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EXCLUSIVE REPORT

**2022 STATE
OF THE
INDUSTRY**

PATH TO SUCCESS

Readers say despite some challenges,
the future is bright for the green industry



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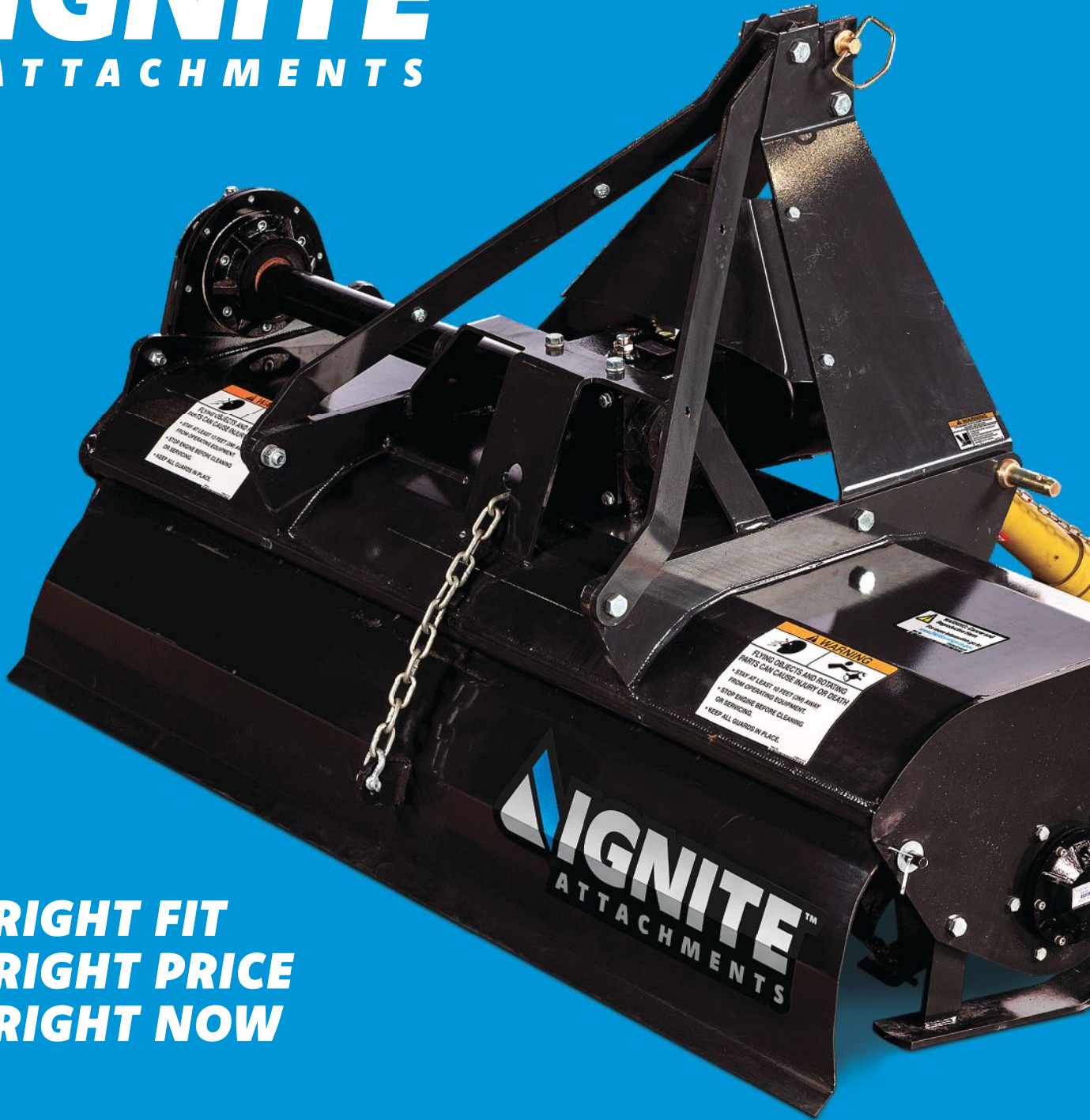
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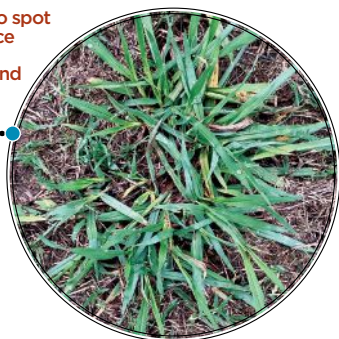
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Calling all irrigation contractors!

Did your operation recently complete a noteworthy irrigation installation? If so, we want to hear about it! Drop Editor Christina Herrick a line at cherrick@northcoastmedia.net and your project might be featured in an upcoming issue of LM!

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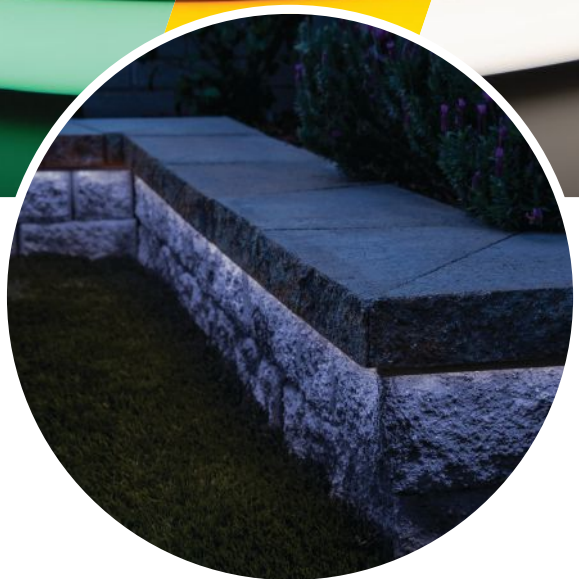
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SETH JONES
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Finishing the year strong

I just plopped into my office chair after a long day of travel. I have one more business trip this year (Pinehurst, N.C.), then I'm heading to Cleveland. Cleveland, AKA 'The Land,' is the home of North Coast Media, the parent company of *Landscape Management* magazine and our sister publications, *Golfdom* and *Pest Management Professional* (among others.)

I'll tell you why I'm going to Cleveland: to celebrate the conclusion of a fantastic year with my co-workers.

I'll get to my tour of this issue in a moment, but before that, I want to recognize the hard work my team put in this year. If you get this magazine, you know the effort we put in to make 12 worthwhile issues a year. And hopefully, you get our weekly e-newsletter, *LMDirect!*, which deployed like clockwork for 52 Thursdays this year. And hopefully, along the way this year, you saw some of our social media posts, our YouTube videos, attended our educational seminars at Equip Expo, attended our three-day *LM* Growth Summit in Orlando or attended one of our webinars.

Whew! These things don't come together on their own, and for the last several weeks — since attending the first Elevate, really — it feels like we've been running on a treadmill set to a 7-minute mile. (Which would be a big deal to me. To some of my co-workers, no sweat.)

I'd like to point you to the names listed on page 2, our masthead. I'm the one who gets to write this column every month, and my name is in the 'from' field

“For the last several weeks — since attending the first Elevate, really — it feels like we've been running on a treadmill set to a 7-minute mile.”

on the e-newsletter, but these are the people who get the job done every month: Christina, Tracie, Joey, Rob, Courtney, Kendra, Danielle, Pete, Marisa, Bill, Craig, Jake, Dan, Chloe, Karen, Michelle, Allison, Bobbi and Antoinette. Thank you for another incredible year — perhaps our best yet. We shared breaking news, exclusive stories, unveiled our annual *LM150* list and made it look good along the way. Well done!

So, team ... what will we do in 2023? I can't wait to find out.

On to this issue ...

Our annual State of the Industry Report, sponsored by our friends at Vanguard, begins on page 11. There is a lot to take in with the report as we look at the current state of the industry, what it might look like in 10 years and some of the challenges facing the industry today.

We pull this feature together by first surveying, then interviewing our readers. We once again had a strong response from our readership in support of our survey. As promised, I would like to thank a few randomly selected readers for their participation by sending them \$100 gift cards. Andrew Moberly, senior

irrigation manager at Yellowstone Landscape; John Langton, vice president of Langton Group and Joshua S. Reed, supervisor of Landscape Maintenance, you all have gift cards coming your way. And Scotty Kelley, owner of Superior Lawns of Western Oklahoma — I'd like to buy your crew lunch this upcoming spring. I'll be in touch soon; maybe I can even do it in person.

Also in this issue, we share our Battery-Powered Equipment Guide.

We're going deeper down the electric battery rabbit hole this issue and asking two tough questions: 1) how do you keep these batteries charged, and 2) how is the performance of the different batteries judged? You can find this special section inserted in the middle of the magazine.

Finally, this issue also features short articles on battling dallisgrass (page 22); compact equipment attachments (page 54); landscaping trends that can save water (page 59) and I have my 5 Questions interview with Mike Morin of Morin Turf in Sioux City, Iowa. Mike has quite the recollection when it comes to working in this industry. How many guys do you know who remember the economic downturn of 1973? That Q&A appears on page 60.

Once again, thank you to my team for another great year of *Landscape Management* magazine. And thank you for your readership. 🍷



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EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD



MORE ONLINE

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

What's one way contractors can prepare for 2023 and potential economic uncertainty?

"I would take a hard look at marketing and sales to make sure you've got plenty of work in the pipeline. Conservation of cash is paramount in this environment. Getting out of debt is a worthwhile endeavor, too, in these uncertain times."



Landscape Professionals

Richard Bare

Arbor-Nomics Turf
Norcross, Ga.

Troy Clogg

Troy Clogg Landscape Associates
Wixom, Mich.

Pam Dooley

Plants Creative Landscapes
Decatur, Ga.

Paul Fraynd

Sun Valley Landscaping
Omaha, Neb.

Mike Haynes

The Loving Companies
Charlotte, N.C.

Luke Henry

ProScape Lawn &
Landscaping Services
Marion, Ohio

Chris Joyce

Joyce Landscaping
Cape Cod, Mass.

Aaron Katerberg

Grapids Irrigation
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Jerry McKay

McKay Landscape Lighting
Omaha, Neb.

Bryan Stolz

Winterberry Landscape
& Garden Center
Southington, Conn.

Greg Winchel

Winchel Irrigation
Grandville, Mich.

Industry Consultants

Marty Grunder

The Grow Group
Dayton, Ohio

Phil Harwood

Tamarisk Business Advisors
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Jeffrey Scott

Jeffrey Scott Consulting
New Orleans, La.

"Make a plan, work the plan ... be diligent about selling and closing work as far into the future as possible."

Having work as far out into the future is a great way to soften a downturn and give you time to adjust more as the economy moves along."

"Keep your service quality and customer service strong. People will still spend plenty of money on their outdoors, but the pie may be smaller. By giving your clients a great experience and being a market leader, there will still be a lot of business to be had."

"2023 might be the year to launch customer loyalty and referral programs!"

These will deliver greater value to your existing customers and strengthen relationships."

"Increase recurring contract revenue and decrease overhead. This provides a strong base from which to choose when and where to capitalize on uncertain times to gain market share."

"Tighten up all your expenses, watch your pipeline and backlog closely and make adjustments quickly. There's going

to be a downturn; we just don't know when it will be or how severe it will be. The ones who win make cuts fast and are watching their numbers closely."



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

LM GALLERY

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

1 That's not Bob Barker or Drew Carey! At the Price Isn't Right panel at Equip Expo, **LM** Editor-in-Chief Seth Jones (foreground) took the opportunity to get a selfie with the panel and the attendees. Jones was joined on stage by (left to right) Nada Duna, Gothic Landscape; Barb Stropko, New Desert Gallery; Steve Steele, Bruce Wilson and Co.; and Sam Gembel, Atlas Outdoor.

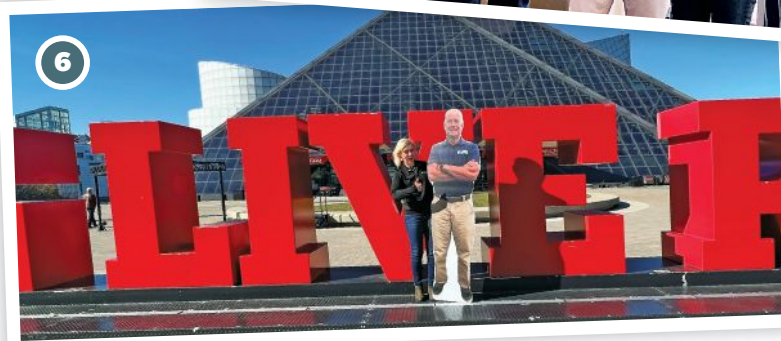
2 Hands-on learning **LM** associate editor Rob DiFranco took a shot at operating Kubota's KX030-4 compact excavator during the company's Kubota Connect dealer event at the Gaylord Texan Resort in Grapevine, Texas.

3 Automatic, for the people This foursome dropped so many long putts during the **LM** Growth Summit golf scramble that they borrowed an R.E.M. album name as the theme of their round. Left to right are Jones; Alan Hollen, The Andersons (in back); Andy Zuniga, Grass-Roots Turf, and Bob McElhannon, FieldRoutes.

4 Project EverGreen visits Kansas City To help celebrate their 75th anniversary, PBI-Gordon, along with the help from Project EverGreen and local industry professionals, worked to beautify a local Kansas City park. (Left to right) Tim Demerath, VP of sales, PBI-Gordon; Cindy Code, executive director, Project EverGreen; and Larry Ryan, founder and president, Ryan Lawn and Tree, take a break from the work for a photo.

5 VIP Visitor *Landscape Management's* headquarters in downtown Cleveland had a special visitor recently: a cardboard cutout of Ruppert Landscape's CEO, Craig Ruppert. Look for a story on Cardboard Craig in an upcoming issue. Here's Craig with the **LM** team including (left to right) Kevin Stoltzman, Dan Hannan, Jake Goodman, Rob DiFranco, Craig MacGregor, Christina Herrick and Allison Blong.

6 Let's rock! Herrick made sure to take Cardboard Craig to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame during his sightseeing tour of Cleveland.



An inside look at Davey Tree's new addition to its Ohio headquarters

BY ROB DIFRANCO
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The Davey Tree Expert Co., No. 3 on the 2022 *LM*150 list, debuted a new third-wing addition to its Kent, Ohio, headquarters. The company gave *Landscape Management* a behind-the-scenes look at the 38,400-square-foot expansion.

Chris Bast, vice president and treasurer, said the new wing doubles the size of the facility and will bring 70 new jobs to Kent. The company currently employs 435 at its headquarters and 908 in Northeast Ohio.

The company's next project is a renovation of its other two wings, built in 1985. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the company said it performed minor upgrades to the original two wings, but this new wing will allow Davey to update them fully.



Davey Tree commissioned a local artist to turn an oak tree into this 18-foot table.



Davey Tree's new third wing doubles the size of its Kent, Ohio, headquarters.

USING FEEDBACK

Molly Senter, director of property for Davey, told *LM* that at the start of the expansion process, the company reached out to employees with a needs assessment survey.

Many of the employees' requests appear in the new third wing, including:

- Improved access to natural lighting;
- More open collaboration space;
- A fitness center in the basement of the facility; and
- Adjustable-height desks.

"This third wing is meant to be a representation of our employees' preferred work environment," Senter said. "The third wing exemplifies those key takeaways so the building can best serve our current and future employees."

COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

A small forest of trees previously sat on the land where the third wing now sits.


As a part of its sustainability efforts, the company salvaged the wood from trees it removed from the construction site to create several tables, including



Davey's third wing addition features several green walls, including this one which houses live moss.

an 18-foot table made from a single oak tree. The salvaged wood also features heavily in walls throughout the wing.

"Sustainability is one of Davey's values, so it was important that we found a home for this wood in our new addition," said Dan Herms, vice president of research and development for the Davey Institute.

Davey designed the facility with other sustainable features, Senter said, including large windows that allow for more natural light and power-saving utilities. 



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PROGRESSIVE
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Bland Landscaping adds The Byrd's Group

Bland Landscaping Co., No. 61 on the 2022 *LM150* list, recently acquired The Byrd's Group of Charlotte, N.C. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

Bland Landscaping is a full-service provider of design/build, enhancements and maintenance services for commercial and homeowner associations. Bobby W. Byrd founded The Byrd's Group in 1980. It is a regional landscape management firm offering landscape maintenance, enhancements and irrigation for commercial properties, industrial sites, municipalities, multifamily communities and homeowners associations.

Bland Landscaping President and CEO Kurt Bland said the addition of The Byrd's Group aids in the company's plans for regional expansion. Bland and his brother, Matt, the company's CFO and COO, are second-generation owners of Bland Landscaping.

BrightView expands presence in Myrtle Beach

No. 1 on the 2022 *LM150* list, BrightView Holdings of Blue Bell, Pa., acquired Apex Land Group, a full-service commercial landscaping company in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

Conall O'Brien founded Apex Land Group in 2019. Apex Land Group specializes in commercial landscape management, irrigation and new construction landscape installation.

"BrightView's acquisition of Apex Land Group is another step in our long-term strategy of growing our business and strengthening our position as the country's leading landscaping company," said Andrew Masterman, president and

CEO of BrightView. "With its strong maintenance portfolio and focus on delivering quality service, Conall has established Apex as one of Myrtle Beach's premier landscaping services providers. We look forward to welcoming Apex team members to the BrightView family and working in concert with them to expand our market services and opportunities."

This acquisition is one of several moves BrightView made this year, including the addition of Inter-mountain Plantings of Boise; SGS Hawaii of Wailuku; TDE Group of Detroit; and Performance Landscapes, of Honolulu, Hawaii.

R.G.S. Landscape of Georgia joins Landscape Workshop

No. 39 on the 2022 *LM150* list, Landscape Workshop of Birmingham, Ala., recently acquired the landscape operations of R.G.S. Landscape of Dallas, Ga. R.G.S. Landscape provides landscape design and maintenance services for commercial and residential clients. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

Royce Day, owner of R.G.S. Landscape, will join Landscape Workshop as general manager for Landscape Workshop's Northwest Atlanta operations. Landscape Workshop said Tim Christie will continue to oversee its Atlanta-area operations. R.G.S. Landscape employees can join the Landscape Workshop team with this move.

The addition of R.G.S. Landscape follows other Landscape Workshop acquisitions, including Bailey's Lawn Care and Landscaping of Knoxville, Tenn.; Southern Scape of Madison, Ala.; Green-Scape of Memphis; and A Cut Above Landscape Management of Columbus, Ga.



Landscape business owner sentenced to eight months for tax evasion

A Bethel, Conn., man who owned a landscaping company was sentenced to eight months in prison for tax evasion, according to the U.S. Attorney's office.

Timothy Draper, who owns and operates T&M Lawn & Landscape, according to court documents and statements made in court failed to deposit checks into business accounts for his company. This resulted in underreported business receipts of approximately \$1.8 million on his tax returns from 2015 to 2017, the U.S. Attorney's office said.

He also paid personal expenses out of business accounts and did not report them as personal income, officials said. In total, the underreporting of income resulted in more than \$500,000 in underpaid income tax for the three years.

In April, Draper plead guilty to one count of tax evasion. The U.S. Attorney's office said he paid back more than \$1.1 million in back taxes, interest and penalty payments. The court also ordered him to pay a \$75,000 fine during his sentencing.

Draper, who is released on bond, is set to report to prison on Jan. 10, 2023, according to the U.S. Attorney's office.

A SUPPLEMENT TO



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**STATE
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PATH TO SUCCESS

**Readers say despite some challenges,
the future is bright for the green industry**

Word from our sponsor P. 13

2022 In the Rearview P. 14

Outlook on 2023 P. 16

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[WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR]

Excited for what's to come

Even with the challenges of the last year, I am excited by what's to come for the industry as we prepare for 2023. I'm also proud that Vanguard is sponsoring *Landscape Management's* 2022 State of the Industry Report.

Now more than ever, landscape crews are relying on their equipment to deliver powerful performance with maximum efficiency. As a premier power solutions provider for manufacturers of professional landscape equipment, Vanguard is committed to delivering quality products that are designed with our customers' productivity and bottom line in mind. We work closely with them to understand their pain points and offer solutions that help them succeed on the job site and in their business ventures.

This collaborative approach has led to innovations like the Vanguard Oil Guard System, which provides the industry's only 500-hour oil change interval. From conversations with our customers, we also learned how combining electronic fuel injection (EFI) and electronic throttle control (ETC) technologies can offer a dynamic solution that addresses emissions concerns and delivers smooth, consistent power in any condition.

Vanguard is also — literally — leading the charge when it comes to electrification as more OEMs realize the many benefits of battery power, including minimizing maintenance intervals, reducing emissions and boosting productivity. Drawing on years of industry research, engineering expertise and customer input, Vanguard has developed a robust line of battery packs that are engineered to meet the demanding needs of commercial turf applications.



Our new 1.5kWh swappable battery pack is the latest development in lithium-ion battery technology from Briggs & Stratton. The battery's design allows customers to swiftly swap freshly charged packs from application to application, reducing downtime and increasing productivity. Vanguard battery packs are ruggedly designed to deliver maximum protection and withstand the harshest conditions. Our battery and other low-emission solutions empower our customers and landscapers to confidently take on ever-changing industry expectations.

Wherever the industry takes us, Briggs & Stratton and Vanguard will be there to offer unparalleled power and support to our OEM partners and their customers. Please enjoy the insights gathered in this year's State of the Industry Report and know that Vanguard is applying them to solve the industry's next great challenges.

BRAD HANNA

Vice president, marketing and product management for the power division, Briggs & Stratton

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PATH TO SUCCESS

It is a wild time to be in the landscape and lawn care business, but experts remain bullish on the future

BY THE *LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT* STAFF

During the Supply Chain Hacks seminar at Equip Expo 2022, panelists were asked for their forecast for 2023. How much longer would there be supply chain interruptions? How will the market react to inflation? Will the industry keep chugging along like it has these last few years?

"If we had a really good answer to what you're asking, a perfect answer?" George Kinkead, president of Turfco, responded, "We probably wouldn't be on this panel, because we'd be in the investment banking world."

While the future is difficult to predict, one thing we learned after asking dozens of experts — including boots-on-the-ground landscape and lawn care business owners, industry suppliers and consultants — though the market is volatile, the need and appreciation for the industry remains high.

"There are many bright spots (for the industry)," says Marty Grunder, CEO of The Grow Group and Grunder Landscaping Co. "The brightest one is the impact that landscaping makes on our lives. The work we do is respected and appreciated and that's a great thing."

PART 1:

2022 IN THE REARVIEW

BY SETH JONES | *LM* EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

In late 2022, *LM* columnist Greg Herring, CEO of the Herring Group, an operational and strategic finance consultancy, released his annual Benchmark Report. Herring described it as a bit of good news and a bit of bad news. His report is based on in-depth feedback from 150 companies in the industry.

"On the good side, the average company growth rate was about 20 percent, which is almost identical (to 2021)," Herring says. "So what that means is the average company is going to double in size in 3 1/2 years."

The bad news came, not unexpectedly, in the average profit column.

"Companies that were greater than 10 percent profitable weren't as profitable as they were last year," Herring says. "The average last year was a 6.1 percent profit margin. This year was a 4.9 percent profit margin. The other bit of bad news was that there were more companies that lost money this year. Last year, about 15 percent of respondents lost money. This year, about 21 percent of companies lost money."

Herring adds fuel costs and inflation are two of the reasons that

2022 turned out to be a challenging year.

"We had some clients implement fuel surcharges and that's a big help, but it is hard to respond quickly and get it all organized and communicated," he says.

Herring will dive deeper into this report in the next two issues of *Landscape Management*.

TAKING SMART RISKS

Thankfully, gas prices retreated somewhat after peaking in June. But considering how volatile the price and availability of basic needs to run a business were, like fertilizer or heavy equipment, it was paramount to maintain open communication with clients.

"The biggest challenge facing landscape businesses will be transparency, keeping clients informed about supplies, the increased costs and managing potential misinformation," says Jeff Korhan, a Duct Tape Marketing-certified consultant and *LM* columnist. "In times like this it's easy to pass along the increased costs of doing business because there will be little resistance

from those who need to get the work done. Those who feel they were not treated fairly will have a lot to say about that when conditions change.”

Adds Herring, companies that proactively raised prices set themselves on a successful path for 2023.

“Many companies have adjusted their pricing to reflect current and future inflation,” Herring says.

Fellow *LM* columnist Ben Gandy, principal with Envisor Consulting, describes the 2022 economy as “volatile.” He foresees a similar economy in 2023, which might not all be bad.

“A bright spot is fuel costs are coming down,” Gandy says. “A recessionary period might mean the labor market loosens and inflation slows. The level of profitability and professionalism is higher than it’s ever been. It’s a good time to take a smart risk.”

In regard to smart risk, Bob Mann, senior director of techni-

“MANY COMPANIES HAVE ADJUSTED THEIR PRICING TO REFLECT CURRENT AND FUTURE INFLATION. THESE COMPANIES ARE SET UP FOR A GREAT 2023.”

— GREG HERRING, CEO OF THE HERRING GROUP



cal and regulatory affairs for the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) and an *LM* columnist, mentions the increased attention venture capitalists have given the green industry.

“As this trend continues, it provides incentives for new players to enter the industry,” Mann says. “For some employees, the consolidation that comes with mergers and acquisitions can be painful in the short term, but many new businesses are propagated by former employees of acquired firms. This provides new opportunities for industry growth not only for the new entrepreneurs but also for industry professionals looking to further their growth.”

STICK TO THE PLAN

Over the last 10 years, *LM* has asked readers to describe the state of the market. Choices were “Very or relatively healthy,” “flat” and “slightly or significantly down.”

Last year 78 percent of readers said the industry was healthy. This year that number dipped 10 points to 68 percent. 2018 was the highest score over the last 10 years, when a whopping 92 percent of respondents said the industry was healthy.

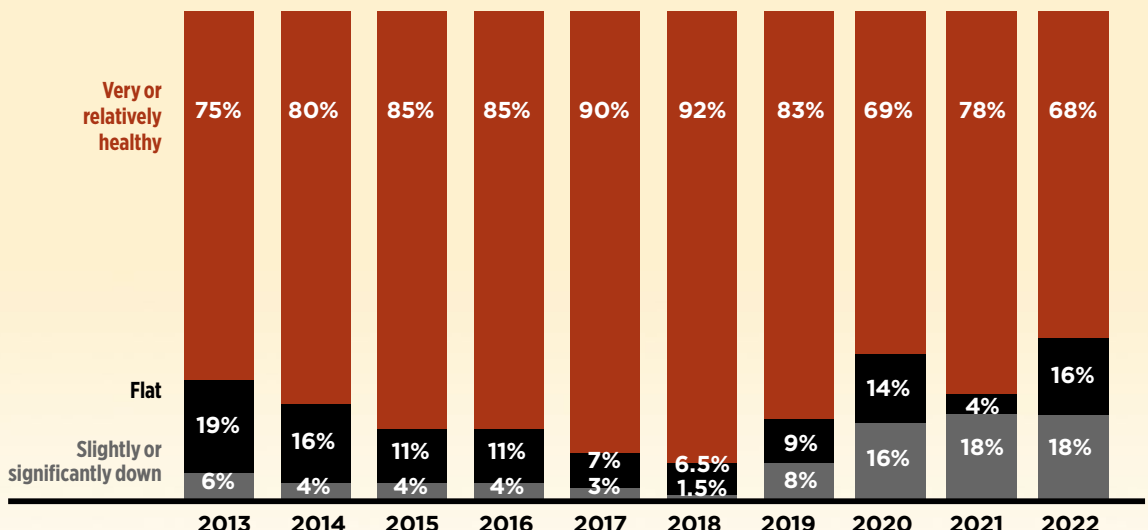
Gandy says he isn’t surprised to see this number dip. He believes readers are preparing for more challenges in 2023, and are savvier than ever when it comes to overcoming those obstacles that can hinder a successful operation.

“The economy is likely to stay volatile. Domestic and international politics are contentious, driving uncertainty. Labor is likely to remain scarce,” Gandy says. “Invest energy into your human resource plans and stay away from low-margin work; labor is too hard to come by. Develop a strategic plan and stick to it.”

Continued on page 16

STILL FEELING FINE

How landscape professionals describe the state of the market.



*Continued from page 15***PART 2:****OUTLOOK ON 2023**

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

TD Bank surveyed equipment dealers and distributors at the 2022 Equip Expo to get a pulse on the industry. Mike Rittler, head of retail card services at TD Bank says findings from the survey show mixed expectations from dealers. Rittler says, though, dealers are optimistic about 2023. Supply chain and economic uncertainty are at the top of dealers' minds. Only 12 percent of dealers expect to see a decrease in sales in 2023.

Rittler acknowledges that as interest rates increase, unemployment has remained level, so he says it's a challenge to get a true read on how 2023 will play out.

"When you talk about state of the industry and outlook, I think the word murky is a great word," he says. "There's indicators all over the place right now. As long as the state of the consumer confidence stays strong, then we should feel pretty confident in the demand that will be created by that. And that's, to me, the key."

The Conference Board, a nonprofit think tank, releases monthly data on consumer attitudes, buying intentions, expectations for inflation and more. For the latest consumer confidence numbers, visit [Conference-Board.org/data/consumerdata.cfm](https://www.conference-board.org/data/consumerdata.cfm).

NOT SLOWING DOWN

While supply chain issues, water woes and inflation plagued the industry in 2022, Tony Nasrallah of Ground Works Land Design in Westlake, Ohio, says his motto for 2023 is "not slowing down."

Ground Works offers maintenance and design/build services for high-end residential and commercial clients and commercial snow and ice management. Nasrallah recently opened an artificial turf wholesale franchise, Purchase Green Cleveland. As Ground Works saw an uptick in interest from clients, he says he wanted to get ahead of the curve.

"I'm going to keep growing this business and I'm not going to stop," he says. "We're still in high demand.

We're already booking up for next year and I'm talking to people for the following year, as well."

He expects a little bit of a slowdown in demand with high interest rates going into 2023, but he also sees opportunities as more homeowners opt to stay put and remodel.

"I don't see any crazy change in the market that we haven't had to deal with already, and I feel good about next year," he says. "There are always ups and downs, especially in this landscaping business. You just have to muscle through and maintain a positive attitude and bright view for the future."

Nasrallah, who started Ground Works in 2009 in the middle of the Great Recession, is bullish about 2023.

"I'm not scared of next year," he says. "I'll keep my ears open and pay attention to what's going on, but I'm not slowing down and that's exactly why I made the decision to double down and add Purchase Green Cleveland to our family of businesses. I encourage anyone in my position to take full advantage of all the great opportunities that are available."

SEEING THE POTENTIAL

David McCary also sees a lot of potential. He recently purchased Seattle Sustainable Landscapes, a full-service commercial and residential maintenance and residential design/build operation. McCary left a job in the tech sector. He says with the influx of young software engineers to the Seattle area, there's ample opportunity for a sustainably-minded landscaping operation.

As for some of the challenges the green industry faces — labor, supply chain and inflation — McCary takes a more big-picture approach. McCary takes a big-picture approach thanks to his experience outside the green industry.

"There's labor shortages everywhere," he says. "Problems create opportunities. ... It's hard for customer to get people to consistently show up on their property, which

means there's an opportunity for somebody like me if I can do a good job to fill in that gap and create a phenomenal experience for my customer."

For example, McCary, 34, says young Seattleites want more automatic buying options. With his background in technology, he sees ample opportunity

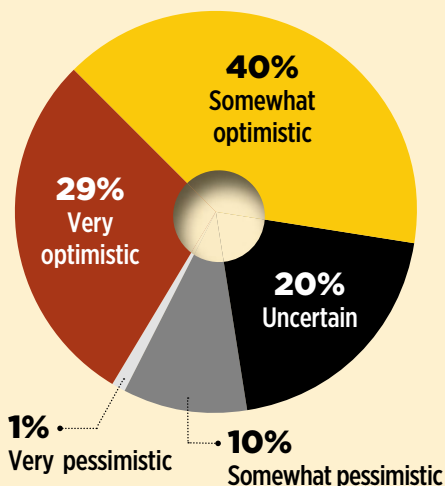
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"I'M GOING TO KEEP GROWING THIS BUSINESS AND I'M NOT GOING TO STOP. WE'RE STILL IN HIGH DEMAND. WE'RE ALREADY BOOKING UP FOR NEXT YEAR AND I'M TALKING TO PEOPLE FOR THE FOLLOWING YEAR, AS WELL."

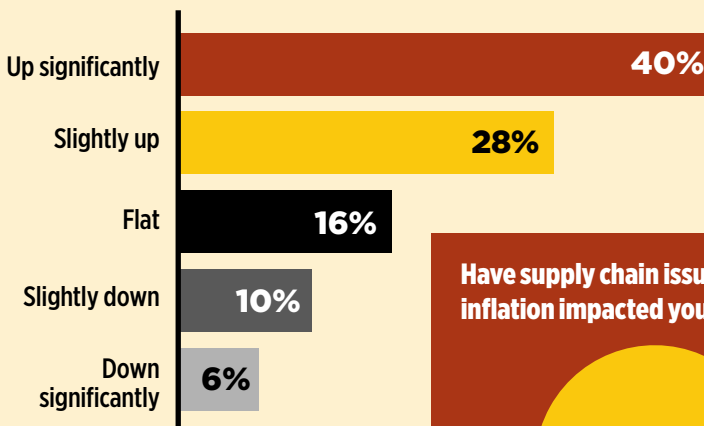
— TONY NASRALLAH, GROUND WORKS LAND DESIGN, WESTLAKE, OHIO



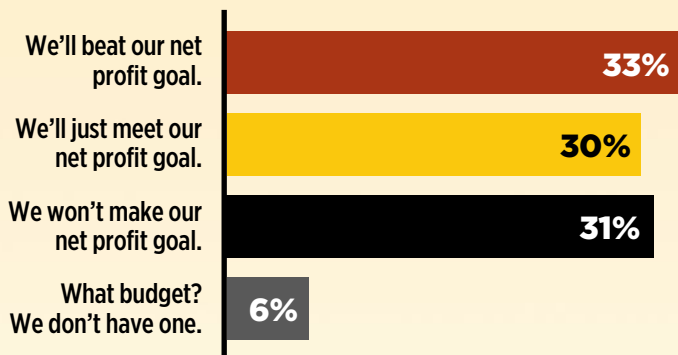
What's your business outlook for next year?



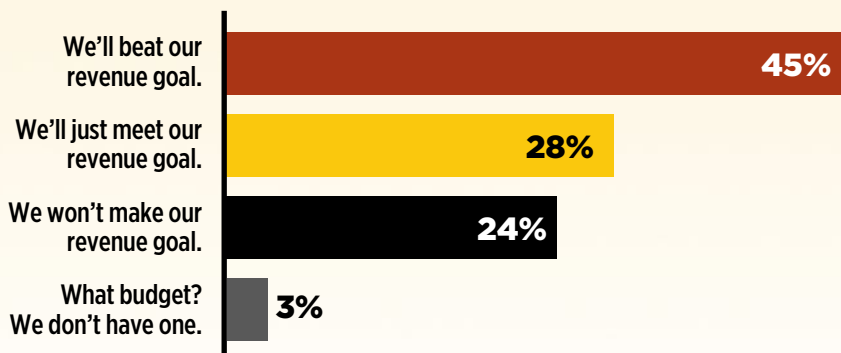
Describe the current state of the landscape and lawn care service market in your region.



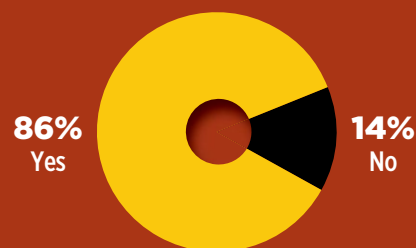
How does your expected 2022 net profit compare to what you budgeted for the year?



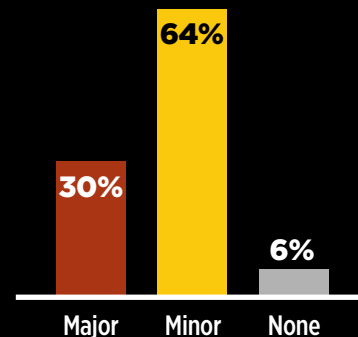
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Have supply chain issues and inflation impacted your business?



What impact do you see supply chain and product availability playing in 2023?



Has a worker shortage impacted your business?





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Continued from page 16

to offer a tech-based subscription option for services.

"I think the industry can do a better job of being modern in terms of the consumer experience," he says. "My generation wants to have an app, wants to be able to interact with something online, not necessarily talk to a person, especially on the maintenance side. So you can do something online and automated, via whatever messaging platform, communication platform, customer service platform."

McCary also sees some noise restrictions or gas-powered engine bans for the future of Seattle, much like in California.

"It's a bright spot that we get to play a role in that," he says. His operation offers services utilizing battery-powered equipment and sustainably sourced landscape materials.

McCary says 2023 presents a lot of unknowns, including talk of recession and high interest rates. These factors will likely lead clients to reconsider existing landscape contracts, he says.

Looking into 2023, McCary has one thing planned: automation. He's planning to streamline the processes and systems he inherited from the company's previous owner, add CRM software and automate some communication with clients.

"We do want to grow and I believe there's going to be an opportunity — even if the industry is down — for me to grow without a doubt. There'll be opportunities for us to take some of the business from our competitors and just communicate our story more clearly to consumers."

IRRIGATION OUTLOOK

Max "Aqua Max" Moreno, vice president of water conservation with Harvest Landscape Enterprises in Anaheim, Calif., says 2023 is all about water management. He expects more and more landscape operations to focus on water management.

Moreno says he's currently working with Harvest Landscape's more than 400 clients to create 2023 water management plans. The cost of water continues to go up.

"Going in to 2023, it is one of those things where the operating costs are increasing and the water resources are dwindling," he says. "Putting together the budgets and allocations is very key for a lot of the landscape companies."

He says technology is going to play a bigger role with a dwindling workforce in the green industry.

"We're heavily investing into training them, educating them, because having a more efficient labor force is going to help us to reduce some of those costs," he says.

Training needs to be a major focus in 2023, he says. He spends time as a Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) instructor to ensure a solid future for the industry.

"Because we all do get lumped into the same situation," he says. "So it's not where A, B and C company do a good job. If we don't get A, B, C, D, E and F company all aligned, then it affects all of us."



MAX MORENO

PART 3:

2024 AND BEYOND

BY ROB DIFRANCO
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

It might be scary to think about what the industry will look like next year, let alone 2033.

But according to industry experts like Ben Collinsworth, general manager of Yellowstone Landscape in Austin, Texas, if you aren't thinking about the future now, you might already be behind the eight ball.

"Many contractors don't want to think about (the future) and have to create a new way of operating, but it's coming, whether you like it or not," says Collinsworth. "You're either going to benefit from it, or it's going to roll you over."

WIDESPREAD AUTOMATION AND BATTERY POWER

Collinsworth says he is a firm believer in technologies like automation and battery power.

"I try to tell (landscape professionals) to get this idea of affordability out of your head (with automation and battery power)," he says. "You might pay more upfront, but you will operate more efficiently in the long run, and it will cost less per acre to mow. I mean, it's a no-brainer to me as far as a return on investment."

On the side of battery-powered equipment, Collinsworth acknowledges that the most common concerns that professionals have — longevity and productivity — are legitimate. He also says they shouldn't scare pros away from what he believes will be a winning technology.

He points to features like battery management systems (BMS) as a way to overcome both of those concerns.

Engine brand Vanguard already implements these systems into the

batteries it produces. Vanguard's BMS, according to Randy Lockyear, senior director of commercial turf sales for parent company Briggs & Stratton, offers professionals more up-to-date data on the battery state.

"There are some misconceptions about the safety and reliability of batteries," he says. "(The BMS) constantly monitors voltage levels and temperature within the battery. Another misconception is that you have to sacrifice power for safety. The lithium-ion batteries Vanguard utilizes have a higher energy density which provides more power density within a smaller physical footprint."

Alongside benefits like a decrease in necessary maintenance, less noise pollution and less harmful fumes and emissions, Lockyear and Collinsworth see battery power as a technology professionals will implement more widely over the next decade.

"You can see where it's going from the early technology we've seen," Collinsworth says. "I think a majority of companies will have some participation in autonomous mowers and battery-powered equipment as it rolls out over the next five to 10 years."

Collinsworth sees both smaller autonomous mowers — like Husqvarna's Automowers — and larger ones — like Scythe's M.52 — as ways professionals will make their business more efficient in the future. That belief is thanks to the data that both solutions can offer professionals.

LEARNING FROM DATA

Collinsworth relates running a successful landscaping business to coaching a football team. Like a football team, companies can gain invaluable insights from data.

"When you send the crew out, it's like having offense go out on the field," he says. "You don't just say, 'Hey, get a touchdown,' you give them

a play. And then, after the game's over, you review what the film looks like versus the plan you put together."

As more data becomes available with further advancements in technology Collinsworth believes in-depth planning will be a more accessible task for landscape pros thanks to automation.

"Guys like Ben Gandy (principal of Enviro Consulting and *LM* columnist) have been using flow maps and production maps charts for a long time. Other industries do it a lot in production too, but we just don't," says Collinsworth. "It's a lot of work. And then, to go and measure the guys against that plan is a monumental task. I've done it, and it's not easy."

Collinsworth expects it will take time for these technologies to gain a foothold in the industry.

"It takes the person to step back and say, 'Oh, that's what we're doing wrong,' or 'This is what we do better, or our production plan is wrong, and the crew does it better,'" he says.

HEALTHY TURF MATTERS

As the future becomes more unpredictable, so will the cost of doing business says Ben Pease, turfgrass agronomist with The Andersons Plant Nutrient Group.

"Even if the price of our raw fertility materials stays the same, we're seeing LCOs have to battle other increases," he says. "So if we can do anything to help offset some of that, we will. Maybe we can achieve that with some soil amendments that help decrease the raw nutrition demands."

Pease believes that as more information about the effectiveness of

organic amendments like biochar and humates on turfgrass becomes available, the more receptive LCOs — and their clients — may become.

"There are fewer people that know how to best care for their lawns, and they're reaching out to professionals," he says. "The numbers will stay the same, if not grow

"KEEP AN OPEN MIND AND REALIZE THAT THESE PEOPLE ARE HERE TRYING TO IMPROVE OUR LIVES. SURE THEY'RE HERE TO MAKE SOME MONEY DOING IT TOO, BUT THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT. THAT'S WHAT WE'RE ALL HERE FOR."

— BEN COLLINSWORTH, GENERAL MANAGER, YELLOWSTONE LANDSCAPE, AUSTIN, TEXAS



as far as the demand, in my opinion, because so many more people are getting further detached from any sort of agronomic knowledge as far as lawns go."

TRUST THE PROCESS

Collinsworth believes the only way technology will continue to move the industry forward is with constructive criticism. He urges professionals to stay open-minded about technology.

He admits that not every innovation will make a viable product but warns about what could happen if the industry shuts out new tech altogether.

"We should point out the flaws so the technology gets better," he says. "But if we don't keep encouraging investments to come into our industry, we'll stop getting a lot of these cool innovations. If some of these companies aren't successful, people might stop trying to invest in our industry. And I would hate to see that happen." 📌

WEED AVENGERS

GUESS THAT WEED
Dallisgrass is commonly mistaken for crabgrass. An easy way to tell the difference is the weed's height, with dallisgrass being taller of the two.



How to win the battle against dallisgrass

Get the upper hand on this aggressive warm-season weed **BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR**



As lawn care operators (LCOs) gear up to fight weeds in the new year, they must plan their products and applications to have the best results — especially for weeds like dallisgrass. Not only is dallisgrass difficult to control, but it also requires unique application timings to keep it from becoming an eyesore throughout the year.

PROPERLY IDENTIFY

An aggressive warm-season perennial weed, dallisgrass has a coarse texture and dull, grayish-green color, says Chris Butcher, Quali-Pro Southeast area manager. Its leaf blades are smooth and grow in clumps, and the seed heads have hairy spikelets in four rows.



Chris Butcher

Dallisgrass is commonly confused with other grassy weeds like crabgrass. However, it has a prominent mid-rib and is a taller, upright weed compared to crabgrass, Butcher says. Its seed heads are also much larger than those on crabgrass, and dallisgrass seeds are darker in color versus the white color of crabgrass seeds. Proper identification is important because the chemical products for crabgrass management won't control dallisgrass.

Maintaining healthy turf through cultural practices — like ensuring the proper fertilization, irrigation, mowing height and using quality, weed-free seeds — helps prevent dallisgrass from becoming competitive, Butcher says. Spot spraying with non-selective her-

bicides or hand pulling to remove the root and underground stems (rhizomes) are other management options.

"It's a very difficult weed to control. If they go unchecked, they can grow 3 to 4 feet and keep producing rhizomes and seeds for the following year," Butcher says. "Keeping it mowed and the seed heads from making new seedlings is half of the battle."

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Like with managing other weeds, operators want to achieve dense, healthy turfgrass through proper maintenance to keep dallisgrass at bay, says Lane Tredway, Ph.D., technical services manager for Syngenta.

Controlling diseases like spring dead spot during the spring also can help prevent dallisgrass. However, most direct treatments for this weed should come later in the year.

"The application timing for dallisgrass is unique in that with most weeds, you want to control them early in the season before they get big," Tredway says. "But fall applications when it is beginning to prepare for winter dormancy are much more effective with dallisgrass — even though dallisgrass is more evident during the summer."

Operators can follow the two fall postemergent applications with one or two more in the spring once the turf begins to green up. In warm-season turfgrasses, apply a postemergent with the active ingredients trifloxysulfuron-sodium or

pinoxaden. In cool-season turfgrasses and zoysiagrass, postemergent products containing fluazifop work best.



Jesse Benelli

FILL THE VOID

Named for farmer T.A. Dallis who introduced the weed to the U.S., dallisgrass can dominate the landscape due to its ability to spread and produce new plants, says Jesse Benelli, Ph.D., green solutions team specialist for Envu.


Using a postemergent herbicide at the high-level rate, LCOs should spot treat to ensure they thoroughly wet the leaves with the application — but not so much that there's runoff. They can follow the initial fall application with another one four to six weeks later — and again in the spring if there's regrowth.

"This is one of those weeds where application timing is equally important to the product you're using to control it. LCOs might be eager to control

weeds in the spring, but it's more effective in the fall," Benelli says.

"You can use the best chemistries available, but if you apply them at the incorrect time, you'll get inconsistent control at best."

Effectively managing dallisgrass is only part of the battle: Operators also need a plan in place to fill bare spots left once they control the weed.

"You need to recover desirable turf to fill those voids, or they will likely house a new set of weeds," Benelli says. 



Lane Tredway

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.

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Biochar offers lawn care professionals a natural way to aid their customers' lawns.



Get the inside scoop on the benefits of biochar for turf

Experts share the best practices for using biochar in your lawn care operation to boost soil quality

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Jeff Norton, vice president of business development for V-Grid Energy Systems, says biochar—a captured carbon produced from agricultural waste—offers lawn care operators (LCOs) a way to get more out of their fertilizers as prices continue to soar.

Norton and Ben Pease, turfgrass agronomist with The Andersons Plant Nutrient Group, share the benefits of biochar and how LCOs can incorporate them into their lawn care operation.

OFFSET COSTS

Pease tells *LM* that while biochar has been around for a while, lawn care operators are just recently starting to come around to adding them into their regimens.

“Even if people don’t use them, they’ve at least heard of them and have maybe thought about using them,” he says. “As straight nutrient prices are rising, LCOs are looking for ways to offset that increase in cost without decreasing their quality of service.”

According to Pease, biochar allows LCOs to keep costs steady and maintain quality by enhancing nutrient retention. Pease

says that biochar also improves soil structure and moisture-retention abilities, setting biochar apart from similar products, like humates.

Biochar serves as what Norton calls a “hotel for microorganisms” and offers a healthy microbiome for turf.

“We find that by amending soil with biochar, we explode both the population and diversity of those microorganisms,” he says. “So it offers not only water retention and nutrient binding, but the porosity hosts those organisms that provide a natural benefit to the soil.”

V-Grid’s biochar product, Persist, utilizes pistachio shells as feedstock. The shells create energy through a process called gasification, which leaves biochar as a coproduct.

APPLICATION TIPS

Norton says V-Grid recommends a 10 to 20 percent application by soil volume. He also says biochar isn’t a season-specific product, so LCOs can apply it anytime.

“Once it’s in the soil, it stays there; that’s the point. It’s captured carbon,” he says. “So, once you get it applied, you have that benefit in the root zone for a long period of time.”

Because there aren’t many fertilizers that come with a biochar portion, according to Pease, LCOs should make an application when there’s already another project going on, like establishing a lawn or overseeding.

“The best time to apply them is when you’re doing aeration or any other kind of cultural practices like seeding or something like that,” he says. “If you can get some of that product into those aeration holes, you might see some of the benefits sooner.”

Incorporating biochar into the soil with a simple broadcast spreader also



works for LCOs interested in biochar, but who aren’t aerating or overseeding anytime soon, Pease and Norton say.

GIVE IT TIME

Pease says a common question he hears from LCOs who use biochar is, “Why am I not seeing a difference?”

“Biochar isn’t like nitrogen, where there’s going to be a drastic difference in the short term,” he says. “It’s really a long-term game. If you’re applying these with one of your applications every year, over time, you’re going to get healthier and improved soil and plant health.”

Biochar, Pease says, offers an overall benefit for the system that will show a difference after a few seasons of application.

“It might not be an overall visual change,” he says. “But I would say after a couple of seasons of a biochar application, you’ll see an improvement in your

water-holding capacity and your porosity. That, in turn, will help your standard nutrient applications go further.”

SUSTAINABILITY SELLS

For LCOs looking to incorporate biochar into their program, the sustainability factor can be a major selling point for customers, Norton says.

“It’s an all-natural product,” Norton says. “If I want to promote how my business is sustainable and provides environmentally friendly solutions to customers that are cutting edge, I think including biochar in your activities gives a really good story to tell, and it’s a good marketing point to connect with your customers.”



Jeff Norton



Ben Pease

Get to know these emerging pests

With a new year and a new growing season approaching, get the scoop on some weeds and insects on the move BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

Pest is a broad term used within the turf industry. The term can refer to weeds, insects and diseases. As last year's fall armyworm outbreak shows, familiar foes in one part of the country can wreak havoc in a different part of the country where lawn care operators (LCOs) are unfamiliar with best management practices.

To offer their take on a few emerging pests, Eric Reasor, Ph.D., southeast research scientist with PBI-Gordon Corp., and Edwin Afful, Ph.D., insecticides product development manager for FMC, share some emerging pests LCOs should get to know.

EMERGING WEEDS

Reasor says LCOs should look at green and false-green kyllinga as emerging pests in the transition zone and Northern growing regions with cool-season grass. Kyllinga can resemble nutsedge, he says.

"Perennial kyllinga species such as green and false-green kyllinga can persist year after year by spreading via underground rhizomes and seed," he says. "These weed species can look like a turfgrass; however, they typically appear lighter green in color and have a fragrant smell to the leaves. They have a fine leaf texture and often have a burred seed head at the base of the leaves."

Best management practices such as proper mowing height, irrigation and fertilization can help LCOs prevent infestations. Postemergent herbicides are most effective for kyllinga control because the weed is perennial, Reasor says.

"It is important to apply herbicides earlier rather than later when the plants are more mature in the late summer,"

he says. "Key active ingredients are pyrimisulfan, halosulfuron, trifloxy-sulfuron, flazasulfuron, imazosulfuron and sulfentrazone."

Doveweed, a summer annual broad-leaf weed with a grassy appearance, is another weed LCOs should know, especially in the transition zone. Doveweed is no stranger to LCOs on the Gulf Coast and in the Deep South, Reasor says.

Doveweed germinates rapidly when temperatures reach 65 to 70 degrees F and can resemble St. Augustinegrass or centipedegrass. It may appear more succulent and rubbery than turfgrass, Reasor says.

"When mature, purple flowers will grow, which will aid in identification," he says. "Leaves are linear in shape and have an alternative arrangement on the stems."

Reasor recommends proper irrigation and watering practices as doveweed prefers moist soils. Again, he also encourages LCOs to maintain a dense lawn with proper mowing heights and fertilization.

"Preemergent herbicides do offer doveweed control," he says. "However, most preemergent herbicides applied for crabgrass control in spring do not last in the soil for excellent doveweed control."

Reasor recommends LCOs use multiple preemergent applications to get the upper hand on doveweed. Postemergent herbicides are also effective against doveweed, he says.

"Multiple applications are likely warranted due to doveweed's rapid germination and recovery from herbicide injury," he says. "Key active ingredients for postemergent control are 2,4-D, dicamba, MCPP, carfentrazone, sulfentrazone, penoxsulam and thienencarbazone."

EMERGING INSECTS


Spotted lanternfly was first identified in the U.S. in Berks County, Pa., in 2014. Since then, researchers found populations in New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Connecticut, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia and West Virginia.

While not a turf pest, the invasive species is a nuisance to homeowners and ornamental plantings. Afful says he's heard reports of spotted lanternfly activity picking up further south in Maryland and Virginia, west in the Midwest and further into New England.

Another insect LCOs should be on the lookout for is the crane fly. These pests resemble large mosquitoes. Research from North Carolina State University says adults emerge in the summer and lay eggs in thatch. Larvae feed on the turf's crown and roots.

"We have also received quite a few calls on crane flies expanding down into Maryland from the Finger Lakes region in New York," he says.

Afful says LCOs also will commonly contact FMC for assistance with fall armyworm, mosquito and tick control solutions.

He adds, "definitely reemerging as a bigger threat are chinch bugs and mosquitoes and ticks." 



THE BIG ONE

Major upgrades

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

LOCATION San Diego

COMPANY LandCare

DETAILS The client acquired this 67.5-acre Class A office and R&D campus in 2016, embarking on an \$80 million renovation project, which included upgraded outdoor amenities, volleyball and bocce ball courts, a barbecue and food court area. The property owner contracted LandCare to oversee an overhaul of the landscaping.

“LandCare played an integral role in the planning and execution of more than \$500,000 in landscape upgrades,” says Tom Williams, North San Diego branch manager for LandCare.

When LandCare began the project, only two of 12 irrigation controllers were functioning. The previous tenant turned on 500 valves by hand. LandCare upgraded the system to a two-wire system with decoders and a pedestal controller.

Because the office space was in use during the renovation, the LandCare team needed to prioritize projects to avoid disrupting tenants and employees. Raul Payo, production manager, worked with the client to design a service schedule and communicated with the client frequently to create and maintain trust.

The new landscape design featured xeriscaping with drought-tolerant plants and drip irrigation. LandCare crews monitor weather and apply preemergent herbicides when rain is in the forecast.

The project earned LandCare a Silver Award from the 2021 National Association of Landscape Professionals’ Awards of Excellence program. 

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



Captions |

- 1.** LandCare oversaw a renovation of the property’s landscaping with upgrades to the property’s irrigation system and xeriscaping.
- 2.** A goal of the renovation was to create an inviting, spacious workplace with bocce and volleyball courts, a barbecue area and more.
- 3.** Drought-tolerant plants are a major component of the xeriscaping at this site.
- 4.** Crews from LandCare deploy a strict weed abatement program to keep the xeriscaping looking weed-free.



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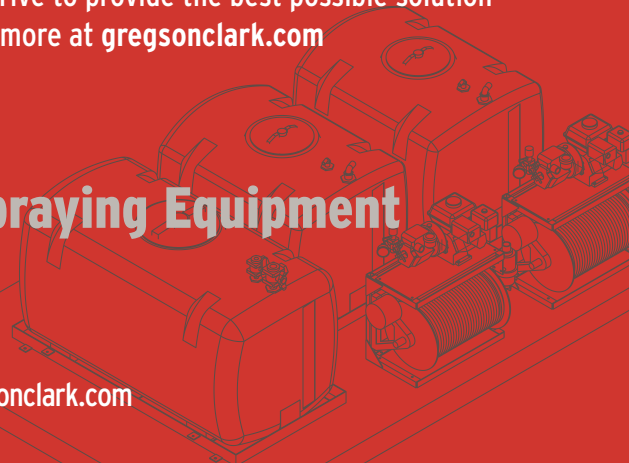


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BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Get the most out of software in 2023

Industry experts offer tips on how contractors can best use business software in the new year

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Business software offers landscape professionals a bevy of options to streamline their businesses.

LM gathered tips on how to make the most of your business software in the new year from Abheek Dhawan, vice president of business operations for Jobber; Donna Garner, chief marketing officer at Arborgold; and Mark Bradley, CEO of LMN.

1. Get out of your comfort zone.

Garner says pros shouldn't underestimate what business software can do for them. As companies add more features to their software, professionals must evolve.

"We all do it — people get comfortable with the current technology, but they know it can do more," she says. "The software keeps innovating, and new features are constantly coming out. I think a fear of change can keep companies from finding solutions to their problems."



Donna Garner

2. Invest in training.

According to Bradley, pros shouldn't invest in a software without adequately training their staff on how to use it. Business owners should also be as up-to-date as possible with the same training, he says.

"Whether you invest in a platform or new equipment, consistently training your team is the best way to make sure that your entire team gets the most out of your tools," he says. "Software evolves and changes. So, your team's knowledge of it must change too."

3. Embrace digital payments.

While some professionals might hesitate to move away from accepting cash or checks, Dhawan believes those types of payments will take a downward turn as more digital payment options become available.

Dhawan cites credit card fees on larger projects as something that might drive pros to lean towards checks. While he admits that's a legitimate concern, he also says professionals should consider the costs



Mark Bradley

associated with cashing a check.

"You've got to go pick up the check in person, you've got to put it on file somewhere, then someone has to go deposit it — all of those steps will end up costing you more than (the credit card fees) in reality," he says.

4. Don't forget the budget.

Bradley says a common mistake contractors make with business software is leaning too much toward estimating and not budgeting.

He says pros often try to estimate profit without building a profitable budget.

"Many don't account for their salaries or fixed costs in estimates and only find that they're making less than expected at the end of the year," he says. "With a comprehensive budget, pros can understand their overheads, equipment and fixed costs and work to include those costs in their estimates to ensure that every job is profitable."

5. Consider alternative payment methods.

In the same vein as accepting digital payments, Dhawan says third-party options exist that allow the end customer to finance a project.

He says Jobber has already integrated services, like Wisetack, into its software, allowing clients the ability to finance a more extensive project when they might not be able to afford it immediately.

"For the business, it's a great incentive to get the client to add more services," he says. "Say they only have cash on hand for one (service); a financing option for the customer still lets you get paid right now. It's a win-win situation."



Abheek Dhawan




Landscape pros should consider their options with digital payments according to Abheek Dhawan, vice president of business operations for Jobber.



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HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

Brick by brick

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOCATION Lakewood, Texas

COMPANY Lawns of Dallas

DETAILS The homeowners reached out to Lawns of Dallas to help mesh the look of their front landscape with the aesthetic of their house.


Madison Gardner, president of Lawns of Dallas, says the client wanted the retaining wall to look as if contractors installed it at the same time as the house. To meet that request, Lawns of Dallas ordered brick and custom stained it to match the preexisting brick on the house.

“We built up the landscape with the retaining wall on top to match the size of the house, given that it has higher windows and is just a tall house,” Gardner says. “So, we built the retaining wall to lift up the landscape so that it met the house at the height the client wanted.”

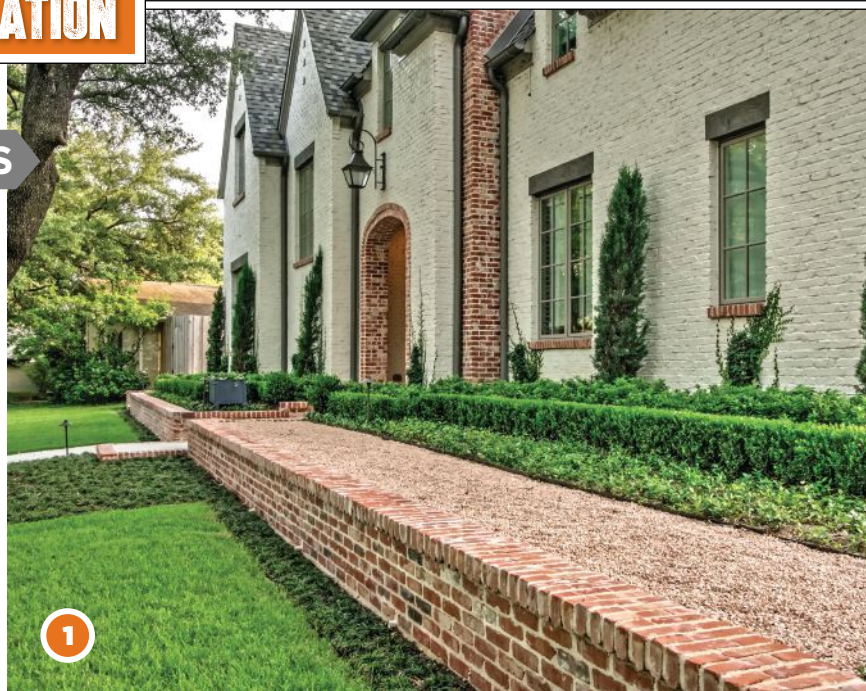
The property also features artificial turf, which Lawns of Dallas installed, in the backyard. Gardner says artificial turf is a popular choice in the Dallas area for reasons including sudden downpours and hot summers.

“We get a lot of sudden thunderstorms in Texas,” he says. “With proper drainage underneath, it gets dry pretty quickly after it rains. (Artificial turf is) not dirty and muddy; you don’t have to worry about the grass dying or the dogs trampling on the grass.”

Gardner’s team also installed an outdoor living space, which the clients requested as an extension of their living room, with a spot for a grill and fireplace.

This project won Lawns of Dallas a Silver Award from the 2021 National Association of Landscape Professionals’ Awards of Excellence program. 

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



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LAWN OF DALLAS



Captions | 1. Lawns of Dallas President Madison Gardner says the homeowners wanted the landscape to gradually work up to meet the house at a higher level than it did before. 2. Lawns of Dallas installed a retaining wall with brick meant to match the brick that lines the house. 3. Gardner says the clients requested vines and lattice on the house's exterior to create an aged look. 4. The homeowner called upon Lawns of Dallas to tie design elements from the house into the landscape. 5. The homeowners also wanted the look of the brick from the front of the house to also appear in the backyard. 6. Lawns of Dallas installed artificial turf in the backyard to withstand the Texas heat, clients' children playing and more. 7. A before view of the front entryway shows how Lawns of Dallas rerouted the walkway.





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Readers see future with battery **P. BP3**

Q&A with AGZA **P. BP5**

Infrastructure and
battery-powered equipment **P. BP8**

Mulch Mate spotlight **P. BP16**

Portable Winch spotlight **P. BP17**

BATTERY-POWERED EQUIPMENT GUIDE

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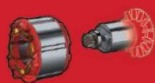
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SURVEY SAYS ...

Readers see future with battery-powered equipment

State of the Industry respondents sound off on the future of battery-powered equipment

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

Battery-powered equipment is a major focus for many manufacturers, with companies such as Kress, Stihl, Husqvarna, DeWalt and more introducing new electric lines at the 2022 Equip Expo.

As part of our annual State of the Industry report, we asked our readers about their interest in incorporating battery-powered equipment into their operations. Responses split evenly among those who plan to add electric equipment and those who don't. And 14 percent of survey takers already use battery-powered equipment. This is up from 2021 where only 6 percent of respondents said their operations already deploy electric equipment.

SOUND OFF

An owner of an operation in the Midwest that provides maintenance, lawn care, irrigation and snow removal operation is investigating electric handheld equipment and plans to add a hybrid truck next year — if vehicle inventory issues level off.

"We are testing battery-powered string trimmers and chainsaws," the owner said. "We are adding a hybrid truck next year (if we can get it)."

An owner of a weed, disease and insect control, fertilizer, design/build and irrigation operation in the Southwest uses Stihl electric equipment but doesn't plan to add more soon.

"There are also many items that use gas and oil that we will not be changing to battery-powered because we like the equipment as-is, and we will not be purchasing new equipment while the current equipment still works," the owner said.

The CEO of a full-service operation in the West

plans to continue using handheld battery-powered equipment.

"For our operations right now, we are sticking with small hand tool (battery-powered) equipment. We have tested mowers but are struggling with cost and efficiency," the CEO said. "Technology is getting much better, but we feel holding off for a bit is OK."

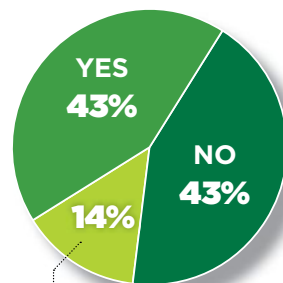
Trialing is the name of the game for an operation in the Southeast that currently deploys Stihl, Mean Green Mowers and Toro products. The company plans to continue to trial more equipment to see what works best for the operation.

"We're still trying to find the best fit," the supervisor said.

A co-owner of a full-service operation in the Midwest said the company's battery-powered DeWalt chainsaws are great for small jobs.

"We currently use Greenworks, and it is roughly 5-10 percent of our total inventory," a general manager of a full-service operation in the Southwest said.

Would you consider using battery-powered equipment?



I currently use battery-powered equipment

TAKING THE LEAP

Forty-three percent of respondents said they plan to

Continued on page BP4

BATTERY-POWERED EQUIPMENT GUIDE

“(We are) experimenting with electric blowers for fertilizer apps. We’re also trying to locate a viable option to replace small engines powering spray pumps.”

— OWNER OF A LAWN CARE OPERATION IN THE SOUTHWEST

Continued from page BP3

add battery-powered equipment. This number is slightly down from last year where 53 percent of survey takers said they planned to add electric equipment. Their answers vary as to what type of equipment they intend to add.

The vice president of a full-service operation in the Southeast plans to add blowers first.


“(We are) experimenting with electric blowers for fertilizer apps,” said an owner of a lawn care operation in the Southwest. “We’re (also) trying to locate a viable option to replace small engines powering spray pumps.”

An owner of a maintenance, lawn care, irrigation and snow removal

operation in the Midwest plans to add electric trimmers.

An owner of a maintenance, lawn care, irrigation and snow removal operation in the Midwest plans to add electric string trimmers to the company’s fleet of battery-powered equipment, which includes push mowers and backpack sprayers.

A vice president of a maintenance, lawn care, irrigation and snow removal company in the Southwest said it’s important to remember the reasons for adding the equipment in the first place.

“We are always open to trying a new product. But we look for quality that the product can deliver, ease of use and total cost,” the vice president said. 

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Get the inside scoop on the American Green Zone Alliance

Daniel Mabe, president of AGZA, shares how his organization helps green industry businesses transition to battery-powered equipment and what resources it offers contractors

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

Earlier this year, the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) partnered with the American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA) to highlight a responsible transition from gas-powered to zero-emission equipment in the landscape industry.

AGZA, an organization that promotes and facilitates lower-impact operations and sustainable land care, and NALP work with federal, state and local policymakers to provide landscape industry companies with resources and training to transition to battery-powered equipment.

AGZA President Daniel Mabe sat down with *Landscape Management* to share the resources his organization provides for green industry operations.

LM: How does AGZA help professionals transition to battery-powered equipment?

DM: AGZA was conceptualized in 2008 and initially formed in 2010. I started a two-person gas-free landscaping business for routine maintenance in 2006. I built the business to nearly 70 clients in two years. I wanted to sell the business for a profit and move on to another endeavor. Even though it was profitable, no one wanted it. This was in what we call the pre-lithium era.

So, we formed a team and created AGZA. We started to develop print and digital learning materials based on our experience of performing low-impact services for the landscape maintenance industry.

We started conducting workshop classroom sessions for nonprofits and municipalities. We slowly refined and solidified our process and continued to add content.

Eventually, we received assistance from the likes of Jamie Banks, founder of Quiet Communities (an organization that helps communities reduce harm from noise and pollution), who was instrumental in helping us organize and structure the three distinct certifications we offer today. They are for properties, people and equipment.

LM: What kind of certifications and courses are available for professionals?

DM: We created AGZA Service Pro Certificate Courses and Certification.

Since the transition from gas equipment is full of challenges, AGZA helps the industry make informed decisions when transitioning to battery and electric technologies through our online courses, remote and in-person classroom sessions and workshops and field tutorials and training.

We provide specific standard operating procedures and case studies to educate folks on the realities of battery electric operations. Also included are costs, workload, economic feasibility and how to effectively market low-impact businesses.

Continued on page BP6



Daniel Mabe

BATTERY-POWERED EQUIPMENT GUIDE

Continued from page BP5

Our first priority is to help anyone transitioning into battery-powered equipment to do it safely and become solvent and profitable as soon as possible. AGZA helps management and crews avoid predictable pitfalls. The upfront cost of battery electric equipment vs. gas equipment can range from 25 to 60 percent higher.

There are considerations and information businesses need to ensure they have the best chance to run a profitable business model, so all can enjoy the benefits of low-impact operations wherever they conduct their operations. A free preview of the 15-lesson course is available on the AGZA site at [AGZA.net](https://www.agza.net).

LM: What does AGZA Field Tested Certified (AFTC) equipment mean for contractors?

DM: AGZA evaluates AFTC battery electric tool platforms independently. Any new tool brought to our doorstep has to go through rugged and torturous field testing before we introduce a tool line to a client seeking unbiased data and information about battery electric equipment.

Heavy use and battery cycling in extreme heat in humid and dry regions, drop tests and abuse that occurs when loading and unloading equipment, and testing in moisture/rain conditions to substantiate the manufacturers' ingress protection ratings are some of the things we prioritized.

We know that folks are having success with brands that are not AFTC certified, but we encourage people to research, gather peer-to-peer information and utilize AGZA AFTC as an extra layer of their discovery process to make informed purchasing decisions, which we feel a contractor cannot make by a simple one-day sampling of tools.

Companies and institutions need to look three, four and five years into the future to understand their chances of a solid return on investment. That can only come from "independent" information sharing amongst industry operators and professionals.

LM: Why is your testing important?

DM: AGZA acknowledges that all testing from other sources is important. Our testing is specific to field use. At the top of the list is safety, and we will keep saying



The American Green Zone Alliance conducts in-person hands-on training to help operations transition to battery-powered equipment.

it over and over again, battery equipment is a more expensive upfront cost and can be a gamble if the contractor chooses the wrong equipment, and tools and charging infrastructure are not taken care of properly.

AGZA cares about this industry and hopes successfully implemented electric operations will increase revenues, profit margins and image enhancement of our workforce.

LM: What other information do you have for professionals interested in battery-powered equipment?

DM: Here are some key points to remember:

- Do your due diligence on research and information gathering on equipment.
- If possible, try before you buy for more than a day. The most reputable manufacturers tend to accommodate this.
- Do the math. Try to understand when you will break even and reach a return on investment on your battery equipment.
- Contact AGZA or other independent sources for information and guidance if needed.
- Be passionate and excited about the future of our industry!

LM: What else should professionals know about AGZA?

DM: AGZA was formed by a group of individuals who are part of the workforce of this industry using gas and electric equipment. We are honest and have experience developing successful transitions and business models for companies wanting to offer low-impact services. We are here to support and provide unbiased information to help meet the demands of our evolving industry. 📞

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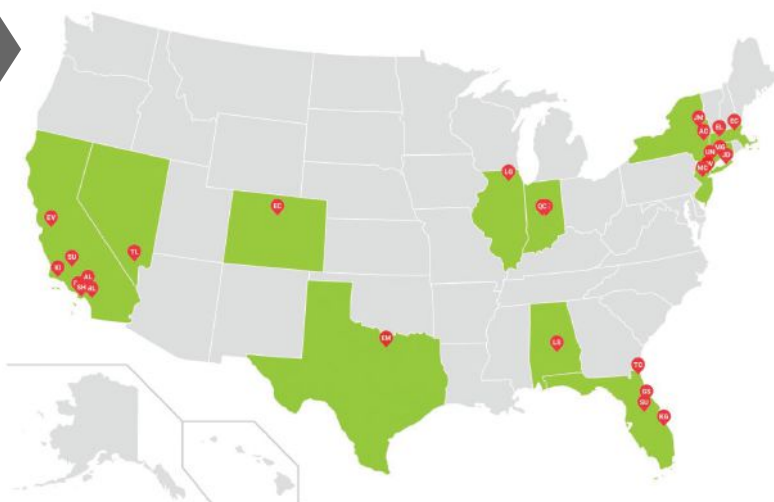
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BATTERY-POWERED EQUIPMENT GUIDE

While choosing a brand of battery-powered equipment is a big decision, a bigger decision might be how to keep that equipment charged. Some choose to buy enough batteries to last all day, while others look for opportunities to recharge during the day.



Why **infrastructure** is the latest buzzword in battery-powered equipment

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

With rising gas prices, noise restrictions and two-stroke engine regulations, it's no wonder some contractors are looking to electric handheld equipment and mowers for solutions.

Industry experts caution contractors that the conversion to battery-powered equipment isn't as simple as switching a gas-powered string trimmer for a battery-powered one. The more battery-powered equipment an operation invests in necessitates more batteries and chargers. Often, green industry businesses lack the right amount of power at their shop to meet the increased demand on the grid.

To learn more about what a landscape operation should know about its power structure and needs, we spoke to Jack Easterly, global business segment manager for zero-emission landscaping at Husqvarna; Christine Potter, president of the outdoor business unit within the tools and outdoor division of Stanley Black & Decker; Paul Beblowski, product manager for Stihl's professional battery line and Daniel Mabe, founder and president of American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA).

THE FIRST STEP

Beblowski says the importance of infrastructure is quite simple: "It supports the professional user at and beyond the job site," he says.

Potter says the term infrastructure brings up critical questions a landscape professional should ask before transitioning to battery.

"One of the biggest things that the landscapers need to consider is, 'Where do I charge it? How do I charge it, and when do (I) charge it?'" she says.

Easterly encourages pros to think about the electrical power available at a shop. He says many landscape companies lease properties, which complicates making the necessary upgrades to an electrical system to support battery charging.

"You may be able to charge your fleet of battery products today with existing infrastructure and what energy you have available," he says. "However, the (electrical) infrastructure across America, Canada and even globally are not ready for the growth we are starting to see in this industry."

This means the type of outlets needed to charge batteries or electric

Continued on page BP12



Paul Beblowski

Thinking about going electric? Learn why it's important to understand your charging needs before making the jump to battery

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BATTERY-POWERED EQUIPMENT GUIDE

Continued from page BP9

mowers — standard 120-volt outlets or 240-volt outlets — the number of plugs in the shop to even the amount of power coming into the shop. Easterly says this is a major challenge for manufacturers as electrification gains popularity with the mainstream public.

Potter notes that contractors should understand that larger electrical equipment — such as battery-powered zero-turn mowers — will have different electrical needs.

“How am I going to charge these?’ ‘Do I have enough service coming in from the street?’ ‘Do I need to add in additional breakers?’ And, ‘do I need to upgrade to high voltage lines?’” she suggests pros ask.

Mabe says pros should not overlook that critical step in the transition to battery-powered equipment, ensuring an operation has the proper infrastructure

Know what type of charging structure you have — and amount of power going into your shop before leaping into battery.

to support the charging needs of an electric fleet.

“Pay attention to the amperage draws of setting up multiple chargers to ensure considerations for



“If batteries are abused, improperly stored, charged and mishandled, they then need to be replaced more often, which leads to more unnecessary waste.”

—DANIEL MABE, AMERICAN GREEN ZONE ALLIANCE



possible necessary upgrades on outlets, wiring and breakers of electrical panels,” he says.

He says good infrastructure includes proper training and safe and organized charging areas. He says it’s also critical for the industry to develop standard operating procedures when deploying battery-powered equipment.

“Supporting business enterprises and institutional operations with workforce development, training, preventative maintenance on the tools and batteries, as well as safe and organized charging areas lend to a solid infrastructure,” he says. “Creating the right standard operating culture specific to electric is critical for successful outcomes.”

Mabe led a panel at Elevate 2022 on how to set up a battery-powered landscape operation. Infrastructure was a big part of the discussion. Panelists noted, on average, battery-powered equipment could cost five times what a gas-powered tool would cost. Mabe said infrastructure, while a costly part of the transition, is a critical step.

“(Infrastructure) is well worth it and will save time, money and headaches in the future,” he says.

One of Mabe’s panelists, Roscoe Klausung, president of the Klausung Group, told Elevate attendees that infrastructure goes beyond purchasing the new equipment itself. It entails rethinking your truck and trailer setups and, in some cases, modifying them to be able to charge your equipment.

“Investing in infrastructure is different than purchasing handheld equipment. It’s (purchasing) all-enclosed trailers,” he says. “It’s (making) after-market improvements to the trailer.”

Continued on page BP14

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Continued from page BP12

Easterly says vehicle type is another critical component professionals need to keep in mind. Does the business use dove-tail-style trucks, box trucks, tow-behind trailers or enclosed trailers?

“Enclosed transportation is the best for running battery-powered products,” he says. “It protects against inclement weather, of course, and also theft. Your current assets — such as trucks and trailers — are something to also think about when it comes to overnight charging. Are you planning to bring the batteries into the shop at night for charging? Or is it something that’s permanently kept in an enclosed trailer or a box truck?”

KNOW YOUR NEEDS

Easterly says it’s also imperative for pros to understand how many batteries an operation will need. This, though, can be a bit of a challenge as not many operations track the runtime hours on gas-powered equipment. Mabe says this figure could vary, too, based on the operation’s approach.

“Some prefer to purchase enough batteries to adequately get through their entire day, and others will look for opportunity charging at client locations or charging on the go with various solar designs and backup storage batteries with inverters,” he says.

Potter notes contractors also need to think about the types of jobs and how a typical workday looks for crews because it may inform the type of charging structure needed when converting to battery-powered equipment.

“What ability do I have to charge throughout the day?” is a good question to consider,” Potter says. “For someone who’s in that portable situation doing residential properties and going from place to place to place, it probably makes sense to load up on the batteries to take

with you through the day. You never know when you’re going to have access to power. Portability is the first thing that I really try to understand when we start sizing up equipment.”

Landscape professionals also must consider the safe storage of battery-powered equipment, Mabe says. Keep in mind temperature and room ventilation for batteries, especially.

“This improves safety and can help batteries last longer from a lifecycle perspective,” he says. “Longer lasting batteries translate to positive economic outcomes and less need to recycle lithium batteries. If batteries are abused, improperly stored, charged and mishandled, they then need to be replaced more often, which leads to more unnecessary waste.”

The next part of a successful transition is understanding your environment, Potter says.

“If you’re in a more urban environment and you’re doing smaller properties, your runtime demands will be different than if you’re in large suburban areas,” she says.

EQUIPMENT SELECTION

Mabe says it’s also critical for pros to research the type of equipment available on the market.

“AGZA recommends trying at least three different companies’ battery/electric tool platforms,” he says. “You will gain valuable feedback on which tools your workforce likes best, workload productivity vs. your gas tools, and how long the batteries last on one charge for each tool in your specific workload settings.”

Easterly says contractors also need to understand the upfront cost of battery-powered equipment.

“You’re probably going to spend 80 percent of your cost on the batteries alone,” he says. “I think a mindset shift really needs to take place, looking at

Continued on page BP18



“I think a mindset shift really needs to take place, looking at batteries more like fuel. You are really buying your fuel upfront.”

—JACK EASTERLY,
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Portable Winch Co.

The 600MH is the cable-laying machine manufactured in Canada by Portable Winch Co., a well-established company since 2003. The machine was originally designed to optimize the work of robot mower installers more than five years ago and has improved over time to adapt to the needs of the workers. A battery motor was developed in collaboration with Greenworks Tools in 2018 to bring the gas-powered model to the new era!

Indeed, more and more customers and users are looking for battery-powered tools. Whether it is for their incredible level of performance and requiring no maintenance or because they have zero emissions, your customers will always be pleased to see



you arrive with a battery-powered equipment. The efficiency of Lithium-Ion batteries no longer needs to be proven and the 600MH-Li is no exception.

The 600MH-Li's motor features three speeds and gives the flexibility to adjust the pace in accordance with the terrain and landscape, allowing users to install even in the steepest slopes, while providing sturdiness, durability and portability that professionals are seeking. It can bury up to 2,000 feet of wire per hour. What used to take days of hard work can now be achieved by a single worker in one day! In fact, the 600MH-Li is designed to be carried and operated by one person and its ergonomic anti-vibration handle folds down.

As installers have expressed needs, we've developed a range of accessories, like the wire twinning device that allows users to quickly go around islands and bury both wires in the same trench without having to do it manually. More add-ons also have become available to ease the installation work of several types of wires. See 600mh.com for all details and to benefit from a special price before the year ends!



BATTERY-POWERED EQUIPMENT GUIDE



Continued from page BP14

batteries more like fuel. You are really buying your fuel upfront.”

While manufacturers offer different voltages of batteries, Easterly says pros need to look at watt hours to evaluate battery-powered equipment. He says, for example, to take the voltage of a piece of equipment and multiply that figure by the amps of the battery to give you the watt hours of the equipment.

For example, Husqvarna’s BLi200x battery has 36 volts (V) and 5 amp hours (Ah) and using Easterly’s equation looks something like this:

36V x 5 Ah = 180 watt hours (Wh)

“That will help landscapers level set the playing field of what they are looking at,” he says.

Easterly says it’s important for operations to start small with a few pieces of equipment. He also encourages contractors to stick with one equipment manufacturer.

“Don’t mix and match,” he says. “You want to start small with your investment, and after testing different brands, select a single manufacturer’s platform.”

FUTURE OUTLOOK

As for the future of battery-powered equipment in the green industry, Mabe says AGZA doesn’t see any sign of interest and demand slowing down.

“We anticipate a 50 percent commercial adoption rate of some battery in operations within three to five years, if not sooner,” he says.

Beblowski agrees, saying Shil continues to see greater demand.

“Professional battery-powered product adoption continues to trend upward in the U.S.,” he says.

Mabe also sees manufacturers continuing to innovate to keep up with the demand.

“Our industry is creating a lot of electrical and mechanical innovation to produce quieter and more powerful equipment powered by batteries,” he says.

Charging infrastructure, Easterly says, is also a huge focus for manufacturers.

“Infrastructure really is one of the hardest things since we don’t control it,” he says. “So in the next few years, you will see manufacturers launching solutions that can reduce, or eliminate, a landscaping company’s investment in infrastructure.”

Potter expects battery-powered equipment will one day completely power the green industry. To her it’s more of a question of when than if.

“None of us really know how soon it is going to transition, and it’s probably going to transition differently in different parts of the country, different job sites, etc.” 📍

AGZA recommends letting the crew test three different brands of electric equipment. Their feedback is invaluable, and they are the people putting the equipment to work each day.



Christine Potter



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PELLENC designs and manufactures durable, robust tools, motors, and batteries for **professional use**. For over 13 years, landscape contractors from all around the globe have put their trust in Pellenc's professional battery-powered tools. Find out more information about Pellenc at pellencUS.com

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SOFTWARE UPDATE

New year, new software?

Challenges continue to emerge for landscape design/build and installation professionals, making 2023 an ideal time to consider adding new software to your business

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

As 2022 comes to a close and landscape professionals take last looks at their performance from the year that was, plenty of discussions will arise. One of those discussions might be whether adding business software is a worthwhile endeavor.

LM spoke with Gage Roberts, national enterprise sales manager for Aspire, and Jeff Wraley, founder and CEO of Groundwork, about why 2023 might be the ideal time for design/build pros to add new software to their business.

SAVING TIME AND MONEY

Groundwork, a virtual sales system, offers pros a way to streamline their sales and review process through what the company calls “VideoLeads,” or videos from the customer giving a video tour of their property.

“The traditional sales process comes with a real cost,” Wraley says. “It comes down to doing some simple math of how many sales appointments are truly not worth the time. We ask contractors, ‘Do you see value in providing a quicker, more convenient experience to the homeowner?’”

Wraley says the answer has been a resounding yes. Consumers’ willingness to use technology has made the integration for professionals more accessible than ever, according to the Groundwork CEO.

“When we can create valuable conversations quickly through video collaboration, close rates go up, and the expense of running the sales process goes down,” he says. “It’s a much more efficient way of doing things, and it’ll continue to be that way as the world moves to a digital space.”

Roberts says Aspire gives pros an end-to-end solution that can help them manage one of the more challenging aspects of running a business in the present: material purchasing and managing.

“You can manage materials at a granular level,” he says. “That empowers companies to maximize their buying power,

ultimately giving more profit from the job. The system shows a picture of what the project will do in the next week, month and six months.”

TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE
Experts say the most common mistake pros make with a new software is not fully buying into it.

DO MORE

Wraley says equipping the team you do have with efficient technology is more important than ever.

“Optimizing lead flow and ensuring that you get leads quickly and in a way that sets you apart from others is critical,” he says. “I think it’ll be a major factor in taking advantage of that spring bump and setting yourself up for the rest of the year, especially in the spring season.”

Roberts points to Aspire’s site inspection tool as a way for pros to do more with the tools at their disposal.

“It can be used as a quality audit internally and as a customer sales or satisfaction tool,” he says. “A project manager, after a project is done, can audit the work that’s been done and share that internally. Or a salesperson can go out and, while a project is taking place, take photos and put them into a nicely laid out document to share with the client to say, ‘Hey, here’s how this project is going.’”

Roberts says pros can do the same to upsell clients during an ongoing project. He gives an example of a customer who decided against an upgrade to an area on their property.

“You can say, ‘Hey, we talked about this area over here, but we decided not to do it.’ Here’s a picture of the area. Did you maybe want to tackle that now?” he says. “It’s an entry-way to give ideas for enhancing that area and potentially upsell that project.”

GO ALL IN

The most common mistake landscape contractors make when they incorporate new software into their business is not buying in all the way, Roberts says.

“When you don’t have a good process to follow the software, it won’t operate correctly,” he says. “People in our industry can be a bit stubborn with that. If you buy a system and don’t put a process behind it, it’s useless, no matter how expensive it is.”



Jeff Wraley



Gage Roberts

INSTALLATION IRON

The inside scoop on compact equipment attachments

Learn the advantages of several attachments for design/build projects and what other tools to have in your arsenal

Attachments can be a design/build contractor's best friend. Manufacturers and dealers share the advantages of several different attachments, such as four-in-one buckets, mulching heads and fork tines and how contractors can make the most of them.



Attachment: FOUR-IN-ONE BUCKETS

Advantages: "Four-in-one buckets, or combo buckets, are four tools in one. Allowing contractors to dig, drag, doze and clamp, it is more efficient and cost-effective than owning four different tools or swapping tools for different tasks. It saves contractors time and money because they don't have to invest in multiple tools. They don't need a dozer, grapple and bucket — one tool will meet all of their needs." — *Dee Warren, marketing manager at Land Pride*

Attachment: MULCHING HEADS

Advantages: "Design/build contractors can use drum mulchers and disc mulchers to reduce unsightly, overgrown hedges, saplings, underbrush, vines and overhanging limbs. Mulchers can turn these items into varying stages of mulched material.



Using a disc mulcher will result in larger, less-refined material, while a drum mulcher will create more finely mulched material. Using a mulching head attachment can also help contractors be more profitable by giving them an additional revenue stream or simply making their land-clearing jobs faster and easier. Contractors need to use the right type of mulcher/tooth/blade combo for the job. For jobs where they are unlikely to come into contact with much rock, use a mulcher equipped with blades. Doing so will work best on lighter material/softer wood. If the job is going to have them in contact with more rock and other hard materials, they would want to have a mulcher equipped with carbide teeth, which handle more difficult mulching applications." — *David Caldwell, national product manager, Takeuchi-US*

Attachment: FORK TINES

Advantages: "Pallet fork carriages and forks are used for a variety of material handling needs, such as moving pallet-sized or bulky loads



OTHER TOOLS IN THE TOOLBOX


Don't overlook post-hole diggers, power rakes and seeders, says Dee Warren, marketing manager with Land Pride.

"Post-hole diggers are useful not only for footing and fences but for other landscape projects, including tree planting," he says. "Powered rakes create seed beds for seeding or sod, level and shape soil profiles and windrow rocks and construction debris. Last, and certainly not least, seeders ... are great for contractors who are planting grass post-construction."

David Caldwell, national product manager for Takeuchi-US, suggests contractors add grapples to their attachment arsenal.

"Thumbs or grapples on excavators work well for picking and placing materials and can be very handy on hardscape projects," he says. "Augers are also a valuable attachment for contractors using a compact track loader or a compact excavator. Augers can be used for tasks like fence post installation, tree planting, footing and pile drilling, cement mixing and stump grinding."



on industrial and construction sites. Pallet fork carriages offer a notched rail-type design, allowing the fork tines to be easily spaced or changed and locked into place. A heavy-duty backrest structure is functional, durable and provides operator protection from shifting loads while offering improved operator visibility to the fork tips." — *Brock Bahr, senior sales support specialist with BDP attachments at Caterpillar* 

BRAND U

TIME SAVER

Trencher attachments help companies like Southern Classic Landscape Management save time and money.



Doing the heavy lifting

BY JESSE KHALIL | CONTRIBUTOR

Vermeer trencher attachments have only been on the job with Southern Classic Landscape Management in Flowery Branch, Ga., for about a year.

But, in that short time, Brad Brown, operations manager, says his team already noticed how the trencher attachment helped speed up work, he says.

“You can really tell when we don’t have our trenchers on the job,” says Brown. “They essentially do the work of two men. They help us save time and work more efficiently.”

Brown and his crew deploy several Vermeer trencher attachments on

Southern Classic’s Vermeer CTX160 mini skid-steers. Southern Classic Landscaping provides maintenance, lawn care, design/build, hardscape and irrigation services to a predominately residential clientele.

A VARIETY OF JOBS

Brown said he searched for a brand that offered products that could withstand different working conditions and help his crew work more efficiently.

“Vermeer has always been a solid brand,” says Brown. “I have used many different products and attachments

Continued on page 56



PHOTO: VERMEER



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BRAND U

Continued from page 55

from different brands, and Vermeer just seems to be the top of the line. It really is the strongest and most durable.”

Southern Classic deploys its trencher for drainage, irrigation and outdoor lighting jobs. Brown adds that Vermeer’s CTX160 mini skid-steers are a must-have on all of Southern Classic’s job sites.

“We love our CTX160 with the trencher attachment because it saves our crews’ backs and energy by doing all the heavy digging for us,” says Brown. “It takes out a lot of the shovel work and heavy manual labor that comes with our line of work.”

ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS

Brown said crews also make sure to bring other attachments, including a

VERSATILE TOOLS
Skid-steer attachments, like a trencher attachment, allow pros to quickly switch between multiple tools.




Harley rake, soil conditioners, forks and a tooth bucket, to each job site.

The Harley rake allows the crew to prep for sod. The forks pick up heavy pallets, and the bucket attachments haul materials like gravel or aggregate. Southern Classic recently used its 3-inch trencher at a 6-inch setting and noticed a major difference, says Brown.

“We can now fit a 6-inch pipe into the trench instead of having to use shovels and wheelbarrows to make the trench wider,” he says. “Overall, it is just so much easier on our crew and makes the job smoother.”

Brown says Vermeer’s trencher attachments help Southern Classic perform jobs quickly and more

efficiently, which is a help in today’s labor climate.

“Vermeer products allow the crew and me to stay on task and make the most of our time on the site,” he says. “It saves us a lot of time between transporting heavy products or digging wider trenches. I don’t think we could do the job half as efficiently without these products.” 

Khalil is currently an intern with *Landscape Management’s* parent company, North Coast Media, and will graduate from Kent State University in December 2022.

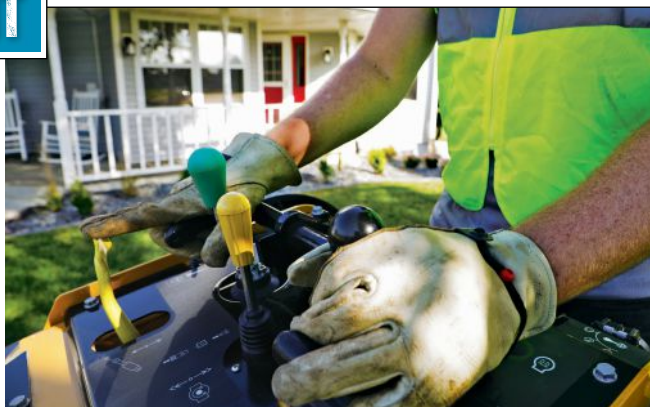


PHOTO: VERMEER



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IRRIGATION TECH

Get the 411 on pressure-regulated spray bodies

As many states mandate the use of pressure-regulated sprinkler bodies, experts from Hunter and Rain Bird share what you need to know **BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR**

The sale of spray bodies for irrigation systems without pressure regulation (PRS) is banned in states such as Vermont, California, Washington, Hawaii, Colorado, Massachusetts plus Washington D.C. Regulations in Maine, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Oregon go into effect in 2023, and Maryland's rule takes effect in 2024. Several states are looking to join the list.

Landscape Management talked to Kelsey Jacquard, CID, CLIA, category manager for mechanical irrigation products for Hunter Irrigation, and Jessica Case, marketing group manager for Rain Bird Corp., to help irrigation contractors understand what these regulations mean for existing and new projects.

Case says it's important to understand what your state is regulating.

"Some states restrict non-pressure regulating spray sprinkler bodies only at the point of sale; other states also restrict the installation of non-PRS sprinkler bodies," she says.

Jacquard says these new regulations promote the water-saving potential these spray bodies offer.

"The push for pressure-regulated spray sprinkler bodies is to address existing landscape irrigation systems that are the biggest culprit for landscape irrigation water waste," she says. "Generally, newly installed systems meet local efficiency standards or

simply use newer technologies that help save water. Older systems often get neglected, so the idea is to force the end-user to upgrade to a prescribed water-saving product."

WHAT DO PRESSURE-REGULATED SPRAY BODIES DO?

Pressure-regulated sprinkler bodies regulate the output of pressure from the nozzle, which produces a more efficient

irrigation zone where the pressure is consistent with each nozzle.

"With reduced pressure comes reduced flow rates, reducing pressure loss and stress on the system, and also reducing the stress on the nozzles for longer product life," Jacquard says.

Case says these spray bodies help save water.

"When water pressure at the nozzle is in the 30 to 45 psi range, water droplets are larger and less likely to be carried away by wind," she says. "With more water droplets landing on the landscape, you don't have to run the irrigation system as long, which also saves water."

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

To know whether your spray bodies meet these regulations, look for the

Continued on page 58



Jessica Case



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Continued from page 57

EPA's WaterSense certification on the packaging. Jacquard says Hunter, like other manufacturers, identifies pressure regulation on the sprinkler's cap with different colors.

"Hunter Pro-Spray PRS30 shows PRS30 on the brown body cap, and the Hunter Pro Spray PRS40 shows PRS40 on the gray body cap," she says.




Kelsey Jacquard

Jacquard says contractors may notice a difference in spray coverage when deploying pressure-regulating spray bodies. If head-to-head coverage changes due to reduced pressure at the nozzle, she recommends contractors add a longer-distance nozzle if the flow allows or switch the zone to lower-flow rotary nozzles to make up the distance.

BENEFITS TO EXISTING SYSTEMS

Both Jacquard and Case say irrigation efficiency is the main result of using pressure-regulating spray bodies.

Case says adding pressure-regulated spray bodies to older irrigation systems is a way to help clients create a more efficient irrigation system without a complete overhaul. 

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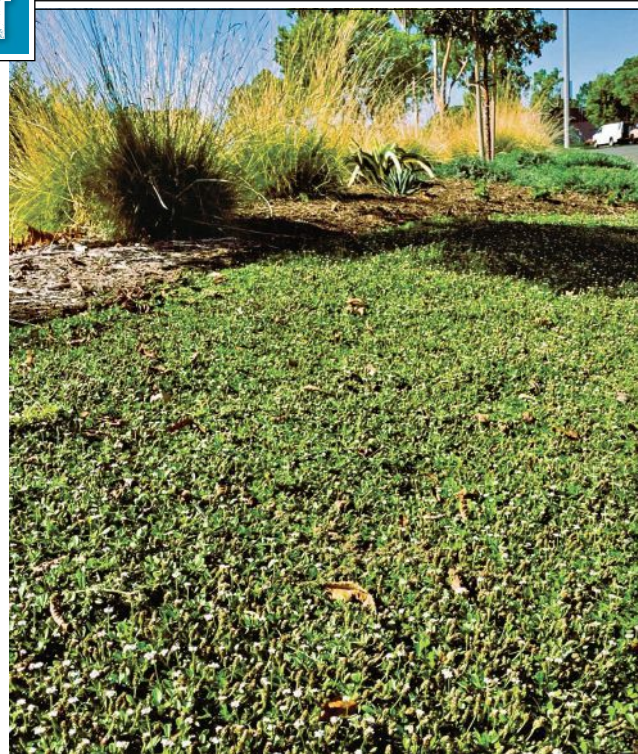
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» EVERY DROP COUNTS

Landscaping trends that can help save water

BY MAX MORENO | CONTRIBUTOR



Climate change and dwindling resources present the landscape industry with challenging obstacles and new solutions never tried before. In the Western half of the U.S., we face the challenge of maximizing one of our most precious resources: water.

As another year passes, state and local government agencies require that we continue to reduce our water consumption from designated watering days to specific windows of watering time for landscaping. Water conservation is another challenge we must face and overcome, alongside rising labor and inflation costs. But as always, our industry is up for the challenge of providing solutions and opportunities by setting emerging trends.



Max Moreno

Like most people, I enjoy having lush, green open spaces, and if you travel through southern California, these spaces are changing because of water conservation. Since turfgrass is one of the most highly water-consuming plant species, professionals must consider options for reducing or eliminating turf in certain areas. This trend is making these areas more water efficient and redefining the landscape's appearance to be more aligned with the region.

ANOTHER TYPE OF GROUND COVER

As vice president of water conservation for Harvest Landscape, people ask me about reducing turf while keeping the

look and feel of turf. I refer to some of my early experiences with Kurapia, which is rapidly gaining popularity. Kurapia is a versatile low-lying ground cover with the appearance of grass from afar. It offers many benefits, the most important being drought tolerance.

By pairing Kurapia with pressure-regulating sprinklers and high-efficiency nozzles, we now have a solution many clients have been looking for. With Kurapia, you can kill two birds with one stone by reducing the labor necessary to maintain turf and still have the lush green look you desire.

EMERGING EDUCATION

Another emerging trend is the concept of water-efficient, sustainable landscaping through design, construction and maintenance that encompasses ecologically sound practices. This trend is gaining popularity through educational programs like the Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) program, a program of the Sonoma-Marín Saving Water Partnership in California. Sustainable landscaping practices pertaining to irrigation may include converting existing, outdated irrigation to a highly effective and efficient system.

Typically, contractors convert landscape areas from overhead to drip or point source irrigation. By doing so, we increase irrigation efficiency while also reducing wastewater. I highly recommend this water-conserving technique because it adds to the transformation into a water-efficient, sustainable landscape, which is ideal for long-term viability.

I regularly get called to do third-party irrigation audits for new irrigation construction. In California, all new developments must meet criteria the state sets in the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO). Many new irrigation development projects are now a two-wire irrigation system. Traditional irrigation systems typically have wires run to each valve, whereas a two-wire irrigation system requires only two wires throughout the whole system. With the rise in the cost of materials and labor, a two-wire system reduces the amount of copper wire while consolidating irrigation controllers. This new direction is significant for landscape maintenance contractors, as they must understand how these systems operate and how to maintain them. Two-wire education is becoming more popular because of the operation and maintenance of these systems.

Adapting to these emerging trends is both vital and beneficial to our industry. If we keep up and adapt to the trends, we will be able to provide the best service to our clients and Mother Earth. 🌱

KEEPING UP WITH KURAPIA
Moreno says Kurapia, a low-lying ground cover, is gaining in popularity as a turfgrass alternative in the Western U.S.

Max Moreno is vice president of water conservation with Harvest Landscape Enterprises in Orange, Calif.

FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Mike Morin

PRESIDENT
MORIN TURF
SIOUX CITY, IOWA

1 What can you tell me about Morin Turf?

We were started in 1946 by my father. He started off small and went to the golf course guys to learn how to grow grass. And from there, he sprouted into this infant lawn care business and grew it. His caveat's always been quality over quantity. He passed away 12 years ago. He was a Great Depression kid. When I got out of college, he didn't want me to be in the lawn business, but I persevered. I said, 'I think you got a great business; I'd like to come into it.' And I slowly changed his mindset about a few things. Mechanization being one of them. We grew a little bit once we mechanized, but after that, we tried to keep our focus on the quality side of it.

2 Have you really been at this for 50 years, starting out as a kid?

From day one, all I remember is grass. I don't think there are a lot of guys that are still in business today who remember the downturn in '73, but I do. There are a lot of chemicals that I remember that are no longer available. I've always liked it. I like when I drive past a place, and I go, 'wow, look at that (grass). That looks great, and I do that, we do that.' All we do is grass, we don't do landscaping, but we install a lot of grass by seeding it. It's always fun to drive by a place that I did 40 years ago, and I'm still taking care of it. I still have two customers from 1959.

3 What is your favorite tool to get the job done?

There are two of them that I rely on. One is my spreader-sprayer. I've got two different brands, Z-Spray and Steel Green. I've got eight ride-on units for four guys. When we fertilize, I have dedicated machines for fertilizing; when we spray, I have dedicated spraying units, and they don't have spreaders on them. The other piece would be my aerator. I recently made the switch to Stinger. It's a fantastic piece of machinery.

4 What's your expectation for 2023, in terms of the industry and the health of your business?

We've been through a lot of downturns, and most of them have never affected my business. I feel somewhat insulated because I work for a demographic that is fairly upper-tier. But some of the old guard is gone, and now we're working with younger people. Part of me worries (about what would happen) if that demographic feels that lawn care isn't essential, if they feel it's a luxury. If we run into a real spate of nasty economic weather, how are we going to keep going? Let me put it this way: I'm worried about holding on to what I've got.

5 Do you have a day at work that was most memorable?

Wow, there are so many. I can remember the last day my dad came to work. He was 89 years old. He still came to work every day! You know, it's kind of weird ... it was 12 years ago *today*. I remember we were working on a football field, and he came to see if we were doing it right. He just showed up and took a tour. (In gruff voice) *'I think you guys are doing OK ... I think I'm gonna go hit some golf balls.'* That day sticks in my mind. The other one is when my son, Sean, decided to come work with us. Unlike the way my dad felt about me coming to work for him, I'm glad my son came to work for us. I'm looking forward to the third generation. 🍷

BEST ADVICE

"If you take care of your customers, your customers will take of you."



PHOTO: LM STAFF



Time to fill the barn

Suppliers discuss the chaos of trying to fulfill orders when the supply chain went wild

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Spot outages aren't going away anytime soon. Don't be brash, but be prepared. It might be time to fill the barn with more material than usual to prepare for the 2023 season.

Such was the advice of the Supply Chain Hacks panel at Equip Expo in Louisville in October. A panel of industry suppliers came together to discuss what they're seeing at their businesses regarding the supply chain challenges, and how they foresee this topic playing out in 2023. The panelists were Mike Floyd, co-founder and senior product specialist, Steel Green Manufacturing; George Kinkead, president, Turfco; and Dan Wurgler, executive vice president of procurement and operations, Ewing Irrigation & Landscape Supply. Beth Berry, vice president of turf and ornamental sales, Advanced Turf Solutions, moderated the panel.

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Over the last two years, these companies experienced longtime suppliers reducing or delaying orders. In some cases, those longtime partners even quit picking up the phone.

"We've always had the pleasure of cutting a (purchase order) and having products show up at our location within a few days," Kinkead told the room. "Suddenly, we were faced with things we had never dealt with before. Some places just didn't answer the phone. We had to move quickly to secure inventory. It was very touch-and-go."

We can work it out

This change from the norm took its toll on everyone, Ewing's Wurgler said.

"At first, customers were in shock," he said. "But as time went on, we encouraged our customers to do the same thing we were doing with our vendors: tell me what you have on the books; tell me what is coming up. (Tell me) what's in the mix, so we can work with manufacturers to make sure we have enough inventory on-hand to help our customers get through this."

Floyd said the one item that was so difficult for Steel Green to get was front tires. With high prices and long waits on shipping containers, their normal supply of front tires dried up.

"We really had to scramble and work with other manufacturers for tires," Floyd said. "We were mounting them on the rims ourselves. The parts end is what took the longest, but we just did our best to help our customers."

Kinkead added one missing part means the entire item doesn't ship out.

"My experience most of this year has been an engineer walking into my office and saying, 'We can't get blank. Will this alternative work?'" Kinkead said. "We had to take our whole engineering team off of new product development, and move them into finding what else would fit, and who that vendor was."

Looking forward

The panelists agreed that, above all else, working hand-in-hand with suppliers and manufacturers was vital. Good communication and keeping a close eye on in-house inventory were also paramount, the panelists added.

How long will the supply chain disruption continue?

The panelists passed on a hard answer, but said they are monitoring some indicators that things are getting better.

"There are several sectors where prices are beginning to pull back," Wurgler said. "Raw materials are more readily available. The price of oil has dropped a little, and that helps plastics. There are a few things I look at every day, and there are a few things I look at twice a day. The demand for our services continues to be there. But ask your real estate agent neighbor about the correction that's going on right now. Real estate isn't tanking, but it is leveling off."

"Everything in manufacturing moderates at some point," Kinkead added. "The growth in demand that is occurring right now, it's hard to believe that will be sustainable forever." 🗨️

"SUDDENLY, WE WERE FACED WITH THINGS WE HAD NEVER DEALT WITH BEFORE. SOME PLACES JUST DIDN'T ANSWER THE PHONE."



BY PHIL HARWOOD

The author is a senior advisor with Tamarisk Business Advisors. Reach him at phil.harwood@tamariskadvisors.com

Don't miss the window of opportunity to secure a future for your business

Joe started his mowing business when he was 14 years old, working out of his garage until graduating high school. Unlike other kids in his neighborhood, Joe always wanted to run his own business. His parents had instilled in him a work ethic rarely seen in someone his age. Joe treated every lawn like it was his own, and his customers rewarded his dedication with loyalty and referrals.

By the time Joe was 16, he had more work than he could handle himself, so he started hiring classmates as employees. This served him well throughout high school as his business continued to grow. Joe's mom helped him with the legal side of his business, and Joe's dad took care of the bookkeeping.

GROWTH CONTINUES

Joe made more than \$100,000 while a freshman in college. Graduates at the time received job offers with salaries that were less than half of that amount.



He attended a few college classes, but business demands were too great, so Joe poured himself into his business. Before he turned 21, his revenue hit \$1 million. Joe bought his first house that year. Two years later, Joe bought a duplex and continued to invest in real estate, amassing a substantial portfolio of income-producing rental units.

Joe got married and started a family of three boys. Despite constant business demands, Joe maintains a relatively healthy work-life balance.

Joe's landscape company continued to grow, hitting \$2 million in annual revenue, \$5 million and then \$10 million. All of this occurred while Joe was young and had boundless energy. That was many years ago. His companies have continued to grow, but Joe is tired. Now in his 60s, his perspective has changed.

What Joe longs for at this stage in his life is to spend more time with his family, especially his five young grandchildren. He also wants to travel. Joe is stuck in his business and doesn't know how to get out.

None of his children are interested in taking over the business. Joe occasionally thinks about selling the business, but every time he does, all that comes to mind are enormous brokerage fees and an endless list of unknowns. His attention turns back to the demands of today. Joe tells himself that he can deal with the unknowns of succession another day. This proposal needs to go out tomorrow.

TOO LATE TO PLAN

Yesterday, Joe's widow called me for advice. She has no idea what to do with her late husband's company, customers or anything else with the business.

Joe took care of all these details and had all the passwords. He knew where everything was.

She told me about the conversations she and Joe had about putting a plan in place. Joe knew he needed to take action to protect his legacy. But he was afraid to face the inevitable. There were too many unknowns, too many questions and expenses related to dealing with all of this. There was always tomorrow, until there wasn't.

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY


Every business owner has a window of opportunity to protect their legacy. The only question is will they take the first step? Often the first step is to bring on an adviser who can develop and implement a thoughtful plan, taking this burden off the owner's shoulders.

We have no idea exactly when that window of opportunity opens or closes. For some, it begins the day of founding the company. Some business owners create their companies with a plan for growth and a plan for succession from the beginning. In my experience, these people are rare.

More commonly, the business owner begins to have thoughts about succession after a number of years of running his or her business but is hesitant to act. The owner fully recognizes the need to act while at the same time deciding not to do so. Every day, the window of opportunity shrinks.

Joe's inaction left behind a mess for his family to clean up. Much of what Joe worked so hard for will be gone. This will be his legacy.

Nobody likes to face their mortality. But maybe this will inspire you to take that first step to protect your legacy.

Now go forth. 



BY JEFF KORHAN

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

Enhance your company's value with these strategic moves

Instead of planning for the market conditions your company expects for 2023, you can proactively influence them to favor your strengths. Business enterprises do this all the time when embarking on a new brand growth strategy.

One definition of a brand is all the emotional and tangible touch points surrounding it. Take Apple, for example. The iPhone is the most successful product in history, but fans and investors equally admire the intangibles of its retail stores that redefined the category.

The qualities that shape a brand's perceived value translate to margins that have made Apple one of the most profitable companies of all time. Likewise, your landscape services business can prosper by taking steps to strategically enhance its brand.

Landscape brands typically speak to tangible product qualities, but the right strategy can amplify intangibles that often reflect leadership embedded in its culture. These intangibles may include attention to detail, customer communication or environmental leadership. These attributes are nearly always evident in the way the company fulfills its mission.

The challenge is communicating these benefits to buyers, so they understand how the benefits will make potential buyers' lives better. When that happens, you effectively raise the perceived value of your brand and the incremental margin it supports.



CHOOSE HOW YOUR COMPANY CAN WIN

If you don't have a distinctive quality that gives your company a competitive edge, you only need to find one aligned with your strengths that exploits a market weakness. Then you must dedicate resources to establish the conditions for successfully fulfilling that brand promise.

- 1** Ask what buyers value that aligns with your capabilities.
- 2** Establish conditions to fulfill the promise of providing it.
- 3** Communicate the brand story that shows why it matters.

My residential design/build company was already successful when we decided to take the confusion and mystery out of buying landscape services. We reasoned that making everything transparent to buyers would result in a more enjoyable experience that also promised outcomes greater than they had imagined.

Most importantly, we did not try to be everything to potential customers. We decided the opportunity for our

market was removing the fears and doubts of acquiring high-end residential landscape services. We reasoned that getting that right would establish sufficient trust to take care of everything else associated with delivering exceptional projects.


Branding is a way to choose your destiny. It's an intentional process of strategically

establishing how you want to win in the marketplace, as opposed to simply responding to the status quo. Our greatest challenge was perfecting

“Your landscape services business can prosper by taking steps to strategically enhance its brand.”

how we communicated the difference our business offered and why it was in the best interest of our customers.

Over time, we became known for taking the fear out of buying high-end landscape solutions. Occasionally, our customers would refer friends who told us they heard we were expensive but worth it. They meant it as a compliment, but we were careful to reframe our service in terms of value.

The unexpected discovery we made is that because our brand value is personal, it cannot be easily copied. One of our competitors tried, but they never figured out that you cannot copy what's personal to a business and its culture. 

What's in store for the green industry in 2023



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.

I'm not one for making New Year's resolutions, nor do I think much of lofty prognostications about the year ahead, but I guess I could give it a try. Let's see what the future might hold for the industry in the political arena.

Macro and microeconomic pressures. The effects of inflation attack your business from every angle, and it's challenging, to say the least. The forces that cause food prices to skyrocket are the same forces driving up the price of fertilizer, pesticides, fuel and labor.

Economically, our industry is adjacent to the agricultural sector. We use many of the same inputs. The urea in our fertilizer is the same commodity that's traded internationally as an agriculture plant nutrient. Urea is produced by reacting natural gas with atmospheric nitrogen, so when the price and availability of natural gas are an issue, so are the price and availability of urea.

A blizzard of new legislation. As soon as Congress and the state legislatures are sworn in, politicians begin filing bills. We monitor legislation daily, searching through thousands of possible bills for ones that could impact your business. We track these bills through the legislative process and engage as appropriate with our Advocacy Contact Team nationwide. Want to help out? We could sure use it! Drop me a line, and I'll tell you more.

EPA registration decisions. Under requirements in the Food Quality Protection Act, all active ingredients for pesticides must be reregistered every 15 years. This provision consistently evaluates pesticides with up-to-date scientific standards with

an eye on human health and environmental protection. The first 15-year deadline passed on Oct. 1, with many active ingredients not completing a review. There is some question about what this means for us. Will the products continue to be available under the previous regulation? "Yes" is the answer we get from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). We're unsure about what the environmental nonprofit groups will do. Keep your eyes open for further updates.

Endangered Species Act. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is a facet of pesticide policy that had not been on our radar until recently. The ESA says if a federal government action, like the registration of a pesticide, can adversely affect an endangered species or its habitat, it must be assessed (in our case by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service) to see if that action will jeopardize the species.

This requirement is above and beyond what is already required in the risk assessment process in the federal law governing pesticides. What does this mean for the green industry? It's likely future pesticide registrations will come with new requirements to protect endangered species. This may include restrictions on where products may be used or a list of mitigations on the label. We will work with EPA to ensure regulations are fairly and logically applied.

A new Farm Bill. The federal Farm Bill comes up for consideration in the coming year. While this legislation deals with agricultural and food policy, our industry is championing two issues. The first is funding for research and statistical analysis of the nation's turfgrass. A thorough analysis on the

national level is necessary to push back on dubious claims by anti-lawn groups based on modeling and not data.

Second, we continue to fight for an amendment to the federal pesticide law to close a loophole that allows local regulation of pesticide products. A 1993 Supreme Court case opened the door to local regulation, but most states stepped in soon after to pass legislation that plugged that hole. Unfortunately, activists are interested in employing strategies and tactics used in Ontario, Canada, in the early 1990s that led to the overturning of a pesticide preemption law. Our efforts seek to establish a consistent set of rules that are science-driven, equitable and consistent.

Going local. In the U.S., we have a well-developed regulatory system for fertilizer and pesticide use rooted deeply in science. When those who disagree with how federal and state governments go about regulating, they turn their attention to cities and towns. We've already seen efforts to repeal state preemption of pesticide regulations in several states, which would lead to a patchwork of contradictory regulations if passed.

Gas to electric. I could be wrong, but I sense that landscapers are open to adopting battery-powered equipment as long as performance is at parity and the return on investment is positive. Unfortunately, some politicians are determined to ban landscape equipment long before the industry is ready to transition.

Our position is that the industry embraces our responsibility to employ sustainable practices, but we need the time to do so responsibly and we need tax breaks and other incentives for broad adoption. 🌱

RAISE THE BAR FOR SAFETY

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Sometimes mandatory safety training can feel like just going through the motions, says Justin White, CEO of K&D Landscaping in Santa Cruz, Calif.

As part of his company's efforts to change that sentiment, White and his team give employees interactive training at an event he calls Raise the Bar.

"Sometimes it feels like you're just going through the training so you can check the boxes and say, 'This person is certified,'" he says. "(Raise the Bar) was nice because it felt like there was a purpose behind the training, not just training to say that we did it."

K&D split its 110 employees into groups of 10 and sent them through six safety stations. One involved answering questions like, "What are the first things you should do if you get into a car accident?"

Others included:

- Saw safety;
- Best practices for operating trucks and trailers;
- String trimmer safety;
- Proper lifting; and
- Staying safe during chemical applications.



California-based K&D Landscaping uses its quarterly planning session as a way to ensure its employees are properly trained.

The stations with live demonstrations were a hit with employees who found it amusing to see their managers or office employees perform, White says. He notes his team received positive feedback from the event, which allowed for discussion after each station.

"It was cool to double down on some of these standard operating procedures that we've had in place, and we don't talk about enough," he says.

QUARTERLY PLANNING

The other portion of K&D's event is a quarterly planning session, which White says was the original intent of the event.

"Coming together every three months to talk strategically about the vision and the direction of the company is something we've got tremendous value out of," he says. 📅

PHOTO: K&D LANDSCAPING



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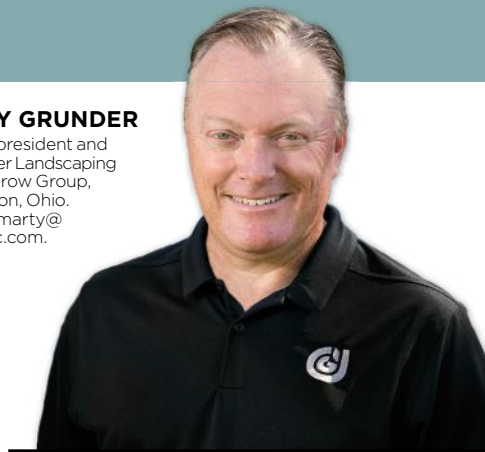
RESOURCES



GROW WITH GRUNDER

BY MARTY GRUNDER

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



Why service in season should always be a part of your operation

Last year, my company, Grunder Landscaping Co. (GLC), went back to using the slogan I came up with more than 35 years ago when I was a college student at the University of Dayton. That slogan is “Where Service is ALWAYS in Season.” At GLC, it’s not just a slogan; it’s who we are.

We want to be in service to our team first and foremost, and also provide great service to our clients and our community. I’m proud of how we conduct business, and I know that when we treat our team members well, the rest will naturally follow.

COMMUNICATION FAIL

This month, there’s a lesson I want to share with you about offering great service, which has become increasingly less common.

Those who were with us in Boston last summer for the Field Trip at R.P. Marzilli will be glad to know that in late July, I finally got the new Ford Bronco I ordered in January 2020. I received four emails from Ford starting in January 2022 saying it was manufactured and about to be shipped.

None of that happened, and for seven months, even the Ford dealership I ordered through had no idea where my truck was nor a definitive answer on when it would be delivered. Now that it’s here, I love the truck, so Ford got the hard part right. They made a quality product, but the communication was horrible.

“Most customers will understand that people make mistakes. Show them you care and take steps to make it right when mistakes happen.”

Am I on a rant? Maybe, but there’s a lesson here for all of us.

To offer great service, start with these three things:

First of all, treat your people — the folks delivering the service to your clients — well. Your external customer service will never exceed your internal customer service. If you treat your team poorly, they will treat your clients poorly. Treat them with kindness and respect, pay them well and equip them with everything they need to do great, quality work.

Secondly, have systems that enable you to take care of the customer. Software programs, like Aspire, for example, make communicating with multiple clients and providing updates easy and fast. If a client is upset, what do you do? If there’s an issue with an account, what do you do? How do you manage the handoff from sales to production effectively to avoid clients needing to repeat themselves? Clients don’t like lip service, and the first thing you want to do is to have a system that enables you to deliver it right the first time.

Finally, you have to care and be empathetic to the customer. If you understand that the client is getting bad service or interacting with people who are indifferent to them multiple

times a week, you can do great things. Empathetic communication could have helped Ford avoid my frustration. Most customers will understand that people make mistakes. Show them you care and take steps to make it right when mistakes happen.

Make sure your service stands out, and you will grow your business as a result — that I know for sure.

If your team needs inspiration for improving the level of service you provide or training to refine the processes that impact customer service, join us at GROW! 2023 in San Antonio, Texas, from Feb. 28-March 2. At this event, we’ll take a deep dive into Summit Landscape and Design’s operation and learn how they provide superior service to their clients. We’ll have main stage and breakout sessions to help you improve your business in every area possible. Come join us, and if you do, make sure you find me to say hello! Register at GrowGroupInc.com/Grow-2023. 

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