



IN THE

GROW

Angels Landscape Contractors | Garfield, NJ

Angels Landscape Contractors didn't make our *LM150* list last year. But the company is fast on the move. From 2009 to 2010, its revenue nearly doubled — from \$800,000 to \$1.5 million, says Angels General Manager Diego Lovato.

The huge leap is due in part to Angels' commitment to beginning accepted projects within 30 days. That commitment, says Lovato, increases the company's reliability among customers.

Angels' increasing focus on

manager training also has contributed to its newfound growth. As a result of that training, Angels' workers consistently are meeting customers' expectations — and developing a reputation for quality service.

In the last three years, Angels has grown its finances about 30% and its customer base roughly 25%, Lovato says. In 2010, Angels grew most in two areas: gardening and design, and construction. The reason? "People need renovations right now," Lovato says. "With the market down for home sales, if you're selling a house, you need to do updates on your house. And gardening makes a big difference."

Angels' rise in a lagging economy was spurred by its ability to do more with less. "It's unbelievable how efficient we have become," Lovato says.

To be as efficient as possible, Angels' field workers educate customers on how best to maintain their properties once work is finished. That way, Angels doesn't need to return to make repairs, saving the company time and money. Likewise, Angels' managers show employees how to care for equipment, therefore reducing new machinery costs.

Lovato is hardly surprised by Angels' growth, however: "We've been working hard for that," he says. **LM**

2010
GROWTH
47%

Many in the landscape business took another hit in 2010 — but not these growing companies.

BY **BETH GERACI**

SavATree | Bedford Hills, NY



Merging with multiple companies is one way to grow. Just ask the arborists at SavATree, whose 2010 growth resulted largely from its mergers with three companies: Northbrook, IL-based AutumnTree; New Jersey-based Town & Country Tree Service; and Deertech, a producer of ultrasound technology that deters deer from eating shrubs.

The mergers, which earned SavATree the No. 2 spot on our 2011 list of top tree companies, make SavATree a stronger competitor — not only because it now has a larger talent pool, but also because the company can spend more on marketing and reach a wider audience, SavATree President and CEO Daniel van Starrenburg says.

While the Deertech merger enables SavATree to

broaden its range of services, van Starrenburg says joining forces with the AutumnTree staff made sense because the companies were built on similar principles. Joining with Town & Country was an equally attractive prospect, he adds, because “any time you have a presence in the marketplace and are able to merge with, in this case a competitor, it increases market share and visibility.”

But acquiring businesses is fraught with challenges. Enduring change can stress employees, van Starrenburg explains. Consequently, “you have to overcommunicate,” he asserts. “We’ve learned that lesson over and over. You literally have to overcommunicate.”

Just as important as communicating is weighing the companies’ cultural similarities and differences, van Starrenburg says.

Fortunately for SavATree, its employees — whether longtime or newly acquired — are passionate about their work. “If you have employees who are passionate about what they do, that’s the flame you need to keep alive,” van Starrenburg says. **LMM**



WHO GREW AND HOW THEY DID IT

These 25 companies had the highest growth rates in 2010. We asked a few how they plan to keep growing in 2011 and how they’ll get it done.

What they’ll do: Continued maintenance growth, capturing expanding capital opportunities (landscape upgrades), increasing irrigation revenue by educating our clients on the importance of being water conscious

How they’ll do it: Honesty, integrity, humility and education

What they’ll do: Environmental services, hardscapes and pool construction and maintenance

How they’ll do it: The environmental division has merged with a larger established company so will not be part of RCI in 2011 — expected revenue \$18M. Hardscapes and pool will continue to grow at a 15% rate due to customer retention and new services. Maintenance has been supported by our first full sales force dedicated to maintenance.

1	Earthworks	32.4%
2	RCI	30.1%
3	The Highridge Corp.	25%
4	Lucas Tree Expert Co.	23.9%
5	Mainscape	22.4%
6	PROscape	21.9%
7	Hoffman Landscapes	21.8%
8	Grant & Power Landscapes	20.3%
9	James River Grounds Management	20%
10	Ryan Lawn & Tree	18.5%
11	HighGrove Partners	18.3%
12	Brickman Group	17.5%
13	Schultz Industries	16.7%
14	Lipinski Outdoor Services	16.2%
15	SavATree	15.8%
16	Gothic Grounds Management	14.4%
17	Native Land Design	14.2%
18	Naturescape	12.8%
19	Russell Landscape Group	12.7%
20	Ruppert Landscape Management	12.5%
21	Basnight Land and Lawn	11.7%
22	Sposato Landscape Co.	11.4%
23	Moore Landscapes	11.1%
	Designs By Sundown	11.1%
25	Land-Tech Enterprises	10.4%

What they’ll do: Start and grow a turf fertilization division; expand our snow and ice management accounts; grow our residential design/build division

How they’ll do it: Hire good quality people that specialize in what we need; develop new programs; get more employees certified in CLT, fertilization applicators, etc.; market to the right audience and areas

What they’ll do: Enhancement Sales; qualifying leads; expanding markets

How they’ll do it: Restructure the way we approach enhancements; Take the time to more accurately qualify a lead; add to sales team, adding branches and satellite offices

2010
GROWTH
15%



Brickman | Gaithersburg, MD

Mother Nature dumped a boatload of snow on the United States last winter — and a boatload of cash on snow removal companies.

The harsh winter was a lucrative one for Brickman, which began ramping up its snow services a few years ago in an effort to partner with its customers year-round. In 2010, with nearly \$194 million in snow revenue, Brickman topped our 2010 snow revenue list.

Brickman President Mark Hjelle says the company experienced double-digit growth in snow removal services last year, servicing “virtually all the major U.S. snow markets.”

According to Hjelle, Brickman’s growth in the national commercial snow market resulted from its management team’s efforts to be proactive, discussing snow removal strategies with clients well in advance — during spring and summer. Among other things, Brickman teams help customers plan which winter services they will need, then create detailed service plans to meet those needs. Such proactivity has enabled Brickman to grow in hard economic times, Hjelle says.

Brickman’s reputation has only been enhanced by its team members’ eagerness to sit down with customers one-on-one, Hjelle says.

The company’s maintenance business, which accounted for nearly \$600 million of Brickman’s \$807 million 2010 revenue, experienced “solid growth” and about a 90% renewal rate in 2010, Hjelle says. Why so high? Because, Hjelle says, Brickman service teams focus on “finding creative ways to deliver solutions to what customers are looking for,” such as how they can best manage their water systems.

“Proactive communication is key,” Hjelle reiterates. “It’s part of the company’s strategy to deliver high quality services on time, as promised.” **LMI**

GrassCor Lawn & Landscapes, LLC | Cincinnati, OH

Not many maintenance companies can say they’ve “grown everywhere” in the last year. But somehow, GrassCor has pulled it off.

“We’re small enough that it’s been easy,” explains GrassCor Vice President Alex Sulfsted. Virtually all aspects of GrassCor’s business grew in 2010, Sulfsted says, especially its commercial business, which constituted 60% of its \$932,000 2010 revenue. The lawn care and enhancements aspects of the business have performed well, too, he reports.

With a projected 2011 revenue of \$1.6 million, GrassCor only continues to expand. How has the company thrived when other companies are struggling? “A lot of long days,” Sulfsted sighs. “Really, we’ve worked on ways to become more efficient, to have a better pricing model. You have to make everything you do as efficient as possible.”

The way to be most efficient, Sulfsted says, is to always ask “what is our goal here with this property?” before beginning a project. “And even then, you have to say to the customer, ‘OK, is this really what you want?’ It’s identifying what they want and what they need.”

Such communication is vital when building and maintaining a loyal clientele, and in 2010 it helped GrassCor nurture a stable of longtime clients who spread the word about the business. GrassCor’s success last year, Sulfsted says, was driven largely by its follow-up with customers, its strong relationships with clients, and customer referrals.

“We were able to come up with ways of reducing some services customers were getting, trying to find them ways to save a little bit of money,” Sulfsted says.

And that’s exactly what GrassCor customers sought. **LMI**

2010
GROWTH
60%

