

LAWN CARE INDUSTRY

Design/build...



**for the
high-end
markets**

**'The industry needs
to...start telling our
clients about their
outdoor living
spaces just like
building architects
tell them about in-
door living spaces.'**

—Gary Kinman

■ Last summer, on a whim, Gary Kinman bought a pony. It was a real miniature—tiny enough, he reckoned, to coax and shove into the family minivan and take home to the kids. Strawberry (the name Gary's two children later gave it) rode to the Kinman household with its wet muzzle poking over Gary's right shoulder.

The arrival of the pint-sized gray, with blond mane and tail, elicited the hoped-for response, delighted yelps from the kids and Gary's two, huge yellow dogs. Never mind that the minivan no longer has that new-car odor.

Sometimes impulsive. Usually outspoken. Never boring. Kinman, 36, with his

stocky, powerful build and square jaw, looks like a boxer. Or maybe a middle linebacker.

He's really a pushover, though. A bonafide softie.

When he claims that his Kinman & Associates regularly designs and builds residential landscapes costing \$250,000 and more, he can almost convince a listener that customers always get the better of him in the process. Shame on them.

"We have a reputation—which, I guess, isn't necessarily good—for being expensive," pleads Kinman. "We're not expensive. For the product we deliver, we're inexpensive—which I can prove by our

financial statement."

A handy market—Kinman's K&A is located in quaint Dublin, Ohio. It's a good town to be doing what Gary likes to do best, top-of-the-market residential landscape design and build.

Just outside of Dublin, which is itself just northwest of Columbus, is golfer Jack Nicklaus-built Muirfield Golf Course. It's a gem, and site of his annual Memorial Tournament. In fact, Nicklaus's new home will be going up nearby soon.

Kinman may or may not get the Nicklaus landscape. But it's the type of residential project that K&A has earned an enviable national reputation for designing and building: the big residential job.

"A small project for us is in the \$25,000 to \$30,000 range. But I think even that's a lot of money and we can do some really beautiful stuff with it," says Kinman. "Certainly we'd like to do more of that, but our problem as a company is that people in our market think, 'Oh, my gosh, Kinman & Associates, they're too expensive and they work on bigger projects.'"

Plant selection and installation. Patios. Walkways. Retaining walls. Decks. Swimming pools. K&A does it all, says Kinman. Or it'll find a top-notch sub-contractor that can.

"Actually, planting is one of the last things we usually do. There is so much more to the business than jamming a bunch of bushes next to a house. I think our industry pushes that too hard," says Kinman. He calls the process "super shrubbing."

"I think we (the industry) need to be putting in more beautiful, front sidewalks, designing home entries that work, installing stone walls that enhance properties. We've got to start telling our clients about their outdoor living spaces just like building architects tell them about indoor living spaces."

One job at a time—Kinman figures K&A has put in over \$30 million worth of

ELSEWHERE

**The benefits
of service,
page 50**

**LCO help their
injured friend,
page 52**

**Is 2,4-D next
Alar scenario?,
page 53**



Project managers Sharon Halldren, foreground, and Julie Taggart see big projects to completion, from initial design to planting.

landscape projects. That's a lot for his small operation that stays so close to home. "I think I almost have enough callouses to prove it," he says opening his rough, workman's hands.

Gary insists size doesn't preoccupy him though. It never did, not even when he decided to start a landscape business almost 14 years ago. He was studying business and finance at Ohio State University then. "By the time I was a senior, I already knew that I wanted a company to put in

the best residential landscapes in the area," he says.

K&A, he insists, is doing just that, in large part, because K&A is a team effort, involving five project managers and supporting office and field crews—even Gary's wife Lori, who works the phones.

As soon as K&A gets a recommendation, Kinman builds a team to work with the client and building architect. Gary's always on the team, along with a project manager. He says he deals with the bigger

client picture, the concept, while the project managers do the actual designs and track construction details.

"I'm kind of associated with every job. I wish I wasn't as much," Kinman admits.

Everyone's busy—Actually, each of the five project managers (three men and two women) may have a dozen landscape projects bubbling at once. They guide each through a 22-step process. They can tell at a glance where each project stands because all are recorded on a huge, white board on the wall in front of their drawing boards.

"We're trying to develop a system where each job will have an on-site project manager as well as an in-house project manager," says Kinman. "Then, everything that we're doing on a project—from the beginning design to the end of the job—is being looked at by two people."

When operational, Kinman thinks this system will meet his clients needs even more precisely.

Then, he insists, his clients will get an even bigger bargain.

"The money they spend with us is like money they invest and get high interest on," he claims.

—Ron Hall

Sell the benefits of service

To win commercial accounts where there are in-house crews, stress cost, efficiency and expertise.

■ Laflamme Services of Bridgeport, Conn. has found a way to convince commercial prospects to switch from in-house crews to an outside landscape contractor. Judith Guido, director of business development and marketing for the 24-year-old company, says persistence has paid off—in the form of new commercial accounts eager to sub out the work. And that's because Laflamme knows how to sell the benefits of what Guido calls "outsourcing." And it's

not a very hard sell when it's done right. Just let the numbers do the talking.

Laflamme's message to mid- and large-sized commercial prospects is simple: it's more cost effective and easier to contract out than to subsidize an in-house crew.

Recent new clients include headquarters for Clairol, Champion Sporting Goods and Aetna Insurance.

Guido says area competitors try to sell the idea, but lose something in the translation.

SHADES of GREEN
AN INFORMATION BULLETIN BY LAFLAMME SERVICES, INC.
AUGUST 1993
VOLUME 3 / NUMBER 6
Eyes On The Landscape

New England, if you don't care for the weather, wait five minutes and it'll change. Well, Mr. Twain, we could sure use a bit of that change right about now. The July stats are in and we received less than two inches of rain for the month, leaving the 1993 season a full six inches short of the norm. This puts us in a bit of a pickle, horticulturally speaking, for the already tough growing month of August. The water company serving the Westchester area has placed a ban on all non-essential water use and

At this time, reducing the use of fertilizers and pesticides needs consideration. The intent is to slow the growth of the plant reducing its need for water and reducing the stress caused by constant mowing or pruning. Furthermore, the application of certain pesticides during dry spells can cause serious damage to the plants they were meant to save. Adjust mowing heights to provide some needed shade to the crown of the plant and the soil surface itself.

overseeds, that allow new seed to be introduced into the soil without radically reworking it. (Many of these are available through rental centers.) If the season takes its toll on your lawn, now is the time to reseed with drought tolerant, disease resistant varieties. Some of the new rye grasses are ideal for this application and require less fertilizer per season to keep them looking green and healthy, an added bonus.

"There are people who have contacted these companies, but nobody told them *why* it would be better (to contract out)," she says.

Laflamme gives the prospect a list of 26 reasons why it makes sense to contract out (see sidebar). Closing a sale was never so easy!

Most of Laflamme's newly-contracted accounts buy all the important landscape services: landscaping, lawn care, flower planting, waste management and snow removal.

Reminders help—As an extra way of staying in touch, the company's single