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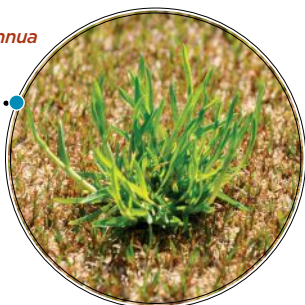
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# DON'T MISS OUT!!

Our 2022 LM150 nominations close for our list of the largest landscape companies, ranked by annual revenue at the end of this month. Companies with \$10 million or more in annual revenue are encouraged to complete the form. The our 2022 LM150 is sponsored by Aspire Software and Grasshopper Mowers and will appear in the June issue of LM. Please contact LM Special Projects Editor Marisa Palmieri at 440-537-4308 or [mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net](mailto:mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net) with questions.



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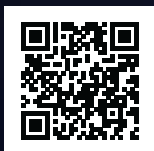
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## This industry goes to 11

**S**pring has arrived. The excitement our readers have for this time of year is contagious. Around the office we were buzzing about the vibe in the air — it's an exciting time to be in the industry. This month ... and in general.

I'm reminded of the scene in the 1984 spoof documentary *This Is Spinal Tap* when Nigel explains to the documentarian that his guitar amp can be turned up to 11. "When we need that extra push over the cliff," he explains, "You know what we do? 11. One louder."

This industry will be asked to amp it up and "go to 11" in 2022.

I laughed when Joe Majerus, owner of Landmark Landscapes in Sheboygan Falls, Wis., told me during our interview for this month's cover story that he was "super-jacked" about a project the company had recently completed (to see that project, check out the feature story that starts on page 14, and to see some impressive drone footage of the project, visit [LandmarkLandscapes.pro](https://www.landmarklandscapes.pro)). Editor Christina Herrick couldn't get AC/DC's "Thunderstruck" out of her head after visiting GROW! 2022 in Nashville (see page 12 for the recap); only in her head it was "Grunderstruck." And the new guy, Rob DiFranco, *Landscape Management* associate editor, was excitedly packing his bags for the National Association of Landscape Professionals' National Collegiate Landscape Competition in Raleigh, N.C., to see what that event is all about. (Welcome aboard, Rob!)

I'd say the mood in the industry is somewhere between super-jacked and

“Sure, it's not all as pleasant as the sight of the Forsythia blooming. ... But hey, we can see each other smile just about anywhere outside an airport these days.”

Grunderstruck right now ... you know, depending on your region.

Sure, it's not all as pleasant as the sight of the Forsythia blooming. The situation in Ukraine is both scary and sad. The price of gasoline worsens by the day. My most recent 401(k) statement was an envelope I should have left unopened.

But hey, we can see each other smile just about anywhere outside an airport these days!

Recently I sat down for an interview with Mr. Grunderstruck himself, Marty Grunder, president and CEO of the Grow Group and Grunder Landscaping Co. in Miamisburg, Ohio. In what has become something of a tradition, we discussed his forecast for the upcoming season. This chat with Marty always gets me "super-jacked" for the season that is about to kick into high gear. We talked about his expectations for 2022, the big service addition Grunder Landscaping is making this year and the low-hanging fruit Marty thinks every company can easily pick. This conversation with Grunder can be found exclusively at [LandscapeManagement.net](https://www.LandscapeManagement.net).

As we all kick off the winter blahs, we realize that your time is about to become more precious than ever. That means we have to take our own industry coverage up a notch, or to the "next level," as our cover states. We have some things cooking at LM, your favorite industry magazine, that are sure to catch your attention, maybe even surprise you. Keep an eye on us and tell me if I'm wrong.

Meanwhile, a few notes before I invite you to peel into the rest of the issue:

- A big thank you to Nate Negrin and his team at SouthernEEZ Landscaping in Fort Mill, S.C., for allowing us to come out for a few days and photograph the crew at work. Weather challenges weren't going to keep our photographer, Rusty Williams, or the crew, from getting the job done. That's a Ditch Witch SK600 going to work on the cover. Negrin told me he rented a Ditch Witch "forever" until he bought an SK800 two years ago. Within months, SouthernEEZ also bought an SK600.
- A friendly reminder that you're always invited to help us create this magazine. Upcoming topics we're working on include "keys to running a lean and mean green operation," and "companies switching to battery power." If you have any success stories to share, sage advice or even a good old horror story of what not to do, we'd love to hear from you. 📧



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## MORE ONLINE

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

## What's the No. 1 thing green industry business owners should do to start spring off right?

“The one thing that we got away from in years past was not having weekly management meetings. When things went south, we started having a weekly meeting on Wednesday mornings and lunch together. We set and discussed goals and saw how we were hitting the goals/budget.”



### Landscape Professionals

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Norcross, Ga.

**Troy Clogg**  
Troy Clogg Landscape Associates  
Wixom, Mich.

**Paul Fraynd**  
Sun Valley Landscaping  
Omaha, Neb.

**Luke Henry**  
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**Aaron Katerberg**  
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**Jerry McKay**  
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**Phil Harwood**  
Grow the Bench  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

**Kevin Kehoe**  
3PG Consulting  
Laguna, Calif.

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

“Make sure your team and your clients are clear on expectations. So many problems can be avoided by making sure you can deliver on what is expected. Does your team know what you expect from them? Do they know what a win looks like for their role at the company and the company overall? Do your clients know what you are going to do for them? Details matter.”



“Practice makes perfect. Have a plan for your service execution, your team, training and equipment. Draw it out, just like a basketball play, and involve your team in the process.”



“Start early. If the weather cooperates, a ‘soft start’ with a portion of your crews is a great way to train, work out the winter bugs and cut into the overtime that will hit later in the spring without reducing capacity.”



“Owners need to overcommunicate their plan for the year. Share with everyone the 10 key metrics that the company needs to follow and hit. Explain how it all holds together and then help each employee set individual goals to help do their part. Each month, give an update on the metrics.”



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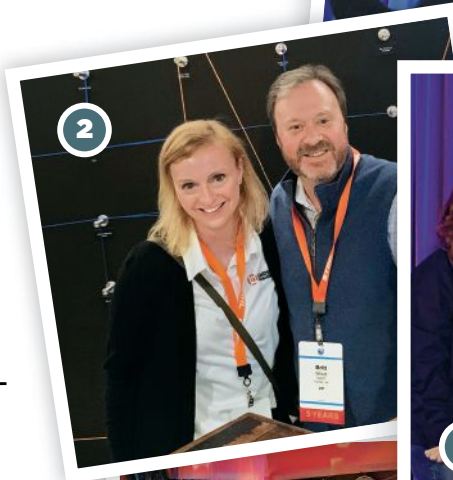


# LM GALLERY

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



**1 Ready, set, GROW!** Brothers Jonathan (left) and Josiah (right) Peterson of GROW! 2023 host Summit Landscape & Design in Hondo, Texas, with Marty Grunder, president and CEO of The Grow Group during GROW! 2022 in Nashville.



**2 The Young and the restless** National Association of Landscape Professionals' CEO, Britt Young, with *LM* Editor Christina Herrick.



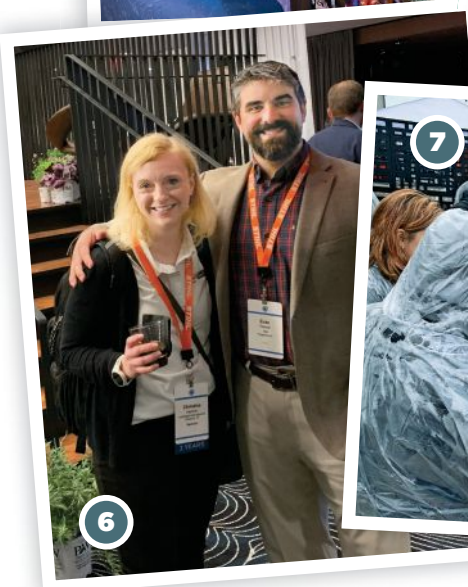
**3 Eight years in the making** Milosi's Sheila Boggs, finance manager; Chris Williams, director of operations; Carynell Carlton, director of employee success; Taylor Milliken, owner and president; and Tina Kizer, office manager, gave GROW! attendees a snapshot of their business. Milliken wanted his Hendersonville, Tenn., business to be a host site since GROW! came to Nashville eight years ago.



**4 Live music in the Music City** No Nashville experience is complete without some live music. At McFarlin Stanford's party at the Bourbon Street Blues and Boogie Bar, Stacy Mitchhart and his backing band entertained the crowd.



**5 Stihl warm and dry** Herrick checked out GROW! 2022 sponsor Stihl's latest offerings on display at Milosi with Roger Phelps, Stihl's communications manager.



**6 Hey, I know you** Herrick spotted Evan Parenti, FMC lawn market manager during a GROW! 2022 happy hour.



**7 Gather round the campfire** GROW! 2022 tourgoers flocked to tour host Milosi's fire pit in the company's barbecue patio.

PHOTOS: LM STAFF

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## GETTING “GRUNDERSTRUCK” IN NASHVILLE

GROW! attendees got a behind-the-scenes look at Milosi during the event’s tour and educational sessions

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

When Taylor Milliken, owner and president of Milosi, attended GROW! eight years ago, he knew he wanted his business to host a tour when the event returned to the Music City. His wish came full circle last week during The Grow Group’s GROW! 2022 event in Nashville, Tenn. Milosi is a full-service residential and commercial landscape company based in Hendersonville, Tenn.

While the spotlight shined on Milliken’s operation, Marty Grunder, president and CEO of The Grow Group and Grunder Landscaping Co., kicked off the event with his annual tradition of energizing the crowd to AC/DC’s “Thunderstruck.” It was time to get “Grunderstruck,” the LM columnist said.

Milliken and his team rolled out the “Milosi red” red carpet for the tour with a food truck serving warm beverages, a Nashville singer/songwriter and band playing tunes and team

Visitors to Milosi lined up for hot beverages on a rainy tour day.

members taking tourgoers through the inner workings of the operation.

Attendees learned how Milosi structures referrals from existing clients, how team members identify ideal new clients, how leaders get daily reports from maintenance crews, how designers serve as project managers and estimators, why Milosi recently brought on a full-time recruiter, and more.

Milliken says Milosi’s core values reverberate into everything the business does, including implementing changes to rewarding employees. Milosi splits 15 percent of its net profits equally among team members and distributes it as an annual performance bonus. Last year, the bonus amounted to \$2,700 per employee for those who had worked there for six months or longer.

### 2023 SITE

GROW! 2023 will take place Feb. 28 through March 2, 2023, in San Antonio, Texas. Summit Landscape & Design in



Hondo, Texas, will serve as GROW! tour host.

Summit Landscape & Design was founded in 1999 by Josiah Peterson. His brother, Jonathan, joined the business in 2011 and became partner and general manager in 2019.

To celebrate the sibling connection between 2022 host Milosi and 2023 host Summit Landscape & Design, Milliken and his sister, Tina Kizer, office manager for Milosi, squared off against the Peterson brothers in a sibling game that added some levity. Although the siblings from team Milosi have been working together for almost 20 years, the Petersons narrowly eked out a win.

Hosting GROW! 2022 was a dream come true for Milosi’s Taylor Milliken.

### A SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Brodie Bruner, executive vice president of Weathermatic—a GROW! sponsor—made a special dedication. Weathermatic donates some of its proceeds to fund water wells and projects throughout the world. To date, more than 65 communities have safe drinking water thanks to the company’s donations. Bruner announced its latest project, the Mary Ellen Graham well, in Zambia, named in honor of Grunder’s late mother. The gesture visibly moved Grunder. 🇱🇲



PHOTOS: LM STAFF

## Ruppert adds new Georgia branch

Ruppert Landscape, No. 8 on the 2021 *LM150* list with \$213 million in 2020 revenue, has expanded its landscape management operations to include a new location in Alpharetta, Ga. This branch joins two existing landscape management branches in Georgia, located in Lilburn and Mableton.

This new location will be led by Stephen DeWeese, who was promoted to branch manager. In this role, he will be responsible for the Alpharetta branch, including the safety and development of his team, strategic planning and budgeting, training, customer service and day-to-day operations.

The Alpharetta branch will primarily serve clients in north Fulton County and offer the following landscape management services: grounds management/contract services; design and landscape enhancement; turf care; irrigation system management; pond and lake management; arbor care;

snow and ice management; lighting and holiday decorations.

## Senske adds to lawn care operations in Washington and Utah

Senske Services — no. 62 on the 2021 *LM150* list with \$37.5 million in 2020 revenue — partnered with Rentokil, a pest control provider, as the latter company divests itself of select lawn care operations. According to Senske CEO Tim Ehrhart, partnering with Rentokil made sense.

“Our expansion and growth strategy focuses on acquiring companies with similar service lines and quality employees that can join our team,” he said. “We look forward to providing fantastic service to our new customers.”

In December, Senske acquired Custom Insect & Weed Control, continuing a string of additions that spanned 13 months.

## NALP MEMBERS STRESS IMPORTANCE OF H-2B REFORM

Members of the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) participated in the organization’s Legislative Days on Feb. 16-22. More than 120 NALP members participated in 100 virtual meetings with congressional staffers from all over the country, including Texas, Ohio, Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Kurt Kluznik, president of Yardmaster in Painesville, Ohio, said NALP’s Legislative Days plays an important role in the green industry.

“I usually learn something from meeting with the staffers and particularly their position on H-2B,” he says, referring to the federal guest-worker visa program. “It allows me to thank them for their support or request their support and hopefully

make an impression on them that this is a serious issue with serious consequences for our industry.”

A hot topic among the Ohio delegation is the availability of H-2B workers.

“I’m all about H-2B visas,” says Joe Drake, president of J.F.D. Landscapes in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. “If you didn’t win the lottery — which we did not — then you’re out of luck. We’re dropping entire

maintenance routes right now, sending cancellation notices to our clients. Because we need 12 visas, and we got zero. We’re having a hard time trying to find anybody that wants to do this work, period.”

A big part of the H-2B conversation with legislative aides and NALP members was the returning worker exception, HR3897, introduced in June 2021. HR3897 proposes a returning worker

exemption, where returning H-2B workers would

not count against the 33,000 cap. Currently, more than 20 members of the House of Representatives have signed on as cosigners of the bill and there are 67 cosponsors.



Joe Drake, president of J.F.D. Landscapes in Chagrin Falls, Ohio, shares his struggle with securing H-2B workers during the NALP Legislative Days.



# Next level

**In the design/build industry, opportunities abound to take a project up a notch. Industry pros advise how.**

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



**GOALS  
ACHIEVED**  
After dreaming  
of a landscaping  
career during his  
college years,  
Nate Negrin has  
achieved his goal.

**N**ate Negrin recalls being in college with a dream of working in the landscape industry. But while at Cornell University he drifted away from that goal and went the business management route. He worked in the financial services industry for more than 10 years, focusing on the agriculture and farming sectors.

Seven years ago Negrin decided it was time to get back to his dream. He bought a landscape company and now he is the owner of SouthernEEZ Landscaping, serving the Charlotte, N.C., area.

"Here I am," he says with a smile. "There have been a lot of challenges, but it's been a lot of fun."

One of those challenges is helping his customers navigate exactly what it is they want. SouthernEEZ does 60 percent commercial and residential landscape installation projects and 40 percent landscape maintenance. His company is growing fast, and to make sure his company and his clients are on the same page, SouthernEEZ meets with clients early on to discuss the client's vision.

But Negrin has learned, sometimes the vision can change after ground is broken.

"You're standing at the top of the mountain, it can either go down or on to the next peak," he says. "A lot of our clients are referrals. They come to the project in different mindsets. Some of them are like, 'Here's the plan, the budget and we're going to stick to that.' Others, every step of the way, they'll write a check for an upgrade because they're going to do this once. Let's get that retaining wall, let's do this right, right now."

Negrin says he isn't much of a salesman but he does express



to his clients that there is a cost associated with getting his team on-site. He'll explain to a client that there are upgrades he would spend money on and things he wouldn't spend money on.

"It's an investment, and they'll never have to make the investment again," Negrin says. "We're borrowing from the bank once, so let's do it."

*Landscape Management* spoke with professionals about those moments when a design/build project goes from its starting budget up to the next level, and how to make sure that a change in plans is a success and not a failure.

### **THE MAGIC OF DESIGN/BUILD**

"One of the magical components of the design/build world is the opportunity, in the middle of a project, to make an adjustment," says Joe Majerus, owner of Landmark Landscapes in Sheboygan Falls, Wis. "It's these unique little features that will take a project over the top."

Landmark Landscapes was deep into a 3-acre project on Elkhart Lake, a main house with a neighboring guest house. The clients were particular about what they wanted, Majerus says, but at the same time great to work with.

The project changed after the family went on a vacation to Hawaii and came back with a new idea for their lake home.

"They said, 'Oh my gosh, we just got done with this Airbnb! They had an infinity edge hot tub ... we have to have one!'" Majerus recalls. "We're neck deep in this project and we already have nine pounds of copper in a five-pound sack. There's no way. (I asked), where do we even put a hot tub on this thing?"

The initial feelings of doubt subsided once Majerus saw that the county was willing to work with him on updates to the design. His team came up with an "ingenious" design to install the hot tub in a hillside right outside the main outdoor living

*Continued on page 17*

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Continued from page 15  
room. Eventually, a gas fireplace, a built-in grill and an additional patio space along with the infinity edge hot tub took the place of what was originally planned to be a garden.

“It was a major add-on in the middle of the project, when we already had all the permitting done and everything had been thought through,” Majerus says. “And then, boom. We have to do this and do it now. The beauty is, had I proposed the concept, they never would have gone for it ... I wouldn’t have even known if it was

possible. But because of our design/build process, and

because of our willingness to be communicative and change course mid-stream, we were able to tack on this little gem that has now become the focal point of the landscape.”

**ROLLING THE DICE**

While the Elkhart Lake project was a huge success for Landmark, Majerus says in the past a client changing direction could cause a project to fail. Why? Because it wasn’t clear what the project would now cost. Things changed when Landmark did two things: started working with Aspire and added the “while you are here” clause to contracts.

*Continued on page 18*

**LAKE LIFE**

Landmark Landscapes hit a home run with its Elkhart Lake project, despite some unforeseen changes.

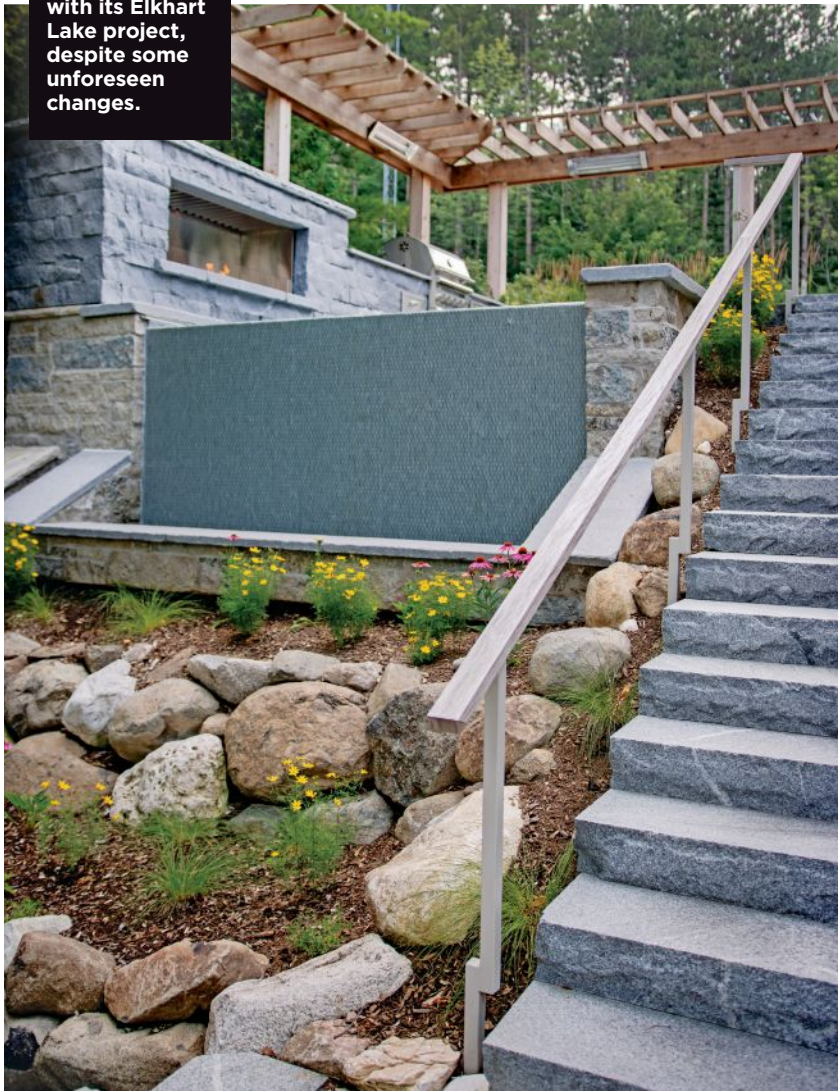


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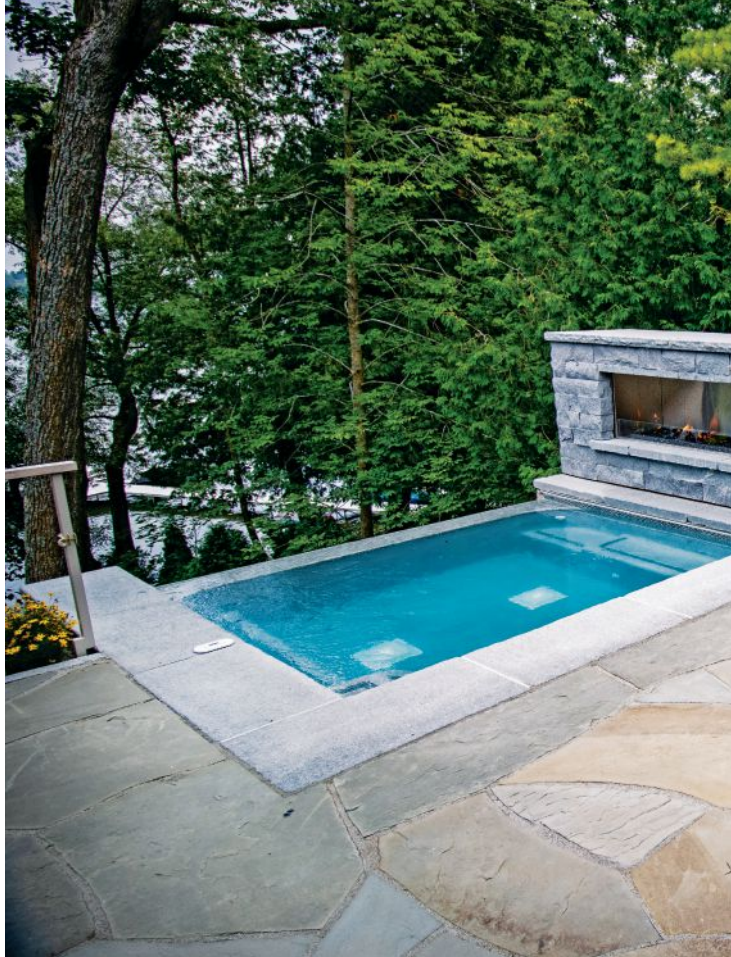
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*Continued from page 17*

“While you are here’ are the four most expensive words in the English language,” Majerus says. “People get excited and they say, ‘Oh, while you’re here, can we just add this or that?’ The clause is us being proactive, just saying that when this happens, this is what it’s going to cost.”

By adding Aspire software, changing a work order mid-project requires a foreman to contact the project manager to create a new work order for this add-on project. Not only is it proactive and transparent, Majerus says, but it also makes it easier for the client to say ‘yes’ to a smaller number added on to the larger overall budget.

“With adopting Aspire, we’re way ahead of the game — we can add three hydrangeas, or we can add a \$30,000 water feature, but we can communicate exactly what kind of costs the client can expect the request to add to the project total,” Majerus says. “Early in my career I always wanted the extra work, but it became a rolling of the dice. If the client is upset with the unexpected project price at the end of it all, you’re in trouble. After all the material is in the ground, all the labor is paid for, it is not the time you want to find out the request is more than the client wanted to spend. I’d much rather find out early if they don’t want to incur the extra costs.”



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**RUN THE PLAY**

When it comes to favorite tools in the industry, Brian Gray, operations manager at Precision Landscape Management in Greenville, S.C., says he appreciates how quickly technology has taken the industry to the next level. He keeps his eyes peeled for any tool that can simplify a process (Editor’s note: see more with Brian Gray in this month’s 5 Questions interview on page 54).

One thing he does not want to simplify is the process his company uses to make sure all the design/build projects are fully understood from department to department.

“The best tool you can have is an extremely well written process. We have 40 people here, we have several sales staff, there’s a bunch of moving pieces. As a designer, you take that vision from the client. How does it get from the client’s head, to the designer’s head, to the project manager’s head ... how can we make sure what we designed, we actually create?” Gray asks. “The only way is to have a very well thought out process. Everyone knows from point A to point C, and what’s happening in between.”

At Precision, there’s a saying called, “run the play.” That saying basically is a rephrasing of “follow the process,” Gray says. They changed it to “run the play” because “process” is an overused word, he laughs.

“I’m from a lawn care background. Lawn care is very simple. You schedule it, you produce the work and you’re done,” Gray says. “Design/build still blows my mind with the amount of moving pieces, and the scheduling and

PHOTO: LANDMARK LANDSCAPES



**GARDEN NO MORE**

This space was originally set to be a garden, before a mid-project change turned it into this outdoor grill and chill spot.

to the next level. He mentions the project featured on this month's cover as a perfect example.

Negrin says the developers had a budget but realized the opportunity

an extra investment might have on the final selling price. The developers requested seed and straw for the yard.

"Once we got out there and got the quote finalized, I said, 'hey, for this much more you can do sod and the house will sell immediately.' We started small ... by the time they're done they've spent more, but it's perfect and they don't have to second guess it.

"There was a wow moment, the way that (sod) turned out versus seed and straw," Negrin continues. "You're going to fall in love with it when you look out at it and their buyers did. I tell them, let's make some smart decisions and spend a little money and we'll never have to look back." (L)

the weather. And then all of a sudden the materials — the price of river rock goes up. And we have to have sod delivered. It's a living thing and we have to be sure we don't prep too soon or too late! Having that process built into our company is one of the best things we've done. 'Run the play.' The sales guy, the project manager, the crew leader, the crew, all the way to invoicing, everyone knows what everyone else should be doing."

**PLANT THE SEED**

Landmark has its own saying — "plant the seed." When a customer mentions to the designer interest in, say a water feature, but it doesn't make the final budget, the foreman is alerted in case the topic comes up again.

"You have to be present; you have to listen for cues," Majerus says. "You can seize those opportunities when they're presented. Because you will always find those opportunities in these projects."

Negrin adds that typically customers are happy when they decide to go

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## PROTECT YOUR TURF

# Stop spring turf stressors

Prepare for common weeds, insects and diseases this season **BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER | CONTRIBUTOR**

Spring is here, which means it's time for lawn care operators (LCOs) to prepare to battle the season's most common weeds and pests. *Poa annua*, billbugs and dollar spot are three issues that can affect lawns this time of year, but knowing when and how to treat these problems can minimize the damage.

### THE 411 ON POA ANNUA

*Poa annua*, or annual bluegrass, is one of the most common grassy weeds. David Hillger, Ph.D., Midwest and Northeast turf and ornamental research field scientist for Corteva Agriscience, says LCOs in northern areas should begin thinking about *Poa annua* in the early fall as temperatures begin to cool. In southern regions, *Poa annua* control should start in the winter. The first thing LCOs will notice is seed heads, which Hillger says can generate at all heights of cut and in any condition.

"A small tuft of grass that is light green with seed heads at half-inch height is very likely *Poa annua*," Hillger says.

*Poa annua* thrives in soil with poor drainage and over-fertilized turf. It can even germinate and grow on sidewalks, rocks and drain tiles.

"The more mismanaged the soil and turf, the better *Poa annua* can compete," Hillger says.

When treating *Poa annua*, Hillger says many LCOs often underestimate how much of the weed they are dealing with. He recommends doubling the estimate to ensure treatment is effective.



David Hillger

Two sequential preemergent herbicide applications — or a split application in the South — is the best option for treatment, Hillger says.

Postemergent products can be used for cleanup.

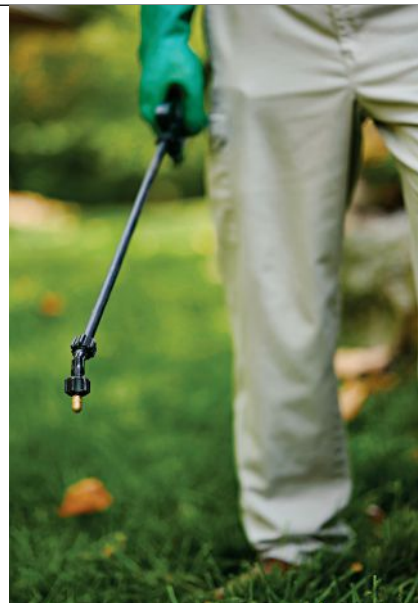
"It's best to start with a preemergent as a strong foundation and then use post emergence herbicide products to clean up any misses," Hillger says. "Control is a long-term process due to the high level of seeds. Early prevention is key."

### THE 411 ON BILLBUGS

A billbug is a type of weevil or snout-beetle that feeds on grass stems and roots. There are nearly 70 different types of billbugs in North America. Different species are found in different regions. Billbugs overwinter as adults and become active at temperatures above 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Females lay eggs in the stems of turfgrass in the spring. After the eggs hatch, the larvae begin feeding on the turf. Billbugs are most prevalent in well-maintained turfgrass, but occasionally can be found in less healthy turf.

"Billbug damage first appears as thinning or dead areas of turf, and these damaged areas often coalesce

**BYE-BYE BILLBUGS**  
Timing is vital to minimize billbug damage. If turf thinning is visible it's probably already too late.



into large, damaged areas," says Chris Williamson, Ph.D., Midwest and Pacific coast research scientist for PBI-Gordon Corp. "Billbug damage is often mistaken for other problems, including drought stress, turfgrass diseases or injury from other insects."

Billbugs are among the most misdiagnosed turfgrass pests, Williamson says. He notes the "tug test" can help LCOs confirm their presence.

"This is accomplished by grabbing tufts of dead or dying turfgrass and pulling on them," he says. "Should they pull out easily, severing near the crown, look for the presence of billbug larvae and/or sawdust and shredded plant parts."

If you identify billbugs, the timing of treatment is crucial to minimize damage, Williamson says.



Chris Williamson

Effective strategies include a curative treatment with an application of insecticides when adults are first observed and preventive treatment with an insecticide application when larvae are identified.

"Once billbug damage has occurred, it is too late to make a treatment application to resolve the issue," Williamson says. "This mistake can be avoided by monitoring for billbug adults when temperatures are above 50 degrees Fahrenheit. This is an opportune time to begin making preventative insecticide applications."

*Continued on page 22*

Don't underestimate *Poa annua*. Experts like David Hillger from Corteva recommend doubling down on treatment.



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## TURF + ORNAMENTAL

### PROTECT YOUR TURF



Like billbugs, experts say it's important to catch dollar spot before it takes hold, or you'll be left playing catch-up.

*Continued from page 20*

#### THE 411 ON DOLLAR SPOT

Dollar spot is one of the easier turf issues to identify, Hillger says. LCOs should look for cream-colored patches in the turf measuring 3 to 6 inches in diameter. Individual blades of grass will have tan-colored, hourglass-shaped lesions and a cotton-like mycelium in the morning, especially when there is dew on the ground.

“Low-nitrogen lawns are weakened and tend to favor dollar spot, which can take over easily,” Hillger says. “Dollar spot can infect most turf species, but it needs higher humidity and a few days with the right temperature and moisture to really get going.”

Brian Aynardi, Ph.D., Northeast research scientist for PBI-Gordon, says dollar spot is typically seen when daytime temperatures exceed 75 degrees Fahrenheit, nighttime temperatures are above 55 degrees Fahrenheit, and there is significant wetness or extended periods of high humidity.



**Brian Aynardi**

“LCOs should have dollar spot on their radar a month before they traditionally see disease symptoms develop, but should remember that the disease won't occur if the right environmental conditions do not exist,” Aynardi says.

While cultural practices can help manage dollar spot, Hillger says fungicides are the best solution when used in rotation. Preventive treatment of dollar spot is most effective, and applications should be made several days before the right environmental conditions occur.

“Fungicide rotation is key, as dollar spot is notorious for being resistant,” Hillger says. “Another key mistake is waiting too long to spray. Once dollar spot starts for the season, it's too late and LCOs will have to play catchup for the rest of the year trying to control it. Prevention is their best bet.”

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.





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## KEYS TO SUCCESS

Experts say staying in contact with a distributor can give you a leg up.



# Becoming 'true partners'

Experts share the advantages to building distributor relationships to help mitigate supply chain and product availability issues

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

**T**he landscape industry is one of many plagued by supply chain issues. But as these three distributors explain, contractors and lawn care operators (LCOs) have a partner that can help minimize the effects on their businesses.

## FIND SUPPORT

Distributors are advocates for LCOs and help mitigate the ebbs and flows of the supply chain, says Mark Jull, director of proprietary products, Target Specialty Products.

"If professionals were depending on small retailers or specific vendors for their supplies, they may have found that their favorite products were no longer available," Jull says. "By working with a distributor, professionals have access to many different supply options."

Target Specialty Products also provides technical support, readily available inventory, education, product recommendations and help to diagnose soil or plant health.

"Distributors act as true partners to the landscape professional," Jull says. "We strive to take the guesswork out of product selection, so as a landscape professional, you can focus on your customers and your staff."

## KNOW THE OPTIONS

Keeping ongoing communications between contractors and distributors is instrumental — says Jack York, director of product line management, Ewing Irrigation & Landscape Supply — especially when looking to alleviate supply chain challenges.

"Contractors can expect to experience ongoing production delays, port congestion, fuel and freight costs, natural disasters, foreign supply side issues and a shortage of materials, equipment and workers," York says. "Additionally, demand for work and projects should continue to rise, making these supply chain challenges even harder to overcome, but it's not insurmountable."

Distributors know what is in stock and incoming — and can suggest alternatives if the product isn't available. Contractors

also can ask distributors for extended payment terms to help manage cash flow.

"Many distributors offer several credit options, as well as loyalty rewards programs that can help you stretch your purchasing power," York says.

He encourages contractors to build their inventory strategically and not delay orders if they have the space and financing. Some distributors offer early order programs (EOPs) and the option to store products for customers.

"As soon as you book a project, even if the start date is weeks away, place your order immediately with your distributor," he says. "Product availability isn't just a matter of what manufacturers have available, but also the freight and shipping availability and timing. So many factors can play into your product order, so plan ahead."

## PLAN OUT PROJECTS


One main cause for the industry's supply chain issues is the labor shortage, says Phil Stephens, general manager at Horizon Distributors.

"If manufacturers don't have the team to match the demand, those issues amplify supply chain disruptions — affecting shipping and the entire equation," Stephens says. "We work with our manufacturers on a week-to-week basis to discuss our demand and where to put the products. We work to get our customers what they need when they need it."

To combat these issues, contractors should lean on their relationships with distributors, which have the tools and knowledge to help manage different aspects of the business — from products and finances to project workflows.

"Maybe they can do one phase of a project and then do other when the product they need comes in. We can help them figure it out," Stephens says. "Access to information is key. We can show you what you need, how it works and its applications."

He says his team's proactive communication ensures contractors know which products have supply chain issues, the lead times for affected products and alternative products available. Distributors also can share trends across the marketplace — from landowners or property managers — to keep contractors up to date.

"Most contractors who shop at distributors are there for the long-haul. They leverage us for the long-term relationships," Stephens says. "Distribution doesn't come and go, and good contractors don't either." 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.

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# SEE IT TO ACHIEVE IT

How technology can set up your team members for success and streamline your operation as you scale up



PHOTO: GROW & CO.

**Y**ou've heard the analogy before: Business is like a game. If your team members don't know the game plan, don't know the score, and don't have the equipment they need to play, how can they win?

Most landscape business owners know they must make their companies attractive to employees by offering benefits, fostering a strong company culture, and providing opportunities for career growth. But they may be overlooking a significant factor that could help them find and keep the best players for their team: technology.

Technology, such as an integrated business management software, not only provides the game plan and scoreboard, it's also a tool that makes the game easier to play, and ultimately, helps your company grow.



BRYAN MOURS

"When your team has the visibility to see precisely how their efforts are contributing to the company's success, it's empowering," says Bryan Mours, Aspire's vice president of customer services. "It's about investing in the technology and processes that

help your team work most efficiently."

“

*When your team has the visibility to see precisely how their efforts are contributing to the company's success, it's empowering.”*

**Bryan Mours**

## Knowing the game plan and score

One way an integrated business management software streamlines operations for efficiency is by making vital information available to all team members, which empowers them to do their jobs well.

Seabreeze Property Services in Portland, Maine, a \$14 million commercial maintenance company with 90 employees, is going into its fifth landscaping season using Aspire. CEO Josh Flynn says Aspire allows the company to give crew members clear goals, which improves their productivity and the company's overall communications.



JOSH FLYNN

"My hope is it reduces frustration, which is a primary reason people don't stay at a particular job," Flynn says. "When you come to work, it's all laid out and everybody's on the same page. People don't want to be frustrated by the chain of communication, tasks changing, and not having the right tools. My hope is that providing as much information as possible makes it a more enjoyable place to work."

For example, Seabreeze uses Aspire to share the daily game plan with front-line employees in both maintenance and construction. "It's not 'Here's the mow list, come back when it's dark,'" Flynn says. "It's 'Here's what today and tomorrow look like, and if we need to move things around we can.' It saves the crews a lot of time because it streamlines everything for them."

Similarly, on the installation side, Seabreeze focuses on giving crews as much information as they can within the software.

"Photos, maps, blueprints—those all used to be handwritten notes," he says. "Now it's saved (in Aspire) and accessed by everyone."

In addition to knowing the game plan, contractors say knowing the score—in terms of having access to real-time data about individual jobs or the company as a whole—is a key to success.

Kasel Rocks Landscape Co. in Allentown, Pa., adopted Aspire in March 2021. Owner Scott Lesak says "keeping our finger on the pulse constantly"



SCOTT LESAK

helps the management team understand where the company is making money and where it's not. For example, he can easily identify which crews consistently hit their budgeted numbers and which ones perhaps need more training.

"We're able to keep a pulse on our team members," he says. "The system is pointing out a lot of issues where things might go unseen."

Better visibility into company data has been a boon for Grow & Co. in Houston, too. The company, which adopted Aspire in May 2019, primarily operates on a time-and-materials basis in its maintenance division. The information allows the team to accurately bid the number of hours it will take to complete a job, which helps Director of Maintenance Levi Johnson manage expectations with both clients and the production team. He can easily pull up historical data about the property to analyze the hours and the trends—and to make changes when needed.

"I could look back in the year 2019, 2020, 2021, and pull up those numbers and say ... 'Why have we increased by a whole hour in the last two years?'" Johnson says. "And we can start asking that question because I think there's a power in data and in getting those results."

Similarly, Flynn reviews Aspire data to improve estimating and raise prices where needed or identify if a project requires a different approach. If he notices a trend of spring and fall cleanups being underbid, for example, it leads to questions like whether the company needs to invest in new equipment or address its leaf pick-up method.

"It's easy to blame the crew for not working hard enough, but when it takes us this long every year for three years, they're not dogging it," Flynn says. "It creates better conversations and relationships between sales and operations, so they're on the same page."



## Making the game easier to play

Reiterating his earlier point about reducing frustration, Flynn points out that it's difficult to scale up without a unified software platform like Aspire.

"I can't imagine being able to maintain this level of growth or even schedule this many employees without the system," he says. "Not only from a communication standpoint, but the fact that you can go from estimating to production to invoicing."

Before adopting the end-to-end system, monthly invoicing used to take a full day at Seabreeze. "Now it takes 45 seconds," Flynn says.

Other office tasks are much easier and more consistent than they used to be, too, which Flynn says is appealing to team members because it allows them to be more successful. For example, salespeople used to hand type proposals into Word documents and do their calculations manually. This method took a long time and sometimes led to mistakes.

"Now I have two salespeople who can churn out a million dollars in proposals quickly," he says. "That would not have been possible if they had to do



LEVI JOHNSON

“

*Now I have two salespeople who can churn out a million dollars in proposals quickly.”*

**Josh Flynn**



**KYLE CAHILL**

everything by hand. These guys can do 300 renewal contracts in a couple of days. I don't know how long that would take us (without Aspire).”

Seabreeze grew 40 percent last year with three account managers, two salespeople, and a part-time business development person. “They get a lot done because of the system,” Flynn adds.

Likewise, Lesak says estimating and bidding have become much easier and more consistent with Aspire due to the software's production rates and kits. Streamlining the estimating role opens up the pool of candidates who can take on these tasks in the future.

“Estimating and bidding was always a job someone with experience in the company had to have eyes on,” Lesak says. “Our bids were accurate, but you needed that experience and skill set. We've

eliminated that. Four people can bid the exact same project and their prices are going to come out almost identical.”

As another benefit, Grow & Co.'s Founder Kyle Cahill says having a professional software system like Aspire demonstrates his firm's investment in the future, which is attractive to prospective employees.

“(Potential employees) see that we are committed to growing a foundationally strong company using a very robust software like this that they haven't experienced in other companies,” he says.

Like Flynn, Cahill says he does not believe his company would have been able to grow at the pace it has grown, while retaining good team members, without the system.

“We couldn't be operating at the growth that we're doing as the size of company we are the way we had done things previously,” he says. “People would've quit like crazy.”



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## HOW TO

### Save time and money when designing your spray rig

Experts share their tips on how to maximize your budget

BY ROB DIFRANCO  
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Setting up your spray truck can seem like a daunting task. Where do you start? What are the best ways to maximize your space?

Whether it's an expensive new custom rig or the bed of a pickup truck, getting the layout right in a new truck is essential to saving time and money.

To find out the best practices for reel and tank setups, *LM* spoke to suppliers and companies that recently designed rigs — Grunder Landscaping Co. in Miamisburg, Ohio, and Milosi in Hendersonville, Tenn., — about the design process.

#### MAKE THINGS EASY

According to John Butler, maintenance division operations manager at Milosi, the most important thing to keep in mind when laying out your rig is the ease of use for the operator. Milosi offers 60 percent residential design/build, 20 percent commercial maintenance and 20 percent residential maintenance services.

"The biggest area of concern for us on this aspect of our rig was how to load water-soluble fertilizer into the tank. The original design had a top-load tank with a narrow access area," he says.

To combat this, Milosi added a mechanism that allows the material to be added in at the ground level, so the



Brian Davis

applicator does not have to carry multiple 50-pound bags to the top of the tank.

Similarly, Grunder's new truck has several tanks on board to limit the number of times it needs to be refilled. The truck, which Chemical Containers designed, also has room for tree and shrub care equipment, which the company plans to offer in the near future.

"We have a 300-gallon (tank) and a 250-gallon (tank), so we can make multiple applications with those, and then we can also carry 2,000 pounds of dry (material)," says Brian Davis, director of lawn care at Grunder, which also provides landscaping, hardscaping, and maintenance services for 60 percent residential and 40 percent commercial clientele.

#### DON'T OVERTHINK IT

When designing and laying out a spray rig, the biggest pitfall contractors can run into is overcomplicating things. Experts say it's important to stay within your means.

"You don't need a gazillion tanks," says Zack Smith, marketing manager at Gregson Clark. "Think about what is going to work for your business."

Butler echoes that sentiment, hammering home the importance of not overstuffing a truck with equipment you don't need.

"Spray rigs can be very simple. It all depends on what services you offer," Butler says. "For companies only applying turf treatments, then you only really need one tank. Our program offers turf applications along with tree and shrub. We also treat some diseases and insect issues."


If you need extra tanks, there are plenty of ways to maximize the available space in a truck, although the price may start to jump in that case. Smith says poly welded tanks — like the ones in the Milosi truck — can help maximize space. Even mounting a tank high is another solution to eliminate the floor space it can take up.

#### REEL IMPORTANT

In addition to tanks, reels are a crucial part of any spray rig.

Jennifer Wing, marketing manager, Hannay Reels, says making sure your reels are accessible for maintenance is one of the most important things to keep in mind for reel placement.

"It's always good to think about logistically where you're going to put it on the trailer or the truck and make sure you know you can check the swivel joints or lubricate them if and when they're needed," she says. "Check chains if it's a power reel."

To maximize space, Wing recommends reels with small footprints or stackable reels in some cases. 



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## BUSINESS BOOSTERS

# How PGRs can cut down on labor

Experts share how plant growth regulators (PGRs) can help your business maximize labor while boosting plant health

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR



**MOW LESS**  
Lawn growth regulators reduce the frequency of mowing and create a healthier plant.

**P**lant growth regulators (PGRs) have been a game-changer for The Greenery according to Miles Graves, regional manager.

The Greenery, headquartered in Hilton Head Island, S.C., uses PGRs on turf and shrubs as part of its turf and ornamental services. The Greenery also provides mowing and landscape maintenance, design/build and landscape installation for its 90 percent commercial, 10 percent residential clientele.

Graves, along with Nate Moses, president and CEO of Precision Landscape Management in Greenville, S.C., share how lawn care operators (LCOs) can capitalize on the benefits of PGRs.

## PGRS VS. PRUNING

Graves says The Greenery team uses PGRs for its commercial maintenance contracts. Instead of bidding a maintenance contract with pruning five times in the growing season, he bids his contract with one technician applying three sprays of PGRs instead of pruning.

Graves says his clients appreciate the consistency PGR applications provide, noting his clients get a better product. The Greenery also communicates the benefits of PGR applications to its clients, Graves says.

“It’s similar to the section of your contract that tells you how frequently you prune,” he says. “Now, it just tells

them this is how frequently we spray your shrubs with the PGRs. It also goes into detail about the benefits to plant health, why it’s environmentally conscience and even how it reduces noise pollution.”

## MORE THAN JUST SHRUBS

Precision Landscape Management uses PGRs for turf, trees and shrubs for its business, which is comprised of 20 percent lawn and shrub care services, 50 percent installation services and 30 percent maintenance services for residential clientele.

Precision Landscape Management refers to each PGR with an abbreviation: tree growth regulators as TGRs, shrub growth regulators as SGRs and lawn growth regulators as LGRs.

Precision Landscape Management uses a paclobutrazol tree growth regulator to help established trees recover from stress, insect damage or to manage growth. The result is a more resilient tree, Moses says. He notes it’s important to read the label for tree growth regulators to understand the risk of plant injury with some species and how to properly time applications.

However, he says TGRs are an effective tool. He points to a situation where TGRs helped with a client



Nate Moses

whose trees were planted three years apart in a new development.

“The trees that were installed three years before were larger and more mature, but they were planted in a line and they were intended to all look uniform,” he says.

## LESS MOWING, HEALTHIER TURF

Moses said implementing lawn growth regulators took a little trial and error to learn how each turfgrass responded to the applications. Precision Lawn Care primarily uses trinexapac-ethyl. He says in Precision Landscape Management trials, crews noticed Bermudagrass could tolerate a higher application rate than other turfgrasses.

“We were able to go three weeks in between mowing without damaging the turf,” he says.

Graves says LGRs reduce the frequency of mowing crews and the frequency of cleanup and detailing. He says while the cost for PGRs is high, he looks at the investment as reducing staffing needs, not predominantly cost savings.

## START SLOWLY

Moses says any LCO considering adding plant growth regulators to a spray program should start small.

“I’m thankful that we started with a control group where there was some tolerance for mistakes,” he says. 🍷



Miles Graves



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# 75<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

## THE BIG ONE

### Into the 21st Century

BY ROB DIFRANCO  
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**LOCATION** Atlanta

**COMPANY** Yellowstone Landscape

**DETAILS** Located just outside downtown Atlanta, the District at Chamblee, a large commercial property, features more than 20 buildings across 78 acres. The client wanted to offer modern amenities like those associated with larger-scale corporate campus environments.


An outdated irrigation system on the 30-year-old property provided the biggest challenge. According to branch manager Jeff Barksdale, the irrigation system was 60 percent operational when Yellowstone took over.

“We took it from a pretty poor state to what you see now, which is something to hang your hat on,” says Barksdale.

Yellowstone has been maintaining the property for four years. Barksdale says his team took a straightforward approach to modernize the irrigation system.

Updating the system was vital for Yellowstone because of the large fescue acreage on the property. Barksdale estimates that at least half the property is turf.

“We mainly put a lot into the turf because there is a large acreage of turf. At least 35 acres of fescue in Georgia, which is tough in the summers. We put a lot of energy and effort into our turf looking clean,” he says.

The project earned Yellowstone a silver award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals Awards of Excellence program. 

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



PHOTOS: DISTRICT AT CHAMBLEE



**Captions** | **1.** A pair of large murals pay tribute to Atlanta, located 15 miles to the southwest of the District at Chamblee. **2.** The property's vibrant fescue turf shows best through the temperate fall of central Georgia. **3.** District at Chamblee features more than 20 buildings on its property, several of which Yellowstone needed access to install irrigation controllers. **4.** Each building has been completely redeveloped from the inside out as part of a project that began in 2015. **5.** The original 1985 project has been reimagined to meet the expectations of a modern corporate campus. **6.** Crushed gravel and steel-edged trails lead employees to many of the park's outdoor meeting areas. **7.** In 2020, the developer installed outdoor covered areas for employees returning to work.

The logo for GreenTRX, featuring the brand name in a bold, white, sans-serif font with a trademark symbol, set against a background of a lush green lawn and garden.

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“We can balance the soil and make it healthier with the organic matter in GreenTRX. Increasing microbial activity in the soil gives plants better access to the nutrients in the soil,” says Justin Berg, lawncare owner-operator, Purple Care, Fort Worth, Tex. “We don't have to keep pouring more nitrogen on the lawn. We can be more sustainable and productive with the natural biological activity of the soil working for plants and lawns.

“Purple Care wants sustainable solutions, and Anuvia is at the forefront. GreenTRX can help us with better performance and reduced environmental impact.”

Lawn care managers often juggle performance, economics and sustainability when developing fertility programs. Three different GreenTRX analyses provide a seamless solution.



“By using a high organic matter product in your soil and increasing water holding capacity, you're going to improve water retention and nutrient usage. GreenTRX allows plants to use all of the nutrients on lawns and make best use of your money. You're doing the right thing environmentally and providing value to the client that's going to last for years.”

Lawn care manager/owner Luke Hawthorne, Emerald Lawns, Round Rock, Tex., says, “There's no filler and no uncoated urea. No matter where the GreenTRX granule falls, it's going to feed the plants and provide even consistency. You don't get that with a lesser fertilizer.

“Three GreenTRX products allow me to use a premium fertilizer at a standard fertilizer price. The organic matter in GreenTRX provides a greener, thicker lawn while at the same time it's sustainable and good for the environment.”





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## HOW TO

# How to mulch like a pro

## Mulching offers many benefits

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**M**ulch can be an essential part of any landscaping project. *Landscape Management* spoke with Matt Malone, vice president of operations for Northeast Ohio-based landscape supply company, Kurtz Bros., about the benefits of mulching and what contractors may overlook when it comes to the mulching process.

### LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT: WHY IS MULCHING SO IMPORTANT?

**MATT MALONE:** To me, it's the paint on a landscape project. It kind of finishes the job in my mind, regardless of the other benefits. It's the finishing touch that makes the project complete and look good, regardless of what type of mulch you use.

In addition to that, it conserves moisture. It generally creates a better environment for any plants in that bed. It's also going to hamper any weed growth. You put mulch down, and hopefully, you don't have to do as much weeding.

### LM: WHAT WAYS CAN CONTRACTORS COMMUNICATE WHAT YOU JUST SAID TO CLIENTS?

**MM:** Showing finished pictures of a landscape project is a good idea. People's time and energy are essential, too. So, if there are ways to relate to the customer, "hey, do you want to be weeding every three weeks or to be watering more than you need to?" That is a good way to communicate the importance of mulching to clients.

### LM: WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT PEOPLE MIGHT OVERLOOK WHEN MULCHING?

**MM:** With some of the labor challenges everybody's having, I think it's easy to overlook how much time their crews will spend in trucks.

You can mitigate that by ordering the correct amount from the get-go, so you don't have to go back and get more. You can have a guy in a truck for an hour going back and forth to get more mulch. I think that that's an expense that is sometimes easy to overlook. So, make sure that you order the right amount and if you can't have the



Matt Malone



**MULCH-A-MANIA**  
Matt Malone, vice president of operations for Kurtz Bros., says mulch is an important part of any landscaping project as it offers many benefits, both aesthetically and practically.

material delivered there, try to minimize how much time you have guys in the trucks.

### LM: WHAT MATERIALS DOES KURTZ USE IN ITS MULCH? AND WHAT KINDS OF MULCH DO YOU OFFER?


**MM:** We use a wide range of wood fiber, recycled pallet wood, fresh green land cleared wood and wood debris from fall and spring cleanups. We'll grind up any clean wood fiber and make a product out of it.

We offer both natural and colored mulches. Our natural mulches are un-colored. There's 100-percent bark where it goes through a debarking process at a mill, and we get that finished product with 100-percent bark.

And then we have just a natural wood product that is a blend of yard trimmings, spring and fall cleanups, wood debris-type material and land cleared wood.

In our colored mulches, we offer a double grind and a triple grind. They also have those natural products in them, and some of them have recycled pallets in them. Essentially, they're dyed to either black, brown or red, and then they're ground to a double size or a finer triple ground mulch.

### LM: WHAT CAN CONTRACTORS DO TO MULCH EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY?

**MM:** There are blower trucks, which are trucks that have hoses, and you can spray or blow on the mulch. Those are gaining popularity, especially since they are a lot less labor-intensive. They're an expensive capital investment, but those certainly can help contractors be more efficient. 

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## MAINTAIN YOUR EDGE

# Stump grinding safety tips



**GRIND IT OUT**  
Ryan Lawn and Tree's Vermeer SC70TX is outfitted with a side skirt that keeps debris from flying indiscriminately.

Heed this advice, and take your time when grinding stumps **BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

**C**utting down a tree is only the beginning of the removal process. Long after the tree itself has been hauled away, its stump is left behind, which poses its own problems, experts say.

Stump grinding is necessary because it is the final step in killing the tree, so its roots can no longer grow.

LM spoke with stump grinding experts from Ryan Lawn & Tree and

SavATree, about the best ways to prepare to grind a stump and the essential tips needed to stay safe while providing a potentially dangerous service.

### DON'T SKIP THE PREVIEWS

Ryan Logue, pruner for Ryan Lawn & Tree in Missouri, says his first move when he arrives at a stump grinding site is to scout for potential safety issues.

Logue and team will identify the best place to park their truck(s) and check for any hazards which may include a hole, a raised driveway or a gas line. After discovering what challenges may await them at the stump, then he formulates a plan of attack.

The plan starts with the best route to get the grinder to the stump and includes what part of the stump he will grind first. Logue says that the stump itself is the first target most of the time, followed by the surface roots.

*Continued on page 40*

PHOTO: RYAN LOGUE

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## MAINTAIN YOUR EDGE

Continued from page 38

### GEAR UP FOR SAFETY

Grinding a stump can be a dangerous job, so experts say it's important to ensure that safety is a top priority. Personal protective equipment (PPE) and attachments for the machine are essential to ensuring that a grinding operation is safe.

Logue says the Vermeer machines his team uses have side skirts that stop debris from flying in all directions.

Mike Tilford, director of tree care for SavATree in Colorado, recommends checking the American National Standards Institute's (ANSI) regulations on stump grinding for more guidance on safety.

Logue has personal experience with face shields, citing a time when one of his crew members was almost

struck in the face by a rock from the grinder. He says his crew uses Protos helmets, which provide several safety features, including a metal face shield and neck and ear protection.

Eye protection is also a must-have. Logue recommends safety glasses that are big enough to cover the entirety of one's eyes, adding that they should be ANSI-certified.

### UNEXPECTED HAZARDS


One hazard Logue says contractors might not expect are bystanders who want to watch the stump grinding in action.

"You'd be surprised with the number of people who think this is a super interesting process and want to watch," he says. "If you're focused on grinding

the stump, someone could walk up next to your machine, and it could throw some pretty big chunks of debris that can do some damage."

As a deterrent, Logue recommends setting up cones to mark the work area. If that doesn't work, he says it's important to have your head on a swivel.

Tilford says one of the most common mistakes he sees that could lead to a safety issue is an operator not turning the cutter wheel off before moving the machine.

"All it takes is hitting the controls wrong or hitting the pile of debris that is under the machine and you're getting sprayed," he says. "I see that one overlooked a lot because anything that takes extra time is often overlooked." 



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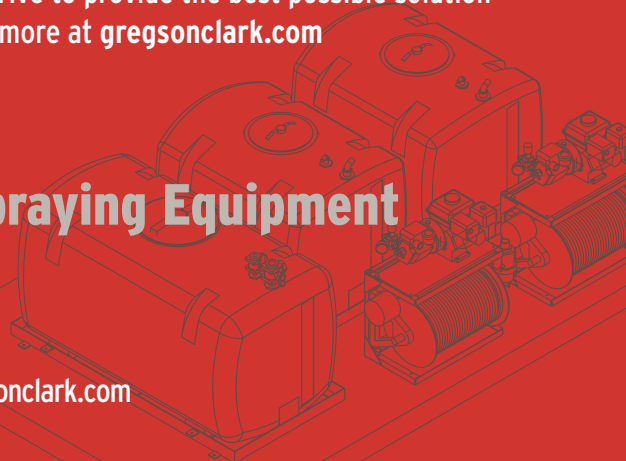


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## HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

# The great escape

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

**LOCATION** Zionsville, Ind.

**COMPANY** Calvin Landscape

**DETAILS** This homeowner reached out to Calvin Landscape because of an existing relationship with an account manager. The client wanted to combine an adjacent two-acre vacant lot into a park-like setting with passive and active recreation spaces.

Daniel Camacho, a landscape architect with Calvin Landscape, says the lack of trees on the empty lot and existing issues from runoff damage were major challenges. To mitigate runoff, crews installed a catch basin between the abandoned lot and the client's property and an additional one at the top of a hill.

Calvin Landscape added 50 spaded trees, 15 ornamental trees, evergreen and deciduous shrubs and perennials to create the desired park-like setting. Plants added include 'Jane' magnolia, 'Royal Star' magnolia, swamp white oak, 'Winter King' hawthorn, 'Frontier' elm, 'Green Mountain' sugar maple, Norway spruce, 'Green Giant' arborvitae, 'Emerald Green' arborvitae, double pink weeping cherry, Japanese tree lilac, Eastern redbud, pyramidal hornbeam, river birch, 'Crimson Queen' Japanese maple and 'Autumn Brilliance' serviceberry.

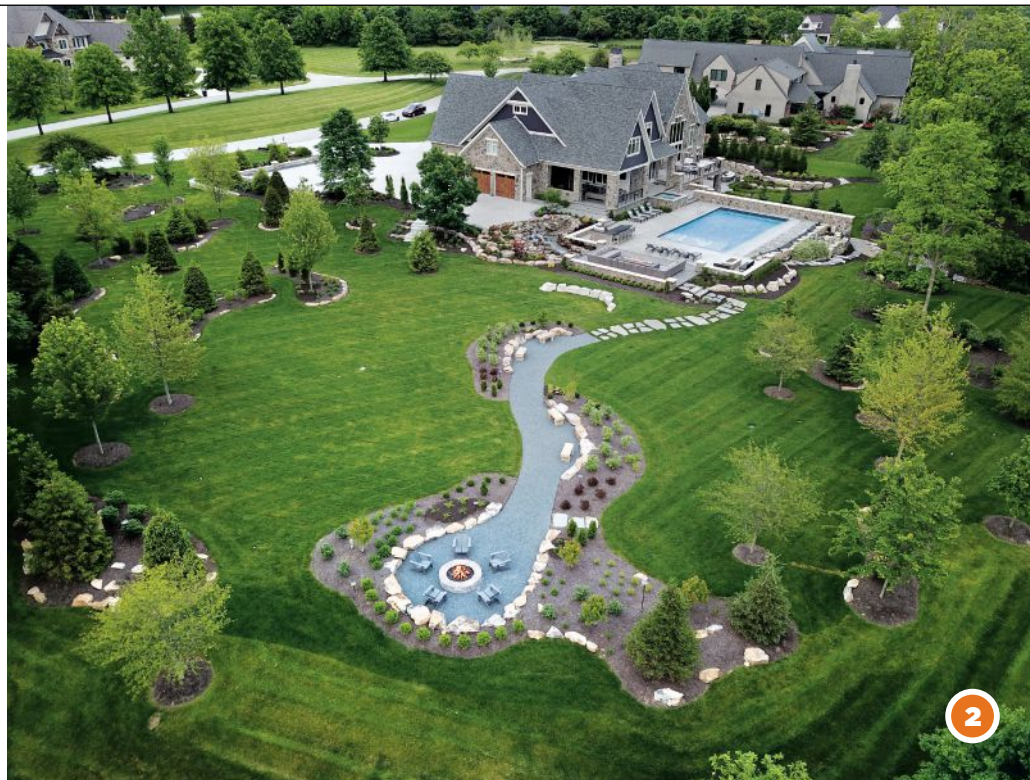
Camacho says the client gave him a blank canvas to execute the design.

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

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



PHOTOS: CALVIN LANDSCAPE



**Captions |** 1. This outdoor gathering space is the property's large natural gas fire feature. In the background is the large pondless water feature. 2. Calvin Landscape added 50 spaded trees, 15 ornamental trees, evergreen and deciduous shrubs and perennials together to shade the views from the neighborhood road and to create space for passive and active use throughout the two lots. 3. Perennials, shrubs and trees offer year-round flowering and fall color. Low voltage landscape lighting from Kichler adds security and interest to the space. 4. Crews expand the large paver patio extension and masonry wall to provide the client with more entertaining space on the pool deck. 5. The clients saw potential in the open lot next to their property as a space for more outdoor recreation and entertaining for their growing family as seen in this before photo. 6. The homeowner wanted to combine an adjacent vacant lot with the existing property to maximize the passive and active recreation space. 7. This waterfall serves as a backdrop to the client's pool and also to create some privacy in the backyard. This feature also provides tranquil background noise.

**PRODUCTS THAT WORK**

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**↓ POROUS PAVE XL**

**COMPANY:** Porous Pave  
**URL:** PorousPaveInc.com

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**↑ NATURAL STONE SAWN CUT DRYWALL**

**COMPANY:** Kafka Granite  
**URL:** KafkaGranite.com

Kafka Granite's Sawn Cut Drywall is a natural stone hardscape. Each stone is sawn on the top and bottom to for a quicker installation process, reduced labor costs and give a clean look. Both faces and ends are split to allow for a more natural appearance. The Sawn Cut Driwall hardscapes are available in three classic colors — imperial gray granite, starlight black granite, and harvest gold sandstone.

*Continued on page 46*

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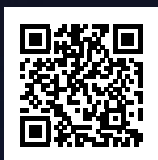
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## PRODUCTS THAT WORK

Continued from page 44



### UMBRIANO

**COMPANY:** Unilock

**URL:** Unilock.com

Umbriano is a modern paver with incredible surface resilience, color retention and an EasyClean sealant, which helps protect the surface from

stains. This is a contemporary paver that sports a granite-like appearance achieved with proprietary Unilock ColorFusion Technology. Umbriano is the ideal pool deck, patio or driveway paver. Umbriano is unaffected by chlorine, salt pool water and is resistant to de-icing salts.



### CRESTLINE SERIES

**COMPANY:** The Belden Brick Company

**URL:** BeldenBrick.com

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## MAINTENANCE SHOP

# Get clients' water features ready for spring

As the temperatures begin to rise, experts share the best practices to get water features going this season **BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR**

**W**ater features are popular additions to design/build projects. Demi Fortuna, director of product information and education for Atlantic Water Gardens, and Ron Malloy irrigation lead for Hidden Creek Landscaping in Hilliard, Ohio, share what types of maintenance water features like fountains and ponds need.

Malloy says Hidden Creek Landscaping — which provides 40 percent land-

scape maintenance and snow removal and 60 percent design/build services to a 55 percent commercial and 45 percent residential clientele — aims to get all of its clients' water features up and running by the end of March. Malloy says this deadline is so the company's crews can focus on getting its clients' irrigation systems ready for the season.

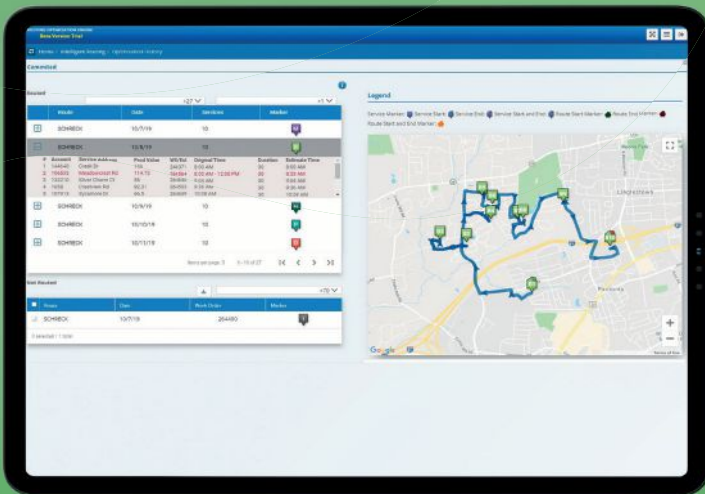
Hidden Creek's water feature maintenance package includes inspecting

the water feature for damage or cracks, cleaning or replacing pump filters, and removing debris in the spring.

Fortuna says fountain features and pond-free waterfalls are the simplest to maintain in the spring. Use a shop or pond vac to drain existing water and clean out debris. Clean the pump and add clean water. The same goes for fountains and water features with underground basins including basalt columns,



PHOTO: ATLANTIC WATER GARDENS



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## KEEPING IT CLEAN

Demi Fortuna says pond vacs can clean up ponds in the spring without disrupting fish or good bacteria.

spillways, spouts, colorfalls, waterwalls and more.

"If there's debris on top of the gravel bed that typically covers the reservoir, you sweep that off," he says. "You pull the pump, clean and inspect the pump and treat the water, sweep all debris off the top of the pump and turn it on and verify that it's functioning."

For water features with a volume of water that can't be easily drained and replaced, Fortuna says contractors should apply a water treatment like an enzymatic pond cleaner to remove organic debris from winter.

Malloy says as he and his crews start up water features for the year, the Hidden Creek team communicates with clients about not putting water features on timers. Water constantly moving will keep the buildup down.

Hidden Creek monitors the water level of the larger water features throughout the spring to make sure there aren't any leaks. Malloy says rodents can chew water feature hoses, especially if they're below ground.

## POND MAINTENANCE

Pond maintenance is different than other water features, Fortuna says. Many have koi and are complex ecosystems that depend on colonies of good bacteria. To clean ponds, he recommends using a pond vacuum to clean up debris without disrupting either the fish or the bacteria. Clean and refill filters and use a bacterial starter in the water to get it ready for spring.

While many contractors who service ponds may want to remove the fish and give the pond a really deep clean,



After removing water from a fountain feature, be sure to clean the pump before adding clean water.

Fortuna says spring is the worst time to do so for the health of the fish. It's a stressful process and the fish are at their weakest because they haven't eaten all winter.


A sparkling clean pond, too, lacks the bacteria to process any waste from the fish as they start feeding and excreting ammonia again. Essentially the fish poison themselves, causing them to die. Fortuna says replacing koi can cost thousands of dollars, too. 

PHOTO: HIDDEN CREEK LANDSCAPING

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## WATER WORLD

### Spanning acres and years

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

**LOCATION** Innisfil, Ontario, Canada

**COMPANY** Empire Green Lawn Sprinklers

**DETAILS** Featuring Canada’s biggest inland marina, Friday Harbour Resort spans 600 acres with two man-made islands, retail and dining, a golf course, nature preserve and condos. Sean Sparks, owner of Empire Green Lawn Sprinklers, created the irrigation design for the property and began installation in 2017 — and his team is still working on the massive project.

Crews installed irrigation for the landscape around the 40-acre lake, with only half of the west island to complete. The size and scope of the property posed several challenges, including only being able to work on closed sections — and also the need to prepare for redesigns.

“There were architectural and engineering changes nearly daily, so we constantly had to redesign sections,” Sparks says. “There were parts we had already installed that we had to remove and reinstall.”

Sparks and his team strictly used Hunter Irrigation products, including the Hydrawise Wi-Fi smart irrigation controller, PGP rotors, thousands of Pro-Sprays and thousands of feet of dripline.

“I didn’t realize how long the journey would last. It’s been a learning experience,” Sparks says. “If you’re a new company trying to take on something like this, cash flow is something to think about. You need to plan to not get paid for about 90 days. That requires strategic budgeting.”

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

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.



**Captions** | 1. Crews installed drip lines for planters and trees along the boardwalk. 2. Friday Harbour Resort spans 600 acres with two man-made islands, retail and dining, a golf course, nature preserve and condos. Empire Green Lawn Sprinklers created the irrigation

design for the property. 3. By the third year of the project, crews installed the water mains and electrical lines. 4. Empire Green Lawn Sprinklers also secured an irrigation maintenance contract for the property. 5. Landscape installation crews added more than \$1,000 in landscaping materials in certain areas of the project, but the site was not ready for crews from Empire Green Lawn Sprinklers to install irrigation. To keep plants alive, the team hooked up hoses to fire hydrants to water those areas.

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## BUSINESS BOOSTERS

### How heads and nozzles can result in water savings

**By choosing the proper sprinkler heads and nozzles, experts say your clients will see a good ROI**

BY CHRIS LEWIS | CONTRIBUTOR

**A**s irrigation contractors strive to reduce water waste in clients' landscapes, experts say the significance of sprinkler heads and nozzles must not be overlooked.

They are the main components that will positively affect irrigation systems' water efficiency.

To ensure you select the proper irrigation heads and nozzles, understand the available pressure and flow for each site. For instance, if a site has high pressure use pressure-regulated spray bodies, which decrease pressure down to an optimal amount for the nozzle utilized.

For example, Kelsey Jacquard, CID, CLIA, category manager for mechanical irrigation products at Hunter Industries, says the company's spray nozzles work best at 30 psi, while the manufacturer's MP Rotator nozzles are most efficient at 40 psi.

"Using the optimal pressure for the nozzle will reduce flow rates and misting, resulting in higher uniformity and larger water droplets that don't fly away in the wind," says Jacquard. "MP Rota-

tor nozzles, on the other hand, provide higher uniformity and a lower application rate than spray nozzles."

#### STAND APART

Steve Thompson, a service technician for Lee Engineering in Kennedale, Texas, has used MP Rotators to achieve water savings of up to 30 percent when compared to traditional spray nozzles. Lee Engineering provides irrigation, drainage and foundation watering services to residential clients.

Lee Engineering often pairs MP Rotators with Hunter Pro-Spray PRS40 spray bodies at a high application rate, especially on properties with native clay soils. The Pro-Spray spray bodies decrease water psi to an optimal level of 40 psi, decreasing misting and evaporation loss.

Thompson says he selects Hunter Pro-Spray PRS30 spray bodies often, especially if clients need to utilize standard spray nozzles rather than MP Rotator nozzles, or if he's upgrading existing systems to new pressure regulated heads.

"These heads and nozzles help us stand apart from other irrigation contractors, as we focus on the watering savings someone can have just by changing out something as simple as a head or nozzle," Thompson says.

#### ACHIEVE A HIGH ROI


Meanwhile, Mike Sowby, owner of Sinc Constructors Co. in Centerville, Utah, installs Rain Bird's pressure

regulating sprayheads and rotors, along with its MPR (matched precipitation rate) U-Series nozzles on each of his projects. Consequently, he says he can achieve higher distribution uniformity, leading to a high-quality turf for his commercial landscaping and irrigation clients.

"It's difficult to calculate, but all contractors will agree that having a green lawn — without any dry spots or stressed areas — is very valuable when it comes to closing out warranties and being paid," Sowby says.

Sinc Constructors serves clients in the Salt Lake City area and its suburbs where high water pressure is common. Contractors mitigate high water pressure by using pressure-compensating and pressure-regulating products, like drip lines, emitters, heads, nozzles and valves.

To enhance the efficiency of nozzles, Sowby says the operating pressure of the heads must be correct. To provide more water at a fast rate, he advises his clients to use pressure-regulated heads and MPR nozzles.

"Pressure-regulated heads and MPR nozzles are the icing on the cake of a well-constructed irrigation system," Sowby says. "When used properly, they can boost contractors' business in countless ways. There's definitely a high return on this investment." 

Michigan-based writer Chris Lewis specializes in reporting on turf in the U.S.



#### UNDER (STANDING) PRESSURE

Understanding the available pressure and flow at each site is key to selecting the correct irrigation heads and nozzles.



Kelsey Jacquard



Mike Sowby



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# FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

## Brian Gray

**OPERATIONS MANAGER**  
PRECISION LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT  
GREENVILLE, S.C.

### 1 Tell me about Precision Landscape Management. How did you end up working there?

We are a full-service landscape company. We do design/build, lawn maintenance and lawn and plant care across the board. We've been in business for 12 years and have 40 employees. I was working for a tree care company in town and I knew Nate Moses, the owner. I'm a (ISA) Certified Arborist. I talked with Nate about bringing plant care into the company. We've been rocking and rolling since. I love it. I started out as a guy cutting grass at age 16. I've held different positions in the green industry since I was 18. I'm 34 now. The green industry has always been my passion.

*(To learn how Precision Landscape Management uses plant growth regulators, see pg. 30)*

### 2 What does your family like to do for fun?

My wife is Jordan. We have two little girls, 9 and 6. We're pretty simple — a family outing for us is going to the neighborhood pool or the park. We have awesome parks here. Being outside, riding bikes,

that kind of stuff. If we can get the girls tired enough to go to bed on time, then we accomplished our mission.

### 3 What is your most memorable day at work?

When I worked for a tree company, I had a guy say to me, if you're going to operate a bucket truck then you need to know what it feels like to be all the way up. We had a center-mount bucket that had an elevator on it. He put the outriggers out. I strapped in, put my hard hat on. He was operating the controls because I didn't know the controls yet. He sent me straight up in the air 75 feet up. It's weird to look down 75 feet and see that tiny truck and the tiny people walking around, laughing at how nervous you are. It was a rush, for sure.

### 4 What will be your biggest challenge in the 2022 season?

From a company perspective, as we continue to scale ... we're a small business, we're looking to scale our lawn care program and our lawn and plant care division as a whole. We take our culture very seriously. As we bring new managers into the company, we are trying to make sure we maintain that culture. We're looking to bring in a new service manager to scale that division from where it is to five times what it is. How can we do what we're doing on a bigger scale and still deliver the same experience? Finding that right person is going to be the biggest challenge this year.

### 5 What is your favorite time-saving tool?

From my perspective technology is one of the biggest things that is helping our company. We use Service Autopilot. One of my favorite things about Service Autopilot is the automation. To deliver a really high-level experience to clients, if we have a customer on the schedule, we have it set up so the client is going to get a text and an email two days before saying which technician will be on their property, and when they will be there. That's 200 phone calls or 200 emails that one person doesn't have to send out. Any way we can use technology to automate what we're doing and deliver a high level of client experience, I'm a huge fan of that. 📧

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-Scott Lamon, Tynic Landscaping, Southwick, Mass.

# A LOOK BACK

## The more things change, the more they stay the same

In celebration of *Landscape Management* magazine's 60th anniversary, we take a look at another feature from LM's earliest publications, first known as *Weeds and Turf*.

In this October 1962 article, *Weeds and Turf* shares the keys to an economical spray operation. For your spray truck, these include:

- An aluminum tank that holds 150 to 200 gallons
- Nylon roller pumps
- Filters

- A filler hole to allow for sediment sweeps of the tank
- A measuring stick with gallon increments marked to assist in filling tanks
- A pressure gauge with a suck-back shutoff valve
- Booms with nozzles spaced 20 inches apart at a 5-degree angle

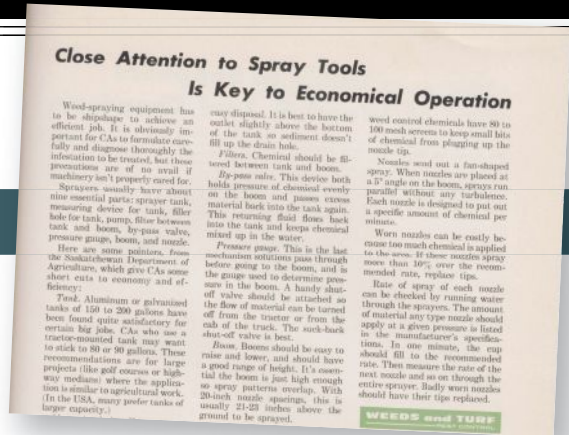
While spray booms evolved in the 60 years of LM, the need for a steady boom hasn't changed.

"A sturdy boom prevents uneven spray patterns which may result when booms whip back and forth," the article states. "It is desirable to keep the boom from bobbing up and down because if

the boom is too low, there is no spray overlap, and if too high, too much overlap. A stiff brace will help hold the boom steady."

The article suggests LCOs check nozzle spray rates by running water through the sprayer. A cup should collect what the sprayer emits, according to the article.

"In one minute, the cup should fill to the recommended rate. Then measure the rate of the next nozzle and so on through the entire sprayer."



ART: LM ARCHIVES

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**BY PHIL HARWOOD**

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

# Do you know the worth of your business?



**T**he value of your business depends on some important details. The valuation process is quite subjective, but there are two objective statements we can make with confidence.

First, owners really care about the value of their business. Valuation matters in a variety of circumstances. Second, owners often think their business is worth more than it really is. In many instances, owners learn that their business is not valued by the rest of the world as greatly as it is to them.

So, what is a business owner to do? How are businesses valued in our industry? Where can an owner turn for help?

## WORK WITH AN EXPERT

One place to start is with a valuation expert. Focus on the different certification programs available. Pay close attention to the minimum requirements of the certification process. Some of these are the ABV by AICPA, ASA by ASA, AVA by NACVA, CBA by IBA, and CVA by AICPA. Full-service accounting and legal firms have these folks on staff. Keep in mind that these people may or may not have experience in our industry.

You may be thinking that working with a certified valuation expert will be expensive. It may be, but it's all relative. If you sell your business

for a higher multiple because you equipped yourself with qualified advisers, the cost of an expert valuation will be insignificant.

## WORK YOUR NETWORK

At the other extreme is the DIY method. Who do you know who has already gone through the process you're considering (selling, divesting a partner, etc.)? Talk to your peer group members, trade association contacts and your company's advisers.

At the end of the day, a business, like any other asset, is only worth what someone else is willing to pay for it. A highly motivated buyer may pay a premium for the opportunity to integrate the business, expand into a new region or for another strategic reason. On the other hand, auction buyers may seek a discount because they intend to sell off the parts of the business for whatever value.

## TABULATION METHODS

Valuation experts use various methodologies for calculating business value. However, the essential ingredients are the same. The first component is the value of the real estate, equipment, vehicles and all other assets. The key with this component is to value the assets at a fair market value price, not an auction or fire-sale price and not an unrealistic, overly

hopeful price. If you had a reasonable amount of time to sell these assets to an interested buyer, what would the total of these assets be worth?

The next component is the value of the business itself, separate from the assets and real estate. The starting point here is your earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) — your "true" profit. The key here is to add back into your EBITDA any expenses you, as the owner, take that a buyer will no longer need to pay for. For example, let's say your business pays your boat payment, legitimately. A buyer will not continue paying on your boat, so you need to add that expense back into your EBITDA calculation.

When calculating EBITDA, the other consideration is the trajectory over the past several years. Looking at a few years gives more information than only looking at last year or the last two years. When EBITDA is growing year-over-year, the business is more valuable.

The last component is to apply the multiplier to EBITDA. The multiplier is determined by how hot the market is. A multiple of two doubles your EBITDA. A multiple of three triples your EBITDA. This is where an expert with industry knowledge will be helpful.

There are other ways to value a business and different industries have different methods. In some industries, businesses are valued in terms of multiples of revenue. Wouldn't that be nice?

Best wishes for valuing your business. If you have any questions, please feel free to shoot me an email. Now go forth. 📧

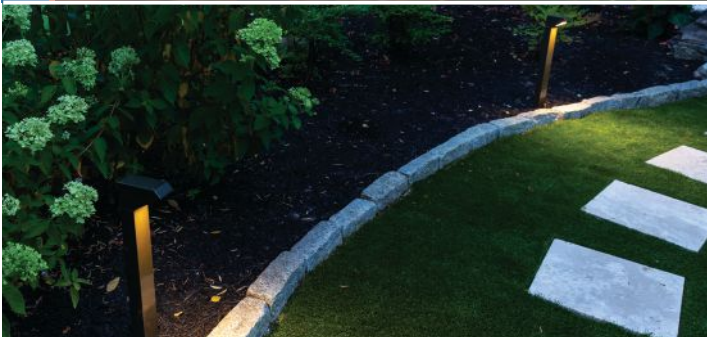


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BY JEFF KORHAN

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

# What to do when marketing goes wrong

**M**arketing is communication that seeks to level up your brand with customers. Occasionally, it can miss the mark and create doubt or stir up unspoken fears. All these outcomes are learning experiences, more so if you track and record these events.

As I write this article, inflation is rising and Wall Street is shedding considerable value. It's uncertain how this situation will affect our industry in the coming months.

Early in the season is the time to plan your marketing for potential scenarios, especially resistance to price increases and product and service delays. What are clients saying? If everything seems to be going well, make note of that, but be specific as to why.

## KEEP A RECORD

Whenever you invest in marketing it's helpful to record relevant information for later reference and training. I recommend recording the following:

- Market conditions.
- Messaging content and tone.
- Calls to action.

This information allows you to build on your successes and respond to potential pushback. Economic and political instability are expected this year. So, if you are not experiencing its effects in your communities, you should record why.

Unlike tracking production costs, tracking marketing is subjective. It nevertheless pays to record what you believe clients are thinking, feeling and doing. Later in the year when conditions have changed, you can

use these observations to inform your decisions.

If your communication channels are unusually quiet, you may have a problem. Maybe that price increase isn't sitting well with your clients. Talk to customers to understand what's on their minds. That may be enough to steady their confidence for a few months.

## ACT QUICKLY

When you discover your marketing was not received as expected, it's necessary to act. The more swiftly you move to right the wrong, the more easily you will get everything back on track.

Steve Jobs once explained Apple's rationale for taking swift action to fix customer problems, despite imperfect results.

"If mistakes are made it means decisions are being made, and that's good," he said. "We support customers and learn from those mistakes. Some will be unhappy, but it's a proven way of getting there."

## LESSONS LEARNED

My landscape company once made a marketing mistake when we notified our customers that we were no longer

doing homeowner association (HOA) work. Our intent was to strengthen our commitment to our core customer base of residential homeowners.

Somehow that message which was intended for homeowners was delivered to all our clients. HOA clients were surprised and some were angry.

So, we developed a plan for doing what was right — telling them the truth. Some companies will dig in and defend their position. That's a choice, but stepping back to consider other viewpoints may be enough to acknowledge you can do better.

We were getting out of HOA work, but not until the following year. There were some tense moments, and we assured these clients that we appreciated their past loyalty, but our company was simply not positioned to serve them profitably. Most of them understood our decision and thanked us for that clarification.


Marketing triggers emotions that inspire action. This is true for marketing that works and marketing that has gone wrong. Consider the actions you seek and the messaging that will trigger them to further your business goals. 



PHOTO: HISPANOLISTIC/E+/GETTY IMAGES



## HOW TO MITIGATE THE RISKS OF PERFORMING TREE CARE

BY ROB DIFRANCO  
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Safety should always be at the top of tree care professionals' minds, according to Jim Dossett, regional safety manager for Bartlett Tree Experts.

"Understanding the environment that we work in," he says. "We face so many hazards in this industry, and the level of exposure to those hazards is high. Just about everything we do can have a significantly higher level of risk."

Dossett believes that pros in the industry do a good job of understanding the risk. He calls for those involved in handling those risks to take a methodical approach instead of the "gut instinct" they rely on.

Dossett's methodical approach involves more people in the conversation about mitigating risk, bringing in different viewpoints and finding creative ways to produce meaningful outcomes in remaining safe.

In addition to the methodical approach, Dossett proposes multiple mechanisms to mitigate risk. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) — like eye protection, climbing helmets and chainsaw protective clothing — is an excellent place to start the process.

Dossett says hazard identification and reduction are other ways to mitigate risk, as is training.

### LOOKING AHEAD

Tree care safety regulations from the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) — more specifically, the ANSI Z133 safety standards — are the industry standards for

workplace safety. Last updated in 2017, the Z133 safety standard is due for an update in 2023, meaning new regulations are on the way.

ANSI isn't the only regulatory agency with eyes on the tree care industry. Dossett says the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has started to take an interest.

Recently, OSHA's Region 1 launched a Regional Emphasis Program (REP).


OSHA Region 1 administrator Jeffrey Erskine said the REP aims to raise awareness and improve safety for workers in the tree care industry, citing the 31 worker deaths his office has investigated since 2016. 

PHOTO: BARTLETT TREE EXPERTS



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and you may be featured in an upcoming issue of *LM*.



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# GROW WITH GRUNDER

BY MARTY GRUNDER

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## Do you DWYSYWD?

**W**hen teaching a group or coaching landscape contractors, I often put DWYSYWD up on the board or screen and ask my students to tell me what it means.

People often know it stands for “do what you said you would do” or “do what you say you will do.” It sounds trite, but I’m telling you if you DWYSYWD, your business will improve by leaps and bounds. There are three areas of your business impacted when you commit to DWYSYWD:

### YOUR TEAM

Some of the most significant business problems I see are created by owners and managers who just plain don’t do what they say they will do when it comes to their teams. They tell a new hire they’ll offer training and it’s the opportunity of a lifetime, and then nothing happens. They say they’ll do regular reviews, which team members interpret as when they get a pay raise. When those things don’t happen, relationships go sideways fast.

The bottom line is, how in the world can you expect your team members to take care of your clients when you aren’t doing what you said you would do for them? Your external customer service will never exceed your internal customer service. If you want your team to take care of your clients, you must take care of them!

To do better by your team, you must:

“Be a good partner to your vendors and subcontractors and treat them how you’d like to be treated. Ultimately, their loyalty will help you DWYSYWD...”

- 1 Be realistic about what you commit to.
- 2 Be organized and document your commitments, so you deliver on them.

### YOUR CLIENTS

The companies that win in the green industry are the ones with happy clients. You create happy clients when you DWYSYWD. If we promise a client that we will be at their property at 2 p.m. on Tuesday, we better be there. If we told them we could fix an issue, we better do it. This year at Grunder Landscaping Co., we picked up new snow removal accounts simply because we could communicate when our crews would show up better than our competitors could.

A key area to focus on is the communication between the sales professional and the client. Often, in the desire to make a sale, a salesperson overstates what the company can execute. I used to do it myself, but it puts a strain on your production teams when they need to execute on your overpromises. As I’ve gotten older, I’ve realized that I don’t need to overpromise to close the sale. Clients usually understand if we’re just honest with them about any constraints ahead of time.

People do business with people they know, like and trust, and those things come from simply DWYSYWD. Expectations are everything. Be careful about what you say, and you’ll win.

### YOUR VENDORS AND SUBCONTRACTORS

Supplier relationships have always been important, but with the labor and supply chain issues we’ve all faced lately, vendors and subcontractors are as vital as ever. It should go without saying, but if you have net 30 payment terms, cut your checks on time. Respond to calls and messages promptly and treat your partners like an extension of your team. Plus, make sure you give them all the information they need to succeed, give them detailed notes and plans so that it’s easier to work together.

Be a good partner to your vendors and subcontractors and treat them how you’d like to be treated. Ultimately, their loyalty will help you DWYSYWD for your team members and clients.

Doing what you said you would do is one of the simplest ways to get ahead in 2022. Remember this simple phrase as the busy season begins again. I’ll talk to you again next month! 📍

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