

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

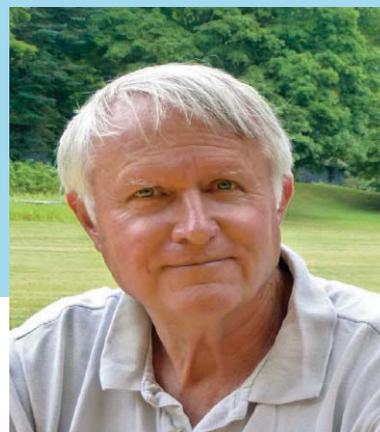
Price: \$14.99 (iOS)

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.

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—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*

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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 ■■■■

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

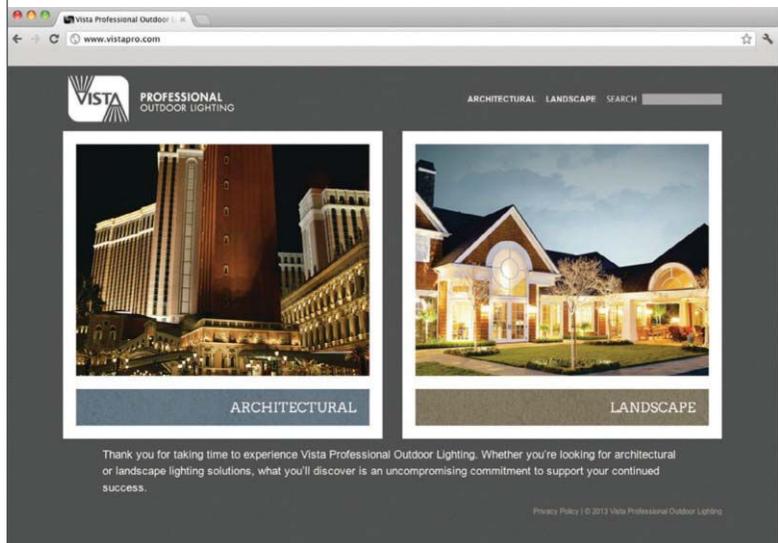


magnifying glass tool. He uses it to identify insects and other pests, such as *poa annua*, which is invasive in lawns in his region.

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

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

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