

LM 100

20 Top Landscape Contracting Firms

Expect plenty of changes before next year's list appears, as the trend toward consolidation continues. (Editors' note: Despite repeated requests for information, some firms have not provided operating data and are not on this list.)

TruGreen-LandCare Memphis, TN

Paul Anderegg, president and chief operating officer of TruGreen-LandCare, reports that revenues for the newly formed TruGreen-LandCare division will reach somewhere around \$550 million for 1999 (those figures include TruGreen-ChemLawn landscape division revenues for all of 1999, plus the TruGreen-LandCare revenues



from March 18, 1999 on, when LandCare USA was acquired by TruGreen-ChemLawn).

Having acquired at least 60 companies through merger and acquisition this year, TG-LC is moving forward on several pending deals through the end of 1999.

Environmental Industries Inc. Calabasas, CA

EII is the leading vertical integration of landscape contracting services that include landscape construction, site development, irrigation, golf course construction, maintenance, tree moving and preservation, landscape maintenance franchises and specimen tree nurseries. Divisions operate from 47 locations/offices nationwide include Valley Crest, Environmental Care, Valley Crest Tree Co. and U.S. Lawns. According to Burton Sperber,

CEO, president & founder, this 50-year old firm expects 1999 revenues to reach \$450 million.

The Davey Tree Expert Co. Kent, OH

\$315 million in 1998 revenues/\$325 million projected for 1999. See under 10 Pioneer Firms, pg. 37.

The Brickman Group Langhorn, PA

Although Brickman's annualized growth rate was 47% for the last year, some of that includes acquisitions made in 1998. This year's rate of internal growth is around 30%, says Scott Brickman, president. He says Brickman had \$145 million in revenues for 1998 and projects 1999 revenues to reach \$175 million. He is concentrating on building internal growth for the immediate future rather than through acquisitions.

Grounds Control San Antonio, TX

Grounds Control is part of Sanitors Inc., which provides both janitorial and landscaping services with total sales of about \$70 million this year. Al Honigblum runs the landscape end of the business, centered in San Antonio. His 12-year-old operation recorded sales of \$15 million this season. The company's business mix is 65% maintenance and about 35% construction. Honigblum says Grounds Control is seeking to grow substantially through acquisition in 2000.

RBI Companies Littleton, CO

This 25-year-old firm is solid in Western construction and landscape design/build markets, bringing 1998 revenues of just over \$56.4 million. Most of RBI's customers are commercial (81%), but a significant number also are municipal, sports and golf services. The firm offers landscape maintenance, irrigation and related services from 10 locations and is on the consolidation path. Rick Randall, president, estimates that 1999 revenues will grow to \$66 million.



Gothic Landscaping Phoenix, AZ

This company has enjoyed significant growth, expanding nearly 20% in each of the past several

years. It has about 950 employees, as well as offices in Los Angeles and Las Vegas, along with one in Phoenix. Vice President Jon Georgio says Gothic generated \$39 million in revenue last year, and projects \$50 million for 1999. He and his brother Michael, president, look for \$59 million in revenues in 2000.

OneSource, Landscape Services Division Atlanta, GA

The 1,200 landscape employees of OneSource, led by Division President Ron Schmoyer, provide landscape design/build and maintenance, golf course maintenance and related services. This fits into OneSource's other services, such as janitorial and renovation work. While 1998 revenues totaled \$35 million, Schmoyer expects more than \$45 million for 1999. Look for more growth in the South and East as OneSource expands.

The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin Inc. Middleton, WI

The Bruce Co. finished a \$26-million year in 1998 and projects revenues of \$29 million for 1999. Services include landscape design/build and maintenance, golf course construction and retail sales. Payrolls for around 225 year-round employees swell upwards of 500 during peak season, Nicholson reports.

American Landscaping Canoga Park, CA

President Mickey Strauss and Executive Vice President Gary Peterson fiercely maintain the independence of their California landscaping corporation against consolidations and rollups, while recording 1998 revenues of \$24.5 million. That may grow by \$2 million in 1999. Working exclusively in the commercial arena, the company has been in business for 26 years. They operate out of seven offices, the newest of which is located in Salt Lake City, UT.

Lipinski Landscape & Irrigation Inc. Mt. Laurel, NJ

Robert A. Lipinski founded this company 23 years ago, and this season it will generate \$22.2 million in revenues—54% design/build, 24% maintenance and 22% other services. Just over half the company's sales come from commercial work. Lipinski specializes in



incorporating custom swimming pools within landscapes. Lipinski, the president, budgets sales of \$25 million for 2000.

The Groundskeeper Tucson, AZ

With seven branch offices and close to 600 employees, The Groundskeeper's growth has been consistent for the last few years, growing at about 15% each year. According to Kent Miller, vice president, it introduced tree service to the Tucson area about three years ago. The Groundskeeper produced about \$22 million in revenues for 1998, and close to \$25 million has been projected for this year. Miller expects to reach the \$28 to \$30-million range in 2000.

Lewis Landscape Design Las Vegas, NV

Lewis Landscape, owned by Scott Lewis, started as a 100% residential design/build firm and became 100% commercial this year. Last year's \$18 million in revenues is on track to become \$20 million as Lewis continues on a 60% average growth curve. The firm designs and installs high profile projects, forming alliances with national master-plan community builders. Lewis, Jerry Bowlen and Bob Bracken are the team that makes this approach work. The firm operates in Arizona and California as well as Nevada, with 250 employees.

Teufel Nursery Portland, OR

\$17 million 1998 revenues/\$19 million projected for 1999. See 10 Pioneer Firms pg. 36)

Cagwin & Dorward, Novato, CA

With operations in 13 locations, Cagwin & Dorward anticipates growing its 1999 revenues to \$18 million, up 12% from the \$16 million it pulled in during 1998.

Wayne Richards, COO and an owner, said the internal growth is brought about by expansion in landscape maintenance, design/build and a new tree division. C&D, which was founded in 1955, employs 300 people.



Chapel Valley Landscape Woodbine, MD

This firm is 31 years old and has more than 250 peak season employees. J. Landon Reeve, president, says his company has enjoyed substantial growth, but would like to keep the growth at "around 10% each year." In 1998, Chapel Valley generated around \$16 million in revenue and Reeve projects close to \$17.5 million this year.



Landscape Concepts Inc. Grayslake, IL

For 18 years, Mike Kerton and Peter DeVore have steadily grown Landscape Concepts to its 1998 revenue total of \$15 million. This is a big growth year for the commercial landscaping firm, which operates on 65% design/build services and 35% maintenance in the competitive northwest Chicago area. Revenues for 1999 may shoot up to \$20 million. The company watches trends closely and believes native prairie plantings hold promise for the future.

Brookwood Landscape San Diego, CA

Keith Wilhite incorporated Brookwood Landscape in 1972, but sons Glenn and Mark conduct the day-to-day operations of this \$15.2 million business now. It is a full-service landscape provider, with 65% of its maintenance clients in retail. Glenn Wilhite points to their veteran managers as a big reason for Brookwood's success. It works almost exclusively in San Diego County.

Mariani Landscape Lake Bluff, IL

The second generation of Marianis runs this design/build and maintenance firm near Chicago, established 40 years ago. President Frank Mariani expects 1999 revenues to reach approximately \$15 million, partly in response to the company's addition of a new perennial garden services division. About 95% of Mariani's customers are residential.



AAA Landscaping Tucson, AZ

This 25-year-old company has the attributes of other successful operations, but Richard Underwood, vice president, says his partnership with his brother, Bob, is what makes this company unique. "He's the best partner a guy could have," he says. "We complement each other very well." The partnership works well for AAA's 500 employees. Underwood says AAA has probably doubled its growth in the last decade and expects to generate \$16 million this year.



Nanak's Landscaping Longwood, FL

This 100% commercial firm has grown steadily for 26 years. Founded by Mahan Kalpa Khalsa and Sam Puran, Nanak's sees revenue rising from a healthy \$12 million in 1998 to about \$15 million in 1999. Working the Tampa, Orlando, Jacksonville and Sarasota area with 300 employees, Nanak's offers everything from horticulture to irrigation, tree trimming, landscape and maintenance.

Terrain Systems Inc. Phoenix, AZ

Dale Micetic and his wife founded Terrain Systems Inc. 25 years ago and it has grown steadily ever since, offering landscape installation, irrigation, erosion control, maintenance and tree growing services to residential and commercial customers in Phoenix. He estimates it will do \$13 million in sales for 1999, driven by the growth of Phoenix's light industries. Micetic says his greatest challenge right now is the labor situation.

20 Top Lawn Care Firms

This year been good to chemical lawn care firms, and several of them have shown healthy growth, despite harsh weather conditions in some areas of the country. Our list includes several top revenue generators, plus others who have influence on a wide range of issues. (Note: Some companies have not responded to information requests and are not listed.)

TruGreen ChemLawn Memphis, TN

TGCL is predicting lawn care revenues of \$900 million this year. TruGreen, established in the mid-1970s in Michigan, was acquired by ServiceMaster in 1990. In 1992, TG purchased long-time rival ChemLawn, and in 1997, it bought Barefoot



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Grass and Orkin Lawn Care too. TGCL Executive David Slott says that internal growth accounts for most of the company's annual increases in sales. "But, we're continually in the acquisition mode," he adds.

The Weed Man

Mississauga, Ontario

The 135 Weed Man lawn care franchise locations will generate about \$55 million in sales in 1999, says Vice President Michael Kernaghan. The company, started by Canadian entrepreneur Des Rice in the early 1970s, faces an interesting dilemma — it has no more franchise locations available in Canada. "I guess that's good news in some ways," says Kernaghan who feels the logical move for Weed Man is to build its presence in the United States.

Lawn Doctor, Inc.

Holmdel, NJ

\$50 million revenue in 1998/\$56 million projected for 1999. See 10 Pioneer Firms, pg.36.

FirstService

Toronto, Ontario

FirstService owns ChemLawn (Canada), Green Lawn Care and Sears Lawn Care brand in new markets in Canada. Together, FirstService companies recorded sales of \$36 million in 1998, a jump of about 31% over 1997. This season, FirstService is forecasting growth of 10% in its company-owned lawn care operations, and planning for at least two additional acquisitions. FirstService also owns and operates the lawn care franchise Nutri-Lawn Lawn Care.

Leisure Lawn Inc.

West Carrollton, OH

Leisure Lawn is more than 20 years old and has 11 locations in seven states, all but one of them company-owned. It reported sales of \$20 to \$25 million for 1998. The company is developing perimeter pest control as an add-on service. Vice President Carl Pettelle says that LL continues to grow while lowering its cancellation rate.

Spring-Green Corp.

Plainfield, IL

This company has been in the lawn-care game since 1977. It has about 65 franchise offices representing more than 100 franchises. Specializing in chemical lawn and tree care with minimal mowing, Spring-Green reported its 1998 revenue slightly under \$20 million. Tom Hofer, president of Spring-Green, describes his company's growth as "steady and consistent."



NaturaLawn of America

Frederick, MD

"We're growing like mad," says Randy Loeb, vice

president of franchise development. It has grown 25% to 30%, compounded annually, for each of the past few years, with 1998 revenues around \$10 to \$20 million. Loeb expects the company to grow another 30% — or possibly more — in 1999. It currently has 45 branch offices in 18 states, as well as Canada.

Kapp's Green Lawn Inc.

Fort Wayne, IN

Longevity, patience and determination are the words that Larry Kapp uses to describe 35-year-old Kapp's Green Lawn, Inc. The company has offices in Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis and St. Louis, along with the office in Fort Wayne. It has around 240 employees. Kapp, president, says it has enjoyed steady growth and produced close to \$10 million in sales for 1998.

Swingle Tree & Landscape Care

Denver, CO

About \$8 million revenues in 1998. See 10 Pioneer Firms, pg. 36.

Scotts Lawn Service

Marysville, OH

This company has over 200 employees, nine company branches and 17 franchises, all in only their second year of existence. Scotts generated more than \$7 million in revenue last year. Bill Hoopes, director of training, says the firm projects \$13.5 million for this year, and possibly more than \$20 million in 2000.

Massey Services

Maitland, FL

Massey will provide about \$30 million in pest control, termite control and lawn care (including tree/shrub) sales from locations throughout Florida this year. About a fifth of that total comes from lawn care, says Adam Jones, who heads the lawn care division. Sales arising from its 11 lawn care locations rose by 15% from 1997 to 1998, and another 17% this season, he says.

The Lawn Co. Inc.

South Dennis, MA

This 20-year-old company generated around \$6 million in revenue in 1998. Edwin McGuire, president, expects 8% growth for 1999. The company has about 75 employees and three other branch offices, with plans to open a fourth location.



Super Lawns

Rockville, MD

With more than 20 locations in Maryland, Virginia, Delaware and New Jersey, Super Lawn franchises will generate between \$4 and \$4.5 million, says founder Ron Miller. Super Lawns offers traditional chemical services, plus aeration and seeding. Miller says, "Our business was pretty

steady," in spite of a season-long drought. He's been in the lawn care business since 1979.

Prescription Turf Services

Middleton, MA

This company first started out providing services to area schools. Twenty years later, it now handles more than 1,000 acres and 6,000 residential accounts. Nearly 25 employees work for this company, and it has enjoyed a consistent 10% to 15% percent growth in each of the past several years. Last year, the company generated around \$2.8 million in revenue. President Paul Harder projects a figure closer to \$3 million in 1999, as well as possibly \$3.3 million in 2000.

Landscape Management Services Inc.

Lake Charles, LA

A relatively younger name at nine years of age, this company once had 30 employees working for it several years ago. Now that number has increased to around 70 workers. The company managed to generate revenue in the \$2 to \$3 million range, with a chance to top \$3 million this year.

Masters Green Inc.

Sterling Heights, MI

This is a 10-year-old company that has about 25 employees working for it. Paul Wagner, the president of the company, says that Masters Green produced revenue in the range of \$2.1 to \$2.5 million, and hopes to grow another \$500,000 in 1999.

Agro-Lawn Systems Inc.

Vienna, VA

This well-established company is more than 25 years old, with about 50 employees. Tom Speirs, president, says that last year was the company's best, growing 10% and reeling in about \$2.4 million for 1998. Speirs hopes that will grow to \$2.6 million this year. The company also recently purchased a 13-acre nursery.

Lawn Master Inc.

Pensacola, FL

Lawn Master has been in business for 19 years, with more than 40 employees. The family owned company pulled in about \$2.25 million in 1998. Joe Williams, president, says it enjoyed a 4% to 6% growth increase in the past several years, and should reach \$2.4 million in revenue for 1999.

All American Turf Beauty Inc.

Van Meter, IA

This company has close to 40 full-time employees and generated more than \$2 million in revenue last year. Daryle Johnson, president, says it grew rapidly in its younger days, but growth has leveled off into a steady 10% to 15% range in past years. However, Johnson hopes for a 20% increase in 1999.

Southern Lawns Inc. Montgomery, AL

This season saw this 22-year-old firm grow by about 10%, says James Bartley, president. Southern Lawns' two offices — Montgomery and Columbus, GA — counts about 8,000 customers and will register about \$2 million in sales this season — 85% arising from traditional turf fertilization, insect and weed control and the remainder in ornamental and flower bed services.

Fairway Green Inc., Belle Mead, NJ

With approximately 25 employees, this 12-year-old business generated about \$2 million in revenue last year. Robert Windish, vice president, expects that figure to grow another 7% to 8% this year. Windish says that one of the challenges he has had to deal with involved finding people. "The challenge is finding people who are willing to go out there and work for a living," he says.

One Step Tree & Lawncare North Chili, NY

One Step is 24 years old and has about 22 year-round employees. It has enjoyed a 7% to 12% increase each of the past several years. It generated \$1.75 million last year, and Robert Ottley, president, hopes for nearly \$2 million in 1999. Ottley says that he hasn't had the personnel problems many companies have — at least not yet. "We've been lucky so far," he says.

20 Outstanding Grounds Management Operations

We looked high and low to recognize leading grounds management operations that involved large landscapes, big budgets, complex conditions or large staffs worth noting. These aren't the only ones — but these are some of the more interesting and challenging grounds to manage in 1999.

Post Properties Atlanta, GA

This innovative, publicly traded corporation, founded by John Williams, CEO, in 1971, posted assets of \$3 billion in 1998 and is one of the largest and highest rated Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) in the country. Post's success is based on its philosophy of managing the top properties in the top markets and providing superior communities to more than 50,000 apartment dwellers in



97 locations, says Todd Tibbetts, vice president of Post Landscape Operations, based in Atlanta.

Post Landscape Operations is one of two landscape arms, and it provides in-house landscape management for apartment communities in nine states (Atlanta alone boasts nearly 50 such communities). Post Landscape Group is the

for-profit commercial landscape maintenance division, with revenues of \$15 million in 1998.

San Diego Zoo San Diego, CA

It's world famous for its animals, but with more than 6,500 plant species, horticultural manager Mike Bostwick faces special challenges dealing with a 100-acre accredited botanical garden col-



lection growing amid hungry, playful — and messy — animals. Monkeys can strip a tree bare of leaves in a heartbeat, and hoofed stock can damage bark. With more than 25 years on the job, Bostwick thrives on applying the knowledge he has obtained.

Colonial Williamsburg Williamsburg, VA

As one of the nation's oldest planned communities, the historic homes and streets once populated by patriots are complemented by more than 100 gardens overseen by Gordon Chappell, director of landscaping. "Landscape archaeology" has been a part of the plan since restoration began in the late 1920s. Each was researched for style and accuracy in the traditions of 17th and 18th centuries. Chappell's mission is to maintain ornamental (and practical food-crop) heirloom plant varieties in a fashion that fits the world's largest outdoor living history museum.

Los Angeles Unified School District

Los Angeles, CA

The largest landscaping project ever in the history of the Los Angeles is now underway — a \$100 million "greening program" that involves planting trees, lawns and flowers at more than 800 school sites. With Eddie Martinez in charge of maintaining these new grounds, scheduling and coordination remain key components. (See article on page 22.)

City of Columbia Columbia, MD

Founded in the 1960s by visionary real estate developer James Rouse, this 15,000-acre planned community of 80,000 people consists of 10 distinct villages located midway between Washington and Baltimore. As vice president of open space management, Charles Rhodehamel tends to 82 miles of pathways and 3,100 acres of open space spread among lawns, gardens, "tot lots" and other recreational assets.



University of Pittsburgh Pittsburgh, PA

Dealing with ups and downs is a daily challenge for Conrad Neuner, one of the nation's experts on planting and maintaining extreme slopes like those at the University of Pittsburgh. "The whole university is built on steep hillsides," he says. "We have 132 acres in the middle of the city." With a crew of 20 full-timers and an annual budget of about \$900,000, Neuner uses unusual combinations of ornamental grasses, wildflowers and other groundcovers to beautify campus landmarks with names like "Cardiac Hill."



Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. Akron, OH

Clearing snow and ice from eight miles of sidewalks is a top wintertime priority for Grounds

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Manager Tom Riccardi and his crews at this 600-acre showplace corporate campus in Akron, OH. Along with the snow comes a strong program designed to prevent salt damage to the turf. Under warmer conditions, nine full-timers and six seasonal workers mow 325 acres and tend to a 100-acre wildflower garden.

Yellowstone National Park Yellowstone, WY

The world's first national park is bigger than Rhode Island and Delaware combined. Eleanor Williams can drive up to three hours to a landscape worksite and still remain within the park's borders. Temperatures can be as hot as 98° F or as cold as -66° F. A big part of the job is keeping out non-native plants. "We don't bring anything new into the park," says Williams. "You can't go out and buy a blue spruce at a nursery and bring it in here."

City of Lenoir Lenoir, NC

Cemeteries and Grounds Superintendent John Abernethy was the very first Certified Grounds Manager in 1981, designated by the Professional Grounds Maintenance Society. Professionalism on a budget is apparent throughout Lenoir, NC. In addition to the two city-owned 30-acre cemeteries, he is responsible for 84 acres of park lands and landscaped areas, which include annual flowers, street trees and athletic fields.

University of Texas Austin, TX

UT has the largest enrollment in the United States, and Jerry Harrison's annual landscape services budget for the 435 acres is about \$1.6 million. On the job for 27 years, he says students taking shortcuts through planted areas is always an issue. "We try to get the sidewalks in the 'right place,' rather than just what looks good on a plan." In addition to many varieties of aged oaks, UT is graced with color throughout as fresh plantings are done three or four times a year.

Chicago Park District Chicago, IL

Chicago's official motto is a Latin phrase meaning "city set in a garden." Parks chief Carolyn Williams Mezzo oversees an operation aimed at maintaining high levels of horticultural and recre-



ational standards. With an annual budget above \$141 million, the enterprise encompasses more than 7,400 acres of green space, 26 miles of shoreline, 520 neighborhood parks and 800 ball-fields. "Our programming is designed with neighborhoods in mind," Mezzo says, noting that last year, a record 7,100 new trees were planted throughout the Windy City.

Winterthur Estate Winterthur, DE

More than 200,000 people each year come to enjoy the 60 acres of spectacular gardens surrounding the former country estate of the late Henry Francis Du Pont, himself a great horticulturalist. "Du Pont documented the blooming time, cultural considerations and aesthetic characteristics of thousands of plants," says Denise Magnani, curator and director of the museum's landscape division. For John Feliciani, the curator of horticulture and grounds operations, working at Winterthur is a family tradition — his father and grandfather also tended the property.

Valley Forge Military Academy and College; Wayne, PA

This highly structured and demanding institution was established during the Great Depression with a critical mission: "Send us your boy and we will return to you a man." Steeped in tradition, the 800 students enjoy an immaculate parade ground and several precision athletic fields managed by Joseph Murphy, who also serves as deputy facilities director. An annual budget of \$150,000 is allotted for 90 acres of open space.

Hearst Castle San Simeon, CA

Known as "the Enchanted Hill," the late newspaper publisher's fabulous 165-room estate overlooking the Pacific Ocean took nearly 30 years to build. Tons of soil were hauled up to the barren mountain top to create 175 acres of gardens, terraces, fountains, pools and walkways. Now overseen by grounds supervisor Bob Conlen and historic maintenance supervisor Bob Soto, Hearst's original horticulturalists (several of them have plants named after them) used American influences combined with Spanish and Italian elements to create a stunning floral palate that provides year-round color.

Missouri Botanical Garden St. Louis, MO

More than 30 different gardens on 79 acres are overseen by Dr. Shannon Smith, director of horticulture. Some 4.8 million plant specimens are present. Recent additions include a Chinese garden, a boxwood garden and a Victorian garden.



Bird watchers flock here to enjoy the many varieties of feathered visitors attracted to the landscape, and a series of hands-on ecology demonstrations have been introduced.

Shanty Creek Bellaire, MI

Director of Outdoor Operations Brent Nelson feels right at home on these 4,500 acres, providing year-round activities for vacationing families and business groups. He cares for 43 downhill ski slopes and almost 19 miles of cross-country ski trails, along with a network of bike paths and swimming facilities. Seventy-two holes of championship golf are also available. This northern Michigan site contains three separate villages and their accompanying common areas.

The Ohio State University Columbus, OH

Catharine Maupin's position as superintendent of grounds-plant materials marks a second career, having been a teacher before studying horticulture. With Director of Roads and Grounds Chuck Smith, and Mike Fitzsimmons, superintendent of landscape maintenance, she tends a massive operation that cares for the campus' 1,675 acres, including the well-traveled 22-acre Oval and 88 acres of intermural athletic fields. With a student population of 48,000, some 100,000 people come and go every day, which takes a toll on the plants.

Tucson Botanical Gardens Tucson, AZ

Creating color in an arid environment is a challenge faced by Tony Edlund as he practices gardening in the desert. A xeriscape demonstration garden is joined by a cactus and succulent garden, a butterfly garden, a backyard bird garden, an iris garden, a tropical exhibit, herb garden and compost demonstration project. Founded in

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1968, the nonprofit facility thrives on its mission to provide relaxation for visitors of all ages, along with horticultural education. About 100,000 people visit each year.

City of Las Vegas Las Vegas, NV

While this desert oasis is better known for its flashy entertainment and miles of bright neon, Manager of Parks John Black oversees an incredible array of landscaped beds along each road and sidewalk. Colorful ornamentals, turf, trees and shrubs are artfully arranged to make the country's fastest growing city look its best. As



part of a current five-phase, \$22-million makeover project, more than 220 palm trees

have just been planted at the intersection of Fourth Street and Las Vegas Boulevard.

University of Notre Dame South Bend, IN

Founded in 1842 by Father Edward F. Sorin, a French missionary with a respect for scholastic excellence, the historic campus landscaping is now overseen by Grounds Superintendent William Thistlewaite and covers 1,250 acres. It also hosts 155 buildings. Heavily traveled, with more than 10,000 students, the institution's grounds remain a major tourist attraction known worldwide for its diversity, grace and beauty.

10 Great Smaller Companies

We think smaller, innovative and successful operations should be recognized, which is why we've established this new category. Obviously, there are hundreds of great, small companies out there, but we don't have room to salute all of you. This inaugural group has revenues ranging from less than \$500,000 to nearly \$5 million, but each does business in an innovative or unusual way.

Share your story of growth, reputation, innovation or employee loyalty with us. See the end of this article for information on how to tell us more.

Jack Robertson Lawn Care Springfield, IL

Loyal employees. Loyal customers. Robertson Lawn Care has grown each of its 23 years, and owner/operator Jack Robertson doesn't see any reason why it shouldn't continue to prosper. "I've been fortunate to keep people for a long time," he explains. Senior service technicians Brian Cox, 19 years, and Mike Harris, 18 years, along with other members of Robertson's staff, know they

get time off to see a child's soccer game or to take care of a sick family member when they need to. "We don't have daily quotas here," he says. Robertson Lawn Care is one of the most visible small businesses in Springfield, and one of the most respected. Its trucks are always clean, its service efficient and its follow-up prompt.

Down to Earth Inc. Wilmington, DE

The journey Larry Iorri has taken from starting his company with a partner in 1974 to today has been one of learning and no-nonsense operations. At one time, he had the company on a track of fast growth, but that has changed. "I had to sacrifice too much quality," he says, and now concentrates on providing excellent turf and ornamental service to his residential customers. Iorri is happy with his 10 employees, the approximately \$600,000 in revenues for 1998 and the strong customer loyalty he enjoys.



Russ Fragala Landscaping Corp. Long Island, NY

This do-it-all New York company has been around since 1982, when it was known as Nice & Green Landscaping. Since 1988, it has carried President Russ Fragala's name. This year, it has put up eye-popping growth numbers for its Long Island business. "With the people that we have, we can grow 143% and not have a problem." Fragala generated about \$4.7 million in 1998, and is looking for a figure close to \$6.6 million in 1999.



Dwight Hughes Nursery Cedar Rapids, IA

Dwight Hughes' business plan (he calls it "the most unusual business plan in America") aims to make the most volume and profit possible, with only four full-time employees to handle a nursery producing 10,000 trees, as well as a landscape installation business servicing residential, commercial and institutional clients. With revenues of around \$700,000, Hughes constantly pushes for more production and innovation through better equipment and time management. "We're always trying to focus and do work better and faster," he says.

Pro Scapes Inc. Syracuse, NY

The company that Rick Kier formed back in 1978 employs 32 to 35 people each year. Kier estimates 1999 revenues to reach between \$1 million and \$1.2 million, for a business that serves residential, multifamily housing and commercial customers around Syracuse. One of Kier's innovations for productive operations include setting goal times for specific operations and services. "When people have something like that to shoot for, they can pull off the work," he notes.



Turf's Up Lawn Service Lee's Summit, MO

Jon Cundiff's roots go back to his days working Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium with famed George Toma, so it was natural for him and his wife and co-partner Vicky to expand the 15-employee lawn, tree and shrub care business into sports field maintenance. Although the bulk of their business is in residential services, the lure of sports services represents additional potential to grow. With 1998 revenues of around \$900,000, Turf's Up is poised to break through the \$1 million barrier this year.



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Clean Lawn Tire Hill, PA

Ronald Keafer started Clean Lawn 16 years ago, after working 27 years in the green industry for someone else — first on the golf course, then as gardener for Bethlehem Steel. His firm does turf applications, along with tree/shrub trimming and contract mowing. Keafer says 80% of his clients are located within three zip codes — nice and tight. "I don't want to be any bigger," says Keafer, whose eight trucks are busy all the time in Johnstown, PA.



Loyet Landscape St. Louis, MO

Owner Joe Loyet gets up every work day before the crack of dawn to get his 60 to 70 employees on the road and onto customers' properties. Then he's off to see his clients himself to make sure they're pleased with his service. Recently, Loyet opened a branch on the north side of St. Louis so his crews can better service their hospitals, apartment, condo and mall properties. With sales of about \$3.5 million, Loyet Landscape, founded in 1985, competes with smaller companies on quality of service and with larger ones on price.

Mike Ward Landscaping Loveland, OH

Mike Ward, president and owner, says his small-team orientation gives his 30 employees several types of work to experience. His company serves both residential and commercial customers in Cincinnati, doing maintenance, installation, sodding/seeding, chemical lawn care, snow removal, light excavation and sod growing. He expects revenues to grow from \$1.5 million to nearly \$1.8 million. Employee relations are a priority: "You can spend as much energy on employee (relations) as you do on the business," he adds.

Village Turf Inc. Mt. Vernon, VA

In the seven years since Lou Kobus Jr. started Village Turf Inc., it has grown to \$2.8 million in revenues from a variety of services: landscape design and installation, chemical lawn care, soil amendments, lawn and sports turf maintenance, irrigation, seeding and sodding, drainage work, arbor care and removal, snow removal and hardscapes, to name a few. Village Turf employs eight year-round and nearly 60 seasonal employees. He expects the business, which serves government facilities and commercial and residential customers, to exceed \$3 million in 1999.

10 High-Profile Women-Run Operations

Lawn care, landscape contracting firms and grounds management operations managed by women are still something of a rarity in our industry. Here's a list of select few:

Smallwood Design Group Naples, FL

Instead of becoming a teacher in the early 1970s, Joanne Smallwood found her niche offering landscape design and installation services to wealthy



estate owners in Naples, FL. "When I first started, there were so few women in our industry," she says. Since then, her firm has blossomed to 75 people offering design, build and horticultural management services to high-end residential, hotel, resort, commercial and golf course clients in the area. She expects Smallwood Design Group to have about \$7 million in revenues this year. Her leadership in design, management and associations makes her a strong role model. "I like to bring an attention to detail and a passion for creating great environments and beautiful spaces," she explains.

Audrie Seeley & Co. Kansas City, MO

The company, owned by Audrie Seeley, employs 60 people and does \$4 million in business. Seeley said what she hears most often from clients is that her people are talented and know how to take care of clients' needs. Seeley is very active in her local Associated Landscape Contractors of America chapter and would like to become more active in the national organization.

Longhorn Maintenance Inc. McKinney, TX



Longhorn services a niche market in the Allen/McKinney area of north Texas. The company focuses on educated professionals (residential market) looking for quality service, custom design and professional work. President Andee Bechtold says her company is "innovative and unafraid to try something new." This is Longhorn's 18th year in business.

Gardener's Guild Inc. San Rafael, CA

Linda Novy said she prides herself of leading a cutting-edge company. "We were on the leading edge of environmental issues long before it became trendy to do those things," Novy said. Her company, which employs 94 full-time employees and expects to do \$4.3 million in business this year, develops "organic" solutions to her clients' landscape management issues. She is active in ALCA.



Utah State University Logan, UT

Utah State University knew what it was getting when it hired Ellen Newell as its landscape manager for the campus in 1992. After all, Newell started at the university as an hourly employee and has done a little bit of all the jobs to be found in her department. Newell urges all of her colleagues to join a professional organization such as the Professional Grounds Management Society, of which she is an active member.

Madelyn Simon & Associates New York, NY

"We like to think of ourselves as being on the German-car level of landscape management," said Madelyn Simon, whose company, founded in 1979, has 75 employees and expects to do \$3.3 million in business this year. Simon, an ALCA member, said personal service is what her company is known for. "We just hope to do our projects at a higher level," she said.

Secret Gardens San Francisco, CA

If a client is looking to produce a show garden, this firm is not for them. Kathryn Mathewson, owner of Secret Gardens, said her firm focuses on the healing power of plants — hence the name of her firm, which plays off the title of a Frances Hodgson Burnett book "The Secret Garden." Mathewson, active in the ANLA, said she would rather keep her firm small than compromise her principles.

Leisure World of Maryland Corp. Silver Spring, MD

Tending 600 acres of landscaping at a retirement



community is not a walk in the park — just ask Stephanie DeStefano. "People here pay a lot of attention to the landscaping and aren't shy about letting their feelings be known," she said, laughing. "It's rewarding to know your work gets noticed." She is in her second year of presidency of

the Washington, D.C. PGMS branch, and said joining the organization gives her a great net-

work of people to go to for advice

Greater Texas Landscapes Austin, TX

This one-stop shop, founded in 1981, does everything from landscape design to irrigation to facilities management. Owned by Debby Cole, the firm expects to do \$3.4 million this year. "Our strongest assets are our knowledge of horticulture, combined with our ability to communicate it," said Sara Twaddle, director of business development.

Tiger Stadium Detroit, MI

Heather Nabozny became the first-ever female Major League head groundskeeper when she began tending the turf at historic Tiger Stadium this past spring. Heather, a graduate of the Michigan State University turf program, got her start as a grounds manager at Old Kent Park, home of the West Michigan Whitecaps, and so impressed the folks there that the Tiger organization noticed her. This is the last season for Tiger Stadium, and next season, the Tigers and Nabozny open new Comerica Park.

10 Pioneer Firms Who Shaped the Industry

Compared to some industries, ours is young. We searched for firms that we consider to be "old" for their segment. Most of these were real innovators when they started, and they have served as models for many that followed. We're sure there are other pioneer companies worth celebrating — just contact us with your details.

Hillenmeyer Nurseries Lexington, KY

Stephen and Chris Hillenmeyer run the second oldest continuous nursery/lawn care company in the United States. Founded by fruit tree grower Francis Xavier Hillenmeyer in 1841, this fifth generation success story started by shipping mail order fruit trees around the country. Today, the operation, which is almost fully residential, had



1998 revenues of \$10.2 million, with an 11% to 12% uptick in the cards for 1999. The landscape operation keeps nearly 125 trucks on the road serving central Kentucky.

Lied's Landscape, Design & Development Sussex, WI

Delmar Lied founded this family business in 1945, working out of his house. He built a trailer to pull to jobs, and that was the beginning of today's \$14.9-million design/build and maintenance operation. His son, Tom, expanded the business, and today, Delmar's grandson Rob

holds the family name high, overseeing a third generation of growth fueled by reputation and three generations of clients. With a second branch in the Fox Valley, Lied's keeps 300 people on the road.



Rood Landscape Co. Tequesta, FL

When Roy "Buster" Rood returned from his tour of duty in the South Pacific following WWII, he considered attending Purdue University and becoming an engineer. But, that would have meant leaving south Florida, and he figured he'd been away long enough already. Now, more than 53 years later, Bert Clattenburg and Tom Whitesell run the day-to-day operations of Rood Landscape, but, Roy, 81, still keeps on eye on the business he founded. The firm, which offers a complete package of landscape services, puts 100 trucks on the road daily in Palm Beach and Martin Counties.

Clarence Davids & Co. Matteson, IL

With little more than a belief that top quality, cost-effective service and a knack for beautiful landscaping would be enough, Clarence Davids Sr. started on a shoestring in 1951. Son Bill runs one of the top 10 landscaping companies in the Chicago area, with over \$10 million in 1998 revenue, and a \$2-million boost forecast for 1999. The company's customer mix is 80% commercial and 20% residential, providing a mix of 40% design/build, 40% maintenance, with lawn care and flowers adding another 20%.

Teufel Nursery Inc. Portland, OR

This fourth-generation-owned family business, headed by Larry Teufel, was begun by Gustav Teufel 109 years ago in 1890. The landscape division recorded \$17 million in revenues in 1998, and estimates business will climb to \$19 million in 1999. Riding the Northwest's booming economy, 300 employees and 75 vehicles cruise the

Greater Portland and Seattle landscape doing installation and maintenance.

Swingle Tree & Landscape Care Denver, CO

"Tree surgeon" John Swingle founded this company 52 years ago, with a promise to give customers the best service he could possibly deliver. Swingle will generate just under \$8 million in sales this year, but a better indication of its level of service is its overall customer retention rate of 81% in 1998. Services include tree/shrub care, lawn care, irrigation, landscape lighting and holiday lighting. Tom Tolkacz, 12 years with Swingle, purchased the company this past year.

Lawn Doctor Inc. Holmdel, NJ

Lawn Doctor is a pioneer in chemical lawn care and one of the masters of franchised applications services, with 376 locations in 36 states. It was founded in the early 1960s. The company also has close to 2,000 employees and generated around \$50 million in revenue in 1998, with \$56 million projected for this season.

Grasshopper Lawns Inc. Edwardsville, PA

For over 35 years — before ChemLawn — this family-owned business has been providing professional lawn care in northeastern Pennsylvania. Michael Kravitsky III started the business in 1964. Kravitsky later became independent, and Grasshopper Lawns is now run by his two sons, Michael Kravitsky IV and Shawn Kravitsky.



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Davey Tree Expert Co. **Kent, OH**

John Davey and his son, Martin, incorporated The Davey Tree Expert Co. in 1909, and the company is now one of the largest horticultural services providers in the United States, with sales of about \$315 million in 1998. Doug Cowan, president, expects 1999 revenues to reach about \$325 million. Davey's 6,000 employees, breadth of services, 75-branch network throughout the United States and Canada and initiatives in research and education make it a formidable competitor in residential lawn care, landscape contracting and arborist services.

The Siebenthaler Co. **Dayton, OH**

This family owned nursery and landscape design business has existed for 129 years. Five generations of family have managed the operations, which now include a 600-acre nursery, a full-service landscape design-and-build department and three retail garden centers. Chairman of the Board Bob Siebenthaler, his son Jeff and his son-in-law Mike Fanning currently manage this Dayton landmark company, which grows more than 400 varieties of trees and hundreds of perennials. The nursery is adjacent to a 60-acre natural fen.

We had to include two other companies for their 50+ years in the industry (see details about them in our listing of 20 Top Landscape Contractors):

Environmental Industries Inc. **Calabasas, CA**

See pg. 24.

The Brickman Group **Langhorm, PA**

See pg. 24.

10 High-profile Landscapes

Millions of people visit landscapes like these each year, either for a special trip or as part of their day-to-day lives. We developed this category because excellent management of landscapes like this reflects well on our industry as a whole. The 10 landscapes we selected this year are known for their design and components, their innovative practices or the challenges of maintenance with so many visitors.

The Grand Hotel **Mackinac Island, MI**

Staying abreast of maritime shipping schedules and keeping an accurate account of available horse power are just a few of the many duties performed by Stephen Bernard, grounds and

recreation manager at the world's largest summer resort. "There's a lot of challenges that come from being on an island," he reports. "All the materials have to be brought in by freight boat, and then they're delivered by horse and carriage." The seven-person grounds staff, along with 15 other workers assigned to the golf course, use hand tools to complete most of the landscape tasks at this 250-acre site, which dates back to 1887 and has hosted five U.S. presidents.

Walt Disney World **Lake Buena Vista, FL**

Under Director of Horticulture Katy Moss Warner, more than 650 horticultural professionals — gardeners, arborists, irrigation specialists and pest management specialists — tend to Disney's

Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada

Up to 20 million visitors a year soak in the gardens and spectacular natural landscapes adorning the entire 35 miles of parkway between lakes Erie and Ontario. John Dick, manager of horticulture, has an annual grounds maintenance budget (equipment and capital improvements are extra) of \$7.5 million (Canadian) and 190 workers — and it is each person's job to pick up litter. The sheer volume of people and a near-constant mist from the falls create logistical challenges. A highlight is the 40-foot diameter floral clock that keeps accurate time. The colors on the face change twice a year.

Central Park **New York, NY**

Neil Calvanese, vice president of operations, tends a landscape of Big Apple proportions as the 843 acres of historic parklands make up 6% of Manhattan's total area. More than 20 million people visit the park each year to enjoy the 26,000 trees (including 1,700 American elms), 250 acres of lawns and 136 acres of woodlands. The 8,968 park benches would stretch seven



dizzying array of 4,000 acres of plant materials featuring 2,400 species. Nearly 12% of the resort — an area equal to 3,000 football fields — is devoted to gardens and maintained landscapes. The 2,000 acres of turf require 450,000 miles of mowing annually, plus there are more than two million shrubs and some 200 trimmed topiary projects in addition to the 6,000 trees planted each year. Nearly 13,000 roses adorn the 47 square miles of grounds, along with more than three million annuals and bedding plants.

The Niagara Parks Commission

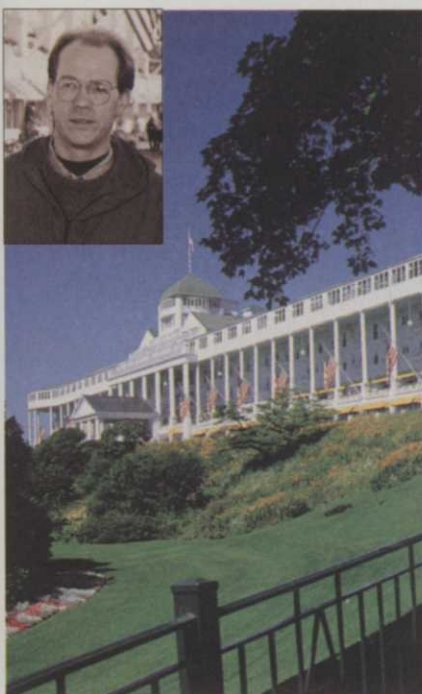


miles if placed end-to-end. The annual budget, which includes funds for maintenance, programming and landscape improvements, tops \$5 million.

Monticello **Charlottesville, VA**

President Thomas Jefferson was an avid collector of plants, in addition to being a world-class inven-

cont. on page 40





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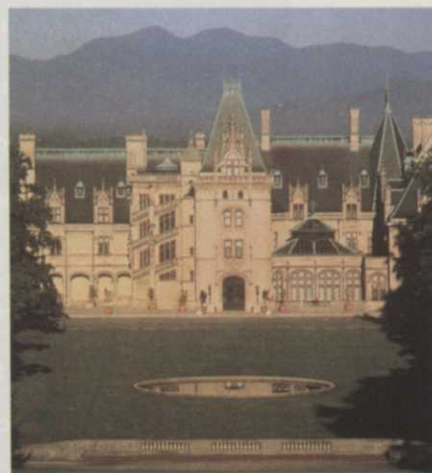
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cont. from page 37

tor, architect and statesman. Today, 500,000 people each year tour his home and the 2,000 acres of grounds managed by Peter Hatch and a staff of 14. "We don't have a 1999 grounds management approach," he explains. In accordance with 18th and 19th century practices, a policy of "benign neglect" reigns. Modern materials are seldom used, and "low-tech" techniques, like using branches to hold up plants, are in place.

Biltmore Estate Asheville, NC

The country's largest private residence, this 250-room French Renaissance chateau is home to more than 250 acres of grounds, gardens and a greenhouse overseen by landscape curator Bill Alexander, maintenance manager Rick Connard



and a staff of 57. Their jobs include pruning 80 varieties of roses, planting 50,000 tulip bulbs in the English walled garden each year and growing and planting 20,000 annual bedding plants.

The Getty Center Los Angeles, CA

A master landscape plan developed by world-renowned architect Richard Meier at this new \$1 billion museum complex was specifically designed to blend with his unique construction details. Eighty-six acres of gardens and terraces, including the Central Garden designed by artist Robert Irwin, provide views of the Los Angeles basin, the mountains and the ocean, with the surrounding 600 acres preserved in their natural state. Under the direction of grounds superintendent Richard Naranjo, the landscape evolves with the intent of creating an intimate, ever-changing tableau that enhances the visitor's experience.

The Butchart Gardens Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Each year, more than a million annuals, perennials, trees and flowering shrubs of 700 varieties are overseen at this 50-acre showplace by Rick Los, director of horticulture. The famous Sunken Garden is perhaps the ultimate environmental reclamation project, as it was constructed in an

abandoned limestone quarry by the wife of Portland Cement king Robert P. Butchart. Starting in the early 1900s, plants from around the world were collected and brought here to populate gardens saluting the horticultural contributions of Italy, Japan, The Netherlands and other locations.

The Hermitage Hermitage, TN

Located just outside of Nashville, the horticulture surrounding the home of President Andrew Jackson is maintained in the fashion it was in 1819. Nancy Murphy, director of gardens and grounds, says the highlight of the 650 acres of meadows and woodlands (once populated by Jackson's slaves) is Rachel's Garden, a one-acre monument to a Southern plantation garden, featuring shrubs and flower types that Old Hickory's wife presented to departing guests. The property and mansion are viewed by 250,000 visitors each year.

Longwood Gardens Kennett Square, PA

Nurtured and grown by the late industrialist Pierre S. du Pont, more than 900,000 people



each year view the 11,000 species of plants gracing 20 outdoor gardens, 20 greenhouse gardens and more than 1,000 acres of woodlands and meadows. **LM**

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