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the TOP 100 ISSUE

Executives from the largest companies in North America recap 2021 and look forward to the future.

A white Bobcat E50 compact excavator is shown in the process of digging a deep, narrow trench in a grassy yard. The excavator's arm is extended, and its bucket is positioned at the bottom of the trench. A person is visible inside the operator's cab. In the background, a portion of a house with a white door and a window is visible, along with a tree and a lawn. The overall scene suggests a home improvement or landscaping project.

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From the top

I enjoy hearing from companies of all sizes. But the bigger companies in the industry always have an interesting perspective because they are usually in many locations, can provide insight on many different markets and have to deal with more variables. We checked in with a handful of Top 100 company executives about a number of topics on page 42, and below are some highlights.

- **In California**, a ban on gas-powered equipment will go into effect in 2024, forcing companies to seriously look at battery-powered equipment. What starts out west sometimes finds its way to different parts of the country. Chris Angelo, president and CEO of Stay Green in California, said he is getting even more familiar with battery-powered equipment. While I don't expect everyone to accept the change with open arms, it would be wise to at least investigate and be open to a new idea.

- **Weed Man is allowing** full remote work for some of their employees, and the company's CEO Jennifer Lemcke says it will help recruiting and retention of employees.

It's no secret that finding and retaining quality employees is difficult in this industry. While you may not be able to allow all of your workers — or even most of your workers — to work remotely, can you think of other ways to provide a flexible schedule?

- **Even large companies** are feeling the pain of inflation and supply chain issues. Chris Malham, president of SiteWorks in Arizona, relies on "BNE." That stands for "Bad News Early" so if he knows something is going to be more expensive than originally thought, he tells customers right away. You can't control what something is going to cost, but you can control how and when customers hear about it.

- **"It's easy to get overconfident** when business is good, and you are growing. Our goal is to make sure our revenue grows faster than our overhead," says McHale Landscape principal Kevin McHale. Growing too fast is something that can hurt companies of all sizes. If you feel like you don't have your daily, weekly and monthly tasks under control, or you are taking on too much work, it may be time to hit the brakes, at least temporarily.



Brian Horn
Editor, Lawn & Landscape

- **Larry Ryan**, founder of Ryan Lawn & Tree, is a strong proponent of open-book management. You can't be afraid to show profits and losses to employees, he says. The handful of companies I've spoken to who practice open-book management say employees are more surprised at how much it costs to run a business and aren't as focused on how much money is being made.

You may not want to be one of the biggest companies in your location, let alone one of the biggest in the country. Regardless, these bullet points may help you achieve one of the goals you have set for your own business. — *Brian Horn*

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COMPETING FOR THE FUTURE

NCLC returned to its in-person format this spring.

By Jimmy Miller

For Britt Wood, it's not so much that it's good to be back — it's good to get started.

Wood, CEO of the National Association of Landscape Professionals, took over NALP in Fall 2019. By the time NCLC rolled around, event organizers postponed the event originally slated to be at Michigan State — COVID-19 forced the event to an online format for the last two years. Wood said he was disappointed when they had to cancel in 2020, and then he was just as disappointed last year when they couldn't host at Virginia Tech, his undergraduate alma mater.

So, Wood's first in-person trip to NCLC was at North Carolina State University. It was there where — with a team score of 4739.68 — Brigham Young University (Provo) won the overall event. Cuyahoga Community College in Ohio finished second, while host North Carolina State University placed third.

"I heard about this event when I was working in another industry in another association, how awesome it was," Wood said. "I'm going to be here the whole time. I'm going to check out as many events as I can. I'm loving the enthusiasm from the kids."

533 competitors took part in the event, down from where NCLC has peaked around 800. Some schools couldn't commit in the winter when registration and hotel housing

opened up for the event. Even still, he said it was refreshing to see so many schools back at the event.

"We had a few schools that just weren't going to be able to come because of COVID...but we've got two schools that came that made such a great effort to get here that they literally are having to stay in Virginia and then come to North Carolina," Wood said.

"You talk about dedication? It's about an hour (drive). It's just awesome. I think it shows how much the schools love this event. It's so important to them."

ONE CRITICAL ELEMENT? NETWORKING. The event started off with its annual career fair. Wood commended the NALP team for assembling two good virtual programs for the last two NCLC events, but

NALP CEO Britt Wood addresses students at the association's National Collegiate Landscape Competition.



“you just can’t replace in person.”

The opportunity to meet with potential employers face-to-face is a huge element to the event, Wood said. With 31 competitive events, there’s plenty of opportunities to win big, but he believes connecting with someone who could be a resource down the road in the industry is huge, especially for underclassmen or juniors.

“It’s fun to go to a competition, but at the end of the day...when you make connections with potential employers, now you get a chance to build relationships with people that may harbor themselves over time,” Wood said. “I think it’s a critical part of it.”

Wood added that the career fair is exciting for the companies that are attending, too. With so much work to do back home, he said it’s easy for employers to get bogged down with the nuances of day-to-day work. This gives them an opportunity to disconnect from the day-to-day and talk more big picture about their company with prospective employees.

“They get energized by seeing these young people,” Wood said. “They get excited. I think it’s a great refresher for them.”

NETWORKING AFTER NCLC. Jackie Hales has been on both sides of the table at the NCLC career fair — she was a student attendee at one point, but now works in human resources at Brookstone Landscape & Design, which is based out of Lynnwood, Washington.

She said she understands the value of the networking component now but wishes she would’ve known how to keep in contact with people after the event ended. She hopes students will stay in touch for the months to follow.

“I wish I would have done better at networking and staying in contact with some of the people I had met at the competition,” Hales said. “Networking got me my last job and it got me my current job. I think it’s important to find people in the industry you connect with and stay in touch with as you go through your career.”

Hales recommends sending follow-up emails once every few months or even once or twice a year to strong connections from the career fair.

COME FROM AWAY. Some 4,300 miles away from its headquarters in Anchorage, Alaska, Arctic Terra attended the NCLC career fair hoping to find its next employees.

The company does anything from septic and foundation repairs to hardscapes, landscapes and fencing. For the last three

years, they’ve even done some earthquake repairs.

Sure, Flora Springer works in Idaho — just a bit closer to Raleigh than Alaska — but the recruiter knew she’d find some candidates among the experienced students at the competition. It’s hard enough to find pos-

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sible employees willing to relocate to Alaska, but it's even more difficult to find the skilled labor that fits even some of those needs.

"It's very hard to find people who have any experience at all," Springer said. "Like anywhere, COVID hit, and now we can't get employees. We're booked solid for the summer and we're trying to find people driven to work, people who are reliable and show up to work every day."

HARD WORK PAYING OFF. Many landscape contractors tell Roger Phelps that they can't get their guys to report for work. At NCLC, Phelps — the corporate communications manager at STIHL, the platinum sponsor for the event — was blown away that students could be out partying for St. Patrick's Day or laying on a beach for spring break.

Instead, they were at NCLC, competing and networking with others in the green industry.

"What does that say about our industry and the future of our industry?" Phelps said. "How cool is that where we get to be in an industry that is so invested in its future where we get to have this event?"

This was the 19th NCLC event for Phelps, who said the virtual offerings were good stopgaps but couldn't possibly replace the experience of an in-person event.

Take the small engine event that STIHL hosts for example: No, some students may not ever need to repair an engine, but if they become managers, they should know the value of a trained technician and what they do.

Phelps also specifically mentioned the plant ID events and Truck & Trailer Operation, where two-person tandems are tasked with a written test and maneuvering a truck and trailer through an obstacle course. Plus, there's the "Super Bowl" of events — Landscape Plant Installation, where all teams are shouting and cheering on their



teammates as they place a variety of sod, mulch, plants and more into the landscape.

The experiences mimic those they'll have in the real workforce, and Phelps said it's impressive for employers to see this.

"Let's face it: The hands-on element is so important," Phelps said. "If (students) can say that they competed in this event, most of the employers out there understand what that means."

"Not only do they have the academic intelligence, but they have the hands-on intelligence in the pressure cooker that is this event. The fact they managed to get through this event says something about them."

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DIVERSIFYING THE FIELD. Wood noticed when the all-women team from North Dakota State University won the cheer competition during the opening ceremony.

Wood said it's been a NALP priority to highlight more women in the industry.

He cited one of NALP's recent studies that suggested only 8% of the landscaping workforce was comprised of women, while 47% of the available workforce are women.

It's a jarring juxtaposition, and Wood hopes NALP can continue to change that.

He also mentioned engaging more Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which Wood said NALP needs to work on to help increase diversity in the industry.

"Part of it is communicating with our members is to say, 'Hey, where did you go to school? Are they on our NCLC list?'" Wood said. "It's going to require effort."



"It's fun to go to a competition, but at the end of the day...when you make connections with potential employers, **now you get a chance to build relationships** with people that may harbor themselves over time. I think it's a critical part of it."

— **Britt Wood**, CEO of the
National Association of Landscape Professionals

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¹ See 2022 FDD for specific details.

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Davey Tree merges with Vaillancourt Tree-Landscape Service

The company is located in Pittsford, Vermont.

THE DAVEY TREE EXPERT COMPANY has added Vaillancourt Tree-Landscape Service of Pittsford, Vermont, to its family of brands.

Vaillancourt will be joining Davey's Eastern Utility service line. Vaillancourt provides utility line clearance services throughout Vermont, in addition to quality residential and commercial tree services in the area surrounding Rutland, Vermont. Vaillancourt has been in business for almost 50 years and has approximately 24 employees who will all continue employment with Davey Tree.

"The merging of Vaillancourt Tree-Landscape Service into the Davey family will be of great benefit to Vaillancourt clients and employees," said Jon Leonard, president and co-owner of Vaillancourt. "Vaillancourt will now have the ability to support our clients with a greater range of services including the Davey Resource Group's consulting services, storm response crews and the Davey Institute, which is a leading diagnostic and research facility dedicated to keeping its clients' trees and landscapes healthy."

Sam Drake, vice president and co-

"The merging of **Vaillancourt Tree-Landscape Service** into the **Davey family** will be of great benefit to Vaillancourt clients and employees."

—**Jon Leonard**, president and co-owner of Vaillancourt

owner of Vaillancourt, said Davey's employee-owned status was also a contributing factor in their decision to join. "As an employee-owned company, Davey will provide Vaillancourt employees with the opportunity to own a share of their company, providing our employees with financial benefits for years to come," Drake said.



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SavATree merges with Kentucky's Abundant Tree Services

This merger increases SavATree's market share in the Louisville area.

SAVATREE HAS MERGED with Kentucky-based Abundant Tree Services. This merger increases SavATree's market share in the Louisville area.

Abundant Tree has been providing professional tree care to residential and commercial clients throughout Louisville for over a decade. Their team of arborists and professional field specialists will continue working with the company.

"One of the most important parts of the transition is that our clients are taken care of. We are confident that SavATree has the team, operational expertise, infrastructure, and strong brand in place to do so," said Abundant Tree Owner Kevin Bold.

"We're looking forward to supporting Abundant Tree Services' clients and helping to keep Louisville's landscapes healthy and safe," said SavATree CEO Carmine Schiavone.



Bartlett Tree acquires Fox Tree Care

The Long Island-based company has operated for 45 years.

BARTLETT TREE EXPERTS has expanded on Long Island with the acquisition of Fox Tree Care, a boutique tree care company that has been in business for 45 years.

Bart Fusco, owner of Fox Tree Care, said he decided to sell his company to Bartlett Tree Experts as he prepares for retirement because of its leadership in scientific tree care. Bartlett offered the right cultural fit, Fusco said, because both are family businesses that operate "under very similar philosophies."

With the addition of Fox Tree Care, which is keeping its name as a division of Bartlett Tree Experts, Bartlett will gain density in the Hamptons and more coverage area on the North Fork.

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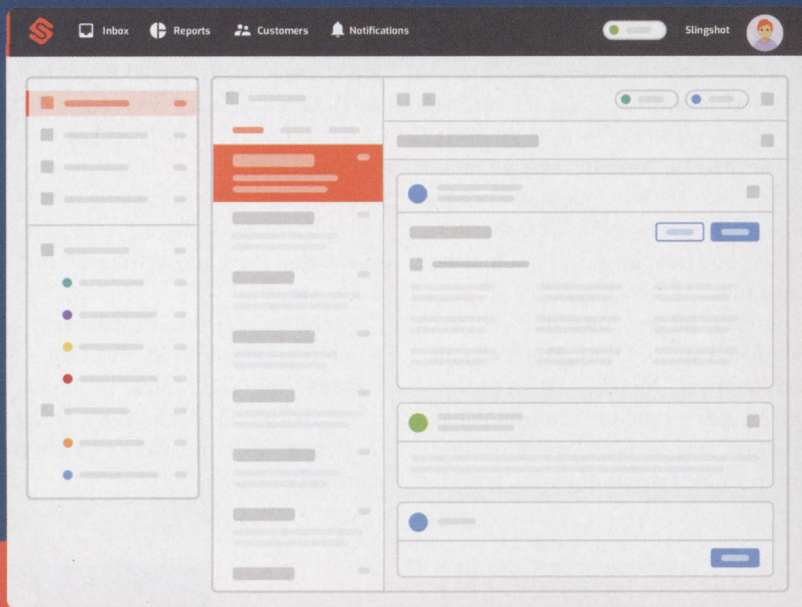
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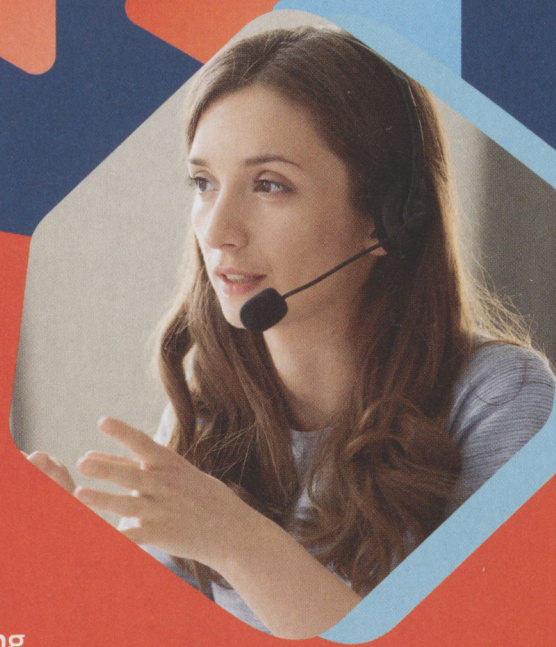
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Ryan Lawn & Tree merges with CM's Outdoor Solutions

Both companies will operate under the name of Ryan Lawn & Tree, and CM's 61 employees will all be retained.

RYAN LAWN & TREE, a Lawn & Landscape Top 100 company, completed its largest merger to date with CM's Outdoor Solutions of Omaha, NE.

Founded by Chuck Monico in 1987, CM's Outdoor Solutions, formerly known as CM's A Cut Above, has grown from providing only mowing services to offering complete turf, tree, irrigation and landscape services, as well as snow removal for both residential and commercial clients.

For the leadership team at Ryan, the merger was more than a fiscal decision.

"When we met with Chuck and the CM's team, we liked them right away," said Larry Ryan, founder and president of Ryan Lawn & Tree. "We saw Chuck as someone who cares about his associates... he hires good people and he's committed to the industry."

"One of the biggest things that's different about Ryan Lawn & Tree is that it's a faith-based company," Monico said. "If you have a faith-based company, if you're looking to take care of your people, if you're looking to take care of your community and grow the

industry, those are companies that would be a great fit for Ryan."

Both companies will operate under the name of Ryan Lawn & Tree.

CM's Outdoor Solutions employs 61 people, all of whom will be retained.

Like Ryan Lawn & Tree, CM's Outdoor Solutions is a participant in the Great Game of Business (GGOB) open-book management system. Both CM's Outdoor Solutions and Ryan Lawn & Tree were named as 2021 GGOB All-Stars earlier this year.

Ryan Lawn & Tree is 100% employee-owned and with the recent merger has more than 400 full-time associates and graduates from more than 80 different universities.

Ryan Lawn & Tree now serves six different markets, both Kansas City, KS and Kansas City, MO Metro, St. Louis, MO, Springfield, MO, Wichita, KS, Tulsa, OK, and Omaha, NE, and offers a variety of lawn care services.

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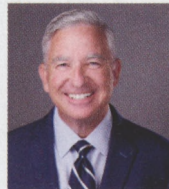
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Terry Horan named president, CEO of STIHL

Horan was previously RPM Consumer Group president at RPM International.

TERRENCE “TERRY” HORAN has been named president and CEO of STIHL Incorporated, and assumed his position on April 1, 2022. Horan will be responsible for the management of the STIHL Group’s largest market and subsidiary. Based in Virginia Beach, Va., STIHL Inc. supplies the majority of STIHL products for the U.S. market. As an integral part of STIHL

Group’s manufacturing and sales network, STIHL Inc. also supplies components and products for more than 100 markets worldwide. The company employs more than 3,000 people in the United States.



“We are pleased to welcome Mr. Horan, an internationally successful leader with 35 years of experience in the power tools, DIY, and consumer goods industry to the STIHL family,” said Dr. Nikolas Stihl, chairman of the advisory board and supervisory board at STIHL Group.

Horan joins STIHL Inc. after a career as RPM Consumer Group president at RPM International Inc. Horan has also held various senior leadership roles including president and CEO of DAP Products Inc., president of The Master Lock Company, president and CEO of the Robert Bosch

Tool Corporation North America, and president of Dremel Power Tools.

“I am excited both personally and professionally to join the team at STIHL Inc.,” Horan said. “I look forward to meeting and working with the men and women here in Virginia Beach, our branch and distributor teams, and our vast network of more than 10,000 local STIHL Dealers across the country. Together, we will build on STIHL Inc.’s long-standing legacy of success, accelerate our growth and continue our industry leadership position as the number one selling brand of outdoor power equipment in America.”

Horan, a native of the Chicago area, received a master’s degree in business administration from the University of Notre Dame, and a bachelor’s degree in marketing at Northern Illinois University. He also volunteers as a Start-Up Advisor at the IDEA Center at the University of Notre Dame. He and his wife Jill have three children.

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RISE elects new officers for 2022

The 2022 RISE Executive Committee includes Karen Larson, the newly elected chair.

RISE (RESPONSIBLE INDUSTRY for a Sound Environment) elected new officers and welcomed new Governing Board members during its March meeting in Arlington, Virginia.

The 2022 RISE Executive Committee includes newly elected Chair, Karen Larson (Clarke) and Vice Chair Jose Milan (Bayer Environmental Science). Blaine Pinkerton, Nufarm, will continue his term as treasurer. Elections were held during

the Governing Board's March meeting due to company staffing changes.

"I'm thrilled to lead the board into 2022, which so far, is a challenging year at the state and federal levels. We have an engaged RISE Governing Board to guide RISE through the tough issues the specialty industry is facing and to support the association's work to promote the benefits of our products," Larson said.

The Governing Board elected two new members, Barbara Aguiar (BASF) and Shayne Wetherall (AMGUARD). Members continuing their terms serving on the governing board include:

- Daryl Allen, Corteva Agriscience
- Kathy Bishop, Lebanon Seaboard Corporation
- Bill Culpepper, SePRO Corporation
- John Johnson, Prokoz, Inc.
- Scott Lazarczyk, SBM Life Sciences
- Todd Mason, Sipcam Agro USA
- Scott Reasons, Syngenta



- Brian Rowan, SiteOne Landscape Supply
- Nadia Sinno, FMC Corporation

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HOW TO ENTER:

Send two to three high resolution photos (7X5 or bigger at 300 DPI) and 300-400 words describing your project with details like: Why you chose to submit it, challenges on the project and how you overcame them, how long the project took, etc.

Please email submissions or any questions to Editor Brian Horn at bhorn@gie.net.

Project EverGreen partners with I Want to Mow Your Lawn

The New Jersey-based non-profit was founded in 2020 by Brian Schwartz.

PROJECT EVERGREEN RECENTLY partnered with I Want to Mow Your Lawn.

Like Project EverGreen's GreenCare for Troops, which provides complimentary lawn care and basic landscape services to families of deployed military personnel, I Want to Mow Your Lawn provides complimentary lawn mowing services to senior citizens, military veterans, disabled and under-resourced individuals and families. The New Jersey-based non-profit was founded in 2020 by Brian Schwartz.

"Forming an alliance to help more military families, veterans and other deserving individuals made sense for many reasons," said Cindy Code, executive director of Project EverGreen. "Our two organiza-

tions together can cast a wider net and help more families and individuals enjoy all the benefits healthy, accessible green spaces have to offer."

Both non-profits serve a nationwide audience and collectively will strive to expand the bandwidth and awareness of both programs. Fluctuations in the availability and location of both volunteers and families create an ebb and flow that is dependent upon new volunteers joining these initiatives and delivering the gift of a well-maintained healthy yards and landscapes.

These initiatives provide the platform for individuals and businesses with the skills and bandwidth needed to maintain healthy lawns, which in turn deliver peace of mind

to families during stressful times such as deployments or rehabbing from a service-related injury. The alliance will work to raise the profile and availability of the programs to fill current gaps and the opportunity for new volunteers to give back to their communities.

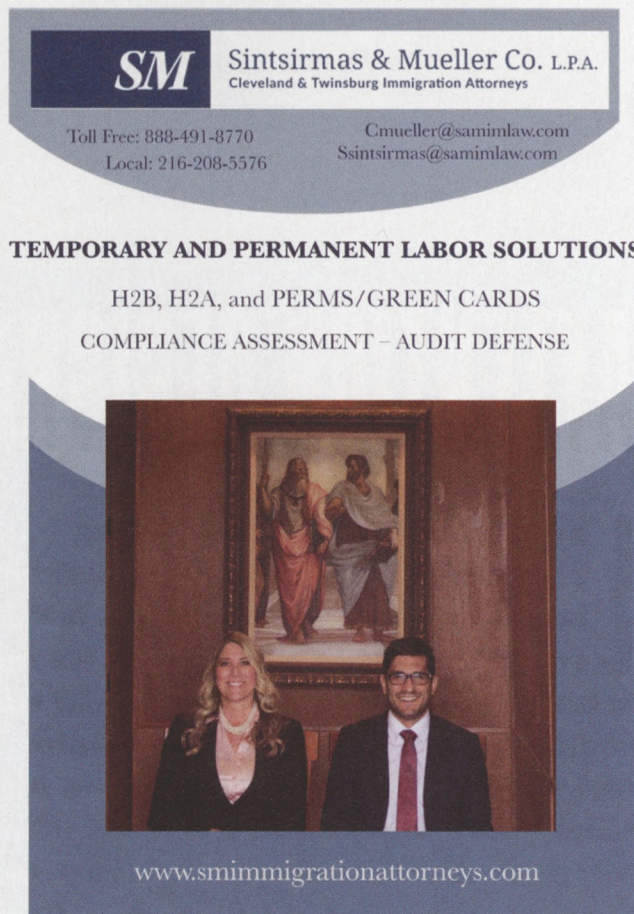
"We're honored to officially partner with Project EverGreen to create synergies between our two organizations. The partnership will multiply efforts to provide relief for families of active military and give back to those who have proudly served our country," Schwartz said. "It's our way to say thank you for the service and sacrifices families make to protect our freedoms. We never take that for granted."



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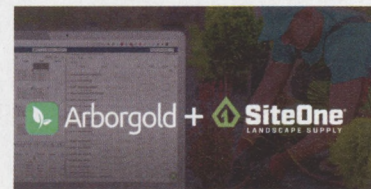
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SiteOne partners with Arborgold Software

This new partnership allows Arborgold users to link to their SiteOne account, providing real-time pricing for quotes and proposals.



SITEONE LANDSCAPE SUPPLY adds Arborgold Software to its business management software solutions for landscaping customers. For more than 25 years, Arborgold has supported landscape business owners through their industry software for streamlined operations and improved productivity.

"We are proud to work with Arborgold to provide customers with a cohesive experience to manage their landscape business," said Sean Kramer, CIO at SiteOne Landscape Supply. "At SiteOne, we are committed to empowering customers to take control of their business. By consolidating

platforms, we offer a one-stop solution to increase profitability and efficiency."

This new partnership allows Arborgold users to link to their SiteOne account, providing real-time pricing for quotes and proposals. Arborgold users will save time and money with access to SiteOne's most up-to-date material pricing, making it easier to focus on growing their business.

"Partnering with SiteOne, the industry's largest landscape supply distributor in the United States, gives Arborgold clients access to real-time product pricing so they can quickly generate accurate estimates

and proposals, create purchase orders and follow the procurement workflow through Arborgold," said Ed Rockhill, COO at Arborgold. "Arborgold's clients have come to expect additional features and functionality that increase the overall value of their subscription, such as the SiteOne partnership that offers clients a more seamless estimating, job management and supply chain experience."

Arborgold and SiteOne accounts can be linked by visiting SiteOne's Business Management Center and following the integration directions.

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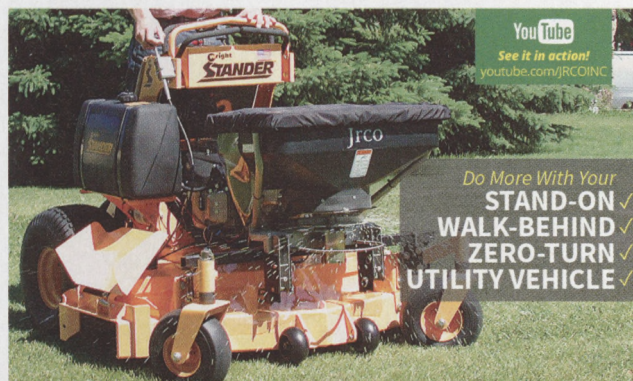
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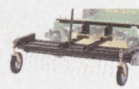
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AGZA, NALP partner on zero-emissions transition

Zero-emissions equipment is the hope for the future, but the associations say the industry must do so responsibly.

THE AMERICAN GREEN ZONE Alliance and the National Association of Landscape Professionals will work together on an approach to the responsible transition from gas to zero-emission equipment in the landscape industry.

"The industry is committed to making a transition to zero-emission equipment in a time frame that is feasible," said Britt Wood, NALP CEO. "Unfortunately, this is not just a light switch to turn on and off as landscape businesses will have to invest in new and more expensive equipment and build the infrastructure required to

power the batteries needed for commercial operations."

AGZA and NALP believe that the transition to zero-emission equipment will require:

- Education and workforce development training
- Infrastructure support including the capacity to charge the equipment within the community electric grid, at contractor's facilities and in vehicles
- The knowledge and capacity for equipment dealers to maintain the equipment in a timely manner

- The availability of battery-powered landscape equipment without supply-chain issues

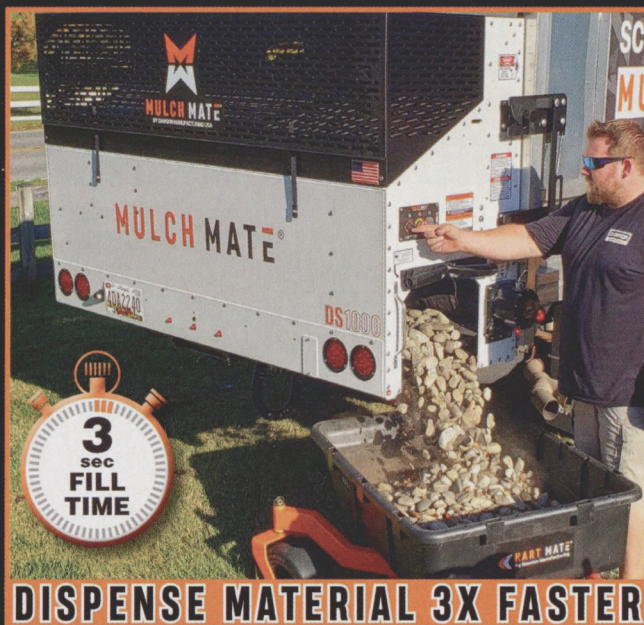
- Proper funding through tax credits and rebate programs

"The American Green Zone Alliance is neutral on regulation, bans and restrictions, but instead prefers a solutions-based approach that involves the carrot versus a stick approach to help the landscape industry transition into lower-impact technologies," said Daniel Mabe, AGZA president.

NALP and AGZA will work together with federal, state and local policymakers to provide the resources and training needed to transition to battery-powered equipment.

"There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach as different geographic regions of the country have different landscape equipment needs," Wood said. "This transition will take time, and we look forward to working with AGZA, the landscape industry, and policymakers on solutions."

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Central Turf & Irrigation Supply acquires Irrigation Supply

This expands the company into Ohio with newly acquired locations near Columbus and Cleveland.

CENTRAL TURF & IRRIGATION SUPPLY, a North American customer-focused wholesale distributor of irrigation and landscape supplies, announces the acquisition of Irrigation Supply Inc., with two locations in Ohio; serving Columbus, Cleveland and the surrounding areas.

The two newly remodeled Ohio locations will offer a more robust, full-service experience for local green industry professionals. The two locations will now have expanded hours and be open six days a week in season. In addition, customers will have access to more products and categories, the largest selection of in-stock inventory, hundreds of leading manufacturer brands, and services such as same day delivery, business and marketing resources, and category subject matter experts for onsite training and troubleshooting.

"The timing was right for Central to acquire Irrigation Supply, not just for the customers but for the industry," said Bob Hobar on his decision to sell Irrigation Supply Inc. "The additional product and service offerings is a wonderful thing for our customers. Central will enable them to access everything they need for their businesses to be successful—products, training, and business resources. Central will be their partner for success. The future is bright for the Green Industry in the state of Ohio."

Hobar and partners purchased Irrigation Supply in 2003 from founder David Vanderwist. Irrigation Supply Inc. has a renowned reputation for service excellence and has served the irrigation contractor in Cleveland and Columbus areas for more than 40+ years carrying professional products in irrigation, lighting, and fountains/water gardens.

"As a family-owned and operated business, Central believes in strong partnerships to help our customers grow and be successful. That's why we're so excited to be able to serve and support new and existing customers in Ohio with solutions across irrigation, landscape, lighting, hardscape, and more," said Bernardo Luciano, president of Central Turf & Irrigation Supply. "As a former contractor, I understand the importance of being able to get the products and help you need, when you need it. This is why we continually focus on our combination of customer-centered solutions, fully stocked warehouses, and one-stop shopping. We are thrilled to bring this approach to Ohio as we continue to increase our footprint in the Midwest and support the growth of the green industry." **L&L**

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IMPLEMENTING PERFORMANCE PAY

→ **PERFORMANCE PAY TAKES MANY FORMS.** Regardless of the method, it ties one's pay to one's performance. No performance — no pay. On the other hand, the better one performs, the better one's remuneration. A merit-based system rewards good character traits such as industriousness, hard work, risk-taking, creativity, the serving of others (customer service), frugality, perseverance and so forth. Performance pay has deep roots. It is capitalism implemented at the field level of your business. Like being a business owner, it's not for everybody. Some get it. Some don't. Some won't. It incentivizes your field personnel to think like entrepreneurs where the goal is to gain the maximum amount of benefit (pay) while expending the minimum amount of cost (time/labor). Performance pay rewards people who constantly submit their efforts to a continual cost-benefit analysis.

HOW IT WORKS. John Garretson, president of ABC LawnWorks, implemented a performance pay system that is pretty simple. His lawn maintenance crews are paid 33.33% of the revenue that they generate. Re-work and call-backs are done as needed and by the crew that caused them. This automatically increases their time on the job without any additional pay. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that doing work *right* the first time pays big dividends.

Here's how John calculates the 33.33% figure used to pay his crews: (See the Diagram by visiting: bit.ly/2HlAnIV).

The two-man crew is paid \$23 and \$19 an hour for an average wage of \$21. There's no overtime, so the total labor per crew-day is \$336 (\$21.00 x 16). Add to this a 24% labor burden (FICA, FUTA, SUTA, WCI, GLI, PTO, vacation pay, etc.) and you get a total of \$417. The total cost of equipment (mowers, edgers, trimmers, blowers, etc.) is \$71 per day. The F-150 with a trailer costs \$96 per day. All of this calculates to a total direct cost (TDC) of \$584 per day.

Next, we add general and administrative (G&A) overhead costs at \$14 per man-hour multiplied by the 16 man-hours, which produces a break-even point (BEP) of \$808. Finally, a 20% net profit margin (NPM) added to the BEP produces a daily revenue goal of \$1,010. It looks like this:

Field labor	\$336
Labor burden	\$81
Field equipment	\$71
Truck and trailer	\$ 96
TDC	\$584
G&A overhead	224
BEP	\$808
20% NPM	202
Daily revenue goal	\$1,010
Labor (without labor burden) as a percent of daily revenue:	

$$\$336 \div \$1,010 = 33.33\%$$

QUESTIONS ABOUT PAY-FOR-PERFORMANCE.

Is performance pay legal? In most states, it is. However, one's pay must equal or exceed the minimum wage rate with overtime properly applied to it. Check with your state's labor board, attorney, human resource professional, etc. to be sure.

Does it only work with residential maintenance work? Performance pay can be implemented (sometimes with minor adjustments) for various kinds of work (enhancements, irrigation service and installation, landscape installation, lawn care, and so forth) whether residential or commercial.

CONCLUSION. Implementing performance pay based on a percent of revenue requires that you know your costs for your labor, labor burden, trucks, equipment and G&A overhead. If you do, you can implement an accurate system. The primary benefit of such a system is that you're rewarding your field staff to think like you do as an entrepreneur. Both of you should be constantly analyzing your work through the lens of a cost-benefit analysis. The objective is to achieve the greatest gain while incurring the least cost.

I should add that this must be done in a safe, legal and ethical manner while achieving the desired quality standard. In the process, you're helping to create good character traits in good people who will be wealthier than they were before. It's literally, "The more the merrier." The more entrepreneurs we have, the merrier we all will be.

For a free copy of my MSX worksheet or more information on PP, contact me at the email below. **L&L**

YOUR PAY-FOR-PERFORMANCE RATE

can be instituted by looking at several costs including labor burden, field equipment, total direct costs and more.

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

6 WAYS TO MAKE INNOVATION A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

→ WE'VE COME A LONG WAY since we first thought outside the box. Landscape businesses today are moving so fast that we blew through the box and into the cloud. The metaverse seems almost too big to think out of. But with practice, we can leverage speed, scale and connectivity as opportunities to find innovation where we need it most.

Years ago, having someone in charge of ideas was a role given to marketing or outsourced to a creative agency. Today, both creativity and innovation have been brought in-house, with a culture of possibility and a chief possibility officer to lead it an important step change for competitive advantage.

As a serial entrepreneur, I've seen a lot of great ideas get lost in the execution, a problem that can happen at any stage of a company's lifecycle and for various reasons. There's momentum, there's employee buy-in, but innovation stalls, becoming a wish list instead of a deliverable.

Here are six things you can do to make innovation more actionable:

- **Make brainstorming around market** and customer trends part of strategic planning. Follow up with an action plan to address the trend's impact on your business and assign an innovation leader to explore how the trends can be turned into opportunities.
- **Remove obstacles that bog down motivation.** A prime obstacle is taking a "wait and see" approach to advanced technologies, holding off until someone else tried it first or the price goes down. By then, your first-to-market advantage is gone. Compare this to innovative organizations already making commitments to robotics or electric vehicles, for example, testing demos and making pre-orders since they know that machines might not be available for two or three years.
- **Give your people "roots and wings."** Employees grounded in accountability and discipline can soar in unexpected ways if you eliminate the fear of failure. Empower your teams to chase "aha" moments and develop a pipeline of ideas that have the potential to save money or boost revenue.
- **Understand what your customers want.** Ask what innovations are shifting their priorities and incorporate their feedback into new ways to strengthen your relationship. Check with vendors and manufacturers whose product and service innovations are resulting in efficiencies and savings, which can be passed on to customers.
- **Conduct scenario planning** to challenge assumptions and encourage possibility thinking. We could not accurately anticipate COVID, supply chain or fuel shortages; however, historical data, analytic tools and experts who've led companies through disruption are available to help with contingency planning.

• **Broaden your professional network** to include creative thinkers and entrepreneurs, and people working to advance ideas in engineering and technology. Encourage employee attendance at association conferences, seminars and professional peer group events where people with different perspectives have good ideas to share.

I know from experience that innovation leads to growth, but people always ask how much it costs. The answer is, 1) the cost of innovating is less expensive than the cost of not innovating and 2) if your business is invested in continuous improvement and things that support greater agility, you already have an innovation budget and may only need to think about how it's allocated.

My rule of thumb is to make sure you're investing in ideas that will change your business, not just run your business. "Do you really need that new facility, or can you be smarter, faster and better out of the facility you have if you use resources differently?" is just one example.

The vetting process for ideas is simple: "Is it worth doing?" If yes, then find ways to fund it and assign or retain someone to help you make it scalable. "Innovation has nothing to do with how many R&D dollars you have," said Steve Jobs, whose bar was pretty high when Apple came up with the Mac and IBM was spending 100 times more on R&D. "The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do." L&L

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CREAM OF THE CROP

WITH JUD GRIGGS

LANDSCAPE DESIGN/BUILD SALES
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CREAM OF THE CROP features a rotating panel from the Harvest Group, a landscape business consulting company.

MANAGE CLIENT EXPECTATIONS

→ IN MY 40 PLUS YEARS working in the landscape industry, I have never seen demand for landscape services any stronger. It is not a question of if clients will have the work done, but how quickly they can get the work done. Price resistance is low. Sounds like a perfect scenario for a successful and profitable year, doesn't it?

Well, life in the landscape industry is never easy. Over the past 18 months, most contractors are dealing with delays in getting critical materials for projects, rampant inflation and labor shortages due to immigration and COVID-19 issues. Those three factors must be faced head on to successfully manage your client's high expectations.

COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY. How can you manage your client's expectations in light of these challenges? It starts with great communication. I have found that it is better to be brutally honest about the potential for delays or changes to their project or weekly maintenance regime. If you try to gloss over these issues to make the sale, it may come back to haunt you later.

Communication after the sale is sometimes more important than before the sale. The key is to keep the client engaged and informed of any potential changes or price increases — be proactive! This communication needs to come not only from the sales team, but from everyone in the organization. Everyone who touches the project must know what has been promised to the client. This means that detailed notes in your CRM system regarding what the client is expecting as well as what their "hot buttons" are.

While similar, this proactive communication with your clients may be a little different between design/build project and landscape management projects.

FROM A DESIGN/BUILD PERSPECTIVE. Many design/build companies across the country have anywhere from a two- to six-month backlog of work. During the sales process, it is essential that you let your client know that prices could change during the project due to the rampant inflation we are experiencing.

Having price increase clauses in your contracts is a good way to protect yourself from rapidly escalating prices and minimize surprises for your client. Let them know, too, that there may be delays in material shipments due to the strain on the supply chain.

When you have a four-to-six-month backlog of work, the most challenging time to manage client's expectations is the time period between selling a project and starting construction.

It is essential to stay in touch with your clients to keep them engaged in the project. You don't want them to lose interest in the project, or worse yet, get "buyer's remorse" and decide to cancel

the project. Be sure to schedule a weekly call or email with your clients.

FROM A LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE. Labor is the largest part of your maintenance contracts and, therefore, most deeply impacted by the labor shortage and COVID-19 issues. To manage your client's expectation, let them know up front that the crew size may vary during the course of the year as well as the day of service may change. This way, it will not be a surprise to your client when it does happen.

Inflation has hit all aspects of the industry. Labor costs, PVC pipe and fertilizer costs have all gone through the roof. Be sure that you have captured those increases in your pricing structure. With the huge rise in fuel costs, it would be advisable to add a fuel surcharge to your contracts. This addresses the inflation issue head on, and the client will not be blind-sided.

MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS. I think we all know that there is a direct correlation between successfully managing your clients' expectations and having ecstatic clients. Besides seeing improvements in your bottom line, can you quantitatively measure how successfully you have managed your client's expectations? The answer to that question comes from setting up and measuring Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).

With all the headwinds you could be facing this year, it has never been more important to manage your client's expectations.

Be proactive. Don't wait for the angry phone call when your crew does not show up on the normal day of the week, or you find you have to institute a price increase. **L&L**

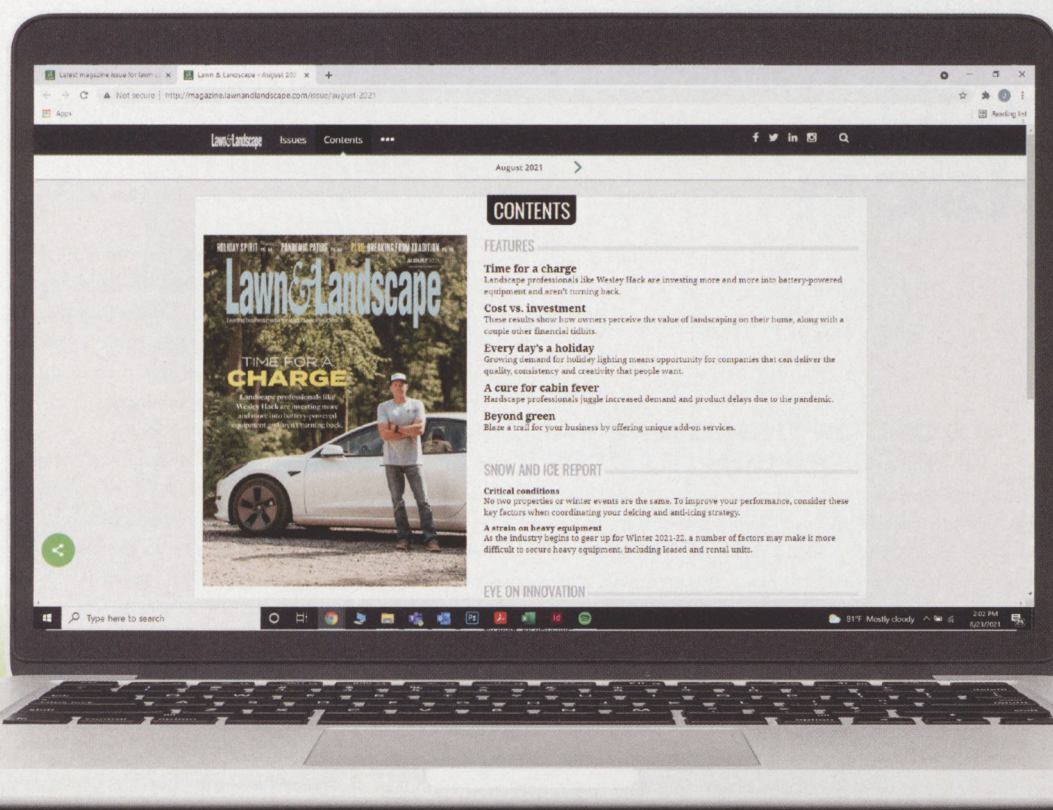
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AS ONE OF THE FEW FEMALE LANDSCAPE CONTRACTORS

offering design/build services on the Oregon Coast and also as the sole breadwinner for my household, the pressure can seem like it's always on. I often used to find myself answering client communications at all hours of the night and day and still couldn't keep up with everything. Something had to change.

I'm someone who likes to get a lot accomplished in a day, and I absolutely love my job — the opportunity to build something beautiful that others will enjoy for years to come, and that I feel proud of, is one of my favorite things in life. But I wanted to spend more time with my children and friends, and my commitment to running a business that offered prompt, accurate communication and reasonable turn-around times was hindered by how much I was trying to do.

Being overwhelmed, tired, or always busy means you're less likely to have time to communicate clearly and effectively with your staff, vendors and clients, which costs your business money and can affect the reputation of your business over time.

Those of us who face additional barriers in the industry such as skin color, gender or presumed age/youth often feel we need

Ariana Carlson 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.

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

to work harder to make the same progress others may naturally experience. Here's what I've found helps me run my businesses in a way that works better for our vendors, employees, clients and myself.

1. Hire people you trust and who understand the ethics with which you run your business. It can and will save your business thousands. Or, it might even save your business. Find a way to afford to pay someone to do the things that suck your soul dry and take your attention away from what you need to be doing — nurturing your business. Take care of your business and it will take care of you.

2. Have solid contracts. It costs less than \$1,000 to have a licensed attorney look over your contract to make sure it protects you (less if you go through Legal Aid). Your business is your livelihood. Well-written contracts protect your future. Consider adding a clause about expected client behavior to your contracts. Choose a business structure that protects YOUR interests.

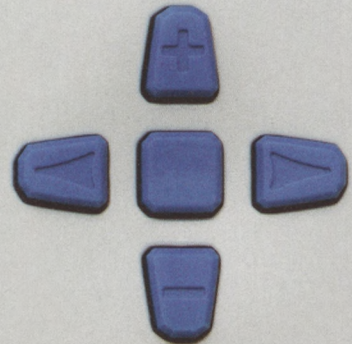
3. Develop well-thought-out SOPs. They can be time-consuming to create, but what they save you in headaches, lost time and late nights is worth it. Hire someone to write them if you have to. It's money well spent. SOPs cut down on miscommunication between clients, vendors, management and staff, which benefits everyone, and saves you money.

4. Play to your strengths. I was a member of the Planning Commission in the small coastal town in which I lived when I founded my first landscape company. That experience gave me insight into variances, lot lines and other knowledge that relates directly to my career. If a prospective client mentioned how young I looked during an initial bid (which happened frequently), I would bring up my involvement in city government or my volunteer work with charitable organizations. I also advertise that my business is woman-owned, which is a HUGE selling point.

5. Face your challenges. If you think an employee, vendor or client isn't taking you seriously because of your age, gender, skin color, or some other factor, you may have to stand up for yourself (always do so in a way that keeps you safe). It can be difficult at first, but it's necessary. You will get used to holding boundaries and speaking up for what you and your business require. Your business will benefit from you choosing to be brave, and so will our industry. **L&L**

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TURF DISEASE

TAKE
DOWN

New Pillar® SC Intrinsic® brand fungicide from BASF controls 26 key turf diseases and improves overall plant health

FOR LAWN CARE OPERATORS, diagnosing turf diseases correctly is half the battle. To help combat the majority of turf diseases more effectively, BASF has released a new product — Pillar SC Intrinsic brand fungicide.

This fungicide has been specifically designed for the lawn care market — a first for BASF.

“Pillar SC brings the same, trusted combination of active ingredients that we have in our current Pillar G product, which is a granule, but this comes in a sprayable formulation,” says Kyle Miller, BASF technical specialist for the northern U.S. “While Pillar G has been very successful, many lawn care companies prefer a sprayable product.”

Miller says creating the new sprayable fungicide was essential to providing more options to LCOs.



“We’ve got limited options in the lawn care market that deliver what LCOs really need - broad-spectrum and long-lasting disease control” Miller says. “Pillar SC was developed specifically for use in lawn care. So that means even our research trials were targeted on lawn turf to ensure Pillar SC performs as expected in those situations, and what we found is that this product is a great fit.”

“We’ve tested it in many different spray situations that LCOs might use,” he says. “This formulation has been optimized for convenience and reliability, it mixes very well regardless of what type of equipment you’re running it through.”

Pillar SC Intrinsic brand fungicide delivers a dynamic combination of two broad-spectrum ingredients, pyraclostrobin and triticonazole, for excellent control of a wide variety of turf diseases.

Emma Lookabaugh, PhD, BASF technical specialist for the Southeast, says the fungicide’s duo of powerhouse ingredients makes the product an ideal solution for the lawncare market.





We create chemistry

Pillar® SC

Intrinsic® Brand Fungicide



BEST-IN-GRASS CHEMISTRY

Strengthen your lawns with powerful turf science. Introducing Pillar® SC Intrinsic® brand fungicide: a cutting-edge, lawn-focused solution from BASF. Its fast-acting, dual-active, one-easy-rate chemistry delivers broad-spectrum control of up to 26 cool and warm-season diseases, like brown patch, large patch and dollar spot. Set your lawns up for success and build a strong foundation against future threats like disease and weeds. Lawn smarter, not harder, with a fungicide that helps deliver grass you will be proud of.



FAST-ACTING FORMULATION



DUAL-ACTIVE INGREDIENTS



ONE EASY RATE



Brown patch

"Pillar SC provides broad-spectrum protection against 26 turf diseases including some of the toughest lawn diseases, like brown patch, large patch, dollar spot - even take-all root rot and fairy ring," she says. "Pillar SC readily fits into existing preventative fungicide programs for fast curative and season-long control. Plus, its two active ingredients work together to delay resistance development of fungal pathogens."

Lookabaugh acknowledges there's nothing worse than when disease takes over a lawn. She notes that Pillar SC Intrinsic brand fungicide works to combat disease preventively and even when disease is already active.

"Turf diseases like brown patch and large patch can be quite devastating to lawns," she says. "These diseases can progress fairly quickly and if not controlled, can take out large areas of grass. Once the turf is dead, that's when weeds can come in and take over. You end up with an unsightly front yard full of dead patches and weeds - and with that kind of damage the turf can take a long time to recover."

"Like Kyle mentioned earlier, currently there are only a handful of products out there and of those, very few offer any curative control," Lookabaugh adds. "Pillar SC starts working very quickly to control diseases that are already present and provides long-lasting control."

And because it's such a broad-spectrum product, Pillar SC Intrinsic brand fungicide is simple to use for most scenarios.

"We took the guesswork out of disease control with the pre-mix formulation," Lookabaugh says. "It's easier to mix and

SPONSORED CONTENT

load, so that's a huge benefit for our LCO customers. The label is simple. We have one rate on the label and that one rate controls all diseases, so you don't have to try and figure out what rate to use for brown patch versus dollar spot or any other disease you're after. You use one fluid ounce per thousand square feet for everything."

LCOs also don't have to worry about crafting a complicated schedule for using Pillar SC Intrinsic brand fungicide, since the label allows up to five applications per year. "You have quite a bit of flexibility to put out applications when you need them the most with this product," Lookabaugh says.

While Pillar SC Intrinsic brand fungicide fights a number of tough turf diseases, Lookabaugh and Miller agree that it's especially useful against one common foe of LCO's:

"What really sets this product apart is strong dollar spot activity," Lookabaugh says.

And for most LCOs, that's a disease they run into all too frequently.

"Dollar spot is the number two disease in lawns across the country, and Pillar SC has an advantage over the other lawn care products in controlling this particular disease," Miller says. "Both of the active ingredients in Pillar SC have excellent activity on dollar spot."

Diseases like dollar spot can be particularly hard to diagnosis when there are several types of turf in play, and Lookabaugh says this is where Pillar SC Intrinsic brand fungicide can be especially useful.

"Symptoms of brown patch and dollar spot are difficult to differentiate and it is common to have both diseases active at the same time. This is especially true in lawns with mixed turf types, like Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue blends. When we hear customers say 'x fungicide isn't controlling brown patch' it's usually a misdiagnosis and the product is actually failing to control the dollar spot. What's great about Pillar SC is that it combines two active ingredients that work together to control whatever diseases pop up. Even when

you have more than one disease present, you're going to get effective and reliable control," Lookabaugh says.

And not only is Pillar SC Intrinsic brand fungicide essential for fighting disease, but Miller says there are added benefits of plant health when regularly using this product.

"Pyraclostrobin, one of the unique active ingredients in Pillar SC, can reduce turfgrass stress in so many ways," he says. "This is very well documented in both BASF and university trials. Not only is Pillar SC an excellent fungicide, it's also able to deliver what we call improved plant health by minimizing the effects of heat, drought, traffic, shading and other environmental stresses on your turfgrass. That's what the Intrinsic brand means in the name Pillar SC Intrinsic."

Miller says that alone makes it an even more important tool in an LCO's toolkit.

"In the end, you get two for the price of one with a product like Pillar SC," he says. "It delivers great disease control and improved plant health."



Large patch

BASF
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Always read and follow label directions. Pillar and Intrinsic are registered trademarks of BASF.

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THE ANNUAL TOP 100 *L&L*

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About this list

The Lawn & Landscape Top 100 list is based on 2021 revenue from landscape profit centers. Most information is reported by each company listed, and supplemental data are sourced from public records and reporting by L&L staff.

ABBREVIATIONS

- %MT:** Maintenance
- %CLC/F:** Chemical Lawn Care/Fertilization
- %LD/B/I:** Landscape Design/Build/Install
- %II/MT:** Irrigation Installation/Maintenance
- %CR:** Commercial Revenue
- %RR:** Residential Revenue
- N/A:** No Answer/Unknown

✳ Indicates new to the list or not on list last year.

2022 RANK	COMPANY	2021 RANK	2021 REVENUE	HEADQUARTERS	EMPLOYEES	% CHANGE FROM 2020	% CHANGE EXPECTED FOR 2022	%MT	%CLC/F	%LD/B/I	%II/MT	%CR	%RR
1	BrightView Holdings	1	\$2,553,600,000	Blue Bell, Pa.	20,500	9	N/A	67	0	22	0	100	0
2	TruGreen	2	\$1,500,000,000	Memphis, Tenn.	14,793	5	N/A	0	90	0	0	14	86
3	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	3	\$1,378,053,000	Kent, Ohio	10,821	7	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

2024-2025	4	Yellowstone Landscape	4	\$446,000,000	Bunnell, Fla.	6,000	25	10	80	0	9	0	100	0
	5	Bartlett Tree Experts	5	\$397,000,000	Stamford, Conn.	2,200	13	9	0	0	0	0	30	64
	6	HeartLand	12	\$388,000,000	Kansas City, Mo.	3,700	111	25	72	0	8	0	100	0
	7	SavATree	13	\$296,000,000	Bedford Hills, NY.	1,920	6	7	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	21	77
	8	Sperber Companies	19	\$280,000,000	Westlake Village, Calif.	2,700	N/A	N/A	49	4	32	5	99	1
	9	Weed Man	9	\$259,562,911	Orono, Ontario	3,986	22	14	0	100	0	0	5	95
	10	Gothic Landscape	6	\$259,000,000	Valencia, Calif.	2,150	13	8	33	0	67	0	95	5
	11	Outworx Group	7	\$257,904,500	Westbury NY	4,300	15	5	19	0	3	1	100	0
	12	Ruppert Landscape	8	\$249,000,000	Laytonsville, Md.	1,990	17	8	53	0	47	0	100	0
	13	LandCare	10	\$246,000,000	Frederick, Md.	3,600	18	15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100	0
	14	U.S. Lawns	14(t)	\$197,000,000	Orlando, Fla.	2,450	8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100	0
	15	Lawn Doctor	16	\$187,000,000	Holmdel, N.J.	1,500	15	10	0	100	0	0	5	95
	16	Park West Landscape	14(t)	\$175,350,000	Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.	1,530	0	11	43	0	47	4	100	0
	17	Juniper	20	\$137,939,000	Fort Myers, Fla.	1,700	37	12	66	0	25	10	100	0
	18	Loving	22	\$119,329,170	Gastonia, N.C.	254	43	31	3	0	39	1	43	0
	19	Divisions Maintenance Group	11	\$111,721,741	Newport, Ky.	610	18	20	22	0	0	1	100	0
	20	Ambius	21	\$105,000,000	Reading, Pa.	750	10	10	0	0	0	0	100	0
	21	Mariani Landscape	35	\$95,500,000	Lake Bluff, Ill.	850	10	9	62	0	35	0	15	85
	22	NaturalLawn of America	24	\$91,132,092	Frederick, Md.	708	11	8	0	99	0	0	3	97
	23	The Grounds Guys	25	\$89,000,000	Waco, Texas	1,400	14	18	0	0	0	0	55	45
	24	United Land Services	38	\$88,700,000	Jacksonville, Fla.	450	53	20	15	0	64	15	95	5
	25	Clintar Commercial Outdoor Services	23	\$87,500,000	Markham, Canada	1280	6	6	40	0	6	0	95	5
	26	Massey Services	26	\$86,053,765	Orlando, Fla.	2,470	10	15	0	22	1	4	12	88
	27	Clean Scapes	30	\$85,262,000	Austin, Texas	939	20	16	53	1	41	6	100	0
	28	Rotolo Consultants	28	\$84,000,000	Slidell, La.	950	11	20	45	5	45	5	100	0
	29	Spring-Green Lawn Care Corp.	29	\$83,200,000	Plainfield, Ill.	660	12	10	0	95	0	2	4	96
	30	The Greenery	31	\$81,000,000	Hilton Head Island, S.C.	943	18	11	70	3	22	5	90	8
	31	Mainscape	32	\$74,000,000	Fishers, Ind.	948	14	6	67	6	7	10	100	0
	32	Metco	27	\$73,000,000	Aurora, Colo.	505	5	0	20	10	40	10	98	2
	33	Lucas Tree Expert Co.	33	\$66,000,000	Portland, Maine	550	0	12	0	0	0	0	100	0
	34	Garden Design	34	\$65,700,000	Dallas, Texas	92	11	20	5	2	83	10	94	6
	35	Dixie Landscape	40	\$64,405,000	Medley, Fla.	385	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	36	Chenmark	43	\$58,781,179	Portland, Maine	N/A	19	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

37	Ryan Lawn & Tree	44	\$56,300,000	Merriam, Kan.	420	18	30	0	36	11	14	5	95
38	Landscape Workshop	47	\$56,000,000	Birmingham, Ala.	1,000	24	27	76	7	10	5	95	5
39	Sebert Landscape	42	\$55,000,000	Bartlett, Ill.	561	8	10	40	10	20	5	95	5
40	Yardnique	98	\$54,600,000	Morrisville, N.C.	790	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	93%	7%
41	DJ's Landscape Management	99	\$54,209,000	Grand Rapids, Mich.	732	110	10	33	0	32	0	100	0
42	Beary Landscaping	54	\$54,000,000	Lockport, Ill.	395	22	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	80	20
43	RP Marzilli	59	\$53,905,000	Medway, Mass.	285	34	N/A	10	1	83	3	13	87
44	Choate USA	39	\$53,579,000	Plano, Texas	350	-6	10	0	0	60	40	N/A	N/A
45	Kline Brothers Landscaping	41	\$53,200,000	Ship Bottom, N.J.	252	19	5	10	0	80	10	N/A	N/A
46	Teufel Landscape	37	\$53,027,632	Hillsboro, Ore.	400	-9	5	9	1	85	3	99	1
47	Senske Services	53	\$52,200,000	Kennewick, Wash.	500	13	15	6	60	0	2	15	85
48	Complete Landscaping Service	48	\$51,200,000	Bowie, Md.	578	30	15	35	0	12	0	95	5
49	Denison Landscaping	36	\$51,000,000	Fort Washington, Md.	450	16	18	7	0	81	10	18	82
50	Earthtones Landscaping	46	\$50,543,000	Midlothian, Texas	180	8	-10	19	5	53	18	85	15
51	EMI	61	\$50,472,000	Plain City, Ohio	419	32	5	28	3	51	2	95	5
52	Russell Landscape Group	56	\$50,015,000	Sugar Hill, Ga.	600	14	18	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	98	2
53	American Landscape	51(t)	\$50,000,000	Canoga Park, Calif.	310	11	3	26	4	35	33	88	12
54	NELTS	51(t)	\$46,750,000	Ashway, R.I.	200	4	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100	0
55	SiteWorks	50	\$46,324,809	Chandler, Ariz.	260	2	6	11	0	75	9	100	0
56	AAA Landscape	57	\$45,255,000	Phoenix, Ariz.	600	9	4	45	5	42	3	99	1
57	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	62	\$45,000,000	Woodbine, Md.	500	17	10	75	0	25	0	90	10
58	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	60	\$43,773,821	San Antonio, Texas	442	13	22	29	0	64	4	95	5
59	Bland Landscaping	*	\$43,200,000	Apex, N.C.	500	27	15	86	0	10	4	96	4
60	Xquisite Landscaping	77	\$42,797,400	Stoughton, Mass.	248	36	15	14	2	74	6	100	0
61	Impact Landscaping & Irrigation	66	\$40,600,000	Jupiter, Fla.	485	14	10	37	3	43	17	N/A	N/A
62	Christy Webber & Co.	58	\$40,000,000	Chicago, Ill.	286	0	3	45	0	40	0	80	20
63	Dennis Seven Dees Landscaping and Garden Centers	64	\$39,844,098	Portland, Ore.	320	9	3	28	0	44	0	34	40
64	Stay Green	81	\$38,500,000	Santa Clarita, Calif.	500	30	10	85	0	0	0	100	0
65	Harvest Landscape Enterprises	69(t)	\$38,000,000	Anaheim, Calif.	N/A	20	N/A	65	5	10	18	100	0
66	Greenscape Land Design	75	\$37,000,000	Raynham, Mass.	335	15	25	41	0	38	0	100	0
67	Pacific Landscape Management	89	\$36,839,000	Hillsboro, Ore.	365	28	25	50	0	30	10	100	0
68	Gachina Landscape Management	68	\$36,143,944	Menlo Park, Calif.	390	8	11	57	1	25	12	96	2
69	Southern Botanical	87	\$36,053,582	Dallas, Texas	365	24	12	28	6	43	13	46	24
70	The Bruce Company	79	\$36,043,000	Middleton, Wis.	375	17	5	19	0	44	5	80	20

71(t)	McHale Landscape Design	85(t)	\$36,000,000	Upper Marlboro, MD	310	20	10	42	3	55	0	0	100
71(t)	Designs By Sundown	88	\$36,000,000	Littleton, Colo.	260	25	10	31	3	61	4	10	90
73	Landscape Design Concepts	69(t)	\$35,505,000	Norwood, N.J.	85	2	1	40	0	20	0	85	15
74	Schumacher Co.	97	\$35,000,000	West Bridgewater, Mass.	240	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
75	Berghoff Design Group	55	\$34,680,500	Phoenix, Ariz.	375	4	6	33	0	52	10	0	100
76	Superscapes	67	\$34,500,000	Carrallton, Texas	325	8	15	27	0	56	18	N/A	N/A
77(t)	Elite Team Offices	69(t)	\$34,000,000	Clovis, Calif.	625	3	5	20	0	13	67	99	1
77(t)	Chalet	80	\$34,000,000	Wilmette, Ill.	250	12	6	60	5	35	0	0	100
79	Nutrilawn	91	\$33,894,720	Toronto, Canada	400	24	10	0	80	0	10	N/A	N/A
80	Environmental Designs	82	\$33,840,630	Brighton, Colo.	317	12	10	25	2	53	8	70	30
81	Naturescape	76	\$33,480,592	Muskego, Wis.	340	7	5	10	80	0	0	5	95
82	Schill Grounds Management	*	\$33,000,000	North Ridgeville, Ohio	465	15	10	58	5	13	1	100	0
83	Designscapes Colorado	74	\$32,600,000	Centennial, Colo.	353	2	11	17	1	76	2	53	47
84	Gibbs Landscape Co.	84	\$32,500,000	Smyrna, Ga.	405	10	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	60	40
85	Meadows Farms	93	\$32,300,000	Chantilly, Va.	270	18	5	12	2	85	0	3	97
86	Merchants Landscape	85(t)	\$32,000,000	Santa Ana, Calif.	480	7	4	81	6	0	13	100	0
87	Earthworks	95	\$31,400,000	Lillian, Texas	415	15	8	50	0	40	8	100	0
88	LMI Landscapes	73	\$30,904,434	Carrallton, Texas	177	-7	15	35	0	44	16	100	0
89	Perfect Cuts	83	\$30,472,000	Austin, Texas	96	1	8	45	5	30	20	100	0
90	Green Lawn Fertilizing	*	\$30,015,717	West Chester, Pa.	235	27	26	0	68	0	0	5	95
91	Down to Earth Landscape	96	\$29,864,500	Deptford, N.J.	128	14	3	8	3	73	14	95	5
92	Unlimited Landscaping & Turf Management	*	\$29,859,768	Suwanee, Ga.	253	14	15	11	54	33	2	41	59
93	Southview Design	94	\$29,748,253	St. Paul, Minn.	215	11	25	27	0	57	4	45	55
94	DLC Resources	92	\$29,100,000	Phoenix, Ariz.	390	5	0	85	0	5	0	100	0
95	Lawn Management Company	*	\$29,062,868	Houston, Texas	375	25	5	62	2	20	8	99	1
96	Frank and Grossman Landscape Contractors, Inc.	100	\$29,000,000	Hayward, Calif.	262	14	15	35	0	10	40	35	65
97	Level Green Landscape	*	\$27,418,000	Upper Marlboro, Md.	293	26	9	46	0	29	2	100	0
98	David J. Frank Landscape Co.	*	\$27,350,000	Ger mantown, Wis.	340	10	5	32	3	42	3	65	35
99	Great Oaks Landscape Associates	*	\$26,200,000	Novi, Mich.	173	18	8	31	2	41	2	80	20
100	Lifescape Colorado	*	\$26,017,021	Denver, Colo.	179	36	15	25	1	64	8	90	10

TOP 100 NEWS & NOTES

JANUARY

BrightView acquires Cutting Edge Property Maintenance

"Cutting Edge has earned a reputation for providing superior service, which creates lasting client satisfaction," said BrightView President and CEO Andrew Masterman. "They have the expertise and capabilities to provide a full suite of winter services, landscape maintenance and enhancements, tree care, and irrigation services. This deal brings a service leader in a desirable Upper Midwest market into the BrightView family along with more than 110 skilled team members."

Founded in 2005, Cutting Edge Property Maintenance is one of the Twin Cities' commercial outdoor maintenance services providers with a reputation for attention to detail, client service, employee safety and superior workmanship.

Davey Tree announces slew of promotions

The Davey Tree Expert Co announced the following promotions:

- **They promoted two regional vice presidents** within the Davey Tree Surgery Company, a subsidiary of Davey Tree. Bill Heriford was promoted to regional vice president of the Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) operations, and David Miller was promoted to regional vice president of southern operations.

- **The company promoted Kyle Celmer** to operations manager of commercial tree care, residential/commercial (R/C) services. In his new role, Celmer will be responsible for the sales and safe production efforts as they relate to the expansion of the Commercial Tree Care division.

- **Dave Bargerstock** was promoted to operations manager of the Great Lakes West region, residential/commercial (R/C) services.

- **Davey Tree Expert Company** also appointed Thomas Whitney to technical advisor within the Davey Institute.

FEBRUARY

BrightView acquires Green Image

BrightView Holdings has acquired Green Image based in Las Vegas, Nevada. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

"GTI and its more than 400 team members are a great strategic addition to our operations in the western U.S.," said BrightView President and CEO Andrew Masterman. "They bring a solid base of maintenance operations plus an impressive capability in landscape development. This team of professionals has years of experience in horticulture, engineering, maintenance, design, architecture, and equipment management and I am pleased to welcome them to BrightView."

Founded in 2004, Green Image works on both landscape development and maintenance, including HOA streetscapes and entries, parks, common areas, play structures, athletic fields and water features.

Roger Zino named CEO of Gothic Landscape

Gothic Landscape named Roger Zino, currently vice chairman of the company and veteran of the landscape business, as CEO of the company.

Jon Georgio, Gothic's current CEO, will remain chairman of the board.

"Roger's increasing involvement in our company has confirmed and further energized us all to the fabulous growth opportunities we have in front of us," Georgio said. "His experience in scaling service businesses, combined with his genuine passion for the landscape profession, comes at the perfect time in our company's evolution."

"I am deeply honored the Georgio family has entrusted me with the responsibility of continuing the company's family legacy as the first non-family CEO," Zino said. "In working closely with the company over the past 18 months I have been equally impressed with all it has accomplished, as well as

the unique potential it has in the coming years to expand its distinctive mark on the industry. The family's willingness to continue to invest in its future and expand its vision of the company's leadership, speaks to the multi-generational view the family has of its commitment to this business."

Ron Georgio, the founder of Gothic's maintenance division, will assume the role of vice chairman, serving in a key governance and special project capacity. Nada Duna will continue in her role as chief operating officer of the maintenance division, which has enjoyed expansion over the past four years and is seen as a key growth area for the company.

Zino previously served as president of ValleyCrest Landscape Maintenance, CEO of ValleyCrest Companies and as vice chairman of Brightview during the company's integration. Prior to ValleyCrest, he was a partner at McKinsey & Co. and served a range of diversified businesses.

APRIL

Sperber Landscape Companies acquires Cagwin & Dorward

Sperber Landscape Companies has expanded into the Northern California marketplace by merging with Cagwin & Dorward.

Headquartered in Petaluma, California, the company was founded in 1955 and has grown to include multiple locations servicing California's Bay Area, Sacramento, and the Central Valley.

Cagwin's CEO, Steve Glennon, will continue his leadership of the company alongside his existing management team.

Massey Services expands in three southern states

Massey Services, a national pest management company and family-owned company, has expanded its operations in Texas, Georgia and Florida

The top 100 companies were busy in 2021 with mergers and acquisitions, promoting employees and more. Here's a recap of the year.

through the opening of several new service centers in these states.

The company opened three new service centers in Texas, located in Denton, Frisco and McKinney in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Massey also opened a new service center in Doral, Florida, to further expand their presence in the South Florida market.

In The Villages community, Massey opened two new service center locations. They now have a total of eight offices in The Villages, Florida, that provide pest, termite, landscape and irrigation services. Additionally, the company opened a new service center in Decatur, Georgia, to better serve their customers northeast of Atlanta.

Massey Services also opened two new GreenUP Landspace service centers in Orange Park, Florida, and Destin, Florida. Additionally, they now offer their award-winning landscape service in Marietta, Cumming and Dallas, Georgia. Massey's environmentally responsible landscape service includes aeration, custom-blended fertilizers, pH testing and targeted weed, insect and disease control.

Finally, Massey Services has opened new commercial service centers in Cocoa, Florida; Clearwater, Florida; and Baton Rouge, Louisiana. These offices provide commercial pest prevention and disinfecting services to all types of businesses, including healthcare, restaurants, hotels, warehouses and many more.

SavATree acquires company in Michigan

SavATree has acquired Advanced Arboriculture by Arbor-Olin of Rochester, Michigan, a full-service tree care company that has been serving customers for more than 40 years.

Advanced Arboriculture founder, Terry Jenkinson, an arborist with decades of experience in the industry, will be joining the SavATree team along with members of his staff. This union further strengthens SavATree's

service at its Troy and Orion branches to customers throughout the Detroit Tri-County.

Bartlett Tree Experts hires new chief information officer

Gamal Maklad has joined Bartlett Tree Experts as its incoming chief information officer. He will succeed David Andry, who plans to retire in early 2022 after 42 years with the company.

In his role, Maklad will develop and execute Bartlett's technology strategy to drive digital business innovation for Bartlett's customers, partners, and employees. Maklad joins Bartlett after leading business transformation initiatives rooted in technology at large public and private companies for more than 16 years, including Finit and United Technologies Corporation.

Most recently, he served as head of technology for Advance Publications in New York. In that role, he led M&A technology due diligence and integration efforts in addition to executing a global software alignment program across \$100 million in spend. He also drove the adoption of the Microsoft 365 platform, including a shift to Teams in support of digital workplace initiatives.

JUNE

Clean Scapes becomes fully employee-owned

"The success of our company can be directly attributed to the culture we have created and maintained at Clean Scapes," said Ivan Giraldo, co-founder and president of the Austin-Texas based company. "Transitioning to an ESOP allows Clean Scapes to maintain its character while executing its vision of becoming Texas's most trusted commercial landscape partner.

"With quality labor being one of the commercial landscaping industry's largest concerns, it is important for Clean Scapes to establish a benefit that attracts new employees and incentivizes those wanting to establish a career with

Clean Scapes." An ESOP is a type of tax-qualified defined contribution plan through which eligible employees will receive a benefit linked to Clean Scapes's future value. The company ranked 30th on Lawn & Landscapes Top 100 list with almost \$70 million in 2020 revenue.

JULY

SavATree merges with Preservation Tree Services

SavATree has announced a merger with Texas-based tree and lawn care company, Preservation Tree Services. This merger marks SavATree's flagship entry in key markets of the state of Texas with three branches located in Dallas, Fort Worth and Anna.

Preservation Tree Service has been providing a complete range of tree care expertise to residential, commercial and municipal clients throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth and North Central Texas area for nearly three decades. These services include skilled pruning, Earth-friendly fertilization, construction mitigation, cabling and bracing, surveys and appraisals, urban forestry, consultation, soil aeration, tree planting and transplanting.

Principals of Preservation Tree Services, AJ Thibodeaux, Pauline Perry and Andy Spiegel, along with their dedicated team of arborists, technicians and office personnel, will stay on with SavATree to provide outstanding, personalized local service. Preservation currently employs 72.

AUGUST

NaturaLawn opens new national sales office

NaturaLawn of America opened a new national sales office in downtown Frederick, Maryland.

The office was developed in response to NaturaLawn's continued growth and provides digital and traditional sales support to franchises across the continental U.S.

The office is an extension of

NaturaLawn of America's headquarters and their 30-year history of being located at 1 E. Church Street. The sales office currently employs 21 sales support specialists and is seeking to grow its sales force to up to 42 full-time, benefited positions within the next three to five years.

Together, the NaturaLawn of America headquarters and national sales office will employ over 75 full-time employees in the heart of downtown Frederick, helping develop local jobs and investing in the Frederick city economy.

The national sales office team uses a variety of techniques to support the sales efforts of NaturaLawn service locations across the country. Currently, the office supports two-thirds of all existing service locations, managing customer relations utilizing email campaigns, SMS engagement software, and phone outreach.

"We're pleased to give our growing sales force the space and resources it needs to continue supporting our locations and customers across the country," said Phil Catron, president and founder of NaturaLawn.

In addition to Frederick city housing the company's national headquarters and sales office, the local franchise owner, Roy Good, employs nine additional individuals and serves Washington and Frederick counties. The NaturaLawn Frederick franchise provides homeowners with lawn fertilization, aeration and seeding, grub control, mole control, and comprehensive tick and mosquito control programs.

SEPTEMBER

LOVING releases new sod delivery platform

LOVING expands its service offering with the launch of a business that will serve the sod needs of landscaping companies across the Southeast, as well as the ever-growing DIY segment of the industry.

The new platform, nextDAYsod, features a "three clicks and done" platform and guarantees next day delivery. Freight is also free with the platform.

"We are excited to leverage our

regional footprint of sod farming locations combined with our vast distribution footprint across the Southeast to now provide the landscaping industry with an unprecedented service and quality," said Brian Reed, executive vice president of farming at LOVING. "All sod will be cut to order, ensuring that we are shipping the freshest sod on the market with less than 24 hours from harvest to delivery. We are also excited to serve DIYers with this same cutting-edge service."

"We at LOVING have never been more excited about the pipeline of projects that our teams are working on to leverage technology to better serve our growing customer-base," said Mike Haynes, founder and president.

NOVEMBER

Sperber adds Bemus Landscape

Sperber Landscape Companies has added Bemus Landscape. The partnership marks Sperber's return to the Southern California region, where ValleyCrest was founded by Burt Sperber over 70 years ago.

Headquartered in Orange County, California, Bemus was founded by Bill Bemus in 1973 and provides commercial landscape services in the areas of Orange County, San Diego, and the Inland Empire.

"The Sperber partnership creates an exciting new chapter for the company my family has carefully built throughout the last six decades," said Bill Bemus, who retired from day-to-day operations in 2017. "We have a longstanding relationship with the Sperber Family, and I feel confident and comfortable joining forces with them for this next phase of Bemus' growth."

Bill Bemus's three sons (Colin Bemus, Corin Bemus, and Spencer Bemus) will continue active leadership of the company. As a result of the Sperber partnership, they will now be shareholders in the company.

"When evaluating a variety of potential partners, it was important for us to choose a parent company that had a deep understanding of the nuances of our industry," said Bemus CEO Corin Bemus. "Sperber's seven

decades of experience in landscaping reinforces our confidence that this partnership will allow us to retain our culture, treat our employees well, and take care of our clients properly."

DECEMBER

SiteWorks becomes fully employee-owned

SiteWorks has become a 100% Employee-Owned Company.

This announcement of the Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) was presented to all coworkers at their annual winter gathering in November.

An ESOP is an employee benefit plan, which provides company stock to employees as part of their retirement benefits. As a 100% employee-owned company, all of the SiteWorks stock is now held in trust by the ESOP exclusively for the benefit of all the coworkers who are employed by the newly formed corporate business entity, SiteWorks Holding Co., Inc.

As discussed in an openly shared conversation with the three, they said that "we instinctively knew our ultimate succession plan was to focus on the one buyer who absolutely stood to benefit most for their wholehearted contribution made to the ongoing success of SiteWorks: Our coworkers."

In a joint statement, original founders, Chris Malham, Rob Spoor and Don McIntyre said the process took eight months. They told attendees, "It was necessary to start transitioning the company as we began to consider our ensuing retirement years, and after declining two highly attractive offers to sell the company to strategic buyers, we knew we would be wrongfully settling and 'selling out' our coworkers, many who made career commitments to join us back when we modestly started in December 2004.

"We felt there was nothing improper about selling to an outside buyer, however after our research it appeared that very few seller transactions are beneficial to those who are left behind.

"Therefore, instead of one day looking back and feeling disappointed, we thought to instead focus on what is ahead and establish something wonderful for those that we cared about."

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Illustration by
KATH ANDERSON

Become the change

K **OHLER IS DELIGHTED TO BE PARTICIPATING** in the Lawn & Landscape Top 100 again this year. We have been supporting this business for many years now, and we are proud to see that with each anniversary, our member companies are making more and more progress, proving that despite the adversity of recent times, this business is delivering great results.

Over the past two years we have suffered from the pandemic, but we have held on and supported each other. Now that the situation seems to be improving, it is time to raise the bar in our goals, aiming for progress and the cutting edge. We have learned how important it is to look to the future, so let's set our sights higher and higher.

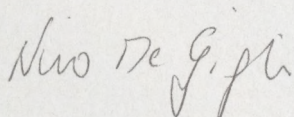
Personally, at Kohler we are always setting ourselves new challenges. At the beginning of this year, for example, we joined the eFuel Alliance. This is in line with our commitment to reducing CO2 emissions in the off-road sector, which is leading us to invest in technological innovations that are alternatives to traditional fuels. We have decided to acquire two important companies, Heila and Curtis, which will help us to embrace a slow but steady path towards electrification and hybridization.

As a first, small but important concrete action in the fight against climate change, we have approved in Europe the use of Hydrotreating of Vegetable Oils (HVO - according to EN15940), either pure or blended with conventional fuel, in all our diesel engines.

Developing clean energy solutions is an investment that will benefit us now and in the future. Let's be part of the change, let's become the change ourselves.

Once again, congratulations to all of you for your achievements, and for what we have achieved together as a Top 100 list. We are confident that you will continue this path of growth and innovation.

Best regards,



Nino De Giglio

Director – Marketing Communications
& Channel Management, Kohler Engines



“

**IT IS TIME TO RAISE
THE BAR IN OUR
GOALS, AIMING FOR
PROGRESS AND THE
CUTTING EDGE.”**

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ACROSS THE INDUSTRY

5 EXECUTIVES FROM **TOP 100 COMPANIES** GIVE THEIR THOUGHTS ON THE CURRENT STATE OF THE INDUSTRY.

WITH THE TOP 100 COMPANIES having reach in multiple states and in Canada, we asked some of the largest companies in North America about everything from industry M&A activity, inflation, what they see on the horizon and much more.

by
KIM LUX
and
JIMMY MILLER

“I want to keep close to the beat. The customer tells you what they want, so why not listen? We have the ability with technology now.”

— JENNIFER LEMCKE,
WEED MAN



JENNIFER LEMCKE

CEO, Weed Man

AFTER SIFTING THROUGH a 70-plus page report from a consultant, Jennifer Lemcke realized Weed Man could double down on its good customer experience and make it even better.

The consultant analyzed the industry and trends there, but also highlighted areas where friction existed between the Weed Man franchisees and the customers. After interviews with clients – including some current customers and others who opted not to renew Weed Man — and interviews with the franchisees and their employees, the report showed communication breakdowns. Lemcke herself heard some of these breakdowns after listening to more than 100 recorded phone calls clients made to her company, and so she launched a 12-month project to improve.

One clear thing that needed to be fixed — Sometimes, new clients didn't know when to expect Weed Man to come out and begin working on their lawns. Some people order services in January or February, but Weed Man employees assumed those clients knew nobody would be out until the spring, or that frequently telling them when trucks would be onsite would be annoying.



*the
stats*

Company:
Weed Man

Headquarters:
Orono,
Ontario

Locations:
332

Employees:
3,986

That wasn't always the case, and the assumption proved frustrating to the end users.

"Imagine you order something, you give them your credit card, and you don't hear anything from them until they're ready to come out," Lemcke says. "These are the little aha moments. We've gone in and we're developing a communication plan that follows the customer's journey with us."

To be clear, Lemcke says Weed Man is proud of its high customer retention, and she acknowledges some might think she crossed too many lanes trying to listen in on customer phone calls. But as CEO, she's striving to understand the clients' concerns, and improving the client experience became her chief priority. Plus, if she didn't understand the customer's frustration, how could she expect anyone else at the company to do so?

"I want to keep close to the beat," she says. "The customer tells you what they want, so why not listen? We have the ability with technology now."

One big incoming call she heard when she listened back went something like, "Hey, I saw your trucks down the street. When are you coming to do my property?" Lemcke hopes adding email and text alerts that keep clients posted weeks in advance will help alleviate some of these questions. By listening to the calls, she got to experience what the customer experienced.

Weed Man also redid its customer portal. Lemcke blew it up, opting to find sleeker, intuitive ways to make things easier on clients. This way, it was easier for them to make referrals and log in to their accounts, for instance. Lemcke wants to launch the new templates as soon as possible — she also had IT add ways to get faster loading speeds on the site. This is important, she believes, because technology is advancing fast, such as 5G.

The company moved quick on advancements like going paperless during COVID-19 and allowing full remote work for many of their employees. They're big moves, Lemcke says, but they help improve employee recruiting and retention dramatically, something that can't be understated in today's market.

However, these current changes will take some time. So, while she believes wholeheartedly that the work they do out in the field is top of its class, she also wants to ensure the infrastructure supports these changes. That's why the project will take up a majority of 2022.

"What we need to do is what customers are seeing on the lawn with their experience in communication," Lemcke says. "Life has gotten more complicated, even for our franchisees. When you've done things for so many years a certain way and you add technology to that, you have to be careful not to lose yourself in that."

THE
TOP
100

#64

CHRIS ANGELO

CEO, Stay Green

ANGELO ADMITS THAT 2021 was a tough storm to weather at times.

"In my years of experience, 2021 was probably the most trying and challenging year to manage and lead through," he says. "Just because of the unintended consequences of COVID, limited resources and people and inflationary pressures."

One of the biggest hurdles Stay Green had last year was wage increases across all levels of the business.

"Since 2020, we've seen a 20% increase in wages at the labor level," he says. "We're now seeing this year wage inflationary pressure on salary management staff that is in that range as well — anywhere between 20-40%."

Angelo says these increases are also needed to retain employees, who are constantly being enticed by other companies.

"Industries that never used to look at the green industry to recruit from are now recruiting people out of the green industry to come work for them — whether that's distribution, trucking and things of that nature," he says. "That's forcing us to pay more for an account manager, a production manager or branch manager."

Being able to find the right employees has also been difficult Angelo notes, despite Southern California's large labor pool.

"There's a lot of people who didn't come back to the workforce after COVID, so finding talented people is extremely limited," he says. "The labor participation rate has measured extremely low. We still have a lot of people who are sitting out on the sidelines — particularly in California."



the stats

Company:
Stay Green

Headquarters:
Santa Clarita,
California

Locations:
13

Employees:
500

But Angelo is optimistic now that the majority of COVID relief programs and government subsidies are subsiding, that this will turn around.

"Since those have ended, we've had a lot more people come back and work for us," he says. "2022 has been a lot more forgiving in that aspect than 2021."

Yet Angelo says labor isn't Stay Green's biggest issue.

"The most challenging thing in the California market is probably regulatory and policies directed by government," he says. "California leads the country in green initiatives, which obviously impacts landscape contractors like us. We're state no. 1 when they talk about being sustainable and green. We're being legislated to do that."

Angelo cites the state's recent ban on the sale gas-powered equipment (which goes into effect in 2024) is something that will make a major impact.

"It's a challenge most California contractors will have to address and overcome," he says. "It's requiring us to get more familiar with battery-operated, handheld equipment and try to figure out how to charge this equipment while we're out in the field because logistics are a problem when traveling from place to place in traffic."

But Stay Green is ahead of the curve. The company has been using battery-powered handheld equipment and alternative fuels for years now.

"Early adopters, such as Stay Green, have fared very well because we've been in front of green technologies and using alternatives for the past several years," he says. "It's not going to be a shock culturally for our organization when it's mandated to do that."

Along with initiatives to stay up on environmental regulations, Angelo says Stay Green is looking to expand outside of the Golden State.

"In 2021 we acquired a small business to expand our geographical footprint,



which led to some of our growth," he says. "We still have a strong desire to grow geographically and diversify our work. Over the next five years, we will be looking at opportunities to get into some other Southwest U.S. markets and adding branches outside of California."

Along with the recent acquisition, Angelo says a strong marketing and lead generation campaign as well as a steady influx of commercial landscape work post COVID has led to the company's growth.

"We were writing more enhancement proposals to clients as there seemed to be a desire from clients to start reinvesting in their properties coming out of COVID," he says. "2022 seems to be a year that clients are opening back up their budgets... they're reinvested in their outdoor environments for certain."

"California leads the country in green initiatives, which obviously impacts landscape contractors like us."



THE
TOP
100

#55

CHRIS MALHAM

President, SiteWorks

AT SITEWORKS, last year was all about keeping the ship steady as the company faced some exciting new changes.

"We didn't really want to grow all that much," Malham says.

"We purposefully wanted to stay steady, and we didn't want the wheels to get wobbly and have to start compromising the brand.

"We had about 2% growth," he adds. "And honestly we were content with that."

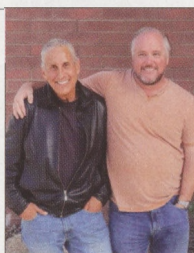
Malham says SiteWorks wasn't looking to double its headcount or increase its fleet but instead remain committed to providing quality service to clients and focusing on work already in the coral.

He also attributes much of the company's growth over the past two years to a boom in business caused by the coronavirus pandemic, leading to the best years the company has ever had.

"COVID was all about get outside, be outside and don't be inside," he says.

But in addition to all the growth COVID brought on, Malham acknowledged that it also led to several challenges SiteWorks is still struggling with — specifically supply chain disruptions.

"Because of the unanticipated growth



Chris Malham, left, stands with co-founder Rob Spoor.



*the
stats*

Company:
SiteWorks

Headquarters:
Chandler,
Arizona

Locations:
1

Employees:
260

that COVID has brought to the industry, the nursery market hasn't been able to keep up," he says.

Malham notes that what's been equally problematic is finding materials for irrigation projects. "The real industry challenge for Arizona is anything with an irrigation component," he says. "It's what's holding off the start of projects."

SiteWorks works directly with several wholesalers in the Phoenix market and even gets preferred buying. But, Malham says that hasn't been enough recently to ensure they have the materials they need at an ideal price point.

"What's happening is, that regardless of how good of a customer we are, there's limited availability of resources and also rations. So, they are getting lesser quantities and the quantities they get, they still have to ration," Malham says.

Malham says inflation has also been a challenge as material costs fluctuate so fast and has caused SiteWorks to change how they buy from their wholesalers.

"When you get a quote, they can only lock in the price when you take the material out of the warehouse," he says. "In the old days, a purchase order would hold that price, but not anymore. The only thing that holds the price is when you physically take delivery."

Because of this, Malham says he relies on what he calls "BNE" or bad news early.

"We tell our customers about this early," he says. "We force them to make procurement purchases right away. The sooner I can tell those wholesalers, 'I got this job and I'll need pipe in October,' then I get in the chute."

Another side effect of this is customers going to bid on projects faster than before. "Clients are awarding work much earlier than they ever anticipated," Malham adds.

But when increases do happen — Malham says SiteWorks isn't looking to make the situation worse for customers by adding on a markup for themselves. "I can't eat the cost increase, but I'm not going to make money on their pain," he says.

Regardless of any supply chain issues though, Malham says 2021 was a banner year as SiteWorks became 100% employee owned.

According to Malham, the decision to enter into an employee stock ownership plan (or ESOP) came after SiteWorks was approached to sell the business.

"We had two major offers and we weren't even for sale," Malham says. Malham says that after meeting with one potential buyer he and Co-Founder Rob Spoor chose not to sell.

"We didn't want to dismantle the asset," Malham says.

Instead, they went in the direction of establishing an ESOP.

"We ended up starting the process for an ESOP in January of last year, and they said it could take upwards of a year...we did it in seven-and-a-half months," Malham notes.

And Malham says he believes the company will continue to be even more successful following the change.

"In 2022 we're already ahead of the plan, and I know we're going to exceed 2021 numbers," he says. "We have upward mobility."

THE
TOP
100

#71_(t)

KEVIN McHALE

Principal,
McHale Landscape Design

FOR MCHALE LANDSCAPE DESIGN, the 40th anniversary of the business included a commemorative coffee table book of all its best projects, significant bonuses for staff and record-setting profits.

The company has continued to grow between 10-15% each year over the last three years.

"2021 was our best year, top and bottom line, of our 40-year history," said Kevin McHale.

"2022 is off to a great start. Although it's only the beginning of the second quarter, our pipeline is 15% ahead of last year... Our goal is to surpass 2021 numbers, continue to reward our employees and look for growth opportunities through organic growth and acquisitions."

And acquisitions are something McHale says continue to be one of the biggest trends in the industry.

"It seems there are many companies out there looking to either sell or buy," he says. "We choose to be on the acquisition side."

But McHale says it's important to be mindful of not just acquiring companies for the sake of it.

"Our biggest challenge, or what we are most cautious about, is that we don't grow



Kevin McHale,
principal of Mchale
Landscape Design



*the
stats*

Company:
McHale
Landscape Design

Headquarters:
Upper
Marlboro,
Maryland

Locations:
6

Employees:
310

too fast," McHale says. "It's easy to get overconfident when business is good and you are growing. Our goal is to make sure our revenue grows faster than our overhead."

When it comes time to acquire, McHale says the company has to be a good fit in order to ensure success. He adds his philosophy for acquisitions is geared more toward "what can we do with this company" rather than what the company is valued at.

"We are careful to make sure we have similar cultures and business philosophies before we engage in discussions with a prospective company," McHale adds.

In addition to its organic growth over the years, McHale Landscape Design can attribute some of its success to a handful of acquisitions of residential maintenance companies in its Maryland market.

"We are attracted to small, well-managed residential maintenance firms," McHale explains. "In addition to continuing to provide maintenance services to their clients, we also offer our design/build services to the new client base. Once we gain their trust, we then have new design/build clients. It has worked out very well for us."

Even with all its recent growth, the company has had to contend with several challenges — mainly related to inflation and supply chain issues.

McHale says it's been especially hard as demand for design/build projects is still high even post-COVID.

"Although COVID has subsided in our market, our phone is still ringing," he says. "It seems people have come to appreciate their home and property after spending so much time at home."

And McHale says there's no one-size-fits-all solution to these challenges.

"Inflation is a demon to deal with for sure. Raising prices alone will not be sufficient," he says.

"We instituted our 2022 pricing in September of 2021 in anticipation of inflation. It has helped but clearly is not enough. Vigilant project management, value engineering and a team approach to doing business must be a part of the strategy to combat inflation."

While it might seem easy to just raise prices and hope that fixes things, McHale says that's not going to cut it.

"Raising prices doesn't happen fast enough to solely resolve increased cost issues," he says. "Cutting costs or quality will only ensure that you lose customers. The challenge to all of us is to find a way to be more profitable to offset the increased costs."

But inflation aside, McHale says he feels his company, and the industry in general, are in a good place.

"Until recently, consumer confidence has been strong," he says.

"Recent world events certainly will affect the overall economy and it will trickle down to us. The short term looks very good for us, but 2023 may present some uncertainty."

"Instability in the world and its effect on commodities such as oil, fuel and construction material will significantly impact us," McHale adds.

LARRY RYAN

Founder/President,
Ryan Lawn & Tree

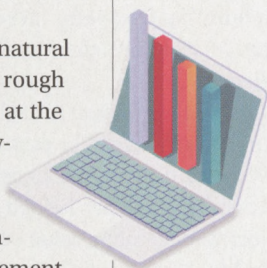
LARRY RYAN FIRST PICKED up a Great Game of Business book 20 years ago purely by happenstance.

He says his wife, Kathy, has a natural eye for finding diamonds in the rough at bookstores. She took one look at the cover — contrary to the popular saying — and decided Ryan should give reading it a try.

The principles of GGOB are simple: Encourage open-book management with employees, and they'll engage more in company culture, work harder out in the field and communicate effectively. Five years ago, Ryan picked up the newer, expanded version of the book, then attended a conference to solidify the principles.

"It's a game changer because it starts teaching business to our people," Ryan says. "It was suddenly like we had 100, 200 junior accountants working."

One of the reasons Ryan picked up GGOB again was because, at the time, they were trying to explain some difficult financial decisions but found they couldn't get the right messaging across.



the stats

Company:
Ryan Lawn
& Tree

Headquarters:
Merriam,
Kansas

Locations:
12

Employees:
420

"We were struggling with financial issues and getting everyone on the same page," Ryan says. "I couldn't understand why they couldn't understand what we were talking about. Well, we weren't talking the language."

Ryan added the GGOB is a huge benefit as they moved to an employee stock ownership plan in 2018. He started the transition into an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP) in 1998, and after a gradual build, he now says it's one of the best pitches to prospective employees: They can become fully vested in the company after six years at the job. One of the companies they acquired in January used GGOB, too, and now they're part of his ESOP.

"People like hitting goals and they like getting rewarded for hitting goals," Ryan says. "It makes them feel like they own the company, even if it's not employee-owned."

As far as implementation, Ryan suggests any interested employers read the book first before diving in headfirst to GGOB. "The book itself will open your eyes," he says. Then, he recommends additional research on YouTube, where experienced GGOB advocates will take viewers through how to do huddles. At Ryan Lawn & Tree, they use every Tuesday morning to bring the branches together to go over the numbers.

He also recommends getting in the habit of paying out bonuses to employees, and showing them clear guidelines via open-book management on how and why they determined who gets paid extra. Ryan says it has helped him attract better people to work at his company, and it creates genuine buy-in from employees.

"We're all going to win when we win," Ryan says, repeating what he tells employees who are looking to earn extra.

Ultimately, Ryan says GGOB discourages employers from keeping financial information hidden, clinging to high profit margins while paying low wages. He says it's time to start talking about open-book management with your people, and he suggests that you can't be afraid to show the profits and losses to your employees.

"We don't want people to give up on learning," Ryan says. "That has made such a difference in the way how people think. If you want your company to grow, your people have to grow."



Larry Ryan,
founder and
president of
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By Kim Lux

A new HORIZON

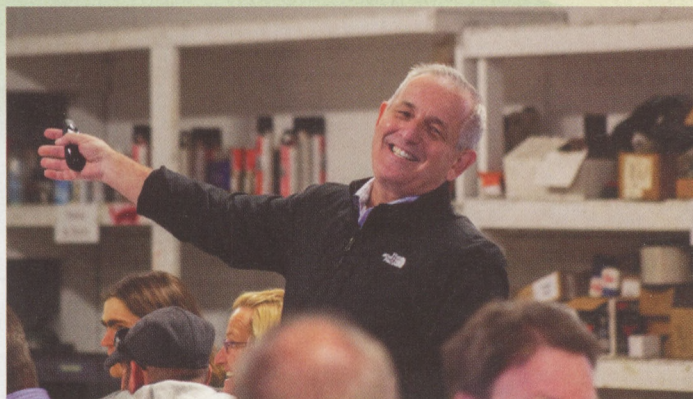
Longtime industry icon and consultant
JIM PALUCH is retiring after nearly 40 years.

Whether it's on stage in front of thousands of industry professionals, or in a small garage full of crew members ready to start their day, Jim Paluch brings the same passion, energy and creativity.

The industry icon started his consulting agency, JP Horizons, in 1988. Paluch has spoken at hundreds of green industry conferences — keynoting sessions for NALP and others, along with hosting educational leadership events and working with the companies who hired JP Horizons.

"Some of my favorite talks I've given through the years, and I've given thousands of them, have been in somebody's maintenance bay where the audience was sitting on mowers and crates," Paluch says. "Because we knew if we could get a few people on the frontlines excited, it would help push the owners to stay engaged."

But after nearly four decades at the helm of the business, it's time for Paluch to pass the torch and retire.



▲ Jim Paluch started his consulting company, JP Horizons, in 1988 and is retiring after nearly 40 years in the industry.

"JP Horizons is still going strong," he says. "I've just decided to step back."

Still, Paluch adds he's leaving with nothing but fond memories.

"We've worked with hundreds of landscape companies through the years," he says. "It's a profession that I've always loved. I think it's one of the greatest professions in the world."

A LEGACY TAKING SHAPE. But before there was JP Horizons, Paluch was working as a landscape architect for YardMaster in Cleveland. "Jim came to work for me in the mid-80s," says YardMaster Founder and President Kurt Kluznik. "We were recruiting a landscape architect. He worked for me for three or four years."

“We learned a lot working with Jim. He was very much a people person and a student of human behavior. Jim would become such good friends with his clients. He would have clients call him and consult with him on naming their kids and crazy stuff like that.”

— YardMaster Founder and President Kurt Kluznik

Paluch says it was during those early days at YardMaster that his desire to open his own consulting firm really started to flourish.

“At YardMaster, I got introduced to consultants,” he says. “I’d sit there and think, ‘This is really good stuff.’ But I’d also see glazed eyes and people staring off into space. I thought, ‘If only we could make this fun and make this enjoyable.’ Consultants should know how to excite, energize and engage.”

Kluznik adds that YardMaster was able to benefit greatly from Paluch working to fine-tune his craft.

“My company was young when Jim joined us. We were learning a lot and growing a lot. It was an exciting time back then as we were adding crews, adding offices, adding salespeople and adding services. He was right in

the thick of it,” Kluznik says. “He did some things within our company that he took and applied in his consulting business, so in some ways, I guess we were a beta test for some of the things he would go on to do.”

Though what Kluznik remembers most about Paluch is his competitive nature.

“I had half a dozen people selling for me at the time and he would do whatever he could to have one more sale or a higher sales volume than the others,” he says. “The better they did the better he did.”

Paluch says he seemed to just have a knack for selling — due much in part to his ability to relate with people on personal levels.

“I had a skill that doesn’t always come to landscape architects, but I



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could just sell," he says. "I was able to achieve some great sales numbers."

Kluznik also remembers early morning games of racquetball with Paluch. Once, the wager at stake was a deck for Paluch's home. Kluznik says he could beat him pretty regularly, but that was one time where Paluch pulled out on top.

"So, he got a free deck out of me early on," Kluznik jokes.

For Robert Maffei, founder of Maffei Landscape Contractors, his first interaction with Paluch changed the trajectory of his business and his life.

"Jim worked with my company for 25 plus years, and it change my life," he says. "From my heart, I don't think I'd be where I am today without Jim Paluch in my life."

Maffei remembers hearing Paluch speak at an event and being immediately impressed.

"Jim came to speak at New England Grows in Boston, and I was just a kid with a landscape company," he says. "It was just incredibly inspiring, so I went up to talk to him afterwards and said, 'You're coming to Cape Cod.'"

FOLLOW THE LEADER. Rorie says it was after Paluch's first visit to his Ohio headquarters that he was convinced that hiring a consultant was the right move.

"Jim came and visited me in Cincinnati and talked about what he was hearing in terms of my issues, and he put a proposal together



► In addition to his consulting work, Paluch has spoken at hundreds of state- and national-level association events.

to come in and begin working on a solution with myself and my management team,” he says. “It was called Circle Q, which was his idea of a quality circle. It was one of his original consultancy products for small businesses to introduce to your team in a systematic approach. It gained engagement and accountability.”

Leadership was a cornerstone of what Paluch, and JP Horizons, taught so many.

“He helped me tremendously in terms of how to teach my people leadership skills,” Rorie says. “And he helped me help them take themselves to the next level.”

Paluch says the foundation of what he told clients was simple — leaders make time to connect with people and engage with them.

“We can’t grow ourselves as leaders if we aren’t willing to do meetings, get together and create a culture within our organization that enables people to feel a part of it,” he says. “That sounds so doggone elementary, but buying into it and doing it is another thing.”

Paluch also utilized collaboration quite a bit as a way to hone clients’ leadership skills.

“He really opened my eyes to the power of not only my state association but also the national association and participating in a lot of networking,” Rorie says. “What it did was show myself, and therefore then my folks, that we could become whatever we wanted as a business versus thinking, ‘You’re never going to get over the next wall or the hurdles that are in front of us.’”

“He’s one of the pioneers of peer groups,” Rorie adds. “He would get your people together at their levels and he’d run programs to increase engagement and accountability.”

◀ Paluch says the key to motivating employees is to have them excited, energized and engaged.

Paluch says these educational retreats would help push clients to start thinking out of the box.

“We started doing our events like Sales Jam, which was all about brining salespeople from



around the country to great places like Fort Lauderdale or Miami or Las Vegas and we’d bring these 100 people together and create an atmosphere where we put the ideas out there and then they debated, and discussed and learned from each other,” he says. “We’d put them through crazy outlandish days. We got people thinking in a different way and that became our brand as JP Horizons.”

Rorie remembers these trips fondly.

“I participated in probably nothing less than 50 JP events over the time I spent with Jim,” he says. “He invited us to everything, and I always sent people to it because I was trying to keep them excited about their job and excited about personal growth within their job, which translated often into personal growth beyond the job.”

Maffei also benefited from these collaborative events along with one-on-one guidance from Paluch.

“Jim came to my company, and not only did he inspire my team, but he gave us cutting-edge information that most folks weren’t utilizing,” he says. “Jim was bringing advanced concepts, like lead management, to the green industry in a way that it hadn’t been done before.”

Maffei says Paluch understood landscapers on a deep level, which allowed him to tailor his consulting to them. He adds that it led to such tremendous growth for his company, which he has since sold.

“He helped me take my company from \$2 million to \$12 million and more,” Maffei says.

Paluch recognizes that what he was asking of companies in terms of leadership weren’t



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easy changes to make. But those who stuck with it reaped the benefits and those who couldn't make the commitment to change struggled.

"Being able to stick with it can be a challenge," he says. "For all of the great companies we've worked with over the years, there are still those who struggled — who aren't around and didn't make it. Because we couldn't establish a sense of patience or process."

A PASSION FOR PEOPLE. But Paluch says leadership, growth (both financial and personal) and success aren't anything without people — something that he always focused on.

"My interest has always been in people, and how do we take this person, whether they're the owner of a company or it's their first day on a mower, and build them up," he says. "Our whole idea was how do we connect people with people. It's not so much about all the great wisdom and knowledge that sometimes we consultants think we have...it's about getting people thinking and getting them to talk and communicate."

Maffei says it's that mindset that made Paluch such a pillar within the industry.

"Jim was never really about the money; it was about the idea," he says. "He was about helping people get energized and grow."

"The biggest thing he taught me was it's about people first," Maffei adds. "He taught me to not be afraid to build an organization and believe in the people and challenge those people and take responsibility for their success."

Maffei notes he wasn't the only one inspired by Paluch. He recalls Paluch motivating everyone from upper management down to hourly crew members.

"He changed lives in my company," he says. "He spoke to field guys who he impacted and changed their lives. I can name at least five guys from my initial H 2-B class in the early 2000s that now own their own companies. I guarantee Jim Paluch had more to do with that and creating a spark within these guys than I ever did."

Kluznik says Paluch's caring nature has always been evident. "We



“Our whole idea was how do we connect people with people.”

— Jim Paluch

learned a lot working with Jim,” he says. “He was very much a people person and a student of human behavior. Jim would become such good friends with his clients. He would have clients call him and consult with him on naming their kids and crazy stuff like that.”

Rorie says that in addition to being a trusted advisor, Paluch has always been a dear friend.

“Coincidentally, we’re both the same age,” Rorie says. “When he came to see me, we were going to dinner every night and you’d be covering kids and business and relationships at home and all kinds of stuff. It was a valuable friendship and resourceful relationship for all of my 30s.”

He adds that it’s been nice reaching milestones right alongside Paluch and being able to share the experiences.

“He has grandkids now, and I have grandkids now, so we’re both in that lane and that’s exciting as well,” Rorie says.

REFLECTING ON A ROCKSTAR. With so many close friends after years of networking, a party was held recently in Boston to commemorate Paluch’s distinguished career.

Those who know him best believe that Paluch’s mark on the industry will be an everlasting legacy.

“He’s turned into a little bit of a rockstar in the industry. He’s brought a lot of energy to what he does,” Kluznik says. “The land-

scape industry can be a fairly conservative group of people, and Jim pushes people beyond their conservative comfort levels. He brings an energy and an appreciation for people.”

Rorie agrees, saying he’ll be remembered for bringing the leaders of the industry together to learn and evolve.

“Jim is one of the most well-known names in the industry. He was instrumental in the initial networking and event gatherings...it was super valuable,” Rorie says. “I think Jim promoted the growth, professionalism and leadership that the industry so lacked 25 years ago. There wasn’t another place that was working on your behalf to support you and challenge you more so than JP Horizons.”

Yet retirement isn’t slowing Paluch down he says — just taking him down a new path. This path will include plenty of time with his wife, two sons, daughters-in-law and grandkids.

“I’m going to get good at oil painting if it kills me,” Paluch adds. “I enjoy painting landscapes and spend a lot of time doing that.”

Paluch says he’s been incredibly lucky to have the career he has but is ready for what’s next.

“Retirement is a process, and it doesn’t mean you get up in the morning with nothing to do,” he says. “It’s about getting up and thinking, ‘How can I make a difference?’” **L&L**

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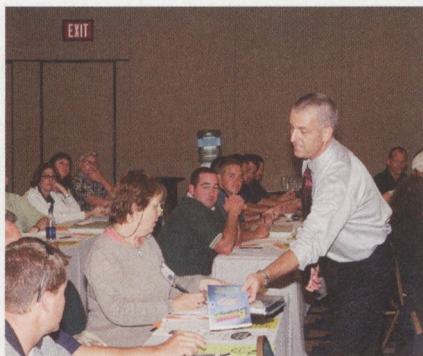
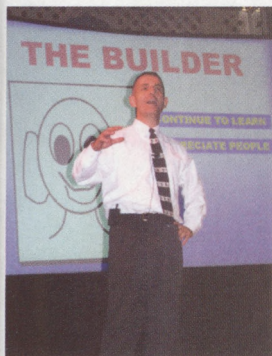


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Paluch says he's reflecting on his career with nothing but fond memories.

By Kim Lux

careful consideration

Selecting a customer relationship management software is a big deal, and plenty of factors should weigh into the decision.



While software in any form is an integral part of running a successful business, selecting the right customer relationship management (CRM) or accounting software can be a strenuous and often personal process.

Finding a software that fits the needs of your company now, and in the future as it continues to grow, should be the ultimate goal.

And there are several factors to take into consideration when making the switch to a new system or diving into the realm of software for the first time.

MAKING THE SELECTION. General Manager John Patterson, of the Pennsylvania-based Grasshopper Lawns, says the company has been using the same CRM system for practically a quarter of a century.

"We've been using our customer management software for over 20 years — maybe closer to 25 years at this point," he says. "We live and die by it."

"For us being a small company, it's all about time savings. Where it used to take five to 10 minutes every stop to fill out paperwork, now it's done in two to three minutes."

— MATT BOHN, BRIGHT WATER ILLUMINATION & IRRIGATION





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Patterson notes the best thing about the software is it's always evolving and forcing the company to keep up with the times.

"There's a lot more features to it now and it really keeps up with technology," he says. "It's always progressing."



John Patterson

The Grasshopper staff uses the CRM for everything from remote estimates to inter-office communication, note keeping, add-on sales, mass communication, marketing opportunities and more.

The company utilizes a very popular software brand for its needs, and Patterson says working with a big corporation has a few advantages — particularly the chance to connect with other businesses using the system.

"I like that they have a broad, universal appeal," he says of the brand. "Because of that, we can touch base with other com-

panies to and share and ask questions so that we can learn from each other as well.

"If you pick something that's only for one (market) you don't have all those options," Patterson adds.

Matt Bohn, president of Bright Water Illumination & Irrigation, in Maryland, employs the same tactic. When he and his wife started the business in 2011, they chose to go with a very popular accounting software.

Because it's such a well-known system, Bohn says it's easy for him and everyone else to use.



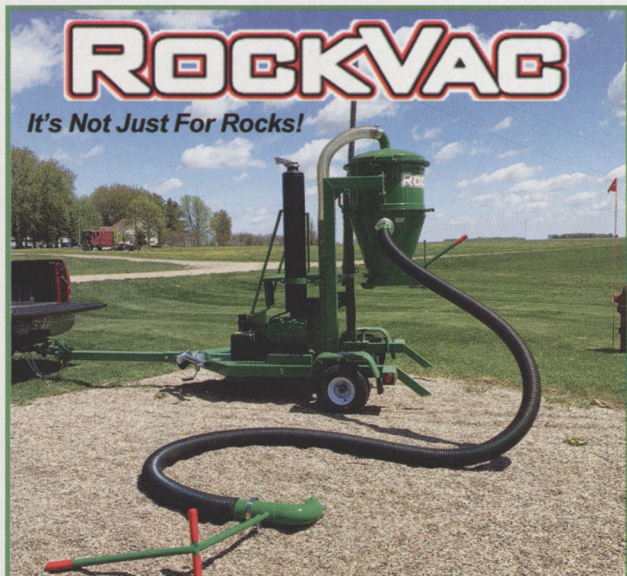
Patterson says to look for a software company that is easy to communicate with, which makes solving problems easier.

"It's kind of the gold standard in the accounting world," he says. "Every accountant that I know is extremely familiar with it. It's what they recommend to all their clients."

Also, it's a web-based system so sharing information is even easier.

"What I really like about it is the accountant can dial it up and see everything live," Bohn says. "That's a huge benefit to us. It's a big timesaver. He's 45 minutes away from me, and being a small company, I don't have time in my day to pull reports, send

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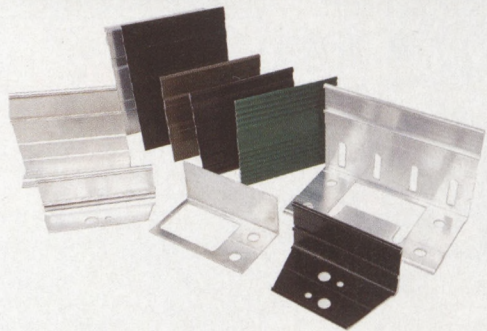


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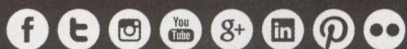
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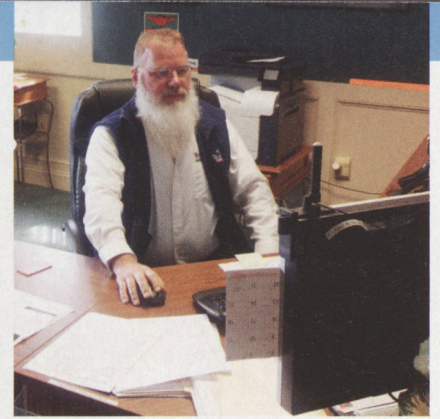
them to him and be real hands-on with it. Whatever information he wants, he can pull up and it's at his fingertips."

Yet when it came time to choose a CRM, Bohn wanted something more personal.

"We didn't just want to be a number to someone," he says. "My wife and I both had experience with other software companies and their support was minimal at best. They're so big they just treat you as another number."

Bright Water is structured through three primary segments — irrigation, lawn care and pest control. Bohn says he spent a long time researching software that would blend all these segments together.

"We'd been shopping around, and we found someone who was good with lawn care stuff, another who was good with irrigation and another for



pest, but we really couldn't find anybody who was good with all three," he says.

Bohn wound up choosing a small software business that's primarily utilized by pest control companies.

"We ran into them at a recertification seminar, and they were really willing to work with us," he says. "They were a small growing company just like we are. They were very happy to help us adapt our business model into their software."

Not only was the personal service a major factor in Bohn's decision, but he says the all-in-one pricing was also a selling point.

"What really helped us in the decision-making process was the price," he says. "They charge us one price for everything. Some of the other companies had a price for one thing and then another for a different module, and for this and that, and the number just kept growing and growing."

GETTING IT GOING. After selecting a software comes the implementation process. Something that Bohn and Patterson admit can seem daunting and takes thoughtful planning.

Bohn's advice is as simple as Nike's slo-

ABOVE PHOTOS: Plenty of hands-on training will assist employees in getting comfortable with the new software.

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gan — just do it. He says take the time to input all of the data at the beginning instead of just adding to it while you're trying to utilize the software.

"Onboarding is never smooth and as easy as you'd hope," he says. "My wife spent a ton of time working with it and getting the data inputted correctly."

Plenty of training is also important, according to Patterson.

"Be prepared because it's going to take some time," he says. "You'll want to have a plan for the changes and the training and the follow-up. If you jump in without being

ready for all of that, it'll be a challenge."

Recently, Grasshopper upgraded to the latest version of their CRM system. Patterson says training was rigorous but needed to get everyone comfortable with the changes.

"We recently upgraded from one version to the latest one. The big change there was it went to a web-based program, which has a lot of convenience since you can use that anywhere you're at," he says. "They gave us some online training that we did last winter as prep."

Additionally, Patterson says Grasshop-

per makes use of retreats and conventions hosted by the software company.

"They have a convention every year in Florida, and we sent some employees down to it to ask questions and pick up more tips," he says.

Bohn says he didn't face much pushback when it came to training. He adds that his employees really like the CRM as it's improved their efficiency.

ABOVE PHOTOS: CRM systems can save valuable time when it comes to on-site reporting.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GRASSHOPPER LAWN



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"Everyone who uses it likes it," he says. "It makes their job easier. And when you can give them something that makes their life easier, the buy in happens."

But if the buy in isn't happening as fast as you'd like, Patterson says practice makes perfect, and that patience is a virtue.

"Upgrading always comes with its own challenges," Patterson says. "Be prepared to work through all the quirks. You have to be patient."

THE AFTERMATH. Patterson also advises leaning heavily on your software provider not only during onboarding but whenever issues arise.

"You want to make sure you're working with someone who's good at following up," he says. "If someone just sells you software and says, 'go at it,' then that would be tough. You really do need that follow up."

Bohn says anyone looking to implement new software should also keep the time of

year in mind as it takes longer than you think to install correctly.

"If I was going to do a software implementation again I would definitely do it in December," he says. "We got onboard with them at the end of February. I'd never do that ever again. We were getting ready to jumpstart our season and we ended up spending way too much time, and way too many late nights, trying to get everything up and running to make sure we were good to go in time."

Bohn adds that more so today than in the past, it can be easier for landscaping companies to get caught up in the latest and greatest software, and purchase more than they need for their size business. He advises using software only where you can clearly determine it's return on investment.

"Ten years ago, guys were going broke buying a ton of trucks and equipment and shiny things. Today, I got a lot of friends in the business who are spending a ton of

money on software and gadgets and computers. I don't think anyone really looks at it to see if it makes them the money they spent," he says.

Additionally, Bohn says time is money. So, software that can improve efficiency is also a good thing.

"For us being a small company, it's all about time savings," he says. "Where it used to take five to 10 minutes every stop to fill out paperwork, now it's done in two to three minutes. In the day that's getting me an extra couple jobs done. And for me, that's how we justify our technology purchases."

Patterson adds that he sees value in the company's CRM through several lenses — one being that it highlights mistakes and helps the company realize its own potential.

"We've had ups and downs, but the positives definitely outweigh the negatives," he says of using software. "It gives you a lot of insights into areas you can improve upon." **L&L**

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Bayer COR3 Programs Offer New Control Strategies for Difficult Lawn Pests

By Todd Lowe, Bayer Green Solutions Team

Southern chinch bugs are the most damaging pests on St. Augustinegrass turf. Chinch bug nymphs and adults have piercing-sucking mouthparts that injure turf by withdrawing sap from leaf, sheath, crown and stem tissues. In southern states like Florida and Texas, multiple generations can occur, and lawn care operators often treat for chinch bugs regularly from spring through fall.

What are the symptoms of chinch bug feeding?

Initial symptoms include a reddish-purple discoloration of the leaf blade margins followed by yellowing leaves and thinning turf. As the populations grow and feeding intensifies, plants turn straw-colored and resemble drought symptoms, but no amount of irrigation or fertility will bring life back to the grass. If left untreated, large swaths of turf decline and plant death can occur. Turfgrasses grown on south-facing slopes are at highest risk of decline because of the full sun exposure.

What does Bayer recommend for effective southern chinch bug control?

A programmatic approach, including combinations of effective insecticide groups, is

recommended for season-long southern chinch bug control.

Bayer programs include:

- **Barricor® SP**, a new formulation of deltamethrin (type II pyrethroid), whose formulation provides activity where the pest resides and feeds.
- **Tetrino®**, a new diamide that offers longer residual and superior broad-spectrum insect pest control.
- **Merit®**, a cornerstone product for lawn care, that when combined with Barricor offers longer residual and reduced pyrethroid use.

How does the Bayer chinch bug program compare to current insecticide options?

Standard season-long southern chinch bug programs often include frequent applications of inexpensive bifenthrin, along with an application of clothianidin during peak pest pressure. Research has shown that Bayer programs can provide the same level of control as standard programs, while reducing pyrethroid use and improving resistance management.

Bayer's southern chinch bug programs provide proven season-long control of a broad range of turf pests. Tank mixtures: The applicable labeling for each product must be in the possession of the user at



the time of application. Follow applicable use instructions, including application rates, precautions and restrictions of each product used in the tank mixture. Not all tank mix product formulations have been tested for compatibility or performance other than specifically listed by brand name. Always predetermine the compatibility of tank mixtures by mixing small proportional quantities in advance.

Do the COR3 programs control other important lawn pests?

Yes, COR3 programs also control caterpillar pests such as fall armyworms and sod webworms, as well as grubs and billbugs.

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A close-up photograph of a southern chinch bug, a small insect with a white and brown patterned back, perched on a green grass blade. The background is a blurred green field.

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MULTI-TASKING MOWERS

EASY-TO-USE **MOWER ATTACHMENTS** PROVIDE A WAY TO DELIVER MORE SERVICES MORE EFFICIENTLY AND PROFITABLY.

By Gregg Wartgow



There are a wide variety of lawn mower attachments available, from blowers, brooms and blades to sprayers, spreaders and stump cutters. For the typical lawn maintenance crew, a handful really stand out for their potential to deliver essential services more efficiently.

INCREASE OFF-SEASON UTILITY. Scott Hord, owner of Hord Landscapes in Campbellsville, Ky., began using a dethatching attachment last year. Yes, the implement does an excellent job of dethatching. But more importantly, it helps save a lot of time.

"We use the dethatcher with our zero-turn bagging mower, so everything gets sucked up as we go," Hord says. Prior to purchasing the attachment,

Attachments like this tow-behind plug aerator can help make faster work of larger, more wide-open areas.

Hord used a dedicated walk-behind dethatcher. It did a fine job of dethatching but left a mess all over the lawn that the crew had to deal with later. That took a lot of extra time, not to mention fuel for the bagging mower.

Working with cool-season grasses down in central Kentucky, Hord says dethatching services are provided in both the spring and fall. He prefers the fall. "In the spring, dethatching has a tendency to open up sunlight and air to expose weeds," Hord explains.

Another advantage of dethatching in the fall is that crews aren't mowing as rigorously. Hord can set up one of his mowers with the dethatcher, which attaches to the front of the mower deck, and leave it there for the entire fall season. "The dethatcher also helps dislodge wet, matted-down leaves," Hord adds. "Then our bagging mower can suck them right up with the thatch, leaving the lawn looking nice and clean with a lot less effort."

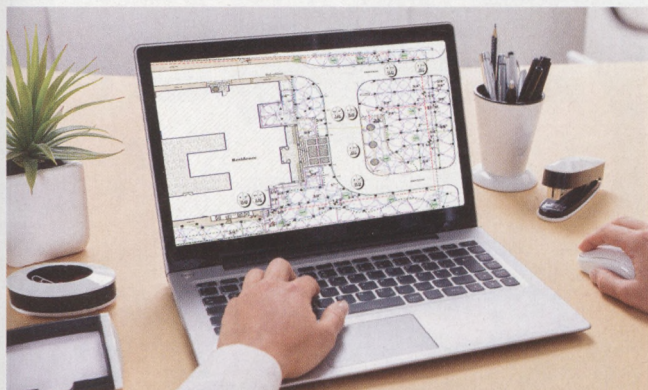
Hord has realized one more benefit of switching from a dedicated dethatcher to an attachment. An attachment doesn't have its own engine, and that means a lot less maintenance. "About the only maintenance you might end up having to do is replacing a spring that might break," Hord says. Additionally, it's important to make sure the casters and other key areas maintain proper lubrication as outlined in the owner's manual.



Fran Meister attaches a 42-inch slicer seeder to his zero-turn mower to create a fall overseeding workhorse.

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Fran Meister, owner of Fran's Mowing & Snow Removal in West Liberty, Ohio, has discovered another attachment that lends itself well to the fall season. He began using a Verti-Slicer with a seed box a couple of years ago to transform one of his zero-turn mowers into a fall overseeding workhorse.

"We like to use this attachment on our smaller properties," Meister says. In the past, he used a 5-foot seeder that attached to the rear of a compact tractor. That obviously couldn't work on smaller properties. For the smaller properties, Meister used a 24-inch walk-behind seeder. "It was a nice machine, but running it was very labor-intensive," Meister says.

Meister now utilizes a zero-turn mower that can accommodate up to a 48-inch deck. He removes the deck and connects the 42-inch seeder, making this setup ideal

for smaller to mid-size lawns. "It's easy to attach to the mower and only takes about five minutes," Meister says. "It's also fairly easy to operate for someone who can already operate a zero-turn." Application rate is set with a dial, and the agitation and depth are controlled via toggle switches.

INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY DURING THE GROWING SEASON. While overseeding is generally done in the fall, Meister sometimes uses his seeder attachment in the early spring when the grass is still dormant. This allows him to get a little more productivity out of a mower that would otherwise be sitting in the shop waiting for the grass to start growing.

Down in Georgia, Hal Pruitt utilizes his mowers to provide early season dethatching. He attaches his lightweight, 30-inch



Scott Hord attaches spray tanks to some of his zero-turn mowers so operators can spot spray as they mow.

dethatcher to the rear of a zero-turn, and sometimes even the rear of a sulky on an intermediate walk mower if yard access is very narrow. Either way, the dethatcher does an efficient job of getting lawns prepped for the growing season.

"This has been a great tool when doing lawn renovations on smaller lawns," says

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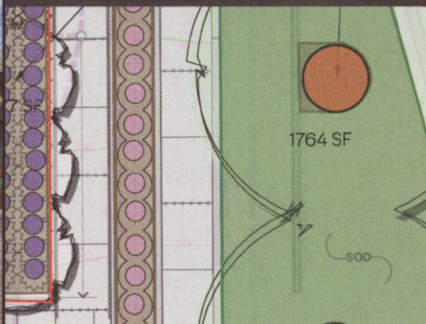
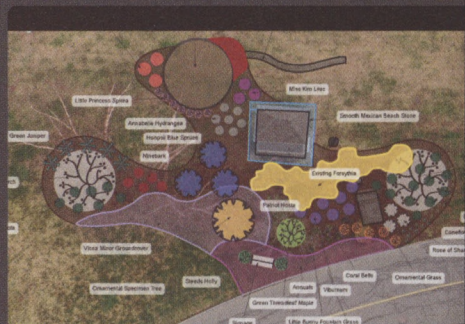
Pruitt primarily uses the aerator attachment in the spring on bermuda and zoysia, and then again in the fall on fescue. Maintenance is minimal because there is

66

IT'S ALL ABOUT TIME MANAGEMENT.

When we need to go mow a lawn, we already have our tank mix and sprayer on the trailer. **ALL WE NEED TO DO IS CONNECT THE SPRAYER** to the mower when we're at the jobsite and we're ready to go."

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no engine. "You just attach the aerator to the riding mower and fill the drum with water," Pruitt explains. "We do need to make sure the point of connection remains lubricated, but that's about it. Just from normal wear over time, a tine might break off at some point. You can usually weld one back on if you want. I just went ahead and

bought a new aerator because my first one lasted 15 years."

Backup in Ohio, Meister has found some additional attachments that help keep some of his other mowers busy all year.

On select properties that require rough-cut mowing or have steeper hills, Meister mows with a 4WD articulating tractor. To

get more use out of it, he has purchased a handful of attachments — a landscape rake, aerator and stump grinder — to help deliver lawn care, tree care and installation services all year long. He has even purchased some snow removal attachments to tackle driveways and sidewalks during the winter months.

Renting these and other attachments is something Meister would like to do more often if he could.

"Our local dealer has retired, so our nearest dealer is now a couple hours away," Meister says. "We've decided to purchase the attachments we currently have because renting really isn't practical anymore. That's OK because we get a lot of use out of them, and they improve our productivity."

In Kentucky, Hord also uses a mower attachment to boost growing-season productivity. A chemical sprayer attaches to a zero-turn's deck, enabling mower operators to double as lawn care technicians, so long as they've obtained the proper state licensing.

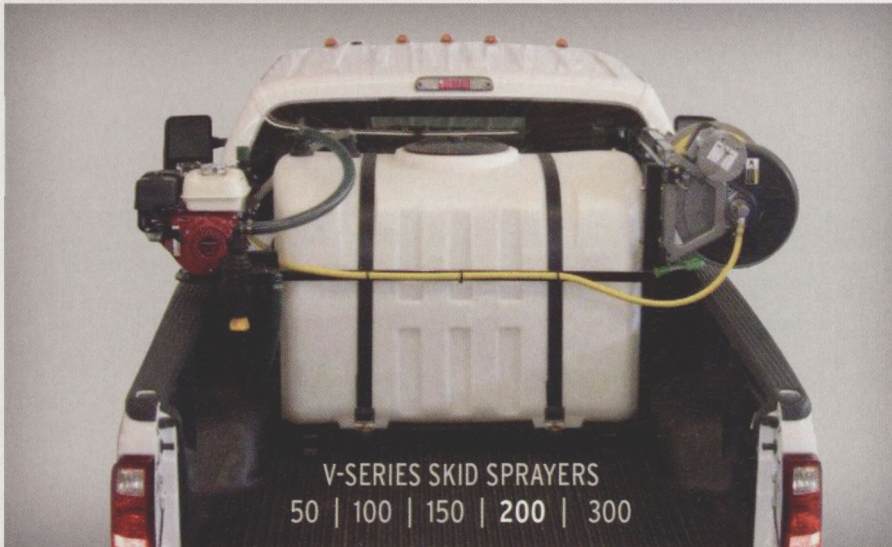
"It's all about time management," Hord says. "When we need to go mow a lawn, we already have our tank mix and sprayer on the trailer. All we need to do is connect the sprayer to the mower when we're at the jobsite and we're ready to go."

Hord's lawn care crews still use a dedicated stand-on sprayer for their primary treatments. The spot sprayer attachment simply gives maintenance crews an efficient tool to deliver targeted applications in between those primary lawn care visits.

"We've been using this setup for about three years now," Hord says. "If a mower operator notices something that needs to be sprayed, he doesn't have to jump off the mower to run get a sprayer. We use it a lot for spraying fence rows and gravel areas. It saves a lot of time."

When it comes to using lawn mower attachments, most contractors will tell you it is largely about saving time. It's also about saving money, simplifying preventive maintenance and increasing mower utilization. And most of all, it's about delivering services better, faster and more inexpensively, which benefits both the landscape company and its customers. **L&L**

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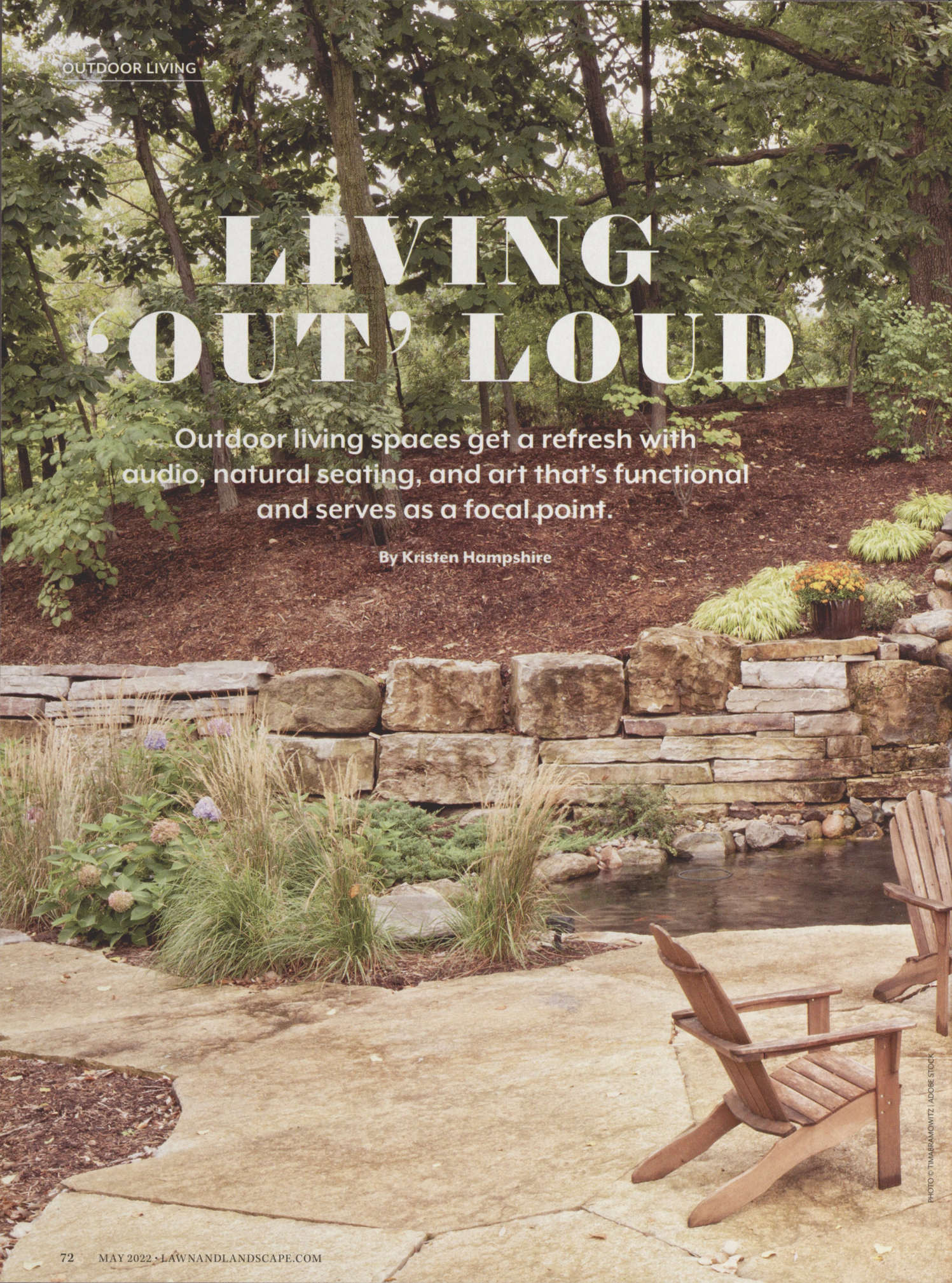


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LIVING 'OUT' LOUD

Outdoor living spaces get a refresh with audio, natural seating, and art that's functional and serves as a focal point.

By Kristen Hampshire





Experts say demand for elaborate and unique outdoor living spaces isn't slowing down any time soon.

OUTDOOR LIVING

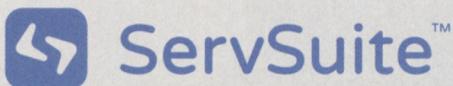
Outdoor living is a focus for many after a couple years of working, entertaining and “staycationing” at home. So it’s no surprise that when Brandon Granger offers clients an opportunity to literally crank it up a notch, they’re all in.

In 2018, he became an outdoor audio supplier after stumbling on the company’s booth at an industry tradeshow. “I immediately fell in love with it, and every opportunity we have to demo the system with clients — as soon as you turn it on and show them how easy it is to operate, they fall in love with it,” says Granger, president, Granger Landscapes, Florence, S.C.

Audio is one more way for homeowners and property managers to enhance the outdoor experience. “It goes well with our landscape lighting offering because the installation is similar,” Granger says, adding that the company’s “demo truck” stopped at his business to train the team. And he bought a demo kit so he could “hit



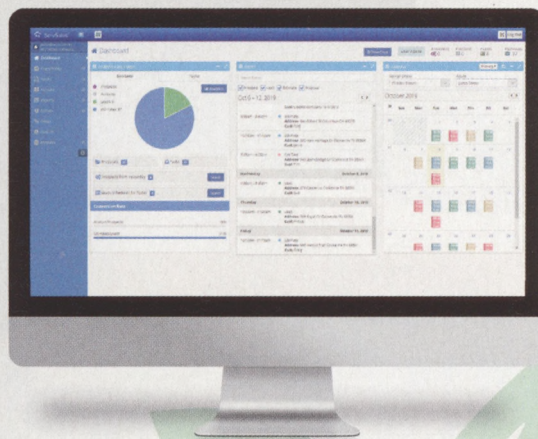
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OUTDOOR LIVING



Providing outdoor audio installation can be a natural fit for companies in the design/build space.

the ground running," but there are plenty of times when the mere suggestion of outdoor audio seals the deal, no demo required.

"I was on a property where they were building a new pool and I just mentioned it and they said, 'We want that. Sign me up,'" Granger says.

The system complements all of the patios, fire pits, outdoor kitchens and seating areas Granger Landscapes has been building, and with greater intensity since the pandemic. Introducing an attractive add-on is one more way his company can be a full-service provider.

While Granger doesn't sell outdoor furniture or accessories, he does work with clients to plan seating spaces and offer suggestions. "We have one or two suppliers we work with that we direct clients to," he says, adding that the abundance of outdoor furniture available online, in garden centers and large retailers can be overwhelming for clients, so supplying some ideas always helps.

But furniture isn't limited to Adirondack chairs and patio dining sets. Broccolo Tree & Lawn Care in Fairport, N.Y., also operates a garden center, where guests can find handcrafted stone benches. Plus, the company has been installing natural outdoor playscapes with natural stone and wood serving as sit spots.

Overall, CEO Laurie Broccolo says, "There is more interest in these outdoor spaces at school and home, and people are looking for something different."

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Some of the trends contractors are seeing include an interest in utilizing natural materials, like stone, to create tranquil gathering spaces.



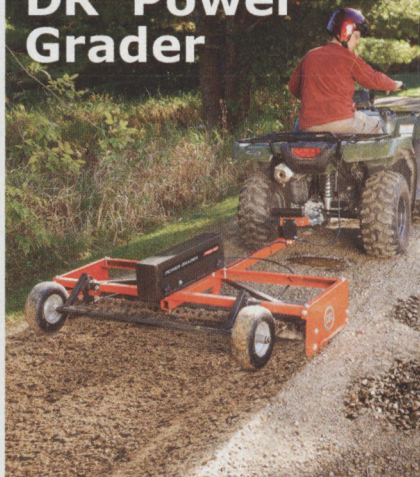
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FUN & FUNCTIONAL INSTALLATIONS

Indeed, “different” can create a big impact in small outdoor spaces and add character to outdoor living areas. Broccolo Garden Center started introducing consignment artwork to its store several years ago — metal sculptures in plant and flower formations, stone fountains, fire and water features, and functional pieces like the natural stone benches.

“We’re very much in tune with finding out what the customers really wants so we can design and build a space that works for them,” Broccolo says, adding that projects might begin with a meandering walkway and evolve



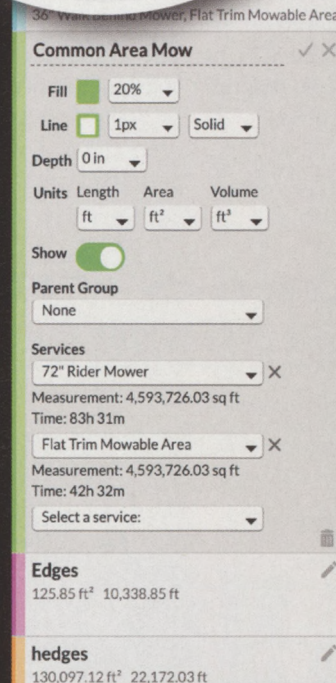
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OUTDOOR LIVING

into, "Could we create a sitting area here to add more interest?"

And this is where the outdoor artwork can come into play.

"Having a few art display pieces has helped our sales," Broccolo adds.

Plus, creating the art has become a hobby for her husband, Albert Broccolo, co-owner, who has a mechanical engineering background. When a client with an especially tight backyard space requested fire and water be included in the design, a sculptural solution delivered both.

"He took a container and was able to create it so water drips over the side into a basin and there's a propane tank for the fire," Broccolo describes of the all-in-one innovative piece.

Adding sculptures can enhance a landscape design, especially one that's functional.



"Having a few art display pieces has helped our sales."

— LAURIE BROCCOLO

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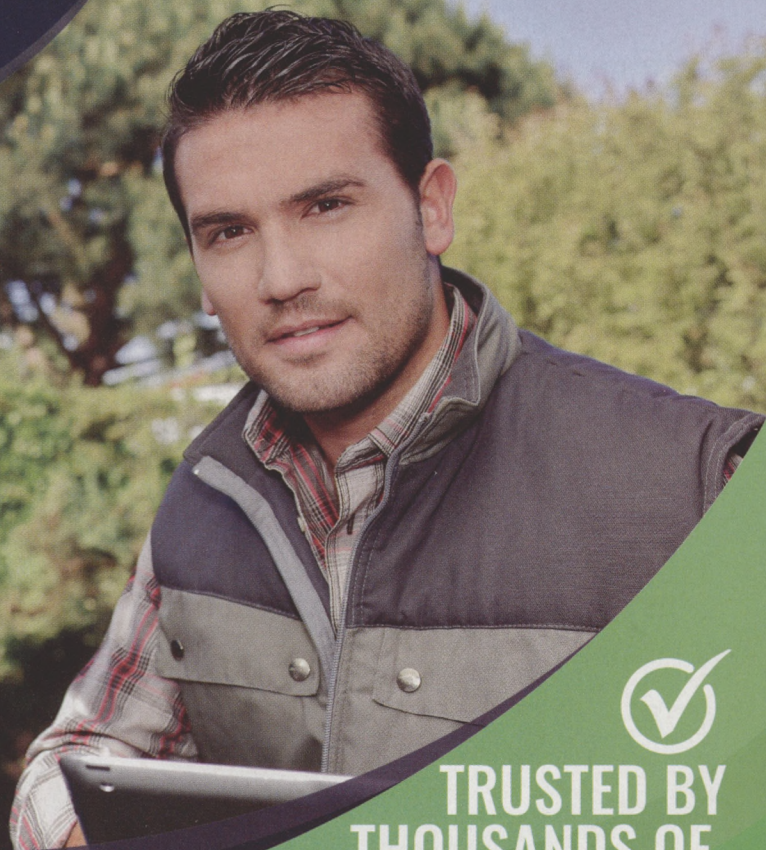
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Creativity is also a big factor when designing an outdoor living space. Broccolo's company has started creating custom, one-of-a-kind pieces for clients to add something different.

The metalwork adds new dimension to gardens and becomes one-of-a-kind focal points in outdoor spaces. For instance, a piece Albert calls "Rock On, Plants," features burgundy-painted metal leaves that reach up like flames with stone "buds."

The Broccolos can custom-design and build feature pieces and this offers clients something unique that sets them apart.

NATURAL MATERIALS AT PLAY

Stonescape with seating rocks in a children's learning garden is "furniture" with a natural bent. "We've seen more interest in outdoor active spaces whether in schools or at home," Broccolo says. "I think COVID spurred on schools wanting outdoor spaces for learning, education and to be creative."

One project Broccolo installed that was designed by a local landscape architect features a canoe converted into a planter. "But kids can sit in it, too," she describes. The garden includes a green wall and customized containers. "As a result, they created an outdoor gardening program and

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It's not just homeowners but schools, too, looking to maximize their outdoor spaces.

we have an employee who goes there once a month. In the spring, we kick it off with how to take care of the plants that are there."

Requests for outdoor amphitheater and courtyards also offer opportunities to literally build functional furniture with natural materials. And nature play programs are growing in popularity and have similar needs. "We create balance beams and seating with logs (and) willow huts," she says.

And as Granger pointed out, sometimes the power of suggestion is all it takes to turn on clients to a fresh design/build feature, furniture, art piece and more. He says, "Since we picked up outdoor audio, people are falling in love with it." **L&L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Ohio.

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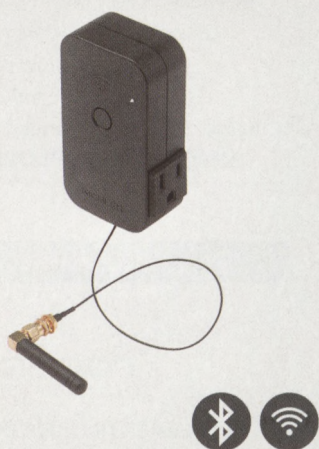


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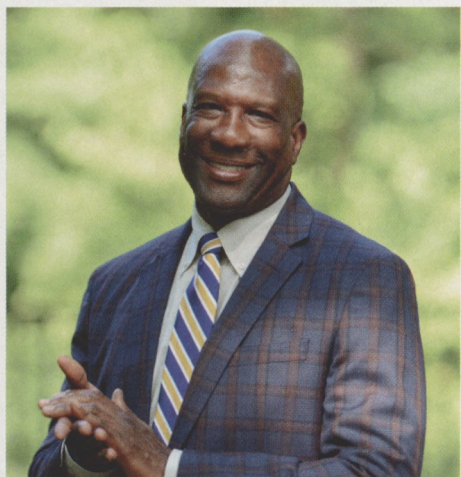
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AN AVERAGE DAY

Maurice Dowell
president, Dowco



When it comes to eating breakfast and being healthy overall, Maurice Dowell recalls an old saying he remembers hearing.

“Someone said we spend our lifetime losing the same 15 pounds. That is so true,” says the president of Dowco in St. Louis. “My solution is to adopt healthy lifestyle choices, and one of them is eating breakfast. Usually fruit and yogurt; occasionally baby carrots at my desk. I tend to nibble at the office. However, I will do eggs, spinach and juice at home. I must have my coffee.”

“Interestingly enough, if I’m cycling in the morning, I will do two boiled eggs and take an Uncrustable with me and protein bars.”

Interviewed by **Brian Horn**

Here's Dowell's average day.

Mornings are quiet where I feed the Koi and prep my cat, Freddie, for his day.

My commute is nine miles, so around 10 minutes. I usually make phone calls while traveling, listen to my current audible, NPR or enjoy reverential quiet. Lately, I've opted for the latter as I'm out of the house in less than an hour.

Generally, I arrive at the office at 7:30 in time for our morning production stretch. I enjoy heading to the shop to see what's being worked on and connecting with my mechanic. Arrival time is when I link up with the people in the field to get their feedback on day-to-day activities. A couple of days a week, I work from home or have irregular hours. This flexible schedule allows the leaders to lead without my intervention and gives me the space I need to plan.

I live by the reports, so dashboard reviews and conversations with leaders keep me abreast of daily issues. I believe that a manager can effectively manage up to three direct reports, so I stay in regular touch with these members comparing notes and reviewing our monthly goals.

I have three coaching sessions a week, one with each direct report. I also have a sales and marketing meeting – usually Zoom – and our weekly leadership meeting. So formally, I am involved in five meetings, averaging one a day.

All of our meetings have agendas, and we submit our reports before them to keep the discussions focused

For lunch, I shoot for 11:30 to avoid the rush if I'm meeting someone. I book 90 minutes; otherwise, I will eat at my desk.

Lunchtime is a window to catch up on social media or allow my mind to drift, something we all need.

In most cases, I visit crews and clients or work from home the rest of the day. Afternoons are an excellent time to prepare for other meetings, plot strategic objectives or work in my yard. I've been known to meet others for a bike ride or take a nap.

Out-of-office time is flexible. There is no designated leave time; however, my commutes are primarily a time of reflection. I tend to detour to inspect a job or if I want to see how our crews are performing. Phone calls, audibles and NPR are where I'm engaged as I commute.

I am a social biker and enjoy my afternoon and evenings with friends putting in the miles, then going to grab something to eat afterward.

I don't have do-not-call hours, as my schedule is so elastic. Social media and other app media come twice a day to minimize distractions. Emails and texts go directly to me.

I know what time I'm supposed to be in bed to get eight hours. I need more discipline to make it happen. I read or listen to YouVersion, the Bible App, a Ted Talk or my current Audible before falling asleep.

I don't usually work from the office on the weekends. I spend time working through projects or focusing on an issue such as H-2B or seasonal changes.

For therapy, there are many other weekends where I take three to five days and escape to visit friends or family. That is my favorite way to recharge. **L&L**

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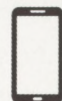
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