

## Certified Wildlife Landscaping Professional program launches

The National Wildlife Federation aims to certify 300 Green Industry pros by the end of the year. BY MARISA PALMIERI

**N**ational Wildlife Federation (NWF) launched its Certified Wildlife Landscaping Professional (CWLP) designation late last year as an offshoot of its Certified Wildlife Habitat, Schoolyard Habitat and Community Wildlife Habitat programs. The new program certifies landscape professionals who commit to supporting ecologically sound and wildlife-friendly methods of landscaping.

"We wanted to bring together our expertise and couple that with the landscaping professionals' skills and expertise to combine for a true certification program for them where they participate in a training program," said Eliza Russell, NWF's director of education.

The impetus for the program was two-fold, she said: 1) Demand from its existing habitat program participants looking for expert help, and 2) Demand from landscape professionals asking for guidance on and recognition for setting their businesses apart from an environmental standpoint.

About 25 landscape professionals were certified as CWLPs in 2013. Some of them worked with NWF to test the program during its eight-month-long development phase. NWF hopes to grow the number of certifications to 300 by the end of 2014.

Ben Bowen, landscape manager for Ross NW Watergardens in Portland, Ore., is one of those pilot participants.

"One of the things I like about the program is it's very focused," he said. "It's not something that takes a huge investment of time or money to get involved in, but has some real benefits."

The advantage

Bowen names is the credibility gained by being associated with NWF and the ability to promote the certification on its website and via social media.

"I'm here in Portland, Ore., where this sort of thing is very important," he said. "I realize in some parts of the country, the (environmental) emphasis isn't there yet, but everywhere people are becoming so much more aware of the impact we have on the world around us. There's a little investment with time and money with this program, but I think it's one that would pay off for a lot of companies."

### Getting certified

To become certified, landscape professionals complete 18 to 20 hours of online, self-paced training about wildlife habitat elements, native plants and more. The process also includes submitting documentation (plant lists, design, etc.) that emphasize how the company's approach "improves the larger ecosystem, benefits wildlife and enhances their client's experience with nature," according to the NWF's website. The training



culminates in a test with an essay. The first year certification fee is \$150 and it's \$200 to renew in subsequent years.

NWF worked with the Ecological Landscaping Association, the American Society of Landscape Architects and the Association of Professional Landscape Designers to develop its certification requirements.

Once professionals are certified, they're entitled to use marketing materials provided by NWF, such as web and print badges, a listing and profile page on NWF's website and access to more training.

Bowen noted his website received some traffic from the NWF site listing, but he hasn't yet landed a job directly from there. "We've had the badge on our website for a few months and had people who've commented on it," he said. "It's caught their eye."

Though any landscape professionals may apply to participate, the "sweet spot" for the program right now is landscape designers and installers, Russell said, noting the training reflects that focus. "We do know there are probably going to be more tweaks," she said. "And we need to learn more about the lawn care side of the industry."



# AmericanHort debuts

**A**mericanHort, the Green Industry's new trade association, formally began Jan. 1, following the closing of the consolidation of the American Nursery & Landscape Association (ANLA) and OFA—The Association of Horticulture Professionals Dec. 31. The more than two-year effort to bring the groups together was initiated by the volunteer leadership of the legacy organizations. OFA and ANLA members have been automatically enrolled in AmericanHort.

"We will not forget the past as we rapidly move toward the future," said Michael Geary, president and CEO of AmericanHort. "We will continue the legacy of providing innovative educa-

tion, industry promotion, developing consumer and professional markets, an expanding convention and trade show and leading a powerful national government relations program."



The mission of AmericanHort is to unite, promote and advance the industry through advocacy, collaboration, connectivity, education, market development and research. The vision, developed by the new board of directors, is to be a leading and unifying organization for the horticulture industry to cultivate successful businesses and to enhance lives through the benefits of plants.

The new organization will represent breeders, greenhouse and nursery growers, garden center retailers, distributors, interior and exterior landscapers, florists, students, educators, researchers, manufacturers and all of those who are part of the industry supply chain. AmericanHort will have its primary office in Columbus, Ohio, and an office in Washington, D.C., to facilitate government relations and research activities, including the management of the Horticultural Research Institute. AmericanHort also will continue to manage America in Bloom.

## » CORRECTION

The 1-Minute Mentor department of *LM's* December 2013 issue (page 44) incorrectly identified Jim Cali as CEO of Southern Botanical. His title, in fact, is COO.

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