

LM100

TOUGH LANDSCAPES TO MAINTAIN

TOUGHEST 10

Think you have problems? Check out these 10 very challenging landscapes that require the professional touch

BY GEORGE WITTERSCHEIN

Graceland Mansion, Memphis, TN

The biggest challenge at Graceland Mansion, Memphis, TN, is its 650,000 annual visitors.

"My crew starts blowing driveways and pathways and checking the gravesite at 7 a.m.," says maintenance manager Jimmy Gambill.

"Our work is dictated by the climate. Last summer, we had consistent temperatures in the 90-to-100-degree range with little rain. We have no sprinkler system (Elvis installed a lot of TV and security wires and cables — a major barrier to installing an irrigation system), so we do all watering by hand."



Graceland

Utah State University's Logan Campus

Standards are high at Utah State University in Logan, in part because of a top-notch landscape architecture department on campus. The campus is also part of the state arboretum.

Local conditions also make things challenging. It's not necessarily warm in May in Utah, but the campus expects flowers in bloom for early May graduation. Ellen Newell and her staff use the winter months to get as ready as possible, and plant pansies and other flowers that should bloom in time for the event. To address water restrictions,

Newell installed a Maxicom satellite system for more efficient water use.

Overpeck Park, Bergen County, NJ

Todd Cochran, regional director of the Professional Grounds Manage-



Overpeck Park

ment Society (PGMS), is the assistant superintendent of parks for Bergen County, NJ. The challenge there is environmental: much-visited Overpeck County Park is built on a reclaimed landfill. "Every few feet, the soil type may be different," Cochran explains. It also sits at the edge of a protected wetlands that is the source of salt water infiltration and debris.

Other challenges? The ground settles often, making sinkholes that General Supervisor Mike Gallucci and his crews must keep refilling. A constant wind dries things up, and methane gas from garbage buried in the landfill hurts trees. The park also adjoins the New Jersey Turn-

pike, one of the most traveled highways in the world...and one of the biggest litter producers.

Villanova University, Philadelphia, PA

As campus Superintendent of Grounds, Kevin O'Donnell has a classic task at Villanova University: keeping a large, semi-urban academic landscape beautiful despite substantial foot traffic and public events drawing large crowds.

O'Donnell and his crew of 16 grounds employees have a clear strategy for the 150-year-old campus designated as an arboretum: "Take care of the basics first," O'Donnell says. "Keeping litter off the ground helps maintain a pleasant atmosphere and the beauty of the landscape. We think today's effort results in less litter being deposited in the future because, when an area is clean, people tend to leave it clean and respect it."

Groundmasters, Cincinnati, OH

For Mike Rorie, president of Groundmasters, it's not the landscape that's challenging but the

continued on page 34

LM100

TOUGH LANDSCAPES TO MAINTAIN

continued from page 32

client. Groundmasters has a subspecialty in homeowners' associations (HOAs), and the typical client is a board of volunteers, none of whom are landscape professionals. "They are under tremendous budgetary pressure from their fellow homeowners, creating an intense focus on price," Rorie says. "Plus, as



Groundmasters' headquarters

soon as an individual develops expertise in landscaping, he or she is replaced by someone else and we start the learning process all over again.

The best way to deal with this, Rorie says, is to "know the players and educate them about the details of the agreement and the recent history of the community's landscaping."

Hilton Grand Vacation Club, Orlando, FL

Adam Koenigsknecht is an account manager with Environmental Care Industries, Orlando, FL, where his responsibility includes



Hilton Grand Vacation Club

the Hilton Grand Vacation Club, a high-end time-share with a strong appetite for attractive landscaping. It's a large property with 13 units containing timeshares, plus the clubhouse and a sales center. A multi-year drought, however, has made his job a lot harder.

"Florida irrigation systems were installed to supplement rainfall water, not replace it," Koenigsknecht says. "Without rain, the dropping groundwater causes problems with pumps, coverage pressure and everything else having to do with irrigation."

The key to success is an educated client. "As the account manager, I'm constantly keeping the client aware of the changing water restrictions and ways to deal with them. It's time-consuming, but it's my job."

Busch Gardens, Tampa, FL

Ron Schmoyer is president of OneSource Landscape and Golf Services, Tampa, FL, which maintains both Busch Gardens theme parks (Williamsburg, VA and Tampa Bay). The Florida theme park is the most challenging because of the state's drought and its year-round operation.

"We have hundreds of pots and baskets of annuals to keep watered. The restrictions come from a local water management board and change from time to time as the drought conditions vary," Schmoyer says.

Another challenge is fixing the damage caused by guests who Busch Gardens believes should have a "hands-on experience"



Busch Gardens

with the landscape. Landscape features are not barricaded and fenced off, which means the crew has to replace many flowers.

The Grand Casino, Tunica, MS

The Grand Casino, Tunica, MS, lists landscape maintenance challenges that are built into the soil and water itself, according to project manager Scott Brewer and director Rod Rotolo, both of whom work for Jack's Landscape in Mississippi, a subsidiary of Randall and Blake, Littleton, CO.

The property and landscape is designed around a sizable barge casino. The resort's parent company, Park Place Entertainment, demands that the property look first



The Grand Casino

class. That, however, isn't easy.

"We're situated in the Mississippi Delta on land that has different soil types with pH levels that have to be adjusted," Brewer says. "Also, our service road is a seven-mile and 4 to 5-lane 'highway' that requires a lot of landscape maintenance."

City Place,

West Palm Beach, FL

Rick Leal, vice president of Vila and Son Landscaping Inc., Miami, takes care of City Place in West Palm Beach, a retail/residential complex in the city's downtown area.

The demands are similar to Graceland's: "Watering the pots and keeping the flower beds intact is a challenge given the several thousand people who walk through every day," Leal says. "Because the aesthetic standards are high, we have to get the place looking good by morning when the stores open for business."

Universal Studios, Orlando, FL

The most formal landscapes at Universal Studios Orlando are at the entrances. The Resort Garden Walkway has no hours of operation, so guests come and go at all hours. Employees must be out of



Universal Studios

guest view by 7 a.m. every morning and stay out of view until 2 a.m., 365 days a year.

Rainfall is another big problem. Some years, it's 30 inches. Others, it's seven inches. This keeps some of the 100 employees running around adjusting irrigation computers and programs all the time.