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150

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LM150 rankings share
how they make culture
more than a buzzword



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Once you've checked out our LM150 rankings and stories beginning on p. 11, be sure to head over to **LandscapeManagement.net** to find video interviews with the heads of some of this year's top companies. There, you'll find more tips on how to lay the foundation for a strong company culture, how to scale up your business and more.



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Proving durability

In this issue, we celebrate our annual *LM150* list, ranking by revenue the top 150 landscape companies in America. Now in its 13th year, the list, sponsored by our friends at Aspire Software, sets a record at a total of \$12.6 billion in revenue.

A common theme we wanted to have in this year's coverage of the *LM150* was 1) getting companies to share how a strong culture helped them prosper in what was a strange year and 2) general tips companies of all sizes could use. The *LM150* begins on page 11, and I hope you'll find both of these themes helpful within your business.

One of the interviews I did for the section—and you can view the interview on [LandscapeManagement.net](https://www.landscapemanagement.net)—was with Chenmark Partner James Higgins. The company came in at No. 43 on the list, with a revenue of \$50 million. Based in Portland, Maine, Chenmark is a family-owned company (James, his wife, Trish,

“... this list is just one of the many ways we like to celebrate what is clearly a durable industry that continues to thrive and provide for so many, our team included.”

and brother Palmer) that acquires businesses and utilizes the Higgins' expertise in finance to strengthen the companies with the intention of owning and operating them indefinitely. The landscaping industry was where Chenmark got its start, and two-thirds of its businesses are in that market.

I asked Higgins what it was about this industry that drew them in. “Durability,” he told me. “Part of that is related to the core services being offered.

Grass is going to grow, snow is going to fall. That's basic. Beyond that, for a lot of the companies in the industry, what you find are very deep and long-lasting customer relationships. There's the opportunity, when you're on a customer's property, caring for it and treating it like it was your own... that can build a very valuable relationship. That's very appealing to us.”

Durable is a great word for this industry. Only 150 companies are featured on this list, but this list is just one of the many ways we like to celebrate what is clearly a durable industry that continues to thrive and provide for so many, our team included. Congratulations to the *LM150*, and continued success to you all!

5 Tips from James Higgins, partner, Chenmark

1 Get your books in order: The better you understand your financial and operational data, the more likely you are to be successful on purpose, instead of by accident. If you are organized and disciplined about collecting and reviewing it, the information your business produces will tell you where to invest more, where to look to correct mistakes and how to allocate your time as a leader.

2 Focus on the full employee experience: Employees are the most important part of any business. Therefore, it's crucial for any successful business to have a fully developed strategy for each part of the employee experience. Including the outreach to a new candidate, onboarding and training and reviews and incentives, each step is an opportunity to differentiate your business from the competition.

3 Sweat the details and get the little things right: Our No. 1 core value is to Chase Better Every Day, but this doesn't mean pursuing some transformational silver bullet.

Instead, it's about buying into the ethos that success in small business is the sum of tremendous amounts of small decisions made well, every day. As Admiral William McRaven likes to say, “If you can't do the little things right, you will never do the big things right.”

4 Understand the relationship between cost and value: In any business, profit isn't just a measure of success for the current period; it also represents capital that can be reinvested into the business to fund future growth and expansion. Every incremental dollar of current spending has a substantial opportunity cost, and it is crucial that the business gets good value for the dollars that are spent. This means being frugal but not cheap.

5 Mistakes: Make mistakes, own them, fix them and share the learning. We all make mistakes, but it's the ability to turn them into a learning opportunity for you and your team, rather than simply brushing them aside, that can make all the difference.



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EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD



MORE ONLINE

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

How can landscape company owners ensure “culture” is more than a buzzword?

“You might preach honesty and integrity, but when you instruct your staff to tell clients that you are out when you are really there, all your preaching goes down the sliding board.”



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.

“Culture is a verb! You keep it alive with your daily actions, energy and how you handle the toughest decisions.”



“Place someone in your office in charge of it and provide accountability. If left up to the owner, it may never get done.”



“To have a great company culture, core values and desired behaviors must be constantly discussed, from the top down.”



“Talking about your culture is one thing, but when you live it, people notice, and that’s what makes a culture real.”



“You ensure culture is more than a buzzword by using your core values as a compass that guides all decisions.”



“It starts with values in execution, not on some poster on the wall. It happens when those values are equally important to employees and customers.”



“Culture must be operationalized to become meaningful.”



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Registration open for GIE+EXPO 2021

GIE+EXPO's registration is open for the Oct. 20-22 event at the Kentucky Exposition Center. Registration, which is only \$20 through Sept. 9, is available online.

As of April 20, GIE+EXPO said 675 companies had already signed on to exhibit at the show and the co-located Hardscape North America, which is an 18 percent increase over the same time in 2019. More than 70 companies are new exhibitors. New for this year include the Kentucky Exposition Center's recent renovations to the outdoor demo area, where attendees can test drive equipment.

"We look forward to attending the GIE+EXPO every year and are eager to get back to the show in 2021," said Chris Durig, vice president of sales with Bluebird Turf Products. "It is the only industry show that provides an audience of distributors, dealers and landscapers at a single event. Additionally, it is the only industry show that provides opportunities for an indoor exhibit as well as outdoor product demonstrations."

Recently named the sixth-largest trade show in the nation, GIE+EXPO is sponsored by the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, Professional Grounds Management Society and National Association of Landscape Professionals. 



The 2021 GIE+EXPO is set to be in person, similar to the events in 2019 and before.



Top Gun Facility Services adds Emerald Isle Landscaping

Top Gun Facility Services, a portfolio company of Osceola Capital, has acquired Emerald Isle Landscaping. The move expands the company's suite of services into the commercial landscape market.

Emerald Isle, founded in 1977, is headquartered in Denver and serves as a commercial landscape maintenance provider to the Colorado market. The company provides a range of landscape

maintenance, enhancement, irrigation, floriculture and snow removal solutions to commercial and multifamily customers.

Emerald Isle is Top Gun's fourth acquisition within its partnership with Osceola Capital and the second acquisition this year.

KEI expands into Green Bay with Landscape Associates partnership

Kujawa Enterprises Inc. (KEI), a Milwaukee market leader in commercial landscape services, teamed up

with Landscape Associates of De Pere, expanding service offerings into the Green Bay and Fox Valley Region of Wisconsin.

Landscape Associates, founded in 1990 by Gerry Andrews, has built a solid reputation throughout the community as a preferred commercial and residential landscape management and construction services provider. Andrews will continue to provide local leadership of the company alongside his existing management team.

KEI, family operated for 57 years, is a partner company of Sperber Landscape Cos. and is a full-service, four-season landscape management contractor.

Blount is now Oregon Tool

Blount unveiled a new corporate name that positions the company for growth while honoring its heritage: Oregon Tool. The manufacturer of professional-grade cutting tools and equipment selected Oregon Tool as its new name to harness the power of its pioneering origin story.

The company was founded by Joe Cox in 1947 in the basement of his Portland home. Inspired by nature — a timber beetle larva to be exact — Cox studied the creature to better understand how to cut wood more efficiently.

He designed a new saw chain with his learnings that was modeled after the larva's alternating C-shape jaws. He called it the "Cox Chipper Chain" and started the Oregon Saw Chain Corp. to produce it. According to the company, Cox's saw chain revolutionized the timber industry, and it remains widely used today around the globe.

Today, the newly named Oregon Tool has more than 3,000 team members and sells thousands of products in more than 110 countries across multiple consumer brands, among them Oregon, Woods and ICS Diamond Tools. It manufactures saw chain and guide bars for chainsaws and diamond saw chain and is an original equipment manufacturer supplier of first-fit and replacement parts.

Susan McGee, owner, Lawn Doctor of Wilmington and Brunswick Co., N.C., on the recent surge in gas prices due to the ransomware attack by DarkSide, a criminal hacking group:

“I had 13 trucks that had to sit in line that first morning. I heard about the concern for the pipeline, and I made sure everyone knew. When you drive possibly 30 to 45 minutes per route, you're going to use gas. The pricing is also a concern, when you look at the economics and price adjustments. There's no way you can factor it in today. There's a lot to figure out.”

As told to Seth Jones, LM editor-in-chief

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The LM150 showcases the giants of the landscape industry each year, and 2020 was a year unlike any other. The industry has braved many months of difficult conditions as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. As landscape company leaders, you have dealt with shutdowns, new safety protocols and increasing demand from clients. You've adapted to these new ways of working, in addition to facing the ever-present challenges of running a business and H-2B and labor shortages. Through it

all, you've proven you can tackle these obstacles and emerge stronger than ever.

People make the difference in these tough times. The companies profiled and featured on this list have strived to create an environment where people felt valued and cared for. They're demonstrating how landscape companies have remained agile, creative and determined when it comes to supporting their teams and maintaining a sense of community at work, even when social distancing has become the norm. This emphasis on culture has helped their revenues continue to climb and even attract new clients and employees — all at a time when many other companies and industries haven't fared so well.

Like the rest of the country and the world, we hope that we're seeing the light at the end of the tunnel where COVID-19 is concerned, but we look forward to the resourcefulness that it's revealed. You've been true innovators and leaders, focused on understanding your clients, your

businesses and your workforce. You're not afraid to take a deep dive into the details of your operation to discover what's working and what isn't and to make the adjustments and decisions that will lead to more profit. You're strengthening your processes with state-of-the-art equipment and technology. You're listening to your clients and confidently offering insight and solutions based on reliable data. And, you're able to properly train your employees and rely on their expertise to deliver for your clients.

Here at Aspire, we're proud to help landscape companies see into all areas of their businesses so they can act proactively and become more profitable. We're honored to partner with leaders in landscaping and help contribute to your success. We wish you all a prosperous year and congratulations to the companies on the 2021 LM150. Thank you for all you do to grow and inspire this great industry.

Mark Tipton
CEO, Aspire Software



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	Headquarters	2020 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev. Change from 2019	% Projected Change for 2021	FTEs/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm./ Res./Gov.	
1	BrightView Holdings	Blue Bell, Pa.	\$2,346,000,000	-3%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
2	TruGreen	Memphis, Tenn.	\$1,400,000,000	1%	0%	13570/NR	15/85/0
3	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	Kent, Ohio	\$1,287,552,000	13%	5%	9594/NR	NR/NR/NR
4	Yellowstone Landscape	Bunnell, Fla.	\$358,000,000	34%	10%	3650/620	80/0/20
5	Bartlett Tree Experts	Stamford, Conn.	\$352,000,000	8%	7%	2000/200	30/64/6
6	Gothic Landscape	Valencia, Calif.	\$230,000,000	0%	9%	2000/0	95/5/0
7	SavATree	Bedford Hills, N.Y.	\$217,000,000	4%	7%	1047/131	30/70/0
8	Ruppert Landscape	Laytonsville, Md.	\$213,165,000	2%	18%	1820/0	100/0/0
9	Weed Man	Orono, Ontario	\$212,928,956	14%	9%	958/1886	6/94/0
10	LandCare	Frederick, Md.	\$208,000,000	12%	15%	1600/2200	100/0/0
11	Aspen Grove Landscape Group*	Willow Grove, Pa.	\$187,000,000	NR	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
12	HeartLand	Kansas City, Mo.	\$184,000,000	19%	40%	1200/900	100/0/0
13	U.S. Lawns	Orlando, Fla.	\$182,000,000	2%	NR	1600/750	100/0/0
14	Park West	Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.	\$180,000,000	-3%	5%	1600/0	100/0/0
15	Lawn Doctor^	Holmdel, N.J.	\$153,900,000	12%	12%	1500/0	5/95/0
16	Ferrandino & Son	Farmingdale, N.Y.	\$122,000,000	NR	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
17	Sperber Landscape Co.	Calabasas, Calif.	\$120,000,000	253%	70%	1400/200	100/0/0
18	LandOpt^	Pittsburgh, Pa.	\$103,138,990	1%	10%	340/526	40/51/9
19	Bailey Nurseries	St. Paul, Minn.	\$103,000,000	10%	5%	600/400	0/0/0
20	Juniper Landscaping	Fort Myers, Fla.	\$101,000,000	19%	20%	1100/0	100/0/0
21	Loving	Gastonia, N.C.	\$83,180,867	24%	27%	416/0	100/0/0
22	Clintar Commercial Outdoor Services	Markham, Ontario	\$82,600,000	1%	10%	320/320	93/2/5
23	NaturaLawn of America	Frederick, Md.	\$81,946,807	11%	8%	595/35	3/97/0
24	The Grounds Guys	Waco, Texas	\$81,390,000	4%	10%	1000/200	56/41/3
25	Massey Services^	Orlando, Fla.	\$79,225,000	11%	15%	2456/0	12/88/0
26	Rotolo Consultants	Slidell, La.	\$77,000,000	6%	9%	400/350	85/0/15
27	Meadows Farms	Chantilly, Va.	\$75,000,000	20%	5%	200/300	2/98/0
28	Spring-Green Lawn Care	Plainfield, Ill.	\$74,300,000	11%	8%	502/83	4/96/0
29	Clean Scapes	Austin, Texas	\$69,599,347	26%	18%	450/285	98/0/2
30	The Greenery	Hilton Head Island, S.C.	\$69,000,000	6%	7%	610/150	90/8/2
31	Acres Group	Wauconda, Ill.	\$65,473,392	-5%	10%	113/765	26/71/3
32	Mainscape	Fishers, Ind.	\$65,000,000	-12%	9%	695/112	100/0/0
33	Lucas Tree Expert Co.	Portland, Maine	\$63,000,000	8%	8%	500/0	98/2/0
34	Garden Design	Farmers Branch, Texas	\$61,000,000	NR	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
35	ABM^	New York, N.Y.	\$60,390,000	9%	10%	1100/300	43/0/57
36	Denison Landscaping	Fort Washington, Md.	\$58,600,000	-9%	5%	380/100	98/2/0
	Mariani Enterprises	Lake Bluff, Ill.	\$58,600,000	9%	8%	150/375	10/90/0
38	Teufel Landscape	Hillsboro, Ore.	\$57,955,252	7%	5%	370/30	95/1/4
39	Dixie Landscape	Medley, Fla.	\$56,900,000	18%	0%	335/0	0/0/0
40	Choate USA	Carrollton, Texas	\$56,765,940	8%	2%	82/375	0/0/0
41	Pierre Landscape	Irwindale, Calif.	\$55,000,000	25%	10%	320/0	0/0/0
42	Sebert Landscape	Bartlett, Ill.	\$50,500,000	1%	8%	101/561	90/5/5
43	Chenmark	Portland, Maine	\$50,000,000	0%	15%	334/273	60/40/0
44	Earthtones Design	Midlothian, Texas	\$46,500,000	25%	10%	150/8	72/14/14
45	Ryan Lawn & Tree^	Merriam, Kan.	\$46,153,570	15%	16%	339/15	6/94/0
46	Complete Landscaping Service	Bowie, Md.	\$45,877,800	18%	10%	175/180	95/5/0
47	Landscape Workshop	Birmingham, Ala.	\$45,305,000	4%	30%	393/122	92/5/3
48	Baytree Landscape	Ladson, S.C.	\$45,200,000	NR	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
49	SiteWorks	Chandler, Ariz.	\$45,139,207	24%	8%	178/58	100/0/0
50	Creative Environments	Tempe, Ariz.	\$44,650,000	15%	15%	150/150	0/0/0
51	Beary Landscaping	Lockport, Ill.	\$44,000,000	8%	15%	75/80	90/10/0
52	Russell Landscape Group	Sugar Hill, Ga.	\$42,582,937	12%	10%	400/450	0/0/0

LEGEND NR = Not reported; * Indicates estimate, based on projected revenue for 2020 reported last year; ^ Indicates a portion of reported revenue was removed (such as pest control, janitorial services or other nongreen industry offerings).

		Headquarters	2020 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev. Change from 2019	% Projected Change for 2021	FTEs/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm./ Res./Gov.
53	Kline Bros. Landscaping	Manahawkin, N.J.	\$42,000,000	5%	5%	200/30	10/90/0
54	AAA Landscape	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$41,525,000	4%	4%	525/80	91/1/8
55	R.P. Marzilli & Co.	Medway, Mass.	\$40,240,000	-3%	19%	130/70	7/93/0
56	Christy Webber & Co.	Chicago, Ill.	\$39,993,000	-14%	0%	251/0	50/20/30
57	Xquisite Landscaping*	Stoughton, Mass.	\$39,726,564	15%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
58	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	San Antonio, Texas	\$38,874,196	-5%	26%	304/100	28/7/65
59	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	Woodbine, Md.	\$38,500,000	0%	8%	300/200	85/15/0
	The Schumacher Cos.*	West Bridgewater, Mass.	\$38,500,000	0%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
61	EMSI	Plain City, Ohio	\$38,188,000	1%	10%	75/350	80/5/15
62	Senske Services^	Kennewick, Wash.	\$37,464,000	11%	8%	380/120	10/85/5
63	Bemus Landscape	San Clemente, Calif.	\$37,050,000	0%	5%	450/0	99/1/0
64	Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers	Portland, Ore.	\$36,256,770	-2%	9%	275/50	NR/NR/NR
65	Cutting Edge	Garden City, Idaho	\$35,560,135	NR	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
66	Impact Landscaping & Irrigation	Jupiter, Fla.	\$35,100,000	-1%	15%	435/0	98/2/0
67	Superscapes	Carrollton, Texas	\$34,095,000	12%	9%	130/84	80/20/0
68	Bland Landscaping Co.	Apex, N.C.	\$34,000,000	30%	15%	350/100	90/3/7
69	Gachina Landscape Management	Menlo Park, Calif.	\$33,400,000	-15%	12%	385/0	90/4.5/5.5
70	Harvest Landscape Enterprises	Orange, Calif.	\$33,000,000	15%	30%	500/50	100/0/0
71	Landscape Services Inc.	Nashville, Tenn.	\$32,780,769	NR	10%	250/25	90/5/5
72	LMI Landscapes	Carrollton, Texas	\$32,750,000	35%	25%	150/32	100/0/0
73	Berghoff Design Group	Scottsdale, Ariz.	\$32,675,500	2%	6%	300/300	12/88/0
74	Designscapes Colorado	Centennial, Colo.	\$32,208,000	6%	10%	240/60	21/40/39
75	Intermountain Plantings	Bluffdale, Utah	\$31,964,643	20%	24%	143/157	91/1/8
76	L. J. Thalmann Co./Chalet	Wilmette, Ill.	\$31,666,401	3%	6%	134/120	0/100/0
77	Naturescape	Muskego, Wis.	\$31,415,171	8%	5%	305/15	5/95/0
78	The Bruce Company of Wisconsin	Middleton, Wis.	\$30,932,000	8%	1%	83/276	80/20/0
79	Perfect Cuts of Austin	Austin, Texas	\$30,200,000	7%	10%	30/89	100/0/0
80	Environmental Designs	Brighton, Colo.	\$30,158,000	3%	7%	201/87	69/31/0
81	McHale Landscape Design	Upper Marlboro, Md.	\$30,000,000	10%	10%	300/0	0/100/0
	Merchants Landscape Services	Santa Ana, Calif.	\$30,000,000	4%	5%	495/0	0/0/100
83	Designs by Sundown	Littleton, Colo.	\$29,000,000	NR	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
84	DLC Resources	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$28,800,000	4%	0%	380/0	100/0/0
85	Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management	Gilbert, Ariz.	\$28,712,000	0%	18%	278/10	100/0/0
86	WLE*	Austin, Texas	\$28,200,000	20%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
87	Nutri-Lawn	Toronto, Ontario	\$28,000,000	NR	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
88	Pacific Landscape Management	Hillsboro, Ore.	\$27,724,915	3%	5%	200/260	100/0/0
89	Stay Green	Santa Clarita, Calif.	\$27,400,000	3%	30%	381/0	80/0/20
90	Southview Design	St. Paul, Minn.	\$26,696,658	4%	9%	80/125	48/52/0
91	Landtech Contractors	Aurora, Colo.	\$26,500,000	5%	8%	100/150	100/0/0
92	Earthworks	Lillian, Texas	\$26,400,000	5%	5%	250/120	96/0/4
93	Unlimited Landscaping & Turf Management^	Suwanee, Ga.	\$26,016,962	11%	6%	214/214	57/42/1
94	Schill Landscaping & Lawn Care Services	North Ridgeville, Ohio	\$26,000,000	7%	10%	190/200	90/5/5
95	Yardnique	Morrisville, N.C.	\$25,900,000	5%	10%	288/100	100/0/0
96	DJ's Landscape	Grand Rapids, Mich.	\$25,600,000	2%	10%	165/200	100/0/0
97	The Budd Group*	Winston-Salem, N.C.	\$25,200,000	5%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
98	Frank & Grossman Landscape Contractors	Hayward, Calif.	\$25,100,000	11%	15%	276/0	15/65/20
99	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting^	Germantown, Wis.	\$24,651,000	-5%	14%	230/50	65/35/0
100	SOI Group	McKinney, Texas	\$24,612,800	12%	10%	105/0	98/0/2
101	Santa Rita Landscaping	Tucson, Ariz.	\$24,500,829	16%	11%	247/0	73/23/4
102	Service Direct Landscape	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$24,186,000	21%	30%	212/0	100/0/0
103	Andre Landscape Service	Azusa, Calif.	\$24,150,000	0%	8%	285/0	100/0/0
104	Great Oaks Landscape Associates	Novi, Mich.	\$24,000,000	-4%	10%	160/0	80/20/0

150 RANKINGS

	Headquarters	2020 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev. Change from 2019	% Projected Change for 2021	FTEs/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm./ Res./Gov.	
105	John Mini Distinctive Landscapes	Congers, N.Y.	\$23,600,000	5%	5%	163/41	98/2/0
106	Benchmark Landscape	Poway, Calif.	\$23,365,000	0%	0%	250/0	90/5/5
107	Heaven and Earth Landscaping	Indian Trail, N.C.	\$23,189,750	-8%	14%	231/40	98/2/0
108	Accent Landscape Contractors	El Paso, Texas	\$23,180,000	33%	10%	220/20	28/0/72
109	Lawn Management Co.	Houston, Texas	\$23,125,368	8%	8%	300/70	100/0/0
110	ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	Venice, Fla.	\$22,825,634	13%	17%	245/60	80/20/0
111	The Munie Co.	Caseyville, Ill.	\$22,812,711	-2%	-19%	154/104	93/7/0
112	Level Green Landscape	Washington, D.C.	\$21,743,000	-5%	29%	95/120	95/0/5
113	Andy's Sprinkler, Drainage & Lighting	Carrollton, Texas	\$21,598,210	16%	14%	115/69	30/70/0
114	Gibson Landscape Services	Alpharetta, Ga.	\$20,559,796	18%	10%	135/50	100/0/0
115	Cherrylake	Groveland, Fla.	\$20,200,000	38%	-5%	305/69	100/0/0
116	Hoffman Landscapes	Wilton, Conn.	\$20,071,075	23%	10%	185/0	0/100/0
117	Siteworks Landscape	Richmond, Calif.	\$20,000,000	0%	5%	200/0	0/100/0
118	Clarence Davids & Co.	Matteson, Ill.	\$19,978,800	-4%	3%	75/235	NR/NR/NR
119	Lifescape Colorado	Denver, Colo.	\$19,896,675	14%	20%	85/54	15/85/0
120	Crawford Landscaping*	Naples, Fla.	\$18,918,610	15%	3%	225/0	89/10/1
121	Art by Nature	Granite Falls, Wash.	\$18,500,456	-10%	10%	152/0	99/1/0
122	Perficut Companies	Des Moines, Iowa	\$18,500,000	-5%	18%	75/45	95/5/0
123	Complete Landsculpture*	Dallas, Texas	\$18,405,253	-9%	15%	160/0	54/45/1
124	Scott Byron & Co.	Lake Bluff, Ill.	\$18,296,340	3%	16%	83/109	11/89/0
125	The Joyce Cos.	Marstons Mills, Mass.	\$18,185,000	-3%	8%	100/60	0/100/0
126	Sposato Landscape Co.	Milton, Del.	\$17,637,000	-5%	6%	200/0	42/53/5
127	Richmond & Associates Landscaping	Carrollton, Texas	\$17,520,168	-1%	8%	106/130	97/1/2
128	Landscape Maintenance Professionals	Seffner, Fla.	\$17,500,000	2%	5%	275/50	100/0/0
129	Texscape Services	Houston, Texas	\$17,480,000	-8%	12%	260/260	92/0/8
130	Schultz Industries	Golden, Colo.	\$17,420,162	-16%	20%	120/32	90/0/10
131	HighGrove Partners	Austell, Ga.	\$17,200,000	0%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
132	ProQual Landscaping	Tempe, Ariz.	\$17,100,000	9%	10%	270/0	100/0/0
133	Brilar	Oak Park, Mich.	\$17,000,000	-7%	30%	188/20	80/0/20
	Earthco Commercial Landscape	Santa Ana, Calif.	\$17,000,000	6%	10%	350/0	100/0/0
	Mountain View Landscape	Chicopee, Mass.	\$17,000,000	-20%	10%	24/85	45/5/50
136	Pro Cutters Lawnsapes	Conyers, Ga.	\$16,913,276	21%	15%	60/10	40/0/60
137	Timberline Landscaping	Colorado Springs, Colo.	\$16,635,525	-15%	15%	166/78	77/21/2
138	Focal Pointe Outdoor Solutions	Caseyville, Ill.	\$15,675,000	19%	24%	63/115	90/10/0
139	Hittle Landscaping	Westfield, Ind.	\$15,525,261	-25%	15%	180/105	83/15/2
140	GreenScapes Landscape Co.	Columbus, Ohio	\$15,100,000	0%	6%	75/4	89/11/5
141	Green Lawn Fertilizing*	West Chester, Pa.	\$15,058,058	23%	20%	203/0	9/91/0
142	Nanak's Landscaping*	Deerfield Beach, Fla.	\$14,250,000	1%	10%	150/20	100/0/0
143	Saluda Hill Landscapes	Lexington, S.C.	\$14,133,000	9%	10%	110/0	30/70/0
144	GreenView Partners	Raleigh, N.C.	\$14,100,000	20%	20%	225/25	100/0/0
145	NJ Best Lawns Sprinklers & Fencing*	Lakewood, N.J.	\$14,055,210	-10%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
146	Michael Hatcher & Associates	Olive Branch, Miss.	\$14,000,000	8%	20%	100/50	0/0/0
147	Heritage Professional Landscaping	Kennewick, Wash.	\$13,881,564	0%	10%	90/35	60/25/15
148	Mullin	St. Rose, La.	\$13,879,239	6%	14%	125/0	NR/NR/NR
149	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	San Diego, Calif.	\$13,750,000	5%	15%	150/0	75/0/25
150	James Martin Associates	Mundelein, Ill.	\$13,640,000	-7%	11%	47/76	49/50/1
		Total: \$12,656,499,519	Avg: 8%	Avg: 12%			

Aspire Software congratulates the 2021 LM150 companies — we're inspired by your resilience, success and contributions to the growth of the landscaping industry.



Pandemic-proof

Despite a year of uncertainty, the industry saw 8 percent revenue growth in 2020

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

2020 will always be remembered as a year of uncertainty, but at least one thing remained the same: The lawn care and landscape industry continued to grow and set records.

The total revenue in the LM150 list, sponsored by Aspire Software, once again set a record at \$12.6 billion. That's up \$400 million from last year. The top three companies remain unchanged from last year: BrightView Holdings, TruGreen and The Davey Tree Expert Co. Yellowstone Landscape, based in Bunnell, Fla., saw a 34 percent increase in revenue and jumped up one spot to No. 4 on the list. Bartlett Tree Experts rounds out the top five companies.

A common theme we saw this year in the submissions was companies writing to us about how important a strong company culture was in uncertain times. While "the new normal" was a common theme in 2020, at companies with strong cultures, employees felt normal and safe at their workplace. That's why we profiled three companies that pride themselves on having strong company cultures: GreenScapes Landscape Co., Columbus, Ohio; Ryan Lawn & Tree in Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma; and Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management, Gilbert, Ariz.

Companies on the LM150 list certainly rose to the challenges provided by 2020. As Mark Wordley, COO and president of Caretaker, told LM, "Generally, in businesses, you're planning at least a year out. The uncertainty from month to month meant that we needed to be very nimble."

Fear of being left out?

Should your company be on the LM150 list of the largest landscape companies? Or, do you know of one that should be on the list, but isn't? Contact Special Project Editor Marisa Palmieri at mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net to be notified next year when the submission period opens. We encourage companies that think they might make the list to contact us for information.

COMBINED 2020
LM150 REVENUE

\$12,656,499,519

AVERAGE
REVENUE GROWTH
FROM 2019

8%

AVERAGE REVENUE
GROWTH PROJECTED
FOR 2021

12%

COMBINED 2020 REVENUE OF
THE TOP 3 FIRMS


\$5,033,552,000

40%
of total
list

METHODOLOGY

LM sought submissions from landscape companies in the magazine, on **LandscapeManagement.net**, via email and over the phone from January through May. Companies submitted their details through an online form. LM editors compiled the results and, where applicable, removed nontypical green industry revenue sources from totals reported by companies. For example, we omit revenue from pest and janitorial services.

We estimated revenue for firms that didn't provide data if they participated in last year's list and reported a projected 2020 revenue figure. We calculated the numbers for client mix, profit centers and regional charts based on data submitted.

The information in the LM150 is self-reported unless otherwise noted. Some companies do not break out individual service lines, so we can't be sure what revenue is specific to typical green industry services. Several firms opt not to participate in the list, there are others we are unaware of and it is possible some revenues overlap due to subcontracting agreements. 

GreenScapes ensures employees are aware of goals they should be hitting each week.

#140

It starts at the top

The higher-ups at GreenScapes Landscape Co. lead by example to create a strong company culture that trickles down through the ranks **BY SARAH WEBB | LM MANAGING EDITOR**

Since its inception in 1977 as a small six-employee company, strong company culture has served as the foundation for GreenScapes Landscape Co. in Columbus, Ohio.

“If you treat people with respect and work hard, the people you work with emulate what you’re doing,” says Bill Gerhardt, president and founder of the company, which came in at No. 140 on the 2021 *LM*150 list, with \$15.1 million in 2020 annual revenue. “I’ve seen companies where a bad culture will transfer down, but you have to be a leader and show that you’re an honest person, that you respect them and that you’re a hard worker.”

Gerhardt lays out the additional pillars that have helped the company maintain a strong culture throughout its four-plus decades in business.

MEASURE IT

A landscape architect by trade, Gerhardt said he struggled at first with the business side, especially as his company started to scale up by performing design and installation work for apartments and hotels.

“I thought I knew it all, but the longer I was in it, I realized I didn’t know anything,” Gerhardt says, chuckling. “I started hiring consul-

tants, and they taught us a lot. Open book management was a big part of it. You sit down and share the company goals and sales goals every year with all the company.”

The other part of it, Gerhardt says, was developing a budget in his third or fourth year of the business.

“A lot of companies, smaller companies especially, don’t budget, and I think that they’re missing the point of business,” Gerhardt says. “That really helped us so I could share that information with people, and it also gave us goals as a company.”

To determine if the company has hit its goals, GreenScapes measures proposals and sales, time spent getting out of the gate every morning and time spent on the job sites. Every week, crews get a graded score if they got out of the gate on time and if they hit the designated time to be spent at job sites.

To be efficient in hitting the road early, the company preloads all the trucks with the help of a nursery team who comes in to load plants and materials at 5 a.m. When the rest of the employees come in for the day, design/build crews have 20 minutes to load and get out of the gate and landscape maintenance crews have 15 minutes.

As far as time on the job sites goes, GreenScapes aims to have

crews on the job sites for 85 percent of the day, with the other 15 percent going to drive time and nursery time.

“Columbus is a decent-sized town, but it’s not Los Angeles, where you can have an hour or two driving time,” Gerhardt says. “That 85 percent is key because those are billable hours, and so many people lose that.”

When the company first started measuring time spent on job sites in the mid-1980s, 60 percent of crews’ time was spent on the sites.

“(At that time), the guys were loading their trucks in the morning. They would come in, have to load all of the plants and wait for loaders to load, and they probably left here at 10 a.m., and they were tired already,” Gerhardt says. “Eighty-five percent is pretty aggressive, but we found it could be reached. In our industry, the longer days are a lot more productive because you’re on the site more. We do a lot of lengthy construction where the crews typically go out to the site, and they’re there all day.”

INCENTIVIZE IT

Early on in GreenScapes’ history, the company started a profit-sharing program, which evolved into a 401(k) plan, where the company matches 50 percent of employees’ contributions up

SETTING A GOAL

Moving forward, GreenScapes strives to increase the recurring landscape maintenance and snow removal side of the business.

“We’d like to get that up to about 50 percent,” Gerhardt says. “Right now, it’s about 25 percent. That’s all so we can stabilize the income when the construction side is down.”

to 6 percent of their total yearly wages.

About five years ago, when involvement in the program was down, GreenScapes made participation mandatory unless employees opt out.

“We found people were not opting in because they didn’t understand it, didn’t want to take the time or were intimidated,” Gerhardt says. “Now, employees have to opt out. We’ve got some young guys who already have some savings for retirement. That makes me feel good.”

As of last year, the company was approaching close to \$3.5 million in the 401(k) account, Gerhardt says.

“I would never have thought it would get that big, but that’s satisfying to me as I look at the next venture for myself,” Gerhardt says, noting that last year, he created an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP). “It’s a leveraged ESOP, and the company is paying me for the value. The employees are not contributing anything other than their time and effort to make it profitable.”

Gerhardt landed on the plan after he received offers from people around the country to buy the company. Ultimately, he determined it wouldn’t be a good deal for employees.

“It was a matter of different cultures trying to buy us, and most of them were just interested in the maintenance dollars and maintenance accounts, and they would have probably let go of most of the administrative people here because they would’ve (operated) out of a different city.”

In addition to putting money aside for their future, employees also reap the benefits of more immediate rewards in the form of GreenScapes Bucks, imitation money in \$5 and \$10 bills that employees earn for hitting goals and receiving recognition from clients on a job well done. For example,

if crews achieve the 15- or 20-minute out-of-gate goal at least four out of five days in a week, they get \$5 for each crew member. If they hit the goal all five days, they get \$10. Employees can use the GreenScapes Bucks to get plant materials from the nursery or mulch or to buy boots.

“GreenScapes Bucks reward that employee who is winning,” Gerhardt says. “The pressure to perform is there without us calling them out. We learned from a consultant that praise is public, and punishment is private, so it’s effective when we’re in a room of all their peers giving out recognition to those who hit the company goals.”

The company also rewards employees with a bonus for referring new recruits: \$150 if a new crew member lasts six weeks on the job and \$300 if a new crew leader completes six weeks on the job.

“We’ve found that the best recruits are referrals from our employees,” Gerhardt says. “That has worked better than the online ads, signage and all the other things we have tried. People wouldn’t refer their friends if we had a bad culture here.”

STANDARDIZE IT

GreenScapes relies on standardized systems for almost everything.

“We were one of the first companies in my area that started renting uniforms,” Gerhardt says. “That made a difference in our image. We needed to be professional if we were going to be taken seriously as a business. It was a no-brainer when you’re a young business. I think the guys appreciate not coming home with dirty workwear.”

To manage more complicated aspects of the business, GreenScapes has developed paperwork and processes for training, tools lists, how jobs are sold, what plans look like, the development of contracts and more. New employees go through a daylong orientation and receive a manual that covers responsibilities and benefits.

WIN IT

GreenScapes’ efforts have not gone unnoticed by employees. Gerhardt says the culture has helped with retention: 25 percent of employees have been with the company for 10 years or more.

“That’s a lot for this industry,” Gerhardt says. “Some of them have been with me for 30 years. It’s very much a family in that respect.”

GreenScapes creates a culture where crews are praised publicly for a job well done.



#45

Game time

With a new CFO and business strategy, employee-owned Ryan Lawn & Tree raises its game

BY SETH JONES
LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Larry Ryan, president of Ryan Lawn & Tree, cringes at wasted effort. He's led Ryan Lawn & Tree since 1987, but before that, he spent 10 years in the food service industry, where margins are slim. First, it was a family business selling fish and chips, and then he entered the pizza game.

It was during his years selling pizzas that everything changed. His boss took him to a seminar on hiring that changed his life. The focus of the seminar was to hire talents, not people. Hiring the right person (and talent) is key to the life of a business. Because the seminar was expensive, to Ryan, it was important. He commented that had it been free, he would not have given it the meaning it deserved.

It's that mentality that has made him grow Ryan Lawn & Tree over the last 34 years into a \$47 million company with nine branches and 360 full-time employees across Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma. Ryan is a big believer in a strong, positive culture, and that led him to transition the company into an employee-owned company in 1998. The emphasis on hiring full-time employees is a



"The culture is one of a kind," says Katherine Miller (pictured center), customer service manager. "(It's) about the people; they have the heart." From left to right: Larry Ryan, Roy Heinbach, Miller, Mark Stuhlsatz and Rodney St. John, Ph.D.

big part of that culture. The company is one of the biggest movers on the 2021 LM150 list, growing \$7 million over the year and going from No. 51 last year to No. 45 this year.

THE OWNERSHIP CULTURE

Rodney St. John, Ph.D., is the agronomist for Ryan Lawn & Tree. Previously, he worked as a professor at Kansas State University and consulted for multiple lawn care companies around the state. St. John says the way Ryan runs his company made it an easy decision to join the Ryan Lawn & Tree team in 2012.

"Most of the time, you see the president of the company, and he has a big house in town and a big house down at the lake and multiple cars," St. John says. "This company was designed to make sure everybody has a career opportunity and everybody shares in the wealth of this company — not just one person. That is also part of our culture."

The company recently invested in the business principles of the Great Game of Business (GGOB) as a way to

further motivate employees to reach their fullest potential. The GGOB philosophy is to educate employees on the rules of business and give them a stake in the outcome.

"We trust our employees, the ownership culture," St. John says. "The Great Game of Business program has been very exciting, very fun, to see exactly what everything costs. One of the most eye-opening experiences for a new person is when they get here in December/January, they're going to see how we're going to do a couple hundred thousand dollars in revenue for those months, but we're going to lose several million dollars over that three-month period. 'Wait a minute, we're going to lose money? How do we stay in business?' Well, that's why we have to make up for it in the other 10 months."

New to the Ryan team is Roy Heinbach, vice president and CFO. The certified public accountant joined Ryan six months ago and brings 26 years of experience from a local accounting firm, a national

telecommunications company and a global finance leader in the clinical research industry.

Heinbach is quick with the list of things that appealed to him about working for Ryan Lawn & Tree: It's a faith-based company; a desire to grow both organically and with acquisitions; employee owned since '98; the industry itself; and Larry Ryan's vision for the industry.

HIT F9 AND WATCH

Heinbach enjoys telling employees about a longtime employee who got into Ryan's 401(k) early and now boasts \$300,000 in his 401(k) and \$600,000 in company stock.

"He wouldn't have that anywhere else in our industry, not being a manager," Heinbach says. "He just comes to work every day, prunes trees and shrubs and enjoys it."

A giant dry erase board in the heart of the company's Merriam, Kan., office displays the running totals in dollars and cents for every department. Near the lobby, another board shows the value of the company's stock through the years.

"I joke with the team that we've created a bunch of mini CFOs," Heinbach says. "There are not too many places where you know what your numbers are going to be or pretty close before month's end. This is special. I've come from a \$12-billion-a-year company, to here where employees at all levels are so much more on top of our numbers than we were over there. In this industry, that's shocking."

Larry Ryan says the Great Game of Business is "fueling the engine" of culture at the company. Employees get four bonuses a year. The bonus percent

increases each quarter, and the bonus goes up as goals are met. If a team is in a hole, they know it and can work to dig out. It's all because they know the score. The score creates purpose, Ryan says, just as in sports. The score creates excitement. The employees know what they have to do to win.

It's a different mentality from 30-plus years ago when Ryan's solution to every challenge was just to work harder.

"I told a manager recently, 'Not all of you worked seven days a week like I did when I got this going ... You're more rational than I am.' I'm lucky to still be married," Ryan says. "I love those guys, and the only difference between us is age and the understanding of the game.

We didn't have Excel files.

We had Lotus 1-2-3 when I started. The computers were so antiquated.

If the spreadsheet got big, you had to do manual calculations. When you'd get all your numbers typed in, you'd hit F9. It was amazing watching the numbers fly up! It was the most motivating thing at 10 o'clock every night to add in three new customers and their dollar amounts. Hit F9, and watch gross revenue go from \$78,200 to \$79,300."

There might not be an F9 button today, but Ryan says he wants everyone to feel

that same excitement of ownership. He compares it to the excitement of hitting three free throws in a row to send a basketball game into overtime.

Mark Stuhlsatz, vice president of irrigation and landscape, credits Larry Ryan with raising the bar in the industry in the Kansas City area. He remembers a meeting he was in when he first started with the company, and he thought to himself that every per-



"This company was designed to make sure everybody has a career opportunity and everybody shares in the wealth of this company — not just one person. That is also part of our culture," says Rodney St. John, Ph.D., agronomist.

TOP 5 KEYS TO SUCCESS


Larry Ryan, president of Ryan Lawn & Tree, No. 45 on the LM150 list, shares his top five keys to success.

- 1. Hire better.** Better employees will make your company better.
- 2. Offer employees more.** If you can't find good people, look at what you are offering.
- 3. Charge more.** Better people doing a better job command a higher price.
- 4. Sell better.** A lot of our work is hard or hazardous or both. Share this with the client when you give them the higher bid. Tell them (truthfully), "They will be glad they chose you." Then live up to it!
- 5. Overall, take better care of your employees.** Few things will do as much to grow your image and your business or our industry!

son in the room was qualified to lead the team at his old company.

"What's different about us is our culture and our people, but that's a basic answer," Stuhlsatz says. "In my experience here, what is truly different about us is the ownership mentality people take with everything they do. That's the bulk of the culture at Ryan Lawn & Tree. Everybody wants to win. We all want to work together. Rarely do you find someone rowing against you; we all are going the same direction."

Heinbach agrees and says his goal is for the company to grow faster in the next five to 10 years. He says there are things the company can do even better — he calls them opportunities — and that turned-on and focused employees are the key.

"We do internal surveys to see how everyone is doing and how they are feeling about Ryan. We must meet the needs for their professional growth, have succession plans and keep solving problems," he says. "One thing about Great Game of Business is it's not just focused on the numbers. It's focused on the people as well and making sure they have a voice, making sure they are excited about the company. One of the GGOB sayings is, 'people support what they help create.'" 

#85

With a name like Caretaker, culture has to be good



No. 85 on the LM150 list, this Arizona company shares how an education-based work environment creates a culture of promoting from within

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK
LM EDITOR

Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management in Gilbert, Ariz., has built a company culture surrounded by training and professionalism, which, in turn, has fueled growth, says Matt White, CEO and owner. The company ranks No. 85 on this year's LM150 list with a 2020 revenue of \$28,712,000.

"Employee retention is critical for growth, and it's critical for myriad different reasons," he says. "Culture is probably the biggest. You get good people; you want to keep good people. You want to do as much as you can to make a very good home for them in a place where they're going to spend most of their time."

As White started to take over the company about 20 years ago from founder and Executive Vice President Susan Harris and President L. 'Bud' Stephenson, Jr., he realized poor

employee retention was costly. For this reason, he says he emphasizes employee education because education breeds passionate employees who want to stick around. It's even reflected in Caretaker's core values, which are symbolized by the acronym CARE: caring, accountable, reputable, educated.

"We now have probably one of the most educated staff in the landscaping industry, with International Society of Arboriculture-certified arborists and tree climbers, Arizona Certified Landscape Professionals and Sustainable Landscape Management professionals," White says. "That is only the beginning of our landscape-specific certifications, not to mention all of the higher education degrees we have across the company including MBAs, bachelor's degrees and associate degrees."

White says that investment in employees has fueled a passion and pride for the team at Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management, which provides maintenance, tree care, water management, design/build and snow and ice services for a primarily commercial clientele.

"You get people who are super excited about what they do and it spreads to other people and they become more proud of what they're doing in the company they're working for and the people they work with," White says.

PROMOTING FROM WITHIN

White says part of the successful employee education program is having a leadership team with shared values and goals. It's something COO and President Mark Wordley believes in and says is a way to reflect the company's name as it relates to employees.

"We're a family-owned company, and we pride ourselves on looking after our employees, and part of that looking after employees is giving them the opportunity for career growth," he says. "We love to promote from within. That's one of our core principles, and to be able to do that, you've got to have robust training programs, where you are willing to invest the time into developing the skills of the people that work for you."

Wordley says he's proud to see the positive company culture reflected in the personal growth of so many Caretaker Landscape employees.

"Some of the highest people that are in the company now, at the VP level, started in as an account manager working much lower in the organization," Wordley says. "I've got a great person who started at the front desk, and now, she's a director running continuous improvement. We've got lots of great examples where we're actively seeking out the best skill sets for the staff that we've got in place, and then trying to not necessarily create jobs around those skill sets, but encouraging them

Employee development and growth is a key to Caretaker's success. That investment has paid dividends in retention.

to develop those skill sets in a positive way that impacts the company.”

Another part of Caretaker's success is the emphasis leadership puts on frontline employees as the linchpin to Caretaker's relationships with clients.

“The folks who are customer-facing are out there, whether it's mowing the grass, installing trees, trimming landscape or whatever it is, they are the most important folks in the company because they're the ones that are adding value to the client,” Wordley says.

From an operations standpoint, Caretaker retooled the company mindset about four years ago around supporting customer-facing crews in the field as they directly help the organization add value for customers and earn money for the organization. Wordley says this means understanding the vital role that crew members have to the overall success of the business.

“You start saying, ‘Guess what? The finance group, your sole existence is to support the folks in the field. And the continuous improvement group, your whole existence is to help all the other departments get better at helping the folks in the field,’” he says. “Let's figure out how we can help those men and women to do their job better, faster, more efficiently, so that we get better customer satisfaction. Whether that's purchasing or HR or anybody else, it starts to change your mindset.”

GROWING PAINS

This past year was a challenge for many businesses, and it was no different for Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management, says Wordley. He and White worked together to understand the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on their business monthly.

“Generally, in businesses, you're planning at least a year out,” he says. “The uncertainty from month to month meant that we needed to be very nimble. One minute, we

had clients saying, ‘Shut everything down.’ The next minute, we had clients going, ‘Oh, we need double what you had before because we need to catch up, because things haven't slowed down.’”

In the end, this meant Caretaker Landscape needed to hire more employees to help manage the increase in demand for services.

“It became quite apparent that 2020 was always a growth year for us in our budgeting, in our planning, in what we thought we could do,” Wordley says. “We decided that we were going to execute those plans, hire as much as we could and get ourselves into a position where we truly run the track of a growth company.”

White says with each of the company's major revenue milestones — \$5 million to \$14 million, \$14 million to \$24 million and \$24 million to \$33 million — the company took time to refocus systems and operations to maintain momentum. “Each one of those steps requires somewhat different management and somewhat different systems to support that volume of business,” he says.

Wordley adds, “At each one of those jumps, we've generally taken a year or two to try to figure out and catch up the systems and processes and put more processes in place. As we got even bigger, it requires much more planning for the implementation of the new processes. The last thing you want to do is grow and not be equipped to handle the growth.”

Wordley says while Caretaker Landscape continues to grow, the focus remains on keeping that education-centric culture in place.

“We think we've got a pretty good recipe, and we've got a pretty good mousetrap to get good folks to come over and share the experience and grow with us,” he says. “Growth is clearly a goal. Undoubtedly, we can't do that without having a great workforce, and we can't have a great workforce if we don't have a great environment.”



Caretaker Landscape puts an emphasis on employee training and certifications.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Caretaker Landscape and Tree Management's Matt White, CEO and owner, and Mark Wordley, COO and president, share their keys to a successful business.

Mark Wordley:

1. Team-work and focus on the customer.
2. Treat the company like it's your own.
3. Focus on the top items that move the needle.
4. Remove obstacles for the team to allow them to be strategic.
5. Use technology to create KPIs and remove non-value-added activities.



Matt White:

1. Find the right people, empower them and treat them like family.
2. Stay focused (Jim Collins' Hedgehog Concept) and be the best.
3. Have integrity in every encounter; do the right thing.
4. Be passionate, be educated and be proud.
5. Be accountable.
6. Find time to work on the business, not just in it.
7. Invest in technology.



Big gains

Here's a snapshot of how nearly 50 companies on the LM150 list earned more than 10 percent growth in 2020

Cherrylake

The Groveland, Fla., company opened remote deployment locations to keep up with growth and draw from a larger pool of candidates for employment. Cherrylake says these hubs are designed to reduce wasted travel time and fuel and boost crews' time on job sites. "Customers pay for value, and we do our best to maximize value-add time," the company says.

Ryan Lawn & Tree

See [pg. 20](#) for the full story.

SOI Group

McKinney, Texas-based SOI Group reviewed its systems and processes to help streamline operations, reduce redundancies and increase efficiencies. Managers and foremen can now access data collected by the company's new software system via smartphone or tablet.

Growth Rank	LM150 Rank	Company	% Rev Change from 2019
1	17	Sperber Landscape Co.	253%
2	115	Cherrylake	38%
3	72	LMI Landscapes	35%
4	4	Yellowstone Landscape	34%
5	108	Accent Landscape Contractors	33%
6	68	Bland Landscaping Co.	30%
7	29	Clean Scapes	26%
8	41	Pierre Landscape	25%
	44	Earhtones Design	25%
10	49	SiteWorks	24%
	21	Loving	24%
12	141	Green Lawn Fertilizing	23%
	116	Hoffman Landscapes	23%
14	102	Service Direct Landscape	21%
	136	Pro Cutters Lawscapes	21%
16	86	WLE	20%
	75	Intermountain Plantings	20%
	144	GreenView Partners	20%
	27	Meadows Farms	20%
20	12	HeartLand	19%
	20	Juniper Landscaping	19%
	138	Focal Pointe Outdoor Solutions	19%
23	39	Dixie Landscape	18%
	114	Gibson Landscape Services	18%
	46	Complete Landscaping Service	18%
26	113	Andy's Sprinkler, Drainage & Lighting	16%
	101	Santa Rita Landscaping	16%
28	45	Ryan Lawn & Tree	15%
	57	Xquisite Landscaping	15%
	50	Creative Environments	15%
	70	Harvest Landscape Enterprises	15%
	120	Crawford Landscaping	15%
33	9	Weed Man	14%
	119	Lifescape Colorado	14%
35	110	ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	13%
	3	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	13%
37	52	Russell Landscape Group	12%
	67	Superscapes	12%
	15	Lawn Doctor	12%
	10	LandCare	12%
	100	SOI Group	12%
42	62	Senske Services	11%
	28	Spring-Green Lawn Care	11%
	98	Frank & Grossman Landscape Contractors	11%
	23	NaturaLawn of America	11%
	25	Massey Services	11%
	93	Unlimited Landscaping & Turf Management	11%
48	19	Bailey Nurseries	10%
	81	McHale Landscape Design	10%

Clean Scapes

Austin-based Clean Scapes worked with its customers through price and service reductions for hard-hit industries like restaurants and retail operations. "This helped us retain these properties, while still making sure their properties' landscape and irrigation didn't fall on the back burner," the company says.

Intermountain Plantings

The Bluffdale, Utah, company transitioned from short-term equipment rentals to long-term leases to save on costs and increase availability.

Crawford Landscape

This Naples, Fla.-based firm implemented a mentorship program for those interested in learning more about specific areas of the company. Managers and staff can volunteer to be mentors. "This allows us to share knowledge, create a strategic family and friendly environment where, when our employees succeed, we all succeed," the company writes.

Weed Man

For this Canada-based lawn care company, communicating daily to U.S. and Canadian franchisees helped the company realize 14 percent growth. Weed Man helped franchisees transition to digital marketing efforts and worked with national associations to ensure green industry services were deemed essential. The company also focused on giving unwavering support to franchisees. "As the franchisor, it was our responsibility to help franchisees succeed despite the challenges that we faced as a network," the company says. "We're happy to report amazing results in 2020!"

LM150 Company Index

Company name	LM150 rank		
AAA Landscape	54	Focal Pointe Outdoor Solutions	138
ABM	35	Frank & Grossman Landscape Contractors	98
Accent Landscape Contractors	108	Gachina Landscape Management	69
Acres Group	31	Garden Design	34
Andre Landscape Service	103	Gibson Landscape Services	114
Andy's Sprinkler, Drainage & Lighting	113	Gothic Landscape	6
Art by Nature	121	Great Oaks Landscape Associates	104
ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	110	Green Lawn Fertilizing	141
Aspen Grove Landscape Group	11	Greenery, The	30
Bailey Nurseries	19	GreenScapes Landscape Co.	140
Bartlett Tree Experts	5	GreenView Partners	144
Baytree Landscape	48	Grounds Guys, The	24
Beary Landscaping	51	Harvest Landscape Enterprises	70
Bemus Landscape	63	HeartLand	12
Benchmark Landscape	106	Heaven and Earth Landscaping	107
Berghoff Design Group	73	Heritage Professional Landscaping	147
Bland Landscaping Co.	68	HighGrove Partners	131
BrightView Holdings	1	Hittle Landscaping	139
Brilar	133	Hoffman Landscapes	116
Bruce Company of Wisconsin, The	78	Impact Landscaping & Irrigation	66
Budd Group, The	97	Intermountain Plantings	75
Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management	85	James Martin Associates	150
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Cherrylake	115	Juniper Landscaping	20
Choate USA	40	Kline Bros. Landscaping	53
Christy Webber & Co.	56	L. J. Thalmann Co./Chalet	76
Clarence Davids & Co.	118	LandCare	10
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Clintar Commercial Outdoor Services	22	Landscape Maintenance Professionals	128
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Complete Landsculpture	123	Landscape Workshop	47
Crawford Landscaping	120	Landtech Contractors	91
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TIPSHEET

SUMMER WEEDS: WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE

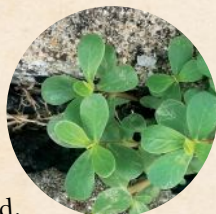
Effective weed control starts with proper ID. Here to help you recognize summer weeds are turfgrass experts from FMC, Nufarm, PBI-Gordon and Corteva Agriscience.

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

In the middle of the season, weeds are coming hard and fast. Accurate identification is essential to proper treatment. Here to help you ID these turf foes are Tina Bond, Ph.D., technical services manager for FMC; Jason Fausey, Ph.D., director of technical services for Nufarm Turf & Ornamentals; David Hillger, Ph.D., field scientist with Corteva Agriscience Turf & Ornamental; and Eric Reasor, Ph.D., Southeast research scientist with PBI-Gordon Corp.

Wanted: purslane
Characteristics:

- Mat-forming, upright growth habit
 - Oblong leaves with a broad, rounded end
 - Loves warm locations in late summer
- “Look for the thick and dark in color stems on the mature portions of a purslane plant,” Fausey says.
- “Leaves are smooth and look like a cactus without the thorns,” Hillger says.
- “Purslane has little yellow flowers produced in late summer,” Bond says.



May be mistaken for:

- Spurge
 - Knotweed
 - Carpetweed
- “Carpetweed also has oblong or spatulate leaves,” Reasor says. “However, carpetweed is not as succulent and fleshy as purslane.”
- “Spurge has smaller leaves with wiry, thin stems. When spurge is damaged, it exudes a white, milky sap. Purslane does not contain white milky sap,” Bond says.

Wanted: knotweed
Characteristics:

- First to germinate in spring
- First leaves rolled together have a grasslike appearance
- Thrives in compacted soils
- Upright growth with thin, wiry stems



“Knotweed has a paper-thin membrane around the leaf attaching it to the stem,” Hillger says.

“Since knotweed germinates early, look for the red hypocotyl (stem of a germinating seedling),” Bond says. “Growth is prostrate having thin, wiry stems with alternate lanceolate leaves. Knotweed gets its name from swollen, sheathed nodes.”

May be mistaken for:

- Grass
- Pennsylvania smartweed
- Wild buckwheat
- Spurge
- Lespedeza

“Other plants in this family having ocreas — a larger whitish sheath — include Pennsylvania smartweed and wild buckwheat, but smartweed and buckwheat have upright and vining growth habits, respectively,” Fausey says.

“Spurge and lespedeza are two weeds that look similar to knotweed. Spurge has smaller, oval-shaped leaves with milky sap, and lespedeza leaves have three leaflets per leaf and serrated margins,” Reasor says.

PHOTOS: STOCKSOLUTIONS/ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS/GETTY IMAGES; PBI-GORDON (PURSLANE AND KNOTWEED)

Wanted: foxtail

Characteristics:

- Bottle-brush seedhead in clumping form
- Can grow as tall as 3 feet
- Yellow foxtail has a thicker seedhead

“Leaves have rolled vernation (new leaf formation) and taper to a sharp point,” Reasor says.

“When you pull the leaf back, the point where the leaf comes into contact with the stem has a lot of small hairs that stick up,” Hillger says.

May be mistaken for:

- Crabgrass
- Goosegrass

“Crabgrass often has more of a prostrate growing habit than foxtails with the distinct digit- or fingerlike seedheads,” Fausey says. “Goosegrass is a clump-forming annual grass that has flattened white to silverish leaf sheaths with distinguishing fingerlike flowers on the top of stems.”

“Grasses are the most difficult to ID because they look so much alike,” Bond says, “Seedheads can help narrow down the identity, but for yellow foxtail, look for hairy leaf margins and a ligule (thin outgrowth at the junction of leaf blade and sheath). Green foxtail has a green seedhead with long hairs. Crabgrass and goosegrass have similar leaf shapes and stem characteristics, but the ligule separates them apart from each other.”



PHOTOS: PBI-GORDON

Wanted: plantain

Characteristics:

- There are several species of plantain, but most common are buckhorn and broadleaf
- Broadleaf plantain leaves grow in a rosette form

- Buckhorn plantain has slender leaves with noticeable veins
- Contains small green flowers produced on tall stocks



Continued on page 28



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TURF + ORNAMENTAL

TIPSHEET

Continued from page 27

“Broadleaf plantain has round leaves, whereas buckhorn plantain has narrow, lance-shaped leaves,” Reasor says.

“The broadleaf dock looks similar; however, it can be identified by its wavy leaves and veins that branch out like a tree from the midvein,” Hillger says.

May be mistaken for:

- Buckhorn and broadleaf are often confused for each other
- False dandelion
- Fleabane
- Grass

“When seedlings first emerge, the cotyledons (embryonic leaves) are grasslike in appearance, but once the first true leaves emerge, you will find they are much wider than grass with prominent and distinguishing parallel veins that run down the entire leaf,” Fausey says. “The most evident portion of plantains are the seedheads, which are produced on the end of a long unbranched stalk.”

“They are often confused with other plants that grow in a basal rosette,” Bond says. “These are in the aster family, so their flowers are daisylike and very different than those of plantain. Fleabane has lance-shaped leaves with serrated margins. False dandelion has long slender leaves, but the margins are highly lobed with a central midvein.”

Wanted: spurge

Characteristics:

- Mat-forming
- Upright growth habit
- May have dark red spots on top of the leaf




“Most spurge species problematic in turfgrasses are summer broadleaf annual weeds that can form dense mats via their prostrate growth habit and prolific seed production,” Reasor says. “Spurge leaves are small and oval shaped.”

“A quick ID for spurge is to break a leaf or stem. If you see white, milky sap, chances are it is spurge. There are many species of spurge, but for the most part, these plants are low growing, mostly with opposite leaves,” Bond says. “Stems can be reddish/pink in color. Flowers are small and white, born in clusters.”

May be mistaken for:

- Lespedeza
- Knotweed
- Purslane

“Spurge is found in similar areas as knotweed and purslane with all these weeds having similar growth habits, but unlike the other weeds mentioned, spurge is the only one that will exude a milky sap when the foliage or stems are injured,” Fausey says.

“Lespedeza has pink flowers and leaves with three oblong leaflets with prominent midveins,” Bond says. 



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ISUZU

Summer patch typically occurs in areas with saturated soils and poor drainage.

TURF DISEASE ID + CONTROL

Stop summer patch

Follow these tips to help ID summer patch symptoms and control the disease

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

Summer patch is another headache for lawn care professionals. Here are some tips for identification and control of this pesky pathogen

from Brian A. Aynardi, Ph.D., Northeast research scientist with PBI-Gordon; Lane Tredway, Ph.D., technical services manager for Syngenta; and Jamie Heydinger, cool-season national account manager with Nufarm.



Jamie Heydinger

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Symptoms include a “frog-eye” pattern with gradual enlarging patches with no foliar signs of pathogen. Summer patch appears with warm summer temperatures, especially after rainy periods. It is associated with saturated soils that have poor drainage. Summer patch can occur when soil temperatures reach above 70 degrees F for at least 48 hours.

The pathogen favors high daytime temperature (85 degrees F) and warm nights (70 degrees F). — J. H.

- Patches or rings from 6 inches to 3 feet in diameter appear during summer stress. Infected turf initially wilts or turns yellow; then comes tan to orange-colored dieback. The crown, roots and rhizomes of affected plants will be dark and rotten. — L. T.

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PHOTO: PBI-GORDON CORP.

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TURF DISEASE ID + CONTROL

Continued from page 30

HOW TO CONTROL IT

- The summer patch pathogen begins infecting roots in the spring when soil temperatures reach 65 degrees F. This is the best time to initiate a preventive fungicide program. Azoxystrobin, propiconazole or penthiopyrad fungicides are highly effective options for summer patch prevention. Granular or spray applications should be watered into the soil for best results. — *L. T.*
- Fungicide groups with active ingredients offering the best control are the strobilurin and DMIs, with combination products or tank mixes of



Lane Tredway

those two groups performing exceptionally well. Preventive applications should be watered-in immediately with at least 1/8-inch of irrigation. A minimum of two to three preventive applications 21-28 days apart is optimal. — *B. A.*

- Use acidifying (AMS) and slow-release fertilizers.

— *J. H.*

KEEP IN MIND

- It is problematic in Kentucky bluegrass, annual bluegrass and fine fescue lawns. — *B. A.*
- Avoid low mowing heights. Alleviate stress by

avoiding overirrigation; mow high. Aeration may relieve compaction. Plant-to-plant movement of disease happens via roots and rhizomes. It can be spread by aeration and de-thatching. It can come from infected sod. — *J. H.*

- Summer patch is most severe in compacted areas or where soil pH is high. Aerify regularly to alleviate soil compaction, and apply lime only as needed based on soil test results. Mixtures with resistant species, such as tall fescue or perennial ryegrass, can help mask summer patch symptoms. It will generally leave tall fescue or perennial ryegrass unaffected. — *L. T.*



Brian A. Aynardi

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Going Blue

Water management technology provides benefits owners can't afford to ignore

Water management has become not only a way to save on water usage and differentiate services but it's also allowed landscape and irrigation professionals to become more efficient internally.

For Chris Lee, president of EarthWorks, Weathermatic's smart water technology has been so beneficial for his company that he doesn't always charge customers for it. EarthWorks services primarily commercial properties in Dallas, Houston, Irving, Arlington and Fort Worth, Texas.

"It's the first product in 25 years that I've been willing to just give people because it saves us money," Lee says.

Instead of sending two technicians to a site for an irrigation inspection, for example, he can send only one with an iPad, saving on the additional employee's hourly rate. They can also make the six to eight seasonable adjustments a year via their devices instead of visiting the sites.

"It starts paying for itself in much less than a year," Lee says.

Customers also experience savings in the form of a 15- to 30-percent water reduction and eliminating additional trip charges. If a customer needs the water turned off for a construction project, for example, Lee's team can do that from their phones, instead of requiring visits to the site to turn the system off and back on.



Chris Lee

The other advantage is that EarthWorks can handle both the water and landscape management of a property instead of the customer needing a third-party water management provider.

Lee says, with his company being built on its reputation and client relationships, they never roll out anything to customers until they are 100-percent sure of it. So, Lee and two other managers tested Weathermatic's technology at their homes for two years first. Now, about 90 percent of their customers use Weathermatic on their properties.



Instead of sending two technicians to a site for an irrigation inspection, you can send one with an iPad, saving on the additional employee's hourly rate.

Tech attracts younger generations

After serving as a local firefighter for 30 years before retiring, Joe Chiellini no longer works with sirens and hook ladders, but water has continued to play a large role in his line of work as president and CEO of ASI Landscape Management in Tampa, Fla.

While the company has always focused on water management since starting in the '90s, there was a shift when it brought on its director of irrigation three years ago. Being in Florida, the company experiences times of serious drought, so supplemental water is a major factor.

"Like the movement in the industry to go green, we believe going blue is going to be the next hurdle as a country to overcome, so we put an emphasis on it," he says.

All of ASI's contracts include water management using Weathermatic's smart technology, just as they include maintenance and horticultural services.

To build lasting client relationships, crews show clients how water management is an important part of the bigger picture on their property. Besides lowering the water bill, smart water practices also save clients money on landscaping needs because the property has been properly watered.



Joe Chiellini

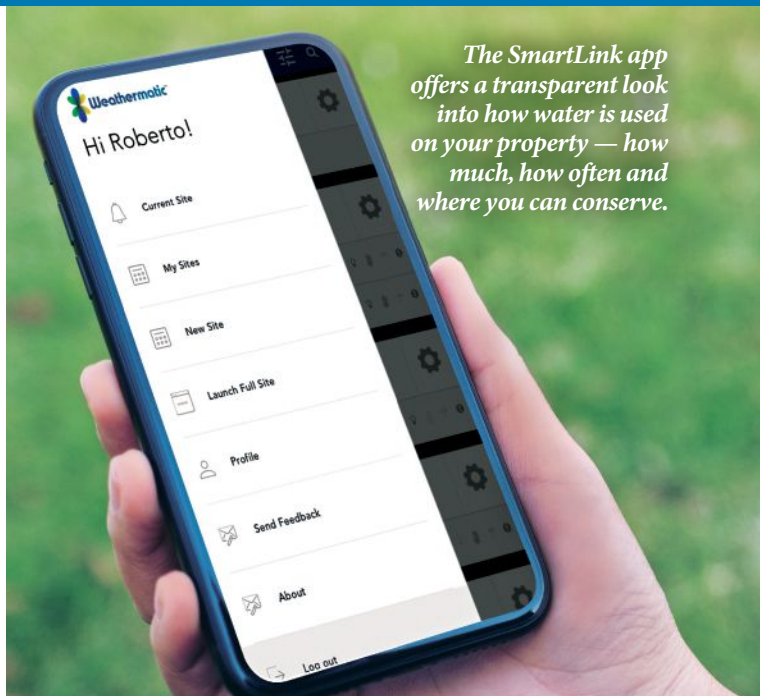
"We aren't asking customers if they want to purchase a timer. We're telling them this is how we do business," he says. "That tells us how serious they are about their water. If we are helping them in those ways, we have a true partnership."

One thing ASI hears from customers is about the level of professionalism they see on the job sites. "Our team has confidence because we armed them with the tools and information to be confident about the future of water," Chiellini says.

With the labor shortage continuing to put a strain on the industry, water management has also served as a way to attract and keep employees.

"When a potential team member walks into our company and sees we put an emphasis on water, they know we are putting an emphasis on the future," Chiellini says.

To appeal to the younger generation, ASI needed a way to show young job seekers the water management industry



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is a good place to look for a career — and Weathermatic's smart controllers have been a major selling point.

The younger employees have adapted to the technology especially well, allowing the company to attract a wider variety of team members because they have roles beyond working with a mower or trimmer all day.

One of their success stories came when ASI brought on a college graduate looking for a job. ASI gave him a tablet and showed him how the Weathermatic technology worked. After a week of training, he was ready to go out on his own, now running through more systems than any other team member.

"We're able to bring in young college kids on summer break or maybe just out of college, and they can run the computer side of what's going on," he says. "We owe it to ourselves as an industry to keep up with the technology piece and attract that talent."

In addition to the labor, water savings and efficiency benefits that come with this service and technology, Chiellini encourages owners to look at the impressive profit margins for water management and irrigation. Plus, it's a way for companies to stand out in their market, no matter the location.

"I assure you: Your competition isn't stressing water management enough. It's an opportunity for you to offer a service no one else is," he says. "Even if they are offering it, if you really buy into water management, you'll be heads above everyone else. It's very much one of our selling points."

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SCAN ME

BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Fertilizer prices on the rise

Experts explain recent increases in fertilizer prices

BY SARAH WEBB | LM MANAGING EDITOR

It's no secret that the cost of fertilizer has increased. Jeremy Bigler, landscape channel manager for LebanonTurf, Mike Caprio, regional business consultant for the Southeast territory of Lawn Doctor, and John Perry, president of Greene County Fertilizer Co., explain the increase and lay out a few ways lawn care operators (LCOs) can offset the cost.

WHY THE INCREASE?

Raw material costs have driven the price increases on finished good products, Bigler says, and the three key raw materials in fertilizers — urea, ammonium sulfate and potash — have all increased significantly over the last year.

Bigler notes that urea is up 70 percent compared to last year, ammonium phosphate is up more than 80 percent

and potash is up more than 50 percent. He says the industry is also seeing shortages of specialty materials in smaller granular sizes.

"There are shortages where you can't even buy those products until the end of this year," Bigler says. "There's been a lot of demand because of the pandemic."

The increase is based on the indexes for crops like corn, wheat and soybeans.

Continued on page 34



HIGH PRICES
The high cost of raw materials and high demand have led to an increase in fertilizer prices.

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Jeremy Bigler

Continued from page 33

“On all of those crops, the prices have gone up significantly over the last year,” Bigler says.

Shipping and securing raw materials are also taking a lot longer, Bigler says.

“You’re also seeing some issues with logistics, so the whole just-in-time philosophy, stocking stuff just when you need it, is causing shortages, and if you want it faster or sooner, it usually costs more,” Bigler says.

Another possible reason for the increase, Perry says, is last year, the nitrogen production facilities were not running at 100 percent because demand was lower than normal, and that caught up really quickly once COVID-19 caused people to spend more time at home.

“At the beginning of COVID, no one

had good predictions on what was going to happen, but with more people being at home, fertilizer companies saw record profits,” Perry says. “Then, couple the reasons above with the winter storms early in the year in Texas and across Louisiana, and it put yet another pinch in the market and drove the prices up at that time.”

COMBATTING THE COST

To help offset some of the cost, LCOs can take advantage of early order programs by forecasting what their needs will be next year, ensure spray equipment is calibrated properly and make sure crew members are properly trained so they’re not wasting products when mixing or applying, according to Caprio.

“Forecast accordingly, order your materials and, from a business model, take a look at your profit and loss statement and see where you can pick up some efficiencies somewhere else,” Caprio says. “It’s not as if the product is going to go bad, so even if you had a little bit left over, whether it be fertilizer or weed control or fungicide, you can use it the next season.”

Caprio notes lawn care companies can look at other items, such as routing efficiencies to save on fuel, and consider offering other services to clients to increase the ticket per stop.

Bigler says LCOs can also aim to apply less product or look to incorporate slow-release products.

“Instead of putting down a pound of nitrogen, look at putting down three-



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quarters of a pound of nitrogen or maybe even as low as half a pound of nitrogen per application. That'll be a way to cut back on the material costs," he says. "Also, if you use the product that has a higher slow-release content, you're going to get a longer feeding time and be able to stretch it out longer than something that's quick release."

Perry notes that LCOs may feel more of a strain this year because once the prices had taken off, companies may have already set budgets or sent out prepay letters. Next year, however, many companies will be able to equalize and pass on the higher cost of goods to the consumer.

"This year is a little bit tighter for operators because of this uncertainty and the rising cost of goods," Perry says. "That's included in anything related to shipping transport and petrol chemical right now. Pesticides and herbicides are doing the same thing."



John Perry


AN EYE ON THE FUTURE

Bigler says the demand for fertilizers fluctuates depending on the season, and while prices are usually high because the demand is high, when the demand drops off, prices may stabilize. However, this year, due to other factors, it's difficult to judge when the prices may drop again — and by how much.

"Historically, this time of year, we see prices start to drop off, but I haven't seen any indication of that yet, and this year is not shaping up as we expected in a lot of ways," Bigler says. "It's difficult to judge with the pandemic, and then if we continue to see supply chain disruptions, that could also have an impact on this. It's something we've been keeping a close eye on because there's not much we can do about it as far as putting these components together into a finished good."

Perry notes that higher prices may be a new normal for LCOs to adjust to.

"The industry is trying to find a place to set to that will be the new zero," Perry says. "There will be some

new ebbs and flows, but I don't know if it will go back to where it was. However, fertilizer prices are always moving, so there's nothing predictable about it." 

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» DID YOU KNOW

How to manage sod webworms

Follow these tips for the best management and scouting for sod webworm this season

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

The sod webworm hasn't really evolved in the past few decades, but how lawn care operators (LCOs) identify and manage this insect has changed and become more accurate.

WHAT DO MOTHS MEAN?

Getting a clearer picture of this insect has made proper identification easier in recent years. A sod webworm is a caterpillar about a 1/2 inch in length in the juvenile stage of a moth. This fact often leads to the misidentification of this pest because customers will tell their LCOs they have sod webworms if they see moths on their lawn when that might not be the case, says Ian Rodriguez, Ph.D., technical services manager for Quali-Pro.



Ian Rodriguez

"It's a very simple pest to understand, but there's a lot of misconception about it," Rodriguez says. "You treat when you have the damage. You can't judge an infestation by the mere presence of adult moths flying around."

Even if there is damage where moths are present, it could be from drought stress, grubs, chinch bugs or other causes that would require a different approach. However, there aren't other pests that chew leaves like they do, Rodriguez says.

SIGNS OF SOD WEBWORMS

Brown patches about the diameter of a tennis ball in the grass where blades might be missing, but not necessarily dead, are good indicators of sod webworms. The grass will look scalped with only the stem left.

Bright green fecal pellets also can be signs of sod webworms. The presence of these pellets, which are found where larval feeding has recently occurred, is also a good way to distinguish sod webworm damage from other reasons turfgrass may turn brown, like dog urine, drought, disease or herbicide injury. Having flocks of birds pecking small holes in the turf to find the larvae may be an indicator of sod webworms, as well.

MISSING BLADES
Brown patches of turf with missing blades can indicate a sod webworm problem.



A HUNGRY CATERPILLAR
About a 1/2 inch in length, sod webworms are caterpillars that feed on turf.

As the infestation grows, so will the size of the brown turf. Taking a closer look at these areas will show a grazed or scalped appearance because the larvae chew off leaves and stems just above the crown of the plant, says Matt Giese, technical services manager for Syngenta.

To determine if sod webworms are present, he suggests mixing two tablespoons of liquid dish soap into 2 gallons of water and evenly pouring the soapy solution over a marked-off, 1-square-yard area.

"This solution irritates the caterpillars, and they will move to the surface within five to 10 minutes and will provide valuable information about the level of infestation," Giese says.



Matt Giese

"Most turf entomologists agree that 10 to 15 sod webworms per a 1-square-yard area may warrant treatment on an as-needed basis."

If you use chemical treatments, Giese adds, apply them in the late afternoon or evening because sod webworms are actively feeding near the surface at that time.

CHANGE IN CONTROL METHODS

A lot has changed over the years when it comes to managing sod webworms.

"In the past, there's been a lot of reliance on chemical control — not just

Continued on page 38

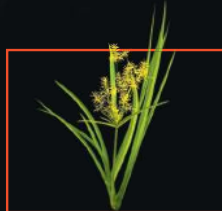
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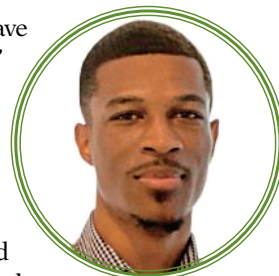
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DID YOU KNOW

Continued from page 36

with sod webworms, but how pests have been managed in the past overall,” says Rakim K. Turnipseed, Ph.D., product development manager, insecticides, FMC. “We’ve learned that you need more than chemicals. You need an integrated pest management approach when dealing with sod webworms, in addition to the chemicals you use.”



Rakim Turnipseed

That includes cultural practices like avoiding excessive fertilization and overwatering, which can cause thatch to build up, he adds.

“Insecticides, in general, have evolved from a very broad spectrum to a more targeted species approach,” Giese says. “Today’s products, such as Acelepryn (chlorantraniliprole), can now select for control of webworms and yet have a minimal impact on beneficial insects in that same ecosystem. That wasn’t the case 25 years ago.”

Other products commonly used for sod webworm management include Conserve SC (spinosad), Orthene (acephate), Sevin (carbaryl), Talstar (bifenthrin) and Tempo SC (beta-cyfluthrin), according to a University of Georgia Extension bulletin.

LCOs and their customers should determine what’s an acceptable level of damage before making a treatment plan.

“It’s not a pest like chinch bugs where you have to buy new sod because they will kill it,” Rodriguez says. “Sod webworms eat the blades, and a week after they are sprayed, the grass looks fine because the leaves grew back. They aren’t hard to kill, and they don’t typically cause turf loss.”

WHERE TO FIND THEM

Sod webworms are generally found in the Southeast, which has remained the case over the years. However, other species of this insect, including the burrowing sod webworm, are now present in areas they weren’t found previously. This burrowing species was originally contained to the Midwest but can now be found in the Northeast.

Climate change also has caused sod webworms to emerge a little sooner than they did in the past, Turnipseed says.

“Whether it’s warm- or cool-season turfgrass, webworms seem to be more prevalent because turf managers are actively scouting for them, rather than misdiagnosing the damage as a different causal agent,” Giese says. “We also probably know more about the life cycles of these insects now and what the damage thresholds are for initiating control measures.”

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Nashville.



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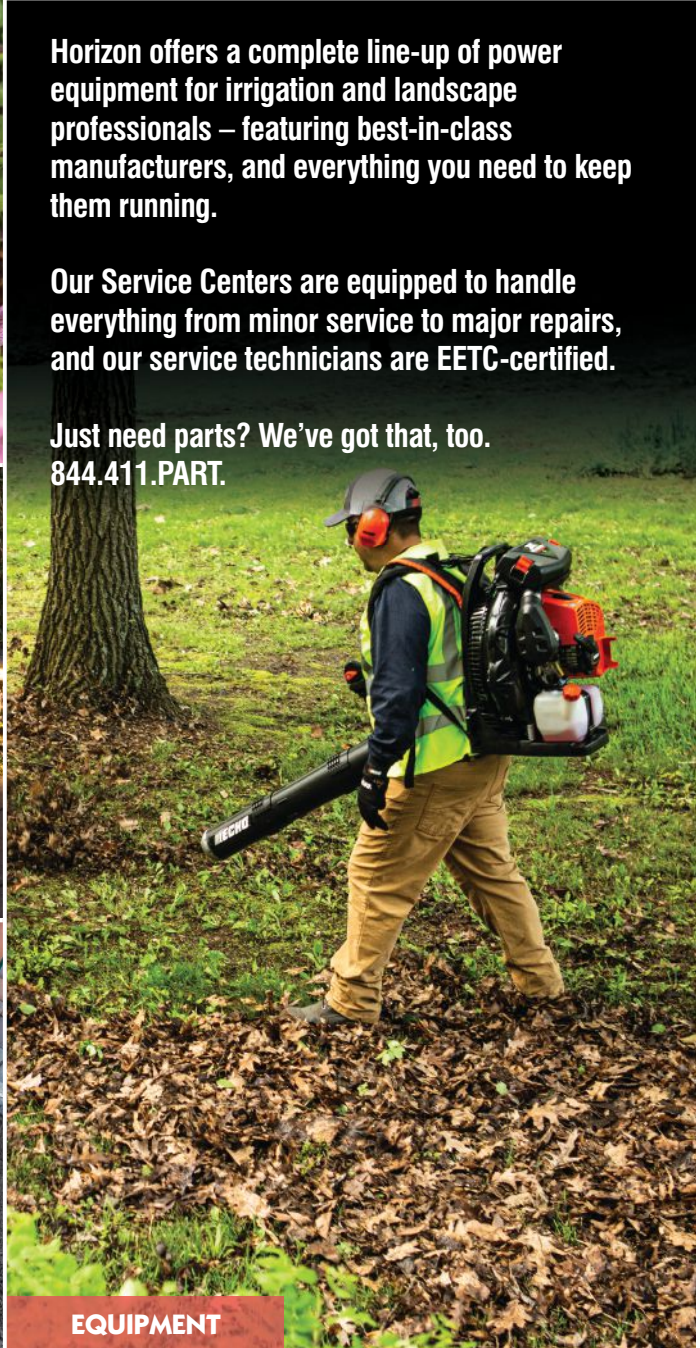
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THE BIG ONE

A masterful garden

LOCATION Chapel Hill, N.C.

COMPANY Myatt Landscaping & Construction

DETAILS The client is a master gardener who is actively engaged in her property. The goal of the project is to have a natural, organically managed property. Deer damage is a constant struggle for the client and the team at Myatt Landscaping & Construction. The homeowners' association does not want deer fencing, so crews rotate deterrent sprays.

"It's almost not fair that she lives in an area where the deer are terrible because she has such an affection and love for plant material," says Anna Myatt, floriculture manager.

Voles present another challenge, especially in the area of the property called Destiny's Garden. The client ordered cages to prevent voles from eating the fruits of the *Brunnera* plantings.

Myatt Landscaping & Construction uses Stihl rototillers and blowers and Corona hand tools on the property.

Acorus Ogon grass, *Tiarella*, *Brunnera* and *Heuchera* are also popular on the property. The client prefers lime, rosy pinks and white plantings. This year, Myatt added foxtail ferns and zonal geraniums in pink, rose, light pink and coral tones.

"The next day, she walked out and took a photo of it and sent it to me. She was just like, 'Wow, this is just spectacular,'" Myatt says. "That is such a compliment."

The project earned Myatt Landscaping & Construction a Gold Award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program.

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



PHOTOS: BRIAN MULLINS



Captions | **1.** The front of the home is highly landscaped with multiple layers of plantings and a paver motor court. Crew members from Myatt Landscaping & Construction allow the trees and shrubs to grow in their natural form but prune them to keep the plants properly thinned and healthy. **2.** Crews plant seasonal flowers to accent and highlight the many installations and sculptures on the property. **3.** Myatt Landscaping & Construction uses organic fertilizers and pest control in the landscape beds and on the 17,000 square feet of tall fescue turf. To prevent deer grazing, crews use organic animal repellents. **4.** The garden surrounding the conservatory is the most manicured area of the property. Crews hand weed and shear hedges. **5.** Each year, crews spread 40 cubic yards of triple-shredded hardwood mulch, 5 cubic yards of soil conditioner and 10 cubic yards of leaf mulch. **6.** The client is a master gardener who seeks out unique plant material that will often have different needs than what is commonly planted in the region. Crews carefully monitor and manage soil pH to accommodate the different plants. Leaves help build organic matter and improve soil structure. **7.** Bright tropical plants in the summer and pansies and tulip bulbs in the winter surround the hot tub. There are about 360 square feet of seasonal flower beds throughout the property.

Replacing worn-out parts before they actually break down can help prevent downtime in the field.

MAINTENANCE SHOP

Preventive measures

Proper maintenance helps contractors get the most out of their blowers

BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER
CONTRIBUTOR



To get the most out of their blowers, contractors should do maintenance on a daily, weekly and monthly basis, according to Jack Easterly, Husqvarna’s professional brand manager for handheld equipment. Including simple visual inspections to check for cracks and loose screws and more in-depth tasks like cleaning the machine’s cooling system, regular and consistent maintenance can keep blowers operating at full capacity day in and day out.

“Blowers are tools that contractors use to make money, and they need to operate at 100 percent, 100 percent of the time,” Easterly says. “In general, it’s best to be proactive when it comes to blower maintenance, as reactive maintenance creates downtime and lost productivity.”

Michael Bedell, owner of Bedell Property Management in Milford, Mich., has four backpack blowers and says he prefers this style because of their power. He adds that it is also more comfortable for his crews to wear a backpack blower than it is to carry a handheld. Bedell’s crews use their blowers year-round for spring and fall cleanups, blowing snow off sidewalks in the winter and more. Bedell Property Management provides 40 percent maintenance, 35 per-

cent design/build and 25 percent snow and ice management services to an 85 percent residential, 15 percent commercial clientele.

“For the work we provide and the size of properties we typically service, we need that mix of power and comfort,” Bedell says.

Bedell does a “deep once over” on his blowers each year before the start of the busy spring season. This includes replacing filters, changing spark plugs and checking components like gaskets and fuel lines. Every six to eight weeks, the blowers get washed and visually inspected. They are checked thoroughly again before fall cleanups begin.

“Blowers play the biggest part in fall cleanups, so we replace parts to prevent downtime, so we can make the most of the short window of good fall weather,” Bedell says. “It’s best to replace any parts or components that are showing wear before they snap.”

Bedell allocates money for maintenance in his budget each year and says preventive maintenance helps him stay true to his budget goals by limiting unexpected repairs. Regular maintenance helps keep his crews safe by ensuring

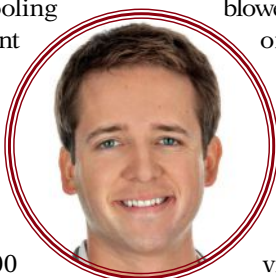
all equipment is operating properly at all times. Preventive maintenance also saves Bedell a lot of frustration because he knows his crews always will have the equipment they need to get the job done.

“To show up to a job and not have equipment function correctly can turn a good, profitable day into a bad day or a business loss,” Bedell says. “If you don’t schedule maintenance, your broken-down equipment will schedule it for you.”

Jeff Cartwright, owner of Cartwright Landscaping in Richmond, Va., has 10 backpack blowers and a few smaller handhelds, including two battery-powered models. He says the type of blower his crews use depends on the size and scope of the job. For example, backpack blowers are great for cleaning up large areas quickly, while handhelds are better for small, tighter areas. Cartwright Landscaping is a \$1 million company that provides 60 percent design/build, 30 percent maintenance and 10 percent other services to high-end residential clients.

Cartwright says his crews inspect their blowers once a month and change the air filters at that time. Each year, they use Stihl tune-up kits to replace the spark plugs and the fuel pickup lines.

Continued on page 44



Jack Easterly



Michael Bedell

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MAINTENANCE SHOP

Continued from page 42

For blowers that are showing a decline in production, Cartwright will have a dealership adjust the intake and exhaust valves, which he says can bring a lot of life back to a blower.

“We use our blowers every single day, so they get a lot of wear and tear,” Cartwright says. “We try to use each blower for two years and want to make sure they last.”

John-Pierre Dermendjian, technical training supervisor for Stihl, agrees that preventive maintenance helps contractors maximize their investments.

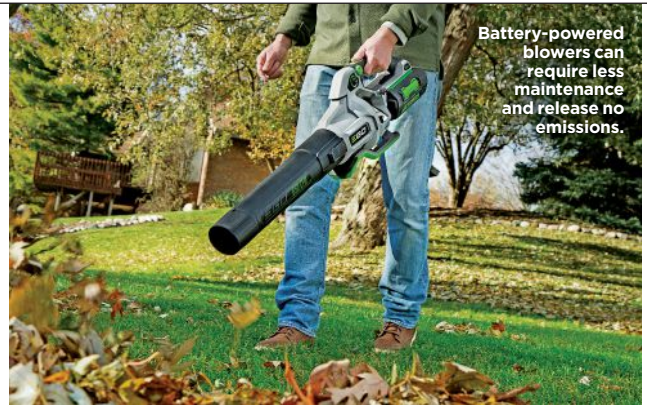
“Taking proper care of equipment will pay off in the long run,” Dermendjian says. “No contractor wants to be in the

middle of a job and have their blower die because they didn’t replace the \$10 air filter six weeks ago. Preventive maintenance pays off in dividends, helping the machines last for years.”



John-Pierre Dermendjian

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.



Battery-powered blowers can require less maintenance and release no emissions.

ALL CHARGED UP

Maintaining a battery-powered blower really couldn’t be simpler, according to Mike DeMaira, product manager of outdoor power equipment for Ego.

“With regard to battery-powered blowers, there is really very little maintenance required for use and storage,” says DeMaira. “Since there is no oil or gas required to operate, there is typically less maintenance to worry about when it comes to battery-powered equipment in general.”

DeMaira says the most important thing to do with battery-powered blowers is to make sure the air intake is clean and free of debris. This step will ensure optimal airflow for maximum push force and optimal cooling of the motor. Battery terminals should also be kept clean and free from any moisture to avoid corrosion and poor connectivity between the blower terminals and battery. When storing battery-powered blowers, DeMaira says to avoid keeping them in extremely hot or cold conditions over long periods.

“If storing lithium-ion battery packs for longer than 30 days, be sure to keep them in a location free of moisture where the temperature is below 80 degrees F,” he says.

Jeff Cartwright, owner of Cartwright Landscaping in Richmond, Va., has two handheld battery-powered blowers in his fleet. These blowers run much quieter than gas-powered models, so his crews use battery-powered blowers when they need to be cognizant of noise. Cartwright also likes that these blowers do not require fuel and do not produce emissions.

Cartwright agrees with DeMaira that there is virtually no maintenance associated with his battery-powered blowers. He says the most important thing is to keep the batteries charged — an hour and a half of charge time provides about an hour and a half of run time — and to make sure crews keep track of the batteries. They can be costly to replace.

“The best thing about maintenance of our battery-powered blowers is that there really isn’t any,” Cartwright says. “That is a huge asset of a battery fleet.”



Jeff Cartwright



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HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

Backyard serenity

LOCATION St. Louis, Mo.

COMPANY Frisella Nursery

DETAILS The homeowners reached out to Frisella Nursery to conceptualize a backyard alongside their to-be-installed pool. The yard at that time was a blank slate, with hills, objects that needed to be hidden and a woodline along the rear. All in all, the homeowner wanted to create a backyard retreat.

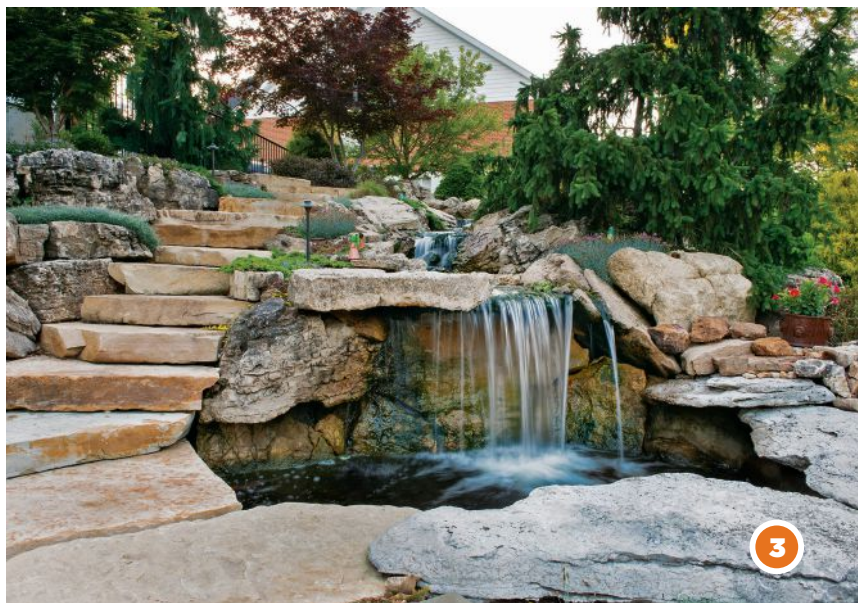
Tony Frisella Jr., vice president of sales, put together a large concept for the pool, a swim-up bar area, an outdoor kitchen and a waterfall.

“I talked about what it could possibly be, and as soon as I left, he told his wife that he didn’t care what it cost, I was going to be the guy doing the job,” Frisella says.

The excavation of the pool itself had left the homeowners with a significant amount of additional earth. Rather than paying to have it disposed of, Frisella Nursery was able to repurpose it in order to create the hillside waterfall.

The company used Green Giant arborvitae and Graham Blandy boxwood to hide air conditioning units and utility stations, as well as Alaskan weeping cedars to provide privacy and a sense of lushness to the poolside. The focus of the yard is a large weeping Norway spruce.

From start to finish, the project took place over about six months. Crew workers graded the area, incorporated 30 to 40 yards of concrete, planted trees, constructed the waterfall and placed the stonework, using Bobcat excavators, skid-steers, dump trucks and concrete mixers.



In addition to creating a serene backyard space, the project brought Frisella and the client closer together.

“That project is a unique one for me from a personal level because the client became one of my mentors,” Frisella says. “It’s creating such an experience for the client that they actually become more like family. He’s on our advisory board at the company after that project, and I go over for dinner about three

or four times a year. It’s very rare that you get to have those relationships that come from projects.”

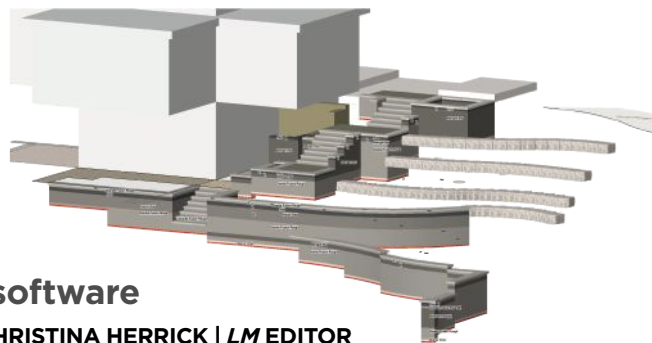
The project won Frisella Nursery a 2020 Silver Award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals’ Awards of Excellence program.

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



Captions | 1. Frisella Nursery highlighted the home's architecture and landscaping with outdoor lighting. 2. A focal point is a large weeping Norway spruce. 3. For the client's home, creating a gorgeous landscape required infusing nature with a little bit of magic. The homeowners reached out to Frisella Nursery to conceptualize a backyard alongside their soon-to-be-installed pool. The yard included hills, objects that needed to be hidden and a woodline along back of the property. 4. A before photo of the backyard. 5. A view of the front landscaping. 6. An after shot of the completed project. 7. The excavation of the pool itself had left the homeowners with a significant amount of additional earth. Rather than paying to have it disposed of, Frisella Nursery repurposed it for the hillside waterfall.

SOFTWARE UPDATE



On the job

Landscape designers share how design software helped execute noteworthy projects **BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR**



MULTI-DIMENSIONAL
Joe Hanauer, owner of Landscape Architecture, says the ability to see designs in Vectorworks in both 2D and 3D is extremely helpful.

COMPANY: Landscape Architecture
SOFTWARE: Vectorworks

Joe Hanauer, owner of Landscape Architecture, says he's been using Vectorworks Landmark software since 2014 for his design/build company in Madison, Wis., which caters to a 95 percent residential, 5 percent commercial clientele.

One project Hanauer says comes to mind is what he calls the "Modern Marvel," which featured several retaining walls. To help plan and create the design, Hanauer used Vectorworks' digital terrain model. He says his ability to visualize as he's designing has significantly improved the overall accuracy of his estimates.



Joe Hanauer

Hanauer says the software's building information modeling capabilities also help with estimating and data. For example, he can draw a line that represents a design element, such as a wall, and with that line, he can accurately calculate the amount of wall material needed.

"When I'm bidding a project, the cost of a retaining wall is basically materials and labor," he says. "But, that length of the wall affects my labor. So with this, I can tell how long my walls are. I can tell how tall my walls are. For me, as a salesperson and an estimator, I have such confidence in what I'm doing based on this." For the "Modern Marvel"

project, Hanauer used Unilock's U-Cara Modular System to hang different colors of brick for a wall design, and with the data captured from the software, Hanauer says he could accurately capture how much of each color of U-Cara bricks he needed for the project.

"We were able to take a 3D image of it and label it, so when my installers started working, they knew that they had three rows of this color. They had a row of this color. They had a row of a different color," he says.

Hanauer says this feature came in handy because the worksite did not have room to stage unused material, so he used the information from the Vectorworks design to inform his ordering.

Continued on page 50

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SOFTWARE UPDATE

Continued from page 48

COMPANY: Fisher's Landscape

SOFTWARE: PRO Landscape by Drafix Software

For Richard Fisher, owner of Fisher's Landscape in Clermont, Fla., the best part of using Pro Landscape design software is how realistic the renderings have become in his 15 years using the software. Fisher's Landscape offers landscape design, irrigation, landscaping and hardscaping services for a primarily residential clientele.

He says he almost broke up a marriage because of a Pro Landscape design. The wife emailed Fisher's rendering to her husband, who was out of town during the design process.

"The husband called her back and was just saying, 'What the heck did you do? We didn't talk about this,'" Fisher

Continued on page 52

SO REALISTIC
Richard Fisher, owner of Fisher's Landscape, says Pro Landscape renders hyper-realistic designs.



PHOTO: RICHARD FISHER

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SOFTWARE UPDATE

Continued from page 50

says. The wife replied, “We owe him nothing because that’s only a drawing.” He goes, “Do it. Because if it looks that good, just do it.”



Richard Fisher

Fisher says this design looked so realistic thanks to the extra step he takes of creating a reflection of the landscaping in the home’s pool.

“I try to get the customer to see exactly what I see,” he says. “With Pro Landscape, I can show my customers the real plants, trees, shrubs and/or personal items they want in the landscape. They get to see their new landscape as it will look before they buy the first thing for their landscape project.”

COMPANY: Jon Pride Designs
SOFTWARE: Land F/X

Jon Pride, owner and landscape architect for Jon Pride Designs in La Canada, Calif., has been using Land F/X design software for about 14 years with his landscape design company, which serves around 75 percent high-end residential and 25 percent commercial clientele.

One project in which Land F/X came in handy, Pride says, is a landscape design on Toluca Lake in Los Angeles. The property sits below the street, and Pride says it likely has a great view of the lake. The focus of the outdoor space was the entertainment area and the dock. Pride says he designed a separate walkway so people didn’t need to walk down the driveway to get to the front door.


“Where Land F/X kind of falls in is it’s a combination of the CAD and the design software,” he says. “It just makes

the job easier. It makes it so much faster, and there’s a great transition from conceptual to an actual planting plan. It’s pretty quick, but everything is much easier with this program.”

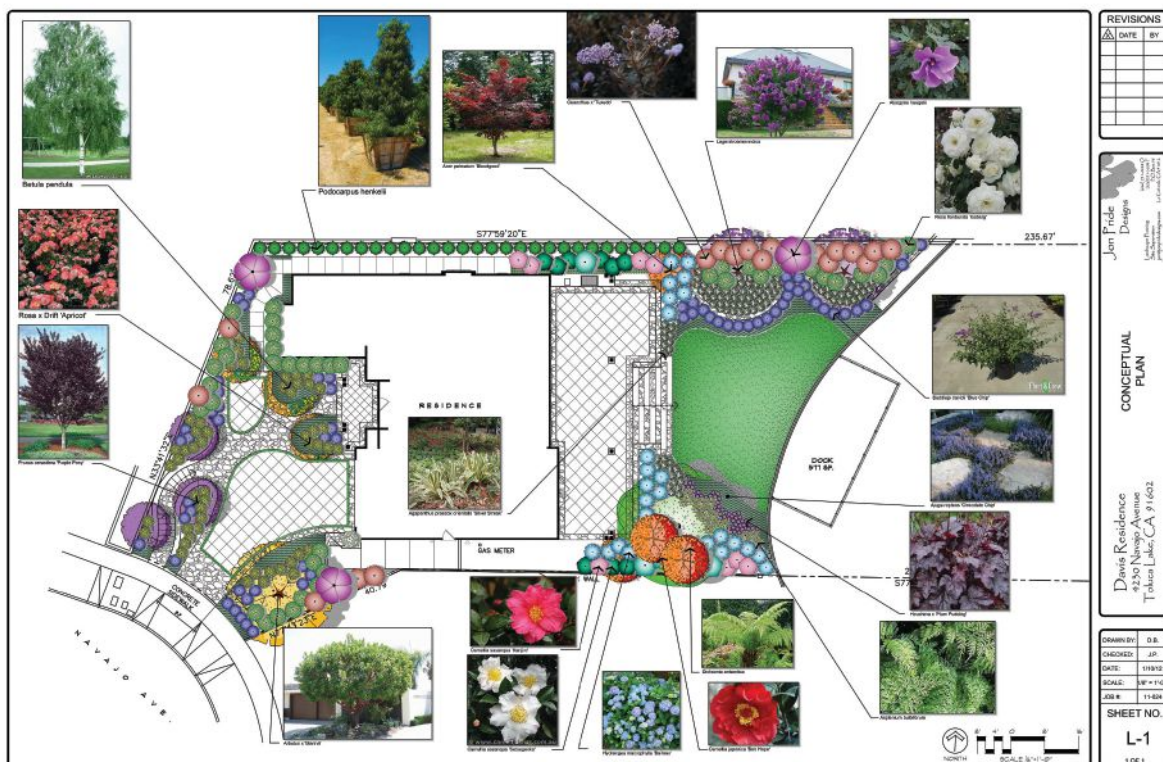


Jon Pride

Pride designed the fireplace and barbecue features of this project from the ground up in Land F/X, he says, noting that the software also has a helpful detail manager feature that allows you to save elements and use them in future projects. The same is true of Land F/X’s plant manager. Pride says he can easily find a detail or plant and drop it into the project.

“I turn around, and I got another project that’s very similar, but I’m going to change the fireplace from stone to brick, or I’m going to do a wood mantle, but I can alter it quickly and save it for that project,” he says. 

DETAILS SAVED
Jon Pride, owner of Jon Pride Designs says the ability to create and save plants and details such as fireplaces and outdoor grills is a great feature of the Land F/X software.



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BUSINESS BOOSTERS

(Tid)bits of drill wisdom

Experts at Little Beaver and Ditch Witch explain what to keep in mind when purchasing and using drills **BY SARAH WEBB | LM MANAGING EDITOR**

When it comes to purchasing and using drills, there are several items landscape professionals should consider.

“Landscapers should keep in mind that a drill is an investment in their business, not just an expense,” says Mike Hale, sales manager at Little Beaver. “Some drills may have appealing price tags, but repairs, breakdowns, injuries

and increased labor needs can lead to costs much greater than that spent on a quality drill.”

Hale and Cory Maker, H80 product manager at Ditch Witch, dig into what landscape professionals should consider when using and purchasing drills.

SAVE ON LABOR

Because finding and keeping good labor is an ongoing theme in the green industry,

it’s important to find a drill offering that can help cut down on man-hours.

Maker notes that directional drilling can help landscape companies become more efficient. Directional drilling is a minimal impact trenchless method of installing underground items such as utilities and irrigation along a prescribed path using a surface-launched drilling rig. Therefore, Maker says, directional drilling can be a less invasive method to reach and adjust underground components.

“You’re not having to open cut holes in someone’s yard or place of business. It works well in roads and sidewalks because they’re not having to tear any of that up,” Maker says. “For time and money savings, you’re also not having to go back and fix anything that you’ve damaged. You essentially just have an entry pit and an exit pit.”

He notes that the directional drilling options Ditch Witch offers for landscape professionals include the JT-5 and JT-10 directional drills.

“For design/build professionals, it’s specialized for our market,” Maker says. “A lot of the technology helps with the overall accuracy versus having a laid-out plan of where the other underground utilities are and having to work around those.”

Other offerings to help with efficiency, Hale says, include earth drills built to be controlled by one person. The drills can help landscape pros with multiple digging and drilling applications, including fencing and sign installation, landscaping and soil sampling.

“The earth drills optimize speed and torque for maximum productivity in a safe, one-person earth drill, offering

← LESS MANPOWER

Several drills on the market only require one operator, helping save on man-hours.

Continued on page 56



PHOTO: LITTLE BEAVER

AIRPORT SEES SKY-HIGH RESULTS WITH iMOW®



Chesapeake Regional Airport, an airport in coastal Virginia, sits on 500 acres with more than 80 hangars accommodating both private and commercial aircraft. While student pilots, commercial crews and hobbyists who frequent the airport are used to seeing the latest in aviation technology flying the skies above, the newest high-tech addition at this facility is operating on the ground.

CHALLENGES WITH PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

With a small staff responsible for the upkeep of the large property, the Chesapeake Regional Airport team's conventional mower approach was causing more problems than solutions. Every time the grounds crew mowed the overgrown lawn, it resulted in grass clippings, dust and dirt blowing into the air.

In addition, with a recent mechanical failure of their current mower, it was time for an upgrade.

"When our crew was left without their primary means to maintain the property, we identified the opportunity to install STIHL iMOW® robotic mowers as a solution," said Chris Schrantz, Airport Manager.

CLEAN, WELL-MAINTAINED LAWNS

Two STIHL RMI 632 PC-L iMOW® robotic mowers were installed to maintain approximately one acre each alongside rows of hangars housing aviation tenants. Unlike the conventional mowers, with STIHL iMOW®, there was no dust, dirt or excessive debris.

Not only did the robotic mowers leave the area cleaner, but iMOW® also provided other benefits. The mowers' self-mulching functionality returned nutrients and moisture back to the soil providing a greener, healthier lawn. Its smart battery technology automated the mowing work reducing labor, maintenance and fuel costs – saving the airport time and money.

LESS COST, LESS LABOR, HEALTHIER GRASS

With LTE connectivity the RMI 632 PC-L robotic mowers deliver a host of enhanced smart features – all operable via an app. From setting and updating mowing schedules to monitoring service issues and performance, usage has been seamless.

¹ Cost is dependent on electricity and may vary. STIHL iMOW® provided by STIHL Inc.

According to Greg Dorson, Grounds Maintenance Lead, his experience with STIHL iMOW® has been "super easy," he added. "It's practically self-explanatory. In fact, one of the greatest benefits is that I don't have to do the mowing – and it requires virtually zero maintenance."

BOTTOM-LINE RESULTS

iMOW® provides real solutions to challenges faced by the airport authority and other customers. Instead of mowing lawns, they can now focus on other more pressing tasks, and as an added benefit, the lawns maintained by iMOW® are green and thriving.

"[Installing] STIHL iMOW® was a fantastic decision – and one that has paid off," said Schrantz. "Over a five-month period, we've calculated only \$5.75 in electricity costs per unit.¹ A conventional solution would have taken double that amount in labor alone. Add wear and tear on our zero-turn mower plus fuel costs and it is a no-brainer!"

Between labor and fuel costs, Chesapeake Regional Airport is saving upwards of \$80 per month by using the two robotic mowers.

THE FUTURE OF MOWING

With the overwhelming success of the first two installations, a third iMOW® was installed to further reduce the grounds crew's workload. Given the expanse of the property and the ROI analysis thus far, the Chesapeake Regional Airport is considering installing even more iMOW® robotic mowers onsite.

"From the management side of things, iMOW® just makes a lot of good sense," said Schrantz, "Especially for large-scale commercial applications. It's just a great highly-efficient solution."

To learn more about the STIHL iMOW® visit [STIHLUSA.com/products/imow](https://www.stihlusa.com/products/imow).



» Chris Schrantz, Airport Manager, and Greg Dorson, Ground Maintenance Lead.

BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Continued from page 54

landscapers enhanced versatility and the ability to take on more jobs with less labor,” Hale says. “These drills cut out the need for two-man drilling. This allows crews to take on more jobs and/or complete jobs faster because their labor goes further without a decrease in performance.”

Hale notes that Little Beaver’s hydraulic earth drills, mechanical drills and towable and untowable drills all help to optimize the labor that a company does have.

The hydraulic and mechanical drills feature a torque tube design, eliminating kickback by transferring the torque back to the engine carrier. The mechanical drills operate at 360 rpm for high-speed auger rotations and are ideal for projects

requiring several narrow holes, such as installing fences and planting decorative shrubs, according to Hale.

The towable and untowable designs employ a counterbalance design and larger tires to allow for better ergonomics and easy maneuvering in tasks like planting trees or accessing tight spaces. Additionally, the towable machine can be pulled by a vehicle by installing the

tow bar and attaching the unit to any 2-inch ball, while the untowable version can be connected to the receiver hitch of a truck or SUV, saving valuable bed space.

WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND

Hale suggests contractors research the drill options before making any purchasing decisions.

“Landscapers should consider the opportunity to take on unique jobs or challenging locations and the versatility options of their drill,” Hale says.

Hale notes that when considering high torque and drilling speeds, purchasing original manufacturer parts can help ensure an ideal fit and wear life.

Maker adds that landscape pros should be aware of the overall spec profile of what they’re working with, including the length, the size of drill shots, the overall distance they’ll be drilling and the footprint of the machine as a whole.

He adds that landscape companies should be prepared to train their employees on how to use the drills, as they’re typically more complicated than the average piece of landscaping equipment.

“The biggest thing is the overall learning process and training that goes along with it,” Maker says. “It’s unlike a piece of rental equipment you would get from a rental yard. This is more specialized and requires background information on what you’re doing, including locating and tracking all the way down to the drilling functions.”



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PHOTO: LITTLE BEAVER

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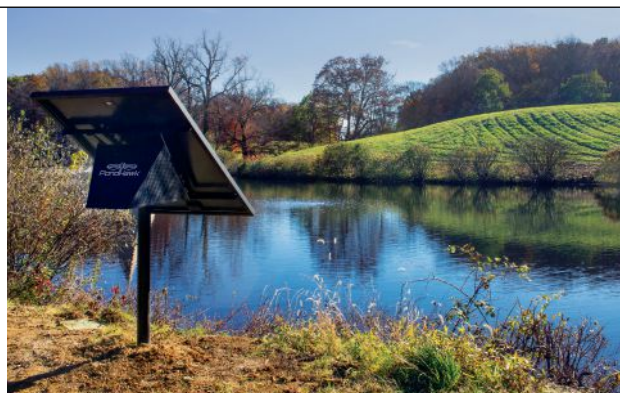
ATLANTIC POND AND LAKE MANAGEMENT PRODUCTS



COMPANY: Atlantic-Oase

URL: Atlantic-Oase.com

Atlantic's Pond and Lake Management offers a full range of subsurface aeration products starting at 0.25 acre up to 4 acres. Options include shallow water systems up to 7 feet deep and deep water systems up to 35 feet deep. The company's Water Cabinets feature top quality compressors and hardware. Double-walled for high strength, noise reduction and efficient cooling, the product is all safely housed in heavy-duty, wood-grain finished cabinets.



PONDHAWK

COMPANY: Linne Industries

URL: PondHawk.com

PondHawk from Linne Industries is a solar-powered subsurface aeration system that delivers low-maintenance pond upkeep. Using the power of the sun, PondHawk works without electricity — so its operating costs are minimal, according to the company. PondHawk is quiet, tamper-resistant and environmentally friendly. By using subsurface aeration, PondHawk improves water quality, reduces odors and encourages decomposition of organic matter with aerobic bacteria, creating a sustainable ecology for pond life.



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WATER WORLD

Classroom in the field

LOCATION San Antonio

COMPANY Seeger Water

DETAILS The property management company is a longtime client of Seeger Water and was its first commercial client to convert to Rain Bird's IQ4 platform. The Teralta Corporate Park has 19 zones, and each zone averages about 40 gallons of water per minute.

"It has become our property to beta test this technology and begin to quantify the data," says DJ Seeger, president of Seeger Water. The IQ4 sensors have been on the property for about a year.

San Antonio's strict watering limits are part of the reason the IQ4 platform is on the property as watering is only permitted between 7 p.m. and 11 a.m.

With IQ4, Seeger says the system monitors and manages the number of stations operating in real time based on data collected from on-site controllers. The data includes water source capacity, station flow rate, station module assignment, number of valves per station and more. The IQ4 system then determines the optimal irrigation sequence.

Seeger uses the reporting function to help communicate to the client the benefit of having the technology at Teralta Corporate Park. He says the system downloads data that includes water savings every 30 days that he shares with the client.

"It creates some accountability with us to show the client that we are checking the property," he says. "The No. 1 goal is definitely water conservation."

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



1



3

PHOTOS: SEEGER WATER



Captions | 1. Crews from Seeger Water prepare the site for IQ4 system installation. 2. DJ Seeger says one of the benefits of using the IQ4 system is the ability to log in and see irrigation system performance from anywhere, including from his truck. 3. A Seeger Water crew member installs the controller used to manage the Teralta Corporate Park's irrigation zones. 4. Seeger Water uses this site as a test site to learn more about the IQ4 capabilities. 5. Seeger Water manages Teralta Corporate Park's 19 irrigation zones.

INSTALLATION SOLUTIONS

How to successfully install irrigation systems

Follow these steps before you dig to ensure proper irrigation system installation

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

Before putting a shovel or trencher in the ground, irrigation contractors need a clear plan that ensures their irrigation systems will be correctly installed.

PROPER PLANNING

First on the list is to call 811 to have the utilities flagged on the property. Next, irrigation contractors need to know what they will be digging into.

Understanding the soil type is important because some areas can be rocky and possibly require additional tools or equipment to get the pipe buried to the proper depth. The soil also affects the man-hours required and watering time for the zones to prevent runoff, says Jason Fuller, president of Red & White Greenery in Georgetown, Texas.

The company provides irrigation, landscape, hardscape, site furnishings,

masonry and commercial maintenance. Fuller's customers are 80 percent commercial and 20 percent residential, and the company has an annual revenue of \$11 million.

The irrigation plan should detail all aspects of the system, including the type, size and location of the backflow preventer; mainline pipe sizing and general location; valve size and location; lateral line size and general location; and irrigation head type, nozzle size and location.

They should check the flow and pressure at the meter, which will alter the design of the irrigation system, Fuller says. Installers must also consider the contour of the property and the different types of irrigated vegetation.

Visiting the property before installation allows contractors to flag any conflicts between the landscape plan and real-world site, says Steve Barendt, senior contractor account manager, Rain Bird.

"Make adjustments as necessary, being sure not to exceed flow rate available on the zone," Barendt says. Mark any changes made during installation on the as-built plan.

START DIGGING

While the depth of the trench will vary based on local codes and geographical locations, there are general guidelines. On a residential property, an acceptable depth for the pipes is 8 to 12 inches, says Steve Hovel, senior product manager of rotors, valves and accessories at Hunter Industries.

FINE-TUNING
Small adjustments to the system can be made once it's up and running.



For commercial projects, the mainline tends to be about 18 to 24 inches deep, with the lateral lines from the valve out to the sprinkler heads being installed shallower, around 8 to 12 inches, he adds.

When using gasketed pipes on commercial properties, contractors must consider the higher flow rates, which can cause damage on angles if not handled correctly, Hovel says. Installers should add a thrust block every time the pipe turns 90 degrees, encasing the entire fitting in concrete or installing blocks behind it as a holder.

Once the valves are set and the pipe is connected, connect swing joints to the rotors and then adjust to the proper height. After adding the nozzles, installers can begin adjusting rotors to the proper arc to avoid overspray on hardscapes or buildings. You can make some of the adjustments before running the zone, Barendt says, but the zone should be running to fine-tune it.

While backfilling may seem straightforward, there's a proper way to bury lines, says Michael Derewenko, marketing manager, Jain Irrigation.

If the property is rocky and PVC pipe is laid in the trench, the sharp rocks will likely wear on the pipe from the minor vibrations, causing issues, Hovel says. Creating a sand bed for the pipe to rest on — as well as backfilling with sand — will keep sharp edges from damaging the pipe.

MISTAKES TO AVOID

There are several potential pitfalls when it comes to installing irrigation systems.

Avoid installing sprinklers directly onto rigid PVC because the bases can break when mowers or vehicles run over them. To allow for movement in a sprinkler, premade swing joints should be used — or flexible tubing at lengths of 18 to 24 inches, depending on grade.



When installing irrigation systems, be sure the lines are compacted and the sprinklers are installed to grade.



Laterals should run parallel, not on top of each other when possible, as recently filled ditches don't have the strength that compacted dirt offers. If heavy machinery drives over newly buried lines, pipes can crush each other, causing hard-to-see hairline breaks. Contractors should also be sure not to leave trash and debris in ditches, Derewenko says.


"The big one is leaving trash and debris in ditches. Not only is this adding garbage to a site, but rocks can pierce pipes after lines are installed," Derewenko says. "Along with keeping debris out of ditches, it's always good to walk the newly added soft dirt to make sure lines are compacted and sprinklers are installed to grade and pointed in the right direction."

Improper nozzle selection is another common mistake, Barendt says. For example, contractors may install a No. 2 or No. 3 nozzle on every rotor in a zone. Since all rotors will emit the same amount of water and rotate at the same speed, a 90-degree rotor will get twice the amount of water as a 180-degree rotor because it covers the arc twice in the time it takes the 180-degree one to cover once.

"This also means that if there are any 360-degree rotors in the middle of the yard, it will only cover the arc once — while the 90-degree rotors in the corners cover four times," Barendt says. "The result is soggy corners that are being overwatered and/or center areas that are dry and underwatered."

The solution for this issue is to size the nozzles and space according to the manufacturer's guides. Changing nozzle sizes will also alter the distance it throws, so space and size them for proper head-to-head coverage with the correct size nozzle, Barendt adds.

By using quality craftsmanship and products, installers can ensure the system will last decades and bring savings to customers.

Fuller adds, "One of the main benefits of a properly designed and installed irrigation system is that a client is able to irrigate their property effectively and efficiently, saving them time, and most importantly, money." 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Nashville.

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FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Susan McGee

OWNER

LAWN DOCTOR OF WILMINGTON AND BRUNSWICK CO., N.C.

1 How did you find your way to this industry?

I moved to Wilmington prior to being with Lawn Doctor. Having gone to N.C. State, where I had a few horticulture classes and business classes, and having owned a business previously, I was excited about the opportunity provided to me by Lawn Doctor. It was the perfect fit for my young family, and Lawn Doctor helped train me to be in its franchise model. That was 23 years ago. We have 20 employees, and we're in growth mode. As the community grows, we've had more opportunities. We're fortunate to have long-term customers, some for 23 years.

2 What is June like there, and any advice on how to endure it?

The heat really comes into play. We start a little earlier in the morning. Flexibility and foresight play a key in every day. I know my team well, (I know) their strengths and I trust in the skills they have. You have to look after the people in your business and be positive as you figure it all out. I really try to look after the staff in the field. I do not subscribe to working on Saturdays. The guys need to recover from a long week. Work/life balance is important for all of us.

3 What do you think our magazine will be writing about for the foreseeable future?

One of the biggest surprises for me as an owner, aside from the day-to-day balance of the workforce in the field, is the ongoing challenge of human resources, whether it's labor supply or opportunities for advancement. Knowing the expectation of the human resources side of this business is

important. You have to take care of people with policies and handbooks, things that, 23 years ago, were not an issue. It takes a lot of time. I think human resources is going to become a bigger thing, especially after COVID. The ways you managed your staff last year? That's not going to slow down.

4 Do you have one day at work that was really memorable?

I've mentioned this day to several of my office staff. I remember when our business was much smaller, and I was the only staff person in the office. The Monday after Easter, I came into the office and there were a number of calls on the answering machine. I thought, 'Wow, this is going to be a busy day.' In that one day, I had hundreds of phone calls. I couldn't plow through one message before getting the next message and the next message. It was a sign that 1) We were doing a lot of things right, but 2) I needed additional help and the right kind of help to handle the volume.

5 What gets you to work on time every day?

I truly care about the people who work with me. This is their opportunity, as much as it is mine, to create a career. I can't say enough about the kind of customers I have. They really appreciate the value we bring every day to their yards. It's the science of what we do. I make sure all my technicians and even my office staff get their pesticide licenses, so they can have personal growth and also have a stake in the company. 📍



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A LOOK BACK

TECHNOLOGY'S COME A LONG WAY

Take a look into the past and how computer-aided design programs transformed the landscape design process

This issue examines how software helps landscape designers create their ultimate designs. It's easy to appreciate how far the industry has come when you take a look at where it started. Computer-aided design (CAD) has evolved from a desktop computer and mouse to a laptop to now a tablet and other mobile devices.

Design software has become more than just a platform to develop a project — it is now a communication tool with clients and installation crews, and it aids in project estimation. Design software is becoming increasingly valuable in 3D design as well. Take a look at an excerpt from a July 1994 Landscape Management article about the early days of CAD.

COMPUTERS HELP LANDSCAPERS CONQUER THE FOURTH DIMENSION

Computer-aided designs help the client envision his or her dream landscape and see how it will change over the years.

The landscape manager who feels at home with a computer will also be much more at home when discussing a client's needs. Not only is computer-aided designing quickly becoming a competitive requirement, but other computer uses such as inventory control are also important.

"One of the biggest changes within the industry is the use of computers," says Dr. George Longnecker, professor of landscape

horticulture at West Virginia University. "A lot of people really haven't gotten into this yet," he acknowledges, "but the young folks coming into the profession really need to know this."

For the astute landscape manager and designer, computers are aiding efforts to conquer the always-pesky fourth dimension.

"The fourth dimension is time," he explains. "The computer is going to help us: With a computer, we can actually predict that fourth dimension. You take space and time, and it equates with change."

BOOTING UP

In the landscape industry, you can plot the normal changes that crop up within a property's design characteristics. Adjustments to drawings can be made and future plant growth can be projected and planned for. By using the assorted software programs available, landscape designers can make detailed, lifelike drawings that can be altered with a simple movement of a mouse in response to the customers' reactions.

"With a computer, you just plug in the changes; changes are cheap," Longnecker reports. "You used to have to go back and redo the drawings," he recalls. "You'd spend all that time, and if they didn't like it, you'd get upset. Now, redrawing is so simple."

Computer drawings allow you to portray the growth patterns of the selected plant materials proposed for the job. "Once a landscape is planted, it's just the beginning, and it's going to change." As an example, previously, a landscape design might have included certain high-growing species of plantings around a house. "Twelve years later, you couldn't see the house," Longnecker observes.



"You're now putting the right plant in the right place," he says. If a client wants a certain species to be planted in an area that just happens to be underneath power lines, you can demonstrate what the project will look like years later. The customer will see right away that the treasured evergreens could someday be sparking up a storm.

GETTING ONLINE

The landscape manager or designer can better sell the level of his or her professionalism via the computer, too. This can come in handy when dealing with do-it-yourselfers who may not have the proper shopping expertise. "They'll put something in that's not even going to grow there," Longnecker points out. "You're not going to get the right advice from the folks pushing the plants," he adds.

"Usually, when they go out and put in several hundred dollars' worth of plants (that aren't right for the yard or climate), they realize they need some help." For landscape professionals witnessing this type of spectacle in the making, "You have to get it across to the public that with the plant comes the knowledge. This is one of the extras you get from the pros," Longnecker explains.

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BY PHIL HARWOOD

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

The difference between revenue and success

Congratulations to the companies listed on the *LM150* list. This is an accomplishment to be proud of, for sure. At the same time, wouldn't it be equally great to have another list of the top companies in our industry based on profitability or company value? Of course, not many companies would volunteer their profit or EBITDA data to be published for all to see, so this is somewhat wishful thinking. However, it does bring up a question that is worth exploring: Is revenue the same as success?

Take another look at the *LM150* list. What's missing? You may need to look at last year's list for reference. What happened to the companies that aren't included in this year's report? Some chose not to participate. Others lost revenue and fell off the bottom of the list. Still, others no longer exist, either because they were acquired or dissolved. Revenue only tells us part of the story. The real story lies in the profit margins and value drivers.

MORE TO REVENUE THAN NUMBERS

Let me give you an analogy. Let's say you're considering buying a classic

“Many leaders become fixated on revenue at the expense of other items, such as producing consistently strong profits and building long-term value in their businesses.”

car. The car looks amazing with a new paint job, shiny chrome and new tires. It's impressive from the outside. It may also be impressive mechanically and in its performance, but there's no way of knowing without popping the hood, inspecting the engine and driving the car in various conditions. When we see revenue, we are only seeing the shiny car. It's not *unimportant*, but it's only part of the story — and usually not the most important part of the story.

One of the most interesting aspects of the story is how the revenue was produced or where it came from. Was it a result of acquiring other businesses, which may be extremely fascinating in terms of the story, or was it a result of organic growth? Was it a combination? Another great part of the story is regarding the mix of services, customer segments, geographic markets, self-performance versus subcontracting, etc. Still another part of the story is regarding the use of technology and support resources that have allowed significant growth to occur.

My point here is that many leaders become fixated on revenue at the expense of other items, such as producing consistently strong profits and building long-term value in their businesses. There is nothing wrong with walking through a car lot and drooling

over the shiny cars on display. It's fun but you never truly know what you're looking at by looking at the paint job.

LEARN FROM THE BEST

My advice is to go deeper. What are the top revenue producers in our industry doing that you might also be able to do? How are they growing? What are they investing in? What resources are they utilizing to develop their people? What core business processes have led to their success? What technologies are they employing? Many in our industry are fairly open to sharing their experiences with others. The three companies profiled in this issue — Ryan Lawn & Tree (No. 45), Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management (No. 85) and GreenScapes Landscape Co. (No. 140) — are perfect examples.

Take advantage of industry virtual networking opportunities, which are more prevalent today than they have ever been, to get to know people from some of these industry titans. You may be surprised at what they're willing to disclose. Become a student, be willing to learn and pay attention. The goal is to not simply chase revenue but to chase success. They are not the same.

Some of the biggest revenue producers in our industry are no longer in business. Some have been acquired, while others have liquidated. These are interesting stories to learn from as well. Building long-term value requires generating revenue, but it also involves so many more interesting things of which to be mindful. As you drool over the shiny cars, don't forget about the ultimate prize: building a valuable company. You just may end up on the *LM150* someday as a result.

Now go forth. 🚗



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BY JEFF KORHAN

Jeff Korhan is the author of *Built-In Social*, founder of Landscape Digital Institute and a Duct Tape Marketing Certified consultant. Reach him at jeff@landscapedigitalinstitute.com.

How investing in this platform can grow your business

Imagine a perfect world where Facebook gives you complete control.

A platform like that would be priceless for any business. You would be able to keep in touch with your community, gather information to inform decisions and have ready access to new leads.

Of course, this is never going to happen with Facebook, but it can on another platform.

Wildly successful companies such as Amazon, Microsoft and Apple became who they are by investing in their platforms and growing it. Your business can do this, too.

OWN YOUR AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIPS

Platforms are places where companies engage with their audiences and conduct business. The key is ownership, and the one platform that gives every business this control is email.

Most businesses give up on social media because they work so hard to get results, only to have them taken

“Your platform challenge is essentially the same as Spotify, Netflix and Amazon. You have to consistently deliver exceptional value that exceeds the price of the subscription. That price is a combination of several things, with the most important being attention.”

away by an algorithm change. How can your business expect to win when it is renting rather than owning audience relationships?

If you watch the TV show, “Shark Tank,” you know the sharks seldom invest in retail startups because they are transaction based. Unless that business also has an online presence with subscriber relationships, there’s no way to grow the audience.

As the sharks like to say, “For this reason, I’m out.”

BE THE BEST RESOURCE TO GROW YOUR AUDIENCE

Growing an audience is not as easy as it once was, but it’s possible. You have to figure out how to be the best match for your ideal clients, giving them what they cannot get anywhere else.

At Landscape Digital Institute, we help our clients build their audiences from a base of current customers. We start with their goals, which may be encouraging referrals and growing subscribers who later become customers.

Then, we develop a strategy for achieving

those goals. To keep an audience engaged, we have to offer them unique value that makes their lives better. It may take up to six months to find the sweet spot, but once we do, we go all-in on that content.

You may know that content that humanizes you and your business works exceptionally well. This includes interesting discoveries and your recommendations based on personal experience.

We are all human beings who want to live a better life, stay safe and healthy and secure our financial future. If you have expertise in these areas, you have something to offer.

This is your platform, and it gets better with continued use. How you use email should not be the same as any other business. You have to tailor it to your community and realize it will evolve.

Your platform challenge is essentially the same as Spotify, Netflix and Amazon. You have to consistently deliver exceptional value that exceeds the price of the subscription. That price is a combination of several things, with the most important being attention.

When your business has a platform relationship mindset, it will become second nature to earn the attention of your audience.

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Correction: In the May 2021 issue of LM, Glow Path Pavers were incorrectly portrayed. A photoluminescent aggregate is incorporated directly into the paving stones, and the naturally glowing material is placed directly into the paving stones during production. LM regrets the error.

GROW WITH GRUNDER

BY MARTY GRUNDER

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



Why your team is your most valuable asset

When any labor at all is hard to come by, it can be easy to lose sight of your priorities. It's a mistake I made early on in my years running Grunder Landscaping Co. (GLC) We'd keep team members employed and forgive their attitude issues or tardiness because we thought we couldn't afford to lose them. Everything you allow at your business, you encourage, and by making exceptions to keep certain team members, we were sending a bad message to the rest of our team.

Talented team members are critical to a company's long-term success, and they want to work with other talented people. When someone is tardy every day for a week or loses his or her temper on a fellow team member and faces no repercussions, you're telling the entire team that their bad behavior is OK. Your company culture is the sum of all the behaviors and attitudes present at your company. When that sum starts to turn negative, you are no doubt frustrating the real superstars on your team.

Our first line of defense in this labor market is to retain the talented people already on our teams and ensure we are supporting them. In my years running Grunder Landscaping Co., I've found two ways companies can make sure they're being excellent employers that good team members want to work for.

1 HAVE CLEAR AND CONSISTENT EXPECTATIONS.

Being consistent in our expectations

“Our first line of defense in this labor market is to retain the talented people already on our teams and make sure that we are supporting them.”

helps our teams understand what attitudes, behaviors and skills are required to be successful in the company. We can support their professional development simply by staying consistent, and that means following the same rules for all team members, even when we're desperate for labor.

The core values at Grunder Landscaping are quality, teamwork, leadership and profitability, and our team's behavior and work must always align with those, or else, we aren't being consistent. Even knowing that we will have a hard time replacing a team member who leaves, we aren't afraid to show the door to someone who isn't a fit for our company culture.

2 TEACH NEW SKILLS.

Sometimes, our team members aren't doing what we want or need them to do because they just don't know how. In tight labor markets, we're hiring anyone with a good attitude and teaching them the horticultural and landscaping skills they need. Having a solid training program in place is critical to the company's success. It shows team members you value and believe in them, improves the quality of work you do and is another tool for setting clear expectations with your team.

We do this by having our most experienced team members train our newest team members by following this process: tell, show, do and teach. We tell our team

members how we want it done, we physically show them on-site how to do it, our trainees do it themselves and then they teach someone else how to do it. Follow these four steps, and you will see your training improve immediately.

Find a moment this month to look around your company and take stock of your own leadership: Are you setting clear and consistent expectations? Could you do more to teach your team new skills? Would you want to work for you? The best leaders are always looking to improve, and sometimes, small changes can make a big difference in your company's culture and morale among team members.

If you'd like to see a strong company culture in action, join us for one of our upcoming in-person Grunder Landscaping Co. Field Trips. These events bring small groups of success-minded landscape pros together for 24 hours of learning on-site at GLC. The field trips fill up quickly; claim your spot now to make sure you can join us this year: growgroupinc.com/glc-fall-field-trips. 

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