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APP PICK

With GIE+EXPO and other work-related trips on the horizon, it makes sense to simplify the way you keep track of business expenses. With Expensify, users can link their credit or debit card to their Expensify account so the app will place charges directly on an expense report. Users can also take pictures of receipts with their phone, and Expensify will automatically extract the relevant information. **Free**

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SETH JONES EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Contact Jones at 785-690-7047, sjones@northcoastmedia.net or via Twitter @sethajones.

That's what **he said**

SETH'S CUT

ven after more than 20 years as a journalist, I still get a thrill when I hear a great quote. When I go back and listen to audio recordings of my interviews, I often laugh at myself

because I get so excited I say it out loud after an especially eloquent answer: "That's a great sound bite!"

In the course of attending the 2019 NALP Field Trip in San Diego (story on page 10) and in doing interviews for this month's cover story (begins on page 12), I got more than my fair share of these nuggets of wisdom. Here are some of my favorites:

"You can't wait to do budgeting (for) when you can afford a CFO — you'll already be dead."

"Too many people are building up for the future ... and then you're old like me."

Both of those tidbits are from industry great Frank Mariani, CEO of Mariani Landscaping in Chicago. Mariani was the co-host of the NALP Field Trip.

Mariani, who has been running the company for 46 years, seems to be driven to help others in the industry by imparting wisdom gained from his years working within it. That second quote, about building for the future, sums up one of Mariani's key points ... he wants people to take time to enjoy their success. Luckily for us, Mariani's enjoyments seems to come from helping his fellow landscape professional.

"Your goal should be to constantly be looking for low-risk experiments to improve your operation."

"Your website can make you look like a multimillion-dollar business, while you're operating out of grandma's basement." These two sound bites come from our own columnist Marty Grunder (page 68), president and CEO of the Grow Group and Grunder Landscaping in Dayton, Ohio. Grunder served as the emcee of the Field Trip and was on the microphone often, so I was able to scribble down a few of his nuggets of wisdom.

For Grunder, his energy is focused on one thing: driving his fellow professional to take his or her business to the next level. Grunder is a walking sound bite — I'm glad he's on our side.

You can't wait to do budgeting (for) when you can afford a CFO — you'll already be dead. **JJ**

"We want to grow because that means you're doings things right, and you're doing good for your people."

This quote is from Bob Grover, president of Pacific Landscape Management in Oregon. Grover hit on a recurring theme at the Field Trip: This business is more about people than it is about landscaping.

"If you believe that relationships are the foundation of this business, like I do, then you will be successful."

"Just don't suck at the landscaping. What you've got to be great at is the service." Those are both from Mike Bogan, CEO of LandCare, who was the keynote speaker of the Field Trip. He talked about the importance of being on a firstname basis with your customers. He said that when dissatisfied customers cancel their service, they rarely use a name ... and that's because they never got to connect with a person. When customers connect with a person, they're more likely to be happy with the service.

LANDSCAPE

"Having a growing presence in a growing industry is something we're committed to."

This one comes from Brett Newendorp landscape market manager for Vermeer, in regards to GIE+EXPO. I talked to many people about GIE+EXPO in these last few weeks, about why it's important to them and the effort it takes to prepare for the show. Newendorp's statement above nicely summarizes the comments many made to me — to maintain your status in a thriving industry, you need to be seen at the thriving show that represents that industry.

"Because walking is overrated."

This last sound bite comes from David Reeves, owner of Florida-based Reeves Lawncare and Equipment and inventor of the KR Chariot.

To get to the meaning of this quote, I'll ask you to make it to the last part of my cover story ... and then maybe you'll want to see Reeves and the KR Chariot in person at next month's GIE+EXPO.



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

Orange is the new black Casey Black, branch manager for LandCare's Orange County, Calif., branch, and Ryan Burrow, business development, LandCare, sport the company colors (it's tangerine, not orange) at the NALP Field Trip in San Diego.

2 Grover, Grunder, Grover David Grover (left) and his dad Bob Grover of Oregon's Pacific Landscape Management (right) and Emily Grunder, The Grow Group, take time for the camera at the 2019 NALP Field Trip to San Diego.

3 Field Trip friends Vince Torchia, vice president, Indexcape market manager, Vermeer, and Bill Roddy, publisher, *Landscape Management*, can now say they've been on a Field Trip together.

4 Flyer and a Jayhawk Marty Grunder, president and CEO, The Grow Group and Grunder Landscaping, and Seth Jones, editor-in-chief, *Landscape Management*, agree on many things, but they agree to disagree on college basketball. It looks like Grunder's Dayton Flyers and Jones' Kansas Jayhawks will both be in Hawaii for the Maui Invitational — perhaps this score should be settled in person at the tournament, fellas.

5 Karl Strauss Brewing Co. crew It was a fun bunch that took in dinner (and some craft beers) at the NALP Field Trip, including the guys from Colorado Springs, Colo.'s Timberline Landscaping (Josh, Max, Jake and David up front), the LandscapeHub team (Jeremy and Brian, middle), Scott of Live Green Landscape Associates (seated next to Bill) and the *LM* team (Seth and Bill in the back).

6 Who wants cake? Steel Green Manufacturing rang in its first full year in business with an open house at the Steel Green factory. The Steel Green leadership team, left to right: Scot Jones, operations manager; Craig Conyer, production manager; Brent Mills, general manager; Michael Floyd, inventory control manager; and Matt Smith, sales manager.









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Field trip to San Diego

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

andCare is a \$180 million company with 50 locations in 30 different cities across the U.S. At the 2019 NALP Field Trip in San Diego on Aug. 6-7, those 50 locations turned into one, and more than 100 curious landscape professionals, eager to learn the keys to the success of the company, were able to take a look behind LandCare's tangerine curtain.

Marty Grunder, CEO of the Grow Group and Grunder Landscaping Co., led the two-and-a-half day meeting, along with industry great Frank Mariani of Mariani Landscaping.

Grunder introduced the star of the show, LandCare CEO Mike Bogan, a 30-year veteran of the industry who has taken LandCare to new heights. Bogan spoke to the attendees on the first day.

"If you believe that relationships are the foundation of your business — like I do — you will be successful," Bogan told the room. "You have to be employee-centric and customer-centric. Culture is LandCare's strategy." L to R: Vince Torchia, The Grow Group; Frank Mariani, Mariani Landscaping; Mike Bogan, LandCare; Tommy Cole, The Grow Group; Bob Grover, Pacific Landscape Management.

The next morning, the group moved on to the actual Field Trip part of the agenda, visiting LandCare's offices and employees in La Jolla. Attendees cycled through several

stations, discussing everything from LandCare's "no mechanics" policy to its social media efforts.

Field Trip attendee Selena Herrin, business manager for Smith & Enright Landscaping in Salinas, Calif., said the opportunity to see the structure and organizational charts of a company like LandCare was invaluable.

"I'm inspired to go home and put a lot of what I learned into work. But really, it's about treating people right and doing the right thing and creating career pathways," she said. "I liked how (LandCare) was passionate about their own company, and they knew what their culture was and how they wanted to live it each day."

Exmark launches new walk-behind mower

Exmark launched its new Commercial 30 X-Series walk-behind mower model, expanding the company's line of 30-inch walk-behind mowers. The Commercial 30 X-Series has a new, more powerful engine and transmission. According to Exmark Product Manager Lenny Mangnall, the Commercial 30 X-Series is an evolution of the company's original Commercial 30 model, introduced in 2013. The increased displacement of the powerful Kohler engine gives it 30 percent more torque to power through thick grass. Exmark upgraded the transmission on the Commercial 30 X-Series to make the most of the Kohler engine's additional power.

Toro introduces two new trencher models

Toro added two new models to its TRX walk-behind trencher line that are designed for performance, serviceability, ease of use and operator comfort. The new TRX-250 and TRX-300 feature Intelli-Trench technology, an innovation that optimizes the machine's hydraulic flow for the digging conditions. This system automatically diverts the hydraulic flow from the traction motors, providing more power for the trencher head. As a result, the traction handle can be held in one place without requiring constant adjustment, reducing operator fatigue and optimizing performance. The walk-behind trenchers are now available through Toro's dealer network.

Sperber Landscape Cos. partners with Conserve LandCare

The newly launched Sperber Landscape Cos. (SLC) teamed up with

CHEERS TO 35 YEARS

BY SARAH WEBB | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

andscape Management had the opportunity to tour the Honda Power Equipment (HPE) Manufacturing facility in Swepsonville, N.C. There was more than one reason for *LM*'s visit:

1. As of Aug. 6, Honda Power Equipment has been producing power equipment products in North America for 35 years;

2. HPE recently embarked on a \$46.4 million expansion of its Swepsonville plant. A total of about 250,000 square feet have been added to the plant's existing blueprint. Overall, the expansion will allow for the production of about 2 million more engines and 300,000 more mower units (about the same as the amount of Honda Civics

produced each year).

3. HPE also unveiled its new HRN216 mower lineup, which includes four different walk-behind products: the HRN216VKA, the HRN-216VLA, the HRN216VYA and the HRN 216 PKA.

To help commemorate the milestones, HPE invited about 750 of its associates to celebrate in a special ceremony. A total of about 1,100 associates are employed by the plant.

Rep. Mark Walker (R-N.C.), commended HPE on its plant's impact in the surrounding area.

"You all are leading by example and raising the standard of living for many in this community," Walker said. (9)



Conserve LandCare. Headquartered in Thousand Palms, Calif., Conserve serves prominent clients in Coachella Valley, including commercial, resort and retirement properties. The commercial landscape company has more than 350 employees. No changes are planned or expected in staffing, and the company will retain its name and branding. Conserve founders, husband and wife George and Teri Gonzalez. will continue in their existing roles and retain a portion of ownership in the company. Conserve Vice President Bruce Wilson will also remain

with the company. Jeffrey Harkness of Three Point Group managed the partnership agreement between SLC and Conserve.

Aurora Resurgence sells LandCare to management group

Aurora Resurgence, a Los Angeles-based private equity firm, sold LandCare, a national provider of landscape maintenance services, to the company's management team and a small group of investors led by Scott Brickman, former CEO of the Brickman Group.



IRRIGATION SHOW HEADS TO LAS VEGAS

Registration is now open for the 2019 Irrigation Show.

The Irrigation Show and Education Week will be held in Las Vegas Dec. 2-6. The weeklong event attracts irrigation professionals from all over the world and brings the best in irrigation products, technology, education and networking together in one location, according to the Irrigation Association.

This year's show will co-locate with the National Ground Water Association and the American Rainwater Catchment Systems Association and includes an exhibit hall of up to 600 total exhibitors. The show floor features the popular new product contest, showcasing the newest landscape irrigation and lighting products and technologies to hit the market.

The 2019 Irrigation Show also offers numerous opportunities to explore the industry, learn new ideas and connect with peers. Check out **IrrigationShow.org** to see the full schedule of events and to register. Early bird registration discounts are available through Nov. 1.

As an investor, Brickman will serve as chairman of the board of directors and support and advise the company moving forward, while Mike Bogan will manage the company day to day, according to Bogan. Since being acquired by Aurora Resurgence. LandCare introduced a new management team in 2014, led by Bogan. Under his leadership. LandCare restructured its operations and rebranded in 2015, leading to significant revenue and profitability growth over the past four years.

COVER STORY



The next big idea can get sparked at GIE+EXPO — something landscapers and exhibitors bank on

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

ext month, an estimated 25,000 people will descend upon Louisville, Ky., for the annual GIE+EXPO. They'll come from a variety of businesses and backgrounds but

with a common goal: to improve their operation with that next big idea.

Kyle Narsavage is president of GreenSweep, a full-service landscaping firm based in the Washington D.C./Baltimore area. He and two of his employees travel the 600 miles to GIE+EXPO for three reasons: networking, education and researching new equipment.

"We've found (GIE+EXPO) very beneficial we found out about Aspire two years ago, and now we are implementing the software this year," Narsavage says. "We've also purchased various equipment solely based on meeting with vendors at the show that we never would have had access to back home."

What will be the "ah-ha" moment for any attendee is impossible to predict. One thing is





certain: The companies exhibiting their wares at GIE+EXPO are hopeful that it is their products or services that become a game-changer for the droves of attendees.

Mulch ado about GIE+EXPO

Craig Carlson, president of Mulch Mate, was diligently working on his GIE+EXPO videos when contacted by *Landscape Management* in August. Perfect timing, then, to talk about the show and what it means to the family-owned company.

"Last year at GIE+EXPO was when we brought (Mulch Mate) to the world," Carlson says. "And we felt like we had almost rock-star status when we got there." The Mulch Mate automatically dispenses mulch, increasing the amount of mulch a crew can spread by as much as 50 percent. The company says the machine can dispense 10 yards in 10 minutes. The idea sprang from the mind of Carlson's son Nick, who owned and operated a landscaping company for 16 years before changing fields when he came up with the idea for Mulch Mate.

"Three-and-a-half years ago, he won a bunch of contracts, then he thought, 'Holy crap, I'm the dog that just caught the mail truck! What do I do now?" Carlson recalls. "He came to me and said he needed to do something without killing his guys and without hiring a bunch more guys. He came up with the Mulch Mate and got it patented, then brought it to market."

Continued on page 15





COVER STORY

Continued from page 13

Carlson was optimistic going into GIE+EXPO. His background is in a different industry, but he had attended trade shows before and GIE+EXPO as a part of his son's landscaping company, so this definitely wasn't his first rodeo. He thought he knew what to expect.

"You're standing there waiting for someone to stumble by, hopeful you can snag them and that they're a customer," he says of typical trade shows. "My reaction at GIE+EXPO was, 'how fast can I talk?' Because I needed to

hurry up and talk to the next person." Carlson describes a scene that would make an exhibitor in any industry salivate: He was unable to leave the booth because he was surrounded by so many people. He had five or six people waiting at all

OUT IN DROVES At the 2018

PHOTO: GIE+EXPO

GIE+EXPO, the Mulch Mate demo area was a hot spot for attendees. them to choreograph the flow of people through the booth so they

times, forcing



"The great thing about the show is the opportunity to demonstrate product. Guys get to run your equipment and experience it hands-on." – SCOTT KINKEAD could make sure everyone got an opportunity to see the machine.

When the outdoor demo area opened? It was more of the same.

Allow me to demonstrate

Brett Newendorp, landscape market manager for Vermeer, says that every year, the company has seen more people come through its booth — and that's why it's expanding its presence at GIE+EXPO.

"We see a lot of value in being at that show ... for us, it's the indoor/ outdoor combination,"

Newendorp says. "That's huge there aren't many shows where you get the opportunity to demonstrate your equipment as well as show it. When people get on our machines and get to operate them, they get to see the value, and they see themselves using them as a business solution."

Scott Kinkead, executive vice president of Turfco Manufacturing, agrees. He's been attending the GIE+EXPO show for almost 30 years — back when it was just the *Continued on page 16*



<image>

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Continued from page 15

GIE show and traveled to different cities — and recalls moments like hauling around a bag full of quarters to take the equipment to the local car wash, or the year it was so cold in St. Louis they stood around a fire to stay warm.

"The great thing about the show is the opportunity to demonstrate product. Guys get to run your equipment and experience it hands-on," he says. "It allows you to close deals



with the full experience. We're always slammed, the entire show."

While it seems the show is a home run in terms of attendees and attention, it's also a brute to bear in terms of costs.

"It's a significant investment," Kinkead adds. "You have to have product both inside and outside. It's not just an investment in the (booth), but also your people ... getting equipment there ... and the downside of demoing products? It's that now you're demoing products, and now you can't sell it as new anymore."

"For the manufacturers, it is a serious investment," says Kris Kiser, president and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute and the managing partner of GIE+EXPO. "It's a lot of money, a lot of

GIE+EXPO. It's a lot of money, a lo planning, a lot of people and a lot of logistics. Thankfully, it's something they want to do because it's good for business. You see how big some of these booths are — these are hardcore business folks. They wouldn't be there if it didn't work."

Ken Taylor, customer segment manager for John Deere, says it "takes a village" for his company to get everything in order for the presence Deere likes to create for the show. He laughs when he recalls the time when they held an early morning event at Churchill Downs, home of the Kentucky Derby. Though there was a Hall of Fame jockey present to address the group, most of the *Continued on page 21*



CONNECT

GIE+EXPO provides

landscape pros,

distributors and

dealers a chance

to network.

"Planning for the show starts months in advance, with many team members ... incorporating their thoughts and ideas into the show." – KEN TAYLOR

SPONSORED CONTENT

On a Personal Level

Andrew Ziehler looks to Bayer for more than just lawn care products to help his Ohio-based company thrive.

BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER

ndrew Ziehler isn't just interested in lawn care products. The owner of Ziehler Lawn and Tree Care in Centerville, Ohio, is interested in partnerships. Which is why for the past 20 years Ziehler has worked closely with Bayer, using the products that keep his clients' lawns green and healthy — and the array of other resources and support the manufacturer provides.

"We look for partners that are going to help us in multiple areas — we are not just looking for the product itself," explains Ziehler, whose company provides 90 percent lawn care and 10 percent mosquito and pest control services to residential customers. "Whenever we ask Bayer for a little bit more help we always seem to get it."

Don't get him wrong - Ziehler sticks with Bayer because the products

work. He relies heavily on Merit for grub control and uses Maxforce ant bait and Suspend Polyzone for surface insect and mosquito control. But Ziehler also takes full advantage of Bayer's training and educational opportunities and appreciates Bayer's support of green industry associations like the National Association of Landscape Professionals. He counts on his Baver sales representative to keep him up to speed on things like new products and advancements in technology,

They are supporting what is going to be happening in the future and allow us to provide services for a long time."

industry trends and emerging lawn or pest problems pertinent to his region.

"The No. 1 thing is that we have confidence in the results of the products," Ziehler says. "But Bayer is also involved in so much stuff. It is not a transactional relationship. They are supporting what is going

ANDREW ZIEHLER

to be happening in the future and allow us to provide services for a long time."

"The beautiful part of Bayer having so many sales managers around the country is that it makes a big company seem small," explains Eric Skorich, Ziehler's Bayer area sales manager, based

www.DiscoverZiehler.com

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Partners for Success. When Bayer Area Sales Manager Eric Skorich visits Ziehler Lawn and Tree Care, the team comes out to brainstorm solutions to current problems. During a recent visit, Skorich (left) meets with owner Andrew Ziehler (center) and service manager/certified arborist Sean Meier (right).

SPONSORED CONTENT

in Columbus, Ohio. "It brings a big company down to a level where customers like Andrew can put a face to Bayer and can feel comfortable calling me directly."

Skorich serves as the liaison between Bayer and customers like Ziehler. He also works closely with local distributors and is wellversed on Bayer's products and how they work in the lawn and landscape market. Skorich also has access to Bayer's Green Solutions Team when customers have technical questions that he can't answer.

"I am the first point of contact when customers have questions





Family Comes First. Owning a family business takes time—lots of it. Ziehler Lawn and Tree Care owners Andrew and Dessine Ziehler turn to their representatives at Bayer to keep them updated on the latest chemical trends and solutions. That allows the Ziehlers to spend more time where it counts, with their children, Matthew, Loula and Georgia.

about our products," Skorich says. "My customers can call me at any time; if I don't have the answer for them right away I can get them to someone who does."

For lawn care operators looking to establish a preferred supplier partnership, Skorich recommends looking for a company that provides solutions, not just products.

"All companies have products to sell, but I like the solutions-based approach to help solve problems my customers are having," Skorich says. "I have become a resource for Andrew — he can ask me questions, he can bounce ideas off of me. It's building relationships on a more personal level."

Ziehler agrees that getting to know your product sales representatives on a personal level is important for LCOs to create a partnership that is truly beneficial. Taking the time to get to know one another by going to lunch or playing some golf helps lay the groundwork for the open communication and trust needed for a company to thrive.

"A lot of times, lawn care operators just go to the local supplier and pick a product off the shelf. They don't always know that there is all of this support available, so they are not able to take advantage of it," Ziehler says. "LCOs should be sure to ask a lot of questions and get to know the reps for the products they use. Once both sides really understand each other, you can get the recommendations and advice that will help your business grow and help you take care of your customers in the best way.

"As with any relationship," he adds, "you get out of it what you put into it."





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Continued from page 16 attendees were focused on the million-dollar thoroughbred race horses eating peppermint candies from the hands of guests.

"Planning for the show starts months in advance, with many team members from the factory, marketing, advertising and sales incorporating their thoughts and ideas into the show," Taylor says. "GIE+EXPO is a trade show that attracts dealers, retailers and rental companies as well as professional end users from various segments and gives us the opportunity to display the depth and breadth of our product portfolio."

Growing and growing

Kiser reports that for the last eleven years, the GIE+EXPO show has grown each year, and it's on track to do so again in 2019.

"The show is emerging as an international show. You see large shows in China and Europe, but they have a *Continued on page 22*



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COVER STORY

Continued from page 21

very strong agriculture or construction presence," Kiser says. "Our show is the gold-plated event in our space."

Jeff Weemhoff, president of Atlantic Water Gardens and Oase, says GIE+EXPO has been steadily growing for his company — in terms of its presence and interest in its products.

"We create quite a few displays for the outdoor area, while the indoor area is more show and tell," Weemhoff says. "We base our success of the show on the participation we get at the booth and the people we meet before, during and after the show. This year will be the first year since the (Atlantic Water Gardens and Oase) merger, so we'll be there telling people what that means for our customers."

Weemhoff says GIE+EXPO is the biggest presence his company will make at any show, and that is because of the diversity of the attendees, like Taylor described.

"Our second biggest show is the Irrigation Show, but for us, that's a little more of a distributor show instead of a contractors' show," Weemhoff says. "I think the fact that



"For the manufacturers, it is a serious investment ... Thankfully, it's something they want to do because it's good for business." – KRIS KISER attendees get to try out the equipment, it makes it more of a hands-on show than the Irrigation Association show."

"I like the direction the show is going," says Mulch Mate's Carlson. He had attended previously as a landscape pro when his son still had his landscaping business. "In previous years, it seemed like it was going down the path of a dealer show. Once people had their dealer network set up, they'd just come for the backslapping. 'How ya doing? You going to order the same number as last year? Good.' But maybe because of social media, it's got the interest of end users again. They want to come check it out and see what's new on the market. The end users want to see new ideas to improve their business."

The next big thing

What will make waves in 2019 like Mulch Mate made in 2018? Every GIE+EXPO offers a slate of new products offering potential. The better question is which one will make a true difference a year down the road?

Continued on page 24





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COVER STORY

Continued from page 22

"We had a number of people asking us how long we've been around ... and when they heard we were new, they said, 'Well, we'll see if you're still around next year," Carlson says. He expects to see many of those same customers this year, now that the Mulch Mate has sustained itself for a year.

"Since we're such a new machine and a new concept, people didn't buy from us last year," Carlson says. "I think our investment last year was really into this year. GIE+EXPO is a building process, and we consider it the biggest show we go to."

One company that is raising its hand as a hopeful up-and-comer is KR Chariot, invented by Floridabased lawn care operator David Reeves. Don't bother looking for the company's website, because as of right now, the only online presence the company has is a handful of YouTube videos of Reeves operating the machine.

The KR Chariot is a hands-free three-wheeled transporter that allows a worker to do such projects as string trimming, blowing and fertilizing much faster than if they were on foot. Reeves, who has owned and operated Reeves Lawn Care in Lakeland, Fla., for the past 16 years, came up with the idea because he was getting fatigued too early in the day.



Vermeer will have about 25 people working on behalf of the company during the show. "Having a growing presence in a growing industry is something we're committed to. - BRETT NEWENDORP

"I was worn out by 10 in the morning, and that's when it dawned on me, as I was driving to my next yard, what I should do," Reeves says.

He says the machine has made him as much as 30 percent more efficient. He takes fewer breaks, is no longer tired at the end of a day and his work boots last a lot longer than they did before the Chariot. Only four KR Chariots currently exist -

built by Reeves and his cousin — but Reeves is hopeful a trip to Louisville can change that.

"That's why I'm going to GIE+EXPO — I'm hopeful to get the attention of a big company," Reeves says. "I'm demoing it in the demo area. I've tried to Google 'who builds mowers in America' but that just doesn't work."

Continued on page 26

PHOTO: SETH JONES



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COVER STORY



Continued from page 24

Reeves can operate his KR Chariot like an old pro, but it's hard to say how much training a typical laborer would need before he or she became an expert. SPARK INTEREST David Reeves hopes GIE+EXPO will bring attention to his invention, the KR Chariot.

Reeves estimates 15 minutes on the machine would get someone comfortable enough to then operate it while holding a hand tool like a string trimmer or blower.

"The way I explain it is when was the last time you thought about how you drive a car? Or if you're experienced

GIE+EXPO:

DATES: Oct. 16-18 TIME: Varies by day LOCATION: Louisville

RELEVANT INFO:

1,000 exhibits over 500,000 square feet in the Kentucky Exposition Center, plus 20 acres of outdoor demo space. on a zero-turn mower, how much do you think about that?" Reeves says. "With the Chariot, you don't even think about it. You're just edging, line trimming and blowing off properties."

Perhaps if the right person kicks the tires on the KR Chariot at GIE+EXPO, it'll light a fire.

"I'm just a little guy who built something, came up with something and paid for it all myself," Reeves says. "Because walking is overrated."

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WEED AVENGERS

Dominate dallisgrass

Manage dallisgrass with postemergent persistence BY DANIELLE PESTA | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

allisgrass may be the most aggressive grassy weed that lawn care operators (LCOs) contend with --especially when it comes to postemergent control. Fall is the best time to control dallisgrass, says Maggie Reiter, area environmental horticulture advisor at the University of California Cooperative Extension.

By timing applications in the fall, LCOs can target dallisgrass when it's most sensitive to herbicides.

Fall applications provide longer-lasting results and more long-term control, according to Lane Tredway, technical

services manager for Syngenta.



UNDERSTAND THE WEED

A common weed in turfgrass areas, dallisgrass has coarse leaves and a clumpy form, which make it stand out, Reiter says.

Usually when an LCO is called in to address the weed, it's not the best time

Maggie Reiter

to effectively control it, Tredway says. "It becomes big, ugly and most objectionable to customers in June, July and August," he says.

Correct identification is important since dallisgrass competes in a lot of different environments.

"Dallisgrass is often confused with crabgrass, and misidentification can reduce the efficacy of weed control practices," Reiter says.





Cultural control methods are limited because dallisgrass is not encouraged by soil conditions or growing conditions, Tredway says.

PRIME WINDOW Dallisgrass typically rears its ugly head the most in June, July and August.

Prevention is the best approach, Reiter says. Maintain a healthy turf stand at an appropriate mowing height. Tredway agrees. "Healthy, dense, uniform turf is going to compete against dallisgrass and keep it from becoming established in the first place," he says.

MANAGE WITH PERSISTENCY

With a consistent herbicide program, Tredway says good dallisgrass control might take more than a couple vears to achieve.

"Unlike a lot of other turf weeds. you're not going to kill or control dallisgrass with just one or two applications," Tredway says.



Strong rhizomes of the weed help it survive and regrow through multiple herbicide applications, he adds.

Lane Tredway

Apply a systemic herbicide where the weed absorbs the active ingredients. The first application should be applied in late summer or early fall. A follow-up treatment can be applied 30 days, or four to six weeks, later. If dallisgrass shows signs again in the spring, another application is required.

Tredway advises being consistent with both fall and spring applications.

"If you only do fall and skip spring, you're going to be right back where you started or maybe even lose ground against the weed over time," he says.

Look for products that contain the following active ingredients: pinoxaden, foramsulfuron, trifloxysulfuron, mesotrione or fluazifop. 🕲

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TURF INSECT ID + CONTROL

Getting grubs gone

BY DANIELLE PESTA | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

rub types vary depending on region, and populations change over time. Although this turf foe can be damaging in its larval stage, it has a complete life cycle. There are a few approaches to managing grubs.

Here are a few tips for controlling European chafers and Japanese beetles, two prevalent types of this pest:

EUROPEAN CHAFER

These invasive species are good survivors. They are damaging to turf, especially toward the beginning of their life cycle, but they're not as much of an issue in a well-irrigated lawn.

Spring irrigation creates turf that is not as favorable for laying eggs. Fall irrigation can help the turf withstand any root damage caused by the grubs.

STAY AHEAD Taking a preventive approach to dealing with grubs is often

the most effective control method.

These chafers typically feed later in fall and start again in the spring.

JAPANESE BEETLE

These grubs develop by feeding on the thatch layer of a lawn. The invasive species feeds on grass roots in the spring and fall. These pests reach adulthood in July and can cause damage to leaves on a variety of plants.

Although irrigation helps maintain a healthy turf to defend against grub



damage, irrigation may make areas attractive for the pests to lay eggs in June and July.

MANAGEMENT

Like with many turfgrass issues, a preventive approach is ideal. The target time to apply an insecticide is during the grub's first instar life stage.

Product applications can be made in late summer and early fall with active ingredients that include imidacloprid, thiamethoxam, chlorantraniliprole and clothianidin. Curative applications can be made with products that contain trichlorfoxn or carbaryl.

SOURCES: Rick Fletcher, Nufarm; David Shetlar, Ph.D., Ohio State University; David Smitley, Ph.D., Michigan State University.



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DID YOU KNOW

Companies share their most popular combination fertilizer, how to use it and their best application tip

Combination fertilizers

BY DANIELLE PESTA | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

COMPANY/PRODUCT	USE	APPLICATION	ACTIVE INGREDIENT(S)
The Andersons 21-22-4 Fertilizer with Mesotrione The Constants	Controls many broadleaf and grassy weeds including crabgrass, yellow woodsorrel, chickweed, buckhorn plantain, hairy bitter- cress, dandelion and clover.	Can be applied in conjunction with seeding or directly after. Each homogenous prill of 21-22-4 Fertilizer with Mesotrione con- tains all NPK nutrients plus the mesotrione herbicide.	Mesotrione
LebanonTurf ProScape Fertilizer with Acelepryn plus Dimension	Controls crabgrass, other grassy weeds and broadleaf weeds, as well as insects such as white grubs, billbugs and turf caterpillars.	Apply from early April to end of May prior to germination in established lawns and ornamental grasses. It works best if applica- tion receives 0.5 inch of rainfall or irrigation within 30 days.	Chlorantraniliprole and dithiopyr
Knox Fertilizer Co. One & Done	Controls crabgrass and insects/ grubs. Chlorantraniliprole has a low impact on nontarget organisms. Dithiopyr provides pre- and poste- mergent crabgrass control.	Can be applied in early April for season-long control of insects, grubs and crabgrass. Early-sea- son applications help the effec- tiveness of the insect control.	Chlorantraniliprole and dithiopyr

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PRODUCTS THAT WORK



GRAHAM SPRAY EQUIPMENT MAVERICK

COMPANY: Graham Spray Equipment URL: GrahamSE.com

Graham Spray Equipment's latest design, the Maverick, costs less than the combination of a high-quality pickup truck and spray unit. With a much tighter turning radius, the Maverick provides high maneuverability and a spacious aluminum flatbed measuring 10 feet by 8 feet. It also features ample storage, greater cargo capacity and easier access to spray equipment. It offers impressive handling, efficiency, affordability, longevity and performance, according to the company.

(\mathbf{E})

EMPRO 24V LITHIUM ION RECHARGEABLE BACKPACK SPRAYER

COMPANY: Ewing Irrigation **URL:** EwingIrrigation.com The Empro 24V Lithium Ion Rechargeable Backpack Sprayer from Ewing Irrigation & Landscape Supply features a 6-inch opening, making filling easy. The backpack sprayer offers three-stage filtration, ensuring uninterrupted operation. A translucent tank allows the operator to conveniently monitor fluid levels, and a 20-inch chrome-plated steel

wand with a cushion grip handle provides extended reach. Two hours of runtime on a single charge sprays up to 58 gallons. The backpack's padded back pad, deluxe straps and lumbar support help operators spray comfortably for hours.

EMPRO

24V MICHAN DE RECENT

CHAPIN 63900 COMMERCIAL DUTY BACKPACK SPRAYER COMPANY: Chapin

Manufacturing URL: ChapinMfg.com The Chapin 63900 Commercial Duty Backpack Sprayer incorporates both diaphragm and piston pump technology to produce increased psi and eliminate piston leaking. A three-stage filtration system includes a filter basket in the wide 6-inch opening, a 3D removable filter and a built-in serviceable filter in the cushion grip shutoff. The self-cleaning JetClean

design sends a powerful burst of fluid to prevent debris from clogging the removable filter. A swing-away pump handle allows for right- or left-hand operation.



GREGSON-CLARK ECO-505

COMPANY: Gregson-Clark URL: GregsonClark.com

The Gregson-Clark Eco-505 Injection System allows the lawn care operator to selectively apply a pesticide on demand, while making a blanket application of fertilizer. By pulling the second trigger on the injection gun, the pesticide solution is injected instantaneously into the flow of the fertilizer at the gun. The complete system consists of a 9-gallon or 5-gallon tank, pumping unit, Hannay dual-line hose reel, coaxial hose and dual-trigger gun. The Eco-505 can easily be incorporated into any existing lawn care spray unit, according to the company.

MAINTENANCE SHOP

Spray equipment to-do's

A checklist for properly maintaining spray equipment BY SARAH WEBB | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

eeping up with a busy spray schedule would be difficult without the help of properly functioning spray equipment. To ensure a steady flow of customers — and revenue — lawn care operators (LCOs) should take the time to correctly maintain their tanks and sprayers.

"Your time is precious, the spray solutions are expensive and the results of your hard work are important," says Anne Miller, sprayer technical expert at Chapin Manufacturing. "Maintaining your sprayer saves you time, money and improves the look of your landscaping."

Landscape Management spoke with Miller and Rhett Clark, president and owner of Gregson-Clark Spraying Equipment, to find out what maintenance tasks LCOs should check off their lists.

HANDHELD AND SMALL MOUNTED UNITS

✓ Periodically check to make sure filters are clean and free of debris.

✓ Rinse the tank twice with water after each use. Be sure to pressurize the tank and spray water through the hose, wand and nozzle tip. Add a couple of drops of dish soap to the rinse water and continue to rinse the tank until all the bubbles are gone, Miller suggests. "By removing the spray solution, you are able to prevent chemical attack within the tank and prevent any cross contamination of residual spray solu-



tion the next time you use the tank," she says. After rinsing the tank at the end of the season, leave it upside down with the pump removed in a warm, dry location.

✓ Be sure to always use the right sprayer for the right chemical, Miller says. In some cases, manufacturers design certain tanks to be more resistant to chemicals with low pH levels.

✓ When a handheld sprayer is set down between uses while out on the job, tip the tank with the bottom side up and spray out any product left in the hose and wand until only air is flowing. "This will reduce the chance of spray solution gumming up the filters and hose," Miller says.

✓ If the nozzle tip becomes clogged, remove the tip and rinse it with water. "Do not try to poke a hole through the nozzle opening as you could damage it, and this may affect your spray pattern," Miller says.

LARGE MOUNTED SPRAYERS

 Regularly inspect the hose, fittings and polyethylene tanks. Be aware that sunlight can degrade these components.
Know the correct oil type for the engine, gear reduction and pump. Check oil levels daily. "Many engines have oil sensors in them and will not allow the engine to run in a low-oil condition," Clark says. "The pump and gear reduction oil should remain steady under normal operation."

✓ Inspect hose reels for loose and faulty wire connections. "Although reel motors can fail, the more likely cause of an electric reel not working is a faulty switch, solenoid or wire connection, particularly the ground wire," Clark says. "It's important to have a properly sized fuse or circuit breaker in the reel wiring assembly." Also, be sure to grease the reel swivel monthly.

✓ Keep the suction strainer clean. A clogged strainer will result in poor system performance and premature diaphragm failure. "Often when a pump will not build or sustain pressure, the issue is on the suction side of the pump, either a clogged strainer or an air leak," Clark says.

✓ Replace diaphragms after every 500 hours of use. Milky or missing oil in the pump site glass is an indication of diaphragm failure, Clark says. Having replacement diaphragms and pump oil in stock can help reduce downtime. ⊕


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COMPANY Moore Landscapes

DETAILS Navy Pier is one of the most-visited tourist attractions in the Midwest, so the company tasked with maintaining the landscaping has to be at the top of its game.

Moore Landscapes has been tending the property at Navy Pier for a little more than 10 years.

The pier sees more than 9 million visitors annually, the company says, which poses maintenance challenges for Moore Landscapes. Plants and flowers are frequently trampled by crowds. To help mitigate this damage, the company orders 10 percent more seasonal flowers than it needs, so damaged plants can be replaced.

The pier is open to the public 365 days a year, so crews have limited windows in which to do their work. Many of the plants need to be hand watered, a task that's done between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. If crews needs to perform turf applications, it gives a 24-hour notice.

Trees planted on the pier are in planters, meaning they have a limited root space, and trees in the parks around the pier are subject to compaction due to heavy foot traffic.

To combat this, Moore Landscapes ensures that trees in planters are watered deeply and performs root pruning every season. Tree root zones in parks are aerated and fertilized annually to ensure healthy growth.

The project won the company a 2018 Gold Award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence Program.

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









Captions 1. Visitors often stand by (or in) the flowering perennials at this extremely popular photo spot. Frequent trampling causes damage that requires pruning or plant replacement. All planters are drip irrigated but also require supplemental watering. 2. Rows of deciduous trees line the South Pier, offering shade for pedestrians. The trees are planted in large pits with an irrigation system that does not rely on city water but uses rainwater that is captured and stored in underground cisterns. The tree grates are adjusted in width as the tree caliber increases over time. 3. The North Dock is lined with 240 concrete planters, which are planted with more than 4,000 summer annuals. The depth of the planters is only 8 inches so maintaining sufficient moisture is a challenge due to the shallow soil depth and heat that radiates off the concrete planters. Planters are soil probed daily for moisture levels to determine the watering schedule. 4. Watering at Navy Pier is an everyday task. Many of the plantings are in above-ground planters that dry rapidly. Planters are often relocated due to the many events held at the pier, which adds additional stress for the flowering plants. 5. More than 20,000 summer annuals must be installed prior to Memorial Day weekend. Designers work over the winter to present several concepts to Navy Pier's management. Once a plant palette is selected, plants are sourced and grown locally. A percentage of additional plant material is secured to replace damaged and stolen plants. Multiple walk-throughs are done daily for quality inspection and to monitor plant health care. 6. There are more than 3 acres of turf throughout the property. Core aeration is performed routinely along with slit seeding. Fertilizers are added to help ensure a dense healthy stand of turf at all times. Irrigation is monitored daily for head adjustments and damage.

SOFTWARE

A software update

Find out how software can help you connect with more customers BY CLARA RICHTER | LM MANAGING EDITOR



oftware is at the center of many businesses these days. With its ability to streamline processes, store information and increase efficiency, it has become a solution for landscape contractors looking to modernize the way they do business.

Software isn't just something the back office uses to create invoices, process payments and route crews. It is also a powerful tool companies can use to get in front of and create a better experience for their customers.

Carrier's Turf Pros Lawn Care in Sutton, Mass., has been using SingleOps' software for the last two years.

"We have access to a customer's information quickly, it's easier to communicate through SingleOps and we have a record of the emails we send to them," says Jennifer Power, office manager at Carrier's Turf Pros.

The company performs lawn care services for a 90 percent residential and 10 percent commercial clientele.

Greg Brooks, CEO, founder and president of Brooks Landscaping, has been using Jobber since 2014. The company, based in Hiram, Ga., has grown a lot in the five years since it was founded, and Brooks said much of that growth is thanks in part to the software.

"When Jobber was introduced to me, it was a pivotal time in my business because we were transitioning away from trying to keep up with 60ish clients that we were doing maintenance for," he says. "It allowed us to be 10 times more effective out in the field and be more effective toward being more professional with our clients."

COMMUNICATE AND CONNECT

Being able to communicate effectively Continued on page 40



THE NEW KING OF THE HILL.

THE CUB CADET PRO Z 972 SD IS A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.

The Cub Cadet[®] PRO Z[™] 972 SD has changed the way commercial cutters attack slopes and tough terrain.

Cub Cadet listened to the top concerns of commercial landscapers and put together a machine that conquers steep hillsides, offers superior cutting performance, keeps you comfortable all day long and reduces downtime to keep you on the job.

"Every new machine we launch is designed to solve problems for the commercial cutter. We want to produce game changers," said Josh Sooy, director of the professional business segment at Cub Cadet. "Not only do we strive to improve upon durability, comfort and productivity, we design machines that let operators do things other machines can't."

Let's talk about hillside confidence. The PRO Z 972 SD cuts on slopes up to 25 degrees (or 46 percent of grade). On a standard lap bar zero-turn mower, the front casters go wherever the machine pushes them and can't be steered. On steep slopes, gravity pulls the front of the machine down and the front wheels follow. The PRO Z 972's steering wheel technology lets you control the front wheels, which is a huge advantage on slopes and challenging terrain. This machine takes it a step further with dual rear wheels and optimized weight distribution for handling slopes. This makes the machine ideal on uneven or varying terrain for landscapers or municipalities mowing on imposing inclines.

What does that mean for productivity? For starters, you can mow across hillsides, which minimizes turning and improves cut speed and quality. Many lap bar zero-turn operators mow up and down a slope because their machines may slide down if they mow horizontally. This is inefficient, unsafe and puts a lot of stress on the machine.

Features-wise, the machine uses the thickest, strongest steel deck in the industry with its triple-7-gauge steel construction. The frame features a full-length 3/8- x 5-inch rail-style construction, while the 35 hp* Kawasaki® FX1000V (999cc) engine and 16cc Parker drive system provide the power needed to operate. An electronic deck lift raises and lowers the 72-inch deck, along with 14.9-gallon fuel tank capacity for extended use.

And let's not forget about comfort. Cub Cadet pulled out all the stops to deliver a fully adjustable air-ride seat that literally gives you a cushion of air to sit on. Even at high speeds, vibrations and vertical movements are significantly dampened.

> "Cub Cadet put together a machine that conquers steep hillsides, offers superior cutting performance, keeps you comfortable all day long and reduces downtime to keep you on the job."

"You can't beat the look on the face of a commercial cutter when they demo the 972 SD and can tackle their toughest terrain with confidence," said Sooy. "The PRO Z 972 SD is just one machine in the PRO Z Series, which continues to earn the trust of professionals."

Learn more at CubCadet.com/PRO



*As required by Kawasaki, horsepower tested in accordance with SAE J1195 and rated in accordance with SAE J2723 and certified by SAE International.

MOWING + MAINTENANCE



Continued from page 38

with customers is important for business owners. That's why many software solutions available to landscape contractors have features that allow companies to easily connect with their clients.

"We have built in some intelligent automated email and text message functionality," says Sean McCormick, CEO and co-founder of SingleOps. "You can have reminders about estimates. You can have emails about work. If there is a rain delay, you can notify customers."

According to Power, SingleOps allows Carrier's Turf Pros to send out planned emails to customers and also text them when crews are on their way.

"Communication with our customers has greatly improved through the use of SingleOps," she says.

Shawn Cadeau, chief revenue officer for Jobber, adds that features like





texting and branding make a business really impressive. "These are things (customers) might expect from a much larger company," he adds.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Customer portals are another innovation many software companies are including in their products to allow users to give their clients a better customer experience.

These portals can perform any number of functions, and they give the customer greater insight into the

portal this year where (customers) can go into their portal and see the invoices that are outstanding, the services they've signed up for. They can request or add on a service right through the portal," Power says.

Jobber has a Client Hub, which allows for two-way communication between the customer and the company. This feature makes it possible for companies to view quotes and ask questions of the customer using the hub, Cadeau says. It also allows the user to ask the client for feedback after completing a job.

"(The client hub) is an opportunity for the customer to have their own portal. They're able to see their invoices and our movement with them," Brooks says. "It provides two-way communication with clients. It's been instrumental in being able to take a payment on a deposit, rather than having to take a payment through check. It's created a 65 percent conversion ratio just simply on them being able to decide upon making the deposit on their credit card."

Real Green also has a customerassisted website that allows customers to handle referrals and order services right online, says Brian Bacigalupo, director of software sales and account management for the company.

"The end-to-end service is very important," he adds. "These are people who want to run their business and not do the administrative stuff. This allows them to do that efficiently."







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ROBOTIC MOWERS

Put mowing on autopilot

Implementing robotic mowers is one way to ease the industry's labor shortage BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER | CONTRIBUTOR

rian Chapman is about to install a robotic lawn mower on a residential property. While it sounds like a futuristic process, he says it will only take him about an hour to do on this average-sized lawn. He would know—this is the seventh robotic mower Chapman has installed this year, and he has 15 more properties waiting for installation. Although they are small, these machines drastically cut down on the time it takes to maintain these properties and allow crews at Lambert Landscape Co. in Dallas to focus on more skilled tasks, like trimming, edging and bed maintenance.

"We will never replace the landscaper — you just can't do it — but robotic mowers ultimately make the job easier for our guys," says Chapman, the company's director of fleet and facilities. "Lambert's has always prided itself on being a leader in innovation."

While Lambert may be ahead of the game, robotic mowers have grown in popularity over the past few years. Once seen as frivolous gadgets, many companies now view robotic mowers as timesaving tools, particularly companies affected by the industry's labor shortage.

"Year one, when these mowers were introduced, we were a joke and not taken seriously," says Steven Uljua, Husqvarna's North American product manager for robotics. "In year two, we were the enemy, and people feared we were replacing human jobs with robots. This year, contractors are embracing us as another tool to help with the labor shortage."

Chapman spent about two years testing different robotic mowers, and Lambert's began installing the Husqvarna Automower early this year. The company is also a full-service



Husqvarna Automower dealer that sells, installs and services mowers not only on its clients' properties but also to the general public. Lambert's is a \$15 million company that offers 50 percent construction and 50 percent maintenance services to a residential clientele.



The installation process starts with a site visit to plan out the mowing area. Chapman, who handles all Automower sales,

installations and maintenance for Lambert's, then uses a perimeter wire machine that buries the wire 2 inches into the ground. Once the wire is buried, it is attached to the base station. From start to finish, the process takes anywhere from one to three hours, depending on the number of obstacles in and size of a lawn.

"As of right now, we are using the mowers on existing accounts that already have mowing time built in, like a lease of the mower through their maintenance contract," Chapman says. "In the near future, we will be offering the robotic mower as an additional service along with the use of battery-powered equipment for completely quiet, eco-friendly service."

Lambert's crews only use push mowers, and Chapman says robotic mowers save anywhere from two to four manhours per job. Because the mowers can run at any time of the day or night and are completely weatherproof, maintenance schedules are not impacted by rain or other restrictions.

"We have one client whose kids like to play outside in the afternoon so their mower is scheduled to only run at night," Chapman says. "Others like to watch it mow, so it runs in the evening while they sit outside. I also make sure it does not interfere with irrigation schedules. The runtime is based on each client's needs."

Uljua says this flexibility opens up new job opportunities for contractors that may not have been feasible before.

"At most hospitals, for example, noise is very concerning," he says. "You bring in a robotic mower to do the grass and send in a crew to do the trimming, edging and blowing, and you can get in and out with a small impact on noise.

"This is the future — it's not going away," Uljua adds. "It is new technology, and there is some uncertainly, but it's that see-it-to-believe-it mentality."

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.



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DESIGN BUILD + INSTALLATION

HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

A stellar sportsplex

LOCATION Essex Fells, N.J. COMPANY Landscape Techniques

DETAILS This project began when the clients purchased the property immediately adjacent to their home with a plan to create a sportsplexlike environment.

The clients recruited their longtime contractor, Landscape Techniques, for the project. The team began by demolishing the existing home on the new property and then completely regrading the site to construct regulation tennis and bocce ball courts. The original property had a large depressed retention basin, which had to be drained, have wet soils mucked out and then filled to bring it back to grade. Overall, the site's wet soils also had to be removed to stabilize hardscape elements.

According to Landscape Techniques President Brian Koribanick, the extensive site work required the use of Caterpillar construction equipment, including a 314 excavator, D3 Cat dozer, mini Cat excavator and a track skid loader. The cabana was constructed on 21 concrete-reinforced piers that were 6 to 10 feet deep, 18 inches in diameter and tied into a 10-foot reinforced slab to support and stabilize structures. The company trucked in 2,800 tons of crushed concrete aggregate to stabilize the wall and backfill the cabana, tennis court and patio areas.

The project earned Landscape Techniques 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.

















Captions | 1. A diverse mass of grasses, flowering perennials, roses, hydrangeas and other varieties of plant material soften the boulder wall construction. 2. The newly acquired 1-acre property was cleared and renovated to include a cabin, fire pit, tennis and bocce ball courts. 3. The 1,200-squarefoot cabana includes a full bath and kitchen, storage area, indoor/outdoor shower and TV viewing area. 4. The 12-by-80-foot bocce court is surfaced with crushed oyster shells and surrounded by lush, colorful plantings. 5. Three hundred tons of 4-to-5-foot boulders were used in the construction of retaining walls surrounding the tennis and bocce courts. 6. The cabana was constructed on 21 6-by-10-foot deep, 18-inch wide concrete piers with 8-inch reinforced concrete slabs. 7. The upper level landscape terrace provides maximum turf area and perimeter screening.

DESIGN BUILD + INSTALLATION

INSTALLATION SOLUTIONS



Staying on track

Extend the work season with track loaders and attachments by LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

rom extreme weather conditions to varying tasks, track loaders and their attachments are up for the job.

When it comes to what makes track loaders versatile pieces of equipment, Lee Padgett, product manager at Takeuchi-US, says there are many contributing factors.

"Track machines are better suited for multiterrain use and have lower ground pressure, reducing the amount of disturbance to the job site," Padgett says. Due to their base, track loaders are more stable than machines with wheels, and operators can use them in most conditions including mud, ice and snow, says Chris Trampush, product manager for skid-steer loaders and compact

track loaders at JCB North America.

"They're also great for construction worksites," Trampush says. "You don't have to worry about puncturing a tire. They pretty much can go anywhere you need to."

QUICK CHANGE

Using attachments on track loaders can help landscape pros transition from job to job quickly.



Being able to use track loaders throughout the year adds to their value as well, allowing owners to look for more areas where they can use their machines.

"As the seasons change, new opportunities emerge, and the proactive contractor can capture these by keeping his machine producing year-round," Padgett says. "Where dirt work and grading may be a summertime focus, wintertime may bring additional opportunities like snow removal."

Helping to extend the machine's use throughout the year is the track loader's ability to balance torque with tractive efforts, thanks to more groundto-surface contact, says Jason Boerger, marketing manager, Bobcat Co.

The tracks also distribute the weight, reducing ground disturbance. To get the most from the machine,

it's important for operators to pair them with the right attachments for each job.

"You wouldn't need multiple machines or

to hire multiple operators," Trampush says. "You can just add more attachments."

Jason Boerger

The versatility and capabilities of track loaders and their attachments are *Continued on page 48*

gett says. Lee Padgett can go

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INSTALLATION SOLUTIONS



Continued from page 46 especially helpful with the industry's labor shortage.

"As the labor force tightens, contractors can take advantage of the many different types of hydraulic attachments available now for compact track loaders," Padgett says. "The work that used to take a crew of people can now be done with one or two guys, saving time and labor cost as well."

Track loaders are offered in standard- and high-flow auxiliary configurations, Padgett says, which make them good platforms for use with a wide variety of hydraulic attachments.

Popular attachments include buckets to move materials, mulchers for clearing,

sweepers to clean streets, grapples for debris removal and pallet forks to load/ unload materials, Trampush says. The specific tasks and jobs will determine the best type of attachment, and most manufacturers offer dozens of them from which to choose.

Daily checks and proactive maintenance are vital to reduce downtime and keep these machines running at peak level. While track loaders can tackle muddy conditions better than their wheeled counterparts, those environments can cause mud and other debris to build up in the undercarriage.

<complex-block>

"Clean the undercarriage out, especially in cold environments where it can freeze up and cause problems, like track slippage," Trampush says.

> It's also important for operators to use track loaders in the right applications and understand how to maneuver them on job sites. For example, if there's concrete or cement work on a site, Trampush says operators need to be careful traveling across it, especially with making turns.

"If you have to turn, make a wide turn or a three-point turn to save your life expectancy on the tracks," Trampush says.

Whether on a construction site or landscape, track loaders have shown they can leave a small footprint while also making a big impact on what contractors can accomplish with them and their attachments.

"There are lots of opportunities that used to go to their larger counterparts that can now be done more efficiently and cheaper with today's track loaders," Padgett says. ▲ IT'S VERY IMPORTANT FOR US TO BE ENGAGED AND TO LET MILITARY FAMILIES AND VETERANS KNOW WE

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BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Trimming the fat

Doug Taylor's lean approach to growth has helped his Ontario-based design/build firm thrive

BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER | CONTRIBUTOR

n 2016, Doug Taylor found his company at a revenue plateau. But instead of achieving growth by scaling up, the president of Frontiers Landscape Architecture in Georgetown, Ontario, did the opposite. He went from a staff of 18 down to a more manageable group of 12 and focused on operating in a leaner, more efficient way. Frontiers Landscape Architecture has since nearly doubled its revenue, growing from \$1.5 million to \$2.8 million in just two years.

"The traditional idea of growing is scaling up — doing more of what you're already doing," says Taylor, whose design/build firm serves an 80 percent residential, 20 percent commercial clientele. "We have always been a small, lean business, and we saw scaling up as something that would make it difficult

to keep our standards."



In addition to a staff overhaul, Taylor revamped three main areas of his business with a goal of getting more work done in a faster, smarter way.

"For us, everything boils down to time — if we can get it done faster, then we can move on to the next job," he says. "If we can get two jobs done in the time it used to take us to do one, we are effectively doubling our revenue."

Doug Taylor

EQUIPMENT

In the past, Taylor's crews operated standard-sized construction equipment. But he found that it was often difficult to access residential backyards with these large machines, and his employees would spend too much time doing work by hand. Taylor invested in miniature skid-steers and excavators that easily fit through gates and other tight areas.

"We used to need four or five guys digging a patio by hand," Taylor says. "We can now do that with two guys in half the time."

Taylor purchased a vacuum clamp, which allows his crews to move heavy stones and pavers with ease. He also switched to cordless power tools, which eliminate the hazard of cords running through a job site and the need for access to an outlet, making crew members safer and more efficient.

"Like many in the industry, we are battling a labor shortage," Taylor says. "We have exploited any innovations and gadgets that we can find."



SUBCONTRACTORS

As a smaller company with smaller projects, Taylor's crews would complete the majority of each job themselves. But as Frontiers Landscape Architecture has grown, Taylor has embraced the use of subcontractors, which allows his crews to focus only on what they do best. While electrical work, gas work and pool installations used to always be subbed out, Taylor now also outsources concrete and asphalt work, largescale tree work, irrigation and complex masonry projects. He also doubles up where he can — for example, if the asphalt contractor also can excavate the site, Taylor's crews can use that time to perform more profitable tasks.

"With larger, higher-caliber projects comes a higher expectation of the quality of work, so we rely on specialty sub trades that are excellent at what they do," Taylor says. "We have also found that we can increase revenue because, since we aren't providing that product to the client ourselves, we are able to pivot and make revenue elsewhere."

MATERIALS

Like he does with advancements in equipment, Taylor seeks out advancements in materials that make the work quicker and easier for his crews. He has embraced the new technology that makes stones lighter and easier to maneuver. New hidden clips and fastener systems make retaining walls quicker to construct. The vacuum clamp has "opened a lot of doors" for using heavier patio stones that were too cumbersome before.

"Manufacturers and suppliers are doing a good job innovating and creating materials that take a fraction of the time to install," Taylor says. "Most cost more, but the material price is passed on to the client. We use half the time installing it, and then we can go on to another task.

"You would think that investing in equipment and tools is against the rationale of staying lean, but it's more about staying efficient," he adds. "It's a mental hurdle to get over, and you have to take the big picture into account. Doing all of this was how we were able to shrink our staff and almost double our revenue."

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

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IRRIGATION + WATER MANAGEMENT

WATER WORLD

Out with the old

LOCATION Grand Rapids, Mich.

COMPANY Grapids Irrigation

DETAILS The client needed a new irrigation system installed at an apartment complex that had recently been converted from an old church building.

Grapids Irrigation answered with the design and installation of a 10-zone system across a total area of about 0.75 of an acre.

"As the city is being changed, with the church being converted over to an apartment complex, it just made it kind of interesting to balance the old and the new," says Aaron Katerberg, CEO of Grapids Irrigation.

To complete the job, Grapids used Irritrol valves, a Hunter controller and sprays and gears for the irrigation system, as well as a Ditch Witch Zahn trencher to install and pull piping.

Grapids Irrigation crew members marked and separated the lawn areas from bed areas. The company also had to call a plumber to install the backflow protector.

A major challenge the Grapids team faced was installing the sleeving.

"We had to stop by the site a lot to be in and out as the concrete was being poured to make sure that we had all of our sleeves underneath all of those areas," Katerberg says.

All in all, the project took three crew members about four days to complete.

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







Captions | 1. A new apartment complex in place of an old church represents just one of the ways the city of Grand Rapids has changed. Grapids Irrigation was quick to adapt to the changing environment by raising its hand to perform the irrigation installation for the new complex. 2. Through-

out the entire apartment complex, Grapids Irrigation crews were responsible for setting up 10 zones across a total of about 0.75 of an acre. 3. Grapids Irrigation's crews marked out and separated bed areas such as this one from turf areas. 4. One of the most interesting parts of the job for the company was installing the new system over the one that had previously been in place, according to Grapids Irrigation CEO Aaron Katerberg. 5. An image of the older building housing a church that used to stand where the modern apartment complex does now.

IRRIGATION + WATER MANAGEMENT

EXPERTS' TIPS

Trenchers

TRENCH AWAY When considering what type of trencher to buy, irrigation pros should consider several different factors.



Advice for choosing the right trencher

renchers are tools that can help ease the burdens of an irrigation crew and make them more efficient when they're on the job.

There are several options when it comes to trenchers, notably, whether to invest in a walk-behind (pedestrian) or ride-on machine. When it comes to making that choice, soil type in your area can have a big impact on what type of machine you choose. "A lot of it depends on geology," says Greg Winchel, owner of Winchel Irrigation in Grand Rapids, Mich. "In some places, trenching is mandatory."

Some soils, like those in West Michigan where Winchel Irrigation is located, allow crews to simply plow pipe in, but in some parts of the country, the soil is either too dense or too rocky, and crews have to use a trencher.

In an area with dense or rocky soil, a ride-on trencher is going to provide

users with the most efficient experience. A walk-behind trencher might be used in situations where soil is not soft enough to plow pipe in, but size restrictions on the property don't allow for crews to use a ride-on machine, Winchel says.

There are a few other factors that should be considered when determining whether to use a pedestrian or rideon trencher. We asked a few experts to weigh in on the subject.

VERMEER CORP. Brett Newendorp

Landscape market manager Job-site location and trenching distances are two main factors landscapers should think



about when trying to choose between a pedestrian trencher and ride-on trencher. Pedestrian trenchers are compact and able to fit in more confined areas, making it easier to maneuver near buildings. However, when trenching at greater distances, rideon tractor trenchers can be more efficient. With many ride-on models, contractors can swap out the trencher with different attachments. For example, Vermeer's ride-on tractor can be outfitted with a trencher, vibratory plow, backhoe attachment and reel carrier. There are also optional weight kits available, which are helpful for plowing or trenching in challenging ground conditions.

DITCH WITCH Chris Thompson



Product manager, compact equipment and heavy-duty trenchers

There is more to deciding between a ride-on trencher and a walk-behind trencher than just choosing to embrace (or forgo) your day's cardio exercise. There are two main factors to consider when deciding which type of trencher fits a unique project. First, determine the size of the job. Going more than 250 feet is a sign that a ride-on trencher is the machine for you. Another consideration is whether or not you have multiple trenches to dig. With long runs or multiple trenches, spending a little more on a ride-on trencher is going to pay off through the time you will save. Second, consider your trench dimensions and available space. A good rule of thumb: A walkbehind trencher will work best up to a depth of 48 inches and a width of 8 inches. Weighing these factors can save you time and money on the job.

> TIGHT SQUEEZE Walk-behind trenchers are often most useful in smaller, more confined areas.

TORO Kyle Cartwright

Marketing manager

There isn't a perfect trencher for every project, but there are a few things to consider when purchasing a trencher. First, consider the size of the project. Think about the machine's horsepower, footprint, chain width and boom depth. Linear feet being trenched and width/depth of trench will determine the overall size of the trencher that is needed. Operators should also consider the type of utilities that are being installed and the proper chain width and boom depth for the utilities. Certain utilities require different depths and widths for proper installation and code requirements. Third, keep in mind the type of conditions of a typical application. When doing so, consider the trencher's chain width, boom depth and machine footprint. There are multiple types of chains to consider. From soil, rock, frost and combination (to name a few), choosing the correct chain will provide the best results and chain/machine longevity. Last, determine if there is a dedicated operator or multiple operators using the trencher, which impacts how you consider the machine's controls. Dedicated operators are harder to find and afford. With the labor market shrinking, machines' controls need to be easy to use at all skill levels.



BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Tidy van, efficient plan

Conserva Irrigation offers a look at how it keeps its irrigation vehicles organized

BY SARAH WEBB | *LM* ASSOCIATE EDITOR

rrigation technicians spend so much time working out of their vehicles that those spaces often function as second (or even first) offices. To help operations flow efficiently, it's important to keep those vehicles organized.

MORE ONLINE

Find more tips for organizing irrigation vehicles at LandscapeManagement.net.

"Organization is key, and it all comes down to the leader," says Russ Jundt, founder, vice president and brand leader of Conserva Irrigation. "It doesn't matter if you have two service trucks — they should be geared up the same way so if any one technician jumps in that vehicle, they know exactly where everything is."

Landscape Management spoke with Jundt to gain some insight on how Conserva Irrigation keeps its service vehicles shipshape. 0



• Every vehicle within Conserva's 36 operations is a fully wrapped enclosed van or pickup truck with a topper.

Every van is set up with electronic diagnostic equipment. Such equipment helps the company trace and find faults within wires. It also helps Conserva techs check and diagnose any electrical issues at the controller and in valve boxes in the field.



• Every vehicle within Conserva's fleet is laid out the same way so crew members don't waste time looking for materials. Drawers, racks and other organizational tools are standard across all vehicles. Keeping a tidy vehicle also enables crews to carry around less inventory, Jundt says.

"If you have a blank slate, a wide-open truck, it will get filled with two, three or four times the amount of stock that it needs," Jundt says. "The human tendency when there's lack of organization is to continue to cram parts in there."

Jundt estimates that a disorganized vehicle may carry nearly \$20,000 worth of parts, whereas an organized one may only carry about \$6,000 worth of inventory.



To keep tools, irrigation parts and other equipment orderly, Conserva invented a six-drawer system called a "Conserva Pak."

"Those systems are organized in such a way that every vehicle has about 99 percent of the parts that a technician would need on any given day," Jundt says.

The drawers house materials necessary for in-ground installations, hand tools and fittings.

The company then runs an inventory report based on what items are picked out of the Conserva Paks each day.

Originally, the Conserva Pak consisted of three drawers, but after feedback from technicians, the company standardized the component to six drawers. The company also adjusted the depth of the drawers.



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A LOOK BACK

Those were the days

In 2003, GIE only had 6,000 attendees and took up 100,000 square feet. It was held in St. Louis that year, but the directors were considering moving it to a "convention city," like Orlando, Fla., to help the show gain more traction. Clearly it has, thanks to merging with the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute's International Lawn, Garden & Power Equipment Expo in 2006, even without being held in a location like Orlando, GIE+EXPO takes up roughly 500,000 square feet of space in the Kentucky Expo Center, and that doesn't include the space for outdoor exhibits and the conference rooms where Landscapes talks are held. Will you be attending the show this year? Tweet at us at **@landscapemgmt** and let us know what vou're most excited about.





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Why marketing needs a bigger purpose

n late 1996, Apple acquired NeXT, the company Steve Jobs founded after getting kicked out of Apple more than a decade earlier. In 1997, Apple fired its CEO

and named Jobs interim CEO.

Most analysts had already given up on Apple. It was on the brink of bankruptcy and losing billions.

Apple's marketing campaign at the time was communicating features and benefits to customers. Jobs believed this way of marketing was wrong.

"We've lost our way," he said. "We need to get back to our core value that people with passion change the world for the better."

That purpose changed the marketing road map. It put Apple on a path to innovation, and it became the first company to reach a market valuation of a trillion U.S. dollars.

MARKETING THAT DIFFERENTIATES IS UNLIKE ADVERTISING

According to a July 15 article in AdAge, marketing is moving from an interruption model to one that is purpose driven.

The interruption model wants to sell more products. The purpose-driven

model aims for customer experiences that are bigger than products.

Apple proved the purpose-driven model works. The idea that marketing must have a purpose is changing the marketing landscape in dramatic ways.

The most stunning change is the elimination of the chief marketing officer role. Marketing titans like Coca-Cola, Unilever and Taco Bell have created new positions to replace CMOs.

Chief growth officer, chief innovation officer and chief experience officer are some of the new titles emerging. These titles signal a shift from what marketing is to what it can become, and that's something bigger.

Companies have to commit to helping customers in ways that products cannot.

Does your marketing have a purpose bigger than revenue and profits?

If it doesn't, it lacks meaning, and a meaningful point of differentiation. This is what Steve Jobs was saying. To compete with HP and IBM, Apple had to be true to its core value, its purpose of changing the world.

Are you ready to change the world? At least your small corner of it?





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

BRAND-PURPOSE MARKETING TRANSCENDS MARKETING BARRIERS

The marketing officers that were eliminated did their jobs. They successfully marketed products, but all products have their limits.

Nowadays, people want more. They want to rally around brands that have a purpose greater than what they sell. You can find that purpose by looking inside.

As marketers, we tend to look outside ourselves for validation. We do what the market seems to be telling us to do, only to find out that markets move quickly.

To win, you have to be smarter than the market.

What are your customers saying that you can build your marketing around? Build listening systems to gather and analyze data that informs your purpose.

To find this data, look no further than replies to your email newsletters, social media comments and Google Profile reviews, both positive and negative. Now connect that data with your purpose.

That purpose, that promise, is your brand.

A brand purpose conveys important feelings of community and trust. It unifies and transcends traditional marketing barriers. Customers large and small can all get behind the same brand purpose.

Make marketing that shows your customers it understands how they feel and thinks as they do. Naturally, this will repel some people, and that's OK.

Brand-purpose marketing is giving customers a relationship with a company that dares to think bigger.

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The ultimate GIE+EXPO experience

hat is the ultimate GIE+EXPO experience? Hold on, we'll get to that in a minute. First, it's important to understand that planning is a prerequisite. Showing up to the largest event in our industry without a solid plan isn't going to get 'er done. Now is the time to map out your ultimate GIE+EXPO experience. If you're attending with someone else or a group from your company, it's even more critical to plan ahead.

Let's start with **networking.** Every survey I've ever seen indicates that networking is the most valuable aspect of an industry event. I couldn't agree more. However, effective networking takes planning and effort. Because of the abundance of networking events — some simultaneous and in different locations — it's impossible to attend them all. Decide ahead of time which ones are essential and which are not. Be sure to save enough time and energy for the essential networking events.



If you want to take your networking to the next level, do some supplemental research on best practices for where to stand in a room, where to place your name tag and even in which hand to hold your drink. Challenge yourself to become the ultimate networker.

Expanding your circle doesn't necessarily have to happen at a scheduled event. Many professional relationships begin in a coffee line or in the elevator. Introduce yourself to people you don't know. Wear your name badge at all times, even when out to dinner or walking around town. Be sure to bring lots of business cards and have them with you. They won't do you any good in your hotel room. Place some extras in your name badge holder.

The next aspect to consider is **education.** With several educational tracks running simultaneously, this is an area where you must have a plan. Most attendees I see do have a plan for which educational sessions to attend, but where they're lacking is with their follow-up. What happens after the educational session ends? What are the great ideas to bring home? Where are they captured?

Each educational session is an opportunity to bring back one or more new ideas. Taking time to identify these ideas and document them will elevate your educational experience from average to ultimate. Leaders sending people to GIE+EXPO should expect a full report upon their return. Why *wouldn't* you?

GIE+EXPO is not all work and no play. It also offers an excellent opportunity to **unwind.** In fact, the ultimate GIE+EXPO experience includes having fun. When was the last time you were ordered to go have some fun or gave yourself permission to do so?



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

We work way too hard in this industry to not take time to blow off some steam every so often. Louisville, Ky., has an array of options. What do you like to do to unwind? Now is your chance. That's an order. Give yourself permission.

Networking, education and unwinding are all good, but they will catch up to you. Even high-energy extroverts need to **recharge.** It's important to plan some downtime to recharge your batteries so you don't come home exhausted and unprepared to face what lies ahead.

Some people need a vacation after their vacation because their "vacation" drained them. GIE+EXPO isn't a vacation by any means, but the same rule applies here. Take off the cape. You're not a superhero. Don't try to do everything. Less is more.

Finally, what if your GIE+EXPO registration were free? If that sounds appealing, you'll want to check out our drawing for a full registration to the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Landscapes conference and educational track, which includes full GIE+EXPO registration — a \$599 value. Details on how to participate in this drawing will be announced on GrowThe-Bench social media sites and in our e-newsletter. If you have not yet subscribed to our e-newsletter, please visit **GrowTheBench.com** to do so.

The ultimate GIE+EXPO experience is a well-devised blend of networking, education, unwinding and recharging. Will you have an optimal experience without advance planning? Not a chance. So, now is the time to get your plan together. See you in October!



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Follow these guidelines to employ safe practices when using a tractor.

- Ensure you have a slow-moving vehicle sign or other device to alert other drivers;
- Be cautious as tractors don't handle or brake as well as cars or trucks;
- Don't make sudden changes in direction;
- Be aware that a heavier rear piece of equipment like a mower will lessen the weight on the front tires;
- Never engage the differential lock while driving at high speeds;
- Make sure the two brake pedals are properly interlocked. Braking with only one pedal at high speeds may cause a loss of control;
- Be sure that the three-point hitch doesn't accidentally drop while running on the road;
- Never drive on the road in four-wheel drive unless conditions are slippery;
- It's also crucial to not operate the tractor in an



unventilated space and to wear personal protective equipment as recommended. Don't start or operate the tractor from anywhere other than the tractor seat and don't bypass safety systems;

- Wear a seat belt when operating a tractor that has a rollover protection system (ROPS) and don't wear a seat belt when there is no ROPS;
- Avoid handling the tractor on a sideways slope. Approach slopes straight up and down when possible.
 (Driving up a slope backward is the safest approach.) Avoid turning or changing gears on slopes;
- Park on flat ground with the parking brake set. Don't leave the tractor's transmission functions all in neutral; leave a manual transmission's tractor in gear when parked and not running and the shuttle lever in neutral.
- Exercise caution when digging or lifting heavy loads; the tractor can become unbalanced if the whole load is on one side of the bucket.

MORE ONLINE See more about landscape tractor safety at LandscapeManagement.net. SOURCE: GREENIUS





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[State of the Industry] LM Industry Pulse

Our annual LM Industry Pulse report, featured in the December issue, will uncover the landscape



industry's current market conditions, based on our research and extensive interviews with landscape professionals. Are vou interested in providing vour own input on the state of the market? Keep an eye on your inbox for a link to our survey and/or email LM Editorin-Chief Seth Jones at sjones@northcoastmedia.net to schedule an interview.

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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.

Do your numbers add up?

Ve talked a lot in this column about the importance of culture, leadership and exceptional customer service. But the truth is you can get all those right and still lose if you don't get your financials right, too. I've seen many hardworking folks in our industry not realize the gains they should because they don't understand or monitor the financial side of their business.

At The Grow Group, the consultancy and coaching firm I lead, we work with the business owners in our ACE Peer Group program to track and manage 13 numbers that we know landscaping companies need to monitor closely if they want to succeed. By establishing benchmarks for those numbers and comparing results, we help our ACEs see exactly where they stand — within their group and the industry as a whole — and where and how they need to get better.

Unfortunately, I can't cover all 13 of those metrics here, but I can



23.

2

address the top three you need to watch every month:

Gross margin. To calculate this percentage, take your total revenue, subtract the cost of goods sold and divide the result by your total revenue. The industry goal is 50 percent, depending on the type of work you do.

Gross margin essentially measures how your production costs relate to the revenue they generate. If your gross margin starts to fall, you may need to look for ways to cut your labor costs through improved efficiency or to dial back on the costs of materials you're using. Alternatively, you could increase your prices, but do that carefully or you risk losing customers; convey the value you deliver to your clients and the investment it requires on your end to do that.

Profit margin. To calculate this percentage, take your profit (your total revenue minus costs and expenses) and divide it by your total revenue. Ten percent is considered the new breakeven in our industry, so use that as your goal.

Profitability is the ultimate financial metric. Without it, you can't reinvest in new equipment, get the best people to join your team or give back to your community. If you're not netting 10 percent, look for ways to increase your sales volume, reduce your costs of goods sold, rein in expenses and/or raise prices.

Days receivable. To calculate yours, divide your accounts receivable balance by your annual revenue and multiply the result by 365 (the number of days in the year).

This metric tells you the average number of days that a customer invoice is outstanding before it is collected. In the green industry, anything below 30 days is great the more you trim this number, the faster you have cash on hand.

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WHAT GETS MEASURED GETS IMPROVED

Since our industry is seasonal, when you compare your metrics, it's important to measure them against the same month. This will provide you with a much more accurate and useful picture of where you stand and where you need to go.

It's important too to ensure you're capturing your financial data correctly — it does no good to run these calculations if you're not working with accurate numbers from the getgo. Find a trusted CPA to help you get set up. Ask successful business owners in your area whom they use.

Last, if you're an owner, don't be afraid to share your financial metrics with your leadership team. You can't expect them to help you win at business if they don't understand how your company actually makes money or how well the company is doing. You may be surprised to learn of all the ideas they have for trimming costs and boosting profits.

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