



The Ideas Issue // // //

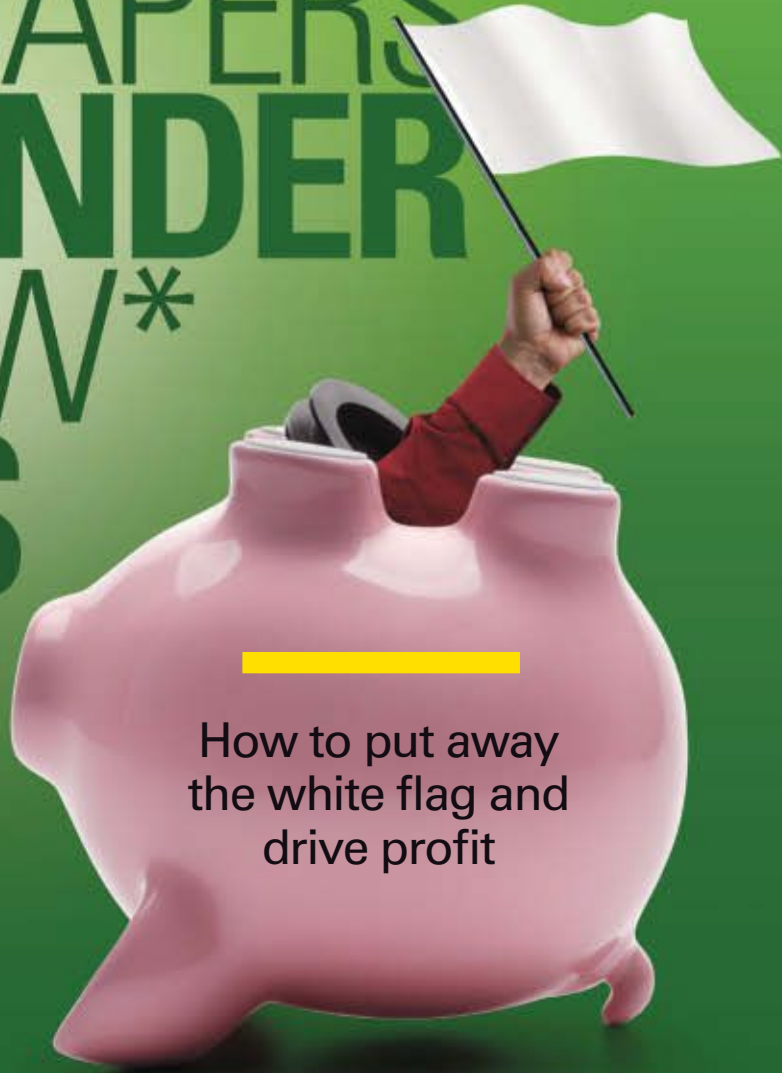
Top 5 industry trends

Landscaper Management

*The preferred resource
for large contractors*

LANDSCAPERS SURRENDER TO LOW* PRICES

** As much as 50% lower*



How to put away
the white flag and
drive profit



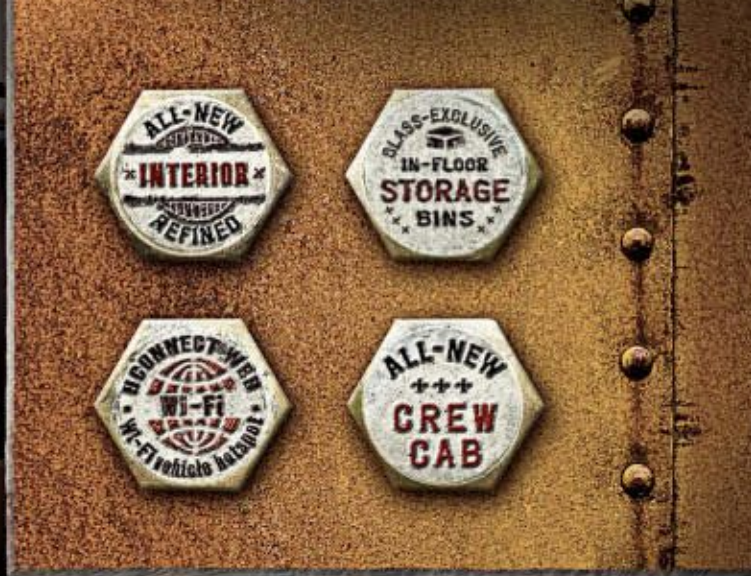
**THE ALL-NEW RAM HEAVY DUTY.
MOTOR TREND'S 2010 TRUCK OF THE YEAR!**

**IT'S LEGENDARY
ENGINEERING UNTIL
YOU GET IN.
THEN CHEMISTRY
TAKES OVER.**

RAMTRUCKS.COM



RAM



Uconnect® Web not intended for use by the driver while the vehicle is in motion. Subscription required, sold separately. Uconnect is a registered trademark of Chrysler Group LLC.

CONTENTS

SEPTEMBER 2010
VOL 49, ISSUE 9



Presenting *Landscape Management's* guide to the thought-provoking trends that, for better or worse, are shaping the industry right now.

And the No. 1 trend is...

18 Landscapers surrender to low prices

How to put away the white flag and drive profit
BY NICOLE WISNIEWSKI

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



SPECIAL SECTION

45 LIVESCAPES
Consumers are looking at ornamentals in a new light.

DEPARTMENTS

- 34 LM Reports**
Blowers; Seeding and turf repair
- 38 Lawn Care Pro**
Andre J. "Frenchy" Rheault, Denton, TX
BY RON HALL
- 40 Weed Watch**
Ground ivy; Goosegrass
- 53 A Cut Above**
Clarence Davids & Co., Matteson, IL
BY DANIEL G. JACOBS



COLUMNS

- 4 First Cut**
BY NICOLE WISNIEWSKI
- 6 The Hall Mark**
BY RON HALL
- 32 The Benchmark**
BY KEVIN KEHOE
- 42 Best Practices**
BY BRUCE WILSON
- 56 Whit's World**
BY MARTY WHITFORD

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 54 Classifieds** **55 Resources**

ON THE COVER
Illustration by iStock International Inc.;
design by Carrie Parkhill

Landscape Management is now on Twitter and Facebook.



Get the latest news, blogs, and info by becoming a fan of the magazine on Facebook at: <http://tiny.cc/MTfcH>.

Or you can keep up to date with everything *LM* has to offer by following our tweets at: twitter.com/LandscapeMgmt.



DIGITAL VAULT

Select stories from our e-newsletters. Visit www.landscapemanagement.net/enewsletters to sign up or view.

LMdirect!

America may be a melting pot, but the mixture of any one individual with a group can create an extraordinary blend or a disaster.

Athletic Turf News

We know natural turfgrass provides environmental benefits. But not many know growing and harvesting turfgrass sod plays a role in good stewardship.

LD/B Solutions

An Arizona landscape architect figures out how to design around a 40-year-old pool, which dominates a relatively small back yard.

Get Growing

A survey finds getting orders on time and landscapers' lack of knowledge are the biggest issues growers have when selling to landscapers.



THINKING ABOUT BECOMING A BUSINESS OWNER?

We can help.
We start with you. We stay with you.

Our Franchise Support Team has over 260 years of combined commercial landscape industry experience to assist you with business and industry knowledge.



It's
MUCH MORE
than cutting grass.

INVEST IN YOUR FUTURE

BECOME A
FRANCHISE OWNER WITH
U.S. LAWNS

**YOUR
SUCCESS**
is everything to
US



NATIONAL STRENGTH
LOCAL COMMITMENT

1-866-781-4875
franchise@uslawns.net
www.uslawns.com/franchise



FIRSTCUT

NICOLE WISNIEWSKI EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Contact Nicole at 216/706-3735 or via email nwisniewski@questex.com.

Price is not always right

Online forums like Yelp.com and [Yellow Pages.com](http://YellowPages.com) give customers the ability to write reviews about small business services and ask each other questions about things like price.

Recently on About.com, I came across a customer named "Cindy." Her landscape had become too big for her to handle, so she contacted landscapers for maintenance quotes. She got a price of \$36 an hour for a two-man crew plus \$20 per hour for additional help. The work involved maintenance, weeding, mulching, small planting, watering and fertilizing. "If they worked five full days (40 hours), it would cost me \$1,440. Does that sound reasonable?" she asks cyberspace.

The first response: "I'm not shocked at the \$1,400-plus price. It's a big commitment of resources for a small business like that to have two people working 40 hours for one client. And it's just not labor you have to figure in, but costs for such things as transportation, equipment and insurance."

Not a bad understanding of business costs. However, the next part is what Cindy ends up listening to: "A more cost-effective way for you to get the job done would be to try to locate what is, admittedly, something of an endangered species: Namely, a neighborhood kid who wants to earn a few bucks. Of course, you'd have to take a supervisory role when it came to matters such as planting and fertilizing, but it sure would save you money."

"Sounds like a good idea," Cindy says.

And the landscape professional loses the sale.

Just like that your work, experience, systems, degrees, licenses, etc. are reduced to work a high school student can do for less than half the price.

In today's economy, price drives decisions over property pride, quality and brand. Contractors who once had the edge with the value-driven clients they built relationships with are now battling bids as much as 50% lower than theirs.

It's been a consistent complaint from contractors, and we knew we had to cover it — no matter how uncomfortable the topic. As a result, we found some contractors who were able to pick themselves up, dust themselves off and find profit-driven strategies. Their stories begin on page 18.

You never know when a willingness to engage with possibly uncomfortable topics might have an upside. Thinking about the landscaper who bid Cindy's job ... Since 84% of consumers say customer reviews influence their purchasing decisions, per Opinion Research, paying attention to and being active in these forums can provide free marketing, drive referrals and increase business. Maybe if that contractor would have responded, restating the benefits of hassle-free service over managing the teenager next door, Cindy would have chosen differently.

Price is driving decisions over property pride, quality and brand.

Landscape Management

CLEVELAND HEADQUARTERS
600 SUPERIOR AVE. EAST SUITE 1100
CLEVELAND OH 44114 800/669-1668

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editorial Director Marty Whitford 216/706-3766 | mwhitford@questex.com
Editor-in-Chief Nicole Wisniewski 216/706-3735 | nwisniewski@questex.com
Editor-at-Large Ron Hall 216/706-3739 | rhall@questex.com
Managing Editor Daniel G. Jacobs 216/706-3754 | djacobs@questex.com
Technical Editor Pete Grasso 216/706-3775 | pgrasso@questex.com
Executive Editor Larry Aylward 216/706-3737 | larylward@questex.com
Contributing Editor Heather Gooch 330/723-3539 | hgooch@questex.com
Art Director Carrie Parkhill 216/706-3780 | cparkhill@questex.com

ADVERTISING STAFF

Publisher Patrick Roberts
216/706-3736 Fax: 216/706-3712 | proberts@questex.com
Northern National Sales Manager Dave Huisman
732/493-4951 Fax: 732/493-4951 | dhuisman@questex.com
Southern National Sales Manager Jason DeSarle
216/706-3758 Fax: 216/706-3712 | jdesarle@questex.com
Business Development Manager Ric Abernethy
216/706-3723 Fax: 216/706-3712 | rabernethy@questex.com
Account Executive Classifieds Kelli Velasquez
216/706-3767 Fax: 216/706-3712 | kvelasquez@questex.com

BUSINESS STAFF

Vice President Kevin Stoltman 216/706-3740 | kstoltman@questex.com
Administrative Coordinator Petra Turko 216/706-3768 | pturko@questex.com
Production Manager Amber Terch 218/279-8835 | aterch@questex.com
Production Director Jamie Kleist 218/279-8855 | jkleist@questex.com
Audience Development Manager Carol Hatcher
216/706-3785 | chatcher@questex.com

MARKETING/MAGAZINE SERVICES

Reprints landscapemanagement@theygsgroup.com | 800/290-5460 x100
Ilene Schwartz Circulation List Rental 216/371-1667
Customer Services Subscriber/Customer Service landscapemanagement@halldata.com | 866/344-1315; 847/763-9594 if outside the U.S.
Paul Semple International Licensing
714/513-8614 Fax: 714/513-8845 | psemple@questex.com
For current single copy, back issues, or CD-ROM, call 866/344-1315; 847/763-9594 if outside the U.S.

QUESTEX MEDIA CORPORATE OFFICERS

President & Chief Executive Officer Kerry C. Gumas
Executive Vice President & Chief Financial Officer Tom Caridi
Executive Vice President Antony D'Avino
Executive Vice President Gideon Dean

THE ARMY KNIFE OF TURF HERBICIDES



NEW Q4[®] PLUS CONTAINS 0.75 LBS/ACRE OF QUINCLORAC FOR EXTRA KNOCKOUT POWER ON GRASSY WEEDS

CRABGRASS • YELLOW NUTSEDGE • BROADLEAF WEEDS • TURF TOLERANCE • SPEED



G pbi / GORDON CORPORATION

An Employee-Owned Company

800-821-7925 • pbigordon.com/q4plus

NOTE: Includes bermudagrass labeling

Q4[®], ProForm[®] & Checkered Flag/Label Design are registered trademarks of PBI/Gordon Corporation. ALWAYS READ AND FOLLOW LABEL DIRECTIONS 01009



THE HALLMARK

RON HALL EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Ron has been in the Green Industry for 26 years. Contact him via e-mail at rhall@questex.com.

Surviving in this Wal-Mart economy

Everybody in my economically challenged city in northwest Ohio is becoming a contractor of one ilk or another, or so it seems. Many are suddenly landscape maintenance contractors.

This is one reason, although not the largest, why you should be moving to become a lower-priced service provider in your market. Of course, that means finding ways to cut costs to continue making an acceptable margin. Yes, quality is still important, but — borrowing a phrase from the world's largest retailer — every day low prices increasingly determine who gets the work.

As you surely now realize, customers are in charge. They're demanding lower prices and willing to consider multiple offers even when they've been satisfied with the quality of service you've been giving them. More contractors are willing to meet their demands, even those that you might consider unreasonable.

Each week pickup trucks I have never seen before pass through my neighborhood. The trucks are pulling trailers, each loaded with a zero-turn mower, a small trim mower, a rack of handhelds and a red gas can or two. Apart from the signage on their doors, the parade of unfamiliar trucks rattling down our normally quiet city streets looks pretty much the same to me.

"It's no secret it's getting tougher to maintain what many of us consider 'fair' price for providing landscape maintenance."

Landscape maintenance has become a favorite career choice of the unemployed and the under employed. Officially, unemployment in my community is 9.6%. Unofficially, it probably approaches double that figure. Who can fault individuals for working and trying to make a living in these tough times? Many of you probably started with a single truck and a mower, too.

But, judging by the size and robustness of our industry, many of you wised up and survived. You became businesspeople and not just grass cutters. You learned the true cost of providing service and of meeting customers' expectations at a price that provides you and your employees reasonable compensation, and with profit left over to reinvest.

While business basics never change, conditions that shape them change. A new reality is always arriving and demanding appropriate response.

Acknowledging that, it's no secret it's getting tougher to maintain what many of us consider a "fair" price for providing landscape maintenance, a cornerstone of our industry; this has been a measurable trend for a decade or longer. Indeed, the middle-of-the-pack pricing strategy that has been so successful for so many small, independent companies appears to be under attack.

National and regional companies rely upon tightly managed systems and operational efficiencies to meet the low prices demanded by the property managers of multi-family, commercial and industrial locations. A steady stream of inexperienced, take-what-they-can-get operators churn residential markets. Only a few will be around next season, to be joined by a new crop of newcomers. They establish a price floor that most established, quality-service companies find difficult to meet.

What to do?

In reality, there's only one thing that can be done — lower your costs of doing business. In light of this economy and the uncertainty of any significant improvement soon low price will loom even larger in determining who gets the work.



COMMERCIAL STEEL EDGING

STEEL EDGING CREATES A CLEAN LINE BETWEEN PLANTING AREAS AND TURF TO RETAIN STONE AND MULCH AND CAN BE USED TO FORM PATHS AND DRIVEWAYS.

** DURABLE POWDER COAT IN GREEN, BROWN OR BLACK*

** 14GA - 1/4" THICKNESS*

** 4" - 6" HEIGHTS AVAILABLE*

***THE FIRST CHOICE!
OF LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONALS***

WWW.COLMET.COM



CONTACT US FOR YOUR QUOTE TODAY! SALES@COLMET.COM 1-800-829-8225



THE *Five* BIGGEST IDEAS OF THE YEAR

Presenting Landscape Management's Ideas Issue – a guide to the thought-provoking trends that, for better or worse, are shaping the industry right now.

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

DIVERSIFICATION IS YOUR LIFEBOAT

Las Vegas enjoyed an overinflated economy for 15 years. “Even though land prices and construction costs were very high, money was easy to come by so developers flocked there and bought land and built everything from residential to multi-family to commercial properties,” says Donnie Garritano, president, Las Vegas-based D&K Landscape.

Garritano realized once he saw a grocery store on every corner that the bubble would eventually burst, especially when it involved design/build/construction. And it did at the end of 2008/beginning of 2009.

His solution: better balance.

The previously 70% construction company — mostly commercial — is now a 33%/33%/33% split between construction, maintenance and playground equipment sales and

5

playground design/build for both commercial and residential customers. The recurring revenue model of maintenance helped cash flow and the new playground equipment sales and design/build division brought profit.

Feel like your drowning in a sea of recession, consumer confidence, low sales and even lower prices and profits?

Jump on the diversification lifeboat like Garritano did. Design/build and maintenance can no longer cut it alone, contractors say. New services are taking over — but not in terms of a percentage of dominance. Maintenance and design/build still rank as the most offered services by landscapers, according to *Landscape Management's* survey.

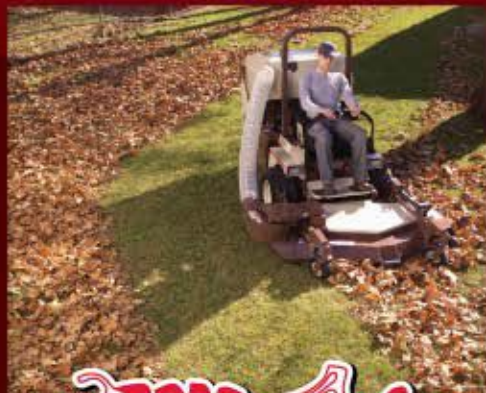
So, what new services are the best to incorporate today? Unfortunately, it's not cut and dry. No one can tell you exactly which services are doing well and which ones aren't overall. It's different based on your region, business model, competition, customer base and strategy. >>

“ THE POWERVAC™ SYSTEM IS
THE BEST
WE'VE EVER USED.

IT SAVES US FROM HOURS
OF BACKBREAKING WORK
BAGGING UP LEAVES.”

BRIAN FRASER

*Greenlawn Landscaping Maintenance Co.
Farmington Hills, MI*



YOUR NEXT MOWER®

Visit grasshoppermower.com/powervac or call 620-345-8621 for more information.

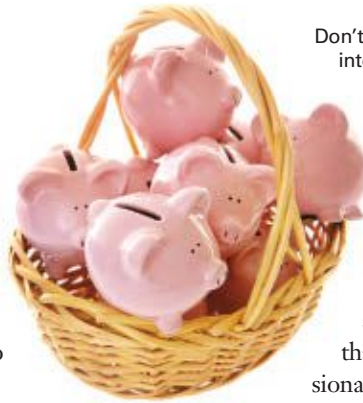
© 2010 THE GRASSHOPPER COMPANY



But, as Susan Wilson Solovic points out in ABC News' *Reboot Your Small Business by Reinventing*, "sometimes shaking things up a bit — in a large or small way — can ramp up revenue opportunities. Look at the way you make money now — are there other revenue streams you could create that might be more appealing to your customer base?"

Looking at current trends can give you ideas as to growing customer needs. Senior care, for instance, repeatedly makes lists of best business opportunities because the 77 million Baby Boomer population represents at least 25% of the population, ranging in age from 61 to 79 until at least 2025.

While a landscape business may not feel comfortable pro-



Don't put all your resources into one service basket.

viding senior care services, they are present at seniors' homes or senior care facilities to maintain the landscapes so they could consider adding an errand-running service or incorporate some senior-specific elements into landscape design for those customers, such as ramps or specialized outdoor areas that are wheelchair accessible, industry professionals suggest.

No matter what new services, customers or service repackaging works for you, Wilson Solovic encourages: "Don't be afraid to trying something seemingly unorthodox. Collaborate with a competitor. Target a new industry. Go virtual. Reinventing your business may be just the boost you need to rebound from the recession." **LM**

It's not *easy* being green

4

A very famous frog once said, "It's not easy being green."

Maybe he was talking about running a sustainable business in a recession.

The green movement picked up some tremendous steam during the past decade, leaving many business owners stymied over what the word "sustainability" really means, yet racing to keep up. Some offered greener services. Some started using greener equipment. And some improved operations to eliminate waste.

Then they touted these internal sustainable practices and green service offerings in sales and marketing because customers seemed to respond. According to a Gallup survey, 53% of Americans rate the overall quality of the environment as only fair or poor, and 68% worry in some fashion over the state of the environment. Even 22% of Americans admitted they are feeling green guilt for not recycling more or replacing their regular light bulbs with the more energy-efficient variety, though 89% said they recycle something, says the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation's 2008 study.

But then the recession hit. One

year later, only 12% of Americans are feeling the green guilt.

The problem? Going green is not cheap for businesses to implement, particularly if they want to embrace a sustainable culture inside and out. And, for customers, the desire to be green does not always outweigh the price of going green. No demand = no service growth.

"People want to say they are green or be green, but no one wants to invest in green," says John Gibson, president of Denver's Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care.

"Environmentalism is deeply rooted in the consumer mind-set," explain Paul Flatters and Michael Willmott of Trajectory, a consumer trends forecasting consultancy. "But green consumerism has definitely slowed in the recession. Consumers are cutting back on pricey displays of green credentials but they're ramping up cheap and discreet methods of reducing waste."

For contractors struggling in the recession, balancing dwindling customer demand with their desire to tout greener services and practices is particularly challenging. "I'm not about to switch all my mowers to propane

— I'm not willing to spend the money just yet," says Terry Delany, president of Fayetteville, AR-based GroundServ. "And not one customer is asking me

about my 'green' services. They don't care. They don't even ask me if I have insurance anymore. But they do ask me how cheap my service is. So I have to focus on that. To be truly green is just too expensive to do right now."

But, Flatters and Willmott predict, the green trend "will likely accelerate again in three to five years." So for those who believe in sustainability, don't give up on it just yet.

"It's not just a phase," agrees David Snodgrass, president of Portland's Dennis' 7 Dees. "It's a trend that will be a part of everyday business." **LM**





PENDULUM^{Herbicide}
AquaCap™

You've got enough things to worry about. But the proven performance of **Pendulum® AquaCap™ herbicide** means weeds aren't one of them. Its water-based formulation gives you long-lasting, broad-spectrum preemergent grass and broadleaf weed control, with reduced staining and odor, plus easier clean-up. So don't worry about weeds popping up. Use **Pendulum AquaCap**.

betterturf.basf.us | 800-545-9525

 **BASF**
The Chemical Company

Always read and follow label directions.
Pendulum is a registered trademark and AquaCap is a trademark of BASF.
© 2009 BASF Corporation. All rights reserved.

3

Marketing isn't enough

Marketing without connecting is just expensive noise.

That's how marketers describe a period they call "post-marketing." And your customers are controlling it.

What does this mean for business?

It means telemarketing is dead. It means Yellow Pages ads are dead. It means, in some cases, direct mail may even be dead. Ask John Gibson, president of Denver's Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care. He's lived through it all. "Telemarketing and the Yellow Pages have come and gone," he says. "But what really surprised us this year was direct mail. We did a big piece we expected to do well, but it flopped in the market. So now I'm thinking direct mail has come and gone, too."

Social media is the next great marketing wave — a way to connect with potential and current buyers on a different level. And you can ride it or let it pass you by. But it may be taking your customers with it.

According to *Social Media Examiner's* 2010 Social Media Marketing Industry Report, an overwhelming 91% of businesses said they were using social media for marketing purposes, but 65% have only been doing so for a few months. Ten hours per week was the average time spent using these tools — the top four being Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and blogs. Owners aged 20 to 29 spent the most time using social media, followed by 40- to 49-year-olds and then 30- to 39-year-olds.

But what does this time spent behind a screen actually do for business? Eighty-five percent of marketers say the No. 1 advantage is generating exposure, followed by increasing traffic (63%) and building new business partnerships (56%). And 74% of businesses who have used social media for years say it's helped them close sales.

And the cost? Just time. A significant percentage of participants in the *Social Media Examiner* study say

their overall marketing costs dropped after implementing social media marketing. Maybe that's why in the prolonged recession, 67% of marketers plan to increase their use of blogs, Facebook, video/YouTube, Twitter and LinkedIn (in that order) in the coming year.

Another thing these tools provide is a means of push vs. pull marketing, meaning that

instead of trying to pull customers to your website, you push relevant content and information straight to their iPhones, Blackberries, Facebook and Twitter feeds — anywhere, anytime. You do this right, and customers will "like" it and pass the word on to their friends. *Wired* calls it "a radical future of media beyond the Web." "The Web is, after all, just one of the many applications that exist on the Internet," the magazine explains in its September issue, adding as the Internet moved from your desktop to your pocket, the nature of it changed ... and will continue to change. "Within five years, Morgan Stanley projects the number of users accessing the Net from mobile devices will surpass the number who access it from PCs."

"Blame human nature" on this movement, *Wired's* Chris Anderson says. "As much as we intellectually appreciate openness, at the end of the day, we favor the easiest path." LM



There's a New Name in Landscape Contracting

the Grounds Guys
LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

A GREENER FUTURE IS WAITING FOR YOU

Say hello to The Grounds Guys, the newest franchise in the landscape contracting industry. But we're not really new. We're part of a family of nationally-respected service franchise brands - Leading the Service Industry™.

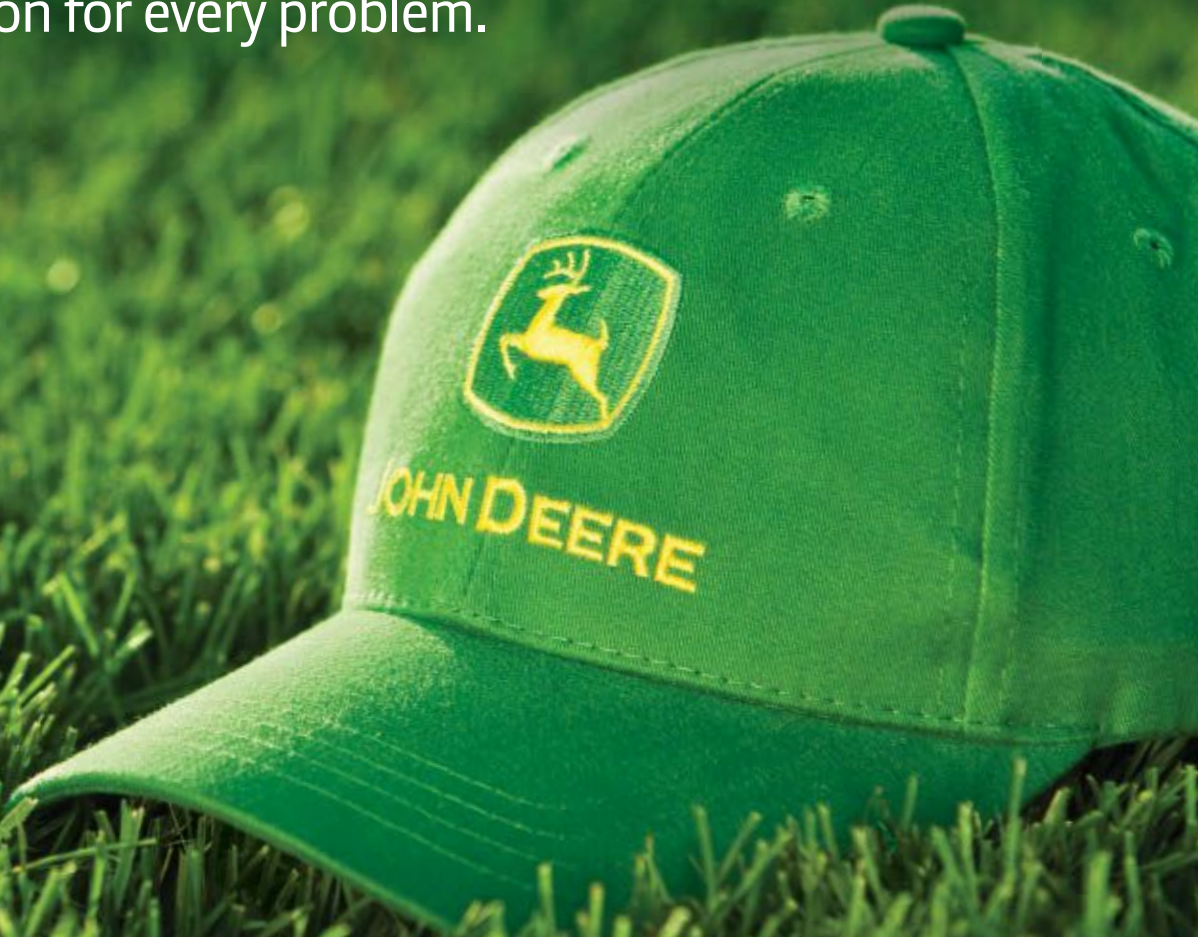
With The Grounds Guys, you get -

- World-class training and support.
- Discounts on supplies, vehicles, insurance and more.
- National marketing and internet marketing.
- Systems to build your business.
- Sophisticated software systems.
- Control of your business and an improved quality of life.

(800) 638-9851
GroundsGuysFranchise.com

A Company of The Dwyer Group®

Work with a partner who has
a solution for every problem.



John Deere Commercial Solutions Mowing | Construction | Landscaping | Finance

You know you can count on John Deere for the best in commercial mowing equipment. But that's only the beginning. We are the only company in the landscaping industry to also provide financing, landscaping supplies, and construction equipment. Not to mention a nationwide dealer network and the best in parts and service.

One hat does it all. We want to be your partner . . . in every way possible.



Your partner from the ground up.



www.JohnDeere.com/Commercial



PRIDE, QUALITY & BRAND HAVE LOST THEIR EDGE

Residential and commercial customers alike have always craved a neatly manicured landscape that makes the neighbors and office parks next door envious. And they would do almost anything for it.

Not anymore.

Over the past two years, "pride has certainly become second to price," says Terry Delany, president of Fayetteville, AR-based GroundServ.

As a result of the recession combined with high drought periods, John Gibson, Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape's president, has even noticed that customers' acceptance of the standard of care on their properties has declined. "It became a badge of honor to have brown spots in their yards because it meant they weren't watering as much," he explains.

Quality has also faded. "Contractors are lowering their service levels and quality, as well as their pricing, further diminishing the traditional fair market," says Donnie Garritano, president of Las Vegas-based D&K Landscape.

And if pride and quality have slipped a few rungs down the ladder, Delany says brand has gone with it. "Customers used to look at a company like mine and it used to matter — we have trained employees who can be counted on to show up every Tuesday; we have systems and clean, recognizable trucks," he says. "But that doesn't matter anymore. We still tout our attributes, but the client just flips to the back page of our proposal to see the price."

Customer association with brand



has declined across industries, fed by consumers' confidence in their buying power and need to spend less, confirms eBoost Consulting's Johnny Chan.

But don't stop entirely touting your brand, throw quality out the window or wallow in consumers' dwindling property pride just yet. Ever the optimist, Gibson believes there's some pride left. "There's less of it," he qualifies. "There's societal pressure now to spend less, but I don't believe personal pride of property will ever completely go away. The pendulum will swing back." **LMI**

PRO-TECH[®]
MANUFACTURING & DISTRIBUTION



Proven Value

Now Featuring **FREE FREIGHT & LOWER Sale Pricing for 2010 on the Entire Sno Pusher Product Line**



- QUALITY** > Best Pushers in Design, Strength and Ease of Use
- AVAILABILITY** > Always available and delivered to you when promised
- PRICE** > NEW, AGGRESSIVE pricing (with FREE FREIGHT*) can't be beat

*Freight free from Pro-Tech to dealer destination.

See pricing and more at: www.snopusher.com Call: (888) PUSH-SNO or (888) 787-4766

**THE SUPER Z
SET THE BAR.
THE NEXT GENERATION
WILL RAISE IT.**



A R R I V I N G 1 . 1 . 1 1

CUTTING GRASS, NOT CORNERS.

HUSTLER 

HUSTLERTURF.COM



A Game Changer

Business is measured in results and customer satisfaction. Whether you are in charge of fairways and greens, parks and sports fields and / or greenhouse and nursery plants, count on us – to provide the most advanced plant technology available.

We are the leading manufacturer and marketer of controlled-release fertilizers and micronutrients.

We are at the forefront of environmentally-responsible fertilizer technologies and also provide effective pest control solutions.

We deliver innovative, premium quality products with unsurpassed customer service.

We achieve this through the expertise of our employees, strong customer relationships and our passion for developing technologies and leveraging them into new markets.

We will help your business grow.



DIRECT SOLUTIONS

Setting a new standard in service excellence and solution delivery

www.agriumat.com

1-888-757-0072





Agrium
Advanced
Technologies
DIRECT SOLUTIONS

Agrium
Advanced
Technologies
DIRECT SOLUTIONS

Agrium
Advanced
Technologies
DIRECT SOLUTIONS



LANDSCAPERS SURRENDER TO LOW* PRICES

** As much as 50% lower*

IN 2006, TERRY Delany was bidding commercial mowing services at \$40 an hour, and winning the work 85% of the time.

Business was good.

Then the president of Fayetteville, AR-based GroundServ noticed his close ratio starting to slow in 2007 and again in 2008. Taking a closer look, he found his competitors had already lowered their prices — first to \$30 an hour and then to \$27 an hour.

And they were winning the work — based solely on price.

To remain competitive today, Delany bids these same jobs at \$25 an hour and closes sales less than 50% of the time.

As the pricing situation worsened, Delany did what every boat does when it finds out it's sinking — “started throwing stuff overboard,” he says. “We cut positions, froze pay, eliminated paid holidays and vacations.”

The company also boosted productivity to make up for profit loss. Installing \$50-per-truck GPS units to improve routing saved \$500 per month in fuel instantly.

Efficiencies helped, but what really saved the company from going out of business was forgetting about something he couldn't control: mowing prices. Instead, he focused on offering new services to his client base — services with less competitive pressure that he could price to generate profit.

As a result, his landscape company AAA Lawns became GroundServ, a commercial property maintenance company. And while mowing, which actually generates a negative profit percentage (-5%), gets Delany in clients' doors, new services like parking lot striping and stop sign installation bring in as much as 30% in profit. Now, instead of looking at tumbling below \$1 million, GroundServ is well on its





How to put away the white flag and drive profit

BY NICOLE WISNIEWSKI
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

way to hitting \$2 million in revenue next year.

Delany isn't alone. In many markets across the U.S., landscape contractors are battling the pricing game more than they've ever had to in the past. According to a *Landscape Management* survey, underpricing competitors ranked as the No. 2 factor negatively affecting business growth this year — less than a quarter of a point away from tying with the prolonged recession as the No. 1 factor. Speaking of the recession, 80% of small business owners expect it to continue into 2011, according to a recent U.S. Bank Small Business Survey.

And over the next six months, landscape businesses say their No. 1 priority is maintaining current business and sources of revenue. This has taken priority over things like innovation.

Even in *Landscape Management's* recent LM150 survey and report, the largest contractors in the country repeatedly touted lower prices and profits as challenges negatively affecting growth this year. When asked to rank his top three challenges, Chris Senske's responses were all very closely related to one thing: "sales, sales, sales," says the president of Senske Lawn & Tree Care, Kennewick, WA. "One: Creating new profitable sales in an environment of extreme downward pricing pressure. Two: Retain customers who are being bombarded with low price offers. And, three: Manage operating costs and lower overhead to be more competitive in all parts of our business."

The weak economy continues to put downward pressure on pricing in all industries. According to Bill Dunkelberg, chief economist for the National Federation of Independent Business, June is the 19th consecutive month in which more business owners reported cutting average prices rather than raising them. "Widespread price cutting contributes to the high percentage reporting declining sales revenue," he explains, adding that only a net 11% of owners raised prices this year. In fact, the U.S. Bank Small Business



Survey cited poor sales as the biggest challenge facing business today.

And few customers wake up in the morning eager to pay higher prices either. A recent Gallup poll shows consumer spending this summer as being unchanged compared to last summer's decreased buying habits, suggesting they are getting settled into what Gallup and other economists are calling "the new normal."

"There's no question about it — price has come down; in many cases it's half of what it was five years ago," says industry consultant Phil Harwood. "There's a new reality. And contractors have to stop whining and find a way to make money now."

"It's not going back to what it was," agrees Donnie Garritano, president of Las Vegas-based D&K Landscape. "We have to accept it and adjust."

Contractors are taking lessons from Green Industry professionals who've

figured it out, as well as others outside the industry who are thinking differently, to revive price — and, more importantly — profit.

STRATEGY

A

SOMETHING NEW.

Landscape business owners can get a lesson in pricing at least once a week with their trip to the local gas station, says Anne Graham, managing director of the Legendary Value Institute and a business lecturer at the University of British Columbia. There "you probably check the price per gallon often, but you might not check how much the chips cost in the store," she says.

Instead of raising prices across the board, which usually aggravates customers into seeking competitive bids — in her example, driving to the gas

station across the street — raising less visible prices on services or products not every customer buys every time they do business with you (maybe a 1% or 2% or 5% increase) can add up to a big difference in the bottom line. In her gas station scenario, the bag of chips is an example of a product sold at a price that's rarely argued.

That, in essence, was Delany's pricing strategy. He had to do something. "My commercial customers started freaking out — the cuts they were making were ridiculous," he explains, sharing the story of one commercial property owner who cut services and started doing the work himself to save money. On top of that, the competition was getting fierce. "One of my loyal customers showed me five other bids priced lower than mine. I asked him why he requested five other bids, and he said he didn't — they just came in.

"The old theory was if you were



SPRINTER

a larger company you could compete with smaller companies because you have the advantage of efficiencies,” he adds. “That’s out the window now. When people charge \$15 or \$20 an hour, it can’t cover any overhead.”

Delany realized if prices continued to plummet, business would suffer to the point of possible demise. “We weren’t making money mowing, so we had to find something we could make money doing,” he says.

So he started focusing on ancillary services his commercial customers wanted and not all his competitors offered, including tree services, window washing, parking lot striping and sign installation. “I took a good look at my customer base,” he says. “Every commercial site has a parking lot. They already paid people to stripe, sweep and seal it — why not us?”

The services are even applicable for real estate management company

clients who want foreclosed home landscapes fixed up. GroundServ can pressure wash the house, fix up the landscape, clean windows, seal driveways and even sub out handyman work for things like broken windows. And despite pricing pressure, Delany found customers still craved a one-stop shop. “And now that real estate manager has to make only one call vs. three,” he says.

In his company reinvention, a name change and new website were essential. “It was hard for us to tout parking lot striping services as AAA Lawns,” Delany says. “We’re not just a landscape company anymore.”

Garritano is approaching today’s pricing situation in a similar fashion for one area of his business. After a successful design, estimate and proposal for a \$650,000 park project 10 years ago — what he calls the “biggest achievement of his career” — Garritano has always had a soft spot for designing parks

“We weren’t making money mowing, so we had to find something we could make money doing.”

— TERRY DELANY,
GroundServ



HEAVY ON THE LIFTING. LIGHT ON ITS FRAME.

The 2010 Freightliner Sprinter Cab Chassis proves that it doesn’t take a heavyweight to carry heavy loads. Its lightweight, all-steel, unibody frame handles a Best-In-Class* payload up to 6,269 lbs. And with numerous upfit options and body packages available, the Sprinter Cab Chassis has the versatility to carry any business. Visit FreightlinerSprinterUSA.com or your local dealer to discover your Sprinter today.

*Based on a comparison of the Automotive News classification of full-size commercial vans.





and playgrounds. And with the huge trend in the importance of exercise and outdoor play for children, playgrounds have become integrated zones where children and adults can play together and interact. "They are being designed and created today as more of a destination where people want to go," he explains. "The playground is evolving

and the landscape structure has spearheaded the entire movement."

So not only did he become a designer and installer of these types of environments, he also became a distributor of play structures, park equipment, rubberized surfacing and site furnishings under the business Creative Play. This now makes up 33% of his business.

Garritano went from a 70%/30% construction/maintenance mix, with 80% of the construction and 95% of the maintenance coming from commercial clients in 2008 to 33% construction, 33% maintenance and 33% Creative Play and an 85%/15% commercial/residential mix. While construction work is bringing in a gross profit margin of 0% to -10% today, maintenance still holds its own at 25% profit (down from 35% but still profitable).

"If I didn't cut out commercial construction and push the playground side of my business, I don't know if I'd be talking to you right now," Garritano says. "Construction is a service that's really struggling. Some local landscape business owners are spending entire life savings to keep companies afloat. What I learned is you have to spend resources on the biggest opportunities — not the biggest problems. Instead of chasing the problems and throwing money at them, we decided to chase the opportunities. We decided to look outside the box."

Being proactive and recognizing opportunities is the game contractors must play today, Harwood agrees. "Ten years ago, contractors were making a killing on landscape maintenance and design/build," he says. "But as customers got smarter and competition grew, the premium profits were sucked out of the whole environment. The strategy now is to control costs, retain contracts, add services and try to get a premium price on those additional services."

continued on page 24



The **NEW** TURFCO

T3000
APPLICATOR

Spreader and Sprayer

TRANSFORM YOUR WORKDAY AND YOUR BOTTOM LINE.

Through revolutionary design and engineering, the patent-pending **T3000** will dramatically increase your productivity and profitability.

Step on and grab the steering wheel for simple, intuitive driving. The ride is smooth and steady, especially on hills and rough terrain. Move effortlessly from residential properties with 36" gates to commercial properties, improving route efficiency so you can increase the number of properties you complete in a day.

The T3000 also gives you unprecedented application control. Easily match your spread and spray widths and capacities. And the unique spray system is the ultimate in precision and efficiency, virtually eliminating callbacks.

More precise. More efficient. More profitable. It's easy with the T3000.

"The T3000 helped me grow my customer base by 58%. It's so easy to use—I can do a property in about half the time."

••••• Mike Immel
Mike's Total Lawn Care
Fon du Lac, WI



WWW.TURFCO.COM

See the T3000 in action—call 800-679-8201 for a demo or DVD.



Only **11%** of companies raised prices this year.

TURNS ON A DIME AND EVEN BETTER ON GRASS.



The A300's four steerable axles help minimize turf damage, tire marks on concrete and asphalt, and tire wear. That means less surface repair and cleanup as well as lower maintenance costs – and a better bottom line for you. Flip a switch and go from the smooth, rolling efficiency of an all-wheel steer to the agile maneuverability of a skid-steer. It's like having two machines in one.

947D-2



Bobcat

www.bobcat.com/turns5

Bobcat® and the Bobcat logo are registered trademarks of Bobcat Company in the United States and various other countries. ©2010 Bobcat Company. All Rights Reserved.

One Tough Animal.



continued from page 22

STRATEGY

B

REVIVE SOMETHING OLD. The current popular strategy has many owners sailing off in search of “blue oceans” — market spaces where allegedly no

one else is fishing. What Garritano and Delany have found certainly fit that mold. But Cespedes recommends another strategy to revive profit. “Avoiding competition is always nice work if you can get it,” he says. But firms can also emulate “Odysseus — the sailor who sought prosperity closer to home — in the pricing opportunities inherent

in their current business mix.”

Garritano did this with his landscape services by repackaging them into a current customer niche or emotion, hoping to transcend the price issue. So far, it’s working.

For instance, after discovering his client base really responded to landscape detailing or clean-up work based on an annual charity crew-for-a-day giveaway he sponsored, he packaged the quarterly service that includes trimming, edging, lawn care and irrigation system check and adjustment into something he calls “Seasonal Gardener.” It’s positioned for the customer who doesn’t want to pay for regular, monthly services but does want occasional help on the bigger cleanup tasks.

Also, in Las Vegas, distressed commercial properties with high vacancy and low occupancy continue to rise. So Garritano created a monthly service called PropertyGard where his crews perform full detailing on these sites. “We help them preserve the integrity of the site and still stick within their budget since they can’t afford high monthly maintenance bills,” he says. “This cuts their regular prices for weekly service 30% to 40%.”

continued on page 26

“What I learned is you have to spend resources on the biggest opportunities — not the biggest problems.”

— **DONNIE GARRITANO,**
D&K Landscape



Cuts Branches (and Your Workload) 20% Faster**

FREE* Replacement Blade (\$45 Value) With Purchase.
Limited time only 8/2/10 - 10/31/10

The new QuickSaw™ cuts 20% faster, lasts longer and stays sharper.

For a limited time, get a free replacement blade when you purchase a new QuickSaw. Save money now on the saw that helps you get more done later.

Visit coronaclipper.com for details.

CORONA

Available at leading arborist and landscape catalogs and retailers. *Some restrictions apply. **Than comparable professional saws.

Zip It Up!



Zip up your greens for maximum winter protection. TransFilm® Anti-transpirant minimizes moisture loss from winter desiccation and can often eliminate the need for greens covers in less exposed areas. You can even tank-mix your winter fungicide application with TransFilm. ***This winter, zip it up with an overcoat of TransFilm!***

- Resists peeling and cracking
- Anti-transpirant and sticker
- Uniform emulsion

G pbi / GORDON
CORPORATION

An Employee-Owned Company

800-821-7925

pbigordon.com/transfilm

Transfilm® is a registered trademark of PBI/Gordon Corp.
ALWAYS READ AND FOLLOW LABEL DIRECTIONS 00659



continued from page 24

Garritano's theory is if you create a service that is priced based on customers' changing needs at a rate that generates profit, making it worthwhile, then it should sell and drive business growth. "Despite the recession, I still see people driving Mercedes — not everyone wants to drive junkers," he says. "I still

see people going to the grocery store and buying something besides the white-labeled generic products. No one wants to feel they have to eat beans and hotdogs every day. People are still buying quality."

What's changed is how they are defining value, the proper definition of which is a perception of the combina-

tion of price and quality. Rafi Mohammed, a pricing expert and author of the book *The Art of Pricing*, says value is not just a matter of being cheap. "I think the word is misused, and when people talk about value, they think about it in terms of giving people the lowest price," he explains. "From a consumer's standpoint, it's about an evaluation between what they get and what the price is."

A recent example is the introduction of Subway's \$5 foot-long sub sandwich, which was created as an answer to McDonald's and Wendy's \$1 value menus. Even Subway couldn't have predicted the \$5 deal would be so successful, redefining value in that market. The lesson, Mohammed says: while price is a very important part of the equation, so is what you're offering.

Our QuickBooks integration is so smooth

Smooth. Real smooth. One click, and minutes later your entire customer list, employee list and item list is automatically synched with QuickBooks. Any change you make in QuickBooks or QXpress syncs in real-time.

and simple that you'll be scheduling jobs

QXpress looks and feels just like QuickBooks, so you'll feel right at home, and be scheduling your crews and routes in no time.

and creating invoices the very next day...

Scheduled jobs convert into QuickBooks invoices with only a couple clicks! Quick and easy. With no double-entry, you'll save time and prevent costly mistakes.

...just like Jody at Sepulvado Ventures Inc.

"The moment I started using QXpress, all of my apprehensions disappeared. It looked just like QuickBooks and imported my QuickBooks data, so I had a full database from the very start. My staff and I were literally scheduling in QXpress right away. Within no time, our crews' mowing schedules were full and we were even scheduling landscape projects. It was the best transition I could have asked for!"



Discover why lawn & landscaping professionals have rated QXpress the easiest scheduling add-on to setup.

Contact QXpress for a FREE demo today!

<http://www.qxpress.com/LM> 1-888-QXPRESS x1



A GOOD DEAL.

"As Harvard Business School professor Gerald Zaltman told me,

'Price is typically a number, but there is nothing more subjective,'" explains Ellen Ruppel Shell in her new book *Cheap: The High Cost of Discount Culture*. "Some numbers trigger in our minds the flashing light of 'good deal,' while others send signals of 'rip-off?'"

"Looking deep inside the human brain, neuroscientists have discovered the very anticipation of a 'bargain' sets our neural networks a quiver," she continues. "The manipulation of price can confuse us, block the thinking part of our brain and ignite the impulsive, primitive side, the part that leads us to make poor decisions based on bad assumptions. Ever wonder why you'll drive 5 miles out of your way to save a buck on ... a tank of gas?"

And "in a market awash in increasingly similar — even identical — goods, price is the ultimate arbiter; the lower, the better," she says.

Contractors have discovered the magic of a discount, too. But the trick is to package it with something that

continued on page 28



SUBARU

Industrial Power Products

PRIDE.

It permeates through everything you do. Your work. Your reputation. Your lifestyle. We understand. It's core to us too. That's why Subaru V-Twin engines represent **the best American built engines** have to offer – it's our pride in our workmanship.

Reliable design. EFI technology second to none. And the power to tackle any job. All built in Hudson, Wisconsin.

**Exercise the power of Pride.
Man Up. Insist on Subaru.**

Learn more by visiting subarupower.com/pride



**3-YEAR
WARRANTY**

LIMITED MANUFACTURER'S WARRANTY



“There’s no question about it — price has come down. *There’s a new reality.* Contractors have to stop whining and find a way to make money now.”

— PHIL HARWOOD,
Pro-Motion
Consulting



continued from page 26

helps the company retain business and, ultimately, grow. Denver’s Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care raised its prepayment discount for residential lawn care customers from 3% to 5% this year. Not only did it help their cash flow, President John Gibson explains, but it also increased their customer retention by 3% to the highest rate the company has seen in 10-plus years.

Rebates are also a good way to deflect discount requests and save margins from being squeezed, according to Graham. “The next time someone asks for 10% or 15% off, tell them you’d like to offer them a rebate once they reach a certain threshold of business with you,” she says. “Encourage them to make you a one-stop shop. If you can provide things they’ve been buying from your competitors, offer to bundle those services and give them a price rebate. Rebates are great because they get paid out after the

fact, they don’t affect your cash flow and the truth is: not everyone requests them. They are also very easy to discontinue. By contrast, if you take away a discount, people get really upset.”

While a better prepayment discount is proving successful for Swingle Tree, in most cases, the company is maintaining prices — having to take lower margins by not raising prices and boosting efficiencies internally to try and make up that difference.

But the reality is the business’ profit margins, in some divisions, are still down 40% to 60% from their peak seven years ago. And Gibson asks, “is there no getting back to where we were. We have to define what’s acceptable going forward.”

What is acceptable? In accordance with the sentiments of many contractors in today’s tough economic climate, Gibson admits: “We’re still trying to figure that out.” **LM**

You can’t tell whether you should aerate or dethatch.
Your customer’s turf has dollar spot—or is it Fido’s spot?

YOU NEED

Horizon’s Landscape Maintenance Guide.



Horizon gives you the edge you need by providing professional landscaping products, and now we can help you get the right information to solve landscape maintenance problems.

Go to YouNeedHorizon.com/guide to order a **FREE** copy of the Landscape Maintenance Guide.



Irrigation ♦ Specialty ♦ Landscape ♦ Equipment ♦ HorizonOnline.com

© 2010 Horizon Distributors, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Dow AgroSciences

Dimension[®]

Specialty Herbicide



GOLF



LAWN



NURSERY



ORNAMENTAL



THE HOTTEST SHOW ON THE WEED CONTROL ROAD JUST GOT EVEN LOUDER.

Only a superstar rolls like this, and you're about to get a backstage pass to the hottest tour on the road. It's the Rock the Weeds Tour featuring Dimension[®] specialty herbicide, the No. 1 preemergence herbicide brand in the lawn and landscape markets.¹ Dimension is cranking up the volume on tough weeds like crabgrass, creeping woodsorrel, bittercress and many other grassy and broadleaf weeds. And its nonstaining formulation rocks all season long and delivers outstanding early postemergence control on crabgrass. On this tour, there are no groupies or wannabes. It's brought to you by the company that delivers only proven solutions — Dow AgroSciences. www.DowProvesIt.com

¹2008 Specialty Product Consultants. [®]Dimension is a trademark of Dow AgroSciences LLC. State restrictions on the sale and use of Dimension specialty herbicide products apply. Consult the label before purchase or use for full details. Always read and follow label directions. [®]The swinging golfer logo is a registered trademark of PGA TOUR, Inc. ©2010 Dow AgroSciences LLC T38-813-002 (12/09) BR 010-60661 DATOTURF9075

OFFICIAL
CHEMISTRY
COMPANY



PROVEN SOLUTIONS



**“CUSTOMERS WANT A SUPERIOR
GRUB PRODUCT DESIGNED WITH
THE ENVIRONMENT IN MIND. AND
THAT’S EXACTLY WHAT I DELIVER.”**



—Chris Paisley
Mariani Landscape
Lake Bluff, IL



Make a statement with DuPont™ Acelepryn® insecticide.

Evolve your business with DuPont™ Acelepryn®, the latest advancement in grub control. One application provides unparalleled performance against every turf-damaging white grub species as well as key surface feeders. The Acelepryn® Application Advantage delivers timing that fits every grub preventative treatment program. Acelepryn® also provides effective control of key insect pests infesting landscape ornamentals. And, Acelepryn® is the first and only grub control product to be granted reduced-risk status by the U.S. EPA for application to turfgrass. Customers will appreciate the excellent environmental profile and the exceptional performance of Acelepryn®, while you'll benefit from a reduced number of costly callbacks. **DuPont™ Acelepryn®. Start an evolution.**



The miracles of science™

Always read and follow the label. The DuPont Oval Logo, DuPont,™ The miracles of science™ and Acelepryn® are trademarks or registered trademarks of DuPont or its affiliates. Copyright © 2010 E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Company. All rights reserved.



THE BENCHMARK

KEVIN KEHOE

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

Sizing up the challenge

We talk a lot about strategic plans, but rarely about strategy. A successful strategy increases *enterprise value*. Enterprise value is the financial worth of your business. It is calculated by multiplying earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) by an EBITDA multiple. Therefore, your strategy must address a simple mathematical truth: Increase both EBITDA and the multiple.

So far, so good, right? But how do you do that? The only way is to manage the “four horsemen” (see below) of EBITDA and the multiple — and do this in an economy not likely to return to the glory days for at least the next five years. That is the horizon on the commercial real estate cycle upturn.

If you haven’t recognized it yet, the landscape industry business model and platform — upon which we have been standing the last 15 years — is burning. What worked for you in the past *will not* work in the future. You need a new strategy.

There are three steps in determining your strategy:

1. Size up the challenge.
2. Assess key business performance benchmarks.
3. Determine a few critical priorities and the required financial investment.

In this article I address the first step, and will address the other two in future columns.

If you haven’t recognized it yet, **the landscape industry business model and platform** — upon which we have been standing the last 15 years — **is burning.**

Meet the four horsemen

The four horsemen of enterprise value are revenue growth, margin performance, cost growth and revenue mix.

For example, take a business with a 40/60 revenue mix of maintenance/construction and an operating profit of \$140,000. When we adjust operating profit for interest, depreciation and owner add-backs, we get an EBITDA of \$300,000. Applying industry multiples of 5.00X and 1.50X for maintenance and construction, respectively, we arrive at an enterprise value of \$870,000.

Now, let’s *size up the challenge* to see what it would take to double enterprise value in four years (2010 to 2013). With a shrinking gross margin due to pricing, we have to grow revenues between 12% and 15% annually while adding overhead at only 7% per annum; at the same time, we shift to a 50/50 mix.

In other words, we have to add more than \$250,000 in revenues every year — primarily in maintenance — while still selling \$1 million in construction. We will need to price and manage operations such that margins get no worse than the projection.

Finally, we have to slow down cost growth. Because variable costs for equipment usually run 15% of revenue, equipment costs consume most of the allowable cost inflation. In simplest terms, this strategy allows for no additional non-billable staffing.

While this is not a small undertaking, it is achievable — and it is what is required to double enterprise value. Knowing the size of the challenge, we can proceed to the next step: assessing key performance benchmarks to determine the business drivers that will get us there.

So, while you are putting your head down and running as hard and fast as you can working your tactical to-do list, you might want to pick your head up and make certain you’re not headed for a cliff or a wall. Start thinking about the wisdom of your strategy.

LITTLE WONDER®

14HP TRUCKLOADER



- ▶ Talon shredding ring
- ▶ Replaceable housing liner
- ▶ Replaceable chute liner
- ▶ 4 Mounting choices
- ▶ Easy to service



Make a Tough Job Easier

This new Little Wonder truckloader puts a 14hp helper at the back of your truck. With the 8" intake this unit will pick up leaves and debris and load them all day long, especially in tough conditions. We put all of the features you want into a smaller easy to use unit. Built for commercial use, this model has high airflow for performance, a tough impeller, an easy to use intake, plus we made it serviceable so it will last.

**Visit your local dealer
for more information.**

LITTLE WONDER®

Professionals Demand Little Wonder.™
www.lwtruckloader.com

1.877.596.6337



**MAINTENANCE:
BLOWERS**

Grasshopper

Grasshopper Turbine Blowers clear debris from congested, hard-to-reach or wide-open areas and long stretches of walkways and curbs in a fraction of the time required by conventional backpack blowers and walk-behind units. The quiet units offer 360° nozzle rotation — controlled remotely from the operator's station — to direct airflow precisely for reduced high-volume cleanup time along walking paths and around sport facilities, parking lots, playgrounds and cemeteries. GrasshopperMower.com/turbine



Echo

With performance specifications of an average air volume of 765 cfm at the pipe and 204 mph maximum air speed, the new PB-770 blower is equipped with a powerful 63.3cc

Power Boost Tornado engine with Pro-Fire ignition for quick and easy starts.

Available in hip- and tube-mounted throttle versions, it features a straight back "L" frame, an extra-flexible tube, dual-stage side-mounted heavy-duty air filtration, wide-angle tube rotation, padded backrests and shoulder straps, and a leaf guard. It even features an exclusive vented back pad that draws air in around the user for comfortable operation in hot weather. A vent cover is included to block this function during cold weather use. Echo-USA.com

FINN Corporation

The FINN Corp. made a name for itself in the landscape and erosion control marketplaces with products lines such as HydroSeeders™, Bark Blowers, Straw Blowers, and the FINN Consumable Products. Not only has the FINN Corporation extended its expertise into the development and commercialization of these diverse product lines, but has also opened its arms to a number of additional industries including golf, home construction, mine reclamation, waste management and equipment rentals. Finncorp.com



Express Blower Inc.

Express Blower is a manufacturer and distributor of large pneumatic blowing equipment. Spread large or small quantities of mulches, composts, soil blends and aggregates for landscapes, green roofs, and erosion control blankets and berms. Plus, install or topdress lawns and turf with our patented and exclusive Ter-raseeding process. Expressblower.com

Stihl

The Magnum BR 600 backpack blower, backed with a two-year limited commercial warranty, offers fuel efficiency as much as 28% more than competitive models. Its improved engine design increases durability and improves operational life. An enhanced nozzle extends wear area for longer life, and a nylon harness increases wear resistance. The blower is 69% cleaner than current U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requirements. The blower also features adjustable blower tubes to provide greater versatility for a wide range of jobs and users. Stihl.com

Helping Landscapers save money, no matter what they drive.

No matter what kind of vehicle you use for your business, you could save with Progressive Insurance. To learn more about Progressive, and see why we are the #1 Truck Insurer in America, please visit ProgressiveCommercial.com.



Call for a Free Quote | Find an Agent
1-888-375-7908 | ProgressiveCommercial.com



United Financial Casualty Company and its affiliates, Mayfield Village, Ohio. Available in most states. No. 1 truck from Highline Data's 2007 written premium data. 09P00560.BA (12/09)

Does your insurance company think
“photosynthesis” is the latest
feature on a digital camera?



In a competitive business environment, you can't afford an insurance company that doesn't understand your business. Hortica has over 120 years experience in the horticultural industry. We provide specialized insurance solutions and loss control strategies that other companies don't deliver.

To learn how Hortica can help protect your business visit www.hortica-insurance.com or call 800-851-7740.


hortica
INSURANCE & EMPLOYEE BENEFITS
To guide and provide

“In **this** neighborhood,
PERFECTION
is the only acceptable
RESULT.

That’s why I use
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.

© 2010 Nufarm. Important: Always read and follow label instructions. 4-Speed™ is a trademark of Nufarm.



www.nufarm.com/us



LAWN CARE:

SEEDING & TURF REPAIR

JCB

The new 515-40 is JCB's most compact and maneuverable telescopic handler model to date. At just 5 ft., 11 in. tall, 5 ft., 2 in. wide and 9 ft., 6 in. long, the unit weighs 7,672 lbs. and features an offset, single-spine main frame. As a result, the machine boasts a full-size cab with both easy accessibility and plenty of space for the operator. The new design enables the machine to break through a barrier that previously prevented many compact telescopic handlers from use in smaller workspaces. Use it to haul, level and load as an alternative to a skid steer. JCBNA.com

SourceOne Outdoor Power Equipment

A SourceOne TurfSavr slices, overseeds, fertilizes and dethatches. It starts as a top-dresser for seeding and spreading fertilizer. Use the high carbon steel renovation knives, with 1.6-in. blade spacing, to increase seed penetration and germination. Change from seed to fertilizer, and it's a spreader. Use without the hopper for dethatching. Install a TS010 flail blade for aggressive dethatching. Powered by an 8-hp Honda OHV engine, TurfSavr has a built-in quick-release receiver hitch for a StepSavr. The self-propelled, oversize 13x5-in. pneumatic rear tires, ergonomic handle and weight-balanced design reduce operator fatigue for all uses. SourceOneOPE.com

Turfco Manufacturing

The new budget-friendly, 140-lb. Kiscutter Sod Cutter is easier to operate and transport than traditional sod cutters. Features include a four-wheel design, pneumatic tires and rear-wheel drive. A 5.5-hp Honda engine, which can cut up to 150 ft. per minute, produces lower vibration — reducing operator fatigue. It's also easy to use: Operators set the depth adjustment, then run simplified controls on the handle bar. Lightweight folding handles result in easy lifting, hauling and storage. Turfco.com



Bobcat Co.

New Bobcat three-point disc harrows can easily break up the soil surface to prepare it for new seedbeds and plantings. Four sets, or "gangs," of five 18-in. discs cultivate the soil and chop unwanted debris, such as weeds or old crops. These gangs are adjustable to provide different cutting depths and aggressions. The discs on the two front gangs are notched to assist in better ground penetration. The 72-in. Bobcat disc harrow is approved for use on compact tractor models CT225 to CT335 and the Toolcat 5610. The 84-in. Bobcat disc harrow is approved for use on compact tractor models CT335 to CT450. Bobcat.com/attachments



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."

4-SPEED™ XT

Better Choices.
Better Business.



www.nufarm.com/us

Nufarm Turf & Ornamentals: 800-345-3330
© 2009 Nufarm. Important: Always read and follow label instructions. 4-Speed™ is a trademark of Nufarm.



Andre J. "Frenchy" Rheault is the only landscaper we know who has had a frozen dessert named in his honor. During a 20-year career as a U.S. Air Force Master Sergeant air traffic controller, and after taking over a landscape business from a friend who got orders to go to Germany, Frenchy began a lifelong campaign supporting veterans affairs and charities — and providing community service projects in and around Denton, TX.

Frenchy, tell us why a local ice cream shop named one of its flavors in your honor: Frenchy's orange sherbet.

We've been honored in many ways and with many awards for the things we've done in the community and for our veterans. It's very gratifying, but it's been fun, too. I've been selected as the Businessman of the Year by the Denton Chamber of Commerce, and the State of Texas Volunteer of the Year, and I've twice won the 4th of July's Most Patriotic Character Award. Everybody knows who we are, and we appreciate that.

By the way, how did you get the nickname Frenchy?

When I joined the Air Force, people I met in the service who were not French had trouble understanding that Rheault was pronounced "row." Frenchy is a lot easier.

You've been in the business a long time. How do you keep your enthusiasm for the industry? Simple: I work with incredible people. Today (Aug. 12) it's

105 degrees. The temperature has been above 100 degrees for 14 days in a row. We've been incredibly busy, and working 7 to 7 every day for the past several weeks. These guys are unbelievable.

I have five employees who have been with me better than 20 years, and the rest have been with me 10 years or more. We put in a lot of hours, and we do a lot of jobs. I stay with my people from the early morning until dark six days a week.

How did the recession affect your business? It hasn't affected my business that much. We started slow this year, but we had the best June we've had in my 36 years in this business — and we're incredibly busy right now. I believe the longer you've been in business, the longer you're going to stay in business if you keep doing things right.

If you have a good product and you provide excellent service, it doesn't matter what the economy is.

You obviously enjoy the lime-light, and certainly aren't shy.

Yes, I'm highly visible. In fact, you can see me at the (NFL Dallas) Cowboy games. This year I'm going in costumes and a beard every game. I'm going to do a pilgrim, a Santa, I'm going to dye my beard red, white and blue, and I'm going to go as the King of Orange in a Henry the Eighth outfit — although around here I'm known as Frenchy the First. I'll be sitting right over the luxury suites. It will be easy to pick me out. I've never wanted to be just one of the crowd.

We're surprised that as an owner you're still out working in the field every day. You have an enviable work ethic.

AT A GLANCE

COMPANY: Frenchy's Lawn & Tree

FOUNDED: 1974, renamed and rebranded in 1995

TITLE: President and owner

HEADQUARTERS: Denton, TX (sole location)

EMPLOYEES: 20

SERVICES: Fertilization, mowing, mulching, aerating, plant/tree installs, tree services, color, seasonal cleanups, debris removal

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS:

Retired U.S. Air Force, proud supporter of veterans affairs and a variety of local charities

SOCIAL MEDIA: Follow Frenchy's Lawn & Tree on Facebook, and watch a recent television profile on Frenchy done by Dallas/Fort Worth ABC-TV affiliate WFAA at <http://tiny.cc/vn6qgh>.

WEBSITE: www.frenchys-lawns.com

I decided from Day One I was going to have the best company I could have. I knew there is always a demand for quality service. It doesn't matter what profession you are in; fortunately, I'm high energy and low maintenance.

“IF YOU HAVE A GOOD PRODUCT AND YOU PROVIDE EXCELLENT SERVICE, IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT THE ECONOMY IS.” — ANDRE “FRENCHY” RHEAULT, FRENCHY'S LAWN & TREE

The next great leap in broadleaf weed control is coming.

October 2010.



The DuPont Oval Logo is a registered trademark of DuPont or its affiliates. Copyright © 2010 E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Company. All rights reserved.

WEEDWATCH

STANDING SENTINEL TO PROTECT PLANT HEALTH



Recommended
Dow AgroSciences
solution

Turflon Ester Ultra®
specialty
herbicide*

GROUND IVY

Glechoma microcarpa

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This prostrate creeping perennial has square stems several feet long that root at the nodes.
- ▶ Its rounded, scalloped leaves and small, funnel-shaped purple flowers grow in clusters.
- ▶ All plant parts feature a strong mint odor.
- ▶ It prefers moist, shady sites, and can tolerate low mowing heights.

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Fall is an excellent time to treat ground ivy; applications in spring (when it is in flower) are also a good time to get effective control.
- ▶ Research has shown that products containing triclopyr are effective in spring and fall, and more effective than 2, 4-D-based products during the difficult summer period.
- ▶ Combinations of shade, wet soils and poor fertility favor ground ivy. Try and alleviate these conditions to maintain control.



Recommended
Dow AgroSciences
solution

Dimension®
specialty
herbicide**

GOOSEGRASS

Eleusine indica

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This prostrate-growing summer annual grows in a clump, with the base of the leaves being distinctively white to silver.
- ▶ Leaves are folded, and may be smooth or have a few hairs.
- ▶ It features a strong, extensive root system and readily invades hard, compacted soils found in high-traffic areas.

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Be sure your turfgrass is maintained properly so it grows vigorously and thickly.
- ▶ If you have had goosegrass previously, apply a pre-emergent herbicide labeled for goosegrass. Consider putting out two applications of pre-emergent each year in early and late spring.

* The state of Arizona has not approved Turflon Ester Ultra for use on sod farms.

** State restrictions on the sale and use of Dimension apply.

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.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



Dimension[®]
Specialty Herbicide

Gallery[®]
Specialty Herbicide

Snapshot[®]
Specialty Herbicide

 **Dow AgroSciences**



It takes courage to admit there's a problem.

Meet Frank. He's got what you'd call a "problem" with hand-weeding. Fortunately, there's Dimension[®], Gallery[®] and Snapshot[®] specialty herbicides from Dow AgroSciences. They give Frank the kind of group therapy he really needs by delivering serious control of the toughest weeds in lawn and landscape settings. So go ahead and skip the awkward meetings. Come learn more about the portfolio of products proven to help kick the hand-weeding habit at DowProvesIt.com.

www.DowProvesIt.com 800-255-3726

*Trademark of Dow AgroSciences LLC. State restrictions on the sale and use of Dimension specialty herbicide products and Snapshot apply. Consult the label before purchase or use for full details. Always read and follow label directions. *The swinging golfer logo is a registered trademark of PGA TOUR, Inc. ©2010 Dow AgroSciences LLC T38-000-018 (2/10) BR 010-60665 DATOTURF9072

OFFICIAL
CHEMISTRY
COMPANY



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.

Identify your at-risk clients

Maintenance contractors have faced — and will continue to face — competitive invasion of their base contracts in what remains a “take away” environment. Until new construction rebounds, the competition remains fierce as contractors try to protect their existing contract base and grow by taking others’ work. Prices are down significantly over the last two seasons as price-conscious buyers take advantage of the highly competitive environment.

Many contractors have taken significant hits to their contract base, while others have managed to hold on. Some contractors have stubbornly resisted lowering prices and have paid a price in lost contracts. Lowering prices can save contracts, but no one really wants to go there if they do not have to.

We believe there is a partial solution in identifying your most at-risk clients, and coming up with a creative strategy to lock them in. It involves becoming hyper-observant, trying to understand your clients’ businesses, and anticipating their pain.

We have created a checklist of things that can put a client at risk (see Table 1). If you and your account managers look at all of your jobs and assess them against this list, it will help you determine relative risk. There is no specific scoring system, but the more risk factors present, the more in jeopardy the property becomes to being stolen.

If you use this tool to rate each of your jobs, you can decide where to focus attention. Often, the account manager can take this information early on and meet with the client to see how serious these factors come into play with the client. This allows you to take a proactive approach to finding a win-win solution.

For example, if the client is experiencing a high vacancy rate, curb appeal will still be important, but short-term cash flow could be an issue. Offering a lower price for a new contract could be appealing, while you provide for an escalation to a higher price as the vacancy rate goes down. Or it might be attractive to include mulching in the contract price for a year, if you can get an extension at the current price. This gives the client a discount, now, when they need it, and returns you to a more acceptable price when things improve.

Do not underestimate your competition. Most good contractors are very in tune to with options to entice the client to change, and they will most likely offer things similar to what you can come up with. Your single advantage can be “trust.” If you have built a trusting relationship with your clients and are proactive in approaching them before they have to come to you or go out to bid, you hold the advantage in working something out favorable to you. Train your staff to look for the risk factors, and take action while you hold that advantage.

TABLE 1: RISK FACTORS POTENTIALLY RESULTING IN CLIENT LOSS

Client or job	Vacancy rate	Business health	Business sector health	Change in ownership	Change in client contact	Change in our contact	Other contractors work w/ client	Price-sensitive client	Won job on low bid	Recent service glitch	Risk rating: low (L) medium (M) high (H)
Job one	L	M	M	M	L	L	H	H	M	L	
Job two	H	L	M	M	M	H	L	L	L	M	
Job three	L	L	M	L	L	M	M	M	H	H	

Get a JUMP START on PROFITS

The combination of indoor exhibits adjacent to a huge, two-day demonstration park makes GIE+EXPO unique within the industry and highly beneficial for you. This marketplace is your best opportunity to efficiently compare products and get a jump on purchasing decisions.



See what's new from the industry's leading exhibitors as well as innovative start-ups in the New Products Arena and then head outside to the 19-acre demo park to kick the tires, jump on and test drive the latest industry innovations. Open the first two days of GIE+EXPO, this 19-acre shopper's playground is just steps away from the 500+ indoor exhibits.



Press conferences and product launches are open to attendees as well as the media again at GIE+EXPO 2010. Hear directly from exhibitors the details of their newest products and corporate announcements.



"2009 was our first-time at GIE+EXPO and we enjoyed the complete experience. From the new products and innovations to the demo area and the education sessions, we got a lot out of the show. We're planning to come back in 2010 just to keep up with the industry's newest trends."

Doug McDuff, President
Landscape America
Wrentham, MA



REGISTER TODAY AT
WWW.GIE-EXPO.COM

GIE+EXPO is sponsored by:



GIE+EXPO



The 14th largest tradeshow in the USA!

Thursday, Friday, Saturday
October 28-30, 2010
Kentucky Exposition Center
Louisville, Kentucky
www.gie-expo.com
info@gie-expo.com
Toll Free: (800) 558-8767
Phone: (812) 949-9200

Make money with
matrix[®]
pansy



Matrix[®] pansy makes more blooms for more impact – count on season-long color in your plantings. Turn to Ball for fast, easy and profitable landscape color solutions!

Request your free Landscape Color Solutions catalog with poster and photo CD at **balllandscape.com**.

800 879-BALL



Ornamental OPPORTUNITIES

CONSUMERS ARE LOOKING AT ORNAMENTALS IN A NEW LIGHT. BY JAMIE J. GOOCH

YOUR CLIENTS MAY not know the difference between herbaceous perennials and woody ornamentals, but they know what they want. Creating educated landscape customers is a worthy goal, but don't forget to listen and learn from them as well.

"Landscapers shouldn't be lumping everything into plant categories, like trees, shrubs and perennials," says Debbie Lonnee, planning and administration manager at Bailey Nurseries Inc., Newport, MN. Bailey is one of the largest wholesale nurseries in the country. "They are all plants and can work in harmony. So many times we try to lump everything into a neat category, but the lines are becoming blurred. Shrubs are being used as annuals. Hey, whatever makes the customer happy!"

Craving color

This year, color is making the customer happy. And it doesn't matter if that color comes from blooms or foliage. Landscapers have the opportunity to weave ornamental trees and



Landscapers looking for something different in large-scale groundcover shrubs could move away from *Diervilla lonicera* to the new *Diervilla Cool Splash*, introduced by the Landscape Plant Development Center.

PROUD SPONSOR

Bailey[®]

BALL VARIETY FOCUS: NEW MATRIX MIXES

Matrix[®] are the best large-flowered pansy for landscapes with better branching for less stretch. Plants bloom even through the shorter days of winter in mild climates. Outstanding for spring and autumn beds! Matrix custom blends make pansy mix use easier in the landscape. Check out the new Jewel Mix appropriate for fall and spring, as well as the always-popular Matrix Ocean Breeze, Autumn Blaze and Citrus Mix. Visit www.BallLandscape.com for more information.



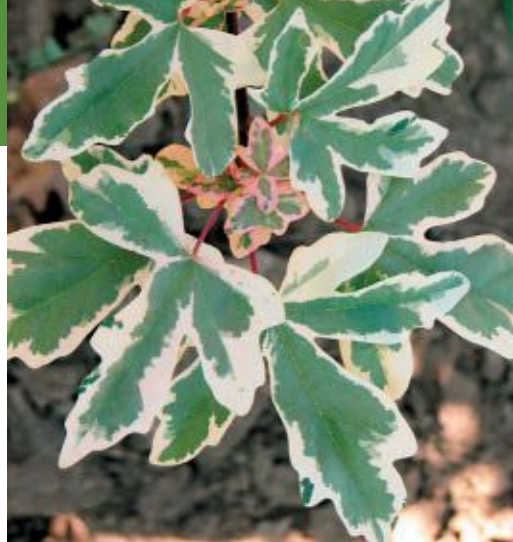
shrubs with distinctive shapes and foliage colors into the landscape.

Year-round color and interest from spring blooms, fall color and winter bark should all be taken into account when satisfying your customers' requests for color. Many consumers have also become enamored with variegated leaves. Clumps of green are becoming out of vogue, says Lonnee.

Edibles remain popular

Some of that color may even be good enough to eat.

According to The Garden Writers Association Foundation's (GWAFF) Late Spring Gardening Trends Research Report for the 2010 gardening season, more consumers are planning on adding a vegetable garden or herb garden. This



Top Variegated foliage, like this on *Acer campestre* Carnival, adds interest without blooms.

Bottom Landscapers can find improvements in new *Hydrangea*, from the reblooming *Endless Summer*, to the new types of *Hydrangea paniculata*, including more dwarf forms and improved flowers.

continues the edible landscape trend identified in last year's report that showed more than 41 million U.S. households (38%) grew a vegetable garden in 2009, more than 19.5 million households (18%) grew an herb garden and 16.5 million households (15%) grew fruits.

"Fruits in general have been a very strong category for us, whether it is a fruit tree such as apple, pear or plum, or any type of small fruit, from blueberry to currants, gooseberries and raspberries," Lonnee says. "We can't keep enough rhubarb in stock."

When planting edible plants, make sure the client is aware of the mainte-

continued on page 48

PHOTO COURTESY: BAILEY NURSERIES

How long does a Corona last?

We'll let you know when we find out.

You shouldn't have to buy a tool twice. Get it right the first time with a Corona, built tougher than any on the market.

CORONA

coronaclipper.com 800-847-7863

REGISTER ONLINE AT
GreenIndustryConference.org

YOU HAVEN'T BEEN THERE. YOU HAVEN'T DONE THAT.

What planet are you on?

Join us at GIC 2010, and you'll gain practical, real-world tools to position your company for success in the new marketplace. Participate in engaging, peer-approved program sessions designed to tackle your most difficult business challenges, plus network and share ideas in beautiful Louisville, Kentucky.

- Upgrade Your Company
- Maximize Your Growth Potential
- Qualify Your Workforce
- Protect Yourself From Pending Regulations
- Keep Up With the Latest Technology
- Cut Costs and Increase Profits
- Stay Competitive in Your Market
- Assess Your Company Against Industry Peers

KEY PRESENTERS:

PLANET Keynote: **Jamie Clarke**
Above All Else: The Power of Passion

Kevin Kehoe: Three Point Group
Business Building Blocks

George Hedley: Hard Hat Presentations
Sales and Marketing / Business Management

David Minor: Texas Christian University
Business Management

Marty Grunder: Marty Grunder!
Leadership / Business Building Blocks

PLATINUM SPONSOR



JOHN DEERE

MEDIA SPONSOR

Landscape
Management



2010 GREEN INDUSTRY CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 27-30, 2010 | Louisville, KY



Small berries, whether on strictly ornamental plants or on edibles, add splashes of color to the landscape.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

No one can accurately predict what the economy will be like in the years to come, but a little soothsaying shows this might be a good time to profit from trees and shrubs.

Woody plants are readily available this season. There may even be an oversupply of them. However, it's likely that growers may cut back on production during the recent economic downturn. Because of the relatively long turn around time between planting and installation of trees and shrubs, supplies could be more limited even if the market picks up in the near future. If so, low supply and high demand could lead to price increases.

Volatility is not something growers enjoy. Many are willing to work with landscapers to custom grow plants for them, which can be a lifesaver on long-term projects.

continued from page 46
nance that comes with many fruiting trees and shrubs. Many drop their fruit. However, there are ornamentals that don't leave a big mess, such as flowering crab apples, or produce small berries that are taken up by birds — often before ever hitting the ground.

Big ideas for small spaces

Designing a small landscape space? Don't rule out ornamentals. There are plenty of dwarf trees and shrubs from which to choose.

"We love the new Rocket series of barberries from PlantHaven," says Lonnee. "In the upper Midwest, people are looking for a substitute from the banned columnar buckthorn, and anything columnar and small fits the bill."

New shrubs and trees bred to fit small spaces can help landscape professionals

do a lot with a little space. Plant breeders have also made great strides in drought tolerance and disease resistance.

"Get to know your supplier's salespeople, and keep up on new plant trends," says Lonnee. "So many suppliers have open houses and tours and can show you what is in production." 🌿

Gooch is a freelance writer based in Northeast Ohio. Contact him at jamie@goochandgooch.com.

PHOTO COURTESY: BAILEY NURSERIES



Are you misting a great business opportunity?

We are actively seeking Landscaping Professionals to sell, install and service our innovative outdoor misting systems that effectively control mosquitoes and other annoying insects.

Great margins and recurring revenues!

1-866-485-7255
WWW.MISTAWAY.COM



BECOME A MISTAWAY DEALER TODAY!





THE STATE OF *color*

Contractors learn about new varieties during Ball Horticulture's Landscape Day.

CONTRACTORS BELIEVE the market for annuals might wither like, well, a drought-stricken annual in the heat of the noonday sun.

According to a survey conducted by Ball Horticulture, 75% of landscape contractors say the number of color change-outs will stay the same or decrease over the next three years. At the same time, 96% expect their expenditures for perennials will stay the same or increase during the same period.

"This year has been flat-line stable for us," said Ed Mrozinski, a buyer for Acres Landscape, Wauconda, IL. Mrozinski was part of a panel of growers and contractors at Ball Landscape Day, held last month at Ball's headquarters in West Chicago, IL. Ball released its 2010 Landscape Contractor Survey at the event.

CONTRACTORS EXPECT THE PERENNIAL PLANT MARKET TO GROW WHILE ANNUALS MARKET TAKES A DIP. BUT NO MATTER WHAT THEY'RE LOOKING FOR, GROWERS CAN BE A CONTRACTOR'S BEST FRIEND.

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS

PHOTO BY: DAN JACOBS

MONTAGE[®]
by  **AMERISTAR[®]**



Fusion-welded for durability • E-coated maintenance free finish



 **AMERISTARFENCE.COM**

1-888-333-3422

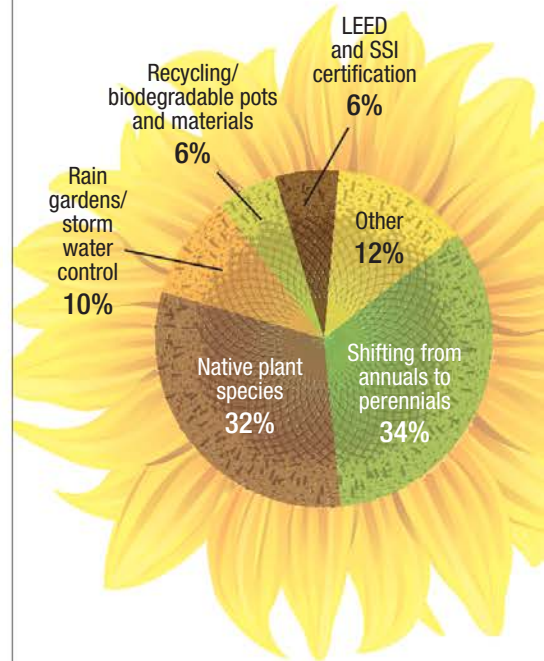
Preserve natural water drainage through a classic segmental permeable clay pavement system.

StormPAVE **RainPAVE**

Pine Hall Brick
 earth friendly, naturally green
 www.americansegmentalpaver.com • 800.334.8689

> SURVEY

Which ONE of the following areas pertaining to landscape sustainability are your clients asking you about the MOST?



Notable trends

When asked which area pertaining to landscape sustainability clients are asking about most, nearly 34% responded “shifting from annuals to perennials.” The second most common response was “native plant species” at 32%.

Fewer annuals mean fewer color change-outs, which could have an impact on the bottom line.

“I like annuals,” said Bruce Hellerick, senior horticulturist for Brickman. “I’m very nervous for the industry right now.”

Whether it’s annuals or perennials, when contractors are looking for new varieties, the most popular source of information is to speak with the local grower. And nearly nine in 10 contractors (88%) are willing to trial those new varieties on customer jobsites. Just over half of contractors (51%) want growers to trial samples at the grower’s production facility. 🌱

Results based on Ball Horticulture survey with responses from 376 U.S. landscape contractors, 29% commercial and 46% residential, primarily maintenance (49%) and design/build (29%).

ILLUSTRATION BY: ISTOCK INTERNATIONAL INC.

What ELSE can your Aerator do?

Z-Plug. The only ride-on aerator that aerates, sprays, spreads, dethatches and seeds.

Redesigned with hydraulic downforce and locking wheel caster system.

With Spray System Option

With Hopper Option

With Dethatch Rake Option

With Silt Seeder Option

L.T. Rich Products
 Call us at: (877) 482-2040
 or visit us at: www.zspray.com

Come see us at
GIE - Indoor booth #1022
Outdoor booth #7429D



Snapless snapdragon

Twinny Peach from **Hem Genetics** is a double, or butterfly, flower form that does not have jaws or joints. With distinct, soft shades of peach, yellow and light orange, the heat-tolerant plant rewards a full sun garden with abundant flower spikes. Plants will continue to flower all season with little garden care, according to the company. HemGenetics.com



Love at first blush

As the first of the michelia hybrids by New Zealand breeder Mark Jury to be released in the U.S., **Tesselaar's** Fairy Magnolia Blush delivers lilac-pink, lightly fragrant flowers, preceded by velvet-textured, russet-colored buds and accompanied by evergreen foliage — resembling a camellia without the gloss. The upright, compact, bushy shrub reaches 8 ft. high by 6 ft. wide, and is hardy in Zones 7b through 10. It blooms in late winter to early spring when sited in full sun to partial shade. Tesselaar.com

Fabulous phlox

Phlox Early Start is a series of new hybrids bred in Holland and offered as liners from **Pacific Plug and Liner**. Early Starts are most notable for their ability to flower four to six weeks earlier than traditional paniculata type phlox, according to the company. Currently available in three colors — pink, light pink (pictured) and velvet — it offers a nicely compact plant with flowers that will reach 8 to 12 in. while in the container. The appearance of Early Starts is similar to other paniculata phlox, but with smaller and more abundant blooms. The fragrant plants are densely branched and will put on an impressive show of color from April to July. PPandL.net



There's business out there.
Get more of it. Guaranteed!

Maximize your chances to win that new landscape or renovation project using the most complete landscape design software available. PRO Landscape will help you communicate your designs with stunning photorealistic 3D images, easily create accurate 2D and 3D CAD drawings and automatically generate professional proposals. We guarantee you'll sell, plan and bid better than ever before, or we'll give you your money back.



"I've won every bid when I've used PRO Landscape."
Aron Hoffman, Groundskeepers Landscaping, Inc.



VISUAL DESIGNS THAT SELL

Excite customers with photos of their home with recommended landscaping in place.



PROFESSIONAL PROPOSALS

Show your professionalism with complete, polished proposals prepared in seconds.



ACCURATE SITE PLANS

Easy-to-use CAD lets you quickly develop detailed, accurate site plans.

drafrix software, Inc.
PRO Landscape™
The Standard in Design Software for Landscape Professionals!
prolandscape.com

800-231-8574 or
prolandscape@drafrix.com

SELL BETTER • PLAN BETTER • BID BETTER



Straight and tall

Ball's award-winning, first year-flowering perennial Gaillardia, Mesa Yellow, flowers early and fills landscapes quickly. It maintains a controlled height of 16 to 18 in. without "flopping" over. Drought tolerant once established, Mesa Yellow shows intense, non-fading color all season on upright, well-branched plants.

BallLandscape.com



Early-season color splash

Monrovia's Sun Parasol Mandevillas are hybrids that have been available in North America for just a few years. Sun Parasols are valued for their intense flower color and glossy foliage. They are floriferous and will bloom with shorter daylight hours, so clients can enjoy the flowers as early as February, depending on variety. Colors include Giant Crimson, Giant Pink and Stars and Stripes. Monrovia.com

NEW RESOURCES & TRAINING

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

REAL-LIFE STORIES



Connecting the Professional Snow & Ice Management Industry



Orange intensity

The fade-resistant, double blooms of Syngenta Flowers' Moonsong Deep Orange hybrid African marigold make others look more golden than orange. The flower size ranges from 2.5 to 3.5 in. Plants will flower in about 70 days under short days or 84 days under long-day growing conditions. The vigorous, stress-tolerant plants will reach 12 to 15 in. tall. Over the summer, the old blooms will be covered with green foliage, which keeps the plants looking fresh throughout the season. Syngenta-Flowers.com

Golf's U.S. Open was in Pebble Beach, CA. **Bill Davids**, president of Clarence Davids & Co., and his team hopped on a plane and headed west. They didn't go to watch professionals play the famed golf shrine. Davids and his team were there to landscape the corporate hospitality area, the main entrance promenade and the merchandise pavilion. "The U.S. Open was in Chicago at Olympia Fields (Country Club) in 2003," Davids says. "We won the contract, and we've been doing it ever since."

LM recently spoke with the second-generation owner to discuss changes in maintenance.

TOP TRENDS

» **Environmental concerns.** We've seen a move to more natural landscapes. Instead of trying to mow everything, we're having some areas utilize more natural plantings or a lower mow turf mix. There seems to be a desire to be more environmental — using fewer chemicals and less water. We have a commitment to being good stewards of the land and to create natural sustaining environments. The goal of the new generation of landscapers is to use fewer chemicals, less water and become more natural.

» **New technology.** We use equipment to maximize our labor. An example is stand-on mowers. Any type of newer equipment that saves labor and is better for the environment (e.g. uses less fuel, etc.) — all those things are taken into account when we do our purchasing.

» **Equipment maintenance.** There is a return there. We utilize our equipment for several years. When equipment gets a certain number of hours, we are ready to trade it in. We have full-service mechanics, and we service all our own equipment. We keep our equipment a long time and keep it in good condition.

TOP OBSTACLES

» **The economy.** Lower budgets are caused by a poor economy. Even on the Gold Coast, in downtown Chicago, they're seeing the impact. If one or two \$1 million condos in a building are in foreclosure, that throws the whole budget off. The management

The Clarence Davids & Co. team.



INSIDE INFO

Company: Clarence Davids & Co.

Headquarters: Matteson, IL

Founded: 1951

Branches: 3

Employees: nearly 75 full-time (200 seasonal)

2009 revenue: \$18 million

LM Top 150 Ranking: No. 68

Key to being a maintenance leader: Communication with the client. Find out what their priorities are. Your priorities are going to be different than their highest priorities. Without that communication, you're going to be going one way, and they're thinking something else.

company has less money to run the building, and eventually it trickles down to landscaping. We're doing fewer services for less money. Bottom line, it affects our sales.

» **The government.** The biggest intrusion in Chicago is prevailing wage. The prevailing wage law for Illinois does not recognize landscaping as a profession, so they don't recognize our rates. They throw us in this category with highway workers, which is five times our current wage. The state has no money, but they continue with these outdated laws that are confusing and counter productive. We've made a decision to no longer bid prevailing wage jobs.

TOP OPPORTUNITIES

» **Cross-selling.** Design/build is still a strong sales tool. It gives the landscape maintenance

contractor a very creative way to add sales and benefit their maintenance clients. We can redesign certain parts of a client's property or redesign an old, tired landscape or an entryway. It gives us that creative edge over a pure maintenance contractor. Design sales are down, but it's imperative we continue to use it to benefit our clients.

» **H2O.** There is opportunity in how we need to capture rainwater. We need to begin designing and installing underground tanks for the storage and reuse of that water in the landscape. We continue to look at technology. I see that as key in years to come.

» **Innovation.** There are a lot of new plants out there that have been improved. Native plants that take less water, less maintenance — they look better longer in the season. We have the ability to redesign areas and take out the problem plants — the older plants that have too many diseases and require too much water and maintenance.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



CLASSIFIED SHOWCASE

ADVERTISING INFORMATION

Call Kelli Velasquez at
216-706-3767,
Fax: 253-484-3080,
E-mail:
kvelasquez@questex.com



Payment must be received by the classified closing date. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and American Express.

Mail LM Box # replies to:
Landscape Management Classifieds, LM Box # _____
306 W. Michigan St., Suite 200
Duluth, MN 55802
(please include LM Box # in address)

Every month the Classified Showcase offers an up-to-date section of the products and services you're looking for. **Don't miss an issue!**

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

SELL MORE LANDSCAPES & JOBS



Two **NEW** Profit Centers - 50%+
Two **NEW** Revenue Streams
Two **NEW** Customer Bases
A Simple, Easy Add-On Service
Buy Factory Direct - Wholesale
NO PAYMENTS & INTEREST
FOR 90 DAYS
We **FUND** Your Installs
1-800-334-9005
www.allprogreens.com/training

FREE DVD & TRAINING SYNTHETIC LAWNS

SELL MORE LANDSCAPES & JOBS



Two **NEW** Profit Centers - 50%+
Two **NEW** Revenue Streams
Two **NEW** Customer Bases
A Simple, Easy Add-On Service
Buy Factory Direct - Wholesale
NO PAYMENTS & INTEREST
FOR 90 DAYS
We **FUND** Your Installs
1-800-334-9005
www.allprogreens.com/training

FREE DVD & TRAINING SYNTHETIC GOLF GREENS

EARN BIG
With Landscape Lighting



-Great Add-On Sale
-Enhance Your Projects
-Penetrate Affluent Households

WE CAN TEACH YOU TO DO LANDSCAPE LIGHTING THE RIGHT WAY!

Training ~ Support ~ Products
Call For Information
1.800.687.9551
www.nitetime.com



Snow, Lot Sweeping, & Landscape Contracts
Join the affiliation that works for YOU.
Contractors needed throughout the US.
Sign up today www.agmgus.com.
EXPERIENCE THE AGMG DIFFERENCE.

HELP WANTED

FLORASEARCH, INC.
In our third decade of performing confidential key employee searches for the landscape/horticulture industry and allied trades worldwide.
Retained basis only.
Candidate contact welcome, confidential and always FREE.
1740 Lake Markham Road
Sanford, FL 32771
407-320-8177 ♦ Fax: 407-320-8083
E-mail: search@florasearch.com
www.florasearch.com

REPEATING an ad ensures it will be seen and remembered!

Incorporate
for as little as **\$99**

Visit www.incorporate.com
or call 800-616-0216

THE
COMPANY
CORPORATION®

INCORPORATING WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU



WANT TO BUY OR SELL A BUSINESS?

Professional Business Consultants can obtain purchase offers from numerous qualified potential buyers without disclosing your identity. There is no cost for this as Consultant's fee is paid by the buyer. This is a **FREE APPRAISAL** of your business.

If you are looking to grow or diversify through acquisition, we have companies available in **Lawn Care, Grounds Maintenance, Pest Control and Landscape Installation** all over the U.S. and Canada.

182 Homestead Avenue, Rehoboth, MA 02769

708-744-6715 • Fax 508-252-4447
E-mail pbcmello1@aol.com

SOFTWARE

TAKE YOUR OFFICE WITH YOU
CLIP2Go



GPS Tracking + Bilingual Directions + Start/Stop Times for each Job

* Requires CLIPr, a Windows Mobile device, Garmin mapping software, Microsoft MapPoint and GPS receiver.

To Learn more call
800-635-8485 www.clip.com

AUTOMATE YOUR SUCCESS
with **GroundsKeeper Pro** business software

JUST \$399
SAVE THOUSANDS OVER SIMILAR PROGRAMS
FREE TRIAL

FEATURES INCLUDE:
Billing Contracts And More
Routing Estimating Scheduling
Optional credit card processing
Income & Expense Reporting
Time & Materials

ADKAD TECHNOLOGIES / 1.800.586.4683 / WWW.ADKAD.COM/LM.HTM

Use color to get the attention your ad deserves!

AD INDEX

Agrium Advanced Technologies	p16-17
Alocet	p26
Ameristar Fence	p49
The Andersons	cv3
B A S F Corp.	p11
Ball Horticultural	p44
Bobcat Co.	p23
Brite Ideas Decorating	p55
Corona Clipper	p24, 46
Dodge Chrysler	cv2-1
Dow AgroSciences	p29, 41
Drafix Software	p51
DuPont	p30-31, 39
The Dwyer Group	p12
FMC Professional Solutions	p7A
Freightliner Sprinter	p20-21
GIE+EXPO	p43
The Grasshopper Company	p9, BRC
Horizon	p28
Hortica Ins.	p35
Hustler Turf	p15
John Deere Commercial	p13
John Deere Construction	cv4

L T Rich Products	p50
MistAway Systems	p48
NuFarm	p36, 37
PBI/Gordon	p5, 25
Pine Hall Brick	p50
PLANET	p47
Progressive Insurance	p34
Pro-Tech Mfg.	p14
Reddick Equipment Company	p55
Schiller Pfeiffer Inc.	p33
SIMA	p52
Subaru	p27
Turco Mfg.	p22
U S Lawns	p3

Indices are provided as an additional service. The publisher does not assume any liability for errors or omissions.

— OFFICIAL PUBLICATION —

Landscape Management and ASIC

Landscape Management is proud to be the official publication of the American Society of Irrigation Consultants. Our commitment to coverage of irrigation and water issues makes us the perfect fit to work with "an organization of professionals within the irrigation industry."



LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT (ISSN 0894-1254) is published monthly (12 issues per year) by Questex Media Group LLC, 306 W Michigan St, Suite 200, Duluth, MN 55802. **Subscription rates:** one year, \$54, two years \$76 in the United States & Possessions; \$87 for one year, \$127 for two years in Canada and Mexico; all other countries \$165 for one year, \$246 for two years. For airmail delivery, include an additional \$75 per order annually. Single copies (pre-paid only): \$8 in the United States; \$10 in Canada and Mexico; \$15 all other countries. Back issues, if available: \$16 in the U.S., \$20 in Canada and Mexico; \$30 all other countries. Add \$6.50 per order for shipping and handling. **Periodicals postage paid at Duluth, MN 55806 and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER:** Please send address changes to *Landscape Management*, P.O. Box 1268, Skokie, IL 60076-9268. Canadian G.S.T. number: 840 033 278 RT0001. Publications Mail Agreement Number 40017597. Printed in the U.S.A.



Copyright 2010 Questex Media Group LLC. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including by photocopy, recording, or information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use, or the internal or personal use of specific clients, is granted by Questex Media Group LLC for libraries and other users registered with the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Dr., Danvers, MA 01923 phone: 978-750-8400 fax 978-750-4470; call for copying beyond that permitted by Sections 107 or 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law. For those not registered with the CCC, send permission requests to questexpermissions@theygsgroup.com or phone 800-494-9051 ext. 100.

Landscape Management does not verify any claims or other information appearing in any of the advertisements contained in the publication, and cannot take any responsibility for any losses or other damages incurred by readers in reliance on such content. *Landscape Management* welcomes unsolicited articles, manuscripts, photographs, illustrations and other materials but cannot be held responsible for their safekeeping or return. Questex Media Group LLC provides certain customer contact data (such as customers' names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses) to third parties who wish to promote relevant products, services and other opportunities which may be of interest to you. If you do not want Questex Media Group LLC to make your contact information available to third parties for marketing purposes, simply call 866-344-1315; 847-763-9594 if outside the U.S. between the hours of 8:30 am and 5:00 pm CT and a customer service representative will assist you in removing your name from Questex Media Group LLC's lists.



BRITE IDEAS
decorating

CALL TODAY to find out how to receive \$5000 in **FREE** product

888.200.5131

www.sayitwithlights.com

- No Franchise Fees
- Year Round Support
- Complete Marketing Plan
- Exclusive Product Line

REDDICK EQUIPMENT COMPANY INC.

Ice Control Sprayers

Lawn & Turf Sprayers

REDDICK EQUIPMENT COMPANY INC.

Reddick Equipment
Sales: 800.334.3388
www.reddickequipment.com



Honesty always rings true

Remember what it was like to possess unbridled honesty? For many of us adults, it's been decades.

Unbridled honesty is what made "Liar, Liar" — the 1997 comedy in which Jim Carrey played an attorney who can't help but speak his mind and tell the truth at every turn — so appealing at the box office.

On a daily basis, I get a whiff of that pure-white honesty children seem to innately possess, thanks to our three children, our 25 nieces and nephews and my 10 grandchildren.

We adults could learn a lesson or two about rigorous honesty from these little ones. Complete honesty not only is the easy way; it's the only way.

Our day-to-day dealings and long-term relationships with co-workers, customers, the public and our families and friends, hinge on honesty. Fortunately, honesty is pretty straightforward: *Is it true or false?*

Having said that, in practicing honesty sometimes there's a golden mean — that perfect spot somewhere in-between a child's penchant to be brutally honest (where, in some cases, a taming of the tongue would be advisable) and that point to which many of us adults seem to have "progressed" — where too

much is muddled or buried for myriad "reasons" (also known as *rationalizations*).

Political correctness aside, children's penchant to freely speak their minds often yields refreshing, humorous "big picture" honesty:

› **It's All About Perspective** — A few years ago, Bridgid was cuddling with our ever-lovable son, Jamie, who happens to have Down syndrome. Holding Jamie, and worried about serious medical tests our precious angel was set to receive the next morning, Bridgid told him: "When I was student teaching in college, I worked with some beautiful children who had Down syndrome, and Dad and I said to each other way back then, 'Wouldn't it be fun to adopt a kid with Down's?' ... And then God gave us you years later." Jamie's eyes lit up. He grinned ear to ear and asked, "You mean I was your dream come true, Mom?"

› **Laughter: Medicine Without a Co-Pay** — Bridgid shared the above story with me that day, when I got home from work. After hearing the touching tale, I looked at Jamie and tried to humorously change the gravity of the conversation: "Let me get this straight. You were hugging and kissing *my* wife? What were you thinking?" Jamie's little body shook with laughter as he quipped, "That was *my* dream come true, Dad."

› **Lord of the Rings** — I recently attended a grade school reunion (St. Mark, Class of 1980), where my wife discovered I'd previously proposed to five other women. Luckily, I was in the first grade when I was handing out rings. I'll never forget my dad asking me about the five plastic companion rings I was wearing and then grinning impishly — and cautiously — as he looked at Mom and asked, "Why on Earth would anyone want five wives?"

Having five wives is like having five different stories. It's best to be married to one story — the truth — at work and at home. Absolute honesty is the goal; we claim progress, but seek perfection.

At a recent reunion, **my wife discovered I'd previously proposed to five other women.**





NITROGEN MANAGEMENT SYSTEM EXPANDS YOUR BOTTOM LINE

NUTRISPHERE-N[®] is a proprietary nitrogen management tool proven to prolong desirable turf color for up to eight weeks!

How? NutriSphere-N's proprietary nitrogen management system keeps urea in its ammonium form longer. That's good because plants are able to derive more healthy benefits from the ammonia form of N than nitrate form.

NutriSphere-N is available in select Andersons Professional Turf Fertilizers. Ask your distributor to recommend a NutriSphere-N product that's right for your needs.

Contact your Andersons Distributor or Territory Manager at 800-253-5296.
www.AndersonsTurf.com



The Andersons

811

Know what's below.
Call before you dig.



**DESIGNED TO MEET THE MOST DEMANDING SPECS.
YOURS.**

You said you needed a small “big” excavator. Consider it done. Weighing in at just over 13,600 pounds, the 60D still manages to pack plenty of your other big ideas into its reduced-tail-swing design. Versatility? It sports a standard blade, a swing boom for tight work, and three track options: continuous rubber belt, rubber crawler pads, or steel tracks. For big excavator technology (and reliability) in a compact package, see your dealer or call 800-503-3373. Productivity? Uptime? Low Daily Operating Costs? We’re On It.™



JOHN DEERE

JohnDeere.com /60D