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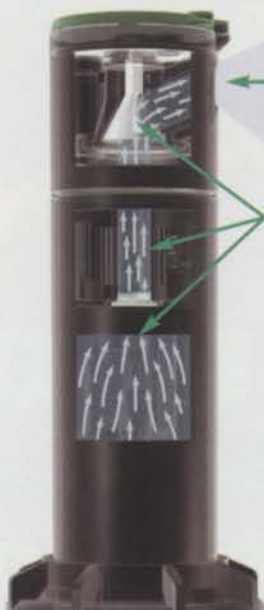


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State OF THE Industry 2002

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SEPTEMBER 2002 / #9 / VOLUME 41

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COVER IMAGE: PHOTO COURTESY LARRY SPEED / LAMBERT LANDSCAPE CO.

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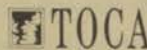
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BY RON HALL / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The watchwords remain 'cautious optimism'

Sometimes a few reassuring comments can put a bleak situation in a better light; they can ease everyone's worst fears.

Less than a year ago, as we mourned a national tragedy and slipped into an economic recession, PLCAA president Bill Hoopes insisted that he and his company, Scotts Lawn Care, remained "cautiously optimistic." He said that Scotts would continue to grow by making strategic acquisitions.

Hoopes spoke at a hastily called gathering of lawn care business owners at last year's Green Industry Expo in Tampa. The comments seemed almost Pollyannish given the events earlier that day.

Our spirits sank

Flash back to the morning of 11/12/01. We stare dumbly at the television mounted above the entrance to the trade show. The images on the screen are horrifying and discouraging. The broadcast is live — smoke billowing from shattered and burning buildings and rescue workers, their faces covered in dirt and soot, working with grim determination to retrieve victims and restore order. These are the images of yet another airline disaster in New York City.

Accident? Terrorist attack? Nobody knows.

Only after details of the tragedy in Queens become known — an accident, an awful accident but not another attack — did several thousand business owners and managers resume networking and planning for '02.

Scotts Lawn Care did indeed make acquisitions this season. Big ones. It purchased the lawn care business of

J.C. Erlich; the Cape Cod-based The Lawn Company, with revenues of about \$6 million annually, and the \$20 million lawn care division of Centex.

The "cautious optimism" expressed by Hoopes turned out to echo the sentiments of the landscape and lawn care industries as 2003 approaches, a recent online survey by our magazine and telephone interviews confirms. (See our 2002 State of the Industry coverage in this issue.)

We're still confident

When we asked readers to describe their feelings concerning next season, 130 of them (49%, the largest percentage by far) responded "cautiously optimistic," while 74 (28%) remained "strongly optimistic," 59 (22%) took a "wait and see" approach and just four (2%) described themselves as "pessimistic."

Companies that put together realistic budgets, maintained strong operations and cost-management systems and began selling aggressively entering this season have been weathering '02's tough economic times and will grow again once the economy recovers, readers tell us.

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



PLCAA president Bill Hoopes reminds an industry that things aren't as bleak as they sometimes seem.

BY JASON STAHL / MANAGING EDITOR

Bidding wars heating up

It's been a year since the terrorist attack on America. The economy is still weak, and the stock market doesn't know which way to go.

So, how are professional landscape companies doing?

The work is still out there, say most members of The Owners' Network, but competition is on the rise.

Healthy competition?

Steve Corrigan, president of Mountainview Landscaping, Chicopee, MA, says the current commercial landscape construction market is as competitive as the market of the early 1990s.

"There are a lot of bidders on projects," Corrigan says. "Many times, the low bidder is lower than our cost. We find ourselves second and third many times and still not able to get to the low bidder's number."

Bruno Pillari of Pillari Bros., Howell, NJ, also believes that competition is heating up. "It seems to be growing in certain markets, but that's okay because it makes things more challenging," he says.

Lack of loyalty among commercial maintenance customers doesn't help with the competition issue either, says Becky Sunday of RJ Sunday Landscaping, Bowie, MD. "It's been tough to grow the maintenance company mostly because of competitors' pricing," she says. "We get the project for one year, it bids the next and the others come in lower, so we lose it."

Labor picture brightens

Finding quality labor has always been difficult for landscapers, but the high unemployment rate has eased the strain a little.

"Last year, we couldn't get a response for

a help wanted ad," says Corrigan. "This year, qualified people are knocking on the door."

Mark Baldwin of Mark J. Baldwin & Associates, Plymouth, MI, agrees. "The labor market has softened a little," he says. "There seem to be more people to choose from and they seem to be a little less cocky about being able to go anywhere else and get a job."

Plenty of work

Landscape professionals haven't seen work dry up either.

"Our backlogs of work have never been larger, but they have changed slightly," says J. Landon Reeve of Chapel Valley Landscape Co., Woodbine, MD. "We're now



Becky Sunday (left) decries the lack of commercial customer loyalty. Ed Koenig has stepped up his company's marketing.

doing more developer work and less base building construction."

The reason a lot of work still exists is the brisk housing construction market.

"As I drive around or talk to our estimators and landscape architects, I do see a lot of construction being planned or construction starts," Pillari says.

Adds Sunday, "The housing market is hot — \$90,000 in lot prices, and \$400,000-\$500,000 houses. Shopping centers, office buildings, and I'm seeing permit applications for schools, churches and retirement facilities."

Market notes

1. Commercial landscape market very competitive
2. Lots of work still out there
3. Labor market better
4. Marketing efforts on the rise
5. Housing construction market still healthy

Baldwin believes something bigger than just housing construction is happening. "Even more important, houses are being remodeled and built on to," he says. "As long as people are building and remodeling, things will be good for us."

Marketing rules

This year started out slowly, says Ed Koenig of Lifestyle Landscaping, North Ridgeville, OH. But as the spring season progressed, he noticed that the market began to rebound. Now, he expects a strong year.

"There is an extra focus on marketing that will make it happen," Koenig says. "Specifically, we zeroed in on our current client base. Also, we are expending much additional energy in public relations."

Baldwin has also been increasing his marketing efforts. "We have started doing more marketing to attract clients, but once we talk to them they are willing to spend money," he says.

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NEWS YOU CAN USE

Signature acquires Northwest

REDMOND, WA — Signature Landscape Services, Inc. acquired Northwest Grounds Maintenance, Inc., a landscape maintenance firm that has served commercial/residential clientele for 20 years. Signature has been in business for 25 years and grosses \$2.3 million in revenue.

Bush Hog expands

JONESBOROUGH, TN — Bush Hog and Great Bend recently opened a 400,000 sq. ft. plant expansion here to meet demand for their equipment. The new state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities are designed to meet Bush Hog and Great Bend's manufacturing needs for the next 10 years.

Case forms alliance with Astec

RACINE, WI — Case Construction Equipment and Astec Industries have formed a strategic alliance for the marketing and sales of trenchers, horizontal directional drills and other related equipment.

Toro's third quarter results up

BLOOMINGTON, MN — The Toro Company reported its third quarter will be better than expected with net earnings per dilutive share to be up \$.06 to \$.08 over current analyst expectations. At the same time, the company is raising its full year expectations \$.10 to \$.15 cents over current analyst estimates.

Scotts remains on the grow

Lawn care company's buy of Centex makes it a player in Texas, Florida and Georgia

BY JASON STAHL /
MANAGING EDITOR

If The Scotts Company's plans for growth weren't clear enough before, they certainly are now after the Aug. 13 announcement that the company had bought the lawn care operations of Centex Home Team Services, which grossed \$20 million in revenue in 2001.

Scotts has been acquiring lawn care companies left and right this year. In February, the company bought J.C. Ehrlich Co.'s lawn and tree care division in Reading, PA. In March, Scotts acquired The Lawn Company, an \$8 million operation serving the Boston area. Other 2002 buys were in Dayton; Memphis, TN; Charlotte, NC; and Milwaukee. The Centex purchase, which now gives Scotts a presence in the South, particularly Florida and Texas, is the largest to date.

"We launched this lawn service business several years ago, and our goal was to grow that business so we would have a presence in the top 100 markets in the country," says Jim King, Scotts' director of investor relations and corporate communications. "We have internal growth opportunities, but we need to support that with acquisitions, too."

King says the solid performance of the lawn care business in a stagnant economy has only reaffirmed the soundness of Scotts'

acquisition strategy. Asked whether Scotts will pursue more acquisitions, King left the door open.

"There are still a lot of great growth opportunities out there, whether it be in-

"There are still a lot of great growth opportunities out there..."

— Jim King, Scotts

ternally or adding on by the acquisition of new markets," he says.

Centex Home Team Services, a division of the \$5 billion Centex Corp., fast became a player in the lawn care industry by aggressively acquiring companies over the last

several years. But Home Team president Dave Armitage, after much analysis, decided lawn care wasn't where the company wanted to be.

"When we looked at lawn care, despite our best efforts looking around, we realized there was nothing proprietary about it," Armitage says. "So, we asked, is this the channel we want to be in?"

As for the future, Armitage says Centex isn't ruling out a return to the Green Industry in a different area. "We're seriously looking into irrigation and working on some breakthrough technology," he says. "No one out there will do what we do."

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WHAT'S NEW ON-LINE

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■ Features from the current issue of *LM*
■ LM Week in Review
■ The latest Green Industry news

Organicare brings new look to lawn care franchising

BY RON HALL/
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

There's a new twist in lawn care franchising that, in the past two years, has become hot again.

Organicare, headquartered in Kensington, CT, plans to build a network of over 200 locations within the United States offering organic-based lawn care within the next five years.

Getting centralized

What makes Organicare different is its centralized high-tech support system, says president Frank Catalano. That system allows franchise owners to concentrate on production and customer relationships.

Administration, sales, marketing and even routing are handled by a central service center using customized soft-

ware products. When a lawn care customer calls the company's 800 service number, they're connected to the service center, not the local owner/service provider. Owners use the Internet to communicate with the service center and to get the information they need for their daily production.

"We will be wearing a lot of the hats for the owners," says Catalano. "All the franchisee does

— and he will do it very well — is to focus on his production. Instead of coming back to his office and answering 50 phone calls, he can keep working until 6 p.m., producing high-gross sales. He doesn't make money sitting in the office."



Frank Catalano



Organicare owners spend their time in the field, not answering a telephone.

Focusing on service

Catalano says that Organicare's service focus will be upon improving the health of customers' soils and providing reduced to pesticide-free organic programs. "We practice Integrated Pest Management and still use pesticides when and if they are needed, but each one of our applications adds organic materials that builds a healthy

soil and, in turn, a healthier lawn." Organicare's 3-step process weans lawns off of chemicals without sacrificing appearance at a competitive price, he says.

A couple of familiar Green Industry names are an integral part of Organicare — David Luse, former owner of Arteka Landscape, Minneapolis, and Judy Guido, formerly with TruGreen-LandCare and Environmental Industries, Inc. Luse, who now directs Andreas, a real estate development company based in Minnesota, is a key investor in the endeavor, and Guido is building out the national footprint of Organicare, which will eventually include over 900 franchises.

Catalano began Organicare in 1991 and says that he tested both its agronomic program and business system extensively in Connecticut before attempting to extend it elsewhere. For more information about Organicare, visit the Web site www.organicare.net.

People & companies



Seed Research of Oregon promoted **Scott Harer** to sales manager.



John Deere named **David Truttmann** the new national golf sales manager for irrigation, landscape and nursery products.



Daniel H. Carrothers (left), Nicholas Hamon

Bayer Environmental Science, North America named **Daniel H. Carrothers** head of U.S. Green Industry Business and **Nicholas Hamon, Ph.D.** head of Development and Technical Services.

S & S Seeds has re-hired **Bruce Berlin** as the manager of Erosion Control Products and Product Testing.

The Davey Tree Expert Company elected **Carol A. Cartwright, P.h.D.**, to its Board of Directors. Cartwright is the president of Kent State University, Kent, OH.

A hero speaks

PLCAA member Vince Tummino recounts 9/11 experience on one-year anniversary

PLCAA's 2002 Legislative Day/Cemetery Project saw a record crowd of about 140 men and women from across the country in attendance. Another record set was the 130 acres that received liming and tree work covered in four hours at Arlington

and Congressional cemeteries.

What made it even more special, however, was PLCAA member Vincent Tummino, battalion firefighter, New York City Fire Department, Battalion #22, Staten Island, formerly of Lawn Doctor/Sayreville-

Edison, Sayreville, NJ, and Charles Campbell, fire chief, Fort Myer, VA, making special presentations in honor of victims of Sept. 11 buried at Arlington. Here's Tummino's personal account of events surrounding 9/11 from the July/August 2002 issue of PLCAA's ProSource newsletter:

My duties are to manage one of 49 Battalions in NYC. I work in Battalion #22 on the North Shore of Staten Island. I rank in the top 100 in seniority. The NYC Fire Department, which is the largest fire department in the world, consists of 11,500 members. I joined in 1970 and am currently completing my 32nd year.

Staten Island has a population of 450,000 people and there are 30 firefighting units supervised by three battalions. On 9/11/01 at 8:48 a.m., I was getting ready to go home after working a 15-hour night tour. When the first plane crashed into the WTC, many off-duty members were starting to head into Manhattan to assist in whatever could be done.

When the second plane crashed, there were announcements made on all local TV and radios ordering a total recall of all members to report to the nearest fire station and wait for instructions. At this point, I was

Info Center

VIDEOS AND LITERATURE FOR THE GREEN INDUSTRY

John Deere Landscapes releases 2002-03 Supplies Catalog

John Deere Landscapes has released a new 2002-2003 Supplies Catalog, which is available free to landscape professionals.

The catalog can be picked up at your local John Deere Landscape branch or by calling 800/347-4272. The handy reference book is also avail-

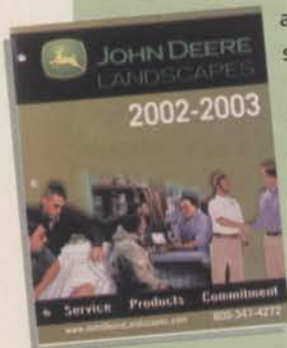
able through the Internet by registering at www.johndeerelandscapes.com.

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Circle 108



Vinny Tummino

preparing to leave for Manhattan, but now had to wait as the phones were ringing off the hook.

This delay is the main reason why I'm still alive today—I didn't get to Manhattan

until all buildings had fallen.

On my way into the city, I felt anger that this was happening to us and that I knew I lost many friends. As it turns out, I lost my cousin and my best friend, not to mention two other firefighters from my station along with 50 others that I knew on a first-name basis. I'm the president of one of the oldest and largest fraternal organizations in the fire department, and we lost 47 from our membership rolls.

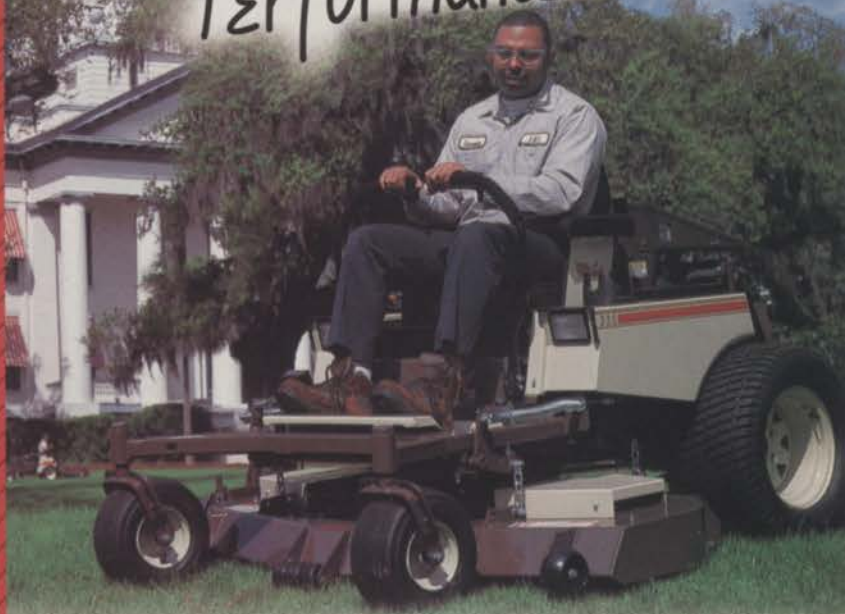
I remained on duty for a total of 63 hours straight. I went home for some sleep. I managed to get some three hours sleep when I realized that I had to get back and do something to recover my friends who were missing.

The department worked on a 24-hour on and 24-hour off shift for the next 10 days. The recovery mission lasted until 5/30/02 (8 1/2 months).

I can't explain in words what I first saw when I arrived at the WTC. There were only dust and steel beams — no desks, no phones, no fire trucks, and most of all no bodies. Everything was either pulverized or cremated.

Since 9/11, I've been presented with many awards on behalf of my members of the Columbia Association or on behalf of the fire department. I have been to Sicily, Italy, and I personally met with the pope, the mayor of Rome, fire chiefs from Messina, Rome, and other cities. I've been knighted by the International Center for Peace in Assisi, Italy. I've been invited to Albany, NY, by the State legislature to make a presentation. I continue to be an ambassador of peace and to remind everyone not to forget that tragic day when 343 firefighters lost their lives trying to save others.

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When the going gets tough

Landscape and lawn care companies say growth continues, but slower and at a price

BY RON HALL /
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

How best to describe this season's market conditions and our landscape and lawn care industries' reaction to them? Let's start with schizophrenic.

The results of recent *Landscape Management* magazine surveys continue to show strong landscape and lawn care activity in 2002 and cautious confidence for next season.

But, a surprising amount of dissatisfaction is evident, too — surprising, in light of the gen-

eral tone of survey responses.

Only four of the 263 readers responding to our survey said that they were "very satisfied and well rewarded." By contrast, 72 (27%) said that they were "mostly satisfied," 99 (38%) that they were "somewhat satisfied" and 88 (33%) that they were "not satisfied or rewarded."

This response seems strangely out of place in light of most readers' assertions that their companies continued to

"I'm still very optimistic about this business. This is the second time we've experienced a big downturn. Maybe it's just part of what's supposed to happen, one of the great lessons that Mother Nature teaches us. Actually, we have an incredible metaphor in our industry — tough times and difficult environments often seem to strengthen some trees. There's a natural thinning process. I think in the economy, to some degree, that's probably healthy, too. We'll survive the recession, the industry will survive the recession, and we'll come out stronger than when we went into it." — Dalton Hermes, CEO, Hermes Landscaping

grow this year, albeit more slowly than before. Almost 72% of our readers (115 of 215) report increasing their customer base this season and 59% (158 of 267) say revenues increased.

Is growth coming at a higher price in terms of personal effort and sacrifice?

Not so, says Scott Frith, marketing director of The



Scott Frith



Dalton Hermes

Lawn Doctor, the New Jersey-based lawn care operation with 425 locations. "We increased our gross revenue, topline rev-

enue about 10 percent, and that's on top of our growth last year," he says. "We're having the best year in our history."

Frith, in fact, sees nothing but continued growth, not only for professional lawn care but for other contracted landscape services as well. "In spite of the economy, there are more opportunities right now than challenges," he maintains. "People don't have enough time to do the things they want to do, and that's why the home service sector is booming and I think that it's going to continue."

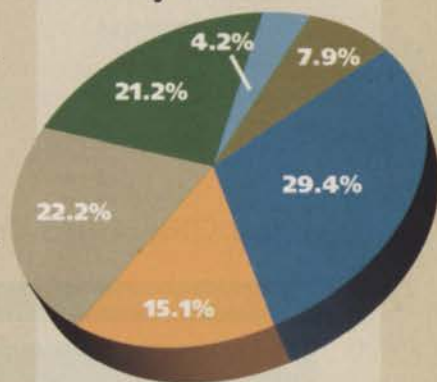
"Without question, we're in a great industry for the next 20 to 25 years," adds Dalton Hermes, CEO, Hermes Landscape, Lenexa, KS.

The other shoe drops?

But, the shorter term prognosis for continued industry growth remains cloudy.

Experienced contractors tell us that the landscape industry is affected later in an economic cycle than many other industries. Projects, particularly in the installation or larger de-

What you spent money on



- Labor and recruitment
- Overhead
- Plant/landscape materials
- Equipment purchases and maintenance
- Fertilizers and pesticides
- Other

SOURCE: LM READER SURVEY

sign/build market segment, are often sold and budgeted before recessions begin. Maintenance contracts for large properties are often negotiated for three-year periods.

The downside is that landscapers, once they start experi-

PHOTOS COURTESY: ESTES LANDSCAPE



encing the effects of a slow-down, are among the last to rev up again.

The swing, up or down, is more dramatic for big-ticket installations and enhancements (add-on services) than they are in contracted maintenance, chemical lawn and tree/ornamental care, readers say.

Commercial properties such as retail centers and office parks, and multi-family complexes such as apartments and condos, require property maintenance, including fertilization and pest controls, regardless of the state of the economy.

A continuing need

When times are good, property

managers can find funds for grounds care. When vacancies rise, they're under pressure to attract new tenants and maintain curb appeal — although maintenance in less areas of a property may be reduced.

The reality is, though, when the economy is in the dumper, all segments of the Green Industry suffer to some extent. Even the residential market, in spite of robust home building and sales in '02, hasn't been immune. Record numbers of homeowners are taking advantage of the lowest interest rates of the past 40 years to refinance or borrow money for major home improvements, but most

continued on page 20

8 trends that owners should watch for in '03



Roger Braswell

Roger Braswell started in landscaping when he was 15 and spent 34 years building a company near Charlotte, NC. He sold it four years ago, focusing on his equipment business, Power-House Equipment, Inc.

Speaking at the recent Associated Landscape Contractor of America (ALCA) Maintenance Symposium, Braswell alerted 425 landscape business owners and managers to the following industry trends:

- 1 Outsourcing growing in importance again.** Cities, counties, hospitals, universities and big corporations will increasingly seek the efficiencies well-run landscape companies can offer in grounds management.
- 2 Continued service line extension.** Think enhancements, enhancements, enhancements.
- 3 Alliances with related companies.** Cross referrals with janitorial, window washing, pressure washing and other property and home service operations.
- 4 Alliances with clients.** One example: For a fee, the landscape company will advertise a client's business on the side of the landscape truck, converting it into a moving billboard. Tony Bass, the developer of the Super Lawn Truck in Bonaire, GA, is investigating the concept.
- 5 Marketing and purchasing networks.** The Symbiot Business Network (www.symbiot.biz) offers services beyond marketing and purchasing. It's an example of new networking opportunities available to independent company owners. Consultant Jim Paluch's Pro Training Challenge and Owners' Network programs are other examples of successful networks of owners.
- 6 Total site management.** Including water conservation, landscape rehabs and major site redesigns.
- 7 Online bidding.** A concept that big landscape clients are just now starting to implement.
- 8 Growing role of certification.** How long will it be before property managers and other institutional or governmental landscape buyers make certification by a respected trade organization a requirement for bidding on their jobs? It's coming, says Braswell.

Top 5 challenges in 2002



SOURCE: LM READER SURVEY

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continued from page 18
still view landscaping as a discretionary expense.

"We're definitely feeling a tightening of money with our customers," says Robert Smart, co-owner of Yard Smart, Inc., Olmsted Falls, OH. "People are thinking twice about installing or improving their landscapes. They're taking longer to make decisions."

Also, believes Smart, a lot of recent home buyers are "house rich but cash poor." As they watch their 401K retirements shrink and struggle with mortgage and SUV payments,

they delay plans for that new patio or koi pond.

Then there's the matter of expectations (realistic or not), both on the part of the industry and on the part of its customers.

"Customers are very picky now," says John Gachina, of Gachina Landscape Management, Menlo Park, CA. "They're pickier than when things are good, so we're having to do our best and try to do everything as well as we can."

This isn't a new trend, but it accelerated during the late 1990s — the period of the industry's most explosive growth.

This year in business, compared to last year

In 2002, we...

Had customers prepared to pay more for quality	71.1%
Had more picky customers	52.6%
Are using more suppliers	51.5%
Had more backlog of work and/or customers	51.1%
Had better financing/cash flow	47.0%
Had more work	40.0%
Found it easier to recruit	40.0%
Found it easier to compete	32.6%
Found it easier to be profitable	30.4%

SOURCE: LM READER SURVEY

Our annual surveys showed companies increasing revenues 20% to 30% annually then and looking forward to continuing

growth due to factors such as the aging of the "baby boomers," increasing demands

continued on page 22

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SOURCE: LM READER SURVEY

continued from page 20
on people's time, rising incomes, and more
awareness of the environment.

Could the level of this frenetic pace

continue indefinitely? Not without a
few bumps.

Even so, the readers that we personally
interviewed admitted that business is
tougher, but they're not discouraged.

By the region

John Gachina, who serves clients in Silicon
Valley near San Francisco, says his com-
pany won't hit his projections but it never-
theless grew.

"It's a pretty rough economy here," he
says. "There are a lot of vacant buildings be-
cause companies had to downsize. Some of
the big companies, our customers, like Ora-
cle and Sun Microsystems, are hurting. But
through it all, our contract maintenance is
up and we're experiencing growth."

Adds Hermes of Hermes Landscaping,
"The economy is soft here, and Kansas City
is a conservative market. People don't
spend on landscaping like I've seen them

continued on page 26

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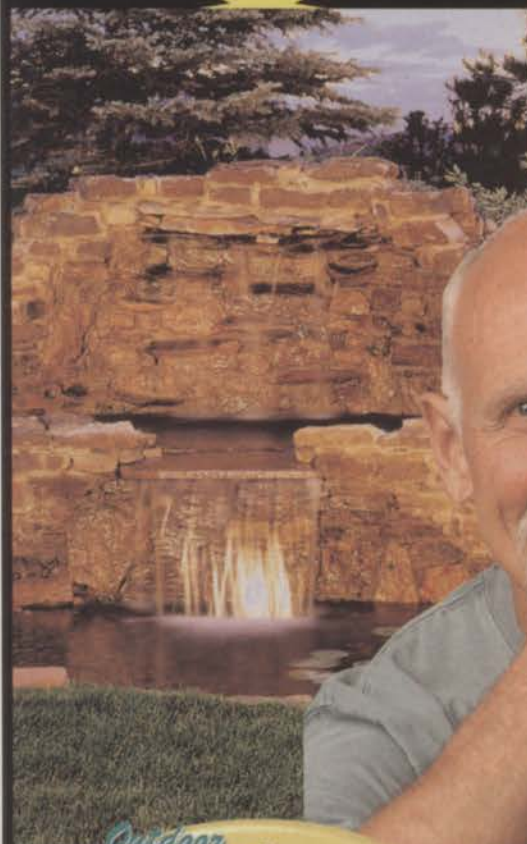
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continued from page 22

spend in other markets. To have growth of 25 to 30 percent year after year is difficult in this market."

Hermes admits that he had planned for a stronger season, but repairs and cleanup from the worst ice storm in the area's history late last winter sopped up clients' money.

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Indeed, there are significant differences in regional markets. The Washington DC/Northern Virginia market is a good example. While Internet and telecommunications companies clustered around Dulles Airport struggle, the federal government seemingly can't add new agencies fast enough in response to 9/11.



Tom Davis

Tom Davis, president of Bozzuto Landscape, Laurel, MD, says his company is feeling a small "ripple" in servicing multi-family properties because of the technology slowdown, but otherwise, he says, Bozzuto is experiencing a "great" year. His firm's recently completed strategic plan calls for it to double in revenues in the next four years.

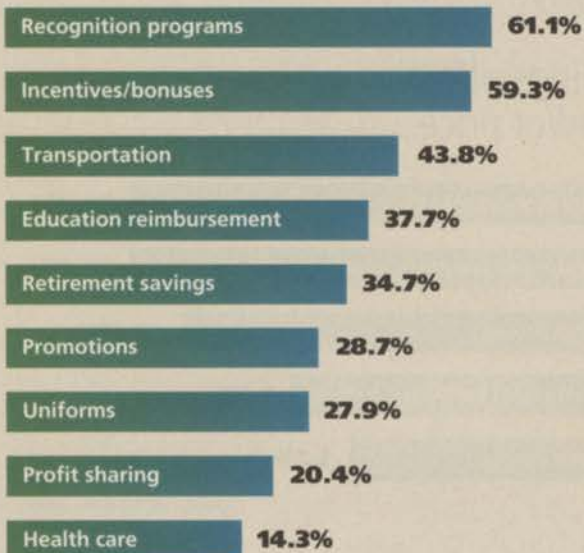
"We've seen an increase in what we call 'rehab' business," says Davis. "Because money is still relatively cheap but land prices are very high, we're seeing a number

continued on page 28

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Programs offered to employees



SOURCE: LM READER SURVEY

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Things affecting your revenue and/or price



SOURCE: LM READER SURVEY

In five years, my organization will:

Grow much larger in revenues	79.0%
Serve new customer groups	60.7%
Offer more employee benefits	47.5%
Market differently	43.6%
Grow much larger in geographical area (or new branches)	34.6%
Change its equipment/product purchasing methods	24.9%
Look for new sources of investment money	24.1%
Recruit differently	20.6%
Add business advisors or partners	20.2%
Be purchased by a larger organization	9.3%
Offer new franchised services	8.2%
Offer new non-franchised services	5.8%
Have more difficult financial times	5.5%

SOURCE: LM READER SURVEY

continued from page 26
of clients buying older apartment communities and shopping centers and rehabilitating them. We go in and design the landscape, tear out the what needs to be torn out, and really give it a facelift."

In nearby Baltimore, Rich Rothstein, president of R.A.R. Landscape, says the economy has slowed but building construction remains strong.

Even so, the commercial maintenance market, his company's focus, is getting

Surveys and interviews

Relying upon the speed and convenience of online polling, we surveyed a cross section of our readers, both service contractors and institutional grounds managers, in July. We selected them randomly from our circulation.

We've also included data in this report from a survey that we contracted from Readex earlier this season. These results are exclusive to *Landscape Management* magazine. They provide a more complete and detailed look at the industry in 2002, in general. To round out this issue's State of the Industry coverage, we interviewed readers.

Barring a dramatic uptick in the U.S. economy or another catastrophe like 9/11, readers see little significant change in next season's business.

In other words, well-capitalized, tightly run landscape and lawn care companies will continue to grow and be profitable. For our readers who manage parks and school grounds, the message is simple — learn to do more with less. Now's the time to start building a compelling case why your department needs a bigger budget.

For a more complete statistical breakdown of the surveys to our contractor and institutional grounds readers, visit our Web site at www.landscapemanagement.net.

tighter. "Whether that is due to the economy or competition, I'm not sure," he says. "But I feel it's the competition, which is good. The strong companies will survive. I think it's going to knock a lot of fly-by-night companies out of the market."

Rothstein says he's confident of both the economy and his firm's place in the market. This summer, he moved his company into a new 20,000-sq.-ft. building on a three-acre lot about 15 minutes northwest of the city. "We're going through growing pains and trying to stay ahead of the curve. It's certainly a challenge," he says.

Steve Russell, who operates Weed Man of Farmington Hills (MI), says that his firm lost a

few clients early in the season because of layoffs, but he described it as "a blip on the radar." His lawn care operation, a part of parent company Eradico Services, Inc., grew its revenues about 25%.

"I have to give our management team a lot of credit for that," says Russell. "We executed our business plan very well."

All of this — the results of our survey and our interviews — suggests that, in spite of that old bromide that starts, "When the going gets tough..." it's not the tough that grow and prosper, it's organizations nimble enough to implement strong business and marketing plans when the economy, specifically the markets they serve, change. **LM**




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Tight times

Frozen or cut budgets have forced grounds professionals to be creative in dealing with daily challenges in 2002

BY JASON STAHL / MANAGING EDITOR

Money makes the world go 'round, right? Nobody knows that better than grounds professionals. All would like a bigger budget, but they're not likely to get one in the near future as the economy stumbles along at a sluggish pace.

Budget woes

Predictably, the majority of you said financial matters have been your biggest challenge in our annual State of the Industry survey. A full 42% of you said your budget stayed the same this year, while 41% said it decreased. When asked whether you've had a cut in either your budget or work staff, 58% of you responded affirmatively.

Ellen Newell's budget has decreased two years in a row.



Ellen Newell



Walter Bonvell

"The state had quite a shortfall from estimated revenues," the head of grounds for Utah State University says. "I lost two full-time positions last year, plus I had to cut back on hourly help. I also had a budget cut in July

of this year, but it was smaller than anticipated."

Chris Fay, grounds superintendent at the University of North Carolina (UNC), expects a 6% to 10% budget cut this year once the state legislature adjourns, which means he'll lose a quarter of his staff.

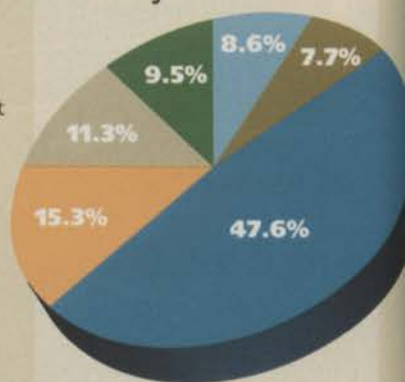
While Walter Bonvell of Xavier University, Cincinnati, OH, says his budget hasn't been cut, certain precautionary procedures have been put in place. "In the past, we had an open budget for plant material," the grounds manager says. "Now, things have changed as far as how we do our buying. We can no longer just go out and get stuff." It looks like Xavier isn't the only place doing that — changing equipment/product purchasing methods was the second most popular response to our question, "Where will your organization be in five years?"

George Van Haasteren, director of grounds operations at Dwight-Englewood School, Englewood, NJ, says his budget also has neither been cut or increased. "That doesn't mean it couldn't be cut yet this year or next year," he says.

Van Haasteren has seen hiring freezes, though. "In a lot of places, people are retiring and not being replaced. To bring on new employees, you really have to justify it."

Boyd Montgomery, facilities and maintenance director at Pacesetter Park, Sylvania, OH,

What you spent money on



- Labor and recruitment
- Equipment purchases and maintenance
- Overhead
- Plant/landscape materials
- Other
- Fertilizers and pesticides

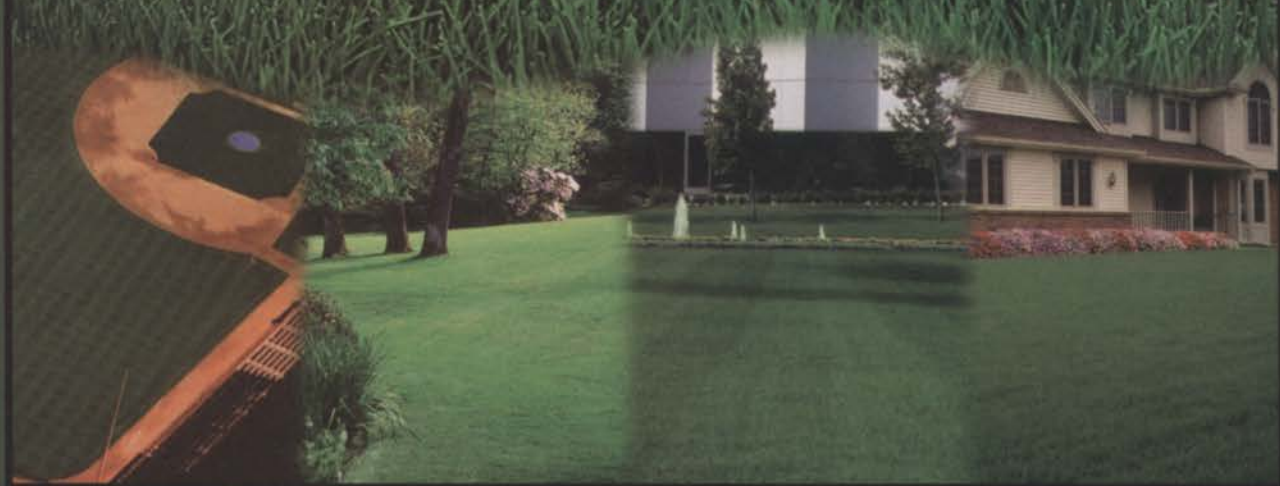
SOURCE: LM READER SURVEY

predicts the worst for his upcoming budget review. "I'm hunkered down and I've got my boots on," he says. "I would assume with the nature of the economy that we'll probably be restricted. I don't think it will be too bad — the cuts will probably be in our capital or equipment expenses."

Montgomery, who has served as president of several

continued on page 32

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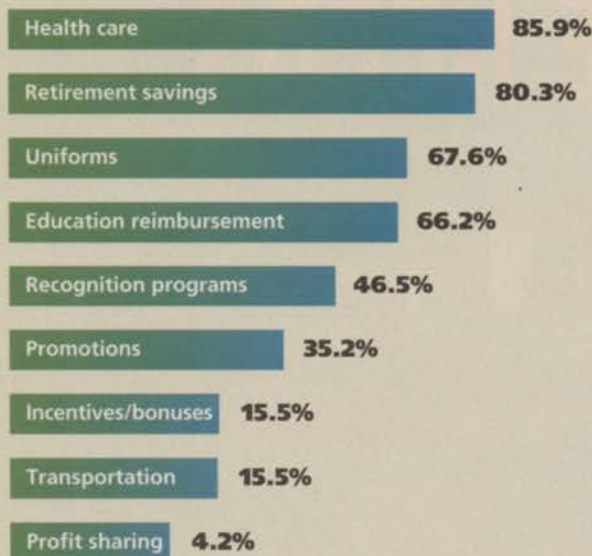
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Programs offered to employees



SOURCE: LM READER SURVEY

continued from page 30

state grounds organizations, says the scores of grounds managers he has talked to are all echoing the same feelings. "It sounds like a lot of people are getting the screws taken to them. A lot of them are getting their budgets cut mid-year, and a few others have had to cut out things like attendance at regional workshops."

The business sector has been hit hard too. Larry Dolnik, grounds supervisor at Fortune 500 company Abbott Laboratories, Chicago, IL, says he has endured a hiring freeze and other

small cuts as the company's stock price has gone down.

Joy Long, superintendent of grounds for Shelter Insurance Company, Columbia, MO, saw \$50,000 cut from her 2002 budget. "And this year has progressively gotten worse," she says. "We can't buy anything that isn't totally necessary or doesn't have a 12-year pay-back. The rumors are that next year will be worse."

For the first time in 20 years, Long saw two part-time staff positions get cut as well.

Danny Miller, director of golf and grounds for The Break-



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Circle 121

Average hourly rate for entry-level crew member

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\$9.62

SOURCE: LM READER SURVEY

ers resort, Palm Beach, FL, says there have been no cuts in his budget, but he has been forced to implement productivity initiatives such as being smarter with labor and leaving out some projects on his "wish list."

"We've just completed our budget process for 2003, and we had to go in lean and prepare for the worst," Miller says.

It's dry out there

Almost as much of a concern as the budget has been the drought, which seems to have impacted everyone across the country no matter where they're located.

"Drought has been almost a bigger problem than the budget," says Newell, whose home state of Utah has suffered four straight years of drought. Last July was the hottest in the state's history.

Chris Fay says Greensboro has also endured severe drought restrictions on all above-ground irrigation, and he and his crews at UNC have resorted to tank-watering newly planted material.

"We're basically in a drought situation. It was mild, now it's severe," says Boyd Montgomery of Sylvania, OH. "The idea is to keep everything growing and provide enough water to let people still come out and be safe. A lot of facilities around here basically shut the water off, so it's going to be tough with fall soccer starting."

Quick turnaround not seen

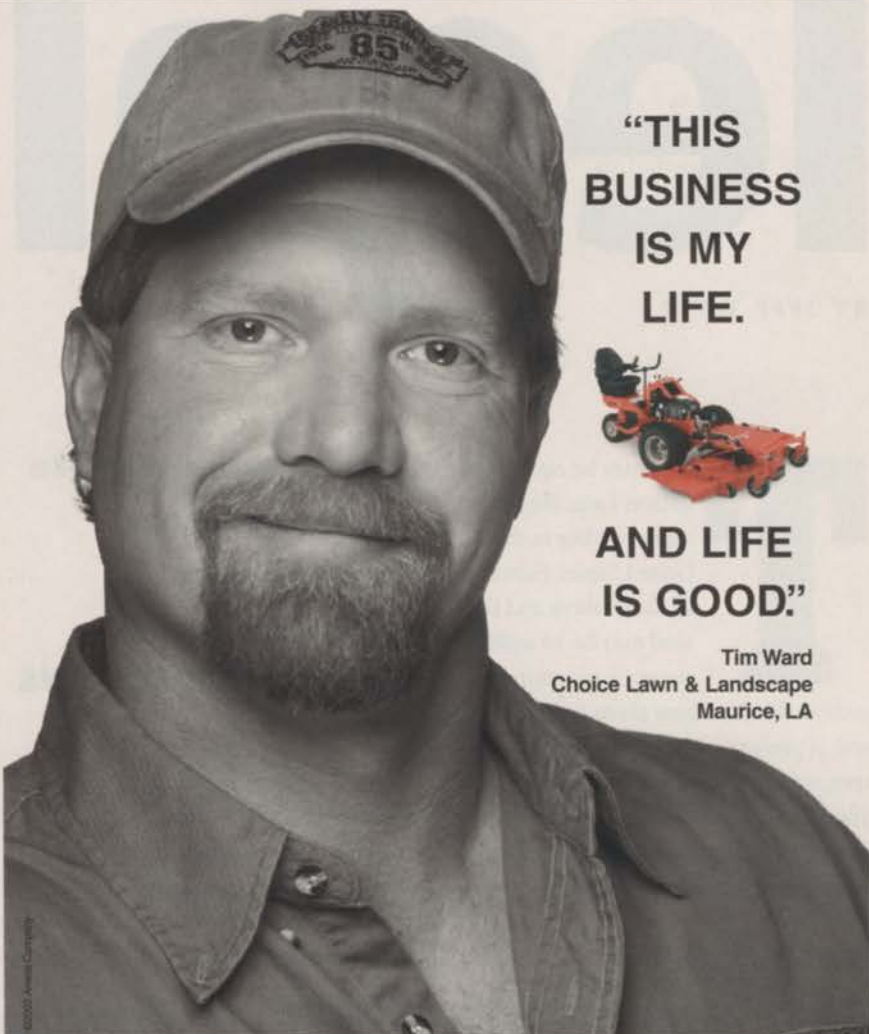
Times are difficult now, and most grounds managers seem to feel they won't get much better anytime soon. Over 40% of you predicted that you'll be facing more difficult financial times in five years. Nearly 60% of you described yourselves as being "cautiously optimistic" concerning 2003.

"I don't see a turnaround happening

within the next year or two," Van Haasteren says. "I feel it will take as much as five years, even with interest rates going down."

Long agrees with Van Haasteren's five-

year outlook. "The next five years will tell," she says. "This year and next year will be tight, but I would believe within five years we'll be back to normal." **LM**



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Circle 122

Keep your labor legal

BY JEFF WEST



You don't want this guy pulled off the job during the busy season due to invalid papers.

There may be eight to 10 million Latin illegal aliens residing in the United States. Factor in all illegal aliens and the total may be 14 million, say some government sources. Most of these aliens are working and, if you're running a sizable landscape company, you've probably either hired or interviewed someone who doesn't have proper authorization to work. Some may be on your payroll as you read this.

What's the big deal?

Because the labor laws are so vague, what does it really mean to you and your company? Most people who are in a position of hiring understand that all applicants must fill out an I-9. Two pieces of identification are required, the most commonly used being a valid social security number and a driver's license. The I-9 document is intended to validate whether you're hiring someone authorized to work in the United States. The problem is that both pieces of identification can be purchased for as little as \$20 in any large city.

Take these simple steps to keep from losing labor to a more aggressive U.S. INS

The Department of Labor says that when reviewing documentation you have to use your best evaluation to determine whether the documentation is valid. Furthermore, the employer can't be held liable for unknowingly hiring an illegal immigrant. The trouble comes when you don't require your employee to fill out the I-9 form or fill it out impartially or incorrectly. So, what's the big deal? You can't be held liable. The law protects the employer. Why worry?

Changes in the wind

Sometime in the near future, some changes will be made in response to the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. In fact, one legislative bill being considered by the U.S. Congress could make employers liable for "knowingly" hiring illegal aliens.

How will they be able to prove this? Three years ago, the Social Security Administration (SSA) initiated a trial verification system in selected states that allowed employers to either call or fax in potential workers to be hired. Social Security required the full name, date of birth and the social security number for each potential worker. Within 24 hours, the SSA determined if the names of the workers matched the social security numbers. Although most employers aren't aware of this, you can call your local Social Security office to verify whether a potential employee's social security number matches with his or her name. As an employer, you should expect this requirement in the near future.

In past years an illegal worker could work for three to five years before Social Security and the IRS notified the employer of fraudulent social security numbers. Not so anymore! In some instances, employers are notified in less than one year. Obviously, these changes make employers think twice. There is nothing worse than training a worker, then being forced to terminate his or her employment six months later.

Obtaining a driver's license wasn't difficult to accomplish prior to 9-11, but since then a number of states have changed pro-

continued on page 36

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Circle No. 123

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to col. Not only are staff members trained to identify fraudulent papers, alien workers must also be able to prove solvent ties to the United States. Workers are now asked to prove they have legally lived in the United States by providing rental receipts, income tax statements and other documentation.

INS on the offensive

There has been much written and spoken by the media regarding the future of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). There is no doubt the INS has suffered negative publicity due to several mistakes that have been well publicized. Because of these miscues, it's a safe bet that the INS will go on the offensive. Just this

spring and early summer, the INS initiated a thorough "sweep" of Wisconsin employers, checking the validity of workers' papers. The result is that there are several hundred Wisconsin employers scrambling to find legal labor. There's nothing worse than losing the majority of your labor at the worst possible time.

Believe me, the author of this article lived through this same nightmare. In May 1995 I was notified by the IRS of discrepancies in social security numbers for over 20 employees. At the time, I was trying to open a new golf course I was constructing. For some reason, the grass kept growing and the owner wasn't too sympathetic that I didn't have enough labor to keep up with the daily tasks.



Other concerns

Besides the potential problems I just listed, there are other concerns employers should be aware of. Many landscape and construction companies have illegal aliens driving insured company vehicles or operating heavy equipment. Insurance companies are constantly looking for ways to protect their interests. Suppose your illegal alien worker was involved in an auto accident or caused some property damage. Often times, insurance companies will check the validity of the worker's employment status. If the insurance company can prove the illegal

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Mexican workers line up outside the doors of a recruiter who is signing up H2B workers for jobs in the United States.

alien was operating without a valid driver's license or operating under a false

name, they may try to refuse the claim.

At least two million illegal workers have applied with the LIFE Act, more commonly referred to as 245i. Many employers don't understand what this immigration bill represents. First of all, it doesn't grant work authorization. When this bill was first enacted, many employers wanted to protect their workers and themselves by making sure all of their illegal aliens were protected. Unfortunately, the IRS doesn't recognize this application. Whether your worker has applied with 245i or not, he or she still needs to possess a valid social security card.

Protect yourself

So how can you as an employer protect yourself? First, check with your local Social Security office. Make sure the name and social security number match. Second, check out ways to find legal sources of labor. Congress has introduced new legislation to address the labor shortage, and a worker guest program has been introduced for discussion.

Will this program allow employers to legalize the illegal labor force? That's the big question everyone wants answered. If you're interested in a worker guest program, you should contact your senator or congressman. Let them know how important a legal workforce is to your business.

There's a program in place that can ad-

dress some of the problems I just mentioned. The H-2B visa program could be the answer to some of your problems. In a nutshell, the H-2B visa program allows employers to apply for workers based on seasonal or peak load need. The biggest problem with H-2B is that it takes a minimum of 120 days to get your labor, so you can't wait until the last moment to apply. If an employer needs labor March 15 for his landscaping or construction business, the application should be filed no later than November 15.

— The author of this article is the president of LLS International, an H-2B recruiting company in Mexico. To learn more about LLS International and the H-2B program, log on to www.llsint.com.

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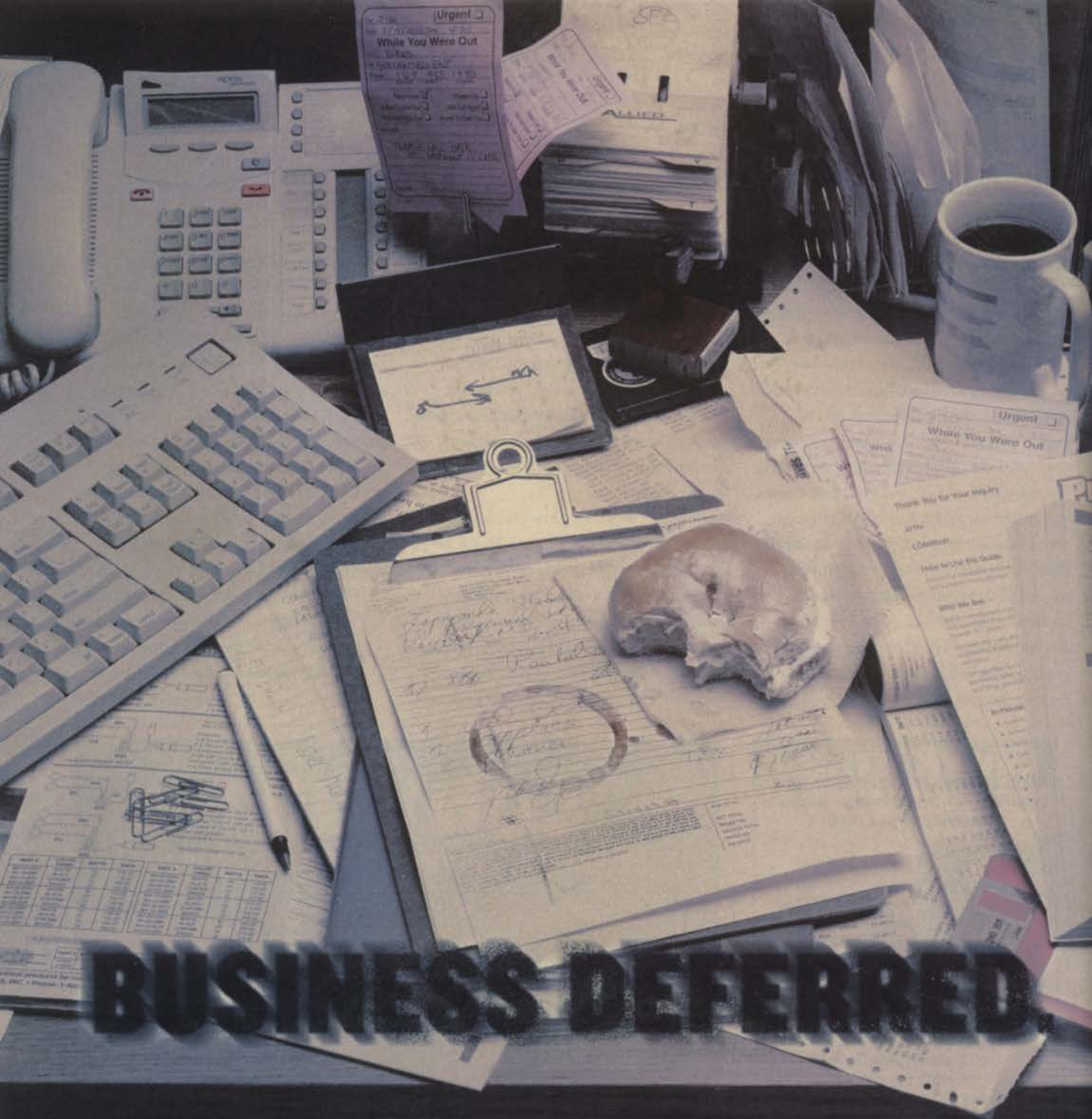
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Sprinkler winterization basics



**An easy-to-follow
guide to prepare
your clients'
irrigation systems
for next spring**

BY KATHERINE WOODFORD

It's spring and crews are clamoring to finish start-ups because the weather is perfect and they've got a backlog of new installations.

Then a crew chief relays bad news — busted pipes, a cracked backflow device and cracked sprinkler heads. This client has a maintenance contract so the repair cost is on the contractor.

The basics of winterization seldom vary. Yet this maintenance service holds more financial liability to the contractor than any other service. Crews perform many winterizations once a year in a four- to six-week window. Therefore, an annual fall "refresher course" might be key in keeping the red ink out of the books in the spring.

Who needs winterization?

Contractors with clients in

areas where the frost level could extend below the depth of installed pipe must winterize their irrigation systems to prevent freeze damage.

If the client has PVC pipe, there isn't a question as to whether or not the system should be winterized. It should. When PVC pipe is more than half-full of water, it freezes and cracks. These cracks are usually hairline lateral cracks running the length of the pipe from fitting to fitting, requiring the contractor to replace the length of pipe rather than digging a small hole to repair the pipe with a fitting.

Automatic drains are best

In some regions of the country, especially in northern states, systems have manual drain valves or automatic spring-loaded drain valves. If they're installed properly and the ground hasn't shifted causing them to move from the lowest spot in the landscape, these au-

tomatic freeze drains can be used in place of winterizations.

Jeff Carowitz, vice president of marketing for Hunter Industries, encourages contractors to use automatic freeze drains, as he used them in the systems he used to install.

Go for the blowout

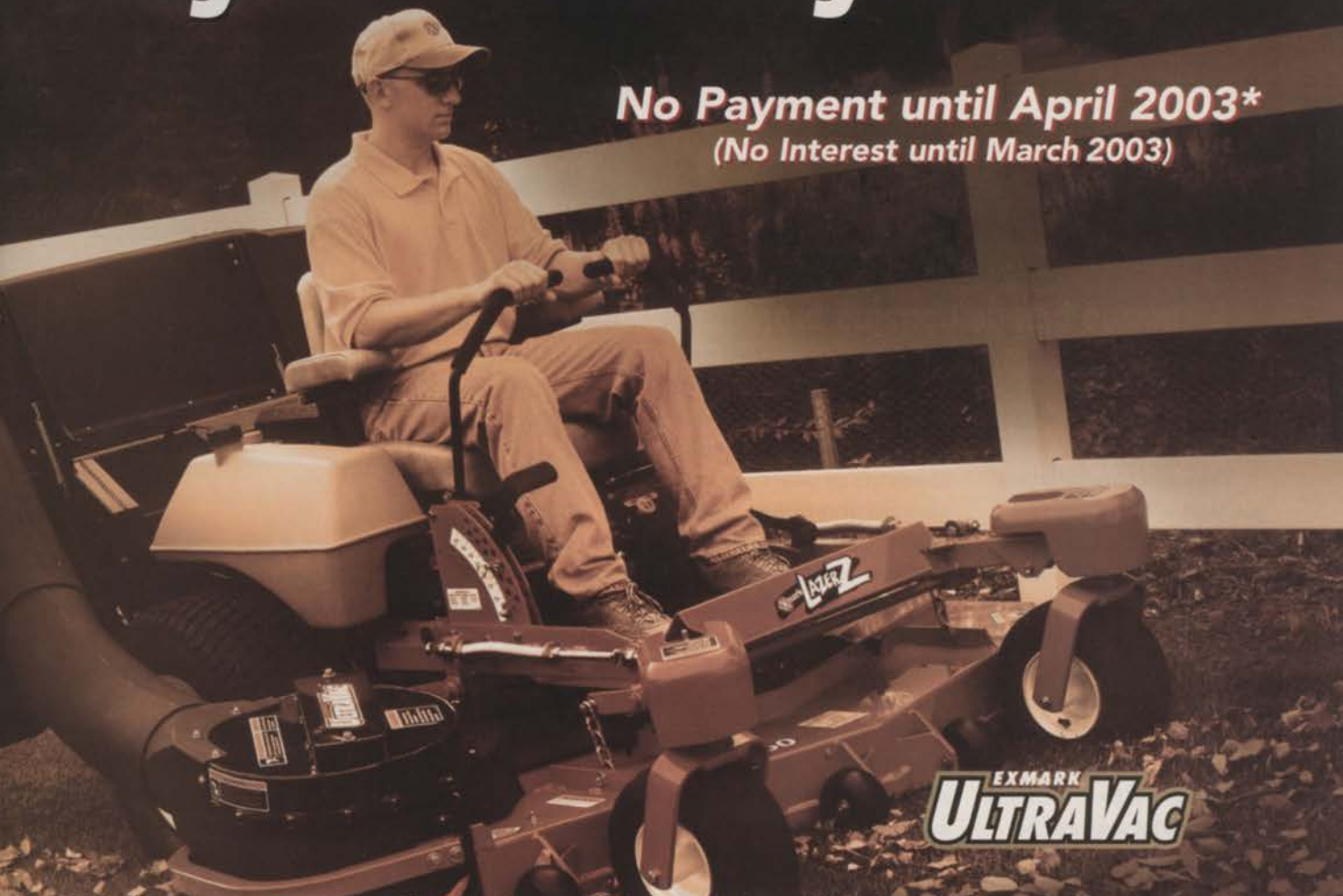
Danny Wilson, crew chief of the Irrigation Department for Moneta Farm Service in Moneta, VA, explains that he blows all pipe out. There are sprinkler heads attached to the pipe, such as the closed case sprinkler heads, with check valves that retain water inside the casing. The water needs to be released to prevent freezing and cracking.

An air compressor is the most common way to blow out an irrigation system that utilizes check valves. The key is to maintain 50 psi and never exceed 80 psi, keeping low pressure with high volume. If the air velocity is too great it creates heat friction

continued on page 42

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Circle No. 136

continued from page 40

that damages the pipe and other system components.

Carowitz advises contractors to use the correct size compressor. Contractors generally rent these from construction rental yards. But remember, if the compressor is too small it doesn't put out enough air volume to push the water out.

The actual blowout is simple. Start with the zone furthest from the compressor located at the highest elevation. Gradually initiate air into the system. It takes about five minutes to blow out each zone. Repeat the procedure at least one time. Water will occasionally stay in a pocket, so some contractors will blow each zone three times for assurance because they want to make sure they don't arrive to a nightmare in the spring.

"You have to be careful on the second time through the process," Wilson cautions. "The first time through, there's a cushion of water against the sprinkler heads. The second time through, you're blowing air directly against the sprin-

klers, and if you apply too much pressure, they'll shoot right out of the ground. I've seen homeowners make this mistake and then call me to fix it."

Go remote to cut labor

One way to cut labor costs is to use the new remote controls for controllers. "This is a growing trend," says Carowitz. "Not all contractors are using them, but more and more of them are discovering their convenience. They save walking between the valves and the controller or eliminate the second man with the two-way radio at the controller."

Keith Shepersky, brand manager for Irritrol Systems, agrees. "The contractor sets the code in the receiver when he installs the system. When he arrives to winterize, he looks up that client's code, programs it into the transmitter and he's ready to winterize, manually advancing through each station. He never has to worry about the client being home." Irritrol introduced its new transmitter and receiver system to the market in August.

Avoid freezing

Suppose a client has asked to keep his system running later into the season than recommended and there's an early freeze that causes ice to form on the sprinkler nozzles.

Watch that the water evacuates from the section of

Sometimes you have to go "underground" to prepare a system.

Fine finishing touches

Here are some "finishing touches" you can begin using now to separate your winterization services from your competitors.

- Have weatherproof tags made up with your company information on them. They should include a statement such as, "System winterized by (crew chief name) on (date)." Wire these to the shutoff valves as a reminder to customers or other technicians not to turn the system on until next spring.

- Develop a checklist of additional related services that would improve your clients' irrigation systems or landscapes. Examples include additional zones, remote control, updated controller, weather sensors, water features and landscape lighting. A designer can contact the client later about this additional work and the crews can perform this work during the off-season.

- Place a professional-looking note with a business card in the client's door to let them know the winterization is complete.

pipe where the nozzles are frozen shut.

In areas of the country with extended seasons or where there are few winterizations performed, Hunter's Freeze Klik Sensor cuts the irrigation system off when the temperature reaches near freezing and then resets the system when the temperature rises above the set point.

"There have been famous cases where thin sheets of ice formed on streets by irrigation systems running in freezing temperatures caused accidents and deaths," Carowitz says. "This product is a liability reducer."

Here are some other precautions to keep an eye on:

- Backflow devices have a plug to remove to drain the device. Open the ball valve on the intake line and leave it in the half-open or half-closed position.

- Leave the power of electronic controllers on and the rain switch or station start switch in the off position to prevent condensation inside the controller, which can cause corrosion and component failure.

- Submersible pumps without a check valve located below the ice line can be left in the water. However, many contractors remove all submersible pumps and reinstall them in the spring.

"If a jet pump is under cover, it's okay to leave it out if properly winterized," Wilson says. "This is easily accomplished if the pump has drains on both the pickup line and outgoing line."

- Allow the pump housing to drain by removing the plug located on the bottom. Keep it in a safe spot until next spring. Open the ball valve on the intake line, draining the pipe, and leave the valve half-open or half-closed to prevent freezing. Repeat the procedure on the outgoing line. Wilson blows compressed air through the pump housing and pickup line for insurance.

- As a final precaution, unplug the power source to the pump.

— The author is a freelance writer in Moneta, VA. Her email is KWoodford@katherinesbylines.com



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Property at a glance

Location: Boca Raton, FL

Staff: Grounds & Landscape
Department

Category: Parks, Recreation Area or
Athletic Fields

Total budget: \$503,000

Year site built: 1993

Acres of turf: 12

Acres of woody ornamentals: 10

Acres of display beds: 1

Total paved area: 7 acres

Total man-hours/week: 410

Maintenance challenges

- ▶ Using only biological and cultural controls in vegetable/herb garden
- ▶ No off-season in South Florida
- ▶ Trying to be inconspicuous while working at a facility that's busy at 8 a.m.

Project checklist

Completed in last two years:

- ▶ Built vegetable/herb garden
- ▶ Expanded and improved playground area
- ▶ Created grass tennis court

On the job

- ▶ 9.5 full-time staff, 0 seasonal employees, 2 licensed pesticide applicators

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Members of Woodfield Country Club in Boca Raton, FL, are demanding and expect the highest quality facility. At the same time, they don't want to hear or see work being done while playing tennis or golf, or lounging at the pool.

Needless to say, this creates some problems for the Grounds & Landscape Department.

To make sure everyone gets along, the grounds crew works different areas during off-peak hours. The pool area and parking lots are maintained during morning hours, while the golf course and tennis courts are cared for in the afternoon. This makes everyone happy, happy, happy.

The grounds crew is responsible for maintaining the clubhouse grounds, which includes four clubhouses, 20 clay tennis courts, a large free-form pool and 30 acres of high maintenance landscaping. Chores include lawn maintenance, landscaping, flower beds, irrigation,



A crew member tends to the vegetable/herb garden built with raised planters and drip hoses due to the Florida humidity and rain.

drainage, tree trimming, landscape lighting, pest control, fertilizing, hardscapes, cleaning the exterior of buildings, site furnishings and signage.

Trimming the coconut palms around the pool before the Tiki Bar opens is no picnic. All tables, chairs and umbrellas must be moved, then the palms trimmed, the debris removed and blown, then everything must be put back in place by 11 a.m. Cocktail, anyone?

PGMS

Landscape MANAGEMENT

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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Red salvia and white and red begonias decorate the front of the membership building, while royal palms line the roadway into the club.



Crews have to train the ficus hedge to grow over the tennis court walkway, as well as trim and clean coconuts palms at the pool so no falling debris hurts anyone.

Ready, set . . . SNOW!

Follow these tips from experienced snow & ice specialists and you might even look forward to winter

BY GARY BURCHFIELD

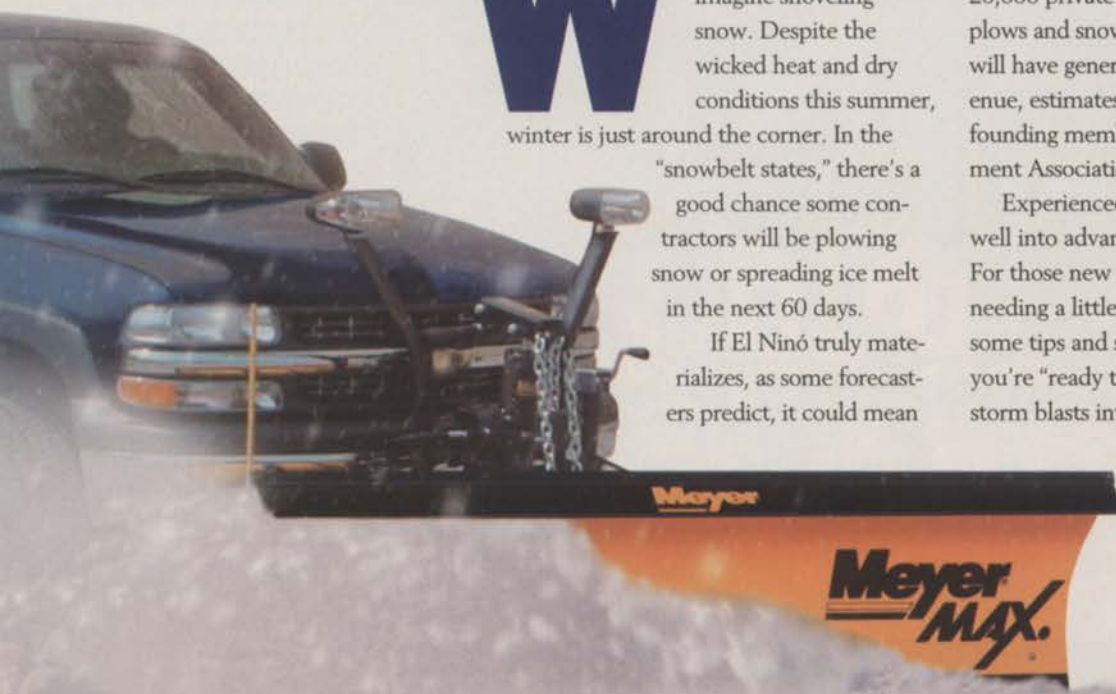
Watching grass wilt and the cracks get wider in the soil, it's hard to imagine shoveling snow. Despite the wicked heat and dry conditions this summer,

winter is just around the corner. In the "snowbelt states," there's a good chance some contractors will be plowing snow or spreading ice melt in the next 60 days.

If El Niño truly materializes, as some forecasters predict, it could mean

heavier than normal snowfall in some areas. Whatever the climate throws at us, the 2002 snow season approaches. That means upwards of 20,000 private contractors will be rolling out plows and snowblowers. By next spring, they will have generated some \$6 billion in gross revenue, estimates John Allin, past president and founding member of the Snow & Ice Management Association (SIMA).

Experienced snow and ice contractors are well into advance preparations for the winter. For those new to the business or "old timers" needing a little refresher course, we've gathered some tips and suggestions for making sure you're "ready to roll" when that first winter storm blasts into your area.



Have a plan

As John Allin says in his book, "Managing Snow & Ice," "the snow business is a crisis management industry. The contractor must learn to manage the storm and not let the storm manage you." That means careful preparation and advance planning.

Planning is a year-round process for most contractors. Jeff Tovar of Tovar's Snowplowing, Elgin, IL, says his key peo-



Jeff Tovar works on strategic planning with his crews the whole year.

ple work on strategic planning throughout the year. "We prepare contingency plans for different situations," Tovar says. "For example, we have plans for handling a snowfall of one to four

inches, another plan for a six- to eight-inch snowfall, and still other plans for a full-scale blizzard."

"We prepare contingency plans for different situations."

— Jeff Tovar,
Tovar's Snowplowing

Tovar says his company is constantly upgrading operating procedures and always looking for new ideas. As the newly elected president of SIMA, he says training programs and educational videos can be a big help. "For example, after listening to some of the training sessions at the last SIMA conference, we completely reconfigured our dispatch room for more efficiency."

Keith Kirby, one of the principals at Curbco, near Flint, MI, says one of their primary fall preparation tasks is laying out preliminary snow clearing routes and driving

their foremen and supervisors around the respective routes. "We prepare site maps of each major property and do a drive-through with the crew leaders for that site," Kirby

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says. "We figure out where to stack snow, which driveways and stairwells to clean out first, etc. Naturally, we coordinate this with the property manager so everybody is working from the same script."

Norm Detrick, Reliable Snowplowing Specialists, Macedonia, OH, says his crew leaders do a work site drive-through at night when it gets closer to snow time. "Roadways and objects look different in the dark, and a drive-through helps supervisors get familiar with the property layout. But, it doesn't help much to do it too early in the fall; people tend to forget many of the details by the time the first snowstorm occurs."

Line up your people

Whether it's your own crews or subcon-

tractors, it's important to get personnel lined up early. "We focus on getting our contract workers all lined up during September," says Keith Kirby. "Most of them have worked for us on a seasonal basis for years, but we contact each one to verify that they are coming back." He says this is also a good way to check contact telephone numbers for workers.

Curbco supplies their winter workers with company-identified parkas and snow pants. "We want them to be able to do their jobs properly, and they can't do that if they're cold and wet because of inadequate clothing," Kirby says.

Jeff Tovar says his company sets up a "phone tree" each season that includes both subcontractors and employees. "We

"We focus on getting our contract workers all lined up during September."

— Keith Kirby, Curbco

typically have at least 200 seasonal workers and upwards of 250 subcontractors working for us, and we use the phone tree to rapidly contact everyone when a storm hits. We set it up in the fall and test it to be sure all the numbers are correct."

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relies mostly on student help for winter snow clearing. "We start advertising for student workers in October, so we have crews pretty well lined up before major winter snows," Long says. "Students like the fact that we pay them \$8 an hour, in cash, the day after the snow event."

Long says the 170-acre campus requires a lot of hand shoveling because the college sits on a hillside called "Mount St. James." "The campus is laid out on five levels, so we have to clear about 115 stairways, along with numerous doorways, drives and over 12 acres of parking lots."

Long, too, has found the SIMA materials helpful for training. "We have started using the SIMA video on snow removal. Our regular full-time workers received certificates

for completing the SIMA training last winter. We submitted their certificates, along with the regular CDL and construction supervisor licenses, to our risk management personnel for insurance considerations."

Ready your equipment

Chances are you already have your snow and ice equipment. How ready to go is it? John Allin says September is when Allin Companies personnel get all the plows out and actually mount them on the trucks to be sure everything works. "We check them over, change hydraulic fluid and fix anything that needs fixed," he says.

Norm Detrick says his company takes its trucks into a truck dealership to have their hydraulic pumps flushed. "Sure, it

costs a little money, but it saves a lot of breakdowns during snow events. Then it can really get costly," he says. It's a good idea to check hydraulic hoses at the same time. Detrick says they often find elbows that get corroded and cause hydraulic system failures. "You can count on it," he says. "When your plows are parked for several months, at least one of them will break down during the first big snowstorm if they don't get serviced at the beginning of the season."

Most major snow and ice contractors have staff mechanics that report to their shop at the same time crews are heading out to job sites. "We have two mechanics from the campus motor pool that come in to help us during storms," says Jim Long at

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Holy Cross. "We also update our vendor phone list. Most of our vendors provide us after-hours phone numbers so we can get a repair part, such as a hydraulic hose, at 3:00 a.m. if we need it during a storm."

Keith Kirby says Curbcos always keeps extra plow attachments on hand. "If a blade goes down, the driver can pull into the shop, drop that blade and mount another one and get back to work. Meanwhile, our mechanics can be fixing the broken one." Curbcos maintains a sizable parts inventory for all their snow equipment, including sidewalk-clearing units. "Our parts inventories get thoroughly checked every fall, too."

Customers come first

Jeff Tovar spends fall months finalizing his

customer contracts and entering the information into the company's database. Customer phone lists are updated at the same time. "We also provide each customer with our own company phone list, with contact numbers in order of who to call first, next, etc.," says Tovar.

"We also make sure we get our certifi-

"We provide each customer with our own company phone list." — **Tovar**

cate of insurance to each customer before winter sets in," Tovar says. "We have our own standard contract, which our attorney helped us prepare. Sometimes a property manager wants his own contract. We usually turn that over to our attorney and they negotiate a modified contract."

For Jim Long, pre-season contacts include making sure good communications are established between his office, college administration offices and campus security. **LM**

— The author is a freelance writer in Lincoln, NB, with a long history in the Green Industry.

His email address is gfburch@aol.com.



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Lowdown on loaders

BY CURT HARLER

This morning, the boss sent the crew out with a loader to move some dirt. This afternoon, the turf the loader rolled across looks worse than the excavation project.

That scenario might be a thing of the past as smaller machines with rubber-tracked undercarriages catch on. These promise to compete with loader-equipped skid-steers. Think of a pocket-sized version of the big Cat dozer.

Better weight distribution and less aggressive track patterns minimize turf damage.

"The key measurement is weight per wheel," explains Brad Lemke, director of new product development at ASV. A 6000-lb., four-wheel unit puts 1,500 lbs. per wheel on the turf. One with 24 wheels behind tracks puts down only 200 lbs. per wheel. "Those wheels help traction since weight is spread all over," Lemke adds.

Not a cure-all

Tracks aren't a cure-all. Lemke notes that aggressive track lugs (say, spaced four inches apart) will exert more force per lug than a track with more lugs spaced closer together. "With tracked machines, you don't need penetration for traction," Lemke says.

Few skid-steer loaders have any suspension other than the pneumatics of the tires themselves. Pneumatic tires help provide some relief from shock and vibration, but can cause bouncing, tipping and downtime from flats. This results in a slower, less efficient operation.

"We don't expect skid-steers to be eliminated," says Lemke. However, he expects a natural progression from skid-steers to

machinery equipped with rubber-tracked undercarriages.

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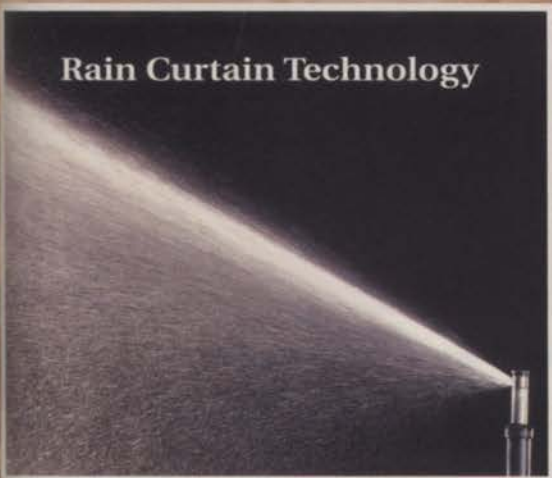
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When it's time to get a new tractor or loader, should you go with diesel or gasoline?

"It's almost always better for the commercial landscaper to go with diesel," says Rick Veenstra, product manager for Allmand Brothers, Holdrege, NB.

Gas tractors generally are designed with the homeowner or estate market in mind. Diesels are for pros because they're more robust.

"Diesel is quieter, smoother, gives better fuel economy, and the engine will last longer," Veenstra says.

No matter who the manufacturer, the diesel unit will likely have more hydraulic options available, which means the landscaper can use more attachments. Veenstra offers a clamshell for his diesel models, not for the gasoline ones.

Landscapers also find themselves using a diesel's quick-attachment features to undo loaders and add options like pallet forks. Without the auxiliary hydraulics that come on most diesels, the quick hook-up feature is gone, Veenstra says.

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Be a pro at pond maintenance



**Look like a champ
in your customers'
eyes by properly
maintaining a pond
in fall and readying
it for winter**

BY JEFF RUGG M/LA., ASLA

One of the jobs some customers desire is a full pond cleanout. Unfortunately, many landscape contractors try to sell this as a springtime task. Winter and spring are both stressful times for the fish, and a clean pond in the fall will keep the fish healthy by creating better water quality for the next three seasons.

Fall is the best time for pond cleanouts for a couple reasons:

► The fishes' immune system is still functioning as compared to spring when it hasn't yet started up after the winter dormancy.

► Removing the debris from the pond before it decays and releases toxins into the water is much better than waiting until spring, when the toxic materials may have killed or weakened the fish. More dust, dirt or debris will have fallen into the pond during the active warm water season than will get into the pond over the winter. Fish parasites overwinter in debris, so removing debris in the fall helps reduce the parasite population before they can attack the weakened fish in the spring.

Contractors who wait until spring to do pond cleanouts may not see any fish kills for a few years, but they will eventually be held responsible for killing a customer's prized fish. A pond that wasn't cleaned in

the fall will really need a good cleanout in the spring, but now the contractor has to be extra careful when handling the fish.

The best time in the fall to do a cleanout is when the water temperature in the pond is near the water temperature of the refill water (mid-50s). Often, it's best to wait until the leaves have all fallen to do the full cleanout. Some leaves will blow in over the winter, but a small cleaning in the spring will handle that.

A major pond cleanout isn't too difficult to do. All you have to do is:

1. Remove the fish and put them in tubs of pond water with netting over the tub. Be sure there's adequate aeration.
2. Pump the water out of the pond.
3. Hose down the pond (power washing is not usually necessary) and pump or wet-dry vacuum out any debris on the bottom. Remove excess algae, and never use cleaning agents.
4. Refill the pond and, if necessary, add chlorine neutralizer to prepare for the fish. Float them in the tubs to allow them to adjust to the new pond temperature before release.

Below 70° F

As the water temperature begins to drop from 70° F to 50° F, prepare the pond

and fish for winter dormancy.

The quality of water is important. Test it for ammonia, nitrite, nitrate, pH and salt levels. Test the water to be used for filling the pond before each filling, especially for nitrites since the level of nitrites acceptable for humans can be deadly to fish.

Remove debris or decaying organic material from the pond. It may release toxins, harbor parasites and fill the pond with sludge. Decaying leaves consume oxygen in the water, depriving the fish.

Consider covering the pond with netting. Are there tall plants in the way, including

▲ Even children can do some pond maintenance between the visits by the professional pond maintainer. By removing leaves, you ensure they don't create a sludge layer on the pond bottom.



cattails or iris growing in the water? Did the filtration system include mechanical filters like skimmers? Who will be responsible for cleaning them out? Trees can drop so many leaves at once that the customer may have to clean out the skimmer before you're scheduled to return.

If the plan is to cover the pond every fall, consider a more expensive reusable net that uses stakes, grommets and poles. With proper care, it will last for many years. A leaf net will usually only need to cover the pond for a couple of weeks. If the trees have small leaves, a net with small holes will be necessary.

Fish. As the water temperature lowers into the upper 60s, the fishes' immune system begins to weaken. It will completely shut down over the winter. Begin feeding the fish food that's lower in protein and higher in carbohydrates to match their natural diet that's lower in animal material during the fall.

Frogs and toads may be attracted to ponds as they look for places to hibernate. They'll need a pot or tray of soil to burrow into if there's no gravel or rocks to hide under. Many species of insects overwinter as larvae or pupas in the water as well.

Plants. Just like in the dry land perennial bed, the wetland plants will be finishing their blooming cycle. Seedpods will be developing, and leaves will begin turning yellow. Remove dying leaves as they fall into the water. Stop fertilizing plants several weeks before the weather changes in the fall so they can consume the fertilizer and not have a lot of nutrients left for algae growth after they go dormant.

Below 50° F

During heavy leaf fall periods, daily cleaning of the skimmer may be needed. Remove all of the leaves with a fishing net, swimming pool net or leaf rake prior to the pond icing over.

Fish. Stop feeding the fish as the water temperature drops below the mid-fifties. Examine the fish closely when they've been removed for pond cleaning so they can be treated for parasites or disease if necessary and enter into dormancy in peak condition. The fish will have grown in size and perhaps number from reproduction and purchases. There are far more fish in the

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average backyard pond than in the same amount of water in a natural lake. Small fish require less oxygen than large fish, and so small babies survive the winter while the large, expensive fish sometimes don't. Cull out the number of fish in a pond if necessary. Just before winter is the best time to do it.

As the fish go dormant, they don't move around as quickly and are less aware of predators. Therefore, the pond should be designed to give the fish protection. Deep areas with vertical walls and rock shelters will help protect the fish.

Frogs and turtles will begin going dormant when the water temperature reaches the low-50s, as will most of the bacteria in the filter system and pond. The biological filter system can be shut down now. Waterfalls or fountains can still be run as long as the water running through the air doesn't mix with the bottom water.

Plants. After the frost has killed the tops of perennials, cut the leaves back to just above the pots. Some plants have attractive seedpods that look nice in winter and can be left for a nice visual effect. Hollow-stemmed plants like cattails can be controlled by cutting the stems down below the water level. This section of the plant will die over winter.

Some hardy shoreline plants can be left planted along the shore or potted. Others should be moved to deeper water where they won't freeze.

After the leaves of lilies start dying, cut off all of the leaves and flower stems. Move potted lilies to a lower level where they won't freeze.

Before annual (tropical) shoreline plants receive a frost, they must be moved indoors. Cut back any extra branches, and expect some to all of the leaves to fall off as the plant acclimates to the new growing conditions. Put them in a window where they'll get the most sun possible. Keep a

saucer of water filled under each one so they can remain wet, and keep them in the 70° F range and away from dry furnace drafts. Otherwise, annual water garden plants are treated the same as dry land annuals — they're thrown away.



Pumps and filters. In the fall, stop running the pump when the water temperature gets into the 40s. You want to allow the development of the 40° F puddle that has an insulating layer of cold water above it. Any pipes that may freeze and crack can be blown clean with a leaf blower or shop vac.

Air temperature below 32° F

At about 40° F, some warmer water settles to the bottom of the pond, forming a puddle that, if left undisturbed, doesn't mix with the colder water above it. The ice floating on the top of the pond insulates the lower water from colder air above it.

Winter pond temperatures can remain cold for many months in northern climates. There's only so much water in a pond, and there can only be so much oxygen in the



▲ This pond is entirely under the branches of a three-foot diameter Silver Maple tree. The net stays on for about two weeks in the fall to keep as many leaves out of the pond as possible.

◀ A good pond leaf net will have small holes to keep leaves out. A pole keeps the net from sagging into the pond.

◀ A tub, fish nets, check valve assembly, pump, dechlorinator and Stress Coat are some of the items a contractor will need to use for doing regular pond maintenance or a pond cleanout.

water. If the ice completely covers the pond, the fish and any decaying organic material may eventually consume all the oxygen and the fish will suffocate — "winter kill."

It's easy to avoid this by keeping a small area of the pond ice-free for the exchange of gases with the atmosphere. Use air bubblers and small pumps to keep small areas ice-free, but don't allow them to mix the lower 40-degree puddle of water with the colder top layers. They cost less to run than deicers, but don't work when the air temperature drops below the teens for extended periods of time.

Pond deicers aren't meant to warm the pond, but just to keep a small area free from ice cover for the exchange of gases with the atmosphere. Keep the heating coil on the deicer clean. If mineral deposits build up on it, dip it into lime-a-way or vinegar to dissolve the deposits.

If the fish are gasping for air at the sur-



face, this may indicate either low oxygen or excess toxic gases like hydrogen sulfide or carbon dioxide. Enlarge the hole for better gas exchange using another bubbler or heater. Don't pound on the ice — if necessary, use a garden hose to melt a larger hole.

Fish. As the water temperature drops through the forties, the fish will become more sluggish and dormant and begin to live off the fat built up during the warm season. Keeping fish outdoors is safe as long as the pond is managed correctly.

Southern pond keepers will have to keep an eye out for the increased presence of fish-eating birds like egrets and herons.

Plants. In the north, all of the plants are dormant. In the south, some plants may need to be protected from the occasional frost. They may, in fact, still be blooming and green and may need to be fertilized.

Pumps and filters. Water features that run during freezing weather can create beautiful ice sculptures. However, running pond waterfalls in winter when temperatures drop below freezing may create ice jams and leaks in the watercourse. These leaks cause the overall pond level to lower, giving the fish less water. Also, warm pond water mixing with cold air could result in excessively cold water temperatures that will harm the fish.

When shutting off the system for the winter, remove the submersible pump, fil-

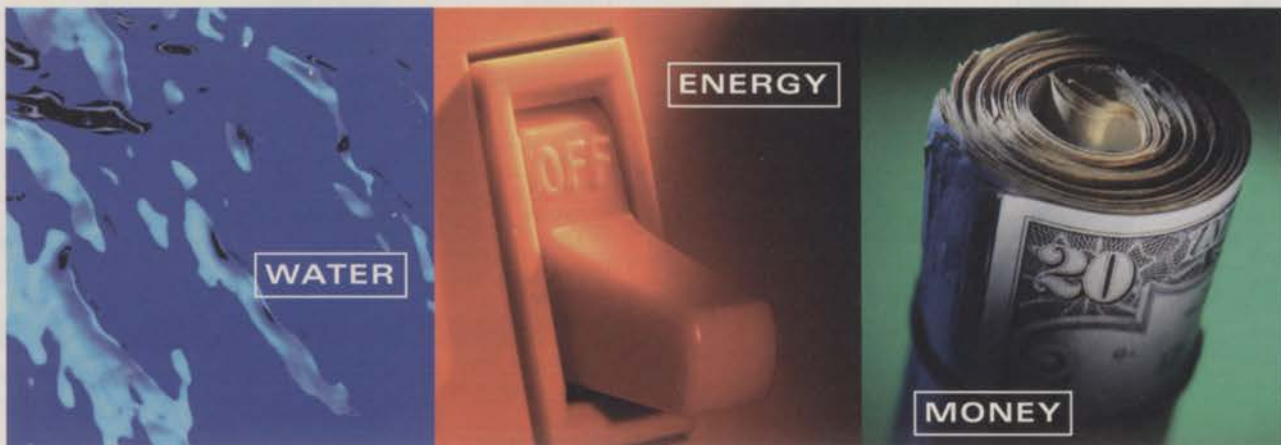
ter mats and any other items from the pond, skimmer and biological filter. They can be cleaned, dried and stored until spring. Disconnect the auto fill valve from the water source to reduce the possibility of freeze damage.

The pump may need additional care beyond cleaning. **LM**

— *The author is with Pond Supplies of America. He can be contacted via e-mail at jlugg@pondsupplies.com.*

Read More www.landscapemanagement.net

For a more complete discussion of fall pond maintenance by Jeff Rugg, an Illinois Certified Nurseryman and registered landscape architect, visit our Web site at www.landscapemanagement.net.



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Seed availability at a glance

The turf seed industry is making headway in matching supply with demand. This is especially true with perennial ryegrass.

Over-production of perennial ryegrass in Oregon's Willamette Valley led to bargain prices in recent years, but growers reduced the number of acres planted in 2001 to 164,000 and chopped it again

this year to 130,000. What's this mean? Expect the price of most varieties to rise.

Meanwhile, prices of many varieties of turf-type tall fescue seed could actually be lower because of a large crop of K-31. Newer turf-type varieties are superior to K-31 in appearance and performance, but many consumers don't know this... or don't care.

Growing conditions in the prime Kentucky bluegrass seed-

producing regions of the Inland Northwest were pretty good this season, so there should be adequate supplies of most Kentucky bluegrass varieties.

Glenn C. Jacklin, location manager, Idaho/Washington/Oregon Jacklin Seed, says the common Kentucky bluegrass crop is slightly below normal but there was more acreage.

Proprietary Kentucky bluegrass production was average with acreage down, which

should help clean up carry-overs, reports Jacklin.

For performance results on each variety in your area, review National Turfgrass Evaluation data at www.ntep.org.

KEY (AVAILABILITY):

A=expected surplus,
B=adequate supply,
C=limited supply.

KEY (PRICE):

H= higher price than last season
S= stable, equal to last season
L= lower prices than last season

CULTIVAR	MARKETER	AVAILABILITY	PRICE
Bermudagrass			
Jackpot	Jacklin	C	S
LaPrima	SR Oregon	A	S
Mirage	Cebeco	B	S
Pyramid	Cebeco	B	S
Riviera	Johnston Seed	B	new
Southern Star	Jacklin	B	S
SR 9554	SR Oregon	B	S
Sundevil	Jacklin	B	S
Sunstar	LESCO	B	S
Yukon	Johnston/Seed Research OR	C	S
Kentucky Bluegrass			
Adams	Jonathan Green	C	S
Allure	Cebeco	B	S
America	Pickseed West	B	S
Apollo	Scotts/Proseed/Landmark	A-	S
Arcadia	SR Oregon	C	S
Barcelona	Barenbrug USA	B	S
Baron	Barenbrug USA	B	S
Bartitia	Barenbrug USA	B	S
Blackstone	Scotts	B	S
Blue Ridge	Pennington	C	S
Bedazzled	Turf Merchants	C	new
Blue Knight	DLF-Jenks	B	L
Bordeaux	Lebanon Seaboard	B	S
Boutique	Merchants	C	S
Broadway	DLF-Jenks	B	S
Brooklawn	Turf Merchants	C	S
Cabernet	Lebanon Seaboard	B	S
Champagne	Lebanon Seaboard	B	S
Chateau	ULTRATurf	B	S
Chicago II	Jacklin	B	S
Coventry	Scotts	B	S
DEEPBLUE	Jonathan Green	B	S
Dragon	Proseed	A	S
Fortuna	Cebeco	C-	S
Julius	Cebeco	C	S
Hallmark	LESCO	A	S

CULTIVAR	MARKETER	AVAILABILITY	PRICE
Jefferson	Jonathan Green	B	S
Quantum Leap	Roberts Seed	A	S
Langara	Pickseed West	B	S
Limousine	Roberts Seed	A	S
Mallard	Pennington	C	S
Monte Carlo	Pennington	C	S
Moonshadow	Pickseed West	B	S
NuGlide	Jacklin	B	S
P-105	Proseed	C	S
Rugby II	Roberts Seed	A	S
Shamrock	LESCO/DLF-Jenks	A-	S
Showcase	SR Oregon	B	S
SR 2284	SR Oregon	C	new
Tsunami	Jacklin	B	S
Wildwood	LESCO	A	S
Fine Fescue			
Ambassador Chewings	Lebanon Seaboard	B	S
Aruba Creeping Red	Jacklin	B	L
Azay	Pickseed West	B	S
Badger Creeper	Scotts	A	S
Bardur Hard	Barenbrug USA	B	S
Berkshire Hard	Scotts	A	S
Bridgeport Chewings	Barenbrug USA	B	S
Brittany Chewings	LESCO	A	L
Carmen Chewing	Jonathan Green	B+	S
Celestial	Turf Merchants	C	new
Cindy	Cebeco	B	H
Columbia Chewings	Proseed	A	H
Defiant Hard	LESCO	A	L
Ecostar	Jacklin	B	L
Eureka	Cebeco	B	S
Hardtop Hard	Barenbrug USA	B	S
Hood Chewing	Jonathan Green	B+	S
Intrigue	Turf Merchants	A	S
Jasper II	Pickseed West	B	S
Longfollow II	Cebeco	B	H
Minotaur	Turf Merchants	A	L
Osprey Hard	SR Oregon	A	S

continued on page 62

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Circle No. 137

TURFGRASS MANAGEMENT

continued from page 60

CULTIVAR	MARKETER	AVAILABILITY	PRICE
Oxford	Lebanon Seaboard	B	S
Pathfinder	Lebanon Seaboard	B	S
Reliant II	Proseed	A	H
Rescue 911	Jacklin	B	L
Ridu Hard	DLF-Jenks	B	H
Rose Chewings	DLF-Jenks	B	H
Salem Creeping	Proseed	A	H
Sandpiper Chewings	SR Oregon	A	S
Shademark	LESCO	A	L
Creeping Red			
Silhouette Chewings	Roberts Seed	A	S
SR 3200 Blue	SR Oregon	A	S
Treasure Chewings	Scotts	A	S
Victory 2	Pickseed West	B	S
Weston Creeping Red	Jonathan Green	B+	S
Wrigley Chewings	DLF-Jenks	B	H
Tall Fescue			
Admiral	Burlingham	A	L
Arid 3	Jacklin	B	L
Barlexas II	Barenbrug USA	B	S
Biltmore	LESCO	A	S
Bingo	Cebeco	B	L
Black Magic	Jonathan Green	C	S
Bravo	LESCO	A	S
Chieftain II	Roberts Seed	A	L
Coyote	Scotts	C	H
Crew-Cut II	SR Oregon	A	L
Crossfire II	Pickseed West	B	L
Daytona	Burlingham	A	L
Defiance	SR Oregon	A	S
Dominion	Scotts	A	L
Dynasty	Pickseed West	B	L
Empress	Roberts Seed	A	L
Focus	Turf Merchants	C	S
Gazelle	Roberts Seed	A	L
Grande	SR Oregon	A	L
Hounddog	Cebeco	B	L
Jaguar 3	Jacklin	B	L
Laramie	LESCO	A	S
Masterpiece	Lebanon Seaboard	B	S
Millennium	Turf Merchants	A	L
Mustang 3	Pickseed West	B	L
Obsidian	Jonathan Green	C	S
Onyx	Jonathan Green	C	S
Picasso	Lebanon Seaboard	B	S
Pixie	Jacklin	B	L
Plantation	Pennington	A	L
Rebel Exeda	Pennington	A	L
Rembrandt	Lebanon Seaboard	B	S
Reserve	DLF-Jenks	B	L
2nd Millennium	Turf Merchants	C	new
Signia	Pennington	A	L
Southern Comfort	DLF-Jenks	B	L
Tempest	Burlingham	A	L
Tomcat	Cebeco	C-	S
Tracer	Barenbrug USA	B	S
Vegas	Barenbrug USA	B	S
Wildfire	DLF-Jenks	B	L
Wyatt	Scotts	C	H
Perennial Ryegrass			
Accent	Jacklin	B	S
Affirmed	Lebanon Seaboard	B	H
Allsport	LESCO	B+	S

CULTIVAR	MARKETER	AVAILABILITY	PRICE
AllStar2	Cebeco	C-	H
Applaud	Pennington	C	S
Barlennium	Barenbrug USA	B	S
Caddyshack	Jacklin	B	S
Calypso II	Roberts Seed	A	H
Champion GC	SR Oregon	A	S
Churchill	Lebanon Seaboard	B	H
Cutter	Pickseed West	C	H
Dogstar	Jonathan Green	A	S
Elfin	DLF-Jenks	B	H
Esquire	DLF-Jenks	B	H
Exacta	Lebanon Seaboard	B	H
Fiesta 3	Pickseed West	C	H
Gallery	Scotts	C	H
Gator 3	Cebeco	C	H
Hawkeye	SR Oregon	B	new
Icon	Burlingham	A	H
Inspire	Scotts	C	H
Integra	Pennington	C	H
Jet	Pennington	A	S
Jockey	Jonathan Green	A	S
Keystone	DLF-Jenks	C	H
Line Drive	LESCO	B+	S
Mach I	Roberts Seed	C	H
Majesty	Scotts	B	H
Manhattan 3	Turf Merchants	A	S
Pacesetter	LESCO	B+	S
Palmer III	Proseed	A	H
Paragon	Turf Merchants	C	S
Pennant II	Proseed	A	H
Pinnacle II	Barenbrug USA	B	S
Pizzazz	Turf Merchants	A	H
Plymouth	Jonathan Green	A	S
Prelude III	Proseed	A	H
Premiere II	Barenbrug USA	B	S
Racer II	Roberts Seed	A	H
Seville II	Pickseed West	C	H
SR 4220	SR Oregon	C	new
Stallion Supreme	ULTRA Turf	B	H
TopGun	Jacklin	B	S
Top Hat	Cebeco	B	H
Vixen	Burlingham	A	H

OTHER

Bluegrass

Supina	ULTRA Turf	B	S
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Buffalograss

Bison	Johnston Seed	B	S
Bowie	Native Turf Group	B	S
Cody	Native Turf Group	B	S
Plains	Patten	B	L
Texoka	Patten	B	L
Top Gun	Patten	B	L
Texoka	Johnston Seed	B	S

Zoysia

Cathay	Jacklin	C	S
Companion	SR Oregon	B	S
Ming	Cebeco	C-	H
Sunrise	Jacklin	C	S
Zenith	Patten	C+	S

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Ground Zero **green** again

Connecticut brothers prepared World Trade Center's glass-enclosed Winter Garden for 9/11 memorial

BY RON HALL / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



The most efficient way to plant the 40-ft. palms was to use a crane to ease them into planting chambers, then blow the specially blended soil around the roots.

Certain events are so mind-numbing and unexpected that you never forget what you were doing when you learned of them. What happened one beautiful Tuesday morning a year ago this month is one of them.

Brothers Stefan, 30, and Ed Kijewski, 26, vow they'll never forget 9/11. Unlike most of the rest of us, however, they got a chance to restore what was destroyed during the terrorist attack.

New life

The co-owners of Mulchmaster Plus LLC, Wallingford, CT, were among the select contractors hired to put life — in this case, sixteen 40-ft.-high palm trees — back into the Winter Garden that was damaged when



Stefan (left) and Ed Kijewski feel lucky to have been involved in restoring the WTC site.

the Trade Towers collapsed. The 120-ft.-high vaulted glass atrium, which looks over the Hudson River, is located at the center of World Financial Center. It was a popular dining and shopping area for workers at the WFC's four office buildings and hosted concerts and other performances.

"It's been a great honor for us to work

down there," says Stefan Kijewski (pronounced Key-s-key). "I keep thinking about it. It's constantly on my mind, and I have to work to keep myself from getting too emotional about it."

They earned the job for a couple reasons: one, they had the equipment to do it efficiently. Two, they had established a good relationship with John Mini Indoor Landscape, the company that had maintained the atrium interiorscape prior to the damage and was charged with restoring it again.

Getting down to work

Using a 60-yd. Express Blower unit with 200 ft. of a 1/2-in.-thick rubber hose, they blew six inches of 3/4-in. smooth gravel for drainage (100 tons total) and four feet of soil mix (800 cu. yds.) into the planting

continued on page 66

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.

"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."



Cut More Leaf, Less Stem



Nu-Gro Technologies, Inc. 2680 Horizon Drive SE, Suite F5, Grand Rapids, MI 49546
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Circle No. 139

continued from page 64

chambers. They separated the two layers with fabric barriers. This took almost four days in mid August.

As they prepared the indoor planting chambers, two trucks with 48-ft. trailers were roaring up I-95 from Florida transporting the eight large palms to the Manhattan site.

Although the brothers thought their part of the project would be complete after blowing the gravel and soil, they were wrong. It became apparent early the following Monday morning that using laborers with wheelbarrows to backfill around the palm's roots was taking too long. Instead, the brothers restretched the hose back into the atrium and blew the remaining soil mix around the rootballs just as the trees were carefully craned into their new locations.

"We wanted to be a part of the planting from the start," says Stefan. "The first couple of trees took a bit longer than we expected, but once we got our system going, it went very smoothly."

Bleak outlook

While their part of the project took just over a week, the Kijewski brothers started



One challenge the Kijewski brothers faced was finding enough space to load and unload gravel and soil from the blower truck.



The Winter Garden restoration project at the World Financial Center was accomplished through the coordinated efforts of many different tradesmen.

planning for it this past winter, when things looked their bleakest. "Imagine how it looked after Mt. St. Helens erupted with everything under a huge coating of dust," says Stefan. "Everything was open all winter and everything had to be taken out."

The brothers realized early into their planning that they were going to face tough challenges, including finding a place to park the blower truck close to the atrium and getting enough space to load and unload the gravel and soil.

"We had to drive the truck down a sidewalk and between trees," says Kijewski. "It was an education for us just to get the blower truck down there." Once in place, the company used a VersaLift telescopic loader manufactured by Bobcat to keep the blower supplied with gravel and soil.

The material was trucked to the site early each morning to avoid New York City's infamous traffic.

Then there was the deadline. General contractor Turner Construction had to have the atrium restored before Sept. 11, 2002, when the world's attention returned to the site during a visit by President George W. Bush and other dignitaries.

"There was a saying at the site," chuckles Stefan, who finds it easier to laugh



Mulchmaster workers blew a layer of round gravel for drainage into the planting hole first.



Workers used 800 cu. yds. of soil at the site.

now that the job is done. "No matter what it takes, the trees are coming."

Now that the Winter Garden project is over, what's next for the brothers? "We have some lawn seeding projects and schools will be needing wood chips in their playgrounds," says Stefan.

"But I don't think any of us will forget when all of this happened. I don't think any of us will forget that we got a chance to help." **LM**

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Circle No. 140



JOHN DEERE

ask the expert

BY BALAKRISHNA RAO

Fighting moisture stress

We've been using Florel brand growth regulator to manage mistletoe on ponderosa pine in our area. These plants are in natural settings like woods. Our problem now is that we're experiencing a severe drought and plants are under severe moisture stress. Can we treat now with Florel to manage mistletoe on these pines without any plant injury?

— CO

If you're dealing with dwarf mistletoe, reports indicate that the ideal time to treat is now or before mistletoe blooming. The objective is to eliminate the seed production and dispersal. Although the preferred timing is around now, it's not a good time to treat due to the moisture stress these trees are experiencing. Treated plants may show phytotoxicity symptoms. In some situations, the older needles can defoliate. Since these trees are in natural settings, prewatering to reduce moisture stress and phytotoxicity from Florel treatment isn't practical.

If you're dealing with leafy mistletoe, a Monterey Chemical Company representative mentioned that treatments should be made in spring.

Unightly galls

How do you manage galls on spruce trees? The galls look bad and are highly visible. We're thinking of using Merit soil injection. How will this work? When do we treat, fall or spring?

— MI

Around July or August the galls on spruce trees, which are produced by adelgids, turn brown and become unsightly. Eastern

spruce gall adelgids produce galls at the base of small branches, while Cooley spruce galls are produced at the tip of branch terminals.

Galls begin to develop from early spring, mimicking lawn-applied herbicide symptoms. Gradually they distort the affected spruce twigs and mature. Around mid to late July, they turn brown. When the adelgid nymphs inside the gall mature and the galls begin to dry out and open the small chambers, the nymphs move out onto nearby needles and molt and become winged forms. Soon, the empty galls turn brown. This discolored and distorted growth on the branches appears more pronounced and becomes aesthetically objectionable. These galls distort the growth of affected trees. It can especially be a problem in Christmas tree growing areas.

Consider treating the affected trees after galls open in late July or early August, or before buds start to break in the spring around early April. Applications of insecticides such as Sevin or Talstar should manage the problem. Another option is to soil inject Merit insecticide around late fall to get control of the adelgids in the spring. Pre- and/or post-watering in conjunction with Merit application will improve the efficacy.

Another alternative option is to remove the galls by handpicking and destroying them.

Avoiding sprinklers

I understand the importance of aerating our ballfields, so I core and spike on a regular basis. The problem is the amount of time I spend marking the sprinkler heads and valve boxes to avoid running

over them. The sod is too thick to see them without marker flags. Do you have any suggestions on how to speed up the process? I have allocated a separate timer program on the irrigation control box to run through the zones at three-minute intervals to speed up marking, but it's still time consuming.

— OH

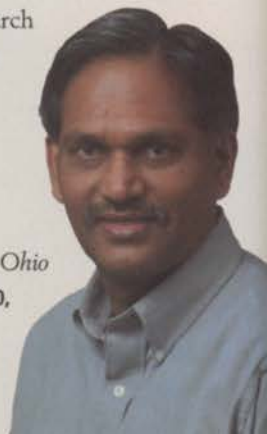
After contacting a few manufacturers and service companies, I've concluded that the way you've been marking the sprinkler heads and then aerifying is the best option. Alternatively, one may choose to use different metal sprinkler heads and can use a metal detector to find their location. This method will also be time consuming and may not be any better than what you're currently using.

I'm not familiar with any automatic units like electronic sensors which might give signals far ahead of your aerifying equipment to help you avoid hitting the sprinkler heads.

One option would be to inject some dyes such as Tracker into your water line prior to the desired aerifying operation period. Run the water for a short period together with the colored dye. When the water comes out, it should be colored and remain colored until you finish your operation, without causing problem to the turf. It should disappear before it becomes aesthetically displeasing. This method, however, needs considerable research to determine its feasibility.

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.



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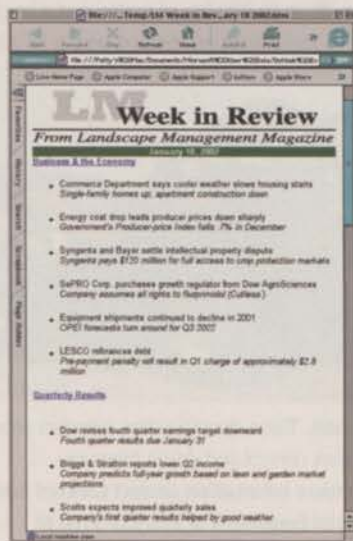
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For more information contact Polaris at 763/542-0500 or www.polarisindustries.com / circle no. 251

Don't wait, calibrate

Toro's new computer-based sprayer calibration tool assists with checking and calibrating sprayers, plus calculating product and water mixing rates. It works with Windows-based PCs, Windows Pocket PC-based handhelds, and Palm OS-based Handhelds. Each program is available for download at the Toro Web site.

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Right on schedule

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For more information contact Rain Bird at 520/741-6100 or www.rainbird.com / circle no. 254

Turn over a new leaf

Giant-Vac Inc.'s new leaf blower attachment for commercial zero-turn mowers called the Leaf Buster features a 16-hp Briggs & Stratton Vanguard engine with a large diameter Whisper Jet impeller and Taper Lok hub.

For more information contact Giant-Vac at 860/423-7741 / circle no. 255

It takes three

Precision Laboratories now has three formulations of Cascade Plus Fertilizer available. Cascade, which is a wetting agent and fertilizer combination product, is now available in an all synthetic 15-0-10 analysis, 5-1-0 all organic analysis, and 10-1-4 organic and synthetic combination. Application recommendations for the 5-1-0 and 10-1-4 formulations are 10 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft. to obtain eight oz. of Cascade.

For more information contact Precision Labs at 800/323-6280 or www.precisionlab.com / circle no. 256

Plow it up

Meyer Products' EZ-Vector V plow for one-ton pickups and one-ton cab chassis features heavy duty trip springs and a center pin that incorporates friction reduction design for wing movement. Plow width is 88 in. at full angle.

For more information contact Meyer at 216/486-1313 or www.meyerproducts.com / circle no. 257

Sporty loader

The Groundhog, from Concord Environmental Equipment, is a front-end loader attachment that mounts on all makes of ATVs. Using a hydraulic pump powered by the ATV battery, it can lift up to 300 lbs. of material at a height of 48 in. Its controls are located on the ATV han-



dlebars. Three double acting cylinders allow for bucket control and down pressure.

For more information contact Concord Environmental Equipment at 218/937-5100 or www.ceesoilssample.com / circle no. 258

No low blow

Goossen's new debris blower features a 36-in. blower fan with eight paddles made of 1/4-in.

steel that spins on greaseable bearings. The 40-in. blower housing is split to allow for easy access to the fan. Bi-directional air discharge is controllable by lever from operator seat. Power requirement is 30 PTO hp minimum while air-flow is 7,100 CFM.

For more information contact Goossen at 800/835-1042 / circle no. 259



You can dig it, too

The JCB 8017 1.5-ton mini excavator can work in tight areas when the undercarriage is retracted to its minimum of 3 ft., 2 in. A two-speed tracking feature allows for a low travel speed of 1.3 mph and high of 2.2 mph. Maximum digging depth is 7 ft., 11 in.

For more information contact JCB at 888/742-5522 or www.jcbna.com / circle no. 260

Pull in profit

Thanks to 2,000 lbs. of downward hydraulic pressure, Daniels Pull Plow removes snow and ice from hard-to-plow areas your front-mounted plow can't handle. Fits any four-wheel drive vehicle equipped with a 2-in. receiver-type hitch.

For more information contact Daniels at 216/486-1313 or www.meyerproducts.com / circle no. 261

Sit or stand

Sit or stand with Wright Mfg.'s new Sentar zero-turn mower. It features a padded, saddle-like seat for sitting, but the seat can be folded out of the way for standing as well. It has cutting widths of 48, 52 or 61 in. Maximum

ground speeds are 11 mph forward and 5 mph in reverse. Fuel tank holds 10.7 gallons.

For more information contact Wright Mfg. at 301/360-9810 or www.wrightmfg.com / circle no. 262

Cover it up

With the Typar professional landscape fabric, Reemay Inc. claims a contractor, with a one-time installation, creates an unseen line of defense against weed growth that lasts for years. It comes available in 3 ft. by 50 ft. and 3 ft. by 100 ft. sizes.

For more information contact Reemay at 800/321-6271 or www.reemay.com / circle no. 263

On the prowl

Encore's Prowler mid-cut features a side-to-side articulating, floating deck, no slip disc brakes and maintenance free blade spindles. For a level cut at the high speed, a PTO shaft powers the blades at 19,000 fpm. New are larger, 11-gal. dual fuel tanks and molded-in cup holders and utility tray. Deck size options are 52, 61 and 72 in.

For more information contact Encore at 800/267-4255 / circle no. 264



Pass the salt

TruckCraft's new TC-140 D-Icer Plus tailgate replacement spreader for one-tons requires no hydraulic system (12V electric) and is easy to install. It handles any free-flowing material up to 3/4 in. in diameter, and spreads up to 10,000 lbs. of material per hour.

For more information contact TruckCraft at 800/755-3867 / circle no. 265



Let it snow

Fisher's new Minute Mount 2 makes it a snap to attach your plow to your truck. A built-in handle disengages both connecting pins simultaneously when removing the plow. Lower gear is flared twice as wide for easier drive-in alignment. A spring-loaded chain automatically retracts the lift arm.

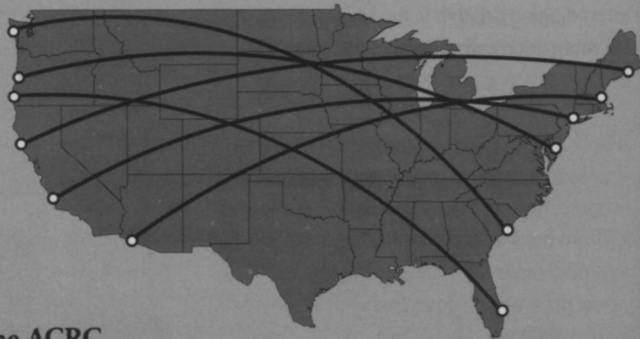
For more information contact Fisher at 207/594-4446 / circle no. 266

This year **7 million pounds** of plastic ag chemical containers will be **recycled** into new products...



Over 10 years, enough to cross the continental U.S. **6** times.

Together we can keep single trip HDPE containers from being burned, dumped, or landfilled. Thanks to the ACRC and its partners in state and local government, thousands of growers and applicators drop off their rinsed containers at collection sites, free-of-charge. **To find out more, call toll free at 1-877-952-2272, or visit online, www.acrcycle.org**



The following companies pay for the recycling programs of the ACRC.

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Gustafson LLC
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Nufarm
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SePRO Corp.
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Tenkoz Inc.
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AFFILIATES

Cousins-Currie Ltd.
Hedwin Corp.
Lee Container Corp.
Murray Equipment Inc.
Pretium Packaging
Rieke Corp.



Ag Container Recycling Council

Landscape MANAGEMENT

September 2002

This card is void after November 15, 2002

I would like to receive (continue receiving) LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT free each month:
 Yes No

NAME (please print) _____
 TITLE _____
 FIRM _____
 ADDRESS* _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
 *Is this your home address? Yes No
 PHONE (____) _____ FAX (____) _____
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Signature: _____ Date: _____

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- 1. My primary business at this location is: (fill in ONE only)**
CONTRACTORS/SERVICE COMPANIES
 02 255 Landscape Contractors (Installation & Maintenance)
 03 260 Lawn Care Service Companies & Custom Chemical Applicators (ground & air)
 04 285 Irrigation Contractors & Consultants
 Other Contractors/Service Companies (please specify) _____

- LANDSCAPING/GROUNDS CARE FACILITIES**
 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 Soil 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) _____

- 3. SERVICES PERFORMED (fill in ALL that apply)**
- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 17 <input type="checkbox"/> A Mowing | 23 <input type="checkbox"/> G Turf Disease Control | 28 <input type="checkbox"/> L Pond/Lake Care |
| 18 <input type="checkbox"/> B Turf Insect Control | 24 <input type="checkbox"/> H Ornamental Care | 29 <input type="checkbox"/> M Landscape Installation |
| 19 <input type="checkbox"/> C Tree Care | 25 <input type="checkbox"/> I Landscape Design | 30 <input type="checkbox"/> N Snow Removal |
| 20 <input type="checkbox"/> D Turf Aeration | 26 <input type="checkbox"/> J Turf Weed Control | 31 <input type="checkbox"/> O Other (please specify) |
| 21 <input type="checkbox"/> E Irrigation Services | 27 <input type="checkbox"/> K Paving, Deck & Patio Installation | |
| 22 <input type="checkbox"/> 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="checkbox"/> A Aerators | 39 <input type="checkbox"/> H Herbicides | 46 <input type="checkbox"/> O Sweepers |
| 33 <input type="checkbox"/> B Blowers | 40 <input type="checkbox"/> I Insecticides | 47 <input type="checkbox"/> P Tractors |
| 34 <input type="checkbox"/> C Chain Saws | 41 <input type="checkbox"/> J Line Trimmers | 48 <input type="checkbox"/> Q Truck Trailers/Attachments |
| 35 <input type="checkbox"/> D Chipper-Shredders | 42 <input type="checkbox"/> K Mowers | 49 <input type="checkbox"/> R Trucks |
| 36 <input type="checkbox"/> E De-icers | 43 <input type="checkbox"/> L Snow Removal Equipment | 50 <input type="checkbox"/> S Turfseed |
| 37 <input type="checkbox"/> F Fertilizers | 44 <input type="checkbox"/> M Sprayers | 51 <input type="checkbox"/> T Utility Vehicles |
| 38 <input type="checkbox"/> G Fungicides | 45 <input type="checkbox"/> N Spreaders | |

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

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**Landscape
MANAGEMENT**

ADVANSTAR COMMUNICATIONS INC
PO BOX 5054
PITTSFIELD MA 01203-9697



**Landscape
MANAGEMENT**

September 2002

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

NAME (please print) _____
 TITLE _____
 FIRM _____
 ADDRESS* _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
 *Is this your home address? Yes No
 PHONE (____) _____ FAX (____) _____
 E-MAIL ADDRESS _____
 Signature: _____ Date: _____

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

- | | | |
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110	122	134	146	158	170	182	194	206	218	230	242	254	266	278	290	302	314
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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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events

WHAT, WHEN & WHERE

September

16-18 Florida Turfgrass Association Conference and Trade Show / Tampa, FL; 800/882-6721

18 Nursery and Landscape Field Day / Virginia Beach, VA; Sponsored by VA Tech's Hampton Rds. Ag Research and Ext. Center; 757/363-3906

19-20 MFPA Summer Conference / Walled Lake, MI; 480/966-1610

19-21 Florida Nursery & Allied Trade Show / Orlando, FL; 800/375-3642

26-28 Community Forestry At Its Best / Nebraska City, NB; 888/448-7337; www.arbor-day.org

October

7-8 Building With Trees National Conference / Nebraska City, NE; 402/474-5655

8 ALCA Essentials for Success / Cincinnati, OH; 800/395-2522; www.alca.org

8-10 OLA Short Course – Beginning Residential Design / Hudson, OH; Sponsored by the Ohio Landscapers Association; 440/717-0002

9-10 Turfgrass, Landscape and Equipment Expo / Pomona, CA; Sponsored by the

Southern California Turfgrass Council; 800/500-7282

12-15 Atlantic Seedsman's Association 50th Anniversary Convention / Hilton Head, SC; 814/237-0330

16-20 ITODA Fall Meeting / St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands; 810/229-9405

18-22 ASLA Annual Meeting and Expo / San Jose, CA; 202/898-2444

21-23 New England Greenhouse Conference / Worcester, MA; 203/445-0110

22 ALCA Essentials for Success / Los Angeles, CA; 800/395-2522; www.alca.org

23-24 Western Nursery & Garden Expo / Las Vegas, NV; 800/748-6214; www.western-expo.com

24-26 22nd International Irrigation Show / New Orleans, LA; 703/536-7080

November

12-14 NYSTA Turf & Grounds Expo / Syracuse, NY; NY State Turfgrass Association; 800/873-8873

14-16 Green Industry Expo & Conference / Nashville, TN; ALCA, PLCAA, PGMS; 800/458-3466; www.gieonline.com

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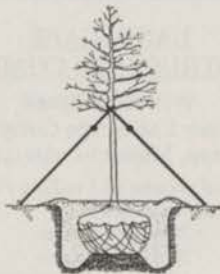


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C. Scott, Inc.

- Processes more green industry H2B workers annually than any other H2B Service in America.
- Retains the largest staff of bilingual H2B professionals including staff attorney Charles Martinez.
- Provides one-point accountability from the start to finish.
- Maintains offices in Bay City, Texas and Monterrey, Mexico to provide a totally coordinated, professional service.
- Offers SILC Lite for companies needing 6 workers or less.

If you'd like H2B services from a company with depth of expertise and turn-key service to guide you confidently through the process without surprises, call C. Scott Inc at 979-245-7577. Find out why 98% of clients return year after year.

Call us now so we can complete your paperwork and get you on the right track for a well-staffed 2003 season.



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Circle No. 151



Advertising information:

- ◀ Contact Leslie Zola at 800-225-4569 ext. 2670 or 440-891-2670, Fax: 440-826-2865, E-mail: lzola@advanstar.com
- For ad schedules under \$250, payment must be received by the classified closing date.
- We accept VISA, MASTERCARD, and AMERICAN EXPRESS over the phone.

- Mail LM Box # replies to: *Landscape Management*, (LM Box # ___), 131 W. First St., Duluth, MN 55802-2065.
- Fax replies to: 218-723-9683 (please include box number and magazine title on cover page).
- E-mail replies to: blindbox@advanstar.com (please include box number and magazine title on subject line).

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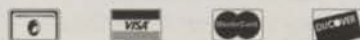
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best practices

GUIDELINES TO HELP AN INDUSTRY GROW

Eliminate "lost time," improve efficiencies

BY BRUCE WILSON

In landscape maintenance, the single biggest cost item is labor. Yet we often see companies spending more time trying to save money on purchases rather than managing hours.

Companies that focus on managing labor hours are rewarded with nice profits and usually perform high quality work. Yes, efficiency and quality go hand in hand.

Travel time

Manage travel time. Develop a sales plan that focuses on building route density. Most businesses grow by word of mouth, but referrals tend to spread you out over wide geographic areas. Disciplined selling is the answer.

If you're spread out, how else can you reduce travel

time? Have crews report to pickup areas and have your crew leader travel to meet them, thereby only paying the driver travel time. Or use satellite yards.



Bruce Wilson

shared. Also, the employee will know the piece of equipment and will notice things going wrong and get them repaired before it breaks in the field.

Equipment breakdown

Equipment breakdowns aren't inevitable. Some companies' old equipment runs better than their competitor's newer equipment. A good preventive maintenance program is almost always the difference. Most breakdowns don't occur out of the blue. Parts show signs of wear before breaking down. Train your crews to be on the lookout for these signs.

Whenever possible, assign one operator to a piece of equipment. That employee will take better care of it than if it's

Load and dispatch

Many companies lose countless hours getting out of the yard in the morning. If security isn't an issue, leave equipment on your trucks or trailers at night, eliminating the need to reload in the morning. Also:

- Prepare route sheets or work orders the night before.
- Enforce strict tardiness policies. One worker showing up 15 minutes late costs a three-man crew 45 minutes.
- Monitor how long it's taking crews to get out of the yard. Stay on top of this; it will improve your efficiency.
- Plan to be successful.

Make sure there is a work order outlining exactly what is to be done, what is needed in materials and equipment and how long it should take.

Eliminate wasted time and celebrate your successes.

Sound off

Bruce Wilson spent 30 years building Environmental Care, Inc., into one of the largest and most respected Green Industry companies in the U.S. He and partner Thomas L. Oyler of Wilson-Oyler Group now offer consulting services to landscape and grounds care providers. (Visit www.wilson-oyler.com or contact Wilson at bwilson@wilson-oyler.com.)

Do you have any time- and/or labor-saving ideas that you can add to Wilson's list? Let managing editor Jason Stahl know at jstahl@advanstar.com. If we publish your e-mail in a future issue, we'll mail you a copy of the book, "Spanish Phrases for Landscaping Professionals," by Jason Halben and Dominic Arbini. For information about the book, call 303/863-1685.

TIME WASTERS' "HALL OF SHAME"

PROBLEM	CAUSE
Travel time	Poor route density
Equipment breakdown	Old or poorly maintained equipment
Load and dispatch	Unorganized and lack of discipline
Job overruns	Poor planning

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