



May 1969

Graduated from The Ohio State University with bachelor's of science in horticulture

June 1969

Hired by Thornton Landscape, Inc.

1971

Attends first ALCA meeting

1983

Elected president of the Ohio Nursery Association

1999

Bought Thornton Landscape, Inc.

2002

In line to become president of ALCA

People of the Year 2001

These outstanding people exemplify professionalism, dedication and a willingness to share their time and energy for our industry

Landscape contracting: Rick Doesburg / President, Thornton Landscape, Inc., Maineville, OH

BY JASON STAHL

Ever since he was 14, working at South Euclid Garden Supply in Ohio, Rick Doesburg knew he wanted to pursue a Green Industry career.

"I just enjoyed working with people, and once I gained more knowledge, I got a kick out of being able to diagnose turfgrass diseases," Doesburg says.

Now, he's getting a kick out of running his own company, Thornton Landscape, Inc., which he bought in 1999 after 25 years as one of its employees.

His single most important professional achievement? "Putting together and being part of a wonderful team at my company geared toward quality and 'beauty by design,'" he says. Doesburg says it's this team that allows him get involved with associations, another thing he's proud of.

But friend Kurt Kluznik, president of Yardmaster, Inc., Painesville, OH, who claims he would have never gotten in-

involved in ALCA without Doesburg's prodding, feels there's another reason why Doesburg is able to accomplish so much. "I'd call him the velvet hammer if he was in sales with me because he knows how to get things done without being too assertive," Kluznik says.

That kind of skill came in handy in 1999 when Doesburg almost left Thornton Landscape because, as he says, "we didn't seem to have a good focus of where we were going." But now he says his company is poised to stay on top as a cutting edge leader of design/build landscape.

Staying on top won't be easy, says Doesburg, who believes the government will be responsible for some of the biggest challenges the Green Industry will face within the next decade. "Legislation, taxes, social security, OSHA — all that has a tremendous impact on our ability to be profitable. If we don't look out for ourselves, nobody will."

That's why Doesburg believes association work is so important. "People have to break away from their business and give something back," he says.

Doesburg has certainly done his share, whether it be with ALCA, the Ohio Nursery Association, Cincinnati Homebuilders or the Green Industry Expo. "What I am is what I've learned from ALCA," he says. He has not only advanced those associations with his own work but helped others make their mark.

"He was always there to help me out when I needed it, like when I took leadership positions in ALCA," says Jud Griggs, vice president of operations at Smallwood Design Group/Smallwood Landscape, Inc., Naples, FL, and former ALCA president.

"Some people take on things because they want notoriety, but the best thing about Rick is that he prefers to stay in the background," Griggs added.

The reason Doesburg bought Thornton Landscape was because his son, Andy, was graduating from college. "We had always talked about starting a business, and that gave me an opportunity to work with him." Now, Andy works in sales, and Rick is hoping he takes over the business some day. **LJM**