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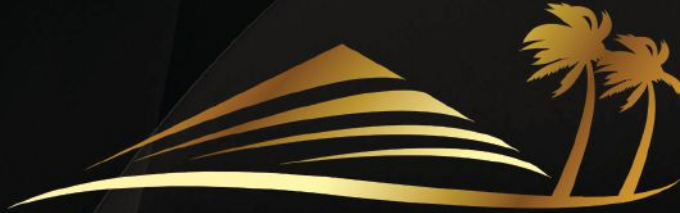
GREAT EXPECTATIONS

As Elevate enters its second year, learn how last year's attendees applied what they learned from NALP's inaugural event



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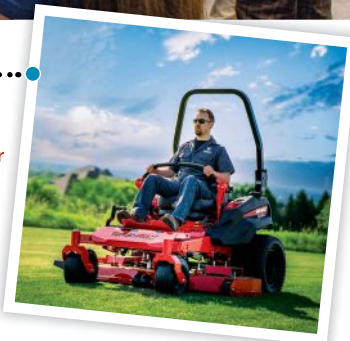
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ON THE COVER: PHOTO BY PHILIPPE NOBILE PHOTOGRAPHY/ NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONALS

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How Grunder Landscaping Co. changed in our 30-plus years
BY MARTY GRUNDER

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Volunteers from across the country participated in NALP's Renewal & Remembrance (page 9).

Early order program fans wanted!

Have early order programs saved your business time and money? If so, tell us! Drop Editor Christina Herrick a line at cherrick@northcoastmedia.net and we could feature your business in an upcoming LM story!



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Ready for a repeat at Elevate

It's the middle of summer, and I'm happy to report that my team and I have been all over the country (and even across our northern border) to meet with people in our industry in these last few weeks.

We've attended the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute's annual meeting in Asheville, N.C., and the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Field Trip to Russell Landscape Group in Atlanta and Renewal & Remembrance in Washington, D.C., among others.

These meetings have been fruitful and have me excited for what is to come for the rest of 2023 and beyond.

And, before I know it, two more meetings will be here soon: Jeffrey Scott's Summer Growth Summit at Mariani Premier Group takes place in Chicago this month, and Elevate will take place Sept. 10-13 in Dallas, at the Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center.

If you don't have the time and travel budget for all these events, trust us in that we will do our best to report from all these meetings here in the magazine, in our weekly e-newsletter *LMDirect!*, and on our various social media platforms.

The second-ever Elevate is the subject of this month's cover story. Editor Christina Herrick spoke with a half-dozen attendees to learn what they took in and how they applied what they learned at the first Elevate. That story begins on page 14.

I'm excited to see how NALP CEO Britt Wood and his team follow up on the success of the inaugural event held last year in Orlando. There's always a lot

of pressure on the follow-up to a great first anything.

Think of your favorite band's first album ... was the second one as good? Or your favorite movie ... did part two live up to part one?

The good news about Elevate is, this event isn't about the music or the plot ... it's about the people. If a similar crowd shows up in Dallas this year as in Orlando, we're in for three days

“I'm excited to see how NALP CEO Britt Wood and his team follow up on the success of the inaugural event held last year in Orlando. There's always a lot of pressure on the follow-up to a great first anything.”

of great meetings, networking and learning. I look back at how much content we got out of last year's Elevate — really, our June *LM150* cover story on Frank Mariani probably doesn't happen if not for a meeting at that event — and I'm excited to find out what could be in store for my team and for the magazine at this event.

Beyond the story on Elevate, this issue also contains useful content for our readers in different markets, including tips for lawn care operators on how to sell fall armyworm control (page 44); what's new and next in landscape lighting (page 54); how to take your winter services from side hustle to profit center (page 92); and the five questions you should ask before adding the position of water manager to your team (page 85).

And speaking of five questions, you know I love to point out my 5 Questions Q&A each month. In this issue, I visit with Mike McCarron, owner of Image Works Landscaping in Fairfax Station, Va. Mike shared with me the advice his late father

gave him, the best thing about having his job and his most memorable day at work. That Q&A appears on page 95.

If you attend Elevate and see me or my team, please stop us and say hello. We're excited to make connections at any event we attend, but we really enjoy meeting the people who already read our magazine and know what kind of content we like to deliver to the industry each month. Perhaps we can exchange business cards, and that might lead to an eventual 5 Questions interview, or maybe even a cover story.

And, at the very least, we can discuss which follow-up albums and movies lived up to the first. I'll go first: Pearl Jam and Foo Fighters; *Star Wars* and *The Godfather*. 🍷

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EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD



MORE ONLINE

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

What strategies do you suggest to keep crews motivated at this point in the season?

“Keeping crews motivated when the season is winding down means cookouts at the lake, great meetings, prizes for goals and things like that.”



Landscape Professionals

Richard Bare

Arbor-Nomics Turf
Norcross, Ga.

Troy Clogg

Troy Clogg Landscape Associates
Wixom, Mich.

Pam Dooley

Plants Creative Landscapes
Decatur, Ga.

Paul Fraynd

Sun Valley Landscaping
Omaha, Neb.

Mike Haynes

The Loving Companies
Charlotte, N.C.

Luke Henry

ProScape Lawn &
Landscaping Services
Marion, Ohio

Chris Joyce

Joyce Landscaping
Cape Cod, Mass.

Aaron Katerberg

Grapids Irrigation
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Jerry McKay

McKay Landscape Lighting
Omaha, Neb.

Bryan Stolz

Winterberry Landscape
& Garden Center
Southington, Conn.

Greg Winchel

Winchel Irrigation
Grandville, Mich.

Industry Consultants

Neal Glatt

Grow the Bench
Boston, Mass.

Marty Grunder

The Grow Group
Dayton, Ohio

Phil Harwood

Tamarisk Business Advisors
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Jeffrey Scott

Jeffrey Scott Consulting
New Orleans, La.



“If you have been measuring your crews’ efforts and reporting and sharing with them their wins and losses weekly, then in August, it’s time to celebrate! Do something to serve your team and thank them and their families for all their hard work.”



“The dog days of summer require empathy, encouragement and alignment.

Set up your logistics so crews work early in the day, ensure crews have adequate resources (water, rest, equipment) and be visible and present with them. Remind them of the big picture and honor the work they do for clients in tough conditions.”

“Culture-building events like golf or food trucks. Also, small personal gifts make a big difference. Everyone likes to be recognized!”



“Share the numbers with your people. Summer is a great time to reinforce these metrics when your management has more time to teach what they mean and how your team impacts them.”



“Focus on growth and development. Crews become motivated by an inspiring picture of the future that only managers can provide.”

“Everyone needs a break. Make sure your team gets theirs too, be it longer weekends or full vacations.”



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

LM GALLERY

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

1 Birds of a feather Our hawk-eyed Publisher, Bill Roddy met a feathered friend at the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute's annual meeting in Asheville, N.C.

1



2 Now that's a team! Troy Winebrenner, OPEI trade show director; Roddy; Chuck Bowen, OPEI vice president of communications and member relations; and Seth Jones, *LM*'s editor-in-chief, pose for a picture during a golf scramble at OPEI's annual meeting.

2

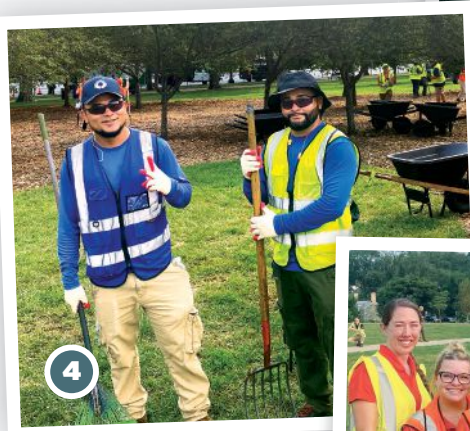


3 Catching up with Kubota While in Asheville, Roddy and Jones had the chance to reconnect with Tom Vachal, senior turf product manager for Kubota.

3



4 Banding together Brothers Nelson and Jose Bonalla of Wewerka Landscape in Manassas, Va., joined a large contingency of volunteers at the Washington Monument for the National Association of Landscape Professionals' annual Renewal & Remembrance event (see page 12 for our full report).



4

5 A caring group A small group of volunteers from LandCare of Frederick, Md., helped to mulch the grounds of the Washington Monument.



5

6 A green celebration Dan Hannan, Eastern regional sales manager for *LM* joined Steel Green's Scot Jones, senior product specialist; Matt Smith, sales manager; Brent Mills, senior product specialist; Michael Floyd, senior product specialist; and Craig Conyer, production manager, during the company's five-year celebration, which also served as the grand opening of its new facility in Lebanon, Ind. (for more, see page 13).



6



How technology is changing the way we do business

At Equip Expo, experts will discuss what ‘The Easy Button’ means to the industry today BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Clients have crossed over from wanting attention and customer service to wanting anonymity and convenience. Think one-click payments over handshake agreements. And now, new technologies like artificial intelligence tools are becoming an everyday part of life.

At this year’s Equip Exposition, *Landscape Management* will host a one-hour educational panel called *The Easy Button: How Technology is Changing the Way We Do Business*. Panelists include Mike McCarron, owner of Image Works Landscaping; Jeff Wraley, founder and CEO of Groundwork; and Utkarsh Sharma, founder of SiteRecon. They will discuss what they are seeing at their own businesses and how they think companies can embrace new technologies to make their customers happy, with the added benefit of becoming a more streamlined, efficient operation.

Information overload

The company McCarron founded, Image Works Landscaping, based in Fairfax Station, Va., celebrates its 25th year of operation this year. McCarron recalls how things were when he first got started, like spending hours over a folding machine and a stamp service to mail out invoices.

Today, more than 700 invoices a month go out electronically, a far cry from how it was in 1998.

McCarron notices another change afoot, and it’s happened just over the last few months — information overload for his clients.

“I think this just started in January or February of this year, where you send them reminders and they just blow right through it,” he says. “I have friends in roofing and painting and they’re seeing the same thing. We have to be more selective with how we communicate, and we have to be concise.”

Sharma believes services like Amazon Prime have created a change over the last few years. People now accept a different, less personal way to do business.



Utkarsh Sharma



Mike McCarron

“People don’t find it surprising anymore to just order a lawn care service online, without actually talking to someone on a call,” he says. “A few years ago, it was tough to see if you got an ROI if you invested in your website. Now, all of these long-term companies need to change their websites to reflect this new reality of e-commerce.”

Virtual everything

The technology customers expect to see from the industry go beyond convenience. Because they stimulate the sense of sight, landscape and lawn care services need to be able to show their customers what they can deliver before they deliver it.

In this sense, Sharma adds that artificial intelligence is something the industry needs to keep an eye on because of its potential.

“[AI] automates the understanding of a property, having it built into the system ... that’s step one,” he says. “Step two is the AI actually suggests the design. It helps you place the design within the context of a 3D space. Some of these technologies come from the gaming side, where they can design a whole world in 3D, photorealistic graphics.”

Wraley’s company, Groundwork, is a video- and text-based sales tool that helps contractors give video walk-throughs for homeowners before the first appointment. In his experience, the industry has shown that it is ready to embrace these new technologies to satisfy the needs of their clients, he says.

“The pandemic opened a lot of people’s eyes to virtual everything. Take the car-buying process, or the dating process. It is common to connect on serious matters,” Wraley says. “There’s a misclassification that service providers in the green industry are slow to adopt. That may have been the case five years ago, but now, when I’m talking to customers, I’m continually surprised by technology that they’re already aware of and already using.”

The Easy Button: How Technology is Changing the Way We Do Business panel takes place at 10 a.m. on Friday, Oct. 20 at Equip Expo in Louisville, Ky. To register, visit EquipExposition.com.



Jeff Wraley

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Veterans the heart of 2023 Renewal & Remembrance event

National Association of Landscape Professionals' event is a meaningful experience for volunteers and veterans alike

BY JOEY CICCOLINI | LM SENIOR DIGITAL SPECIALIST

More than 500 volunteers gathered in Washington, D.C., for the National Association of Landscape Professionals' (NALP) annual Renewal & Remembrance event, where landscape professionals throughout the country descend on Arlington National Cemetery and the National Mall for a day of service. Volunteers spent the morning edging, mulching, aerating and more.

"We've been doing this now for 27 years, logged over 50,000 volunteer hours in those 27 years," said Britt Wood, CEO of the NALP. "People love it, they come back every year and we continue to grow in size and scope."

In addition to the number of volunteers and the size of the projects that continue to expand over the years, NALP president Mike Bogan, CEO of LandCare in Frederick, Md., (No. 12 on the 2023 LM150 list) says the association continually sees an increase in the amount of veterans who want to contribute and join this event. Before this year's event officially kicked off, Bogan invited the veterans volunteering at the Washington Monument to lead the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. Bogan explained how special it was



to watch a sea of veterans in the crowd make their way to the front.

"That was amazing when I asked the veterans to come up; I think a third of the crowd joined me up at the front of the group," Bogan shared. "It's so meaningful to them, not only to be here and participate, but also to see how many people revere their service and appreciate what they've done. It was awesome to see such a big group today."

Bob Grover, past NALP president and owner of Pacific Landscape Management in Hillsboro, Ore., (No. 66 on the 2023 LM150 list) recalled his first time participating and how the veterans at that event expressed their appreciation to NALP's volunteers for their hard work and that stuck with him in the years since.

"I just can't say enough about what we do; it's more symbolic than anything of the honor and respect of our nation's capital and the honor and respect of those fallen at Arlington," Grover said. "I'm really, really proud of our association for hosting this event and the 500 people who take time out of their schedule to come and do this." 🙏

Volunteers at the Washington Monument spent the day mulching areas around the cherry trees.

EQUIP EXPOSITION ORGANIZERS SAY TECHNOLOGY A MAJOR FOCUS THIS YEAR

Smart lawns and landscape lighting? Autonomous mowers? Drone and artificial intelligence-aided landscaping designs? It's all at Equip Exposition, Oct. 17-20, at the Kentucky Exposition Center (KEC). Landscapers and outdoor power equipment dealers can see new industry tech, including business software, drones, irrigation and lighting products, robotic and autonomous equipment, connected equipment systems using GPS, battery and electric innovations, and the latest engine tech.

Equip Expo will utilize more than 675,000 square feet of indoor space in addition to a 30-acre Outdoor Demo Yard.

"Equip Expo is where you can see and experience new capabilities before they're on the market and in the hands of your competitors," Kiser adds. "The Outdoor Demo Yard, the Drone Zone, the vendor exhibits — it's all set up for the landscaper and dealer to get their hands on the latest tech before anyone else."

Show organizers say this year's Equip Expo will have more than 125 exhibitors with technology-related offerings. Attendees gain access to the engineers and developers who create the technology and learn how it can benefit their businesses.

Drone technology, for instance, revolutionizes how landscaping is sold, designed and built. From creating 3D renderings and estimating, to documenting progress and showcasing products with fly-through videos, drones can give landscape contractors the competitive edge.

Registrants can even win a drone each day of the show to take home and work toward their FAA remote pilot certification for drone operation. The Drone Zone in the West Wing will offer hands-on training right on the exhibit floor. Attendees can test their abilities in a flight simulator and then step into The Drone Zone to fly a drone with an expert trainer.

Massachusetts design/build operation pays \$832K in back wages

The U.S. Department of Labor said it recovered \$771,022 in back wages and \$61,215 in liquidated damages for 47 workers of a Haverhill, Mass., design/build company after the employer failed to comply with requirements of the federal H-2B worker program and the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Investigators with the department's Wage and Hour Division determined Triad Associates did not pay certain H-2B workers the proper overtime rate for all hours more than 40 in a workweek, a Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) violation. Investigators also found that Triad Associates failed to keep accurate records for the hours that salaried nonexempt employees worked. The division recovered \$61,215 in back wages and an equal amount in liquidated damages owed to six workers to resolve the FLSA violations. The investigation also identified violations of related H-2B provisions in the Immigration and Nationality Act.

The division found Triad Associates illegally:

- Failed to comply with the prohibition against preferential treatment, which resulted in the division recovering \$138,763 in back wages for 13 workers.
- Paid less than the offered wage rate to masons and pavers. The division recovered \$503,704 in back wages owed to 47 workers.
- Placed workers in an unapproved job classification and made impermissible deductions from workers' wages.
- Failed to pay H-2B workers' inbound travel, outbound travel and subsistence costs.
- Failed to fulfill required recruitment activities, including contacting former U.S. employees when attempting to fill vacancies.
- Did not retain required documents.

In addition to recovering back wages, the division assessed Triad Associates with civil money penalties of \$5,694 under the FLSA and \$117,949 under the H-2B program, which the company paid.

John Deere teams with Ego to improve access to electric equipment offerings

John Deere enters a new partnership with Ego and parent company Chervon, a global provider to the outdoor power equipment and power tool industries. The partnership enables John Deere to sell Ego-branded battery products through John Deere dealers.

As part of this new agreement, John Deere and Ego will collaborate on future product development. Ego batteries are portable and can be used across more than 70 compatible products, which allows customers to use multiple products with the same battery system.

Senske grows again with Virginia acquisition

Senske Services, No. 59 on the 2023 *LM150* list, added National Turf Service of Springfield, Va. National Turf



STEEL GREEN MANUFACTURING CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY AND GRAND OPENING

LM was there when Steel Green Manufacturing celebrated five years of business and the grand opening of its new facility in Lebanon, Ind., with an open house.

Customers and friends joined Steel Green for lunch, tours of the new facility and axe throwing.

"We're proud of what we've built here and honored to celebrate this milestone with our community," said Matt Smith, Steel Green co-founder and sales manager. "The loyalty of our customers and partners over the past five years has helped us get where we are today."

Service provides residential lawn care, pest control and home services.

National Turf Service started in 1970 as a family-owned and operated business, covering customers in Northern Virginia.

National Turf Service will rebrand to Blades of Green, and the Springfield, Va., office will serve as the second branch location. Brad Leahy, president of Blades of Green will take over both operations. Services will expand to include tree care.

Landscape Workshop enters Louisiana market

Landscape Workshop, No. 35 on the 2023 *LM150* list, recently acquired Louisiana Landscape Specialty, a full-service commercial landscape business with three locations based in Southeast Louisiana.

Randy Loup founded Louisiana Landscape Specialty in 1983 and grew it from a small landscape installation and maintenance operation with less than a dozen employees into a landscape contracting company that employs more than 100 professionals.

Loup will join Landscape Workshop as founder and partner.

Arbor Masters expands presence in Kansas City with latest acquisition

Arbor Masters, based in Kansas City, Kan., merged with Heath Nelson Tree Services. The acquisition is the second in two months for the company. It follows the addition of Jennings Tree & Lawn Care in May.

Arbor Masters provides tree and plant health care services to customers throughout the central U.S. and offers tree pruning, stump grinding, fertilization, disease and infestation control, cabling and bracing, and tree removal services.



GREAT EXPECTATIONS

As Elevate enters its second year, learn how last year's attendees applied what they learned from NALP's inaugural event

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR



DEVOTED TRADE SHOW TIME

Elevate show organizers say attendees can expect to have a few less education sessions to allow for great networking on the trade show floor.

PHOTO: PHILIPPE NOBILE PHOTOGRAPHY/NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONALS



Continued on page 16

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

The team at Michael Hatcher & Associates left Elevate in Orlando last September filled to the brim with ideas.

“I bet we had over a hundred takeaways from the event,” says Russ Sneed, CEO of Michael Hatcher & Associates, Olive Branch, Miss. “They were things that each team member who went to Elevate planned on actually implementing and working on whenever they got back home.”



Russ Sneed

Michael Hatcher & Associates, No. 125 on the 2023 LM150 list, sent 19 people last year to the National Association of Landscape Professionals’ inaugural event. Sneed says some of these takeaways include hiring with the company’s

Continued on page 20



PHOTOS: LM STAFF; MICHAEL HATCHER & ASSOCIATES; EVGEN SANGUSH/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS/GETTY IMAGES (ARROW)

EDUCATION IN NUMBERS

(Top) Michael Hatcher & Associates sent 19 people to NALP’s inaugural event. (Right) Alex Moore, commercial maintenance senior account manager from Michael Hatcher & Associates checks out Ventrac’s 4520P at the show.



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What to expect in Dallas

Elevate 2022 kicked off in Orlando with a palpable buzz. And this year, the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) takes the show on the road to Dallas. Event organizers say attendees can expect a similar experience to last year, with minor tweaks and, of course, a big Texas experience.

NALP CEO Britt Wood says, following feedback from 2022 attendees, the planning committee reduced the number of educational sessions from 47 to 39.

TARGETED EDUCATION SESSIONS

Wood says the planning committee tried to ground every educational session, whether it's about new technology or sustainability, into Elevate's four education pillars: business excellence, operational excellence, team member experience and customer experience.

"(The planning committee) looked at our sustainability track, and as opposed to calling sustainability out on its own, what they said is sustainability really is part of business excellence or operational excellence," he says. "We'll be weaving in technology,

sustainability, leadership, all of those things to drive those four core elements of Elevate."

NALP board member Claire Goldman, owner of R&R Landscaping in Auburn, Ala., says attendees can also expect sessions on artificial intelligence and mergers and acquisitions.

Wood says one session on mergers and acquisitions will take a look at the future of the green industry.

"We're bringing in a private equity group that's been part of other industries and been part of other consolidations in other industries," Wood says.

BIGGER IN TEXAS
NALP's CEO Britt Wood says attendees will get a warm Texas welcome this year.



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“They’re going to give a flavor of what happened in those industries. The idea is to kind of take a look ahead and say, how might our industry change?”

Goldman says entrepreneur Liz Forkin Bohannon kicks off the general sessions on Monday morning and shares insights on how to start any goal.

Bohannon is the author of *Beginner’s Pluck: Build Your Life of Purpose & Impact Now*.

“I have had the opportunity to hear (Bohannon) speak before and I just love her, so I’m very excited about that,” she says.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR NETWORKING

Wood says returning this year is Breakfast with Champions, where industry peers participate in discussions centered around a specific theme or topic. Also, NALP will bring back fireside chats.

“Fireside chats, something that we’re going to anchor this event around, is the opportunity for people to come together in smaller groups and talk about specific topics, much more specific than we would get to in a session normally,” says Wood.

For this year’s fireside chats, NALP’s Women’s Network, Latino Landscape Network, Young Professionals Network and Veterans Network will offer in-depth talks in designated areas of the trade show floor.

And, Wood says devoted trade show time means educational sessions do not overlap with expo time this year.

“Elevate is really designed for this industry, and networking is such a part of this industry that we want to make sure we’re offering every opportunity for people to continue to network and build those bonds,” he says.



Claire Goldman

INFAMOUS ELEVATE BASH

Last year’s Elevate made a huge splash when NALP rented out part of Universal Studios. While rollercoasters won’t be a part of the entertainment this year, armadillo races will be.

“We’re going to a place called Gilly’s that’s going to give everybody a real Texas experience,” Wood says. “There will be mechanical bulls. They will be available for riding if you are so daring enough to do so. There will also be armadillo races. If you’ve never attended an armadillo race, it is a sight to be seen.”

Wood says attendees can also expect speakeasies and great food. NALP will bring back a tradition from past events — karaoke.

“This is a very big karaoke crew,” he says. “So not only will we have a live band there, but we’ll also allow some opportunities for some karaoke stars to emerge and to come out of the woodwork.”

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Continued from page 16

core values in mind, improving training and onboarding, how to stand out from the competition, improving profitability, ways to recognize tenured employees and using magnets to aid in shop organization.

Elevate heads to the Lone Star state this year, Sept. 10-13 at the Gaylord Texan Resort & Conference Center in Dallas.

Different viewpoints

Joseph Barnes, marketing director for Yellowstone Landscape, No. 4 on the 2023 *LM150* list, says the benefit of sending a large group to an event like Elevate is his operation brings back perspectives from a wide variety of educational sessions. The Yellowstone team plans to send 12 to Dallas this year.

“Each of our attendees can go to the event and target their learning into their area of focus — not having to worry about what else they may be missing because they know someone else is there taking notes and will share what they learned,” he says.

Attending Elevate is also an opportunity to reinforce a company’s core values, says Amy Snyder, director of public relations with Ruppert Landscape, No. 13 on the 2023 *LM150* list. The company plans to send 13 employees to this year’s Elevate in Dallas.



Joseph Barnes

“Each year, we select some of our emerging leaders to attend with the expectation that they’ll have an opportunity to learn and bring new ideas back to implement at Ruppert,” she says. “In addition to those first-time attendees, we have three people who are speakers this year and we have four others who serve on various NALP boards or committees.”

Sneed says the investment in sending his team to Orlando last year helped his employees understand the level of professionalism in the industry.

“It is an investment into the culture of the team to say, ‘Hey you matter enough for us to spend to spend this investment,’” he says. “I think our team members ended up gaining a whole new sense of satisfaction in what they’re doing. They recognize we’re the top 150 companies in the country and we’re continuing to get better and better and better.”

Opportunities for partnerships and learning

For the team at Yellowstone Landscape, the focus of 2022’s Elevate was technology, says Brian Martin, director of training and safety. Martin says the opportunity to meet

FIRESIDE CHATS

Fireside chats, where small groups discuss topics more in depth than during educational sessions, return for 2023.

with suppliers during designated trade show floor time also led to new opportunities for partnerships with suppliers.

“Some of those conversations we started at Elevate last year have blossomed into trials and continued discussions about how to incorporate new services, software and equipment into our operations across the country,” he says.

As for this year, Martin says a key focus for the Yellowstone team this year will be how to best report operational results with new technology.

“With all the testing we’ve done over the past few years, especially with robotics, autonomous and electric equipment, we’ve collected a lot of data,” he says. “The natural progression is to turn all that data into easy-to-understand metrics that will help us take those new technologies out of the testing phase and into regular production. Moving beyond, ‘Hey, isn’t that cool?’ to ‘This is the right tool for this type of project, and here’s why we know that it will work.’”

Snyder points to the workshops, product demonstrations and opportunities to socialize and network as great opportunities for additional education for the Ruppert team.

“Attending Elevate events like The Breakfast of Champions really helps us learn about new ideas and best practices of others in our industry — and there is always something to learn from our competitors,” she says.

WE’LL BE THERE
Expect more Elevate videos from LM such as this one, where Chad Carney, go-to-market manager for commercial mowing and equipment with John Deere, gives Editor-in-Chief Seth Jones a tour of his company’s mowers.

Barnes points to other opportunities for those in the industry to support the NALP Foundation, which provides scholarships and support for the next generation in the industry.

Continued on page 22



Brian Martin



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GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Continued from page 21

“The NALP PAC event is a great way to support and connect with the staff at NALP advocating on our behalf in D.C.,” he says. “The Ultimate Green Battle — the Family Feud game show — was a hoot, and the auction had some unbelievable trips and experiences offered, which raised a lot of money for the NALP Foundation.”

Coming together

Sneed says in Orlando, the Michael Hatcher & Associates team consciously spent time together at dinners and other team-building events.

“We made it a point to go out on team dinners for two of the nights,” he says. “Last year, we also did a Topgolf outing while we were there. We’ll all still be talking about that five years from now. It was incredible for team building.”



RECOGNITION Amy Snyder, director of public relations with Ruppert Landscape (center), says she enjoys NALP’s award ceremony and pays close attention to any new innovations she could deploy at her operation for Ruppert events.

He says having the opportunity to attend an event like Elevate just helps expand his employees’ expectations to push the operation to new heights.

“You pull yourself out of the little leagues, the farm system, and you see what’s possible and start increasing your expectations,” he says. 🏆

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Optional field trips

At the end of Elevate, attendees can join optional landscape facility tours at Southern Botanical, Land Patterns and Earthworks. Last year, the optional site visits sold out quickly, so this year the planning committee expanded the offerings from two to three tours to provide attendees with unique experiences, NALP CEO Britt Wood says.



Britt Wood

“There may be people who want to see somebody who’s a little on the smaller side but maybe has some unique ways of doing some things. And that might mean Land Patterns is better for you,” he says. “You may want to go with one of the bigger companies. Southern Botanical does a lot of really cool, interesting stuff, as does Earthworks. We wanted to create some variety for some people and we wanted to make it more available.”

The “on tour” event will run like a smaller version of NALP’s field trip, where attendees get a chance to peek into the operations of the tour hosts.

“They are a real treat,” he says. “But we also know they’re not for everybody. We do limit attendance. We understand that we’re packing a lot in here, but we wanted to make that available for people who really wanted to get that specific type of learning opportunity. We’re excited about the offerings this year.”



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7 things to consider when adding new technology

Integrating a new piece of technology can mean a major change in your operation. Learn how to prepare and make the most of your new addition

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

Before adding a new piece of technology — be that a robotic mower, new software or even battery-powered equipment — you should think about where you want your business to be in the next five years, says Todd Reinhart.

Your answer will help inform the path to go down, says Reinhart, co-owner of Reinhart Landscaping & Snow, a primarily commercial design/build, maintenance and snow and ice removal service provider in Bloomington, Ill.

While some operations may want to keep the status quo, others might look to innovations to help improve efficiencies. Here are some things to keep in mind to effectively integrate a new piece of technology.

1 KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Reinhart says a critical first step for a business owner considering adding new technology is to know your company's numbers. You and your team should know how to build a sales campaign and a bid or how to take a service to the market. Access to this information typically comes from a robust software program.

"Without one encompassing system like Aspire or Boss, you're never going to get there," he says. "You think, there are too many variables and things to

watch. How do you do all those things without a system to keep all that data in? It's impossible."

Reinhart says his operation hopes to slash labor costs by 80 to 90 percent with the 20 robotic mowers the company has already deployed. He says understanding these costs and savings helps his team to accurately bid on projects where crews will deploy robotic mowers.

"We can charge the same as what it costs the client now — because our labor and fuel are the things we can't control a lot of right now," he says. "Equipment costs I can control, because if I buy it today, I know what those costs are for the next three years."

2 ASSESS YOUR CLIENTS

Joel Honeyman, vice president of global innovation with Doosan Bobcat, says the first step a company considering adding autonomous mowers should take is to assess its clients and properties to see what makes sense for automation.

"So, there are a lot of tasks yet that we're going to need humans for, that you're going to need precision for," he says. "There are other aspects of the job that would be well suited for automation. It's picking the job that can be successful that is the key. Pick the task or the job that can more easily accept this newer technology."

3 START SMALL

Honeyman says it's important to think of autonomous technology and manual mowers as "both/and."

"I don't think it's a jump all the way in," he says. "We're going to use operators and manual mowers or manual equipment for a very long time. However, there are applications for these autonomous ones. Maybe it's one or two pieces of equipment to start with."

Continued on page IT4



PHOTO: YELLOWSTONE LANDSCAPE; ON THE COVER, ILLUSTRATION: JACKIE NIAMI/STOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS/GETTY IMAGES

INNOVATION + TECHNOLOGY GUIDE

Continued from page IT3

He says autonomous technology installed on ride-on mowers offer manual modes where the equipment offers operators options.

“It doesn’t have to be autonomous all the time,” he says. “They can invest in the technology and then slowly build up and pick the jobs to be successful with that technology.”

Steve Pearce, general manager for Sebert Landscaping, primarily commercial maintenance, snow removal, sustainable landscapes, design/build and enhancements operation in Bartlett, Ill., says a few dedicated crew members started to work with RC Mowers autonomous mowers before deploying them throughout the company.

“We took the approach of learning how to do this rather than shoving it into our operations,” he says. “We want to understand how it works and how it goes.”

4 DISPEL RUMORS

It’s easy for crews to assume autonomous mowers will take their jobs. That’s why it’s so important to make employees feel invested in the mower, says Jason Klear, business development and branch manager for Yellowstone Landscape in Findlay, Ohio.



Jason Klear

Located in the Northwest part of the state, Klear says his commercial maintenance operation is at the heart of the Ohio State and Michigan rivalry.

As such, a senior production manager named the branch’s Greenzie mower “Wolverine,” a nod to Michigan’s mascot.

“We pretty much sell it to the crew as it’s another crew member. It’s not somebody taking your job, but it’s somebody that’s helping you. A two-person crew can now do a three-person crew size job.”

Klear says he also makes sure crews understand overtime and workloads will not change with this mower. Crews can now focus on preventive maintenance and enhancements.

Pearce says with any new technology, he and his team ensure it will work before deploying it through rigorous vetting. So, crews know a lot of thought and time went into the decision before rolling it out.

“We do have a very huge responsibility to not give our staff things that are not going to work or that are inferior,” Pearce says. “That is our responsibility to vet the product the appropriate way.”

5 GET IN FRONT OF YOUR CLIENTS

Reinhart says operations should take a multifaceted approach to educate clients about new technology, especially autonomous mowers. Reinhart Landscaping & Snow set up demo days for clients and prospects.

“You have to show them how it can be sustainable and be safe, reduce sound and interruptions, and how it’s a much higher level of service because it helps them not have tall grass,” he says.

With more than 20 autonomous mowers in operation, he says client field days help his company pick up work.

“What it has done is the clients that either view landscape maintenance as a commodity or ones that we haven’t been able to get into for years, they’re calling us. And we’ve created kind of a little buzz around it.”

Sebert Landscape also uses field days to market services to clients, Pearce says.

“There’s a wow factor,” he says. “We’re catching people’s attention. Clients see that you’re forward-thinking.”

6 MEASURE APPROPRIATELY

Greenzie helps Yellowstone track the autonomous acres and manual acres mowed, which is shared in a weekly call with branch managers. Klear shares his branch’s usage with his team to ensure crews’ efficiency.

“It’s a big investment,” he says. “If you don’t use the technology, it could move you backward on the P&L.”


Klear says he’s working with his team to compare apples to apples with the labor rate of crews with autonomous mowers and those using manual mowers and then integrating those figures into estimating jobs.

7 ARE YOU GOING TO LEAD OR WAIT?

The biggest advice Pearce has for other landscape business owners is to act, not wait.

“You have to be willing to take a chance,” Pearce says. “You have to have an open mind. You have to include your staff in the idea. And ultimately, you’ve got to take chances. That’s the way you get to where you need to go.”

Reinhart likens this dilemma to needing a new computer. Do you wait, knowing new technology will continually come, or do you buy what you need now and continue to add technology as your operation needs it?

“It’s going to be a billion-dollar industry very, very soon,” he says of automation. “The people that are waiting and sitting on the sidelines are going to get clobbered by their competition that’s adopting this faster.” 

INNOVATION + TECHNOLOGY GUIDE



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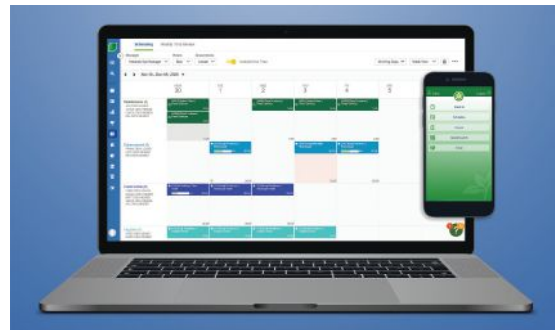
In addition, Aspire offers process automation features that streamline repetitive tasks and workflows. By automating time-consuming and manual processes, employees can save valuable time and focus on more strategic or value-added activities. However, it's important to strike a balance and avoid over-reliance on automation, as this can lead to complacency in the business and result in a negative

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Why it's time to think about cybersecurity

Follow these tips to keep your data safe

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR



How often do you think about cybersecurity in your landscape operation? Experts say you are more susceptible to hackers than you might think.

"I look at it as more of a matter of when are you going to get hit versus do you think you're going to get hit," says Mark Borst, president of Borst Landscape & Design, a full-service commercial and residential landscape company in Allendale, N.J.

Borst says his company's IT department recently shut down his email because it kept getting hit by a hacker trying to reset his password.

Adam Scheinberg, vice president of information technology for Massey Services, No. 29 on the 2023 LM150 list, says no matter what size your operation is, you should prepare for a data breach.

"I tell people you are either going to get breached or you have already been breached," he says. "I do think that's the mindset everybody should operate with."

Scheinberg developed 25 tips for effective cybersecurity after the Orlando, Fla., turf care, pest control and irrigation service provider faced a major security breach in 2019. While his full list might be daunting for many small businesses, he wants you to encourage your team to maintain healthy habits with passwords, logins and computer use. (View the entire list of 25 tips online at [LandscapeManagement.net](https://www.landscapemanagement.net))

EDUCATE YOUR TEAM

Both Borst and Scheinberg say educating your team about potential threats and risks is a critical step. Your IT team should develop a protocol if an employee clicks on a phishing email.

Borst Landscape & Design (now a part of the Mariani Premier Group) uses KnowBe4, a security training company that sends weekly cybersecurity and test phishing emails to Borst employees and reports back

on the employees who clicked on those fake phishing emails.

"It's all about security culture and training," Borst says. "They'll send you emails that look fishy; if you open them, we get a report that says you had three people in your office that opened the attachment. We share that info with everybody."

Scheinberg takes it a step further with a zero-tolerance policy for interacting with real or test phishing links sent from the Massey team.

"We chose an approach that was no compromise," he says. "You click on a link that you shouldn't click on, whether it's really a bad link or whether it's one of our testing links, immediately we have a remediation process."

Massey's IT team disables the person's account, changes the password and removes any device attached to the accounts. This approach might seem a bit extreme, but it helped foster a culture of accountability and safety when operating on the internet.

"At first, I would say people were frustrated," he says. "Then we started to see the percentage of people who were falling for it drop dramatically. We always have some people that miss every month, but the percentage is within the range of what I would consider tolerable."

UNDERSTAND YOUR RISK

"We understand you might be willing to tolerate 5 percent to 10 percent of users still being reckless," Scheinberg says. "We enroll people who fail into training, and it's a 15, 20-minute training session that talks about phishing and spear phishing, which is highly targeted."

He says spear phishing might come in the form of an email or even a text message that looks like it's from Tony Massey, the president and CEO of Massey Services, asking an employee to purchase a gift card



for them and take pictures and email them to him.

“We encourage people to pick up the phone and make a phone call or reach out on Microsoft Teams or reach out in some other method,” he says to verify whether the email or text is real.

MULTIFACTOR AUTHENTICATION

Borst says his company added multifactor authentication for crew members to access his operation’s systems and email. A multifactor authenticator is a security tool that adds an extra layer of protection by requiring multiple forms of verification, such as a password and a unique code sent to a mobile device, to verify the user’s identity before granting access to a system or account.

DON’T GET ALERT FATIGUE

Along with educating your employees about responsible and smart behaviors on the internet and with data, Scheinberg says it’s easy for employees to get what he calls “alert fatigue.”

Yes, you want to take steps to educate your employees on potential issues, but not to the point that your team disregards anything your IT team might send in terms of warnings and advice. Alert after alert makes it easy to dismiss and ignore messages.

“If you’re warned about something every single day, then when there’s a real problem it’s just another alert that you get every single day,” he says.

MAKE IT UNIQUE AND KEEP IT SAFE

Scheinberg encourages those reading this article to exercise caution when using and reusing passwords.

“My expectation is that your login to our system is unique and not used anywhere else,” he says. “What I’d really like to move to is 12-, 15-, 20-character passwords that never expire and teach people to use the term passphrase instead of password.”

By passphrase, Scheinberg says, approach it like a string of words, characters and letters that connect to an idea, thought or sentence. He also encourages operations to deploy password managers, which add a level of protection. Massey uses 1Password, but other password managers he recommends include Dashlane, KeePass and Bitwarden.

“It is a major change in behavior, but everybody can do this and it’s worth the investment of time to make the change to up your security by 1,000 per-

cent,” he says. “I really think you’re making yourself 10 times more secure when you have complex passwords everywhere. And once you do, it doesn’t matter if the password is eight, 10, 12, 15, or 35 characters. Once you’re in that habit, it’s all the same.”

He recommends companies create unique logins for each employee for common software and applications instead of sharing accounts for added safety. This also means upping your operation’s security measures for anyone who accesses your system remotely.

PATCH AND PATCH AGAIN

It’s easy to ignore the pop-ups on your computer reminding you of a pending software update. But these patches often provide critical security updates for computers Scheinberg says.

“There are too many vulnerabilities out there and you need to have a process to update the things on your network,” he says. “Anything that touches the internet directly has to be updated. Oftentimes it’s just run the software update tool on your local PC or server or iPad or whatever.”


THINK ABOUT INSURANCE

Borst and Scheinberg say companies might want to consider cyber insurance. A data breach can be expensive. It’s important, of course, to talk with your insurance provider to find the right coverage.

“Even going back 10, 15 years ago, we would have on our insurance policy terrorist coverage, and we would always deny the terrorist coverage,” Borst says. “With cybersecurity, when they hack, that’s considered a terrorist threat. We don’t deny it on our insurance any longer for that reason.”

START SMALL

Employees at a landscape operation likely run the gamut from tech savvy to tech fearful. Scheinberg says it will always be a challenge for an operation to be completely free from cybersecurity threats. Smaller companies might find it challenging to deploy some strategies to keep systems safe.

When it comes to prioritizing the potential threats, he says, “The right way to approach it is you look at (my list of 25 tips) and you say, ‘How can I make a difference?’ ‘Where do I chop away so I can get down to something that’s manageable?’” 



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Maximizing productivity: The future of landscaping with robotic equipment

Discover how autonomous mowing technology transforms the commercial landscaping industry and empowers landscapers to work more efficiently

BY CHARLES BRIAN QUINN | CONTRIBUTOR

Designing products for the customer and with the customer in mind sounds simple, but it isn't always, and many smart entrepreneurs have failed by losing sight of the people who will use the product or service.

Take the introduction of autonomy into the commercial landscaping industry. Robotic mowers are great technology, but they are not large, not very fast, nor are they robust enough to tackle the large jobs most professional landscapers do in the little time they have to get it all done and go to the next job. Plus, landscapers don't have room on the trailer for some specialty robot that can only do one thing, nor can they buy one to leave on a property for every site they maintain.

A landscaper once told me: "If you can give me autopilot on my existing equipment, that'll save me a ton."

BORING FOR YOU, GREAT FOR THEM

Robots love boring, repetitive tasks. That's what they're suited for. And that's what makes autonomous technology so exciting.

Many original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) work to offer autonomous mowing software on their commercial mowers. Factory-equipped autonomous mowers are commercial and dealer-supported mowers with cutting decks and controls that are familiar to landscapers with the added benefit of autopilot or cruise control, which reduces the repetitive, grueling aspects of the job, such as mowing a big area on a 100-degree F day.

OEMs can add feature functionality and capabilities over time as well.

These features include dynamic handling of slopes in real time, where the mower can replan and retry just like a skilled operator might tackle the job on bigger slopes.

CUTTING LABOR COSTS

Autonomy will never replace the skilled landscapers out there each day. Autonomous mowing software helps reduce the cost of labor and takes job openings, not jobs, and really helps contractors do their best work with these systems.




Charles Brian Quinn

Landscapers are some of the hardest working people in the nation, and they have a big job to do and not enough labor to do it. In fact, there's a labor shortage — in a survey conducted by *Landscape Management*, 73 percent of all landscape leaders say labor is the No. 1 thing keeping them from growing.

When you think about the process of mowing a lawn with a traditional mower, you first mow the outer boundary, which is detail work that humans are really good at. We still do that with the autonomous equipment. When you're ready for the robotic software to take over, you press one button and the mower will cut out the middle — the repetitive, sweat-inducing parts of the task. And the landscaper is still on site to supervise that equipment.

Safety is essential in all industries, but especially in the green industry, where landscapers work with heavy, potentially dangerous equipment each day. Through the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), industry leaders work together on safety standards for large-scale autonomous mowing. Functional safety is crucial.

Landscapers didn't get into the business to manage risk. They want to create beautiful landscapes. Autonomy must help them do this faster and safer. 

Quinn, also known as "CBQ," is the co-founder and CEO of Greenzie, a company that develops software for autonomous robotic lawn mowers.

INNOVATION + TECHNOLOGY GUIDE



BOSS Software

Q+A with **Mike Cossins**
President and founder



What problem does your innovation solve for its users?

Have you found yourself so busy that you rush through the estimating process? It can be embarrassing going back to your client for additional project costs or it can cost you money if you must eat the error. Start the project on the right foot with a comprehensive landscape estimate in minutes with the BOSS Software Assemblies tool.

The BOSS Software Assemblies feature allows landscape contractors to input the job's specifications and it tells you exactly what type and amounts of materials (i.e., pavers, gravel, sand, irrigation parts, etc.) are needed for the job. And, perhaps more importantly, where the gaps are. Using the BOSS Assemblies tool also liberates landscape contractors from relying on spreadsheets and guessing on takeoffs and material quantities.

How does your innovation improve the speed, efficiency or agility of its users?

As landscape businesses grow, there is a need for flexible, adaptable business management software. The BOSS Software Assemblies feature helps companies grow by unlocking valuable catalog and project specific information and reducing friction in real time when it comes to job costing.

It provides the tools that contractors need to make better informed decisions during the estimating process, while

being easy to use and easy to implement. The Assemblies feature also speeds up the estimating process significantly, allowing contractors to submit bids and earn new business more quickly.

BOSS Software is recognized for its adaptability and ability to be tailored to meet the ever-expanding needs of landscape companies. It stands alone when it comes to delivering return-on-investment and unmatched levels of client service and support.

The Assemblies tool is one highlight of the BOSS 10.1 software release for landscape contractors and snow removal professionals. Other highlights include:

- New production dashboard
- New business intelligence (BI) dashboards
- SiteRecon integration
- Job cost overtime
- New pivot table report for FSE/audit
- Add tabs to job screen for tickets, invoices, materials
- Mobile link to property location and directions
- PO — Update Item cost from receipt or receipt history
- BOSS Scorecard updates

“We are pleased to deliver BOSS users with enhanced tools that provide greater ease of use and flexibility on how they view and organize their data. These tools will enable landscape contractors and snow removal professionals to make decisions faster and with greater certainty as they grow their businesses.”

—Mike Cossins,
CEO and founder
of The Integra Group,
developers of
BOSS Software

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Don't get left behind by technology

Robotic and artificial intelligence technology influences nearly every industry and job function. How is the landscape industry adapting? Insiders share why you should stay with or ahead of the technology curve **BY MIKE ZAWACKI | CONTRIBUTOR**



As robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) assimilate further into everyday life, they conjure cautionary sci-fi tales, like HAL 9000 (“What are you doing, Dave?”) in Arthur C. Clarke’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*. However, this technology can reduce costs (especially labor-related), increase revenue, streamline operations, maximize profit and provide a more meaningful and consistent customer experience.

GREAT POTENTIAL

Among commercial service-based industries, nearly a quarter (24 percent) incorporated AI into their processes, with 80 percent of those businesses experiencing performance improvements, according to a 2023 study of more than 1,000 commercial service contractors around the U.S. conducted on behalf of ServiceTitan by Thrive Analytics. The research also found that early adopters see positive results with service bookings (40 percent), invoicing (38 percent), dispatching (32 percent) and customer experience (27 percent).

Contractors need not look too far as numerous AI programs are readily available now — for free or for a modest fee — and hold great potential for small business owners. Take, for example:

- AI chatbots for your website that interact with customers and offer solutions to their problems in real time. In addition to recommending services to clients, the bots track and report on customers’ areas of interest as they navigate your website.

- Personal AI assistants that manage customer outreach, book meetings and target prospects who are most likely to use your commercial service.
- Data-driven copywriting tools that create effective content for ads, email campaigns and social media posts. As a bonus, AI gives users feedback on what content or campaigns work best with customers.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE VS. AUTONOMOUS SOLUTIONS

It’s important to remember that AI and robotics are not synonymous terms and that while robots may utilize AI, not all AI are robots. And, the landscape industry historically has been a slow adopter of new technologies.

“There is this mentality that we’ve done things this way our whole lives, and we’ve been successful at it, so why change?” says Michael Mayberry, customer success lead at Scythe Robotics.

AI AND SOFTWARE

Specific to the green industry, one of the most logical points to begin to find AI integration is landscape design software. The advantages could be revolutionary for contractors.

“AI is the new buzzword out there, and it seems it is where design technology is heading,” says Eric Gilbey, product marketing manager for landscape industries at Vectorworks. “I suspect it will start with automated (design) processes and eventually become part of the overall design workflow.”

The creative process is unique to the human component of a landscape concept shared between designers

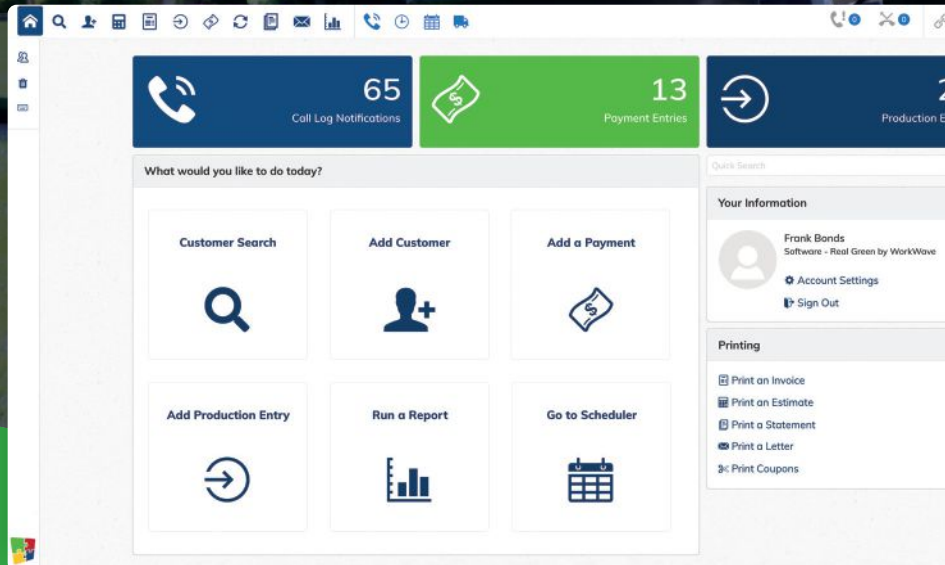
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INNOVATION + TECHNOLOGY GUIDE

Continued from page IT12

and clients, says David Sloan, sales manager at Drafix Software. AI, on the other hand, must rely on the design principles it's programmed to follow.

"AI will only be as good as the people feeding it information. In this case, (AI) must be adept in landscaping principles and plant zones," he says. "(AI) doesn't know what the designer knows or carries with it that creative element humans possess. It can't design a landscape if it doesn't know what (that final design) needs to be."

ADVANTAGES OF ROBOTICS

While AI technology addresses automating administrative duties, robotics represents a solution for the landscape industry's primary business challenge — labor.

The real fear is that robots — or automation — will steal jobs, says Joe Langton, president of the Langton Group and CEO of Automated Outdoor Solutions (AOS). This Chicago-based retailer provides robotic mowing equipment to lawn care and landscaping professionals.

"The fact is that we're pretty short-staffed as an industry as it is," he says. "And we need between 20 and 30 percent more people in our ops. Robots are meeting those needs. Will humans lose jobs? No. Humans will do something different."

Mayberry agrees that adding robots will allow landscape contractors to control labor costs by stabilizing revenue. A robotic mower is a predictable cost for the contractor, whereas human labor is unpredictable due to experience, skill set, productivity, salaries, training demands and more.

"So, if you have 10 robots, then you know exactly what your costs are going to be all year for those 10 robots," he says, "And you can build that into your bids and potentially lower your price because you don't have to worry about employee turnover. We're talking anywhere from 150 percent to 300 percent turnover at the crew member level every year."

In the field, robots provide contractors with a predictable acreage per-hour, per-week cost, allowing crews to refocus on customer value-added tasks.

"That's why robotics is so exciting because now we can take those crews and focus them on tasks the clients really care about, like making sure the front flower beds are weeded and maintained, making sure shrubbery is neat, and actually doing integrated pest management

(IPM) and check on plant health," Mayberry says.

These things affect profitability. Mowing realizes about a 5 percent average profit margin, Langton says. Automation will require fewer on-site workers and multiple tasks managed concurrently. As a result, he predicts margins could increase to 25 percent. Additionally, robotic mowers operate in a seven-day service window regardless of weather conditions, vacations and holidays, sick time or other factors, Langton says. He estimates it would only take one person to monitor the activities of 100 robotic mowers in the field.

FUTURE APPLICATIONS

So, as the landscape industry begins to use AI and robots to address mowing, it can apply this technology to other parts of the business.

Currently, a landscape company may blanket spray for weeds or feed with an application from a broadcast spreader. AI-equipped machines can learn to identify signs of weed pressure or nutritional deficiencies in a lawn environment and apply to only those areas in need instead of the entire property. Mayberry says this leads to more efficient use of resources and a more favorable environmental impact, which customers are more sensitive to when choosing their provider.

"We can use AI to look at weather patterns to understand and predict when the right time is to apply a certain chemical to have the greatest effect on certain weed or insect pressure," he says.

Insiders like Langton and Mayberry say this is the direction the landscape industry is heading, and contractors must prepare now to adopt AI and robotic solutions to remain viable and competitive.

"These will simply be the tools the modern landscape contractor uses," Langton says. "Selling robotic services will be no different than selling a normal service contract."

Mayberry says it's only a matter of time.

"Anybody thinking that robotics are not going to take hold in the (landscape) industry is fooling themselves," he adds. "They're going to be left behind, or they're going to get gobbled up by other companies that are more aware of how to use this technology successfully." 

Zawacki is a Cleveland-based writer covering the landscape and turf industries for nearly two decades.



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DID YOU KNOW

Why there's more to PGRs than meets the eye

PGRs offer more than just growth regulation and reduced maintenance needs, according to these experts BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

As the name implies, plant growth regulators (PGRs) regulate the growth of a plant, allowing landscape professionals to spend less time mowing and trimming.

Mark Lucas, director of landscape solutions at Rainbow Ecoscience, and Lisa Beirn, Ph.D., technical services director from Syngenta, share what you need to know about PGRs.

APPLICATION TIMING

As with most turf and ornamental applications, timing is crucial, Beirn says.

"In general, most PGR applications can begin in the spring to healthy, actively growing turf before the onset of stress," she says. "Al-

ways consult the label to ensure the product is labeled for use on the desired species and that no other restrictions exist."

Other restrictions could include applications in the summer, Beirn adds. In that case, as turf enters dormancy or experiences heat or drought stress, lower rates or withheld applications are the way to go until growth resumes.

Fall is another potential application time for lawn care operators (LCOs), according to Lucas. A fall application will help limit the growth of turf for LCOs who may manage warm-season lawns overseeded with cool-season turf.

"September through November would also be a good time," he says. "We really advocate for those two application windows. Fall and spring are two great times that should provide three or more months of control."

Application timing may vary based on your location as well. LCOs in warmer climates, where turf and ornamentals have longer growing periods, may want to consider additional applications to ensure full coverage while turf grows.

"Geography can influence when turf breaks dormancy in the spring," Beirn says, "so the timing of initial PGR applications may vary across regions. In addition, locations with a prolonged growing season may benefit from additional applications."

METHODS OF APPLICATION

Application timing is important, but so is the mode by which an LCO applies a PGR. Lucas says uniform coverage is a must, which starts with the equipment you use.

"We prefer a motorized unit for application versus a hand-pumped sprayer," Lucas says. "Whether it be a 50-gallon sprayer or, in some cases, we're seeing battery-operated backpacks, because these products require proper coverage to get the full effect."

HOW IT WORKS

PGRs aren't new; LCOs have used them in turf since the 1950s, Beirn says. Recently developed PGRs are a

bit more subtle than their predecessors, however.

"PGRs developed before the 1980s slowed the growth of the turf by inhibiting cell division," she says. "Today, however, most growth regulators inhibit the plant hormone gibberellin."

Newer formulated PGRs — also known as type two regulators — while suppressing the gibberellin hormone, trigger other hormones within the plant, including those in the roots. This process can lead to enhanced drought tolerance for turf and shrubs treated with type two PGRs.

"We have some studies showing that plants treated with a PGR and other type two regulators have become more drought tolerant," Lucas says. "That's because the PGR is limiting that vegetative growth and making the plant utilize it elsewhere. It's taking that energy into root production."

MORE BENEFITS

Beirn says additional benefits can include seedhead reduction and enhanced establishment. Similarly, industry research has also shown that PGRs can aid in drought tolerance for turfgrass and shrubs, Lucas adds.

In addition to practical benefits like limiting growth and better root structure, Lucas says PGRs can provide an aesthetic benefit.

"We've seen over time that PGRs are helping with flower performance," he says. "The plants will actually become greener because of the chlorophyll that's being produced in the plant because you aren't pruning off flowers and there are more appearing on the plants." 🌱



Mark Lucas



Lisa Beirn

Got crane flies?

Learn what cultural controls and preventive applications will help you get ahead of this emerging pest **BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR**

Though there are more than 500 native species of crane flies in North America, only the European and marsh crane flies cause turf damage.

To properly identify crane flies, lawn care operators should scout and send samples or images to a turf entomologist. The damage crane flies cause is similar to what LCOs find with other pests and environmental factors, says

Jesse Benelli, Ph.D., green solutions team specialist with Envu.

“Scouting is important because thinning of the turf will be the first symptom of a crane fly presence,” Benelli says.

“Stick a knife in the ground to check for crane fly larvae.”

Once identified, cultural practices play an important role in controlling them, Benelli says. Operators should restrict irrigation as much as possible if there’s an issue with crane flies.

“Larvae are very prone to desiccation. It’s OK to let things dry out and turn down the irrigation system,” he says. “If the soil is too dry, it will push down the population base.”

When LCOs need chemical applications, timing is everything, Benelli says. The majority of crane flies emerge during the fall, but the marsh crane fly also has a generation that comes out in the spring.

“If you time it just right, you can use a contact insecticide pyrethroid, but that application would have to be made after the eggs hatch and before larvae burrow down in the soil,” he says.

EARLY CONTROL

LCOs can find European crane fly in the Pacific Northwest, Midwest and states along the East Coast, says Chris Williamson, Ph.D., research scientist with PBI-Gordon. While their feeding activity can be confused with other pests, it’s easy to identify crane flies, which resemble large mosquitoes as adults.

They have a leathery appearance as larvae, and it’s in that stage where problems can arise if there’s a dense population in the turf.

“In the spring, the larva stage can come and cause damage to turf by feeding on the root and crown,” Williamson says. “You want to have a management plan in place to treat for the young larvae. The bigger they are, the more difficult they are to control.”

Mitigating the amount of moisture on properties can help control the pests, so can fall applications of synthetic pyrethroid insecticides.

“Insecticide choices are much greater for fall applications than what we could use in spring,” Williamson says.

He also recommends making treatments later in the day or early evening because the larvae are largely nocturnal and feed at night. That helps prevent the product from being exposed to sunlight or other elements to maximize its efficacy.



A LONG TIME COMING
Crane flies spend most of their life cycle as larvae, leaving plenty of time to cause turf damage.

LIMIT MOISTURE

Crane flies prefer moist locations to lay their eggs, so operators should avoid overwatering, reduce thatch and improve drainage, says Lisa Beirn, Ph.D., technical manager with Syngenta.

“In addition, maintaining proper fertility and mowing at an appropriate height will promote healthy turf that can better withstand stress and recover more quickly should feeding damage occur,” she says.

When chemical control is necessary, preventive applications are key and LCOs should make them during the fall when adults lay eggs or when the larvae are small and near the surface.

“If feeding damage is observed in the spring, curative applications can be made but control can be more difficult at that time,” Beirn says.

If there has been crane fly damage on a property in the past, the pest will likely be an issue in future seasons, as well.

“Crane flies tend to return to the same areas to lay their eggs each year, so continue monitoring sites with a history of damage each year,” Beirn says. 🍷

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.



Jesse Benelli



Chris Williamson



Lisa Beirn

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BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Tips to sell fall armyworm control to your clients

An ounce of prevention goes a long way toward keeping fall armyworms at bay and turf looking its best **BY MIKE ZAWACKI | CONTRIBUTOR**



NOT DONE YET
Fall armyworm damage doesn't mean the end of the road for your turf, as curative treatment options can help bring it back.

An off-color appearance is an initial symptom of a fall armyworm infestation that may evolve into full-fledged brown patches as these voracious eaters destroy leaf tissue and devastate turf. In fact, there are accounts of armyworm hordes destroying a lawn in a matter of a day.

Armyworms, which are actually moth larvae belonging to the *Noctuidae* family, are a little trickier to predict

than other turf pests. Turf researchers are uncertain what prompts a surge in populations, but one belief is that springs and summers marked with high precipitation rates create environments that armyworms thrive in.

TO SELL OR NOT TO SELL?

A preventive anti-grub program is the best way to keep these invaders from gaining a foothold in a residential or commercial turf environment. However,

a conundrum for lawn care operators is whether to sell clients preventive applications when they're uncertain if armyworms will be a problem or wait until symptoms appear and hope clients reach out early enough for treatment.

Therefore, vigilance and knowledge are some of the best tools.

"Generally, I try to keep my clients informed and educated about everything that I'm seeing (firsthand), or I'm hearing from (other LCOs) who are beginning

PHOTO: PATRICK BEAMAN

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to see problems,” says Patrick Beaman, owner/operator of Grassmasters, a Wilson, N.C.-based lawn care company with a client portfolio that is 90 percent residential and 10 percent commercial. Beaman says he maintains an open line of communication with industry colleagues in Georgia to help gauge the start of the larval activity in his region.

So, as late August and September near — when fall armyworms typically begin to appear — and subtle signs begin to emerge, Beaman will recommend a preventive application of Acelepryn to clients. Acelepryn is an insecticide with the active ingredient chlorantraniliprole. And, since he’s in the transition zone, the application serves as a preventive treatment for his clients with cool-season fescue lawns, not only for armyworms but also Japanese beetles, other leaf-feeding caterpillars and fall webworms.

Clients with warm-season Bermudagrass turf don’t always experience the same degree of fall armyworm infestation, which poses a challenge for lawn care operators.

“When armyworms start to show (in Bermuda turf), clients may look out at their property and see a patch along a tree line that’s beginning to brown and mistake it for drought stress, which looks similar to initial fall armyworm activity,” Beaman says. “So, they crank up the water a bit, thinking it’s a dry patch. So, they run the irrigation for a week or two, creating a bigger problem.”

PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM




Jim Beveridge

As a preventive measure, Jim Beveridge folds fall armyworm protection into a general anti-grub program involving an Acelepryn application, which has generated positive results.

“In the Greater Cleveland market, everyone wants a comprehensive grub control program,” says the owner of Yards Done Right, a lawn care company based in Westlake, Ohio, primarily serving residential clients. “Acelepryn is pretty versatile, and it’s very effective against fall armyworms and several other grubs, and it has performed really well for us.”

Working with turf researchers at Ohio State University, Beveridge makes his Acelepryn application as early as April and retains solid residual coverage into fall armyworm season.

“We had a pretty serious (fall armyworm) outbreak two years ago,” he says. “My clients didn’t have any issues, but I received calls from competitors’ clients who hadn’t had the preventive application, and their lawns, in some cases, were decimated overnight.”

Beveridge says a curative approach involves a treatment of bifenthrin to get the problem under control. While the damage may seem catastrophic, the turf will grow back over time. 

Zawacki is a Cleveland-based writer covering the landscape and turf industries for nearly two decades.

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THE BIG ONE

Rocky Mountain paradise

BY ROB DIFRANCO
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOCATION Aurora, Colo.

COMPANY TerraCare


DETAILS TerraCare took over this massive project at the Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center with some clear goals in mind.

First, crews needed to address incomplete irrigation installations that led to dead plant material across the property. To do so, they conducted a complete irrigation audit, identifying problem areas and finishing the incomplete system.

To combat the resort's sheer amount of square footage, TerraCare appointed a full-time irrigation technician and a porter to watch over the site. In addition to those two full-time roles, an area manager walks the property weekly to check for any problem areas.

The property features 800 sprinkler zones; an artificial lawn, which requires lawn brushing once a week and before special events; 148,000 square feet of turf; 1,127,500 square feet of native areas; 285,182 square feet of rocks and mulch; and 60 annual flower beds.

Keeping maintenance work discreet was a major request from the client. To keep crews low profile, TerraCare works closely with the client to schedule maintenance during the resort's down times.

TerraCare won a Bronze Award from the 2022 National Association of Landscape Professionals Awards of Excellence program for this project. 

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



Captions | 1. The resort's entryway includes turf, mulch beds with native plants and bronze statues of a herd of horses. 2. TerraCare manages the property's artificial lawn in addition to a large area of native grasses and plants. 3. A bed with annual plantings separates the artificial lawn from one of the resort's many walkways. 4. Maintaining smooth transitions from native areas to rock beds to turf is a challenge for TerraCare.

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MAINTAIN YOUR EDGE

5 things to keep in mind for fall cleanups

Experts offer their keys to maximizing efficiency during this busy time

BY BRIAN LOVE | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

For many landscape companies, August is the time to prepare for fall. Maintenance crews will soon deal with wet weather, falling leaves and cooler temperatures.

Thankfully, the following experts share their tips on how to handle fall cleanups. Nick Carlson, founder of Mulch Mate; Marc Mataya, owner of Leaf Burrito; Tom McDermott, U.S. sales director for Tufx; and Shawn Perillo, owner of Perillo Property Maintenance in Hopewell Junction, N.Y., offer their advice on how to make the most of this season.

When talking about preparation for fall cleanups, Carlson compares it to preparing a meal. Organizing in advance simplifies the process of cooking. He says the same aspect applies to fall maintenance.

“Once you have the ingredients in place, you can make the food quickly,” Carlson says. “When you transfer that mindset over to landscapers, it helps them get ahead, put contracts in place and get all the work done.”

1 COMMUNICATE WITH CUSTOMERS

Carlson stresses the importance of effective communication between customers and contractors.

“If the customer has needs and they have a lot going on in their lives, they just want the job done,” Carlson says.

He explains that customer needs require extra professionalism and initiative in communication. Don’t wait for the customer to talk to you. Be proactive in your communication with your customers.

2 PUT PACKAGES TOGETHER FOR CUSTOMERS

Carlson says typical fall cleanups begin in August when workers start aerating, seeding and applying starter fertilizer. From there, customers want to ensure contractors cut the lawn at the correct heights. Customers will also want to schedule crews before the offseason for tasks such as aeration or pruning.

By putting together packages for customers that include mowing, leaf cleanup and mulching, landscapers can bill their customers once a month.

“Eyes are on property managers to get on schedule, to place bids on other properties and ensure preparation for the next season,” Carlson says.

3 UTILIZE PROPER SCHEDULING

Perillo warns about the potential consequences of not properly scheduling customer appointments. Perillo Property Maintenance’s service mix includes maintenance, turf care, snow and ice management and mosquito control for a primarily residential clientele.

Contractors must be aware of clients’ properties and consider weather conditions on the day of service, he says.

“If the weather is bad — windy or rainy — and it is an open field or area, you automatically know you can’t do that property,” Perillo says. “You don’t want your crew on that property wasting time, gas and energy.”

4 MAKE SURE EQUIPMENT RUNS PROPERLY

Perillo recommends landscapers make

STAY ALERT
Experts say it’s crucial to keep in mind your customer’s needs when preparing for fall cleanup season.



sure their equipment and mowers are ready for the job.

“Get your baggers on the mowers and make sure all of your equipment is running in tip-top shape for leaf removal,” he says. “For leaf cleanup and additional services, you don’t want your equipment to be broken down at the end of the season when we only have a tight window of time to get things done.”

McDermott agrees that proper tools and equipment should be a contractor’s focus.

“A large capacity dual-wheel wheelbarrow is an ideal tool for fall cleanup,” he adds. “That is a tool that can provide maximum capacity combined with maximum stability when it comes to those autumn months.”

5 LEARN FROM THE PAST

Mataya’s No. 1 tip for fall cleanups is to look at what didn’t work last year.

It’s about finding what is low-maintenance and sustainable, he says. Invest in long-term sustainable efforts when preparing for the fall. It’s also important to learn from mistakes so you don’t repeat them.

“I think the general gist is pay now or pay later,” Mataya says. “If you plan now for new and hardy equipment, the investment becomes basic maintenance for many years.”

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PRODUCTS THAT WORK



EBZ8560

COMPANY: RedMax

URL: RedMax.com

The RedMax EBZ8560 is a frame-mount backpack blower that produces 1,000 cubic feet per minute of air volume at speeds of 220 mph at the nozzle. The EBZ8560 comes with a large fuel tank to keep refueling at a minimum. To provide comfort and reduce fatigue, the EBZ8560 features cushioned straps and a ventilated back pad.



BGA 300

COMPANY: Stihl

URL: StihlUSA.com

Stihl's first battery-powered backpack blower features a brushless motor, which delivers 25 newtons of blowing force. With a max air speed of 194 mph (571 cubic feet per minute), the blower can clear both dry and wet debris. An environmentally conscious and zero-exhaust emission option, the BGA 300 is American Green Zone Alliance certified. When paired with the Stihl AR 3000 L battery and used on level 1, the BGA 300 delivers up to 140 minutes of performance.



550iBTX

COMPANY: Husqvarna

URL: Husqvarna.com

Husqvarna 550iBTX backpack battery blower offers 21 newtons of blow force. To ease all-day operation, the Husqvarna 550iBTX features a boost mode for additional power, cruise control, plus an intuitive keypad with battery status and running modes on the handle. The sound pressure level at 50 feet is only 61 dB(A), making it useful in noise-restricted areas.



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Find the ideal mower for each property

Experts break down the best situations for ride-on, walk-behind, stand-on and autonomous mowers

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

No two lawns are the same, making it important for landscape company operators to choose the safest and most efficient equipment for each one. From ride-on and walk-behind to stand-on and robotic mowers, companies need equipment that will best tackle a job site's terrain, size and obstacles.

"Having the right type of mower — whether it's the brand, category or size — can make a dramatic difference in how productive and efficient you are on a property," says Lenny Mangnall, product manager for Exmark.

Here's a look at the different types of mowers and which environments each is best suited for.

RIDE-ON

Zero-turn radius (ZTR) mowers are the workhorses of a fleet. These mowers also provide operator comfort on larger properties and rough terrains, says Angie Ansonge, product manager for Gravely Commercial.

Ride-ons are popular with contractors because of the speed to complete a job, especially on flat, open properties, says Chad Carney, go-to-market manager for commercial mowing with John Deere.

"If you have a large field or property that you need to mow, then you probably don't want a stand-on or walk-behind and would rather use a larger deck zero-turn to get the job done more efficiently as well," Carney says.

However, ride-on mowers aren't ideal for tight spaces, properties with fences, medians, parking lots, sidewalks or

roadways, Carney adds. Also, even if a mower fits on a job site, that doesn't always mean it's the most efficient option.

"If it's too wide, you'll be making more turns and circle backs compared to a smaller mower," Mangnall says.

When mowing around retention ponds or ledges, ride-on mowers wouldn't be the safest option, says Per Kvarby, vice president of product management and marketing for Greenworks Commercial.

"Ride-on zero-turn mowers are very productive on large open areas but not ideal on land with steep inclines or multiple obstacles like hedges and trees creating narrow passages," Kvarby says.

WALK-BEHIND

Perfect for small residential properties, trim work or hard-to-reach spots, walk-behinds are also the go-to mower for areas with safety concerns. That includes maintaining turf around retention ponds or steep slopes.

"Nothing will hold a hill like a walk-behind does," Mangnall says. "You can be more confident with what you're mowing, and that helps with safety, efficiency and productivity."

Crews are often more comfortable using them on slopes of varying steepness. "Some prefer walk-behinds so they don't have to dismount at all on angles," Ansonge says.

Customers on residential properties might also request not to have larger equipment on their lawns, so it's important operators consider those preferences and opt for a walk-behind.



Angie Ansonge



STAND-ON

A hybrid between a walk-behind and ride-on, stand-ons have a compact design that provides a smaller footprint to fit into tight spaces and save on trailer space.

"You still have to be concerned around safety zones, but stand-ons give you the speed and productivity of a ZTR," Mangnall says.

Stand-on mowers are ideal for properties that require operators to jump curbs or smaller areas like strip malls where they need to mow and move on to the next site, Ansonge says.

"For somewhat smaller spaces requiring more maneuverability, a stand-on mower would work best," Kvarby says.


ROBOTIC

Installed on a residential property, compact and lightweight robotic mowers offer less mobility than other options, Kvarby says. However, these autonomous mowers provide the convenience of not needing to manually cut the grass.

"These mowers are best suited for areas under 1 acre in size with summer-type grasses like Bermuda or Zoysia," Kvarby says.

Commercial options include technology to retrofit existing mowers and larger stand-alone options.

Customer demands, property and crew sizes are different for each operation, so it's about finding the best mower options to meet those specific needs.

"For every property, it is important the professional landscaper studies the lot and discusses expectations about the end result with the property owner," Kvarby says. 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.

HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

One with nature

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

LOCATION Emigrant, Mont.

COMPANY Blanchford Landscape Group


DETAILS This client approached Blanchford Landscape Group asking for an outdoor space that felt grounded and connected with the natural landscape. A wildfire in the early 2000s wiped out an existing forest. The clients wanted this project to address the risk of future wildfires.

Blanchford Landscape Group added about an acre of topsoil to the site to help mitigate the soil disruption from the home's construction. Crews planted grass species to match the meadows that emerged following the wildfire and added Douglas fir, Aspen and Rocky Mountain juniper trees. Andy Blanchford, president and CEO of Blanchford Landscape Group says the arid site makes tree establishment difficult, and the account management team works with clients to determine what plant material works best on the site.

Crews also installed a driveway, boulders, four flagstone patios, stepping stone slabs, stone stairs, a fire feature, outdoor lighting and an irrigation system. The stone features are designed to appear as part of the site's natural surroundings, Blanchford says. He estimates the project utilized more than 300 tons of stone.

"It's really integrated into the site," he says. "It's sunken down into it, so you feel like you're just part of the place. Everything just looks pretty understated, although there was a lot of thought and intention that went into it."

The high elevation makes water availability a challenge for the design team. Crews created a series of cisterns to store water to assist in the establishment of new plantings and to mitigate wildfire risks.

The project earned Blanchford Landscape Group a Silver Award from the 2022 National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program. 

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



1



2



3



4

Captions | 1. The client wanted all hardscaping elements, including the four patios, connecting walkways, retaining ledge walls and wildflower meadows, to feel as though they were a part of nature. **2.** A bird's-eye view of the property. **3.** Locally-sourced limestone details highlight this lounging patio. **4.** Blanchford Landscape Group installed a gas fire pit and reclaimed boulder stadium seating and a retaining wall to create a natural feel.

BRIGHTEN UP
Landscape lighting has come a long way from its origins, now integrating Wi-Fi connections and more.



Shining a light on what's new and next with landscape lighting

Learn what trends and products are white hot in this growing market **BY JAMES CONLEY | CONTRIBUTOR**

Brian Harvanec, senior product manager of landscape lighting with Kichler Lighting says basic outdoor lighting has given way to an integrated approach where different products and techniques create specific highlights across the landscape.

“(We) recommend using a mix of seven techniques (within each property),” Harvanec says. “Uplighting, downlighting, path lighting, shadowing, wall washing, silhouette lighting (backlighting) and moon-lighting.”

These features are a far cry from the days of simple path and wall lighting. He says landscape designers can use new techniques to better highlight their client's home.

“(Lighting design) starts with accenting the architectural features of a house,” Pete Sehgal, owner of Irriland Corp., a distributor in Pittsburgh, says, “then accenting the walkways, planting and flower beds and selectively lighting ornamental shrubs and certain specimen trees.”

EXTENSION OF THE HOME

With the demand for outdoor living increasing in recent years, Harvanec says clients want their outdoor spaces to feel like an extension of their home.

“The pandemic brought with it a new appreciation for and greater use of our outdoor spaces,” he says. “We're continuing to see customers extend their living space into the outdoors, which means additional lighting for decks, patios, pools and outdoor kitchens.”

For Sehgal, increasing demand from contractors is a direct result of increased demand from clients, who may not know where to start with new systems.

“The demand for these products has been increasing at a steady pace for the past 25 years, as the awareness is increasing,” says Sehgal.

INTEGRATING COLOR

As outdoor living gains popularity and landscapes increasingly become part of the home, contractors can help homeowners increase curb appeal with the right landscape lighting.

“Professional contractors and their high-end clients love lighting because it enhances landscapes and outdoor living areas,” says Sehgal.

Product options have increased along with demand. Landscape lighting manufacturers offer a variety of material choices including a range of metals and finishes.

“Homeowners are choosing to coordinate their landscape lighting with their homes,” Harvanec says. “Color palettes are leaning toward blacks and grays, and landscape contractors and homeowners are choosing lighting fixtures to match the architecture.”

NEW TECHNOLOGIES

As the Internet of Things expands connectivity to more parts of the home, landscape companies incorporate smart home features into landscape lighting as well. Similar to irrigation, many lighting controllers leverage internet connectivity and mobile devices, experts say.

“More consumers are asking for landscape lights with digital controls,” Harvanec says.

Sehgal agrees, noting contractors see this request coming from younger clients.

“Most younger homeowners, including millennials and Gen Z, are ready for

smartphone-connected applications,” says Sehgal.

In addition to smart controls, Harvanec says contractors should see continued improvements with the core functions of landscape lighting.

“From a product standpoint, integrated LED technology — where the light source is an integrated part of the light fixture — will continue to advance with more control options and features,” he says.

IMPROVED PRODUCTS

Experts say improvements in landscape lighting products don't just extend to the end user. Contractors can expect to find new avenues for upselling installations as lighting products become more varied and powerful.

“(For contractors), landscape lighting is an easy add-on to increase profit margin,” says Sehgal. “To select a landscape lighting product, initially, it is about the perceived value — quality, price, and name recognition. However, in the long run, it is all about durability, ease of operation and the technology.”

Like Sehgal, Harvanec says he expects more contractors to make landscape lighting part of their service mix in the future and upsell lighting services for clients.

“Beyond developments to the product itself in the next two to three years, we expect to see more value-added services for the contractor to manage the lighting piece of their business,” says Harvanec. 

Conley is a green industry professional from Pittsburgh specializing in design, installation and digital marketing.



INSTALLATION SOLUTIONS

How design software can save time

New landscape design technologies not only improve your next project but can boost customer satisfaction and save you time

BY MIKE ZAWACKI | CONTRIBUTOR

Advances in landscape design software provide contractors and professional designers with robust yet simple tools that improve project efficiency, inspire more creativity and ultimately increase client satisfaction.

FASTER IS BETTER

In many facets of landscape design and construction, time is money. Clients demand projects be completed with expediency, and contractors juggle taking on and managing design/build challenges to maximize their workloads and improve their bottom lines.

“Today’s design software addresses many of these concerns and allows contractors to complete their project proposal up to five times faster than doing so without,” says David Sloan, sales manager at Drafix Software. “The same project, if done by hand and without software assistance, can take a designer four to five days to complete compared to just hours.”

Contractors not using design software are, in a sense, creating projects for clients with one arm tied behind their backs, Sloan says, adding that they ultimately lose out to pros who utilize these powerful yet simple-to-navigate digital tools.

“Design software makes you that much more efficient because it cuts your time without impacting your ability to be creative and to get more designing done for clients,” Sloan adds.

SAVE THE TREES
Design software eliminates the need for time-consuming edits on paper.



MATERIAL MANAGEMENT

Advances in design software address the task of maintaining a count of the elements—such as plants, shrubs and trees, water features, lighting and hardscapes—incorporated into a landscape. This is critical from a design perspective and vital to accurately estimating a project.

“Previously, general CAD (computer-aided design) software was not landscape specific,” says Eric Gilbey, PLA, product market manager for landscape industries at Vectorworks. “Now, designers have tools that will self-count and self-quantify, which are immensely useful and save time throughout the design process. This feature could save up to a day of design labor by eliminating the need to manually do plant counts and quantify accurately the materials for a project’s softscapes and hardscapes.”

And this feature makes smaller companies that don’t have the resources of a large design team more competitive in their markets.

“Once the initial drawing is set, a contractor can configure out the number of plants and edging and the type of mulch all from a single, base drawing

and then track those elements as the project evolves,” Sloan says. “Then (the software) recalculates material totals added or subtracted from the project and provides up-to-date and accurate costs.”

ENVISION THE VISION

Landscape-specific design software creates a virtual environment for designers and their clients to experience, in real time, how changes will look without continuously redrawing paper-based plans.

“This allows a contractor to give their clients multiple options, impressions and interpretations for what a (finished) project could look like,” Gilbey says. “It’s also essential in reducing design errors, which is very important when a contractor may be involved in competitive bidding (for a project).”

In addition, innovative software frees the designer to take on jobs of all shapes, sizes and complexities. Consider a small job like redoing a landscape bed or making modest improvements to an existing residential or commercial environment.

“(The designer) can go to the site, take a couple of pictures, tap in some plants, and have the design done and ready to install the next day,” Sloan says.

Lastly, much of this software is available in a mobile format, allowing contractors to maximize on-site time and minimize their workload.

“Software addresses many problems contractors and designers have struggled with for years,” Sloan says. “However, now, software converts artistic vision into reality faster and more efficiently while providing clients with greater input and feedback in producing a beautiful outdoor environment.”

Zawacki is a Cleveland-based writer covering the landscape and turf industries for nearly two decades.



DID YOU KNOW

Right stone, right place

Design/build pros share how they incorporate aggregates in new ways in their projects BY JAMES CONLEY | CONTRIBUTOR



Stone aggregates have been part of the landscaper's toolkit for decades. As design trends evolve, however, contractors say they find new and creative ways to introduce aggregates into the landscape.

LM spoke to Chuck Degarmo, partner at Sperber Landscape Co., and Ryan Empey, owner of Tropical Gardens Landscape in Sarasota, Fla., to learn how they deploy aggregates in new and classic applications for design/build projects.

THINK ABOUT NATIVE STONE

Contractors are increasingly aware of the value of using plants native to their regions and climate zones. The phrase "right plant, right place" is nearly synonymous with native plant use. As for aggregates, contractors say it's the "right stone, right place."

Stone aggregates quarried and used locally help a design maintain a native feeling and keep costs down, some contractors say.

"One benefit of sourcing aggregates locally is that you can add native stones to your landscapes with material that may not be accessible in all parts of the country," says Degarmo. "Sandstone and granite in the Southwest, granite in Texas — you should use materials that are quarried locally."

Operations managers that crisscross a city looking for the best price on mulch or plants understand the importance of cost-savings in sourcing materials. Adding the cost of freight to move tons of stone across great distances for a job and the benefits of native quarrying come into focus. More importantly,

native stones blend seamlessly into a landscape design.

"(Sourcing locally) allows for a native flavor, and is more efficient, with a lower carbon footprint, than imported materials," says Degarmo.

LAWN REPLACEMENT

Empey says aggregates can be an excellent solution for removing water-hungry parts of the landscape without sacrificing beauty.

"Everything runs in cycles," he says. "In the early '90s, we saw a lot of demand for brown river rock as a lawn replacement. Limestone is being used much more often now."

And again, Empey says locale is key in selecting the right aggregates.

"(Limestone) is a porous stone that doesn't get as hot or deplete water like some other aggregates," says Empey. "It's popular in Florida due to temperatures and its availability."

Sperber works in multiple locations, including parts of the West and Southwest where water restrictions are common. Degarmo says aggregates are an effective tool for designing landscapes with these conditions in mind.

"There are many creative ways to use aggregates to replace traditional landscaping," says Degarmo. "They're great as low-water, low-maintenance and low-input alternatives to common landscapes."

Empey says it's important to use aggregates as a supplement to planting beds and not to their detriment.

"We don't like to use aggregates as a ground cover instead of mulch," says Empey. "It doesn't retain moisture or prevent weeds. Many companies will

do whatever a customer wants, but long term, fertilizers and watering are doubled if (stone is) used to replace mulch entirely."

"We often use it as a border if clients want it in their planting beds, and then cover the root zones of plants with beneficial wood mulch," says Empey. "The key is to educate customers on what works best."

CLASSIC APPLICATIONS

Base and backfill are classic applications for crushed aggregates as the building blocks for patios, retaining walls and other hardscapes.

While contractors follow standard procedures for setting base and backfill, not every project is the same. Once again, it comes down to the location.

"Below your finished paving material, you need to consider native soils," says Degarmo. "Clays retain a lot of moisture, where sandier soils are more stable. The stability of the native soils is the key to choosing the right base material."

When choosing materials to support a design/build project, the function is key. As a finished product, Empey says contractors have more leeway to choose aggregates for style over their construction substance. Contractors can pair crushed aggregates with locally-quarried border blocks for a genuinely native patio, walkway or lawn replacement.

"Many hardscape blocks can be selected to match or pair with open-aggregate installations," says Empey. "We always like to use Florida natives — oolite, caprock and so on. Anything is good if it's appropriate for the conditions." 

Conley is a green industry professional from Pittsburgh specializing in design, installation and digital marketing.



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A large, stylized graphic of the number "40" in white, with a blue outline. The number is set against a background of a collage of images: a man on a tractor, a man in a hard hat, and a man in a plaid shirt. The background is divided into sections of red, blue, and yellow.

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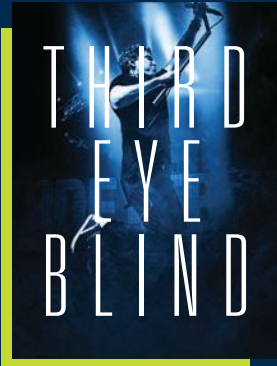
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Wednesday Night Concert

October 18, at 8:00 p.m.

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Mulligan's 5k Fun Run and Walk

October 18, at 6:30 a.m.

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ARIENS

Put on your walking shoes for the second annual Mulligan's 5k Fun Run and Walk. This event takes runners to Louisville's Waterfront Park, ranked No. 3 in USA TODAY's Best Riverwalk (2023), and across the Ohio River on Louisville's Big Four pedestrian bridge. Participants can join us at Louisville Slugger Field for coffee and donuts starting at 6:30 a.m.

Opening Keynote by Record Holding Polar Explorer

October 18, at 11:00 a.m.

Ben Saunders will break the ice as our opening keynote speaker on Wednesday morning. As his keynote address relates to the challenges and endurance needed to accomplish something great, he offers an "adventurous" look at the longest-ever polar journey on foot.



The Morning Show at EXPO

October 19, at 8:00 a.m.

Sponsored by KOHLER

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The Morning Show at EXPO (formerly Influencer LIVE) combines the largest gathering of industry professionals at Equip Expo and the conversational elements of an interactive podcast. Join us for this community event that's included with your trade show pass!

The Battery-Powered Landscape: A Discussion of Gas to Electric Conversion

October 19, at 10:00 a.m.
and 2:00 p.m.

Sponsored by STIHL Inc.

STIHL

Marty Grunder, speaker, author, business coach, and owner of Grunder Landscaping Co., leads a panel of industry experts discussing considerations and challenges in adopting battery-powered equipment. From energy management systems to regulatory pressures, get the information and advice you need to make the transition.



Mulligan's Mutt Madness

October 19, at 11:00 a.m.

Presented by

The TurfMutt Foundation

Who knows your yard best?

Your dog. On Thursday,

attendees can take a break from the show floor to visit (and even adopt) rescue dogs in Freedom Hall, through a partnership with the Kentucky Humane Society. Since the inaugural event, more than 40 dogs have found forever homes!



ENERGIZE

October 19, at 2:00 p.m.

Gather with Equip Expo attendees for an honest conversation with contractors working in the field. This motivational discussion is hosted by some of the industry's familiar voices, who will give their first-hand perspective on everything from marketing, hiring, sales, and purchasing.



Women's Leadership Reception

October 19, at 5:00 p.m.

Sponsored by SiteOne Landscape Supply

Expo will host its first-ever Women's Reception, open to all women attending the trade show. Join women leaders from across the industry — landscapers, dealers, distributors, and manufacturers — at this complimentary reception to build your network and connect with other women in the business.



MASSIVE INDOOR



INDOOR SCHEDULE

Equip Exposition indoor trade show is open to attendees ages 12 and up.

- ▶ **WEDNESDAY** Dealer Preview 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
All Attendees 12:00 - 5:00 p.m.
- ▶ **THURSDAY** 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
- ▶ **FRIDAY** 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.



UNBOXING BRAND NEW PRODUCTS THIS OCTOBER

Equip Exposition is the best place to find and try out the newest products in the market for your business – and some that haven't been released to the public yet. Make sure to visit the return of the New Product Showcase in KEC's West Wing to see the latest introductions from our exhibitors.

TRADER TRADE SHOW

NEW FOR 2023! Equip Exposition adds the West Wing

The historic West Wing of the KEC offers 170,000 square feet of additional indoor exhibit space and is the last remaining unused area at the KEC for Equip Expo. This space is one of the KEC's original structures, and is adjacent to Freedom Hall. The West Wing will feature the return of the popular New Product Showcase, a larger Drone Zone, and a business lounge for exhibitors and attendees during the show.



HARDSCAPE
North America

Hardscape North America is co-located with Equip Exposition, which gives Equip attendees complimentary access to HNA indoor and outdoor (Hardscape House) exhibits, as well as the opportunity to cheer on and watch the teams competing in the HNA Installer Competition. Hardscape education is also available by upgrading your Equip trade show registration to include installation demonstrations, workshops focusing on hardscape fundamentals, and an array of other educational opportunities.

30-ACRE OUTDOOR

OUTDOOR SCHEDULE ▶ Wednesday 12 p.m. - 5 p.m.

TEST BEFORE YOU INVEST IN THE LATEST SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Equip Exposition Outdoor Demo Yard is open to attendees ages 12 and up. Must be 16 or older with a valid driver's license to demo.



OR DEMO YARD

► Thursday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

► Friday 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

**GO
HANDS-ON
DEMO
MODE**



UTV Test Track



Attendees can drive and compare the latest vehicles while putting them through their paces on curves, hills, rocks, and bumps. Attendees 16 or older with a valid driver's license will be able to drive alongside a representative of the manufacturer who can answer all of their product questions – load capacity, features, price, and more. Don't forget to turn-in your \$15,000 UTV Giveaway ticket after your drive. See ticket for details.



LANDSCAPER EDUCATION

Equip Exposition has expanded its educational opportunities for landscape professionals, contractors, and hardscapers to grow their businesses through expert knowledge and new business opportunity courses. Improve your business with tracks focused on New Business Opportunities, Irrigation, Leadership, Technology, Sales & Profitability, Growing Your Team, Pool and Spa, Landscape Lighting, Tree Care, and Hardscaping.

Landscape Education Partners



Landscaper Education Tracks

● New Business Opportunities

If you're looking to introduce a new product offering or service line but don't know where to start, you're not alone. Fortunately, we have a New Business Opportunities track to help you get started. Learn the basics of profitable new services you can add to your operation.

● Tree Care

● Pool and Spa

● Irrigation

● Landscape Lighting

● Leadership

● Hardscape

● Sales & Profitability

● Technology



Running low on energy, but have a full day ahead? Grab a cup of coffee at the Equip Lounge and Coffee House sponsored by EGO.



▶▶▶ Tuesday, October 17

Remote Pilot Training Class - Part 107

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Price: \$175 includes both sessions.

Learn to pass the Part 107 exam for commercial drone use, covering airspace, weather, loading, surveying, and more.

● **Technology**

Irrigation Association's Certification Exams

12:30-5:30 p.m.

Price: Based on exam chosen.

IA Select Certification sets the bar for irrigation professionals. Get certified to stand out from the competition and advance your career.

● **Irrigation**



▶▶▶ Wednesday, October 18

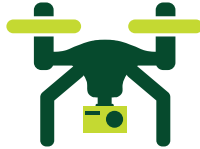
Remote Pilot Training Class - Part 107

8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Price: \$175 includes both sessions.

Learn to pass the Part 107 exam for commercial drone use, covering airspace, weather, loading, surveying, and more.

● **Technology**



Expo Power Sessions: Closing the Sale Isn't Enough

9:00-10:30 a.m.

Price: \$150

Creating passionate customers converts a single purchase customer into a brand ambassador. Learn what neuroscience tells us about what triggers the "buy" decision, the best questions to ask to measure customer engagement, and how to create an action plan that continuously engages customers.

● **Leadership**

● **Sales & Profitability**

Safety in the Tree Care Industry Z133

Sponsored by STIHL Inc.

8:45-10:45 a.m.

Price: \$85

Learn about the ANSI Z133 safety standard for tree work, which includes key components of a safe job site. A copy of the latest standard will be provided.

● **Tree Care**

● **New Business Opportunities**

Growing Profitability Using Open Book Management and KPIs

12:30-2:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

Maximize financial performance through open book management. Learn how to increase buy-in from employees with shared KPIs.

● **Leadership**

Wednesday, October 18

Continued



Arborist Knot Tying Workshop

Sponsored by STIHL Inc.

12:30-2:30 p.m.

Price: \$85

Learn practical knots for arborist climbing and rigging in a hands-on workshop. Perfect your technique in a positive environment.

- Tree Care
- New Business Opportunities

HNA Demo: Segmental Retaining Walls

1:30-2:30 p.m.

Price: \$85

This course covers modern, efficient installation tactics for an age-old product: the segmental retaining wall, including compaction, stacking, labor efficiencies, and common pitfalls.

- Hardscape

Don't Just Think. Know the Value of Your Business

2:00-3:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

Discover business valuation methods and learn how to build business value for a higher selling price in this session.

- Leadership

How to Exit with Style

2:30-3:30 p.m.

Price: \$85

Exit your company with grace and style. Learn from a panel of experts on how to avoid common pitfalls and leave as a winner.

- Leadership

HNA Demo: Paver Installations

3:30-4:30 p.m.

Price: \$85

Watch best installation practices for paver construction, and learn tips, tricks, efficiencies, and management of installations.

- Hardscape

Safely Tying into a Tree Before Ascending

Sponsored by STIHL Inc.

3:30-4:30 p.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Learn safe and efficient tree care techniques from professional arborists while they demonstrate in a tree in Freedom Hall.

- Tree Care
- New Business Opportunities

Electric and Alternative Fuels – Are You In?

4:00-5:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

An expert panel debates whether now is the time to adopt battery-powered and alternative fuel equipment or wait to invest.

- Technology

Your Company, Your Culture

4:00-5:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

Discover how to keep employees engaged and build a great workplace culture during the era of 'The Great Resignation.'

- Leadership



It's Not About the Paycheck

8:00-9:15 a.m.

Price: \$85

Rethink conventional business wisdom and cultivate passion and purpose to inspire leadership and creativity in your team.

● **Leadership**



Strategies for Supply Chain Success

9:00-10:00 a.m.

Price: \$85

Stabilize your business and learn to create a supply chain strategy and build a team of reliable suppliers for maximum ROI.

● **Leadership**

How To Get Into the Irrigation Business

9:00-10:00 a.m.

Price: \$85

Successful irrigation contractors walk you through how to add irrigation services to your business or become a full-service irrigation contractor.

● **Irrigation**

● **New Business Opportunities**

Selección de una Agencia de Empleo que le conviene mejor a su compañía

8:00-9:15 a.m.

Price: \$85

Determine sus métricas de evaluación para identificar si una agencia de empleo es la más adecuada para su empresa.

● **Leadership**

Estimating Hardscape Projects with Confidence

8:30-9:45 a.m.

Price: \$85

Get expert guidance on estimating strategy, goals, and benchmarks for hardscaping projects to ensure accurate estimates, cost recovery, and profitability.

● **Hardscape**

Your Life on the Line: Choosing Your Climbing Gear

Sponsored by STIHL Inc.

8:45-9:45 a.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Learn safe and efficient tree care techniques from professional arborists as they demonstrate live from a tree in Freedom Hall.

● **Tree Care**

● **New Business Opportunities**



EMB Social Media Lounge

Sponsored by  **ECHO MEANS BUSINESS**

Stop by the EMB Social Media Lounge to network with fellow pros, get plugged into your industry community and recharge your devices.

Thursday, October 19

Continued

Pool Design 101 for Landscapers

9:00-10:00 a.m.

Price: \$85

No experience necessary for landscapers looking to get into the booming pool business. Learn the basics of pool design, including choosing a location, building fundamentals, equipment placement, regulations, and material selection.

● **Pool and Spa**

HNA Demo: Hardscape Toolbox

9:30-10:30 a.m.

Price: \$85

Learn about the most important tools to reduce labor, expedite a job, and eliminate the guesswork in your hardscape installation.

● **Hardscape**

What Climbing System Is Best for Me?

Sponsored by STIHL Inc.

10:00-11:00 a.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Learn safe and efficient tree care techniques from professional arborists while they demonstrate from a live tree in Freedom Hall.

● **Tree Care**

● **New Business Opportunities**



The Ultimate Succession Plan: Setting Up Your Business to Run Itself

10:00-11:30 a.m.

Price: \$85

Learn seven steps to establish a strong leadership team and accountability system, enabling longer breaks from your business while maintaining joy in ownership.

● **Leadership**

Expo Power Sessions: The Neuroscience of Employee Engagement

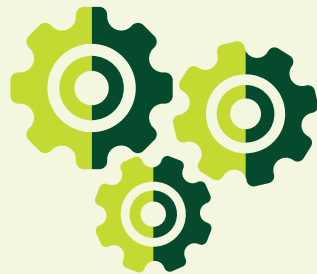
10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Price: \$150

The future of work will be defined more by how it feels than how it pays. If you're struggling with attracting and retaining top-talent, turnover or a toxic culture, you're not alone. Your business needs engaged employees to grow. Harness the power of neuroscience to increase employee retention and engagement.

● **Leadership**

● **Sales & Profitability**



Basic Irrigation Repairs

11:00-12:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

Perfect for beginners: Get hands on and learn how to identify and fix common irrigation problems.

- Irrigation

Infinity Pools and Beyond: The Possibilities Are Endless

11:00 am.-12:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

Discover transformative pool designs with water-in-transit features. Explore aesthetics, functionality, and construction details.

- Pool and Spa
- New Business Opportunities



Mastering the Numbers: Building Business Acumen

12:00-1:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

Enhance your business savvy with financial insights, and learn to analyze statements, budget, forecast, and leverage the market for success.

- Sales & Profitability

Electrical Troubleshooting

1:00-2:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

Discover industry innovations and game-changing tools. Learn effective strategies for increased efficiency.

- Irrigation

HNA Demo: New Products and Ideas

12:00-1:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

Master irrigation system troubleshooting and learn to identify electrical faults through hands-on instruction and presentations.

- Hardscape





Sweatin' to the Oldies

1:00-2:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

Bridge the generation gap in the workplace. Learn strategies from company owners to inspire and collaborate across generations.

- Sales & Profitability

Top Tips for Getting into the Pool and Spa Business

1:00-2:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

Expand your landscape business and dive into pool construction. Get invaluable advice from experts in the field on what works, what doesn't, and how you can make money in this lucrative market.

- Pool and Spa
- New Business Opportunities

Expand Your Business with Landscape Lighting

1:30-2:30 p.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Unlock the potential of landscape lighting for your company and learn how to add profitable service to your business.

- Landscape Lighting
- New Business Opportunities

Scaling for Success: Strategies for Growing Your Landscaping Business

2:00-3:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

Transform your business through organizational development. Craft a vision, build a strong team, and implement efficient systems.

- Leadership

How to Store, Transport, & Recycle OPE Batteries

2:00-3:00 p.m.

Included free with trade show registration

This panel discussion will help landscapers, dealers, and everyone in the industry supply chain learn best practices for safe storage, transportation, and recycling of lithium-ion batteries.

- Leadership

How to Prune Small Trees

Sponsored by STIHL Inc.

2:00-3:00 p.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Elevate your tree care skills with professional climbing techniques. Learn safe and efficient operations from industry experts.

- Tree Care
- New Business Opportunities



Bobcat

MOWER GIVEAWAY

The Bobcat ZT7000 zero-turn mower is the peak of toughness and best-in-the-business performance. With transport speeds up to 19 mph and mowing speeds up to 13 mph, you can knock out quality results, job after job.

HNA Demo: Water & Fire Features

2:30-3:30 p.m.

Price: \$85

Explore hardscape products that have a high impact on a project with a low cost to boost the profitability of your next job.

- **Hardscape**

How to Prune Large Trees

Sponsored by STIHL Inc.

3:30-4:45 p.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Elevate your tree care skills with professional climbing techniques. Learn safe and efficient operations from industry experts.

- **Tree Care**
- **New Business Opportunities**



Pool Construction Documents: What You Need In Your Plans

3:00-4:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

Master the art of construction document sets to ensure seamless project communication, avoid errors, and enhance collaboration.

- **Pool and Spa**
- **New Business Opportunities**

17 Trust-Based Secrets of Closing the Sale

3:30-5:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

Build trust and close deals with honesty and humor. Learn from real-life case studies in this engaging sales session.

- **Sales & Profitability**

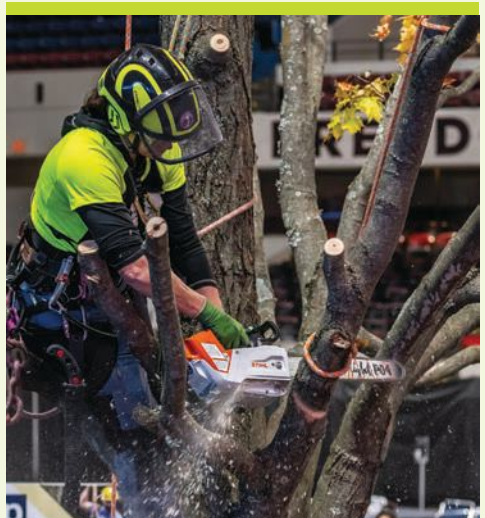
Anatomy of an Irrigation System

3:00-4:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

Great for beginners in the irrigation business. Get an introduction to irrigation components: options, functionality, and industry terminology.

- **Irrigation**



Friday, October 20

National Turfgrass Trialing Programs: Helping You Choose the Right Turf

8:00-9:15 a.m.

Price: \$85

Unlock the power of turfgrass trialing programs. Learn to access, interpret, and apply trial results to ensure the right species for your next installation.

● **Leadership**

Landscape Design Toolbox

8:00-9:15 a.m.

Price: \$85

Enhance your design skills and learn best practices for site evaluation, design process, and meeting client expectations.

● **Sales & Profitability**

Lead or Get Out of the Way: Keys to Developing Strong Leadership Skills

9:00-10:00 a.m.

Price: \$85

A panel of industry experts will help you develop essential leadership skills like communication, motivation, team building, and more.

● **Leadership**



Basic Controller Operation

9:00-10:00 a.m.

Price: \$85

Master basic irrigation controller operations in this hands-on class. Ideal for field staff with little to no irrigation experience.

● **Irrigation**

Hardscape Demonstrations

9:30-10:30 a.m.

Price: \$85

See how experts install yard enhancement options such as a grill islands and outdoor kitchens profitably across different markets and budgets.

● **Hardscape**



GET THE EQUIP EXPO APP

Launching this fall, the Equip Exposition app is the best place to find food, coffee, our show schedule, class information, and more.



Sponsored by

THE
TURFMUTT
FOUNDATION

Styles of Rigging and Why

Sponsored by STIHL Inc.

9:30-10:30 a.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Learn safe and efficient tree care techniques from professional arborists while they climb a tree in Freedom Hall.

- Tree Care
- New Business Opportunities

The Easy Button

10:00-11:00 a.m.

Price: \$85

Business owners share strategies for streamlined operations, and how they adapt to increasing customer demands for convenience and efficiency.

- Leadership

Boost Hardscape Enhancement Sales with Landscape Lighting

10:30-11:30 a.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Increase hardscaping sales – and profitability – with landscape lighting. Learn the technical aspects of this add-on segment.

- Landscape Lighting
- New Business Opportunities

Wi-Fi and Connected Device Knowledge for Green Industry Professionals

11:00-12:00 p.m.

Price: \$85

Seize the smart home market opportunity and learn how the Internet of Things, wireless networking, and smart irrigation systems can grow your business.

- Irrigation
- New Business Opportunities

Tree Removal Techniques: How to Dismantle a Tree.

Sponsored by STIHL Inc.

11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Learn safe and efficient tree care techniques from professional arborists while they demonstrate from a live tree in Freedom Hall.

- Tree Care
- New Business Opportunities



DEALER EDUCATION

Equip Exposition is the best event in the industry to discover and demo the latest products. You'll also have access to Dealer Management education sessions that are included free with your trade show registration. These sessions are designed to help you boost your dealerships profits, and stay ahead of industry trends.

Dealer Education Partners



Dealer Education Tracks

- Dealer Technician Training
- Dealer Management



DEALER PREVIEW EARLY ACCESS

Equip Exposition provides early trade show access exclusively for dealers, retailers, and distributors on Wednesday, October 18, 2023, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. This is your opportunity to meet one-on-one with exhibitors and preview the products featured at Equip Exposition and Hardscape North America.

Mastering Your Chaos Quotient

8:00-9:00 a.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Sara Hey from Bob Clements International helps you eliminate chaos in your dealership for growth by focusing on people, processes, profits.

- Dealer Management

Robotic and Autonomous Mowers

8:00-10:00 a.m. and 12:00-2:00 p.m.

Price: \$45

Everything a technician needs to know to get ahead of the curve on commercial robotic and autonomous mowers.

- Dealer Technician Training



Tuff Torq Hydrostatic Transmissions

8:00-11:00 a.m. and 12:00-3:00 p.m.

Price: \$45

This hands-on training course provides in-depth knowledge of Tuff Torq hydrostatic transmissions, specifically focusing on those used in zero-turn and stand-on mower applications.

- Dealer Technician Training

Hydro-Gear Hydrostatic Transmissions

8:00-11:00 a.m. and 12:00-3:00 p.m.

Price: \$45

This hands-on training course provides in-depth knowledge of Hydro-Gear Hydrostatic Transmissions, specifically focusing on those used in zero-turn and stand-on mower applications..

- Dealer Technician Training

All Things Electric

8:00-11:00 a.m. and 12:00-3:00 p.m.

Price: \$45

This interactive, hands-on training course will provide technicians with the knowledge and skills necessary to diagnose and repair basic electrical systems of both small engine and battery/ electric equipment.

- Dealer Technician Training

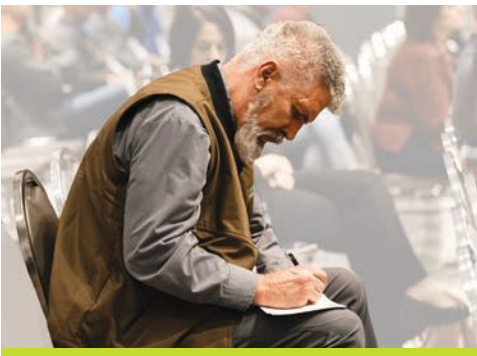
Battery/Electric Powered Equipment

8:00-11:00 a.m. and 12:00-3:00 p.m.

Price: \$45

This training course is designed to provide technicians with a comprehensive understanding of battery/ electric mowing equipment.

- Dealer Technician Training



Wednesday, October 18

Continued

Expo Power Sessions: Closing the Sale Isn't Enough

9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Price: \$150

Creating passionate customers converts a single purchase customer into a brand ambassador. Learn what neuroscience tells us about what triggers the “buy” decision, the best questions to ask to measure customer engagement, and how to create an action plan that continuously engages customers.

● **Dealer Management**

Dealership Transitions: Am I Growing or Going (or Both)?

9:30-11:00 a.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Industry experts discuss considerations, valuation, and best practices for dealer succession planning and transactions.

● **Dealer Management**

Running Your Dealership by the Numbers

1:00-2:00 p.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Master dealership numbers for long-term success. Bob Clements shares strategies for parts, services, and sales departments.

● **Dealer Management**

Right to Repair Roundtable

2:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Learn about the potential impact on dealers from association officials and others who have followed this technical customer service issue closely for years.

● **Dealer Management**



\$5,000 DEALER GIVEAWAY

Dealers, don't miss your chance to win big during the Dealer Preview on the morning of October 18. Simply bring your STIHL giveaway ticket to the indoor booth to enter for your chance to win. This giveaway is not to be missed, with \$5,000 on the line. See your ticket for details.



Turn Your Parts Department into a Bank Vault

8:00-9:00 a.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Sara Hey shares inventory, marketing, and personnel development strategies to help you maximize your parts department's growth potential.

● **Dealer Management**

Expo Power Sessions: The Neuroscience of Employee Engagement

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Price: \$150

The future of work will be defined more by how it feels than how it pays. If you're struggling with attracting and retaining top-talent, turnover or a toxic culture, you're not alone. Your business needs engaged employees to grow. Harness the power of neuroscience to increase employee retention and engagement.



Create a Vision for Your Dealership

1:00-2:00 p.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Bob Clements and Sara Hey offer insights to motivate and engage your team as you create a vision and strategy for your dealership's success.

● **Dealer Management**

Digital Toolkit 2.0: Social Media, Marketing, and E-Commerce

2:30-3:30 p.m.

Included free with trade show registration

Jessica Johnson and Jacqlyn Kirkland lead a discussion to help dealers find the right tools to create a digital footprint that works for their business.

● **Dealer Management**

How to Store, Transport, and Recycle OPE Batteries

2:00-3:00 p.m.

Included free with trade show registration

This panel discussion will help landscapers, dealers, and everyone in the industry supply chain learn best practices for safe storage, transportation, and recycling of lithium-ion batteries.

● **Dealer Management**



LOUISVILLE

EASY TO GET TO.
EASY TO NAVIGATE.



As the 16th-largest city in the U.S., Louisville is home to over 90 attractions, 17,000 hotel rooms, and 2,500 restaurants. Located on the banks of the Ohio River, Louisville is easily accessible and within a day's drive of nearly half of the nation's population.



The Louisville International Airport, only seven minutes from downtown, handles nearly 100 flights per day, and is across the street from the Kentucky Exposition Center.

Equip Exposition is located at the Kentucky Exposition Center, at 937 Phillips Lane, Louisville, KY 40209. We provide free parking for all attendees.

REGISTRATION DEADLINES

Visit www.equipexposition.com to register online. Registration is open now and the earlier you register, the more you save!

Early Bird: Register by Sept. 7 for \$25 per person.

Pre-Registration: Register between Sept. 8 and Oct. 15 for \$50 per person.

On-Site Rate: Register at the show for \$100 per person.



Travel and Hotel Booking Information

Hotel Reservations

Louisville Tourism, the official housing provider for the show, offers the lowest room rates at Equip Exposition hotels. The list of rates is available at equipexposition.com under Travel & Hotels. To make reservations by phone, call the Louisville Housing Bureau at (800) 743-3100.



Airline Discounts

Delta is offering up to a 10% discount on flights. Search flights at www.delta.com/meetings, select 'Book Your Flight' and use Meeting Code **NM2GL** or call Delta at 800-328-1111.



United Airlines is offering up to a 10% discount on flights. Search flights at www.united.com/meetingtravel and Z Code: **ZN6K649187**. Or call United at (800) 426-1122.

Southwest Airlines is offering 5% off all fares to SDF destinations. Book starting 3/15/23 and travel 10/14 through 10/23/23. Go to www.swabiz.com and use SWABIZ/SPS **CID# 99636972**

Shuttle Services

Equip Exposition will run shuttle buses between select hotels and the Kentucky Exposition Center and on the final day to the airport.

See the shuttle schedule at :
www.equipexposition.com/book-your-travel



2023 EDUCATION CATALOG



NOTE: To register for any of these listed events and classes, please complete and include this page with your mail-in registration form and payment.

FEATURED EVENTS

EVENT TITLE	TIME	COST	\$
Mulligan's 5K Fun Run	WED 6:30AM	\$40/per	
Grab & Go Lunches on Wednesday	WED 11:00AM - 3:00PM	\$25/per	
Grab & Go Lunches on Thursday	THUR 11:00AM - 3:00PM	\$25/per	
Grab & Go Lunches on Friday	FRI 11:00AM - 1:00PM	\$25/per	

LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

CLASS TITLE	TIME	COST	\$
Hardscape Demonstrations, 6 Sessions - Upgrade	WED - FRI	\$85	
Two-Day Remote Pilot Certification [Drone Training]	TUE 8AM-5PM & WED 8AM-3PM	\$175	
Irrigation Association's Certification Exams	TUE 12:30-5:30PM	See Website	
Safety in the Tree Care Industry Z133	WED 8:45-10:45AM	\$85	
Expo Power Sessions: Closing the Sale Isn't Enough	WED 9:00-10:30AM	\$150	
Growing Profitability Using Open Book Management and KPIs	WED 12:30-2:00PM	\$85	
Arborist Knot Tying Workshop	WED 12:30-2:30PM	\$85	
Don't Just Think. Know the Value of Your Business	WED 2:00-3:00PM	\$85	
How to Exit with Style	WED 2:30-3:30PM	\$85	
Safely Tying into a Tree Before Ascending	WED 3:30-4:30PM	\$85	
Electric and Alternative Fuels – Are You In?	WED 4:00-5:00PM	\$85	
Your Company, Your Culture	WED 4:00-5:00PM	\$85	
It's Not About the Paycheck	THUR 8:00-9:15AM	\$85	
Selección de una Agencia de Empleo que le conviene mejor a su compañía	THUR 8:00-9:15AM	\$65	
Estimating Hardscape Projects with Confidence	THUR 8:30-9:45AM	\$85	
How To Get Into the Irrigation Business	THUR 9:00-10:00AM	\$85	
Strategies for Supply Chain Success	THUR 9:00-10:00AM	\$85	
Pool Design 101 for Landscapers	THUR 9:00-10:00AM	\$85	
What Climbing System Is Best for Me?	THUR 10:00-11:00AM	\$85	
The Ultimate Succession Plan: Setting Up Your Business to Run Itself	THUR 10:00-11:30AM	\$85	
Secrets of Production Management and Crew Motivation for the Hardscape Jobsite	THUR 10:30-11:45AM	\$85	
Expo Power Sessions: The Neuroscience of Employee Engagement	THUR 10:30AM - 12:00PM	\$150	
Basic Irrigation Repairs	THUR 11:00-12:00PM	\$85	
Infinity Pools and Beyond: The Possibilities Are Endless	THUR 11:00AM - 12:00PM	\$85	
Mastering the Numbers: Building Business Acumen	THUR 12:00-1:00PM	\$85	
Electrical Troubleshooting	THUR 1:00-2:00PM	\$85	
Top Tips for Getting into the Pool and Spa Business	THUR 1:00-2:00PM	\$85	
Sweatin' to the Oldies	THUR 1:00-2:00PM	\$85	
Scaling for Success: Strategies for Growing Your Landscaping Business	THUR 2:00-3:00PM	\$85	
Anatomy of an Irrigation System	THUR 3:00-4:00PM	\$85	
Pool Construction Documents: What You Need In Your Plans	THUR 3:00-4:00PM	\$85	
17 Trust-Based Secrets of Closing the Sale	THUR 3:30-5:00PM	\$85	
National Turfgrass Trialing Programs: Helping You Choose the Right Turf	FRI 8:00-9:15AM	\$85	
Landscape Design Toolbox	FRI 8:00-9:15AM	\$85	
Basic Controller Operation	FRI 9:00-10:00AM	\$85	
Lead or Get Out of the Way: Keys to Developing Strong Leadership Skills	FRI 9:00-10:00AM	\$85	
The Easy Button	FRI 10:00-11:00AM	\$85	
Wi-Fi and Connected Device Knowledge for Green Industry Professionals	FRI 11:00AM-12:00PM	\$85	

DEALER EDUCATION

CLASS TITLE	TIME	COST	\$
Robotic and Autonomous Mowers	WED 8-10AM & 12-2PM	\$45	
Tuff Torq Hydrostatic Transmissions	WED 8-11AM & 12-3PM	\$45	
Hydro-Gear Hydrostatic Transmissions	WED 8-11AM & 12-3PM	\$45	
All Things Electric	WED 8-11AM & 12-3PM	\$45	
Battery/Electric Powered Equipment	WED 8-11AM & 12-3PM	\$45	
Expo Power Sessions: Closing the Sale Isn't Enough	WED 9:00-10:30AM	\$150	
Expo Power Sessions: The Neuroscience of Employee Engagement	THUR 10:30AM - 12PM	\$150	

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EVERY DROP COUNTS

5 questions to ask before adding a water manager

Water management is a growing field in the irrigation industry. Take a look at what you should think about before adding this position

BY CHAD SUTTON | CONTRIBUTOR

A Japanese proverb says, “In the struggle between the stone and water, in time, the water wins.” In our industry, just like the proverb, water will win as well. I liken the stone, which is bound to lose, to the status quo in irrigation or the old way of doing things. Water is scarce, precious and becoming more expensive every day. Most importantly, our industry needs water to survive.

Without water, we lose. We lose our beautiful landscapes, our way of life and our existence.

Many companies realize that water will win and seek to add a full-time water management professional to their leadership teams. But many others are on the fence and wonder if the time is right, among other questions.

Before we examine when and how to hire a water manager, let’s take a



NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

Now, more than ever, a water manager could have a major impact in your operations as water availability issues grow.

page out of author Simon Sinek’s book *Start with Why*.

“People don’t buy what you do; they buy why you do it,” Sinek writes. “And what you do simply proves what you believe.”

Here are my five whys of water management:

1 WHY SHOULD YOU BELIEVE IN WATER MANAGEMENT?

The simple answer is that water is a precious resource and we shouldn’t squander it. Also, many clients demand proper water management. They’re fed up with

Continued on page 86

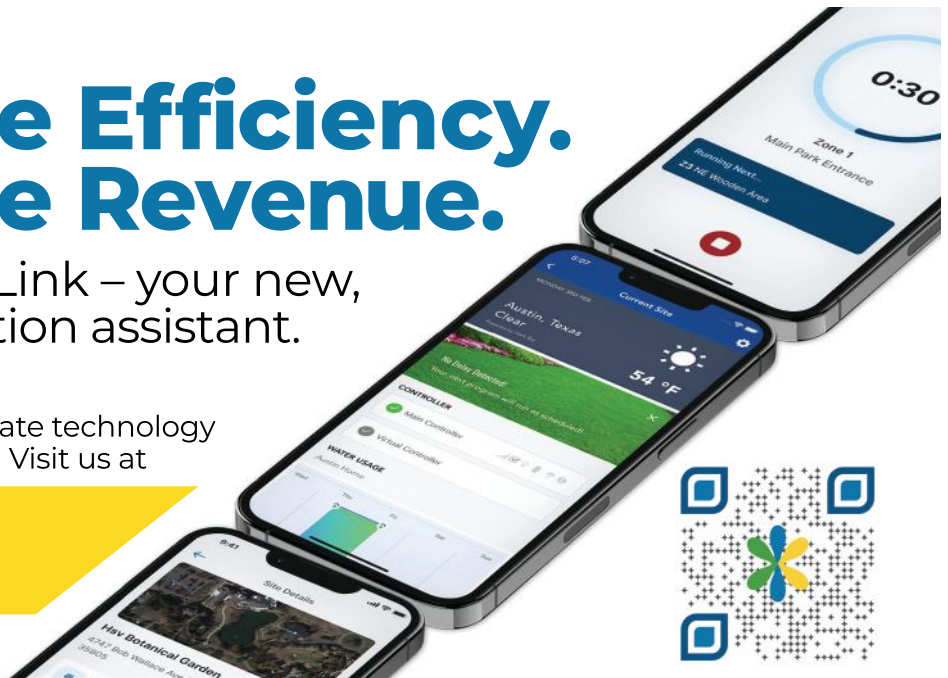
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EVERY DROP COUNTS

Continued from page 85

the wasted money, property damage and the negative image that comes from wasting water. Very large clients have annual reports highlighting sustainability goals around water savings and need to find landscape leaders who can offer a high level of service. There are many reasons why having a water manager makes sense for many companies.



Chad Sutton

2 WHO SHOULD LEAD THE WATER MANAGEMENT EFFORTS?

Look to someone with the knowledge, experience, certifications, track record of success and who can tell a good story around water. They should also be personable, relatable and able to help your existing team learn and grow. Our account managers and production managers have too many demands to become an expert in all things, so a key to success is having the right person who can connect with the team and lead them in the right direction with water management.

3 WHAT WOULD A WATER MANAGER DO FOR US?

A few of the key services a water manager can spearhead are measuring sites, efficiency auditing, GIS (geographic information system), building water budgets, measuring water and control of water (MV/Flow), reporting on actuals vs. budgets, and upgrade or redesign proposals (such as switching to reclaimed water).

4 WHERE DOES IT MAKE SENSE?

Adding a water manager makes sense for operations anywhere in the country or world where the client base, regulatory challenges, climate, cost of water and other factors align to create the right opportunity.

5 WHEN DOES IT MAKE SENSE?

It makes sense as soon as you see how a water manager will add great value to your operation. It also makes sense when a clear path to greater profitability is visible with this role, but even earlier if you believe water stewardship is a core part of your vision and beliefs as a company.

Deciding to add another team member can be difficult. Just like the rock, companies can try to resist the pressure of change, but in the end, water will win, and so will you if you choose to bring water management to your team.

Chad Sutton is the Sacramento, Calif., branch manager for LandCare. Sutton previously served as a water resource manager for a large California-based landscape operation.

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PRODUCTS THAT WORK



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COMPANY: Rain Bird

URL: RainBird.com

Rain Bird's R-VAN Rotary Nozzles offer efficient coverage with quick installation and maintenance.

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PRO-SPRAY PRS30/40

COMPANY: Hunter Industries
URL: HunterIndustries.com
 Hunter Industries' Pro-Spray PRS30 and PRS40 spray bodies save up to 30 percent more water compared to systems without pressure regulation, according to the company. The Pro-Spray's design incorporates interchangeable components. The spray bodies also feature a chemical- and chlorine-resistant co-molded wiper seal and a durable cap.



PRO-S SPRAYS



COMPANY: K-Rain
URL: KRain.com

K-Rain's Pro-S Sprays feature a pressure rating spec of 20-110 PSI, a strong spring, which provides positive retraction in all soil conditions, and a co-molded wiper seal that ensures leak-free, full pop-up operation in low-pressure situations. In states where pressure regulation is mandated, K-Rain offers EPA WaterSense-certified 30 and 40 PSI models. The Pro-S Spray assembly also will fit into K-Rain's 1800 spray body.



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DID YOU KNOW

SAFETY FIRST
Having the correct safety equipment is crucial for irrigation technicians on any job site.



The safety gear every irrigation technician needs

Even though the work is diverse, the gear is consistent **BY BRIAN LOVE | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

A lot can happen in the day of an irrigation technician. At any given job, responsibilities may include repairing, maintaining, installing or testing various systems.

With all of these responsibilities, safety is always key. Sam Steel, safety adviser for the National

Association of Landscape Professionals; Ian Yarian, national irrigation category manager, and Larry Giroux, residential and commercial segment manager for Ewing Outdoor Supply; and Mark Stuhlsatz, vice president of branch operations for Ryan Tree & Lawn, discuss proper safety gear for irrigation installs and service calls.

Stuhlsatz previously served as irrigation department head for Ryan Tree & Lawn, No. 40 on the 2023 LM150 list, a primarily residential lawn care, irrigation, tree care and pest control service company in Merriam, Kan. Having served in that position for 11 years, Stuhlsatz explains the right safety gear depends on what each job requires.

“When looking at the job, workers can determine the proper safety procedures,” Stuhlsatz says. “If it’s installing, disconnecting power or dealing with electricity, there are proper protective gear practices that everybody needs.”

“Crews would need safety jackets,” Yarian says. “If you are on an active construction site or are in that world, there can be traffic that you have to deal with.”

WHAT TO WEAR

Steele says one of the first necessary

pieces of safety gear is an N95 face mask, which protects the wearer from poor air quality. He recommends checking your area’s Air Quality Index (AQI) online at airnow.gov/aqi/ before you send crews out. Crews working during air quality alerts should wear a mask.

“If you have a crew going out to do some installations or intensive work, you might want to proactively look at the AQI and see what the workers are going to be exposed to,” Steel says.

Steel warns, however, these masks do not last forever. Crew members will need to replace their masks within a day or two to remain effective.

The next piece of safety gear Steel recommends is a long-sleeved shirt, to protect arms from ultraviolet light.

“Outdoor workers, especially in the landscape industry, have one of the highest rates for skin cancer of all different occupations,” Steel says. “We are definitely about wearing long-sleeve shirts or sunscreen.”

Other pieces of clothing Steel recommends include protective headgear, such as a hard hat, and gloves, which can be useful for installation work that requires digging or handling electricity.

Yarian and Giroux advise outdoor crew members to wear high-visibility safety clothing.

“Irrigation technicians are exposed to many hazards,” he says. “Always remind our owners and students of this fact. And many of these hazards can be like each other. You always want to be careful.”

Whether it is a service call or personnel checking an irrigation system, Steel explains that safety gear will always be necessary because of the various hazards on the job.

work on or near streets (since sprinkler heads can be on curb lines).

“If you’re doing an inspection, there could be cars buzzing by you,” he says. “It is a good idea to keep a high visibility vest in your vehicle at all times.”

Steel, Stuhlsatz, Yarian and Giroux agree proper eye protection is one of the most critical pieces of safety gear technicians cannot overlook. More specifically, Steel recommends American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Z87.1 certified safety glasses, which protect workers from impact hazards.

“They provide peripheral, ultraviolet and impact protection,” Steel says. “If the safety glasses are certified, they will have ANSI Z87.1 imprinted somewhere. They’re not much different from what a landscape or lawn care employee may use.”

DOES IT CHANGE?

As for whether service calls call for different safety gear, Steel, Stuhlsatz, Yarian and Giroux say not really. For irrigation technicians, knowing what to wear requires understanding the mechanics of what the job requires.

Whether it is a service call or personnel checking an irrigation system, Steel explains that safety gear will always be necessary because of the various hazards on the job.

“Irrigation technicians are exposed to many hazards,” he says. “Always remind our owners and students of this fact. And many of these hazards can be like each other. You always want to be careful.”



Sam Steel



Ian Yarian



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SNOW STRATEGY

Take your winter services from side hustle to profit center



BY NEAL GLATT

Neal Glatt is a green industry sales coach and managing partner of GrowTheBench.com. Contact him at Neal@GrowTheBench.com.

With a winning strategy, snow and ice management services can generate immense profit. But building an operational plan to succeed requires forethought, effort and execution. Here's how to take winter services from side hustle to profit center.

Start with great contracts by engaging in sales early. When promoting snow and ice services, focus on building a balanced portfolio that includes both fixed rate and variable pay structures, so your revenue is protected regardless of how much or little snowfall occurs in a given season. No matter how strong an operations team functions, the quality of the contracts will always play a defining role in a company's wins or losses.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

Next, companies must determine their operational strategy. The two biggest questions that arise tend to revolve around workforce and equipment. Is it better to self-perform work or contract out service partners to work alongside? And should equipment be purchased new, leased for a period of time, or acquired as used?

There isn't a single right answer.

Those with enough seasonal staff can often go through a winter season with their workforce. This ensures the continuity of employees from season to season

and simplifies the time for onboarding. Yet subcontracting allows faster scale across a wider geography and the ability to leverage the competitive advantage of another company without having to invest up front. Often a geographic service area is a deciding factor. Most successful companies of moderate size find a balance between the two extremes.

When considering the strategy for equipment acquisition, use and disposal, there are a few factors to consider. First, can the equipment be utilized year-round for services? If so, a purchase program will likely yield the highest return on investment. As equipment ages, the importance of qualified mechanics on staff increases dramatically. There is no opportunity to catch up in snow and ice, and reliability must be a top priority.

If pursuing older equipment, your snow strategy must incorporate backup parts, preventive maintenance and stand-by equipment.

These factors can radically change the total cost-of-ownership equation.

If fleet maintenance is daunting but new equipment purchase prices are too high, a middle ground is often leasing. Winter rentals are often expensive, but a multiyear lease can provide affordable payments, equipment maintenance and even flexibility for future purchases.

However a company chooses to proceed, strong partnerships with vendors and suppliers are key to success. By working with quality partners, snow managers can explore their options and create unique solutions that work for their operations' circumstances, budgets and objectives. Start today to find the right equipment dealers, salt suppliers, meteorological services, subcontractors and employee sources to set up a successful winter operation.

INVEST IN YOUR TEAM

One of the best strategies for successful snow operations is to invest in education for you and your team. We host Snowfighters Institute events, two-day deep dives with a small group of contractors focused on radically improving your winter services.

Our operations management event will be Sept. 6-7 in Bensalem, Pa., for those who manage and work in the field. The event features great education, networking and facility tours. Visit **SnowfightersInstitute.com** for more information and to register. 



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-Josh Wise, GrassRoots Turf, Acworth, GA

*2023 Partners:



*As of June 22, 2023

PRODUCTS THAT WORK



↑ RENEGADE HOPPER SPREADER

COMPANY: SnowEx

URL: SnowExProducts.com

The Renegade stainless steel hopper spreaders from SnowEx are available in multiple sizes with capacities ranging from 0.35 cubic yards to 5 cubic yards. Choose between the Helixx shaftless auger delivery system or the new pintle chain material delivery system for heavy materials like sand and salt/sand mix. Contractors also can add the Triple Threat pre-wet and direct liquid application accessory for the ability to spread, pre-wet, and spray all with one hopper spreader.



↑ PRO2500 SPREADER

COMPANY: Buyers Products

URL: BuyersProducts.com

The PRO2500 spreader pairs the power and speed of a truck's hydraulics with the durability and simplicity of a PRO Series Poly Spreader. The unit is available with auger and chain drivelines and handles bulk salt or a 50/50 salt/sand mix, spreading material up to 30 feet. Designed for use by professional snow contractors, SaltDogg PRO Series Spreaders offer high-volume performance.



↑ SNOW CANNON TRACTOR BLOWERS

COMPANY: IronCraft

URL: IronCraftCo.com

The Snow Cannon series of tractor snow blowers include welded augers with high-tensile strength ribbon flighting, a heavy-duty gearbox and replaceable skid shoes. A 5-blade fan evacuates high volumes of snow quickly and features tighter tolerance to the housing for increased velocity. The gearbox transfers PTO power from the tractor into the driveline. Manual rotators are standard on all models; electric and hydraulic rotators are optional.

↓ PILE DRIVER PUSHER PLOWS

COMPANY: Western

URL: WesternPlows.com

The Pile Driver lineup of pusher plows — available in 8-, 10-, and 12-foot widths — comes with three heights and a common carrier attachment system, making them compatible with skid-steers, wheel loaders, tractors and backhoe loaders. Patent-pending Trace technology includes independent 2-foot sections that raise, oscillate and trip to accommodate contours and obstacles in the plowable surface. Each blade section comes with a 3/4 inch cutting edge with a carbide insert for heavy-duty commercial applications.



FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Mike McCarron

OWNER

**IMAGE WORKS LANDSCAPING
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1 How did you get into the industry?

I started Image Works Landscaping in 1998. I was working at UPS, in the process of going back to school to get my second degree in accounting, after my first degree in business management. I realized I needed to be stronger on the accounting side to get a better job. I started doing some landscape work on the side and I fell in love with it. I realized I didn't want to be stuck in a cubicle every day. I love people. I like being outside. So, I made the transition over, and I'm very glad I did it. No turning back. This year we celebrate 25 years of Image Works. It's been a great run.

2 How is business in your area?

It's going to take a while to get back to the levels that we were at in 2020, 2021 and 2022. We did see a little bit of pullback at the end of '22 and the beginning of '23. Money is starting to break loose a little bit now, so bigger projects are starting to come back in the queue. The third and fourth quarter of '23 looks great. The beginning of '24 is also looking really strong too. There was a little dip there in the middle. There was just a little bit of uncertainty that seems to be settling off now. Both 2023 and 2024 look good.

3 Do you have a day at work that is especially memorable?

We had a lady come into our office, our shop's kind of on a main road, and asked for directions. 'I'm lost, can you get me here?' We gave her the directions and talked for a couple of minutes. And then she said, 'Hey, can I use your restroom?' And we said, 'Yeah, down the hallway.' She came out, said thank you and left. Little did we know she was a prospective client and she was field testing us. She came into our office to see how our staff was, how clean our office

was, saw how clean our bathroom was and whether we were polite and nice. She called us back later and she ended up doing a \$60,000 project with us. The lesson is, you never know who is looking ... you have to operate at the highest level of professionalism at all times.

4 What is the best thing about having your job?

I've been able to have a lot of freedom to do a lot of things, like helping my dad at the end of his life. I was able to go there and deal with that as best I could. My mother still lives in town. I've been able to get lunch with her and do a lot of things you normally wouldn't be able to do if you were locked in a 9-to-5 job. It's provided a lot of flexibility to see a lot of my children's accomplishments through all the sports that they've done and their graduations.

5 How many kids do you have and what do you do for fun?

I have two daughters and I have two stepsons with my wife, Cathy. They're in various stages from ages 21 to 27. Now they're at the age where we can go to nice restaurants, we can go places and have fun and do events. We're trying to do one big event every year. Last year we went to Ireland. We were there for 12 days. It was incredible. We saw some great stuff. I was really shocked at how beautiful and how unique Ireland was. My family is from there. We went back to the original family piece of land and took a picture of all of us there. 📷





BY GREG HERRING

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

Put the power of compounding to work for your business

We usually discuss compounding in the context of savings, but the power of compounding is relevant in many areas of business and life. Compounding is the substantial increase that can occur over an extended time if there is consistent action.

There are two ways to think about time — one by hours and the other by the calendar. For some things, you can accelerate calendar time by working more hours or assigning more people to work on the project, like a landscape installation. You cannot reduce the time required for a tree to grow — it requires calendar time.

Compounding requires calendar time. Think of it as putting calendar time on your side. Compounding makes time an ally, not an enemy. It's a powerful concept that deserves to occupy a significant place in your thoughts about business and life.

Let's illustrate the power of compounding with some numbers. The chart below shows how much a person at age 25, 35, 45 and 55 must save per month to have \$1 million at age 65:

AGE	PAYMENT PER MONTH	TOTAL SAVED	AMOUNT AT AGE 65
25	\$158	\$75,900	\$1,000,000
35	\$442	\$159,258	\$1,000,000
45	\$1,317	\$316,052	\$1,000,000
55	\$4,882	\$585,809	\$1,000,000

What's the message from the table above? Start saving early and let calendar time work for you!

HARNESSING THE POWER OF COMPOUNDING FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Let's move on to business.

In what areas can you make consistent investments so that in 10 years, 20 years, even 30 years, you create immense value? Value that would be difficult, if not impossible, for your competitors to duplicate? At The Herring Group, we believe that the ultimate measurement of the value you create will be the company's operating profit margin and the consistency of that margin.

To get you started in your thinking, here are two areas to consider.

- **Company brand or reputation:**

What brand or reputation are you creating? What consistent investments are you making in building that brand or reputation? How do you know if your company's work and customer service are consistent with that brand?

- **Company culture:** What would happen if you created a culture that is so strong and attractive that your company became a destination employer (a highly desirable place to work)? How would your life and business be different if you had a waiting list of people who would like to work at your company?

probably the world's greatest investors. Buffet and Munger credit much of their investment success to continuous learning through reading and thinking. Munger advises people to "go to bed smarter than when you woke up."

I read about business and the Bible most days for more than 40 years. But it's not just reading. It is also pondering and thinking about what I have read. The Bible helped me to know Jesus, to understand people and establish priorities for life. Even though I have read it many times, my understanding deepens as the knowledge compounds.

I like to read biographies, books about successes and failures and how-to books related to business. As I think about what I read, I try to synthesize, simplify and apply the concepts to my business and my clients' businesses. I enjoy combining thinking with my bicycle riding — an extended time where I can think freely without interruption.

How are you putting the power of compounding to work? 📖

CONTINUALLY LEARNING

Let's move on to life. Knowledge compounds. I learned this concept from Warren Buffet and Charlie Munger,

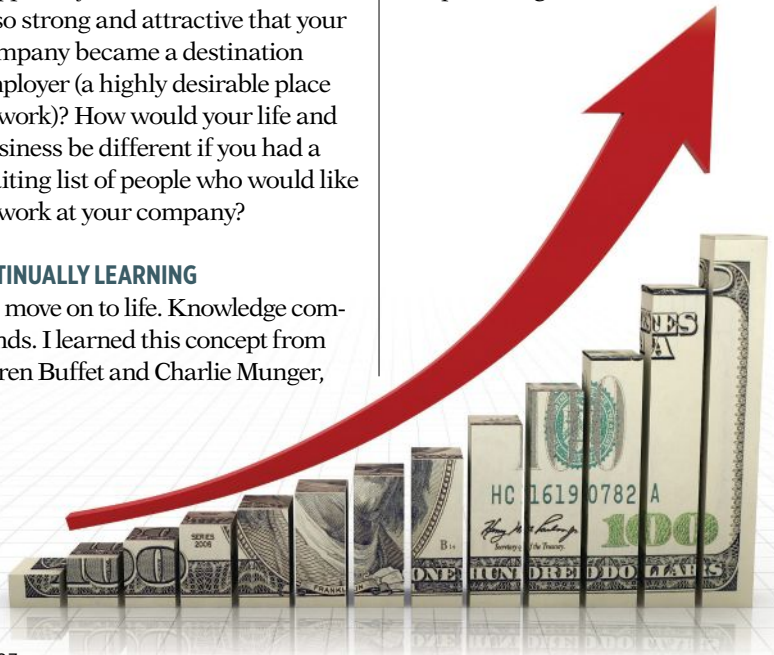


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BY KEN THOMAS

The author is principal of Envisor Consulting. Reach him at kenthomas@envisorc.com.

Why your leadership blind spots might be holding you back

When you hear the term blind spot, you probably think of an area of limited visibility associated with your vehicle. Blind spots are also a real thing in human relations. Our personal or relational blind spots can cause us to act contrary to our intentions.

As leaders, we all have blind spots. In leadership, it is the gap between our intentions and actions that we can't see. I learned years ago people don't respond to leaders based on our intentions; they respond based on our actions.

This gap (blind spot) between intention and actions can confuse our teams and, in some cases, damage our relationships and leadership effectiveness.

COMMON BLIND SPOTS

In my experience and work with leaders at all levels of business and life, I identified and experienced three common leadership blind spots: control, temperament and influence.

Blind spot No. 1 — Control: Most leaders don't want to be micromanagers, but we can sometimes become a bit obsessive in controlling people and outcomes. In order for people to grow and mature, they need experience. They need the freedom to make mistakes. Experience comes from being in the game. Wisdom comes from making and learning from mistakes. Leadership is a combination of skill and wisdom. The more control we exert, the less our people grow!

Solution: Give your team some clear guardrails and empower them to make their own choices. Coach them up and watch them grow.

Blind spot No. 2 —

Temperament: Your temperament or approach to your team is extremely important to your effectiveness. How are you showing up daily or in difficult situations? Is your attitude motivational, neutral or demoralizing?

Solution: Be the leader that your team needs. Remember, you model the behavior for your team. Be real and if you are having a bad day, admit it and interact with care.

Blind spot No. 3 — Influence:

I have operated and grown multimillion-dollar landscape companies in my career. When interacting with team members in the field or other branches, I had to learn the power of my position. In my mind, I was just one of the team. To team members, I was the owner or CEO who wielded a great deal of authority. I underestimated how much influence my words and/or actions had. A flippant comment or missed pat on the back could completely wreck the confidence and motivation of a dedicated team member. On the other hand, a simple smile, handshake or compliment could change the course of a team member's career.

Solution: Don't underestimate the power and responsibility of your position. Be aware of your



words and actions around your team. Be genuine and transparent. Carry your authority with humility.

BONUS MATERIAL

Here are a couple of additional recommendations to help leaders identify and minimize blind spots.

Self-awareness: Any real change starts with a hard look at ourselves. Review your actions, interactions and outcomes. Are you happy with the results? If not, what can you do to self-regulate in the future?

Ask for critical feedback: Identify a trusted advisor or peer that you can ask "What is one blind spot you think I should be more aware of?"

Identify triggers: Leadership expert Marshall Goldsmith asserts we encounter people, events or circumstances that possess the power to influence our actions and reactions every waking moment. When we master our triggers, we master our responses.

Hire a coach: Even the best athletes still need coaching. To stay at the top of their game, they recognize the value of having someone watch them play and identify athletic blind spots.

Marissa Levin, founder and CEO of Successful Culture International, says blind spots can be the Achilles' heel of leadership. In comparison, we can intentionally strengthen weaknesses with practice, time or desire. Blind spots are personal traits or factors we don't know about that may limit how we act, react, behave or believe, and therefore limit our effectiveness.

Don't be naive. Identify and minimize your blind spots and continue to grow your leadership skills! 📌

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GROW WITH GRUNDER

BY MARTY GRUNDER

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



How Grunder Landscaping Co. changed in our 30-plus years

At Grunder Landscaping Co., we set our 2023 top-line revenue goal with the plan to add an additional \$2 million in revenue. This goal felt doable but still challenging for our team as we gut-checked it with the people, equipment and facility investments required to achieve it.

For nearly 30 years, we've operated out of the same property in Miamisburg, Ohio, but we've had to change the layout of our yard, improve and expand our facilities and get smart about how we use our space. We're fortunate to have a lot of land to work with and also to be near our clients, but after 30 years, we had to make improvements and adjustments as we've grown and changed. These include:

FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

We upgraded our space over the years to ensure our team has a nice, clean place to work. We value and respect our team and want our facility to reflect that. Our office and shop aren't overly fancy. You'll find laminate countertops and vinyl flooring that looks like wood throughout, but you'll also notice we designed it to give each person a workspace with materials that are easy to keep clean.

We've also updated the bathroom our crews use within the last few years. We believe having clean, updated bathrooms says a lot about a company. Would you want to work somewhere where the bathroom was gross?

MAKING THE MOST OF OUR SPACE

We've always run a tight ship and

“We don't hang on to things in case we need them. Doing that makes it difficult to track what you have, and you end up with a lot of clutter ...”

kept our shop, yard and offices organized and clean. We believe that's key to efficiency and our success. We changed the way we prioritize what we store versus ordering just in time.

We order and store materials for lawn care applications, where we can predict and order what we need for the year and get a big discount through an early order program. Materials we plan to store need to be nonperishable, and we must have space to hold them, too. We order all green goods on a just-in-time model and only store them as long as we have to.

We don't hang on to things in case we need them. Doing that makes it difficult to track what you have, and you end up with a lot of clutter you never use or need.

ADDITIONS

We made many additions over the years to our facility, including:

- Enclosing part of our shop previously used for storage to create a team room where field team members have lockers to store their stuff (2021).
- Building new offices on the upper level of our storage mezzanine to create dedicated space for additional team members (2023).
- Building a storage facility and dedicated space for Grunder Green's lawn care applications (2022).

- Building a salt dome as we increase our snow removal square footage (2022).

We were at \$1 million in annual revenue when we originally built our building. This year we hope to do \$12 million. We need more team members to do that and more storage space for the different types of materials as we add new profit centers to our business.

As we grow, we're doing it purposefully to stay true to our mission of “Creating opportunities for our team to grow and succeed by enhancing the beauty and value of every client's property while exceeding their expectations every step of the way.”

We're growing to create more opportunities for our team and that's at the center of every decision we make.

Even if you've been to see us for one of our Grunder Landscaping Co. Field Trips in the past, I encourage you to come back and see us this fall. We're growing rapidly. We're projecting 20 percent growth for 2023 after more than doubling the size of our business between 2020 and 2022. We can show you how we plan for and manage everything that comes with that growth. I hope to see you in Dayton this fall:

GrowGroupInc.com/
[GLC-Fall-Field-Trips](#). 



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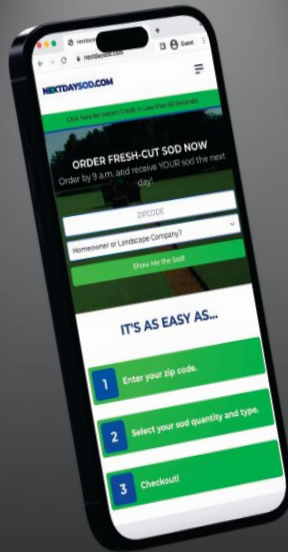
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