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# LEAN, MEAN AND GREEN

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reflect on the  
innovations that  
have changed  
their businesses





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## [ BE FEATURED IN LM ]

We're always looking for great sources for upcoming stories in the magazine. Has your company integrated or adopted any new technology? Do you have any success stories to share or something new your business is doing this year? If so, email Editor Christina Herrick at [cherrick@northcoastmedia.com](mailto:cherrick@northcoastmedia.com) and your business may be featured in a future issue.

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**SETH JONES**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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## A tip of the cap to Kevin

I noted earlier this year that *Landscape Management* is celebrating its 60th anniversary. In any business with a healthy lifespan, staff members come and go while the business goes on. The same is true of *LM*. Everyone who contributes to the magazine is along for the ride until their ride stops, and then the magazine chugs along without them, the same yet different.

Sometimes, there's a significant departure worthy of taking a moment to stop, reflect on and, of course, say thank you. When we received Kevin Kehoe's column this month (see page 48), we realized this was time for a moment of pause.



Kevin's first column, then called "Business Benchmarking," appeared in the January 2008 issue (visit [LandscapeManagement.net/author/KKehoe](http://LandscapeManagement.net/author/KKehoe) to read this column, or any of his columns, or to leave a comment for Kevin). That means he's contributed to this magazine and helped readers for a quarter of its lifespan. In that time, he's written on topics such as leadership, profitability and driving sales. Even more notable, he founded industry behemoth Aspire Software, a company used by 70,000 customers in 1,500 locations along the way. Yes, we have always been thankful that Kehoe was "one of us."

Since Kevin has been contributing to *LM* five times as long as I have, I'll simply tip my cap and say "thank you," Kevin, for helping our magazine by helping our readers. Of course, we are sad to see you go, but we're happy that you're now a published book author and relieved that you're staying involved with us by continuing to serve on our editorial advisory board.

And now, I will step aside and let the people who have known him a lot longer than I have give their own perspective on what he has meant to this magazine and the industry over the last 15 years.

I first met Kevin during GIE+EXPO 2013. His passion for the landscape industry, and in particular helping companies become more efficient and profitable using software and technology, has been truly inspiring. His columns have helped countless landscaping companies. I'm enormously grateful to have had Kevin as a *Landscape Management* columnist and member of our editorial advisory board these past 15 years. I'm even more thankful to call him my friend.

**Bill Roddy**  
Publisher  
Landscape Management magazine

A heartfelt Thank YOU to you, Kevin, for all you have done. Not just for me and my team at Grunder Landscaping Co. and The Grow Group, but for what you've done to raise the bar in the Green Industry. Your coaching, your wisdom, your writing and the software you launched, Aspire, has permanently changed lives. I am grateful for you and your warrior spirit. Your book, "One Hit Wonder" was great. Get the next one done, I'm ready to read it!

**Marty Grunder**  
President and CEO  
Grunder Landscaping Co.  
The Grow Group

A personal "Thank You!" to Kevin Kehoe. Our industry is better because of you! I am better because of you! We started working together many years ago. You taught this landscape technician how to become a landscape businessman. You inspired me, made me laugh and became a true friend! I can't imagine how many others you impacted as well! Looking forward to seeing what you do next!

**Ken Thomas**  
Principal  
Envisor Consulting

The landscape industry was largely a mom-and-pop industry at the beginning of Kevin's career. It's now an industry comprised of professional, highly valuable organizations — the apple of the private equity eye. Kevin's focus and industry-wide mentoring on systems, metrics and professionalism has created tremendous value, professional growth and changed lives. I can think of no one who's contributed more to maturing our industry than Kevin Kehoe. Thank you.

**Ben Gandy**  
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## MORE ONLINE

See more great advice and complete answers from our Editorial Advisory Board in the online version of this feature at [LandscapeManagement.net](https://www.LandscapeManagement.net).

## How can green industry business owners develop a leaner, more efficient operation?

“When my son came over to help me run the company, he went into every molecule of the business looking for wasteful spending. If you can’t do this internally, hire a consultant who specializes in that.”



### Landscape Professionals

**Richard Bare**  
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**Paul Fraynd**  
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**Luke Henry**  
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**Chris Joyce**  
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**Aaron Katerberg**  
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Grand Rapids, Mich.

**Jerry McKay**  
McKay Landscape Lighting  
Omaha, Neb.

**Bryan Stolz**  
Winterberry Landscape & Garden Center  
Southington, Conn.

**Greg Winchel**  
Winchel Irrigation  
Grandville, Mich.

“Make things simple. Don’t try to be everything to everyone. Focus on the 80/20 principle to fix the issues with the most leverage.”



“Embrace technology if you haven’t; it’s the fastest way to improve efficiency. With gas being double what we paid last year, having your crews routed the most efficient way could save you thousands of dollars.”



“Focusing efforts and raises on foremen keeps your investment in the field and billable. Having a better foreman reduces the need for more operations managers, keeping overhead low.”

“Reward crew leaders based on profitability and involve them in discussions about process changes, new technologies and equipment purchases.”



### Industry Consultants

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**Marty Grunder**  
The Grow Group  
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**Phil Harwood**  
Grow the Bench  
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**Kevin Kehoe**  
3PG Consulting  
Laguna, Calif.

**Jeffrey Scott**  
Jeffrey Scott Consulting  
New Orleans, La.

“Hire better people (spend more) in key positions and use remote overseas admin workers to power the back office to support this team.”



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



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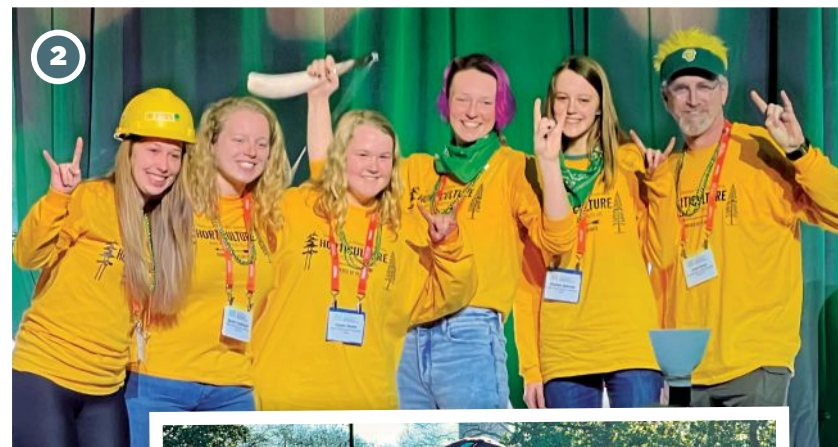
# LM GALLERY

**A look at some of the people and things we saw at the National Collegiate Landscape Competition in Raleigh, N.C.**



1

**1 The hosts with the most** Walt Rose (far right), manager of professional direct sales for Husqvarna, presented an axe and a battery-powered chainsaw to a trio of NC State staff members as a thank you for serving as host site. (From left to right) Emily Erickson, Elisabeth Meyer and Lee Ivy were given the tools at the National Collegiate Landscape Competition (NCLC) industry reception held at Carter-Finney Stadium.



2

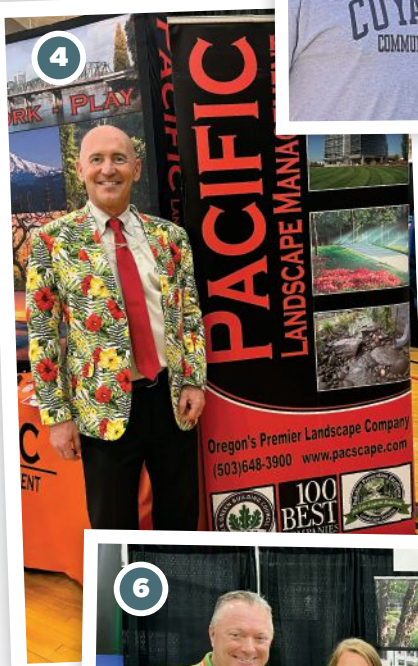
**2 Horns up** Students from North Dakota State won the chant competition with their rendition of “North Dakota girls,” set to the tune of Katy Perry’s “California Gurls,” (sic) during the opening ceremony’s roll call.

**3 Triceratops trio** Cuyahoga Community College earned a second-place finish in the overall rankings. Greg Malone, associate dean, (left); Todd Kitchen, eastern campus president (center) and Jim Funai, Ph.D, assistant professor of plant and landscape technology, watched the arboriculture techniques event. Funai was later honored as 2022 Outstanding Educator of the Year by the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP).



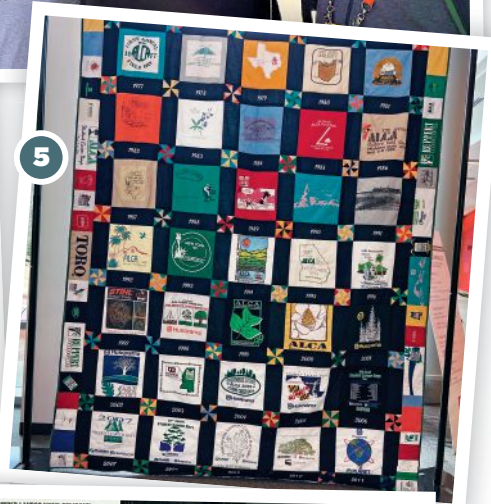
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**4 Standing out in the crowd** NALP President Bob Grover was hard to miss in his sport coat.



4

**5 A rich history** A quilt featuring the T-shirt design from every NCLC dating back to the first-ever event in 1977. Then known as the Associated Landscape Contractors of America’s (ALCA) Field Day, the inaugural event was hosted by Mississippi State University. NCLC will return to Starkville, Miss., in 2023.



5

**6 Hey! I know them!** LM’s Jake Goodman (far right) met up with the team from Grunder Landscaping, including (from left to right) Marty Grunder, Emily Lindley, Dalton Yates and Brian Davis. (Check out Grunder’s column on pg. 56.)



6



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# NATIONAL COLLEGIATE LANDSCAPING COMPETITION RETURNS

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR



The National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) 2022 National Collegiate Landscaping Competition (NCLC) was a return to form for what many in the green industry call their favorite event.

After two years away in-person due to the pandemic — NCLC was canceled in 2020 and virtual in 2021 — students and industry professionals rushed to the campus of North Carolina State University in Raleigh to kickstart the event.

“Lifelong friendships have been built here,” said Roger Phelps, corporate communications manager at Stihl. “For me, it was like a family reunion

walking back onto campus and seeing people that I met 20 years ago.”


Phelps’ sentiment was a common one. Bob Grover, NALP president, first attended the event in 1986. Thirty-six years later, he delivered a speech at the event’s opening ceremonies as the association’s president.

“When I joined, it was all about pretty,” he said. “Now it’s about environmental stewardship and bringing nature into the urban environment, processing water, sequestering carbon. It’s great to see that now we’re doing the good work.”

Grover, who owns Pacific Landscape Management in Hillsboro, Ore., in addition to his NALP duties, knows full

well the worth of the event as he employs six former NCLC attendees.

“I think it speaks to the value of the event that everyone gets something from it,” said NALP CEO Britt Wood. “We get a lot of enthusiasm and excitement from being around a younger (crowd). But I think (the students) get a lot out of it too.”

For the fourth year in a row — not including 2021’s virtual competition — Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, took home the overall team title. Next up for the NCLC is a trip to Mississippi State University in 2023. 

**In the irrigation troubleshooting event, students had to fix a broken irrigation setup.**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I really enjoyed your recent article (“Hanging up the high tops,” February). I can relate. After playing (basketball) in high school and college, I continued to play in various leagues and three mornings a week with neighborhood friends. I played into my early 50s until, unfortunately, work got in the way — a terrible thing. Now, as I near 70, I’ve begun playing again. It’s really great exercise. Fortunately, I now have a 6-year-old grandson who is obsessed with the game. Every time he’s over, he begs me to move my truck out of the driveway so he can shoot hoops. His dad built a sort of court in their backyard so he can

play every day after school. Fortunately, his grandfather is a landscape contractor and helped with the design and building.

Also, I really enjoy your magazine. Every issue, I find something to help me do a better job in our small landscape business.

**Bill Melzer**  
Owner, Pinnacle Maintenance Systems, Mesa, Ariz.



Great article (“Hanging up the high tops,” February) and certainly worthy of pondering! I am 63 and can’t do what I used to (basketball or landscaping). I have run my business for 40 years now, and it has NOT been all fun and games. My favorite part of the magazine is the Five Questions Q&A.

Keeping on coaching, coach! You’ll always remember those days. They go by quick.

**Tim Holtz**  
Owner, Holtz Landscaping and Garden Center, Ham Lake, Minn.

# Charitable cause created for industry

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**N**ow in its second year, Industry Collective is ready to welcome any and all lawn care and landscape companies that want to make a difference in their local community but don't know where to start.

"We oftentimes have people ask us, 'How do you do outreach?'" said Mike Haynes, president of Gastonia, N.C.-based Loving. "We thought, let's simplify the process and then get other landscapers across the country, big and small, to lock arms and do quarterly service projects together."

The events take 20 to 30 minutes and can be performed in a boardroom, a warehouse or even the tailgate of a

truck. Projects include packing food, hygiene products and backpacks for school kids.


Jamie Waldron, programming director for Industry Collective, assists companies with how to start and complete the projects. Participating companies are responsible for the financial and time investments. Industry Collective does all the behind-the-scenes work.

"It's pretty simple for groups," Waldron said. "The supplies show up and (you) follow the instructions. We've found there are a lot of people that want to do good. But oftentimes you're just paralyzed, you don't know what the

first step is. We've been able to come alongside them and give them options."

Events are planned for this month, in July and October.

"Our goal with this vision is crazy-simple projects that are so easy to do that maybe they don't make a massive impact individually, but when linked up with hundreds of other companies, take those stats and they make it significant," Haynes said. "You get so much more than you put in. It doesn't require a lot of time, money or resources. But ultimately it could be the difference in someone's life."

To learn more visit [IndustryCollective.com](https://IndustryCollective.com). 

---

## BARTLETT MAKES THREE ACQUISITIONS

Bartlett Tree Experts, No. 5 on the 2021 LM150 list with \$352 million in 2020 revenue, has acquired S.P. McClenahan Co. of Portola Valley, Calif. The company said this is the largest acquisition ever in its 114-year history. Bartlett said the acquisition of 111-year-old S.P. McClenahan in the heart of Silicon Valley was a natural fit for both companies; each is a fourth-generation family business that thrived for more than 100-years by providing quality tree care to its customers.

Founded by Seymour P. McClenahan in 1911, S.P. McClenahan's original office consisted of desk space in the Mercantile Exchange Building of San Francisco. The company enjoyed steady growth over the years, providing tree care on the San Francisco Peninsula.

Bartlett said this acquisition broadens its presence in California's Bay Area. S.P. McClenahan Co.'s 55 employees are now a division of Bartlett Tree Experts. John Henry McClenahan, who previously served as CEO of the company his great-grandfather founded, will run Bartlett's new Portola Valley office as local manager. His younger brother, Josh, joins Bartlett as a loss control manager.

Bartlett also expanded on Long Island with the acquisition of Fox Tree Care, a boutique tree care

company that has been in business for 45 years, and acquired Savage Forest Enterprise, which has been operating in the Mount Desert Island area of Maine for 23 years.

## COMPANY ORDERED TO PAY \$150K IN BACK WAGES

A federal court has approved a consent judgment ordering a New Kensington, Pa., commercial and residential landscaping company and its owner to pay \$150,000 in back wages and penalties after a U.S. Department of Labor investigation found the employer willfully denied overtime pay to its workers.

Investigators with the department's Wage and Hour Division determined that from Jan. 11, 2018, to Dec. 31, 2020, Shurina Brothers and owner Christopher Shurina failed to pay employees time-and-a-half for hours worked over 40 in a workweek. The employer instead paid straight-time rates off the books for overtime hours, which is a Fair Labor Standards Act violation.

The U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania in Pittsburgh ordered the company and its owner to pay a total of \$61,124 in overtime back wages and an equal amount in liquidated damages to the affected workers. The court also ordered Shurina Brothers to pay \$27,751 in civil money penalties for its willful violations.

# LEAN, MEAN

**LOOKING INTO THE PAST AND REFLECTING ON ONESELF CAN BE DIFFICULT. CONSIDER THE EMBARRASSING FASHION STATEMENTS THAT HAVE COME AND GONE OR ADVANCES FROM CLUNKY TECHNOLOGY THAT HAS OCCURRED OVER THE PAST FEW DECADES.**

Remember when the style of the TV show “Miami Vice” was hot? Crockett and Tubbs represented peak fashion in their bright sport coats, speaking on a car phone that was both wired and the size of a brick.

Don Johnson and Philip Michael Thomas patrolled the mean streets of Miami in the 1980s. Dan Lyster, owner of DTL Total Turf Care in Downingtown, Pa., winces at the thought of a time much more recent, 2012. “Ten years ago, I did nothing efficient, so don’t take me back that far,” he says laughing. “I just knew the days I got to fertilize lawns, I was way more excited than the days I got to cut lawns.”

*Landscape Management* asked lawn and landscape professionals around the country to consider how they used to work a decade ago and what improvements they’ve made since then that have changed their operations for the better. The answers we got were both diverse and insightful. It turns out all these companies have found a way to be lean, mean and green in 2022.

## **TWO GOOD DECISIONS**

Lyster found his way into the industry working for his parents, who owned a mom-and-pop family garden center in the Philadelphia area since the 1970s. As a kid, Lyster would advise his parents’ customers on what seed to buy or what products to apply. It became a passion that turned into a lawn mowing company.



Dan Lyster

In 2019, DTL Total Turf Care transitioned out of landscape maintenance and is now strictly a lawn fertilization company. “I figured I should focus on one thing; as someone who was trying to start a family it made sense,” Lyster says. “And frankly, the margins are better.”

Lyster believes two decisions he made at around the same time have dramatically improved his company. One was adopting a customer relationship management (CRM) system. The other was abandoning push-spreaders for a motorized ride-on.

“In 2019, we adopted Arborgold Software. I started using a Steel Green spreader around the same time,” Lyster says. “Those two things really streamlined me.”

Arborgold allowed DTL to streamline proposals for customers. Now, his clients can get estimates without his company even visiting their properties. Instead, DTL uses the square footage from satellite imagery. Once a homeowner accepts his or her estimate, DTL can add the new location to the most efficient place in the company’s routes.

One of Lyster’s favorite time savers is building reports. Arborgold tracks chemical applications, wind speeds and weather so he doesn’t have to go back in and create those reports himself. He says that feature alone saves him hours in a week.

Lyster says the increased amount of work his company was getting led him to buy a Steel Green spreader-sprayer. His company of six people now has four of the machines, with a fifth on the way.

“I went from push-spreading lawns with a push-behind spreader to a Steel Green, and I was able to do multiple acres on one fill-up at a good speed and I wasn’t getting tired,” he says. “It’s very versatile for us because we do a lot of granular fertilizer, but then we also do a lot of liquid. They have the ability to do one or the other in a pretty quick pit stop at the shop. That’s been huge for us.”

New machines also have made it easier to hire employees, Lyster says.

*Continued on page 14*

# AND GREEN

Industry professionals reflect on the innovations that have changed their businesses

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



*Continued from page 12*

“It’s always appealing when you’re hiring to have good equipment, so the guys don’t have to hoof it all day and walk all day,” he says. “We want the guys to have a level of comfort.”

### NO “DEAD-WALKING”

Joe Chiellini was a firefighter for 30 years and worked his way up to captain before retiring from the fire department. He now focuses his energy on being the president and CEO of ASI Landscape Management, a \$15 million company in the Tampa, Fla., area. ASI is a full-service landscape management firm he started as “something to do,” on his days off from the fire department.

He says he has tried to instill the same mentality of what life was like in the fire department to his company, which means he wants it to feel like not just a place to work, but like a brotherhood.

Chiellini doesn’t hesitate when asked what changed his company for the better: bringing in a board of advisers.

“Ever since I’ve had one it’s changed my business,” Chiellini says. “It has helped everything from operations, accounting, sales and marketing ... you name it. It’s been so key looking at things from a global perspective. A lot of people get lost thinking we’re landscapers and we just cut grass. It’s a business and you have to treat it like a business.”

Once he started working with his advisers, Chiellini realized that a lot of people want to help small businesses like his. He looks for people who’ve been outside the industry because they bring in fresh ideas from their own fields.

“They’ll ask questions, some of which people in our own industry won’t ask because they think they’re dumb questions but they’re not,” he says. “They just want to know how we go about things. I look for one person in operations, one

in sales and marketing, and one in accounting and finance.”

As far as technology advances, Chiellini says with the help of his vice president, Mark “Slim” Almeda, and his operations team (he calls them “studs”), they’ve improved their efficiency by using Weathermatic controllers and mounting Stihl battery-powered string trimmers to their riding mowers.

“The Weathermatic timers all work off an iPad, so it’s not the old-school approach of going and turning on a dial, finding a problem and digging with a shovel to look for it,” he says. “We’ve been able to attract some college talent, maybe some kids that are more technologically inclined than they are with the shovel. Little things like that have made a big difference.”

The idea of mounting electric string trimmers came as a result of watching crew members wasting time walking from one location to the next. They called it “dead-walking.” Now, the same person operating the mower will hop off and deal with the fence line or a tree ring while he’s there.

“The reason (the string trimmers) had to be electric is because we have an issue with a pull cord in the gas one,” Chiellini says. “The cord can get pulled or it can break so the machine doesn’t start. Now, it’s just a matter of pulling a trigger. Little things like this have really brought up our production rates.”

### KEEPING CREWS INFORMED

RJ Lawn and Landscape is a full-scale lawn and landscape company in the suburbs of Des Moines, Iowa. The company will celebrate 25 years of business next year, and it has grown from a company of 10 to almost 90 in that time.

Annette McCarthy, COO, started out on a mowing crew while still in college. She discovered the company in a workforce development program and learned she enjoyed the outdoor work. After college, McCarthy moved on from the company but was called back eight years later to see if she wanted to be its designated “office person.”

“I was the office. I was the only person here,” she recalls. “I think I was the first non-friend, non-family person the company ever hired.”

She says the area RJ Lawn and Landscape services is a fast-growing area. Because of the demands of their clientele, McCarthy says it is necessary for them to be heavily invested in technology.



**“... THIS IS A BUSINESS AND YOU HAVE TO TREAT IT LIKE A BUSINESS.”**

Joe Chiellini



**CHANGE FOR THE BETTER**  
Dan Lyster says his Steel Green spreader-sprayer allows him to switch from granular to liquid fertilizer easily.

*Continued on page 16*



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Continued from page 14

“We’re constantly striving to work smarter, not harder,” McCarthy says. “Everything we do now is app-based.”

McCarthy and the team at RJ looked at several different software programs before deciding on adopting Asset.

“What I like about it is it’s all-inclusive,” she says. “If a customer calls in, it starts with logging the phone call. Then it turns into a contract and a schedule distributed to the crews via an app. Then we’re recording their material, their time, our inventory and our costs. We even do our payroll and invoicing in it. We don’t have to use several platforms.”

**SMARTER, NOT HARDER**  
Annette McCarthy, COO of RJ Lawn and Landscapes, has adopted an app-based approach to handle the demands of their clientele.



McCarthy says RJ made the switch first with work orders in 2015, then went all-in the following year. She says it was challenging but also essential to make the switch. The memory of what it was like before Asset is still fresh enough to recall the pains of the old way of doing business.

“We were filling out paper tickets and turning them in,” McCarthy

says. “Excel is great, but if you’re spending all your time there, you’re missing a big chunk of info that everyone should have access to.”



Annette McCarthy

Because it’s a live system, RJ can have all 15 of its office personnel in it at the same time. This is especially helpful during snow season, when users can see the progress of the crew during an active snow storm. When a crew member takes a photo of a plowed lot, the photo is instantly uploaded into the system.

“It also helps us with informing our crews in the summer,” McCarthy says. “Having budgets is only effective if it’s current. Having a less robust software, where you’re having to slice and dice it or put it in Excel to output that to your crew is cumbersome and too slow. You’re too slow to a change in the field. That can bring your team morale down. Being able to see it all the time is super-empowering.”

**THE COMBO TECHNICIAN**

Palmer Higgins is the president of Mainly Grass, a lawn care and pest control business with 100 employees serving the New England area. Higgins came to the company almost four years ago from his involvement as a partner in Chenmark,

Continued on page 18

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Palmer Higgins

*Continued from page 16*

a family-owned business that has been acquiring lawn and landscape companies.

“I come from a financial background. I had to get educated on agronomy and pest control,” Higgins says. “The team has stuck with me as I’ve navigated that learning curve, and I now know a lot more about the science behind what we do compared to three years ago. I feel like I’m just now getting on par with the people who’ve been in the industry for decades, so now we can have these very technical conversations instead of just strategic conversations.”

Higgins was first involved in Mainely Grass when he ran the acquisition of the company for Chenmark and again as they added some tack-on acquisitions to the business. Now that he’s worked as president for a few years, he’s been able to put his own stamp on operations.

“I had this thesis coming in that we probably just need to orient ourselves a different way to make the business even better,” Higgins says. “Our team was already really good, and our capabilities were already really good. It was a matter of organizing things in a different way, to do it a little more efficiently.”

Higgins focused on the way the business utilized technicians. That led to the creation of what he calls combo technicians.

“Everyone wants to sell to the next-door neighbor. How can we raise manufactured density while we’re waiting for neighbors to sign up?” Higgins asks. “That concept led to combo technicians or combo routing. (Before,) if someone left the shop for the day, they were only doing one particular kind of work. If they left to do lawn care work, they were only doing lawn care stops. The next day, they might swap out their equipment to do mosquito work. If they have the licenses to do both and the equipment can fit in their vehicle in a safe, reliable way, why not do more than one job?”

The revamp came through re-orienting trucks, adding some equipment and reworking schedules. The results have been “phenomenal,” Higgins says, and there’s no going back to the old way.

“Maybe a mosquito house is closer than your next lawn care house,” he says. “It’s a way to manufacture density when you might not have sold to the next-door neighbor.”

**MORE LEAN, LESS MEAN**

Things are changing at Holtz Landscaping and Holtz Garden Center in Ham Lake, Minn. Owner Tim Holtz has decided to sell his lawn care business to focus on his growing irrigation company, Holtz Irrigation.



Tim Holtz

Holtz himself has changed as well. It was when he bought the Garden Center — about 33 percent of his business — that he learned something about himself. Holtz realized he liked his company being lean and green, but it was the mean part he needed to do something about.

“My wife brought it to my attention. When we bought the retail store 15 years ago, she told me I had to lighten up, because I was making the girls cry,” Holtz says. “I’ve been working with young men my whole life. Yelling at them in what I call my ‘emphatic voice’ didn’t work, they thought I didn’t like them anymore. That was my first realization that I needed to change my managerial style.”

One thing that made him easier to work with was when he accepted he couldn’t do everything himself. He needed to let go of some of the work and delegate. It’s made him a better manager, he says.

“Twenty years ago I was in the trenches. I’m old school, I was an iron-fist guy,” Holtz says. “I’m 63 now, most of my guys are in their 20s, 30s some 40s. There’s an art to delegating to this generation.”

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## DID YOU KNOW

# Do's and don'ts of grub control

Experts share when, how and why LCOs should treat for this turf pest **BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR**

**A**nytime lawns show signs of damage or browning, it's important to find the cause — and grubs are one possible culprit. Grubs are the larva or immature stage of various beetles like Japanese and chafer beetles.

There are about 10 species found across the country. Grubs eat roots, causing the grass to wilt, turn brown and increase the likeliness of turf loss. Experts say it's important to follow these do's and don'ts to properly control grubs.

## DO

**Check with the local cooperative Extension office to find which grubs are common in your area.** “This knowledge will guide when to start checking for larvae feeding damage and determining an insect control strategy,” says Ben Hamza, Ph.D., product development associate director for FMC.

**Educate.** Manufacturers can supply contractors with information about grub infestations to share with homeowners. “Contractors should also educate themselves

on how to identify species of grubs by their pattern and characteristics,” says Mike Agnew, Ph.D., technical services manager for turf at Syngenta.

**Know how the insecticide works.** Contact insecticides work by coming in contact with the grub in the soil, Hamza says. Plant roots absorb systemic

insecticides, and the grub comes in contact with the active ingredient as it ingests treated plant material.

**Look for grub damage.** “The lawn becomes spongy because the grubs have eaten the roots and churned the soil, making it a little soft. If you tug on the sod and it pulls up, you can tell if you have grubs,” Agnew says. “You might also see crows, raccoons, skunks or other animals digging up the lawn looking for grubs to eat.”

**Time application around the peak egg hatch.** “The smaller the insect is, the easier it is to control — and they're relatively close to the surface after they hatch,” says Ian Rodriguez, Ph.D., technical services manager at Quali-Pro. “Make sure you're getting the product down by June to mid-July.”

**Control more than grubs.** Consider a product that also covers other insects found on the property like sod webworms, billbugs and caterpillars. If you apply the insecticide early with the preventive compound chlorantraniliprole, you can control a variety of pests including grubs, Agnew says.

**Apply preventively.** Preventive treatments provide longevity of control. “It doesn't have to be 100-percent precise with the day they hatch,” Rodriguez says.

**Use a systemic product.** Systemic applications will get into the soil and control the insect after it hatches. “You can apply an insecticide like (chlorantraniliprole) anytime between April to July for season-long control with a single application,” Agnew says.

**Water in grub applications.** It will help move the product down into the



soil where the grubs are developing and increase the product performance, Hamza says.

**Treat breakthroughs.** Use contact insecticides for breakthroughs in the fall or for new accounts that weren't previously treated, Rodriguez says.



Ian Rodriguez

## DON'T

**Treat for the wrong pest.** Agnew says spraying an insecticide that only treats sucking insects, for example, won't work on grubs. Check the label to ensure it will cover the intended insect.

**Overirrigate.** “That gives you less roots, so fewer grubs can do more damage, compared to having a dense root system,” Rodriguez says.

**Apply the product too early.** Agnew says if you apply a biological product before the insect is present, the application won't work because it affects the insect only.

**Expect grubs to die immediately.** “Some products stop the insects from feeding,” Agnew says. “So, although they will cease to continue causing damage, it could take up to a few weeks for them to perish.”

**Apply insecticides unnecessarily.** Don't assume every brown area on the lawn is from grubs or other turf insects. “Whether using contact or systemic insecticides, avoid applying them when there is no target pest present,” Hamza says. 🍷

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.



Mike Agnew



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TIPSHEET

# How to scout, diagnose and treat summer patch

To effectively locate, diagnose and treat summer patch, lawn care professionals should consider these tips **BY CHRIS LEWIS | CONTRIBUTOR**

Generally, when lawn care operators (LCOs) first notice summer patch, they'll discover wilted, thinned circular areas that ultimately become large and yellow — resembling straw.

Often appearing sunken, the circular or irregular patches range in diameter from a few inches to several feet.

“If a non-host species — such as ryegrass — is present, frog-eye symptoms

may be observed, with healthy, non-host tissue in the center of the patch,” says Brian Aynardi, Ph.D., Northeast research scientist for PBI-Gordon Corp. “The pathogen begins infecting host plants when soil temperatures exceed 65 degrees Fahrenheit at the 2-inch depth in the spring. Yet symptoms aren't observed until significant heat or stress are detected.”

Aaron Hathaway, technical services



manager for Nufarm, advises keeping an eye out for dark brown roots, especially in fine fescue lawns and Kentucky bluegrass. He says older varieties of Kentucky bluegrass are more susceptible than some of the newer tolerant cultivars.

To reduce the risk of summer patch overgrowth, Aynardi and Hathaway offer the following tips.

### SCOUT FOR ROTTING ROOTS

Although summer patch is a difficult disease to scout for because its earliest

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## ← TOO LATE BY NOW

Experts say that when turf displays visible symptoms of summer patch, the damage is unfortunately already done.

symptoms occur in rhizomes, roots and stolons, it's not impossible. Professionals must look for dark (at times blackened), rotting rhizomes, roots and stolons.

"Unfortunately, much of the damage to the roots may have already occurred by this stage of symptoms," Hathaway says.

Aynardi agrees, adding that damage occurs during the infection process in spring and early summer.

"Since summer patch tends to reoccur in the same areas year after year, scouting is best utilized to plan for preventive applications with fungicides the following spring," he says.

## DIAGNOSE THROUGH VISUALIZATION

Hathaway recommends lawn management professionals look for weakened,

wilted or yellowed turf in patches, particularly in early summer.

"Also, look for other grass species or weedy grasses within these patches that are unaffected, a clue that you're dealing with a disease like summer patch that selectively affects turf species," he says.

Aynardi says LCOs should only confirm summer patch on turf through visible dark mycelia, which travels on the surface of the plant's rhizomes and roots.


"Diseased plants often have necrotic root systems that are black or brown in color. So a diagnosis should never be made by foliar symptoms alone," he explains.

## TREAT WITH FUNGICIDES

Timing is everything as LCOs prepare to apply fungicides. Curative applications in the summer can reduce the pathogen, but the damage has already occurred.

"Time the first fungicide application on lawns where summer patch has been seen in previous years when soil temperatures reach 65 degrees (at a 2-inch soil depth) for three consecutive days," Hathaway says. "A second application may be necessary a month after the first, or the first may be enough in some years."

Combination products with two modes of action, especially demethylation inhibitors and strobilurin fungicides, applied three to four times on 21- to 28-day intervals, often provide professionals the best summer patch control, according to Aynardi.

"Applications must be watered in immediately following treatment too, with sufficient irrigation — typically with greater than 0.125 inches." 

Chris Lewis reports on turf in the U.S. and is based in Michigan.

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# Out of the deep freeze

**Bret Corbett of Prime Source discusses how two biological nematicides are different from others**

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

**P**rim Source is the exclusive distributor of two biological nematicides, Zelto and Crescendo. Bret Corbett, director of technical services for Prime Source, sat down with LM to share the innovations in these biological products and why LCOs should pay attention.

## LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT: WHAT ARE SOME MISCONCEPTIONS LAWN CARE OPERATORS HAVE ABOUT BIOLOGICALS?

**BRET CORBETT:** There are a bunch of things that go into biologicals, and for years biologicals had to be stored and kept a certain way. It was really difficult for LCOs to optimize using them. You had to store them in a climate-controlled room or freezer because everything you were dealing with had a lot of living bacteria or a lot of fungi. You had to make sure that you kept whatever it was in that product alive for however long you were going to plan on using them. The shelf life was usually pretty short.

There are a bunch of misconceptions about biologicals, especially when it comes to the shelf life of the products. For years biologicals had to be stored a certain way because of the live bacteria and fungi that made up these products. It was difficult to utilize these products because of the short shelf life. For our

biological line, this isn't the case and we guarantee the same shelf life as any of our synthetic pesticides.

## LM: HOW DOES ZELTO/CRESCENDO WORK, AND IS THAT DIFFERENT THAN A TRADITIONAL NEMATICIDE?

**BC:** We work with Marrone Bio, we have an exclusive in the turf and ornamental market to supply and sell bionematicides Zelto and Crescendo. These products are different than any other biological in the market because they are heat-killed. Marrone Bio extracts this bacterium, heat kills it, and the extract from this fermentation process provides the active ingredient. The active ingredient is very similar to a synthetic pesticide, in the fact you can store it like most pesticides. We also guarantee the same shelf life of our biological line that we do with all of our pesticides.

Zelto and Crescendo can be used either as stand-alone products or in a tank mix. We have seen really good results when tank-mixed spraying once a month. However, we also see really good efficacy when mixed with synthetic pesticides. We like the fact that tank mixing or rotating in a program provides the end user with multiple modes of action. With a lot of synthetic chemistries, you're limited on the number of applications per year. These biologicals have no annual use limit or annual max rate.

## LM: WHAT SHOULD LCOs KNOW AND UNDERSTAND ABOUT USING BIOLOGICALS?

**BC:** Today's biologicals are different

than the biologicals of the past. Our biologicals are effective and we've got some really good data, especially for controlling nematodes. These are Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) certified and don't have an annual use rate. Another benefit is there is no reentry interval period. Biologicals provide multiple modes of action and you're getting plant health benefits. Most biologicals provide an increase in plant health to help them defend against different pests. Lastly, you can use these with other types of chemistries.

## LM: WHY IS A BIOLOGICAL NEMATICIDE A GOOD THING FOR THE SOIL, THE APPLICATOR AND THE LCO'S CLIENTS?

**BC:** Traditional pesticides can impact the microbes in the soil, but when you're using organic material, you have a boost in soil microbes. That's probably an indirect reason we have such strong plant health effects when using our biological products.

## LM: WHAT SHOULD LCOs EXPECT IN THE FUTURE WHEN IT COMES TO BIOLOGICAL PRODUCTS?

**BC:** Biologicals are a very fast and rapidly growing part of our business. We have a strong research development focus on incorporating our biologicals, as far as techniques as well as premixes with different pesticides. So whether it's a fungicide, insecticide or nematicide, we plan on putting some of these biologicals in the same tank. We're looking at more biologicals, as well, since we have a partnership with Marrone. Their R&D team continues to look into different compounds that we could incorporate into the turf market. 🌱



Bret Corbett



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## THE BIG ONE

# A modern homestead

BY ROB DIFRANCO  
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**LOCATION** Mequon, Wis.

**COMPANY** David J. Frank  
Landscape Contracting

**DETAILS** Located on a busy road, this property, consisting of four stylistically different homes, was a unique challenge for David J. Frank Landscape Contracting.

The company has maintained the property for seven years, providing year-round service for the homeowner. An avid gardener, the client has high standards that require care from multiple crews.

The property owner wanted each home to have unique colors and “lots of plant material,” according to Zach Lieven, associate landscape architect.

The property presented a few challenges, including heavy clay soil and several shaded areas where it was difficult to maintain the turf to the client’s standards. A Hydrowise irrigation control system helps address these challenges.

“(The property owner) is all about it being pristine, clean, colorful and very healthy looking at all times,” Lieven says. “And that’s a lot of work. It’s everything from spraying all of the crab apples to keeping the leaves from getting various fungal diseases and other bugs, to treating the roses so that Japanese beetles aren’t eating them.”

According to Lieven, the client pays upwards of \$35,000 a year in maintenance costs.




In addition to weekly mowing, the lawn is core aerated annually and is on a custom fertilization program. David J. Frank trims the spruce and birch trees on the property monthly to maintain their health.

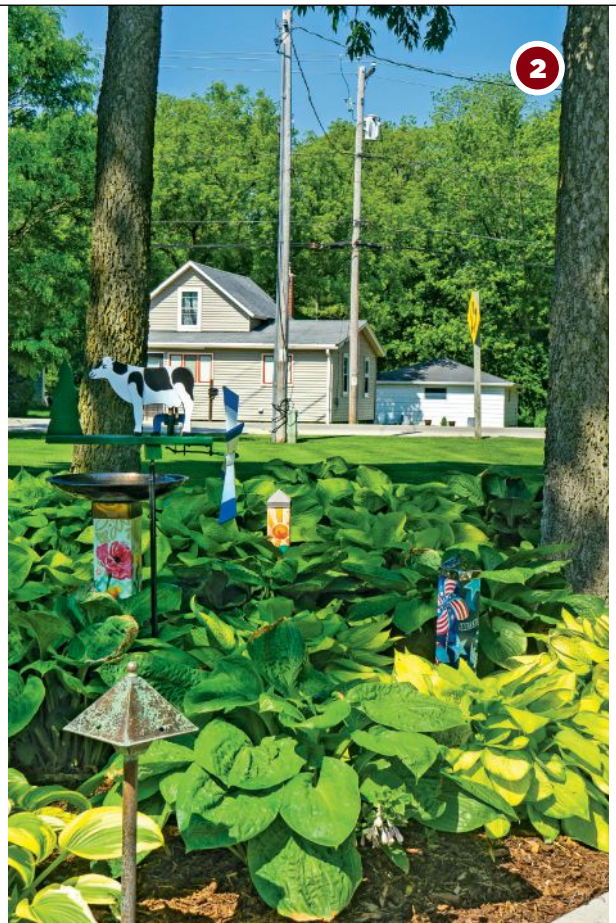
“It’s a seasonal business in Wisconsin, but we do work there year-round,” Lieven says. “It’s cool how you can be a seasonal business but still touch a property year-round and have an impact for (the property owner’s) family.”

David J. Frank provides multi-season service for the property,

handling snow removal and holiday decoration. Crews hand shovel the property’s walkways and decks with plastic shovels during the winter to avoid leaving marks on the pavement.

The property earned David J. Frank a gold award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals’ Awards of Excellence Program. 

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



**Captions** | **1.** Located next to a busy road, passers-by often slow down to take pictures of the manicured lawns and unique flower beds on the property. **2.** To prevent slug damage to the leaves, the company treats and waters Hosta gardens to keep the property looking its best. **3.** The classic Victorian-style home, surrounded by several hand pruned gardens, is known by locals as the “Pink House.” **4.** David J. Frank maintains roses on the property to ensure healthy and clean leaves and robust flowers. **5.** Each bed, with its mix of mature and newer plants, requires regular watering and scouting for pests. **6.** David J. Frank redefines garden bed edges and installs fresh hemlock mulch every spring. **7.** Crews also clean patio areas and walkways weekly to maintain a manicured and tidy appearance.

## MAINTAIN YOUR EDGE

# Must-have maintenance PPE

Stay safe on-site with these PPE recommendations from industry experts **BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

It can be easy for contractors to overlook safety and personal protective equipment (PPE) on general property maintenance sites.

But what might seem like simple jobs can still be dangerous. Contractors must take PPE seriously to avoid potential injuries.

“PPE for us is almost as important or more important than some of the tools we use,” says Johnny Morse, director of safety at Sperber Landscape Cos. in Calabasas, Calif., which provides landscape services for commercial clients throughout the U.S.

LM spoke with Morse, Bruce Allentuck, owner of Allentuck Landscape, Rockville, Md., Roger Phelps, corporate communications manager at Stihl and Sam Steel, Ed.D., safety adviser for the National Association of Land-

scape Professionals (NALP) about what makes PPE so important for general property maintenance.

### MUST-HAVES

Allentuck requires his employees to wear boots — preferably steel-toed — work gloves, earplugs and safety glasses.

Allentuck, whose company received a gold overall safety achievement from the NALP in 2021, prides himself on safety. According to Allentuck, the company’s record for safe days in a row is 1,100.

“We talk about it a lot, and we train for it a lot,” Allentuck says. “When I walk onto a job site, one of the first things I look for (is PPE). Who has the orange buds in their ears? Who has their glasses on?”

Allentuck Landscaping provides design/build installation services for its 100 percent residential clientele.

Eye protection is a must, according to Phelps. He also strongly recommends gloves, saying he has seen contractors absentmindedly grab the blades of a turned-off hedge trimmer, leading to a significant cut.

“That’s downtime off the job,” he says. “Do you want to be off the job for something silly like that? What’s your eyesight worth? Is it worth a few extra minutes and \$15 or whatever it is for a good pair of PPE glasses? I think so.”

Phelps also says it’s OK to go overboard with PPE, especially when working with potentially dangerous equipment like chainsaws.

“In my mind, the must-haves are steel-toed or chainsaw boots and chaps or chainsaw pants,” he says. “The technology is so good now that these chainsaw pants you can buy are almost as

comfortable as your regular pants, and frankly, you can wear them all the time.”

### CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

Hearing protection is also key, and contractors have some options with earplugs and earmuffs.

Sam Steel recommends earmuffs because they can last an entire season if cared for properly.

Whichever option the contractor selects, it’s important to ensure the Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) is high enough to get below the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s (OSHA) permissible exposure limit (PEL).

OSHA recommends wearing hearing protection in environments where the sound level exceeds 90 decibels (dBA).

For example, if a chainsaw produces 110 dBA, a worker would need hearing protection with an NRR of at least 20 to get to the PEL.

### ANSI STANDARDS

Workers should look for glasses that bare the American National Standards Institute Z87.1 mark. The stamp can commonly be found on the stem of the glasses — or occasionally on the lens itself.

There are over a dozen additional markings after the “87” on the stamp. For a pair of safety glasses marked Z87+D4, the 87+ means the glasses have a high-velocity impact rating. The D4 means the glasses protect from dust particles.

### NON-TRADITIONAL PPE

Allentuck also emphasizes the importance of non-traditional PPE or things like hats and long sleeves.

“Hats shade the face, and you think about potential skin cancer down the road,” he says. “Most of our staff prefer long-sleeved shirts to protect them from the sun, insects, poison ivy, etc. I think they’re important things.”

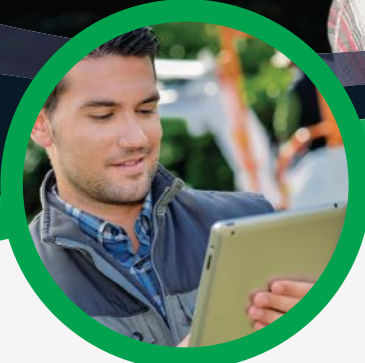
**SAFETY MATTERS**  
Even when performing simple tasks, safety should be at the top of a landscaper’s mind.



PHOTO: STIHL



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## PRODUCTS THAT WORK

### Mowers



#### ↑ Z400XS

COMPANY: Husqvarna

URL: Husqvarna.com

Husqvarna's Z400XS zero-turn mower series features improvements and increased comfort through a new suspension seat and transmission and an engine upgrade and second gas tank. The Z400XS Series pairs bigger Kawasaki engines and a Parker HTE series drive system that offers smooth, quiet operation and reduced heat buildup for extended durability and increased fuel efficiency. Dual fuel tanks extend run times, and the seat upgrade gives all-day comfort. The Z400 Series is backed by a four-year commercial warranty.

#### ↓ Z260

COMPANY: Dewalt

URL: Dewalt.com

The Dewalt Z260 zero-turn mower features a 24 hp Kawasaki FS engine. It also features a commercial-grade Hydro-Gear dual ZT 3400 transmission, a 60-inch fabricated deck, a heavy-duty 1.5-by-3-inch tubular steel frame, a comfortable high-back seat, an ultrawide foot pan and a four-year, 800-hour limited warranty.



#### ZENITH

COMPANY: Ariens

URL: Ariens.com

Take on multiple yards in optimal comfort with the Ariens Zenith. Featuring a commercial-style frame design, this zero-turn's fully welded tubular frame supports the load of the machine with strength and stability. Its durable, 10-gauge steel deck is designed with a 5.5-inch depth to create optimal airflow in all mowing conditions. Operator comfort is heightened with a plush, high-back seat featuring additional padding and an integrated seat isolator.



#### ↓ G ZERO-TURN MIDMOUNT

COMPANY: Grasshopper

URL: GrasshopperMower.com

Model 337G MidMount is powered by a 993 cc Vanguard V-twin, electronic-fuel-injected engine. Hydro-Gear ZT 5400 transmissions deliver a smooth response and feature 1 3/8-inch axles to handle side loads. Extra-deep 61- or 72-inch DuraMax decks provide a manicured cut. A shock-absorbing footrest and MultiPoint Suspension provide a vibration-free ride. The Premier Suspension seat adjusts to the operator's weight and body size. QuikAdjust Tilt dual, swing-out steering levers adapt to the operator's reach. A single-fill, 13-gallon fuel tank sets under the operator seat to create a low center of gravity for more traction and stability.







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Jeff Cartwright  
Owner, Cartwright Landscaping

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## BUSINESS BOOSTERS

# How to sell battery-powered services

Experts share how to approach selling battery-powered maintenance to your clients and what you need to know about working with battery-powered equipment

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

For Michael Reed, owner of Quiet Lawn in Little River, S.C., starting a battery-powered lawn maintenance company five years ago was a way to set his business apart in the competitive Myrtle Beach area.

Quiet Lawn offers residential mowing, fertilization, weed control, shrub trimming and holiday lighting.

Reed emphasizes the client experience when selling battery-powered equipment. He intentionally stayed away from selling the eco-friendly component of battery-powered maintenance, instead, he highlights how his equipment makes less noise and won't wake up the neighborhood in the morning.

"Most people when they hear eco-friendly and stuff like that, they see dollar signs," he says. "I didn't want to lead with that as my main marketing tactic."

Reed, along with Stephen Gault, owner of EcoMow in Dallas, Texas, and Denny Rochford, owner of a Clean Air Lawn Care franchise in Seattle, share approaches to selling battery-powered services.

## BETTER EXPERIENCE

Gault, too, highlights the experience when selling services to new clients. EcoMow offers battery-powered residential and commercial lawn care, landscape design/build, pest control and holiday lighting. Gault estimates only around 30 or 35 percent of his clients reach out to his business because of his zero-emission equipment. Most come to his business because of its reputation.

"The vast majority of these clients said, 'Eco-friendly is a plus, but reliability and dependability are most important when choosing a lawn care company,'" he says.

The pandemic helped fuel interest in EcoMow, Gault says.

"On the Nextdoor app, everybody was always complaining about the noise outside their window," he says. "So the phone just started blowing up."

Being in the Seattle area, Rochford says the ecological impact was a major driver in his purchase of the business.

"My favorite statement when talking to my customers is every time we take on a new yard or a new property, we improve the ecology of the Seattle area," he says.

## GETTING LEANER

Before the start of this season, Reed reconfigured his setups and crew. Instead of a two-person crew and a big box truck, he now uses one-person crews in a Prius with Ego handheld equipment and a Greenworks 25-inch push mower on a custom carrier.

While this change means crews use a push mower to service lawns,

there's less training for new employees, he says. Each vehicle covers around 10 to 15 lawns a day. Reed passes the savings on to his employees with higher hourly rates.

"We pay them a percentage of the revenue they produce," he says. "They might have been making \$13, \$14 or \$15 an hour before, and now they are averaging \$20 or sometimes higher."

Gault says he's focusing on the need for on-the-go charging for his Ego equipment, including Ego zero-turn mowers. Although he's had growing pains, he's happy with his setup now.

"We have solar panels on all of our vans and trailers," he says. "On those trailers, we have big lithium batteries, with power inverters."

## LESS MAINTENANCE


Gault says his employees are happier at the end of the day, thanks to the low noise of the equipment.

"They don't have to wear giant ear-phones all day long when the equipment is running," he says. "There's less vibration in the equipment because it's all used with brushless motors. The overall quality of life for our employees is greater than our counterparts using gas."

Rochford says he's had employees come to work for him from landscape companies that use gas-powered equipment because of a better experience.

"They're lighter," he says. "At the end of the day, you don't have to breathe those fumes."

Another bonus: Reed says his battery-powered equipment needs about 10 percent of the maintenance that traditional gas-powered equipment would.

"You don't have any belts, any pulleys, any filters, any gas, any oil," he says. "You just pop a battery in and pull the trigger and it goes. You don't have these cold starts. You don't have all these issues that you have with gas equipment." 



Stephen Gault, owner of EcoMow, says his employees enjoy using battery-powered equipment because of the low noise emitted.



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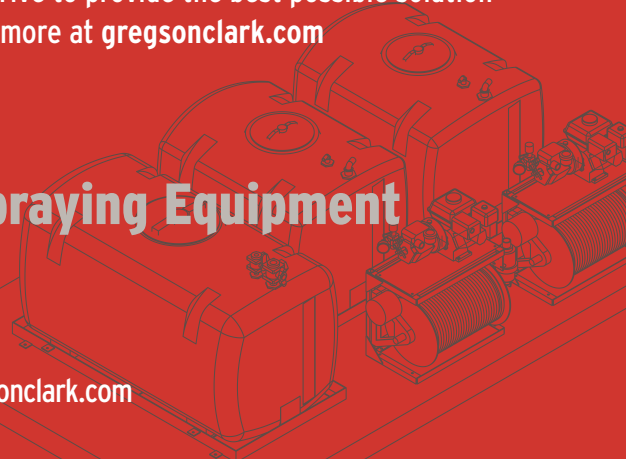


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## HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

## Living great by the lake

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

**LOCATION** Elkhart Lake, Wis.

**COMPANY** Landmark Landscapes

**DETAILS** The client approached Landmark Landscapes to transform a rundown cottage on Elkhart Lake into a timeless summer home. The client set an ambitious timeline of Labor Day to Memorial Day the next year for completion. Crews needed to get most of the materials staged on the site before winter.

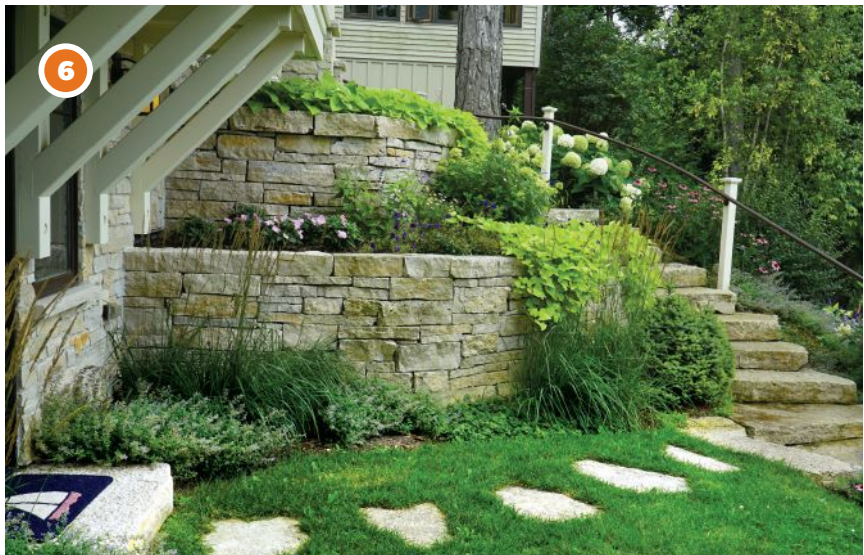
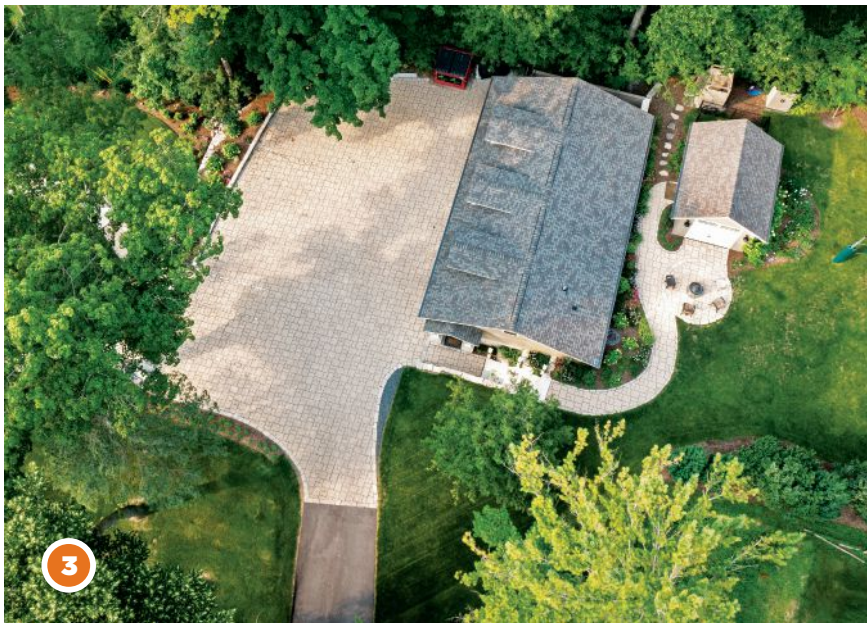
Landmark Landscapes needed to navigate Elkhart Lake village's ordinances, says Patrick Hughes, marketing manager for Landmark Landscapes. Elkhart Lake monitored the project's surfaces to limit the amount of impervious surface area of a project. When Landmark Landscapes opted for Unilock Thornbury permeable pavers, this allowed the client to expand the original footprint of the home.

Landmark Landscapes installed a large parking area that would occasionally stage tents for large parties. Other details of note include the installation of rain gardens that connect to the permeable pavers to reclaim all rainwater that falls on the property. Hughes says it was very important to the client to protect Elkhart Lake and keep the project's impact to a minimum.

"Elkhart Lake and the natural environment were really the driver of this project from the beginning, along with making a great space for the family to relax and entertain," he says.

Landmark Landscapes won a gold award from the 2021 National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program. 🏆

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



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LANDMARK LANDSCAPES



2



4



5



7



8

**Captions** | 1. The client desired a natural and inviting place for the family to gather, relax and make memories. 2. Limestone quarried 20 miles from the project site serves as a hillside structure. Limestone in the planting beds provides repetition and rhythm. A drainage system in the walls transports collected water to rain gardens. Patios and walkways feature permeable pavers. 3. This driveway and parking area feature Unilock Thornbury permeable pavers. Landmark Landscapes worked with the Village of Elkhart Lake to utilize permeable pavers to expand the footprint of the home. The parking area serves as an occasional staging ground for tents for large parties. 4. The back of the property overlooks Elkhart Lake. Beachfront storage holds the family's flotation devices and safety vests. 5. This photo, taken before the restoration of the cottage and landscape, provides perspective on the dramatic changes to the property. 6. The natural limestone walls and steps blend seamlessly from the home to the landscape to create an organic transition. 7. Outfall pipes connect to the property's retaining walls to deposit stormwater into rain gardens for filtration and prevent runoff directly into the lake. The reclaimed water recharges the aquifers below ground. 8. Landmark Landscapes designed the natural stone pillars, steps and patio to create a natural carefree scene.

INSTALLATION IRON

# How compact utility tractors can help you save time and money

Experts from compact utility tractor manufacturers share why the machine could be an excellent addition to your lineup **BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

**C**ompact utility tractors (CUTs) are invaluable tools for landscape professionals. The durability, efficiency and versatility are why Greg Bibee, director of strategic sales at Kioti and Mark Davey, market manager at John Deere, call them “Swiss Army knives.”

“It’s an awesome addition to a landscape professional’s arsenal,” Bibee says. “While the tractor itself may not be a specialized machine, if you think of it as a tool carrier, there are hundreds of jobs you can do just by swapping out the implements, instead of having a specialized machine for all of these jobs.”



Greg Bibee

## THE SPICE OF LIFE

There are dozens of attachments one can add to a CUT, making it the ultimate multitool for a contractor.

“You can use a rear blade, scraper or front loader to perform some leveling work,” says Bibee. “You can use a loader to move soil, mulch or gravel around a worksite if you’re doing hardscapes or

something like that.

Contractors also can use CUTs as mowers with a mower deck attachment. These machines also can aid with snow removal, with some manufacturers offering front-mount and rear snowblower attachments.

Bibee says the variety of attachments makes CUTs efficient investments, potentially saving landscape professionals from having to purchase several pieces of specialty equipment.

“You’ve got one machine with multiple attachments that you can swap out on-site,” he says. “It allows you to take on a lot of those jobs and do it far more efficiently. A compact tractor is a really good

option for landscape professionals that have a wide variety of things they need to be able to do, depending on the job.”

## TIMESAVERS

The number of attachments presents a new issue for compact tractor owners — time spent switching between them.

The team at John Deere has devel-

oped an answer: the Quik-Knect system.

“(Quik-Knect) allows you to quickly attach the power take-off (PTO) without having the hassle that’s typically involved and pulling back to locking collar and aligning the splines,” Davey says. “We pride ourselves on being able to add and detach implements and attachments quickly.”

The system utilizes separate connectors for the PTO shaft and the attachment itself.

Deere’s compact tractors also have drive-over auto attach features for attachments like a mower deck. Users line up their CUTs with the attachment and drive over it, and the attachment automatically connects to the PTO.



Mark Davey

## TECHNOLOGICALLY SOUND

John Deere also offers a way for users to keep track of maintenance schedules in its 2 through 4 Series tractors with its Tractor Plus app. The app requires the CUT to have a smart connector.

“You take a picture of your serial number and add (the tractor) to your profile,” Davey says. “Then you’re able to keep up with that tractor. So, you’d be able to see the engine hours that were last reported on it and any maintenance that’s coming up.”

The app shows users a list of parts needed for maintenance tasks, and then allows users to order the parts from their phone for pickup at a local dealership.

“It just makes it really handy to be connected to your tractor and really know how to keep it in tip-top shape,” Davey says. 📱







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## RECOMMENDER

### What type of **hardscape or landscape edging** do you use and why?



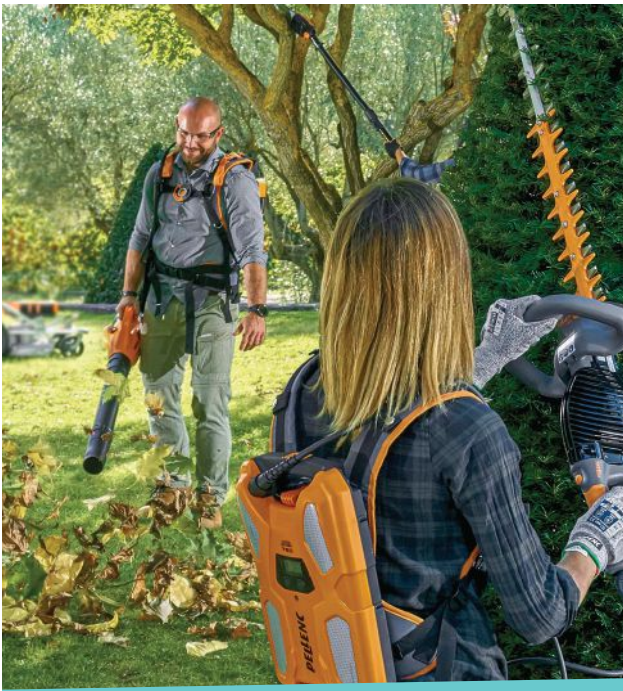
Joshua Jones of Mass Hardscapes says he likes Pave Tool Innovators' Quick-E-Hybrid Edging for its strength and ease of installation.

**TOM BRYANT**  
SEABREEZE PROPERTY SERVICES  
PORTLAND, MAINE



We like to use natural products wherever possible. For high-end residential, we try to use a lot of stone edging and things like that to secure pavers, brick patios or walkways. The everyday product that we use is called Snap Edge paver edging out of Canada. It's 100 percent low profile and super easy to use and is easily accessible here. A lot of our local vendors carry it. And the best part about it is that it allows us to make really cool curves and bends, inside-outside curves and corners. It has a double-walled construction. I can snip pieces out of it to open it up and create really tight bends. It secures and works easily. It's pretty much our day-to-day edging that we use for most of our hardscape patios and walkways.

PHOTO: JOSHUA JONES



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MASS HARDSCAPES  
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We started using Pave Tool Innovators' Quick-E-Hybrid Edging because instead of the regular spikes, it has V spikes with a lot more surface area to add strength to the edging. We just found that the hybrid edging is much cleaner. It installs quicker, too. It's basically like an aluminum L-bracket in 8-foot-long pieces. One bundle is 200 linear feet; and you can carry that with one hand. The hybrid edging works on traditional base systems and an open-graded base system and you can put traditional steel spikes in it. They go in at a 45-degree angle, so when frost tries to push the edging up it doesn't move. It is costly compared to buying concrete, but you can justify that added cost by having a much better product, something that's stronger and will help your space stay beautiful like the day it was finished.

**JOSH FONTANEZ**  
Forni Landscaping Arts  
Lakewood, Ohio

We adopted the laying pavers over concrete method probably five years ago. So being on concrete, if it's a uniformed product like Unilock's Umbriano or Beacon Hill, we don't use any edging, we just glue it. SRW is our go-to adhesive. If it's a product over concrete that has some variations to it like wet-cast products from Unilock, we use Perma-Edge. It's a mixture, mortar-type substance that you press along the outer edge of the patio. If it's a small patio that's going over the base, we use your standard eight-foot section snap edging with 10-inch pins. I know some guys will be wary about gluing borders. I'm coming up on almost a decade on one that I glued with no pop or movement. I think I did my first patio 18 years ago, so I have a wide range of experience. I've tried almost everything and I found it works well, for us at least.

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## WATER WORLD

### Millions of gallons of water saved

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

**LOCATION** Alameda, Calif.


**COMPANY** Serpico Landscaping

**DETAILS** To conserve water and reduce overspray on houses and sidewalks, Serpico Landscaping installed more than 40,000 square feet of in-line drip irrigation in the narrow planter strips at the Sandpiper Cove Homeowners' Association. The team also installed an ETwater Smart Controller to ensure consistent conservation, says Peter Novak, president of Serpico Landscaping.

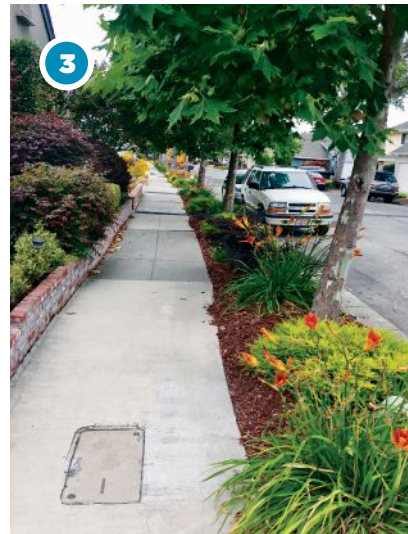
These moves reduced irrigation water usage from more than 5 million gallons to 2.4 million gallons annually. The new system slashed water costs by more than 45 percent — not including service, seismic and pumping costs. The net result for the project was 60 percent less in water expenses annually.

“When a contractor can produce that kind of result for their client, the client will have a more positive view toward other enhancement opportunities, especially ones that will help increase property values,” Novak says.

The extensive project required some creative solutions. Serpico created a parking safety plan for the areas under renovation. That included a phased no parking plan where crews communicated about the areas impacted by the project to community members who used street parking. Novak says the project took four weeks to complete and provided lasting benefits.

“As the cost of water service has risen exponentially over the last several years, these savings will compound over the life of the system and not only pay for itself over time via the savings,” Novak says. 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.



**Captions | 1.** The client needed to find ways to reduce irrigation overspray in this drought-prone area. **2.** The Serpico team controlled street parking to prevent any disruption from the system renovations. **3.** Conversion to drip irrigation from standard sprayheads reduced irrigation maintenance costs by 43 percent annually. **4.** Serpico Landscaping installed Netafim in-line drip irrigation in the narrow planters. **5.** After crews installed the new in-line drip system, all of the bare dirt in the planter areas received 3 inches of eco-friendly mulch.

PHOTOS: SERPICO LANDSCAPING



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## IRRIGATION TECH

# Solve the problem, not the symptom

## Conserve water and time with irrigation controllers and software

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

In parts of the U.S., water availability is a significant issue.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom wants to ban watering “decorative grass” which frustrates Richard Restuccia, vice president of water management solutions at Jain Irrigation.

“We are treating a symptom by doing that, not the problem,” he says. “It’s the way we water, not what we’re watering.”

Jain and other irrigation manufacturers attempt to tackle that problem with the newest irrigation controllers. *LM* spoke with several of those companies about their latest and greatest controllers and controller software, asking why an irrigation contractor should consider using them.

**Jain Irrigation:** Jain designed its new 4G LTE Jain ETWater SmartBox to take advantage of the 4G and 5G cellular networks. The SmartBox connects to Jain’s Unity smart irrigation management system. With a capacity of up to 48 stations, the controller includes connections for rain sensors,



booster pumps, master valves and flow sensors.

“All of the computing is done in the cloud,” Restuccia says. “You can’t put too much computing power into a controller and put it on someone’s wall without charging an exorbitant price for it. Because all of that communication is done in the cloud, the upgrade in the box really is the upgrade of the computing device.”

**Rain Bird:** The EPS-LX-IVM from Rain Bird introduces “smart valves” to the irrigation world. The two-wire system eliminates the need for a decoder on a valve with an Integrated Valve Module (IVM). The IVM reduces the number of wire splices by half, allowing for two-way communication between the valve and the controller, according to Amar Thiraviam, group manager at Rain Bird.

“All of the valves, for lack of a better term, are ‘dumb valves,’” he says. “We’ve removed the decoder from the entire system, and we’ve created a smart valve ... (which allows for) direct communication between the controller and the valve. The valve can communicate with the controller without the controller asking first. The decoder could only



respond when the controller asked something of it.”

**Hunter Industries:** Using the Hydrowise software, the Hunter X2 controller succeeds the X-Core controller, with the option to add Wi-Fi for remote management and advanced water savings. The X2 maintains a dial-based programming style offered by the X-Core.

The controller’s Wi-Firemote, known as a WAND, allows for online management with alerts for controller status and faulty wiring. Users can also access the controller through a phone if Wi-Fi is unavailable. The Hydrowise software allows users to set schedules — with automatic adjustments based on local weather data — and manage an unlimited number of controllers with real-time status updates.



**Smart Rain:** Smart Rain’s SmartController is compatible with flow, rain and wireless moisture sensors. The device connects 48 zones, two flow sensors and two master valves, saving users 30 to 50 percent in irrigation costs. The controller waters each zone to its specific needs before moving to the next area.

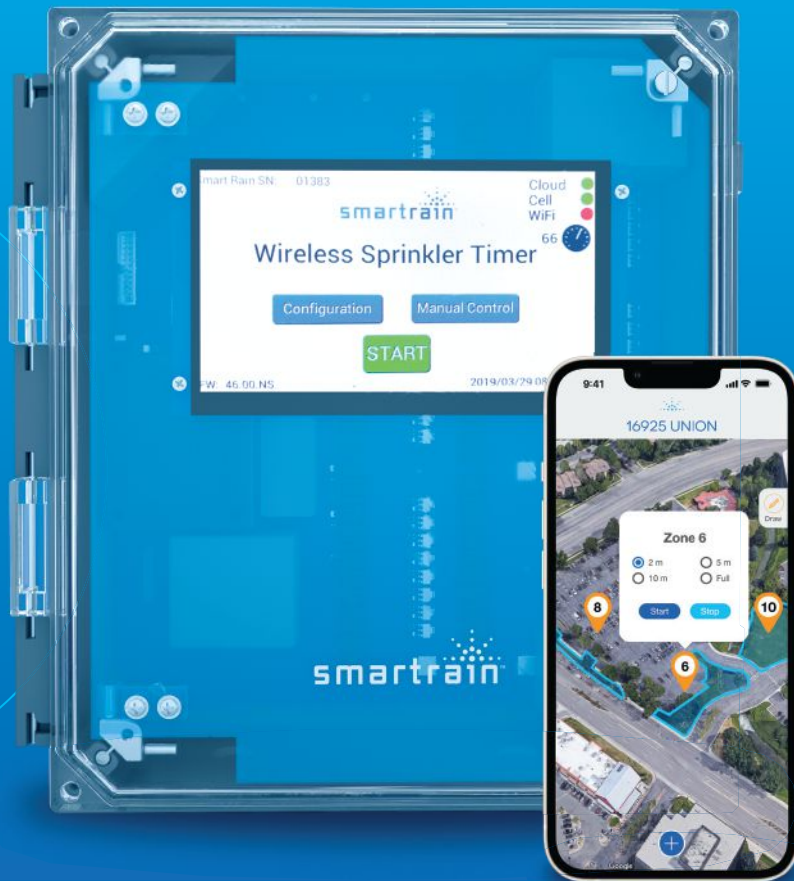
The SmartController connects to the internet using either Wi-Fi or a cellular network and users can access the SmartController through Smart Rain’s app. 📱





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# FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

## Bill Melzer

**OWNER**  
**PINNACLE MAINTENANCE SYSTEMS**  
**MESA, ARIZ.**

### 1 How did you get into the industry?

My career was mostly in retail and importing items for retailers to sell. After years of extensive travel, being around the world and gone all the time, I decided it was time to pull back and stay closer to my family. I took a job for my church; along with that, I didn't make a lot of money. So I started doing a little commercial landscaping on the side. I didn't have a clue what I was doing, but I learned. Then I got a few people working for me. I retired about five years ago, but I've kept doing the landscape business to stay active. It's a good, steady business and it keeps me in shape. We're about 70 percent commercial, 30 percent residential, primarily maintenance. We do some small enhancement projects as well.

### 2 What is something you wish you could change about the industry?

We are always asked to bid on things. I always ask, "Why?" if people are just looking for a lower price. I look at the property, and if it's well maintained, I won't even bid on it. They're just looking for someone to do it for a few dollars cheaper when the contract is up. Establish a relationship; it's better for you and the customer because it's based on trust. They know they can count on you, and you can count on them.

### 3 What trends are you seeing in Arizona?

The Phoenix area is well managed, water-wise. Saving water is going to be paramount, on the commercial side in particular. On the residential side, we're seeing a lot of artificial grass installations here. That changes things. People think if they put that in, they don't have to do anything. They still have plants and shrubs. That grass doesn't last forever. It's a growing market here — it's growing like crazy. And there are more people working from

home now. They look out in the backyard and they say, "This could look better." But they don't want to do it. I'm amazed at some of the high-end homes we take care of, and they have teenage kids. I mowed the lawn for my dad. I learned how to work. But people today want someone else to maintain their property. As long as the economy continues to be good, they're going to pay for it.

### 4 What is your favorite tool to get the job done?

The older I get, the more I like to sit on the riding mowers. We use Walker mowers — those are the best tools in the world. There's less fatigue; they're amazing machines. A lot of the landscape we have here is xeriscape. When you have an opportunity for a small property with grass, it looks so much better. My second favorite tool is a 40-inch Echo hedge trimmer. It trims faster and better. Things grow here 10 months out of the year, so you're constantly trimming things back. The best equipment is well worth the investment.

### 5 How big is your family?

I have nine children, 23 grandchildren and so far two great-grandchildren. How about that? We also raised four of my sister-in-law's children; they were killed 40 years ago in a plane crash. Their four children joined our family. Now you can see why I wanted to spend more time with my family. With nine kids, they vary greatly. But they all get along and I'm so happy with that. They'll jump to help each other in a heartbeat. 🍷



#### BEST ADVICE

The most important thing in any business is to build a relationship with your customer and your employees. It's about people who trust you — I learned that at a young age. Your reputation is all you have.

PHOTO: RYAN HIGGENBOTTOM



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**BY KEVIN KEHOE**

The author is founder of The Aspire Software Co. Reach him at [kevin.kehoe@youraspire.com](mailto:kevin.kehoe@youraspire.com).

# Thanks for the memories

**T**his will be my final column. I hate to go, but my reasoning is simple. Over the years, I've written my columns based on my experiences "in the trenches." In other words, I wrote about what I did with my clients and relayed that to you as real-world, practical advice. Since I'm no longer in the trenches, I feel like I should step aside for others who are.

## ONE CALL CHANGED EVERYTHING

I've been asked how I got into this industry in the first place. Thirty years ago, I mailed out 100 letters to the directors of national associations as a part of a marketing campaign. Yes, we actually mailed things in those days. The letter, in brief, said: "I speak on these business topics, and if you ever need a speaker to fill in on short notice, I'm your guy." I got one response. It was from Debra Holder, then director of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America, one of the predecessors to the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP). That one call changed my life.

Since that call from Debra, I've consulted for 300 companies, written more than 200 articles, and in 2013 co-founded Aspire Software. Along the way, I amassed 8 million frequent flier miles and 7,000 nights in hotels. That I won't miss so much. What I'll miss is being in the trenches with the salt-of-the-earth people who populate our industry. But I will keep the lifelong friends I've made.

I won't be leaving the industry entirely. I will stay involved

with NALP, funding scholarships and events like the National Collegiate Landscape Competition because I believe the single greatest challenge to the vibrancy and profitability of our industry is the training and development of middle managers. It's an even bigger challenge than the availability of crew members.

Where will I spend my time in retirement? Right now, my health is my greatest challenge. I'm entering the eighth year of my battle with cancer. Dealing with it is time-consuming. I am currently enrolled in a cutting-edge immunotherapy trial in which my wife and I have high hopes. In addition, I will be busy working on the Kehoe Family Foundation, a philanthropic enterprise that involves my nephews and nieces in multigenerational giving. I will also be at work on a new career as an author, having just published my first book, "One Hit Wonder."



Kevin Kehoe with his daughter, Julia, who joined Aspire as business development representative at a 2019 Aspire event.

## TAKE A CHANCE

So, as one door closes, another opens. Thirty years ago, a door opened, and I walked through it. Wonderful things happen when you take a chance. Of course, you have to work hard if you want to be able to look back on whatever you chose to do to be able to say, "I did well."

For those of you not around the industry three decades ago, it was a much different place then. Now it is bigger, more professional and an exciting place to make a career and for owners to make real money. The possibilities are for the taking.

In closing, do I have any advice? Yes, be learning all the time. Know that if you want to lead, you must first know how to follow. Dare to risk big by understanding that the path to success is best traveled with humility born out of an understanding of human nature. You must have purpose, values and rules.

My purpose has not wavered much over the years, and that is to leave any place I go better because I was there. My values, too, have been consistent, if not always perfectly practiced. If I do something, I want to do it with excellence, service, sacrifice, generosity, integrity and responsibility.

And as for the rules I developed to deal with human nature? Well, you'll just have to read my book for those. I will say this, though: To master your dealings with others, you must first master yourself. And that can be the work of a lifetime.

Thanks for reading my stuff over the past few decades. I wish you success in your future endeavors. 🙏

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BY BOB MANN

The author is the director of state and local government relations for the National Association of Landscape Professionals. Reach him at [Bob@landscapeprofessionals.org](mailto:Bob@landscapeprofessionals.org).

# It's all about being in the right place at the right time

**A** funny thing happened on the way to the integrated pest management (IPM) conference. Coincidence? Serendipity? Who knows? All I know is that I found myself in the right place at the right time.

About six months ago, I began the planning process for attending the International IPM Symposium in Denver. With a title like that, I was sure to be the dumbest person in the room, but it's important to stay current with horticultural research so I can speak knowledgeably when advocating for the green industry. I was looking forward to my trip out west.

Meanwhile, at NALP, we began tracking a piece of legislation in the Colorado Senate, a resurrected bill from before the pandemic that would have far-reaching consequences for our industry. Senate Bill 22-131 sought to — among other things — prohibit the use of neonicotinoid insecticides for nonagricultural uses and to repeal state preemption of the pesticide regulation. The reports we received from various sources told us this bill had an excellent chance of passage.

The neonics have become a lightning rod for anti-pesticide activism,

despite the mitigations we're anticipating from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency when it finalizes the reregistration of these products later this year. We continue to see legislation seeking to ban or restrict neonics in many states. State preemption essentially means that the ability to regulate pesticides is limited to the federal government, working in cooperation with the state government, to the exclusion of cities and towns. The theory here is that the safeguards at these two levels of government are sufficient.

## READYING THE TROOPS

As the day of my trip approached, our legislation-tracking software informed us that the Colorado Senate had scheduled a hearing on bill 22-131, but upon learning of the interest in the bill, they decided to push the hearing back a week. All of a sudden, I realized that I was going to be in Denver one block away from the Capitol the day of the hearing. Toss a business suit into the luggage!

Before we get to hearing day, there's lots of work to do, not the least of which is rallying troops to attend the hearing to testify. A few emails and Zoom meetings later, we had a solid group of NALP members that live and work in Colorado that could speak directly to the impact of the legislation on their businesses.

Finding consensus with our allies is also important.

**MISSION ACCOMPLISHED**  
Colorado Senate bill 22-131 failed by a vote of 6-1.

We reached out to our state association partners — not only in the landscape industries but in others such as golf — to gauge where they stand and how we can work together to bring cohesion to our efforts. We found considerable common ground in opposing this legislation.

On the day of the hearing, we learned that the bill's sponsor, state Sen. Jessie Danielson, was offering an amendment she believed would blunt much of the opposition. She struck language in the bill that would impose further regulation on pesticide use near school buildings and another section that would fund a study of non-neonicotinoid treated corn seed. She also carved out agricultural uses of neonicotinoids, which is a curious tactic if your goal is to reduce their use since the overwhelming portion of neonic use is in agriculture.

## TESTIFYING AGAINST BAD POLICY

When the hearing started at 1:30 p.m., Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee Chair, Sen. Kerry Donovan announced there were 90 witnesses scheduled to testify. Then began nine-and-a-half hours of testimony from folks all over Colorado (and some from far beyond) both for and against the bill.

The hearing went by quickly, as Senator Donovan proved to be an engaging chairwoman who made everyone feel comfortable and included in her committee, including a number of eloquent children who spoke.

For me, the most interesting aspect of the hearing was the willingness of those whose uses were carved out in the amendment who still showed



PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB MANN

up to adamantly oppose the passage of the bill. Each time a farmer would state opposition, the bill sponsor would reply that they were not affected by the bill. And each time, the farmer would reply to the effect, “I realize that. I am opposed to the bill because it is bad policy.”

NALP members were articulate ambassadors for our industry, describing our commitment to environmental stewardship and to the adoption of best management practices and IPM. Many testified for the first time. They learned they had nothing to fear. Speaking to a senate committee is a walk in the park compared to dealing with your customers.

As the testimony finally came to a close, senators remarked on their views on the bill and what they had heard from witnesses. One senator, Senator Rhonda Fields, participated remotely.

For much of the hearing, she had her camera turned off. It almost seemed as she was mailing it in, not actually paying attention to the proceedings.

That turned out not to be the case at all. When it was her turn to speak, she let loose with a vigorous summation that proved the power of standing up and being heard by your elected officials. She explained that going into the hearing, she was very much expecting to vote for the bill. But after listening to the witnesses tell their stories, she was persuaded otherwise.

The bill was rejected on a 6-1 vote, with only the bill’s sponsor, Sen. Danielson, voting in the affirmative. A huge win for our friends in Colorado.

#### PERSONAL MATTERS

What does this vote mean, and why is it important outside of Colorado? As the old saying goes, you don’t make

any of the shots you do not take. If you show up and make yourself heard using sound arguments and personal stories, you can indeed persuade people. And you don’t need to be a professional speaker either — just willing to take the time to defend our industry.

The policies articulated in this legislation will show up again in other bills in other states. We must remain vigilant to meet these challenges. Colorado shows us that we can succeed.

What about me, you ask? Well, in all the excitement and preparation, I never actually attended the IPM conference. I did sign up to testify, but after waiting for almost the entire hearing for my name to be called, I had to bug out to catch a flight back to Boston. As soon as I left, Sen. Donovan called my name. Oh, well. It’s the result that matters and the result couldn’t have been better. 🇺🇸







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**BY JEFFREY SCOTT**

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

# 3 must-do strategies to win in the coming decade

**T**he landscape business world is changing fast, and with those changes, I have identified three keys to success this year and beyond.

**1 Figure out your “technology stack.”** For programmers, a “tech stack” refers to the behind-the-scenes technology to run an app. But for you as a landscape business leader, a tech stack means all the apps and software you use to run your business.

There are so many great options out there. You can’t afford to stick with what you know, but you also can’t afford to add on every new app you discover.

You need a balanced approach and a tech-savvy team of leaders to pull this off. It starts with the right operating software and extends beyond that to every part of your business.

If you are personally not tech savvy, you can counter that by hiring people who are. An affinity for technology should become one of the criteria you use for any new leadership hire in your firm. Change or die, as the saying goes. Build a team that embraces technology, and you will thrive and prosper.

**2 Professionalize your firm.** With the trend of private equity money buying up firms in our industry, increasingly more competitors will be run (or overseen) by what I call “professional money.” It’s the professionalizing of our industry, and there is no going back.

So, take a close look at how the most professional firms in our industry run. You can follow them on LinkedIn to get a clue.



Look at how they treat their employees, specifically with regard to human resources, training, benefits and rewards.

Check out my podcast, The Ultimate Landscape CEO, for a recent interview with Keith Freeman, it will open your eyes to what professional benefits look like.

Professional firms invest in both their people and the latest equipment and technology. Pay attention to how they invest in their culture as well.

You can’t rely on your past successes and expect to attract and retain the best. All great employees in your city can choose where to work. Your firm must attract them by building a “Destination Company” environment.

(You can download a free copy of my book *Become a Destination Company* at [JeffreyScott.biz/FreeBook/](http://JeffreyScott.biz/FreeBook/))

**3 Take risks.** To maintain a unique advantage in the marketplace, be willing to think and act outside the box. Here are three examples from my peer group members who are leaders in our industry:

● **Kevin from Ohio** rolls out the red carpet for all his employees who leave his firm, even if he fires them.

He has an off-boarding process that includes having them attend a final team meeting where they are celebrated. Treating them as well on their way out as when they came on board greatly increases the chances of these laborers and foremen returning to his firm within three years, all the wiser and ready to embrace his culture. He doesn’t accept everyone back, just the ones he wants.

● **Marcus from Tennessee** hires an overabundance of admin staff to support his managers and people in the field. He hires freelancers from overseas, so he can fully staff all the admin duties in his office and give his managers assistants. To date, he has an overseas freelance staff of 18, including his accounting team, at roughly one-seventh the cost of local labor. This approach allows him to hire even more team members locally and grow his business and the local economy.

● **Matt from Colorado** has brought on a full-time videographer to follow him and his staff around to document their work and to promote it on social media. He took half his marketing budget and dedicated it to this one hire, and it has created a flow of employee and client leads — more than he can ever make use of.

Operating outside the box is where you move ahead of the competition and set the standards for the industry. To succeed in this coming decade, combine the right technology with leaders who can implement it, supported by a professional and compelling work culture, enhanced with new techniques that are outside the box. 🏆

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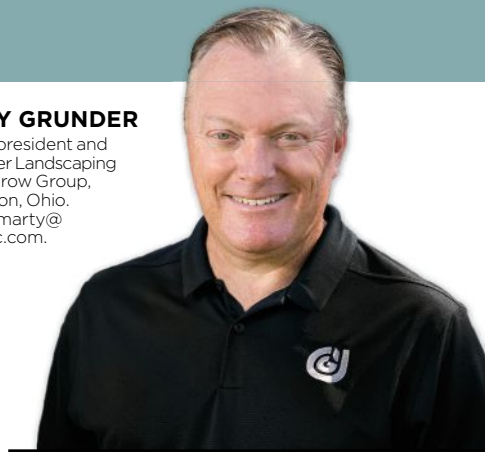


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# GROW WITH GRUNDER

BY MARTY GRUNDER

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## Why we feel like we're building the plane and flying it too

**E**ver heard the phrase: "Build the plane while flying it?" That's often what it feels like when we're implementing changes at a small business, and it becomes even more acute as the busy season gets into full swing. We're making changes and improving our businesses, all while managing client expectations on when their spring clean-up will happen, shuffling the schedule because it rained all day and training new team members on how we work.

As the 100 Days of Victory really heat up, don't lose sight of your goals.

At GROW! 2022 in February, Taylor Milliken, CEO of Milosi, taught a session on change management. His tips for implementing changes are so helpful as we all work through our own changes. Here they are, along with other insights we gleaned at GROW!

### Run the change through a filter.

The changes you make need to align with your core values and your company's goals. At Milosi, the team makes sure everything they do aligns with their core purpose: "Let's Grow Beautiful Together." They ask what the impact will be on their clients and the whole team before deciding to implement a change.

**Overcome fear.** People fear change because of the unknown associated with it. Your team members may resist change because they fear losing their title, pay, freedom or responsibilities they enjoy. You can combat this fear by showing your people what's in it for them.

**“Be a cheerleader for the changes you know need to happen and support your team through them no matter your position in the company.”**

Reassure them that these changes will benefit them and their peers.

**Keep both client satisfaction and profitability in mind.** In a different session, Landscape Workshop CFO Christianna Denelsbeck Rudder shared a story about her dad's part-time job at a hardware store after he retired. She went to see him at work and used the restroom. After noticing the soap dispenser was empty, she let him know that someone should refill it. He told her the store is watching its numbers, and they can't refill the soap dispenser because it will be an added cost.

The store had put such a focus on profitability, it lost sight of customer service. In everything Landscape Workshop does, the company tries to balance improving profitability with having happy customers. When implementing changes at your own company, make sure you aren't sacrificing profitability or customer satisfaction.

**Never stop looking for ways to improve.** When we stop learning, we stop growing. We can't do things the way we always have and expect to get different results. If a challenge stumps you at your business, or you're looking for ideas to spark your creativity, get

around people and companies who inspire you.

With that in mind, I'm so excited for this year's Field Trip. In partnership with the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP), we'll be touring R.P. Marzilli in Medford, Mass. Their projects are impressive, and I know I'll leave that event with ideas for how we can operate better at Grunder Landscaping and with design ideas to delight our clients. Sign up to join me there: [LandscapeProfessionals.org/FieldTrip](https://LandscapeProfessionals.org/FieldTrip).

Prioritize the changes you want to make, run them through the filter, get buy-in, keep profitability and your customers top of mind and never, ever, stop learning and growing. Be a cheerleader for the changes you know need to happen and support your team through them no matter your position in the company.

It'll be worth it in the long run. I'll talk to you next month. 🎧

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