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### Best issue in five years

On behalf of the members of the New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association, I would just like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the October 2010 issue of *Landscape Management*. In my opinion, this is the best issue of any landscape industry publication that I have seen in the past five years! Great job to all who contributed to this informative, exciting and intriguing issue. Keep up the great work.

— **Gail E. Woolcott**, *Director of Operations, New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association, Elmwood Park, NJ*

### Service to serious business owners

I just read through the October issue of *Landscape Management* and I want you to

know I think it is the best yet! The stories and experiences are all positive examples of what I see every day ... businesses using creative and often new approaches to doing business in this economy. I think this issue is a real service to anyone who is serious about business. Nice job!

— **Bill Hoopes**, *Owner, Grass Roots Training, Columbus, OH*

### Sustainability trend continues evolving

I just read your September 2010 issue of *Landscape Management*, and saw a number of articles about the budget and labor crisis.

The bubble has burst and everyone is bidding margins to eliminate any profits, but everyone continues doing the same thing. This reminds me of Albert Einstein's definition of insanity: "Doing the same thing again and again and expecting a different result."

"The Ideas Issue" covers

a lot of ground, but few will move on new ideas. They will keep doing the same thing and expecting the market to come back and life to return as it was.

But there are a few companies breaking away from the pack, and moving ahead with sustainable landscapes. Sustainable landscapes grew through landscape architects and has been based on new designs and new construction, which is not out there now. Interestingly, sustainability is a value that can be offered to all of the landscapes already established in the ground.

We are currently involved in a number of projects focused on sustainable medical centers, sustainable parks and sustainable resorts. This trend is evolving.

With respect, and the best to you and your publication.

— **Michael Chaplinsky**, *President, Turf Feeding Systems, Houston, TX*



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# HEAVY



# METAL

BY DAN JACOBS MANAGING EDITOR

Mower manufacturers provide landscape contractors with more options than they've ever had. **Efficiency and productivity are key** if contractors want to continue to operate profitably.







# HE MOWER MAKES IT HAPPEN.

Even when the economy is good, contractors are looking for ways to do more with less. The current economic conditions have simply reinforced the need to run their businesses more efficiently, to find a way to get more productivity from their crews and, of course, from their equipment.

Every year manufacturers try to do their part by releasing new mower models. They find new ways to tweak engines to adjust to rising fuel costs and contractors' demands to get more from their machines — from ease of maintenance to fuel efficiency to run time. And occasionally they come up with a game changer like the stand-on or the zero-turning-radius rider.

But when all the trappings are stripped away leaving only the most basic considerations, there are two factors that take top consideration over purchase price.

“Quality of cut and reliability would be the

two most important features,” says Brett Miller, owner, Brett Miller Landscaping, Ogden, UT.

While nothing at this year's GIE+EXPO suggested contractors will revamp their mower fleets, there were updates and new models that offer contractors and their crews the ability to get more for their time and investments. (For the latest offerings, see our mower roundup beginning on page 18). As contractors are ready to bring new machines into rotation, they will find more mowers that offer alternative fuels and other efficiencies.

### Efficiency trends

Contractors face a constant barrage of increasing costs: fuel, labor and materials. But once they've mastered routing and cut the dead weight from their crews and back office staff, there's not much more in the way of expenses to get rid of. And while you might be holding on to the equipment a little longer, sooner or later, maintenance and the associated downtime costs are going to outweigh the value of a new machine.

For the past several years, mower manufacturers have emphasized the energy and time-saving aspects of the their products.

“We're always looking for new technology in everything,” says Jason Laws, landscape manager, Elite Grounds, Pleasant Grove, UT. “It all contributes to the bottom line.”

Like other manufacturers, at Milwaukee, WI-based Briggs & Stratton, maker of Snapper mowers, the focus has been on improving performance, decreasing emissions and enhancing the durability of its mowers.

“All of these trends add up to increased productivity by making sure the landscaper has the right unit with the right features for the job, which results in being able to mow more acres per hour,” says Laura Timm, director of corporate communications for Briggs & Stratton.

While increased efficiency in engines might be de rigueur today, a style introduced several years ago is still making its way onto trucks and trailers.

*continued on page 12*



Jason Laws



Brett Miller

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY: CARRIE PARKHILL; SOURCE IMAGES BY: DREAMTIME, HUSTLER

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*continued from page 11*

For Mark Teegen, the fleet manager at Acres Group, Wauconda, IL, “the stand-on mower is definitely changing our industry.”

One way in which contractors are looking to save money and time is by finding tools that can multi-task or reduce equipment load and space. The

stand-on is that tool for Teegen.

“We’re trending toward stand-on mowers because they seem to be more efficient,” he says. “If we can replace a walk-behind and a rider with a stander, that’s the thing we like.”

Having one mower that can do the job of two means less labor and maintenance, both expenses that drop

straight to the bottom line.

“We cut down the amount of equipment we need to maintain a property by using a different type of mower,” Teegen says. “Functionality is No. 1.”

### Attachments

There are several factors contractors consider when looking at new mowers.

One factor that manufacturers have been focused on is versatility. The more jobs crews can get done with one piece of equipment, the more efficient and productive they will be.

“Using zero-turn maneuverability to perform edging, leaf blowing, vacuum collection, aeration, snow removal and spray application in addition to mowing results in maximum efficiency, superior customer satisfaction and saves time, fuel and labor costs for increased profitability,” says Stan Guyer, president, The Grasshopper Co., Moundridge, KS.

“Landscapers can provide full service to their accounts and efficiently optimize labor without having to maintain a myriad of stand-alone implements by using their front-mount mower to power close-coupled implements with all the benefits of zero-turn maneuverability,” Guyer continues.

Of course they can only accomplish that goal if attachments are easy to mount and change.

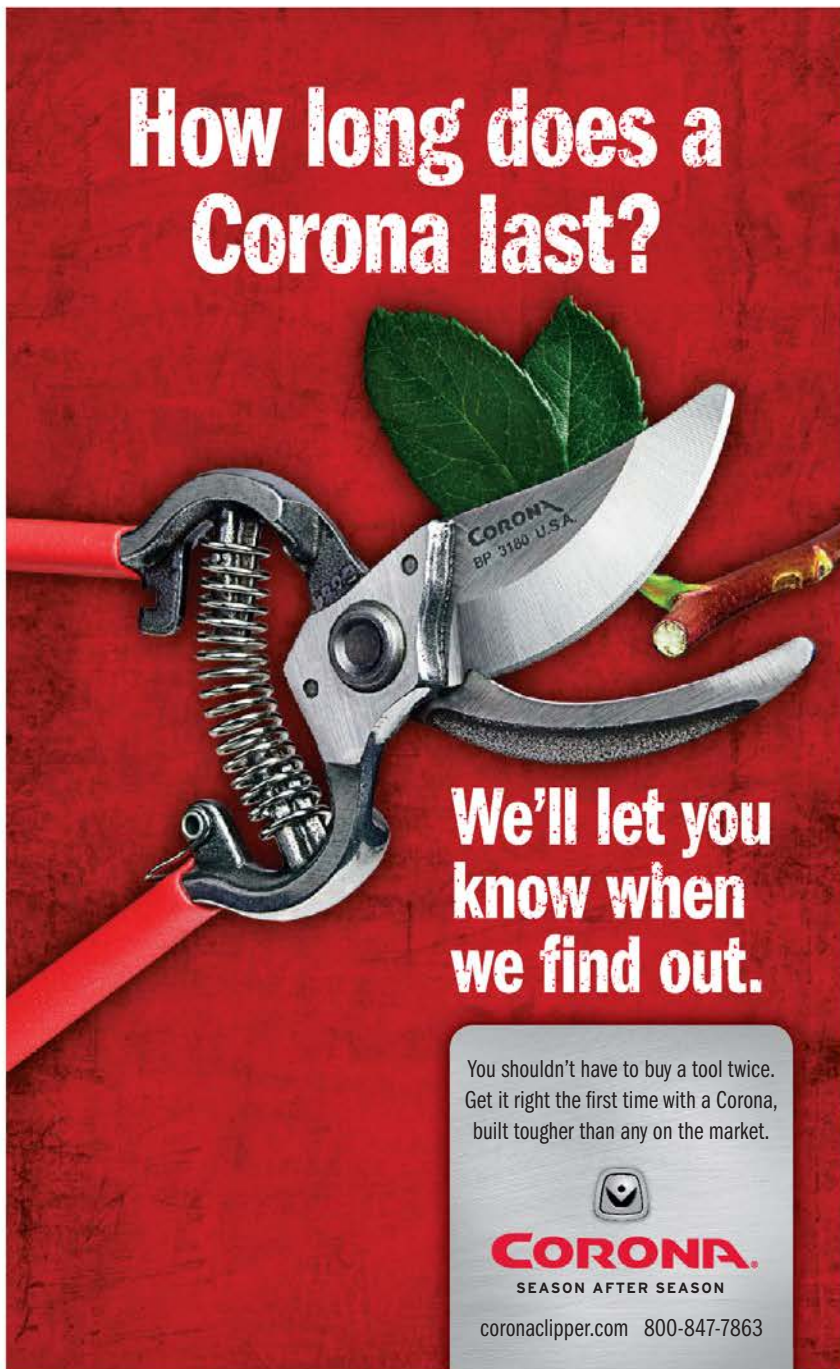
“Ease of operation is one of the top concerns for commercial operators, as less time training and learning new equipment impacts the bottom line,” says Allen Baird, product manager, Cub Cadet, Cleveland, OH. “New equipment that works on a variety of terrain is also important. For those with customers across a large geographic area, it is very important that tools function properly on all landscapes.”

### Alternative fuels

As gasoline prices near and surpass \$3 gallon, there seems to be some renewed interest in alternative energy options.

According to *LM’s Mower Survey*, the split on operating mowers that consume alternative fuels is nearly


*continued on page 14*



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## COVER STORY

*continued from page 12*

even. Just over one in 10 (11%) say an alternative fuel is “very important” when they make mower purchasing decisions. Another 38% believe it is “somewhat important.” The remaining 51% say owning a mower that uses propane, electric, bio diesel or some other power source “doesn’t play a factor” in purchasing decisions.

Teegen would like to see electric mowers one day become the norm.

“If they made a stander that could go half a day on a battery and we could charge it at lunchtime and then finish the day with it that would be pretty cool,” Teegen says.

For his part, Miller says he would like to see a more cost effective diesel mower. The general rule of thumb for diesels is that the rest of the mower will wear out before the diesel engine does.

For now, Acres Group is looking to replace some of their two-cycle equip-

Acres Group replaces mowers every 4-5 years, says Fleet Manager Mark Teegen.

ment with electric alternatives. The mowers will have to wait until the technology is more developed.

“We and our customers like to have options and understand that alternative fuels are becoming more popular,” Baird says. “We are researching opportunities to implement more alternative fuel-driven products and feel that our current line of propane, high-efficiency diesel, gasoline and even new lithium ion equipment satisfies the current market demand.”

Grasshopper is looking at the diesel option.

“Diesel is a sensible alternative to ethanol and other alternative fuels because its greater power density allows completing more work in less time,” Guyer says. “This adds to the fuel savings and emissions reduction realized simply by the efficiency of the diesel engine itself. Compared to gasoline,



propane or LNG, diesel uses as little as .6 or .7 gallons per hour and can save up to \$1,750 per 1,000 hours in fuel costs alone when prices near \$2.50 per gallon.”

That said, the most popular alterna-

*continued on page 16*



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*continued from page 14*  
tive fuel is still propane.

According to Rob Torango, landscape manager, Elite Grounds, Pleasant Grove, UT, it comes down to making sure an alternative fuel delivers the same performance as gasoline. Environmental impacts and cost are factors in the decision making, but ultimately he wants to know if the mower can stand up to daily workloads. "It comes down to power; if it bogs out going up a hill or cutting through wet grass," Torango says. "We don't want to become complacent. Everything is worth looking at."

Concerning propane, statistics from the Propane Education and Resource Council (PERC) say:

- › Propane is the leading alternative fuel in the U.S., and the nation's third most common vehicle fuel, after gasoline and diesel.
- › More than 29 models of propane-fueled commercial lawn mowers are

available today from more than 12 industry-leading brands.

- › Propane-fueled mowers reduce greenhouse gas emissions by almost 50% over gasoline; and carbon monoxide emissions by more than 80% compared with gasoline-powered mowers.
- › Propane is one of the cleanest fossil fuels. It is an approved clean alternative fuel under the Clean Air Act of 1990.
- › A proven model exists for propane refueling. The forklift market has established a fuel delivery and cylinder exchange structure that is directly applicable to the commercial mower market.

### Know when to hold 'em

While the trend toward efficiency has not abated, there are some things the economy has had a direct impact on. It seems contractors are willing to hold on to their mowers a little longer — the economy



Rob Torango

has had an affect on mower purchasing habits. Some 65% of respondents to *Landscape Management's* Mower Survey said budget constraints have impacted their mower replacement schedule.

Acres Group has about 370 rider, stand-on and walk-behind mowers and another 100 push mowers. The company currently replaces its mowers every four to five years, Teegen says. He would like to move that to every three or four years.

Acres Group's replacement time is pretty typical according to the survey. Only 14% of respondents replace their mowers less than three years old. Another 13% change mowers out after three years. The largest majority (43%) replaces mowers every three to five years, while members of the next largest group (30%) keep their mowers more than five years. **LM**

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Dixon's lawn tractors include the D22KH46 with a 22-hp, twin-cylinder Kohler engine and a two-blade, 46-in. cutting width; the D25KH48 with a 25-hp, twin-cylinder Kohler engine and 48-in. cutting width; and the D26KH54 with a 26-hp, twin-cylinder Kawasaki FR engine and a 54-in. cutting width. All units have hydrostatic pedal control transmission, electric push button blade engagement, cruise control and comfort features. [Dixon-ZTR.com](http://Dixon-ZTR.com)



### EXMARK

The propane-powered Lazer Z X-Series mowers, with 29-hp Kawasaki V-twin propane engines, are EPA-certified and feature sealed fuel systems with 43.5-lb. tanks that can hold 10.3 gal. of propane and deliver 5 to 6 hours of run time. They are available with 60-in. UltraCut™ Series 6 cutting decks, and include welded, heavy-duty 1.5"x3" tubular steel unibodies. [Exmark.com](http://Exmark.com)



### FERRIS

The IS 3100Z has an 895-cc Briggs & Stratton Vanguard Big Block V-Twin engine with a 72-in. deck or 61-in. iCD cutting system. 2011 models offer contoured seats with optional suspension platforms. This, combined with Ferris' patented four-wheel suspension system, can boost quality-of-cut and comfort. This propane-powered mower offers reduced emissions (up to 30% less) and is certified to conform to NFPA 58-2002. With a top ground speed of 12 mph, the IS 3100Z can mow up to 7.2 acres per hour. [FerrisIndustries.com](http://FerrisIndustries.com)



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## MOWERS DRIVING EFFICIENCY

*continued from page 18*

### GRASSHOPPER

The 226V MidMount mower features a 26-hp, professional series V-twin engine, as well as an advanced debris management system, 12-gal. fuel capacity and forward mowing speeds of up to 9 mph (5 acres/hour). It's also equipped with

a commercial-grade Parker pump and wheel motor drive system said to increase long-term value, and robotically welded, fabricated 5.5-in.-deep cutting decks with optional Down Discharge mulching and PowerVac capability. Other features include a contoured cushioned seat with coil-spring suspension, foldable armrests, HydraSmooth dampened dual steering levers that adjust to the operator's reach, and a shock-absorbing footrest. [GrasshopperMower.com](http://GrasshopperMower.com)



### GRAVELY

The Gravelly Pro-Ride has a high-volume tunnel deck for mowing tall, thick or wet grass. Made of 7-gauge welding construction, the tunnel deck features a 149-sq.-in. discharge opening, overlapping blades and baffle-free front design. The zero-turn features a 54-, 60- or 66-in. deck with a 27-hp (31-hp for the 66 in. model) Kawasaki FX engine. Twin hydrostatic drives and top-mounted cooling fans are said to keep these mowers 37° degrees cooler. [Gravelly.com](http://Gravelly.com)

### HUSQVARNA

With the PZ line of zero-turns, Husqvarna focused on five areas: productivity, cut, durability, comfort and serviceability. Propane was used as the fuel source because it's said to have lower costs, reduced environmental impact, fewer engine repairs and potential tax benefits. With a 29-hp Kawasaki LPG series engine and optional dual 33-lb. tanks that hold approximately 14 gal., the PZ6029PFX offers all day operation. [Husqvarna.com](http://Husqvarna.com)



### HUSTLER TURF EQUIPMENT

Hustler's X-One and Super Z mowers have VX4 deck technology, with four "V's": Velocity: Tunnel in front of blades and wider discharge opening moves grass through faster. Volume: Higher air and grass volume throughput means less material in the cutting chambers and higher ground speeds. Vacuum: Higher cut quality as grass is better lifted during cutting. Versatility: The adjustable front inner wall is said to optimize performance in all grass conditions. [HustlerTurf.com](http://HustlerTurf.com)



### JACOBSEN

The Jacobsen R-311 Turbo triple deck rotary mower works well in challenging, large turf conditions. It features a turbo-charged Kubota V2403-M engine at 60-hp. With a 134-in. cutting width and a 7.7 mph mowing speed, productivity is 10.4 acres an hour. Decks are available at 64-in., 99-in. and 134-in. (all decks down). [Jacobsen.com](http://Jacobsen.com)



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## JOHN DEERE

Designed and developed in response to customer input, the seven models in the Z900 lineup have the 7-Iron™ Pro deck with full-wrap reinforcement and Mulch-on-Demand™. The Z900s have mowing speeds of 10.5 or 12 mph, and include a ground-drive transmission with a piston motor, internal wet disc brakes and a gear reduction final drive for more torque. The series also offers ergonomic control levers, dial-in height-of-cut adjustment, on-board self-diagnostics, run-flat tires and Brake & Go system. [JohnDeere.com](http://JohnDeere.com)



## KUBOTA

Kubota's ZD221 offers a 21-hp Kubota diesel engine in a compact zero-turn frame. Supplying 40 lbs.-per-ft. of torque, the high torque-to-hp ratio

equals savings. Featuring Kubota's Pro-Commercial Decks, the ZD221 offers 48- and 54-in. options, flexible discharge chute, anti-overflow system, and Kubota's baffle design. An optional front lift allows quick maintenance without removing the mower deck. [Kubota.com](http://Kubota.com)

## SCAG

With a two-speed heavy-duty hydraulic drive system, double tube steel main frame, and adjustable Operator Suspension System, the Scag Cheetah is said to set benchmarks in performance and comfort. A variety of high-hp gasoline engine options can deliver maximum power. A low center-of-gravity and wide stance can provide traction and stability. Ground speeds up to 16 mph can increase productivity. And a 61-in. or 72-in. Velocity Plus cutter deck assures quality-of-cut. [Scag.com](http://Scag.com)



## SCHILLER GROUNDS

The Bob-Cat Predator Pro Zero-Turn Riding Mower features a 37-hp Kawasaki Digital Fuel Injection (DFI) engine that uses an electronic governor (E-Gov) system, which is said to make the unit react quickly to changing load conditions while metering fuel to the engine. This



means the mower doesn't lose engine RPM, resulting in higher performance, and maintains blade tip and ground speed as turf or terrain conditions change — all while maximizing fuel efficiency. [BobCatTurf.com](http://BobCatTurf.com)

## SNAPPER

The S200xp has an 895-cc Briggs & Stratton Vanguard Big Block V-Twin engine with a 61-in.



iCD cutting system. 2011 models have dual Hydro-Gear ZT-5400 commercial powertrains and contoured seats with optional suspension platforms. This propane-powered commercial mower offers reduced emissions (up to 30% less) and is certified to conform to NFPA 58-2002. With a top ground speed of 10 mph, the S200xp can mow up to 6 acres per hour. [Snapper.com](http://Snapper.com)

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## MOWERS DRIVING EFFICIENCY

### TORO



Z Master zero-turns offer three options: propane, biodiesel and electronic fuel injection (EFI). Propane mean 48% less greenhouse gas emissions. All of Toro's Z Master 2011 models are equipped to operate on biodiesel fuels up to B20 (20% biodiesel and 80% petroleum diesel). EFI mowers are said to provide up to 25% better fuel economy than equivalent carbureted engines. [Toro.com](http://Toro.com)

### WALKER

The MT26 features an air-cooled 26-hp OHV V-Twin Kohler engine with EFI technology that delivers responsive, fuel-efficient performance. The MT26 has a clam-shell style body and chassis to accommodate a higher hp engine and a splined PTO drive shaft with a quick-disconnect coupler. [WalkerMowers.com](http://WalkerMowers.com)



### WRIGHT



The Wright Stander X is said to offer high ground speed, maneuverability and reliability. From a standing position, operators can shift weight to handle changing terrain. A quick cut height adjustment and floating cutter deck are said to deliver quality. It comes in many deck sizes, including 32-in., 36-in., 42-in., 48-in., 52-in. and 61-in. [WrightMfg.com](http://WrightMfg.com)

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# WATER WISE

PART  
3

## WATER'S NEW

**RULES:** Landscape irrigation pros must get in step with water purveyors and start thinking in terms of multi-functional landscapes.

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There are solutions in the face of challenges.

## 26 Partners rather than adversaries

Make peace with water agencies.

## 29 Scoring water wins in urban landscapes

Multi-functional landscapes = sustainability.

## 32 Life without lawns

CA water agencies trade cash for lawns.



# Keeping the **bigger water picture** in mind everyday

**ONLY 1% OF THE WORLD'S WATER** is available for human consumption, and our demand for that water continues to increase steadily. The world's population is growing by approximately 80 million people per year, which implies increased fresh water demand of an amazing 64 billion cubic meters annually.

Taken from our white paper, "Water Conservation and the Green Industry," those statistics are part of the "big picture," and they may be best described as overwhelming. When speaking in terms of billions and millions, it's difficult to see how the actions of each of us as individuals can possibly have a positive impact on the world's water situation. However, our seemingly mundane choices do play a role in the global water crisis we face today. In other words, we have to keep the big picture in mind while focusing on the smaller picture framed by our everyday lives.

While everyone can try to limit their own personal water use, landscape and irrigation contractors are in a particularly unique position to create a wider swath of positive change. But, first, they must make the decision to commit to that positive change. Manufacturers and other Green Industry suppliers are developing more efficient products that leave smaller environmental footprints, but it's up to contractors to take advantage of these products and encourage their customers to do the same.

The first step is for contractors to become

knowledgeable about the many elements of a sustainable landscape. Recommending and planting more drought-resistant trees, plants and turf is one example. Understanding when it's right to irrigate with non-potable water is another. And, of course, learning about the latest water-efficient irrigation system components and design practices is a must.

The newest smart controllers can ensure that landscapes are only getting as much water as they need. When used appropriately, drip and subsurface irrigation can use up to 70% less water than above-ground sprays. Rain/freeze sensors and soil moisture sensors can add affordable smart control in just about any application. At commercial sites, central controls can simplify irrigation scheduling and make users quickly aware of any system performance issues.

It's certainly important for contractors to have a solid understanding of water-efficient products and system design principles, but successful contractors will more and more be those who are able to educate their customers on both the need for and best practices of water-efficient landscaping. By being up-to-date on local water-efficient product rebates and watering restrictions, contractors can make the decision to use water intelligently an easy one for their customers.





# Prepare for *opportunities* in water

BY **RON HALL** EDITOR-AT-LARGE

**W**ith challenges come opportunities. In terms of water use, the choices facing the Green Industry are that stark: discovering and capitalizing on opportunities in the face of challenges. There are many challenges.

In the short term the biggest challenge is the anemic economy, which has taken a big bite out of every industry involved with construction or property management. Then there are the millions of property owners who are just now being educated on the value of wise landscape water use.

The longer-term challenge for our industry and American landscapes is the almost certain prospect of less water, poorer quality water and more expensive water.

This will impact everybody in the Green Industry — seed producers, plant nurseries, equipment manufacturers, plant health care product providers, distributors, architects, designers, installers, irrigators, landscape maintainers and let's not forget property owners, the most important people on this list.

Opportunities right now are not so clearly defined, but they're real. These opportunities are being

capitalized upon by a so far small number of visionary and entrepreneurial Green Industry professionals who are developing and adopting ever-more-efficient products and strategies that require significantly less potable water to provide beautiful, living landscapes for their clients. How our Green Industry, as a whole, creates similar opportunities to grow the value of our services with fewer inputs will define future success. I'm confident we will. It's within our DNA to adapt and to innovate and to continue to provide our society with beautiful outdoor environments.

Indeed, those of us in the Green Industry will be looked to and called upon to take a more aggressive and vital role in conserving our nation's fresh water and preserving its quality.

Without attempting to deny the huge challenge this poses or sugar-coat the reality of today's anemic economy or the water still being needlessly wasted on too many manmade landscapes, we're making progress. This is reflected in the technology our industry can now command, some of it just now gaining wide acceptance. This includes:

- › Smart (weather-based) controllers
- › Automatic irrigation shut-off devices

- › Water-efficient rotor and spray features with pressure regulation and check valves
- › Drip irrigation that allows direct-to-plant root water devices
- › High-efficiency nozzles

But, as we all recognize, technology merely provides the tools ... and tools by themselves aren't enough. We have a big job ahead of us in educating ourselves to use these tools intelligently. This involves taking advantage of the training opportunities being made available by product suppliers, Green Industry associations and water agencies.

Beyond that — and this may be the most important piece of the puzzle — we must, as a whole, adopt a more resource-conserving approach to our services and also do a better job of educating customers.

The economy will eventually turn around and society, partly through our efforts, will come to understand water's worth to their landscapes and their pocketbooks.

It's no exaggeration to say that we're in the process of reinventing our Green Industry's future in terms of its use of water. This may be the single most important issue our industry faces in securing its growth into the next decade. **LM**



Ornamental hedges were replaced with drought-tolerant plants that require less maintenance but still have the desired visual impact.

# Partners

# rather than

**W**ATER SUPPLIERS, faced with increasing demand for treated water and seasonal or

chronic shortages, employ a mixed bag of strategies to encourage or, more dramatically, force conservation by implementing outdoor irrigation bans. Short of that, they employ tiered water pricing, educational programs, water-efficient model homes, demonstration gardens, and financial incentives to encourage property owners to install and use water-efficient products, both inside of their homes and businesses and on their landscapes. Some also pay property owners to replace the turfgrass on their properties with synthetic turf or drought-tolerant native or adapted plant material.

### Time to get with it

But water purveyors can't and shouldn't do all of the heavy lifting alone in terms of driving intelligent outdoor water

use. It's time for us Green Industry contractors to step up to help property owners execute smart water management strategies. Who else is better positioned to use their knowledge of urban and suburban ecologies and employ the modern water-conserving technology that irrigation product suppliers now offer.

### Strength in numbers

Because of our large numbers and our unique and specialized training and knowledge, those of us in the professional Green Industry are perfectly positioned to partner with water agencies, and to be in the forefront, promoting and implementing more efficient use of fresh water resources on the properties of our customers. We're the

Why we should make peace with water agencies and what it will mean for our customers and our industry.

BY **RICHARD RESTUCCIA**





Nearly four dozen water features spread throughout the campus were either converted to landscape beds or were shut off completely.



# adversaries

“boots on the ground,” at least in comparison to water officials, when it comes to showing customers how to incorporate new technologies and sustainable practices. But to do this proactively, we must establish mutually beneficial relationships with the water agencies. After all, those of us in the professional Green Industry, and especially us contractors, share the same goal as water agencies – smarter and more efficient use of water on landscapes.

Think of these industry/agency collaborations in terms of having the choice of being considered as part of the problem in promoting water conservation, as is too often the case, or being recognized as a valuable partner. Obviously, the better option is the latter — to be recognized as part of the solution.

Because of our numbers and our presence in virtually every community in the U.S. and Canada, we’re in daily contact with hundreds of thousands of property owners and property managers. These people constitute, for the most part, a receptive audience that trusts us and that we can educate regarding intelligent landscape water use. We have the ears of our customers. Many of us regularly communicate with our customers, and those of us who are managing very large properties often talk with owners or property managers once a week or sometimes even daily.

Also, too often we don’t give ourselves enough credit for the hard-earned and specialized knowledge we bring to our customers’ properties, especially if we made the effort to

really learn and practice our craft. We know (or should know) each property’s special characteristics, especially what’s going on with turfgrass and other landscape plant material on each property. It’s this knowledge and commitment that allows us to establish mutually beneficial relationships with our clients and be viewed as trusted partners.

## Building relationships

Building this bond with customers is crucial to helping them make wiser and more financially sound water management decisions. Equally crucial, as mentioned previously in this article, is our relationship with purveyors who provide the water.

As we all know, actions taken by these agencies or other rule-making bodies affect the landscape business, often dramatically. During times of shortages, agencies often restrict or, in extreme situations, ban outdoor watering. This can have a devastating effect on our professional services, as evidenced by the historic three-year drought that dried up portions of Georgia and the Carolinas 2006-2009, and dramatically slowed sales of landscape plants and all landscape services.

But this relationship between water agencies and our industry doesn’t have to be adversarial. In fact, it shouldn’t be. Water agencies and local governments often enact policies that, seeking to conserve water, also offer landscape and irrigation professionals new opportunities to profitably serve their customers.

For example, when agencies offer rebates for retrofitting older irrigation systems with more water efficient products, this provides the opportunity to shorten the return-on-investment (ROI) for property owners for significant upgrades. These might include replacing older clocks with smart controllers, installing rotary nozzles and making turf conversions. A 24-month ROI, or less, almost guarantees approval for an upgrade. And chances



for providing these services remain good up to a 30-month ROI, but beyond that, not as likely.

### Significant cost savings

A good example of smart water conservation measures in a commercial office park environment is Cisco Systems in San Jose, CA, which over the past decade adopted a more ecologically friendly landscape program and at the same time reduced its landscape operating costs. Cisco, which provides networking equipment and network management for Internet applications, made the changes at the suggestion of ValleyCrest Landscape Maintenance, its landscape partner since 1998. Over the past decade, landscape costs at the expansive campus have declined significantly.

Cisco's landscape management plan focused on three components: horticultural improvements, reducing water consumption and sending less waste to landfills. The goal was to determine how much water was being consumed, what plants required the most water and other inputs, such as fertilizer. Ascertain- ing what resources were being used to sustain the current level of landscape showed what was being spent for water usage and maintenance costs and revealed some opportunities to improve.

A landscape program was developed that encompassed a plant density reduction plan, resulting in the removal of some plants that required significant amounts of water. Plants that required watering five days were replaced with shrubs requiring only two days of irrigation, representing a 60% decrease in the amount of water needed.

Water-conserving drip irrigation systems are being systematically installed and all 48 buildings on the campus were retrofitted with smart, weather-based controllers, which lower irrigation water usage on average 24% a year. In California alone, Cisco saves more than 81 million gallons of water from the company's water conservation

## 5 TIPS FOR WORKING WITH WATER AGENCIES

1. Call your local water agency to set an appointment to learn about all rebate programs available to contractors, owners and managers. You will be amazed at how much you can learn in an hour meeting.
2. Attend water management training provided by water agencies to show them you are interested in learning about what they are telling customers.
3. Invite the agency to do a water audit on jobs you are starting. This gives a third party the opportunity to provide unbiased advice on what is needed to improve a system. Customers will perceive less of a conflict of interest.
4. Let water agencies know you are available to provide training for their community outreach programs.
5. Take time to explain the challenges you encounter as a contractor promoting water management. If they understand the day-to-day management and challenges in promoting water savings, they can develop programs with higher impact.

efforts as reported in its 2007 Corporate Citizenship Report.

Additionally, multi-colored flowerbeds at Cisco's sprawling campus were converted to attractive swatches of low maintenance iceberg roses. Ornamental hedges were replaced with drought-tolerant shrubs that require less maintenance but still have the desired visual impact. Nearly four dozen water features spread throughout the campus were either converted to landscape beds or were shut off completely, saving considerable water and energy. The average water feature on the campus annually uses 87,350 gallons of water and consumes 24,528 Kilowatt hours of electricity. The savings from not running seven fountains add up to more than four million gallons of water each year.

### Waste not, want not

Perhaps one of the largest challenges on a large office campus is green waste reduction. Bagging and dumping grass cuttings is labor intensive – to say nothing of the water needed to maintain a vivid green appearance and the fuel used to cut and transport it. Turf reduction programs in areas of Cisco's 98-acre campus helped to produce less green waste. And in the turf areas that remained untouched, use of specially designed equipment to mulch the grass clippings on-site resulted in reductions in water and


fertilizer usage, which is good for the environment and the bottom line.

The strategic landscape program at Cisco serves as a model for integrating landscape services into a building's operating plan. When new initiatives are mandated by corporate decision-makers, when companies decide to 'go green,' or if the economy places pressures to operate an asset at its maximum potential, building owners and property managers need leaders in smart landscape management who are experienced in maximizing every dollar spent. It must be done in a way that makes sense for companies, it must be efficient, it must be collaborative, it must be simple, and smart water management requires participation by all.

Adopting a smart water management plan works. The proof is as simple as basic dollars-and-sense business accounting. Customers, like Cisco, are learning that ecologically sound landscape practices, and especially those that save significant amounts of irrigation water through increased efficiencies, offer aesthetic benefits to their properties and offer substantial cost savings — savings that will grow over time. **LM**

---

*RESTUCCIA is Leader, Water Management Services, ValleyCrest Landscape Maintenance. He can be contacted at [rrestuccia@valleycrest.com](mailto:rrestuccia@valleycrest.com).*



Properly managed turfgrass replaces grey infrastructure on urban properties and dramatically decreases nonpoint pollution.


# Scoring water wins in urban landscapes



Water management and multi-functional green spaces are the Green Industry's indispensable contribution to the sustainability marketplace.

---

BY **MARK STEVEN APFELBACHER**



**G**REEN ROOFS. Green walls. Green building materials. Green building standards. Go to any trade show in the building trades these days and you'll see that everything at the show is green. But where does water management, in particular urban outdoor water management, fit into this ever-enlarging green picture?

In this case, it seems, it has taken another industry's capitalization on a new market to realize what the Green Industry is sitting on. Water management and multi-functional green spaces are the Green Industry's indispensable contribution to the sustainability marketplace.

## **Sustainable roots**

Landscapers and lawn care professionals have been working with sustainability and water long before the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) was formed in 1993, well before the U.S. EPA's Energy Star label came around in 1992, and the professional Green Industry was a multi-million dollar industry before the first city recycling program emerged in Woodbury, NJ, in the 1970s.



Too date, however, much of our practice has focused on single-serving landscapes — spaces that serve primarily one purpose. This could be a lawn, a landscape, a park or a sports field. In these spaces the primary function is aesthetics or recreation, not infrastructure or related to civic engineered function. Single-serving landscapes as aesthetic and recreation components are in direct competition with the assumed superiority of grey infrastructure. Grey infrastructure includes building footprints, site utilities, parking lots and roads. Landscapes are perceived as a “second” to all improvements related to basic civic functions and land uses.

Landscape and lawn professionals possess and employ practical management strategies that relate to aesthetics and recreation “green” elements as well as water resources. Increasingly they’re being called upon to design and develop multi-functional landscapes where the purpose is to perform more than one service for human development. For example, multi-functional landscapes and utilities may include massive parking lots that look and operate as a park space when not full of vehicles, stormwater management features that appear as landscape amenities, roofs transformed into stormwater catchment and energy conservation systems.

### Adding value and functionality

Multi-functional landscapes transition the perspective of green spaces from a space to maintain to a space that expresses value and functionality. Take the example of great American urban parks. Cities have hundreds of staff maintaining and refining green spaces such as Central Park of New York, Minneapolis’ Chain of Lakes and Grand Rounds Park, Millennium Park in Chicago, and Golden Gate Park of San Francisco. The value in human appreciation of these green spaces is international; the value in dollars of parks in taxes and other revenue is metropolitan. The Trust for Public Land found that land adjacent to park space in the City of Philadelphia generates an additional \$18 million in annual taxes, and adds \$680 million to the value of nearby homes. Cities already value high quality green space and now through the introduction of water management strategies, multi-functional landscapes will add even greater environmental services.

Commercial and industrial landscapes have received many a black eye by water resource managers and environmentalists for their contribution to aquifer depletion, urban runoff pollution and heat island effect. This critique, in some instances, is justifiable from an environmental point of view, but ridiculous from the landowner and business manager perspective. Industrious and entrepreneurial developers haven’t had the practical technological capabilities or the regulatory direction to make economically and environmentally feasible choices. New technologies, such as sub-surface drainage and smart irrigation systems, turf reinforcements, permeable or porous pavers,

intelligent moisture sensor controls, and use of perennial or native-hybrids are “paving the green way” for financially prudent and ecologically sensitive multi-functional landscapes.

Expressing function in landscapes takes a shift from traditional management to identifying design strategies that make sense relative to each site’s grading, land use patterns and vegetation. These spaces should be relatively easy to identify — for example, recommending a rain garden in a persistently wet area of turfgrass, identifying spaces for curb cuts for stormwater management, locating where sand and silt build up on impervious surfaces, and rerouting roof downspouts that have eroded channels to energy dissipation devices or intensively vegetated landscapes.

### Resources to get started

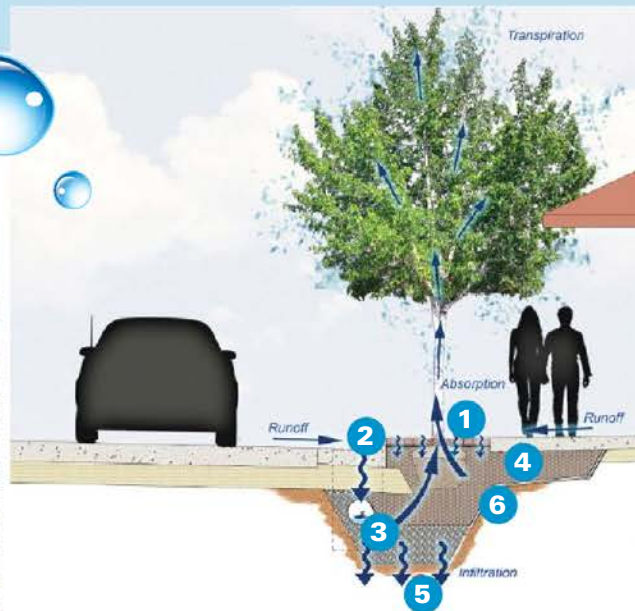
USGBC’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Certification or Sustainable Sites Initiative (SSI) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) websites are all excellent starting points to understand techniques and define metrics of how your lawn and landscape techniques relate to greater environmental function. If you feel that there is dysfunction or bias in a LEED, SSI and EPA, so be it. They do however represent excellent resources for use in business development; repackaging and selling environmentally friendly projects will create new work. The base language and its connection to larger environmental issues is a great starting point for clients to begin to see how a landscape or lawn company relates to being environmentally practical.

In traditional management and water function, the fallback is grey infrastructure, which is pavement, curb, gutter and storm sewers. This single-serving landscape design has for too long defined the American green space aesthetic and accompanying ecological function. A lake, river or stream is





A green roof, like this one on the Target Center in Minneapolis, provides stormwater catchment and energy conservation.



LEGEND

- 1 Permeable pavers
- 2 Catch basin in street curb
- 3 Crushed Granite Infiltration trench & 12" diameter perforated pipe
- 4 Structural soil
- 5 Infiltrating soil
- 6 Impervious PVC barrier

add increased function and value through the introduction of rain water management and low impact design (LID) techniques. Commercial, industrial and residential green spaces can be transitioned into multi-functional landscapes through water management indicators.

**Water: A tool to add value**

Circling back to the opening question, “What the devil does all this “greening” mean for water? A simple answer is: “Greening” through water management in multi-functional landscapes adds value and functionality for our clients and the environment.

The perspective of traditional landscapes is changed by using water as a tool to allow landscapes to be used for multiple purposes. New products and tested practices now provide the Green Industry feasible economic and environmental solutions for new construction and re-development. Water-related technologies increase the capability for landscape and lawn care professionals to transition applicable green spaces from single serving to multi-functional.

We will find that it’s easier for a customer to pull the trigger on projects that have double value on any dollar invested in multi-functional landscapes for water management. Water always wins, regardless of the odds. It’s time to work with water to capitalize on the sustainability marketplace niche. **LM**

quite literally as close as the curb. Efficient water conveyance systems of grey infrastructure result in dirty flushes of water runoff and ambient heat pollution radiating from our asphalt and concrete jungles. From a bird’s eye view, the face of urban areas appears pockmarked from grey infrastructure.

Today, nonpoint source pollution remains the largest contributor to America’s water quality and quantity problems. It is the biggest single reason that 40% of our surveyed rivers, lakes and estuaries are not clean enough to meet basic uses, such as fishing or swimming, says the U.S. EPA. Urban and rural flooding events are increased by runoff from traditional engineering and storm water management.

Parks and private landscapes may have innovative irrigation systems, top-of-the-line construction materials and maintenance techniques, but the greater opportunity is to

*APFELBACHER is Product Manager at 3BIDS, a Sustologist at Sustology and Director of Development at Minnesota Green Roof Council. Contact him at [mapfelbacher@gmail.com](mailto:mapfelbacher@gmail.com).*



# Life without lawns

Faced with an uncertain water future, California water agencies are using cash to entice homeowners to remove their turfgrass lawns.

BY **RON HALL** EDITOR-AT-LARGE

**F**OR 30 YEARS, and until the recent economic slowdown, California's Inland Empire (IE) was one of the fastest growing regions in the U.S. Comprised of portions of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, its population ballooned from 1.55 million to 4.1 million between 1980 and 2008, including a 23% increase over the last decade. While growth has slowed since 2008, it's generally believed that robust growth will eventually return.

This vast, arid region of Southern California, at 27,000 square miles and approximately two-thirds the size of the state of Connecticut, is located 30 miles northeast of Los Angeles. Surrounded by rolling hills and mountains, it has just about everything one could desire in terms of a modern American lifestyle including year-round sunshine, modern infrastructure and plenty of recreational

opportunities. However, with all of these aforementioned amenities, the IE lacks one major core component in maintaining its enviable way of life and necessary for future growth and development. It faces an uncertain water future.

The region receives 11 in. to 15 in. of precipitation and rain annually, depending on geography, and available ground and surface water is not reliable enough to sustain its many bustling communities or allow future growth. Most IE communities supplement the water they draw from underground aquifers or nearby streams with imported water provided by the half-century-old State Water Project that brings water south through the San Joaquin Valley Delta. This is an expensive proposition, The transportation and delivery of this water (each gallon weighs 8.3 lbs.) to the Southern California area consumes

an incredible amount of energy. The State uses an estimated 19% of its available energy treating and transporting water.

The relative scarcity of regional water sources and the expense of providing outside water to this vibrant region of California will almost

certainly mean the downsizing of irrigated lawns and more landscaping with synthetic turf and native plants. Water agencies in the IE have been experimenting with ways to entice homeowners to replace their lawns with low water using plants that will remain healthy, or with synthetic turf or hardscapes. And, for the most part, these programs have been well received and successful, especially when coupled

## CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

- Agree to pre- and post-site inspections
- No restrictions in plant type or site coverage
- No irrigation modification requirement
- Must install permeable surfaces
- No reinstallation of cool-season turfgrass

with financial incentives. This is an increasingly common strategy by water authorities throughout the arid U.S. Southwest.

Lisa Morgan-Perales, Water Resources Analyst II, IEUA, describes a 19-month project by the Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA) to evaluate the public's interest in replacing turfgrass with low-water-use plants and surfaces. She says the program was patterned after similar programs implemented by the Southern Nevada Water Agency and the Crescenta Valley Water District.

The IEUA is a regional wholesale water supplier and wastewater treatment provider serving eight retail water agency members – the cities of Chino, Chino Hills, Ontario, Upland and the Cucamonga Water District, Fontana Water Company, Monte Vista Water District and the San Antonio Water Company.

The IEUA began developing the program in the spring of 2007 and launched it in December of the same year. It ran for 19 months, concluding in July 2009. Initially the program had been budgeted with \$50,000 to convert 30 residential landscapes. A year after its initiation it received additional funding expanding the budget to \$240,620 to cover the expense of 136 residential conversions. Participants were paid \$2 a sq. ft. per conversion with a minimum



BEFORE



AFTER

of 400 sq. ft. being converted. The maximum allowable rebate per property was \$2,000 or 1,000 sq. ft. removed.

Once a member agency received an application to be included in the project from a homeowner to be a part of the project, the agency did a pre-site inspection that included photographing the site. At the conclusion of the Program, the member agencies conducted post-site inspections of the participating properties, again photographing the sites to document the changes, and sent the information to the IEUA for final review and payment to the participants.

Morgan-Perales says the project resulted in 186,446 sq. ft. of turfgrass being replaced with low-water-use plants and approximately 28,320 sq. ft. of artificial turf and other low-water-using surfaces on homeowners' properties. This resulted in an estimated water savings of 26 acre feet per year. An acre foot of water is the amount of water it takes to cover an acre of flat land with a foot of water —325,851 U.S.gallons.

In assessing the project, Morgan-Perales describes how the converted properties were classified, using subjective visual criteria, into three categories:

▶ **Models of Success**, 61 properties, landscape design contains a high percentage of plant coverage or a mixture of plant and non-permeable materials

Water authorities in the U.S. Southwest are promoting smaller areas of maintained turfgrass on residential properties as evidenced by this conversion in Montclair, CA.

▶ **Alternative Landscapes**, 23 properties, landscape design contains a higher percentage of “other” plant (non-native plant) coverage and may contain a higher percentage of hardscape  
▶ **Made the Grade**, 52 conversions, Landscape design contains a high percentage of permeable paving surfaces with minimal plant coverage.

Morgan-Perales says analysis of the results of the project suggested similarly focused future turf removal projects require each applicant to submit a mandatory site plan with live plants covering a minimum percentage of the design, require that participants modify their irrigation systems and require that eligible project areas include the front yard.

Beyond that, the IEUA would like to develop and circulate a “recommended plant/materials list” and increase the maximum conversion area while lowering the rebate amount, she says.

All in all, the project that ended in July 2009 was positive on several fronts, she adds, including building the IEUA's recognition and strengthening customer relations between agency staff and the public. **LM**

## IN THE PROGRAM

- ▶ Encouraged to install low-water-consuming plant materials
- ▶ Encouraged to modify existing irrigation with drip or subsurface irrigation technologies
- ▶ Maintain converted landscaping for five years
- ▶ Agree to water usage monitoring for five years



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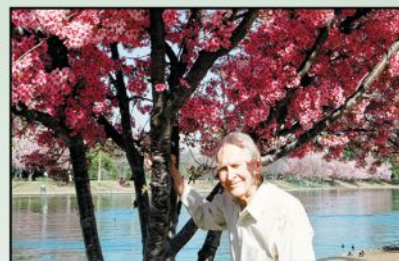
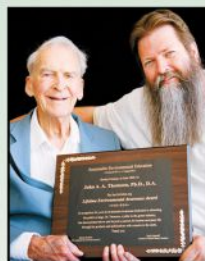
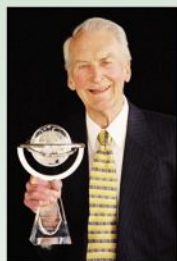
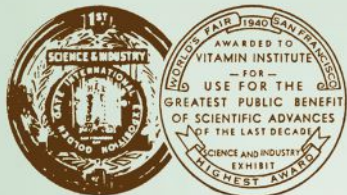
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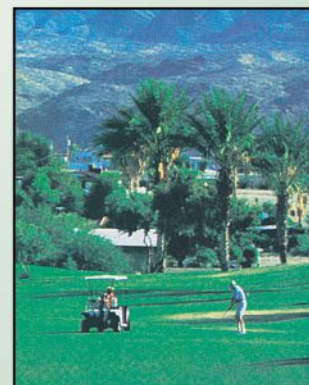
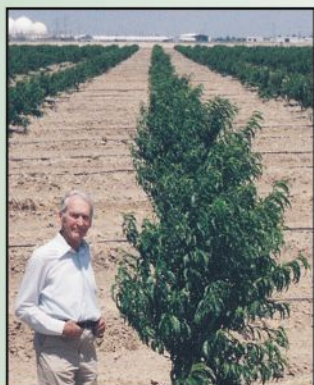
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By John A. A. Thomson, Ph.D., D.A.



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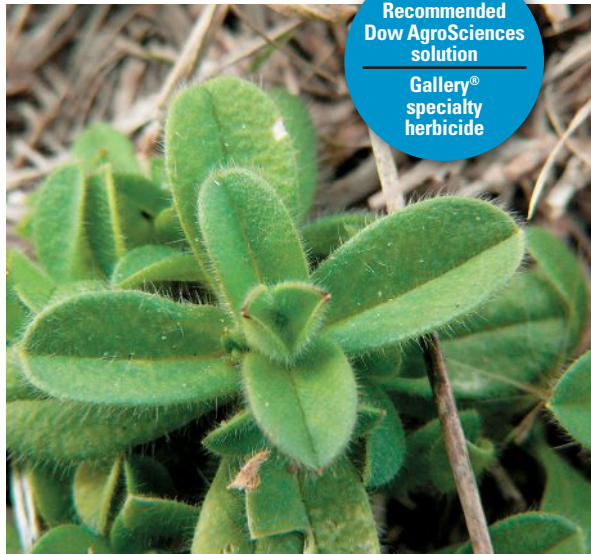
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## MOUSE-EAR CHICKWEED

*Cerastium vulgatum*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This spreading, mat-forming perennial prominently features hairy, prostrate stems.
- ▶ Its small white flowers have five notched petals that bloom in late spring.
- ▶ Leaves are noticeably hairy or fuzzy, long and narrow, and grow opposite; like the weed's common name, they resemble mouse ears.
- ▶ Commonly found in lawns, pastures and cultivated fields, mouse-ear chickweed spreads by seed, but can root at the nodes.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Preventive practices can discourage infestation. Improve soil drainage and decrease shade if possible.
- ▶ Nitrogen fertility, liming and aeration will encourage a dense stand of turf, minimizing potential for mouse-ear chickweed establishment.
- ▶ Apply a pre-emergent broadleaf herbicide such as isoxaben prior to germination.



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## ANNUAL BLUEGRASS

*Poa annua*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This erect, or clump-forming, annual grass tolerates close mowing.
- ▶ It is light green in color, especially compared to the dark green of related turfgrasses.
- ▶ Leaves are keeled, and feature a distinctive boat-shaped tip.
- ▶ Once soil temperatures fall below 70° Fahrenheit, germination of *Poa annua* will begin.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Develop a dense, healthy turf to reduce sunlight at the soil surface.
- ▶ Keep soil phosphorous levels in the low-to-medium range.
- ▶ Cultural practices can reduce *Poa annua*, but herbicides are needed for superior control.
- ▶ *Poa annua* produces most of its seedheads in the spring. Apply a pre-emergent grass herbicide, such as dithiopyr, prior to germination of seedlings.

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# MYBIGGESTMISTAKE

LESSONS LEARNED THE HARD WAY » BY CASEY PAYTON



Joel Korte's business was strong but depended heavily on only a few major accounts. When he lost one of them — and 30% of his business with it — he realized an important lesson.



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**OWNER:** Joel Korte (now division vice president for Brickman)

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**HEADQUARTERS:** Columbus, OH

**2001 REVENUE:** \$6 million to \$7 million (Urban Environments)

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**BEST ADVICE:** Never let one client pose too much risk to your business and, as owner, try not to be the only one with the job of selling work and growing the business.

**I**N 2001, BUSINESS was not only strong and stable but growing for Joel Korte, then-owner of Urban Environments, Inc., in Columbus, OH (Korte has since sold his business to Brickman, and is now a divisional vice president at the \$667 million company).

"I was about a \$6-million or \$7-million company at the time, and the business had largely grown with me being the primary salesperson, something not uncommon for this industry," explains Korte. "I'd built relationships with a number of commercial developers in our market. And as long as we continued to do good quality work and remain competitively priced, these developers continued to give us business and, as a result, help us grow our company."

Among Urban Environment's largest clients was a national developer that had offices in not only Columbus but multiple other cities across the country. Urban Environments did about 75% to 85% of that firm's local work in Columbus, making it a big account for Korte. In fact, that account alone brought in 30% of his overall revenue. Everything was going great until Korte had what he says was a big "wake-up call."

"A large national landscape company ended up pursuing this developer on

a national basis and the developer made a deal for that landscape company to manage *all* of its markets," he recalls. "It wasn't something I could even compete with. The deal was that the landscape company took over the work in all of the developer's cities."

Overnight Korte had lost 30% of his revenue — just like that. "What a wake-up call!" he remembers. "I had to ask myself, 'How did I allow one client to become this big of an exposure to my business and not protect myself?' I may not have had *all* of my eggs in one basket, but I certainly had more eggs in one basket than I should have had."

But Korte says this story has a happy ending, and he learned a valuable lesson. At the time, he was doing 80% to 90% of the sales work for Urban Environments himself. He saw himself as the *only* person who could sell and grow the business. But the minute he saw that large amount of revenue disappear, he knew he couldn't make up the difference alone.

"I immediately turned to two key individuals in my company who were managing operations at the time," says Korte. "I said, 'Tomorrow you're going to be salespeople.' We didn't have a lot of time to respond to this loss of

business. We either had to accept being 30% smaller or get out there right away to replace this lost business with new business."

In the end, Korte was not only able to replace that lost 30%, but grew another 10% on top of it. He says it was an important moment in his business. "In the past, I always depended on myself, thinking I was the only person who could really sell the business," says Korte. "But it was only a matter of taking the time to teach two other individuals the things I knew about selling to increase our sales. If I can sell \$500,000, and I can get someone else to do what I'm doing, I'm now selling \$1 million."

The lesson is an easy one to grasp, Korte says. "It's simple thinking, but too many business owners struggle to look past themselves," he explains. "That's very limiting."

Korte's advice to landscape business owners: "Don't be afraid to look within your own company and beyond yourself for ways you can grow sales."

The other big moral of the story is to never let one client pose that much risk to business. "You just never know what could happen," Korte warns. "Something may never happen to you, but it could happen to them. They may go out of business or hire a new company — things that are out of your control. You have to be prepared."

The author is a freelance writer with six years of experience covering landscaping.





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