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[STATE OF THE INDUSTRY]

What's next in 2025?

How did 2024 go for your business, and what do you think the industry will look like in 2025? What direction are we going in?

Let us know your thoughts for a chance to be included in LM's "State of the industry" report by emailing Editorial Director Seth Jones (sjones@northcoastmedia.net) or Editor-in-Chief Scott Hollister (shollister@northcoastmedia.net).



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Hall G



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Booth 1328 • Hall H

David's Nursery
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visit mants.com



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A frenetic, fantastic end to 2024

Oh, hey, hello there! It's been a few months — since April — that I last occupied this space in the magazine. But even if you haven't been reading me, you've been seeing me — if you've been to any industry events over the course of the last eight months, that is. That's because my team at *LM* and I have been *everywhere*.

Orlando, Louisville, San Diego, Houston, Charlotte, New Orleans and Denver all in the last eight weeks. And that's just me! My team has also been out on the road at both events we've covered in the magazine and online, and even to one event where everything we saw and learned must remain confidential for a few more months! (Yes, it feels very *Mission: Impossible*). It's been an absolutely crazy end to 2024, but in a good way.

LM Editor-in-Chief Scott Hollister and I decided to take on Equip Exposition ourselves since we had extra help attending the conference when our marketing team joined up. Big mistake! Between all the meeting requests, the educational seminars we hosted and

“Orlando, Louisville, San Diego, Houston, Charlotte, New Orleans and Denver all in the last eight weeks. And that's just me!”

the evening events and dinners, we were stretched thin. But these two old guys kept pushing each other to the tune of more than 40 interviews we're sharing in the magazine, in our *LMDirect!* e-newsletter and on our YouTube channel.

Scott told me at the end of the event, “I've been to 25-plus Golf Industry Shows, and none of them were that busy!” Ha! Welcome to the industry, Scott — and I agree.

Only three weeks later, as the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Elevate conference wrapped up, Scott and I found ourselves at Charlotte Beer Garden — which boasts the most draft beers in one restaurant in America — filming a post-event video for the website. We were exhausted but also exhilarated by the people we met, the things we learned, the opportunities being offered to us. All of that was enough to keep the energy level high as we wound down.

Consider this: at Equip Exposition, even though we did 40-plus video interviews, there were still dozens of other companies that reached out to us to try to acquire some of our precious time. Why? Because they're eager to connect with our readership: 93,000-plus magazine subscribers, 100,000 monthly website visitors and (gulp!) 126,451 e-newsletter subscribers.

Try as we might, we couldn't get to everyone. I cringe when I think of what great story or product launch I might have missed out on ... but then I take solace when I remember that we have 12 magazines to publish in 2025, 52 weekly e-newsletters to send, a YouTube channel that never runs out of space and a team in place ready to take on 2025 with a renewed fervor and hunger to connect our readers with the latest news the industry has to offer.

Even in this issue you hold in your hands or read on your screen, we're sharing dozens of products recommended to us by our readers. It's our first ever “Pro's Toolbox” issue. The theme is simple: we asked readers for their favorite tool to get the job done. Some of their responses were obvious while others were a surprise. What might be in this story that could change the way you get the job done and maximize your efficiency? What products did we miss? You'll have to let us know.

As we close out 2024, I want to thank you all for reading and supporting us this year. It was a great feeling this summer at Jeffrey Scott's Growth Summit in Kansas City when I was asked by so many people to explain what was happening with the magazine as the news of Scott joining the team was fresh.

I assured everyone, I wasn't going anywhere — and at the same time I was going everywhere. Here's to what was a great 2024 and to what I hope is an even better 2025. Happy holidays to you all, we'll see you in the new year. 🍷



To celebrate the end of Elevate, Scott and Seth found themselves at Charlotte Beer Garden, home of the largest selection of draft beer in America.

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD



What's the state of the green industry as we head into 2025?

"I'm very excited about 2025, especially if we get someone to run the country who can get us out of this massive debt we have accumulated!"



Landscape Professionals

Richard Bare
Arbor-Nomics Turf
Norcross, Ga.

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Troy Clogg Landscape Associates
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Dayton, Ohio

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Tamarisk Business Advisors
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Jeffrey Scott
Jeffrey Scott Consulting
New Orleans, La.



"Cautious optimism. Much of the demand for large outdoor living projects was pulled forward several years, and

we are seeing a decline in the volume of opportunities this year. We expect 2025 to increase over 2024, especially if home sales begin to turnover. Many areas of the business are still growing in the double digits. The labor market has normalized, and employers of choice can remain fully staffed and be selective. The industry will continue to grow, and professional companies will take most of the market share."

"It has been so gratifying to see the entry of new tools and talent over the last few years. I expect the speed of change will only accelerate. Those companies who are open and nimble will see greater opportunities than ever before."



"Be safe, work hard, watch expenses and take care of your clients and good things will happen. There will always be a need for landscaping, so focus on what you can control to stay sane and keep your head down."

MORE ONLINE

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



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

LM GALLERY

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

1 Revved up at Elevate (Left to right) *Landscape Management's* (LM) Seth Jones, editorial director; National Association of Landscape Professionals' (NALP) Andrew Bray, senior vice president of government relations and membership; Chad Diller, president, Landscape Leadership; and Britt Wood, CEO, NALP, taking in the NASCAR Hall of Fame in Charlotte during Elevate.



2 Rooftop bar in Charlotte That's exactly where we'd expect to find this crew! (Left to right) Bill Roddy, LM; Bobby Kerr, Ph.D., Quali-Pro; Kevin Stoltman, North Coast Media; Ryan Karapas, Quali-Pro; Chris Butcher, Quali-Pro; Craig MacGregor, LM; Allan Fulcher, Quali-Pro; Cal Hill, Quali-Pro; Jones and Scott Hollister, LM, enjoy the scenic view.



3 A Landmark meeting Joe Majerus, owner, Landmark Landscapes; Roddy; and Patrick Hughes, account manager, Landmark Landscapes, take time for a photo at the Kress party during Elevate.



4 Cover models make their return to LM Has it already been two years since we had Doug Delano (left), managing partner, and Bill Hardy (center), partner, Level Green Landscaping, on the cover of the magazine? We saw them again — with Joey Schneider, regional manager, at Elevate.



5 A Premier pic No Elevate is complete until Jones gets a selfie with two of his favorites in the industry, Frank Mariani (center), chairman, Mariani Premier Group, and Dan Carrothers, North American professional solutions commercial director, FMC.



6 Life in the fast lane (Left to right) Brooke Garcia, senior manager, exterior facilities landscape, Walmart; Skyler Westergard, learning & development specialist, LandCare; and Chelsea Hartshorn, co-founder, Threadleaf Landscape Design, were up close with the race cars during Elevate.





7 24 hours in Texas (Left to right) Hollister, MacGregor and Roddy made a quick trip to Houston to visit with the team at Control Solutions Inc./Quali-Pro. With the guys are Erica Cardenas, marketing and event coordinator, Quali-Pro; Sam Pass, PCO director, Control Solutions Inc. (CSI); and Mayra Castorina, digital marketing specialist, Quali-Pro/CSI.

8 The tallest photo to ever run in LM? Jones, at 6'3", is the second shortest person in this photo — with giants (left to right) John Perry, president and CEO, Greene County Fertilizer Co.; Craig Carlson, president, Dawson Manufacturing (makers of Mulch Mate); and Nick Carlson, founder, Dawson Manufacturing.

9 Friendly faces at Equip Jones (left) and Roddy (right) met up with two power players from Ariens and Gravely at Equip Expo in Louisville — Tara Perre, director of marketing, and Dan Ariens, CEO.

10 The boys meet the bugler The guys — Craig, Bill and Scott — nabbed this photo with Karen Williams, senior vice president, partnerships and development, Equip Exposition, and the famous Kentucky Derby bugler, Steve Buttleman, at Equip Expo.

11 Three all-stars These three came up big for LM and served as panelists for the "Grow your all-star team from within" panel discussion at Equip Expo. From left to

right are Sam Gembel, Atlas Outdoor; Steve Bruce, Envisor Consulting; and Barrett Chow, McFarlin Stanford.

12 Famous faces, famous places (Left to right) Taylor Turner, CEO, Numerator Technologies; Hollister; Kevin O'Conner, host, *This Old House*; and Nader Hassen, LM, at Churchill Downs in Louisville.

13 The A-Team Equip is a huge show, so we brought a huge crew! Back row left to right: Hollister; Jones; Hassen; Jake Goodman; Roddy and MacGregor. Front row: Michelle Mitchell; Halle Reid; Alicia LoPresti; Cassi Calamunci and Chloe Scoular.

Show and tell at Elevate 2024, Irrigation Show

BY LM STAFF

These are exciting times for the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP), its members and its annual Elevate trade show — now in year three.

2024 Lifetime Leadership Award winner Jeff Buhler, the senior vice president of customer service for Massey Services, informed the crowd at Elevate 2024, which took place Nov. 3-6 in Charlotte, N.C., just how exciting these times are during his acceptance speech at the event's Opening Session.

He asked the packed banquet hall at the Charlotte Convention Center to consider what NALP is currently experiencing:

- A 52 percent increase in revenue
- Contractor member growth of 53 percent
- A member satisfaction rate of 80 percent

This was just the beginning of the good news shared at Elevate 2024. The opening-day keynote speaker was *New York Times* bestselling author Shawn

Achor, author of “The Happiness Advantage” and “Big Potential.” Achor talked to the room about the science behind happiness and advised attendees on how the mind perceives challenges and how positivity can be spread with a simple smile.

The good vibes would continue from there. NALP CEO Britt Wood announced that the association's board of directors made a change recently and moved away from the format of having a president, a vice president, a secretary, etc., for its elected officers. Moving forward, it will have a chair, vice chair and directors.

He then introduced the first chair of NALP — and also the first female chair: Pam Dooley, the owner of Plants Creative Landscapes in Scottsdale, Ga.

“I had no goal to be the first chair of the NALP. I had no goal to be the first female chair,” said Dooley, who is also on *Landscape Management's* Editorial Advisory Board. “But I would say I'm proud to represent the industry I love and the people I love.”



New York Times bestselling author Shawn Achor was the keynote speaker during Elevate's Opening Session.

From there, the meeting went into busy mode, mixing classes with trade show floor time and networking opportunities. Including the classes and “campfire conversations” — group discussions on the trade show floor — more than 50 educational offerings were available for attendees.

“This year's Elevate event was truly a success, breaking attendee records, blending high-caliber educational programming, inspiring discussions and the latest technology and equipment and extensive networking opportunities,” Wood said.

Elevate 2025 takes place in Phoenix, Nov. 2-5. [📍](#)

EDUCATION IN FOCUS

The Irrigation Association (IA) made a significant effort to bolster its educational content at this year's Irrigation Show and Education Week, which took place Nov. 4-7 in Long Beach, Calif.

The first two days of this year's event were dedicated to IA University — classes that are offered every year to give irrigation professionals the fundamental, practical and business skills necessary to design, install or maintain an irrigation system.

The 3,000 show attendees were able to choose amongst 30 courses, including five new ones, and take certification exams at eight certification locations. On top of that, 14 Industry Insights sessions

were available to attendees on the third and fourth days to those interested in learning more.

“This year's show sparked fresh enthusiasm for industry education,” said Tiffany Erickson, IA brand, engagement and growth vice president. “With the introduction of five new IA University courses and a robust lineup of Industry Insights sessions ... attendees took advantage of opportunities to expand their knowledge, receive expert-led technical training and gather insights to grow and strengthen their businesses.”

The 2025 Irrigation Show is set for Dec. 8-11 in New Orleans.

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PRO'S TOOLBOX

TOP RATED 2024

**We asked and you told us:
Your favorite tools to get the job done**

COMPILED BY THE *LM* STAFF

For the past three years, our sister publication covering the golf course maintenance industry, *Golfdom*, has produced a popular year-end feature highlighting golf course superintendents' favorite tools and how they help them get the job done.

And since the best ideas are often stolen ideas (and heck ... when it comes from a cherished family member, it's more borrowed than stolen, right?) we're excited to bring that concept to the pages of *LM* and introduce you to the very first Pro's Toolbox.

The concept is a simple one — we asked landscape professionals to tell us about their favorite tools and how they help them do things better, faster and more cost-effectively. There were no limits placed on

how "tools" were defined. They could be big pieces of equipment such as mowers and compact loaders. Smaller, handheld tools like chainsaws and blowers. Specialty products such as herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers. Business management software packages were fair game. Even something as simple as a favorite shovel found its way into our Pro's Toolbox.

So without further ado, we're proud to debut *LM*'s first Pro's Toolbox. We hope you'll find some of your favorites listed here along with a few new items that you can add to your arsenal in the future. And if we missed something that we should have included? You know how to reach us so we can remedy that for the 2025 edition.

Mulch Mule ➡

"The Mulch Mule has proved to be invaluable during fall cleanups with its leaf removal capabilities. Since receiving our Mulch Mule, we've seen an increase in efficiency and productivity, time savings and a reduction in labor cost and overall injuries. Overall, we have greatly benefited from investing in this piece of equipment."

— **UZZIEL TOBON GARCIA, PROPERTY CARE DIVISION MANAGER**

Landscapes by Terra, Columbus, Ohio



King of Spades edging shovel ⬇

"All-steel long handle, heavy duty and much more durable than a regular shovel. Great alternative for when I don't have a sod cutter or want to be more precise. Takes some practice to use properly, but they're versatile and stand up very well to heavy use."

— **BEN SCHROEDER, PROJECT MANAGER**
Greenscape Landscaping, Bozeman, Mont.



⬅ Excavator attachments

"For construction crews, the tool I'm seeing with the biggest impact on efficiency is definitely attachments for excavators. They allow operators to do a lot more work without as much ground support. They're much safer and much faster for moving large materials and grading."

— **MARK BRADLEY, FOUNDER**
LeanScaper, Toronto



Vermeer mini skid steers ➡

"They're a great Swiss army knife, they do all kinds of things for us. It's a tremendously powerful machine. It's easy to get a new operator on it and working with it very efficiently, very quickly."

— **MARTY GRUNDER, FOUNDER & CEO**
Grunder Landscaping Co. and the Grow Group, Dayton, Ohio



ChatGPT

"Artificial intelligence has streamlined many of my processes. It funnels information, summarizes my notes and helps proofread documents."

— **ROSS DAY, VICE PRESIDENT**
Oasis Landscapes & Irrigation, Atlanta





↑ Quali-Pro Prodoxaben SC herbicide

"We manage a property that stays wet in a lot of places, and we constantly battle weeds throughout this property. After applying the Prodoxaben SC in March, we didn't see anything coming through till almost October. This helped us out by cutting down costs for labor and herbicides through the growing period. We definitely got the six-month residual from this and will be using it on many more of our key properties."

— **BENJAMIN ANDERSON,**
SPRAY TECHNICIAN
Platinum Lawn Solutions,
Sanford, Fla.



ACE Peer Group ↑

"(My favorite tool) has changed over the years. At one point, it was a skid steer. And then it was probably some landscape design tool I was using. My favorite tool now, in a leadership role? I pride myself on not reinventing the wheel. I'm in an ACE Peer Group with McFarlin Stanford. That's one of my best weapons right now."

— **COLE WELLER, CEO**
Weller Brothers Landscape Professionals, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Asana →

"We're huge Asana lovers. It's a project management tool that we use. It really helps us stay organized, stay on the same page. It's something that we use outside of some of the other industry software that helps us with a lot of workflow and task management."

— **TAYLOR MILLIKEN,**
OWNER
Milosi, Nashville, Tenn.



BomData

"BomData is labor efficiency software that is helping us better use Aspire's software and manage our labor effectiveness."

— **DANIEL CURRIN, PRESIDENT AND CEO**
Greenscape, Raleigh, N.C.



↑ **Stinger Superseeder 2400**

"The efficiency to control seed rates is remarkable. The job it does on the lawn, everything is great about it."

— **RYAN WESTHOFF,**
VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS

*Ryan Lawn & Tree,
Mission, Kan.*

Ditch Witch SK1550 ➔

"We love our Ditch Witch SK1550 ... those have been awesome. It replaces the full-size skid loader on most of our sites. It's an all-in-one tool. It allows us to get the job done more efficiently with less equipment."

— **SAM RANKIN, PRESIDENT**

Etch Outdoor Living, Ankeny, Iowa



SiteRecon ➔

"As an estimator, delivering accurate bids is key to my daily work. One of my favorite tools is SiteRecon mapping software and their Plato app, which allow me to efficiently manage multiple bids across branches. This provides our sales and operations team with the trust, consistency and clarity to stay on track to accomplish our goals. Moreover, it helps me ensure we meet clients' expectations and ... set out teams on the right path for every job, every time."

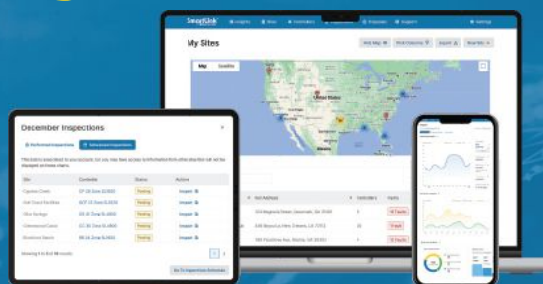
— **IVAN VARGAS, COMMERCIAL MAINTENANCE ESTIMATOR**

The Greenery Inc., Palmetto Bluffs, S.C.



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Atlas Outdoor, Flint, Mich.



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LandscapeCreations, Cranston, R.I.

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— **KYLE NARSAVAGE, PRESIDENT**

GreenSweep and Garden Gate Landscaping, Silver Springs, Md.



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— **JAY WYRICK, AGRONOMIST**

FineTurf, Matthews, N.C.

Leaf Burrito ➡

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— **DAVID BOLANOS, LANDSCAPE SUPERVISOR**
McInstosh Grounds Maintenance, Milan, Mich.



Ditch Witch SK1050 ➡

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— **JUSTIN WHITE, CEO**
K&D Landscaping, Watsonville, Calif.



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— **HAYDEN LAFORGE, PROJECT MANAGER**
LandscapeCreations, Cranston, R.I.

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Continued from page 15

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— **GARRET HERGERT, CEO**

GRO, Vancouver, Wash.

Apple iPhone

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— **NOLAN GORE, OWNER/GENERAL MANAGER**
Top Choice Lawn Care, Austin, Texas



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— **SAM GEMBEL, FOUNDER/CEO**
Atlas Outdoor, Flint, Mich.



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— **JASON DILL, DESIGN-BUILD DIRECTOR**
Angelo's Landscape Group, Baton Rouge, La.



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ONWARD AND UPWARD

Record attendance, a sold-out trade show floor and top-notch education set the tone at Equip Exposition 2024

BY LM STAFF

The winning streak rolled on for Equip Exposition.

The annual international landscape, outdoor living and equipment exposition once again broke attendance records for the 2024 event that took place Oct. 15-18 in Louisville, Ky., with more than 28,500 registrants attending. The sold-out trade show featured more than 1.2 million square feet of indoor and outdoor exhibit space, making Equip Expo one of the largest trade shows in the country.

This year marked the third straight year of attendance growth for the event after setting records in 2022 (25,000) and 2023 (27,000).

"Equip is bigger and better every year in new ways," says Kris Kiser, president and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), which has owned and managed the trade show outright since 2022. "As the industry grows and expands, we are helping people grow their businesses and keep up with the latest trends."

The event also featured a host of educational opportunities,

including a series of 14 sessions presented by *Landscape Management* that attracted nearly 1,000 attendees. This was the third year *LM* partnered with Equip Expo to present education focused on landscape contractors and lawn care operators.

"The education classes at Equip Exposition offer extraordinary opportunities for growth, arming attendees with the knowledge and skills to thrive," says Bill Roddy, *LM* publisher. "*Landscape Management* is honored to provide these learning opportunities that help drive growth and innovation in our industry."

This year's attendees enjoyed a keynote address from This Old House host and home improvement expert Kevin O'Connor, sponsored by Kress. They also took in the second-ever arena concert at the KFC Yum! Center featuring Trace Adkins, sponsored by Senix, Toro, Bobcat and Gravelly, and a Welcome Reception at iconic Churchill Downs, sponsored by CAT.

Here's a look at some of the sights and scenes from Equip Expo 2024. 📷





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: This aerial view shows how massive the demo area was at Equip Expo 2024. Attendees were further rewarded with nice weather for the week. An Equip tradition now in its fifth year, Equip Expo CEO Kris Kiser was on hand for Mulligan's Mutt Madness Pet Adoption event. A 5K fun run was hosted by Equip Expo, sending visitors on a challenging course through downtown Louisville. The keynote speech was given by Kevin O'Connor, host of *This Old House* and *Ask This Old House*. An attendee puts a battery-powered hedge trimmer through its paces at the Echo booth. The outdoor demo area allowed attendees to test equipment, including this zero-turn mower from Bad Boy Mowers.



GEARING UP

How to protect yourself before waging war on pesky turf pests **BY NATHAN MADER | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

Lawn care operators (LCOs) are turf's best defenders in the landscaping business. But who's defending the defender?

When it comes to personal protective equipment (PPE), it's up to the individual to make sure they're adequately prepared for the job. In a profession that deals closely with a wide variety of toxic chemicals and heavy equipment, making sure you're following the recommended (and sometimes legally required) safety tips is critical for any landscaper.

TALK TO THE BIG GUNS

Jay Wyrick, turf and ornamental agronomist for FineTurf in North Carolina, says PPE is regulated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Worker Protection Standard when dealing with pesticides and other chemicals. Following these instructions and laws, he says, is crucial.

"Our guys are required here to wear neoprene, rubber type gloves that are chemical resistant, as well as rubber boots that are chemical resistant, long sleeve shirts, long pants, socks, hats," Wyrick says. "We don't deal a whole lot with the products that need respirators, but we do recommend the guys that are mixing and loading trucks to wear some type of eyewear—safety glasses—just to

keep protection from potential splashes or splash backs."

Wyrick also recommends staying up to date with state and local guidelines, as they can sometimes differ in what PPE is mandated. Plus, reading the labels on any chemical product or machinery is a great way to know what safety precautions should be taken before and after use.

"You got to follow the law on this. I mean, you're dealing with people and animals, so you have to pretty much stick to the rules on this one," Wyrick says. "There's really no shortcut."

A SENSITIVE SUBJECT

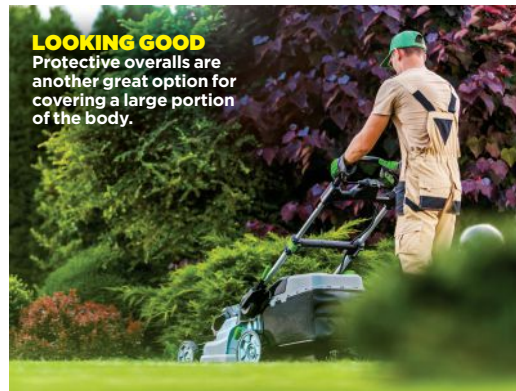
While PPE is important, it's often seen as too tedious or not that big of a deal, leading to it being overlooked.

"I see guys out in the field all the time spraying without the right gloves, in shorts during the summertime, those types of things," Wyrick says. "Those are definitely things that I see other companies doing in the field on a regular basis."

Wyrick warns though that building proper habits with the right safety equipment is important, especially with how sensitive different parts of the body can be to the chemicals LCOs use.

"The most obvious thing I think to most people would be your eyes and your hands. But honestly, the most unprotected part, or the most dermally absorbed part, is actually your genitals and your feet," Wyrick says. "Those two areas tend to absorb pesticides or any kind of chemical the quickest."

And while that may sound a bit silly, Wyrick says the sensitivity of those two regions is exactly why wearing proper gloves, followed by regular hand washing especially before and



LOOKING GOOD


Protective overalls are another great option for covering a large portion of the body.

after using the restroom, is one of the most important yet overlooked tips with personal safety.

Other sometimes forgotten steps Wyrick reminds of is to wash work clothes in a separate load of laundry, throw out any clothes that have been seriously contaminated and to carry equipment that could leak or burst—such as a hose—away from the neck and face.

CALL FOR BACKUP

Wyrick says LCOs should also monitor themselves and others for possible pesticide poisoning by looking for symptoms like nausea, skin irritation, headaches and more.

If help is needed, reading the chemical product's labels will say what to do, and always call the national poison control line at 800-222-1222 for further instructions. 



UP CLOSE

Boots, gloves and clothes that are chemically resistant are important when working close to pesticides.

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THE BIG ONE

California dreamin'

BY NATHAN MADER | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOCATION San Jose, Calif.

COMPANY Gachina Landscape Management

DETAILS When the client of this six-story, nearly 104,000-square-foot office building contracted Gachina to redesign their property, the one request they had was to receive a beautiful and inviting outdoor space for the many employees and clients that frequent the space.

Gachina quickly went to work, creating a new aesthetic that matches the modern, cascading design of the building located in the heart of Silicon Valley. The landscaping also had to compliment the redesign of the office's lobby and the 360-degree view of the building's surroundings.

Being in California, one of the biggest challenges for Gachina was the heat, as the hot summer months paired with the large quantity of light- and heat-reflecting windows put a heavy strain on the vegetation. The company said this led to lots of researching and sourcing plant material that not only can withstand the summer temperatures, but also matches the building's architecture.

In the end, Gachina says it was able to install a wide variety of drought-resistant grasses, shrubs, lighting features and seating areas to fulfill their clients wish and promote a welcoming space that reflects the high-tech yet beautiful life in California's Silicon Valley.

Gachina won a bronze 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.



Captions | **1.** The building is covered in large, dark windows that the company says absorb and reflect heat, amplifying the struggles many plant species would have at the property. **2.** A focus on modern lighting that matches the building's architecture was a key goal in creating the landscape. **3.** Crews are sent out weekly to assess the plant health, and any vegetation that is struggling gets replaced. **4.** Properly irrigating and watering the plant material has been a big task for the property, and routine checks to make sure everything is working properly is crucial in the summer months.

BUSINESS BOOSTERS

The do's and don'ts of adding software to your business

Experts share why patience is a virtue when choosing a business software

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

In an era of digital tools revolutionizing business operations, green industry business owners increasingly turn to specialized software to streamline their processes and boost profitability.

However, navigating the growing number of products can be challenging. That's where these software experts come in. They share the do's and don'ts of choosing software for your company

DO'S

Evaluate your options. As the green industry continues to grow, with outside investors and technology continuing to flood the market, it's important to keep an open mind regarding different software.

Some landscaping companies might want to start off using software for equipment tracking but, down the road, want to expand their usage to aid with

budgeting, accepting payments and more. Therefore, it makes sense for landscapers to check in on all of their options before making a final decision.

Make sure everyone is on board.

It takes a team to make sure business software work its magic. If some team members aren't inputting the data your system needs, it could lead to disaster down the road.



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The advertisement features a central text area surrounded by images of various Uline products: a blue and white patterned glove holding a utility knife, a yellow glove holding a potted succulent, a grey glove holding a power drill, a black and yellow 'Gription HD' glove, a red glove holding pliers, and a black and yellow glove holding a wooden ruler.



“A big issue that people run into is that they don’t buy in fully with the software, or they allow people to be naysayers, bring bad energy into the environment and then not use the software at all,” says Gage Roberts, executive vice president of sales with Weathermatic, formerly with Aspire Software. “It’s like a disease, it just spreads. So, when you don’t have a

good process to follow, the system won’t operate correctly.”

DON'TS

Assume. A mistake that might not come back to bite landscape business owners right away is discarding potentially valuable data, says Ben Collinsworth, general manager of Yellowstone Landscape in Austin, Texas.

“You don’t know what might be usable yet,” he says. “But (in the future) it might be like, ‘Holy cow, I never had that as an option. Now, what can I do with it?’ That ‘what-can-I-do-with-it?’ part is what’s exciting to me. There will be so many uses for all this data as it comes pouring in. I think the people who can figure out where to best utilize it will be huge winners.”

Give up too quickly. “It’s frustrating when you go out and you see

people that are so anxious to find flaws in any of these new things that are coming out,” says Collinsworth. “We should point out the flaws so they can be fixed, but we shouldn’t do it in a way where we think, ‘Oh, this is not a viable product because it has some limitations.’”

Collinsworth adds that as green industry software continues to grow — even in the short term — he expects business owners who didn’t jump on the train early will regret their decisions.

“I think a majority of companies will all have some participation as (software) rolls out over the next five to 10 years,” he says. “(People) will go out to see it and be like, ‘Son of a gun, that’s really cool. I wish I’d done that earlier.’ And then they’ll start to come play catch up.”

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HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

Cactus makes perfect

BY ROB DIFRANCO
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOCATION Scottsdale, Ariz.

COMPANY LandCare

DETAILS LandCare took over maintenance on this property in 2019 and has since provided several hardscape upgrades to the resort.

In this 2023 project, LandCare focused heavily on beautifying the entrance areas by adding hardscapes and palm trees to areas like roundabouts and medians. The centerpiece of this project was a cactus garden that included a 150-year-old saguaro cactus that stands more than 25 feet tall.

The cactus garden also features several smaller cacti and succulents and a walkable pathway for guests to get a closer look. LandCare has plans to install signs next to each plant for guests to learn more about the native cacti.

The contractor also provides maintenance for this site, including rose gardens, drought-tolerant plantings, trees, water features and turf areas.

LandCare won a silver award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals Awards of Excellence program for this project in both 2019 and 2023. 🏆

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



Captions | 1. LandCare kept with the desert theme of the resort with red-colored crushed rock to accent the succulents and cacti. 2. Another entrance to the resort already had a cactus and succulent garden, providing a blueprint for LandCare to upgrade its aesthetics. 3. According to the contractor, this statement cactus was a special request from the client. LandCare locally sourced the 25-foot cactus to provide a picturesque entrance. 4. A major part of this project was improving the aesthetics of medians lining the entrance to the Scottsdale Princess Resort.

IRRIGATION TECH

'Tis the season for a new irrigation tool

Why handheld trenchers are a must-have in irrigation

BY NATHAN MADER | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The 2024 Irrigation Show and Education Weekend happened in Long Beach, Calif., last month, and amidst all the new pumps, valves and controllers attendees have come to expect, one technology was cutting its way above the rest.

Handheld trenchers, showcased at the MiniTrencher and GeoTrencher booths, have become another hot commodity for landscaping and irrigation professionals due to their versatility.

"It's a lightweight tool that does a lot by itself and does a lot in conjunction with other equipment that a landscaping crew would have," says John Hatch, technical director for GeoTrencher. "But unlike other larger machines, it doesn't take up room on the trailer."

Hatch describes them as a dirt chainsaw, meaning they are easy to hold and control while slicing into the ground. He says a handheld trencher is a great way to not only make a ground incision for laying pipes or installing irrigation lines, but also for cutting

roots, installing root barriers, laying low-voltage cables and other jobs that require a smaller machine that can maneuver in tight spaces.

"The customers that buy it find more uses for it every time we talk," Hatch says.

GROUNDING IN EFFICIENCY

One of the biggest reasons to have a handheld trencher is their efficiency on the jobsite. In irrigation, for example, Hatch says many residential properties only require 0.75- to 1-inch pipe, meaning full installations can happen using a handheld trencher.

"It's a tool — some jobs you can use it to do the whole thing, and sometimes you just use it to compliment the rest of the equipment you have," he says.

Plus, because of its smaller, ergonomic size, Hatch says handheld trenchers can usually pay for themselves in just a job or two.

JJ Harris, general manager at MiniTrencher, says handheld trenchers are a great way to get roughly 16-20 inches underground while only making a 2-inch cut, reducing the mess.

"Landscaping is one of the last industries where manual labor is the predominant way that things have to get done," Harris says. "Trenching is one of those things where it takes a shovel out of an operator's hand and gives them something that allows them to produce at three times faster than what they were able to do with a shovel."

"Three weeks later, that 2-inch strip is now grass again, and you don't even know that you were there," he adds.




A NEW POWER-UP

Like most tools in the landscaping business, trenchers are also hopping on the battery-powered bandwagon. For Harris, he says adding battery-powered options is needed not just to stay with the rest of the industry, but to lead it.

"You can do about 45 minutes on a charge, which is pretty remarkable with as fast as battery has gone at this point in time," Harris says. "Otherwise, the machine is basically the same."

Hatch warns that with new legislations in some states pushing harder for the use of battery-powered equipment, finding ways to keep the machines efficient while helping the planet can be important for any landscaper interested in trenchers.

"In testing, we found that the battery units are pretty comparable to the gas," Hatch says. "If you have two sets of batteries and you want to keep going, the batteries recharge at about the same time it takes to use up one set." 



PRODUCTS THAT WORK



VBX+ SPREADER

COMPANY: Boss Snowplows

URL: www.bossplow.com/en

The VBX+ offers enhanced control and precision for snow and ice management. It features an advanced controller for accurate material distribution, optimized spread width and flow rate and material tracking for up to 10 job sites. The company says simplified material calibration enables easy material tracking and supply planning, helping to minimize waste. The improved motor performance increases power on the feeder system and spinner, enhancing efficiency. Additionally, the controller-operated LED lighting improves visibility and safety, allowing for confident operation in any conditions.



STORM BOXX HX

COMPANY: Fisher

URL: fisherplows.com

From scooping and stacking to windrowing and plowing along curbs or in wide open spaces, the Storm Boxx HX pusher plow with TRACE edge technology delivers efficiency and adaptability, according to the company. Its exclusive hydraulic, independently controlled wings provide multiple configurations within a 180-degree range of motion. The terrain response advanced cutting edge (TRACE) provides a cleaner scrape of the plowable surface on even the most challenging properties. The Storm Boxx HX allows operators to scoop and stack heavy loads or maneuver through crowded lots in box plow mode, then expand to full straight blade mode to gain an extra six feet of width for plowing large open spaces.



SBL30 SNOWBLOWER

COMPANY: Kubota

URL: www.kubotausa.com

Kubota's newest snowblower, the SBL30, is available with hydraulic flow rates to match several Kubota power units, including the Kubota RTV line. The snowblowers feature optional bolt-on wings that add an additional four inches of width to bring more snow into the machine, plus an optional fold-over chute can be added to direct snow more precisely. The SBL30 models feature two motor options to accommodate lower-flow machines.



PRO-PLOW 3 SNOWPLOW

COMPANY: Western Products

URL: westernplows.com

The all-new Western Pro-Plow 3 is a robust, professional-grade straight blade with a 70-degree attack angle that easily clears residential driveways and parking lots. The company says it's simple to operate, easy to maintain and comes equipped with a high-carbon steel cutting edge to reduce wear and extend the blade's life. Options include a powder coat surface or stainless steel option, the first ever stainless steel straight blade offered by Western Products. With the exclusive Western Power Bar, high-strength steel base channel and eight vertical ribs for additional structural reinforcement, the Pro-Plow 3 has the strength and rigidity needed to eliminate blade twisting and handle blade tripping.



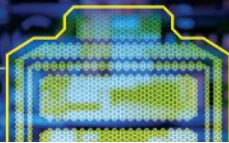
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BATTERY- POWERED EQUIPMENT GUIDE





Electrifying the landscape industry

Industry experts share their solutions and best practices to address the challenges of converting your landscape business to battery-powered equipment

BY MIKE ZAWACKI | CONTRIBUTOR

Justin White wishes to set the record straight. The owner of Watsonville, Calif.-based K&D Landscaping has spent the last year converting the bulk of his company's gas-powered equipment to battery. White's directive wasn't influenced by state or local mandates, client requests or pressure to be more eco-conscious. While those are all legitimate and admirable reasons to switch from gas to battery, White did it because it made strategic financial sense to his company's bottom line.

After crunching the numbers, White discovered that battery-powered equipment had serious time-saving potential, simply through a reduction in daily fueling times and the regular maintenance that gas-powered units require. By his estimates, that could save one K&D three-person landscape maintenance crew 30 minutes daily, leading to significant cost reductions.



Justin White

"So, 30 minutes is like \$40 per day, and we run somewhere around 250 working days a year because we're year-round in California," says White, K&D's CEO. K&D's service portfolio is 30 percent residential design/build, 30 percent commercial landscape construction and 40 percent commercial maintenance. "So, you take 250 (working days) and multiply that by \$40, which is \$10,000 per crew per year."

White's figure is strictly labor, not accounting for fuel, equipment maintenance costs and other factors. He estimates this conservatively totals an additional \$2,000 in savings per crew per year.

"Now, we're at \$12,000 per crew savings," he adds. "Factor in that we'll be operating 30 crews (in 2025), and that's a \$360,000 savings. It's pretty amazing. I think it's a no-brainer."

Like a green industry pied piper, White's number crunching is an electrifying tune for fellow landscape pros to follow in his footsteps. Yet, the conversion from gas to battery comes with unique challenges and complexities that the average landscape professional must carefully consider and plan for to ensure financial and logistical viability.

MAKING THE SWITCH

A critical initial consideration for landscape professionals is determining the optimal approach for transitioning from gas-powered equipment to battery-powered alternatives. Landscape professionals and industry experts are divided on the best strategy for doing just that. Some advocate for swift, full-scale adoption, while others prefer a more measured, phased approach.

Some companies like K&D opt to go all in and commit to a fleet-wide mass conversion. A full-scale conversion to battery-powered equipment requires a significant initial capital investment and a steep learning curve. It's sort of like yanking off a metaphorical Band-Aid all at once. While there may be abrupt short-term financial and logistical challenges, the long-term benefits include increased efficiency and reduced operational costs.

However, a gradual, methodical approach may be the most practical and cost-effective solution for most landscaping businesses. Many industry experts suggest a phased approach, starting with a single crew or a specific

Continued on page BP4



An important step in the battery-power conversion process is teaching operators not to go full-throttle on tools like blowers unless the job necessitates that much force.

3 best practices to operate battery-powered OPE all day long



With advanced technology, Kress Commercial battery-powered OPE not only delivers superior performance and longevity but also considerable cost savings from day one. Here's how landscapers can maximize battery benefit and efficiency:

1. Understand your battery

Understanding different battery technologies can inform purchasing decisions and help get the best out of your equipment. For instance, typical lithium-ion batteries are designed to help homeowners maintain their lawns with ease.

But here's where Kress is unique: Kress Commercial CyberPack batteries, with technology developed through 10 years of R&D, offer 60V power with 240Wh to 1500Wh capacity to provide power, flexibility and runtime for professionals.



2. Prepare for the day

For crews needing to charge onsite without a plug-in, the Kress Commercial CyberTank, with three built-in DC-DC charging ports, keeps crews productive all day long. Able to fully charge in just four hours, the CyberTank can recharge 240Wh CyberPacks as many as 30 times or 660Wh CyberPacks as many as 11 times throughout the day. That means no more need to lug dozens of batteries around.



The new compact and lightweight Kress Commercial CyberTank Lite DC-DC Charging System, with one fully-charged CyberCapsule battery, can power as many as five 240Wh CyberPacks. And with the industry's fastest recharge time – only eight minutes on-the-go¹ – Kress Commercial CyberPack batteries charge faster than they can be depleted.

3. Optimize your habits

Unlike gas-powered tools that are difficult to start, battery-powered equipment is ready at the push of a button. This eliminates the need to keep equipment running while moving across properties, helping operators maintain power for longer.

And understanding tools' capabilities is key to efficient use. For example, while the Kress Commercial backpack blower offers up to 35N of power at level 4, most jobs only require 20N of force, easily attained at level 2.



Make the switch to Kress today

Kress is built for commercial landscapers. Kress battery-powered OPE excels in performance, charging speed and longevity. Backed by an industry-leading six-year or 3,000 life cycle warranty², Kress Commercial CyberPack batteries are a testament to reliability.



Kress is also redefining lawn care maintenance with their innovative line of robotic lawn mowers. To learn more about how Kress' autonomous mowers can help your business, visit kress.com.

Register for a no-commitment, 10-day trial with your local dealer.

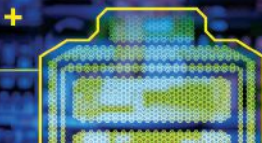


¹ Charging time of Kress Commercial CyberPack batteries when charged with the CyberTank charger on Flash Charge. Cooling just-discharged batteries before recharge is not required. Charging on Flash Charge is designed for one battery at a time to ensure maximum charging speed.

² The Kress 3,000-cycle warranty is applicable when the battery's residual capacity falls below 70% of its nominal capacity.

Kress

The only choice for commercial landscapers to replace gas



Continued from page BP2

type of handheld tool like trimmers or edgers. The benefit is it minimizes risk while maximizing the technology's advantages.

For the uninitiated, some battery-powered tools lend themselves to more straightforward conversion from gas-powered options. Hedge trimmers are an excellent starting point. Battery-powered versions are lighter and quieter and offer superior ergonomics, zero emissions and reduced maintenance needs compared with gas hedge trimmers. Plus, they deliver equal or greater power, making them a win-win for both user comfort and productivity.

This approach worked well for J&J Property Pros, based in Salt Point, N.Y. Co-owner Jenneka Temkin says the company has gradually integrated battery-powered equipment into its residential landscape maintenance crews, which comprise a third of its portfolio.



Jenneka Temkin

"We started with (battery-powered) hedge trimmers," Temkin says. "Our crews tried a number of different (manufacturer) options, and we got their feedback on what they liked best, what made them the most efficient and how many batteries they'd need to get through the day. And then we progressed from there."

As general manager at Larsengines Power Equipment in Petaluma, Calif., Emily Chamberlain advocates gradual adoption for contractors who are not forced to convert by local or state mandates. Converting one crew at a time can streamline the transition and minimize disruptions to operations.

"I have one client who is doing his conversion one truck at a time," she says. "Every three to four months, he comes in and buys enough to outfit one truck. Then, we don't see him again for three to four months."

There are significant benefits — including risk mitigation and greater ROI — to being more selective and starting small.

"We started really small with (battery-powered) drills and saws and gradually worked up from there to chop saws and trimmers, and then blowers," says Brian Linson, owner of BL Landscapes, a landscape design/build firm based in Oak Harbor, Wash., about 90 miles north of



Seattle. "Gradually, it began to make more and more sense for us. Today, about 80 percent of our equipment is battery-powered."

KNOW YOUR BATTERY

Regardless of the adoption strategy, battery compatibility is a crucial consideration. Contractors must know that batteries are not interchangeable between different manufacturer platforms. For example, an Echo battery won't work on a Kress blower.

"Because (battery-powered equipment) is so platform-based, it's important for contractors to remember that gas-powered equipment is a

purchase, and battery-powered equipment is an investment," says Dave Valentine, manager of sales training and development at Echo. "So, make sure you're choosing the right platform and looking closely at all of the brands."



David Valentine

Joshua Dumas, Husqvarna's North American regional product manager, advises landscape contractors to thoroughly test tools from different manufacturers before making a purchasing decision.

"It's important for (contractors) to test equipment out and know exactly what they're getting into because there's a lot to consider," Dumas says. "And it's important to get these tools in the hands of your crews and hear what they think. Once you commit to a (battery-powered) platform, you are locked in for a while. So, I caution any landscape professional not to make a hasty decision. Instead, do your homework."

When choosing an equipment platform, also prioritize battery warranty. As landscape pros soon discover, the lithium-ion battery is the most critical and expensive component of this equipment, representing upwards of 40 percent of the total cost of the tool. In addition, factor in the need to purchase additional batteries (two to three per tool) to support a day's activities. Since many landscape pros opt to upgrade and replace equipment on a three-year cycle, the battery warranty must meet or exceed that time frame.



Brian Linson

Continued on page BP6

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AND CONQUER

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*60V max initial charge. 54V nominal voltage.

BATTERY-POWERED EQUIPMENT GUIDE



Michael Mayberry, Scythe Robotics, believes that today's battery-powered maintenance equipment is only going to get better. "New tech developments are going to get a lot more power out of batteries."

Continued from page BP4

LEADING THE (RE)CHARGE

After selecting a battery-powered platform and adoption rate, the next challenge is ensuring continuous power throughout the workday.

A major logistical challenge for Chad Reinhart during the conversion at Reinhart Landscape and Snow in Bloomington, Ill., was managing battery charging. Early on, charging a few batteries daily wasn't a problem for the commercial landscape firm, whose service portfolio is 40 percent grounds maintenance, 40 percent enhancements and 20 percent snow and ice management. But the charging realities mounted as he converted more crews and adopted more battery-powered equipment.

"Things amplify quickly when you've got 10 crews and two to three batteries per equipment," Reinhart says. "Now you have an entire room full of batteries that you're trying to charge, and you can't because you only have six outlets in the room, and they're all on the same breaker."

"Whether you're doing string trimmers or mowers, it comes down to the infrastructure to charge," he adds. "And for a lot of contractors, charging is a large hurdle to overcome."

To maintain efficiency in the field, crews rotate multiple batteries throughout the day, requiring at least two to three extra batteries per tool.

Many manufacturers offer landscape pros converters to charge batteries through their crew trucks. While these in-truck chargers can provide quick top-ups, they may not deliver the same long-term battery life as slower, deeper charging methods.

Trailer-mounted solar chargers are another option. However, there are mixed feelings about the efficiency of trailer-mounted solar charging arrays, especially if contractors operate in geographic markets where consistent, full sun isn't guaranteed.

"There's just not enough energy being generated by a solar panel to provide enough (charging power) because lithium-ion batteries and these power tools require pretty

high energy cells. They need a lot of juice," says Husqvarna's Dumas. "You might be able to charge a cell phone off a solar panel, but four to five lithium-ion batteries — no way."

However, Dan Bitler, fleet manager at Sebert Landscape, a full-service commercial landscape contractor serving the Chicago market and portions of southern Wisconsin, has successfully implemented solar charging systems.

"The issues we had (with solar) have been minimal," Bitler says. "The trailers themselves have a bank of four AGM (Absorbent Glass Mat) batteries. The (trailer's) solar panels are always charging this battery bank, which we use to charge the equipment batteries off of."

Solar's charging challenges or working isolated from a tappable power supply may necessitate gas-powered electric generators to support on-site charging. However, the general consensus is this approach undermines the benefits and feasibility of battery-powered equipment.

Continued on page BP8

NO GO FOR SNOW

For nearly 65 percent of landscape contractors operating in northern states, winter snow and ice management is a viable revenue generator and a way to keep crews on the payroll. While some manufacturers offer battery-powered snow throwers, many pros don't believe the technology has evolved enough to overcome the challenges of operating long hours in sub-zero winter climates.

Compared to landscape work, snow and ice management offers a whole different set of challenges for battery-powered equipment, says Chad Reinhart, CEO of Reinhart Landscape and Snow in Bloomington, Ill. He's been beta-testing robotic snow and ice machines and investigating the feasibility of battery-powered wheel loaders for winter work. At this time, though, Reinhart is unsure whether the technology can meet the challenges.

"It all comes down to run time," he says. "And snow is so unpredictable. You might go for six hours straight or 30. So, the longevity and reliability aren't there yet. And unlike landscape work, with snow, you can't predict your day, so you are never certain what your usage will be. This makes it difficult to plan around."

Sust

ChargeBot by Sust is a charging solution designed to streamline the adoption of electric equipment for landscaping professionals. Acting as smart, portable power, ChargeBot can save landscapers tens of thousands of dollars on equipment batteries, infrastructure upgrades, and labor costs associated with transitioning to electric tools. It makes going electric as easy as using gas.

ChargeBot simplifies charging with its onboard 5.12 kWh battery, offering upwards of 20 full charges for equipment batteries while on the go. Landscapers can buy fewer batteries and cycle them more often, allowing maximum use in warranty windows. Eight managed AC outlets allow for safe and hassle-free charging of all brands of mowers and equipment. With ChargeBot acting as a mobile hub, landscapers can avoid costly shop electrical upgrades by charging from either a standard 120v outlet or by connecting solar panels. Plus, with charging onboard a trailer or van, crews

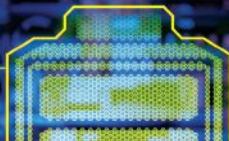


save precious time otherwise spent on managing the charging of batteries.

Built with durability in mind, ChargeBot features industrial-grade components and built-in safety features, making it versatile and robust for field use. It offers smart charging management through a mobile app, GPS tracking, and software that makes ChargeBot better over time. ChargeBot's plug-and-play design ensures compatibility with mowers, trimmers, blowers and electric tools from all OPE brands, ensuring that landscapers can stay productive throughout the day without worrying about battery limitations.

Sust is celebrating the launch of ChargeBot with a limited-time offer for our **Trailblazer Edition**. This package includes an installation kit, added features, premium support, and special pricing starting at \$4,995 for professionals who place their orders now. Order now at **sust.pro**.

sust ChargeBot



Continued from page BP6

Some landscape pros have utilized client outlets for charging batteries, particularly when clients support sustainable practices.

“In our market in upstate New York, our clients are very much in favor of us using battery-powered equipment,” says Temkin. “And we haven’t had any issues or push-back with clients allowing us to plug into their power (outlets) to charge.”

Overnight charging is essential, but managing a large number of batteries can strain electrical systems, posing a significant charging challenge for landscape firms. Plugging into multiple outlets in a shop or headquarters can tax a building’s electrical systems.

Many manufacturers offer contractors charging banks, accommodating as many as eight batteries per bank. These units, which can be pricey, are equipped with “smart” tech to optimize electrical flow and sequence charging activities.

“Not considering or updating your electrical infrastructure is a common mistake,” Valentine says. “People think you can just plug (chargers) into the various outlets throughout your office, which isn’t the case. It doesn’t look good, and it’s not safe. So, you really need to determine how you will manage recharging, and that means consulting with an electrical engineer or reaching out to your electrical (utility) vendor to determine what your current system can handle.”

Addressing electrical infrastructure can result in sticker shock. For example, Sebert’s Bitler says the company invested nearly \$300,000 to upgrade its infrastructure to accommodate after-hour charging for 20 maintenance crews, which consists of batteries to power 60 electric mowers and 125 pieces of handheld equipment.



Companies considering the switch must also consider their own electrical infrastructure, as well as how they plan to safely store the batteries.



Emily Chamberlain

ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

While battery-powered tools and charging strategies are essential in this journey, adequate training and employee buy-in are often overlooked.

Chamberlain says a successful transition from gas to battery requires a change in employee mindset and company culture. She believes this process must include educating laborers on the nuances of battery-powered tools despite their similarity to gas-powered equipment.


“The biggest learning curve, especially with blowers, is that you don’t always have to run them at full throttle,” she says. “Once they accept that and how variable speed works, they’re getting more time out of their batteries, and they can do their jobs more efficiently and effectively.”

While battery-powered tools’ overall engineering is less complex than gas-powered versions, proper battery care is critical to ensure long life.

For example, workers should be instructed to keep battery terminals clean and free of dust and dirt. Likewise, they should be stored in a protective container when not in use or during transportation. They should never be left out and exposed to the elements, especially water, extreme heat or cold temperatures. At the end of the day, crews should inspect their batteries and report any signs of damage, such as swelling, leaks or flaws.

“I’m a stickler for proper care,” says Linson. “I make sure my crews know how valuable and expensive these tools are, especially the batteries, so they respect and care for them. And that means no throwing them in the back of the truck, leaving them exposed to the elements, or leaving them unaccounted for on the job site.”

Ultimately, successful battery-powered equipment adoption requires strong leadership commitment and a company culture says Michael Mayberry, director of customer success at Scythe Robotics.

“Ownership must drive usage and hold crews accountable for how this equipment is used and how the work flows in the field,” Mayberry says. “It’s human nature to want to hold on to the old ways. But once (crews) experience how easy and pleasant these tools are to use, and how they’re more productive throughout the day, then this transition flows pretty easily.” 



Michael Mayberry

Mike Zawacki is a Cleveland-based writer who has written extensively about the landscape and horticulture industries over the last 25 years.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Manufacturers are prioritizing efficiency in the development of future battery-powered equipment.

Michael Mayberry, director of customer success at Scythe Robotics, equates it to advances in cellular phone or laptop computer technology. "Earlier versions of this technology were big and clunky and required a lot of space to do what it needed to do," he says. "Over time, though, those systems shrink down, and developers can get more power and more use out of less space."

"I believe we're going to see this with battery-powered technology as well," Mayberry adds. "New tech developments are going to get a lot more power out of batteries, making the tools more powerful and longer lasting."

The lithium-ion battery is here to stay, at least for the next three to five years, says Dave Valentine, manager of sales training and development at Echo. Therefore, the most significant advances with this technology will be in more effective battery management.

"I see the industry refining (the existing technology) out there and how it's being used," he says. "And there will be a lot of opportunities for (manufacturers) to figure out ways to charge more efficiently or quickly or on the go."

Technology only reaches its limitation until someone comes along and breaks it, says Joshua Dumas, Husqvarna's regional product manager, North America. He suspects this will be true with lithium-ion battery-powered outdoor power equipment.

"Every manufacturer is working on this, and you're starting to see higher density cells, potted batteries, higher

capacities and greater power outputs," Dumas says.

"You're starting to see features like cooling and Bluetooth-enabled technology being incorporated as well."

On the equipment side, R&D is focused on improving the performance of battery-powered blowers. While this equipment has come a long way in recent years, it still does not match the power, blow force and longevity of gas-powered blowers, especially for fall leaf cleanup.

"When cleaning up big piles of leaves, battery blowers struggle to generate the necessary cfm," Dumas says, referring to the cubic feet of air a blower can move in one minute. "You're talking 800 cfm to 1,000 cfm at the top level, and battery blowers can't do that. Some push into the 750-cfm range, but the run time is really short — 15 to 20 minutes. In the fall, contractors are involved in leaf cleanup for hours every day. So, you need extra batteries, chargers and extra labor hours to move the same amount of leaves. And that can get expensive for a contractor."

Since cost and productivity are significant factors in the conversion to battery-powered equipment, Todd Zimmerman, vice president of product development at Kress, suggests that contractors align with innovative manufacturers.

"Every manufacturer is focused on battery technology right now, and we're all looking to figure out how to charge faster, provide more power and have longer warranty periods," Zimmerman says. "So, you're going to see a lot of advancements in charging to allow contractors to use their current infrastructure to charge more batteries at one time without blowing their system up."

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Milwaukee Tool

REVOLUTIONIZING BATTERY TECHNOLOGY

Battery technology is revolutionizing the outdoor trades, with Milwaukee Tool leading the charge. As the industry shifts from gas and corded equipment to advanced battery systems and users consider a conversion, they must assess: “Will these solutions maintain or improve the power I expect? Can it keep up with the work that needs to be done? Can it maintain or improve our efficiency? How can we ensure maximum power, versatile charging, and efficiency?” Milwaukee® delivers an answer to this question with innovative cordless solutions that enhance reliability and user confidence, ultimately accelerating project completion times. With COOL-CYCLE™ capabilities and lightweight designs, Milwaukee sets new benchmarks for operational excellence, promoting safer and more sustainable practices.

REDEFINING PERFORMANCE

Milwaukee’s M18™ REDLITHIUM™ FORGE™ batteries represent a major breakthrough in battery technology. These batteries set a new standard for power, charge speed, life, and are compatible across all M18™ solutions. The M18™ REDLITHIUM™ FORGE™ HD12.0 delivers 50% more power than traditional HIGH OUTPUT™ 12.0 batteries, providing the longest runtime and Milwaukee’s most powerful battery ever made. Meanwhile, the M18™ REDLITHIUM™ FORGE™ XC8.0 provides significant runtime and features a lighter design compared to its predecessors, allowing for extended use without compromising ergonomic comfort.

For example, when paired with our new M18 FUEL 20” Dual Battery Chainsaw, users experience 70cc gas power and are able to take on larger more demanding jobs, previously not manageable with battery powered chainsaws. The introduction of REDLITHIUM FORGE has changed user capabilities and allowed battery-powered solutions to take on the most demanding jobs yet, increasing performance and productivity.

When paired with the M18™ Dual Bay Simultaneous Super Charger, both



HD12.0 and XC8.0 batteries charge to 100% in just 45 minutes. Both packs feature the innovative COOL-CYCLE™ capability, which enables high-speed cooling, minimizing downtime for users performing high-demand applications.

For those requiring versatile and efficient charging solutions, the M18™ Six Bay Daisy Chain Rapid Charger stands out as an optimal shop-to-mobile charging option. This charger features dual charge modes for rapid daytime or overnight charging, allowing users to daisy-chain up to 10 chargers together to recharge 60 M18™ batteries on a single circuit. With Rapid mode, this solution charges batteries at twice the speed of standard chargers, minimizing downtime and enabling crews to manage six batteries in a consolidated, portable experience. Compatible with PACKOUT™, the charger can be easily transported to job sites, ensuring teams can stay productive on the go.

To further enhance charging capabilities, the Milwaukee Power Manager allows users with multiple M12™, M18™, or MX FUEL™ chargers to optimize their circuit usage. This innovative device automatically energizes the largest number of chargers possible, cycling through additional chargers as batteries reach full charge. By prioritizing high-speed chargers for fast daytime charging and bulk overnight charging, the Power Manager helps avoid tripped breakers and unnecessary infrastructure upgrades. This efficient solution empowers professionals to transition seamlessly from gas to battery equipment while managing heavy energy demands.

DRIVING AN INDUSTRY SHIFT

Milwaukee is not just keeping pace with industry changes, but actively shaping the future of outdoor power equipment. By anticipating the future of outdoor power equipment, Milwaukee is committed to leading the transition from traditional power sources to advanced battery technology.





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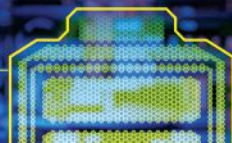
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Q&A with Don Gao, CEO, Kress

Landscape Management visited with Gao at Equip Exposition to learn why he feels battery power and robotic mowing are the future of the industry

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

The origins of Kress date back to 1928 when Christian Kress founded a workshop for car electronics. The company likes to boast that they've never made a single internal combustion engine and never will.

In 2017, Kress joined the international Positec group. With an injection of fresh capital and more research and development opportunities, Kress focused on developing cordless power equipment for the landscape industry.

Kress is led by Don Gao, who visited with *Landscape Management* during the recent Equip Exposition.

Landscape Management (LM): What is it about the landscape and lawn care market that you find attractive?

Don Gao (DG): In general, there are two major trends. One is electrification. I think in the next five to 10 years — 10 years maximum — gas will convert to all electric. The second one is what I call robotization. For our industry, I think all mowing will be robotized in 10 years' time. These two, to me, are major trends. If you really want to thrive, you have to follow these trends.


LM: Do you think our readers are prepared for this, or do you see some reluctance?

DG: I understand this industry is very conservative. People have used gas tools for decades. I'll meet landscapers who tell me they don't want to change because they like the smell (of gas.) What they don't know is how hazardous the emissions are to them. It'll shorten their life. This is not a joke for their workers; they understand how bad gas is. They're going to tell their boss, "If you don't change to electric, I'm not going to work here." Electric is greener, it's saving the earth, but it's also better for the workers, the end user and the business of making more money.

LM: The U.S. traditionally hasn't adopted robotics compared to other parts of the world. Why is that, and do you see that changing?

DG: There is a tradition and a historical reason why robotics started in Europe, and that is because European homes only need the mower to do one go-around; it's easier with their yards. These robotic mowers needed a boundary wire, and it's easier to lay down that wire based on the yards in Europe. But in the U.S., you have walkways, and you split your lawns into different pieces. In Europe, robotics is 10-to-20 percent of the market share, while in the U.S., it's maybe less than one percent. But now we don't need the wires — the robotic mowing era is already getting into no wires, which means the U.S. is going to be more like Europe in the future. Do you see how excited the golf course superintendents are for robotic mowers? It's not just residential and commercial mowing; it's going to golf courses, sports fields and industrial parks. And it's going quick.

LM: How do you feel about the current state of battery technology for these tools? Do they give the end user what they need?

DG: Our battery technology and our charging technology ... can give you eight hours of run time, non-stop. Non-stop! Other people cannot offer that. Last year, we launched the eight-minute Cyber-System, a next-generation battery system that has the world's fastest charging time. Ordinary batteries only offer 300 to 500 charges in their lifetime. We are in the 3,000-to-5,000 (charges) territory — 10 times more. That's why it's so cheap (for the end user). For electrification, I would say we are leading the industry. Nobody can challenge us. 



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The TOWA PDM™ brings advanced active load-sensing technology to measure the remaining power in each circuit when charging, optimizing how power is shared across multiple batteries to prevent breaker trips and ensure each battery charges efficiently. Compatible with any battery brand, our PDM™ SmartCharger provides flexibility for operations with diverse equipment, so you can rely on one system to keep everything charged and ready. TOWA's BPS™ also features a scalable, modular setup, allowing you to connect multiple units as needed without having to make costly infrastructure updates to your building. With TOWA's expansion units, landscapers can connect up to 18kW of mobile power.

TOWA's PDM™ system is also compatible with our BPS™, creating Mobile Trailer Kits create seamless mobile charging set-ups for job sites of any size. TOWA's technologies allow users to charge extra batteries on-site reducing the need for multiple charging setups, extension cords, or trips back and forth to the workshop. Housed within a compact, lockable charging and storage cabinet, the



latest addition of TOWA's PowerVault™ system keeps batteries secure and ready for use, making mobile power simple and efficient for open and/or enclosed trailers.

TOWA's PDM™ and BPS™ system is ideal for operations managers and landscapers looking to reduce complexity and keep teams moving efficiently throughout the day. With intelligent load management and modular design, TOWA's solutions help eliminate common power and charging-related issues. Maximizing productivity, minimizing the headaches, TOWA is here to help the modern landscaper transition to a fully zero-emissions operation.

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Oregon Tool



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Designed to reduce chatter, featuring a specialized bumper drive link and depth gauge that reduces vibration for the smoothest boring cuts

FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Dan Huber

CEO

ALAN HORTICULTURE
WARRENVILLE, ILL.

1 Tell me about Alan Horticulture, and how did you get into the business?

Alan Horticulture was founded in 1978. I came in about seven years ago and took over the company. We're primarily maintenance, enhancements and a snow removal company for HOAs and commercial properties. I got my start mowing lawns with my twin brother, Mike, when we were 10. You know, we just took dad's lawn mower out of the garage and went around mowing lawns and shoveling driveways.

2 What are some trends you're seeing in the industry?

It's pretty competitive; it's a tight market. It's all about pricing. It seems like loyalty has become a thing of the past. Most of our clients are big on service, obviously, but price seems to be driving a lot of our HOA communities especially.


3 How do you feel about the state of the economy and the industry in general?

I think the economy has kind of weathered. I think it's staying strong, and I anticipate it to stay strong with some tax reform and some other things that this new presidency will probably pass down. I think it should be a good couple years. And the industry? I think the industry is strong. I think it's a solid industry. I don't anticipate any real drop off in sales in the next year or so. We've had a lot of growth since 2017. I do see us kind of leveling off a little bit — we'll focus more on internal growth. But I think it's going to be a solid 2025.

4 In this issue we're debuting our first ever "Pro's Toolbox" feature. So let me ask you — what's your favorite tool to get the job done?

Our company rolled out and implemented Aspire in 2022 and I think that's our biggest asset right now — running that software. If you're not on a CRM program like that, you got to get on one. It's been huge for us, and it's really added to our success. The data that we're getting from it and having it at our fingertips versus having to dig for it and spend days and days trying to understand the numbers and the costs that go into our projects — we've really been able to hone in on our margins. It's amazing.

5 That's great news! Let's get to know you personally ... do you have a family and what do you all do for fun?

My wife and I have been married almost 14 years, and we have two girls; an 8-year-old and a 10-year-old. For fun, I like to think I know how to play golf ... I'm learning. And I'm a big boater. I love boating, I love being around water. My wife's in the survival swim business. So we have water in our blood. 

BEST ADVICE

"Know what you don't know and ask for help. I'm a big proponent of surrounding myself with smart people and asking for help."



PHOTO: LM STAFF

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People power success at Juniper

#15

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

While organic growth, acquisitions and mergers have helped Juniper grow, the company says its team is the driving force behind its success.

Juniper experienced a 68-percent increase in revenue from 2022 to 2023, landing at No. 15 on the 2024 LM150 list and No. 10 on the list of fastest-growing firms. Commercial customers make up 95 percent of the company's base, and it offers landscape design/build, landscape maintenance, irrigation, landscape lighting, water management and consulting services.

Since its inception, the Fort Myers, Fla.-based company primarily focused on organic growth from its reputation, says Dan deMont, Juniper's chief revenue officer. But in the past few years, the team has invested in an increased marketing presence, technology and client experience. They've also experienced growth through acquisitions.

"We've continued the double-digit organic growth while having success in mergers and acquisitions," deMont says. "A key metric we focus on is organic growth post-acquisition. We do this by identifying what makes those businesses strong and offering resources where they need it, usually with technology, faster access to data and value-added services to the client."

Juniper is currently seeing increased synergy with its most recent partners, sharing long-time clients, and deMont predicts that cooperation will be a major contributor to the company's future growth.

When looking at companies to acquire, the Juniper team considers the target's culture and core values to determine if it's a good fit.

"We've learned from experience that integration is monumentally more successful when we're aligned there," deMont says.

Juniper's people are at the heart of all the growth, deMont says. As the company has expanded, it has invested more in programs such as progression plans, robust Juniper University programs, team-building events and results-based bonus compensation at all levels of the business.

"These investments resulted in our highest employee retention rate in the last several years," deMont says. "That translates to raving clients who are willing to share their experience with prospective clients and the masses through social media and other outlets."

Like many companies, Juniper has faced labor challenges, and deMont says the company will continue to dedicate significant resources to combat that issue.

"Everything we do starts with people. The business and consumer services markets rely heavily on people as the foundation for growth and success," he says. "If you are not heavily investing in developing your people, it will only get harder to win."

He says his team members continue to step up and contribute to the company's overall success, regardless of what position they hold at the company.

"There are hundreds of stories of team members climbing the mountain and conquering their goals. Today, those folks sit in roles two, three or even 10 levels up from where they started," deMont says. "They left their mark on the business. They've been recognized and rewarded for it."

He recommends that other professionals find team members with values that align with the company and invest in them. Encouraging the team to balance their personal and professional lives is also important, deMont says.

Other tips for success include investing in the best technology and tools, setting up clear systems and evaluating the business often. Specifically, deMont recommends getting smarter about planning for the future.

"In the early days, we'd evolve by force," he says. "My advice would be to invest in your infrastructure, documentation, processes and technology for where you want to be as early as you can afford to — not for where you were this year or even last year. Invest ahead and react less." 



Dan deMont



Based in Fort Myers, Fla., Juniper was the No. 10 fastest-growing firm on the 2024 LM150 list.

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF JUNIPER; ISOCON/PALHOVIK/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS/GETTY IMAGES



BY PHIL HARWOOD

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

Understanding business valuation types

One of the most common questions business owners ask me is to explain the different valuation types and to guide them to the one that's right for their situation. While there is a broad range of business valuation methodologies, there are essentially two types of valuations — estimates and appraisals.

BUSINESS VALUATION ESTIMATES.

The first type of valuation is an estimate of value. This is simply a calculation of business value using basic financial information and multipliers. It's less precise than an appraisal but may be the perfect solution in the right situation.

For example, owners at an early stage of business succession often only need an estimate of value to assist them in their financial and strategic planning.

Often, these owners are discovering for the first time what their business is roughly worth and what factors would make their businesses more attractive to potential buyers. As such, they are usually more interested in learning about value drivers to strategically increase their business' value. The precise value of their business at this early stage is less important because they expect it to change dramatically in future years.

Having an estimate provides these owners with a baseline. With an understanding of what their business is worth and what it could be worth, they can embark on strategic business planning initiatives to close what is commonly referred to as the value gap.

In addition, these owners are often beginning to learn about their readiness to exit, business succession components and exit options. How-

ever, their main focus in the near term is on value-building.

The benefit of an estimate is that it's inexpensive and easy to calculate. Armed with some financial history and an understanding of market demand, an estimate may be calculated within minutes because the process is mechanical and doesn't require much analysis or judgment.

BUSINESS APPRAISALS

The second type of valuation is a business appraisal, also referred to as a certified valuation. Business owners who have advanced from the discovery phase and are preparing for succession often require a more accurate business valuation than what an estimate provides.

A formal business appraisal also affords an owner a more defensible valuation due to the appraiser's expertise, objectivity and credibility (assuming your appraiser is objective, credible and an expert). Plus, a formal business appraisal process may ensure that legal and reporting compliance requirements are met.

For example, a business owner preparing wealth transfer or estate planning strategies may require a formal business appraisal to satisfy IRS rules regarding valuation methodology, professional judgment, discounts, premiums, documentation and independence. Alternatively, an owner planning to transfer the business to a family member, key employee(s) or a third party may also be best served by a formal business appraisal. Each situation is unique, and qualified valuation experts will assess the circumstances and employ one or more valuation methodologies, depending on the type of transfer and level of detail required by the buyer.

As expected, a formal business appraisal requires a more in-depth analysis. The appraiser will need to understand the nature of the business, its history and its management. A financial analysis will need to be performed based on balance sheets, income statements and cash flow statements. An analysis of industry and market trends, the regulatory environment and economic factors will be conducted. Tangible and intangible assets will be evaluated. A risk assessment will be performed, and complete explanations and documentation will be provided.

CONSIDERATIONS

When deciding what type of business valuation best meets your needs, consider the following factors:

- **Purpose of the valuation** — Is the valuation for your own understanding, to provide you with a baseline for value-building or in preparation for your succession?
- **Stage of your business** — Are you at the learning and discovery stage or preparing for a transaction?
- **The audience** — Is the valuation for you, a family member, a key employee or a third party?
- **Precision required** — Is an estimate sufficient for your needs, or do you need a more precise valuation to meet the requirements of your audience?

If you're interested in learning more, please email me at Phil.Harwood@TamariskAdvisors.com to receive a complimentary copy of "Valuation Guide from Discovery to Exit," a 15-page white paper that expands on this article.

Now go forth. 🍀

Progress in paradise

In October, I returned from a trip to Hawaii during which I was the keynote speaker at the Landscape Industry Council of Hawaii Conference. Now, you're probably asking yourself, "Why is a guy from Massachusetts keynoting a conference 5,000 miles from home? And why is he speaking on, of all things, the Endangered Species Act?" Pull up a chair, my friend.

You see, the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) has an annual Leaders Forum, which typically takes place at some tropical destination during the first few weeks of February. I don't usually attend this event, but in 2023, the Leaders Forum was in Hawaii, so I decided to make an exception and attend. I was even going to bring my lovely wife with me. It was going to be fun!

Alas, it was not meant to be. I received a phone call from my boss telling me that he had received a request from a state landscape association for someone to speak at their annual conference at the same time as the Leaders Forum. Trust me when I say that I wasn't terribly disappointed; I love my job and I love public speaking, so it was all good.

"So, where am I going?" I asked him. "Montana," he replied. *Montana?*

I'll be in the Rocky Mountains during the second week in February? Curious, I looked at the weather history for my destination for the prior year. During 2022, the low temperature there was more than 20 degrees below zero!

I was going to die. I just knew it.

I didn't, and I actually was in awe of Montana's indescribably vast and majestic landscapes. At many places you can get out of your car and look in every direction and see absolutely nothing except the horizon. It's an experience much like being out to sea.

Back to the recent keynote: A federal court recently ruled that the EPA must comply with provisions found in the federal Endangered Species Act when registering pesticides, and the agency must do it quickly. This is of great concern to us because we utilize specialty products to protect landscapes from insects, diseases, weeds and invasive species. If EPA does not accurately account for the way we use these products, they could be removed from the market unnecessarily with no benefit for endangered or threatened species.

We made an effort to engage with EPA as it began working through this dilemma. Documents were published; we commented on them. Meetings were held; we attended and asked questions.


One day, an email arrived from a scientist with EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs asking me if I wouldn't mind meeting with her and some colleagues to discuss turfgrass management on the Hawaiian Islands. Panic set in ... I have never

grown warm-season turfgrass, and I've never been to Hawaii. But at the same time, I cannot reject the meeting. *What to do, what to do ...*

Then I recalled the Leaders Forum. Perhaps someone on the NALP staff met someone from Hawaii at the conference? And that's how I met BrightView's Matt Lyum. He and Dan Husek, director of golf maintenance at the Four Seasons Resort Hualalai, graciously agreed to attend the meeting with EPA to explain the similarities and differences between growing turf on the mainland and on the islands.

That meeting was part of EPA's preparation for a document they call the Hawaii Pilot. Once they published the document, the agency announced it would be holding an invitation-only workshop in Honolulu. That same panic returned, because I knew turfgrass was on the agenda.

I needn't have worried. Lyum was there again to speak on behalf of our industry, and all the feedback I received from those who attended told me that he hit it out of the park. We're still waiting for the next iteration of the Hawaii strategy to be published, but I have every confidence that we are in a much better place having engaged at every opportunity.

So, what's next? How are we going to protect the nearly 40 percent of all endangered and threatened species in the U.S. that live exclusively in the state of Hawaii while at the same time protecting our customers' landscapes from weeds, insect, diseases and invasives? The answer is tricky and will require all the professionalism that we as an industry can muster. 



BY BOB MANN

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



The state of Hawaii is at the center of the EPA's recent efforts to comply with the Endangered Species Act when registering pesticides.

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RESOURCES



[DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY]

Got good news?

Have an employee that deserves to be recognized? Is your company making a positive impact in the world? Do you have a big story to share that will put a smile on your colleagues' faces?

If so, email Editor-in-Chief Scott Hollister (**shollister@northcoastmedia.net**) for a chance to be featured in *LM's* newest column, "Time for some good news."

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GROW WITH GRUNDER

BY MARTY GRUNDER

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



A map for success in the year ahead

The end of 2024 is nearly here, and 2025 is around the corner. As you hopefully enjoy some downtime this month with your friends and family, I also hope you're spending time preparing for the year ahead.

While your company's strategic planning should ideally have been done earlier in the year, now is a great time to ensure your calendar is straight. This is the secret to the question I was asked most at events last month — "You're everywhere! How do you manage it all?"

With my job as a coach through The Grow Group, I may travel a bit more than the average landscaper, but whether your schedule is packed with trips out of town, kids' sports schedules or big projects, planning out the year is a smart way to ensure you're in the right place at the right time.

Here's what I recommend you do:

1. Start with can't-miss personal events — weddings, birthdays you must be in town for, holidays and family vacations. Anything you absolutely must be at, make sure it's on your calendar and properly blocked so you don't accidentally double-book yourself later. And don't forget the vacation. Even if it's just a long weekend away, prioritize some downtime with your loved ones.

2. Layer on your work commitments. Add big deadlines, project kick-off dates or industry events you want to attend, such as GROW! 2025, which my Grow Group team and I host. (Nudge, nudge — this year, it's in Columbus, Ohio, Feb. 24-26, and

“I do think we can find ways for our personal and professional lives to be less in conflict with each other when we are organized, prepared and intentional.”

features a tour of Jason Cromley's Hidden Creek Landscaping.)

3. Think through the horticultural calendar. The landscaping business has a seasonal component, and even if you work year-round, it can be helpful to map out what's happening and when. Depending on your role within a company, there may be times of the year when it's harder for you to be away from the office because of the type of work being done and how much hands-on management it requires.

4. Add strategic planning times. If you're an owner or a company leader, pick dates to have strategic planning time, discuss the company's goals and what steps are necessary to achieve them. If you're in a different role within the company, you may want to set aside time on your calendar to think through your own pro-

fessional goals and discuss progress toward them with your manager.

Taking these steps and being intentional with our time is the best way to fit in everything we want and need to do in a year. Intentionality is the key to achieving work-life harmony. I don't say "balance" because I'm not sure I believe that the scales can ever be completely balanced, but I do think we can find ways for our personal and professional lives to be less in conflict with each other when we are organized, prepared and intentional.

Unexpected things will always happen, and we can't plan for everything. But focusing on what we can control and schedule reduces the noise and stress when we face the unexpected. Do what you can to get 2025 in order now; you'll thank me later.

P.S. I'd love to see you and your team in Columbus at GROW! 2025. We have a great event planned that includes breakout sessions for members of your leadership team, energetic main-stage sessions, networking opportunities and an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of Hidden Creek Landscaping's facility and operation. Learn from some of the best in the business; it makes a great end-of-the-year gift to your team. For more information, visit growgroupinc.com/grow-2025. 





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