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SEPTEMBER 2012  
VOL 51, ISSUE 9



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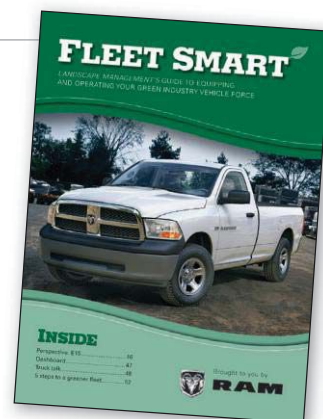
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Illustration: Carrie Parkhill Wallace

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**OUR MISSION:** *Landscape Management* — the leading information resource for lawn care, landscape maintenance, design/build and irrigation professionals — empowers Green Industry professionals to learn and grow from their peers and our exclusive business intelligence. Serving as the industry conscience, we not only report on but also help shape news, views, trends and solutions.



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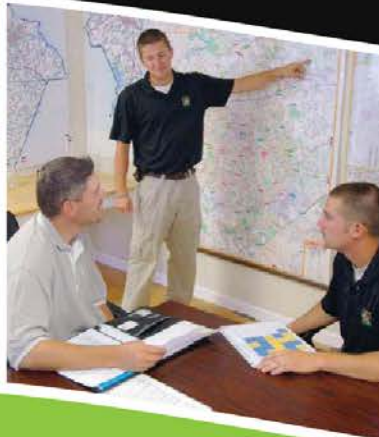
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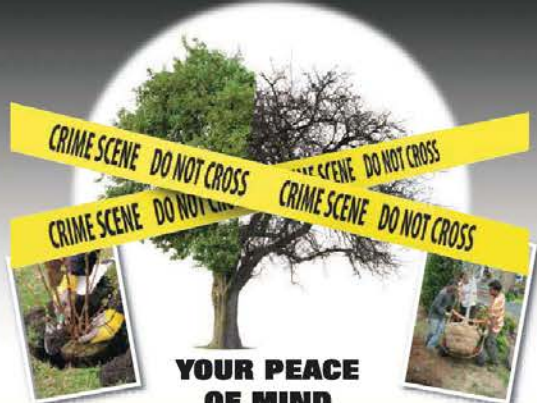
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## EDITOR'S NOTE

MARISA PALMIERI EDITOR

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# Proud to look back

**A**s I researched *Landscape Management's* and the Green Industry's joint histories for our 50th anniversary issue, an unassuming, folded-in-half piece of paper floated out of an old bound volume of back issues of the magazine.

Hurried and on deadline, I almost stuffed it back in without looking at it, thinking it was nothing but someone else's research notes from long ago. Instead, I opened it.

"*Landscape Management Management History*" the document's title read. As I scanned the list of editors and publishers from *LM's* past, some of the names jumped out at me.

▶ **James Nelson.** The son of a pesticide manufacturer, Nelson became editor of our sister magazine *Pest Control* (now *Pest Management Professional*) in 1948. He launched *LM's* predecessor *Weeds and Turf* in July 1962, serving as publisher until 1967. (For more on our evolution, see page 30.) *PMP* is inducting Nelson into its Hall of Fame this year, largely due to his role in launching industry bible "Truman's Scientific Guide to Pest Management Operations" and a related Purdue University correspondence course.

▶ **Bob Earley.** Having served *LM* in various capacities in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, Earley was present in June 1979 when 23 lawn care professionals gathered at the Cincinnati-South Holiday Inn to discuss forming a national association. From that meeting, the Professional Lawn Care Applicators of America (PLCAA, now part of the Professional Landcare Network or PLANET) was born.

▶ **Jerry Roche.** Chief editor of *LM* from 1985 until 1995, Roche is one of the five founders of the Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association (see page 23 for details about TOCA).

▶ **Ron Hall and Sue (Gibson) Porter.** Hall reported for *LM* and its former sister tabloid *Lawn Care Industry* for more than two decades, serving as *LM's* editor-in-chief from 2002 to 2008. He and Porter ushered *LM* through a transition in 1999 from a general turf book covering golf and sports

turf to one focused solely on serving the needs of landscape and lawn care businesses.

It's powerful to see the names of the people who've done the work you do many years before you began to do it. I take pride in adding my name and that of our new ownership, North Coast Media, to *LM's* management history list.

### The more things change

Much like your businesses, our job—business-to-business publishing—has changed a lot since 1962, the year Nelson realized there was an opportunity to publish specialized information for those in the new field of applying pesticides to outdoor environments. But, also like you, the reason we do our job hasn't changed one bit.

I'm sure the men and women whose bylines have appeared in *LM* before mine would agree that the most gratifying thing about being a trade magazine editor is hearing that something you reported on improved a reader's business or life.

I recently received an email from a longtime reader who said just that. Even though *LM* first made a difference to him long before I was around, I appreciated and was encouraged by his note just the same.

Arthur Hathcock, landscape agronomist and former owner of Metroscope, a Washington, D.C., area environmental services and landscape firm, wrote to tell me that in 1976 he was given the Manager of the Year Award by our predecessor, *Weeds, Trees & Turf*.

"The award was two-fold," Hathcock says. "1). I got my photo in the magazine and a minor write-up, and 2). I was given an inscribed pewter desk paperweight with all the pertinent information. I still have the paperweight.

"I thank you for maintaining the integrity of the magazine, its spirit and its relevance. Please keep up the good work, and realize you are accomplishing more than you probably realize for the future of young and impressionable land care professionals."

Thank *you*, Arthur, and all of our readers, for giving us a reason to do what we do.



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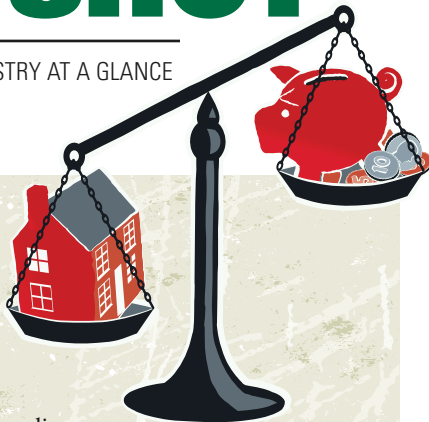


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# INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT

THE GREEN INDUSTRY AT A GLANCE



## HOUSEHOLD INCOME DOWN

Household income is down sharply since the recession ended three years ago, the *Washington Post* reports.

From June 2009 to June 2012, inflation-adjusted median household income fell 4.8 percent, to \$50,964, according to a report by Sentier Research.

Incomes have dropped more since the beginning of the recovery than they did during the recession itself, when they declined 2.6 percent, according to the report, which analyzed data from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The recession, the most severe since the Great Depression, lasted from December 2007 to June 2009.

Overall, median income is 7.2 percent below its December 2007 level and 8.1 percent below where it stood in January 2000, when it was \$55,470.

MUST SEE VIDEOS



Cleveland area lawn care company Weed-Pro demystifies the core aerating and overseeding process for customers. [goo.gl/fAz2T](http://goo.gl/fAz2T)



View proper pruning techniques from Sterling, Va.-based Sunrise Landscape + Design's President Joe Markell. [goo.gl/XZktS](http://goo.gl/XZktS)



Green Industry consultant Jeff Korhan shares seven steps to get the most out of your LinkedIn profile. [goo.gl/zGhSo](http://goo.gl/zGhSo)

## STAFF UP AT SMALL BUSINESSES

Small businesses with fewer than 20 employees created 30,000 new jobs in August but overall saw revenue declines, according to Intuit. The data are based on approximately 83,500 small business customers of Intuit Online Payroll and anonymous aggregated data from QuickBooks Online.

Small business revenues are gradually recovering from recessionary depths but are just now reaching levels seen before the recession began in 2007, according to the Intuit Small Business Revenue Index.



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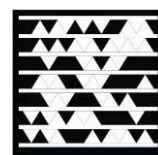
By Mike Kellum | FMC

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Mike Kellum is the Market Specialist for FMC Professional Solutions in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee.

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# NEWS+VIEWS

GREEN INDUSTRY EVENTS, TRENDS AND TIPS

## Syngenta acquires DuPont insecticide business

**S**yngenta has agreed to acquire the DuPont Professional Products' insecticide business for \$125 million.

Syngenta will receive the rights to Advion, Acelepryn, Altriset, Calteryx, Provaunt and Arilon branded products and end-use registrations, and a license under DuPont's patents and know-how for indoxacarb, chlorantraniliprole and cyantraniliprole related to their uses in the professional solutions market. DuPont will continue to manufacture indoxacarb, chlorantraniliprole, cyantraniliprole, as well as products containing these active ingredients, such as Coragen and Prevathon, in other markets.

"This acquisition will contribute to our objective of increasing profitability in the lawn and garden business through a focus on integrated solutions for our customers based on high value chemistry and genetics," said Robert Berendes,



Syngenta head of business development. "The products we are acquiring have an excellent environmental profile while providing superior control of insects in a wide variety of applications."

At press time, it's unknown how

many of DuPont Professional Products' more than 30 employees will join Syngenta. DuPont will continue to handle any issues stemming from the recall of its Imprelis herbicide.

The transaction is expected to close in the fourth quarter of 2012.

"Innovations from our research and development pipeline are driving our Crop Protection business to an exciting, new position in agriculture," said Rik Miller, president of DuPont Crop Protection. "Strategic divestitures like this one give us more resources to focus on what DuPont does best—delivering science-based solutions that help our customers feed a growing population."

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# Ruppert buys N.C. firm

Ruppert Landscape Inc., Laytonsville, Md., has acquired New River Landscape, a Raleigh, N.C.-based company that provides commercial grounds management services.

In the transaction, Ruppert acquired commercial landscape management contracts as well as trucks, equipment and several employees.



New River Landscape has operated in the Raleigh metropolitan area for three years. Founder David Blakely will continue to run a related business he owns that services Charlotte and other markets. New River

Landscape's former minority owner Jeff Sosa, who has been responsible for the day-to-day operations of the company's Raleigh operations, will stay on with Ruppert in a management capacity.

Ruppert also acquired Raleigh area company Eco Scapes in June. "These additions were part of a targeted plan to grow our business in this very vibrant market," said Ruppert President Chris Davitt. "New River Landscape represents a key piece of this plan as they brought to the table a very prestigious list of customers in the Raleigh area."

## Frank, Lied's partner on residential maintenance

**G**ermantown, Wis.-based David J. Frank Landscape Contracting acquired Lied's Nursery Co. to form a residential landscape division. The new entity will operate as Lied's-Frank Residential Landscapes, a division of David J. Frank Landscape Contracting. Terms of the agreement weren't disclosed.

Tom Lied will be president of the new division. Thirty of Lied's staff members will join the company, bringing it to more than 300 employees. David J. Frank ranked No. 73 on the 2012 *LM* 150 with \$17.8 million in 2011 revenue.

Lied's, formerly based in Sussex, Wis., closed its retail garden center in 2010. In July two of four Lied's properties were foreclosed, according to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

"We are both family-owned businesses, and we have families who have worked together for generations," Frank says. "We love that we have passionate fathers and sons working alongside one another, and their commitment to their work is incredible."

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**Since *Landscape Management* launched in 1962 as *Weeds and Turf*, the Green Industry has experienced great growth. The coverage that unfolds in our anniversary edition celebrates that success.**

**P14** In honor of 50 years we look at 50 industry influencers: the people, companies, products and technology that have changed the way the industry does business. **P30** We share *LM*'s editorial and design evolution. **P32** We show how three Green Industry organizations celebrating their own golden anniversaries have survived and thrived, too. **P36** Finally, we detail industry suppliers' milestones.

***Thanks for celebrating with us.***

# 5-0h!

The big

**Here's our list (in no particular order) of 50 people, issues, organizations and technologies that have influenced the Green Industry over the last five decades.**

*By Marisa Palmieri & Beth Geraci*

**1 American Nursery & Landscape Association** — Though it was founded 86 years before *LM*, ANLA has made quite an impact in the last five decades it's been around. With a member mix that includes landscape design and installation firms, in addition to plant growers, distributors and retailers, the Washington, D.C.-based association has led the way on many legislative fronts, including immigration reform, guest worker program initiatives, water issues and others. It's also provided public relations, research and education at events such as its well-known Management Clinic (which now has a new name and format).



Perhaps one of ANLA's greatest influences was the establishment 50 years ago of its research arm, the Horticultural Research Institute, which has directed more than \$5.4 million of industry funds through its competitive grants program. Research projects have covered the full range of production, environmental and business issues important to the Green Industry. For example, two current projects cover research on boxwood blight and biodegradable containers.

With ANLA's recent announcement that it will be forming a new, yet-to-be-named association with OFA The Association of Horticulture Professionals, following several months of working together in a joint venture, one can only hope the best is yet to come.

**2 Irrigation Association** — Launched in 1949, the Falls Church, Va.-based IA promotes efficient irrigation and water conservation, striving to ensure water will be available for generations to come. Today, more than 2,000 irrigation pros belong to the IA. Throughout the years, the association has provided continuing education, advocacy and professional certifications, and influenced legislation, best practices and standards.



**3 Do Not Call list** — During the growth decades of the lawn care industry, one way to gain new customers in a business where volume and density rule was through telemarketing. According to a 2002 survey conducted by the Professional Lawn Care Applicators of America (now part of PLANET), 55 percent of members had used telemarketing to sell to current and potential customers, with 20 percent using it as its main marketing method. That came to a halt in 2003, when Congress passed legislation enacting the federal Do Not Call registry, eliminating one of the lawn care industry's most effective marketing methods.



**4 Suburban development** — With the rise of suburbia in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, aided by the increase in car ownership and the construction of the highway system, came common-interest developments, a category of housing that includes developments of single-family homes, condominiums and apartments. This type of housing—and the homeowner associations (HOAs) that came with it—has exploded over the last five decades. Though homeowners often criticize HOAs for their restrictive rules, the advent of HOAs has created a market segment for Green Industry services that didn't exist before.

According to the Community Associations Institute, in 1970 there were about 10,000 communities with HOAs, accounting for 701,000 housing units and 2.1 million residents. By 2011 there were 314,200 such communities with 25.1 million housing units and 62.3 million residents.

## 5 Pesticide and fertilizer restrictions —

In 1991, Hudson, Quebec, became the first North American municipality to ban lawn care pesticides. Despite a 1987 ruling that said two state statutes preempted the Village of Wauconda, Ill.'s right to pass rules governing lawn care, it launched concern among U.S. lawn care professionals that soon they would have a patchwork of local restrictions to comply with, making their jobs much more difficult. The lawn care industry began supporting state pesticide preemption laws to make it illegal for cities to pass laws more restrictive than the state's (the Supreme Court ruled in 1991 that federal law doesn't preempt local jurisdictions from restricting the use of pesticides). Today, only nine states and Washington, D.C., don't have a pesticide preemption law, and there are seven province-wide bans on the sale and use of "cosmetic" pesticides in Canada.



**6 Stand-on, ride-on sprayers/spreaders** — The early lawn care operators (LCOs) could only dream of the high-end fertilizer- and pesticide-application equipment on the market today. Post-World War II equipment, much of it derived from the

ag sector, included push drop spreaders and rotary spreaders. Next, motorized walk-behind machines hit the market, followed by stand-on, ride-on units by the late 1990s. Today, these machines are outfitted with luxuries such as ergonomic handlebars, fingertip controls, speedometers, pressure gauges and more, improving productivity well beyond an early LCO's imagination.

*"Chemical equipment companies have given us the tools to do our jobs more efficiently, reducing costs and making it easier to accomplish our goals."*

**SURVEY  
SAYS...**

**7 Outdoor Power Equipment Institute** — The OPEI's history goes back 60 years to 1952, when 11 mower manufacturers chartered The Lawn Mower Institute to focus on safety promotion and to work together on government issues. It adopted its current name in 1960 with a membership that includes engine manufacturers. In 1993 the membership expanded to include makers of portable power equipment. In addition to launching the industry's first national trade show, the International Lawn, Garden and Power Equipment Exposition in 1984 (now part of GIE+Expo, which takes place annually in Louisville, Ky.), OPEI's achievements include creating a safety seal and approving independent third-party voluntary testing for mowers. Today the association focuses on advocacy for issues such as fuel, water and regulations, ensuring lawmakers hear the voice of Green Industry equipment manufacturers when they're creating public policy. It also promotes environmental appreciation and the value of green spaces through its TurfMutt educational program, in partnership with Discovery Education.

**SURVEY  
SAYS...**

We polled our readers online in July to get their feedback on the people, technology, organizations and techniques they say have had the greatest impact on the Green Industry over the last 50 years. The survey netted 78 responses and the insightful quotes you see marked with this icon throughout this story.

**8 Two-way radios** — Some landscape contractors and lawn care operators remember a time when they stopped at pay phones to check in with the shop. That subsided in the late 1970s, when the Federal Communications Commission began to license business and commercial 800 MHz two-way radio systems. Soon after, walkie talkies were the norm—and by the 1990s and early 2000s Nextel handheld units and their push-to-talk feature and associated “chirp” were ubiquitous. By the mid-2000s, cell phones had prevailed and carrying two devices became cumbersome, rendering two-way radios obsolete.



**9 National Turfgrass Evaluation Program** — Founded in 1981, the NTEP turf research program has expanded to the evaluation of 17 turfgrass species in 40 U.S. states and six Canadian provinces. Each year NTEP collects and summarizes information such as turfgrass quality, color, density, resistance to pests, tolerance to temperature, drought and traffic. The data are used by plant breeders, turfgrass researchers, extension personnel, growers and consumers to identify suitable types of seed or sod.

**10 GPS** — GPS technology, originally developed in 1973 by the U.S. Department of Defense, became operational in 1994. Within a decade, businesses with mobile fleets, such as those in the Green Industry, began adopting the technology for improved routing, job tracking and employee accountability.

**11 Business software** — Landscape companies lucky enough to be operating in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and beyond reaped the benefits of advancements in business software, which eliminates tedious accounting tasks (general ledger, payroll and taxes, anyone?). Office suites such as Microsoft Office—or today’s web-based alternatives—have increased productivity tremendously. Landscape industry-specific software programs include design software, property-measuring tools, and overall management programs that handle billing, routing, scheduling and more.

*“Financial, estimating, pricing and tracking computer programs have improved so much to allow us as owners to truly know how we’re doing on a monthly basis instead of a ‘feel’ basis or typical year-end basis.”*



**12 Certification** — Over the last two decades, Green Industry professionals have had the opportunity to become voluntarily certified by trade associations. The goal of the programs is to raise the level of technical expertise and professionalism and gain traction among consumers.

On a national level, PLANET administers the Landscape Industry Certified program. The idea was first raised in the late 1980s and gained momentum in the 1990s under ALCA President Bob Maronde. The association retained a Texas A&M professor to help develop a test for the Certified Landscape Professional and formed a board of governors comprising all past presidents and Gary Thornton to oversee the project. By 1993, there were 24 CLPs. Today there are more than 5,000 people with Landscape Industry Certified designations worldwide. The California Landscape Contractors Association held the first Certified Landscape Technician exam in 1983. Certification sprung up as a result of the inability to get an apprenticeship program off the ground. Eleven years later ALCA purchased the rights to the exam and began to offer it to state

**13 Emissions/noise regulations** — Since the mid-1970s, communities have sought to ban—and sometimes succeeded in banning—the use of gas-powered leaf blowers. Hundreds of communities across the country have blower bans or restrictions on the books. As landscape contractors who operate in these areas say, these rules wreak havoc on efficiency (it takes about 40 percent more time to clean up debris with rakes and brooms versus blowers)—and profits. Some ordinances are outright restrictions; others incorporate operator training, time-of-use restrictions and buy-backs of older equipment, promoting new, lower-noise units. Noise pollution is typically the primary argument, but environmental health and emissions often creep into the debate, despite blower manufacturers’ dramatic reductions in noise and emissions levels.



associations for their members.

In 2001 the Snow & Ice Managers Association initiated the Certified Snow Professional program (see No. 20).

The IA certifies professionals in six categories.



*continued on page 18*

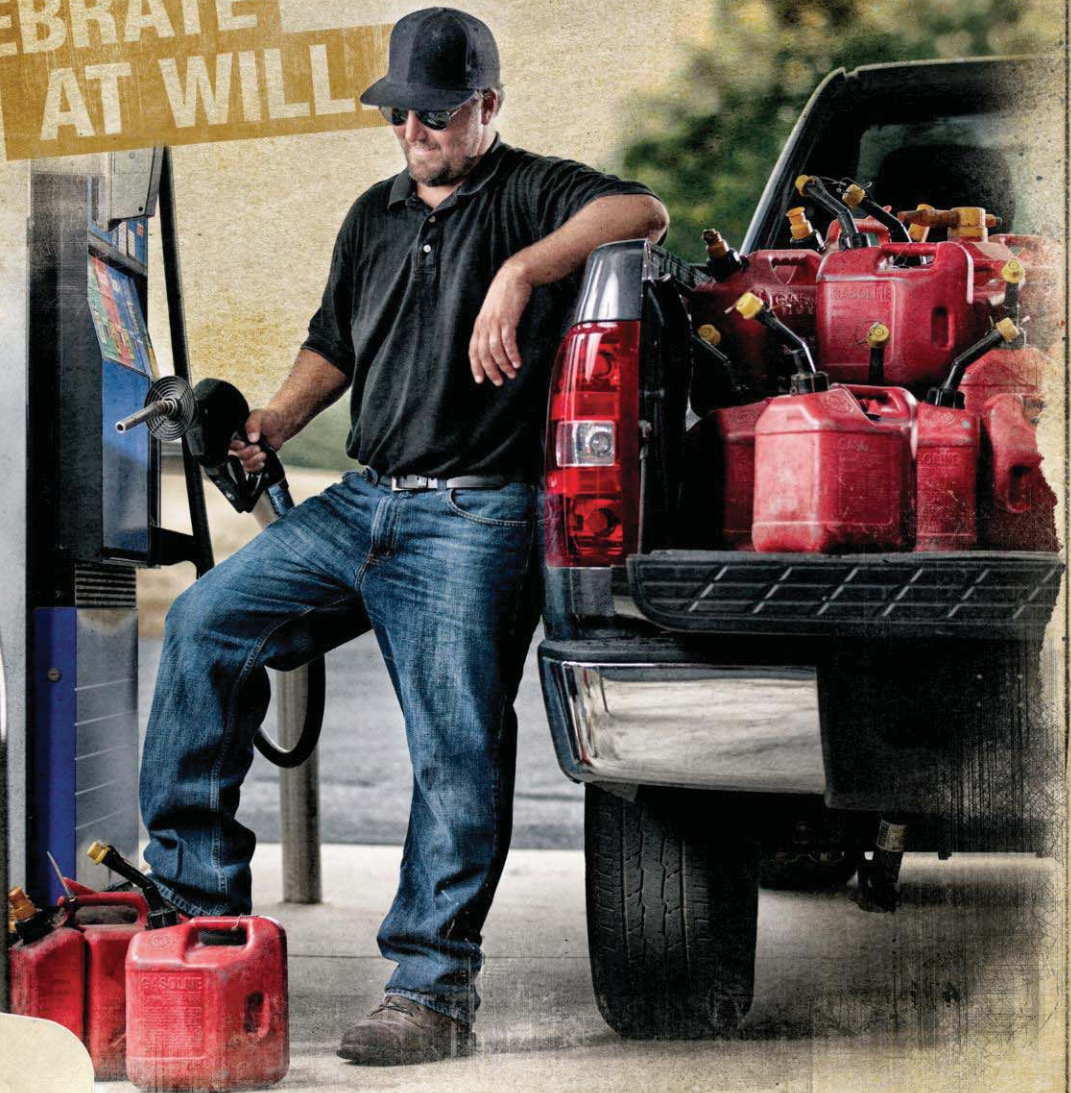


*“GPS has allowed us to more efficiently track and route our maintenance services.”*



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\*Compared to a comparable KOHLER carbureted engine under comparable loads and duty cycles. Based on 600 hours of annual operation at \$3.50/gallon.



continued from page 16

**14 Integrated Pest Management** — Tracing its roots to the post-World War II era, when many pesticides were available and resistance was rearing its head, entomologists began practicing “integrated control” in agriculture, using a mix of chemical controls and biological controls. IPM became a national policy in 1972 when President Richard Nixon asked federal agencies to apply the concept of IPM. In 1979 President Jimmy Carter established an IPM Coordinating Committee and mentioned it in his environmental message. Over the last three decades, familiarity with and practice of IPM has become the norm among all good Green Industry pros.

**15 Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment** — The manufacturers and suppliers of specialty pesticides and fertilizers formed RISE in 1991 to advocate for the industry at a time when lawn care was under intense scrutiny by environmentalists and lawmakers (consider the Congressional hearings on lawn care and pesticide use in the early 1990s). The Washington, D.C.-based association monitors legislative and regulatory issues in the nation’s capital and in the states. In recent years, it has focused on grassroots advocacy at the local level.

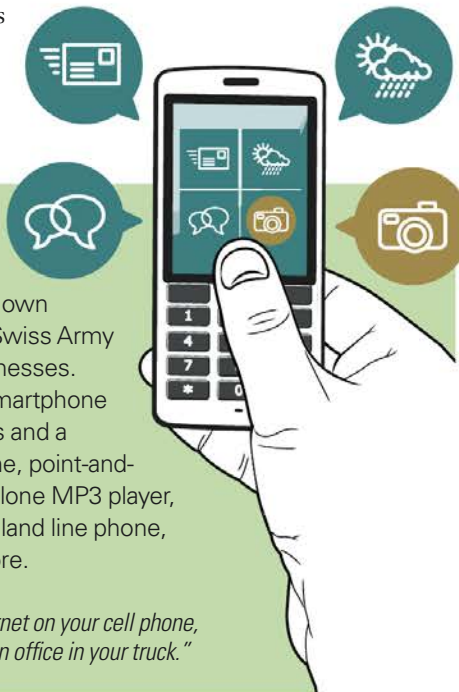
**16 Smartphones** — Half of U.S. mobile phone subscribers now own smartphones, proving these digital Swiss Army Knives are must-have items for businesses. Consider the number of devices a smartphone can replace for a few hundred dollars and a service contract: traditional cell phone, point-and-shoot camera, video camera, standalone MP3 player, GPS device, personal planner, radio, land line phone, home Internet service and many more.



*“With the Internet on your cell phone, you can have an office in your truck.”*

**17 Water restrictions** — As the demands on water resources have increased over the last five decades and drought cycles rear their heads, state and local government have enacted outdoor water use restrictions to limit lawn irrigating, car washing, pool filling and other activities deemed “nonessential.” The bans (which can take the form of completely shutting off the taps, instituting odd/even water days or restrictions on the time of day) often backfire, spurring increased consumption.

Recently, the Green Industry, in this case led by the IA, has hit its stride in promoting preventive water-saving measures rather than reacting once crises hit. In 2005 it launched Smart Irrigation Month in July, the month where irrigation demand typically reaches its peak. The campaign is designed to improve consumer awareness about smart irrigation techniques, encourage industry members to adopt and promote smart irrigation practices and technologies and help water providers minimize peak water use.



Alex Shigo (right) explaining markings on an oak section.

**18 Alex Shigo, Ph.D.** — Shigo, also known as the “father of modern arboriculture,” uncovered how trees process decay when he worked for the U.S. Forest Service in the 1960s and 1970s. When one-man chainsaws hit the market and he was able to cut trees longitudinally, he discovered trees’ ability to wall off decaying tissue, which he called “compartmentalization.” This information changed the way arborists assess and prune trees. After Shigo retired in 1985, he wrote and lectured, spreading his knowledge and mentoring tree care professionals around the world.



*“His way of pruning was revolutionary.”*

**19 American Society of Landscape Architects** — Dating back to 1899, the ASLA strives to “increase the public’s awareness of and appreciation for the profession of landscape architecture and its contributions to quality of life.” With more than 17,000 members and 48 chapters, its efforts over the last five decades have no doubt trickled down to benefit professionals that provide commercial and residential landscape maintenance, design/build, lawn care and irrigation services.

Recently, ASLA spearheaded the Sustainable Sites Initiative, which was conceived in 2005 to promote sustainable land development and management practices that can apply to sites with and without buildings. The U.S. Green Building Council, a stakeholder in the initiative, anticipates incorporating these guidelines and performance benchmarks into future iterations of the LEED Green Building Rating System.

continued on page 20





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## INDUSTRY INFLUENCERS

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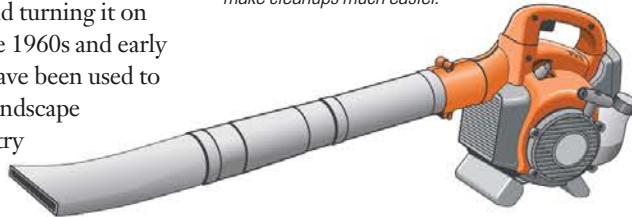
**20 Snow & Ice Management Association** — SIMA was formed by eight contractors in 1996 to foster a professional image of the snow and ice removal industry. It held its first Snow & Ice Symposium in 1998. It also founded a certification program in 2001 that has grown to include nearly 200 Certified Snow Professionals. Over the last 16 years it has grown to 1,600 members and has improved contractors' access to training and best practices information.

**21 Leaf blowers** — Since consumers and landscapers began dismantling a blowing device used to apply pesticides and turning it on their leaves in the late 1960s and early 1970s, leaf blowers have been used to efficiently clean up landscape debris. (Green Industry studies estimate

blowers take one-fifth the amount of time to clean up debris than the hand tools they replaced.) After seeing the demand, handheld equipment manufacturers responded with units specifically for this purpose and have been adapting and improving them ever since with different options: handheld or backpack; two-stroke or four-stroke engines; gas-, electric- or battery-powered. Despite the gripes of some environmentalists and neighbors, today's blowers are cleaner and quieter than their predecessors, and getting better all the time.



*"Blowers are the most important tool on the truck, whether you're mowing, trimming or doing tree work. They make cleanups much easier."*



**22 HGTV** — At the end of 1994, as the E.W. Scripps Co. was shifting its focus from newspapers to television, it launched Home & Garden Television (HGTV), the first cable station dedicated to gardening, landscaping, home decorating and home maintenance. Five years later, HGTV was available in 48.4 million homes. Now it reaches 99 million. HGTV showed homeowners the possibilities, made landscaping trendy and set the stage for the many home improvement channels that followed.

ILLUSTRATIONS: iSTOCK/INTERNATIONAL INC.

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# 23

**Project EverGreen** — About 12 years ago, the Professional Lawn Care Applicators of America (PLCAA, now part of PLANET) gave \$50,000 to form the EverGreen Foundation to replace PLCAA's Research and Education Foundation. In late 2002, the group renamed itself Project EverGreen and refocused on programs that promote actively managed green spaces. Its flagship program, GreenCare for Troops, which connects volunteer service providers with military families in need of Green Industry services, was honored by First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House in April as part of a program celebrating organizations and programs that benefit military families. Today, as a nonprofit organization, it's funded by industry suppliers, service providers and individuals.



*"Project EverGreen and its initiatives, GreenCare for Troops, GreenCare for Communities and the Art of GreenSpaces student art contests, have increased awareness among consumers of the environmental, economic and lifestyle benefits of healthy yards, landscapes, parks and recreational sports fields."*

Advances in turf breeding date back to the 1970s, when Reed Funk, Ph.D., discovered the ability to make turfgrass hybrids with work on Kentucky bluegrass at Rutgers. In the early days, turf researchers focused on quality; today, they emphasize drought tolerance and pest resistance.

Many schools have added business management courses to their curricula over time, as the industry has shown a need for that content. PLANET's Student Career Days event, which 62 colleges attended this year with 817 competing in 28 technical and business management events, is a good example of how Green Industry university relations have evolved. The event started as ALCA Field Days in 1977, with 18 students and five schools participating.



# 24

## University programs —

In addition to churning out future leaders, the Green Industry has university programs to thank for exten-

sion services, horticultural research and turfgrass research projects, including breeding, management trials and pesticide and IPM studies.



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## INDUSTRY INFLUENCERS



The founders of Lawn Doctor's predecessor, Auto Lawn, built a turf care machine, shown here.

Giordano. Three years later Weed Man opened its first location and started franchising in Canada in 1976 (it was 20 years before master licensee Turf Management Systems began franchising in the U.S.). In 1977 Bill Fischer formed Spring-Green Lawn Care in Naperville, Ill., and began franchising about a year later.

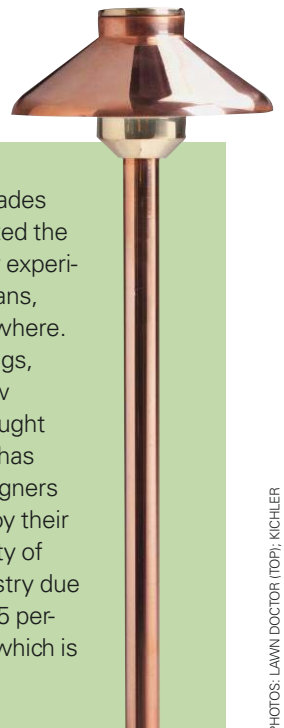
Other franchises popped up over the next three decades. In

**25 Franchising** — Though it's clear franchises aren't for everybody and they aren't all created equal, their penchant for proven systems, marketing support and increased spending power have provided a path to success for many Green Industry professionals.

Franchising in the lawn care sector of the Green Industry goes back to the year LM was founded, when Daniel Dorfman began selling franchises for his year-old company, Lawn-A-Mat. It grew quickly, with 300 franchises by 1967. Perhaps growth was too quick; the company got into trouble over the next two decades and franchisees eventually stopped paying their fees. However, it's responsible for spawning many other successful lawn care businesses.

Lawn Doctor was founded in New Jersey in 1967 by Bob Magda and Tony

1986 Tom Oyler founded U.S. Lawns as the first commercial landscape maintenance franchise in the Green Industry. ValleyCrest Landscape Cos. purchased U.S. Lawns in 1996. Scotts joined the lawn care franchising game in 2001. On the maintenance side, franchising powerhouse The Dwyer Group partnered with Canada's Sunshine Grounds Care in 2010 to launch The Grounds Guys concept in the U.S.



**26 Landscape lighting** — Over the five decades since electrical contractor Bill Locklin created the concept of landscape lighting in 1959 after experimenting with efficient 12-volt light sources and coffee cans, the service has taken off, illuminating landscapes everywhere. Before low-voltage lighting was used in landscape settings, expensive, 120-volt hard-wired lighting was buried below ground. Until the mid-1990s, landscape lighting was thought of in terms of safety and functionality first. The industry has thrived over the last two decades thanks to lighting designers and contractors who sell homeowners the ability to enjoy their landscapes 24 hours a day. In recent years, the availability of white LEDs has revolutionized the outdoor lighting industry due to the technology's "green" quotient—they use about 75 percent less energy than their incandescent counterparts, which is attractive to homeowners.

PHOTOS: LAWN DOCTOR (TOP); KICHLER



## 27/28 ChemLawn & Duke family —

With their garden center and sod farm in Troy, Ohio, Paul and Dick Duke found customers were asking them to care for their lawns after they installed their sod. The father-son team founded ChemLawn Corp. in 1969 and steadily opened branches and sold company stock to employees and customers, breaking the \$1 million mark by 1970. The Dukes reinvested in their company—and the industry—by developing equipment and methods that persist in the industry today. Ecolab bought ChemLawn in 1987. In 1992 it was sold to ServiceMaster and merged with TruGreen (see No. 30), forming the lawn care behemoth TruGreen-ChemLawn. The company has since dropped the ChemLawn name.

*"Companies that now have ChemLawn alumni at the regional or higher level are very fortunate."*

SURVEY SAYS...

**29 Trade press — Landscape Management** and the other trade media outlets that service the specialized Green Industry audience can take credit for helping usher along progress. Over the years we've delivered you the news (in an increasing array of formats), provided practical benchmarking data (i.e. the LM150 and State of the Industry reports) and shared numerous success stories and lessons learned. We've connected you with suppliers of products and services you need and we've helped trade associations get the word out on important issues. (In fact, our former publisher Bob Earley helped launch PLANET's predecessor, the Professional Lawn Care Applicators of America, in 1979.)

Did you know we have our own association to improve the quality of

media and marketing communications? Since 1990 the Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association (TOCA) has hosted an annual meeting and awards program (in which *LM* consistently takes home honors). It also



annually awards a scholarship and recognizes a professional for excellence in environmental communications. It has about 170 members and nearly 30 sponsors.

*continued on page 25*



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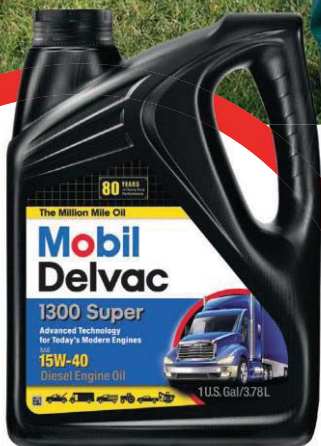




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continued from page 23

**30 TruGreen** — TruGreen, which started in Michigan in 1974 as ChemGreen, has had a broad impact on the Green Industry as its largest company. ServiceMaster acquired TruGreen in 1990; two years later it bought ChemLawn, creating TruGreen-ChemLawn. In early 1998, the company entered the maintenance market, acquiring four landscape companies. Meanwhile, Houston-based LandCare USA had merged seven firms into a single national company. Both companies competed to make acquisitions until TruGreen announced in November 1998 it bought LandCare for \$250 million. In July 1999, the merged firms, numbering more than 80 original companies, became known as TruGreen LandCare.

Last year, ServiceMaster sold TruGreen LandCare, with 60 branches in 17 states, to private investment firm Aurora Capital Group for \$38 million.

**SURVEY SAYS...** "Any company that has sold or bought another company has demonstrated to the rest of us owners the importance of creating value in your company."

**31 String trimmers** — In 1971 George Ballas of Houston created what he called the first Weed Eater with pieces of heavy-duty fishing line, a popcorn can and an edger. It wasn't until two-stroke engine-powered string trimmers came on the market later that decade that they began making landscape companies' lives easier—and more productive—and their clients' properties neater.

**32 Big-box stores** — Home improvement behemoths weren't even a blip on the radar when Lowe's opened as a small North Carolina hardware store in 1946. Lowe's went public in 1961, Sam Walton opened the first Walmart in 1962, and Menards (1972) and Home Depot (1979) followed. The home improvement industry's come a long way from the mom and pops of yore. Walmart alone generated \$420 billion in 2011, while *Forbes* says Home Depot, the largest home improvement chain, is on track to have 2012 revenue of \$73.6 billion.



**33 Professional Landcare Network** — The Green Industry's most instrumental association, better known as PLANET, was born on New Year's Day 2005. It was the result of a merger of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA), founded in 1961, and the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA), founded in 1979.

Today, PLANET provides services for 3,800 member companies; has a strong lobby on Capitol Hill; supports members in certification, education and safety; and cosponsors the annual GIE+Expo national trade show.

**34 State and local associations** — PLANET is valuable for contractors nationally, but don't forget the state, local and niche associations that support tens of thousands of professionals closer to home. They give contractors regional insights through education, advocacy, networking and more. Contributing to the professionalism and quality of services of Green Industry associations is the Nursery & Landscape Executives of North America, nearly 100 members strong.

**SURVEY SAYS...** "Statewide turfgrass, landscape and nursery trade associations have made an impact advocating for the professional."

## End of Summer maintenance tips from Mobil Delvac

After a punishing summer, your truck is no doubt feeling the burn. Avoid costly repairs and downtime with the following vehicle maintenance tips.

- **Battery** — Summer heat evaporates water from your truck's battery, which can lead to internal damage. Average battery life is three-to-five years. If you suspect any battery problems, check your alternator charging rate, the water level, and the condition of the battery connections.
- **Alignment** — Summer driving can wreak havoc on your alignment. Improper alignment will shorten the life of your tires and compromise handling ability, so be sure to have them checked every 30,000 miles.
- **Tires** — Summer heat increases air pressure in tires, so keep a tire-pressure gauge handy. You might also carry a tread depth gauge to check for any significant wear.
- **Filters** — Dirt, gravel and debris found on the job site can obstruct your vehicle's air filter and cause serious engine damage. Clean and inspect your air filters, and consider replacing if necessary.
- **Fluids** — Your engine spent the summer enduring rigorous use and extreme temperatures. Be sure to check all your truck's fluids—engine coolant, break fluid, transmission fluid and oil.

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**35 Personal computer** — PCs have come far since the first personal computer was released in 1950. (For the record, it was The Simon created by Edmund Berkeley and had just 12 bits of memory.) Other computer models came and went, but 1977's Apple II is considered the first PC as we know it. It was the first computer

capable of producing color graphics and the first to include a keyboard. The rest is history.



*"Whether getting rid of route cards, reducing paperwork, making design easier or any of the myriad reporting processes possible, there has been no tool more powerful developed for the landscape/lawn care business."*

**36 H-2B program** — The H-2B guest worker visa program originated as part of the H-2 program created by the Immigration and Nationality Act in 1952. It allows foreign workers to be employed in the U.S. on a temporary basis. In 1990, Congress stipulated that as of 1992, no more than 66,000 H-2B visas could be issued annually. In 2004, the 66,000 cap was reached for the first time, and it's been met consistently in the years since. Just as consistent, it seems, are proposed federal changes to H-2B, and the landscape industry's opposition to them. Department of Labor figures show the Green Industry is the largest user of the H-2B program.



*"H-2B and the hiring of immigrants has been the biggest change over the last 50 years."*

**37/38 ValleyCrest & Burton Sperber** — When Burton Sperber and his father, Lewis, launched ValleyCrest in 1949, it was a small operation fueled by used tools and a pickup. More than 60 years later, the Calabasas, Calif.-based corporation is an \$850 million business—and the nation's largest privately held integrated landscape services firm.

Sperber was more than ValleyCrest's founder; he was a landscape industry icon beloved in Los Angeles and revered throughout the industry for building a world-class company from the ground up. Sperber earned many accolades, including a spot in the Green Industry Hall of Fame in 2010. He passed away last year at age 82, leaving an indelible mark on the industry he helped shape.



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**PROPANE MOWER INCENTIVE PROGRAM**



## 39 Environmental Protection Agency

— In the wake of growing concern about pollution, the EPA was established in 1970, to consolidate, in one agency, a variety of federal research, monitoring, standard-setting and enforcement activities. Related to lawn care, in 1972 the Federal Environmental Pesticide Control Act (FEPCA) amended the 1947 Federal



Insecticide Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIRFA) to establish under the EPA a program for controlling the sale, distribution and application of pesticides through a registration process. The pesticides would be classified as “general” or “restricted,” the latter meaning they must be applied by or under the direct supervision of a certified applicator, affecting the way LCOs did business.

On the water conservation front, in 2006 EPA launched its voluntary WaterSense program, which includes labeling certification programs. IA-certified irrigation contractors, landscape/turf irrigation designers, and golf and landscape irrigation auditors qualify to become WaterSense partners, allowing them to tap into the EPA's consumer awareness campaign.

## 40 Zero-turn mower

— John Regier worked for farm equipment manufacturer the Hesston Corp. in Moundridge, Kan., when he created a device that enabled blades to counter-rotate with a system of pulleys and belts. In 1963, Regier applied that technology to a lawn mower, creating the first zero-turn. Regier called his mower The Hustler, because like the zero-turns of today, it reduced mowing time substantially. Now a standard zero-turn cuts mowing time in half versus a conventional mower.

*“Hydraulic-powered lawn mowers took the belt-drive walk-behind mowers to faster, more efficient units, which allowed for larger zero-turns to carry operators and get things done faster.”*

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## INDUSTRY INFLUENCERS

**41 Sustainability** — “Sustainability” isn’t so much a buzz word in the Green Industry anymore as it is a reality. Rachel Carson’s book “Silent Spring” paved the way for change as far back as 1962, when it was published. The federal environmental regulations and pesticide restrictions it led to, in addition to the first Earth Day in 1970, piqued public awareness and inspired



landscape and lawn care companies to become more environmentally conscious. Today, we’re living in a world of green roofs, reduced emissions, water conservation and less caustic chemicals.

**SURVEY SAYS...**

*“Earth Day and the environmental movement led to profound changes in how we value landscapes, what*

*we include in them, how we care for them and why we landscape.”*

**42 Smart controllers** — Edwin J. Hunter founded Hunter Industries in 1981, but he has another claim to fame. In 1952, he launched Moist-O-Matic Co. (eventually sold to The Toro Co.), where he created the first irrigation controller, paving the way for “smart,” evapotranspiration (ET) rate-based controllers to hit the market 50 years later, changing the way landscapers irrigate.

**43 CAD programs** — When the SKETCHPAD computer program was developed in 1963, it laid the foundation for modern CAD programs, which changed landscape design dramatically. The programs’ affordability and ability to run on personal computers enabled designers to do their own drafting work, eliminating the need for draftsmen. Today, many CAD programs work hand-in-hand with software that allows landscape designers to show 3D models of landscape-specific elements.



**44 Social media** — It’s hard to exist now without using social media. For some, it’s a compulsion, for others, a necessity. First it dominated social lives, today it also links the business world. The first social media site, Geocities.com, launched in 1994 and faded soon after. But today’s giants are going strong and boosting small businesses with their marketing abilities. LinkedIn and Twitter have 161 million and 100 million users, respectively. While Facebook, the granddaddy of them all, boasts 955 million active monthly users.

**45/46 The Brickman Group & Theodore Brickman Sr.** — The Brickman Group, Gaithersburg, Md., launched with a “couple guys, a truck and some lawn equipment,” states the company’s website. It’s grown to an \$844 million corporation. The company branched out to design/build in 1954 and strengthened its maintenance division in the 1970s, when it won an important contract—to maintain McDonald’s headquarters for life. Now Brickman operates in more than 29 states, providing services in every sector of landscaping.

Theodore Brickman Sr., a horticulturist for the Chicago Park District, founded the company as Theodore Brickman Landscaping in 1939 in Glenview, Ill. Brickman was a self-taught horticulturist who had a passion for plants. He chaired the company until his death in 1989, at age 82.

*“Although they’re my competition, Brickman has certainly influenced the landscape industry. I see their processes throughout most of the mid- to large companies I’ve worked for.”*

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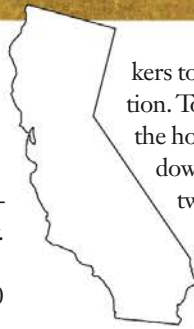


## 47 The Occupational Safety and Health Administration

— Since it was established in 1971 by the Nixon Administration, OSHA has reduced on-the-job deaths and injuries significantly. To get an idea of its effectiveness, consider that in 1970 there were 14,000 work-related fatalities and 2.5 million job-related disabilities. Since then, workplace fatalities have plummeted by 65 percent and occupational injury and illness rates by 67 percent. In 1986, OSHA developed hazard communication standards, requiring employers to furnish their employees with information concerning the hazards of chemicals used in the workplace.

## 48 California Spring Trials

— The event dates back to 1967 when Goldsmith Seeds' Glenn Goldsmith held the first "pack trial" in Gilroy, Calif., inviting seed bro-



kers to view seed in production. Today, many members of the horticulture industry trek down the West Coast for two weeks in April during what's now called the California Spring Trials to learn about new plant varieties, including availability and cultural issues. Over time, the trials have grown from just seed to include vegetative varieties.

## 49 Modular block retaining walls

— The first modular concrete block retaining wall systems were developed in 1986. Their affordability, durability, easy installation and resistance to leaning and toppling made them a design/build game changer.

*"The techniques used to build retaining walls have changed significantly and are now much safer, more reliable and easier to build than ever."* LHM



## 50 The Internet

— When it comes to who invented the Internet, your guess is as good as ours. The development of the World Wide Web has been attributed to everyone from the U.S. Department of Defense to British computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee. One thing we do know about the Internet—it changed the world.



*"Via the computer and Internet, access to real-time information, the capability to store and track data and the ability to increase efficiency through mobility, it forced a cultural shift from the bricks-and-mortar cubicle culture to managing from anywhere."*

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# Aging

# gracefully

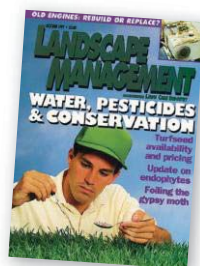
A look at how *Landscape Management's* design and focus have evolved over five decades. *By Marisa Palmieri*



## 1962

**Weeds and Turf debuts.**

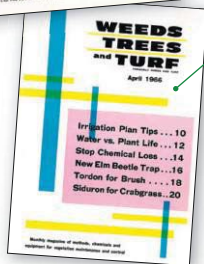
**NOTABLE:** Noticing a rise in demand for contract outdoor chemical applications, *Pest Control* magazine (now *Pest Management Professional*) begins running a monthly supplement called *Weeds and Turf*.



## 1991

**A new LM logo and redesign appear in October.**

**NOTABLE:** The editor's note touts: "What you'll be reading now is a combination *USA Today*, *Business Week* and the 'old' *Landscape Management*." *Lawn Care Industry* rolls into *LM*.



## 1965

**We adopt a new name, *Weeds Trees and Turf*.**

**NOTABLE:** "Trees" is added to the now standalone publication's name to reflect a shift in readership. The tagline is "Monthly magazine of methods, chemicals and equipment for vegetation maintenance and control."



## 1995

**LM gets another facelift, starting in November.**

**NOTABLE:** The editor's note mentions the magazine's new tech-y feature: an email account for readers to communicate with the staff. (In case you're curious, it was 75553.502@compuserve.com!)



## 1970s

***Weeds Trees & Turf* gets a groovy new logo.**

**NOTABLE:** *Lawn Care Industry*, a news-driven, tabloid-sized publication, accompanies *Weeds Trees & Turf* starting in 1977.



## 1999

**The September issue features another new logo and redesign.**

**NOTABLE:** *LM's* focus becomes more vertical, dropping coverage of the golf market with the relaunch earlier that year of sister publication *Golfdom*.



## 1987

**We debut a new name: *Landscape Management*.**

**NOTABLE:** By now we focus on landscape, golf and grounds professionals. *Lawn Care Industry* continues as a separate publication.

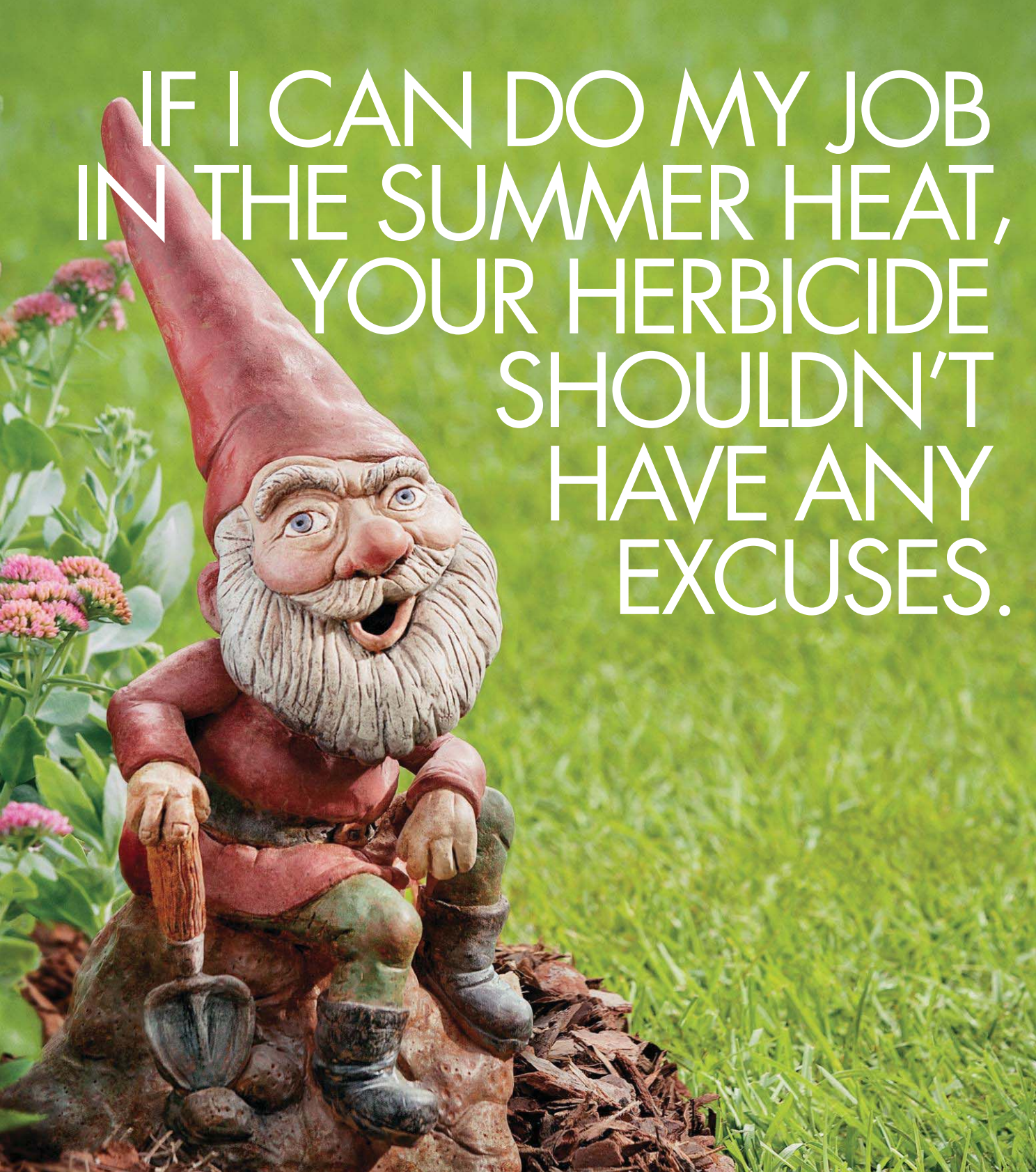


## 2009

**LM gets a modern look.**

**NOTABLE:** *LM's* award-winning art director, Carrie Parkhill Wallace, puts her stamp on the publication's design with a new, sans-serif typeface for the logo, starting with the January issue. It's still our look today.





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# Fifty

and counting

Two Green Industry firms and one association also celebrate a half century in business. *By Tom Crain*

## Suburban Landscape Service St. Paul, Minn.

WHEN JAMES GOOSELAW started Suburban Landscape Service (SLS) in 1962 near the then new Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and the Metropolitan Stadium where the Minnesota Vikings and Twins played, dairy cows and cornfields surrounded all three. The term “landscape company” wasn’t understood by the upscale and affluent St. Paul-based customers that SLS would soon serve. From time to time, homeowners hired “gardeners” to plant perennials and pull weeds; “construction companies” built major projects such as retaining walls, patios or gazebos.

Gooselaw soon got customers to understand what a landscape company could do. Brandishing a master’s degree in horticulture, a fresh-pressed uniform and a logo on his truck, this landscape pioneer knocked on many doors in the exclusive and leafy St. Paul Summit/Grand/Crocus Hill neighborhood on the Mississippi River bluffs.



He landed lucrative contracts mowing, weeding, planting and installing elegant landscapes and hardscapes to complement these estates.

For 38 years, Gooselaw operated quietly and successfully with a simple formula of doing maintenance three days per week, landscaping the next three days and remaining closed on Sundays. He used sustainable practices before they were commonly desired by customers, including composting waste materials, mulching and retaining water through swales and rain gardens. He had three employees and kept a low profile,

Suburban Landscape Service’s current owner, Collin Merrill, and his uncle James Gooselaw, who founded the firm in 1962.

relying only on word-of-mouth marketing.

In 1998 Gooselaw hired his nephew Collin Merrill. Two years later he bought out his uncle, becoming the owner at age 25. Merrill rehired Gooselaw to be the on-site project manager for three years before he retired.

To grow the business quickly Merrill identified which of the company’s current residential customers also owned business property. Three customers did, and he landed all three for the company’s first of many commercial accounts.

Today, Merrill has grown the company from revenue less than \$500,000 to \$1.75 million with 20 employees. The customer mix has gone from 100 percent residential to a 66/33 percent residential/commercial mix.

To continue its growth SLS has teamed up with Gertens, one of the best





Longtime members of the ALCC include, from left: Jim DelPonte (DelPonte Landscape); Lew Hammer (retired); Carl Anderson (retired); Wallace SaBell (SaBell's Enterprises); Chuck Ferdig (Complete Landscape Care); and Stanley Brown Jr. (Alameda Wholesale Nursery).

FIVE  
DECADES  
OF SERVICE

## Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado Denver

FOR 50 YEARS, the Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado (ALCC) has tackled important regional issues such as responsible water use and immigration reform.

ALCC was first formed in Denver as the Landscape Contractors of Colorado with 20 members. One of ALCC's early accomplishments was replacing the term "landscape gardener" to "landscape contractor" in the 1964 Colorado Nursery Act to gain respect for the industry. According to ALCC past president Stan Brown, president of Englewood, Colo.-based Alameda Wholesale Nursery, the goal of the association was to raise professionalism by improving the image of the industry and educating its members.

"In the early days, 'fly-by-night' contractors and those installing jobs in an unprofessional manner were a much bigger problem than today," he says. "So we tackled this problem head on with the offering of educational programs addressed by seminars

at monthly dinner meetings included in the membership dues. We started out each meeting with a prayer and sponsored nickel beers that brought in 100 to 120 attendees each time."

ALCC launched its first trade show in 1978 at Adams County Fairgrounds, 20 miles northeast of Denver. "That first year there were more exhibitors than attendees," Brown says. This year, at what's now called the ProGreen Expo, there were 6,500 attendees and 650 exhibitors. It's the program with the highest member satisfaction and the largest line item in ALCC's budget besides membership dues.

The list of ALCC's community service projects over five decades is long and impressive. The combined retail value of the work totals more than \$1 million.

Today, the ALCC has 650 members and a strong network of six chapters. Each chapter delivers services to members and the public, sponsoring educational opportunities and hosting social events.

"Associations like ours are successful because of the many volunteer hours donated by our members," says Kristen Fefes, who's served as ALCC's executive director for the past 12 years. "Our members truly care about the communities in which they work, and giving back has always been an important tenet inside the association."

Service projects have included tree planting on the 16th Street Mall and Denver Tech Center in the 1970s; renovations at the Central City Opera House and the Brandon Center for Battered Women in the 1980s; and specialty gardens, school playgrounds and libraries in the 1990s and early 2000s. In recent years, ALCC members gave Fort Collins neighborhoods new garden plots to grow their own veggies; a Colorado Springs hospital an outdoor place for healing; and Denver's KidStreet Children's Hospital an improved outdoor play area.

Now that the ALCC successfully celebrated its golden anniversary with a gala in July, Fefes is looking forward to the next 50 years.

"The association's key accomplishments are endless and its programs are many," she says. "For example, our responsible water usage and xeriscape leadership experiences that grew out of the 1980s continues to change the industry each time another drought cycle occurs."

Additionally, the association has led on immigration reform, forming Employers for Immigration Reform in 2006 with the Colorado Nursery & Greenhouse Association.

"Immigration reform is far from over," says Fefes. "And like many of our sister organizations in other states, we'll continue to be an integral part of this conversation."

known garden centers in the Twin Cities, and Stoneman Masonry to deliver a larger array of products and services. It also added snow removal services.

One major initiative in the anniversary year has been the launch of a professional landscape design/build division, SLS Design.

"This process has empowered our customers and streamlines their experience with us," says Merrill. "One of the main differences in landscaping today versus 50 years ago is the explosion of outdoor living spaces that incorporate fire, water and kitchen features. My Uncle Jim finds it hard to believe that a current customer would spend \$3,500 on a granite countertop for an outdoor kitchen."

One focus for SLS Design has been to sell energy-efficient landscapes. Merrill tells clients about how properly designed landscapes can decrease heating and cooling bills and reduce noise and air pollution.

"We can show results of our design team managing our property's landscape elements reducing cooling costs by 15 to 50 percent and heating costs by 25 to 40 percent," he says. "While energy-efficient landscaping requires some initial capital, it can provide enough energy savings that returns initial investment in an average of eight years."



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## Mark M. Holeman, Inc. Indianapolis, Ind.

MARK M. HOLEMAN, INC., a full-service landscape firm, started out as a local asphalt servicing company that landed a lucrative federal contract assisting with the building of the new interstate highway system, which reached its "spaghetti best" in and around Indianapolis. The company also was awarded a landscape contract to add trees for beautification along the major intersections of the interstate system that wound through Indianapolis.

After years building the interstate, the company reemerged as a residential landscape firm.

At its current location since 1980, Holeman's services include design/build, maintenance, integrated pest management and snow removal. Its 10-acre landscape nursery contains an extensive collection of plant material with a major water feature pond.

"We stock a large variety of trees, shrubs, perennials and groundcovers, including many large specimen and uncommon species," says Rich Blankenship, vice president-nursery manager and an Indiana-accredited horticulturalist who has been with Holeman for 21 years. He is also past president of the Indianapolis Landscape Association and current president of the Indiana Nursery & Landscape Association. "As rhododendrons and azaleas are a specialty of ours, we always have our favorite varieties available."

At its 50th anniversary celebration June 1, the very day 50 years ago the company opened its doors for business, Holeman raised more than \$3,700 for the Little Red Door Cancer Agency to create a community garden. Members of the community came together at the company's headquarters to donate food, products and services to be auctioned off for the cancer charity.

Though founder Mark Holeman is retired, his legacy for involvement and support of landscape associations, foundations and horticulture societies is



HALF-CENTURY MARK

Employees of Mark M. Holeman, Inc., surround company founder Mark Holeman and his wife at the 50th anniversary celebration in June.

exemplary. During his tenure, he served as president of the Indiana Nursery & Landscape Association, Indianapolis Landscape Association, Indianapolis Museum of Art Horticultural Society and Indianapolis Museum of Art Board of Governors, among other things.

Continuing Holeman's tradition of affiliation and support of professional associations, the company has a long list of organization memberships.

What's changed over the last 50 years? Blankenship is amazed at the differences in equipment between now and then, including bucket trucks used to lift workers and cranes for difficult tree removal.

"When Holeman conducted tree removal in the 1960s, it was all done by hand," Blankenship says. "It was a painstaking process requiring a lot of manpower and considerable time."

Blankenship also notes how far internal communication has come.

"I used to have to go to a pay phone to communicate on a job site," he says. "Now, smartphones, GPS and even mobile offices with Internet access provide great convenience and efficiencies."

Finally, Blankenship can't help but point out the definition of what a luxury outdoor living space means to his residential landscape customers.

"A luxury outdoor space used to mean the installation of a large rectangular swimming pool, formal tennis court and a BBQ pit. Now, it's all about creating unique intimate outdoor living spaces where you can cook in a full kitchen and recline in a full living room. It's a great trend for the industry." LM

*Crain is a freelance writer based in Northeast Ohio.*





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[NIMBLEWILL]

[BENTGRASS]

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# A history of

The technology and products Green Industry suppliers have brought to market

**1689**

The first **Husqvarna** factory is established as a weapons foundry.

**1837**

**John Deere** fashions a polished-steel plow in his Grand Detour, Illinois, blacksmith shop.



**1876**

**Kohler Co.** produces its first engine.

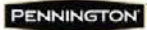


**1939**

**Dodge** introduces the "job rated" concept to help customers choose the right truck for the job.

**1945**

**Pennington Seed** is founded.



**1946**

**Dow Chemical** introduces the broadleaf herbicide 2,4-D.

**1957**

**NAFA** launches.



**1959**

**Husqvarna** starts production of chainsaws and power lawn mowers.



**1966**

**John Deere** introduces the first commercially available rollover protection devices (ROPS), later releasing the patent to the industry without charge.

**Kohler Engines'** 1 millionth engine comes off the assembly line.

**1969**

**Target Specialty Products** opens.



**1977**

**Walker Mowers**

**Walker Mower** is designed.

**1980**

**Syngenta** legacy company Ciba-Geigy supports the formation of PLCAA (now PLANET) and attends its first trade show.



Redding Nursery develops **DeerPro**

**Winter Animal Repellent** to protect evergreen trees and shrubs from winter deer browse damage.

**PermaGreen Supreme** is formed.



**1986**



Matt and Irene Shooner found

**Focal Point Communications** to provide customer newsletters to lawn care operators.



**U.S. Lawns** launches.

**1987**

**Versa-Lok**

introduces a solid, top-pinning segmental retaining wall system.



**1989**

**PhoneTree**

pioneers automated messaging.



**NAFA** moves fleet management certification program fully in-house.

**1992**

**PhoneTree** wins product of the year for the second year in a row at Consumer Electronics Show.

**1993**

**Syngenta** introduces **Barricade** preemergent herbicide.

**Drafrix Software/PRO Landscape** is founded.



**Tree World Plant Care Products Inc.** acquires the North American distribution rights for Plantskydd.

**1994**

**Bayer** introduces Merit, a grub and insect control product.



**Dow AgroSciences** launches Snapshot specialty herbicide for controlling both grassy and broadleaf weeds.

The new **Ram** launches with a full range of gas and diesel engines, and the highest chassis load and tow ratings.



**Techniseal** launches complete line of paver cleaning/sealing products.

**1995**

**Husqvarna** launches a solar-powered, self-propelled lawn mower.

**1997**

**PermaGreen Supreme** debuts first Ride-On Spreader Sprayer.



# innovation

have helped the industry advance over the years. Here are just a few milestones.

1998

**DynaSCAPE**  
Software Solutions for Landscape Professionals

DynaScape opens.

Walker introduces first zero-turn mower with EFI engine.

1999

**BASF**  
The Chemical Company

BASF invests in the future of turfgrass by moving to North Carolina's Research Triangle Park.

**L.T. Rich Products**

L.T. Rich opens its doors.

2001

Bayer launches TopChoice, preventive fire ant protection.

2002

Bayer and Aventis merge to form **Bayer Environmental Science**.



2003

BASF introduces Pendulum AquaCap herbicide featuring a patented microencapsulation technology to reduce odor and staining.

**Modeco Systems**

Modeco Systems develops TimeScape mobile time- and production-tracking solutions.

2004

**QUALI-PRO**

Quali-Pro forms (as a part of Farmsaver, which was purchased the same year by MAI).

Redding Nursery receives EPA registration for **DeerPro Winter**, making it available to commercial applicators across the country.

**LandOpt** is founded by George Fechter, Daniel Stearns, John Davies and Dan Eichenlaub.

2006

Quali-Pro is fully integrated into MAI.

2007

**Dow AgroSciences** brings Dimension 2EW specialty herbicide to market for crabgrass control in a water-based formulation.

**PRO Landscape**

**Drafix Software** releases PRO Landscape Version 13, introducing professional landscape design software that includes 3-D rendering for both photo imaging and CAD.

Hunter acquires MP Rotator from Walla Walla Sprinkler Co.

**Hunter**

2008

**Pine Hall Brick**  
earth friendly. naturally green.

**Pine Hall Brick** introduces StormPave permeable clay pavers.

2009

Hunter acquires landscape lighting company FX Luminaire.

**Target Specialty Products** celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

**EarthWay**

Earthway introduces the S25 ground-driven push sprayer.

2010

DynaScape launches cloud-based business management software.

2011

**syngenta**

Syngenta introduces Tenacity herbicide, the only pre- and postemergent herbicide that can be used before, after or at seeding.

Walker founder Max Walker dies.

**U.S. Lawns** celebrates 25 years.

**Kohler Engines** unveils two new Tier 4 Final emission-compliant, heavy-duty diesel engines without a diesel particulate filter.

**Quali-Pro** merges with Control Solutions Inc., an MAI company, to form the core of MAI Environmental Solutions.

2012

**John Deere** celebrates its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

**LANDOPT**

The **LandOpt** Network achieves a growth milestone of 20 active contractors.

In the fall **BASF** launches Pillar G Intrinsic brand fungicide with both disease control and plant health label language.

**Drafix Software** launches PRO Landscape Companion for iPad.

**U.S. Lawns** adds Alaska branch.

**RAM**

Production of the new 2013 **Ram** 1500, with best-in-class fuel efficiency, begins in the third quarter.

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## THE BENCHMARK

KEVIN KEHOE

The author, owner-manager of 3PG Consulting, is a 25-year industry veteran. Reach him at kkehoe@earthlink.net.

# Managing face time

**S**elling has never been more challenging. That's because it's becoming more difficult to get real face time with prospects. Therefore, when you do get face time, it's critical to manage it effectively. Use the following principles to assist salespeople to ensure they don't waste anyone's time.

### When presenting to a prospect

Presenting to prospects can be sensitive. Following these seven steps will make it a little easier:

**1. Provide them with your agenda** at the start. For example, *"My goal is to arrive at a decision today based on your timeline. If that works for you, shall we begin?"*

**2. Review the prospect's desires and needs.** Prospects often forget their own needs, so go ahead and remind them briefly. For example, *"As we discussed, you were interested in ... and indicated that several things were of special importance to you."*

**3. Start with the big picture** to get them excited. Avoid too many technical details; it bores the prospect and saps the energy from your presentation. Above all, be brief and leave plenty of time for Q&A.

**4. Talk about price early** and then recommend that it be addressed at the end during the Q&A.

**5. Watch the body language and eye contact.** If they are not "with you," stop! Address concerns directly. For example, *"It looks as if you have a concern."* Or, *"It looks as if you are busy and in a rush?"*

**6. Use trial closes** to address disconnects. For example, *"Is this what you have in mind when hiring a contractor for this job?"*

**7. Maximize the visual content** of the presentation. Have pictures and charts and minimize the bullet point slides.

### When closing and negotiating

Don't stop after the presentation. You still have to seal the deal. In doing so, be sure to:

**1. Offer options.** This includes some price negotiation (if you bid it fit), scope and spec adjustments, and benefits that address the prospect's

primary fears, risks and desires.

**2. Validate objections.** For example, *"Price is always critical when making a decision like this. What is your pricing range for budget and enhancements?"* Or *"There are several ways to manage your cost."* Or *"That's a real concern shared by many of our current clients when we first we started with them. Might I share an example?"* Always have an example you can share that addresses the particular concern.

**3. Be brief** when responding to objections. Do not defend or justify your service or pricing strategy. Simply state your logical response and ask if this fits their needs.

**4. Use real-life examples** to illustrate your points. Start with the words, *"We faced the same issues on a job last week and here's how we handled it."*

**5. Paraphrase and summarize** at the end to check for agreement before you ask for the close.

**6. Ask for the close directly** by referring to the contracting process and the signature you need to get them started.

**7. Use silence** after you ask. Sit back and let them make the first move.

### When following up

Most of the success salespeople experience is the result of persistent follow-up. Great preparation and great calls only get you about 50 percent of the way to selling success. Follow-up gets you the remaining 50 percent. Here are several strategies for follow-up:

- ▶ Send a handwritten thank you note.
- ▶ Send an email summary of the meeting and the actions you intend to pursue, assuming you did not get a final "no".
- ▶ Follow through on your promises to deliver information and materials.
- ▶ Send "news" items to the customer. These can be scanned articles or web links that refer to an issue that arose in the sales call.
- ▶ Be available. Communicate times for calls and be there.





## AT A GLANCE

**NAME:** Bill Hildebolt, Ph.D.

**COMPANY:** Nature's Select Premium Turf Services

**LOCATION:** Winston-Salem, N.C.

**YEAR FOUNDED:** 1994

**INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT:**

I authored *The Professional Entrepreneur, When Cowboys Grow Up*. All proceeds go directly to the PLANET Academic Excellence Foundation (AEF).

**BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY:** Our tagline is "Our Service Reflects Our Good Nature."

**FAMILY:** My youngest son works for us and my oldest son has his own business with his wife. I also have two beautiful grandchildren.

**HOBBIES:** Golf and wood-working

**WEBSITE:** [www.naturesselect.com](http://www.naturesselect.com)

Ethics may not be as valued today as they once were, but successful businessmen and women should hold themselves to high standards, says **Bill Hildebolt**, owner of Nature's Select Premium Turf Services in Winston-Salem, N.C. The No. 1 promise the former president of the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) makes his customers is "integrity, honesty and respect," and he feels those values still are appreciated. Hildebolt talks about challenges, running an ethical business and what it's like to see the finished product.

**How has the industry changed since you first started?**

The technology and equipment have really improved. When I started the business almost 20 years ago, I based it on biological and renewable farming procedures. Peoples' reactions were "What is this?" But now, almost two decades later, you can't even pick up a magazine without hearing all about those practices. That's how everyone is operating nowadays, and though some companies make it sound like a new idea, it's something we've been doing from the start.

**What's the most important lesson you've learned?**

I've learned that I will not let my competition drive or change my ethics. I was in the corporate world for 20-something years and even though we were dealing with trade secrets and had steep competition, it was an ethical

environment and nobody would think of trying to get ahead by stealing or cheating. That was back then. Business was built on ethics. Then I started my own business and the whole ballgame changed. I had competitors stealing from us or putting Roundup on our lawns. It was like the Wild West. You want to retaliate, but it's better not to go down that path.

**Do you see that as the biggest challenge the industry faces?**

How to compete against low ballers and still maintain your high standards is the big challenge. It's important to maintain your personal and business integrity by practicing good ethics. In this day and age, customers are using social media or services like Angie's List to find out about you. In the past you had one person aggravated if you cut a corner, but now that one person goes online and tells the

world. The ultimate advice is to deliver the best quality service possible so your customers won't even think of looking anywhere else.

**Do you think the lawn care segment in particular faces any challenges?**

Marketing and sales are the biggest challenge for the lawn care business. With the housing market and economic crisis, it's very difficult to add on new clients. We've become so frustrated with marketing that we have put our money into getting referrals. That's been the best way to get new customers.

**What's your favorite part of the business?**

I think one of the most satisfying things about lawn care is seeing your finished product. In the Green Industry, after we do a lawn renovation, we get to drive by those properties and see a magnificent-looking green carpet and know that we did that work. It's an amazing sense of accomplishment.

Payton is a freelance writer with seven years of experience covering the landscape industry.

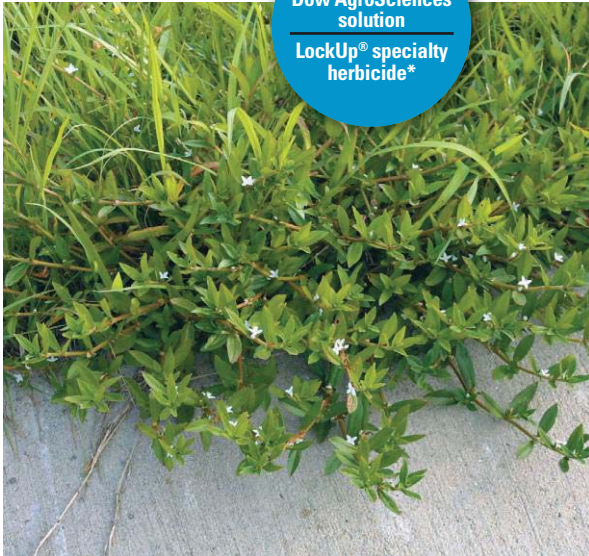
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## VIRGINIA BUTTONWEED

*Diodia virginiana*

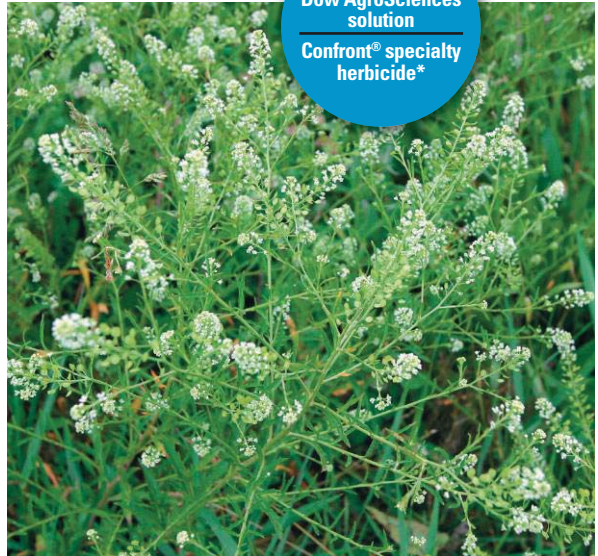
### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This spreading perennial grows along the ground. Stems root at the nodes and can be hairy.
- ▶ Its leaves are opposite and lance-shaped, and often have a yellow molting from the presence of a virus commonly associated with this weed.
- ▶ The seeds are thick and oblong, darker green on the upper surface and lighter green below.
- ▶ Star-shaped, white flowers grow between the leaf and the stem.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Removing Virginia buttonweed by hand is often ineffective, because creeping roots or fragments left behind may re-establish.
- ▶ Apply two- or three-way products containing synthetic auxins such as fluroxypyr, dicamba or clopyralid. Granular products containing penoxsulam are also labeled for Virginia buttonweed control. Multiple applications of granule or liquid products may be needed for complete control.

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herbicide\*



## VIRGINIA PEPPERWEED

*Lepidium virginicum*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This annual weed develops as a basal rosette, eventually producing flowering stems with a bottle-brush appearance.
- ▶ Its seedlings, which grow on long petioles, are hairless and oval-shaped.
- ▶ Rosette leaves are lobed along both sides of the leaf. Leaves that grow along the flowering stem are linear and without petioles.
- ▶ Stems are erect and branched, reaching heights of 20 in.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Virginia pepperweed germinates in cool soil, and can invade fall plantings of cool-season turf that have not yet developed. Low mowing will prevent seedheads from developing, and minimize the development of new seed.
- ▶ Apply a postemergent herbicide to plants that are actively growing in the seedling to flower stage. Some products containing both triclopyr and clopyralid can be applied to cool- and warm-season turfgrass.

\* Confront is not for sale or use in New York's Nassau or Suffolk counties. State restrictions on the sale and use of Confront and LockUp apply.

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

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# FLEET SMART

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## E15'S POTENTIAL DANGERS

BY PHILLIP RUSSO

One of the most important regulatory issues that fleet managers are keeping an eye on is the movement towards E15. Just when fleets were getting used to E10, the Environmental



Protection Agency (EPA) began a push for an increase to 15 percent ethanol.

In 2010, EPA issued a partial waiver that allows for the use of E15 in vehicles manufactured during or after model year 2007. In 2011, EPA expanded authorized use of E15 to include model year 2001 and later vehicles.

In August, E15 moved one step closer to reality when the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit dismissed a challenge to the EPA's partial Clean Air Act waivers for mid-level ethanol blends. In its dismissal, the court said the plaintiffs did not have a legal right to challenge the EPA decision and that trade groups presented speculative and indirect claims of harm from approval of E15. Plaintiffs in the case included the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers and the Grocery Manufacturers Association.

Chief Judge David Sentelle wrote, for example, that engine manufacturers, "provided almost no support for their assertion that E15 'may' damage the engines they have sold, subjecting them to liability." Similarly, he wrote, the refiners said they would face additional expenses for handling E15 without showing there was no other way for them to meet U.S. targets for biofuel use. And food makers' desire for low corn prices has no footing in a statute about cars, he wrote.

Judge Brett Kavanaugh dissented and argued EPA was wrong in approving E15.

We here at NAFAs Fleet Management Association, an organization comprised of fleet managers from throughout North America, have been following this legislation closely, since many of our members are still dealing with problems from E10. The association currently sides with U.S. Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner, the vice chair of the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology, who has been advocating for more time to test the fuel to see whether or not a move to E15 will affect vehicles.

In an interview with NAFAs *FLEETSolutions* magazine, Sensenbrenner said, "The EPA relied on a single Department of Energy study that was never intended to be comprehensive

and ignored significant contrary evidence. Concerns abound that E15 will cause damage to car and truck engines and also will be devastating when accidentally used in a boat motor or small engine."

Many vehicles currently on the road, and in use by businesses, were simply not made to operate on gasoline higher than E10. In June 2011, Sensenbrenner sent letters to 14 U.S. automakers to investigate how E15 would affect vehicles. All 14 automakers expressed strong concerns that cars and trucks (including those made after 2001) would wear down quicker from E15. In addition, the automakers expressed concerns about premature engine failures and other damages that



would be an added expense for businesses. Even more added expenses would arise from voided warranties and lower fuel efficiency.

Businesses with trucks should be concerned about the potential impact for both light-duty engines as well as non-covered engines.

In a statement issued after the ruling on Aug. 17, Congressman Ralph Hall, the chairman of the House Committee, said, "The majority opinion appears to ignore the near-universal agreement among automakers and engine manufacturers that these waivers will result in damaged engines and voided warranties."

"NAFA's concern is another example of the potential fallout from using E15 before we know how it impacts vehicles," said Sensenbrenner. "If E15 is widely available in the marketplace, American drivers who use the fuel will be faced with premature engine damage and more trips to the auto repair shop. In the case of the fleet management industry, those costs will only be compounded—I imagine some companies would be faced with hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional maintenance costs, not to mention more trips to fuel up due to lower fuel efficiency. Of course, because the fuel also voids warranties, fleet managers would have no other recourse but to pay for those repairs completely out of pocket."

This issue now moves back to Congress, which could block EPA's approval of E15, but frankly that is not likely to happen with the few legislative days that remain in the 2012 session of Congress.

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*Russo is the executive director of NAFAs Fleet Management Association. For more information, visit [www.nafa.org](http://www.nafa.org).*



# DASHBOARD



## ValleyCrest's safest employees win trucks

ValleyCrest Landscape Cos., Calabasas, Calif., celebrated its 2012 National Safety Awareness Day by presenting new work trucks to four of its safest employees. It was the featured part of safety events the company held across the country, where more than 10,000 employees gathered to recognize superior performance in workplace safety.

"ValleyCrest's commitment to safety began when the company was founded more than 63 years ago. To this day, ensuring employees go home safe every night remains our top priority," says Roger Zino, ceo of ValleyCrest.

That's a demanding task that requires diligence and attention to details every day. In a typical day, ValleyCrest crews are out on the road in more than 4,400 trucks, pulling more than 2,500 trailers to thousands of cus-

tomers job sites where they'll operate some 9,000 pieces of equipment.

This year marks the 10th year that ValleyCrest has awarded new trucks, during which time 51 trucks have been given to workers. Since 2002, the company's overall claims (at-fault, auto liability claims and OSHA recordable workers compensation claims) have decreased 50 percent.

This year, a record 4,600 employees across four different U.S. safety regions were eligible to enter a drawing for a new truck. To qualify, full-time field employees must complete one year of service with no accidents and be employed by a branch that meets or exceeds the company's threshold safety standards.

The four new truck winners for 2012 include:



From left: Frank Esqueda, regional safety manager; Mike Scully, ValleyCrest regional manager; truck winner Angel Hernandez-Ayala, ValleyCrest gardener in Phoenix; and Dave Hanson, ValleyCrest senior vice president.

- Domingo Cruz Hernandez, a crew leader in the maintenance division in Palo Alto, Calif.,
- Angel Hernandez-Ayala, a gardener in the maintenance division in Phoenix,
- Amelia Lopez, a gardener in the maintenance division in Tampa, Fla.; and
- Jose M. Carrillo, a crew leader in the maintenance division in Delray Beach, Fla.

## Know before you tow

Towing capability is an important consideration when choosing a truck for a Green Industry business. Here's a handy guide to towing lingo, courtesy of Ram Trucks' Ram Zone blog ([blog.ramtrucks.com/ram-technology/know-your-tow/](http://blog.ramtrucks.com/ram-technology/know-your-tow/)).

**Gross Combined Vehicle Weight (GCWW)** is the total combined weight of a fully loaded vehicle, including passengers, payload and everything in tow.

**Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW)** is the total weight of a fully loaded vehicle, including passengers and payload—but excluding all towing.

**Gross Trailer Weight (GTW)** is the total weight of the trailer plus all the cargo in it.

**Curb Weight** is the weight of a vehicle without any passengers or cargo, but including all necessary fuel, fluids and standard equipment.

**Axle Ratio** is the ratio between the revolutions per minute of the driveshaft and the rear axle. In general, a



higher number offers more towing power; a lower number offers better engine efficiency.

**Trailer Tongue Weight** is the downward force exerted on the hitch ball by the trailer coupler. In most cases, it should fall between 10 percent to 25 percent of GTW.

The **Hitch Assembly** is mounted to the tow vehicle (most often to the vehicle frame) and includes a hitch receiver, ball mount adapter, hitch ball and wiring harness.

A **Goose Neck Hitch** is a Class V hitch mounted in the bed of a pickup truck, over the rear axle. The trailer connects to a ball socket with a pivoted coupling arm.

The **Fifth Wheel Hitch** is a heavy-duty trailer hitch that mounts inside the bed of a pickup truck. Instead of using a ball hitch, the trailer attaches via a coupling king pin that locks into a large horseshoe-shaped plate.

A **Locking Differential** restricts the rotational speed of both wheels on an axle. Compared to open differentials, locking differentials are designed to offer increased traction on uneven surfaces.



# TRUCK TALK

We pick the brains of two Green Industry fleet managers



**Paul Hurlock**, *Fleet Manager*  
ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design  
Venice, Fla.

**Landscape Management (LM):** How did you wind up on this career path?

**Paul Hurlock (PH):** I've been a car guy for a long time. I moved down from Canada six years ago to look after the fleet here. My background is automotive and I worked for Lamborghini for many years and then for Chevrolet. I have a unique perspective from being on the other side of the fence for so long.

**LM:** What does the job entail for you?

**PH:** The purchasing of all our vehicles and managing the maintenance for them. In some cases I will design or spec-out what is needed. I also monitor gas consumption.

**LM:** What types of trucks are in your fleet?

**PH:** We have a total of about 105 trucks in the fleet. They'll range anywhere from a half-ton extended cab pickup, which would be driven by our account executives, to three-quarter-ton pickups with service bodies on them for the mechanics and irrigation crews. We have one-ton dump bodies for our shrub crews, for debris. I also have class 5 pickups for my landscape crews that are used to tow. I also have three medium-duty trucks used in our tree division. And I have a large Peterbilt that has a trash body on the back with a crane to move debris.

**LM:** Do you typically lease or buy your vehicles?

**PH:** Ninety-nine percent of the time I purchase them. If I do lease, I generally only lease them on a three- or four-year lease and run them down to the dollar. Here and there we'll do a lease, but there really haven't been any major advantages or tax breaks to leasing over buying. Because of the way we

stage our business with three different shops throughout the area, most of our vehicles don't get a lot of mileage because they're only going into communities within an approximate 10-mile radius.

**LM:** So how long do you typically run them?

**PH:** Our shrub trucks in particular don't go very far, so I have some from 1999 or 2000 still. I have some trucks that are 12 years old and still relatively low mileage, so it doesn't make sense to get rid of them. But for the most part, the bulk of my vehicles are 2006 or newer.

**LM:** What's the biggest challenge you face in the position?

**PH:** Trying to deal with some of the things that get done to the trucks. They get stuck, go through a fender bender or are run without oil.

**LM:** How have you combatted this problem?

**PH:** We really put a lot of emphasis on having a good-looking fleet, so we encourage our crews to take pride in the vehicles. There's only so much you can do when it comes to keeping a vehicle looking new, but we have been pretty successful in convincing our crew to at least check the oil every day. Besides trying to instill a sense of pride in the crews, we offer some rewards here and there. A supervisor will go out from time to time and stuff a \$10 bill in the dipstick handle. Then we'll see if the crew finds it by checking the oil. If they don't, we can tell them, "You missed out on 10 bucks today simply by not checking the oil." That's definitely helped.

**LM:** What's your best maintenance advice?

**PH:** Definitely regular oil changes. It's a small thing that is so important. We're also big on safety here. We're not a company that's going to let our crew drive around on bald tires. Our tire bill is huge because we don't mess around.

**LM:** What do you drive personally?

**PH:** I have an Infinity SUV that I drive but I probably drive my Camaro more than anything. That's part of me being a car guy. It's a 500 HP 2010 Camaro SS that I go drag racing in.

**LM:** Is that your dream vehicle?

**PH:** I love my Camaro but if I could drive anything it would probably be a Ferrari or a Lamborghini.





**Paul Osborne**, *Fleet & Facilities Manager*  
Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care  
Denver

**LM:** How did you get into this field?

**Paul Osborne (PO):** My father was a mechanic when I was younger. I changed my first motor at 12 years old and knew early on I wanted to do this as a career. Then at age 27 I ended up with two back surgeries in one year, so it was clear my days as a mechanic were limited. I'd already been running a commercial shop since the age of 20 so I decided to make the change over to full-time management. I still like to work on the vehicles from time to time.

**LM:** What jobs do you handle in your role?

**PO:** I handle the fleet and facilities for Swingle Tree's Denver and Fort Collins locations. That means everything from the alarm systems to managing the employees who cut the grass at our facilities to dealing with the utilities and creating and managing the budgets for both locations.

**LM:** Walk us through a typical day.

**PO:** I start at 6:15 a.m. and am sitting behind my desk looking through any notes my afternoon shift mechanics left me. Then I'll start answering emails and working on any reports. I may also go out and talk to the crews. Once my computer work is taken care of, I may be doing one-on-ones or senior staff meetings. I also do a lot of vendor negotiations and have appointments with them throughout the week. Afternoons may be spent working on vehicle maintenance reports or entering data into fleet management software. I also do a lot of side reports on different pieces of equipment. If we buy a stump grinder, I can tell you how often we're utilizing it so we're not buying a new one unnecessarily.

**LM:** What trucks do you keep in the fleet?

**PO:** We have over 200 pieces of rolling stock, along with chippers/trailers. We utilize lawn care vehicles both residential and commercial, tree-spraying vehicles, chipper trucks, shrub dumps, bucket trucks and some other vehicles that complete Swingle's corporate fleet.

**LM:** Do you purchase or lease your vehicles?

**PO:** The cost of capital makes it pretty advantageous for us to purchase right now. Of course we're always looking into

leasing because it keeps us honest and gives us a great "Plan B" if something falls through with a purchase. It's always smart to have an alternative plan.

**LM:** What's something you've learned with your years of experience?

**PO:** To cross utilize our equipment. We not only do landscaping and arborist work, but also Christmas lighting in the winter. So our equipment never really gets that downtime period, like most other landscape companies. So scheduling can be a challenge when it comes to equipment use. Cross utilization has been the answer.

**LM:** How do you think the industry sees the fleet manager role?

**PO:** I think fleet managers, in general, need to gain some credibility. A lot of people just see them as mechanics that have stepped up but there's a lot more to it than that. Fleet managers need schooling and training to read P&L statements or a balance sheet. They need technical skills to help steer a company in the best direction. I would urge fleet managers to take their role seriously and realize they have to be a professional. It's important to finish your degree. That adds a lot of value to the company you're working with.

**LM:** What's your best maintenance tip?

**PO:** To send out oil samples. When doing preventive maintenance, I always send out oil samples and use those reports to set intervals. If I've been changing the oil at every 3,000 miles and after sampling oil, realize I can get 5,000 or 6,000 miles out of it, I've just saved us 100 percent of preventive maintenance costs on that vehicle for that cycle. I would urge other fleet managers to utilize technology. You can really find out what works best for your fleet by utilizing technology.

**LM:** What do you drive personally?

**PO:** I'm pretty tall at 6 feet 5 inches, so I drive a full-size pickup.

**LM:** What's your dream vehicle?

**PO:** If they made one to fit me, probably a Callaway Twin Turbo or Ferrari F40.

**LM:** What do you see yourself doing down the road?

**PO:** I see a transition towards retirement. The same way I transitioned from mechanic to fleet manager, I see myself eventually transitioning from fleet manager to consultant. I have a lot of experience in DOT compliance, safety, asset acquisition, disposal and utilization, establishing key performance indicators and benchmarking, and it would be a shame not to continue to utilize that. At some point in the future, I see myself as a consultant where it would free up a little more time for myself but also still allow me to utilize the gifts I have.



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# 5 STEPS TO A GREENER FLEET



Regardless of your operation's fleet size or budget constraints, there's always something that can be done to make your vehicles more sustainable and efficient.

BY HEATHER TAYLOR

**The soaring price** of fuel has pushed some landscape companies to seek budget-driven practices and alternative fuels. For other business owners, the motivation to become more efficient comes from the need to project an environmentally friendly image in the community. Some contractors just want to adopt more earth-minded business practices.

The reasons might be different, but every business can use the same solutions to achieve its goals, and they all involve transforming the vehicle fleet to become more sustainable. Here are five steps fleet managers can take to create a greener, more efficient and less expensive fleet.

**1 Fuel a transformation.** Switching the fleet to vehicles that are fueled by something other than gasoline might seem like one of the most obvious ways to go green. There's good reason: Electric and hybrid vehicles produce as much as 100 percent fewer carbon dioxide emissions than comparable gasoline-powered vehicles, according to Amy Blaine, director of strategic consulting and sustainability at Donlen, a fleet management corporation. Propane and natural gas-powered vehicles emit 10 percent to 25 percent less carbon dioxide than gas-fueled vehicles. While diesel fuel might produce more emissions, it gets better mileage than gasoline, so it's more efficient that way.

The cost of the alternative fuels depends on availability and other factors, but often they're cheaper than gasoline, Blaine adds. Local Clean Cities Coalition offices, run by the U.S. Department of Energy, can offer more information and local contacts to help companies locate nearby alternative fuel sources. Visit [cleancities.energy.gov](http://cleancities.energy.gov) for details.

Perceptions about oddly designed hybrids or electric cars are no longer valid, Blaine says, explaining that most alternative-fueled vehicles today look extremely similar—if not identical—to their gasoline-fueled counterparts.

"If you haven't considered alternative fuel vehicles in a while, it might be time to investigate the options again," she says.

If a jump to a more fuel-efficient fleet is too expensive because of initial acquisition costs, start by replacing one or two vehicles. Gradual integration also can provide a chance to track just how much of a difference the switch to alternative fuels makes.

Still not sold on alternative fuels? Many automotive manufacturers have improved the mileage of their gasoline-powered models significantly in the past couple of years. Just switching to a newer model gas-powered vehicle could lead to big fuel and budget savings.

**2 Don't underestimate upkeep.** Small steps can go a long way toward enhancing performance and reducing emissions. The simple practice of maintaining the proper air pressure in a vehicle's tires can increase gas mileage by more than 3 percent, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Likewise, seemingly insignificant repairs shouldn't be overlooked. Fixing a faulty oxygen sensor, for example, can improve vehicle mileage by as much as 40 percent, Blaine says.

Sometimes it makes more sense to replace a vehicle rather than fix it, and doing so can be more environmentally friendly than people think, Blaine says. She explains that when an older model is traded in for a newer, more efficient one, the next owner of the old vehicle usually is a driver who is upgrading from an even older, less efficient vehicle. So everyone involved is then driving a more efficient vehicle than he or she was before. Plus, Blaine adds, even at the end of its life, much of a vehicle's parts can be recycled.

Also, when updating fleets, managers should consider switching to a smaller vehicle if possible—for example, employees without production duties may switch from a truck to an SUV or from an SUV to a sedan, Blaine suggests.

Fleet managers can determine the optimal time to replace vehicles by figuring out when total costs would be minimized and by looking at the maintenance profile of each vehicle. When the vehicle is replaced, choose a cost-effective replacement that meets the organization's other goals and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.



**3 Change up your oil.** Along with regular oil changes for each vehicle, the type of oil that's used can make a difference when it comes to vehicle efficiency and environmental impact. Newer processes in oil refinement have made it possible for recycled motor oil to hit the market.

Recycled oil is used motor oil that has been re-refined using the same process that is used to refine crude oil. The recycled oil has been shown to perform in engines just as well as first-run oil, with very little price difference, according to Thom Smith, vice president of branded lubricant technology at Valvoline.

He says reused oil reduces environmental impact because it requires less energy, reduces crude oil demand and produces fewer pollutants. For a fleet of 1,000 vehicles that undergoes four oil changes per year, switching to reused oil reduces crude oil demand by 12,000 gallons, cuts down on greenhouse gases by 13,000 pounds and reduces other pollutants by 143 pounds.

Whether it's reused or not, the quality of oil still counts, Smith says.

"If you have poor-quality used oil, you don't get same level of performance as you would with high-quality used oil," he says.

**4 Track effectiveness with telematics.** Knowing a fleet's (and drivers') specific fuel-wasting tendencies is the key to improving the fleet's environmental footprint. Telematics are increasingly used to track a number of fuel use metrics. Telematics is a type of technology that generally involves placing a device in each vehicle in the fleet. The device sends data to a software program that can usually be viewed via the Internet.

Telematics can record and report data including vehicle location, miles traveled and time spent speeding and idling, according to Chris Ransom, director of product management at Networkfleet, a telematics manufacturer.

To properly track and improve fuel-wasting behavior, Ransom recommends beginning by completing what's known as baselining: announce an official start date for the tracking devices to all employees, but place the devices in all the vehicles about a month before the start date and turn them on. That will give managers a good picture of normal vehicle use because the drivers don't yet know they're being tracked. It also will give management a good idea of areas to improve.

Ransom's clients, which include companies and municipi-

palities, have seen significant efficiency-boosting results using telematics. One organization reduced its instances of speeding from 2,000 per week to 100 per week, while another cut down on the average number of miles driven. Drivers were less likely to make unnecessary stops when the telematics system was being used. All of these improvements led to a decrease in fuel use.

Another one of his clients reduced the fleet's idling events drastically from more than 15 times per week to five times per week. This change alone can have a sizable impact on a vehicle's gas mileage, Ransom says.

"Even a little can make a difference," he says.

Assuming gas costs \$3.50 per gallon, and telematics improves efficiency by 10 percent, the resulting fuel savings is \$380 per vehicle per year, Blaine says.

To successfully integrate a telematics program, managers should be clear about the objectives for becoming

more efficient and how employees are expected to contribute to the goals, Ransom says. After all, tracking devices are only as effective as those using them.

"If it's not being utilized, it's worthless," he says.

**5 Sustain employee buy-in.** Being upfront and open about the company's fleet goals is the best tactic to encourage employee adoption, Ransom says.

He recommends regularly sharing the fleet improvement program's results to make employees feel a part of the effort. For example, share when instances of idling are decreasing, along with the amount of fuel it saves each month. The employees will realize the contributions they're making, he adds.

"Whatever the pitch is, you're going to find buy-in across the business," he says.

In addition, incentivize the top performers to boost participation.

"At least when it comes to telematics, the carrot is much more effective than the stick," Ransom says, adding, "We've got customers that give out gift cards for the employee with lowest idling numbers each month or the fewest speeding instances. Once you create that kind of competition and pride, then you're in good shape. You've gotten the most out of your system."

*Taylor is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.*

**Knowing a fleet's specific fuel-wasting tendencies is the key to improving its environmental footprint.**



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## When offering options, less is more

**Q** We spend too much time on concepts and revisions before we go to contract and get a deposit. How can we reduce our design time so that we can make a small profit on our drawings and shorten our sales cycle without compromising the quality of our work?

—Lenny Hartwell, New Traditions Landscaping, Fredericksburg, Va.

**A** First, check out my June column ([goo.gl/E9uW7](http://goo.gl/E9uW7)), where I discuss how to save time by creating an unbiddable master plan.

Believe it or not, one of the best things that you can do for yourself and your clients is to limit the amount of choices they have when it comes to their landscape designs. I know this sounds counterintuitive, but hear me out.

In landscape architecture school I was taught to provide clients with three concept plans so I could involve them in the design process, exploring different ideas and options. This process still makes sense on larger scale projects, but in the fast-paced world of landscape design/build you need to take charge of the design process quickly, keep your clients focused and reduce the amount of choices they have, not increase them.

Before you start throwing your T-squares or laptops at me, let me explain. As much as we all would like to give our clients hundreds of ideas to help them make decisions, the reality is that the more options you give someone, the harder it is for him or her to make a choice. Giving multiple options is especially unproductive in landscape design/build because our process needs momentum to succeed. Anything that slows it down, or causes the client to think too much, opens the door not just to competition, but to frustration and lack of confidence that can easily turn a motivated client into a canceled project.

When I first started in the business I always gave my clients three concepts to choose from. It seemed like a good idea at the time, and theoreti-

cally, it made sense. The problem was that clients wouldn't just pick A, B or C; invariably they would pick ideas from each plan requiring me to go back to the drawing board and come up with plan D. This would be OK if it stopped here. Unfortunately it didn't. A few weeks later I would return with plan D. After this presentation the client began to realize what I already knew—it was a bad design. Since I opened the door to “client input,” the homeowner now struggled choosing from four concepts. So after reviewing plans A, B, C and D, I would return a few weeks later with concept plans E, F, G and H. (I actually had a client that made me do so many revisions that we made it through the entire alphabet!) Oddly enough, after weeks and months of going through these revisions, what typically happens is that the clients return to your original design because they realize it's truly the best layout. Unfortunately, you have wasted so much time, the project can't start for several months, and both you and your clients have lost their initial excitement and enthusiasm.

Here's what you need to do. Take a cue from the movie “Nothing in Common” starring Tom Hanks and Jackie Gleason. Hanks' character worked for a high-powered advertising agency. In one scene he was making a pitch to potentially his biggest client, the president of a major airline. After a wonderful presentation the client looked at him, paused and said, “Do you have any other ideas?” Without missing a beat he responded, “Yes we do, but this is our best one and we're going with it.”

Sheer brilliance!

So, Lenny, that's exactly what I want you to do on your next project. Although you may have developed several different concepts, only present your favorite one.

Instead of leaving the meeting frustrated with a month's full of revisions to do, you'll leave with a signed contract and your client's confidence.

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To submit a question for Profiting From Design, please contact Shilan at [jshilan@gmail.com](mailto:jshilan@gmail.com).





## BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

The author, of the Wilson-Oyler Group, is a 30-year industry veteran. Reach him at [bwilson@wilson-oyler.com](mailto:bwilson@wilson-oyler.com).

# Get a price bump

**C**ommercial maintenance retention rates have declined for most companies over the past few years with many customers testing the waters in hopes of getting a lower price.

Contractors also have been more aggressive in going after each others' contracts, creating an environment that's been unsettling for most companies.

This situation has left many contractors conflicted about bringing up contract renewals, fearing it might trigger the client to put the work out to bid. Some contractors have been able to hold their own; a few companies are reporting that they are able to get some small price increases.

Price increases are always necessary to recapture increased costs of doing business. Contractors have been hesitant to ask for increases, hoping to find ways to cut costs instead. After years of cost cutting, there is no more. It's more important than ever to have good job costing with accurate costs to know what margin each job earns.

Should you increase high-margin jobs? Yes. But you should be willing to back off if you face resistance. Low-margin jobs should be increased as much as the client is willing to pay. Take into consideration the whole picture. Do you get much enhancement work? If so, it may be worth keeping a lower margin contract.

Each fall and early winter property managers prepare budgets for their properties. Get involved in your clients' budget processes. It's an ideal time to see what they're thinking for the upcoming budget year. Property managers realize contractors have not had increases—neither have they. This just might be the year when they become less resistant to price increases. After all, property managers need good service providers.

Call or visit your customer to discuss proposed price increases before putting them into writing. This is critical. If you just send a letter advising of the increase, as some companies do, your customer could put the job out to bid without even telling you.

The key to long-term success lies in demonstrating partnership value to the customer and building on a foundation of trust. These are six tried and true best practices that will build affinity and trust and pay off on the bottom line:

- 1 Stay close to your customer and do good work.** As the owner of the business you have the most leverage in securing the renewal and getting the increase. If you delegate, remember that employees may not have the same vested interest as you in getting the increase and may back down to get the renewal.
- 2 Understand and be sensitive to your customers' businesses.** If their businesses are hurting, you may have to forgo the increases. You can reduce services to retain the same margin, or sometimes it's best to delay the increase until better times. At least if you defer the increase, it's on the table for next year.
- 3 Make sure you're in a strong position at renewal time.** Be diligent in checking the client's property in the months prior to renewal. You can't afford to have a customer service glitch at renewal time.
- 4 Do some reconnaissance.** Try to determine if your client's other service providers have been able to renew and get increases and how much. If you see changes in other service providers, that should be a warning that it may not be business as usual.
- 5 Get involved in the customers' budget processes.** If you're close to your customers you should be able to find out when they budget for the coming year. Give them a budget number for your increase, as well as a budget for enhancements. They usually have budget guidelines and can tell you if they'll be asked to cut costs in tough times. You need to know this.
- 6 Build your case around specific data.** When asking for an increase, do not just ask for an inflationary increase. Be specific in citing which of your costs have increased. This year, most companies have had increases in liability, health and workers' compensation insurance. The customers see these increases, too, and will be able to identify with them.



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## LAWN CARE PRODUCTS



### Valent Professional Products

SureGuard Herbicide provides Green Industry professionals with long-lasting, pre- and postemergent control of broadleaf and grassy weeds in landscapes, bareground settings and in dormant bermudagrass. SureGuard, a sprayable herbicide, provides extended residual weed control of broadleaf and grassy weeds, and in addition to extended control, enhances the speed and

performance of glyphosate. Within dormant bermudagrass, SureGuard delivers excellent turf tolerance and provides unmatched speed and lasting control of winter annuals, including annual bluegrass. [Valent.com](http://Valent.com)

### Syngenta

Controlling difficult weeds and sedges postemergence on residential and commercial lawns just got easier with the introduction of Monument 75WG herbicide in single-dose small-packs. Simply add a 0.5-gram, water-soluble packet to 2 gal. of water in a backpack or handheld sprayer. This broad-spectrum selective herbicide controls all major sedges and more than 40 other weeds, including dandelion, crabgrass (suppression), nutsedge, clover and spurge, among others. [GreencastOnline.com](http://GreencastOnline.com)



### Vitamin Institute

"We never lose trees. Our jobs always look beautiful." That's what SUPERthrive users routinely tell the Vitamin Institute at landscape contractors' conventions. The World's Fair Gold Medal SUPERthrive 50-in-1 Activator, Reviver, Trans/Planter and Extra Grower is revolutionizing tree and other plant care. Visit online for a free trial coupon. [SUPERthrive.com/freetrial.html](http://SUPERthrive.com/freetrial.html)



### Arborjet

Arborjet has partnered with Richter 10.2 Video to create a custom, two-minute promotional video about tree trunk injection treatment. Once the video is customized with the business logo, contact information and tree pests treated, the video

does all the work. The custom video provides a great visual explanation that can be used to educate existing and prospective customers about the benefits of saving trees with Arborjet's trunk injection technology. Arborjet is making the video available to service providers for \$150 upfront. Once the provider shares the video via social media, on the web or by email, Arborjet is offsetting the costs by sending the service provider 300 Arborplugs (a \$150 value) for free. [Arborjet.com/customvideo](http://Arborjet.com/customvideo)

### Growth Products Ltd.

New BioNutrients 8-0-9 is a 100 percent organic bio-stimulant and soil conditioner. The dry concentrate is packaged in 8-oz. packs. Fully soluble in water, it is a "no-mess, no-measure" way to build turf and soil health. BioNutrients can be used in a wide variety of turf applications to revitalize soils and neutralize soil salts, to promote faster rooting and deeper turf roots, and to improve turf color and make turf better able to withstand environmental and disease stresses. These improvements derive from the dry soluble's high concentration of natural L-amino acids, humic acids, kelp extracts and other carbon-rich molecules that sustain the powerful microbial growth unleashed by BioNutrients' proprietary mix of wild yeast and four species of beneficial rhizosphere Bacillus: *B. subtilis*, *B. licheniformis*, *B. amylolique* and *B. pumilis*. [GrowthProducts.com](http://GrowthProducts.com)

*continued on page 60*







## Introducing the New Professional Level M-ZT Series

The MZ series zero-turn mower from Husqvarna takes performance, productivity, and comfort to a whole new level. The intuitive operator interface, heavy-duty steel frame and commercial rated hydraulic system create the ultimate mowing experience. With a rugged fabricated steel deck that is mulch and collection capable, the MZ is practical for all of your property maintenance needs. The engine features EFM (Electronic Fuel Management) - no choke required so the engine starts and performs similar to fuel injection.



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## The Biochar Co.

Soil Reef creates biochar with an age-old process called pyrolysis that bakes uncontaminated wood by cooking it at high temperatures with no oxygen in a controlled container. This process sequesters about half the carbon in the biomass and reduces it to pure biochar, one of the key ingredients in rich soil. Biochar ultimately increases crop yields, grows healthier plants that are more resistant to disease and reduces annual dependency on fertilizers. Soil Reef comes mixed and ready to use, with Organic Mechanics Compost and worm castings. Pure biochar, to mix how you choose, is also available through the company. [SoilReef.com](http://SoilReef.com)



## Agrium

Spread It & Forget It fertilizer (14-14-14) is designed to offer turf professionals the ability to round out their turf-oriented operations by feeding trees, shrubs and flower beds all season long with just one application. The fertilizer provides the right nutrition at the right time, giving turf professionals strong, healthy landscape plants and more time to focus on other areas of their operation. [Agriumat.com](http://Agriumat.com)



## Rockwell Labs

New FenvaStar EcoCap contains 3.5 percent esfenvalerate with Eco-Cap technology. Instead of using petroleum such as other microcaps, EcoCaps are made with renewable vegetable oil, and feature zero

volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and virtually no odor. They won't clog equipment, and they offer superior mixing and ease of use, the company says. The product effectively kills bed bugs, stink bugs, mosquitoes, cockroaches, ants, flies, fleas, stinging insects, and many other target structural, stored product and turf pests. FenvaStar EcoCap is approved for indoor food and non-food areas, including broadcast carpet spray, livestock and poultry premises, and outdoor structural and turf uses. The residual efficacy is outstanding on a variety of surfaces, indoors and outdoors, even after rain and sun exposure, the company says.

[RockwellLabs.com](http://RockwellLabs.com)

## PBI Gordon

Zylam liquid systemic insecticide is a new formulation of dinotefuran, the latest generation of neonicotinoid insecticides. It provides control of a broad spectrum of chewing and sucking insects including scales, aphids, borers, thrips, lacebugs, mealybugs and caterpillars. Used as a soil drench or bark banding application, the low-odor insecticide translocates quickly through the vascular plant tissues, working its way to the plant's extremities. Translocation times vary based on the

size of treated plants and environmental conditions. Insect control for small shrubs may be in as little as a few hours and a few weeks for large trees.

[PBIgordon.com](http://PBIgordon.com)



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***[www.quali-pro.com](http://www.quali-pro.com)***



continued from page 60

## Quali-Pro

Tebuconazole 3.6F fungicide provides preventive and curative control on a broad spectrum of disease pathogens, including dollar spot, brown patch, anthracnose, snow molds and more. A systemic mode of action delivers up to three weeks of residual control, and its multi-site activity is excellent for rotation in resistance management programs. Low use rates and the latest “mix-friendly” Quali-Pro formulation make Tebuconazole 3.6F easy to work with and convenient to apply. Although labeled for disease control on warm- and cool-season grasses, golf course turf and around landscape, nursery ornamentals, Tebuconazole is not labeled for use on residential lawns. *Quali-Pro.com*



## Environmental Science, a division of Bayer CropScience

Tribute Total is a novel herbicide that provides lawn care managers with a complete solution for postemergent treatment in bermudagrass. Its combination of active ingredients replaces the need for tank-mixing multiple products to achieve desired weed control. Tribute Total is effective against a broad spectrum of grassy and broadleaf weeds, sedges and kyllingas—including dallisgrass, crabgrass and yellow and purple nutsedge. At a use rate range of 1 oz. to 3.2 oz. per acre, each 6-oz. container treats between 1.875 acres and 6 acres. Additionally, with a 60.5 percent water dispersible granule formulation, Tribute Total requires less storage space and transportation and less-frequent container disposal. *BackedbyBayer.com*

## Dow AgroSciences

New Kerb SCT&O is a proven, versatile tool for Green Industry professionals. It provides both preemergent and early postemergent control of many winter annual and perennial grasses, including annual bluegrass from warm-season grasses and the removal of perennial ryegrass from warm-season grasses during spring transition. Kerb SCT&O, which replaces Kerb 50WP specialty herbicide, is now available in most states. The new liquid formulation is easier on equipment and reduces worker exposure. *DowAgro.com*

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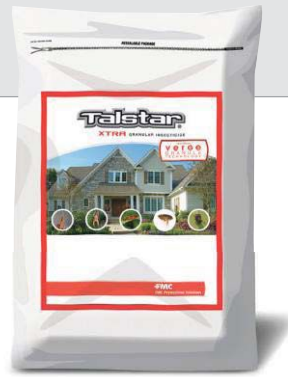
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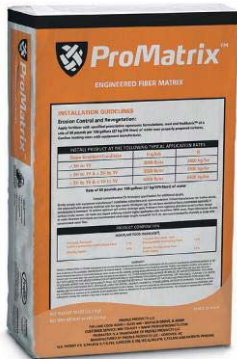
## FMC Professional Solutions

Over the past two years, FMC Professional Solutions, a business unit of FMC Corp., has been enhancing its granular product line. First, FMC added zeta-cypermethrin to its bifenthrin granular product, creating Talstar XTRA for enhanced speed and broad-spectrum protection. Then, FMC introduced Verge granule technology on its Talstar EZ product. Now, all of the "XTRAs" come standard in one granular product—and at no additional cost—with the introduction of Talstar XTRA granular insecticide featuring Verge Granule Technology. The new product combines the fast and long-term power of Talstar XTRA with the Verge granule's many performance benefits, including a more uniform product distribution and less dust. [FMCprosolutions.com](http://FMCprosolutions.com)



## BioSafe Systems

New AXXE broad-spectrum herbicide is formulated as an herbicidal soap utilizing ammonium nonanoate. This active ingredient is National Organic Program (NOP) compliant. AXXE is formulated as a liquid concentrate that is mixed with water. It's powerful, effective and economical for control of annual and perennial broadleaf weeds as well as mosses, liverworts and lichens, the company says. Made of natural fatty acids, AXXE works by removing, or "burning," the waxy cuticle of green vegetation and will not move through soil to injure nearby plants. AXXE works within hours of application, produces no residue and is available in 5-, 30-, 55- and 275-gal. sizes. [BioSafeSystems.com](http://BioSafeSystems.com)



## Profile Products

New ProMatrix provides 20 percent less tank loads per job because of the high loading formulation—and offers excellent erosion

control, shootability, coverage and germination. Its patented Engineered Fiber Matrix (EFM) technology was created to give contractors an edge when bidding on jobs requiring bonded fiber matrix (BFM)/stabilized mulch matrix (SMM) hydraulic products. With a recommended 60 lbs. per 100 gal. of water, ProMatrix is the highest-loading product among BFMs, according to the company. Proprietary dispersion granules facilitate the even distribution of the fibers and chemistry to optimize product performance. A consistent slurry pumps out easily to assume smooth and efficient application. [ProfileProducts.com](http://ProfileProducts.com)

## BASF

Pillar G fungicide controls diseases such as dollar spot, anthracnose, brown patch, large patch, take-all patch, summer patch, snow mold and leaf spot on most types of turfgrass. The fungicide combines triticonazole and pyraclostrobin. The granular formulation gives contractors application flexibility and convenience—allowing them to apply it when a spot treatment is needed, in wet or snowy conditions or when temperatures may freeze spray lines. The active ingredient moves quickly off the granule after irrigation or precipitation, and protects the turfgrass soon after application. [BASFTurftalk.com](http://BASFTurftalk.com)



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## APPLICATION EQUIPMENT

### Earthway Products

The S25SS SPRAY-PRO push sprayer is the newest model in the S-series product line, featuring a brand-new, all stainless-steel chassis. Designed for spraying ice control products, pesticides,

herbicides and fertilizers, the S25 has an adjustable spray system that makes sidewalks and parking lots easy to manage, as well as the ability to apply precise



amounts of liquid. Use it on lawns, driveways, paths and any area that your boom sprayer will not go: No gas, no batteries, no problem. [Earthway.com](http://Earthway.com)

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### Grasshopper

Apply pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers more efficiently with a Shielded Sprayer for Grasshopper zero-turn mowers. The design contains the spray pattern for on-target application, even in windy conditions. The independent suspension and dolly wheels follow ground contours for precise and even spray application. Each spray chamber features four spray nozzles, which provide uniform coverage by applying finer spray droplets. Zero-turn maneuverability eliminates wasted motion, spraying up to 5.5 acres per tank with fewer chemicals, faster application times and faster drying times, while keeping chemicals away from the operator and non-target areas. [GrasshopperMower.com/sprayer](http://GrasshopperMower.com/sprayer)

### Turfco

Turfco introduces the optional 3-in-1 Auxiliary Tank for its patented and pending T3000i spreader/sprayer. The 3-in-1 Auxiliary Tank fits securely on the front of the T3000i without obstructing the view or inhibiting the hands-free speed control system. Using the same liquid in the 15-gal. Auxiliary Tank and the primary 16-gal. tank enables the operator to spray up to 124,000 sq. ft. Alternatively, having the capacity to spray two liquids makes it simple to spray separate areas without switching equipment. The secondary liquid can be sprayed with the additional front-mount spray nozzle for the Auxiliary Tank, which sprays in 6- or 9-ft. widths. [Turfco.com](http://Turfco.com)

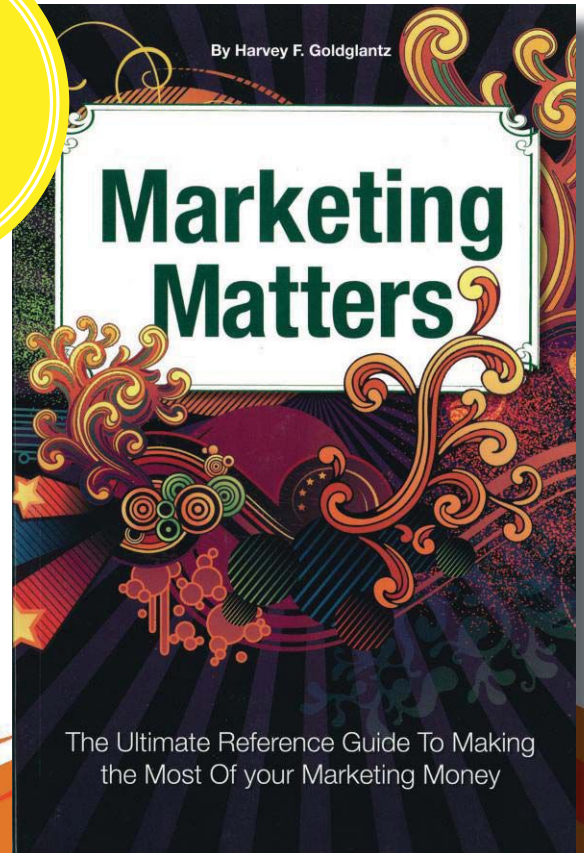




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Author: Harvey Goldglantz

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**Landscape**  
Management

## On new turf

A Maryland firm finds artificial turf installation can be a nice addition to design/build work.

**WHEN A CLIENT** asked Four Seasons Landscaping & Nursery for an artificial turf putting green, it led to a new division for the Damascus, Md.-based company. The company's always focused on design/build (with no maintenance division). Adding an artificial turf service fit well with that niche. Today, the company installs artificial putting greens but also artificial grass for a variety of purposes.

In fact, putting greens are probably the least popular installation for Four Seasons right now. The company found a larger market in selling artificial grass installation to kennels and day care centers.

"Adding artificial turf to a kennel or day care adds value to their companies," says owner Doug Del Gandio. "An outdoor space with a lot of dogs is hard to grow grass on. It gets trampled and dug up. But with the artificial turf, a kennel can still offer a clean area for the dogs to play. Similarly, day cares have to worry about the kids getting muddy in regular grass but an artificial turf eliminates that. It's also hypoallergenic and has some soft padding, which is nice for playgrounds."

Del Gandio says he's seen a growing market for colleges and high-end high schools converting their sports fields to artificial turf. He hasn't gotten into that area, but he says he's seen other companies become successful with it.

"The schools see it as an obvious return on investment because with no mowing or fertilizing, they're ultimately making their money back," says Del Gandio. "But that's a large application and it's more for companies who focus on this full time. For us, it's just an add-on service right now."

As the market grows, Del Gandio believes it will become a bigger money maker for his business. "We're still pretty new to it and doing about 15 projects a year, but as it becomes more of a mainstream idea, I could see it driving a lot of revenue for a company like ours."

Right now, 100 percent of the company's marketing effort is web driven. It had previously tried direct mail, with little luck.

"People don't know a lot about artificial grass right now, so they're already getting online to find out more about it," says Del Gandio. "As they do that, the first thing they'll do is a Google search to see who offers it."

With putting greens there's an opportunity for repeat revenue, says Del Gandio. "The putting greens do require maintenance and we tell our customers that they need to have us come back at least once a year to roll the green," he says. "You want the putting green to play like a real golf course, and in order to do that, we need to get the roller on it for a couple of hours to make sure it's laying right. But that's the only recurring service that comes out of artificial grass. Once you lay down the turf there isn't any future maintenance work that needs to be done. The product is permeable and rainwater goes through it. And if it doesn't rain for a while and you want to wash it out, you can always hose it down."

Although putting greens aren't the most popular application right now, Del Gandio says he could see them coming back. "They're somewhat expensive to install, so it tends to be customers with expendable income that want them, which isn't as many people in this economy," says Del Gandio, adding that a typical 800-sq.-ft. to 1,000-sq.-ft. putting green would cost \$10,000 to \$14,000 to install. Synthetic turf applications for general use range from \$8,000 to \$12,000. "They're sort of viewed as a luxury. But there are also so many practical applications for artificial grass, which continue to drive the market in commercial opportunities like playgrounds, day cares, veterinarian's offices and kennels. I definitely see this as a growing service for our company."

Payton is a freelance writer with seven years of experience covering the landscape market.



Artificial turf installation prospects go beyond putting greens.

### » SERVICE SNAPSHOT

#### WHAT WAS THE LEARNING

**CURVE?** An artificial turf manufacturer helped Four Seasons build a green at its facility as part of its training process.

"There really wasn't a huge learning curve," owner Doug Del Gandio says. "It's very similar to laying a paver patio and is the same kind of base, but you're just laying down turf instead of brick in the end."

#### WHAT WAS YOUR INVESTMENT?

For a design/build company that likely already has excavating equipment and a roller, the cost of training is the biggest investment, says Del Gandio. Small tools specific to artificial turf would cost less than \$2,000.



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"I was amazed at the size of the show and the technologies presented there. The hardscape technology was very interesting, and we found some new methods for installing.

In the education seminars I picked up a lot of useful, take-home ideas on business building and planning. The speakers really knew this business and presented at our level."

**Darryl Orr**  
Pacific Landscapes  
Sebastopol, CA

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Bergenfield, N.J.-based Kindergan Landscaping has successfully built a strong base of residential design/build and maintenance clientele in its 25-plus years of business. Now there are plans to expand even more, getting into the commercial segment and continuing to grow the maintenance division by converting every new design client into a maintenance customer. The key is: “Don’t forget to ask for that sale,” says **Chris Hricik**, account manager and manager of the landscape maintenance division, who also serves as vice president of the New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association. He recently shared his outlook with *Landscape Management*.



Chris Hricik says homeowner spending is finally coming back.

## INSIDE INFO

**Company:**  
Kindergan Landscaping

**Headquarters:**  
Bergenfield, N.J.

**Employees:** 30

**Key to being a maintenance leader:** Communication. Be proactive on a customer’s property and make sure they know you’re there and you’re finding problems before they do. Help make them aware of their property needs and help them to protect their investment.

local functions and getting involved in the community. Participating in service activities, such as donating a project to a school or a non-profit community organization, also helps.

» **Keeping employees focused on the customer.** It’s a challenge here, and I’m sure for a lot of other companies as well, to keep the employees focused on just how important our customers really are. The truth is that without our customers, we don’t have a business. The customer does need to come first. That means putting the focus on giving them top quality and not overlooking that one weed. It may sound small, but that one weed could be the reason behind the negative

phone call or even losing the job. We try to drive that point home with employees.

## TOP OPPORTUNITIES

» **Expanding markets.** A short-term goal for us is to become more involved with the commercial and industrial market. Right now we’re a residential company for the most part, but we’re looking to expand our business into commercial landscape maintenance. We’re also looking to get into snow removal.

» **Technology.** GPS truck- and equipment-tracking and routing software provide a great opportunity. Competition is ramping up and rates are coming down. To know where your equipment is at any given moment and to get it to the job efficiently is just smart. Fuel savings alone can pay for each tracking unit.

» **Continuing education.** We emphasize continuing education for all employees on best maintenance practices, safety regimens and offering them opportunities to further their career with our company. Smart employees are efficient and profitable.

Payton is a freelance writer with seven years of experience covering the landscape industry.

PHOTO: CHRIS HRICK

## TOP TRENDS

» **Investing is back on track.** The single-family homeowners are finally starting to invest in their homes again. It had slowed down a good bit and for a while we weren’t sure when it would come back. But now people want to redo their 15-year-old patios or renovate their yards. They see work going on in their neighborhood again and they want to keep up. It may not be as much work as it once was, but things have turned around.

» **Controlling costs.** We’re finding a trend toward controlling more costs, not only on supplies but on fuel, insurance and even controlling the salaries and hourly wages of our employees. We’re also looking for ways we can reduce costs for health benefits. The idea is to find opportunities to stay competitive, and controlling costs has been part of that solution. One of the things I’ve focused on these past few years is price checking on long-term vendors. We’re not just assuming we got the best price but going out there and finding out. We’ll go out for that second or third quote on plant or hardscape material.

## TOP OBSTACLES

» **Staying current.** Being able to keep up with all of the new products and education is always going to be a challenge, since our industry changes so quickly. There’s always something new to learn. But we really value continuing education and believe that’s the solution.

» **Getting bogged down by price checkers.** It’s always a challenge to put your business out there but not get too overwhelmed by fielding calls from the price checkers. Price checkers do help support the business, so it’s not like we won’t take any of those calls, but there’s only so much time that any one company has to invest in that. We’re not saying we only want the slam-dunk jobs, but we’re looking for elevated clientele who are willing to pay a little more for the better product and the better service. We find that type of clientele by attending





### THE BENCHMARK

KEVIN KEHOE The author is owner-manager of JPC Consulting. Reach him at editor@thebenchmarkmedia.net.

## The power of pricing

There is still a lot of gnashing of teeth about market pricing. I showed a chart at a recent Professional Land-care Network (PLANET) event that reported moving prices in different regions of the country and what the average

Some explanation is in order, however, to explain pricing differentials. Table 2 shows the contractors in two geographic markets can at a very different price for the same service and make the same profit percentage. In this very example, the respective contractors each made



### PROFITING FROM DESIGN

JODY SHILAN Shilan is editor of fromdesign2build.com. Contact him at

TABLE 1: MOVING RATE VS. GROSS MARGINS

AMR	AGM
\$0	51%
\$5	49%
\$10	47%
\$15	45%
\$20	43%
\$25	41%
\$30	39%
\$35	37%
\$40	35%
\$45	33%
\$50	31%
\$55	29%
\$60	27%
\$65	25%
\$70	23%
\$75	21%
\$80	19%
\$85	17%
\$90	15%
\$95	13%
\$100	11%

This table shows what a contractor's average gross margin is (AGM) based on a given average moving rate (AMR).

TABLE 2: MOVING RATE VS. GROSS MARGINS

AMR	AGM
\$0	51%
\$5	49%
\$10	47%
\$15	45%
\$20	43%
\$25	41%
\$30	39%
\$35	37%
\$40	35%
\$45	33%
\$50	31%
\$55	29%
\$60	27%
\$65	25%
\$70	23%
\$75	21%
\$80	19%
\$85	17%
\$90	15%
\$95	13%
\$100	11%

## The unbiddable master plan

This might be a silly question, but is there anything that you can do to stop your client from taking your design, making copies of it and then shopping it around to your competitors to try and get a lower price? Any advice would be greatly appreciated.

—Darryl Wartogaj, Dreamscapes LLC, St. Paul, MN

The short answer, Danny, is yes! However, it is my opinion that if clients pay you for a design, they own the plan and can do whatever they want with it. You've been paid for your design services.

Why that said, there are things that you can do to provide professional design services and still make it difficult for a client to shop your plan.

Unlike the alternative process, where homeowners hire an independent landscape designer or land-

scape designer, you are the one who is doing the design. One of the things that you can do is to stop your client from taking your design, making copies of it and then shopping it around to your competitors to try and get a lower price? Any advice would be greatly appreciated.



### BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON The author, of the Wilson-Dwyer Group, is a 30-year industry veteran. Reach him at editor@thebenchmarkmedia.net.

## It's good if your head's in the clouds

You cannot do today's business with yesterday's tools or yesterday's thinking.

If the last few years have not convinced you that landscape maintenance services are a commodity and differentiated primarily by price, you are in the minority. If, in that same period of time, you have not reconsidered the tools you use to do business, you also are in the minority and it's time to catch up.

One way the business of our industry can reinvent itself is to embrace new technologies that are changing the way we work.

As mobile computing and Internet-based technology knock down walls, the cloud has replaced the cubicle. The dynamics of working, meeting, selling and interacting online have created new behaviors and job descriptions as well as new business models and expectations for performance and success.

The problem is there is a staggering amount of new tools, gadgets, applications, programs and downloadable must-haves available every day, trying to figure out which ones are best and how they work in unison can be overwhelming.

Do not do it yourself. Bring in the skill to make it happen. Even if you are cutting overhead, hire a professional who can tie it together and assist you and your team with identifying and integrating the right technologies to run your business and ensure they work together seamlessly.

In my consulting practice, I see some companies

as if nothing is working the way it should. A recent study by IBM reported that over the next three years, the number of businesses that will



### THE BENCHMARK

JEFF HARKNESS The author is owner-manager of JPC Consulting. Reach him at jph@jpcconsulting.com.

## Considering an exit?

Building profits and increasing the value of your company in the current environment is a challenge. Does it seem like today's economic climate and political agenda are working against you? Health care mandates, expiring tax cuts, immigration reform, high fuel costs and little change in the housing market—shall I go on? If you're considering an exit in the next six to 18 months, make sure you have a plan to quantify

deal is unique, understand that retained assets or liabilities can be negotiated just like your multiple or adjusted EBITDA. Cash, timing of a closing date, working capital requirements or the payoff of long-term or short-term debt all contribute to your net purchase price.

**Tax consequences** Most deals in the Green Industry typically involve purchasing assets rather than stock. Liability risk



### THE BENCHMARK

The author is owner-manager of JPC Consulting. Reach him at editor@thebenchmarkmedia.net.

FRANK ROSS

## The 90-day scrub

ent planner is the property. Why would you want to do this? Principally because wherever you are in your year's activity, you are that much smarter than you were when the budget was created however many months ago. Put those smarts down on paper.

It is not so hard, either. For example, if just closed June, we are looking at our updated rolling budget numbers and it is the second week of July.

If we don't know how July is performing when we are halfway through the month, something's wrong. So, update July's numbers. We also know what the

# Meet the Columnists

Stop by booth #3018 at the GIE+Expo to say hello to LM's expert contributors.

### Bruce Wilson Best Practices

The former president of Environmental Care and vice president of the parent company, Valley Crest Cos., Bruce Wilson has held numerous leadership positions in the landscape industry. Under his guidance, Environmental Care grew from a single-service California operation to the first \$100 million multi-service landscape maintenance company in the country.



### Jody Shilan Profiting from Design

As a former design/build contractor, Jody Shilan has designed, sold and managed millions of dollars worth of highly profitable installation work. He's now an independent designer, consultant and executive director of the New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association. He also operates fromdesign2build.com.



### Kevin Kehoe, Jeff Harkness and Frank Ross The Benchmark

Kevin Kehoe has worked with more than 150 companies in the services industry, helping them increase profits, grow revenues, acquire companies and exit for retirement. Jeff Harkness specializes in growth and exit strategy planning and has spent the last 10 years working exclusively with the owners of contracting and service firms. Frank Ross' in-depth work on several national Green Industry financial studies and 35 years of hands-on experience with the most successful companies in the country give him unparalleled knowledge of what Green Industry firms do to become profitable and what steps they must take to make money.



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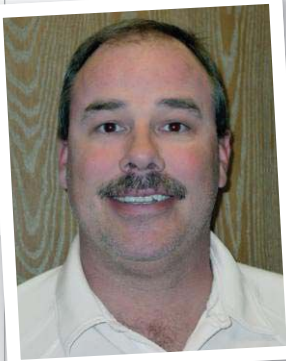


# MYBIGGESTMISTAKE

LESSONS LEARNED THE HARD WAY » BY CASEY PAYTON



## One exec got a hard lesson when his computer crashed.



Brian Golembiewski

**COMPANY NAME:** Paramount Landscape & Maintenance

**COMPANY HEADQUARTERS:** Tempe, Ariz.

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 55

**SERVICE BREAKDOWN:** 85% maintenance; 15% tree trimming and lawn care

**CLIENT BREAKDOWN:** 100% commercial

**2011 REVENUE:** \$2.6 million

**A**LTHOUGH IT WAS 14 years ago, Brian Golembiewski says he'll never forget the day his computer crashed. The data he lost affected almost every area of his business. Not backing up his files remains his biggest mistake in business to date, and it forever changed the way he views technology. Today, he's kept up with every possible advance in backup abilities to ensure all of his work is properly saved.

"It was the worst feeling," says Golembiewski, president of Paramount Landscape & Maintenance, in Tempe, Ariz., recalling the day his computer crashed. "I can remember it vividly. It was almost like being burglarized. I was left with nothing. It was just such an empty feeling and I didn't even know what to do next."

Not only did Golembiewski lose important documents, client information and other paperwork, he also lost all of his financial data. He says the biggest impact was how it affected accounts receivable. Golembiewski literally didn't know which clients owed him money or how much they owed.

"The only thing I could do was wait for checks to show up and create dummy invoices to receive them," he says. "If someone paid me, they paid me. But if they didn't, they

got away with it, because I had no idea what the status was on any of my accounts."

The computer crash caused countless problems for Golembiewski that year, including making taxes incredibly difficult to complete. And all of the hassle caused quite a bit of lost time. But the one good thing that came from it was he learned the importance of backing up his work. Fortunately, he was only four years into the business.

---

**"IF SOMEONE PAID ME, THEY PAID ME. BUT IF THEY DIDN'T, THEY GOT AWAY WITH IT."**

Going forward, Golembiewski spent every night backing up his work from the day. Of course, in 1998, the technology was somewhat limited. Golembiewski used zip disks to backup his work, and to be extra cautious, he rotated them so that he had several discs going at once. "That way if I ever lost a disc, I had another one, and I'd only lost a couple days' worth of data since I was always rotating them," he remembers.

Today, the technology has come so far that back-

ing up computer data is much easier. Golembiewski uses online backup service Carbonite, one of many programs available. Golembiewski likes the idea of having his information backed up on the Internet.

"If you use a backup drive or another local source you still have the potential of losing data in something like a fire or a flood," he says. "A computer crash isn't the only way to lose data. It could be stolen or damaged, too. That's why I've preferred backing up online."

In terms of investment, Golembiewski says it's not unreasonable for the value of the service being provided. He pays \$750 per year and is backing up nine computers that are all linked to one server. And he says it's easy. "It's really as simple as subscribing to a service like Carbonite, or one of the others out there," Golembiewski says. "In 1998 it was much more cumbersome. It took a half hour each night to save everything. But nowadays it's automatic. It makes it practically fool-proof and really doesn't give anyone any excuse not to be doing it."

The bottom line, says Golembiewski, is to do it. "Computers will crash," he says. "That's just what happens. If you're not taking the time or making the investment in a backup, you might wind up being in a pretty tough spot."

Payton is a freelance writer with seven years of experience covering the landscape market.



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