



THEY CAN'T STAND STILL!

Half of the companies in our expanded survey of landscape management companies responded to a soft market by adding new services in 1990.

by Terry McIver, managing editor

Misery doesn't do so well in the company of professional landscapers.

In 1990, as the financial sector was predicting an economic downturn, many companies went full speed ahead to offer new services to their customers.

An impressive 46 percent of the companies answering our survey of the nation's landscape sales leaders took on services such as golf course grading, irrigation installation, tree care, wall construction, lighting and lawn maintenance.

In the "bad news" department, company presidents remain concerned with the shrinking workforce, "unprofessionals" who give the industry a bad name and rising insurance costs.

Making the golf grade

Carlacio Landscape, Inc., Corona, Calif. is our top contractor for 1990, posting \$25.6 million in gross sales for design/build and maintenance services. Carlacio's design/build sales enjoyed a \$3 million jump over 1989.

Carlacio began to offer golf course grading in 1990, and "the idea has paid off," according to president Klaus Ahlers.

"I think it's a natural progression," says Ahlers. "Golf course clearing has never been done by the company doing the landscaping. (Previously), we've done the planting, and the irrigation; grading has been done by separate contractors. Now, we can provide all the services."

A prudent speculator, Ahlers admits he sees a slowdown in the golf boom of the late 1980s. "We've seen a lot of projects postponed," says Ahlers. "Three projects were ready to go in November, now they're waiting till April."

Close to the vest

Ahlers proposes that while the nation is in an economic lull, it's important to look to the cause.

"I've been through several (recessions)," relates Ahlers, "and each one seems to be different." The difference in 1990's recession, explains Ahlers, is that it's been fueled by a tight lending policy. Banks are still seeing stars

from the S&L knockout, and have become too cautious.

The White House agrees. President Bush's last State of the Union address contained a plea for banks to go forward with good loans.

"Monetary health is the challenge for 1991," asserts Gerry Chauvin, president of **Green Thumb Enterprises**, Sterling, Va. (\$3.5 million in design/build sales). But he also believes that while cost savings are important, quality service must be a priority.

"Any savings garnered from easing overhead costs can easily be lost 10-fold if customer service is jeopardized," warns Chauvin.

Brian Storm, president of **Terrascaping, Inc.**, Birch Run, Mich. (design/build and maintenance gross sales: \$3.075 million), refuses to believe in a recession. "We are led to believe that the sky is falling, when in reality, we are in a reduced growth mode," explains Storm, who echoes the Bush administration's call for aid from the nation's bankers.

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LANDSCAPE TOP 50 MANAGEMENT

RANK	DESIGN/BUILD & MAINT. SALES \$ Millions	EMPLOYEES PEAK/YEARLY	NEW SERVICES	
1	CARLACIO LANDSCAPE, INC. Corona, Calif.	25.6	400/175	golf course grading
2	ISS LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT SERVICES Tampa, Fla.	21.5	650/550	recycling
3	CAGWIN & DORWARD Novato, Calif.	15.4	350/225	
4	THE BRUCE CO. Middleton, Wisc.	15.2	375/220	
5	AMERICAN LANDSCAPE COMPANIES Canoga Park, Calif.	13.7	260/235	water audits, tree care
6	RUPPERT LANDSCAPE CO., INC. Ashton, Md.	13.0	170/50	irrigation
7	GREEN THUMB ENT., INC. Sterling, Va.	12.0	325/125	staff architect, horticulturist, interior plant maintenance
	PARKER INTERIOR PLANTScape Scotch Plains, N.J.	12.0	225/220	
8	KT ENTERPRISES, INC. Chantilly, Va.	10.0	250/65	
9	SOUTHERN TREE & LANDSCAPE Charlotte, N.C.	8.95	165/100	
10	TEUFEL NURSERY, INC. Portland, Ore.	8.0	175/100	
11	THE GROUNDSKEEPER Tucson, Ariz.	7.5	300/200	
12	GIBBS LANDSCAPE CO. Smyrna, Geo.	7.4	80/70	weekly residential maintenance
13	ROOD LANDSCAPE CO., INC. Tequesta, Fla.	7.37	180/150	irrigation
14	MAINTAIN, INC. Dallas, Texas	7.1	200/70	
15	R. GLASS LANDSCAPE CO. Roselle, Ill.	6.0	250/100	
16	GROUND CONTROL LANDSCAPING Orlando, Fla.	5.5	110/90	
17	CLARENCE DAVIDS & CO. Blue Island, Ill.	5.38	130/40	
18	DESIGNS BY LEE, INC. Stamford, Conn.	5.2	80-100/30	increased maintenance
	YARDMASTER, INC. Painesville, Ohio	5.2	26/8	residential maintenance
19	IRELAND/GANNON ASSOC., INC. East Norwich, N.Y.	4.8		
20	LIFESCAPES, INC. Canton, Ga.	4.7	85/55	nursery, exterior lighting
21	CHAPEL VALLEY LANDSCAPE CO. Woodbine, Md.	4.35	90/41	
22	BATISTA LANDSCAPE SERVICE, INC. Redwood City, Calif.	4.3	6/2	
23	HILLENMEYER NURSERIES Lexington, Ky.	4.0	150/100	
24	SMALLWOOD LANDSCAPING, INC. Naples, Fla.	3.7	40/35	in-house arborist, licensed spray technician
25	VARSITY SODDING SERVICE Swoyersville, Pa.	3.5	55/20	
26	NORTH HAVEN GARDENS Dallas, Texas	3.4	80/60	
27	L & L LANDSCAPE SERVICES, INC. Santa Clara, Calif.	3.375	85/75	pest control advising, aquatic consulting
28	DOERLER LANDSCAPES, INC. Lawrenceville, N.J.	3.3	80/30	
29	TERRAIN SYSTEMS, INC. Phoenix, Ariz.	3.25	7/7	
30	PENNINK & ARRIMOUR Bryn Athyn, Pa.	3.2	90/35	
	HUNT & HULTEEN Brockton, Mass.	3.2	70/12	arborist service
	BLAND BROS., INC. West Jordan, Utah	3.2	63/15	topsoil, sand & gravel production and sales
31	GREENSWARD LANDSCAPING Byron Center, Mich.	3.1	50/14	
32	TERRASCAPING, INC. Birch Run, Mich.	3.075	51/6	
33	SOMERS COMPANY OF WISCONSIN, INC. Stevens Point, Wisc.	3.6	30/8	
34	STATILE & TODD, INC. Springfield, N.J.	3.0	23/5	irrigation, site development
	ECOSYSTEMS IMAGERY, INC. Encinitas, Calif.	3.0	135/55	
	GREENSCAPE, INC. Fayetteville, N.C.	3.0	50/30	
35	SKB LAWN INDUSTRIES Tucker, Geo.	2.9	120/65	

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42	CONTRA COSTA LANDSCAPING, INC. Martinez, Calif.	3.0	60/50
	SKANDIA LANDSCAPING Livonia, Mich.	3.0	70/45 nursery
44	VIRGINIA TURF MANAGEMENT ASSOC. Norfolk, Va.	2.3	105/35
45	EVERGREEN SERVICES CORP. Bellevue, Wash.	2.2	70/45 irrigation service and repair
46	DRAKE'S 7 DEES Portland, Ore.	2.05	60/25 residential landscape improvement
	PROLAWN Blue Ash, Ohio	2.05	66/25
48	CLEAN CUT, INC. Austin, Texas	2.0	70/50
	HIVELY FARM & NUSERY, INC. Dover, Pa.	2.0	25/5
	WHITE OAK LANDSCAPE CO., INC. Kennesaw, Ga.	2.0	75/55



Klaus Ahlers: Banks recoiling from S&L mess, lending policies strict.

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"For our industry to continue moving forward," says Storm, "we need to have the Federal Reserve Board allow the economy to continue in a growth mode."

Storm, however, foresees new pressure in the form of more taxes, "to help reduce the deficit and help with the clean-up of mismanagement from the '80s."

Storm agrees with many green industry leaders who believe higher wages are essential. "We need to raise our levels of compensation and encourage young people to look at careers in our industry. If we are going to continue with success, the people are the key."

A mature industry

The Bruce Co. of Middleton, Wisc.

placed fourth in our 1990 survey, with build/maintenance gross sales of \$15.2 million.

Vice-president Arnold Sieg believes the landscaping industry has indeed matured, and he's proud to belong.

"We're more than a 'trade,'" says Sieg. "I can remember 30 years ago, when the saying was that 'anybody could be a landscaper.' (Landscaping) has become recognized as a legitimate force in the (construction) industry."

And as its reputation grows, so do the projects.

"I think you're seeing bigger budgets for landscaping and interior beautification," says Sieg. "And suppliers are recognizing our industry as a major customer."

Managing water

Ahlers says he sees more interest in drip irrigation systems. The company has been conducting a cost comparison between drip and standard irrigation systems.

Ahlers sees a solution to California's water woes: more storage facilities.

"When you look (at possible refinements in) water holding capability, you find that almost nothing has been done," laments Ahlers. "You could get through a drought if you had more storage. There's enough rainfall, just not at the right time."

"When the price for water is prohibitive, you'll see something get done."

"If you put \$50,000 of plants into the ground and then go away, you want to make sure the irrigation works," says Tommy Aiello, president of Rood Landscaping, Inc., Tequesta, Fla.

Rood posted 1990 gross sales of \$7.37 million in design/build and

maintenance. Company maintenance sales (\$2.16 million) nearly doubled.

Last year the company hired a licensed irrigation technician to service the needs of the landscape and maintenance divisions, install bubblers, heads, make small repairs.

The final step in Rood's irrigation plan is to promote water-conserving systems for design/build clients, although on a small scale. "We're not looking to get five trucks going or compete with commercial installers," Aiello explains.

People waste water

"We could have two good days of rain," explains Aiello, "and the next morning, you see irrigation systems running. Those systems could be turned off for a week."

Like Carliacio, Rood is exploring drip irrigation. Aiello says tests have been conducted, "to determine the effectiveness of drip irrigation for lawns."

Irrigation has been incorporated into landscape projects at Pleasant Places, Inc. of Mt. Pleasant, S.C. Co-owner, Guy Artigues, says turn-around time is swift, and he can service clients better.

"With subbing," says Artigues, "we don't have as much control. We have people here who are familiar with (irrigation). Our landscaping designer is also capable of producing irrigation designs."

Pleasant Places (\$1.25 million in gross design/build and maintenance sales) has also opened a power equipment division, to sell and service mowers, tractors, blowers, edgers and sprayers. Artigues' partner, Jody Peele, carries the ball for the power equipment division.

THE BEST OF THE REST

The following is a list of companies with revenues between \$1.9 million and \$100,000 which responded to the survey.

Exotic Flora & Fauna, Ltd., Greenpoint N.Y.
Wheeler Landscaping, Inc., Chagrin Falls, Ohio
AAA Lawn Industries/Color Burst, Atlanta, Ga.
John R. Ross Co., Inc., Dallas, Texas
Chem-Turf/Astin-Russell, Inc., Norcross, Ga.
Coronis Landscaping, Inc., Nashua, N.H.
Zendt Bros., Mt. Clemens, Mich.
Bregenzer's Inc., Alpharetta, Ga.
Mill Bros. Landscape & Nursery, Inc., Ft. Collins, Co.
Pleasant Places, Inc., Mt. Pleasant, S.C.
K.S. Enterprises, Inc., Jacksonville, Fla.
Landscape Services, Inc., Ft. Wayne, Ind.
Four Seasons Lawn & Landscape, Kansas City, Mo.
Greater Texas Landscape Services, Inc., Austin, Texas
Custom Lawn & Landscape, Inc., Olathe, Kan.
J-N-D Co., Inc., Princess Anne, Md.

Natural Resources, Inc., Austin, Texas
C & C Landscape, Tracy, Calif.
Landistar, Inc., Birmingham, Ala.
R. J. Sunday Landscaping, Mitchellville, Md.
General Industrial Contractors, Ft. Worth, Texas
John Lamm of Jackson, Inc. Jackson, Wisc.
Beard Landscape Development, Friendsville, Md.
Andy Gagnon Landscape Contracting, Woodland, Calif.
American Landscape & Construction, Ltd., Iowa City, Iowa
Reliable Landscaping, Inc., St. Louis, Mo.
Inner Gardens, Houston, Texas
M. Snyder's Nursery, Inc., Portland, Ore.
Skoog Landscape & Design, Chadwick, Ill.
Wirth Landscape, Billings, Mont.
Tyler's Landscaping Service, Inc., Rockford, Ill.
Prato Associates, Inc., Burlington, Md.



Lee Mueller: 40,000 door-to-door fliers generate 500 service calls.

Caring for trees

Reliable Landscaping, Inc. of St. Louis, is an example of a smaller company (\$350,000 in gross sales) thinking "service." The company now offers tree injection and wall construction.

President Lee Mueller chose tree injection as an effective way to treat tree disease without spray drift.

"All chemicals go directly to source of the problem," says Mueller, who estimates a 50 percent profit margin with the injection system.

Keystone wall installation has also fit well into Reliable's design/build service.

"We were a small grass cutting operation 11 years ago," Mueller says. "Now we have one crew doing tree work, one doing lawn maintenance,

and another that does sod and keystone walls."

Time-saving service

Virginia Turf Managment Associates, Inc. of Norfolk, Va. (\$2.3 million in sales) provides soil samples for \$10.

"The cooperative extension takes too long," says company president Bill Hoover, "and then it's too late to do anything about the problem." After a \$5000 investment in equipment, the company now tests for nutrients, pH and soluble salts.

Small engine repair is also new at Virginia Turf. "We've got a large metropolitan area here," says Hoover. "When we moved to downtown Norfolk eight years ago, it was a blighted area." Today, says Hoover, six-figure homes dot the revitalized urban area. Hoover's is "a captive audience."

Higher standards needed

Mueller says licensing and enforcement has become more stringent in Missouri.

"Every time the Chrysler plant lays off 5000," relates Mueller, "you've got 250 to 300 people with pick-up trucks, a chain saw, a rake and lawnmower who become instant landscapers and want to put down chemicals and (perform) tree trimming, and all the little things that require skills and licenses."

The St. Louis Arborists Association, of which Mueller is president, is taking care of its own, so that the government doesn't have to. Mueller says the association established an ethics committee to oversee the performance of new licensees.

"When someone wants to join," explains Mueller, "they're on proba-



Brian Storm: "Raise levels of compensation, encourage young people to look at careers in our industry."

tion for a year. We look at their work and talk to their customers. Any time we find someone who has done something they're not supposed to, (such as improper pruning or tapping), we have a talk with them."

Test for competence

"The harder times are, the more people you see with rakes sticking out the back of the truck," says Hoover.

"The one that comes to mind is the guy who had a 55-gallon drum, and a water pump hooked to a gasoline motor. He had four sections of garden hose and a regular garden type nozzle, spraying shrubbery."

Hoover would like to see licensing for general landscaping and lawn care knowledge. "Anybody who calls



Bill Hoover: Wants standard test of general industry knowledge.

themselves a landscaper should have to take a moderate test to show they meet some basic requirements. I prefer it coming from business rather than government. We could help implement a single set of guidelines and testing program, to reassure the public."

(ED. NOTE: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT expanded its 1990 "Top 50" survey to include all exterior contractors listed as members of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America. A total of 115 companies responded; 35 requested we not publish sales figures.)

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Teamwork approach good for business



JoAnn Smallwood: landscape architecture is an art form.



A multi-unit development at Villa Mare, end product of the Smallwood team approach.

The warm climate and reputation of Naples, Fla. as a winter retreat have brought good fortune to Smallwood Landscaping, a company started in 1973 by owner/founder JoAnn Smallwood.

Her approach to landscape architecture? That each step of the design process plays an equal part. Each division draws on the technical and field expertise of the other. Each provides constructive criticism that leads to complete, site specific and cost sensitive designs.

Numerous awards have come Smallwood's way, from the Florida Nurserymen & Growers Association, American Society of Landscape Architects and Associated Landscape Contractors of America.

Three-part process

Employees in Smallwood's architecture, construction and maintenance divisions are cross-trained to insure that everyone recognizes the talents of the other, as well as the constraints, expertise and responsibilities of their respective disciplines.

The landscape architecture division is guided by the belief that design is not static, but rather a three dimensional blend of colors, textures and forms that combine to help create exciting spaces that evolve, mature and change.

The construction and maintenance divisions support the design/build process as the project moves from blueprint to reality.

Plant material is selected based on site-specific qualities.

Maintenance, of course, is a crucial follow-up. Crews

are trained in proper turf care and pruning. Bright color, razor sharp bed lines, and disease-free turf are achieved through preventive maintenance.

Team meetings provide an opportunity for constant improvement and positive reinforcement. Annual maintenance contracts show a 90 percent renewal rate.

Smallwood's mission statement is to "provide superior environmental products and services." Growth and profitability are fueled by dedicated customer service. "The client also becomes a member of the team," says Smallwood; "the client has the same goals as we have."

Building a client network

Paul Drummond is Smallwood's director of business development.

He says the business development approach in South Florida involves more networking than anything else.

"It's going out after new business, meeting with new clients as well as servicing the existing client base," says Drummond, who regularly attends meetings of the Naples Economic Development Council and Chamber of Commerce.

It's a time to "generate leads, talk to existing clients, ask them what else is going on."

Drummond says company designers have one-on-one contact with clients.

"I go with them (to a job site) to make sure the clients are satisfied, that control is being maintained, that we're servicing the client according to his needs."

—Terry McIver □