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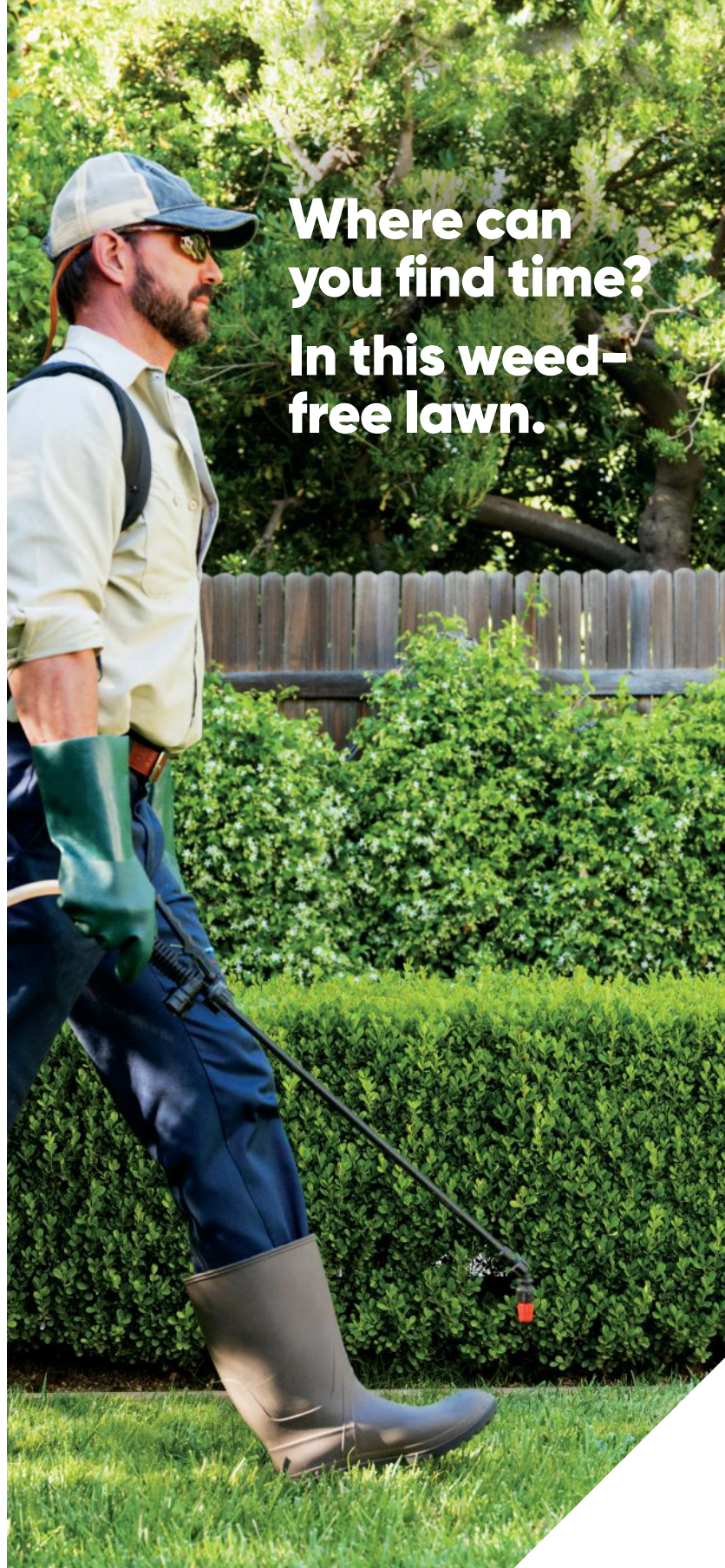


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Join us for our 14 education sessions during the 2023 Equip Exposition in Louisville, Ky., Oct. 18-20. Session topics include scaling for success, company culture, KPIs, closing the sale and more. To register for our Equip Education sessions, you'll first need to register to attend the show. Visit [EquipExposition.com](http://EquipExposition.com) to register and to learn more. During the registration process, you can add our education sessions.



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## Goodbye to a Hall (of famer)

If you've been reading this magazine for years, you'll be saddened to hear the news that Ron Hall passed away. Ron joined the *Landscape Management* staff — then known as *Weeds Trees and Turf* — in 1984 as an associate editor. He became the magazine's editor-in-chief in 2000 and was named editor-at-large in 2008.

He spent more than 30 years as a journalist in the industry — specializing in the lawn and sports turf markets — covering anything and everything to help his readers.

I didn't know Ron well, but I read his stuff, and I was thrilled the day I learned he read my stuff. Getting a compliment from Ron was a badge of honor because he was one of the most gifted writers in the industry,

"Ron could fall out of bed and write a better column in an hour than most editors could produce after days. Always with a smile on his face at shows, Ron was one of my favorites to walk the trade show floor with," said Kevin Stoltman, president and CEO of North Coast Media, parent company of *Landscape Management* magazine. "He could talk shop with the best of them and always looked forward to a good speaker. Ron genuinely cared about our readers and their needs. Our industry needs more Ron Halls, not less."

"Ron was a gifted photojournalist. His photos and words opened our minds and hearts," said Marty Whitford, vice president of content and publisher at North Coast Media. "Throughout his storied career, Ron

nabbed countless journalism awards, but it was his numerous close industry friendships he treasured the most."

Ron Hall belonged in the Hall ... of Fame. He was so revered by his industry colleagues that he was inducted into the Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association's (TOCA) Hall of Fame in 2016.

“Ron Hall belonged in the Hall ... of Fame. He was so revered by his industry colleagues that he was inducted into the Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association's (TOCA) Hall of Fame in 2016.”



"I love what I do — researching, interviewing, writing, etc.," Ron said during his induction ceremony. "It's almost like I'm still a student at that tiny college in Indiana, only with a lot less hair, no longer able to beat out the hits on the Little Giant baseball team and sans the keggers. I have a lot more to learn and I know I can do even better yet."

Ron died June 30 in Port Clinton, Ohio. He was born May 31, 1947, in Kentucky and graduated with a bachelor's degree in history from Wabash College. He was married to Vicky Hall

for 49 years and enjoyed traveling, gardening and riding his bicycle in his spare time. I'm told that back in the day, Ron was a heck of a basketball player with a deadly jump shot.

Here's a small sampling of Hall's editorial writing from his time with *LM*:

- "The fact is the U.S. public — while appreciative of lawns, parks and sports fields — knows little about turfgrass and what it takes to properly maintain it. Most homeowners don't know bluegrass from ryegrass, and too often over-water and over apply product. The implications of this knowledge black hole for our industry and our environment are enormous." — *Landscape Management*, July 2008
- "I'm beginning to wonder if we're promising too much and doing too little to educate ourselves, our teams and our customers to a more sustainable approach to landscape care. I'm wondering if we're relying too much on many of the same practices that have gotten us to this point (for better or worse), and we're paying too little attention to the concerns of a growing segment of the public, lawmakers and regulatory authorities over issues such as emissions, noise, water waste, inappropriate chemical use and nonpoint-source pollution." — *Landscape Management*, May 2010

Here's a cheers, from one *LM* editor-in-chief to another, to Ron Hall. 🍷



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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).

## How do you prepare for fall cleanups?

“Planning, planning, planning. Plan the hours of work you’ll have. Plan the equipment needs and plan your people needs ... Go have fun beating your goals. Then, celebrate.”



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New Orleans, La.



“Examine each job site to determine the right size crew setup, frequency of service, scope of work and debris handling. No two jobs are alike, and taking the time to examine each one with the goal to maximize quality with the least amount of hours possible will set up your crews for success.”

“Don’t assume your teams remember what they did last year. Refresh even experienced crews with processes and expectations. Better yet, let those experienced crews lead the training and then reward them for it.”



“We make sure all our equipment is working — our blowers, truck vacuums and specialized equipment. Then, we look at our work tickets in Aspire and make sure notes, instructions and maps are clear and our clients know what to expect. All planning is good.”



“We do annual maintenance on our air compressors and make sure each truck has the equipment to winterize systems. We also send reminders to our customers for this service. Usually, before our service department starts the winterization process, we have a schedule for each service tech set for three to four weeks in advance.”



“Make sure you coordinate your labor between install and maintenance for best company-wide results.”



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## Gachina Landscape Management finds a unique solution for challenging properties

Learn how the company decided to deploy herds of goats to tackle tough terrain and weeds **BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR**

**V**egetation management crews often face somewhat tough terrain. Gachina Landscape Management, No. 81 on the 2023 LM150 list, found a unique and sustainable way to manage properties — goats.

These four-legged landscapers were the brainchild of Lauren Galanes, Gachina's San Francisco branch manager. The company has deployed goats as part of a sustainable vegetative management strategy since 2018 on a large property in San Francisco.

"At the time we were using chippers to remove a lot of the debris and excessive green waste on site, (and) there were complaints about noise and dust from employees," Galanes says.

Additionally, steep inclines posed safety concerns for the crew, and using equipment in the dry brush posed fire risks.

### RELEASE THE GOATS

Gachina works with three Bay Area companies to deploy the four-legged vegetation management crews. Gachina and the companies work together to determine how big of a herd each property needs. The goat vegetation management companies and their herders work with the team from Gachina to fence off the area, bring in the goats and herd

dogs, and move the goats around the property to ensure the herd effectively clears out all excess vegetation.

"Goats are extremely adept at navigating steep terrain," she says. "The sheer size of the campus also impacted how much physical labor we could get done with our crews daily, while goats move in large herds very quickly. They will eat a wide variety of plants (weeds, brush, grass and invasive plants), clearing overgrown areas (hillsides, forests and utility rights-of-way) and eating invasive weeds."

Galanes also says the goats help add fire breaks — strips of land cleared of vegetation — to stop wildfires.

Once the goats finish a portion of the property, Gachina's crews overseed the area with native grasses and add pollinators, which thrive on the newly fertilized land — thanks to goat droppings.

### HAPPY CLIENTS

Galanes says this approach to vegetation management fits well with clients who have strong sustainability initiatives. She says the feedback has been positive.

"One of our clients really enjoys having the goats on campus — part of their goal as a company is to improve the quality of work life for their employees," she says. "Having goats on campus is relaxing for the employees — uplifting during the work day. We have had them say 'everybody loves your goats, having them here makes our people happier.'"

Cristina Prevarin, plant health care and regenerative landscapes manager for Gachina, says the company also deploys barn owl nest boxes for small rodent control in a large HOA.

For fellow landscape companies looking for alternative vegetation management, Prevarin says using goats is a viable option.

"It's much easier to coordinate than one may think," she says. "The companies that we work with are professional, reliable and insured. Often clients are not aware that this is even an option. Many are happy to hear about this natural alternative." 

**Gachina Landscape Maintenance uses goats to help manage vegetation on properties with steep slopes.**



## MERGERS & ACQUISITION NEWS

### Focal Pointe acquires three businesses

Focal Pointe Outdoor Solutions, No. 116 on the 2023 LM150 list, located in Caseyville, Ill., added three privately-owned landscape companies: Landworks in Kansas City, Kan.; Rite-A-Way Lawn Care in Cottleville, Mo.; and Signature Landscape of Oklahoma City, Okla. The company said it expects these three acquisitions to contribute 39 percent of the total Focal Pointe revenue for fiscal year 2023. The addition of Landworks, Rite-A-Way Lawn Care and Signature Landscape adds 220 employees across Illinois, Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma and represents a combined client portfolio in excess of \$17 million. Focal Pointe said it will integrate all three firms into the Focal Pointe family of companies. Signature Landscape will retain its name and its CEO Brett Gordon will become Focal Pointe's new COO.

### Juniper Landscaping grows in Sunshine State

Juniper Landscaping, No. 18 on the 2023 LM150 list, acquired Flawless Lawncare & Landscaping, which expands its footprint on the east coast of Florida. Owners Michael and Lisa Cram founded Flawless Lawncare & Landscaping in 2005, which offers commercial maintenance, tree and lawn care in Brevard County.

### Aphix expands in Tennessee

Aphix, No.137 on the 2023 LM150 list, acquired Common Grounds Landscape Management, a full-service commercial and government grounds maintenance provider located in Knoxville, Tenn. The acquisition adds a second office in the state for the company as it grows its presence in the Southeast U.S. Founded in 1989, Common Grounds Landscape Management opened when John and Suzanne Watson purchased a division of Jim McClain Nursery. Aphix said John Watson will continue to lead the Knoxville team as branch manager.

### Davey Tree adds Detroit-area company

The Davey Tree Expert Co., No. 2 on the 2023 LM150 list, added Arbor Tree Service of Attica, Mich. Arbor Tree provided residential and commercial tree and plant health care to the greater Detroit area since 1995, with a heavy concentration of work in commercial properties, such as condominiums and homeowner associations.

## ARA'S FORECAST SHOWS INCREASE IN DEMAND FOR CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT RENTAL

The American Rental Association (ARA) updated its forecast for the construction and industrial equipment rental industry. In the quarterly update, the ARA presented significant changes in the economic forecast, particularly for construction and industrial equipment (CIE) rental revenues.

With new considerations, ARA expects the CIE rental revenue to total \$56 billion this year and \$59 billion in 2024. In the previous forecast, ARA said it expected CIE rental revenue would reach \$45.5 billion in 2023 and \$46.7 billion in 2024.

The association said two factors underpin these changes. The first is the data on nonresidential construction spending used in the model and the second is the increasing importance of specialty rental to overall rental revenues.

A recent analysis by economists at the Federal Reserve Board has suggested that data for nonresidential construction spending produced by the U.S. Census Bureau has underestimated nonresidential construction spending by at least 20 percent since the second quarter of 2021.

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# How knowing your numbers and processes sets your business up for success

**Ben Gandy and Ken Thomas will lead two sessions at Equip Expo to help you take your business to the next level** BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

**B**usiness growth is a natural part of business ownership. But do you know how to scale your business? Do you know if your business is truly profitable?

As part of *Landscape Management's* education sessions at Equip Exposition, Ben Gandy and Ken Thomas, principals with Envisor Consulting, will help you understand what you need to do to scale your business effectively and help you get a better handle on your company's numbers. Gandy and Thomas will present two separate education sessions centered around knowing your numbers and scaling for success, held Thursday, Oct. 19, from 12-1 p.m. and 2-3 p.m.

## It's about the process

Scaling your business, Gandy says, is about documenting processes that are easy to replicate.

"Nobody got into landscaping to write standard operating procedures, but that's what (scaling) is about," he says. "Scaling is about developing and documenting systems."

He says this is as simple as documenting exactly how a salesperson closes a sale and hands it off to the designer and the administrative team. It's developing a consistent process for the tasks within a business. All of this documentation, Gandy says, is with the idea for a business to grow — whether that's opening up a second branch or just naturally wanting to grow.

"A lot of times (Envisor Consulting) will step into businesses at the point where they're thinking about multiple locations, multiple branches," he says. "Now (you) have to take the systems from the mothership and duplicate them somewhere else. Well, what are these systems?"

Documenting processes and procedures — and sticking with them — he says is a critical step to business growth.

"If I can develop and document that workflow, then I'm beginning to create the templates I need to scale," he says. "We're going to talk about that workflow, and we're going to talk a little bit about some of the critical elements in each one of those phases that you need to include in your standard operating procedures so that you can scale with structure."

He says all business owners, regardless of company size, will learn something from this session. Business growth

leads to more opportunities for your team and your operation.

"We're in a war for talent, for labor. Part of the compelling story that your business needs to tell is a story about growth, about opportunities," he says. "The earlier you start (developing systems), the easier it is just to grow."



Ken Thomas

## Know your numbers

Another part of successfully running a landscaping business is understanding your company's finances. Gandy says this includes knowing how to create a budget and comparing the budget to the actual monthly expenditures and revenue. He says it's also important for business owners to know and understand the profit and loss (P&L) statement.

"What did I budget for this month? What was my plan? What did we actually do?" Gandy says. "Compare those. I need to be able to do that at multiple levels as a company overall, but also by service line," he says.

Gandy says looking at each service line and job and comparing actual financials to budgets help business owners understand exactly what's happening. Is one crew less efficient? Did the cost of something increase from budget to installation? Gandy says he and Thomas will present mock P&L statements and walk attendees through how to read and learn from the data in those statements.

"We'll talk about how to read a profit and loss statement and what's the story that it's telling us," he says. "Anybody can read the story as a narrative, but what if it's just a bunch of numbers on a page? Well, let's go through that exercise together through an iteration or two so that we can come away with the story, and if this was your company, what would you go home and do?"

## REGISTER NOW

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# A TICKET TO RIDE

Golden ticket winners share what they appreciate most about Equip Exposition

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



## 40 years. The big four-oh. The landmark number is a reason to celebrate with friends.

Equip Exposition, previously known as GIE+Expo, celebrates its 40th anniversary on Oct. 17-20 in Louisville, Ky. One way Equip decided to ring in the occasion was to hand out 40 “golden ticket” free admissions to early registrants.

*LM* interviewed several lucky winners — some first-time attendees as well as some Equip veterans — about why they want to attend Equip, how they get the most out of the show and advice for newcomers.

# 40

40 YEARS OF EXPO

*Continued on page 16*

PHOTO: JOLEA BROWN



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Continued from page 15

## WCJ Land Services, CENTRAL TEXAS

Brandon Rodriguez is the owner-operator of WCJ Land Services, based in south-central Texas. He's a one-man operation in his second year of business. His company is 90 percent lawn maintenance with some tree trimming from time to time.



Brandon Rodriguez

This will be the first Equip Expo for Rodriguez, and he's excited to see what the show is all about. He learned about Equip by listening to industry podcasts and watching YouTube videos.

"I'm in year two of my business now, and in my first year, I realized what a big deal Equip Expo was," Rodriguez says. "So this year, I made it a point, as soon as registration opened up, to register and get a good price on tickets. And then I heard about the golden ticket, so I went ahead and applied for that."

Rodriguez says he has lofty goals for his first Equip. He lists networking, seeing new equipment and education as his primary goals. He singles out one of *Landscape Management's* classes as what he is most excited for: Electric and Alternative Fuels — Are You In?

"I can see a lot of (the industry) going towards electric and robotic equipment," he says. "I've even had my customers tell me that they're interested in having a robotic mower for their yard. I'm thinking, maybe I should start a business that rents these out to my customers, and I can maintain them."

## Amend's Small Engine, RUDOLPH, OHIO

Amend's Small Engine sells Toro, Bobcat and Walker mowers, along with handheld equipment. The company has proudly served customers in and around Rudolph, Ohio, for the last 45 years. By the end of this year, the company will have a new owner — Brian Goris.

Goris attends Equip Expo semiregularly and didn't want to miss this year's edition as he steps into his new role. Bonus points for him in that he will be attending for free, as one of Equip's golden ticket winners.

His main reason for attending Equip is to meet with the vendors he works with at Amend's Small Engine.

"It's a good chance to talk with someone who is higher up at a company. I don't (just) want to talk to the person who relays my information. I want to talk to that person that they're relaying information to," Goris says. "There's an engine shortage for equipment that my customers want to buy. I want to find out the basic points of what they have and what they're doing to (get more engines). That's my big reason for going — to talk about it face-to-face rather than over the phone."

Continued on page 19



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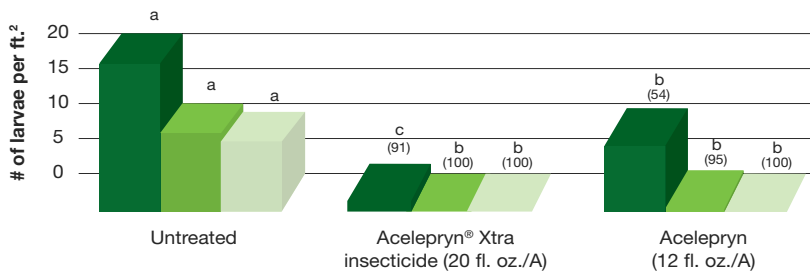


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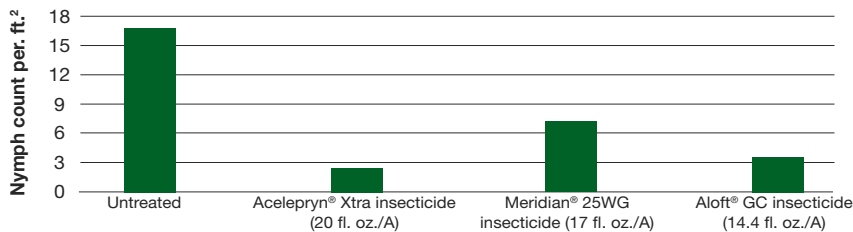
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 ■ **Indiana** JB:MC  
 ■ **Pennsylvania** MC

Source: Seaman, Richmond and McDonald, New York, Indiana and Pennsylvania, 2020. Application dates were June 10, 2020 in New York; May 6, 2020 in Indiana; and May 1, 2020 in Pennsylvania. \*OB = Oriental beetle. JB = Japanese beetle. EC = European chafer. MC = masked chafer.

### Hairy Chinch Bug Control



Source: Steve McDonald, Pennsylvania, 2020. Applications were made on July 10, 2020 and evaluated on July 30, 2020.



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*Continued from page 16*

Goris adds that he also appreciates being able to see what might be new and next ... as well as getting to operate it.

"I can go to Louisville and run the equipment and see it firsthand," he says. "That gives me a good idea on if I want to sell it or not."

He adds that with visiting his contacts being his primary goal for attending, it takes some advanced preparation.

"You need a plan of attack. Equip has a very good website that shows the floorplan, where all the booths are," Goris says. "You can't just start at the front door and walk through every aisle and expect to get to everything. If the person you want to see is way in the back, you'll never get to them. But if you plan out who you want to see, you can go there and see everyone you want to see."

### Fieldhouse Outdoor Solutions, ZIONSVILLE, IND.

Fieldhouse Outdoor Solutions is a commercial landscape maintenance and snow removal company primarily serving the Indianapolis region

with aspirations of

expanding in other

markets. Clayton

Fieldhouse,

the owner, first

started attend-

ing Equip in the

early 2000s. For

him, the reason

to attend with a

handful of his employees is simple: to be as efficient as possible.

"You get to see what's coming out, what's on the horizon," he says. "The goal is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our crews, giving them the best tools all the time."

Fieldhouse says he's seen equipment at Equip that he'd never imagined beforehand, that has helped his crews. This year, he thinks that new technology might be artificial

intelligence. He hopes Equip delivers on educating him on what he needs to know about this nascent technology.

"We're looking to the future.

Every company is having challenges with labor," Fieldhouse says. "We want to see these advancements that are not only hitting our industry, but rapidly expanding. Are they going to allow us as businesses to implement that technology and service our customers, even through the labor shortage?"

For attendees who are new to Equip, Fieldhouse warns them not to get lured for too long by the outdoor demonstration area. While that area is invaluable, there's also much to learn indoors.

"As much fun as it is to demo everything, leave yourself time to explore the entire inside," he says. "There are so many opportunities to network with vendors and other professionals, and then there's the continuing education that's offered. The fact is, early in the week, you can get a lot of education. Don't come and try to cram everything into one day, because there are a lot of things the show offers beyond equipment."

### TNH Lawn and Snow, LA CROSSE, WIS.

Jason Wooden's brother-in-law convinced him to leave the corporate world behind as a network engineer and join TNH Lawn and Snow 2 1/2 years ago. Wooden attended his first Equip Expo last year, and he says he attended a similar show called Cisco Live in his previous career in the IT industry.

But Equip, he says, is unlike any other show he's seen in the green industry.

"Cisco Live is a huge show — Cisco has so much money!" Wooden says. "Equip is very similar. We were very impressed with it. That's why we booked (this year's show) last year, and got our rooms so fast."

*Continued on page 20*

## EXPECT THE BIGGEST EQUIP EVER

### Numbers are tracking for a record-setting show

With a show the size of Equip, trust that there are plenty of meetings that go on behind the scenes before the show arrives. Kris Kiser, CEO of Equip Exposition and the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, just stepped out of one of those joint meetings with his staff in Alexandria, Va., and Louisville, Ky., when *Landscape Management* caught up with him for an update.

Kiser says a clearer picture will be available after Labor Day when the early bird registrations close, but as of press time, Equip numbers were certainly looking strong:

- 30,000 square feet larger than last year's show
- LM education seminar attendance tracking 40 percent ahead of last year
- Landscaper attendance tracking 37 percent ahead of last year
- Dealer attendance tracking 10 percent ahead of last year
- Exhibitors flat, up 1 percent from last year

"We've listened to (*Landscape Management*), the irrigation folks, the pool and spa folks, the tree care folks ... and tweaked some things," Kiser says. "Those numbers are all unusually good. Across the board, the indicators are quite strong."

Quite excited about what the 40th anniversary of Equip Expo might look like once it gets here, Kiser adds, "We're just plain-Jane excited. It's our 40th anniversary and we've had a very good run. What we want to do — and I say this with all sincerity — we want to give back to the people who have helped us," Kiser says. "That includes Louisville Tourism and the state of Kentucky, the hotels, motels and restaurants. That's why we've gone to the next level with the (Third Eye Blind) concert. If you're coming to the show in some capacity and you brought your wife or your family, or your kids or your cousin ... bring them. There are no restrictions." — S.J.



Clayton Fieldhouse

Continued from page 19

Based in La Crosse, Wis., TNH Lawn and Snow “moves a lot of snow” in the commercial market every winter. The company also provides landscaping and hardscaping for its clients. Wooden says his must-see booths include John Deere, Gravelly and Milwaukee. Because the company does so much snow plowing, they’re always excited to see what’s new at Sno-Power. But his favorite thing about the show is meeting like-minded people and learning from them.

“Any time you go to one of these, you always pick things up. I don’t care if you’re talking to a vendor or a fellow pro. The best thing is networking and talking to people who do the same thing you do,” he says. “I look for the events outside (Equip), the events at night. You talk to people, you figure things out. That gets me going.”

### Kyle and Jayden Fox,

#### CENTRAL MISSOURI

Kyle Fox and his little brother, Jayden, have a joint long-term business in central Missouri, primarily cutting grass. Their father also has a business called Fox Earthworx that primarily does dirt work and landscaping.

Last year was the first time Kyle Fox attended, and he’s glad he saw it firsthand. He’s also happy to have won a golden ticket for this year’s show.

“It’s a lot of fun, but there is a whole lot of information there,” Fox says. “I could spend all week there and still not see everything.”

Fox’s main interest is in forestry equipment, skid-steer attachments and lawn care products. He adds that he’s not there for any of the nightlife



Jason Wooden traded in a corporate job to work for his brother-in-law at TNH Lawn and Snow. Wooden says his favorite thing about Equip Expo is networking and learning from others.



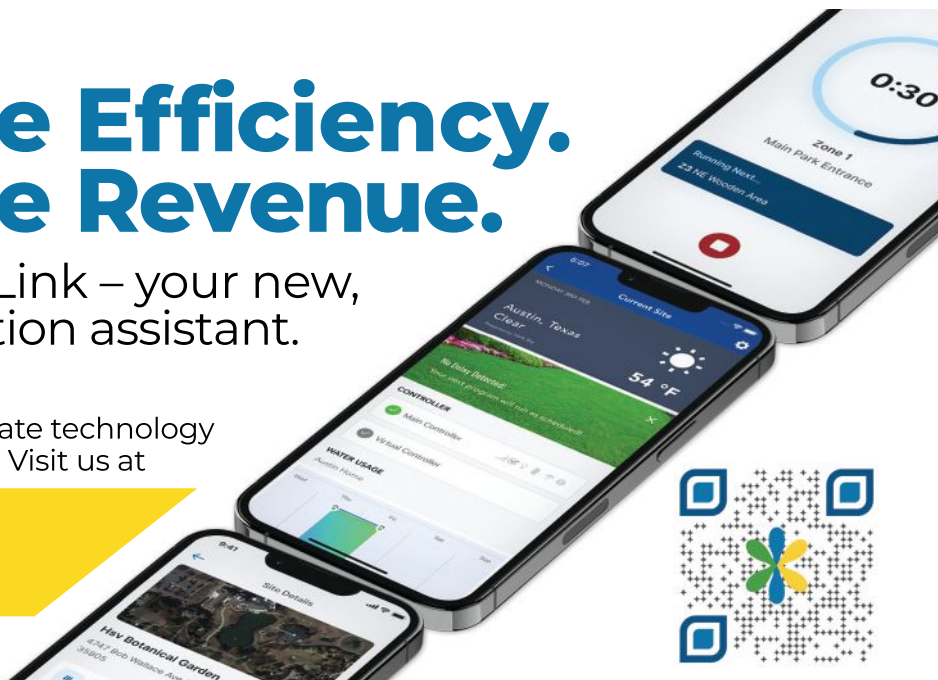
Jayden Fox and the team at Fox Earthworx say new equipment is the main draw for them at Equip Expo.

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or the educational seminars — he strictly wants to see new equipment.

“My best advice is just to go, in no particular order,” he says. “Just start walking. There’s so much to see.”

### Wray Landscape Construction, LINCOLN, CALIF.

Zack Wray of Wray Landscape Construction travels a long distance to attend Equip Expo — all the way from northern California. Based in Lincoln, Calif., the company specializes in softscapes, pavers and retaining walls. Wray is a foreman for the company, which is owned by his older brother.

Wray says high on his list is a meeting at the Takeuchi booth. Wray Landscape Construction is in the market for new skid-steers, and after renting some Takeuchis, they seem like a good fit for the company. But Wray adds that Equip

Exposition is also good for the small stuff.

“There have been a couple tools we’ve seen at Expo that we end up buying,” he says. “One of those tools is very simple, it’s called the Staple Ease, it’s an irrigation staple gun. You use the staples for irrigation fabric, or drip irrigation ... things like that. You don’t have to use a mallet; you don’t have to get down on the ground at all. You just load up the gun and puncture it right in the ground.”

Wray was happy to win a golden ticket from Equip Expo and adds



Zack Wray of Wray Landscape Construction says potential Equip Expo attendees need to plan ahead and get a hotel room early downtown.

three others from the company will join him, including his brother. His one bit of advice to newcomers is to book a hotel room in downtown Louisville — not near the convention center — because downtown is where all the after-show action is.

*Continued on page 22*



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Continued from page 21

“It’s a learning process for the company, but it’s also fun. We use it as a little bit of a vacation,” Wray says. “I’m looking forward to seeing all the new tech, but I’m also excited to catch a few good concerts ... We’ve seen some good concerts there the last couple years, and that is always exciting.”

**Teal Lawncare, BILLINGS, MONT.**

Teal Lawncare is a property maintenance company — lawn care in the summers and snow removal in the winters. It caters to a clientele that’s 50 percent residential and 50 percent commercial. Owner Jason Teal launched the company in 2014. Currently, he has three people working in the company, but he hopes to add another truck in 2024 — and that’s one of the reasons he wanted to attend Equip Expo this fall.

“I like traveling, No. 1, and I like meeting people there, networking,” he says. “I also like seeing the latest and greatest in equipment and I also like the classes they offer.”

Teal says every year he brings something back home for his business. He and a fellow lawn care company owner travel together to the show. He says if a company can afford the time away, it’s worth it. It’s beneficial and fun, he says. This year, he says, “We’re doing everything.”

That includes visiting the Scag, Gravely and Toro demo areas, he

says. He’s been so busy with mowing this season that he hasn’t been able to perform much landscaping.

“Business has been great; it gets better every year,” he says. “Equip helps me think bigger. You see how big the industry really is.”



Jason Teal, owner of Teal Lawncare says if a company can afford time away from the business, to attend Equip Expo, “it’s worth it.”

PHOTO: JESSICA TEAL

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## DID YOU KNOW

# Best practices for fall aeration services

As the fall months arrive, companies share tips to make the most of fall aeration

BY BRIAN LOVE | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

It's September, so one of the things on the mind of lawn care and landscape companies is fall aeration. When it comes to aeration best practices and pitfalls to avoid, George Kinkead, president of Turfco; Steve Nichols, executive vice president at Soil Tech Corp., and Brandon King, product manager at Billy Goat Industries, are happy to discuss.

## WHY AERATE?

Aeration involves creating small holes throughout a lawn. Soils can become compacted and compressed during the hot summer months. Compacted soil can make it difficult for the turf's roots to absorb water and nutrients.

The aeration process helps improve a property's turf by putting all the nutrients on top, says Kinkead. To him, it is about enhancing the growth of the lawn.

"The roots of a plant go deep and have a phenomenal impact on the health of the lawn," Kinkead says. "By punching a hole 2 3/4 (of an inch) down into the soil, you are making room for growth."

According to Nichols, the ultimate goal of aeration is to open up soils that might be too hard or tight.

## START OF AERATION

When should companies start their fall aeration services?

"I think that early to midfall is the ideal time to start aerating," Nichols

says. "The heat of the summer has dissipated. People like to try to get aeration done about the same time or slightly before seeding."

Kinkead and King say the start of fall aeration ultimately depends on where someone lives.

"If you are in the Midwest or north of the (Transition Zone), the ground and soil will need cooling off," Kinkead says. "In the Midwest, a good starting point may be Labor Day. Places still hot in September, such as the Carolinas and Georgia, may be happening later, like October or November."

But for contractors wanting to maximize their services, King advises adding seeding and fertilization and doing it all during a single job, packaging the whole deal to sell to either the homeowner or property manager.

"This gets you more value out of your time," King says. "I offer the aeration. I can do fertilization. I can do it all at once and have a larger charge.' Do more work and end up with a better service for your client."

## AVOID THESE MISTAKES

Aeration experts recommend doing a little preparation before conducting

aeration services. King recommends contractors be sure to flag any valve body, sprinkler head and any other obstructions on clients' properties.


Also, he adds it is a mistake to start scheduling services before making sure the machines are in good working order.

"The aerators will run for maybe six to 10 weeks out of the year and then they're going to sit in storage the rest of the time," King says. "They get neglected. Maintenance is something that may get overlooked. You don't want to lose all that time if something breaks and you have jobs scheduled."

Meanwhile, Kinkead recommends irrigating the property prior to aeration. The drier the yard, the harder it will be for the aerators to reach a good depth. He says it's vital to have a consistent depth.

"If you're not able to get the 2-inch plug-in, you can't bill a service for that customer," Kinkead says.

That watering process should continue post-aeration, especially if contractors plan to do seeding and fertilization at the same time.

"You want water to protect your investment and get the best benefit from it," King says. "Water will help to get everything germinated to run through the seasons." 



## IRRIGATION AID

Making sure the soil is loose enough to aerate properly and irrigating turf prior to the service when needed is a key to a successful season, experts say.

## HOW TO

# How to prevent application overlap

## Equipment and tips to ensure accurate spreader-sprayers applications

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

Limiting overlap with spreader-sprayer applications saves on materials and minimizes environmental impacts and damage to turf. Here are practices and equipment that can help lawn care operators (LCOs) improve their accuracy with these machines.

### LINE IT UP

Choosing operator-friendly spreader-sprayers will help improve application

efficiency, says George Kinkead, president of Turfco.

“Select equipment that’s simple and easy to learn so that when employee turnover happens, you can adapt,” he says. “Training and knowing each operator is doing the job (correctly) are critical to ensure accuracy and efficiency. If an operator is confused about how to use the machine, they aren’t going to be accurate.”

With a steering wheel, pivoting front axle and boomless design, Kinkead says

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Equipment with easy-to-use functions and settings can improve spreader-sprayer applications.



a model like Turfco’s T5000 allows operators to manage uneven terrain and match up on each pass.

“If you don’t know what line you’re on, you’re going to waste material,” Kinkead says. “Each time you get to the end of the pass, go to wheel lock, and that’s exactly where you want to be for the next 9-foot pass.”

He says the hard trim and application-rate controls on the T3100 help prevent off-target prills and maintain a

PHOTO: PERMAGREEN

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“If the trim system isn’t accurate, the prills can go into flower beds, sidewalks, streets and other places you don’t want material,” Kinkead says.

### MARK PASSES

LCOs must provide accurate applications across all of their properties, says Kodi Quinlisk, sales representative for Steel Green Manufacturing.

“A product is only as good as where it’s placed, how it’s placed there and the amount that’s placed there,” Quinlisk says. “Ensuring your spreader pattern is properly adjusted will help eliminate striping and discolored lawns.”

Steel Green’s machines use a boom sprayer that allows LCOs to make precise applications around edges while reducing the amount of drift. The boom also allows LCOs to use a foam marker, which can help them maintain the proper overlap.

“When the only way to tell where you’ve been is your tire tracks, it can be very difficult or often impossible when a lawn had recently been mowed or the sun is shining in the wrong direction,” he says.

Quinlisk says Steel Green’s Accu-Way pattern diffuser controls where the granules fall on the impeller to help prevent striping — and throwing granules back to the center of the tire tracks is key to providing an even granular application.

### AVOID CHANGES

The keys to an accurate application are constant speed, width, output and overlap, says Dan Shiplov, director of sales, PermaGreen. He says PermaGreen’s Triumph ride-on spreader maintains speeds of either 3.5 or 5 mph.

“Simply monitoring the tachometer assures accuracy of the entire system,” Shiplov says. “Spray width and spread width are factory set and outputs are

synchronized to those two speeds. No adjustable pressure regulator to fiddle with.”

He says his company’s Triumph is factory-set to make 7-foot parallel passes by dropping the end of the fertilizer pattern between the last pass and wheel marks.

“To trim and edge, drop the deflector and reduce the spreader output to match the narrower width,” Shiplov says.

He says LCOs should set operating standards including speed, spray pressure, spreader settings, using the deflector, trimming and edging. He encourages them to inspect their machines each morning to verify the correct settings.

“If possible, limit the adjustments that operators can make in the field,” Shiplov says. “Recheck the settings and correct any variations found. Monitor their product usage and compare them to square feet produced.”

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.

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## FROM THE SOURCE

# Understand your soil to level up your turf management

**Soil properties and health can impact turf nutrient availability, which is why it's critical to understand your soil type**

BY LISA BEIRN, PH.D. | CONTRIBUTOR

In the simplest sense, you can define soil as the medium in which plants grow. The often-overlooked reality is that soil represents a diverse, complex ecosystem that is the foundation that allows plants, animals and humans to thrive. By understanding soil properties and how to manage them, turfgrass managers can encourage healthy plants and environments.

Minerals (clay, sand or silt), organic matter, living organisms, water and air make up soil. The amounts and proportions of each of these components drive the physical, chemical and biological properties of soil.

Physical properties represent attributes such as soil texture, color, consistency, density and porosity. Chemical properties include pH and nutrients. Biological properties include organic matter decomposition, pest suppression and nitrogen mineralization.

## KNOW YOUR SOIL

Knowing the properties of your soil is vi-

tal for proper management. For example, soils with a high sand content will have less ability to hold water and nutrients. They dry out faster and are usually well-drained, resulting in turf that may not have enough moisture or nutrients to thrive. Soils with more clay can hold more nutrients and water but tend to dry out more slowly. Clay-based soils are also more prone to compaction, resulting in thin turf that can be more susceptible to wear. Incorporating organic matter, such as compost, into the soil profile can help in both situations.

Turfgrass managers can work compost into the soil following aeration in the spring or fall. Apply compost in a thin layer evenly across the surface and then brush into aeration holes. It can take a few seasons to see results and the process likely needs to be repeated. If conducting a complete soil renovation, aim for loamy soil. Loam soil represents an equal mix

of sand, silt and clay particles and is often considered ideal for turfgrass.


Soil pH also influences plant health by driving nutrient availability. In most cases, extremes in pH decrease the nutrients available to plants. It can also affect microbial processes. For turfgrass, an acceptable pH range is between 5.0 and 7.0, depending on the species grown.

## TAKE A SAMPLE

Portable pH meters are available, but it's preferred to get a soil test because it also will provide valuable information on nutrient status and cation exchange,

or the ability of the soil to supply nutrients to plants. When collecting samples for soil testing, always sample to rooting depth. This tends to be in the 3- to 4-inch range for turfgrass. Remove any thatch or mulch from the sample, as this can bias results.

Take multiple samples from the lawn in a random pattern and be careful to sample at the same depth each time. These subsamples can be combined into a composite and analyzed. If one area has different soil types, drainage or other physical properties, test it separately. Soil tests will generally include recommendations along with fertility and pH results.

Maintaining healthy soils is the first step toward a healthy lawn for your clients. Combining soil management techniques with a sound agronomic program is the best approach for long-term success in turfgrass management. To learn more about newly developed agronomic programs for lawns tailored for your area, visit [GreenCastOnline.com/lawn-programs](https://www.GreenCastOnline.com/lawn-programs). 

Beirn is the technical services director for Syngenta.



Lisa Beirn



**KNOW YOUR TYPE**  
Understanding the soil type will help you better manage the nutrient needs of your turf.

A SUPPLEMENT TO



**LANDSCAPE  
MANAGEMENT**

# WANTED

## EOP PROGRAMS

HERBICIDES, FUNGICIDES, INSECTICIDES

2024

★ **EARLY** ★  
**ORDER**  
**PROGRAM**  
**GUIDE**

**REWARD**

**DISCOUNTS  
AND REBATES**

# EARLY ORDER PROGRAM GUIDE

2024

## Lassoing deals and discounts with EOPs

We asked our readers about how this season's inflation and supply chain issues might affect their purchasing decisions this fall

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

Lawn care operators (LCOs) are a tough bunch, used to working long hours in the hot sun. As the 2023 season began, LCOs set out on their journey, determined to make it to the finish line. They faced many obstacles along the way, including bad weather, supply chain issues and inflation.

To get a read on the situation, *LM* surveyed lawn care and landscape pros to uncover how supply chain issues and inflation affected their early order program (EOP) plans heading into 2024.

In fact, 64 percent of readers said the supply chain impacted their business this year. Readers cited difficulty in sourcing parts for equipment, product delays and inconsistent product availability.

"Hard to get materials and they are more expensive as well," says a reader in Ohio. "It has made scheduling difficult."

A reader in Illinois struggled to get larger plant material.

"(I'm facing) delays in getting materials for design/build projects as well as subcontractor delays," the reader continued.

A reader in Washington cited a delay in wholesale items such as pesticides and fertilizers.

"Some basic components are not even available when needed, a lot of fertilizers (are) not available at one supplier but available at another or not at all for up to a month," said a reader in California.

A reader in Kansas says, "(The

worst problem is if we run short on something it can take months for a replacement, particularly with hardscape materials."

### RUSTLIN' UP SOME TROUBLE

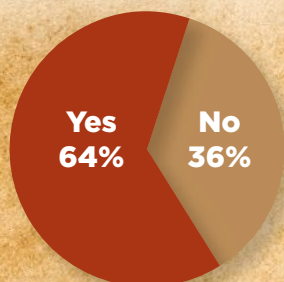
More than 93 percent of respondents say inflation rustled up some trouble for their businesses this year.

One reader in California said some clients let their properties go longer between services.

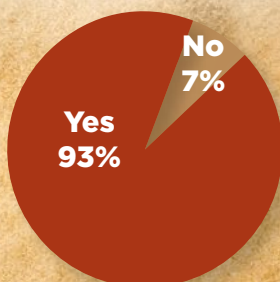
Another reader in California says irrigation contractors feel the pinch of inflation this year in a big way.

"Irrigation supplies have gone up as much as 70 percent on some components, especially pipe fittings, sprinkler heads, outdoor lighting fixtures, etc.," the reader says.

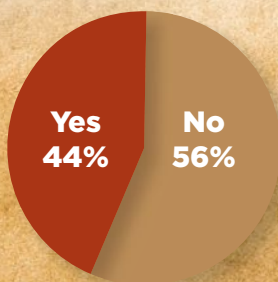
Have supply chain issues impacted your business?



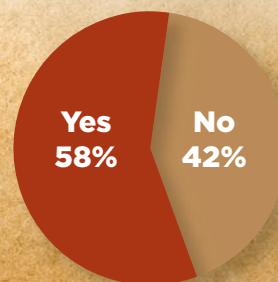
Has inflation impacted your business?



Did you participate in last year's EOPs?



Do you plan to participate in EOPs this year?





A reader in North Carolina says inflation caused the business to check the prices of materials more frequently when pricing jobs. A reader in California agrees, noting irrigation material and components and plant material prices fluctuate more frequently.

“We went from bids being held for three months to needing to update pricing every two weeks,” the reader says.

A reader in Minnesota says as inflation raises material costs, employees also want a cost of living raise to contend with expenses at home.

“Employees are asking for higher pay, all of our overhead costs have gone up and we’ve really had to take a hard look to see what expenses we should try to go without for a while,” the reader says.

### HOLD ON TO YOUR 10-GALLON HAT

Some readers indicated a drop in business as a result of inflation and rising costs as businesses passed some of the rising costs on to potential customers.

“We have had to raise prices to stay up with increased costs,” says a reader in Minnesota. “These increases have caused a reduc-

tion in client renewals. Further, because we set prices for the year, some increases have reduced profit as they were more than expected.”

A reader in New Jersey says passing the increased expense on to clients is necessary.

“Labor costs have increased 20 percent in the last three years as have trucks, trailers and small equipment,” the reader says. “Most materials have stopped rising or have dropped back by 10 to 15 percent.”

One reader in Florida says that while it’s difficult to escape increases in prices, that doesn’t mean clients accept these increases.

“Customers hate rate increases, even though they see them everywhere else,” the reader says. “(It) makes them grumpy.”

A reader in New Jersey says clients may not be willing to handle price increases.

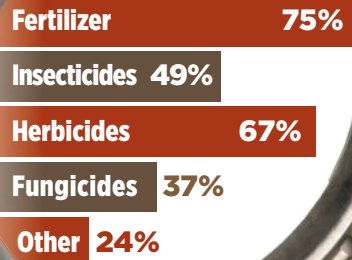
“My prices went up, but I can only raise the customers price so much,” the reader says.

Another reader in Florida says as the costs of services and prices increased, fewer clients want to move forward with projects.

### HIGH NOON DECISIONS

While some lawn care operators (LCOs) turn to early order programs (EOPs) to contend with product availability issues and price instability, some LCOs see EOPs as the Wild West. In fact, only 44 percent of readers participated last year. However, 58 percent say they plan to hitch their wagons to EOPs this year.

### What products do you purchase during EOPs?



While 35 percent of those polled say EOPs will be somewhat important going into next year, most readers expect their budgets for control products on EOPs will remain flat or 1 percent to 9 percent higher.

While most readers indicate fertilizers will be the predominant purchase during EOP season (75 percent), herbicides will follow as a close second at 67 percent. Some readers indicated purchasing irrigation supplies and turf seed along with insecticides and fungicides.

### HITTING THE TRAIL

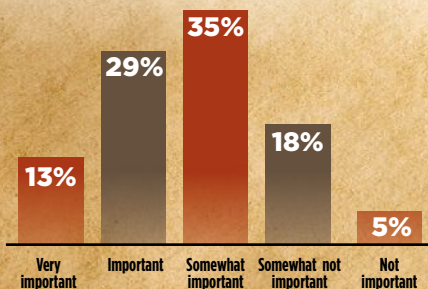
A reader in Ohio says a major driver in participating in early order purchasing programs is to lock in prices and secure product availability for the start of the 2024 growing season.

A reader in Minnesota agrees, noting it’s a “combination of cost savings and having the materials on hand when we need to use them.”

Combining discounts is another benefit to EOPs, says a reader in Utah. A reader in Wisconsin says EOPs are a great opportunity to mitigate any potential issues for supply chain interruptions.

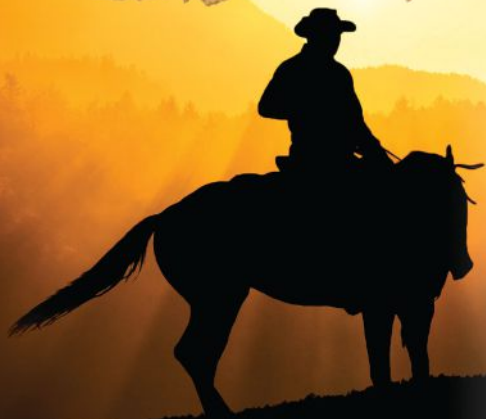
“(I participate) to get lower prices buying in bulk, long terms and have product here when needed,” says a reader in Arkansas. 🐾

### How important do you feel EOPs will be this year, heading into next year’s season?



# EARLY ORDER PROGRAM GUIDE

2024



## It's time to saddle up and ride into EOP season

Readers share why this is the right time of year to round up a good deal

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

**A**s the sun sets on another summer, lawn care operators (LCOs) saddle up for the long haul to 2024. Early order programs (EOPs) are a hot commodity, but not all LCOs are quick to commit. Some are hesitant to plan that far ahead, while others lack the space to store products. But for those who do take the plunge, EOPs can be a real boon to their operations.

Derek Taussig, landscape designer for Taussig Landscape in Manhattan, Kan., says his operation dropped six figures on early order programs.



Derek Taussig

“We used a couple new strategies this year,” he says. “I was able to use the good price break that (suppliers) were giving to negotiate with other companies to negotiate even better pricing.”

Yes, you read that right. Taussig says he decided to shop around for a price match on early order programs because the company he used gave him such a limited time to secure his early order program that it wasn't feasible for him to do all the calculations in a few days during a snowstorm. So, when another supply company reached out and asked what it would take to get Taussig's business, he asked if the supply company would be willing to price match.

“I'd suggest that everybody should do that every year to check and make sure they're getting the best price possible, especially on things you buy a lot of,” he says.

### MOSEY ON OVER

While traditionally EOPs are about chemicals and fertilizers, Taussig says his business buys everything

by pallet, so buying irrigation supplies in bulk — including pallets of rotors and spray heads — helps his operation compound savings.

“When you buy in that kind of bulk, not only is there early order pricing, but we get a really good bulk pricing too,” he says. “You just need one head at a time, but we have them all here just in the warehouse ready to go.”

Ryan Birch of Fairway Lawn and Tree Service in Harwich, Mass., says bundling products in an EOP for added savings gives his company the freedom to try new products from a supplier. One in particular, he says, was the rebate on Corteva's Dimension. Fairway Lawn added three more products to the bundle for additional savings and to increase the percentage of Fairway Lawn's reward.



Ryan Birch

“Last year Dithane was the fourth product added on. We hadn't really used much of it, but we used it on our trees and shrubs.

We saw pretty good results. It was simply the add-on of two cases of Dithane, which is not huge money, but it increased our percentage (rebate).”

### SWAPPING SOME TALL TALES

Shanz Leonelli, owner of Leo's Green Lawn in Grantsville, Utah, works exclusively with Greene County Fertilizer to source all early order materials — including his herbicides, fungicides and insecticides. He says EOPs helped him keep his business costs down.

“As a small business, it helped me be able to have some savings so that I could try to keep my cost down for the customers,” he says. “The caveat to that for me was that I had to forego income to try to start buying the bulk for the EOP. It was able to help me build my business.”



Shanz Leonelli

Taussig agrees, saying his business capitalizes on an EOP's payment terms.

“In the spring in this industry, cash flow is typically slow,” he says. “So, I'm able to do the early order program and then I can set it up to pay it in June or July. And it frees up my cash flow in the spring so I could buy more equipment that makes it more efficient for me.”

Taussig says his business utilizes several shipping containers to store the products his business purchases during EOPs. He stores it strategically — putting the products applied late in the season at the back of the container.

“Now my staff doesn't have to go to the store every time they need something; we just have it here,” he says. “I don't have to pay them or waste the time to go to the store and go pick it up.”

## DRAW FAST

Jerry Grutz, owner of Lawn Doctor of Madison (Wis.), Dubuque (Iowa) and La Crosse (Wis.), says a big benefit of utilizing early order programs is knowing the product is ready when Mother Nature is. Grutz first started using EOPs in 2021 after struggling to get products on time.

“(It's) the peace of mind of having it in the garage where when you do need it, you do have it,” he says. “We stock as much as we can in our garage that we possibly can, that won't affect the equipment space or the vehicle space.”

He says just knowing his team is ready for whatever Mother Nature throws his way helps him sleep at night.

Birch says the product rebates during EOP season offer LCOs a significant advantage.

“The rebates, the rewards and the points you can get back are pretty significant,” he says. “PBI-Gordon's product Q4, for example, for the amount we buy we get a pretty good rebate where we're getting almost a couple hundred dollars off a barrel. Planning ahead and early ordering is to me a no-brainer for someone who's not doing it.”

He also says EOPs help mitigate the risk of a major price increase the next calendar year on the inputs his business needs.

“I find you can almost beat product increases when we're doing our EOPs in September, October, November for the following year,” he says. “We can beat that price increase that following year. ... We can order hundreds of thousands of dollars of product and have June billing.”

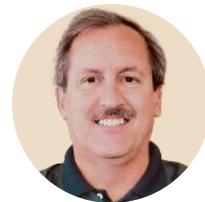
## LIFE'S A RODEO

LCOs that lack space and therefore think they can't participate in early ordering may want to consider renting a storage unit to buy ahead, Grutz says.

“Just so you know that you have it,” he says. “All of a sudden when you do need it (and you didn't purchase through EOPs), the prices might be through the roof. ... Usually prices don't go down.”

Leonelli agrees, noting smaller businesses can start small with EOPs too. He says it's important to understand what product availability looks like and that can help determine which EOPs are worth pursuing.

He recommends LCOs think about what their needs are for the season and project what they know they're going to need and any benefits or discounts available from EOPs. “Start small and just lock stuff in,” he says. “In the long run, it's going to help increase their profitability.”



Jerry Grutz



LCOs say utilizing EOPs help them secure the products they'll need ahead of time at a significant savings.

# EARLY ORDER PROGRAM GUIDE

2024

## Albaugh Advantage Rewards

New name. Same easy rewards program.

In the fall of 2023, to establish consistent name recognition across all markets, Prime Source was renamed **Albaugh Specialty Products**. Along with this change, Prime Rewards is now the **Advantage Rewards Program**.

Just as the product performance and support you've come to trust will continue uninterrupted, Albaugh Advantage Rewards will also remain the same simple points-to-dollars program that makes earning rewards easy – with no limits or complicated levels.

### NOW, THE ADVANTAGE IS YOURS.

Stock up on more than 20 proven herbicide, fungicide, insecticide and PGR solutions from Albaugh Specialty Products to earn points-to-dollars Advantage Rewards. It's not only incredibly easy, the earning potential is limitless.

And we've kept our handy earnings calculator on the website: **AlbaughSpecialtyRewards.com**. All to make it easier for you to evaluate different purchase scenarios and see exactly how fast your total rewards will add up with Albaugh Specialty Products. It's also available as an Excel download for offline use. Now's the time to take ADVANTAGE.



### HOW TO REDEEM YOUR REWARDS:

1. Place order for qualifying products.
2. Ask your distributor to go to **AlbaughSpecialtyRewards.com** to enter your submission, along with corresponding distributor invoices.
3. Collect your rewards.

A minimum of 200 points is required to earn a gift card. Each additional 100 points earns \$100 in gift cards. No earning limit. Reward payout will begin April 1, 2024. See program details, terms and conditions at **AlbaughSpecialtyRewards.com**.



## NEED TO KNOW

**Early Order Period:** Sept 1, 2023-Jan. 31, 2024

**Submission Deadline:** Jan. 31, 2024

**Website:** [AlbaughSpecialtyRewards.com](http://AlbaughSpecialtyRewards.com)

Albaugh Specialty Products | 1525 NE 36th ST, Ankeny, IA 50021

☎ 515-965-5248

🌐 [AlbaughSpecialty.com](http://AlbaughSpecialty.com)

# NEW NAME, SAME GAME. SIMPLY A BETTER WAY TO EARLY ORDER.

ALBAUGH SPECIALTY PRODUCTS

# Advantage

## REWARDS PROGRAM

Albaugh's Advantage Rewards is the easiest program in the business - no limits, no levels, just a straight up points-to-dollars system on 24 exceptional Albaugh products. Order what you need, then redeem your points for gift cards you can spend anywhere, any way you want. It's that easy. Take advantage at [albaughspecialtyrewards.com](https://albaughspecialtyrewards.com).



**PROGRAM DATES: SEPTEMBER 1, 2023 - JANUARY 31, 2024**

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# EARLY ORDER PROGRAM GUIDE

2024

## Nufarm Edge Rewards

**W**ith more ways to save and a new line of products, stocking up has never been easier thanks Nufarm EDGE Rewards. Running from September 1 through December 8, 2023, this early order program gives turf and ornamental professionals savings on popular plant growth regulator, herbicide, fungicide and insecticide brands for the upcoming season.

**During EOP Period 1 — Sept. 1 – Oct. 31, 2023 —**, customers can get volume bonus rebates on eligible products ordered and shipped between Sept. 1 and Oct. 31.

**EOP Period 2 — Nov. 1 – Dec. 8, 2023 —** offers extended rebate savings and EZ Solution Pairings on eligible products orders between Nov. 1 and Dec. 31.

Nufarm has introduced two new liquid formulation products to the program – Anuew® EZ Plant Growth Regulator and Tourney® EZ Fungicide. Also new this year, Nufarm EZ Solution Savings with product pairings are designed to provide multiple solutions at the best value. EZ Solution Savings include growth regulators, weed control and disease management combinations.

Nufarm's Volume Bonus Rewards in the program introduces seven new but well-known brands and includes Anuew®, Anuew® EZ, Tourney® EZ, Traction™, Pinpoint®, Millennium Ultra® 2, Sure Power®, Cool Power®, Horsepower®, 4-Speed XT®, Aloft® and Escalade® 2 brands. For a complete list of eligible products, and to get registered, visit [NufarmRewards.com](https://NufarmRewards.com).



### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

- **TWO NEW PRODUCTS**
- **SAVE UP TO 22% WITH NEW EZ SOLUTIONS PAIRINGS**
- **7 NEW VOLUME BONUS REBATES**
- **EARLIER PERIOD 1 START, SEPTEMBER 1**



### NEED TO KNOW

**Early Order Period:** EOP Period 1: Sept. 1-Oct. 31, 2023

EOP Period 2: Nov. 1-Dec. 8, 2023

**Website:** [Nufarm.com/USTurf/Rewards\\_Programs/Nufarm-Rewards/](https://Nufarm.com/USTurf/Rewards_Programs/Nufarm-Rewards/)

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Nufarm

EDGE

»» REWARDS

# EZ AS IT GETS

Early Order Program  
September 1 – December 8, 2023



NEW PRODUCTS



SAVE UP TO 22% WITH  
NEW EZ SOLUTIONS



7 NEW VOLUME  
BONUS REBATES



Scan code for program  
details and registration.

©2023 Nufarm. Important: Always read and  
follow label instructions. 23-TO-0605-A



Grow a better tomorrow

# EARLY ORDER PROGRAM GUIDE

2024

## Quali-Pro Simply Grow Together

**Q**uali-Pro® has been a leader in the development of innovative and post-patent formulations, offering professionals the industry's widest array of active ingredients.

Quali-Pro provides solutions for lawn care professionals, sports turf managers and golf course superintendents that are backed by university research and a dedicated staff of professionals.

### 2023 QUALI-PRO EARLY ORDER PROGRAM INFORMATION

Quali-Pro is offering special incentives now through Nov. 30. Take advantage of the Simply Grow Together (SGT) best incentives by Oct. 31, 2023.

To qualify, the participating end-user must earn a minimum rebate of \$100. When 50 percent or more of the total rebate is derived from Platinum Products, a Double-Base Bonus will be added to your rebate total. Products must be purchased from an authorized Quali-Pro distributor between Aug. 15 and Nov. 30, 2023.



This is an end-user promotion. Distributors and dealers are not eligible for this rebate. Purchases used to qualify for this promotion are not eligible for any other free goods, cash back or rebate programs. Internet sales and purchases do not qualify.

All submissions must be uploaded by Jan. 12, 2024. Visit [SimpleGrowTogether.com](https://www.SimpleGrowTogether.com).



## NEED TO KNOW

**Early Order Period:** Aug. 15-Nov. 30, 2023.

Last date to upload rebate submissions is Jan. 12, 2024.

**Website:** [SimpleGrowTogether.com](https://www.SimpleGrowTogether.com)

Quali-Pro | 5903 Genoa Red Bluff, Pasadena, TX 77507 | 800-242-5562

Quali-Pro.com | @Quali\_Pro | Facebook.com/QualiPro



# Cutting-Edge



## SAVINGS!



WITH  **QUALI-PRO**

Quali-Pro is offering special incentives beginning August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Take advantage of the SGT early order program for the biggest rebates of the year.

Secure your savings at [simplygrowtogether.com](https://www.simplygrowtogether.com)



SPONSORED CONTENT

# EARLY ORDER PROGRAM GUIDE

2024

## Envu NOW Solutions

It's that time of year again! Summer is winding down, the days are getting shorter and, best of all, the NOW Solutions program is back. With the NOW Solutions Program from Envu, you can save big on all the products you depend on to protect your lawns from weeds this fall.

From Aug. 1-Sept. 30, the NOW Solutions program has various ways to save on industry-leading lawn care solutions so you can stock up on the products you need right now. The four ways to save include: off-invoice discounts, select product rebates, agronomic pairing incentives and purchase tier rebates.

Start shopping for popular herbicides like Specticle® FLO, Celsius® WG, Tribute® Total and more to protect your lawns from everyday threats. Just log in to My Envu Rewards to get started. You can even rack up rewards and calculate your savings on the spot with an easy-to-use calculator spreadsheet. Plus, Envu is committed to meeting your timeline, so you can start taking action right away. Because when it comes to your business, you need to control all that you can.



So trust in your favorite products and in your own expertise, and don't worry about what Mother Nature might bring in the coming months or what unexpected obstacles homeowners might throw your way. With Envu as your partner for leading-edge solutions, you can handle just about anything.

Don't wait. Save today and thrive tomorrow when you start taking advantage of the NOW Solutions program's four ways to save. Whether it's through product rebates, agronomic pairings, off-invoice discounts or the purchase tier rebates, these deals are too good to miss.



**NEED TO KNOW** **Early Order Period:** Aug. 1-Sept. 30 2023  
**Website:** Rewards.Envu.US

Envu |  US.Envu.com

# EARLY

# ORDER

# PROGRAM

Save on Plant Healthcare & Landscape Solutions!

*Sept. 1 - Dec. 8, 2023*



*Scan to  
Learn More!*

Get instant access to all of Rainbow's products and equipment **at significantly reduced prices.** Save on your spring and summer products for next year!



Ordering & Tech Support: **877-272-6747** [www.RainbowEcoscience.com](http://www.RainbowEcoscience.com)

# EARLY ORDER PROGRAM GUIDE

2024

## Syngenta GreenTrust 365

Same Great Program. More Ways to Save.

**W**ith **GreenTrust® 365** from Syngenta, there are so many ways to maximize savings for your business you don't need to think outside the box to find new savings. Spend at least \$5,000 during the Early Order Period (EOP), **Oct. 1, 2023-Dec. 8, 2023**, to earn yearlong rebates. Purchases of **on-fertilizer products through May 31, 2024, also qualify** as an EOP purchase.

**YEARLONG REBATES**  
Lock in your **yearlong rebate of 5-9%** during EOP to save on purchases through Sept. 30, 2024. This includes purchases of our latest innovations, **Acelepryn® Xtra insecticide, Compendium™ fungicide and Recognition® herbicide.**



### GT BONUS BOOSTER

It's easier than ever to save with the **GT Bonus Booster**. Once you qualify for the 7% yearlong rebate (\$20,000 or more), you will automatically receive an **additional 2% rebate on purchases made during the EOP.**



### NEW FOR 2024 – DOUBLE UP BONUS

This year, starting at the 7% yearlong rebate level, **double your rebate on purchases of Acelepryn Xtra 2.5 GA, Acelepryn Xtra 30 oz., Acelepryn 0.5 GA and Acelepryn 4 oz. during the EOP** with the Double Up Bonus.



### ENHANCED VOLUME PRICING

Volume Pricing is now available for multiple SKUs, including:

Purchases made from Oct. 1 – Dec. 8, 2023	Yearlong rebate for Oct. 1, 2023-Sept. 30, 2024	GT Bonus Booster Rebate (Earned Oct. 1-Dec. 8, 2023)	Double Up Bonus Rebate (Earned Oct. 1-Dec. 8, 2023)*	Total Rebate
\$5,000 to < \$10,000	5%	-	-	5%
\$10,000 to < \$20,000	6%	-	-	6%
\$20,000 to < \$30,000	7%	2%	7%	16%
\$30,000 to < \$40,000	8%	2%	8%	18%
\$40,000+	9%	2%	9%	20%

\*The Double Up Bonus will be applied to EOP purchases of Acelepryn Xtra 2.5 GA., Acelepryn Xtra 30 oz., Acelepryn 0.5 GA. and Acelepryn 4 oz. only.

**NEED TO KNOW** Purchasing Period: Oct. 1 – Dec. 8, 2023  
Website: [GreenTrust365.com/Lawn](https://GreenTrust365.com/Lawn)

- Save an additional 10% on Acelepryn Xtra when you purchase at least:
  - 25 gallons of the 2.5-gallon package
  - 108 bottles of the 30 oz. package
- Save an additional 15% on Compendium when you purchase:
  - 60 gallons of the 1-gallon package or more

### BARRICADE BRAND REBATE

**Add 3% to your yearlong rebate** by purchasing Barricade® brand herbicides during the EOP.



#### SMALL PACKS

Small packaging sizes (4 oz. and 8 oz. bottles) of essential products like **Acelepryn** insecticide, **Barricade 4FL** and **Tenacity®** herbicides, **Heritage® SC** fungicide and **Primo Maxx®** plant growth regulator are available and qualify toward your year-long rebate. Find the ideal solution to fit your needs.

#### NEED TO KNOW

**Early Order Period:** Oct. 1-Dec. 8, 2023

**GreenTrust365.com/Lawn**

**NEW Rebate:** Double Up Bonus

**NEW Products:** Acelepryn Xtra insecticide, Compendium fungicide, Recognition herbicide



#### PALLET SOLUTION

Apply intelligently with the right mix of herbicides. **The Warm Season Herbicide Solution** includes Barricade 4FL and Monument® 75WG herbicides and is available **Oct. 1-Dec. 8, 2023**.



#### MULTIPAKS

**Save** even more, **up to 15%**, on complementary products delivered in convenient Multipaks.



#### PRODUCT GUARANTEE PROGRAMS

Protect your customers' turf and your business with leading agronomic recommendations and performance guarantees developed by our technical experts.



#### SUMMERPAY™

Keep your cash flow in check by **deferring payment until June 20, 2024**. It's just one way to manage your expenses more easily throughout the season.

#### NEW FOR 2024 – LAWN AGRONOMIC PROGRAMS

As you prepare for 2024, our new lawn agronomic programs will help you plan a yearlong preventive strategy to keep your customers happy and your business thriving. Our agronomic experts carefully developed these programs to help you save time while also reducing applications, mitigating resistance and more. Find a program at **GreenCastOnline.com/LawnPrograms**.



#### FREE CUSTOMER MARKETING MATERIALS

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## THE BIG ONE

### Keepin' it clean

BY ROB DIFRANCO  
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**LOCATION** Portland, Ore.

**COMPANY** Pacific Landscape Management

**DETAILS** Access to several rooftop and patio gardens makes for a challenging work site at the Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) South Waterfront campus.


According to Adam Flint, branch manager for Pacific Landscape Management, crews must walk through the hospital on their way to maintain the landscapes.

“The expectations of OHSU, from a cleanliness standpoint, is completely different from any of the other green roofs we manage,” says Flint. “We have to be sharp and professional as we’re walking through the building with all of the material they’ve generated throughout the day.”

Some gardens, he adds, are only accessible through windows, meaning crews have to navigate the functioning hospital to access their work spaces.

Irrigating rooftop patios adds another layer of complexity to the project, according to Justin Lenhardt, branch manager with PLM. To ensure no water leaks from irrigation into the hospital space, crews closely manage the site’s drip irrigation system and utilize rainwater as often as possible.

“There’s definitely a fine line there trying to use the resource appropriately and keep the landscape beautiful,” he adds.

Pacific Landscape Management won a Gold Award from the 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.** A ground-level view of the fourth-floor gardens showcases the varying landscapes crews must work in.
- 2.** Water filtration plays a crucial part in Pacific Landscape Management’s design of rooftop gardens.
- 3.** Groundcover density and a variety of plant materials offer an oasis for occupants throughout the working day. Effective irrigation is key to maintenance success 100 feet from ground level.
- 4.** A view of the rain garden collection at ground level. Drip irrigation supplements rainwater.

## REV YOUR ENGINES

# What to know when using propane to power your mowers

Landscape business owners share the challenges and benefits of using alternative fuels for your fleet

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

**A**dding alternative fuel to the mix requires owners to update how and where they fuel — as well as train crews on all of the changes. From maintenance and performance to fueling and environmental concerns, landscape business owners share how propane stacks up against gas for mowers.

### NATURAL ALTERNATIVE

Doug Duschene recalls driving to Salt Lake City and coming over the hills to see a blanket of smog covering the city below.

“I don’t want that for my town,” says Duschene, owner of Bozeman Site Services in Bozeman, Mont.

To be better stewards of the environment, Bozeman Site Services began using propane in 2016 — and for several years, converted all mowers to propane. Bozeman Site Services provides maintenance, snow removal, lawn care and irrigation to a 60 percent residential, 40 percent commercial clientele.

“It’s great for the environment, and I love it,” Duschene says. “It was worth it to switch over all of our stuff, and I wish more people could do it.”

Besides reducing their environmental footprint, the company also decreased costs compared to filling the mowers with gas.

“It’s significantly cheaper, especially when gas prices were through the roof,” Duschene says. “At one point, it cost 25 percent of what you’d pay for (gas).”

But unlike gas, crews couldn’t stop at stations around town to fill up. So, Bozeman Site Services created its own fill station to handle everything in-house when switching to propane. The company also trained all of the employees on how to fill propane tanks.

“You have to hook it up, so none escapes and there’s no waste,” he says.

For customer properties maintained weekly, propane is up for the job — but isn’t as powerful as gas, he says.

“Propane is slightly weaker than gas, but what you lack in power is easily made up for in other ways,”

Duschene says. “You don’t need that high gas power unless you’re mowing through really thick grass.”

However, he says as dealers near them stopped offering conversion kits, the company stopped using propane with their new mowers and returned to electronic fuel injection.

“I think we’ve won contracts because of it, and we’ve saved lots of money using propane,” Duschene says. “No doubt, there are definite benefits. I just wish we could have maintained those, and they continued making conversion kits for the new mowers.”

### LIMIT STOPS

From reducing maintenance to the impact on the environment, the benefits of propane caught the attention of Adam Sarver, president of Sarver



Landscape in Wexford, Pa. His company provides landscape maintenance, enhancements, tree care and snow removal services to commercial customers.

**IN THE CAN**  
Contractors say propane saves operations on fueling costs.

Previously, about half of Sarver’s fleet used propane through a conversion kit. A mechanic handled fueling the propane mowers, which required crews to manage, haul and secure 33-pound tanks. Sarver said that gave his company a level of control over what was happening in the field since crews weren’t stopping by gas stations to fuel up.

“We invested heavily in it and saw the advantages,” Sarver says. “Propane burns cleaner, has less maintenance and you don’t have fuel stabilization issues. It also gave us the ability to stabilize and control fuel costs, along with creating marketing opportunities to claim a greener service.”

Now, about 5 percent of Sarver’s fleet is propane due to changes with manufacturer agreements that voided factory warranties on new machines Sarver Landscape converted to propane.

“These machines are complicated, so a warranty is a key thing to have,” Sarver says. “We are buying (electronic fuel injection) right now but look forward to electric and battery options when they make sense.”



Adam Sarver

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.






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## PROS' TOOLBOX

# How one Stihl superfan added the company's new zero-turns

**A self-professed Stihl “diehard” shares what he likes best about his new mowers**

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

**E**ric Bills, owner of Precision Lawn care and Landscape in Hammondsport, N.Y., has been a Stihl fan since he founded his primarily residential lawn care, maintenance and snow and ice business in 2013.

“I’ve been using Stihl power equipment from the very beginning,” he says. “I trust the reliability and the quality of the equipment is something that I need.”

Bills uses Stihl backpack blowers and string trimmers. He said he wanted to work with one dealer for all his equipment. His dealer for mowers was about 20 minutes away and had trouble getting parts to Bills. Bills said he hoped to get another season out of his existing mowers, but when that became an issue, he demoed a Stihl zero-turn mower and several other mowers on the market and opted to go with Stihl.

Bills credits his Stihl distributor, Titus Hoover, owner of Hoover’s Small Engine in Branchport, N.Y., for setting him up with Stihl mowers. Stihl announced the product launch in October 2022 at the Equip Exposition and started shipping them to dealers early this year.

“As soon as he got wind of (the Stihl zero-turns), he called me right up and he was super excited to get a line of commercial mowers on his property for sale,” he says of Hoover. “The dealer support that I get from Titus ... is huge for me. A dealer that’s readily available for pretty much anything that I need. He answers my phone calls, and he’s pretty much everything that I could ever want in somebody that sells the equipment that I use.”

### GETTING STARTED WITH STIHL

Bills purchased Stihl’s RZ 760 and RZ 960 models from Hoover’s Small Engine. He says after picking the mowers up in late July, he didn’t waste any time getting them up and running.



### DEPENDABILITY

Eric Bills, owner of Precision Lawn care and Landscape says his positive experience with Stihl’s handheld equipment motivated him to purchase two of Stihl’s zero-turn mowers.

“We took them to a big property of mine that we take care of,” he says. “From the very beginning, it was kind of bittersweet getting a nice brand-new mower covered in grass. They’ve been great so far. I’ve been on these machines for quite a while and so far, so good. I enjoy the electronic fuel injection that they both have. The power, the speed, the cut quality, they’re just what I want in a mower.”

Both of Bills’ Stihl zero-turns have 60-inch decks and independent suspension on all four wheels, which Bills says is a nice added feature that makes for a smooth ride. His RZ 960 also features a suspension seat.

“That makes a big difference when you’re on a mower for eight or 10 hours a day on some pretty rough ground,” he says.

### KNOW WHAT YOU’VE GOT

Bills says he doesn’t regret his decision to purchase two zero-turns from Stihl’s relatively new mower line. He says a big driver in his decision was to ensure he and his crew had reliable mowers to tackle his jobs.

“I’ve been a diehard Stihl fan from the very beginning, and I continue to support the name and the brand and the company,” he says. “It’s just an overall enjoyable experience being on a quality product.”

He says anyone considering Stihl’s mowers should know “they’re getting into a product that will last them a long time.” 📍



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## HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

### Tiering up

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

**LOCATION** Banks, Ore.

**COMPANY** Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping

**DETAILS** The client reached out to Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping to update a 35-year-old property on the outskirts of Portland, Ore. Project goals were to create a modern outdoor living space for the entire family and improve access to the property's existing vineyard. The 22-acre property suffered from severe drainage issues.

As crews began work in the pool installation, Kenna Hartman, landscape designer for Dennis' 7 Dees, says they found a drain field in the planned pool location. After consulting with a geotechnical engineer, Hartman said he incorporated drainage throughout the project which filters through a retention area before exiting into an on-site pond.

"The drainage isn't really hidden," he says. "It's all right there on the surface. It's just in all that decorative rock. So, it really looks like part of the project."

Hartman says another challenge this property presented was how to achieve the design objectives of a cohesive outdoor space with access to the property's vineyard.

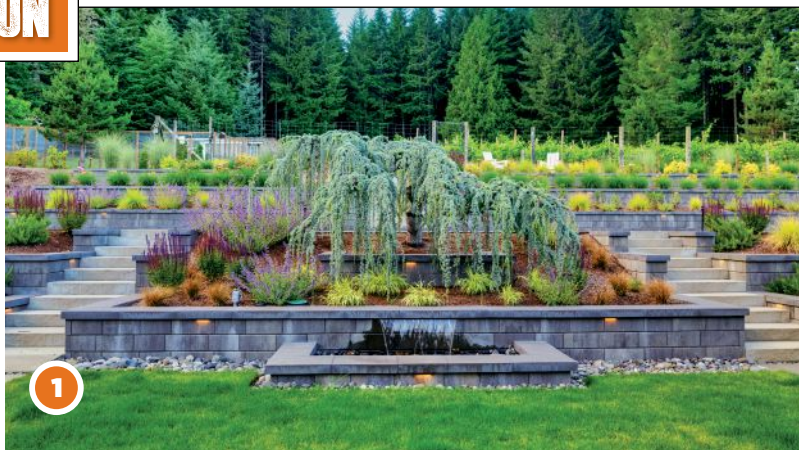
"How do we make the elevations work with a slope?" he says. "How do we get from the concrete deck all the way to the vineyard and how many steps is it going to take?"

Hartman says other details include an outdoor terrace and kitchen, bocce court, tiered walls, a cast-iron fire cauldron and a water feature. The property originally had a flared brick entry that didn't match the modern look of the outdoor space and home. Crews cut the brick to remove the flare and the homeowner painted the new entryway.

"We squared it off and took the flare away, and then we added our own columns to terminate and hide those, the cut," he says. "It was a strategic way to turn something that wasn't flowing with the whole project into something that matches and is cohesive."

Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping won a Silver 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/hardscapesolutions](https://LandscapeManagement.net/hardscapesolutions).



**Captions | 1.** This after photo shows an existing Blue Atlas cedar surrounded by new tiered walls, steps and a water feature.

**2.** This after photo of the updated house shows a morning coffee patio in the foreground. **3.** Raised beds and a custom cast iron fire cauldron highlight the east side of the house. **4.** This during photo shows the wall and pool excavation.

## INSTALLATION SOLUTIONS

### What you need to know about renting vs. buying

If heavy equipment is in your sights, consider the advantages of owning and renting

BY MIKE ZAWACKI | CONTRIBUTOR

**Y**ou've landed a big design/build contract, a project that can put your company on the map. While it's a prime business opportunity, you don't have the necessary equipment to complete the task correctly and efficiently. Determining whether to rent or buy equipment is a necessary decision, one that must balance overall needs, cash flow and the availability of financing from either

manufacturers or conventional lenders.

For contractors, cost is the prime factor in the "should I buy, or should I rent" debate, says Mike Fitzgerald, marketing manager at Bobcat Co.

"Purchasing a machine carries a greater commitment that typically includes insurance, taxes, licenses, registration, maintenance, operating expenses and transportation fees," he says. "Depending on (a contractor's) finances, it may be dif-

ficult to justify the total cost of ownership compared to a flat monthly rental rate."

Various cost calculators are available to landscape pros online, breaking down some considerations to buy or rent equipment. For example, to determine a machine's total rental cost, multiply the rental rate (per year/month/day) by the rental period (number of years/months/days) and then add the pickup/

*Continued on page 34*



**KNOW WHEN TO HOLD 'EM**  
Frequency of use is an important factor when deciding whether to rent or buy compact equipment.

PHOTO: BOBCAT



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**INSTALLATION SOLUTIONS**

*Continued from page 33*

delivery charge. To calculate the total ownership cost, take the purchase cost and add the ownership cost (delivery, maintenance and insurance), then subtract the resale value.

**KNOW YOUR USE**

While it's an important factor, cost is not the only consideration. Suppose a landscape company will utilize a machine 60 to 70 percent of the year. In that case, it makes the most sense to own, says Peter Quinn, rental operations manager at Cleveland Brothers Equipment Co. in Harrisburg, Pa.

“If you have specialized needs for a machine or an attachment, then it may make more sense to own vs. rent,” Quinn says. “Some smaller tools, like plate compactors and cutoff saws, also would be a more common item to own because the upfront cost is fairly minimal.”

Over the last few years, Quinn says contractors gravitate toward compact track loaders (CTLs) over skid-steer loaders.

“CTLs offer much lower ground pressure, do less damage to lawns and extend the construction season when things get wet in the spring and fall,” he says.

In addition, many landscape contractors rent and purchase mini excavators and loaders, which offer a lot of muscle and, when paired with an auger, grapppler or hydraulic breaker attachment, a substantial amount of versatility.

“Evaluate your job site needs and talk to your equipment dealer or rental house about what jobs you need to accomplish,” Fitzgerald adds. “They can offer recommendations on the best attachments to accomplish your goals. But the options are about as endless as your (project) needs.”

**UNDERSTAND YOUR CASH FLOW**

However, if you're operating in a northern market where your construction season is limited, purchasing equipment and attachments that will only be utilized for a handful of months out of the year may not make financial sense, says Tim Dugan, senior director of rental operations at The Home Depot Rental.

“This can strain financial capital and cash flow during the offseason,” Dugan says. “So, contractors need to be safe about their spending habits ... and renting equipment can help the contractor get things done more efficiently.”

Dugan adds that the bottom line when purchasing or renting is not pursuing the wrong piece of equipment.

“A contractor may rent a skid steer believing it can be used for digging and moving large pieces of material when it is better suited for trenching and excavating,” he says. “Another mistake is misjudging the amount of time they will need for the rental. If you aren't sure, rent for a longer duration.”

Zawacki is a Cleveland-based writer covering the landscape industry for nearly two decades.



# THE NEXUS OF TECHNOLOGY AND LABOR

## How forward-thinking landscape companies are attracting team members and improving their job satisfaction with technology

**A**s a leader in Southern Botanical's innovation initiatives, Lindy Reese thinks a lot about how technology can solve some of the problems created by the lack of qualified labor in the landscape industry.

"In our recruiting efforts, of course we market our benefits and growth opportunities, but we're starting to focus more heavily on technology and innovation as a selling point to attract new hires," says Reese, marketing strategy manager for Dallas-based Southern Botanical, a \$45 million company. "I recently read a report from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that said if every single unemployed person in America got a job tomorrow, we'd still have over 4 million open jobs. Leveraging technology to hire, train and work

smarter is key to confronting ongoing labor shortages."

In fact, Southern Botanical's goal is to be a leader in innovation. They've implemented an array of new technologies, including artificial intelligence to assist with landscape renderings, drones to speed up estimating take-offs, Segways to help crew members edge large properties faster, SmartLink for remote irrigation monitoring, and they're in year one with Aspire landscape business software.

Reese and other forward-thinking landscape professionals understand the importance of



LINDY REESE



empowering team members with access to tools that make their lives easier and real-time information that allows them to do their jobs well — both of which contribute to job satisfaction and make their firms more attractive places to work.

## A Baseline of Technology

Tech-friendly landscape companies say prospective employees across generations now expect a baseline of technology. An end-to-end business management system like Aspire is an asset in this regard.

“Having a system like Aspire is attractive to folks, so they know they’re not going to be using a spreadsheet or pencil and paper,” says Jon Gohl, implementation director for Aspire. “From a recruiting standpoint, it’s beneficial.”



JON GOHL

Reese recalls an interview with an account manager Southern Botanical recently hired. The person had previously worked at a company that used Aspire. Southern Botanical just implemented the platform earlier this year after an extensive search for a new

business management software.

“Aspire was a big selling point for this candidate ultimately choosing us,” she says. “They didn’t want to go back to pen and paper or spreadsheets. Those manual processes are time consuming, stressful and inefficient.”

Likewise, Niwar Nasim, president of Nasim Landscape in Puyallup, Wash., recently hired an experienced senior production manager who was burned out and ready to leave the landscape industry. When he introduced her to the technology his company uses, including Aspire, she said it’s “something I’ve been looking for my whole career but have never found.” She is empowered by having real-time access to performance insights rather than doing everything manually.

“(Aspire) is highly rewarding because (team members) can see how it saves them time, and it gives them a sense of accomplishment because you can see metrics and insights,” Nasim says, pointing to job costing as the No. 1 area Aspire improved for his company. “Being able to have a live picture of how



NIWAR NASIM



“

*Having a system like Aspire is attractive to folks, so they know they're not going to be using a spreadsheet or pencil and paper. From a recruiting standpoint, it's beneficial.”*

—Jon Gohl

jobs are going and where you're winning and losing is huge.”

Nasim Landscape went live with Aspire in January 2021 at \$2.6 million in annual revenue. The company is on track to do \$10 million in 2023.

A key factor for Southern Botanical in choosing Aspire was having one platform that serves the whole company vs. “daisy chaining” a dozen or more software programs together.

“That alone saves us time, reduces the learning curve for new employees and allows our team to collaborate more seamlessly,” Reese says. “It used to be fairly siloed. Everyone had to intentionally share information to understand what people were working on. Now you can pull up anyone's job reports or dashboards and see what they're working on and how they're progressing towards the goals that are clearly outlined there.”

In addition to empowering team members and attracting and retaining folks from inside the landscape industry, a platform like Aspire

makes it easier to hire people from outside the industry, Gohl points out. Aspire standardizes processes across the company and creates accountability within each job function. Those things simplify training someone without industry experience.

“It's a system of checks and balances, so your pool of potential applicants is opened up,” he says. “You can look outside in other industries to recruit because you have a process in place, you have measuring tools in place and you have production factors in place. You can use people's talents to sell or work more on the customer service side because Aspire is going to produce the estimate based on that company's production factors, for example.”

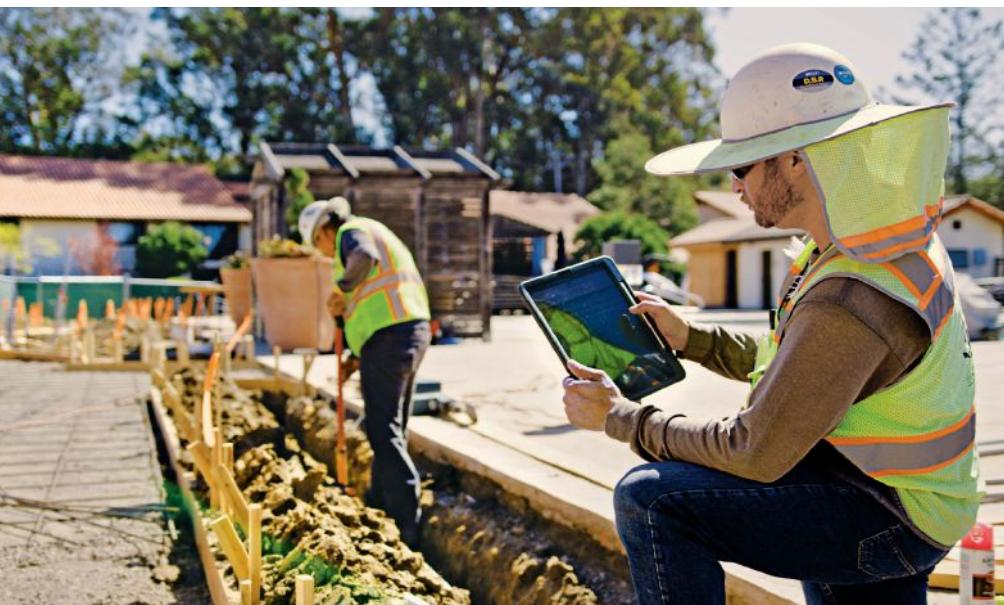
### Making Hard Jobs Easier

Landscaping can be a tough industry in terms of the physical strength needed to get the job done and the fact that team members are working out in the elements. There are also many routine

aspects of the job. In many cases, technology can reduce those, making workers' lives much easier, which improves job satisfaction.

Nasim says his firm uses Aspire and other technology tools to alleviate the labor pains most landscape companies face today.

“Without these tools in place, I wouldn't want to do what we do today,” he says. “It wouldn't be worth it. To have a competitive edge, you have to use these tools. They up the company morale because they remove mundane tasks.”



Specifically, he points to the platform's integrations with Weathermatic's mobile app, which streamlines irrigation inspections and proposals, and the Fleet Sharp GPS fleet-tracking program, which delivers vehicle alerts and allows managers to monitor crews in real time. In addition, Nasim Landscape uses an online automated measuring tool that eliminates the need for an in-person estimator.

"What we do is already difficult and strenuous," Nasim says. "You have to be open minded and embrace technology and embrace better ways to do things."

Technology like Aspire eliminates or reduces some mundane office tasks as well.

At Southern Botanical, business administrators used to spend one and a half days a week entering paper time sheets and processing payroll. With Aspire, it takes no more than a couple of hours.

"It's alleviated the time burden, which has allowed us to elevate that role from data entry into one more focused on higher level financial reporting and providing additional branch support," Reese says. "It's a great example of enhancing efficiency to create more growth opportunities for people."

The workforce is evolving, she says, and

candidates are looking for positions that use technology — not scheduling boards, sticky notes, and clipboards.

"Eliminating antiquated processes removes daily friction and frustrations, allowing people to focus on meaningful problems at work instead of issues associated with inefficient practices," Reese says. "The access to real-time reporting helps people understand their job performance better, too."

She gives the example of Southern Botanical's business developers, driven professionals whose jobs involve achieving sales goals.

"Aspire's given us the ability to display their revenue goals in real time on TV banks throughout the branches," she says. "It's been motivating for our business developers who take great pride in their work and shows others how they're directly contributing to the company. Transparency allows us to celebrate wins and support each other as a team, which are integral parts of our culture of achievement."

The company also displays the profit and loss statement, various reports and key performance indicators on screens throughout the offices.

"It teaches people about the financial aspect of our business and aligns our goals across teams," Reese says.

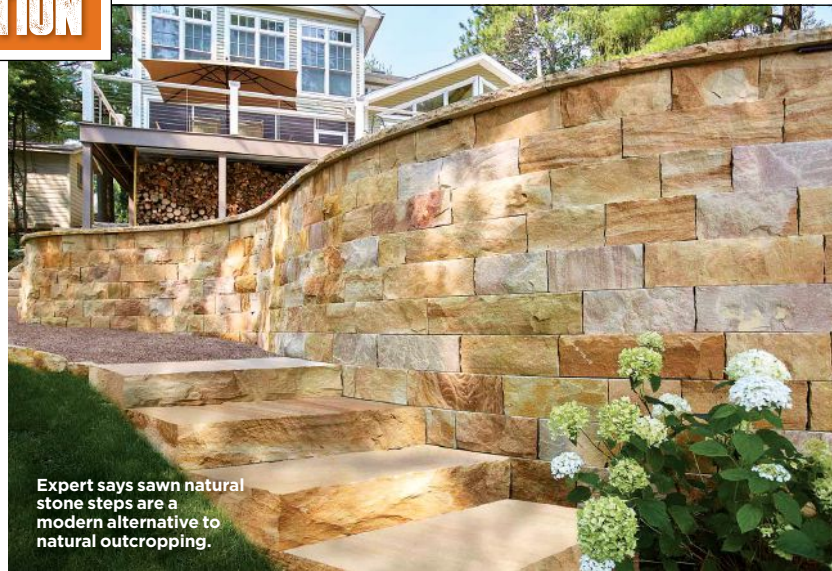


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## RECOMMENDER

# What's the No. 1 design trend you're seeing in the design/build industry?



Expert says sawn natural stone steps are a modern alternative to natural outcropping.



### TIFFANY KOSS

KAFKA GRANITE, DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MARKETING MOSINEE, WIS.

The predominant trend we have been seeing is the need for more efficient installations while maintaining a harmonious blend of contemporary aesthetics and natural elements. Minimalistic and modern designs focus on clean lines, open spaces and natural materials like stone, wood and metal. Clean lines are a win for contractors, who are under pressure to do more work with less labor. Designers and contractors look for premium materials that install fast but still have the natural aesthetic customers desire. Designers favor sawn natural stone steps as a sleek and modern alternative to the time-consuming installation that comes with natural outcropping, while natural sawn cut drywall replaces irregular boulder retaining walls or manufactured concrete wall block.



### CAROLYNE PLANCK

UNILOCK, TERRITORY MANAGER GEORGETOWN, ONTARIO, CANADA

Can we call integration a trend? I think so. Homeowners invest in their outdoor space in an equal manner to their indoor spaces, and designers work in tandem to provide designs that are captivating by using different shapes, colors and textures that punctuate the different areas within any given project. As an example, we offer our Promenade Plank Pavers in three finishes and shapes and seven colors. We're seeing the mixing of at least two finishes, two shapes and three colors both commercially and residentially. Our Umbriano Collection offers 10 different shapes and four different colors, with walls and coping to match. It is exciting to see the No. 1 trend become the integration of color, shape and texture in a single project.



### NOAH DEMPSEY

DELGADO STONE DISTRIBUTORS, MARKETING COORDINATOR BROOKFIELD, CONN.

The design/build industry currently embraces a top trend: using a consistent natural stone collection to create a unified look in designs. This can be achieved in various ways, such as using the same natural stone collection in different forms or incorporating the same natural stone material throughout the entire design. For instance, our Liberty Hill Flagstone can be used for a patio space, while our Liberty Hill Thin-stone Veneer can be used for a fire pit or fireplace to serve as the focal point of the patio. Another popular approach is to use a natural stone veneer for a new home entryway or step riser, continuing with the same stone for an interior fireplace, and extending the material into the backyard with a stone veneer outdoor kitchen.

## DID YOU KNOW

# Tips for a successful irrigation system winterization

**While blowouts and system shutoffs can be a race against Mother Nature, due diligence pays dividends in the spring** BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR

**W**interizing irrigation systems means very different things depending upon the location of your business. Tony Graziani, service department manager for Winterberry Landscape & Garden Center, a full-service residential and commercial landscaping company in Southington, Conn., and Jon DeLisle, market vice president for LandCare in North Carolina, share their approach to this yearly task.

Graziani says while crews will begin blowouts in early October, his first step to winterization happens in January when he secures rentals for all the air compressors Winterberry will need to perform blowouts that fall.

“We try to start with the end in mind,” DeLisle says. “If we know our first frost date here in North

Carolina—let’s just say it’s Nov. 15—we want all of our lines winterized about a week before.”

DeLisle says this is a moving target each year, and it’s also not uncommon for crews to shut a system down only to turn it on again to support plant material when temperatures rise.



Jon DeLisle

### SCOUTING

Following up on any issues a technician identifies while on clients’ properties is a key element in irrigation

system blowouts or winterizations, both DeLisle and Graziani say.

Graziani says it’s easy for technicians to see blowouts as the end of a long irrigation season and rush through the service. He coaches his technicians to use this last visit of the year to help prevent major issues next spring and to give proactive service to Winterberry’s clients. He asks his technicians to rate each system.

“If it’s a 10, it’s perfect. If it’s a five, it needs some work,” Graziani says. “That helps us proactively approach the client. ‘Hey, while we were at your house blowing the system out, we noticed this, this, this and this.’”

These extra steps also help Winterberry secure extra work, all thanks to due diligence from the technician, he says.

“Here’s a quote in your hand for springtime, and we can get you on a schedule right away,” he says he teaches his technicians to say.

DeLisle says transparent communication is a critical part of how LandCare manages the unpredictable nature of winter in North Carolina.

“It’s easy in that shuffle to forget if you drained a backflow to not open up the test cocks,” he says.

And then in the spring, crews would discover a component of the backflow preventer needs replacing following some water expansion over the winter.

LandCare uses a large board to indicate which clients’ systems technicians winterized and which a technician turned back on.



“I think it’s a simple and effective tool that everybody can see in real time,” he says.

### DETAILS MATTER

DeLisle says details matter, especially when technicians are on the go. He encourages all irrigation professionals to label any backflow preventer removed.

“If you’re putting 40 or 50 backflows into storage and you don’t have them clearly labeled as to the job site and location on the job site that they go to, the spring can be a little bit of a challenge to remember which backflow goes where,” he says. “In the past, we’ve said, ‘Oh gosh, these three backflows don’t have tags. Does anybody know where they go?’”

Graziani says keeping meticulous notes also helps crews understand which systems should be among the last for winterization. He says homes with a lawn installation the first week of September might not get winterized until the last week of October unless winter comes sooner in Connecticut.

“Some lawns that we put in in the fall; I want that lawn watered for as long as possible,” he says. 🍷

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Max Moreno says drip works best when irrigation companies tailor it to the specific site and plant material on the property.



# Why drip irrigation makes sense for your clients

**Drip irrigation can provide many benefits to your clients and their plants, but it's not a one-size-fits-all approach** BY MAX MORENO | CONTRIBUTOR

Every year when I revisit conversations with clients about irrigation budgeting or the total cost of water spent annually, the conversation leads to two topics: where we spend the money for the water and how we apply that water.

When we discuss where we spend the money for water, the location and type of plants make up the first topic of discussion. If we can substitute plants

that require less water while keeping up the aesthetics, we can then reduce the amount of water or money needed to irrigate.

When we talk about how we apply water, we discuss how increasing irrigation uniformity can lower water consumption. A key component of budgeting is putting a plan together for years to come on how to maintain or reduce the cost of water. The most effective



way to increase uniformity and reduce runoff and water damage is to convert overhead irrigation to drip irrigation.

### BENEFITS ABOUND

In today's world, preserving natural resources and reducing water waste has become crucial. The principle of landscape drip irrigation is to provide a consistent and slow water supply directly to the plants without losing water to evaporation or wind. This method is beneficial in arid and drought-prone regions where water scarcity is a significant concern.

Drip irrigation is also highly efficient in terms of water conservation since it

*Continued on page 44*

PHOTO: MAX MORENO

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## EVERY DROP COUNTS

*Continued from page 42*

reduces water loss due to evaporation, runoff or overspray. Through my own research, drip irrigation can reduce water usage by 30 to 50 percent compared to traditional irrigation methods. This reduces water bills, saving money and energy for homeowners.

Another advantage of landscape drip irrigation is it is an eco-friendly solution. Traditional irrigation systems can cause erosion, soil compaction and nutrient loss, leading to adverse impacts on plants and the environment. Drip irrigation, on the other hand, maintains soil moisture levels, promotes healthy root growth and reduces soil erosion. It also helps to minimize the use of pesticides and fertilizers.

### DRIP GONE WRONG


There are also disadvantages to be aware of, such as improper installations. The key is to follow manufacturing recommendations based on site specifications.

What begins as a simple plan to retrofit a system to drip irrigation often leads to overwatering and underwatering. Plants suffer from too much or not enough water.

Drip installation is not one-size-fits-all, which is why it is essential to know the type of soil, plant types, slope factors and, most importantly, the overall volume of water capacity.

I recently had an opportunity to explain a bid for a drip renovation proposal. The client interviewed each competitor. When it was my turn, I explained the reasoning for the type of drip components and the quantity I specified. I used lower-gallons-per-hour drip tubing because of the soil type, a specific type of drip tubing because of a slope variation, and a specific quantity of drip due to maximum run length and spacing to stay within capacity.

Afterward, the client informed me the other bidders did not provide the same detail and utilized the one-size-fits-all approach. In the end, the client awarded the project to Harvest.

Landscape drip irrigation is a highly effective technique for maintaining plant health and conserving water simultaneously. Its ability to provide a slow and steady water supply to plants with minimal loss to evaporation makes it an ideal choice for arid and drought-prone regions. Additionally, it is a sustainable and eco-friendly solution that promotes healthy root growth, minimizes soil erosion and reduces the use of fertilizers and pesticides. 



**Max Moreno**

Max Moreno is vice president of water conservation with Harvest Landscape Enterprises in Orange, Calif.

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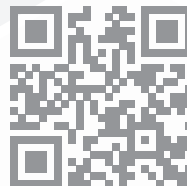
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## Celebrating one-on-one networking at the *LM* Growth Summit

**Mike Morin, owner of Morin Turf, discusses new products he discovered while attending this annual event**

BY BRIAN LOVE | *LM* ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**M**ike Morin, owner of Morin Turf in Sioux City, Iowa, says he attended the 2022 *LM* Growth Summit to learn about new products, practices and network with fellow lawn care business owners.

When looking back on his time at the *LM* Growth Summit, he says the one-on-one meetings with suppliers stood out.

“You’re not hunting down people,” Morin says. “The industry leaders and vendors all want to see you. They want to talk to you. You’re not there to schmooze around a big trade floor. You are actually having conversations with suppliers and innovators.”

Prescheduled one-on-one meetings are a highlight of the *LM* Growth Summit held at the Reunion Resort in Orlando. The event pairs leading supplier partners with prequalified lawn care professionals for two days of one-on-one meetings, educational sessions and relaxed professional networking.

“I just think that it’s great,” Morin says. “It is a great resource for learning about new things that are available. I have always been an equipment hound, so I like to go to expos. But I appreciate the (*LM* Growth) Summit because of the way that the information on the products is presented.”

### TRYING NEW PRODUCTS

As a result of the *LM* Growth Summit, Morin says his business incorporated new products he discovered while attending the event in Orlando.

“In my business, if you can pick up one or two quality pointers per year, be it equipment or product, it means that you have done well,” Morin says. “Because it can save you time, effort and money.”

One vendor he discovered while attending the *LM* Growth Summit is Albaugh Specialty Products, which develops and manufactures post-patent turf and ornamental products. The company has a broad line of fungicides, herbicides, insecticides, plant

growth regulators and liquid fertilizers.

Morin says his business uses Albaugh Specialty Products’ Surmise SpeedPro XT herbicide, which is a combination of glufosinate, pelargonic acid and imazethapyr. It helps to provide knockdown and nonselective control of annual and perennial weeds for three months. He says crews apply Surmise around trees and bushes and it has been a great help to keep weeds out of tough-to-reach areas.

Another product Morin discovered at the *LM* Growth Summit is Q-Ball, a herbicide from Nufarm to help control crabgrass and other summer weeds, such as dandelions, foxtail and torpedograss.

### WHAT TO ANTICIPATE

At the *LM* Growth Summit, lawn care professionals can network and build relationships to improve their business. It is an annual celebration of the industry, complete with outdoor activities, a barbecue and more. Morin says he hopes to attend the *LM* Growth Summit again in the future.

“The great thing about the (*LM* Growth) Summit is that they try to match you with products and people that will make sense to your business,” Morin says. “It helps you to know if that (product) is what you want (to incorporate in your business).”

This year, the *LM* Growth Summit will take place Dec. 4-6. To apply, visit [LMGrowthSummit.com](https://LMGrowthSummit.com). 



Mike Morin



Attendees say the one-on-one meetings are a highlight of the *LM* Growth Summit experience.

PHOTO: LM STAFF

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# FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

## Clayton Fieldhouse

### OWNER

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### 1 Tell me about your business, and how you got into the industry?

I'm a second generation in the landscape industry, I started off as a kid with my father working weekends and summers. Then, I went right into the industry out of high school. I worked for some of the larger companies like Brickman (now BrightView) and a regional company for quite a few years. And then, last year I started my own business. We are full service — landscape maintenance, installation and snow removal.

### 2 What is your favorite thing about being in the industry?

The biggest thing is the relationships. The proof is in the pudding that when you service people well and you communicate well, those relationships can carry you long term. All of our customers, with the exception of a couple, are all customers that I've serviced in the past. As soon as I put the word out that I started my own business, the calls started pouring in. It was to the point where we just couldn't even accept all the work that we wanted to. We just wanted to make sure that we were able to build a sustainable business that could deliver for those customers.

### 3 Any trends you're seeing with your customers?

Customer interaction and communication is more important now than it ever was. We're not perfect, much like any company out there. We all have our challenges. I think the way that we're able to communicate quickly and adequately, to make the customer know that we have it under control, whether we're behind on a schedule or we have to move some dates or something happened ... Just that open line of communication is what's really helped us be able to be successful even when there were challenges.

### 4 What do you and the family do for fun?

My wife, Kate, and I have three kids. Zach is 12, Kyler is 10 and Kensley is 6. We love to spend time outside, going on hikes. We do quite a few trips to the beach throughout the year — primarily the Gulf Coast, Panama City (Fla.), Destin (Fla.), over to Gulf Shores. I grew up in Southern California before moving to the Midwest, so I've just always loved being on the water. And then all of us, all the way down to our 6-year-old, love music. So, we go to a lot of concerts as a family throughout the year.

### 5 What was it about working for your dad that made you want to continue on in this industry?

A portion of it was being able to be outside every day. I love the fresh air, the sun in my face and the fact that it changes from job to job, whether it be maintenance or install. Yes, you may be doing repetitive work, but it's ever-changing and there's those challenges and things you can overcome. Being able to look back at the end of the day of what you were able to accomplish, whether it be laying some nice stripes or putting in some new shrubs or flowers and just be able to see the beautification of what you left behind. And you feel proud when you drive by and say, 'Hey, I did that.' 🙌



PHOTO: KATE FIELDHOUSE



**BY JEFFREY SCOTT**

The author is owner of Jeffrey Scott Consulting, which helps landscape companies grow and maximize profits. Reach him at [jeff@jeffreyscott.biz](mailto:jeff@jeffreyscott.biz).

# Why you need to create a culture of high profitability

**T**op-line growth drives many entrepreneurs. Yet when the economy gets more challenging, the focus switches to profitability.

The saying “sales are vanity, profits are sanity” takes on a new meaning when it’s harder to make sales. However, it’s important to create a culture of high profit regardless of the economy because you need to play the long game.

For this article, I asked some of my coaching and peer group clients for their input. I asked: “What have you

implemented and what has worked for you?” Their answers are inspiring.

## IT STARTS AT THE TOP

“If the owner’s expectations of profits are low, then so will be the rest of the company’s,” said Barry Schneider, owner and president of Surrounds Landscape Architecture and Construction, in Sterling, Va.

He told me he “sees others in our peer group hitting high profit marks that I first thought were unattainable. If they can do it, so can I.”

He recently started a monthly job

cost review with all 10 leaders from sales and installation. It immediately improved the company’s efficiency fade by 50 percent — with more to come.

Chris Di Stefano, president of Di Stefano Landscape in Underhill, Vt., takes it a step further by creating a culture where profit is not a dirty word. We visited his company for a peer group retreat and saw firsthand that profit is one of his core values hanging in his yard (see photo on next page). As we interviewed his team, we could see everyone bought in.

*Continued on page 50*

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Continued from page 49

### BUILD A MARKETING MACHINE

Without lead flow, it's hard to drive profitability. Marcus Kerske, owner of Gardens of Babylon in Nashville, Tenn., implemented this.

"We spend a butt load on marketing, get a ton of leads, aim for really high gross margins and fill the pipeline to the extent that we turn away good leads," he told me.



Profitability is a key business value at Stefano Landscape in Underhill, Vt.

### GOOD LEADS ARE NOT ENOUGH

Dale Drier, general manager of Drost Landscape in Petoskey, Mich., shared this: "A positive company

culture fosters a sense of purpose, leading to higher job satisfaction and engagement. Team members are more motivated and committed to their work, resulting in increased productivity, which boosts company profitability."

Drost believes each team member should treat their role "as an owner." By holding biweekly, open-book meetings with all employees, Drost shares the wins and opportunities and keeps goals top of mind. It works!

### HITTING ON ALL CYLINDERS

I worked with Barney Naylor, founder and president of Naylor Landscape in Kalamazoo, Mich., to bring in a second in command. With his new partnership, the company's leadership team has tackled a host of profit drivers, including:

**1 Become a destination company.** "We attract and retain the best team members from our competitors and surrounding industries, building an A-team that knows how to get 'er done," Naylor said.

**2 Better estimating.** "We have worked hard as a team to improve this process on larger jobs, which means fewer stinkers and more consistency," Naylor said.

**3 Selling better work at higher profits.** Naylor said capturing a higher volume of enhancements and small to midsize jobs and my Profit Pyramid (learn more at **Land-scapeManagement.net**), significantly raised margins.

**4 Speed of sale** has also been a focus, allowing the company to be aggressive across the board with pricing.

**5 Negotiating exclusive purchase agreements** with vendors saved 7 to 10 percent indirect expenses. A dollar saved is a dollar earned.

While all great companies have figured out purpose, people and processes, a high-profit culture requires the leader to drive it home. Sam Bauman, CEO of Earthscape Landscape Design and Build in Wallenstein, Ontario, Canada, said it best: "A culture of profitability means it gets talked about a lot: why it matters, how the team can affect it and how they get rewarded by it!" 🙌

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**BY PHIL HARWOOD**

The author is a senior advisor with Tamarisk Business Advisors. Reach him at phil.harwood@tamariskadvisors.com

## Do you know how ready you are to exit your business?

Several years ago, a green industry business owner approached me and asked me if I would broker the sale of her business. She ran her business since high school and was tired of the daily challenges. She was excited about a new business idea she wanted to pursue after her exit. In a surprisingly short time, we completed the sale of her business. It was a cash transaction with no earnout. She was free to pursue her new business idea with no restrictions.

A few months later, the seller called me and asked me to join her for lunch. When we sat down, she said, “I wish I had never sold by business.” I didn’t know what to say. I was completely caught off guard. We ordered lunch and talked it through. In a nutshell, she wasn’t ready to exit. She only thought she was ready because of her emotional state at the time, but she didn’t fully consider all the implications.

It was an experience I’ll never forget because it opened my eyes to something beyond the transaction itself. Brokering a transaction may be financially lucrative for the broker, but if the outcome results in regret, the deal was unsuccessful in my book. Business succession is only successful if all parties involved are in a better place afterward.

### READY FOR THE NEXT CHAPTER

When business owners consider their exit, they should truly understand if they are ready. It’s often a tough question to answer without some guidance. And if there isn’t sufficient forethought, exiting may lead to regret. In fact, many successful business owners

regret how they exited their businesses because they weren’t ready. According to the Exit Planning Institute, 75 percent of business owners regret how they approached their exit.

So, what does it mean to be “ready?” Being ready to exit encompasses more than being emotionally ready. Being ready from a financial perspective involves understanding tax implications and future financial needs. Being ready involves preparing the organization for succession so the business continues to operate under new leadership. And being ready requires a thoughtful plan for what the owner’s life looks like after exiting. Being ready means having a succession plan in place.

### BACKED BY DATA

Thankfully, there are resources to help business owners discover

how ready they are to exit. One is a free 12-question online assessment called Personal Readiness to Exit Score (PREScore), available at [TamariskAdvisors.com/PREscore/](https://TamariskAdvisors.com/PREscore/). PREScore uses an exclusive algorithm, developed by analyzing more than 40,000 business owners and conducting more than 200 in-depth interviews with owners recently selling their business to calculate readiness based on four key drivers of a satisfying exit. Your customized free report provides insight into at-risk areas overlooked and offers personalized recommendations for enhancing your succession plan.

I strongly encourage you to obtain your PREScore. There is no obligation. Just take the assessment, and you will get a customized report emailed to you. If you’d like to discuss the report with me, I’m happy to take the time to do so. The PREScore assessment helps you consider your level of preparedness so you can exit with no regrets when you’re ready. The report provides insight into unseen factors you may have overlooked. If not addressed, these factors may lead to regret and disappointment. By becoming aware of these considerations now, you will have time to address them.

This October, you will have an opportunity to learn about business valuation at my Equip Exposition session hosted by *Landscape Management*. If you can attend, you will leave this session with a solid understanding of valuation methods, a preliminary valuation of your company and action steps to take to move forward toward your exit.

Now go forth. 🇺🇸



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Does your business have a noteworthy irrigation installation project? Do you offer solutions for new pests in your area? Or did your business add battery-powered equipment to its maintenance offerings? If so, let us know! Drop Editor Christina Herrick an email at **cherrick@northcoastmedia.net**, and your company might be featured in an upcoming issue of the magazine.

# 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](mailto:marty@growgroupinc.com).



## How peer groups can expand your circle and grow your business

**A**fter nearly four decades of running a successful business, I realize the importance of continuously challenging the status quo. It's easy to fall into the trap of doing something the same way simply because we've always done it this way. I've found that stepping outside of my comfort zone and seeking new perspectives is essential for personal and professional growth.

That's why I've grown to appreciate the value of engaging with my peers at industry events and, more specifically, within our ACE Peer Group that we run jointly with our partners at McFarlin Stanford.

### TAKEAWAYS

Recently, we connected with one of our groups, and the experience left me with pages upon pages of notes that I could apply to my own business. From this interaction, three major takeaways emerged that I believe are relevant to all businesses.

### 1 ALIGN YOUR TEAM TO A SINGULAR VISION.

A clear and unified vision is crucial for any organization. As I've often emphasized, every team in the NFL shares the goal of winning the Super Bowl. Similarly, your company needs a defined objective. Whether it's growing your maintenance division or expanding your hardscaping services, the specific goal is less important than ensuring all team members understand their role in its achievement. Define the win

and point your efforts toward that. Everyone on your team should have the same answer to the question, "What's our vision?"

### 2 FOCUS ON THE DRIPS.

In every company, there are drips — small inefficiencies that, over time, accumulate into significant losses. Rather than feeling ashamed of these inefficiencies, it's important to acknowledge them and take ownership. For example, at Grunder Landscaping Co., we discovered that our routing system was outdated and caused unnecessary delays. By assigning responsibility for this drip to our COO Seth Pflum, we addressed it and explored ideas to minimize inefficiencies in our routes. Whether it's your routing process, morning rollout or sales-to-production handoffs, empowering someone to take charge of process improvements can help eliminate those costly drips.

### 3 EMPOWER YOUR TEAM FOR SUCCESS.

For years I served as a bottleneck within Grunder Landscaping. I held onto control and didn't give my team members a chance to showcase their skills. Recognizing this flaw, I made a concerted effort to step back and empower my team to make decisions without my constant involvement. This shift in leadership approach led to record-breaking years in both sales and profitability. By focusing on my own strengths and putting team members in positions where

they can excel, we achieved unparalleled success. I would encourage you to rid the word "delegate" from your language — as Jim Cali often reminds me — and replace it with "empower."

### ACCOUNTABILITY MATTERS

The "ACE" in ACE Peer Groups stands for Accountability Creates Excellence. Having mentors within the industry to hold us accountable to our goals has been instrumental in prompting positive changes, even when they were uncomfortable or difficult. Our own peer groups operate on the same principle, challenging business owners to follow through on their commitments and facilitating the necessary changes for growth and improvement.

Expanding your circle and embracing the power of peer groups can be a game-changer for any business. Fresh perspectives, shared experiences and unwavering accountability can be the impetus for transformative growth.

As I've discovered, sometimes it takes stepping outside of our own bubble to uncover the solutions that have eluded us for far too long. So, I urge you to seek out opportunities to connect with your peers, engage in meaningful conversations, and explore new avenues for success. Your business — and your own personal development — will undoubtedly benefit from it. 🙌





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