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How Troy Hall refocused his business
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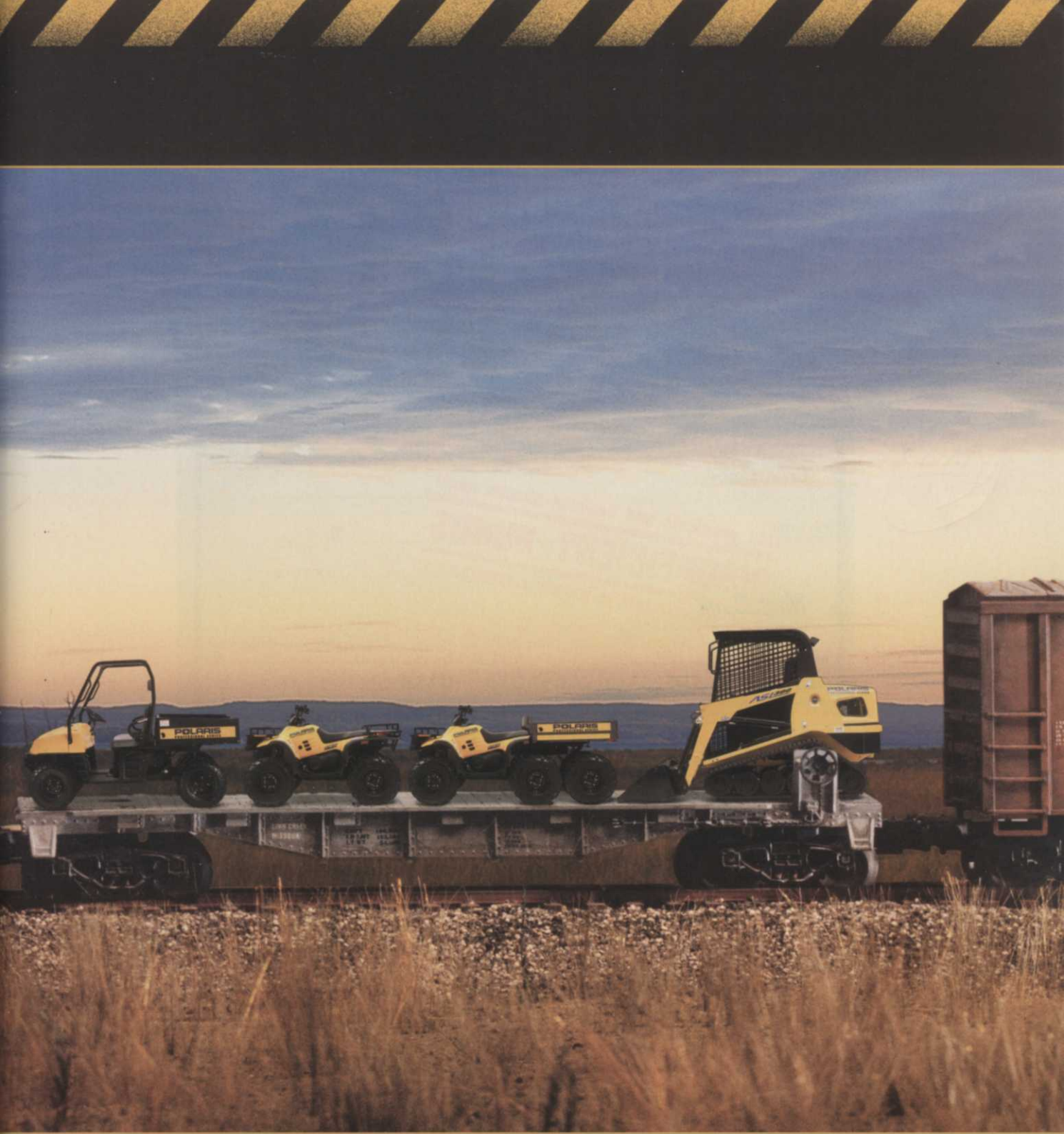


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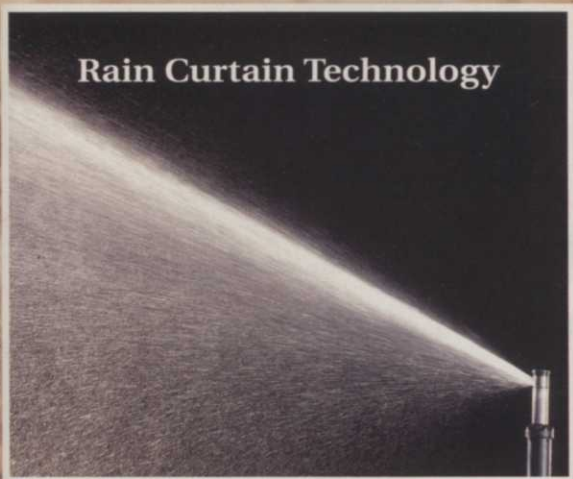
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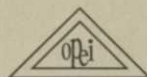
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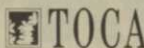
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BY RON HALL / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Revived LESCO good for us

LESCO, Inc., is our neighbor. It's always been our neighbor. Today, its headquarters are literally just down the road from us.

The national Green Industry supplier was founded in 1962. Our magazine began just a few years later.

Over the years we've worked with and gotten to know many of the people at the company. In a sense, we've grown up together.

We met LESCO's new boss Michael DiMino this past December, just days after he joined the company as president and COO. He hasn't exactly been taking it easy since then. The firm's board of directors added the CEO title to his name early in April as it bid William Foley fare-three-well and handed him a generous severance. Significantly, DiMino's promotion came with the naming of longtime Green Industry player J. Martin "Marty" Erbaugh as chairman of the board.

A few days after the shake-up, the new CEO spoke about changes the company will be making.

He didn't mince words. That's not his style.

He said most of what he's seen and experienced with the company so far is working fine and will remain. (See news article on page 18.)

He also pointed out areas he and his new management team feel need improvement. These are cost controls, refocusing the company's sales and service efforts, and streamlining product inventory and distribution for better and more immediate customer service.

Several, however, were bolder, like the implementation of a "hub & spoke" plan to combine some of the company's 5,000-sq.-ft. drive-thru service centers into 50,000 to 75,000 sq. ft. superstores/regional distribution centers.

DiMino is a newcomer to our industry but he's also a fast study. He's already met with every regional man-



CEO Michael DiMino

ager, all the senior sales managers and many of the other 629 LESCO employees. He hasn't tiptoed into his new company's operations as much as he's plunged into them.

We feel LESCO's recent actions are a step in the right direction, not the least of which was the appointment of Er-

baugh as chairman. Few people in the Green Industry have his experience (first with The Davey Tree Company, then as founder and president of his own lawn care company) and his business savvy.

The health of this and all major industry suppliers remains vitally important to us in landscape and lawn care services. In fact, many of us wouldn't be in business without the products they supply us, the agronomic expertise they provide and the credit they extend us.

Since landscape and lawn care operators have been and remain LESCO's number one customer group, we'll eventually decide the soundness of its new initiatives.

Contact Ron at
440/891-2636 or
e-mail at rhall
@advanstar.com



DiMino hasn't tiptoed into the Green Industry
as much as he's plunged into it.

let's hear it

YOUR OPINIONS, COMMENTS, & QUOTES

Crazy prices

\$36.78 per hour for mowing in the small town of just over 1,000 people where I live? I don't think so. I wouldn't have any customers if I charged that price. Most people in my town must educate themselves on good lawn care because they seem to know what it's all about.

I charge \$15 to \$20 per hour, which you apparently think is crazy. Yet there are people in my town who think I'm charging too much. Other people have started to mow and charge \$3 to \$5 less, and they seem to be getting more customers than myself. But I have the experience, background and training. Every year, I have a booth at our local farm and home show. I also have a booth at two other shows in the area.

I don't understand how these people are making it. I'm just barely surviving. I'm looking to expand my own business, but as you know, it's not easy.

— Jerry Wittmus
J.W.'s Lawn Care & Landscaping
George, IA

Too low?

How many sleepless nights have I had since this article was printed? Maybe it's just my lack of knowledge, or terminology (per hour per employee?) My typical day last eight hours, but traffic, maintenance and stops at the local nursery result in 5 to 6.5 hours of actual billable time. Am I on

base? In my market, my cost for one person is \$10 per hour, and the lead person makes \$14 per hour. That's \$24 per hour plus \$2.88 per hour for the vehicle plus \$1.50 per hour for mowers times .46% overhead times .255 profit equals \$52 per hour for those two workers.

Why am I so low compared to these numbers? It must be billable hours. I have a friend across the river who brags that his three-man maintenance crews average \$480 per day. We do \$300 to \$400 a day with two workers. I wonder if I'm too low.

— David M. Teas
Clean Cut Lawn Maintenance
Charleston, SC

Plot the numbers

I own and operate a small lawn care and maintenance business in Muhlenberg County, Kentucky, and every time we did an estimate, we used to have to deal with questions like, "How do you charge?" and "How do you know that's how much it will be?" Three years ago, we came up with a simple, but sometimes alterable, solution.

The answer to my customers' questions was right outside my front door in the form of a 10-acre pasture field used to graze my horses. We measured off five square acres and divided them into five equal plots. Then, we mowed

the plots, keeping accurate times. The first plot we mowed as fast as possible, not worrying about how it looked, the second we mowed in ordinary round-and-round style but took a little more time, the third in quick back and forth strips, the fourth in a nice strip pattern at 3.5 in. on the deck, and the fifth in a nice strip pattern at a height of two inches. We also charted the amount of fuel we used, and placed an equal amount of obstacles in each plot to mow and trim around.

Our numbers allowed us to set a job time and dollar amount to charge for each 500 sq. ft. of lawn area. We no longer had to say, "Well, I've done this long enough that I know what it takes to do a yard," when a customer asked how we determined our fee.

This solution can be altered to accommodate many different situations to better suit our customers' needs. I'm not going to give out the dollar amount determined, but I can say this will work for anyone with the equipment and manpower they currently have if

they want to take the time to do it. I can also say we're below the national average by more than \$2.

— Michael Smith
Greenview Turf and
Ornamental Management
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— John Van Staaldunin
Davey Tree & Lawn Care Experts
Rochester, NY



Editor's note: The following letters were written in response to our "Best Practices" article in February on what to charge for mowing. Due to the large number of letters we received, not all are published here. We will publish more as space permits.

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inside the owner's head

BY JASON STAHL / MANAGING EDITOR

Lowballers? Forget about 'em

Everyone in the Green Industry knows lowballing is an unfortunate aspect of business that'll never go away. If that's the case, you'd think every business should develop a strategy for combatting lowballing, right? Wrong.

It seems a majority of landscape/lawn pros believe the best way to fight lowballers is to not fight them at all.

"I don't want to defeat the lowballer," says Dennis Barriball of Hemlock Landscapes, Chagrin Falls, OH. "There should be no strategy to beat these guys. Let them defeat themselves."

How will they defeat themselves? "By continuing to lowball," says Steve Corrigan, president of Mountainview Landscaping, Chicopee, MA. "Lowballers tend to do shoddy workmanship trying to make up for the mistakes they made in submitting a bid. Poor workmanship will catch up to a contractor quickly."

Choose customers carefully

But if there's a non-strategy out there, it's choosing your customers carefully and offering outstanding customer service.

"I tell all of my clients, potential and current, that we're not the least expensive guys in town, nor do we want to be," says Budd Perlman of Tex-Scape, Plano, TX. "We believe the value of our services is worth what people pay."

Andee Bechtold of Longhorn Landscape Creations, McKinney, TX, agrees that up-front communication with a client can do wonders in the client selection department. "Even when we were contacted to do work for a municipality, we met and explained that we were not a competitive

bid company," Bechtold says. But learning what the city's specific needs were resulted in winning the contract. "I feel if you are clear about who your client is, this is the best line of defense against the frustrating experience of lowballing," she says.

"My idea is, if I can't make money on you, then why would I want you?" says Bruce Sheppard of Tara Holdings, Tillsonburg, Ontario. "These bottom feeders will always be looking for the best price. I want customers that I can build a relationship with."

Once landscape/lawn care pros choose good customers, their next line of strategy is to "customer service them to death."

"We have customer service representatives who are solely responsible for seeing our clientele the day before the service," says Preston Ewing of Kimball Property Maintenance, Draper, UT. "Our customer reps help us overcome the problem of slow turn-arounds on problems and lack of relationships with vendors."



Preston Ewing sends customer service reps out to visit clients.

Focus on what counts

So, if you shouldn't waste time on trying to beat lowballers, what should you do?

"Stay the course of your existing business plan (one year) and strategic plan (three to five years)," says Barriball. "Know your market niche and who your competitors truly are."

Many landscape/lawn pros emphasize a focus on quality, but it takes time to establish a reputation for quality work. Some would then advise to a new company to make sure to do quality work from the start.

"Over time, you can develop a reputation

Tips for fighting lowballers

- Don't fight them; let them defeat themselves
- Choose customers carefully
- Focus on performing high quality work
- Know your market niche
- "Customer service" your clients to death



Ed Koenig says a good reputation will go a long way.

for quality, have referrals as the major source of new leads, and show outstanding products and projects in portfolios, flower shows, etc.," says Ed Koenig of Lifestyle Landscaping, North Ridgeville, OH.

Blessing in disguise?

Some view lowballers as a blessing to the industry. Since so many of them come and go, they frequently offer choice business opportunities for savvy business owners.

"Lowballers coming and going might fit your strategic planning in terms of acquisition opportunities," says Barriball. "Some of these guys are great technicians, and as they begin to flounder, there might exist a purchase opportunity, at least the chance to call them up and offer them a career."

— Information provided by *The Owners' Network*, a program created by JP Horizons, Inc. and sponsored by Weed Man. Visit the Web site www.owners1.com.

Minimize Mowing & Clippings with Controlled-Release Nitrogen

Richard Guzman realized there was something missing in home lawn care services that golf courses had always provided: topdressing. So he started his own business in 1998 offering deep core aeration and topdressing to homeowners and sport fields in the Atlanta area.

"Traditionally, lawn care companies just mow, fertilize and water," says Guzman, owner of Sandman Topdressing and Aerating, Inc. of Hoschton, Georgia. "When you add deep core aeration plus topdressing, all of a sudden the lawn looks phenomenally better. Our topdressing is mostly sand with about 10% organic compost."

While Sandman's customers enjoy their thicker, plusher lawns, they often complained that the grass color faded a month or so after topdressing. "Our Southern turfgrasses require more nitrogen than bluegrass and other northern turf," explains Guzman. "We knew we could put down straight nitrogen and get green grass, but didn't want to bring on a surge of growth and get excessive clippings and added thatch."

A year ago, Sandman was searching for the best fertilization solution for its patented Sandman Application System® when the company discovered Nitroform®

Controlled Release Nitrogen from Nu-Gro Technologies, Inc. Nitroform contains more than two-thirds water insoluble nitrogen, providing extended nitrogen release for 8-12 months. Unlike other nitrogen sources, Nitroform has a 1:1 ratio of nitrogen to carbon. When microorganisms break down the nitrogen in Nitroform, carbon is used as an energy source for microbes. An increased microorganism population results in healthier turfgrass.

Cut More Leaf, Less Stem... "Nitroform constantly releases small amounts of nitrogen so the turf stays green and never goes hungry," Guzman notes. "Once we started applying Nitroform, our customers' lawns and sport fields were near perfect all summer long. We found people were mowing less often – cutting more leaf and less stem when mowing. Nitroform is transforming our business dramatically for our customers and franchise operations."

Sandman continually educates its customers about the benefits of controlled-release nitrogen. They tell them that excess clippings and surges of growth are real negatives.



Cut More Leaf, Less Stem

"We promote returning the clippings to the soil," says Guzman. "By removing the clippings, you're losing 30% of your fertilization. Just mowing and leaving clippings where they lay is the best thing for the turf. By promoting controlled growth, you mow less often, compared to every other day with fast-growing lawns."

Sandman crews topdress throughout the growing season, from mid-March through the end of October. They first deep core aerate, then apply Nitroform at the rate of 200 to 300 pounds per acre, then topdress and drag the material into the soil with Sandman's patented drag-mat screeds.

"Topdressing eliminates thatch, helps percolation, increases the efficiency of fertilizer intake, reduces moisture requirements and develops a healthier root zone," explains Guzman. "Nitroform encourages organic matter and promotes controlled leaf growth. Our customers notice the difference two months and beyond because there's no drop off in feeding, no surge of growth and fewer clippings."

Other Nu-Gro Nitrogen Products... Other controlled-release nitrogen sources available from Nu-Gro Technologies include Organiform® and Nutralene®.

Organiform provides intermediate nitrogen release lasting 16 to 24 weeks. It contains 55% water-insoluble nitrogen, allowing sustained release when plants need it most. Organiform builds up beneficial soil bacteria, even in soils naturally low in microorganisms.

Nutralene provides nitrogen nutrition lasting from 12-16 weeks. It contains 14.5% water insoluble nitrogen, and releases nitrogen both by hydrolysis and through microbial activity. This dual-release of Nutralene provides a two-fold advantage: hydrolysis releases nitrogen quickly, giving plants a boost at the beginning of the growing season, then microbial activity releases nitrogen more slowly through the rest of the season.

"Many homeowners spend time and money mowing much more often than necessary," says Guzman. "They can fill up 20 bags of clippings from a 5,000 square-foot lawn. They spend time filling up the bags and then have to dispose of them, too. By mowing less, they save time, use less fuel and put less wear and tear on their equipment. The best part is they also have a more beautiful, deep green lawn."



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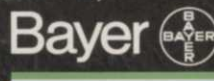




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Circle No. 114

Many companies don't try to **PROVE** to prospects why they should **select their company** with evidence that's convincing.



Give them reasons to buy

A question you should always be asking yourself is, "Why should someone select my product and/or service over my competition?" The answer won't only tell you what prospects are thinking when they consider doing business with you but also if the reasons you give are convincing.

Some call these reasons "unique selling propositions" (USPs), some call them "compelling reasons to buy," and yet others call them "benefit statements." The problem is many companies don't try to prove to prospects why they should select their company with evidence that's convincing.

Here's an example of a good and bad way to prove you're the best choice for a prospect's job:

First, the bad example. ABD Landscaping, "River Valley's Best Landscaper." This slogan on the company's proposal is all the proof it offers that it's the potential customer's best choice.

Now, the great example. ABD Landscaping, "River Valley's Landscaping Company of Choice (based on the 2002 River Valley News Consumer Choice Awards)." That slogan and footnote were on the proposal, and included with the proposal were the following:

- 56 testimonial letters from happy clients
- A copy of five newspaper stories that mention the company
- An audio cassette tape River Valley produced featuring interviews with nine happy clients
- Pictures of those nine jobs talked about on the audio tape showing smiling clients
- A copy of the company newsletter
- A picture of the team at River Valley Landscaping smiling with the caption, "Here's why we can

do what we can to make clients happy and excited to work with River Valley Landscaping."

■ A letter from the company president with the guarantee offered to clients of River Valley Landscaping. In this company's case, their warranty is for life if you agree to have them take care of the landscape once it's installed. The letter closes with some strong words from the president: "At River Valley Landscaping, I want you happy. If you're not happy, we're not happy, and you have my word we'll work with you until we've exceeded your expectations."

■ A fine gourmet brownie.

Here's a summary of what occurred in the great example and the reason why I want you to get to this point.

Testimonial letters. Why 56 of them? You can't provide a prospect with too much proof to do business with you.

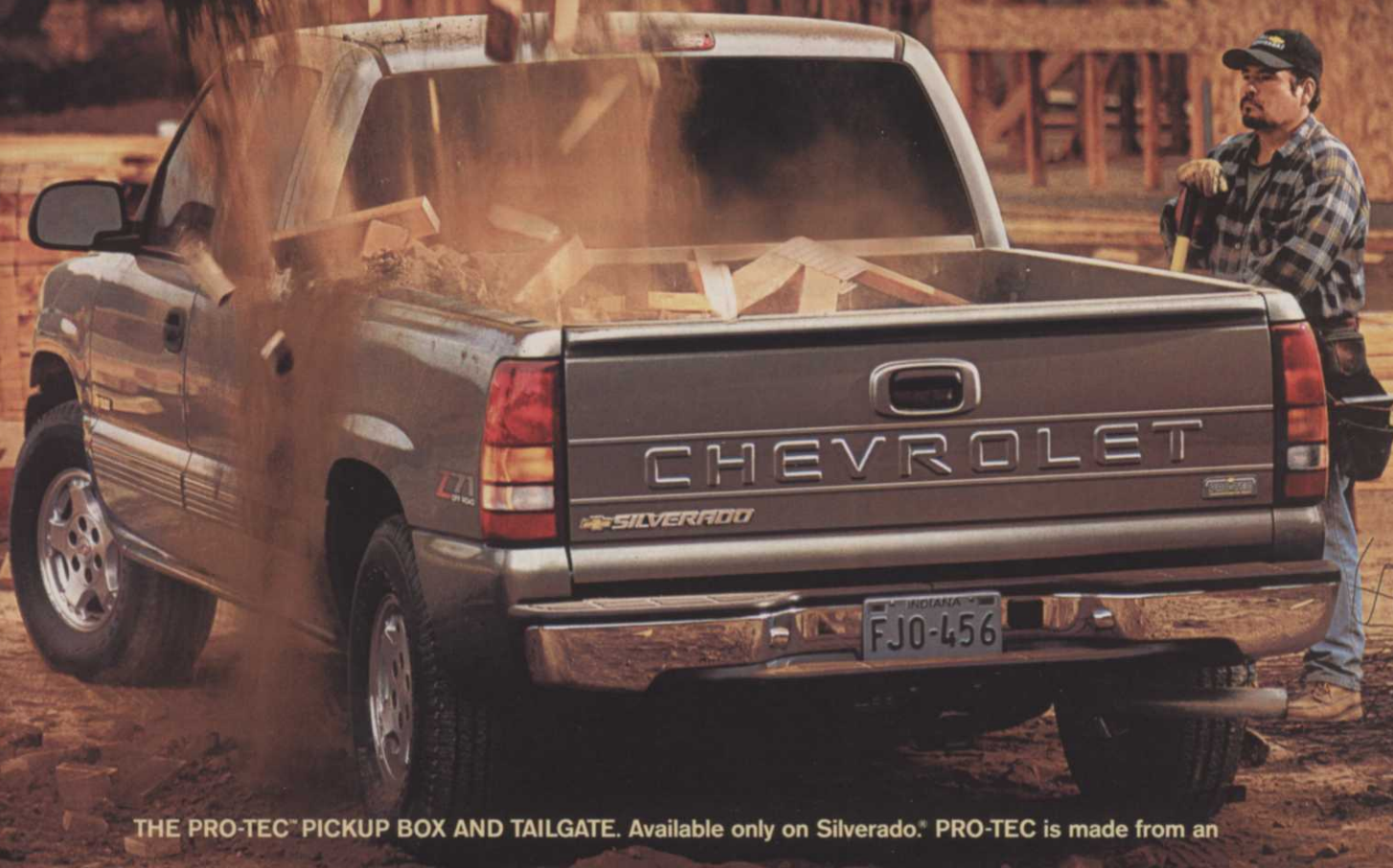
Copies of articles from the paper. A news story speaks the truth and gives you instant credibility.

Testimonials from happy clients. You can talk all day long about yourself and not sway someone to choose your services. But get a third party to talk about you and your company, and you'll really turn some heads.

A guarantee. Get a good one. If you aren't willing to stand behind your product with a clear, easy to understand warranty, I suggest you get out of the business.

— The author is founder and president of Grunder Landscaping Co., Dayton, OH, and the founder of The Winner's Circle, a consulting company. Contact Marty by calling 937/847-9944 or visiting www.grunderwinnerscircle.com.

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Circle No. 113

industry almanac

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Harper Industries acquires Goossen

HARPER, KS — Harper Industries, Inc., acquired Goossen Industries, Beatrice, NE, and its product line of straw blowers, chippers/shredders and power plate skid-steer adaptors.

Drew St. John joins Symbiot

SALT LAKE CITY, UT — Symbiot Business Group has added Drew St. John to its management team as vice president. St. John, immediate past president of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA), joins Steven Glover, Symbiot president, and board members John Allin, Rod Bailey, William Braid and Bruce Wilson.

Shindaiwa awards Challenge groups

TUALATIN, OR — Shindaiwa awarded prizes to Beautiful Landscapes, Issaquah, WA, Houston Landscapes Unlimited, Sugarland, TX, and Lawn South, Roswell, GA, for completing their first 52 weeks of consistent training in Round 1 and 2 of The Training Challenge, a training program created by JP Horizons Inc.

Rockscapes moves headquarters

CHATSWORTH, CA — Rockscapes, LLC has completed the move of its commercial and residential landscape lighting manufacturing and headquarters operations to an expanded facility in Chatsworth, CA.

Minnesota limits phosphorus fertilizers

Adios phosphorus. Hello weaker turf, uglier lawns and more pollution. That will be the payoff if Minnesota legislators keep picking on the chemical lawn care industry, says Jim Skillen of Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE), the Washington-based lobbying group that represents fertilizer and specialty chemical users.

On April 3, the Minnesota House passed (116-16) a bill to restrict the use of phosphorus in turf fertilizers applied to lawns. The bill would allow no phosphorus-containing fertilizer to be used on home lawns, commercial properties or public properties in the seven-county Twin Cities area, and no more than 3% phosphate in fertilizer (0.3 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft.) used on lawns elsewhere in the state.

The bill exempts agriculture, sod farms golf courses, and starter fertilizer use in the first year of a seeded or sodded grow-in.

Taking action

The House took the action to slow the decline of the state's lakes and ponds, their reasoning being that phosphorus stimulates blue-green algae growth, reducing oxygen for fish and more desirable aquatic plants.

"The purpose of this bill is to bring some uniformity across the state in the use of phosphorus and to provide educational information so that consumers can know when they ought to be using it and when they shouldn't be," said Rep. Peggy Leppik, the bill's sponsor. She said testing has shown that soils in many parts of the state have enough phosphorus, and that additional phosphorus would only end up in lakes and streams.

RISE's Skillen, however, disputes that

lawn care chemicals, including phosphate, are the bad guys in the water quality issue. "There is absolutely no scientific foundation for this legislation," he claims, adding that research has shown just the opposite — that healthy and well-maintained turfgrass prevents runoff and reduces pollution into lakes and streams.

"The legislatures don't have science to support the position they have taken," echoes Christiane Schmenk, director of environmental stewardship, The Scotts Co., a supplier of consumer turfgrass fertilizer. One bright note

in the legislation is a clause calling for additional research on the subject, she adds.

The Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, fearful that its agricultural members could be targeted next, lent its weight to RISE and the lawn care industry in opposing the restrictions. However, unless there is a change of heart in the Minnesota legislature, the restrictions will go into effect January 1, 2004.

"There is no scientific foundation for this legislation."

— Jim Skillen, RISE

[CLIPPINGS]

West, South growing most

The 10 states with the largest projected increase in population 1995-2025 (in millions):

State	1995 population	2025 estimated
California	31.5	49.3
Texas	18.7	27.1
Florida	14.2	20.7
Georgia	7.2	9.9
Washington	5.4	7.8
Arizona	4.2	6.4
North Carolina	7.2	9.3
Virginia	6.6	8.4
New York	18.1	19.8
New Jersey	7.9	9.5

New CEO plots LESCO's future

BY RON HALL

NEW YORK — Less than a week after being named Chief Executive Officer of LESCO (NASDAQ: LSCO), Michael DiMino laid out his management team's vision of the company's future.

In a presentation to shareholders and the investment community here on April 9, he described LESCO's new direction as "back to basics," and called on a return to the philosophy of company founders Jim FitzGibbon and Bob Burkhardt.

A vision of the future

DiMino, who spoke for about an hour, said that LESCO, because of new measures to control costs and grow revenues, is on the road to a profitable '02. He also presented a revamped sales and growth strategy that, he said, will boost same-store sales and allow LESCO to compete more effectively.

He stressed the company's person-to-person customer service style won't change.

"One of the things that LESCO is very good at, and is a core competency of our company, is that we deliver agronomic expertise to the experts," said DiMino. "We help them grow grass. We help them keep their jobs. We help them keep their businesses."

LESCO, he said, remains committed to its basic business model that consists of its:

- ▶ drive-thru service centers that offer products and advice for lawn care and landscape pros,

- ▶ unique Stores-on-Wheels (a fleet of tractor-trailers operated by salesmen trained in turf care management) concept for the golf course market, and

- ▶ desire to continue to nurture its Independent Marketing Program in those areas of the country it can't reach with service centers or truck stores. (Its first such partnership with Wilco Farmers in Oregon's Willamette Valley has resulted in sales of \$80,000 in LESCO products, he said, and has enabled Wilco to penetrate the golf market in its region.)

"We want to unleash the value that this model provides," said DiMino.

Realigning sales efforts

Key to that, he said, is the realignment of the company's sales efforts with personnel dedicated solely to selling and facility managers focused on the stores and servicing customers. Both, he stressed, will continue to offer agronomic advice.

"Right now we have a problem where our sales and service people have overlapped," he explained. "They have sort of become one job function."

Another initiative is the development of a "hub and spoke" distribution system to make sure that each store (some will be consolidated into "super stores") has products that customers need when they need them. He said that the company is considering adding more service center stores.



At a glance

Headquarters: Strongsville, OH

2001 sales: \$504.3 million

Service centers: 227

Stores on Wheels: 77

Founded: 1962 by Jim FitzGibbon and Robert Burkhardt as the Lake Shore Equipment & Supply Co. Entered Lawn Care Market in 1974 and went public in 1984, changing name to LESCO, Inc.

Markets served: Professional landscape/lawn care, golf course maintenance, pest control

Primary competitors (chemicals, fertilizers, seed): Anderson's, Simplot Partners, Lebanon, Scotts, ProSource One and United Horticultural Supply

Primary competitors (equipment): John Deere, Textron, Toro, Scag, others

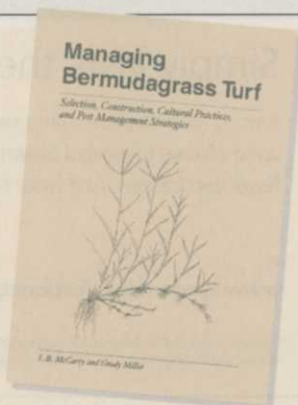
In line with that, the company is upgrading its store systems, he said, taking advantage of software to precisely track the flow of products from manufacturers to customers and gauge customer satisfaction.

"We have to go real time with that transaction so that we know instantaneously that we just sold something and what inventory has been dedicated to what customers," he said, adding that program should be in place by year's end.

"We're going to focus on customer loyalty and satisfaction," added DiMino. "We want to build shareholder value. We want to improve profits. . . This really is a new day at LESCO."

New bermudagrass book

Anybody serious about managing warm-season turfgrass should check out a new book by L. B. "Bert" McCarty, Clemson University, and Grady Miller, University of Florida. "Managing Bermudagrass Turf" is a 220-page hardcover book devoted to the selection, cultural practices and pest management strategies of bermudagrass. For more information call 800/487-2323 or visit the Web site www.sleepingbearpress.com.



Scotts asks for science in FQPA

BOWLING GREEN, OH — Christiane W. Schmenk of The Scotts Company asked U.S. Rep. Paul Gillmor (R-OH) to urge the U.S. EPA to use "accurate, real-world data and sound science" in implementing the next phase of the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA).

The FQPA, passed by Congress in 1996, regulates the nation's use of pesticides. Schmenk was one of several people representing professional pesticide users before the Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Materials here on March 28. Rep. Gillmor is chairman of the subcommittee.

"Scotts is concerned that the impending August 3, 2002 deadline for the cumulative risk assessment of organophosphates may not allow the Agency (EPA) to fully utilize all available data in decisions and that we will lose the use of important pest management tools," she told Rep. Gillmor and other staffers.

She pointed out that the voluntary cancellation of residential uses of chlorpyrifos and diazinon harmed Scotts, both financially and in terms of customer perception. The cancellations were caused by registrants' fears that they couldn't meet "incredibly high theoretical hurdles set by EPA" when faced with impending deadlines, she said. "These were broad-spectrum pest controls for which

there were no good substitutes available," she continued. "More applications of more varieties of pesticides are necessary to achieve control, which costs 25 to 50% more."

She added The Scotts Company remains concerned that, in recent years, decisions about registered pesticide uses of pest control products may not have been based entirely on science.

"Anti-chemical emotions seem to have caused science to be disregarded in certain instances," said Schmenk. "We ask for your help in ensuring that approved uses of safe and reliable pest management tools are not lost, and that all

decisions made are based on scientific evidence. "Consider and incorporate all available data into the tolerance reassessment process, even though there is an August 3 deadline."

Bailey Wood, in Rep. Gillmor's Washington D.C. office, said the hearing's purpose was to inform the Congressman of the issues surrounding FQPA. "There hasn't been any oversight on the bill as a whole," said Wood. "We wanted to make

"We ask...that all decisions made are based on scientific evidence."

**— Christiane Schmenk,
The Scotts Co.**

sure the issues are out in the open.

Rep. Gillmor said he realized FQPA "is not a perfect bill" but that it does give the public confidence the government is monitoring the quality and safety of its food supply.

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- "Ask the Expert" section coming soon — review previously submitted questions and answers, and submit new ones!
- Features from the May issue of LM
- LM Week in Review — Sign up today!
- Green Industry news
- Link to BASF's "Growing Trends" newsletter
- Link to Turfgrass Trends articles — coming soon!



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Optimism prevails at '02 ALCA Student Career Days

BY JASON STAHL

PEORIA, IL — The Associated Landscape Contractors of America's (ALCA) 26th Annual Student Career Days went off without a hitch here in late March with over 1,100 students, faculty and industry representatives gathering to discuss Green Industry career opportunities.

Optimism abounded among the 78 companies present regarding the current job market and business prospects for 2002.



J. Landon Reeve (left) and Jeff Korhan both seem to think the job market is turning around.

"The job market has definitely improved in that it's not hard to get people," said William Dickerson, owner of Dickerson Landscaping, Tallahassee, FL. "If you're on top of things, you're trying to get in early while a pool of good people is still there. You want to hire now before the job market returns to where it was two years ago, and it will return there. There's too much money being spent in this industry for it not to."

J. Landon Reeve, president of Chapel Valley Landscape Company, Woodbine, MD, said 2001 was his company's best year ever, and 2002 looks "pretty steady." His company is currently hiring, although he said they're being very selective.

"Despite what the economy is going through right now, it's still a matter of finding the right people for the right situation in any market," Reeve said.

Some people have positions open not because employees left but certain areas of their business are experiencing strong growth.

"We're ahead of last year with sales of

design/build work, so we're looking for a couple landscape architects and a production supervisor," said Jeff Korhan, president of Tremendous Landscape Com-

pany, Plainfield, IL. "We're not in a hurry, but if we see the right person, whether they're experienced or right out of school, we'll take a hard look at them."

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—Jim Ziegler, President, Rental City, Boulder, CO

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Circle 116

PLCAA adds football star Theismann to conference lineup

NASHVILLE, TN—Two-time Pro Bowl NFL player Joe Theismann recently joined the lineup of speakers at the Professional Lawn Care Association of America's Green Industry Conference held in conjunction with the Green Industry Expo Nov. 13-16.

Theismann, quarterback great of the Washington Redskins, will open the industry's top landscape and lawn show for PLCAA at its grand opening session sponsored by Syngenta on Thursday, Nov. 14 at 8:30 a.m. at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center.

After a 12-year NFL career, Theismann left the Redskins in 1985 due to a severe leg injury. His career highlights include a 27-17 Redskins victory over the Miami Dolphins in Super Bowl XVII. In 1983, he was voted the NFL's Most Valuable Player and Pro Bowl's Most Valuable Player. He's a native of South River, NJ, and a 1971 University of Notre Dame graduate and All-American athlete.



NFL great Joe Theismann

Now a football analyst for ESPN and author of *"The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Football Like a Pro,"* Theismann shares hard-earned lessons of life in his presentation, "Managing to Win."

Theismann headlines PLCAA's educational conference program that offers a mix of business, technical and industry topics. PLCAA's conference runs on a new Wednesday

through Saturday schedule this year. PLCAA's pre-conference activities begin Wednesday, Nov. 13 with a golf outing and afternoon pesticide recertification workshops, and the event closes on a high note Saturday evening, Nov. 16 with an optional outing to the Grand Ole Opry. The GIE trade show takes place Friday and Saturday with the product field day on Thursday.

For more information, contact PLCAA at 800/458-3466 or visit www.plcaa.org. For exhibitor information, go to www.gieonline.com.

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People & companies



Valley Crest appointed **Christina Briggs** to vice president/national business development.

Tecumseh named



Jonathan P. Gorman vice president, marketing and product development-

worldwide for its Engine & Transmissions Group.

ProSource One has hired several people as sales representatives. **Mike Bailey**

will manage turf accounts in the Palm Beach Co./Vero Beach area. **Virgil Beaven** will cover Kansas City. **Geer DuBose** will handle the forestry, vegetation management and aquatics markets in North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. **Bill Gauwitz** will cover Minnesota. **Dan Jones** will focus on central Florida. **Theresa Luke** will cover the turf and ornamentals market around Savannah, GA and throughout South Carolina. **Brian McGuffin** will cover Chicago. **Bill Plante** will service turf markets in southeast Georgia and north Florida.

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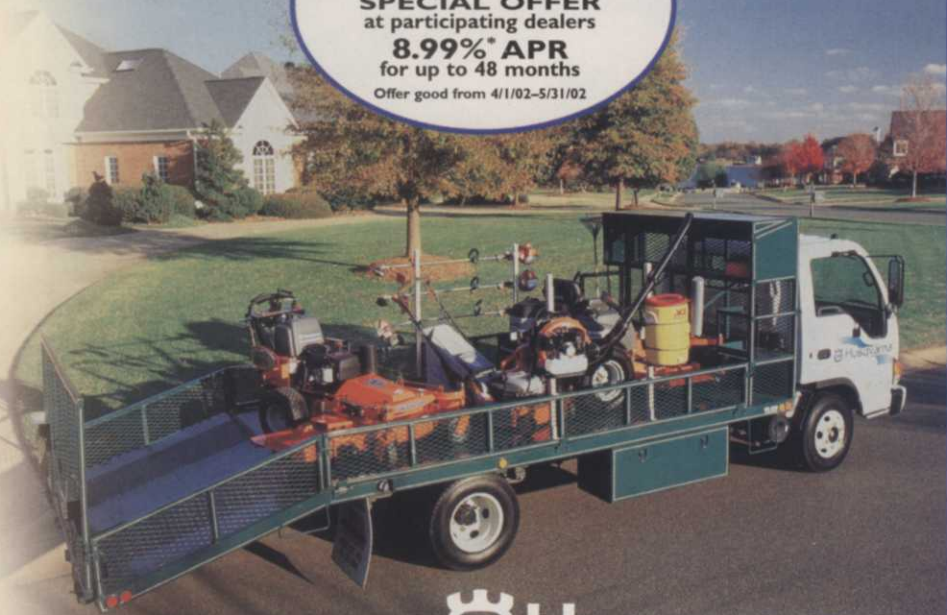
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Play

Troy Hall started Hall's Horticulture Design, Inc., Charlotte, NC, in 1994 convinced he could parlay his commitment to service and quality to business success in landscaping.

Five years later, exhausted from hard work, Hall found himself in the hospital owing vendors \$240,000 and his business in big trouble.

What went wrong? Almost everything. Yet, while many business owners might have thrown up their hands in futility, Hall became passionate about learning from his mistakes. Because of his positive attitude, he turned his business around. "We're living our dreams right now," he says.

Hey, this is easy

Hall's firm offers both maintenance and design/build services, including lighting, irrigation, patio work, all types of stonework, waterfalls and ponds. But, let's start at the beginning.

Business went fine for Hall's first four years. It was going so well, in fact, that he eyed rapid expansion near the end of 1997.

"At the time, we were doing almost all residential work," he says. Even though this work was highly profitable (\$507,000 in sales in 1997 with an 18% net profit), Hall felt he needed to take on large commercial landscape work, too.

His residential clients turned out to be a

Troy Hall (right) with the two managers who helped him refocus his business: Will Sutterlin (left) and Matthew Posvar (middle).

your game

good source for acquiring commercial jobs. "We had several residential accounts where the owners were either in property management or construction," he says. "For example, one residential client was the president of a real estate development corporation. We got to talking, and he was looking for someone to help him out and asked us if we'd be interested in bidding."

Over time, as he began working with more construction contractors, he got to know the foremen. "When they moved on to other jobs, they called us to see if we wanted to bid on their new jobs," he adds.

By the next year, Hall's sales had doubled to \$1.1 million and, instead of nine employees and four trucks, he was managing 26 employees and 11 trucks.

Profit, however, imploded. "We ended up with a 3% net loss," he says, recalling his shock upon discovering this at year's end.

He now realizes that he'd focused on growth instead of profits. "I'd been telling the managers to push crews as hard as they could, and overtime costs were killing us," he recalls. "I spent all my time pushing for more sales. I never looked at whether the work was profitable."

Here's what went wrong

In analyzing his situation, Hall isolated four major problems in four different areas:

Estimating. "We had no way to tell whether we were profitable, so I ended up bidding lower than I should have, often

How Troy Hall refocused his business and saved himself from financial ruin

BY WILLIAM ATKINSON

just as a way to get the work," he says. His commitment to superior service and quality compounded the profit problem. For example, on one \$130,000 job Hall ended up spending \$150,000. That construction contractor, as well as others, encouraged him to cut corners, but he refused. He'd staked his reputation on quality work and he wasn't budging.

Labor costs. He wasn't paying attention to overtime costs. "I was having my managers work the employees as hard and as long as they could, and many of them were putting in 60 hours a week," he recalls. "Payrolls were costing \$25,000 every two weeks. It was a nightmare."

Inventory costs. Hall also found it difficult to compete with larger companies since most of them had their own nurseries. "We ended up having to spend quite a bit more for plants than what they spent to grow the plants themselves," he explains.

Cashflow. Payments from commercial accounts were slow. "In our residential work we operated with 50% down and 50% on completion," Hall says. On the \$130,000 commercial job, for example, it took him nine months to get paid. "There

was a lot of red tape and paperwork to getting paid, and this led to a major cash-flow problem, especially since we had hired so many new employees and had invested so much in new equipment."

By the end of 1999, Hall's invoices with vendors were reaching 90 and 120 days and he owed them \$240,000. "Some of my vendors wouldn't let me charge anymore," he says. "I was even struggling to make payroll."

Hall's work habits were also taking their toll on his health. "I had been working 16 hours a day, seven days a week for a long time and finally ended up in the hospital," he says. "This was a turning point for me."

Let managers manage

Hall committed himself to working smarter. He called on two of his managers to help him refocus the company — Will Sutterlin, manager of the services division, who had been with him since the beginning, and Matthew Posvar, who took over as manager of the landscape division. "They took so much weight off my shoulders," says Hall. "I couldn't have turned this business around without them."

Together they redirected the company's

Simple changes that cut labor costs

When Troy Hall's debt threatened to kill his company, he began to pay more attention to running the business rather than focusing all his time on selling. One area of concentration was on slashing payroll. The company did this in three ways:

Have employees show up earlier. Before, four managers and 21 laborers clocked in anywhere between 6:30 and 6:45 a.m., but they weren't getting into the field until 7:45 or 8:00 a.m. "They spent their time loading up the trucks, sitting in the trucks, trying to back up around each other, and so on," Hall explains. "I was so busy planning my day that I didn't even realize

what was going on out there." So it became a requirement that all of the managers and two laborers show up early to sharpen mower blades, get equipment ready, and load trucks and park them at the front of the shop. When everyone else would come in at 8 a.m., their trucks would be loaded, they'd get their work orders, and be gone in five minutes. Since this policy was enforced, Hall says he's saved over 100 man-hours a week in overtime and cut payroll dramatically.

Keep track of things better. To do this, Hall began using a software program called CLIP, which helps route jobs and cut travel time between jobs,

as well as track crews' locations and lunch times. CLIP also helps Hall manage production. "It tells the crews exactly how long they have for each job," he explains. "If they hit their numbers, they get a bonus at the end of the week."

Eliminate gas cards. Before, seven or eight trucks would be sitting around the gas station with everyone talking before, during and after fill-ups. Hall took gas cards away he'd previously given to foremen. Now, there are designated days where everyone goes to the gas station: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The result? Work hours have been cut from 60 a week to no more than 45.

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Hall goes over a design plan with Sutterlin, one of the managers who he said was crucial in helping him turn his business around.

involved billing in advance rather than billing in arrears.

The first month, of course, ended up with double billing. He billed his cus-

tomers at the end of the month, then also for the next month's work.

"I can't tell you how scared I was when I did this," he admits, "but I only lost one

focus. "Before, we focused on sales, growth and competition with the big boys," Hall says. The new vision was to recapture the original plan to offer high-end residential design/build and maintenance services capitalizing on the company's commitment to service and quality.

"We decided to get almost completely out of dealing with large commercial contracts, with the exception of a small number of general contractors who were friends and where we could get some solid, dependable business," he explains.

Hall decided to perform 60% of his maintenance work on residential properties and 40% on commercial properties. On the design/build side, 85% of the work would be residential.

Profit is king

Hall then drew a bead on profitability. First, he sat down and created a detailed chart of accounts that actually reflected how the company did business. The next step was to create a budget and live by it. Hall then began using CLIP software to job-cost all of his jobs.

This led to some startling realizations. For example, Hall learned that he'd never calculated the real cost of liming. "We had a standard price but if pH was down a lot on a piece of property, we might have to put down 20,000 lbs. and end up losing money," he says. As part of the new contract, liming was considered an extra cost.

Hall also changed his billing schedule. "At the time, we would work for a month, bill for the work, and get paid 15 to 60 days later," he says. "I wrote a letter to all my clients, explained my situation, and explained my new program." The program

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Circle 120

Nine ways to improve cash flow

BY WILLIAM J. LYNOTT

1 Never allow money to lie idle.

Deposit daily receipts into a money market account where they'll immediately start drawing interest. Link it for online transfers to your checking.

2 Use other people's money.

At today's low interest rates, careful use of credit can be one of your most effective business-building tools. Beware of extensive use of credit for personal affairs. When it comes to business, it's a different matter.

3 Consider leasing.

Leasing makes sense if you'll be able to use the cash in your business or investments to earn a better return than the cost

of leasing.

4 Diversify to keep cash flowing.

When you and your employees are idle, any work is better than no work. Performing a variety of maintenance services at prices that don't satisfy your usual parameters of profitability can make sense when they provide work and some cash inflow.

5 Don't rush to pay your bills.

Hang on to your cash as long as possible to keep money available to draw interest or to work in your business. But don't jeopardize your credit standing by paying bills late.

6 Aggressively collect accounts receivable.

When a customer is

late paying a bill, don't hesitate to get on the phone to ask if the bill has been overlooked.

7 Maintain a cash cushion.

Keep enough cash in interest-bearing accounts to cover normal operating expenses for three to six months.

8 Develop a personal relationship with your banker.

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Hall's residential focus gives his firm the opportunity to compete on service/quality.

"Right about 15%," Hall says. He says that early this season he will be out of debt with his vendors and credit card companies.

"And one of the nicest things now is that I

only work about 10 hours a day, and I haven't worked a Saturday in months," he says. **LW**

— The author is a freelance writer based out of Caterville, IL.

customer." Now, each January, he job-costs and renews each contract. "If something is profitable, we stay with it," he says. "If it's not, we increase the cost, discuss it with the customer or lose the customer."

Details matter

Hall also scrutinized his insurance costs. In the area of vehicle insurance, for example, he thought he needed a truck for spraying. Instead, he sold the truck, got rid of the insurance obligation and put the spray rigs on a trailer.

He got a better rate of workers' comp by classifying drivers separate from non-drivers, managers and office staff who didn't do any field work. "This saved thousands of dollars a year," he says.

He also shopped his firm's health insurance and cut that bill by another \$600 each month. In all, he reduced his company's insurance premiums from \$3,000 to \$1,800 a month.

Next came the challenge of paying down his firm's debt. "I sat down with all my vendors to work out a repayment plan," Hall says. He took out a second mortgage on his home to make some immediate payments. Then, each month, he took some of the profits and continued to pay down the debt.

All of Hall's efforts are paying off. "We now have 14 year-round employees, with another six to seven during the 10-month season," he says. "We have some large residential design/build and maintenance projects ranging from \$50,000 to \$80,000."

In 2001, the company's gross revenue was \$1,000,000, only down slightly from what it had been when Hall was focused on commercial work. And net profit?



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Circle 125

Tough little brutes



A variety of attachments allow this Toro Dingo power unit to tackle multiple landscaping tasks.

Compact skid-steer and utility track loaders give landscapers small but powerful tools to reduce labor costs

BY STEVEN GREENWALD

Compact skid-steer loaders and utility track loaders are the newest products on landscape contractors' wish lists. "They were going crazy for these in Las Vegas at Con Expo," says

Brad Lemke, new product development manager for ASV, Grand Rapids, MN.

And it's no wonder. The newer mini-machines can deliver what the larger ones can but at a lower cost and with only half the size and weight, making them ideal for working in tight spaces, often without disrupting turfgrass or surrounding landscapes.

"As the size-to-power ratio improves, the basic market trend in installation products will go toward more compact, more powerful products," says Alan Porter, president of Kanga Loaders, Broken Arrow, OK. "Some of these new products have a footprint the size of a wheelbarrow."

What's the appeal for landscape professionals? First of all, the smaller machines are maneuverable enough to work in

tighter areas, for creating new installations; for renovating terrain that's already been developed and for maintenance work. They can fit between buildings, existing landscaping and hardscaping, even through fence gates without the bother of the operator having to remove sections. They can also turn in a smaller radius.

Turf & landscape friendly

"They give performance with the least disturbance to the property," says Tom Sieper, product manager, Kubota Tractor Corporation, Torrance, CA.

As a category, the smaller units are light in weight, so they exert far less pressure on the ground than the older products and do far less damage to the surface. Look for psi ratings when acquiring one, say the experts.

Exerting far less pressure is especially true with the tracked implements. "Track loaders are soft on the ground, with many actually lighter in psi than a human footprint," says Tony Wixso, product manager

continued on page 37

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Monsanto scientists used scanning-electron microscopy to photograph the effects of weeds sprayed with Roundup PRO and an imitator. Taken just one hour after application, these images clearly show more formulation in the leaf sprayed with Roundup PRO.

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Scientists also used autoradiography to photograph and measure the amount of herbicide in the roots two hours after application. Time after time, at least three times more herbicide showed up in the weeds sprayed with Roundup PRO. With the imitator, barely any herbicide has moved to the roots.





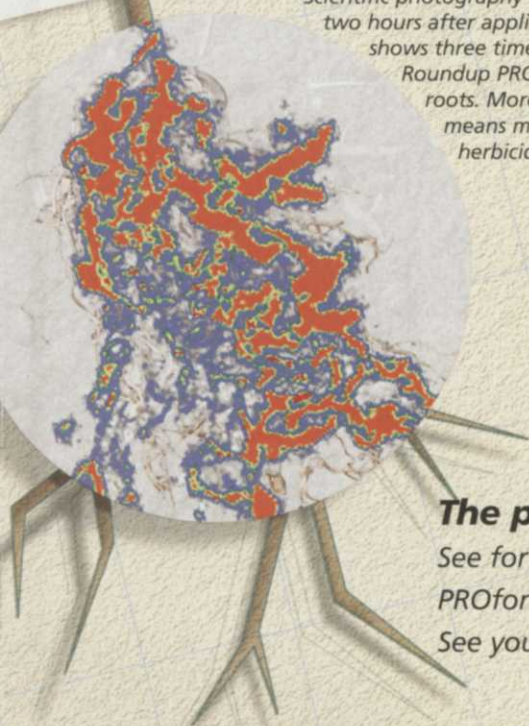
This is a cross-section of a weed leaf magnified 1000x. The yellow droplets mean Roundup PRO is already at work inside.



This weed, sprayed with the imitator, has almost no droplets in the leaf.

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Always read and follow label directions. Test conducted with MON 77360; EPA Reg #524-475 with comparison to Syngenta product carrying EPA Reg. #10182-449. 1. Test methodology: In scanning-electron microscopy, Monsanto scientists identified penetrated formulations of both Roundup PRO and Touchdown Pro in the mesophyll cell layer. These micrographs support the evidence that formulations containing Monsanto's patented PROformance technology rapidly penetrate the leaf surface. 2. Test methodology: Radiolabeled formulations were applied at equal acid-equivalent rates. Radioactivity was visualized by autoradiography following a simulated rain event two hours after application. Monsanto laboratory tests, 2001. Roundup®, Roundup PRO® and PROformance™ are trademarks of Monsanto Technology LLC. [12748 jct 10/01] ©2001 Monsanto Company RUPRO-12748

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for Polaris, Median, MN. "And they don't skid, so they don't rip up the turf."

"The track systems on utility loaders, with their lower psi, are less likely to leave ruts in developed areas, and they can turn without tearing the turf," agrees Lynn Roesler, loader products marketing manager, Bobcat Company, West Fargo, ND. Their combined delicacy and toughness make them popular for sensitive areas such as golf courses, says ASV's Lemke.

According to Marc Bowers, marketing manager, Sitework Systems, The Toro Company, Bloomington, MN, the com-



Lynn Roesler says part of compacts' appeal is their ease of use.

pacts "are like a paring knife. They do a precision job, the job they're designed for." The operator can see what's going on, he says, which is crucial in maintenance and renovation work where "landscapers need to see precisely what they're doing."

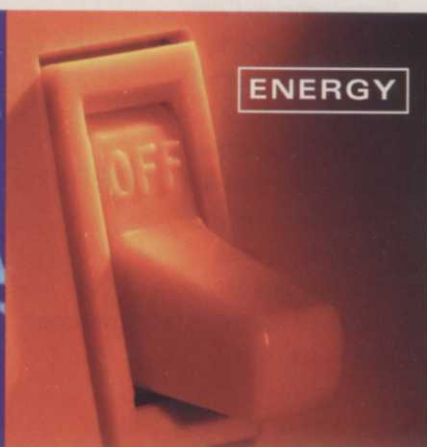
Light weight and small size also translate to portability. The new compacts "are easy to move, with no logistical problems," says Mike McPherson, vice president, Glenmac, Inc., Jamestown, ND. "You can move them to a site in a custom trailer with room for all the attachments," he says, so you can work rather than locate the right equipment or find a rental.

And they don't even need a custom trailer. "The new compacts are under 10,000 lbs., says Kubota's Sieper. "They can be hauled in a 1/2-ton pickup, so light the driver doesn't need a commercial driver's license to haul them around to your worksites."

Less stress

The minimal weight and the track design of compact utility loaders also means they have the traction needed for wet days or on muddy ground, according to Roger Braswell, president, PowerHouse Equipment Inc., Fort Mill, SC.

"You can get out and do the job with less downtime," adds Lemke. "And because you can get work done when the rain is wet, you save on costs and labor."



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Ease of use is touted as a major advantage of the compact installation machine. "They're easy to use and not intimidating," says Bobcat's Roesler.

This appeals to operators, says Wixo. "There are those that work with joysticks, with a thumb-operated hydraulic, and no foot operation. It gives the video game expert an advantage in the workplace."

And their lower center of gravity gives them more stability for more safety.

According to Toro's Bowers, "They aren't only easy to learn to use, they're easy to learn to use safely. Safety is the key. A



Marc Bowers: "Compact utility loaders are like Swiss army knives."

worker can be fully productive in minutes, so the customer doesn't have to see the worker learning on his own turf and on his own time. Instead, he sees proficiency."

New suspension systems, such as the one offered by his company,

give the operator a smoother ride with less fatigue, says ASV's Lemke.

This ease-of-use also translates to ease in changing attachments, according to Kubota's Sieper. These compact products come with many attachments, and they can be added quickly, often by hand without tools, to maximize the machine's productivity.

Versatility rules

A range of attachments makes the compacts stand out. For instance, "compact utility loaders are like Swiss army knives," says Bowers. "They are flexible enough to meet very specific needs. They do a focused job that is specific to that installation. It's a tool-box solution."

"The minis are actually power plants," adds Glenmac's McPherson. "The attach-

ment drivers are almost like generators, with the power of a big machine, but the tenderness and maneuverability of a small one."

"They have good hydraulics, so they have excellent attachment capability," adds Roesler. He touts the more popular ones: tillers, trenchers for irrigation work, and augers for fences and trees. "They let one machine do a lot of different jobs," he says. "It's not like buying a tree spade or post hole digger."

Other attachments include brooms, pallet forks, buckets, and sod rollers, all easy to attach and detach. And there's a general drift to adding more attachments. Braswell notes such things as stump grinders, vibratory plows, and trench improvements.

"One machine can take the place of a dozen others," agrees Lemke, "so you save on equipment cost."

Sieper concurs. Compacts are being used by those who need a lot of bang for the buck, he says, like municipalities with limited budgets and a lot of different needs. And rental companies find that the versatility of compacts will maximize their investment in these assets.

Cost and labor savings

Cost is one of the major factors behind compacts' popularity. First of all, the compacts just cost less to buy than the bigger units, says Dan Kilgas, marketing category manager at Ariens, Brillion, WI. Kubota's Sieper calls them "pocketbook friendly."

Porter adds that compacts are also cheaper to operate and reliable. Kanga's customer feedback has shown that the buyer can recoup the purchase cost well within a year. "All the attachments mean you can do a wide range of jobs, eliminating all hand labor, and you become very efficient in terms of cost," he says.



Customers like compacts' low cost, says Dan Kilgas.

Compacts can replace the manual labor of two or three people, so the job gets done fast, and their versatility lets operators save time by making secondary or tertiary operations easy to do.

"Our customers say you can reduce

your exposure time on a contract site and get a job done with 30% to 50% time savings," says Porter. "So you start your next job sooner and pack in more jobs a year."

This means, says Bowers, that a landscape pro can bid a job based on hand

labor costs and still get the contract, but he can then show up with a compact and get the job done in half the time.

"The test of these products is their productivity," he says, and that makes them popular. "I

know contractors whose crews get to work early so they can get the compact equipment they want."

Cost is one of the major factors behind compacts' popularity.

More creativity, more business

Ultimately, compacts can have an effect on the bottom line most contractors can't foresee. "They're versatile," says Porter. "You can intensify the scope of what you're doing and create more dramatic effects."

Landscape pros can also take advantage of extra attachments by adding services such as snow removal with snow blowers and plow blades. "You use your investment year-round that way," says Wixo, "and that makes sense from a business standpoint."

— *The author is a freelance writer who lives and works in Cleveland, OH.*

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Property at a glance

Location: Baltimore, MD

Staff: The Brickman Group, Ltd.

Category: Cemetery or Memorial Site

Total budget: \$81,300

Year site built: 1896

Acres of turf: 208

Acres of woody ornamentals: 5

Acres of display beds: 1,200 sq. ft.

Total paved area: 3 miles

Total man-hours/week: 120

Maintenance challenges

- ▶ Sunken areas/undulating turf
- ▶ Over 40,000 monuments
- ▶ Looking fresh for holidays

Project checklist

Completed in last two years:

- ▶ Installation of flower beds

On the job

- ▶ 1 full-time staff, 5 seasonal employees, 1 licensed pesticide applicator

Druid Ridge Cemetery

2001 PGMS Grand Award Winner for Cemetery or Memorial Site

Talk about the ultimate obstacle course for a landscaper. Can you imagine having to twist and turn a walk-behind between thousands of headstones, trying to avoid damaging them but at the same time trying to be fast and efficient? Then, of course, someone's got to trim around each one of those headstones.

The six-man crew of The Brickman Group that takes care of Druid Ridge Cemetery in Baltimore, MD, doesn't have to imagine those horrors. They do those chores every week in striving to provide a quality final resting place for the deceased.

Because they work at a cemetery, the crew has to work around and be respectful of ongoing funeral services, which number about 600 during a typical year. Even with the most careful herbicide



Mowing the entire 208 acres of Druid Ridge Cemetery in two days takes a unified and dedicated effort.

treatment, some hand weeding is necessary. Aging gravesites undergo sub-surface collapsing, which necessitates restoration of grading and turf replacement. And there are plenty of trees such as weeping cherries and purple leaf beeches to prune and elevate branches for mowing and visitor safety.

PGMS
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Editors' note: *Landscape Management* is the exclusive sponsor of the Green Star Professional Grounds Management Awards for outstanding management of residential, commercial and institutional landscapes. The 2002 winners will be named at the annual meeting of the Professional Grounds Management Society in November. For more information on the 2001 Awards, contact PGMS at:

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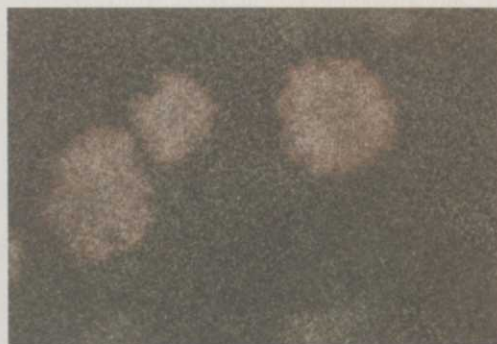
The six-man crew of The Brickman Group strives to make Druid Ridge Cemetery a quality final resting place for the deceased.



The recent installation of flower beds has perked up the cemetery, but of course has also added more duties such as deadheading to the crew's plate.



Fungicide resistance:



**Use chemical disease controls in moderation
and prolong the life of these valuable tools**

BY RICH HANRAHAN

When a product works well — a pest control product, for example — we're tempted to use it a lot, or even use

it exclusively. That can be a mistake. In the case of pest control products, the result can be that, in time, the product doesn't work as well. In the worst-case scenario, it won't work at all because the pest will have become resistant to it.

Fungicides' effectiveness can be reduced by light, irrigation, rainfall and mowing, and so we reapply. Fungicides must also be reapplied to protect against new disease growth.

Every time certain fungicides are applied, the odds that the organism may develop resis-

tance increase. Develop and implement a strategy to prevent the rise of resistance.

Why resistance develops

Fungicide resistance first appeared in the early 1970s with the registration and widespread use of benomyl, a site-specific fungicide. The size and significance of the problem has been growing ever since.

Resistance begins to develop when a fungus makes a genetic adjustment or undergoes a mutation that reduces its sensitivity to a particular fungicide. This adjustment or mutation allows the affected fungus to survive the fungicide. Naturally, the surviving organism is likely to become the dominant strain when the same fungicide is used frequently and exclusively with it. Over

time, the resistant strain replaces all other strains and the disease becomes increasingly difficult to control. This process can be underway before you realize it.

When resistance develops, it's typically not limited to individual chemical compounds. Usually, strains of fungi that have become resistant to a fungicide will be resistant to all fungicides in the same chemical class. Overexposure to one fungicide might destroy the usefulness of several.

Get a plan

A fungicide is just part of a successful disease control program that must also include proper cultural management practices.

Turf susceptibility to disease can be influenced by practices such as mowing and fertilization,

continued on page 55

Dollar spot (top right) can develop resistance but others, like brown rot, can be more of a problem.

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Brown patch (left and right) is significantly less likely to develop resistance in your landscape.

continued from page 52

and diseases are often most damaging to intensely managed turf. So, before disease can be controlled effectively, evaluate whether you're performing all necessary cultural practices that promote healthy turf. Disease poses less of a problem on strong, vigorous turf. Plus, turf recovers from disease faster when it isn't already weakened by other stresses.

However, fungicide applications are still appropriate for even the best-maintained and heavily used turf that must be protected from damaging diseases.

Design a schedule for proper application timing. Sometimes a preventative application is best applied prior to a fast moving disease's appearance, but sometimes a curative application when a disease first appears is adequate.

Keep in mind, however, the risk of disease resistance. Generally, rotating chemistries will reduce the risk of developing fungicide-resistant fungal pathogens, ensuring longevity. Rotating and tankmixing chemistries in different chemical classes and with different modes of action is sensible fungicide resistance management.

Not all fungi created equal

Not all fungi and fungicides are

the same, especially when it comes to resistance. Some fungicides' chemistries are more likely to provoke resistance than others. Some fungi are more apt to develop resistance than others.

Fungi with higher reproductive rates are more likely to develop resistance because they pass on the mutated gene more quickly and broadly. Diseases that infect many stages of a plant under a wide range of environmental conditions are also more likely to develop resistance since the disease can attack in so many ways. Some fungi that have shown a propensity for developing resistance are *botrytis*, brown rot, and *phytophthora*, for example. In contrast, brown patch, *fusarium* and red thread are significantly less likely to develop resistance in your landscape.

Site-specific fungicides run a higher risk of resistance because they work by inhibiting just one vital function in the fungal cell. Once resistance develops to this site, the fungicide is ineffective. Multi-site fungicides, on the other hand, interfere with several vital functions of the fungal cell. They're less likely to foster resistant fungi because even if resistance develops to one site, the fungicide can still attack the fungus via another site.

The benzimidazole class is an example of a site-specific or sin-

gle-point fungicide class, as are phenylamides and strobilurins. The benzamide class represents a chemical class that's less likely to foster resistance because it provides a multi-site defense. Examples of other multi-site fungicides include fosetyl-AL, propamocarb and chlorothalonil. If fungi develop a mutation that protects them from one form of attack, they're still going to be susceptible to these fungicides' other attacks and therefore be controlled.

When rotated and used in tankmix combinations, certain fungicides can effectively control a broad spectrum of disease without the concern for resistance development.

The variety of fungicides available provides you with

Some fungi are more apt to develop resistance than others.

Healthy turf is the best defense

Healthy turf resists diseases better than stressed turf. It also recovers faster from attacks of disease. For healthy turf:

- ✔ Select appropriate species and varieties
- ✔ Maintain adequate soil moisture
- ✔ Avoid soil compaction
- ✔ Maintain proper mowing heights and frequency
- ✔ Ensure proper fertilization

Overusing any fungicide promotes resistance, so never make more applications than you need to.

many good tools to use in developing and running a successful disease resistance management program.

Using multiple fungicides from different chemical classes with varying modes of action is a key technique in managing resistance. The two basic approaches are rotation and tankmixing.

Why rotation?

The basic strategy behind both rotation and tankmixing is that if a fungus has developed resistance to one of your fungicides, using multiple fungicides will vastly increase your odds of ridding turf of

the fungus before it has a chance to spread and mutate further.

Rotation involves using two or more fungicides in sequence, each alone; tankmixing involves mixing two or more fungicides together so they can be applied simultaneously. Typically, your strategy would include both high- and low-risk fungicides, but tankmixing even multiple at-risk compounds can also reduce resistance, so long as those fungicides tankmixed have different modes of action. (Always tankmix in accordance with label recommendations.)

Always be sure to:

Reduce the frequency.

Over-using any fungicide promotes resistance, so never make more applications than you absolutely need to achieve disease control. Adding one more application "for good measure" is not a good idea in this case.

Apply at the right rate. On the other hand, when you do apply a fungicide, be sure to apply enough. "Cutting" the rate used in a single application will increase the likelihood of resistance development because you expose the organism to the fungicide without providing enough product to control it. Observe the recommended rates, and thoroughly cover the plants or areas of concern.

Reduce your dependence.

You can reduce your dependence on fungicides by developing an integrated pest management (IPM) approach. For

example, wherever possible, use plant species and/or varieties that are disease resistant. Make sure the landscape is properly planted and maintained so that its susceptibility to disease will be minimal. Watch the landscape for the first signs of disease so you can intervene before a problem is well established.

Fungicide selection

There are many fungicides on the market that claim to prevent or cure various common diseases. Be aware that although a product may be labeled for a particular disease, it doesn't guarantee it will solve *your* problem. Efficacy can vary from region to region, and different strains of certain diseases may require different fungicides to cure the disease. So, how do you know which to choose?

Trial and error can be expensive, inefficient, and may further damage the turf. You should talk with other landscape professionals in your area to see what's worked best for them. Consult with an expert such as a turf pathologist or university researcher to get a recommendation. Many universities have conducted extensive trials to test fungicide efficacy on a broad number of turfgrass species and varieties.

After gathering shared knowledge, you'll be ready to make an informed fungicide selection.

— *The author is technical development manager of fungicides for Chipco Professional Products.*

Find great disease information online

When you need help in diagnosing or controlling diseases on turfgrass and/or ornamentals, you can turn to several Web sites on the Internet.

Because so many diseases appear seasonally and/or regionally, start by checking if the turfgrass or horticulture department at your nearest land grant university has a site dedicated to diseases.

A quick search on Yahoo (typing in turfgrass disease) turned up excellent disease information from The Ohio State University, Purdue University, the University of Wisconsin, North Carolina State and Texas A&M. There are probably many others.

Also, Syngenta Professional Products' new electronic turfgrass disease identification guide is easy to navigate, has complete listings (with photos and maps) of all turfgrass diseases and offers practical control advice. As a quick reference, you may want to bookmark: www.syngentaprofessionalproducts.com/to/diseaseID/.

—Ron Hall



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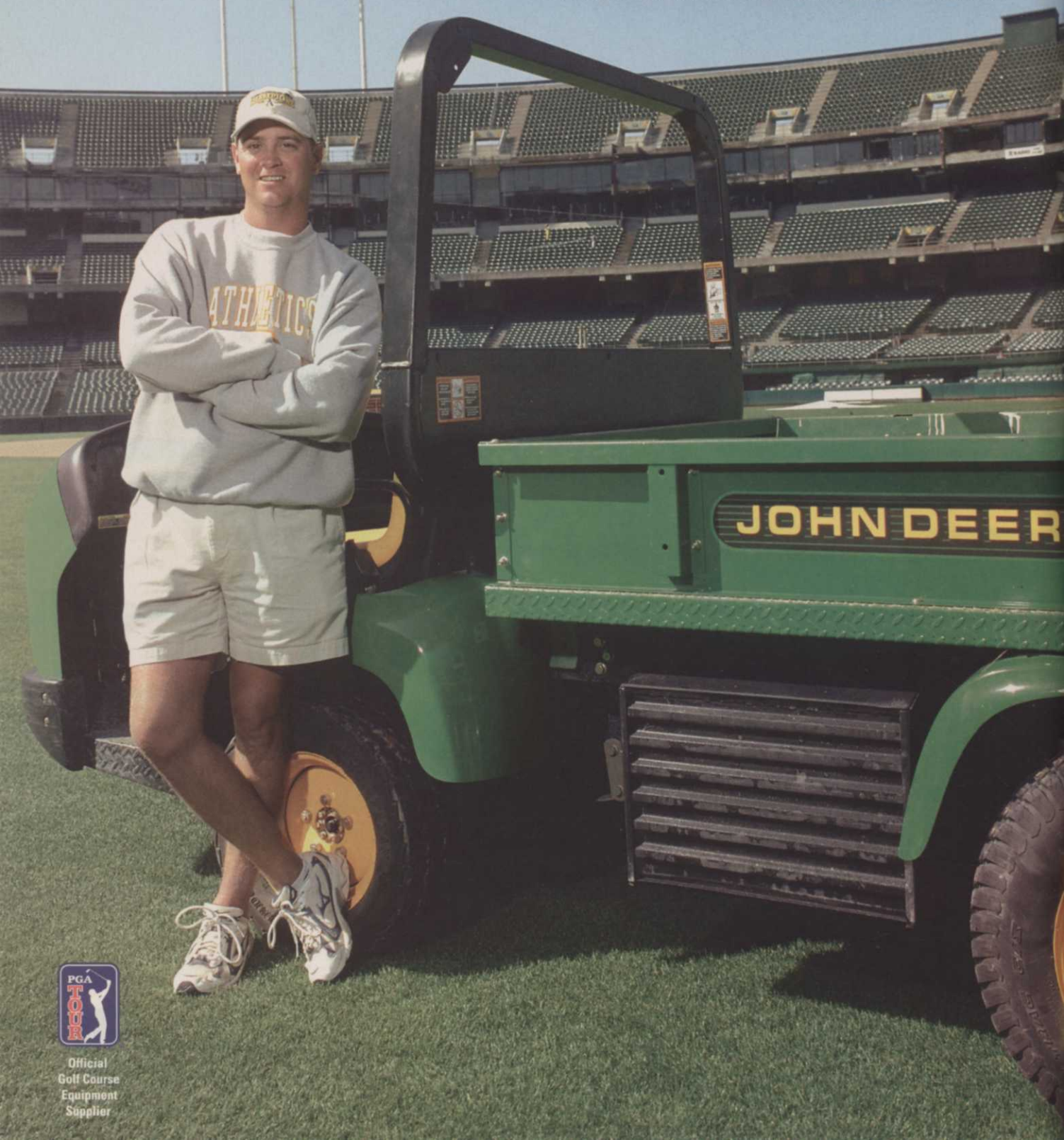
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Infields for truest play

Not too hard, not too soft — here's how to get your infield just right

BY PAUL ZWASKA

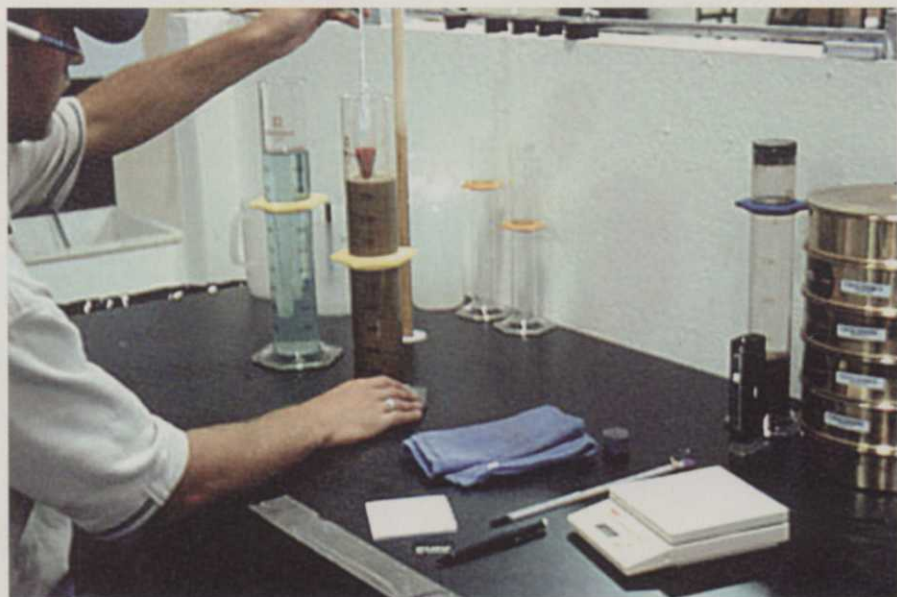
Editor's note: This article is the third and final of a series on infield care.

Many people complain that their infield skin surfaces are too hard, too soft, too tight or too loose.

Some of these problems may be due to improper maintenance or recent weather. For instance, if the infield skin is spiked or nail-dragged too deeply, players may complain it's too soft or too loose.

Daily nail-dragging should only penetrate the soil deep enough to smooth cleat marks and minor ripples in the playing surface. Typically, that means only penetrating the top 1/2 in. - 3/4 in. of the skin portion of the infield

An extended period of heat and drought can cause an infield to become very hard. Unfortunately, many of the park and recreation directors that maintain baseball fields can't do much about



Testing your infield soil mix reveals the percentage of sand, clay and silt it contains. Too much of any of these ingredients will either cause your skin infield to play too loose or get too hard.

this because their fields aren't irrigated whatsoever.

Test that soil

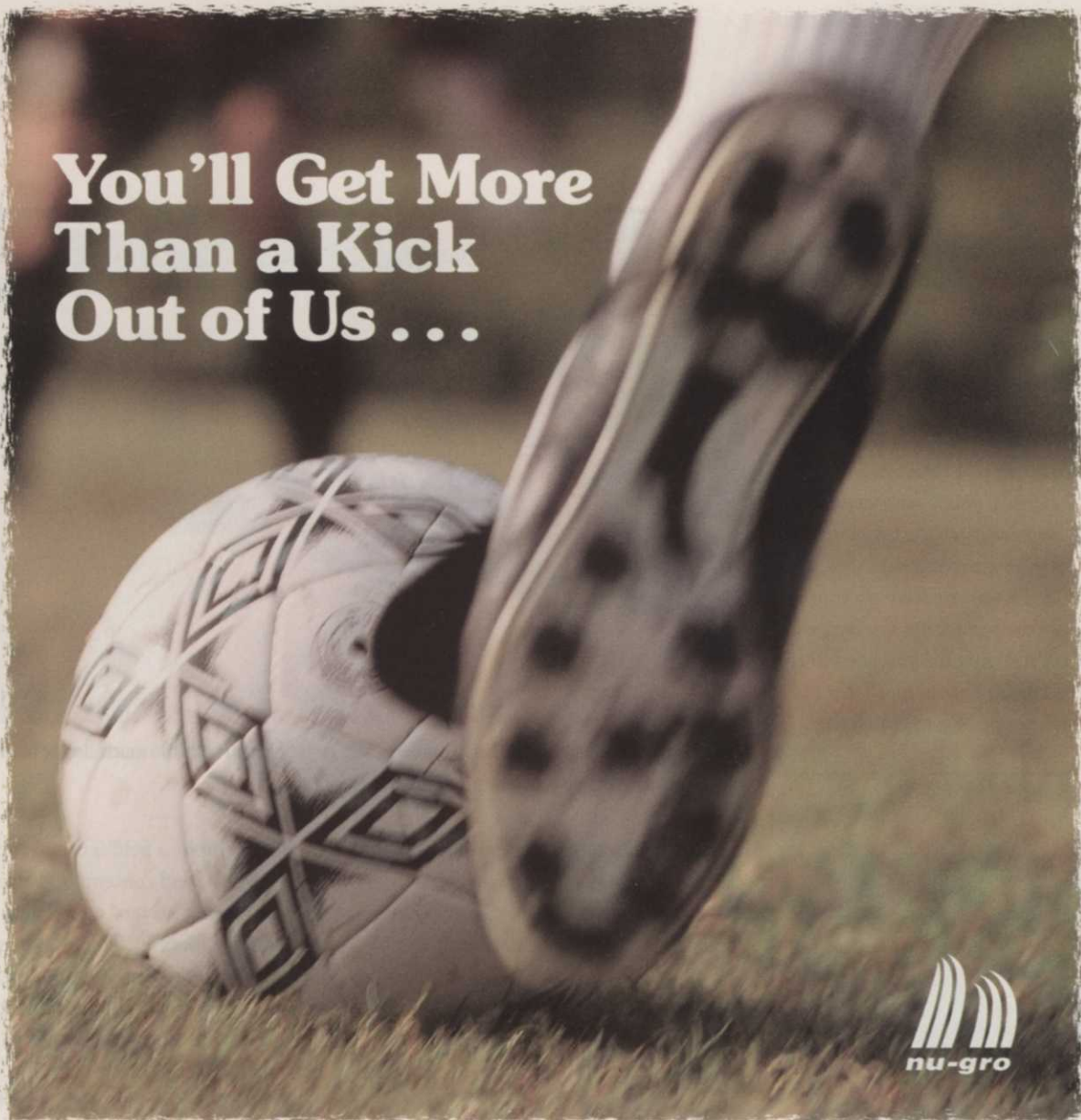
Often the biggest problem is the soil itself. Poor performing infield soils account for many problems but you cannot improve something if you don't know what it is you're trying to im-

prove. You first need to find out the makeup of the existing infield soil by getting it tested. Many soil testing companies around the country perform accurate tests. Also, many county extension offices offer soil testing.

The two types of tests you can have performed are:

continued on page 62

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Circle No. 132

continued from page 60

▶ a soil texture analysis test, which will give you the percentages of sand, silt, and clay in the infield soil,

▶ or a particle size analysis, which will give you the above, plus a distribution of the different sizes of sand in the sand fraction and the sand shape and sphericity.

These tests can cost between \$30 and \$80. For that price, you'll get a valuable document containing a basic list of the ingredients for your current infield skin soil.

If you like the soil you have on your infield skin, use the test results as a recipe for ordering new soil any time you need to add some to the infield. Bear in mind that soil suppliers will not be able to match the



Rototilling calcined or vitrified clay products into an infield soil with too much clay or hardness will help fractionate it and make it more manageable.



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Circle 133

exact percentages for you, but some should be able to get close. Once you find a trusted supplier, stick with them if you're looking for consistent materials.

Amending infield base soils

If you're unhappy with the makeup of your infield skin base-soil, use the soil test as your baseline.

For almost all regions and conditions the guidelines for sand, silt and clay in an infield mix are 50% to 75% sand, 15% to 35% silt, and 15% to 35% clay. If you don't have the budget to totally replace your infield skin base-soil, the next option is to amend it with other soils or manufactured soil amendments to achieve the desired soil consistency.

Some soil labs can prescribe the amounts of soil you'll need to add to achieve your goal percentages. First, a sample of your present infield skin base mix is tested to provide the initial sand, silt and clay percentages. Next, a decision is made as to how the mix must be improved.

For example, a field is tested and found to be high in sand content (a likely scenario following players' complaints of poor traction and footing). There's not enough money to replace the entire infield skin mix, so the field manager decides to amend it with other soils to tighten up the existing mix.

With a loose, sandy infield mix, blend in a loamy or clay loam soil to provide better traction. This can be done in two ways:

▶ The field manager can add small amounts of these other soils (five to 10 yards at a time) to see how well it binds up the soil (a long process because one to two months are needed to see how the field firms up),

▶ or you can have the loamy or clay loam soil tested by the soil lab.

The lab will determine if the soil is a suitable candidate to achieve the desired soil separate percentages, and, if it is, will calculate the amount needed to add to the existing mix. You must know the square footage of the infield skin as well as the

depth it will be amended to make the calculations.

Usually, you don't need to amend any deeper than four inches. If large amounts of soil are needed for the proper results, you may find some soil may need to be removed to prevent the infield skin grade from becoming dramatically altered. Be sure that any new soil added to an infield skin has been properly screened and is very clean.

In another example, the infield skin is too high in clay and too hard. The first op-

Be sure that any new soil added to an infield skin has been properly screened and is clean.

tion for a field manager is to use a commercially-produced soil amendment, such as calcined or vitrified clay products, to till into the heavy soils to fractionate it and make it more manageable. Amounts needed would depend on how much clay is in the base soil.

Take it slow and only add three to four tons at a time. Till it into the top three to four inches of the base soil, and allow the infield one to two months to settle in order to see the true effects of the amending process. (You can always add more if needed. It's a bigger problem if you go overboard with too much and then need to reclaim some firmness.)

The second option is to till in sand to loosen the soil. A word of caution — tremendous amounts of sand could be required to achieve the proper soil separate percentages. This would require the soil

laboratory to calculate the amounts of materials needed to properly alter the soil to the desired consistency.

Due to the tremendous amounts of sand needed to alter the infield mix, you would need to remove a considerable amount of soil to avoid drastically altering the infield skin grade.

Amendments are a big help

In these circumstances, it's usually a lot easier to use commercially produced soil amendments to alter the skin base mix than actual soil. These amendments will usually be needed in smaller quantities to achieve the proper fractionating effect desired in high clay infield soils.

Mix it in good

No matter what you amend your infield skin base soil with, proper mixing is crucial to provide a homogenous soil for your infield skin. Any kind of layering can lead to the top layer sloughing off at the interface between the two layers. And, of course, this will happen right in the middle of a crucial play in a game.

Rototilling the infield in two to three different directions to the proper depths should provide adequate mixing. Make absolutely certain to get along all edges.

Once it's thoroughly mixed, level and drag the infield to assure positive surface drainage off the infield skin. Roll in two directions perpendicular to each

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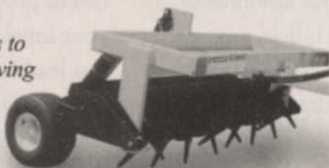
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other with a one or one-and-a-half ton vibratory roller to adequately compact the base. Finish off by thoroughly soaking the field with water to help the soil settle and glue together.

Choosing topdressings

Now that the infield base soil has the desired consistency, a topdressing should be added to make managing the surface much easier. Besides the aesthetic value of a topdressing, these materials assist the field manager in maintaining a loose layer on top for resiliency, and to act as a mulch for holding moisture in the base soils longer.

A field with a topdressing layer allows ballgames to continue in light rains without compromising traction. Infields with topdressings will also dry on the surface faster, which allows for faster field preparation after rain.

Which topdressing material is right for your situation? Field managers have a variety of different materials to custom-craft their infield topdressings for their specific infield soils, climate conditions and desired infield skin color. Here are some common conditions and topdressing suggestions:

Loose, sandy infield skins:

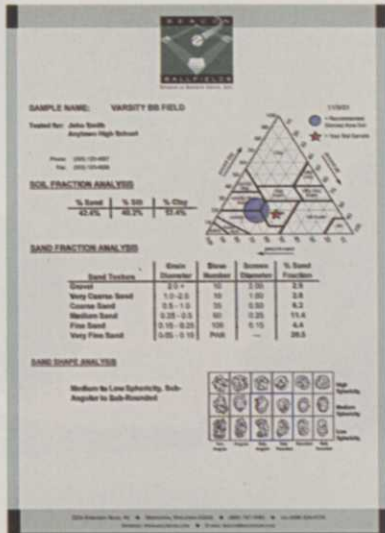
Use topdressing materials that absorb and hold moisture (calcined clays or diatomaceous earth products). These topdressings add

water-holding capacity to the loose, sandy infield skins. Moisture helps to firm sandy soils just like on a beach — as you get closer to the shoreline where there's more moisture in the sand, the sand firms up. This will provide better traction on these soils provided that moisture is always available. However, it won't do much good on a field with no irrigation and three weeks with no rain.

Low humidity, windy climates: In these areas, it's vital to maintain a high amount of moisture on the topdressing

In windy climates with low humidity, it doesn't take long for infields to dry after a light rain.

surface to further slow the rapid evaporative process from reaching the base soil materials. In addition, the extra moisture being held by the topdressing adds weight and glues the topdressing down so that strong, prevailing winds won't blow it off the infield and contribute to building up any lips. It doesn't take long for fields to dry after a



A soil test will provide a report such as this one showing the makeup of your infield soil.

light rain in these areas. Topdressings that hold moisture (calcined clays or diatomaceous earth products, which are too transportable to be used in windy areas) work well, but can be mixed with low moisture absorbing materials (vitrified clays or crushed aggregate products) in small percentages for color or slightly more rapid surface drying.

An example would be a topdressing mix of 70% calcined clay and 30% vitrified clay. Increase the vitrified clay if you want the topdressing to dry faster; decrease it to dry more slowly.

High humidity, light to moderate wind climates: Fields in parts of the United States with this type of climate tend to dry much more slowly after a natural rain. These climates tend to slow evaporation and therefore require different topdressing management strategies.

There are many recipes for a topdressing in these weather scenarios. You can use any of the four types of topdressings, or a mixture. A favorite mixture involves using

a higher percentage of low moisture absorbing materials (vitrified clays or crushed aggregate products) with a smaller percentage of topdressings that absorb and hold moisture (calcined clays or diatomaceous earth products). This provides a topdressing that dries more rapidly at the surface while shading the lower base soil from drying too rapidly. It allows for rapid re-entry by maintenance crews to prepare fields for upcoming games.

By varying your percentage of water-holding vs. non-water-holding topdressings, you can control exactly how much moisture you want to hold in your topdressing.

With all the varieties of topdressings

available, it's wise for a field manager to become familiar with the choices, their attributes and colors. Next, the best advice is to experiment with all of the various materials until you craft a topdressing that gives you the greatest aesthetics and versatility in all weather and field conditions. **LM**

—The author is manager of Beacon Ballfields and former grounds manager for the Baltimore Orioles at Camden Yard. For information concerning a Paul Zwaska seminar on baseball field maintenance, visit the Web site www.ballfields.com.

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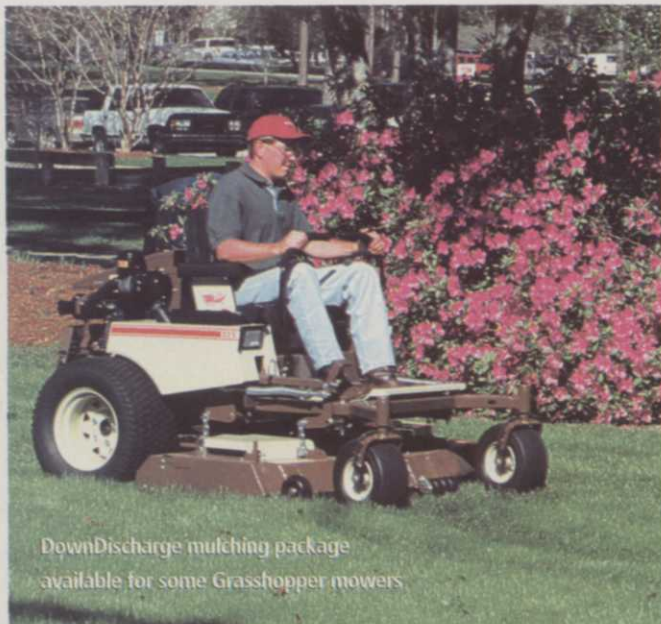


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Mulch it up



DownDischarge mulching package available for some Grasshopper mowers

BY CURT HARLER

Landschoot, associate professor of turfgrass science at Penn State University.

Mulching mowers are rotary mowers designed to keep the clippings circulating under the mower deck so the blades of grass will be chopped into finer pieces.

Some newer mowers have special features that facilitate mulching, including multiple rippled blades and dome-shaped decks.

Most commercial mower manufacturers offer mulching kits for their mowers. These are plates that block discharge shoots and force the clippings back through the blades to assure they become a fine mulch.

BEFCO
800/334-6617
 ROCKY MOUNT, NC
www.befco.com

- Baffling on Cyclone mowers for even thatch disbursement
 - Rear discharge
 - Fast clearing of thatch
- Circle #258**

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www.textronturf.com

- Come with 32-, 36-, 48-, 54- and 61-in. decks
 - Mowers are gear driven
 - Five forward speeds
- Circle #259**

continued on page 70

Mulching mowers are part of the answer to the landfill space crunch facing America. An analysis of resi-

dential waste composition in Cincinnati, OH, shows that yard debris accounted for nearly 20% of the total. A study in Plano, TX (population 80,000) reveals over 700 tons of grass clippings were collected and disposed of in landfills each week.

In addition to demand for landfill space, collection and disposal of this waste material is expensive, notes Dr. Peter J.

Get an edge

It's one thing to sharpen a mower blade properly. It's another thing to keep a sharp edge on that blade.

The best answer today appears to be Marbain mower blades. Several manufacturers now tout products which offer Marbain. Among them are Cub Cadet Commercial, Gravelly, Great Dane, Raptor and Scag.

Competitors agree there's a marked advantage to this newest technology. Blades made with Marbain-treated steel, a proprietary heat treatment process, are extremely hard, yet not brittle.

continued on page 70

TURN ON THE **KUBOTA VALUE:** SHAFT DRIVE, QUIET DIESEL POWER, HYDRAULIC DECK LIFT



The new Kubota ZD28 zero-turn mower is strong enough to handle the tough turf, yet responsive enough to make work seem like fun. With 18,500 fpm blade tip speed (72" mower) for better mowing performance, a tilt-up mower deck for easy maintenance, a shaft drive mower and transmission to reduce wear and the lowest noise output of any zero-turn mower in its class, the ZD28 is everything you value in a commercial turf mower. **Talk to your Kubota dealer about the complete line of ZDs today.**

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- 60" and 72" cutting width mowers
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For more information, call 1-888-4-KUBOTA, Ext. 403 or write to Kubota Tractor Corporation, 3401 Del Amo Boulevard, Dept. LM, Torrance, CA 90503
Financing available through Kubota Credit Corporation. www.kubota.com



Cub Cadet one of several mowers with new blades

continued from page 68

BUSH HOG

800/537-3716

SELMA, AL

www.bushhog.com

- Easy to install on mid-mount zero-turn mowers from mulching kit allows discharge chute to be left in place
- Circle #260

CUB CADET COMMERCIAL

877/835-7841

CLEVELAND, OH

www.cubcommercial.com

- Mulching system is computer designed
 - Features Marbain blades
 - Available on zero-turn riders
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JOHN DEERE

800/537-8233

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www.deere.com



- Deep deck mower design increases airflow
 - Material processes fast
 - All take mulch kit attachments
- Circle #262

DIXON INDUSTRIES

800/264-6075

COFFEYVILLE, KS

www.dixon-ztr.com

- Add a mulch kit to the ZTR



- 7523 mid-mount rider
 - Kit has three Gator Blade mulching blades and bolt-in plug
 - Zero-turning radius
- Circle #263

EASTMAN INDUSTRIES

207/878-5353

PORTLAND, ME

www.hovermower.com

- Hover mowers come in 19- and 16-in. widths
 - Three-blade design chops clippings to 1/4-in. length
- Circle #264

GRASSHOPPER

620/345-8621

MOUNDRIDGE, KS

www.grasshoppermower.com

- DownDischarge mulching package for all front-mount and M1 midmount decks 44 - 72 in.
 - FlipUp option on front-mount
- Circle #265

GRAVELY

800/472-8359

BRILLION, WI

www.gravelly.com

- Mulch kits available for all Pro G and Pro H walk-behinds, 250Z, 260Z and 272Z zero-turns and PM310 and PM460 outfront mowers
- Circle #266

HUSTLER

800/395-4757

MOUNDRIDGE, KS

www.excelhustler.com

- Mulch kits available for all

continued from page 68

In fact, their 50 Rockwell Hardness rating is 25% to 50% harder than blades found on standard mowers.

The process improves blades' metallurgical properties. The yield strength (or amount of force needed to deform the blade edge) is increased, and this gives the blade greater impact toughness and improved wear resistance. As a result, the blades hold their edges longer.

These new blades are tough but not bulky. With the Marbain process, one produces a lighter blade material. The metal's actual weight or density isn't changed. But it's possible to make a blade thinner and therefore lighter given its better properties, according to Cub Cadet product line manager Ken Speece. That means less work for the mower engine.

Marbain blades are no more difficult to sharpen if standard power grinding wheel techniques are used, but would be tougher to do with a hand file.

The material is effective both for mulching blades and regular mower blades.

Hydro walk-behinds

- Fit decks of 37, 48, and 54 in.
 - Retain material under deck to be cut and recut
- Circle #267

LASTEC

317/892-4444

LIZTON, IN

- Articulator 725XR has mulch or rear discharge option
 - Requires 35 pto tractor, 3-point hitch
 - Seven articulating decks
- Circle #268

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EQUIPMENT

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- Mulching kits for TD65-2 and TD-65 give fine cut on 12- or 15-ft. units
 - Three blades on the center and two per wing deck
- Circle #269

SCAG POWER

EQUIPMENT ▶

920/387-0100

MAYVILLE, WI

www.scag.com

- Install a Mulch Master system

on Advantage cutter decks

- Eliminator Blades with individual cutting chambers shred grass to ultra-fine particles
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PARDEEVILLE, WI

- Patented Tri-Cut cutting disk gives one-third more cuts per revolution
 - Mows 1 to 3.5 in.
- Circle #271

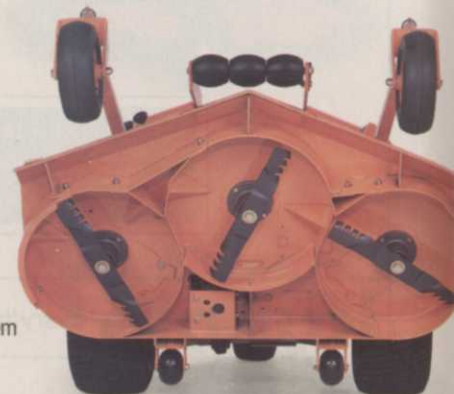
TORO COMPANY

800/803-8676

BLOOMINGTON, MN

www.toro.com

- Cuts, recuts clippings, driving small pieces back into turf
 - 72-in. deck works on Groundsmaster series mowers
- Circle #272



Landscape MANAGEMENT

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- 03 260 Lawn Care Service Companies & Custom Chemical Applicators (ground & air)
- 04 285 Irrigation Contractors & Consultants
- Other Contractors/Service Companies (please specify) _____

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- 05 290 Sports Complexes
- 06 295 Parks
- 07 305 Schools, Colleges & Universities
- Other Grounds Care Facilities (specify) _____

SUPPLIERS AND CONSULTANTS

- 08 355 Extension Agents/Consultants for Horticulture
- 09 360 Sod Growers, Turf Seed Growers & Nurseries
- 10 365 Dealers, Distributors, Formulators & Brokers
- 11 370 Manufacturers
- Other (please specify) _____

2. Which of the following best describes your title? (fill in ONE only)

- 12 10 **Executive/Administrator** - President, Owner, Partner, Director, General Manager, Chairman of the Board, Purchasing Agent, Director of Physical Plant
- 13 20 **Manager/Superintendent** - Arborist, Architect, Landscape/Grounds Manager, Superintendent, Foreman, Supervisor
- 14 30 **Government Official** - Government Commissioner, Agent, Other Government Official
- 15 40 **Specialist** - Forester, Consultant, Agronomist, Pilot, Instructor, Researcher, Horticulturist, Certified Specialist
- 16 50 **Other Titled and Non-Titled Personnel** (please specify) _____

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 TITLE _____
 FIRM _____
 ADDRESS* _____
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- 19 C Tree Care
- 20 D Turf Aeration
- 21 E Irrigation Services
- 22 F Turf Fertilization
- 23 G Turf Disease Control
- 24 H Ornamental Care
- 25 I Landscape Design
- 26 J Turf Weed Control
- 27 K Paving, Deck & Patio Installation
- 28 L Pond/Lake Care
- 29 M Landscape Installation
- 30 N Snow Removal
- 31 O Other (please specify) _____

4a. Do you specify, purchase or influence the selection of landscape products?

58 Yes 59 No

4b. If yes, indicate which products you buy or specify: (fill in ALL that apply)

- 32 A Aerators
- 33 B Blowers
- 34 C Chain Saws
- 35 D Chipper-Shredders
- 36 E De-icers
- 37 F Fertilizers
- 38 G Fungicides
- 39 H Herbicides
- 40 I Insecticides
- 41 J Line Trimmers
- 42 K Mowers
- 43 L Snow Removal Equipment
- 44 M Sprayers
- 45 N Spreaders
- 46 O Sweepers
- 47 P Tractors
- 48 Q Truck Trailers/Attachments
- 49 R Trucks
- 50 S Turfsed
- 51 T Utility Vehicles

5. Do you have internet access? 52 A Yes 53 B No

5a. If so, how often do you use it?

54 A Daily 55 B Weekly 56 C Monthly 57 D Occasionally

101	113	125	137	149	161	173	185	197	209	221	233	245	*257	269	281	293	305
102	114	126	138	150	162	174	186	198	210	222	234	246	258	270	282	294	306
103	115	127	139	151	163	175	187	199	211	223	235	247	259	271	283	295	307
104	116	128	140	152	164	176	188	200	212	224	236	248	260	272	284	296	308
105	117	129	141	153	165	177	189	201	213	225	237	249	261	273	285	297	309
106	118	130	142	154	166	178	190	202	214	226	238	250	262	274	286	298	310
107	119	131	143	155	167	179	191	203	215	227	239	251	263	275	287	299	311
108	120	132	144	156	168	180	192	204	216	228	240	252	264	276	288	300	312
109	121	133	145	157	169	181	193	205	217	229	241	253	265	277	289	301	313
110	122	134	146	158	170	182	194	206	218	230	242	254	266	278	290	302	314
111	123	135	147	159	171	183	195	207	219	231	243	255	267	279	291	303	315
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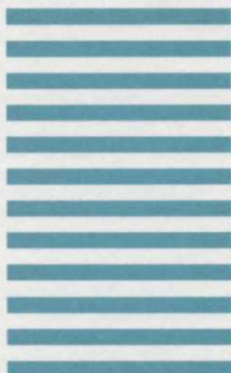


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**Landscape
MANAGEMENT**

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- 16 50 **Other Titled and Non-Titled Personnel** (please specify) _____

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 FIRM _____
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| 18 <input type="radio"/> B Turf Insect Control | 24 <input type="radio"/> H Ornamental Care | 29 <input type="radio"/> M Landscape Installation |
| 19 <input type="radio"/> C Tree Care | 25 <input type="radio"/> I Landscape Design | 30 <input type="radio"/> N Snow Removal |
| 20 <input type="radio"/> D Turf Aeration | 26 <input type="radio"/> J Turf Weed Control | 31 <input type="radio"/> O Other (please specify) |
| 21 <input type="radio"/> E Irrigation Services | 27 <input type="radio"/> K Paving, Deck & Patio Installation | |
| 22 <input type="radio"/> F Turf Fertilization | | |

4a. Do you specify, purchase or influence the selection of landscape products?

58 Yes 59 No

4b. If yes, indicate which products you buy or specify: (fill in ALL that apply)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 32 <input type="radio"/> A Aerators | 39 <input type="radio"/> H Herbicides | 46 <input type="radio"/> O Sweepers |
| 33 <input type="radio"/> B Blowers | 40 <input type="radio"/> I Insecticides | 47 <input type="radio"/> P Tractors |
| 34 <input type="radio"/> C Chain Saws | 41 <input type="radio"/> J Line Trimmers | 48 <input type="radio"/> Q Truck Trailers/Attachments |
| 35 <input type="radio"/> D Chipper-Shredders | 42 <input type="radio"/> K Mowers | 49 <input type="radio"/> R Trucks |
| 36 <input type="radio"/> E De-icers | 43 <input type="radio"/> L Snow Removal Equipment | 50 <input type="radio"/> S Turfseed |
| 37 <input type="radio"/> F Fertilizers | 44 <input type="radio"/> M Sprayers | 51 <input type="radio"/> T Utility Vehicles |
| 38 <input type="radio"/> G Fungicides | 45 <input type="radio"/> N Spreaders | |

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112	124	136	148	160	172	184	196	208	220	232	244	256	268	280	292	304	316

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ask the expert

BY BALAKRISHNA RAO

Mystery growth

We take care of several large properties with trees on them. On some of the trunks, there's a mostly green, sometimes white fungus which appears to be mostly on the bark. It's not very thick and it grows in circular patterns. What are these and how do we get rid of them?

— IL

Based on your description of the growth on the tree trunk, the problem appears to be related to lichens. Lichens are the result of symbiotic association of certain fungi with certain algae. These lichens produce the circular green and white growth and don't cause harm to trees. They're mainly an aesthetic concern, growing on tree trunks to take shelter there.

There's no practical solution to manage these lichens. They tend to establish in a cool and moist environment. Check whether or not the trunks remain wet for a long period of time from overhead sprinkler watering. Monitoring and avoiding this type of watering, plus improving air circulation underneath the bark by selective pruning, might help the problem.

Proper sod installation

How should you prepare the ground to be sodded to avoid creating a soil interface? Also, what's the best time of year to seed turfgrass in our area?

— MI

Prepare the soil prior to sod installation or seeding. If this isn't done, the result may be a soil interface, which occurs when two distinctly different soils come in direct contact.

This is common when a peat-grown sod is laid directly on heavy clay and compacted soil. Water won't pass uniformly through an interface. If water doesn't penetrate, neither will roots.

To prepare the soil for seeding or sodding, cultivate it and remove large stones and foreign objects like tree roots. Till organic matter into the top six to eight inches of the soil to provide a transitional soil between the underlying soil and sod. Never "layer" soil or amending agents, since this could also create an interface. Make sure the area is graded properly for proper drainage and water flow. Any potential "sink type" low areas should be corrected. Prior to cultivation, conduct soil pH and texture analysis tests, and provide corrections as needed. Correcting pH and amending the soil with phosphorous is easier while cultivating or tilling the area.

Rake the area by hand or with proper equipment. Apply starter fertilizer as needed. This tilling, raking and grading operation should minimize the compaction, water drainage and potential interface problem.

Also, consider obtaining sod with little or no thatch. Excess thatch, when dry, can cause a hydrophobic (repel water) condition and lead to run off of water and poor root establishment. After proper turfgrass establishment, aerify the turfgrass to minimize potential interface and rooting problems.

In your area, the turfgrass can be seeded in spring and/or fall. Seeding in fall around Labor Day is better than in spring since the temperature is cooler and there's plenty of moisture. Also, there are less weed problems to deal with. Seeding in spring is okay, but recognize that the subsequent temperature may be high with low moisture and isn't favorable for proper seed ger-

mination and turfgrass establishment. There's also a greater potential for weed establishment and competition.

Tussock tussle

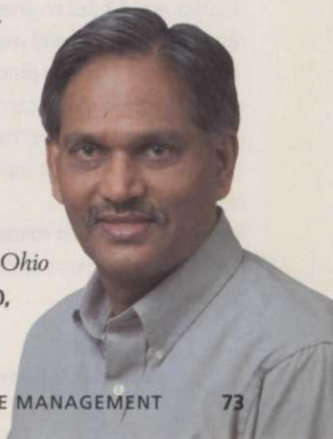
Last year we saw some feeding activity from tussock moths on cherry trees along the street. We're thinking of using Bt to manage them. How well will this work? When is the best time to treat for them?

— OH

Yes, *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) products such as Dipel DF or Foray 48-B can be used to manage the tussock moth problem. Bt works best when applied on young larvae. As the larvae get older and larger, they become difficult to manage with Bt. You may have to use some pyrethroid such as Talstar, Deltagard or other insecticides.

Tussock moths can defoliate trees partially or skeletonize trees during feedings. Depending upon the type of tussock moths you have, there may be one to two generations per year. The white marked tussock moths, common in your area, have two generations per year, while the pale tussock moths have one generation. Their names are based on the appearance of the adult moth, so monitor the adult moth activity for further identification.

As far as managing the tussock moth, consider treating with the Bt of your choice around mid-May or when dogwoods are blooming. Reportedly, the dogwood blooming period coincides with tussock moth emergence and activity. Again, treat as needed in mid- to late August.



Manager of Research and Technical Development for the Davey Tree Expert Co., Kent, Ohio

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO: "Ask the Expert" Landscape Management; 7500 Old Oak Blvd.; Cleveland, OH 44130, or email: sporter@advanstar.com. Please allow two to three months for an answer to appear.

products

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On the rail

L.B. Plastics' new aesthetically-pleasing SheerView glass railing system assures an optimum view for design/build contractors' residential and multi-family customers. Compatible with the company's 3250 Series railing system, it comes with a high impact extruded PVC frame and durable four-ft. sections of see-through glass. Ideal for porches, balconies, docks, decks and walkways.

For more information contact LB Plastics at 800/752-7739 or www.lbplastics.com / circle no. 250



Bug off

Environmetrics Systems' BugBarrier Tree Band eliminates the need for chemical pesticides against crawling and climbing insects. A dense, flexible, fiber barrier is wrapped around the trunk to fill bark crevices and cut off insects' escape route. The inside of the film barrier is sticky to stop bugs dead in their tracks.

For more information contact Environmetrics Systems at 888/276-4104 or www.environmetrics.ca / circle no. 251

A real cut-up

John Deere's two new additions to its Pro-Series chain saws, the CS46 and CS52, feature 45.01cc and 51.7cc engines with 3 and 3.4 hp, respectively. Powerhead weights are 10.8 lbs. and 11 lbs. A two-ring piston and closed port cylinder provide higher compression and more power, and Deere claims the saws' compensating carburetors can last triple the average time between cleanings.

For more information contact John Deere at 800/537-8233 or www.johndeere.com / circle no. 252

Steady as she goes

Kaltec of Minnesota's new Forkster line of skid-steer attachments provides a safe and stable lifting media by providing load-stabilizing wheels on the lifting chassis. Its arms are adjustable from 44 to 88 in., and it can articulate 15 degrees left and right. The 2500 has a lift capacity of 2,500 lbs. and lift height of 8 ft., while the 3300 has 3,300 lbs. of lifting capacity.

For more information contact Kaltec at 763/557-4941 / circle no. 253



Grind it up

Vermeer's HG525 trailer-mounted horizontal feed grinder for large-scale reduction and recycling of green waste and storm debris features a turbo-charged and air-to-air charge-cooled C15 ATAAC 525-hp Tier II Caterpillar engine. A 36-in. diameter hydraulic floating feed roller can apply constant down pressure on various-sized materials.



For more information contact Vermeer at 888/837-6337 / circle no. 254

Go configure

Flowtronex says its new pumping system "Configurator" technology reduces the time required to specify and configure pumping systems for applications from 10 to 900 gpm. The company's landscape division offers FloBoy skid-mounted, prefabricated pump and control packages for a variety of applications.

For more information contact Flowtronex at 800/786-7480 or www.flowtronex.com / circle no. 255

Rolling

The 2003 Chevy Express and GMC Savana full-size van lineup features three "industry firsts" for the full-size van segment: all-wheel drive models, left-hand side 60/40 entry/load door availability, and side access panels on Express Access and Savana Pro models. Also featured are V-8 engines, fast acceleration, and a maximum payload rating of 2,430 lbs.

For more information contact Chevy-GMC at www.gmfleet.com / circle no. 256

Eye of the tiger

Scag's Sabre Tooth Tiger zero-turn mower is now even better with a re-engineered main frame, lower center-of-gravity, and wide, balanced stability. Also featured is more leg room, an easier-to-operate cutter deck lift system, and wider front caster wheels. The mower zooms at 10.5 mph with a 31-hp Briggs Vanguard liquid-cooled gas or turbo-diesel engine.

For more information contact Scag at www.scag.com / circle no. 257





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events

WHAT, WHEN & WHERE

June

14-15 Landscapes for Living & Learning / Greenville, SC; 864/294-2186; www.furman.edu/hortsym

July

11-14 ANLA Convention & Executive Learning Retreat / San Diego, CA; 202/789-2900

15-16 Summer Express Short Course / Chattanooga, TN; Chattanooga Association of

Landscape Professionals; 423/886-8874

17-18 OPE Dealer Convention / Louisville, KY; 800/558-8767

17-19 Turfgrass Producers International Summer Convention and Field Day / Ft. Collins, CO; 800/405-8873

19-21 International Lawn, Garden & Power Equipment Expo / Louisville, KY; 800/558-8767

22-23 PLCAA Legislative Day on the Hill & Arlington Renewal Project / Washington, DC; 800/458-3466; www.plcaa.org

23 Midwest Regional Turf Field Day / West Lafayette, IN; 765/494-8039

23-25 Penn Allied Nursery Trade Show / Fort Washington, PA; 717/238-1673

30-31 Virginia Turf Council Field Day / Blacksburg, VA; 540/942-8873

August

2 Southern Nursery Association 2002 / Atlanta, GA; 770/953-3311; www.sna.org

7 Illinois Landscape Contractors Association Summer Field Day / Hampshire, IL; 630/472-2851; www.ilca.net

13 Michigan Turfgrass Field Day / Lansing, MI; 517/321-1660

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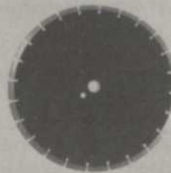


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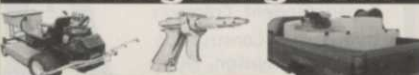
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College degree or 7 years prior related work experience within green industry or other service type sector a must. Must possess DEC (Cat3A) pesticide applicator license or be readily able to pass written exam shortly after hire. Plant identification knowledge a plus, as is the desire to succeed.

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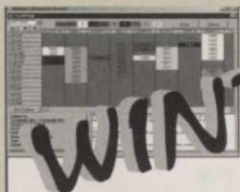
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GUIDELINES TO HELP AN INDUSTRY GROW

What's your time worth?

BY RON HALL /
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Please check our math for errors. There are seven days in a week, 24 hours in a day and so, by our calculations, each week contains exactly 168 hours.

How valuable are these hours to us, particularly the 56 hours a week we spend running our companies? ('01 LM State of the Industry report)

Judging by how we sometimes use them — hours we're supposed to be providing for our families, saving for our kids' educations, building a nest egg for our retirements — they're not worth much. Otherwise, why do we part with so many of them by providing sales prospects with free consultations and landscape designs?

Clayton Smith, who started LandSmith, Corp., Fredericksburg, VA, in 1999, is learning he can't afford to give away too

much of his time chasing sales. After 21 years with the U.S. Marines, Smith says one of the hardest things he's having to learn in the landscape business is saying the word "no" to price shoppers.

"You won't sell to everybody, no matter what, but we have got to learn how to deal with the 'tire kickers' right from the beginning," Smith tells LM. "If you let them, people will get you out to their house and get a plan and a sketch from you and then shop it around and get somebody else to come out and put it in for five percent less.

"It really is ridiculous that we give away so much of our time, our consultation time, our design time."

Smith says he's doing a better job of pre-qualifying poten-



Clayton Smith says landscaping is as tough as the U.S. Marines.

tial clients by discussing what they want and what they're expecting to pay before he goes any further. If it's a landscape plan they want, he'll be glad to provide it, using professional design software — at a cost of \$300 to \$400 for most average-sized front yards.

"No one that I've done work for, as far as I know, goes to an office and works for free," says Smith.

Even so, most landscape professionals provide clients and potential clients with valuable free advice and, sometimes, design services in pursuit of new customers and more sales. Okay, there are legitimate and specific cases where this is justifiable. But how much of your time are you willing to give away in consulting with prospects or providing them with design ideas?

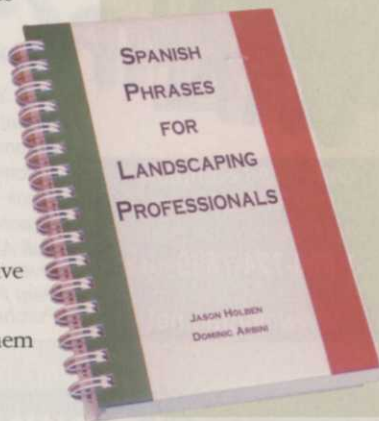
If time is money, why do we give it away?

Sound off

Did we waste our time advising you not to waste yours? What do you think about our take on free consultations? Let us know.

Every month we provide space for feedback. (See "Let's Here It" on page 10.)

If we print your comments we'll mail you a copy of "Spanish Phrases for Landscape Professionals" by Jason Holben and Dominic Arbini. To learn more about this book, call 303/863-1685 or send an e-mail to StockPotSpanish@hotmail.com.

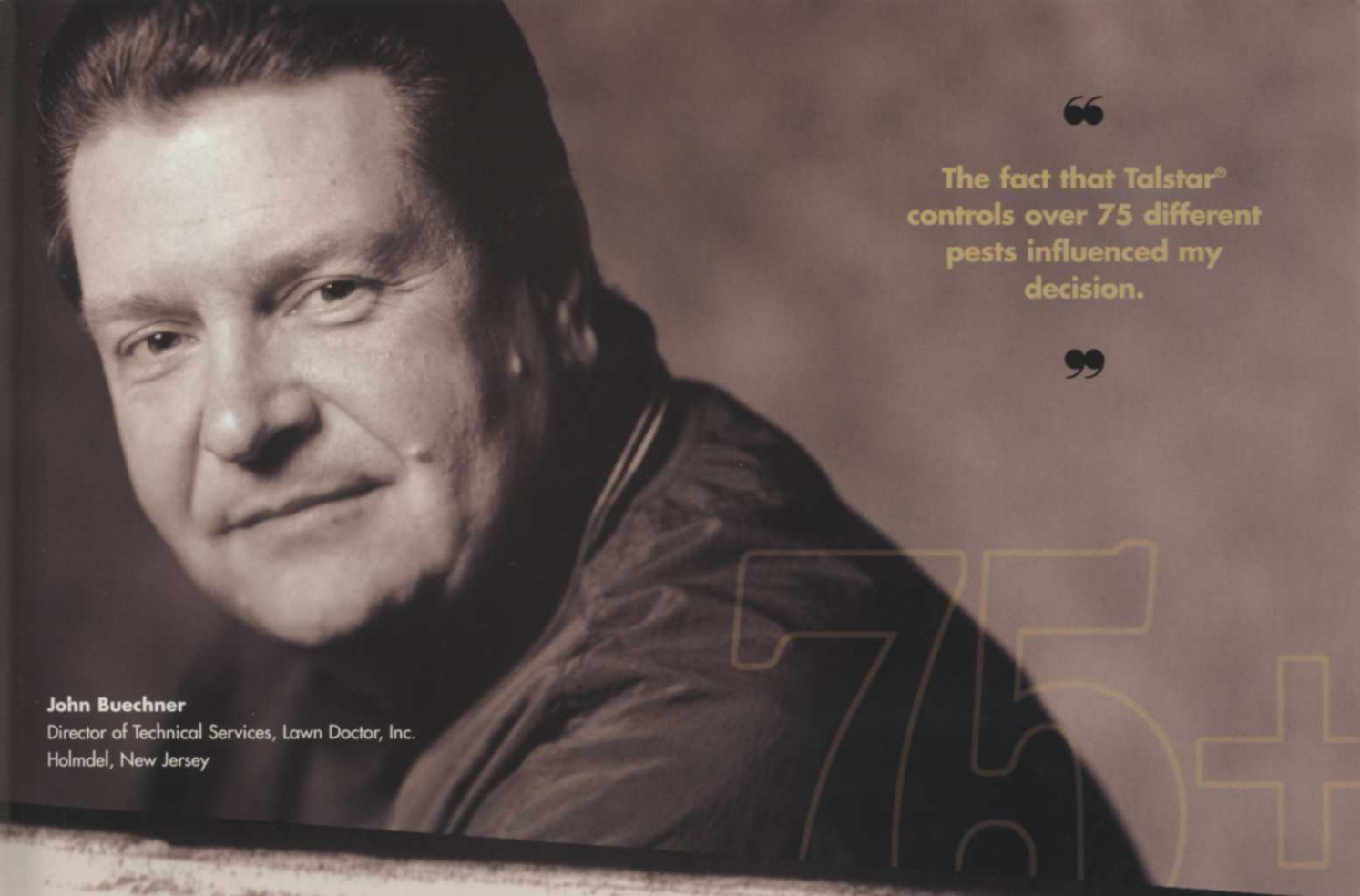


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