

MARKET WATCH

DESIGN/BUILD

Learning from Lambert's

Less than a week before Thanksgiving, dozens of design/build business owners converged on Dallas for a tour of Lambert Landscape Co. and three of its projects, as part of the Professional Landcare Network's DBI Symposium.

They made the trip to see how one of the country's most renowned residential design/build firms operates—and to get inspiration for their own projects, albeit on a much smaller scale.

The day started with a tour of Lambert headquarters, where attendees saw everything from the company's production room and tree division to its design and construction divisions.

The tour showed the design/build professionals much more than the responsibilities of Lambert staff. It also highlighted just how organized and

The Dallas company shows design/build professionals from around the country how to do it right.

By BETH GERACI

efficient Lambert operations are, a coup achieved after years of trial and error.

In the production room, Lambert Director of Garden Services Jodi Joseph explained a system designed to limit miscommunication and increase accountability. She pointed out the board where crew assignments are posted every day; the high-

tech scanning system used to clock the company's crew members in and out; and the ways in which crew members are acknowledged for practicing safety on the job.

Also of interest was the design room, where Tom Nugent, design studio lead, and garden designer Jonathan Swanson explained the design process and the at times deep involvement of Lambert customers in their own projects.

Lambert President and Director of Design Paul Fields said design is at the heart of the company and its 1919 origins. "It's in everything we do and touch," he said. "Our focus today is on high-level garden design and on fulfilling customers' dreams."

Attendees definitely got a taste of that as they toured the day's featured projects: three residential gardens in an exclusive neighborhood north of Dallas.

These aren't the sort of gardens where you can pour the watering can over the daisies and call it a day. These are extravagant gardens, in expansive yards, outside multimillion-dollar homes. And all are designed in the European style Lambert's has made its

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The DBI Symposium attendees pose at one of the tour's featured properties (left). Above: A Lambert-designed greenhouse showcases colorful lemon trees.

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DESIGN/BUILD Tour recap from Dallas-based Lambert's

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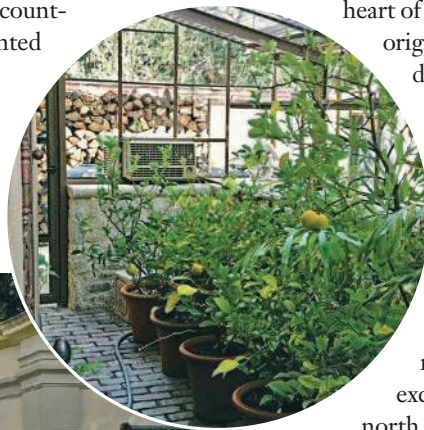
IRRIGATION WaterSense updates plus two state issues to note

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MAINTENANCE Sod installation do's and don'ts

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LAWN/TREE CARE Green Lawn Fertilizing's training day tips



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signature. Sights on the tour included statues from Italy and France, an old apple press, a huge olive jar, and other imported and elaborate garden complements. There were luxurious swimming pools, outdoor fireplaces, trellises, detailed stone work, even a greenhouse full of lemon trees.

“We treat the garden as someone would treat the interior of the home,” Fields explained to the group. In Lambert’s work, the outdoor areas become an extension of the home’s interior—equally as livable as the home itself. “Lambert’s strives to design the garden to the highest possible level,” Fields said. “I’m really passionate about details. If I had my druthers I would sit at a table and do nothing but details. That’s what’s important.”

And that means obtaining materials to match the quality of the work. As much as Fields spoke of importing

things from Italy for clients (including a \$300,000 statue), he emphasized that the company strives to be as authentic and use as many indigenous materials as possible. That means it incorporates Texas limestone into many of its projects, not just because it’s local, but also because it wears well, adding to the antique feel of many Lambert landscapes.

The day ended with a slide show of award-winning Lambert projects, which seemed to awe some small business owners in attendance. But they weren’t there to compete; they were there to be inspired, and they were.

Fields shared much valuable advice



Above: Lambert’s President and Director of Design Paul Fields. Left: The statue shows Lambert’s knack for using European-style materials.

with his audience throughout the day, and in his closing presentation, he left his audience with one more helpful tip. Creating a garden for a client “is more than pushing plants,” he said. “Take it to the next step.”

PHOTOS: BETH GERACI

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