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# Oct '03

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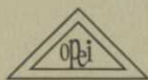
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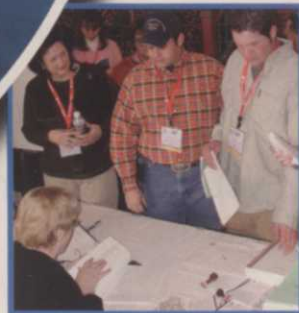
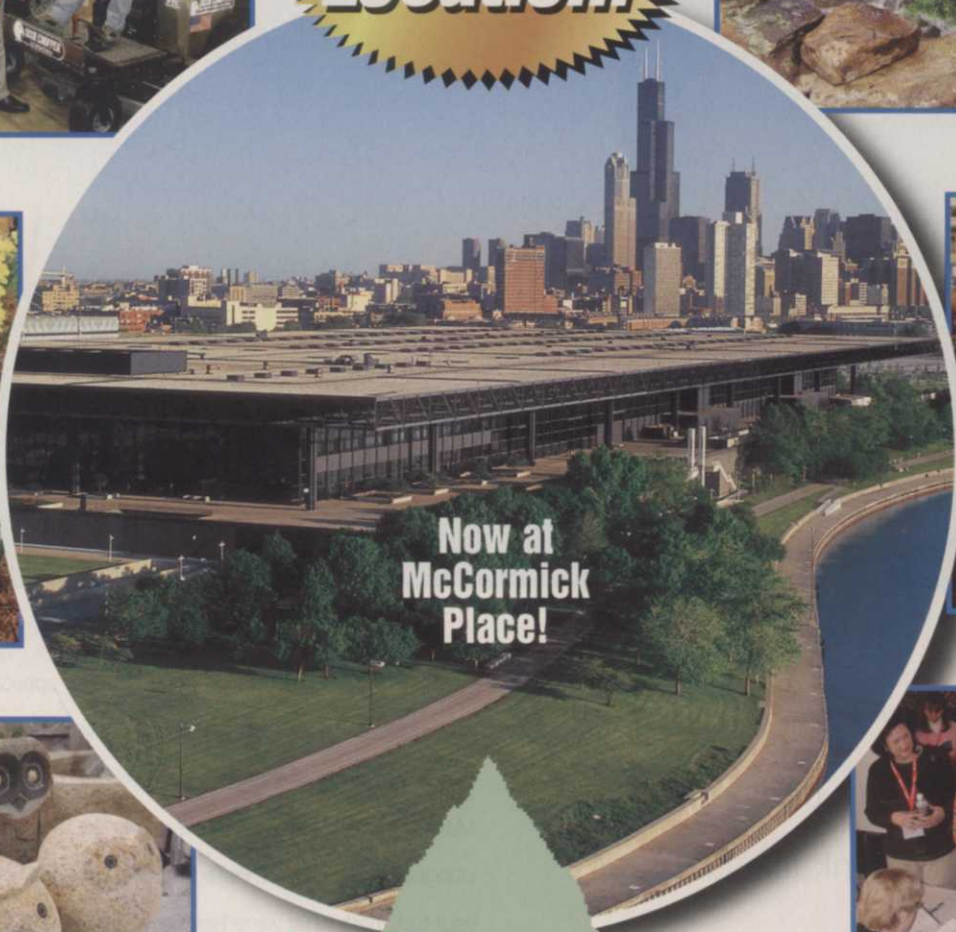
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BY RON HALL / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

## Facility tours a 'win-win'

**H**ow'd you like 50 company owners and managers showing up at your company, quizzing your key people and spending about two hours dissecting your operation?

The owners of two Boston-area landscape companies opened their firms to 50 other colleagues late last month. Nick DiBenedetto and Manny DeSouza of ND Landscape, and Dan Foley of D. Foley Landscape Inc., put bullseyes on their companies' chests, then let their guests have at them.



Fellow landscapers swarmed ND Landscape for ideas.

Giving the visitors the opportunity to speak frankly about what they saw during the tours demonstrated that these owners have an uncommon willingness to learn how they can improve their respective operations.

It also added value to the concept of the facility tour that is often one-sided. Typically, they benefit visitors much more than hosts because the owner and management of the host company start planning for the arrival of guests two or three weeks prior to a tour. The extra work involves all of a company's key employees and means the loss of valuable production for the host company.

Landscapers think facility tours are great, and why not? When they arrive for a tour, they're divided into, say, five or six groups at the host company, and then directed to as many different "stations" where a key

employee explains an aspect of its operation. After the overview of the department (shop management, accounting, maintenance, etc.), they get an opportunity to ask questions. Then they move to the next stop. By tour's end, they know what makes the company tick.

### Easy R & D

Facility tours give visitors the opportunity to do some easy R&D (rob and duplicate). The host company, through generosity, even provides visitors with its printed material such as marketing pieces, customer surveys, etc.

But where's the win for the host company?

In the case of the Boston-area tours, it came from the visitors' feedback. Credit Nick, Manny and Dan for the courage to open their operations to scrutiny, and for the way they handled both the praise and the advice.

Credit also JP Horizons, Inc. that put these facility tours together for its annual "Face to Face" exercise. The visiting owners and managers were all participants in the Owner's Network, a JP Horizons' program. They gave back as much as they took away.

The JP team — Jim Paluch, Jud Griggs, Bob Coulter and Brian Marino — showed us how to make these tours more valuable for not only the guests but also the hosts.

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Facility tours give visitors the opportunity to do some easy R&D (rob and duplicate).



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With expanding populations,  
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Outdoor irrigation for our crops and landscapes is the lifeline that allows our cities to thrive. Modern irrigation works silently in the background — so well that we tend to take our water for granted.

Along with its immense benefits, however, improper irrigation wastes the very thing that makes otherwise barren deserts habitable. From leaky hoses to broken sprinkler heads, an incredible amount of water is wasted. We step around sprinklers spraying the pavement and ignoring that our reservoirs just got a little lower. With expanding populations, we must take measures to conserve our water.

### Not enough

This has already begun at the public level, but merely telling people to conserve water isn't enough. In today's fast-paced society, individuals seemingly can't be bothered with our water woes. But according to the EPA, "per capita water consumption is rising twice as fast as the world's population." The next step to ensure that our water is used efficiently is to tap into our technological capabilities and implement a solution fit for the 21st century.

Outdoor water conservation must begin with sprinkler systems. Currently, methods exist to determine the moisture of the soil. If these sensors are wired into sprinkler systems, then only the dehydrated areas of the landscape will receive water. Sprinklers would be activated or deactivated by the sensors dependent upon soil moisture, instead of running on mindless timers. This is a practical first step towards water conservation and could be implemented by offering tax incentives to those who participate.

### Sail on the "earth ship"

Eventually, houses will be constructed to save water. Currently, "earth ships" designed to impact the environment as little as possible have been constructed throughout the desert Southwest. They're built completely out of recycled materials and operate on solar energy. While such houses are still too radical to replace the more common suburban tract housing, one feature of these houses can be introduced to the mainstream population — each gallon of water is used four times.

Rainwater in these "earth ships" is collected in underground cisterns. The water is then filtered, heated by solar panels, if necessary, and sent to sinks, bathtubs and washing machines. This "gray water" is then rerouted through another set of underground filters, which clean it and allow the soil to soak up as much as it needs. The remaining water is then used in toilets and, when the remaining "black water" returns, solids are broken down and washed into a septic tank, while the rest of the water seeps deep into the soil, creating healthier plants. When systems to reuse water are built into houses and become common, the power of irrigation systems can be maximized.

Unlike wasted water, our conservation problems won't evaporate. If everyone did their part to conserve, the result of our efforts would be much like ripples in a pond that combine to form a wave — a wave of water conservation that people everywhere could ride for years to come.

— The author is a recent graduate of San Dieguito High School, Encinitas, CA. This column is an edited version of a longer essay that earned him a \$5,000 scholarship from Orbit Irrigation Products, [www.orbitonline.com](http://www.orbitonline.com).



*Sure Thing #1:*

# A HAPPY DOG WAGS ITS TAIL.





# inside the owner's head

BY JASON STAHL / MANAGING EDITOR

## Dave Rooney

### ► Rooney Landscape

Dave Rooney owns Rooney Landscape, a \$2.7 million full-service landscape company located in Rolling Meadows, IL. He founded the company in 1986 and today has 48 employees.

#### **You aren't Irish, are you?**

No, no way. With a last name like Rooney in Chicago? But seriously, we get calls all the time from people just because we're Irish. There was a local landscaper who wasn't Irish at all who used a leprechaun as a logo just to get business.

#### **How has your company changed within the past five years?**

We downsized by about 25% two years ago. I had two choices at that time: to get bigger, or get smaller. I underestimated the ability of some of our managers. I thought they could handle it. But the true test comes when the workload increases and extra people come on board.

#### **What role within your company do you enjoy the most?**

My love is landscaping. I love the hands-on approach and being the guy who digs the holes. When I got to be the manager, I found out I wasn't very good at it, and I wasn't having much fun. I got too far away from the field, and that's my true passion. I like interacting with the guys out there.

#### **So where do you stand now?**

I'm back to driving a truck, helping out

with sales, being with the guys in the field, and getting in front of customers more often. The number one person to promote a company's brand is the owner. The guy who's name is on the trucks is the person customers need to meet to find out what the company's all about.

#### **Tell us about some of your favorite ways to relieve stress.**

I own a 20-foot Bayliner. I take the kids (Kevin, 10, Danny, 8, Shannon, 4) and my wife out and we go waterskiing and tubing. But do you know what my biggest stress reliever is? Basketball. Every Wednesday and Friday at noon. I play pickup games at a local hospital, so there are lots of doctors and medical supply salesmen I play with. I've probably gotten \$250,000 worth of work from networking with them, and it's a great way to relieve stress.

#### **You're not the tallest guy, though.**

#### **How do you compete?**

I'm short, but I'm quick. And I'm very committed to staying in shape. I'll be 40 in November. The guys I play with range in age from 17 to 65. I know there will be a day when I can't do it anymore, but I won't worry about that now. I need to do

this. I think the anticipation of the game is actually more therapeutic than playing it.



#### **You're high on professionalism, aren't you?**

We can do the greatest job that goes perfectly according to plan and pleases the customer, but if we don't maintain a sense of professionalism, it doesn't matter. On some large projects, we're on people's properties for four to six weeks. So we need to clean up after ourselves and not lay around at lunchtime. It means much more to me when I hear how polite my guys were. The client says, "You did a good job, but you have good people, too."

#### **Have you added on any new services lately?**

We started a chemical division last year. That's where I see our growth. We've marketed to other landscapers who want a successful company to do the work, and they've been very accepting to the programs we've offered. Right now, we're knocking on \$250,000 of revenue. To see the number you can do in lawn care is incredible, and it doesn't require as much as landscaping does.

#### **How do you beat the competition?**

By living, breathing and preaching your business philosophy. The thing the companies that belong to the Owners' Network talk about least is competition. They aren't worried about it. They're into creating their own niche so that no one else is your competition.

— Rooney Landscape participates in JP Horizons' People Solutions programs. To learn more visit [www.jphorizons.com](http://www.jphorizons.com) or call 877/574-5267.



*Sure Thing #2:*

# CHILDREN WALK THROUGH PUDDLES.





# in the know

NEWS YOU CAN USE

## ANLA members voice concerns in DC

BY JASON STAHL

**WASHINGTON** — Hurricane Isabel came and went from Washington, DC, Sept. 18-19, but another hurricane made up of 150 American Nursery & Landscape Association (ANLA) members followed, intent on opening legislators' ears to issues on their agenda.

The occasion was ANLA's Legislative Conference. First on the agenda was a bipartisan comprehensive agricultural reform bill to secure the workforce through labor and immigration reform. The bill was introduced by Congressmen Chris Cannon (R-UT) and Howard Berman (D-CA), but ANLA considered it a major step that Senators Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Larry Craig (R-ID) recently decided to co-sponsor the bill, entitled the "Agricultural Job Opportunity Benefits and Security Act of 2003."

The object of the bill is to overhaul the H2-A agricultural guest worker program, and to allow experienced agricultural workers an opportunity to earn legal status. The bill is important for landscape contractors as well as nurseries since these agricultural workers would only work a certain number of hours in ag, then be available for landscape or other work.

"This bill is the icebreaker," said Craig Regelbrugge, ANLA's Senior Director of Government Relations. "If it can cut the ice here for the rest of the ships, then the rest can come through."

The Essential Worker Immigration Coalition (EWIC), of which ANLA is an active member, is working on broader general business reforms that would include landscape distribution, contracting and maintenance industries. Both ANLA and EWIC support elimination of the cap on admissions under the H2-B guest worker program. They're currently monitoring several broad reform bills, including S. 1461 and H.R. 2899, the



(Clockwise from top) George Washington's home; ANLA's Ohio contingent pushes for labor reform at the Senate; ANLA, Mt. Vernon and Bartlett Tree reps plant a tree for the newly established Mt. Vernon endowment fund.

"Border Security and Immigration Improvement Act," introduced by Sen. McCain (R-AZ) and Reps. Flake and Kolbe (R-AZ).

Joe Drake, owner of JFD Landscapes, Inc., Chagrin Falls, OH, was part of a contingent of Ohio nursery and landscape company owners. He voiced his concerns about H2-B to Sen. Mike DeWine's assistant on a visit to the Senate Building.

"The number of visas limited to give out is too small. 66,000 is nothing," Drake said. "I started using H2-B workers four years ago, and I can honestly say I'd be out of business if it weren't for them."

### Nothing like leisure

A more leisurely activity during the confer-

ence occurred on the Sunday before Senate visits when ANLA members toured the 8,000-acre Mount Vernon Estate of George Washington. At a reception following the tour, Dale Bachman, president of Bachman's, Inc., Minneapolis, MN, and president of ANLA, made a surprise announcement that a Mt. Vernon Horticultural Endowment Fund was being established. Initial contributors included Bartlett Tree Experts (\$30,000), ANLA (\$5,000), and Bachman himself (\$1,000).

In between Senate visits, conference participants were treated to a host of informative and amusing talks provided by well-known political analyst Charlie Cook, the Honorable Thomas Dowd, Jr., and others.



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## STMA adopts new logo

COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA — The Sports Turf Managers Association recently released a new logo and positioning statement.

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Experts on the Field, Partners in the Game.

The organization's new tagline is: "STMA: Experts on the Field, Partners in the Game."

The marketing revamp also included a new positioning statement: "The sports industry can count on the healthiest and safest playing fields because sports turf managers are unequalled in expertise and professionalism."

The new logo, tagline and positioning statement will appear on all membership recruiting materials. For more details on new marketing initiatives approved by the STMA Board this summer, see "STMA Marketing Initiatives," STMA TurfBlast, August 2003 (password access for STMA members only).

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Circle 112

## People & companies

**CompuScapes** has added **Brent Totman** to its sales and management team.

**The Boston Society of Landscape Architects** recently honored **Joseph T. Geller** with its 2002 Excellence Award. Geller founded Geller Associates Inc. in 1983, and the landscape architecture firm now has a staff of 35 professionals.



**Tanaka** hired **Dennis Opalacz** as regional sales manager.

**Dakota Peat & Equipment** hired **Tim Obregon** as account manager with the company's customer service team.



**John Deere Landscapes** named **Pete Johnson** area manager for Orange and

San Diego counties. The company also named **Michael Maggard** and **Steve Mullican** regional sales managers.

**Precision Laboratories** hired **Don Spier** as Director of Turf Business Unit.



**Village Nurseries Wholesale, LLC** appointed **David R. House** president.

**Electrolux Professional Outdoor Products** named **PACE, Inc.** the first recipient of the Innovative Distributor of the Year award.

**Wright Manufacturing** named **Steven Willand, Inc.** of Augusta, NJ its 2003 Distributor of the Year.



**Yazoo/Kees** announced the winners of the distributor sales contest that was held from June 2002 until December 2002. First place and \$5,000 went to **Bobby Garner** of Carswell Distributing in Winston-Salem, NC; second place and \$3,000 went to **Ron Pullium** of Smith Distributing in Oklahoma City, OK; third place and \$2,000 went to **Jeff Bortz** of J.P. Fuller in Millersville, MD.



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solvents. It's non-irritating and non-staining. And once it dries, it is virtually impossible to tell where it has been sprayed. So no unsightly residues and no phytotoxicity. Plus, it's compatible with herbicides, fungicides, insecticides and liquid fertilizers.

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TalstarOne multi-insecticide will replace Talstar® F insecticide. All existing inventory of Talstar F insecticide is still actively registered. To make sure TalstarOne multi-insecticide is registered in your state, check with state authorities or call 1-800-321-1FMC.



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Circle No. 110



## Reliant Stadium a glimpse at future

**HOUSTON** — One-year-old Reliant Stadium, home of the NFL Houston Texans, is a \$400-million technological wonder. The same can be said for its playing field, and makes one wonder what else lies ahead for athletic turf.

But big and futuristic is nothing new for Houston, which unveiled the Astrodome in the mid-1960s. But unlike the Astrodome, Reliant Stadium has a retractable roof, and it also has a natural grass playing surface. The Texans compete on 1,250 modules (8-ft. by 8-ft.) of TifSport Bermudagrass that sit on a metal drainage base over a concrete floor. The concrete is sloped to perimeter trench drains. The trays can be removed by forklift trucks and stored, allowing the Stadium to be used for events such as the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in February and March.

The playing surface experienced yet another unique changeover when it had to be set up for two international soccer matches. Contractors had just six days to get the temporary natural grass field ready.

"We had to move extremely quickly," says Mike Courter of Airfield Systems,



**Workers at Reliant Stadium ready the field for FIFA action.**

LLC, Edmond, OK, designers of the field. "They (Reliant) needed something that would live up to FIFA (Federal Internationale de Football Association) standards, but could be installed in a flash."

Airfield Systems chose the ring-and-grid drainage layer, trade name Draincore2. Workmen placed 86,000 sq. ft. of the plastic product (one-inch hollow rings connected by a grid) over the existing concrete floor, and then covered that with a permeable geotextile fabric layer. After Turfgrass America installed the washed sod and filled the seams with sand, the field was ready for play.

"The field held up tremendously throughout both games," said Courter. Following the contests, the entire system was taken down in a single day.

**[CLIPPINGS]**

### **Orbit acquires Di Tai plastics**

**NORTH SALT LAKE, UT** — Orbit Irrigation Products, Inc., a manufacturer and supplier of irrigation products for the residential and commercial markets, recently announced its purchase of an equity interest in Di Tai Plastics Corp. in China. The acquisition is part of Orbit's global strategy to meet customer demand, both in the United States and abroad.

### **Rogers sells sprayer division**

**SASKATOON, CANADA** — The sprayer division of Rogers Innovative Inc. is under new ownership. The name has been changed to Rogers Sprayers Inc. to better reflect the equipment.

### **Maruyama renews with Universal**

**AUBURN, WA** — Since mid-2002, Maruyama U.S. has been the preferred supplier of two-cycle landscape equipment for Universal Studios Florida. Universal Studios and Maruyama have renewed the partnership through 2004.

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# H2B success in 11 steps

It's time to start planning for next season's H2-B labor needs. Whether you hire a professional processor or do it yourself, you better get cracking.

Follow these 11 suggestions and you'll save yourself a lot of headaches:

**1. Count to 120 backwards** — Count back 120 days from when you want your

work permits to begin and be sure your petition is filed on that date to ensure the earliest chance of getting your approval on time.

**2. No surprises** — Know your absolute total cost for a worker to arrive at your site. Don't be fooled by "menu" pricing.

**3. Know your processor** — Ask for and check references.

**4. Keep in touch with your processor** — Communicate with your processor and respond promptly to requests for information, letters, recruitment results, etc.

**5. Find them a place** — Research housing early and be prepared to subsidize it if it's estimated over \$150 per worker.

**6. Be fair** — Workers must receive fair wages (\$7.50 to \$8.00 per hr. minimum), overtime and good treatment.

**7. Arriving workers** — Greet your workers and orient them to their new environment. Complete an Immigration I-9 Form on each worker. Within two weeks, take workers to apply for their social security cards.

**8. Hurry up, slow down** — Be prepared for the process to be slow. Respond quickly to any requests your agent, attorney or, if doing it yourself, governmental agency may have to complete your petition.

**9. Proof of existence** — Be ready to provide documentation to substantiate your seasonal need with financials and payroll records. The national office for the U.S. Department of Labor is taking great strides to ensure all regional offices are interpreting petitions the same.

**10. Next in line please** — Screen your recruits carefully for deportation history. Many times you can only go by their word. Have a list of backup recruits in case your first choices do not pan out.

**11. Be kind and unwind** — Be patient with your processor. The program still works and is getting better all the time, but delays will still occur.

— Information provided by Amigos, Inc. ([www.amigos-inc.com](http://www.amigos-inc.com)) and Foley Enterprises ([www.foleyenterprises.net](http://www.foleyenterprises.net)).

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# statistics

INDUSTRY TRENDS BY THE NUMBERS

## ESTIMATE GREAT

What kind of estimating system do you use? While there are many ways to estimate the price of a job, there are three pricing systems that we've discovered are the most common in the industry in our observation of over 100 companies over the past two years.

They are the (1) "drive-by" estimating system (hmmmm... looks like \$2,000 per month), the (2) Excel-based spreadsheet estimating system (the owner came up with these standards, we just plug in the measurements and adjust for the competition), and the (3) fully integrated software estimating systems — usually purchased off the shelf and customized to meet local bidding needs.

What was the breakdown from our study?

"Drive-by" estimating system  
20%

Fully-integrated software estimating system  
20%

Excel-based spreadsheet estimating system  
60%



SOURCE: KEHOEGUIDO

PHOTO: IMAGE 100

## WHAT IS YOUR HOURLY RATE FOR AN ENTRY-LEVEL CREW MEMBER?

>\$12	3%
\$11-\$12	3%
\$10-\$11	8%
\$9-\$10	19%
\$8-\$9	5%
\$7-\$8	36%
\$6-\$7	14%
\$5-\$6	6%
<\$5 an hour	1%
No answer	5%

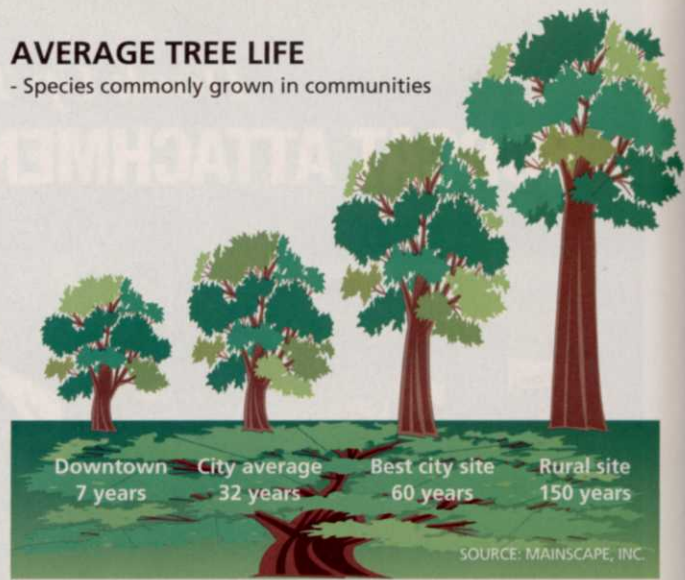


SOURCE: LM SOI SURVEY

PHOTO: CHAPEL VALLEY LANDSCAPE CO.

## AVERAGE TREE LIFE

- Species commonly grown in communities



## Survey says...

**Q** We know you work hard, and we know you play hard. If you could manage to snag a day off, which kind of sporting event would you choose to attend?

Here's what our online visitors had to say:



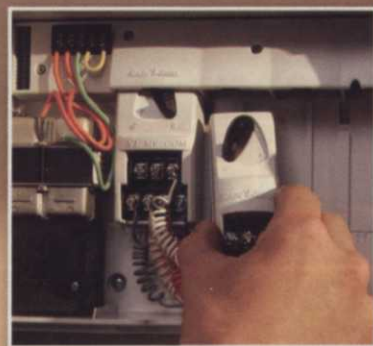
Percentages based on 213 responses

Log onto [www.landscapemanagement.net](http://www.landscapemanagement.net) and answer our online survey. We publish the results here monthly.





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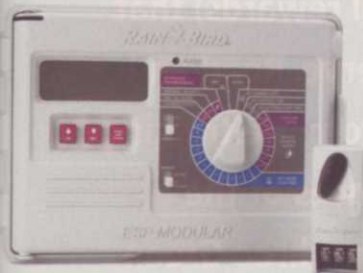
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# BLUEPRINTS FOR TRAINING



**Training might be the single largest challenge that we face in 2004. It's critically important as we strive to elevate our professions in the public's eyes and earn the respect (and the financial rewards) that we deserve. Read and profit from the training experiences of the following three Green Industry operations — a sizable landscape company, a prestigious grounds operation and a lawn service company.**



# Train to fit your culture

Consider a tiered approach like the one HighGrove Partners developed. It will give your employees a reason to be more productive and customer-focused

BY RON HALL /  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

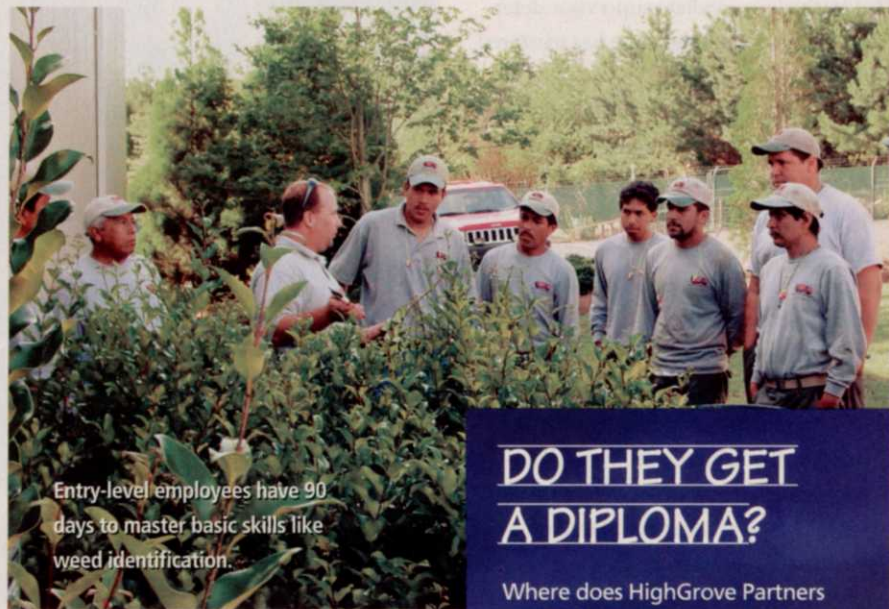
**N**eed a boost to get your training program started? Start by focusing on the people within your company that have the most impact on your customers, your field employees. Keep your training program basic. Keep score. Stick with it.

That's how Zak Campbell approaches training at HighGrove Partners, LLC. He's the training director for the \$18 million company that has offices in Atlanta and Charlotte, NC. Zak says you can borrow and use any of the ideas that he's developed for his company, and he hopes you get the same results — better quality work, fewer customer complaints, less turnover and higher profits.

## Strive for constant learning

"We strive to create an environment where there is constant learning going on in our organization," says Campbell. To that end, he constructed a multi-tiered training program for the company's field employees.

Entry-level employees are referred to as



Entry-level employees have 90 days to master basic skills like weed identification.

"grounds persons" and, in addition to going through a thorough company orientation, receive basic instruction on simple procedures such as weed identification and the operation of power blowers and small trim mowers. They have 90 days to master these basics.

The second tier for field workers is "assistant supervisor," and the instruction is more technical and varied. Among other things it includes bed maintenance (annual and perennial), mower blade sharpening, mulching and leaf removal.

The uppermost tier for a field worker is "supervisor," and these candidates must be proficient in operating equipment such as large mowers and backpack sprayers, demonstrate that they can prep beds and prune ornamentals, and complete truck driver education. They must also be able to speak English since they sometimes must interact with customers.

## DO THEY GET A DIPLOMA?

Where does HighGrove Partners go with its training program from here? Up, up, up. This past year, it has been building a program to provide ongoing education/training for its senior managers, what it describes as HighGrove University.

Most of that training will take place in the classroom and require a lot of reading. It will consist of five recurring themes: the daily routine, job information (understanding budgets, etc.), personnel management, customer service and sales.

Concurrently, the company's senior managers will be expected to work toward becoming Certified Landscape Professionals (CLP) through the certification program administered by the Associated Landscape Contractors of America.

— RH



Workers must become "certified" in all of the skills at a particular level before moving to the next. They can do this either in the field with a hands-on demonstration or, in some cases, by taking a written test. The worker's immediate supervisor determines whether the employee has mastered the skill.

"It has given the employees a road map to be successful," says Campbell. "It made them more productive in the field. Quality went up. Morale went up."

A simple concept, accountability, is at the core of the programs he helped create and administers. Each field employee's name, broken down by position and level, is listed on 4-by-6-ft. boards in the employee training rooms at the Atlanta and Charlotte offices. Across from each employee name is a row of job-related skills. An employee gets a red dot placed on a particular skill across from their name once they've mastered the skill. A blue dot shows that they haven't become certified in the skill yet or, perhaps through an act of carelessness, they've had that particular certification revoked.

"Tracking each employee's progress definitely increases peer pressure," says Campbell.

In addition to regular classroom training using many of the resources made available by ALCA and University of Georgia Cooperative Extension, and brief Thursday morning tailgate talks focusing on worker safety, supervisors plan and conduct seasonal training events that focus on particular services such as turf aeration, mulching and annual installation.

But some of the best training excitement takes place when the company conducts one of its "Saturday Demo Days." About four or five times a year supervisors set up five or six stations on operations, giving employees a chance to learn or, in many cases, become certified in particular job skills.



A "Saturday Demo Day" at HighGrove where employees learn a particular job skill.

## ZAK'S MAGNIFICENT 7

1. Keep it simple.
2. Start at the field level and work your way up. The people in the field make the most impact.
3. Look at other companies for ideas. How are they training? Take those ideas and mold them to fit your culture and needs.
4. Use all available resources. ALCA and local trade organizations are great resources for training material. Try contacting a vendor to see if they would be willing to come to your facility to conduct some training classes.
5. Involve everyone in the program.



Don't put all of the responsibility of training on one person. Make everyone a trainer.

6. Track everyone's progress through the program. Develop a tracking system that shows who's taking advantage of the programs and how they are progressing.

7. Install accountability into the program. Tie promotions, pay increases, and bonuses into the program. This turns it into a win / win situation where you win by having a more productive employee and they win by having more money in their pocket.

These special events aren't mandatory, but the company does pay workers for every other event. "We feel that if we make an investment in them, helping them better themselves, they should make an investment in the company," says Campbell, admitting that attendance is higher on the paid Saturdays.

"It's been refreshing to see the excitement with many of these guys. We are empowering them, giving them responsibility, giving them a role, and they're eating it up," he adds.

Another training experience on page 30 ►►

Read More [www.landscapemanagement.net](http://www.landscapemanagement.net)  
To read more on HighGrove Partners' training, visit [www.landscapemanagement.net](http://www.landscapemanagement.net).





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# Training at Duke: focused and thorough

**J**oe Jackson teaches in a conference room in the Duke University Grounds Building every Monday afternoon for one hour. His pupils aren't typical college students. These people, in most cases, provide for families and, in all cases, get their hands dirty on their jobs. All are employees of the grounds or sanitation crews at the University. Jackson or other supervisors have recommended them to receive more advanced training.

There are six students in Jackson's class this year, employees demonstrating by their work habits and their attitudes that they have what it takes to

advance in their grounds or sanitation careers at the beautiful and prestigious university of 12,000 students located in Durham, NC.

Not every employee selected for the training — and even some of those that complete it — advances his/her career. Some decide they're more comfortable as part of a crew and not supervising one. But the opportunity is there.

#### A positive message

"Training sends a positive message to our work force that we want the personnel that we have to advance," says Jackson. "This (the training program) is a mechanism for them to ad-

vance if that's what they want to do. We want them to know that we look within the department before we look outside to fill positions."

Jackson is Assistant Director/Facilities Management Department at the University. He's approaching his 10th year

there. His primary responsibilities include the campus grounds (626 acres of landscaped area, including 200 acres of turfgrass) and the campus sanitation and waste recycling operations. He oversees 56 full-time employees within grounds and eight in the sanitation/waste recycling operations.

The University's grounds staff consists of several levels of employees — supervisors, superintendents, landscape and horticultural specialists and hourly



Some hourly employees aspire to be horticultural specialists.



Jackson makes sure the opportunity is there for his employees to advance.

## JOE'S TOP 5 TRAINING TIPS

1. Align training with your overall vision.
2. Assess existing skills of trainees and the skills they need.
3. Be in touch and stay in touch with your employees/trainees.
4. Keep the focus of the training on employee betterment.
5. Make the investment in time, money and effort.

Circle 136





crew members. The hourly workers belong to a union.

Those hourly workers that have demonstrated a desire to be candidates for the positions of landscape or horticultural specialists must sign an agreement to attend the weekly classes for a period of 12 months. Those seeking higher supervisory positions commit to 18 months of education.

"We discuss a lot of technical material, subjects such as calculating work measurements and calibrating sprayers, for example, as well as personnel issues such as team building and conducting interviews," says Jackson. "The program is targeted and very specific depending upon whether it's for either grounds or sanitation."

Because the knowledge and skill levels of the trainees vary from class to class, Jackson doesn't use the same course of study from year to year. "I think it's better to customize the training based on the composition of the class. My primary goal is to strengthen those areas that individuals feel they're weak in," he remarks.

Not that Jackson relies solely upon his own knowledge to sustain the program. He often enlists the help of "guest trainers," including visiting industry suppliers, some of his own supervisors or those in related departments, or other university resources. For instance, Duke University's nationally known basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski (Coach K) spoke on the qualities of leadership at a session that included Jackson's group. Jackson has been offering this training for the past five years.

"We're getting those folks that really, really want to put forth that extra effort," he says. And that's saying a lot since there are no guarantees that those who finish it

will actually get a promotion — not right away anyway.

"What we're saying is that they're going to be prepared and they're going to be in a

better position to be considered for a job as a horticulture or landscape specialist or for a supervisor's position," says Jackson.

*Another training experience on page 32 ►►*

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Circle 117



# Turn a 'challenge' into an opportunity

**T**hirty minutes. That's what Ed Romm sets aside each week to train his employees.

Doesn't sound like much, does it? But consider that his company, K&D Lawn Care Service, Inc., Norfolk, VA, employs about 100 people, and all of them participate in the training program. That's 50 hours each week that could have been used for production.

Ed, without hesitation, says it's worth it. "I wouldn't keep doing it if I didn't think it was worthwhile," he insists with emphasis.

## A new experience

Employee training is a new experience at K&D Lawn Care Service, which passed the \$1 million and the \$2 million revenue plateaus without it. But Romm, seeing his company suffer the same employee retention and service quality issues that every contractor with moderate to rapid growth seemingly faces, felt his company should operate more efficiently. That's why he attended the 2001 ALCA Conference in Tampa.

It was there that he was introduced to consultant Jim Paluch and his program, The Training Challenge.

"I don't know what drew me to go see Jim but I think it was the topic. It was about motivating your people and, yeah, my people needed motivating," says Romm.

The program, administered through Paluch's company, JP Horizons ([www.jphorizons.com](http://www.jphorizons.com)) is a Web-based training competition among the owners of Green Industry organizations. Its goal is to encourage them to provide structured ongoing employee education for 52 straight weeks.

Romm embraced the challenge and started his company-wide training program that, he admits, has since experienced a few significant changes. Even so, he's convinced the performance of his company and the morale of his employees has improved because of it.

"At one point, the training got a bit messy because our people felt like it was too complicated. Maybe we were trying to do too much," says Romm. "Now we try to make it more fun."

Sessions begin promptly at

7:30 a.m. every Tuesday morning in the company's cavernous warehouse. The first 15 minutes are devoted to issues affecting the whole company, the importance of prompt cus-

tommer service being one example. Then, the managers of the Maintenance and Landscape Divisions will take their crews for 15 minutes of more job-specific instruction. The final piece of each week's training is a review of the company's mission statement.

"Do I think we can do it better?" asks Romm rhetorically. "You bet I do. We have not taken this program to where we can take it but I think we're getting there." **LM**



Consultant Jim Paluch revs up the troops at K & D Lawn Care as part of their training program.

## ED'S TOP 5 TRAINING TIPS

You know you're getting your training program right when your employees want to come and don't want to miss one.

1. Make it fun and you'll hold your employees' attention.
2. Involve everyone. Encourage employee role playing; it works wonders.
3. Focus on issues that

relate to what your employees do, such as proper equipment use and safety. Discuss "real life" events and what they mean to the workers and to the company.

4. Listen to your employees. They'll tell you where they need training.
5. Be consistent. Train every week.



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**10 signs that  
your company  
is headed  
for trouble**

BY GARY GOLDMAN

# Why contractors fail

**L**andscape contractors spend a lot of time maintaining trucks, loaders, mowers, trimmers and blowers. However, they don't see the need to perform "preventive maintenance" on their business operations.

As the nation's economy continues to wobble, more and more business owners are struggling to keep their "bottom line" in the black. In most situations, it has nothing to do with quality of the product or service that they offer to their clients — most contractors are excellent craftsman. Nor is it caused by lack of work as many of these contractors have more work than they can handle.

Watching a business die is never easy, if for no other reason that it can happen in so many different ways. And, no matter what the cause, it's never funny. Here, in the hope that a bit of foreknowledge may make a dent in the death rate, are 10 of the most popular reasons contracting businesses fail:

**1 Undercapitalization** — Far too many contractors underestimate how much money they're going to need, not merely to get the business up and running, but also

to sustain it as it struggles to gain a commercial foothold. Starting out undercapitalized usually leads to a downward spiral that's difficult to stop and reverse.

**2 Bad cash flow** — This is the evil cousin to inadequate capital. Even businesses that move past the embryonic stage often collapse when incoming cash doesn't at least offset expenses and other costs. Watch your cash "burn rate" by not falling into the trap of confusing cash receipts, or a positive cash flow, with excess cash. Once you spend it, you cannot get it back. Understand the importance of monthly budgets and cash flow projections. They're great tools that will help you manage your business. When it comes down to it, cash is what really counts.

**3 Lack of planning** — This is the reason that problems like capitalization and bad cash flow happen in the first place. Map out as comprehensive a business plan as possible, covering financial issues, marketing, operations, growth and an array





## Do a 'BEAR' before budgeting

Here's an easy exercise you can do once a year to keep your landscape operation headed in the right direction. I call it "BEAR," short for Business Evaluation And Review. It's a form of preventive maintenance, just like you would do on your trucks or mowers. This process reviews and analyzes six key components of your business operations and procedures:

- ▶ management and administration,
- ▶ marketing and sales,
- ▶ contract administration,
- ▶ field production and
- ▶ finance and accounting.

In the process you analyze each component to make sure you have standard operating systems in place. Review your process and procedures to make sure that they meet your organization's needs. If you don't have systems or they're not functioning to your satisfaction, take action. You *need* standardized processes and procedures.

Start BEAR prior to the preparation of your annual budget and any goals that you may be setting for the upcoming year. The process gives you the opportunity to take corrective action, standardize many of your company's processes, and provide you with information to manage your business efficiently and with confidence.

But don't stop there. Get in the habit of performing monthly operating reviews to be sure that what you projected and planned is really happening.

By grabbing control of your business and keeping it running at peak performance, you'll increase your odds for long-term success and profitability. And most important, you will have a good time doing it.

— GG

of other elements. Granted, it's time-consuming, as a well-prepared plan can take weeks or months to complete — but that's the time to find out an idea may not work. If you don't plan and still go ahead, you may end up with heartache and thousands of dollars down the drain.

**4 A competitive edge** — Your business must gain a toehold in some sort of singular niche that you can exploit. It could be a slightly different service or exceptional customer support. Too many contractors are simply "me too" operations. Make sure something is unique or different.

**5 Mushy marketing** — Develop a marketing strategy not merely to identify who

might buy from you, but why. Your marketing strategy must set you apart so a customer can clearly see why they would rather work with your company than a competitor.

**6 Inadequate flexibility** — Larger competitors have more cash, employees and, usually, marketing clout. But they can't react to changes within the market as responsively as smaller companies. Remain flexible and scout for new opportunities. A small company can make in-course adjustments more easily than the big players.

**7 Ignoring the next step** — Exercise proactive customer support. Keep your staff focused on quality, service, responsiveness and value. This mindset often gets lost in the hustle of day-to-day activities.

**8 Forgetting there's no "S" on your chest** — Entrepreneurs are smart and resourceful, but few can do it all. Running a small business carries its share of hidden kryptonite. Find and rely upon the skills of other capable people to help you with those tasks that you don't like to do or aren't particularly skilled at.

**9 Great boss and mediocre staff** — Inexperienced and unmotivated employees can often bring down a solid business, even one with a knowledgeable, enthusiastic owner. Train your employees, compensate them fairly — but still find ways to keep them motivated.

If you feel that your company is suffering from any of these "symptoms," don't panic.

**10 Uncontrolled growth** — A small business that takes on too much work too quickly often pushes itself into an early grave. Match production with demand, and make sure you have the cash to finance your growth. Don't abandon your original plan too quickly.

If you feel that your company is suffering from any of these "symptoms," don't panic. In fact, it isn't uncommon for a business to have these types of problems as it progresses toward its long-term goals and objectives. What's important is the ability to have a system in place to identify the various problems and take the necessary corrective action. **LMI**

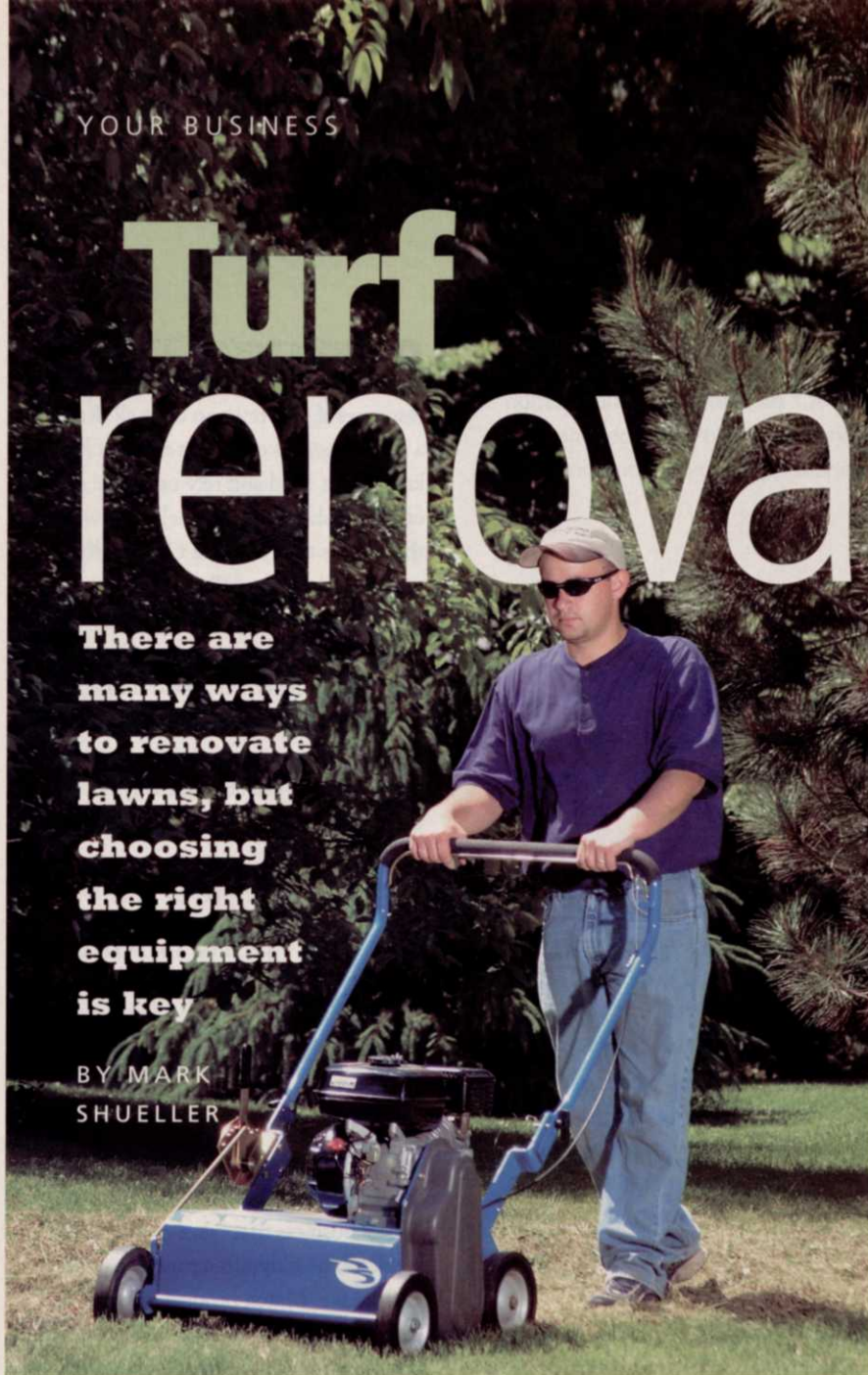
— *The author is a business consultant with more than 20 years experience in several industries, including landscaping. He's also a former regional operations manager of TruGreen Landcare Corp. He can be contacted at [gmanaf@msn.com](mailto:gmanaf@msn.com).*



# Turf renovation 101

**There are many ways to renovate lawns, but choosing the right equipment is key**

BY MARK SHUELLER



**A**lthough many landscape contractors are winding down from a busy summer season, the smart ones know that now is the time to make one final push to ensure all of their hard work is protected. By taking a few steps now, they can generate more income and make their clients' lawns healthier.

#### The easy way

Dethatching or power raking a yard is the easiest way to prevent a dull, yellowing and

lifeless lawn. Thatch is a layer of dead stems, roots and clippings that keeps your lawn from receiving vital nutrients by naturally accumulating between the soil's surface and the green vegetation. If the thatch layer is a half-inch or more, it prevents water and air from reaching the turfgrass roots. It also forces herbicides with residual action to settle in the top layer of the soil. And let's not forget that thatch buildup can also provide an attractive breeding ground for insects and disease.

The best way to remove thatch is to use a mechanical dethatcher with steel flail

blades or rigid wire tines that comb through it and lift debris to the surface.

Dethatching may cause temporary damage or browning to the turf for a short period of time. To speed up the lawn recovery, remove the thatch debris with a hand rake or a lawn vacuum. If you use a dethatcher unit that has a bagger, you'll save yourself the inconvenience of this step.

#### Prevent soil compaction

While aeration may take less time and labor than dethatching, it isn't a thatch eliminator. A healthy, aerated yard can help control thatch, but it doesn't remove it.

Aeration in the fall is key to preventing soil compaction and promoting nutrient exchange. Lawn traffic such as walking and mowing can create compaction in the top two to three inches of the soil. Turf deterioration typically results when compacted soil particles reduce the area where roots can grow. Aeration can relieve this compaction through its process of mechanically removing cores of turf. Removal of cores allows more water and nutrients to reach the turfgrass roots, decreasing the frequency of watering and



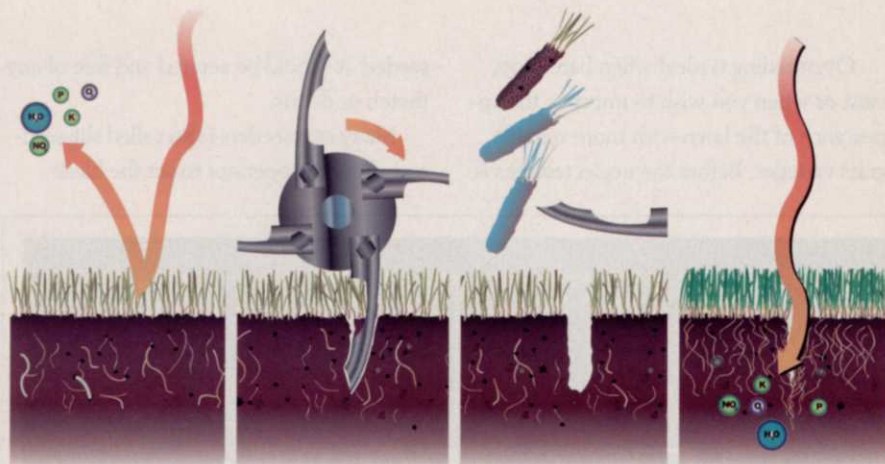
the application of herbicides needed for a healthy lawn.

Most growth in the turfgrass's roots occurs in the fall. Aerating and fertilizing in the fall enhances root growth in the spring and increases drought resistance during the dry winter months. In addition, fall aeration reduces the effects of cyclical freezing and thawing during the winter.

For optimal effectiveness, you should aerate at least once annually. Aerators are available in various sizes from walk-behind units to larger, towable units.

#### Improve bare spots

Overseeding is the process of planting grass seeds over an existing lawn, which encourages new growth for a fuller, richer lawn.



Overseeding in the fall results in more effective seed germination because the soil and air temperatures are warmer than in the spring. Reasons for overseeding include winter damage, dryness, excessive rain and poor drainage.

▲ The removal of cores through aeration allows more water and nutrients to reach the turfgrass roots.



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Overseeding is ideal when bare spots exist or when you wish to improve the appearance of the lawn with more suitable grass varieties. Before the neglected area is

seeded, it should be aerated and free of any thatch or debris.

Many overseeders (also called slit-seeders) allow the operator to set the blade

depth and adjust the application rate for depositing the seed, slicing turf and covering the seeds to ensure optimal germination. The units use slicing blades that cut through the soil, opening small furrows to deposit the seeds that are two inches apart. When overseeding, it's recommended to make two passes at 45-degree angles at half the recommended rate of seed. This will produce a distinct crosshatch pattern in the soil and avoid the "corn row" look of germinating grass. A slit-seeder offers higher germination than broadcasting seeders because the seeds get placed into the soil.

**Tear it out**

When other techniques fail to rejuvenate turf or when more than 50% of the lawn in a given area is damaged, tearing out the original lawn may be a feasible solution. A sod cutter is the most effective method for removing turf because it provides a consistent even cut, leaving a level surface for seeding or laying sod.

However, sod cutters have many more uses than removing damaged turf. They can also be used for redesigning landscapes — adding sidewalks, stepping stones, pools, ponds, flowerbeds and more. A sod cutter is much more productive than a simple hand spade.

With the fall landscaping and lawn season upon us, it may be beneficial to review equipment options that are available to help you capture additional business. Conditions, specifically temperature and moisture, in the fall are optimal for preparing a lawn before winter dormancy when the roots benefit most from turf maintenance procedures. A lawn renovated in late summer or early fall will have a stronger root system and will revive more quickly in the spring. **LM**

— The author is the marketing manager for BlueBird, a division of Electrolux Professional Outdoor Products.

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## Property at a glance

Location: Greenwood Village, CO  
 Grounds Supervisor: Tom Fochtman  
 Category: Industrial or Office Park  
 Total budget: \$35,000  
 Year site built: 1981  
 Acres of turf: 5  
 Acres of woody ornamentals: 3  
 Acres of display beds: 5  
 Total paved area: n/a  
 Total man-hours/week: 50

## Maintenance challenges

- ▶ Rocks
- ▶ Hillside
- ▶ Ponds, water quality, geese

## Project checklist

Completed in last two years:  
 ▶ n/a

## On the job

- ▶ 3 full-time staff, 3 seasonal employees, 1 licensed pesticide applicator

# Highland Park

## 2002 PGMS Grand Award Winner for Industrial or Office Park

The challenges CoCal Landscape must deal with at Highland Park can be summed up in three words: rocks, geese and water.

Colorado's prolonged drought and mandatory water restrictions have made managing the irrigation system a nightmare. Plus, since the site is almost 50% water, the irrigation system along with fertilizer must be carefully managed to avoid excess runoff into the ponds. As if the irrigation technicians need more headaches, the glass office buildings reflect the sun onto the turf 300 days a year, baking it to a crisp.

Geese are everywhere on the property, and while they're mostly a nuisance, the crews can still show them compassion. Take the time an emergency call came in about two baby geese that were stuck in a drainage grate inlet. The crews rescued them and had a new appreciation for their fowl friends.

Slopes and rocks require nimble foot-



Rolling hills make Highland Park one challenging job for the mowing crew.

ing for those on mowing and trimming duty. And vehicle traffic can get heavy, requiring crews to schedule work in the early morning hours. With traffic comes trash, and second weekly visits are needed to clean up after the office tenants who stake out various picnic spots. Trash out in the ponds has to be retrieved by boat, with the crews using shovels as oars in a pinch.

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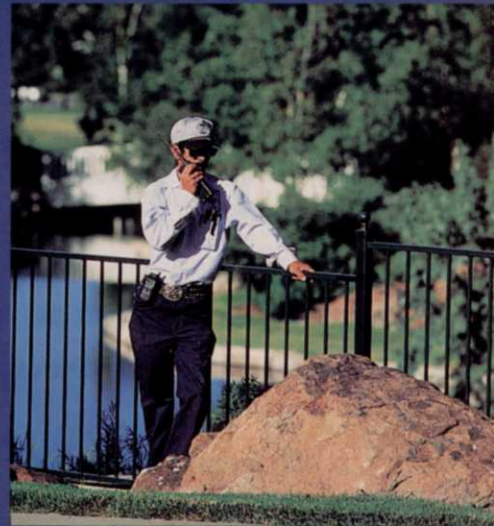
Editors' note: *Landscape Management* is the exclusive sponsor of the Green Star Professional Grounds Management Awards for outstanding management of residential, commercial and institutional landscapes. The 2003 winners will be named at the annual meeting of the Professional Grounds Management Society in November. For more information on the 2002 awards, contact PGMS at:

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Highland Park is made up of almost 50% water, which requires intense irrigation and fertilizer management.



Picking up trash in picnic areas and irrigating in the face of drought restrictions are ongoing concerns.





# athletic turf

GROUNDS SUCCESS

## Infill systems — the real scoop

**Read this if you think the new generation of artificial turf is going to do away with athletic field maintenance**

BY MIKE ANDRESEN, CSFM

**T**here's a new player in the parks and stadiums of this country and all over the world. This "new guy" is catching the fancy of administrators and event planners and causing nervousness among sports turf managers. Who's this new player? The third generation artificial turf field, or the rubber-infill playing surface.

No doubt by now you've seen a competitive event played on a rubber-infill artificial surface. As of this writing, FIFA, the governing body of World Cup soccer, has approved the product for all of its events except FIFA Final Round competitions. The NFL and NCAA boast of successful installations in stadium and practice facility settings throughout the United States.

### Popularity on the rise

Infill systems are being installed at an increasing number of high schools and municipalities, too. Often, there are so many events played on these school or youth fields that it's virtually impossible to maintain a high-quality grass-covered playing surface. That's why infill systems are be-



A rubber-infill artificial surface may require an athletic turf manager to drag it with a brush attachment that also has a scarifying unit to ensure the field doesn't get too hard.

coming attractive alternatives to natural turf fields, particularly as communities, dependent upon user group revenues, expand their activity schedules.

Iowa State University athletics became a market for one of these fields this past year as a new indoor multi-purpose facility was designed there. The facility will be used

every day, but its most demanding tenant will be the football team. When field options were examined, a criteria checklist similar to the one used in designing the natural grass practice facility was followed.

### Lots of components

The profile of a rubber infill system consists



of a base layer, a backing with fibers attached and a sand and/or rubber particle layer. Visualize a roadbed and build a third generation artificial turf surface on top of that roadbed!

The bottom of the profile is a base of compacted, crushed stone. (Some fields contain drain lines sliced into the stone layer.) In most cases, the stone base will be graded with a mid-field crown. On top of the stone base, you have the option of installing a pad layer, similar to a carpet pad, for more field cushion before laying the turf surface. This choice is made on a case-by-case basis.

Load bearing capacity is another factor to consider. That depends upon the types of events the field will be hosting.

The turf layer is a simple carpet-type backing with a 2.5-in. fiber of "grass blades" sticking out on the topside. Different systems have different fiber densities and lengths. The backing and fiber layer is laid onto the pad or the base. Finally, the infill product is installed.

Some systems use only rubber granules, some use stratified and segregated layers of

The crumb rubber is a recycled product, and key to the field's performance.

rubber and sand granules, and others a mixture of sand and rubber. The crumb rubber is a recycled product, and key to the field's performance.

The sand-rubber combination determines surface hardness and shock absorption. One option for this combination is to lay down .5 in. of sand to ballast the fiber backing, then 1.5 in. of rubber to provide the field cushion. Another option is to only apply rubber granules. Either way, the field



must be dragged during the process to prevent burying the "grass blade" fibers. The green fibers, sticking just .5 in. above the infill, provide the elasticity and stability that the field will display during its lifetime. Installers will shred, or fibrillate, the tips of the blades to your desired specification. Consider factors such as foot traction and potential abrasions before making a choice.

#### Varying costs

The cost of these types of fields can vary considerably, from \$340,000 to \$1 million, depending on too many factors to discuss here. Iowa State's new surface is budgeted to cost less to install than its natural grass fields did when they were built. Some of the base layer specifications aren't as dramatic on our particular project, so it's unfair to simply say, "The synthetic field costs less."

There are at least a dozen companies marketing and installing these fields, all of them the same in design but offering different combinations of fibers or infill product recommendations.

Jason DePaepe, Athletic Turf Manager for the University of Colorado-Boulder, prefers to treat his rubber infill practice field "like a grass field" and asks the coaches and team to do the same.

Most turf managers acknowledge initial reluctance to the infill system concept, but eventually agree that the fields offer advantages in certain situations. DePaepe, in Boulder where the snow can pile up, appreciates that snow can be removed from

**The artificial turf on the left has been dragged and scarified; the turf on the right hasn't. The neglected turf is hard and unsafe for athletes.**

the field easier than on grass, even though the process removes some rubber from the surface, too. He has toppedressed rubber back onto the field three times in the year and a half he has managed the surface, for a total of 25,000 lbs. He's found that the field doesn't freeze solid, which can be an asset for those in northern climates.

On the other hand, static electricity can be a nuisance, especially in dryer climates and during the first six months of a field's life. Generally, it can be controlled with field irrigation, rainfall, or spraying the field with a hose. As the field compacts, the static electricity problem becomes less of an issue.

#### Yardlines and sidelines

The yardlines and sidelines are permanent markings at the University of Colorado practice field, but no permanent markings were built into the game field of the Seattle Seahawks. Field Manager Jay Warnick, CSFM, says it was a challenge to find a paint that stuck to the fibers yet washed off the blades during a field conversion. Finally, he found a paint that will wash off by using a cleanser applied by a backpack sprayer, followed up with a Kromer scrubbing machine.

For "old" artificial turf, field managers blasted the markings away with a pressure washer. That treatment on an infill system would blast away the rubber and sand infill.



Jay has the scrubbing machine in his plans for cleaning up biohazards, too, but no major issues have surfaced to date. Should blood become an issue, Jay plans to apply a disinfectant, use the scrubber and flush the area with water. Vomit would be dealt with by applying a disinfectant, then using a wet/dry vacuum to clean it up.

Ted Thorn, University of Iowa athletics, states that for clean up of spills and routine practice liquids, the rubber infill system behaves like natural grass fields in that flushing of the contaminants seems easy.

**Softness and hardness**

Softness and hardness are buzzwords in talking about these surfaces. In choosing Iowa State's field, Mark Coberly, Certified

Athletic Trainer, was concerned that the chosen field would be too soft. A field must be forgiving during the activity but also allow for little or no rebound of energy.

For example, if you walk on a rubber surface that springs back too aggressively, you will have to absorb the return energy within your legs or spine, causing fatigue to muscles and joints that have to work extra hard to stabilize the body.

The same analogy can be made if your head or body hits the surface of the field. This return energy can be catastrophic in the worst cases. So, the safest fields aren't necessarily the softest fields. Ideally, you want the cushion on your rubber infill system to mimic that of natural turf. Bob Campbell, CSFM, University of Ten-

nessee, states that both his natural turf field and his rubber infill system boast a G-max of around 60.

Any discussion of the new systems centers around knowing how to effectively maintain proper hardness, or softness. Colorado's Jason DePaepe states that his coaches can tell when their field is getting hard. Over time, rubber granules become compacted. As the field compacts and gets excessively hard, it can potentially be more dangerous to play on.

Seattle's Warnick states that his work for the Seahawks is much more intense on the new synthetic field than he originally imagined. His ritual after each game is to drag the entire field six to eight times with a brush attachment that also has a scarifying unit. He adds weight to the scarifying apparatus so the teeth penetrate deep into the rubber profile. The brushes then go over the rubber and smooth the surface. It's somewhat similar to working a baseball or softball infield skinned area. Jay adds that after a game, the center of his football field is actually the softest portion of the field due to players disrupting the rubber throughout the playing of the game.

**Degradation**

How are we going to quantify degradation of these fields, and can we predict how and when they'll wear out?

Managers I talked to agree that the "grass blade" fibers have noticeably degraded in the time they've been managing the fields. Comparisons of fibers on different segments of the field verify this. Green dust is common on the footwear of those who work out on the infill systems. Common thought is that the integrity of the fibers, and the user's satisfaction with that fiber, will dictate when your field is worn out.

Herein lies an important consideration for those of us who manage fields, and for

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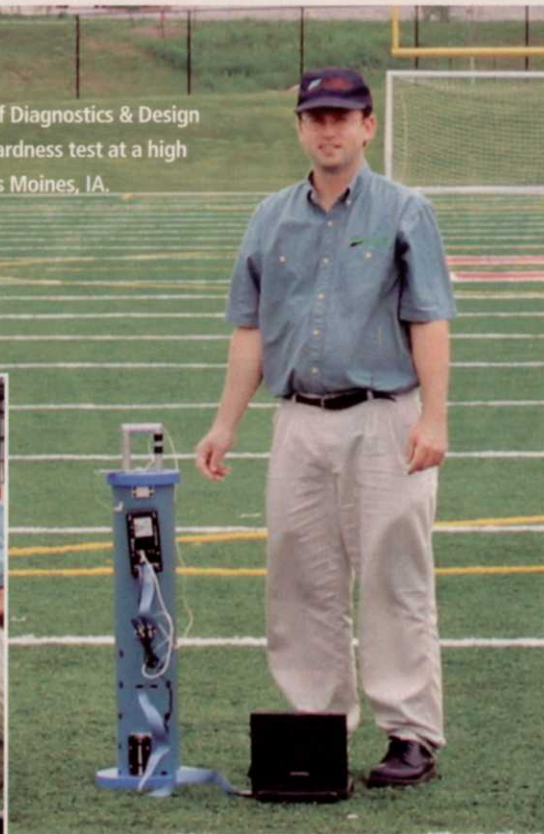
## Tests determine field hardness

Turf Diagnostics & Design, Olathe, KS, has expanded its services to include artificial turf testing, including field hardness and subgrade testing. This includes F355 and G-max testing that often is used to indicate if an artificial field is fit for play.

Subgrade testing involves performing standard tests to ensure that the materials used in field construction meet project specifications for material size, hardness and drainage. This testing should be done before and during field construction, says Sam Ferro, president of the independent testing laboratory.

For more information, call 913/780-6725 or visit the Web site [www.turfdiag.com](http://www.turfdiag.com).

Duane Otto of Turf Diagnostics & Design conducts a field hardness test at a high school in West Des Moines, IA.



those who are responsible for providing safe facilities for our user groups. Maintenance of rubber infill playing surfaces is cause for some of the wearing off of green fibers within the system. The field will age through the breaking or shredding of these fibers, causing the stability of the field to be compromised. With more activities and more maintenance on these fields, their life span will become shortened.

On the other hand, if a field like this isn't scarified, brush dragged, topdressed and cleaned on a regular basis, the surface may become dangerously hard for athletes to compete on. The field that's not maintained aggressively will look nice and new, yet may not be satisfactory for play.

In short, the new rubber infill systems require aggressive maintenance to maintain safety, yet those practices are likely detrimental to the longevity of the surface. This is the reverse of a natural turf field, which is certainly considered an investment in the longevity of the grass surface. **LM**

— The author is the athletic turf manager for the Iowa State Cyclones. He can be reached at 515/294-2983.

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# Winterize or weep

**E**very year, it's a ritual. From Maine to Minnesota to Montana and anywhere, the frost level could extend below the depth of installed pipe. So professional landscape and irrigation contractors must make getting an irrigation system ready for the change of seasons an annual event.

Contractors must emphasize to clients with irrigation systems that repeated water expansion inside pipes can weaken those pipes and lead to fractures. Plus, if the fittings and the pipe don't expand and contract at the same rate during seasonal temperature changes, the matter of material stress will be called into question.

Of course, if your clients' system contains PVC pipe, there's no question about material stress. Why? Because when it's more than half full of water and frozen, PVC pipe will crack — most often from fitting to fitting (i.e., along the length of the pipe).

You need to "winterize" your clients' system to protect it. The only question is: "How?"

## A blowout

Unless your system has manual or automatic drains, you'll need to "blow out" water in the system with a portable air compressor in order to winterize. And doing it all is rather easy.

After turning off the water, connect the compressor (100 CFM for pipe with two-inch diameter or less, 250 CFM for pipe

four-inch diameter or larger) to inject air into the system near the main shutoff. Turn off the compressor and activate the zone of sprinklers at the highest elevation and furthest from the compressor before opening the valve on the compressor.

Be careful to introduce air into the system gradually to avoid high pressure surges. Then, slowly increase the air pressure to 50 psi to reduce the chance of water ram damaging the components. If the sprinkler heads don't pop up and seal, adjust the pressure upward until they do, but never let the air pressure exceed 80 psi.

It usually takes about two minutes or more to evacuate each zone. Proceed in sequence through all the zones, eventually ending up at the part of the system closest to the compressor and at the lowest elevation.

Go twice through the entire system,

## Blowout checklist

- ▶ Don't allow air pressure to exceed 80 psi (especially in systems designed to operate below this pressure level)
- ▶ Don't stand over component parts while the system is under air pressure
- ▶ Don't leave the compressor unattended
- ▶ Don't blow out the system through a pump (first blow out the system, then drain the pump)
- ▶ Don't leave manual drain valves open (water could enter the system during a winter thaw)

## Winterize your clients' irrigation system or weep from the consequences

BY DAVID A. SINDEL

using a short cycle on each pass rather than a single long one, as repeating the process completely removes water that has drained from one zone into another on the first cycle. It also helps reduce the amount of time compressed air is moving through dry pipes (such friction can cause heat damage).

## Additional steps

Got a controller? Be sure to leave your power on and the rain or station start switch in the off position to prevent condensation inside the controller enclosure.

Have a backflow device with ball valves? After shutting off the water supply and draining the system, remove any water trapped in the valve bodies by opening and closing them several times with the lever handle. Then, leave the handle at a 45-degree angle so the valve is partially open.

Preparing a hydraulic control system? Close and disconnect the potable water supply line to the signal control tubing, and drain the tubing.

Whether your system is an industrial one in Indianapolis, a residential one in Rochester or on a sports field in Saskatoon, the same rules apply. To prevent freeze damage, you have to winterize your pipes. **LM**

— The author is with Hunter Industries, Inc.,

[www.hunterindustries.com](http://www.hunterindustries.com)



# Leadership insights

GROWING GREEN INDUSTRY LEADERS

SUPPLEMENT TO LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

## Rewarding success

Since 1988, GreenScapes Landscape Architects and Contractors owner Bill Gerhardt, of Columbus, OH, has rewarded his management group and hourly employees. His keys to successful rewards programs:

- 1** A solid system rewards employees for longevity and responsibility. Gerhardt says employees get more involved and are likely to stay with the company.
- 2** Show employees how they affect the bottom line. Help them understand that the better they perform, the bigger the rewards. To help achieve that, Gerhardt shares sales numbers, expenses, etc.
- 3** Emphasize that their actions can have a negative impact. For example, if a piece of equipment is lost, Gerhardt deducts the replacement cost from the profit pool, which reduces everyone's take – not just the worker who lost the equipment.
- 4** Profit-sharing fosters a team concept. Employees are more likely to work together to achieve a superior result when an incentive is on the line.
- 5** No out-of-pocket expenses from employees are required. While Gerhardt offers a 401(K) and pension plan, the incentive plan is funded strictly from profit, not employee contributions.
- 6** Having a stake can help develop leadership skills. "Our employees have come up with their own ideas on how to improve the bottom line, and thus increase their share of the profit."
- 7** Little things mean a lot. Gerhardt also uses small gifts such as \$10 GreenScapes certificates that can be used to buy company logo clothing or horticulture materials. The rewards are given at weekly employee meetings, and everyone's performance is charted. Gerhardt says public recognition and peer pressure is key to any successful rewards program. Everyone wants to win, and no one wants to be last. ■

“If you have a passion for winning (winning the game, winning the sale, winning a partner, all forms of winning) then you will have a passion for working. Work ethic is the great equalizer. Persistent, smart, hard work will conquer any opponent, and most importantly it is the surest path to healthy pride.”

– Greg Werner, strength coach

### From the front lines

#### Owners find money doesn't always talk

**E**xtra cash for a job well done – an incentive that is like money in the bank? According to many landscape company owners, when it comes to motivation, money isn't always the answer.

Mike Leshner, MCLP, and owner of J. Michael Landscaping in Marshfield, MA, says, "Money is short-lived, and it can be an expensive incentive. It then becomes expected on every little thing they do."

Pete Wodarz, of Wheeling, IL's Milieu Design, says the key to cash incentives is tying them to performance – not random payouts, such as at holidays or end of season.

"Cash bonuses not related to individual performance always backfire. They become anticipated if not tied directly to a measurable, established performance goal."

Steven M. Vandervest, of Turf Management Lawn Care in Lawrenceville, GA, says the best way for any reward program to work – cash or otherwise – is careful tracking and employee input.

"The biggest thing in setting up any program is to get employee input into setting the objectives and goals. Once the goals are set, we keep score by documenting when the goals are achieved or are not achieved. You have to keep a scorecard so employees can see where they stand." ■





# Running LAPS

BY JIM PALUCH / PRESIDENT JP HORIZONS

## Share the Success

The following is an excerpt from Jim Paluch's book, "Growing Dreams." It chronicles the fictional adventures of two partners growing a landscape business. Read on and you may find a bit of yourself in the story:

"It's not just about becoming the biggest, boldest, richest. It's about enjoying the process over the accomplishment. We'll learn how to make money and have an enjoyable personal life at the same time. That's success. We'll somehow develop a program that will SHARE THE SUCCESS." Then the room fell quiet.

"THAT'S IT!" Curtis yelled, jumping up and clapping his hands. "THAT'S IT. We'll create an entire philosophy called 'SHARE THE SUCCESS' – S.T.S. We'll incorporate help from outside sources, like our accountant and some industry experts. We'll ask the team to help with it, and it will be revolutionary." Curtis was now standing on top of his desk; his brother stared in disbelief.

"We'll start by first defining success. Just like we created our mission statement to guide the company, we'll create a definition of success for the entire company in one of the Training Challenge sessions. We'll build off this definition by determining what motivates people. We'll then bring in the accountant because we need to know the numbers in a timely fashion, not after the month is over, but right now while we can do something about it. If he can't get us that information, we'll seek out somebody who can. Then we'll educate. How many of the crew do you believe really know how the company makes or loses money?

"I'm not sure. But now that you mention it, I overheard Frederico and

### BOOKSHELF

"Growing Dreams," by Jim Paluch, was first presented in a series of articles and chronicles two brothers, Oscar and Curtis, and their quest to own a prosperous professional landscape company. The series was so well-received that it prompted Paluch to compile the first novel written with a landscape company as the backdrop. "Growing Dreams" is full of content and practical ideas as it systematically introduces the concepts of organizational excitement, a blueprint for every owner to use to energize their company and team.

"Growing Dreams" \$11.96 (plus tax for Ohio residents) and \$3.95 for S&H.



José talking about how you probably get to keep at least 50 percent of everything the company sells."

"That's what I'm talking about, Oscar. If they're thinking that, and I am sure most employees are, let's tell them the truth. Let them see how we risk everything each year to try to keep 10 percent of everything we sell. Let's educate on the financials and share information. We don't even need to go all the way to net profit. Let's just start with revenue minus materials and labor to get us to gross profit. That's all the crews can help control anyway. I'll start at the training session on Tuesday to introduce the idea and see what they think. Then as a group we'll start to develop the program.

"We'll start paying quarterly or maybe even monthly bonuses on hitting gross profit goals. I'll never pay out another throw-money-away Christmas

bonus. The team members are going to be in control of their destinies, and they alone will determine how much they make in bonuses, not you or me. We are going to SHARE THE SUCCESS.

"Once the numbers are understood, Oscar, we'll start talking about efficiency. What if every one of the crew worked normal hours, you know 40 to 45 hours a week, and no more? What if we could base a bonus on just the minimum number of hours instead of thinking the only way to work is around the clock? Do you know how many hours Frederico has worked this week? Seventy-two hours, and he'll be going out this evening to plow all night. I believe we can change that."

"How?" Oscar asked, starting to get caught up in new possibilities. "Frederico likes the overtime."

"Does he like the overtime, or does he like the rewards that overtime brings him? We need to find that out. We all need to realize that we can make more money by working smarter, not just harder."

"Okay, but how are you going to develop such a plan?" Oscar asked, watching the idea grow in his little brother's head.

"I don't know yet, but I'll make some calls. There have to be some people around the country that can give us direction. What we need is a guide to point us in the right direction, and then we can figure out the details." Curtis stood up and walked over to the white erasable board that had hatched many ideas in the past years. "Oscar, let's you and I start now and list the criteria for the Share The Success program." He picked up the marker and began to write:

*Continued on page 7*



# Networking and skill building are among the benefits of serving as ALCA committee chairperson

**H**e might be a rookie, but Tom Heaviland – who became an ALCA committee chairman in July – says he already is reaping the dividends of his position.

As co-chair of the education committee with James River Ground Management's Maria Candler, Heaviland is focused on delivering educational programs that will have the most impact to the greatest number of members.

"I am pretty passionate about the importance of education," explains Heaviland, of Heaviland Enterprises. "I have seen what education has done for me personally and how I've grown as businessperson. I've seen what it has done for my company. Education is the primary reason people will join an organization. They want to learn, network and find out how everyone else works to succeed."

Candler, who has served as chairperson of various committees for the past three years, says the networking opportunity is invaluable.

"I'm amazed at the lessons that come up in committee meetings that I'm able to take back to my company. The benefits of being involved don't end, and it's an excellent way to expand your leadership skills," she says.

Heaviland agrees: "Serving as a committee chair will help me be a better leader. I'm treading into new territory and swimming in deeper waters. Without a doubt, even in the short time, my confidence and leadership abilities have improved. To be in this environment, surrounded by people passionate about making themselves, as well as the industry better, it's a tremendous experience."

Candler encourages anyone who want to take a more active role in ALCA to attend a committee meeting to see which group is the best fit.

"One of the greatest challenges for a committee chair is to have a group of consistent, interested members who are ready to take over the helm," she says.

## Great training leads to great rewards

When training is viewed as fixing someone and they perceive the selection as nothing more than being forced to participate in another worthless training exercise, they may be already negatively predisposed to their learning. Leaders must communicate that the experience can enhance both the organization and an individual's development.

Learning should challenge people to work with people they had never worked with before to achieve the strategic mandate; it is to push themselves intellectually and emotionally and learn new ways to lead and manage. Turn education into action by establishing clear expectations and accountability.

— From "Action Learning" by David Dotlich

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#### 6 Measuring success

Husqvarna President David Zerfoss, says without measuring and charting results, there is no way to objectively determine the true level of success.

#### 7 Fiscal rewards aren't everything

Owners answer the question "How are you rewarded as an owner?" The money is nice, but even better? Seeing your employees succeed, and time off to be with their families.

### BECOME A MENTOR

ALCA offers the One-on-One Mentor Program, a member benefits program launched to provide guidance to landscape contractors who want to grow their businesses. The program matches ALCA-member "mentors" with new-member "protégés" and offers experienced contractors the opportunity to improve their leadership skills while making a difference in someone else's career. For information, call ALCA at 800-395-2522.

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# ESOPs – Fable or fairy tale?

James Martin Associates, Inc. rewards its employees by making them company stockholders, which gives them the opportunity to control the company's destiny

**BY CHERYL HIGLEY**

Seeking a more consistent method to promote an environment of shared ownership, Jim Martin, owner of James Martin Associates, Inc. in Vernon Hills, IL, decided to motivate and reward them with something very close to him – his company.

Ten years ago, Martin decided to give shares of stock in the company to about 15 of the company's most dedicated and committed long-term employees. Once he saw the positive impact, he decided that an Employee Stock Ownership Plan might be the answer to drive the benefits of shared employee ownership to every employee in the company.

"I felt for a long time that if I could attract highly committed staff members

## IS AN ESOP RIGHT FOR YOU?

Jim Martin has found success with his company's ESOP, but he cautions that they might not be right for everyone:

"ESOP was a good fit for us because we share a tremendous amount of company information with our employees, including full financial statements. A successful ESOP requires openness and a willingness to share that information honestly. If you're guarded with that information, it might not be a good fit."

"If you have wild swings in terms of earnings, it might be a more challenging story to tell your employees. As stockholders, employees must learn to accept the good news with the bad news. If you don't have a high degree of business literacy, it can be disturbing to see the value of their piece of the ESOP go from \$1,000 to \$5,000 and back again. Education is crucial to an ESOP's success."

Start up is not inexpensive. "By the end of the first year, we had spent \$30,000 or so to get it set up. For a small company with not a lot of value, that's something to consider."

who had a stake in the business, that we would all benefit more in the long-term. I felt I'd get further ahead and that the individuals would have a bigger and more important stake in the company," Martin says. "An ESOP is fair, consistent and eliminates the subjectivity in deciding who receives how much and when. Every employee that has been designed into the plan is on equal footing. The ESOP contribution is proportional to their annual compensation and includes all employees that work a minimum of 1,000 hours per year."

## How an ESOP is funded

There are two major ways of funding an ESOP – owners can borrow money or they can fund it through the company's profits. Martin chose the latter. The amount of available contribution to the ESOP to buy stock depends on how much of the company's yearly profit he designates for the ESOP. Those profits are contributed to the ESOP, which then buys those shares from Martin. Over the past 2½ years, contributions of 25 percent to 45 percent of annual profits have allowed the ESOP to buy 7 percent of the company's stock. These contributions happen before taxes, are deductible expenses and the owner enjoys a tremendous tax advantage.

ESOPs were included as part of the original federal legislation that created the well-known 401(K) plan. Both are designed to give tax advantages to the employee, but ESOPs differ in that the only required contribution is their hard work.

"We also have a 401(K), but we only have 40 to 50 percent participation. It takes a savings requirement

“Our employees have developed the beginnings of an ownership attitude. People are more focused on making sure everyone carries their weight, realizing that if we're more productive, they get a piece of that improved productivity.”

— Jim Martin



and a lot of trust in us for the employees to participate. For an ESOP to succeed, it takes focus – not an employee’s financial contribution,” Martin says.

To encourage employee longevity and loyalty, the workers cannot fully redeem their shares until they are vested in the company. In addition, Martin has set up the ESOP to include season workers – not every plan is designed as such.

“After an employee has been with us one year and has worked 1,000 hours, they meet the requirement for our ESOP. The nature of the landscaping industry and the culture of our company embraces part-time employees and we wanted them to be able to benefit. I believe if you find good help, you need to encourage them to stay.”

### Emerging business people

Martin believes one key to the ESOP’s

success is the openness he has with his employees. On a monthly basis, he shares financial statements, how much cash is in the bank, any deficits, how profitable they’ve been, etc. The result, he says, is developing business acumen among the employees.

“Our employees have developed the beginnings of an ownership attitude. People are more focused on making sure everyone carries their weight, realizing that if we’re more productive, they get a piece of that improved productivity,” Martin explains. “Once an employee is enrolled in the ESOP, we see a much more serious focus on how the company is performing. I don’t have any intention of retiring; but over the next 10 to 15 years, the ESOP will create a secure and structured exit strategy. The employees will have continuity and the long-term ability to control their own destiny.” ■

## ESOP resources

**The National Center of Employee Ownership**  
1736 Franklin Street, 8th Floor  
Oakland, CA 94612-3445  
www.nceo.org

**The ESOP Association**  
1726 M St. NW, Suite 501  
Washington, DC 20036-4502  
202-293-2971  
www.esopassociation.org

**Employee Stock Ownership Plan Answer Book**  
By Idelle A. Howitt

**The ESOP Reader, An Introduction to Employee Stock Ownership Plans**  
printed by The National Center of Employee Ownership

## Thrival Campaign: Financial Fun and Frolic

Thrival Campaigns are a simple tool developed by JP Horizons that companies utilize to focus employees on accomplishing a specific result that they help develop and systematically define. It provides a path that they can follow on the specific actions that lead to definable positive outcomes. The process develops focus, clear expectations, accountability and a motivated team that gains increased confidence through its accomplishments. The following Thrival Campaign titled “Financial Fun and Frolic” was introduced at Leadership Jam and can be used to help everyone in the company implement a Share The Success program:

THRIVAL CAMPAIGN			
CAMPAIGN		SPECIFIC RESULT	
	Action	Who	When
Dynamic Action 5:		—	—
Dynamic Action 4:		—	—
Dynamic Action 3:		—	—
Dynamic Action 2:		—	—
Dynamic Action 1:		—	—

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Company: \_\_\_\_\_

- **Dynamic action 5:** A major celebration is set when the first bonus checks are paid out, (no matter how big they are). This draws attention to the success and keeps people wanting to improve.
- **Dynamic action 4:** Based on the test and further refinement, the official program has been rolled out, complete with follow-up meeting schedules, education opportunities and tools to report the progress. This is done in an exciting kick-off event.
- **Dynamic action 3:** Based on the input from other companies, the employees and other programs have a draft program ready to present to the company and begin a test run for a quarter or longer.
- **Dynamic action 2:** We have held a team meeting that introduces the concept of profit and have set monthly update meetings to begin an education and trust between the employee and company.
- **Dynamic action 1:** A team has contacted other landscape professionals from around the country to gain insight into programs that are working. They will report back to the management team.
- **Specific result:** We have created a SHARE THE SUCCESS program that has everyone in the company inspired and motivated.





# By the numbers

BY DAVID ZERFOSS / PRESIDENT HUSQVARNA

## Measuring and charting success

**W**hat a year this has been for those of us in the green industry. While many segments of the American economy have fought to stay afloat, it seems that many landscape contractors, as well as the companies who serve them, have just gotten busier. This year has come to exemplify a philosophy we always keep in mind at Husqvarna – “With great challenge also comes great opportunity.” With that in mind, it has been deeply gratifying for me to be involved with ALCA’s efforts to share leadership insights with those of you who are working diligently to move your businesses forward.

In this final quarterly installment of “By the Numbers,” I want to tie everything I’ve written previously together by discussing results. You may find it surprising to learn that few people can really discuss the results of their labors at the end of the day. Why? Without systems for measuring and charting results, there’s no way to objectively determine the true level of success achieved by any given endeavor.

Believe it or not, effective measurement begins before anything else. Whether you’re broadening your service territory, introducing new services, launching new marketing campaigns or investing in infrastructure, the only way to gauge your success at the end of the initiative is to determine up front how you’re going to measure your results. Decide what your key measures of success will be – profitability, efficiency, improved service, new customers, etc. – and identify the current benchmarks against which your final results will be weighed. Then set realistic goals for your efforts.

Once you’ve outlined your basic measures, benchmarks and goals, it’s time to formulate a way to collect and track data. At Husqvarna, we continuously gather data in a multitude of categories, such as sales, customer service, product durability and more. More importantly, we have designed systems that make this data readily available to

real-time feedback and helps you quickly make decisions that will affect your performance vs. a goal. The point is, you can’t make good decisions based on delayed or garbled data. Make sure your measurement systems provide useful, real-time feedback.

The final step in effective measurement is heeding the data. Sounds simple, right? It isn’t, particularly for the small business owner. Often, especially when starting a business from scratch, success is achieved by following gut instincts. Instinct can be a good thing in the right situation. But when it’s time to measure your company’s success over time and make decisions about its long-term future, listen to your data. If you chose your benchmarks correctly, set your goals wisely and measured your results effectively, the final data will always show you where your efforts succeeded and where they failed. Armed with this knowledge, you’re uniquely equipped to make sound and logical decisions that will keep your company moving forward, even in the most challenging of times.

The process can be as easy as you make it. There are many ways to track and measure your success, ranging from the very simple to the very complex. Whether your system utilizes a pencil and a ledger book or a customized computer network solution, just develop a system that works for you and actually use it. Over time, you will be surprised how many more effective and timely decisions you can make because you had all the information right in front of you. And, as your business grows and evolves, so too will your systems for measuring that growth. ■

### Husqvarna’s Keys to effectively measuring your success

**1** Determine up front how you’re going to measure your results.

**2** Formulate a way to collect and track data.

**3** Make sure your measurement systems provide useful, real-time feedback.

**4** Heeding the data.



anyone who needs it. Each day, new statistics are gathered, entered into our systems and processed into easy-to-use charts and graphs. The updated information is then distributed to every person whose role is affected by it. Why? It’s all about decisions.

Measurement systems help us make good decisions at any point in time. How useful would your car’s speedometer be if it only revealed your car’s velocity at the end of the trip? A functioning speedometer gives you



Continued from page 2

- **It Is Simple And Easily Understood.**  
("Even by the owners," Oscar added. "Get serious with this," Curtis needed back.)
- **The Entire Company Becomes Educated On The Key Financials Of The Business.**
- **It Is Based On Working Smarter, Not Harder ... Creating Efficiency And Systems.**
- **The Customers Benefit And Receive The Quality They Deserve.**
- **It Is Paid Out In 90 Days Or Less From The Time The Team Earned It.**
- **It Reflects And Drives Us Toward The Company Mission Statement.**
- **It Develops Open Communication And Teamwork Between All The Departments Of The Company.**
- **It Is Easily Measured And Tracked.**
- **It Is The Philosophy We Run Our Business By, Not Just Something Discussed When We Are Supposed To Pay A Bonus.**
- **It Improves The Quality Of Life For Everyone Involved In The Company.**

Curtis set the marker down and looked at the list of statements. "That's it, Oscar ... that list is the guide. We just have to move in that direction. We can share the success." ■

**Jim Paluch** and the JP HORIZONS team have been helping landscape companies all over the country grow their businesses. To find a copy of one of Jim's books or to learn how the PEOPLE SOLUTION process can help you drive the performance of your business visit [www.jp horizons.com](http://www.jp horizons.com)

## Leadership Insights Q&A

### Q How are you rewarded as an owner?

**A** "My rewards come from the satisfaction of the everyday interaction with clients and employees. Financial rewards are a bonus if we have a great year, a new car once in awhile, and maybe a beautiful yard."

— Bill Gerhardt, *GreenScapes Landscape Architects and Contractors, Columbus, OH*

"One of my greatest rewards is seeing our employees succeed at the tasks they are assigned. When you see an employee that starts at ground level and develops into a valuable team member, it gives you a great deal of satisfaction."

— Steven M. Vandervest, *Turf Management Lawn Care, Lawrenceville, GA*

"Reward for me is being able to spend time away from the business and with my family. My job is to develop the personnel at our company so that it can operate successfully in my absence. When the company is hitting on all cylinders, I can reward myself by stepping out of it for a day or two."

— Peter Wodarz, *Milieu Design, Inc., Wheeling, IL*

"I recently gave myself a Friday off. The day began with a massage, then a pedicure, followed by a haircut with my favorite stylist. After that I went home, had some lunch and took a nap. I call it a "Cherie Day" and it happens about three times a year."

— Cherie Florman, *City Gardens, Indianola, IA*

"We review where we are financially every month. When we are meeting and exceeding our year-to-date financial goals, in September we will bonus out money to ourselves and the team in October. For the owners we decide on a reasonable year-end bonus based on the year-end profits and profit planning. We will also contribute additionally to our retirement plans."

— Steve Corrigan, *President, Mountain View Landscape and Lawncare Inc.*

"If we got a great job, we go out for dinner, or if we handled a sticky situation we go for a shopping spree to Home Depot; but I think for us, it is more important to look at the big picture and reward ourselves in a big way for the day in and day out accomplishments of our company and our employees. We make vacation travel plans for January and in August. Some are more elaborate than others, but wherever we go work stays here. A real vacation!"

— Anne-Marie Allen, *Allen Landscaping, Santa Rosa, CA*





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# Not just blowing hot air



BY RON HALL /  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**W**hat many of us refer to as mulch or bark blowers are used for more than just blowing mulch or bark.

Brothers Stefan and Ed Kijewski, operators of MulchMaster Plus, Wallingford, CT, educate contractors, landscape architects, engineers and various public agencies about new and more effective methods to control erosion by using a so-called mulch blower, in this case an EB 60 Express Blower. They provide on-site demonstrations and occasionally rent a conference room for presentations to groups. They want to get the word out about how public and private entities can

best meet new, more stringent Phase II erosion and sediment containment rules.

They promote the use of their large truck blower in conjunction with new erosion and sediment control products such as EcoBerm, EcoBlanket and the Filtrex Filtersoxx. These products provide much better performance than standards such as silt fences and straw bales, they claim. They say that the technology is backed by extensive research and testing.

EcoBerm is a 1-ft.-high barrier of compost impregnated with Microblend, a proprietary blend of organic ingredients that aid in stabilizing the mulch, help it bond with the soil surface and promote beneficial microflora that degrades hydrocarbons. EcoBerm is blown into

place surrounding a construction or disturbed site, while EcoBlanket is blown onto the bare soil surrounded by the "berm," in conjunction with a proprietary process known as Terraseeding.

What else can many of these units do? They can, depending on the size, power and particular features of the unit:

- ▶ dispense safety material such as wood chips for children's playgrounds,
- ▶ cover muddy areas with mulch or sawdust so that contractors can work more effectively,
- ▶ topdress, renovate and seed lawns,
- ▶ blow in sawdust and shavings for animal and poultry barns and, one manufacturer claims,
- ▶ spread rocks and/or aggregate.

Just two manufacturers sell the largest and most powerful of these material blower trucks, Peterson Pacific Corp. and Express Blower, which pioneered the category.

Several manufacturers offer smaller pieces of equipment that provide real calculable savings (both in time and labor) and

meet their clients' needs. These units, too, can often be used for multiple tasks.

#### ◀ EXPRESS BLOWER, INC.

800/285-7227

EUGENE, OR

[www.expressblower.com](http://www.expressblower.com)

- Seven different models
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  - Power Sweep assist simplifies delivery of different materials in same day
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[www.finncorp.com](http://www.finncorp.com)

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- BB 302 model applies 17 yds. per hr. with two-man crew



- Can be used with variety of materials (bark mulch, wood mulch, compost)
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[www.filtrex.com](http://www.filtrex.com)

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**REINCO INC. ▲**

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[www.reinco.com](http://www.reinco.com)

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  - TM-35X popular with landscapers
  - Capacity for up to seven tons of hay or straw per hour
  - Fixed work deck with slip-free footing and 40-in. safety rail
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# solutions center

TECHNOLOGY THAT WORKS

## Go for a *quick kill*

**Hawaiian landscaper needed a product that eliminated the ground cover in a big hurry**

BY BARBARA MCCABE

**G**reen Thumb, Inc., worked quickly to clear a piece of cemetery ground for construction

of a new mausoleum. The Japanese-style cemetery, known as the Valley of the Temples, is a popular tourist attraction on the outskirts of Honolulu, and its operators wanted the job done swiftly.

### **The problem: Weeds on a slope**

For Green Thumb, one of Hawaii's largest commercial landscape contractors, it meant finding a speedy way to remove the ground cover and reseed the area around the tomb after the structure was in place.

Tillage was impractical because of a steep slope, so Van Goto, vice president of Green Thumb, decided to use Finale, a fast-acting, non-selective herbicide, to remove the bermuda grass and other weeds that made up the existing

ground cover. By using this herbicide, Goto, who served as project manager on the job, knew that he would also be able to quickly reseed the ground around the new mausoleum without harming the young bermudagrass plants.

### **The solution: Fast-acting herbicide**

Applying the product directly to the foliage at the rate of two oz. per gallon of water, Goto saw results in as little as two days. "One of the alternatives, Roundup, is slower acting. It usually takes more than a week to work and needs several applications to work thoroughly."

After clearing out the dead debris, the crew from the 44-year-old company reapplied the herbicide to the spots they missed during the first application. Goto mixed the herbicide with a dye and a spreader-sticker to define the spray area and keep the material from washing away. "We didn't have to apply the material to the same spot twice."



Finale, however, isn't the product of choice for all jobs. Its lack of residual activity may be a disadvantage.

Scott Ushijima, vice president and COO of Landscape Hawaii, Inc., a commercial landscape maintenance contractor, says that Roundup does a more "thorough" job of destroying bermudagrass and other grassy weeds.

Ushijima, whose 10-year-old company maintains the grounds around several Honolulu office complexes, finds he must make a second Finale application to handle residual growth. However, like Goto, Ushijima has found that Finale provides a quicker kill than Roundup.

### **Van Goto inspects the turf at the Valley of the Temples.**

"Basically, it's a matter of timing and the desired effect," said Ushijima of his choice of herbicides. "If we have time to prepare the ground and make a kill, we use Roundup because it destroys the weeds more thoroughly. If we don't have time, or, if it's a cosmetic thing where we're going to have an inspection, we use Finale."

Ushijima also prefers to use Finale herbicide when removing weeds from tree wells. **LM**

— The author is a freelance writer who covers the Green Industry.





In an annual head-to-head contest for Green Industry publications, the Advanstar Landscape Group once again reaped more Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association writing, design and photography awards than any other publisher. Congratulations to our entire content team.

## Hauling Home the Hardware ...Again

Best Use of Photography - Printed Magazines

### First Place

Carrie Parkhill, Landscape Management, *"Lawncare in Nowhere"*

Printed Magazines - Overall Magazine Design

### Merit

Lisa Lehman/Kim Traum, Advanstar Communications, *"Golfdom"*

Writing For Commercial Publications, Column

### First Place

Pat Jones, Golfdom, *"This Turf Disease Can Affect You"*

### Merit

Jason Stahl, Landscape Management, *"Always Listen To Your Mom"*

Writing For Commercial Publications, Turf Feature Article

### First Place

Larry Aylward, Golfdom, *"How The Other Half Lives"*

### Merit

Larry Aylward, Golfdom, *"The Apple Doesn't Fall Far From The Tree"*

Writing for Commercial Publications, Business Management

### Merit

Larry Aylward, Golfdom, *"The Politics of Water"*

Writing For Commercial Publications,

Environmental Stewardship Article

### First Place

Larry Aylward, Golfdom, *"Up a Tree and Loving It"*

Writing for electronic web site newsletters/magazines (external and commercial)

### First Place

Pat Jones, Golfdom, *"To Move or Not to Move"*

Printed Magazines - Cover Page Design

### Merit

Kim Traum and Dan Beedy, Advanstar Communications, *"The Golfdom Report"*

Printed Magazines - Two-Plus Page Design, Editorial

### First Place

Kim Traum, Advanstar Communications, *"Welcome To Golf 2025"*

### Merit

Kim Traum, Advanstar Communications, *"The Golfdom Report"*

Electronic Publishing - Overall Newsletter/Magazine Design, (internal and non-commercial)

### First Place

Derek Miller, BASF, *"Growing Trends"* (and Lynne Brakeman, Advanstar, Jennifer Kempes, The Dudnyk Agency)

Electronic Publishing - Overall Newsletter/Magazine Design, (external and commercial)

### First Place

**TIE:** Lynne Brakeman, Advanstar, *"Landscape Management.net"*

**TIE:** Lynne Brakeman, Advanstar, *"Golfdom.com"*

### Merit

Lynne Brakeman, Advanstar, *"Landscape Management Week in Review"*

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Say hello to Ron Hall.

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award winning Editor-in-Chief of

*Landscape Management.*

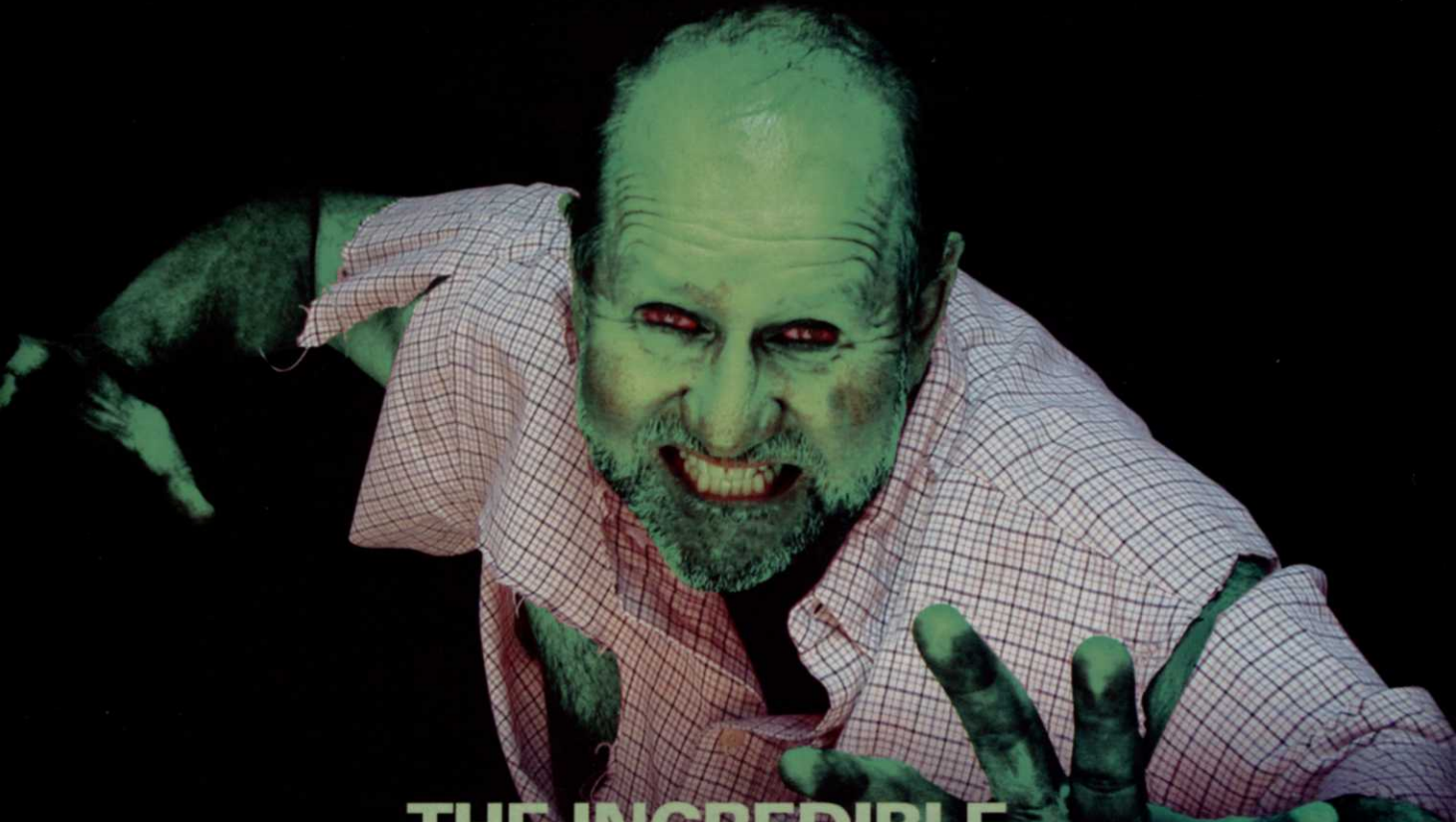
But when he writes about turf, he changes...





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# Truck loaders

BY RON HALL /  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**M**aine has trees, lots of trees. Trees have leaves, lots of leaves, and each autumn they fall onto lawns. Property owners want them gone. That's one of the less glamorous tasks that Brian Creamer shares with landscapers in every part of the country where deciduous trees and fine turf co-exist.

Creamer owns Ideal Landscape that services clients in the Sebago Lake region of Maine, just northwest of the state's largest city, Portland. About 80% of his business is property maintenance, both residential and commercial. As you read this, it's likely Creamer's crews are cleaning up clients' properties. One of the tools they use is a truck loader, sometimes referred to as a debris loader. The one he uses is a 16-hp unit with more cleanup power than the 11-hp loader he previously used.

## The faster, the better

With leaf removal and property cleanup, the faster it's done the better, says Creamer. Who knows when the first wet snow is going to fall, especially in Maine?

Creamer hired a local fabricator to weld special attachments onto a Fisher Snow Plow Minute Mount so he could attach his unit to the front of a F-350 dump truck. Once the leaves and other landscape debris is blown or deposited in piles, it's sucked up by the loader and blown via a hose over the top of the truck cab and into a "leaf" box in its bed. With the front mount, the loader can be



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  - Exclusive scroll-shaped radius housing with 10-gauge liner
  - Noise level of only 90dBA with increased air volume

operated into tighter areas than, say, a trailer-mounted unit.

"Our lawns can have leaves up to your knees," says Creamer, who started his company in 1989. "On small yards, we blow the leaves out of the beds onto the lawns, mow them and suck them up with our Walker mowers, and dump them in front of the truck to be vacuumed up. On larger jobs, we mulch leaves with our Toro Z-Masters to 1/2 to 3/4 their original size, then suck them up with the Walker mowers."

### Giant-Vac, Inc. ▼

- South Windham, CT  
860/423-7741  
[www.giant-vac.com](http://www.giant-vac.com)
- Trailer type & skid mount, hitch mount, tailgate mount, self-contained
  - Units from 11 hp to 42 hp (liquid-cooled diesel Perkins)
  - Reduction ratio up to 12:1 to reduce trips to landfills



Truck loaders come in a variety of sizes, power ranges and mounting configurations. Match the size of the unit with its intended use. . .but remember, with a loader, it's better to end up with too much cleanup power than too little.



- Spring-loaded boom and chain hose support
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### Little Wonder ▲

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[www.littlewonder.com](http://www.littlewonder.com)
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  - Lowest engine loading in its class



# products

TECH CENTER

## Tractor-pull

McCormick USA has introduced a new transmission and model number for its medium-duty line of CX series (73- to 102-hp) tractors. The CX 05 series features a new optional XtraShift transmission with 24 forward and 24 reverse speeds as options to the standard synchromesh shuttle transmission. An optional



rugged oscillating four-wheel drive front axle on the CX 05 is designed for sure-footed traction and a tight turning radius.

For more information contact McCormick at [www.mccormickusa.com](http://www.mccormickusa.com) / circle no. 250

## Keep on truckin'

American Cargo LLC introduces the Heritage cargo van, available in 10-ft. through 16-ft. lengths and 72- to 96-in. interior body heights. Standard features include a larger bulkhead door, Galvaneal steel rear frame, rear roll-up door with stainless steel rivets and new rear bumper system.

For more information contact American Cargo at 800/283-3993 / circle no. 251

## Wing it

Daniels manufactures the Wing Plow that's designed to both push and stack tons of snow, eliminating the need for multiple pieces of equipment. The patented, fold-back wing design reduces the plow size by up to 50% for maneuverability.

For more information contact Daniels at 847/426-1150 or [www.danielsplows.com](http://www.danielsplows.com) / circle no. 252



## High capacity controller

Hunter Industries has released the IDS, a new high capacity, two-wire decoder controller for commercial installations. The unit is housed in an all-weather stainless steel or plastic pedestal for vandal-resistant industrial applications. One IDS controller and a system of site decoders is required to control more than 100 stations on a campus or industrial park. Up to five two-wire paths (with a range of up to 15,000 ft. each) can be run from the controller to the field. The IDS system is designed to work with Hunter's twisted pair IDWire-1 with runs up to 10,000 ft., or IDWire-2, with runs up to 15,000 ft.

For more information contact Hunter at 800/733-2823 or [www.hunterindustries.com](http://www.hunterindustries.com) / circle no. 253

## More time for cutting

To spend more time cutting, and less time dumping grass clippings, Dixie Chopper has developed a new large capacity Pro-Vac grass catching system for its line of fast-cutting, zero-turn-radius ride-on mowers. The easy-to-attach Pro-Vac system features a powerful belt-driven blower and a viewing window to see grass levels inside the catcher. It can be dumped automatically from the driver seat with an operator lever, and the rear door is self-latching so the operator can continue cutting after dumping. Dixie Chopper offers two models of the Pro-Vac grass catching system — the Pro-Vac 12 with a capacity of 10 bushels, and the Pro-Vac 15, which holds 12 bushels.

For more information contact Dixie Chopper at 765/246-7737 or [www.dixiechopper.com](http://www.dixiechopper.com) / circle no. 254



## Spread the word

SnowEx, a division of TrynEx International, touts its new Vee Pro 8000, the largest capacity bulk spreader in its line. It carries up to 1.5 cu. yds. of material and is constructed of heavy-duty polyethylene. Spread width is infinitely variable from five to 40 ft. It comes standard with a top screen and fitted tarp for effective material retention.

For more information contact TrynEx at 800/725-8377 / circle no. 255

## Out of control

Rain Bird has added a new modular controller to its ESP controller family. Designed to eliminate the need for replacing a controller to add more stations, the ESP modular controller upgrades from four to 13 stations with the





# products

addition of three station modules that may be installed immediately or at a later date. Its features help users save time and make programming easier. Hot-swappable modules can be in-

stalled in any open position while the controller is in operation.

For more information contact Rain Bird at [www.rainbird.com](http://www.rainbird.com) / circle no. 256



## Tree eater

Bear Cat has introduced a new 6-in. engine-driven, towable chipper to its outdoor power equipment line. Features include a live hydraulic feed system with a variable speed feed roller with instant reverse. A "try again" feed system automatically retries feeding limbs three times. The feed roller is 15 in. in diameter, with a 13-in. wide opening containing 10 knife blades. A 360-degree rotating 6.7-in. discharge chute extends to the end of the hitch for efficient loading. Models available include the 74624 Honda 24-hp OHV twin-cylinder gas engine or 74628 Kubota 28-hp, three-cylinder diesel liquid cooled engine.

For more information contact Bear Cat at 800/247-7335 or [www.bearcatproducts.com](http://www.bearcatproducts.com) / circle no. 257

## Light up your life

Your landscape company works so hard that sometimes daylight fails you. The solution? Wobble Light. It has an impact resistant body and counter weighted hemispherical base that quickly returns upright if knocked over. Protected by a floating shock system and bullet-proof dome, the 500-watt halogen bulb produces brilliant 360-degree light.

For more information contact Wobble Light at 773/463-5900 or [www.wobblelight.com](http://www.wobblelight.com) / circle no. 258



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Circle 126



## Bye bye algae

BioSafe Systems' new non-copper based algaeicide, GreenClean granular algaeicide, instantly controls a broad range of algae blooms in ponds while oxygenating the water column through its unique oxidation process. It's a reduced risk pesticide that's nonhazardous to fish, organic approved, completely biodegradable, and available in 20-lb. and 50-lb. pails.

For more information contact BioSafe at 888/273-3088 / circle no. 259

## At a fast clip

Echo's HC-150i hedge clipper is powered by Echo's new 21.2cc Power Boost Tornado engine with two-stroke technology that delivers improved engine performance and higher fuel efficiency while meeting all EPA emissions regulations. HC-150i's Tornado engine features Variable Slope Timing (VST), ensuring smooth acceleration. Its user-friendly i-start System reduces required starting effort by up to 75% as compared to standard engine starting systems. Featuring 20-in. double-sided, double-reciprocating blades, the HC-150i has a commercial-grade gear case and cutter blades built to withstand the most demanding conditions.

For more information contact Echo at [www.echo-usa.com](http://www.echo-usa.com) / circle no. 260

## Aerate great

Gandy offers core and knife aerators from 34 in. to 8-ft.-wide in tow and 3-pt. hitch models. The 34-in. and 4-ft. models have a central shaft featuring separate dual-wheel coring heads with six cores each and are offered as either tow or 3-pt. hitch packages. The 4-ft. model

also has an integral shroud to cover the working tines or knives. Depth of coring penetration for the unit is increased by adding weight to a built-in weight tray, with poly water containers

as optional weights.

For more information contact Gandy at 800/443-2476 or [www.gandy.net](http://www.gandy.net) / circle no. 261

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Circle 124



# products

## What's the spread?

EMAS Attachment Systems' Gal-V is a multi-purpose four-season drop spreader with one-person operation that ensures a non-skid surface. Spread sand, salt or calcium during the winter, or topdress with loam or sand in summer. The Gal-V is hot dip galvanized, has adjustable flow control, a built-in agitator with filter grate and is available in five widths from 42 in. to 72 in.

For more information contact EMAS Attachment Systems at 508/430-8079 or [www.emasattachments.com](http://www.emasattachments.com) / circle no. 262

## Blow it away

FINN's new enhanced BB605 bark blower, the industry's only 60+ hp, 4.5-cu. yd. capacity bark blower available for use in trailer or skid applications, has a redesigned hydraulic system to



handle greater workloads. It also now offers an optional front feeder conveyor, a new hydraulic option that can be used to feed the machine during operation from a towing vehicle. An optional seed injection feature calibrates seed into compost or topsoil mixes. A hydraulic powered, re-mounted hose reel provides power to coil the 150-ft. flexible mulch hose.

For more information contact FINN at 800/543-7166 or [www.finncorp.com](http://www.finncorp.com) / circle no. 263

## Nifty nozzle

Full Coverage Irrigation has expanded its line of high uniformity sprinkler nozzles to include a retrofit spreader (close in) nozzle for Rain Bird

Model 900 Eagle sprinklers. The FCI Eagle 900 spreader nozzle improves distribution uniformity by increasing droplet size and volume surrounding the sprinkler to fight donuts and dryness commonly seen in windy locations.

For more information contact FCI at 877/658-3072 or [www.fcinozzles.com](http://www.fcinozzles.com) / circle no. 264

## Internet ready

Rain Master claims it has come up with the industry's first Internet-based irrigation system. The iCentral system allows Rain Master customers using Eagle series controllers to receive instant alerts, connect to real-time weather updates, intelligent ET data management, and remote access and operation of multiple controllers.

For more information contact Rain Master at [www.rainmaster.com](http://www.rainmaster.com) / circle no. 265

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# events

WHAT, WHEN & WHERE

## October

### 8-9 Turfgrass, Landscape and Equipment Expo /

Pomona, CA; Sponsored by the Southern California Turfgrass Council; 800/500-7282

### 17-18 Xeriscape

Conference Albuquerque, NM; 505/822-8222; [www.xeriscape.com](http://www.xeriscape.com)

### 18-20 International Lawn, Garden & Power Equipment

Expo / Louisville, KY; 800/558-8767

### 22-23 Garden Expo /

Toronto, Canada; Sponsored by the Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trade Association; 905/875-1805

### 23 10th Annual Southeast Texas Grounds Maintenance Conference /

Conroe, TX; 936/539-7822

### 24-26 New Jersey Shade Tree Federation's 78th

Annual Meeting / Pleasantville, NJ; 732/246-3210; <http://community.nj.com>

### 30-3 ASLA Annual Meeting and Expo /

New Orleans, LA; 202/898-2444

## November

### 4-6 Turf and Grounds Exposition /

Rochester, NY; Sponsored by the New York State Turfgrass Association; 800/873-8873

### 5-8 Green Industry Expo /

St. Louis, MO; 800/395-2522; [www.gieonline.com](http://www.gieonline.com)

### 9-11 Educational Conference of the National Institute on Park and

Grounds Management / Indianapolis, IN; 920/339-9057

### 10-13 Ky Turfgrass Council Conference /

Louisville, KY; 270/726-6323

### 17-20 Turf and Ornamental Seminar /

West Lafayette, IN; 765/494-8039

### 18-20 23rd International Irrigation Show /

San Diego, CA; 703/536-7080

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<b>A. Total Number of Copies</b>	63,142	62,592
<b>B. Paid and/or Requested Circulation</b>		
1. Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541	55,824	55,063
2. Paid in-County Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541		
3. Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution	207	204
4. Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS		
<b>C. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation</b>	56,031	55,267
<b>D. Free Distribution by Mail</b>		
1. Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541	6,351	6,814
2. In-County as Stated on Form 3541		
3. Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS		
<b>E. Free Distribution Outside the Mail</b>	668	392
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<b>G. Total Distribution</b>	63,050	62,473
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 Other Contractors/Service Companies (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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 365  Dealers, Distributors, Formulators & Brokers 370  Manufacturers  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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 20  **Manager/Superintendent** - Arborist, Architect, Landscape/Grounds Manager, Superintendent, Foreman, Supervisor  
 30  **Government Official** - Government Commissioner, Agent, Other Government Official  
 40  **Specialist** - Forester, Consultant, Agronomist, Pilot, Instructor, Researcher, Horticulturist, Certified Specialist  
 50  **Other Titled and Non-Titled Personnel** (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Which of the following services does your company provide? (Fill in ALL that apply)  
**Maintenance/Services**  
 A  Mowing F  Turf Fertilization C  Tree Care  
 B  Turf Insect Control D  Turf Aeration L  Pond/Lake Care  
 J  Turf Weed Control E  Irrigation Services N  Snow Removal  
 G  Turf Disease Control H  Ornamental Care O  Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Design/Build**  
 I  Landscape Design M  Landscape Installation P  Irrigation Installation  
 K  Paving/Deck/Patio Installation Q  Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Type of customer served? (Fill in ALL that apply)  
 A  Commercial B  Residential C  Both

5. Which of the following landscape products do you purchase or specify? (Fill in ALL that apply)  
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 C  Chain Saws I  Insecticides Z  Pavers/Masonry/Bricks/Rocks R  Trucks  
 U  Engines W  Irrigation Systems (Hardscape Materials) S  Turfseed  
 V  Erosion Control X  Landscape Lighting AA  Skid Steers T  Utility Vehicles  
 F  Fertilizers J  Line Trimmers N  Spreaders BB  Water Features

6. My firm's annual revenue is: (Fill in ONE only)  
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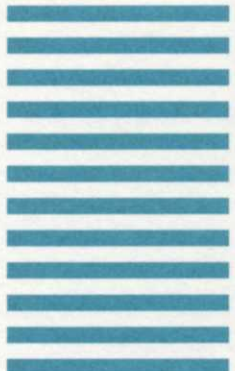
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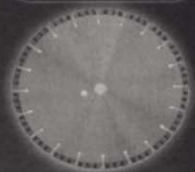
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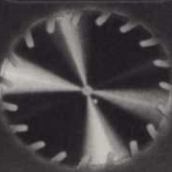
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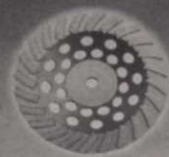
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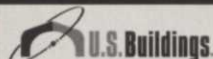
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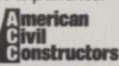


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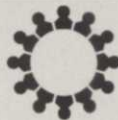
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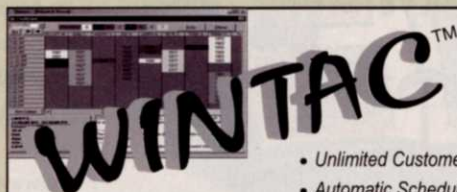
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# best practices

GUIDELINES TO HELP AN INDUSTRY GROW

## planning Make improvements in the slow season

BY BRUCE WILSON

Now that another peak growing season has come to a close, companies should focus on making improvements in areas of their operations that didn't go perfectly this past spring and summer.

As a whole, the landscape industry doesn't plan as well as it should. Planning for changes that will be made for the next busy season should start in October and November at the latest. You must make time to plan. I recommend the following:

► **Season debriefing.**

Schedule a meeting review on what went well and what needs improvement. Include all key people. Even though you're reviewing operations, include salespeople and customer service people in the mix. They're the best ones to represent the customer's point of view. Be hard on yourself as you strive to fix the flaws.

► **Determine the root cause.**

Once you have your list of

flaws, try to look for the root cause.

Don't jump to conclusions too quickly. Many of this year's problems come from last year's solutions.

Many companies rush to single out lack of training as the cause of operational problems, and many of those problems are re-

lated to training. But when you dig deeper, it could be poor hiring. The best training doesn't help if you don't start with the right people.

► **Prioritize.** Take your list and decide which problems can be solved and which ones do the most good if solved, and



Bruce Wilson

tackle a small number.

One of the biggest reasons why companies don't successfully make improvements is that they try to do too much.

► **Develop a timeline and assign responsibility.**

Once you determine what you're going to do, lay out a timeline for implementing the change. Set due dates for reaching milestones in implementing the change. Assign an owner to each project and make sure all commit to the schedule.

► **Accountability.**

Finally, hold yourself accountable. Schedule meetings to track progress.

I've always believed that you can plan for the unexpected. Why not look at the long range forecasts to see what the weather gurus are saying about the coming winter? If there's a possibility of a bad winter, it's probably best to front-load your planning and implementation into November. Don't let snow become your excuse for not achieving

your plans. And if you live in the sunbelt, don't let weather become your excuse. Ask yourself, what will I do if it's warmer or wetter than normal next year? It may happen, so plan for it.

### Sound off

Do you plan for next season properly? Bruce Wilson says you have to do it early; you have to plan to plan. Do it in October or November at the latest, he says.

What kind of changes do you typically plan for? Does it help to plan? Do you have unique ideas on how to plan effectively? Contact Wilson at [bwilson@wilson-oyler.com](mailto:bwilson@wilson-oyler.com) and let him know. Wilson spent 30 years with Environmental Care, Inc., before partnering with Green Industry entrepreneur Tom Oyler to form the Wilson-Oyler Group, which offers consulting services. Visit [www.wilson-oyler.com](http://www.wilson-oyler.com).



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## Hunter Preferred Contractor Program



**Bob Reeds**  
Blue Horizon Lawn Sprinklers, Inc.

# The Rewards Go Right Back Into Your Business

I joined the Hunter Preferred Contractor Program a couple years ago.

I'd been using Hunter rotors for a long time and thought – what the heck – might as well pick up a few Hunter Points with my purchases. Now I feel it was one of the best business moves I've made.

I became actively involved in the Program and discovered that Hunter offers a great line of products – and an outstanding choice of Preferred

Contractor Program rewards that I can invest right back into my business.

For example, every time we install a complete Hunter system, we earn a stack of Points on purchases of rotors, sprays, valves and controllers. I then turn these Points into valuable business development tools. This year, my Hunter Points are helping me lease new trucks. And I also use the Points for promotional materials and to attend Hunter irrigation workshops.

My relationship with Hunter has been a real asset – and the Preferred Contractor Program deserves a lot of the credit!

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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