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Before one-on-one meetings with these top lawn care companies, *LM Growth Summit* partners had ten minutes to address the group. See what they said



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Matt Hunter, president, New Garden Landscaping & Nursery shares his expectations for 2023 (page 44).



## It's LM150 time!

We're now accepting entries for our 2023 LM150 list. We encourage companies with \$10 million or more in revenue to complete the form online at [LandscapeManagement.net](https://www.LandscapeManagement.net). Entries close April 3. The LM150 list highlights the largest landscape companies, ranked by annual revenue. This year's list is sponsored by Aspire Software and Ewing Irrigation and Landscape Supply and will appear in the June issue of LM. Please contact LM Special Projects Editor Marisa Palmieri at 440-537-4308 or [MPalmieri@NorthCoastMedia.net](mailto:MPalmieri@NorthCoastMedia.net).



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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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## Back to work

It's starting to warm up outside, and the season is about to kick into full gear. My team has been spread out all over the country in these early weeks of 2023, attending industry events and meeting with industry leaders. Here's just a quick snapshot of the last two weeks:

Associate Editor, Rob DiFranco, went to Morristown, Tenn., to see the grand opening of the new Greenworks factory (that story is on page 10.) I went to New Orleans to attend Jeffrey Scott's Executive Retreat. And Editor Christina Herrick wins the day for making the trek from Cleveland to Lahaina, Hawaii, for the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Leaders Forum.

It's at events like these where we make connections and get to see how much our work is appreciated by the industry. It's great to see old friends and then have them introduce you to their network of peers — especially when, all the while, a New Orleans jazz band is providing the soundtrack. I'll always have a fond memory of doing this issue's 5 Questions Q&A in person with Matt Hunter, president of New Garden Landscape & Nursery in Greensboro, N.C., at a noisy hotel bar.

More than 120 people attended Jeffrey Scott's event. Industry veterans and

“Perhaps the most interesting talk came from Kevin Werbrich, president of Werbrich's Landscaping ... his speech was about what he calls the 'red carpet exit.'”

young up-and-comers were included as speakers, talking on a wide range of topics. Scott opened the event by telling the room to get ready for 2023, because it's set to be a big one for all the companies represented at the event.

“If you make a better company, your clients will want you to get bigger,” Scott said. “The better you get, the more your clients will want you to get better. In other words, you're not pushing your growth ... your customers are pulling it.”

Perhaps the most interesting talk came from Kevin Werbrich, president of Werbrich's Landscaping in Cincinnati, Ohio, about what he calls the 'red carpet exit.'

Werbrich believes any employee parting ways might someday return to work for him, so he treats exiting employees — even those terminated — with kindness and respect. He calls his ex-employees every January to check in, see how they are and if they might be at a point in their life where they want to return to work for his company. Another thing he does is he “forgets” to remove former employees from their Facebook group, so the ex-employee still sees updates from Werbrich's Landscaping.

Attendees challenged him with a bunch of 'what ifs' on who he would and wouldn't call in January. Werbrich could not be swayed. You don't know where these people are in their lives, he reiterated. And by showing compassion to everyone, even the bad apples, it will make employees value the culture of the company and keep them coming back to work.

“If you treat people fairly, that word is going to spread,” Werbrich told the room.

We'll have more reporting from these events, including Herrick's journey to Hawaii, online and in our next issue. And remember, if you're not signed up for our weekly e-newsletter, you're missing the most current news resource in the industry. It deploys like clockwork every Thursday morning, and the last issue, once again, was the first place in the industry to break the news of another major acquisition.

In this issue, we welcome a new columnist to the magazine. On page 46, Neal Glatt, managing partner, Grow the Bench, makes his debut in the magazine with his column “Sales Scouting Report.”

Glatt is a coach with a passion for the green industry. He took a one-truck snow contractor and built it up to a \$40 million company before he left to pursue his passion for coaching and helping others. You can learn more about Neal and listen to his podcast at [NealGlatt.com](http://NealGlatt.com). Welcome to the *LM* team, Neal! 🙌



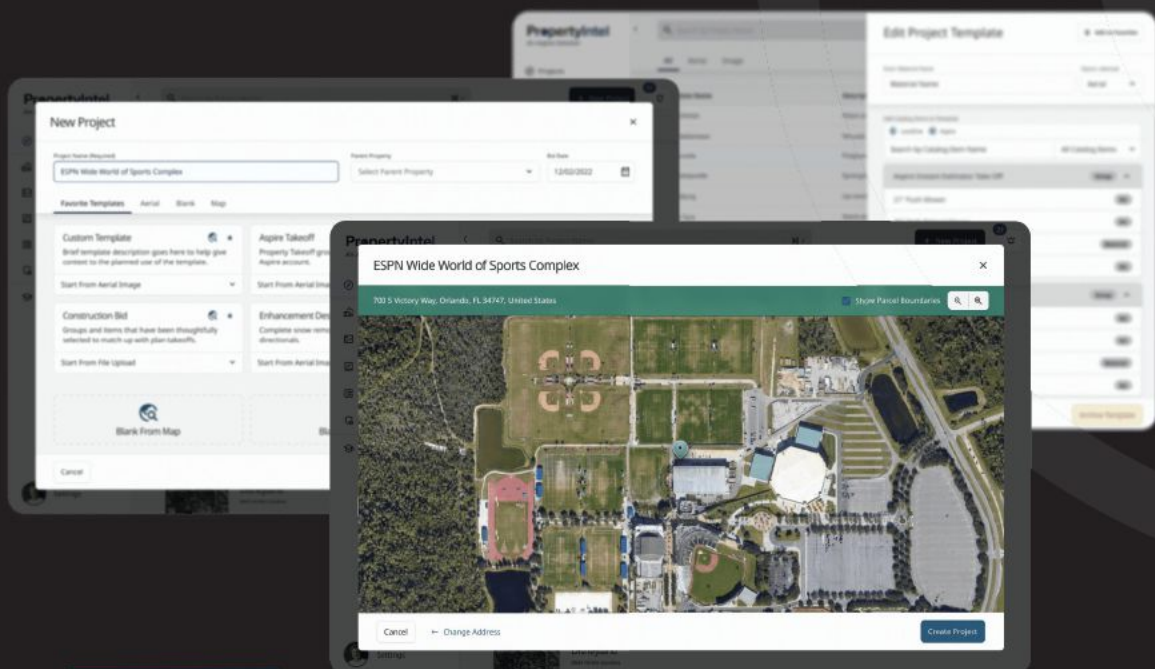
DiFranco got an up-close look at Greenworks' new OptimusZ zero-turn mower during his tour of the factory.



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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](http://LandscapeManagement.net).

## What's the best way to onboard new seasonal staff?

“An acceptance letter outlining the employee’s job responsibilities, pay, benefits, time off, etc., all clearly spelled out along with provisions for becoming full-time. The goal of the letter and the training would be to establish trust and a desirable future for the new position.”



### 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**  
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ProScape Lawn &  
Landscaping Services  
Marion, Ohio

**Chris Joyce**  
Joyce Landscaping  
Cape Cod, Mass.

**Aaron Katerberg**  
Grapids Irrigation  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

**Jerry McKay**  
McKay Landscape Lighting  
Omaha, Neb.

**Bryan Stolz**  
Winterberry Landscape  
& Garden Center  
Southington, Conn.

**Greg Winchel**  
Winchel Irrigation  
Grandville, Mich.

**Industry Consultants**  
**Marty Grunder**  
The Grow Group  
Dayton, Ohio

**Phil Harwood**  
Tamarisk Business Advisors  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

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



“Build a checklist for onboarding and follow the list, no exceptions. Spend the time upfront to give the new hire the best possible chance to feel included and supported.”

“The best way to onboard seasonal help is to have a training program in place to allow you to hire early to beat the rush and use that time to train.”



“Make them feel welcome with company gear and a tour of the facility. Hold an annual kick-off event for training and networking for the new team.”

“Have designated trainers at each level, and remember that training is a skill. The best pruner isn’t always the best at training others to prune. Find your skilled trainers and pay them extra to put that skill to work.”



“Give them a mentor within the organization, someone whose job is to make them feel included and help them get up to speed. Once they prove themselves, take them through your onboarding. Who knows? They may turn into a full-time employee.”



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# LM GALLERY

## Snapshots from the LM Growth Summit in Orlando, Fla.

**1 Thank you two, also** Francisco Sicilia (left), horticulturist for Integrated Growth Partners, Fort Pierce, Fla., and Mizraim Mata, regional manager, The Greenery, Ridgeland, S.C., help us get a shout-out to our 2022 LM Growth Summit partners.



**2 Four-man scramble champs** On the far left, LM Editor-in-Chief Seth Jones. On the far right, LM Western Regional Sales Manager Jake Goodman. In-between them? Our 2022 LM Growth Summit winning golfers. Left to right, Todd Zandstra, owner of Redwood Landscape, Cedar Lake, Ind.; Trevor Barnett, vice president of operations, Turf Magic, Forsyth, Ga.; Paul Blodorn, key account manager, Quali-Pro; and Josh Wise, CEO, GrassRoots Turf, Acworth, Ga.



**3 Starting five** (Left to right) North Coast Media CEO Kevin Stoltman; Bob McElhannon, account executive manager, FieldRoutes; Rod Marquardt, lawn care warm season market manager, Nufarm; Jones and Barnett might not have won any golf prizes, but they look like they'd make for a pretty good basketball team.



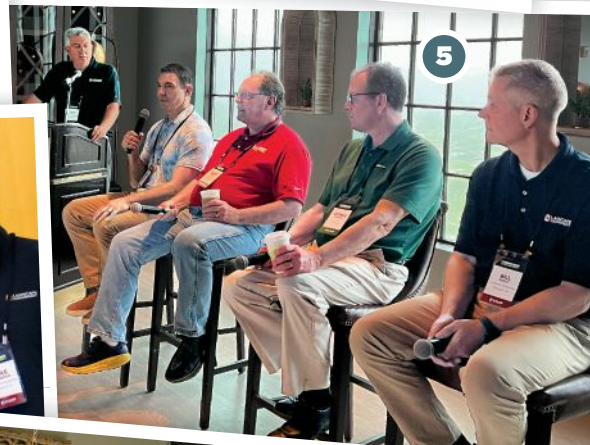
**4 Cheers to the LM Growth Summit!** Jamie Heydinger, lawn care segment lead, Nufarm, and Bill Roddy, publisher, *Landscape Management*, share a laugh and cheers.



**5 All the president's men** The morning panel discussion was led by Jones (far left) and included panelists Justin Berg, president of Purple Care, Fort Worth, Texas; Chris Senske, president of Senske Services, Kennewick, Wash.; George Kinkead, president, Turfco; and Roddy.



**6 What a shot!** Kellyn Vale (with Jones and Goodman), marketing director, Redwood Landscape, won the prize for closest-to-the-pin.



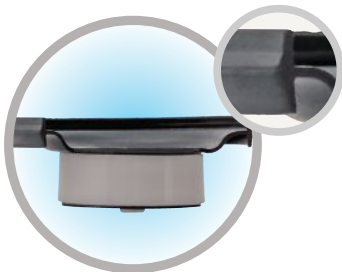
**7 Learning from the best** Is this photo of LM Editor Christina Herrick with Senske and Jones a new tradition? We hope so because we always enjoy hanging out with the longtime industry pro.





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## Greenworks opens doors to its first US-based manufacturing facility

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**G**reenworks Commercial, a manufacturer of battery-powered handheld tools and mowers, opened the doors to its new Commercial Center of Excellence for Manufacturing and Engineering in Morristown, Tenn., on Jan. 19.

The company hosted local and state officials, distributors and media alongside executives from its team at the 180,000-square-foot facility.

“We were determined to make Morristown our home for manufacturing in North America,” said Greenworks founder Yin Chen. “We have a very diversified team. We have people from China and Europe working together with a local team here. Our common goal is for this factory to produce the best battery-powered equipment on the market.”

Greenworks has plans to employ more than 150 at the facility by the end of 2023, with hopes of adding up to 400 people by 2025.

The Morristown facility will also house the company’s North American Center for Advanced Vehicle Engineering. The company says more than a dozen mechanical, electrical and testing engineers will work at the facility by the end of 2023, alongside teams in China and Sweden.

### AUTOMATION IN THE WORKPLACE

The facility features automated guided vehicles, which shuttle mowers through the assembly line, and a fully-robotic welding center. The company says its initial development phase at the facility provides an annual production capacity of 30,000 ride-on mowers with room to grow to 80,000 in 2025.

“I saw this factory 18 months ago when it was still a (General Electric) factory, and it’s still transforming,” said Klaus Hahn, president of Greenworks. “It’s changing every day. What you see here is just a glimpse of what’s to come.”



Greenworks says it will also expand the Morristown facility with a parts and service warehouse and automatic assembly lines for its large commercial-grade battery modules by early 2024.

Assembly lines at Greenworks’ new U.S. facility are semi-autonomous.

### BATTERY-POWERED MOWING

Currently, the facility manufactures Greenworks’ new OptimusZ zero-turn mowers. The battery-powered mowers, which the company announced at the 2022 Equip Expo, offer up to eight hours of runtime with a cut speed of up to 16 mph.

The company also plans to manufacture its first fully-autonomous mower, the OptimusAI, at the facility by late 2023. OptimusAI will feature GPS-RTK navigation and vision-based live-object avoidance technology, according to Greenworks.

Based on OptimusZ’s platform design, the mower also allows for manned operation. 🚗

### MARIANI LANDSCAPE ADDS ED CASTRO LANDSCAPE

Mariani Landscape — No. 20 on the 2022 LM150 list — made major moves in 2022 with the addition of seven family-owned landscape companies. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

The company is back at it again, this time with the

addition of Ed Castro Landscape, a full-service high-end landscaping firm in Roswell, Ga.

Ed Castro founded the business in 1992. The company offers landscape construction, maintenance and related services year-round.

## Equip Expo to celebrate 40th anniversary, focus on new attendee experiences

Equip Expo said it will expand and offer new, advanced education, additional entertainment and events, including a new arena concert as part of its 40th-anniversary celebration. The show plans to expand into the West Wing of the Kentucky Exposition Center (KEC) and improve logistics and food options.

New for 2023 show experiences:

- A concert at the Yum! Center, featuring headlining band, Third Eye Blind;
- A return of the New Product Showcase;
- A Welcome Party at the downtown Kentucky International Convention Center (adjacent to the downtown Marriott and Hyatt hotels) with a concert from Expo house band, The Crashers;
- Keynote speech by Polar Explorer and master storyteller Ben Saunders, who completed the longest-ever polar journey on foot;
- The debut of the Equip Exposition Equipment Museum to showcase the evolution of the industry;

- The addition of a business lounge, meeting spaces and expanded seating areas at the KEC;
- Landscape education for youth, sponsored by the TurfMutt Foundation; children ages 12 and up may attend;
- Improved shuttle bus, rideshare and transportation logistics; and
- More coffee shops and food offerings on-site, including breakfast options.

Fan favorites also will return to the 2023 Expo, including can't-miss education (including content powered by *Landscape Management* magazine) and connection events for landscapers and dealers; live in-tree climbing demonstrations; Mulligan's Fun Run & 5K; the UTV Test Track; the Drone Zone; and Mulligan's Mutt Madness, a national dog adoption event, sponsored by the Turf-Mutt Foundation.

Equip Expo will be held Oct. 17-20. Registration opens in April.



## Massey Services' founder Harvey L. Massey dies

Massey Services' retired founder, chairman and community leader Harvey L. Massey, died Jan. 24 at age 81. In 1985, the former Orkin and Terminix employee moved to Orlando and purchased a 50-year-old pest and termite company for \$3.9 million, creating Massey Services. Under his leadership, the company grew to a \$350 million business in 2022.

Massey Services, No. 26 on the 2022 LM150 list, is predominantly a pest control company, but also offers lawn care, irrigation and landscape services.

Massey is survived by his wife of 59 years, Carol Massey; their three children: Angela, Tony, Andrea; and 10 grandchildren.

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# ON THE CLOCK



**R**ecently, 36 lawn care professionals from 26 companies across the country joined us at the 2022 *LM* Growth Summit, held at Reunion Resort near Orlando. To kick off the event, representatives from our 12 partners gave a quick 10-minute snapshot of their company. Over the next day and a half, each lawn care company met one-on-one with each *LM* Growth Summit partner.

What they discussed in those one-on-one meetings will remain between the attendees and the partners. But what was said in those boardroom presentations? We share an excerpt from each here: ▶

AS TOLD BY THE *LM* GROWTH SUMMIT PARTNERS



## 2022 ATTENDEES

The following is a list of companies that attended the 2022 *LM* Growth Summit. To apply for the 2023 *LM* Growth Summit, visit [LandscapeManagement.net](https://www.LandscapeManagement.net) and click on the *LM* Growth Summit tab at the top of the page. Decision makers for lawn care companies that have revenue of more than \$750,000 in the turf + ornamental care segment are encouraged to apply. However, not all who fit these parameters are accepted, as attendance is limited.

- Turf Magic, Forsyth, Ga.
- Grunder Green, Dayton, Ohio
- Purple Care, Fort Worth, Texas
- Yards Done Right, Westlake, Ohio
- Fairway Lawn & Tree Service, Harwich, Mass.
- Quality Seasons, Lakeville, Minn.
- American Landscape and Lawn Science, North Franklin, Conn.
- Calvin Landscape, Indianapolis
- Quality Cut Lawn Care, Des Moines, Iowa
- Moxie Pest Control, Irving, Texas
- Delaware Valley Turf, Broomall, Pa.
- Go Green Lawn and Pest, West Chester, Pa.
- McHale Landscape Design, Clarksburg, Md.
- My Turf, Byron Center, Mich.
- Tynic Landscaping, Southwick, Mass.
- The Greenery, Ridgeland, S.C.
- American Turf & Tree Care, Greeley, Colo.
- Image Works Landscape Management, Fairfax Station, Va.
- Morin Turf, Sioux City, Iowa
- McCall Service, Jacksonville, Fla.
- Weed Pro Lawn Care, Sheffield, Ohio
- Intracoastal Landscape Designs, Tabor City, N.C.
- Redwood Landscape, Cedar Lake, Ind.
- Weed and Feed Lawn Care, Byron Center, Mich.
- GrassRoots Turf, Acworth, Ga.
- Scientific Plant Service, Baltimore, Md.

## THE COMPANY: TURFCO

**WHO:** *George Kinkead, president*

**WHAT THEY SAID:** “We celebrated our 100th anniversary in 2019. My grandfather started the business in 1919 when he returned from World War I. We have over 38 patents, with a focus on renovation equipment. We’re focused on how to make machinery that is highly productive and easy to train your employees on. One thing we’ve seen is that keeping employees is harder than it’s ever been. We continually find that the people you are hiring don’t even mow their own yards. We have to adapt to this environment. You have to make these employees incredibly productive; they need to know how to operate all your equipment. We need to make up for the fact that someone is going to call off because they need to stay home with their cat, stuff you never thought was possible. If it’s easier to train, it’s easier to retain.”

**FOR MORE:** [Turfco.com](http://Turfco.com)

## THE COMPANY: QUALI-PRO

**WHO:** *Jeff Rampino, territory manager*

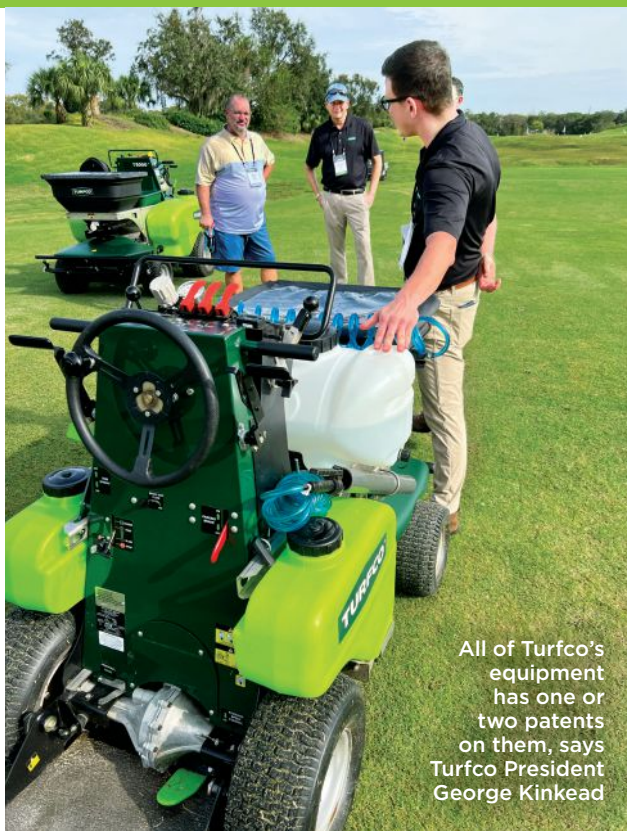
**WHAT THEY SAID:** “We are a division of Control Solutions Inc., which is a member of the Adama Group, a large multinational company. We have a 250,000-square-foot facility in Pasadena, Texas. If you’re ever in Houston, let us know, we’d love to show it to you. We have five unique and differentiated product lines. Most of you know that we’re a post-patent company. What you might not know is that we are moving into formulating unique chemistries. This is a really exciting time for us; we’re almost becoming a (basic) manufacturer. We have eight area managers in the United States, over 70 SKUs, 56 products and 38 active ingredients. In herbicides, we have 22 products, 15 active ingredients and two unique products — Fahrenheit and Negate. For fungicides, we have 16 in that lineup, 11 active ingredients and one unique with Enclave. We have eight active ingredients and two unique products for insecticides. We’re really excited about our new product Suprado. It’s our first active in that chemistry class, and it’s actually its own chemistry class in the Insecticide Resistance Action Committee group.”

**FOR MORE:** [Quali-Pro.com](http://Quali-Pro.com)

## THE COMPANY: ANUVIA

**WHO:** *John Fowler, vice president of sales*

**WHAT THEY SAID:** “We’re not going to wear you out with data. Anuvia has been around since 2016. We take organic waste and turn it into fertilizer. We’ve had a tremendous amount of success in this space. One thing that has changed this year is that we had a hard time getting products to market with a limited distribution model. Now we have distributors across the country that will have our product. Today we have blenders that have Barricade, Dimension,



All of Turfco’s equipment has one or two patents on them, says Turfco President George Kinkead

Acelepryn, Merit, bifenthrin and Ronstar; it doesn’t matter — whatever chemistry you use for fertilizer, we can now put on GreenTRX, which is a huge advantage for us. The other thing is, with rail, we can ship with rail over truck. Few fertilizers have decreased in price year over year, but GreenTRX is one of them.”

**FOR MORE:** [AnuviaPlantNutrient.com/turf](http://AnuviaPlantNutrient.com/turf)

## THE COMPANY: REAL GREEN

**WHO:** *Brian Wareck, software sales team lead*

**WHAT THEY SAID:** “We’re known as a marketing company; we’re known for helping you grow your business. We’re very efficient with what we do. We’ve been around since 1984 and are on the fifth generation of our software. We cater to the biggest lawn care companies in the world, all the way down to the mom-and-pop shops. It’s a great story, our founder, Joe Kucik’s father, was in the lawn care business as a fertilizer guy, and his brother was a programmer, and they needed software. That’s where it started from, and it’s grown. I was employee No. 8, and now we have over 3,000 companies nationwide, in Canada and the U.K. We can help you get the low-hanging fruit, with routing and scheduling. We can get you four more stops a day, that is what our customers average. If you can even get one more stop a day, think about how that helps your business. There’s just so much that we do at Real Green. We’re a one-stop shop.”

**FOR MORE:** [RealGreen.com](http://RealGreen.com)

*Continued on page 16*

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**THE COMPANY: FMC**

**WHO:** Kent Turner, market specialist

**WHAT THEY SAID:** “FMC is a large agricultural science company. We’re going to talk to you about how you can use our products to increase your business. How many people want to add on sedge control? We’re going to talk to you about Dismiss NXT. How many people do mosquito control? If your hand is not up, you are throwing money away. We’ll tell you how you can spend \$15 (on Scion), and you can charge \$300, and we can give you 75 days of mosquito control with one product, rain or shine; it’s that good. True Champions is our awards program; it’s like going to the grocery store and scanning your card to get benefits. We have rebates, but we also offer 1st Friday webinars every month, where you can get continuing education credit and train your employees.”

**FOR MORE:** [FMCProSolutions.com](http://FMCProSolutions.com)

**THE COMPANY: GREENE COUNTY FERTILIZER COMPANY**

**WHO:** John Perry, founder

**WHAT THEY SAID:** “We’re a liquid fertilizer company out of Greensboro, Ga. We’ve had our home there for almost 10 years. We go direct to consumer; that’s one of the things that has set us apart. But now, as things are changing, we are going to distribution, so you can pick our stuff up at different suppliers, which is nice. Our mission is to establish good personal relationships with our customers and continue to partner with them as time progresses. We want to help others in the industry grow; that’s the fun part. Here’s the sketchy part. The fertilizer business sort of sucks right now. Prices are crazy. It’s hard to have stability. For the next little while, it’s still going to be rough. As long as there is conflict across the pond, it won’t be easy. Not doom and gloom, but it is best to be prepared.”

**FOR MORE:** [GreeneCountyFert.com](http://GreeneCountyFert.com)



John Perry, founder of Greene County Fertilizer Co., chats with Matt VanNoord, owner of Weed and Feed Lawn Care.



**THE COMPANY: STEEL GREEN MANUFACTURING**

**WHO:** Caleb Myers, demo rep

**WHAT THEY SAID:** “We’re based in Lebanon, Ind. We just celebrated our fourth anniversary. At Equip Expo (in October), we launched two new products; the SG54, which mixes our stand-on units and the SGXL. (The SG54) a 100-gallon, 12-foot boom machine with a belt-driven pump that runs 45 to 50 gallons per minute. The idea behind this is to take the place of the hopper with a 35-gallon tank. Instead of doing that, you can have a 100-gallon tank with a true agitation system. It also comes standard with a pressure control system, hillside assist and a 100-foot hose reel. We also unveiled at Equip an all-new electric unit. We are very early in the stages of this. We don’t anticipate this to be out for another year or more. The idea behind this unit is to meet California’s emission laws. We’re getting enough interest in California that we’re going that route. We also have companies that want it just because it is quieter.”

**FOR MORE:** [SteelGreenMfg.com](http://SteelGreenMfg.com)

The Steel Green SGXL is the company’s largest spreader with a 120-gallon spray capacity, a 100-foot hose reel and a hillside assist system.

**THE COMPANY: FIELD ROUTES**

**WHO:** Bob McElhannon, account executive manager

**WHAT THEY SAID:** “There’s been a lot of confusion with what’s going on with our company. ServiceTitan is our parent company; they are big in plumbing, electrical and HVAC. We work with lawn care to give you the best solutions we can. We are new in the lawn world. It’s been a little over a year. We want to have one software platform that will knock your socks off. We have a lot of real-time reporting. The platform has all the office functionalities you need and a lot of automation. For example, if you have a customer who is 30 days past due, a trigger is set up, and that customer automatically gets an email, text, call or all three. Or, after a service is complete, your technician can set the trigger so your customers can get an alert. The good thing is that you don’t need the internet with our mobile app. If you’re in the middle of nowhere, where the internet is spotty, it saves it locally on the techs’ phone.”

**FOR MORE:** [FieldRoutes.com](http://FieldRoutes.com)

Continued on page 18

PHOTOS: LM STAFF



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Continued from page 16

**THE COMPANY: NUFARM**

**WHO:** Jamie Heydinger, lawn care segment lead, and Rod Marquardt, lawn care warm-season market manager

**WHAT THEY SAID:** “We’re building a new synthesis plant here in the U.S. that will come online in the next three to four years. Right now, no matter who you talk to, they’re bringing in products from China or India. With this plant, we can make our phenoxy herbicides from the ground up here in the U.S.” — Marquardt

“There’s plenty of investment going on; plenty of products are in the pipeline. (Allstar herbicide) is one that we should have available to you in 2023. This year we have plenty of material, so the complexion of our supplies is considerably better than it was a year ago. We have the material to meet your needs.” — Heydinger

**FOR MORE:** [Nufarm.com/USTurf](https://www.nufarm.com/USTurf)



**THE COMPANY: SLINGSHOT BY WORKWAVE**

**WHO:** Robin Kellagher, director of solutions sales, and Christie Semmer, enterprise account executive

**WHAT THEY SAID:** “A potential customer or sale calls, or emails or uses live chat on your website, and our agents are there to answer the phone for you instead of having somebody in your office take that call. Once the agent captures all of the information (from the customer), we can mea-

sure and price out for you with your pricing and service matrix.” — Kellagher

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**FOR MORE:** [GetSlingshot.com/Lawn-Care](https://www.getslingshot.com/Lawn-Care)

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**THE COMPANY: PRIME SOURCE**

**WHO:** Mike Daugherty, Midwest territory manager

**WHAT THEY SAID:** “Albaugh purchased Prime Source. The global headquarters is in Ankeny, Iowa. We’re the largest agrochemical company based in the United States. Our manufacturing facility is in St. Joseph, Mo., near Kansas City. Dennis Albaugh owns 80-percent of the company. Albaugh got its start in the post-patent world, but since then, we’ve got a lot of new, proprietary, differentiated products that we’re bringing to the market right now. Coming from the agricultural world, they’re using a lot

Continued on page 20

PHOTO: LM STAFF



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**2022 LM GROWTH SUMMIT RECAP**

*Continued from page 18*

of new formulation technologies. It's a way to get their products into the plant better. They're bringing that into our world now. When you see 'H value technology,' that's a technology to get into the plant better. It's a formulation process that Albaugh has patented."

**FOR MORE:** [PrimeSource-Albaugh.com](http://PrimeSource-Albaugh.com)

**THE COMPANY: THE ANDERSONS**

**WHO:** Alan Hollen, territory manager

**WHAT THEY SAID:** "People ask us what is going on in the industry. Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues to impact nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. Although, right now, the markets are settling. Urea is down from where it was, but it is still elevated from two, three years ago. Where it is now is where we think it'll be in the spring. There have been pressures on chemistries as well. One thing to keep an eye on is that we're relatively dry. How those barges move up and down the Mississippi River could be a black swan (event). On to the company, what is The Andersons? We like to stay on the edge of technology. We have a lot of patents. We have a really good research and development department. We have an agronomist we just brought in, Ben Pease, Ph.D. There's a science behind what we do."

**FOR MORE:** [AndersonsPlantNutrient.com/Turf](http://AndersonsPlantNutrient.com/Turf)

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-Josh Wise, GrassRoots Turf, Acworth, GA

## HOW TO

# Best practices for tank mixing

Learn how to avoid issues and keep equipment running longer with these tips

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

**W**hether lawn care operators (LCOs) need a refresher or are using a new formulation, learning to properly tank mix products for sprayers and spreader-sprayers will help ensure success with the property and equipment.

## HOW TO MIX

Before adding a product to the tank, it's important operators understand the proper mixing order, according to the PBI-Gordon team — including Eric Reasor, Ph.D., Southeast research scientist; Brian Aynardi, Ph.D., Northeast research scientist; Chrissie Segars, Ph.D., West research scientist; and Jeff Marvin, Ph.D., director of field research.

The order LCOs should follow is:

1. Water-soluble packets
2. Dry formulations
3. Ammonium sulfate
4. Compatibility agents and anti-foamers
5. Dispersed liquid formulations
6. Liquid drift retardants
7. Other liquid formulations
8. Adjuvants and micronutrients
9. Liquid fertilizers

If LCOs mix products in the wrong order or combine them with incompatible products, the product may not dissolve or may cause excessive foaming, says Ben Pease, Ph.D., turfgrass agronomist for The Andersons Plant Nutrient Group. Users should add products one at a time in the tank and think about the application of each.

"If there's a product that needs to stay on the leaf, for example, you don't

want to mix it with a product that needs to get to the soil," Pease says. "You're going to lose the efficacy of one."

## WHAT TO AVOID

One of the most common mistakes with tank mixing is adding materials before adding enough water, which can cause separation, Pease says.

"If you're mixing right into the sprayer, you want to make sure the tank is at least 50 percent full of water and then add the products," he says.

LCOs should also check if products are compatible, as some products are not intended to be mixed together. For example, tank-mixing bensumec and carfentrazone can lead to turfgrass injury. Tank-mixing phenoxy herbicides and ACCase inhibitors can antagonize and decrease herbicide control. Mixing liquid iron products with low pH and 2,4-D amine with large pH differences can lead to sludging.

To test products for compatibility, operators can use the jar test to simulate what will happen when mixing multiple products together. To perform a jar test, LCOs need a quart jar with a sealable lid. Add a pint of water to the jar if used as a carrier. Add each product and shake between additions. LCOs should check for settling and solubility issues after about 30 minutes (or 60 minutes at most), Pease says.

Not all incompatibilities can be resolved by adding more water or a compatibility agent. The PBI-Gordon team explains there are cases where adding more water, detergent soap,

nonionic surfactant, compatibility agent or pH adjuster might help.


Keeping records of specific tank mixtures helps operators stay organized and track problem tank mixes. Take note of carrier source, water source/quality, water temperature, water volume, any fertilizer source, product names, formulations types, application rates and mixing order, the PBI-Gordon team says.

## PROPER CLEANOUT

Another important component of tank mixing is how to clean out the equipment between uses or before storing. Performing a double-rinse when going from one application to the next helps ensure the operator isn't combining an old chemical with the new one, says George Kinkead, president of Turfco.

"Drain the tank, rinse it out and check the manual to make sure you're using the appropriate drain with each tank to ensure it's being flushed," he says. "Check the filter at the same time to see what condition it's in and if there are foreign objects in the tank."

If objects get stuck in the tank system or if an operator leaves products in the tank for an extended amount of time, it will shorten the life of the pump and filters. Once the system is completely flushed, LCOs can spray water through it to ensure the spray pattern and nozzle are working up to spec.

"Make sure your employees know you value cleaning and maintaining the machine," Kinkead says. 

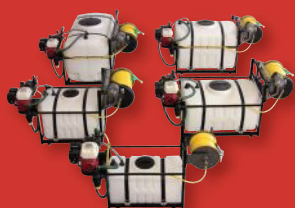
Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.

**THE RIGHT MIX**  
Knowing the correct order for tank mixing is crucial to avoid critical errors, experts say.





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## DID YOU KNOW

# Stay a step ahead of herbicide resistance in crabgrass and goosegrass

**With few active ingredients for crabgrass and goosegrass control, learn what you can do to keep them in your arsenal as long as possible**

BY GEORGE KEGODE, PH.D. | CONTRIBUTOR

**C**rabgrass and goosegrass are annual weeds that germinate in the spring, grow rapidly throughout the summer, mature in late summer and produce numerous seeds before dying out at the first frost in autumn. Both species have a history of developing herbicide resistance. When weeds become resistant to a herbicide, lawn care operators (LCOs) lose a valuable tool and it becomes more difficult to control the weed.

Ian Rodriguez, Ph.D., technical services manager for Quali-Pro; Bret Corbett, product development manager for Albaugh; Lisa Beirn, Ph.D., technical services representative for Syngenta; and Aaron Hathaway, technical services manager for Nufarm, share what LCOs should know about managing crabgrass and goosegrass to minimize or prevent herbicide resistance.

## FACTORING IN RESISTANCE

Corbett says LCOs have few herbicide active ingredients available for crabgrass and goosegrass control, which makes resistance management challenging.



“Crabgrass and goosegrass can both produce numerous seeds with a variety of herbicide resistance mutations,” says Rodriguez.

Both species can easily cross-pollinate with other biotypes, which helps spread resistant genes, Hathaway says. The problem is exacerbated when crabgrass and goosegrass seeds spread to new areas.

Applying an active ingredient or using herbicides with a similar mode of action repeatedly for several years can cause resistance, Beirn says.

Experts say dinitroaniline herbicides — such as pendimethalin, indaziflam, trifluralin and prodiamine — are good options for preemergent crabgrass control. The dinitroaniline herbicides dithiopyr and indaziflam are good options for goosegrass control. LCOs often use quinclorac and mesotrione for postemergent crabgrass control. When used with a non-ionic surfactant, sulfentrazone or topramezone are postemergent options for goosegrass. LCOs could also opt for fenoxaprop-p-ethyl for postemergent control of crabgrass and goosegrass on cool-season grasses.

## TIMING MATTERS

When it comes to crabgrass and goosegrass, preemergence herbicides are the best option, says Hathaway.

Corbett notes LCOs can opt for split applications to help extend control of crabgrass and goosegrass. According to the University of Nebraska Extension, to make a split application, LCOs put half the highest recommended rate in early

spring and the other half 6-8 weeks later.

Crabgrass starts emerging when the soil temperature reaches 55 degrees F for three to four days in a row, Rodriguez says. LCOs should apply preemergent herbicides as soon as soil temperatures reach that threshold.

“Depending on your location in the U.S., goosegrass begins to emerge when the soil temperature is between 63 and 65 degrees F,” Beirn says.

She stresses that LCOs need to time preemergent applications to coincide with the soil temperature to ensure herbicide efficacy.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

It’s critical for LCOs to choose the right preemergent herbicide for their growing zone, Corbett says.

“Picking the right herbicide, making timely application and dealing with the elements as they come (are important),” he says.

Next, LCOs must ensure their equipment is properly calibrated, their application timing is correct, and they irrigate after application.

Other keys to crabgrass- and goosegrass-free turf are good cultural controls like fertility management and disease and insect control, Rodriguez says.

“Develop a good turfgrass management program that combines cultural practices with proper herbicide use and use a soil temperature prediction tool to help with timing preemergent applications,” Beirn says. “Mowing at a height of 2 to 3 inches and irrigating deeply and less frequently (once weekly) are good cultural management practices LCOs should always remember.”

George Kegode, Ph.D., is a consultant and writer specializing in pest and weed management, based in Missouri.

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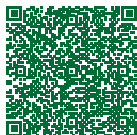
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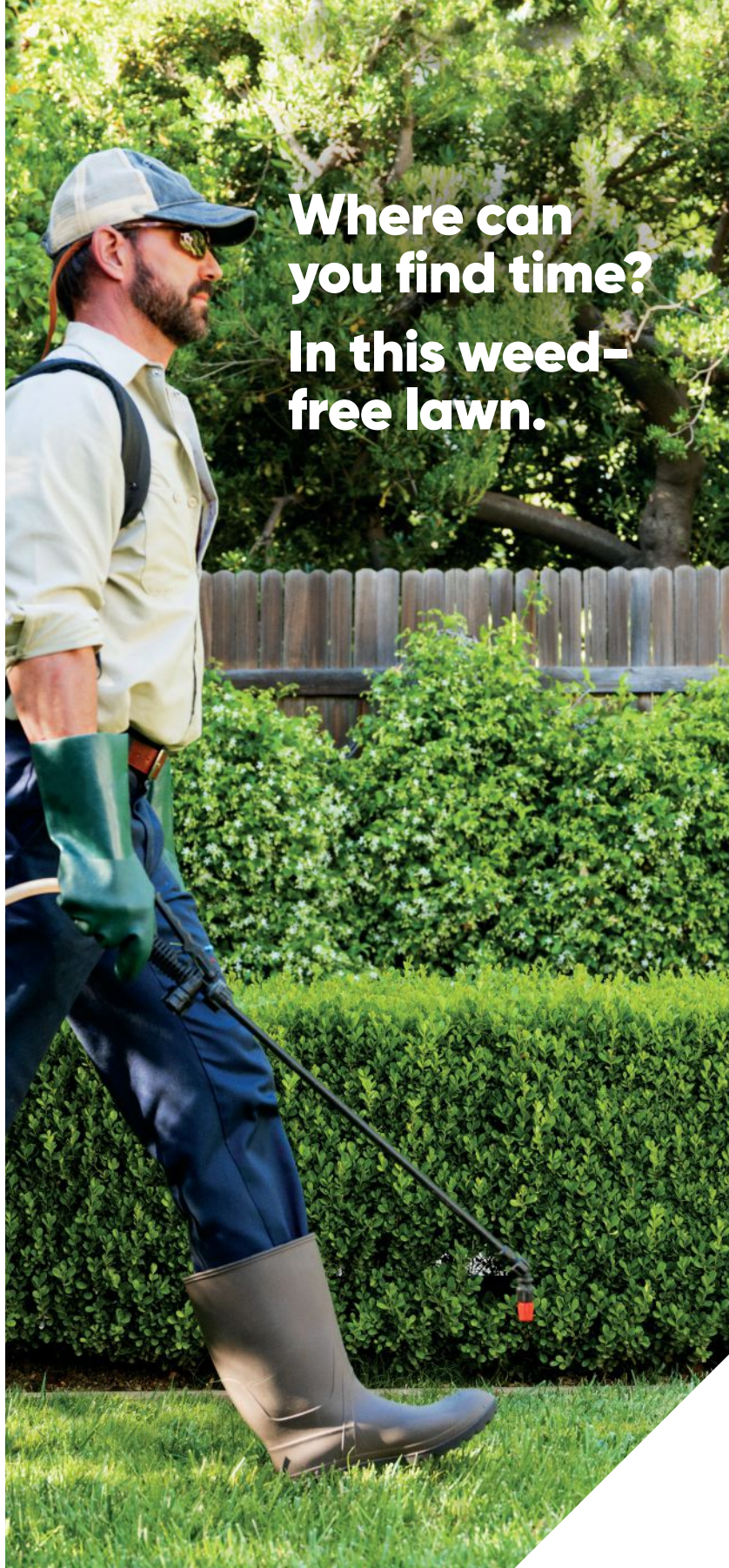


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# How to keep sod webworms at bay

Envu's Jesse Benelli, Ph.D., shares tips for managing one of an LCO's least-favorite turf pests

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**S**od webworms are an equal-opportunity turf pest, says Jesse Benelli, Ph.D., green solutions specialist for Envu. The sod webworm will feed on just about any type of turf, making it a tricky pest to manage for lawn care operators (LCOs), especially those in the southeast.

Benelli shares with *LM* what LCOs need to know about one of the green industry's most widespread pests.

## KNOW WHEN AND WHERE TO LOOK

LCOs should look for adult moths first because they're easier to spot, according to Benelli, despite the fact that moths are not the damaging part of the life cycle.

"You don't want to find these when you already see the damage, and you're looking at mature caterpillars because

as they become larger, they are more difficult to control," he says.

Benelli says that LCOs will most likely find adult moths on the turf during the day. Caterpillars will be tougher to see as they are mostly burrowed during the daytime.

"This is slightly easier said than done," he says. "The adult moths tend to come out at night, and the caterpillars themselves usually won't feed during the daytime. If you're in an area with a chronic history of sod webworms, once you start to see adults, then you can make a preventive application."

Moths are slender and are off-white to light yellow in color. Their most unique characteristic is a pronounced snout, which Benelli says is a dead giveaway that sod webworms are present.

"The other thing is how they hold their wings when they're resting on the turf," he says. "(A sod webworm) holds them very tight to its body, so they look very slender."

## WHAT DAMAGE LOOKS LIKE

According to Benelli, there are two different times in the growing season when sod webworms will cause damage: in the early spring and summer.

"They can overwinter as caterpillars," he says. "Then, in the spring, the caterpillars will start feeding in the upper root system and the lower plant stems. So they're essentially cleaving off roots and the stem of the plant."

As a result, LCOs will see sunken depressions of dead turf that could be similar to several other diseases, such as dollar spot. One way to confirm

webworms as the culprit, Benelli says, is through a soap flush.

"You're taking some water and dish soap and pouring it onto the turf during the day," he says.

"After a while, the caterpillars will come to the surface because the soapy water has irritated them."

In the second generation of webworms, which appear in the summer, damage appears to be thinning and irregular patches of turf because the pest feeds more on the leaf tissue as opposed to the root system.




Jesse Benelli

## HAVE A PREVENTIVE APPROACH

Recommendations for sod webworm control have shifted in recent years, Benelli says, with a preventive approach becoming the most popular.

"In an area where you've seen multiple generations of sod webworms, I would put down an insecticide that has residual activity," he says. "Ideally, you'll want something that will work both right away and provide some residual control."

Historically, Benelli says, the preferred method of control among LCOs was contact insecticides. That's still a valid course of action to control as many webworms as possible if you see active damage.

"In a perfect situation, you would put down an application if you're concerned about the overwintering caterpillars in the early spring," he says. "Then six to eight weeks later, you'll get the second generation of caterpillars that feed in a different way. So you're looking at another application there around mid-July." 



## HEAVY HITTERS

Sod webworm caterpillars are the most damaging part of the turf pests' life cycle. Most damage occurs when the caterpillars reach peak maturity.

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## THE BIG ONE

### Point of pride

**LOCATION** Chicago

**COMPANY** Balanced Environments

**DETAILS** This office building in the West Loop of Chicago is the headquarters of several large corporations, including a property developer. Gayle Kruckenberg, sales director for Balanced Environments, says expectations are high for the crew that manages the high-profile property.

“The communication from the account manager to and from their property manager has to be quick and concise,” she says. “Then we have to filter it through the various levels of our team quickly in order to respond in a timely manager manner. We’re honored to be the landscaper of choice.”

The 1 1/2 acres of turf is one of the largest grassy areas along the Chicago River, according to Balanced Environments, and it sits on top of the building’s parking garage. This property is also home to a red swirl sculpture by Sergio Calatrava. Balanced Environments creates a parklike setting around the public artwork with blooming plants, shrubs and mature trees.

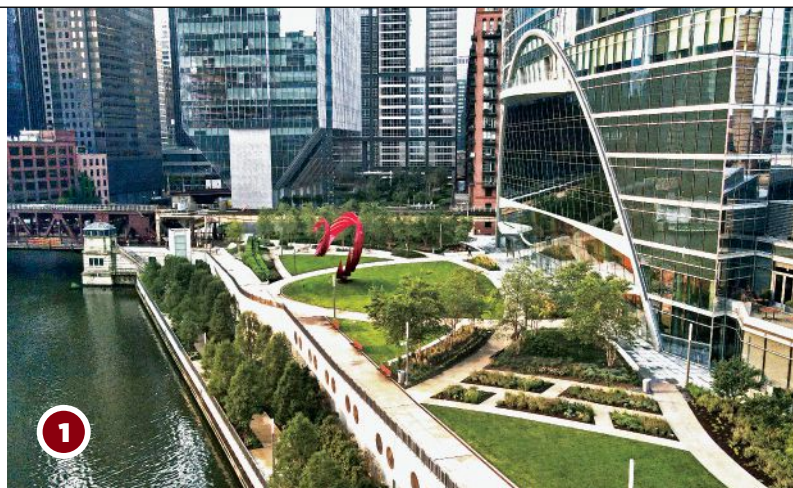
The building maintains its LEED Platinum Certification with the help of several initiatives created by Balanced Environments, including a water harvesting system from Watertronics, a pumping system and controls to capture rainwater and reuse it on the property.

Crew access to parking in downtown Chicago can be a challenge. They carry equipment upstairs to a pedestrian elevator to access rooftop gardens, taking extra measures to protect the elevators and entryways.

Crews work under a strict noise ordinance and have only one hour to make noise during maintenance. Kruckenberg says the team plans what equipment to take each day. Equipment in use at the site includes a Toro 52-inch stand-on mower and Stihl handheld equipment.

Balanced Environments won a Gold 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](https://www.LandscapeManagement.net/thebigone).



**Captions |** **1.** River Point is an office building in the heart of the West Loop of Chicago. The large, multi-level river frontage is a dedicated public easement with mature landscape plantings and large expanses of turf. A landscape maintenance crew is on-site weekly, along with a dedicated day porter on-site six days a week. **2.** The property features intimate and larger outdoor meeting areas as well as dedicated formal restaurant space on the plaza level. Crews deep-root fertilize the raised birch beds two times a year. Drip line irrigation provides adequate moisture. Crews dormant prune the birch trees on a two-year cycle and illuminate the branches with mini-LED string lights during the winter. **3.** The Chicago Elevated Train speeds by directly to the south of the property on Lake Street. There is a nearby Chicago Transit Authority bus stop and several bike racks for tenant and visitor use. The Chicago water taxi passes in front of the property on the river as well. **4.** Live hedges of woody and herbaceous materials and pops of color soften the metal safety railing.





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## RECOMMENDER

### What's the No. 1 tip for a successful start to **spring cleanup?**

Marc Mataya, owner of Leaf Burrito, says contractors should make note of potential problem areas early in the season.



**MARC MATAYA**  
OWNER  
LEAF BURRITO

Our No. 1 tip is to hit the “go” button. Don’t hesitate to get started. Spring cleanup is a great way to revitalize the investment you’ve made in your client’s property. It might be overwhelming to know where to begin, so start with a detailed assessment of the landscape. Take note of any problem areas, keeping in mind what suffered or failed last year. This could include dead or diseased plants and overgrown shrubs or debris that can stifle new growth.



**NICK CARLSON**  
FOUNDER AND CEO  
MULCHMATE

After 17-plus years in the landscape industry, there are a few things that have helped me in the middle of the crazy spring cleanup seasons: customer communication and expectation control, having your staff trained and finding efficient equipment. Make sure your customer knows exactly what to expect and when to expect it. Have your entire staff trained and have them repeat your expectations back to you, so you know they not only hear you but totally understand the expectation. More efficient equipment will allow jobs to be completed faster, with fewer people and that can reduce wear on the property.



**CHRIS GILBERT**  
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT  
MANAGER  
REDMAX

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## REV YOUR ENGINES

**CHARGED UP**  
Experts say battery-powered handheld equipment has come a long way since the early days of the technology.



# What to know before switching to battery

Hear from experts about the questions you should ask before committing to battery-powered equipment **BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

**L**andscape professionals still have plenty of questions about handheld battery-powered equipment and mowers, even as adoption becomes more widespread.

Jack Easterly, product manager for Husqvarna; Jason Wilk, senior product manager for Echo; and Nick Suchoza, senior director of design for Greenworks, share answers to the questions you need to ask before committing to battery-powered equipment.

### START SMALL

After years of relying on gas-powered equipment, the switch to battery power might feel daunting.



Jack Easterly

Easterly recommends doing your research and starting small once you've decided on a manufacturer's battery and charging platform. He says anything more than a few tools can lock you into a brand with a potentially significant cost associated with switching.

"Unless you want to make a big change to a different brand with different chargers and batteries, I would be careful when you pick one platform or brand," he says. "If you use multiple platforms, you might not know which charger is compatible with which, you don't have compatible batteries for those chargers and so on."

To avoid the confusion of switching, Wilk says it's crucial to research what tools each brand offers to ensure it has everything you need.

"For example, if you're a contractor who offers tree care in addition to your other services, you want to make sure that the manufacturer you choose has the tools you need for tree care," he says.

### DON'T UNDERESTIMATE

The No. 1 barrier to entry Suchoza hears from pros is "range anxiety," or the question, "Can the tool provide consistent power for the task I'm using it for?" That fear, he says, is becoming more unfounded as battery-powered equipment continues to evolve.

"Everyone wants something more powerful than what they already have," he says. "I think we're finally there (with battery-powered equipment). You won't be disappointed; you'll probably be surprised at the money you'll save in the long run."

Battery-powered equipment also can help increase productivity, Suchoza says, with fewer stops at gas stations and quicker starting procedures.

"Productivity is more than just run time," Suchoza says. "For a stop at a gas station, who knows how long the crew will be inside buying food, gassing up the truck and filling up gas cans. It's time lost."

### CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE

Easterly says another barrier that may keep professionals from making the switch to battery power is infrastructure.

"We hear from a lot of people that they've reached a certain point where their infrastructure can't support anymore (tools)," he says. "If you look at the difficulty in electrification, it's

an exponential chart. The bigger the company, the more batteries it'll need to operate."

Retrofitting current assets, like enclosed trailers, for battery-powered equipment is one solution Easterly offers. He says multi-battery and overnight charging solutions that companies like Husqvarna offer are ways for pros to maximize their existing infrastructure.

"Landscapers aren't paid to charge batteries during the day," he says. "So we try to take advantage of that time window where they're not out in the field, so the battery has enough energy to perform the job."

### GET THE WHOLE PICTURE

Wilk says it's essential to view the whole picture before deciding on a single platform. Evaluating battery-powered equipment isn't as simple as looking for the highest voltage, he says. It comes down to how the equipment uses the volts.

"There's a lot of marketing information when it comes to performance and runtimes," he says. "Professionals are wading through a lot of this new technology trying to find out what it does or means. We've been doing a lot with our dealers trying to educate end users."

Wilk, Suchoza and Easterly agree that the best way to cut through the marketing lingo is to visit a local dealer and get hands-on experience with the machines. 📍



Jason Wilk

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## HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

### Final piece of the puzzle

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**LOCATION** Great Falls, Va.

**COMPANY** McHale Landscape Design

**DETAILS** Access to the project site was a significant hurdle, says Anthony Cusat, director of design and senior architect for McHale Landscape Design.

Crews had limited space to maneuver materials to the clients' backyard due to both the location of the route and an existing walkway and water feature McHale had previously installed.

"There is a travertine walkway that we had installed, and the client didn't want that damaged," he says. "We had to use a lot of manpower to get to the backyard. Pretty much everything was done by hand and with wheelbarrows."

Cusat says space difficulties continued into the backyard, where the rear property line sits 50 feet from the back of the house. A resource protection area to the left of the home also limited space for expansion of the client's screened-in pavilion.

McHale expanded the pavilion's interior by 2 feet in each direction and added new lighting fixtures. The contractor also replaced the previous deck with travertine stone to match the walkway it had installed years prior.

The clients are longtime patrons of the contractor. According to Cusat, the company has worked on the property for 16 years, including design/build work on the front of the home, as well as regular maintenance.

"We did some projects on both side yards and the front foundation as well," he says. "This project was kind of a culmination, bringing everything we had done previously together."

This project won McHale Landscape Design a Gold Award from the 2022 National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence Program. 🏆

*See more photos from this project at [LandscapeManagement.net/hardscape-solutions](https://www.landscape-management.net/hardscape-solutions).*



**Captions** | **1.** McHale Landscape had limited access to the backyard, with just one entrance that shared space with a water feature the company had previously installed. **2.** McHale crews ran into a problem with the septic line during construction, requiring a septic engineer to relocate the system entirely. **3.** In addition to the new family terrace area, McHale crafted custom storage containers for the property. **4.** McHale continued to work down to the lower levels of the backyard terrace, including room for more outdoor activities.



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### WEAR AND TEAR

Checking wear items regularly is crucial to ensure a skid-steer operates properly.



# Keep skid-steers in top working order with these tips

Understanding the biggest places for wear and tear and doing routine maintenance help boost skid-steer productivity **BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR**

**S**cheduled maintenance not only maximizes a skid-steer's performance but also reduces unplanned downtime, boosts resale value, reduces expenses and improves operator safety.

### CREATE A CHECKLIST

Landscape professionals should reference the maintenance information in their machine's operator's manual and keep records to prevent issues down the line, says Luke Gribble, solutions marketing manager of compact equipment at John Deere. The manual will help them create a checklist for what to inspect and also where to locate each touchpoint.

Before running a skid-steer, operators need to walk around the equipment to inspect for damage, debris, exposed wiring and the machine's frame, as well as check in the cab, to ensure things like the controllers, seat belt and lights work properly, Gribble says.



Luke Gribble

### WHAT TO INSPECT

Operators should check all oil and coolant levels, look for hydraulic leaks and lubricate all pivot points, says Gerald Corder, product manager of construction equipment at Kubota.

"With hydraulic, that system does not utilize a high system pressure like the boom, bucket and aux circuits," Corder says. "Because the cylinder sees less pressure, any buildup of corrosion or wear that causes binding may keep the pins from properly locking and may cause safety issues."

Check fuel/water separators at least weekly to minimize water in the fuel, and change filters at the suggested intervals, Corder adds.

"For fuel filters, make sure that filters with a 5-micron or better rating are used to optimize the life of common rail fuel system components," he says.

The biggest wear parts of a skid-steer loader are the tires, says Mike Fitzgerald, marketing manager with Bobcat. "Tires are also one of the major operating expenses for skid-steer loaders, so it's critical to take good care of these assets," Fitzgerald says. "Make sure to inspect tire pressure and keep it at the recommended PSI — not over or under."

Other areas to monitor include inspecting the water separator, checking hoses for damage/wear and ensuring all safety equipment is present and working, says Jason Boerger, senior product line manager for Kioti.

Teams should keep an eye on pins and bushings to identify and address concerns, Boerger says. They also need to monitor ground-engaging components and accessories like buckets, teeth, cutting edges and attachments.

### DON'T OVERLOOK

The most overlooked daily maintenance item for skid-steers is greasing, Boerger says.

Gribble recommends keeping grease in a truck nearby to reduce downtime.

Cabin air filters should also be cleaned and replaced as necessary. "Often, when we hear that the HVAC is not working effectively, we can typically correct the issue right there by looking at the air filters," Corder says.


On pilot-operated skid-steers, maintenance personnel often forget that the pilot control system has its own filter separate from the main hydraulic filter.

"If neglected, this can cause a loss of control for the driver and front functions if the filter gets plugged," Corder says.

Another area that's not visible is the final drive chain case, which includes fluid that needs changing at regular intervals, Fitzgerald says. Some models use mechanical linkages to control machine movement and loader lift arm function and may require occasional lubrication to operate properly, he adds.

Contractors also should check alternator and AC compressor drive systems. "Inspecting the belts for cracking and wear, checking for grooving on pulleys and checking for rotational rough spots on idlers and tensioners will help keep those systems running," Corder says.

Remember to note worn or damaged components and tackle those issues as soon as possible.

"Being proactive about handling any concerns or even minor damage will go a long way to keeping the machine healthy and operating for years to come," Boerger says. 



Gerald Corder

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.





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## RECOMMENDER

What should pros know to select **the correct filter cartridges** for their needs?



Experts say it's crucial to understand the importance of good filtration as they are key to a high-quality irrigation system.

**MATTHEW MIKUCKI**  
SITEONE LANDSCAPE SUPPLY  
DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT  
MARKETING



Filter cartridges are the key to success for high-performing and long-lasting irrigation systems, especially when dealing with less-than-ideal water sources or water conditions. Filtration reduces the cost of maintenance caused by dirty water, keeping emitters, nozzles and other equipment functioning as designed. Key areas to focus on when selecting a filter cartridge are minimum and maximum flow rates, the water source and seasonal factors such as algae or water turbidity, system pressure and the dimensions of the sprinkler nozzles or emitters. Manufacturers recommend that the filter porosity maintain a ratio of 1-5 for drip irrigation and 1-3 for sprinklers.

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With drip irrigation becoming more prevalent, it is good to understand the importance of good filtration. One thing to know would be, what is the minimum mesh size required for your irrigation emission device? Larger emission devices can allow larger particles to pass through without clogging. Small emission devices will require a finer mesh. Generally, most drip emitters would require a minimum of 120 mesh. The larger the number, the finer the mesh. For example, a 200-mesh filter would capture more particles than a 20-mesh filter. The finer filters may require more frequent maintenance, however. Choose wisely.

**MATT JONES**  
CONSERVA IRRIGATION  
FRANCHISE SUPPORT AND  
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Irrigation professionals should look for filters with high filtration efficiency, easy maintenance, durability and compatibility with their existing irrigation system. Easy maintenance means easy cleaning or replacement of the filter element, minimizing downtime and maintenance costs. Durability is important due to its long-lasting use in harsh outdoor environments. Compatibility with the existing irrigation system ensures that the filter can be easily installed and integrated with minimal modifications. Be sure to choose the correct micron size based on the particle size of the target material to be filtered from the water and the orifice size of the equipment downstream.

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Drip irrigation is more cost-effective for contractors because of fewer material costs.



# The many benefits of a drip irrigation system

While irrigation contractors may think of drip irrigation as high-maintenance, its benefits outweigh the drawbacks **BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR**



**D**rip irrigation often gets a bad rap for being high-maintenance, says Steve McCarter, vice president of sales and marketing for Landscape Products.

Still, there are many good reasons to use a drip irrigation system. We spoke to McCarter; Justin White, CEO of K&D Landscaping in Watsonville, Calif.; and Adam Edgar, assistant category manager at SiteOne Landscape Supply, to

learn the benefits a drip irrigation system offers contractors, including targeted watering and a less extensive installation.

### INSTALLATION EASE

McCarter says it's a big misconception that drip systems are more labor-intensive than overhead irrigation.

"Any irrigation system requires periodic maintenance to inspect the backflow device, adjust sprinklers and rotary

heads, or make seasonal adjustments to the irrigation controller," he says.

White says installing a drip system is less expensive for the primarily commercial design/build, irrigation, maintenance and tree services operation. A drip system saves on material costs because contractors need less hard pipe and fewer fittings and sprinklers.

"You also save a lot of money on  
*Continued on page 42*

PHOTO: K&D LANDSCAPING

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## BUSINESS BOOSTERS

*Continued from page 40*

labor because you basically just install the valve system,” he says. “You sub out a few places for the drip hose and you connect to that and run your drip hose to your plants and install emitters on that drip hose. Instead of having to put all these sprinklers in and all this hard pipe, you do a flexible drip piping, 3-4 inches below the surface.”

Edgar says irrigation contractors also save on installation by not needing to trench. And as the system sits at or just below the surface, irrigation contractors can access the system easier for more convenient maintenance.

### A TARGETED APPROACH

But the No. 1 benefit to a drip irrigation system is its targeted approach to watering — slowly and directly to the base of a plant. This method translates to water savings and better plant health. McCarter estimates drip irrigation systems use 30 to 60 percent less water than an overhead system.

Irrigation contractors also may see ancillary benefits, such as less weeding, White notes.

“With a sprinkler system or overhead irrigation, typically it waters the whole area,” he says. “So, you’ve got to do a lot of weed control in between the plants. Where the drip irrigation just drops it right at the plant.”

Another plus is the amount of area potentially covered by drip irrigation, White says. For example, a drip system will water a larger square footage with fewer gallons per minute.

“Once you convert it to drip irrigation, now you can water that same system for a quarter or maybe even a 10th of the amount of water per minute,” he says.

### WHAT TO KNOW

Before installing a drip system, Edgar says contractors need to understand the site’s specific needs.

“You need to make sure that your plantings (whether drought-tolerant or native) will match the anticipated water usage,” he says. “It’s also important to know your soil; this will help determine the type of emitters to be used and it should also match your plants’ needs.”

K&D also installs a pressurized flag that pops up when the irrigation system runs. Since drip runs at such a lower pressure, it’s not easy to tell when the system is on.

Hillside can be a challenge as well. If K&D installs a drip system on a hillside, technicians install a flush valve or check valve to prevent overwatering plants at the bottom of the hill, White says.

“We recommend doing some type of flush valve where you put a little bit of drain rock or something at the end of the line that automatically flushes the line,” he says. “Or you can use a check valve system to ensure that it doesn’t run to the low end or the low elevation drainage once that valve shuts off.”

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## Why Hidden Creek Landscaping dove in head-first to pool installations

Co-owner Jason Cromley shares how the Hilliard, Ohio, operation added pool installations and how they differ from standard design/build projects BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

**H**illiard, Ohio-based Hidden Creek Landscaping, No. 148 on the 2022 LM150 list, purchased a Columbus, Ohio-based pool installation company at the end of 2020. Co-owner Jason Cromley estimates this move added about \$3.5 million to the company's revenue in 2021.

Hidden Creek provides 25 percent landscape maintenance and snow removal and 75 percent design/build and pool installation services to a 25 percent commercial and 75 percent residential clientele.



Jason Cromley

Adding pool installation under the Hidden Creek umbrella was a no-brainer, Cromley says, because projects are never just a pool installation.

### Not just an easy project

Cromley decided to purchase a pool installation contractor Hidden Creek had worked with for five years. He says there's so much more to a pool installation than a paver patio installation, and having the insight and knowledge from the pool installation owner was a tremendous asset. A \$100,000 patio might take about three weeks to complete and need gravel, pavers, weed mat, concrete and more. A pool takes even more time and requires more permits and inspections. A standard pool installation could take between

three to six months, he says.

"When you're putting a light in a pool, you're throwing electricity into water, and it's a structural thing as well. Anytime you put a footer in, you have to go down three feet, and you have to have an inspector to come out to make sure you dug down (properly)," he says. "You have to put your rebar in the right way so that it could be a solid structure. You have permits at three different stages throughout the project."

The COVID-19 pandemic and the explosion of interest in outdoor spaces accelerated Cromley's interest in adding pool installation to his business. While most landscape businesses are booked out four months in advance, many pool contractors are booked six months to a year in advance.

"We developed a really strong partnership years ago where he was always referring me," Cromley says. "But every time I would go to refer him, he's like, 'Sorry, I'm already booked out two years.' I decided to buy the best company in town that had the best reputation and had the biggest backlog."

### Daring to be different

Cromley says he hopes to create a unique outdoor experience for Hidden Creek clients.

"We wanted to create a whole different kind of pool experience for our clients," he says. "We don't want to do



just the 20-by-40 (foot pool), like everybody else. ... Some of our core values are 'dare to be different' and 'lead with intent.'"

He says 2021, despite the \$3.5 million in growth, was a challenging year for his operation. Cromley says the Hidden Creek team could have integrated the financials of the pool operation better and done a better job explaining the purchase to clients.

In 2024 the company will officially go by Hidden Creek, dropping the "Landscaping" part of its name.

"When you say landscaping, people say, 'Oh, you cut grass, right?'" he says. "Not everybody does the design/build side. We like the design/build part because that's the most visually rewarding. The pool (service) really adds to that." 🗣️

**Hidden Creek Landscaping Co-owner Jason Cromley says pool installation added millions in revenue to his business.**

# FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

## Matt Hunter

### PRESIDENT

NEW GARDEN LANDSCAPING & NURSERY  
GREENSBORO, N.C.

### 1 Tell me about the company.

It was formed in 1977 by Morris Newlin. He started it out as a design/build and maintenance company. He brought his brother in to run the garden centers. I bought the company in December 2020. We have one retail garden center. We have a main operations and administration location, and we have a satellite operation in Winston-Salem. It's design/build, landscape maintenance and we also do fine gardening and estate work. We're 40 percent design/build, 30 percent maintenance and 30 percent retail.

### 2 How did you find your way into the industry?

I got into the industry at a very young age. I lived in Toledo, Ohio. My best friend's family had a retail garden center and grew annuals. In order for me to be able to keep my dirt bike on their farm and be able to ride, I had to work in the garden center and help with the annuals. We would plant spring annuals, we'd help in the garden center loading customers and by picking apples and strawberries. Then I started mowing lawns. I moved to North Carolina in 1990 and went to work at a garden center. I got a degree in horticulture from N.C. State in 1995.

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

The most memorable day in my career was Dec. 17 of 2020 when I signed the paperwork to buy New Garden Landscape & Nursery. It was my dream since I was a young man to own a landscape company and be able to help give people opportunities that might not have been provided within their own families. My wife and I took Morris Newlin and his wife out to dinner to celebrate his

retirement and celebrate the movement of New Garden Landscaping & Nursery into the future.

### 4 Do you have a family, and what do you all do for fun?

I married my high school sweetheart Christie, we've been together since 1992. We have two daughters, Katelyn and Alexis, 18 and 14. For fun we like to travel, and we also are into sporting events. My team is N.C. State, and my wife and daughters root for UNC-Chapel Hill, so we have a divided house.

### 5 What are your expectations for this upcoming season?

For 2023, I foresee that we will have to work harder for our sales. I think we'll have somewhat of a downturn in the economy. But internally, we'll be more proactive with our sales and not be order-takers and work on really selling the clients. We work with high-end residential, so a lot of our clients are somewhat recession-proof. I hope to show at least five-percent growth in 2023. 

### BEST ADVICE

"Never burn a bridge and create strong relationships. I think everything is possible through strong relationships; it's more about who you know than what you know."



PHOTO: CHRISTIE HUNTER





**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](mailto:greg.herring@herring-group.com).

# How your income statement can help your business win

**S**ports metaphors are common in business. One of the most useful is the importance of a scoreboard. How do you know whether your company is winning if you don't know the score?

As we discussed in my January column, operating profit margin is the best way to measure success in the landscape industry. Operating profit is revenue minus direct job expenses, indirect job expenses and overhead expenses, including straight-line depreciation expenses. Operating profit margin is operating profit divided by revenue — a percentage.

It measures customer satisfaction, management effectiveness and operating efficiency. For companies with revenue greater than \$3 million, I recommend you target an operating profit margin of 12 percent and settle for anything above 10 percent as an initial goal. (Smaller companies can often earn higher margins because the impact of an effective owner is much greater for small companies.)

So if a 10 to 12 percent operating profit margin is a win, your income statement is the scoreboard.

Your income statement is the most accurate representation of your company's performance. It helps you see clearly. It also informs your estimating, including labor burden and overhead markup calculations. If your income statement is jumbled, and many are, your pricing will likely be too low.

Here are some steps to take to build your scoreboard.

**1 Start with a well-organized chart of accounts.** Your chart of accounts provides a structure to ensure an accurate income statement. I recommend not having any costs above the gross profit line not included in estimates. All other costs go below the gross profit line, so you'll know your overhead costs.

**2 Use your income statement to check on the data in your landscape business management software program.** As you reconcile bank statements and there is a discrepancy between the numbers in your business management software and your accounting software, you can be confident that the accounting software is correct.

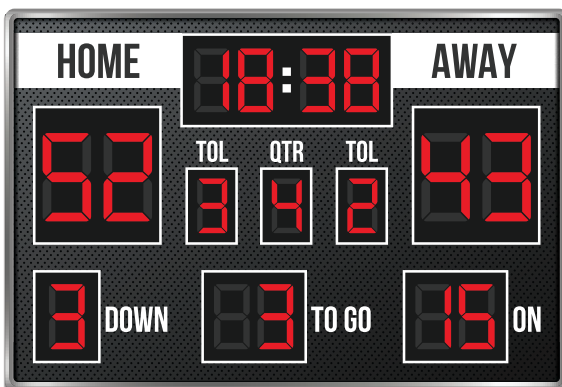
For our clients at The Herring Group, we compare the numbers in their income statement with the numbers in Aspire every month. The numbers should be very close. (By the way, if you don't have software like Aspire, you manage your business the hard way.)

**3 Use the correct depreciation number.** Get a GAAP or straight-line depreciation estimate from your tax accountant — not tax depreciation. It's better to have an estimate than nothing, but don't use a tax number.

**4 Accrue payroll expenses at the end of every month.** You want to avoid three-payroll months (for companies that pay every two weeks) or five-payroll months (for companies that pay every week). Accruing payroll expenses will reduce the volatility of your gross profit margin and operating profit margin.

**5 Don't forget overhead in your growth plans.** It is common for landscape company owners and managers to believe they can grow their businesses significantly without growing overhead. According to my Landscape Industry Benchmark Report, big companies are not more profitable than small companies. If your revenue doubles, plan on your overhead expenses doubling.

**6 If you have significant snow revenue, ensure you make money on the green side.** Simply look at your income statement beginning in March or April (depending on when your growing season starts) through October. When you add your operating income for those months (after depreciation), was your company profitable? Was the profitability greater than 10 percent of the revenue for those months? It should be. You work hard in both the snow and landscape seasons. You want to win 12 months out of the year. 🏆





BY NEAL GLATT

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

# Why you need a solid sales process

**T**he ability to sell profitable contracts is critical for every business. With rising labor and material costs and a slowing economy, the green industry is starting to feel pressure. Even companies that have had success for the past couple of years may find the results were more a factor of lockdowns and government stimulus checks than actual sales acumen.

Few companies have a sustainable sales process that can deliver enough predictability and profit for operations to scale in a tight labor market. Here's how to enable sales success with a quality process.

## CONSIDER THE TARGET

You should build a sales process around how specific customers choose to buy, so having a clear picture of the target market is the first step. The first step in defining a target market is considering which customers a business can efficiently serve to maximize customer service, retention and profit.

A great clue as to what your target market should be is your current most profitable or otherwise favorite customers. A quality target market profile will include the customer segment (residential, estates, retail,

medical, industrial, etc.), geographic location and the unique features that make them the right fit for a given company (minimum lot size or maintenance requirements). What's more, the target market statement should include the top benefit the customer values in the company's service, the annual budget spent on that service and what specific service will resonate with the customer.

One example of a quality statement could be: We target residential clients with 30,000-plus-square-foot lawns in Wayne County, Mich., who value proactive communication and annually spend at least \$3,000 on weekly lawn mowing and fertilization.

## CHOOSE THE RIGHT LEAD GENERATION

With a good target market statement, it becomes much easier to determine how these customers may purchase the service you offer. Will direct mail, social media ads, professional networking or cold calling be the most effective way to contact leads? The way in which a target market buys will dictate the best method.

The same demographic in different geographic markets will be accessible in different ways. For instance, commercial property managers in Ohio may be active members of the

Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), where six local associations exist, but that same demographic in New Hampshire may be part of a different association. In the same way, you

may approach a residential service target with different online strategies. According to the Pew Research Center, 45 percent of adults in urban areas use Instagram, while only 25 percent of adults in rural areas do.

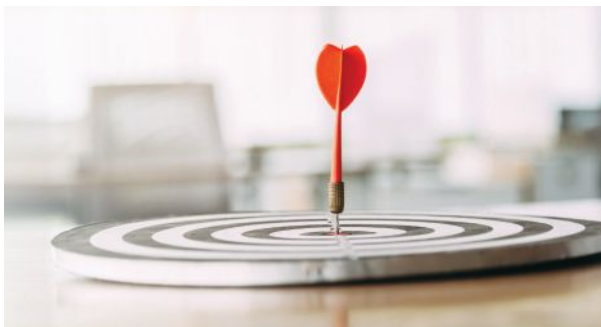
## DETERMINE THE STEPS

Your sales process should be highly detailed to ensure you can measure and improve each distinct step of the process. When selling commercial maintenance contracts, it may require no less than seven steps. First, some level of research on a lead followed by reaching out to those who seem like a fit.

Then, the sales team will qualify the match against the target market before having a discovery meeting. Your sales team may prepare a proposal for some of those prospects based on the meeting, and then conduct the proposal presentation meeting. Finally, some prospects become customers and there are steps to complete the sale and onboard the client.

Of course, each step can have few or many substeps or activities. This process allows you to track these metrics with the right customer relationship management software so your sales teams can track and improve their efforts.

Are your team's sales unsatisfactory because they don't have enough conversations with prospects? Or because the prospects aren't a great fit for the company? Is a salesperson lacking skills at hunting or closing? A detailed sales process will reveal where you can make improvements to reach sales goals and enable your sales team to break through to the next level. 🎯



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# GROW WITH GRUNDER

BY MARTY GRUNDER

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



## Why focusing on soft skills sets your business apart

I've said it before, as have many others in our industry: Your team is your landscaping company's greatest asset. At the successful companies we tour for our GROW! Annual Conference each year, the owners always say their *people* make their businesses stand out from the crowd.

Having a great team doesn't happen by accident. It comes from leadership intentionally creating a good company culture, hiring managers making smart decisions about who they add to the team and the entire team working together to build one another up and support the team. To an outsider, it may look like this team has the magic and unattainable "it" factor. But in my experience, we can teach that.

It starts by having a growth mindset as an owner or leader. This means that when something doesn't go according to plan, you ask yourself, "What did I do or not do that led to this?" You don't start by placing blame or pointing fingers; you take ownership and work toward a solution.

The next step is teaching your team to have a growth mindset and training them on soft skills that will

“To an outsider, it may look like this team has the magic and unattainable ‘it’ factor. But in my experience, we can teach that.”

make them better team members. I'll be covering this topic in depth at GROW! 2023 in San Antonio, Texas. I'll dive into the skills we teach our team at Grunder Landscaping Co. to help them be better team members to one another and to take better care of our clients. Three of the soft skills I teach are:

**Nurturing relationships.** Establishing and nurturing relationships are life skills; they aren't taught in school. We teach our team to ask questions, take an interest in other people and actively listen during conversations. It's essential for our team to be able to create and sustain relationships with both their fellow team members and our clients. It makes our company a better place to work.

**Handling issues and disagreements.** No matter how much we plan and communicate, things will still go wrong. When a problem arises within the team, with a vendor or with a client, we want to equip our team to find a solution civilly. We teach them to look at *what* and not *who* is to blame, to take accountability when it's their mistake and be part of the solution when something goes awry.

**Be a person other people want to be around.** The world doesn't revolve around any single person.

That's why self-awareness is a key soft skill for us. We want our team to be friendly, show they care and be aware of how their actions affect the people around them. To teach this trait, we often explain to our team the *why* behind our processes so they understand how the way they work can affect their team members.

All three of these skills may come naturally to you or others on your team, but they don't come naturally to everyone. By explicitly teaching our team how to do these things, we're investing in them as people and as team members.

We want Grunder Landscaping Co. to be a great place to work. To achieve that goal, we need a team that is great to work with. We get there by hiring the right people who fit our company culture and teaching our team the skills we want them to have. All around, I've learned that when you invest in your team, it pays the largest dividends.

Join my team and me Feb. 28 to March 2 in San Antonio, Texas, for GROW! 2023. I'll teach a session that goes more in-depth on soft skills; plus, we have a full agenda of sessions on all the topics your company needs to know about to be successful in 2023. Register online before spots sell out: [GrowGroupInc.com/Grow-2023](https://www.growgroupinc.com/grow-2023). 

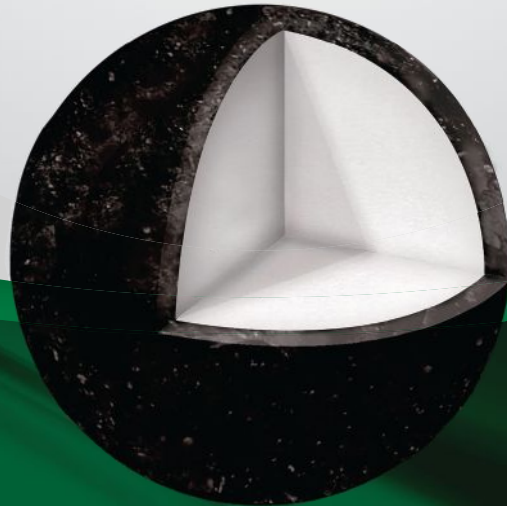


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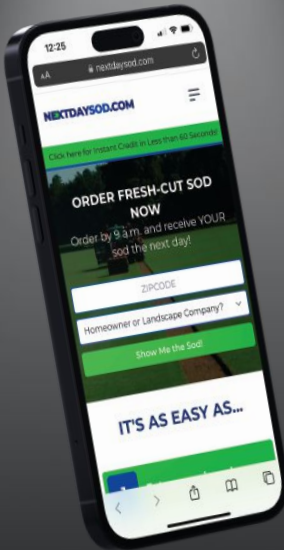
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