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of the 150 largest
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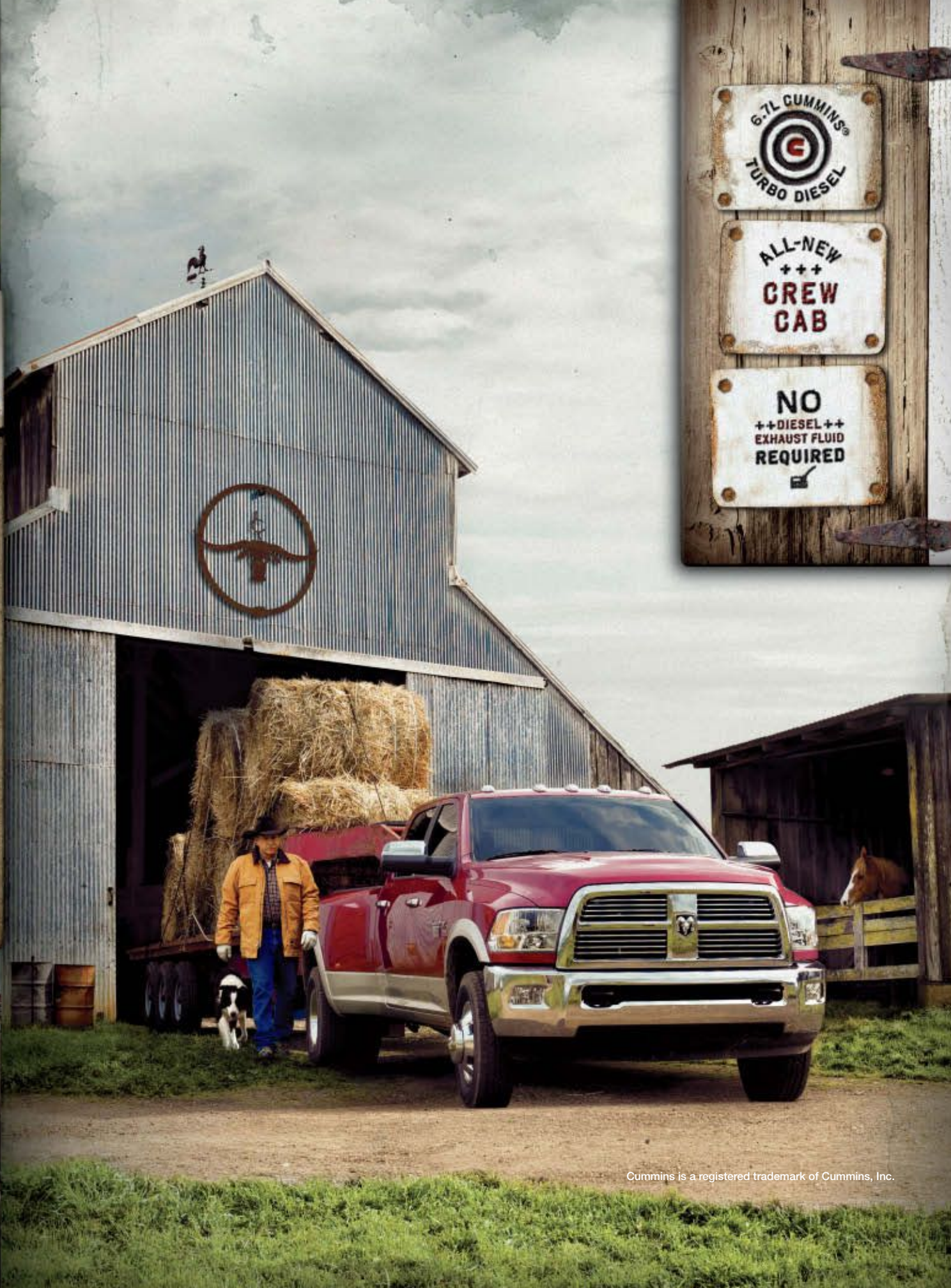


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JUNE 2010
VOL 49, ISSUE 6

S1

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT



Unwrapped B D/B I LC M

LM reveals its elite list of the 150 largest landscape contractors in the industry. BY NICOLE WISNIEWSKI, HEATHER GOOCH, MARTY WHITFORD AND JULIE COLLINS

LM MARKET MATCH We've made your life a little easier by supplying icons that direct you to stories targeting your core business.

B – Business, **D/B** – Design/Build, **I** – Irrigation, **LC** – Lawn Care, **M** – Maintenance

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FIRSTCUT

NICOLE WISNIEWSKI EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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From the minds of customers

Consumer confidence concerning economic recovery is improving, and their finances are on the mend, according to a new survey of consumer spending and trends from Deloitte. More than half (55%) of consumers think the economy has started to recover from the recession and nearly two-thirds (64%) say their household financial situation is the same or better than one year ago. Nearly the same amount (63%) say they are planning to spend the same or more this year than they did in 2009.

Despite this optimism, consumers are still worried about things that could negatively impact their pocketbooks. More than half (54%) say rising energy prices could cause them to hold back spending, and 45% and 41% say higher taxes and a lack of improvement in the job market, respectively, could do the same. A little more than a quarter of respondents (27%) believe the economy is recovering but is at risk of falling back into recession.

That's the good news.

The bad news is that some of the frugal shopping habits consumers picked up during the recession are sticking. Almost half (45%) of consumers said they shopped with a focus on saving money during the recession, and seven out of 10 (71%) plan to continue to do so even if their financial situation improves.

How can you benefit? Stacy Janiak, Deloitte's vice chairman, says sellers

55% of consumers say the economy is recovering, and 64% report more positive finances.

“should keep a sharp focus on consumer's shopping behavior and invest in areas that may drive loyalty in months ahead.”

The web is also playing a greater role in the customer buying experience with 75% of consumers saying they look online for product, service or price information before reaching out to service providers. More than half (56%) use social networking sites and 43% interact with sellers through these channels. Nearly two-thirds (64%) do so to find out about promotions, almost half (48%) browse products and services and more than one-third (35%) review customer recommendations found on those sites. In fact, half of customers say online reviews have influenced their decision to buy (51%) or not (50%).

Your lesson this month: Pay attention to your customers' buying shifts and be where they are; go where they go. Twitter, Facebook and YouTube are free marketing tools.

As Wayne Gretzky says, “I skate to where the puck will be, not to where it's been.”

Landscape Management

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NEWS+VIEWS

GREEN INDUSTRY EVENTS, TRENDS AND TIPS

D/B on the grow?

Despite housing and economic challenges, survey shows there could be hope for design/build/installation contractors. BY NICOLE WISNIEWSKI EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Nearly 50% of landscape professionals say 2010 sales are already up compared to last year. And 20% of them expect 10% higher sales; another 11% expect 15% higher sales.

The other twist to this plot: The majority of survey respondents were landscape design/build/installation contractors and landscape design firms — companies many industry experts say are suffering from double-digit decreases in growth as a result of the recession and slumped housing market.

Now that we have your attention ...

The survey results were presented during a May 20th webinar conducted by The New American Landscape Outdoor Living Channel (NALOLC).

Though the majority of respondents admit business is improving (30%),

many say they are undergoing challenges and changes as a result of the economy.

“Growth is occurring but at a slow rate reflective of overall trends in economic recovery,” says J. Geio Pensoneault, CEO and host of the NALOLC.

But it's still growth, and that's a positive thing for the industry, webinar panelist and industry consultant Judy Guido says.

Pensoneault also highlighted the economies of three separate states to show varying degrees of progress. California is showing good signs of growth as it emerges out of the recession, he says, citing a recent Wells Fargo Economic Outlook.

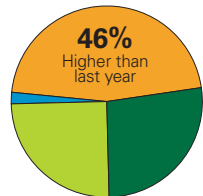
Colorado is also recovering but lagging behind a bit because the oil and gas industry is one of the state's larger

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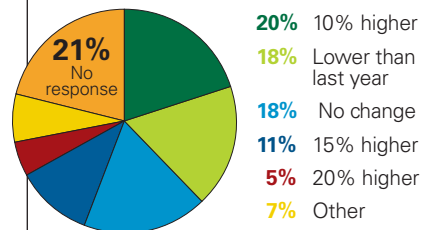
THE STATE OF THINGS

How are your first quarter 2010 sales compared to first quarter 2009?

- 27% Lower than last year
- 25% Same as last year
- 2% No response

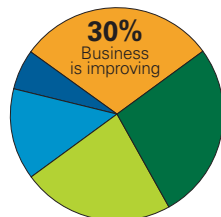


What percent change are your first quarter 2010 sales compared to first quarter 2009?



Describe the state of your business this year.

- 27% Undergoing industrywide changes due to the economy
- 23% Facing difficult challenges
- 14% Doing OK with minor challenges
- 6% No response



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continued from page 6
forces of economic growth.

Florida will be one of the slowest states to come out of the recession. Pensoneault said the Sunshine state's economy has been based on people moving in, but for the first time since World War II, there are more people moving out.

What can landscape professionals do with this information? Pensoneault suggests the following:

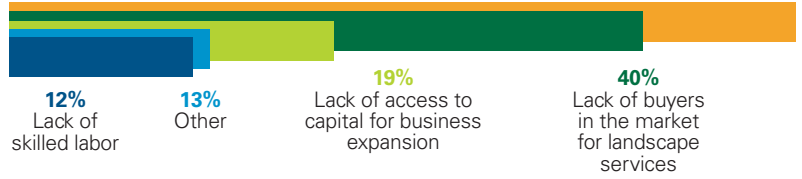
- › Adapt to the realities of business.
- › Maintain a lean and mean approach to operations.
- › Invest in marketing to capture growth as it returns to the marketplace.
- › Demand a return-on-investment approach in all expenditures.
- › Invest in education during this slower business cycle.

Guido adds: "It's pretty interesting that all of the things suggested are things you should be doing regardless of whether it's a good or bad economy."

IN THE WAY OF GROWTH

My main obstacles to growth right now are...

54%
Uncertainty in economy



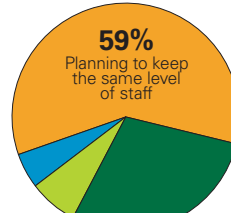
DESPERATELY SEEKING ...

What resources would be most useful to your company right now?

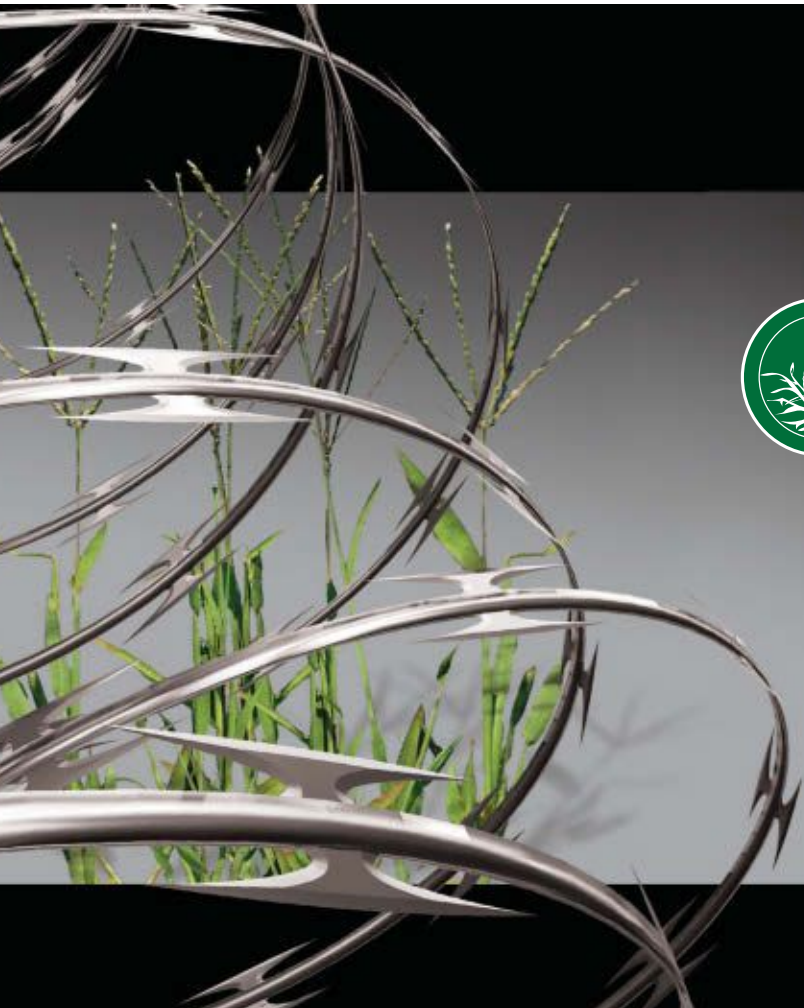


HIRING PLANS

What are your hiring plans this year?



- 29% Planning to hire additional staff
- 5% Planning to reduce the number of staff
- 7% No response



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In search of **FIRE ANTS**

Few things can earn a client's wrath faster than a return of these biting insects. BY DANIEL G. JACOBS



It's 9 a.m. on a Friday morning, and the Orlando sun is already baking the grounds of the hotel outside the conference room.

"Ever seen a fire ant?" Robby Clemenzi, area sales rep for Bayer Environmental Science, asks the account manager for the public relations firm that helped organize the event. Clemenzi props open a door that leads to the hotel's pool and tennis courts, and begins to scour the well-manicured grass and surrounding area. A few short minutes

Robby Clemenzi smiles even after being bitten.

later, he finds one, brushes away the mulch from a bed, pokes in a finger and pulls up a half dozen or so red imported fire ants scurrying furiously across his now-bitten digit.

He begins to pick them off one by one. "Can you imagine a small kid stepping into that?" he asks.

It's scenarios just like that that have lawn care professionals across the south from Virginia to Texas looking for the most effective way to deliver quick and long-lasting fire ant treatments to customers.

There are nearly 40 million people living in roughly 330 million-plus acres of land across the Southeast where

continued on page 10



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CHANGES IN FIRE ANT TREATMENT

According to Charles Barr, Barr Research & Consulting, the approach to dealing with fire ants has changed over the years. Here's a look at a few of the differences.

OLD WAY

1. Individual mound control
2. Remedial response
3. Speed is most important
4. Product-centered



NEW WAY

1. Broadcast control
2. Proactive response
3. Duration of control and prevention are most important
4. Program-centered



Charles Barr explains the latest fire ant treatments.

continued from page 9
fire ants live, says Dr. Charles Barr, Barr Research & Consulting.

It's believed they arrived in the ballast of ships sometime during the 1920s, and became widespread starting with the rise of the highway system in the 1940s. Hawaii has yet to see them, but is afraid the pests could reach the state's shores.

Internationally, China and Australia also have fire ant problems. New Zealand has spent millions of dollars to deal with the issue, and has found only three mounds.

Research has found that about 15% of humans have a local allergic reaction, which can cause pain and discomfort. Of that population, about 2.5% suffer systemic allergies (anaphylactic shock), Clemenzi says.

Of the more than 300 million fire-ant-infested acres in the U.S., fewer than 500,000 are treated. Until last fall, homeowners treated nearly 75,000 acres themselves using a product called Over 'n Out. But the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently pulled the registration of that product — giving lawn care professionals a huge new market, Barr says. The product is still on the shelves and legal to use, but is no longer being manufactured. When it's gone, he points out, there will be no consumer-grade solutions to treat fire ants.

Clemenzi concluded his presentation to “biological service providers” by discussing how lawn care professionals can use science to affect fire ant biology to produce a healthy, safe and beautiful environment — at a profit, of course.


Both Barr and Clemenzi suggest using a combination of products. But, he advises, with about 150 products labeled for fire ant control, lawn care professionals need to sell their professionalism.

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LM staff honored 17 times over

Landscape Management's editors cleared off another shelf to hold a slew of new editorial honors. Between the Turf & Ornamental Communicator Association (TOCA) and the Press Club of Cleveland, the staff picked up 17 first place and merit awards. *LM* won nine TOCA awards — more than any other industry publication. Those honors include:

- › **Cover Page Design:** “Surviving the Social Explosion” by Carrie Parkhill
- › **Single Page Design/Editorial:** “Table of Contents” by Carrie Parkhill
- › **Writing for Commercial Publications — Editorial/Opinion Piece/Column:** “Be More Productive or Expect Less” by Ron Hall
- › **Writing for Commercial Publications — Business Management:** “With a Little Help From My Friends” by Dan Jacobs
- › **Writing for Commercial Publications — Business Management:** “Digital Slots” by

- Marty Whitford and Joe Shoener
- › **Writing for Commercial Publications — Environmental Stewardship Article:** “The Greenest Museum on Earth” by Dan Jacobs
 - › **Writing for Commercial Publications — Headline Writing:** “Digital Slots” by Marty Whitford
 - › **Writing for Special Projects:** “Business Planner 2010” by *LM* Staff
 - › **Writing for Commercial Publications — Series:** “Shake-Down & Immigration’s Widening Fault Line” by Marty Whitford

- The Press Club of Cleveland honors include:
- › **Second Place, Best Trade Publication in Ohio:** *Landscape Management*, by *LM* Staff
 - › **Single Page Design:** “Today’s Choices, Tomorrow’s Reality” by Carrie Parkhill
 - › **Features-Personality Profile:** “Solemn Salute” by Marty Whitford
 - › **Features-Special Section/Package:**

- “Break Through: Business Planner 2010” by *LM* Staff
- › **Features-Trends:** “Digital Slots” by Marty Whitford
- › **Features-Trends:** “Surviving the Social Explosion” by Dan Jacobs
- › **Public Service/Investigative:** “Water Wise” by Ron Hall and John Walsh
- › **Departments or Columns:** “The Hall Mark” by Ron Hall



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Dow AgroSciences announces \$340 million R&D Expansion

Indianapolis — Dow AgroSciences announced plans for a multi-year expansion of its global headquarters, with investment of more than \$340 million and the addition of more than 550 scientific and commercial jobs over the next five years.

The first phase in the multi-year expansion plan includes the construction of a 175,000-square-foot research and development building, as well as a 14,000-sq.-ft. greenhouse on the company's corporate campus. More than 550 new jobs will be added over the next five years at the headquarters location in both scientific and commercial roles.

"Dow AgroSciences is positioning itself for growth," says Mark Urbanowski, product marketing leader for Turf & Ornamental. "This expansion gives us the infrastructure and capabilities to deliver innovation for our customers."

GRAVELY'S 'PINKY' RAISES MONEY FOR RESEARCH

Brillion, WI — Gravelly has produced a pink Gravelly Pro-Turn zero-turn mower, "Pinky," to help raise money for the breast cancer foundation. From now through October 23, 2010, consumers are encouraged to buy \$10 raffle tickets as the mower travels to Georgia dealers, fairs, trade shows and other locations. One lucky winner will win "Pinky" at the conclusion of the fundraiser.

"Pinky" was built at the request of Ariens District Manager Dave Bowker, with a goal to raise \$10,000. Bowker and his team are using the mower to raise money with all proceeds benefiting breast cancer research and to help women enduring financial hardship due to the disease.

Raffle tickets and donations will be accepted by dealers through Oct. 23, 2010, and the winner will be announced shortly after this date.



In 2009, the company announced numerous plans for expanding its research capacity, including the signing of a 15-year lease on an 80,000-sq.-ft. research facility adjacent to its corporate headquarters in Indianapolis and the

establishment of a significant research program at the Purdue Research Park in West Lafayette, Ind. Dow AgroSciences LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of The Dow Chemical Co., has sales of \$4.5 billion.

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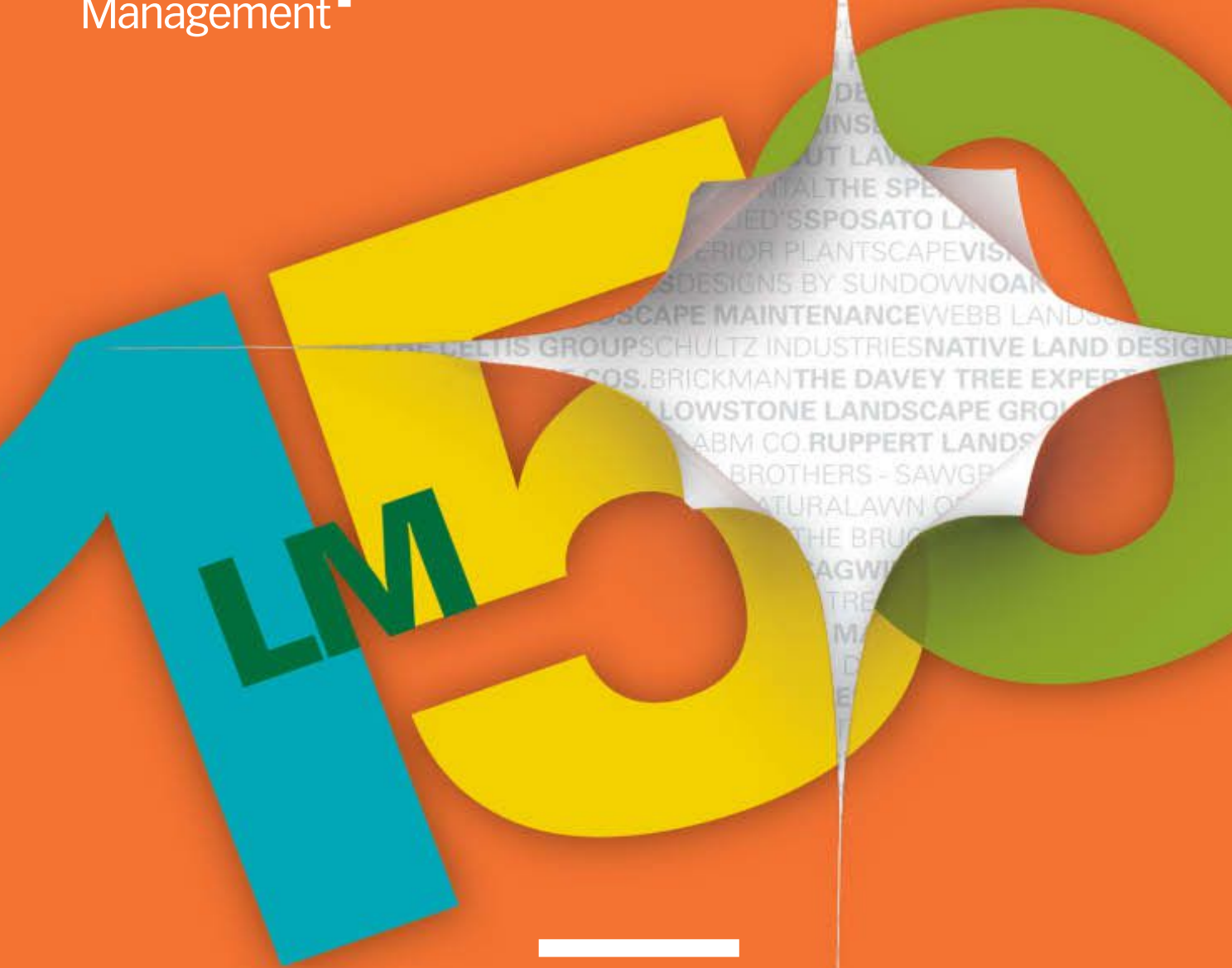
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That's one of the many reasons John Deere is pleased to sponsor the *LM150* Report. We believe that you will find the information helpful as you analyze and strengthen your business plan and prepare for the future.

While the majority of the landscape contractors surveyed indicated they lost money in 2009, 18 companies broke even and 33 companies showed positive growth. And more companies are increasingly confident predicting even or positive sales for 2010. We realize that 2009 presented some of the toughest economic times and weather conditions that we have ever faced. Today's economic reality calls for new and innovative approaches, and John Deere is dedicated to providing you with the support and solutions to help you succeed in business today and into the future.



KENTAYLOR, CLP
Business Solutions Manager,
John Deere

While you're reading through the report, be sure to take notice of the companies who are driving growth strategies and solutions. On page S15, *LM150* Leaders share their growth tactics; on page S14, they reveal employee retention and growth strategies; and on page S20, they share how they are handling competitive pricing pressures.

While economic recovery might seem slow in coming, it will come! The industry is viewed as a growth opportunity and increasingly investments are being made.

Read "M&A Upsurge" on page S21 for proof.

Our commitment to your business does not stop with providing quality products and solutions through our experienced John Deere dealer network. The John Deere dealer is there to support your business needs after the sale with the most extensive factory trained service technicians and knowledgeable parts staff in the industry. They have one priority: To ensure product uptime in the most responsive manner, because downtime is not an option when you are running a business!

John Deere hopes the work we do in 2010 and beyond will move us closer toward becoming your most trusted supplier on the job site. Because even after 170 years, our business is not much different from yours: We are continuously changing, adapting and implementing new processes in order to build a better business for you, our customer.

We look forward to seeing you soon, whether at an industry event, our dealerships, or even at one of our factories.

Have a prosperous 2010!

UNWRAPPED

LM reveals its elite list of the 150 largest landscape contractors.

BY **NICOLE WISNIEWSKI** EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Flat is the new up. “If you were flat in the last 12 to 18 months in the Green Industry, that’s huge,” says Brian Corbett, managing partner at Atlanta-based CCG Advisors.

“Whatever you are doing to be flat or up means you’re beating the odds,” agrees industry consultant Judy Guido.

Growth was certainly the exception in 2009. Only 33 of the LM150 companies reported growth, 18 broke even and the rest — 99 companies — saw their sales drop.

The LM150 earned a total of \$7.53 billion, down 5.6% from 2008’s \$7.97 billion. Revenue was down an average 7.64% per company in 2009 compared to 2008’s 6.75% average dip.

That’s the bad news.

The good news is in 2010 the LM150 are focusing on understanding how a weak economy can actually help them.

That’s Ron Georgio’s plan. The president of Valencia, CA-based Gothic Grounds Management (No. 54) will invest in high quality talent, analyze mergers and acquisitions potential and develop closer vendor ties with the goal of “emerging from this downturn bigger, stronger and more capable.”

In this report, we present a comprehensive look at some of the LM150’s strongest assets — from growth strategies to employee and client retention tips to business analysis.

For the estimated 272,450 Green Industry enterprises who aren’t on this list, the report is a road map of sorts. Even if limiting overall growth to drive profit — or staying small — is your strategy, you can learn a lot from them.

continued on page S6

LEGEND * = 2008 revenue; + = BNET CBS Business Network figures; ° = Purchased by Massey Services in 12/09; • = Purchased by Brickman in 12/09; NR = Not reported

	Company	Headquarters
1	TruGreen	Memphis, TN
2	ValleyCrest Landscape Cos.	Calabasas, CA
3	Brickman	Gaithersburg, MD
4	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	Kent, OH
6	Scotts LawnService	Marysville, OH
7	Bartlett Tree Experts	Stamford, CT
5	USM	Norristown, PA
8	Ambius	Buffalo Grove, IL
9	Weed Man	Mississauga, Ontario, Canada
10	U.S. Lawns	Orlando, FL
11	Yellowstone Landscape Group	Plano, TX
12	Lawn Doctor	Holmdel, NJ
13	Gothic Landscaping	Valencia, CA
14	Vila & Son Landscaping Corp.	Miami, FL
15	OneSource Landscape & Golf Services, an ABM Co.	Tampa, FL
16	Ruppert Landscape	Laytonsville, MD
17	SavATree	Bedford Hills, NY
18	Clintar Landscape Management	Markham, Ontario, Canada
19	Acres Group	Wauconda, IL
20	Luke Brothers - Sawgrass	Holiday, FL
21	Marina Landscape	Anaheim, CA
22	Jensen Corp.	San Jose, CA
23	ISS Grounds Control	Phoenix, AZ
24	Lipinski Outdoor Services	Martinton, NJ
25	The Groundskeeper	Tucson, AZ
26	NaturaLawn of America	Frederick, MD
27	Mariani Landscape	Lake Bluff, IL
28	Denison Landscaping	Ft. Washington, MD
29	Nanak’s Landscaping	Longwood, FL
30	Spring-Green Lawn Care Corp.	Plainfield, IL
31	Mainscape	Fishers, IN
32	The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin	Middleton, WI
33	Sierra Landscape Co.	Palm Desert, CA
34	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	Woodbine, MD
35	AAA Landscape	Phoenix, AZ
36	Middleton Lawn & Pest Control°	Orlando, FL
37	Cagwin & Dorward	Novato, CA
38	Teufel Landscape	Portland, OR
39	Terracare Associates	Littleton, CO
40	Landscape Concepts Management	Grayslake, IL
41	Mission Landscape Cos.	Tustin, CA
42	Lucas Tree Expert Co.	Portland, ME
43	The Greenery	Hilton Head, SC
44	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	San Antonio, TX
45	Chalet	Wilmette, IL
46	Cornestone Solutions Group	Dade City, FL
47	McFall & Berry Landscape Management	McLean, VA
48	Greenscape	E. Taunton, MA
	Metroplex Garden Design Landscaping	Dallas, TX
	Scott Byron & Co.	Lake Bluff, IL

2009 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change From 2008	FT/PT Employees	% Employee Change From 2008	2009 Avg Rev Per Employee	% Avg Rev Per Employee Change From 2008	Comm/ Res Mix
\$1,311,132,213	-7.1%	NR	NR	NR	NR	32.2/67.8
\$937,000,000	-5.4%	10,000/0	-9.1%	\$93,700	4.1%	100/0
\$687,000,000	0.6%	10,053/0	3.2%	\$68,338	-2.5%	70/30
\$562,111,000	-5.7%	6,626/291	-4.3%	\$81,265	-1.4%	NR
\$290,000,000	0%	1,750/250	0%	\$145,000	0%	2/98
\$150,000,000	-11.8%	1,216/26	-5.9%	\$120,773	-6.2%	20/80
\$133,305,900	1%	1,446/536	3.8%	\$224,194	-2.7%	100/0
\$123,000,000*	-0.2%	NR	NR	NR	NR	99/1
\$105,000,000	10.5%	788/2,625	5.0%	\$30,765	5.2%	5/95
\$94,000,000	8%	1,600/0	3.2%	\$58,750	6.6%	100/0
\$80,100,000	0%	600/400	0%	\$80,000	4.6%	100/0
\$80,000,000	-4.8%	40/0	-11.1%	NR	NR	0/100
\$68,300,000	-14.6%	925/0	-7.5%	\$73,838	-7.7%	60/40
\$61,400,000	-1.9%	798/0	8.4%	\$76,942	-9.5%	99/1
\$60,000,000	0%	1,000/0	NR	NR	NR	100/0
\$58,100,000	0.7%	600/0	9.1%	\$96,833	-7.7%	100/0
\$47,600,000	-10.9%	430/30	-9.8%	\$103,478	-1.2%	15/85
\$45,000,000	-2.2%	175/400	0%	\$78,261	-2.2%	90/10
\$44,113,813	-3.2%	100/645	0%	\$59,213	-3.2%	90/10
\$43,000,000	-8.5%	550/100	-13.3%	\$66,154	5.6%	100/0
\$42,000,000	0%	500/5	0%	\$83,168	0%	100/0
\$41,700,000	-19.8%	415/0	17.2%	\$100,482	-31.6%	50/50
\$40,000,000	-16.7%	509/40	-22.0%	\$72,860	6.9%	95/5
\$36,791,000	27.8%	60/60	33.3%	\$306,592	-4.1%	100/0
\$36,000,000	-5.3%	600/0	-14.3%	\$60,000	10.5%	100/0
\$35,500,000	0.3%	250/30	9.4%	\$126,786	-8.3%	10/90
\$35,000,000	2.9%	100/290	5.4%	\$89,744	-2.3%	10/90
\$34,975,000	-4.2%	160/125	-14.9%	\$122,719	12.6%	80/20
\$34,500,000	-4.2%	450/200	-13.3%	\$53,077	10.6%	100/0
\$32,849,000	0%	NR	NR	NR	NR	10/90
\$32,600,000	-6.9%	310/100	-8.9%	\$79,512	2.2%	100/0
\$32,126,000	-23.5%	183/330	-17.9%	\$62,624	-6.8%	80/20
\$32,000,000	-7.8%	250/0	-10.7%	\$128,000	3.3%	90/10
\$29,000,000	-19.4%	210/130	-12.8%	\$85,294	-7.6%	60/40
\$27,987,000	-21.9%	426/1	-5.7%	\$65,543	-17.1%	100/0
\$27,540,000	-51.7%	546/7	2.0%	\$49,801	-52.6%	95/5
\$26,625,961	-12.3%	325/50	-11.8%	\$71,003	-0.6%	100/0
\$26,580,000	-27.4%	303/21	-26.4%	\$82,037	-1.4%	90/10
\$26,500,000	1.9%	200/200	0%	\$66,250	1.9%	100/0
\$26,319,000	-15.3%	110/250	-10%	\$73,108	-5.9%	90/10
\$26,000,000	-18.8%	500/0	-16.7%	\$52,000	-2.5%	80/20
\$25,500,000*	NR	NR	NR	\$68,182	NR	NR
\$25,300,000	-17%	350/50	0%	\$63,250	-17%	60/40
\$24,000,000*	0%	206/3	0%	\$114,833	0%	90/10
\$23,629,100	-14.9%	275/0	-7.1%	\$85,924	-8.4%	10/90
\$23,500,000	-9.6%	225/12	3.0%	\$99,156	-12.3%	50/50
\$23,400,000	6.8%	180/120	0%	\$78,000	6.8%	100/0
\$23,000,000	15%	200/0	11.1%	\$115,000	3.5%	80/20
\$23,000,000	-6.1%	27/2	-9.4%	\$793,103	3.6%	60/40
\$23,000,000	-23.3%	79/177	-7.2%	\$89,844	-17.3%	0/100

listing continued on next page

continued from page S4

Our LM150 survey reveals minimizing risk is the key strategy for 2010. To do this, these companies are marketing smarter, reducing expenses, driving efficiency, emphasizing client retention and, in some cases, shifting focus.

Zero risk

Assessing risks inherent to every potential job is an important aspect of how Phoenix-based ISS Grounds Control (No. 23) manages its book of business. “Having the knowledge and understanding to know when to walk away from a potential loss is as important as any sale we can make,” says President Dale Micetic.

-7.64%

Average LM150 decline in 2009

**\$7.53
BILLION**

LM150 total revenue

So in the current economic climate, the company’s focus is on creating client and vendor agreements that allow for reciprocal relationships. Maintaining solid financial footing in 2010 also will mean maintaining service delivery schedules and collections consistent with contract documents.

Retain to gain

Instead of trying to add a lot of new customers, Native Land Design (No. 148) is focusing on client retention to have greater control of its cost structure. The Cedar Park, TX-based company is also watching customers’ payment trends weekly — looking for possible complications. “We had a few client bankruptcies that carried over from 2009,” reports Controller Michael Spell. “Hopefully, we won’t have any

continued on page S8

	Company	Headquarters
51	DLC Resources	Phoenix, AZ
52	Shearon Environmental Design	Plymouth Meeting, PA
53	Sebert Landscaping	Bartlett, IL
54	Gothic Grounds Management	Valencia, CA
55	Christy Webber Landscapes	Chicago, IL
56	Bemus Landscape	San Clemente, CA
57	Girard Environmental Services	Sanford, FL
58	D. Schumacher Landscaping	West Bridgewater, MA
59	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting	Germantown, WI
60	James River Grounds Management	Glen Allen, VA
61	Countryside Industries	Wauconda, IL
62	Dennis’ 7 Dees Landscaping	Portland, OR
	Environmental Management Services	Plain City, OH
	Senske Lawn & Tree Care	Kennewick, WA
65	Creative Environments Design & Landscape	Tempe, AZ
66	RCI	Slidell, LA
67	Urban Farmer	Thornton, CO
68	Clarence Davids & Co.	Matteson, IL
	Lambert Landscape Co.	Dallas, TX
	Moore Landscapes	Northbrook, IL
71	Russell Landscape Group	Dacula, GA
72	Heads Up Landscape Contractors	Albuquerque, NM
73	FAIRCO	Scottsdale, AZ
74	Landscape Specialists	Lake Forest, CA
75	Dobson’s Woods & Water	Ocoee, FL
76	Gachina Landscape Management	Menlo Park, CA
77	CoCal Landscape	Denver, CO
78	Benchmark Landscape	Poway, CA
79	Dora Landscaping Co.	Apopka, FL
80	Massey Services	Orlando, FL
81	Dixie Landscape Co.	Miami, FL
82	Nissho of California	Vista, CA
83	Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care	Denver, CO
84	LMI Landscapes	Carrollton, TX
85	The Dworsky Cos.	Gardena, CA
86	Ryan Lawn & Tree	Overland Park, KS
87	McHale Landscape Design	Upper Marlboro, MD
88	Andre Landscape Service	Azusa, CA
89	Greenscapes	Naples, FL
90	Complete Property Maintenance	Coconut Creek, FL
	The Highridge Corp.	Issaquah, WA
	Meadows Farms	Chantilly, VA
93	Naturescape	Muskego, WI
94	Precision Landscape Management	Dallas, TX
95	Intermountain Plantings	Bluffdale, UT
96	The Green Plan*	Bloomfield, CO
	Hermes Landscaping	Lenexa, KS
98	Stay Green	Santa Clarita, CA
99	Raymow Enterprises	Oldsmar, FL
100	RGS Services	Anaheim, CA

2009 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change From 2008	FT/PT Employees	% Employee Change From 2008	2009 Avg Rev Per Employee	% Avg Rev Per Employee Change From 2008	Comm/ Res Mix
\$22,375,934	1.9%	330/0	3.1%	\$67,806	-1.2%	100/0
\$22,000,000	0%	350/130	2.1%	\$45,833	-2.1%	80/20
\$21,000,000	-8.7%	50/300	9.4%	\$60,000	-16.5%	90/10
\$20,782,753	13.4%	475/0	13.1%	\$43,753	0.3%	NR
\$20,467,809	6.6%	264/0	9.5%	\$77,530	-2.7%	70/30
\$20,459,000	-23.5%	350/0	-26.3%	\$58,454	3.8%	90/10
\$19,994,920	-5.7%	320/0	42.2%	\$62,484	-33.7%	100/0
\$19,950,000	10.8%	160/0	6.7%	\$124,688	3.9%	NR
\$19,800,000	-8.3%	215/40	-19%	\$77,647	13.2%	65/35
\$19,760,785	10.5%	441/3	0%	\$44,506	10.5%	100/0
\$19,066,000	-26.9%	49/179	-31.1%	\$83,623	6.1%	80/20
\$18,500,000	-15.5%	237/14	-23.9%	\$73,705	11.1%	60/40
\$18,500,000	-15.9%	80/200	3.7%	\$66,071	-18.9%	90/10
\$18,500,000	-4.6%	170/80	-7.4%	\$74,000	3%	30/70
\$18,300,000*	0%	300/90	0%	\$46,923	0%	20/80
\$18,100,000	26.1%	189/30	23%	\$82,648	2.5%	100/0
\$18,065,760	0.1%	150/150	-14.3%	\$60,219	16.8%	100/0
\$18,000,000	-18.7%	275/0	-12.7%	\$65,455	-6.9%	90/10
\$18,000,000	-2.7%	160/5	0%	\$109,091	-2.7%	0/100
\$18,000,000	0%	250/0	0%	\$72,000	-20%	100/0
\$17,750,000	-16.4%	265/310	-4.2%	\$30,870	-12.8%	98 / 2
\$17,600,000	-29.6%	225/10	-35.6%	\$74,894	9.3%	90/10
\$17,500,000*	0%	150/0	0%	\$116,667	0%	100/0
\$17,000,000	-15%	300/0	-14.3%	\$56,667	-0.8%	100/0
\$16,800,000*	0%	248/1	0%	\$67,470	0%	87/13
\$16,538,565	-12.1%	259/0	-4.1%	\$63,855	-8.4%	100/0
\$16,250,000	-26.1%	120/150	-18.2%	\$60,185	-9.7%	100/0
\$16,205,000	-12.2%	204/0	-9.3%	\$79,436	-3.2%	100/0
\$16,000,000	-5.9%	80/0	0%	\$200,000	-5.9%	90/10
\$15,942,808	-79.4%	1,192/0	52.4%	\$13,375	-86.5%	90/10
\$15,750,000	-43.3%	145/0	-35.6%	\$108,621	-12.1%	80/20
\$15,700,000	-15.1%	260/0	-25.9%	\$60,385	14.6%	20/80
\$15,607,805	-12.1%	158/35	-11.5%	\$80,869	-0.7%	35/65
\$15,100,000	-17%	185/0	-17.8%	\$81,622	0.9%	100/0
\$15,000,000*	0%	NR	-100%	NR	NR	100/0
\$14,650,000	1.5%	130/130	100%	\$56,346	-49.2%	15/85
\$14,600,000	-24%	150/0	-21.1%	\$97,333	-3.7%	10/90
\$14,191,846	17.1%	260/0	13%	\$54,584	3.6%	85/15
\$14,100,000	-4.7%	212/0	-18.5%	\$66,509	16.8%	20/80
\$14,000,000	3.7%	275/40	0%	\$44,444	3.7%	90/10
\$14,000,000 ⁺	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
\$14,000,000	-20%	90/250	-15%	\$41,176	-5.9%	10/90
\$13,828,312	4.6%	156/8	1.2%	\$84,319	3.3%	10/90
\$13,500,000*	0%	172/242	0%	\$32,609	0%	100/0
\$13,150,000*	0%	40/120	0%	\$82,188	0%	90/10
\$13,000,000	36.8%	60/120	20%	\$72,222	14.0%	100/0
\$13,000,000	-13.3%	80/110	-13.6%	\$68,421	0.4%	80/20
\$12,523,196	0%	200/0	4.7%	\$62,616	-4.5%	70/30
\$12,500,000	-7.4%	275/0	-8.3%	\$45,455	1%	90/10
\$12,400,000	2.5%	170/0	21.4%	\$72,941	-15.6%	100/0

listing continued on next page



The most — 25 businesses — on the *LM150* call “The Golden State” home.

continued from page S6 more in 2010.” If they notice a problem, they discontinue services faster than they have in the past.

Market smart

Instead of an emphasis on general Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care (No. 83) marketing programs, the company is dedicating a larger percent of its budget to cause marketing for charity. In partnership with the Denver Nuggets, the mayor’s office and the Denver Parks & Recreation Department, Swingle is working toward planting 1 million trees in the Mile High City by 2025 through “Trees for Threes.” Every time a Nuggets player scores a three-pointer during home games, Swingle plants one more tree. The Nuggets usually make eight to 10 three-pointers per game — at 42 home games per season, this could equal 420 trees.

Success defined

Two years ago, CoCal Landscape (No. 77) made a strategic decision to replace bid/build work with landscape management/maintenance.

The magnitude of the economic downturn — not to mention the numbers — sped up this plan, says President Tom Fochtman. CoCal did \$12 million in bid/build in 2007, \$9.4 million in 2008 and then only \$2 million in 2009 — partly because of the economy and partly by design. The result is a \$15.75 million company in 2009 — less than half its \$33 million from 2007.

But, Fochtman says, “we are a much stronger, financially fit organization and have successfully transformed the company.”

And isn’t success what it’s all about? **LM**

WANT TO BE AN LM150 LEADER?

To compile the *LM150*, we requested submissions by e-mail, Web, phone and fax. We make every attempt to contact firms for the list. Interested in being on next year’s list? Contact Nicole Wisniewski at 216-706-3735 or nwisniewski@questex.com.

	Company	Headquarters
101	ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	Venice, FL
102	Florida Landscape Service	Orlando, FL
103	ProGrass	Wilsonville, OR
	Sun City Landscapes	Las Vegas, NV
	Westco Grounds Maintenance Co.	Houston, TX
106	Reliable Property Services	St. Paul, MN
107	Kinsella Landscape	Blue Island, IL
108	Land-Tech Enterprises	Warrington, PA
109	Houston Landscapes Unlimited	Sugar Land, TX
110	BDG Maintenance, Berghoff Design Group	Scottsdale, AZ
	Perficut Lawn & Landscape	Des Moines, IA
	Rosehill Gardens	Kansas City, MO
113	Mickman Brothers	Ham Lake, MN
114	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	San Diego, CA
	PROscape	Orlando, FL
116	Angler Environmental	Richmond, VA
117	The Spencer Co.	Houston, TX
118	Cleary Bros. Landscape	Danville, CA
	Realty Landscaping Corp.	Newtown, PA
120	Arteka Cos.	Shakopee, MN
121	Mill Brothers Landscape Group	Fort Collins, CO
122	Lied’s	Sussex, WI
123	Sposato Landscape Co.	Milton, DE
124	Earthworks	Lillian, TX
125	HighGrove Partners	Austell, GA
126	Carson Landscape Industries	Sacramento, CA
	Gardeners’ Guild	Richmond, CA
128	Parker Interior Plantscape	Scotch Plains, NJ
	Visionscapes	Tucker, GA
130	Basnight Land & Lawn	Chesapeake, VA
	Nanak’s Landscaping	Pompano Beach, FL
132	D&K Landscape	Las Vegas, NV
133	Odyssey Landscape Co.	Lodi, CA
134	Becker Landscape Contractors	Indianapolis, IN
	Designs By Sundown	Englewood, CO
	Oak Leaf Landscape	Anaheim, CA
137	American Landscape Systems	Lewisville, TX
138	KEI	Oakcreek, WI
139	John Mini Distinctive Landscapes	Congers, NY
140	Carol King Landscape Maintenance	Orlando, FL
141	Webb Landscape	Ketchum, ID
142	B&L Landscaping	Oak Park, MI
	Blondie’s Treehouse	Mamaroneck, NY
	Tree Tech	Foxboro, MA
145	Executive Landscape	Fallbrook, CA
146	The Celtis Group	San Jose, CA
147	Schultz Industries	Golden, CO
148	Native Land Design	Cedar Park, TX
149	Peabody Landscape Group	Columbus, OH
150	Hoffman Landscapes	Wilton, CT
	Grant & Power Landscaping	West Chicago, IL

2009 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change From 2008	FT/PT Employees	% Employee Change From 2008	2009 Avg Rev Per Employee	% Avg Rev Per Employee Change From 2008	Comm/ Res Mix
\$12,304,590	-15.5%	250/50	-21.1%	\$41,015	7.1%	90/10
\$12,280,000*	0%	60/0	0%	\$204,667	0%	95/5
\$12,000,000	-20%	175/0	-31.6%	\$68,571	17%	40/60
\$12,000,000*	0%	147/0	0%	\$81,633	0%	5/95
\$12,000,000	-14.3%	145/0	-14.7%	\$82,759	0.5%	30/70
\$11,946,900	-0.7%	30/200	0%	\$51,943	-0.7%	100/0
\$11,770,000	-10.2%	54/60	26.7%	\$103,246	-29.1%	30/70
\$11,675,000	11.7%	245/135	5.6%	\$30,724	5.8%	95/5
\$11,600,000	-4.5%	121/0	-6.2%	\$95,868	1.8%	90/10
\$11,500,000	-4.2%	140/1	-6%	\$81,560	2%	70/30
\$11,500,000	-4.2%	45/65	-8.3%	\$104,545	4.5%	90/10
\$11,500,000	-4.2%	150/30	-2.7%	\$63,889	-1.5%	60/40
\$11,300,000	-1.7%	95/10	-4.5%	\$107,619	2.9%	50/50
\$11,200,000	1.8%	175/25	0%	\$56,000	1.8%	35/65
\$11,200,000	-9.7%	270/0	-12.9%	\$41,481	3.7%	90/10
\$11,119,738	9.4%	84/3	2.4%	\$127,813	6.9%	80/20
\$11,069,516	-18.3%	185/3	-15.2%	\$58,261	-3.7%	100/0
\$11,000,000	-15.4%	160/0	-11.6%	\$68,750	-4.3%	90/10
\$11,000,000	-21.4%	65/75	-6.7%	\$78,571	-15.8%	70/30
\$10,929,718	4.3%	100/5	0%	\$104,093	4.3%	80/20
\$10,818,658	0.2%	140/0	-6.7%	\$77,276	7.3%	80/20
\$10,750,000*	0%	150/18	0%	\$63,988	0%	30/70
\$10,500,000	-10.3%	125/40	-5.7%	\$63,636	-4.8%	80/20
\$10,200,000	-5.6%	135/80	-2.3%	\$47,442	-3.4%	100/0
\$10,100,000	-5.6%	115/0	-4.2%	\$87,826	-1.5%	90/10
\$10,000,000	-33.3%	125/0	-51.9%	\$80,000	38.7%	90/10
\$10,000,000	-4.8%	130/5	-10%	\$74,074	5.8%	70/30
\$9,500,000	-5%	150/10	-7%	\$59,375	2.1%	100/0
\$9,500,000	-9.5%	65/0	-40.9%	\$146,154	53.1%	90/10
\$9,400,000	-17.5%	90/75	-8.3%	\$56,970	-10%	80/20
\$9,400,000	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
\$9,200,000	8.2%	91/0	9.6%	\$101,099	-1.3%	85/15
\$9,065,000	-39.4%	NR	NR	\$78,826	NR	95/5
\$9,000,000	-23%	40/120	-20%	\$56,250	-3.7%	90/10
\$9,000,000	-18.2%	55/40	-28.6%	\$94,737	14.5%	5/95
\$9,000,000	NR	NR	NR	\$150,000	NR	15/85
\$8,700,000	4.8%	102/0	7.4%	\$85,294	-2.4%	100/0
\$8,530,000	-32.4%	145/0	-12.1%	\$58,828	-23.1%	90/10
\$8,400,000	-8.5%	53/39	-3.2%	\$91,304	-5.6%	100/0
\$8,200,000	-7.9%	122/45	-6.2%	\$49,102	-1.8%	90/10
\$8,150,515	-37.2%	145/20	-13.2%	\$49,397	-27.7%	0/100
\$8,000,000*	0%	120/0	0%	\$66,667	0%	95/5
\$8,000,000	-38.5%	95/35	0%	\$61,538	-38.5%	70/30
\$8,000,000	14.3%	75/4	5.3%	\$101,266	8.5%	60/40
\$7,764,144	-10.7%	120/0	-4.0%	\$64,701	-7%	70/30
\$7,750,000	NR	78/0	NR	\$99,359	NR	NR
\$7,624,456	-28.5%	52/44	-31.9%	\$79,421	5.1%	60/40
\$7,621,617	-20.9%	147/0	0.7%	\$51,848	-21.4%	95/5
\$7,600,000	-2.6%	45/75	-7.7%	\$63,333	5.6%	70/30
\$7,400,000	-5.7%	75/0	0%	\$98,667	-5.7%	10/90
\$7,400,000	-26%	23/60	-2.4%	\$89,157	-24.2%	50/50

BY REGION

(IN U.S. DOLLARS)



NORTHEAST

1	Brickman	\$206,100,000
2	Scotts LawnService	\$87,000,000
3	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$84,000,000
4	SavATree	\$42,840,000
5	Denison Landscaping	\$34,975,000
6	Ruppert Landscape	\$34,860,000
7	Lipinski Outdoor Services	\$33,111,900
8	NaturaLawn of America	\$26,625,000
9	Greenscape	\$23,000,000
10	Shearon Environmental Design	\$22,000,000
11	D. Schumacher Landscaping	\$19,950,000
12	U.S. Lawns	\$18,800,000
13	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	\$14,500,000
14	McFall & Berry Landscape Management	\$11,700,000
15	Land-Tech Enterprises	\$11,675,000
16	Realty Landscaping Corp.	\$11,000,000
17	Lied's	\$10,750,000*
18	Sposato Landscape Co.	\$10,500,000
19	McHale Landscape Design	\$10,220,000
20	Parker Interior Plantscape	\$8,550,000
21	John Mini Distinctive Landscapes	\$8,400,000
22	Tree Tech	\$8,000,000
23	Hoffman Landscapes	\$7,400,000
24	Tomlinson Bomberger Lawn Care & Landscape	\$7,276,000
25	Blondie's Treehouse	\$7,200,000

SOUTHWEST

1	Brickman	\$68,700,000
2	Yellowstone Landscape Group	\$40,750,000
3	The Groundskeeper	\$28,800,000
4	ISS Grounds Control	\$28,000,000
5	AAA Landscape	\$27,987,000
6	Metroplex Garden Design Landscaping	\$23,000,000
7	DLC Resources	\$22,375,934
8	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$21,600,000*
9	Scotts LawnService	\$20,300,000
10	Lambert Landscape Co.	\$18,000,000
11	Creative Environments Design & Landscape	\$17,751,000*
12	Heads Up Landscape Contractors	\$17,600,000
13	Gothic Landscaping	\$13,660,000
14	Precision Landscape Management	\$13,500,000*
15	LMI Landscapes	\$12,080,000
16	Westco Grounds Maintenance Co.	\$12,000,000
17	Houston Landscapes Unlimited	\$11,600,000
18	BDG Maintenance, Berghoff Design Group	\$11,500,000
19	The Spencer Co.	\$11,069,516
20	Earthworks	\$10,200,000
21	U.S. Lawns	\$9,400,000
22	FAIRCO	\$8,750,000*
23	American Landscape Systems	\$8,700,000
24	Gothic Grounds Management	\$6,234,825
25	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$6,000,000

WEST

1	Brickman	\$68,700,000
2	Gothic Landscaping	\$54,640,000
3	Marina Landscape	\$42,000,000
4	Jensen Corp.	\$41,700,000
5	Sierra Landscape Co	\$32,000,000
6	Cagwin & Dorward	\$26,625,961
7	Teufel Landscape	\$26,580,000
8	Terracare Associates	\$26,500,000
9	Mission Landscape Cos.	\$25,220,000
10	Bemus Landscape	\$20,459,000
11	Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping	\$18,500,000
	Senske Lawn & Tree Care	\$18,500,000
13	Urban Farmer	\$18,065,760
14	Landscape Specialists	\$17,000,000
15	Gachina Landscape Management	\$16,538,565
16	CoCal Landscape	\$16,250,000
17	Benchmark Landscape	\$16,205,000
18	Nissho of California	\$15,700,000
19	Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care	\$15,607,805
20	The Dworsky Cos.	\$15,000,000*
21	Gothic Grounds Management	\$14,547,927
22	Andre Landscape Service	\$14,191,846
23	Intermountain Plantings	\$13,150,000*
24	The Green Plan*	\$13,000,000
25	Stay Green	\$12,523,196

SOUTHEAST

1	Brickman	\$137,400,000
2	Scotts LawnService	\$87,000,000
3	Vila & Son landscaping Corp.	\$61,400,000
4	Luke Brothers - Sawgrass	\$43,000,000
5	Yellowstone Landscape Group	\$40,750,000
6	U.S. Lawns	\$37,600,000
7	Nanak's Landscaping	\$34,500,000
8	Middleton Lawn & Pest Control*	\$27,540,000
9	The Greenery	\$25,300,000
10	Cornerstone Solutions Group	\$23,500,000
11	Ruppert Landscape	\$23,240,000
12	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$22,500,000
13	Girard Environmental Services	\$19,994,920
14	James River Grounds Management	\$19,760,785
15	RCI	\$18,100,000
16	Russell Landscape Group	\$17,750,000
17	Dobson's Woods & Water	\$16,800,000*
18	Mainscape	\$16,300,000
19	Dora Landscaping Co.	\$16,000,000
20	Massey Services	\$15,942,808
21	Dixie Landscape Co.	\$15,750,000
22	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	\$14,500,000
23	Greenscapes	\$14,100,000
24	Complete Property Maintenance	\$14,000,000
25	Raymow Enterprises	\$12,500,000

MIDWEST

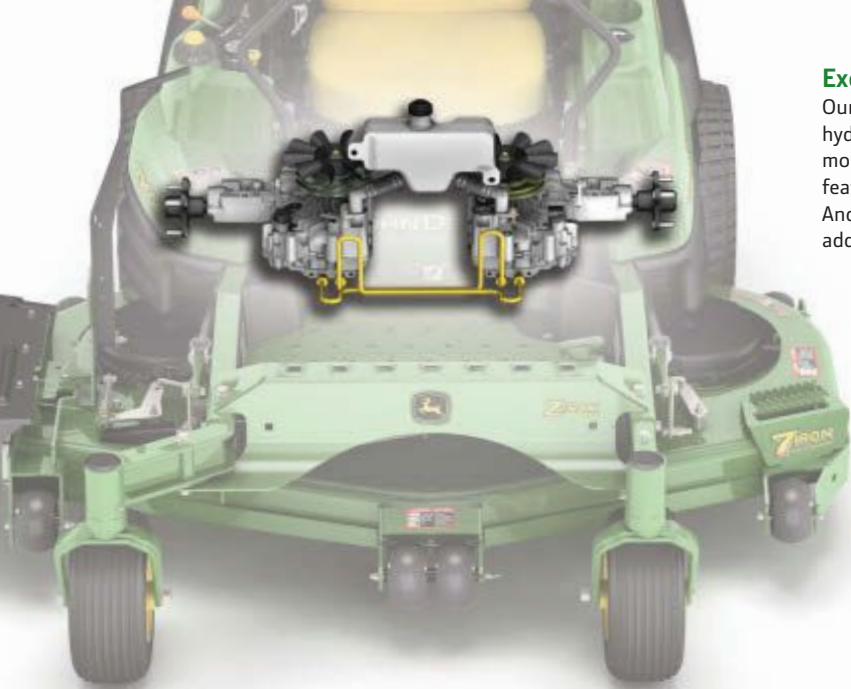
1	Brickman	\$206,100,000
2	Scotts LawnService	\$87,000,000
3	Acres Group	\$44,113,813
4	Mariani Landscape	\$35,000,000
5	The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin	\$32,126,000
6	Landscape Concepts Management	\$26,319,000
7	Chalet	\$23,629,100
8	Scott Byron & Co.	\$23,000,000
9	Spring-Green Lawn Care Corp.	\$22,994,300
10	Sebert Landscaping	\$21,000,000
11	Christy Webber Landscapes	\$20,467,809
12	D. Schumacher Landscaping	\$19,950,000
13	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting	\$19,800,000
14	Countryside Industries	\$19,066,000
15	U.S. Lawns	\$18,800,000
16	Environmental Management Services	\$18,500,000
17	Clarence Davids & Co.	\$18,000,000
	Moore Landscapes	\$18,000,000
19	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$13,917,500
20	Naturescape	\$13,828,312
21	Hermes Landscape	\$13,000,000
22	Reliable Property Services	\$11,946,900
23	Kinsella Landscape	\$11,770,000
24	Perficut Lawn & Landscape	\$11,500,000
	Rosehill Gardens	\$11,500,000

COMMERCIAL

1	ValleyCrest Landscape Co.	\$937,000,000
2	Brickman	\$480,900,000
3	TruGreen	\$422,184,573
4	USM	\$133,305,900
5	Ambius	\$121,770,000
6	U.S. Lawns	\$94,000,000
7	Yellowstone Landscape Group	\$81,500,000
8	Vila & Son Landscaping Corp.	\$60,786,000
9	OneSource Landscape & Golf Services (ABM)	\$60,000,000
10	Ruppert Landscape	\$58,100,000
11	Scotts LawnService	\$58,000,000
12	Luke Brothers - Sawgrass	\$43,000,000
13	Marina Landscape	\$42,000,000
14	Gothic Landscaping	\$40,980,000
15	Clintar Landscape Management	\$40,500,000
16	Acres Group	\$39,702,432
17	ISS Grounds Control	\$38,000,000
18	Lipinski Outdoor Services	\$36,791,000
19	The Groundskeeper	\$36,000,000
20	Nanak's Landscaping	\$34,500,000
21	Mainscape	\$32,600,000
22	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$30,000,000
23	Sierra Landscape Co.	\$28,800,000
24	AAA Landscape	\$27,987,000
25	Denison Landscaping	\$27,980,000

RESIDENTIAL

1	TruGreen	\$888,947,640
2	Scotts LawnService	\$284,200,000
3	Brickman	\$206,100,000
4	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$120,000,000
5	Weed Man	\$99,750,000
6	Lawn Doctor	\$80,000,000
7	SavATree	\$40,460,000
8	NaturaLawn of America	\$31,950,000
9	Mariani Landscape	\$31,500,000
10	Spring-Green Lawn Care Corp.	\$29,564,100
11	Gothic Landscaping	\$27,320,000
12	Scott Byron & Co.	\$23,000,000
13	Chalet	\$21,266,190
14	Jensen Corp.	\$20,850,000
15	Lambert Landscape Co.	\$18,000,000
16	Creative Environments Design	\$14,640,000
17	McHale Landscape Design	\$13,140,000
18	Senske Lawn & Tree Care	\$12,950,000
19	Meadows Farms	\$12,600,000
20	Nissho of California	\$12,560,000
21	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$12,452,500
22	Naturescape	\$12,445,481
23	Cornerstone Solutions Group	\$11,750,000
24	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	\$11,600,000
25	Sun City Landscapes	\$11,400,000*



Exclusive Hydro Ground Transmission

Our unique cross-porting system routes the coolest hydraulic fluid to the hydraulic pump doing the most work. For long life, our transmissions also feature a piston pump and internal wet disk brakes. And for performance, gear reduction drives were added to enhance torque to the drive wheels.

Heavy Duty C-Channel Frame

The C-Channel frames on the Z900 are rock-solid, indestructible foundations. And a redistribution of weight, from front to rear, including a cast-iron bumper, makes side-hill mowing a breeze.

Our design philosophy?



7-Iron PRO Deck

The only deck in the industry stamped from a single sheet of thick, seven gauge steel using four million pounds of pressure. The result? Superior strength, excellent airflow, and an industry best blade tip speed of 18,000 feet per minute.



The New ZTrak™ PRO 900 Series

When we sat down to design our new zero-turn mowers, we had three goals in mind: make it easier to operate. Make it stronger. And make it more productive. The result is a machine that excels in all three areas, with features you won't find on any other mower. See your John Deere dealer for a Z900 demonstration and ask about our Work It For A Week Guarantee.

Accept Nothing Less





Height-of-cut Adjustment Dial

Our exclusive HOC dial allows you to set the cut height with just the twist of a dial. The simple mechanical design ensures superior performance and long life. A transport lock keeps the deck in place when loading and unloading. And the cut range is 1.5 to 5.0 inches at $\frac{1}{2}$ in. increments.



Mulch On Demand

Need to mulch one pass and side-discharge the next? This patented deck allows you to do just that by simply pulling a lever from your seat. By shifting the lever to mulch position, the moveable gate closes off the discharge chute and the smooth moving baffles close off cutting chambers to maximize mulching performance.

Common sense.



Comfort and Convenience Package

This industry exclusive features built-in electronic controls embedded in the levers that allow you to raise or lower the deck as well as disengage the mower blades, all with the push of a button. Also, these ergonomically angled control levers come with thick padded grips for less fatigue.



JOHN DEERE



EMPLOYEES

THE POWER OF PEOPLE

Every LM150 company knows people are its greatest asset *and* cost. And 2009's tough economy didn't make employee retention easy. The average LM150 company lost 4.42 workers and average revenue per employee dropped 2.78%. Some LM150 companies who added employees and/or grew average revenue per employee share how they drive employee retention and growth.

Back to school

More businesses today are creating internal hubs that rival colleges to streamline systems and train workers.

New Way Landscape & Tree Services, San Diego, calls its program New Way University. This "allows for more efficiency in the field, as well as standardizes our processes," says President **Randy Newhard**.

Green & lean

Ruppert Landscape Co.'s management team knows they can't come up with all of the sustainable initiatives themselves. So they empower employees to take the

lead, and it's paying off in more ways than one.

Ruppert's Atlanta office installed a well and 10,000-gallon cistern to collect and store captured rainwater and run-off. The project, completed last June, took one week to complete and cost \$26,000. It should pay for itself in three years. The facility went from using 2 million gallons of water and spending \$9,000 on water annually to using just 96,000 gallons and spending only \$500 annually, says company President **Craig Ruppert**.

The reclaimed water is being used to irrigate Ruppert's nursery holding yard and landscape and wash vehicles. Over the course of the next seven years, the company is anticipating saving approximately 13 million gallons of water and nearly \$47,000.

Positive punch

Motivating employees today is a challenge *and* a necessity. As **Mark Borst**, president, Borst Landscape & Design, Allendale, NJ, says, "Owners need to stay positive and be encouraging to employees." — NW



% GAIN IN REVENUE PER EMPLOYEE

1	Visionscapes	53.1%
2	Carson Landscape Industries	38.7%
3	ProGrass	17%
4	Greenscapes	16.8%
	Urban Farmer	16.8%
6	Nissho of California	14.6%
7	Designs by Sundown	14.5%
8	The Green Plan*	14%
9	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting	13.2%
10	Denison Landscaping	12.6%
11	Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping	11.1%
12	Nanak's Landscaping	10.6%
13	The Groundskeeper	10.5%
	James River Grounds Management	10.5%
15	Heads Up Landscape Contractors	9.3%
16	Tree Tech	8.5%
17	Mill Brothers Landscape Group	7.3%
18	Lawn Doctor	7.1%
	ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	7.1%
20	Angler Environmental	6.9%
	ISS Grounds Control	6.9%
22	McFall & Berry Landscape Management	6.8%
23	U.S. Lawns	6.6%
24	Countryside Industries	6.1%
25	Land-Tech Enterprises	5.8%
	Gardeners' Guild	5.8%

% GAIN IN TOTAL EMPLOYEES

1	Ryan Lawn & Tree	100%
2	Massey Services	52.4%
3	Girard Environmental Services	42.4%
4	Lipinski Outdoor Services	33.3%
5	Kinsella Landscape	26.7%
6	RCI	23%
7	RGS Services	21.4%
8	The Green Plan*	20%
9	Yellowstone Landscape Group	19%
10	Jensen Corp.	17.2%
11	Gothic Grounds Management	13.1%
12	Andre Landscape Service	13%
13	Greenscape	11.1%
14	D&K Landscape	9.6%
15	Christy Webber Landscapes	9.5%
16	Naturalawn of America	9.4%
	Sebert Landscaping	9.4%
18	Ruppert Landscape	9.1%
19	Vila & Son Landscaping Corp.	8.4%
20	American Landscape Systems	7.4%
21	D. Schumacher Landscaping	6.7%
22	Land-Tech Enterprises	5.6%
23	Mariani Landscape	5.4%
24	Tree Tech	5.3%
25	Weed Man	5%

BY EMPLOYEE FACTORS

GROWTH MASTERS

At a time when many landscape businesses are struggling to stay afloat, a few on our *LM150* are on the grow.

BY **JULIE COLLINS**

3RD
BIGGEST
GROWER

RCI

Slidell, LA | **2009 Growth: 26%**

Thanks to post-Hurricane Katrina rebuilding projects on the Gulf Coast, the landscaping market in Louisiana has remained strong even as other parts of the country have faltered. It's what Joe Rotolo, president of RCI, calls the "Katrina effect"—and it allowed the company to grow more than 20% from 2008 to 2009.

"The ability to adjust has been our greatest strength," Rotolo says. "In the past 10 years, we sold and then bought back our company, endured Hurricane Katrina our first year back, and in doing so re-created our scope of services to meet the immediate demands of our customers."

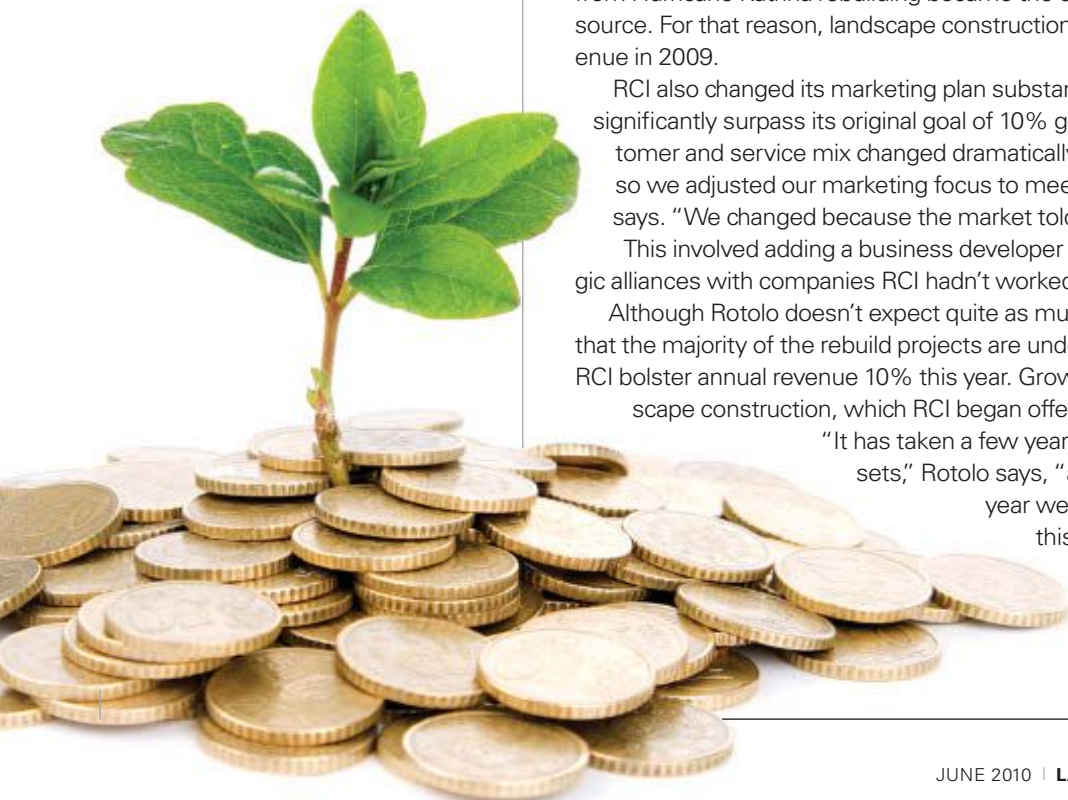
In the past couple of years, federal and municipal work resulting from Hurricane Katrina rebuilding became the company's core revenue source. For that reason, landscape construction was 55% of RCI's revenue in 2009.

RCI also changed its marketing plan substantially, which helped it significantly surpass its original goal of 10% growth for 2009. "Our customer and service mix changed dramatically from our historical base, so we adjusted our marketing focus to meet their needs," Rotolo says. "We changed because the market told us to change."

This involved adding a business developer as well as forming strategic alliances with companies RCI hadn't worked with in the past.

Although Rotolo doesn't expect quite as much growth in 2010, now that the majority of the rebuild projects are underway, he hopes to see RCI bolster annual revenue 10% this year. Growth from pool and hardscape construction, which RCI began offering in 2005, will help.

"It has taken a few years to develop these skill sets," Rotolo says, "and 2010 appears to be the year we will get dividends from this division." **LM**



ON THE GROW

These 25 companies had the highest growth rates in 2009.

1	The Green Plan*	36.8%
2	Lipinski Outdoor Services	27.8%
3	RCI	26.1%
4	Andre Landscape Service	17.1%
5	Greenscape	15%
6	Tree Tech	14.3%
7	Gothic Grounds Management	13.4%
8	Land-Tech Enterprises	11.7%
9	D. Schumacher Landscaping	10.8%
10	James River Grounds Management	10.5%
	Weed Man	10.5%
12	Angler Environmental	9.4%
13	D&K Landscape	8.3%
14	U.S. Lawns	8%
15	McFall & Berry Landscape Management	6.8%
16	Christy Webber Landscapes	6.6%
17	American Landscape Systems	4.8%
18	Naturescape	4.6%
19	Arteka Cos.	4.3%
20	Complete Property Maintenance	3.7%
21	Mariani Landscape	2.9%
22	RGS Services	2.5%
23	DLC Resources	1.9%
	Terracare Associates	1.9%
	Yellowstone Landscape Group	1.9%

Meet 2010's 25 top growth contenders.

1	LMI Landscapes	25%
2	Gothic Grounds Management	22%
3	Andre Landscape Service	20-30%
4	American Landscape Systems	20%
	Native Land Design	20%
6	Earthworks	17.6%
7	Countryside Industries	15.3%
8	Mission Landscape Cos.	15%
9	Ruppert Landscape	13%
10	AAA Landscape	10%
	ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance	10%
	The Celtis Group	10%
	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	10%
	RCI	10%
	Ryan Lawn & Tree	10%
	Senske Lawn & Tree Care	10%
17	McFall & Berry Landscape Management	9%
	Moore Landscapes	9%
19	Stay Green	7.8%
20	Mickman Bros.	7%
21	Cagwin & Dorward	6%
22	Bartlett Tree Experts	5%
	Environmental Management Services	5%
	Shearon Environmental Design	5%
	Tree Tech	5%

GREENSCAPE

East Taunton, MA | 2009 Growth: 15%

A competitive and rapidly changing market kept Greenscape president and CEO Joseph Ciffolillo and his team on their toes in 2009, but some savvy management moves ensured the maintenance and design/build company met its 15% growth goal.

"The growth came as a result of careful strategic planning," Ciffolillo says. The company redeveloped its website, launched a brand strengthening campaign and a customer relationship management piece, invested in business development staff and training, and jumped on the social media bandwagon.

It wasn't all about marketing though. Ciffolillo says focusing on the company's core principles has always been the key to its success. That involves fostering relationships with clients and delivering high value. It also means giving the management team tools necessary to make informed decisions.

Greenscape, which focuses 75% on commercial properties and 25% on private estates and large-scale specialty residential projects, strives to deliver quality while

5TH
BIGGEST
GROWER



also cutting costs. "We're listening to clients and better managing our costs," Ciffolillo says.

For 2010, Ciffolillo expects revenue to stay steady, although the company's profit centers are changing. "It's a dynamic equation. Our construction market has softened a lot since 2009, but we're using that to position ourselves to capitalize when conditions improve," he says.

At the same time, the company's maintenance department is moving into new geographic areas.

"We're putting a lot more time and effort into sales growth," Ciffolillo says, "but we're also making sure we stay rooted in our core principles." LMI



6TH
BIGGEST
GROWER

TREE TECH

Foxboro, MA | 2009 Growth: 14.3%

Based on the economic climate at the end of 2008, Tree Tech president Andy Felix set the goal of maintaining his company's annual gross revenue of \$7 million for 2009. So it came as a welcome surprise when the company exceeded that goal — by \$1 million.

"We knew of opportunities in the public sector that matched our capabilities," Felix says. "We were fortunate to win some public projects that were good for our company."

Although the public sector drove the company's growth in 2009 — and tree removal services were particularly vital — this year Felix sees the residential market picking up. "Since many companies that previously had not been involved are now bidding on public, low-price work, we have steered away from that," Felix says.

Instead, the company is focusing on acquiring new residential business by marketing its plant health care services. "Homeowners can only sit still for so long before their trees and shrubs become overgrown, and the look of a neglected landscape becomes unacceptable," Felix says.

In 2010, the company expects a 5% increase in revenue, spurred by an updated marketing plan.

Revamping the Tree Tech website was a key goal early this year. "We found a small firm that rapidly increased traffic to our site and knows how to navigate and position us for our goals," Felix says.

In addition, for the first time in 24 years, the company hired a professional marketing firm. "They have given us some excellent ideas that we will be implementing over time," Felix says.

For starters, the company will begin its first direct mail marketing campaign to two towns where Felix hopes to develop more residential business. And the web and marketing firms are collaborating to help Tree Tech produce an e-newsletter, which will save the company thousands of dollars on postage and help it maintain a connection with existing customers. **LM**

AMERICAN LANDSCAPE SYSTEMS

Lewisville, TX | 2009 Growth: 4.8%

The weather in Dallas cost American Landscape Systems 20 days of work in the last quarter and prevented the company from reaching its goal of 20% growth in 2009. Yet despite that setback, the company increased revenue by 4.8%.

Vice president Joe Angelone attributes growth to the company's strong municipal presence, which kept it safe during the private market downturn.

"In 2009, general contractors performing work for a municipality or a public entity that required bonds was the driving force of our customer base," he explains. "The projects that were done under bonds guaranteed we were going to get paid in full and, for the most part, in a timely manner."

Angelone says these municipal customers are a strong component of the company's work in 2010, which is why he expects to grow 20% this year.

He also expects private work will increase through the rest of this year and into 2011, although "not near the quantity prior to the housing bust."

Irrigation repair and commercial maintenance were steady in 2009, Angelone says, and he expects them to stay strong in 2010.

"Clients now want the quickest response they can get because the perception is that none of us are doing anything, and the first one to respond usually gets the work," Angelone says.

The other goal: Striving to secure as many guaranteed contracts as possible.

"Controlling cash flow to your business will keep you in business," Angelone says, "and we have been able to do that during the toughest parts of the last three years." **LM**

17TH
BIGGEST
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UP-AND-COMERS

Four landscape companies just shy of our *LM150* rankings' revenue cut-off share their growth stories.

BY **MARTY WHITFORD** EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

DIDN'T MAKE OUR *LM150* revenue cut-off? Don't feel bad. The elite list eludes (a.k.a. excludes) more than 99.9% of the country's estimated 272,600 landscape enterprises.

While much can be learned by following the *LM150*, the same can be said about many of the businesses just shy of our rankings' cut-off of \$7.4 million in 2009 revenue. *LM* interviewed the leaders of

four such up-and-comers to get their takes on industry trends, obstacles and opportunities.

Commercial focus

Brookeville, MD-based McDonnell Landscape rode out 2009's economic storm by increasing sales 6.25% to \$5.1 million. Vice President Jon Fritz attributes the company's \$300,000 revenue gain in 2009 to its concentration on commercial customers.

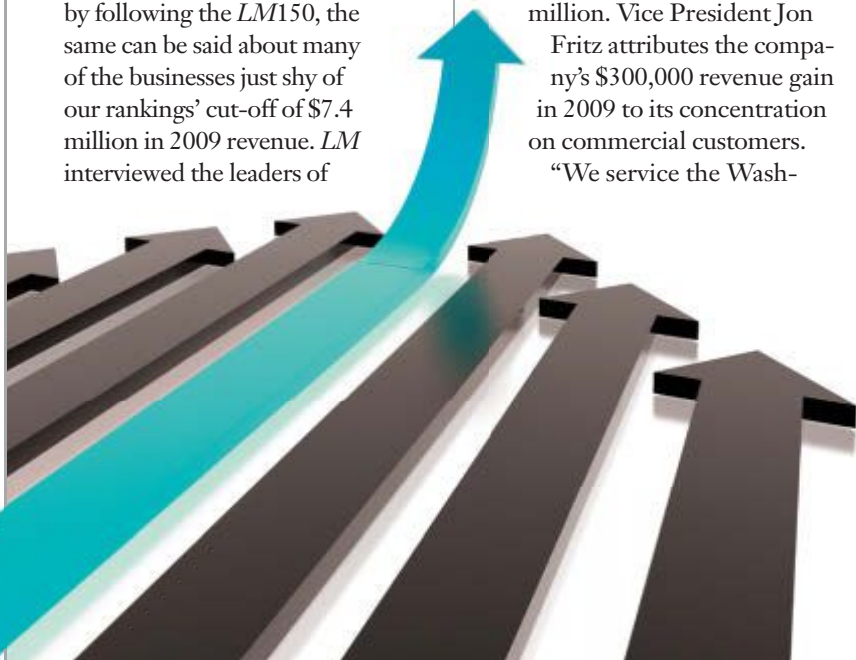
"We service the Wash-

ington, D.C., area, where the recession is not so severe," Fritz says. "We do a lot of work for the federal government and various agencies, and the economic downturn hasn't hit their budgets to quite the degree it has the residential market."

Although McDonnell Landscape wasn't able to increase its 2009 maintenance contract fees, the company hasn't had to reduce its pricing either — a feat many failed to accomplish because of significant pricing pressures from customers and competitors.

McDonnell continuously identifies and captures increased efficiencies, which has helped offset rising fuel, labor and other costs, Fritz says. As a natural extension of that, cross-training is a must.

"All of us in the office go out in the field and pitch in when needed," Fritz says. "When we did the landscape design/build and installation work at Nationals Park in 2008, I was on-site, helping out for the better part of three months. It's a player-coach deal here."



Recession-proof

Not every landscape business can say it increased sales each of the past three years. Jacksonville, FL-based R&D Landscape & Irrigation can.

R&D increased sales 9% in 2007, 30% in 2008 and another 5% in 2009. Since 2006, R&D has boosted its annual sales almost 50% — from \$2.56 million to \$3.83 million.

“As we’ve started to grow, I’ve stopped wearing so many hats,” says Tom Rowand Jr., R&D’s president. “2008 was the first year we had a dedicated, full-time sales rep, and non-coincidentally, we added \$850,000 in sales that year.”

R&D also reduced its contract fees with homeowner associations (HOAs) 15% to 20% to keep their business.

“Many of these HOAs saw their budgets shrink, and some of their members can’t pay their mortgages, never mind their association fees,” Rowand says. “So, we worked with them, and our suppliers, in turn, worked with us on pricing. We would have surpassed \$4 million in sales in 2008 if it weren’t for the fee cuts with HOAs, but we’ll get there soon enough — and with our client base fully intact.”



68% growth in 2009

Most landscape company owners would be happy with a 6.8% revenue gain in 2009. Not William Pyne, owner of Exton, PA-based Dooley-Pyne Landscaping Co., which boosted its annual revenue by 68% in 2009, from \$2.5 million to \$4.2 million.

The company increased its snow removal revenue tenfold to \$725,000 thanks to a few storms and the restructuring of one-third of its snow-removal contracts to a fixed season fee — based on each client’s number and size of properties and the area’s average snowfall the past 25 years — in exchange for three-year service agreements.

In addition to a 25% increase of hardscaping work, Dooley-Pyne also bolstered its landscaping build/installation and maintenance work 50%, to \$2.95 million.

“We’re going gangbusters this year, too,” Pyne says. “We’re on track to do more than \$8 million in sales this year — with a doubling of build/installation, maintenance and snow-removal work, a 20% increase in hardscaping and the launch of our in-house lawn fertilization business.”

Pyne attributed 70% of the

company’s success to a partnership with Lipinski Outdoor Services, a Marlton, NJ-based company among the elite *LM150* (No. 24).

“In an industry where organizations can be so competitive, the good people at Lipinski have gone out of their way to guide us and push us on so many levels,” Pyne says.

The partnership began in 2004, with Dooley-Pyne handling a few local snow-removal jobs for Lipinski. Since, it’s blossomed to include landscape build/installation, maintenance and hardscaping.

“They’re kind of our big brother,” Pyne says. “We’re fortunate to learn from and assist Lipinski — and we’re both growing significantly because of our give-and-take.”

Best quarter ever

In business 72 quarters (18 years), Pomona, CA-based CentreScapes had its best quarter ever from October to December 2009.

“Last year’s fourth-quarter push more than made up for a slow first nine months,” says Mark Marcus, CentreScapes’ CEO. “We ended the year with a 14% increase in sales.”



CentreScapes

Before the fourth quarter, Marcus couldn't have imagined even matching CentreScapes' 2008 revenue mark of \$4.2 million. But by New Year's Day 2010, CentreScapes had shattered that glass revenue ceiling.

"We service about 25 malls in the Los Angeles area, and many of them apparently were sitting on money until the fourth quarter," Marcus says. "Thanks to many of the malls' 'use it or lose' budget philosophy, we topped our 2008 revenue by \$700,000."

Marcus expects 2010 to be flat because of the loss in June 2009 of maintenance work at five cemeteries.

"It hurt to lose that business — especially since I brought it in and maintained the relationships — but it was low-margin work," Marcus says. "We were making 5% margin, and a national company came in and underbid us by 40%. They can have it at that price." **LM**

THE NEXT 20

A look at the companies primed to break into the LM150 in 2011

152	Tomlinson Bomberger Lawn Care & Landscape	\$7,276,000
153	Pacheco Brothers Gardening	\$7,100,000
154	Michael Hatcher & Associates	\$6,970,846
155	Commercial Scapes	\$6,880,000*
156	Timberline Landscaping	\$6,700,000
157	Young's	\$6,500,000
158	Bluegrass Lawncare of St. Louis	\$6,324,822
159	Franz Witte Landscape Contracting	\$6,300,000
160	Plantique	\$6,247,666
161	Southview Design	\$6,112,000
162	The Lawn Ranger	\$6,100,000
163	McAdam Landscaping	\$5,919,000
164	Greener Landscaping	\$5,900,000
165	Maffei Landscape Contractors	\$5,782,000
166	The Pattie Group	\$5,718,000
167	Landscape Service Professionals	\$5,714,016
168	Borst Landscape & Design	\$5,620,919
169	B&B Exterminating Co.	\$5,600,000
170	Eastern Land Management	\$5,500,900
171	Fine Earth Landscape	\$5,500,000

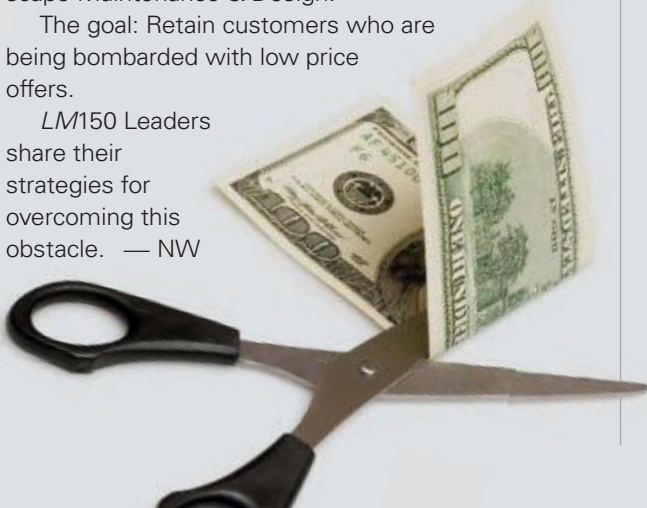
PRICING PRESSURES

The No. 1 challenge clearly expressed by the LM150 this year is increasingly competitive pressure on service pricing.

"Creating new profitable sales in an environment of extreme downward pricing pressure" is tough, says Joe Gonzalez, CEO of ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design.

The goal: Retain customers who are being bombarded with low price offers.

LM150 Leaders share their strategies for overcoming this obstacle. — NW



"We will continue to show the clients what makes us different. It is not only what you pay for today but what it will cost you over the years for poor execution. We have to show the client how we add value." — **Tim Emick**, Timberline Landscaping

"We will manage operating costs and lower overhead to be more competitive in all parts of our business." — **Joe Gonzalez**



"We plan to overcome this by partnering with our vendors to obtain quality materials for premium pricing." — **Sean Lynam**, business development, Urban Farmer

"We need to educate customers as to what is included in our price and what is possibly missing from the competition's price." — **Rick Christensen**, Teufel Landscape





M&A UPSURGE

RON EDMONDS DOESN'T measure the level of mergers and acquisitions in the Green Industry by the number of press releases that come across his desk.

Rather, he tracks how much his phone rings. And, this year, the president of Memphis, TN-based Green Industry mergers and acquisitions firm The Principium Group says his phone is ringing off of the hook.

"There's an awful lot of stuff going on," agrees Brian Corbett, the managing partner of Atlanta, GA-based CCG Consultants, which worked on the December 2009 deal between Denver-based The Green Plan and CIVC Partners and Leonard Green & Partners-backed Brickman. "We're working on six deals in the landscape industry right now."

But don't expect the "Wild, Wild West days" — a term Corbett affectionately uses to describe 1998-1999, when Houston-based Notre Capi-

M&A experts predict 2010 will be a hot year for deals driven by private equity firms investing in the market.

BY **NICOLE WISNIEWSKI** EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

tal Ventures merged seven multimillion-dollar landscape companies to form LandCare USA. After a year of heated bidding wars with TruGreen ChemLawn, the business was sold to its competitor, adding \$450 million to its \$820 million revenue at the time.

Today's activity might not rival that time period, but "approximately \$10 trillion of personal wealth and business assets is predicted to change hands in the next five to 10 years" in many markets," explains Mark Long, a partner with BlueSky Group in Powell, OH. "It's an enormous number with enormous possibility, and it will continue to drive M&A activity."

Though private equity dollars have been in the industry for some time — Michael S. Dell's MSD Capital-backed ValleyCrest Cos. and the above mentioned Brickman, to name a few — the newest wave of private equity interest came with Grid-iron Capital's formation of Yellowstone Landscape

Group in May 2008, giving it an instant \$50-million industry presence. And, as a result, the past 18 to 24 months have brought additional private equity interest in the landscape industry, Long points out. An example is Progress Equity Partners recent carving of ACC Landscape out of Denver-based American Civil Constructors.

Even though Yellowstone is the furthest down the private equity path, “I think there will be one or two more new private equity buyers that will be acquiring landscape companies pretty soon,” Corbett predicts.

Edmonds agrees. “I think there are some players that have visions of getting a lot bigger, and this might be their time to make a move,” he says. “The landscape industry will probably evolve a bit over the next year.”



“I THINK THERE WILL BE ONE OR TWO MORE PRIVATE EQUITY BUYERS THAT WILL BE ACQUIRING LANDSCAPE COMPANIES PRETTY SOON.”

— BRIAN CORBETT, CCG Consultants

2010 = M&A double time

In 2009, there weren't as many sales of Green Industry businesses as Edmonds expected. “Last year was a slow year, which was a huge surprise to me,” he shares. “I thought there would be an enormous number of people trying to exit the business coming off of a year where we had the rationing effect of commodity prices combined with gasoline prices rising so much and then the uncertainty of the economy. But that didn't materialize at all.”

There are two reasons 2009 didn't turn into a banner M&A year, Edmonds believes.

First, “the world was in a state of inertia,” he says. “People were hesitant to do anything. They weren't buying new houses or new cars; they weren't taking vacations.”

Also, business sales happen for many more reasons than just an owner deciding to sell his company. Sometimes it's a marriage issue, a conflict with a spouse's career, a need to relocate, disability, retirement, etc. “All of those things happened last year at the same pace they usually do,” Edmonds says, “but fewer deals got done — mainly because of the poor credit market.”

“In a typical deal structure, a private equity firm is looking to invest very little of its own money — it borrows several times the size of its investments,” Long adds. “Easy credit makes this work.”

But today's credit market is certainly not easy. “The credit market is not perfect, but it has already improved a great deal,” Edmonds says. “And the stimulation of the Small Business Administration (SBA) lending program was the most successful part of this — provisions introduced did cause SBA lending to take off, and some deals that were in discussion became viable in the fourth quarter of 2009 when deals increased.”

What does this mean for 2010? “We're going to see a doubling up effect,” Edmonds predicts.

PE squared

One can pretty quickly conduct an online search of the private equity firms interested in the landscape and lawn care business, Edmonds says. These firms raise funds from investors that are used for the equity portion of acquisitions. But those are always leveraged with other financing that is arranged deal by deal, particularly for platform acquisitions — the initial industry deal a private equity firm makes, Edmonds explains. Then after the platform acquisition, there is usually a series of follow-on acquisitions that happen much quicker and involve less complication and fewer steps because the company has established a credit agreement.

These larger private equity firms seek out \$20-million-plus companies for their platform acquisitions. From there, size still matters for the majority of acquisitions — usually top 150 companies, Corbett says.

But the trend to buy good, smaller companies also is growing by private equity firms operating on a smaller scale. Brighton Partners' recent acquisition of a 70% stake in \$5-million to \$6-million Lawn Dawg, Nashua, NH, is a good example of this.

Then there is a third world of private equity interested in the landscape market — one backed by family wealth. “They operate the same, but are using their own money vs. raising funds,” Edmonds explains, pointing to Michael Dell's MSD Capital as a good example of this type of business. “They are making the same kinds of deals but don't put out press releases like the tradi-





tional private equity firms do. These are happening just as often as the deals you do hear about.”

Another big difference between these types of firms is a private equity firm backed by financing dollars usually is operating on a 5- to 7-year return-on-investment window, at which time they’ll likely make the business public, sell it to another industry company or sell it to another private equity firm. The family-based companies don’t seem to have these short-term exit strategies, Edmonds says.

Industry turn-ons

Regardless of the type of private equity firm, the industry businesses they are attracted to today are the same. Recurring revenue maintenance businesses continue to be more attractive than installation-focused businesses, industry consultant Judy Guido says. In fact, “many companies today are running around trying to get maintenance work to make up for how much their construction business has fallen off,” she says. “Buyers aren’t interested in construction even if those companies have relationships with home builders and general contractors. If they aren’t building anything, so what? There is so much overbuilt stuff in commercial — and residential will be soft for a while. There’s not a lot of intrinsic value there.”

In addition to recurring revenue, landscape and lawn care services are tied to real estate, which remains one of the most viable assets anyone owns today. Therefore, maintenance work is a bit recession proof.

“It’s something properties have to do to keep up value and appearance, and it’s certainly not something you can outsource to another country,” Guido adds.

Sustainability is another buzzword that’s driving M&A transactions in the landscape industry. “You can’t look anywhere without seeing ‘green’ or ‘sustainable,’” Guido says, adding that companies providing water management and other “sustainable” solutions have value to buyers.

Sell, sell, sell

Not only is there more interest on the buying side, but more companies are willing to sell today.

“YOU MIGHT EXPECT THIS TO EVOLVE INTO A BUYER’S MARKET, BUT IT’S REALLY NOT. THE HESITANCE OF SELLERS TO SELL GIVES THEM SOME NEGOTIATING POWER.”

— RONALD EDMONDS,
The Principium Group

The challenging economy is partly to blame. A lot of owners are looking to sell because they feel increasingly vulnerable, Guido says. “The economic challenges brought their shortcomings and weaknesses to the forefront,” she says. “So they think they can better protect themselves and their employees if they share the risk with someone.”



Another reason is they want to diversify their net worth. “A business owner with a bigger company like those on the *LM150* realizes he has a dilemma — 85% to 90% of his net worth is tied to one huge liquid business,” Corbett says. “So diversity in net worth would help insulate him

in case of another recession.”

This year is also an attractive year for business mergers and acquisitions because after Dec. 31 the capital gains tax rate on selling assets is rising 33%, Corbett explains. That’s in addition to the new 3.8% health care mandate for businesses with more than \$200,000 in revenue. So selling now means avoiding approximately 40% in tax hikes. “These business owners are thinking, ‘I can bust my butt to get my business back to where it was before the recession, but if taxes are going up that much I won’t really get more than I could get by selling now,’” Corbett says.

One might think the recession would also have an impact on business valuation, but most M&A experts say this is not the case. “You might expect this to evolve into a buyer’s market, but it’s really not,” Edmonds says. “The hesitance of sellers to sell gives them some negotiating power. Where limits come in are on the financing side.”

Long agrees. “Valuations are as aggressive or solid as they’ve ever been because there are a lot of strategic buyers in the space,” he says. Typically, maintenance companies get between 2 and 6 times EBITA and design/build companies get between 1 and 3 times EBITA, Guido says.

But, she adds, “the economy doesn’t matter — good or great businesses will always be contenders to buy or be bought.” **LM**

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JOHN DEERE

Beyond logic?

What are people telling your customers about the value of turf?

BY NICOLE WISNIEWSKI EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

As landscape professionals, you may be faced with questions regarding pesticides and the effectiveness of the tools you use every day. It's important to be aware of "what you're up against" when it comes to the information your customers may be getting from groups who oppose the use of pesticides.

In April, the 28th National Pesticide Forum, "Greening the Community," was held by Beyond Pesticides in Cleveland. During the opening session, "Pesticides 101," Caroline Cox, a Beyond Pesticides board member and research director for the Center for Environmental Health in Oakland, Calif., outlined the "10 Reasons Not To Use Pesticides," renaming her session to clarify her message.

Here are a few of the points this organization is spreading to your current and potential customers.

› **Pesticides don't solve pest problems.** "If pesticides really solved pest problems, we wouldn't use them repeatedly," Cox explained. "Every year in the U.S., a billion pesticides are used. The amount isn't going down."

› **Pesticides are hazardous to human health.** Three hundred million pounds of cancer-causing pesticides and 150 million pounds of pesticides that cause reproductive problems like miscarriages or birth defects are used annually, Cox told the group.

› **Pesticides cause special problems for children.** "For their size, children drink more water and eat more food than adults do," she said. "Their play exposes them to pesticides. They do somersaults on the lawn and they sprawl out on the carpet to read a book. All of these things increase their exposure to pesticides."

"Kids are also growing and developing," she added. "If they are exposed to pesticides when they are at a critical stage of growth or development and their growth changes, this is something have to live with for life. For instance, some common pesticides appear to affect the developing brain so a child's brain will be different when they grow up."

› **Pesticides contaminate water and air.** The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Monitoring Program found 57 pesticides in public drinking water samples in 2009, and the U.S. Geological Survey found pesticides in 90% to 100% of rivers and streams they tested in 2006. After stating these facts, Cox concluded that "pesticides used on lawn and roadsides do end up in urban streams and rivers."

› **Pesticides are hazardous to fish and birds.** "We share the planet with other living things and they pay the price as a result of our pesticide use," Cox said, adding that 100 million pounds of pesticides per year kill fish, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

› **Pesticide health and safety testing is conducted by pesticide manufacturers.** "The government does not test pesticides – they



ask companies that make them to test them," Cox said. "If you profit from a product and test it, isn't there a built in conflict of interest?"

› **Pesticides are hazardous to pets.**

"A good way to talk to people about pesticides is talk to them about pets," Cox offered the group, adding that the American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals reported more than 30,000 pesticide poisoned pets in a single year (2005). She also pointed specifically to the use of lawn care herbicides as a reason for the increased risk of pet cancer.

› **Pesticides have too many secrets.** Pesticide ingredients are divided into active and inert, Cox explained, "so you wouldn't know exactly what chemicals were used on your block because a good percentage of them could be inert and not listed on the label."

Do yourself — and your industry — a favor and become educated about the benefits of pesticides and be prepared to speak knowledgeably when faced with questions regarding their harmful effects.

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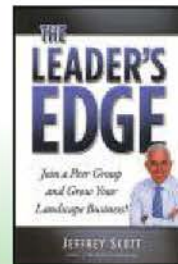
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MARTY'S PICK

Marty Whitford • Editorial Director

The Leader's Edge



The Leader's Edge explains the benefits of joining a peer group. Joining a peer group will increase your company's profits, improve cash flow, and give you insight and usable ideas. There is more accountability to what works in the landscape industry. Scott's book shows how to get the most out of your active participation in the peer group and grow your business.

Author: Jeffrey Scott
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Cost: \$9.95

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Anatomy of an accident

The huge dead limb shifted and crashed, without warning, to the dried leaf litter covering the soft earth on the other side of the towering oak. It happened in the blink of an eye. Almost simultaneously, we heard a grunt, as if somebody had been struck with something heavy. It was followed by a groan and then a hoarse, frightened cry: “*Get it off of me! Get it off of me!*”

The limb — thicker than a large man’s thigh — had pinned a young worker against the other side of the mature oak, where three equally young co-workers had been attempting to dislodge the gnarly, twisted chunk of wood. The limb, which had been wedged just above the workers’ heads in the crook of the oak, weighed 500 lbs. or perhaps a bit more.

I witnessed this accident, and have since often replayed it in my head, considering what I could have done or said to have prevented it.

Consider the accident’s anatomy:

As three young workers put their shoulders to the limb and pushed to dislodge it, their co-worker had, in an attempt to help extricate the massive branch, moved to the other side of the oak, the side where it was meant to drop. When the limb released from the oak’s crotch so suddenly — almost to the surprise of everybody — it pinwheeled awkwardly from its perch, slamming their friend to his knees and crushing his upper body against the oak’s trunk.

Sensing what had happened and hearing their colleague’s pleas for help, the small group of us

pushed the huge limb off of the young worker. Released from the tree, the young man painfully discovered he could barely move his left arm. All of us feared he had broken his collarbone or a bone in his left shoulder. Fortunately, he had not. I later learned that he had sustained muscle bruises — and being young and strong, he quickly recovered and was back at work.

Far less fortunate are the more than 200 landscape workers who will die on the job this year, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). This is a hard, cold fact. It happens every year.

It is also unacceptable. Our industry is sustaining far too many fatalities, even when you take into account that most of the work is done using powerful and potentially dangerous equipment in often environmentally demanding conditions.

Time to reduce the numbers

To reduce the level of fatalities in this industry, it starts by training employees to recognize and avoid the potential dangers inherent in the tasks they perform. Let’s not assume this can be done in a single morning or a single day. Safety training is ongoing and, considering the consequences, requires weekly — if not daily — education and reminders of specific hazards.

Fortunately, none of us have to go it alone or invent a new training program. The Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) has helped hundreds of landscape companies through its Safety Training Achieves Remarkable Success (STARS) program, which is still going strong. Check it out at PLANET’s website: LandcareNetwork.org.

As I learned from my recent experience with the young guys freeing the huge limb, the anatomy of an accident is remarkably easy to reconstruct after it happens. It’s much better to be trained to recognize a hazard and respond to it appropriately so you’re not left wondering (as I was) what you could have done differently.

More than **200 landscape workers will die** on the job... It happens every year. It is also unacceptable.

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MYBIGGESTMISTAKE

LESSONS LEARNED THE HARD WAY » BY DANIEL G. JACOBS



Early success doesn't ensure continued growth. That's one of the lessons Rick and Randy Girard learned the first time around.

RICK GIRARD FOUNDED Girard's Landscaping and General Maintenance in the early 1990s and quickly grew it to 30 full-time employees with monthly revenues of about \$85,000. His brother Randy and father Leo also were involved in the company.

But Rick Girard says by the mid-1990s, he began to realize the family business was in financial trouble, and in 1995 he was forced to declare bankruptcy.

"It wasn't just one thing," Girard says. "It was largely due to inexperience

compounded by poor financial results. It had to do with immaturity — I was 26 — as well as lack of financial ability and knowledge, and not having enough guts to make the hard decisions. We weren't living within our means, and my inexperienced decisions came back to haunt me."

"For example, we were behind on payroll taxes and 'robbing Peter to pay Paul.' The overwhelming feeling of failure is difficult for anyone to completely understand who hasn't experienced it themselves. At the time I filed bankruptcy, I didn't comprehend the long-term repercussions that would follow."

Girard learned from the experience, but didn't immediately venture out on his own. He spent the next three years working for other landscaping companies, always with an eye on once again leading his own enterprise.

"Those years were incredibly difficult

times for me and my family," Girard says. "We had two young children and my biggest concern from week to week was making sure the check didn't bounce when my wife went to the grocery store."

In 1998, Girard took another stab.

"My brother Randy and I founded Girard Environmental Services, Inc. — as equal partners. Starting

a new company with the name 'Girard' in the same town it had been tarnished in was a conscious decision by us to not hide from our past. We were completely upfront about past mistakes. We wrote our 'company story,' which included information about the bankruptcy and how we repaid virtually all of our debt, had learned from our mistakes and now were ready and willing to move forward to provide our customers with superior results and service."

Rick Girard learned from his mistakes and is eager to share so others can learn from his missteps. He offers this advice:

► **Make tough decisions.** I tell new business owners, 'Don't be afraid to make the tough business decisions that need to be made.' Regrettably, I avoided making the tough decisions — like laying people off and negotiating with vendors for better prices.

► **Be financially literate.** Don't overextend yourself financially or the assets of your business.

► **Take responsibility and never give up.** I never passed the buck when it came to the bankruptcy. Along with taking responsibility, I believe it's important not to use the bad economy as a crutch to explain away your business trouble. Innovate. Work

smarter. Don't give up. If I could do it again, I would have refused to file bankruptcy. Keep working at it and fight for your business, tooth and nail.

► **Never forget the ones who helped you.** We still employ the second person we hired from Girard's Landscaping and General Maintenance. He's part of our executive team. We hire good people and reward them — they're the backbone of our success. And we've always been thankful to particular vendors who were willing to give us a second chance when we started over. The relationships I value most are the ones that have been tested.

► **Reputation is everything.** Don't ever jeopardize your business' reputation ... because it takes a long time to get it back. We fought hard to redeem our reputation. Now, every day is another opportunity to work hard to protect and strengthen our reputation.

"Believe me, there's nothing I'd rather *not* talk about than declaring bankruptcy," Girard says. "It happened 15 years ago ... I still get knots in my stomach thinking about it. And it still stings. I know what it's like to fail and I know how to not 'go there' again. We don't take our success for granted. The bankruptcy made us more humble and thankful, which ultimately has helped our business grow."

To share your biggest mistake, contact Dan Jacobs at djacobs@questex.com.



NAMES/COMPANY: CEO Rick Girard (left) and President Randy Girard; Girard Environmental Services

EMPLOYEES: 320 full time

FOUNDED: 1998

HEADQUARTERS: Sanford, FL



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The author is the owner-manager of 3PG Consulting. Contact him at kkehoe@questex.com.

Re-evaluating account managers

If you are in the grounds maintenance business — and who isn't these days — the one position that will undergo dramatic transformation over the next few years is that of account manager. The reasons why are simple:

1. To flatten out overhead expense growth, account managers must handle a larger book of business.
2. To maximize contract retention and enhancement sales, they must address the customer's real service need.

The customer's value proposition is driven by the **Price-Product-Service** experience. This proposition is shifting dramatically (see Table 1). In its simplest terms, the **Product** has become a commodity, while **Service** has remained focused on horticultural expertise and responsiveness. As a result, the only point of differentiation is now **Price**.

TABLE 1: PRICE-PRODUCT-SERVICE EXPERIENCE

Year	Price	Product	Service
2007	30%	50%	20%
2010	60%	10%	30%
	Contract cost	Mowing Spring clean Fall Clean Irrigation Fertilization Pruning	Responsiveness Communication Proactivity Budget management Speed

Here's the problem: Unless you are the lowest price provider in the market, you *will* lose work if you can't differentiate convincingly and consistently. The customer's real service needs are cost management and proactive communications. I apologize for the "proactive" cliché, but few deliver this very well — as almost any property manager will tell you. The solution requires investments in a combination of web-based technologies and account manager retraining and recruiting.

Web-based customer technology

The account manager of the future simply cannot take any more phone calls, manage crews and hope to deliver a better level of service without off-loading some of the interaction to the customer. The banking industry did it through ATMs and online banking. The leaders in the Green Industry will do it through online scheduling, service order, work order and invoice management in a direct customer interface.

In addition, these customer needs will need to be seamlessly integrated into production management and scheduling to ensure satisfaction. Web-based software already exists to do this — and it is being used right now.

The new and improved account manager

Today's typical Green Industry account managers are horticulture experts who know how to talk to people. This is fine as it goes, but that in no way qualifies them to be budget managers and salespeople.

The future account manager will more closely resemble one who, today, works in the retail world. These professionals must demonstrate the return on investment the buyer achieves selling the vendor's products, as well as working with the buyer to provide ideas that further drive their margins.

Similarly, leaders in the Green Industry will accomplish these goals by providing account budgeting tools, sales training, and commission structures that attract a more highly paid professional. Many of these tools are available already.

I see these changes as an enormous opportunity for the industry, rather than something to be feared — or worse, ignored. We are experiencing a very normal economic process associated with the commoditization of any product. If we want to avoid price discounting as the only point of differentiation, we are going to have to learn some new tricks from those in industries who have already traveled the path on which we now find ourselves.

The good news is the leaders in these industries are making better margins now than they did before.

Net Margin Up . . . 4 points

Cut Costs While Growing Your Business . . .

Is that Really Possible?

Ask Scott Hall, President of Classic Landscaping, and he'll tell you, absolutely. Two years ago Classic was struggling to maintain the status quo. Their overhead was creeping up faster than the business was growing. Scott lamented, "We reached a point where we could not sustain our costs and maintain profitability... we had to do something."

Like other landscapers, Classic was feeling the same business pressures. Scott projected, "The nature of business is fundamentally changing, and we must learn to operate in this new environment. Business management software is a critical tool for success now and in the future."

A Vision Realized

Classic knew they needed to replace their old software system. Scott recalls, "We were pouring a lot of time and data into our system, but we couldn't get any information out of it. Only the office staff at our main location could use it and what's more, the software required too many office people."

Classic began looking for an enterprise software system that would fit their entire business and soon discovered BOSS[®]LM. Scott reflected, "I had a vision for this type of product in the green industry when I first saw business management software while working on my MBA."

Results that Just Keep Coming

With the new system in place, Classic went from spending 3 days working on payroll to just 3 hours. A similar story for invoicing resulted in improved cash flow and upgraded professionalism to clients.

Beyond overhead savings, Classic has been able to reap additional savings from direct job costs by more effectively managing jobs. Scott explained, "... the new system allows us to look at data on jobs in ways I could have only dreamed of a couple years ago. This information has enabled us to quickly identify the problems and fix them."

"We've made several changes to our business and all contributed to a significant increase in our net profit. I attribute 4% of our improved bottom line directly to BOSS[®]LM."

A little over a year after implementing the new system Scott says, "This is the greatest thing I've seen in the industry in a long time. BOSS's impact across the entire company is similar to the addition of our mulch blower to mulching services - radical improvement of operational efficiencies."

Opportunities Now Flourish

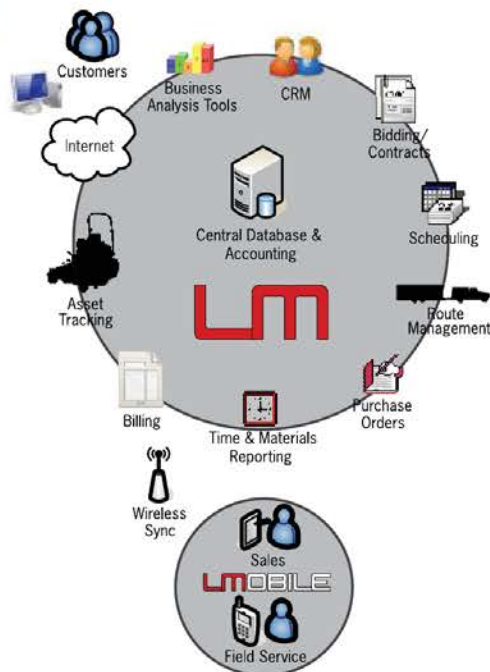
Classic has been able to shift costs from administration to other critical areas of the business. This flexibility is essential for the success of long-term growth. "As these resources are re-deployed," says Scott, "we are careful to place client care first on our list of priorities. Because BOSS[®]LM shoulders increasing administrative burdens for us, we have more time to evaluate other essential facets of our operation."

The changes Classic made have not only improved the bottom line but the quality of life at work. Scott contemplated that, "...two years ago running the business was a drudgery, now it's exciting!" So exciting that Classic is looking for ways to expand the business. Classic Landscaping is clearly ready.



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YOUR GUIDE TO PRODUCT RESEARCH

MAINTENANCE: MOWER ENGINES

Schiller Grounds Care

BOB-CAT has reached its goal of 2011 EPA exhaust emission engine compliance throughout its mower line. This year, through advanced engine technology that includes new Kawasaki FX & FS Series engines as well as units that feature digital fuel injection and propane-power offerings, the line even more so will live up to its "green machine" designation. The new Predator-Pro 37hp DFI, with digital fuel injection, will provide an increase in fuel economy of up to 30% while significantly increasing engine performance through an Electronic Governor (E-Gov). Plus, the new LP-61 zero-turn riding mower features a 30hp Generac 990 propane engine that uses the same common liquid withdrawal propane tanks and technology that propane forklift trucks use. BOBCATTurf.com



Caterpillar

The C3.4B, C4.4 ACERT and C6.6 ACERT are three new additions to the Cat Tier 4 Interim/Stage IIIB technology industrial engine lineup. Ranging from 60 to 174hp, they are available with a wide choice of options that are suitable for compact and midrange equipment. Compared to existing Tier 3/Stage IIIA engines, these new engines produce fuel consumption improvements across the entire horsepower band. They will begin production and distribution prior to 2012, when Tier 4 Interim/Stage IIIB emissions standards take effect for this power category of engines. In addition, the C7.1 ACERT and C9.3 ACERT will be available prior to 2011, when Tier 4 Interim/Stage IIIB emissions standards take effect for this power category of engines. Cat.com/industrial-oem

John Deere Power Systems

JDPS introduces the generator drive power ratings for its entire lineup of Interim Tier 4 diesel engines. The new power ratings are the latest addition to its extensive lineup of standby and prime gen-set engines that meet emissions regulations around the world. In addition, John Deere will continue to offer a full lineup of reliable engines for use in standby applications, since emergency stationary applications are not required to use Interim Tier 4 engines with aftertreatment devices. For a full listing of engines and ratings, visit John Deere online today. JohnDeere.com/jdpower



B₃C Fuel Solutions LLC

Mechanic in a Bottle is designed to clean a fuel system and combustion chamber thoroughly and counteract the negative side effects of bio-fuels. The anticorrosive/metal deactivator cleans machine carburetors, revitalizes old fuel, and dissolves varnish and shellac safely. It improves octane, stabilizes fuel and provides upper cylinder lubricity. MechanicInABottle.com

Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power

Four new Vanguard single-cylinder engines, with gross horsepower ratings ranging from 5.5 to 10.0hp, feature the patent-pending TransportGuard system, an integrated switch that simultaneously shuts off the ignition and fuel. A high-mounted, canister-style air cleaner has 27% more filter area than several competitive units. An all-metal fuel tank reduces emissions, saves fuel and is mounted directly to the engine block — and the heat-treated PTO bearing races ensure long-lasting equipment performance. VanguardEngines.com





Subaru

Two new models of electronic fuel injection engines — EH72 V-twin and EH72 UTV — are designed to reduce fuel consumption and emissions, while providing fast, easy starts in a wide range of ambient temperatures. The engines run on an open-loop system, which uses an electronic control unit. Using several different sensors that detect manifold pressure, ambient temperature and throttle position, the ECU constantly is relaying information to the injector, which then is able to deliver the proper air-to-fuel ratio. Allowing for differences in operating speed, applications and fuel type, the estimated fuel economy improvements are 11% to 25% better than a similar carbureted engine. *SubaruPower.com*

Kohler

The Courage XTR-6 engine joins Kohler's line of walk-behind recoil and electric start engines. The 3.5-net-hp, vertical-shaft engine's Energy-Saver electric starter provides 30% more starts per battery charge and is 40% lighter than older models. It's also available with a 0.5 amp charging system. The overhead valve design provides efficient combustion and strong performance with minimal fuel consumption and emissions. A commercial-grade, cast-iron cylinder bore enhances engine life. All XT series engines also are equipped with a flywheel ball bearing, which protects the engine when operating at extreme angles. *Kohler.com*



Plews/Edelmann

LubriMatic Green is a family of premium quality bio-based products that include a variety of spray lubricants, penetrants and greases. These lubricants are formulated from renewable, biodegradable vegetable oils and have four times the natural lubricity of most petroleum-based products. They are less likely than traditional lubricants to "thin down" at high temperatures, so they provide lower equipment operating temperatures. In addition, each product is made from U.S.-grown crops and does not have the harsh odor found in traditional lubricants. *LubriMaticGreen.com*

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DESIGN/BUILD: PAVERS, EDGING & RETAINING WALLS

Pine Hall Brick

RainPave permeable clay pavers were used on Kings Court in Haddonfield, NJ. Designers were able to prevent standing water and flooding of businesses in the 11,000-sq.-ft. plaza, while keeping with the Colonial-era surroundings

using the Rumbled RainPave (a 2009 Brick in Architecture winner).
PineHallBrick.com



Redland Brick

The Tuscan Collection Genuine Clay Pavers are the first-ever wood-molded genuine clay paver series to be available in 6x6- and 6x9-in. sizes, which allow for more sophisticated paving bonds and patterns. The pavers are currently available in four popular Rocky Ridge colors: King William, Rustique, Cumberland and Bayshore. *RedlandBrick.com*



Vögele

The design of the new tracked Super 700 allows a wide range of paving applications on most varied job sites. It's designed for minor to medium jobs such as backfilling trenches with asphalt, surfacing footpaths or cycle paths, or paving asphalt on traffic areas or small roads — as well as variety of

landscaping tasks. The AB 200 Extending Screed in V version (with vibrators in the basic screed and the extending units) is specially designed for use with the Super 700. As the electrically heated screed floats on the mix, the paver achieves optimal pre-compaction. *Vogele.info*



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Willow Creek

The new LedgeStone wall system stacks up as very user-friendly landscaping solution available for building naturally rustic freestanding walls and columns. Available in the same rich color blends as Willow Creek's paving stones, LedgeStone walls are built with 4x8x12-in. weathered units dry-stacked on a standard 6-in. leveling pad of compacted crushed-rock base material. Units are secured using concrete adhesive. Neither frost footings nor mortar are required. The units are easily modified with a masonry saw and can be configured in a variety of wall patterns.

WillowCreekPavingStones.com



Belgard Hardscapes

Celtik Wall is Belgard's modern interpretation of prehistoric Celt-stone. Celtik Wall 90 (pictured) refers to its 90mm size (3.5 in.). The series offers authentic stone elegance combined with today's durability, flexibility and ease of maintenance. Installation applications include encircling greenery, partitioning property and accenting light posts, among other uses. The units are available in a range of colors. Belgard.biz



Unilock

The modern yet elegant look of new Richcliff adds a touch of class to any landscaping project. With a compressive strength rating of up to four times the strength of conventional poured concrete,

it's a virtually indestructible paver that will not split, crack or fade. Features include a MicroBevel edge, Reala surface design, StayClean Stain Resistance Technology, a non-slip surface and an AutoAlign system. Available in squares and small and large rectangles. Colors include Pebble Taupe and Dawn Mist (a mixture of which is pictured). Unilock.com

continued on page 29

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4-Speed™ XT.”

Eric Larson, Green Systems Turf Management
Site: Astor’s Mansion
Newport, Rhode Island

With contracts for many of the world’s most famous mansions, Eric Larson faces customer expectations that are as high as the real estate prices. So when ground ivy, clover and other tough weeds started showing up, he turned to 4-Speed XT. Its combination of four active ingredients makes weeds ‘Deader. Faster.’ For more on 4-Speed herbicide brands, and more of Eric Larson’s story, go to www.nufarm.com/us.

Better Choices. Better Business.

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www.nufarm.com/us

continued from page 27

LAWN CARE: COMBINATION CHEMICALS

BASF Professional Turf & Ornamentals

Onetime herbicide is a soluble liquid formulation that controls more than 70 annual broadleaf and grassy weeds. Onetime combines liquid-quinclorac-based Drive XLR8 herbicide with MCP-P and dicamba, which provides fast entry into the plant, rainfastness in 30 minutes and more effective, consistent control of grassy and broadleaf weeds than other products. Onetime can be applied to both cool- and warm-season grasses, as well as tank-mixed with other commonly used products, including pendimethalin-based Pendulum herbicide, to enhance residual control. *BetterTurf.com*



Dow AgroSciences

LockUp specialty herbicide offers post-emergence control of dandelion and other key broadleaf weeds in turf such as white clover, kyllinga, English lawn daisy, chickweed and lespedeza. It provides activity at extremely low use rates (0.02 to 0.06 lb. of its active ingredient, penoxsulam), and is available for professional use on

cool- and warm-season turf. New granular formulations of LockUp on fertilizer are currently available in the North

from Lebanon Seaboard and John Deere Landscapes, with more formulators and distributors to be named in the near future. ProScape with LockUp (penoxsulam + dicamba + 2,4-D) is available through Lebanon Seaboard. John Deere Landscapes currently markets LockUp Extra (penoxsulam + dicamba) and LockUp Extra 2 (penoxsulam + dicamba + 2,4-D). DowAgro.com/turf/prod/lockup.htm



Bayer Environmental Science

Armada fungicide is a pre-mixed product containing two active ingredients, triadimefon and trifloxystrobin, for a broader spectrum of activity against most turf diseases of importance in lawns — and more convenience. It is designed specifically for lawn and landscape professionals and offers 30-day control of two major turfgrass diseases: brown patch and dollar spot. It also controls gray leaf spot, anthracnose, various leaf spots, red thread, southern blight and summer patch, among other turf diseases. It offers good compatibility for tank mixing with foliar fertilizers or insecticides. *BackedByBayer.com*



FMC Professional Solutions

New Talstar XTRA granular insecticide combines the residual of Talstar with the speed of a new active ingredient, zeta-cypermethrin. The patent-pending formulation quickly disrupts the insect's nervous system, with a residual that lasts for at least four months. The unique, dense sand granule enables the product to penetrate mulch and thatch to reach many surface-feeding pests, yet appear invisible because of its small size. Talstar XTRA granular insecticide is labeled for use against most ants, (including fire ants), chinch bugs, fleas, ticks, mole crickets, crane flies and many other lawn pests. It's available in 25-lb. bags, which can cover more than 60 fire ant mounds (nearly 11,000 sq. ft.). *FMCProSolutions.com*

BETTER RESULTS



4-Speed™ XT Saves Contracts

APPLICATION RATE:

1.3 oz/1,000 sf of 4-Speed XT plus spreader-sticker (1 oz/gallon finished spray)

APPLICATION EQUIPMENT:

LT Rich Z-Sprayer, 1/3 gal spray tips

TIMING:

July 13, 2009

SUMMARY:

"This was not ideal herbicide application timing for ground ivy control, but we still had great results on it and all the other weeds on the 4-Speed XT label. As a result, we saved several contracts. We'll be using a lot more 4-Speed XT and other Nufarm products in the future."

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IRRIGATION: TRENCHING & EXCAVATING



Volvo

The EW230C wheeled excavator is designed for heavier lift operations such as pipe laying and hard digging thanks to a new, more robust platform. When fitted with a standard counterweight, the rear axle weight remains below 12 tonnes — making it approved for road travel between sites. The EW230C is powered by a Volvo D6E EHE3 diesel engine, developing 125 kW/168hp net at 1,900 rpm. A choice of 18.7-ft. mono or optional articulated two-piece boom is available, while Volvo's automatic lubrication system not only ensures correct lubrication, but also reduces lubricant use by 50%. Volvo.com/constructionequipment

Case Construction Equipment

The Klac Quick Coupler System is available for seven Case compact and minimum swing radius excavators. The system features automatic locking that is visible from the cab, as well as a



secondary safety-locking feature. The system also maintains Case specifications regarding tip radius, minimizing the breakout force

impact. The quick coupler supports a full range of attachments, from buckets to rippers to hydraulic hammers. The coupler is available for all models of compact excavators — CX17B, CX27B, CX31B, CX36B and CX50B — and minimum swing radius excavator models CX75 and CX80. CaseCE.com

Toro

Boasting a 26hp Kawasaki engine, the new TRX-26 combines the power of a ride-on trencher with the maneuverability and control of a walk-behind. The patented Toro Dingo TX-style control system makes it easy to control. It eliminates the "jerk" steering required with handlebar control steering, allowing for smoother, more precise trenching. Three simple controls operate all traction and trenching functions. With zero-turn capability and ground pressure as low as 4.1 psi, the TRX-26 has the ability to access confined spaces without damaging existing turf. Toro.com/trx



Extend Manufacturing

The new line of TMX Trowable Mini-Excavators features a quick-on and quick-off hitch system for use behind a standard half-ton pick-up, van or light-duty tow vehicle. No trailer is needed, and no commercial driver's license is required — making it the ideal option for

small contractors. Lockout drive hubs enable towing at highway speeds of 55 mph. And unlike conventional mini-excavators, TMX units eliminate tracks by using zero-turn technology. The drive tires are designed for mud terrain, ensuring performance and traction in demanding applications. Featuring a highly efficient orbital motor with tapered roller bearings on the output shaft, the wheel motors allow plenty of durability for tough loads. TMX-Excavator.com

Bobcat

As a new M-Series model in the 6-ton weight class, the E60 features a completely new design that increases the comfort of the operator and the durability of the machine, while decreasing the frequency needed for some preventive maintenance tasks. Everything about the new excavator has been created to help keep operators working longer, including a spacious cab and a top-of-the-line seat to keep operators comfortable, and polymer shims to decrease wear on the lateral pins. The operator can adjust the seat nine ways, including moving or angling the armrests, joysticks and lumbar support. A number of attachments are available to make the machine suitable for several tasks. Bobcat.com/excavators

Cub Cadet Yanmar



Built on a large chassis to accommodate a wide array of attachments, including a front loader with a universal quick-attach bucket, backhoe and three-point implements, the new Ex450 compact tractor can be used for everything from cutting grass to backhoe trenching and excavation. The unit is powered by a four-cylinder, liquid-cooled, 45-hp direct-injection Yanmar diesel engine. Other features include the Synchro Shuttle, a 9x9 transmission and fully hydraulic power steering. CubCadetYanmar.com

Ditch Witch

The new 30hp XT855 is a compact, multi-function machine that features an excavator with a 260-degree swing, plus a tool carrier that can drive as many as 70 compact utility attachments. It offers a lift capacity of up to 1,080 lb. when equipped with optional extension legs. The excavator end features a 260-degree operating radius, enabling the machine to offset dig. The operator can dig against a footing, wall or fence, and dig trenches without having to move the machine. Zero-radius turning and 50-in. width help the XT855 maneuver in tight spots. DitchWitch.com

Z-SPRAY VS. the COMPETITION

	Z-SPRAY	Competitor A	Competitor B
True Zero Turn Maneuverability	✓		
By-Pass Agitation	✓		
All Stainless Steel Chassis	✓		
220 LB Hopper Capacity	✓		
Optional Auxiliary Tank	✓		
50' Hose Reel for Spot Spraying	✓		
G.P.S. Speedometer	✓		
8 m.p.h Transport Speed	✓		
3 Section Independent Boom	✓		
Hydraulic Drive Hopper	✓		
3' to 25' Variable Spread Width	✓		
4.0 GPM Pump	✓		
Standard 18 Gallon Spray Capacity	✓		
Up to 1 Gallon per 1000 capacity	✓		
Air Injection Low Drift Nozzles	✓		
16" Front Tires	✓		
20" Rear Tires	✓		
16 HP Electric Start Engine	✓		
Locking Caster System	✓		
5 Gallon Gas Tank	✓		
Z-Max & Intermediate	✓		
50 on Z-Max	✓		
not applicable		not applicable	not applicable












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With his first job at All American Turf Beauty (AATB), the company his father started in 1976, **Kevin Johnson** earned \$48 delivering brochures in the Des Moines, IA, area. Johnson began his adult career at AATB in 1986 after graduating from Iowa State University with a degree in agricultural business. "Farming didn't appear attractive to me in the early 1980s — a time when farming was in crisis," he says. "I wanted to work outdoors and meet people. The family business allowed me to do that."

Briefly describe your role with AATB today. As president of our company, I'm heavily involved in strategic planning, budgeting, sales and marketing, employee training, and making sure we are getting the best pricing on a variety of employee benefits. As a management team, we get together one or two days each week to discuss current situations, problems and opportunities we need to take advantage of quickly.

Describe your market — the regions and types of properties you serve. Our service area comprises most of Iowa. Our average size lawn is about 7,000 sq. ft., with larger lawns in small towns, and smaller lawns in the core of our metropolitan areas. Ninety percent of our lawns are a mixture of cool-season grasses — mainly bluegrass, ryegrass and fine fescues. The other 10% are transitional warm-season that are more likely to grow in the southern parts of the state.

We're in a very competitive atmosphere with more than 700 registered companies licensed to do business in the state of Iowa. Mom-and-pop operations are predominant in small-town Iowa.

What percentage of your company's revenue remains lawn care? Lawn care and other related services — aeration, seeding and grub control — still comprise approximately 60% of our revenue.

From a business standpoint, what is your impression of the 2010 spring lawn care season in your market compared to 2009? 2010 has started strong. We've seen increased interest in lawn care compared to the previous two years. We feel good about achieving a 5% increase in the total square feet of area we treat in 2010

vs. 2009. This is the first time in several years we feel like we had a "normal" spring in terms of number of leads and sign-ups.

Which of the services that your company offers have held up best during the recession? When the economy is poor, we notice that people might reduce their spending on bigger-ticket items — irrigation systems, landscape lighting, Christmas lighting — but they still want to invest in having nice lawns.

Most frustrating? I am frustrated by being labeled as a "polluter of the environment" by so-called environmentalists who fail to understand and appreciate our contributions to providing healthy turf and safe areas for our children to play on. Most people don't

AT A GLANCE

COMPANY: All American Turf Beauty

FOUNDED: 1976

TITLE: President

LOCATIONS: Headquartered in Van Meter, IA; branch offices in Ames, Waterloo and Cedar Rapids, IA

SERVICE AREA: Most of Iowa

EMPLOYEES: 45 full-time

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT:

Board member of the Iowa Professional Lawn Care Association; past president of the Iowa Sports Turf Manager's Association.

2010 BUSINESS OUTLOOK:

"Bright. Expecting 5% growth in lawn care."

WEBSITE:

www.allamericanturf.com

realize the changes we have gone through in the past 30 years. Better products, better agronomic knowledge — all of which allow us to provide better results with less pesticides being used.

It's a win-win that doesn't get any press play. I don't compromise my health, my employees' health, my children's health or my pet's health just to make a buck, as I've heard some "environmentalists" claim.

I DON'T COMPROMISE MY HEALTH, MY EMPLOYEES' HEALTH, MY CHILDREN'S HEALTH ... JUST TO MAKE A BUCK."



If only everything worked as fast as Dismiss.[®]

Satisfy your need for speed with Dismiss herbicides, the fastest visible control of sedges available.

With all the things you have to do, you don't have time to wait around for your sedge control to start working. That's why FMC Professional Solutions formulated Dismiss turf herbicide for faster, visible control against yellow nutsedge and green kyllinga than any other product. And for most warm season grasses,* FMC created Dismiss South herbicide to deliver all the sedge control of original Dismiss plus enhanced efficacy against purple nutsedge.

Dismiss and Dismiss South start working immediately, producing noticeable signs of control in just 24 to 48 hours. University research trials have demonstrated greater than 90% control within a week, even before other products begin to work. What's more, Dismiss and Dismiss South also prevent sedge tubers from germinating, helping you avoid future outbreaks and reducing the need for re-treat applications. Once you've experienced the fast-acting, long-lasting control of Dismiss and Dismiss South, you'll wish everything on the job kept you working at top speeds. For more information on Dismiss and Dismiss South, visit www.fmcprosolutions.com or contact your local FMC Sales Representative or FMC Distributor.

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Cirsium arvense

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This creeping perennial's extensive rhizome system can extend up to 3 ft. It features smooth, oblong, irregularly lobed leaves with spiny margins.
- ▶ Pink or purple flowers bloom in late June through September, growing in 3/4-in.-diameter clusters.
- ▶ Unlike musk and bull thistles, the stems and flowers do not have spines or prickles.
- ▶ It colonizes in tall clusters (1 to 3 ft. in height), particularly in open areas.

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ After the first flower buds are formed and before the first flowers open, apply foliar herbicides, which move down through the plant and injure the root system. Repeat applications on regrowth may be needed.
- ▶ Removing shoots can stimulate growth on underground buds, which can generate new shoots a year or more after top-growth has been destroyed. Hand-pulling or mowing just spreads the growth of this problematic plant.



SPURGE

Euphorbia maculata

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ Red- or purple-tinged stems host opposite leaves, and emit milky juice when broken.
- ▶ Oblong leaves are smooth or sparsely hairy, from reddish-green to dark green in color — often with a maroon or purple spot in the center.
- ▶ The prostrate structure forms mats by branching from the base.
- ▶ This warm-season annual is found in disturbed soil, such as in gardens and flower beds, along

sidewalks, and in open turf areas.

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Apply a broadleaf, pre-emergence herbicide in late spring. If you have germinated spurge, apply a post-emergent herbicide when the plants are small.
- ▶ Mulching of beds, adequate soil moisture and good fertility help control this species. Hand-pulling plants when they're small will minimize the seed deposits.

For more information regarding these and other turf weeds — and related control technologies and tips — please visit www.DowProvesIt.com or call 800/255-3726.

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P R O V E N S O L U T I O N S



BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

The author is a partner with the Wilson-Oyler Group. He can be reached at bwilson@questex.com.

Use overtime only to your advantage

If you haven't already experienced excessive overtime, you are one of the lucky ones. Overtime is not all bad and can be a useful tool if used in a planned, controlled and well-thought-out way. What starts to hurt companies is when overtime is not planned and slowly gets out of control.

You must realize that overtime to an employee can become a reward for being inefficient or working slowly. Employees, for the most part, love overtime — and it can be addictive. Many employees will work as many hours as you are willing to give them. Some have a great work ethic and want to make more money; others just ride along on the gravy train.

Benefits do exist

Overtime can help with varying demand situations:

- ▶ In the right instances, it is less expensive to work some overtime than to add and train a new, inexperienced employee. Once a new employee is hired, the tendency is to carry him or her even when the work demand does not justify it.
- ▶ Late in the season, when you lose employees through normal attrition, it is usually better to work shorthanded than to hire new, only to be faced with another person to layoff weeks later.
- ▶ Sometimes the spring season starts prematurely, and you bring on employees too soon. It might be better to work with smaller staffs and build over time, rather than bringing on too many employees.

Another good use of overtime is to give it to deserving employees to keep up with urgent enhancements that must be done on the weekend to keep customers happy. It's better to give good employees occasional overtime rather than to add to an enhancement crew's size when the larger crew will not be needed when work load returns to a more normal level.

Overtime can also make sense as a way to leverage experienced employees, rather than hiring untrained employees. This is a slippery slope, however, because existing employees must produce

at a high level. As a long-term strategy, it usually does not make sense. This is a short-term solution that requires intense management to pay off.

Some companies pay crew leaders up to 30 minutes per day for loading and unloading at overtime, sending the crew home after 8 hours. This gives the crew leader a little more take-home pay in the busier season and can be cut back in the slower times.

Preventing abuse

Once employees get used to overtime, many managers are afraid of taking it away for fear the employees will become unhappy. They do not manage it with a tight fist, and it slowly gets the best of them. This starts a chain reaction of bad decisions.

To prevent that, you must do two things:

1. Adhere to a managerial approval process for granting overtime. Do not allow crew leaders to call for approval at the last minute so they can finish a job. They should call in enough in advance for a manager to make a decision whether to re-prioritize the work or add to the crew to eliminate the need to do the overtime.

As an owner or senior manager, you must watch — track with each payroll — overtime hours and look for changes over what is normal planned overtime. Any changes require immediate investigation and corrective action.

Middle managers must have good justification to senior managers for any spikes in overtime. If they have not used good judgment, you should take away their right to approve overtime.

2. Do not reward inefficiency or slow work effort with overtime. If a crew, through its own lack of effort or thinking, ends up behind, do not give them overtime to catch up. Give the catch-up work to hard-working, efficient crews.

You control overtime. You must aggressively monitor and manage it through good processes and management, or you will become a victim. Once employees get used to overtime, it is like an addictive substance. It causes pain to break the habit.

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Forest Lake, MN-based Bever Landscaping so impressed a local client with its design projects for him on the mainland that he decided to bring the crew over to landscape his property on the Island of Oahu, HI.

Controller Chris Hahn recalls that Bever landed the customer back in 2006, when they did landscaping for his Minnesota residence as well as some rental properties he owned. In 2008, he asked whether they could perform their magic on an estate he was building on the North Shore.

“He flew in crew members up to five times to complete the project,” Hahn says. “We also used a couple local landscapers to maximize our time there.”

The project was a designer’s dream: 270-degree views of the world’s best surf and sunsets, and miles of picturesque coast and beaches. The centerpiece is a pool landscape featuring hand-tooled Chinese quartzite and lava rock walls with travertine caps. Plants were selected not just for color and beauty, but for their tolerance to wind and salt. They create “waves” of foliage cover and tropical flowers, and serve to buffer the wind and inward views.

The project did have a few unusual situations to resolve in the process of construction. Most dealt with an imposed deadline of having the home exterior and landscape completed within a year, with all work in progress at the same time in a small workspace, and with a limited staging area. To accomplish the project efficiently, frequent organizational meetings were needed, and the landscape crew needed to act as support crews to accomplish various tasks on a day-to-day basis, such as installing conduits, gas lines, plumbing, septic, poured concrete and a variety of other trades.





THE WORK

1 | Location, location, location. A view looking toward the end of the peninsula from an upper lanai shows off the pool landscape, shelter and masonry work. The barrier plantings along the sea wall include waves of spiny tradescantia, lemon bromeliad and crinum plants, as well as variegated hau.

2 | Between a rock and a ... This “before” view shows the roughed-in pool and home under construction as the landscaping plans were being developed, about a month before installation commenced. The rough-in pour, interior finish of the pool and the connection of equipment were done by outside contractors. Otherwise, the design consultation, pool coping, decking and utility hookups were done under Bever crews.

3 | A font of inspiration. The view looking toward the big surf over the infinite edge pool played a big factor in the overall design. Boulders at the end of the pool replicate the boulder formation in the ocean.

4 | Let there be light. The pool landscape as seen just after dawn, with the landscape lighting adding ambiance as it compliments the illuminated horizon.

5 | Privacy, please. The paver driveway and lava rock fence separate the estate’s properties, with a built-in planter to screen the adjacent house. Arkansas stone columns break up the expanse of walls and are illuminated with light fixtures.

6 | A welcome sight. The front entryway corridor features a hibiscus pattern in cut travertine, plus a mix of quartzite and concrete pavers against the lava rock planter walls.

7 | Rock on. The adjacent property’s entryway design and threshold into the house is done in quartzite, blending the different types of stone together.

Now in its 41st year, Forest Lake, MN-based Bever Landscaping is a second-generation, family-owned company. Services include landscape design, architecture and imaging, hardscapes, masonry, irrigation, fencing, waterscapes, interiorscapes and lighting. Learn more at BeverLandscaping.com. This particular installation garnered a recent Environmental Improvement Merit Award from the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET).

PHOTOS COURTESY: BEVER LANDSCAPING

PROBLEMSOLVER

LANDSCAPE TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS » BY H. BRUCE HELLERICK

PROBLEM

Keeping a property safe is always a concern. In this particular situation, an individual was walking on the sidewalk, saw a pretty flower along the wood line (left side) did not see the grade change and slipped and fell on the wet turf and fallen leaves. Thankfully, the individual was more embarrassed than angry. This situation could have turned bad with the “wrong individual” or if they had been injured. What could be done to correct this situation in the future?



SOLUTION

There are several options to reduce the chance of an accident like this happening again in the future. The first would be to post “No Trespassing” signs on the site. This may not sound neighborly but it does help protect you legally. Another option is to install fencing between the walk and tree line to prevent trespassing on the site. Depending upon the style of fence selected the fencing could be very expensive and could also add to the cost of maintenance in the future. In this case, it was decided to install “No Trespassing” signs and add soil on the wood line side to match the grade of the sidewalk. Adding the soil helped solve the grade change issue and still simplified maintenance. It is a landscape manager’s responsibility to recognize potential safety hazards on their customers’ sites and then take action or make clients aware of these problems before an injury occurs.

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 in Problem Solver. He can be reached at bhellerick@questex.com.

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GREEN INDUSTRY MAINTENANCE LEADERS » BY DAN JACOBS

Success can be a little uncomfortable.

“It’s kind of embarrassing in a way when people ask me, ‘How’s business, Randy?’” says **Randy Newhard**, CEO New Way Landscape & Tree Services “I know a lot of people are hurting, and I’m saying, ‘It’s the best year we’ve ever had.’ We had our best year ever in 2009 as far as sales and profits, which beat our best year in 2008.” Now in its 30th year, Newhard offers his insights on the maintenance industry and what he expects the coming years.



CEO Randy Newhard says NewWay is having its best year ever.

TOPTRENDS

» **Water.** Finally people are paying attention to water usage. The rate (in San Diego) has gone up something like 40% in five years. They’re looking at another 14% increase coming this January, if they don’t do it before then. Smart controllers that can automatically adjust to the weather — we sold a lot of those last year.

» **Sustainability.** There has been a move to low-water-usage plants. Reducing turf to where it’s needed. A lot of turf needs to come out. It’s more than just water — sustainability — in the whole landscape. It’s water, plants maintenance, making things more sustainable for the future while still reducing costs. Sustainability is the big word. It used to be “going green.”

» **Fuel.** We have five hybrid vehicles. When gas was up around \$4 a gallon and these vehicles get 47 miles per gallon, it helps reduce the \$400,000 to \$500,000 a year we spend on gas between the mowers and vehicles. Someday, I see mowers and equipment run by solar power.

TOP OBSTACLES

» **Competition.** Price points are probably near the top of the list. We’re probably at five-year-ago pricing. With the vacancies in commercial buildings many businesses have cut back. The HOAs have been hurt by foreclosures; they don’t have the revenue they were budgeting for, so they have to gear down. They’re always looking

INSIDE INFO

Company: New Way Landscape & Tree Services

Headquarters: San Diego

Employees: 205 full-time (plus 30 seasonal)

2009 revenue: \$11.2 million

Key to being a maintenance leader: We have a knowledgeable (long-term) staff. Our people enjoy doing the work, being with clients and educating them. We have fun at work.

We have a couple of different safety programs where the foremen can get significant money, quarterly, based on safety. We put away \$30,000 every year. When there are accidents and people are out on modified duty or lose a day of work, a certain amount of money comes out of that pool. If there’s an accident, \$500 comes out. If somebody negligently damages equipment or if equipment is stolen because they didn’t lock it, money comes out. Any remaining money — up to \$7,500 each quarter — is divided up by the number of foremen in the field.

for the lower price. It’s the same thing for commercial properties, with 20% to 40% vacancies. They need to reduce their expenses.

» **Drought.** We’re in southern California in a drought. One of the hardest things to do is to convince people to go to low-water usage plants. People don’t have money to convert even though it would save them a lot of money going into the future. It’s not just convincing them, it’s finding ways to get their limited financial reserves to re-landscape.

TOP OPPORTUNITIES

» **Sustainability.** Conversions, redoing landscapes. I’ve re-landscaped my whole house. I might have had to water three times a week. Once the low-water use plants are established, I might have to water once a month. We’re trying to get people to understand there are a lot of opportunities there. Many are doing it in stages, which is great because then we can show them the savings.

» **Expansion.** We’re moving into other geographical areas. We’re now in Riverside County — we have two branches there. That’s starting to take off after six, seven years. Coming this summer, we’re moving into Orange County with one branch.

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Embracing the online sale

When you're a small business owner, nothing is more important than sales. It goes without saying that revenue is the lifeblood of business.

So why do most business websites focus only on marketing products and services, and not taking the next step of closing the sale? Maybe it's time to start collecting payments online instead of just generating leads. With a few simple changes, your website could be paying for itself.

The typical lifecycle of a company website begins as an online brochure, directing potential customers to contact the company for more information. Adding the ability to capture sales leads through the use of html forms is the next step in website evolution. For companies selling products, adding a shopping cart can turn prospective customers into paying customers. But when it comes to companies that sell services, where the price is not known ahead of time, lead capture is

often the stalling point in their website progression. What most companies don't consider is the ability to use online payment systems to allow customers the ability to pay their invoices online.

Adding payment options to your website can range from simple modifications to in-depth software development. In the past, figuring it out was a lesson in patience and persistence. Today, adding simple payment options to your website has never been easier.

PayPal.com

Gaining a start as a way to pay for eBay purchases, PayPal has become the most widely used payment system on the Internet today. Because PayPal allows a business to take credit cards without setting up a merchant account, it is a service many businesses use when first implementing online payments.

A good starting point with PayPal is the Website Payments Standard service. With no set-up charges or monthly fees — and no programming skills required — it's an easy way to start accepting credit cards. All you need to do is set up a business PayPal account, then link it to one of your bank accounts as a funding source. My suggestion is to set up a separate bank account just for your PayPal transactions. That way, reconciling your transactions will be simple and straightforward.

Once your account is set up, you can use "Buy Now" and "Add to Cart" buttons. Just use the easy button wizard to generate the HTML code, then cut and paste the HTML onto your web pages next to the services you're selling. With PayPal, you can even create and email invoices to your customers for your goods and services, or create a specialized version of a "Donate" button to have your customers send you payments along with their account number.

To receive payments online, all it takes is a little bit of planning. If you can integrate web orders into your back office fulfillment process, additional revenue could be right around the corner. And who couldn't use a little more revenue these days?

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— COMING IN AUGUST —

LOOKING BEYOND GASOLINE

The very real possibility of higher gas prices, tougher emission regulations and reduced maintenance costs suggest diesel, propane, alternative fuel and electric mowers will become a bigger factor in commercial mowing. Here's the low-down on the respective advantages and disadvantages of each power source, including a look at what's in the market now and what's around the corner.

AUGUST • AUGUST

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Milestones and forgiveness

Our family changes forever this month. Our oldest child has begun attending a five-week program offered by Washington University in St. Louis. Josh returns home near the end of July, and a few weeks later, he returns to Wash U. to begin his full-time college experience. Save for a few holiday breaks, he'll probably never call our house "home" again.

My wife, Marci, and I still have a teenage daughter at home, so we'll not be at a loss for our share of angst and turmoil — not to mention the nearly daily reminders about how little we know about ... well, everything.

For more than 16 years, we've guided Josh as best we could, instilled our values and managed his path to adulthood. But once he hit high school (and probably long before), many of the choices he makes are his alone. We've guided and cajoled, supported and commiserated, cheered and cried. Josh has done a wonderful job and — as far as we know — in general, he's made excellent choices. It's been as much a pleasure watching him mature as it's been a struggle waiting for it to happen.

And while he's still a work in progress (aren't we all), I'm confident he will continue to make good

choices. That's not to say he won't take missteps. I suspect there will be a number along the way — girlfriends, jobs, ill-conceived late nights. Our only hope is that they're temporary and short-lived mistakes, and most important, that he learns from them.

Josh, for the most part, seems not to repeat his mistakes. Samantha, our 15-year-old, is a repeat offender. To be fair it's not the mistakes I'm concerned about. I still make plenty of those myself. My issue is with my daughter's response to them. Josh has learned discretion is the better part of remorse. He says he's sorry and moves on with his life, trying not to repeat past missteps. Sammie rolls her eyes, sighs and immediately offers a dozen explanations of why it's not her fault. She contradicts every comment I make. My favorite line is her response to the comment, "Sammie, quit arguing with me." Her response: "I'm not arguing."

Please don't misunderstand; my daughter, my children, are extraordinary. I love them both — equally and unconditionally. And given what I hear some families are dealing with, we're lucky. It's just in our home (and nowhere else), Sammie whines, argues and complains.

I imagine having employees is a lot like raising children. You spend time and money teaching, training and supervising them, but in the end you must let them do their jobs. And most likely, somewhere along the way, they'll make mistakes.

How you deal with those mistakes — and equally important, how well they accept responsibility for their actions — says a lot about your character and theirs. How often have we heard celebrities "apologize" for their abysmal behavior with a line like, "I'm sorry if anyone was hurt"? It's not an apology if there's no acceptance of responsibility.

How refreshing it would be to hear, "It was my mistake, and I'll do my best to not let it happen again." I know that's something I'd love to hear more often from my daughter when she falls short.

And to my son, it's an extraordinary world. I envy the journey you're about to begin.

I imagine having employees is a lot like raising children. Somewhere along the way, they'll make mistakes.

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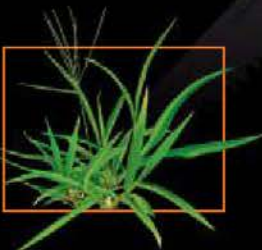
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