

# 10 Great medium-sized firms

**Most medium-sized firms have been around for a while. Learn what they've learned about being "great"**

BY VICKY POULSEN

## **Aldo 1 Landscaping & Lawn Service Inc., Ocean, NJ**

Competitive prices and top quality service with a personal touch keep Aldo 1 Landscaping & Lawn Service Inc. ahead of its competition. "I look at each project and property — no matter what the size — as if it was my own," says Chris Aldarelli, president of the 12-year-old firm, which serves a 50/50 mix of commercial/residential accounts. That philosophy may be responsible for an 18% increase in revenues from 1999 to 2000, to \$12.1 million. This full-service firm employs 150 workers during the season and still serves 40% of their original customers.

## **Allin Companies Erie, PA**

Snow is bringing in the green for John Allin's firm, where gross revenues for landscape and snow services jumped from \$2.1 million in 1999 to \$6.5 million in 2000. Projected revenues for 2001 are \$12.5 million, with revenue goals set for \$18 to \$20 million in 2002. "Our phenomenal growth has come predominantly from increased snow revenues due to a national presence in over 14 states," he says. Key services include landscape design/build, maintenance and hardscape for commercial customers. Around 65 employees enjoy a comprehensive benefits package.



## **Barnes Nursery Huron, OH**

Barnes Nursery is the biggest firm within 100 miles, if excluding industrial and highway landscaping. On the

brink of its 50th anniversary, it scored \$14 million in revenues in 2000, in part due to the 400 acres of nursery stock it carries. Its composting facility ships about five trucks full of mulch and materials daily to local buyers, says owner Bob Barnes. The service palette runs the gamut from design to maintenance and several others. Most of the 125 employees have been around for a long time, just like the customers.

## **Dennis' 7 Dees Landscape Portland, OR**

Dennis' 7 Dees offers its 200 employees a strong training and edu-



cation program that aids in their professional growth and encourages them to achieve their CLT designation. In business for 45 years, this Snodgrass family-run firm maintains a 90% customer retention rate and services a 60/40 ratio of commercial and residential accounts. Revenues are projected at \$12 million in 2001, says David Snodgrass, president.

## **Gachina Landscape Management, Menlo Park, CA**

Strong community involvement and second-to-none customer service pay off for this commercial landscaping firm, which saw gross revenues jump 22% in 2000, to \$9.3 million. The 13-year-old Silicon



Valley company has a second location in Campbell, CA. President John Gachina says its 220 employees, mostly Hispanic, benefit from in-house English and landscape technician training.

## **Realty Landscaping Corp. Newtown, PA**

Known for quick customer response, Realty Landscaping has been in business since 1985, doing mainly design/build services for a 65/35 residential/commercial client base. It has branch offices in Oaks, PA and Burlington, NJ. Regional Manager David Plechner reports, "We have 65 crews spread over two, sometimes three states, which give us ability to rectify any problems within 24 hours." The company grossed \$10 million in 2000, and expects to hit \$11.5 million in 2001. An 80% employee retention rate is the result of benefits such as human resource management, which offers 108 employees everything from financial advice to counseling.

## **Yardmaster Inc. Painesville, OH**

Bringing trained landscape architects together with project managers, experienced installers and maintenance technicians has made Yardmaster Inc. a comprehensive resource for its residential and commercial clients. The company has five locations in Ohio and 250 employees to handle a mix of landscape design, construction and maintenance services grossing \$9 million in 2000, says Kurt Kluznik, CCLP and president. He serves on the advisory committee for high school and college landscape programs.



## **Greater Texas Landscapes Inc., Austin, TX**

A committed staff and a local presence give this mostly commercial landscape firm a competitive edge, notes Debby Cole, president. Approaching 20 years in business, Greater Texas provides mainly maintenance and related services (12% irrigation installation and service). She says 2000 gross revenues hit \$3 million and are likely to grow 15% in 2001. The company is noted for a strong customer relations program, which includes monthly focus groups and bi-monthly e-mail newsletters.

## **Thornton Landscape Maineville, OH**

Rick Doesburg ASLA, CCLP, and Thornton president, says employees count: "Our strong point is our ability to keep both our employees and our clients." Almost half of the company's 40 employees have worked at Thornton for 10 years or more, with six over the 30-year mark. The 40-year-old firm offers only design/build services to mostly commercial accounts. Revenues hit \$3.3 million in 2000. Doesburg says his company is not about selling plants but designs.

## **Del Conte's Landscaping, Inc., Fremont, CA**

Del Conte Landscaping is committed to building dependable relationships with both its customers and employees. The 29-year-old firm offers mostly commercial landscape installation service and earned \$6.5 million in 2000, a 43% increase over 1999. It aggressively trains its 115 employees and hosts a formal budget meeting each year where key employees and allies are involved in planning the company's direction, says President Tom Del Conte.