



LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

REAL-WORLD SOLUTIONS™

The key messages from
the companies at the
LM Growth Summit
(psst! — any of them could
change your business)



YOU CAN QUOTE 'EM ON THAT!

2023 LM GROWTH SUMMIT RECAP

SIMPLY GET IT DONE

Simple to Operate. Simple to Train. Simple to Maintain.

NEW



T3200 SPREADER SPRAYER



T5000 SPREADER SPRAYER

TURFCO®

Largest capacity applicator that fits through a 36" gate.

The new T3200 is designed for minimal maintenance and maximum productivity. It offers the ultimate stability on hills, without tearing turf, and gets new staff up to speed in no time. Add versatility with the optional T-Flex15 tank and **cover up to 140,000 sq ft per fill.**

Added Capacity, Range, and Power Under 48" Wide.

With a spray width of 13 ft and covering up to 300,000 sq ft per fill, the T5000 is nimble enough for small properties and quickly handles larger properties. It is easy to train and masters the hills without tearing turf. Effortlessly match up each pass and cover more properties in a day.

Call now for best prices and special financing.

Visit **Turfco.com** or Call **(800) 679-8201**

CHARGE UP YOUR PRODUCTIVITY



XT10 RIDING AERATOR

Nimble, fast, powerful, and durable.
Consistent depth all day.



TURNAER™ **XT5** AERATOR

So smooth and fast you'll forget
it's a walking aerator.



Call now for best prices and special financing.

Visit **Turfco.com** or Call **(800) 679-8201**

SPONSORED CONTENT

**2-Day In-Person
Mastermind Session**

Business Growth Transformation



Hosted by Mark Bradley
Founder & CEO,
Landscape Management Network (LMN)



**After this,
wearing
a cape
might feel
appropriate.**

**What's your next growth goal?
\$5M, \$10M, \$25M?**

Join Mark, an industry insider who built a Top 100 landscaping business from scratch and has helped thousands of contractors accelerate their growth.

During this program you will:

Define your customer and build a sales and marketing strategy to grow revenue and profit, develop a strategy to grow your people who support your business, and create systems that improve safety, quality, and efficiency using transparent metrics to drive success.

Day 1

AM

Build Your Strategic Growth Plan

- Set 2024 desired outcomes
- Align company mission & values
- Develop a SWOT analysis
- Implement a financial plan that makes it happen

PM

Solve the People Problem

- Learn simple tools to attract the best people
- Retain staff with training & career laddering
- Design a performance-based incentive system
- Develop a culture of high-performers

Day 2

AM

Win More Business and Grow Profits

- Complete a go-to-market strategy
- Uncover how to win at marketing
- Learn a sales process that delivers
- Improve customer retention

PM

Run Efficient Operations

- Guides to eliminating waste in materials, equipment, subs & more
- Build your 2024 operational strategy
- Create measurable success goals
- Finalize your accountability plan to crush 2024

**With events across North America,
reserve your seat at a session near you!**

Buy One Company Ticket – bring up to 4 attendees!

Use code "LM10" & save 10%!



golmn.com/workshops-LM



Spotlight: Local Roots Landscaping

We had a chance to catch up with Patrick Murray, founding partner of Local Roots Landscaping. Patrick has been an LMN customer for about 5 years and we checked in to see how business was and to ask how LMN helped Local Roots grow.

Hey Patrick, thanks for sitting down with us today. Can you tell us a little bit about who you are and your role at Local Roots?

Sure! My name is Patrick Murray and I'm one of the two founders of Local Roots Landscaping here in Pittsburgh. I handle the financials and team building for the company while the other founding partner, Ken, handles sales. We brought in a third partner to lead our day-to-day operations.

What services does Local Roots offer? And what would you say your company is great at?

We focus on the high-end residential market, but we also do a fair bit of commercial work too. So our service offerings range from patios and pools to outdoor kitchens and decks. Plus our commercial offerings and maintenance work. We also just got into snow, so we're building that part of the business as well.

Sounds like a little bit of everything. What would you say your team is most passionate about doing?

We love turning neglected spaces, like city landscapes, into small areas where people want to spend time. They present a unique challenge for us, so figuring out what's going to work in the space is really interesting.

Our crews might get a little bit frustrated with these projects because they're usually hard to access and small - so we can't use our full-sized equipment. But after getting that all taken care of, I think they also enjoy the unique challenge.

So how long have you been using LMN and what made you decide to become a customer?

It's been about 5 years now. We had been trying out the free version but weren't quite sure if it was going to be right for us. My business partner convinced me to drive down to Ohio where LMN was holding a training session. After learning how to use the software a little better, I knew we couldn't go back to the pen and paper estimates and the notes written down on napkins. (laughs)

When you're using pen and paper, it seems normal to lose track of time sheets, forget to invoice people, or just working through a job where the estimate was way off. And changing your process is intimidating and easy to put off. But once we started using LMN, it was impossible to go back.

What's your favorite LMN feature?

We really like the scorecards for our crews, but I have to say that the budget and estimating tool are so helpful in our day-to-day business. The budget links directly into our estimating, so we know if a project is going to be profitable, or if we can take the project on without increasing our overhead. So if we're considering buying a new piece of equipment, we can see exactly how much more margin we need to make to justify that expense.



What would you say to business owners who are considering LMN?

Hands-down I recommend LMN to other contractors. I'm also a business coach for landscapers, and if they aren't using a software, LMN is the one I steer them toward.

Not only is the software good, but I've had such a great experience with the service team. They hold in-person and online classes to help customers learn how to use LMN, and I can call or chat with a real person whenever I need. The team really cares about your success.

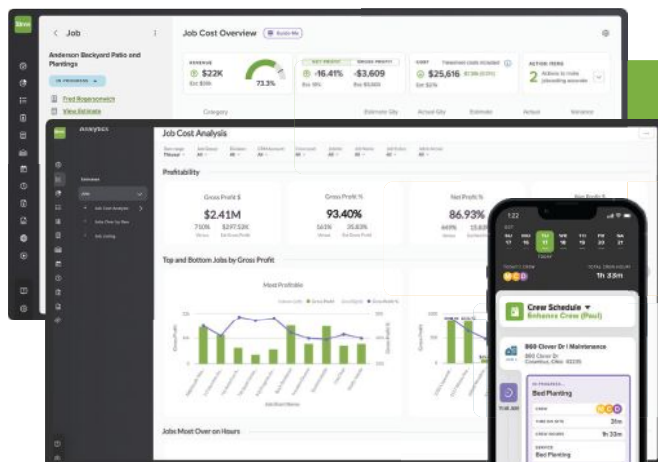
Thanks so much Patrick! We're so glad that you've had such a good experience and we can't wait to see your snow business grow!

Business potential unlocked here.

If you're still using pen and paper, or your current software just doesn't cut it, check out LMN. You'll get the tools you need and the support you deserve to grow your business.



To get a demo, start a free trial, or to learn more, visit:
golmn.com/free-LM





CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 2024 • VOL 63, ISSUE 2



YOU CAN QUOTE 'EM ON THAT!

The key messages from the companies at the LM Growth Summit

12

TURF + ORNAMENTAL

25 Solutions That Work

It's time to review your plant health care routine

26 Maintenance Shop

Tips for making your spreader-sprayers ready for the season

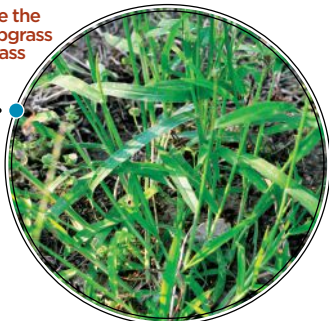
28 From the Source

How combination products can make your business more efficient

29 Turf School

Do you have crabgrass or goosegrass?

Experts share the basics of crabgrass and goosegrass treatment (page 29).



MOWING + MAINTENANCE

30 The Big One

Clean Scapes, Austin, Texas

32 Maintain Your Edge

The what's and when's of preseason equipment maintenance

34 From the Source

How AI will supercharge landscape operations

DESIGN BUILD + INSTALLATION

35 Hardscape Solutions

Complete Landsculpture, Allen, Texas

36 Recommender

What is the top trend you are seeing with water features in 2024?

37 Business Boosters

What to know before adding pool installation services



Learn what to look for when getting your trencher ready for the season (page 38).

IRRIGATION + WATER MANAGEMENT

38 Maintenance Shop

How to keep your trencher running all season long

40 From the Source

How AI will influence landscape irrigation

41 Recommender

How often should technicians change filter cartridges

ON THE COVER: PHOTO BY LM STAFF

IT'S MORE THAN WHAT YOU SPRAY, IT'S HOW YOU SPRAY IT.

HIGH QUALITY, INNOVATIVE SPRAY SYSTEMS FOR YOUR SPECIFIC NEEDS



GREGSON-CLARK Spraying Equipment

A Division of Rhett M. Clark, Inc.



It starts with a conversation about your specific requirements. From there, we provide an itemized quote and dimensional CAD drawing to confirm every detail of your new spray system. Our goal is to always provide the best possible solution, whether it's a simple parts order, troubleshooting help or a complete spray system. We look forward to earning your business.

800.706.9530 — sales@gregsonclark.com — gregsonclark.com



COLUMNS

6 Seth's Cut

BY SETH JONES

Hear from Ryan Lawn & Tree President, Larry Ryan (center) (page 10).

43 Ask McFarlin Stanford

Unlocking the leader within

BY JASON NEW

44 LM150 Profile

How a 2021 acquisition helped Valley Landscaping grow

45 Leadership Advantage

The four C's of planning

BY BEN GANDY

46 Grow Your Green

A look at the Herring Group's Industry Benchmark Report

BY GREG HERRING

48 Grow with Grunder

Is your sales team ready to make sales with warm calling?

BY MARTY GRUNDER

IN EVERY ISSUE

8 Editorial Advisory Board Q+A

How do you hit the ground running in 2024?

9 LM Gallery

Check out the faces and places the LM team recently encountered

10 Need to Know

The sights and sounds from Ryan Lawn & Tree's annual reunion

42 Five Questions

Todd Christianson, president and CEO, Titan LLC, Anchorage, Alaska

47 Classifieds/Ad Index

Could an acquisition push your company over the top in 2024? See how one company turned its acquisition into growth (page 44).



We want YOU for the LM150!

We are now accepting entries for our 2024 LM150 list. We encourage companies with \$10 million or more in revenue to complete the entry form online at [Landscapemanagement.net](https://www.landscapemanagement.net). Entries close on April 1. The LM150 list highlights the largest landscaping companies, ranked by annual revenue. This year's list is sponsored by Aspire Software, Ewing Outdoor Supply and Weathermatic and will appear in the June issue of LM. Contact LM Special Projects Editor Marisa Palmieri at **440-537-4308** or mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net.



LM CONNECT

facebook.com/LandscapeManagement

twitter.com/LandscapeMgmt

linkedin.com/company/landscape-management-magazine/

youtube.com/c/LandscapeManagementTV

[instagram.com > @landscapemgmt](https://instagram.com/>@landscapemgmt)

HEADQUARTERS

1360 East 9th St., 10th Floor • Cleveland, OH 44114

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor-in-Chief **Seth Jones**

785/542-2627 | sjones@northcoastmedia.net

Associate Editor **Rob DiFranco**

216/675-6001 | rdifranco@northcoastmedia.net

Associate Editor **Brian Love**

216/675-6000 | blove@northcoastmedia.net

Art Director **Tracie Martinez**

216/280-6127 | tmartinez@northcoastmedia.net

Graphic Designer **Courtney Townsend**

216/363-7931 | ctownsend@northcoastmedia.net

Graphic Designer **Kendra Taylor**

216/706-3780 | ktaylor@northcoastmedia.net

Senior Digital Media Manager **Danielle Pesta**

216/363-7928 | dpesta@northcoastmedia.net

Senior Digital Specialist **Joey Ciccolini**

216/363-7925 | jcciccolini@northcoastmedia.net

ADVERTISING STAFF

Group Publisher **Bill Roddy**

216/706-3758 | broddy@northcoastmedia.net

Associate Publisher **Craig MacGregor**

216/706-3787 | cmacgregor@northcoastmedia.net

Eastern Regional Sales Manager **Dan Hannan**

216/363-7937 | dhannan@northcoastmedia.net

Western Regional Sales Manager **Jake Goodman**

216/363-7923 | jgoodman@northcoastmedia.net

Account Executive **Nader Hassen**

216/363-7932 | nhassen@northcoastmedia.net

Account Manager **Chloe Scoular**

216/363-7929 | cscoular@northcoastmedia.net

BUSINESS STAFF

Operations Manager **Petra Turko**

216/706-3768 | pturko@northcoastmedia.net

Events Manager **Allison Blong**

216/363-7936 | ablong@northcoastmedia.net

Manager, Production Services **Karen Lenzen**

216/978-3144 | klenzen@northcoastmedia.net

Senior Audience Development Manager

Antoinette Sanchez-Perkins

216/706-3750 | asanchez-perkins@northcoastmedia.net

Audience Marketing Manager **Hillary Blaser**

216/440-0411 | hblaser@northcoastmedia.net

MARKETING/MAGAZINE SERVICES

Reprints & Permissions **Wright's Reprints**

northcoastmedia@wrightsmedia.com

List Rental **Brahm Schenkman**

The Information Refinery, Inc

800/529-9020 | bschenkman@infofinery.com

Subscriber, Customer Service

847/513-6030 | landscapemanagement@omeda.com

For current single copy or back issues



CORPORATE OFFICERS

President & CEO **Kevin Stoltman**

216/706-3740 | kstoltman@northcoastmedia.net

VP, Finance & Operations **Steve Galperin**

216/706-3705 | sgalperin@northcoastmedia.net

VP, Marketing **Michelle Mitchell**

216/363-7922 | mmitchell@northcoastmedia.net

VP, Graphic Design & Production **Pete Seltzer**

216/706-3737 | pseltzer@northcoastmedia.net

VP, Content **Marty Whitford**

216/706-3766 | mwhitford@northcoastmedia.net

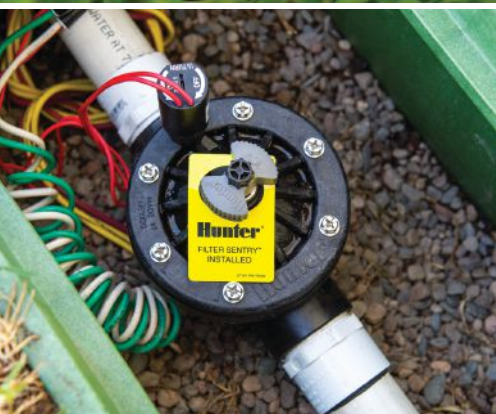
Editorial Director **Seth Jones**

785/542-2627 | sjones@northcoastmedia.net

Editorial Director **Kevin Yanik**

216/706-3724 | kyanik@northcoastmedia.net

WE MAKE THINGS GROW.
LIKE LANDSCAPES. BUSINESSES.
AND EVEN SOLID RELATIONSHIPS.



RELIABLE PERFORMANCE.
DEPENDABLE SERVICE.

Get growing with Hunter's best-in-class commercial irrigation solutions! Our highly efficient rotors, valves, and controllers use cutting-edge, water-saving technologies to ensure landscapes thrive while keeping costs down. For time-tested products, world-class service, and profitable relationships, partner with Hunter.

SETH JONES
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Contact Jones at 785-542-2627,
sjones@northcoastmedia.net or
via Twitter @sethajones.



Seeing is believing

2024 is off to a fast start! I'm writing this column outdoors again with a strange car parked next door to my Morton Building: a rental Chevy Malibu I'll be driving tomorrow morning to attend Grow! 2024 in Des Moines, Iowa. The good folks at the Grow Group are even giving me a panel to moderate. Let's go!

I'm fresh off a short trip to Overland Park, Kan., where I attended Ryan Reunion hosted by Ryan Lawn & Tree (See the story on page 10, and more on our freshly redesigned, may I even say *attractive* website, at **LandscapeManagement.net**.) Even more recently, I returned home from a few days in Phoenix, where I attended a conference for the golf course maintenance industry.

Speaking of strange cars, it was in Phoenix that we all saw a sight to see: the Waymo, a driverless taxi service. These auto-pilot cars are currently offered in Phoenix and San Francisco, with Los Angeles and Austin 'coming soon.' The vehicles are recognizable for their Waymo branding, the sensors all around them, a spinning lidar on the roof and obviously ... for the lack of a driver.

As one stopped next to the pub where a group of us were sitting, someone looked at the vehicle and scoffed, "Can you believe they're allowing driverless vehicles here? Not me!"

Maybe it was the long day mixed with the cold drink, but I had to admit: I do believe. Seeing is believing. I suddenly found myself griping for the

future like a reverse Grandpa Simpson from *The Simpsons*.

"In 100 years, do you know what this same conversation will be? 'Can you believe, back in the day, they used to let *people* drive cars? Yeah and they were texting all the time, totally distracted!'" I said. Apparently, I was just getting warmed up, as I raised

“I do believe. Seeing is believing. I suddenly found myself griping for the future like a reverse Grandpa Simpson from *The Simpsons*.”

my glass. "Then they'll say, 'Even worse, people would get behind the wheel after having consumed a few drinks! And you won't believe this part — they even let teenagers drive! Isn't that wild?'"

Seeing the Waymo coast down the streets of Phoenix was a cold dose of reality for me. Yes, they'll crash some cars. This is a nascent technology. But do I really think this technology will slow down? No way. Are we worried about autonomous mowers? Friends, they're figuring out ways to transport men, women and children in vehicles traveling 65 mph and over with no driver. That makes a robotic mower stopping for a dog or not scalping the lawn sound like child's play.

If you have my job, you better be a believer. My 1964 Chevy Impala and my scores of 1960s comic books say that I'm gripping too tightly to the past, which I'm fine with. But despite my

nostalgia, I won't pump drum brakes on an idea, a technology or a new way of thinking until it's been thoroughly vetted. Why do you think I travel so much? It's not just to meet with the

industry but also to see what's new, what is being embraced and, conversely, what is getting laughed at.

In this month's cover story, we write about the 2023 *LM* Growth Summit and give a moment to each of the event's partners to share a message with you, the reader. These were direct quotes and talking points made by each company. Only about 40 lawn care operators were there to hear it in person, but I'm happy we're able to give these messages a larger audience by sharing them here. Some of the new technologies discussed at that event could really bring a change to your business in the future.

And I'll share this message with you: seeing is believing. Just like my moment of seeing a driverless car drop off passengers outside that pub in Phoenix, it's hard to say what technology is coming next or how soon. But you and me — let's keep our eyes open. 📺

**The secret to a perfect lawn
is somewhere on this page.**

Can you find it?



It's not a secret. Floxcor™ is a fluoxastrobin fungicide that has exceptional efficacy, better control of a variety of turf diseases, long residual activity, plus quicker plant intake that keeps your lawn pristine.



Explore the "secret" at Corteva.us/FloxcorLM

Floxcor™

FUNGICIDE



™ Trademarks of Corteva Agriscience and its affiliated companies. Floxcor™ is not for sale or use in Nassau and Suffolk counties, New York. Other state restrictions on the sale and use of Floxcor apply. Consult the label before purchase or use for full details. Always read and follow label directions. ©2024 Corteva. 018248 TO (01/24) BR CAT03TURF069

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD



MORE ONLINE

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

How do you hit the ground running for success in 2024?

“We have a new in-house marketing/sales team and a new outside marketing company. They are very excited and motivated because we’ve been giving them pep talks, improving culture and morale.”



Landscape Professionals

Richard Bare

Arbor-Nomics Turf
Norcross, Ga.

Troy Clogg

Troy Clogg Landscape Associates
Wixom, Mich.

Pam Dooley

Plants Creative Landscapes
Decatur, Ga.

Paul Fraynd

Sun Valley Landscaping
Omaha, Neb.

Mike Haynes

The Loving Companies
Charlotte, N.C.

Luke Henry

ProScape Lawn &
Landscaping Services
Marion, Ohio

Chris Joyce

Joyce Landscaping
Cape Cod, Mass.

Aaron Katerberg

Grapids Irrigation
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Jerry McKay

McKay Landscape Lighting
Omaha, Neb.

Bryan Stolz

Winterberry Landscape
& Garden Center
Southington, Conn.

Greg Winchel

Winchel Irrigation
Grandville, Mich.

Industry Consultants

Neal Glatt

Grow the Bench
Boston, Mass.

Marty Grunder

The Grow Group
Dayton, Ohio

Phil Harwood

Tamarisk Business Advisors
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Jeffrey Scott

Jeffrey Scott Consulting
New Orleans, La.



“Start early! We are focused on selling good work, hiring nice people and training them to serve our customers well before the season starts.”

“We are reorganizing our shop and inventory and plan on more in-house training to raise our own standards.”



“Working hard in Q4 means that Q1 gets off to a solid start. For those who didn’t plan ahead, don’t rush into hiring or strategic initiatives without exercising the proper care and time. Nothing will hamper forward momentum like a critical mistake made while rushing.”



“You hit the ground running in 2024, in large part, by what you did in 2023. In one sense, it’s never too late but companies who grow are intentional about it. And growth requires a runway. It requires planning or it isn’t going to happen. A well laid out plan has all the elements of selling, doing, billing and collecting for the work.”



“With a clear set of strategic goals.”



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 Don't stop talking shop We interrupted Larry Ryan, president, Ryan Lawn & Tree, Merriam, Kan., and Jack Moore, president and CEO, Grassperson Lawn Care and Landscape, Lewisville, Texas, while they were still deep in turf talk as they awaited their ride to the airport.

2 These guys are wicked smart Everyone stood back as this group of New Englanders got going ... *what did they just say?* From left to right are Lawrence Taylor, manager, Natural Tree and Lawn Care, Stoughton, Mass.; Michael Stephens, general manager, Always Green of Cape Cod; Chris Joyce, president, Always Green of Cape Cod, Marstons Mills, Mass; with Rob Fawcett, president and Michael Trask, business development associate, Tiger Payment Solutions, Kingston, Mass.

3 Selfie time! Remember *Landscape Management* Editor-in-Chief Seth Jones' goal of getting in front of more crowds in 2024? He was motivated when he stepped up to address the *LM* Growth Summit, a friendly audience for sure.

4 Big hitter, long ... What do they have in the water in Lebanon, Ind., home of Steel Green Manufacturing? Because Sales Rep Caleb Myers keeps winning our long drive awards from the annual *LM* Growth Summit golf scramble, year after year ...

5 Flyers or Red Wings? Brian Thomas, manager, Moyer Indoor | Outdoor, Souderton, Pa.; Chris Stoudt, owner, Stout Lawn Care, Pottstown, Pa.; and Joe Kinnear, senior account executive, Real Green by WorkWave, Detroit, were ready to make their bold Stanley Cup predictions.

6 Let's go, Team LM! The friendliest magazine staff in the biz paused for a team photo. Left to right are Craig MacGregor, Allison Blong, Joey Ciccolini, Jones, Antonio Hernandez, Jake Goodman and Bill Roddy as they celebrated a successful week at the 2023 *LM* Growth Summit.



A red Friday in Kansas City

Ryan Reunion brings almost 500 employees to the KC Marriott

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

OVERLAND PARK, KAN. — It might be Chiefs Kingdom, where the Kansas City Chiefs fans love to wear red on Fridays, but this was extreme.

Anyone driving by the Marriott in Overland Park, Kan., on a Friday in late January thought one of two things: either the Marriott was having a serious landscaping project installed, or there was one *heckuva* Ryan Lawn & Tree reunion taking place inside the hotel.

It was the latter. Almost 500 employees from Ryan's six branches ascended on the hotel for the company's annual Ryan Reunion, packing the parking lot with the company's branded "clean, red trucks."

Larry Ryan, president, founded the company, which ranked No. 40 on the 2023 LM150 list of the top revenue-generating firms in the industry, in 1987. He recalled the humble origins of the Ryan Reunion fondly to *Landscape Management*.

"Ten years into this, we were still hosting (the meeting) in the shop," he laughed. "It used to be in the warehouse. You could hardly hear over the overhead fan."

Those humble beginnings are a far cry from where it is today. The 2024 Ryan Reunion offered ten breakout sessions, a 'Women leading the way' panel, an emotional thank you from representatives of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, an awards celebration and a keynote speech from Ryan — and it was all translated in real time for Spanish-speaking employees through translators over wireless earphones.



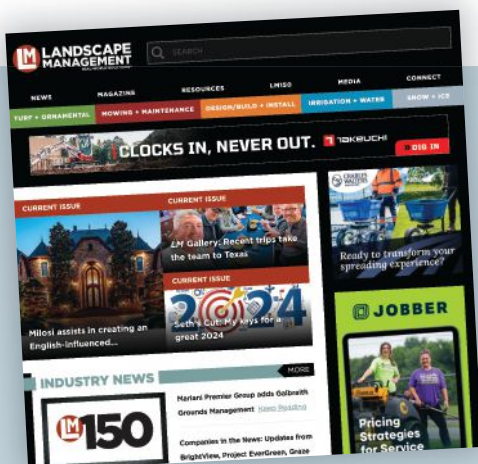
During the "Panel of the Year," Ryan Lawn & Tree leadership was asked some serious — and some not-so-serious — questions. From "What's the strangest thing in your fridge?" to "What excites you for Ryan Lawn & Tree in the future?"

(Left to right) Roy Heinbach, CFO, Larry Ryan, President, and Phillip Fisher, COO, share a laugh during the "Panel of the Year."

"The next branch or service (added)," responded Phillip Fisher, COO of Ryan Lawn & Tree, to the latter. "There's a lot of opportunity in Oklahoma City, northwest Arkansas and west of Nashville. There's a whole lot of opportunity to expand — we've got to invest in sales and marketing and put the best people out there to close."

"We've got a lot of great employees and associates," Roy Heinbach, Ryan Lawn & Tree CFO, told *LM*. "We're an employee-owned company. You really get that sense when you come to this reunion that these people are super-excited about the year ahead."

For more coverage of the Ryan Reunion, including remarks from Larry Ryan's keynote speech, visit **LandscapeManagement.net**.



NEW YEAR, NEW US!

We are thrilled to announce the official launch of *Landscape Management's* brand-new website. Visit **LandscapeManagement.net** for a more aesthetic, intuitive, responsive and engaging experience than ever before!

WHAT'S NEW?

- A new, better design
- A more user-friendly interface
- More content at the forefront
- Better responsiveness across devices

YOUR TO-DO LIST CAN BE A LOT. WE MAKE ONE THING EASY.

Progressive Casualty Ins. Co. Coverage provided
and serviced by affiliated and third-party insurers.



As a small business owner, you can't escape your to-do list. That's why Progressive makes it easy to save with a commercial auto quote, so you can take on all your other to-dos. Get a quote in as little as 6 minutes at **ProgressiveCommercial.com**

PROGRESSIVE
COMMERCIAL

QUIPS AND QUOTES

Here's what our partners said at the 2023 LM Growth Summit

BY THE LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT STAFF, AS TOLD BY THE INDUSTRY PARTNERS

The format is unique to any other event in the industry: for two-and-a-half days, personnel from 20 lawn care companies from around the country come to Reunion Resort near Orlando. Over those 60 hours, each company meets individually with each Summit partner. (We also sneak in a round of golf and a poolside barbecue dinner, among other activities.)

Before the individual one-on-one meetings begin, partners make presentations to the group as a whole. What follows are some of the key messages from each partner.

Continued on page 14



PHOTOS: LM STAFF



The *LM* Growth Summit lasts two-and-a-half days at the Reunion Resort near Orlando. Beyond the one-on-one meetings, boardroom presentations and outdoor demonstrations, attendees also enjoy panel discussions, poolside meals and a casual 18-hole golf scramble. The unique meeting has taken place annually for over a decade.





George Kinhead (far right) is the president of Turfco, a company that is over 100 years old and now in its fourth generation as a family-owned business. Kinhead personally gives the demonstrations to LM Growth Summit attendees and listens to their feedback.

Continued from page 12

THE COMPANY: WORKWAVE

WHAT: Coalmarsh

WHO: Jeff Davis, senior vice president and general manager

WHAT HE SAID: “Everything that we do is behind data. That’s what makes us a little bit different. We’re pulling from your databases, specifically within RealGreen. You all have the key. Everything that we do is around your client data, from building profiles to targeting and figuring out what markets you’re in, what markets you need to go after, where your target demographic is and everything around there. We use that for both digital and direct marketing purposes. This is the core of what we do.”

FOR MORE: Coalmarsh.com

THE COMPANY: TURFCO

WHO: George Kinhead, president

WHAT HE SAID: “What’s been happening is that the industry is changing rapidly. We’re decelerating the growth that we are seeing over the last five to 10 years. Over that time, we’ve seen a rapid pace where some companies grew by 20 to 25 percent a year. We’re shifting now to a much different pace. That pace will be about productivity. What we want to do during this visit is explain how we’ll be the best partner you’ll ever have and show you what we will do in the

future. Most importantly, we want to show how we’ll be a different kind of partner than anybody that you’ve spoken to here and how we are the true leading innovator to the way in which you really want to run your business, which is, ‘I need more productivity, I need easier ways to train my employees on equipment and I can’t have downtime.’”

FOR MORE: Turfco.com

THE COMPANY: FMC

WHAT: Durentis insecticide

WHO: Kyle Richards, pest and nursery/greenhouse market manager

WHAT HE SAID: “What is Durentis? It is an FMC-proprietary technology. It is powered by the active ingredient chlorantraniliprole, which is an FMC molecule. FMC discovered it back in the early 2000s. Durentis has a really unique low-use rate formulation. 2.7 to 5.4 oz. per acre. It has control over all 13 species of grub, from fall armyworms, sod webworms or black cutworms. Great operational flexibility. Fast-acting mode of action. And the best part ... no signal words. It’s safe for you. It’s safe for your customers. It has a favorable environmental profile and no pollinator impact, which is great safety for bees. It will be available in Q1 of 2024. I’m really excited to talk to you guys about Durentis and the capabilities it can bring to your program.”

FOR MORE: FMCPProSolutions.com

Continued on page 16

GET THE TRIADVANTAGE



FIVE PROVEN FORMULATIONS. ONE CONVENIENT PLATFORM.

Powered by precise blends of active ingredients for wall-to-wall post-emergent weed control, the Triad platform delivers solid control of tough weeds, grasses and sedges. The five unique, proven formulations will give you the distinct advantage of full-season control in cool and warm season turf.



GET THE WHOLE STORY AT
TRIADHERBICIDES.COM



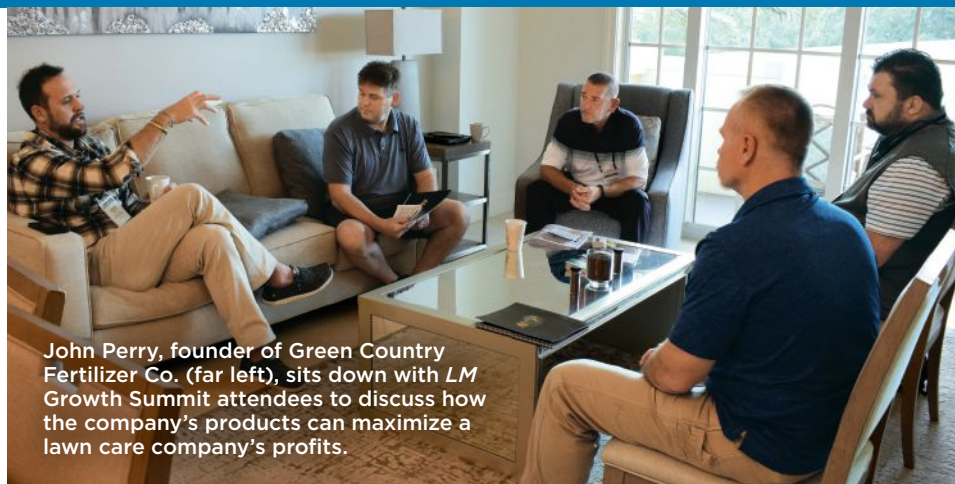
©2024 Albaugh, LLC. All rights reserved. Albaugh and the A logo are registered trademarks and Triad Select, Triad QC Select, Triad SFZ Select, Triad T Select and Triad TZ Select are trademarks of Albaugh, LLC. Always read and follow label precautions and directions for use. Some products may not be registered for sale or use in all states or counties. Please check with your state agency responsible for pesticide registration to ensure registration status. All products are EPA registered.

Continued from page 14

THE COMPANY: GREENE COUNTY FERTILIZER CO.

WHO: John Perry, founder

WHAT HE SAID: "When we first started out, I was doing polymer injections. I was taking liquified polymer and putting down two to three inches into the root zone. It was highly painstaking and it worked okay. But now, there are better things out there and we've developed a few things, one in liquid form to work to retain moisture on the surface of the soil. We also have a granular version that's out now as well that uses granulated compost. We're feeling like this is going to be the next big push for a lot of people in our industry. On the production side out to you guys, it is about how we can make sure that your lawns can mitigate a lot of this damage that is happening from low water levels, water restrictions or droughts. And



John Perry, founder of Green Country Fertilizer Co. (far left), sits down with LM Growth Summit attendees to discuss how the company's products can maximize a lawn care company's profits.

how you can continue to be able to do applications and have happy customers. That's a big push for us."

FOR MORE: GreeneCountyFert.com

THE COMPANY: NUFARM

WHO: Jamie Heydinger, lawn care segment lead

WHAT HE SAID: "Not only are we involved with Project EverGreen and

GreenCare for Troops, we're also very involved in the National Association of Landscape Professionals and Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE) on the manufacturing side. We're always working with EPA and other groups to support our industry for the future. There are people out there who don't quite understand what we do. We spend a lot of time and money to support that

PHOTOS: LM STAFF

MULCH MATE®



AS LOW AS \$600 PER MONTH

DISPENSE MATERIAL 3X FASTER

DMT TRAILER

SUPERCHARGE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY



Designed to carry Mulch Mate® & load

Configure with front equipment platform



KART MATE®
Works with most commercial mowers
MOVE UP TO 500LB OF MATERIAL

(888) 776-8524
www.MulchMateUSA.com



and tell our story — that what we do is good and safe.”

FOR MORE: Nufarm.com/USTurf

THE COMPANY: ALBAUGH SPECIALTY PRODUCTS

WHAT: Triad

WHO: Bret Corbett, product development manager

WHAT HE SAID: “Where our focus is in herbicides. That’s where most of our manufacturing comes from in the U.S. And Triad is our flagship product. We have specialty products featuring the same name as Triad. Triad QC has quinclorac for crabgrass. Triad SFZ is going to have sulfentrazone for speed. TZ is basically ‘t-zone.’ It’s going to have triclopyr and sulfentrazone. This is us trying to be different than other post-patent companies in the market.”

FOR MORE: AlbaughLLC.com

THE COMPANY: QUALI-PRO

WHAT: Nimitz Pro, Suprado, Doxem Plus Fire Ant Bait, Prodoxaben SC & G

WHO: Jeff Rampino, Florida territory manager

WHAT HE SAID: “It’s pretty fair to say we’ve always been known as a post-patent company. Well, we’re moving into more of a hybrid company. We have an innovative product focus. We have plenty of products that we’ve developed with our own active ingredients or reformulated. We will still always be a post-patent company at heart. That’s where we got our start. And, to be honest with you, everybody needs an affordable solution that they can go out and make sure they’ve got quality work.”

FOR MORE: Quali-Pro.com

THE COMPANY: REALGREEN

WHO: Brian Wareck, senior account executive

WHAT HE SAID: “One thing that I think you guys will really like about us is that we’re a one-stop shop. We’re built for a lot of different industries. We’ve been around the block. We’re big into enterprise companies all the way down to mom-and-pop shops. We have companies that, when they come on board with us, have no customers. What really

Continued on page 18

ACE PEER GROUPS

LEADER SPOTLIGHT



MICHAEL HUPF

CEO - Lifescape Colorado

THEN

Lifescape Colorado was at \$3MM when Hupf took over in 2006. Prior to that, Michael had a varied career. He was pre-med at Creighton, a CPA at Deloitte, a Stanford MBA, worked as a McKinsey consultant, & started a wine company. But, he had zero experience in the green industry. “I read a book called *Greenside Up*,” he says, “and that’s how much I knew—plant the green side up.”

NOW

After years of struggling to maintain growth, Michael began coaching with **McFarlin Stanford** in 2015. With their help, Lifescape Colorado has more than **quadrupled** its revenue and is now one of the premier creators of outdoor living spaces in the Denver metro area.

I don't care if you're at \$1.5 or \$5 million. You can do exactly what we did. There's nothing magic about it.

MICHAEL HUPF

MICHAEL'S 3 KEYS:

1. Focus on **profitable** revenue... don't get caught up on the top line.
2. Business structure: think 3 years out. “At \$1MM, you probably have four team members. You move to \$2MM and you have to reinvent yourself and start hiring. You get to \$10MM and you've got to start trusting people.”
3. Focus on incremental & continuous improvement. “I look back and ask: Am I better today than I was a month ago?”



Quali-Pro's Jeff Rampino excited the room when he said he wasn't going to hand out toys, coozies or Yeti mugs, but would give out free samples of the company's products.



MCFARLINSTANFORD.COM

Continued from page 17

separates us is the marketing capabilities, the efficiencies in our software and the way that we can take things out of your office's hands and make your technicians a lot more efficient on the field. People that use us from an upsell standpoint experience, in the first year, (they see) a 12 percent increase in upsells."

FOR MORE: RealGreen.com

THE COMPANY: RIGHTLINE

WHO: Cary Zech, sales manager

WHAT HE SAID: "My plea with you and my offer to you all is that you need to be better buyers. You need to contact companies, like mine or some of the other ones here today that bring alternatives to market. We will help you. I've got a portfolio of products that are good but there are, like I said, other companies that are bringing alternatives that



Tim Zech, CEO and owner of RightLine (far left), talks to attendees about how his company can help lawn care companies lower their herbicide spending.

are worth your while. There are no free rides. We've all had to pay to get into these markets. We've had to pay the big companies to be here. We have 18 products — a lot of herbicides that you get to use in the lawn care industry that are already available. Some of them you've

probably not heard of before, but they are out there. If you are a good buyer, look for them and contact the manufacturer directly. That is what RightLine is about ... bringing alternatives to the market."

FOR MORE: RightLineUSA.com

Continued on page 20

PHOTO: LM STAFF

Design | Communicate | Excite

PRO Landscape®

D E S I G N S O F T W A R E

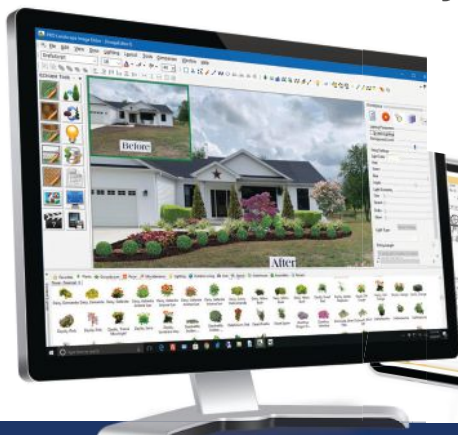


PHOTO IMAGING | CAD | ESTIMATING | 3D RENDERING
 NIGHT & HOLIDAY LIGHTING | FREE COMPANION APP

prolandscape.com

816-842-5551

sales@prolandscape.com

STEELGREENTM

MANUFACTURING



VERSATILITY IS OUR SPECIALTY

The **SG36**, **SG42**, **SG46**, and **SG52** meet a range of needs for lawn care professionals. Each of these stand-on spreader/sprayers has a variable spread width of up to 25 feet, with machine width and capacity varying by model.

*Find out how our standard
models compare here:*



If you're still unsure which model is best for you, email sales@steelgreenmfg.com or call (765) 481-2890 to schedule a demo in your area.

B & B TECHNOLOGIES

☎ 800-847-9865 🌐 www.b-btech.com

SPREADER CARRIERS

- Ground Logic
- PermaGreen/Lesco
- Triumph
- Toro/EKMARK/ZSpray
- Stinger
- T3000/T3100 Turfco
- TurfExc



- Eliminate Fert. & Chemical Spills
- Improve Spreader Life
- Leave Truck Bed Open
- Fits Class IV Hitch
- Easy On & Off w/Curb Side Ramps
- Securely Locks in place
- Standard 2/Light Package



674 Highway 75 Tekamah, NE 68061

Leaf BURRITO®
THE YEAR ROUND YARD BAG
LeafBurrito.com | 800-BURRITO

AVAILABLE AT



*Ergonomic & safer!
Eliminates short-lived tarps!*



2023 LM GROWTH SUMMIT RECAP



Continued from page 18

THE COMPANY: STEEL GREEN MANUFACTURING

WHAT: SGXL

WHO: Caleb Myers, sales representative

WHAT HE SAID: "Getting into our newest machine, the SGXL, we're seeing more of a trend of landscaping or commercial companies being contracted out to do athletic fields, golf courses and things of that nature. This machine was originally designed and conceived based on golf and sports turf specifically. It's a 120-gallon, stand-on sprayer. It has a 14-foot rear boom and comes with five different options, like the foam marker; a 100-foot hose reel; an 18-inch LED lightbar; and what we call our 'hillside assist kit.' This also has a 27-gallon per minute centrifugal pump. This is not strictly limited to being a sprayer though. We have a 350-pound hopper attachment that is interchangeable with the tank."

FOR MORE: SteelGreenMfg.com

Scot Jones, co-founder and senior project specialist of Steel Green Manufacturing (far right), explains the finer points of the company's SG45.

THE COMPANY: STINGER EQUIPMENT

WHO: Dustin McGehee, vice president of sales and marketing

WHAT HE SAID: "A little bit about Stinger Equipment is we don't design a product unless it meets a strict criteria. It's got to be easier to use, have less maintenance, be more productive and it's got to have two or more defining features. If we can't do that, we're going to let someone else do it. We do multiple ride-on aerators, ground meter spreader-sprayer, walk-behind aerators and walk-behind power seeders."

FOR MORE: StingerEquipment.com

Continued on page 22

PHOTO: LM STAFF

GROW YOUR BUSINESS, WE'LL GROW YOUR TURF.

**SOMETHING
HUGE
IS HERE.**

N-Ex^t
Hydr8
Granular

Hydr8 MRG™
Moisture Retaining Granular

N-Ex^t
Hydr8
Liquid

Hydr8 Liquicure™
Soil Surfactant/Wetting Agent

A greener lawn is about to be easier than ever with Hydr8™. Conserve water, eliminate hot spots, and cruise through summer.



GreeneCountyFert.com



BUY/SHIP DIRECT

Healthy turf starts with Greene County Fert.

Continued from page 20

THE COMPANY: THE ANDERSONS

WHAT: CarbonCoat Technology

WHO: Alan Hollen, territory manager,
and Dave Louttit, territory manager

WHAT THEY SAID: “As you guys know, during COVID, things got a little wonky. Things backed up. But we are definitely through that now. It was a tough couple of years. We weren’t sure there for a while if we would make it through. Now, we’re rock ‘n’ rolling like we were back in 2019.”

– Alan Hollen

“CarbonCoat Technology has been a work-in-progress that really started about three years ago. A couple of years ago, we introduced HCU, which is our humate-coated urea. This year, we were proud to introduce HCAS, our humate-coated

Continued on page 24



David Cook, CEO of Stinger (right), demonstrates the advanced technology behind one of the many machines he’s invented.

PHOTO: LM STAFF



BACKSLOPE

Built for the Slopes

Introducing Backslope, your go-to source for commercial-grade spreading and spraying equipment with unbeatable hill stability and safe slope operation. Give us a shout, and let’s discuss how our products can enhance your productivity and efficiency.



PURSUIT 120

EXPLORE OUR ENTIRE PRODUCT LINE TODAY!
backslopeinc.com



NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS!

GROWTH SUMMIT

TURF+ORNAMENTAL CARE

December 2024

Reunion Resort – Orlando, FL

An exclusive
invite-only experience.

Space is Limited.

Apply Today!



- ▶ One-on-one scheduled meetings with leading industry executives
- ▶ Presentations, peer panels and networking
- ▶ Exclusive event with your expenses covered (lodging, golf, food and drinks)

LMGrowthSummit.com

2024 Confirmed Partners*





Alan Hollen, territory manager for The Andersons, likes to dedicate his boardroom time to giving a presentation on the state of the industry.

Continued from page 22

ammonium sulfate. The last one that came out this year was, what we call PCHCU, which is a polymer coating humate-coated urea. It gives us an extended control. And we're going to have blends that you can buy individually or we're going to put these into blends depending on where you're at in the country and how long you want the product to last." — Dave Louttit

FOR MORE: AndersonsPlantNutrients.com/Turf

THE COMPANY: TIGER PAYMENT SOLUTIONS

WHO: Rob Fawcett, president

WHAT HE SAID: "We help small family businesses manage their cost of credit card acceptance. It's not a glamour business, but we're really good at what we do. We're 10 people in an old schoolhouse in Kingston, Mass. We take our dogs to work and we answer our phones on weekends and holidays. We know clients in almost every state. We're doing close to two billion dollars in total transactions across our portfolio of customers. We're here to try to help you reflect on what your payment situation looks like."

FOR MORE: TigerProcessing.com 

WE'RE FOR EVERY TREE.



EXPERT TREE CARE FOR 117 YEARS — AND GROWING.

Quercus alba, Betula papyrifera, Carya ovata. Better known as White Oak, Paper Birch, and Shagbark Hickory, these are three of the thousands of species we specialize in. Leverage our tree expertise, highly trained and insured staff, and state-of-the-art equipment to bring your clients tree services second to none.

Call **877-227-8538** or visit **bartlett.com**

REMOVALS | STORM DAMAGE | TREE INSPECTIONS
CABLING & BRACING | LIGHTNING PROTECTION | PRUNING
FERTILIZATION INSECT & DISEASE MANAGEMENT



BARTLETT TREE EXPERTS

SCIENTIFIC TREE CARE SINCE 1907

The F.A. Bartlett Tree Expert Company

WILL YOU BE IN THIS PHOTO NEXT YEAR?

NEW ATTENDEES WANTED! HERE'S HOW TO APPLY

If you're reading this article, it means you're interested in learning more about the tools available to help lawn care operators get the job done. Instead of reading about the tools discussed at LM Growth Summit, why not attend it and see them for yourself?

For more than a dozen years, *Landscape Management* brings 20 companies to Reunion Resort for this event. Accepted companies only need to get to Orlando and give us their time and attention — accommodations, food, beverage and golf are all covered.

To submit an application to attend, visit **LandscapeManagement.net**.



SOLUTIONS THAT WORK

How combination products can make your lawn care strategy more efficient

Experts share how these products can reduce costs and enhance client satisfaction

BY MIKE ZAWACKI | CONTRIBUTOR

Successful lawn care operators (LCOs) know how to use their labor force efficiently and effectively. Granular and foliar combination products check both boxes in a single pass.

Healthy turf resists environmental stress and remains in top form throughout the growing season. Therefore, the long-term health and vibrancy of residential and commercial clients' turf hinges on the right blend of a combination fertilizer product.



Aaron Suttentfield

"From an applicator's standpoint, any time I can use a combined product in our schedule, I'm going to be more efficient," says Aaron Suttentfield, lawn care coach and founder and CEO

of Mount Holly, N.C.-based RDS Lawn Care, which provides lawn care applications to around 1,300 clients.

Suttentfield uses a "three-legged stool" analogy when building a program with combination products. One leg shows an LCO's agronomic understanding of the needs and issues. Another is the client's expectations and price threshold for results. The final leg is the product strategy required to support the first two legs.

ASSESS NEEDS

Before you apply any product, a soil test is the most effective way to assess turf's deficiencies and needs. However, this isn't always a practical strategy for LCOs with an extensive portfolio of clients.

"If you take enough soil tests in a given region, you can find the general

trends," says Jeff Atkinson, director of agronomy for Harrell's. "(A broader sampling of tests) will tell you if an area's soil has a low pH or if there are low calcium or phosphorus levels."

A different approach is required when determining pest pressure with turf nutrition. Successful LCOs know their local agronomic history and develop their application strategies accordingly.

"Wherever you are located, weeds are going to be an issue," Atkinson adds. "So, applying a preemergence herbicide (in combination) with a fertilizer application is going to be a given in most lawn care programs."

Cort Hall, Harrell's territory manager, says a fertilizer/preemergent herbicide combination effectively builds turf while addressing weed pressure.

"We've looked at controlled-release fertilizer plus a preemergent herbicide application and the relative level of crabgrass control with and without (the fertilizer component)," he says. "Preemergent herbicides work, but they work better when combined with a nutrient base. It goes back to the turf school adage that the best weed control program is a dense turf strand."

Addressing insects with combination products is more challenging since species' pressure varies from region to region.

"It's vital to watch for and monitor pest pressure trends from season to season to make an educated assessment on preventative applications," Hall says. "Random applications just don't make sense because they're an inefficient use of time and product, which end up costing the (LCO) in the long-term."



Cort Hall

Hall recommends that LCOs consult with vendors, local extension agents and industry colleagues to educate themselves on forecasted and observed pest trends.


"Entrepreneurship can be a lonely world," he says. "A big mistake is trying to win it by yourself. If you think you can just shoot from the hip (with an application strategy), you'll be running a broken company."

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Combination products can be pricey and LCOs can be tempted to go with cheaper options.

"The biggest mistake I see made is looking at just the cost of a round of product and not realizing that the (following) rounds will cost them less because they achieved so much success and control with that initial round (of a combination product)," Suttentfield says.

Atkinson adds cheaper, sometimes inferior, combination products have hidden costs, such as labor lost to follow-up applications, the purchase of additional products to amend failed applications and even the loss of clients.

"Suddenly, that cheap bag (of product) becomes more expensive because you're not getting the value out of what you've applied," he says. 



Jeff Atkinson

Mike Zawacki is a Cleveland-based freelance writer with nearly two decades of experience covering various aspects of the green industry.

MAINTENANCE SHOP

Easy does it

Maintenance is the easy part. Making a simple spreader-sprayer for operators is where the art form lies BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Time to dust off the spreader-sprayers for another season in the sun. Mastering the machines is no big deal, says Scott Kinkad, executive vice president of Turfco Manufacturing, Blaine, Minn. According to him, companies need to focus on the man versus the machine.

“It’s not just, ‘clean your engine and look for parts that are worn out,’” Kinkad says. “We can give you all that stuff. But there’s two things: here’s what

to do for the product ... and here’s what you need to do for your staff.”

STARTING OVER

Brice Crawford is the president and owner of Backslope, a manufacturer of spreaders and sprayers based in Lincoln, Neb. Readers might remember the Ground Logic line of spreaders and sprayers — Crawford sold that line in 2017 and is “starting over.” He’s been working on Backslope’s Rival 120

and 220, as well as the Pursuit 120 and 220, for two years. He launched at the beginning of this year.



Brice Crawford

His main goal for Backslope is improved hill stability and better machine control. They’ve accomplished this, he says, by adding lower side tanks and a lower hopper position, lowering the center of gravity.

He also wants the machines to be simpler, he says, because the market demands it.

“We’ve taken away a lot of the clutter from some of these machines and made it simpler,” he says. “A new feature is the gate open/closed lever. You’re able to operate that with either hand without

We all want
**Green Grass,
No Weeds.**



Every tool you need
to have the greenest,
most weed-free grass
is right here.

**Greene County
Fertilizer Company**

Healthy turf starts with Greene County Fert.

BUY/SHIP DIRECT

Learn more:
GreeneCountyFert.com



N-Charge 28-0-0
Hydr8 NPK
Granular

**COUNT
ON US**
for the very latest.

Your 24/7 access to daily industry news, updates,
blog postings, e-newsletters and so much more.



**PRINT • WEBSITE • E-NEWSLETTERS
SOCIAL MEDIA • VIDEO • WEBINAR • BLOG**

**LM LANDSCAPE
MANAGEMENT**
LANDSCAPEMANAGEMENT.NET

moving your hands from the handlebars. That's been a nice feature compared to our old machines where you had to move a lever and take your hand off the handlebar to do that."

UNDER PRESSURE

Matt Smith, co-founder of Steel Green, Lebanon, Ind., says now that the company is in year six, the newness has worn off. Now, customers are looking hard at the options the company offers.

Their pressure control system and their hillside assist kit are two options that have drawn attention because they make operation easier, he says.

"You can set your pressure and operate the machine and it's going to stay at your desired pressure without the gauge moving up or down," Smith says. "With hillside assist, any type of terrain, flip a switch ... it's going to engage the front casters to cylinders to lock the front casters in place. That way you can be on a hillside and keep straight without those casters potentially moving."



Matt Smith

GRIP THE WHEEL AND GO

Will Haselbauer, president of bioLawn, bioTree and bioHome in Minneapolis, says his Turfco spreader-sprayers are always ready to go come springtime. His company focuses on training for the crew at this time of year.

He relies on Trainual to share classroom training for operators before they're in the field. Following successful online learning, operators get a three-day introduction to the machine. After that, operators are monitored in the field to ensure they're handling the equipment properly.

"The Turfcos are so easy to run," Haselbauer says. "They're simple because of the steering wheel. People who don't have any lawn care or mowing experience, we can have them up and trained in a week. People who have been running mowers? It normally takes another three to five days, just because they're so used to running a complicated machine that requires both hands."

"What we're dealing with right now is you're cranking along and then you lose a key member of the crew," Kinkead says. "Turnover in lawn care right now is pretty significant. We designed the T3200 with the idea that it needs to be really simple to operate. We look at it as, 'If your crew can't drive this ... we don't know how they got to work in the morning.'" 🎧



Scott Kinkead

"We came for one specific rig, but Graham's pricing and service sold us on two more."

Jeremy Lowe | Chorbie | Frisco, Texas

The details make all the difference.

- ▶ Equipment that's easy to use and maintain
- ▶ Design that makes our business more efficient
- ▶ Quality we'd never seen before




**Graham® Spray
Equipment**

PUTTING YOU FIRST IS WHY
WE'RE SECOND TO NONE

Ready for a rig you'll rave about?
Talk to Graham today.

» (770) 942-1617 | GrahamSE.com

© 2024 Graham Spray Equipment

FROM THE SOURCE

It's time to review your plant health care routine

Prepare yourself for success in the new year with these five tips **BY JAY GOUGHNOUR | CONTRIBUTOR**

The offseason is a great time to review plant health care (PHC) recommendations for the upcoming year. The following are my top five tips, particularly as they relate to tree care.

EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

The No. 1 tip is to prioritize equipment maintenance, particularly during the off-season. Thoroughly clean all equipment, inspect hoses and devices and ensure proper lubrication. Don't overlook replacing worn parts like O-rings, seals, tubing and needles. Lastly, organize your inventory and restock supplies to be fully prepared when spring arrives.

EOPs

Take advantage of Early Order Programs (EOPs) and the significant discounts they offer. This approach helps

maximize your bottom line by taking advantage of manufacturer and distributor discounts. If you're able to put in a bulk order, you'll have what you need for the entire year. Having a stocked inventory to work from will ensure that you have everything that's required to get the job done on a moment's notice.

PHC SCHEDULING

My third tip focuses on PHC timing and scheduling. Strategic planning for the upcoming seasons is crucial, emphasizing efficiency in schedule reviews. For example, addressing diseases like bur oak blight and fungal issues is best done during spring, along with applying plant growth regulators (PGRs). Summer provides a good opportunity for tackling

pests such as emerald ash borer (EAB), Japanese beetle and two-lined chestnut borers. Fall is the prime season for fertilization and chlorosis treatments; PGRs can also be applied during this period.

UPSELLING

I also encourage upselling and positioning yourself as the expert. Seize opportunities on each property by not overlooking potential issues beyond the customer's initial concern. For instance, during an EAB treatment, if you spot a chlorotic oak, or a linden tree showing signs of Japanese beetle or drought stress, don't hesitate to mention it. As the expert, even if you don't discover a specific issue, conduct a routine PHC check and share your findings. This proactive approach sets you apart from competitors, demonstrating your commitment to thorough service and potentially opening doors for additional business.




Jay Goughnour



EARLY AND OFTEN
Plant health care checks work the best when done routinely, even if you don't discover any issues.

SAFETY

The final tip is a simple one — be safe. Personal protective equipment isn't just a recommendation, it's the law. You should always have plenty of gloves and safety glasses on hand. Winter is a good time to stock up so you're never left empty-handed. Lastly, it's critical to follow label instructions and always review rates to avoid overapplying.

Implementing these tips will contribute to your success, ultimately translating into increased profits for your business. 

Goughnour is the upper midwest regional technical manager for Arborjet | Ecogel.

DO YOU HAVE CRABGRASS OR GOOSEGRASS?

How to identify and treat these annual grassy weeds **BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR**

When weeds pop up on customers' lawns, it's important to properly identify them to provide the best management plan. Two common annual grassy weeds that lawn care operators (LCOs) should be on the lookout for are goosegrass and crabgrass.

These two weeds have a similar appearance. Bobby Kerr, Ph.D., technical services manager at Quali-Pro, shares the key differences between them and how LCOs can effectively treat them both.

HOW TO IDENTIFY

Both crabgrass and goosegrass germinate in the late spring and throughout the summer, but each has its own distinct characteristics.

There are five different types of crabgrass found throughout the U.S., including smooth crabgrass, Kerr says. Smooth crabgrass is a tufted or prostrate spreading summer annual with leaves that are smooth on both sides, he says.

"(On smooth crabgrass) the leaf sheath is smooth with a few long hairs at the base of the leaf blade," he says. "Typically, the seedhead has two to six finger-like branches and it reproduces from seed."

Goosegrass is a tough, clumped summer annual that generally has a whitish to silverish color. It can also be known as silver crabgrass due to the color of the center, Kerr says.

The leaf blades are also smooth on both surfaces with a few hairs occasionally at the base. Its ligule — a thin growth between the leaf and leafstalk on the weed — is membranous, visible and short-toothed at the base of the leaf blade.

"It has spikelets in two rows on two to 13 fingers — typically, with a single finger below the terminal cluster of fingers," Kerr says. "It reproduces by seed and is found throughout temperate and warmer regions of the world."

Both crabgrass and goosegrass are warm-season grasses but goosegrass is becoming more of a problem farther north where it historically was not a problem, Kerr says.

"Goosegrass is, in a sense, similar to *Poa annua*," he says. "Its biology is still not fully understood. There are many biotypes that are morphologically different but botanically identical."

Both weeds can be found in areas with thin soil — for example, near sidewalks or driveways — but inspecting the center of the plants is the best way to make a clear identification between the two weeds.

Color is an important distinction between crabgrass and goosegrass, Kerr says.

"I think, for LCOs, one key difference is the whitish to silverish center of goosegrass," he says. "Crabgrass tends to have some reddish to purplish coloration of the stems."

Goosegrass also grows in a low, wide rosette pattern, whereas crabgrass tends to grow taller.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

After LCOs properly identify the weeds, they can decide on a treatment plan to keep customers happy and save time.

The best way to control both crabgrass and goosegrass is to take a preventive approach, Kerr says. Preemergence herbicides like dithiopyr




Above: Experts say identification is essential when treating weeds. Right: Crabgrass is weed to watch out for.



and prodiamine are good options for crabgrass and oxadiazon is highly effective against goosegrass, he says.

The application timing of preemergence herbicides is critical, Kerr says. Soil temperatures at a 2-inch depth should be about 55 degrees for crabgrass and about 60 degrees for goosegrass.

"Split applications are typically the best option for preemergence herbicides. Also, split applications have been proven to prolong control," he says. "For postemergence control, the combination of topramezone plus quinclorac is highly effective for the control of both crabgrass and goosegrass." 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.



Bobby Kerr

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



THE BIG ONE

Beat the freeze

BY ROB DIFRANCO
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOCATION Austin, Texas


COMPANY Clean Scapes

DETAILS Located alongside a winery, the client wanted this landscape to look like an Italian villa. Clean Scapes took over this property in May of 2021, months after a major freeze hit Texas.

This meant that crews spent much of the next year working to reestablish the landscape. Clean Scapes again faced challenges with an ice storm affecting the Austin area in early 2023.

Among the casualties of the two cold weather events were several Italian Cypress trees. To fill the void, Clean Scapes worked with the client to install a more cost-effective option: several rose bushes. The contractor was, however, able to save an Abelia Hedge on-site with nearly a year of trimming dead branches.

Other challenges Clean Scapes faced in refurbishing this landscape included irrigation in planted pots, flower selection in those same pots and armadillos. To solve their flower issues, the contractor found that Dianthus Amazon thrives on the property. For armadillos, crews utilize coyote urine as a deterrent.

Clean Scapes won a silver 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. Maintenance crews focus on regular cutbacks across the landscape to help trees and shrubs remain healthy. 2. This area previously featured three Italian Cypress trees. Filling in the empty space left by the loss of these trees was a major priority for the contractor. 3. The front entrance was an area hit hard by the winter storm that affected much of Texas in 2021. 4. Alongside Dianthus Amazon, the client requested irises in some of the high-traffic areas of the property.

PHOTOS: CLEAN SCAPES



Your #1 source for **irrigation and landscape supplies.**



Irrigation & Drainage

controllers, valves, PVC fittings, sprinklers, grates, basins, smart irrigation products and more.



Outdoor Living

including landscape lighting, pavers, synthetic turf, BBQs and outdoor kitchens.



Landscape & Agronomic

seed, fertilizer, pesticides, sprayers & spreaders, safety products, hand tools and more.



Battery & Gas Power Equipment

mowers, blowers, trimmers, chainsaws, plows, trenchers, turf management, parts & service.



Now including
online ordering
and account
management!



The new **HorizonOnline.com**
makes online ordering simple, fast and
convenient. Check it out!



@horizondistributors



Horizon Distributors, Inc.



horizondistributors | 800.PVC.TURF | HorizonOnline.com

» MAINTAIN YOUR EDGE

The what's and when's of preseason maintenance

Experts share the importance of checking your equipment before the start of the season

BY BRIAN LOVE | ASSOCIATE EDITOR

For landscape maintenance contractors, while winter might be considered the offseason, it's also a great time to make sure they're prepared for the upcoming busy season.

Katy Stringfield, product manager at Milwaukee Tools, says that winter is the time professionals should perform preseason maintenance checks, ensuring they have all components and pieces of equipment available before the start of spring.

LM spoke with Stringfield, Lenny Mangnall, marketing product manager at Exmark, and Jeff Taylor, manager of product services at Stihl about the best practices contractors can follow to be ready in the new season.

WHAT TO CHECK

Preseason maintenance checks ensure that everything is ready to go before getting out of the door when spring rolls around. Stringfield says that these maintenance checks begin with draining the fluids from equipment that uses oils and gas after the end of heavy fall cleanup.

"You don't want oil and gas to be sitting in there," she says. "If it is sitting there all winter, it can cause a lot of problems. If it's sitting there idle, it can cause its carburetors to get gummed up or it might not run at all and could have shutdowns."

Stringfield says another way to check on equipment is to randomly start-up equipment throughout the winter to ensure it is still working. Also, right as spring is approaching, she adds that is the time to be looking to replace things like oil filters and spark plugs.

For Mangnall, the checks are all about validation. He recommends starting the machines around two weeks before use. After that, he says to perform operations like changing oil and filters, lubricating the machine, looking at tire pressure, making sure the blades are sharp and checking the engine.

"It is just a double check," Mangnall says. "I think you should know the damage that can happen to a piece of equipment when it just sits over the winter as opposed to during its operation season. It's really important to have that machine fully serviced as you put it away for any extended period of time."

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

The things to look out for during these preseason checks can often differ depending on the piece of equipment. Taylor explains that most of these differences in equipment will be related to gas and battery-powered equipment.

For gas-powered, it will be about gas and oil. On the battery side, a user doesn't have to worry about filters, spark plugs, etc. The focus will be on the cutting system, making sure chainsaw and brush cutters are sharpened.

For mowers, there are some differences in maintenance checks depending on the type a professional has.



MAKE A LIST AND CHECK IT TWICE
Experts say preseason maintenance checks are crucial, especially if equipment sits unused in storage during the winter months.

"On a ride-on, you've got a deck system, meaning there's spindles, casters, front wheel casters and also have mowing belts," Taylor says. "The typical walk-behind is usually a direct drive unit. There's no belts, pulleys and things like that on it."


Some components will always need to be checked, he adds. Mostly, the similarities lie in the engine with lubricants, air and oil filters and spark plugs topping the list of wear items.

DON'T FORGET THESE

Mangnall says there are aspects that contractors can overlook during these maintenance checks.

"I think it's those easy things that you just take for granted," he says. "The safety system is one that people will overlook, unfortunately, because it's really critical. When you get out of the seat, you want to know that the blades are going to shut off."

All three experts agree that the best place for contractors to find out which items they will need to service is their owner's manual.

"There are so many tips in there, not only from safety and making sure that operation is proper but there's great maintenance, storage and other things that professionals can learn and do," Taylor says. 



Katy Stringfield



Lenny Mangnall

THE ULTIMATE UPGRADE



SAVE THOUSANDS
WHEN YOU PURCHASE A Z-SPRAY®
PLUS SELECT ACCESSORIES*



**VISIT YOUR LOCAL DEALER TO
FIND THE RIGHT Z-SPRAY®**

Learn More About the Z-Spray Difference



NOW THROUGH 10/31/24 • zturfequipment.com

Make the most of your fleet by combining Z Turf Equipment and Exmark® to meet fleet qualifications.

*The Ultimate Upgrade discount can be achieved by purchasing Z Turf Equipment units and accessories that are eligible for the fleet program. Ask dealer for complete details on how to achieve a minimum of 7 points. Rebates for this program cannot be combined with other promotions or support programs to achieve additional discounts or incentives unless explicitly allowed. May not be available in all regions.

FROM THE SOURCE

How AI will supercharge landscape operations

Artificial intelligence is going outdoors, which will lead to smart equipment and smarter crews

BY MICHAEL MAYBERRY | CONTRIBUTOR

Mowers that mow on their own. Sprayers that can spot-treat weeds without you. Wearables that make crews better at their jobs. This isn't science fiction. These are examples of artificial intelligence (AI) - enabled technologies that are rapidly advancing and shaping the future of mowing and maintenance.

Landscape operations will become more productive and efficient as more pieces of equipment can sense, respond to and learn from the world around them. As the tech evolves, it will equip crews with operational intel, further improving their performance in the field.

SMART EQUIPMENT

Robotic mowers are quickly emerging as the leading application of advanced AI in landscape equipment today. AI enables these mowers to navigate around a property like a human operator, identifying and responding to obstacles using cameras and other sensors. For example, a robotic mower will go around a tree or a pole but stop for people and pets. While the machines are mowing, the

crew is free to do the higher-value, more complex work on-site.

As AI systems powering robotic mowers become more advanced, landscape equipment will increase crews' production rates even further. Utilizing cameras and other sensors, mowers will be able to sense turf health, identify weeds and flag pests, serving that information up to the crew to address or account managers to upsell.

Companion robots — imagine small sprayers equipped with the same sensors — will use this data to spot-treat the turf, spraying targeted applications that are more economical and environmentally friendly.

AI will use data from robotic mowers to inform other maintenance services. Looking further into the future, the same visual AI technology that enables the mower to drive itself will advance far enough to allow trucks and trailers to do the same.

This could allow landscape companies to create self-operating autonomous mowing fleets closely followed by detail crews who perform the higher margin work that truly makes properties shine.


SMARTER CREWS

Just as advanced AI systems will enable mowers to do more through computer vision, visual AI can improve the productivity and quality of crew members themselves through augmented reality (AR). AR enhances human vision with computer vision, blending the physical world with a digital overlay. Imagine a pair of safety glasses equipped with smaller but similar cameras that project relevant information to operators.

AR glasses could provide new crew members' on-the-job training, displaying the tasks they need to complete as well as visual instructions for how to do them in the real-world environments where they're working. Powered by the same visual AI systems as robotic mowers, AR glasses also could identify additional tasks or upsell opportunities while the crew members are working.

AR systems like this are still a few years out, but in the meantime, the information that robotic mowers can provide will still empower crews to operate more productively. Based on mowing performance data, AI programs can recommend better job site workflows and route planning to maximize the efficiency of the crews.

They will also be able to surface client satisfaction data in real-time as well as historical service records so crews can be better equipped to provide the level of service that is expected of them.

These are just a few of the many ways AI will influence maintenance and mowing. As more emerge, they will ultimately empower crews to get more done faster and to a higher level of quality. What was once a far-out future is quickly becoming a day-to-day reality in the landscape industry. 

Mayberry is the director of customer success at Scythe Robotics.



Michael Mayberry



Robotic mowers are quickly emerging as a leading application in the world of AI-enabled technologies.

HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

A plan comes together

BY BRIAN LOVE | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOCATION Allen, Texas

COMPANY Complete Landsculpture

DETAILS When Santosh George, ASLA, and his team at Complete Landsculpture took over this project they didn't know the number of challenges they would face.

The client's intent for the project was improvements to the 12-year-old site that wore out over time. The upgrades necessary included new planting, seating, lighting and fountains.

"The new owners bought the property in 2022," says George. "They had several landscape architects look at it, but the process was not moving fast enough. They had a lot of new tenants in place that wanted this done quickly."

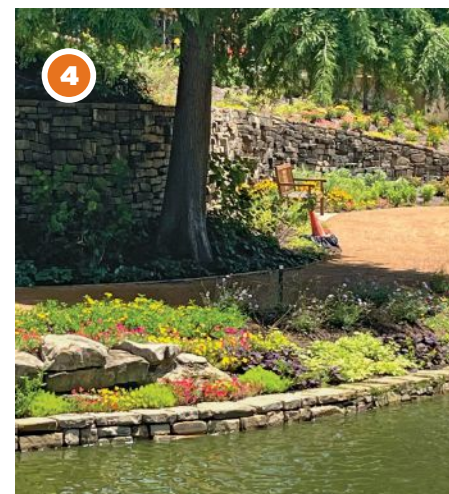
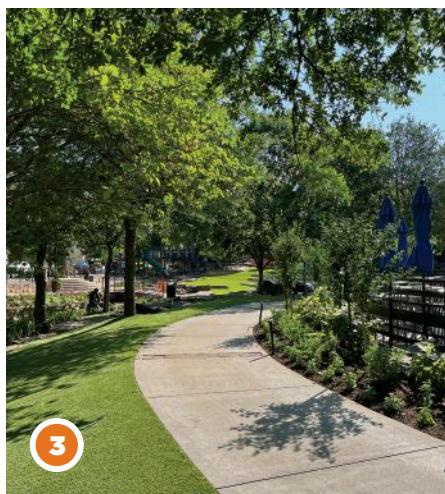
Modifications were necessary to the site for sub-surface irrigation and drainage purposes. Making things more difficult, George's crew needed to work without disturbing the surrounding active retail spaces.

To overcome these hurdles, Complete Landsculpture worked with the client to schedule each step of the installation.

"It was a lot of day-to-day coordination between the project managers and property managers to make sure they knew what we knew," George says.

Complete Landsculpture won a Silver Award from the 2023 National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program for this project

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



Captions | 1. Challenges revolving around the project included dealing with tight spaces and scheduling, according to Santosh George, ASLA, of Complete Landsculpture. 2. The contractor, in addition to working around active businesses, had a small area to work in, adding to the challenge. 3. Shops and apartments surrounded the project, which all needed to remain accessible during the installation process. 4. In addition to the seating area, the contractor installed new fountains and lighting along the edge of the existing pond.

RECOMMENDER



What is the **top trend** you are seeing with **water features** in 2024?

BRANDT REYNOLDS
CONTRACTOR SALES
REPRESENTATIVE
BLUE THUMB DISTRIBUTING

"We continue to see the trend of fire and water as a top trend. We have also been seeing a resurgence in pond enthusiasm. We expect this trend to continue in 2024. People are continuing to invest in their property and creating their own unique backyard oasis."



Experts say that natural swimming pools and ponds will continue to build popularity throughout the new year.

DEMI FORTUNA
DIRECTOR OF
PRODUCT
INFORMATION
ATLANTIC-OASE

"The most important trend that we're seeing, and it's been building for a couple of years, but it seems to be coming to the forefront this year, is the trend toward swim ponds and natural swimming pools. We've seen a movement towards a cleaner approach to swimming. We have the equipment to make this type of water feature very accessible. And, because it's a pool, you see people toward this and devoting quite a part of their landscaping budget to it."



BUSINESS BOOSTERS

What to know before adding pool installation services

Learn what's ahead before diving into pool installation **BY ROB DIFRANCO | ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

As pool installation services continue to grow as a viable option for landscaping companies, the question of where to start looms large.

“My No. 1 tool, if you want to call it that, a landscape person or company needs to invest in, that would be themselves,” says Rocky Wisley, president of Serenity Hardscapes in Memphis, Tenn. “That includes them and their company and their ability to be able to rightfully perform these large projects.”

Wisley shares what landscape contractors looking to add pool installation to their lineup of services need to know before diving in.

EDUCATION

According to Wisley, the swimming pool industry has a wide variety of continuing education classes, all the way from design to engineering, construction and maintenance. He recommends landscape contractors who don't already have a working relationship with a pool contractor start their journey in this arena.

“If you go to a basic 201, you're going to leave there and be like ‘Holy cow, I'm glad I didn't jump into this thing. Maybe I need to think about teaming up with an expert or a mentor to help me,’” he says. “There are plenty of people in the industry that will help people work their way in. I mean, the door is always open for everybody.”

Wisley recommends the Pool and Hot Tub Alliance's Genesis program for beginners.

“With Genesis, they have an entry-level course into the swimming pool construction,” he says. “That's for concrete

pools. It's a three-day course where we cover all aspects of the swimming pool construction.”

Genesis offers landscape contractors several different pathways into the pool installation and pool building business. Starting with the entry-level class, students can work their way up through the ranks to eventually earn a master pool builder certification.

“That first class is great. It's not enough information to say, ‘Hey, I'm good to go and build,’ but it's enough information to build off of and get you thinking,” Wisley says.

COSTS

Wisley says landscape contractors should be aware of the monetary aspect required to add pool services — from education to insurance and licensing.

In some states, like Texas and Florida, he says, licensing isn't required.

However, in others, like Wisley's home state of Tennessee, a contractor must be a licensed pool builder.

“Whatever your region and whatever those requirements maybe it's going to take some time and money to get set up,” he says. “Then you got insurance, and once you start bringing in a policy for pools, you're going to have a cost associated with that, whether you're (consistently) installing pools or not.”

After taking the recommended courses and ensuring they are licensed and insured, Wisley says contractors should be in a good spot to start to installing pools.

“That'd be a good start since landscape contractors are probably going to have the necessary equipment already in their arsenal,” he says. “That would include excavators, skid-steers and maybe even dump trucks as far as moving the earth.”

Even still, Wisley, a master pool builder himself, says continuing education — as it is in the landscape industry — is crucial as technology continues to evolve.

“I can't emphasize enough the continuing education path,” he says. “Once you get all those things and you start protecting yourself. You'll be a force to be reckoned with because you're going through it.”

The last tool a future pool installer and builder needs, Wisley says, is experience.

“Time and experience will build your confidence and your abilities to install pools and to keep it going,” he says. “There are days where I'll lose my butt on pools, and I'm like, well, that sucked, but we're going to make it up on the next one.”



Rocky Wisley



ON ANOTHER LEVEL
While pool installation can be a lucrative business, it's crucial to be fully ready for the challenges it can throw your way.

MAINTENANCE SHOP

How to keep your trencher running all season long

Learn why time is such a crucial element of trencher maintenance **BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

As is the case with any piece of heavy machinery, regular maintenance checks are crucial to keep trenchers in peak operating condition. Unlike other machines you might use on the job site, trenchers provide unique maintenance challenges with wear items that see high-impact uses.

Brant Kukuk, product manager for Ditch Witch, shares what you need to know to ensure your trencher is at its best when it matters most.

Landscape Management: HOW SHOULD CONTRACTORS APPROACH OFFSEASON MAINTENANCE OF THEIR TRENCHERS?

Brant Kukuk: Generally, contractors should base their offseason maintenance on hours of usage, not necessarily on a year-by-year basis. We recommend this because some contractors will trench 2,000 hours a year, but some will trench 200 hours a year and those maintenance cycles look very different.

LM: WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MAIN ITEMS ON A TRENCHER THAT A USER MIGHT NEED TO REPLACE DURING THEIR MAINTENANCE CHECKS?

BK: The biggest piece of maintenance on a trencher is the trencher chain itself. All the ground-engaging features of the trencher are maintenance items just because they're in contact with the ground all the time, like the teeth.



Brant Kukuk

COMMERCIAL GRADE. ALL DAY POWER.

MEANGREEN
ELECTRIC MOWERS

NOW WITH
25% MORE MOWING POWER!



Durable



Reliable



Noise Reduction



Operational Savings



Zero Emissions



Cut Quality



Find a Dealer at: MeanGreenProducts.com

◀ **SCAN CODE TO SCHEDULE YOUR FREE DEMO!**



★ **USA**
ENGINEERED AND BUILT

Assembled in the USA using domestic and foreign parts.

OFF THE CHAIN

The chain is a major wear item on trenchers as it's constantly moving and in contact with the ground.



As contractors use their trenchers, the teeth will wear away. A contractor should know the shape of the teeth to start with. That will allow them to know if that tooth is worn or not. The local dealer will know their area's soils, which is very important. If you're in an area with rock sand or clay soils, you might need a different style of chain.

On the chain, most of the wear comes from the interaction between the roller and the sprocket. During use, you get dirt between the sprocket and the chain, which is very abrasive. You start with a wide sprocket and it becomes narrow as the material wears away on the chain. The roller is cylindrical to start with, and, over time, it becomes hourglass-shaped.

It's important to replace them at the same time. The sprocket and the chain are a system, so if you replace one, it's going to wear out the other faster or break it.


LM: SHOULD CONTRACTORS KEEP AN EYE ON THEIR MACHINE'S TIRES OR TRACKS DURING THESE CHECKS?

BK: Just like a car, you're going to go through tires and you're going to go through tracks.

Most of the time, the tread on a track will not wear very much. If you spend 90 to 95 percent of your time on soil, you're not going to see the tread wear. It's when you are using tracks on asphalt or concrete that

you'll start to see the outside of the tread wear down.

On soil, you will see the inside of the rubber — where it's making contact with the rollers and sprocket — start to wear down. Over time it will start to show cracks on the inside.

If you're on concrete or asphalt all the time, you're going to wear the tread down before you wear the inside out. And, in that case, unlike a tire, you aren't going to patch it. You'll need to replace it every time. 

LITTLE BEAVER BIG POTENTIAL

Push your potential with Little Beaver's Kwik-Trench. Start and **finish** projects **fast** with our exclusive push-forward design and neatly deposited soil for convenient backfill. Get started **kwik** thanks to the trenchers' compact size and easy maneuverability. **Trench efficiently** with **hassle-free** operation and cutting speeds as fast as 30 feet per minute.

See the Kwik-Trench in action at littlebeaver.com/kwik-trench.



LITTLE BEAVER
EARTH DRILLS & AUGERS

littlebeaver.com
936-213-6066

FROM THE SOURCE

How artificial intelligence will influence landscape irrigation

How AI can help contractors answer the three critical scheduling questions BY RICHARD RESTUCCIA | CONTRIBUTOR

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the simulation of human intelligence in machines programmed to think like humans and mimic their actions. The term can also apply to any machine that exhibits traits associated with a human mind, such as learning and problem-solving.

In the landscape industry, AI shifts emphasis for landscape contractors to achieve irrigation management accuracy and efficiencies not seen before. This is becoming more important to customers as water prices increase.

Companies that adapt AI first will win more jobs and need more employees.

In landscape irrigation, AI applications are part of the broader movement toward precision agriculture and smart landscaping. These applications are designed to increase efficiency and conservation by leveraging data, machine learning and automation.

For landscape irrigation, AI applications can now compute and respond in milliseconds to the three critical questions in landscape irrigation scheduling.

HOW MUCH?

Starting with how much should I water, an AI application gathers and processes environmental data from multiple sources to understand how much water is currently in the soil available for plants. The calculations occur each hour, specifically for each plant.

When weather data tracking includes evapotranspiration and rainfall, the AI application determines how much water went into the ground, how much ran off and the soil soak rate. It then uses this information to deter-

“Both commercial and residential landscape operations are beginning to adopt these smart technologies to conserve water, reduce costs and maintain healthier landscapes.”

—RICHARD RESTUCCIA



mine how much water is without over or underwatering.

In addition, using predictive analytics for weather for irrigation schedules in the future provides exceptional value. Why water a total amount today if it will rain tomorrow or the next day? How much of the water that falls will be usable and how to incorporate this into an accurate irrigation schedule is available today through AI in irrigation.

WHEN?

The next question is when during the day or night should the irrigation take place? Most water managers agree to provide the answer at the first light of day. However, the best answer is when evapotranspiration is the lowest, at a time before the plant reaches a permanent wilting point, and how this correlates to other plants in the zone. Very complex decision-making for a human, but with AI and all the data available to the application recorded on an hourly basis, the answer is easy to calculate.

HOW?

The last question is how to water. Knowing how you are watering the plant (spray head, drip emitter, bubbler, etc.) combined with soil data information allows AI to determine the perfect watering program. This uses the concept

of soil and soak when necessary and provides exact instructions on watering a given plant best considering precipitation and flow rates, soil soak rate, slope and allowed surface accumulation.

Thanks to detailed algorithms, AI systems can now perform mammoth computing tasks much faster and more efficiently than human minds, helping to make significant strides in research and development areas worldwide. A human cannot perform the calculations AI can use to determine or adjust a watering schedule. This includes:

- Use and selection from multiple sources of data.
- Using cross-correlation of large data sets.
- Hourly analysis of data sets.
- An optimal schedule that is predictive of future weather events.

These technologies are continually evolving, with new advancements appearing as the field of AI grows. Both commercial and residential landscape operations are beginning to adopt these smart technologies to conserve water, reduce costs and maintain healthier landscapes. 🌱

Restuccia is Global Vice President of Business Development at Rivulis. He currently hosts the Rivulis Irrigation Training Series webinar/podcast and is a regular presenter at conferences concerning how contractors can help their customers save water and money.

RECOMMENDER



Filter cartridges play a key role in any irrigation system, making regular maintenance checks important.

How often should technicians change filter cartridges?

MAX MORENO

HARVEST LANDSCAPE ENTERPRISES
VICE PRESIDENT OF WATER CONSERVATION

You'll want to check right before the start of the irrigation season, typically around the beginning of spring, and then in the fall when you're about to winterize your system. Firstly, inspect it to make sure that the filter hasn't been compromised at all and that it's still working correctly.

Secondly, one of the things that I always tell my technicians to do is see what sediment the filter is collecting. Typically, if they see some kind of sediment that's larger in size, like gravel, that tells us that there could be an issue within the water purveyor system. If I start to see large chunks of either gravel or concrete, that tells me that the water purveyor at some point may have had a mainline break within the system.



LARRY HALL

HORIZON DISTRIBUTORS
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
REPRESENTATIVE

As far as the timing of maintenance, a couple of things come into play. One is your water source. In California, we have a lot of repurposed water and in many situations, the reclaimed or repurposed water has a lot of extra particulates in there that could clog your filter.

The finer the mesh, the more frequently you're going to have to maintain and clean the filter and clean because it's going to hold back more matter. There are different options on your screen filter material too usually it's between nylon and stainless steel. When you do clean the filter, you're going to rinse them inside out. But you don't want a heavy stream on a high-pressure hose because you don't want to tear it. A visual inspection would be after it's clean to look around the surface areas and make sure there are no tears or bigger openings than the mesh size itself.



FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Todd Christianson

PRESIDENT AND CEO
TITAN LLC
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

1 Tell me about Titan LLC and how you got into the business.

I've been in the business for 42 years coming up in May. I started like everyone else; with a broken-down lawn mower working out of my parent's basement at age 18. I developed it into what it is today. We're mostly construction. We're looking at \$10 million in sales this year. We're having a lot of fun and I still enjoy it. We have about 45 different skill sets that we do including decks, paving and mostly residential work. Things have gone kaboom for us. We're up 25 percent and we were up 30 percent the year before. I think it's because of our ability to get labor. In Anchorage, there's a labor crisis. We're one of the few companies that recruit labor and management to Alaska.

2 Take me back to 1982, what did Titan look like back then?

I had just graduated from high school and me and a buddy were power-raking yards. We lived in a middle-class area, but we would go over to where all the doctors lived and we got a few customers. I moved away to play hockey, but I would come back in the summer and get back to it. I was lucky enough to get a Division I scholarship with my hometown team, the Anchorage SeaWolves. I ended up building my company and while I was a sophomore in college, I already had 15 employees.

3 Your company is in Anchorage, but where do you call home?

I live in Scottsdale, Ariz. I run my company from 4,000 miles away for eight months out of the year. I do go back to Anchorage for four months. It started 12 years ago. My kids were grown and I decided I needed a change. Anchorage is a great city, but I needed to get somewhere with sunshine and great weather. I was done with living in the snow, even though I work in the snow and ice removal business. I went to school at the University of Arizona my senior year. I always knew that I would go back. Another unique thing is, I found a special guy in Chris Dietrich, who runs our project management division from Miami. I have an incredible team; Kevin Thompson has been with me for 37 years. We both bring different things to the table. My COO, Renee Davies-Ecklund, is also very

special. She recently moved to Dallas to take care of her parents. It's interesting that four out of the five on our leadership team are not in Alaska.

4 How many kids do you have and what do they do?

We're a sports family. I played DI hockey. My sons both played college hockey and my daughter was a really good gymnast. She left at age 15 for Florida to compete there. I was a single parent for the most part. All three of my kids have worked for me from time to time. My oldest, Bryce, worked for me for 10 years, decided it wasn't for him and now he's looking for his next opportunity. My son Gage is a civil engineer and still works for me from time to time as a consultant. My daughter Kai works for me managing rental properties in Phoenix. She's also a health and wellness coach. I'm really proud of them. They didn't get a perfect mom and dad relationship growing up, but it says something about having your kids grow up with athletic teams ... it takes a village.

5 What was it like when you had to guard future Hockey Hall of Famer Brett Hull?

It was my junior year and we were so excited to play Minnesota-Duluth. I don't know why the coach decided to put me against him. I certainly wasn't as good as he was. Basically, once the puck dropped, I jumped on his back and held him. He was on a 14-game goal-scoring streak. He finally looked me in the face and said, 'Will you stop?' My claim to fame is that I shut him down for two periods. We were tied going into the third, then they benched my line and he scored a couple of goals and they beat us. 🙌



BEST ADVICE

"Hard work and perseverance pays all dividends. Be accountable to yourself for your personal conduct. And hire by culture."

PHOTO: JIM STAFF



BY JASON NEW

The author is a founding principal and executive coach for McFarlin Stanford.

Unlocking the leader within

You can't do it alone. If the landscape industry has taught me anything, it's that leadership and support are key to the innovation, growth and strength of any successful team. This belief is the driving force behind the creation of this brand-new *Ask McFarlin Stanford* column, a dedicated space for us to focus on leadership strategies rooted in the real challenges faced by landscape business leaders like you.

The purpose behind this new column is simple but incredibly impactful. Most landscape business owners have the desire and ability to grow but often lack the skills and support to do so effectively and profitably.

Through this column, I aim to bridge this gap by offering insights into leadership that go beyond the surface, providing practical advice tailored to your specific needs.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Here, you'll read thoughtful tactics and strategies you can apply in your own business right now. My advice won't ever be theoretical — it will be real-world lessons I've learned through 24 years of hands-on time in the green industry. That first-hand experience, along with my time with NALP leading the education committee and others, I've lived through all the challenges you face every day.

Now, as a Founding Principal of McFarlin Stanford, I have the honor of working alongside landscape businesses of all sizes across the U.S. and Canada. Through ACE Peer Groups, our coaching program

“Here, you'll read thoughtful tactics and strategies you can apply in your own business right now.”

partnership with The Grow Group, I'm proud to say we guide a community of successful companies almost 200 strong with a combined revenue exceeding \$1 billion. The leadership wins and struggles we've been through together will provide a rich source of real-world experience we'll draw upon for the actionable strategies shared with you in this column.

And, while my name graces the byline, you'll actually be tapping into the power of the entire executive team of coaches and experts at McFarlin Stanford with a wealth of green industry experience in all areas of the business. Our team of seasoned executive coaches will be influencing my leadership advice on everything from operations and sales to finance and HR.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

As we embark on this journey together, I invite you to be an active participant. Think of *Ask McFarlin Stanford* as your space, driven by your questions and fueled by your curiosity.

Your questions will shape the advice and insights I share. Whether it's unraveling team dynamics, demystifying financial strategies or unlocking your team's full potential, we'll explore all of these topics through our experienced lens of leadership.

WHERE SHOULD YOU START?

We don't have a reader question to answer here today, but we want to offer you a free resource to give you a glimpse into the kinds of advice and topics we will explore. One of the first questions we get from clients is, “Where should I start?”

While it's not *always* the same answer, the most common place we start is making sure leaders know their numbers. It's the first step to understanding everything in your business. It's difficult to make effective decisions without being comfortable reading your financials.

So here are two free tools for you:

- **Profitability Scorecard:** This download is a great introduction to the vital parts of your profit and loss statement (P&L). You can download it here: McFarlinStanford.com/scorecard
- **Listen to this podcast episode** with our own CFO, Liz Helton, for more detail on our favorite P&L strategy, the 50/40/10 rule. Listen here now for more: McFarlinStanford.com/cfo

WHAT'S NEXT?

To submit your question for a future column, go to LandscapeManagement.net and look for *Ask McFarlin Stanford*.

I'm honored *Landscape Management* asked me to take the lead in providing a platform where you can ask questions and we can share our experiences — you don't have to do it alone. Thanks for reading and I look forward to answering your questions in a future issue.

Until then, lead with purpose, grow with passion and never stop asking questions. 🙌

FINDING THE PERFECT FIT

How a 2021 acquisition helped Valley Landscaping grow

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

What began as a venture to organically expand into a new market turned into an acquisition that was too good to pass up for Valley Landscaping, says Brandon Walters, director of landscape maintenance at Valley Landscaping in Richmond, Va.

Valley Landscaping, No. 132 on the 2023 LM150 list of the top landscaping companies in the country, experienced a 52 percent change in revenue from 2021 to 2022.

Based in Christiansburg, Va., the company provides design/build, landscape lighting, landscape maintenance and commercial snow removal services. Its Richmond location offers irrigation maintenance and installation.

When Valley Landscaping opened branches in Roanoke and Waynesboro,

they grew organically, soon acquiring year-round landscape maintenance contracts.

"We tend to follow the landscape maintenance work and build our landscape construction divisions around those existing clients," Walters says.

Continuing that strategy, the company grew into the Richmond market organically, ending its first year with two landscape maintenance crews and one enhancement crew.

"Our leadership team knew that we wanted to continue to grow and the Richmond market made the most sense to us to move into next, being that we were already in the Charlottesville and Shenandoah Valley markets," says Walters.

However, those plans changed, thanks to an opportunity for Valley Landscaping to acquire Tuckahoe Landscaping & Lawn Care. According to Walters, Tuckahoe had a similar business mix, values and culture.

With the previous owner looking to exit, Walters says Valley Landscaping's leadership team felt it couldn't pass on this opportunity to acquire the company.

"The company had a very similar business model as us with an unparalleled focus on their production staff employees, which we appreciated," Walters says. "We could relate to their leadership well and many of their values translated easily. Their focus on quality work, customer service and employee retention certainly resonated with us."

With the addition of Tuckahoe's clients, Valley Landscaping's growth in Richmond accelerated. Now, the Richmond branch operates as its own separate company, still under the Valley Landscaping name.


"This acquisition helped us scale into new services lines and take market share in a new location quicker than the traditional growth we have used in the past to open

new branches," he says. "Through the acquisition, we learned a lot about who we are and what we're capable of. It has helped the company scale and helped each branch become more consistent."

This expansion also forced the leadership team to focus on professionalizing the business. Walters says Valley Landscaping accomplished this by taking a deep dive into its systems and procedures and helping staff visualize the company's goals and direction.

"As we continue to grow, we need to make sure that we are nimble enough to still be able to move quickly when needed," Walters says. "Getting each division moving in the same direction and working toward the same common goal has played a big role in the company's success since 2021."

According to Walters, Valley Landscaping currently does not have plans to acquire any other companies. However, he says his team will continue to network with other professionals.

"We are always open to connecting with great leaders in the industry to bounce ideas off of and help each other out," he says. 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.



Brandon Walters



Valley Landscaping's 2021 acquisition, helped the company, No. 132 on the 2023 LM150 list, expand its presence in Richmond.

Applications are open for the 2024 LM150 list. Fill out the form at LandscapeManagement.net to submit your information, or email Special Projects Editor Marisa Palmieri mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net for more information.



BY BEN GANDY

The author is principal of Envisor Consulting. Reach him at bengandy@envisorco.com.

The four C's of planning

Planning is a key responsibility of management and leadership. This isn't news to anyone, it's part of the job. But there is little said about how to actually be good at planning. If it's important, we need guidelines.

First of all, there are different types of planning: strategic and tactical.

Strategic planning involves working backward from long-term, holistic targets to break down and ultimately identify action items needed to achieve the target. Most organizations begin their strategic planning processes by developing a long-term vision. The more specific, the better. Then, they seek to understand the opportunities, strengths, needs and headwinds they'll face.

Understanding these things isn't always easy or obvious. It takes some time and thought, but once identified, you can discuss the resources, initiatives, skills and tools it will take to achieve the vision. The process should end with specific tasks, programs and initiatives assigned to individuals, with deliverables and due dates.

Tactical planning involves defining actions and "how to's" to execute on short-term, immediate missions, such as delivering on your spring service. Knowing and understanding the building blocks of thorough tactical planning is critical. Omitting one of these essential elements will undo our results.

Start with scope, always. Often, assumptions made about the scope by field staff, management and clients may all be different. In this case, clarity matters.

Next, order the optimal sequence of activities. Getting activities out of sequence will torpedo your

“Sitting in your office alone and working through a plan feels productive, however, business is a team sport. You will likely develop a far more comprehensive plan when you sit in the conference room and work through the process with your team instead.”

efficiencies. Then consider the elements of time, i.e., calendar windows, schedule, labor hours and tasks times. Equipment and materials must also be included. The right type, size and number of equipment units is important.

And finally, people must be integrated into your tactical plan. What are the right numbers, skills sets and leaders needed to bring it all together?

Both types of planning should also include the four C's: Collaborate, Communicate, Course correct and Celebrate.

C **OLLABORATE**
Sitting in your office alone and working through a plan feels productive, however, business is a team sport. You will likely develop a far more comprehensive plan when you sit in the conference room and work through the process with your team instead. Additionally, there's no better way to get buy-in and agreement than to include the team at the front end.

C **OMMUNICATE**
This might mean that the leadership group rolls out the annual strategic plan to the middle management group. Or the operation managers debrief the field staff on the spring services plan. In either case, the plan has

a much better chance of being executed if all parties are communicated with upfront.

Without communication, your people may end up working against you simply because they don't know what your plans are.

C **COURSE CORRECT**
Embed checkpoints, waypoints or updates as part of your initial planning process. As we roll forward in time through our operations, the unknown will inevitably surface. We'll need to reset the course on almost any project, initiative or strategy. The question is not whether we'll need to course correct, but how much and in which direction.

C **ELEBRATE**
Celebrate milestones, waypoints and benchmarks by embedding them into your planning process. Celebrations provide clarity on what winning looks like, generate some enthusiasm and keep the team engaged. Celebrate quarter by quarter, or at appropriate points. People may lose focus or management if we always wait until the end of the game.

Strong planning processes, both strategic and tactical, along with the four C's will diminish the chaos, strengthen your leadership and set up the win. 🏆



BY GREG HERRING

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

These numbers tell a story

The Herring Group recently completed its 10th Annual Landscape Industry Benchmark Report. So, what story does this year's report tell?

You will find some interesting statistics below, but the big idea is that most companies can be a lot more profitable than they are.

Before we get into just how much more profitable landscape companies could be, here's some background on our Benchmark Report, sponsored by Aspire, Ewing Outdoor Supply, Unlimited Labor and Weathermatic.

This year, 144 companies with revenue between \$1 million and \$140 million participated. Total revenue for participants was \$1.9 billion over a 12-month period that ended on Sept. 30, 2023 — almost as much as Bright-View's revenue.

To produce the report, we obtained income statements from all participants and formatted them to make them comparable. Participants received an Excel file with every participant's summarized income statement — anonymized to maintain confidentiality. Then, each company created its own groups of peers based on revenue mix and size. Using that group of peers, management can see where they are winning and where they can improve.

KEY RESULTS

At The Herring Group, we use operating profit margin to measure profitability. Operating profit equals revenue less direct job expenses, indirect job expenses and overhead expenses, including straight-line depreciation expense. Operating profit margin is operating profit divided by revenue. This indicator measures customer

satisfaction, effectiveness of management and efficiency of operations. We encourage companies to plan for an operating profit margin of 12 percent and settle for anything above 10 percent as an initial goal.

“ Total revenue for participants was \$1.9 billion over a 12-month period that ended on Sept. 30, 2023. ”

Our 2023 report shows a weighted average operating profit margin of 6.4 percent, up from five percent last year. Companies with an operating profit margin above 10 percent averaged 13.3 percent, up from 12.8 percent last year. Companies with an operating profit margin below 10 percent averaged 3.5 percent, up from 2.9 percent last year. That's a big gap. Nearly one out of every three companies had an operating profit margin greater than 10 percent.

WHICH GROUP ARE YOU IN?

If you are in the high-profit margin group, congratulations! You are setting a great example for the industry. Hopefully, your example helps eliminate some of the foolish pricing that exists in the industry.

If you are in the low-profit margin group, do you want that situation to change?

Getting to a higher profit margin usually requires:

- Making a commitment and rejecting excuses.
- Understanding your costs.
- Pricing to hit your profit margin goal.
- Understanding which divisions and services produce the highest operating profit margins and

adjusting that mix of services.

- Managing actual labor hours to match estimates.
- Understanding which contracts are most profitable and least profitable.
- Being disciplined in determining renewal pricing.

It's not all about the money. In our work with clients, we find that a higher operating profit margin is correlated to a greater life margin for the owner. Life margin is the excess time and energy that no longer must be invested in the company.

When analyzing the participants exceeding 10 percent, I noticed the following:

- Companies of every size and in every region hit the goal.
- Companies with and without snow hit the goal.
- Companies that grew fast and those that grew slow hit the goal.

Here are a couple of other interesting statistics:

- High-profit companies' average total payroll expense (direct and overhead) as a percentage of revenue is five percentage points lower than the average for low-profit companies.
- High-profit companies' average gross margin is 4.4 percentage points higher than the average for low-profit companies.
- All other expense lines that we measured were roughly comparable.

As you contemplate the start of a new season, now is the time to develop your plan and seek commitment from your team to reach the goal in 2024.

To be notified when registration opens for next year's Herring Group Landscape Industry Benchmark Report, visit Herring-Group.com/benchmark.

Every month the Classified Showcase offers an up-to-date section of the products and services you're looking for. **Don't miss an issue!**

ADVERTISING INFORMATION

Call Chloe Scoular
at 440-342-6011,
FAX: 216-706-3711,
E-MAIL: cscoular
@northcoastmedia.net



Payment must be received by the classified closing date. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and American Express. Mail LM Box # replies to: Landscape Management Classifieds, LM Box # 1360 E. 9th St., 10th Floor, Cleveland, OH 44114 (please include LM Box # in address)

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

1994 • 29 YEARS • 2023
SELLING YOUR BUSINESS?
FREE APPRAISAL NO BROKER FEES
Professional Business Consultants

Professional Business Consultants
PBC
Merger & Acquisition Specialists

Professional Business Consultants can obtain purchase offers from qualified buyers without disclosing your identity. Consultants' fees are paid by the buyer.

CALL:
708-744-6715
FAX: 508-252-4447
pbcmello1@aol.com www.PBCbroker.com

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

OVER 30 YEARS **We Find Plants**
Powered by Horticultural Associates
Best Price Nursery Stock!
Quality plant material at a great price.
Let us show you how.
Contact us for a free quote today!

Shade Trees Large and Small,
We Find (and Ship) it all.
Evergreens Shrubs Perennials Plugs

www.WeFindPlants.com
585.889.5933 — info@wefindplants.com

BENEFITS OF CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

IMPACT

Command immediate attention
and get fast action
with the dynamics of classified advertising!

EXPOSURE

Reach highly-targeted,
market-specific business professionals,
industry experts and prospects.

VALUE

Select from a variety of classified display options
to meet specific needs
on a timely basis cost-effectively.

RESULTS

Generate sales leads, maintain market presence,
conduct market testing, promote existing lines,
introduce new products and services,
or recruit the best —
bottom-line, classifieds offers
you an excellent return on investment!

Keep Your Business Growing.

Next available issue:

APRIL 2024

Ad closing:

March 5th

Contact Chloe Scoular today!

440-342-6011

cscoular@northcoastmedia.net

AD INDEX

Albaugh Specialty Products.....	15
Bartlett Tree Experts.....	24
B & B Technologies.....	20
Backslope Inc.	22
Corteva.....	7
Exmark.....	33
Graham Spray Equipment.....	27
Green County Fertilizer Co.....	21, 26
Gregson-Clark Spraying Equipment.....	3
Horizon Distributors.....	31
Hunter Industries.....	5
John Deere	CV4
Kawasaki Engines.....	CV3
Landscape Management Network.....	CV2-1
Leaf Burrito	20
Little Beaver.....	39
McFarlin Stanford.....	17
Mean Green Mowers.....	38
Mulch Mate	16
PRO Landscape by Drafix Software	18
Progressive Insurance.....	11
Steel Green Manufacturing.....	19
Turfco.....	OTS*

*denotes regional advertisement

The ad index is provided as an additional service. The publisher does not assume any liability for errors or omissions.

RESOURCES

Tell us about your franchising experience

Is your business part of a franchise? Do you franchise out your brand? If so, we want to know! Email LM Editor-in-Chief Seth Jones at sjones@northcoastmedia.net or Associate Editor Rob DiFranco at rdifranco@northcoastmedia.net to share tips for those looking to enter the franchising game and you could be featured in an upcoming issue of *Landscape Management*.



LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT (ISSN 0894-1254) is published monthly by North Coast Media LLC, 1360 East 9th Street, 10th Floor, Cleveland, OH 44114. Subscription rates: For US, Canada and Mexico, 1 year \$64.95 print and digital; two years \$99.95 print and digital. All other countries, 1 year print and digital \$174.95; two years \$259.95. For air-expedited service, include an additional \$75 per order annually. Single copies (prepaid only) \$10 plus postage and handling. For current single copy or back issues, call 847-513-6030. Periodicals postage paid at Cleveland OH 44101-9603 and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Please send address change to Landscape Management, PO Box 2090, Skokie, IL 60076. Printed in the U.S.A.



Copyright 2024 North Coast Media, LLC. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical including by photocopy, recording, or information storage and retrieval without permission in writing from the publisher. Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use, or the internal or personal use of specific clients is granted by North Coast Media, LLC for libraries and other users registered with the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Dr, Danvers, MA 01923, phone 978-750-8400, fax 978-750-4470. Call for copying beyond that permitted by Sections 107 or 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law.

Landscape Management does not verify any claims or other information appearing in any of the advertisements contained in the publication, and cannot take any responsibility for any losses or other damages incurred by readers in reliance on such content. The views and opinions expressed by Landscape Management's contributors are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Landscape Management or North Coast Media. Landscape Management welcomes unsolicited articles, manuscripts, photographs, illustrations and other materials but cannot be held responsible for their safekeeping or return. North Coast Media LLC provides certain customer contact data (such as customers' names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses) to third parties who wish to promote relevant products, services and other opportunities which may be of interest to you. If you do not want North Coast Media LLC to make your contact information available to third parties for marketing purposes, simply call 847-513-6030 between the hours of 8:30 am and 5:00 pm CT and a customer service representative will assist you in removing your name from North Coast Media LLC's lists.



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.



Is your sales team ready to make sales?

Green industry salespeople, I've got news you probably already know but still don't want to hear: the days of easy sales are over. Demand for projects has softened across the country, and salespeople find themselves having to go out and *make* sales instead of just waiting for the leads to come to them.

This isn't necessarily a bad thing. Many landscaping companies and their salespeople can thrive in this environment, but it's going to take more work in the early stages of a sale than many of us are used to. As we look ahead to 2024, one thing that is abundantly clear to me is that for salespeople to win in the current economy, they're going to have to search for work.

I like to say that we do zero cold calling at Grunder Landscaping Co., but that doesn't mean we aren't out prospecting and generating more interest for our work. Instead of cold calling, I want my team to be *warm calling*. Let me tell you more about what this means and how to do it yourself.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

There is so much information available online about people these days that there's no excuse to show up or call someone blindly. This is a simple step to be a warm caller instead of a cold caller. For new commercial leads, start on LinkedIn and find out:

- What people do we both know?
- Where has this person worked in the past? What's their current role?
- What school(s) did they go to?

“I like to say that we do zero cold calling at Grunder Landscaping Co., but that doesn't mean we aren't out prospecting and generating more interest for our work. Instead of cold calling, I want my team to be *warm calling*.”

We then can use this information to make a more genuine connection when we reach out, or we can ask any mutual connections to help us with an introduction. It helps us start out a step ahead and builds a good foundation for us to start a business relationship.

PULL UP THE PROPERTY

Whether it's residential or commercial, pulling up the property on Google Maps can give us an idea of what we're working with. Depending on the work we're trying to get, we may even be able to have an unsolicited quote ready to go on that first interaction. Gathering any information that will help us close a sale quickly is critical, especially when we get busy in the spring.



HAVE PROOF READY TO GO

Social proof is powerful, especially when we're warm calling. While we may know who the prospect is, they may not know who we are yet. This has become especially true as we've grown our service area and expanded the services we offer in recent years. Have testimonials ready to go, give them names of current clients willing to share their experience, or have collateral ready to leave behind so they can research on their own once you leave.

Think about it. You'd be skeptical if someone just showed up at your home or business trying to sell you something. Be ready to overcome that skepticism with proof.

As you prepare for the busier months ahead, I encourage the salespeople reading this to have the mentality of “every day I prospect, every day I nurture, every day I close.” Create systems now that will allow you to do each of those steps efficiently to drive your to-do list, so you stay on track to hit sales goals.

If you want help creating and defining what that system should look like, join me and Chris Psencik, another accomplished green industry salesperson, for our Virtual Sales Bootcamp in March. Sign up here: growgroupinc.com/virtual-sales-bootcamp.

Kawasaki
— ENGINES —

GENUINE PARTS

KawasakiEnginesUSA.com



MAKE YOUR PRE-SEASON POWER MOVES.

A STRONG COMMITMENT TO YOUR EQUIPMENT.

As spring draws near and the busy season takes shape, now's the time to check back in on your equipment after a long winter in storage. From fresh filters for air, fuel, and oil to KTECH™ Fuel Treatment, which helps keep injectors, lines, and carburetors clean, Kawasaki Genuine Parts can provide your performance with precision, power, and durability. Stock up on in-season essentials and help ensure a smooth transition from one job to the next, all season long.



INTRODUCING
THE NEW STANDARD IN MOWING



The new John Deere Q800 Series QuikTrak™ Stand-On Mowers are absolute game changers. Totally redesigned, they provide an all-new operator experience for superior terrain mowing, easy maintenance, and the ultimate in productivity. Fast. Efficient. Awesome.
Take a Stand. And Keep Mowing.

Q800
E M R SERIES



JOHN DEERE

JohnDeere.com/Q800