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VOL 52, ISSUE 12

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**OUR MISSION:** *Landscape Management* shares new ideas to inspire and empower readers to run more efficient, profitable businesses. We're the leading information resource for lawn care, landscape maintenance, design/build and irrigation professionals.

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easier and your  
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productive**

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## facebook FEATURE

### QUESTION OF THE WEEK

What's your take on the state of market?  
Are things healthy, flat or down?

Every Monday we query our Facebook followers. Here are a few of our favorite responses to a recent question. Share your thoughts at [Facebook.com/LandscapeManagement](https://www.facebook.com/LandscapeManagement).



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@PLANET2005: @LandscapeMgmt: LM Editor Marisa Palmieri provides pointers on the topic of hiring #military members. [ow.ly/qKA2i](https://ow.ly/qKA2i)

@GoiLawn: RT @LandscapeMgmt: Immigration reform: Small window closing fast, says LM government affairs blogger Gregg Robertson [ow.ly/qAnzY](https://ow.ly/qAnzY)

@LandscapeMgmt: Overtime can actually make you more money, Jeffrey Scott says @LeadersEdge [ow.ly/qyzuY](https://ow.ly/qyzuY)

» **Jonathan CJ Scott:** Business seems to be going well in Middle Tenn... Hoping for more of the same next year.

» **Justin Foley:** They are good in Central Florida. Last year sales were \$417,000 and by year-end we will be around \$520,000.

» **Ryan Hagen:** Great year in Northern Ohio this year! Doubled profits in our second full year.

» **Spyker Spreaders:** Healthy!

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

MARISA PALMIERI EDITOR

Contact Marisa at 216/706-3764 or via email at mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net.

# LM staff app picks

I don't know about you, but I always want to know what technology tools others are using to make their lives easier. After all, that's the inspiration for this month's cover story. As we were working on this issue, it occurred to me that I'd never asked my co-workers their favorite business-related apps. So, I inquired. Here's what I found out.

I'll go first. My favorite app that keeps me organized professionally is the RSS reader app Feedly (free, iOS and Android). Its design is pleasantly user-friendly for a mobile format. If you're not using this or another RSS app to keep up with your favorite news sites, blogs and other feeds, you're wasting your time.

LM Publisher **Bill Roddy** gives a shout-out to CardMunch, a LinkedIn product (free, iOS). I second his pick. With this app you can say goodbye to your stacks and drawers full of business cards. Take a picture of a card with the app and it converts to a contact automatically. It also displays your contact's LinkedIn profile information and the connections you have in common; plus, you can send a connection request right from the app. Cardcloud and CamCard are alternatives for Android users.

Hootsuite is the productivity app of choice for LM Associate Editor **Sarah Pfledderer**. "It's great for monitoring all social media platforms and the scheduling feature is extremely useful," she says. Sarah would know. She manages much of LM's Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+ activity—and she can do it easily from one app on her iPhone.

When it comes to document shar-

ing, our Manager **Antoinette Sanchez-Perkins** recommends CamScanner (free, iOS and Android). "You don't have to be stuck next to a printer or scanner to share documents," she says. The app allows you to scan documents by taking a photo of them with your phone and it enhances the images like a computer scan would. The scan is saved as a PDF and can be emailed directly from your phone. You also can upload documents from other apps, such as Google Drive or Dropbox.

Travel much? **Kevin Stoltman**, president and CEO of our parent company North Coast Media, takes a simple but effective approach to recalling various hot spots when he's travelling on business. Within his iPhone's Notes app he has one long-running note, organized by city, that serves as his list of places to stay, eat and play. He often refers to it when booking reservations so he never has to say, "Where should I stay, what was the name of that restaurant I read about or where should I play golf?"

Here's one for all you landscape designers: Our Vice President of Graphic Design & Production **Pete Seltzer** singles out Adobe Kuler (free, iOS)—billed as a "fun and simple way to capture inspiring color combinations wherever you see them." Snap or import a photo and Kuler extracts a color palette you can save for future reference. Android user? Try Swatch-Matic (free).

What are your best productivity and organizational apps? We want to know. Email mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net or tweet at us @LandscapeMgmt and we'll share the responses online and in a future issue.

# Landscape Management

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## Forum prompts peer, supplier networking

BY SARAH PFLEDDERER ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**B**ill Leuenberger may have best summed up the takeaway of the *Landscape Management 2013 Lawn Care Forum* when he said, “It’s amazing, when you talk to your peers, the things you can find out about.”

Leuenberger, soil and turf management department manager at Chalet in North Chicago, Ill., was one of 34 lawn care professionals who gathered at Reunion Resort in Orlando, Fla., Nov. 13-15 for the conference.

The event kicked off with an informal welcome reception. Other networking opportunities continued with golfing, ziplining and an ATV tour.

Next, attendees engaged with forum sponsors in one-on-one supplier meetings—with Dow AgroSciences, FMC Professional Solutions, Holganix, John Deere Landscapes, PermaGreen Supreme and Quali-Pro.

Education sessions also were held and hosted by guest speakers:

- ▶ Shaun Canary, director of marketing for Weed Pro in Sheffield Village, Ohio, who presented “3 Tips for Dominating Online Marketing;”
- ▶ Ron Edmonds, of The Pincipium Group in Cordova, Tenn., who offered “What You Should Do Now to Plan Your Exit;” and
- ▶ Karen Reardon, vice president of public affairs for RISE in Washington, D.C., who gave a grassroots briefing.

Anthony Williams, CGS, CGM, director of ground for Stone Mountain Golf Club by Marriott in Stone Mountain, Ga., delivered the event’s keynote speech. He discussed setting and achieving Green Industry goals, referencing personal



accomplishments for sustainability programs he put in place for golf courses and hotels.

### Add-on services panel

With lawn care professionals from nearly every region in the U.S., as well as Canada, the forum came full circle when a three-person panel spoke on the topic of add-on services in their lawn care companies, sharing differing business techniques to put specialty services in place.

Gary LaScalea, owner of GroGreen in Plano, Texas, disclosed details about pest control services—he calls his six-year-old add-on a “pest preventive program.”

“It’s a lot of that work that lawn care technicians are able to do at the same time as doing regular tree and shrub treatment at the house,” LaScalea said, and added GroGreen treats the outside perimeter of houses around the foundation with broad-spectrum insecticides via quarterly applications.

Leuenberger talked about Chalet’s specialty application program for removing bentgrass from bluegrass lawns, which it calls its Tenacity program. Since beginning the program two years ago, Chalet has added the service to 100 accounts.

“It’s pretty labor intensive,” he said.



**The Landscape Management 2013 Lawn Care Forum was held Nov. 13-15 at Reunion Resort in Orlando, Fla.**

Chalet applies three applications of Tenacity within a six-

week period and also slit seeds the lawns.

Rob Palmer, CEO of Weed Pro, gave a by-the-numbers explanation of his company’s success with its add-on services.

From July to August, it sold about \$372,000 in special jobs through customer request or “nurturing campaigns,” whereby technicians notify customers about concerns with their property then the sales team follows up with an email about a service to fix it.

For example, the company sold 2,186 aerations through this process, Palmer said, and 526 of those customers also bought \$82,000 worth of seed jobs.

A clear focus, Palmer said, is most important in managing specialty services.

“Don’t let some of those projects distract you from your core mission or what you’re really trying to do economically,” he said. “Stay with what you do best and focus on that. Learn from it and take opportunities.”

*Interested in attending or sponsoring the 2014 LM Lawn Care Forum? Contact Publisher Bill Roddy at [broddy@northcoastmedia.net](mailto:broddy@northcoastmedia.net) for sponsorship details or Editor Marisa Palmieri at [mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net](mailto:mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net) for content and attendance details.*



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## Irrigation Show hits 6-year high in education participants

**F**or the first time since its inception in 1979, the Irrigation Association's (IA's) annual Irrigation Show & Education Conference traveled to Austin, Texas. During the first week of November, about 4,000 participants and 315 exhibiting companies filled the Austin Convention Center to check out the latest industry technologies, conduct business, learn best practices and network with peers.

Austin proved to be a good location for this year's event—the education conference saw the highest numbers of class enrollment since 2007 and irrigation seminars and technical sessions were well attended. The event's 83 educational offerings

provided attendees with opportunities to earn IA continuing education units, with 25 landscape irrigation classes and seminars approved by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to earn licensed Texas irrigators TCEQ credits.

Once the exhibition opened, attendees crowded the show floor to view the record number of irrigation

products on display at the New Product Contest showcase, chat with exhibitors and participate in education sessions.

Backstage sessions included an update from Smart Water Application Technologies and a Smart Irrigation Month briefing, where awards were presented to the 2013 Smart Marketing Contest winners:

- › **Affiliate—Agriculture:** University of Georgia, Stripling Irrigation Research Park (Camilla, Ga.);
- › **Affiliate—Landscape:** City of Greeley, Colo., Water Conservation Program (Greeley, Colo.);
- › **Agriculture:** McCrometer (Hemet, Calif.);
- › **Contractor:** James River Grounds Management (Glen Allen, Va.);
- › **Distributor:** Ewing Irrigation (Phoenix); and
- › **Manufacturer:** Hunter Industries (San Marcos, Calif.).

Competition was stiff for this year's New Product Contest, with a record number of 50 entries. Awardees included:

### *Landscape/golf*

- › **Winner:** The Toro Co., Toro EVOLUTION Series Controller;
- › **Honorable Mention:** Hydro-Rain, HRC990 Battery-Powered Controller and Moisture Sensor Plug-In; and
- › **Honorable Mention:** Rain Bird Corp., ESP – SMTE;

### *Specialty*

- › **Winner:** Hydro-Rain, Irrigation Audit App and Hydro-Rain Sprinkler Catch Cups;
- › **Honorable Mention:** Illumicare Group Limited, Woody; and
- › **Honorable Mention:** RainHarvest Systems, RainMaster 5100 Pro Rainwater Harvesting System.

Preparation for next year's show in Phoenix, Nov. 17-21, is already underway. IA once again will welcome the International Professional Pond Companies Association and American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association as co-locating partners. Future conferences are slated for Long Beach, Calif. (Nov. 9-13, 2015), and Las Vegas (Dec. 5-9, 2016).

### » WEB EXTRA

The 2013 GIE+EXPO and the Green Industry Conference, held in October in Louisville, Ky., both saw increased turnouts. Get the full story at [ow.ly/qm1N6](http://ow.ly/qm1N6).

## MAILBOX



### Veterans as laborers?

Seriously, hire vets. I'm a vet and a landscaper, but here's the issue: Say the "average" soldier/seamen gets out of the military with great medical benefits, and E-4/E-5 pay. He's probably making \$2,300 per month, plus nearly no-cost health care, then if he's married he's getting a housing allowance at around \$1,700 per month and a food allowance at another \$350 or so. This means he's used to making \$4,000 a month or

more. For a typical LCO, that means having to pay that guy \$20 to \$23 per hour or more. To a guy with no landscaping experience, that's a fine foreman rate, but the industry needs labor—workers—not high-end people. We have all those. These guys aren't going to want to get out of the military to make \$15 to \$18 per hour with a layoff period of three to five months depending on region. It's not an easy-fit shoe.

**Ted Pengagast**

*via Facebook, in response to LM's November issue*

Kudos? Complaints? Share your thoughts with the *Landscape Management* team by emailing [mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net](mailto:mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net).





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## BESTPRACTICES

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).

# Are you on the grid or gridlocked?

**O**ur customers are using technology to research and communicate with us online; our suppliers are using technology to make more efficient equipment; and many of us are managing our businesses, irrigation programs and operating strategies with cloud-based programs.

Everywhere you look the strategic use of technology is driving improved performance. It's safe to say technology has opened up new ways of driving growth for landscape contractors.

Yet, not everyone is on board. Some companies are moving faster than others, some are pushing back and some are doing business as usual. This is not surprising to me.

Throughout my career I've noticed the landscape industry is very slow to embrace change. There's a prevailing attitude that companies don't want to adopt change until they're sure change works. This is true with equipment, fertilizers, chemicals and programs like H-2B and social media.

While there's consensus on technology's transformative potential, the process to learn how to use it can be frustrating, complex and slow. By the time programs are mastered, the technology has changed and training begins anew.

The pace of technology is nearly too fast for everyone to keep up. It evolves so quickly that by the time you finally decide to take the plunge, the programs may already be obsolete.

I share a vision with many who believe social media, mobile and web-based business programs enable major improvements. I also share a frustration with nearly everyone about how to actually use technology to get the best results. Most of us want results as fast as we think technology will deliver them. But it takes time, investment and discipline—and the willpower to embrace continuous learning—to get measurable benefits.

Employees are often your best resource. I know owners who lack experience with emerging technologies but have employees better informed and using

selected apps to make their work easier. Their co-workers could use these apps but are unaware of them.

### Committing to technology

It's time for our industry companies to commit to technology as a permanent fixture on their financial and organizational agendas and as a strategic consideration in yearly line-item budget planning.

For larger companies, this commitment may require retaining a full-time technology professional in-house. In peer groups I facilitate, member CEOs share knowledge about technology products, but the learning is slow. Owners hear about something another owner's company is looking into or starting to use, but they're usually too busy to do anything with it. Having an IT professional on-hand to train and troubleshoot is essential.

Smaller, budget-conscious companies could seek to outsource professional technology support via independent contractors, part-time telecommuting consultants or in computer science students with familiarity in web development, IT, data storage, cloud-based applications and social media. Whether your technology person is in-house or is an outside resource, the bottom line is you need one.

Technology comes in all styles and shapes. Over the last few years, more and more companies have switched to electronic time capture. And companies using Green Industry business software are further along because the software companies make learning available.

A lack of vision, sense of urgency, fear of cost or complacency can affect companies' willingness to adopt these new tools. When technology does succeed, it's because the vision and road map came from the top.

My enthusiasm for technology's transformative potential is evident by the apps that promise to make my life easier every day. On my Launchpad are: productivity apps, social apps, cloud-based calendars and virtual-collaboration tools, travel apps, photos, file-storing and document-sharing tools.

What's on yours?





**Our mission is to preserve and enhance green spaces in our communities where we live, work and play.**

## BECAUSE GREEN MATTERS.

A national non-profit service organization, Project EverGreen works to help spread the good word to consumers about well-maintained lawns and landscapes, sports fields, parks—anywhere that green exists. The more people believe in the environmental, economic and lifestyle benefits of green spaces, the better off we'll all be.



## WORKING TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.

Together with key industry partners, Project EverGreen has established the following programs to help make a greater impact, sooner:

### GreenCare for Troops SnowCare for Troops

- Project EverGreen connects military families with lawn and landscape companies, as well as snow removal companies to receive free services while their loved one is serving overseas.
- More than 3,500 contractor volunteers and 12,000 military families have signed up for GCFT, while 1,100 contractor volunteers and 1,500 military families signed up for SCFT.
- These popular programs have garnered attention on TV and in newspapers across the nation including Mike Rowe's *Dirty Jobs* and NBC's *Nightly News*.



### Community Based Revitalization Projects

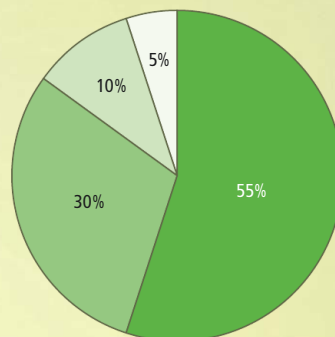
- Focused community revitalization and renovation projects across the United States encourage industry professionals, consumers and anyone who's passionate about healthy green spaces to work together to improve their city and surrounding areas.
- Over the last seven years, our message has made a positive impact in: Akron, Ohio; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Greensboro, Raleigh and Charlotte, North Carolina; Ft. Myers, Florida; Toronto, Canada; and San Antonio, Texas.
- Maintained green spaces generated community engagement, involvement and communication among residents, city leaders and visitors.

### GreenCare for Youth

- By reaching out to children of all ages, we can create a greener tomorrow.
- The Art of Green Spaces Competition, sponsored by Birds and Blooms, encourages students to use all forms of art to share how they feel about the green spaces in their lives.
- Golf bag tags, featuring messages on the benefits of green spaces, are given to participants of the GCBAAs Sticks for Kids program.
- Youth sports field renovations make playing surfaces better and safer.

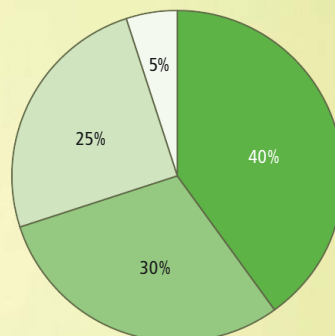
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## THE BENCHMARK

JEFF HARKNESS

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# The leadership/growth connection

One of my clients has a leadership approach that's limited his company's ability to grow and attract quality talent. He is fair, but often manages with stern, in-your-face comments, is never wrong, is certainly impatient and is just negative at times. Sound familiar?

To his credit, he's changing after I pointed out his weaknesses, but the scenario leads to the question, "Are leaders born or made?" The answer is both, but data shows more leaders are made than born into greatness. The path isn't easy, but rewards and growth in business lie ahead if you're an owner or manager that's willing to look in the mirror and make some changes.

Leadership is defined as "a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task." Studies about leadership have produced theories stating leaders must have traits such as vision, charisma, intelligence and core values. So how do you stack up? If you want to succeed in this industry you need people to follow you. It's difficult enough to find help and to compete, but if you don't invest in making yourself a better leader you're missing the boat. Focus on these points to begin your transformation.

**Know your strengths and weaknesses.** Effective leaders invest in their strengths and then surround themselves with the right people to maximize their teams in areas where they are weak. The question is how? Start by taking a personality profile test. Myers-Briggs, DISC or Wonderlic assessments all are effective. These reports reveal strengths, weaknesses, motivations, work habits and insights for your improvement. Don't surround yourself with people just like you. I know it's easy to like them (of course, they remind you of yourself), but it's a mistake plain and simple. Check your big ego and bring in some people who are different but complement you. Watch what happens to your culture.

**Manage pessimistic thinking.** Focus your time and energy in areas that affect your business. Sales,

hour management, people management and productive scheduling are a must. Every hour of your day needs to be efficient. Good leaders can compartmentalize things. Work a weekly plan with clear focus. You won't have time to get emotional about issues if you're focused on daily tasks. Remember, successful leaders create a positive and inspiring workplace culture. You can't do this if you're negative and stressed all the time.

### **Engage your people and provide feedback.**

Consistent meetings with a prepared agenda have to be a priority. Too many owners think talking on the phone three to four times a day to a manager is enough. It's not. Schedule time with your leaders and make it a priority. You are not too busy. Mix in coffee or lunch. Show people you care. Your people need direction and feedback. It's a cardinal sin to say, "I'm paying them a lot of money. They should know how to do that." What they need is your leadership.

**Clearly define metrics and reward success.** Leaders must communicate their specific goals and expectations. Management must be held accountable and actual results compared to budget should be reviewed regularly. When the team meets or exceeds expectations, recognize the win. Too many companies don't keep score or don't manage the right metrics.

**Invest in relationships.** Leaders expand their companies by investing time, money and emotions in mutually beneficial relationships. Associating with the right customers, employees and centers of influence involves planning, passion, trust and a genuine belief that time will bear results. This is a 24/7 passion, not a 9-to-5 gig a few days a month.

Remember, leadership is a learned behavior that becomes unconscious and automatic over time. Pressure and stress come with the territory, but ultimately great leaders serve as enablers of talent, culture and results. The best companies in the industry have leaders who invest in making themselves better. Get out of your old routine and go do something that helps you be a better leader. That sounds like a good New Year's resolution.



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## PURPLE CUDWEED

*Gnaphalium purpureum*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

▶ Purple cudweed is a low-growing winter or summer annual—or sometimes biennial, as some plants will survive into the second year to achieve maturity.

▶ It overwinters as a basal rosette, but it usually grows from an upright stem in the spring.

▶ Seed leaves and first true leaves have white to light gray woolly hairs.

▶ Mature plants are sparsely branched and grow 8 in. to 20 in. tall.

▶ Flower heads are crowded, spiked and densely

arranged on the stems or at the base of leaf stalks.

### CONTROL TIPS

▶ Cudweed is a relatively easy weed to control. First, maintain a dense, actively growing turf through proper mowing, fertilization and irrigation.

▶ It's best to control purple cudweed in the spring or fall when actively growing. Two-, three- and four-way herbicides containing clopyralid provide good postemergent control. Apply to the plant before seed stalk formation.



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## CATCHWEED

*Galium aparine*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

▶ Also known as rough bedstraw, this annual is commonly found in moist, shady areas.

▶ Seed leaves are oblong to egg-shaped with slightly notched tips. Mature leaves are whorled with six to eight leaves per whorl. Small, downward-curved prickles cover the stems and leaves.

▶ Small, four-parted white or greenish-white flowers grow on short branches originating in the leaf axils on the upper parts of the plant.

### CONTROL TIPS

▶ Long-term cultural control requires removing existing plants before they flower and produce viable seed. Hand-weeding, followed by a layer of mulch, works well in landscape settings.

▶ To control in turfgrass or bare-ground areas, apply a postemergent herbicide containing florasulam when catchweed is actively growing. Florasulam can be applied at the same time the first fertilizer and liquid preemergent applications of the season are made.

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# *Applied* knowledge



*LM* tracked down six mobile app-using landscape professionals. Find out how they save time and money with these tools.



1

The app: **Planimeter**

Price: \$7.99 (iOS)

The user: **Adam Linnemann**

President

Linnemann Lawn Care & Landscaping  
Columbia, Ill.

When Adam Linnemann provides an estimate, he doesn't bother with burning fuel to measure property lines at a prospective client's house. A mere phone call can suffice when he has his distance-mapping app, Planimeter, available on his iPad.

Comparable to Google Maps, the app provides satellite views of properties by address and measures selectable distances or areas by dropping pins.



"IT'S A USEFUL  
SUBSTITUTE TO GO  
LOOK AT A LAWN."

—ADAM LINNEMANN ■■■■



"This isn't necessarily a replacement to go look at a property," he says. "But it's a useful substitute to go look at a lawn."

Linnemann, his sales manager and a landscape manager downloaded the app a year ago after Linnemann came across it in the app store. They now use it multiple times a week to measure square footages, following up over-the-phone estimates with a trip to clients' properties when they receive positive feedback on provided quotes.

"It's pretty spot on," he says. "We've noticed a little variances, up to 5 percent off, give or take."

The mobility of the app, he says, is the most advantageous to his \$825,000 full-service company.

"The biggest thing is it saves us time and it saves us money."

His suggested improvement: The satellite views should show boundary lines and identify property owners.

—Sarah Pfledderer

"IT'S EXTREMELY  
EFFICIENT AND  
TELLS IF THE  
CLIENT HAS PAID  
OR NOT."

—AARON POPE ■■■■



2

The app: **Invoice2go**

Price: Free or \$9.99 (iOS and Android)

The user: **Aaron Pope**

Owner

Aaron's Lawn Care  
Virginia Beach, Va.

For landscape business owners who find themselves out of the office more often than in it, bookkeeping can turn into a paper-pushing debacle, especially if slipups unveil when the owner is in the field.



Aaron Pope says he nixed that unease about a year ago when he downloaded Invoice2go, allowing him to manage billing for his full-service firm from his iPhone and iPad—devices are synchronized through a cloud—as well as provide estimates, bill, collect and report payments.

"I don't have to wait and go back to the office," he says. "I can just fix clerical errors and go about business."

Although he downloaded the app for his convenience, Pope says he's seen relatively positive feedback from customers, too, in regard to giving an estimate on the spot, then emailing or printing that estimate off in their home via a Wi-Fi printer.

Because he uses the app almost daily, Pope upgraded to the \$9.99 version to have nil limits on the number of items and documents to create. His single criticism is numerical values aren't automatically figured, so he must do his own calculations.

That flaw isn't a deal breaker, though, he says, adding Invoice2go brings a shade of professionalism to small businesses like his looking to gain their footing in the Green Industry.

"It's extremely efficient and tells if the client has paid or not paid," Pope says. "It takes out bookkeeping time, (making) it worth every penny." —SP

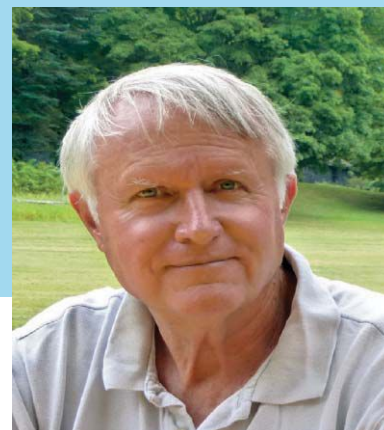
3

**The app:** *Dirr's Tree and Shrub Finder***Price:** \$14.99 (iOS)**The user:** *Stephen Wing**Owner**Stephen Wing, Landscape Architect**Milford, Conn.*

**For years landscape** architect Stephen Wing has had a “wonderful, 8-lb.” book on his shelf: *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants* by Michael Dirr. “It’s considered *the* reference for landscape architects and horticulturalists regarding plants,” he says. “I don’t even have the new book with the colored pictures. Mine is black



and white—text with line drawings.” Therein lies the problem: He can’t lug that tome to all client visits if they need help visualizing the plants on their landscape drawings. Even if he did, his clients wouldn’t get to see full-color photos. Wing’s methods of sharing plant photos—photocopying images from miscellaneous sources or telling clients to Google botanical plant names on their own—also aren’t ideal because they’re not at his fingertips.

**“IT’S SO EASY AND SO PORTABLE.”**

—STEPHEN WING ■■■■

But Dirr’s Tree and Shrub Finder app allows them to be.

“Now, with my iPhone, if (clients) say, ‘I have no idea what winter hazel is, I can go to Dirr and up comes the plant with pictures of the whole plant, details and what fall foliage looks like. It’s so easy and so portable.’”

Wing uses the Dirr app for more than just sharing photos. Recently, for example, he was on a property with a client who asked him to identify a tree. He remembered the botanical name but not the common name. It just took a quick search in the app to discover the latter.

At first glance the app seems pricey at \$14.99, but Wing says that’s nothing compared to the print version that costs more than a hundred dollars. Besides, his app was free—it was gifted to him by one of his children.

Wing’s only gripe isn’t about the app; it’s about his screen size. “It would be more effective if it was

on an iPad so the images would be larger, but I don’t have one of those yet.” —*Marisa Palmieri*

**» WEB EXTRA**

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4

**The app: Smart Service iFleet****Price:** Requires software license for iPad**The user: Greg Winchel***Owner**Winchel Irrigation**Grandville, Mich.*

**Four years ago** Greg Winchel began shopping for new office management software. He had the foresight to select a program, Smart Service, with a mobile application, even though the company wasn't ready to ante up for devices at the time. Earlier

this year, Winchel made the investment and installed iPads with the Smart Service iFleet app in four service vehicles.

With the iPad app the company's service technicians can complete and review service notes, view customer history and check what irrigation equipment is on a customer's site. Because the app syncs with the office's server every 10 minutes via the cellular network, the office staff and the field technicians have nearly all the same information available to them, such as photos the techs upload from the field or documents the office staff scans.

"The only thing that's a little cumbersome is adding the inventory parts," Winchel says. "That's not as easy to use as I'd like, but in my mind that is kind of minor."

The initial software investment was about \$2,000.

Winchel estimates it costs about \$1,000 per vehicle to outfit it with a 16-gigabyte iPad and add another software license. Other companies could reduce the cost by choosing iPad minis, which Winchel says may be preferable because they fit better in a tech's hands.

Though implementing this technology was no small expense, Winchel says the company is making up for it by saving the office staff at least eight hours per week in data-entry time because the techs are inputting their own information while they're on site. Before, they would return for the day and hand their paperwork to the office manager, who would manually enter it. "It's part of the billable job when the guys are doing it in the field," Winchel says.

The app also can track production times, capture electronic signatures and accept credit cards with the addition of a card reader like Square. —MP

**"DATA ENTRY  
IS PART OF THE  
BILLABLE JOB  
WHEN THE GUYS  
ARE DOING IT  
IN THE FIELD."**

—GREG WINCHEL ■■■■

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## MOBILE APPS

**Weather apps are** ubiquitous, but Graham Oldreive says his app of choice, Rain Alarm, doesn't just give you the forecast. It tracks your location to let you know when precipitation is within a radius you designate. He says this app is especially helpful to him as a one-man mowing and enhancements shop with no office staff to inform him about inclement weather.

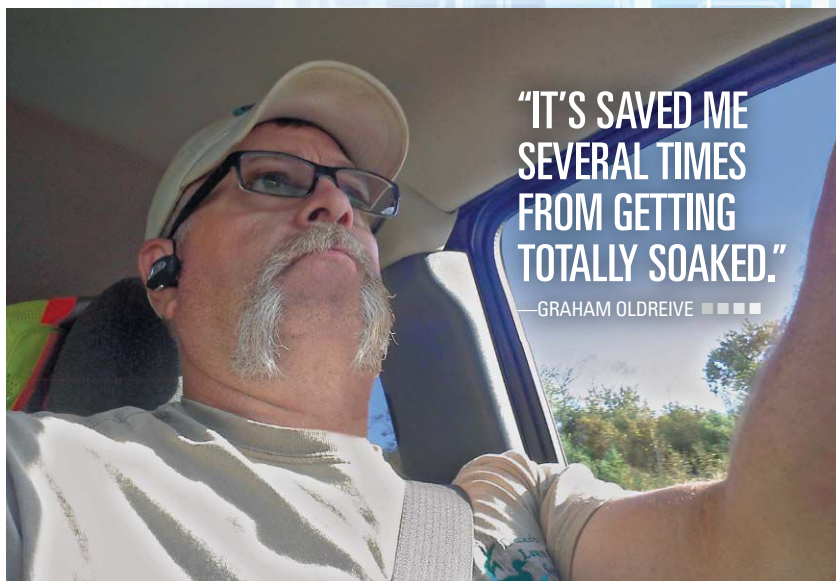


"It's saved me several times from getting totally soaked or having to leave a job halfway through," he says.

Here's how he uses it on his smartphone: He sets up the app's alarm to notify him when there's rain within a 30-mile radius of where he's working. In his region on the Atlantic coast, that gives him about a two-hour warning.

"Then I can make the determination with the app's radar whether I should speed up and get done or pack up before the rain hits," Oldreive says. "What I like about it is it's adaptable."

The app has paid for itself many times over, he says, noting he tried the free version for a while, but upgraded to



**"IT'S SAVED ME  
SEVERAL TIMES  
FROM GETTING  
TOTALLY SOAKED."**

—GRAHAM OLDREIVE ■■■■

### The app: **Rain Alarm**

**Price:** Free (iOS, Android); Extended and Pro versions available for \$2.99 and \$3.90

**The user:** **Graham Oldreive**

*Owner*

*Ducke's Lawn Care Services*

*Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada*

5

Pro for more "bells and whistles," like lightening alerts.

"Living here on the coast, rain can pop up just about any time," he says.

"This past June, we had 20-odd days of rain out of the month. It's nice to have an app like that where I can get a couple hours of work done." —MP



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6

## The app: **Swiss Army Knife**

**Price:** Free (Android)

**The user:** Dwight Wolfe

Owner

Weed Man

Albany, Ore.

**The Swiss Army Knife** app Dwight Wolfe puts to use on his Android smartphone is much like its pocketknife predecessor—it's quite the multi-tool.

Within the app you'll find a flashlight, unit converter, timer, calculator, compass, bubble level, magnifying glass, ruler and more. Wolfe has been a fan of using this app for his lawn care operation for about three years. In fact, it was one of the first he downloaded upon upgrading to a smartphone. He estimates he uses it a few times a week.



**"SOMETIMES  
YOU NEED A  
MAGNIFYING  
GLASS."**

—DWIGHT WOLFE

The app's flashlight has come in handy for Wolfe when working on equipment and even for off-hand "customer service" needs, like the time he pulled up to treat a homeowner's lawn and ended up helping her locate information she couldn't find on her car battery.

The unit converter tool and timer both come in handy when he mixes chemicals.

"Sometimes the chemicals are in liters rather than gallons, so I can convert metric to standard," he says. "And when you calibrate spray equipment, you always need to measure out a minute."

One of Wolfe's favorite features is the

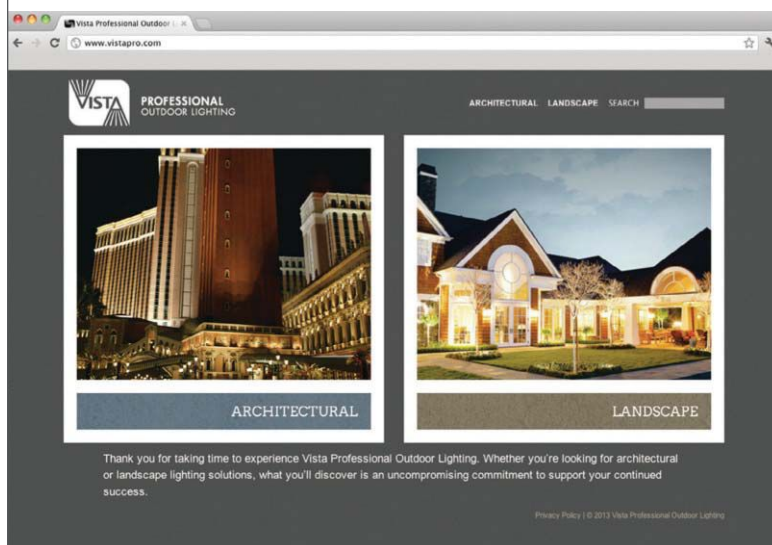


magnifying glass tool. He uses it to identify insects and other pests, such as *poa annua*, which is invasive in lawns in his region.

"You can identify it by its boat-shaped tip," he says.

"Sometimes you need a magnifying glass to see that." —MP LM

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iOS, Android // Free



### Leafsnap

Leafsnap is the first in a series of electronic field guides being developed by researchers from Columbia University, the University of Maryland and the Smithsonian Institution. It uses visual-recognition software to help identify tree species from photographs of their leaves.

iOS, to-be-released for Android // Free



### Safety Meeting App

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iOS, Android // 30-day free trial and options from \$9.95 per month



### SprinklerTimes

Developed by a landscape contractor, this app uses regionally-based, historical climate information and combines that with plant type, sprinkler type, soil type and sun exposure to generate a customized monthly schedule to determine the best possible watering settings for clients' irrigation systems.

iOS, Android // \$5.99



### Turfpath

Developed by turfgrass professionals, Turfpath is a mobile resource to assist in the visual identification of turfgrass pests worldwide.

iOS, Android // Free

## 11 FROM INDUSTRY SUPPLIERS



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iOS, Android // Free



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iOS, Android // Free



### Ewing Irrigation

Ewing's app allows contractors to locate the nearest Ewing branch, access landscape and irrigation calculators and conversion formulas and stay informed with Ewing news via Twitter and Facebook.

iOS, Android // Free



### ExakTime Mobile/PocketClock

This time-tracking app allows workers to clock in and enter job locations, cost codes and materials from their smartphones. It also offers GPS crew tracking and a field notes feature.

iOS, Android // Free for current users



### Irritrol

The Irritrol app allows users to view and download brochures and photos, access the company's YouTube channel for how-to videos and view promotions and specials.

iOS, Android // Free



# apps to try

DON'T MISS [SIX MORE APP RECOMMENDATIONS](#) FROM LM STAFF MEMBERS ON PAGE 4.



## Labor Sync

An alternative to time sheets, this GPS-enabled app allows users to track employees' time and locations with their mobile devices.

**iOS, Android** // Free to download;  
\$10 per month per employee



## TimeScope Live

The mobile component of Modeco Systems' TimeScope Live time and material-

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## WeatherTRAK Mobile

HydroPoint Data Systems' app turns mobile devices into remote controls for Weather-

TRAK Central controllers. Features include real-time alerts, one-click customer support and on-site troubleshooting and diagnostics.

**iOS, Android** // Free with WeatherTRAK.net login information



## My Harrell's Mobile

This app offers a searchable product listing, MSDS and label downloads, sales representative contact information, calculators and a glossary of fertilizer terms. Additional features for the distributor's customers include viewing open orders and billing information.

**iOS, Android** // Free



## PRO Landscape Companion

This free app for PRO Landscape design software users allows users to create and edit designs, assemble proposals and deliver client presentations.

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# Plateau *pains*



**Good businesses grow** naturally, until they don't.

Many landscape company owners find their initial success stalls, leaving them struggling to break through a plateau and reach the next level.

Bill Silverman, owner of Springboard Business Coaching, offered executives "The Keys to Breaking Through to the Next Level While Working Less" during his presentation at the Professional Land-care Network's Green Industry Conference in Louisville, Ky., in October.

Some business owners blame the economy for their lack of growth, but that simply allows them to "take the responsibility off their shoulders," says Silverman. He offers tips for leaders to take matters into their own hands.

Business growth happens in spurts, he says. Companies grow quickly and then that growth levels off for a period of time. Using broad strokes, Silverman divides a business's growth into three categories:

**Phase 1:** Up to \$250,000—where the owner does as much as he or she can to get the business to grow. The plateau usually comes between \$150,000 and \$250,000. An owner's next goal is usually \$500,000.

**Phase 2:** Between \$250,000 and \$1 million—the goals are expanding the business and becoming a well-oiled machine. The plateau usually comes north of the \$500,000 level.

**Phase 3:** More than \$1 million. The goal for these business owners often is "to be a market leader," Silverman says.

Periods of stagnation are common in business. Here's how to reach the next level. **BY DAN JACOBS**

The plateau typically comes between \$1 million and \$2 million.

The first step in breaking through the plateaus is to know why the plateaus happen, Silverman says. One of the most basic reasons for an inability to move to the next level is owners don't set a good foundation on which to build to the next level.

Think of it like a student's progression through math, he suggests. First you learn to add and subtract and then multiply and divide. You don't start off with algebra and calculus. Business is no different. An owner needs to build on fundamental skills—marketing, sales, team management, financial management, service delivery, etc.

"What you do on one level leads to the next," Silverman says. "At each level the same challenges happen," but different skills are needed to be successful, just like there are different skills needed to complete high school and college. "Different level; different devil," he says.

Phase 1 business owners tend to be the "be all and end all" for their businesses, he says. They handle crew management, finances, marketing, spend time in the field and the list goes on. To move to

Phase 2, the owner has to transition from a doer to a manager. At some point some of those responsibilities must be handed over to others. The owner needs to focus on selling and marketing the business.

"If you don't switch your role, you will learn there is too much work," Silverman says.

By the time a business owner reaches Phase 3, he or she shouldn't be working anymore, Silverman says. "Work must be done by other people."

When most business owners hit a plateau, they "hunker down" and start working harder. They come in earlier and stay later. But at some point, it's like pouring water into a full glass, he says.

Silverman offers the following techniques to break through a plateau:

➤ **Triage:** Like in a war movie in which the most seriously wounded soldiers are treated first, business owners should start by addressing their most critical problems. Look at the foundation and assess which areas are the weakest.

➤ **The post-up:** Bring your team into a meeting room and let them help you find your broken areas. "They see





things you don't," Silverman says. Give everyone in the room a stack of Post-it notes. Have them write one broken process down on each note and let them write until they're done. Put the notes on the wall by category—marketing, selling, schedule prep, etc.

This way you start to recognize where the biggest problems are. A good question to ask at this point is, "How much money are we leaving on the table with all these broken issues?"

► **Systemize:** Start developing solutions, begin testing them and turn successful solutions into procedures you document. Eventually you will have a procedure manual to run your business.

### Are you the bottleneck?

To move to the next level, a business owner also must build a self-sufficient team.

"If you can't do that, it's game over," Silverman says.

Many business owners fall into what he calls the "growth trap." The owner begins the day with a list of high-level growth issues, but after getting the crews out in the morning, one crew calls and needs something left behind. The owner drops it off and decides to check on the other crews while he's out. He makes a couple of calls between stops. At the end of the day, he realizes he hasn't completed half the items on the list.

"You end up being the bottleneck," Silverman says. You're not able to grow

your business because of that. That's why you need self-sufficient crews."

The first step to create self-sufficient crews is to create job descriptions. Showing employees what their roles are helps them do their jobs better. It also helps when it's time to evaluate employees, give feedback and coach them.

Once the processes are in place, a business owner doesn't need to manage every aspect of the business.

"The process of growing your business, is a process of letting go," Silverman says. **LM**

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*Jacobs is a Cleveland-based freelance writer.*



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# MARKET WATCH

## LAWN/TREE CARE

# Bee-friendly lawn care

How turf managers can help protect pollinators while using insecticides.

By JONATHAN LARSON AND DANIEL POTTER, PH.D.

**P**opulations of cultivated honeybees, native bumblebees and other pollinators have declined alarmingly in recent years. Scientists are scrutinizing the possible causes of bee die-offs and what to do about them. Much of the debate centers on whether or not exposure to insecticides, especially neonicotinoids, contributes to the problem. Because lawn care providers use these insecticides to control grubs and other turfgrass pests, they should understand the issue and be able to reassure customers their services don't contribute to the problem.

## WHY POLLINATING INSECTS ARE IMPORTANT

Many orchard and garden crops, including apples, cantaloupes, almonds, cherries, soybeans, blueberries and a host of others, will not produce fruits without first being pollinated by bees. European honeybees get much of the credit, but in the U.S. alone some 4,000 species of native bees, including bumblebees, orchard mason bees, squash bees and leafcutter bees, also provide important pollination services.

According to a 2012 scientific study published in the journal *Public Library of Science One (PLOS One)*, crops pollinated by bees and other insects contributed \$29 billion to U.S. farm income in 2010. If bees continue to die off, those pollination needs may not be met, resulting in shortages of fruits, vegetables and seeds. These shortages lead to higher costs to consumers. Insect pollination also is essential to the preservation of wild plants, most of which would not otherwise produce fruits and seeds.



University of Kentucky researchers studied how to reduce insecticide hazards to bees. Above: A bee hive at a safe foraging site. Right: A hive in a treatment tent.



PG 27

**LAWN/TREE CARE** How turf managers can protect bees

PG 30

**MAINTENANCE** One company saves with box trucks

PG 32

**IRRIGATION** Successfully selling efficient irrigation systems

PG 34

**DESIGN/BUILD** Pros debate hourly vs. flat-rate design fees

Bees in suburban areas commonly forage on flowering lawn weeds. Indeed, we've surveyed and collected dozens of species of native bees visiting dandelions and white clover in central Kentucky lawns. Many of the species we caught are also pollinators of garden crops, fruits and berries, and of ornamentals such as flowering crabapples and hollies. Bumblebees, for example, are especially good pollinators of tomatoes, eggplant and peppers in home gardens.

## WHY ARE BEE NUMBERS DECLINING?

Experts agree there's no single reason why bee numbers are declining. Rather, bee populations face a number of stresses that include parasitic mites, disease-causing pathogens, land development, habitat fragmentation, changes in beekeeping practices and, in some cases, exposure to pesticides.

**Parasites, diseases and changes in beekeeping practices.** Honeybees are parasitized by varroa mites that suck their blood and by tracheal mites that clog the breathing ducts of adult bees. They are susceptible to diseases caused by bacteria and fungi as well and to a virus that targets their immune systems. Shipping bee colonies around the country for commercial pollination can weaken them, increasing vulnerability to these agents. Plus, they may bring diseases with them that will infect local bee populations. Beekeepers provide colonies with supplemental food—often sugar or corn syrup—to compensate for the lack of wild forage in agricultural monocultures and as a substitute for “raiding” the bees’ stores of honey, which is harvested for sale. Artificial bee foods, however, lack some of the nutrients in real honey that bees need to develop a strong immune system.

**Loss and fragmentation of natural habitat.** Replacement of natural habitat by agricultural or urban expansion results in shortages of plants that bees depend on for food. Monocultures of crops like corn and wheat offer relatively little in the way of pollen and nectar that bees need to survive. In addition, native wild bees typically have specific nesting requirements; bumblebees, for example, often construct their underground nest in abandoned rodent burrows. Because of habitat loss, nesting sites are limited and worker bees must forage greater distances to bring food back to the nest.

**Insecticides.** Bees may encounter insecticide residues on the crops they pollinate or on wildflowers or flowering weeds that are inadvertently sprayed. Many chemical insecticides used to control insect pests of lawns, landscapes and gardens are acutely toxic to bees, which is why they have label precautions not to apply them to plants that are in bloom when bees may be present. This potential hazard was punctuated by an incident in Oregon this past June that led to the deaths of some 50,000



An inside look at a bumblebee hive tested by UK researchers.

bumblebees when linden trees in bloom were sprayed with an insecticide, a violation of the pesticide label.

Because neonicotinoids are systemic, there also is potential for translocation of their residues into pollen and nectar. Even low-level exposures can adversely affect bees. For example, research has shown worker bees that ingest sublethal amounts of imidacloprid become intoxicated and neglect their duties in the hive. Such bees are less likely to learn essential tasks like locating patches of food plants, which can lead to food shortages and decreased colony success. Additionally, sublethal exposure to insecticides can weaken bees’ immune systems, making them more vulnerable to infection by parasites and pathogens.

**A perfect storm of stresses.** Most likely, bee declines are due to a combination of the aforementioned menaces acting together. In the case of honeybees, a one-two punch of varroa mites and viruses has been implicated in collapsing colonies, although lack of food and pesticide exposures can weaken colonies and make it easier for the mites and pathogens to finish them off. In the case of bumblebees, stresses from habitat loss and disease could be compounded by

pesticide exposures. Ongoing research does not point to a single causal agent for global bee declines; rather, the causes are multiple and complex.

## LAWN INSECTICIDES AND BEES

We conducted a study to determine how turf care providers can reduce insecticide hazards to bees when treating lawns for grub control. The research, published last spring in *PLOS One*, showed when turf intermixed with flowering white clover is sprayed with a neonicotinoid insecticide, bumblebee workers foraging on the contaminated flowers were intoxicated or killed, reducing colony growth. Only the largest, most vigorous bumblebee colonies will produce queens by late summer, and those failing to do so are doomed because only the new queens survive the winter to start the next generation. We found even when they were moved to a “safe site” with no pesticide exposure, colonies that had foraged on treated flowers for just six days failed to produce new queens.

Notably, though, once the clover flowers present at the time of treatment were removed by mowing and new flowers grew to replace them, bees subsequently foraging on the site were not harmed. Indeed, residues in the nectar dropped from toxic to essentially nontoxic levels

### » WEB EXTRA

Read Larson’s, Potter’s and Carl Redmond’s complete study, “Assessing Insecticide Hazard to Bumble Bees Foraging on Flowering Weeds in Treated Lawns,” at [bit.ly/15S6oja](http://bit.ly/15S6oja).



once the turf was mowed. Thus, while the research validates EPA label precautionary statements not to apply neonicotinoids to blooming nectar-producing plants if bees may visit the treatment area, it also indicates that such applications don't pose a prolonged systemic hazard to bees. Another key finding was chlorantraniliprole (Acelepryn), representing a relatively new class of insecticides called anthranilic diamides, did not adversely affect bee colonies even when the workers foraged on flowering clover that had been directly sprayed.

UK research shows LCOs taking precautions can use neonicotinoids on turf without harming bees.



without harming bees. Chlorantraniliprole, a relatively new chemistry, appears non-hazardous to bees.

*Larson is a doctoral candidate in the Turfgrass Entomology Lab in the Department of Entomology at the University of Kentucky, where Potter is a professor of entomology. Reach them at jonathan.larson@uky.edu or dapotter@uky.edu.*



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## MAINTENANCE

# Fuel savings inside the box (truck)

John Shorb Landscaping backs its sustainable mission with diesel-electric hybrid vehicles. *By JONATHAN KATZ*



**S**ome of the latest blog entries on John Shorb Landscaping's website focus on sustainable landscaping practices, such as beneficial insects, rooftop gardens, conservation and stormwater management. The company, based in Kensington, Md., also promotes its sustainability message on its Facebook page.

The efforts all are part of an overall commitment to resource conservation. John Shorb Landscaping has built a sizable portfolio of services that appeal to eco-conscious customers. To build on its sustainability message, the company ordered two diesel-electric hybrid box trucks in 2012 and began driving them in the spring of 2013.

"We thought this played into our image of trying to do the right thing environmentally," says John Shorb, president of the company.

In addition to the environmental benefits, Shorb expects the trucks to provide fuel savings. As of September, the company was still evaluating how much it has cut fuel use.

"We are noticing fuel savings," Shorb says. "We don't have empirical data proving it. It's mainly based on the fact that we're not fueling up as often."

## WHY HYBRIDS?

The trucks Shorb purchased were 2014 Hino 195h diesel-electric hybrid box trucks. The company drove Isuzu box vans for several years until Isuzu stopped making the model the company preferred. Shorb purchased two Hino vans and liked them enough to purchase two more. Upon visiting the Hino website to view his options, he noticed the company, a Toyota Motor Group company, offered hybrid vehicles. One of Shorb's managers drove a Toyota Prius and spoke highly of its performance, further convincing Shorb to make the purchase.

"Hino is Toyota's truck version (of the Prius), so we knew the brand and liked it," Shorb recalls. "Also, we knew fuel prices weren't going down, so we thought it would be worth a try."

John Shorb Landscaping added two diesel-electric hybrid box trucks during the 2013 season.



Shorb says his company plans to continue replacing its fleet with more hybrid box trucks as long as the cost remains competitive. The hybrid trucks cost about \$11,000 more than a traditional diesel box truck, says Ed Ervin, a commercial fleet sales manager at K. Neal International Trucks in Hyattsville, Md.

In addition to improving fuel efficiency, John Shorb Landscaping hopes to better maintenance crew productivity with the addition of bathrooms and laptop computers to its box trucks.

PHOTOS: JOHN SHORB LANDSCAPING



But the hybrids are about 30 percent more fuel efficient than the standard diesel engine, says Ervin, who sold the Hino trucks to John Shorb Landscaping. The payback period on these hybrid vehicles is nearly seven years. The return on investment can fluctuate depending on the price of diesel fuel, Ervin says.

Hybrid trucks, Ervin cautions, are not suited for every industry because the trucks need to idle for the batteries to recharge. They are ideal for landscaping businesses that have many clients in the suburbs, where stoplights every few miles offer an opportunity to recharge, he says.

### HOW IT WORKS

When the clutch engages in the hybrid system, the motor uses electric power stored in the battery to start the engine, eliminating the need for a starter motor. The hybrid system is active until the truck reaches a cruising speed, the most efficient operating mode for an engine. The truck then automatically switches to engine-only driving.

During braking, vehicle acceleration energy is converted to electricity, which is stored in battery. In this mode, the clutch automatically disengages to enable energy recovery and regeneration. Another potential fuel-saving feature is the “idle stop mode.” When the vehicle stops, the engine shuts off to reduce unnecessary fuel consumption. When the driver takes his or her foot off the brake pedal, the engine restarts.

### MOVING FORWARD WITH HYBRIDS

As of late July, Hino had sold about 450 195h hybrids in the U.S. since introducing them in November. Most of the sales were in California, due to the state’s Hybrid Vehicle Incentive Program.

And while adoption has been slow, more landscaping companies are showing interest in hybrid vehicles.

“I’ve quoted two or three other landscaping companies on hybrid trucks,” Ervin says. “The landscaping companies I’ve dealt with are very environmentally sensitive—a lot more than any other industry that I deal with. They’re dealing with the environment day in and day out so they seem to be more in tune with it.”

So far, Shorb says he’s pleased with the performance of the hybrid vehicles. The “idle stop mode” feature was a little frustrating at first because Shorb thought the van wasn’t working properly. “It’s a little disconcerting the first few days you’re driving it in stop-and-go traffic,” he says.

Looking ahead, though, Shorb expects the hybrid trucks will pay off.

“We hope we’re able to confirm the extra price will be offset by the fuel savings,” Shorb says. “We also believe that eventually customers will appreciate the fact that we’re doing this.”

*Katz is a Cleveland-based freelance writer.*

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## IRRIGATION

# Three keys to a 'smarter' business model

EPA WaterSense Partner of the Year shares tips on how to successfully sell efficient irrigation systems. *By JONATHAN KATZ*

In October, Taylor Irrigation Service became the first Texas-based irrigation designer/contractor to win the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) WaterSense Partner of the Year Award. The EPA recognized the company for changing its business model by designing and installing irrigation systems that consume as much as 50 percent less water than traditional systems.

John Taylor, director of operations and president of the Houston-based company, decided in 2011 to transition his business from general irrigation services to water-conservation technologies. The change has helped the company differentiate itself from competitors and expand the business.

The process didn't come without challenges, though. Here, Taylor shares three principles to establishing a profitable irrigation business model focused on conservation.

## 1 Sell the ROI.

It seems every business today in just about any industry is marketing some type of "green" product or service. But actually convincing customers they need sustainable solutions can be a tough sell. Irrigation contractors must demonstrate to customers efficient irrigation can provide a measurable return on investment, Taylor says.

The company performs audits to show customers how much money they can save by adopting smart-irrigation systems, including evapotranspiration

rate-based (ET) controllers and drip irrigation. The company backs its auditing services with certifications from the state of Texas and the EPA. Taylor sells systems that cost 40 to 50 percent more than standard technologies, but with the audits he can show customers more efficient irrigation technologies use up to 50 percent less water.

Taylor cautions, however, contractors should not oversell the potential savings. In addition to the property audits, he suggests contractors interview their clients about how they use their irrigation systems because some customers may manage their irrigation schedules better than others.

"How the client interacts with the system is very important because with an ET-based system the controller is making the decisions on its own," Taylor says. "So if we're going to forecast the ROI for the client, then we need to have a pretty accurate idea of what the client does with their current system."

## 2 Don't be afraid to refocus your client base.

Taylor Irrigation previously sold standard and "Cadillac" smart-irrigation systems. Before the company shifted its focus to water conservation, it regarded the higher-priced, more efficient systems as a luxury for its clients. Now, it's the only option for customers.

After making the move, the company lost the bottom 25 percent of its client base, Taylor says. But the move opened the door to a new client base that's capitalizing on the company's high-efficiency technology.



John Taylor, director of operations and president of Taylor Irrigation Service, accepts the company's EPA WaterSense Partner of the Year Award.

In addition, the company has gained an advantage over many competitors in the Houston area because it's positioned itself as an expert in efficient irrigation, Taylor says.

## 3 Ask your peers for advice.

One of Taylor's most difficult challenges in the beginning was learning how to install and price the new technology. Taylor tried to hasten the learning curve by reading market reports on the best technologies available and providing his staff with training courses.

The company, Taylor admits, learned mostly by trial and error in those first three to six months. He now suggests contractors take advantage of industry resources such as conferences and industry trade magazines to overcome some of the early hurdles.

"One of the best things irrigation contractors can do is go to the industry shows to network and ask other irrigators what they think works," Taylor says. "You'd be surprised how many great irrigation contractors are out there and available and willing to share information with guys ready to make the same choices. I think if irrigators weren't so afraid to flat-out ask, they'll be much better off."

*Katz is a Cleveland-based freelance writer.*



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## ABOUT THE HOST

Jody Shilan, MLA is an award-winning landscape designer and former landscape design/build contractor, who has sold tens of millions of dollars of design and installation work throughout his career. He now uses his 35+ years of experience to coach other landscape contractors how to easily and dramatically increase their sales by following his unique landscape design/build/sales process. He does this through public speaking, private consulting, group workshops and his “exclusive” members-only website [www.FromDesign2Build.com](http://www.FromDesign2Build.com).



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## DESIGN/BUILD

# Tracking time vs. measuring value

Design/build pros weigh in on the art of charging design fees. *By SARAH PFLEDDERER*

There's a tale about Pablo Picasso that begins with the artist sitting in a cafe, sketching a woman in his view. The picture took all but five minutes to craft, but he alleged to the woman it would cost her \$2,000 to own.

While not charging for the minutes to do the drawing, he was charging for the years it took him to attain the knowledge to put the sketch to paper.

"It is a wonderful way to say what we do has so much more value than the time we put in it," Diana Grunden says.



Diana Grunden

The owner of Trio Landscaping, in Minneapolis, shares the Picasso scenario to support why she charges

flat-rate design fees instead of hourly rates.

Charging design fees is a choice of yes or no. But choosing how to charge them—hourly or flat—is complex and approaches differ per company, depending on clients, individual projects and design processes.

Grunden starts off with a \$300 base rate, an amount she figures is worth six hours of her time. The cost goes up contingent on the intricacy of the project and size of space. (She's charged up to \$1,500 for a single project.)

And, to the client's benefit, Grunden uses her design fees as a deposit instead of a source of income, reimbursing the prorated payment to clients for whatever part of the design they choose to move forward with.

For this reason, she rarely banks on her design fees.

On the flip side, Chad Wheeler makes around \$12,000 in design fees annually.

The president of Dream Landscapes in Lynchburg, Va., which is 70 percent design/build, isn't loyal to hourly or flat rates, though. His means of pricing vary per customers and projects.

"I like to take more a consultative approach, consulting with the clients, giving them their options," he says.

Typically, his "rule of thumb" is to charge an hourly rate at \$100 per hour for projects that will cost \$10,000 to \$15,000. He will charge a flat rate on projects costing more than that, factoring in some revision times for those larger projects.

Wheeler isn't set on his hourly rate either. He sometimes lowers the price to \$75 per hour to have an advantage over competitors and, on very rare occasions, also will reimburse fees like Grunden.

The biggest advantage

to a flat rate, he says, is the commitment from his clients to see through an entire project.

Whereas with an hourly fee, they can back out at anytime, but he still will be paid for the hours he's already put in.

For David Marciniak, a flat rate is a greater reassurance to clients because they're able to see what they're charged for every step of the way before they chose to move forward with a proposal.

"You tend to get a lot of pushback from homeowners on the idea of design fees anyhow," says the owner of

design firm Revolutionary Gardens in McLean, Va., which does not offer reimbursements on design fees. "So when (clients) get the perception, 'You're just charging us hourly so we have no idea what's going on,' they just have an extra level of fear and discomfort."



Dave Marciniak

Revolutionary Gardens, however, does offer hourly fees to landscape contractors, with the assumption they have an understanding of design processes and procedures.

For traditional clients, Marciniak details to them the time it takes to design a project and instills there's two processes to a landscaping project: the design process and the construction process.

"I find when it's presented to clients that way, they understand it and they see the value in it," he says. "It ends up being a very transparent way of seeing what your costs are throughout the process."

In figuring estimates, Marciniak investigates the complexity of projects, factoring in the time to measure, base map, draft conceptual designs, put together supporting materials, etc.

He educates clients on these components and accounts for some revision time in his proposals, plus offers additional revision time at an hourly rate.

"Part of the value in that is it lets people know 'I need you to really think through what you're asking me for. Because if you neglect to tell me something important, I'm not going to go over and start at zero again,'" he says. "From a sales standpoint, it's just neater and cleaner to do flat rate."

Grunden adds a flat rate is fairer to clients because her design processes vary.

"How in the world do I track and budget people appropriately for back-end time?" she says, adding she brainstorms about projects in her daily tasks and jokes she even landscapes in her sleep.

"We're all artists," she says. "Our brains are all going to work in different ways. You have to do what is best for you." **LM**



Chad Wheeler



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# PROJECT **PORTFOLIO**

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## THE MISSION

Eradicate invasive plant materials that have colonized this archeologically significant lighthouse space.

Florida's Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse and Museum is more than a local landmark. Its site is a Native American shell mound, thus no digging can take place without an archeologist present.

This is what Hobe Sound, Fla.-based Rood Landscape encountered firsthand when it was engaged to rid the property of a non-native *Sansevieria* colony. Project Manager Ron Vekeman, who is also an account executive and landscape designer for Rood, notes that the persistent nature of *Sansevieria* meant it had to be removed, but physical removal wasn't really an option. Instead, the team opted to cut the plants at the root and apply an herbicide to each cut stem.

"Only a limited amount of chemical could be applied to the multitude of exotic plants per calendar year, and it needed to be reported on a weekly basis," he says. "Added to that, we were on a rather tight timeline—right during our summer rainy season."

Despite these limitations, the team was determined to make the job a success. When sufficient kill had taken place with the herbicide, an erosion control geo-grid fabric was applied on the steepest grade, at the north side of the lighthouse, to ensure soil cap stabilization. A coco fiber mat then was applied to hold the soil in place.

Into these strata, a new planting took place: A plant palette of approved native plants was chosen, each for its ability to withstand the proximity to the ocean. An irrigation system was applied within this soil cap. Irrigation work was done by Treasure Coast Irrigation, Rood's sister company also based in Hobe Sound.

Today, the *Sansevieria* colony is but a memory—and the lighthouse continues to serve as a beacon of history for thousands of visitors each year.



PHOTOS: ROOD LANDSCAPE





3



4



5



6

## THE WORK

**1 | Before removal.** The north bank with the *Sansevieria* colony in full swing.

**2 | Archeological dig.** Any soil disturbance on the property had to be supervised by an archeologist.

**3 | Surgical procedure.** Treating *Sansevieria* using herbicide and wick.

**4 | On the grid.** A grid was used for soil stabilization of the north bank.

**5 | Material world.** Erosion control fabric was applied over the soil layer.

**6 | A better place.** The south bank today.

*Founded in 1946, Rood Landscape offers "concierge-style" landscape maintenance services, as well as design and installation for both residential and commercial customers. Learn more at [RoodLandscape.com](http://RoodLandscape.com).*





## Field work

Virginia-based J.W. Townsend specializes in wildflower meadows.

**I**N ITS FIRST year of installing wildflower meadows, J.W. Townsend, a Charlottesville, Va.-based landscape company, only did one. But the interest has grown dramatically since that first meadow installation in 1998. In fact, the service has increased by 50 percent each year. This past year alone the company installed 16 meadows.

Ed Yates, the company's nursery manager and wildflower meadow expert, always has been interested in the idea of meadows as an alternative to pastures or lawns. "The most significant benefit of a meadow is what it offers to the local wildlife," says Yates, who majored in wildlife management in college. "Mown grass or pasture land offers very limited possibilities in terms of what creatures can live there. But a meadow supports a tremendous amount of wildlife. In one meadow we installed, a butterfly expert found 500 different species of butterflies."

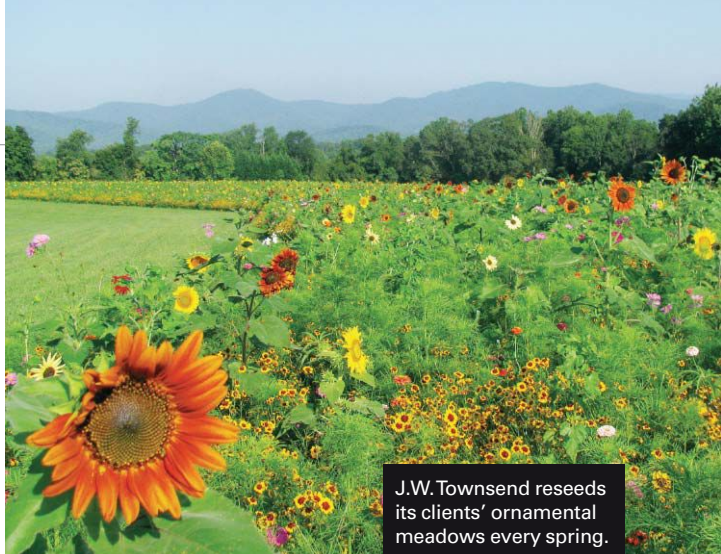
While the service is only a small portion of the company's \$4.5 million overall revenue—accounting for approximately 3 or 4 percent—it's something that helps set the company apart. J.W. Townsend is one of the only companies in its region that does work like this, Yates says.

Meadow installations also have led to ongoing revenue opportunities via annual or semiannual maintenance services. "Every year we knock back the succession (growth) by cutting or burning the meadow," Yates says. "If you don't knock back the growth, weeds will grow really fast. Weeds don't typically hurt the meadow, but it can really hurt the aesthetic."

### TARGET MARKET

The interest in meadows has grown, Yates says, adding they're not for everyone. "Those who like a manicured lawn are not the right fit for a meadow," he says.

While meadow design and installation began as a primarily residential offering—for large-estate owners and those who didn't want the maintenance involved with a lawn—the service has evolved to include many commercial properties as well. The company has



J.W. Townsend reseeds its clients' ornamental meadows every spring.

installed meadows at several locations for the University of Virginia Real Estate Foundation.

When J.W. Townsend began offering meadow installation, it already owned the majority of the equipment required for the work. The most specific tool needed for meadows, Yates says, is a no-till drill. His meadow installation and maintenance crew also uses a boom sprayer when it's converting a field.

Converting the site may include herbicide applications, Yates says, noting every conversion is unique. It can take up to eight months to prepare a site for seeding. After seeding, depending on the seed mix used, annual wildflowers begin to appear within three to five months. By the second growing season, the meadows appear full but will continue to evolve for years. In terms of seed type, Yates's team custom designs the mix for each meadow, taking into consideration site conditions and the owner's goals.

"Many of the meadows seeded are the sustainable type, focusing upon native warm season grasses and wildflowers," Yates adds. "In general these only need to be seeded once. When a more ornamental meadow is desired we reseed every spring, focusing primarily on annual wildflower species."

Yates acknowledges there's a big learning curve when it comes to meadow installation. It's not an easy service to jump into without having some experience. In former roles, Yates worked for a park authority and was also an arboretum manager. He gained meadow experience in both positions.

"There's a lot of knowledge involved in a service like this," Yates says.

Since the service's inception, he has been passionate about his work on meadows, finding value in the opportunity to create such uncommon landscapes. "Each one is different," Yates says. "We can create an aesthetic that is unrivaled and truly original."

Payton is a freelance writer with eight years of experience writing about the landscape industry.

### >> SERVICE SNAPSHOT

**COMPANY:** J.W. Townsend

**HEADQUARTERS:**  
Charlottesville, Va.

**WHY MEADOWS?** Ed Yates, the company's wildflower meadow expert, sees this service as a trend. "There was a time where the idea of converting property into meadowland was thought of as crazy," Yates says. "But now everyone is talking about it and the trend is only going to grow."

**CLIENTELE?** "We've done everything from a 30-acre field to a meadow all around a house," Yates says. "Some residential properties want zero lawn, while others want a meadow as part of their overall property, including a trail. Commercial opportunities have also been increasing."



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## MOWERS



### Pro-Stance 36

With patent-pending features, including integrated Hydro-Gear transmissions, a dial height-of-cut and foot pedal deck lift, the new 36-in. Pro-Stance fits within gates and tight spaces. A lower center of gravity allows operators to handle slopes or uneven terrain. The isolated platform reduces vibration and operator fatigue, the company says.

**Gravely** // [Gravely.com](http://Gravely.com)



### Stryker Stand-On series

The new Stryker is available in a 48- or 54-in. deck, powered with a 23.5-hp Kawasaki FX engine. Both models are primarily composed of 7-gauge steel and 14-gauge stainless steel. The compact stand-on design creates a lighter footprint for trailer space and becomes even narrower with the platform flipped up, the company says.

**Dixie Chopper** // [DixieChopper.com](http://DixieChopper.com)



### HRC commercial series

The self-propelled, hydrostatic drive HRC216K3HXA (pictured) and push-type HRC216K3PDA feature Honda's exclusive MicroCut twin-blade mulching technology. In addition, the push model features Honda's GSV160 overhead cam (OHC) engine, while the self-propelled model uses the GXV160 engine. Both engines feature all-aluminum construction and a cast-iron cylinder sleeve.

**Honda** // [PowerEquipment.Honda.com](http://PowerEquipment.Honda.com)



### Altoz XP Z

Available in two models (540 Z, pictured, and 610 Z), these zero-turn radius mowers' features include the Aero Deck High Output System, Gator Mulcher G6 blades and the SmarTrak Monitoring System.

Other features from this new manufacturer include built-in maintenance reminders, a digital gauge, alarm protection and an on-board clock. The drive system and clutch produce 200 ft-lbs of torque for the heavy-duty deck, deck spindles, front forks and fork castors.

**Altoz Precision Mowers** // [Altoz.com](http://Altoz.com)



### IS 2100Z lineup

This new model lineup consists of six models, ranging from 25.5- to 32-gross hp and 52- or 61-in. decks. Each boasts a commercial Hydro-Gear ZT-5400 powertrain and a Ferris suspension

system featuring rear-coil-over shocks and front, adjustable shocks. This exclusive suspension system provides the machine operator with comfort, speed (up to 10 mph), consistency of cut, extended mower life and productivity, the company says.

**Briggs & Stratton Power Products Group** // [FerrisIndustries.com](http://FerrisIndustries.com)



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[www.irrigationshow.org](http://www.irrigationshow.org)



## Z-Force LZ and SZ

Ideal for mowing up to 5 acres, these commercial series zero-turns offer four-wheel steering and cruise control. Oversized lap bars with quick-adjust knobs, full-length comfort grips and integrated automatic parking brake system are standard. They offer a dual Hydro-Gear ZT 3100 transmission and ground speeds from 8 mph forward and 4 mph reverse.

**Cub Cadet** // [CubCadet.com](http://CubCadet.com)



## 21-in. commercial line

All five models in this new line are equipped with the Recycler cutting system; a wide, easy-empty bag; premium engines and maintenance-free transmissions. Models are equipped with a Honda or Kawasaki engine, travel up to 4.2 mph and offer 1- to 4.5-in cutting heights to mow in a variety of conditions. They also come equipped with a self-propelled Zone Start or Blade Stop System.

**Toro** // [Toro.com/professional](http://Toro.com/professional)

## Grasshopper EFI

These new electronic-fuel-injection (EFI) mowers feature Delphi-based, closed-loop engines that monitor internal and external factors and make automatic adjustments to maintain an optimum fuel ratio. Automotive-style, plug-in diagnostics facilitate faster and more precise service. Models 327 EFI and 727T EFI accept side-discharge cutting decks up to 72 in., as well as dedicated rear discharge decks and PowerVac Collection Systems.

**The Grasshopper Co.** // [GrasshopperMower.com](http://GrasshopperMower.com)



## STALKER

Made in the U.S., the new, patent-pending STALKER stand-on walk-behind mower is powered by Lithium Energy Modules (LEMs). The 48-in. cordless mower can mow all day on one charge for most contractors, the company says, noting that if needed, LEM swaps can be accomplished in less time than it takes to add gas to a gas-engine mower. Quiet and lightweight, the STALKER offers more than 350 ft.-lbs. of torque per drive wheel. The NIGHT STALKER model with LED floodlights also is available.

**Mean Green Mowers** // [MeanGreenProducts.com](http://MeanGreenProducts.com)





### WHP61A and WH61A

Available with either pistol grip (WHP61A) or twin loop (WH61A, pictured) controls, these two new 61-in. hydraulic walk-behind mowers are available with 23.5-hp engines, a 5.8-gal. fuel tank, standard electric start and standard electric PTO. Both are eligible purchases within the GreenFleet Loyalty Rewards program.

**John Deere** // [JohnDeere.com/MowPro](http://JohnDeere.com/MowPro)

## TRIMMERS

### ST275 Trimmer/Edger

Now with 50 percent more torque over previous models, this newest addition to the 40V MAX Cordless Tool System features a dual-line head and flip-down edge guide. The ST275 features a quick-load trimmer head and a variable speed trigger. Weighing in at 9.4 lbs. with battery pack, it will be available in early 2014.

**Oregon** // [OregonCordless.com](http://OregonCordless.com)



### HHT35SLTA and HHT35SUKA

The HHT25SLTA (loop handle, pictured) Honda string trimmer is lightweight, while the HHT35SLTA (bike handle) trimmer is designed for heavy-duty trimming and brush removal. Both models feature Honda's Quick Start system for easy starting. They run on regular gasoline, so there's never a need to mix gas and oil.

**Honda** // [PowerEquipment.Honda.com](http://PowerEquipment.Honda.com)

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## T235

The new T235's design inherits popular traits of the Shindaiwa brand such as a solid shaft drive, ergonomic grips, two-stage air filtration and full-wrap tank stand. A 20-in. cutting swath, easy reloading high-capacity Speed-Feed 400 head and a high-torque gear box are standard. Like all Shindaiwa products, it falls under the 7-Day Money Back Guarantee program.

**Shindaiwa** // [Shindaiwa-USA.com](http://Shindaiwa-USA.com)

## 536LiL and 536LiR

Two new trimmers—the straight loop 536LiL (pictured) and the straight bullhorn 536LiR—offer ergonomics and balance. Each provides stepless electronic speed control, a brushless motor and rotation direction change for professional use.

**Husqvarna** // [Husqvarna.com](http://Husqvarna.com)



## Power Lok system

CORE's Power Lok handheld blower, hedge trimmer and split boom landscaping system features interchangeable attachments that can trim grass, cut hedges and blow leaves and debris. This addition to the company's GasLess line offers flexibility and efficiency for a fraction of the cost of purchasing separate units, the company says.

**CORE Outdoor Power** // [COREOutdoorPower.com](http://COREOutdoorPower.com)

## FS 240 and 240 R

These trimmers cut through heavy thickets and tall growth. The loop handle design of the FS 240 R offers the flexibility needed to trim between bushes, shrubs and other tight spaces. The FS 240 bike handle version offers a swivel design for easy transport and storage. Both feature a vertically pleated, paper air filter element that extends service life, reducing maintenance costs.

**STIHL** // [StihlUSA.com](http://StihlUSA.com)



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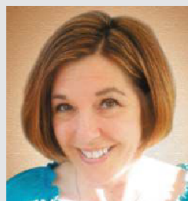


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# Jason New

*vice president of garden management,  
Southern Botanical, Dallas*



**Who's your mentor?** It's hard to learn all you need to know from one person. I can name a few. Presently I spend a lot of time with Jim Cali. He's my boss here at Southern Botanical. He's the CEO, a brilliant person when it comes to people management. This might be kind of hokey, but I also want to say my mom. My mom taught me all the basic things I needed to be successful when I was growing up.

## **As a Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) Trailblazer, what advice do you most**

**often give?** The people you work with are the most important thing. Be willing to pay them well.

**Do you have a secret recipe to growing your business?** We're never happy with what we've created. We enjoy where we're at, but we always look at it again with a critical eye to say: "We're not satisfied with where we're at. Can we do it better?" We're always in an improvement mode with all systems, trainings, everything.



## **Tell me about Southern Botanical's use of the H-2B program**

**to recruit college graduates from Mexico.** That's a huge recruitment program that we have for our field team members. We find them by going to Central Mexico—there are two agriculture colleges there. Through H-2B, we bring college graduates who want to be in

an agriculture program and teach them how to do landscaping. You have smart individuals who want an opportunity in America and we give them an opportunity to do it. They are some of the best team members we have. That's a large part of our success.

**Southern Botanical implemented air spading this year. Has it been effective?** Some background on why it's so important for us: We kept finding that over time, many homeowners, commercial landscapers and people that don't know what they're doing keep piling mulch and soil on top of the trees, suffocating them. Air spading has been a tremendous tool for us to remove all those layers of soil and mulch that's been done over the last 20 years and get back down to where the root zone is getting the right amount of air and water immediately versus having to go through layers and layers of soil.

**What are you proudest of in your career thus far?** I'm proudest of the team of people I work with. We started with 12 managers and maybe 60 employees total. Now we have 215 employees. We're 18 years old.

## OFF THE CLOCK

### **WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST CAR?**

It was a mint lime green 1992 Ford Ranger pickup truck. It was so ugly but everybody loved it.



### **WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE SONG RIGHT NOW?**

"Hey, Soul Sister" by Train.

### **WHAT'S THE BEST MOVIE YOU'VE SEEN LATELY?**

"Silver Linings Playbook."

### **WHO MAKES UP YOUR FAMILY?**

I'm married to my middle school sweetheart, Molly, and I have two young children—my 6-year-old girl, Lily, and my 3-year-old son, Grant.

### **WHAT DO YOU MOST LOOK FORWARD TO EVERY WEEK?**

When I wake up on Saturday morning and I don't have an alarm clock. My kids come wake me up and want to crawl in bed with me.





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