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## »Overheard

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## Editorial staff

Editor in Chief RON HALL / 216/706-3739 / rhall@questex.com  
 Managing Editor DANIEL G. JACOBS / 216/706-3754 / djacobs@questex.com  
 Associate Editor MIKE SEUFFERT / 216/706-3764 / mseuffert@questex.com  
 Senior Science Editor KARL DANNEBERGER, PH.D. / danneberger1@osu.edu  
 Art Director CARRIE PARKHILL / 216/706-3780 / cparkhill@questex.com

## Reader advisory panel

DEBBY COLE Greater Texas Landscapes / Austin, TX  
 WAYNE VOLZ Wayne's Lawn Service, Inc. / Louisville, KY  
 JOHN GACHINA Gachina Landscape Management / Menlo Park, CA  
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 JACK ROBERTSON Jack Robertson Lawn Care / Springfield, IL  
 DR. BARRY TROUTMAN ValleyCrest Companies / Sanford, FL  
 BRIAN VINCHESI Irrigation Consulting / Pepperell, MA

## Business staff

Group Publisher KEVIN STOLTMAN / 216/706-3740 / kstoltman@questex.com  
 Admin. Coordinator PETRA TURKO / 216/706-3768 / pturko@questex.com  
 Production Manager JILL HOOD / 218/279-8837 / jhood@questex.com  
 Production Director RHONDA SANDE / 218/279-8821 / rsande@questex.com  
 Audience Development Manager ANTOINETTE SANCHEZ-PERKINS / 216/706-3750 / asanchez-perkins@questex.com  
 Assistant Audience Development Manager CAROL HATCHER / 216/706-3785 / chatcher@questex.com

## Advertising staff

Cleveland Headquarters 600 Superior Ave. E., Ste. 1100, Cleveland, OH 44114  
 Associate Publisher PATRICK ROBERTS / 216/706-3736 Fax: 216/706-3712 / proberts@questex.com  
 Regional Sales Manager DAVE HUISMAN / 732/493-4951 Fax: 732/493-4951 / dhuisman@questex.com  
 National Account Manager GERRY BOGDON / 407/302-2445 Fax: 407/322-1431 / gbgodon@questex.com  
 Account Manager KENDRA KOVALYCSIK / 216/706-3763 Fax: 216/706-3712 / kkovaly@questex.com  
 Account Manager LESLIE MONTGOMERY / 216/706-3756 Fax: 216/706-3712 / lmontgomery@questex.com  
 Account Executive ANNETTE MCCOY / 216/706-3746 Fax: 216/706-3712 / amccoy@questex.com  
 Account Executive, Classifieds KELLI HARSANY / 216/706-3767 Fax: 216/706-3712 / kharsany@questex.com

## Marketing/magazine services

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A photograph of a Case backhoe loader, model CC36B, with a ZTS (Zero Tail Swing) configuration. The machine is orange and black, positioned in a narrow workspace between a concrete wall and a dirt area. The backhoe's boom and bucket are extended towards the wall. A worker in a white shirt and orange safety vest is visible in the operator's cab. The sky is blue with light clouds.

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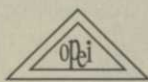
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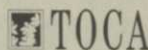
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## Needed — youth's energy

BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

**T**his month's cover article focuses on innovative programs to bring talented young people into our fold. Our coverage is long overdue. We hope it inspires you to take a similar interest in bringing fresh young talent into our industry.

There seems to be a feeling by many within the Green Industry that high school students aren't aware of its many career opportunities. Or not enough of them are aware anyway which prompts the question — how many are enough?

The only answer that we consistently hear is "more." Owners tell us that the lack of sufficient numbers of sharp, responsible managers, including entry-level managers, is limiting their growth.

From there discussions revolve around the need to work with our local schools and vocational training programs, perhaps through guidance counselors or FFA advisors, to enlighten young people to our role in beautifying properties, adding enjoyment to people's lifestyles and improving the environment.

### Opportunity aplenty

We know that the Green Industry offers energetic young people fine career opportunities, including the chance for steady and long-term employment, not to mention the very real likelihood of many of them becoming owners and entrepreneurs. But how many of them know this?

Indications point to continued growth for the Green Industry, not only in terms of the numbers of customers and revenues, but in a growing diversification of services, too. Who knows what additional

services we will be offering property owners or society, in general? No question that we will be expected to deliver and take a more visible role in improving the environment. More erosion control. Property remediation. Water and, perhaps even, energy conservation. We and the next generation of industry owners and managers will have to be ready.

### Imagine the possibilities

Let's use our imaginations to keep discovering and delivering new services for clients and our society. The possibilities are endless. We only have to look at the incredible range of services that we now deliver to see how far we've come and as a promise of how much more we can do.

Indeed, how many of us 25 years ago imagined companies growing to five, 10 or 15 million dollars in annual revenues by offering property management services — primarily mowing and trimming?

How many of us envisioned the huge and more recent consumer move to "outdoor living" and all that implies?

The fact is we're going to grow in both importance to society and in terms of size and services.

We will need the imagination and energy of talented young people to continue to make it happen.

Contact Ron at 216/  
706-3739 or e-mail at  
rhall@questex.com

We know the Green Industry offers young people fine career opportunities.





Mine your data to determine whom to target and where to place your emphasis for profitable growth.



## Base your moves on facts

BY BRUCE WILSON

**M**ost companies grow, but not all grow profitably because not everybody takes advantage of leads they get from referrals and elsewhere in the same way. While all companies process leads, they can become more profitable if they develop and use more fact-based decision making to build growth, in particular, profitable growth.

By "fact-based decision making," I'm referring to using data to make decisions. For instance, many companies get business through a combination of word-of-mouth, cold calling, advertising and joining organizations to network and develop business relationships that lead to new business. However, most companies do not have or use a database to track the source of their new business. They believe they know and will tell you that one or the other is the best source, but do they really?

### Don't trust your gut

For instance, I own a company that gets its new business through referrals, direct mail, and advertising in a local money mailer. When I reflected back on the year, my feeling and that of my manager was that the money mailer, which we had tried for six months, produced a lot of small nuisance jobs or opportunities. We considered dropping the service.

We track all inbound calls and enter the information into a database, which we check periodically.

Looking at the data, we found that the mailers actually produced jobs that were the same average size as both of our other sources. In fact, they produced work more consistently than the referral source. Our referral business was good but sporadic. The mailers produced work in each month at about the same sales level. This was valuable factual information in determining whether or not to continue to invest in this type of advertising.

### Use the data wisely

We were able to change the promotion on the mailers to discourage the small jobs by stating a minimum size for the promotion to be valid. Since we implemented that change, we have increased the job size in that category, although there are fewer opportunities. There are also fewer wasted sales calls and our close ratio has improved.

This type of data leads to more profitable growth. Another thing to track is individual job profitability. Track it by type of service; landscape maintenance, enhancement, landscape construction, irrigation, hardscape, etc., as well as by size and customer type. You can then mine that data to determine whom to target and where to place your emphasis for profitable growth.

You want to use factual data about your business that helps you to link your sales and operations so that you sell work, which you know for a fact that you can produce profitably.

— The author is a partner with entrepreneur Tom Oyler in the Wilson-Oyler Group, which offers consulting services. Visit [www.wilson-oyler.com](http://www.wilson-oyler.com).



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# In the Know

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## SURVEY SHOWS ILLINOIS WANTS

# 'greener' landscapes

**URBANA, IL** — A survey of Illinois Green Industry professionals and residents shows a trend toward environmentally friendly practices and concerns. According to the survey, the top emerging trends for landscaping are: to be low in maintenance; incorporate native plants and grasses; use drought-tolerant plants to reduce water use; and use disease-resistant plants in order to reduce the need for chemicals.

"Management practices can be changed to include alternative methods such as biological control and the use of organic fertilizers and pesticides," said Gene Campbell who conducted the survey. "These types of products were promoted, used or sold by 17% to 30% of Green Industry businesses and by up to

23% of residential households. And, all of the participants in the survey reported that they expect to increase their level of activity regarding the use of these environmentally friendly alternatives within the next three to five years."

"Using less water and applying fewer chemicals are also more environmentally friendly trends," said Bill Krudenier coordinator of external relations in the University of Illinois College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences.

Additional information can be downloaded from the University of Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences Web site:

[www.nres.uiuc.edu](http://www.nres.uiuc.edu)

## Livescapes debuts to landscape contractors in July 2007

**CLEVELAND** — Questex Media Group, Inc., publisher of *Landscape Management* magazine, will launch a new supplement called *Livescapes*.

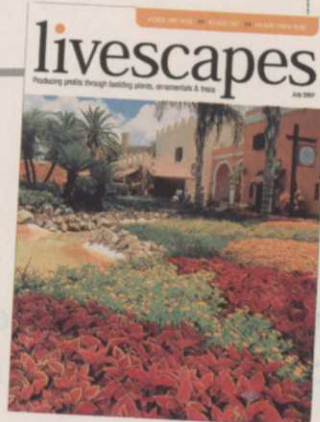
Set to debut in July 2007, *Livescapes* will target landscape contractor professionals who perform installation services and purchase bedding plants, ornamentals and trees. It will focus on such topics as how to make installation projects more profitable, addressing product challenges, and choosing among the many varieties available.

*Livescapes* is supported by OFA — an Association of Floriculture Professionals, and ANLA, the American Nursery & Landscape Association.

"We are excited to be a part of this endeavor because our members, who are the leading floricultural professionals across the country, are very interested in enhancing their relationship with the landscape contractors who install color," said OFA Executive Director John R. Holmes.

"A publication such as *Livescapes*, which will ultimately bring nurseries and garden centers closer to the landscape professional, is a great idea," said ANLA Executive Vice President, Robert J. Dolibois.

Two more issues are planned for 2007 in September/October and November/December.



[CLIPPINGS]

## Borst Landscape expands reach

**ALLENDALE, NJ** — Borst Landscape and Design of Allendale, NJ, has expanded its eastern Bergen County customer base with the purchase of Valley Landscaping. Valley Landscaping serves about 60 residential and commercial clients. Valley owner Guy Nicolosi has joined the Borst team as a sales associate.

## Two-year turf care warranty

**SOUTHAMPTON, PA** — Schiller-Pfeiffer Inc., is offering a new two-year warranty on all Classen turf care equipment shipped. Visit [www.classen-mfg.com](http://www.classen-mfg.com).

## New Finn supply store

**CLEVELAND** — Cincinnati-based FINN Corp. opened another store location for its Wholesale Landscape Supply division, d.b.a. CWS Inc. in Cleveland. The newest location is the third CWS Inc. storefront that FINN has built to satisfy landscape supplies, erosion control products and FINN equipment sales, rentals and parts sourcing for the Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana tri-state customers.

## Lifetime zero-turn warranty

**JOHNSON CREEK, WI** — Commercial Grounds Care Inc., announced a new Lifetime Deck, Cradle, and Engine Deck (DCED) Warranty for all Bob-Cat and Bunton "E" model zero turn mowers. Visit [www.cgcequip.com](http://www.cgcequip.com).



# Tired of losing money on every payroll?

**EMPLOYEE TIMESHEET**

NAME: Bill Kemp DATES: 11-15

DAY	START	LUNCH	END	JOBSITE	WORK DONE	HOURS
MON	7:00	1/2	3:30	Brentw.		8
TUE			3:30			8
WED			4:00	↓		8 1/2
THU			4:00	Crestv.		8 1/2
FRI	↓	↓	4:00	↓		8 1/2

Employee Signature: Bill Kemp **TOTAL HOURS: 41 1/2**



**Reality?**

**Employee Report**

**Kemp, Bill** Date Range: 6/11/2007 through 6/15/2007

Day	Date	Jobsite	Start	Stop	Cost Code	Hours	Total
Mon	6/11	Brentwood	7:08 AM	12:05 PM	Irrigation	4:57	
			12:41 PM	3:22 PM	Irrigation	2:41	7:38 hours
Tue	6/12	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:07 PM	Irrigation	4:55	
			12:43 PM	3:23 PM	Irrigation	2:40	7:35 hours
Wed	6/13	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:02 PM	Irrigation	4:50	
			12:46 PM	3:49 PM	Irrigation	3:03	7:53 hours
Thu	6/14	Crestview	7:17 AM	12:19 PM	Planting	5:02	
			12:50 PM	3:46 PM	Planting	2:56	7:58 hours
Fri	6/15	Crestview	7:13 AM	12:07 PM	Planting	4:54	
			12:44 PM	3:39 PM	Planting	2:55	7:49 hours
<b>Total</b>						<b>38:53 hours</b>	

Signature: Bill Kemp Kemp, Bill



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 > **DOZENS** of cost codes?  
 > Crews on the **MOVE?**

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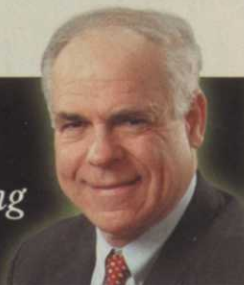
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# In the Know

## LEGALLY Speaking



BY KENNETH D. MORRIS, ESQ. L.L.C.

**Q** Why is maintaining written employee procedures and policies important?

**A** Because it can cost your company a lot of money if you do not. Don't believe me? Ask Mitsubishi, who settled a sexual harassment class-action suit for \$34 million in 1997. Or Coca-Cola, who settled a class-action race discrimination for \$192.5 million. Or Triton, who paid one ex-employee \$124 million for a wrongful termination suit (awarded by a Texas jury). And, even if you are not guilty, the cost to successfully defend a single employment discrimination claim can easily approach \$100,000-\$200,000.

**Q** Besides the courts, are there other institutions that might investigate my company's conduct?

**A** Yes. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) typically resolves tens of thousands of claims each year through settlements, conciliations, mediations and litigation. Recent increases in the numbers of EEOC charges involve matters of religious, age and nationality discrimination.

Kenneth D. Morris, a Philadelphia-based attorney with more than 30 years corporate and law firm experience, offers information on industry legal issues in each issue of LM. Contact him via [www.kenmorrislaw.com](http://www.kenmorrislaw.com).

**Note:** The above should not be interpreted as offering legal advice in any jurisdiction where such practice is not authorized. Engage competent counsel familiar with your jurisdiction when legal issues arise.

## BYU wins big at PLANET Student Career Days

**EAST LANSING, MI** — For the second year in a row, Brigham Young University swept the field with the Idaho campus winning first place at the event and the Provo campus coming in second at the 31st Annual Student Career Days, hosted by the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) March 28-April 1 at Michigan State University.

Following were Colorado State, Kansas State and Pennsylvania State. The host school, Michigan State University, placed 8th overall. The event has steadily grown through the years, with students from 53 schools participating this year.

Winners of the individual competitions, who were identified as "Superstars" are Ken Kwiat of the University of Illinois, Champaign; Adam Barnshausen of Clemson University and Nathan Roach of Alamance Community College.

The 24 individual and team competitions included tree climbing, skid steer operation, patio installation, wood construction, plant identification, personnel management, sales presentation, exterior/interior design, irrigation troubleshooting, equip-



ment operation, and others.

In addition, this year's PLANET Student Career Days drew the largest national gathering of landscape, lawn care, and interior plantscape employment recruiters. The Career Fair offered students the opportunity to interview with Green Industry companies for full-time positions and internships.

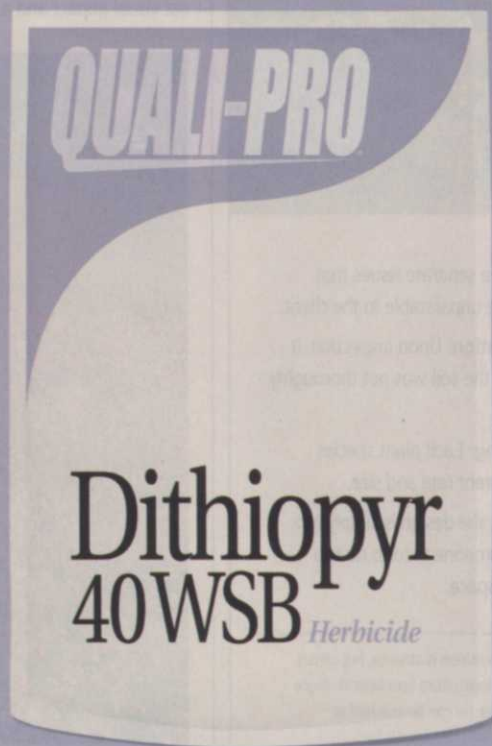
For a complete list of winners, please visit the Web at [www.StudentCareerDays.org](http://www.StudentCareerDays.org)



**1.** Nathan Baker of BYU begins a near-perfect climb **2.** Jenna Knackstedt from Kansas State University tests out a Toro walk-behind mower **3.** Joe Plummer and Brent Davies from Pennsylvania College of Technology lay pavers down



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BEFORE



**Problem** The client is unhappy with the appearance of the flower display. What are the potential reasons for the problem? What would you do?

**The cause**

There were three separate issues that made this space unpalatable to the client.

- 1. Soil Preparation:** Upon inspection, it was found that the soil was not thoroughly prepared.
- 2. Plant Spacing:** Each plant species grows at a different rate and size.
- 3. Complexity:** the design is simply too complicated. Someone tried to do too much with the space.

Every day you see horticultural problems. Sometimes the solution is obvious, but others are much more difficult to solve. Brickman Group Senior Horticulture Specialist H. Bruce Hellerick tackles these issues each month in Problem Solver. He can be reached at [Hellerick@BrickmanGroup.com](mailto:Hellerick@BrickmanGroup.com)

**Solutions**

There are several reasons why the plants in this flower display are not creating the desired impact. Let's address each of the causes.

- 1. Soil preparation:** A soil test should be taken and the soil amended. Soil should be tilled to a depth of eight to 10 inches.
- 2. Plant spacing:** Know or increase your knowledge of plant materials!
- 3. Complexity:** When designing a floral display use the KISS Method (Keep It Simple & Smile). Simple, well managed displays create the greatest visual impact and a positive long-lasting impression for your client.



AFTER

**Their time is up.**  
Starts working in hours—even minutes.





# CAT Chopper raises funds for children's camp

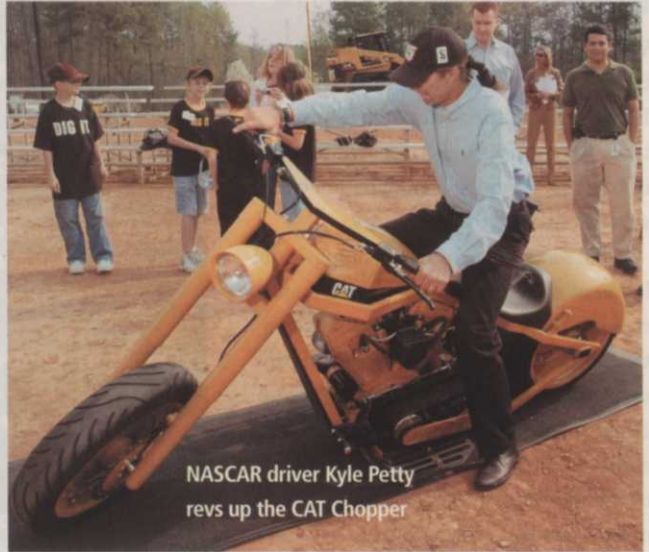
**CLAYTON, NC** — Caterpillar donated a CAT Chopper to the Victory Junction Gang Camp for seriously ill children. The charitable organization was founded and is supported by the Petty family of NASCAR racing fame, and the plan is to use the motorcycle to raise funds for the camp.

The mission of the Victory Junction Gang Camp is to enrich the lives of children with chronic medical conditions or serious illnesses by providing life-changing camping experiences that are exciting, fun and empowering, in a safe and medically sound environment. Kyle and Pattie Petty founded the camp, which operates solely on donations.

The camp features a NASCAR racing theme, and it has been strongly supported by the NASCAR community. Caterpillar is now in its 14th season of NASCAR participation as a sponsor — starting in 1993 as an associate sponsor of Kyle Petty's #42 Pontiac in what was then the NASCAR Winston Cup Series. Caterpillar now is the primary sponsor of the #22 car driven by Dave Blaney in the Nextel Cup Series.

Caterpillar officials donated the CAT Chopper to the camp, represented by Petty family members, in a ceremony at the Caterpillar Building Construction Products Division in Clayton, NC.

"I can't thank the folks at Caterpillar enough for donating this beautiful custom chopper to the camp," said Pattie Petty, CEO and co-founder of Victory Junction. "This donation will help raise funds to continue to send children with chronic med-



NASCAR driver Kyle Petty  
revs up the CAT Chopper

ical conditions to Victory Junction for a life changing camping experience. The fact that Caterpillar has reached out to create such a great partnership with the camp speaks volumes about their organization."

The donated CAT Chopper being is one of two identical custom motorcycles designed and fabricated for Caterpillar by Orange County Choppers Inc. (OCC), the focus of the Discovery Channel's hit American Chopper television series.

## They can crawl, but they can't hide.

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## In the Know

### Bartlett Tree Experts protects historic land

**WILLIAMSBURG, VA** — To help maintain the splendor of historic Jamestown, Bartlett Tree Experts dispatched more than 40 employees and donated \$26,000 in tree care services in anticipation of the settlement's 400th anniversary.

The services, including pruning, installation of structural support systems and tree lightning protection, helps preserve the landscape of the settlement and provide enhanced safety for visitors. A crew of more than 40 Bartlett employees from across Virginia arrived in the early hours of the morning on March 24 for a full day of tree care and restoration.

"With Bartlett Tree Experts celebrating its centennial this year, it is a great time for both our company and Jamestown from a historical view point," said Robert Bartlett, chairman, Bartlett Tree Experts. "We take great pride in helping our communities, and this is a great way to put our 100 years of experience to work for a worthy cause."

## People & companies



In addition to his current role as commercial leader for the company's Pest Management business, **David A. Morris** has been named commercial leader of the Turf and Ornamental and Technical Products business for **Dow AgroSciences**.

**Jacobsen**, a **Textron** company, promoted **Ralph Nicotera** to vice president of sales for the company.

**Signature Control Systems** expanded its team to include industry veteran **Dale W. Hansen** as Commercial Sales Director – North America.



**Ruppert Nurseries** promoted **Jack Jones** to branch manager for the new Maryland Landscape Management Branch located in Forestville, MD.

**John Deere** Golf & Turf One Source awarded **Greg Goudeau** as its top Territory Manager of the Year.

**Bruce Martin** has been named interim director for **Clemson University's** Pee Dee Research and Education Center at Florence, SC.

**PROFILE Products** welcomed **Michael D. Robeson** as its new manager of technical services.



**Sakai America** appointed **Todd Mansell** as technical marketing manager.

**BASF Professional Turf and Ornamentals** appointed **Thomas Hill** as communications manager for the Professional Turf & Ornamentals business.

**Absorbent Technologies Inc.** (ATI), the maker of the Zeba brand of soil amendments, added **Michael Harowitz** to its Southeast sales team.

The **Golf Course Builders Association of America** presented the Don A. Rossi Award to irrigation industry pioneer **Edwin J. Hunter** (1917-1998) of **Hunter Industries**.

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# Add-On Biz

BUSINESS

EXTEND YOUR BUSINESS

## Concrete engraving

► Landscape pros can beautify and stain existing surfaces for clients who balk at the cost of pavers

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS /  
Managing Editor

The customer wanted a hardscape with pavers arranged in circles bordered by flagstone. Had Michael Rodriguez tackled the job the usual way, he would have had to rip out a few thousand feet of cracked and damaged concrete and lay each paver by hand. The amount of manual labor involved would have generated a huge bill for his client.

Instead Rodriguez, president of Santa Fe Springs, CA-based Creative Innovations Landscape and Design, used specially made cutting tools to

etch patterns into the existing concrete. He then stained the concrete to simulate the effect of pavers.

He estimates the cost of the project using pavers at about \$35,000. "With the concrete carving, I was able to do it, for about \$6,000," says Rodriguez, who got his contractor's license in 1979. He delivered the look of pavers and flagstone without removing the old concrete by using patented tools purchased from Engrave-A-Crete, a 15-year-old company based in Bradenton, FL.

### Tools small and large

The tools look like souped up hand and yard tools (think an electric circular saw on

wheels with a vacuum attachment to collect dust), but they can etch any design into a variety of surfaces. The tools come in a variety of shapes — everything from a handheld etcher about the size of a large fountain pen to a walk-behind device called the Super Compact.

Darrell Adamson, president and CEO of the Florida-based company, "spent years" perfecting a methodology and designing machines that could create effects in existing concrete surfaces that replicate any building material, claims Paul DelFino, chief operating officer of Engrave-A-Crete. "You combine stain with our machines and you can take existing concrete walkways, patios, pool decks or anything like that and make them look like tile, cobblestone or pavers," he says, adding that not only does the company sell the machines, but it also trains purchasers in their use.

Rodriguez says he researched different options before settling on this particular solution. "I researched it two years prior to going to their school, workshop," he says.

Etched and stained concrete can mimic the look and texture of pavers and flagstone, and it can be enhanced with designs.

### Lots of options

The tools and training allow creative landscapers to do more than mimic pavers, flagstone and other patterns. Send the company a design — perhaps a photograph — and an artist can turn that into a 3-D template. That template can be laid out and all the landscaper has to do is cut the mold. Add stain and the only limitation is the client's imagination. The process works equally well for large and small jobs, says the company.

Before he had the tools another client wanted a Chinese character set into concrete. But when he priced the job, the client balked. Rodriguez says he's now able to go back and give the client a less expensive alternative — and still make what he feels is an acceptable profit.

Engrave-A-Crete sells a variety of tools and materials. The minimum entry is about \$2,500, says Brandon Adamson, Engrave-A-Crete's vice president and son of the founder. A complete trailer with everything the company makes is available for just under \$50,000.





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# TRAINING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

BY STEVEN M. COHAN, PH.D.

Green Industry-school district collaborations around the country prepare students for rewarding careers.

**F**inally, some of them are getting it, high schools that is — and our industry is helping deliver the message. The challenge now is to make high school students aware of it.

The 'it' is the effort to make young people aware of the career opportunities within our Green Industry.

Some exciting new education/industry partnerships are being developed for students. The aim is to develop the next generation of industry managers, business leaders and owners. These programs signal an expanding, although admittedly fledgling, effort by industry to raise awareness of the industry's importance to tomorrow's young adults.

One such program, and hopefully a model for high school programs elsewhere, is being developed in Maryland's Montgomery County Public Schools. It replaces the career-based horticulture programs schools formerly offered in the schools. Thanks to the help and advice of Green Industry business owners and managers

the new programs, with redesigned curricula, will offer more "real-world" training in landscape and related businesses.

The push began in 2005 when the county school district took a critical look at its vocational training. That review led Montgomery Community College and county school administrators to develop an infrastructure that connected stakeholders with educators. This led to the formation of Cluster Advisory Boards (CAB) involving business leaders from various industry sectors. To date, 11 CAB's have been established within Montgomery County for specific Career Technology Education (CTE) programs. One of these CAB's involves input and guidance from Green Industry business owners and leaders and government agencies such as the Montgomery National Capitol Parks and Planning Commission.

## **Nine high schools initially**

So what does this collaboration mean to the Green Industry around Montgomery County? In a nutshell, it means that nine county high





schools now have the go-ahead from the Maryland State Board of Education (MSDE) to implement landscape programs for the 2007-2008 academic school year.

"We're building the airplane while it's in flight. That's how Ed Ball described what we're doing," explains Bruce Allentuck, owner of Allentuck Landscaping, Clarksburg, MD, and one of the local industry leaders involved providing educational tools and guidance for the landscape program. Ball is the coordinator of the Career Technology Education program.

The primary role of the Landscape CAB is to research industry and academic standards for community colleges and universities. These standards are the basis for the development of curricula, which the MSDE must approve.

### Landscape career pathways

The three curricula, approved under the Environmental, Agricultural and Natural Resource Cluster Pathways (Green Industry), are: Landscape Design, Green Industry Management and Environmental Horticulture.

Each career pathway accommodates up to 34 students per high school course. A second phase will enable more students to participate when college courses are opened for enrollment in the evenings and during summer sessions.

Courses included in each of the career options include: Fundamental Horticulture, Landscape Maintenance, Turf and Irrigation Management, Environmental Studies and Landscape Installation.

Courses specific to the respective career tracks encompass Fundamentals of Design, Floral and Interior Design, Site Design Development, and Greenhouse and Nursery Production.

*continued on page 26*

PHOTOS COURTESY: PLANET



## RECRUITING YOUNG TALENT:

### EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE

Brette Hardison, human resources administrator for the Wauconda, IL-based Acres Group, says her company finds and develops young talent from industry events, such as the career fair held during the Professional Landcare Network's (PLANET) recent Student Career Days at Michigan State University (MSU) and also the Mid-Am Horticulture Show. Acres Group also seeks potential team members at universities with horticulture programs such as MSU, Purdue and Iowa State.

"We're looking for team players, as we're very team-oriented both at and outside of work," Hardison says. "We want ambitious, self-starters, because we're growing fast and there's going to be opportunities to move up."

She adds that the company looks for young people with strong horticulture knowledge, and if they're proficient in a second language such as Spanish, that's another big plus. Acres Group hires five to seven interns every summer, hoping to catch the students' interest early on.

"The interns come in and learn our entire process and all aspects of the business," Hardison says. "They can choose to focus on a certain area like design/build for example, and we'll let them do everything our regular employees do, all the way down to working with clients."

"The internship program gives both the students and us a chance to work together and see if we're a good fit for the future."

The Acres Group offers interns a salary and housing, plus they line up fun activities like visiting the Chicago Botanical Gardens and local baseball games. The company hopes when the interns finish their college careers, or when the internship ends, they'll return as employees.

"It's good to know you can go back to school and further your education and be able to stay with the company," Hardison says. "It's one of the things we do that we think really sets us apart."

Acres Group employees are given benefits such as medical, dental and life insurance; 401(k) retirement saving; flexible spending program; and tuition reimbursement.

"We talk to our employees about a designated career path, so they know when and how they can advance and what they can expect from us," Hardison says. "If they have an idea of where they can go within the company, they're not going to feel like they're stuck in the same position or decide to leave."

— Mike Seuffert



A future professional gets advice at PLANET's Student Career Days.





continued from page 25

Also, all seniors are required to complete an internship for real-life hands-on experience.

"The framework for the program is basically in place," says Allentuck, president of the Green Industry CAB. "It's just a matter of filling in the details." There is a lot of work to do yet in building the complete 4-year high school curricula, he adds.

"The story here is not the people who created this program. The story is the program itself," says Allentuck, pointing out that it's taken a lot of effort by a lot of people to get the program up and running. Assisting in the effort, in addition to his company, are Fine Earth Landscaping; John Sorb Landscaping, Lila Fendric Landscape Architects, Borders and Butterflies, Chapel Valley, University of Maryland Cooperative Extension, Nature Unlimited, The Brickman Group, Potomac Garden Center, Waverly Farm, Green Gardens and Chevy Chase Country Club.

continued on page 28

RECRUITING YOUNG TALENT:

**STUDENT PERSPECTIVE**

Bigger isn't always better, students told *Landscape Management* at PLANET'S Student Career Days at Michigan State University in March. Undergraduates told us that as they look at potential employers, they're more concerned about opportunities to grow within the company.

"It helps when a company is looking for a specific position, and not just trying to hire any kid they can get their hands on," says John Young, a graduating senior at SUNY (State University of New York) – Cobleskill. "The companies that impress me are the ones that say 'Where do you want to be in our company?' and then work with me to show how I can get there."

Patrick Smith, a senior at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo is looking at two things: "First is location, a company from some part of the country that appeals to me, like northern California or northwest Colorado. Second, I'm looking for a company that shares the same morals and values that I hold. It's a mutual relationship. I expect to be given responsibility, and the ability to make decisions for customers right on the spot. And together we're going to succeed."

"I think the best companies are the ones that go out of the way to train you, and do what they can to help make you fit in," says Tim Fitzgerald, also from SUNY. "A company that wants to help you grow looks better than one that isn't willing to put in the work."

"It also helps if they pay you a lot of money," Fitzgerald grins.

— Mike Seuffert

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Photo Courtesy BMJ Design



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*continued from page 26*

"We've had to do a whole lot of selling to make this program real," says Allentuck. Program promoters worked closely with teachers to give them an accurate picture of the industry and its many opportunities.

"The industry realizes it needs smart young people who speak knowledgeably, do mathematics, are technologically competent and — if they have to the desire and drive — can run a successful business," says Allentuck.

Integral to the landscape career pathways is hands-on experience, which will be provided by internships and summer jobs with participating companies and on-going projects with the Montgomery National Park and Planning Commission.

CTE coordinator Ball says that the program will provide a smooth transition for students to

*continued on page 30*

## SCHOOL RULES

It's a universal complaint. There are not enough ready-made leaders coming out of colleges to fill open positions. The solution is simple. Dip into the minor leagues — the local high school vocational programs. At least that is what several northeast Ohio landscape contractors have done through the landscape and horticulture program at Auburn Career Center in Concord Township, OH.

"They're walking out of most programs with the foundation of the technical side," explains Jim Paluch, of JP Horizons. "If they have a good teacher, they're also walking out with a passion for the industry."

The teacher at Auburn is Green Industry veteran Dave Richards.

"We have about 35 students — juniors and seniors," Richards says. "The junior year we do a lot of hands on equipment safety training, teaching them how to operate different types of landscape maintenance, management and construction equipment safely. This is a more general ornamental horticulture program. The senior year is geared more heavily in landscape construction."

Richards uses Green Industry veterans like Paluch, Steve Pattie of The Pattie Group and Sandy Munley, executive director of the Ohio Landscapers Association (OLA) to help decide curriculum and content. The 12-member advisory committee meets quarterly.

"We spend about 20% of the time in the classroom doing traditional classroom studies — plant material, landscape estimating, math for the landscape industry, botany, pest ID studies," Richards says. "The other 80% of the time is spent with hands-on experience, where they learn by doing."

At the recommendation of the advisory committee, the program has begun to prepare students for OLA certifications.



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articulate in either 2- or 4-year college programs. While working with the colleges and universities the program's advisory board will continue to develop courses to prepare the students for college-level courses. Montgomery College has articulated an agreement with Montgomery County Public Schools to accept six credits toward their Landscape Technology associate degree program.

Ball envisions the potential of 1,000 students graduating from the cluster career pathways program. If this model is followed throughout the country, community colleges and universities will have an excellent recruitment resource. Furthermore with the education and experience these students will be bringing to the college classroom faculties will be challenged with the need

continued on page 32

## SCHOOL RULES

"We've had some phenomenal support from industry partners who've engaged in the recruiting process and partnered with us to help improve... it's knowledge of what the industry is all about, and all of the opportunities in the industry," Richards says. "They're continuing to try to communicate that to high-level administrators within our 11 school districts and perspective students who express an interest in exploring our program."

Paluch helped engineer that interest a few years ago by staging a tree planting at a school where the principals gathered for a meeting.

"The principals of the high schools became interested who then started talking to their counselors and saying, 'hey, consider sending some kids to this program,'" Paluch says. Richards next class went from a single-digit student count to the maximum number of 24. It's certainly assured the center won't be closing its doors like other programs have had to do.

"We got together and created a little challenge to Dave in getting out, getting into the living rooms of the students and meeting with the parents, bring the parents in," Paluch says. "I would talk to the parents about the future of the industry and let them know the financial piece. So many times there is a



Auburn's advisory board

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(see page 103)

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## SCHOOL RULES

continued from page 30

to develop a diversity of upper division courses to fulfill the educational expectations of these students.

These innovative high school programs enable college educators and industry representatives to promote Green Industry career opportunities to students and their parents. We can all get involved by providing exposure to regional career fairs, Student Career Days, the Green Industry Conference planned each October and other events hosted by college landscape programs.

This is the opportunity we've been waiting for to promote the industry to the next generation of leaders. **LJM**

— The author is Professor of the Practice, Plant Science & Landscape Architecture, University of Maryland. Contact him at [scohan@umd.edu](mailto:scohan@umd.edu).

perception that this is where the troubled kids go. We really educated them on the professionalism in the industry."

Besides jumpstarting the program and sitting as an advisor, Paluch and the other advisors – will occasionally serve as guest speakers.

"I'll go in and I'll talk about leadership," Paluch says. "That's really the key thing that the landscape contractor is looking for 'Please send me some people that can become foremen, supervisors, eventually branch managers.'"

Many students find part-time work to complement their education. These on-the-job experiences broaden their knowledge with real-life lessons.

"I very strongly encourage all of our students to be employed within the industry," Richards says. It comes back to the ties with organizations like the OLA and PLANET, which have set standards for the industry.

"What that does is that gives us a bar that we prepare students for," Richards says. "By having clearly defined goals and or clearly defined targets, it gives us the opportunity to really start to fine tune our training programs."













It also gives landscape companies something they desperately need, new leaders. But none of that would have been possible without those same companies getting involved in the program.







"They are truly active and engaged partners," he says. "Some of the people have worked in partnership by sending some of their more skilled trades people to work side-by-side with our students on large project-based learning experiences. It's been phenomenal." — Daniel G. Jacobs

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Mowers greeted GIE attendees at a fall '06 Brickman facility tour.

Learn how to buy and when to retire mowers so you can make good on your largest capital investment

# Fleet science

BY KAY OHLY

**T**wo landscape trailers pull up at a stoplight. One is loaded with a rainbow of equipment – red, orange, yellow, green. The other is uniform in color, an advertisement on wheels for any given manufacturer. One trailer's machines are brand-new, still shiny. The other contains a range of mowers: a barely broken-in walk-behind and a veteran, workhorse rider.

Which fleet will get the best mileage?  
“We have considered whether we can

put together a cookie-cutter trailer of equipment that would get a landscaper started in the business,” says Edric Funk, marketing manager for Toro Landscape Contractor Equipment. But defining the perfect fleet just isn't that easy.

Neither is predicting how long a fleet will last.

“You can't put a time period on a piece of equipment because that depends on use and abuse, and how equipment is maintained,” says Gilbert Peña, commercial segment strategy manager for John Deere.

There's no exact recipe for building up a mower fleet, and there aren't hard-fast rules on when to retire equipment.

However, landscape contractors who think business first when investing in their working capital will assemble a more productive fleet. Maintenance records, parts commonality, trained crews and plain-and-simple preference figure into equipment purchases.

“There is not a blueprint on how to do this, but the most profitable and successful landscape contractors make a science out of it,” Funk notes. “They look at total cost of operation, and they engage in time studies or deeper analysis other than the initial equipment bill.”

## Business first

Whether buying a startup fleet or replacing retired machines, landscape contractors should look at their client databases before shopping the dealership. Some questions to consider: Are jobs primarily residential, and if so, how large are the properties? Does a major commercial account warrant investing in equipment to manage an expansive space?

“Study your job requirements first – your lay of the land,” Peña recommends. “You make your money go farther by adapting your products to meet your job requirements.”

For most, demands call for a variety of equipment: a 21-in. walk-behind, a zero-turn mower, and perhaps out-front riders for certain sites.

The next order of business is to evaluate crew size and operating experience. “In some cases, having more people on smaller pieces of equipment fits in better to an owner's overall plan,” Funk says. “Other contractors may need to do with as few people as they can, so they look for larger deck sizes to maximize their production.”

These decisions require crunching numbers, of course: deciding whether equipment or labor is a better investment, and calculating man-hours saved



either by trading up to larger decks or adding more employees. Meanwhile, the way employees treat mowers determines equipment life span.

"A machine in the hands of an owner-operator will last a long time versus machines in the hands of crewmembers," Peña says. "If you can't control how [operators] use equipment, concentrate on controlling things tied to machine life." These include properly loading, securing and unloading equipment, as well as, routine maintenance: changing oil, filters, belts and blades.

"If contractors overlook the importance of routine maintenance in a fleet, their machines will wear out prematurely and they will literally have no value after the warranty period is over," Peña says.

Warranties typically last one to three years, and contractors can expect mowers to operate smoothly for twice the warranty life. Some don't wait that long, says Cheri Stange of Scag Power Equipment. "Contractors who trade up to the newest models more often generally rely less on backups," she says.

Funk knows contractors whose shiny equipment is an important part of their message to customers. "Some swap out their entire fleet every year," he says. But turning one-third of an entire fleet every year is more common.

"I've also seen contractors' shops full of equipment that is 10 years or older and still gets the job done," Funk adds. "There are people out there cutting all kinds of properties with all kinds of equipment getting the job done."

The question is, are they getting it done without losing money on their equipment investments?

### The power of one

Many landscape contractors chose just one mower brand because they're loyal, plain and simple. Others figure their solid-color fleets are more cost effective

because of parts consistency, a single point of contact for service (one dealer, one manufacturer), and crews that are comfortable with the brand. These conveniences represent "soft costs," Funk says.

First, consider parts. "If you can choose one brand of mower, you can minimize the spare parts that you carry," Stange explains. "[Many brands] use common parts interchangeable to cut down on the inventory contractors might keep."

Rather than buying three different brands of belts, an owner can purchase one. This is also less confusing for the crewmembers who must change belts. They are trained to replace and maintain one type of equipment well.

Also, brand consistency can reduce windshield time and minutes spent on hold with technical or warranty support, Funk says. "You don't have the complexity of dealing with warranty claims or

The working life of a mower depends a lot on use and abuse.

— Gilbert Peña

where you go online to find technical information," he says. One dealer can manage service.

Too many times, owners make snapshot price-tag decisions when purchasing mowers. "It's easy to do," Funk admits. "If you can save a chunk of money on Product A vs. Product B, it's difficult to not strongly consider purchasing Product A."

But what about costs associated with downtime?

Companies that turn over equipment quickly may address downtime by "retiring" mowers as spares rather than reselling them. "It's worth more to them to have those units to fall back on to keep their

## Turnover strategy

**Q** I bought three mowers to start a fleet, and I want to get on a regular turnover schedule so I can pace my equipment expenses. Currently, they are all brand new. Should I start retiring equipment early?

**A** If you want to get into a cycle of turning over one-third of your equipment each year, start early. You won't want to sell off one piece after the first year, but consider selling a unit that is in perfect condition after the second season. That way, you will get a decent amount of money from the used equipment, and you can reinvest in a new piece. Now, you're working with one new mower, and two mowers that are a couple years old. The third year, retire one more. By the fourth season when you retire the last of your "new" mowers, the equipment may be at the point where it's more worn, and you'll be in a turnover cycle.

— Edric Funk,  
Toro Landscape Equipment

crews up and running than to get the relatively small amount of money by selling it," Funk says.

However, Peña advises against investing in brand-new equipment just to keep a spare mower on hand. "You've just doubled your investment," he says simply. Dealers most often provide support and loaner equipment.

The intangible service side of any equipment purchase decision plays a significant role in how long a mower will keep its spot on the trailer. "But landscape contractors rely on these products and fleets for their livelihoods, and they really need to look at the total cost of operation," Funk says. **LMI**

— Ohly is a freelance writer in Cleveland. Reach her via [info@landscapemanagement.net](mailto:info@landscapemanagement.net).



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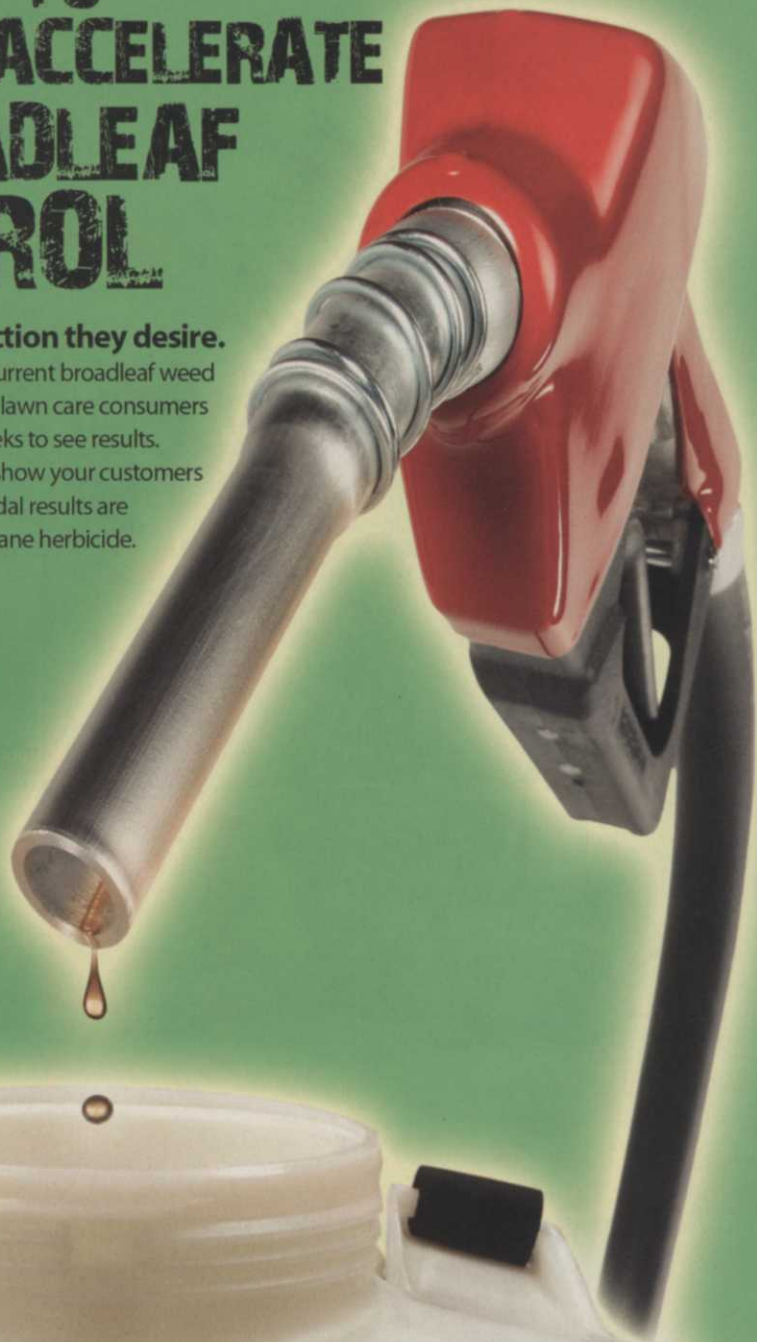


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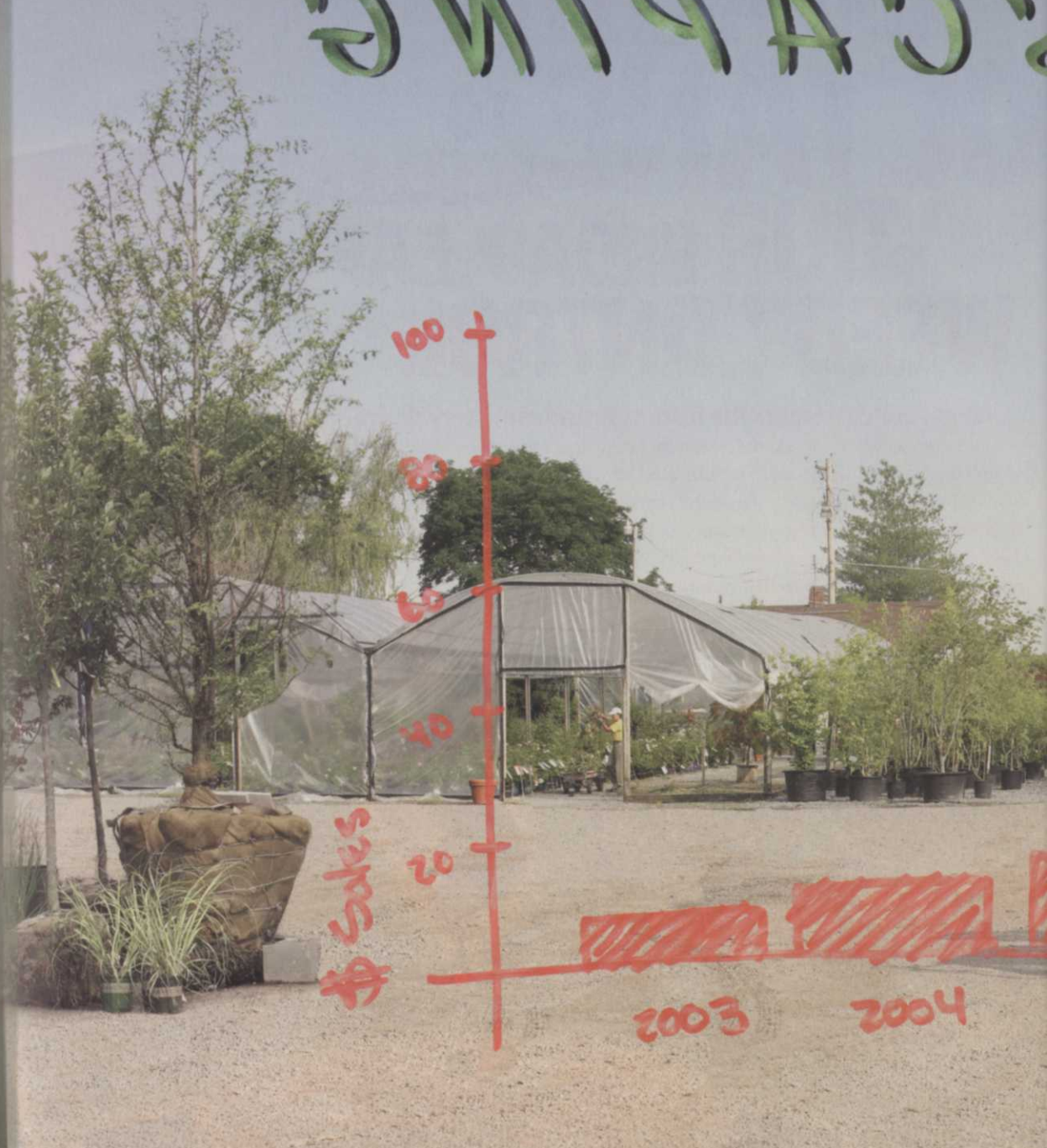


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# Landscape MANAGEMENT

## INSIDE

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# SNOW & ICE GUIDE



# Trees & salt don't mix

**M**any contractors and homeowners use salt deicers to combat ice on roads and sidewalks. While salt stains are a common sight on cars and steps, many may not know that salt deicing products can also damage foliage on trees.

Sodium chloride, the scientific name for rock salt, is the most popular and generally least costly type of deicer. Unfortunately, as ice and snow treated with rock salt melts, the resulting runoff may cause harmful byproducts to seep into soil or splash onto leaves, causing wilting and other injuries to vegetation.

"It is impractical to avoid salting completely because safety on our roads and sidewalks is obviously an important issue," says Dr. Bruce Fraedrich, vice president of research at Bartlett Tree Expert. "However, there are ways to protect trees and

## Valuable tips to recognize and lessen damage to trees from rock salt used on icy walkways and roads

shrubs." Fraedrich points to several causes and telltale signs of deicing problems, and offers solutions:

► "A lot of trees are affected by airborne salt kicked up by traffic. It settles on leaves, desiccating the tree. Some trees absorb the sodium and others suffer from root damage, caused by salt seeping into the soil." Species most susceptible to this type of damage are evergreens, including conifers, pines, spruce and holly trees. Fraedrich says trees retaining foliage year round have the highest risk.

► Professionals can identify damage by the wilting and dryness of leaves and other foliage, though symptoms are usually evident only after large masses of salt have accumulated. "Damage to the soil can be spotted by noticing significant drooping, especially at the top of a tree, because salt inhibits absorption of water by the root system. Salt damage produces similar symptoms as drought. When caused by airborne salt (from vehicles), it usually occurs on the lower part of the tree, facing the street," he says. Damaged trees also tend to have thinner leaves and often bloom later in the spring.

► Other symptoms include stunted growth of foliage, browning of foliage,

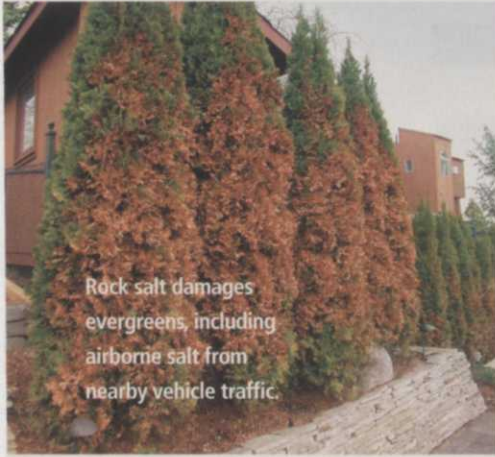
thinning of branch tips, premature fall coloration/defoliation and dead branches. Severe cases often lead to insect infestation.

"Damage is hard to prevent and winter weather complicates efforts to help trees, because there's no way to wash off salt," says Fraedrich. To counter the inevitability of salt damage, Fraedrich recommends planting trees tolerant to salt (such as birch, oak or juniper) near the road and driveway. Beyond that, he advises monitoring plants to ensure their overall health. "Keep trees well watered and use gypsum (calcium sulfate) to help counteract salt in the root system," he says. A certified arborist can help keep trees healthy year-round so they are less susceptible to winter issues.

Other measures can be taken to reduce the risk of damage including diverting salt from trees by erecting barriers of burlap or wood, laying down mulch to prevent seepage and watering during dry periods. These preventative measures can decrease the chances of trees experiencing heavy damage. **LM**

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# It's electrifying

Low voltage radiant snowmelt systems offer a new revenue source for landscape contractors

BY WILLIAM & PATTI FELDMAN

**H**ere's a largely untapped opportunity — offering commercial and residential customers the installation of low-voltage electric radiant snowmelt systems. Not only does it give you another profitable service to offer clients, it makes their properties safer.

The learning curve for these 21-volt radiant snowmelt systems is low. Installations can be a natural extension for landscape contractors with expertise in building walkways and other hard surfaces. And, generally, the project is a quick one. An electrician is needed only to connect the low voltage transformer to the service panel for the final hook-up to line voltage.

In fact, installation of the heating elements for a single-family residence can take just a few days, followed by the finish surfacing. Exact time frame and cost varies depending upon the design and layout of the system, the length of the driveway and/or the walkway and/or the square footage of the patio, and the geographic location of the project. For instance, on a long driveway, it's possible to install snowmelt elements for the entire width and length, for a particular portion

of the driveway or for tire tracks the length of the pavement.

#### Increases safety

Snowmelt systems appeal to owners of residences who value the cachet and benefits of "ground-breaking" technologies, especially one that can improve safety for anyone walking outdoors in bad weather and minimize risk of liability from slips or falls on snow or ice.

Installing a system can be practical and a smart business move for owners of multiple tenant properties, resort properties and commercial retail locations, where liabilities related to lingering snow and ice are considerations but also where stockpiling of removed snow is not feasible. Melting away the snow can be more efficient and reliable than shoveling or plowing it.

Snowmelt also eliminates the need for rock salt and other minerals that can damage a walkway or driveway and are often carried indoors, ruining expensive finished floors. In addition, homeowners gain the use of a snow and ice-free patio in winter and, perhaps, add to the home's resale value.

Low-voltage radiant snowmelt systems can be designed as an always-on or on-demand systems. With always-on sys-

tems end-users don't have to worry about unexpected or overnight weather events. By contrast, on-demand systems can be switched on/off as required and are generally installed in areas of more moderate weather and infrequent snow and ice occurrences. All designs should take drainage into consideration, to minimize water accumulation from run off that could result in ice build-up near the driveway or walkway.

Both types of low-voltage electric radiant snowmelt systems can feature self-regulating elements, where the output of



A low-voltage radiant snowmelt system can eliminate the need for rock salt on patios and stonework.



the elements is responsive to the temperature of the ground, conserving energy on warmer days.

#### Consider energy costs

When evaluating the concept of efficiency of a self-regulating low-voltage snow melt system for a customer, take into consideration two factors — consumption and cost. Consumption refers to how much energy the system will pull compared to other snowmelt options. (Self-regulating low-voltage snowmelt systems use fewer BTUs or kWh per hour than non-self-regulating low-voltage systems.) The cost is the energy cost per kilowatt hour in the area (winter rates) compared to other available energy sources.

"During a usual Colorado winter along the Front Range, snow storms generally drop 3- to 6-in. of snow and the sun is out the next day, greatly helping the snowmelt cycle, keeping actual operating costs of a snowmelt system relatively low," says A.J. Seastone, president of Centennial Building Supply, in Littleton, CO, a distributor and installer of STEP Warmfloor systems.

Snowmelt systems come in a range of BTU/kWh outputs. With Class 1 systems,



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# SNOW & ICE GUIDE

Low-volt radiant snowmelt systems can be designed to fit any shape.

snow accumulates and, after several hours or after it stops or slows down, the snow melts. With a Class 2 system, the system keeps the area clear of accumulating snow, though the driveway or walkway

may stay wet. Class 3 systems (which are relatively rarely requested by customers because they are expensive to run) melt the snow as it accumulates and are ideal for an application where a facility wants



all the water evaporated to achieve a dry, no-slip surface.

The actual design data differs throughout the country and should be calculated for each location according to the freezing index of the area, type of soil and loading conditions, points out Monica Irgens, chairperson of the Electric Radiant Committee of the Radiant Panel Association and the president of STEP Warmfloor, a St. Louis MO-based manufacturer of low-voltage electric radiant heating systems. Other factors that can affect rate of snowmelt include rate of snowfall, ambient temperature, wind speed and humidity.

Working from an area sketch provided by the contractor, STEP Warmfloor designs a layout that shows placement of all elements to achieve top performance. In many cases, input from a local engineer familiar with the particularities of the region and the land would be welcome.

Low-voltage electric radiant systems have several strong selling points that can tip an end-user into serious consideration when evaluating that option against water-based (hydronic) radiant systems or line voltage electric systems. They're generally easier to install and are often less expensive than other systems. And, unlike hydronic systems that require boiler tune-ups, low-voltage systems have no maintenance and no chance of leaks.

Once a landscape contractor is conversant with the attributes and benefits of low voltage snowmelt systems, installation of this value-added service should be mentioned on the company website, in newsletters and in fliers added to monthly bills, percolating interest that can create a blizzard of new business opportunities. **LM**

— William Feldman is a freelance writer in Chappaqua, NY. Contact him at [billfeldman@verizon.net](mailto:billfeldman@verizon.net)

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For more information contact

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## New solution

Bobcat's new Snow Pusher attachment quickly clears light to moderate snow from large areas. Available in 94- and 120-in. widths, the attachment features a free-floating blade with a 12-degree tilt, abrasion-resistant skid shoes and a rubber cutting edge to protect pavement surfaces are standard.

For more information contact 866/823-7898 / [www.bobcat.com](http://www.bobcat.com) / circle no. 251

## New inhibitor

From the distributors of ICE BAN products, Winter Management now offers an addi-

# New products



tional line of ice melt products called Safer than Salt. This family of unique formulations includes calcium, magnesium,

sodium and potassium chlorides, plus a corrosion inhibitor (CMA). Safer than Salt melts ice faster than rock salt, working down to -25 1/2 F, and its unique color coating assures visible, complete coverage.

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## Pull plow

Snowman Snowplow's Quick Mount (model 04RS) is the industry's only spreader-compatible pull plow. It features a knife mount system that allows quick on/off from the vehicle receiver hitch. Two safety stand bars support the plow for easier hookup and storage after use. The twin cylinder and heavy steel construction is designed for commercial use with full-size and 1-ton 4WD vehicles. The wide-set mounting arms allow enough clearance for the plow to operate behind most V-box and tailgate spreaders. A tested and approved receiver hitch is provided with each plow. In addition, hydraulic

power down pressure scrapes the surface cleaner, reducing the amount of deicer material needed for ice management.

For more information contact 888/766-6267 / [www.snowmanplows.com](http://www.snowmanplows.com) / circle no. 253

## Easy and adjustable



With its 400-lb. (6-cu.-ft.) capacity and low-profile design, the new TGS 600 Tailgate Spreader from The Boss Snowplow fits Class 3 and 4 receiver hitches, and mounts/dismounts easily, saving valuable time. It also features an adjustable feed gate; adjustable material deflector; 12-in. poly spinner; an internal auger with a chain link agitator; an enclosed 12-volt high-torque motor and a variable speed control with blast feature and overload protection.

The spreader also comes with The Boss 2-year warranty.

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*continued on page 50*





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continued from page 50



## Sensible sensors

Low-cost Zydux Intelligent Environmental Sensors offer a fast return on investment, an open protocol and free software. Users define an automated callout for custom results. The easy-to-install sensor program reports on multiple pavement temperatures, moisture depth and a freeze point. Zydux also includes an affordable GPS system.

For more information contact 509/526-4482 / [www.zydux.com](http://www.zydux.com) / circle no. 255

## Heavy-duty spreaders

Ideal for heavy-duty municipal and commercial applications, Salt Dogg's 4- and 4.5-yd. salt and sand spreaders are designed for dump bodies and flat beds with a GVW chassis of 15,000 to 20,000 pounds. The series is available with either hydraulic motor drive or 10.5-hp gas engine. They feature a self-contained hopper and a spread width of 4 to 30 feet. Options include a light bar, a 55-gal. liq-

uid spray system and a tailgate latch kit.

For more information contact 440/974-8888 / [www.saltogg.com](http://www.saltogg.com) / circle no. 256

## The scoop from Hiniker

The concave shape of the Hiniker Scoop Plow provides greater capacity, less spillage and faster plowing over other models. The Scoop Plow's 20-degree, fixed-angle outer ends help it capture snow, making it ideal for clearing parking lots. Available in 8- and 9-ft. lengths, the plow features a high-impact polyethylene moldboard that creates a low-friction, corrosion-free plowing surface. Its 3-section trip-edge with a 9-in.-high pivot point provides protection from curbs and parking barriers.

For more information contact 507/625-6621 / [www.hiniker.com](http://www.hiniker.com) / circle no. 257



## Safe driver training

Coaching Systems LLC, formerly FLI Learning Systems, reissues two snowplow safety videos in

DVD format. *Snowplow Safety: On Road* is a 23-minute video ideal for both newly hired and experienced operators. Topics include equipment, inspection, positioning of the truck, scanning, mirror use and defensive driving techniques. The 19-minute *Snowplow Safety: Parking Lots* is also available and focuses on safety issues specific to plowing parking lots.

For more information contact 800/354-9099 / [www.flilearning.com](http://www.flilearning.com) / circle no. 258



## Strong push

Pro-Tech's IST stands for Ice Scraping Technology. It was created as the first steel trip edge designed for Sno Pushers to incorporate the longevity and limited moving parts of rubber-edge pushers. This urethane-based technology ushers in a new generation of steel trip edges that do not require springs or hinges, which are susceptible to malfunction. The design of the IST Sno Pusher incorporates extended wear shoes for a balanced, even push along with a modified angle in the moldboard. These two features, combined with the urethane tripping mechanism, provide a loaded torque on the steel edge that ensures effective ice scraping ability and a safe, consistent tripping mechanism.

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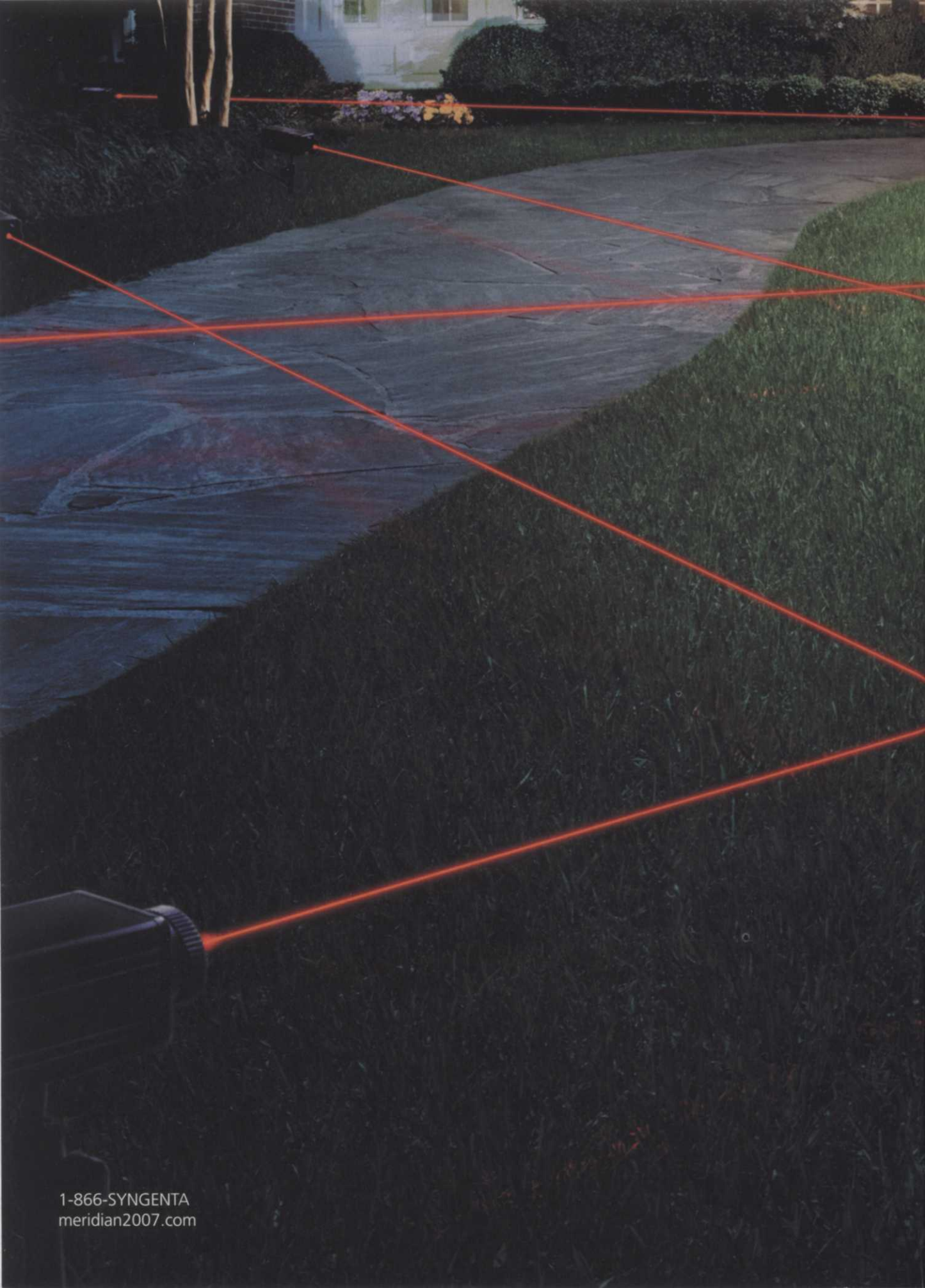
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# Innovations

TECHNOLOGY

HOT NEW PRODUCTS

1



2



3



4



## 1 The Scout

The new ASV Scout SC-50 is the only rubber-tracked utility vehicle on the market. With 2.5 psi under the tracks, the Scout has less impact on the ground than a person on foot. The undercarriage features the same Posi-Track technology used in ASV's earthmoving equipment. The combination of suspension, all-rubber track, 10 rubber wheels that disperse weight across a 15-in. wide track and a uniquely designed sprocket with roller system provide the machine with a smooth, quiet and efficient operation. The Scout offers travel speed up to 11.5 mph and 30 gallon fuel capacity.

For more information contact ASV at 218/327-3434 or [www.asvi.com](http://www.asvi.com) / circle no. 260

## 2 60-in. overseeder

Turfco Manufacturing has increased the versatility of its Tri-Wave 60-in. overseeder with a new Power Take Off shaft that allows the unit to more easily be mounted to tractors without the need to trim the shaft. The Tri-Wave 60-in. also received a new top hitch link that allows the machine to better track the ground contour. The blade spacing of 1.5 in. delivers greater seed density. Blades are mounted on three, 18-in.-wide, patent-pending independent floating seed heads capable of precisely following the ground contour, even in uneven terrain, for unbeatable consistency in seed placement depth.

For more information contact Turfco at 800/679-8201 or [www.turfco.com](http://www.turfco.com) / circle no. 261

## 3 Bigger engine

Toro's Z Master Z500 Series zero turn riders now are available with added power from a 28-hp Kawasaki engine. This twin cylinder gas engine (764 cc displacement) on Z Master Z528 and Z558 models offers a step up from the Z500 Series 25-hp Kawasaki engine previously available. Along with a more powerful engine, new Z558 models come equipped with Toro's 7-gauge TURBO FORCE cutting deck, which includes Toro's patented adjustable baffle that allows landscape professionals to fine-tune their cutting performance to conquer changing seasons or turf conditions.

For more information contact The Toro Co. at 800/348-2424 or [www.toro.com](http://www.toro.com) / circle no. 262

## 4 Re-engineered

Honda's HRC Commercial Series mowers are re-engineered and replace the existing HRC series. The two new models are the self-propelled, hydrostatic-drive HRC216HXA and the push-type HRC216PDA. The HRC Series' mowing performance is enhanced with Honda's MicroCut twin-blade mulching technology. The all-new HRC mowers incorporate key features, such as: dome-shaped deck design that facilitates both bagging and mulching; new Hydrostatic Cruise Control transmission and improved handlebars that are now adjustable for height.

Contact Honda Power Equipment at 770/497-6400 or [www.hondapowerequipment.com](http://www.hondapowerequipment.com) / circle no. 263



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Anything that makes it easier to set up meetings is a good thing in my book.



## Networking on the 'Net

BY TYLER WHITAKER

**W**ho you know' is often times more important than 'what you know.' In business, expanding your social network has traditionally meant exchanging business cards, playing golf and attending the local chamber of commerce meetings. While not as fun as hitting golf balls, the Internet is making it even easier to expand your social network.

When it comes to networking, you have three options: love it, hate it or love to hate it. I must admit, at times, I've fit into each of those categories. Even so, I know your personal network is one of the greatest assets you can develop. Networks, however, are only as good as your ability to add value and create opportunities. Being able to keep track of contact information and keep in touch with those you've met can be a fulltime job. That's where a new breed of social networking Web sites can help.

► **LinkedIn.com.** [LinkedIn.com](http://LinkedIn.com) can keep track of your business and personal contacts and you don't need to type all of them in. LinkedIn has the ability to upload your contacts from Microsoft Outlook. It also has features to stay in touch with people, find long-lost co-workers and search your contacts and their associates. But the one of the best features is your ability request introductions to people several relationships away.

With even a modest number of contacts in the system, you can connect with thousands of other professionals both inside and outside of your industry.

► **Jott.com.** [Jott.com](http://Jott.com) is one of the coolest Web sites I've seen in while. Jott is a Web site, an email reminder service, a private stenographer and a group-messaging tool all in one. Jott allows you to call an 800 number and leave a message for yourself or others using a simple and easy voice interface. That message is then translated into text and emailed back to you or sent to a list of your contacts. It's perfect for leaving yourself a reminder message or informing your office staff of a change in the weekly staff meeting. Staying in contact has never been so easy.

► **MeetingWizard.com.** In networking, nothing is better than face-to-face. Being able to go to lunch or visit someone's office can make or break a business deal. But the biggest problem is that the most valuable meetings are often with people that have the busiest schedules. Finding a time that works for everyone is time consuming and a major barrier to success. That's where [MeetingWizard.com](http://MeetingWizard.com) is such a great tool. You suggest a topic, a couple of dates and times, and a list of attendees, and it does all of the hard work automatically. It contacts your attendees and figures out a time when everyone can meet. This one is a real time saver. Anything that makes it easier to set up meetings is a good thing in my book.

Networking may not be your strong suit, but with these tools you'll be a pro in no time. Each of these solutions comes with a free price tag, so put that Rolodex away and let the technology do the hard work.

— *The author is a freelance technologist focusing in business automation. Contact him at 801/592-2810 or visit his blog at [www.tylerwhitaker.com](http://www.tylerwhitaker.com).*



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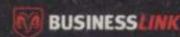


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# Plan

## TURF DISEASE MANAGEMENT

# NOW

**Turfgrass disease management for commercial and residential lawns**

BY HENRY C. WETZEL III, PH.D.

**N**ow is the time to begin to think about management practices that minimize disease to ensure high quality lawns throughout the summer. Start by considering the need for balance among landscape plants, trees and turfgrass. Recognize that they all compete for water, nutrients and sunlight. Also, be aware that too much shade, or plantings that impede the movement of wind, can increase the leaf wetness duration within the turf canopy. This can increase disease severity.

Knowing soil type and pH are also vital to developing a successful disease management program. Soil pH between 5.5 and 7.0 is sufficient for optimal turfgrass growth and development. Soils that are too acid (<5.5) or too alkaline (>7.0) require adjustment prior to establishment or renovation, and soils high in silt and clay typically take additional time for water to percolate through the profile.

*continued on page 78*



**RUST**





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Circle 137





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Typically, lawns on sandy soils have less disease incidence. However, be aware that drought stress symptoms can be confused with disease symptoms. Make an effort to educate your clients about lawn watering practices and, if they follow your recommendations, this will minimize disease incidence and severity. Irrigate in the early morning as it will not increase the overall length of turf canopy leaf wetness duration.

**In the zone**

You can also reduce disease pressures by selecting the turf species best adapted to the particular climactic zone you are working in. Transition climactic zones are the most difficult in which to choose the appropriate turfgrass. The northern-most

edge may be too cool and day lengths too short for optimum growth of warm-season turf species. The southern-most edge may be too warm for optimum growth of cool-season turf species. In either scenario, the turf plant is not growing optimally. That makes it more likely to succumb to turfgrass fungal pathogens.

An excellent source of information as to how different turfgrass species and varieties within a particular species have performed within a given climactic/geographic zone is the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP). Access this information through the Internet at <http://www.ntep.org>. Also, consult with a knowledgeable local seed distributor. Ask the distributor for local performance data on the particular varieties, blends or mixtures that are available.

The use of fungicides is an integrated component of an overall disease management program. But, understanding the soil physical and chemical properties, making modifications to improve sunlight and air penetration into the landscape, selecting the best adapted species and implementing sound cultural practices, should be addressed prior to using fungicides.

Here are some common turf diseases and some basic management suggestions:

**RUST**

**Pathogens:** *Puccinia* and *Uromyces* spp.

**Primary hosts:** Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass, but can occur on any turfgrass species

**Environmental conditions conducive the disease development:** cool, wet, low light

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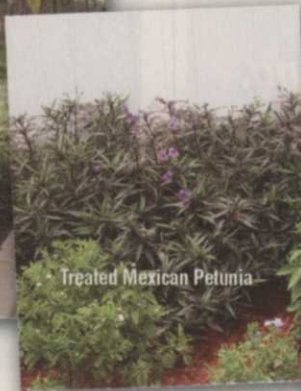
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*continued from page 78*

intensity, weather of primarily the fall and spring

Rust disease in turfgrasses is probably one of the easiest to diagnose. With a hand lens, note small collections of spores, often referred to as pustules, that have an orange to reddish-brown color to them, on the leaf surface. When observing the turfgrass, from a distance, symptoms take the appearance of a general chlorosis or drought stress.

Rust is generally managed through good cultural practices. Mowing on the high side of the recommended mowing height for the particular species as well as regular mowing frequency is important. Maintain balanced nutrition during the growing season. Consider applying light applications of a water-soluble nitrogen source (0.25 to 0.5 lb. N per 1000 sq. ft.) to stimulate growth for the plant to outgrow the symptoms during stressful times in the spring and fall. Anything that can be done to increase air circulation and light penetration will also reduce the severity of rust disease.

#### **NECROTIC RING SPOT ▲**

**Pathogen:** *Ophiosphaerella korrae*

**Primary hosts:** Kentucky bluegrass, annual bluegrass and fine leaf fescues


**Environmental conditions conducive**

**to disease development:** A root-infecting fungus that is in continuous association with the turf. Necrotic ring spot is a perennial disease that tends to occur in the same location from year to year. Plants within a circular pattern (i.e., several inches to feet in diameter) initially have a drought stress appearance, and eventually collapse and die.

Core aerify in spring and fall to reduce thatch accumulation. This also improves soil drainage through the alleviation of compaction. Implement deep and infrequent irrigation and maintain a mowing height of 2.5 to 3 inches. Treat the turfgrass with a complete balanced fertility program with more than 75% of the fertility applied in the fall months. This should minimize the severity of necrotic ring spot.

*continued on page 82*





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continued from page 80

**SUMMER PATCH**

**Pathogen:** *Magnaporthe poae*

**Primary hosts:** Kentucky bluegrass, annual bluegrass and fine leaf fescues

**Environmental conditions conducive to disease development:** A root-infecting fungus that is in continuous association with the turf. Symptoms can be misdiagnosed as drought stress. The symptoms of summer patch typically start out as small 1- to

**SUMMER PATCH**



2-in. patches where the plants die from the leaf tip down. The affected areas can expand from 3- to 12-in. in diameter and coalesce over time. Summer patch symptoms are typically more severe on sunny exposed slopes or areas surrounding walls, sidewalks or driveways.

To minimize the severity of summer patch aerify the turfgrass in the spring and fall to reduce thatch accumulation and improve soil drainage through the alleviation of compaction. Again deep and infrequent irrigation will help, along with maintaining a mowing height of 2.5 to 3 inches, and implementing a complete balanced fertility program with more than 75% of the fertility applied in the fall months. Acidifying nitrogen sources such as ammonium sulfate and sulfur-coated urea have shown to reduce summer patch disease severity when used in an overall management program.

**BROWN PATCH**

**Pathogen:** *Rhizoctonia solani*

**Primary hosts:** Perennial ryegrass, tall fescue

**Environmental conditions conducive to disease development:** hot days (80 to 90 F), warm nights (65 to 75 F), high relative humidity, soil moisture and increased leaf surface wetness duration, primarily early summer through early fall.

Patches generally occur in the size of a

continued on page 84

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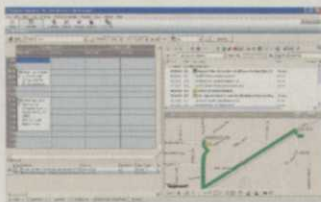
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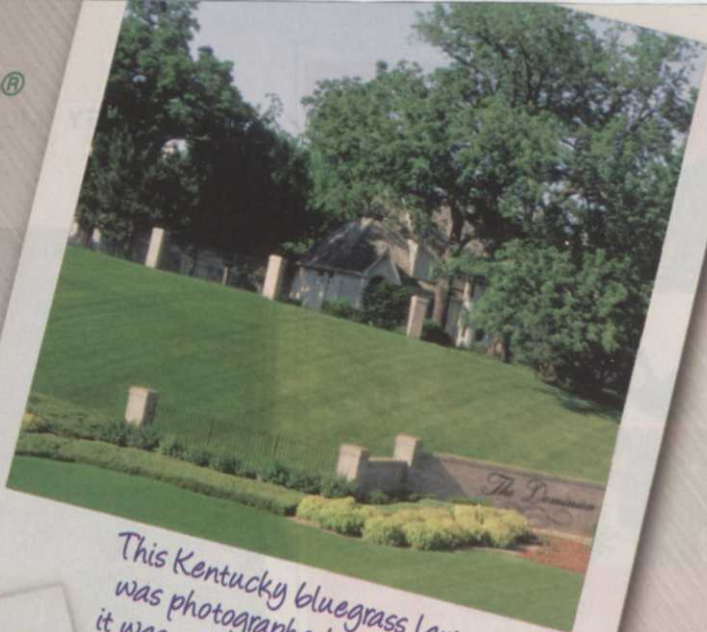
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## TECHNOLOGY MULTIPLE-APPROACH STRATEGY



**BROWN PATCH**

*continued from page 82*

softball up to 2 ft. in diameter. Observing the turf in the early morning under high humidity, you may observe abundant foliar mycelium in a circular patch. Around the border of the circular patch, the mycelium may take on a grayish cast — called 'smoke ring.' Close inspection of the leaves may show tan, water-soaked lesions that are irregular in shape and tend to have a chocolate brown border of the lesion. Overtime, patches will coalesce into large areas of blighted turf.

Once evening temperatures consistently reach into the mid to upper 60's F and day time highs are in the mid to upper 80's F, coupled with rain and showers, start looking for brown patch disease. Irrigate turf in the early morning to prevent increasing the leaf wetness duration of the turf canopy. Put down enough water to wet the root zone, but you don't want to keep the thatch/foliage wet over extended periods of time. The majority of your fertility program should be applied in the fall and limited in the spring after green up. Consider making light applications of 0.25 to 0.5 lb. N per 1,000 sq. ft. every two to four weeks during the summer months. This could be helpful.

### GRAY LEAF SPOT ▶

**Pathogen:** *Pyricularia grisea*

**Primary hosts:** perennial ryegrass, tall fescue and St. Augustinegrass

### Environmental conditions conducive to disease development:

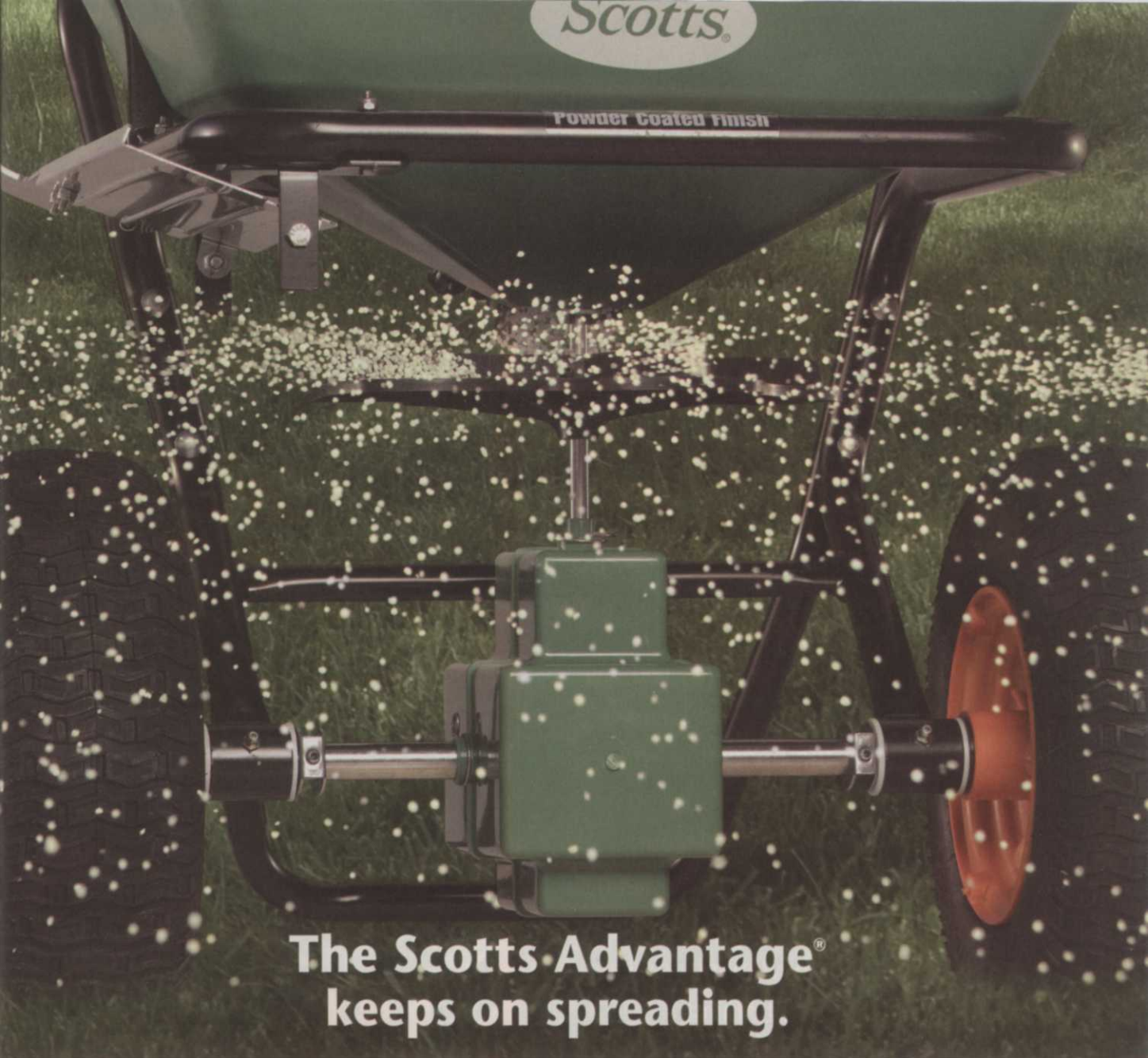
This disease is one of the last to be seen in lawns (mid-July through early-October) following summer months of high heat and humidity. It is usually more severe following prolonged periods of drought stress.

Fungicides may be necessary during the first year for the establishment of St. Augustine lawns from sprigs or sods since nitrogen and water requirements will be higher and will lead to conditions conducive for the disease. In perennial ryegrass and tall fescue, brown patch can be present at the same time as gray leaf spot. A preventive fungicide program would be the best choice for managing gray leaf spot as well as brown patch. **LM**

— *The author is a turfgrass scientist with Jacklin Seed by Simplot*







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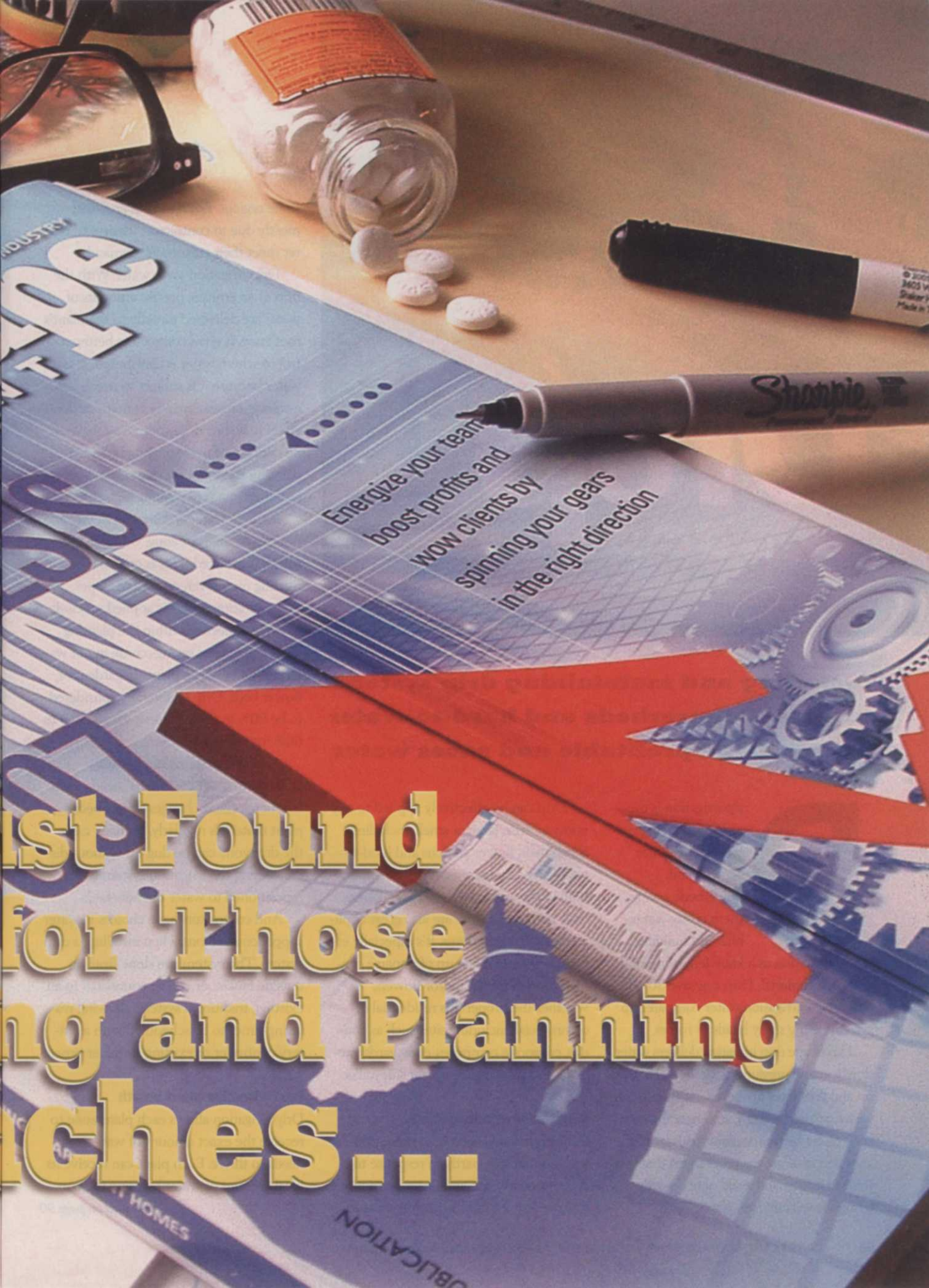
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# Drop

## BY DROP

BY JIM PATRICK

### Installing and maintaining drip systems in clients' flowerbeds and hard-to-water areas can be profitable and saves water

**D**rip irrigation is the answer to giving customers' healthier gardens and flowerbeds, saving them costly water bills and building your reputation as a knowledgeable landscape professional. Drip can save 30% to 65% of the irrigation water compared to systems using spray heads or rotors.

Landscape drip irrigation delivers water slowly, at low pressure (typically at 15 to 50 psi and flow rates measured in gallons/hour versus gallons/minute), at or near the root zone of the landscape plant material. It allows you to target the precise area that you want to irrigate and avoid unnecessarily watering the soil between plants.

Drip can be effectively applied to any non-turf area, large or small, including shrub beds, flower gardens and hard-to-water areas. Areas sensitive to overspray, high traffic areas, windy areas and areas with mixed plantings are also great applications for drip systems. It's especially effective in areas made up of a sparse configuration of plants and/or flowers, whether the property is residential or commercial, including sites such as condos, corporate campuses, courtyards, medians and planting areas near sidewalks.

#### Benefits of drip irrigation

Drip irrigation is becoming more popular with contractors, partly in response to drought conditions and water restrictions. It is the only form of irrigation allowed in

some regions. But its use is growing, mostly due to contractors' desires to better meet their customers' demands.

Drip irrigation saves water. With the drip of an emitter, precise amounts of water are delivered directly to the plant's root zone. It gives contractors better control of where water is distributed. It saves water because it is subject to much less evaporation since windy conditions don't affect it as they do spray. And there is no concern of over-spraying intended planting areas and soaking sidewalks, cars, buildings, roads or parking lots.

Because water is delivered slowly and directly to the root zone, water or soil runoff is reduced. This is critical when irrigating on uneven ground or slopes.

In addition, water is applied precisely where it is needed within the planting area. The biggest savings come in not watering soil between plants in gardens or flower beds. Drip is generally considered to be 90% to 95% efficient versus 30% to 60% for sprays and rotors.

Also, drip systems can be easily changed to meet customers' needs, such as when a client changes flower beds or plant materials regularly. In many cases the drip zone can be dug up without disconnecting the irrigation system and repositioned to water the new beds.

And contractors have choices in water supply connections when installing a drip system. The system can draw from an outside faucet, or can be connected to an existing, traditional system, allowing watering times to be scheduled with a battery controller or existing sprinkler timer.

#### Cost-effective plant health

Drip irrigation allows each plant zone to receive the exact amount of water it needs to thrive. Each plant can receive its ideal amount of water by using the cor-

*continued on page 90*



Four less reasons to think about global warming in the Southeast.



The Heat Tolerant Bluegrass Series tolerates the Southeast's heat and humidity while providing the beautiful appearance your customers demand. You get the fine leaf texture of the best Kentucky bluegrass, excellent resistance to brown patch and in some cases, four seasons of color. Each Heat Tolerant variety

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Circle 172



*continued from page 88*

rect size and amount of emitters, bubblers or micro-sprays.

Different drip products can distribute the water to the foliage itself or only to the soil, depending on what is best for a specific plant. Overhead water can create unsightly brown spots on some flowers, while it can aid the health of other plants. Drip allows you to tailor watering to meet the requirements of all plant types.

Installing and maintaining a drip irrigation system saves time and money. Start with a good design. It will dramatically improve the installation process. Typically they're easier to install than spray systems, but can return a nice profit for contractors nevertheless.

### Design flexibility

Installation of drip irrigation systems offers lots of flexibility. Flexible, polyethylene tubing conforms to individual and unique plant areas. PVC pipe, used with traditional systems, can be used as tubing with drip systems as well, but flexible tubing is advantageous because it can be placed in any direction and can be curved.

Contractors need few special tools to install and maintain drip systems. The basics of hydraulics and flow are similar for drip systems compared to traditional systems. Also, replacing parts because of vandalism shouldn't be a concern. Emitters, the small devices that control the flow of water going to the soil, and drip line typically remain relatively hidden from view in flower beds or gardens near high-traffic areas. Some emitters can pop up and down, retracting flush with the grade when not in use and keeping them out of sight. Other products make it easy for contractors to install tubing below grade.

### System design tips

More thought is required up front when designing a drip system compared to a

## Match products to sites

The care you take in selecting and installing products for each site will result in healthier, more attractive landscape plants and reduce system maintenance.

Take into account the flowerbed's or garden's water requirements, the climate, the soil and whether the irrigation zone has dense or sparse plantings.

Don't make the mistake in the design of using the same product for all applications. Different plants require different amounts of water. For dense plantings, inline emitter tubing is usually used due to its ease of use. However, polyethylene tubing with pop-up micro-sprays or PVC pipe with poly-flex risers and bubblers can also be used. For sparse plantings, polyethylene tubing with emitters or PVC pipe with poly-flex risers and emitters can target each plant and not water the soil in-between the plants.

Emitters come in many different flow rates and styles. Some emission devices are designed specifically for dense plantings and are considered broadcast emission devices. These include in-line emitter tubing, micro-sprays, misters and pop-up low-volume sprays. Pop-up sprays with low-flow nozzles are often used in annual flowerbeds, for instance.

Other emission devices are better suited to sparse plantings, but can also be used to supplement broadcast emission devices in dense plantings when a certain plant needs more targeted watering. These include single-outlet emitters, multi-outlet emitters and bubblers. These emitters come in a range of flow rates (from 0.5 gph to 24 gph) and inlet styles (barbed, threaded, spiked).

The plant type, the soil and the type of installation will determine which emitter to choose. To satisfy the different water intake requirements of plants in one irrigation zone, emitters can distribute different volumes of water using the same run time. — JP

traditional system to achieve maximum water distribution efficiency. Again, the goal is to deliver the proper amount of water to the root zone of the plants, which will require smart product selection, proper design, pressure regulation and filtration. Because drip requires low volume and low pressure, every drip irrigation system should include filtration and pressure regulation.

Pressure regulation ensures that the pressure entering the system doesn't exceed the maximum operating pressure of drip irrigation. Filtration keeps large particles from clogging downstream components, and lessens the chances of smaller particles from impeding the water flow from the emission device. Yes, periodically the filter will need to be cleaned, but self-cleaning filters exist that are ideal for certain applications. These virtually eliminate

maintenance. Complete control zone kits are also available on the market.

Hydraulic calculations are necessary in drip irrigation designs, just as they are with traditional systems.

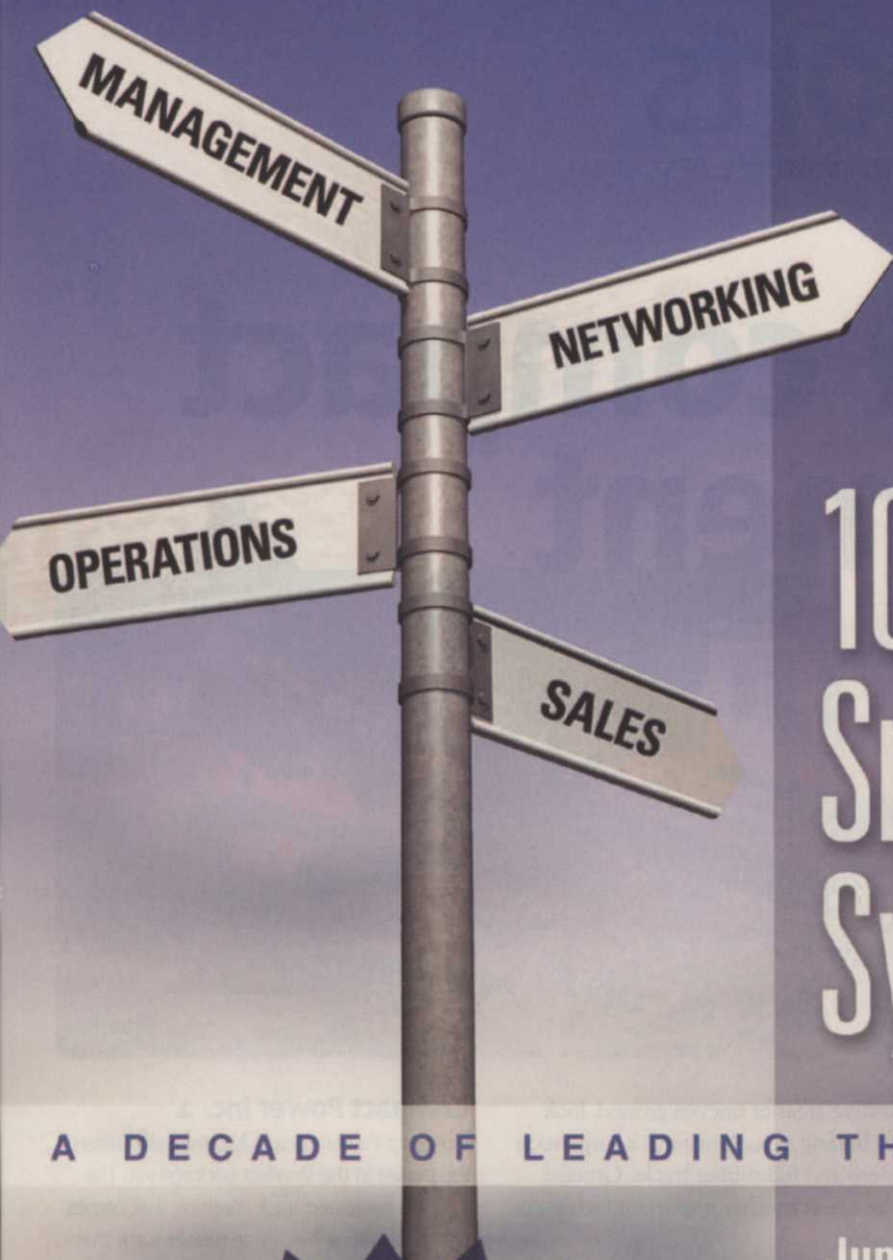
Size you header correctly for the amount of flow required, and take pressure loss into account when you calculate the lateral lengths of your tubing runs. Pressure should remain between 15 psi and 50 psi everywhere in the system after the pressure regulator.

A landscape drip design guide is a helpful tool that shows maximum lateral lengths and header sizes based on flow rates, helping determine calculations.

Find examples by visiting [www.rainbird.com/drip/literature/index.htm#appguides](http://www.rainbird.com/drip/literature/index.htm#appguides). **LM**

— The author is the marketing manager for Rain Bird's Landscape Drip division.





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## Mini & compact equipment

**T**he compact equipment industry has changed remarkably over the years. In the beginning, the industry could be summed up with two words: skid-steer.

Such machines helped take the "break" out of "back-breaking" and became synonymous with what was known as compact equipment.

But, as industry representatives and end-users know all too well, technology changes. For compact equipment, the main driver for change was the many users who found that their needs weren't being met by the limited functionality of skid-steers.

For example, compact track loaders, once a niche player, have taken chunks of market share from competitors over the last decade. According to the 2006 Yengst Associates "Equipment Analysis of Compact Track Loaders," more than 30,000 are expected to be sold in 2007.

"It was inevitable that inventive minds would develop alternatives to skid-steers that would challenge the basic assumptions of what compact machinery is, and what it should do for a landscaper," claims Brad Lemke, director of new product development at ASV. "For example, a rubber track loader can beat a skid-steer in virtually all applications. This has given a buyer a lot to think about when considering a purchase." Consider this:

► What sort of terrain will you be working on? If it includes turf, environmentally



sensitive areas or uneven ground, look into finding a machine with a suspension system and full rubber tracks. Ground clearance is another important factor to consider.

► Will you need to transport the machine or work in tight quarters? Machine width and trailering capabilities come into play here.

► If you're looking at a rubber track loader, how is the undercarriage designed? Some manufacturers have a suspension system, while others maintain rigid undercarriages. Factors to consider are the terrain and rider comfort.

► Is the track system incorporated into the design of the machine, or is it added to an existing skid-steer frame? A good point of consideration is whether or not a machine has been built to be a rubber track loader. Look for a machine where the tracks and the frame have been built from the ground up to work in unison.

### Compact Power Inc. ▲

Compact Power's Boxer 320 mini-skid offers the power in the smallest package yet. The 320 is a dedicated track machine that comes standard with a 7-in.-wide rubber track that produces only 3.2 psi of ground pressure to reduce damage to lawns and landscapes. The Boxer 320 is only 34.5 in. wide, but features a tip capacity of 1,250 lbs. and a 50% operating capacity of 625 pounds.


For more information contact Compact Power at 800/476-9673 or [www.boxerequipment.com](http://www.boxerequipment.com) / circle no. 264

### Gehl

Gehl provides three models of its compact track loaders: the CTL60, CTL70 and CTL80. The CTL60 features high-powered, 4-cylinder, liquid-cooled and emission-certified diesel engines, which deliver up to 97 hp for exceptional performance. Models CTL70 and CTL80 are turbo-charged. The 2-speed-drive system uses high-torque, radial-piston mo-

*continued on page 94*





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# LM Reports

continued from page 92

tors with planetary final drives. SAHR (spring-applied, hydraulic release) multi-disc wet brakes respond quickly to hold the loader on any grade. The units have exceptional hydraulic power, for dependable digging and self-leveling lift action, and for keeping loads balanced when the lift arm is raised.

**For more information contact Gehl at 262/334-9461 or [www.gehl.com](http://www.gehl.com) / circle no. 265**

## Ramrod

The 905, 915, 950 and 1150 Ramrod Taskmasters handle the most demanding jobs. The 905 Taskmaster can be as narrow as 32 in. to work in constrained areas and the 915 can wide track to 44 inches. There are more than 40 versatile, "quick on, quick off"

attachments. From the low-step stand-on platforms, operators get a clear, 360 degree unobstructed view of their work area.

**For more information contact Ramrod at 800/667-1581 or [www.ramrodequip.com](http://www.ramrodequip.com) / circle no. 266**

## Ditch Witch

At less than 36 in. wide, the Ditch Witch SK350 Mini Skid Steer can go anywhere you need it. The Ditch Witch SK300 is a 13-hp,



track-mounted, platform mini skid steer. The SK500 is a track-mounted, walk along mini skid steer. The SK650's powerful 31.5-hp Kubota diesel engine and hydraulic system give it the muscle to do the jobs of much larger machines.

**For more information contact Ditch Witch at 800/654-6481 or [www.ditchwitch.com](http://www.ditchwitch.com) / circle no. 267**

## Toro

Compared to other Dingo models, Toro's TX 525 Wide Track diesel compact utility loader offers extra torque, longer engine life and increased hydraulic flow for enhanced performance of ground-engaging at-



tachments. The model is compatible with Toro's 35-plus compact util-

ity loader attachments — making it suited for applications such as installing irrigation systems, preparing seedbeds, material hauling and handling, constructing decks and fences, tree planting, demolishing structures and pond building. Weighing 2,127 lbs. with a standard bucket, the TX 525 Wide Track has a rated operating capacity of 553 pounds.

**For more information contact Toro at 800/Dig-Toro or visit [www.toro.com](http://www.toro.com) / circle no. 268**

## Tiger Equipment

The Cheetah Mini Skid Loader is the only Stand-in-the-Middle mini skid steer loader. Less mistakes are made because the operator can see the work area. The Cheetah also offers excellent operator stability, exceptional overall balance, simple user-friendly controls, 24-hp Honda with electric start engine and a light footprint of 1,250 pounds. More than 40 attachments are available.

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## ASV

ASV's SR-80 rubber track loader is built on a new ISR-4 undercarriage with 20-in. rubber tracks, a multi-level suspension and four wheel carriages on each side that flex independently. The SR-80 has an overall width of 72 in., an all-new chassis and a 125-in. lift height for the bucket. The cab has an adjustable suspension seat, split lap bar with gauge package and an optional slide up door. The company also launched a smaller model, the SR-70 (not shown), with 15-in. tracks on a 66-in. machine. This model is built on the same chassis and cab as the SR-80. They can travel at max 7 and 12.5 mph.

For more information contact ASV at 218/327-3434 or visit [www.asvi.com](http://www.asvi.com) / circle no. 270

## Caterpillar ▶

Caterpillar's C-Series line of mini excavators has 22% more digging force and 10% more stick digging force than other models. The 301.6C and the 301.8C have 18.1 hp, increased hydraulic flow and pressure.

New, variable displacement hydraulic pump eliminates stalling. Operating weight is 3,792 lbs. when equipped with a cab and 3,548 lbs. with a canopy. Independent swing boom lets the machine work next to a wall or obstruction. 200-degree bucket rotation ensures good material retention at height as well as flat trenching capability.

For more information contact Caterpillar at 888/OWN-A-CAT or [www.cat.com](http://www.cat.com) / circle no. 271

## Hitachi

Two improvements to Hitachi's new Zaxis 17U-2 compact excavator are its adjustable-width tracks and its backfill blade with fold-



able end sections. These features reduce the width to 40 in., allowing maneuverability in previously inaccessible areas. When fully extended to more than 50 in., the undercarriage provides excellent stability for operations. The standard quick coupler/hydraulic attachment package increases job-site possibilities. The reduced tail-swing ZX17U-2 improves performance specs, more operator comfort, and better fuel economy.

For more information contact Hitachi at 800-675-8459 or [www.hitachiconstruction.com](http://www.hitachiconstruction.com) / circle no. 272

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Circle 153



# LM Reports

## IHI

IHI's NX series units have a hydraulic pilot joystick for higher responsiveness and zero tail swing. Mini excavator is powered by a 10-hp water-cooled diesel. Auxiliary hydraulics to front are standard, as is backfill blade. Has 5-ft., 2-in dig depth. Undercarriage expands from 27.5 - 37.5 inches.

For more information contact IHI at 800/538-1447 or [www.ihcompactexcavator.com/](http://www.ihcompactexcavator.com/) circle no. 273

## Kanga

With compact power to handle the toughest of jobs, whether moving soil or mulch across the work site, trenching for an irrigation system or installing a fence. The 16-hp Honda, electric-start Kanga Kid has more than 10 attachments, all with a quick attach mount plate. Unit weighs less than 1,000 lbs. and is 32 in. wide. Complete system trailer can be pulled behind a standard vehi-



cle. Ride-on operator platform and fingertip controls minimize training.

For more information call Kanga at 800/476-9673 or [www.kangaequipment.com/](http://www.kangaequipment.com/) circle no. 274

## Finn Corp. ▶

Finn Corp.'s Eagle compact skid steer comes in three models: 204, with 20-hp Kohler Command Pro; 244D, with 23.5-hp Cat diesel; and 252 with 25-hp Kohler Command Pro. Its 3,000 psi parallel hydraulic system provides full power simultaneously to all functions.

For more information contact Finn Corp. at 800/543-7166 or [www.finncorp.com/](http://www.finncorp.com/) circle no. 275

## Vermeer ▶

Vermeer Manufacturing Co.'s S600tx rubber track mini-skid steer features a spring-cushioned platform and two single-joystick controls with operator-handle grip that allows operators to keep their balance while operating any of the machine functions. A machine width of 35.75 in. allows the S600tx to maneuver through gates and other con-



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Circle 156



# Get a Grip

TECHNOLOGY

TRIMMER LINE, THE SCOOP

All of them will do the job.  
It boils down to which is easiest  
to use and does the best job.



## Test them first, then buy

BY ALLEN SPENCE

**Y**ou need to purchase trimmer line for your trimmers. You're faced with a bewildering number of choices. How do you know which one is for you? Is it even important?

Consider these points about trimmer line before you plunk down your hard earned cash:

1. Will this product help me make more money?
2. Will it do the job I need it to do?
3. How will it affect my equipment?
4. How easy is it to use?

Obviously, you won't know how a particular line will function until you've used it. It takes a bit of trial and error. Start by buying small quantities from a trusted source. You can find out for yourself what each type of trimmer line does.

The line comes in at least five sizes. Diameters of .065, .080, .095,

.105 and .130 are available. Within each size are several different shapes and colors – round, square, twisted, dimpled, and even hexagon shaped; it is a long list.

Trimmer line should be chosen by matching its diameter to the horsepower of the unit. The larger the line, the greater the power needed to rotate it. Failure to match the cutting-line diameter with horsepower may cause mechanical problems such as excessive carbon build-up, spark arrestor clogging, premature clutch failure or overheating.

► **Shapes** — Round line is more aerodynamic says one manufacture, square line has more cutting edges and lasts longer says another. Another advertises that their hexagon-shaped line has more mass resulting in a cleaner cut. It is also supposed to last longer. Then we have line with serrated edges. These edges act like saw blades and are designed to work better in grasses and weeds that tend to have stronger stalks. The dimpled line is claimed to accelerate faster, run quieter and cut better.

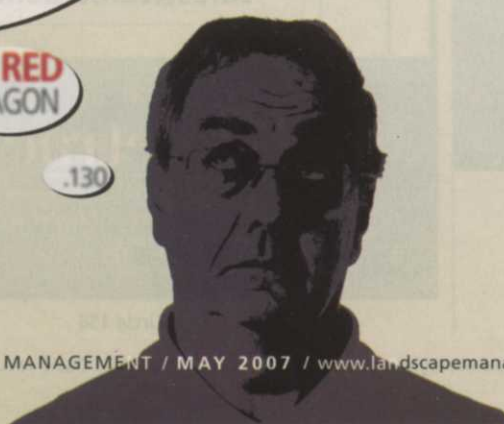
► **Colors** — Distributors' claims don't make the decisions easier. Green line blends in to the grass resulting in less time spent cleaning up, advertises one distributor. Red, yellow and blue are highly visible, which results in faster clean up times, argues another.

Of all these choices which one is right for you? All of them will do the job, but which one will do the job best for you? It boils down to which is easiest to use and does the best job for you.

— *The author is turf equipment management instructor at Hinds Community College in Raymond, MS. Contact him at [hspence@hindsc.edu](mailto:hspence@hindsc.edu).*



.130







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# Project Portfolio

DESIGN/BUILD

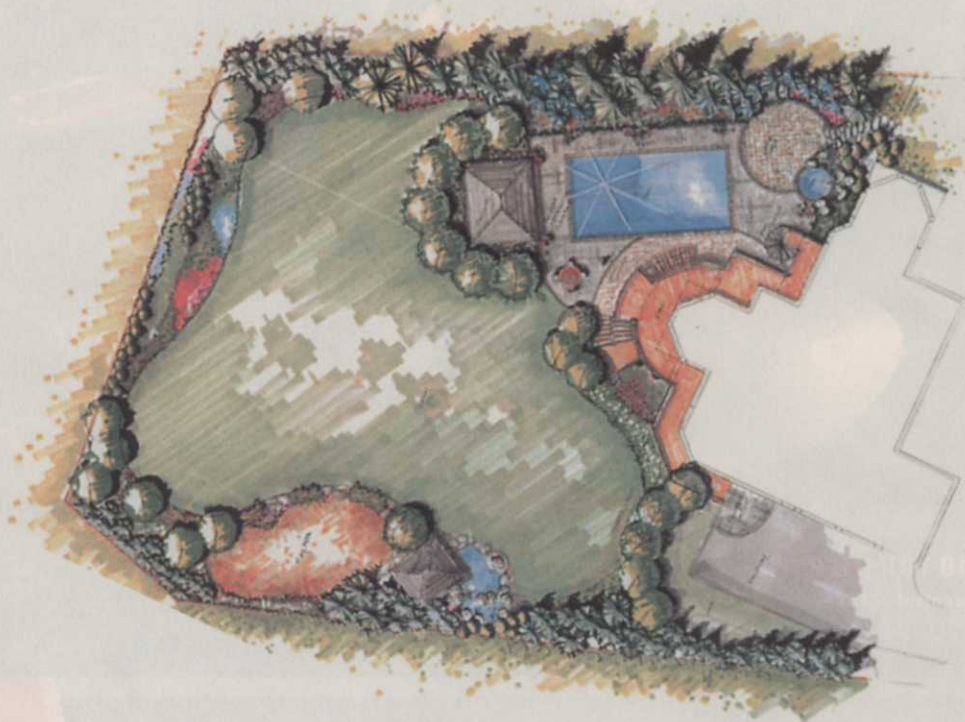
RENOVATION / OUTDOOR KITCHEN / POOL TERRACE

## The design

Connecting stairways, an outdoor kitchen and a new, larger pool deck terrace were on the wish list for the occupants of this 5-year-old home.

## The site before construction

A small deck, two separate staircases, a swimming pool, pavilion and landscape planting.



PHOTOS BY: ERIN B. BOGAN / MICHAEL LANDSCAPE DESIGN

## Project Requirements

- Relocate the existing pavilion.
- Add a curved upper deck with new connecting stairways, an outdoor kitchen and new pool terrace – one that repeated the curve of the pergola.
- Access off the heavily used garage driveway area made materials storage and backyard access a challenge during the project.

## Project Specifics

The existing hardscape and woodwork did not meet the standards of craftsmanship and design the new owners wanted.



**ABOVE** The pavilion was moved and centered on the new, larger pool deck, which has a detailed paving pattern and bull nose bluestone coping.

**RIGHT** The geometric IPE decking was fastened by a biscuit system, preventing any surface penetration to the decking.







AFTER

BEFORE



**ABOVE** Fiberglass architectural columns and synthetic PVC trim material are long-lasting alternatives to wood trim, and the raised panel detail of the below-deck dry storage area repeats the home's architectural detail. Also note the curved decking border boards, which were constructed by milling a 2x10 board down to 1-inch thickness and then scribing the curve. This before shot shows the original staircases and drab patio area.

### Project Principal

■ McHale Landscape Design,  
Upper Marlboro, MD

**ABOVE** The new staircase features a steel framework clad with IPE treads, PVC synthetic risers, solid 6x6 cedar posts and a mahogany rail cap. The cap was built on site by scribing the metal rail shape onto a full 2x8 piece of IPE.

This project was a Grand Award winner in PLANET's Environmental Improvement Awards program. For more information on this program, or other services of the Professional Landcare Network, please call 800/395-2522 or visit [www.landcarenetwork.org](http://www.landcarenetwork.org).



## State Line project

Passion for customer satisfaction delivers a renovation featuring a year-round outside swimming pool

BY SUE BROKAW GUARD

**S**ituated on the far eastern edge of Kansas, smack dab next to the Missouri border, lies the town of Olathe (pronounced O-lay-thuh). It's the Shawnee word for "beautiful." Included among the 100,000 residents is Jason Cupp, CEO of Highland Outdoor Landscape Designers, which caters to upscale residences and commercial properties.

Because of the city's locale, Cupp named one of his company's most recent ventures the State Line Project. It's a high-end ranch-style home of about 5,000 sq. ft. surrounded by about an acre of landscaping that required enhancements or renovations. A Kansas City, MO, firm, D. Andersen Consulting, provided the project's engineering and consulting.

### Built on trust

Dan Andersen and Jason Cupp have worked together for three years on other projects, as well. Their thoughts and

philosophies dovetail so well that you would think that one can read the mind of the other. There is pride but no ego in their business relationship.

"We think alike and we both keep an open mind for change or suggestions," says Andersen. "We believe craftsmanship, creativity, trust and client importance is woven into every project. All of these qualities result in achieving our goals."

Cupp has been passionately devoted to landscape design/build since 1986. It's a commitment that fuels the efforts of Highland's employees, as well.

With the State Line project, Cupp and Andersen worked with a client who travels a great deal. He requested that his outdoor pool be designed so that he could use it year 'round. Heated to 89 F. for that purpose, the client enjoys the heated pool even when the winter temperatures fall below freezing, which happens, on average, about 100 days a year in Kansas City.

"It was a big project," Cupp says of the pool renovation. "We installed a



Winter dip in the pool? A Kansas City homeowner enjoys winter swims thanks to Highland Outdoor Landscape Designers.

cover that slides out of sight when the pool is not in use. If the client is not home, the cover is put in place and the pool temperature is turned down. When Andersen says the client is returning home, we uncover the pool and turn up the temperature, all by computer. All is ready when the client gets home."

### No cold feet here

When Highland Outdoor says it delivers customer service, it's not just talking, it's doing.

"On one occasion it snowed 12 inches overnight. Any time the client is home, the

*continued on page 104*

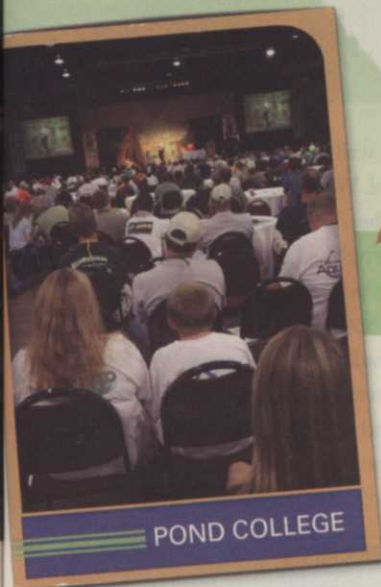


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continued from page 102

crew arrives about 5 a.m. to remove the snow so that he can swim in the morning without walking through snow," says Cupp. "And the snow is removed by hand so there isn't a lot of noise that would wake up the client." When the client is out-of-town, a machine removes the snow.

Meeting customer expectations in spite of unforeseen challenges is the hallmark of a quality company, and the State Line project had challenges.

Andersen says: "We wanted to enhance the pool perimeter in an onyx color so we found and ordered about 18 tons of Mexican pebbles. Our concrete supplier stored the stone at his yard. Then it rained. A jelly-like substance oozed from the stone and we were astonished. Everyone — me, Jason Cupp, and the

Cupp's company enhanced some of the features already present, on the property, such as the limestone walls and the red brick pathway.

supplier. We sent a few of the stones to a lab for processing and it was discovered the goo was some type of algae. We had to replace the stone with another type of shiny black pebbles."

Cupp emphasized that the landscaping, brickwork and other requirements were not all new installations.

"We enhanced and reclaimed what was already there to keep the house as original as possible," Cupp says. "A rectangular

limestone wall with arched insets is next to the pool. We cleaned it up and added two lions heads that were elsewhere on the property. The lions heads became fountains that flowed into the pool."

Vines, both dried and healthy, covered a similar wall on the property. "We found the main root system was strong and healthy and we pruned the foliage back, keeping the vines along the top of the wall as decorative greenery. Regular main-



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tenance will keep the growth under control." Similarly, Highland Outdoor Landscape Designers and upgraded the landscape's irrigation system.

Because the client likes to entertain guests poolside, the company installed new lighting at the pool area and also in the landscape at the rear of the house, which also features a red, brick pathway and a patio.

"On the morning of the big celebration party, we were checking the lighting one more time and found one of the transformers had blown," recalls Andersen. "Jason had one of his crew go to his own home and get a transformer from his yard. The party went off without a hitch,"

Cupp's Highland Outdoor specializes in upscale residential design/build projects, maintenance of any landscaping and snow removal, as well as providing similar services on premier commercial properties. It also incorporates property management and concierge services into its residential/commercial packages.

#### More challenges ahead

However, Cupp's real passion is envisioning the finished project, such as the State Line project.

He and Andersen are working on another challenging residential property where the owner has requested an indoor swimming pool. It's not your "cookie cutter" indoor pool with a greenhouse-type of roof.

"It's going to be in the middle of the house, accessible from the living room,

the kitchen and the master bedroom," explains Cupp.

As with every other project the Andersen/Cupp collaboration has been involved with, this one sounds like it's going to pose some fascinating challenges.

"As long we don't lose sight of our vision and we don't let our passion start flagging — and we won't — we'll be fine," says Cupp confidently. **LMI**

— *The author lives in Cleveland. Contact her at [neebrokaw@yahoo.com](mailto:neebrokaw@yahoo.com).*

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# Collaborative effort

Tossing out the plans and designing a residential water feature as you go can spell disaster — or something incredible

BY DON DALE

**W**hen you put a creative contractor together with an equally adventurous client, unexpected things can happen. Sometimes you have to trust your ingenuity, tap into your client's enthusiasm and let 'er rip, says contractor Mike Bulone.

Maybe this is one of those "don't try

this at home," projects, but Bulone, owner of Bulone Brothers Landscaping, Aurora, OH, made it happen. He "teamed" with a client to create what an incredible backyard waterscape project. In other words, Bulone and the client agreed to pretty much scrap the original blueprints and the original contract — and "wing it" in the midst of a very complex job.

Not a good idea? Recipe for disaster?

From time to time, given the right circumstances, why not throw caution to the wind and test yourself, asks Bulone? He started his design/build company in 1992, and since he's experienced in creating water features and loves the ingenuity they require, he was confident his company and the client could pull it off

— he just didn't know how.

The customers found Bulone through a local pond and garden tour after admiring the water feature he saw at the contractor's house. That led to some work, such as renovating an existing pond in the client's front yard. But the big job was to be a water feature in the backyard.

## Leaving the known behind

That job ultimately encompassed the entire backyard and took up about five months of Bulone's time over a period of almost a year. Taking the client's original ideas, Bulone came up with some of his own. This led to a collaborative effort that was so creative that it necessitated leaving the original design and working from day to day on elements that client and contractor collaborated on.

*continued on page 108*

◀ The bridge, concrete with a stone veneer, is based on a bridge in a Thomas Kincade print.





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*continued from page 106*

"There was a lot of creativity there. It was above and beyond the normal," Bulone says. He loved the process, and the client got into the spirit of the project.

By the end of the job, the back yard

▼ **Grade changes challenged Bulone's crew in building the patio and water features.**



held a stream, a bridge, an extensive patio, a lot of new vegetation and a waterfall as well as several small water grade changes ending in a pondless reservoir. It was a water feature that grew, in phases, into an entire landscape.

The job began in the fall of 2005 with the grading of the odd, triangular backyard. The first part of the work was a walkway and multi-tiered patio. Next came a 6-ft.-long footbridge, which Bulone conceived as being stone. It ended up being built in three phases in concrete, and then his crew put a stone veneer on it. The bridge was based on the client's concept of a Thomas Kinkade painting that had a bridge in it.

"Then we started carving out our stream bed," Bulone says. It ran under the bridge, dropping three levels, and ended



in a huge hole filled with gravel. That was the pondless water holding tank, the size calculated after figuring grade requirements and the fact that the recirculating system would require 17,000 gallons of water per hour.

Using mostly Aquascapes circulation equipment, the water system began with a hidden biofalls box from which water overflowed into the head of the stream among some evergreen trees. At the bottom, water was recirculated through a pump and filtration in a vault hidden in the holding pond. Three pumps were used in all. There is a 4-ft.-tall waterfall by the bridge that streams into the holding tank and is viewable from the house.

Another prominent aspect was the stones and boulders. Bulone was almost fanatical in selecting colored "character stones". He and his crew fitted about 50 tons of stone into the landscape, including many moss stones and one 700-lb. boulder that he drilled through with a diamond bit so that stream water could run through it. Reworked drainage and a planting of Canadian hemlock trees for backyard privacy were also necessary.

**Excellence recognized**

The yard turned out to be beautiful, and it won the 2006 Water Features & Lighting Award (Category II, over \$25,000) from the Ohio Landscape Association. But a beautiful part of the story is how well this turned out with both client and builder tossing out ideas over the course



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◀ Bulone took care in selecting the boulders and "character stones" that would grace the flowing stream and 4-ft.-tall waterfall. Everything is viewable from the client's house

design, they also agreed to set aside the original estimate and contract. Because the project grew and grew, the company basically ended up working on a per-day rate that was acceptable to both parties.

"The homeowner's very happy," Bu-

lone adds. "That's what it all comes down to." **LM**

— The author is a freelance writer living in Altadena, CA, has been covering the Green Industry for more than a decade. Contact him at [info@landscapemanagement.net](mailto:info@landscapemanagement.net).

of the project. Bulone is still amazed by the customers' active participation.

"We wanted to make sure we were on the same page," he points out, so good communication was important. Fortunately, the homeowner was around a lot, and Bulone was on the job most of the time himself. "A lot of it, we winged it," he recalls, and made corrections to the corrections as they went along.

For anyone who knows Bulone, that doesn't come as a surprise. He's a creative contractor who loves to tweak and redesign and reassemble as he progresses. When you're working in concrete and stone, that can be a hassle, but he's just the type of guy who will tear out work if the aesthetics aren't there for him. His crew of seven to 10 workers (it varies with the season) has learned to be patient with him. "First of all, they know I'm crazy," jokes Bulone.

As for this particular client, he calls him a "needle-in-a-haystack kind of customer." He says that their relationship was so successful that early in the game the two of them not only began changing the

▼ The 6-ft.-long concrete bridge was built in phases and is a focal point of the landscape.



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continued on page 112

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# Products

continued from page 110

## Green Industry software

New and improved Groundskeeper Pro software from Adkad Technologies makes it a breeze for landscaping and lawn care companies to do their books. Groundskeeper Pro features scheduling, routing, billing, customer account maintenance, job estimating, customizable customer lists, tracking business expenses and more. The software is packed with additional features: enter up to 10,000 customers; invoice for regular repeating services and estimates; invoice for special services and time and materials; print or email invoices; easy access to customer account history. Besides the time savings, the software enables companies to look more professional.

For more information contact Adkad Technologies at 800/586-4683 or [www.Adkad.com](http://www.Adkad.com) / circle no. 282



## Dump trailers

Designed for a wide range of applica-

tions, Bri-Mar's Low-Profile Heavy-Duty (LP HD) dump trailers have the deck positioned between the wheels. The tires and fenders are located outside the frame and body of the trailer, producing a wider, more stable wheelbase and lower center of gravity. The low-profile deck is closer to the ground and minimizes the angle of ramp incline. This makes it better suited for general, landscape or hardscape contractors who transport equipment and haul materials. All models have 81.5-in.-wide beds that are 12, 14 or 16 ft. in length, with 5.0-, 5.9- and 6.6-cu.-yd. capacities.

For more information contact Bri-Mar at 800/732-5845 or [www.bri-mar.com](http://www.bri-mar.com) / circle no. 283



## Pond aerator

The Boilermaker is an improved high volume floating surface aerator designed for maximum oxygen transfer and water flow. The low profile design of the "Boilermaker" creates a maximum volume white boil effect of highly aerated water which fish love and algae hates. The heavy-duty design of the Boilermaker is ideal for salt water applications and for fresh water use. The Boilermaker's large volume of water circulation and the highest oxygen transfer rates makes this water feature the preferred selection.

For more information contact Scott Aerator Co. at 800/WATER-45 or [www.scottaerator.com](http://www.scottaerator.com) / circle no. 284

## System-In-A-Box

Weathermatic introduces new pre-packed irrigation systems that help contractors save time during installation. The "System-in-a-Box" features key irrigation components that are ready to install at a residential site, including: a SmartLine modular controller, plug-in module, rotors with nozzle racks and key,



spray heads with nozzles, a choice of valves and optional weather station. Two systems packs are available: the Pro Pack and the Tract Pack. The pre-packed cartons save 10% off a system's cost, as compared to purchasing the products individually.

For more information contact Weathermatic at 888/4-THE-PRO or [www.smartline.com](http://www.smartline.com) / circle no. 285

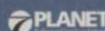
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Circle 165

continued on page 114





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# Products

continued from page 112

## Gets grubs out

GrubOut Season Long Grub Control is based on the active ingredient imidacloprid, which is the most widely used chemistry for season-long grub control. Andersons, a premier formulator of professional fertilizers and control products, offers a variety of fertilizer + GrubOut formulations to meet the needs of turf managers. A granular version (no fertilizer) is also available for Andersons' DG Pro dispersible carrier.

For more information contact Andersons at 800/253-5296 or [www.andersonsinc.com](http://www.andersonsinc.com) / circle no. 286

## Visual scheduling aid

To ease the burden of complex scheduling for landscaping businesses, Magnatag Visual Systems has introduced the Do-Done JobStage Tracker. This color-coded, magnetic white-

board designed specifically for the landscape contractor features 16 columns to track each stage of a project from beginning to end for a wide range of customers. The Do-Done JobStage Tracker comes with Magnatag's unique FlipOver Do-Done 2-sided yellow-green 5/8-in. diameter magnetic circle symbols to show yellow for each pending stage and green for completed tasks.

For more information contact Magnatag at 800/624-4154 or [www.magnatag.com](http://www.magnatag.com) / circle no. 287

## Tidal Wave of color

Pairing an extra-large container with an in-ground planting of the same plants makes an impact on professional landscapes. Tidal Wave spreading petunias from Ball Horticultural Co. are designed for this luscious look because they stand out in both large containers and landscapes. By planting Tidal Wave Silver spreading petunias in-ground, and then "top-



ping off" the look with a large container of the same variety, the plants will grow "up and over" the sides of the container for a mountain of color that cascades onto the landscape bed below. Tidal Wave petunias can reach 16 to 22 in. tall and spread up to four feet.

For more information contact Ball Horticulture Co. at 800/879-BALL or [www.BallLandscape.com](http://www.BallLandscape.com) / circle no. 288

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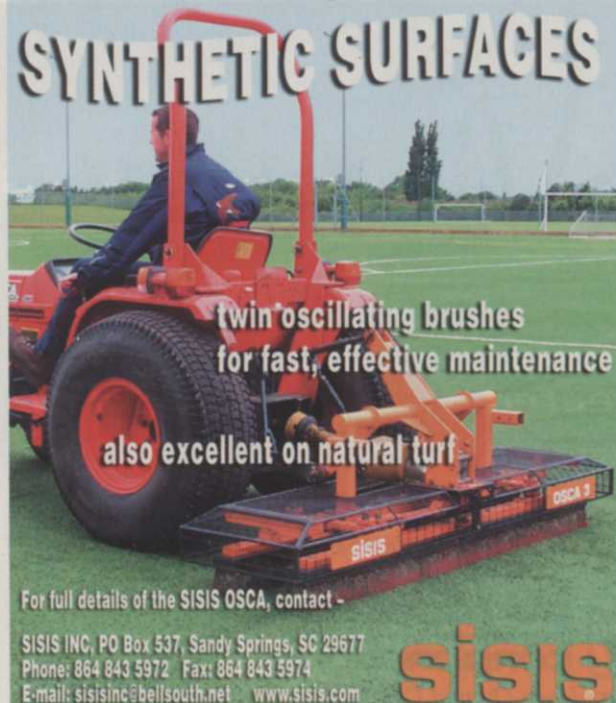
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**1. My primary business at this location is: (Fill in ONE only)**

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- 01  Landscape Contractors (Installation & Maintenance)  
 02  Lawn Care Service Companies & Custom Chemical Applicators (ground & air)  
 03  Irrigation Contractors & Consultants  
 14  Ornamental Shrub & Tree Services  
 15  Landscape Architects  
 04  Other Contractors/Service Companies (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPLIERS AND CONSULTANTS

- 09  Extension Agents/Consultants for Horticulture 10  Sod Growers, Turf Seed Growers & Nurseries  
 11  Dealers, Distributors, Formulators & Brokers 12  Manufacturers  
 13  Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**3. Which of the following services does your company provide? (Fill in ALL that apply)**

MAINTENANCE/SERVICES

- 01  Mowing 04  Turf Disease Control 07  Irrigation Services 09  Tree Care  
 05  Turf Fertilization 06  Turf Aeration 47  Bedding/Perennial Installation 10  Pond/Lake Care  
 02  Turf Insect Control 45  Hydro-seeding 11  Snow Removal  
 03  Turf Weed Control 46  Erosion Control 08  Ornamental Care 49  Perimeter Pest Control

DESIGN/BUILD

- 12  Landscape Design 14  Irrigation Installation 48  Landscape Lighting Installation 98  Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
 13  Landscape Installation 15  Paving/Deck/Patio Installation

**4. Which of the following landscape products do you purchase or specify? (Fill in ALL that apply)**

- 27  Mowers 22  Herbicides 28  Ornamental/Nursery Products 33  Tractors  
 18  Engines 21  Fungicides 24  Irrigation Systems 44  Pick up Trucks  
 16  Blowers 40  Biological/Organics 38  Ponds/Water Features 43  Cab Forward Trucks  
 17  Chain Saws 36  Turf Seed/Seed 29  Pavers/Masonry/Bricks/Rocks 11  Utility Vehicles  
 26  Line Trimmers 32  Spreaders (Hardscape Materials) 41  Business Management Software  
 20  Fertilizers 39  Bedding/Perennials 31  Skid Steers 97  Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
 23  Insecticides 42  Compact Track Loaders

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

- 001  More than \$4,000,000 003  \$1,500,000 - \$1,999,999 005  \$500,000 - \$999,999  
 002  \$2,000,000 - \$4,000,000 004  \$1,000,000 - \$1,499,999 006  Less than \$500,000

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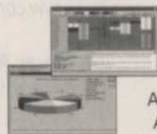
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## An unusual alliance

Four former competitors pool interests and service strengths to become a market force

BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

Sharing clients, equipment, advertising is rare. In the real world contractors compete. But there are instances where contractors refer business to each other, often in a contractor/sub relationship. But four companies serving a market in what can most accurately be described as a "confederation"? That's a stretch.

### Finding synergy

Located in the far northeast corner of Ohio, the four companies, last year, crafted a relationship to share resources such as advertising dollars, jobs and sometimes even equipment and employees.

Previously, they competed for essentially the same customers, even though each company specialized in a different service. This meant they relied upon subcontractors to deliver all of the landscape services that many clients wanted. It wasn't a satisfactory arrangement, several of them felt. They were losing clients to ambitious subs. Also, they weren't

satisfied that the subs were recommending work back to them from potential clients.

That led to each of the four companies becoming more specialized and joining forces in a loose "partnership" to offer a complete range of landscape services. The companies are:

- ▶ **Basic Lawn Care**, specializing in residential lawn care, gutter cleaning and maintenance;
- ▶ **Brobst Landscaping**, offering mulch blowing, lawn installation, hydro seeding, commercial mowing and snowplowing;
- ▶ **Just Gardens Landscaping**, a landscape design and installation operation; and
- ▶ **Reflections Natural Waterscapes** water features and hardscaping.

"The worst thing is to turn away business because you're too busy," says Julie Cole of Just Gardens Landscaping. "Sometimes you have to be because there's too much work and not enough of you to go around. You lose a sale and, usually, the potential for future work. That was a problem, but I also was reluctant to send business elsewhere.



**The 4-in-1 team:** (from left) JR Cross, Basic Lawn Care; Joe Brobst, Brobst Landscaping; Eric Eland, Brobst Landscaping; Julie Cole, Gardens Landscaping

### How it started

Cole started thinking about thinking about partnering with other quality companies when she visited a client's house and was impressed with the backyard pond built by Eric Eland of Reflections Natural Waterscapes.

"I called Eric and told him how impressed I was with his work, asked questions about his company, insurance and other work he did," she says. "Soon Eric's company became my go-to company for water features and brick work."

Similarly, she found herself referring more of her clients to Basic Lawn Care for lawn care and Brobst Landscaping for other landscaping work at which her company wasn't proficient.

"We liked how our individual companies cooperated, and we discovered that we all liked specializing in certain services," Cole says. "Of course, we were comfortable referring work to each other because we were all fully insured, reputable and committed to great customer service."

That comfort eventually grew into trust.

This spring the relationship changed again with Eland hooking up with and bringing his expertise to Brobst Landscaping. As a result, Basic Lawn Care is adding pond care and cleanup services at the request of Reflections Natural Waterscapes, which couldn't keep up with demand. Even so, the officers of the companies continue to talk each week, share ideas and offer help to the others. **LM**



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