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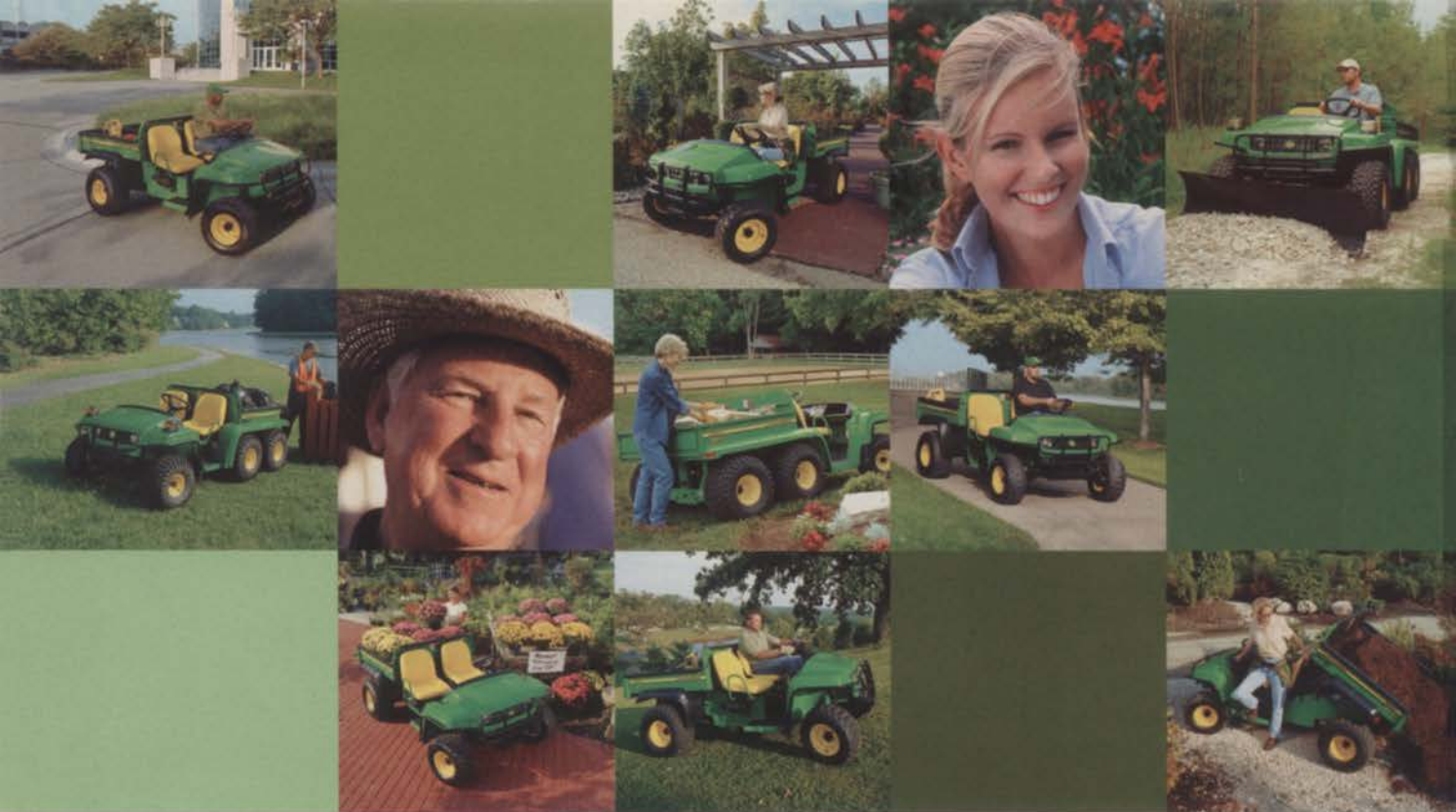
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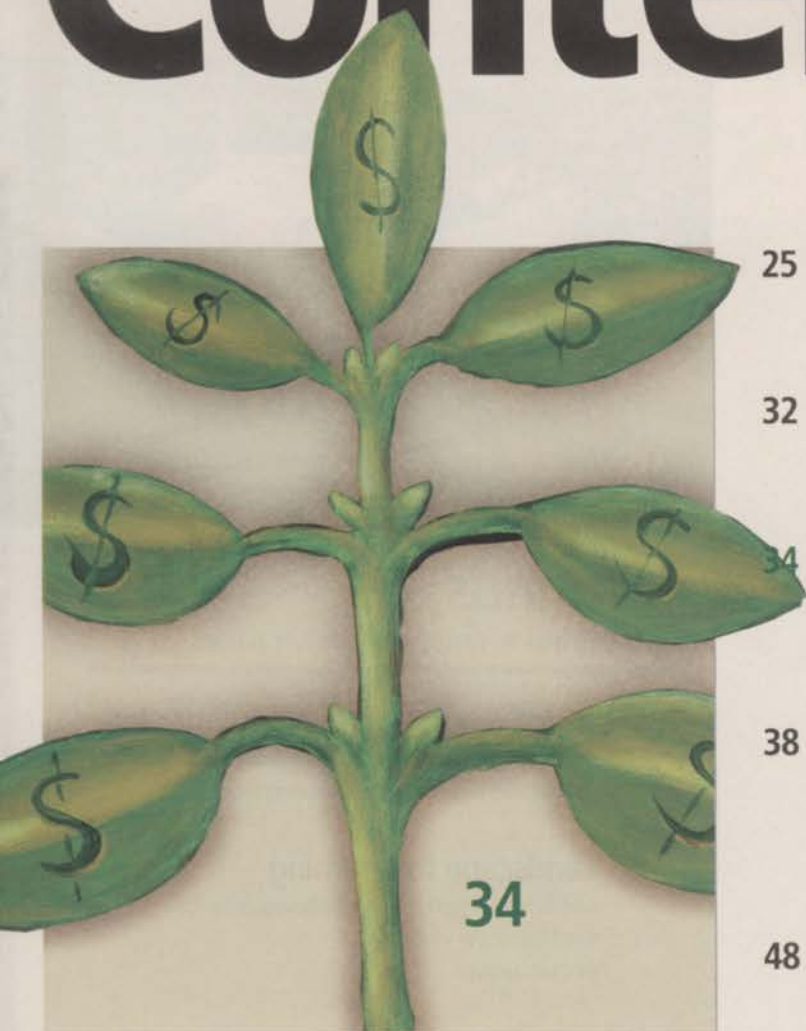


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BUSINESS

WHO'S WHO IN LM



C. Hope Clark explains why landscape professionals should never underestimate a client's knowledge of landscape services. This means going beyond being on time, being appropriately dressed and doing what any professional should do as a matter of course. This is Clark's first appearance on our pages and hopefully not the last. A Clemson University grad and a recent employee with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, she writes from her home in Phoenix. Turn to page 62 and learn what it means to *really* connect with the residential client.

Christine Kratoski left the fast-moving, high-tech recruiting world of Silicon Valley in 1999 and never looked back. Relying upon the skills she acquired in matching some of the world's best-know tech companies with great talent, Christine now focuses her efforts in the landscape industry. Starting on page 48, this successful recruiter draws upon the experiences of some of the industry's most experienced leaders to tell you how to keep your valuable employees.



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Editorial staff

Editor-in-Chief	RON HALL / 440/891-2636 / rhall@advanstar.com
On-Line Content Editor	LYNNE BRAKEMAN / 440/826-2869 / lbrakeman@advanstar.com
Senior Science Editor	KARL DANNEBERGER, PH.D. / danneberger1@osu.edu
Group Editor	VERNON HENRY / 440/826-2829 / vhenry@advanstar.com
Corp. Creative Director	LISA LEHMAN / 440/891-2785 / llehman@advanstar.com
Art Director	CARRIE PARKHILL / 440/891-3101 / cparkhill@advanstar.com

Reader advisory panel

DEBBY COLE	Greater Texas Landscapes / Austin, TX
JOHN GACHINA	Gachina Landscape Management / Menlo Park, CA
WALTER BONVELL	Xavier University / Cincinnati, OH
BILL HOOPES	Scotts Lawn Service / Marysville, OH
FRED HASKETT	U.S. Lawns / St. Louis, MO
LARRY IORII	Down to Earth Landscaping / Wilmington, DE
TODD GRAUS	Green Turf Lawns / Worland, WY
GARY LASCALEA	GroGreen / Plano, TX
MILTON HALLMAN III	Stewart Enterprises, Inc. / High Point, NC
JACK ROBERTSON	Jack Robertson Lawn Care / Springfield, IL
DR. BARRY TROUTMAN	ValleyCrest Companies / Sanford, FL
GEORGE VAN HAASTEREN	Dwight-Englewood School / Englewood, NJ
BRIAN VINCHESI	Irrigation Consulting / Pepperell, MA

Business staff

Publisher	KEVIN STOLTMAN / 440/891-2772 / kstoltman@advanstar.com
Admin. Coordinator	MINDY MOCZULSKI / 440/891-2734 / mmoczulski@advanstar.com
Production Manager	JILL HOOD / 218/723-9129 / jhood@advanstar.com
Production Director	RHONDA SANDE / 218/723-9536 / rsande@advanstar.com
Circulation Manager	JESSICA BORGREN / 218/723-9356 / jborgren@advanstar.com
Asst. Circulation Manager	MELISSA FEIRO / 218/723-9431 / mfeiro@advanstar.com
Green Book Coordinator	CANDACE HAUSAUER / 218/723-9175 / chausauer@advanstar.com

Advertising staff

Cleveland Headquarters	7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130-3369
Associate Publisher	PATRICK ROBERTS / 440/891-2609 Fax: 440/891-2675 proberts@advanstar.com
National Account Manager	GEORGE CASEY / 440/891-3146 Fax: 440/891-2675 gcasey@advanstar.com
Account Manager	MICHAEL HARRIS / 440/891-3118 Fax: 440/891-2675 mharris@advanstar.com
Account Executive	LESLIE MONTGOMERY / 440/891-3199 Fax: 440/826-2865 lmontgomery@advanstar.com
Classifieds	BRIAN OLESINSKI / 440/891-2694 Fax: 440/826-2865 bolesinski@advanstar.com

Marketing/magazine services

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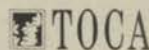
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Employee turnover's \$\$ cost

BY RON HALL / Editor-in-Chief

Did you know that you can put a dollar figure on losing a good employee? Until a couple of weeks ago I hadn't given it much thought. And even if you had pressed me to tell you what that figure would be, my guess would have grossly underestimated the cost of replacing the employee.

But, I've been made aware of the significance of employee turnover. Not the vaguely disquieting cost we associate with a disruption in our day-to-day operations; I'm talking dollars and cents. This is the countable expense involved in recruiting and training the new hire, not to mention smaller, but not insignificant, extra administrative expenses.

Sam Geist, the speaker at the recent PLANET Executive Forum, tossed out statistics that startled me out of the beginnings of a mid-morning nap. Remember what Mark Twain said about statistics: "There are three kinds of lies — lies, damn lies and statistics." I remembered it. In fact, it comes to mind whenever anybody starts throwing around numbers to support the point they're making.

So, even though I was impressed, maybe even a bit skeptical about the extent and costs of turnover, Geist sparked my curiosity; I wanted to learn more.

Geist said that 56% of all employees don't last in their jobs for two full years. The turnover, usually unrecognized by owners, costs the U.S. economy an estimated \$160 billion annually, he added. He then directed the 200 or so landscape and lawn service contractors at the educational session to visit the Web site www.keepemployees.com and calculate the cost of employee turnover for themselves.

Of course, the first chance I got I visited the Web site of Keep Employees, Inc. (KEi), which says that U.S. businesses report a 25-30% annual unwanted employee turnover rate. KEi says this high figure is a direct result of bad hiring and bad treatment of employees.

The site allows employers to calculate the real costs of a lost employee — separation processing costs, replacement hiring costs, training new hire costs, lost productivity and lost business costs.

Says KEi, the cost of replacing an hourly worker is 0.25 to 0.5 times the person's salary plus benefits; the cost of a manager or supervisor is 1-1.5 times salary plus benefits; replacing an executive or top manager is 3-5 times annual salary plus benefits.

What can you do to keep more of your good employees? Geist said employees want:

- ▶ To be treated truthfully and to be trusted.
- ▶ To have their ideas received in a positive fashion.
- ▶ To receive credit where credit is due.
- ▶ To be allowed to show initiative without fear of being condemned.

Also, read the excellent article "It's not just the money," prepared by career consultant Christine Kratoski on page 48 of this issue. It tells how successful companies keep good employees.

Contact Ron at 440/891-2636
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Unwanted employee turnover is
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Companies that haven't invested in safety programs are paying dearly today as they face high modifiers on top of rising costs.



Workers' comp strategies

BY BRUCE WILSON

Many companies face tighter margins due to the competitive nature of the market. Wages, health care costs, fuel and material prices continue to climb while prices stay the same. In many cases, companies have contracts going out to bid that were priced five to 10 years ago, and they lose the jobs sometimes by 20% to 30%.

Mind your modifiers

Workers' compensation costs are strangling some companies. Companies that haven't invested in safety programs are paying dearly as they face high modifiers on top of the aforementioned rising costs. A modifier is the amount that the normal rate for the class of worker is adjusted to reflect a company's actual loss ratio. Pay close attention to this if you're serious about improving profits. Unfortunately, many companies don't understand what their modifier is until it's too late.

Some companies pay minor claims out of their own pockets to keep their claims down. Companies that have good modifiers also aggressively track claims and work to get them closed quickly. Understand that insurance companies base rates on open claims. Reserves are set up each time you have an accident, and the amount may or may not be justified. The insurance company is in no hurry to close the claim on its own since it helps justify higher rates.

For example, when an employee twists his back, a claim is opened and often a reserve of \$5,000 to

\$10,000 will be set up in case the claim lingers or, worse yet, becomes litigated. If the employee comes right back to work, quickly get a doctor's release and hound the insurance company to get the claim closed. If you don't get it closed, it counts as an actual loss when calculating your new rate for the next year.

Managing your claims

Once you have a bad modifier, it can take three years to reverse the loss trend because the insurer doesn't use just one year in the calculation.

Here are some best practices that companies follow to manage their claims:

- ▶ Companies pay small claims themselves rather than having them add to their loss ratio.
- ▶ When a worker is injured, make sure the employee gets prompt and proper attention, preferably through a company selected doctor. There are different rules in each state regulating this practice, and it's in your best interest to know the rules, and how to use them to your advantage.
- ▶ Try to get the worker back to work as quickly as possible. Sometimes they can get released to light duty.
- ▶ Follow up with the employee to make sure that he/she has a final release to fulltime work and that the insurance company is notified. Stay on top of this. It's important to you. It will mean a substantial savings to you to close claims as quickly as possible.
- ▶ Nothing works better than having a good safety program that prevents the accidents in the first place.

— *The author is a partner with entrepreneur Tom Oyler in the Wilson-Oyler Group, which offers consulting services. He is also the Director for the Symbiot Landscape Network. Visit www.wilson-oyler.com.*



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Zerfoss: Change will mean more intensity

The announcement that Electrolux AB, the world's largest maker of household appliances, is spinning off its outdoor products unit is positive news for the commercial landscape industry, said Husqvarna North America President David Zerfoss.

"It will allow us to bring more focus and intensity to the outdoor power equipment industry," Zerfoss recently told *Landscape Management* magazine.

Husqvarna, of course, has, within the past 15 years, become one of the most recognizable names in the commercial outdoor power equipment market — manu-

Husqvarna will remain focused on being the "total source" for the industry — Zerfoss

facturing and supplying the Green Industry (commercial and consumer) with everything from chain saws to commercial mowers.

Until the mid-1990s, the company focused on building its hand-held power equipment presence in the United States. Within the past decade it also emerged as a major supplier of commercial and consumer mowers and other equipment, acquiring and adding companies such as Yazoo-Kees and Bluebird to its other brands, which included Poulan, Flymo and Weedeater.

"We literally are the only company that can outfit an entire landscape trailer or truck," claimed Zerfoss, adding that the new entity will remain focused on being

the "total source" for the commercial landscape industry.

The new outdoor products company will carry the Husqvarna name and be headquartered in Husqvarna, Sweden, the city of its founding about 300 years ago.

The process of separating it from Electrolux AB should take about 16 months, said Zerfoss. The new company will have about 12,000 employees worldwide and annual revenues of about \$3.7 billion. Besides commercial lawn & garden, it will have three other "related end user focuses," said Zerfoss — consumer lawn & garden, forestry and construction.

The spin off is part of an accelerated restructuring of Electrolux AB, whose appliance business has been challenged by



David Zerfoss confident of continuing growth

higher raw material costs and increased competition from low-cost producers. Electrolux AB recently said it's relocating about half of its 27 plants in Europe

and North America to Eastern Europe, Asia and Mexico.

Separating the outdoor products unit away from the appliance business allows the company to take advantage of market opportunities, said Zerfoss, adding, "outdoor power equipment, although the smaller part of Electrolux is a significant part of its profitability."

He added that U.S. consumers, including the landscape equipment supply chain and end users, will see "a very familiar profile of what we're already doing but with more intensity, growth and acquisition."

Canada won't restrict 2,4-D

OTTAWA — Canada said on Monday it did not plan to restrict the use of the popular garden pesticide 2,4-D and said the public had no need to worry about a substance that some activists say can cause cancer, reported Reuters on Feb. 21.

Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) said that 2,4-D was safe to use as long as instructions were followed.

"The PMRA understands that the public may have concerns over domestic uses of pesticides and would like to convey that all registered pesticides undergo a thorough science-based risk assessment," it said in a statement.

More than 60 municipalities across Canada have banned the cosmetic use of pesticides because of the possible harmful effects to humans and the environment.

2,4-D, formally known as 2,4-dichloro phenoxyacetic acid, is manufactured by a number of major chemical companies such as Syngenta Crop Protection Canada Inc., Dow Agrosciences Canada Inc., Bayer Chemicals, Monsanto DuPont and BASF.

The PMRA said it would take a final decision on whether to ban the pesticide later in the year after the Canadian public had been given a chance to make comments, according to the Reuters report.

It had found nothing to back allegations that 2,4-D could cause cancer or would damage aquatic life.

But it did advise use of the pesticide at its lowest effective rate and added the Agency would limit the number of times per year that an entire lawn could be sprayed.

David who?
David Be needin'
a last name!

Employee Time Card

Name:	DAVID B.		Dates:	April		
Day:	Start:	Lunch:	End:	Jobsite:	Activity:	Hours:
Monday	7	:30	3:30	Morris	Gen	8
Tuesday	7	:30	3:30	'	'	8
Wednesday	7	:30	3:30	'	'	8
Thursday	7	:30	4:30	'	'	9
Friday	7	:30	4:30	'	'	9

Great. Which week
in April?

Is he driving in the
same traffic I am?

If he would just fill
this in, I could cost
this job properly.

I dropped by Friday
at 4:00, and no one
was there!

Employee Signature: *David B.*

Total Hours: 42

I don't mind paying
overtime as long
as it's real.

Fiction?

One of 15 available
reports.

Employee Report

David Burns

Jobsite Name: Morris Property

Date Range: 4/11/2005 through 4/15/2005

Day	Start	End	Activity	Hours
Mon 4/11	7:19 AM	12:02 PM	Irrigation	4:43 hours
	12:40 PM	3:39 PM	Irrigation	2:59 hours 7:42 hours
Tue 4/12	7:21 AM	12:06 PM	Irrigation	4:45 hours
	12:37 PM	3:42 PM	Irrigation	3:05 hours 7:50 hours
Wed 4/13	7:16 AM	12:04 PM	Irrigation	4:48 hours
	12:33 PM	3:44 PM	Irrigation	3:11 hours 7:59 hours
Thu 4/14	7:18 AM	12:25 PM	Planting	5:07 hours
	1:05 PM	3:42 PM	Planting	2:37 hours 7:44 hours
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Industry fights phosphorus bans

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Businesses and associations, including Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE) and CropLife America, filed a motion and supporting papers with the U.S. District Court in Wisconsin this winter, asking the court to strike the City of Madison and Dane County ordinances banning the display, sale or use of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus.

"The City of Madison and Dane County believe that their ordinances will help alleviate the algae problem," Jim Skillen, manager of formulator issues for RISE, said. "It is truly ironic that not only are they breaking federal and state law by instituting these bans, but by removing inorganic,

phosphorus-based fertilizers from the marketplace, they will increase the phosphorus load in local lakes over the long term."



Jim Skillen of RISE says Madison law ill-advised.

According to research from the University of Wisconsin Turfgrass Research Center, healthy, dense grass fertilized with phosphorus improves turf better than fertilizer without phosphorus and thus, limits runoff to almost nothing. Unfertilized turf can contribute 40 percent more phosphorus in runoff.

"We made every effort to avoid the lawsuit, but our efforts were rejected," Allen James, president of RISE said. "We believe that we have a strong case and will prevail on the basis of scientific fact and the strength of the law."

STMA honors Hunter's Wightman

PHOENIX, AZ — The Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) has awarded long-time Hunter employee, Lynda Wightman, the Harry C. Gill Memorial Award. Originally called the "Lawn Ranger Award," the award was renamed after the STMA's second president, the late Harry Gill, who established the award in 1982.

This award is presented to individuals to recognize their long-time service and commitment to the STMA's goals and standards. The award is the highest honor pre-



STMA President Mike Trigg presents Wightman with the Harry C. Gill Award.

sented by the STMA.

"This is a huge honor for me," said Wightman. "It's the highest award that the STMA gives and I'm very proud to have won it as a Hunter repre-

sentative. There are many other professional STMA members who deserve this award as well as I! It is the first time the award has gone to a commercial recipient."

[CLIPPINGS]

Skinner Nurseries grows in Maryland

CENTREVILLE, MD — Skinner Nurseries acquired the former Bridgetown Farms, Inc., here. The new Skinner location is one of 15 across the Sunbelt and will be managed by Craig Higgs, who had owned Bridgetown Farms.

SIMA beefs up Web

ERIE, PA — Check out the redesigned Web site of the Snow & Ice Management Association (SIMA), www.sima.org. "Property managers can use it to search for snow and ice managers in their area. You can learn all about what it means to be a Certified Snow Professional and search a listing of people who hold that title. You can register for training and other events," says SIMA Executive Director Tammy Higham, CAE.

Spanish labels on PBI/Gordon site

KANSAS CITY, MO — PBI/Gordon Corp. added Spanish versions of its product labels and MSDS information for its most popular products, Speedzone, Trimec Classic and Trimec 992 to its Web site (www.pbigordon.com). Copies of Spanish labels can also be obtained by calling 800/821-7925.

NITAMIN distributor expanding

ORLANDO, FL — Fairmount Minerals is expanding its manufacturing capabilities in the South and distribution capabilities in the Northeast and South. Fairmount Minerals currently manufactures NITAMIN coated sand at its facility in Bridgman, MI. The expansion will widen the distribution of NITAMIN coated sand in the northeastern states, and also in South Carolina and Florida.

NY county legislators target pesticides

ROCHESTER, NY — Monroe County is likely to become the eighth county in New York to adopt the controversial Neighbor Notification Law.

A group of lawmakers is planning for the county to "opt-in" to the law that was approved by NY State legislators in 2000. It passed this year, which appears likely, it would take effect Jan. 1, 2006.

At a recent public forum, longtime LCO Donald Burton, president of the New State Lawn Care Association, and several other industry people spoke against the necessity of the law. But, the general consensus at the forum, sponsored by the Breast Cancer Coalition of Rochester, favored its passage, according to several published reports.

Most lawn care business owners here, including some that promote IPM services, say the law overstates the risk of the products they use and will significantly increase their cost of doing business without a corresponding benefit to customers.

The lawn care industry's main concern with the law is the provision requiring commercial applicators to provide a notice of 48 hours to anyone living within 150 feet of properties being sprayed, and to give two rain dates along with information about the products they're using.

Meanwhile, Jay Schneiderman, a legislator in Suffolk County on Long Island, who had originally sought to outlaw pesticides used for "aesthetic or cosmetic" pur-

poses, recently revised his proposed legislation to:

- ▶ prohibit the retail sale of lawn chemicals that re regulated by the U.S. EPA
- ▶ prohibit unlicensed applicators, including homeowners, from apply an lawn chemical containing as an active ingredient any substance listed by the U.S. EPA as a known or suspected health risk,
- ▶ prohibit licensed applications from performing "any preventative blanket application" of a lawn chemical listed by the U.S. EPA as a known or suspected health risk.

The resolution, if approved, mandates a fine not to exceed \$1,000 for violators.

The legislator says the law is necessary to protect the health of citizens. Green Industry organizations claim the county has no authority to make pesticide law.

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Circle 113

In the Know

[CLIPPINGS]

LCOs get free stuff at new Bayer site

MONTVALE, NJ — Bayer Environmental Science launched the Web site, BayerMarketingTools.com, to help lawn care professionals build their businesses. All materials available for order through the website are free to LCOs. Materials include doorhangers, statement stuffers, postcards, brochures, ad slicks, yard signs, vehicle magnets and radio commercials. For a minimal charge, LCOs can have the materials customized with their contact information and company logo.

Bobcat building support center

BISMARCK, ND — The Bobcat Company, a business unit of Ingersoll-Rand, announced a \$9.5 million project to develop a manufacturing support center (MSC). The new facility will be approximately 100,000 sq. ft., and it should open up space at the current Bismarck factory for additional fabrication and assembly.

Two KC firms form Highland Outdoor

OLATHE, KS — The Kincaide Company and ADKI Group, LLC, merged to create Highland Outdoor, a full-service landscape company. The new company will offer landscape design/build, installation, maintenance and irrigation as well as other exterior construction projects. Jason Cupp, CLP, is the president and CEO of Highland Outdoor, and Chad Fulk, is the vice president and COO. Rounding out its management team are Ben Acheson, general manager and vice president, and Nicki Fulk, director of client services and vice president.



The NFL/MLB groundskeeping volunteers hit the field running.

NFL and MLB groundskeepers create a field of dreams for Phoenix high school

BY LYNNE BRAKEMAN

PHOENIX, AZ — The day before the kick off of the Sports Turf Managers Association Annual Conference, more than 50 professional athletic field managers from the NFL and MLB joined forces to renovate the baseball field at North High School (NHS) in central Phoenix.

"This is probably the most exciting thing that's happened here in 15 years," said NHS Principal Zack Munoz. Munoz was previously the school's athletic director. NHS is an inner-city school of approximately 2,500 students.

The school has only one baseball field and due to the high traffic and low maintenance budget, the field was in poor shape.

Using equipment and materials provided by Toro, Turface Athletics and Covermaster, the skilled volunteers dragged and raked the infield, leveled the infield, rebuilt the batters box and pitchers mound, and mowed, edged and striped the turf.

The school has a very small maintenance budget. Pitcher's mound before (1) and after (2).

"This really gives us the opportunity to work together, and we don't usually get to do that," said Bob Christofferson, head groundskeeper for the Seattle Mariners and one of the event's organizers.

"Since we had NFL and MLB guys here, we learned a lot from each other," he said.

At the end of the day, the field's lines were all perfectly straight, the turf expertly groomed and the base paths were absolutely immaculate.



PHOTOS COURTESY: TORO.

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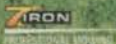
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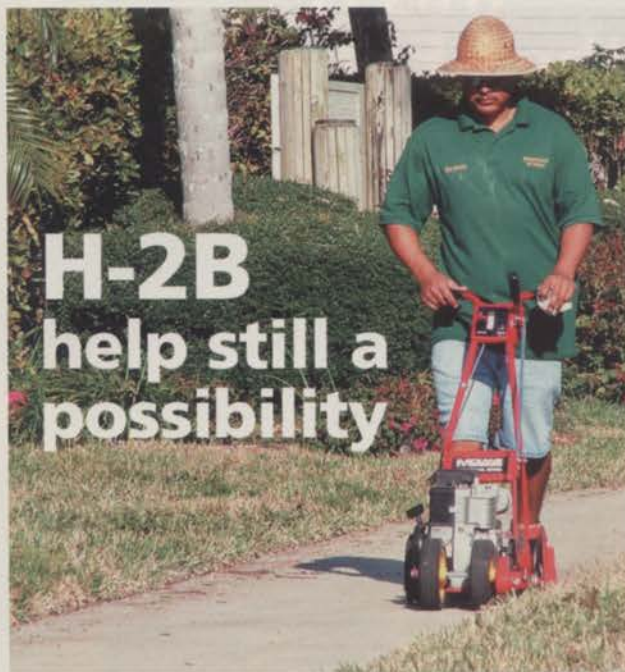
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H-2B help still a possibility

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The "Save Our Small Seasonal Businesses Act" can still be passed this spring — either on its own or as an add-on to some other federal legislation.

But the owners of small businesses that have relied upon the H-2B seasonal immigrant program and are experiencing labor shortages still face an uphill fight in convincing their legislators to support it. Even so, John Meredith, Director of Legislative Relations, the American Nursery & Landscape Association (ANLA), told *Landscape Management* that he remains optimistic.

About 80 owners of small businesses and leaders of several trade organizations (Professional Landcare Network and ANLA included) met here March 2 seeking Congressional support for the bill. After receiving briefings from staffers of Senators Barbara A. Mikulski (D-MD) and Judd Gregg (R-NH), the business owners tromped the halls of the Senate and House office buildings to beseech their respective legislators for help in acquiring labor this yet this season.

Senators Mikulski and Gregg are co-sponsoring the bill that would allow U.S. businesses to acquire more H-2B workers.

The H-2B program's federally mandated cap of 66,000 visas for seasonal immigrant workers was reached in early January.

The emergency legislation introduced in February and slowly gaining support from fellow legislators, if passed, would:

- ▶ Exempt returning seasonal workers from the national cap of 66,000 people
- ▶ Reserve half of the 66,000 visas for employers needing workers in the winter and half

for those needing them in the summer

- ▶ Create new anti-fraud provisions and requiring employers to pay an anti-fraud fee of \$150 for each H-2B petition
- ▶ Create new reporting requirements for the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that Congress knows how many people are using the program.

Small business owners work hard to convince legislators to support new H-2B fix for more seasonal workers.

By the end of the H-2B National Lobby Day, which took place March 2, the business owners, representing industries — ranging from hospitality, to seafood to landscaping — had made about 150 office visits, several securing verbal commitments from legislators to support the 2-year temporary fix of the H-2B program, represented by Senate Bill S. 352 and House Bill H.R. 793.

[CLIPPINGS]

The Care of Trees keeps on growing

MARSHALL, VA — The Care of Trees has opened two new offices here and in Annapolis, MD. The overall region now extends from Maryland's Eastern Shore to the Virginia Piedmont to Baltimore, MD, and south of Warrenton, VA.

Lawn Doctor adds eight locations

HOLMDEL, N.J — Lawn Doctor recently announced the opening of eight new locations in Kentucky, Texas, Montana and Pennsylvania. These Lawn Doctor Franchisees graduated from Lawn Doctor's comprehensive two-week New Owner Training Class. Lawn Doctor, founded in the mid 1960s, now numbers more than 450 locations.

Symbiot and JDL extend agreement

SANDY, UT — Symbiot said that its national purchasing contract with John Deere Landscape, a P3 supplier for Symbiot's service providers has been extended until 2010, allowing JDL to continue as an exclusive supplier for irrigation equipment and landscape supplies to the Symbiot Network Partners. clients in 28 locations

JP Horizon winners to cruise

PAINESVILLE, OH — Peter Copses, Gibbs Landscape Co., Smyrna, GA, and Nikki Stein, Bever and Sons Landscaping, White Bear Lake, MN, each won a cruise to The Bahamas as winners of the JP Horizons Sales Jam 2004 competition. Mark Lay, co-owner of AA Tex Lawn, Inc., Indian Trail, NC, won one phase of the contest but is unable to take the trip and passed it on to Nikki Stein.

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People & companies



Agrisel USA, Inc. named **Luciana Jaber** administrative sales assistant.

Exmark added **Mark Aldendifer** as product manager for the company's after-market parts and accessories.

Husqvarna hired renowned industry trainer **Tim Ard** to serve as the company's manager of field applications.

Ewing Irrigation appointed **Geoffrey Simpson** manager of its Washington facility.

The International Society of Arboriculture bestowed the Board Certified Master Arborist designation to **Scott Bates** from Bartlett's Springfield office.

Maruyama U.S., Inc. hired **Larry Snow** as general sales manager.



Bell Laboratories named **Brad Herman** account manager for

the turf and ornamental industry.

The Alabama Nursery and Landscape Association (ALNLA) recently honored **Jim Pursell**, chairman of the board for Pursell Technologies Inc., with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

HRP LanDesign promoted **Hwa Wang** to senior associate.

Hunter Industries



promoted **Brandon Meadows** to vice president of sales.

Bayer Environmental Science named **Michael Daly** (above, left) director of marketing for the Chipco Professional Products Division, **Jim Fetter** (above, center) manager of the Lawn & Landscape Sales Region, and **Ben Cicora** (above, right) business manager, Herbicides/PGRs for the Chipco Professional Products Division.



Aquatrols appointed **Tom Malehorn** international accounts manager.

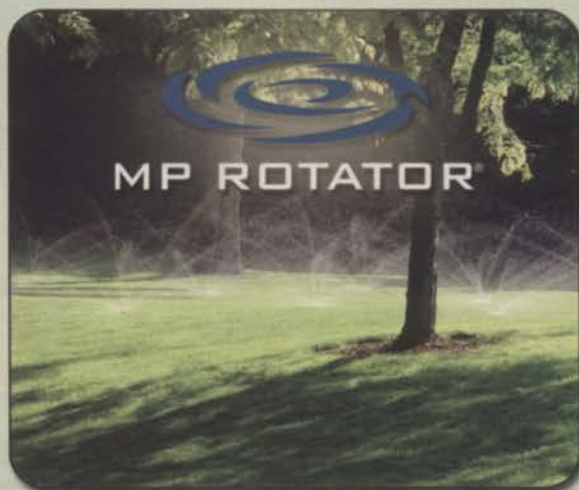


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PLANET

Meeting Brief

NEWS FROM THE
EXECUTIVE FORUM

Seeking a change? Start with yourself

By Sue Porter

Speaker/Facilitator Sam Geist of Geist & Associates, Inc., said the best thought of the 2-1/2-day Executive Forum was, "How can I change myself?" Leaders will affect change in their organizations, once their own practices and ideas have been changed.

He made the observation at the Professional Landcare Network (PLAN-ET) Executive Forum event held at the sun-splashed Westin Rio Mar Resort in Rio Grande, Puerto Rico.

He said the challenge to many contractors is to re-engineer their organizations for growth, to change the business model.

Geist used the example of Dell Computers in changing the market from one of mass marketing to what he calls

"customerizing" computer shopping. For Dell, this ability to customize for each customer is reflected in a dramatic advantage in operating costs/revenue over its competitors.

This idea can work in landscape and lawn care firms also, he maintains — companies that can have as much as 80% of their assets in intangibles.

Geist stressed developing knowledge and products for customers that can be perceived as a form of intimacy. This type of interaction easily leads to customer dependency, he said, because "the business stays with those who appreciate it."

How can landscape professionals encourage customers to appreciate them? Focus on the three variables that can affect the buying decision and process: Stress, time and trust.

"Think like a customer, act like a customer, be like a customer," Geist noted.

Rick Doesburg
presents an ALCA
Executive Forum Award
to Debra Holder.



Final thanks for a great CEO

RIO GRANDE, PR — Former ALCA President Rick Doesburg's tribute to Debra Holder, the association's former executive director, highlighted the Executive Forum Awards Banquet here.

Taking the stage midway through the dinner at the lavish Westin Rio Mar Resort, Doesburg recounted Holder's 25-year career with the Associated Landscape Contractors of America. He noted that she began her ALCA employment as an administrative assistant, not too far removed from her days at the University of Georgia, and retired this past summer as its CEO.

During her tenure, the association tripled its membership and added a host of educational and industry-building programs, said Doesburg. He enlivened his presentation with personal reminiscences and a series of candid images of Debra taken at various times in her career at industry events.

Concluding the tribute, Doesburg invited the ALCA presidents in attendance, both past and present, to the stage as a final gesture of gratitude and respect. As Holder made her way across the stage, each ALCA president, in turn, gave her a hearty hug. Several of the past ALCA presidents, Doesburg included, seemed to have tears in their eyes as concluded their well wishes for Holder.

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"People want less clutter and less stress in their lives, and more control and convenience."

One study Geist cited showed that companies lost customers because they tend to over-promise and under-deliver. In fact, he said 68% of companies lost customers due to indifference, 14% because of a poor product or service and only 9% because of price.

How can you avoid this trap of indifference? Geist stressed the importance of executing well the systems and services that make up your operation.

"Execution is closing the gap between knowing (what needs to be done) and doing it," he said.

The path to changing perceptions starts internally, Geist noted, and also involves giving customers new ways to value your service and take the basic transaction from one based on price to one based on value.

"Become customized or commoditized," he said.

For many organizations, this means building a brand, but understanding what that means is first.

Geist said 68% of companies lost customers due to indifference.

"A brand is a promise," he said.

Your products and services can be almost generic, but the value creation is when you add the unexpected, for no extra cost.

"Price is what you pay; value is what you get," Geist added.

To move an organization from generic to value-add services involves new thinking, clear communication with employees, getting their buy-in for the process. He maintained that many employees are "actively disengaged" and capable of much more productive work than they typically provide.

10 questions to ask your team

Speaker Sam Geist asked attendees to consider these questions in their own company's planning sessions. They're excellent questions for anybody to ask of team members.

1. Where do we make money?
2. Where in the value chain will we be allowed to make money in the future?
3. What can we deliver for customers today?
4. What will we need to deliver tomorrow?
5. What percent of our business is repeat business?

6. What is the lifetime value of business for our customers?

7. What message do our employees get from our management?

8. Where is our system breaking down and why?

9. Why don't customers buy from us?

10. If we're not here, will customers miss us?

For more information about Sam Geist and his books, visit www.samgeist.com, email samgeist@geistgroup.com or call 905/475-1022.

"Employees can be your ambassadors or your assassins," he said.

Geist warned that even the savvy organizations can be blinded by what he calls the "arrows of truth." They include:

- Being blinded by the financial numbers in the business to the exclusion of other success indicators
- Avoiding conflict within the organization
- Too strong a focus on cost control or net margin contributions
- Trying to be something you're not
- Using a bandage when surgery is needed
- Stifling and frustrating good employees
- Allowing sloppy execution to continue
- Leadership – the process

"Leadership is not a position, it's a process," said Geist. "Change before you have to."

He maintained that leader's responsibility is to ask questions, answer them, make plans, engender change.

"Shoot for outcomes, not just activities," he added.

Deliverable outcomes need to be spe-

cific, he advised. "Make your deliverables specific by month, week or year. Turn generalities into specifics."

He challenged the group to devise ways to make it painless for customers to do business with them. In doing this, Geist challenged the group individually to develop the three key traits of every leader: example, example and example. ■



Snodgrass named 'Landscape Pro of the Year'

LM magazine makes presentation at Executive Forum

By Ron Hall / Editor-in-Chief

RIO GRANDE, PR – How does a company tally the true cost of serious on-the-job injuries? The physical pain it causes? The financial losses resulting to the injured parties and their families? The disruption of service to customers? The cost of higher insurance premiums?

Those are the negatives. Let's dwell on what we're doing instead. Let's turn the spotlight on David Snodgrass who has been methodically and quietly crusading (yes, that's an accurate description) to raise the landscape/lawn service industry's awareness of safety. For this reason, *Landscape Management* magazine honored Snodgrass as its 2004 "Landscape Professional of the Year." LM Editor-in-Chief Ron Hall made the formal presentation at the Professional Land-care Network (PLANET) Executive Forum here Feb. 11.

Snodgrass and his brothers Drew and Dean operate the 170-employee, \$20-

million Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping and Nurseries in Portland, OR, one of the premiere Green Industry organizations in the Pacific Northwest.

You would think that would be enough to keep David Snodgrass busy. And it does. Nevertheless, his commitment to raising the industry's safety quotient has gone way beyond merely chairing the PLANET Safety Committee.

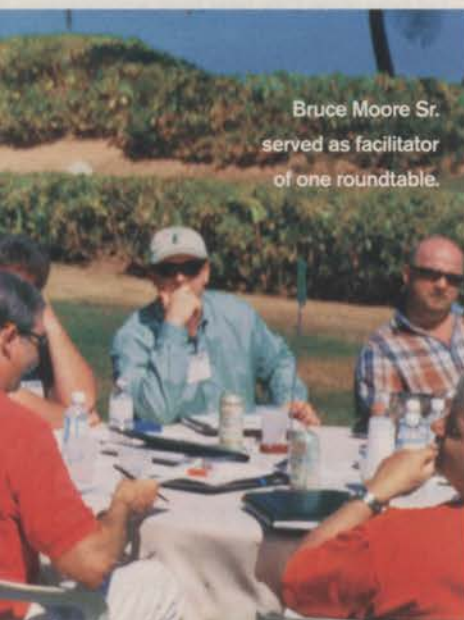
Snodgrass, under the auspices of PLANET and the sponsorship of CNA Insurance, has successively and aggressively promoted a safety initiative that is growing industry-wide. To date, about 500 Green Industry contracting companies have joined the STARS Safety Program that was initiated in November 2003. STARS is PLANET's next step in its alliance with OSHA. The program's mission is to grow a culture of safety.

Snodgrass emphasizes the STARS program is not limited to association members; all landscape and lawn service companies can join. When companies join, they sign a "Pledge of Honor" to



Pro of the Year
David Snodgrass
leads crusade for
safety awareness.

actively pursue safer workplaces by developing a strong safety program, having a safety committee in place, conducting weekly safety awareness meetings and sharing best practices with other STARS member companies. As part of the program, they receive the STARS Safety Resource Manual as a guide. ■



Bruce Moore Sr.
served as facilitator
of one roundtable.

Roundtables inspire ideas

PLANET participants swap experiences, share strategies

By Ron Hall / Editor-in-Chief

RIO GRANDE, PR – There's no better way for a small group to discuss common issues or challenges than around a roundtable. While it's necessary to appoint somebody to point the discussion in the right direction, there's no head of the table, no dominant position. Once everyone gets involved, the ideas literally begin flying across the table.

This formula, which has worked so well for the Associated Landscape

Contractors of America (ALCA) at its annual November conferences, proved again to be the heart of this year's Executive Forum held here.

Guest speaker and facilitator Sam Geist primed the approximately 225 landscape and lawn service business owners and managers with early-morning give and take. But, when the attendees, divided into 20 different discussion groups, settled around their assigned roundtables and opened up to each other, the real learning began.

Table 15 is where I found myself the first day of the two-day event that turned out to be about 70 percent networking and 30 percent educational. My companions in this particular discussion group were:

- **Bruce Moore, Sr.**, CCLP, Eastern Land Management, Stamford, CT, who served as facilitator,
- **Jason Knight**, James River Grounds Management, Inc., Glen Allen, VA, who recorded our observations,
- **Emmanuel Carrena**, O'Donnell's Landscape Services, Southlake, TX,
- **Jim Clare**, Landscape Essentials, Inc., Tyrone, GA,
- **Michael Currin**, Greenscape, Inc., Holly Springs, NC,
- **Chuy Medrano, Sr.**, CLT, CoCal Landscape, Denver,
- **Will Rogers**, CLT, Gachina Landscape Management, Menlo Park, CA, and
- **Vaughn Weedman**, Northwest Landscape Services, Woodinville, WA.

Our group was assigned the topic of increasing efficiencies within our operations. As it turned out, the topic may have been too ambitious, given that we had just over an hour to share our thoughts.

So, instead of discussing specifics, such as equipment or processes, we zeroed in on how to increase the level of communication within our companies. The feeling of the group was that if everyone within an organization has a better understanding of what it stands for and is trying to accomplish, the organization stands for



Jason Knight recorded observations from the roundtable discussion.

a better chance of succeeding.

Chuy Medrano said he believes that too often companies don't explain their goals or operations in a way that can be understood by all employees.

"About a month ago I took some of our financials line by line to some of our employees," said Medrano. "You should have seen the looks on their faces. They loved it. But I had to present the information at a level they understood."

That observation prompted Michael Currin to recommend the book "Less is More," which he said clearly sets out how to communicate a company's vision to its employees. One of his goals, he added, is

to get his company's employees "to think more like owners, to apply the ownership way of thinking."

To accomplish this, be specific, added Emmanuel Carrena. This goes, not only for employees but for customers, too. Communicate very clearly to your customers what services you will be performing, and be equally clear to your employees about how they're to be performed.

Put systems in place to measure performance and results, and this must be clearly communicated, opined Jason Knight. "We assume as managers that our workers, from account managers to field hands, are communicating our message, but that may not be the case."

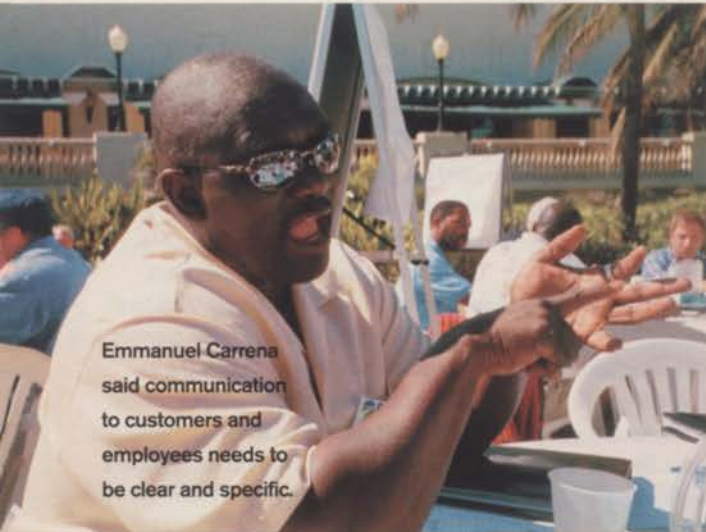
Knight typically audits about 15 percent of his company's customers each year, and would like to do more but time doesn't permit it.

Medrano, likewise, said he calls clients regularly to judge, not only how well they're being serviced by his company, but how often they hear from a company representative.

Building communication within a company can be likened to any of the other necessary systems that successful operations use to their advantage. Employees, however, sometimes don't see it that way.

"Professional people often don't feel like they need systems," said Currin. "You should expect resistance, and it's usually not at the lower levels. It might be an account manager who doesn't want to fill out a report at the end of the day, for example. But we need systems."

How do you improve the communication within a company so that you can work toward systems and measureables — involve all the key people within the company. Get the employee buy-in first, the group agreed. ■



Emmanuel Carrena said communication to customers and employees needs to be clear and specific.

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A golden retriever dog is shown in a lush green lawn, actively digging with its front paws. The dog's fur is a warm golden color, and its front legs are covered in dark soil. In the background, a white house with dark shutters and a set of steps is visible, surrounded by tall trees and well-manicured bushes. The scene is set in a bright, sunny outdoor environment.

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Circle 123

Making money isn't easy, otherwise every company would be making double-digit profits.



Here's how to boost profits

BY ED LAFLAMME

We're all well into the new year and ramping up our busy spring services, optimistic about this new season. The economy looks good, new housing starts remain strong and interest rates low. Demand for landscaping construction and maintenance is greater than ever. The question is — as good as the markets are, will you make money this year?

It ain't easy

I work with companies throughout the country, some that make money and some that struggle. Making money isn't easy, otherwise every company would be making double-digit profits. However, there are certain similarities between those companies.

One area of similarity is productivity. Some surveys done in the U.S. show that workers are only 50% productive. There are many reasons for low productivity, and most have nothing to do with the willingness of the workers to work hard. So if this is true, why do so many companies suffer from this affliction?

When you think of what causes low productivity, what comes to mind? Many think of late morning starts or stopping to get coffee before getting to the job. While this may be true, it's more of symptom of a problem than a cause. Here are a few causes:

- ▶ Low investment in education
- ▶ Focus on the result instead of the process
- ▶ Lack of focus on budgeted man-hours
- ▶ Lack of knowledge/communication

Let's face it, most companies don't educate their people on how to perform their jobs; it's usually "trial by fire." Make your company a learning organization by taking the time to educate your people on how to do their jobs.

Next, focus on the process, not just the result. The process includes every minute of the workday. Educate your staff on what's expected from the moment they begin til they "clock out" for the day. For example, insist that planning for the next day begin the day before. Include a checklist for materials, equipment and directions to the job. In the morning, leave the shop on time and go directly to the job to begin work. Make sure the workers understand their tasks and what's expected.

Third, make sure your supervisors know how long every phase of the job will take. Make sure they track man-hours by phase every day. Finally, keep your people and your customers informed as to the job status. Ask your supervisors how they could improve the job and save on man-hours.

As part of your "process evaluation," instruct your supervisors to track how many hours they spend per day waiting for materials, equipment or people. Also, make sure the crews get out on time in the morning.

Finally, I suggest every company spend 30 minutes per week on its productivity, analyzing past and future jobs. If jobs are over budget or under budget, find out why.

It takes only a slight increase in productivity to double or even triple your profit on jobs. So, are you going to make money this year? You will if you follow the steps set out above.

— The author is a consultant, speaker, author and president of Grass Roots Consulting. He can be reached at ed@grassrootsconsulting.com or 203/225-0807.

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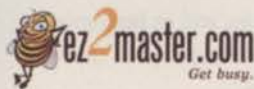
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Strategies that will increase your company's value in the eyes of a potential buyer

BY W. JAMES ORMOND

“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” This ancient and often recited phrase is packed full of meaning and truths. It can also say a lot about your business. How so? Let me explain.

Years ago, you may have started your business with the dream of being an entrepreneur, a few dollars in your pocket and tons of energy. You worked countless hours, met endless challenges, experienced many successes and failures, and now you're at the point in your career and life when you're considering selling your business. Again, think of the phrase, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” Get it? Translate the “beauty” into “worth” or “value” and it should make sense.

What's it worth?

Using the word “value” or “worth” with regard to your business can convey multiple meanings to different audiences, and almost as many methods for figuring out a company's value exist as there are reasons to do so. Lenders will analyze the liquidation value, investors are more interested in capitalized earnings value, a potential buyer will look to the value of similar companies, and an insurance company will be interested in the replacement value.

So clearly there can be many different scenarios, each having interested parties with varying degrees of motivation. So based on who you're negotiating with, your company may not be worth what you think.

“What?” you reply, totally stunned. “But I worked so hard! And look at all the jobs we've done. I have all this equipment and lots of customers.”

No one will argue that you haven't put your blood,

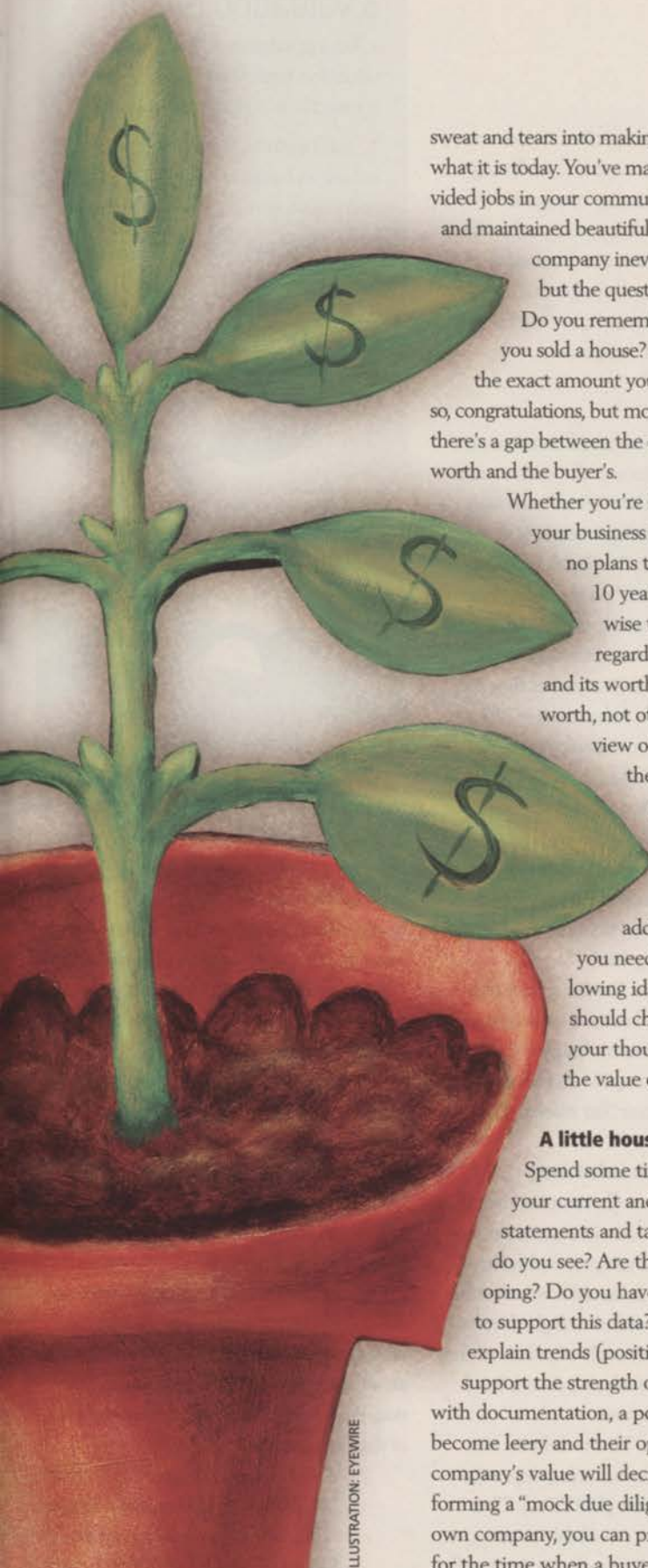


ILLUSTRATION: EYEWIRE

sweat and tears into making your company what it is today. You've made a living, provided jobs in your community and created and maintained beautiful landscapes. Your company inevitably has worth, but the question is how much? Do you remember the last time you sold a house? Did you receive the exact amount you asked for it? If so, congratulations, but more often than not there's a gap between the owner's view of worth and the buyer's.

Whether you're looking to sell your business in 2005 or have no plans to sell in the next 10 years, there are some wise things to consider regarding your business and its worth...it's actual worth, not other people's view of its worth. While there isn't sufficient print space in this edition of *Landscape Management* to address everything you need to know, the following ideas and concepts should change or enhance your thought process about the value of your business.

A little housecleaning

Spend some time analyzing your current and past financial statements and tax returns. What do you see? Are there trends developing? Do you have documentation to support this data? If you cannot explain trends (positive or negative) or support the strength of your statement with documentation, a potential buyer will become leery and their opinion of your company's value will decrease. By performing a "mock due diligence" on your own company, you can prepare yourself for the time when a buyer comes calling.

This is a great exercise for all business owners to perform on a regular basis.

Is it formalized?

You have great clients that pay on time, but do you have formal contracts with all of your customers? You have a great relationship with your vendors and you "understand" each other, but is anything written down? You've been "leasing" some space for additional storage over the past few years, but do you have a written lease? Based on the size of your company, some of these questions may sound petty and unnecessary, but the more organized and thorough your operation is, the more attractive it will be to a potential buyer. Relationships with customers and suppliers and retention of skilled employees may be crucial to the future success of your company, but so are important contracts and agreements. Get them formalized in writing.

Your crews know what to do every morning, you have your jobs lined up and your office knows what to do at all times. You can just step out of the picture tomorrow and things will run like a machine, right? Even if this is the case, you should have formal procedures in place that outline all the functions that make your business run the way it does. Think through each and every facet of your operation and look at it from the angle of a newcomer to your company. Play the "devil's advocate" with regard to the procedures you have in place. Ask why you do your ordering process, routing, billing and customer service the way you do as it's a great question to defend. If you have to defend it too much, this may be an area to change or improve upon. This exercise will most likely uncover inefficiencies in your operation that you didn't know existed. A potential buyer (aka newcomer) may spot them immediately and translate this inefficiency to the bottom line, thus lowering their opinion of your company's worth.

Just as there are several reasons to value your company as discussed above, there are many ways to determine that value.

Market valuations is a method of valuation is based on comparable transactions in the marketplace. They're considered reliable because at least two parties have placed a value on a particular concern after a long and hard negotiation. A market valuation will usually include a sales multiple, a comparison of comparable firms and a price earnings ratio. Here's a brief description of each.

► **Sales multiple.** This historically has been the most widely quoted method of valuation, but it's very important to know that the multiplier will vary from industry to industry. A standard sales multiplier would be to double the gross margin percentage of sales. For example: A company reporting 50% gross margin would use a

By performing a "mock due diligence" on your own company, you can prepare yourself for the time when a buyer comes calling.

sales multiplier of 1 times sales revenues, and a company with a 55% gross margin would use 1.1 and so forth. This method clearly favors higher margin businesses. It's also important to determine the sales period being used in the analysis, the previous 12-month sales period being the most common.

► **Price earnings ratio (P-E).** This ratio, also known as the multiple, is most commonly referred to in discussions concerning publicly traded companies. The ratio is determined by the price of the stock divided by its earnings per share. It gives an investor a good idea of how much they're paying for a company's earnings power.

► **Comparable companies.** A sales comparable can be ascertained by analyzing market activity of similar companies over a 2-3 year period. Unfortunately, only publicly traded companies are required to publish such information, so adjustments clearly are made to accommodate for private or closely held companies.

Asset valuations

Analyzing a company based on its assets doesn't take into account the future earnings potential. Therefore, it isn't the best method for an ongoing concern. You may have heard the term "book value," which is simply the "net worth" on the balance sheet calculated by subtracting the net of depreciation, amortization and total liabilities from the total assets. Companies that are involved in multiple industries are often sold at 1-1/2 to 2 times book value. Asset valuations may include:

► **Liquidation value.** This is the company's worth if the assets were sold for cash and all its debts were paid. This would also include additional costs that may be incurred to "shut down" the business (i.e. legal and accounting fees).

► **Appraised value.** Similar to real estate appraisers, there are business appraisers who will produce an economic balance sheet that would reflect both tangible and intangible assets recorded at their "fair market value."

Earnings/cash flow valuations

For companies that will continue after the sell, the following valuations are more appropriate. They analyze past and future earnings, and most financial advisors will determine value based on weighed averages. There are many such calculations that can be used in the analysis process, but I will briefly mention two.

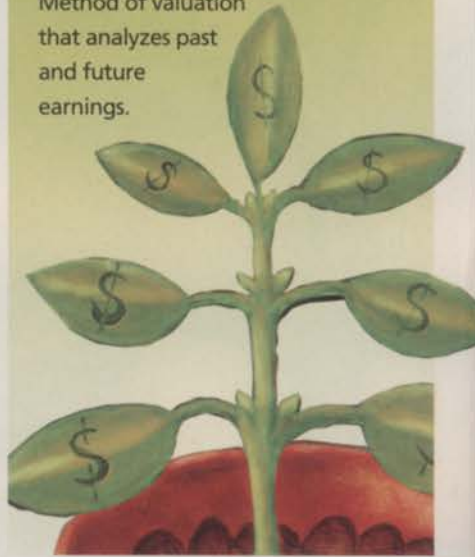
► **Free cash flow.** This is defined as earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA). This represents cash that's available to meet debt and equity obligations. Analysts will

3 valuation methods

1. Market valuation: Method of valuation based on comparable transactions in the marketplace.

2. Asset valuation: Method of valuation based on assets, not past and future earnings.

3. Earnings/cash flow valuation: Method of valuation that analyzes past and future earnings.



use this multiplied by a value multiplier to determine value. This, too, will vary from industry to industry.

► **Discounted cash flow.** This is basically to determine the present value of all future benefits. It's a combination of current assets and future financial performance. This method requires a forecast of cash flow that can be reasonably achieved.

As previously mentioned, this is just scratching the surface of information as it relates to placing a value on your company. You may be interested in just obtaining the value for estate purposes or entertaining an offer from an interested party that desires to run your business.

It goes without saying that if you're seriously considering selling, you should contact a business appraiser, an accountant and an attorney to assist you with the transaction. And remember, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." **LM**

— The author is co-owner of Barringer & Barringer Landscape Services, Charlotte, NC, and a former banker. He can be reached at 704/335-3775.

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Drug testing

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Drug and alcohol abuse in the workplace can damage or destroy what it's taken years for an owner to build

BY BARBARA MULHERN



Dick Gooding has paid the price of not having a drug and alcohol testing program in place at his small landscape design/build company sooner than he did.

Effective July of 2004, Gooding's Nursery & Landscaping in Sherrodsville, OH, was kicked out of its state trade association's workers' comp group rating program due to several costly claims. He believes were likely the result of employee drug use.

The company, now actively participating the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation Drug Free Workplace Program, hopes that a continuation of fewer and less severe workers' comp claims will enable it to again participate in a group rating program "which allows substantial savings on workers' comp premiums," Gooding says.

"We started (drug) testing in mid-summer of 2003," says Gooding, president of the landscape company that employs fewer than 50 workers. Here is the firm's claims history prior to testing: 2000, nine claims; 2001, three claims; 2002, five claims; 2003, three claims. It has had just two claims, one of which was a bee sting, after implementing drug testing.

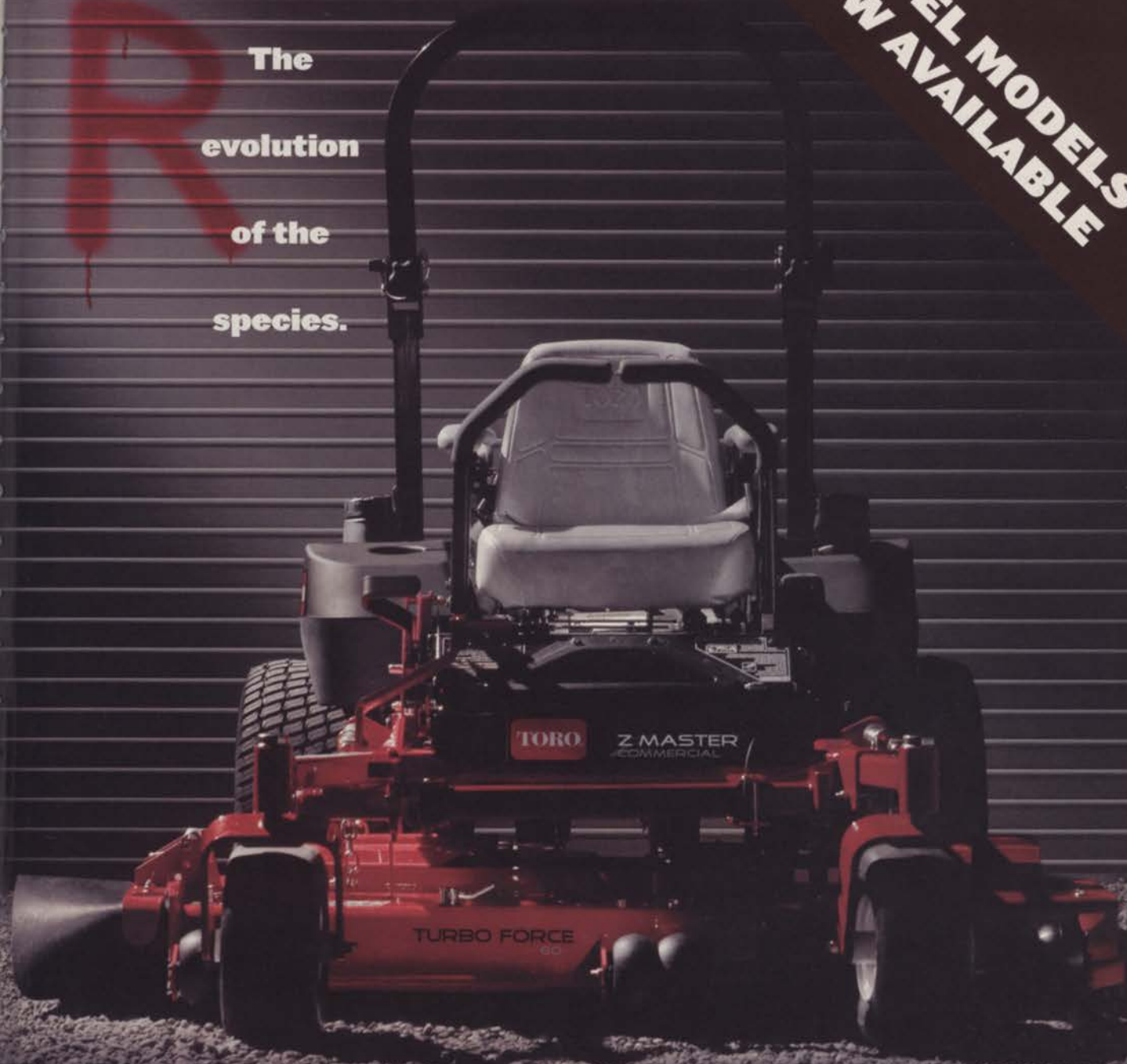
"One of the three claims in early 2003 was a severe claim that actually took us out of our group rating," he continues. "When that employee was able to return to work toward fall, he was required to take a drug test and he tested positive. If we, a relatively small employer, are having these types of problems and results, what does this mean for other employers across the United States? You can be naive and overlook things only so long."

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Count on it.

'A substance abuser generally works at about two-thirds of his productivity — so one third of the person's paycheck is wasted'

— Hub Kelsh

continued from page 38

The real cost of abuse

Drug and alcohol abuse is a costly issue for landscape contractors and other employers, in terms of economic, safety, and "human" costs, Hub Kelsh of Hub Kelsh, Inc. in Dunwoody, GA, a loss prevention consultant and investigator, says.

"From an economic standpoint, a substance abuser generally works at about two-thirds of his productivity – so one-third of the person's paycheck is being wasted," says Kelsh, a former federal drug enforcement officer. "He also causes other people to be disconnected, and they respond by anger, by slowing themselves down, grumbling and defeating the teamwork that had existed. Yet usually, these people are reluctant to blow the whistle.

How to start your program

Tom Rebel, an attorney with Fisher & Phillips LLP, Atlanta, suggests the following steps if you have not yet implemented a drug and alcohol testing program:

- Check your state law, including workers' compensation law, to take advantage of any available discounts and to ensure that proper procedures are followed.
- Adopt a formal (written) drug and alcohol policy.
- Identify and establish a relationship with a collection and/or testing company.
- Begin testing of job applicants.
- Test employees as appropriate.
- Educate employees by advising them of the policy and its benefits. Provide an implementation date 30 or 60 days later. "Most employees will welcome a drug testing program if it is presented properly," Rebel says. "A company should explain to its employees why it is adopting such a program, including explaining it is for their benefit from a safety perspective, as they will not be working alongside, or riding with, an impaired worker.

"It is also helpful if the employer has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and offers to help employees with drug or alcohol problems if they come forward voluntarily before testing positive."

— BM

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"Invariably, when we find a lot of theft in a company, it's substance abuse-related," Kelsh adds. "An individual in great debt to his drug dealer turns his back when the dealer comes in and steals materials. He tells him where the keys are to company trucks and where the safes are. There are

continued on page 42



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also occasions where employees use a company truck to transport drugs to a job site — not only their own, but also drugs for other employees.”

This, Kelsh says, becomes the employer’s issue because “in most states, when a vehicle is used in a crime, it can be seized by the federal government.”

Then there’s the equally big issue of workplace safety. “Vehicle use and increased use of mechanized equipment has become a necessity in the landscape industry, and individuals operating pieces of equipment unsafely put others in harm’s way,” Gooding says. “One vehicle accident involving a wrongful death verdict can exhaust insurance and the resources of small companies. If someone is taking drugs or

abusing alcohol, it’s just a matter of time before accidents will occur.”

How about your program?

Both Kelsh and Attorney Tom Rebel of Fisher & Phillips LLP in Atlanta strongly urge landscape contractors to have drug and alcohol testing programs in place.

“Some states (including Florida) provide a discount on workers’ compensation costs for companies that comply with their drug-free workplace laws,” Rebel says. “Studies have shown that there are fewer on-the-job injuries, less use of company health benefits, and less absenteeism in companies that have good drug and alcohol (testing) programs.”

At the very least, do pre-employment drug testing, he stresses. But before you

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'If we are having these type of problems and results, what does that mean for other employers?'
— landscape company owner Dick Gooding

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implement any drug and alcohol testing program, be sure to consult with legal counsel familiar with the laws surrounding drug testing in your state, he recommends.

Other times you may want to consider testing, he says, include: post-accident; upon "reasonable suspicion" (that an employee may be using drugs or alcohol); randomly (without any advance notice or warning); and/or after a worker returns from extended leave.

Kelsh suggests that companies also carefully measure attendance. "Be precise in documenting tardiness, absenteeism, early departures," he says. "The substance abuser will reveal himself early on."

In Ohio, for any state-funded project, "all general contractors and their respective

subcontractors (i.e., landscapers) must have an approved drug free workplace program," Gooding says. The Ohio BWC program has three different levels, all of which require four categories of testing: pre-employment and/or new hire; reasonable suspicion; post-accident; and follow-up assessment or treatment testing, he says.

"We started out at Level 1 initially. We have now moved to Level 2, which adds random drug testing of 10% of our average annual work force over the course of the program year. Level 3 requires 25%. With each level, you receive an additional percentage off (your workers' compensation premium). Ten percent off your premium for Level 1; 15 percent off for Level 2; and 20% off for Level 3," Gooding says.

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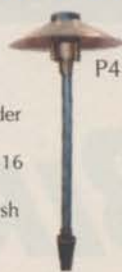
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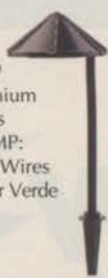
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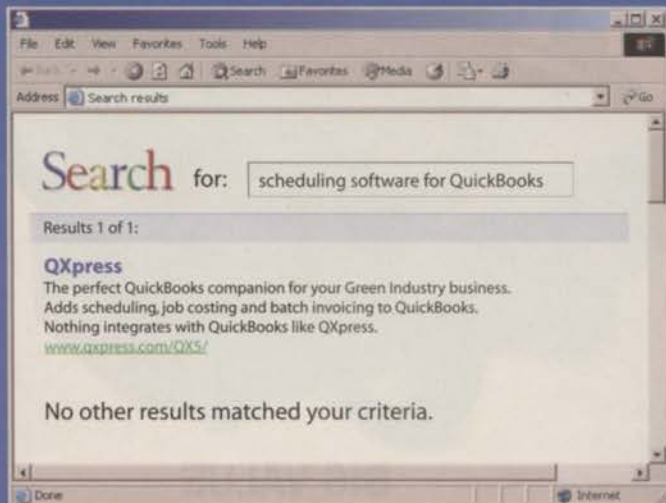
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continued from page 44

"The statistics don't lie," Gooding says. "Alcohol and drug abuse exist in our society today. A high percentage of workers' comp claims are a direct result of either alcohol or drug abuse since certain products

can stay in a person's system beyond the normal 'high' and thus impair the individual during working hours. If we can help individuals face their substance abuse problems and work with them in receiving professional help while still maintaining

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Workplace drug abuse's real cost

- More than six percent of the population over 12 years of age has used drugs within the past 30 days. Rates of use remain highest among persons ages 16-25, the age group entering the work force most rapidly.

- Drug-using employees are 2.2 times more likely to request early dismissal or time off, 2.5 times more likely to have absences of eight days or more, three times more likely to be late for work, 3.6 times more likely to be involved in a workplace accident, and five times more likely to file a workers' compensation claim.

- More than 14% of Americans employed full- and part-time report heavy drinking, which is defined as five or more drinks on five or more days in the past 30 days.

- Alcoholism causes 500 million lost workdays each year.

- A survey of callers to the national cocaine helpline revealed that 75% reported using drugs on the job, 64% admitted that drugs adversely affected their job performance, 44% sold drugs to other employees, and 18% had stolen from co-workers to support their drug habit.

— From the U.S. Department of Labor's Drug Free Workplace Advisor E-law, www.dol.gov/elaws/asp/drugfree/benefits.htm.

their job, then in the long run we have done what's right by the individual, helped their family unit, and secured and maintained a valuable human resource — the employee — for our company." **LJM**

— The author is PLANET's Safety Specialist and a freelance writer who lives in rural Belleville, WI. Contact her at bamu100@aol.com.



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It's not just the money

Landscape business leaders reveal how they drive employee loyalty, and it's not all about wages BY CHRISTINE KRATCOSKI

The pendulum swings from an employers' market to an employee's market due to recruiting challenges that are developing for various positions in different regions of the United States. Green Industry service companies must give closer attention to the retention of their employees.

Some of you invest extravagantly in your valuable employees, perhaps providing them with off-site company training or management summits in beautiful resorts. Or, by offering more competitive salaries.

Certainly, offering a competitive wage is key to recruiting and retaining good employees, but it's not the only reason why employees stay or leave an organization. The good news is that you don't have to be extravagant to generate employee loyalty. You can increase your employee retention ratio by adopting the time-tested employee retention strategies that leaders in the industry have developed. Once your company chooses a course of action, be sure to stick with the plan.

Before we get into specifics, realize that nothing is

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going to work unless you first secure employee buy-in. In other words, find out what's important to your employees. Do this before building your employee-retention strategy.

How do you start? Consider a simple employee survey offering a few different plans and work from there.

What are some of the common strategies used to keep good employees? Here is the short list: employee recognition programs, offering ESL (English as a Second

Secure employee buy-in by finding out what's important to your employees.

Language) programs on site, initiating management training programs, cross training front-line employees to increase their value, recognizing top performers at company gatherings and/or developing financial bonus incentive programs.

You can't use one or several of these strategies. These strategies benefit the company as well as the employees!

How, specifically, do some of the industry's top owners and managers secure employee loyalty?

"Treat your people with respect and dignity," says Bill Arman, president of Landscape Development, Inc./Maintenance, a 200-employee firm, part of the \$80 million Landscape Development, Inc./Construction, based in Valencia, CA. "Recognize that each person's role in the organization is an important piece of the whole."

"Listen to people's input. The people that are closest to the ground often have the best solutions and ideas. Be humble. People like working in an environment where even the leaders are regular people like them. Be grateful. Demonstrate your

appreciation to a job well done. It's not all about money."

Arman adds that employees need to see an opportunity to advance their careers. Management can help them by providing opportunities such as certifications, licensing, education or stretch assignments. "People get bored and need a change of scenery, new challenges," says Arman.

While Arman says it's vital to recognize excellent performance, they should never tolerate poor performance.

"We formulated management agreements that are performance based, rewarding success in both the short term and the long term," shares Mark Brower, owner of Merchants Landscape Services, Inc., a 200-plus-employee multi-branch company,

Why good managers leave

Why do good managers leave one company for another? Here is the list of preventable reasons I hear most often:

■ Horizontal or vertical leadership?

"Senior management is so unaware of what this new policy does to my operation. Dictating new policy instead of building a consensus with middle managers and front-line personnel."

■ Unresponsive leadership.

"I'm not being fully utilized. I'm bored. I've spoken to my manager about this many times."

■ Lack of effective communication.

"I was made promises when I was hired but over time the company didn't deliver on those promises or offer an explanation when I followed up with the hiring manager."

■ Short-term solutions sends sinking-ship message to employees.

"How can I run an efficient operation if my front-line employees' benefits are cut or the

number of laborers per account are cut back."

■ Too busy to be proactive.

"I haven't had a review or a raise or a promotion in over two years even though I have requested this to my manager."

■ Unstable leadership.

"I've had three different bosses in one yea. Too crazy."

■ Poor internal communication.

"I am here on the job with my crews in front of the client but the materials I ordered still haven't arrived. I've had it."

■ Attacks the person not the problem.

"My manager went off on me in front of my employees. I don't have to take this."

■ Limited growth opportunities, no creative job development.

"No where to promote to unless someone dies or leaves."

■ Lack of competitive compensation.

"I have friends earning more in the same position with other companies."

— CK



Companies that consistently keep valuable employees do it by educating them to a common mission and incorporating them into the total team effort.

based in Santa Ana, CA. "With these performance-based compensation packages, Merchants' managers control their own compensation. In the short term, they're compensated for successful performance in enhancement sales, new contract sales, as well as monthly profit sharing.

"In the long term, Merchants' managers are able to participate in the growth and subsequent increased value of their branches. This creates a long-term package that grows year after year. A successful Merchants' manager becomes a long-term partner with the company," explains Brower.

Rich Angelo, president and operations manager of Stay Green, Inc., a 200-employee landscape maintenance company in Valencia, CA, is convinced that employee retention is tied to a company's leaders demonstrating strong ethical values. "Employees will emulate those examples," he notes.

Peter Sortwell, President and owner of Arborwell in San Francisco, adds, "Pay them well, recognize and reward them for their contributions and listen to them." ("The East Bay Business Times" ranked Arborwell at number nine out of the 50 fastest growing private companies in the East Bay region. The company has grown 181 percent in the past three years!)

"I take my team skiing once a year," reports Tom Denker, owner of Evergreen Landscaping, Sun Valley, ID. "I think it is

important for my crews to experience this particular benefit while living and working in Sun Valley. I also try to be very responsive to each employee's career goals."

Chris Wick, CFO of Luke Brothers Landscape, Inc, a landscape maintenance and installation company with 350 employees, based in Orlando, FL, believes the key factor in retaining key employees is building a solid working relationship with their direct supervisors.

"We stress the importance of approachability at all levels of management. All employees need to feel that their contributions have value and contribute to the overall success of the company. Giving proper recognition for a job well done goes a long way in creating a sense of loyalty to the company," says Wick.

"We work hard to create a "teamwork" attitude. Our bonus structure is based on overall performance so employees are motivated to work together for favorable results. The sense of camaraderie also creates a sense of loyalty."

Even so, Wick concedes that to retain good employees in his Florida market his company has to provide a comprehensive benefits package for its managers. With laborers, the hourly wage remains king.

Companies that consistently keep valuable managers and employees do it by educating them to a common mission and incorporating them into the total team effort. They give employees recognition and respect and offer them opportunities to gain new skills and meet new challenges. Of course, they set guidelines that spell out what they expect from them, then monitor and measure their progress. Let's not downplay the importance of competitive compensation, but you will drive employee loyalty if follow the lead of these business pros. **LM**

— The author specializes in recruiting and career counseling for the landscape industry. Contact her at christine@landscapecareersearch.com.

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Respect 'customer IQ'

"Isn't that nice?" John asked as he showed me the colored pencil sketch of my proposed landscape. John knew something about customer service. His landscape business operated at full speed via word-of-mouth in its short two years of existence.

With freshly gelled hair, creased khaki shorts and white teeth that stood out against his tanned, close-shaven face, he could have starred in a commercial advertising landscape services.

Passing the buck

He offered a warranty, rattled off nomenclature and danced a good show. When I asked him about watering rates, pH and fertilization needs required once his crew left me alone with his masterpiece, he said I'd have to talk to Randy. Unaccustomed to a client with an agronomy background, he passed the buck. In that moment, his ability to make the sale hung by a thread.

He had assumed that a lady from out of state who stayed home all day was a sucker for pretty colored charts and sketches of flora. He'd met a lady with an agronomy degree and a lifetime of experience who operated a successful home-based business.

When landscape company owners implement customer service, they understand

Being sensitive to your customers' knowledge of horticulture is a sure-fire way to impress them BY C. HOPE CLARK

the minimum mandates for quality. These would include, for example, efficient phone call management, respectable warranties, uniformed staff, credible deadlines, honorable prices, professional business stationery, meticulous clean-up, behavior etiquette and the occasional gift merchandise wrapped up with a bow.

These are givens. They're business basics. Customers don't demand these, they take it for granted most are provided.

John had mastered these items but had failed to take into account the "Landscape IQ" of the customer. The service provider should match the product he delivers with the owner left behind with the maintenance. Giving personal attention to the customer's horticulture knowledge not only demonstrates a more personal interest but also helps assure fewer warranty claims.

Know your clients

Understanding the needs, wants and relationship of an owner with her yard creates a superior customer connection. When as-

sisting home or business owners with initial landscape choices, remember that in addition to the plant and the hardscape decisions, you might determine a little more about your clients.

Educate yourself with a checklist or selection survey to avoid misunderstandings and future headaches. Include personal

Never forget to ask

How many hours per week do they wish to invest in maintenance?

Will the owner or a hired service perform maintenance?

Does the owner want plants that favor or deter certain wildlife or pets?

Does the owner prefer specific varieties, types or color?

Will frequent traffic impair optimum appearance?

Does the owner desire a hands-on or hands-free grounds?

taste in color palette, pruning needs and shade desires. Offer unusual items like fruit trees, raised vegetable beds or hummingbird feeders. You can't go wrong collecting more information than you need. The inexperienced person addresses issues she never thought about, and the seasoned customer elaborates about her preferences.

Take your customer assistance one step further, and leave her with personalized follow-up instructions that will make her life easier once the job is done such as:

When you discover the client's needs, wants and how she wants to interact with her yard, you'll win.

- ▶ Seasonal watering instructions
- ▶ Timer calibration
- ▶ Pruning times and techniques
- ▶ Fertilization schedules
- ▶ Suggested annuals for beds
- ▶ Pest control
- ▶ Disease pointers
- ▶ Potential nutrition problems
- ▶ Mechanical upkeep guidelines.

Go the extra mile with follow-up and you'll not only receive more business from your customers, but you'll also hear from their friends:

- ▶ Revisit in a month, six months and a year
- ▶ Send a birthday gift on the anniversary of completion
- ▶ Offer a discount for follow-up specialized services
- ▶ Keep a website with current advice for owners about maintenance
- ▶ Feature satisfied customer testimony

And most of all, reference the surveys you collected initially and ask specific questions during follow-ups about a plant, a terrace, the color scheme or the fruit produc-

tion. Thrill your client by remembering her needs and wishes. The reward remarkably surpasses the additional effort on your part.

Treat your customer with dignity and respect by understanding her "Landscape

IQ." People buy the personal touch of customer service over bargains every time. **LM**

— The author is a freelance writer based in Phoenix, AZ. She can be hope@fundsforwriters.com.

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One high-flying job

**Florida
landscape
contractor
finds sky is
the limit
for airport
maintenance
contract**

BY JASON STAHL /
Managing Editor

Tom Jacobs no longer thinks that long pauses in conversation with his crews over the cell phone is strange or unusual...especially the ones on duty at Ft. Lauderdale International Airport. He knows they're simply waiting for an airplane to pass overhead and the deafening roar of the jet engines to quiet down enough for them to hear him again.

Challenges aplenty

Communications is one of many challenges that taking care of the airport presents, but, with a \$420,000 contract in hand, Jacobs, co-owner and operations manager of Prestige Property Management & Maintenance, Inc., believes the stress is more than worth it.

"It's more difficult than the average job because there are more variables. Because of that, I think that some companies don't even bother to bid on it," Jacobs says. "But we'd never not bid on it. I say bring it on and we'll take it all on."

That means taking on lots of people and cars. Any time Jacobs' crews perform a task, they have to also concern themselves with MOT, or "maintenance of traffic."

"If you block a lane you have to have a flagman or put cones out in a turning lane off the shoulder area," says Jacobs. "The main thing is to keep a clear flow of traffic."

continued on page 66

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T & O HERBICIDE

continued from page 64

It's all about systems

Prestige has taken care of the airport for a full year now and has a pretty good system in place. The greatest concentration of people and automobile traffic occurs between Thanksgiving and Easter. During these busy times Jacobs' crews hustle to finish the terminal area before 9 a.m.

"We try to do the 'hotspots' first, so we're not in people's way and they're not in ours," Jacobs says. "And certain terminals open at certain times, so we try to follow a pattern that allows for the most efficiency."

No one area of the sprawling property is the same as another. In the parking overflow and employee parking lot areas, there are lots of islands and high traffic. In another 50-acre park-like area, the lay of the land is more open, but there are more people standing around watching the planes come and go. "The degree of difficulty changes from area to area, and when you're bidding, you have to take that into account," Jacobs says.

From A to Z

Prestige takes care of all maintenance duties at the airport, including pest control, fertilization, irrigation, litter pickup, hedge and weed trimming and, of course, mowing. Try 100 acres of mowing. For that tough task, the company recently bought a fleet of more than 20 Ferris mowers, including 61-in. 3000ZX/3000ZF zero-turns, one 72-in. 5000Z, and 36- and 52-in. walk-behinds. Jacobs says that as a result of the wear his company puts on mowers, he has switched to a two-year fleet replacement program.

"It's not unusual for us to put an average

At a glance

Company: Prestige Property Management & Maintenance, Inc.

Location: Davie, FL

2004 gross revenue: \$2.5 million

Services: Full-service

Employees: 50

Customer mix: 100% commercial



of 1,200-1,400 hours on a mower," he says. "The reason is that we have different crews for different tasks — a hedge-trimming crew, a weed-trimming crew, a mowing

"It's not unusual for us to put an average of 1,200-1,400 hours on a mower."

— Tom Jacobs, co-owner, Prestige Maintenance

crew — so that our mowing crew is constantly going. Plus, because we're located in Florida, we're mowing year-round."

Jacobs says his crews use the 61-in. Fer-

The Ft. Lauderdale International Airport maintenance contract includes 100 acres of mowing.

ris 3000 to "cut in" a 150-acre, 2-mile long turf area after it's tractor-mowed. Prestige lost this area to another bidder but recently picked it up again, a good deal since it represents 20% of the total contract. It's relatively easy to mow compared to other areas of the airport, but that is slowly changing as more and more landscaping obstacles are added.

Downtime, Jacobs says, is enemy number one. "It creates the biggest loss because, when a machine breaks, it ruins your pattern. We try to keep each crew with the same equipment so they're familiar with it and notice any irregularities."

So far, so good for Jacobs' high-flying company and their big account. **LM**

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1



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For more information contact Wright Manufacturing at 301/360-9810 or www.wrightmfg.com / circle no. 298



2

2 Keep a cool head

The Cooling Neck Shade from Silver Eagle Outfitters is made of specially engineered, three-layer evaporative cooling fabric that works with water to offer hours of effective cooling. The cooling process is activated when water is added to the fabric. The neck shade attaches easily to the suspension system of a standard hardhat or to a ballcap. Shoulder cut-outs allow neck shade to comfortably wrap around the neck and ears for more complete cooling comfort and shade. Available in ANSI-certified high visibility yellow or desert camouflage. Machine washable.

For more information contact Silver Eagle Outfitters at 888/672-6963 or www.coolingapparel.com / circle no. 299

3



4



3 Lots of protection

Hustler's ATZ zero-turn mower features a certified 2-post ROPS with 4-post roll cage for operator security and white RC 26 wheel motors that provide more torque at lower pressures for improved slope performance. A top speed of 9 mph, 60- or 72-in. deck side-discharge/mulching deck options, and 12.2-gal. fuel capacity ensure all-day productivity. 24x12-12 Carlisle AT101 ATV bar-tread tires increase traction and performance (mounted "backwards" for improved traction while backing up hill). Twin-lever steering with automatic park brake system offer control and safety. Operators will also notice the added weight and wide stance of 59 in. for improved traction and balance.

For more information contact Hustler at 800/395-4757 or www.excelhustler.com / circle no. 300

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Bob-Cat's new Predator-Pro series of zero-turn riding mowers brings increased power and speed to the commercial cutting business. The mower's Generac overhead valve gas engines generate the highest horsepower available in a vertical shaft engine and these units feature a new 12-cc HydroGear pump. An increase of 5 hp over previous engine offerings in the Bob-Cat ZT-200 Series of zero-turn mowers means a 2-mph boost in ground speed — up to a top speed of 11 mph. The Predator-Pro ZTs are available in three models: 26-hp Generac engine with 52-in. deck, 31-hp with 61-in. deck, and 33-hp with a 72-in. deck.

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Example of shoots from Cutless Granular treated plant (left) and untreated plant (right).



SePRO Corporation Carmel, IN 46032

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COMMERCIAL POWER

Spring is near, so it's time to think about performing an annual mower tune-up. Not only does it reduce mower emissions and fuel consumption, but it also extends the engine's life. Tune-up with these simple steps:

1. Change filter — Replace pleated paper air filter elements annually. Never use compressed air to clean it as high pressure can make a hole that allows dirt to enter the engine. If equipped with a foam filter, wash the foam in warm water with liquid dish soap and squeeze dry in paper towels. If your owner's manual says to oil the foam filter, use only a sparing amount. Finally, make sure the filter element and air cleaner cover is installed correctly to seal out dirt.

2. Change the engine oil — This ensures clean oil with proper lubricants are distributed to critical engine components. Run the engine for five to 10 minutes, then drain the oil. Renew with proper SAE weight and API service category oil. Replace the oil filter if engine has one.

3. Change the spark plug — Consult the engine manual for the correct spark plug number and gap the plug to the correct setting.

4. Fuel system — If your engine has a fuel filter, replace it now with the same micron rating as the original filter. Drain old gas in the equipment and any storage cans and use new fuel that has a fuel stabilizer added.

5. Valve adjustments — If engine has Overhead Valve Configuration, adjust the valve clearances annually.

6. Inspect other engine parts — Visually inspect for loose hardware or linkage and make sure the engine is clean of debris.

7. Equipment inspection — Do belts, blades, wheels, etc. need attention? Consult the owner's manual for a preventative maintenance schedule.

8. Parts — Use Original Equipment Manufacturer parts.

9. Manuals — If you can't find your manuals, check the manufacturers' Web sites.

10. Service — If servicing your own equipment is not for you, use a servicing dealer.



By Mark Nelson,
Product Service Trainer,
Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power

From the Shop

TECHNOLOGY SMOOTH OPERATION

The single most effective thing you can do to keep your gas from gumming up is to use all of your stock every 30 days.



Gas: keep it 'fresh'

BY HARRY SMITH

Is your technician baffled by the continuing problem of gummed up carburetors? Is he finding water and dirt in the fuel? And just what is this mysterious white corrosion that seems to eat carburetor metal?

What's going on?

The causes are numerous and increasing. It all started with the removal of lead from gasoline. Lead was wonderful for engines but not for humans. The creation of federal and state agencies to regulate air and ground pollutants associated with lead in engine exhaust resulted in the formation of the EPA, the California Air Resources Board and other agencies. These agencies have been and will continue to be the primary influence on how our gasoline is formulated.

As lead was removed, the refiners found substitutes, such as alcohols and other compounds (methyl tertiary butyl ether or MTBE, for one). But each new additive has its own problems. MTBE has begun turning up in ground water, and alcohols sop up water from the atmosphere.

Once lead was removed from gasoline, the focus shifted to other air quality issues such as smog. Efforts to reduce it resulted in additional reformulation with more oxygenates, or alcohols which complicate good

housekeeping in gasoline storage. Gasoline shelf life has dropped, and now it can go "bad" in just a few months. Additionally, in most of the northern United States, summer and winter blends of gasoline are common. If you fill your storage tank with winter blend and have a warm early spring, all your gasoline powered equipment either runs raggedly or not at all.

Use it up quickly

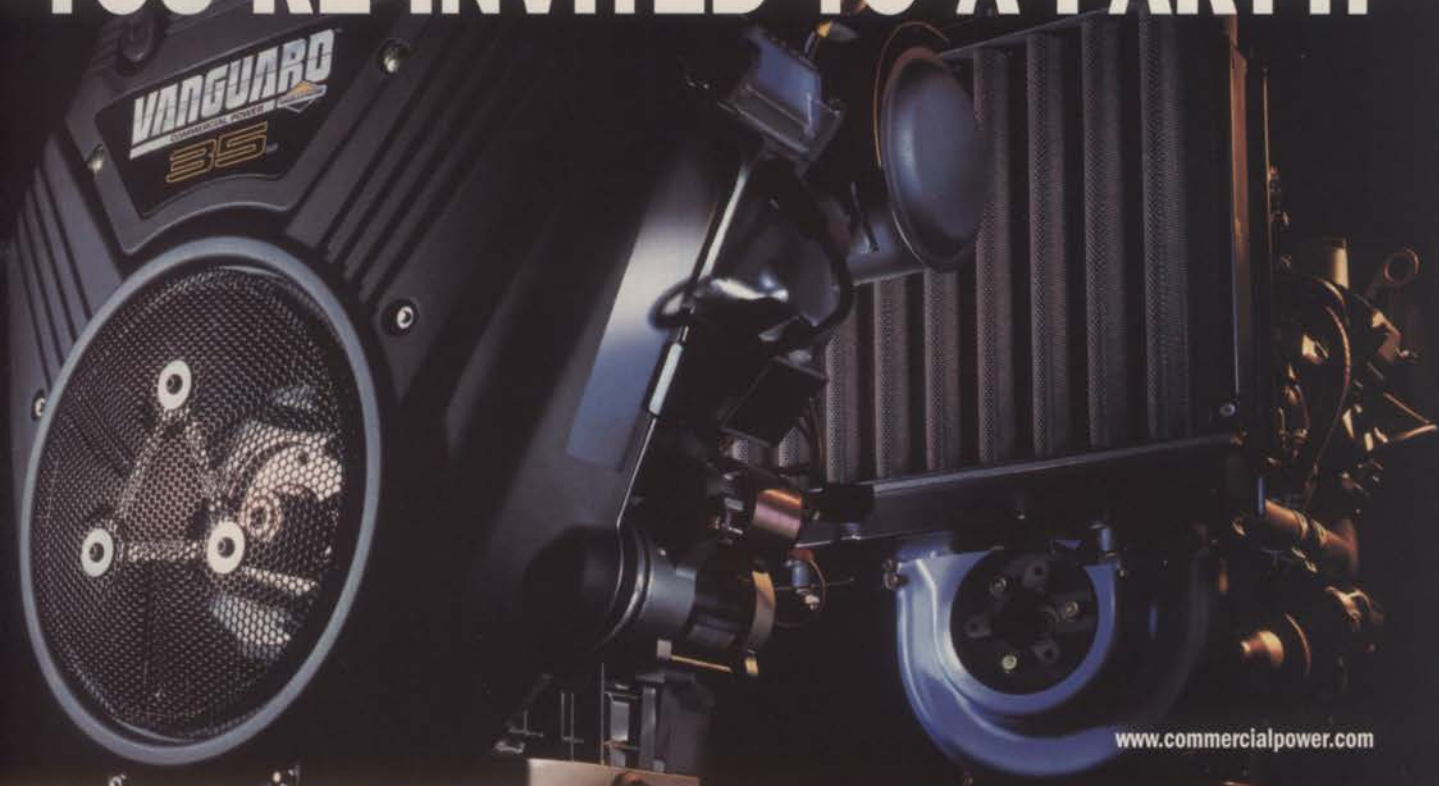
So what's the answer to this costly and aggravating dilemma? The single most effective thing you can do is use all of your gasoline stock every 30 days. But you say this isn't possible because you have leaf handling equipment or snow removal equipment that's used heavily during particular seasons. This equipment then sits idle for months. Now what? The best answer is to plan your usage to deplete your stock quickly especially as the seasons change.

The next and most effective solution is to regularly add stabilizer to your gasoline. Modern stabilizers can extend shelf life to more than a year. Stabilized gasoline is much less prone to form gum and more resistant to absorbing water.

Also, filter your gasoline, keep your storage tank clean, keep your gasoline cans clean and replace damaged or rusty cans.

— The author is turf equipment professor at Lake City Community College, Lake City, FL. Contact him at smithh@lakecitycc.edu.

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**New this month:*****Turf Chemicals***

Use this course for an excellent and thorough review for your experienced employees, or as a solid training basic for new ones. The proper application of turf chemicals has become an important factor in maintaining healthy turf. Fertilizers provide nutrients for healthy root growth, color and foliage growth. This course will help Green Industry professionals plan for lush, healthy turf.

This course covers both pesticides and fertilizers and focuses on safe and proper use and application of all those products. *Turf Chemicals* is essential for anyone working with turf chemicals so that they might use them in the safest and most effective manner possible.

This interactive course gives users good, basic information. After completion, your employees should be able to:

- Describe the properties of granular and liquid chemicals and how each is applied,

- Explain why calibration of spreaders and sprayers is important and how to calibrate each,
- Define the meaning of fertilizer formulation numbers,
- Describe factors to consider when developing a fertilization program.
- Determine when it is best to fertilize and how much to fertilize,
- Define various types of pesticide products,
- Use important safety precautions for handling pesticides,
- Know what to do in case of chemical spills or accidental contact.

Turf Chemicals is developed from PLANET (formerly ALCA) Certification study materials and has been approved by industry experts. This 1-hour course includes an introduction and outline, interactive quizzes and a variety of visual aids in understanding calculations, safe handling and proper application techniques.

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Take computer security seriously. These problems can be beat if you take action before they become unmanageable.



Defeating spam and worse

BY TYLER WHITAKER

Making sure that your computer was secure used to involve locking your office door. With Internet access available just about everywhere — office, home and on the road, you can't hide from serious security issues.

Phishing, spam, spyware, viruses and worms may be just the tip of the iceberg. Imagine a call from your largest customer informing you that your sales rep has been the source of an e-mail virus now on his network. What does that do to your company's credibility?

Last year, my home Internet connection stopped working. I checked the computer connections, Internet settings and even my broadband antenna. Finally, I called my Internet Service Provider (ISP) and found that they had shut down my connection due to a worm that had infected my computer. They then required that I solve the problem before letting me back on the system.

Know the symptoms

Knowing the symptoms can alert you to the presence of a problem. Most worms and viruses will give you some warning signs in the form of slowness and random errors on your computer. Spyware can cause unwanted popup windows. And everyone knows the inbox clogging properties of spam e-mail.

On the surface, these nuisances seem trivial and annoying. But when you start adding up the time involved in combatting these problems, you'll quickly see a drain on your company's resources. For example, 15 minutes a day spent deleting unwanted spam e-mail,

closing pesky popup windows and rebooting your computer translates into just over 7.5 days a year in lost and unproductive time. For a \$12/hour employee, that equals \$720 a year — not counting the lost revenue.

Seek protection

Protect every computer on your network with a firewall that blocks all unwanted or untrusted communications. Microsoft Windows XP has this functionality built in, and other software vendors provide additional functionality. Be aware, however, that installing these firewalls can restrict access to other computers.

Patch management is another area of concern. Each month, software vendors release software patches for everything from broken features to major security concerns. Keeping your software up-to-date can greatly decrease your chance of catching computer viruses. Microsoft Windows XP has a great automatic update service, but it doesn't help if it's not turned on.

Next, you need an anti-virus solution that scans files and e-mails in real-time on every computer. E-mail is the primary source of virus infections. Centralized anti-virus management solutions help to ensure that the virus updates are current and working on each machine in an office with multiple computers.

Spyware is a more recent development. Unsuspecting victims can lose control of their browser, their desktop, and worse — their privacy. One of the best deterrents is a browser popup blocker. Most mainstream anti-virus programs now offer spyware removal features as well.

— *The author is the Chief Technology Officer for Symbiot Business Group (www.symbiot.biz). Contact him at twhitaker@symbiot.biz.*

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The selective use of plant growth regulators offers landscape service providers some real benefits BY RON HALL / Editor-in-chief

PGRs

— why and where

Plant growth regulators (PGRs) have been around for longer than most of us have been providing grounds maintenance or lawn care. At least the older compounds have. The term PGR refers to any compound that increases or decreases plant

growth. Even so, when most of us say "PGR" we generally mean products that decrease growth. Similarly, we often refer to PGRs in reference to products that decrease turfgrass growth. That's understandable; the establishment and maintenance of turf is the common thread in almost all of our operations. These products are more correctly referred to as turfgrass growth retardants (TGRs), however.

That said, the concept of products that can slow or decrease the growth of turfgrass or the other landscape ornamentals is attractive to Green Industry service providers for many reasons. Most of these reasons are economic. But PGR use also offers safety and significant environmental benefits.

The most obvious purpose of a TGR is to reduce the frequency of mowing, as well as making treated properties easier to mow. Fewer cuts translate

into lower labor costs as well as reduced mower wear and fuel consumption. In light of concerns over the continuing availability of affordable labor, and with gasoline and diesel fuel selling at more than \$2 a gallon (and likely to go higher), these are bigger issues than they were just a few years ago.

These same economic factors apply to PGRs used on landscape ornamentals, although on a different scale. And while we're mentioning ornamentals, some PGRs can be used to eliminate messy or hazardous fruit from trees, and suppress sprout and sucker growth.

Another well-documented benefit of using PGRs in retarding plant growth is the corresponding reduction in green waste, be it turf clippings or shrub trimmings. This is an economic and an environmental issue. It takes time and labor to collect and transport

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Turf Growth Regulation Modes of Action

- **Class A:** Late gibberellic acid (GA) synthesis blockers include Primo MAXX (trinexapac-ethyl), foliar absorbed
- **Class B:** Early GA synthesis blockers, Trimit (paclobutrazol), Cutless (flurprimidol), root absorbed
- **Class C:** Mitotic inhibitors, Slo-Gro (maleic hydrazide), Embark (mefluidide), Limit (amidochlor)
- **Class D:** Herbicidal mode, Oust (sulfometuron-methyl), Roundup Pro (glyphosate), Telar (chlorsulfuron), Prograss (ethofumesate)
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RAIN BIRD

continued from page 76

green waste. Many landfills charge tipping fees, that is if they allow green waste at all.

Not to be overlooked — and the factor that's spurred sales of PGRs for golf course maintenance — it's been firmly established that newer PGRs, promote a greener, healthier, denser (albeit lower-growing)

turf that is better able to withstand environmental stresses and, to some degree, resist pests and diseases.

But, perhaps the most overlooked benefit of PGR use, especially for the commercial landscape industry, is safety. Wouldn't it be wonderful if every property you mowed and maintained was perfectly flat

and wasn't dotted with trees with low-hanging branches and other potential hazards or bounded by fences that you had to trim around? By reducing the frequency or difficulty of mowing and trimming on steep slopes or other hazardous areas, you also reduce the possibility of worker injuries.

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A natural for cemeteries

When you're a one-man gang you have to be efficient. You've got to sleep sometime, right? Jim Ragsdale sleeps well. He's been offering professional grounds maintenance for the past 30 years.

In addition to maintaining the properties of several local schools districts (including the athletic fields), Ragsdale does the chemical work — fertilization, weed control and plant growth regulation — in the St. Louis Diocese Catholic Cemeteries. He says the cemeteries contain about 600 acres of fine turf. Anybody who's ever maintained cemetery property knows the challenges — working around thousands of headstones and, in many cemeteries, an equal number of mature trees.

While Ragsdale doesn't get the "fun" of mowing and trimming around the cemeteries' headstones and trees and along the fence rows, he works closely with cemetery superintendents to make those tasks easier.

He applies plant growth regulators (PGRs) to save both time and labor. He says their use also reduces the possibility of mower or trimmer damage to headstones, some of which are historic and fragile. Some of the famous people buried in these cemeteries include General William Tecumseh Sherman of Civil War fame, playwright Tennessee Williams and Dred Scott,

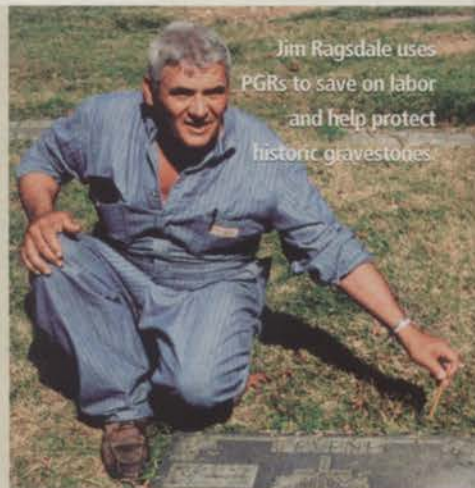
the black slave who sued for freedom in 1847 and, over a period of 10 years, took his case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, only to be denied his freedom.

"We want to keep the equipment away from the headstones and trees as much as possible," says Ragsdale. "It definitely reduces the time it takes to mow and trim. And if you reduce the amount of string trimming, you also reduce the noise, which is a problem you have burials underway."

Ragsdale uses Embark (mefluidide) for areas within the cemeteries containing primarily cool-season grasses, often the shaded areas of the cemeteries, and Primo (trinexapac ethyl) for warm-season species. St. Louis is in the center of the so-called transition zone, where neither warm- nor cool-season grasses are perfectly adapted.

"Growth regulators give you a denser turf," explains Ragsdale. "In a cemetery setting this helps prevent erosion around the upright stones. It helps stabilize the stones."

He's developed his own unique system for applying chemical turf products, including the PGRs. He uses a Kubota "front-runner" tractor, replacing its mower deck with a hydraulically operated spray boom. He can adjust the boom to apply product from 20 to 120 inches wide. The tractor is also equipped with a handgun for spot spraying, which he operates



Jim Ragsdale uses PGRs to save on labor and help protect historic gravestones.

from the tractor seat. The 30-gallon tank on the tractor holds enough material "to carry a long way" when he's banding around the stones, he says.

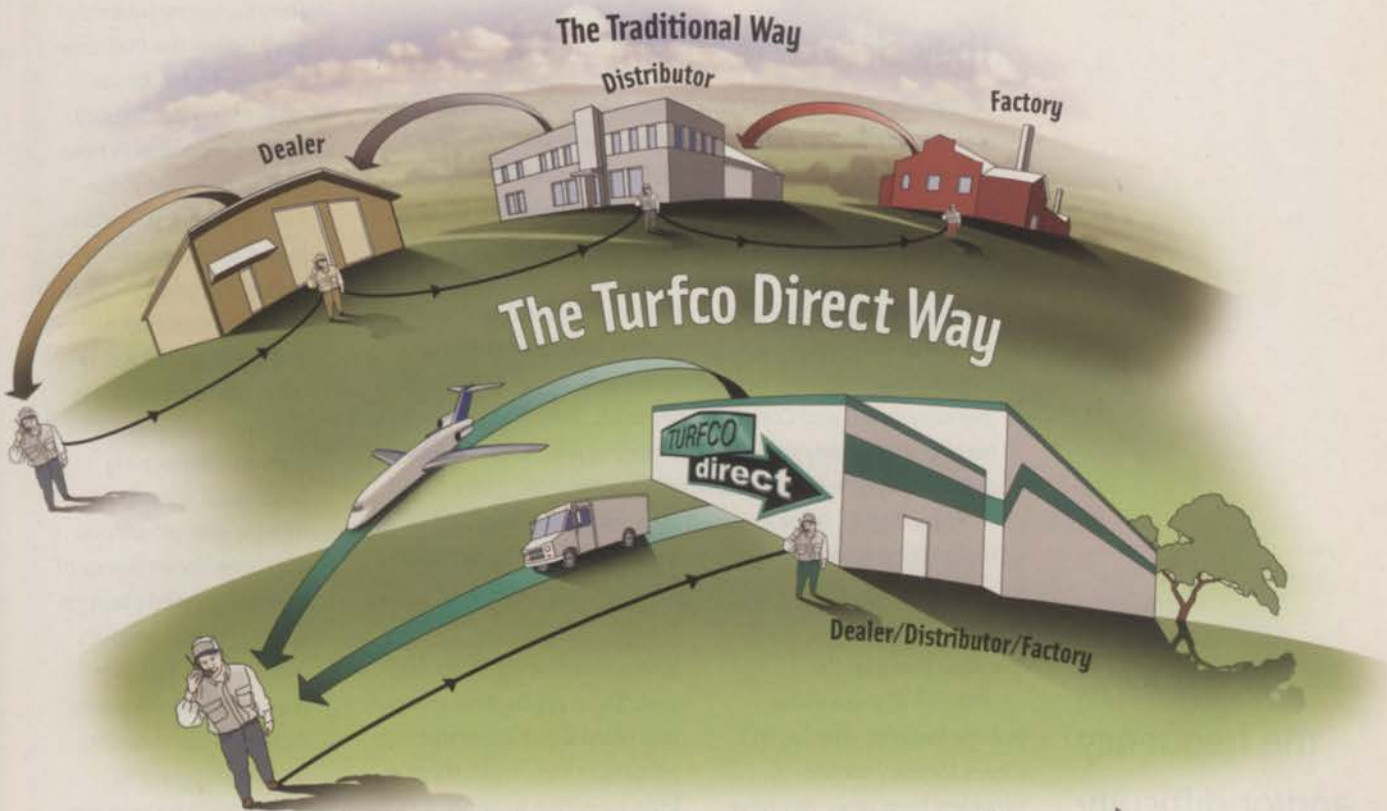
Ragsdale starts the PGR program in the spring, generally after the season's second mowing. He hopes for a period of dry weather after he puts down the product. It takes him a full eight weeks to complete a cycle within the cemeteries.

Indeed, there are probably few people in grounds maintenance as experienced in PGR use as Jim Ragsdale. He began using PGRs since the product Embark first came on the market more than 30 years ago. And, he's tackled some huge projects since, including the entire area within the security fence at St. Louis Lambert Airport.

"Overall, a PGR is a highly effective product," he says

— RH

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They **disrupt** a plant's **GA**

Gibberellic acid is a hormone responsible for cell elongation and contributes to normal growth and development. There are many GAs. Type II PGRs are gibberellin inhibitors. They interfere with gibberellic acid (GA) biosynthesis. The effects are not rapid, usually 1-2 weeks, and they last 4-8 weeks.

The effects include shortened internodes, reduction in plant vertical growth (more uniform turf surface), decreased seedhead stalk height but no effect on seedhead formation.

The root-absorbed Type II PGRs include Trimit 25C (paclobutrazol) and Cutless (fluprimsidol). They inhibit gibberellin in the early stages of the biosynthetic pathway and require rain or irrigation required for activation.

Primo MAXX (trinexapac-ethyl) is foliar absorbed and inhibits gibberellins in the late stages of biosynthetic pathway.

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With all of these indisputable benefits, why haven't Green Industry service providers been more receptive to PGR use? Or, at least to the extent that they've been embraced by golf course superintendents, the majority of whom now incorporate PGRs (in this case TGRs) into their turfgrass maintenance programs.

There are several reasons. First, the level of maintenance is more intensive on most golf courses than for commercial or residential properties. Also, golf courses, especially high-end courses, are more likely to be fairly uniform in terms of turf species. The response to TGRs varies among turf species, and lawn care contractors, more often than not, are faced with a mixed-bag of species on the properties they maintain.

But the biggest reason why commercial lawn care providers, in particular,

haven't embraced TGRs is cost. Since application companies often don't mow the properties they treat, there's little incentive to apply a product, say in spring when the grass is growing fastest, to reduce mowings and clippings.

Even so, some companies are beginning to offer TGRs as a part of their "premium" programs, targeting clients (perhaps 10% of their base) that will pay extra for the denser, greener turf that today's TGRs deliver. Others are using TGRs to "chemically edge" around tree trunks, along fence lines and along hard-to-mow edges.

Would a PGR or TGR be right for your program or for the properties you maintain?

Do an economic analysis, calculating the amount of labor you can save or, in the case of an application company, the extra income you can reasonably expect to generate with their use. Then balance that

New granular LGR

Here's another subcategory within the PGR category — the landscape growth regulator (LGR). SePro Corporation's new Cutless Granular is the newest LGR. It was introduced by the company earlier this year.

"Plants treated with Cutless Granular will require less trimming and will reduce annual labor costs of maintaining landscapes shrubs, hedges and groundcovers," says Roger Storey of SePro. Expected plant responses to the product include: reduced trimming/pruning frequency; increased plant density or compact growth habit, shoot growth suppression and a darker green foliage, says the company.

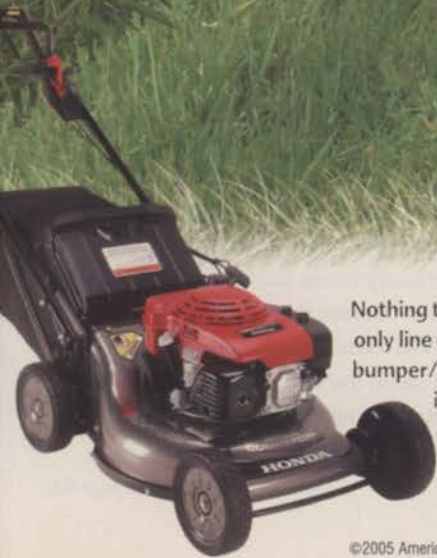
The company says that the duration of growth suppression may last 3-12 months. Consult the product label for specific recommendations.

with the application costs.

Which PGR or TGR should you use for your particular needs?

That's a decision you'll have to make after researching the various products and consulting with suppliers and extension specialists. Even then, you may want to test the products on some property behind your shop before launching into a full-blown buying decision. **LME**

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Those that do, undergo a rigorous screening process, one that literally takes years to complete. Not only do these new varieties contain desirable characteristics that set them apart, it's been determined that they can be produced in quantities that offer farmers and marketers a fair return on their labors.

Survivors: It's fair to call the proprietary turfgrasses that make it our clients' lawns just that. The following are some new or newer turfgrasses that you'll be hearing a lot more about in 2005:

Kentucky bluegrasses

"One thing I can say that's common with everything I do in bluegrass is that it's dark, dense, and disease resistant. That's our given," says Doug Brede, Ph. D., Research Director, Jacklin Seed, Post Falls, ID.

Jacklin Seed has several newer quality bluegrasses, including Beyond, Everglade, and a variety popular with sod growers, Tsunami (named several years before the December tragedy). But the one Brede has



Great new seeded turfgrasses sure to please your clients and lessen your maintenance chores BY GREG MCCONNELL

PHOTO COURTESY: BURLINGHAM SEEDS

planted in his lawn is Nu Destiny.

"It looks incredible," Brede says of his lawn, citing its high summer patch resistance, leaf rust resistance and its ability to withstand close mowing.

Nu Destiny proves a lot of people wrong, says Brede, because it's excellent for both golf courses and home lawns.

The Scotts Company, headquartered in Marysville, OH, has several quality Kentucky bluegrasses coming out in their Midnight series. However, their program is expanding with what's called the Hybrid

Field days give turf managers a look at the new varieties.

Bluegrass Series, says Wayne Horman, Director of Sales and Marketing for Seeds.

Scotts new hybrid bluegrass is called Thermal Blue. It's a heat tolerant grass with surprisingly strong shade tolerance.

"I'm not sure there is bluegrass today that will tolerate the heat that Thermal Blue can in the south," adds Horman. "It's an excellent replacement for tall fescue, and it has rhizomes."

continued on page 84

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continued from page 82

Whoa there partner, LESCO's Longhorn is another hybrid of Kentucky and Texas bluegrasses.

"While Longhorn has the cool-season properties associated with bluegrasses, what lawn care and landscape professionals will like the most about Longhorn is that it's particularly heat- and drought-tolerant for a Kentucky bluegrass variety," says Evelyn Dennis, turfseed merchant for LESCO. Dennis says the variety has tested well as far south as Atlanta and Dallas.

She predicts the new variety will replace a lot of tall fescue properties in the region of the country stretching from Dallas to Atlanta.

Turf-Seed, Inc., in Hubbard, OR., has its own "breakout" variety Kentucky bluegrass that so far carries the designation PST101-376, according to Duane Klundt, Western Marketing Manager.

"The 101-376 is a Midnight/Unique cross that has real good spring green up and excellent turf quality; and it's a little better yielder than most," explains Klundt. "We're trying to find a niche for this variety. Here we have a grass with great turf quality and is a good seed yielder."

Blue Velvet is Pickseed's new fine Kentucky bluegrass that, says says the company's Web site, is dark green, dense and fine leaved, and is "an excellent summer performer under severe summer stress."

Dynamo, the new Kentucky bluegrass from Burlingham Seeds, is being promoted as an excellent grass for sports turf because it does well in a high-maintenance, short-cut regimen. This compact America-type variety also scored well in shade trials, says the company.

Perennial ryegrasses

"We've been focusing on perennial rye's gray leaf spot resistance because of its concern in the transition zone," says Leah Brilman, Ph. D., Research Director of Seed Research of Oregon, Corvallis, OR. "But



it's (gray leaf spot) now been reported in California — in both permanent turf and in over-seeding situations."

Brilman says that SR's current perennial ryegrasses did well in the last national test for gray leaf spot resistance, but they had a new one come out last year, called Peregrine that will be "a step above." They also have another perennial ryegrass that will be

It takes years of field and laboratory testing before an improved turfgrass makes it to market.

coming out later this year, SR 4450.

Charismatic, the newer perennial ryegrass from Lebanon Turf, does very well

under medium maintenance, says the company's Murray Wingate. It also exhibits excellent wear and traffic tolerance, making it a fine grass for sports or landscape mixtures.

Indeed, most varieties of turfgrass are used in either mixtures or blends, usually mixtures. The theory is the strengths of one variety or species make up for the weaknesses in others, making a better whole.

Turf-Seed, Inc. also has a new perennial ryegrasses coming out, Quicksilver and Silver Dollar. Klundt says that Quicksilver has excellent turf quality. "Its main attribute is that it has good wear tolerance and a very dark green color." Silver Dollar's forte is its resistance to dollar spot disease.

Paragon GLR Perennial Ryegrass is one of the first fine-textured ryegrasses with resistance to gray leaf spot, adds Steve Tubbs,

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president of Turf Merchants, Inc., Tangent, OR. Paragon GLR produces a dark green, dense turf that has been carefully selected for specific resistance through natural selection of resistant clones, he adds. It's excellent for winter over-seeding or permanent turf in the Northeast, Tubbs reports.

According to Pickseed's Web site, it released Sunshine II in 2004. It's a very fast starting, but lower growing perennial rye. Sunshine II has superb summer performance, even under hot, humid conditions, says the company.

Tall fescue

Lebanon Turf points to the overall turf quality of its DaVinci turf-type tall fescue. Selected for improved disease resistance, high endophyte level and dark green color, it's tested well in both southern and northern sites.

Burlingham Seeds came out with two new turf-type tall fescues — Turbo and Firebird. The Rickreall, OR-based company says that endophyte-enhanced Turbo maintains high turf quality through the late fall, and has good disease resistance against pythium and typhula blight. Fire-

Small victory for seed farmers

LAS VEGAS — This past January, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Linda B. Riegler entered a judgment for \$14.87 million that will provide more vindication than financial relief for farmers and other creditors in the AgriBioTech Inc. (ABT) bankruptcy.

The judgment was entered against former ABT Chairman and CEO Richard P. Budd of Winston-Salem, NC, and ABT Group LLC, an entity Budd established in 1999 to loan money to Henderson, NV-based ABT.

Attorney David Bryant, with the Texas-based law firm of Diamond McCarthy Taylor Finley Bryant and Lee LLP, successfully represented the plaintiff Anthony Schnelling in the trial of the case in December. Bryant is a name partner in the Texas-based law firm of Diamond McCarthy Taylor Finley Bryant & Lee LLP.

The Court found that former CEO Budd received a preferential loan repayment of more than \$10 million in June 1999, as ABT slid deeper into financial trouble. Budd was paid in full, but ABT filed for bankruptcy in less than a year.

Even if creditors can recover the entire judgment, Oregon farmers would still likely receive no more than \$1.5 million, which they would split, reported Michael Rose in the January 31 issue of the Salem, OR, *Statesman Journal*. It's estimated that ABT's bankruptcy left hundreds of farmers in Idaho, Washington and Oregon, as well as other creditors, with more than \$60 million in unpaid debts.

ABT, beginning in the late 1990s, engineered a rollup of about 30 turfgrass and forage seed companies. As the publicly traded company acquired first one company, then another in the fragmented seed industry, the price of its stock climbed, finally reaching almost \$30 a share by mid 1998. But, in January 2000 it filed for one of the largest agricultural bankruptcies in U.S. history. The Court approved ABT's reorganization plan in 2001, appointing Schnelling to pursue claims for the benefit of creditors.

Litigation led by Diamond McCarthy against ABT's officers, directors, professionals, and consultants has resulted in aggregate settlements of more than \$18 million prior to today's ruling. Litigation reportedly continues against ABT's auditors, KPMG LLP.

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bird is touted as a lower-growing and dark-green fescue with improved resistance to brown patch.

Turf-Seed's fine North Carolina research farm continues to progress in breeding tall fescues that can handle brown patch. The company's Tar Heel II, promises great brown patch resistance along with salt tolerance.

Barenbrug is promoting LABARINTH Rhizomatous Tall Fescue (RTF). This new type of tall fescue produces rhizomes and can repair itself, making it behave like a bluegrass, the company's Web site says.

Bentgrasses

Benchmark DSR Creeping Bentgrass from Turf Merchants will be available in limited quantities in August, 2005, says Tubbs.

Lebanon Turf harvested its first crop of Declaration creeping bent this past fall. One of the primary strengths of this variety is its improved resistance to dollar spot, says Lebanon's Wingate. It joins Independence, the other new creeping bent from Lebanon Turf, and the company's new Legendary velvet bent, developed from the Rutgers University program.

Also keep an eye out for two new elite bentgrasses from Jacklin Seed — T-1 and Alpha. These two turfgrasses are essentially the same except for color.

Other seeds to watch

Pennington Seed, Inc., Madison, GA, got a lot of press at this year's Super Bowl with its attractive Princess 77 hybrid Bermuda-grass. The playing field at Alltel Stadium

was Princess 77 over-seeded with Applaud, Integra and G2 varieties of perennial ryegrasses and also Royale and Blue Ridge Kentucky blues.

"There's a lot of benefits to (Princess 77)," says Russ Nicholson, National Sales Manager. "Basically, what we've been able to do is take all of the vigor and resiliency of a seeded variety and made it like a vegetative type, the beauty of a vegetative type."

Panterra is an annual ryegrass that's marketed by Barenbrug and was released in 2003. Some call Panterra the most "dwarfish" of the annual ryes because it requires less mowing during the winter and spring, saving time and money spent on maintenance. **LM**

— *The author is a business writer who lives in Palatine, IL. Reach him at gimc90@yahoo.com.*



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Let there be light

Landscape lighting can brighten your clients' yards — and your company's profit margins

BY GREG MCCONNELL

"It's part science and part art. Landscape lighting is a wonderful field," says Michael Gallia, owner of Metamorphosis Landscaping, Milbrae, CA.

He founded the company 16 years ago, focusing on second-story decks at first. He's since expanded it into a full landscape firm and has been providing lighting services for more than a decade.

Gallia has discovered that integrating lighting services into his company has been rewarding both professionally and personally. He takes pride in seeing the smiles on his satisfied clients' faces after a job well done.

Landscape company owners thinking about providing lighting services, can pick up a few pointers from Gallia about

making sales, installing lighting and then maintaining them.

Getting started

"We just saw a need for it," says Gallia, explaining why Metamorphosis Landscaping began providing lighting services for high-end residential properties. His company is located in the San Francisco Bay area, where the homes are expensive and people have to work hard to keep them. Other than on the weekends, the people usually aren't home during the day to enjoy their landscapes, so it makes sense that they'd want them lit to enjoy at night.

Gallia says that his company has always been technologically advanced and he liked pushing the envelope with irrigation and decking, so lighting tech-

nology was no problem. However, he still studied his options very carefully.

"Truly learn about the products," he advises, adding that a good distributor is key. Back when he was exploring landscape lighting services, his distributor sat down with him and walked him through all the concepts.

"After that, all the pieces fell together and made sense."

Selling

"It's profitable," admits Gallia when asked how landscape lighting profit margins compare to the other services he provides. But, he warns against having the wrong motivations. His three keys to selling landscape lighting services are:

1. Truly be excited about lighting
2. Have a professionally shot portfolio
3. Give tours of past clients to potential clients

"If you're just trying to sell it to add to your profit margins, clients smell that a mile off," explains Gallia. "You have to truly be excited about lighting."

Gallia adds that the photos in his portfolio are taken at dusk, showing the landscape lighting in very "demure" terms. "People just love that," he says.

To prepare for the tours, Metamorphosis Landscaping goes to some of their past clients a day or two in advance to provide some free services, such as trimming the garden so it looks its best for the tour.

The tours start at 6 p.m. (dusk is best), and the clients

are transported in one or two large rented buses. The first three stops are in daylight to show irrigation and structural issues, says Gallia. Then the last five jobs are at night.

"There's no fee but we're selective," he says of the tours. "We don't let every Tom, Dick and Harry come in and steal ideas. We screen pretty good. If this tells you anything, 70% of the people who put their feet on the bus buy our services.

"If you do a better job, you'll make money and you'll get a lot of referrals by doing nothing."

Gallia adds that the average lighting job that Metamorphosis Landscaping does has 150 fixtures. Some can have upwards of 300.

Why so many? "When you try to light, you want to take a scalpel versus taking a shotgun

approach, so you're using smaller lights, more specific lights," he explains. "And what we also do, one of our trademarks is these computerized lighting controls where you have your lights and they're all on separate channels, just like you would zone an irrigation system; and you have it set for Party, Intimate Dinner, Safety, Dog Pooh is actually one of them..." Dog pooh?

"You see the dog out in his garden but not when the other lights are on," says Gallia.

"One we have set up for spas," he continues, "where it's relatively dim around the spa but bright around the property line so that it's private, so that neighbors can't spy."

Maintenance

Selling lighting is one thing, but

"If you're just trying to sell it to add to your profit margins, clients smell that a mile off. You have to truly be excited about lighting."



— Michael Gallia, Owner of Metamorphosis Landscaping

what about maintaining them?

"The (lighting) fixtures are built like a tank so you won't often be called back," says Gallia. "Occasionally there will be a problem. The maintenance gardener hits it with a weed whacker or something, but more often than not there's not much.

"Let's say for the first eight years of a fixture's life there's no worries. From eight to 10 years we're starting to see a little bit of repairs here and there. And then at about 10 to 12 years the clients usually want fresh fixtures in."

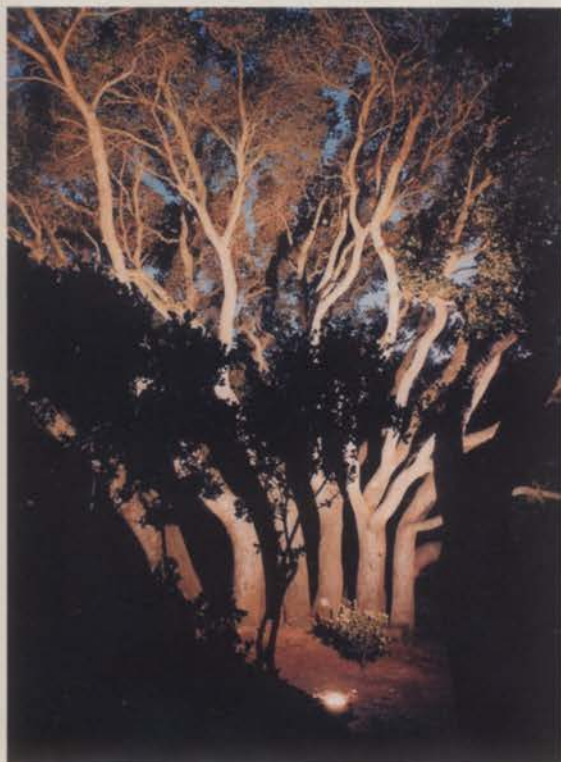
In fact, some of the very first lighting jobs that Metamorphosis Landscaping did more than a decade ago are now being updated with new lighting, notes Gallia. "Technology's moved forward, the fixtures have lived their life, but the wiring and the actual electrical are already pre-done so all you're doing is like changing bed sheets."

Gallia concludes with one final tip, "One thing I've learned, leave extra room in your transformers because once we've wired it and lit up the project — in all the years — I've never had one client that said, 'I want less lights.'" **LM**

— The author is a business writer who lives in Palatine, IL.

Reach him at

gjmc90@yahoo.com.



Properly designed and installed low-voltage lighting allows homeowners to enjoy their landscapes in the evening.





Walk-behinds

BY CURT HARLER

Buying tips

- ▶ Check that handles and bail levers are comfortable for 10-hour days.
- ▶ Be sure the mower is easy to load onto a trailer or truck.
- ▶ Does it turn and reverse conveniently?
- ▶ Does it meet CARB and noise standards?
- ▶ Seven-gauge decks are now standard and give good life.
- ▶ Check ease of reaching maintenance points.
- ▶ How many hours does it run on a fill-up?
- ▶ Does it have anti-scalp features?
- ▶ Is the dealership a good, responsive shop?
- ▶ How easy is it to adjust cutting height?

Yazoo/Kees ▲

New Kutter lineup offers the durability and productivity of a hydro walk, at a cost just over a gear-drive unit. The IZT features dual, sealed-for-life transmissions from Hydro-Gear. This eliminates hoses, oil filters, reservoirs and the cost of maintaining them. The Kutter IZT intermediate walk-behinds are available in three models, a 36-in. 15-hp unit; and a 48-in. unit in either a 15 hp or 17 hp.

For more information contact Yazoo/Kees at 877/368-8873 or www.yazookees.com / circle no. 250

Tru-Cut

The new C2151HP is a commercial-grade self-propelled 21-in. mower. All-steel, 5-speed

transmission and differential provides speeds of 1.1-4.3 mph with shift on the go. Adjust from 3/8 to 3-5/8-in. heights in eight quick-adjust settings. High-vacuum blade, cloth grass catcher, aluminum cast decking.

For more information contact Tru-Cut at 323/258-4135 or www.trupower.com / circle no. 251

Better Outdoor Products

The Quick 36 mower is designed as a modern alternative to belt-drive mowers. It features a hydrostatic transaxle along with many other features that make it more productive and easier to use. The 3-blade 36-in. deck makes the mower 18-20 inches shorter than competitive machines. Combined with its sub-300 lb.

weight, this provides a walk-behind that's more maneuverable and easier on the operator. Available in three sizes, 11.5-, 13- and 16-hp, mowers and service parts are available directly from the manufacturer.

For more information contact Better Outdoor Products at 866/290-7295 or www.betteroutdoorproducts.com / circle no. 252

continued on page 94

To Sprig or To Seed?

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Circle 145

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Exmark ▶

For 2005, the Exmark Metro 21 Commercial's drive handle was redesigned to give a flatter, more comfortable grasping surface. Rubber discs isolate the handle from engine and deck vibration. New lower drive engagement bail lever features a 50% reduction in engagement travel as well as a refined shape. Other features include a 21-inch TriVantage deck, with ability to bag, mulch or side discharge; choice of 5.5-hp Honda, or 6-hp Kawasaki engines. Three drive styles are available, including hand-push, self-propelled and self-propelled with a blade brake clutch that allows the operator to disengage the cutting blade without stopping the engine.

For more information contact Exmark at 402/223-6300 or www.exmark.com / circle no. 253

Ferris Industries

Choose a 32- or 36-in. cut version of the HydroCut. Unit is powered by a 13-hp Kawasaki V-Twin engine with electric PTO. It features a 4-gallon fuel tank and 0-5.5 mph forward/reverse ground speeds. Integrated Comfort Controls (ICC) improve productivity. Quick-adjust height-of-cut controls machine moving. All Ferris mowers carry a 2-year front-to-rear commercial warranty.

For more information contact Ferris Industries at 800/933-6175 or www.ferrisindustries.com / circle no. 254



Billy Goat

The new FM3300 is a 3-in-1 finish cut, side-discharge mulching mower. It features a heavy fabricated steel deck, three machined spindles with sealed bearings for smooth operation and maintenance-free performance. Cutting height is adjustable from 1.5-4 inches. A 5-speed transaxle with reverse gear allows the operator to match ground speed to cutting conditions. The controls are simple to operate but highly functional. An automatic parking brake is standard.

For more information contact Billy Goat at 816/524-9666 or www.billygoat.com / circle no. 255

Bunton

Hydrostatic walk-behind is available with 36- or 61-in. decks. Unit's hydrostatic drive has dual pumps and wheel motors. Choose the 15-, 17-, or 21-hp Kawasaki V-Twin engines. Smooth-tread pneumatic anti-scalp wheels are gentle on turf. A jumbo grass catcher, mulch kit and striping kit are available. Gear-drive unit also available.

For more information contact Bunton at 888/922-TURF or www.bunton.com / circle no. 256

Country Clipper

Trek-Hydro line of hydrostatic-powered walk-behind mowers feature patented stand-up deck, which positions the deck vertically for easy maintenance and under-deck access. Twin tracking levers place ground speed and "on-the-go" tracking adjustment at your

fingertips. The Trek-Hydro features a full floating deck, convenient cutting height adjustment and large fuel capacity. Gear driven, it has five forward speeds, one reverse speed. Covered by a 2-year/4-year limited warranty.

For more information contact Country Clipper at 800/344-8237 or www.countryclipper.com / circle no. 257

Encore

Premier HydroPro mowers doubled their traction control by using two V-belts to each rear drive wheel. Available in 32-, 36-, and 48-in. decks of 7-gauge steel, they feature front-to-back stabilizing Z-Bar. The 5-speed, 9-spline transmission, bolt-on rim pulleys and drum, and 6-in. brake drums are standard. Work long hours with the 6-gal. removable fuel tank.

For more information contact Encore at 800/228-4255 or www.encoreequipment.com / circle no. 258

Wright

Velke ride-on features an adjustable deck with heights from 1.75-4.50 inches. Powered by Kawasaki 15- or 17-hp recoil, or 17-hp recoil and electric-start engines, it reaches ground speeds to 7.5 mph. Features 6.4-gal. fuel tank, self-neutralizing control handles. Pro-1 or X-2 sulkies, Grass Gobbler, Grass Gobbler Turbo 10, Leaf Gobbler and mulching baffle kit are available as accessories.

For more information contact Wright at 301/360-9910 or www.wrightmfg.com / circle no. 259

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To be in the know is often a matter
of who you know.



The Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association (TOCA) helps put you in contact with those in the industry you need to know. With TOCA, it's about fostering an open exchange of information regarding communications issues in our industry. Most importantly, it's about building relationships with the leading communicators. Editors, writers, publishers, photographers, advertising professionals, industry leaders, and others. So that we're all connected. And all in the know.



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Gravely

Exclusive 5.4-in.-deep Air-Flo Deck on the Pro G Pro-Steer walk-behind can handle the toughest grass. The mower features a 34-in. cutting width. Powered by a 13-hp Kawasaki twin engine, it has a 7-mph ground speed and optional double blade kit along with a zero-maintenance XL Spindle and hardened steel blades. Runs on never-flat semi-pneumatic front tires. It has a 6.6-gal. fuel capacity.

For more information contact Gravely at 800/472-8359 or www.gravely.com / circle no. 260



John Deere

A-series Quik-Trak mowers come in three models: 19-hp, 48-in. deck 647A; 23-hp, 54-in. deck 657A; and the 23-hp, 60-in. 667A. All are powered by air-cooled, vertical shaft Kawasaki engines. Unit's compact size means it trailers and maneuvers well. Operator stands on a platform. Cut height can be adjusted from 1.5-5 inches in quarter-inch increments.

For more information contact John Deere at 800/537-8233 or www.johndeere.com / circle no. 261

Allen

No wheels — these mowers hover over the grass. Quick-change disc blade or nylon string give a clean cut. Three units available: 21-in.

width, with 0.5-2-in. cut height and 5.5-hp Honda engine; 18-in. width, with 0.5-3-in. cut height and 5.5-hp Honda; or 16-in. width, with 0.5-2.5-in. cut height and 2.5-hp Honda. Units are perfect for continuous use on inclines and steep slopes.

For more information contact Allen Seago at 772/546-9889 or www.allenseago.com / circle no. 262



Great Dane

Designed for landscaped areas, Scamper HG has a loop handle with handle-mounted, pistol-grip controls for ease of use and single lever speed control. The integrated hydrostatic transaxles have no reservoir or hoses to leak. Extra-wide wheel stance gives hillside stability. Choose models from 14-17 hp with 36- or 48-in. cutting decks.

For more information, contact Great Dane at 812/218-7100 or www.greatdane-mowers.com / circle no. 263

Howard Price

Full line of walk-behinds features gear and hydrostatic drive. Choose between the 36-in. model with 14-hp engine or the 60-in. with 20-hp Kawasaki engine. The 48-in. hydro model has a floating deck system that oscillates 9 inches from side-to-side to avoid scalping or gorging the grass.

For more information contact Howard Price at 636/532-7000 or www.howardpriceturf.com / circle no. 264

Husqvarna

Line of hydro-drive wide area mowers is available in 42-, 48- or 62-in. widths. Choose 15-, 17- or 18-hp Kawasaki V-Twin engines and look for the standard electric start and PTO on the 15- and 18-hp models. QuickLift setup makes curb-hopping easy. Cut height adjusts easily from 1.5-6 inches. Unit has 3-year warranty.

For more information contact Husqvarna at 704/597-5000 or www.husqvarna.com / circle no. 265

Cub Cadet Commercial

Soft-touch hand controls for optimum maneuverability with less user fatigue, and a Float-Fab, floating fabricated deck highlight the Cub Cadet line of walk-behinds. The updated HFF1748 offers a 17-hp Kawasaki V-Twin OHV engine and 48-inch Command Cut System deck. Hydrostatic drive, variable speed cruise bar, electric PTO that turns off and on with the flip of a switch and optional bagger make work fast. Optional 2-wheel standing sulky makes work easier.

For more information contact Cub Cadet Commercial at 877/835-7841 or www.cubcadet-commercial.com / circle no. 266

Rich Manufacturing

Go from a rider to a walker. Or convert the versatile Rich mower to a zero-radius turn — whatever suits the job. Choose between the 17 V-Twin Kawasaki or V-twin Kohler engine. Both offer 12-volt electric-start. Available attachments include snow blade, aerator, dethatcher.

For more information contact Rich at 765/436-2744 or www.convertiblemower.com / circle no. 267

Jacobsen

Z-control loop handles minimize fatigue on this 54-in. Hydro-drive walk-behind mower. Choose 15-, 17- or 21-hp Kawasaki V-Twin gas engines. This mower has true zero-turn radius capability. Mulch Baffle kit features Eliminator blades to chop grass into fine particles.

For more information contact Jacobsen at 866-522-6273 or www.jacobsen.com / circle no. 268

Honda

The Honda HRC216SXA is a commercial mower with heavy duty 2-speed transmission. Unit features a rear bagger and engine upgrade. Works with Roto-Stop blade brake clutch. Also available is the HRC216HXA version with hydrostatic transmission. All commercial decks feature extra-heavy duty steel.

For more information contact Honda at 800/426-7701 or www.honda.com / circle no. 269

National Mower

The 22-in. infield rotary striping mower features a self-propelled rear roller drive, B&S overhead valve Intek engine, cutting heights from 0.5-2.5 in., and 18.2-gal. grass bag capacity.

For more information contact National Mower at 888/907-3463 or www.national-mower.com / circle no. 270



Snapper

The Pro Hydro line of mid-sized walkers features Kawasaki OHV engines, solid frames and seven-gauge steel mower decks. Available in three sizes — 15-hp engine with 36 inch mower deck, 15-hp engine with 48-in. deck, or 17-hp engine with 52-in. deck — Pro Hydro exclusive features include comfort-loop handle steering for reduced fatigue and enhanced maneuverability, and Accutrac hydro drive adjustment for tracking control. Other features include Hydro Gear twin hydros, zero turn maneuverability, Ogura electric PTO, full floating mower decks with infinite height-of-cut, and alloy steel blades on field-serviceable spindles.

For more information contact your local Snapper dealer or visit www.snapper.com / circle no. 271

Bob-Cat ▶

Bob-Cat Classic offers choice between 36- or 48-in. side discharge, fixed-mount mowing deck. Choose 15 hp B&S ELS or a 15 hp Kohler Command Pro engine. Electric clutch with single deck drive belts, and five forward speeds plus one reverse speed. Has 13-inch turf-friendly drive tires and 9-inch maintenance-free caster wheels.

For more information, contact Bob-Cat at 888/922-8873 or www.textronurf.com / circle no. 272

Swisher

Swisher's Finishing Touch Mower is a walk-behind mower perfect for lawns from a half acre up. Designed with a 360° turning radius, it has a 42-in. deck. Unit is powered by a 9.0 HP Briggs & Stratton IC engine. Features include self-propelled, 4-speed transmission with reverse, large pneumatic tires, infinite cutting height adjustments within a 4-in. range.

For more information contact Swisher at 800/222-8183 or www.swisherinc.com / circle no. 273

Hustler

New Hustler claims the highest-hp walk-behinds on the market. They offer a 48-in. deck with 23 hp and a 54-in. deck with 25 hp. Units have H-Bar Steering for ease of operation and large tires to improve cut quality and add speed. Lifetime warranty on the leading edge of deck.

For more information contact Hustler at 800/395-4757 or www.excelhustler.com / circle no. 274

Sutech

The Stealth 33-in. commercial walk behind mower is lightweight, compact, and has a true zero turn radius. The 9-hp Kawasaki engine has recoil start. Three forward speeds move the mower at 2.4, 3.4 or 4.4 mph. Controls allow operator to leave the mower without killing the engine. Its unique operating system allows you to pull back the mower without shifting gears.

For more information contact Sutech at 888/536-8368 or www.sutechusa.com / circle no. 275



The Toro Company

Tru Trak sulky allows ride-on capability on the ProLine mid-size walk mowers. Available with 13-, 15-, 17-hp Kawasaki; or 15-hp Kohler engines. Other features include pistol grip or fatigue-reducing T-Bar control systems. Choose a gear-driven or productivity-enhancing hydraulic drive system. ProLine fixed decks come in 32-, 36- and 48-in. widths. Floating decks come in 36-, 44- and 52-in. widths.

For more information contact Toro at 612/888-8801 or www.toro.com / circle no. 276

Scag

SWZ Walk Behind features hydraulic drive system with dual pumps and wheel motors. Four-quart nylon hydraulic reservoir keeps operating temperatures low. Heavy-duty Advantage cutter decks available in 36-, 48-, 52- or 61-inch widths. Engines include 15-, 17-, 19- and 21-hp Kawasaki and 18 hp Honda. Dependable Ogura clutch features 90 lb. torque, engaging the blades quickly and easily. Adjust-A-Trac tool is conveniently mounted on the engine deck for quick and easy neutral and tracking adjustments, in the field.

For more information contact Scag at 920/387-0100 or www.scag.com / circle no. 277



Wake Forest University

2004 PGMS Grand Award Winner for University and College Grounds

Property at a glance

- Location: Winston-Salem, NC
- Grounds Supervisor: James Coffey
- Category: University and College Grounds
- Total budget: \$2,043,218
- Year site built: 1956
- Acres of turf: 138.63
- Acres of woody ornamentals: 17.63
- Acres of display beds: 3.51
- Total paved area: 87.82 acres
- Total man-hours/week: 1,500

Maintenance challenges

- ▶ On-going tree preservation program
- ▶ New construction
- ▶ Americans with Disabilities Act projects

Project checklist

- Completed in last two years
- ▶ Summer 2002: Phase #1 of quadrangle renovation
- ▶ Summer 2003: Phase #2 of quadrangle renovation

On the job

- ▶ 35 full-time staff, 13 seasonal workers, 20 licensed pesticide applicators

When Jim Coffey arrived at Wake Forest University in 1986, the grounds wasn't much to speak of. But that was fine with him. Starting with a blank canvas was a thrill for him because it allowed him to paint his own picture of what the campus should look like.

Today, visitors to Wake Forest might say the campus looks like a Monet. Coffey has been able to watch trees he planted in his first year grow into maturity, as well as observe 3.5 acres of display beds flourish.

"I tell my crews that we're simply caring for God's creation," Coffey says. "We're here to enhance what he's given us for the enjoyment of our students, faculty and staff."

Coffey has been caring for God's creation since he was a child growing up and working on his grandparents' farm. But the young man wasn't so enamored with laboring over the land. "I thought there had to be a better life," he says. He didn't realize his true calling until college, where he took a stab at psychiatry before falling in love with horticulture.



Jim Coffey (left) oversees an ongoing tree preservation program at Wake Forest.



Wake Forest provided the perfect outlet for his creative energies in that he could do everything — design, plant and maintain. But the job hasn't been without challenges. Coffey has seen construction in every one of his 19 years change the face of the landscape. He and his crews have also been busy with American with Disabilities Act (ADA) upgrades and an ongoing tree preservation program.

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 2005 winners will be named at the annual meeting of the Professional Grounds Management Society in November. For more information on the 2004 awards, contact PGMS at: 720 Light St. • Baltimore, MD 21230

• Phone: 410/223-2861. Web site:

www.pgms.org

PGMS Landscape
MANAGEMENT



"Caring for God's creation" for the enjoyment of everyone on Wake Forest's campus involves caring for 140 acres of turf and 3.5 acres of display beds.

Landscape *for* learning

Landscape is part of marketing plan for the University of Akron

BY CURT HARLER



The University of Akron is investing \$300 million in a project called "landscape for learning." Before you sell your landscaping business and move to Ohio, keep in mind that the \$300

million is not all for landscape work. The project will include new buildings, improved campus access, as well as creation of inviting, park-like open spaces.

The project is part of a huge effort to upgrade Akron U's image and to market the college to potential students.

According to Ted Curtis, AIA, NCARB, who is vice president for capital planning and facilities management at AU, even before they consider academics, students make a gut-level decision on whether they like a college within 20 minutes of first seeing the campus. A few years ago, students looking for a modern, tree-lined campus were disappointed.

Curtis came to Akron from private business in August 1998. "For 10 years, nothing was built on the campus, no landscaping was done. The college had to do something." A Master Plan had been developed, but it was suspended.

Like most metropolitan schools, AU is not in a natural, park-like setting. They inherited busy streets that cut the campus, buildings with different architectural styles, old warehouses and bars, and a scattering of gravel and blacktop parking lots. It was not an inviting place, either from an aesthetic or a social viewpoint. Students came, took classes, then went away.

The administration knew, however, that today's students demand amenities: nice buildings, student centers, green areas to meet and to study, recreational fields and buildings...in short, the landscape that Akron lacked.

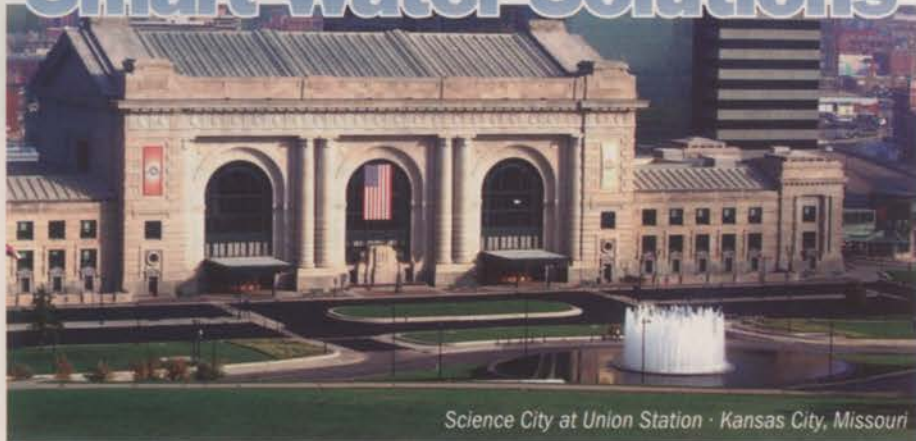
The initial plan set aside \$200 million to



1. Prior to the start of the \$300 million beautification project, students spent little time on the city campus. Now they linger along landscaped pathways. 2. Where there were roads, attractive pedestrian walkways now criss-cross Akron University.



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add six new buildings, renovate nine more, and add green space. So successful was the first phase that the project was expanded to \$300 million for nine new buildings and 14 renovations.

The creation of vast new open spaces will add a greater sense of identity, community and cohesion, Curtis says. "In total, we'll be adding 31 acres of open space, nearly doubling the existing open space. These strategically-created spaces will feature many new and abundant landscape enhancements, including the planting of 30,000 new trees that will line the clearly defined campus connections."

Work strategy

Over two dozen different contractors were used in the project. With the exception of URS Company of Cleveland, which had a couple of projects, each contractor had one building or green area to work. Except for Sasaki, all contractors were Ohio-based.

The decision whether to use contract help or the in-house staff to complete a job boiled down to the project itself.

"Where we moved a parking lot and converted it to green space, our own people took care of the job," Curtis says. Interestingly, the overhead lights were left in place in a number of these areas, allowing students to play Frisbee or gather for social purposes in the pocket parks.



3. 30,000 trees, shrubs and bushes are being planted as part of the project. **4.** The practice field features grass field and open-style fences to accentuate the green areas around campus.

5. The Carroll Street arches lead the eye to the recreation buildings at Akron U.



The grass used is an athletic mix of 60% perennial rye and 40% improved Kentucky bluegrass. "We treat all of the grass areas like an athletic field," says Rick Ricardi, assistant director of grounds and campus services. A 12-12-12 starter fertilizer was used. "For maintenance, we have an in-house fertilizer program using LESCO 32-10-10," he continues.

One big boost for the turf is that 90% of the campus is irrigated. Ricardi, who has

been with the University 20 years, says they developed an in-house irrigation specialist. "My guy works well with the contractors so we can get what we want," Ricardi says, noting that initial design



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drawings often must be tweaked to meet final requirements.

The University has a staff of 30 people to call upon for grounds work. With so much more work to be done, and the burden of on-going maintenance, one might think that the staff became overburdened. Not so.

"We found a new work attitude," Curtis says. "New things were happening and people were proud to be a part of the new things. Our people worked harder and better. They knew that they had to get each job done today because we were going to have something new to do tomorrow."

The new attitude came from the top down. Shortly after Curtis was hired away from private industry (he was a key player in Akron's signature Quaker Square development), a new University President came on board.

"The bar was raised and people responded," Curtis says. "Attitudes were very positive."

Even with part-time and student help, he acknowledges that they will need more people. This is especially true with the ad-

dition of the new IM facilities in the Buchtel Field area.

The University hired landscape architects to work the pedestrian malls, the Oval and Wolf Ledges. "Where an architect was used, they did the design and were

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Circle 152

awarded the full project to install it," he continues.

That included demolition of existing streets, installing new landscaping, adding benches and trash receptacles — all of the usual components of the job.

Roads to trees

The first step was to get the City of Akron to allow the University to close off several major roads. The campus was divided into quarters and further subdivided by Exchange Street, Carroll Street, and others.

Working with Sasaki & Associates, Wadsworth, MA, the college drew up a plan. The city approved closing the roads. The college immediately planned to turn the roads into green belts, tree-lined pedestrian walkways, intramural sports fields, small

A lovely payoff

Small gardens, study parks and other open spaces are available for naming and endowment by alumni. Take the sweet story of a couple of Akron students who, years ago, met one another in a spot just behind the present location of the Student Union. He walked her down the bricks on nearby Carroll Street and into her life.

Decades later, the husband died and the wife wanted to establish a memorial. What better idea than a study garden on the very spot where they met?

The path to the garden is lined with bricks recovered when Carroll Street became a pedestrian mall...some from the very section where the couple walked. Today's students enjoy a quiet green spot with a bench for studying (or courting, perhaps).

Naming rights to such green spaces is no small potatoes — already nine areas at Akron U have been named, at a return to the University of \$900,000.

gardens, study parks and other open spaces. Each is available for an endowment by alumni (see sidebar).

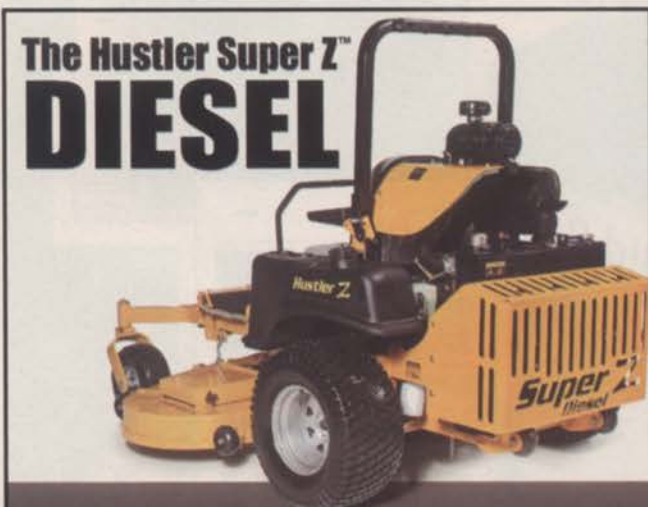
"We got rid of the gravel and asphalt parking lots and moved them to the perimeter," Curtis says. "The parking lots were turned into green space."

This fall, students returning to campus

found their parking areas on the perimeter of the campus. Once they cross one street into central campus, they are walking past trees and low shrubs in an area almost free of traffic. Bikeways are part of the plan.

Five tree species dominate, according to Ricardi. They are Red Sunset red maple,

continued on page 107



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6



7

6. Ted Curtis, vp for capital planning and facilities management, reviews Akron U's plan. 7. The campus renovation sparked a new work attitude among campus employees, says Curtis.

students. Rather, the new greenways, improved pedestrian patterns, tree plantings and homey feel are keeping students from leaving campus as soon as they can.

"If the students don't like what we've done, then we've done something wrong," Curtis concludes. **LJM**

— The author is a freelance writer based out of Strongsville, OH. He can be reached at curt@curtharler.com.

continued from page 104

Skyline locust, red and pin oak, purple ash and Cleveland select pear. "The locust is very tough," Ricardi says.

Building proceeded rapidly. By the start of the 2004-05 school year, renovations were completed for the school's largest residence facility, Bulger Hall. The building has a new suite-style design. Sisler-McFawn, Orr, Spanton Hall and Ritchie Residence Halls are next on the list.

The sports fields for students, including those in the dorms, were no minor consideration. "We were deficient in intramural and recreational areas for a campus of 24,500 students," he continues.

A 50-yard football practice field was added. The fence around the field is an open design — allowing the green area to blend from the nearby city to the center of campus.

In addition, several houses and other small buildings are targeted for purchase by the school to add more green space.

Trees are being planted to tie the campus together. 30,000 shade trees, ornamentals, bushes and shrubs are

being put in place.

"We are creating edge lines," Curtis explains. The tall shade trees are flanked by intermediate-sized ornamentals, then bushes, shrubs and foundation plantings.

Turning back time

Typically, a program like Akron U's would be completed in 10-12 years. "We did this \$300 million project in five years and came in \$3 million under budget," Curtis says proudly.

The University is starting to formulate the next phase. While nothing has been formally approved, one key component is likely to be the demolition of a building near the recreation complex and relocation of the existing tennis courts to form a large green mall near the new student union.

"We are trying to create a suburban feeling in a metropolitan setting," Curtis says.

The proof-of-concept comes in a popular misconception among returning alumni, trustees and visitors. Most think the University has increased enrollment.

"That's because they see so

many more students around campus," Curtis says. "The truth is that the students are hanging around more, sitting on benches and walls, studying together in the little gardens.

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Braun says his relationship with TruGreen LandCare has been a win-win situation for the Speedway and for him.

On the fast track

This landscape manager revved up the turf program at Chicagoland Speedway and became a winner himself BY DEBORAH CLAYTON

As soon as Steve Braun heard they were building a NASCAR racetrack in the Chicago suburb of Joliet, IL, he knew he wanted to work there. "I came in and introduced myself and let them know about my experience," says Braun, landscaping manager for Chicagoland Speedway and Route 66 Raceway since August 2001. "I really wanted this job!"

After working at five Chicago-area golf courses and

being an assistant at two others, Braun knew he had the right skills to manage the 800 acres of turf at the 1,280-acre facility. Only 10 acres of the site are irrigated—the infield area between pit road and the grandstands. "The infield is my pride and joy," beams Braun. "It's equivalent in size to 10 football fields and it's the area most fans notice when watching our races."

A group of Joliet businessmen, partnering with the Indianapolis Motor Speedway

Corp. and the International Speedway Corp., built the Chicagoland Speedway in 2001, three years after opening Route 66 Raceway, a drag strip on the site. The Speedway track, a 1.5 mile D-shaped Tri-Oval, has 75,000 grandstand seats and 32 luxury suites. In addition, fans can watch the race from the comfort of their own recreational vehicles in 800 RV spots in the infield and Speedway Ridge.

Two major races are held at the state-of-the-art facility each

year: the NASCAR NEXTEL Cup Series Tropicana 400 in mid-July and the Indy Racing League Delphi Indy 300 and ARCA RE/MAX ReadyHost-ing.com 200 races in September.

But the rest of the year also bustles with activity ranging from the Richard Petty Driving Experience and Driving 101 events to stock car and open-wheel test and practice sessions for race teams. The Route 66 drag strip gets heavily used with activities such as two NHRA Nationals, Bracket Racing, Test & Tunes and concerts from national recording artists. The dirt oval track hosts monster truck shows, demo derbies, motorcycle and several other forms of dirt racing.

"We're now the largest sporting venue in the state of Illinois," notes Braun, who has a degree in history from Chicago's Loyola University. "There's something going here

every night of the week from April through October. Most of our events have great attendance numbers and all our major racing weekends at Chicagoland Speedway have sold out each year."

Though maintenance operations are subcontracted to TruGreen LandCare, Braun oversees all operations. The Speedway supplies equipment and direction, but TruGreen provides the labor. "It's an unusual situation," says Braun. "I have a full-time crew of 10 people but they actually work for someone else. I'm the liaison between the track and TruGreen, but I'm very appreciative of the leadership of Dan Grosse, TruGreen area manager, and his crew's hard work. They are a huge asset to me and our organization."

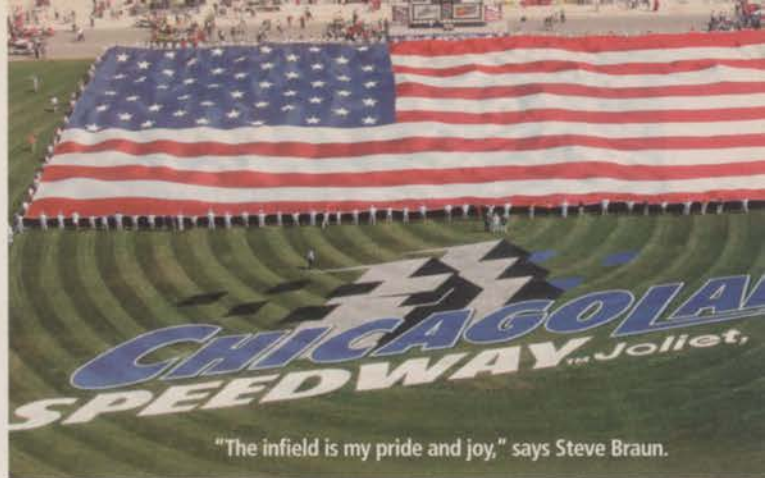
The crew handles maintenance for the majority of the track's turf, while the infield is Braun's baby. He tries to manage maintenance for the 10 acres of blue/ryegrass turf to attain optimum conditions for race weekends: mid-July and mid-September. "I like being in the spotlight and showing off my turf on national TV," adds Braun. "I love the fact that 75,000 people will see it in person and many more on television."

Braun tries to time his fertilizer and pesticide applications and mowing practices to hit the two peaks each year. He double

or triple mows with a Toro 3500-D mower, starting to work on a pattern about a month before race weekends. He also applies Proxy plant growth regulator before each race, spraying the product at 5 oz. per 1,000 square feet.

"Proxy is the most important product I use," remarks Braun. "It definitely slows down growth. The guys come to paint the logos on the grass about a week before each race. If the grass isn't growing as fast, the logos look crisper and the paint lasts longer. Plus, I can't get out there as much, so I need to control growth at that time. I really can't be out working when the cars are zipping by at 200 miles per hour!"

Working with his distributor rep, John Anderson, sales manager for Arthur Clesen, Inc., Braun develops a pesticide



"The infield is my pride and joy," says Steve Braun.

application program each year. "John plays a big role in my operation," he says. "He's the first person I'll call if I have a problem."

For disease control, Braun applies 26GT for helminthosporium leaf spot, red thread and dollar spot. Because he has bluegrass turf, his main disease problem is leaf spot, he says.

"My grass isn't under a lot of stress since it doesn't have to be cut real short," adds Braun, who keeps his turf mowed at 2-1/2 inches. "Disease isn't a major factor, like on a golf course green, but I still have problems with several

of them. I used 26GT for dollar spot on fairways when I worked on golf courses and found that it provides solid preventive disease control. I like it because it controls a number of diseases at once. It definitely works well."

In addition, Braun uses Merit insecticide for grub control. The track sits on farmland formerly planted to soybeans. "We're the only wet spot for miles around and it seems that every Japanese beetle in the state of Illinois lives right nearby," says Braun. "If there are that many beetles, there must be grubs. I use Merit on a preventive basis and it works great."

Twice a year, about a week before each race, Braun applies a tank mix of Proxy, 26GT, Merit and liquid fertilizer plus iron. The program works very well for him. He enjoys getting the "Wow" effect of seeing his turf on television during race weeks.

"We seem to be on a good routine now," says Braun. "I've really kind of created my position as we've moved along. It's my hope that management now trusts that I know what I'm doing as things have improved since I first started. It just keeps getting better each year." **LM**

— The author is with the Tierney Agency. She can be contacted at dclayton@tierneyagency.com.



Steve Braun became landscaping manager for Chicagoland Speedway and Route 66 Raceway in August 2001, soon after the facility opened.

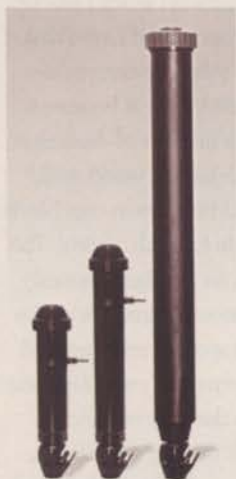
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age while saving money through maximizing water efficiency. In addition to saving water, Rain Bird's 12-in. Xeri-Pop, which is also available in 4- and 6-in. pop-up heights, provides a convenient and simple way to irrigate gardens and shrubs and saves time. Using a flexible, 1/4-in. distribution

tube, the 12-in. Xeri-Pop spray head can be easily installed virtually anywhere. By simply digging a hole for spray head placement, contractors can install or relocate spray heads based on changing needs without redirecting water lines. This makes the product ideal for watering annual flower beds.

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Go mow

The Encore X-treme, a new "serious red" mower with more horsepower and bigger tires in a 52-in. deck size, is rolling



off the trucks in time for the 2005 mowing season. Designed for power and versatility, it features a 23-hp air-cooled Kawasaki engine and can mow at speeds of up to 10 mph. The cutting height adjusts from 1 to 4 in. with a convenient foot pedal lift for easy changing. Other features like a height of cut indicator and auto deck lock make this a lawn care professional's dream machine. Creature comforts like a high-back cushioned seat, arm rests and responsive controls won't leave the operator worn out at the end of the day. Big 24-in. rear tires also define the X-treme, with heavy-duty larger wheel motors for maximum performance and traction on all surfaces and inclines. New in the X-treme and all the mowers in the Encore Z-rider series are positive locking drum-style brakes with a gentle hand lever brake activation.

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coverage with minimal setup time. The CM101 operates directly off of the horizontal grinder's hydraulic system, so there's no need for an additional power source on the work site.

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Fluff it up

Grassroots Technology introduces the MulchPRO Power Rake attachment for commercial grade straight shaft string trimmers. MulchPRO fluffs up and rejuvenates faded and compressed mulch to bring back the original "new" look. The standard size MulchPRO tills a path about 14 in. wide. Optional short extensions are available for working in tightly planted flowerbeds, as are long extensions for use in larger open areas. MulchPRO is up to 75%

faster than fluffing mulch by hand, and its heavy-duty design allows it to quickly cultivate dead spots in turf and prepares the ground for sod or seeding in seconds.

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Dress it up

R & R Power Turf's new self-propelled Power Top Dresser allows lawn care professionals and business operators to top dress lawns more easily and profitably than ever before. The Power Top Dresser's capacity is greater than traditional push-type spreaders. A 12.9-cu.-ft. hopper means fewer re-filling stops. This increased capacity reduces the amount of time on the lawn, thus lowering labor expense. It's narrow enough to navigate traditional fence gates comfortably. Easy maneuverability also helps reduce operator fatigue and the potential for worker injury. An optional front mount seed attachment allows seeding while topdressing — two operations in a single pass! Measuring just 34 in. high and 40 in. long, it fits easily into a standard pickup truck bed, while leaving plenty of room for additional equipment and product.

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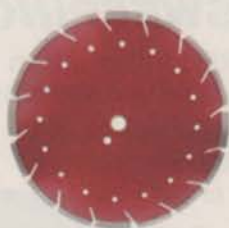
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On track

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Columbia ParCar Corp.'s new Summit Utility Vehicle (SUV) features an automotive-style roof; safety glass windshield; head, tail and stop lights; tubular steel front bumper; rear steel bumper; adjustable, automotive-style, fabric-covered, individual seats with folding armrests; automotive suspension; digital battery discharge indicator; horn; and black painted steel diamond plate rear deck. The SUV is a complement to Columbia's expanding Neighborhood Electric Vehicle (NEV) line, directed towards military installations, colleges, universities and other large government and non-government facilities and campuses where both on-road and off-road use is required. The SUV-NEV package makes the Summit street legal on roads with posted speed limits up to 35 mph in many states. The NEV package includes driver and passenger side-view mirrors, high-low speed switch, turn signals, emergency flashers, license plate light, license plate mount, retractable seat belts (2 sets), reflectors and back-up lamps.

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Fall for this kit

Adding the look and sound of a waterfall to an above-ground or in-ground pond is easy and affordable with the new Beckett waterfall kit. The kit comes complete with all of the water gardening components needed to create a 16-in.-wide flowing waterfall. It's perfect for landscape contractors who want to provide a stunning waterfall addition to their pond project



without spending a great deal of time and effort. The kit includes a pump, waterfall weir, filter foam, corrugated tubing, a mesh bag for bio-media and a 6-ft. by 5-ft. PVC liner.

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Gandy Company is now offering a 20-in. self-propelled Slice n' Seed walk-behind overseeder for repairing or re-establishing grass in worn areas or establishing new grass varieties. The walk-behind model complements Gandy's 48-in. 3-pt. hitch overseeder. The new design reduces operator fatigue. The Slice n' Seed features an 8-hp Honda engine with centrifugal clutch, capable of seeding 22,000 sq. ft. per hour. Seeding width is 20 in., with 9-in. heat-treated slicing blades on 2-in. centers. The seed box features Gandy's precision-mated stainless steel bottom and slide with internal rotor driven by front-wheel drive. The .83 cu. ft. seed box can be ordered with traditional 10-in. disks to

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them perfect for a variety of jobs. Other features include a 24-hp Briggs & Stratton Intek OHV engine, 8-position cutting height range from 1.5 to 5 in., and dual 2.0-gal. fuel tanks.

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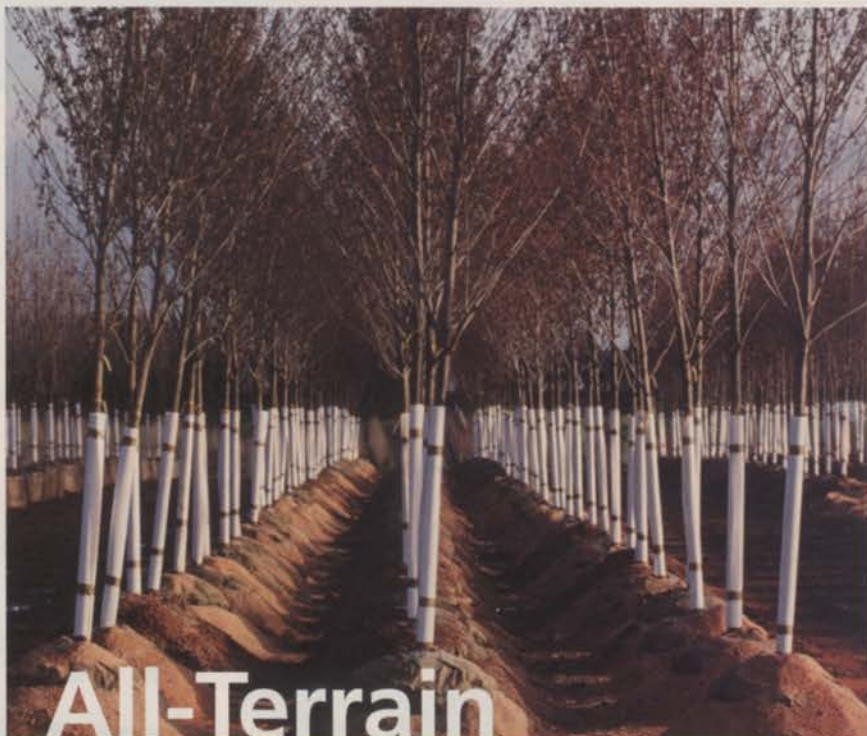
Wright Mfg. has kept all of the features that made its Velke mowers great and added a popular new feature — traditional pistol grip controls. And the Velke is now available with a new, compact 32-in. deck in addition to the 36-, 48- and 52-in. sizes. Like the original model, the new Velke mower can be operated as a walk-behind for tight spaces, or it can be paired with Wright's Velke fold-away sulky for ride-behind convenience. The Velke is more

compact than the competition, yet it has the largest drive tires of any fixed-deck walk behind mower in the industry. A simpler hydraulic control system with fewer



components increases the mower's reliability.

For more information contact Wright at 301/360-9810 or www.wrightmfg.com / circle no. 292



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Circle 155

Products

Dump it

Standard Hamilton Company introduces Dump-Pro, a dump insert for pick-up trucks. This new lightweight (under 400 lbs.) patented unit enables a user to go from pick-up to dump truck in just minutes using the Quick Change-Out option. The unit's dump body is constructed of industrial weight polyethylene and the drive system requires no expensive hydraulics to operate. The award-winning WarnWorks winch provides the lifting and dumping power. Unlike other dump units, even a half-ton pick-up can maximize its carrying and dumping capacity due to Dump-Pro's lightweight design. With an amazing 60-degree dumping angle, everything that goes in...comes out. When the job is done,



simply release the clamping system, disconnect the power, remove one hitch bolt and slide the unit out to get your pick-up truck back for other uses.

For more information contact Standard Hamilton Co. at 866/438-6777 or www.dump-pro.com / circle no. 293

Shred to pieces

The Echo ES-230 Shred 'N' Vac offers three essential functions – mulching, vacuuming and blowing – in one hand-held unit. It features the 22.8 cc Power Boost Tornado™ engine, which delivers up to 20 percent more torque than the 21.2 cc engine standard on all Shred 'N' Vacs. The ES-230 features a four-blade shredding mechanism, enabling it to reduce the volume of debris by a ratio of 12:1. The ES-230 uses a 35-in. intake tube for easy, no-stoop clean-up and features anti-vibration controls, such as padded rear and top handles, for long-term comfort. ES-230 comes complete with a two-bushel capacity bag for debris storage. When used as a hand-held blower, it generates 345 cfm and 155 mph of air speed at the pipe.

For more information, contact ECHO at 800/432-3246 or www.echo-usa.com / circle no. 294




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For more information contact Sarlo at 800/749-5296 or www.weedboss.com / circle no. 295

Light load

Mantis offers four tiller models: Mantis Original 2-cycle tiller, Mantis FastStart, Mantis electric tiller and Mantis Honda-powered tiller. The Mantis Original 2-cycle tiller weighs 20 lbs. and

is easy to maneuver. The FastStart model has a ratchet and spring, so that the recoil cord is easier to pull and the short powerful burst in the release starts the engine more quickly. Weighing 21 lbs., the electric tiller has a quiet yet powerful 120-volt heavy-duty electric motor that is suitable for noise-sensitive areas. The Mantis Honda-powered tiller features a 4-cycle Honda engine. No fuel mixing is required for this tiller.

For more information contact Little Wonder at 877/596-6337 or www.littlewonder.com / circle no. 296

Follow the line

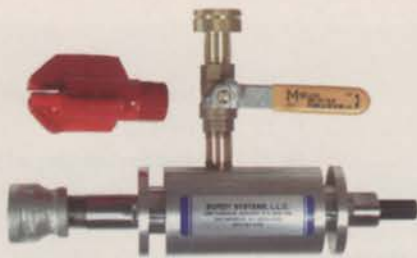
Toro's Line Pro 1200 is a walk-behind line painter that easily lines sports fields and other areas. The self-propelled Line Pro 1200 has a three-speed transmission. First and second gears are used during painting. The operator will know exactly how much paint is distrib-



uted, according to the speed and flow. The third gear is for transport. The floating spray head placement and locking castor wheel assures a consistent straight line. The castor wheel unlocks to rotate freely allowing easy maneuvering for painting arcs and circles.

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RESOURCES

INDUSTRY TRENDS BY THE NUMBERS

HAND-HELD SALES SOFT IN '05

Sales of hand-held gasoline-powered trimmers and chain saws should increase slightly in 2005 over 2004. That's the early-season prediction from the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI).

The Arlington, VA-based, trade association expects trimmers and chain saws to show a 2.2% sales increase during the year, while sales of hand-held blowers and back-pack blowers



should show a slight dip over the same period.

OPEI says that several factors are likely to dampen the demand for some hand-held, gasoline-powered equipment, including high oil prices, rising interest rates and an expected slow down in new home sales.



THE BUYING DECISION

What most influences homeowners in their purchasing decision when it comes to selecting a professional service provider? Here's what a Harris Survey of homeowners, commissioned in 2004 by ALCA (now PLANET) revealed:

Referral from family member or friend	...55%
Advertising other than phone book	...22%
Phone book (Yellow Pages)	...22%
Area professional groups	...12%
Internet	...8%
I wait for a pro to contact me	...5%
Other	...12%
Not sure	...16%

SOURCE: ALCA'S REPORT ON LANDSCAPE INDUSTRY GROWTH

TOP 10 CONSUMER GRIPES



- 1 | Home improvements, bad workmanship, not living up to contracts.
- 2 | Automobile sales of new and used cars.
- 3 | Automobile repairs.
- 4 | Credit, excessive interest and fees.
- 5 | Telecommunications, disputes about contracts, undisclosed charges.
- 6 | Collections and billing, unscrupulous debt collection tactics, inaccurate records.
- 7 | Identity theft, deceptive practices, using phony e-mails and Web sites.
- 8 | Internet-related issues, e-commerce and scams.
- 9 | Major purchases of household goods, defective goods, dishonored warranties.
- 10 | Telemarketing, deceptive advertising, sales, and promotions.

SOURCE: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSUMER AGENCY ADMINISTRATORS AND THE CONSUMER FEDERATION OF AMERICA

U.S. BUILDING MAINTENANCE SERVICE REVENUES (BILLION DOLLARS)

Item	1998	2003	2008
Landscaping	26.2	40.2	47.5
Cleaning	28.7	34.7	42.8
Security	16.5	24.2	31.6
Other	11.3	14.2	16.7
Total	82.6	113.5	138.5

SOURCE: THE FREEDONIA GROUP, INC. (WWW.FREEDONIAGROUP.COM)

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT (ISSN 0894-1254) is published monthly by Advanstar Communications, Inc., 131 W. First St., Duluth, MN 55802-2065. **Subscription rates:** one year, \$46, two years \$67 in the United States & Possessions; \$76 for one year, \$113 for two years in Canada and Mexico; all other countries \$148 for one year, \$220 for two years. For airmail delivery, include an additional \$70 per order annually. Single copies (pre-paid only): \$8 in the United States; \$10 in Canada and Mexico; \$15 all other countries. Back issues, if available: \$16 in the U.S.; \$20 in Canada and Mexico; \$30 all other countries. Add \$6.50 per order for shipping and handling. **Periodicals postage paid** at Duluth, MN 55806 and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Please send address changes to Landscape Management, P.O. Box 6198, Duluth, MN 55806-6198. Canadian G.S.T. number: R-124213133RT001. Publications Mail Agreement Number 40017597. Printed in the U.S.A.



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