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In-house mower
maintenance **P 46**

Are you a coach
or a boss? **P 72**



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If you're looking for more content on topics such as employee retention, company growth, government affairs and marketing, you should check out our blog. Every week, we have one industry expert shed light on the topics most important to green industry professionals. Head over to LandscapeManagement.net/blog and bookmark the page now for weekly updates.

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This modern phone call culture

It seems like a lot of my friends are celebrating major life events lately, which is awesome. A longtime friend and his wife just welcomed their first child, and another friend told me his family is expecting baby No. 2. And this summer it seems there are at least two weddings to attend, with a third one imminent.

Not to be outdone, we recently had a major life event at the Jones household. Yeah, we've got a 12-year-old and a 7-year-old, but that doesn't mean we're boring. There's still the occasional big news here.

It was last month that we welcomed the arrival of ... my daughter's first smartphone.

Trust me, this was a Very Big Deal. My daughter rapid-fire texted all her friends with the news. (But how did she already have all their phone numbers?)

The smartphone is something that always impresses me when it comes to how much it has changed our lives in a short amount of time. Remember when to meet someone out, you had to make plans in advance, then stick to the plan? Or when after you left the house, you were mostly unreachable until you got home?

I was having this conversation with Cheryl Claborn, membership director of the National Association of Landscape Professionals, at a recent trade show. We talked about how we're all seemingly chained to our phones. If you miss a call or don't reply right away to a text, you must either be mad at that person or dead. There's no in-between.

A coincidence occurred after I left Cheryl's booth — just a few booths

down, I met Thomas Welsh, president of Voice for Turf — and we picked up right where Cheryl and I left off.

Voice for Turf (VoiceForTurf.com) is a company that delivers voice and data solutions for lawn care companies. The business began in the pest management industry, then sprouted up in lawn care because of the many companies worried about the complexities that go along with how people expect calls to be answered in our ultraconnected world.

“Making calls has also become more difficult. With robocalls becoming so prevalent, 75 percent of calls made to residences now go unanswered.”

“In this day and age, every business is bombarded with cold calls, robocalls and vendors calling in,” Welsh told me. “With the business operator trying to handle customer calls and prospect calls, that becomes daunting. If you're not there, ready to handle the call, (customers) just call somebody else.”

Welsh told me it's his job to “rescue” people from the chaos of our new phone call culture. For example, when the Voice for Turf system is integrated with an LCO's customer database, calls that come in are instantly qualified as current customers, prospects, vendors or junk. While calls from current customers are connected with their information popping up on a computer screen, robocalls are sent to oblivion.

Welsh says that while the expectation of being attached to our phones has gotten out of control, the younger generation — like my daughter, eventually — will even further complicate things.


“Millennials are getting older and buying houses,” Welsh says. “So we're bringing in solutions like web chats and texting. As we meet more people, we learn about their business and that allows us to bring more capabilities into our solutions beyond voice, in a very voice-heavy industry.”

The current headache of taking calls is just part of it. Making calls has also become more difficult. With robocalls becoming so prevalent, 75 percent of calls made to residences now go unanswered, Welsh says. While that's a pain for us, it's good for his business (his system detects when a real person answers the phone.)

But Welsh did have some good news — he says the days of robocalls are numbered.

“People should be looking for a technology called ‘SHAKEN’; it's basically a technology where you can better authenticate where a call is coming from, like an electronic signature,” Welsh says. “This will be coming in a fairly short period of time.”

Hopefully it comes before the next major announcement from the Jones household — the day my son inherits his big sister's smartphone. That is, if her phone isn't obsolete by then. 📞



I'mpossible:
is knowing
an 8-hour day
is only half
the story

You know the rest of the story well.
Payroll. Phone calls. Paperwork.
Dinner at 7 p.m.? Unlikely.
Sleep? Even less likely.
And while it takes courage to do everything yourself,
it's not always better. Or necessary.
Not when you've got an insurance partner who
watches your back and frees you up to do the job at hand.
With policies tailored to your unique story.
So maybe, one day, you'll know the luxury of
a mere 12-hour day.

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MORE ONLINE

See more great advice and complete answers from our Editorial Advisory Board in the online version of this feature at LandscapeManagement.net.

What's your best advice to help landscape pros get through spring preparations?

"... delegate, delegate and then delegate some more!"



Landscape Professionals

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Norcross, Ga.

Troy Clogg

Troy Clogg Landscape Associates
Wixom, Mich.

Paul Fraynd

Sun Valley Landscaping
Omaha, Neb.

Luke Henry

ProScape Lawn & Landscaping Services
Marion, Ohio

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Grand Rapids, Mich.

Jerry McKay

McKay Landscape Lighting
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Bryan Stolz

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Industry Consultants

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TurfBooks
Newton, N.J.

Marty Grunder

The Grow Group
Dayton, Ohio

Phil Harwood

Grow the Bench
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Kevin Kehoe

3PG Consulting
Laguna, Calif.

Jeffrey Scott

Jeffrey Scott Consulting
Trumbull, Conn.

"Plan for the spring in the fall. And the same goes for winter. Plan for next winter at the end of this winter. The best time to make a plan for improvement, growth or change is while it's fresh in your mind."



"Spend half of a day out of the office, without distractions, and think about what did and did not go well last year."

"Make sure you staff up and get all your employees in the right 'seats on the bus' for the season."



"One strategy that works well for us in the spring is to overhire for our initial mowing and maintenance crews. We plan our mow crews anticipating additional sales through the spring and early summer, reaching capacity in July. Until that point, those crews fill their extra time helping with spring cleanups, which reduces overtime."



"Plan every single day, week, month, quarter and year. Take charge of your calendar; don't let your calendar take charge of you."



"Actively manage expectations of clients."



OUR MISSION: *Landscape Management* shares a comprehensive mix of content designed to stimulate growth and take our readers to their next level.

DIGGING IN

Learn how one machine reduced pool removal time and property damage.



Left: Carroll Bros. Contracting removes a swimming pool from a client's backyard with the Takeuchi TB285 Compact Excavator in the winter. Right: Same backyard later that spring, after demolishing and filling the swimming pool.

Removing a swimming pool demands a machine that's tough, powerful and reliable — and it has to be all of that while also not destroying the surrounding yard and hardscapes.

Those are all capabilities Tom Carroll, owner of Carroll Bros. Contracting in Stevensville, Md., looks for when purchasing equipment. His company specializes in swimming pool removal, and it also offers demolition and excavation services.

All of their construction equipment is Takeuchi, and their fleet includes track loaders, a wheel loader and three excavators — TB250, TB285 and TB2150.

"They've been good machines to us," Carroll says. "We're pretty particular about our equipment, and we don't have any downtime with these machines."

His company started by purchasing smaller machines and has gradually moved up to adding larger ones, like the TB2150, which is the largest excavator in the U.S. Takeuchi line. Carroll says they chose the TB2150 because of its rubber tracks, which allow them to travel over sidewalks and driveways. "I'd say it's in a class of its own," he adds.

The excavator's comfort is another standout feature, one that is especially important for Carroll and his team, considering one of his operators is 6 feet, 8 inches tall. "He likes the equipment because of the cab room and size," Carroll says. "I want him to be comfortable in it and not get fatigued."

The excavator's overall size also helps reduce the time spent on pool removals.



TOM CARROLL

"It took about a day and a half for the smaller machines to demolish the pools," he says. "The larger machine can do it in three hours now, if there's access."

And access is the No. 1 key to deciding how they will handle a project. "That affects my ability to do the job and dictates the price and how long I'm going to be there," he says. "Most concrete swimming pools are similar in design, but the access is different on every pool. So, we have to use a smaller machine or have good access to use a larger machine."

Carroll Bros. has owned the TB2150 excavator for a year and put it to use on several sites. While the average swimming pool thickness is 12 inches, Carroll says, they sometimes run into ones with more concrete and rebar. That was the case with one project in Westminster, Md.

"There was just so much concrete, and we still don't understand why there was so much concrete poured into the swimming pool," Carroll recalls. "But, it didn't affect us because of the machine."

He said the excavator is able to break up concrete in a timely manner, which not only helped them on that jobsite but is an asset to them in their market. "That's what sets us apart from the other contractors," he says.

While their entire fleet of Takeuchi equipment continues to be reliable, Carroll's TB2150 has stood out for its capabilities and usability.

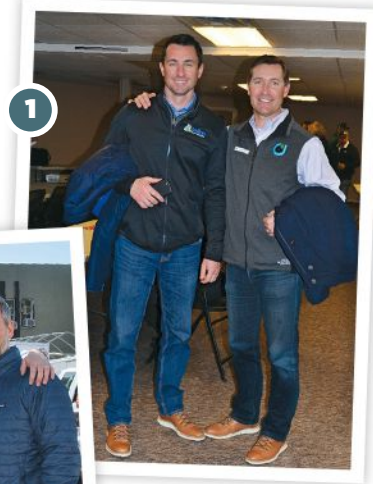
"Since it's so big, you can use it on those larger jobs, but you can also drive it through someone's front yard without destroying it," Carroll says. "That makes it versatile and well worth it. It's really the best decision we've made with purchasing equipment."

Takeuchi
From World First to World Leader

LM GALLERY

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

1 Hey man, I like your shoes Tommy Cole of Tellus Outdoors, left, and Jason New, The Grow Group, were wearing the same shoes on the second day of Grow! 2019. They are hopeful that they'll spark a new fashion trend for landscape professionals.



2 Soaking up some rays Despite a chill in the air in the Mile High City, attendees of Grow! 2019 took to the outdoors to check out Lifescape Colorado's trailers and for a photo-op. From left: Frank Mariani Jr., Mariani Landscape, Lake Bluff, Ill.; Brett Newendorp, Vermeer; Marty Grunder, The Grow Group and Grunder Landscaping Co.; Bill Roddy, publisher of *Landscape Management*.



3 Landscape Management goes to Washington We traveled to Washington, D.C., for the first National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) Workforce Summit and talked about creative solutions for finding labor with some long-time industry pros. From left: Shayne Newman, YardApes, New Milford, Conn.; Ken Taylor, John Deere; Merry Beth Hall, Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute; Ed Castro, Ed Castro Landscape, Roswell, Ga.; Ronald Sikkema, West Bay Landscape, Bradenton, Fla.



4 Ladies take the Hill At the NALP Workforce Summit, one of the main topics of conversation was diversity in the workplace. The female landscape industry members present gathered for a photo at the end of the event.



5 Pacific in the Southwest Two members of the crew from Oregon-based Pacific Landscape Management enjoy some time under the palm trees at the Aspire User Conference in Phoenix. Pictured are, from left, Corey Peterson, branch manager, Hillsboro; Adam Flint, branch manager, Parkrose.



6 Like father, like daughter Kevin Kehoe, founder and managing partner of Aspire Software and columnist for *LM*, and his daughter, Julia, who joined Aspire as business development representative.

7 The gang's all here Roddy, right center, poses with fellow members of Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment's (RISE) communications committee, at the group's meeting held in Atlanta.



PHOTOS: CLARA RICHTER (1,2,5,6); ABBY HART (3,4); BILL RODDY (7)



BOREALIS WALL / HAZELNUT BRANDY

BUILD TIME*: 1 HR / STAFF: 2 / TOTAL LABOR HOURS: 2 HRS



GRAPHIX WALL / GREYED NICKEL

BUILD TIME*: 2 HRS / STAFF: 1-2 / TOTAL LABOR HOURS: 2-4 HR



TRAVERTINE RAW WALL / IVORY

BUILD TIME*: 1 HR / STAFF: 1-2 / TOTAL LABOR HOURS: 1-2 HR
*EXCLUDING BASE CONSTRUCTION

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ROAD TRIP ROUNDUP

The *LM* staff hit the road in February, covering events in Phoenix, Washington, D.C., and more.

The first stop was the **Aspire User Conference**, held in Phoenix, Feb. 6-8. The inaugural event aimed to help Aspire clients better use the software and technology to run their businesses more efficiently. It did this through presentations from industry experts and group activities.

"I want clients to take personal responsibility for their system," said Kevin Kehoe, founder and managing partner of Aspire. "We can't handhold you every day. If you don't practice, it's like anything else. I want them engaged ... And to do that, you've got to make them feel confident."

The event drew close to 200 attendees, all of whom are Aspire users. Many of the companies attending had just begun using the software in the last couple of months, while others had been using it since it was launched five years ago.

No matter how long a company had been using the software, the goal of the event was simple: bring Aspire users together to talk with other clients, ask questions and hear from industry leaders on how they put technology to work in their companies.

LM also attended the first **National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) Workforce Summit**, held Feb. 12-13 in Washington, D.C. The event, sponsored by Caterpillar, brought together



Members of Lifescape Colorado's leadership team participate in a panel discussion to close out the tour of their facility during Grow! 2019.

120 landscape professionals from all over the country to discuss the industry's biggest challenge: labor.

"A large percentage of the country is looking for a family-sustaining job and a career path, and that's what you're offering," said keynote speaker, Nick Geale, chief of staff for the U.S. Department of Labor.

Sessions at the summit educated attendees about local workforce boards, the benefits of becoming a more diverse company, recruiting veterans and working with schools to host landscape industry career days. One of the major outcomes of NALP's efforts is the creation of a landscape management apprenticeship curriculum and program, which is registered with the U.S. Department of Labor. The new apprenticeship program aims to raise awareness of the industry and place it on par with other fields with apprenticeship programs, such as construction.

Missy Henriksen, NALP's vice president of public affairs, addressed the 71,000 full-time jobs in the industry that went unfilled in 2017.

"The industry must rally together — the problem is too great for even the biggest company in the industry to tackle alone," she said.

The summit closed with an open forum discussion on topics includ-

ing moving away from the H-2B visa program, retaining workers and unifying the industry's efforts to grow the workforce.

The last stop was Denver from Feb. 20-22 to attend **Grow!**, an annual event hosted by The Grow Group that aims to help landscape professionals grow their businesses.

This year, the roughly 350 attendees were treated to a tour of Lifescape Colorado, a landscape design, construction and maintenance company located just outside of downtown Denver.

Attendees explored Lifescape's unique facility — an old church — and heard from members of the firm's leadership team about their roles in the company and how they foster a healthy company culture.

Attendees also heard from speakers such as Marty Grunder, president and CEO of The Grow Group and Grunder Landscaping Co.; Jennifer Lemcke, COO of Weed Man USA; Frank Mariani, owner of Mariani Landscape; LeAnn Ostheimer, director of design and sales at Lifescape Colorado; and Eric Chester, a best-selling author and workplace researcher. *LM*'s own Bill Roddy also took a turn behind the mic to discuss marketing strategies.

Keeling named interim CEO of NALP following Hickman resignation



Carol Keeling

The National Association of Landscape Professionals' (NALP) board of directors named Carol Keeling interim CEO in February.

Keeling succeeds Sabeena Hickman, who served as CEO of the association for more than a decade before resigning last month to pursue other opportunities. Keeling also will continue to serve as vice president of finance and administration, a role she has held since she joined NALP in 2007.

"We are extremely fortunate to have someone with as much leadership and industry experience as Carol at the helm during this transition period," said Jeff Buhler, NALP president. "In her nearly 12 years with the association, Carol has skillfully and strategically overseen the financial, human resources and information technology areas of NALP. Our board has the utmost confidence in her abilities to keep NALP on track for the future and ensure a smooth transition of leadership while a thorough, national search for a permanent chief executive is conducted."



David J. Frank (right) with his son David R. Frank.

IN MEMORIAM: David J. Frank, CEO and chairman, David J. Frank Landscape Contracting

David J. Frank, founder, CEO and chairman of David J. Frank Landscape Contracting, died Feb. 9. He was 69.

A pioneer in the industry, Frank originated ideas such as in-house video training and marketing programs, proactive service strategies and safety initiatives. He was equally as passionate about his employees as he was about landscaping. He led the formation of the company's "Great Place to Work" program, which encourages professional development and positive recognition.

"My father's mission, to delight clients through great customer service, is strongly woven into our culture and will remain so moving forward," said David R. Frank.

David J. Frank Landscape Contracting, based in Germantown, Wis., is ranked No. 73 on the 2018 *LM150* list.

Acquisition action

- **The Toro Co.** entered into a definitive agreement to acquire privately held **Charles Machine Works** — the parent company of Ditch Witch and several other brands in the underground construction market — for \$700 million. The deal is anticipated to close before the end of Toro's fiscal 2019 third quarter.
- **Davey Tree** acquired **LMS**, a landscape firm in Houston. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.
- **Ewing Irrigation & Landscape Supply** merged with three **Kenney Outdoor Solutions** sprinkler locations, further extending Ewing's footprint in the Midwest. Terms

of the deal were not disclosed. Ewing will merge the Kenney Rochester Hills location into Sterling Heights, Mich., while maintaining Kenney's Grand Rapids, Mich., and Indianapolis locations.

- **Bartlett Tree Experts** completed eight acquisitions in the last six months: **Clean Cutt Tree Service** in Wilmington, Del.; **Pavey Tree** in Ontario, Canada; **Weise Choice Tree Services** in western Connecticut; **Connecticut Arborists** in Monroe, Conn.; **Tree Frog Tree Care** in Alberta, Canada; **Colorado Treescapes** in Littleton, Colo.; **C.L. Frank and Co.** in Northampton, Mass.; and **Mellinger Tree Service** in Santa Monica, Calif. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

BY THE NUMBERS:

\$1.5 million
The price of the crane (pictured) ordered and built to the specifications of Senna Tree Co. in Sun Valley, Calif.

SOURCE: SENNA TREE CO.





CHALLENGE CONQUERED

Four contractors overcome various installation challenges to reveal design masterpieces

BY DANIELLE PESTA | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Even with upfront challenges and unanticipated issues, landscape contractors create beautiful, functional spaces for their clients. The key in many of the projects is usability — creating unique landscapes that are practical and that will actually be used by the client at the end of installation.

We talked with four different landscape contractors about how they overcame their challenges to succeed in the end.

PHOTO: BOBCAT



D.C. ROOFTOP RENOVATION J.B. Kline Landscaping

Laytonsville, Md.

CUSTOMER MIX: 100% commercial
SERVICE MIX: 60% design/build,
40% maintenance

Set in the heart of Washington, D.C., Terrell Place is a historic building right across from Capital One Arena, home of the NBA's Washington Wizards.

J.B. Kline Landscaping took on the challenge of renovating the building's rooftop, which covered the eighth and ninth floors. The crews installed the rooftop's pedestal pavers, landscaping and the intensive green roof design.

Pedestal pavers are typically installed in on-structure situations like above a parking garage or, in this case, across 21,000 square feet of rooftop.

"The roof membrane, drainage and all of that remain intact, and the pave deck is suspended up above it

all," says Nathan Iager, construction division manager for J.B. Kline. "In this particular scenario, the entirety of the eighth and ninth floors got custom pedestal pavers with four uniquely different colors and finishes creating a pattern with an intricate design."

The pavers, by Nitterhouse Masonry Products in Pennsylvania, had to be craned onto the roof. Iager says that the pave deck was one of the first things that had to be completed so other trades could move in to install other aspects of the rooftop renovation.

Only able to crane materials on weekends due to Washington's crane permits, Iager said material logistics were a significant challenge, since his team only had four days of crane use.

"In one case, we had planned two different crane days to reach the corner of a building, but there was an issue with receiving the permit for the second day," he says.

The team had to combine two scheduled cranes into one Saturday and make adjustments accordingly.

"It was mid-November, and we had a snowstorm. But it went off flawlessly and was a big success," he says. "I think we had about 25 to 30 employees out there to get all the soil on the roof. It worked out to be about 75 picks per crane. That's something to be proud of."

In that single Saturday, J.B. Kline brought up more than 120 cubic yards of soil, several pallets of plant materials and 40 tons of Mexican beach pebbles and stone.

"When you have a crane day, you really have to maximize the use of the crane," Iager says. "You have to be able to bring up all your material in a single crane day even though you might be inconveniencing other trades. You have to coordinate and ask: 'If we put these pallets here, are they going to be in your way?'"

Continued on page 14

"THANK YOU FOR SAVING MY (INSERT TREE)."

Azalea

Arborvitae

Euonymus

Yew

Bittersweet

Magnolia

Pachysandra

Maple

Ash

Oak

Dogwood

Crape Myrtle

Lilac

Spruce

Maple

Hemlock

Willow

Peach

Elm

Apple



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COVER STORY



Continued from page 13

Since there were four types of pavers, the crews and crane operators needed to know exactly where to put every pallet of pavers.

"We had a map so pavers were distributed, so we weren't trying to move pavers across the roof," he says. "We had to think about roof loading, because each pallet of pavers was roughly 2,400 pounds. The roof loading plan and crane plan needed to be provided to the structural engineer for review and approval beforehand."

J.B. Kline installed the paving system and the green roof.

"This green roof is unique in that it's not just your typical sedum plantings," he says. "This was a very intensive system with a unique grading plan where the soil actually increased in depth — up to 24 inches deep in some spots."

The finished project won the firm a 2018 Gold Award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' (NALP) Awards of Excellence program.

Iager says that even with delays, the client was adamant about hitting the deadline.

"The soil was craned right at the end of the project, which is why we had to run both cranes, because the client had a hard completion deadline," he says. "One thing about landscaping — especially in commercial projects — we're pretty much always the last crew on the job. So, a lot of times, our preferred duration can get condensed."

HILLSIDE RETAINING WALLS LandPatterns

Dallas

CUSTOMER MIX: 70% residential, 30% commercial
SERVICE MIX: 80% design/build, 15% maintenance, 5% enhancements/irrigation

For this home in Fort Worth, Texas, an extensive landscape was mapped out and created on a hillside. LandPatterns tackled the extreme elevation change with a multilevel backyard and massive retaining walls.



RAISE THE ROOF

A majority of the materials for the renovation, including soil and pedestal pavers, were brought up via cranes.

Marc Funderburk, president of LandPatterns, says continuous communication during the project was essential.

"Our firm was the lead design firm and tasked with orchestrating all allied trades to complete the landscape," he says.

The project was originally scheduled to be completed in late April but was finished in early October, partly due to unusual weather for the area.

"The project began during one of the wettest and iciest winters we have ever experienced in the Dallas-Fort Worth area," Funderburk says.

Fortunately, the client was familiar with the construction process and was understanding about the schedule delays.

"Daily communication with the client and the subcontractors was essential to managing their expectations," he says.

The property's new home was built on a steeply sloping site with more than 60 feet of vertical change. This required an extensive amount of fill to create a suitable building pad, which intensified the backyard's hillside.

LandPatterns took on the challenge of creating a usable backyard, including a patio, pool and pond. The team's efforts won the company a 2018 Gold Award from NALP.

The fill from building the house was unstable and required soil stabilization, Funderburk says. This reinforcement was important for a tiered pool in the backyard.

The use of retaining walls helped ensure that all portions of the site could be accessed and used.

"All stone gravity walls were on concrete footings with 24-inch diameter piers throughout," he says.

The team selected drought-tolerant plant materials for the project.

"A natural pond was built on the low end of the site to manage runoff and allow the homeowner to use on-site water for irrigation," he says.

Soil slippage, ground water seams and dewatering of piers also proved to be a major issue with the project and caused delays, according to Funderburk.

Continued on page 17

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Continued from page 15

For the project's pavers, LandPatterns brought in more fill and set the Florida-imported pavers on a polymeric sand base with grout.

"All steps were cut Lueders limestone to match the pool coping and had a chipped face," he says.

THREE-PHASE LAKESIDE HOME Southern Landscape Group

Evinston, Va.

CUSTOMER MIX: 70% residential, 30% commercial

SERVICE MIX: 75% design/build, 25% maintenance

Every project has challenges, but a lakeside property can bring both beautiful views and shoreline complications.

Drainage was a main concern for this renovation because the three-acre property sloped directly toward

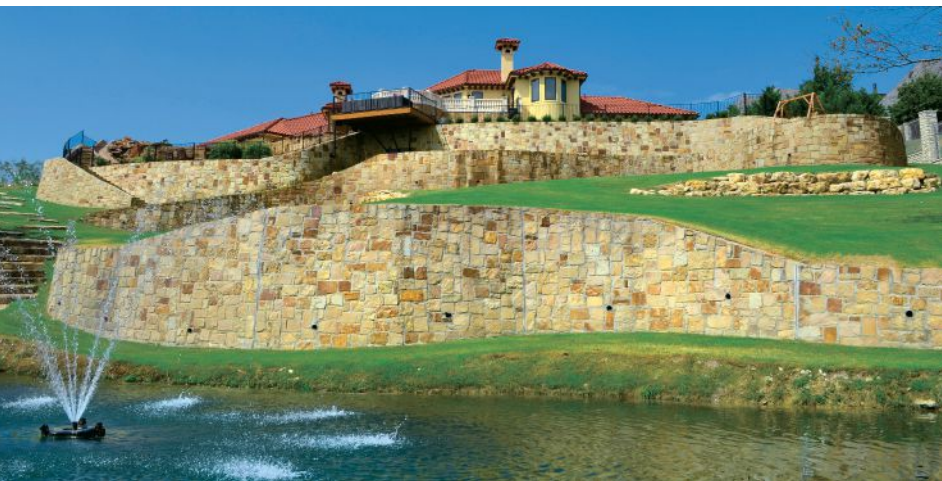
the lakeshore. Southern Landscape Group tackled the project in three phases to accommodate the main house, a guest house and a combined movie theater/antique car garage.

The drainage solution required extensive drains, culverts and piping to reroute and control water runoff. More than a mile of underground pipes helped Southern Landscape Group meet appropriate regulations and ensure protection of the lake, which is maintained by a local power company for electrical production.

Andy White, director of preconstruction at Southern Landscape Group, says thorough site analysis and preplanning were extremely important to overcome the steep slopes. "Once work began, weather was the biggest factor in tackling the steep slopes," he says. "Proper equipment selection was key for the execution of these areas."

The elevation changes required extensive grading and a retaining

Continued on page 18



MEGA WALL
Multiple levels were created on the hillside using retaining walls with a tiered pool up near the house.



PHOTOS: LAND PATTERNS

KAWASAKI ENGINES SALUTE TO HEROES

POWER OF ONE

*Stacey Manny,
Account
manager,
Belknap
Landscaping Co.,
Gilford, N.H.*

Why and when did you first get involved in public service?

It has always been a dream of mine to contribute to the community in some greater way. However, with three young kids and no free time, it wasn't a possibility for a while. After moving to New Hampshire, I was presented with the opportunity to be in the fire service. In October 2016, I officially began my journey and have met some wonderful people I have come to think of as family. I received my Level One certification on December 8, 2017. My next steps are to get my Level Two certification and my Commercial Driver's License, which will allow me to drive the apparatus.



Who are your mentors?

I have all of the respect in the world for my fire chief and his wife. He runs the fire side of operations, and she runs the medical side. It's a small town, and they've been through a lot — but they're still at it and doing incredible work. I'm learning so much from them.

Who supports you so you can commit to public service?

Belknap has been supportive from the start. I was open with my intentions when they hired me, and they have helped make my service possible by allowing me to leave work early on the days I needed to complete my training.

Who are your heroes?

My kids. We have endured a lot together, but they are resilient. I'm amazed by them. They have been incredibly supportive of my moving to New Hampshire and taking on new roles in the landscape industry and the fire service.

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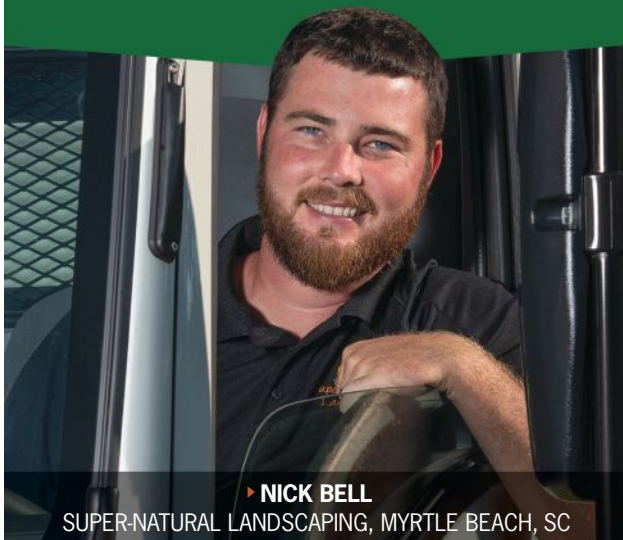
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Continued from page 18

Preplanning and design played a major role in preparing material types for this project, according to White. The main-level deck off the house uses Trex decking, and the patio areas features Techo-Bloc pavers that transition from grays and blacks to more earthy colors.

"With such a large property and multiple phases of construction, it was important to choose materials and colors that blended throughout," he says.

Winning a 2018 Gold Award from NALP, the project boasts an infinity edge pool, pizza oven, covered porch, wood-burning pit and a cornhole lawn area — all for the clients to entertain guests. Along with entertainment, maintaining accessibility throughout the property remained key. The team selected Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting to achieve this goal.

The low-voltage lighting is seen throughout the property and highlights a late-model truck that's partially sunken into the ground in the southwestern-themed garden near the movie theater/garage.

MEETING DEADLINE AT A BALTIMORE MALL Live Green Landscape Associates

Reisterstown, Md.

CUSTOMER MIX: 85% commercial, 15% residential

SERVICE MIX: 85% design/build, 10% irrigation, 5% snow removal

A renovation at an open-air mall outside of Baltimore came with challenges for Live Green Landscape Associates. The central area was positioned between restaurants, shops and a movie theater, which all remained open for business during renovation.

Michael Martin, president of Live Green, says some of the challenges were safety, logistics, traffic, material transport, working with other trades, weather, location access and staying on schedule to meet the client's deadline.

Live Green focused on installing only part of the extensive renovation while working alongside other trades and contractors. Live Green won a 2018 Silver Award from NALP for the completed project.

Scheduled for an unveiling in the spring, the bulk of work on the project took place during the winter. "We were challenged with freezing and thawing temperatures, which affect when you're able to lay brick pavers," Martin says.

Though paver installation was on a tight and weather-dependent schedule, there was no sympathy from local retailers. "Concrete sidewalks were being torn out in front of stores, and brick pavers had to be put back in 24 hours or less," Martin says. "The stores weren't interested in losing customers just because new brick pavers were being installed in front of their store."

Continued on page 22

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PAVING THE PLAZA

The plaza renovation took place while vehicle and pedestrian traffic at the mall continued, so safety was always a top priority.



“Skid-steer loaders and the attachments they use are able to access the confined work areas where hardscapes are installed, and mechanize tasks that would otherwise be performed by hand, creating better efficiency.” —**JASON BOERGER**, marketing manager, Bobcat

Continued from page 20

With the cold weather, Martin says the crews had to watch temperatures closely. The pavers were set on a sand setting bed, but the company stored the sand in dump trucks indoors. “If we saw a lot of freezing temperatures, we would bring the sand back and

keep it inside,” he says. “We would only spread as much sand for as many pavers as we could lay that day.”

The pavers were clay brick from The Belden Brick Company. They were cut with a wire, so each one’s a little different, Martin says. They can also get out of line quickly and create gaps.

Martin says the Live Green crews would move pallets of pavers with Bobcat skid-steers and track loaders to different areas for installation in the road and alongside the roads once another company finished pouring concrete curbs.

Along with moving pavers, Martin says crews used a Bobcat MT52 with a trencher attachment to install the Rain Bird irrigation system.

Part of Live Green’s landscape installation included tree plantings. But the trees were so large — 10,000 pounds — that they were brought in on tractor trailers from Halka Nurseries in New Jersey, which took a lot of coordination. “We spent a lot of time communicating and talking about what we were doing, when we were doing it and making sure when we said we were going to do it, we did it,” Martin says.

Martin and his team had to shut down the whole road and bring in a crane for two days to place the trees. “I can remember one day when it was snowing — it wasn’t heavy enough for plows yet, but it was snowing, and we were craning trees in the snow,” Martin says. “People said we were crazy.” 📸

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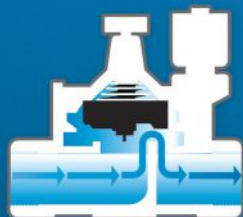
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WEED AVENGERS

Defeat dallisgrass

A grassy weed that produces many seeds and grows in thick, unsightly clumps in turf, dallisgrass can be tricky to deal with in the warmer months. Read on for ways to spot and eradicate this turfgrass problem.

BY ABBY HART | LM SENIOR EDITOR

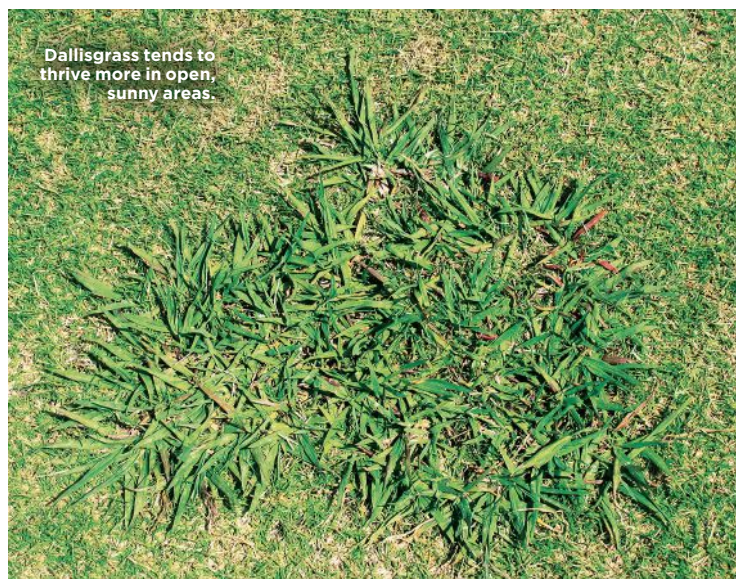
DALLISGRASS

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

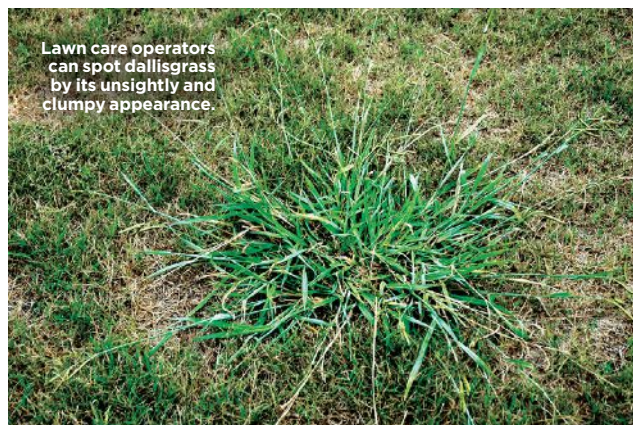
- Perennial, warm-season, grassy weed;
- Grows in thick clumps;
- Tends to grow more aggressively in open, sunny areas;
- Wide leaf blade measuring ¼- to a ½-inch wide that can have a “dull” green appearance;
- Very tall membranous ligule (where the leaf blade meets the sheath);
- Most visible during summer when it’s forming seedheads, which can grow a foot or more above the turf canopy;
- Features large spikelets that protrude from the main branch and stalk, each of which contains three rows of seeds that can turn dark in color;
- Unique seedheads that branch perpendicularly from the stalk;
- Contains large underground rhizomes that store carbohydrates for overwintering — this attribute can make control difficult because new leaves easily grow back from the rhizomes; and
- Can tolerate frequent low mowing.

COMBAT STRATEGY


- Keep your turfgrass healthy and competitive through proper cultural practices such as mowing, fertilization, irrigation and cultivation;
- Selective herbicide options are very limited and can take multiple years to achieve full control;
- Apply two applications in fall and one in spring — and avoid summer herbicide applications. Always follow directions on the herbicide label;
- In warm-season turfgrasses, apply a postemergent with the active ingredients trifloxysulfuron-sodium or pinoxaden;
- In cool-season turfgrasses and zoysiagrass, postemergent products containing fluazifop work best;
- Refer to the University of Tennessee Turfgrass Weeds program website (TennesseeTurfgrassWeeds.org) for information on



Dallisgrass tends to thrive more in open, sunny areas.



Lawn care operators can spot dallisgrass by its unsightly and clumpy appearance.

- growing and cooling degree days. These details will aid in timing applications for dallisgrass control; and
- No cases of resistance have been reported, but be sure to properly maintain turfgrass through cultural practices and do not rely on a single herbicide mode of action. 

SOURCES: Lane Tredway, Ph.D., technical services manager, Syngenta; Eric Reasor, Ph.D., Southeast research scientist, PBI-Gordon; Bayer Green Solutions Team

PHOTOS: PBI-GORDON



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Fighting fire ants

These mound-creating, stinging crawlers can pose a problem for lawns in the South and Southeast. A lawn care operator and a researcher offer their recommendations for getting these insects under control. **BY ABBY HART | LM SENIOR EDITOR**

TRAVELING PEST
Broadcast applications can help control fire ant infestations best, as the ants have been known to travel up to 50 feet from the mound.

“Fire ants are pretty simple things; they tear you up, and you have to suppress them,” says Steve Alicky, the integrated pest management (IPM) manager for West Bay Landscape in Bradenton, Fla. “There’s not too many properties down here that don’t have them.”

Lawn care technicians from Oklahoma to Virginia and southward may encounter fire ants. Within that region, fire ants are one of the few ant species that make a pretty substantial mound above ground, explains Michael Merchant, Ph.D., professor and extension urban entomologist at Texas A&M University.



Michael Merchant

They are reddish brown, do not have spines along the back and have two visible nodes between the thorax and abdomen. Unlike other types of ants, worker ants vary in size.

Fire ants are often drawn to warmth, so they can be found along sidewalks and next to electrical transformer boxes on slabs on the ground, Merchant says.

He recommends broadcast applications of fire ant bait or insecticide as the best control strategy. Mound-by-mound treatments of fire ants are inefficient and expensive because ants can simply create new mounds a short distance away, according to Merchant.

Fast-acting fire ant bait methods may take from one to two days to

approximately a week to work. They include products with the active ingredients hydramethylnon or indoxacarb. Slower-acting products include pyriproxyfen or methoprene, and though they may take longer to activate, they can provide season-long coverage.

“The larger the size of the area you treat, the less frequently you have to treat,” Merchant says. “Fire ants typically recolonize an area from the edges. If you’re treating a small yard, it may have to be treated two or three times a summer.”

As mentioned, fire ants are attracted to warmth, so electrical equipment, irrigation systems and transformer boxes are especially susceptible to fire ant infestation, and lawn care operators should take care to treat these areas.

Granular insecticides are a good option for these areas. Products with active ingredients such as fipronil and bifenthrin treat a thin layer of soil, and as fire ants build their mounds, they come in contact with the insecticide. The product can typically offer a year of protection.

“Using these products in a band around a potentially sensitive area, such as a school building, is a good idea,” Merchant says. He recommends using bait products in the turf areas outside the treated zone for additional coverage.

CONTROLLING CRITTERS IN THE FIELD

West Bay Landscape’s typical fire ant treatment is a broadcast application of a bait product. “If you’re just doing

a little spot here or there, you always have the opportunity for the fire ants to pop in an area that’s not treated,” Alicky says.

The company uses a variety of chemical applications, including Award, Extinguish and Amdro on their properties. Alicky explains that though many products have worked well for controlling fire ants in the past, he switches products when it comes down to price of the chemical.



Steve Alicky

West Bay measures the property and quotes a price for spray applications. They typically recommend clients have four applications of an ant bait, administered on a quarterly basis.

“If it’s a bad rainy season and if (ant mounds) start coming back up, we go out and we treat the mounds and we do that at no cost to the client,” Alicky explains.

West Bay Landscape informs its customers of the fire ant control applications and what to expect, based on the education gained through agriculture and pest management classes.

Some of this information can show just how persistent these insects can be.

“A single fire ant foraging for food at dusk can actually go 40 to 50 feet away from the mound,” Alicky says. “That’s a long way for a little guy.”



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Just in time, Mesotrione

A new fertilizer combination product — including the herbicide Mesotrione — helps LCOs overcome labor limitations when seeding

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Though the calendar in Anthony Goldsby's Kansas City, Mo., office reads March 1, the weather outside—subzero temperatures with snow on the way—sure didn't make it feel like March.

"From a business perspective, you just miss out on spring," Goldsby says. "Last year's weather was already bad enough. And now, it's not looking like it's going to warm up significantly in the next 30 days. It's not pleasurable at all."

Tony Goldsby, Ph.D., is a research agronomist for The Andersons. Last year's truncated spring season in many parts of the country made work challenging not just for LCOs but also for companies like The Andersons that sell to lawn care companies.

Thankfully, combination products were designed for instances like this, helping LCOs who find themselves short on labor and now even shorter on time.

"If an LCO is not using a combination product, that LCO is going to have to go out more often and put down a straight NPK fertilizer, then go back and do a preemergent application," Goldsby says. "By impregnating that fer-

tilizer with a herbicide, you are essentially combining those steps. It makes it easier, and you can get more yards done."

Jeremy Bigler, professional landscape channel manager for Lebanon

Turf, echoes those comments.

"The big reason for (combination products) is time savings," he says. "Not only are you reducing your labor, but you're also doing two or three applications in one. With the restrictions of H-2B visas

and finding good employees, you're really limited in the time

you have during the season. With these products, you're able to maintain your book of business or even grow it with the same number of man-hours."

A relatively new development in combination products that has both Bigler and Goldsby excited is the inclusion of Mesotrione in fertilizers to prevent weeds in newly seeded grass. With Tupersan (active ingredient siduron) losing its Environmental Protection Agency registration, Mesotrione—and the robust list of weeds it controls—has come around just in time.

"Our starter fertilizer with Mesotrione allows the grass to germinate but knocks out any broadleaf weeds," Bigler says. "It had been in development for a couple years and just fully launched last year. The timing was just coincidentally right with siduron going away. The interesting thing is siduron had a



⬆️ TIME CRUNCH
When spring weather arrives later, lawn care operators have less time to complete lawn care services.


much more narrow list of weeds it would control. (Mesotrione) has a nice list of about

33 weeds that it controls, so this has been a really strong product for us."

Goldsby again points to the calendar when speaking of the benefits of Mesotrione.

"Ideally, from an agronomics perspective, we recommend you do your seeding in the fall," he says. "But if that's not possible, our 21-22-4 with Mesotrione is just a great product because you can put it down at the same time as you're putting down your seed in the springtime or the summertime. You're going to kill all those broadleaf weeds, and you're going to have your starter fertilizer all in one product. This is a prime example of when you'd want to use a combination product."

Goldsby, who was a researcher at Kansas State University early in his career, says it has been an exciting time in the industry for him and his colleagues, keeping up with advancements in fertilizers as they come out of development and become available to customers.

"In some regards, I've always done a lot of work with fertilizers," he says. "It's exciting to see the sustainability aspect of these products—we're always trying to use less fertilizer while also increasing the productivity of the end user. We want to maximize the products, and the biggest thing from an end-user standpoint, it just makes things a little more simple." 



Anthony Goldsby



Jeremy Bigler



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DID YOU KNOW

Know before you go

Two experts give their best tips for getting the most out of sprayers and spreaders.

BY ABBY HART | LM SENIOR EDITOR

A STEADY HAND

It's important to maintain a consistent pace throughout the day when using spreading and spraying equipment.

1 BE CONSISTENT.

Common mistakes that lawn care operators (LCOs) make are they don't stay consistent with the spray pattern and they don't cut in edges near sidewalks and driveways, says Teddy

Mathis, sales manager for Graham Spray Equipment, a manufacturer of spray rigs.

Mathis knows from experience — prior to joining Graham Spray Equipment, he owned a lawn care company in the metro Atlanta area.

Areas near sidewalks and driveways are often where a weed breakout might occur, he mentions. "You have to apply a little extra product there, and (applicators) typically do not," he says.

Tom Hackworth, category manager of equipment and safety for SiteOne Landscape Supply, says that aside from

a consistent spray pattern, maintaining a consistent speed is critical.

"It's very easy to kick up the speed of a ride-on unit when you are on a flat, wide open property," he says. "This affects the application rates in that you would be underapplying product (at a higher speed)."

Hackworth says operators using tank sprayers have to ensure they are applying at the same speed all day and at the same speed they calibrated their sprayer.

He warns that a majority of operators tend to apply product at a much slower pace towards the end of the day, which results in overapplying product.

2 CALIBRATING IS KEY.

Another common equipment error is not calibrating equipment enough.

"Even the best systems will not stay perfectly calibrated, and you should calibrate that equipment at least once a week, and we recommend doing it every morning before you leave for a job," Mathis says.

"Whether it's a tank sprayer, push spreader or ride-on spreader-sprayer, they do not take too long to calibrate," Hackworth says. "What many (LCOs) don't realize is the lack of proper calibration directly affects their bottom line — it's very easy to over- or underapply product by 15 to 20 percent."

He explains that it takes merely a quarter of a gallon or one pound of product per 1,000 square feet to be off by this much.

Overapplying can affect a company's bottom line through excess product costs. Underapplying can result in having to retreat a property, which can lead to additional labor costs and loss of income.

3 TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE DOWNTIME.

According to Mathis, one of the most expensive things in the lawn care business is downtime, so maintaining the equipment to manufacturer specifications is vital.

Rinse corrosive chemicals off of equipment, change the oil in engines,

Continued on page 32



Teddy Mathis



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DID YOU KNOW

Continued from page 30

replace the packing or diaphragms in the sprayer and drain the gas tank or include a fuel additive to prevent carburetor issues due to ethanol in the fuel — these tasks are essential to ensure spreader-sprayers stay in top condition.

Hackworth says the most common issue SiteOne typically encounters in the spring is a broken sprayer pump due to improper winterization. Over winter, products left in the pump freeze, expand and break the pump. Winterizing the pump and hoses with an RV antifreeze is quick, easy and inexpensive, says Hackworth, noting that a few hours spent maintaining equipment in the winter means less chance of downtime in the spring once an LCO starts production.

SiteOne also witnesses pumps breaking in the early spring. Hackworth says


this situation happens when temperatures outside are slightly above freezing and a technician is driving from one location to another, and the windchill drops the temperature below freezing, potentially causing the pump to break. He recommends technicians simply run the sprayer/pump while traveling between locations to prevent pump breakage.

4 SAFETY FIRST.

The average lawn care technician walks 6.5 miles a day, Mathis estimates,

so ride-on spreader-sprayers are a valuable innovation to the industry. He cautions that all operators be aware of the capabilities of their ride-on equipment.

“Depending on what type of spreader-sprayer you have, there are inclines they can operate safely on,” he says. “A lot of guys think that they are all about the same, but they are not.”

He explains that top-heavy equipment is much better suited to higher-acreage, low-incline jobs, while others are made with lower centers of gravity and can handle more significant slopes. 

RIDE SAFELY

Ride-on spreader-sprayer operators should be aware of each machine's capabilities to avoid injury.



PHOTO: SITEONE LANDSCAPE SUPPLY



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<p>STROBE® PRO Broad Spectrum Fungicide</p> <p>Active ingredients: azoxystrobin, propiconazole URL: ControlSolutionsInc.com/Quali-Pro</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be applied as a foliar spray in alternating spray programs or in tank mixes with other registered turf protection products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snow mold appears in spring after the snow has melted, as matted, circular patches that vary in size from inches to feet in diameter and that are either grayish-white or pinkish-white in color. Mow turf before entering winter and remove leaves. Any way you can keep the turf dry will help control snow mold. 	 <p>Snow mold</p>
<p>SEGWAY FUNGICIDE SC</p> <p>Active ingredient: cyazofamid URL: PBIGordonTurf.com</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stops spores from germinating, preventively inhibiting all stages of Pythium fungal development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce prolonged periods of leaf wetness to minimize disease outbreaks and avoid excessive amounts of nitrogen fertilization. Don't apply more than two consecutive applications of a fungicide before switching to an alternate FRAC group fungicide. 	 <p>Pythium blight</p>
<p>BAYER Armada® 50 WDG</p> <p>Active ingredients: trifloxystrobin, triadimefon URL: EnvironmentalScience.Bayer.us</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quick-dissolving granules provide easy measurement for efficient loading of both backpack and large tank applicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the fungus is active and leaf surfaces remain wet, a fine, white, cobwebby mycelium covers diseased patches during early morning hours. Maintain adequate nitrogen when dollar spot is active and aerify to reduce compaction and thatch. 	 <p>Dollar spot</p>
<p>Tourney® FUNGICIDE</p> <p>Active ingredient: metconazole URL: Nufarm.com</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low use rates offer less environmental load; controls a broad spectrum of diseases, including fairy ring, summer patch and brown patch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The disease initially appears as small, circular, slow-growing or thin/wilted areas of turf; later it appears as enlarged straw-colored patches up to 3 feet in diameter. Apply fungicide to control summer patch when soil temperatures reach 65-70 degrees F. 	 <p>Summer patch</p>

PHOTOS: ISTOCK/CREATIVEPHOTOGRAPHY (SNOW MOLD); BRIAN AYNARDI (PYTHIUM BLIGHT); COURTESY OF BAYER (DOLLAR SPOT); MARY ANN HANSEN, VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY (SUMMER PATCH)

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Make it simple.

MAINTENANCE SHOP

Keep on trucking

How two lawn care operators maintain their fleets

BY ABBY HART | LM SENIOR EDITOR



INSPECT TO PROTECT

It's important to perform regular maintenance checks to keep trucks in tiptop shape.

Trucks are a major expense for lawn care operators, and many begin each day ensuring their investments are well cared for.

Jason Zielesch, production manager for Lush Lawn in Grand Blanc, Mich., says before technicians leave the lot, the company requires they complete what it calls a “three-minute 360.”

The three-minute 360 is a full inspection of the truck to check fluids, tires and general maintenance items. Technicians handle any minor maintenance in the shop before they head off for the day. The inspection details are kept in an



Jason Zielesch

Excel checklist and reviewed regularly.

Lush Lawn is an \$8 million company with five locations in southeast Michigan. It provides 70 percent lawn care and 30 percent tree care to a 90 percent residential customer base, and counts 40 trucks in service across all five branches — Ford, Chevy and GMC 3/4- and one-ton pickup trucks as well as RAM ProMaster 3500 vans.

Upfittings and equipment, including spray rigs, are checked and maintained just as often as the trucks, Zielesch says.

The crew checks all hoses and straps for fraying or breaks and the fluids and oils for any motors or pumps on the equipment. Spray tips are checked for clogs and proper flow.

Aside from the daily maintenance check, the company performs routine maintenance every 3,000 miles.

For Lush Lawn's more extensive truck repairs, the company negotiated an agreement with a national auto shop chain, and all Lush Lawn branches receive the same pricing on repairs and maintenance at each auto shop location.

Even with regular maintenance, lawn care trucks have to be retired at some point. Erik Hutson, branch manager of Lush Lawn's Grand Blanc location, says vehicles are often phased out around the 10-year mark. After a review of the truck's maintenance logs, which include tracking the price of ongoing repairs, the company analyzes whether it makes more sense to purchase a new truck.

PROTECTING THE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

Mark Utendorf, owner of Emerald Lawn Care, says his trucks undergo a biweekly inspection that includes a visual check of the tires, oil level, brake lights, turn signals, undercarriage, warning lights and hitch and rider racks.

Emerald Lawn Care is based in Rolling Meadows, Ill., and primarily provides lawn care services with some perimeter pest and tree and shrub care for a 99 percent residential clientele. The company has 13 employees and runs eight trucks — Chevy 2500s, Chevy 3500s and Ford 250s — which range in year from a 1999 model to a new 2018.

A little more than two years ago, Emerald Lawn Care moved next door to an auto shop, which it uses for all truck

EXPERT TIP:

“Time tends to be more of prevalence than mileage with land care (vehicles) because of the lower mileage on the vehicles. That’s the No. 1 thing people overlook in the lawn care industry ... we recommend servicing trucks at the one-year mark.”

— BRIAN TABEL, executive director of marketing, Isuzu

repairs the firm can't handle in-house.


As for the exterior of the truck fleet, Emerald Lawn Care's pickup trucks feature a spreader rack on the front, so technicians can easily move a push spreader on and off the vehicle without having to store them in the back of a truck and maneuver them around the Permagreen equipment. This setup does have some drawbacks, however.

With a spreader rack on the front, fertilizer prills may blow out of the hopper and end up wedged in the trucks' radiators, he says. His crews back flush any fertilizer out of the radiators with a regular hose — not a power washer.

Loose fertilizer is not permitted anywhere in trucks, and if there is a fertilizer spill, the truck is emptied, blown off and washed immediately.

Emerald Lawn Care also applies Boeshield, a specialty lubricant created by aerospace builder The Boeing Co., to trucks to offer another layer of protection.

“We put it on all the body panels to offset any potential damage from fertilizer,” Utendorf says. “And if we think that it needs it, we'll undercoat trucks.”



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Frank Mariani, Jr.
West Branch Manager, Mariani Landscape
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THE BIG ONE

No small feat

LOCATION Austin, Texas

COMPANY Native Land Design

DETAILS With 800 luxury residential units, 120 stand-alone landscape containers, 100 high-end retail stores and two acres of turf, The Domain poses several maintenance challenges.

Based in Cedar Park, Texas, Native Land Design is up to the task and has been since it started maintaining the popular retail center and “hangout” space in June 2008.

A three-man crew performs work on the site’s turf and beds before many venues open at 10 a.m. each weekday. The crew uses a 48-inch Walker mower, 60-inch Scag mower, a Hurricane blower and various pieces of two-cycle equipment at the site.

The team rotates the plantings in the site’s containers six times a year. The containers feature a variety of perennials and shrubs and are irrigated using a water trailer and porter.

Because the area is constantly under the public eye, the Native team also must be prepared to react to damage caused by ongoing construction projects and vehicular traffic.

“When this happens, our irrigation and enhancements teams are mobilized to ... ensure that any damages are addressed the same day,” says Robbie Huang, director of operations.

On the lookout for potential safety hazards, Native Land Design quickly repairs cracks in the pavement and ensures trees and shrubs don’t hang over walkways or block pathways.

The work performed by Native Land Design helps keep the parklike atmosphere intact for shoppers, diners and residents alike.

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





Captions | 1. A large artificial lawn area, also known as “The Lawn,” where children can play. This area is also where live music acts perform weekly. With residential units on the second and fourth floors, the Native Land Design team is unable to use motorized equipment prior to 7 a.m. due to the city’s noise ordinance. Retail stores open at 10 a.m., so the team has a tight window to get all of the maintenance done on the areas along storefronts.

2. Some of the many planters without irrigation or drainage that Native Land Design maintains. The porter hand waters more than 100 pots throughout the property several times each week. The property manager didn’t want drain holes in the pots to prevent staining on the sidewalk, so after rain events, the team pumps excess water out of the pots. The company installed a system in each pot that allows the team to insert a hand pump at the bottom of each one in order to remove all excess water, not just the surface water.

3. Focal bed at the center of the mall. With Starbucks, Apple and a park area here, this is the hub of The Domain, with many shoppers stopping to take a break and enjoy the landscape. The crews and porter keep the plant material separated and the sagos trimmed to allow pedestrians to see and be seen by vehicular traffic.

4. Large Domain sign and lush landscaping, welcoming patrons to the lawn area, where live music is performed and where children can play.

5. A crosswalk located on the main corridor with some local artwork featured in the landscape bed.

6. Large heritage oak trees provide shade at Century Oaks park at The Domain, where shoppers can relax and let children play. The crews have to continuously pick up trash and debris here and replace gravel and stones that children displace while playing games.

EXPERTS' TIPS

Walk-behind mowers



JOHN DEERE

Carl Agee

Product marketing manager

DEERE.COM

DO ensure the mower is equipped with a striping kit and that it provides smooth steering, allowing the operator to maintain straight lines. **DO** keep cut widths consistent on each pass and keep in mind that varying the applied pressure will change the contrast of the stripe. This is important to make sure the operator is creating a uniform pattern. **DON'T** forget to consider elements such as the type of grass, turf health, height of cut, positioning of the sun throughout day and shady locations, as these will all factor in to the final striping appearance.



KUBOTA

Tom Vachal

Kubota senior turf product manager

KUBOTAUSA.COM

DO use a striping kit consisting of either a roller behind the deck or a striping wiper installed on the deck. Both are intended to lay the grass down in the mowed direction. **DO** make sure grass is laying down in the intended direction.

DON'T forget, it may also help to set the rear of the cutting deck slightly lower than the front of the cutting deck.

This will help ensure that the grass is laying in the same direction and enhance the striped appearance left behind by a walk-behind mower.

CHALLENGE

Striping using a walk-behind



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International sales manager,

Spider remote-controlled mowers

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DO ensure the walk-behind mower has a roller. Striping can be achieved with a reel mower, but also with a rotary, as long as it has a roller. **DO** bend the grass over in one direction on the first pass. On the return pass, the grass is pushed over in the opposite direction. The striping effect is caused by the light shining off the grass blade as the roller pushes the grass over in the direction of cutting. **DON'T** forget to properly maintain the roller. The quality of the sward and the sharpness of the blade have a bearing on the appearance of the stripe. A well-maintained roller mower on a fine turf area will always provide the best visual effect.



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HONDA

EXPERTS' TIPS

Walk-behind mowers



FERRIS

Joe Ferris

*Product manager,
commercial turf*

FERRISMOWERS.COM

DO ensure that grass is healthy. We recommend keeping grass as tall as possible, as it's much healthier that way. Grass creates its own nutrients through photosynthesis, so the longer the grass blade, the more surface area it has to capture the energy it needs. **DO** consider double cutting the grass. Cut the grass at a high cut height, and then mow it again in the same path and direction, but this time at a lower cut height. **DON'T** forget to mow in the same path and same direction each time.

CHALLENGE

Striping using a walk-behind



GREENWORKS

Chad Bishop

*North America product
development manager*

GREENWORKSTOOLS.COM

DO purchase a striping kit that easily attaches to a walk-behind mower. Striping kits can be purchased online or even from big box retailers. The kit can be used with or without a bag attached. **DO** set the walk-behind mower to the highest setting and mow in a straight line. **DON'T** forget to lift the mower deck when turning at the end of each row. Lower the deck as you start mowing in the opposite direction from the previous line.

“Don’t forget to consider elements such as type of grass, turf health, height of cut, positioning of the sun throughout the day and shady locations ...”



PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/CJP



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REV YOUR ENGINES

Fuel for thought

A look at the fuel options available for handheld equipment **BY SARAH WEBB | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

Gasoline has served as the go-to fuel option for many years when it comes to handheld equipment.

However, the recent rise of battery-powered equipment — and subsequent use of propane-powered generators to recharge that equipment — has stoked the number of choices landscape contractors have at their fingertips.

GAS 'EM UP

While gasoline-powered equipment no longer represents a monopoly, it's important to note that it's still the prevalent option for landscape pros, according to Doug Hartley, application engineering manager for the Honda Engine Group.

"Gas-powered equipment is what this industry's been used to for many years," adds Mike Poluka, product manager at Stihl. "And, since they've been using it, they're knowledgeable on how to repair the equipment."

He adds that gas-powered equipment typically boasts a strong power-to-weight ratio and that contractors don't need to worry about constantly recharging the equipment.

On the other hand, Poluka says those benefits also come with higher noise and emission levels.

For contractors who decide to use gas to power their equipment, Hartley suggests making sure a clean air filter and air cover cleaner are installed. It's also important to use fresh fuel.

"Gasoline tends to have a shelf life of 30 to 60 days. Anything beyond that, the fuel breaks down and gums up the carburetors and fuel lines. Those can be costly repairs," Poluka says.

BATTERY BOOM

Within the past five years, many landscape pros have adopted battery-powered equipment and are familiar with some of its benefits: less noise, fewer emissions and lower overall cost of maintenance as there aren't any carburetors, fuel lines or fuel filters, Poluka says.

However, there's more to consider than quieter surroundings and a smaller on-site carbon footprint, according to Jeremy Wishart, director of off-road business development for the Propane Education and Research Council.

"Electric has a dirty little secret," he says. "You've got to factor in the whole source-to-site emissions profile. Just because you're using it at your site and nothing's coming out of the tailpipe doesn't mean it has zero emissions."

For landscape pros who may be interested in switching to battery-powered equipment, Hartley says it's important to consider how to properly dispose of the battery at the end of its lifespan.

"Because of the chemicals, finding a place to recycle lithium-ion batteries can be a little tricky," he says.

To ensure batteries are safely and properly recycled, landscape pros should follow the equipment manufacturer's recommended procedures for battery disposal and recycling and research and adhere to local jurisdictional codes and regulations for disposal, according to Wishart.

PROPANE POWER

Manufacturers have not yet released any propane-powered handhelds, so how does propane fit into the equation? Wishart has an answer.



"We've tried to focus on being the recharging solution for in-field applications, for example,

through the use of a small, propane-powered generator," Wishart says, referring to generators that can be used on a landscaper's trailer. "There will probably be some manufacturers taking a look at propane-powered handheld equipment (in the future), but we've got to come up with a better way to package the tanks and fuel delivery."

The main benefit of using propane is lower fuel costs, especially when factoring in the cost of spillage, theft and evaporation, Wishart says. In addition to also producing a reduced carbon footprint, propane can be used as a one-size-fits-all option for several different fuel applications, he adds.

Wishart acknowledges that converting to propane options can be overwhelming if landscape pros attempt to make the switch without help.

"At the end of the day, if you reach out to the right people or partner with your local propane retailer and they set you up with refueling infrastructure, everything falls into place," he says. 📞

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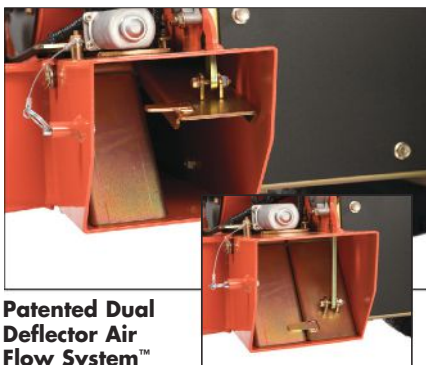
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MAINTENANCE SHOP

In-house maintenance musts

Tips and tricks for mower maintenance

BY SARAH WEBB | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Tire-stained hands, deflated tires and broken belts are just a few images that come to mind when discussing mower maintenance. For many landscape companies, mower maintenance amounts to much more.

“Mowers are the most important piece of equipment for a company,” says Marc Fisher, mid-Atlantic region general manager for BrightView Landscape Services in Sterling, Va. “You want to reduce downtime on those machines. If you’re not mowing grass, you’re not completing your work and you’re not getting paid.”

For companies that prefer to perform maintenance in-house, landscape pros offer up a few tips to get the job done — and get it done right.

TIPTOP SHAPE

On whose shoulders does the task of maintenance fall anyway? Some landscape companies leave it up to the crews.

For example, at Ruppert Landscape, crews are expected to spend additional time twice a week — once in the beginning of the day and once at the end of the day — to sharpen and check blades, check air filters and blow off machines, according to John Sawyer, regional fleet manager of Ruppert Landscape in Raleigh, N.C. During the more in-depth maintenance session, which takes place at the end of the day, Ruppert’s crews are expected to do a more thorough inspection and catch any minor repairs that need to be handled.



LOOK SHARP
Sharpening blades, checking filters and tires and cleaning off machines are just a few mower maintenance tasks.



ACCOUNTABILITY
Having mowing crews maintain their own machines gives them more accountability.

Greg Kaiser, operations manager of YardApes in New Milford, Conn., agrees with this approach.

“Having crews involved in as much of the mower maintenance as possible is important because it gives them more of a responsibility for the upkeep and performance of the mower they’re using,” he says.

In addition to having mowing crews perform maintenance, Ruppert has its in-house mechanics perform a winter reconditioning of all its mowers during the slower winter months.

Other companies may opt to leave the crews out of it and only have a dedicated mechanic do maintenance. This is the case with BrightView, which employs one to two mechanics at each branch, according to Fisher. Because finding a mechanic may be difficult, Fisher suggests looking within the company’s own ranks.

“Look internally to see how you can repurpose someone’s skill set,” Fisher says. “How can you reassign someone who has a passion for maintenance?”

To document maintenance, companies can implement an hour meter on machines to determine how long it’s been since the machine was last serviced, log what type of maintenance is performed on each machine and, as one last fail-safe, physically mark filters with the date on which the machine was last serviced.

Crews also can clean debris off of pumps and motors, keep a consistent set of parts on hand and be sure to use a tire pressure gauge when checking tires.

“A lot of people just look at a tire, think that it’s low and put air in it without using a tire gauge, but they can overinflate the tire. Then they’ll bring the mower back later and say that it’s not tracking properly,” Sawyer says.

Aside from the maintenance tricks, Fisher suggests contractors look into manufacturers’ trade-in programs, which allow landscapers to swap in their mowers every few years.

“Getting new mowers keeps your fleet newer and up to date on fuel efficiency, safety, technology, speed and durability,” he says. “All those different things will help save companies some money in the long run.”

Kaiser adds, “If a mower is outside of warranty and is constantly breaking down, it’s time to replace it.”

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A lakeside kitchen escape

LOCATION Warsaw, Ind.

COMPANY The Cornerstone Landscape Group

THE DETAILS This lakeside residence may have a simple layout — that's because it was designed to be a fun, easy-to-maintain and usable space. The client wanted a solution that would complement an existing upper deck and add a complete, high-quality outdoor kitchen.

The space was built on the lower level of the backyard. The Cornerstone Landscape Group removed or brought in more than 100 tons of materials using Vermeer mini skid-steers and a Caterpillar track loader.

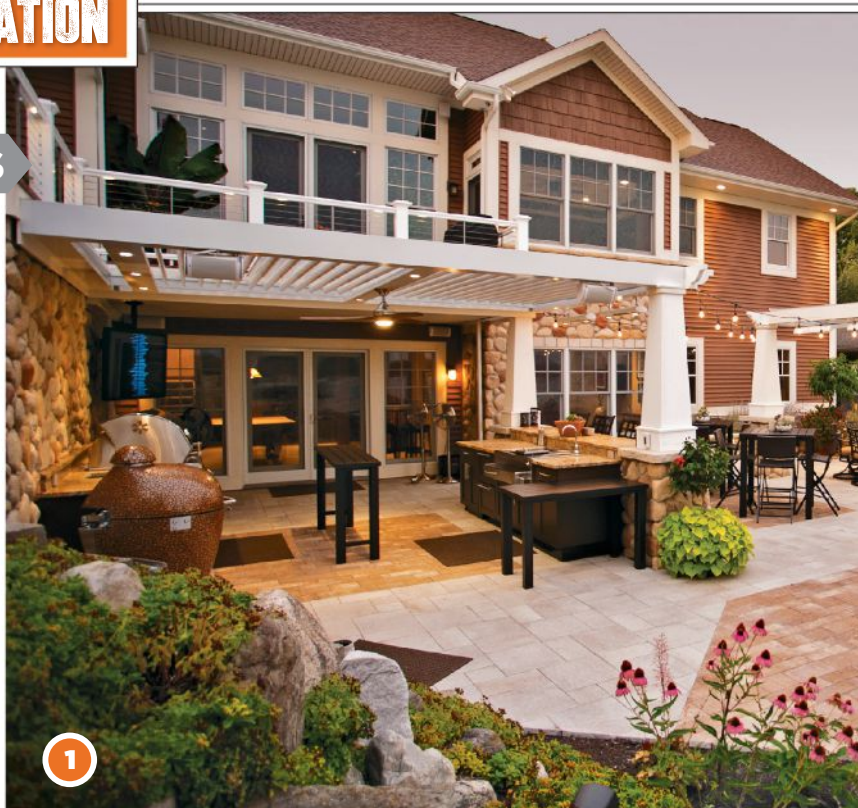
To round out the look of the patio, the company installed Unilock Umbriano pavers in the color of Summer Wheat.

The timeline for this project was tight, posing a challenge for The Cornerstone Landscape Group. The clients wanted their patio, which encompasses more than 1,400 square feet, to be installed and ready for a spring wedding rehearsal dinner party.

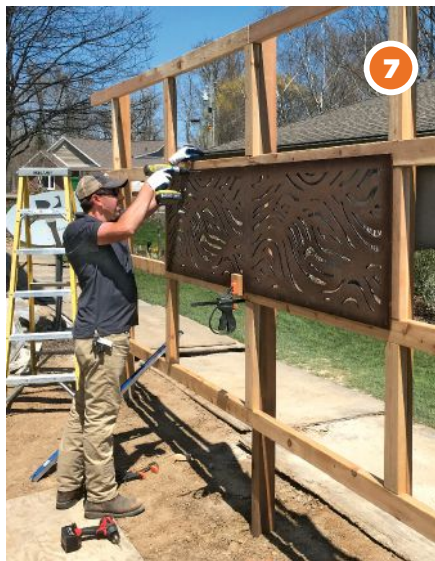
The clients now enjoy their patio almost daily, and the company uses it to show off its work to potential clients.

This project earned The Cornerstone Landscape Group 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: WILL PANCAKE



Captions | **1.** The client desired an outdoor kitchen and living space to complement the home's upper deck. The space was designed to comfortably accommodate groups as small as two, as well as large parties. **2.** Because the project was located in a backyard on a lower level, access was challenging but made easier by an accommodating neighbor. **3.** A significant challenge on this project was the clients' desire for a fully automated, complete outdoor living experience. Underground utilities include electric, natural gas, water and a drain for the sink, downspout drainpipes, pergola controls, audio and visual wires, landscape lighting and an underground irrigation system. **4.** A "during" photo of a crew member installing Unilock's Umbriano Summer Wheat-colored pavers. **5.** Shown here completing work on the patio, The Cornerstone Landscape Group managed to finish the multifaceted project by the clients' deadline. **6.** As is the case with many lakeside properties, the neighboring house is very close. Not wanting to build a fence or wait for a natural hedgerow to grow, The Cornerstone Landscape Group introduced an OutDeco Modular Decorative Screen Panel system. **7.** A crew member puts together the custom screen panel wall, which was built to provide a suitable backdrop to the space, offer some privacy and hide a satellite dish.

EXPERTS' TIPS

Track loaders



ASV

Buck Storlie

Product line manager

ASVI.COM

DO use three-point turns instead of counter-rotations whenever it's possible. **DO** perform regular maintenance on the machine and clean the undercarriage of mud and debris. **DO** pay attention to track tensioning, which should match what's in the equipment manual. **DO** stay aware of your surroundings and keep the bucket just above ground level when moving. **DON'T** spin the tracks, especially on coarse material. **DON'T** quickly move into piles of material.



BOBCAT

Jason Boerger

Marketing manager

BOBCAT.COM

DO consider what attachments may be used and how large a load the machine will need to lift. This will help customers make a more informed decision about rated operating capacity, engine horsepower and hydraulic flow required to operate the compact track loader and attachments. **DO** operate or demo the machine to give you an idea of whether it will be able to perform the specific tasks you will demand from it. **DON'T** just rely on machine specs to decide on the type and size of machine you need. Make an informed decision prior to purchase.

CHALLENGE

What are some ways to avoid mistakes when using track loaders?



CASE CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT

Debbie Townsley

Product marketing manager

CASECE.COM

DO closely monitor the health and performance of the tracks. **DO** travel straight up and down on slopes as much as possible to minimize excessive stress to one set of tracks. **DO** clean the tracks and undercarriage at the end of the day, as the constant presence of dirt and other materials is abrasive to the inner workings. **DO** avoid hard edges and curbs whenever possible. **DON'T** forget, excessive counter-rotation can lead to accelerated wear and a greater possibility of detracking.



CATERPILLAR

Kevin Coleman

Product Manager

CATERPILLAR.COM

DO equip your machine with the best track tread design for your work. Due to narrowly spaced tread bars, a track with a bar-style tread delivers minimal ground disturbance, making it ideal for performing finish-grade work. It leaves behind a light footprint of narrow, parallel ridges that are easily knocked down with a rake. A bar-style track tread also offers extra traction in the snow. **DON'T** forget, a bar tread is also easier on existing surfaces, making it ideal for completing jobs without the need for a rework.



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What are some ways to avoid mistakes when using track loaders?

EXPERTS' TIPS

Track loaders



DITCH WITCH
Chris Thompson

*Compact equipment
product manager*

DITCHWITCH.COM

DO match the machine to the job requirements. Overloading a machine with heavy materials can increase ground pressure and potentially damage turf. **DO** consider using a wider or longer track when moving heavy materials to more evenly disperse weight. **DON'T** make sharp turns, as this can damage turf. Landscaping crews can reduce or eliminate the need to counter-rotate a machine on turf by planning a clear path for equipment before the project begins. In doing so, operators can use their machines to transport materials without risking ground damage.



JCB
Chris Trampush

*Product manager for skid-steer
and compact track loaders*

JCB.COM

DO check and maintain awareness of your surroundings. This can prevent damage to the machine or property and can help avoid injuries. Take a few extra minutes to check for obstructions, people or hazards within the vicinity of the machine. **DO** conduct daily maintenance checks. **DON'T** try to lift more weight than recommended. This can cause the machine to tip or cause hydraulic cylinder failure. Know the operating capacity of your machine, keep the weight of the load at or below the maximum lift weight and keep the load as low to the ground as possible.

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What are some ways to avoid mistakes when using track loaders?

EXPERTS' TIPS

Track loaders



**JOHN DEERE
CONSTRUCTION & FORESTRY**
Justin Steger

Inside district manager, compact construction equipment

DEERE.COM

DO keep tracks clean and ensure proper track tension to prevent downtime and extend track life. Some compact track loaders suggest checking track tension every 50 hours. **DO** stay within the rated operating capacity and tip loads to help avoid mistakes. **DO** turn at the correct angle to not damage tracks. **DON'T** maneuver compact track loaders across sloped terrain types. Work up and down a slope to uphold the machine's quality and durability over time. When transitioning landscapes, turning at the correct angle is important to not damage the track.



TAKEUCHI-US
Keith Kramlich

National service and warranty manager

TAKEUCHI-US.COM

DO perform regular cleanings of the belly pan. This will allow heat to escape and keep excessive hydraulic temperature from impacting engine temperature, as the oil cooler is right next to the radiator. **DO** replace dirty filters. Using compressed air to blow the filters out will damage them and allow dirt ingestion, resulting in engine damage. **DON'T** perform hot shutdowns, which cause the turboshaft to continue to spin in hot residual oil, damaging the turboshaft and bushing, which could eventually result in turbo failure.

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INSTALLATION SOLUTIONS

Handy tools

What contractors are using to tackle hardscape projects

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

Having the right tool for the job saves crews time and energy and reduces the risk of an injury. For hardscape projects, there are several tried-and-true handheld tools to get the job done. Here's a look inside the toolboxes of contractors from around the country.

TOOLS THAT LIMIT STRAIN

Located in South Windsor, Conn., Bahler Brothers offers design/build, landscape lighting and hardscape maintenance services. While it services the occasional commercial property, the main focus for this \$4.4 million company is residential, says Josh Bahler,



Josh Bahler

production manager.

The company uses several of Pavé Tool Innovators' products, including its mallet hammers, which have rubber heads and wooden handles that can be replaced. Bahler and his team also have flat chisels, flat pry bars and trowels, which he says are a necessity.

Levels are another important tool Bahler Brothers keeps on its trucks. The team uses different-sized levels, including 6- and 8-foot ones that can be adjusted, ensuring the work is straight and has pitch, when needed. "Levels do go bad, and that could mess up a whole project," says Bahler, who has his team test them every morning.

For putting down spikes, the team uses a hammer drill.

"It saves on hand injuries and on forearms cramping up because it's a lot less manual labor," Bahler says. "If there's a machine to do the job you're doing, use the machine to reduce injuries and labor."

The company provides gloves, safety glasses and any other required protective equipment. All work trucks are equipped with dedicated toolboxes containing everything a crew will need for each project.

Quality of the hand tools is also important, and Bahler looks at whether parts can be replaced or adjusted.

"Hand tools don't cost that much, but downtime does," he says. "The guys appreciate it when you spend the money and give them good stuff, and they'll respect the tools — and the company — more."

GOOD FIT FOR CREWS

Outback Landscape also gives each crew its own set of tools, including saws, shovels, blowers, drill sets and dead-blow hammers, says Tyler Washburn, operations manager.

Outback Landscape uses demo saws — the company's most-used hardscape tool — for tasks such as cutting PVC pipe or pavers, as well as chop saws for cutting rock. The crews also have Corona shovels, including spade and flat-nose shovels.

Located in Idaho Falls, Idaho, the \$3.5 million company offers maintenance, design/build, landscape/holiday lighting, irrigation and snow and ice removal services. Its customers are 60 percent residential and 40 percent commercial.

The company looks for tools that are easy to use, safe, have good user

reviews and that crews like to use, Washburn says.

"It doesn't make sense to buy a \$400 or \$500 tool that sits on the shelf and doesn't get used," he adds.



Tyler Washburn


DON'T FORGET MAINTENANCE

The team at M.J. Design Associates in Plain City, Ohio, uses tools like steel spades with flat edges from A.M. Leonard. They hand dig everything, says co-owner Molly John.

The company offers landscape design/build, maintenance and seasonal enhancement services and has \$2.3 million in annual revenue. Its customers are about 70 percent residential and 30 percent commercial.

Shovels, rakes and hand tampers also get a lot of use at M.J. Design. All crew members keep a soil knife with them to cut rope, containers and other materials.

John's team members perform yearly maintenance on their handheld tools — sometimes more often for metal components. They check their wood handles, sand them down and re-treat the wood to prevent splinters. They also clean and oil the metal pieces.

"Hand tools aren't free of maintenance," John says. "We make sure our equipment is in good working order and safe to use." 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Nashville.



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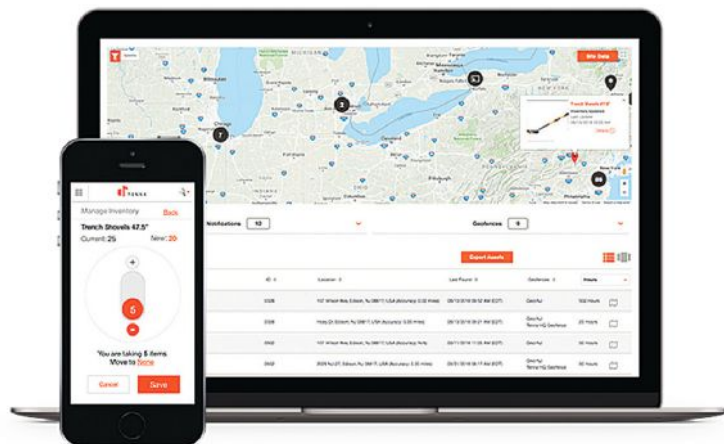
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BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Track your way to efficiency

Use the data from GPS and asset-tracking technology to make a difference in your business

BY DANIELLE PESTA | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR



How do you find the right tracking technology for your business? Experts say landscape contractors need to look at their operation first, including the people and processes, to determine what technology would be best.

George Heck, director of strategic partnerships at Tenna, says technology is only an enabler of a company's people and processes. He says landscape contractors should first develop an asset management strategy.

George Heck

"Over the last several years, equipment managers have been inundated with data," he says. "There's no point in collecting the data if we're not going to take an action with it."

The challenge as an asset and equipment manager is to gain control over a fleet and get rid of underutilized equipment, according to Heck. "It's the job of the equipment asset manager to protect the value of those assets," he says. "Look at everything, not as a mower, a blower, an excavator, a dozer, but look at it as a revenue-producing asset that has a certain dollar value that brings a certain dollar value."

Rob Odom, director of fleet and facilities at Hoffman Landscapes in Connecticut, says the firm originally looked into GPS and maintenance-tracking

technology to gather data for greater efficiency. Right now, Hoffman uses a GPS tracking software called Linxup. For the firm's heavy equipment, the technology is used for tracking machine location, monitoring machine hours, security and time management, according to Odom.

"We wanted to track the hours and see what the equipment was doing the most when it was on the job site," he says. "We did that to see if we were buying the right thing or if we needed to buy something bigger."

Deciding what technology would best fit the operation at Hoffman Landscapes took some time.

"The cost prohibited us from making the leap for many years," Odom says. "But due to growth, tracking and remembering the equipment's location and hours was becoming a challenge and causing us to be inefficient."

Andrew Kahler, product marketing manager, John Deere WorkSight, says tracking equipment hours and utilization can be the key to running a more efficient operation.

"By being able to see what machines haven't had any activity, contractors can identify which machines might be able to be moved to a different job site to help with utilization," he says.

When there's a lot of equipment assets in use, landscape contractors might get worried about them becoming lost, misplaced or just forgotten about.

TRACKING EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

"If you're tracking maintenance for a fleet of equipment, the most important information you want is hours and location," Kahler says. "And that seems kind of trivial, but for fleets that have hundreds of machines, sometimes it can be very difficult just to figure out where a machine that needs maintenance is located to execute it."

Many landscape contractors in the industry have a mixed fleet of equipment, Kahler says. The challenge is how to manage maintenance for a mixed fleet of equipment.

John Deere and other manufacturers can take the telematics data collected on their machines and make it available to third-party software companies that can track mixed fleets.

Some software companies collect the equipment telematics data from the manufacturer and combine it to allow landscape contractors to track maintenance for their entire fleet from a single portal. According to Kahler some of the software companies that do this include: Foresight Fleet Intelligence, Verizon Connect, LHP Telematics and HCSS Software.

TO USE OR TO MOVE?

Tracking equipment helps cut down on machine inactivity and increases productivity.



Rob Odom



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WATER WORLD

A well-watered resting place

LOCATION Chattanooga, Tenn.

COMPANY Landscape Services Inc.

DETAILS Installing an irrigation system is never an easy undertaking. Add a cemetery to the mix, and not only do you have to dig trenches around the usual water lines and tree roots, but you also have to avoid gravesites. That's what Landscape Services Inc. (LSI) did when it installed a new irrigation system at the Chattanooga National Cemetery.

The main challenge was ensuring the crew's hand tools and Ditch Witch ride-on trenchers never encroached on the tombs. It was a major concern because the cemetery superintendent didn't have precise tomb measurements or locations. Additionally, construction had to be coordinated around the cemetery's burial schedule, says Paul Stacey III, vice president of construction services at LSI.

"Unfortunately, they were burying someone daily," Stacey says. "They didn't have any burials too late, so the work was heavy in the mornings and heavy in the evenings."

The crews were careful to never leave their work unfinished at the end of the day. They completed one valve at a time and covered the irrigation pipes and valve boxes the same day.

Despite the challenges, which also included boring underneath a road and hand digging several sections of the system, Stacey says he and his crew were honored to work on the grounds at the national cemetery.

"I took more pride in my work than I maybe normally would have because of the property," he says.

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



↑ KEEP IT ROLLING

The rollability of these wheel hoses is the key for flexible irrigation. One of the main goals of the project, both during and after construction, was to not disturb any tombs.



← PROGRESS

There was a lot of disturbance to the existing grounds with the trencher. At the end of each day crews had to complete a section so the grounds appeared undisturbed.



↑ A LOOK BELOW

An in-ground look at the massive Quick Disconnect valves that were installed with a concrete backing for extra support to handle the water pressure.

↓ EVEN IT OUT

An image taken prior to backfilling the hole. It was important to the client for the irrigation boxes to be level with the ground so that they would not sink.



← FAR REACH

The cemetery has bermudagrass throughout. These rolling irrigation sprinklers are tasked with irrigating all 115 acres of the property. This project earned LSI a silver award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals.

PHOTOS: DAN STACEY



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Project pictured was designed and built by Todd Erickson
and Campus Landscape, LLC of Tampa, FL



PROFESSIONAL LANDSCAPE LIGHTING

WATER WORLD

Continued from page 60

NO BACKFLOW

Here is a look at the 3-inch backflow preventer that was installed on a very cleanly poured slab of cement.



HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

The valve boxes are nearly invisible when closed, so as not to create any visual disturbances on the cemetery grounds.



BEAT THE HEAT

This picture was taken in August after the project was completed. The grass is very healthy and vibrant, even during the hottest part of the year.

ALL CONTAINED

These two sealed boxes cover the backflow preventer, pressure tank and the booster pump.



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EXPERTS' TIPS

Valves + pumps



RAIN BIRD
Bill Beard

General manager
RAINBIRD.COM

Pumps operate on a flow versus pressure curve. However, the system demand dictates where the pump operates, so matching the pump to the system is critical. **DO** achieve good balance by setting up irrigation zones that require about the same flow rate. **DO** calculate the pressure losses in the zones. Taking the time to do these calculations right will make it easy to pick a pump that matches every zone's need for flow and pressure. **DON'T** purposely oversize pumps. This results in higher costs and serious performance issues.

CHALLENGE

What are some tips for determining the proper balance between a pump's flow rate and pressure?



HUNTER
Robb Kowalewski

Product manager, micro irrigation and valves
HUNTERINDUSTRIES.COM

DO use the flow control knob, which many valves come equipped with. This often-underutilized feature allows you to regulate the volume of water passing through the valve. An unadjusted valve takes longer to close than a valve with properly adjusted flow control. **DO** adjust the flow control knob to its lowest setting without limiting necessary system flow. This can also help extend the life of the diaphragm. **DON'T** forget, flow can and should be adjusted if the operating pressure is too high or if the flow is too low.



SITEONE
Brian Quill

Category manager — irrigation, storm water, aquatics
SITEONE.COM

DO reference the manufacturer's performance data for your pump model. Referred to in the industry as "pump curves," the flow and pressure relationship is shown on a curved line that is plotted on a graph. In general, as a pump's flow rate increases, the discharge pressure decreases. **DO** determine the performance of any given pump by finding the point on the manufacturer's graph where the desired flow rate and discharge pressure intersect along the pump curve line. **DON'T** ignore it if the desired flow rate and discharge pressure do not intersect near the pump curve line on the graph. If they don't intersect, you've got the wrong pump.

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BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Partnering up

What to consider before partnering with an irrigation distributor

BY SARAH WEBB | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Working with an irrigation distributor should be a partnership, according to Russ Jundt, founder and vice president of Conserva Irrigation, an irrigation firm that began franchising in 2016.

“Many times, contractors pit distributors against each other, but if they truly value partnership, both the contractor and the distributor should mutually benefit,” Jundt explains.

To ensure an exclusive partnership pays off for both parties and to determine what contractors should consider before partnering with a distributor, LM spoke with several experts — Jundt; Steve Counter, vice president of category management at SiteOne Landscape Supply; Ed Montalvo, general manager at Sprinkalawn Atlanta; and Lee Scheer, senior account manager at Ewing Irrigation & Landscape Supply.

Perhaps the most important items a contractor should keep in mind boil down to three Ps: products, people and proximity.

For instance, irrigation pros should consider whether a distributor carries the products they prefer and whether the distributor offers up-to-date and innovative solutions.

The contractor should also look into how knowledgeable the distributor’s employees are. The distributor’s employee may even be an ex-irrigation contractor or ex-irrigation installer, as was the case with Montalvo’s distributor, whose employee he had trained on installs years prior.

“Challenges come when (contractors) walk into a distributor, and they

don’t get the knowledge of an associate behind the counter who understands the challenges they face,” Counter says.

In addition to keeping their own employees well-informed, many distributors also will offer training for the contractor’s employees.

“From an educational standpoint, distributors will provide resources and training to help contractors’ employees, which is something that usually comes last on a small business owner’s list of

“The more clarification you have, the fewer instances where feelings or pocketbooks get hurt in either direction.”

—RUSS JUNDT

things to do,” says Scheer, who received his start as a landscape contractor. “Now that I’m in distribution, I kick myself for not using the resources of a distributor more to my advantage.”

An irrigation professional also should determine if a distributor has several locations within a reasonable distance to his shop and job sites. Jundt also suggests looking into consignment options, where a distributor’s goods can be securely kept at a contractor’s home base. Other elements to consider include delivery options, reward programs, rebates and e-commerce options.

In some cases, distributors also may introduce new revenue avenues to contractors, such as lighting opportunities, and offer project services, helping contractors bid and quote

large commercial job opportunities, according to Counter.

Scheer adds that partnering exclusively with one distributor helps cut down on the number of payables, as a contractor typically only has to write one check every pay period, instead of several.

Once a contractor has done the legwork and settled on a distributor, the two parties must agree upon a set of terms, spelling out items such as pricing, preferred product mix and delivery schedules. Challenges may crop up if a distributor doesn’t offer a specific product needed by the contractor, if a contractor visits a different branch of his distributor that’s unfamiliar with his company’s needs or if an initial agreement is unclear.

“I would make a written agreement outside of a handshake,” Jundt says. “The more clarification you have, the fewer instances where feelings or pocketbooks get hurt in either direction.”

In addition to drawing up a clear arrangement, Scheer suggests contractors present the distributor with a clear picture of their company and its goals.

“The more a contractor is able to open up and the more information a distributor has about a company, the more the distributor is going to be able to help him,” Scheer says.

Finally, the experts agree that ongoing communication between both organizations is a must.

“It (requires) constant communication, making sure the needs of each partner are constantly being met,” Scheer says.

Montalvo adds, “As long as you communicate, (the distributor) is more willing to work with you.”



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FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Mike Caprio

REGIONAL BUSINESS CONSULTANT

LAWN DOCTOR, HOLMDEL, N.J.

1 What all does your job entail, and do you enjoy it?

I provide business, agronomy, financial and human resources support to our franchisees in the Southeast. With over 50 years of experience in the industry, Lawn Doctor offers custom lawn care solutions to residential and business consumers. I've been with them for 19 years. I love my job because it gives me the opportunity to help people scale and grow their business. I have the pleasure of working with some tremendous people who have chosen franchising as their path to small business ownership.

2 If you had one primary concern for the industry, what would it be?

I would have to say regulatory and legislative issues both on the federal and local levels. Whether it's passing a permanent H-2B returning-worker exemption at the federal level or issues like fertilizer/pesticide bans at the state or county level, we need to continue to advocate for our industry and small businesses. It's important to get involved in the process locally in your own town.

3 Are you married, and what do you and your family do for fun?

Yes, I'm married to my wonderful and supportive wife, Janice. We have four boys between the two of us: Devin, Michael, Brendon and Vinny — and our fur baby, Lily. We're cat people. The boys are all older, so Janice and I enjoy spending time together traveling and saltwater fishing. We live a half-mile from the ocean. Living on the coast is awesome. When I'm not traveling, I keep a rod in the car, and I'll just pull over once in a while and throw it out from the beach.

4 What was your favorite car?

I'm a bit of a gearhead. My first car was a Dodge Challenger, but it only had a six-cylinder (engine). Then, when I was 18, I picked up this 1968 Ford Mustang. It was white with a dark red interior and powered by a 289 V8 and a manual transmission four-on-the-floor. I had a lot of fun with that car! I used to race a lot. I might have even lost my license for about six months while I had it ... I had it for four or five years, and then it started getting rust, so I sold it. I wish I had it now.

5 What's the coolest sporting event you've ever attended in person?

Before I was in this industry, I worked in the automotive industry. Years ago, I had a good friend who was on a NASCAR Craftsman Truck race team. I attended several races along with the entire team in the garage behind pit road. I've been to football games, baseball games, but when you're on that side with the cars coming into the pit — it's a feeling you can't describe. 🏎️

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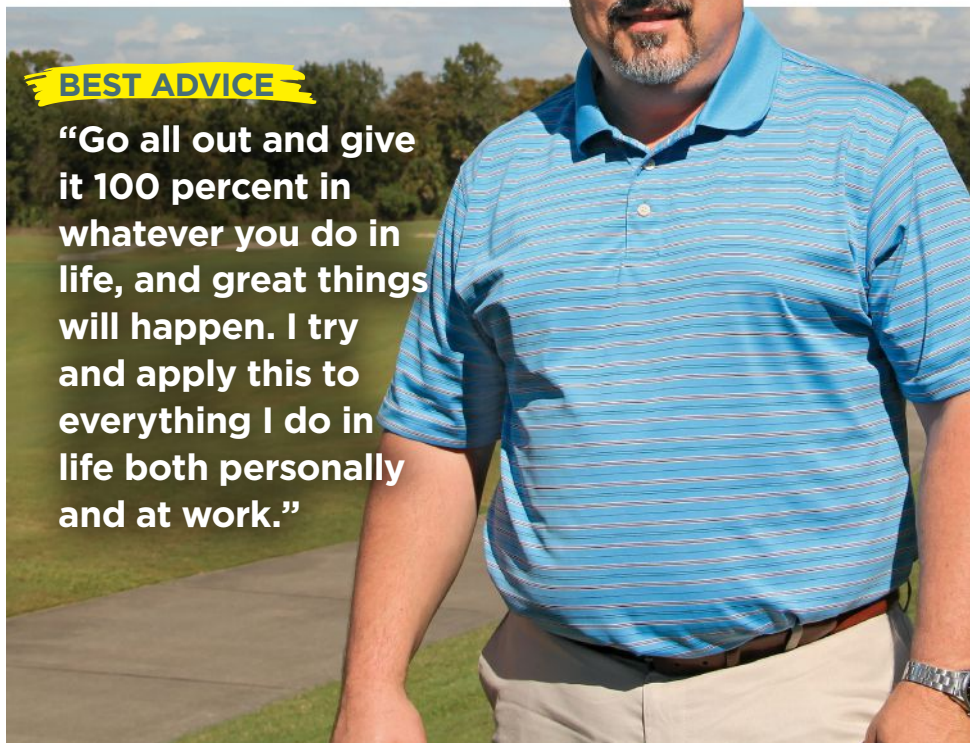


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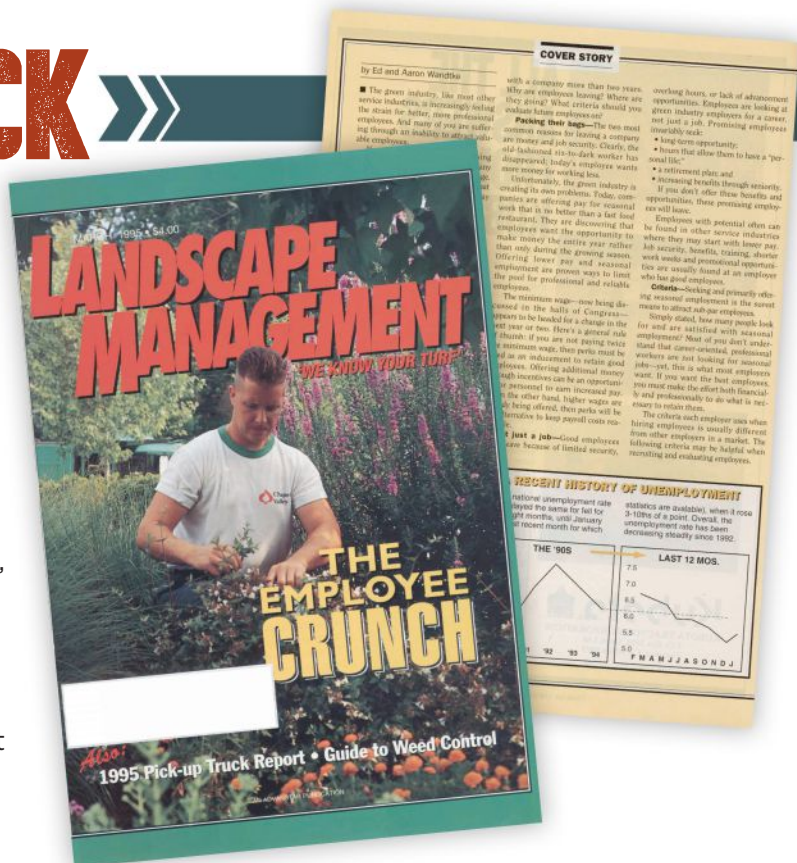
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A LOOK BACK

Labor, labor, labor.

The cover of the March 1995 issue of *Landscape Management* addressed a problem many landscape companies are still facing 24 years later. The magazine gave five criteria for determining the types of employees you want to hire: the type of work a candidate is looking for, the experience he or she brings to the job, why he or she applied, how he or she responds to pressure and the style of management he or she prefers. How does your company deal with finding and hiring qualified candidates? Tweet @LandscapeMgmt with your tips.



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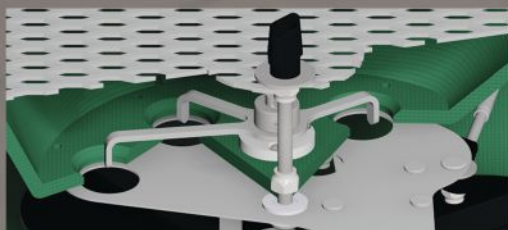
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Are you a boss or a coach?



BY PHIL HARWOOD

The author is president and CEO of Pro-Motion Consulting. Reach him at phil@mypmcteam.com.

Everyone is looking for a secret answer to recruit and retain talent in the face of a serious labor shortage. One answer is to understand and react to the expectations of a new generation of workers. The millennial generation, followed by iGen or Generation Z, is changing the way organizations and industries do business. Our industry is no different.

The reality is millennials have more options than previous generations did. They don't need to put up with what my generation had to in the workplace. Baby boomer and Gen X workers were more accepting of a bad boss. The boss was often in a bad mood, barked orders and only appeared when things went wrong. We didn't like our bosses, and we sure didn't want to have them involved in our daily work. In fact, the less we interacted with our bosses, the better. Those days are over.

Today's boss is expected to be a coach. For many supervisors, the concept of having to coach an employee is completely foreign because it's a totally different approach than what they experienced coming up through the ranks. It doesn't come naturally, and it's a bit strange. For these supervisors, it will require some effort and training to become a good coach.

For other supervisors, coaching is second nature. They are wired to be engaged, present and to offer positive and constructive feedback on a daily basis. They were born to be coaches and enjoy the ongoing relationships they have fostered with their people, who are more like family than employees.

Either way, this concept of coaching is sweeping the business world. The idea is that everyone wants a coach. Everyone deserves a coach. Employees without a coach will move on to another employer that values coaching.

Honestly, I think this trend is a game-changer. Over the last 30-plus years, I've rarely had a boss whom I would have considered to be a good coach. As a baby boomer, it never occurred to me that this was a problem or that it held me back. But looking back on my career, I would have loved to have had a coach who was guiding me and pushing me to be my best. I wonder how much more I could have accomplished in my career, how many bad decisions I might not have made and where I would be today if I'd had a coach.

COACHING WORKS


Think about it. Every professional athlete has at least one personal coach, in addition to the position coaches, coordinators and head coaches. Every accomplished musician has spent thousands of hours with a private music instructor — his or her coach. Every master tradesperson toiled for years as an apprentice under the wing of a skilled craftsman. Coaching brings out the best in people.

Many supervisors today have the wrong idea about coaching millennials. Based on false information, they mistakenly believe that they need to

be soft with millennials. The opposite is true. The worst coach is a soft coach who avoids tough conversations and who just wants to be everyone's buddy. In fact, that's not a coach at all.

Millennials want to develop and grow. To do so, they want a coach who is tough and who will demand their best efforts. They want a coach who will not accept lame excuses and will not coddle them if they miss their goals. They want a coach who will help them develop professionally and help them achieve their goals. Being soft or being everyone's buddy isn't going to cut it. Millennials have options that my generation didn't have. If they're not being developed and growing, they will bounce. I don't blame them. So would I, if I were in their shoes.

It's time to invest in coaching on two levels. First, supervisors need to learn how to become great coaches. Like I mentioned earlier, some will struggle with this role, while others are already great at coaching. Second, employers need to provide coaching for their people — all of their people, not just the high-potential stars. Everyone deserves a coach.

Some of you are wondering how you will find the time to implement coaching with all of your people. Some of you are questioning the return on investment (ROI) of coaching. I have two comments. First, if you don't coach your people, you'll have all the time in the world on your hands when your business has folded. Second, there is a wealth of data available about the value of coaching. If you truly are questioning the ROI, do your homework. You'll discover very quickly that the ROI is significant. 





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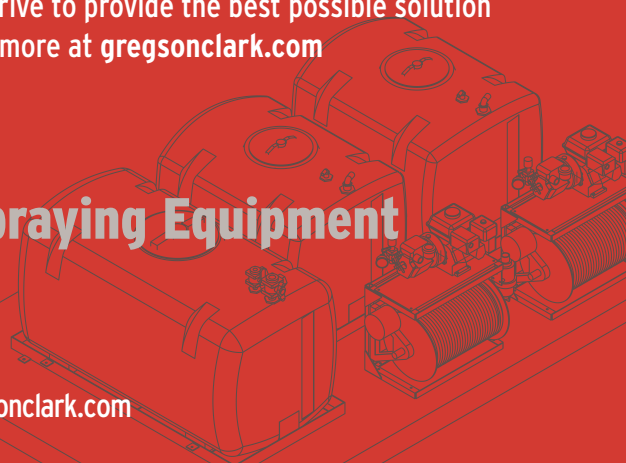


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BY JEFF KORHAN

Jeff Korhan is the author of *Built-In Social*, founder of Landscape Digital Institute and a Duct Tape Marketing Certified consultant.

How to make marketing that attracts the right customers

You've been there from the beginning. You attracted the first customers. You created a culture that made them happy. You handpicked team members who believed in that culture. Everything was clicking.

Over time, new challenges popped up. You tried to keep the culture alive, but somehow it faded. If only you could get that magic back and your people surrounded by the right customers. This is a marketing problem, and it can be fixed. It won't be easy because marketing is never easy. But, it turns out there are free tools that will help you.

#1 CREATE BUYER PERSONAS TO TARGET THE RIGHT PEOPLE

My residential design-build business attracted its share of high-end customers. It also repelled people with similar and often much greater disposable income.

The difference is the buyer's persona, which is more than personality, demographics and pain points. It's tendencies, habits and ways of seeing the world, otherwise known as a worldview.

Marketing that hits the mark for a buyer persona communicates one thing: This is for you. It speaks to buyers' worldviews and sparks the changes they are seeking in their lives.

We value marketing that activates strong emotions. It moves us to action. This is what makes buyer personas a powerful marketing tool.

I spoke with the founder of the Buyer Persona Institute about how to create these marketing assets. You can listen to the interview here: JeffKorhan.com/2015/09/buyer-personas-with-adele-revella.html.

#2 USE THE EMPATHY MAP TO GIVE THEM A REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE

When people rave about companies, they tell stories. The products and services are often the supporting cast. It's usually one aspect of their experience that is so remarkable they have to share it.

Of course, the same is true when people have an unsatisfactory experience. This is why negative online reviews should always be taken to heart.

What if I said you could understand your customer so well you can talk his talk, think his thoughts, dream his dreams and feel his fears?

You can by employing the empathy map to sharpen your awareness of your customer experience.

Use a flip chart or wall-size Post-it note to create your empathy map. Divide the page into four equal quadrants and name them (in no particular order): seeing, thinking, feeling and doing.

Start with the first potential customer touchpoint. This may be a website visit, submitted form or call to the office. What is the buyer seeing, thinking, feeling and doing — or should he or she be?

Use sticky notes to capture ideas within the respective quadrants for improving the customer experience. I like to imagine the perfect experience and close the gaps where buyers are currently getting hung up.

Continue your evaluation through the entire buyer's journey and even after that buyer becomes a customer.

#3 CRAFT A BRAND STORY THAT COMMUNICATES THAT EXPERIENCE

Your core marketing message is a promise to the customer. It should capture what differentiates

your business from every other.

The brand story makes it come alive. It's more than a story, even more than a narrative. It's everything people say, feel and believe about your business.

Marketing nowadays is a handcrafted conversation with buyers. It reflects who they are and what they believe — and changes it.

That change is what attracts the right customers. 📌



A close-up, high-contrast photograph of an excavator's joystick control. The joystick is dark blue or black. A prominent yellow circular button is visible, featuring a black icon of a stylized excavator bucket. Above this button is a circular button with a white double-headed arrow icon. To the right of the yellow button is a rectangular button with a series of horizontal ridges. A glowing blue fingerprint graphic is overlaid on the right side of the joystick, suggesting biometric authentication or a new level of precision control.

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Inspect the hoses and nozzles before beginning. Also check the gasoline and oil levels and fill with the fuel and oil recommended by the equipment's owner's manual. Do a quick site check of the area and remove debris.

Connect the water supply to the water intake and tighten. Next, connect the high-pressure hose and trigger assembly. Make sure all connections are secure.

Next, turn on the water. Water will run into the system at that time, so the operator will want to squeeze the trigger to release air pressure in the hoses and gun assembly.



To start the motor:

- Open the fuel valve and the choke;
- Set the throttle to maximum;
- Switch the engine button or lever to "on;"
- Point the sprayer toward a safe place and squeeze the trigger again to release freshly built-up pressure;
- While squeezing the trigger, pull the cord; and
- When the engine starts, close the choke again.

WATCH AND LEARN

Visit [LandscapeManagement.net/SafetyWatch](https://www.LandscapeManagement.net/SafetyWatch) to view a video about pressure washer safety.

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RESOURCES

[Online] Submit by April 1

Landscape Management is accepting submissions for the LM150 list, which will appear in the June issue. Entries are due by April 1.

The LM150, brought to you by John Deere, is a list of the largest landscape companies ranked by annual revenue. LM has published the list annually since 2009. It has grown to include breakouts by customer mix, service mix, regions and firms with double-digit growth.

To submit your company's details, visit **LandscapeManagement.net/LM150**.

Contact LM Special Projects Editor Marisa Palmieri with questions at mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net.



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.



Focus on your people first

I am just back from Grow! 2019, the annual conference I lead for ambitious landscape pros. This year, we were fortunate to have Eric Chester — a leading expert on driving performance in the workplace — deliver the keynote address. An endlessly entertaining speaker, Eric had us leaning in to listen, learn and laugh about all the ways we should be building engaged teams and all the dumb stuff we're doing instead of not to. His main point: Leaders of great companies recognize that the employee — not the customer — is No. 1, and they focus their efforts on taking care of their people. They recognize and reward team members for what they're doing right, instead of looking only for what's wrong. When you take care of your team, your team will take care of your clients.

Yet, I know from all the landscape professionals I've coached over the years that many of us are just not very good at doing this. Despite our best intentions, it can be hard to

“Leaders of great companies recognize that the employee — not the customer — is No. 1.”

focus on your people when you are juggling all the challenges of running a small business and clients' seemingly incessant demands. I have struggled with this too in running Grunder Landscaping Co., and that's why I've had to get very intentional in my approach. Here are the two simple but key tactics that have helped me the most in putting my people first:

Use your calendar. I live through my calendar, mapping out my days in great detail. If a task isn't listed there, it's very unlikely I'll remember to do it. That's why I track all the birthdays and anniversaries of the 65 people I work with in my calendar. It ensures I recognize each of them on their special days. I track all the

thank-you notes I write to them there to ensure I don't overlook anyone. I block off time for team appreciation events, whether it's the season kickoff we're about to hold, Friday afternoon cookouts in the summer or our annual outing to the baseball park. I set reminders for myself

to leave doughnuts for our crews or to stop by job sites with Gatorade to replenish them on especially hot days. And I set aside time each week to review what I'm doing to ensure my team knows I appreciate the hard work they do. I don't leave any of this to whim or chance — it's too important not to plan for.

Be specific and sincere when you recognize your people. I have observed many owners compliment their people by telling them, “You did a great job!” Now, I believe these owners' intentions were good, and giving a compliment is a start. But when a compliment is generic, it may come across as phony or patronizing. Think about how much more meaningful compliments are when you specifically call out what your team members did to warrant them. Not only do they know you noticed the extra effort they undertook, but they are also far more likely to repeat it. So thank them for edging the beds perfectly or for pruning the Japanese maple exactly as needed or for handling a difficult customer with calm professionalism. And if a client compliments *you*, be sure to pass it on to the team member or crew who are likely the ones who truly earned it.

As I am always telling the green industry owners I coach, your *external* customer service will never exceed your *internal* customer service. Treat your people right, and they'll treat your clients right. No matter how busy you get in the coming season, don't lose sight of this simple truth.

See you next month! 🍌

It can be helpful to log tasks, events and special days in your personal calendar.



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