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TURF + ORNAMENTAL

The grass is greener

11 experts discuss
turf care innovations,
trends and predictions



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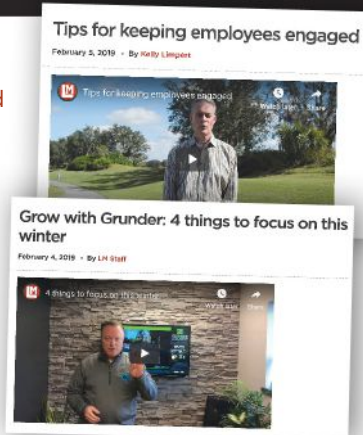
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March landscape madness, baby!

College basketball is my favorite sport, and the Kansas Jayhawks are my team. It's rare for me to miss a game — I'll even record games when I'm traveling for business. When March Madness rolls around, my TV watching increases exponentially. It doesn't matter what teams are playing — I'm taking it all in.

For the last several years, I've taken vacation days for the first two days of March Madness. I open the garage doors (I convert my garage into a man cave every spring) and watch hoops from 10:45 a.m. until the last game ends around midnight. I revel in having multiple games on multiple channels.

But this year, I broke my streak of taking a March Madness staycation. I tried to forewarn my friends who come over, but I can still imagine someone pulled up to my house with a six-pack in the passenger seat, then quietly cussed and drove off when they saw the garage doors were closed. Instead I joined *LM* Publisher Bill Roddy, and we went and saw a different kind of March Madness — the landscape industry's version — the National Collegiate Landscape Competition (NCLC), hosted by the National Association of Landscape Professionals.

The event was in Fort Collins, Colo., a fantastic college town, and Bill promised it would be a fruitful trip. The NCLC delivered on that promise. I went in not knowing what to expect. I walked away charged up about the landscape industry, invigorated by the energy of all the young college students so excited to join this great industry.

It got off to a fun start when all the attendees packed the Lincoln Center on Colorado State University's campus. Some 800-plus students from 60-plus universities and colleges filled the auditorium, and the vibe was legit. Each college took turns doing a chant showing off their school spirit, giving the opening ceremony the feeling of pregame tipoff at the NCAA tournament. March (landscape) madness, baby!

“... we went and saw a different kind of March Madness — the landscape industry's version — the National Collegiate Landscape Competition (NCLC).”

From there, students were challenged in all the various intricacies of the landscaping profession, including business management, plant problem diagnosis, computer-aided landscape design, tractor loader backhoe operation and more. The moment that drove it home for me that this was like college finals mixed with job interviews was when Bill and I rolled back into the hotel after a few postevent meetings at the various breweries that Fort Collins is well known for. At our hotel were six drowsy college students from Eastern Kentucky University, paperwork strewn about the table, quizzing each other as they sipped coffee.

I talked to Lee Ivy, senior lecturer, horticultural science, at North Carolina State University, about the importance

of the event to his students. Ivy was a participant in NCLC as a student in 1997-98, and now he's the one bringing students and training them on how to succeed there.

“The exposure to the industry — you've got all these industry people here committed to helping these students advance and take the next step — for that, it's worth it,” Ivy told me. “There's so many jobs out there right now, and they're building relationships. While they're here, they're getting a supporter, a cheerleader, a mentor, on their side.”

I spoke with one of those supporters, Roger Phelps, corporate communications manager for Stihl, as the 800 students filed out of the Lincoln Center. Stihl serves as the platinum sponsor for the event, and the reason why was clear for Phelps.

“The future of the industry was sitting right here in this room,” Phelps said. “As an industry, we need to show these young people that not only is there a career for them, not only can they take whatever their skill set is and apply it, but that the industry is going to stand behind them.”

John Janes of Caterpillar reaffirmed that as we were watching the students navigate the skid-steer challenge course together.

“We were talking to a young woman yesterday — she graduates this year,” Janes said. “We talked to her about what her career aspirations are. She said the first decision she has to make is which of 10 job offers she wants to select.”

KICKSTART CONTEST

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Thank you to the hundreds of Kickstart entrants and all hardworking landscapers.
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See more great advice and complete answers from our Editorial Advisory Board in the online version of this feature at LandscapeManagement.net.

What's the best way to retain employees?

"Make sure they love and respect their boss. When questioned in surveys about why employees quit their jobs, it wasn't pay or benefits, as you would imagine — most of the time, they couldn't stand their boss."



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"... good bosses treat people as they would want to be treated ..."



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LM GALLERY

Check out a few of the places where the **LM** team made its rounds recently

1 Let's cut to the chain *Landscape Management* Digital Editor Kelly Limpert was in Asheville, N.C., to learn about — and why yes, even test — the newest chainsaws from Husqvarna. Don't worry, she'll be sticking to her writing job, with some light sawing as a side hobby.

2 Chillin' at CooperSmith's (L to R) Bill Roddy, publisher, *LM*, Marty Grunder, president & CEO, Grunder Landscaping Co. and The Grow Group, and Seth Jones, editor-in-chief, *LM*, take in a relaxing moment at one of Fort Collins, Colo.'s finest micro-breweries before the 2019 National Collegiate Landscape Competition (NCLC) kicks off.

3 TOCA travels That's Roddy (fourth from right) with his industry colleagues on the Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association's board of directors. The group recently assembled in Fort Myers, Fla., for a strategic planning session.

4 Chili, it's what's for lunch How do you feed 800-plus hungry NCLC participants? With chili — lots and lots of chili!

5 Mowing down some sandwiches with Walker Mower While in Fort Collins, Jones (left) was invited to meet up with Bob Walker (center), president, Walker Manufacturing Co., and Tim Cromley (right), marketing manager, Walker Manufacturing Co., at Choice City Butcher & Deli.

6 A couple branches from the Bartlett family tree The crew from Bartlett Tree Experts, including Nicole Belhumeur (second from right), corporate recruiter, and Bret MacKay (right), foreman, take a break from giving plant problem diagnosis quizzes to the NCLC students to pose for a photo in front of one of their service trucks.

7 Orange army It was easy to spot the team from LandCare — their bright orange jackets were an even brighter orange than the colors the team from Oklahoma State was sporting. Account managers (L to R) Katie Newbern of Nashville, Tenn., Ryan Burrow of San Diego, Hermelinda Castro of Dallas and Cody Tibbs of Sacramento, Calif.





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TOP-TIER TRAINING

BY DANIELLE PESTA | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

With the current workforce shortage, hands-on experience is invaluable. But finding a good way to receive accurate and up-to-date training can be a challenge.

Recognizing the need for more qualified labor in the landscape industry, Frank Niccoli, a horticulture professor at Foothill College, a past president of the California Landscape Contractors Association (CLCA) and a former landscape contractor, set out to create an interactive learning program at Foothill College in Los Altos, Calif.

Just last year, the National Association of Landscape Professionals decided to end the hands-on training portion of the Certified Landscape Technician (CLT) program. The CLT training was developed more than 30 years ago by a partnership with Niccoli, the late John Gachina, founder of Gachina Landscape Management, and CLCA.



Gachina Landscape Management team members watch a demonstration by Frank Niccoli at Foothill College's John Paul and H. Jaclyn Ishimaru-Gachina Learning Center.

The John Paul and H. Jaclyn Ishimaru-Gachina Learning Center at Foothill College is now in full swing. The center's dedication on Feb. 21 recognized John and Jackie Gachina for their impact on the industry.

"I've known John for over 40 years, until he passed in 2015," Niccoli said. "The Gachina family has been very supportive of the landscape industry ... and it just made sense to name it after John and Jackie."

Niccoli said with the help of student labor, it took 16 months to complete the center's 25 hands-on training modules. The modules cover items such as irrigation troubleshooting, paver installation and how to drive a skid-steer.

"Since I was a contractor, I know what skills we're looking for in the industry," Niccoli said. "So, I built this program around those skills so that students coming out of Foothill College will have a better chance of getting a job with the companies in our area."

In addition to benefitting students in the program, Jackie Gachina said the center will also give professionals already working in the industry additional training.

"With a shortage of a talented labor pool, this program will help fill that need," Gachina said. "John would be so proud to see Foothill College leading the way in the education of the future leaders in the green industry."

By the end of April, nearly 50 employees of Gachina Landscape Management will have completed the hands-on irrigation training at the learning center. Chad Sutton, water resource manager at Gachina, was part of the first class.

"If you like irrigation and you love seeing your team get better, then this is the best thing you could ever go to," Sutton said.

Irrigation is the highest-grossing profit margin in the landscape industry next to lighting and concrete, according to Niccoli. The irrigation training consists of one day of theory with two days of hands-on training at the 11 stations, each with a controller donated by Hunter Industries.

The training center creates an open environment where people can feel comfortable trying something new or making a mistake. "There's no other place I could teach people this kind of information, except for at one of our client's job sites. (The clients) are paying us, and that's not the best place because you are afraid to mess something up," Sutton said.

"We're lucky. It's a beautiful facility," Sutton added. "The bottom line is there's going to be a lot of better irrigation professionals in the Bay Area because of it."

Kicked into gear

BY DANIELLE PESTA | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

We've all needed a kick-start at some point in our life or career. Jeff Rausch, founder and owner of Daybreaker Landscapes, Union, Ill., is getting his kick-start this year after winning the 2019 Kickstart Landscape Business Development contest, held by Case Construction Equipment.

Hitting some ruts in his business, Rausch said he needed a rejuvenation. He decided to attend the 2018 GIE+EXPO for a "renewed sense of interest in the industry," signed up for a Pave Tech class and entered the Case Kickstart contest — and won.

This good fortune didn't come without struggle.

An Air Force veteran who lost his job in the 2008 recession, Rausch was delivering pizzas and doing anything to make ends meet.

Getting an old truck and borrowing a mower, he started a landscape business, put in long hours and



Jeff Rausch has big plans for his business in 2019.

learned things the hard way.

"There were several nights where I was working until 2 a.m. on commercial jobs with headlamps trying to finish," Rausch said. "Some of that was employee problems or my own inexperience of not knowing how long jobs took to complete."

His perseverance gained him loyal customers. He currently serves a 90 percent residential, 10 percent commercial customer base. "I had made a promise to my customers and had to make sure the job was getting done," he said. "I have built a reputation as someone who will get the job done right, no matter what."

SWEETENING THE DEAL

As part of Case Construction Equipment's 2019 Kickstart Landscape Business Development contest, winner Jeff Rausch will receive:

- A six-month lease on any Case compact track loader paired with a Case laser grading box with SiteControl;
- A yearlong consultation with Ken Thomas and Ben Gandy of Enviro Consulting;
- A full set of six Crusader Hammer Tools by Pave Tech;
- Fleet management consultation and recommendations from Case staff during 2019;
- Custom-branded Case apparel/uniforms for staff; and
- Up to five passes to GIE+EXPO 2019 in Louisville, Ky.

Reporting a 2018 annual revenue of \$275,000, Rausch said he plans to focus his service mix to 80 percent design/build and 20 percent maintenance. He also plans to hire more employees, including veterans.

"My goal is, at the end of the contest, not only do I want to keep the Case compact track loader, but that I have to keep it because I have so much work to do," Rausch said.

NALP launches package insurance program for members

The National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) has partnered with Axis Insurance and Rancho Mesa Insurance Services to offer NALP members a program that provides coverage on general liability, commercial auto, property, inland marine and crime.

Aspen Grove Landscape Group acquires second N.C. company

Aspen Grove Landscape Group in Willow Grove, Pa., acquired Long Brothers Landscaping in Raleigh, N.C. Bringing Aspen Grove's portfolio to a total of 11 commercial landscape service companies, Long Brothers serves the Triangle

and Triad regions and is the second North Carolina company to be acquired by Aspen Grove.

Husqvarna heralds in new generation of chainsaws at N.C. event

Located in Asheville, N.C., the Biltmore Estate is a breathtaking property that includes George Vanderbilt's historic mansion, numerous hiking trails and for one sunny March day, was the locale of the official unveiling of Husqvarna's latest chainsaws. Products included in the launch event were two new saws in the 70 cc class, the company's lightest professional gas-powered tree care saw and two redesigned 50 cc saws. Why choose such an elegant backdrop for a product line reveal?

The Biltmore Estate was home to the Biltmore Forest School — the first school of forestry in North America. Husqvarna invited a few media professionals, dealers and customers to the 8,000-square-foot property to see what the new models could do.

David J. Frank Landscape Contracting hires new COO

David J. Frank Landscape Contracting in Germantown, Wis., hired John Joestgen as its COO, a newly created role. He was previously an executive vice president and COO in charge of maintenance, construction, irrigation and snow operations for up to five branches of Chicago-based Balanced Environments, with annual revenues exceeding \$25 million.

The grass is greener

Ten lawn care chemical companies discuss the products that maximize efficacy and minimize environmental impact

BY LM STAFF

Spring is in the air. Grass is growing, flowers are blooming, insects are hatching and the weeds are, well, they're as pesky as always. As lawn care operators (LCOs) enter the busiest times of the year, it's important for them to evaluate their strategies for combating lawn invaders of all types.

To address the myriad issues that can affect healthy turf growth, LCOs must have an arsenal of products they know are proven to work. We spoke with some of the makers of those products to find out how they're working to help lawn care providers do their jobs effectively.

They told us about products they're proud of, but most importantly, we got the scoop about what's on the horizon for the lawn care industry as a whole. As environmental awareness and water conservation continue to be on clients' radars and the labor market becomes tighter, how can LCOs operate in an efficient manner and how can the products they use help them do that?

Read on to find out.



AQUATROLS

Eric Griscom

Product manager

RECENT INNOVATIONS: Aqueduct Flex is a new fast-acting granular that treats and prevents localized dry spots. It

contains Aquatrols' core water management technology, which is specifically designed to reduce water repellency and promote recovery from moisture stress in all turf-grass and landscape plants.

Aqueduct Flex utilizes a high-quality granular carrier that releases ingredients and completely dissolves with as little as a quarter-inch of moisture. This reduces the need for access to irrigation and having to water immediately after application. The new durable and resealable packaging also makes storage and movement of unused product more convenient and secure.

Whether you're looking to spot treat problem areas, make broad preventive applications or reduce moisture stress in landscape beds, Aqueduct Flex is a versatile solution for any landscape professional.

PREDICTIONS: Water and labor issues will continue to impact the green industry, and Aquatrols is committed to developing solutions that help with both. Reducing the amount of water needed to sustainably maintain turf and landscape plantings makes sense from an environmental conservation standpoint. It also makes business sense.

PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/GRUPHOTO



BAYER

Laurence Mudge

Green Solutions Team manager

RECENT INNOVATIONS: Bayer has been involved in the area of pollinator health for many years, and we've done a lot of research in insecticide development.

We introduced an insecticide solution called Altus to the lawn and landscape market in October 2017, which is compatible with pollinators and has fans in the ornamental production area. It also has fans in lawn care industry because LCOs are treating various landscape plants, sometimes while they're in the flowering stage.

Altus is compatible with pollinators and effective on troublesome insects like whiteflies, aphids and lace bugs.

Most lawn care companies go with a preemergent herbicide because it's cost-effective — it's easier to prevent weeds from coming up than attacking them strictly from a postemergent standpoint. But the lawn and landscape industry hasn't had a lot of preemergent products come into market.

Bayer was fortunate enough in 2011 to bring to market (the active ingredient) indaziflam, brand name Specticle.

Specticle FLO is a broad spectrum preemergent weed control product used on warm-season turf and has a long residual. You get a little more out of it, and the net result is you have fewer repeat applications of postemergent herbicide, which can result in fewer callbacks and cancellations, which saves a lot of labor.

PREDICTIONS: The three portfolios are insecticides, fungicides and herbicides. Now we feel there's a fourth portfolio that could be really anything — water management-type products or soil amendments.



There are a lot of things related to plant health beyond just pest control. How can we improve an LCO's efficiency? Pest control, people, fertility and product application — that all goes back to labor.

There's also a lot going on in agriculture and golf course maintenance that could have a place in the turf and ornamental marketplace — GPS technology and sophisticated, automated equipment.



CORTEVA

Karan Bansal

Category leader for the turf and ornamental division at Corteva Agriscience, the agriculture division of DowDuPont

RECENT INNOVATIONS: Pending federal registration, GameOn and Relzar specialty herbicides are going to change the game in weed control. Both of these products contain a new active ingredient called Arylex active. Arylex active is a Group 4 synthetic auxin with a different mode of action and it is the newest active ingredient in the turf market in the U.S. Relzar will simplify weed control for both warm- and cool-season turfgrasses. GameOn specialty herbicide also has our latest formulation of 2,4-D, called 2,4-D choline, that has low odor and has reduced volatility compared to the 2,4-D used in a lot of postemergent products. GameOn will provide fast-acting, systemic control of more than 100 broadleaf weeds.

Arylex active is absorbed through the foliage, down to roots and shoots. We're seeing good knockdown upfront and more complete control of the weeds. Another great aspect of these products is the application flexibility, especially with respect to hot and rainy conditions. We have also seen excellent turf safety with these products throughout the trials. Corteva is committed to bringing new innovations to the market that make life easier for lawn care professionals, and our R&D pipeline has never been more robust.

GameOn™

Arylex™ active

SPECIALTY HERBICIDE

Relzar™

Arylex™ active

SPECIALTY HERBICIDE

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Continued from page 15

We have done thorough research on these two new products — GameOn and Relzar — for the past 10 years before bringing them into the market.

PREDICTIONS: I expect the lawn care business to grow; however, the tight labor market and employee retention are going to continue to be a challenge for LCOs. The industry needs products that LCOs can easily train the labor force to use and that deliver exceptional control of several broadleaf weeds at the same time. LCOs are looking for products that provide them with application flexibility and help them reduce callbacks. They also want products that provide effective weed control throughout the season, have different modes of action to overcome resistance issues and are easy to use.

There are a lot of areas throughout the U.S. that are seeing increasing restrictions around use of phenoxy products, such as 2,4-D or dicamba, and having a product option that doesn't contain 2,4-D or dicamba will be huge for the turf market.



FMC GLOBAL SPECIALTY SOLUTIONS

Michael Sisti

Golf and lawn market manager

RECENT INNOVATIONS: At FMC, we are excited to have our latest innovations, Dis-

miss NXT herbicide, Solitare herbicide and Fame SC fungicide serve the lawn care market. Much of the lawn and landscape industry is already familiar with Dismiss herbicide for control of yellow nutsedge and kyllinga.

Dismiss NXT builds upon that success and provides an improved tool to help lawn care operations control yellow nutsedge long term. It contains sulfentrazone and carfentrazone-ethyl, which over time help reduce tuber viability in the soil. By reducing the number of tubers in the soil, less yellow nutsedge may appear the following season.

Solitare herbicide is ideal for improving lawns with thin density and constant weed outbreaks. It helps control not only yellow nutsedge, but also crabgrass, clover, dandelion and other difficult-to-control broadleaf weeds, like ground ivy. The combination of quinclorac and sulfentrazone also performs better on the midtillering growth stage of crabgrass compared to quinclorac alone.

Fame fungicide offers a reliable defense against patch diseases, like brown patch, large patch and summer patch. With its rapid uptake by the turfgrass, Fame is translocated through the plant for better coverage. This



provides better distribution of the product throughout the plant, which means better curative activity on specific diseases and less preventive breakthrough, which can reduce the likelihood of a costly follow-up application. An added safeguard: Fame SC is rainfast within 15 minutes.

PREDICTIONS: FMC is constantly staying abreast on the current trends in the industry. We're innovating to provide tools LCOs can apply seamlessly to make day-to-day operations more efficient and help serve their customers in a timely manner. We're currently exploring new active ingredients to continue to serve as a partner in the lawn care industry.



ICL SPECIALTY FERTILIZERS

Fred Hulme, Ph.D.

Technical services director

RECENT INNOVATION: H2Pro wetting agent contains the latest technologies to improve water use in containers for an extended period of time. This is important for hard-to-soak growing media and experimenting with new media components like wood fibers. Additionally, H2Pro can help finished plants better survive the retail environment where irrigation might be less than optimal.

High root zone pH can result in chlorotic foliage due to iron deficiencies. ICL has recently introduced the Peters Excel pHLow product line to mitigate this issue. Peters Excel pHLow 21-7-7 Acid Hammer water soluble fertilizer is a great tool to lower media pH. Another product innovation is Peters Professional with Black Iron. These water-soluble formulations contain one of the strongest iron chelates available while maintaining efficiency at extremely high pH levels. Osmocote Blue Max coated aluminum sulfate provides safe, controlled-release bluing of hydrangeas with a single application.

PREDICTIONS: Fertilizers and other products need to be longer lasting and less labor intensive to make businesses profitable.

Environmental awareness will continue to grow at the consumer level. Smart controlled-release fertilizers that reduce runoff, leaching and waste will begin to supplant widespread use of water-soluble and granular fertilizers.

Water restrictions will only continue to increase. High-performance wetting agents that improve the spread and retention of water in the root zone and reduce the frequency of irrigation application will become increasingly important tools.



Continued on page 18



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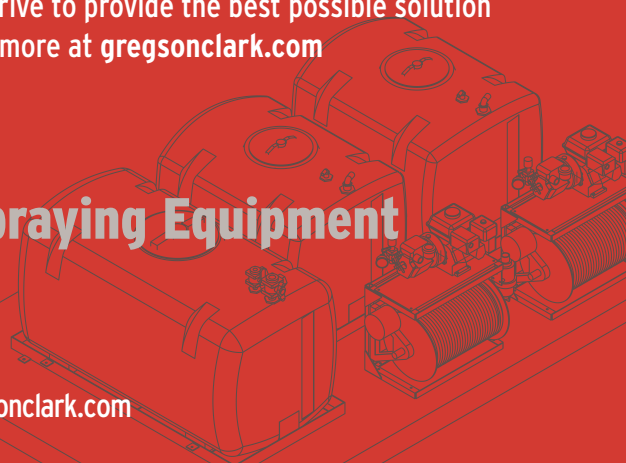


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Continued from page 16



KOCH TURF & ORNAMENTAL

Eric Miltner

Research agronomist

RECENT INNOVATIONS: At Koch, we have done significant research documenting the level of nitrogen use efficiency of our products and substantiating how much turf managers can benefit from an enhanced efficiency fertilizer (EEF) compared to using unamended urea. Stabilized nitrogen (N), such as UFLEXX fertilizer, is one option. The urease inhibitor, NBPT (N-(N-Butyl) Thiophosphoric Triamide), reduces ammonia volatilization, resulting in more N available for plant uptake. Dicyandiamide, or DCD, when used in the proper amount, slows down the conversion of ammonium to nitrate in the soil, extending the time of nitrogen availability and reducing losses to leaching and denitrification.

It is important to make sure the stabilized N product used has enough DCD to be effective. Slow-release fertilizers do just what the name implies: slow down the rate of nitrogen released so that availability is better matched

with plant demand. Products such as XCU slow-release fertilizer can result in increased N uptake by the plant and less lost from the system.

Controlled-release fertilizers such as POLYON fertilizer

and DURATION CR fertilizer provide the most advanced control of nutrient release. These products can be engineered with release longevities up to six months or longer.

PREDICTIONS: One trend we are seeing, and that continues to grow, is an evolution of fertilization programs.

Recently, more LCOs are innovating with programs that include only two or three fertilizer applications using controlled-release polymer-coated fertilizer. Fewer applications does not necessarily mean reducing the number of visits to a property. The time savings can be used for other revenue-generating or value-added services. Fewer fertilizer applications mean savings in time, but also freight, fuel, equipment wear, employee fatigue and other areas.

Regulations and restrictions on fertilizer use are on the rise. If these regulations were to impact you, it could affect the way you do business. Enhanced efficiency fertilizers can be a solution to help address these challenges. The green industry needs to continue to present the science behind what we do, as well as the impact our businesses bring to local economies, in order to continue to bring valuable services to our customers and communities.



NUFARM

Jason Fausey

Director of technical services, T&O

RECENT INNOVATIONS: Our newest product launch at Nufarm is Sure Power selective herbicide. Sure Power is a new postemergent herbicide that is completely unique for the cool-season turfgrass market. The first thing applicators will notice is that weeds begin showing symptoms and death within two to three days after application. In addition to being fast, Sure Power is highly effective as it controls more than 250 broadleaf weeds as well as sedges and common weedy grasses, including bentgrass, crabgrass and goosegrass. Sure Power herbicide is specially formulated to penetrate the leaves of even the most difficult-to-control weeds, such as wild violet, with a summer application. It's important to understand this unique formulation does not require or allow surfactants, fertilizers or other pesticides to be mixed, as additional uptake can result in a temporary response to the turfgrass.

PREDICTIONS: Within the turf and landscape segments, we will continue to find weeds invading areas where they have not previously been found. Weeds that are often isolated or found in limited regions of the country such as false green kyllinga or Japanese stiltgrass are now being found throughout much of the country. Resistance is another issue we will battle in the future. It has never been more important to consider a complete weed management program to ensure you're maximizing the use of all the available chemistries.



PBI-GORDON

Jay Young

Herbicide product manager

Jim Goodrich

Fungicide, insecticide and plant growth regulator product manager



RECENT INNOVATIONS: Vexis, containing pyrimisulfan, which is a new active ingredient to the U.S. professional market and PBI-Gordon's first proprietary molecule, will initially be offered in a granular end-use formulation.

Vexis can be applied to both wet or dry turf and will offer the professional

Continued on page 20

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Continued from page 18

an innovative solution for a growing sedge and kyllinga problem. SwitchBlade, which contains another new active ingredient for the U.S. professional market, halauxifen-methyl, provides the end user with a non-2,4-D broad-leaf control option while demonstrating very good turf safety even on sensitive warm-season varieties.



We have a new fungicide in at EPA with an expected registration in June 2019. It's called Union Fungicide SC, and it's a unique, proprietary combination of cyazofamid and azoxystrobin.

This product was conceptualized and developed to meet the market needs of a dual mode of action fungicide offering turf managers the flexibility to apply one product, which preventively controls a variety of turf diseases typically associated with summer stress — Pythium, anthracnose, brown patch, summer patch, fairy ring, red thread and others.

In late 2018, we launched the first and only liquid flutolanil product for the turf market, Pedigree Fungicide SC. Flutolanil has been around for many years as a wettable



powder formulation and wasn't an easy product for turf managers to use.

Our customers using Zylam liquid systemic insecticide are treating larger areas and asked for help minimizing the environmental impact of pack-

aging disposal. The addition of a larger package size reduces the number of bottles being consumed by our customers by a factor of four and also saves them time and money.

PREDICTIONS: We predict advancements in technology; for example, GPS is now crossing over into the LCO industry. We can see precision application becoming a real trend in the not-too-distant future. As crazy as it sounds, we are probably not too far away from watching an LCO truck pull into a neighborhood or property and unload automated spray units that communicate with a computer in the truck.

Another prediction is resistance management. Resistance will become more of an issue due to the continual overuse of the same chemistries and lack of chemistry rotation.

Finally, public scrutiny — continual backlash from the negative connotations of glyphosate and that our chemistries are carcinogenic — will continue. It will be a tireless effort to continue to try and educate the public on our products and the steps we as manufacturers take to ensure we produce a product that is not only effective, but also safe to people and the environment.



SYNGENTA

Matt Giese

Field technical manager

RECENT INNOVATIONS: Adigor surfactant is packaged along with Manuscript.

This surfactant maximizes the performance of Manuscript and maximizes weed control based on how the active ingredient pinoxaden works in the plant. Another aspect in relation to Manuscript is that it contains a safener — which safens the desirable species but also helps control the target weed.

Manuscript herbicide launched in the fourth quarter of 2018. It's part of a new herbicide subclass for the turf market in what is called ACCase

inhibitors. Manuscript is a postemergent grassy herbicide for use on turf species like zoysiagrass,



Manuscript

Herbicide

Bermudagrass and St. Augustinegrass sod. It's active against signalgrass, a serious problem in the southeastern U.S., and tropical carpetgrass. It also has activity on large and smooth crabgrass and dallisgrass, which is also difficult to control in the Transition Zone, and in the south and southeastern U.S. It fills a niche with control of those particular species.

PREDICTIONS: With a variety of weather extremes across the U.S., what does that portend for us in terms of pest pressure? We're probably always going to have white grubs and brown patch, but what other pests might be favored with some of these extreme weather conditions, whether it's drought or flooding? That's relatively unknown, but it's certainly going to play a role in how turf managers are going to address (pests) going forward. There are resources out there in order to help turf managers deal with how turfgrass pests are affected by weather extremes.

(Turf managers) used to base when to make applications on a calendar basis. It's gone from that to paying much more attention to the phenological indicators — for example, when the forsythia blooms — and also turning to models. Syngenta has a website (GreenCastOnline.com/tools/soil-temperature) where you can plug in your name, email address and zip code and it will send you an alert, for example, when soil temperatures in your area are getting near when crabgrass germinates.



THE ANDERSONS

Anthony Goldsby, Ph.D.

Research agronomist

RECENT INNOVATIONS: One of the products we released last year was our 22-0-4 fertilizer containing our Humic

Coated Urea (HCU) and Black Gypsum DG. This fertilizer has the limestone filler removed and replaced with our Black Gypsum DG soil amendment.

Soil health improvements are achieved through the addition of humates in both Black Gypsum DG and the HCU. The benefits of integrating humates into the soil include improved cation exchange capacity, nutrient chelation, improved soil structure and aid in flushing bicarbonates through the soil profile.

Another recent product innovation is our 21-22-4 starter fertilizer with the herbicide Mesotrione. In applying our 21-22-4 fertilizer with Mesotrione product, you can achieve both pre- and postemergent control of broadleaf and grassy annual weeds. The low level of active ingredient per acre (0.15 lb. A.I.) is maximized for effectiveness by our homogeneous 135 SGN granule size.

This product can be safely applied to cool-season grasses, including Kentucky bluegrass, tall fescue and perennial ryegrass. Do not use this product with seed mixes containing greater than 20 percent fine fescue.


Our Turf Nutrition Tool (TNT) was reimagined and relaunched for end users in early 2019. LCOs can create custom fertility programs for their customers. It is accessible from any type of device and features many of our premium

and professional fertility products.

Another bonus: This program is free. Just sign up at TurfNutritionTool.com and create an account.

PREDICTIONS: The freight cost of shipping materials like fertilizers is and will continue to be a challenge.

Most of the products manufactured and sold through distributors to LCOs spend at least a portion of their journey on a semitrailer. Finding new and unique ways to innovate products and subsequently drive down shipping costs will be important.

The green industry is also going to continue to see increased regulation and mandates relating to the application of fertilizer products. Therefore, providing options that utilize organic or enhanced efficiency nutrients will need to be a focus for fertilizer. This will also take a shift in mentality from the current turfgrass management practices, with more focus being placed on products that increase nutritional efficiency in the soil, like humates. 



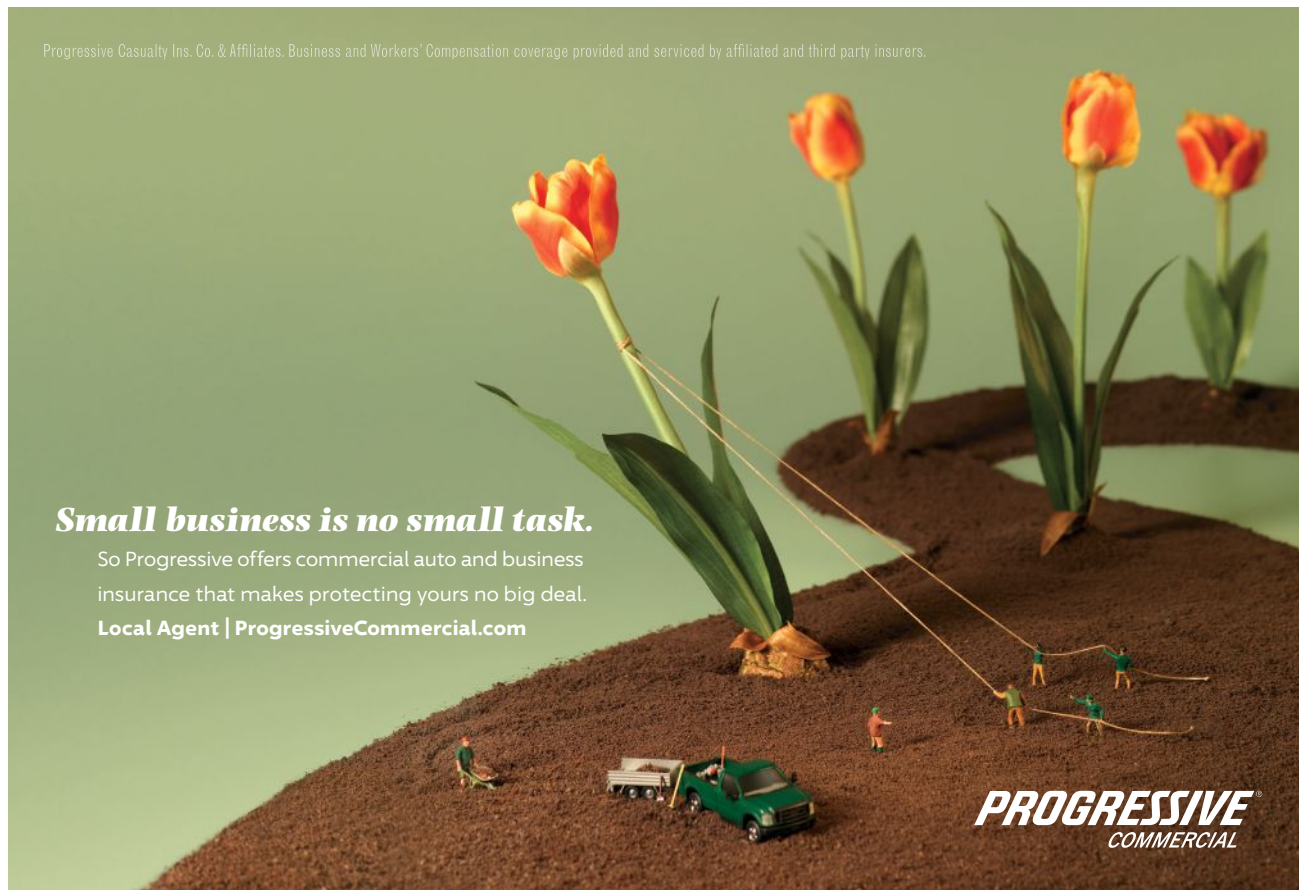
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THE BIG ONE

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LOCATION Gainesville, Ga.

COMPANY The Fockele Garden Co.

DETAILS In 2007, Northeast Georgia Health System (NGHS) enlisted landscape architects and designers to conceptualize landscapes for its regional medical centers. The designs included gardens that would provide places of hope and healing.

Mark Fockele, owner of The Fockele Garden Co., says there were two things that helped his company secure the project. It would handle the design/build, in conjunction with HGOR Planners & Landscape Architects, and the maintenance of the gardens. It also asked the hospital to fund an endowment, the income from which would be set aside to ensure the gardens received high-quality maintenance well into the future.

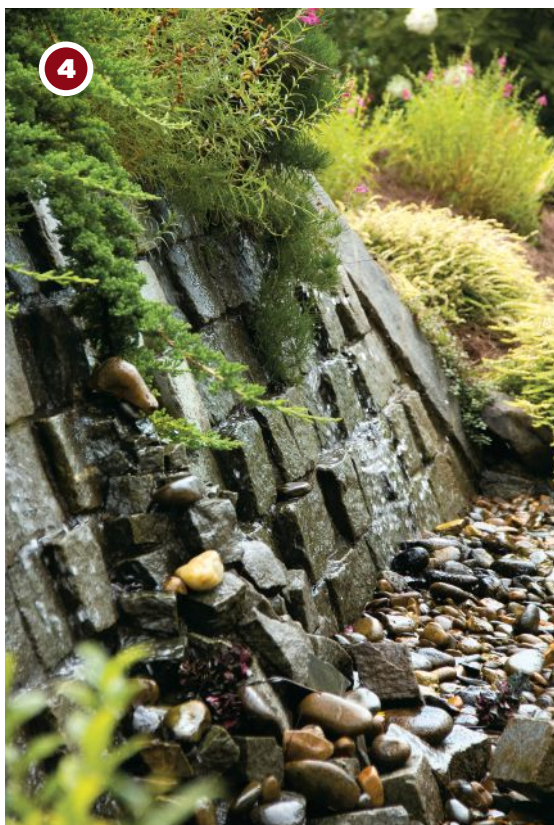
At NGHS Gainesville, the therapeutic gardens see a high volume of visitors and patients. Water features require careful maintenance, and irrigation is adjusted to accommodate changes as the gardens mature.

Maintenance managers and technicians visit the gardens weekly. Noise-free zones require handwork only, and crews are mindful of NGHS policies and any practices or products that can be a hazard to patients.

By articulating and providing landscape management services, the company supports NGHS' aim to create comforting environments for people seeking wellness.

The project earned The Fockele Garden Co. a 2018 Gold Award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program.

See more photos from this project at LandscapeManagement.net/thebigone.



PHOTOS: THE FOCKELE GARDEN CO.



Captions | 1. The complex plant palette at the Wilheit-Keys Peace Garden makes visitors stop and take notice. Designers inspect the gardens frequently to counsel the Northeast Georgia Health System in horticultural improvements. The Fockele Garden Co.'s landscape management team ensures the design intent is preserved. **2.** Since its installation in 2011, the Wilheit-Keys Peace Garden has received weekly maintenance visits. Plant growth has been enhanced through soil nutrient building, mulching and expert pruning. More than 100 different plant varieties were used. **3.** In 2008, it was hard to imagine this sunny bowl could accommodate shaded seating and a year-round quilt of color and textures. Hospital staff members walk the oval and count the laps for exercise. Patients in wheelchairs can access the garden from a ground floor entrance. **4.** The pathways in the Peace Garden wind along five cobbled water walls. Water-loving plants are tucked into pockets on the faces of the fountains. Plants above the water walls drape into the tumbling water, and ground covers thriving on either side create lush frames for the features. **5.** The family that provided the funding and inspiration for this family garden continues to participate in the design of the garden. Over the years, additions have included a giant frog, a book box library, a shade structure and commemorative bricks. The garden is accessed through the labor and delivery pavilion and provides a safe place for children to wait for new family members. **6.** To maintain perennial color, The Fockele Garden Co.'s crews are trained in managing the 60 different kinds of plants that make the view of Anne's Garden great, whether one is standing on the sidewalk or looking from the lobby on the sixth floor above.



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EXPERTS' TIPS

Steep grades



HUSQVARNA
George Reister

Regional product manager, U.S. wheeled
HUSQVARNA.COM

DO choose the right equipment and operate that equipment safely. Ideally, landscape contractors will want a piece of equipment that is versatile and handles well on both flat and steep grades, so they don't have to switch between two mowers. **DO** avoid abrupt directional changes in the middle of the row and always assess conditions for wetness, large bumps and other obstacles. **DON'T** exceed the slope rating as stated in the operator's manual.



EXMARK
Lenny Mangnall

Marketing product manager
EXMARK.COM

DO understand the equipment's limitations and how mowing conditions affect traction. It's critical when mowing grades. Choosing the right mower is important as well. Even in ideal conditions, we don't recommend using zero-turn mowers on grades of more than 15 degrees. **DO** consider moisture, walls, dropoffs or other traction-reducing conditions on a case-by-case basis because these factors reduce the grade that can safely be mowed. Typically, mowing across the grade and turning up the slope is the preferred method of attack. **DON'T** forget to always err on the side of safety.



JOHN DEERE
Nick Minas

Product manager
DEERE.COM

DO read and understand all the safety and operating information provided with the machine that will be operated. Typically, a machine has a specified maximum slope for operation, but the number varies from machine to machine. **DO** be aware of the terrain and operating conditions and maintain at least a machine width between yourself and any dropoffs and other hazards. **DO** always consider current turf conditions when assessing slope angles and use common sense and good judgement when assessing the site. **DON'T** forget that cabs, baggers and other attachments could increase the risk of a rollover and decrease the recommended operating slope.



DO use the right product. In very steep situations, I use walk-behind mowers and believe they are the safest. In less steep areas, one can use a stand-on or zero-turn mower. My preference is a stand-on because it's easy to step off the unit if things get out of control. **DO** mow side to side, never uphill, and start at the bottom and work up. **DON'T** mow wet slopes. You don't want to become one of the statistics that people talk about who mowed on slopes; always remember: safety first.



DO use the inclinometer if the machine is fitted with it. Be sure to take note of what it's indicating.

DO walk the area to ensure there are no hidden obstacles. **DO** make sure the rollover protection system is deployed if the machine is equipped with one. **DO** check the tire pressure of your machine and ensure it complies with the manufacturer's recommendations. **DON'T** tackle the slope if you have any doubt in mind.

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MAINTAIN YOUR EDGE

Geared up

Tips from handheld equipment experts on starting off the spring season right **BY ABBY HART | LM SENIOR EDITOR**

Spring is a critical time for landscaping businesses. They are in the process of getting their equipment going again after being stored for the winter, and crews are starting to clear out the cobwebs and get ready for a busy spring season. Here's what some top handheld equipment experts recommend to get started on the right foot.

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY

Equipment safety should be top of mind according to all of the experts we spoke with, and a large part of that is maintenance. Per Kvarby, director of global product management for Husqvarna, says, "As you start up any business, you want to make sure that your equipment is serviced appropriately and is ready for the season."

This includes examining all safety features, such as chain brakes and chain catchers on chainsaws and harnesses on blowers. Check for signs of breakage and leaking, check spark plugs and filters and ensure that guards are securely in place.

Be sure to reference the manuals for your equipment and review all the safety features in those guides, adds Roger Phelps, corporate communications manager for Stihl.

For specific types of handheld tools, the experts recommend a few different things to check on. Phelps advises the following:

- For trimmers, ensure the interlocks are in place and working;
- For spools of dried-out string trimmer line that have been stored for an extended amount of time, rehydrate the trimmer line by placing it in a bucket of water overnight; and
- When present, spark arrestors should be clean and in good condition. Gummed-up arrestors can create pressure, preventing the engine from having a free flow of exhaust, stalling out and affecting the equipment's performance.

Both Stihl and Husqvarna offer support such as training and online resources for contractors needing to brush up on equipment safety and maintenance.

And don't forget the proper protective equipment necessary to safeguard against injury when operating equipment — face shields, chaps and hearing protection should be available and accessible for all operators on the job site.

TRAIN FOR SUCCESS

Longtime operators should also be properly trained on



equipment, Phelps says, even if it's just a newer model of a piece of equipment they are familiar with.

"I know that over the years, the starting mechanisms for us have changed," he says, cautioning that operators who try to start a piece of the equipment the way they've always started it could quickly flood the unit.

Paul Vanderwal, senior global product manager for Oregon Professional Products, says crews doing extensive edging to start the season should go heavy on the edger blades on the first deep cut to make a clean border for the rest of the season.

CHARGE YOUR BATTERIES

Vanderwal says Oregon is seeing more professional landscapers adopt battery-powered equipment, which is an indicator that these machines are beginning to offer power and durability that approaches gas power. Rather than mixing and loading up fuel, he says it's a matter of "making sure you've got batteries charged and then loading up the trailer."

Kvarby adds that it's important to keep consumables such as chainsaw chains sharp and have plenty of trimmer line available.

Aside from ensuring you've got sharp edges and enough power, considerations specific to battery-powered equipment may include the following, according to Phelps:

- Inspecting electrical contacts and checking for damage and dirt in the area where the battery is inserted;
- Checking the battery housing for any cracks or deformities; and
- Examining cables that sometimes attach the battery to the unit for fraying or breaks.

RETRAIN
It can be beneficial for crew members to relearn how to safely operate equipment.

Continued on page 30

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MAINTAIN YOUR EDGE

Continued from page 28

GET SMART ABOUT REGULATIONS

The start of the season is also a good time to get up to speed on local guidelines or laws, Phelps says. More communities are either banning or restricting the use of two-cycle equipment for noise and emissions, which is one of the reasons some landscapers have turned to battery-powered equipment.

There's a lot to keep in mind at the beginning of the season, but "it's worth the few extra hours to go through these (safety and maintenance) procedures," Phelps says. "Once (the season) starts, then there's really no time." 



REEVALUATE
It's important to review local regulations and ensure equipment falls within them.

SPRING INTO ACTION

How two companies handle their spring cleanups and prepare for a busy season ahead

BY ABBY HART | LM SENIOR EDITOR

Switching gears for spring season cleanups after a long winter of snow removal or other services can be a welcome change for lawn and landscape companies. Many have processes in place weeks before the temperature changes in an attempt to hit the ground running.

Anne Campbell, owner and operations manager of Colorado Stoneworks Landscaping (CSL) in Colorado Springs, Colo., says the company's typical cleanup involves removing leaves, needles and debris, flipping and fluffing any cascade cedar mulch and pruning mainly decorative grasses, since shrubs and perennials are usually pruned during the fall cleanup for recurring customers.

The company's crews carry backpack blowers (the company favors RedMax blowers), hedge trimmers, loppers, hand shears and hard and soft rakes. For jobs with more debris, the field crews tote a leaf vacuum.

CSL provides 60 percent lawn care and maintenance, 30 percent design/build and 10 percent irrigation services to an 80 percent residential and 20 percent commercial clientele. The company has a revenue of \$1.4 million and employs 23 staff members.

The company has a few full-time, year-round employees, but most of the company's workers are seasonal and laid off in the winter, returning in mid- to late March. They are eligible for job-attached unemployment, and as a condition of that unemployment, they must be available when work picks back up in the spring.

CSL begins its season at a strong pace, aiming to complete spring cleanups for all its clients by the end of April — in time to start aerations, sprinkler turn-ons and mowing in May.

Training is the main thing CSL focuses on in the late winter and early spring, according to Campbell. The company's

training materials are modeled after the Landscape Industry Certified Technician test.

"This was the first year we did more hands-on testing for things like equipment maintenance, how to handle blowing off a property when there's a building or cars, things like that," she says. "It's a refresher of proper education so (field staff) can provide better service if customers have questions. The training will have more impact if people know the why behind it."

Beth Hammonds, landscape maintenance account manager for Exscape Designs in Novelty, Ohio, says spring cleanups typically involve two- to three-person crews cleaning the beds and the lawn; edging beds; clearing leaves, branches and debris; pruning back ornamental grasses and putting down a pre-emergent herbicide and fertilizer in the beds.

Beth Hammonds

"People think spring cleanups are very straightforward and simple, but our Ohio weather is very harsh," Hammonds says. "You have a lot of mulch that's blown around and shifted into the lawns, we're hand raking a lot and we're using trucks to haul away debris if that's the client's preference."

The company, which has an annual revenue of about \$8.1 million, staffs up for the spring at the end of March and reviews any operational changes and goals for the upcoming season. The company has about 60 returning seasonal employees, some of which are H-2B workers.

About a third of Exscape's business is lawn care and maintenance. Its clients are 88 percent residential and 12 percent commercial.

Both Exscape and CSL outline cleanup packages for spring and fall in detail on their annual maintenance contracts and say that's the best way for them to communicate their services clearly to their clients.

Hammonds stresses that as you're ramping up for spring season, preparation is key. "You want to make sure that you're ready as soon as the weather allows," she says, adding that it's also important to "set expectations with your crew and the quality of work they're performing."



Anne Campbell

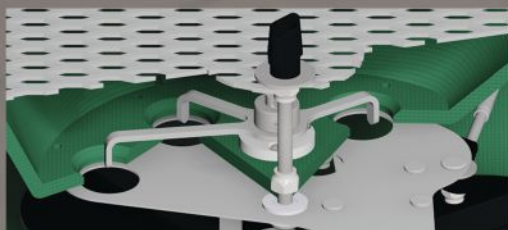


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WEED AVENGERS

Combat white clover


Understand the traits and control method of this perennial broadleaf weed **BY CLARA RICHTER | LM MANAGING EDITOR**

Lawn care professionals battling clover don't consider themselves very lucky. White clover is a broadleaf weed found in warm- and cool-season turfgrass. It can tolerate a wide range of mowing heights and environments and is a perennial, so it will persist from year to year.

The good news is resistance to pre- or postemergent herbicides has not been observed in white clover; although, it is always possible for any weed to develop resistance.

The best way to combat potential herbicide resistance in white clover is to use products that have been shown to

have effective control against the weed and apply the herbicide at the labeled rates. Also, rotate herbicide modes of action whenever possible.

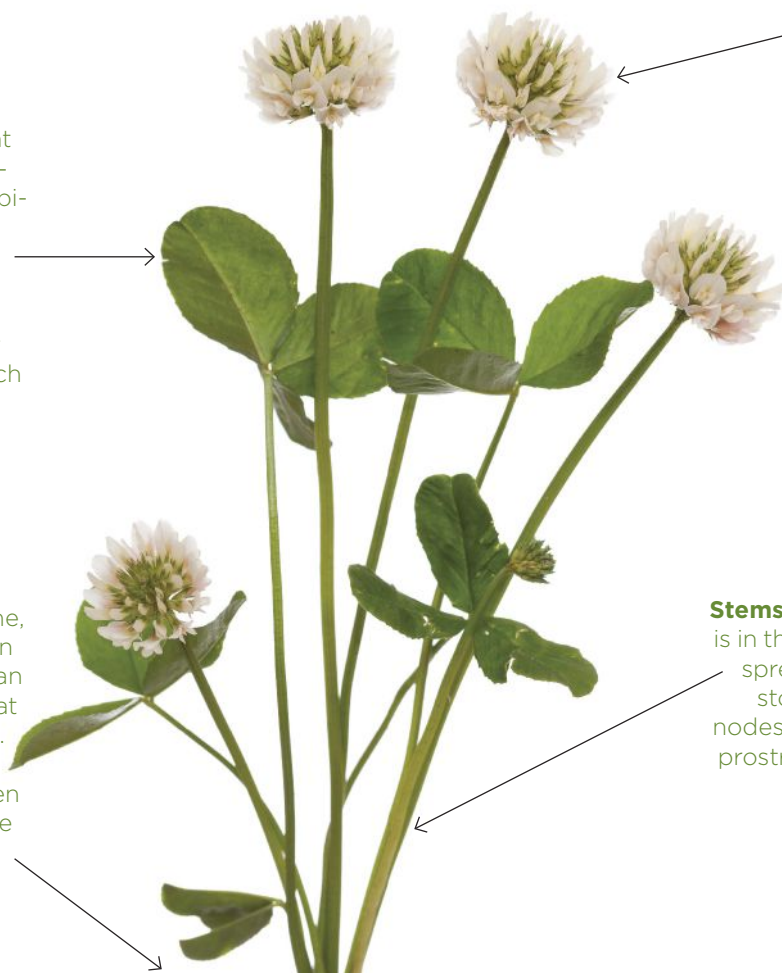
Controlling clover: Since white clover is a perennial weed, preemergent herbicides aren't effective; however, there are many postemergent options available for white clover control. Active ingredients to look for include flu-roxypyr, triclopyr, quinclorac, dicamba, 2,4-D, MCPP, MCPA, metsulfuron, trifloxysulfuron and topramezone. 

Leaves: Despite the hunt for the ever-elusive four-leaf clover, leaves are typically found in a trifoliate arrangement with three round, elliptical leaflets. They often have a white watermark that partially encircles the base of each leaflet. Leaves are also slightly serrated along the margins.

Roots: Clover is a legume, so it can produce its own nitrogen. Therefore, it can persist in turfgrasses that are deficient in nitrogen. Seeds in the soil seed bank will germinate when the soil temperatures are about 50-75 degrees F.

Flowers: White clover produces white flowers on long stems that are mostly present in spring and fall.

Stems: Most active growth is in the spring and fall and spreads from stems and stolons that root at the nodes and can form dense prostrate mats or clusters.



SOURCES: Eric Reasor, Ph.D., Southeast research scientist, PBI-Gordon; Jason Fausey, director of technical services, Nufarm

WINNING THE GAME WITH SOFTWARE

When Mike Rorie, CEO of GIS Dynamics, gave the keynote at the 2019 Aspire Client Conference in Tempe, Ariz., his message was simple: The smartest investment you can make today is software.

Rorie knows. He spent 18 years working long hours to grow his business to \$3 million in revenue. In 1993, he invested in software and grew to \$28 million in eight years.

"I could not have continued to play the game I was playing — working like a maniac 12 hours a day, seven days a week for so little return," he says. "Something had to change, and we made the change. We invested and managed the



MIKE RORIE

"I could not have continued to play the game I was playing — working like a maniac 12 hours a day, seven days a week for so little financial return, Something had to change."

— Mike Rorie

business with a system."

Rorie outlined three parts of the system that help businesses make money: hard systems (equipment), soft systems (standard operating procedures) and information systems (management software). Twenty years ago, hard systems were important; today information systems are where it's at.

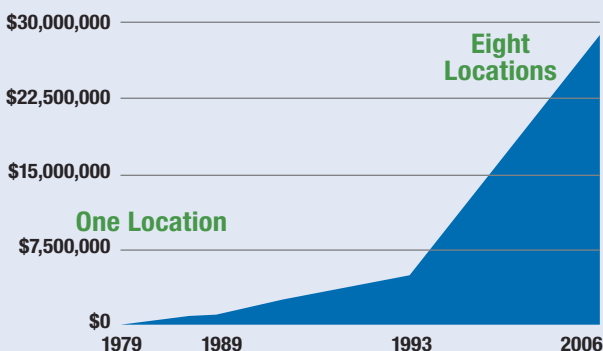
"Software, to me, allows you to standardize work so people can move on to more valuable tasks

and activities," Rorie says.

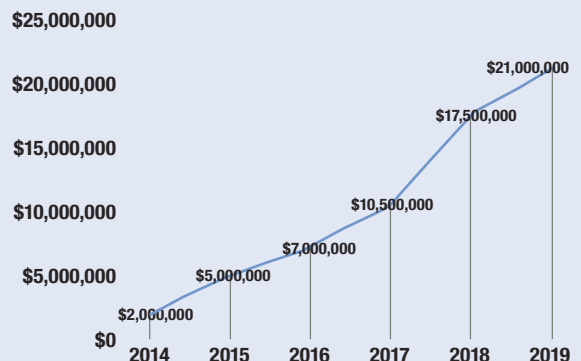
Instead of building your own, Rorie encourages owners to work with a software partner that already has everything in place.

"Don't think you have to have a custom program that does things just the way you do them," Rorie says. "If you want to grow your business and remain competitive, you're going to have to adopt systems and processes. You have to do that to be effective."

My 27 Years with Ground Masters



In June 2015, GroundSystems started using Aspire



FIVE REASONS WHY SYSTEMS MATTER TO AN OWNER

- 1. Great systems put owners in control of the company.** You become proactive instead of reactive, guessing what decisions to make.
- 2. Great systems turn dimes into dollars.** You reduce waste and can focus on growth, playing offense instead of defense.
- 3. Great systems turn average people into high performers.** Your people can become THE experts instead of relying on you increasing productivity and reducing turnover.
- 4. Great systems protect the company.** You no longer have to rely on a few key people, and should they leave, other team members can fill in quickly.
- 5. Great systems create equity interest in your company.** Your company is more valuable because of the predictability a system provides. Rorie knows having sold his company at the price he wanted.

“Today’s software systems allow you to standardize repeatable, routine, transactions into a system people don’t have to think about. When we adopted systems, managers were able to spend time more productively running the business.”

— Mike Rorie



James Martin Associates in Vernon Hills, Ill., has been able to tackle a large mix of commercial and residential projects using Aspire software.



JIM MARTIN

INSTANT REPLAY

For Jim Martin, president of James Martin Associates in Vernon Hills, Ill., software allows them to track how they’re doing compared to how they thought they’d perform, which has played a large role in their success.

“The most important thing for business owners is to be able to predict where you’re going to be and look forward. It’s difficult to do that without having an aggregator for the information,” Martin says. “Aspire does the best job of that from what we’ve seen.”

His company offers maintenance, design/build, irrigation and snow services, and their customers are about half commercial, half residential. The company has an annual revenue of \$15 to \$20 million and has been using Aspire for four years.



Service and Productivity.
The Aspire Software allows you to conduct site reviews and write proposals onsite for electronic signature by the customer.

“The most important thing for business owners is to be able to predict where you’re going to be and look forward. It’s difficult to do that without having an aggregator for the information. Aspire does the best job of that from what we’ve seen.”

— Jim Martin

“It gives us a really good look at how we’re doing and at how we thought we were going to do,” Martin says.

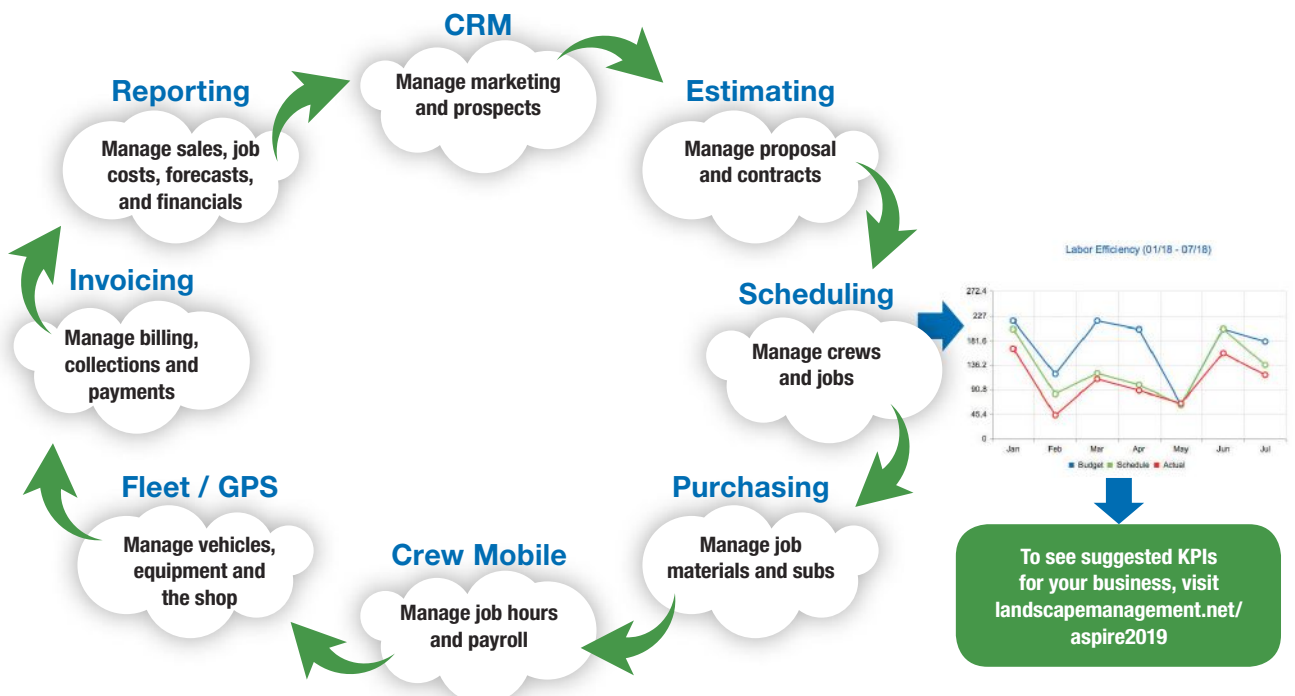
Before, they had a dozen different spreadsheets to track all of their information, but now, they’ve drastically cut down on those and can rely on the software, says Martin’s general manager, Tom Bolas.

“It’s streamlined the process,” Bolas says. “If people don’t have software that allows them to consistently estimate and review how they’re performing at their jobs, it’s very hard to improve their performance.”



TOM BOLAS

THE ASPIRE BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE SYSTEM





Heartland LLC has an annual revenue of \$65 million providing commercial maintenance to locations like Kansas City's Two Pershing Square. CFO Peter Welch says Aspire software has been essential to the company's growth.

MAKING THE GAME

Winning is the reason people play the game, at least that is what Vince Lombardi believed. Every business needs a vision, a strategy, a system, and the courage and commitment to execute.

"A good software is a good solution. The less it takes to do what we do, the better off we are and the better we can get ahead," says Rorie. "People don't realize 'simple' usually wins. Complexity eliminates a lot of victories, which keeps people from being able to get to the goal line."

Software can run the business, lessening the workload and inefficiencies – things that are important to Peter Welch, chief financial officer of Heartland, and his team.

The company offers commercial maintenance and snow removal services and have an annual revenue of \$65 million. They're located in Mission

Woods, Kansas, and they have four platform companies, which all use Aspire.

"We have seen efficiency and consistency across the platform in bidding work, estimating work, production scheduling and profitability reporting because they are all speaking the same language," Welch says.

Welch says it's essential to have a software system if a company wants to grow. "If you want scalability, multiple branches or multiple account managers, now is the time to make that investment. It makes the ability to grow in an organized fashion much easier than waiting until it's out of control." •



PETER WELCH



If you want to talk to someone about your business or see a demonstration, visit www.youraspire.com.

EASY TO SPOT

Large patch is characterized by irregular patches with sunken interiors that appear tan in color.

Diagnosis: Large patch

The doctor is in, and we're looking at the defining symptoms of and best practices for dealing with large patch

BY CLARA RICHTER | LM MANAGING EDITOR

Large patch — formerly called brown patch — is a disease of warm-season turfgrasses, such as centipedegrass, St. Augustinegrass, seashore paspalum, zoysiagrass and Bermudagrass. One of the major fungal diseases of warm-season turf, large patch is caused by the soil-borne fungus *Rhizoctonia solani* and infects and rots the leaf sheaths, crowns and stolons of the turf.

According to Jim Kerns, Ph.D., associate professor and extension specialist of turfgrass pathology at North Carolina State University, large patch is relatively easy to diagnose because its symptoms are so unique. Here is what to look out for.



Symptoms: “Large patch can develop almost anywhere warm-season grasses are grown, but the disease is most severe in the transition zone or areas with prolonged humidity or precipitation,” Kerns says.

The disease creates irregular patches ranging from 10 inches to 3 feet in diameter, or larger in some cases. The perimeter of the patch displays a yellow or orange color, the patch interior becomes sunken and injured turf appears thin and tan. The plant will develop lesions on the leaf sheath, which can look different depending on the grass species that is affected. Sometimes the lesions are just necrotic — dead

cells caused by severe injury or disease — like on zoysiagrass and centipedegrass, but on St. Augustinegrass, the lesions are purple in color.

If you determine turf has developed large patch, there are steps you can take to help rid it of the disease.



Treatment: Preventive fungicide applications are best for large patch, Kerns says.

Time the first fall application when the average thatch temperature is 70 degrees F, or when the average soil temperature at a 2-inch depth is 72-75 degrees F.

“In North Carolina, we typically target about 75-degree F soil temperatures to initiate preventive fungicide applications,” Kerns says. “However, for those managing St. Augustinegrass or centipedegrass, preventive applications may need to target 80-degree F soil temperatures.”

A second fall application two to four weeks later is recommended to extend protection through cool, wet weather. According to Kerns, a colleague in Missouri also has found early spring application to be critical in the Midwest.

Cultural practices, such as improved drainage and regular aeration during the summer, are also important to the success of reducing large patch. 

SOURCES: Jim Kerns, Ph.D., associate professor and extension specialist of turfgrass pathology at North Carolina State University; Axel Elling, Ph.D., product development manager, Bayer

> DID YOU KNOW

Guess that weed

Tips for identifying and dealing with one of turf's most prevalent problems

BY CLARA RICHTER | LM MANAGING EDITOR

It's everywhere: According to Jim Brosnan, Ph.D., associate professor at the University of Tennessee, a 2017 survey by the Weed Science Society of America found that it is the No. 1 most common turfgrass weed.

It follows forsythia: This weed is a summer annual (typically — there are some species that are considered perennials), and its germination occurs when soil temperatures are sustained above 55 degrees F. Don't have the tools — or the time — to track soil temps? Watch for the forsythia to bloom. This event often coincides with soil temperatures warm enough to sustain this weed's germination.

It needs a shave: A couple types of this weed have hairy leaf sheaths. One type of this weed can grow up to three feet tall if left unmowed.

It preys on the weak: It favors sandy, sunny locations with weakened turfgrass, says Michael Sisti, golf and lawn care market manager for FMC. Areas damaged by insects or along sidewalks and driveways are prime targets for this weed.

It is prolific: A single plant can produce 150-700 tillers and 150,000 seeds, according to Sisti. Primary reproduction for this weed is through seeds, so it is important to remove seedheads or apply a preemergent herbicide for control.



TAKE THE HINT

Typically, lawn care operators can expect crabgrass germination to coincide with the blooming of forsythia.



SHAGGY SUMMER ANNUAL
In most cases, crabgrass makes its appearance when soil temperatures are sustained above 55 degrees F.



Did you guess crabgrass? If you did, you're right. And while knowing about it is great, the real question is how do you deal with it?


There are several species of crabgrass, but among the most common found in lawns are smooth crabgrass and large crabgrass, according to Brosnan. Large crabgrass is more commonly found in the south and smooth crabgrass in the north, but both can be found in the Transition Zone.

The best defense against crabgrass is a healthy, thick lawn and root system. Cutting the lawn at the recommended height will encourage a healthy root system to develop and will also remove seedheads. But be careful. Cutting the lawn too short can lead to poor turf density, which will make the lawn more susceptible to crabgrass.

"Because crabgrass is such a prolific seeder, anything that can be done to reduce seed production will help alleviate the occurrence of this weed," Sisti says.

Another benefit of keeping the lawn lush and healthy? Increased mowing height can improve the efficacy of several preemergent herbicides used for crabgrass control, according to Brosnan. Data regularly show that preemergent herbicide applications are the most effective way to control crabgrass in the landscape, he says.

Finally, don't forget to keep an eye on your equipment, Sisti adds.

"It's important to note the calibration of your application equipment, both sprayers and spreaders, is essential to ensure you're delivering the proper amount of active ingredient," he says. "Any type of soil disruption, like dethatching or heavy raking, can nullify the crabgrass barrier." 



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HOW T+O SOLUTIONS WORK

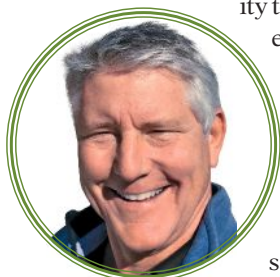
Dual action

A look at combination fertilizers

BY LAUREN DOWDLE |
CONTRIBUTOR

Products that combine fertilizers with another lawn care chemical can reduce the number of applications if the schedules for each substance line up.

“Being able to apply a fertilizer and something else — like a pesticide or herbicide — in one pass is the No. 1 reason why lawn care operators (LCOs) would use it,” says Jim Jensen, formulator business segment manager at Nufarm Americas. “It gives them the flexibility to save some time, especially if they have a one-week window to apply a pesticide, for example. They’re able to apply both at the same time.”



Jim Jensen

The most common combinations include pairing granular fertilizers with either herbicides (pre- or postemergent) or insecticides. There are also instances when the fertilizers are combined with fungicides, but fungicides are generally more efficient when sprayed, Jensen says.

HOW THEY WORK:

Traditional nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (NPK) fertilizers are impregnated with another substance, such as an herbicide or insecticide. This chemical combination allows

HOW DO FERTILIZER+HERBICIDE PRODUCTS WORK TOGETHER?

NPK fertilizer

The **fertilizer** feeds the turfgrass, which improves the color and density. It helps eliminate weeds through competition.

Preemergent herbicide

The **preemergent herbicide** goes down to the soil floor and creates an invisible barrier. When a seed germinates, it comes into contact with the **preemergent herbicide** and begins to die.

The chemistry from both the fertilizer and herbicide are delivered at the same time during one application.

Combination products used on cool-season grasses — such as Kentucky bluegrass or tall fescue — are usually higher in nitrogen than those used on warm-season grasses, like zoysiagrass and Bermudagrass.

operators to meet two needs at once: applying fertilizer and another chemical at the same time.

Fertilizer plus herbicide products are the most common combination for LCOs, and they provide food for turfgrass while also controlling weeds, says Tony Goldsby, Ph.D., research agronomist for The Andersons Plant Nutrient Group.

PRODUCT USE DO'S:

LCOs need to consult the product label to determine the proper application rate for their geography, since the preemergent herbicide's effectiveness can be affected by high amounts of rainfall, Goldsby says. “Then you can select the proper fertilizer plus preemergent combination product that will suit the needs of your area,” he adds.

In addition to rainfall, LCOs also should monitor soil temperatures and apply the preemergent barrier before the weed germinates; for example, crabgrass starts to germinate at 55 degrees, Jensen says.

To ensure product accuracy, Jensen says operators should overlap the product area during application. It's also important to sweep or blow off any particles left on hard surfaces into the lawn area to prevent runoff.

PRODUCT USE DON'TS:

It's possible for lawn care professionals to use multiple combination products, but they shouldn't assume a product will be fine because it's been used by itself in an application in the past. They need to review all of the labels before adding the combo to their program.

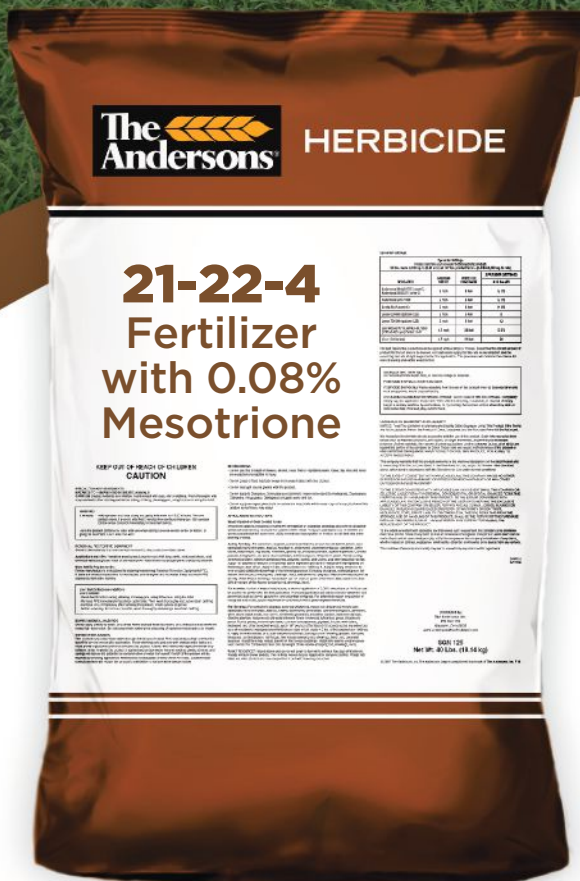
“You may have a combination product that is fine when applied as a stand-alone application, but you may need to stay clear of other combination products,” Goldsby says. Even products that can be used in conjunction with another combination product may need to have application times spaced out — such as a week window — to prevent possible turf injury, he adds. 📌

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Nashville.



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FERTILE GROUND

Efficient choices

What to look for when selecting a fertilizer

BY LAUREN DOWDLE |
CONTRIBUTOR

Ask customers what they expect from their lawn care company, and one of the top answers is probably “results.” That means companies are tasked with keeping their clients’ turf green and healthy — and to do that, they will need the right general fertilizer for the job.

Finding the most well-suited fertilizer can come down to the price, quality, turf type, conditions, product capabilities and operator preferences. To help sort out all of those different factors and concerns, several industry professionals share their insights on purchasing trends and how to select the best fertilizer.

LIMIT FILLERS

No matter the property’s location, condition, type or issues, there are two factors that remain true: Lawn care operators (LCOs) should want to provide a quality product and service. That goal encompasses everything from how and when they apply products to the actual products themselves.

So, when it comes to choosing the right general fertilizers for lawn care services, Chris Sherrington, technical director at Lawn Doctor, a lawn care franchise based in Holmdel, N.J., says his company



Chris Sherrington

ASK WHAT’S IN THE BAG

For many others in the industry, the price per bag is still one of the top deciding factors when it comes to purchasing fertilizers, says Chris Derrick, Koch Turf & Ornamental field sales agronomist. But after customers ask



CUSTOMIZED CARE
Lawn care operators should assess each lawn individually to determine what type of fertilizer should be used.

looks to purchase quality fertilizer that’s blended and formulated to the highest standard. For Lawn Doctor, that means finding a product that has a uniform pearl size, less filler in the bag and controlled-release technology.

“The price does come into play, but I feel like a lot of our Lawn Doctor owners will pay that extra to get a good quality material,” Sherrington says.

Lawn Doctor services mainly residential properties — about 90 percent of its customers — as well as commercial properties. The firm provides lawn care, ornamental tree/shrub care and outdoor pest control services in 40 states. Lawn Doctor had \$130 million in sales last year and has 222 franchises across the country.

about the price, he says another common concern is the nitrogen level of the product.

“The next question we see many consider is the amount of slow-release nitrogen that is in the bag,” says Derrick, who adds that the interest in the amount of slow-release has become more important to LCOs in recent years.

Like the name suggests, slow-release fertilizers provide a steady amount of nutrients that break down during a period of time. While slow-release fertilizers generally cost more, the number of applications are fewer, helping to offset some of the overall cost.

STOCK UP

To reduce some of the cost and stress of finding new products between applications, Sherrington says he’s also seeing more Lawn Doctor franchise owners buying fertilizer in bulk to last for two to three rounds of applications.

“They find a good product they can use early, midseason and in the fall,” he says. “It’s also comforting to find a product that works and per-



forms well — and meets the customer's expectations."

Customers care about results, and if they can see those with the current product being used, they will feel more comfortable going forward with that same substance on their lawn. It's easier to sell them on a product that's already proven to work.

THINK LOCALLY

While product quality is an important factor to consider when purchasing fertilizer, even the highest grade will fall short if it isn't the right fit for a lawn and its needs. LCOs need to assess each property separately, even though there will be some similarities with other sites in the same area.

Some of the deciding factors that affect which fertilizer an LCO should use include whether it's warm- or cool-season turf, the number of weeds and type of application approach. Lawns with an overgrowth of weeds may require a general fertilizer that will speed up turf growth so the grass outgrows the weeds. For a steadier approach, operators may consider an extended-release fertilizer for continuous nutrition.

Besides the lawn's current state, LCOs also have to consider local conditions and ordinances. For example, LCOs in Florida can't apply fertilizer that contains nitrogen and phosphorus between June and September. So, operators in areas with specific laws have to find fertilizers that will provide nutrition regardless of the restrictions.

CONSIDER STEADY GROWTH

One way to deliver a steady level of nutrients is by using an enhanced efficiency fertilizer (EEF).

"A lot of folks industrywide are using more enhanced efficiency fertilizer technology with applications," Sherrington says. "You're not seeing that drop off, but instead, you're seeing more of a uniform feeding."

EEF products are gaining ground throughout the industry, Derrick adds, but operators need to understand exactly what they are before choosing one. He says it's important for LCOs to educate themselves and better define what type of enhanced efficiency fertilizer will work best for their properties and services.

There are three main types to choose from: stabilized nitrogen, slow-release nitrogen and controlled-release nitrogen. Derrick says LCOs can extend a fertilizer's longevity up to 26 weeks and produce a healthier turfgrass for their customers by using EEF technology.

"We are also encouraging LCOs to question what is in the bag of the general fertilizers they purchase — paying more attention to the analysis and understanding how the analysis can affect things like the amount of product used or handling required," Derrick says. "Having a larger percentage of EEFs in the analysis allows for increased performance and less potential of nitrogen loss, making EEFs a sound economical choice."

Lawn care professionals also should look at how their current fertilizer

blends may contain high amounts of filler, which offers little to no nutritional value, Derrick says. Using a blend with a higher amount of EEF technology can be a better solution for LCOs, he adds.

MAXIMIZE EFFICIENCY


Beyond EEF technology, LCOs are looking to boost their efficiency — and level of convenience — in other ways when applying the fertilizer.

"They prefer a product with high nutritional value, so there are fewer fertilizer applications, freeing time for their crews to complete other tasks, more efficient nutrient delivery and reduced storage and handling of fertilizer bags," Derrick says.

"Spending less time at each property means more properties each day, which equates to increased revenue."

Lawn care companies are also in search of fertilizers that can meet the needs of all of their customers' properties. That means the need to change the analysis, rates and calibration settings is minimized, Derrick says.

"I think the needs of many LCOs will continue to evolve as they gain greater experience in operating their businesses more efficiently," Derrick says. "The green industry, as a whole, needs to keep emphasizing the importance of understanding what it is that is being applied."

Ultimately, LCOs need to determine what they value and need from a general fertilizer and then choose the type and brand that best meets those requirements. 



Chris Derrick

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Nashville.

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LOCATION Vancouver, Canada

COMPANY MRD Landscaping

THE DETAILS While tackling a small basement courtyard may seem like a challenge, it was no match for the team at MRD Landscaping.

“To maximize this small basement courtyard is to make every inch count,” says Frank Shang, owner of MRD Landscaping.

The team also had to contend with poor existing concrete work.

To ramp up the cramped courtyard’s visual appeal and create the illusion of more space, the MRD Landscaping team divided the area into layers. Artificial turf comprises the bottom layer, a natural stone wall and waterfall make up the middle layer and red geraniums add a pop of color to the top layer.

Various accents, including fatsia japonica plants, carved wood art, landscape lighting and four different sizes of copper planters, add another dimension.

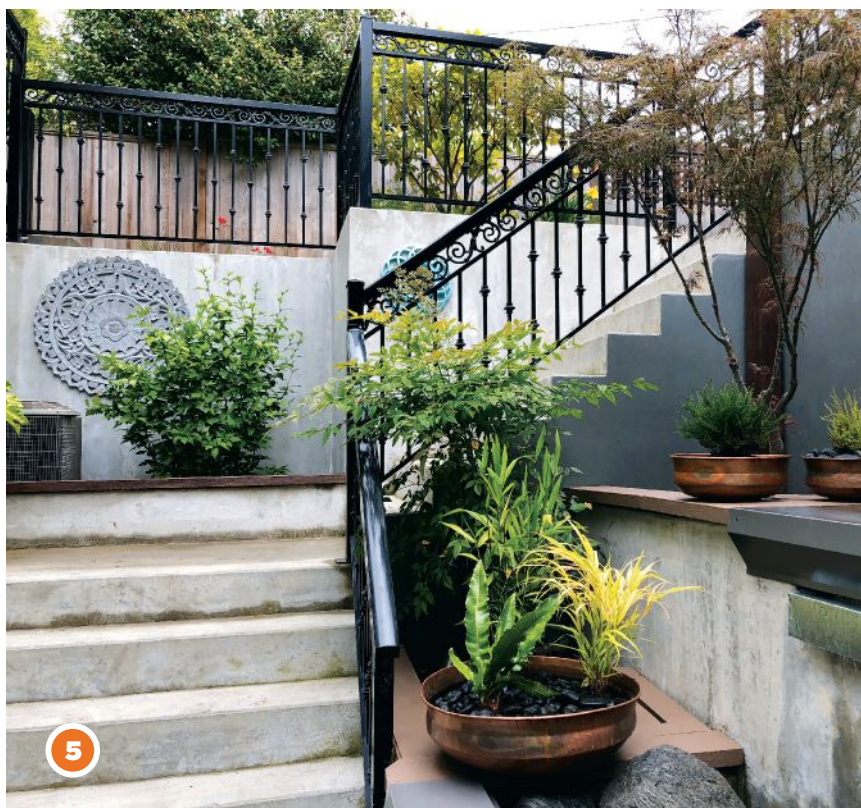
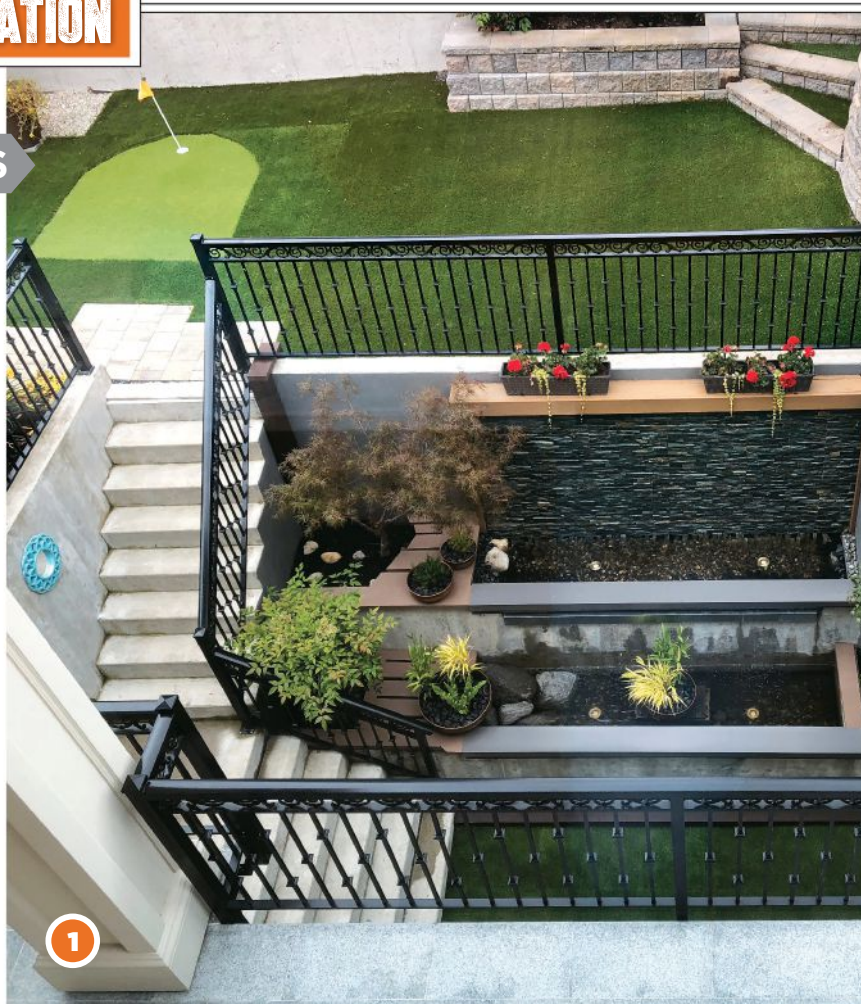
The client selected MRD Landscaping to take on the project based on pleasant past experiences of working with the company.

“They knew we would do a good job at a reasonable price,” Shang says.

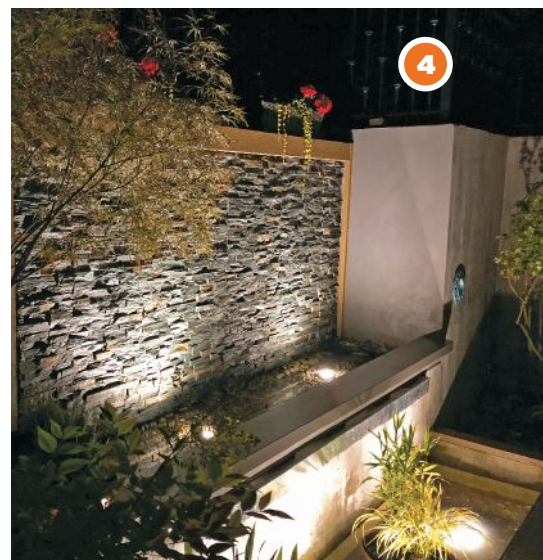
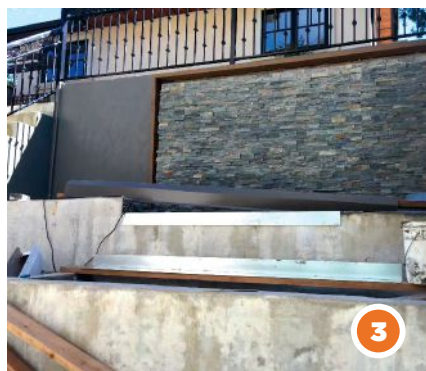
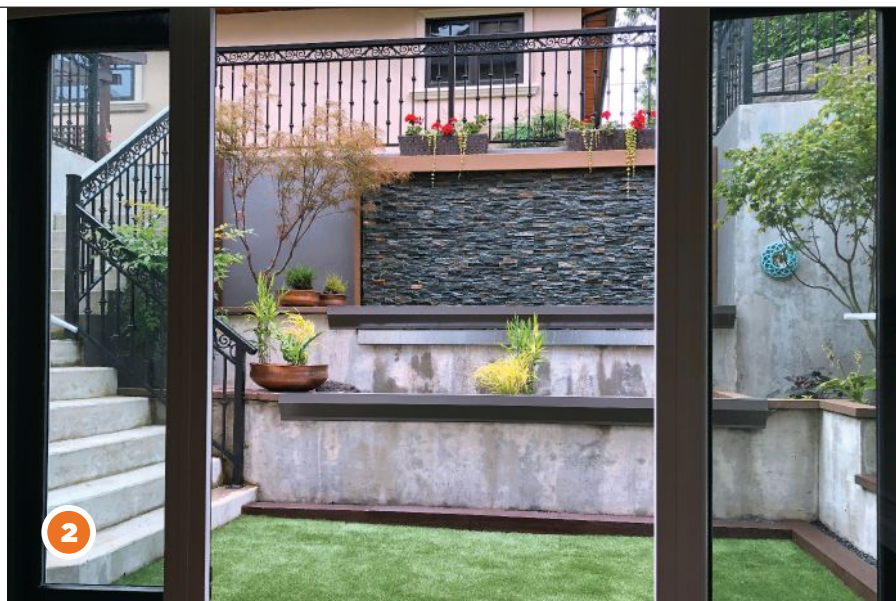
The entire project took the two-man crew about 20 working days to complete.

This project earned MRD Landscaping a 2018 Gold Award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals’ Awards of Excellence program.

See more photos from this project at LandscapeManagement.net/hardscapesolutions.



PHOTOS: MRD LANDSCAPING



Captions | 1. A view of the entire project from the home's master bedroom captures the courtyard area, as well as the rest of the yard, which includes a practice putting area. 2. The team added dimension to the courtyard by including a waterfall, red geraniums, artificial turf and other shade-loving plants. A sliding glass door opens to the basement, and the outdoor stairs lead up to the main level of the yard. 3. This photo depicts the construction phase of the courtyard's waterfall. 4. Lights were added to the waterfall area for a mesmerizing effect at nighttime. 5. Shade-loving plants placed in various-sized copper planters add visual interest to the courtyard. 6. A before shot of the courtyard. With such limited space to work with, the MRD Landscaping team had to determine how to maximize the area's design.

EXPERTS' TIPS

Compact tractors and wheel loaders



JOHN DEERE FINANCIAL

Angie Harms

Tactical marketing planner for John Deere Financial
DEERE.COM

DO focus on two key factors when adding a compact tractor to a fleet: type of machine and how to pay for it. **DO** consider horsepower, hitch life capacity, property type and desired implements when deciding to add a compact tractor to a fleet. Equipment use and finances determine if it is best to buy, rent or lease. **DO** improve your cash flow throughout the year with a lease. On the other hand, buying doesn't restrict hours or damage because the business owns the machine. **DON'T** forget to weigh the pros and cons. Renting is a good solution if the machine isn't needed on a regular basis. However, if the machine will be used often, it is better to buy or lease.



MULTIONE AMERICA

Bill Grundy

National sales manager
MULTIONE-AMERICA.COM

DO match the machine to the requirements of the intended tasks. With a compact articulating loader, one can carry heavier materials without damaging sensitive surfaces. **DO** consider the specifications and versatility of the machine, matching attachments that make you more productive.

DO demo and operate the machine to ensure it maneuvers and performs the tasks demanded. Make an informed decision prior to purchase. **DON'T** try to lift more or operate the unit in situations that it's not intended for. Know the capability of your machine and keep the weight and load low to the ground and under control as much as possible.



KUBOTA COMPACT TRACTORS

Kelcey Cockrell

Product marketing specialist
KUBOTAUSA.COM

DO rent a compact tractor for applications when the machine is only needed once or very rarely. **DO** buy or lease if you plan to utilize the tractor often. Landscape contractors can lease a compact tractor for tax purposes or buy the machine, which is typically more advantageous in terms of return on investment. **DON'T** forget to shop at your local dealerships. Choose a dealership and a brand that you can rely on for parts, service and overall quality.



JOHN DEERE

RUN WITH A 3E SERIES TRACTOR

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Transforming your property has never been easier. The 3E Series unlocks your land's potential with a best in class turning radius, intuitive operator station, and features that let you swap out attachments in no time. And with a 6-Year Limited Powertrain Warranty, we've got you covered from the ground up.

Nothing Runs Like A Deere™ | Run With Us
Search "John Deere 3E Series" for more



Determining whether to buy, rent or lease compact tractors/wheel loaders.

EXPERTS' TIPS

Compact tractors and wheel loaders



KIOTI
Joel Hicks

Senior product support manager
KIOTI.COM

DO consider what services you offer and how often you'll need a compact tractor and attachments. **DO** consider how many hours you'll put on the machine annually. **DO** remember, renting means the equipment may not be available when you need it. When you buy, warranties can help with equipment when needed. **DO** consider the potential of trading in the machine for newer equipment upon lease completion. **DO** annually assess your equipment needs and make the best decision for you and your team. **DON'T** forget, with a lease, you'll likely be restricted by hours of use.



TAKEUCHI-US
Lee Padgett


Product manager
TAKEUCHI-US.COM

DO look at lease and purchase plans; a few rentals may equal the cost of a lease. **DO** think about whether you can cross-use a compact wheel loader in areas where you may normally use a compact track loader or a skid-steer loader, saving the cost of having two machines. **DO** consider the offseason and if you can repurpose the compact wheel loader for applications other than landscaping, like snow removal. **DO** think about whether buying a compact wheel loader could open up new opportunities for your business. **DON'T** purchase or lease if your business only requires one occasionally. **DON'T** forget, there may be additional equipment to buy in order to transport the machine.

Before buying, renting or leasing, it's important to consider how often a machine will be used.



PHOTO: KIOTI



“POLYON® helps us maintain that nice green color... but with far fewer applications and less labor.”

Frank Mariani, Jr.
West Branch Manager, Mariani Landscape
Chicago, IL

POLYON Controlled-Release Fertilizer Helps Mariani Landscape Stay Ahead of a Changing Industry



“The labor shortage is affecting us like it’s affected everyone. It’s probably our biggest concern right now.

“POLYON frees up my guys to do other tasks — and we have plenty for them to do. They can help enhancement crews, do other specialty applications for roses and shrubs, address fungus problems, insecticide applications, etc.

“POLYON is a better product, and many times, the better product costs more per bag. However, the labor savings more than make up for the initial cost.”

Mariani Landscape has been in business over 60 years, and Frank Mariani, Jr. is continuing the family tradition. With POLYON controlled-release fertilizer, his crews maintain high-quality turf, and much more. POLYON’s increased longevity frees up his employees to take on additional jobs, helping the family business do even more outstanding work.



Find out how POLYON can give your business a competitive edge at **KochTurf.com/Advantages**.



DESIGN: SOFTWARE

Picture this

How landscape pros are using design software and services to their advantage

BY SARAH WEBB |
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but in the landscape design world, a picture—or rather, a realistic rendering—may be worth so much more.

“Showing the design to the customer can be like the Achilles’ heel,” says Kevin Smith, owner of Online DesignScapes, a web-based design service. “Using a service helps because the customer can see exactly what the finished product will look like.”

In addition to helping transform a flat blueprint plan into a lifelike reality, using a design software or service can assist landscape contractors with upselling.

“Using a design program or service can be the difference between a simple 300-square-foot patio and showing the homeowner what a fully functional living space could look like,” says Mike Miles, senior designer for Belgard Design Studio. “The clients may ask for something simple, but showing them what they could do with the area makes them more likely to bump up their budget.”

LM spoke with several design experts to get the picture on the value these services and software can add to a landscape design firm.

THE CONTENDERS

With many different options available, companies have the freedom to select a program that works best for their needs.



Some firms may decide to incorporate a software that enables the in-house designer to use a computer-aided drafting (CAD) program, which then does the “heavy lifting” by automatically outputting the lifelike renderings. For example, DynaScope Software offers a CAD system, complete with color rendering and three-dimensional (3D) features.

“When you do it by hand, you’re faced with several repetitive and tedious tasks,” says Joe Salemi, vice president of DynaScope Software. “Using a design software solution eliminates the monotony of landscape design, as it allows you to automate.”

Dynascope’s software comes with about four hours of video tutorial training. Each tutorial video is between five and seven minutes long, according to Salemi. Pricing for Dynascope’s CAD system starts at \$1,195, plus a \$37.50 monthly subscription fee. The full bundle, which includes color rendering and the 3D add-on, runs \$2,850, plus a \$50 monthly subscription fee.

Other contractors may opt to have their layout designs—along with a few photos and notes—sent off to a web-based design service, such as those

provided by Online DesignScapes and Belgard.

In these cases, the user simply has to upload the materials to the provider’s website and wait for the polished design to be returned, typically within a week or so, depending on the time of year.

“Ours is more of a conversion process,” Belgard’s Miles says. “It’s freeing up (the designers’) time. They’re still able to be creative. They put their focus on the design itself and getting us the information, and we take care of the dirty work.”

Belgard’s Design Studio is free to Belgard authorized contractors (BACs) and costs \$249 per project for non-BACs. Online DesignScapes services start at \$119, but Smith says the average project design ends up costing about \$300, depending on the scope of the project.

From Online DesignScapes, customers receive the 3D color images, two-dimensional (2D) blueprints and a virtual video tour to present ideas to potential clients. From Belgard, the user receives 3D renderings presented in a 2D format. From there, the contractor may choose to present the 3D renderings using virtual reality technology, made possible by virtual reality goggles



UPSELL
Showing clients a realistic rendering of what's possible within a space can be a strategy for upselling.

view animation and integration of a design into a business software to assist with items like job pricing or crew tracking.

START TO FINISH

While designers may not experience any trouble picturing what the final product will look like, it's likely the client will.

"(The service) is a good closing tool. It's a lot easier to close someone on a job that's \$70,000 to \$80,000 when you have a 3D rendering," says Scotty Coyote, owner of San Diego-based Coyote Construction and Pavers, which started using Belgard's service about 10 years ago.

Miles, who has experience as a contractor, adds that if a client is able to visualize a design, it helps ease their worries once ground is broken.

"Being out on the job site, I've seen homeowners watching through the window to see what's happening," Miles says. "Giving them the image upfront, they know their funds are going to the right place."

He adds that using these programs can cut down the selling process from 20 hours to three to five hours.

The programs also can make it easier for the designer to edit the plan if a client wishes to make changes.

"It gives contractors a huge advantage than if they'd do a hand-drawn design," says Joe Monello, user of Online DesignScapes and owner of Monello Landscape Industries in Wayne, N.J. "These designs can be saved, changed and gone back to without wasting time, energy and money." He adds that using a design service assisted his company in making its first \$1 million sale.

In addition to helping the clients visualize the finished product, the design software and services can help streamline the production process by giving foremen and crew members an accurate depiction of the space.

Salemi says having the image available trumps other methods such as relaying details of the proposed design through word of mouth or even spray painting it over the designated area.

"There's no need for handholding. The project manager can show crews exactly what he wants, where he wants it," Smith says. 

REALISTIC RENDERING
Programs that bring a design to life help make visualization easier for clients and crew members alike.

(which cost about \$30), a smartphone and a free app called Scope by IrisVR.

Some design programs offer other detailed features such as giving the user the ability to include a timeline that'll portray where the sun shadows will be at any given time of day, the ability to view a project through a bird's-eye-



WATER WORLD

Water-saving success

LOCATION Palo Alto, Calif.

COMPANY Gachina Landscape Management

DETAILS A well-planned irrigation system is never more important than during a drought. With water conservation in mind, Gachina Landscape Management renovated Oak Creek Apartments' irrigation system. It was California's worst drought in decades, but the Gachina team helped Oak Creek take advantage of a \$50,000 rebate from the Santa Clara Valley Water District for the renovation.

When replacing more than 25 old solenoid valves, the team discovered the old controllers were being damaged by a high current.

The property's 28 outdated controllers were replaced with HydroPoint WeatherTRAK Pro3 smart controllers, which prevent high-current damage with alerts.

The system's 162 valves pull water from a single 4-inch point of connection. Because of the limited water supply, Gachina also had to consider the potential lack of water pressure.

Focusing on a sustainable landscape, Gachina crews installed new inline drip irrigation. Crews also removed 20,000 square feet of turf from the property and in its place installed native plant material with a heavy layer of mulch for soil moisture retention.

Within 18 months, the property saved nearly 5 million gallons of water, a 16 percent difference compared with the old irrigation system.

See more photos from this project at LandscapeManagement.net/waterworld.



COLLABORATE

The partnership between Gachina Landscape Management, Oak Creek Apartments' management, HydroPoint and the Santa Clara Valley Water District was critical in this water-saving project.



DIG IT UP

This old Rain Bird valve from the '60s was part of the original equipment installed more than 50 years ago. In order to identify the valve, Gachina crews had to remove it and ship it to Rain Bird.

TECH TIME

After installing up-to-date products, crews at Gachina ensured new technology was being used to its full advantage. The WeatherTRAK mobile app provides the crews real-time data and information about the irrigation system through email.



WATER WORKS

Drought-tolerant plants were chosen based on the Santa Clara Valley Water District's landscape conversion rebate program requirements. Crews installed drip irrigation, which distributes the right amount of water at the right time.

WHAT DOES EFFICIENCY LOOK LIKE?



**when compared to standard MPR spray nozzles*

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Efficiency looks like **Toro® Precision™ Series Spray Nozzles.**

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TORO®

EXPERTS' TIPS

Sprayheads



HUNTER
Kelsey Jacquard

Product manager — MP Rotators & Sprays
HUNTERINDUSTRIES.COM

Proper sprinkler placement depends on the types of plants being irrigated, expected plant growth over time and size of the hydrozone area. **DO** keep in mind that shrubs and flowers will likely require a different design than turf to prevent future overgrowth from blocking the spray pattern and to protect delicate plants from potential damage. A 4-inch pop-up is generally acceptable for shorter, warm-season turf, but taller turf typically requires a 6-inch pop-up. Some taller ground cover requires a 12-inch pop-up. **DON'T** forget, larger landscape areas can use farther-throwing sprinklers, like rotors, while smaller areas can use shorter-throwing spray nozzles. Rotary nozzles can irrigate both smaller and larger areas.



JAIN IRRIGATION
Richard Restuccia

Vice president, water management solutions
JAINSUSA.COM

DO check to ensure a pop-up sprinkler or rotor is necessary. When possible, use drip irrigation to increase the percentage of water reaching the plant material. Little or no water is lost to evaporation when water is applied at ground level, near plant roots. **DO** remember that when the only possible solution is a rotor, select a low-angle nozzle. **DO** review your zone separation and make sure the lawn is separate from shrubs, sun areas are different from shade and slopes are on a separate zone from flat areas. I also recommend smaller-radius heads to provide better control. **DON'T** forget to select a smart controller with water-conserving features and predictive weather analytics to reduce water waste.



RAIN BIRD
Paul Anderson

Product manager — contractor rotors
RAINBIRD.COM

DO ensure that you're selecting the right head for the right job to achieve optimum coverage and performance. **DON'T** try to fit a rotor where a different product, like a fixed spray or rotary nozzle, might perform better. **DO** select your nozzle based on the distance of throw and precipitation rate that your application requires. **DO** space your heads appropriately to facilitate head-to-head coverage. Too much space in between heads will result in dry areas, and too little space will result in certain areas being overwatered. **DON'T** use the same nozzle for every watering pattern or reduce your throw distance any more than necessary. While it may be tempting, you risk both efficiency and performance by doing so. Use the right product for the right application, and you and your customers will both be happier in the long run.

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z-spray.com

FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Brian Haga

PRESIDENT

SCIENTIFIC PLANT SERVICE, BALTIMORE

1 How did you get started with Scientific Plant Service?

I've been here 25 years total. I started here as summer help and then came on as a technician. It was a good way to make money in the summers, and I'm still here. I've only owned the business for one year — I was the vice president for 15 years. I really enjoy my job; I get to work with the staff and our clients in the field. I have clients in athletic fields — little league fields and athletic programs. I like learning about their challenges and giving them solutions based on their budgets. I'm always in the middle of something ... the days fly by.

2 How have you done with finding labor in your market, and do you have any magic solutions?

Finding people is extremely difficult. I don't have any magic tricks. Craigslist, social media, industry sites — I use it all. But what I really try to do is work on retaining who we already have. This is a small business, so there aren't a lot of ladders to climb, but we're fair and we're honest. They say this is a seasonal business, but I can't tell you when our downtime is anymore. We plan on everyone taking a summer vacation, we tell them to put it on the calendar and we'll work around it.

3 Speaking of summer vacations, what's your favorite summer vacation memory?

I've been all around the country ... I'm lucky, when I was in seventh grade, my parents purchased an RV and my siblings and I piled in and headed out West. We drove to San Francisco and then went down the coast, and we saw everything in between: the St. Louis Arch, the Grand Tetons, the Grand Canyon, the Badlands. Now that I have four kids of my own, we like to go to Ocean City, Md. It's a 3-hour drive. We rent a house and unwind. It won't last forever, but I sure enjoy it. It's a lot easier than Disney World — I hope to never do that again!

4 Tell me more about your family — how old are your kids and what do you all do together for fun?

My wife and I live in Baltimore and we have four kids — three daughters and a son. Their ages are 13, 11, 8 and 6. We also have three cats and two dogs, a Vizsla and an Irish setter that are a part of the family. My son is a cub scout and plays soccer, the girls are into dancing. We like to go to the beach and go to the mountains and ski and snowboard. I've skied my whole life, but now I'm a snowboarder convert — I think I have more fun than the kids do.

5 What's the craziest thing you've seen in this industry?

Oh man, you see some stuff and you just shake your head a lot. I think the thing I see here that I think is crazy is when an employee leaves your company for the lawn care company around the corner — we call it "changing shirts." When they land at that other company, I wonder what it was that made them leave. Did they find a better culture, a better match? It's strange to me to think it's that much different. And I think the other thing I find crazy in this industry is that two teenagers in a hatchback with a mower can suddenly do great — they can compete with Bright-View! All it takes to get started is a desire to succeed. 🍷

BEST ADVICE

"I live by this and remind myself often: It's better to try and fail than fail to try. I always give it a shot. When the forecast calls for rain, the whole world thinks it's going to rain all day. Some days the forecast is off by a few hours, we prefer to get out in the field and see what we can accomplish until the rain starts. Usually, we can be productive."



PHOTO: ABBY HART

A LOOK BACK

Web surfin' USA

In this article from the August 1999 issue of *Landscape Management*, the authors discussed online resources available to landscape professionals. With the exception of The University of Illinois turfgrass program's website, all of these sites still exist in some form or another. Although, these days, you probably aren't going to find them by searching Alta Vista. What web resources do you use to grow your business? Is *Landscape Management* one of them? Tweet your responses at @LandscapeMgmt.

Surfin' Turf

Bookmark some of these horticultural sites. They contain information that can increase your knowledge.

By DAVID WEINSTOCK AND CURT HABLER

HortWorld

<http://www.hortworld.com>

There are sites on the World Wide Web serving as links that connect a large collection of links, usually related to subjects. These sites are called search engines. One of the most extensively designed and largest horticultural links sites is HortWorld. Sponsored by Network International Horticultural Network, this site features information of interest to both landscape and turf management professionals.

HortWorld features links to associations, reference Web sites, institutions and trade show calendars. It also features an extensive library of research and reference materials on turfgrass disease and management topics from 17 major commercial and educational research institutions.

Another interesting HortWorld feature is Florida's Plant Clinic.

<http://www.floridaplantclinic.com>

This site is a GREAT one, and did we mention, it's free! Designed for those who are looking for information on Florida's plant problems, this site is the most up-to-date, just as definitive one in the region. It's the all-in-one Florida turfgrass professionals.

Florida Plant Clinic covers just about every facet of botany within the geographical confines of the state of Florida. Landscape design, application, horticulture, management, irrigation, nutrition, tree care, and the list goes on and on. It's a site that's not just for the professional, but for the hobbyist as well.

Florida Plant Clinic also features a link to the Florida Plant Clinic's website.

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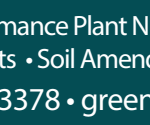
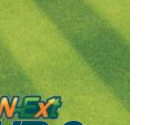
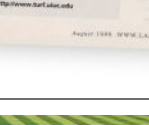
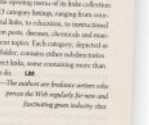
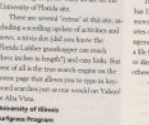
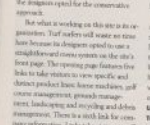
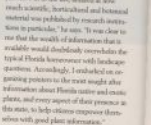
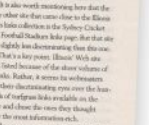
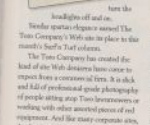
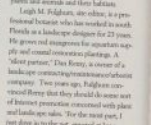
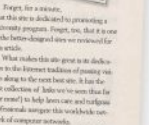
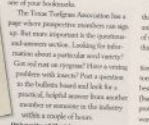
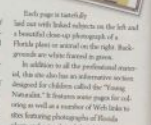
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BY KEVIN KEHOE

The author is managing partner of The Aspire Software Co. Reach him at kevin.kehoe@youraspire.com.

AMs: Use tech to retain more clients

Account managers (AMs) have a tough job. It's hard enough to handle customers, but the job becomes impossible if you're poorly organized despite all your hustle. Hustle is important, but a system is essential to become an A-plus account manager.

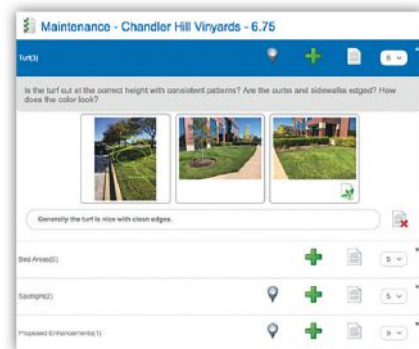
There are three metrics that define an A-plus AM: contracts under management, upsell rate and retention rate (see chart). Why does this matter? Because retention is the single most important driver of net profit.

There are three essential tasks to produce those metrics, though an AM's job is more than three tasks. But these three are critical and require technology to perform them productively and effectively:

1. Responding to issues and requests;
2. Anticipating needs by performing site walks or property reviews; and
3. Recommending services by proposing fixes and enhancements.

RESPONDING — ISSUES AND REQUESTS

You must respond, coordinate and document issues and requests. You can use Post-it notes, calendars and emails, but with this method, it's unlikely you can keep up with the volume of requests and their dispensation without dropping the ball. Every time that happens, your customer loses a little faith and confidence in you, which he or she remembers at renewal time. You need technology that can assist in the process so you can respond quickly and accurately with all the information required. This system builds confidence with the customer. Simple dashboard reports linking people and calendars can dramatically improve productivity and the customer's experience.



Technology can help streamline the process of performing site walks.

ANTICIPATING — SITE WALKS AND REVIEWS

You must anticipate customer needs before they bring them to you. After all, that's why they hired you. Once upon a time, paper forms and spreadsheets could document a site walk. Today, clients want more. They want pictures, locations, analyses and ideas. The time it takes to document those needs for one site walk is significant. Multiply it by 70 sites four times a year, and you get the picture. Again, technology can provide the tool to speed up the process, archive the results and have them available for proposal writing and renewal and budget discussions.

RECOMMENDING — FIXES AND ENHANCEMENTS

You must be able to propose, price and close on enhancements efficiently. An A-plus AM will create a large number of proposals to do the job. The customer does not want to wait. In fact, the longer the wait from discussion to proposal delivery, the lower the close rate, meaning you will have to bid more to achieve the upsell goal. And even that's not the real issue. The real issue is the customer's perception of your service and capabilities, which he or she will consider at renewal time. In this most critical task, use technology to reduce the time and effort required to deliver a proposal. You can't do that with office-bound software and spreadsheets.

The successful AM uses technology to reduce the time required to respond and the time required to perform the critical tasks that affect and shape the customer's experience. When you can integrate the performance of *critical tasks* with technology that improves customers' experiences, they will have little reason to look elsewhere because of something as mundane as a lower price. 📱

A+ vs. B+ Account Managers

Metrics	A+ AM	B+ AM	Notes
1. Contracts under management	\$1,500,000	\$1,200,000	Annual contract value
2. Upsell rate	35%	28%	Percent sold on contracts
3. Upsells	\$525,000	\$336,000	Upsell revenue
4. Retention rate	96%	93%	Percent contracts renewed
5. Retention	\$1,440,000	\$1,116,000	Retained revenue
Net value	\$1,965,000	\$1,452,000	No. 3 plus No. 5
Revenue difference	\$513,000	Net value difference	
Gross profit margin	48%	Assumed margin percent	
Contribution to net profit	\$246,240		

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BY JEFFREY SCOTT

The author is owner of Jeffrey Scott Consulting, which helps landscape companies grow and maximize profits. Reach him at jeff@jeffreyscott.biz.

Is “continuous improvement” too slow?

“Continuous improvement” has been popular for years, going back to post-World War II, when the now famous American management consultant W. Edwards Deming helped Japan reinvigorate its economy after the war.

But sometimes continuous improvement can be too slow to get results we need. Business operates much quicker than it did back in the 1950s. Today, you may need to simply take a sharp right turn on the big issues to make a larger impact on your business.

I call this type of decision-making “bold leadership.”

If you rely only on incremental improvement, here are some of the consequences you can expect:

Entrenchment. It can be difficult to change the minds of conservative members of your team. Taking the slow approach can, at times, dilute the momentum needed for lasting change.

A moving target. When your goal is higher profit, it can be difficult to achieve with the incremental approach because companies tend to build overhead over time. This pushes the profit targets further into the future.

Demotivation. When profit sharing, bonuses and even raises are tied to improving performance, employees can lose faith when your goals take longer (or too long) to hit.

Wrong change. With a culture of continuous improvement, you run the risk of making change for change’s sake, improving things that are not broken. And when you focus on small changes, you may miss the big opportunity right in front of you.

On the flip side, for those of you willing to embrace “bold leadership,” there are many benefits. Here are a few:

1. Making a deeper impact through focus.
2. Gaining increased respect and attention of your team. When they see that their leader is making bold decisions — as long as those decisions are calculated and thoughtful — they will get on board.
3. Catching the competition off guard. When you (their competition) make a sharp right turn, you’ll surprise them. Let them follow you, not the other way around!

GETTING STARTED WITH “BOLD LEADERSHIP”

Pick a big challenge or opportunity your company is facing. For example, it might be lack of personnel, lack of profit, lack of cash, lack of space or lack of quality lead flow.

For the sake of discussion, let’s pick lack of profit. I just

WHERE IS YOUR BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY?



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got off the phone with a contractor talking about this challenge. The contractor in question was not aware he had a lack-of-profit issue. When he started working with me last year, the company was at 4.9 percent net profit. After a couple months, we were on track to hit 15 percent net profit. That seems wonderful, but there were two flaws:

- The company counted on a large sales spurt to grow into profits.
- It didn’t budget in a sufficient market-based salary. At \$125,000, the owner was actually underpaying himself compared to provable market rates.

When we rectified those two factors, the projected profit shrunk. So, I asked him to replan with this question in mind: “What would you have to change in your marketing, sales and operational strategy in order to achieve a 20 percent net profit?”

We worked through this question and developed some “bold leadership” strategies and tactics. The team morale was higher than ever, and now was the time to strike.

PUT IT INTO ACTION

What would have the biggest impact on your company’s current health and performance if you used “bold leadership”?

To answer this, look at the figure “Where Is Your Biggest Opportunity?” and identify where your biggest impact can or needs to be achieved. It might be in your balance sheet, in your marketplace, in sales, in operations or it might be outlined in your long-term goals.

Find where you can have the biggest strategic impact now and go forth in a bold manner. 🚀



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PRUNING KNOW-HOW

Pruning trees or shrubs can be performed at any time during the year. Landscape pros can perform pruning if branches are in the way or if a tree or shrub has outgrown its space and poses a threat to things around it. Pruning also can involve:

- Trimming back small tree branches (the size that can be cut with handheld lopping shears);
- Lightly shaping hedges to keep their shape;
- Removing dead or diseased branches;
- Thinning out a crowded center that's preventing airflow, which can cause disease; and
- Taking care of crossing or rubbing branches, which may create a wound for disease or insects.

If the shrub is unhealthy or half dead, cutting it back to about 6 to 8 inches will be beneficial. For most shrubs, pruning is a forgiving task. Once you learn how each plant grows, you can correct previous pruning mistakes as you go. With a little practice, pruning becomes intuitive and is a quick way to revitalize a yard or garden.

Shearing involves trimming off the tips of branches and is best used for formal hedges and topiaries that require a maintained shape. Shearing is the only way to promote thick growth and keep the desired shape.

Most pruning tools have an arc-shaped blade that will slice through small branches. They come in different shapes and sizes to meet the requirements of different ways of pruning. Read carefully to determine which type of tool to use.

Scissor action pruners involve two sharp blades sliding past each other. These are also known as pole pruners.



Anvil cut pruners have one blade slicing against a wide, flat surface. These are also known as hand pruners.

Manual hedge clippers or shears have long, straight blades and are used for cutting small, green branches and tips. They are ideal for shearing formal hedges.

Power hedge clippers can be battery operated for smaller branches or gas powered for larger branches. The blades are flat, look like teeth and slide back and forth quickly, creating a cutting action.

Hand pruning saws come in a variety of shapes and sizes with blades designed for larger branches and small trunks. This type of saw looks similar to a serrated knife and usually folds for easier transport.

Always take a step back and look at what you have pruned so far. Are you taking off too much or making it lopsided? While a trimmed shrub can become somewhat rounded, you may want to keep some natural wisps to it.

WATCH AND LEARN

Visit LandscapeManagement.net/SafetyWatch to view a video about pruning.

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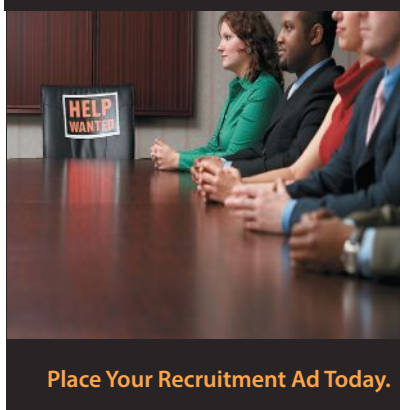
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GROW WITH GRUNDER

BY MARTY GRUNDER

The author is president and CEO of Grunder Landscaping Co. and The Grow Group, based in Dayton, Ohio. Reach him at marty@growgroupinc.com.



Stay focused, no matter how busy you get

My team at Grunder Landscaping Co. (GLC) in southwest Ohio is thrilled that spring is finally here, after what felt like an especially long, cold winter. We've scaled up our crews, held our annual team kickoff and training and set our sights on clear efficiency and revenue goals. In other words, we've done all we can to prepare for the busy months ahead, but as we all know, even the best-laid plans have a way of getting derailed when client demands soar. You can very quickly lose sight of getting ahead when you feel like you're barely keeping up.

To help keep you focused and in control no matter what comes your way this season, here are three tactics that have worked year after year for me at GLC and for the landscape professionals I coach.

1 MONEY MATTERS

Nothing causes more stress than financial performance. Smart landscaping companies require deposits from their clients upfront with their signed contracts, bill immediately upon completion of projects and are proactive when it comes to collecting. In the green industry, anything below 30 days is good. The more you trim this number, the faster you have cash on hand and — as we all know — cash is king. Some of the companies I consult with have gotten theirs down to as low as 11 days, often by accepting credit cards and assigning one person in the company to really drive and own the collections process.

“No matter how stressed or busy you get, make it a point to find and keep time for yourself, your family and your health every week.”

It's also important to make your work orders as detailed as possible, no matter how busy you get. Clearly list the hours bid for a job so your team knows exactly what numbers they need to hit. At GLC and the companies I coach, I have seen profitability improve significantly by focusing on this tactic. You will never motivate a team to deliver and foster a culture of accountability if you do not make your goals and progress clear and explicit.

2 LEAD THROUGH THE UPS AND THE DOWNS

You're going to be asking a lot of your people in the next few months. Foster a HOT — honest, open and transparent — environment in which your team knows you will listen to their concerns and face them together. And no matter how stressed you get or how great the challenges are when you're at your busiest, do not complain in front of your team. When leaders do that, they give license to everyone else to complain, too, and that can drag down your whole company. When problems arise, discuss them, focus on finding solutions and leave your venting for

after hours with a peer or mentor who can help you put it all in dispassionate perspective.

3 YOU CAN'T TAKE CARE OF YOUR TEAM IF YOU DON'T TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Stress at work is a vicious cycle. Under pressure to deliver at our companies, we dial back on our lives outside of work, thinking the only way we're going to get out of the fix we're in is by doubling down on the time we spend on our businesses. We stay late at the office, skip out on dinner with our families, cancel sessions at the gym, pare back our weekends to work more and check our work email at 3 a.m. I am guilty of all of this and more.

Guess what? It turns out all you get from doing this is a frustrated family, a bigger belly and sleep deprivation. It really is just like they tell you: If the plane you're on is going down, you can't help anyone else until you get oxygen for yourself. No matter how stressed or busy you get, make it a point to find and keep time for yourself, your family and your health every week. Schedule it and honor it, just like you do for work appointments. Trust me — it really is that important.

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