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★★ **HIRING** ★★ **HEROES**

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FROM THE LM BLOG

> LandscapeManagement.net

Every month, LM government affairs blogger Gregg Robertson opines on a Green Industry-related regulatory or legislative issue. Check out some of his recent posts here:

"Native plants: Are mandates the answer?"
wp.me/p2BT0U-8is

"MS4: Get your share of the green infrastructure market"
wp.me/p2BT0U-8b8

"Green Industry labor crisis: Let's get busy"
wp.me/p2BT0U-809

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@Inbound_Agency: Cool profile from @LandscapeMgmt of Glenn Jacobsen, current @PLANET2005 president - buff.ly/H4izNN

@BetterWay2Learn: "Confessions of a Budget Freak" - ow.ly/pSjKs << Insight on budgeting from Frank Ross and @LandscapeMgmt

@FMcturf: What We're Reading: "How do I develop good people?" ow.ly/pS8p7 via @LandscapeMgmt

@LandscapeMgmt: @McKayLighting is hosting a conference in Omaha, which will include guest speaker @chris_heiler. ow.ly/pma4Y

FACEBOOK FEATURE » Question of the Week

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

What was the first major piece of landscape equipment you invested in for your business?

- » **Kevin Gangi** A back brace
- » **Rick Longnecker** Isuzu cab over
- » **Jason Fawcett** Kubota L3400
- » **Matt Catelli** A rake



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EDITOR'S NOTE

MARISA PALMIERI EDITOR

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

Closing the gap

The U.S. military discharges about a quarter million service members annually and about 10 percent of post-9/11 veterans are unemployed. Those figures—and the landscape industry's dire labor needs—make it encouraging to see, as laid out in this month's cover story, at least a few landscape firms are recruiting skilled leaders from the armed forces.

Because the number of service members discharged and unemployed seems high, it's surprising to note just 0.5 percent of today's U.S. population has been on active military duty at any given time, according to the Pew Research Center. Compare that to about 9 percent at the height of World War II. There are many reasons for this (a shrinking military force, no draft in two generations and others) and the outcome of such a disparity is certainly up for debate. In any case, the result of this divide means many Americans—including veterans' potential civilian employers and coworkers—haven't been on the frontline of the home front.

I have been: My husband has completed three overseas deployments with the Army National Guard. I'm both proud of what he's accomplished and hypersensitive to the needs of returning service members readjusting to civilian life.

In the event you do bring on board a former or current member of the military, please consider the pointers that follow. They may seem like common sense, but surprisingly they're not. As the loved one of a person who has served, I'm asking for others to be

mindful of the potential gap between their perspectives and experiences and those of a veteran.

Do's and don'ts

Do thank them for their service and offer support, but don't make it a big deal. Doing so may make the veteran feel awkward. Certainly don't share any political views like, "I don't think we should be there in the first place."

Don't use war-related hyperbole to describe your job, such as "I've been diving on grenades around here all day." No, you haven't. You've been dealing with minor workplace inconveniences. It's not the same thing.

Do remember that while a veteran may be fully capable in his or her job and seem adjusted to being home from a deployment or working at a civilian job, that doesn't mean it has been an easy road. Forty-four percent of post-9/11 veterans say their readjustment to civilian life was difficult, compared to just 25 percent of veterans from earlier eras who say so, Pew reports.

Don't ask questions like, "What's the worst thing that happened to you over there?" Has anyone ever casually asked *you* to recall the most difficult day of your life? It's invasive, insensitive and could cause someone to relive painful memories. Just don't do it.

Finally, why not give your veteran employees a day off on Veterans Day? It's a federal holiday, but few private-sector businesses close that day, so it comes and goes without much of a to-do. One day may not seem like much, but the gesture will speak volumes about your appreciation for their service.

Landscape Management

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GREEN INDUSTRY EVENTS, TRENDS AND TIPS



John Deere donated \$400,000 in equipment to the National Park Service to restore the National Mall.

Deere makes major donation to National Mall

BY SARAH PFLEDDERER

Glance at the National Mall from an aerial view and you notice a divide in the grounds—a lush greenery on the east side in front of the U.S. Capitol building and a lawn in need of a face-lift on the west side in front of the Washington Monument.

That unbalance will soon come to an end.

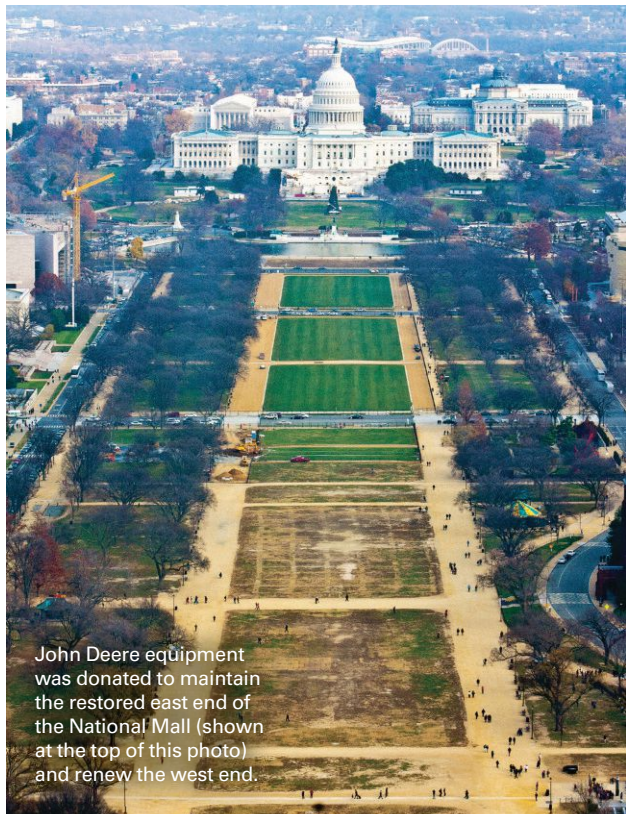
John Deere donated \$400,000 in equipment to the National Park Service (NPS) to maintain the restored areas of the National Mall (from 3rd to 7th Street) and to migrate that restoration west (from 7th to 10th Street). The renewal of the latter side of the mall was set to begin in October at the start of the 2014 fiscal year.

In an early celebration of National Public Lands Day, John Deere personnel as well as representatives from the Trust for the National Mall and NPS gathered at the National Mall Sept. 27 to unveil the donation.

“We recognize as a company that public lands are the cornerstone of our society and they serve many people in many ways,” said Denver Caldwell, manager of turf marketing and marketing support for John Deere. “Through this donation we hope to ensure the National Mall will continue to thrive as an enduring green space for generations to come.”

John Deere’s partnership with the NPS, Caldwell said, has been in the works for about 10 months and goes hand in hand with the National Mall plan.

Instituted in November 2010 the plan was set in place to revive and continually sustain the National Mall, making it functional for nearly 30 million visitors per year.



John Deere equipment was donated to maintain the restored east end of the National Mall (shown at the top of this photo) and renew the west end.

PHOTOS: JOHN DEERE

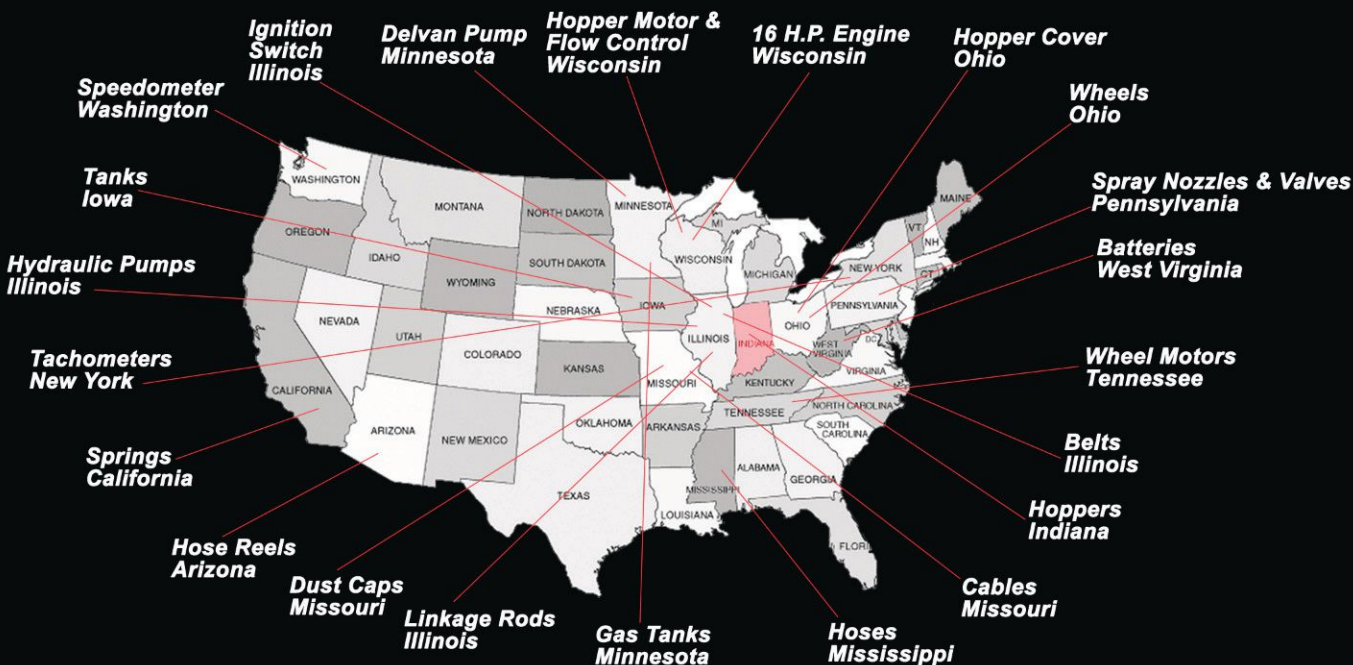
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Briggs unveils new mower engine

BY MARISA PALMIERI

Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power unveiled a new zero-turn mower engine—the Vanguard V-twin 810cc Engine, available in 24 to 26 gross horsepower models with engine displacement of 810 cubic centimeters (cc).

“For the ZTR market, contractors want durability, reliability and most of all displacement,” said Dan Roche, marketing manager of commercial power for Briggs & Stratton, at a launch event and plant tour for the trade media in Auburn, Ala., in September. “We believe 810 cc is the optimum.”

There has been “displacement creep” in the ZTR engine market—to the tune of about 50 cc over the last four years, but increasing displacement often means increasing the footprint of the engine, Roche said. That’s not the case for this model.

Briggs officials were tight-lipped about which mower manufacturers will debut these new engines, except to say there are “launch customers” lined up that will be introducing mower models



A new Vanguard 810cc commercial engine rolls down the production line at Briggs & Stratton’s plant in Auburn, Ala.

featuring the engine in late 2013. However, Roche said mowers with cutting widths between 54 inches and 60 inches dominate the ZTR market, and this new engine fits those sizes well.

The new engine carries the Vanguard three-year commercial warranty.

This introduction marks a new “mid block” category for the Milwaukee-based

company, Roche said. The Vanguard 810cc falls between the company’s V-Twin Big Block engine line, which includes a range of engines from 25 to 35 gross horsepower and features engine displacements as high as 993 cc, and its “small block” V-Twin line with gross horsepower ranging from 13 to 23 and displacement in the high-400 cc to low-600 cc range.

MAILBOX



Right plant, right place

Thanks to Gregg Robertson for the great article on *Landscape Management.net* describing the pros and cons of using native plants (read “Native plants: Are mandates the answer?” at wp.me/p2BT0U-8is). I hope you don’t mind me sharing this with my students at Michigan State University. One of the courses I teach is landscape maintenance, and at least three times each week I remind them about the importance of “right plant, right place.” This article fits perfectly with the message I try to get across to these future leaders in the Green Industries.

Marcus Duck

*Coordinator & Academic Specialist
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Saving the ash

You had an excellent editorial in the July *Landscape Management* magazine (“In the long run,” page 4, or wp.me/p2BT0U-7Gp).

Our local radio gardening talk show just addressed this issue and said landscape managers who sell ash protection are scabs. We have three known ash tree deaths in Kansas City and the neighborhood where the first Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) tree was found has dead ash all over the neighborhood.

It is our feeling at Ryan Lawn & Tree that we need a head start. We have started selling ash protection this year. All our people who will do ash protection have degrees in forestry or horticulture. We take what we do seriously.

When we look at an ash as a Ryan representative, we evaluate the tree’s value to the homeowner. If the tree is in a poor location, is of poor quality or for any reason is inferior in quality, we are not going to sell ash protection. But, we do not want to be playing catch up in three years when our city is losing 10 percent of the ash every year. Just the logistics of getting people trained to sell and apply tree protection products takes some time.

Larry Ryan

*President
Ryan Lawn & Tree
Overland Park, Kan.*

Kudos? Complaints? Share your thoughts with the *Landscape Management* team by emailing mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net.





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BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

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

Financial dashboard starter kit

Having a good financial dashboard is among the best practices used by successful companies to make better business decisions. Knowing what parts of your business are working, where your operations are aligned and what needs your attention is essential.

It's not enough to look at a profit-and-loss statement once per month. A financial performance dashboard can help you find new problems and solve them before they require damage control. They also can reveal if your revenue is growing to meet goals or if you need to make a major course correction before incurring potential losses.

Financial performance dashboards are particularly well suited to small business owners who are seeking a process to help benchmark themselves or need a tool to help keep them on track.

There are dashboard technologies that can help you and your departments establish an integrated continuous improvement process, setting measureable goals and translating them into action with less time and fewer resources. The dashboard concept is not limited to owners and finance officers, though. Salespeople need to monitor and track multiple accounts and field managers need a dashboard to manage labor and job costs; every unit needs feedback and analysis that helps it manage and aggregate its data and performance levels better. As an owner you need to know where you stand every day. One of the biggest issues faced by owners is cash flow.

Because there are things you need to know daily, weekly and monthly, it's not uncommon for an owner to have a daily, weekly and monthly dashboard.

Get started

Since there are as many ideas about what makes the perfect dashboard as there are dashboard tools, consider this useful baseline:

A daily dashboard may include:

- › Cash in the bank;
- › Checks received;
- › Payables due or paid;
- › Credit line available; and
- › Head count.

A weekly dashboard may include:

- › Direct labor hours worked;
- › Overtime hours worked;
- › Enhancement sales billed;
- › New sales sold;
- › New sales proposed; and
- › Backlog.

A monthly dashboard may include: (this also may show the same month in prior year to indicate whether you're doing better or worse year over year):

- › Receivable aging totals;
- › Average age of receivables;
- › Current ratio;
- › Quick ratio;
- › Debt-to-equity ratio;
- › Other ratios that may be part of bank loan covenants such as equity levels etc.;
- › Gross margin;
- › Net profit percentage;
- › Credit line;
- › Monthly revenue by service type;
- › Average hourly wage;
- › Payable days aging;
- › Return on equity, assets or invested capital; and
- › Compounded annual growth rate.

As you can see, it's helpful to have a dashboard so you can judge your company's health in real time. It may help you to sleep better knowing the overall big performance picture—where your company is headed and the challenges you face—rather than worrying about whether you made it through the day without any surprises.

They say money talks, and...

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THE BENCHMARK

KEVIN KEHOE

The author, owner-manager of 3PG Consulting, is a 25-year industry veteran. Reach him at kevinkehoe@me.com.

6 habits of successful salespeople

The industry has changed dramatically over the past five years. We are truly in the new normal now. Part of that new normal is the importance and necessity of the salesman. Where we once were order takers relying on referrals, we have become hunters out of necessity.

What are the attributes and behaviors of the most successful hunters? I've had the privilege of working with more than 100 salespeople since 2008, including business developers and account managers. Through association and observation I've formulated the habits of successful salespeople. I share them with you in hopes that they'll help you improve your game. Here's what I have observed about the most successful salespeople:

1 They keep the sales pitch simple. They talk about benefits not just features. Saying you have dedicated account managers is certainly good. But it's a feature. However, telling the customers they get answers when they want them or, and better yet, they get answers before they have to call you is a very good benefit. The simplest pitch? "We manage your budget and minimize your hassle."

2 They're grinders. They schedule every week so it includes time dedicated to closing and presentation appointments, phone calls, emails, cold calls, proposals and network-

ing. They block and tackle every week, ensuring a sufficient quantity of time in these activities. Selling is long stretches of rejection interspersed with moments of glory.

3 They're direct. They ask targeted and consistent questions to qualify potential clients early (and minimize time invested on low probability prospects). They ask for the sale early to surface and deal with objections. They rarely accept "we'll get back to you" as a close or "we like your numbers" (these are kisses of death and low probability prospects).

4 They use a list. They make a contact and opportunity list and organize it from hot to cold. Then, they work the list every week (see No. 2 above) with the goal of advancing, eliminating and expanding "the list." They know the number of leads required to make one sale and they call until they get a "no." They document conversations and emails with the prospects and schedule tasks and dates on a calendar.

5 They listen more than they talk. Enough said. (Note: The best way to listen is to ask a question).

6 They're prepared for every call. They have an objective, an agenda, a sense for potential objections and things they're willing to negotiate *before* they get on a call. I rode along on a sales call recently. In the car, I asked, "What's the goal for this meeting?" *Meet with the guy!* "What's your agenda?" *Talk about the job!* "Why should he hire you?" *Because he likes us!* "What objections might he have to hiring you?" *I'm not certain!* "OK, let's say we get to the point of closing this today, what's your negotiation strategy?" *What do you mean?* I observed that he was not very successful on that call or, as it turned out, very successful in general.

There you have them: My observations. Not every successful salesman does all of these things all of the time. The best, however, do these things more consistently and frequently than the average guy. Happy hunting!

Selling is long stretches of rejection interspersed with moments of glory ... Successful salespeople know the number of leads required to make one sale and they call until they get a "no."

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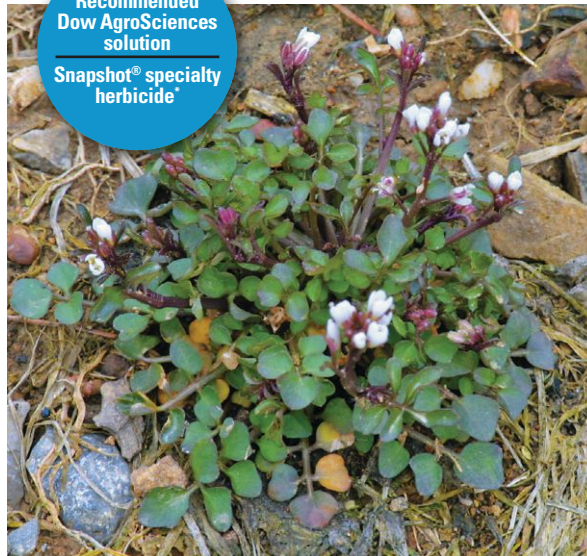
Conyza bonariensis or *Erigeron bonariensis*

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This summer annual or biennial broadleaf weed is commonly mistaken for horseweed (*C. canadensis* or *E. canadensis*) in the seedling stage; however, hairy fleabane leaves are narrower and more crinkled.
- ▶ Its seed leaves are gray-green, twice as long as they are wide and hairless with short stalks.
- ▶ A mature plant can reach up to 4 ft. It is well-branched, with lance-shaped upper leaves and egg-shaped lower leaves.

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Because its seed is spread by wind and is common in nursery plants, a preemergent product with an extensive list of tolerant ornamental species is ideal.
- ▶ Make fall and early spring applications of a preemergent herbicide containing isoxaben to turfgrass or ornamental settings. For early postemergent control in cool- or warm-season turfgrass, a product containing florasulam can be used.



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HAIRY BITTERCRESS

Cardamine hirsuta

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ The leaves of this summer or winter annual consist of two to four pairs of round leaflets arranged alternately along the stem.
- ▶ Each leaf grows from a distinctly hairy petiole. Upper leaves are hairy and smaller than the lower basal leaves.
- ▶ Small white flowers grow in clusters at the end of stems.
- ▶ Hairy bittercress is often found in wet, disturbed areas, such as landscape beds, containers or poorly drained turf.

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ This weed can have multiple generations per year and spreads by seed that project when the plant is disturbed. Preemergent herbicides are considered to be one of the best control methods for hairy bittercress.
- ▶ When applying to landscape beds, start with weed-free soil. Several weeks after transplanting, apply a preemergent herbicide containing isoxaben and cover with a layer of mulch.

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★★ HIRING ★★ HEROES

Employing veterans is about more than honoring their sacrifices. Why you should consider recruiting former and current service members.

BY SARAH PFLEDDERER ASSOCIATE EDITOR

From aiding in the destruction of bombs as a radio field operator in the U.S. Marine Corps to destroying weeds, among other tasks, at The Grounds Guys of Greater Little Rock, Ark., Andrew Wagner's transition to the civilian sector—primarily the Green Industry—was somewhat seamless.

Then again, his stake in landscaping started awhile ago. When he was 10 years old, his dad rolled a push mower in front of him and instructed to go earn some dollar bills.

Wagner credits his four-year military service, including two tours to Afghanistan and one to Iraq, for his success in the industry, though.

"It's a great place for military [people] for the simple fact it's fast-paced and you're always doing something new," says Wagner, a foreman. "In the military that's what we do every day, something new and fast-paced."

To that end, it's Wagner's military mindset and work ethic that make him, as well as other military veterans, a fine fit for the Green Industry, says Russell Hall, president of The Grounds Guys of Greater Little Rock.

continued on page 20

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**A reliable truck means
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continued from page 18

Wagner, the only veteran of a nine-man staff, has quickly risen through the ranks at the company. He was promoted to foreman shortly after his hire in February and is slated for promotion to supervisor before the end of the year.

“He knows what it takes to make a business successful,” Hall says. “We are rewarding him as quick as we can to show him we really appreciate his attitude and efforts.”

The most admirable qualities of a veteran like Wagner, Hall adds, are punctuality, discipline and leadership. Wagner also will keep colleagues in check for quality workmanship, which Hall says is a plus for a boss.



RUSSELL HALL



THERESA AUSTIN

Parallels in sectors, skill sets

Theresa Austin says the discipline veterans attain from their service is most transferable to the Green Industry and what makes them stand out from their peers.

The COO of Lambert Landscape Co. in Dallas speaks from experience, too. Austin served in the U.S. Air Force from 1987 to 1992.

“The military requires great discipline and a get-it-done attitude,” she says. “We used to have to get up at 4 a.m. every morning, run 3 miles and then get to work when most people are just waking up.”

As a hiring manager, she adds: “Service personnel put a lot of investment in what they do and are great employees. Every vet I’ve hired has proven that.”

For Austin, it was her exposure to total quality management in the Air Force that’s proven useful to her career in the Green Industry. The process of putting a design from paper into reality and then sustaining it, for example, must be through a “regimental process,” Austin says.

“In the Air Force, standard operating procedure guides all decision-making,” she says. “This mindset works well at Lambert’s because standard operating best practice is how we approach our work. There’s a very specific way we execute our jobs, maintain the properties and measure performance. Military training is really compatible with that.”

Benefits in workmanship, finances

Hiring veterans also can come with financial benefits to business owners.

The Veteran Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 provides tax credits to

“[THE LANDSCAPE INDUSTRY IS] A GREAT PLACE FOR MILITARY [PEOPLE] FOR THE SIMPLE FACT IT’S FAST-PACED AND YOU’RE ALWAYS DOING SOMETHING NEW. IN THE MILITARY THAT’S WHAT WE DO EVERY DAY.”



—ANDREW WAGNER, THE GROUNDS GUYS OF GREATER LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

employers who hire veterans struggling to gain employment. Those tax credits include the Returning Heroes and Wounded Warrior Tax Credits.

The Returning Heroes Tax Credit provides a credit of 40 percent of the first \$6,000 of wages (up to \$2,400) to employers who hire veterans unemployed for at least four weeks and a credit of 40 percent of the first \$14,000 of wages (up to \$5,600) for employers who hire veterans unemployed for more than six months.

The Wounded Warrior Tax Credit provides a credit of 40 percent of the first \$24,000 of wages (up to \$9,600) for employers who hire service-disabled veterans who have been unemployed for more than six months.

These programs expire Dec. 31. A move in Congress is required to extend them to 2014 or to make them permanent. Though it’s uncertain if it will do so as of press time, Congress has expanded and extended them in the past.

Chris Vedrani, owner of Planted Earth Landscaping in Westminster, Md., took advantage of a \$1,500 tax credit four years ago when he hired Justin Spittal, a project manager with the company. Spittal served eight years in the Army National Guard.

Vedrani says the financial advantages to hiring Spittal were a minor perk. He concurs with other landscape business owners that veterans’ greatest value to the Green Industry lies in their discipline and, in Spittal’s case, organizational skills.

“For him, organization may stem from coordinating plant deliveries to scheduling equipment,” Vedrani says. “The discipline and the organization are a key part of that role.”



He adds military members also bring loyalty, and says: “They made a commitment to the country and completed it. That spells loyalty and they’re going to be loyal to your company and loyal to your client. That’s a big plus.”

Challenges to consider

Hiring military members may not always go smoothly, though, cautions Dirk Bakhuyzen Jr., president of PROCARE Landscape Management in Byron Center, Mich.

With two veterans and one National Guard member, who is his daughter, in the makeup of his 35-member team, Bakhuyzen says hardships can surface from employing military members.

His daughter, for example, was sent to Advanced Individual Training for the National Guard during PROCARE’s midseason. (This branch of the Army allows soldiers to maintain their military training part-time amid working or acting as a civilian.)

Although PROCARE is operating sufficiently in his daughter’s absence, Bakhuyzen says it’s not always easy.

“You want to leave their job open for them but you can’t necessarily do that,” he says. “You may have to fill that job temporarily until they get back.”

Still, employers should know the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) is a federal law in place to protect military members against discrimination and safeguard their civilian jobs, ensuring their position is available upon return from trainings or deployments.

Another challenge Bakhuyzen once had was with a veteran employee who suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder after a deployment to Iraq.

“We stood by him for a long time but he ended up ultimately having to leave,” he says.



CHRIS VEDRANI



JUSTIN SPITTAL

ENLISTING RESOURCES

American Jobs for America’s Heroes, a nonprofit alliance with the National Guard, helps unemployed Guard members, veterans and spouses obtain skills and jobs in the private sector. Companies can post job openings for free online and are also assigned a case manager who will actively match National Guard candidates with job requirements.

The Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) has signed on to this program’s honor roll of trade and professional organizations promoting the effort. For more information or to post free job listings online, visit CenterforAmerica.org/register.html.



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MY MILITARY EXPERIENCE

How two Green Industry business owners have turned their military service into private-sector success.



Daryle Johnson and his wife, Linda, attend PLANET's Renewal & Remembrance ceremony nearly every year with grandchildren.

Daryle Johnson

CEO of All American Turf Beauty in Van Meter, Iowa
Service: U.S. Army, 1954-1956

"I was 18. I'd worked one summer, gone two quarters to college, ran out of money and volunteered for the service. I spent 16 months in Korea. I got out when I was 20. They wouldn't let me buy a beer when I got back.

The G.I. Bill gave me a chance to complete college. That's a reason I went to the service.

I majored in agronomy [at Iowa State University] and went to work for Swift Agricultural Chemicals, a division of Swift & Co. that was large in the fertilizer business. I worked there in sales and management for 17 years. We marketed and sold fertilizers and pesticides to golf courses, lawn care people and farmers, so we were deeply involved with the Green Industry. At that time chemical lawn care was just starting. There

weren't any program chemical lawn care companies doing business in Iowa, so I started the first chemical lawn service business, All American Turf Beauty.

The first two years were difficult. We obviously didn't make any money. It takes a while to get started and you've got to stick with it. We started in 1976 and in 1983 we were an Inc. 500 company, one of the fastest-growing privately owned companies in the U.S.

We financed our expansion with our own profits. About every two years we would move into another market, when we developed enough money to buy the equipment and hire the people. We financed our own growth rather than getting huge loans. We had 67 percent compound annual growth over five years each year.

Anybody that's been in the service knows you have to have a certain amount of discipline. That's also necessary to start a business. It's not easy. You've got to stick with it and be disciplined or else it falls apart."

—As told to Sarah Pfledderer

Brandy Prettyman

Co-owner, The Grounds Guys of Omaha, Neb.

Service: U.S. Army, 2001-2004; husband Dan Prettyman served in the U.S. Army from 2001-2007

"Both my husband, Dan, and I were in the Army. We're both Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans. We were both in Iraq for the initial go around in 2003. I got out during 2004. He came home in 2004 and went back out again in 2004. He pretty much did back-to-back trips.

When we got out of the Army we both went into government contracting. Last year we decided we wanted to do something different. We both knew we wanted to start a business but starting a business from scratch wasn't the way we wanted to go. We knew the VetFran program was available to us and we started looking at The Dwyer Group. The episode of "Undercover Boss" that Dina Dwyer-Owens was on featured The Grounds Guys. I said to Dan, "You like being outside, and I could run the business side of it." It was just a good fit. We created our corporation in March 2012.

Last year we started with just myself and Dan. This year we currently have 10 employees. During the summer we actually surged to 14. We have the Offutt Air Force Base grounds maintenance contract. We provide maintenance services for over a thousand acres. It's a \$1.4 million contract over five years. Dealing with a federal contract is never easy, but our experience helped us hone in on what was important and what needed to be done. We knew this is where our specialty was.

It has been an exhausting year, but it's also been very rewarding being able to run your own business and know you control how well you do.

The one thing about the military that prepared me the best to run a business was being able to roll with the punches. In the Army I wasn't in a leadership position; I was a specialist when I got out. You learn as member of lower enlisted to just roll with it. Learning how to diplomatically react to your [military] team leader or a drill sergeant is similar to reacting to a customer. You have to find a way to explain why you did what you did.

Another thing the military taught me is having a structure and knowing that structure. You really learn how to empower your subordinates. As an owner, you cannot control everything; it's the same as being a squad leader or platoon leader. There are so many tasks that have to be completed to keep the mission going. You can't do them alone. You have to depend on your team. One of the best lessons the military teaches you is it's not just about you. We either succeed or fail as a company."

—As told to Marisa Palmieri



Brandy and Dan Prettyman met in the Army; today they co-own a The Grounds Guys franchise.

» WEB EXTRA

To read about L.G. Scott Landscaping & Tree Service, a Pennsylvania landscape business operated by a military family, visit the Web Extras section of [Landscape Management.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net).

Landscape business owners, he says, should not be deterred from hiring veterans dealing with the aftereffects of deployment, though. They just need to be attentive to their needs.



DIRK BAKHUYZEN JR.

Attraction between parties

The advantages to hiring veterans in the Green Industry, Bakhuyzen says, far outweigh the downsides. It's for that reason he hopes to recruit more veterans going forward.

"The experiences I've had with veterans and active (members) is that they're very job-focused. They take instruction easily, listen and try to follow through on everything," he says. "They're not whiners."

Hence its name, Military Veterans Landscaping (MVL) was formed from the notion veterans and the Green Industry mesh well, says Chris McDonald, managing member of MVL. The company was largely established for the purpose of employing veterans in the Green Industry.



"WHEN YOU BRING SERVICE MEMBERS BACK THAT ARE LOOKING FOR EMPLOYMENT, THEY ARE STRONG, ABLE-BODIED INDIVIDUALS. A LOT OF THESE GUYS ARE LOOKING FOR A JOB AND THEY'RE WILLING TO WORK HARD NO MATTER WHAT THE SECTOR IS. WHEN THEY PUT ON OUR UNIFORM THEY GIVE 100 PERCENT."

—CHRIS MCDONALD, MILITARY VETERANS LANDSCAPING

Based in Washington, D.C., MVL is mainly staffed by veterans, with the exception of some seasoned landscapers for training purposes.

"When you bring service members back that are looking for employment, they are strong, able-bodied individuals," McDonald says. "A lot of these guys are looking for a job and they're willing to work hard no matter what the sector is. When they put on our uniform they give 100 percent."

After a 10-year service in the Navy, McDonald cofounded MVL with John Yori in January 2012.

While he had no experience in landscaping, McDonald joined the industry for an obvious comparison between it and the military, which is they both require outdoor work.

"I liked getting outside. I enjoyed working really hard," he says of his service, and adds of his landscaping career, "I love that you go to a property and it's a mess. You tear it up and put something back more beautiful than before."

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★★HIRING HEROES★★

The outdoor aspect, Hall agrees, attracts veterans to the Green Industry.

“Being in the military, they are used to hard work and working outdoors a lot,” Hall says. “People who sign up for the military, they’re the type of person who enjoys the work we’re doing.”

Veterans, Austin adds, like the structured environment of a landscape business and may be beneficial to a company looking to put structure in place.

“Having military management experience is a skill set that can be a strategic advantage for entrepreneurial companies seeking to build efficient systems and practices,” she says.

These comparisons are the reason many landscape business owners seek out veterans for employment, too.

“It’s hard work, long hours, hot, cold.



I think [the military] provides some of that before they get here,” says Vedrani, who actively recruits veterans from Hire Heroes USA. The nonprofit organization trains job-seeking veterans for employment in the civilian sector. It creates engagement between employers and veterans via job postings and offers a database of veteran candidates to employers.

For other business owners, the drive to hire veterans goes beyond gaining a dedicated staffer.

In Bakhuyzen’s case, it’s about returning a favor.

“I’d like them to work for me just for the satisfaction of knowing I can give back to someone who gave something to me and my country,” he says. “If I can help them achieve their goals after service, that would be a great thing.” LM

Just the facts

★ 270,000

Estimated number of active military, Reserve and National Guard members discharged annually. Statistically, about 32,000 of those veterans will join the ranks of nearly 1 million veterans already unemployed.

SOURCE: HIREHEROESUSA.ORG

★ 10%

The unemployment rate for Post-9/11 veterans in August.

SOURCE: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

★ 49%

The rate of unemployed members of Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America who don’t feel employers are open to hiring veterans.

SOURCE: IAVA’S 2012 MEMBER SURVEY

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Controller or CFO:

What's the difference?

I've been asked several times by people inside and outside the Green Industry about the differences between a controller and CFO. After having many of these conversations, I've come to realize most people think they're the same thing—except maybe a CFO is a supercharged version of the controller. They think the next step along the career path of any controller is to be promoted to CFO. I've held both positions and can attest they're quite different. I read a quote on LinkedIn recently that differentiates the two roles: "Controllers put the numbers together in black and white and CFOs add the color."

Main responsibilities

There are many responsibilities for each role, but the most evident and important to end users inside and outside the organization are the financial statements. The controller is in charge of preparing the financial statements each month and reconciling all the underlying data. He or she is responsible for making sure all controls are in place and the data contained within the financials maintains integrity. When complete, the CFO will interpret the financials. He or she performs variance analysis and researches underlying issues to determine why anything differs from the budget. A CFO should be able to provide internal and external end users a clear understanding of the results, and, more importantly, project an accurate picture of future results.

BY **ERIN MILAM**

Hiring one or the other

While the responsibilities of both positions are important to a company, it may not be financially possible to hire both. A company needs to reach a certain size before it makes sense to have both, and that size is determined by the company's industry and the strength of its staff. In the meantime, you have to have a controller but you don't need a CFO. This is even truer if the CEO or president has a keen understanding of finances and a clear vision for the company. Because the function of the controller is to perform required tasks daily, this position is essential.

If your company size or cash flow doesn't allow for a CFO, another option is an outsourced CFO or financial consultant, who can be used as needed. His or her hourly rate can be expensive, but you'll be able to receive strategic help at a much lower cost than a full-time salary of a CFO. Another advantage to these types of advisers is they remain objective because they're independent contractors.

Individual type

It's difficult to find someone who can operate extremely well as a controller and CFO. I did

Successful controllers are methodical, backward-looking individuals. They're detail-oriented, generally risk averse and take on a large workload.





CFOs tend to take more risks because they have to make decisions based on assumptions and projections, so there's always more implied risk.

both. And while I did a pretty good job as a controller, I'm much better suited as CFO. That's what you'll find with most job seekers—there's a common set of skills required for each role, but that's where it ends. The individual's personality is paramount.

Successful controllers are methodical, backward-looking individuals. They're detail-oriented, generally risk averse and take on a large workload. They have strong managerial skills and stick to process as if their lives depend on it. They believe in chain of command and ensure compliance and effective controls. From a back office perspective, they're the backbone of the company.

In contrast, a successful CFO is forward-thinking and strategic in nature. While by nature financial professionals tend to be conservative, CFOs tend to take more risks because they have to make decisions based on assumptions and projections, so there's always more implied risk. Skilled at forecasting, budgeting and cash management, they have strong relationships with bankers and have the ability to work well with decision makers throughout a company. They listen more than they talk and have the ability to identify and hedge against unnecessary risk.

Duties and overlap of a CFO and controller

| Responsibility | CFO | Controller |
|--------------------------------------|-----|------------|
| ACCOUNTING | | |
| Assist with the annual audit | X | X |
| Accounts payable | | X |
| Accounts receivable | | X |
| Issue billings promptly | | X |
| Calculate job costs | | X |
| Complete bank reconciliations | | X |
| Issue management reports | X | X |
| Prepare financial statements | | X |
| Interpret financial statements | X | |
| Maintain policies and procedures | | X |
| Maintain the chart of accounts | | X |
| Manage the accounting staff | | X |
| Manage the budgeting process | X | X |
| Review capital requests | X | |
| Process payroll | | X |
| Implement operational best practices | X | X |
| Provide financial analysis | X | X |
| Develop performance measurements | X | |
| Maintain performance measurements | | X |
| Review control weaknesses | X | X |
| FINANCE | | |
| Formulate financial strategy | X | |
| Formulate tax strategy | X | |
| Formulate risk management strategy | X | |
| Negotiate acquisitions | X | |
| Maintain banking relations | X | |
| Arrange for debt financing | X | |
| Invest funds | X | |
| Issue credit to customers | | X |
| Maintain insurance coverage | X | |
| Monitor cash balances | X | X |

Due to these differences, it becomes clear why these roles need filled with different individuals. It's important to search for these employees carefully, with extensive interviews and reference checks. The controller and CFO will need to work closely together regularly, so find people whose personalities mesh well. **LMI**

Milam, a CPA, is the CFO of HighGrove Partners in Austell, Ga. She oversees all financial elements of the landscape company, including strategic planning, corporate accounting and reporting, risk management, internal controls, tax management, treasury, budgeting and various special projects. Reach her via highgrove.net.

MARKET WATCH

IRRIGATION

Harvesting savings

A California company focuses on “smart” landscaping and irrigation to reduce clients’ water use. *By JONATHAN KATZ*

Steven Schinhofen speaks with the business acumen of a Silicon Valley entrepreneur. His company, Harvest Landscape Enterprises, is actually located about 400 miles down the coast in Anaheim, Calif., and the business is a far cry from the high-tech world of microprocessors.

Still, the 34-year-old business-school graduate says his maintenance and design firm is beating traditional “mow-and-blow” competitors by applying a science-based approach to landscaping. This includes a focus on water conservation through sustainable landscape practices.

It’s much more than a feel-good marketing ploy. The president of Harvest says sustainability is key to profitability. “It’s not just the right thing to do, but it’s also the smart thing,” Schinhofen says. “By being more efficient with the water, we actually haul less green waste and make more money.”

The “green waste” typically occurs when companies overwater and overfertilize their properties, which eventually require more maintenance and labor, he says. Harvest offers customers a program called SmartScape that focuses on creating a landscape requiring less water and thrives in the Southern California climate.

BREAKING WITH TRADITION

Schinhofen has landscaping in his blood. His grandfather started a landscape company in 1963, and 20 years later his father opened his own landscaping business. Schinhofen began working summers for his father after graduating high school in 1997. By 2003, he decided to add a third landscaping business to the family portfolio. He established Harvest using the business knowledge he gained in college and the real-world experience he achieved working for his father. But he didn’t want

to do things the old-fashioned way.

Early on, a local water district asked Harvest to test a smart irrigation controller on one of the company’s properties. Schinhofen liked how the controller worked, so he contacted the manufacturer to provide training on the system. He also hired a bilingual irrigation expert to educate his staff on how to be more resource efficient.

He noticed drought conditions in California created customer demand for these controllers and sustainable landscapes as water prices increased. Property owners were installing their own smart controllers, but many landscape contractors weren’t willing to help their customers reduce water consumption. That’s where Harvest stepped in.

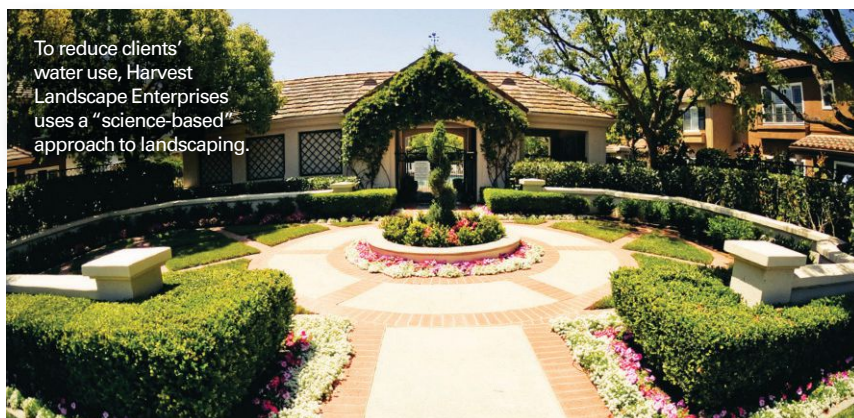
The company also became involved with a nonprofit environmental group called Orange County Coastkeeper, which focuses on protecting the region’s waterways. Harvest helped establish Coastkeeper’s sustainable demonstration garden, which enhanced the company’s reputation as an expert in sustainable landscapes.

WATER-SAVING CASE STUDY

Managing irrigation volume is only part of the water-conservation equation. Landscape design plays a significant role as well. While many companies and customers may suggest replacing shrubs with native plants as a way to reduce water usage, Schinhofen says that alone is typically not effective. All



Steven Schinhofen



To reduce clients’ water use, Harvest Landscape Enterprises uses a “science-based” approach to landscaping.

native plants aren't visually appealing and the return on investment can take up to 20 years. As an additional measure he advocates replacing turf, where appropriate.

An example of where turf reduction made sense is a beach community in Dana Point, Calif., called Niguel Shores of Dana Point. It had been using the same landscape contractor for the past 35 years to maintain the 95-acre property. When Schinhofen arrived he noticed the property was "grossly overwatered." To fix this problem and others like it, Harvest begins with an assessment process that considers the square footage of the landscape along with other factors, such as the percentage of turf, flower beds, slope and evapotranspiration rates. He puts those variables into a formula to determine how much water the property is wasting. The company then maps the irrigation system to identify flaws.

Harvest replaced more than 100,000 square feet of turf at Niguel Shores with

drought-tolerant shrubs and replaced a irrigation systems with drip irrigation to save water and prevent runoff. The community expects to save \$17,000 a year with the improvements. Schinhofen helped the community earn rebates from the local water department to subsidize the project. The project should pay for itself within seven years, Schinhofen adds.

"We are already using less water, making faster progress on the implementation of the master landscape project and at a sharply reduced cost versus initial projections, says Steve Stewart, a Niguel Shores Community Association board member. "Also, we are seeing higher homeowner satisfaction with the current condition of our landscape."

For Harvest, the payoff has been an increasing share of the local landscape market. Schinhofen eventually purchased both his father's company and the business his grandfather founded. Harvest now



has five branches throughout Southern California and more than 400 employees. The focus on sustainability also has made the business more resilient.

"The peak of us doing all this conservation work was also when the market crashed, which impacted our profits, but we probably weren't impacted as much as our competitors and were able to survive the economic downturn," Schinhofen says.

Katz is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

PHOTO: HARVEST LANDSCAPE ENTERPRISES

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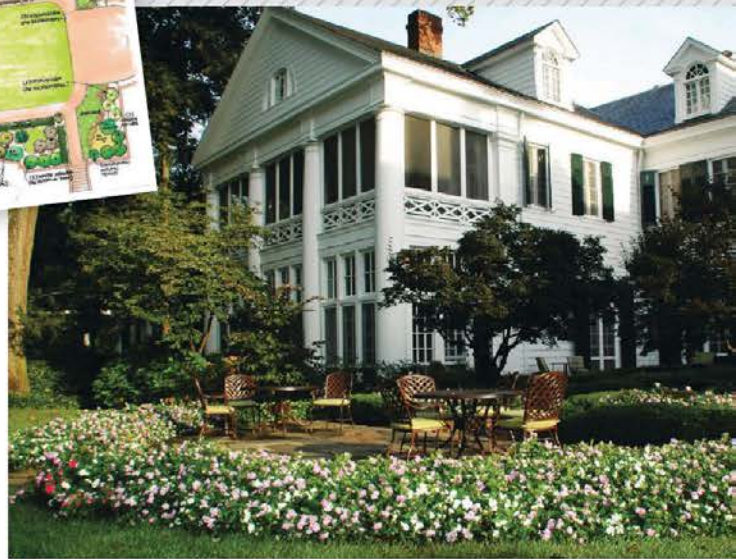
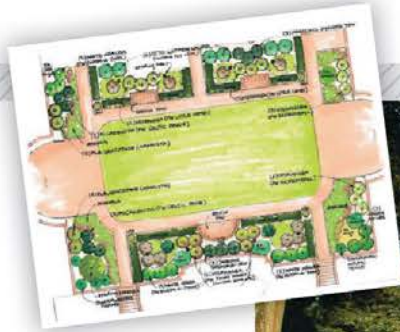


MAINTENANCE

History in the making

Providence Landscape gets the chance to redesign and maintain a Proven Winners Signature Garden at 100-year-old The Duke Mansion.

By MARISA PALMIERI



The decision nearly 20 years ago to provide landscape maintenance at cost for a high-profile but financially struggling property with historical significance has turned into a unique opportunity for Jim Lawrence, owner of Providence Landscape in Charlotte, N.C.

Today the \$8 million landscape maintenance and design/build company is a partner in the effort to redesign the gardens at The Duke Mansion in celebration of its 100th anniversary in 2015.

“As a landscaper, to be a part of a project like this, it’s once in a lifetime,” Lawrence says. “If you can’t get excited and passionate about something like this, you shouldn’t be in the business.”

The relationship between Lawrence and the mansion started in the mid-1990s. At the time he was with the Charlotte branch of Atlanta-based HighGrove Partners. (Lawrence purchased the branch in 2006, forming Providence.) The Duke Mansion, which operates as a nonprofit event and meeting venue with 20 guest rooms, was going through some financial troubles. It had a full-time horticulturist on staff but was looking to cut costs. Lawrence’s company, offering its services at cost, was able to improve the look of the property and do it less expensively than the Duke was paying a full-time staff member.

“We do it at cost for them because it’s Charlotte’s most historic property,” Lawrence says. “We can help preserve it and at the same time it helps us sell more work because it’s a very prominent, high-profile property and we can show that on our resume. It works out really well for both of us.”

Currently, Providence sends a three- or four-man crew to the mansion twice a week. For the centennial garden project the company will be on site even more, providing project management, design, installation and eventually maintenance on the new gardens. The Duke Mansion aims to raise \$5 million, about \$800,000 of which will go to the gardens. The rest will go to an endowment to maintain the mansion for years ahead, Lawrence says.

» WEB EXTRA

To learn more about the Signature Garden program and why The Duke Mansion gardens were a good fit, visit the Web Extras section on [Landscape Management.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net).

‘SIGNATURE’ DESIGN

As the project is still in the fundraising stage, only one “baby step” is complete, Lawrence says. Two small gardens were completed in time for the campaign’s kick-off last spring to give patrons and donors a taste of what’s to come. Many of the details are still in the works but one vital component has been solidified: The Duke Mansion will be home to a Proven Winners Signature Garden—it’s just one of three in the U.S. The others are the Hotel Iroquois on Michigan’s Mackinac Island and Grand Tradition Estate and Gardens in Southern California.

After Lawrence heard about plant brand Proven Winners’ Signature Garden program from his local grower, King’s Greenhouse in Matthews, N.C., he, the folks at the Duke and Proven Winners began a months’ long “courtship” to ensure it was a good fit for all parties, he says. The property was officially accepted as a Signature Garden last year.

As for specifics of the design, it’s still in the early stages, but it will include a path to welcome visitors to tour the gardens. Currently, the grounds of the mansion are open to the public, but the building’s stateliness is intimidating. “You feel like maybe you shouldn’t go behind the gate,” Lawrence says. “These gardens are going to invite people to take advantage of this property.”

A Southern aesthetic also is expected, including roses, camellias and magnolias. “It will include Proven Winners’ latest and greatest signature and heirloom plants throughout,” Lawrence says. “The challenge is to preserve the Southern architectural heritage and the historical value of the property.”

Lawrence is also quick to point out even though the Duke is a century-old property, its landscape will feature new technology, including a brand new “smart” irrigation system and LED landscape lighting.

“It’s those kinds of things, coupled with the latest and greatest-engineered plants, that are going to be the one of the neat things about this,” he says. “Through the collaboration we’re going to be able to put out an incredible garden for Charlotte, and I really think it will be known throughout the U.S.”

Providing services for The Duke Mansion at cost is a win-win, Jim Lawrence says.

LAWN/TREE CARE

35-mph grass

How one landscape company uses ecolawns as part of its mix. *By SARAH PFLEDDERER*

Envision a lawn that needs to be mowed only a couple times a year. Your customers are likely ecstatic about the reduction of landscaping costs and so much so you make up the slump in revenue from new work, per their referrals.

Sound too good to be true? It is.

But this was the overrated notion for ecological lawns, aka ecolawns, when they came about 20 years ago as the brainchild of Tom Cook, an associate professor of horticulture at Oregon State University.

The majority clover-covered turfgrass that required nearly nil maintenance was to be a sustainable substitute for traditional lawns recalls Bob Grover, president of

Pacific Landscape Management in Hillsboro, Ore. But after going untouched for more than a month, the lawns would look like an ugly field once mowed.

Due to sustainability interests from commercial clients, Pacific Landscape Management bounced back the ecolawn concept five years ago.

Since then it has installed and maintained about a dozen ecolawns, which it markets as EcoLawns, and has seen a threefold advantage to them versus traditional turf:

- › 50 percent less mowing.
- › 100 percent less fertilization.
- › 30 percent less irrigation.

SUITABLE SETTINGS

Ecolawns are not “front-door grass,” Grover says. In fact, they’re most suitable in spaces that receive few visitors passing close by.

A more fitting description, he says, is “35-mph grass.” “It’s green and you glance at it as you’re driving by. But if you walk on it, it may not look as great every day as a fine-cut lawn,” Grover says. “If you’re using it at the right place and you give it enough maintenance, we’ve had some good success.”

Grover says an ecolawn fares best in locations with little foot traffic because passersby can’t tell from afar the turf is mostly comprised of clover. Moreover, clover attracts bees when it blooms, making ecolawns a risky substitute for a backyard, school or athletic field where people could get stung.



Bob Grover, president of Pacific Landscape Management

“It’s green and you glance at it as you’re driving by.”

—Bob Grover

This type of turf, though, is able to grow in any area traditional lawns grow, Grover says.

“I think it would be possible to grow this in all regions of the country,” he says. “If you really want to be ecological, it’d be a great option.”

THE LOGISTICS

Ecolawns are comprised of a dwarf grass, herbaceous plant and clover seed mixture. Pacific Landscape Management purchases its mixture from Oregon suppliers Hobbs & Hopkins, Sunmark Seeds and Nichols Garden Nursery.

Clover is the key ingredient to the lawn’s sustainability, given it is drought tolerant—although not 100 percent—and it nitrifies the soil, thus naturally and fully fertilizing the lawn.



Ecolawns are comprised of a dwarf grass, herbaceous plant and clover seed mix. Bob Grover says they're best suited for "drive-by" areas.

As far as controlling broadleaf weeds like dandelions, Pacific Landscape Management occasionally will do spot herbicide treatments, Grover says.

When implementing EcoLawns for customers, the company has grown them from scratch, but more commonly it converts existing lawns by overseeding. It charges about 50 cents per square foot for installations and the turf can take up to a year to be fully established.

Regular mowing, Grover says, is most important in maintaining the lawn. He suggests mowing no more than every other week in a growing season, which cuts maintenance needs for clients by about half.

Grover, who calls ecolawns a "necessary evil piece of landscaping," says it can be difficult for some customers to swallow the idea of willingly letting a weed govern their lawn.

"It's a different thought process and theory," he says. "We don't have people beating our door to say, 'Please convert my lawn.'"

Yet, to an extent, that's OK with him. "It's a great way to help your customer out," he says. "But if I did that on all the lawns I maintain, I would probably cut my revenue by 20 percent."

To strike a balance Grover floats the option of EcoLawns to customers, but doesn't actively market them. The idea,

he says, is to stay ahead of his competition with "cutting-edge" offerings.

"Ecological or otherwise, we really don't want to be left behind because somebody else is offering something we aren't," he says. "If this is something our customers are interested in, we don't want to be left behind."

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DESIGN/BUILD

Money talks

A Plus Lawn and Landscape grabs attention with a unique marketing ploy. —

By MOLLY BEALIN

In April, residents of select central Kentucky neighborhoods were surprised to find in their driveways Velcro wallets with what appeared to be large sums of money inside.

Each wallet was in fact a promotion from A Plus Lawn and Landscape in Lawrenceburg, Ky., including a business card for owner John Rennels, which appeared to be a Kentucky driver's license. It also included the full-service company's phone number and website. Several different cards for discounts and specials, some of which were written on fake \$100 bills were also in the wallet. The discounts were for maintenance and design/build services. They ranged from a free consultation and design with contract for project construction and a free first mowing with a weekly mowing service contract.

Several months after launching the promotions, Rennels says the company of eight employees plans to do a similar campaign again.

"We're still getting results from the promotion because we are doing year-



long analysis," Rennels says. "Feedback has been 95 percent positive; we've gotten some very good publicity and created some buzz."

The company spent \$11,000 on the campaign and choose to conduct it during April because that's when landscape services are the most in demand, he says.

"We have a two-week window when it first starts to get warm. Since it didn't get warm until May we're going to run it another year. It was a very odd sales season this year," he says.

Many advertising pieces are immediately discarded by the consumer and don't produce high results, he says. Rennels came up with campaign by asking himself the question, "How

could we take this driveway drop ... and make it something that people are going to pick up?"

He was fairly sure people would pick up something that gave the appearance of money. He purchased 10,000 wallets from China and stuffed them with his promotional materials before distributing them to target neighborhoods.

While Rennels is still quantifying the results of the wallet campaign he predicts it will bode well for the company and plans to do another campaign next year with the same concept in the same areas. **LM**

Bealin is a Cleveland-based contributor for Landscape Management.

“Feedback has been 95 percent positive; we’ve gotten some very good publicity.” —John Rennels



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PROFITING FROM DESIGN

JODY SHILAN

Shilan is editor of FromDesign2Build.com. Contact him at 201/783-2844 or jshilan@gmail.com.

The last proposal you'll have to write

Q I lose a lot of work because it takes me so long to get back to a new potential customer. Between the time it takes to meet with them, put together a plan and proposal and still keep my current projects running, many clients have already chosen to work with another contractor. How can I speed up my design/build sales process?

— George Margate, Mountain Lakes Landscape, Calgary, Alberta

A I have a process for everything I do, and you should too. I have standard operating procedures (SOPs) or best management practices (BMPs) for screening customers on the phone, managing the initial meeting, my landscape design process and even how I color render my drawings. Why? The better and more defined your processes are the more organized your projects will be, which translates to happier customers and higher profits.

This month I want to discuss one process many of you waste a considerable amount of time on: It's the proposal-writing process. I know, I know: What could be more boring or mundane than writing proposals? Well I couldn't agree more. That's why I no longer write proposals. I just take my standardized proposal template, make a few tweaks and hit print. Unlike my site visit proposal (see "Web Extras"), which you can use for smaller, non-design projects, this template is for bigger design/build installations. However, keep in mind that just because a project may be larger and more sophisticated, that doesn't mean your proposal has to be.

For example, when installing a paver patio or walkway, although your layout may change from project to project, your installation process stays the same. You'll still need to excavate down about 8 inches, put in a 4-inch base and a 1.5-inch screed bed. Next, you install the pavers, make your cuts, put in the edging and sand sweep the joints. So if this is how you do your paver installs, why do you need to reinvent the wheel and develop unique language every time you design a paver project? You don't.

Imagine if one day you decided to list all of the steps required for everything we do, including hard-scape installations, new plantings, etc., and wrote them all down? Now, what if you reviewed these processes with your coworkers so they could make comments and help you to fine tune them? Next, and only after you get a general consensus, you take this document, check for spelling and grammatical errors and save it onto your computer? You just may have all of the ingredients you need to create a master template that could be cut and pasted into a proposal in just a matter of minutes instead of hours.

Naturally, there will be some modifications you need to add to your proposal, such as paver style and color or the quantity and types of lights you're installing. However, all of the important language is not only already written; it has already been proofed for errors. This way you can be assured you're not going to forget to include one of those pesky little sentences like "we're not responsible for damage to irrigation lines during excavation," which could potentially cost you hundreds or thousands of dollars in irrigation repairs later on.

Although it's a template, you still may need to add a plant list to your proposal unless there's a planting schedule on the drawing. If that's the case, you can just use my three favorite little words, which are, "as per plan." Nothing shortens your proposal-writing process more than referring to the landscape plan and writing "plantings as per plan," "patio as per plan," "lighting as per plan," "swimming pool as per plan," etc., etc., etc. (as per plan).

So take the time now and document all your construction processes and create your own proposal template. It's certainly worth the investment and may be the last proposal you'll ever have to write. Combine this with my unbiddable master plan process (see "Web Extras") and you'll be getting back to your clients faster and selling more work than ever before.

To submit a question for Profiting From Design, please contact Shilan at jshilan@gmail.com.

» WEB EXTRA

Download Shilan's sample site visit proposal at wp.me/p2BT0U-8bx or read about his unbiddable master plan process here: wp.me/p2BT0U-8k4.

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| 10/30 | Shelly Hewson , Contractor, <i>Hewson Landscape</i> | Married to Your Business |
| 11/7 | AJ Davis , Contractor, <i>Davis Outdoor Jobs</i> | Young Guns of the Green Industry |
| 11/14 | Chris Heiler , Consultant, <i>Landscape Leadership</i> | It's Time to Update Your Website |
| 11/21 | Jason Cupp , Consultant, <i>Kolbe Certified Growth Consultant</i> | Hire and Keep the Right People |
| 11/27 | Maurice Dowell , Contractor, <i>Dowco Enterprises</i> | Growing a Successful Maintenance Company |

Remember: all shows are archived for later listening at FD2B.COM!

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.



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Off the (green) wall

Green wall and roof installations are a profitable endeavour for The LaurelRock Co.



Light is a critical factor for green wall health.

AFTER HEARING A talk about living walls and roofs, Burt DeMarche was immediately interested in adding the service to his business. The owner of The LaurelRock Co. in Wilton, Conn., knew it would appeal to certain niche clients—particularly those interested in “going green.”

The talk that attracted DeMarche was given by George Irwin, the CEO of Green Living Technologies International (GLTi), a manufacturer of green roof and green wall panels.



Burt DeMarche

LaurelRock launched the service last year after having Irwin speak at an event of its own. Since then the service has seen slow but profitable growth—mostly through word of mouth. In fact, the company’s first customer was a direct result of the event it sponsored with Irwin.

“One of the guys from the catering company at our event was opening a restaurant and wanted a green wall inside,” DeMarche says. “He let us put up a plaque that says we built and maintain the wall, so that gives us some good publicity.”

Ongoing maintenance is a revenue driver of the green wall business. LaurelRock comes once a week to hand water the restaurant wall and clean out the catch. Initially, the company came twice a week, but the restaurant took over some of the watering on its own. This client’s system has no built-in irrigation, but the company has installed walls that have drip irrigation systems.

Besides watering, light is the most critical factor for a green wall to thrive and it may even dictate where walls can be installed. “Having someone on staff who has some knowledge of indoor plants and how to maintain them has been important to the success of this service,” DeMarche

says. “Getting the proper lighting on the plants can be a challenge, particularly if there’s not a lot of sunlight coming in. For the restaurant project we had to install light fixtures that came on via a timer at night since the plants weren’t getting enough light during the daytime. A working knowledge of plant selection is also really important.”

Though green walls are more suited for commercial clients, DeMarche says LaurelRock has designed a vertical vegetable garden for a residential customer. “She wanted a vertical vegetable garden installed on her fence and ended up really liking it,” DeMarche says. “In the winter she wanted to bring it inside so she purchased a freestanding unit where we could hang the panels and she grew herbs in her family room during the winter.”

For the most part, the bigger sell on the residential side is for green roofs. DeMarche says so far the company has installed two green roofs and hopes to continue to see growing interest as more homeowners embrace a green lifestyle.

“With the roofs you have to get the architect on board because it does have to be designed as part of the home’s design process,” DeMarche says. “But I do see the interest in it expanding as more customers become eco-conscious. They like the idea that it’s not only environmentally friendly and reduces runoff, but it also looks really good.”

To date, the service has been profitable. DeMarche estimates there’s at least a 20 percent net profit margin to be had on the jobs.

“Each time we do a project we’re also learning more efficient ways to do the planting and transporting. The more we learn, the more profitable we’ll be,” DeMarche says. “We’re always looking to expand our knowledge and learn more.”

>> SERVICE SNAPSHOT

COMPANY: The LaurelRock Co.

HEADQUARTERS: Wilton, Conn.

WHY GREEN WALLS AND ROOFS?

“We saw George Irwin [CEO of Green Living Technologies International, a green wall and roof manufacturer] speak at a Professional Landcare Network event and got pretty interested in the idea,” says company owner Burt DeMarche. “We had George come speak at an event we were putting together at a client’s farm and he trained us on building.”

INVESTMENT? “The main investment was time,” DeMarche says. “We had to invest time in researching the products and learning what to do.”

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



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- 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

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- 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.
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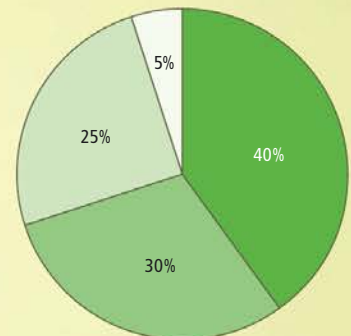
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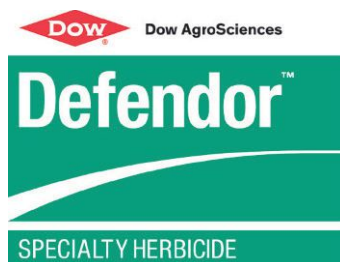
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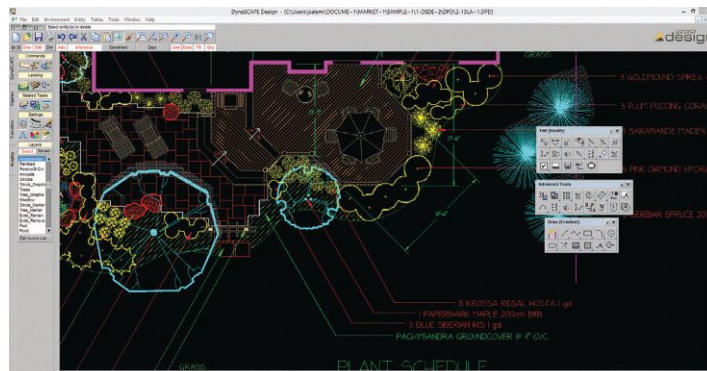
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Design v6.2

DynaSCAPE's new 6.2 landscape design application update features new tools, enhancements and fixes. This includes a new figure outliner tool to help with hatching; a new "close" option to the building outline tool; and a new PDF file import as a raster. The update is free for DynaSCAPE users with active subscriptions.

DynaSCAPE Software // DynaSCAPE.com

PRO Landscape Version 19

New PRO Landscape Version 19 helps users quickly create visual designs for customers, accurate site plans for crews and professional proposals to communicate every aspect of the proposed project. Features include photorealistic imaging, night and holiday lighting, CAD, estimating, 3D renderings and mobile tablet applications in an easy-to-learn and -use program.

Drafix Software // PROLandscape.com



ENGINE CARE

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Toro // Toro.com



PRODUCT SPOTLIGHTS



Eco 200

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Ecolawn // EcolawnApplicator.com



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[Happy Veterans Day]

Landscape Management salutes...

North Coast Media employees honor their veteran friends and family:
 Ray Bement (Army), Ray Bement Jr. (Army), Leesha Bolton (Army), Henry Constantino (Army), Erik Cooke (Army), Sam Eager (Navy), Eric Gakstatter (Air Force), Nick Gomez (Navy), Bernard Henry (Army), Laddie Hula (Army), Don Jewell (Air Force), Boyd Jones (Air Force), Steve Kanaba (Army), William Knauer Jr. (Army), Bruce MacGregor (Air Force), Ronald MacGregor (Army), Eric McAllister (Army), John McAninch (Navy), Emil Palmieri (Marine Corps), Edward Pipik (Army), Bradley Roddy (Army), John Roddy (Army), C. Philip Seltzer (Army), Edward Sessler (Army), Mike Shugrue (Army), Joseph Stoltman (Army), Eric Tubbs (Army) and Martin Whitford (Navy).

» WEB EXTRA

To see which North Coast Media staffers these vets are connected to, visit the Web Extras section of **Landscape Management.net**.

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Who is your mentor? There were two folks who helped me in my career. Doug Davis was the owner of the prior business that I worked for. Another fellow, Jim Lanier, worked there for a number of years as the vice president. Doug taught me the business of taking care of our customers by meeting or exceeding their expectations. Jim taught me how to be smart about the landscape contracting business. Both of these folks were instrumental in furthering my career and business.

What sparked your interest in the Green Industry at such a young age? There was a horticulture program in high school, which is really where I got my start. My senior year I was also involved with Future Farmers of America and they had a work-release program as part of an internship. I worked at a greenhouse for six months my senior year. It was called Garden Valley. It's now long gone. There's actually a church where it used to be.

What are some obstacles or restrictions you face as a landscape business owner in Georgia? Our biggest obstacle the past two years has been water restrictions. Certainly they've gotten better, and especially this year because we've had more rain. The biggest thing is trying to adjust your business to fit what you're able to do: Use plants that are more drought-tolerant; use irrigation that is more conservation conscious; try to plant or install things correctly; and use technologies available that help manage your ability to water.

What are some of the most notable changes you've observed in the industry over the years? As I've learned more, I realize it isn't just going out and mowing grass. There's a business side to it. You see all kinds of changes with water restrictions and regulations, meaning what types of fertilizers and things like that you can use, planting techniques, etc. It used to be you couldn't buy plants if they weren't pre-dug in the winter in dormancy. Now you can dig all year-round. Your season is extended with planting.

How has your involvement in the Irrigation Association and the Georgia Green Industry Association advanced your career? They're different from any other kind of business associations because it's more geared toward your industry. With networking you're able to grow your business in ways you normally wouldn't get to. Back to restrictions and regulations, by being involved in those and having a voice in the industry, you're able to approach your local representatives, folks in the state capital and even on the national level to try to work through issues that affect your ability to have a business and to operate as you need to.

OFF THE CLOCK



WHAT SPORTS TEAMS DO YOU BACK? University of Alabama

ARE YOU A BIG CONCERT-GOER? I like music a lot. I saw Peter Frampton and B.B. King in mid-August.

HOW MANY CONCERTS DO YOU ATTEND PER YEAR? Probably more than I should. I maybe go see six or eight a year.



WHERE IS YOUR HOMETOWN? The Metro Atlanta area, that's mostly where I've been all my life.

WHAT DO YOU DO TO RELAX WHEN YOU HAVE SOME DOWNTIME? I like competition shooting.



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