own self-development deal, I was a high-strung person...I started to get into meditation to learn to control my emotions. When you're a business owner, you get so many problems in a day. I had to find some way to think clearly."

After his business partners and employees noticed a change in his demeanor, Diaz says they started to get curious, asking him questions about meditation.

"One day I introduced it to the company. I paid a professional to come to the Christmas party and he taught us all to meditate. A lot of people really took it up. Now, we do it about once a month," Diaz says.

Since then, Diaz has noticed change in how his employees are handling pressure.

"It's about convincing people that it's a way to compartmentalize your thoughts and be able to make

better decisions because your mind isn't all over the place," he says. "One of the things that it's helped is that in our company, there's never panic. You don't see anxiety in the company itself."

Diaz says most employees practice meditation every day on their own and once a month together. He would like to eventually make it a part of the team's daily routine in the office.

CELEBRATORY CULTURE. In the early years of the business, which was founded in 2007, Diaz says he worked with several consultants who taught him what he should be focusing on when growing the company like the culture and customer retention. Diaz says that approach really sunk in for him and now the company's culture is at the forefront of everything.

"We started working a lot on our company culture and defining our values," he says. "From there, our quality improved because employees were happy and we started doing more training, so that helped the quality, too."

Diaz's philosophy for building up his company's culture was pretty simple - just have fun.

ABOVE: Diaz Group President Rafael Diaz, right, went into business with his two brothers and father in 2007, and the company has continued to grow 15% year over year.

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Company and community cookouts are just one way that Chicago-based Diaz Group sustains the company's family-oriented culture.

"Don't be afraid to have fun," he says. "I feel like some companies always want to have that uptight 'we're down to business' mindset and we have to be OK with having fun once in a while."

To lift spirits, Diaz Group employees celebrate everything. "For Diaz Group, everything is a big event," Diaz says. "There is not one day we don't have fun at work. Whenever a rep has a sale, we sound this airhorn and everyone claps and hits the walls. The office goes up in a roar."

Gathering together for a meal, even at a social distance, is another way the company boosts its culture.

"With COVID it's been super hard because we can't have barbecues and dinners, so that's been a challenge for us," Diaz says. "But even just eating lunch together can be an event."

NEVER STOP LEARNING. Diaz Group's revenue is \$10 million annually, with 15% growth each year. One of the most crucial components of the company is its high customer retention rate of 92%.

"[One consultant] gave us a really good idea on how to

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“I made a promise with my business partners... that as long as I was president of this company, that everybody will always be learning.”

RAFAEL DIAZ, president of Diaz Group

structure the business and to always keep in mind that selling is the most important part of the business in order to have those customers come in,” he says. “So, we started learning more about sales, marketing and stuff that we needed to know to keep a flow of customers coming in.”

As a small company, Diaz admits his team was somewhat passive in its early years, but a consultant taught them to be more active in their sales approach.

“We were waiting for the phone to ring,” he says. “But in reality, it’s not about waiting for the phone to ring but about proactive approaches to contact the customer first. Nobody wants to be cold-calling or prospecting, so it was hard... but we had to have a different approach.”

Diaz learned that the services they provided were adding value to customers’ lives

and that should be at the cornerstone of their sales pitch.

“I trained everyone in the company to be sales oriented,” he says. “So, no matter what your position was, you were trained in sales. Even if you’re in accounting and you answer the phone, you can help the sales team and find a lead for them.”

Diaz adds another way they seek out new customers – and keep them – is looking within their existing customer base.

“We ask for referrals,” he says, “And it always works. Our customer really is that property manager or facility manager. So, when we talk to them, we ask them to refer friends from the industry. It usually goes further than the cold-calling and the door knocking.”

But learning about sales and marketing wasn’t enough for Diaz. He took the advice

of the consultant to heart and strived to improve his leadership skills.

“He started telling me that I needed to work on myself every single day and work on self-development for the rest of my life if I wanted to be a leader,” he says. “He told me to read books, watch YouTube videos, go to coaches... and he was right. If I wanted to be a good leader, I had to learn how to be one. I wasn’t just a boss anymore. I was a leader.”

Diaz says he especially connected with books by John Maxwell.

“He’s a great author and I read all his books,” he says. “The one part I loved was where it said you have to learn to create memories with your people intentionally. I never thought about it that way – I always thought memories were created spontaneously.”

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“I always say that if other companies aren't recruiting my guys, that means I don't have good enough guys.”

RAFAEL DIAZ, president of Diaz Group

also had a massive impact on Diaz. So much so, that it has become a requirement for certain Diaz Group employees.

“There's this really cool course about

how to influence and win people over... I liked it so much, that now if anyone comes into management, they have to take the course,” he says. “So, they can

learn how to work on relationships. It teaches people a good way to approach other people. It's about learning how to read people and understand them and their point of view.”

Diaz adds he instructs those who participate in the course to teach what they've learned to those they manage in order to share the knowledge and help everyone grow.

The course is not the only educational requirement for employees. Diaz says that each segment of the business, from sales to production, have their own weekly educational days. During lunch on these days, employees read and discuss books, watch training videos, lead workshops and more.

“I made a promise with my business partners, which are my two brothers and my dad, that as long as I was the president of this company, that everybody will always be learning. It's helped us become very humble and always try to learn something from everyone,” Diaz says.

And that starts with the hiring process.

“Right away when we're interviewing, if that person thinks they know it all already, they probably won't work well within our company, because we're all learning and if they don't want to learn, they won't fit in with the culture,” Diaz says.

WORTH THE WORK. Between the educational and self-development opportunities, Diaz says his team has the skills to handle anything that comes at them, which has also contributed to the company's growth. “It gives them better decision-making when they are stressed out,” he says.

Diaz says that whether it's meditation, leadership courses or another form of self-development, in order to get employees on board, you have to make them see why it's necessary. And don't give up if there's some hesitation or pushback at the beginning.

“You just got to keep at it,” he says. “Explain the value in it. I don't think companies can afford not to do it.”

And Diaz says because of this, self-development is an integral part of the company's budget that proves its worth year over year.

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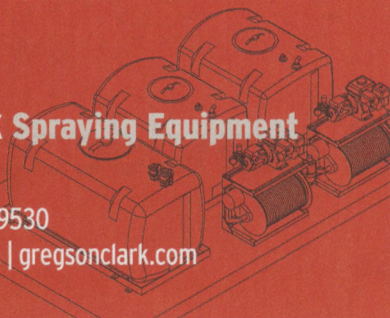


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From the top down, employees at Diaz Group spend time learning to better themselves and others through self-development.

“You can measure how much money you spend on this type of development, but you can’t measure how much you lose if your people aren’t developed,” he says. “At the end of the day, if I don’t develop and train people to be better, I start losing them. It’s happened in the past.”

But Diaz says even if you train your employees religiously, you will never retain them all.

“People always ask me why I train them so much if they’re going to leave, and I say that’s the wrong way to think about it,” he says. “I always say that if other companies aren’t recruiting my guys, that means I don’t have good enough guys.”

AN OPEN-DOOR POLICY. With all of the self-development, the culture at Diaz Group has become incredibly family-oriented.

But that aspect of the culture is balanced out with expectations and clear policies in place, so everyone knows what is expected of them.

“People might think that if you treat them like family, they might get away with not working hard, or putting effort into it. We had to learn that balance,” he says. “It’s a family, but a family where everyone is working at their highest level.”

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The culture at Diaz Group is also built on volunteerism. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the company served as a distribution site for food drives.

Now when people ask Diaz what the company's secret is, he doesn't just tell them – he shows them.

"We open our doors to every contractor here in the city to come to our office and see what we do," he says. "We don't have any secrets."

Over the past few years, Diaz says he's had 10 or so companies come and tour Diaz Group's headquarters.

"We do a lot of it through social media," he says. "We're big on social media. We're uploading stories all the time, or Facebook Lives, inviting people over and saying the door is open."

At first, Diaz says his family was hesitant on the idea.

"At the beginning, they thought I was nuts," he says. "Now everybody is on board."

Diaz acknowledges he's gotten to where he is by having people open the door and teach him, and he likes to return the favor. He adds that the questions people have most often are on people themselves, and how to retain good employees. But he gives general business advice, too.

"At the end of the day, I think life is too short for secrets or closing doors on people," he says. "Anyone who wants to come in and learn how to do a proposal – great. I'll teach you."

He notes there are some things that are off-limits when it comes to the financials.

"I won't show you my bank statements or accounting stuff, but I'll show you how I got there," Diaz says. "It's not a big deal and it's pretty easy."

So, when a business owner asks Diaz about how to grow their business, not only does Diaz offer his assistance but he encourages them to ask everyone they can for support.

"The number one key is to ask for help," he says. "Talk to other people. Also, the first step is recognizing you need help and accepting that you need help. Because if you don't believe you need help, then you'll never make any changes. It's about being open-minded." **L&L**



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Regarding Liquid Aeration

If you haven't yet heard of liquid aeration (or N-Ext Air-8™ specifically) and the benefits it will add to your company, your client's soil and your overall turf care program, it's time to get your head out of the compacted dirt!

N-Ext Air-8™ was initially born from curiosity. The concept of liquid aeration wasn't new, but the products offered seemed to be based on surfactants and short-term fixes rather than long term measurable gains. The idea for the product was first conceived through other chemical release processes we have in our manufacturing facility in Greensboro, Georgia. The thought was: "If we can separate organic acids from insoluble particles, why not replicate this in the soil?"

The benefit of this process showed that releasing tied up soil particles and allowing certain minerals to move, created pore space in the soil for roots to take hold and ultimately create greater respiration. Because of the carbon nature of N-Ext Air-8™, micro particles stay behind in the soil allowing for greater microbial colonization, retention of pore space and over all, healthier soil.

Now, I can't speak for the efficacy of any other liquid/chemical aeration products out there, and there are many, I can most definitely relay the information from a 2020 university trial regarding N-Ext Air-8™. I believe that the industry is in the process of adopting this newer method and it's time for manufacturers to provide more data surrounding the overall efficacy of their products and set the expectations for the end users. I also believe there is a place in the industry for both mechanical and liquid/chemical aeration and that we are witnessing a larger push toward the liquid method in residential lawn care.

While aerification of golf greens and playing surfaces will likely go unchanged in their methodology of core aeration and top dressing, residential lawns are a completely different animal. The overall need for core aeration on home lawns is often overstated and the infrequency does not offer much benefit. Additionally, residential lawns rarely suffer from the compaction that plagues playing surfaces; i.e. the traffic and the ma-



"N-Ext Air-8™ is one of those revolutionary products that answered the question, 'is there a simpler way?' Air-8™ is an easy-to-use product that relieves soil surface tension, increases rooting, allows for greater water holding capacity, and decreases compaction in the top 2 inches of soil."

John Perry,
President/CEO/Founder
of Greene County Fertilizer Company

chinery. With the minimal compaction that can occur on home lawns, the time, energy, cost and resulting mess of mechanical aeration is not the simplest answer.

N-Ext Air-8™ is one of those revolutionary products that answered the question, "is there a simpler way?" Air-8™ is an easy-to-use product that relieves soil surface tension, increases rooting, allows for greater water holding capacity, and decreases compaction in the top 2 inches of soil. While you may not want to sell your aerators yet, this option will provide an incredible value to customers with many of the benefits of mechanical aeration without the increased man power, time, energy, mess and call backs.

Quite simply put, there is an economical and simple way to better soil. But let's dive a little deeper, N-Ext Air-8™ is part of a larger program and catalog of products that can benefit your business in numerous ways. N-Ext Air-8™ and RGS™ (root growth stimulant) showed an increase in root mass of 140% in 2020 university trials in one sea-

son without fertilizer applied. This gives a big boost to the rest of your fertility program by giving more opportunity for fertilizers to make it into the turf.

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John Perry is President/CEO Founder of Greene County Fertilizer Company and author of *Lawncology*®



CUT FROM A TOUGHER CLOTH

Despite ongoing health battles, Connor Turner has been able to start, and grow, his own lawn care company with the help of his father.

By Kim Lux

NOTHING'S EVER BEEN EASY for 15-year-old Connor Turner, but that hasn't stopped him from running his own landscaping company - A Cut Above Lawn Care Service.

The Bennettsville, South Carolina, native was diagnosed with a combination of gastrointestinal motility disorder and acute toxic colitis, with dilatation of the colon, when he was a small child.

"Connor's journey actually began in 2010 - that's when he got really sick," says his mother, Kim Turner. "What Connor has is not curable, but he's learned how to deal with it and how to live with it."

Kim says she and her husband, Larry Turner, were desperate to find help for their young son who was experiencing developmental delays.

"We were going from doctor, to specialist, to specialist just trying to figure out what was going on with Connor," she says. "Right before his fifth birthday, Connor had his first colostomy."

Connor's parents say that changed everything and their family's life quickly revolved around his colostomy bag.

"He wanted to go swimming and be a normal little boy," Kim says. "We thought we had to set limitations, but with Connor, there were no limitations because he was going to do things regardless of it. Connor always had his perseverance about him."

She says Connor could easily be found swimming, crawling around on his stomach, eating popcorn and behaving like a typical child regardless of the colostomy bag.

STARTING HIS EMPIRE. Over the years, Connor endured countless surgeries, a bowel resection and a cecostomy in 2014. It was at that time Connor and his dad started A Cut Above, and

Sedges, including yellow nutsedge, can disrupt play and discolor golf courses, lawns, and sports fields. They steal nutrients, and sunlight from your turf, and can be a beast to control. If you don't take control of it, sedge will take over. The first step in controlling sedges and almost all weeds in turfgrass is to grow dense, strong turf that can win its battle with the weeds. Proper maintenance is key. Keeping your turf at the correct height will prevent weeds from forming seed heads. Sedges do best in low mow conditions. Drainage is vital. Controlling sedges and other weeds in turfgrass is to grow dense turf that can win its battle with the weeds. Maintenance

The first step in controlling sedges is to grow almost all weeds in turfgrass. Sedges do best in low mow conditions. Drainage is vital. Controlling sedges and other weeds in turfgrass is to grow dense turf that can win its battle with the weeds. Proper turf maintenance will help your turf resist weeds. Seed heads in moist conditions are common. The first step in almost all weeds in turfgrass is to grow dense

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Connor would be out mowing grass in between hospital stays, on the weekends and whenever else he could.

"Connor started going to cut grass with me when he was seven years old," Larry recalls. "We actually had to put a brick on the zero-turn mower so he could mow without the safety switch going off."

Larry says even as a young toddler, Connor would follow behind with his toy lawn mower as his grandfather, Papa Freddy, mowed the lawn.

"I saw that this was something he loved to do, and I wanted something for him to fall back on when he was out there in the real world," Larry says of his motivation for starting the business. "This company was built for him and I hope he can take it way farther than I ever could."

Connor says he's always loved the out-



15-year-old Connor Turner leads A Cut Above Lawn Care Service, with assistance from his father and four additional employees.

doors and mowing lawns, so the business was an escape for him.

"I just love to do it and it's like my getaway from everything," he says. "I just love the work, and it was my way out of being sick."

Following the cecostomy, Connor was

able to lose the colostomy bag and now has a trapdoor chait tube, which gives him more freedom. Despite everything, Kim says her son's perseverance has never wavered. "It's still a struggle, but that does not stop him from trying to do his best," she says.

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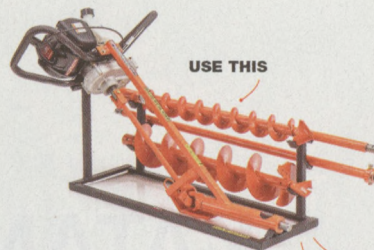
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I saw that this was something that he loved to do, and I wanted something for him to fall back on when he was out there in the real world.”

LARRY TURNER, Connor's father

A LITTLE LEADER. In addition to maintenance, A Cut Above provides several other services.

“We prune bushes, do bush hogging, overseeding, mulching, gutter cleaning – a little bit of everything,” Connor says.

And even though he's only 15, Connor's the one in charge.

“We have four people who work with us,” Larry says. “And if I'm not there, I can send Connor out with the guys and he's the boss and tells them what to do. He's the boss.”

“I'm basically the money man behind the scenes. Connor tells me what we need to buy and what we need to do.”

When Connor's not working, he's either learning about the latest equipment or watching videos from around the industry.

“He started watching videos of all these landscapers on YouTube and videos on

different pieces of equipment,” Larry says. “He's very knowledgeable about lawns and landscaping.”

He's so knowledgeable that Larry remembers a time when Connor encouraged a complete stranger to buy a certain brand of equipment.

“We were buying a piece of equipment one day and looking at some weed eaters at our local vendors here and someone else came in and also started looking. Next thing I know, Connor is in the corner with the guy and he sold a piece of equipment to the guy without any salesperson coming up to him,” he says.

Because Connor loves learning about all things landscaping, he was eager to one day attend GIE+EXPO and got the opportunity to do so in 2019.

“He loved that and really enjoyed

meeting people from across the country,” Larry says.

“He just loved being able to network with the people he watches on YouTube.”

A SEA OF OPPORTUNITY. Larry, who also works full-time for the local police department, says he hopes the company grows.

“We probably service about 65 customers,” he says. “We're basically maxed out right now, but hopefully when I retire that changes.”

Connor is also eyeing a new piece of equipment to expand his services.

“I'm looking for a skid-steer,” he says. “I want one so bad.”

And for Connor's business – the sky's the limit.

“I want to grow it bigger,” he says, “so it's huge.” **L&L**

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PROGRESS PATH



Maintaining the same vision for 18 years while evolving other parts of his business has allowed Founder and CEO Andy Kadrich to continue growing Turf Masters.

By Kim Lux

Andy Kadrich, founder and CEO, started Turf Masters in his basement in 2002. Since then, the company has grown to include 11 branch locations in four states.

For Kadrich, setting high goals for the company contributes to its success. In 2019, the company budgeted \$15 million in revenue and increased it to \$19 million for 2020.

Turf Masters finished out the year just over \$20 million, and projections for 2021 are north of \$24 million.

Kadrich says the company reaches these high goals by what he calls “boots on the

ground” or going door-to-door. Strong advertising and branding also play a large role.

KEEP EVOLVING. Kadrich says success is all about making the necessary adjustments. He adds there were a few changes in 2019 that helped Turf Masters get closer to their goal.

“It was an adjustment year,” he says. “We used to hire salespeople from any industry. We made the decision to hire only from within our industry. They seem to last a bit longer and we get better sales. In this hiring environment, it’s already very difficult.



“As we get bigger, we’ve got to get better, so that we keep the same values we had when we were working in my basement 17 years ago.”

ANDY KADRICH, founder and CEO
of Turf Masters

rich says having a recruiter that’s plugged into the industry is also a major benefit.

Kadrich says another adjustment that bolstered the company’s bottom line was only taking on new customers who prepaid or put a credit card on file for auto-payments.

“We left our current customer base the way it was,” Kadrich says. “But through email, and the way we delivered the bill, we tried to move them toward this. It wasn’t mandatory, but they no longer got an invoice on the door that they could mail in. They got a card on the door that explained what we did and showed them how to pay the bill online.”

Kadrich says having customers on auto-payments helped in a few ways.

“Our bad debts were cut in half, but we didn’t really have a bad debt problem,” he says. “It also lowered our new sale cancellation rate down to about 13%.”

Kadrich adds that auto-payments also help keep customers on a better schedule.

“Service to our customers improved quite a bit,” Kadrich says. “The key to our service is keeping customers on time and on schedule with their applications. So, if

someone waited 60 days to pay, that puts your program off kilter.”

Kadrich says TurfMasters has continued to strengthen internally as well.

“Our big commitment this year was to reinvent our training program, which we did at the end of 2019 and implemented in 2020,” Kadrich says. “We made the training program for salespeople into a three-month program. It’s structured so that everyone goes through the same thing and we can hold people accountable for making sure they’ve successfully gone through the program. There’s testing that goes on and the manager can look at a new hire and see where they’re at with the testing.”

The company has also recently brought on an operating system director, who has become the go-to person for all the operating systems and has helped streamline operations.

“As we get bigger, one of the things we always say is, ‘if you’re not changing, you’re dying,’” he says. “As we get bigger, we’ve got to get better, so that we keep the same values we had when we were working in my basement 17 years ago.”

FINDING THE RIGHT FIT. When it comes to hiring, Kadrich says the best thing companies can do is look internally first.

“We feel it’s our responsibility to provide an environment where our employees can grow within the organization,” he says. “From a business standpoint, it just makes sense. We’ve hired from outside, but when you do that, you’re relying on an interview process. It could be five interviews, but you can still only get so much out of these interviews. When you promote from within, you’ve got someone you’ve worked with for 5, 10 or 15 years. You know everything about that person.”

Kadrich adds that this also helps to boost morale.

“Other employees have to see hope, they have to see there’s opportunities down the road,” he says. “Having that hope creates a culture where people work harder. When it comes to taking care of your employees, it means growing your business, so that

Turf Masters may have started in Andy Kadrich’s basement, but it moved to its first office in 2004 and has since grown to 11 branches in four states.

It can be even tougher when you limit it to just this industry, but we made that commitment.”

And the move paid off. Kadrich says they have less turnover and more sales now.

Because the salespeople he’s hiring are veterans of the industry, Kadrich says he’s willing to pay a little more. “We traditionally pay team members more than normal as they have experience and are married to the industry thus, they don’t leave as frequently,” he says.

While TurfMasters uses traditional hiring platforms like LinkedIn and Indeed, Kad-

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PROFILE



Turf Masters Founder and CEO Andy Kadrich is not only involved in the recruiting process, but also in building succession plans for employees at all levels.

you're creating opportunities for your employees all the time. If they don't have opportunities, then what are you doing?"

Kadrich says that all openings are first posted within the company and everyone who applies is interviewed by the branch manager, president and CEO. While co-workers are competing for the same promotions, Kadrich says Turf Masters' process can help everyone in the long run.

"There are times when you have to tell somebody, 'no, you aren't getting the position,'" he says. "But... it gives us an opportunity to build a plan for them going forward on how to accomplish the goals that they want to. Sometimes they don't get promoted at that point, but we have a succession plan to get them where they want to be. It's monitored by me all the way down to their direct manager."

While filling a role internally may not always be possible, Kadrich says making sure your team has the skills to recruit the best is also vital in the hiring process.

"I took a more active role in recruiting when we were a younger company and doing a lot of it, but as we got bigger, we moved a sales manager into a recruiting role," Kadrich says. "He teaches our branch managers how to be better recruiters and he teaches our other management as well. We've got a really good hold on our recruiting now. A lot of people are taking notice of Turf Masters around the country. They're seeing our company grow and hearing about our culture."

One way to improve your recruitment process is to never stop it, he says.

"If you are 100% staffed, still recruit. It doesn't mean you hire them right away, but building these relationships and having them on the bench is a great way to go," he says.

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Other employees have to see hope, they have to see there's opportunities down the road."

ANDY KADRICH, founder and CEO of Turf Masters

Kadrich also suggests that businesses looking to hire diversify their search and not pigeonhole themselves to one job posting site or one recruiting strategy.

"Don't just count on one thing. There are so many different things out there," he says.

CULTURE IS KEY. Kadrich says making sure your company has a reputable culture is also beneficial, not only for recruiting but for growth as well.

"Without our culture, we certainly wouldn't grow at the rate we're growing," he says. "It's a cliché and you hear a lot of people say, 'we work as a team,' but people who come into our company see it and say, 'the culture here is so positive.' It's a little laid back but yet very aggressive. We all work very well together."

Kadrich says the positive culture is built around a favorable work/life balance.

"I want to have a company that takes care of its customers like nobody else and takes care of its employees by having a work/life balance," he says. "We try to provide a work/life balance that works for us and works for the employee, so we have less turnover."

Kadrich says shortening the work week has helped promote this. Crews put in 40 hours Monday through Friday.

"When you drive around in our markets...you will not see Turf Masters' trucks on the road on Saturdays," he says. "Saturdays are unacceptable, 40 hours is the maximum work week. From a recruiting standpoint, this gives us an advantage."

The culture at Turf Masters is also based upon the company's vision and it's been at the forefront of everything since the beginning.

"Our vision is essentially the same as it's always been," Kadrich says. "It's three basic things - take care of your customers, take care of your employees and when you make mistakes (whether it's with a customer or a peer) do the right thing and fix it. It seems so simple, but it means a lot. If we don't do this, then we've lost everything we're supposed to be doing."

Kadrich adds having that vision so integrated into the company keeps everyone on the same page.

"Before any meeting is ever started, whether it's a conference call or manager's meeting, somebody has to read that vision," he says. "If you go through our company, everyone can recite that vision. It's really what keeps our culture the way it is."

A vision, according to Kadrich, is the foundation of a success.

"I think every company should have one," he says. "I talk to a lot of business owners and all the successful ones have a vision."

Kadrich suggests business owners who don't already have a vision establish one. He says start with your goals and values and build up from there.

BRANCHING OUT. While growth is key, Kadrich says maintaining quality service has to stay a priority.

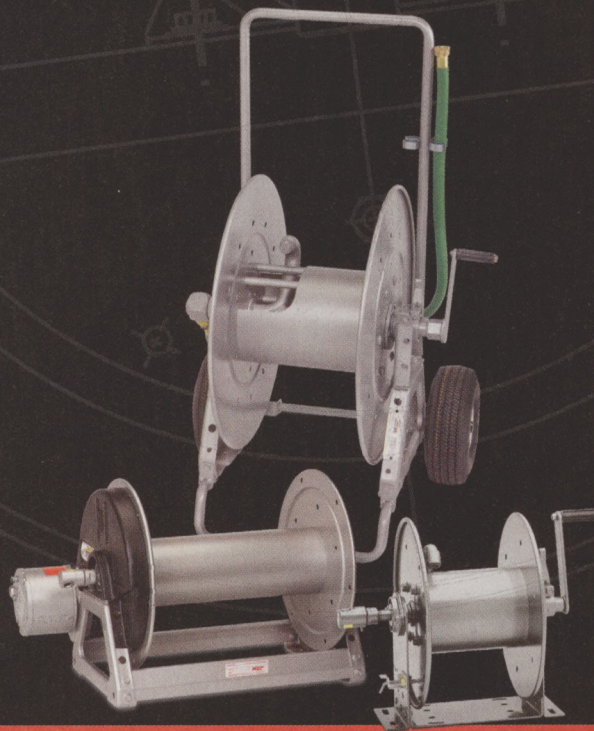
"As we grow, the worse thing I could hear is that we lost our val-

Continues on pg. 86



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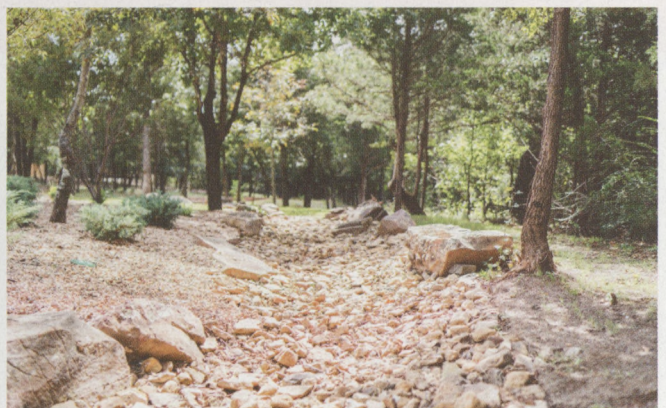
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Nelson Landscaping's client wanted a look that made the property surrounding their castle appear that it had been around for centuries. "Everything in you wants to make a landscape pristine and uniform," says Andy Nelson, founder/owner of the company, which is based in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. "So you had to go against your instincts and really create something that worked for this client. Even down to paver pathways and trying to break those up in a way that made them look uneven and somewhat broken down as if they've been there for 400 years."

1. It took 1,500 man-hours to complete the job and native grasses were used as an anchor for the landscape.
2. Taylor Junipers (tall slender Juniper trees) were used to give an evergreen look. The goal was to resemble what you would see in European landscape in olden times. Mass plantings of various grasses and perennials that had a "growing out in the wild" look like Russian sage, and lavender were used to obtain the look. Crews threw in a few horizontal and vertical junipers to make it look like a random tree or bush grew up while the castle was abandoned.
3. There's also plenty of fun accessories to complement the castle like a draw bridge, dry creek riverbed to resemble a moat, fully-automated sprinkler system, boulder retaining walls, mortared stone edging, landscape lighting both on the house and built into the driveway which lights up at night, faux paver/chariot broken-down road to be made to look abandoned, and a custom boulder staircase.
4. The detached garage to the right of the house has what looks like an arched door that has a different stone than the house. "I wanted to make it look as if at some point this was a barn, and the door was rocked in at a later date," said Scott Kilgo, landscape designer at Nelson Landscaping. "If this was a barn, there had to be some type of cobble drive leading up to the entrance. So, picking out the right paver was key."
5. Explaining to the install crew to make the road look old was also a challenge. They had to put gaps between the pavers to make it look as if time had pushed them apart naturally over hundreds of years. "Use irregular shapes to build the shape of the road and space them apart as if parts of the road had disintegrated," Kilgo says. "Once the guys got the concept, it fell into place."



PUMPING

Pumps and valves can make or break an irrigation system, and knowing exactly what to install and how to maintain it is crucial. **By Kim Lux**



Much like the heart pumps blood throughout the body, pumps and valves are integral parts to any irrigation system, and key to its success or failure.

"If any of those fail, then nothing else is going to work," says Andy Paulson, irrigation foreman at Salt Lake City-based Simms Landscape. "That's the backbone of the entire system."

And in some parts of the country, specialized equipment like booster pumps are

a necessity to bring enough water to the system. That's certainly the case for Chris Haase, president of Haase Landscape in Spokane, Washington, who has 35 years of experience in the irrigation industry.

"This area here is so rural...so we have a lot of properties that are on wells. We don't have domestic water everywhere in this area, so sometimes we have to put booster pumps in to get the pressure up," he says. "It's very helpful in getting enough water."

START OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT. Haase says because of Washington's climate, his company installs a lot of irrigation systems.

"In our areas, we are prone to wildfires, so we put a lot of fire line irrigation in, and we add pumps in extra zones to water those areas around the properties," he says.

According to Haase, the first step in installing a successful system is to do your research and see exactly what kind of pump and other equipment will be needed.

"One of our designers comes out to take a look at the property and evaluate the area," he says. "They will find out what their water system is like right now, whether it's a well or domestic, and if they have enough water. We'll do a pressure test and gallons test on the water and determine if we need to add the pump to it."

Paulson also urges the importance of making sure you have the right equipment for the pressure needed.

"It's about sizing everything correctly," he says. "Is my valve and main line and everything going to be able to handle what I need it to do? Also, do I have the supply to handle the demand?"

Jake Francesconi, president of Grass Roots Landscaping on Cape Cod, says installing pumps and valves should be easy.

"The preparation and planning are key to any job, but even more so for irrigation," he says. "If you have a good plan of action, and you know exactly what you're getting into, problems don't happen."

Francesconi adds that doing your due diligence can also keep installation crews from having to make on-the-fly decisions or having to change course midway through the project.

"Have everything pre-flagged, know what kind of pressure you're looking for and get it all laid out in terms of where the

G THINGS UP

valve boxes are going,” he says. “You’ve just got to put everything together correctly and know that it has the space to work. Don’t just jam anything in any place and make sure to expand to a second box if need be.”

EVERYTHING’S AUTOMATED. While the technology behind pumps and valves hasn’t changed too much over the years, Francesconi, Haase and Paulson all say that irrigation customers have fully embraced “smart” technology – or automation.

“I feel like a lot of the time, with our clients, irrigation is a mystery,” Paulson says. “It’s something that happens underground, and something they don’t see. And the only time they see it is if there’s an issue. But with the smart technology, it gives them the opportunity to monitor it from anywhere.”

Not only is the smart technology nice for the homeowners, but it’s convenient for the irrigation companies, too.

“I can make adjustments on the fly and I can do them from anywhere on the lawn or even offsite, to make sure the client’s property is staying as good-looking as it should,” Paulson says. “It’s convenient for us, but a lot of times now, the customer wants the upgrade.”

Haase says the latest irrigation clocks have been a game changer as well.

“The technology with the clocks is crazy – with the apps and being able to start them and turn them off anywhere, it is nice,” he says. “Even at my house, my clock is app-driven. So, when a crew goes to mow at my house, I can turn off the irrigation system with my phone. I don’t have to ask my wife to do it or go over there or anything.”





When installing an irrigation system, plenty of research beforehand can prevent problems with pumps and valves down the road.


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WHAT TO WATCH. But even with all these advancements, problems can still occur.

“The number one thing that goes wrong, other than heads and coverage, is valves,” Paulson says. “If your valves are not working correctly, then nothing’s going to operate right for you.”

Paulson says the most frequent problems are either a wiring issue where the valves are not turning on and off, or an obstruction in the valve that keeps it from closing all the way.

Haase says inadequate water pressure is a regular obstacle his crews face, which harkens back to Washington’s geography.

“We also have a lot of mountains around here, so sometimes the water pressure is not that great when you get to the top of a mountain and want to build your house on a domestic water system,” he says.



Routine maintenance and winterization can keep valves lasting a long time.

“Sometimes we get into iron deposits in our water - or calcium. We have a lot of calcium. So, we get buildups and things like that. Sometimes we have filters on them for the iron. Most of the calls we get are because of the equipment failing.”

SUPPORTING THE SYSTEM. Paulson says filtration is an important step for maintaining pumps and valves in Utah as well.

“We service a lot of systems (here) and they use secondary water,” he says. “So, if you’re pulling off of a secondary source,

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“I feel like a lot of the time, with our clients, irrigation is a mystery. It’s something that happens underground, and something they don’t see.”

ANDY PAULSON, irrigation foreman with Simms Landscape

you have to monitor pulling debris in. It all comes down to filtration.”

Haase says his crews are on each client’s property at least once a year to blow out the system at the start of the season. He adds that with proper maintenance, pumps and valves can last a long time.

“Most of the times the pumps run pretty good, if you keep it clean and protected,” he says. “Valves can last for 20-plus years if it’s a good brand. Pumps last five to seven years usually.”

Paulson says maintenance can encompass a lot of things, but the root of it should focus on the system’s wiring and connections.

“As far as the maintenance goes, the most complicated thing you can get into is a wiring issue from the controller to the valve itself,” he says. “And on the install

side, you’ve got to make sure you’re using good connectors and things like that. So, it lasts as long as it can. You can do everything right, but if your connections aren’t sound, they’re not going to continue to operate correctly for you.”

Francesconi says getting eyes on the valve box a few times a year, usually in the spring and at the end of the season, can also prevent headaches down the road.

“Keeping the valve box clean and putting some gravel underneath it so it doesn’t get overrun by vegetation is important,” he says. “You’ve got to keep them clean when you do the blowouts and everything else, so they aren’t overwhelmed with leaves, debris or mice.”

Francesconi says he’s seen a lot of animals get inside a valve box and hibernate.

“When you’re doing the winterization,

you’ve got to make sure to get them clean,” he says. “You don’t want stuff burrowing underneath there because it’ll be a nice little shelter for them all winter.”

Like with anything else, preventative maintenance is essential and keeps small things from snowballing into bigger issues. Paulson says you should stick to a routine maintenance schedule.

“Usually on our properties, we do monthly site checks,” he says. “And cleaning filters and running through the entire system are part of that site check. So, we can make sure everything’s top-notch for our clients.

“We tell our clients it’s a preventative thing – because it is,” Paulson adds. “If we keep everything at 100%, then you aren’t going to call us down the road because you have dead spots in your lawn or something like that.” **L&L**

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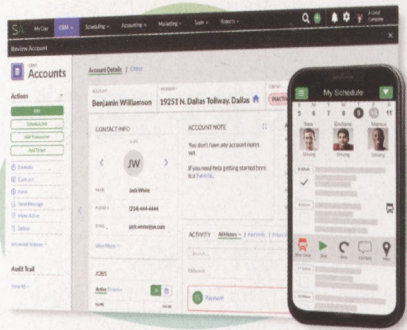


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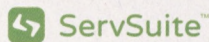


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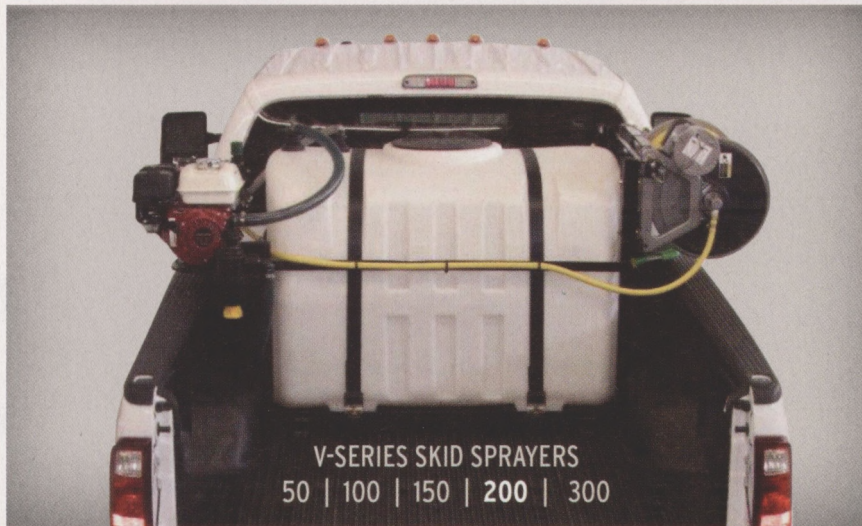
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For more info: Singleops.com

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For more info: Smartserv.io

Continues on pg. 86

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GET YOUR GEAR IN GEAR

Proper upkeep
for hoses
and reels
can ensure
the equipment
lasts for a
long time.

By Kim Lux



It's tedious work at the end of the day, but cleaning out reels and hoses is crucial in keeping them effective.

LAWN CARE CAN OFTEN TIMES be all about the number of properties that can be treated in a day. From dawn to dusk, it's all about getting one more lawn in.

And with all that use, it's important to maintain hoses, reels and spray rigs in order to keep them running efficiently.

"It's like checking the oil and tire pressure in your car. If they're properly maintained, they'll keep working every day," says Jennifer Wing, marketing manager with Hannay Reels.

KEEP IT CLEAN. While it's the last thing LCOs want to do at the end of the day, Wing says taking the time to clean your reels and hoses can be crucial to keeping them in working order.

"For reels and things like that, it's always important to keep an eye on the dirt and grime buildup on the hose reel and the hose itself," she says. "So, (I suggest) quick wash-ups every so often to clean out hidden areas of dirt that can damage the hose or the reel components. (This) will just make things last longer and work better.

"Especially after a tough or dirty job, it might be wise to wash things down quickly because dirt can hide in certain areas - especially on a power reel with a chain guard," Wing adds.

However, don't fret if crews forget to hose things off every once

in a while, because John Kucera, director of engineering at Coxreels, says the equipment can handle it.

"When pertaining to reels, operation is rarely impeded by poor maintenance. The working components are well protected by the inherent design," he says. "The nature of the industry is rough and tough, and our product line fits right in line with that type of work. A reel does not need to shine to do its job."

Even so, Kucera does say a good scrubbing every now and then is still necessary.

"This, of course, does not mean that the product should not be cleaned," he says. "Landscape and lawn care are tough on equipment by default because of the abrasive nature of the environment. Depending on the location of the reel on the equipment, cleaning to remove abrasives around the bearing and swivel joints can help extend component life."

Kucera says the chemical used in one's lawn care rig shouldn't have an impact on the equipment's maintenance schedule.

"Most products used in the lawn care industry are mild enough that internal damage cause by them is negligible," he says. "Best practices to prolong the life of

equipment is to keep it relatively clean and to address any corrosion as soon as possible."

DON'T LET IT DETERIORATE. Corrosion is one of the most common problems that can occur from improper maintenance. Wing suggests investing in noncorrosive equipment to play it safe.

"If you're using harsh chemicals, it's always important to be careful of spills around a hose and its components, and the hose reel," she says.

"Reels constructed in noncorrosive materials, like aluminum or stainless steel, are always recommended when you're working with harsh chemicals like fertilizers and pesticides. If a spill occurs, any piece of equipment should be washed down as soon as possible to prevent any chemical reactions."

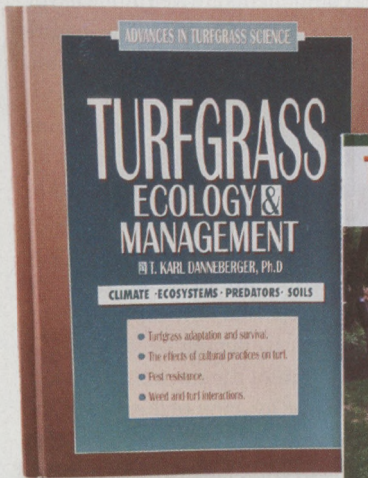
The elements are known to do their damage, too.

"Leaving it outdoors in inclement weather can have a significant impact on the reel," says Jerry Medley, vice president of sales & business development at Coxreels.

If corrosion is spotted, Kucera recommends immediately cleaning, lightly sanding and painting any broken powder coat showing signs of rust.

And the problems caused by corrosion are not always eye-

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Even the smallest parts of a reel can get damaged, and if left untreated, the destruction will get worse.

catching. Medley says even the smallest parts can get damaged and, if left untreated, the destruction will begin to spiral.

“The pieces that break or need to be repaired on any reel in the industry are from wear and tear on component parts like swivels, or seals inside of a swivel,” he says.

Medley adds that while hoses are made to take a beating, they are one element of the operation that is damaged the most.

“People run over hoses, they’re out in the elements. Eventually your hose will need to be replaced as well,” he says.

Kucera adds that over time, seals and hoses are bound to degrade.

“Because of the abrasive nature of the work, damage to the protective coatings of the steel is common and not letting this damage fester is the best way to extend the life of your equipment,” he says.

MAKE IT LAST A LIFETIME. Wing says reels that are kept up thoroughly should have quite the longevity.

“As far as the reels go, it usually depends on wear and tear and things like that,” she says. “We’ve had some reels that are used daily

“The pieces that break or need to be repaired on any reel in the industry are from wear and tear on component parts like swivels, or seals inside of a swivel.”

JERRY MEDLEY, vice president of sales & business development, Coxreels

SLOW BUT STEADY. Corrosion is one of the main issues you face in improper maintenance, so invest in noncorrosive equipment and don't leave it outdoors.



last for decades. If they get damaged, they may need replaced. But if they are maintained properly and are serviced regularly, they can last a very long time."

Medley and Kucera say they know lawn care operators who are still using reels that are decades old.

"We build these things very robust and very industrial in construction and design," Medley says. "And that's because the industry is very rough. We build these in such a way because we know these things take an absolute beating.

"If they are properly maintained, you should never have to replace them," he adds.

And while these reels might not look the prettiest, Medley says they can still get the job done.

"It might just look dull and dingy and you'll have places where the powder coat or the paint on the equipment might crack," he says. "You just keep it relatively clean and dry.

SPOT THE SMALL STUFF. As Medley mentions, even the smallest parts of the reel need to be maintained to keep it operating correctly.

"There's a lot of working components in a reel," Wing says. "You have swivel joints and chains, and things like that. You always want to check the joint connections and make sure they're secure. A lot of manufacturers recommend different lubrication intervals - usually 40 hours of use."

Ignoring the swivel joints can cause the reel not to spin anymore, meaning LCOs will have to manually unwind and rewind the hose.

Other parts to keep an eye on include bearings, pinlocks and even the motor on power reels.

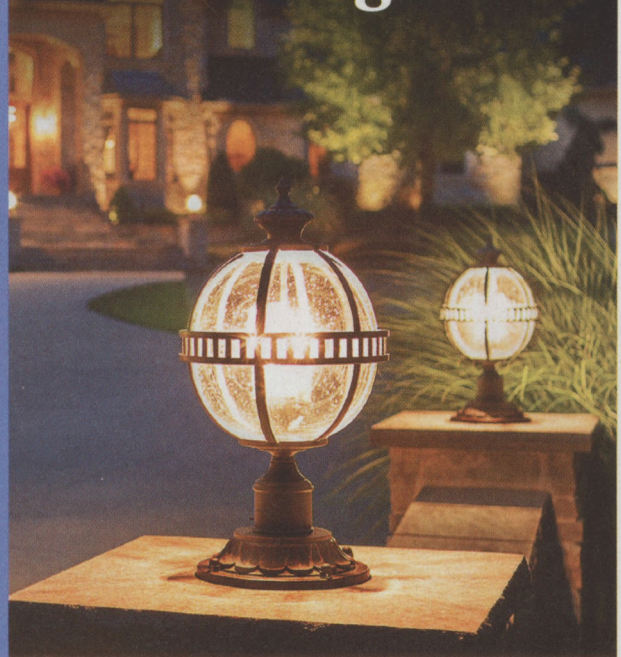
"There are also bearings on each side of the reel, and they allow the reel to rotate easily," Wing says. "Bearings eventually wear depending on use and the working conditions of the reel. So, people may notice resistance or tugging."

Wing adds that the pinlocks keep the reel engaged during travel, so the hose doesn't unwind while the truck is on the road. "Checking the spring on the pinlock to see if it's starting to wear is important. These are easily replaceable," she says.

An extra tip Wing has for lawn care operators is to occasionally make sure the reel is firmly attached to their rig.

"Make sure the reel is still securely bolted to the truck, the trailer or the cart," she says. "They aren't welded into these vehicles so checking they are secure is necessary. Things can loosen over time, especially depending on the road conditions where they are." **L&L**

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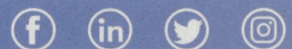
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Q&A WITH THE EXPERT ZERO-TURN MOWER



Q&A WITH CASEY CHILD and MARK LINKLETTER

Commercial Business Development Managers, AriensCo.

1 What are the biggest challenges facing landscape contractors?

Casey Child: Landscape operations of all sizes continue facing labor issues. From attracting talent to retaining it, lawn & landscape companies are fighting for resources in a dwindling pool of candidates. Because landscaping is a seasonal business in much of the country, it can be costly to retain employees year-round.

Finding out if your business qualifies for the Federal H-2B Temporary Worker Program is a good place to start if you're struggling to find seasonal employees.

Mark Linkletter: Increasing regulations related to the use of pesticides and fertilizers, limits on noise levels and emissions associated with lawn care require landscape professionals to be aware of current policies as well as understanding changes that may be on the horizon.

It's essential for landscapers to stay up to date on industry trends as well as state and local regulations. Industry groups like the National Association of Landscape Professionals are a great resource for trends and updates.

2 How can landscapers retain employees in a competitive labor market?

CC: While attracting and hiring the right employees depends heavily on an owner's

intuition during an interview, retaining good employees depends on business culture. Fostering a healthy work environment in which employees feel empowered, supported, and recognized is essential.

ML: Safety and comfort should also be a priority. Maintaining established processes and SOPs, embracing technology, and upgrading outdated equipment will allow employees to work more efficiently, comfortably, and safely.

A focus of the Gravelly Pro-Turn 600 is operator comfort and safety with specific features to reduce body fatigue. The Operator Pod System separates the operator from the bouncing and jostling the mower encounters, reducing impact on employee's back, arms and shoulders.

3 How will alternative fuel sources shape the industry?

ML: The demand for alternative fuel sources will continue to increase as consumers expect their landscape providers to offer greener options. Landscape contractors will evolve to meet those demands but also to address the need for reducing costs associated with fuel and maintenance.

Following our commitment to innovation, we designed the new fully electric Gravelly Pro-Turn EV. Powered by FusionCore, the industry's first swappable lithium-ion battery system, it delivers all

the power associated with the Gravelly name along with new benefits like lower maintenance costs, zero emissions, and quieter operation.

4 What trends are you seeing in mower purchases by landscape contractors?

CC: The industry is experiencing a growing demand for greener machine options, along with increased performance and comfort.

We're also seeing more professionals lease lawn equipment. Leasing helps business owners retain their cash flow reserves while taking advantage of low interest rates. New equipment also means lower maintenance costs and higher employee satisfaction.

The Gravelly Pro-Stance® is one of our frequently-leased models. It combines quick on-and-off versatility with a suspension platform designed to ease vibration and take stress off the operator's back.

5 What should contractors keep in mind when selecting the right mower for their business?

ML: Carefully selecting a specific dealer and manufacturer is as important as choosing the right product. It's important to find the right partner who can provide service, knowledge, training, and value to your bottom line. ●

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Q&A WITH THE EXPERT BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE



Q&A WITH MARK TIPTON

CEO & Founder, Aspire Software

1 How is technology shaping the landscaping industry?

Mark Tipton: Productivity improvements driven by integrated information systems are revolutionizing every industry, but many landscape business owners tell me they still rely on an array of disconnected systems to run their business—things like spreadsheets, Google Docs, QuickBooks, a CRM, or even paper or whiteboards. The potential to transform their business is great, but they believe this patchworked set of systems is “good enough.” That’s often driven by their mistaken belief that investments in software are an expense while investments in machinery and equipment are moneymakers.

2 What’s wrong with that approach?

MT: What they fail to realize is how much this impacts their bottom line due to inefficient business practices and operational data spread out among disconnected systems. They’re basing business decisions on late, inaccurate, or even missing information that unnecessarily results in lost revenues and lower profits.

3 Can you give us an example?

MT: Sure. For example, many landscapers price their work based on past job results and perceptions about what the market will bear and use a spreadsheet to make their calculations. However, this approach doesn’t account for their true costs. For instance, most landscapers are not aware of their actual

labor costs for each division. For a \$3 million landscaping company with 72,000 labor hours, even a small difference of \$0.50 per hour in their labor rate translates into \$36,000 in lost revenue and profits. So they’re scratching their heads at the end of the month because they’ve hit their budgeted hours but have fallen short of their profitability goals. They don’t know how or why that happens.

That’s just one example. There are many more I could mention involving invoicing, payroll, and other areas of their business. The sheer frustration of a lack of insight and control over their business can be overwhelming.

4 So how do they avoid that?

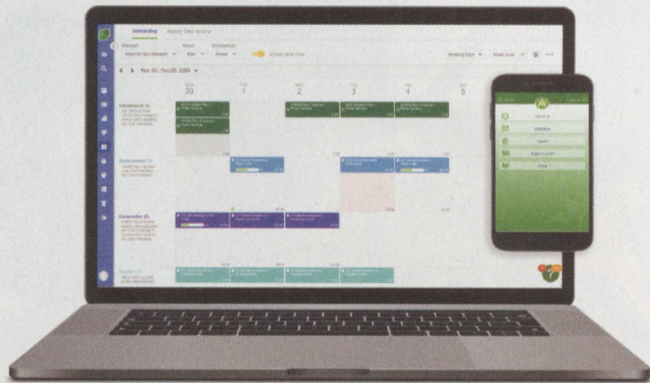
MT: They need to use a single, centralized system around which they can

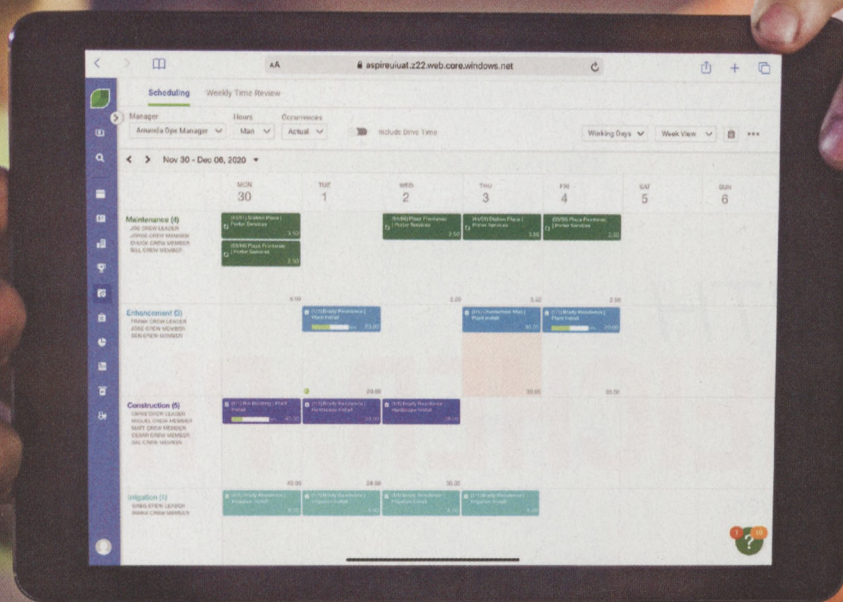
align their organizational data. Using my pricing example above, this type of system would provide clear insight into metrics like average labor rates for each division as well as other job costs so that their estimates are priced at the right profit margin.

5 What should such a system include?

MT: They need a fully integrated business management system that provides full visibility into every aspect of their business. It should provide accurate real-time job costing and drill-down reports and dashboards that empower their managers to make good, timely, and profit-enhancing business decisions. They also need a vendor with seasoned industry experts to implement, train, and support them on the system. ●

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Q&A WITH THE EXPERT HERBICIDES



Q&A WITH ZAC REICHER, Ph.D.

Green Solutions Team, Bayer

Summer Weed Control in Warm-Season Lawns

Summer weed control in warm-season turf can be tough for LCOs. Weedy grasses, broadleaves, and sedges can all be found in lawns during the summer, plus widely variable temperatures, wind, and soil moisture can negatively impact applications. Here are some common questions and answers regarding summer weed control.

1 What is the most important aspect of summer weed control?

ZR: Do no harm! Herbicides are designed to kill weeds, so be careful not to damage the turf or ornamentals in adjacent landscape beds. Herbicide selection is critical to minimize risk to the various warm-season turf species. Celsius®, for example, has proven turf safety on St. Augustine and centipede where phenoxy herbicides may cause damage. Avoid applying to drought-stressed turf or during excessively high temperatures. Summer temperatures will increase volatilization and off-target drift of herbicides, so be careful around ornamental beds, trees, vegetable gardens, etc. Be sure to follow all label directions to minimize the chances of non-target damage.

2 Can preemergence herbicides still be used during summer months?

ZR: YES! Preemergence herbicides can and should be combined with postemergence herbicides to extend residual control of weeds yet to germinate. Combining a broader spectrum PRE like Specticle® FLO with Tribute® Total or Celsius® will

extend control of difficult broadleaves like doveweed, dollarweed, or Virginia buttonweed as well as annual grasses like crabgrass or goosegrass.

3 What's the best way to control sedge in summer?

ZR: In turf we have both annual and perennial sedges and kyllingas. Control of annual sedges and kyllingas is easier than the perennial types. Specticle Flo offers preemergence control of both annual sedges and kyllingas. However, it is not designed to control perennial sedges like yellow and purple nutsedge or the perennial kyllingas, so a POST product must be used. The most recent research suggests early summer applications with nutsedge in the 2-3 leaf stage are more effective than later, more typical applications. Realize that 2-3 leaf stage nutsedge is tough to see in a lawn, so pay special attention on lawns with a history of nutsedge problems. Since sedges germinate over a wide window of time, repeat applications on 4- to 6-week intervals are most effective. Tribute Total controls sedges as well as a wide range of broadleaf and grassy weeds found in bermudagrass or zoysiagrass lawns.

4 Can bull paspalum, dallisgrass, and other tough grasses be controlled in summer?

ZR: Controlling a perennial grassy weed in a perennial grassy turf is difficult because there's not much selectivity in herbicides between closely related grass species. Closely follow label directions and seek advice from turf experts. POST control of grasses is more effective with moist soils compared to drier soils. Revolver®, Tribute Total, and Celsius are labeled for some grassy weeds, depending on the weed and turf species.

5 Should adjuvants be used in the summer to improve control?

ZR: Yes, adjuvants can be used but with extreme caution. Using herbicides during summer heat can be risky when a single herbicide is the only product in the tank. Adding fertilizer, adjuvants or additional herbicides can dramatically increase leaf burn potential. Follow the label, personal experience, and expert recommendations to help with your decisions. It is always better to error on the side of simpler applications during stressful conditions to limit the chance of turf damage. ●



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Q&A WITH THE EXPERT SOIL HEALTH



Q&A WITH NICK diLORENZO

Product Manager, Landscape Products, Horizon Distributors

1 What trends and changes are you seeing in the landscape industry?

Nick diLorenzo: The Landscape or Green Industry has grown significantly over the last 20 years. According to the latest research, the landscape services industry grew to \$93.7 billion in 2020, with a projected 13% growth in 2021. With that, it has also gotten increasingly competitive. Much like the downturn in 2008/2009, we've seen a number of individuals struggling with unemployment decide to jump into the landscape maintenance world, often driving down market prices. With this influx of competition, it's becoming more and more important to set yourself apart by showcasing your knowledge and expertise while avoiding the "cheapest guy" price wars.

2 What are some strategies landscape businesses can use to differentiate themselves?

ND: I think a great approach is to offer

an organic service option - focus on the "brown" rather than focusing on the "green." When I started my distribution sales career 17 years ago, I needed a message that would set us apart and provide value to the customer, and learned of a study that showed 89% of surveyed households said they felt an environmentally friendly approach to lawn care was important. Offering a solution that is perceived to be safer with less risk of exposure and pollution is an attractive selling proposition.

3 You mentioned expertise. Any suggestions on how they can position themselves as Landscape Professionals?

ND: Make the conversation not just about the turf, and help your clients understand it's about the soil. Soil Health is no longer just an industry buzz word; it's becoming a social movement. It's a revenue stream for those that understand it and integrate it into their businesses, which means us-

ing the tools, understanding the science and then applying the science to solve the core issues. This isn't simply using organic products and calling the soil "healthy." It's understanding the importance of soil and taking the steps to improve it while correcting the liabilities that contribute to poor soil. This creates sustainability, and not just within the landscape system, but within your business. Recommend soil testing and then review the results with your clients - this brings tangibility to your service. Your client will quickly see that you deserve that higher rate and help keep you out of bidding wars.

4 Are there other aspects of soil health landscapers should be considering?

ND: Absolutely - water. It's important to understand any liability in the irrigation water. Not all water is equal; it can have excessive salts and bicarbonates that drastically effect pH levels. Offer an irrigation suitability test to identify any hidden liabilities. That's the water you are stuck with - fixing it up front will save a lot of money and frustration down the road.

5 Any other suggestions for marketing their company in this new world?

ND: Check out Horizon's Turf Triage solution. It's a simple program that helps landscapers understand soil and water tests results and makes recommendations on products that can resolve any uncovered problems. ●





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Q&A WITH THE EXPERT IRRIGATION



Q&A WITH CHRIS HUDSON

Irrigation Product Manager, Horizon Distributors

1 Product availability was a big issue for our industry in 2020. Is the Covid-caused product shortage behind us?

Chris Hudson: When it comes to irrigation branded products, for the most part, yes. The major manufacturers have done an excellent job of catching up after the factories were closed in April & May, but they couldn't build inventories back up to normal off-season targets, so we're still experiencing some isolated backorders. In addition, demand's at levels we haven't seen since the housing boom of 2005-6, so we're seeing a little pinch on the supply side with commodities. Finally, as we have all experienced, COVID is still very much a reality, and outbreaks will impact capacity in factories. I think everyone needs to understand that we will continue to see ebbs and flows in lead times, with some shortages over the remainder of the year.

2 What's happening with PVC pipe pricing and availability?

CH: That really is the biggest issue right now. As we all know our business starts and finishes with pipe. Bottom line is, we have been subjected to a perfect storm over the last 8 months between Hurricane Laura, gulf snowstorms, and unprecedented demand for PVC resins around the world. We have been hit with 50+% price increases over the last 6 months. The freeze in the Gulf area in February forced PVC resin plants to shut down and declare Force Majeure. That means all price contracts are rescinded, so we're expect-

ing significant increases to keep coming for now. An even bigger issue, though, will be the availability of PVC pipe. The resin guys are behind and having problems getting product to pipe manufacturers. All distributors have been placed on allocation, limiting our purchases and causing shortages that I believe we'll continue to wrestle with through summer.

3 Are there other commodity products being impacted?

CH: Unfortunately, yes. Inflation is widespread in construction materials for all industries; in fact I'm hearing lumber prices have gone up 75% over the last 8 months. For us though, it's primarily PVC fittings, PE pipe & drip tubing, and copper-based products like backflow and wire. Reality is our industry is built around plastic, and plastic is made with resin, so we're feeling it.

4 What can contractors do to minimize the impact on their business?

CH: Well, if you don't have a good relationship with your supplier, I'd create one. The better suppliers are actively managing the situation not just to keep

their shelves filled, but to keep product coming for our customer's jobs. If we know you've got a project going in the ground in the next two months, we can order appropriately to ensure we have the product here when you need it. But we can't help if we don't know, so make sure you are communicating with your supplier on a regular basis. I'd also recommend having accounts with multiple suppliers. Keeping your options open is important this year.

5 What's Horizon doing to navigate the volatility?

CH: Communication, & more communication. Our team can't perform if they don't fully understand the situation. We are giving the field almost daily updates on shipments, forecasts, pricing, anything else that might impact the supply channel and our customers. We have worked with our manufacturer partners to create reporting tools that are helping us navigate these predicaments together. We recognize that we've got to come together as an industry if we are going to minimize impact, and the best thing we can do at Horizon is roll up our sleeves and be part of the solution. ●





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Q&A WITH THE EXPERT

EDGING



Q&A WITH DANIEL MARTIN

Director of Marketing, Permaloc Corporation

1 Should I be using a different edging for straight runs as opposed to curved lines?

Daniel Martin: We've all been there.

Trying our best to make edging that is running parallel to a structure look straight. No matter how hard we try, the waves between each staking point remain painfully obvious. The human eye is designed to pick up those anomalies.

That's why when doing straight lines with edging, it is important to use an edging that was created for that. Not only will the result look much better to those that will see it over time, but you will save yourself a great deal of time during the install. And in this business, time is money!

Edgings designed for straight lines

typically have a feature built in that allows them to remain perfectly rigid, like a small "foot" on the bottom. They should still have built-in staking to assure that it remains in place and does not shift during the lifetime of the project.

2 How do I install a paver edging for permeable pavers when I can't drive a spike in?

DM: As permeable pavers become increasingly popular, in large part due to governmental regulations on stormwater management, many contractors are curious about how the installation steps vary from traditional installation over a compacted base.

With non-permeable applications, the

edging is simply spiked into the compacted base using a spiral steel spike. This provides plenty of holding power to keep the edging in place. However, permeable pavers require an open-graded base to allow the water to move through. This loose stone will not provide any "bite" for the spike to hold the edging in place.

A new system for holding edging in place on a permeable base involves attaching the edging to a biaxial geogrid textile embedded between two layers of stone. The edging is attached using a capture plate and heavy-duty screws to assure that it will maintain holding power under the heaviest of vehicular loads.

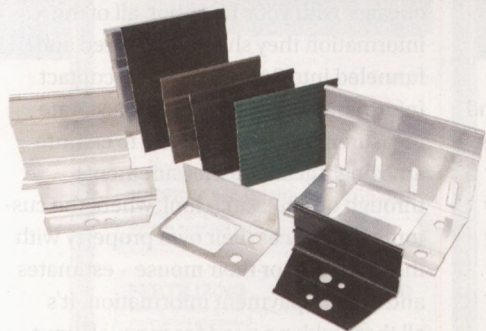
3 What is the difference between residential edging and commercial edging?

DM: The primary difference in edging grades is wall thickness. A thicker wall provides more vertical strength, allowing heavier foot traffic and larger maintenance equipment to traverse the edging.

It is important to match the thickness and depth of the edging with the circumstances associated with your installation. This checklist can include foot traffic, maintenance requirements, adjacent materials, soil type, etc.

It is important to note that landscape edging uses nominal thicknesses (similar to lumber), and not all edging companies provide the same wall thicknesses within the same nominal size. So be sure to do your research to make sure you are truly getting what you are paying for! ●





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Q&A WITH THE EXPERT MARKETING



Q&A WITH KENDALL HINES

Co-Founder and CEO, Lawnbot

1 What is Lawnbot?

KH: Lawnbot is a sales automation tool that makes e-commerce easy via an AI-enabled chatbot that lives on your company's website. It lets your company respond to leads, 24/7, by meeting customers where they are. When customers click on your Lawnbot, it guides them through the quote and sales process with a brief text-based chat, asking them questions about their property and what they're looking for, providing them with accurate estimates, customized program recommendations and fast, seamless checkout. It's fully branded to your company, using your logo, your photos and your service categories. Customers don't see "Lawnbot," they see your business.

2 How did Lawnbot get started?

KH: I grew up in the industry – My parents owned a Lawn Doctor franchise, and I grew up on the lawns with my dad, learning every aspect of the business from the time I was eight years old.

A few years ago, I took over sales and marketing for the family business, and I realized right away that the green industry has a huge problem. When a homeowner wants a quote for service, they want to talk to someone – no matter when. This would get frustrating for us because our offices were closed on weekends, and we'd come in on Monday to 150 emails and 80 voice mails. We would miss sales because we'd get bogged down and couldn't respond to everyone.

That's how Lawnbot came to be. I said,

"Why can't people just order service online?" I think of Lawnbot as a salesperson that never sleeps, gets sick or takes a vacation. It's always closing sales.

3 How can Lawnbot help green industry companies with sales and growth?

KH: The most obvious way is that we make sales easy and we help you capture leads that you might otherwise lose. With Lawnbot, customers get the instant satisfaction of a quote right when they're thinking about buying, and you get the reward of the sale. We also help businesses collect positive reviews from happy customers, something that is really crucial when it comes to your ongoing growth.

4 What would you say to a business owner who doesn't think they need a Lawnbot?

KH: I'd start by asking them why they want to add extra layers of work into their sales process. Lawnbot automates many of the difficult, time-consuming parts of sales: Quick response to inbound leads, making sure there's a standard set of probing questions for each prospect, recording contact information for every lead, sending an instant proposal along with the ability to buy and pay instantly.

Plus, other companies act as middlemen between you and your clients. You subscribe to their service, but they own the customer relationships. Lawnbot is different: With us, you own your own custom-branded technology platform, you set

the prices – and you own your customer relationships 100 percent.

5 Lawnbot and Real Green Systems are now strategic partners -- what does that mean for Lawnbot and its customers?

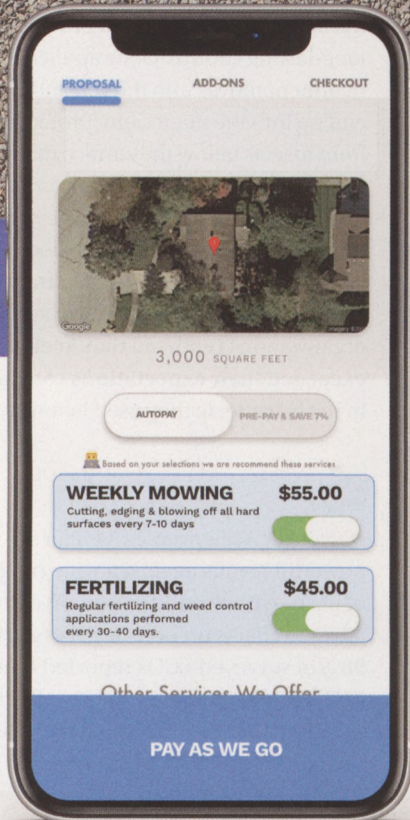
KH: This is an exciting move for Lawnbot and for our customers. Our partnership with Real Green will enable us to deliver even greater service and to drive even more exciting innovations. Our goal is to make our products the best and easiest to use in the industry, and this partnership will help us continue to achieve that goal.

6 How does Lawnbot's strategic partnership with Real Green Systems strengthen its integration with Service Assistant@ 5?

KH: The beauty of Lawnbot's integration with SA5 is how easy it makes everything. When a lead visits your website and engages with your Lawnbot, all of the information they share is captured and funneled into SA5. Their initial contact information, property details, accurate measurements – we are able to capture amazingly accurate measurements through our measur.it tool, where the customer just traces their own property with their fingertip or their mouse – estimates and quotes, payment information. It's all there with no need for manual input. We'll be adding even deeper integrations as we continue to develop and improve the tool, like real-time pricing updates and other key features. ●



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Q&A WITH THE EXPERT INSECTICIDES



Q&A WITH MATT GIESE

Technical Services Manager, Syngenta

1 What benefits does Acelepryn® insecticide offer lawn care operators (LCOs) to give their business a unique advantage?

Matt Giese: Acelepryn offers season-long control of multiple insects with one application including the longest-lasting grub control on the market. This length of control can help reduce call-backs from homeowners. It can also be applied early, in April and May, **without the need to water in**, so LCOs can rest assured their customers' lawns and landscape ornamentals are protected from the start.

Additionally, Acelepryn, not only has shown no adverse effects on non-target organisms but is the only diamide that does not harm bees and pollinators. This is important because in a 2021 TechValidate survey, **92%** of LCOs reported it was important to them/their customers that

Acelepryn has **no signal word and no adverse effects on beneficial and non-target organisms including honeybees.***

2 In addition to controlling grubs all season, what other insects can Acelepryn prevent?

MG: Along with controlling grubs, Acelepryn can protect lawns from additional insects like billbugs and turf caterpillars. While less common than white grubs, these insects can still cause substantial damage.

Billbug larvae feed inside the grass stem then drop to the soil surface to feed on the crown and roots of the plant, making them difficult to spot. Damage is identified by tufts of turf that are easily pulled from the surface and usually appear in late June through early August, so preventive applications targeting larval

development are key. Meanwhile, by foliar feeding, caterpillars (including sod webworms, fall armyworms and cutworms) can cause patches of damaged, dead or dying turf that rapidly increase in size, causing severe damage one blade at a time. Preventing infestations will severely limit turfgrass damage and speed up plant recovery.

3 How does Acelepryn work to protect lawns from these key insects?

MG: Acelepryn is powered by *chlorantraniliprole*, a diamide that provides long-lasting control. Once applied, the treatment moves into the soil and roots, and up into the plant stem, protecting turf from insects below the surface that you cannot see. Unlike most other products for lawns, irrigation or rainfall is not required after a treatment is applied, which can save you time and avoid homeowner noncompliance. In fact, **94%** of surveyed organizations **reported that Acelepryn exceeded their expectations** compared to the insecticide they used before.*

4 What kinds of results have LCOs seen with Acelepryn?

MG: With Acelepryn, LCOs can see powerful results against a wide range of pests, with the added benefit of no adverse effects on non-target organisms. **98%** of surveyed LCOs reported that they find **Acelepryn to be a highly effective product.*** When it comes to reducing breakthroughs, **69% of surveyed LCOs**

94% of lawn care companies confirmed Acelepryn exceeded expectations compared to previous insecticides used.

said they saw a notable improvement.*

Overall, most LCOs report excellent results with **53%** saying they'd **rate Acelepryn five out of five stars** and **96% rating Acelepryn at four stars or higher**.* We are confident LCOs who incorporate Acelepryn into their rotation will see better control of target pests.

5 Some expensive applications occur early in the season.

Does Syngenta offer any financial solutions?

MG: A key benefit of Acelepryn is that one application can provide the season-long control you and your customers need. In addition, as part of GreenTrust® 365, customers can defer payment until late June with SummerPay™ terms. This

provides flexibility to manage expenses more easily throughout the season. For instance, if you qualified for GreenTrust 365, you can use Acelepryn for grub control between April and mid-June, and you can choose to pay any time before July. Also, if you purchase 10 gallons or more of Acelepryn, Syngenta offers a volume discount.

6 What other tools and resources does Syngenta provide to help LCOs grow their businesses?

MG: Syngenta offers free marketing materials for LCOs to use with customers to help explain services that control grubs, as well as turf diseases, fire ants and mosquitoes. To order these materials, visit GrowWithSyngenta.com. In addition,

we have soil temperature maps and growing degree day tools available to help monitor for common insects found in specific areas. They can be accessed at GreenCastOnline.com/AgronomicAlerts.

Learn more about Acelepryn at GreenCastOnline.com/Acelepryn.

*Source: 2021 TechValidate Survey
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*Jonathan L. Larson, Carl T. Redmond and Daniel A. Potter, SCI, September 2011.

 **Acelepryn**
Insecticide

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Continued from pg. 53

ues,” he says. “That is a challenge I take on every day, so that we don’t lose our culture or our vision. I want to maintain that we’re the same company we’ve always been, just bigger.”

Currently, Turf Masters has 11 branches across Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina and Tennessee. Kadrich says he hopes to continue adding to this list.

“We’re looking at Chattanooga and opening another location in Nashville,” Kadrich says. “We’re also looking at Charlotte, Memphis and a lot of different markets.”

Turf Masters had another opportunity for growth when it acquired Dorsey Services, of Jackson, Ga., in 2015.

Kadrich warns that before companies make an acquisition, they should ensure it’s the right move.

“The only way I will buy a company is if they have great service,” he says. “Then, I feel that all I have to do is implement my marketing plan and the company will pay for itself.”

In order to determine if a company has great service, Kadrich suggests looking at cancellation rates, the tenure of employees, the facility, the equipment and customers’ lawns.

Kadrich says his acquisition of Dorsey Services checked all the right boxes.

“In all the years I’ve been in lawn care,

this has been the best acquisition I’ve ever seen,” he says. “We didn’t lose employees; the employees saw more opportunities and they got paid more. From a financial standpoint, a company has to pay for itself. I have to make an investment to buy it, but it has to pay me back. Dorsey Services has paid me back and we’ve already doubled the revenue. The value is double what it was.”

While the acquisition was successful, Kadrich says he isn’t overly eager to take over another company.

“We’ve looked at other companies, but if they don’t have the great service, we pass on them,” he says. “We like looking at companies in emerging markets that we want to go into. We’re very selective.”

NAVIGATING COVID-19. Despite the coronavirus pandemic impacting landscaping companies across the nation in 2020, Kadrich says his company did its best to weather the storm.

Kadrich says Turf Masters took sanitation and social distancing seriously by putting new measures in place.

“We implemented staggered starts for all technicians where they do not come into the office unless to use the restroom. Everything is ready for them in the truck in the morning and they leave everything in the truck in the evening, which is picked up by a

manager,” he says. “Some of these processes we’ve implemented will stay with us forever because they make us more efficient.”

Kadrich says that despite all the safety measures in place, some employees still contracted COVID-19.

“We had a situation where three folks in our customer care center were diagnosed with COVID-19,” he says. “They were quarantined for two weeks. We then took our office people and set them up to work from home.”

However, even during these tough times, Kadrich says sales have still been going up.

“Everybody was home and what do people do when they’re home? They stand outside and stare at their weeds,” he says. “We made more sales.”

Kadrich adds a serendipitous marketing approach also helped bring in more customers.

“The other thing people do is watch T.V. Coincidentally, we made the decision to do a fairly large T.V. campaign,” he says. “It started right when COVID-19 did. The timing was perfect.”

And sales continued to go up throughout the year.

“In 2020, we grew by 27% which I would say is great during a pandemic, or any other year for that matter, and our retention rate actually improved in 2020 by a point,” Kadrich says. **L&L**

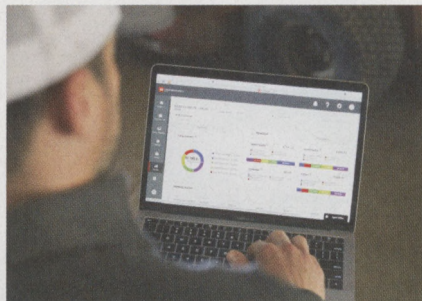
Continued from pg. 64

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AN AVERAGE DAY

Taylor Milliken,
Owner and President, Milosi



Once Taylor Milliken is home and all calls and texts have been returned, the cell goes away for a while. But that wasn't always the case. Last year, Milliken changed up his routine when it came to his cellphone activities.

Interviewed by **Brian Horn**

"I put my phone on my docking station to charge in my room," says the owner and president of Milosi in Nashville, Tennessee. "It stays there for several hours intentionally. I have caught myself many times reading emails, texts, etc., with my children vying for my attention. I started doing this last year and it has helped me so much."

Here's Milliken's average day.

The mornings I am training, I usually return home for breakfast or am having a protein shake on the go. It's all over the board. My commute is about 15-20 minutes and I listen to Christian music, leadership podcasts on Spotify, or I am listening to a book on Audible. I listen to more podcasts and books than anything else. I work from home more than anything. If it's a long training day, I may not start until 8 or 9 but if it's an off day, then I am usually working by 6:30 a.m.

In the morning, when I am on my "A game," it's read a devotion or scripture, make coffee, train, eat breakfast and workday startup routine: confirm top 3 goals/tasks for the day (I use the Focus Planner), update

(software we use), review calendar and communicate as necessary, spend about 15 minutes making sure all important e-mails have been responded to, and start on my #1 top priority for the day.

I have lunch on my calendar from 12-1 every day, but I don't follow this like I should. Usually, if I'm at the office or out, I have either a smoothie from Smoothie King, chicken from Chick-fil-A or a salad or sandwich from Panera Bread. If I'm at home, it would be something like a sandwich or a healthy meal that is on my meal plan – the latter is not as often as I'd hope.

After lunch, I am in several meetings per week so I usually will have meetings. I also like to check on my emails and review where I am at on my goals/tasks for the day. It's like a mid-day check-in with yourself.

If I finish the day at the office, I leave between 3 and 5 p.m. I finish most days in meetings or at home. Phone calls and focus on email stops around 5:30-6 p.m. but always bleeds over to a fault.

Cooking is a huge passion of mine. So, after dinner, if we are having a traditional dinner then I am helping clean and wrangle our three kiddos. Our goal is that nobody sits down until everyone sits down. This helps our kiddos build a sense of teamwork. I do work a little most nights to stay on top of the endless emails and planning it requires to keep things moving in the right direction, but it's been greatly reduced as I have been able to add great people to our company.

At night, I like to review my notes from the day and mind-dump anything that I need to tackle the next day or plan over the next few days to a week. I feel like this helps me relax while falling asleep. Also, I try not to look at the phone or computer for the last 30-60 minutes before bed. Studies show this affects sleep quality. Since I have trouble falling asleep, I use this to help. **L&L**



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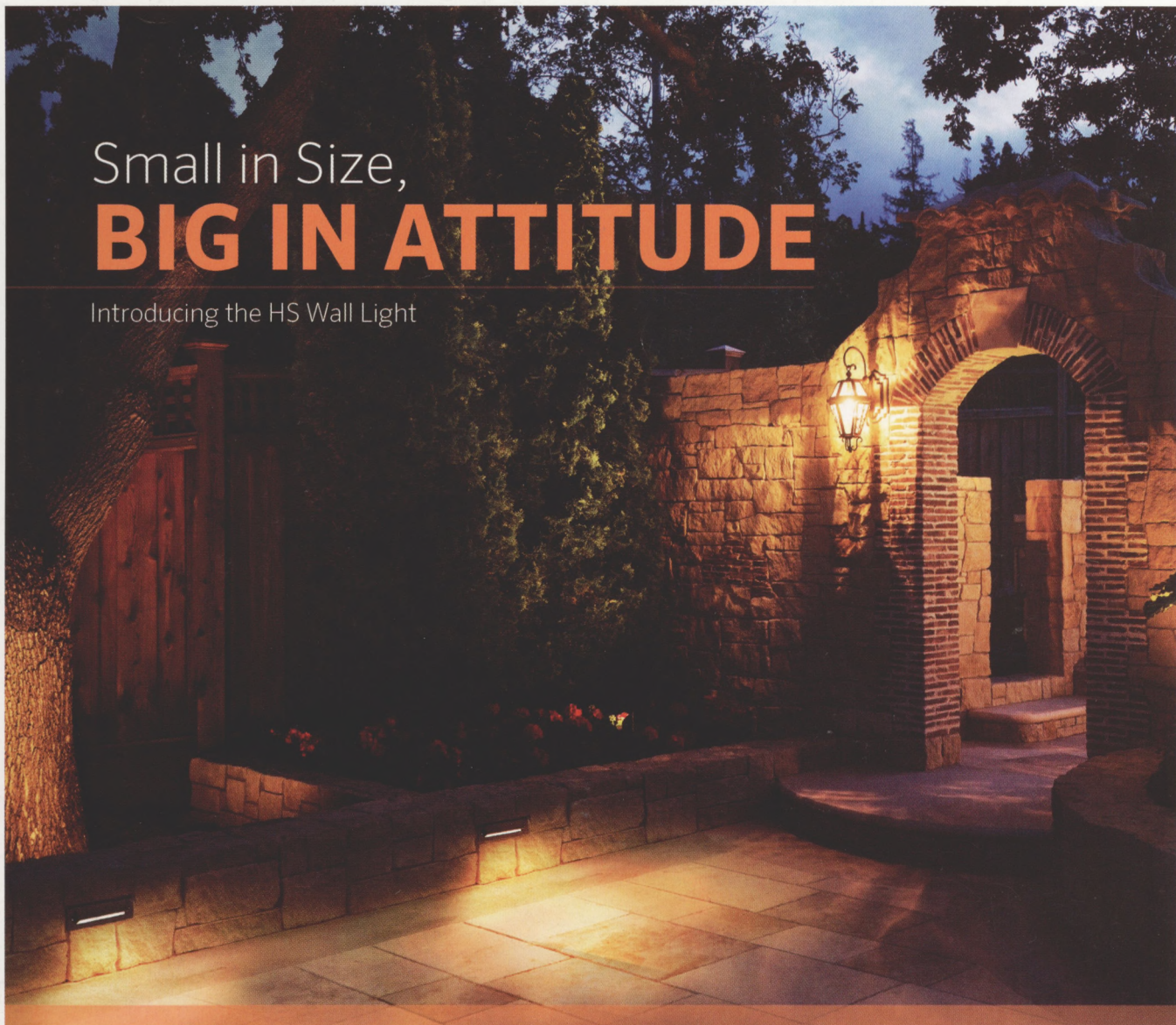
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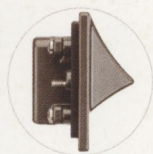
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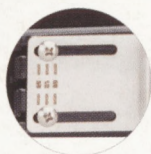
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