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Bill Hardy and Doug Delano, Level Green Landscaping



Level up

Companies on our 2022 *LM150* list — including Level Green — share how they took their business to the next level

150



JOHN DEERE



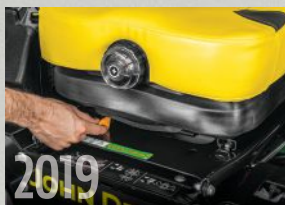
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2018



2019



2020



2021

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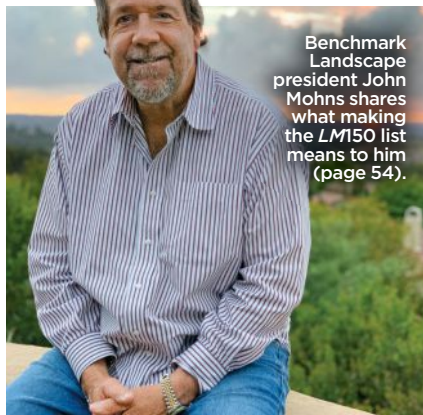
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[WE WANT YOUR HELP]

Is the green industry a second or third career for you or someone on your team? If so, we'd love to hear about it. Does your business have a favorite piece of equipment or tool to help you do your job better or faster? Share your thoughts with Editor Christina Herrick at cherrick@northcoastmedia.net.



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An incredible industry

It is a thrill for our team here at *Landscape Management*, along with our partners, The Grasshopper Co. and Aspire Software, to present the 2022 *LM150* list, our annual listing of the top 150 companies in the industry based on revenue.

This issue is a celebration of the industry and all it encompasses. Along with the list of the 150 companies, we also profile three of them: Level Green Landscape (page 20), Sperber Landscape Co. (page 24) and Conserva Irrigation (page 22), a newcomer to the list. These three companies are all unique yet share industry success as a common thread. We also share advice from eight *LM150* companies on what they think it takes to make the list (page 27).

As we sorted through the hundreds of submissions for the *LM150* list, we were impressed that so many people from around the country took the time to share some of their wisdom about this incredible industry. The insights varied on topics like maintaining success, maintaining a team and maintaining sanity. Here are just a few of those nuggets I found useful:

“Stay humble, stay focused, stay hungry, stay honest, stay helpful and wake up like you’re broke every day. Don’t reflect on what you did yesterday but on what can you do today. Stay ahead of growth by implementing processes to help with hiring, scheduling, routing, purchasing, etc. Focus on hiring employees at the beginning who will ultimately help you get to the next level. Never sacrifice quality for quantity.” – *Lane Plaisance, CEO and president of Landry’s Landscape*

“As we sorted through the hundreds of submissions for the *LM150* list, we were impressed that so many people from around the country took the time to share some of their wisdom about this incredible industry.”

“We struggle to find enough landscape professionals to support our growth. We’re getting our team members involved in solving that problem. Recruiting is not a one-person job. We need everyone to be enthusiastic ambassadors of our brand and share what they love about working here.” – *John Munie, president of Focal Pointe Outdoor Solutions*

“Hire the right people and take care of them. You may think you can’t afford to pay top-quality people, but the reality is that if you want to succeed, you can’t afford not to.” – *Chris Lee, president of Earthworks*

“Establish a vision, communicate it to the team and ensure that everyone is growing in the direction to bring your company to that destination. It’s amazing what can be accomplished by a synchronized team; don’t undervalue that.” – *Chase Mullin, president and founder of Mullin*

“Be nimble and ready for the unexpected, invest in top talent and focus

on building strong relationships internally and externally.” – *Michael Hupf, owner and president of Life-scape Colorado*

“Do what you do best. Develop a strong employee retention and recognition program.” – *Wendell Furtick, president of Saluda Hill*

“Take great care of your people, and they will take great care of your clients.” – *Edward Schatz, Jr., CEO of HeartLand*

“Find and empower key people who can help you reach your goals and share your success with them.” – *Brandt Dillon, president of Texscape Services*

“Excellent customer service is essential for success. It is possible to both take care of your customers and run a profitable business.” – *JT Price, CEO of Landscape Workshop*

Finally, while speaking to John Mohns, president of Benchmark Landscape in the San Diego area, for this month’s 5 Questions interview (page 54), something he said stood out. I congratulated him for being on the *LM150* list, and he said he finds it amazing to look at the list and see so many companies doing the same thing and some of them are so much bigger. “It’s an incredible industry,” he said.

We agree. 🗨️



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MORE INFO



EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD



MORE ONLINE

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

How can businesses keep a growth mindset during the busy season?

“The financial goals for growth targets should be gone over at every weekly meeting. Generous incentive programs are hopefully in place to motivate sales partners to higher and higher achievements.”



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.

“Focus on your team’s mental energy and encourage healthy habits at home, especially when it’s busy!”



“Stay focused. The year is long and some parts of it just seem more busy than others. You grow when you stay focused. Don’t get distracted!”



“Stay focused on what you are looking to grow. The strategy and execution required for revenue growth will be different than margin growth. Then, frame each decision within that goal.”



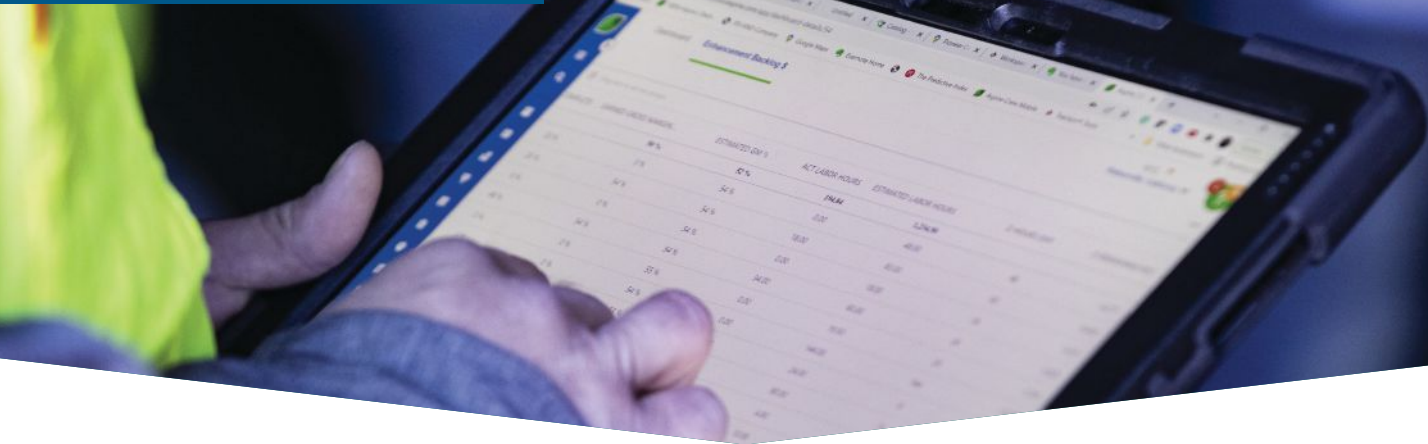
“Recognize that setbacks and even failures are opportunities to learn, reassess and move forward.”



“Keep looking at the numbers. Be looking for pivots: reacting to negative variances and positive opportunities. Keep reviewing quarterly strategic initiatives plus weekly metrics with your leadership team!”



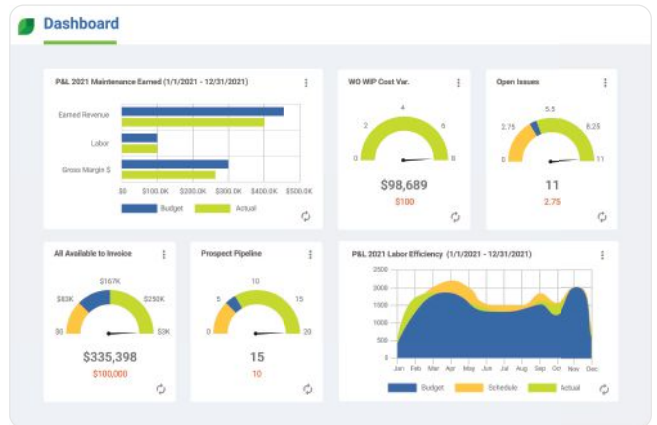
OUR MISSION: *Landscape Management* shares a comprehensive mix of content designed to stimulate growth and take our readers to their next level.



The right tools to power growth

Since 2009 the story for Arizona-based DBL Landscaping has been one of skyrocketing revenue, from \$2.5 million annually to triple that today.

Founder Aric Budden credits two things for his company's monumental growth. First, they began specializing in commercial properties. Second, they found the right software to help them grow.



“I’ve seen our gross margins increase 18% since using Aspire. That’s significant.”

Aric Budden

President and Founder, DBL Landscaping



LM GALLERY

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

1 TOCA ... TOCA ... TOCA ... (From left to right) Director of Marketing for Sipcam Agro USA Sam Wineinger; **LM** Associate Publisher Craig MacGregor and Vice President of Marketing and Communications for the National Association of Landscape Professionals, Lisa Stryker take in the Kansas City skyline during a dinner at the Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association's (TOCA) annual meeting in KC.



2 Cheering section (Left to right) Jacy Glazier of Wisconsin-based Epic Creative, **LM** Group Publisher Bill Roddy and Joe Sallustio of PBI-Gordon, cheered on the TOCA pickleball tournament.



3 Are there ties in pickleball? After a hard-fought match, these guys decided to call their double's pickleball match a tie. From left to right, Scott Covelli, Epic Creative; proud Mizzou alumnus, Wineinger; MacGregor and PBI-Gordon's Sallustio. Don't worry, guys; we know who had the lead at the end.



4 Champions pose (Left to right) Kris Guy and Amanda Baldwin, both of Hunter Industries, and **LM** Editor Christina Herrick all took home pickleball trophies.



5 Home-field advantage **LM** Editor-in-Chief Seth Jones (in his No. 95 Chris Jones jersey) felt right at home when TOCA attendees, including Kristy Mach (right), TOCA executive director, got a behind-the-scenes tour of Arrowhead Stadium — the home of the Kansas City Chiefs — from Head Groundskeeper Travis Hogan (left).



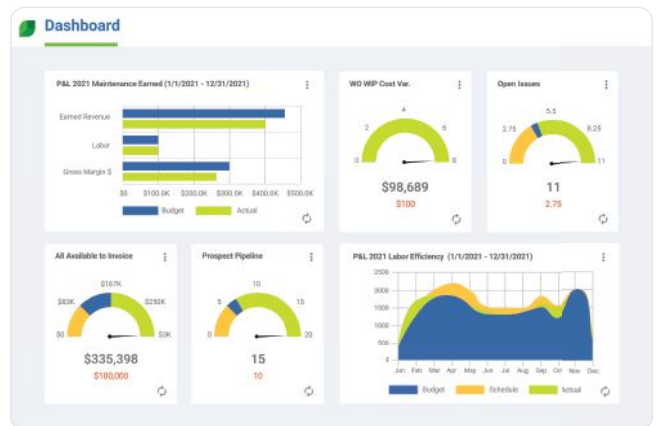
6 From golf to goal line A former golf course superintendent, Hogan shared with TOCA members the challenges of growing Northbridge Bermudagrass in January.





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in client revenues



Drought hits California hard

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

While California struggles amid one of its worst droughts in years, Southern California took drastic measures to slash water use. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California ordered communities dependent on water from the State Water Project to cut water use and implement one-day-a-week watering restrictions, or the equivalent. The measure applies to communities in Los Angeles, Ventura and San Bernardino counties.

This move comes on the heels of a statewide order in March from Gov. Gavin Newsom to restrict outdoor watering to two days a week.

"It's really going to change our approach more quickly than we expected," said Max Moreno, vice president of water conservation with Harvest Landscape Enterprises in Anaheim, Calif.



Max Moreno

Moreno said part of this ordinance includes a ban on watering ornamental turf, which is found in a lot of parkways. He said this is an opportunity for the

green industry to take a broad look at how to conserve water more efficiently and keep the landscape healthy.

"Part of this ordinance is allowing us to be exempt if these properties have invested in smart controllers, invested in drip irrigation, just to make their irrigation more efficient and to conserve water," he said. "So a lot of these HOAs, in some essence, are going to be rewarded because they took that approach a while ago. Some of these other properties that have been maybe putting it on the back burner are going to have to do something about it."

GETTING CREATIVE

Chad Sutton, water resource manager for Gachina Landscape Management in Menlo Park, Calif., said while Northern California might still be under a two-day-a-week watering ordinance, the turf — already under a significant amount of stress — will likely die during the hottest part of the year.

In 2015, Sutton and Gachina worked with clients to experiment with the amount of water necessary for turf to survive. He modeled his experiment

after a study conducted at the University of California. His clients watered the turf using only 40 percent of its reference evapotranspiration with the help of smart controllers.

"We saw that the grass went dormant and dried out, but it still had enough water content to keep the roots alive," he said.




Chad Sutton

Sutton said about 80 to 90 percent of the turf came back with normal irrigation. Crews replaced or overseeded about 10 percent of the turf.

"The money we saved on water more than enough paid for what we had to do to renovate it and bring it back to full health," he said.

Sutton said this strict allocation on days is a challenge for companies that manage irrigation systems.

"If we can water enough to keep the roots alive, it bounces back, but if you start to go and artificially restrict the number of days between watering, that's when you kill the blade and the roots," he said, "That's why I hate the two days per week watering restrictions because it takes away the professional irrigators' ability to come up with creative solutions that minimize permanent damage." 

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT WINS 10 INDUSTRY AWARDS

Landscape Management took home 10 awards as part of the 2022 Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association Communications Awards contest:

GARDNER (BEST-IN-SHOW) AWARD

Business management article - "Twice the work, half the workers," Christina Herrick

FIRST PLACE

- Series of columns by regular

columnist - Grow with Grunder, Marty Grunder

- Column writing - "Graduation day," Seth Jones
- Writing for special projects - 2021 LM150 Special Report, Seth Jones, Christina Herrick, Sarah Webb
- Business management article - "Twice the work, half the workers," Christina Herrick
- Best instructional video - "New model from John Deere celebrates

25 years of ZTrak mowers," Seth Jones, Joey Ciccolini

MERIT

- Best print magazine cover - "Get connected," May 2021, Tracie Martinez
- Series, two or more articles as a series - Women in Landscaping
- Headline writing - "A brew-tiful place," Christina Herrick
- Best short video - "4 keys to grow your business in 2022," Marty Grunder, Joey Ciccolini

Equip Exposition adds 7 acres to Outdoor Demo Yard

Equip Exposition, the trade show known formerly as GIE+EXPO, expands its Outdoor Demo Yard, adding more than seven acres for outdoor exhibits at this year's event.

"Year after year, attendees tell us that the Outdoor Demo Yard is one of the most valuable parts of the show," said Kris Kiser, president of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, which owns and manages Equip Exposition. "Outdoor booths are always at a premium and adding this highly visible space inside the main gates will allow longtime indoor exhibitors to move outdoors for the first time."

Equip Expo recently announced several programming updates, including educational sessions from *Landscape Management* magazine. Visitors also can experience expanded access with the show opening at 9 a.m. on Wednesday

for dealers and noon for contractors.

Registration has opened for this year's show, which will be held Oct. 18-21 at the Kentucky Exposition Center.

New Jersey landscape business owner indicted for employment benefit fraud

Acting New Jersey Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin indicted Richard Hockenberry, 71, of Hawthorne, N.J., on a charge of fourth-degree failure to provide workers' compensation coverage for an employee injured on the job.

According to the allegations against Hockenberry, on Feb. 26, 2018, an employee suffered an injury during employment. On May 4, 2018, the victim filed a workers' compensation claim petition. During the course of the workers' compensation case, investigators discovered Hockenberry failed to carry workers' compensation

insurance coverage, as required by law, at the time of the accident.

Arizona landscaping company ordered to pay \$92,500 in back wages to employees

The U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona ordered Artificial Grass Masters of Peoria — operating as Artificial Grass Masters and Sun Screens for Less — and owner Joshua Apodaca to pay \$92,500 in back wages and \$92,500 in liquidated damages to 66 employees. The U.S. District Court's judgment also required the landscaping company and Apodaca to pay \$15,000 in penalties for the willful nature of their violations.

Investigators determined the employer paid workers in cash and off-the-books, denied overtime pay, lied to investigators and intimidated workers.

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**Bill Hardy and
Doug Delano,
Level Green
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Level up

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on our 2022
LM150 list —
including Level
Green — share how they took
their business to the next level**

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150 Rankings

		Headquarters	2021 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev. Change from 2020	% Projected Change for 2022	FTEs/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm./ Res./Gov.
1	BrightView Holdings	Blue Bell, Pa.	\$2,553,600,000	9%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
2	TruGreen	Memphis, Tenn.	\$1,500,000,000	1%	NR	NR/NR	15/85/0
3	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	Kent, Ohio	\$1,378,053,000	7%	9%	10449/NR	NR/NR/NR
4	Yellowstone Landscape	Bunnell, Fla.	\$446,000,000	25%	10%	5000/1000	80/0/20
5	Bartlett Tree Experts	Stamford, Conn.	\$397,000,000	13%	9%	2000/200	30/64/6
6	HeartLand	Kansas City, Mo.	\$388,000,000	111%	25%	1900/1800	100/0/0
7	SavATree	Bedford Hills, N.Y.	\$295,000,000	6%	6%	1700/1900	20/77/3
8	Sperber Landscape Co.	Westlake Village, Calif.	\$280,000,000	133%	38%	2500/360	96/1/3
9	Weed Man	Orono, Ontario	\$259,562,911	22%	14%	1039/2128	5/95/0
10	Gothic Landscape	Valencia, Calif.	\$259,000,000	14%	10%	2150/NR	95/5/0
11	Ruppert Landscape	Laytonsville, Md.	\$249,000,000	17%	8%	1990/NR	100/0/0
12	LandCare	Frederick, Md.	\$246,000,000	18%	15%	3600/NR	100/0/0
13	U.S. Lawns	Orlando, Fla.	\$195,600,000	0%	0%	1650/800	100/0/0
14	Park West	Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.	\$175,000,000	0%	11%	1530/NR	98/0/2
15	Lawn Doctor ^	Holmdel, N.J.	\$172,020,000	14%	8%	1500/NR	5/95/0
16	Divisions Maintenance Group ^	Newport, Ky.	\$169,985,250	25%	30%	610/NR	100/0/0
17	Juniper	Fort Myers, Fla.	\$138,000,000	37%	12%	1500/200	92/0/8
18	Landscape Development Inc.	Valencia, Calif.	\$124,750,000	27%	11%	1055/NR	90/2/8
19	Loving	Gastonia, N.C.	\$119,329,170	43%	31%	254/8	100/0/0
20	Mariani Landscape	Lake Bluff, Ill.	\$95,500,000	10%	9%	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
21	LandOpt ^	Pittsburgh, Pa.	\$94,666,908	-9%	10%	325/510	40/53/7
22	NaturaLawn of America	Frederick, Md.	\$91,132,092	11%	8%	684/24	3/97/0
23	The Grounds Guys	Waco, Texas	\$89,000,000	14%	18%	1400/NR	55/45/0
24	United Land Services	Jacksonville, Fla.	\$88,700,000	53%	30%	400/50	95/5/0
25	Clintar Commercial Outdoor Services	Markham, Ontario	\$87,500,000	6%	6%	350/350	90/5/5
26	Massey Services ^	Orlando, Fla.	\$86,053,765	9%	15%	2470/0	12/88/0
27	Rotolo Consultants	Slidell, La.	\$86,000,000	14%	15%	400/400	90/0/10
28	Clean Scapes	Austin, Texas	\$85,262,000	18%	17%	703/236	98/0/2
29	Spring-Green Lawn Care ^	Plainfield, Ill.	\$81,536,000	12%	8%	525/98	4/96/0
30	The Greenerly	Hilton Head Island, S.C.	\$81,000,000	18%	11%	803/140	90/8/2
31	Meadows Farms ^	Chantilly, Va.	\$79,200,000	6%	1%	300/200	4/95/1
32	Mainscape	Fishers, Ind.	\$74,000,000	14%	6%	788/160	100/0/0
33	Lucas Tree Expert Co.	Portland, Maine	\$66,000,000	0%	12%	550/550	100/0/0
34	Garden Design	Farmers Branch, Texas	\$65,700,000	10%	15%	92/15	85/15/0
35	ABM	Columbia, Md.	\$63,000,000	3%	3%	1000/400	40/0/60
36	Dixie Landscape	Medley, Fla.	\$62,700,000	5%	3%	382/NR	NR/NR/NR
37	Denison Landscaping*	Fort Washington, Md.	\$61,530,000	5%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
38	Chenmark	Portland, Maine	\$58,781,179	19%	10%	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
39	Landscape Workshop	Birmingham, Ala.	\$56,000,000	24%	27%	480/280	94/4/2
	Schill Grounds Management	North Ridgeville, Ohio	\$56,000,000	11%	10%	250/68	99/1/0
41	Choate USA	Carrollton, Texas	\$55,000,000	0%	1%	85/200	100/0/0
	Sebert Landscape	Bartlett, Ill.	\$55,000,000	8%	10%	101/460	90/5/5
43	Ryan Lawn & Tree ^	Merriam, Kan.	\$54,611,000	18%	30%	387/33	5/95/0
44	Yardnique	Morrisville, N.C.	\$54,600,000	110%	40%	550/200	100/0/0
45	R.P. Marzilli & Co.	Medway, Mass.	\$54,150,000	39%	7%	190/70	8/92/0
46	Beary Landscaping	Lockport, Ill.	\$54,000,000	22%	5%	75/320	80/20/0
47	Teufel Landscape	Hillsboro, Ore.	\$53,027,632	-9%	3%	350/25	91/1/8
48	Pierre Landscape	Irwindale, Calif.	\$53,000,000	10%	0%	270/40	100/0/20
49	DJ's Landscape Management	Grand Rapids, Mich.	\$52,209,000	110%	10%	332/400	100/0/0

LEGEND NR = Not reported; * Indicates estimate, based on projected revenue for 2021 reported last year; ^ Indicates a portion of reported revenue was removed (such as pest control, janitorial services or other nongreen industry offerings).



	Headquarters	2021 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev. Change from 2020	% Projected Change for 2022	FTEs/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm./ Res./Gov.	
50	Kline Bros. Landscaping	Manahawkin, N.J.	\$51,200,000	5%	10%	256/256	10/90/0
	Complete Landscaping Service	Bowie, Md.	\$51,200,000	30%	15%	260/318	98/2/0
52	Earhtones Design	Midlothian, Texas	\$50,543,000	8%	-10%	140/30	85/15/0
53	Environmental Management Inc.	Plain City, Ohio	\$50,400,000	35%	20%	160/255	80/2/18
54	Russell Landscape Group	Sugar Hill, Ga.	\$50,015,000	16%	18%	425/180	NR/NR/NR
55	Creative Environments Design & Landscape	Tempe, Ariz.	\$49,500,000	33%	25%	175/NR	NR/NR/NR
56	SiteWorks	Chandler, Ariz.	\$46,324,809	2%	6%	183/78	100/0/0
57	AAA Landscape	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$45,255,000	9%	4%	520/80	94/1/5
58	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	Woodbine, Md.	\$45,115,000	18%	10%	300/300	85/15/0
59	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	San Antonio, Texas	\$43,773,821	13%	22%	304/130	50/5/45
60	Senske Services ^	Kennewick, Wash.	\$43,326,000	13%	15%	400/100	10/85/5
61	Bland Landscaping Co.	Apex, N.C.	\$43,200,000	27%	15%	400/100	96/4/0
62	Xquisite Landscaping	Stoughton, Mass.	\$42,979,400	36%	15%	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
63	Impact Landscaping & Irrigation	Jupiter, Fla.	\$40,600,000	14%	10%	485/NR	97/3/0
64	Harvest Landscape Enterprises	Anaheim, Calif.	\$39,875,000	25%	22%	505/30	90/0/10
65	Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers	Portland, Ore.	\$39,844,098	9%	3%	278/42	NR/NR/NR
66	Christy Webber & Co.	Chicago, Ill.	\$39,800,000	0%	0%	286/NR	NR/NR/NR
67	Caretaker Landscape and Tree Management	Gilbert, Ariz.	\$38,310,990	33%	10%	282/45	100/0/0
68	Stay Green	Santa Clarita, Calif.	\$38,000,000	30%	10%	500/NR	60/0/40
69	Greenscape Land Design	Raynham, Mass.	\$37,000,000	15%	25%	85/275	98/0/2
70	Pacific Landscape Management	Hillsboro, Ore.	\$36,839,000	28%	25%	275/65	100/0/0
71	Gachina Landscape Management	Menlo Park, Calif.	\$36,143,944	8%	11%	391/0	NR/NR/NR
72	Southern Botanical	Dallas, Texas	\$36,000,000	24%	12%	286/237	74/24/2
	McHale Landscape Design	Upper Marlboro, Md.	\$36,000,000	20%	10%	300/10	0/100/0
74	Berghoff Design Group*	Scottsdale, Ariz.	\$34,636,030	6%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
75	Superscapes	Carrollton, Texas	\$34,500,000	8%	15%	300/25	NR/NR/NR
76	Chalet	Wilmette, Ill.	\$34,000,000	12%	5%	100/140	5/95/0
	Elite Team Offices	Clovis, Calif.	\$34,000,000	3%	5%	480/100	99/1/ 0
78	Environmental Designs	Brighton, Colo.	\$33,840,631	12%	10%	209/108	70/30/0
79	Naturescape	Muskego, Wis.	\$33,480,592	7%	5%	320/20	5/95/0
80	Designscapes Colorado	Centennial, Colo.	\$32,600,000	2%	11%	263/90	13/48/39
81	Merchants Landscape Services	Santa Ana, Calif.	\$32,000,000	7%	6%	470/NR	0/0/100
82	Earthworks	Arlington, Texas	\$31,400,000	20%	10%	305/120	95/5
83	The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin*	Middleton, Wis.	\$31,241,320	1%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
84	Scott Byron & Co.	Lake Bluff, Ill.	\$31,200,000	19%	5%	91/141	0/100/0
85	Perfect Cuts of Austin ^	Austin, Texas	\$30,561,795	2%	15%	30/68	100/0/0
86	LMI Landscapes	Carrollton, Texas	\$30,309,434	-7%	15%	88/89	100/0/0
87	Unlimited Landscaping & Turf Management	Suwanee, Ga.	\$29,859,768	14%	15%	229/18	41/59/0
88	Southview Design	St. Paul, Minn.	\$29,748,000	11%	25%	90/125	45/55/0
89	DLC Resources	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$29,100,000	5%	0%	390/NR	100/0/0
	Santa Rita Landscaping	Tucson, Ariz.	\$29,100,000	21%	10%	280/NR	NR/NR/NR
91	Lawn Management Co.	Houston, Texas	\$29,062,858	25%	5%	300/75	97/1/2
92	Frank & Grossman Landscape Contractors	Hayward, Calif.	\$29,000,000	14%	15%	290/NR	35/60/5
93	Landtech Contractors*	Aurora, Colo.	\$28,620,000	8%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
94	The Budd Group	Winston-Salem, N.C.	\$28,000,000	11%	10%	300/35	NR/NR/NR
95	Level Green Landscape	Upper Marlboro, Md.	\$27,417,000	26%	13%	118/175	85/0/15
96	SOI Group	McKinney, Texas	\$27,330,000	11%	10%	127/NR	100/0/0
97	David J. Frank Landscape Co.	Germantown, Wis.	\$27,320,000	10%	5%	220/40	65/35/0
98	Andy's Sprinkler, Drainage & Lighting	Carrollton, Texas	\$26,678,488	24%	6%	131/63	20/80/0
99	Great Oaks Landscape Associates	Novi, Mich.	\$26,200,000	18%	8%	173/NR	80/20/0
100	Lifescape Colorado	Denver, Colo.	\$26,017,021	36%	15%	110/65	10/90/0

150 Rankings

		Headquarters	2021 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev. Change from 2020	% Projected Change for 2022	FTEs/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm./ Res./Gov.
101	Andre Landscape Service	Azusa, Calif.	\$26,000,000	5%	7%	325/NR	100/0/0
	Gibson Landscape Services	Alpharetta, Ga.	\$26,000,000	NR	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
103	Service Direct Landscape	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$25,183,000	20%	20%	305/305	25/75/0
104	ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	Venice, Fla.	\$25,111,675	10%	15%	233/76	80/20/0
105	Heaven & Earth Landscaping	Indian Trail, N.C.	\$25,106,160	25%	35%	105/150	100/0/0
106	John Mini Distinctive Landscapes*	Congers, N.Y.	\$24,780,000	5%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
107	Hoffman Landscapes	Wilton, Conn.	\$24,750,000	23%	12%	210/NR	0/100/0
108	Siteworks Landscape	Richmond, Calif.	\$24,240,000	21%	5%	180/NR	0/100/0
109	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	San Diego, Calif.	\$24,000,000	0%	7%	250/NR	97/0/3
110	Urban Dirt	Austin, Texas	\$23,900,000	100%	50%	150/150	100/0/0
111	Clarence Davids & Co.	Matteson, Ill.	\$23,732,600	21%	2%	80/135	85/15/0
112	Complete Landsculpture	Dallas, Texas	\$23,081,670	15%	8%	125/85	45/54/1
113	The Joyce Cos.	Marstons Mills, Mass.	\$23,060,460	26%	10%	150/25	5/95/0
114	Shinto Landscaping	Deerfield Beach, Fla.	\$23,000,000	26%	15%	260/60	86/2/12
115	Winterberry	Southington, Conn.	\$22,549,574	22%	12%	42/96	71/29/0
116	American Landscape Systems	Lewisville, Texas	\$21,780,971	0%	3%	200/60	65/0/35
117	Michael Hatcher & Associates	Olive Branch, Miss.	\$21,700,000	55%	10%	200/65	65/35/0
118	Green Lawn Fertilizing*	West Chester, Pa.	\$21,611,317	27%	26%	235/NR	8/92/0
119	Conserva Irrigation	Glen Allen, Va.	\$21,579,227	48%	44%	200/100	10/89/1
120	Benchmark Landscape*	Poway, Calif.	\$21,551,228	0%	0%	200/NR	90/1/9
121	Richmond & Associates Landscaping	Carrollton, Texas	\$21,471,998	20%	2%	145/155	95/1/4
122	Texscape Services	Houston, Texas	\$21,300,000	22%	0%	200/50	100/0/0
123	Focal Pointe Outdoor Solutions	Caseyville, Ill.	\$21,003,054	34%	96%	143/84	82/18/3
124	ProQual Landscaping	Tempe, Ariz.	\$20,300,000	19%	15%	293/NR	100/0/0
125	Brilar	Farmington Hills, Mich.	\$20,150,000	19%	26%	154/5	82/0/18
126	Timberline Landscaping	Colorado Springs, Colo.	\$20,006,162	21%	12%	43/134	70/25/5
127	SPSD	Arlington, Texas	\$20,000,000	NR	3%	150/NR	85/5/10
	Mickman Brothers	Ham Lake, Minn.	\$20,000,000	3%	4%	48/145	60/39/1
129	Greener Group	Lowell, Mass.	\$19,740,195	22%	5%	95/1	98/2/0
130	Crawford Landscaping*	Naples, Fla.	\$19,486,168	3%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
131	Accent Landscape Contractors	El Paso, Texas	\$19,457,165	NR	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
132	Mountain View Landscape	Chicopee, Mass.	\$19,300,000	13%	5%	24/90	45/5/50
133	Art by Nature	Granite Falls, Wash.	\$18,997,905	3%	5%	130/NR	99/1/0
134	Saluda Hill Landscapes	Lexington, S.C.	\$18,838,928	33%	12%	132/NR	17/83/0
135	Landry's Landscape	Baton Rouge, La.	\$18,677,056	41%	12%	47/42	96/4/0
136	Schultz Industries	Golden, Colo.	\$18,634,256	3%	5%	120/30	90/0/10
137	Utz Environmental Services	Leander, Texas	\$18,633,393	9%	15%	120/50	100/0/0
138	HighGrove Partners	Austell, Ga.	\$18,400,000	NR	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
	Mullin	St. Rose, La.	\$18,400,000	33%	10%	152/12	65/35/0
140	Sposato Landscape Co.	Milton, Del.	\$18,293,750	5%	10%	165/45	55/43/2
141	Cherrylake	Groveland, Fla.	\$18,100,000	-10%	23%	295/82	100/0/0
142	Landscape Maintenance Professionals	Seffner, Fla.	\$18,000,000	3%	3%	290/25	100/0/0
143	The Munie Co.*	Caseyville, Ill.	\$17,793,915	-19%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
144	Rock Water Farm	Aldie, Va.	\$17,700,000	62%	16%	30/70	1/94/5
145	Earthco Commercial Landscape	Santa Ana, Calif.	\$17,500,000	15%	10%	300/NR	100/0/0
146	Greenscape	Raleigh, N.C.	\$17,400,000	20%	20%	136/32	95/0/5
147	GreenView Partners	Raleigh, N.C.	\$17,307,213	23%	15%	180/20	100/0/0
148	Hidden Creek Landscaping	Hilliard, Ohio	\$17,000,000	50%	24%	65/40	35/65/0
149	Pro Cutters Lawnscares	Conyers, Ga.	\$16,835,745	0%	5%	75/10	40/0/60
150	Heritage Professional Landscaping*	Kennewick, Wash.	\$16,570,380	21%	12%	97/51	70/20/10
			Total: \$14,327,243,070	Avg: 17%	Avg: 15%		

Big year, big numbers

Companies on the 2022 LM150 list saw a 17 percent average revenue growth last year

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

2021 was another year of exponential growth in the green industry, as seen by the staggering figures displayed in this year's LM150 list.

The total revenue of the LM150 list, sponsored by Aspire Software and The Grasshopper Co., once again set a record at \$14.3 billion. That's up about \$1.7 billion from last year. The top five companies remain unchanged from last year: BrightView Holdings, TruGreen, The Davey Tree Expert Co. and Yellowstone Landscape.

Sperber Landscape Co. in Westlake Village, Calif., saw a 133 percent increase in revenue and jumped up from No. 17 to No. 8 on the list. We profiled Sperber on page 23 to learn a little more about the keys to the company's huge growth.

Other list makers with triple-digit growth include No. 5 Bartlett Tree Experts of Stamford, Conn., and HeartLand of Kansas City, Mo., with 111 percent growth, and Yardnique of Morrisville, N.C., DJ's Landscape Management of Grand Rapids, Mich., with 110 percent growth and Urban Dirt of Austin, Texas, with 100 percent growth.

Labor continues to be a challenge for the green industry. We profiled Level Green Landscape in Upper Marlboro, Md., on page 20 and Conserva Irrigation of Glen Allen, Va., on page 22 to learn more about each company's unique approach to staffing for the future of the operations.

"We've looked outside the industry to find people that fit culturally into what we're looking for," says Russ Jundt, founder and owner of Conserva Irrigation. "They have a (strong) work ethic, an ability and a desire to work outdoors; (they) want to do something special and bigger than themselves."

NOT ON THE LIST?

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

COMBINED 2021
LM150 REVENUE

\$14,327,243,070

AVERAGE
REVENUE GROWTH
FROM 2020

17%

AVERAGE REVENUE
GROWTH PROJECTED
FOR 2022

15%

COMBINED 2021 REVENUE OF
THE TOP 3 FIRMS


\$5,431,653,000

38%
of total
list

How we calculated our figures

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

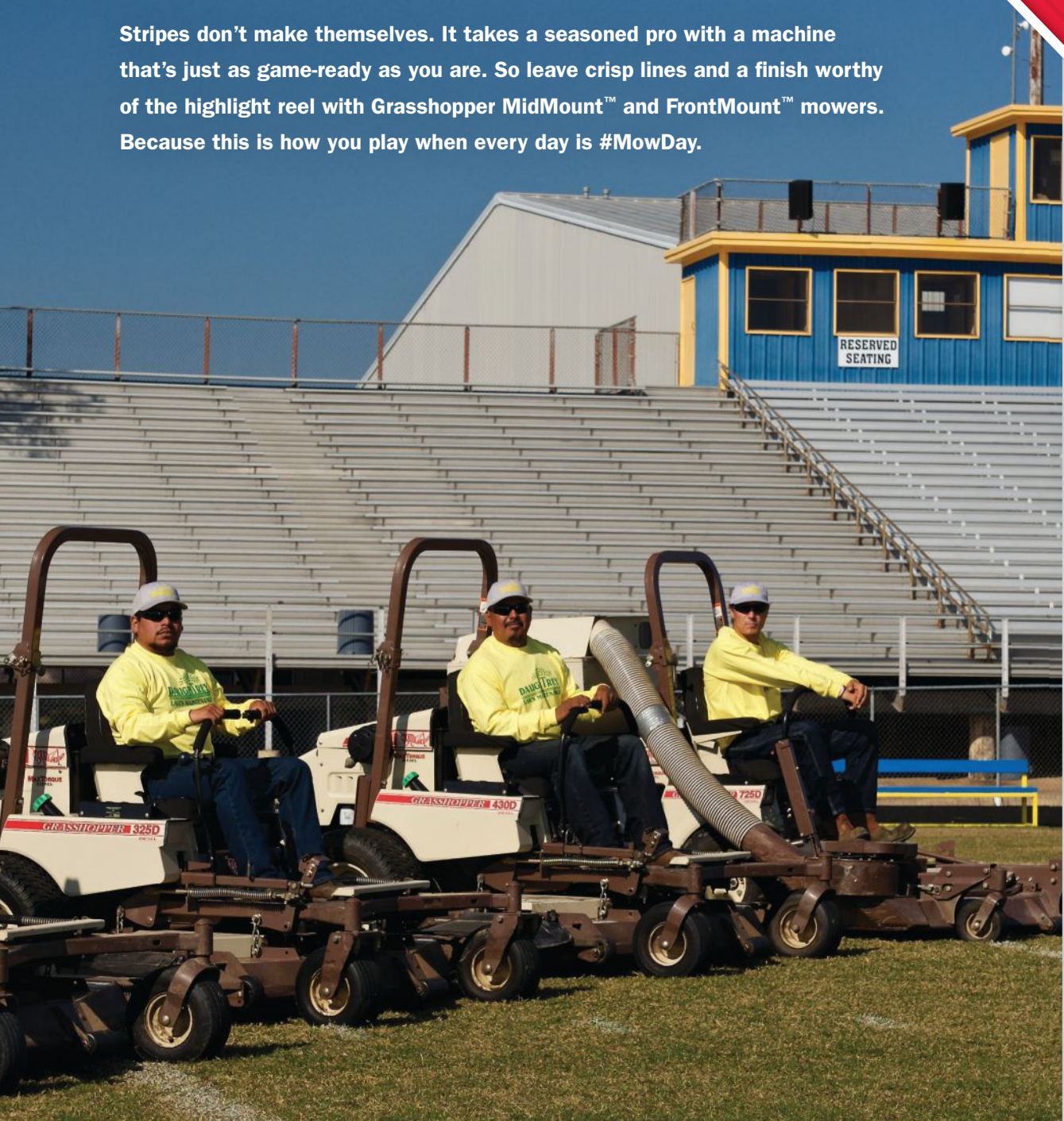
We estimated revenue for firms that didn't provide data if they participated in last year's list and reported a projected 2021 revenue figure. We calculated the numbers for client mix, profit centers and regional charts based on data submitted.

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

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Team: Daughtrey Lawn Maintenance **Yards per Wk:** 50+ / **Acres:** 16,392+ **Roster Size:** 20 employees **MidMounts / FrontMounts**

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Level up

A great partnership and a willingness to embrace technology and change take Level Green Landscaping to the next level

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Doug Delano and Bill Hardy met 40 years ago when Hardy hired Delano to work in the construction field at Ruppert Landscape Co. Delano had just left his first job teaching high school math in disillusionment. He knew he enjoyed the outdoors and gardening, having grown up on the rural Eastern Shore of Maryland, and was curious to explore a career in landscaping.

Delano and Hardy were both branch managers when a larger company purchased Ruppert Landscape Co. in 1998. Delano stuck around with the new company for three years; Hardy stayed for five. Eventually, they looked at the new company and said to each other, “If these guys can run a landscape company, we can probably do just as well as they can.”

Level Green Landscape, a commercial landscape company headquartered in Upper Marlboro, Md., with four additional branches in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia, has indeed done well. The company

enjoyed a 26 percent increase in revenue from 2020, landing them at No. 95 on the 2022 LM150 list with reported revenue of \$27,417,000. The company has 118 full-time employees and staffs up to 175 in-season.

“This company was built organically. We were both in our 40s at the time (of forming Level Green),” Delano says. “We both had kids, so our work/life balance was important. If we do this together, it makes it a lot easier to bounce things off somebody on a regular basis. There’s a value to not going in alone ... working well with a partner is huge.”

Embrace change

Now that Delano (managing member/head gardener) and Hardy (partner) are in their 60s, the vision has changed. They want the company to continue to grow — they mention a goal of \$100 million in the next eight years — and they want to replace themselves while not being acquired.

“We have a very specific culture here, and if we were rolled into a larger

organization, I don’t know (if) that culture would survive,” Delano says. “We want to continue to grow with the people we have and continue to recruit people who will help us grow.”

One of the philosophies at Level Green that enabled the company to grow is a willingness to embrace change. A recent structure change at Level Green, promoting two employees from within to regional managers, allowed other employees to back-fill the positions and showed what opportunities are available at the company, says Paul Wisniewski, division manager. The reorganization allowed him to focus more on production, with a goal of taking the company to the next level.

“Growth will come from giving these opportunities to our team,” Wisniewski says. “Opening up that door to more people within the organization allows them to grow with us.”

Another employee who has grown with the company and created positive change is Michael Mayberry, chief technology officer for Level Green.

When he first came to the company seven years ago, he joined as an operations manager. Immediately, he started bringing new technology to the company — software, a new accounting system, new equipment. When a colleague looked at Level Green and told Delano and Hardy that they were more high-tech than companies twice their size, they knew they were on to something.

“That’s when we decided that Mike was not in the right position, and he needed more freedom to work,” Delano says. “He became our full-time tech guy, and it really helped us out.”

Mayberry says his goal is to get the entire business to run through automation and make decisions based on data collection. He says data-driven decisions are superior to gut decisions.

“I think we can all admit that our industry as a whole has been stuck in the ’80s,” Mayberry says. “We may have moved up to the 2000s, with a lot of companies using software platforms. Technology, in general, is changing rapidly, and the industry is finally starting to accept that technology. My goal is to integrate as much of that technology that makes sense so we can do more with the same or less amount of people.”

Recruiting and retaining staff

Keeping the Level Green staff at the proper level has always been a challenge. While Delano and Hardy don’t think it’ll ever become less of a problem, they have implemented some “strategic initiatives” they say are working.

Recently, Level Green hired a full-time recruiter and shared an in-house survey with all employees to determine what is most important to its workers. Following the survey, a committee comprised of employees at all levels will review the results.

“It’s going to be a long process, but we’re going to have to put significant time, effort and money toward it to be

able to continue our growth,” Hardy says. “It’s going to be a major project, I believe, for a number of years. We just have to work on it; there are no magic bullets, there is no magic wand... there’s just constant hard work.”

Delano adds that he knows his leadership team is up to the challenge and that they have learned from experience.

“We are often solving the same problems today that we were solving when we were a \$200,000 company,” Delano says. “We had staffing problems when we were a \$200,000 company. We’ll be a \$100 million company and still be looking for people. Paul will have less hair, but he’s going to have the same problem.”

Wisniewski heads the committee that focuses on training and developing staff, another element in successfully retaining employees. The most exciting thing about it, he says, is it gives employees the opportunity to be successful in the long term. Hardy says the desire to help employees succeed for the long term is a foundation of the company.

“I get excited about making sure that we stick to the basics that made us successful,” he says. “When we first started with 10 employees to when we’ll be 500 or 1,000, we have to maintain that smaller company feel. That’s very important to Doug and me because that’s what got us here. That’s part of these committees and initiatives, they all lead to growth, but growth through maintaining our core values and doing the right thing.”

Level Green is also proactive about building a pipeline of future



Doug Delano (left) and Bill Hardy founded Level Green in 2002 and haven’t looked back.

employees. The company actively connects with local universities, colleges and community colleges.

“We want to get younger people in and show them that we’re an organization that is investing in growth and investing in people,” Hardy says. “Hopefully,

by building this pipeline, we’ll bring in people who can grow through the organization and support us for our 10-year plan.”

It starts with trust

Delano looks back at the 20-plus years of Level Green and says he and Hardy didn’t know what they were getting into at the beginning, but he’s happy the partnership has brought happiness to many.

“I don’t think Bill and I ever set out to have a company this large,” he says. “We worked for a great company in Ruppert that taught us a whole lot, and we’ve been able to carry that on. Bill and I have always felt very strongly that if you make a commitment to somebody, whether it be your family, a friend, an employee or a customer... you live by it.”

However much Hardy paid Delano by the hour back in the 1990s, it’s paid off, and then some, in the 2020s.

“My wife calls Doug my ‘work wife,’” Hardy laughs. “Partnerships are like a marriage in many ways. It starts with trust. You have to trust each other, and you have to communicate. Realize that you will not always agree. When Doug and I had offices side-by-side, it was pretty evident to most people around us that we didn’t always agree. But there was a trust level, and that continues on.”

Modern problems, modern solutions

Conserva Irrigation takes on the labor crisis with a new, bold strategy

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR



For Conserva Irrigation in Glen Allen, Va., the past several years brought increased levels of growth. The company added 25 to 30 franchisees per year and increased revenue, following what Russ Jundt, founder and owner, calls a “hockey stick” pattern.

The growth comes during a time when the U.S. faces an ice-cold labor market that forced Jundt to get creative with his hiring — and training — practices.

Jundt says he’s heard the excuses and reasons for the labor crunch, and while he acknowledges that they are legitimate, he isn’t willing to let that stop his company’s upward trajectory.

“I refuse to accept the anecdotal answers that ‘Oh, it’s COVID-19’ or ‘People are on their couches.’ They might be great reasons or excuses, but the reality is that none of them help us move forward,” says Jundt.

Conserva, making its LM150 debut at No. 119 on the 2022 list with a revenue of \$21,579,227, sought to tackle the labor problem head-on.

Armed with a new approach to hiring technicians and an online Learning Management System (LMS) training program, the company moves forward with a bold strategy — having new hires field-ready, in their own trucks, within 60 days.

Expanding the search

Step one of Conserva’s new approach to hiring and training technicians is to expand its pool of potential hires.

“If there’s a massive shortage or a limited pool from which we draw, we figured we needed to extend that net,” he says. “In doing so, we’ve looked outside the industry to find people that fit culturally into what we’re looking for. They have a (strong) work ethic, an ability and a desire to work outdoors; (they) want to do something special and bigger than themselves.”

Extending its net isn’t something new for Conserva; the company has done it before with franchisees. Conserva, which currently has 70 branches across 30 states, saw success in looking outside the industry for franchise owners, so Jundt thought it would be no different at the technician level.

“We attract talent and people with different business acumen backgrounds, experiences and cultural backgrounds,” says Jundt. “We bring them in and provide a system that they can plug into and change their career and their lives.”

Conserva started its technician search by looking within. The company took note of its best technicians’ key traits and characteristics and used that to focus its recruitment search.

“We’ve found that one of the key underlying factors of successful franchisees and technicians was an overwhelming passion for what they do,” Jundt says. “In other words, loving what, how and why they do it.”

Jundt says coachability, a willingness to learn and a desire to be a leader were other attributes the company found to make for a successful technician.



Finding a better way to train irrigation technicians drove Conserva to create its LMS training program.

PHOTOS: CONSERVA IRRIGATION



“We’re starting to attract bartenders, people that work at Home Depot and fast-food employees,” says Jake Mathre, director of franchise operations for Conserva. “I tell them there’s a different opportunity here. We’ll train you. We want to get you in your own vehicle within a couple of months.”

From the ground up

There’s more to this plan than just identifying the right intangibles, however. Once Conserva has those prospects in-house, the team needs to train them.

Enter Conserva’s online LMS training program. The online program is 22 modules long and aims to have new hires field ready within 45 to 60 days.

The program walks new hires through irrigation fundamentals, like the basics of digging a hole and the anatomy of an irrigation system, all the way to more advanced ideas like fluid dynamics.

“Then we start ramping it up with understanding flow, pressure, velocity and how those interact with each other,” Mathre says. “At its base, it’s about breaking it down to the most basic components. How does it work? How does it fail? How do you fix it?”

The program’s opening module introduces Conserva and its ideals and mission statement. Three modules focus exclusively on sales and customer interactions; others include leadership training and communication.

Employees that participate in the program also work with a crew as they would be in a traditional training program. But with the supplemental online training, the process of having them ready to work on their own accelerates.

“I think (the idea behind the program) was twofold of needing it and then wanting to bring new blood into the industry,” says Mathre. “There’s nothing out there



Jake Mathre

Conserva trainees will still get field experience when using the company’s online training.

that makes it simple to add new people. It was always, well, you’re going to just have them ride along with us, and they’ll pick up stuff over the year, and maybe they’ll be in their own vehicle next year.”

Collaborate and listen

Creating the LMS was a collaborative process between Jundt; Mathre; Conserva’s top franchisee; Toro District Sales Manager Chris Keating, CID; and a third-party company, Unboxed Training and Technology.

Unboxed — based in Richmond, Va., 20 minutes south of Conserva’s headquarters — works alongside companies to develop online training programs.

“They’re education experts; they know how people learn,” says Mathre.

Tasked with condensing decades of irrigation knowledge into an easy-to-understand training program, Unboxed asked for everything Conserva had available on the topic.

“We kind of balked at it. We said, ‘Well, we’ve got an operations manual and some technician training manuals.’ I mean, the real robust stuff, you know, I don’t think you’ll find much value there,” Jundt says. “But they said, ‘No, no, bring it on.’”

Conserva obliged, sending their own operations manuals in addition to Environmental Protection Agency and Irrigation Association manuals on best practices, design and fluid dynamics and YouTube videos on irrigation.

“They jumped all over it and digested it and broke it down into bite-sized pieces and put together a strategy of how they could pull this off,” Jundt says.

A five-month process followed where Unboxed worked closely with Mathre to ensure the material was on point.

Conserva officially launched the LMS in mid-April this year, opening it to franchisees and existing employees. Mathre says the early returns are promising and Conserva still receives feedback and plans to fine-tune some of the information.

“So far, what we’re seeing is it’s building confidence,” he says. “That’s the biggest thing; confidence in the skill and knowledge of the industry. It’s empowering people.”

As the program evolves, Mathre says the next step — in addition to translating the entire program to Spanish — is for franchisees to leverage it into the recruiting process, hiring for work ethic and character, with the confidence that the program will turn new hires into successful technicians. 📧



Russ Jundt

Full throttle in California

How Sperber Landscape Co. went from zero to 60 in three short years

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

Marking its third anniversary this year, Sperber Landscape Co. has a lot to celebrate. A relative newcomer to the *LM150* list, Sperber debuted on the list last year, coming in at No. 17 with \$120 million in 2020 revenue and 253 percent growth from 2019. This year, Sperber comes in at No. 8, with \$280 million in 2021 revenue and triple-digit growth of 133 percent.

Richard Sperber, founder of Sperber Landscape Co., says developing leaders is why he got back into the industry.

“This is a pure startup,” says Richard Sperber, managing partner and founder of Sperber Landscape Co.

“Three years ago, we had zero employees and zero sales. We went from zero to 60 pretty fast.”

While Sperber Landscape Co. might be a newer entry to the *LM150* list, Richard Sperber is not. In 1949, Sperber’s father founded ValleyCrest Landscape Cos., a longtime member of the *LM150* list. The family merged the company with The Brickman Group in 2014 to form BrightView. Following a five-year noncompete agreement, Richard Sperber founded Sperber Landscape Co. in 2019.

A return to the industry

He says his decision to return to the green industry came out of his

passion for landscaping and gardening.

“I love landscaping and building gardens,” he says. “I actually believe it changes people’s lives and I certainly missed the camaraderie and all the great people that helped make ValleyCrest such a big success and the people I’ve worked with over the years.”

Sperber says in those five years, he also watched as the industry became flooded with private-equity money and how that changed the industry. “I saw the industry really where it is today, which is almost all decisions are made on a financial statement and bottom line versus what’s right for the business, for the clients and for

the employees,” he says.

Sperber says he saw a great opportunity to build another strong operation and “put the band back together” with many of his former colleagues.

“Let’s not say the right thing, let’s do the right thing,” he says. “That’s why I got back in this business to develop great people and leaders that will become the future of this industry.”



Richard Sperber



PHOTOS: SPERBER LANDSCAPE CO.



For Sperber Landscape Co. it's about the people. Chris Kujawa, president of KEI; Todd Haslier, manager and training coordinator; Tom Jurasinski, director of operations and Judy Kujawa, office manager, recognize Haslier for 25 years with KEI. Sperber added KEI in 2019.

Growth mindset

In the past three years, Sperber has grown even more thanks to acquisitions with Top Cut Lawn Services, headquartered in Palm Beach County, Fla.; Greenscapes in Naples, Fla.; Conserve LandCare in Thousand Palms, Calif.; Kujawa Enterprises Inc. (KEI) in Milwaukee, and Crystal Greens Landscape in Clackamas, Ore.

In 2021, Sperber continued its growth streak through additions of Bemus Landscape in Orange County, Calif., and Cagwin & Dorward in Petaluma, Calif.

Sperber says these moves help solidify the company's future.

"The Bemuses, the Cagwin & Dorwards, the KEIs and the Crystal Greens of the world, these are people that I've known and have been competitors and cohorts with for 40 or 50 years in the industry," he says. "We've worked alongside them and respected them highly as great competitors and great leaders in the industry, and now I have the chance to work with them."

He says each acquisition gives his operation a chance to learn a little bit from each entity and improve Sperber Landscape Co. collectively each time a new company joins.

"We're always looking at our great competitors in the marketplace that have been there forever, and all the great things they also do, and say, 'Wow, maybe we should be doing a little bit more of this,'" Sperber says. "Now we have the chance to work with a lot of these people and learn from them."

Knowing the why

Sperber says that an eye to the future is a big focus of the operation. He says it's

critical for his operation to find and grow the next generation of leaders at Sperber Landscape Co.


"It's about developing the people that have the passion and providing them the tools they need so we can have a great business that does the right thing," he says. "I'm looking at someone's passion and potential, rather than where they went to college or how many degrees they have. You can train most anyone to use a piece of equipment or software system, but you can't train someone to have passion."

Sperber says the "why" is a big component of all training — from teaching a new employee how to run a lawn mower to something more complex.

"Our goal is to share why we do what we do," he says. "Why do we have to mow the lawn like this? What are the horticultural practices? The why is always the most important, so they understand the big picture and context. It makes people more excited about their job, and it teaches them why they're doing something, rather than just how to do it."

Caring for the team

Sperber says the exponential growth his company experienced during the last three years is designed with one thing in mind: looking after his team.

"It gives us the opportunity to develop more people and give people better lives; otherwise, we'd just stay small," he says. "It's making sure that we give as many people opportunities and great careers in this industry as possible. I always say without them, there's no us." 

TAKE-HOME ADVICE

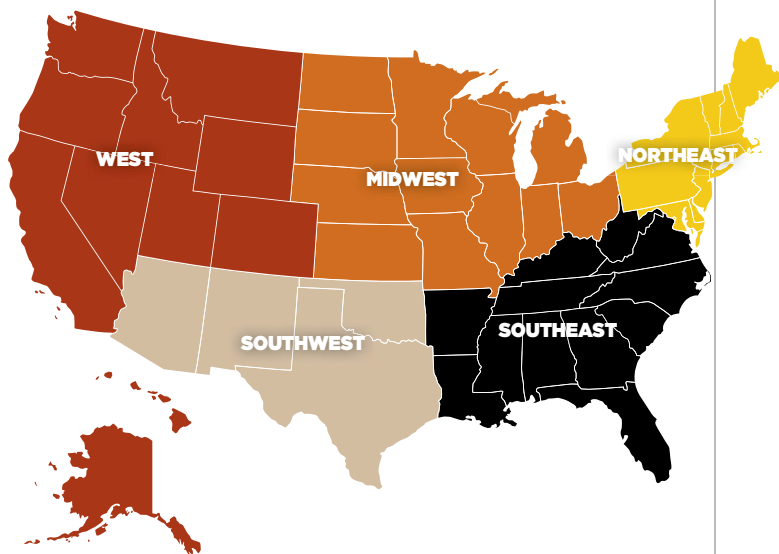
Richard Sperber, founder and managing partner of the Sperber Landscape Co., says landscape business owners who aspire to make the LM150 list one day should first take a close look at their operation.

"One thing I've definitely learned in the last three years going around meeting all these people are there are great businesses out there doing great things. They're just not \$50 million or \$100 million (businesses)," he says.

Landscape business owners with aspirations to make this list should ask themselves: Do you love what you do? Are you doing great things? Are you happy with where you are?

"I don't want it to be a number-driven business," he says, noting that he focuses on the answer to this question: "How do we run a successful business and get people that are passionate about what they do?"

By Region



Editor's note: Not all companies report regional data. Dollar amounts were calculated by LM from data reported.

NORTHEAST

1	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$186,590,000
2	SavATree	\$122,000,000
3	Ruppert Landscape	\$104,580,000
4	Lawn Doctor	\$68,808,000
5	NaturaLawn of America	\$56,501,897
6	R.P. Marzilli & Co.	\$54,150,000
7	Complete Landscaping Service	\$51,200,000
8	LandOpt	\$51,120,130
9	Kline Bros. Landscaping	\$46,080,000
10	Lucas Tree Expert Co.	\$39,600,000
11	Greenscape Land Design	\$37,000,000
12	Level Green Landscape	\$27,417,000
13	Hoffman Landscapes	\$24,750,000
14	The Joyce Cos.	\$23,060,460
15	Green Lawn Fertilizing	\$21,611,317
16	McHale Landscape Design	\$21,600,000
17	Weed Man	\$20,765,033
18	Winterberry	\$20,294,617
19	Meadows Farms	\$19,800,000
20	Greener Group	\$19,740,195
21	Mountain View Landscape	\$19,300,000
22	Divisions Maintenance Group	\$16,998,525
23	ABM	\$6,300,000
24	Spring-Green Lawn Care	\$4,076,800
25	Mickman Brothers	\$4,000,000

SOUTHWEST

1	Gothic Landscape	\$101,010,000
2	Clean Scapes	\$85,262,000
3	Garden Design	\$65,700,000
4	Earthtones Design	\$50,543,000
5	AAA Landscape	\$45,255,000
6	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$43,773,821
7	Caretaker Landscape and Tree Management	\$37,544,771
8	Southern Botanical	\$36,000,000
9	Earthworks	\$31,400,000
10	Superscapes	\$31,050,000
11	Perfect Cuts of Austin	\$30,561,795
12	DLC Resources	\$29,100,000
13	Santa Rita Landscaping	\$29,100,000
14	Lawn Management Co.	\$29,062,858
15	SOI Group	\$27,330,000
16	Andy's Sprinkler, Drainage & Lighting	\$26,144,918
17	Service Direct Landscape	\$25,183,000
18	Urban Dirt	\$23,900,000
19	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$23,820,000
20	Complete Landsculpture	\$23,081,670
21	Divisions Maintenance Group	\$22,098,083
22	American Landscape Systems	\$21,780,971
23	Richmond & Associates Landscaping	\$21,471,998
24	Texscape Services	\$21,300,000
25	Lawn Doctor	\$20,642,400

WEST

1	Park West	\$175,000,000
2	Gothic Landscape	\$157,990,000
3	Landscape Development Inc.	\$124,750,000
4	SavATree	\$80,000,000
5	Teufel Landscape	\$53,027,632
6	Pierre Landscape	\$53,000,000
7	SiteWorks	\$46,324,809
8	Senske Services	\$43,326,000
9	Harvest Landscape Enterprises	\$39,875,000
10	Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers	\$39,844,098
11	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$39,700,000
12	Stay Green	\$38,000,000
13	Pacific Landscape Management	\$36,839,000
14	Gachina Landscape Management	\$36,143,944
15	Environmental Designs	\$33,840,631
16	Designscapes Colorado	\$32,600,000
17	Merchants Landscape Services	\$32,000,000
18	Divisions Maintenance Group	\$30,597,345
19	Frank & Grossman Landscape Contractors	\$29,000,000
20	Lifescape Colorado	\$26,017,021
21	Andre Landscape Service	\$26,000,000
22	Siteworks Landscape	\$24,240,000
23	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	\$24,000,000
24	Benchmark Landscape	\$21,551,228
25	Timberline Landscaping	\$20,006,162

SOUTHEAST

1	Juniper	\$138,000,000
2	Ruppert Landscape	\$134,460,000
3	Loving	\$119,329,170
4	United Land Services	\$88,700,000
5	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$87,340,000
6	Rotolo Consultants	\$86,000,000
7	The Greenery	\$81,000,000
8	Massey Services	\$76,587,851
9	Weed Man	\$64,890,728
10	Meadows Farms	\$59,400,000
11	Landscape Workshop	\$56,000,000
12	Yardnique	\$54,600,000
13	Divisions Maintenance Group	\$52,695,428
14	Bland Landscaping Co.	\$43,200,000
15	Lawn Doctor	\$43,005,000
16	Mainscape	\$41,440,000
17	Impact Landscaping & Irrigation	\$40,600,000
18	Unlimited Landscaping & Turf Management	\$29,859,768
19	Spring-Green Lawn Care	\$26,091,520
20	ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	\$25,111,675
21	SavATree	\$24,000,000
22	Shinto Landscaping	\$23,000,000
23	ABM	\$22,050,000
24	Michael Hatcher & Associates	\$21,700,000
25	LandOpt	\$20,826,720

MIDWEST

1	Weed Man	\$70,081,986
2	Schill Grounds Management	\$56,000,000
3	Sebert Landscape	\$55,000,000
4	Beary Landscaping	\$54,000,000
5	SavATree	\$54,000,000
6	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$51,880,450
7	Environmental Management Inc.	\$50,400,000
8	Divisions Maintenance Group	\$47,595,870
9	Spring-Green Lawn Care	\$43,214,080
10	Christy Webber & Co.	\$39,800,000
11	Chalet	\$34,000,000
12	Naturescape	\$32,141,368
13	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$31,760,000
14	Scott Byron & Co.	\$31,200,000
15	Southview Design	\$29,748,000
16	David J. Frank Landscape Co.	\$27,320,000
17	Great Oaks Landscape Associates	\$26,200,000
18	Clarence Davids & Co.	\$23,732,600
19	Lawn Doctor	\$22,362,600
20	Focal Pointe Outdoor Solutions	\$21,003,054
21	Brilar	\$17,530,500
22	Hidden Creek Landscaping	\$17,000,000
23	Mainscape	\$14,800,000
24	NaturaLawn of America	\$12,758,493
25	ABM	\$12,600,000

GROWTH MINDSET

Didn't make the LM150 list this year? We asked pros from companies on our 2022 list to share some advice for others striving to hit growth goals.

► “Understand your numbers. Analyze your job costs to understand where you are making or losing money. Profits are never made by accident and if your only understanding of making or losing money is by how much is in your bank account at the end of the month, you are essentially running your business blind, leaving you at a huge disadvantage to your larger competition.”

— *Tanner Spross, CEO of Santa Rita Landscaping*

► “Be thinking ahead on your needs and stay out of the weeds as much as possible. In these times, if you aren't forecasting ahead, you will get swallowed up quickly. Also, cash is king, so get the money as soon as a job is complete.” — *Judd Bryarly, CEO of Timberline Landscaping*

► “Know your bread and butter; focus on small jobs that will focus your customer base instead of focusing on the higher-priced jobs, which include large overhead expenses. — *Andy Hulcy, president, Andy's Sprinkler, Drainage & Lighting*

► “Don't reinvent the wheel. Learn what is working for other companies in the industry and then try to replicate it yourself. Green Lawn Fertilizing has traveled all over the U.S. to learn from other lawn care companies, and we have hosted several dozens of companies to learn from us. We never stop learning, but the early visits we made were particularly impactful since those help set us on the right course. One of the great things about the lawn and landscape industry is how willing to help each other we all are. — *Matt Jesson, president of Green Lawn Fertilizing*

► “Create SOPs before you need them.”
— *Chris Angelo, CEO of Stay Green*

► “Invest in good software to help you manage your business. You need to know where you are making money and where you are not so that you can make informed decisions.” — *Shawn Ryan, president of Environmental Designs*

► “Charge more. Get out of your own head and charge your worth, but you have to deliver. Don't take advantage of people, but know your costs.”
— *Todd Thomasson, owner of Rock Water Farm*

► “Stay the course no matter how rough the sea. April 11, 2022, marked 25 years ago that I started Yardnique. I never could have dreamed the company that we have today would be possible. DREAM BIG!”
— *Brian DuMont, CEO of Yardnique*

150

Power moves

More than 50 companies on our 2022 LM150 list grew by 20 percent or more last year. Here's a look at how a few of these companies did it:

Hidden Creek Landscaping

The Hilliard, Ohio, company purchased a pool company at the end of 2020, which added about \$3.5 million in revenue in 2021.

Level Green Landscape

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

Divisions Maintenance Group

During the pandemic, the Newport, Ky., company focused on sanitization services. This new revenue stream helped the business grow while providing a much-needed service to its customers.

Winterberry

The Southington, Conn., business slashed administrative time in payroll by implementing remote time reporting.

Growth Rank	LM150 Rank	Company	% Rev Change from 2020
1	8	Sperber Landscape Co.	133%
2	6	HeartLand	111%
3	49	DJ's Landscape Management	110%
	44	Yardnique	110%
5	110	Urban Dirt	100%
6	144	Rock Water Farm	62%
7	117	Michael Hatcher & Associates	55%
8	24	United Land Services	53%
9	148	Hidden Creek Landscaping	50%
10	119	Conserva Irrigation	48%
11	19	Loving	43%
12	135	Landry's Landscape	41%
13	45	R.P. Marzilli & Co.	39%
14	17	Juniper	37%
15	62	Xquisite Landscaping	36%
	100	Lifescape Colorado	36%
17	53	Environmental Management Inc.	35%
18	123	Focal Pointe Outdoor Solutions	34%
19	67	Caretaker Landscape and Tree Management	33%
	134	Saluda Hill Landscapes	33%
	55	Creative Environments Design & Landscape	33%
	138	Mullin	33%
23	50	Complete Landscaping Service	30%
	68	Stay Green	30%
25	70	Pacific Landscape Management	28%
26	118	Green Lawn Fertilizing	27%
	61	Bland Landscaping Co.	27%
	18	Landscape Development Inc.	27%
29	95	Level Green Landscape	26%
	113	The Joyce Cos.	26%
	114	Shinto Landscaping	26%
32	16	Divisions Maintenance Group	25%
	91	Lawn Management Co.	25%
	64	Harvest Landscape Enterprises	25%
	105	Heaven & Earth Landscaping	25%
	4	Yellowstone Landscape	25%
37	72	Southern Botanical	24%
	39	Landscape Workshop	24%
	98	Andy's Sprinkler, Drainage & Lighting	24%
40	147	GreenView Partners	23%
	107	Hoffman Landscapes	23%
42	129	Greener Group	22%
	122	Texscape Services	22%
	46	Beary Landscaping	22%
	9	Weed Man	22%
	115	Winterberry	22%
47	108	Siteworks Landscape	21%
	126	Timberline Landscaping	21%
	150	Heritage Professional Landscaping	21%
	89	Santa Rita Landscaping	21%
	111	Clarence Davids & Co.	21%
52	82	Earthworks	20%
	121	Richmond & Associates Landscaping	20%
	72	McHale Landscape Design	20%
	146	Greenscape	20%
	103	Service Direct Landscape	20%

Sperber Landscape Co.

See [page 24](#) for the full story.

Conserva Irrigation

See [page 22](#) for the full story.

Juniper

The Fort Myers, Fla.-based firm added 30-day price quotes and escalation clauses into contracts to manage inflation.

Focal Pointe Outdoor Solutions

Focal Pointe invested in training and sales, which the Caseyville, Ill., company says helped achieve 34-percent growth between 2020 and 2021.

Green Lawn Fertilizing

The West Chester, Pa., company hired two new quality assurance managers to improve its product for customers.

Landscape Workshop

Landscape Workshop, based in Birmingham, Ala., completed five acquisitions in 2021, two in new markets and expanded operations in key markets.

Clarence Davids & Co.

To offset rising costs from inflation, the Matteson, Ill.-based company increased rates by more than double its standard yearly price increases.

LM150 Company Index

Company name	LM150 rank		
AAA Landscape	57	Great Oaks Landscape Associates	99
ABM	35	Green Lawn Fertilizing	118
Accent Landscape Contractors	131	Greener Group	129
American Landscape Systems	116	Greenscape	146
Andre Landscape Service	101	Greenscape Land Design	69
Andy's Sprinkler, Drainage & Lighting	98	GreenView Partners	147
Art by Nature	133	Harvest Landscape Enterprises	64
ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	104	HeartLand	6
Bartlett Tree Experts	5	Heaven & Earth Landscaping	105
Beary Landscaping	46	Heritage Professional Landscaping	150
Benchmark Landscape	120	Hidden Creek Landscaping	148
Berghoff Design Group	74	HighGrove Partners	138
Bland Landscaping Co.	61	Hoffman Landscapes	107
BrightView Holdings	1	Impact Landscaping & Irrigation	63
Brilar	125	John Mini Distinctive Landscapes	106
Caretaker Landscape and Tree Management	67	Juniper	17
Chalet	76	Kline Bros. Landscaping	50
Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	58	LandCare	12
Chenmark	38	LandOpt	21
Cherrylake	141	Landry's Landscape	135
Choate USA	41	Landscape Development Inc.	18
Christy Webber & Co.	66	Landscape Maintenance Professionals	142
Clarence Davids & Co.	111	Landscape Workshop	39
Clean Scapes	28	Landtech Contractors	93
Clintar Commercial Outdoor Services	25	Lawn Doctor	15
Complete Landscaping Service	50	Lawn Management Co.	91
Complete Landsculpture	112	Level Green Landscape	95
Conserva Irrigation	119	Lifescape Colorado	100
Crawford Landscaping	130	LMI Landscapes	86
Creative Environments Design & Landscape	55	Loving	19
David J. Frank Landscape Co.	97	Lucas Tree Expert Co.	33
Denison Landscaping	37	Mainscape	32
Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers	65	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	59
Designscapes Colorado	80	Mariani Landscape	20
Divisions Maintenance Group	16	Massey Services	26
Dixie Landscape	36	McHale Landscape Design	72
DJ's Landscape Management	49	Meadows Farms	31
DLC Resources	89	Merchants Landscape Services	81
Earthco Commercial Landscape	145	Michael Hatcher & Associates	117
Earthtones Design	52	Mickman Brothers	127
Earthworks	82	Mountain View Landscape	132
Elite Team Offices	76	Mullin	138
Environmental Designs	78	NaturaLawn of America	22
Environmental Management Inc.	53	Naturescape	79
Focal Pointe Outdoor Solutions	123	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	109
Frank & Grossman Landscape Contractors	92	Pacific Landscape Management	70
Gachina Landscape Management	71	Park West	14
Garden Design	34	Perfect Cuts of Austin	85
Gibson Landscape Services	101	Pierre Landscape	48
Gothic Landscape	10	Pro Cutters Lawnservices	149
		ProQual Landscaping	124
		R.P. Marzilli & Co.	45
		Richmond & Associates Landscaping	121
		Rock Water Farm	144
		Rotolo Consultants	27
		Ruppert Landscape	11
		Russell Landscape Group	54
		Ryan Lawn & Tree	43
		Saluda Hill Landscapes	134
		Santa Rita Landscaping	89
		SavATree	7
		Schill Grounds Management	39
		Schultz Industries	136
		Scott Byron & Co.	84
		Sebert Landscape	41
		Senske Services	60
		Service Direct Landscape	103
		Shinto Landscaping	114
		SiteWorks	56
		Siteworks Landscape	108
		SOI Group	96
		Southern Botanical	72
		Southview Design	88
		Sperber Landscape Co.	8
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PROTECT YOUR TURF

Keep your spreader-sprayers sparkling

Experts say a well-kept machine increases productivity while saving expenses

BY JONATHAN DELOZIER | LM MANAGING EDITOR

In the turf care field, getting maximum output from equipment like a spreader-sprayer is a necessity.

Jim Rogers, owner and operator of Wood Dale Ill.-based Turf 10 Professional Lawn Care, credits PermaGreen spreader-sprayers as a huge part of what lets him thrive as a solo act.

“I have about 1,800 hours on one machine and about 500 on the other,” he says of his spreader-sprayers. “They’re 2017 and 2018 models. I run the one with the high hours all the time because it works flawlessly, and once a month, I pull out the backup machine to make sure it’s all working properly. With a one-person operation, you can’t afford downtime.”

Rogers serves a mostly residential base of 463 customers, providing services including weed control, fungicide, insecticide, fertilizing and consulting.

“Don’t abuse the machine and maintain it properly if you want the best use out of it,” he says. “It’s like anything that’s mechanical; if you abuse it and don’t clean it, it’s not going to last long.”

One of the first things Rogers does when he arrives home is pull his PermaGreen spreader-sprayer off the truck and wash it.

“I know a lot of guys go out and apply fertilizer for five or six weeks, then they wash it,” he says. “That’s a recipe for disaster for anything that’s spreading fertilizer.”

Brian Rowan, vice president of category management at SiteOne Landscape Supply, says proper training and calibration are other keys to peak spreader-sprayer output.

“We worry a lot about the cost of a bag or the cost of a jug of product, but

then we don’t pay any attention to how much product we are actually putting down,” he says. “The most important thing to do if you buy a new piece of equipment is to make sure the branch manager trains you on how to calibrate and how to use it properly. That could potentially be your biggest cost savings.”

MAKE THE EQUIPMENT SOMETHING EMPLOYEES WANT TO USE

Even when users check all boxes for spreader-sprayers in terms of maintenance and training, businesses must make the equipment as user-friendly as possible, says Chris Brown, CEO of Teed & Brown of Norwalk, Conn.

A user of Turfco equipment, Brown says users shouldn’t overlook the “human element.”


“Someone might be perfectly happy to put a great effort forth across an eight- to 10-hour day,” he says. “However, if you can give them the ability to get 15 lawns

done in a day versus eight or nine, they’re not as exhausted at the end because you gave them a machine that’s easier to use and can do more work.”

Teed & Brown provides fertilizing, pesticide, weed control, seeding and irrigation services to a mostly residential client base.

“If you think about how much production an employee can generate with a machine like this, versus a traditional push-behind spreader, I venture to guess that each machine is the equivalent of hiring another employee,” Brown says. “That’s probably the cheapest salary you’re ever going to pay.”

Turfco President George Kinkead adds that certain attachments can further enhance spreader-sprayer output.

“We have a three-in-one tank you can put on top of the applicator, where it lets you have separate chemicals to spray,” he says. “Or, you can use it for additional capacity. That lets a guy who sprays a lot during the day go from 18 gallons to 33 gallons. We need to think of our employees as assets and that the company will be better if they’re feeling good.” 

SAVE SOME CASH

SiteOne Vice President of Category Management, Brian Rowan, says the most important thing to do after buying a new piece of equipment is to learn exactly how to use it.





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» DID YOU KNOW

How to work with fertilizer technology

Experts share the do's and don'ts of working with enhanced-efficiency and controlled-release fertilizers **BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR**

To provide more flexibility with applications and reduce overall labor costs, many lawn professionals turn to enhanced-efficiency and controlled-release fertilizers (CRFs).

Instead of using a traditional fertilizer program with three or more applications, companies can use these products for a single application — meaning fewer products in storage, few site vis-

its, less fuel used and fewer chances for weather interruptions. Experts say CRFs also don't leach or volatilize as quickly as regular fertilizers.

To get the most from these fertilizers, experts suggest following these tips.

DO

Reach out to the local Extension office. Extension agents can recommend



Experts say controlled-release fertilizers don't leach or volatilize as quickly as regular fertilizers, making them a more environmentally friendly option.

the best time of year to apply fertilizers based on the location, says Chris Lemaster, field manager for Green Group, a lawn care company based in Tulsa, Okla.

Educate the customer. "High-end products have a lot of technology and cost more," says Chuck Barber, vice president of customer accounts, specialty, for Anuvia Plant Nutrients. "Overall, the benefits outweigh the little extra money you're spending."

Establish and evaluate plans. "Always recommend to take the hardest property that is the farthest from your office to evaluate first, then the overall

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benefits of CRF become clear quickly,” says Bill Abetz, director of turf and ornamentals for Pursell Agri-Tech.

Use on properties without irrigation. “Controlled-release products are great for properties that rely on nature for water rather than an irrigation system,” says Benjamin Allen, vice president, Midwest region for Green Group.

Start with commercial properties. “Consumers don’t typically want to see a guy with a spreader bouncing fertilizer off cars or in parking lots,” Abetz says. “These properties are perfect for a single fertilizer application and evaluation.”

Know your zone. “In the transition zone, sometimes people make two applications — one for the spring/warm-season grasses and another for the fall/winter for the cool-season grasses,” Abetz says.

Note the rate will be higher. “You’re applying fertilizer for the entire

growing season, depending on analysis and desired annual nitrogen requirements,” Abetz says. “Rates can range from 250 to 500 lbs. per acre.”

Watch your budget. “These can be more expensive,” Allen says. “If not properly calibrated and applied, you can waste money quickly.”

DON'T

Worry if the grass doesn't initially green up. “Because the plant isn’t getting as much uncoated nitrogen at the initial application, it may not appear as green as normal,” Abetz says. “This difference is usually gone in about two to three weeks.”


Assume all products are the same. “Some technologies rely on moisture and temperature, and some rely on microbial activity,” Lemaster says. “Choosing the correct one can have an impact on what you are trying to accomplish.”

Be inconsistent. “Bouncing back

and forth from a quick-release product to a slow-release product won’t hurt your turf, but it will create those spikes in color and growth that we are trying to avoid,” Allen says.

Fail to communicate. “Unclear or inconsistent communication with customers can be an issue, especially on a commercial property where there is a contract for a certain number of applications,” Abetz says.

Overapply nutrients. “The turf-grass won’t be able to utilize that amount, so it could be wasted or leached away,” Barber says.

Compare the cost. “This initial comparison has always been the biggest objection to considering CRF. In the case of CRF, to evaluate the true costs, you must consider all the other benefits CRF provides,” Abetz says. 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.



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Get ready for spotted lanternfly



What pros need to know before adding treatments to a plant health program

Located in Berks County, Pa., New Castle Lawn & Landscape of Birdsboro had a front-row seat to the emergence of spotted lanternfly (SLF), first identified in the U.S. in Berks County in 2014. Since then, researchers have found populations in New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Connecticut, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia and West Virginia.

Andy Auchenbach, senior account manager and ISA Certified Arborist, says the team at New Castle quickly re-

alized SLF treatments would fit into the operation's plant health care offerings.

"That upsell on the lanternfly treatments is a super easy upsell," he says.

Auchenbach says SLF-infested areas will likely get calls from clients as the pest reaches the adult stage. While SLF does not feed on turf, it is a nuisance for ornamental plantings, including tree-of-heaven, sugar and red maple, sycamore and black walnut trees.

EARLY SPRAYS

Auchenbach says systemic applications of dinotefuran are an effective tool to control adults. Technicians cover the first four feet of the tree with a bark spray in August in Pennsylvania to kill adults on the tree.

"The bark sprays, or if you can directly inject into the trunk of the tree, that's the best," he says, although early treatments could miss the window of effectiveness.

HOW TO GET READY

Castle uses Service Autopilot to run treatment estimates. The client provides a salesperson the diameter of the tree for treatment, and the software estimates the budget hours and cost of the job.

"We've treated 30 homes in a day," he says. "Our lowest treatment is around \$55 and can go up to a few hundred if you have a really big tree," Auchenbach says. "Some of the materials or insecticides are pretty expensive, so you have to make sure that you're covering your costs." 

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SOMEBODY'S WATCHING ME

GPS tech allows landscapers to know exactly where their fleets and equipment are at any given time.



TIPSHEET

How GPS proves its value

As tracking tech evolves, experts share how it becomes a critical resource for landscapers and their customers **BY JONATHAN DELOZIER | LM MANAGING EDITOR**

How accurate is your equipment use tracking? Can you cut time spent on regular administrative tasks?

Evolving fleet management and GPS technology is carving new paths to those answers for landscape management companies.

Texas-based FieldRoutes software is the product of a 2021 rebrand that combined PestRoutes and Lobster Marketing. That move included expansion into the

lawn care industry and enhancements to routing capabilities.

Avani Aggarwal, FieldRoutes associate product manager, says users have drastically cut administrative times.

“One of our customers said they’ve reduced their admin time from three to five hours daily to now just 30 minutes,” she says. “Most of the companies have also reduced the amount of time their technicians spend on day-to-day activities.”

FieldRoutes helps City Green Environmental of Fort Myers, Fla., provide services including landscape maintenance and fertilization to a mostly residential customer base.

Operations manager Ricky Turru-biartez envisions further tech growth.

“As we continue to move forward with FieldRoutes, I see it eventually letting our technicians get so familiar with it that they can create their own routes,” he says. “I think that would be a huge plus versus having someone in-house create that for them. They can input customers’ calls and emails into their schedules and get to them even

Continued on page 38

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5 PRACTICES TO MAKE YOUR LANDSCAPING BUSINESS A SUCCESS

JEFF CARTWRIGHT | OWNER OF CARTWRIGHT LANDSCAPING

Running a business takes commitment, dedication and hard work. But where do you start? Prior to forming Cartwright Landscaping in 2011, I asked successful business owners for insight, guidance and advice on how to build and grow a company. Thanks to that advice, eleven years later Cartwright Landscaping has an outstanding reputation with an extremely dedicated, passionate and knowledgeable team. Here's how we strive to do our best every day.

1 KEEP LEARNING

Keep your skills—and your team's skills—fresh with seminars, professional associations, certification programs, hands-on training, “how to” videos, books, mentoring, etc. I spend several hours a week studying landscape and hardscape techniques and projects. In addition to participating in local seminars and certification programs, my team members coach each other while on the job. Peer coaching brings everyone's techniques up to the same standard while promoting cross-training.

2 PROTECT YOUR CLIENT INTERACTION

You can't have a company without clients. Treat every project like it's your first with the same determination and desire to please. Listen closely to your client's ideas, desires, and dreams for their project. Be honest, straightforward and don't over promise on deliverables. Use clear, consistent communication and provide daily project status updates, including on behalf of your subcontractors. Our proposals are extremely detailed to comprehensively cover project scope and costs. In addition to our online project portfolio, we provide samples and conduct nursery and stone yard tours to help clients make informed decisions about our work.

3 APPRECIATE YOUR TEAM

Dedicated employees are hard to find. Treat your team with respect and appreciation. Listen to them. Learn what motivates them. Ask what you can do to support them and help them grow. Empower your team to make decisions, manage projects and learn from mistakes. Offer incentives like spot and annual bonuses based on individual and company performance. Foster morale through regular training, team building, volunteer projects and outings. Taking a break for a team meal or fun outing can change the dynamic for the better especially during a busy time of year.

4 FOCUS ON DETAIL AND ORGANIZATION

Details are everything; from the first interaction to maintenance and upkeep and everything in between. A plant installed out of place, an irrigation head buried under sod or mulch dropped in the lawn can tarnish an otherwise perfect project. Do the job right the first time—don't cut corners. This is also true for scheduling and logistics. Review your project materials needs, deliveries, staffing and subcontracted work. Don't overextend yourself or your resources.

5 PROTECT YOUR BRAND AND REPUTATION

Your brand is more than your logo, website and advertising. Your brand is your reputation and, if protected, your best sales tool. People will remember your work ethic, project quality and commitment to clients, partners and team members. It takes years to build a brand reputation, but only minutes to lose it, and once lost, it is very difficult to recover. Success is fragile and growth is impossible without a good reputation.

**Want more tips from Jeff?
Visit STIHLusa.com.**

As a professional landscaper and small business owner, Jeff Cartwright has nearly 20 years of experience providing exceptional personal service, high-quality work product and extensive horticultural expertise through Cartwright Landscaping.

TIPSHEET

Continued from page 36

more quickly. I want them to be able to create schedules, routes, estimates, upsells, you name it.”

BETTER INFO FOR CUSTOMERS

CrewTracker Software allows for digital filing of route sheets, contracts, dispatch records, photos, field data and billing information for real-time business analysis and reporting.

The company’s mobile app lets users start and stop services, enter crew notes and attach photos of work sites.

“Fleet tracking can monitor your gas mileage, your acceleration, whether you’re making sharp turns or stopping,” says CrewTracker CEO John Paganini. “Using the GPS capabilities of the mobile phone, CrewTracker knows where the crews are in real-time.”

CrewTracker users can also turn on “breadcrumbs” to see the status of workers’ trip to a job site.

“This is similar technology used to track an Uber driver as they approach the pickup point,” says Paganini. “The breadcrumbs can be very precise and refresh every five seconds or 30 seconds, depending on your preference.”

MOVING TECH FORWARD

American Honda Motor Co.’s Fleet Management App provides a use rate for vehicles and other large equipment as well as handhelds such as trimmers, edgers and blowers. The app gives suggestions on appropriate fleet size, maintenance schedules and replacement. The tech remains in a pilot marketing phase.

“Our priority is visualizing the utilization rate, the utilization hours,” says

Yuko Furuichi, marketing manager at Honda. “Our device has a shock sensor feature, so if a mower were to hit something like a wall, it will detect that there was a big shock on this day, at this time, at this location. That provides a hint for the future.”

Colin Bemus, a Honda user and president of California-based Bemus Landscaping, says the tech has proven its benefit.

“It will help track seasonality and what needs to be done when to help schedule appropriately,” he says. “It’s really the only tech I’ve seen that tracks the usage like this. Currently, most units are designed where you have no idea how long it’s been running. It’s like not having an odometer in your car or truck and still expecting someone to know how long it’s been used for.”

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THE BIG ONE

West-coast flair

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOCATION Atherton, Calif.

COMPANY Gachina Landscape Management

DETAILS Maintaining a unique estate located in the Bay Area, Gachina Landscape Management works hand in hand with the client to ensure everything on-site — from the trees to the flowers — ties together into a cohesive design.

That can be challenging because the estate features several unique trees, including redwoods and oak trees. The client wanted the trees and the architecture to be a focal point of the property.

According to Robert Garcia, senior account manager, the tree species require different plant varieties under their canopies. The four oak trees on the property thrive without grass or “water-loving” plants — such as heuchera, hellebores and perennial geraniums — under the canopies.

When Gachina took over the property in 2019, it had to remove the old lawn, irrigation system, gopher netting, filter fabric and drain rock due to an incorrect fabric used by the previous contractor.

The property’s original landscape architect referred Gachina to the homeowner and still works on the property alongside Gachina in a consulting role.

The estate also features plants that Gachina is still training, including two bougainvilleas, in the back of the property.

“I constantly have to glue and paint anchors to match the wall so you can’t see them,” Garcia says. “We’re also training a climbing hydrangea inside a lightwell.”

To ensure the redwoods — and the other plants and trees on the estate — receive the water they need, Gachina utilizes a HydroPoint Weather-TRAK smart controller with Hunter MP rotators.

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

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



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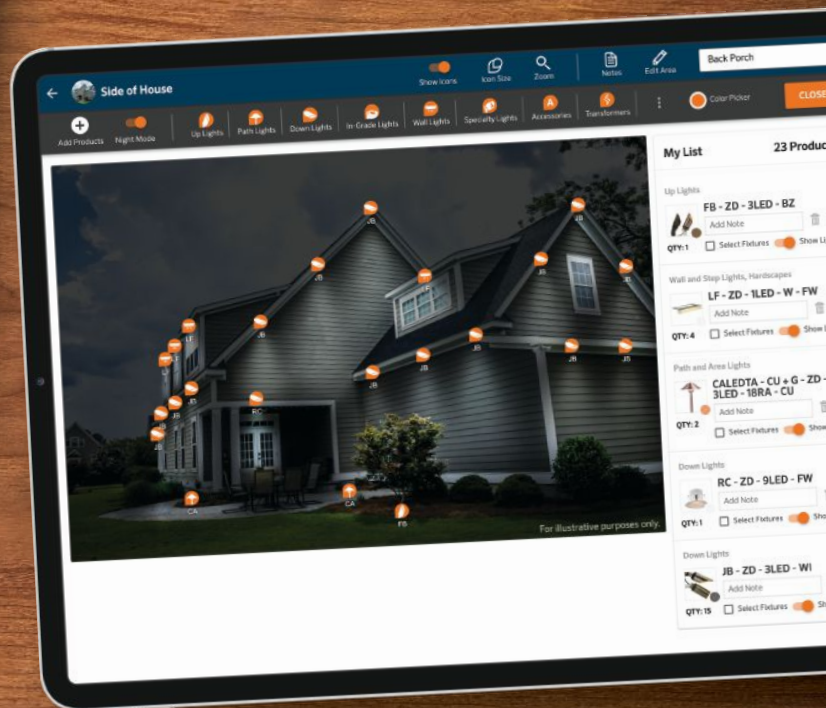


4

Captions | **1.** One of several species of trees on the estate, redwoods are native to the Pacific Northwest, providing a unique flair to the property. **2.** At the front of the property, an oak tree towers over the home. Gachina also manages several boxwood hedges around the property. According to Robert Garcia, senior account manager with Gachina, the client has specific requirements for their height. **3.** The estate features a vegetable and wildflower garden. A custom cage covers two beds to protect them from squirrels and other animals. The garden is home to berry vines, citrus trees, seasonal vegetables and wildflowers. **4.** Gachina is training two bougainvilleas to climb the three arches located on the back patio of the property.

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MAINTENANCE SHOP

Don't neglect walk-behind mowers

Experts share how proper maintenance keeps walk-behind mowers in top shape

BY JONATHAN DELOZIER | LM MANAGING EDITOR

Even with the onset of automation and popularity of ride-on models, walk-behind mowers continue to occupy an important space among landscape professionals. Here, industry experts share thoughts with *LM* on proper maintenance and tips for keeping walk-behind equipment running smoothly throughout the year.

Brian Aldinger, product manager for commercial walk-behind mowers and wide-area mowers at John Deere, says not to underestimate the benefits of simply looking at the operator's manual.



NOT GOING ANYWHERE

Experts believe that walk-behind mowers will continue to find their place in turf care, even with advancing technology in the coming years.

"Maintenance on the commercial walk-behind mower is very similar to the ZTrak (zero turn mower) and QuikTrak (stand-on mower)," he says. "The operator's manual is a great resource to use for the recommended maintenance on machines. There are recommended service intervals according to engine hour intervals. Also, the operator's manual contains a list of items to check and inspect before and after each use."

A common misconception is that walk-behind mowers require less maintenance compared to other models, says Lenny Mangnall, product manager for Exmark.

"(Maintenance) is overlooked in many instances and sometimes (walk-behind mowers) are looked at as lesser equipment," he says. "The feeling is that someone doesn't have to

Continued on page 44

PHOTO: JOHN DEERE

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Continued from page 42

be as vigilant in service and maintenance as they would on a (riding mower), and that's just not true. The opposite may be true. When you look at engine placement, typically, the engine is much closer to the cutting deck and those operations in a walk-behind. It's likely going to catch more debris, more dust and maybe run a bit hotter in some situations."



Mangnall also cites regular oil changes and air filter cleaning as maintenance components that pros cannot overlook.

⚠️ DON'T FORGET IT
Industry experts say maintenance components not to overlook with walk-behind mowers include regular oil changes and air filter cleanings.

"When you get down in the 21- and 30-inch models, not all of them have engine oil filters," he says. "Guys get into the mindset of, 'when it burns oil, I'll add oil.' You can't discount service and maintenance because it's a walk-behind. You just can't.

"A lot of times, (neglectful maintenance) occurs subconsciously," Mangnall continues. "I don't think people are consciously thinking, 'I don't have to maintain that.' There can also be cost factors. You have a \$1,700 21-inch mower. You have a \$6,000 to \$8,000 walk-behind and a \$10,000-plus rider. So, maybe because of cost, you subconsciously lose thought of maintaining certain equipment."

CLIMATE SPECIFIC NEEDS, TECH ADVANCEMENT

Across various climates and terrain, Mangnall says maintenance remains largely the same outside of service intervals. He says this is similar to automobiles. Algorithms in today's vehicles look at how hard the vehicle runs and what conditions the vehicle operates in.

"The exact same thing holds true with turf equipment," he says. "In the springtime, when you're mowing heavier grass, you have to sharpen your blades more."

Both Mangnall and Aldinger say walk-behind mowers will continue to find their place in turf care circles, even with advancing technology giving users more options.


"We see tech growing across the industry as a whole," says Aldinger. "Having a robust technology solution is definitely an area on which John Deere is focused. As we look out five to 10 years, we're excited about what the future holds and the potential of what we can bring to market to help our professional landscapers operate more efficiently." 

PHOTO: EXMARK

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HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

Diamond in the bluff

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

LOCATION Bayside, Wis.

COMPANY David J. Frank Landscape Contracting

DETAILS The client wanted secluded outdoor dining and a casual retreat area for this property that overlooks an 80-foot-high bluff on Lake Michigan. The 40-degree slope and size of the property presented a major challenge in the execution of the design. Only one skid-steer would fit on the site. The operator had to back the company's Takeuchi skid-steer up and down the hill to control the machine safely.

David J. Frank also had to get creative when constructing the property's 1,000-square-foot cedar pergola with 28-foot long beams, says Jeff Hershberger, landscape designer. Access was another challenge: Switchbacks on the pathway to the job site made it impossible to take the material down by hand and foot.

"We used a zip line from the top of the block to the bottom," he says. "There was no way to get them straight down the hill. That zip line would be the best way of slowly lowering (the beams) down to the bottom (of the site)."

The unique site meant crews needed to get most of the materials staged on the site before winter. They lost days when a polar vortex brought -25-degree F temperatures and frozen ground 8-feet deep.

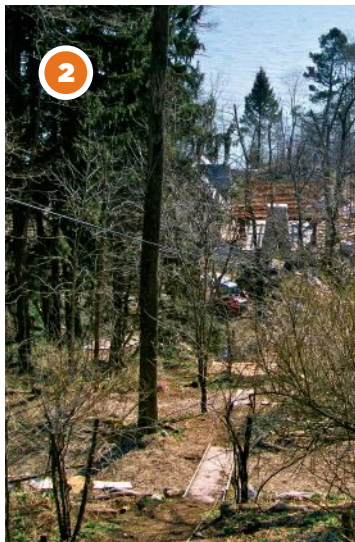
Details on this project include bluestone pavers, a wood-burning fireplace, a gas fire pit, a bocce court with Brazilian ipe hardwood frames and monochromatic, deer-resistant plantings. Hershberger said the client added a Wi-Fi extender to ensure the signal from the wireless router in the home reached the FX Luminaire landscape lighting controller.

This project earned David J. Frank Landscape Contracting 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](https://www.landscapemanagement.net/hardscapesolutions).



1



2



3



4

Captions | 1. The formal-patterned dimensional bluestone paving on the terrace morphs into irregular stone steppers and paving for the informal paths and fire pit area. 2. The 80-foot-high bluff presented a logistical challenge for David J. Frank. Crews designed a zip line to carry the 28-foot beams for the large pergola and other materials to the site. Crews also pumped concrete down several hundred feet to pour footings and pedestals. 3. The switchback path provides access down the 80-foot-high bluff. 4. David J. Frank worked around the razing and rebuilding of the main residence, which meant the bulk of construction occurred during the heart of winter.

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~ Ed Bryant, *Unilock Founder*



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322H/348H EPIC SERIES TWO-PERSON HOLE DIGGERS

COMPANY: General Equipment Co.

URL: GeneralEquip.com

The 322H and 348H Epic Series two-person hole diggers feature 5.5-horsepower (4.1 kW) Honda GXV160 four-stroke engines and can dig holes up to 18 inches (457 mm) in diameter. The hole diggers also include the Auger-LOK feature for removing stuck augers. The 322H and 348H include an enclosed spur-gear transmission with oversized bearings, heat-treated shafts and machine-cut gears.



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SB2-16HD

COMPANY: SiBore Drill

URL: SiBoreDrill.com

The SiBore Drill SB2-16HD uses a Honda GX35 four-cycle engine. The auger comes in 2-, 3-, 4-, 6- and 8-inch diameters. The SB2-16HD does not require a water hose; it bores dry and removes soil from underneath concrete. The unit has a larger main shaft with bearings and heavy-duty augers. Additionally, the unit can convert to a vertical post-hole drill in two minutes.

MECHANICAL EARTH DRILL



COMPANY: Little Beaver

URL: LittleBeaver.com

Little Beaver's Mechanical Earth Drill features a 360-rpm operating speed with a compact design, allowing access to areas unreachable by skid-steer-mounted augers. It also features a steel torque tube that enables operators to use large diameter augers without fear of kickback.

The mechanical drills are ideal for projects like fence and sign installation.



24V BRUSHLESS DRILL

COMPANY: Greenworks

URL: GreenworksTools.com

The Greenworks 24V Brushless Drill features a 24-volt lithium-ion battery and a brushless motor. Its 18-position clutch settings offer torque adjustment for drilling holes and driving screws in a variety of materials. The drill's design also makes maneuvering in and out of tight working spaces easier. A built-in LED light helps illuminate poorly lit areas.



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INSTALLATION SOLUTIONS

On the rocks

Experts share their secrets behind getting your hardscapes and waters features to work together

BY JONATHAN DELOZIER | LM MANAGING EDITOR

The wrong stone installed on a water feature can doom a project. Experts who shared thoughts with *LM* all agree that knowing your land and climate before installation is key.

“You want to consider the end result first and work your way backwards from there,” says Chris Noone, SiteOne Landscape Supply, senior director of category management for hardscapes. “These projects tend to really mimic time. You have to think about multilayering the stone. Is your site in freeze-thaw conditions where the water freezes and can be a punisher for thawing, expanding and retracting? That’s very hard on the stone. You have to have the right pieces for the project.”

Noone says that hardscape installations at SiteOne split about 80/20 across residential and commercial customers. Those different demographics spell varied needs met by SiteOne’s Stone Centers.

“As far as sourcing stone and making sure it’s going into the right climates, we have our Stone Centers across the United States and Canada,” Noone says. “They specialize in servicing, education and sourcing materials for the contractors. They also work in conjunction with our customers’ customers. They connect them with experts, the craftsmen, who can do the jobs they’re not capable of doing.”

Marcus Ralston, vice president of New Hampshire-based ClifRock, says his company’s stone panels are another good solution in solving project hurdles related to climate or stone location.

“We have a system in place of mixing these proprietary masonry compounds,” he says. “That is mixed and cast in pre-formed panel molds, creating the look and feel of natural stone hardscape designs. It looks very authentic and blends right in. The panels aren’t as sensitive to temperature changes as the natural stone is.”

WORKING TOGETHER

Jason Hestekin, director of dimensional stone for Wisconsin-based Kafka Granite, sees his company’s materials used in luxury home projects.

Working with what he characterizes as “pallet-sized sheets” of stone allows clients to form irregular shapes around ponds and other water features. Regardless of shape, Hestekin says contractors should make sure materials will withstand contact with water.

“A big thing to think about, whether you’re working with a granite or a limestone, is the chemicals in those ponds to keep the water (pH) in balance,” he says. “Chemicals and a natural product (like stone) don’t do well together. The stone can be damaged on the inside. They need to get their rubber liner up and, a lot of times, keep that natural stone a few inches above the water so it’s not coming in direct contact with those chemicals.”

Hestekin advises contractors to seek out stone with a low absorption rate such as a granite product.

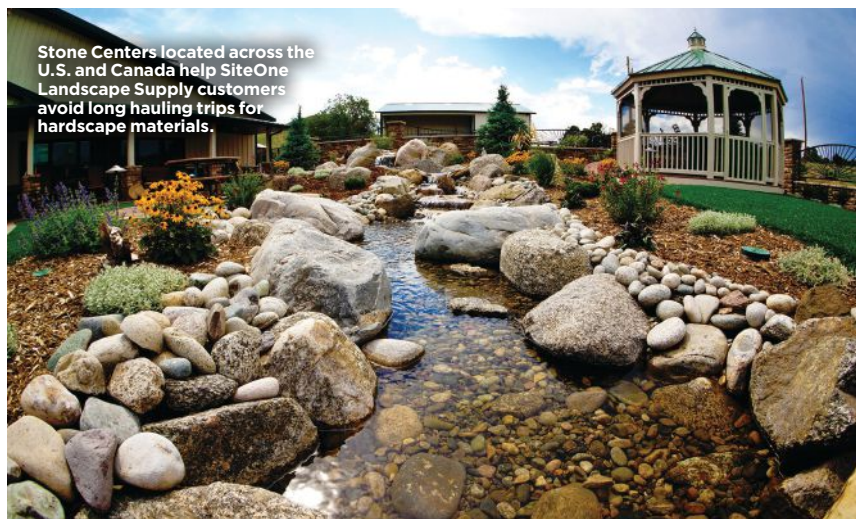
“You see monuments in cemeteries made out of granite,” he says. “It’s made of granite for a reason.”

SOFT STONE CAN BE TEMPTING

Choosing softer stone for a project where conditions like rainfall or extreme temperatures may present problems is an easy mistake to make. That’s due to those materials being aesthetically pleasing, says Roger Ramsey, national category manager for outdoor living products at Arizona-based Ewing Irrigation and Landscape Supply.

Daryl Irsik, Ewing’s national product manager for hardscapes, agrees.

“One of my larger pond builders put it very well; you want stone that looks like you could have found them hiking in the mountains or the woods,” he says. “They try to incorporate as much variety as you’d find in the natural landscape and, for the most part, I’d agree about seeking the indigenous stone.”



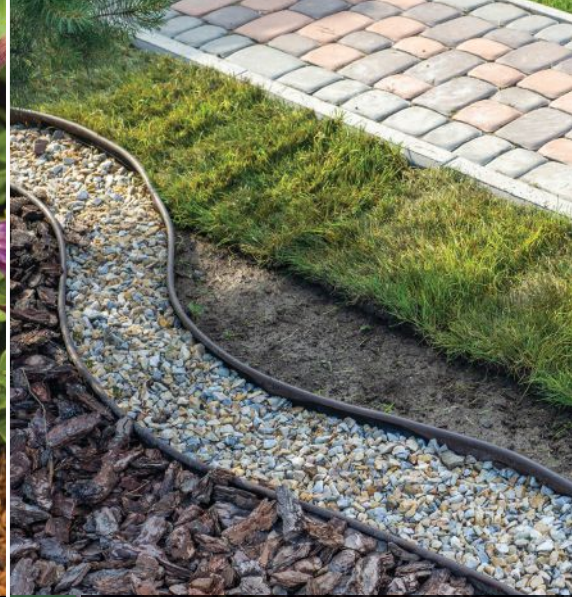
Stone Centers located across the U.S. and Canada help SiteOne Landscape Supply customers avoid long hauling trips for hardscape materials.



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The backup on backflows

Irrigation industry professionals discuss what supply chain challenges are doing to their businesses and how they're adjusting moving forward

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Troy Oster, senior category manager at SiteOne Landscape Supply, is nearing the 20-year mark in his career. He looks back at the last 18-plus months as some of the most challenging, yet rewarding, of his career.

"Every day is different; every new day is a new challenge," he says. "I love hopefully being able to solve some of those challenges to help our customers get work and get that work done."

Oster says supply chain challenges in the irrigation industry have been quite the curveball for him and his customers. He cites a general shortage of components, longer delivery times, increased freight costs and high demand as the perfect storm that has created this supply chain drama.

But he stresses that this is not an industry that makes excuses, it is an industry that gets it done.

"The people are the bedrock of the industry; these people have a get-it-done attitude," Oster says. "Everyone is dealing with these challenges. Look at the last few years, there have been a number of challenges. But business has been good. That speaks to (the industry) figuring it out and getting it done — the suppliers, the manufacturers, the installers, everyone."

Landscape Management spoke with Oster, Justin White of K&D Landscape in Santa Cruz, Calif., and Andrew Moberly at Yellowstone Landscape in Nashville about what their current supply chain challenges are and what they're doing to overcome the obstacles.

PRODUCTS IN NEED

K&D Landscape is a full-service company that operates in the Bay area of



Justin White

California. Justin White, CEO, says there are a number of products that used to be readily available that now are challenging to obtain. He lists plastics, backflows, stone, hardscaping materials, small equipment and vehicles as all having

some form of challenges associated with obtaining them.

"We're looking into the future a lot more than we used to when it comes to material procurement," White says. "If we don't, we either find ourselves changing the product we spec'd on the fly — that doesn't go over well with the client — or we change the schedule. And that also doesn't go well with the client."

Andrew Moberly, irrigation manager at Yellowstone, says backflows and MP rotators are on his shortlist of products that have been harder to get in recent months.

"There are a lot of issues with getting the necessary supplies," Moberly says. "The day-to-day products can run out. Our local distributors are always looking out for us. They might say, 'X product is scarce, you need to look at this alternative.' You never want to be surprised. We use SiteOne, and they take the surprise out."

LESSONS LEARNED

White says K&D Landscape has made a commitment to staying on top of the supply chain drama by creating a weekly meeting they call "three-month lookouts."

"Once a week we look and see what products we'll need," White says. "And

WHAT'S THE HOLDUP?

Unexpected delays in the supply chain could force companies to reschedule jobs.



PHOTOS: SITEONE LANDSCAPE SUPPLY



COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Troy Oster, senior category manager at SiteOne Landscape Supply, says communicating with everyone involved on a project is as important as ever with supply chain challenges.

we have one person, our chief operations officer, making sure everyone is doing these look-aheads ... because it's easy to let them fade off the schedule after a few weeks."

White adds another adjustment they've made is carrying a larger supply of products. He notes that K&D also works with SiteOne, which gives them more control of their inventory.

Moberly says he's learned that he needs to be more flexible when it comes to trying different brands.

"I know myself, and I know I get stuck in my ways," he says. "I only use X product. Well, there are a ton of great products, not just two. I've learned to try them."

Oster says the main lesson he's learned is how important it is to keep communication lines open with everyone involved in the process.

"Communicate that this is real," Oster says. "The time is going to take longer, and the prices have gone up. Try to get everyone

to grasp this. Open the dialogue that there are challenges and a need to be flexible with alternative products."

LOOKING AHEAD

How much longer will these supply chain challenges be the norm? Opinions differ.


"I think the general sentiment is that there is some optimism," Oster says. "We are by no means out of the woods, but we see some improvements upcoming."

Moberly was not optimistic.

"My gut says it's not getting better any time soon," he says.

White, meanwhile, doesn't see it in black and white, but in gray.

"I expect us to see an increase in supply in the next 12 to 18 months," White says.

"I see manufacturing ramping up. Barring any COVID-related shutdowns, I think in quarter two or quarter three of 2023, we're done. What I don't see? I don't see the prices stalling or coming down for a few years." 



Troy Oster



MORE ON THIS TOPIC AT EQUIP EXPO

Want to see in person what industry experts have to say about the current supply chain situation? Join *Landscape Management* in Louisville at Equip Expo, where we'll present "Supply chain hacks," a 60-minute seminar featuring Dan Wurgler, executive vice president of procurement and operations, Ewing and George Kinkead, president, Turfco Manufacturing and other industry guests. The seminar is at noon on Friday, Oct. 21. To register for the class, visit EquipExposition.com.

John Mohns

PRESIDENT
BENCHMARK LANDSCAPE
POWAY, CALIF.

1 Tell me about Benchmark Landscape and how you made your way into the industry.

We're a commercial landscape contractor servicing San Diego County out of three branches. We've been in business for 38 years. Our company mission and vision are to operate professionally, provide high-level service and workmanship and be a great employer. We have 40 employees who have been here over 20 years, and we have 15 employees who have been here over 30 years. Growing up, I mowed lawns, raked leaves and pulled weeds in the neighborhood. I went to college and studied horticulture. I fell in love with the landscape contracting course path. I wanted that to be my career. I worked with a couple contractors the first five or six years; then, I started Benchmark with a partner. I can say today that I'm one of the lucky ones who has a career that I love.

2 Tell me about yourself. Do you have a family?

I'm married. We're celebrating our 40th anniversary early next year. We've got one daughter; she's 32 and lives up in San Francisco. We're a small family. I grew up in Los Angeles and my wife grew up in the Bay area. We met in college at San Luis Obispo — that's our favorite getaway. We've been in San Diego for over 40 years. I like to go to the Eastern Sierras here in California. I'm learning how to fly fish, and I have a Harley-Davidson — I like to get out on a road trip a few times a year with friends.

3 Congratulations on making the LM150 list! What does being on the list mean to you?

I guess No. 1, it's rewarding to be on the LM150 list. In anything in life, there's a little competitiveness. When you look at an organization that you're a big part of, that you've grown from nothing ... there's a lot to be proud of. You're not going to be on this list if you're not successful and strong. I'm proud that we have such a good team that we've been able to build something that is professional, strong and

successful. It's amazing, and it's amazing to look at the list and see so many companies are doing the same thing ... and some of them are so much bigger. It's an incredible industry.

4 What trends are you seeing with your customers in the San Diego area?

Inflation and cost management come to the top. Our customers are willing to pay a little bit more. They understand what's going on with the economy. But I don't think anybody wants to pay for what inflation is really doing to us. It's a balance. We get a little relief from our clients. We just have to be more efficient and productive as a company. We also have to be more understanding right now that our margins are going to be challenged. It's more competitive today than it was yesterday.

5 You have two 35-year employees retiring soon. How does that make you feel?

It's amazing to think that someone has committed their career to this organization, an organization that I'm fortunate to lead. Any business owner has taken a lot of risks to build a business. But you don't do it by yourself. To be able to keep a team together — not everybody, some people come and go — but you have a nucleus that becomes like a family. 🙌



BEST ADVICE

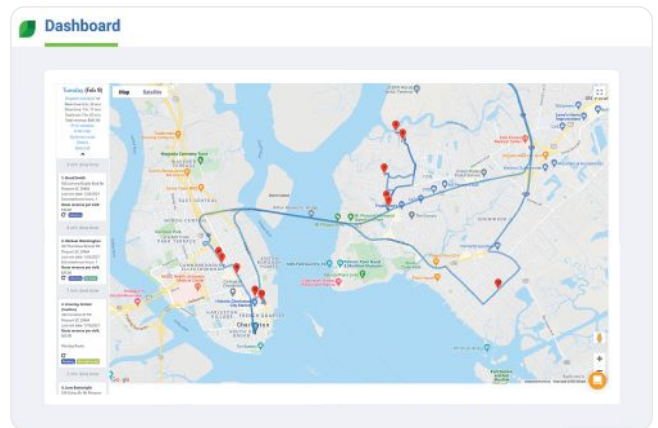
“Try to always be positive. That's the best advice you can give or get from anyone.”

PHOTO: COURTESY OF JOHN MOHNS



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BY PHIL HARWOOD

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

Consider the family behind the family business

I've always been mindful of the family behind the business. Growing up in a family-owned business, it was clear that our family was unlike my friends' families. My family and our business were intertwined. In the families of my buddies, there were clear boundaries.

We had unique opportunities and challenges that "regular" families didn't have. We also had a sense of purpose that the business brought to our lives with the burden of ensuring the company was profitable and sustainable for the future. Even as a young boy, I carried a sense of obligation to play whatever role our family business needed. Not so much for the business itself, but for the family behind the business — my family.

FAMILY TIES

As a business coach, I've become even more convinced that the family behind the business deserves as much attention as the business itself, especially during critical times like when a business contemplates a leadership change, ownership change or divestiture. For a family business, the outcome of these monumental changes has serious consequences for the future of the company and the family itself. Stories of families that didn't survive such critical changes abound.

The family behind the business should not be overlooked. Major decisions should not be made without full consideration of their impact on the family or families. And when long-term strategic planning or discussions about the future of the business occur, the family should give careful thought to how

the future of the business could affect the future of the family. This requires a family office.

A family office is an organizational structure to manage the family's affairs. Family offices have been around for many years in very wealthy families but, in my opinion, are underutilized in general. With a family office in place, the family and the business benefit from thoughtful planning and careful execution of important matters affecting them. In other words, the family behind the business is not overlooked.

“Major decisions should not be made without full consideration of their impact on the family or families.”

NAVIGATING SUCCESS

Some family businesses have successfully navigated generations of leadership changes. But many have not. Successful examples share some elements that are important to highlight. The first element is ongoing, long-term planning. The business leadership team engages in a consistent strategic planning process for the business. At the same time, the family leadership team engages in a consistent strategic planning process for the family. Sounds challenging, doesn't it? It is. But that's why successful examples are a fraction of the failures.

The second element is transparency. Hidden agendas and secrecy will likely sabotage a successful

transition. The only way this process works is by bringing issues to light and being willing to have direct conversations about an issue. I realize this is easier said than done. It often requires outside facilitation.

The third element is trust. As Patrick Lencioni famously explained in his book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, there are two kinds of trust. The first is predictive trust, based on previous actions. Someone earns predictive trust by being trustworthy. Once broken, it is gone. The second type of trust is vulnerability-based trust based on faith, given out of an abundance of hope and love. It requires a person to let go and allow someone else to take the wheel, even if that's a scary thing to do.

Successful family business transitions only occur when vulnerability-based trust is present. Predictive trust only works when people are perfect all the time, which, of course, is never the case. Predictive trust will always lead to failure.

These three elements — long-term planning, transparency and trust — are foundational principles found in successful family businesses. They take effort and time to develop, so the sooner a family business gets moving in this direction, the better.

My family business was missing one element — long-term planning. The business that my grandfather started in 1940 no longer exists. For 80 years, this business provided for my family, but it never made it to the third generation because there was no plan in place. Sad, but true. And powerfully motivating.

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BY JEFF KORHAN

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

Sustainable growth practices every business leader should know

The green industry enjoys another season of strong demand, but accelerated growth at times like this comes with risk.

As businesses grow, the stakes go up, and that can be scary. There are practices seasoned professionals rely on to protect their companies. Applying one or more of the following practices could prove to be valuable preparation for whatever lies ahead.

1 GET TO KNOW FAILURE TO AVOID IT

Legendary investor Warren Buffett and his partner Charlie Munger built an unparalleled investment portfolio by betting on what's not likely to fail. They choose companies with predictable growth instead of taking risks on faster growth that may later prove unpredictable.

Planning to fail is the inversion of planning for success. It's avoiding the probable obstacles that trip up many businesses. One way to do this is through diversification. When taking on new work or team members who do not fit your typical profile, limit

“Every company should consider setting up a VIP program to enhance its customer service. VIPs will sense greater appreciation and feel more invested in the company's success. Most importantly, they are likely to mention it to friends.”

your risk by planning for what could go wrong. Regardless of what happens, celebrate the lessons learned to strengthen your company.

2 QUIETLY OFFER VIP CUSTOMER SERVICE

Your best customers already receive your best service, but not all value it equally. Some expect it, and others may be willing to pay more for it. Consider formalizing this elite level of service to quantify its value and determine which customers should get it. It's a well-known practice in the hospitality industry to reward perks such as upgraded rooms and seats for the customers who value the company the most.

Every company should consider setting up a VIP program to enhance


its customer service. VIPs will sense greater appreciation and feel more invested in the company's success. Most importantly, they are likely to mention it to friends. To better manage expectations for all customers, you may wish to quietly market this service to your most profitable ones.

3 LEARN TO SAY YES SLOWLY

There are multiple paths to success, but the one to sustainable growth is well worn by industry leaders who have preceded you. They learned to say no to the many distractions that stood in the way of their company's vision, mission and goals.

Saying no may seem inconsiderate or arrogant, which is why mastering the art of slowly saying yes works better for earning respect as a thoughtful and considerate leader.

Keep track of the time sucks that come your way — in a normal week — to determine what to eliminate or delegate. Then practice your responses to more freely say yes to the needs of loyal customers, employees, business partners and family.

These are unprecedented times. There's more work than most companies can handle, but there are also shortages of materials, certain types of equipment and skilled labor. Apply one or more of these practices to predictably sustain your current growth for years to come. 





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BY BOB MANN

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

We've still got a lot to learn about pesticide regulations

With new presidential administrations come new political appointees with new priorities. While the Biden administration might not seem altogether new, it has taken a while to fill those appointments. This is true at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), where the new administrative staff at the Office of Pesticide Programs is steering the agency in a different direction, one that eventually will affect the green industry.

Before I became involved in the policy end of our industry, the EPA seemed to me to be an amorphous beast, an agency without a face, doing things I didn't understand for mysterious reasons. Five years into my current job, I've learned a lot about pesticide regulations, but I am still a student of the topic.

One thing mentioned quite often when talking about the regulatory system is its pace — moving at the speed of government, as they say. The chief reason things move so slowly is stakeholder involvement. Interested individuals and groups are an integral part of policymaking, including associations such as the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP). We interact with the EPA in many ways. We provide written comments when the EPA publishes registration decisions and hold meetings to discuss issues important to our industry.

FOCUS ON FIFRA

Until early this year, the EPA focused its regulatory efforts on the law that regulates all aspects of pesticides and their use, the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). FIFRA has been amended several

“Before I became involved in the policy end of our industry, the EPA seemed to me to be an amorphous beast ...”

times to modernize and strengthen pesticide policy, and those amendments come to bear on our industry quite often without us realizing it.

For instance, the reason we no longer use the insecticide Dursban in the lawn care industry is due to the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA). FQPA introduced the concept of a “risk cup,” which looked at all the various ways you might encounter a pesticide in your daily life, either in food or pest control or landscaping. When evaluating the human and environmental risks associated with the active ingredient in Dursban, chlorpyrifos, the EPA determined that too much was entering the environment. In other words, the risk cup was overflowing. This led to residential uses of chlorpyrifos, including on lawns and landscapes, being removed from the label in 2000.

ANOTHER HURDLE

Overall, this is a good thing. As advances in science bring newer, safer pesticides to market, the EPA retires older chemistries. The problem is Congress passes a lot of laws, and FIFRA isn't the only hurdle pesticides must clear to be legally registered. Congress passed the Endangered Species Act (ESA) half a century ago, yet the EPA has not been meeting its obligations under this law.

As a result, environmental non-profit groups, such as the Center for Biological Diversity and the Natural

Resources Defense Council, have sued the agency repeatedly. The groups say the EPA failed to consult with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to determine if the use of a particular pesticide places endangered species in jeopardy.

The process used to determine if a pesticide poses jeopardy and adverse modification (J/AM — yet another acronym) is convoluted and conservative. For instance, if a pesticide affects a single member of an endangered species, the agency will take a much closer look at those effects to mitigate the risk. The agency announced in January that it was changing the order in which it evaluated pesticide products, placing the endangered species consultation process with Fish & Wildlife and NMFS ahead of the FIFRA-mandated risk assessment.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

We are not quite sure how this new procedure will impact the lawn and landscape industry. In April, the EPA released its ESA work plan for review and comment. This document is the first foray into this policy, offered up for stakeholder feedback and input.

Simultaneously with EPA's January announcement on its ESA compliance efforts, the agency released label documents for two widely used agricultural pesticides using this new approach. Enlist One (2,4-D) and Enlist Duo (2,4-D and glyphosate) are commonly used herbicides on corn and soybeans. Being the curious type, I downloaded the two labels to see what differences I might find versus the old way of doing

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We've still got a lot to learn about pesticide regulations
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things. About halfway through, I discovered that one of the ways the EPA is mitigating risks to endangered species and their habitats is to prohibit the use of these two pesticides at the county level. A chart that broke states out at the county level showed banned use of the Enlist products.

Now, I live in Massachusetts; we don't grow much corn or soybeans here. So, imagine my surprise to see the EPA banned both Enlist products from use on the island

of Nantucket. Not only that, the Enlist products aren't even registered for use in the state. As a good stakeholder should, I dropped an email to someone who knows just the right people, and the EPA amended the label almost immediately.

This leaves me wondering if the EPA doesn't realize that corn and soy aren't grown on Nantucket, what other erroneous assumptions is it making? Ever the skeptic, I'll keep my eyes and ears open. (u)

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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.



It's time for a mid-year check-in

We're now in the heat of the busy season, working in the literal heat day in and day out. I'd like to take just a moment to brag: My team at Grunder Landscaping is doing a phenomenal job.

We set ambitious growth goals for this year, and they've stood up to the challenge. They're installing jobs efficiently, closing jobs left and right and we're poised to nearly double our revenue in three years.

But it's that time of the year, and even though we know we're doing great work, I know all of us could use a little pep talk. Client demands get intense as everyone wants their property in tip-top shape by July 4. Team members are tired and the heat doesn't help. We're in the run right now and we need to power through.



“It's so important to check in with yourself and be honest about how well you're doing in all aspects of your life.”

My wife often jokes that she plays a nurse on TV. She's a kindergarten teacher and has no medical credentials, but after years of teaching and raising four kids, she's seen all kinds of illnesses, bumps and bruises. So inspired by her, this month I'm going to play therapist in a magazine for you.

TIME TO CHECK IN

Have you checked in with yourself lately? We recently asked the readers of our weekly “Great Idea” newsletter to do a self check-in. I asked them to ask themselves:

- 1 Am I spending time every week on my priorities? Or am I letting my inbox and cell phone control my time?
- 2 Am I playing offense with my team and my clients? Or am I in reaction mode because I haven't planned accordingly?
- 3 Am I reviewing numbers and metrics daily? Or am I just hoping we are making money on our work?
- 4 Am I spending quality time with my family and friends? Or am I just there but not really present?
- 5 Am I eating right, staying active and getting enough sleep? Or am I making excuses for being too busy to do that?

HELP YOURSELF FIRST

It's so important to check in with yourself and be honest about how

well you're doing in all aspects of your life. Like they say on airplanes, you need to put on your own oxygen mask before you can help others. We bring our best selves to work and to our families by taking time to take care of ourselves and be intentional with our time and headspace.

If you aren't happy with your answers to the questions above, schedule time on your calendar to do better. Make an appointment with a real therapist, book a workout class, block an hour on your calendar to walk the local botanic garden or nature reserve and resolve to get home in time for dinner. Spend Saturday morning planning out next week's priorities so you can be more organized. Do whatever gives you energy and helps you work through what's weighing heavily on your mind.

In the mad rush to get everything done, sometimes the best thing to do is slow down. There's a saying from the Navy SEALs that “slow is smooth and smooth is fast.”

It's true in our businesses, too. By being intentional with our time, we waste less of it and get more done. This month, pause to evaluate how you're doing, take care of yourself and your team, and try to stay the course.

We'll get some relief soon. And until then, know I'm rooting for your success!

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