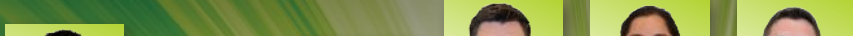




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[CALL FOR ENTRIES]

LM accepting submissions for 2022 LM150 list

We've opened our submission process for the 2022 LM150 list. Entries are due by April 1. Companies with \$10 million or more in annual revenue are encouraged to complete the form online at LandscapeManagement.net. The LM150 is the list of the largest landscape companies, ranked by annual revenue. The 2022 LM150 list, sponsored by Aspire Software and Grasshopper Mowers, will appear in the June issue of LM. Please contact LM Special Projects Editor Marisa Palmieri at 440-537-4308 or mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net with questions.



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Hanging up the high tops

Basketball has always been a passion of mine. My love of hoops is one of the things that drew me to Kansas University, which regularly has one of the top teams in college. I crammed a lot of basketball watching in my four years at KU. I also laced 'em up and played as often as possible. It was always easy to find a game, either in the intramural leagues or at the various courts around campus.

After graduating college, it wasn't as easy to find a game, so a group of us decided to put together a city league basketball team. We weren't ever good enough to win the league and after a while, we started struggling to get enough guys to show up for games. Eventually, we dropped out of the league.

But we kept playing as a group and learned that we had more fun getting 10 to 15 guys together to play two hours of pickup basketball on Sundays. We all started growing up, getting married and having kids, but we kept the core together and played for more than 20 years on a rented court just a few blocks from my house.

“Bringing back the LM Growth Summit, which we recap in this issue, was a welcome revival of something that was temporarily on hold.”

As the original guys started dropping off, we replaced them with younger guys. In recent years, as my knees aged and I slowed, the young guys got too fast for me. There were only two of us originals left, both of us named Seth. Despite playing different positions—I'm a forward, he's a guard—we made an agreement that us two old guys would guard each other and go easy while the young pups would get after one another.

The pandemic was the nail in the coffin for Sunday pickup basketball. We never had a formal going away game. We all walked off the court one day and that was it. I'm glad I played OK on that last day and hit a few 3s. At least I can say I won the last battle of the Seths.

It didn't occur to me at the time that this was the end of my basketball playing career. And it made me wonder. How many times are we doing something we love for the last time and we don't even know it?

Recently we hosted the LM Growth Summit again, back at Reunion Resort in Orlando. I remember the moment we

made the decision to cancel the event in 2020. I considered how much work I had put into the event, only to see it all just go POOF! Gone. I remember sitting at my desk, breathing a heavy sigh, and then getting back to work. There was nothing else I could do.

Bringing back the LM Growth Summit, which we hosted recently and recap in this issue, was a welcome revival of something that was temporarily on hold. It was such a great feeling to once again walk into a room of 50-plus people (including my team; to see the complete list of who was there, and who is on the cover, see page 16), a mix of people I knew and people I was excited to meet.

Some things go away and they're gone forever, like Sunday pickup. My knees don't ache on Mondays anymore, but I do miss the rewarding sound of the ball swishing through the net. I'm not totally out of basketball these days—I'm coaching my son's 3rd and 4th-grade rec league team. At least I can still keep up with 10-year-olds.

Some things go away but then they come back, like the LM Growth Summit. I'm grateful for the return of these opportunities to network and learn. When they went away, I didn't know how long they'd be gone. Now that they're back? I plan to take full advantage. Because you never know when you're hanging up your high tops for good. 🍷





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MORE ONLINE

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

What challenges do you expect the busy season to bring, and how can landscape pros contend with them?

“‘Busy’ is an interesting word. Are you good busy or just busy to be busy? Focus your time and your ‘busy’ in that which reaps you the greatest rewards.”



Landscape Professionals

Richard Bare
Arbor-Nomics Turf
Norcross, Ga.

Troy Clogg
Troy Clogg Landscape Associates
Wixom, Mich.

Paul Fraynd
Sun Valley Landscaping
Omaha, Neb.

Luke Henry
ProScape Lawn & Landscaping Services
Marion, Ohio

Chris Joyce
Joyce Landscaping
Cape Cod, Mass.

Aaron Katerberg
Grapids Irrigation
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Jerry McKay
McKay Landscape Lighting
Omaha, Neb.

Bryan Stolz
Winterberry Landscape & Garden Center
Southington, Conn.

Greg Winchel
Winchel Irrigation
Grandville, Mich.

Industry Consultants

Dan Gordon
TurfBooks
Newton, N.J.

Marty Grunder
The Grow Group
Dayton, Ohio

Phil Harwood
Grow the Bench
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Kevin Kehoe
3PG Consulting
Laguna, Calif.

Jeffrey Scott
Jeffrey Scott Consulting
New Orleans, La.



“We are planning for continued challenges in the labor market and for price pressure from higher wages and our ability to pass on cost to our clients.”



“Hiring people. Start the process early!”

“When budgeting for equipment purchases, assign extra value to assets that replace labor. If, by purchasing a new attachment or piece of equipment, you can reduce crew size from four to three, that’s a bigger win now than it was in the past.”



“With materials costs changing, some contractors bid on projects with outdated pricing. Material quotes from vendors often are only good for 14 days. We tend to get busy with the work and overlook the price increase. Then, at the end of the year, contractors wonder why they worked so hard but didn’t make the profit margin they need.”



“Strong demand will bring opportunities for differentiation and price increases.”



“1. Make sure your place is a great place to work, knowing that cookouts, snacks and fancy trips don’t engage people. Meaningful work and rewards, both emotional and financial, do. 2. After working hard to engage your team, look at your operations. Where are the inefficiencies?”



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LM GALLERY

Snapshots from the LM Growth Summit in Orlando, Fla.

1 Three under par (Left to right) Tom Knopsnyder, vice president of operations for Green Lawn Fertilizing; Kevin Stoltman, president and CEO of North Coast Media (parent company of *Landscape Management*) and George Kinkead, president of Turfco, put their golf games on display at the LM Growth Summit.

2 My eyes! This group didn't win the golf scramble, but Chris Senske (third from left), president of Senske Services, won the most visible award with those colorful shorts. Golfing with Senske were (left to right) Derek Madden of Go Green; John Kinkead of Turfco and Jamie Heydinger of Nufarm.

3 Big hitters, long ... It was bomb's away for this foursome of long drive champions. From left to right are Josh Cull, operations manager with Emerald Lawn Care; Todd Deitz, Great Lakes territory manager for Prime Source; Nicolas Freeman, senior account executive with Lytx and Russell Skipper, owner of Solid Green Lawn & Landscape.

4 Steel Green on LMTV Joey Ciccolini, LM digital editor, and Christina Herrick, LM editor (seated) interview (left to right) Steel Green co-founders Scot Jones and Matt Smith. We'll share these interviews throughout the year on LandscapeManagement.net and in our LMDirect! newsletter.

5 Good time with "Goody" Whenever this group gets together, it's a guaranteed good time. From left to right, Jake "Goody" Goodman, LM; Allan Fulcher, Quali-Pro; Ciccolini; Allison Blong, LM and Paul Fox, Quali-Pro.

6 Drop the mic Uh-oh, looks like LM Editor-in-Chief Seth Jones (second from left) had the microphone in one hand, a beer in the other — a dangerous combination.

Trying to keep him from saying anything stupid are (left to right) LM Publisher Bill Roddy and Fulcher and Fox.



1



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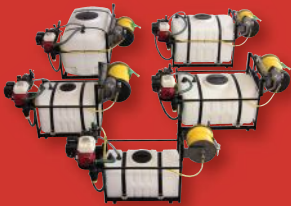


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PHOTOS: LM STAFF



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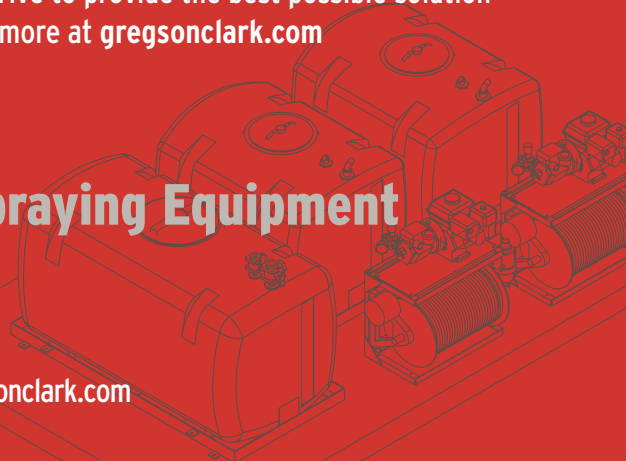


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Jeffrey Scott (left), welcomes attendees to his retreat in New Orleans. Scott was joined by several speakers, including Mike Haynes (right), founder of The Loving Cos.

JEFFREY SCOTT HOSTS EXECUTIVE RETREAT

BY LM STAFF

More than 75 members of Jeffrey Scott's peer group and coaching clients gathered in New Orleans for two days of connecting with new members and reconnecting with old ones during Scott's inaugural client-exclusive Executive Retreat.

The event kicked off with a private concert and reception at Preservation Hall Jazz Club in the French Quarter, followed by exploring the city.

On day two, the group listened to three speakers, each offering their unique take on how to prosper in the landscape industry.



Haynes shared with attendees how he took his business from \$0 revenue to \$100 million in less than 20 years.

Plus, Scott introduced Loriena Harrington, owner and horticulturist at Beautiful Blooms Landscape & Design in Milwaukee, Wis., as a new peer group leader.

Mike Haynes, founder, The Loving Cos., kicked off the event with a keynote in which he shared his journey from \$0 to \$100 million in revenue in less than 20 years. He shared tools and approaches he uses to ensure his team leaders have

ownership for their areas and the metrics they need to be accountable, allowing him to keep scaling at a fast pace.

Marcus Kerske, owner of Gardens of Babylon in Nashville, discussed his system for hiring overseas remote workers. He has about 18 remote workers for the cost of two and a half full-time local people. Four people in India run his accounting and for the cost of \$48,000. The rest of his remote workers come from the Philippines and Belize.

"His high profit margins show that



Scott introduced National Association of Landscape Professionals' Woman Entrepreneur of the Year, Loriena Harrington as a peer group leader.

this approach works," Scott said.

Matt Hine of Hiner Outdoor Living in Colorado Springs, Colo., spoke about integrating a full-time videographer into his business. His videographer spends 50 percent of his time filming, 40 percent editing and 10 percent posting content on social media.

"It was surprising to learn just how affordable this approach is and how it can also impact training and employee recruiting, not just client marketing," Scott said. 📺

ASLA Landscape Architecture Projects to be archived in the Library of Congress

The Library of Congress and the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) are collaborating to archive the society's professional award-winning projects, the first time that collections representing the landscape architecture profession will be archived by a U.S. federal institution.

While the Library of Congress has archived collections representing the professions of architecture, design and engineering since the 1800s, this collaboration reflects the library's recognition of the growing significance of landscape architecture in society. Each year the society will add new designs to the collection.

"This is a step forward in strengthening the connection between landscape architecture and the built environment," said Torey Carter-Conneen, CEO of ASLA. "The chosen winners are a snapshot of the issues we face in our society each year and how landscape architects are addressing them, which also demonstrates the increasing relevance of landscape architecture to global communities."

Hillsdale College institutes Kehoe Family Initiative for Entrepreneurial Excellence

Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Mich., launched the Kehoe Family Initiative for Entrepreneurial Excellence (KFIEE), a five-semester program for Hillsdale College students who aim to join the free market as entrepreneurs after they graduate. Students of all majors were invited to apply during the fall 2021 semester.

"The Kehoe Family Initiative for Entrepreneurial Excellence is

a rigorous fellowship that will prepare Hillsdale College students who want to start their own businesses after college to be unequivocally successful in those endeavors," said Ken Koopmans, executive director of career services at Hillsdale College.

The initiative awards a \$10,000 scholarship over the course of five semesters to each accepted student, regardless of his or her major. Up to nine students will be accepted each year.

The KFIEE was made possible by Kevin Kehoe, who started his consulting firm, Kehoe & Co., in 1993. Kehoe founded The Aspire Software Co. in 2014 and in 2021, sold that company to Service Titan, where he retains a position as a consultant.

Schill Grounds Management acquires Envirosapes

Envirosapes of Louisville, Ohio, has joined Schill Grounds Management of North Ridgeville, Ohio. Schill Grounds Management came in at No. 94 on the 2021 *LM150* list with \$26 million in annual revenue.

Envirosapes provides commercial landscape maintenance, design/installation services, snow and ice removal and public utility clearing and mowing. Schill Grounds Management provides commercial landscaping and snow removal. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

The addition of Envirosapes is one of many moves Schill has made in the last several years, including the addition of The Ohio Valley Group's commercial division and the addition of Ward + Thornton Landscapes of Maineville, Ohio, and Fredericks Landscaping of Cincinnati.

BRIGHTVIEW GROWS WITH ADDITION OF PERFORMANCE LANDSCAPES

BrightView Holdings, No. 1 on the 2021 *LM150* list, grows again with the acquisition of Performance Landscapes, a commercial landscaping company headquartered in Honolulu, Hawaii. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

Formed in 2002, Performance Landscapes provides landscape maintenance, irrigation, enhancement, installation, arbor care and pest control services. The company has more than 100 trained and qualified landscape employees who serve clients across the homeowners' association, high-end residential, commercial and private military housing market segments.

"Hawaii's landscapes are renowned for their beauty and cultural significance, something we came to appreciate through our development services team's work in Hawaii," said Andrew Masterman, BrightView president and CEO. "BrightView is excited to add maintenance services to its existing development capabilities on the islands."

BrightView Development Services has been a licensed landscape and irrigation contractor in Hawaii since 2008. In addition to renovating the Hualalai Four Seasons in Kona following a tsunami in 2011, BrightView restored the irrigation system for the Hilton Waikoloa Village and Resort and performed landscape architecture work at the Four Seasons Maui.

MY **GROWTH SUMMIT EXPERIENCE**

An attendee recaps the *LM* Growth Summit

BY AN ANONYMOUS LAWN CARE OPERATOR, WITH HELP FROM THE *LM* STAFF



John Kinkead, southern regional sales manager, Turfco, took advantage of a steep slope near their outdoor demonstration area to show off the capabilities of their spreader-sprayers to attendees of the *LM* Growth Summit.

I've been reading *Landscape Management* for years, but because of the weirdness of the last few years, in 2021 I probably read it closer than ever. That's how I saw a page buried in the back of the magazine about an event in Florida called the *LM* Growth Summit with a message to visit the website to apply and see if you qualify.

What the heck, I thought. I put the magazine down and applied.

Much to my surprise, a few weeks later Seth Jones, the editor-in-chief of the magazine, was in my voicemail. I had almost forgotten about applying by then. After a discussion with Seth, where he further explained the format and the agenda, I called my vice president of operations and told him to save the dates — we were both going to Orlando to see what this *LM* Growth Summit was all about.

What follows is my experience at the event, as best as I can recall, with the help of my new friends at *LM* magazine.

DAY ONE

Upon arriving in Orlando we took a shuttle to Reunion Resort, a beautifully maintained property about 45-minutes from the airport. We entered the lobby to find the *Landscape Management* team waiting to greet us. This is when we were handed our schedules that were specifically made for me and my co-worker. And that's when we further learned the way the *LM* Growth Summit worked, and how it differs from a trade show or educational seminar.

There are three groups of attendees at the event: representatives of 20-plus lawn care companies; representatives of 13 industry vendors; and the *LM* staff. Right off the bat, all 20 lawn care companies went to the top floor of the resort and took a seat. Then, one by one, the 12 different companies entered the room and gave us a quick 10-minute presentation. The following day, all 20 LCOs systematically rotated meetings, either outside on the driving range or inside the resort, with each of these companies.

That part was like speed dating for lawn care.

After we got settled into our rooms, we headed up to the top floor of the resort and found our seats.



BOARDROOM PRESENTATIONS

The top floor of Reunion Resort is beautiful, half restaurant and half open-air patio with a walk-in pool. It's an interesting setting for the boardroom presentations.

Chris Brasher, vice president of sales and marketing for Slingshot kicked it off. He took to the podium and asked us LCOs, "Who loves it when an employee calls off sick on a Monday in March?"

Nobody raised their hand. He then asked: "What if it's three customer service reps?"

"Eighty percent of business owners right now are experiencing a more than 20 percent loss of sales due to hiring challenges," he said, telling us Slingshot can provide short-term solutions to help navigate our busiest times of the year. Brasher shared how Slingshot's technology could help my business connect with more sales and customer service calls in a timely fashion.

Lyt's boardroom presentation was part show-and-tell. Nicolas Freeman, senior account manager, passed around the company's Lytx DriveCam, an in-vehicle event recorder.

I liked the chance to see the device up close. We take safety seriously at our company and I'm interested in how a device like this in our vehicles would reinforce our safety protocols. Freeman said companies who use Lytx DriveCam technology experience an 80 percent reduction in insurance costs.

The boardrooms were moving pretty quickly at this point. A lot of information was coming at us. Most attendees had notebooks

Continued on page 14

EASY PEASY

George Kinkead, president of Turfco, discussed the importance of having equipment that was easy to operate with attendees. "The business is going through an amazing transformation right now. Everyone attending the *LM* Growth Summit is growing their business phenomenally," Kinkead said. "The challenge they're dealing with is labor. Labor is the No. 1 issue that is restricting their ability to grow. So we're talking about training ... they need to buy equipment that is going to help them with their next employee — the employee they don't even have yet."

Continued from page 13

and looked like they were in a college classroom while others simply listened attentively.

Nufarm took the podium with Rod Marquardt, national warm-season account manager and Jamie Heydinger, national cool-season LCO and key account manager. They briefly talked about their products like Anuew, Celero, Escalade 2 and Arena. Then they talked about how weird 2021 was (tell me about it.)

“We saw a lot of issues with armyworms across the country; that’s something we haven’t seen in 25 years,” Marquardt said. “Chinch bugs were across the northern parts of the country. That’s a pest we never used to hear about. And kyllinga spread to parts of the country that haven’t seen it before.”

After two-and-a-half hours, the boardroom presentations were wrapped. We had a short break, then we met at a new location at Reunion Resort. And yes, there was another beautiful pool surrounded by beautiful landscaping as well as a busy bar monopolized by the LM Growth Summit group.

I sat down with David Louttit and Ken Klopp, territory managers with The Andersons at dinner. The Andersons is a company I already do business with, so it was nice to put some more faces to names. I picked their brains about the supply chain issues and what they’re hearing.

“It’s as bad as we’ve seen it since 2008 and it will remain like this until at least Q2 of 2022,” Klopp said.

Justin Watts, national sales manager for Prime Source, chimed in and said they’ve seen a dramatic change in the way their customers are buying materials because of this.

“People are planning ahead a lot more than they have in the past,” he said. “We’ve seen continued supply shortages in 2021 and guys trying



NO MIDDLE MAN
Two of Steel Green’s co-founders, Matt Smith (top, right) and Scot Jones (bottom, right) were at the LM Growth Summit to talk directly to attendees like David Drennan, Andrews Lawn and Landscaping (top, left) and Scott Lamon Tynic Landscaping (bottom, left).



to react to that to make sure for 2022 that they have what they need.

We’ve seen really successful Early Order Programs with guys paying attention to shortages.”

DAY TWO

Day one was busy but day two would prove to be even busier. This was the day that our one-on-one meetings took place in the morning, followed by an afternoon round of golf (something I was dreading).

Our first meeting was with American Honda Motor Co. Marketing manager Yuko Furuichi got me thinking about how we manage our two-cycle engine equipment maintenance intervals. I told her that’s one thing we struggle with, especially once our season is rolling.

Furuichi showed us an app Honda has to help us track how our crews use our small equipment. It helps us understand if we have the right amount of equipment, too much or not enough. She said this app helps the team become more productive

and get a better sense of equipment repair and usage costs.

“(In the app) we visualize the daily equipment usage rates,” she told us. “Based on that data, we try to help landscaping companies understand if there’s any room to reduce the size of the fleet. And by doing that, improve productivity by reducing repair cost or equipment replacement costs.”

When we met with the team from FieldRoutes, Anthony Joseph, account manager, shared how his company could help us boost our digital presence. Joseph told us how important our website and online presence would be to hit my growth target and how FieldRoutes could help us get the business out there to potential clients.

“People are smarter, and smarter buyers nowadays are going online,” he told us. “They’re researching companies. They’re reading the company’s online profile to see who’s worked with them in the past. And then that’s

Continued on page 16



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Continued from page 14

how they're deciding on customers are working with."

After wrapping up there we walked down the hall to meet with Green County Fertilizer Co. It's a Georgia-based fertilizer company I was somewhat familiar with, but now here we are meeting with the CEO and founder of the company, John Perry. He looks like a lumberjack but talks like a mad scientist. After telling us that "he's never had bad sushi," he started talking about why his company wanted to meet with the attendees.

"We're looking for holes in programs, where people have a problem they need to fix," Perry said. "We're looking to benefit your company in a different way. We're not necessarily trying to replace an entire program. We're saying, here, this is something that will fit in well, it'll fit into your comfort zone and you'll be off and running with better turf."

After one-on-one meetings concluded for the day it was time to play 18 holes of golf. I'll admit I haven't played since high school and even then, I don't know if what we were doing really qualified as playing golf. But here we were, loading up into golf carts listening to the starter read us the rules of the 18-hole scramble.

FORE!

Thankfully I was paired with good players in my group, so there was no pressure on me to play well. Allan Fulcher, vice president of turf for Quali-Pro was in my group. It was after about the fifth hole — and a couple very good shots — that he admitted he once made a go at playing professional golf. (I'll add though, that out of nowhere, I had the longest drive of any of the players in my group ... the highlight of my round.)

Being on the golf course for a little over four hours gave everyone a chance to get to know one another. Fulcher is extremely passionate about the industry and gave me some insights in what he foresees as a challenge for the industry in the next decade: pesticide regulations.

"You have certain cities banning different pesticides and different applications of certain molecules, even if it isn't an EPA ban," Fulcher said. "I think a lot of these are starting to snowball together.

One here, one there. It's even as localized down to the HOAs. With the EPA as a whole limiting products,

Continued on page 18

OWN THE ROOM

John Perry, president, Green County Fertilizer Co., addresses the LM Growth Summit on day one, during the boardroom presentations. Presentations were limited to 10 minutes each.



ON THE COVER

1. Ben Molitor, Best Lawn Care
2. Christie Zawacki, Slingshot
3. Evan Parenti, FMC
4. Jason Dorsey, Turf Magic
5. Russell Skipper, Solid Green Lawn & Landscape
6. Luke Hawthorne, Emerald Lawns
7. Tom Donahue, Donahue & Sons Management
8. Allan Fulcher, Quali-Pro
9. Brad Hendrickson, Turfco
10. Chuck Barber, Anuvia Plant Nutrients
11. George Kinkead, Turfco
12. Jeremy Elliot, myLawn! Turf & Tree
13. Josh Cull, Emerald Lawn Care
14. David Drennan, Andrews Lawn and Landscaping
15. Rod Marquardt, Nufarm
16. Larry Ryan, Ryan Lawn & Tree
17. Andy Thompson, Coastal Greenery
18. Brian Gray, Precision Landscape Management
19. John Bell, Free Spray Lawn Care
20. Justin Johnson, FieldRoutes
21. Scot Jones, Steel Green Manufacturing
22. Anthony Joseph, FieldRoutes
23. Chris Brasher, Slingshot
24. Myron Ritter, BioGreen of Brevard
25. Justin Watts, Prime Source
26. Scott Lamon, Tynic Landscaping
27. Avani Aggarwal, FieldRoutes
28. Chris Senske, Senske Services
29. Ken Klopp, The Andersons
30. Keaton Elliot, myLawn! Turf & Tree
31. James Yarasavych, New England Lawn Care
32. Henry Holst, GreenLawn Fertilizing
33. Aaron Johnsen, bioLawn, bioTree & bioHome
34. Todd Deitz, Prime Source
35. Patrick Vailancourt, Northern Turf Management
36. Will Haselbauer, bioLawn, bioTree & bioHome
37. Justin Berg, Purple Care
38. Matt Smith, Steel Green Manufacturing
39. Tom Knopsnyder, Green Lawn Fertilizing
40. Allan Dufoe, FMC
41. Jerol Mariotti, Senske Services
42. Jamie Heydinger, Nufarm
43. Nathan Sonaf Frank, Lakeway Landscaping
44. Paul Fox, Quali-Pro
45. Yuko Furuichi, American Honda Motor Co., Inc.
46. Chris Sonaf Frank, Lakeway Landscaping
47. David Louttit, The Andersons
48. John Perry, Greene County Fertilizer Co.
49. Michael Prokopchak, Walnut Hill Landscape Co.
50. Nicolas Freeman, Lytx
51. John Kinkead, Turfco
52. John Fowler, Anuvia
53. Derek Madden, GoGreen



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LM GROWTH SUMMIT

Continued from page 16
two or three of our biggest products could take a hit. Not just for our company but industry-wide, talking to other manufacturers, there aren't a lot of new active ingredients in the pipeline to target turf pests. When the EPA starts targeting existing chemistries it makes it difficult look-

ing into the future, to combat these problems."

At the conclusion of golf, FMC sponsored a barbecue dinner where they gave away a truck (see photo, page 20). We didn't win the truck but the barbecue was excellent. One thing I can guarantee about the LM Growth Summit — you never go hungry.

HOME STRETCH

The last day, a half-day, had arrived. I started my day outdoors with the guys at Steel Green Manufacturing, Matt Smith and Scot Jones, two of the co-founders of the Indiana-based company. Based on their presentation from day one, I knew they

Continued on page 20



KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE
Chuck Barber, vice president customer accounts, speciality, Anuvia, describes the company's bio-based fertilizer and invites attendees to ask tough questions.

PHOTO: LM STAFF

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THE SOURCE MATTERS

LM GROWTH SUMMIT

Continued from page 18

were going to show off their new SGXL, a 120-gallon zero-turn sprayer that can be converted to a 350-pound spreader and can store an additional 10 bags of fertilizer (five bags each side) for the field.

“We’ve gone through a bunch of changes, a bunch of prototypes, which is what we’re known for — listening to customers and making changes until they’re completely satisfied,” Smith told us.

My last one-on-one was with Anuvia. I met with John Fowler, vice president of sales. He has a handshake that would break your hand and a laugh that fills a room.

Anuvia bills itself as “the future of fertilizer.” The Florida-based company produces environmentally friendly plant nutrient products. We learned about the lengths the company takes to create a fertilizer that leaves behind only clean air and clean water as byproducts. It was a real “how the sausage is made” meeting. After that meeting ended, my LM Growth Summit had adjourned.

Or so I thought. While waiting for the shuttle bus to the airport, I found myself in a conversation with Luke Hawthorne, owner of Emerald Lawns near Austin, Texas. Turns out he learned about Anuvia at the same event several years ago, and now he’s a customer.

This is one of the things that made the LM Growth Summit unique — hours after meeting with the company itself, and even after the meeting had adjourned, by happenstance I was chatting with a fellow lawn care operator about that same supplier and how their products were performing for his company.

Networking with industry peers — fellow LCOs, manufacturers and the LM staff — was really what the event was all about. It was two-and-a-half days that my company found very valuable, both right then and moving forward. 🙌

WINNER, WINNER
Mike Stephan, owner of Ultralawn in Euclid, Ohio, drove away from the LM Growth Summit in a new Ford F150 that he won as part of FMC celebrating 25 years of its Talstar product.



PHOTO: LM STAFF

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-Scott Lamon, Tynic Landscaping, Southwick, Mass.

Man-eaters no more

Manufacturers reflect on how far aerators have come

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

When it comes to almost every bit of machinery in the landscape and lawn care industry, the saying “they don’t make ‘em like they used to” is quite appropriate. And that is a good thing.

For example, walk-behind aerators of the past were either heavy and clumsy or light and ineffective.

Gary Sorensen, agronomic sales manager for SiteOne Landscape Supply, remembers when he started with LESCO in 1988, how primitive the aerators dedicated to the lawn care industry were.

“For lawncare, there really weren’t a lot of options back in the 1980s,” Sorensen says. “Lawncare was in its infancy stage, really starting to go. LESCO was deep into it. We came up with one of the first walk-behind aerators a customer could purchase. It was clumsy, but it was all that there was. We’ve come a long way since then.”

Scott Kinkead, executive vice president of Minnesota-based Turfco agrees. He recalls when aerifying was a job that made crewmembers crumble, or even worse, quit.

“It used to be you put your least experienced guy, or maybe even the guy you wanted to get rid of, on the aerator,” Kinkead says. “Because it was a man-eater, it was brutal. But that was 30 years ago when you could get people to do that. It’s a different environment today — people won’t put up with that (today).”

EVOLUTION

Aerators evolved because customers demanded it. Multifunctional ride-on aerators are now the norm. Aeration is

a growing market for both the manufacturers and the lawn care companies because it has become so efficient, Sorensen says.

“Operator speed is much more efficient. We also have options where you can put a drop-seeder in front, so they can drop seed, (and) run the aerator over it,” Sorensen says. “Now all you have to do is go back with your fertilizer. So instead of three passes, you’re only doing two.”

Kinkead adds that the machines are also more high-tech, with features like Turfco’s patented auto-depth control.

“Previously the operator had to ask, ‘What’s my psi (of pressure)?’ Because you don’t want to tear up the turf, but you do want to still aerify,” Kinkead says. “So now the operator can go out and aerate without worrying about his depth, or adding additional pressure.”

From the late 1980s to today, Sorensen

says he’s seen dozens of manufacturers work to create a better aerator. His company most recently released the Pro-Aer 30 and the Pro-Aer 36 in October, a line that have been so popular it sold it out the last two years.

Along with that, he says aeration services have become a money-maker, instead of a man-breaker, for the company’s customers.

“Now, it’s much more efficient,” he says. “The revenue streams, you can do three or four times the amount of (work) you used to do in a day... all of a sudden landscapers are saying, ‘You know what? This is a great source of revenue. Oh, and by the way, at the end of the day my guys aren’t unnecessarily tired.’”

“Everyone has the opportunity to grow, the only thing stopping them is people and productivity,” Kinkead adds. “Companies want their equipment to be more productive, more effective and take on less wear and tear. It’s easier to provide more services to the customers you already have than to add more customers.”



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STICKING OUT IN THE CROWD
Crabgrass can be easily identified thanks to its light color, pointed leaves and twisted veneration membrane ligule.



How to identify and prevent crabgrass and goosegrass

Experts say it's important to think about weed prevention so you're ready to spring into action this green season **BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR**

When grassy weeds take root, it's a tall order to rid a lawn of them. That's why it's important to implement a preventive plan this spring for weeds like crabgrass and goosegrass.

AVOID TURF TAKEOVERS

These two summer annual weeds can develop a dense canopy and outcompete the desired turfgrasses, says Eric Reasor, Ph.D., southeast research scientist at PBI-Gordon Corp.



Eric Reasor

"Dense weed canopies shade turfgrass plants to the point where they cannot properly grow and tiller," he says. "Moreover, weeds do not tolerate foot traffic and use as well as turfgrasses, leading to bare and unsafe areas."

These grassy weeds will compete with the turf for light, nutrients, water and space during the warmer months, says Dean Mosdell, Ph.D., technical manager at Syngenta. They also set seeds to spread next year.

"At the first frost, these plants will die, leaving voids in your lawn for increased weed invasion," says Mosdell.

The No. 1 prevention against crabgrass and goosegrass is having a healthy turf base, so lawn care operators (LCOs) should ensure they don't have bare spots or other areas that would be more susceptible to weeds, says Ian Rodriguez, Ph.D., technical services manager at Quali-Pro.

"Try to avoid going into the winter months with weak areas in the turf," Rodriguez says. "You want it to transition out of dormancy as fast as it can."

To prevent crabgrass and goosegrass from leaving their mark, LCOs need to ensure they follow the best practices for identifying and treating these weeds.

PROPERLY IDENTIFY WEEDS

Crabgrass and goosegrass are often confused with each other. However, it's important operators properly identify them because most herbicide control options for goosegrass are different than for crabgrass.

Both annual weeds typically germinate in the spring, grow in the summer and set seed in the fall. Crabgrass germinates when soil temperatures are 55 degrees F for several consecutive days, and goosegrass germinates when soil temperatures approach 60 degrees F.

Crabgrass tends to have a lighter green color than goosegrass and the surrounding turf. It has rolled veneration, membrane ligule and pointed leaves.

Goosegrass leaves have more rounded leaf tips, flattened stems and a white-colored plant base, Reasor says. Goosegrass is also more common in high-traffic areas with soil compaction, like along curves, driveways or sidewalks.

HOW TO TREAT

With few postemergent options for these weeds, applying a preemergent herbicide is the best course of action for crabgrass and goosegrass.

Operators should apply a preemergent herbicide prior to germination.

Application timings depend on their location and soil temperatures, ranging from late January in the South to early April in northern states, Mosdell says.

For the most efficient treatment plan, operators should plan to treat these weeds a year in advance, Reasor says. That aids in an LCO's ability to do timely herbicide applications, plan for herbicide mode of action rotation and use early order programs. Also, the preemergent program should involve split applications.

"Make initial applications prior to germination and then a secondary application two months later," Reasor says. "A third application may be beneficial if goosegrass is a persistent issue."


Waiting too late to put out preemergents or not applying them at all are the biggest mistakes Rodriguez sees operators making with these prolific seed producers.

"If you skip it, you're going to have way more problems throughout the season with weed control than if you had done at least one preemergent application," Rodriguez says.



Ian Rodriguez

While preemergent herbicides are highly effective, postemergents such as fenoxaprop, fluazifop, pinoxaden and quinclorac, can be used to control escapes during early growth stages, but the best approach is a well-rounded one.

"It is vital to properly manage turfgrass through cultural practices, scout for weeds and use postemergent herbicides to maximize herbicide efficacy and manage against herbicide resistance," Reasor says. 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.



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DID YOU KNOW

VICIOUS CYCLE
Sod webworms morph into moths, which can lay 200 or more eggs per night, turning a small problem into a much larger one.



Sod webworms are one unpredictable pest

Experts share how these insects can be tricky to diagnose but simple to control

BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER | CONTRIBUTOR

There are several telltale signs that sod webworms have invaded a lawn. For example, these insects chew off blades of grass just above the crown of the plant, leaving behind circular brown or yellow patches of turf. They carry the blades of grass into visible tunnels where they feed and leave behind tiny green pellets of waste. Despite all this evidence, Jeff Kolbe says lawn care operators (LCOs) often misdiagnose these pests.

“Sod webworms get misdiagnosed more often than not because technicians don’t get down close enough to see what is causing the damage,” says Kolbe, business consultant and manager of technical education for Spring-Green Lawn Care in Chicago. “You can’t just drive by a lawn and say, ‘That is sod webworm damage.’ You have to get down on your hands and knees and comb through the turf, looking for the signs that they have been feeding.”

Sod webworms are small caterpillars measuring 1/2 inch to 3/4 inch long, with small brown spots down their bodies. There are several types of sod webworms that thrive in different areas of the country. They are most commonly found in sunny areas of healthy turf in the late summer or early fall. The caterpillars morph into brown moths that fly around at dusk “like bomber jets,” laying 200 or more eggs per night, Kolbe says. The moths do not cause damage because they don’t eat the turf, but once the eggs hatch, the caterpillars begin to feed.

“Once you’ve seen the moths, that’s a good indicator that you may soon have a problem,” Kolbe says. “After that, you’ll start to see what looks like burns in the lawn.”

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

LCOs often confuse these burn-like spots for other problems like drought, fungus or even pet urine. The insects themselves also can be difficult to see because both the caterpillars and the moths are most active at dusk and into the evening. Unlike other pests, sod webworms do not consistently appear every year. Chris Lemcke, technical coordinator of Weed Man, headquartered in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, says several years can go by without an infestation, making it difficult to stay in front of the problem. Lemcke says consistent scouting is the best way to prevent a sod webworm outbreak, and Weed Man trains its technicians to be on the lookout for sod webworms at certain times of the year.



“It can be hard to prepare because outbreaks can come out of nowhere,” Lemcke says, adding that these insects can be carried from place to place by storms or wind. “You don’t know from one year to the next when there will be an issue, but if we see them, we can control them pretty easily.”



Chris Lemcke

Phil Klemme, owner of The Grounds Guys of Union in Union, Mo., says LCOs can determine if sod webworms are present by saturating a damaged area of turf with a mixture of 2 gallons of water and 2 tablespoons of liquid dishwashing soap. This application will force any

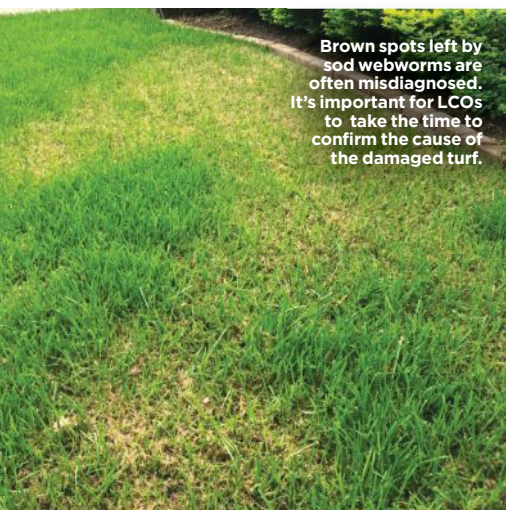


Phil Klemme

larvae to the surface of the ground within a few minutes. Once identified, LCOs can deploy pyrethroid insecticides designed for surface-feeding insects to treat sod webworms.

“If you find more than 10 to 15 larvae within a 3-foot by 3-foot area, a treatment is definitely needed,” Klemme says. “A common mistake in treating sod webworms is misdiagnosis. You need to make sure it is sod webworms and not a fungus or pet damage, which all require completely different treatments.”

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.



Brown spots left by sod webworms are often misdiagnosed. It’s important for LCOs to take the time to confirm the cause of the damaged turf.

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THE BIG ONE

Color coordinating

BY SARAH WEBB
LM MANAGING EDITOR

LOCATION Wilmette, Ill.

COMPANY Chalet

DETAILS The clients wanted a colorful and private landscape they could enjoy with friends and family.

A granite cobble driveway welcomes guests, a large bluestone patio provides space for entertaining and 25 mature trees, flowering shrubs and perennials offer guests and residents an aesthetically pleasing view.

“We have a whole team dedicated to doing seasonal plantings, pedestal plantings as well as window boxes and planters on the back patio,” says Nathan Robinson, creative director at Chalet.

Chalet has been maintaining the property since it performed the landscape’s design and installation in 2016. Three crew members and one site manager visit the residence weekly, paying careful attention to bed edging, weeding and trimming by hand, tending to window boxes and pedestal containers and mowing with Scag 36-inch walk-behind mowers.

Challenges include contending with sickly trees, poorly draining clay soil and a shady backyard.

Chalet prioritizes fertilizing and maintaining the large shade trees on the property and preserving a lush planting border for privacy in the backyard. The company has improved the soil quality by mixing in organic materials and topdressing beds with leaf compost.

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

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



Captions |

- 1.** Visits from a weekly maintenance crew include lawn mowing, bed edging and flower deadheading.
- 2.** Bluestone step-pers with turf joints act as a transition between spaces.
- 3.** A granite cobble drive and entry piers with annual planters welcome guests.
- 4.** Chalet routinely weeds and deadheads lush perennial beds around the back patio.

MAINTENANCE SHOP

Get a head start on mower maintenance

Experts share why now is the time to get your fleet ready for spring **BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

It's never too early to think about spring, especially when it comes to preparing your mower fleet.

For parts of the U.S., spring might feel light-years away, but rest assured the busy season is right around the corner. Experts say now more than ever, contractors must prepare their mowers for a heavy workload in the spring.

"It sets the foundation for the busy spring cleanup season and the mowing season," Justin Green, customer service manager with Briggs & Stratton, says. "Spring maintenance is for making sure your equipment is in good condition and ready for the season so that you don't have breakdowns because breakdowns can get costly — not just in time, but also in getting the work done."

Whether it's a zero-turn, stand-on or a walk-behind mower, preseason maintenance is important.

LM spoke with Green and Michael Simmon, marketing communications specialist for Grasshopper Mowers,

about why spring maintenance is so critical and what contractors should be doing as they prep their mowers.

EASY TO OVERLOOK

Grasshopper's Simmon recommends keeping a maintenance log to make sure maintenance — such as oil changes and air filter replacements — takes place when it needs to. The company also has a mower prep checklist online for contractors to consult as they gear up for the spring.

Simmon also advises consulting service manuals for specifics when it comes to procedures, schedules and replacement part lists.

"Use only original equipment manufacturer (OEM) replacement parts, as OEM parts are designed to work in conjunction with specific systems," he says.

Green agrees, saying the service manual is a great first place to check when starting spring maintenance.

"It's too often that once the season

gets going those things are going to get missed or put off," he says. "They'll say, 'I'll do it when it's raining,' and then it just never gets done."

DIFFERENT MOWERS

No matter the type of mower, regular maintenance is important. But does the type of mower change the maintenance needs? Not really, according to Green.

"They all have something that might drive the wheels, whether it's a transaxle or a pump and wheel motor system, they all have a belt there. They all have recommended oil change intervals or inspection intervals," he says. "So, really, the type of mower doesn't change the basic maintenance of that mower. They all have the same basic components that all need to be checked."

SUPPLY CHAIN WOES

Supply chain interruptions played a major role in parts availability in 2021. With no signs of that issue ending soon, it promises to be an even bigger problem this year.

"The availability of any number of different parts could be affected at any time. The best way for you to insulate yourself from parts supply disruptions is to stock up now on wear items such as belts, blades and filters," says Simmon.

As the mowing season kicks off, the demand for those items could increase and, in turn, increase prices and wait times for delivery. Experts say it's more important than ever to order ahead and put a premium on winter and spring maintenance. A maintenance problem that was a small inconvenience in the past could become a major problem this year.

Green agrees, saying, "Those that wait until the last minute are going to feel the biggest pain when it comes to the supply chain." 📞



Michael Simmon



HEAD START
Experts say preseason mower maintenance is more important than ever to ensure a smooth start to the busy season.

PHOTO: GRASSHOPPER

PRODUCTS THAT WORK

Spring cleanups



P2000 HURRICANE ZERO-TURN STAND-ON BLOWER

COMPANY: BillyGoat

URL: BillyGoat.com

Billy Goat's compact P2000 Hurricane zero-turn stand-on blower packs 3,500 cfm. Users can easily switch from left to right discharge via a dual discharge foot pedal and a proprietary dual deflector air flow system with adjustable air columns for maximum cleaning on turf or hard surfaces. The unit easily fits through a 36-inch gate and makes quick work of any midsized cleanup challenge.



APPARATUS FOR NAVIGATING TARPS



COMPANY: Practical Products

URL: TheAntTool.com

Practical Products' new Apparatus for Navigating Tarps (ANT) is a heavy-duty, padded strap that allows the user to move tarps faster, easier and safer versus bending over, grabbing the corners and walking backward. The 10-foot-long ANT is compatible with most tarps. Users clip the attached carabiners into the eyelets of a tarp, lean into the pad and pull the tarp while standing upright and facing forward. For debris, clippings, brush, leaves and more, the ANT is a labor-saving tool that speeds up cleanups.



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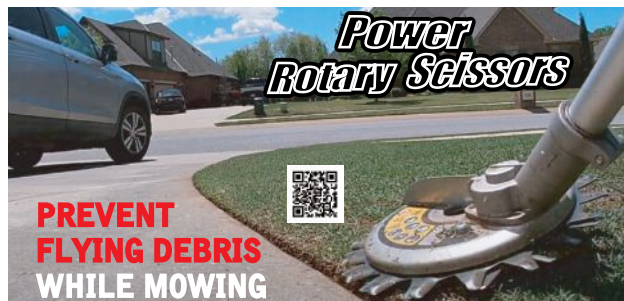
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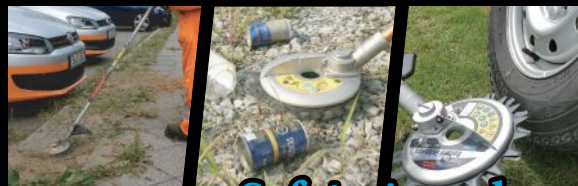
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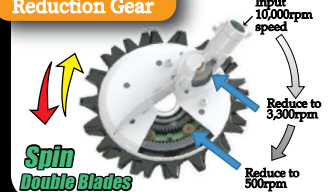
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➔ 450 TRACTOR WITH TURBINE BLOWER ATTACHMENT

COMPANY: Steiner
URL: SteinerTurf.com

The Steiner rotary sweeper attachment is designed for clearing away leaves, grass, debris and light snow on pathways, parking lots, sidewalks and driveways. Available in 15-inch and 24-inch diameter models, it reaches a speed of 265 rpm and features reversible rotation. With hydraulically controlled nylon broom angles for left- and right-hand operation, operators can tackle a variety of sweeping tasks. The Steiner 450 tractor also features more spring cleanup attachments, including a turbine blower, slip scoop, core aerator and a flail mower.



LEAF BURRITO ↓

COMPANY: Leaf Burrito
URL: LeafBurrito.com

The Leaf Burrito is designed to make bagging leaves, hedge clippings, weeds, sticks and grass clippings a simple task that's more ergonomic, efficient and eco-friendly than using traditional leaf bags. The Leaf Burrito starts flat then rolls up like a burrito thanks to heavy-duty zippers. The 5-foot Leaf Burrito holds the equivalent of four or more large leaf bags of debris. The 7-foot Leaf Burrito holds more than six bags. Leaf Burritos are strong and have heavy-duty handles for transporting material in and out of jobs.



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HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

French connection

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

LOCATION Boulder, Colo.

COMPANY Lifescape Colorado

DETAILS This landscape design strikes a balance between contemporary and traditional French design elements, influenced by the clients' travels through Europe. As a new build, this project needed to meet Boulder County's green building standards. The county sets strict limits and guidelines on permeable surface areas, high-efficiency irrigation, shade trees, mitigating light pollution and more.

To meet those goals, more than 84 percent of the site is permeable. The permeable paver circle driveway at the front of the property surrounds an existing maple tree. Irrigated turf makes up 18 percent of the 34,000-square-foot lot's green space.

"There's the dark sky requirement in Boulder so we had to downlight everything," says LeAnn Ostheimer, executive vice president of design/build for Lifescape Colorado. "Any up lights had to be tight against the house and had to have cowls on them."

Another challenge to the project was the site's location in a floodplain. The property's 100-year flood drainage needed to remain intact.

"We designed a cobbled street dry stream, and we planted layers of perennials among it," Ostheimer says. "There's a path that meanders through it with bridges that go over the swale."

The project won Lifescape Colorado a Gold Award from the 2021 National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program. 🏆

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



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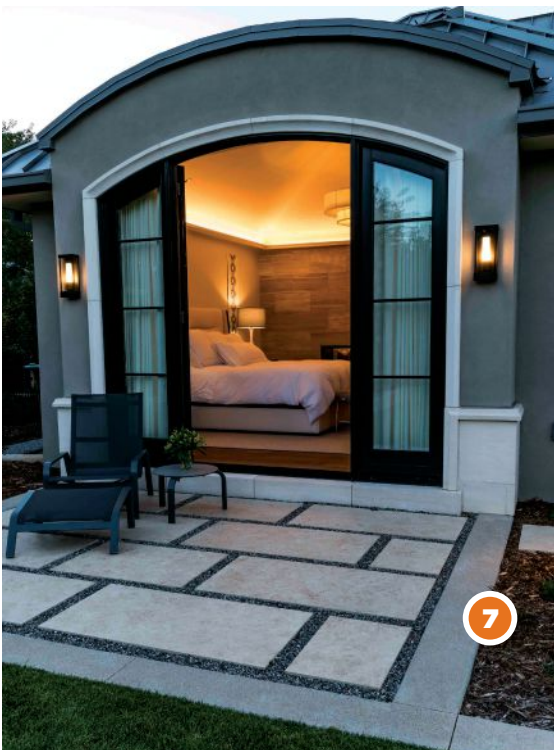


3



6

PHOTOS: DAN DEGRUSH



Captions | **1.** Clean lines define a modern look for the functional and accessible indoor/outdoor living space in the backyard. Every room in the house opens to the back of the home. **2.** The fire pit features a mix of textures and seating. The artificial turf offers guests the ability to sit on the ground around the fire if desired. Built-in seating provides a view of the entire property. **3.** The trail area, complete with flagstone slab bridges over rock creek beds, highlights an area designated to mitigate drainage swells of a 100-year flood. **4.** This view shows the entry fountain focal point and courtyard coming from the property's cutting garden. The stacked-stone wall separating the cutting garden is also seen in design elements throughout the home's interior and exterior. **5.** The permeable circle driveway highlights the property's European influence. The driveway wraps around an existing maple tree. Layers of shrubs, grasses and blooming roses and hydrangeas follow the lines of the home and the driveway. **6.** A close-up shows the courtyard entrance with a custom fountain. This entrance continues the theme of bringing the outdoors in with its large windows and glass doors. The path lighting meets the area's light pollution restrictions. **7.** This small patio, designed for the master bedroom, connects with the rest of the grounds but is also private. There is no path leading to it.

BUSINESS BOOSTERS

How to create an accurate design/build estimate

Experts share what systems you must have to ensure a successful start to a design/build project

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

Accurate estimating is a critical part of a design/build project, says Kellan Vincent, CEO and owner of Vincent Landscapes in Austin, Texas. He says it's also the difference between a good and bad relationship with a client for his high-end residential design/build and irrigation business.

"The last thing you want to do is go, 'By the way, there's going to be a 10 percent change order because we didn't do this right,'" he says. "At the very least,

you're damaging the relationship. At the very most, you're going to end up in (a legal dispute)."

Vincent; Scott Burk, president of Scott's Landscaping in State College, Pa.; and Brittany Adams Madden, account manager of ND Landscape Services in Georgetown, Mass., share steps to creating an accurate estimate.

KNOW YOUR QUANTITIES/TAKEOFF

Experts say working with takeoff software



is a critical component of estimating. ND Landscape Services started using LandOne Takeoff two years ago for its commercial and residential design/build, maintenance and snow and ice management business. Madden says she likes how the software integrates with satellite maps, which update every two to three months. She says having updated satellite images comes in handy if a site changes between bid and construction.

"If it's a project that's developing or if it's something that's changed in the landscape, you can go back into your old estimate, copy that over, and then

PHOTO: ND LANDSCAPE SERVICES

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UPDATES

Brittany Madden, account manager with ND Landscape Services says Landone Takeoff updates its satellite images every three months which keeps developing project measurements accurate.



put it into the new overhead mapping," she says.

Vincent Landscapes uses Vectorworks and its data and calculations to increase its accuracy with estimating. Vincent says in the past, the company would pad estimates with overages. Now, he says, the team is more confident in its data.

"We've gotten a lot closer estimating sod volume or the total square feet," he says. "We used to do that by hand, measuring rectangles over and over and you'd be within 10 percent, which could be a couple of pallets. You end up with two pallets or a pallet and a half sitting there that you have to dispose of now. Now, we're within about a half a pallet."

KNOW YOUR PRODUCTION RATES

Burk says another component to a

successful estimate is understanding production rates, essentially how long it takes a crew to perform a certain job. These figures must be realistic, he says.

"In the morning, if you plant 2.5-inch trees, you might plant them in two hours," he says. "It gets hot, the crew slows down and the afternoon it might take you three hours. You have to have a sustainable production rate that you can do all day long."

Vincent says his company records how long it takes a crew to do each specific job, the quantity involved (depth, length, etc.) and uses averages to attach labor hours to each project for each aspect of the job.


"I know in rocky soil, how much labor it takes to plant a certain type of tree, versus normal soft soil," he says.

HAVE A GOOD BIDDING SYSTEM

Another critical component to estimating is accurate material pricing. Vincent says his company pulls direct SKUs from Vectorworks into the estimate for an itemized list of products that goes into his company's budget for a project.

"You have to have the whole thing buttoned up from design to estimation and execution has to be almost exact or else your estimate doesn't really count," he says.

Burk says accurate bidding comes down to a company's confidence in its measurements and production rates. A company should verify its figures.

"You should (be able to) have three different estimators sit down with the same plan and come up with almost the identical same number," he says. "If you can do that, you have a good estimating system." 



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How stand-on skid steers cut a company's labor in half

Justin Moseley, project manager for Nelson Landscaping, shares how his company's Ditch Witch equipment is like having an additional crew on job sites

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

For Nelson Landscaping in Oklahoma City, Okla., the company's Ditch Witch SK stand-on skid-steers are like having an additional crew on a job site, says Justin Moseley, project manager.

"It's doubling your work power, essentially," he says. "It takes our labor force and it almost cuts it in half."

The equipment's weight is a big factor why Nelson Landscaping opted for Ditch Witch's stand-on skid-steers, Moseley says.



It's not uncommon for a crew to tow a stand-on skid-steer, an attachment or two and pallets of products on a dual-axle trailer.

"Having smaller machines gives us all of our capability of getting material to the job site easier," he says.

Moseley says Nelson Landscaping's Ditch Witch mini excavator also comes in handy for design/build projects, and the company will occasionally rent an additional one.

ATTACHMENTS GALORE

The Ditch Witch stand-on skid-steers are so invaluable to Moseley because of their versatile attachments. Every crew has a Ditch Witch stand-on skid-steer with a bucket and fork. Most crews also have a trencher attachment.

"That's what we use on a daily basis," he says. "It's easy to use all the different attachments that we need to have. Most

PHOTO: SUNDANCE PHOTOGRAPHY



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← NICHE WORK

Nelson Landscaping likes to use the Ditch Witch SK1050 stand-on-skid steers due to its size, operating capacity and balance.

of our places that we go to, we're installing the sprinkler system, we're doing the landscaping, we're installing all these big boulders (and) decent-sized trees."

Nelson Landscaping also has a power rake crews use for grading hills with the Ditch Witch SK500. The company also uses an auger attachment to dig holes for tree planting. Another thing Moseley likes about the stand-on skid-steers is their mobility and 2,270-pound weight and a maximum track width of 42 inches.

"They can get through gates, minimize your footprint without tearing up an existing yard," he says.

FIRST STEP

Moseley says when he started with Nelson Landscaping, the company did not have any stand-on skid-steers. That changed quickly when he showed Nelson Landscaping's owner how much

more productive crews could be with a Ditch Witch stand-on skid-steer.

"I was on a landscape project and asked the owner if I could show him a way of doing something a lot faster on doing just the demo work to pull everything out of a flower bed," he says. "I rented an SK and did it. He said, 'Wow, that was fast.'"

Nelson Landscaping's first skid-steer was the Ditch Witch SK735 in 2013. While Ditch Witch no longer manufactures that model, Moseley says his crews refer to the one still running as "Old Faithful."

The company also has many Ditch Witch SK850 and SK1050 stand-on skid-steers. Moseley says the SK1050 is the perfect size for the company — with its 1,062-pound rated operating capacity — and it replaces the work of three or four crew members with one machine.

"That's about the size that we like to

run, because it's just big enough to do a lot of our heavy lifting, lifting our boulders or trees, moving gravel or dirt," he says. "It's a lot better balanced machine; it's got a lot more power to it than the 755. It's our niche that we've found that we really like."

LOCATION, LOCATION

Nelson Landscaping went with Ditch Witch products partially based on the company's proximity to Ditch Witch's headquarters in Perry, Okla. Moseley points to a strong relationship with the local Ditch Witch dealership as a key to Nelson Landscaping's growth.

Moseley says many times Ditch Witch will approach the team at Nelson Landscaping to get feedback on products and features in development.

"They've been great to work with," he says. 📍

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WATER WORLD

Putting on the Pressure

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

LOCATION Colorado Springs, Colo.

COMPANY Weisburg Landscape Maintenance

DETAILS Despite record-low precipitation, Eric Moroski — co-owner and vice president of Weisburg Landscape Maintenance — knew immediately that the Bear Creek apartments' bright green turf was overwatered.


"The system was being run so much, it was like flood irrigation," he says.

The project was the pilot for Colorado Springs Utilities and the Colorado Water Conservation Board Business Irrigation Efficiency Rebate. Moroski's proposal to Bear Creek included 85 man-hours and replacing everything but the mainline, pipes and laterals. The property had two buildings, two taps and two controllers.

Weisburg Landscape Maintenance upped the pressure to 65 psi from 45 psi, providing 40 psi at the heads. The team also added 6-inch heads in the spray zones where 4-inch heads were used previously, which took considerable time to install due to the height difference, he says.

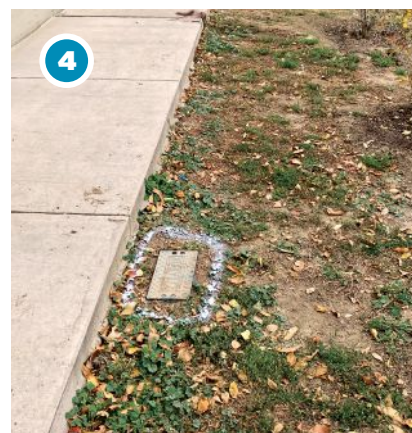
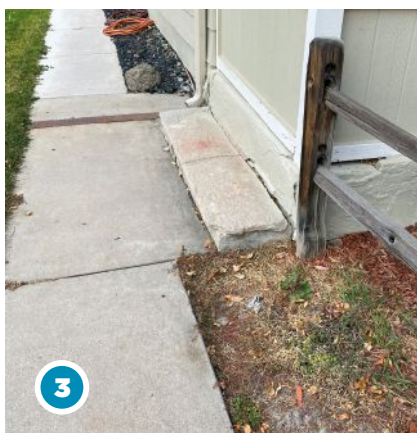
Weisburg Landscape Maintenance converted three spray zone beds to drip irrigation, added a pressure reducer and filter and ran the drip to plants.

"The beds went from 20 percent efficiency with heads to 100 percent efficiency," Moroski says.

The property is conservatively estimated to save 163,000 gallons per year. 

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

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.



Captions | **1.** The site originally had two taps in each building, so Weisburg Landscape Maintenance ran wires from one building to the other to eliminate a controller. **2.** The new controller with a Wi-Fi module was connected to an on-site network. **3.** Colorado Springs Utilities identified the property through algorithms that track when a customer's monthly consumption increases by 100 percent or more in the same month from the previous year. **4.** The turf soon went dormant after Weisburg Landscape Maintenance disabled the previous system. **5.** Weisburg Landscape Maintenance replaced all the heads in impact rotor and spray zones, as well as 10 old valves.

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PRODUCTS THAT WORK

PGP ROTOR



COMPANY: Hunter Industries

URL: HunterIndustries.com

The PGP is Hunter's original product — the item that put the company on the map in 1981. Continuous improvements and enhancements to its design and performance have allowed it to evolve. With the ability to deliver even water distribution from engineered nozzles, this sprinkler is reliable, durable and versatile.



5000 SERIES ROTORS

COMPANY: Rain Bird

URL: RainBird.com

With a throw distance of 25 to 50 feet, Rain Bird 5000 series rotors are ideal for a wide range of residential and commercial applications. A Triple-Blade Wiper Seal offers seven times the leak protection, while Rain Curtain nozzles provide a uniform spray pattern with large water droplets for superior wind resistance and gentle close-in watering that eliminates brown spots around the head. Options like Plus (flow shut-off), PRS (pressure regulation) and SAM (check valve) give contractors the flexibility they need to meet the demands of any landscape.



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POWER-LOC

COMPANY: Jain Irrigation



URL: JainsUSA.com

Available in many configurations, the Power-Loc line of drip products features an ergonomic locking motion, making the installation process easier for the contractor. Power-Locs are available in six sizes ranging from 15 to 20 millimeters with the PL-55 series the ideal choice for the 17-millimeter emitter line. One fitting can handle two different kinds of tubing with the PL-55 series also accommodating 1/2-inch supply tubing.



SUPERPRO ROTOR

COMPANY: K-Rain

URL: KRain.com

Starting with Intelligent Flow Technology, which allows the reduction of distance and flow rate simultaneously and proportionately up to 50 percent, SuperPro rotors contain all the best K-Rain features in one rotor. A top arc set indication and 40 degrees to continuous 360-degree arc adjustment make this rotor easy to set and adjust. The product also has an arc memory clutch that prevents internal gear damage and returns the rotor to its prior setting automatically if the turret is forced out of adjustment. The product comes with five free check valves per case.



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FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

John Bell

PRESIDENT
FREE SPRAY LAWN CARE
MANSFIELD, OHIO

1 How and when did you get your start in the industry?

Like many, I started out as a high school kid with a mower. Free Spray started in 2000 doing fertilization (and) weed control applications only. We've grown quite a bit over the past 20 years. We started out slow for the first five years — I was quite young then. I started right out of high school. As we've grown, we've figured out the way to make things work, and now we're in a rapid expansion period. We offer fertilization, weed control, flea and tick control and outdoor pest control. We're getting into mosquitoes this year. That's new for us.

2 What's the origin of the company name?

We're not exactly sure how we came up with it. We tossed around a bunch of different names, but it stuck. They always say 'free' is the most powerful word you can use in marketing. We were looking at Green Spray, or Lawn Spray, or any combination you always hear. What we came up with turns out to be unique. People remember it, they ask us about it. Anytime we talk to people they say, 'Oh, we remember that name,' or 'what does that name mean?' What we've adapted it into over the years is, when you start service with us, you're going to get some type of free treatment from us, whether that be a pest control treatment or one of your lawn care treatments. It's just a unique name that tends to stick with people.

3 Tell me about you and your family. What do you all do for fun?

I've been married to my wife Kim for 12 years now, we have two daughters, Ally and Avery, ages 11 and 6. The girls are very active in sports, even my youngest. We love to travel, and we've been to Germany a couple times and Luxembourg. We did a World War II history tour — you see battlefronts and all sorts of cool stuff. I'm into history. The kids love to go to amusement parks and so do I. I hate heights, but I love roller coasters. I guess when you're strapped in, you're going so fast, it's over so fast your body doesn't have time to think about it.

4 Do you have a favorite tool to get the job done?

We're very traditional. A lot of companies that do strictly lawn fertilization and weed control services are dedicated to zero-turn equipment. We're primarily hand-spray. We do have some zero-turn equipment for larger properties. I think being traditional has paid off well for us. There have been a lot of springs in the past few years that have been so wet out that other companies haven't been able to work, while we're able to get out there right away. Look at new products, new technologies and how they can help your business ... but don't get so caught up in it that you look past the old standbys.

5 How would you say your customers have changed over 20 years?

Every day customers want to be involved less and less. Twenty years ago when I got started in this business, they would want to know exactly what you're doing when and how it would work. How it would solve their particular problem. Customers now just want something that is simple and easy to understand. We're going to come in and give you a program that's going to take care of the problems with weeds, take care of the problems with color. Here's what it's going to cost, and we'll handle everything from there. Everybody is pressed for time now; they want simple solutions. The biggest thing you can do is make your program simple and easy for your clients to understand — that is going to take you the furthest. 📞

BEST ADVICE

"Know your numbers at all times. Know your costs and know your expenses."



PHOTO: LM STAFF



BY GREG HERRING

The author is the CEO of The Herring Group, financial leaders serving landscape companies. He can be reached at greg.herring@herring-group.com.

Secrets for successful labor hour management

The Herring Group 2021 Landscape Industry Peer Benchmark Report revealed some interesting profit data. Twenty-four percent of landscape companies had an operating profit margin greater than 10 percent.

The average operating profit margin for this group was 14 percent. The remaining companies had an average operating profit margin of 4 percent. That's a big difference and a big opportunity.

The operating profit margin is revenue minus all operating expenses, including depreciation and reasonable owners' compensation, divided by revenue. Operating profit excludes nonoperating items, like income from the forgiveness of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans.

With such a big opportunity for most companies to improve their profitability, let's discuss steps to take now to make the green season more profitable.

STEPS TO PROFITABILITY

Did you know that many landscape companies with snow operations are not profitable in their landscape operations? We see that situation frequently with our clients. It's unacceptable.

For companies with snow operations, here is a quick test: Run a monthly trended income statement in your accounting software for the period from Nov. 1, 2020, through Oct. 31, 2021. You should have 12 columns of numbers, one column for each month. Add up the operating income for the snow season — generally November through February or March.

Then, add up the operating income for the green season — March or

“If people cannot manage labor hours well, they cannot win with profit.”

April through October. Is the total operating income positive for the green season?

How do the operating profit margins for the snow season and the green season compare? For this analysis to be correct, depreciation and any bonus expense must be recorded every month. You will also need to exclude nonoperating items like PPP loan forgiveness income.

One of the three primary reasons for low profitability in the green season is poor labor hour management.

In this industry, if people cannot manage labor hours well, they cannot win with profit. In other words, the companies with the best labor hour management have the highest operating profit margins.

SECRETS TO GOOD LABOR HOUR MANAGEMENT

For perspective, in 2021, 60 percent of our clients had actual labor hours fewer than budgeted labor hours — they had great labor hour management practices.

What are the secrets to successful labor hour management?

- Empowering crew leaders.
- Empowering account managers or production managers.
- Clearly communicating the budget hour expectation.
- Managing hours daily.
- Managing the totality of hours — all paid crew hours. Crews incur hours

for preparation, travel, on-site work and shop work. Some companies only manage the on-site hours.

- Refusing to accept excuses for poor labor efficiency.
- Creating simple incentive plans for account managers or production managers based on labor efficiency — actual hours divided by budgeted hours.

EMPOWERING TEAM MEMBERS

How do you empower your team members? Consider this example. Recently, we had extended discussions with account managers from two different companies. We showed them reports of actual labor hours exceeding budgeted hours. We showed them the income statement for the green season that showed an operating loss.

Each group of account managers had no idea that their company was losing money in the green season.

They were mad. Why? Because the work was too difficult, and they created too much value for their customers not to generate a profit. What a great response! The account managers at one of those companies made changes the very next week — implementing some of the secrets above. They created significant change in less than 30 days. The proof was in the numbers.

Empowerment requires reliable data presented in a way that's easy to understand. In this case, the data should reflect all paid crew hours and show actual and budgeted hours.

It's February. Now is the time for your management team to develop a labor hour management plan so the company can achieve a higher operating profit margin in 2022 and beyond. 📌



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.

Got customers? You can lobby, too!

Here's a funny story, at least I think it's a funny story; your mileage may vary. Back when I owned my lawn care company, I had a friend who owned a nursery and landscape service in Cambridge, Mass. He didn't enjoy doing the fertilization part of the business, so he was eager to refer customers to me. One such customer was a guy named Bruce Mann, no relation to me.

Bruce lived in a beautiful three-story brownstone home just steps from Harvard Square. His lawn was perhaps 500 square feet, but it would take me half an hour or more to complete it because Bruce and I would start talking. He was a professor and told me he spent most of his time in the "Middle Ages," and we would talk about anything and everything. I suppose we all have customers like this, and I thoroughly enjoyed my visits with Bruce.

During the 2012 Senate campaign in Massachusetts, excitement swirled around a professor at the Harvard Law School who had been instrumental in the creation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, a priority of President Obama. Elizabeth Warren won the nomination of the Democratic party and eventually the general election. Something seemed awfully familiar about Ms. Warren, as if I had met her before. After a little digging around on the internet, I found that she lived on Linnaean Street in Cambridge. "You don't suppose..." I said to myself, and with a little more digging, I discovered that the woman I knew as Mrs. Mann was going to be the next senator from Massachusetts.

ON THE HILL

Fast forward to NALP's 2016 Legislative Day on the Hill event in Washington. I reached out to all the Massachusetts senators and representatives to request a meeting. Most ignored my request, sadly, but in my note to Sen. Warren's office, I made mention of being her lawn care guy and my friendship with Bruce. Surprisingly, I got an immediate reply with an offer not only to meet with the staffer that handles environmental issues but an invitation to attend a meet-and-greet event with Sen. Warren. The meeting with the staffer went very well. Although she had a doctorate in some aspect of environmental science, she knew little about the lawn care and landscape

MEETING UP
Bob Mann makes it a point to be a known constituent to his Massachusetts representative, Sen. Elizabeth Warren.

industry, so it was fun to share my issues with her. The meet and greet was a blast, as well.

Sen. Warren remembered me, and we had a nice five-minute chat.

The lesson here is it's not difficult for those of us in the lawn care and landscape business to take a step into the world of politics. If you can handle service calls from Mr. or Mrs. Jones about that one dandelion way out in the back lawn (you know who I mean, don't you?), then you can be a successful advocate for the industry.

Trust me when I say that politically speaking, the only thing I'd agree with Sen. Warren on is the color of the sky (maybe), but that's not a barrier to being a known constituent. I've found that the public persona of politicians in the media is often at odds with what they're like in person.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Activists on the other side of our issues interact with politicians daily and are not saying kind things about our industry. It's up to us to share our stories. Make it a priority to take that first step and schedule a meeting with your elected officials in their district offices.

This month, NALP is launching a new platform to better represent and advocate for the landscape and lawn care industry. Voices for Healthy Green Spaces is a community of supporters dedicated to highlighting the benefits of managed landscapes. Landscape and lawn care professionals contribute to sustainable environments, generate positive economic activity, protect the health and safety of our communities and make nature accessible to everyone.

We're excited about this new venture and encourage you to visit GreenSpaceVoices.org and join. 



PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB MANN



BY BEN GANDY

The author is principal of Envisor Consulting. Reach him at bengandy@envisorco.com.

How lean principles apply to your leadership team

Toyota pioneered lean manufacturing principles after World War II. These principles have found their way into many industries over the years, including ours. Consultant Jim Paluch of JP Horizons was instrumental in piquing the landscape industry's interest in this topic years ago, as well as my own.

Recently, I've thought about the applications of these principles when it comes to the activities of the leadership team.

The distractions and pressures on your company's leadership team are endless, but time is not. Without being yet another time management tool, can lean principles help leaders clarify their values and improve the use of their time?

LEAN FUNDAMENTALS

Lean principles cover a lot of ground, but let's consider some foundational pieces. Lean always starts with determining what the customer wants. In business, we tend to make this complicated. We can simplify it by asking, "What does the customer pay for?" To the extent that money represents value, we can identify the value through the analysis of the transaction.

Have you ever won a contract where you were not the lowest price? Provided the scope you offered was comparable to the losing bid, the customer was paying for the scope, *plus something else*. What was it? Whatever it was had real value for that customer.

Next, in lean thinking it is paramount to appreciate that the ultimate mechanism for delivering that value is people. People deliver what the customer pays for. Respecting, dignifying and appreciating people is fundamental.

“Continuous improvement is not an aspiration in lean organizations, it's a requirement.”

Lean is also about reducing and eliminating waste. Toyota, and many other companies, have proven that identifying and reducing the non-value-added activities, or steps, in a process can dramatically ramp up productivity. There are non-value-added activities in almost any process.

Many people consider lean to be the art of seeing and the science of reducing non-value-added activities. Companies use many tools, methods and ways of thinking to drive out this waste.

Finally, lean is about continuous improvement. Continuous improvement is not an aspiration in lean organizations, it's a requirement.

LEAN AND LEADERSHIP

For leaders, who is the customer? Clients ultimately pay the bills, and we don't want to lose sight of them. But many leaders don't directly interface with clients regularly.

Leaders owe their value to their people, who can be considered their customers. What do their people want? What do they need? What is it that only leadership can provide? In my view, they should do the following to apply lean concepts to leadership.

- **Build culture.** Share stories that highlight the wins, the goals and what to shoot for. Keep everyone level-set. Set the example for decorum, image, pace, punctuality, vulnerability, values and focus.
- **Develop relationships.** Create community through group activities

to build trust. Subordinates don't generally ask the boss out to dinner, the boss initiates. The team's interest in what you stand for and strive for is proportionate to how much you care.

- **Hold people accountable.** High-performing teams hold each other accountable. Good coaches don't tolerate bad play; good leaders shouldn't either.
- **Be decisive.** Make decisions on people, clients and equipment. Some of these decisions are difficult to make, but deciding is powerful. Not deciding is often devastating.
- **Develop capabilities.** Strong leaders develop strong leaders.
- **Improve processes.** Well-designed processes ensure predictable, reliable results. Re-enforce the processes. When the right process is followed, it should yield the right results. Where the results are not met, effective leaders re-set the process.

If this sounds like a lot of time with your people, it is. The value-add occurs when leaders are in the room with their people (physically or virtually). Leaders may not be able to escape the time spent in front of a computer screen, but as urgent as it seems, it's not the real value.

Lean leadership is shaped around activities that engage people and foster relationships, accountability, knowledge and increased capabilities. Effective planning means putting these activities first. It does not mean trying to do more or working harder (never a good solution). It means maximizing and prioritizing the time you spend with your team and letting everything else come second. 📌

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SAFETYWATCH

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT SAFETY WHEN WORKING WITH SUBCONTRACTORS

Beware of these safety risks before subcontracting work for your business

BY SARAH WEBB | LM MANAGING EDITOR

When it comes to subcontracting out work, it's crucial to keep safety top of mind, according to Sam Steel, Ed.D., safety adviser for the National Association of Landscape Professionals.

Landscape companies must ensure the subcontractor has a good reputation for quality work and has safety programs in place, and is insured for the services they're providing, Steel says.

To prevent potential injuries, he suggests landscape companies ask for a copy of the subcontractor's liability and insurance policies and that those policies cover both the subcontractor's employees and the host company's employees.

The other important safety element of a subcontractor contract includes spelling out who will

provide the personal protective equipment (PPE) and training.

"If you know the hazards and the subcontractor doesn't, it's your responsibility as the host employer to provide the PPE to these guest workers or temporary workers brought in by a staffing agency," Steel says. "Safety training is required by OSHA for workers who are doing jobs where they're exposed to hazards."

Steel stresses the need to spell out all safety elements in a written contract, not a verbal one.

"Verbal agreements just don't make it in court when it comes to who is providing the PPE and the training," Steel says. "If there's a serious incident with a subcontractor where a number of workers are hospitalized or if there's a fatality, there will most likely be an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) inspection"

For more safety information regarding subcontractors, Steel suggests reviewing **OSHA.gov/temporaryworkers.**



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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.



The importance of defining your company's 'why'

No doubt, the biggest challenge landscaping companies will face in 2022 will continue to be finding and retaining team members. As March 1 quickly approaches, our teams are all gearing up for another busy spring.

Step one to finding team members is to keep the good ones you already have and equip them with the information and skills they need to be successful in their roles. At Grunder Landscaping Co. (GLC), we've put a renewed focus on teaching team members the *why*. We want them to clearly understand the company's goals, how they're a part of reaching them and what reaching those goals means to them as an individual.

As our leadership team was evaluating this approach, we realized it was time to refresh our vision and mission statements to better reflect the company's true goals and incorporate our team.

NEW VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is to be recognized as leaders and as a growing company that provides opportunities for our team.

“As you prepare for a new season in business, review your why. Why is your company in business?”

NEW MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to create opportunities for our team to grow and succeed by enhancing the beauty and value of every client's property while exceeding their expectations every step of the way.

And to tie a nice little bow on it, we are also going back to our roots with a customer-facing slogan, using '*Where service is ALWAYS in season*' again because it reflects why we are in business:

1 We provide a high level of service to our clients, which is why they choose to do business with us.

2 Our leadership team's function is to be of service to our team and to provide them opportunities to grow, learn and provide for their families. It's why people choose to join our team at GLC.

3 No matter the season, you'll see our community a better place. We serve

the community by being stewards of the environment, creating beautiful spaces for our neighbors and donating our time and profits to nonprofit organizations that serve the less fortunate.

For GLC, it all comes down to one word: service. We are in business to be

in service to our clients, team and community. It's our *why*.

As leaders, it's our job to help our team members understand this purpose and to clearly explain why doing their jobs well is vital to making our vision and mission a reality. We've incorporated this message into our regular training, so we're clearly explaining all the time how team members doing their jobs well affects our clients, our team as a whole and our community.

As you prepare for a new season, review your why. Why is your company in business? What does this job mean to your team members? How can you get everyone better aligned and working toward a common goal?

If you're looking for inspiration, I'd encourage you to join us this year at one of our Grunder Landscaping Co. Field Trips. Our next one is March 9-10, where you'll get an in-depth look at our company and everything we do to create a great place to work for our team. Learn more at [GrowGroupInc.com/glc-fall-field-trips](https://www.growgroupinc.com/glc-fall-field-trips). 



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