



David Frank

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Who's your mentor? I've had many mentors at different periods of my career. When I was starting out at age 10, many of my clients became wonderful mentors, significantly because of my young age. At that time, I was fortunate to have some of Milwaukee's leading industrialists and businesspeople as clients and received consistent, generous advice from them.

As I became active in the Green Industry, pioneers such as Dick Brickman, Joe Marsh, Tom Lied, Lee Bruce and Ron Kujawa were of great assistance.

How does a 10-year-old start a landscaping business? I lived in a nicer neighborhood with affluent, older families who weren't able to physically garden. I had a reasonable amount of ambition and was able to start a "neighborhood gardening service," with the intent of improving my financial potential.

You said working in this industry today is harder than it used to be. Why? Twenty years ago, continuous improvement and implementing new technologies was a good strategy. Today, consistent, constructive change is integral to a business' survival. We've tried to embed it in our corporate culture so that we can be proactive rather than reactive.

The last time we spoke with you, you said your work is largely inspired by the Sagrada Familia cathedral in Barcelona and the Gardens of Versailles. What is it about them? The Sagrada Familia cathedral was innovative for its time [the 1880s], and it's a wonderful study of architect Antoni Gaudi, who was far ahead of his time.

The Kew Gardens in London, the Gardens of Versailles or the Butchart Gardens in British Columbia, which I visited this spring, are all inspirational for different reasons. The scale of some of these developments is staggering, and their quality inspires me.

What professional connections have influenced you most? Although my firm has affiliations with over 40 organizations, without a doubt I have been most influenced by my involvement in ALCA, now the Professional Landcare Network, as well as the Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association. All offered me wonderful mentoring opportunities.



What advice would you give to someone starting a landscaping business today? It's critical to supplement your technical education with a level of business training, as well as an affiliation with a certified public accountant who understands contractor job-cost accounting. It's the same advice Green Valley Landscape founder Joe Marsh gave me in 1978.



OFF THE CLOCK

WHAT'S NEXT ON YOUR BUCKET LIST? Visiting Giverny and the Chateau de Vaux Le Vicomte in France.

HOW MANY SCUBA DIVES HAVE YOU LOGGED? 1,030, most recently in Playa del Carmen in the Yucatan Peninsula. The best ones have been the dives where we fed sharks and manta rays.

WHO'S IN YOUR FAMILY? I just welcomed my first grandchild this year, with another on the way this fall. I have a beautiful and wonderful wife, Jane Marie, as well as five children and two stepchildren.

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT WISCONSIN? The tens of thousands of inland lakes and lots of nature opportunities.



EVERY WEEK I LOOK FORWARD TO... Working with the best team in the industry

