

cutthroat competition is understandable.

"It's fun doing those projects because they have the money to do it the right way," Wall says, grinning at the thought of a homeowner spending \$100,000 on landscape installation. "It gives the foreman a great sense of accomplishment."

The company does no maintenance work. But Wall will prepare a fertilizer and spray program for customers who don't know the proper procedure.

"I get upset when an owner invests three-quarters of a million dollars on a project and I drive by six months later and it's brown," Wall sighs. "It's a real shame."

Future plans

Tree Land's nursery carries about \$5 million in inventory. The company's future plans include further specializing in plant materials, with an emphasis on more salt-tolerant plants for oceanfront landscapes.

Down the road Tree Land also plans expanded mechanization. The company already boasts more than 100 pieces of equipment, including

hydraulic cranes, front-end loaders and water trucks. The company has purchased its own service truck.

The company recently opened its second landscape contracting office in Orlando.

The design and contract divisions rarely work together on a job. When they do, the sister divisions often

create masterpieces, like the Radice Corporate Center.

Of course, million dollar figures can be a real motivator to a company. But, when you can landscape for some of the world's richest people, it would just be boring to work any place else.

—Heide Aungst



Landscaping luxurious Palm Beach homes is all in a day's work.

BEST IN THE NORTHWEST?



Rich Akerman, president of Northwest Landscape Industries, used to weigh 267 pounds during his college football days. He's down to a svelte 205 now.

Northwest Landscape Industries is enjoying success in 'The Silicon Forest' by keeping many high-tech clients 'in the chips.'

When you look for quality in the landscape industry, look to the Pacific Northwest, home of Northwest Landscape Industries.

A trendsetter from its birth 15 years ago, Northwest remains one of the nation's finest large-scale operations, thanks to a skilled work force and management with vision.

General manager Jim Wathey and president Rich Akerman became partners 14 years ago and have watched the operations grow with vigor each year. Today, revenues total \$6 million.

"Our overall goal for this company is to be in the \$10 to \$14

million range," says Akerman. "We don't want to get too big because it's fun now. We've gone through hard growth that has wiped some young kids out. Bigger is not always better."

Northwest has main offices in Tigard, Ore., a Portland suburb, and Seattle, Wash., and smaller offices in Portland and nearby Beaverton.

High-tech companies dominate the Portland area (Akerman calls it "The Silicon Forest").

"Here in the Northwest, we have something a lot of people don't realize—water," says Akerman, a native of California's arid San

LANDSCAPE PROFILE



Northwest Landscape Industries maintains the Tektronics campus located along Rte. 217 in south Portland, an area teeming with high-tech operations.



Fernando Valley region. Northwest revenues come from two sources: landscape construction and industrial landscape maintenance.

A unique business

Northwest's growth is a result of attention to the little things.

Like using only reel mowers. "We set the trend," Akerman says, noting that just about everyone else in Portland also uses reels. Northwest has invested in Ransomes 70-inch triplex and Toro 58- and 70-inch triplex mowers.

Akerman makes cold calls on clients to find out how his crews are performing, and watches over equipment efficiency like a mother hen.

Also, the company publishes a quarterly newsletter, "4 Seasons", as an educational tool for existing clients, former clients, real estate developers, universities and trade publications.

On sending the publication to former clients, Akerman says, "We want our past clients to know if they want to come back they can. We want our name in front of them at all times."

At the end of each year, Northwest personnel meet and discuss company strengths and weaknesses. "We pick out our three worst weaknesses and try to make them strengths in the future," says Akerman.

Wathey, Akerman and staff then look at the economy and project what they can sell over the next year.

Northwest workers believe in teamwork, a concept Akerman learned as a 5-11, 267-pound offensive guard for the University of Oregon in the late 1960s and early '70s. Two notable teammates were San Diego Charger quarterback Dan Fouts and NBC football commentator and former NFL star Ahmad Rashad.

Dedication

"Our company is dedicated to providing quality products and services to our clients in the landscape industry," says Akerman.

Northwest is everywhere. Nike,

Another impressive Northwest job—the Oregon Graduate Center research facility in Beaverton, Ore.

Intel, Mentor Graphics, Tektronics—the company has many giant-sized clients. The buildings are sharp, the landscape superb.

"We only offer service and quality—you can't do anything else. People today sometimes don't get a lot of service but if you offer it, they'll spend the money," says Akerman, while preparing an urgent quote for a potential client.

Northwest prepares to better serve clients in the future by beefing

up the company's design/build services.

"We believe the future is in design/build and we're heading that way," says Akerman.

One way he's doing that is by hiring landscape architects as part of the team instead of competing against them. "That way they can have their business. We're not in competition." That attitude has helped growth in the design/build end.—by Ken Kuhajda

Daniels. "We've never been a company to dwell on anything. We just go after something else."

Daniels is a proponent of team management. And he has assembled a good team: chairman Art Davis, vice-president Scott Forrester, secretary-treasurer Scot Davis, contract administrator Dan Tamminga and vice-president David Lindorfer.

"Our people have to be the tops," Daniels says. "We can't settle for less. Those guys have pushed me to my limits. When my alarm goes off at 5:45 a.m., I know there's 30 or 40 managers' feet hitting the floor at the same time."

Top managers at Davis work 10 to 12 hours a day, five days a week. That kind of a schedule might burn out many executives. But not the people at Davis.

Tamminga, who is married and has one son, does like it, though, when things get a little slower. "You have a higher frustration rate with the long hours," he says. "And the family puts a lot of pressure on. But what keeps me going is that I know there's a breather at the end of the

SHOOTING THE MOON

From zero to \$8.4 million in sales in just six years, Davis Landscape Contractors know no bounds.

Contrary to the controlled growth of Northwest, Davis Landscape Contractors of Gaithersburg, Md. has blown the top off its growth chart. Begun in 1981, Davis experienced

total sales of \$8.4 million this past season.

"We haven't set a limit on what 'the moon' is for Davis," notes the company president and CEO Chris



Fairview Park, where Davis crews must cope with turf, tree, shrub and water management.