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THE GREAT OUTDOORS

**Despite the anxiety of the pandemic,
the industry is thankful to be
working safely outside**

Chris Strempek (left) and Gene Freeman,
Complete Landsculpture, Dallas

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Pre-production model shown. Specifications, features and available options subject to change. *Not available for sale in California.





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CORONAVIRUS COVERAGE

If you're looking for up-to-date information on how the coronavirus pandemic is affecting landscape operations in your state, please visit LandscapeManagement.net/how-landscape-companies-handling-covid-19-concerns/. There, you will find reports from other landscape professionals, equipment manufacturers, dealers and industry organizations about how they're handling COVID-19. If you're interested in adding your take on how the pandemic has affected your company, please email LM Senior Editor Abby Hart at ahart@northcoastmedia.net.



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Awesome, outdoors and essential

If you could see me right now, you'd chuckle at the irony of the name of my column. It shouldn't be called "Seth's Cut." It should be called "Seth Needs a Cut." I haven't been this shaggy since I depended on Dad to drive me to the barbershop.

But you can see me right now (and please forgive the hair) in our new video series called *Landscape Management: At Home Edition*, where the team at LM interviews people online via Zoom from our home offices. In these interviews, we've been talking to landscape and lawn care professionals about what the market is like in their regions; how they're keeping everyone safe at work; and their projections on how the coronavirus will impact their business in the long term. The nice thing about these videos is we post them to **LandscapeManagement.net** quickly, so the information is current.

It's been quite the roller coaster ride covering the industry since the last issue. We were thankful that our industry was deemed essential in so many states. And we watched closely to see what would happen in Michigan and Minnesota and were happy to see those states granted essential status. In this month's cover story, we include reports from around the country that detail many of the positive stories we've heard throughout the month of April: companies that are busier than ever, companies that are gaining an influx of available labor as a result of the pandemic and companies doing their part to help out their fellow man during the pandemic.

As we prepared this issue to send to the printer, we asked many of these experts what kind of information we should include in this issue. We got a lot of good feedback. In my At Home Edition interview with Marty Grunder, his message to the industry was:

"The only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth. If you feel like you're in a rut, stop digging! If the people you're talking to are these people on Facebook who type out all

the key things that policymakers want to ensure is that what we're doing is safe," Bray says.

I asked Jeffrey Scott — who has been posting weekly videos to **LandscapeManagement.net** since the pandemic broke out — what he would write about. He talked to me about

“We've been talking to landscape and lawn care professionals about what the market is like in their local region; how they're keeping everyone safe at work; and their philosophies on how the coronavirus will impact their business in the long term.”

these things that everybody's terrible? Get away from that. Get around other positive, forward-thinking people who have some fight in them, who want to talk about solutions and want to talk about being a part of the solution.”

LM Senior Editor Abby Hart had an excellent At Home Edition interview with our friends Britt Wood and Andrew Bray at the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP). Bray has been getting well deserved praise from the industry for his successful lobbying efforts in Washington, D.C., to keep landscaping and lawn care essential. His message was a reminder that we must stay safe:

“We have fought tooth and nail to educate policymakers about the essential nature of our industry, and one of

how he had been worrying about the U.S. economy, until he recently took a different approach.

“I think we can't respond to the economy. We're the backbone of this country. We have to *make* the economy.”

This issue features plenty of perspectives from green industry experts, as well as articles on weed control, mower engines, irrigation ideas and even one sweet Camaro (see page 56.) One page is sadly missing — our LM Gallery where we would share pictures of all the people we'd seen when we were out covering industry events — but we've gained a new appreciation of how exciting it is to cover an industry that is awesome, essential and operates in the great outdoors. 🌳



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MORE ONLINE

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

What's the best piece of advice you're sharing with your team in relation to COVID-19?

"It is a good time to reevaluate individuals' healthy lifestyle choices. Watching diet, quitting smoking and regular exercise are good decisions to make and have long-term payoffs."



Landscape Professionals

Richard Bare
Arbor-Nomics Turf
Norcross, Ga.

Troy Clogg
Troy Clogg Landscape Associates
Wixom, Mich.

Paul Fraynd
Sun Valley Landscaping
Omaha, Neb.

Luke Henry
ProScape Lawn & Landscaping Services
Marion, Ohio

Chris Joyce
Joyce Landscaping
Cape Cod, Mass.

Aaron Katerberg
Grapids Irrigation
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Jerry McKay
McKay Landscape Lighting
Omaha, Neb.

Bryan Stolz
Winterberry Landscape & Garden Center
Southington, Conn.

Greg Winchel
Winchel Irrigation
Grandville, Mich.

Industry Consultants

Dan Gordon
TurfBooks
Newton, N.J.

Marty Grunder
The Grow Group
Dayton, Ohio

Phil Harwood
Grow the Bench
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Kevin Kehoe
3PG Consulting
Laguna, Calif.

Jeffrey Scott
Jeffrey Scott Consulting
New Orleans, La.



"Protect the physical and mental health of our team; live out our core values and uphold our purpose in service to our clients; and maintain the financial health and viability of our company in uncertain times."



"We are treating this spring like a 'late spring' where we have snow into April in Michigan. We plan to do whatever we can to keep our employees and our customers safe while also providing for both of their needs in any way we are allowed."



"That this is temporary, however, only if we all do our part, so be safe, positive and empathetic to everyone."



"We must increase communication during this time of challenge. Especially with office and sales staff working from home, communication takes more intentionality because we aren't working across the hall anymore."



"Limit going out and the people they interact with so they don't get sick and are available when we can go back to work."



"We are highlighting the benefits of self-care while we're all confined to our home offices."



"In these uncertain times, your character will be tested, your compassion will be needed and your generosity will be remembered."



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PROGRESSIVE
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Green industry companies step up during COVID-19

Project EverGreen has formed the GreenCare for Troops Cares for Our Health Care Heroes initiative to provide nurses, paramedics and other frontline health care professionals with complimentary lawn care and basic landscape services.

Current GreenCare for Troops volunteers are asked to nominate frontline health care professionals in their community to receive services. The expanded program will run through Oct. 1.


John Deere, in collaboration with the United Auto Workers, the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and the Illinois Manufacturers' Association, started producing protective face shields at John Deere Seeding Group in Moline, Ill.

Deere employees will initially produce 25,000 face shields for health care workers in several of its U.S. manufacturing facilities. Materials and supplies are on order to produce an additional 200,000 face shields.

FMC Professional Solutions recently donated nearly 165,000 masks to five major health systems in the Philadelphia region to assist frontline health

care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lotus Landscapes revamped its website to include a Virtual Landscaping Consultation. After filling out a form, sending pictures and paying an \$85 consultation fee, a homeowner is scheduled for a video conference with an expert. Advice can range from landscape design, hardscapes, plant selection, drainage, tree care and more. And, 25 percent of the consultation fee goes to local COVID-19 relief efforts.

For more on how companies are helping out during the coronavirus crisis, visit the COVID-19 News tab on **LandscapeManagement.net**. 



Workers in several of John Deere's plants hustle to help produce face shields for frontline health care workers.

PHOTOS: JOHN DEERE



The National Collegiate Landscape Competition goes virtual

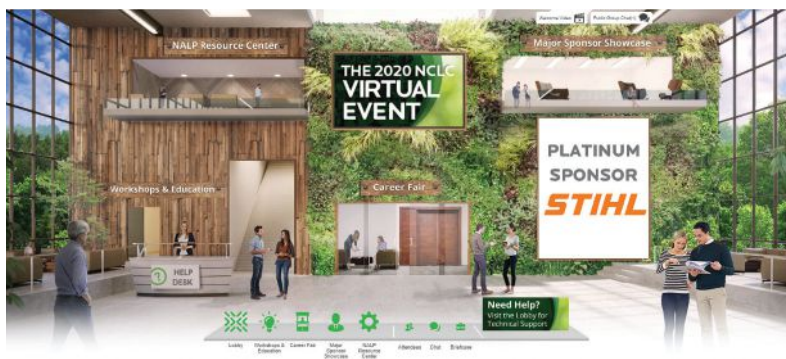
When green industry leaders gathered in Arlington, Va., on March 1-3 for the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP)

Workforce Summit, the coronavirus was of minor but rising concern in the U.S. By the following week, NALP knew it had to pivot for its next event, the National Collegiate Landscape Competition (NCLC).

NCLC was originally scheduled for March 18-21 at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Mich.


As the organization began the event cancellation process at Michigan State, leaders began thinking about how they could provide another option and what that would look like, said Jenn Myers, NALP's senior director of workforce development.

NALP's virtual event was held on April 7-8 and is on demand online until June 30. The event included the career fair and 12 workshops, but didn't include the student competition, or the NALP scholarship reception. Scholarships



were mailed to the winners, who will be recognized in NALP publications and on its website.

Myers said that despite disappointment about not being able to include the competitive events, feedback from attendees has been positive, and they have appreciated having some format of the event available to them.

"(Sponsors) felt it was important to participate and get the word out that they're still working and still hiring," Myers said. "Yes, these are crazy times, but you can feel good that you're choosing a career path that is deemed essential and you can still continue to feel good about the choices you're making." 

The 2020 NCLC went virtual due to the coronavirus. It included 12 workshops and a career fair.

Davey Tree acquires Wickes/arborists

The Davey Tree Expert Co. acquired Wickes/arborists in Spring Valley, N.Y. Terms of the deal weren't disclosed.

For 90 years, Wickes has provided residential and commercial tree services, plant health care and lawn care in Rockland County, N.Y.

Jim Houston, vice president and general manager, Eastern U.S. residential/commercial (R/C) services, said the Wickes office will join Davey's Northeast R/C operating group. The office will conduct business as Wickes/arborists, a Davey company.

Scott & Sons Landscaping joins Ruppert Landscape

Ruppert Landscape acquired Scott & Sons Landscaping, located in Dagsboro, Del. Ruppert Landscape in Laytonsville, Md., ranked No. 8 on the 2019 LM150 list.

Founded in 1997 by Scott Shubert, Scott & Sons offers residential and commercial landscape maintenance, design, irrigation, pest and nutrient management and landscape installation on the Delmarva Peninsula.

"Similar to Ruppert, Scott & Sons invested in owning and maintaining a first-class operating facility and employed a strong team dedicated to great customer service," said Tom Barry, president of Ruppert's landscape management division. "We felt that this would help give us a great base of operations in Delmarva and market-specific knowledge from which to build in the years ahead."

The transaction includes the purchase of one facility, all commercial landscape management contracts, vehicles and equipment and the onboarding of all employees. Ruppert will relocate its newly opened Delmarva branch from its temporary facility to join the Scott & Sons team in its facility.

Former head of Nature's Select Premium Turf Services dies

William Hildebolt, founder and owner of Nature's Select Premium Turf Services, died on March 28, in Winston-Salem, N.C., after a long battle against lung cancer. He was 76.

After graduating from Ohio State in 1969, Hildebolt joined the Campbell Soup Co. in Camden, N.J., where he eventually rose to be vice president of product and development. During his time at Campbell, he helped develop several products, most notably Prego tomato sauce.

In 1994, he used his continuing interest in renewable agricultural practices to develop Nature Select's "biologically enhanced" lawn care and tree and shrub programs.

According to his bio on Nature Select's website, Hildebolt was a Certified Landscape Technician and a Certified Turfgrass Professional. He also served as president of Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) — now known as the National Association of Landscape Professionals.

As restrictions have eased throughout the country, companies are relieved to be able to send crews back to work.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Despite the anxiety of the pandemic, the industry is thankful to be working safely outside

BY LM STAFF

While the coronavirus pandemic continues to affect everyday life, green industry professionals around the country have managed to spot some silver linings. Landscaping companies have been deemed as an essential service in all 50 states, including in Michigan and Minnesota, where there'd been a complete shutdown of services just a few weeks prior.

"I think as a landscape contractor, we have the benefit of working outside, and that warranted the opportunity for us to bring staff back," says Dale Drier, general manager of Drost Landscape in Petoskey, Mich., which had closed its doors from mid-March until April 29.

Overall, some companies have experienced an uptick in customers as weather improves and people spend more time in their yards. Others have found that their recruitment efforts have been answered with workers from other industries. And still others have donated their mowing and lawn care services to frontline health care workers.

HARD AT WORK

→ CONSERVA IRRIGATION IS SURVIVING — AND THRIVING

For Conserva Irrigation, an irrigation firm with 91 franchises across the U.S., the business is not just surviving — it's thriving, according to Russ Jundt, founder of the company.

"While it's been an awkward time where we've needed to pivot and be more thoughtful and more prepared, our sales for Q1 were up 65 percent year over year, and it's not slowing in April," Jundt says.

In addition to following social distancing and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) measures, the company has developed a platform where technicians can assemble a digital estimate on-site and email it to the client instantly.

While Jundt says no one could have foreseen a global pandemic, Conserva felt somewhat prepared as it had already run through a series of contingency planning exercises late last September with different measures to prepare in the event of a downturn or economic change.

"We had already started that planning process last September, and then as things started to evolve in mid-to-late February, we understood that we better get some guidelines put in place so we can be ahead of the curve for each of our franchise locations," Jundt says.

Jundt says he expects Conserva will continue to do well, despite the economic fallout from COVID-19.

"Due to the nature of our business being a need-based business, the fact that our services are a smaller-ticket amount and that we're a repeatable service, we anticipate that in a downturn, we would remain robust and busy," he says.

→ RAISING THE BAR AT COMPLETE LANDSCULPTURE

"Raise the bar" was the theme of Complete Landsculpture's recap and prelaunch training trip earlier this year.

A few short weeks later, the coronavirus pandemic hit, and like businesses all over the country and the world, the company had to put its goals on hold and meet the challenges of the pandemic head-on.

Complete Landsculpture is a \$24 million operation, led by owner and President Chris Strempek and co-owner and Vice President Gene Freeman. It's headquartered in Dallas with a second location in Edmond, Okla. It provides 60 percent design/build and 40 percent maintenance services to a half residential, half commercial clientele, and ranked at No. 100 on the 2019 *LM150* list.

"A week after things started to get very serious in New York, we jumped on board and figured it was going to come to us," Freeman says. In mid-March, the company began to allow office staff to work from home, providing temperature checks and developing safety procedures for crews and locking down its corporate campus.

The safety protocols aside, the demand for construction work hasn't waned, even with the turbulence in the national economy. The company has continued to hire and book jobs and is currently on pace with its revenue goals for the year.

A longtime client even signed a contract on a design plan in the early weeks of the coronavirus outbreak.

"We scheduled a 4:00 p.m. happy hour Zoom presentation, couriered the plans to them and did a virtual tour through it. And then we did a 'cheers' through the camera," Freeman says. "So, clients are getting familiar with it, too. They're not scared of the technology or being able to do it that way."

Complete Landsculpture experienced some setbacks at the beginning of 2020. After the wettest year on record, it was behind its numbers in January, and then found that it was denied its usual 75 workers from the H-2B visa program — 40 percent of its labor force.

The company has hustled to fill 60 of the 75 open positions. Freeman says they're finding success with hiring laid-off workers from some clients in the retail and the restaurant industries, and the company is currently offering an \$8,000 signing bonus for an experienced foreman.

Freeman says the company is continuing to work its typical hectic schedule, but it's also working with clients who are experiencing hardships, such as hotels, restaurants and churches. "We're sensitive and concerned for the people who are affected by COVID-19 both short term and long term," Freeman says. "We're still servicing those accounts, modifying billing, cutting back on services, reducing rates and delaying invoicing."

Freeman says it's all about relationships.

"Relationships matter at all levels for us. It's one of our core principles," he says. "We've just got to stay strong,

Continued on page 12



Though landscape crews can easily maintain distance while working, they're also direct reporting to job sites to keep a safe distance in transport.

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continue to push, continue to come together. And, we're letting (our crews) know we're in the trenches with them, in the office, working with them side by side — 6 feet apart.”

→ BACK TO WORK IN MINNESOTA FOR DOEHLING LANDSCAPE SERVICES

Matt Doehling, owner of Doehling Landscape Services in Shakopee, Minn., is glad to be back to work.

The company was originally among the businesses classified as a nonessential service in Minnesota Governor Tim Walz's executive order in March. But as of April 8, landscaping operations were named essential businesses so he and his employees could start the season.

While nonessential, he says he wasn't able to go into the office to process payroll, according to the strictest reading of the executive order. Unable to work, Doehling took to an advocacy role.

“I sent an email to our whole customer list, as many as I could,” he says. “I said, ‘Here's what's going on with our service and our business.’ I encouraged them to write to our legislators and our representatives.”

He also encouraged his clients to sign a petition to designate landscape and lawn care services as an essential

Continued on page 14

PHOTO: LAY STAFF

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Continued from page 12
business, which ended up garnering 40,000 signatures.

“Our industry is a great example from a public health standpoint,” he says. “We can maintain all the social distancing that’s required and needed to prevent the spread of this terrible virus.”

He’s had some substantial hits to his bottom line, with about 25 to 30

account cancellations on spring fertilization programs, and there are about 60 to 70 other clients he hasn’t heard from. He estimates all of that to be about a \$25,000 to \$30,000 loss in revenue.

However, he says the new business he’s received may offset those losses.

“I’ve been surprised with the number of new business we put in place

this year,” he says. “It’s a testament to the great work our employees do. The positive is that we’ve been able to, for the most part, replace lost business.”

AN UNEXPECTED SIDE EFFECT

→ COVID-19 CHANGES THE WAY PROGREEN RECRUITS

Michael Hall, owner of ProGreen Turf & Landscape in Newport, N.C., says this time of year is always busy for his operation, but it seems busier than usual.

“We are 100 percent working,” Hall says. “We haven’t slowed down.”

One of the biggest innovations to come out of COVID-19, Hall says, is how he’s approaching hiring. He’s noticed more applicants for jobs recently, and they’re not always from a landscaping background.

“We’ve upped our game on recruiting,” Hall says. “We’ve actually had an influx of females.”

Hall attributes this to two factors: highlighting his female employees on social media and a new trial employment program. Following a phone interview, potential employees come in to work a day.

Continued on page 16

PHOTO: LM STAFF

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Continued from page 14

Employees fill out paperwork and are paid \$100 a day. He puts the new employees with strong crew leaders, and usually by lunch the first day, the crew leader has assessed whether the potential employee is a good fit.

"Some of the females that were applying said they'd give it a try for a day," Hall says.

For example, one employee is a bartender and was looking for a new source of income after bars and restaurants in North Carolina closed due to COVID-19. She didn't have any experience working outside, so she opted to try working for ProGreen Turf & Landscape for a day, and she decided to stay.

Overall, Hall says he's hired three women so far.

While there's a lot of good on the recruitment side of the business, Hall has noticed more clients micromanaging crews since they're home.

"People are at home, and they've got nothing to do but look at their yard," Hall says. "Every little detail, they're picking out."

→ SILVER LININGS AT CHERRYLAKE

Cherrylake sees mostly sunny skies on the horizon as it expects its maintenance and construction sectors to keep pushing forward, despite the coronavirus pandemic.

The central Florida company, which ranked at No. 127 on the 2019 LM150 list with \$15.6 million in 2018 revenue, is comprised of an 1,800-acre tree farm, a landscape and irrigation construction division and a landscape maintenance division.

While the company is concerned it won't receive its 20 H-2B workers this season, Chloe Gentry, director of organizational development and marketing at Cherrylake, is optimistic that the current labor market conditions will allow for Cherrylake to fill some of those spots.

"The silver lining on this is that unemployment is high right now, so we're hopeful that we'll be able to recruit some strong workers who will become part of our year-round team," she says.

In the meantime, the company considers itself lucky to be deemed an essential business in Florida and will follow the necessary protocols to stay open, according to Gentry.

"Our first priority is to make sure our employees and our community stay healthy and safe," she says. "Our second priority is to make sure we keep operations and revenue flowing so that we can keep people employed."

To keep employees safe, the company follows CDC guidelines of keeping people 6 feet apart, sanitizing vehicles and equipment, decreasing the number of employees riding in each vehicle and staggering start, finish and lunch times so 200-plus employees aren't all amassing at once.

As far as its clients go, Gentry says the company has received support from them to keep operations up and running.

Continued on page 33

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LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

1. Belle of Louisville
2. 2nd St. Bridge
3. Muhammad Ali Center
4. Galt House Hotel (PGMS HQ)
5. Jeff Ruby's Steakhouse
6. Old Forester Distilling Co.
7. 21c Museum Hotel Louisville
8. Evan Williams Bourbon Experience
9. Louisville Visitor's Center
10. Hyatt Regency Hotel (HNA HQ)
11. Marriott Downtown
12. Louisville Slugger Field
13. The Frazier History Museum
14. Michter's Fort Nelson Distillery
15. Kentucky Science Center
16. Jim Beam Urban Stillhouse
17. Fourth Street Live!
18. Omni Louisville Hotel (NALP HQ)
19. Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory
20. St. James & Belgravia Courts
21. The Seelbach Hilton Louisville
22. Embassy Suites
23. Angel's Envy Distillery
24. Cave Hill Cemetery
25. Brown Hotel
26. Jack Fry's
27. Kentucky Derby Museum
28. University of Louisville
29. Olmsted Parks Conservancy
30. Kentucky Expo Center/Mutt Madness
31. Louisville Zoo
32. Waverly Hills Sanatorium
33. Louisville Jack O' Lantern Spectacular
34. Crown Plaza Hotel
35. Louisville Mega Caverns
36. Louisville International Airport

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& KENTUCKY DERBY MUSEUM

**"7 PILGRIMAGES
EVERY SPORTS FAN
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- *Thrillist*



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MUSEUM ROW

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Big Four Bridge

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Louisville Zoo

This interactive attraction is home to more than 1,200 animals and 134 botanical gardens. Animal highlights include polar bears, gorillas, lions, tigers, penguins and the newest resident – Fitz the baby elephant.

Louisville Mega Caverns

One of the largest caverns in the U.S. featuring 17 miles of corridors located beneath the city. This cavern offers adventure seekers a ropes course with six zip lines, an aerial ropes challenge, bike park with 45 trails and a relaxing tram ride tour where you will learn about the geology of this man-made cavern. This is one of the most unique attractions in the city. Enjoy the comfort of the 60-degree temperature year-round.





“8 BEST SPOTS FOR BREATHTAKING SUNSETS IN AMERICA: BIG FOUR BRIDGE” - Ecophile

Spooky Seasonal Attractions

Cave Hill Cemetery

This Victorian-era National Cemetery is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Several prominent people are buried on the nearly 300 acres including Muhammad Ali, KFC Founder Col. Harland Sanders, Louisville founder George Rogers Clark and Patty Hill, the kindergarten teacher who penned the world famous “Happy Birthday” tune. Stop by the guard station on the way in for a map to help you find these local legends.



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Continued from page 16

"Our clients are calling us to say, 'We just want to make sure you understand you're an essential business so you need to show up,'" Gentry says. "We're very happy to see that our clients view this as an opportunity to get a lot of work done on these construction projects, and they want to push forward and keep building."

GIVING BACK

→ A HELPING HAND FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

R&R Landscaping, a landscape company based in Auburn, Ala., joined in the effort to help COVID-19 health care workers after a simple request.

Claire Goldman, principal and head of design and business development at R&R Landscaping, received a text asking about welders'

face masks from a friend, whose husband worked at a hospital in their area.

Goldman purchased the entire stock from her welder's supplier and dropped them off. After some communication with her friend, she thought that servicing yards for some of the health care workers would at least give them one less thing to worry about when they are home and, hopefully, allow them to rest.

The hospital chaplain gave her addresses for emergency room and intensive care unit nurses, and Goldman asked Southern Pride Landscaping, Cutting Edge Lawn Services and other local landscaping companies if they would be willing to take on properties if the need arose. They all jumped on board.

"The thing that really blew me away was how my competition

Continued on page 34



As homeowners spend more time at home, they're enlisting landscapers to help beautify those spaces.

PHOTO: DANNY HURLEY

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Many companies enforce safety measures, such as wearing face coverings and following strict disinfecting procedures.

Continued from page 33

responded,” Goldman says. “You don’t ask a landscaper to do free stuff in the spring — we’re all going as hard as we can just to keep our head above water this time of year.”

Goldman adds that the goal is just to do what the company can for people to feel loved and supported.

R&R Landscaping offers 80 percent construction, 10 percent maintenance and 10 percent irrigation services to a completely residential clientele.

The company’s season started off by having to cancel its spring kickoff event just as the coronavirus sparked safety concerns all over the country.

The company adjusted and brought a taco truck, Drive-by Tacos, out to its property. Team members ate tacos on the lawn 6 feet apart, reviewed their work from 2019 and discussed their direction for 2020.

On the other hand, very little has changed for the company from a client standpoint, Goldman says, but there’s been turnover on the employee side. Some employees have had to stay home with their kids and some have been afraid to come in, but the company has made some new hires, mostly from the restaurant industry.

Goldman says the company is training as quickly as possible while maintaining its spring hustle, following CDC safety guidelines closely and providing the team with masks.

In addition to safety, the constantly changing nature and public response to the coronavirus has shown the importance of leadership and communication.

“This has been a time where accurate information has been very difficult to come by, and there are very few answers,” Goldman says. “It’s easy to lead when you have a

clear path. The only clear path we have had is to do everything we can to make sure our employees feel safe to come to work and our clients feel safe doing business with us.”

She credits her leadership team with staying focused on the day-to-day tasks, allowing her to research government programs, connect with clients and collaborate with other business owners to get through the pandemic.

“We’ve made it a point to validate how everyone is feeling and communicate there is no right or wrong way to feel,” Goldman says. “It’s confusing, frustrating, scary and exhausting — and that’s OK. ‘We’re in this together’ has never rang so true.”

→ ALL AMERICAN LAWN SERVICES GIVES BACK

Mary and Eric Infante, co-owners of All American Lawn Services in Evans, Colo., also wanted to do something to help during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

“I felt this overwhelming need to give back,” Eric Infante says. “The only way I could think of was donating my services since I’m out there mowing anyway. Why not help?”

The couple is giving away a free year of service to 10 first responders — firefighters, police officers, nurses, doctors and paramedics.

“They seem to appreciate it a lot,” Eric Infante says of the first responders he’s taking care of.

Mary Infante adds, “It’s got to be nice to come home exhausted and have a nice mowed lawn.”

Overall, the Infantes have remained optimistic. “There’s a lot of hope in this house,” Mary Infante says. 🍷

WEED AVENGERS

WEB EXTRA

For more information on these weeds and more, visit landscapemanagement.net/category/lawn-care/.

Slam summer weeds

Four experts give insights into controlling three pesky weeds **BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Summer is almost here. With the warmer weather comes some difficult-to-control weeds.

"A healthy, dense turf is the first line of defense against weeds," says Todd Lowe, Bayer Green Solutions Team technical service manager for the Florida region. "So, optimize irrigation, fertilization and mowing." In the event that the first line of defense has broken down, four experts gave us their tips to control and defeat some pesky weeds, including prostrate knotweed, purslane and doveweed.

PROSTRATE KNOTWEED

"Prostrate knotweed is a summer annual broadleaf weed in the smartweed (*Polygonaceae*) family," says Dean Mosdell, Ph.D., technical manager, Syngenta Professional Solutions. "It is one of the earliest germinating summer annuals and is often missed by preemergent herbicides targeting crabgrass." He adds that key identification characteristics are matted prostrate growth, pink-white flowers in leaf axils, alternate leaf growth and blue-green leaf color.

"Prostrate knotweed can outcompete turfgrass in compacted soil and is considered an indicator weed of soil compaction," says Eric Reasor, Ph.D., research scientist, PBI-Gordon. "If knotweed is a persistent problem, decreasing compaction with aeration should be considered."

Reasor says that postemergent control is typically much easier when herbicides are applied earlier in the season rather than later. The dense canopy and thick stems associated with mature plants can make control difficult in late summer. Typical 3- and 4-way herbicide mixtures containing 2,4-D, dicamba, carfentrazone, fluroxypyr or triclopyr can provide



acceptable postemergent control. Mosdell adds that preemergent herbicides such as (prodiamine) or isoxaben products applied in late fall are effective or combined with Mesotrione for early postemergent activity at crabgrass timing. Postemergent herbicides that contain a higher percentage of dicamba or clopyralid are also effective. He notes that 2,4-D is less active on this weed species.

PURSLANE


Count common purslane as a summer annual that is relatively easy to control. However, it often rears its head at the most inopportune times, says Aaron Hathaway, technical services manager, T&O for Nufarm.

"(Purslane) becomes most problematic during spring seedings and can quickly germinate and mature before seeded plants can. It's during establishment that annual broadleaf weeds like common purslane can be a challenge — newly germinated seedling plants are often too sensitive to treat with an herbicide at all," Hathaway says. "When purslane pops up in these seedings, a broadleaf herbicide with a protox inhibitor can be a great tool to quickly burn down common purslane before seeding or before seeds have germinated to remove competition that could stifle a new seeding project."



DOVEWEED

Doveweed is a grasslike summer annual with fleshy, creeping stems that root at the nodes. "Its lance-shaped narrow leaves have parallel veins and alternate branching," Lowe says. "Leaf sheaths have short hairs on the upper margins. Doveweed produces an open cluster of purple flowers throughout summer. Seeds germinate later than other summer annual weeds, such as crabgrass and goosegrass."

Unlike purslane, Lowe says doveweed can be difficult to control, and a combination of preemergent and postemergent herbicides is most likely needed. "Apply a preemergent herbicide in areas historically infested with doveweed when soil temperatures at the 4-inch depth approach 70 degrees in spring," Lowe advises. "If targeting just doveweed, application timing must be delayed relative to traditional preemergent application timings that target crabgrass and goosegrass to provide maximum length of residual control. To target doveweed, in addition to other summer annuals like crabgrass and goosegrass, the best approach would be a split-application preemergent program, combined with a postemergent program." 

PROTECT YOUR TURF

Tip of the problem

How to identify and treat brown and large patch

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

When a section of turf loses its lively green color, there are several possible reasons, including brown and large patch.

These diseases are caused by members of *Rhizoctonia solani*, and both cause circular, discolored patches of turf. Brown patch symptoms typically begin on cool-season turf like fescue, whereas large patch can be found on warm-season turf like centipedegrass.

EDUCATION IS KEY

Located in the Transition Zone, Rodney Gaddis, owner of Spring-Green Lawn Care in Franklin, Tenn., says he mainly sees the disease on tall fescue.



Rodney Gaddis

The company has an annual revenue of \$1.4 million and offers lawn care, tree/shrub care and pest control services. Its customers are 75 percent residential and 25 percent commercial. He also owns Gadco Lawn Care, which offers lawn maintenance services.

Most of the time, the brown or large patch is still small when his crews find it on their customers' properties, Gaddis says. The patch normally has a brownish color where the tips of the grass are starting to turn brown. It may appear to be a pet urine spot at first.

"The main thing is to be proactive and identify the problem as quickly as you can, so it doesn't eat down to the roots and kill the whole plant," Gaddis says.

Some of the main causes of these diseases are improper mowing techniques and failing to aerate. It's also important not to apply too much nitrogen to the turf as temperatures warm up.

"Education is the No. 1 way to prevent these diseases," Gaddis says for both homeowners and professionals.

After identifying the disease, his company applies fungicide treatments to the infected turf in May and again every month until the pressure of the disease slows down, up to four treatments if necessary, Gaddis says.

He says it doesn't matter if operators use granular or liquid fungicide, as long as they ensure the granular treatment is watered into the ground. If it's later in the season, they may opt to aerate and rake up the dead area, instead of applying a fungicide.

IMPROVE CONDITIONS

The temperature, humidity and moisture level are usually the main triggers for brown and large patch, says Patrick Beaman, owner of GrassMasters in Wilson, N.C.

"It doesn't take too many of these afternoon thunderstorms for them to



TRIGGER CONDITIONS
High heat, humidity and temperature can result in brown and large patch on turf.

pop up overnight," he says. "That's why we use preventive treatments. If a client has had disease problems in the past, we can put them on a preventive program."

The company, which has an annual revenue of \$375,000, provides lawn maintenance and lawn care to 90 percent residential and 10 percent commercial clients.



Patrick Beaman

Beaman looks for ways to improve the lawn's air flow and drainage to suppress or eliminate the disease. If that doesn't work, he will use fungicides to treat the area. His typical large patch program includes one spring and two fall applications, unless spring seems to linger, he says.

"It's all about monitoring the conditions and being prepared for when the disease is going to start," Beaman says.

Educating the homeowner also is an important part of his process. He sends out newsletters and email blasts when conditions are favorable for the diseases, so customers can watch for symptoms.

"I'm only there every five to six weeks," Beaman says. "There are problems that could pop up during that time. If they start to see something that doesn't look right, they can call me to come check it out. Once it shows up, you can stop it in its tracks, but you can't make the brown turn green. It has to grow out."

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Nashville.

BUSINESS BOOSTERS

A good first impression

Landscape professionals and industry experts share why there's more to apparel than displaying a logo

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

Apparel might not be the first thing landscape pros think about when it comes to their job or company, but industry experts say it's a critical piece of a business. Apparel can help a company make a good first impression to clients and in the neighborhoods it works in.

"They're going to be left with an impression of that company based on that person," says Carl Atwell, president and owner of Gempler's. "Some of that is how the person treats the customer, but also part of it is how that person looks."

To illustrate this point, Sean Johnson, head of inventory and planning at Gempler's, gives an example of two crews: one shows up with 15 workers in matching button-ups, and the other shows up with 15 workers in different shirts and sweatshirts.

"It's 15 different branding moments," Johnson says.

WHAT LANDSCAPE PROS CONSIDER

When it comes to apparel, landscape professionals say there are many factors to consider — a critical one is the need for layers. The weather throughout the day and year fluctuates in most climates, and a coat could easily cover up any work wear with a company's logo on it.

"We offer a range through our vendor, like coats, sweaters, shirts, pants and shorts. That way, (crews) can still be comfortable while representing their company," says Maegan

BRANDING MOMENT

Uniforms can promote a company's brand and image within a community.



Jenkins, owner of Elm Creek Lawn & Landscape in Farwell, Mich. "I like a company that's consistent and that can find a solution to any problem that my crews may come across with their attire."

Elm Creek Lawn & Landscape provides 50 percent landscaping, 20 percent lawn care and 30 percent snow removal services to a 60 percent commercial and 40 percent residential clientele.

"Customers always appreciate a clean, well-put-together crew," she says.

Jenkins says uniforms are switched out and cleaned weekly. The company provides each employee T-shirts, two hats, two pairs of gloves, two pairs of safety glasses, ear protection and one hard hat. Employees are required to provide work boots and any personal protective equipment (PPE) that needs replacing, at cost.

PROFESSIONALISM


GreenSweep in Silver Springs, Md., sees providing uniforms as a way to take care of employees and encourage professionalism. The company performs primarily maintenance and some design/build services for a 80 percent commercial, 20 percent residential clientele.

The company provides new uniforms in the spring for all new hires. Uniforms include T-shirts, a sweatshirt, pants, a baseball hat, a winter beanie and PPE for eyes and ears. Rehires and current field workers get pants every other year. "We've found more success in providing uniforms rather than expensing the cost to employees, but employees have the option to purchase additional uniforms at their discretion," says Lisa Greenwell, vice president of business operations.

SOURCING SERVICES

S&K Services in Wonder Lake, Ill., had a few issues with locally sourced apparel and decided to go in-house to order and finish their items.

"We actually took on our marketing in-house. This includes all promotional items as well as uniform apparel," says Trevor James, vice president. "Doing this allowed us to not only cut costs but also offer more promotional items when doing trade shows or community involvement."

S&K Services provides 95 percent landscape construction and 5 percent maintenance services to a 90 percent residential and 10 percent commercial clientele. S&K Services supplies shirts, hats and hoodies. James says he likes the control the company has over the end product. 

WEB EXTRA

For bonus apparel tips, visit the Web Extras section at LandscapeManagement.net.

PHOTOS: GEMPLER'S (TOP); KUJO YARDWEAR (LEFT)



MIX IT UP

Offering employees options of pants, shorts, T-shirts and sweaters ensures each employee's attire preferences are covered.

THE BIG ONE

A prominent project

LOCATION Chicago, Ill.

COMPANY Moore Landscapes

DETAILS The Chicago Park District is one of the largest municipal park systems in the nation, with 8,800 acres of green space and 600 parks.

Moore Landscapes has been managing the Chicago Park District's plantings and landscaping since 2004. For Jim Pearson, general manager of public works for Moore Landscapes, it's been a new project every year.

"We've done all kinds of crazy things," Pearson says.

Moore Landscapes is in charge of the mowing and maintenance of more than two dozen perennial and shrub gardens. The company also installs and maintains the irrigation and performs specialized fertilization for all plantings, which include roses, succulents, water and tropical plants.

In 2018, more than 68,000 annuals and tropical plants were installed in 18 different gardens, planters and window boxes throughout the city.

The account's challenges include a constant amount of foot traffic in the parks. Crews have flexible schedules and often work off-hours.

Pearson says the project is a source of pride for the company. He adds that it's a successful partnership that is built on communication.

"It isn't about how the beds look; it's about how we communicate with the park district," Pearson says.

Moore Landscapes has secured the project through 2025. This project earned Moore Landscapes a 2019 Gold Award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Award of Excellence program.

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



Captions | 1. These sidewalk beds are located on Michigan Avenue, just south of the Art Institute of Chicago in Grant Park.

When the Park District wanted to showcase designs using perennial grasses, 17 perennial grasses were chosen and planted in a flowing display of different shapes and colors. Two years ago, some of the varieties died off from an extremely cold winter, and pollinator plants were incorporated into the beds. **2.** These beds are located on Michigan Avenue across from the Hilton Hotel at Logan Monument Garden in Grant Park. The beds are planted with flowering perennials and shrubs for yearlong color. All beds are hand watered and fertilized. **3.** These entry beds are located just outside the DuSable Museum of African American History in Washington Park. The Sago palms and Bismarckia palms are overwintered in the Lincoln Park Conservatory. They are carefully removed and taken in at the end of the season. **4.** These planters are located at Congress and Michigan Avenue in Congress Plaza in Grant Park. The plants were selected to handle tough city conditions, such as high winds and high pedestrian traffic, and because their car-stopping color offsets the stone surroundings.

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PRODUCTS THAT WORK

Zero-turn mowers

A look at a few of the zero-turn mowers currently on the market

↓ Z400 SERIES MOWERS

COMPANY: Husqvarna

URL: [Husqvarna.com](https://www.husqvarna.com)

Husqvarna's new Z400 zero-turn series introduces three new models — the Z448, Z454 and Z460 — to Husqvarna's lineup, all protected by Husqvarna's 750 hours of guaranteed performance or four-year limited commercial warranty. The 48- to 60-inch fabricated three-blade Clear-Cut decks and smart design feature tool-less fasteners, sealed and labeled fuse boxes and easy access to all major components. Other features include LED digital fuel gauges, 6-gallon dual fuel tanks and a 22- to 23-hp power output.



ZTO MIDMOUNT ZERO-TURN MOWER

COMPANY: Wright

URL: [WrightMfg.com](https://www.WrightMfg.com)

The Wright ZTO midmount zero-turning-radius mower is built for the toughest jobs. Its name, ZTO, means zero technology optimized. With deck widths of 48, 52 and 61 inches, the ZTO has enhanced features from the ground up. The rear tires are low profile, and the front tires are 13-inch by 5-inch run flats. The transmissions are ZT-3400 Series Hydro-Gear. An undercarriage cage protects the transmission and its filters, and an exclusive transmission interlock is built into the controls, eliminating the need for a separate parking brake. The integrated parking brake engages when levers are opened. The cutting speed is 10.5 mph, and the fuel tank capacity is 13.5 gallons.



ZD1500 ZERO-TURN MOWER

COMPANY: Kubota

URL: [KubotaUSA.com](https://www.KubotaUSA.com)

The newest addition to Kubota's ZD Series, the ZD1500 features a wide mower deck and a Tier 4-compliant, 30.8-hp Kubota diesel engine with a diesel particulate filter. Kubota's patented Aerodynamic Cutting System provides smoother air-flow and a powerful

blade rotation, resulting in less clumping of clippings, high fuel efficiency and fast cutting performance. The ZD1500 mower is the most powerful of Kubota's ZD Series, delivering high-volume cutting efficiency and professional performance for large turf acreages, according to the company.



Z955R EFI ZTRAK MOWER



COMPANY: John Deere

URL: [Deere.com](https://www.Deere.com)

The Z955R EFI ZTrak mower features a 29-hp electronic fuel injection engine. Two seat choices feature the ComfortGlide suspension, allowing the seat to travel up to 2 inches fore and aft, absorbing bumps to improve ride comfort. The standard Comfort and Convenience package features padded, ergonomically angled control levers and electronic controls, allowing the operator to raise and lower the deck or disengage mower blades at the push of a button.





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-Reza, Persica Landscape Nursery

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RECOMMENDER

What types of **mowers** and **mower power/engines** are you using?

Whether a walk-behind or zero-turn, battery powered or gas, contractors look for easy maintenance and longevity out of their mowers.



CHAD HANEY

PRESIDENT & SALES, THE YARD WORKS LANDSCAPING
AVON LAKE, OHIO

"We use Scag 61-inch Turf Tigers, a 72-inch Turf Tiger, and both have Briggs & Stratton Vanguard 37-hp engines. We also invested in stand-on, 61-inch V-Ride mulchers with a 29-hp Kohler engine, and 52 V-Ride stand-ons with Kohler 25-hp engines.

We demoed all this equipment in the fall of 2018 before we bought them in the spring of last year — we're really pleased with Scag mowers and these engines and haven't had any issues."



JEREMY LOADHOLDT

VICE PRESIDENT - CHARLOTTE, PHOENIX LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT
CHARLOTTE, N.C.

"We have six crews running battery-powered equipment, and we purchased our first Greenworks 52-inch stand-on mower. All of our crews operate Greenworks GM210 battery push mowers. We're letting our gas-powered equipment age out, eventually replacing them with battery power. The majority of our crews have battery-powered edgers, pruners, weed eaters and blowers. We want to experience the full spectrum of what's out there as far as battery-powered equipment because we think the industry's turning toward that."



ADAM SCHLUTT

PRESIDENT, MAAC PROPERTY SERVICES
NILES, MICH.

"We use a mix of Exmark Lazer ZS mowers with Kohler propane engines. Our in-house mechanic says Kohler engines are always easy to work on. We use an Exmark dealer, and we try to put more on them as far as repairs go. We went with propane for our mowers because it's a cleaner burn and we get more longevity out of the engine."

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HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

From dune to done

LOCATION Morehead City, N.C.

COMPANY ProGreen Turf & Landscape

DETAILS Word-of-mouth helped ProGreen Turf & Landscape land this project, but owner Michael Hall says it was a full mock-up of the design using Realtime Landscaping Pro software that secured the job.

The backyard was essentially a dune with weeds and vines. Hall says it is one of the highest points in the area.

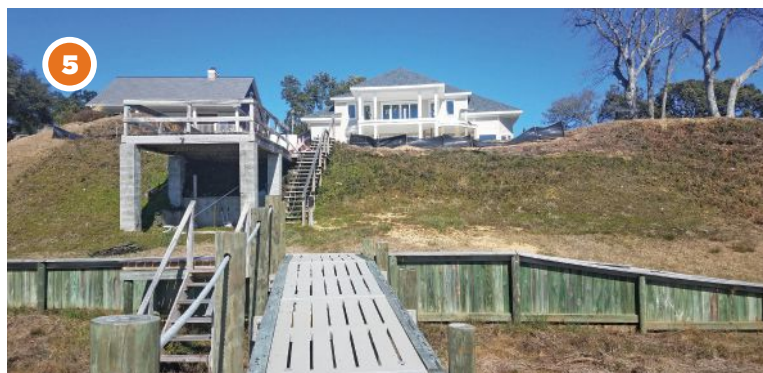
“There was no access to get down to the seawall and the dock,” says Hall, noting the southwest winds off the Bogue Sound were a challenge for the design, so Hall used river rock as groundcover instead of straw or mulch. The plants are salt resistant, with grasses, roses and lantanas. “Salt and wind are the biggest things we fight,” he says.

Other challenges included moving the materials needed, rains washing away sand and positioning each layer of wall inset to the other. There was only a 5-foot-wide gap to bring products from the front to the back of the property. The crews used Ditch Witch SK1050 mini skid-steers and worked with neighbors to get an excavator to the backyard to start the project.

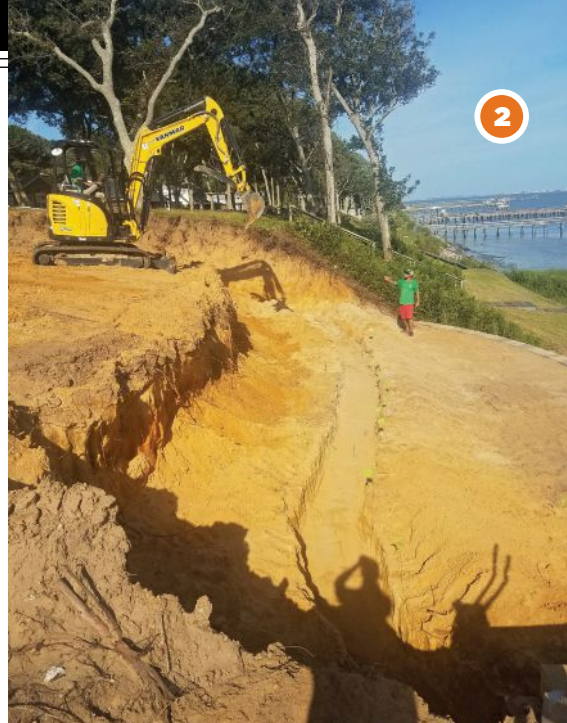
Hall and his team installed drainage, drip irrigation in the beds and turf irrigation for each tier of the wall. The company used a Belgard Tandem wall system to provided a stacked look. Hall says the homeowner is pleased with the result.

This project earned ProGreen Turf & Landscape a 2019 Silver Award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals’ Award of Excellence program.

See more photos from this project at [LandscapeManagement.net/hardscapesolutions](https://www.LandscapeManagement.net/hardscapesolutions).



PHOTOS: PROGREEN TURF & LANDSCAPE



Captions | 1. The stairs and each level of the retaining wall were designed to gradually scale the backyard dune from the dock to the house. 2. An excavator that had to be brought in through a neighbor's access point dug trenches to build the retaining walls. 3. Crews set up the base of a retaining wall. 4. Salt-tolerant plants and river rock were selected for the backyard plantings as the area's southwest winds bring lots of salinity off the coast. 5. A before photo shows the natural weeds and vines that grew up along the side of the dune. 6. The site was graded, cleared and prepared for an application of fresh sod.



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DESIGN TRENDS

Backyards take center stage

Experts share the latest design trends and why outdoor spaces are more important now than ever before **BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, backyards and outdoor living are becoming even more important.

“People are home and thinking about their outdoor spaces,” says Emily Holle, director of trend and design for MSI Surfaces, a distributor of flooring and natural stone.

And, people are seeing these spaces as not only places to entertain, but as areas that play an important role in their daily lives, especially as more time is being spent at home.

“During COVID-19, these outdoor spaces are also key places to live a more balanced and healthy lifestyle,” says Joe Raboine, director of residential hardscapes for Belgard. “They’re beneficial to overall health and well-being.”

As more homeowners turn their attention to their outdoor spaces, experts say some new trends are emerging in hardscapes and water features.

BOLD COLORS, SEAMLESS SANCTUARIES

One trend MSI Surfaces has seen is a bold use of color. Holle says this means

bright colors, contrasts of black and white and complex geometric patterned tile with a Moroccan influence in places like outdoor grill islands, fireplaces and waterfall backgrounds. This bold use of color is playing off a trend that is popular indoors.

Another trend, according to Holle, is taking an indoor tile and matching it to an outdoor paver. She says homeowners are not seeing indoor and outdoor spaces as separate; they want them to flow naturally. Holle says MSI calls this trend a “seamless sanctuary.”

“We have several lines that have an indoor tile that can flow seamlessly outdoors by switching to a paver,” she says. “It takes the guesswork out of matching indoor and outdoor patterns.”

ONE WITH NATURE

Raboine says more residential spaces are blurring the lines between hardscapes and the backyard.

He says design elements pull in natural stone so there aren’t as many hard lines and it blends in with the natural surroundings.

HIGH-TECH, LOW-MAINTENANCE WATER FEATURES

When it comes to ponds and water features, homeowners are seeking options that are easy to maintain and offer some customization.

Demi Fortuna, director of product information for Atlantic Water Gardens, says younger homeowners who are used to smartphone integration want to control items such as lighting, music, pumps and filters with a smartphone app. Atlantic Water Gardens offers Wi-Fi-controlled pumps and filters that can modify the rates and speed and control algae.

“They wanted to flip a switch and be able to turn on music and water features,” he says. “They don’t want to do maintenance.”

Fortuna says there are a lot of water features that are easy to install, including large water walls and features with a simple, small plume of water running over moss.

A small plume of water, Fortuna says, “can be completed in under an hour and costs next to nothing to run. It looks like a liquid torch.”

Plus, Fortuna says the water is filtered so homeowners can set it and forget it.

Fortuna encourages contractors to educate their customers on the benefits of adding a water feature.

“Between the aesthetics of having water and the ease of bringing these to the customer, they’re going to make some money, but (customers) need to know how easy it is to maintain,” he says.



As the coronavirus pandemic continues to affect the U.S., homeowners are spending more time in their outdoor spaces.

Belgard calls this trend “entanglement with nature.” And Raboine says it’s addressing how homeowners now want to use their backyards, green spaces and gardens on a day-to-day basis. The trend incorporates details such as edible landscapes and permeable pavers that aid in replenishing groundwater—and Raboine says all this is a nod to health and well-being.

“People are much more attuned to where they live and spend money,” he says. “It has a collective significant effect on the environment in a positive way.”

PRODUCTS THAT WORK

Attachments in action

A look at installation equipment attachments that perform under pressure



← SVP18 VIBRATORY PLOW ATTACHMENT

COMPANY: Vermeer

URL: Vermeer.com

The Vermeer SVP18 vibratory plow attachment for mini skid-steers is designed for landscaping and utility installation applications on compact job sites. With the ability to install product up to 12 inches deep using

either a chute-style or pull-style blade, the vibratory plow delivers better productivity than digging irrigation lines or fiber optic cable by hand in residential areas. A 50-degree swing angle allows the attachment and mini skid-steer to make tight turns around obstacles, and the 6-inch height of the plow's tamping feet provides improved tractive efforts over previous models.



BH310 SMART BACKHOE ATTACHMENT

COMPANY: Caterpillar

URL: Caterpillar.com

Cat's BH130 Smart Backhoe attachment for D3 Series equipment can perform utility trenching, dig footings and form and maintain drainage ditches. The backhoe is compatible with Cat 3-ton excavator attachments, and its auxiliary-hydraulic system allows pairing with hydro-mechanical work tools, including hammers, thumbs, augers and vibratory compactors. The backhoe hydraulically shifts side to side for digging adjacent to buildings and footers. Integrated stabilizers provide a solid digging platform. Maximum digging depth with the BH130 is 9.75 feet; reach at ground level from the swing pivot pin is 13.25 feet. Stabilizer spread in the working position is 71 inches, and total side-shift travel is 33 inches. The operating weight of the backhoe is 2,325 pounds.



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BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Project pros

SiteOne discusses how bid and takeoff services can help contractors

BY ABBY HART | LM SENIOR EDITOR

Landscape industry distributors, in addition to selling equipment and products, also offer bid and takeoff services to help their customers with irrigation, landscape, nursery, outdoor lighting, site furnishings and stormwater/drainage jobs. These services also can be another avenue for contractors to find and bid on work.

Erik Acker, director of project services at SiteOne Landscape Supply,

explains that SiteOne's program, Project Services, is an online portal where contractors can bid commercial work.

The program is free to join and helps connect contractors with new construction opportunities, cloud-based landscape and irrigation material takeoffs, customized bid creation, and request-for-quotes submission and tracking.

A contractor signs up for an account and can upload his or her own project in order to form a bid or search for new construction projects.

After a contractor submits a project for bid on the Project Services platform, SiteOne then performs a design and/or

material takeoff using proprietary software. When the material takeoff is complete, the system notifies the contractor that his or her bid is ready. From there, customers can hand their materials list to a SiteOne associate who can help them place a supplies order.

"We've tried to automate as much of the process as possible," Acker says.

Commercial landscape contractors rely heavily on bidding tools to help expedite work. Acker says that SiteOne's Project Services tool offers features, automation and usability to help contractors grow their businesses.

WINNING BID
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ADDED VALUE

At a February SiteOne University event in Westlake, Ohio, Project Services Manager Jeff Lovell mentioned additional capabilities available to users.

"Sometimes we do head spot designs for irrigation, and if you get the job, we can go back and do a finished design, so that you have construction documents," he explains, adding that contractors can then give those plans to installers to complete the job.

"We're not in the design business," he says, "but we like to be involved where we can to raise the level of the industry and help people out."

Traffic has picked up on the SiteOne client portal as more people are spending time at home and working from home during the coronavirus pandemic, Acker says.

"If contractors are sitting at home, we're seeing more projects that they're trying to bid," Acker says. "We haven't seen a slow down with COVID-19, at least on the bidding side ... a lot of guys are looking for opportunities when the coronavirus is done." 

Sedges, including yellow nutsedge, can disrupt play and discolor golf courses, lawns, and sports fields. They steal water, nutrients, and sunlight from the turf, and can be a beast to control. If you don't take control of it, sedge will take over. The first step in controlling sedge and almost all weeds in turf is to grow dense, strong turf that can win its battle with the weeds. Proper maintenance is key. Keeping your turf at the correct height will prevent weeds from forming seed heads. Sedges do best in moist conditions. Drainage is vital. The first step in controlling sedges and almost all weeds in turfgrass is to grow a dense turf that can win its battle with the weeds. Proper maintenance

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WATER WORLD

More than an afterthought

COMPANY Conserva Irrigation

LOCATION Target stores across the U.S.

DETAILS A quarter-billion gallons of water saved, 300-plus store locations, three years of work — all of this encompassed Conserva Irrigation's irrigation renovation at select Target locations.

It started out as a nine-store project, but from 2017 to 2019, it blossomed into fixing the irrigation systems for the 300 most water-abusing stores across the U.S., according to Target's data.

"Target had the fortitude to say we want to see if we can shift that irrigation system from a liability to an asset," says Russ Jundt, founder of Conserva Irrigation. "(Target understood) you can't address irrigation as an afterthought."

At the sites, crews addressed all the irrigation leaks. "We fixed the lateral fractures, main line fractures and leaking heads. There were tens of thousands of leaking heads on those systems," he says.

The team then updated the existing controllers so they fit with the current systems. Jundt notes that while smart irrigation technology can be effective, it's useless if it's controlling a faulty system. Challenges included educating Target on the work Conserva performed and standardizing procedures across all locations.

The solution came in what Conserva calls its "Target Playbook," a standardized operating procedure that it now uses for all national accounts. "We really had to put a series of procedures and protocols in place that made it scalable and repeatable, all the way down to where we park at a Target store, how and where we check in and how we identify and label equipment," Jundt says.



Captions | **1.** Conserva trained employees for every aspect of the Target project, including where to park and how to speak to customers who mistake them for Target employees. **2.** Russ Jundt (left), Conserva founder and vice president, and Jake Mathre, Conserva director of franchise operation, at a Super Target store location. **3.** Conserva puts its efforts into unbundling irrigation services and repairing faulty irrigation systems.



PHOTOS: CONSERVA IRRIGATION

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Maximizing irrigation truck efficiency

Nothing kills job site productivity like a crew that forgets something back at the shop. That's why truck setup is so important.

"As a contractor, you often find a way to get by with what you have until you can afford what you actually need to do things more efficiently," says Matthew Barbour, co-owner of The Yard Barbours in Elizabethtown, Ind. "I know some successful irrigation contractors who still work out of totes in the truck bed. I'd even done that myself not too long ago. But now I really like the setup we use."

That setup is a 1-ton pickup with a utility body. Bedside-accessible storage compartments have helped improve job site efficiency.

"Not all utility bodies are the same," Barbour points out. "What I like about ours is that you can open one of the

storage compartment doors and a set of shelves runs the entire width of the truck. We can keep all kinds of supplies in there — and you can pull the shelves out to easily see what's in there."

Not having to climb into the truck bed to dig around in totes or toolboxes saves time on the job site. It has also spared Barbour the burden of having to travel back to the shop to grab certain items he'd inadvertently left behind.


"I make a list of what we're going to need on a job and make sure everything is accounted for in those rollout shelves on the truck," Barbour says. "For example, we might keep 30 misters and 20 rotors at a given time, along with all sorts of 1-inch PVC parts like elbows, Ts and reducers. We also keep up to 200 different types of barb fittings, as well as 200 to 300 feet of flexible black pipe."

Barbour has recently made one more time-saving addition to his irri-

gation truck. One of the front storage compartments on the utility body now contains a power inverter that's hooked up to the truck.

"We have several battery-powered drills, grinders, saws and shears that we use all of the time on irrigation jobs," Barbour says. "With the power inverter, we can recharge batteries in the field. I wasn't sure how much we'd use it, but now we know how convenient it is and wouldn't do without it."

When organizing an irrigation truck for peak efficiency, it largely comes down to those little things learned over time that help save a few minutes here and a few minutes there.

Experts from four truck and accessory manufacturers offer some additional insights on how landscape contractors can maximize the efficiency of their irrigation trucks. 

BUYERS PRODUCTS

Jennifer Pusateri

Truck tool box product manager



When you're on a job, time spent looking for tools is time wasted. That's why it's key that your toolbox helps keep your equipment organized and accessible. Built-in drawers, tool trays and removable dividers are all great features that let your crew work at peak efficiency. A box that's easy to open and reach into from the ground is also better than one that requires climbing in and out of the bed of the truck. It all comes down to time management. Aside from that, look for a box built with durable materials and the latest technology. Aluminum and powder-coated steel are popular options because they're sturdy, corrosion-resistant metals. Robotic welds are extremely precise and produce consistent, high-quality boxes.

ISUZU COMMERCIAL TRUCK OF AMERICA

Brian Tabel

Executive director of marketing



When spec'ing an irrigation truck, the most important thing to determine with your truck dealer, body company and equipment company is the total load of everything fully loaded to decide on the proper chassis. After that is determined, figure out the route the truck will run to see if you should have a gas or diesel powertrain. After that, you will need to decide on a regular cab or a crew cab based on the crew size for the truck and the routes the truck will run. From there, you can get into the fun stuff, like a backup camera, lane departure, chrome grill and many other important features.

RAM COMMERCIAL TRUCK

Dave Sowers

Head of Ram Commercial



A reliable truck or van is the backbone of any successful irrigation business. Look for vehicles with a durable powertrain, robust chassis, new technology and features that further enhance capabilities while delivering low total cost of ownership. Going in, know your payload weights and your people-carrying requirements. Then think outside the traditional box. For instance, Ram light-duty trucks now tow up to 12,750 pounds, heavy-duties tow up to 35,100 pounds and the Ram ProMaster full-size van offers up to a 4,680-pound payload while towing up to 6,800 pounds with higher security for your equipment. The truck and van product offerings today are more capable and more advanced than ever before, so do your research. All of these things factor into doing effective and efficient business.

READING TRUCK GROUP

Eric McNally

Vice president



While irrigation trucks can be configured many ways, there are some features that will make a crew's day much more productive. Two popular Reading irrigation trucks look very different, yet each has two important characteristics: PVC pipe storage and secured organization for tools, sprinkler heads and control panels. A 9-foot service body with an over-the-cab pipe rack allows for pipes of up to 20-foot lengths to be carried while providing plenty of secured storage for tools and parts. This truck is equipped with a towing hitch for a trencher. The dovetail flatbed incorporates a pipe rack for transporting PVC pipe and a large toolbox for secure storage. The dovetailed unit allows for trenching equipment to be transported directly on the truck and eliminates the need for a trailer.

IRRIGATION TECH

Head in the clouds

Cloud-based irrigation controllers are the fastest-growing segment of the marketplace for their connectivity and convenience

BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER
CONTRIBUTOR

Wi-Fi's connectivity capabilities now apply to irrigation controllers.

"Cloud-based irrigation controllers are the largest-growing sector in the market," says Anthony Long, product manager for Hunter Industries. "I predict all controllers will be cloud based in the next three years. It doesn't make sense to install a system with old technology these days."

Wi-Fi or cloud-based controllers allow users to operate and maintain irrigation systems remotely. Kurt Thompson, owner of K. Thompson & Associates, an irrigation training and troubleshooting company based in Lake Wylie, S.C., says end users are driving the popularity of cloud-based irrigation controllers for residential systems.

"It's all about the property owner who wants to be connected to the controller remotely like the other appliances in their home," Thompson says. "They can make sure the controller is doing what it's supposed to do from anywhere."

Long says contractors also rely on the ability to monitor systems remotely.



"Contractors have access to their clients' irrigation controllers from anywhere at all times, which allows them the ability to monitor them and make sure they're functioning as efficiently as possible without having to visit their property," he says.

TRIAL RUN

Long recommends contractors practice and gain experience with cloud-based controllers before installing one.

"The first thing contractors should do is try (them) at their own home," Long says. "Don't go straight into a customer's house and expect the controller to work straight away. You have to do your homework."

PLACEMENT

Cloud-based controllers need access to a strong, reliable signal to function optimally, so contractors should be mindful of a controller's placement. "It may not be a good place if there are pipes or wires in the wall between the controller and the Wi-Fi source," Thompson says. "Make sure to test the Wi-Fi connection using the controller. Do not rely on just a mobile device."

FINE-TUNE

Once a cloud-based controller is set up and programmed, the system will need to be fine-tuned to the client's particular landscape, Thompson says.

"Contractors should expect to have to come back several times in the first few months and make adjustments," Thompson says.


DAMAGE CONTROL
Clients adjusting their own controllers may lead to issues that the contractor has to fix.

CLIENT CONTROL

While many customers enjoy the ability to monitor and adjust their systems, Thompson says this can create an unprecedented layer of customer service. Homeowners who like to "fiddle" with their systems can end up creating problems that will fall on the contractor to fix.

"The contractor needs to be prepared for when the customer messes things up," Thompson says. "How many freebies will they get? How many times can you fix or adjust things for them? How and when do you charge for this?"

CHOOSE WISELY

Long says it's important for contractors to choose the right controller for the job. For example, Hunter has two Wi-Fi systems for two different markets. The Hydrowise is designed for residential properties, while the Centralus is for commercial sites and sports fields. Long says it also can be difficult to differentiate between smart controllers that can self-adjust based on evapotranspiration data and those that also have internet connectivity and remote access. 

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.



Anthony Long



Kurt Thompson



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FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Scott and Alex Lawn

CO-OWNERS, FATHER AND SON

GREENWAY IRRIGATION, LAWN AND LANDSCAPE & GREENWAY LAWN AERATION, SAN DIEGO

Scott Lawn



1 Your last names are Lawn ... were you destined to be in this industry?

Scott: It didn't dawn on me, as strange as it may sound, that my last name is Lawn when I got into the lawn and landscape business. I was a business broker for a number of years, selling small businesses. I thought I would buy a service business of some kind and resell it after I used my marketing skills to make it better. The first one I bought was a little one-man aeration business. I simply liked it. I didn't have to wear a suit and tie anymore. I spent the last 28 years building it up to what it is today. We converted about 18 years ago to being a licensed landscape contractor, everything from fixing a sprinkler to a complete landscape makeover, or even a new construction.

2 How's it been going during the pandemic and how are you adjusting?

Alex: We're still extremely busy. The only thing that's changed is we've had to shut down our aeration side temporarily. The construction side is still going strong. Like everyone, we've had clients here and there say they want to pause for right now. But we're still really busy. We're keeping distance from clients. No shaking hands, no going inside homes. We're trying to make it so we're safe and the client is safe. **Scott:** Everybody has gloves, everybody has masks. Everybody has antiseptic spray on the equipment and (uses it) as we're entering and leaving properties, so we're not bringing anything in and we're not taking anything away. The rule states stay 6 feet apart; we're staying 15 feet apart. We are telling our clients, 'We're worried about your safety, don't be offended.' And instead of putting them off, it assures them that we are taking care.

3 Alex, what can you tell me about your Camaro and that crazy paint job?

It's a 2019 Camaro 2SF. I have the Greenway lettering on the tires. People see the tires and say 'Greenway?' I've actually picked up clients at car shows

with the car. Life is too serious; you've got to have a little bit of fun. It's free flowing, something different that no one else has. The reason I don't put Greenway stickers on the car, and only on the tires is because sometimes the car goes faster than it should. (You can check out the Camaro on Instagram at @toxic_garages.)

4 What's the best part of your jobs?

Alex: The people. It's our staff, our clients. Being able to work with my dad is amazing. I realize this: I have something special a lot of people don't have ... I have a great relationship with both of my parents. The fact that I can be best friends with my dad and have him as a business partner and work with him on a daily basis is pretty amazing. And getting to see the smile on our clients' faces when we've done something for them ... in the beginning they say, 'I just don't go outside. I don't go out in my backyard.' I say, 'Seriously? You have one of the best views in San Diego!' And when I get them outside for the first time in years, that makes it worth it, seeing the smile on their faces.

5 Scott, looking back, were there times you thought that Alex might one day be working alongside you?

One of my favorite memories is, as I'd be aerating a lawn and he was 3 years old, he would demand to bring his plastic lawn mower and follow along with me. When he was 5 years old, the thing he asked for that blew Santa's mind? He said 'a weed wacker.' Santa looked at me and said, 'What?' So he got a weed wacker that Christmas, but it wasn't from Santa. 🙄

PHOTO: LM STAFF

BEST ADVICE

"It's been embedded in me since I was young ... you have to work for what you want. Work hard and good things will come." — ALEX LAWN





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STAYING SAFE DURING COVID-19

Follow these guidelines to keep your landscape operation and employees safe during the coronavirus outbreak.

Follow social distancing practices. Many companies have dual-cab or crew-cab trucks, and there's no way two people inside those transport vehicles can stay 6 feet apart or more. Many companies have asked employees to get to the job site on their own, in their own personal vehicle, rather than coming to the company's headquarters.

Protect your respiratory system. Right now, nationally, most occupations are being asked to leave the N95 NIOSH-approved mask for medical and emergency personnel. However, when doing construction work, contractors can use wet saw technology, a cutting tool that automatically introduces water, to reduce the amount of silica dust inhaled. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is for individual use. When employees take off PPE,



they should put it in a sealable plastic bag with their name on it.

Practice good personal hygiene. Sanitize surfaces within and on vehicles and tools and equipment workers use daily. Workers should wash their hands at a minimum of 20 seconds and do it a lot more often: before lunch, after using a restroom and in between job sites. At the end of the workday before employees go home, they should take off their work clothes.

Consult OSHA rules. Many states have their own OSHA guidelines, some of which are stricter than the national OSHA guidelines. Find a list of state rules at [OSHA.gov/StatePlans](https://www.osha-slc.gov/StatePlans). TM

SOURCE: SAM STEEL, PH.D., SAFETY ADVISER FOR THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONALS

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BY DANIEL GORDON

The author is a CPA who caters to lawn care operators and landscape contractors. He can be reached at dan@turfbooks.com.

How to keep your company solvent during COVID-19

Working with our many lawn care clients, we are hearing that the green industry is faring better than many others. Most customers are accepting their first round of treatment.

The National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) is working hard to ensure state and federal governments recognize lawn care as essential. Our clients report that many people are staying home, so there are many homeowners to speak to, making new sales strong.

That said, if widespread stay-home orders persist, things can and will change, making for an ugly spring. The need for a sound financial strategy has never been greater. Rewriting budgets with a few different “what if” scenarios is prudent. We don’t think it’s time to hold on to original plans for the year. Our recommendation is to work on liquidity and cost control.

Here’s a look at what assistance is available for small businesses during this unprecedented time.

PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM (PPP)

- Provides eight weeks of cash-flow assistance through 100 percent federally guaranteed loans to small employers who maintain their payroll during this emergency.
- If the employer maintains payroll, a portion of the loans used for covered payroll costs, interest on mortgage obligations, rent and utilities would be forgiven, which would help workers to remain employed and affected small businesses and our economy to recover quickly from this crisis.

ECONOMIC INJURY DISASTER LOANS (EIDL)

- Includes \$10,000 advance. (If applying for the PPP, the advance will be subtracted from PPP proceeds.)
- Provides up to \$2 million to help overcome the temporary loss of revenue.
- May be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that can’t be paid because of the disaster’s impact.
- The interest rate is 3.75 percent for small businesses.

“The need for a financial strategy has never been greater ... We don’t think it’s time to hold on to original plans ...”

- The Small Business Administration offers loans with long-term repayments to keep payments affordable, up to a maximum of 30 years.
- Terms are determined on a case-by-case basis, based upon each borrower’s ability to repay.

EXTENSION OF TAX PAYMENT

Taxpayers are now eligible for the deferral of federal income tax payments due on April 15 until July 15 without the imposition of penalty or interest, subject to certain caps. The IRS clarified that estimated tax payments due on April 15 are covered under this deferred payment rule. However, the second estimated tax payment due on June 15 is not covered, unless the U.S. Treasury changes its position, so as of this writing, the second estimated payment is due prior to the first.

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

The CARES Act expands unemployment benefits through larger federal grants to the states to process and pay claims. The federal government will increase unemployment benefits by an additional \$600 per week.

PAID SICK TIME

There is a requirement that employers with 500 or fewer employees and government employers provide emergency paid sick leave to employees due to any of the following reasons:

- To quarantine because the employee is diagnosed with the coronavirus;
- To seek a diagnosis or preventive care for the coronavirus;
- To comply with a recommendation or order by a public official with jurisdiction or health care provider on the basis that the physical presence of the employee would jeopardize the health of others due to exposure of the employee to the coronavirus or exhibition of symptoms by the employee; or
- To care for a family member for such purposes or to care for a child whose school has closed or whose childcare provider is unavailable, due to the coronavirus.

Full-time employees are entitled to 10 days of sick leave, and part-time employees are entitled to the typical number of hours that they work in a typical two-week period, paid at two-thirds of the employee’s regular rate.

These situations are complicated and ever-changing, and we’re here to help. Our firm remains open and fully operational for business, and we are available to support you any way we can.

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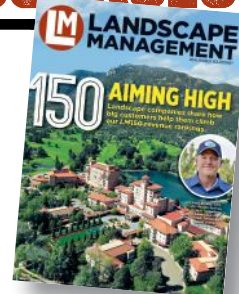
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RESOURCES

[Top landscape companies]

LM150 rankings

Be on the lookout for the June issue, where we will publish our annual LM150 list of the top 150 landscaping companies in the industry, ranked by annual revenue. The list will be broken out by service mix, customer mix and region, and the issue will also highlight some of the top companies.



BY MARTY GRUNDER

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



Focus on what you can control

You've surely heard the saying that life is what happens when you've made other plans. I've found that line popping into my head quite a bit since the coronavirus began to spread in the U.S. just as my team at Grunder Landscaping Co. (GLC) was set to jump into our busiest season. We spent all winter preparing for what we had projected would be our strongest year yet, and then — poof! — most of it was put on hold.

Frustrating? Sure. Ironic? You bet. A setback we can't recover from? No way. We won't let it be, and neither should you. Here's how we plan to make up for the revenue we've lost and position ourselves well for the future, no matter what it holds.

We're making use of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).

This federal legislation authorized up to \$349 billion in forgivable loans to small businesses to pay their employees during the coronavirus crisis. We applied for a PPP loan at GLC and were fortunate to get approved; once we receive the money, we will meticulously document how we spend it to help ensure we're eligible for forgiveness. If you received this money too, be smart about what you do with it, follow the federal guidelines to a T and — as always — keep good records. This program is a lifeline to small businesses; don't waste it.

We're watching our indirect labor hours.


Indirect labor is all

“It will never cease to amaze me what a live human voice on the end of the line can do to make a customer feel cared for.”

the time your hourly team members are clocked in but are not producing billable work. To drive profits up, you need to push these costs down. At GLC, we're using technology to reduce our indirect time, including tracking when our trucks leave and return to the yard. Our new digital schedule board, fed by Aspire Software, has made us much more efficient, as have the reconditioned iPads we've purchased and placed with every team leader. All of this improves our bottom line.

We're building up our sales team. Any time the economy takes a turn for the worse, business owners immediately look for ways to tighten their belts. In my experience, sales is one area where it often makes more sense to invest rather than reduce. At The Grow Group, the consultancy I lead, we always say sales are to a business what gas is to a car: Without them, you aren't going anywhere. That's why at GLC, we're actively recruiting for two new salespeople. We also believe the current economic uncertainty is temporary, and demand for landscaping services is likely to come roaring back. We want to make sure we're in the best possible position we can be once it does.

We're finding new ways to market to and connect with clients and prospects. I've made it my mission to personally call and speak to every one of our 200-plus clients at GLC in the last couple months. It will never cease to amaze me what a live human voice on the end of the line can do to make a customer feel cared for. Nearly every single person I've called has thanked me — effusively — for reaching out to them and has expressed their understanding and support for GLC. We are treading carefully, and sensitively, in our marketing for now, but we also know from the calls we're receiving that many folks in our market are eager to improve their yards now that they're spending so much time in them. And with many spring breaks canceled, and the possibility summer vacations will have to be tabled too, you just might find yourself positioned to make a lot of staycations a whole lot better.

I hope sharing the approach we're taking at GLC helps you keep moving your business forward. Stay positive, focus on what you can control and if we can help you in any way at The Grow Group, let us know. 

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