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2024 EQUIPMENT PURCHASING GUIDE

- How a purchase changed the lives of a husband/wife duo
- Questions to ask before making the buy
- How to get the most out of a demo



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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.



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Welcome to March Madness

I write this realizing it is by pure luck that I happen to be a sports fan living in northeast Kansas in the 2020s: When you're a Kansas City Chiefs fan, March Madness gets here *fast*. I say that because the Chiefs have been playing so deep into the NFL season these last few years (how about that Super Bowl LVIII victory!) that when their season ends, you take a breath, and suddenly it's March Madness and time for the NCAA basketball tournaments.

As a sports nut, it's a fun time of year. As one of the dozen or so people who help create *Landscape Management* magazine, it's an exciting time of year because I know what March means to our readers. 2024 is right there in front of us and now it is really getting started.

I dropped my son off at school this morning and as I drove through town, I saw a Ryan Lawn & Tree truck pulling out of a neighborhood and I



Me with my friendly lawn care operator, Boston Champagne. All of Boston's customers appreciate him ... even though he's an Eagles fan.

“As one of the dozen or so people who help create *Landscape Management* magazine, it's an exciting time of year because I know what March means to our readers.”

got excited. I wondered if that was my friendly lawn care operator, Boston Champagne (such a great name), and how soon he'd be pulling into my driveway. (And how's that for timing? 30 minutes after I wrote the previous sentence, he pulled in.)

It's that time of year and the team here at *LM* wish you all the best of luck for the upcoming season. Know that while you're busy taking care of your clients, we'll be here continuing to take care of you, our readers, reporting on the industry and keeping you updated on all the latest happenings.

And now, on to the magazine that you hold in your hands, or have on your screen:

- This issue includes our first-ever Equipment Purchasing Guide. I hope you'll find it useful and even interesting. I know I enjoyed meeting Tom and Tracie O'Brien for my story in that section and learning their story. If you have suggestions for how we can strengthen the Equipment Purchasing Guide in 2025, please let me know. That feature begins on page 16.

- Of note in this issue, it's a good snapshot of where all *LM* has been over the last month. By my count, in just four weeks, we attended four events: Grow 2024! in Des Moines (recap on page 12 and a longer story online); SmartCon in Austin (recap on page 70 and a longer story online); LMN Mastermind Summit in Orlando (recap on page 13 and a longer story online); and a Conklin AgroVantage Lawn Care seminar in Kansas City (video Q&A online). Right up front in the magazine, the *LM* Gallery on pages 12-13 shows some of the people we met and were lucky enough to hang out with while we were on the road. Our travel slows down a bit now that we're in the growing season, but we'll still see you at the next event. No other magazine gets on the road and covers the industry like *Landscape Management*.
- I'd like to shout out the following people for their hard work on the redesign of **LandscapeManagement.net**: Tami Liss, Joey Ciccolini, Danielle Pesta, Adam Greenwell, Julie Sweany, Bill Roddy, Michelle Mitchell, Brian Davis, Steve Galperin and Craig MacGregor. This crew put in a lot of hours (some of them even working a weekend) to improve our website. I hope you'll take the time to check it out on your computer, phone or tablet. I don't know the first thing about creating a better website, but I do know a great one when I see it — and they created a great one. 

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EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD



MORE ONLINE

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

What is easy to overlook or forget as contractors prepare for the “busy season”?

“Taking care of yourself. Build healthy habits to stay in shape mentally and physically while also prioritizing time spent with your loved ones.”



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

ProScope Lawn &
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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.

“Safety often gets a back seat in the rush to make money and profit. Bad idea.”



“Employee growth and development is the No. 1 factor when people select a job or consider their job satisfaction today. Skipping training because things are too busy often leads to employee turnover and burnout for those who remain. Taking care of employee well-being and growth as the top priority is the best plan for success.”



“Have your marketing calendar and budget in place so all you have to do is execute it during the busy season.”



“Themselves. If you don’t take care of yourself, eat right, sleep right, stay active and have meaningful people in your life, you won’t have the energy needed to win at the game of business.”



“To be grateful for the chance to serve others during the ‘100 days of opportunity.’”



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LM GALLERY

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

1 Three buds at Stubb's (Left to right) Eric Barnes, hydrate manager, Plants Creative Landscape, Scottdale, Ga.; Pam Dooley, owner, Plants Creative Landscape; and Ben Mason, VP of sales, Weathermatic, at Stubb's BBQ during Weathermatic's third annual SmartCon.

2 Coffey takes the stage At SmartCon 2024, attendees were treated to a barbecue dinner and a country music concert by Coffey Anderson, singer of *Mr. Red, White and Blue*.

3 Florida men Austyn Roth, owner of Lucky Landscaping in Jupiter, Fla., (left) and John Amarosa, COO of Pine Lake Nursery and Landscape in Lutz, Fla., didn't have to travel far for the 2024 LMN Mastermind Summit in Orlando.

4 Social media meetup Ryan Markewich, founder of Creative Roots Landscaping Kelowna, British Columbia, (left) might be a familiar face if you're a regular visitor to *Landscape Management's* LinkedIn page. LM's Rob DiFranco met up with Markewich at the LMN Mastermind Summit.

5 Always time for Tex-Mex Luke Hawthorne, COO, Emerald Lawns, Austin, Texas (center), took time out of his evening to treat LM Publisher Bill Roddy (left) and Editor-in-Chief Seth Jones to a fine Tex-Mex dinner.

6 Class is in session We visited the Conklin AgroVantage Lawn Care class in Kansas City, Mo., and caught up with (left to right) Steve Bonar, Executive VP, Conklin; Rachel and Brian Benfer, directors with Conklin and owners of Envirocare Turf Management; and Dan Wilgoys, product specialist, AgroVantage System at Conklin.





7 Lone stars Brett Anderson, VP of marketing, Weathermatic, with Roddy, at Stubb's in Austin.

8 Everything is bigger in Texas Including the smiles on friends Bob Grover, president, Pacific Landscape, Portland, Ore., Jones and David Grover, branch manager, Pacific Landscape.

9 Italy travel friends reunite The last time we saw Josh Amigo (left) G and G Landscape, Charlotte, N.C., and Paul Myers, McFarlin Stanford, it was as we

waved goodbye to them in the mountains of Tuscany, Italy following the Aces Wild trip. We ran into them again at Grow! 2024 in Des Moines, Iowa.

10 A three-hour tour Roddy and Jones started their tour of RJ Lawn & Landscape right — by meeting up with co-owner Ryan McCarthy during Grow! 2024 in Des Moines.

11 Men in black Gage Roberts, senior director of sales at Aspire Software, with Mike Mason,

CEO, Weathermatic, at SmartCon 2024.

12 How about those Chiefs??? One surefire way to get your photo in the magazine is to wear something with Seth's beloved Chiefs on it, to an industry event. Dustin Grizzoffi, Embassy Landscape Group, Riverside, Mo., (in Chiefs hat) proves that, with (left to right) Roddy, Jason Mathers, Monarch Landscape Management, Houston, and Nick Novak, Embassy Landscape Group.

Grow! 2024 attendees visit RJ Lawn and Landscape

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

It was a packed house — exactly 786 people — at the Iowa Events Center in downtown Des Moines, Iowa. Landscape and lawn care professionals from around the U.S. traveled to Des Moines to learn from industry consultant Marty Grunder and his colleagues at McFarlin Stanford, to visit RJ Lawn & Landscape, network and meet with industry vendors.

The three-day curriculum included more than 50 classes and a three-hour tour of RJ Lawn & Landscape, a family-owned company offering commercial and residential lawn care, irrigation and fountains, landscape design and installations and snow removal.

Company owners Ryan and Annette McCarthy and their team welcomed attendees as they went from station to station to see how RJ gets the job done with lectures on their facility and fleet management, snow removal, creating a successful work environment, financials and reporting and recruiting.

Ryan McCarthy talked to the group about their facility and their equipment. McCarthy is dipping his toe into battery-powered equipment and had a truck on display loaded with battery-powered equipment. He discussed how his company is learning from others on how to make the switch.

“The idea is, they’ll back in and plug in a welding wire into the actual breaker box. That puts power to all the outlets,” Ryan McCarthy told the group as they looked inside the vehicle. “That way, they never have to move anything day to day. The only thing they have to do is unplug that one wire. Everything else stays in the chargers as needed. It’s all about convenience and scalability. If we’re going to move forward, we need to think of how we’re going to do this.”

For Colton Ballantyne, superintendent with Alpha Landscapes, Slater, Iowa, the tour of RJ Lawn & Landscape was a highlight of the event.

“There’s a lot of innovative stuff (at RJ Lawn & Landscape), we’re here to bounce some ideas off of each other,” he said. “We’re in between setting up a new shop, so there are a lot of good ideas here for our new shop.”

This was his first time attending Grow! Along with the tour of RJ, Ballantyne pointed to the seminar, “Facility



Must Haves: What are the Best Companies Doing When Designing their Facility,” presented by Tommy Cole and Jason New of McFarlin Stanford, as a highlight of the event.

Ryan McCarthy dove deep into RJ Lawn & Landscape’s transition to battery-powered equipment.

A GROW!(TH) MINDSET

Lisa Greenwell, vice president at GreenSweep, Silver Spring, Md., has been attending Grow! regularly over the last several years. She said a highlight of this year’s event was seeing how two of her teammates — new to the industry and first-timers at Grow! — were seeing the industry in a new light.

“It’s a good opportunity for us to connect with our peers,” Greenwell adds. “We have a growth mindset. We’re always looking for ways to improve. We’re always able to pull a few nuggets, if not several, to implement into our strategic plan for long-term growth.”

BACK TO OHIO

Grow! 2025 will head to Columbus, Ohio, for a tour of Hidden Creek Landscaping, a residential and commercial landscaping and design company.

As the event came to a close, event host Marty Grunder asked the audience for some key takeaways.

“It’s a constant focus on where we’re going and what we’re doing,” Grunder told the audience. “Keep chopping wood, keep doing what got us here in the first place. Focus on those basics.”

Key takeaways from the LMN Mastermind Summit

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Mark Bradley, CEO of Landscape Management Network (LMN), didn't hold back when addressing attendees of the LMN Mastermind Summit in Orlando, Fla., on Feb. 22.

Bradley told attendees that the green industry has to be a leader when it comes to paying employees fair wages and that starts with building a culture backed by numbers. Most importantly, revenue per hour and profit margin.

The LMN Mastermind Summit brought together LMN users for a three-day learning experience designed to help them better understand both the LMN software and their own businesses.

"We designed (the Mastermind program) to fill a gap in the business management training," said Bradley. "For many years, I felt that many of the customers were using the software but not necessarily fully adopting it for a lack of understanding on the business side of things."

In addition to the Mastermind Summit, LMN hosts weekly online webinars and two-day sessions across North America.

A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE

Austyn Roth, owner of Lucky Landscaping in Jupiter, Fla., may have been the youngest attendee at the Mastermind Summit. Roth, whose full-service landscaping business serves commercial customers, celebrated his 21st birthday a week before attending the LMN Mastermind Summit.



LMN CEO Mark Bradley (center) gave attendees insights into how they can leverage the LMN software to grow their businesses and build a healthy culture.



"(Attending events) gives me a look at what's going on in the industry," Roth told *LM*. "I'm able to meet companies that (have) \$10, 20, 30 million (in revenue) and learn what their overhead infrastructure looks like and how they use LMN to drive their day-to-day."

Navigating the labor market was a hot topic of discussion during panels at LMN's Mastermind Summit.

While also racking up frequent-flyer miles — Roth also attended Grow! in Des Moines, Iowa, the week before LMN's gathering in Orlando — he has picked up tidbits from the other professionals during his travels.

OH CANADA

Even though the event brought attendees to sunny Florida, it had a distinctly Canadian flair. LMN — based in Ontario — hosted several speakers from Canadian landscape companies, including Oriole Landscaping, Creative Roots Landscaping and Urban Life Solutions.

Other speakers included *LM* editorial advisory board member Troy Clogg of Troy Clogg Landscape Associates in Wixam, Mich., Scott Lamon, owner of Tynic Landscaping in Southwick, Mass., and Cole Weller, president and CEO of Weller Brothers in Sioux Falls, S.D. (*Editor's note:* Our 5 Questions interview with Weller can be read on page 72.)

Heather Monahan gave a keynote speech on day two of the event. Monahan is the author of *Overcome Your Villains*, a former TEDx speaker and CEO of Boss in Heels, a lifestyle brand that aims to help people build confidence and learn how to stand their ground.

"Everybody needs more confidence in their lives. Do you want to know why?" she asked attendees. "Confidence is directly tied to revenue. People buy from confident people."

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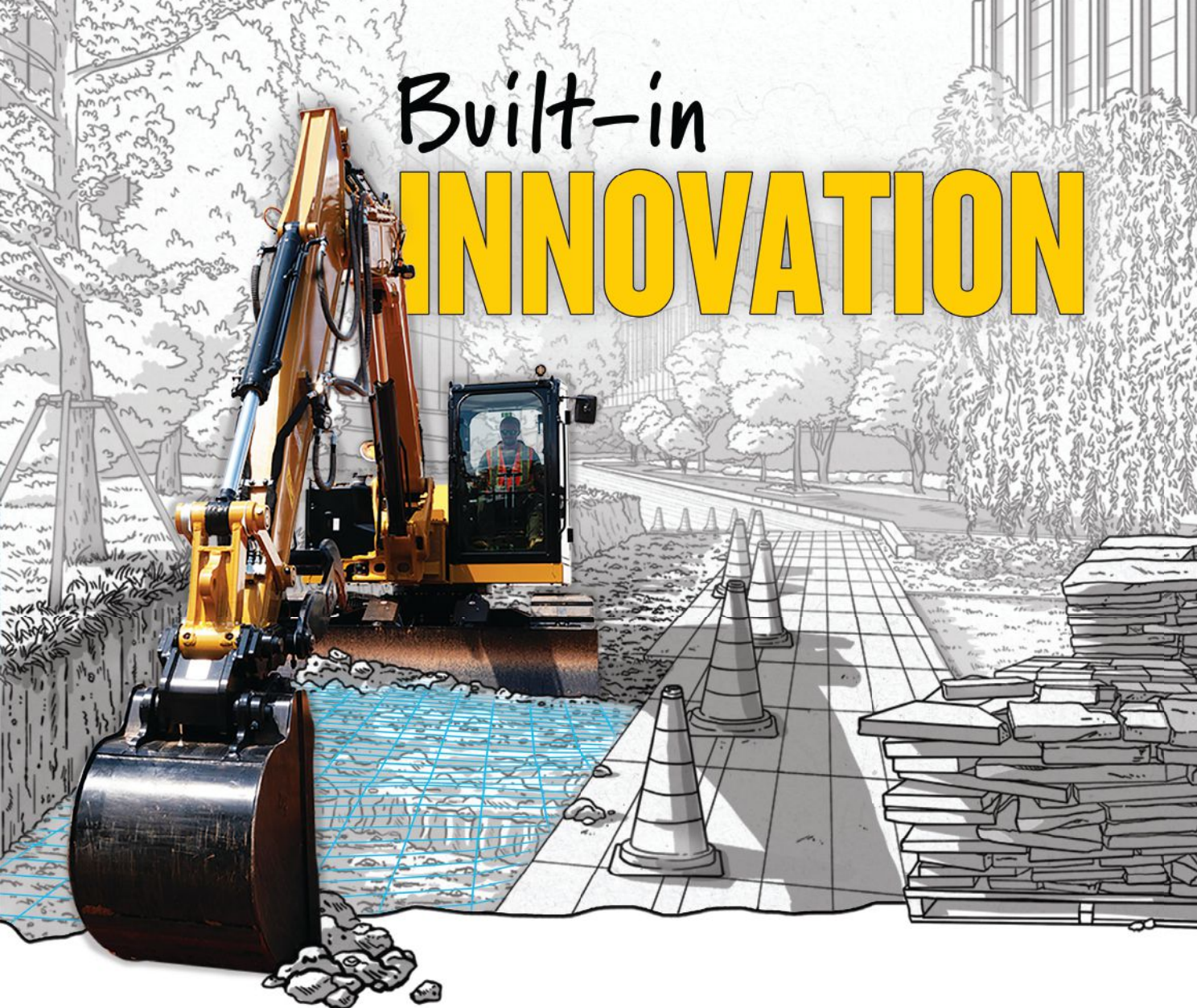
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2024 EQUIPMENT PURCHASING GUIDE

HARD TIMES

Tom and Tracie O'Brien needed a change in order to face labor issues following the pandemic.



RUN DMT

How a Florida couple's investment in a trailer and a topdresser changed their lives

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

COVID-19 did not kill Oxford Lawn in Wildwood, Fla., but it sure did change it. Husband/wife owners Tom and Tracie O'Brien, transplants from New Jersey, bought a small company of about 20 residential mowing accounts 16 years ago and built it up to 400 clients. After a few years, they added irrigation services. Their coverage area was The Villages in Florida, a massive retirement community of 71,000 homes.

"When you have (400) properties to maintain, you really cannot miss a day," Tom O'Brien says. "I guess we'll blame it on COVID because the employees' attitudes changed and that was the turning point: trying to get good, reliable, solid people to show up five days a week all year round. We were having a real problem finding people to keep coming in consistently, and we needed to get out of that grind. The stress level was insane."

The O'Briens moved to Florida from New Jersey to get away from "the rat race." Back then, Tom owned his own auto shop and Tracie was a hairdresser. Tom says that 20 years ago, he realized the auto manufacturers were trying to phase small businesses like him out and force car owners to go back to their dealers for maintenance.

"Mercedes was the first one to do it, then BMW," he says. "The writing was on the wall."

Now, history was repeating itself, except this time it was COVID that was phasing out O'Brien's business. A change was necessary.

IT'S TRICKY

The good news was that Oxford Lawn had developed a strong reputation in the market. The O'Briens saw topdressing services were taking a foothold in the Florida market to bring properties back to life. The process of topdressing involves spreading a layer of material around a property to improve the health of the soil. Oxford Lawn spreads Comand from Life-Soils, an organic compost specifically blended to rejuvenate lawns.

"In Florida, it's all sand and clay. Nothing grows good in sand and clay," Tom O'Brien says. "It's all new construction down here. They strip the land, mix the sand with a bunch of clay and then compact the heck out of it. Grass has no real chance of survival. The fertilizer companies we (work) with would recommend our (topdressing) service to properties."

The O'Briens wanted to see if they could move away from mowing — which necessitated multiple employees — and focus their business on topdressing. They bought a 12-yard dump trailer to see if they could do it.

"Before we made a huge investment in this space, we bought a trailer and an aerator, and we just worked out of the back of that trailer ... and it was killing us," Tracie O'Brien says.

The numbers were working, but the effort was not. Shoveling compost into a topdresser was labor intensive. They had enough work lined up to justify buying a machine to solve their labor problem.

"That was when the light switched on," Tom O'Brien says.

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2024 EQUIPMENT PURCHASING GUIDE

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IT'S LIKE THAT

Tom O'Brien was researching ways to make his business less labor-intensive by watching YouTube videos. He came across Mulch Mate's videos, hosted by Nick Carlson, the founder and CEO of Dawson Manufacturing. The problem was, at the time, Mulch Mate was loading mulch into wheelbarrows, not topdressers.

He decided to call Carlson and describe the problem he was having. It turns out, his timing was perfect.

"(Nick) was like, 'Dude, that is exactly what I'm setting this (DMT) up for,'" Tom O'Brien recalls. "It was a pretty funny conversation. He turned me on to the DMT trailer, which was a trailer they had just come out with."

In fact, Carlson says he developed the Mulch Mate DMT trailers specifically with the topdressing community in mind.

Continued on page 20



PHOTO: DAVID STEELE

CAN YOU ROCK IT LIKE THIS

Tracie O'Brien loads compost into a Kart Mate, an articulating zero-turn cart that mounts to a mower.



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Continued from page 18

"They have to take the compost to the job site, but you also have to take the equipment too, which creates a logistical nightmare — especially when you have to take two trucks and a trailer and then another truck and ... it just becomes a big rigamarole," he says.

Carlson says while most of the world was in a COVID nightmare, that was the time when he threw himself into developing the DMT. The first trailer was released in October 2020. The O'Briens were one of his first customers for the new system. Today, about 50 percent of the products Mulch Mate produces are DMT trailers.

What makes the DMT special are hydraulics to lower and raise the trailer. When the trailer is fully loaded, it can be lowered to the ground so it is safe to drive from job site to job site. But when it arrives at the work site, it can be raised 16 inches so the topdresser can quickly be loaded with material.

"Topdressers are really tall because they're trying to get a lot of volume into them," Carlson says. "The DMT is great because you pull up to the job site, drop the gate, pull up the topdresser, press a button and the trailer hydraulically lifts up. Put the topdresser underneath the Mulch Mate, press a button and in nine or 10 seconds, it's completely full. And this is all a one-person operation."

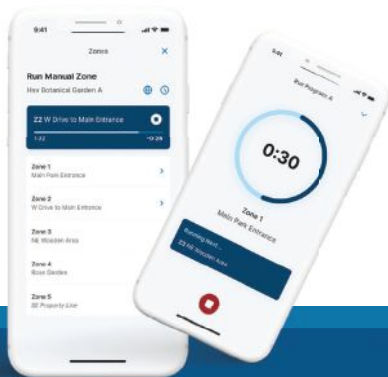
The DMT also has room in the front to store equipment. Tom O'Brien calls the DMT the best investment he's ever made in his life. He and his wife are now a two-person topdressing team, reliant on no one except each other, a trailer and a topdresser.

"The two of us absolutely kill it in a day," Tom O'Brien says. "The profit margins are much higher doing the lawn rehab work than it was with the weekly mowing service. The schedule is more flexible. It's a much less stressful life and it has given us our freedom back."

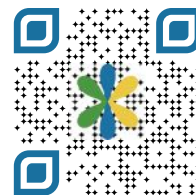


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DAVID AMIGO

CEO - G&G Landscape Solutions

THEN

David purchased G&G in 2017 with no previous experience in the landscape industry. He saw a lot of potential, but his 17 years running a modular home business did not prepare him for the challenges he faced. David found himself knee-deep in operational issues and a very unorganized shop. Cleaning up on all fronts was a massive undertaking.

NOW

After years of tough improvements, David attended the GROW! event in 2020 and joined ACE Peer Groups. With help from McFarlin Stanford coaches and the other owners in his group, David was able to double his revenue in less than 3 years. He's done this profitably while building a spotless operation and a stellar, dedicated team. David is now part of two ACE Peer Groups, leveraging the collective power and experience of this unique community of business owners.

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DAVID AMIGO
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2. **Keep it clean:** a spotless, organized shop and clear communication are key
3. **Treat your team well:** value & respect foster a healthy, positive culture
4. **Be profitable:** it's the cornerstone of long-term business success



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**"MY THEORY IS,
SPEND THE MONEY.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT
IT. IF YOU HAVE THE
EQUIPMENT, IT'LL MAKE
YOU THE MONEY BACK."**

— TOM O'BRIEN

The O'Briens use an ECO 250 from Ecolawn to apply the topdressing materials. Tom O'Brien says he prefers this topdresser because of the way it dispenses material — it throws it rather than drops it. If he gets in a tight space, say around an air conditioning unit or a pool, he can throw the material forward, saving time on spot-spreading on foot. He also likes that the machine can adjust from about two or three-foot widths to a 10-foot width for wide-open areas.

WALK THIS WAY

O'Brien says he's happy that he's not getting beat up by shoveling the compost anymore. When the Florida sun gets hot, it limits how much shoveling he can do, he says. Now, everything is automated.

Carlson is thrilled with the success the DMT trailer has brought the O'Briens.

"I don't know how old Tom is, but he's not 20," Carlson says. "And he was able to reduce the size of his business, increase his profits

and reduce fatigue. (The DMT) is a money-printing machine."

At the end of 2023, the O'Briens sold their mowing business. They are now completely in the topdressing business. O'Brien says half of his 2024 is already booked out. Many of his jobs are one-and-done, while some are two applications spread a few months apart.

The topdressing market is becoming recognized as a way to improve lawn health in Florida, Tom O'Brien says. Most of their work is residential, with some HOAs and sports fields. In the immediate future are two Orlando-area hospitals, and coincidentally a Lamborghini dealership to harken back to Tom's early days as a mechanic.

"The (DMT) unit was a big investment for us, but we did the proof of concept to make sure we had the numbers to support the investment," Tom O'Brien says. "My theory is, spend the money. Don't worry about it. If you have the equipment, it'll make you the money back." 🍷



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QUESTIONS FIRST, BUYING SECOND

Experts share the questions landscape companies and contractors should ask before making the purchase

BY BRIAN LOVE | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

A

ny big purchase also comes with big questions.

Whenever he makes a major purchase, Nolan Gore, general manager and owner at Top Choice Lawn Care in Austin, Texas, likes to think about a quote from Charlie

Munger, former Berkshire Hathaway vice chairman: 'The company that needs a new machine or tool and hasn't bought it is already paying for it.'

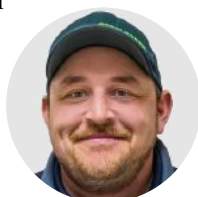
"We believe very firmly in the idea that technology and equipment is an enabler of human functioning and human flourishing in our industry," Gore says. "While it seems expensive, the labor and people are far more expensive the vast majority of the time. So, you're saving yourself a little bit of money upfront with that purchase."

Still, there are plenty of questions that need to be answered before deciding to invest in new equipment. Thankfully, experts are happy to share their thoughts on what to consider before making that equipment purchase.

WHAT TO CONSIDER

The first thing a landscape contractor should consider before making an equipment purchase is the size of a typical customer's property, says Kodi Quinlisk an equipment specialist for Pa.-based Steel Green Manufacturing.

"If they're doing larger properties, obviously they'd want to look into something that's going to be more efficient for big properties," he says. "If they're looking at smaller properties, then they would want to look at



Kodi Quinlisk



something that's going to be more maneuverable in tight areas."

As for equipment features, Quinlisk recommends contractors ensure their machines are capable of applying the products they want to apply.

BE PREPARED

Josh Flynn, CEO of Power Equipment Plus, says have all of the necessary paperwork done before heading in to make your equipment purchase for a smoother experience.

Continued on page 26

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Continued from page 24

“Some equipment is only low volume, so they’re limited on what type of products they’re going to be able to put down with it,” Quinlisk says. “Other machines are more capable of doing high volume. For example, if you want to do an all-liquid program, you’re going to need that high volume.”

He says additional questions to consider include what kind of warranty is available? How convenient are the service center locations? Are parts readily available and is the machine easy to calibrate? The easier the calibration, the more accurate one can be, Quinlisk says.

For Gore, sometimes the best question to ask is whether the manufacturer is a reputable brand. And then when you’ve chosen a line of equipment, stick to it.

“The maintenance will be easier, knowledge accumulation is easier and



Nolan Gore

you don’t have to research as much,” Gore says.

Other sticking points for him and his team are reliability and durability. He says they want machines they know will work when it’s 3 p.m., it’s hot and they just want to finish the day.

“Good employees like working with good tools,” Gore says. “Bad employees accept poor equipment.”

WHERE TO LOOK

Searching for the right piece of equipment can be difficult. There are many options and a lot of ways to do research.

Gore says the best place to start researching is by talking to groups of operators — not suppliers.

“Stores are incentivized to sell,” Gore says. “Operators want efficiency and reliability.”

Continued on page 28

Q: Should I buy, or rent?

A: No matter how big you are, the most important thing is when do you start seeing a return on the investment? Do you really need that excavator? I can’t believe how many companies have equipment that really doesn’t do much more than sit in a parking lot. Ask yourself what you’re going to use the equipment for. Once you’ve made the decision that this equipment clearly makes sense, then do your homework on it.

— Frank Mariani, founder and executive chairman, Mariani Premier Group



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Continued from page 26

Quinlisk recommends searching online and reaching out to local dealers. He also recommends looking at social media.

"There are a lot of helpful Facebook groups where people from all over the country with different points of view can come together," Quinlisk says. "It's nice to be able to ask around and get feedback (about the machine) from other users."

Josh Flynn is the CEO of Power Equipment Plus, an outdoor power equipment dealer with four branches on Long Island, N.Y. Flynn encourages everyone to research not only the products they're looking to buy but also the equipment dealers.

"There are a lot of folks who come into the store and ask for a random brand and we're like, 'Nope, sorry, we don't sell that, but hey, we can show you something else,'" he says. "Get an idea of the models you're interested in, maybe the price point."

GREAT MINDS

Nolan Gore of Top Choice Lawn Care in Austin, Texas, recommends talking to other users before making a large equipment purchase to get an unfiltered opinion.

WHAT TO REMEMBER


Some overlooked aspects of the process include understanding what is and isn't included in the warranty.

"Most warranties are going to be for a specified amount of time," Quinlisk says. "They'll require you to take the machine to a dealership, go through a diagnostic process, they'll get the parts and everything."

It's also important, says Lee Padgett, product manager for Takeuchi, to know what other purchases you may need to make to support your new equipment.

"Transporting a larger machine will likely require a more expensive trailer," he says. "Operating a vehicle weighing over 26,000 lbs. requires a CDL — which means more time and effort."

Finally, Flynn says the buying process will go smoother if you fill out financing paperwork online before walking into the dealership.

"Normally folks come in, we fill out the application with them, you have to wait and maybe you get the program you wanted," he says. "It's kind of like buying a house ... you know exactly where you sit if you're prequalified. That makes it a lot easier for us to sell." 

Q: Does this piece of equipment make me more efficient than I already was?

A: If you can get more work done, if you can be more efficient, if it will make life easier for the technician, then it is worth it. I'm in Texas where the temperature gets up to 105 degrees F in the summer-time on the daily. I'm trying to do everything I can to make my technician's life easier.

— **Luke Hawthorne, COO,**
Emerald Lawns



Q: What is the best timing for me to buy?

A: If you're looking to buy a fleet or even a few units, don't do it in May. Spring orders are coming in January and February; we're fully stocked for the season with hundreds of mowers at that time.

— **Josh Flynn, CEO,**
Power Equipment Plus

Q: Am I certain this is a positive investment in the business?

A: A failed equipment purchase means you're not using the equipment enough for it to pay for itself.

Regardless of how you financed it, it's an anchor on your business and now there's capital you don't have to grow your business elsewhere. You sort of get stranded — you're going to take a hit on the resale market. The real downside is an opportunity missed to invest in your business in a positive way.

— **Palmer Higgins, partner,**
Chenmark



PHOTO: NOLAN GORE

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HOW TO ACE YOUR EQUIPMENT DEMO

Experts explain why no question is a stupid question during a trial

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Do you remember your first date and the nerves, anticipation and awkwardness of not knowing what to talk about that came with it?

For those in the green industry, an equipment demo might bring up similar feelings. According to Lee Padgett, product manager for Takeuchi-US, the most common mistakes made during a demo aren't too far off from ones you may have made during that first date.

"The most common mistake we see is simply not asking enough questions or the right questions," he says.

Matt Moore, director of robotics sales for Sunseeker, agrees, adding there's never a situation in which you're going to ask too many questions. While his expertise comes in demonstrating robotic mowers for Sunseeker and others in the robotics market, his advice is still relevant for other equipment purchases like mowers or compact equipment.

"Keep (the equipment) in spec," he says. "Make sure that you understand the site that it is going to be working on. Does it have a lot of hills? Does it have uneven surfaces? Landscapers really need to know the property they want to put the product on (before making a purchase)."

KNOW YOUR ROLE

Moore says that the biggest thing a contractor should aim to find out during an equipment trial is what the product can and can't do.

"Over the years, I've done countless demos with robotic mowers, and typically it always comes back to realizing the realm of which the product operates," says Moore. "A lot of times with a zero-turn turn or a ride-on (mower) or anything like that in the normal landscape portfolio, it's designed to do X and a lot of times (the contractor) will push to do Y and Z."

Continued on page 32

"IT'S LIKE TEST DRIVING A CAR. YOU KIND OF KNOW ALREADY WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR. JUST MAKE SURE AND ASK YOURSELF, DOES IT RIDE THE WAY I THOUGHT IT WOULD? IS EVERYTHING SMOOTH? IS IT THE RIGHT SIZE, WILL THIS FIT ON MY TRAILER?"

— JOSH FLYNN, CEO,
POWER EQUIPMENT PLUS



WHAT'S THE DEAL?
Before you schedule a demo, experts say you need to have a clear understanding of your budget.



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— PALMER HIGGINS, PARTNER, CHENMARK



Continued from page 30

To find out exactly what “X” is, Moore says landscapers should have a few questions in mind, including how big the cutting area is, how the mower communicates and what the limitations of that mode of communication may be.

“Every mower company has an app, but how it communicates is very important,” he says. “Some have 4G cards on them where they’re connected through cellular. So, if you have a property that has no cell service, then your machine’s not going to communicate.”

Another way to make sure you know the limitations of the machine is to put it to work in an environment similar to where you foresee using it,

Padgett says.



Lee Padgett

“Getting some hands-on time with the machine is great, and it’s even better if you can demo the equipment by using it for your specific application,” he says.

In addition to knowing what you need the machine for now, he adds that it’s helpful to have an idea of what you might use it for in the future.

“Ask if the machine is the right one for your (current) application,” says Padgett. “Find out if it has the (rated operating capacity) you need, the bucket breakout and lift arm forces you need and the hydraulic pressure and flow to run the attachments you want to use now and in the future.”

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

It’s also important to understand your clientele and their expectations before you schedule a demo for any machine, robotic mowers included.

“When you look at a commercial setting or a landscape professional that does residential, you need to understand the availability of time for the machine to work,” Moore

Continued on page 34



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“MOST EQUIPMENT BUYERS ARE FOCUSED ON THE MACHINE. THE MACHINE WILL DO ITS JOB. THE QUESTIONS AND YOUR THOUGHT PROCESS SHOULD BE ALL ABOUT, ‘HOW AM I GOING TO INTEGRATE THIS INTO MY OPERATION? WHO IS THE BEST CREW LEADER I HAVE TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS? AND HOW WILL I DEFINE SUCCESS?’ QUITE HONESTLY, RUNNING THE MACHINE, WE CAN TEACH THAT IN MINUTES.”

— TIM KUBISTA, RC MOWERS



Continued from page 32

says. “If you’re doing a park, you’re typically not going to want it to run during the day when people are out there laying out, having picnics and stuff like that. So, you’re going to be limited on the hours when you can operate.”

Specifically for robotic mowers, the same is true for residential sites,

according to Moore. He says there’s a wide spectrum of when homeowners want their mowers to run. Some want to actually see the machine cutting regularly, while others never want to see it.

For larger machines like ride-on mowers or compact construction equipment, operator comfort is another important piece of

the puzzle you discover by getting hands-on during a demo.

“A comfortable operator is a productive operator. Consider the size of the operator’s area, how it’s appointed and designed,” says Padgett.

KNOW YOUR BUDGET

Heading into your demo, it’s important to know what your budget is for an upcoming purchase. Moore says that will be one of the first questions asked of you.

“It’s important to understand what your budget is before you get really deep into it,” he says. “If your budget is \$500, then there might be a product out there. It just might not live up to the expectations that you have.”

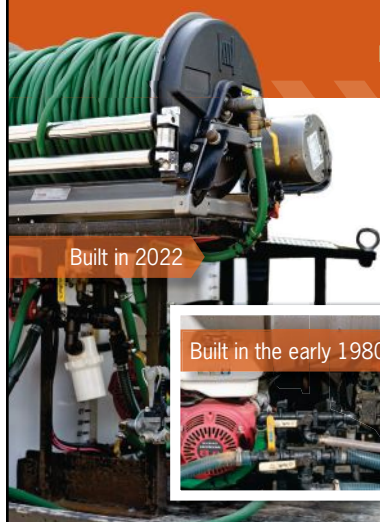


Matt Moore

“One of the best things about Graham is how they listen and adapt their equipment to fit our needs.”

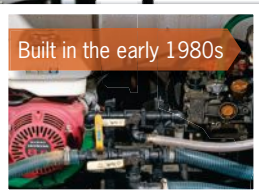
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2 If something more intimate is more your pace, we also suggest our own LM Growth Summit, held every year at Reunion Resort near Orlando. *Landscape Management* invites a small group of lawn care operators — around 20 businesses in all — to visit with 15 of our advertising partners for two-and-a-half days of demos, meetings and networking. To submit an application to attend, visit LandscapeManagement.net.



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TIPSHEET

The do's and don'ts of PGRs

Experts share how you can get the best out of your PGRs this spring

BY LAUREN DOWDLE
CONTRIBUTOR

Plant growth regulators (PGRs) can be sustainable and cost-effective options that benefit both the lawn care operator (LCO) and customers when applied correctly.

PGRs help operators cut down on labor hours, equipment use and the amount of product needed, says Derek deBloois, owner/operator of DeBloois Landscaping in Milford, Del.

DeBloois uses Nufarm's Anuew, with the active ingredient prohexadione calcium, and T-Nex, with trinexapac-ethyl.

"On our maintenance accounts, we have reduced double-cutting, extra edging and line-trimming times by 50 percent. We view this product as a tool and time-saver," deBloois says. "This also can have a color effect on turf without the application of more NPK."

His company offers lawn care, soil testing and corrections, overseeding, aeration and also a small amount of mowing and landscaping. The company serves 95 percent residential and 5 percent commercial customers.

DeBloois says his crews use a zero-turn spreader-sprayer to apply a liquid formulation of Anuew.

"We feel our dual-pump setup on this machine gives us the flexibility of running 1 to 2 gallons per thousand square feet," he says.

FOLLOWING THE LABEL

DeBloois recommends LCOs closely follow the product's label and wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE). He adds that PGRs are best applied during the spring — early April to mid-May — and it's also best to water the product in and apply it as evenly as possible.

"We tend to avoid the product in the summer as heat and humidity can naturally stunt growth on non-irrigation properties," deBloois says. "The correct wind and weather conditions are key with this product."

ACHIEVE UNIFORM COVERAGE

Mizraim Mata, plant and turf health-care manager at The Greenery in Bluffton, S.C. says that PGRs promote a denser, more lush appearance to the landscape. He adds that they also reduce the amount of maintenance needed because of the slowed growth.

The Greenery offers lawn care, aquatic management, garden center, landscape construction and maintenance services to 80 percent commercial and 20 percent residential properties.

While application timing varies by location, LCOs should typically apply PGRs during the growing season, ideally in late spring or early summer, Mata says. Backpack or handheld sprayers are common for applications in smaller areas, whereas larger properties might require ride-on or truck-mounted sprayers.

Mata says that The Greenery uses Trimtect from Rainbow Ecoscience, which features a commonly used active ingredient — paclobutrazol — which inhibits the production of a plant hormone that is responsible for cell elongation.

Specific PGR and application rates will vary depending on factors like the plant species, environmental conditions and desired outcome, according to Mata.

"Applying these substances results in reduced vertical growth of plants, promoting lateral growth and a more compact appearance," he says. "This can lead to benefits such as decreased pruning frequency, enhanced plant quality and improved stress tolerance."


MISTAKES TO AVOID

Applying PGRs during the wrong time of the growing season can diminish the effectiveness, Mata says.

He adds that using excessive amounts of PGRs can also have negative effects, such as stunted growth or discoloration. Mata recommends that LCOs follow the manufacturer's recommendations for application rates.

Mata also says that operators should avoid application during extreme weather conditions like droughts or high temperatures since that can negatively impact the efficacy of PGRs and potentially harm the plants.

Inaccurate calibration of the equipment can also lead to uneven, ineffective results. LCOs should regularly assess the health of the plant to check for signs of stress or disease and adjust the PGR application or address other issues.

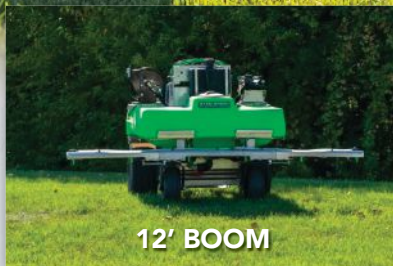
"By incorporating these practices into their PGR application routine, lawn care operators can optimize the effectiveness of the treatment and promote healthier, more attractive landscapes for their clients," Mata says. 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.

↑ THIS THE SEASON

The late spring or early summer is the ideal time for PGR applications.





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BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Make the most of your space

Experts share the importance of truck organization **BY BRIAN LOVE | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

For lawn care operators (LCOs), proper organization is an essential element for completing any job.

“If your trucks are organized, even if it comes down to your tools and putting them right back in their same spot, it makes things easier for workers to find stuff, get things fixed and be quicker on a site,” says Jennifer Wing, marketing manager for Hannay Reels.

“If things are unorganized and you’re spending time looking for things, you’re wasting time and money. Organization leads to efficiency, which leads to the cost-effectiveness of a truck build or layout.”

When Dave Arnett, sales manager for Graham Spray Equipment, talks to contractors about organizing their trucks, he often finds himself asking, “What do you think you need to go out

there and maximize your daily revenue potential?”

“Our rigs are set up one way by their specifications, whereas multiple tanks and systems can spray turf and trees and shrubs,” Arnett says. “We can also offer accessories like backpack brackets and storage boxes for dry fertilizer.”

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Experts say that proper organization only helps effectiveness on the job site.

Continued on page 40



PHOTO: GRAHAM SPRAY EQUIPMENT

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BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Continued from page 38

According to Wing, proper organization is about knowing what you need, what things will come up during the day and trying to make the most of the space on the truck.

"It's very easy to roll up a hose and throw it in the truck and go, but when planning a truck layout, a hose or cable reel can save time and protect that piece of equipment," Wing says. "It can be expensive, but sometimes, cables can be more expensive than the reel itself. It's a safety issue a lot of the time."

In addition to a reel, contractors should be sure to include tanks for chemicals, mounts for equipment, hoses and safety tools on their spray trucks.


Successful truck organization starts with the truck itself. Brian Tabel, vice president of Isuzu, says safety is the company's No. 1 priority with its offerings to LCOs. When discussing the chassis and new diesel truck from Isuzu, he says that new configurations have made things easier for drivers while operating the vehicle.

"The first generation of our truck came out in 2007 and a lot of changes have gone into making it more ergonomically user-friendly for the driver," Tabel says. "There are different pockets, a rear passenger pocket to slide paperwork into, a new work surface, a center seat, different hooks and positioning of buttons."

As the times have changed, driving has become simpler, he adds. This

means that Isuzu's trucks have new features like steering controls, which limit the time a driver has to make adjustments while driving.

While a contractor considers these options and accessories, knowing their budget is an important factor.

"Expenses are at an all-time high for almost everything now, so I think contractors need to look at their overall initial expenses on a truck and the longevity of the product they're putting on it," Wing says. "You can get an aftermarket part fairly inexpensive, but will it last? Will you have to replace it in a year? Then you're paying twice. So, paying a little more for a product that lasts will save you money in the long run." 

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PRODUCTS THAT WORK

Spreader-sprayers



SGXL

COMPANY: Steel Green Manufacturing

URL: SteelGreenMfg.com

SGXL has a 120-gallon spray capacity and a 14-foot four-section rear breakaway boom with electric-hydraulic lift actuators. The SGXL features a 35-horsepower Kawasaki engine, 100-foot hose reel, 2.5-gallon foam marker, LED light bar, hillside assist system and pressure control system. Optional accessories include a liquid rate control system and a 350-pound hopper kit with a lift system. The machine also has a 12-mph transport speed and a 27-GPM centrifugal pump.



Z SPRAY MAX

COMPANY: Z Turf Equipment

URL: ZTurfEquipment.com

The Z Spray Max offers a 250-lb. hopper and 60-gal-lon tank capacity (two 30-gallon tanks), allowing for the simultaneous application of liquid and granular materials. The corrosion-resistant stainless-steel chassis is designed for a lower center of gravity to enhance stability and maneuverability. The bi-directional spray boom pivots both forward and back when impacted, so the boom is much less likely to be damaged. The new tank design drains more completely, so less material is left over in the tank and a tools-free tank drain eases draining the tank. The flip-open hopper makes cleaning easier and allows for access to the engine for service.



T3200

COMPANY: Turfco

URL: Turfco.com

The T3200 has a unique drive system and pivoting axle set for maneuvering on hills and uneven terrain, without turf tearing. According to Turfco, it is the largest applicator that fits through a 36-inch gate. Add-ons for the T3200 include the T-Flex 15 tank that can cover up to 140,000 sq ft per fill. The T-Flex also offers an additional 15-gallon capacity, front-mount spray nozzle and hand wand. The T3200 can also carry up to 275 lbs. of granular product.

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Making connections and friends at the *LM* Growth Summit

Mike McCarron shares what he took from his *LM* Growth Summit experience

BY BRIAN LOVE | *LM* ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Mike McCarron, owner of Image Works Landscape Management in Fairfax Station, Va., remembers falling in love with the landscaping industry.

McCarron started his lawn care business while working at UPS and attending school, pursuing his second degree. After graduating, he had a choice: continue his career with UPS or fully immerse himself in his lawn care business.

“My business had been doing good at that point and it was a pretty good size,” he says. “So, I decided to go at it full-time and not turn back from that moment forward.”

MAKING THE SUMMIT

Since beginning in 2011, the *LM* Growth Summit has served as a hub for lawn care operators to connect with each other and industry vendors.

McCarron attended his first *LM* Growth Summit in 2022, which he

says allowed him to learn about new equipment and products with hands-on demos and one-on-one meetings. Those relationships made during the event were the ultimate highlight for McCarron.

“I think the Summit is an excellent opportunity,” he says. “You get to talk to some of these high-end people within these organizations, such as vendors, distributors and suppliers. They say, ‘If you have a technical question, give us a call.’ It was fantastic to have that ability to communicate with someone and have a direct connection with someone on the inside.”

McCarron adds that spending the week with a small group of lawn care operators, talking about their experiences with equipment, products and more was a highlight.

“Your group becomes in sync during the two days, going around and speaking to everyone. I’ve since seen the people in my group at the Snow

and Ice Management event in Chicago and I got to see them again at the Equip Expo,” he says.



Mike McCarron

SEEING WHAT’S NEW

Alongside these relationships came the ability to test the latest products and learn how to incorporate them into the daily practices of McCarron’s business.

He points to a pair of *LM* partners — Albaugh Specialty Products and FMC — as relationships he built at the event that have become valuable partners for his business.

McCarron says that Albaugh’s Quintessential herbicide was what drew him to the company. Quintessential targets crabgrass — a problem weed for McCarron — with an altered formulation of quinclorac which affects all growth stages.

FMC’s Scion insecticide, which provides control of mosquitos, ants, cockroaches, spiders, scorpions and ticks, was another product of interest for McCarron.

“With the previous product that we were using, we only got around 28 to 45 days (of control),” he says. “With Scion, we doubled our longevity with a single application. It makes a huge difference when you’re trying to do more properties. If you can hit that property once over the course of 90 days, that is a much better way to go.”

To learn more about McCarron and his business, read the August 2023 edition of *Landscape Management*. 



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KEEP A CLOSE EYE
Sod webworm damage
can look similar to
drought damage,
making identification
crucial for control.



Win the battle against sod webworms

The best ways to ID and treat sod webworms

BY GEORGE KEGODE, PH.D. | CONTRIBUTOR

The sod webworm, known for its insatiable appetite for grass, causes significant damage to different types of turf, adding to the list of pests that cause trouble in the spring and summer months.

There are more than twenty species of sod webworm, with all following a similar life cycle, according to Richard Fletcher, technical services manager with Nufarm.

Adult female sod webworm moths lay eggs while flying over turf, typically during the evening. The young larvae spend the winter in thatch or just beneath the soil before becoming active and starting to feed in the spring, eventually transforming into adult moths.

Fletcher notes sod webworms can undergo two or more generations annually, contingent upon location. Southern regions may witness three or more generations, while northern areas experience fewer occurrences.

Sod webworms attack both warm- and cool-season turfgrass, favoring warm-season bermudagrass and St. Augustine grass in the South. Notably, if sod webworms appeared in a lawn the previous year, recurrence in the following year remains highly probable.

“When suspecting sod webworm presence in a lawn, confirmation requires verifying worm presence and evaluating the population for potential control measures like insecticide application,” Fletcher says.

He emphasizes ensuring comprehensive coverage for ingestion of the insecticide when applying it.

DETECTION

Lawn care operators (LCOs) can mistake sod webworm damage for other issues like disease, drought effects or even dog urine burns. Accurate identification of sod webworm problems is crucial.

Jared Hoyle, Ph.D., market development specialist for Corteva Agriscience, says there are a few surefire ways to know you have a sod webworm problem. The easiest is observing sod webworm adults flying low over turf in the evening signals their presence, as this is when they lay their eggs. The larvae emerge from thatch or just beneath the soil surface at night to feed on turf.

However, targeting the adult moths is ineffective as they’re not the root cause of turf damage.

TREATMENT

According to Hoyle, sod webworm larvae reside in thatch or below the soil surface, appearing at night to feed on turf, leading to visible damage later. Detecting these pests during their feeding times is challenging for LCOs, requiring alternative detection methods.

Hoyle recommends that LCOs use a 1 percent pyrethrin solution mixed with household detergent in water to confirm the presence of sod webworms. Pouring two gallons of this solution over a square yard of infested turf can prompt larvae to surface. Depending on the number of larvae detected per area, insecticide treatment may be advisable.

“Management with insecticide might be necessary if five or more sod webworm larvae are present per square

foot,” says Jesse Benelli, Ph.D., green solutions specialist for Envu.


Benelli stresses the importance of initiating sod webworm management through cultural practices for a healthy lawn foundation.

Practices like proper fertilizer application, adequate watering and mowing at optimal turf-specific heights aid in maintaining dense turf. When pesticide application becomes necessary, Benelli outlines two strategies for LCOs.

First, employing contact pesticides like bifenthrin, a pyrethroid insecticide, can control present sod webworms. He adds that multiple applications are essential for areas with multiple sod webworm generations annually.

Alternatively, using pesticides with residual activity, such as tetraniliprole, a diamide insecticide, offers six or more weeks of control. While these pesticides have limited contact impact, ingestion by sod webworms maximizes efficacy. Some LCOs combine bifenthrin with tetraniliprole for heightened control.

Benelli acknowledges potential pyrethroid insecticide resistance in sod webworms but recommends frequent mode-of-action rotations among insecticides to hinder resistance development.

Mastering sod webworm management requires a comprehensive approach encompassing cultural practices and strategic pesticide use. Understanding their life cycle and employing precise identification methods empower efficient control, ensuring turf health and vitality. 

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





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TIPS TO TACKLE TOUGH WEEDS

How to stand up to clover, ground ivy and nutsedge

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

Wherever clover, ground ivy or nutsedge pop up, lawn care operators must be ready and have a plan.

Bobby Kerr, Ph.D., technical services manager at Quali-Pro, offers tips for identifying and treating this trio of tough-to-control weeds.

CLOVER

The main clover species found on lawns is white clover, which is especially noticeable when it flowers in late spring and early summer. It's a low-growing perennial with creeping stems that root at the nodes. Its stem is smooth to sparsely covered with hairs, says Kerr.

"The flowers are white and are often found with a pink tinge and are arranged in round heads," he adds.

Its leaves have three elliptic- to oval-shaped leaflets with small marginal teeth. It also has a small white semicircle at the base of the leaflets.

Clover is more likely to grow in patches in the lawn that aren't properly fertilized. Improving the turf's health, density and overall site conditions can help control this weed.

GROUND IVY

A creeping perennial, ground ivy is a prostrate with four-sided, square, hairy stems. Its roots are readily at the stem nodes, and the weed is arranged in groups of three to seven at the stem ends or leaf axils, Kerr says. Ground ivy reproduces from both the creeping stems and its seeds.

It has flowers that are bluish to purplish with red speckles. Ground ivy can also be misidentified as wild violet, as both weeds have purple flowers and can be found growing in shaded areas. However, ground ivy has leaves with a more scalloped edge.

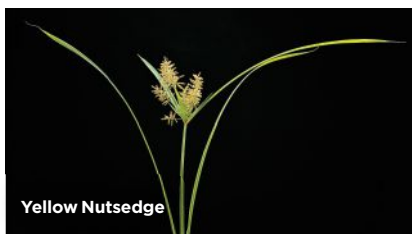
"The leaves are opposite on the stem and are kidney-shaped to rounded—



White Clover



Ground Ivy



Yellow Nutsedge

prominently veined and with scalloped margins," Kerr says.

Another way to identify ground ivy is by its minty odor, which is more noticeable when crushed.

NUTSEDGE

A grass-like weed with sharp blades, yellow nutsedge grows in sunny areas with poor drainage. Its leaves are thicker than the ones on turf and the plant grows faster than most grasses. The weed is also a lighter green than most turf, which can lead to uniformity issues in the lawn if left untreated.

Nutsedge is a rapidly spreading perennial with three-ranked basal leaves, Kerr says. The leaves are flat or slightly corrugated, and they tend to be as long or longer than the flowering stem and have a long-attenuated tip.

"The seedheads are usually yellowish-brown or straw-colored," Kerr says.

Nutsedge mainly reproduces by tubers, which are hairless, round and formed at the end of whitish rhizomes. Unlike the square stems found with ground ivy, nutsedge has triangular stems.

CONTROL ALL THREE

Taking a proactive approach with all these weeds is important for achieving control. If left untreated on lawns, they will become unsightly and lead to customer callbacks, Kerr says.


"Earlier is better," he says. "Trying to control mature weeds is challenging."

Splitting preemergent applications in the fall and/or spring typically is the best approach for weed management, he adds. Improving the lawn's fertility and reducing areas with poor drainage can also help control these weeds.

"However, these three weeds are typically hard to control," Kerr says. "So, regular postemergent herbicide applications will be required."

With yellow nutsedge management, it's important for LCOs to find and eliminate underground nutlets.

"Sulfentrazone- and halosulfuron-containing herbicides are the best option for yellow nutsedge control," Kerr says.

Three- and four-way combination herbicides with 2,4-D, dicamba, MCPP, sulfentrazone and fluroxypyr are good post-emergent herbicide options for both white clover and ground ivy, he adds. 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.

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THE BIG ONE

Movie magic

BY ROB DIFRANCO
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOCATION Culver City, Calif.


COMPANY LandCare

DETAILS This property is home to a historic film studio in Southern California, adding a unique twist for LandCare as it works to maintain the landscape.

LandCare has two full-time employees on the property performing maintenance in the early morning. Because of the nature of the property, crews utilize battery-powered equipment to keep noise at a minimum.

The property also houses another movie studio, which requires a different aesthetic approach. LandCare worked with both studios to transition from a traditional look to a more modern landscape design. The studios also have different irrigation systems, with the modern landscape featuring drip irrigation and the traditional landscape utilizing sprinklers.

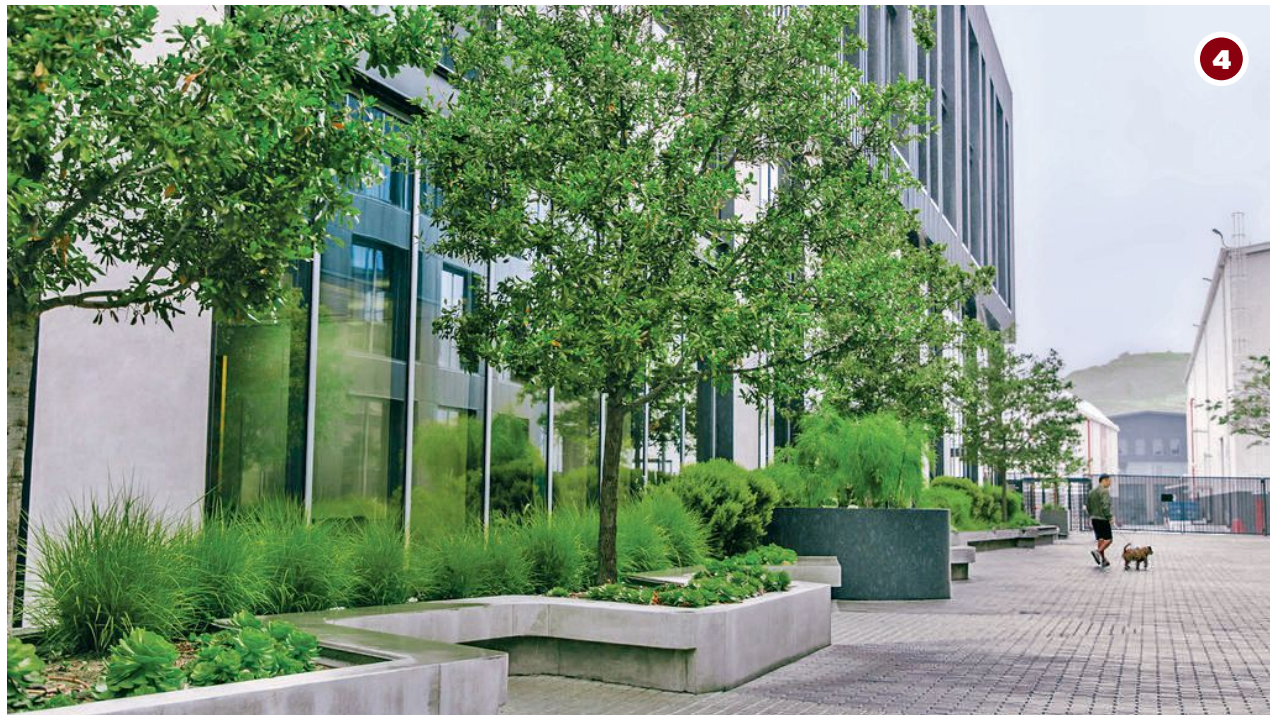
Plant material selection on site was limited because of an underground parking garage directly beneath the property. As a consequence, LandCare needed to use plants with shallow roots — like jasmine, azaleas and iceberg roses.

LandCare won a gold award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence Program for their work on this project. 

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



PHOTOS: LANDCARE



Captions | **1.** LandCare utilized iceberg roses and azaleas to help preserve the original landscape design of the historic studio. **2.** Transitioning from a historical landscape to a boxed xeriscape was a design challenge. LandCare used varying bushes and tall plants to help add cohesion between the two. **3.** The smaller office buildings are restored historical buildings. LandCare incorporated the same color palette of green and fuchsia as the front of the mansion. **4.** Oak and sycamore trees add height and depth to the otherwise majority-succulent gardens. **5.** The modern architecture and boxed landscapes are all irrigated with a drip system. **6.** Some of the sycamore trees in front of the mansion are over a century old.

MAINTENANCE SHOP

What to know before setting up shop with battery-powered equipment

Industry pros offer advice for successfully setting up and maintaining charging operations for battery-powered equipment

BY MIKE ZAWACKI | CONTRIBUTOR

Whether due to local mandates or an effort to offer clients more sustainable services, landscape pros are integrating more battery-powered equipment into their operations. As a result, it's critical to employ a thought-out charging strategy to support these endeavors adequately.

Here are some essential do's and don'ts to consider when establishing your charging solutions.

ENERGY NEEDS

When transitioning from gas to battery-powered equipment, a contractor must first assess their energy needs, mainly how many batteries will be required to power their daily activities.

This dictates whether they'll require mobile charging units on their service trucks and a charging station back at their home base, says Paul Beblowski, product manager with Stihl. For example, a small operation may only need a handful of chargers, while a larger outfit requires a dedicated charging procedure.

"Guessing is not a reasonable way to move forward on (battery management)," he says. "You never want to be in a position where you can't finish a job because you've run out

Continued on page 55



Paul Beblowski

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*Sessions were originally presented by *Landscape Management* during Equip Expo in October 2023



UNIVERSITY

Continued from page 52

of power. That being said, a contractor must understand the company's products and the charging platforms they'll be investing in, including parts, batteries and serviceability."

There are numerous resources where contractors can find information, Beblowski adds. Including equipment manufacturers, dealer networks and industry colleagues.

THE RIGHT SPACE

Inside your shop, locate an uncluttered, clean and dry area near a dedicated 20-amp circuit, which can support upward to 10 outlets. It's essential to use GFCI outlets, which will trip — or shut off — when ground faults occur, moisture is present in the receptacle box, a circuit overloads or if the outlet fails outright.

Position the charging station in a clearly visible space and at least five feet off the ground, which will prevent bumping or tripping hazards, says Scott Horoszewski, the owner of Acme NLS in Sylvania, Ohio, and a member of Echo's User Advisory Group.



Scott Horoszewski

His company primarily services residential properties with a portfolio of 55 percent maintenance, 20 percent ornamental and tree pruning, 15 percent fertilizer application and 10 percent snow/ice management.

"Find an unused corner in the shop that maintains a constant temperature throughout the year," he says. "Make sure you're at least 20 feet away from any chemical or fuel storage, and have a good fire extinguisher in reach."

When in doubt about an electrical source's viability, call a professional electrician to take stock of the situation and provide an educated opinion of your electrical needs.

"The cost to hire a professional electrician to assess your situation far outweighs the safety factor and cost if an overloaded or failed circuit results in a fire," Horoszewski adds.

CLEAN AND DRY

After a long day maintaining properties, resist the urge to plug batteries in for overnight charges and jet out the door for home.

Horoszewski recommends investing a few moments to wipe down each battery with a clean, dry rag to remove dust and debris. In addition, inspect each battery for damage before placing it on the charger. He recommends replacing any faulty or ill-performing batteries immediately.

"Make this part of your end-of-day routine, and it'll decrease any interference with the charger and increase the life of the battery units," he says. 📱

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

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FROM THE SOURCE

The how and why of shrub care in the spring

BY DREW ZWART, PH.D. | CONTRIBUTOR



As winter fades into spring, there are a few actions that landscape managers can take to ensure that ornamental shrubs on their properties remain healthy and beautiful year after year.

The *how* is not complicated and the *whys* are clear to see when you consider the physiology and growth cycles of plants.

SOIL NUTRIENT AMENDMENTS

Many shrub species are planted for their showy flowers, and with a heavy flower set comes heavy nutrient use.

If a contractor allows fallen flowers to decompose under the shrubs, the plant will recycle much of those nutrients.

However, this is rarely the case on managed properties. Shearing new growth off shrubs is also common, and this practice removes a significant amount of nutrients and carbohydrates that have been 'invested' in that new growth.

To help offset these situations, soils from shrub beds should be sampled for nutrient and pH analysis. Based on this soil analysis, appropriate nutrient additions should be applied in early spring

to prepare for the new flush of growth and flowering.

MULCHING

While mulching is a great practice for woody plants, including shrubs, contractors must keep in mind that mulch is a soil treatment and not a stem treatment. We often see declining shrubs where annual additions of mulch around the base have led to buried root collars, with multiple stems coming from below the soil or mulch line.

This can lead to decay, disease, or insect attack of buried portions of stems



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⚙️ TAKE IT SLOW
Hand pruning might take more time than a quick shear, but in the long run it will benefit your plants.

that should have been exposed or excavated after new mulch was added. Be sure to apply only a thin layer of fresh mulch and do not mound it against the base of plantings.

PRUNING

The best time of year for pruning shrubs is species-dependent, but in general, contractors should prune flowering shrubs after bloom before the plant produces the next set of flower buds.

For shrubs planted for foliage or as borders, timing is less important. However, pruning or shearing of fresh new growth results in a loss for the plant of valuable nutrients and carbohydrates. Shearing in general is very stressful physiologically for plants, and whenever possible hand pruning should be preferred for the maintenance of desirable size and form.

While hand pruning is far more time and labor-intensive, it is much better from a health perspective compared to shearing.



Drew Zwart

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT (IPM) SCOUTING AND TREATMENT

Spring is the most common time for disease infection and infestation by many insect pests. The succulent, newly emerging tissue is more susceptible to infection or infestation compared to older hardened leaves.

Monitoring for disease or insect issues and applying the appropriate management strategies is very important in spring to protect that new growth.

CONSIDER PGRs

Plant Growth Regulators (PGRs) can be a very effective tool to maintain desired size and form in shrubs, while greatly reducing the need for hand pruning or shearing.

Recent research from the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories has shown that compared to shearing, boxwoods that were hand-pruned or treated with PGRs contained higher levels of non-structural carbohydrates.

These carbohydrates serve as energy reserves that plants can use for growth and defense against diseases and insects. In general, higher levels of carbohydrate reserves leave the plants more resilient in the face of environmental stresses. This is a great option when there is limited space for plantings and when a landscape design aesthetic needs to be maintained. 🌱

Drew Zwart, Ph.D., is a Plant Pathologist & Physiologist at Bartlett Tree Experts. He is based at the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories in Charlotte, N.C., where his responsibilities include the diagnosis and protection of landscape plants from disease, insect and abiotic problems.

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MAINTAIN YOUR EDGE

A guide to trailer success

How to choose between open flatbed and enclosed trailers for your landscape ops

BY MIKE ZAWACKI | CONTRIBUTOR

There's an adage that tools are only as good as their users. Landscape contractors could go one step further by adding that tools are only effective if you can get them to the job site.

This is why an emerging landscape operation must determine whether a flatbed or an enclosed trailer is the best choice for their operation. Here are some essential guidelines to help you make that decision.

GOALS

Cost, especially for a fledgling contractor, is a prime consideration. On average, an open flatbed landscape trailer is



more affordable (between \$1,500 to \$3,500) compared to an enclosed model, which can be double the price.

The next question should concern growth strategy and how a trailer will assist in achieving a contractor's goals.

"If you're primarily specializing in mowing and maintenance work, then a modest open trailer may make the most sense," says Nathan Uphus, sales manager at Felling Trailers in Sauk Center, Minn. "But if you're expanding into tree care or irrigation, then an enclosed trailer and the benefits that affords may make the most sense."

PROTECTION AND SECURITY

While locking racks and other provisions can secure landscape equipment stored on an open trailer, an enclosed setup can better protect your equipment from theft and exposure to the elements.

"Security is critical for contractors who invest heavily in high-quality landscaping tools," Daniel Doult, account and

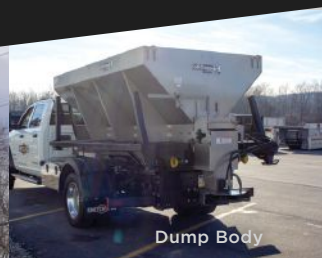
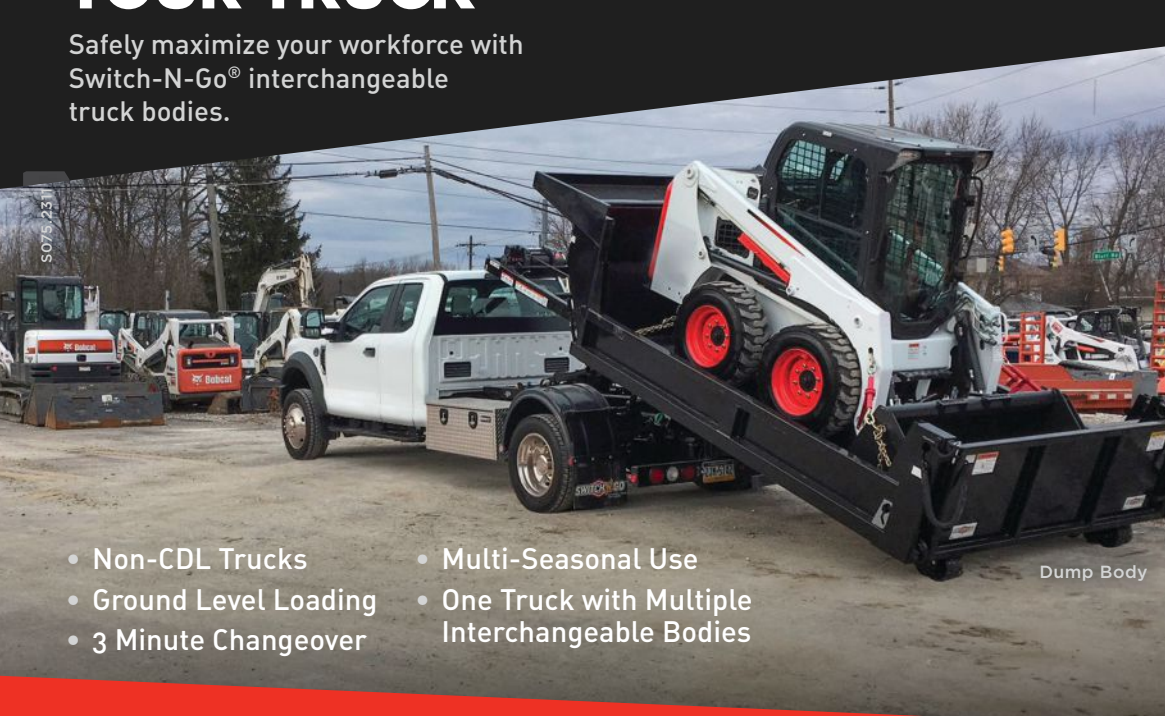
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G VERSATILITY PAYS OFF
Flat-bed open trailers offer professionals added versatility for all seasons according to experts.

business development manager at Lawn Butler in Centerville, Utah, says. “Enclosed trailers offer a secure, lockable space that reduces the risk of equipment theft and vandalism.

Lawn Butler maintains a service portfolio comprised of 50 percent snow and ice management, 30 percent maintenance, 15 percent new installations and 5 percent lawn and tree care.

Doutt adds that an enclosed structure shields equipment from adverse weather conditions, ensuring tools and machinery remain in optimal condition.

MANEUVERABILITY

Adding an open or enclosed trailer to a truck requires some getting used to, and in-yard practice is advised for the novice driver before hitting the open road. However, Doutt says an open trailer provides some maneuverability advantages.

Uphus agrees, adding that driving with an enclosed trailer can be intimidating for some drivers.

“You can almost put anybody in a pickup with an open trailer attached,” he says. “An enclosed trailer is a different story because you have that big, solid trailer behind you.”

ACCESSIBILITY

While both styles of trailers offer several variables depending on the scope of your operations, Uphus says open, flat-bed trailers provide design/build contractors an edge with accessibility.

“Transporting compact construction equipment isn’t as convenient with an enclosed trailer as with an open trailer,” he says. “And it’s easier to load and unload equipment and pallets of building materials from an open trailer.”

There are enclosed trailers large enough for construction equipment, but they are pricey and may be impractical.

“If you’re buying an enclosed trailer to haul a couple of mowers and a variety of handheld equipment, then for the same price, you probably can get a heavy-duty, open flatbed trailer that will give you considerably more carrying capacity and much more versatility for the applications you’re going to use it for,” Uphus says.

BUILDING ON

If you opt for an open flatbed, consider increasing your trailer’s versatility by adding low or high sidewalls, says Mike J. McCrea, business development manager at TrailerFlex.

“A contractor can take virtually any length of an (open, flat-bed) trailer and, for a fairly low cost, convert it into a low or high sidewall trailer to extend its use and versatility,” he says. “In the fall, that trailer can haul leaves and debris. A contractor can transport seasonal decorations (and holiday lighting) in the winter. Then, you can easily convert it back in the spring for maintenance purposes.” 📺

Mike Zawacki is a Cleveland-based writer who has covered various aspects of the green industry for the last 20 years.

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PRODUCTS THAT WORK



K9 2400

COMPANY: Kioti

URL: [Kioti.com](https://www.kioti.com)

The K9 2400 Cab from Kioti comes equipped with a 24-horsepower, three-cylinder 24-horsepower and three-cylinder” with ground speeds up to 31 mph. Key features include an all-steel cargo bed with spray-in bed liner and a dump bed capacity of 1,102 lbs. The cab features speed-sensitive, electric power steering and two- or four-wheel-drive options with limited-slip front axles and mechanically actuated locking rear differential. Additionally, the K9 Series features a climate-controlled cab.



RTV520

COMPANY: Kubota

URL: [KubotaUSA.com](https://www.kubotausa.com)

Kubota's gas-powered RTV520 features a 2-cylinder Kubota liquid-cooled EFI engine that provides more than 17 horsepower and gives instant power with greater throttle control. Equipped with a variable hydrostatic transmission that provides performance on any terrain, the RTV520 offers a smooth driving experience at low speeds. The RTV520 also features dynamic braking for one-pedal operation. Kubota offers the RTV520 in both general-purpose and deluxe configurations.



BOBCAT UV34

COMPANY: Bobcat

URL: [Bobcat.com](https://www.bobcat.com)

The Bobcat UV34 features a payload capacity of 1,250 lbs., along with a towing rating of 2,500 lbs. The UV34 has selectable drive modes available with push-button controls, including a single-wheel drive that allows wheels to turn at different rpm to protect grass and other finished surfaces. Other modes are two-wheel drive, which provides power to both rear wheels and all-wheel drive for improved traction.



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HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

Looking to the future

BY BRIAN LOVE | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOCATION St. Petersburg, Fla.

COMPANY Landscapes by Randy Lee

DETAILS When Randy Lee, owner of Landscapes by Randy Lee, and his team of six subcontractors took over this waterfront property, the client had clear expectations — a modern waterfront residence with a contemporary landscape design.

“I had worked with this client for four other properties of theirs and it was a major remodel of one of their parents’ homes on the waterfront,” says Lee.

The location proved to be the biggest challenge the project presented, Lee says. Specifically, when it came to the pool installation.

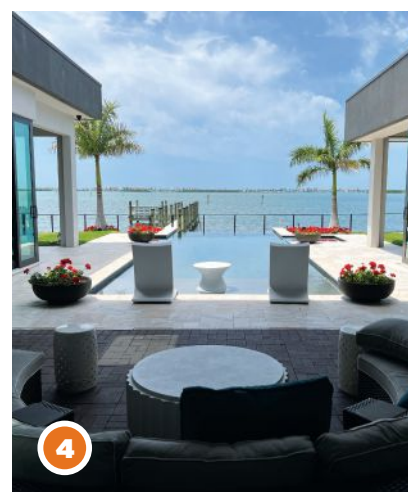
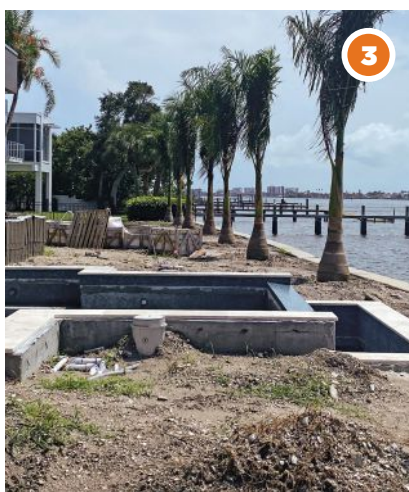
“Because we were so close to the water, the pool had to be put on pilings, which is a feat in itself,” he says. “They couldn’t keep (the pool) dry because the property only sits about six to seven feet above the sea level. I think the shell of that pool used over a hundred yards of concrete.”

The pool required the use of commercial pumps to remove excess water that came from both the ocean and several storms during construction, Lee adds. Midway through the project, Lee’s team got more room to work with as the client purchased an adjacent property.

Additional installations included over 400 seasonal monochromatic flowers and 150 LED lights along the pots and planters.

Landscapes by Randy Lee won a gold award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals’ Awards of Excellence Program for this project. 🏆

See more photos from this project at landscapeManagement.net/hardscapesolutions.



Captions | **1.** This oceanside project proved to be an extensive one, taking the Landscapes by Randy Lee team 24 months to complete the project, with 18 months of on-site time. **2.** The client had a clear vision, seeking to develop an area for future generations to enjoy. **3.** Because of the project’s location, the pool sat just seven feet above the water meaning Lee’s team had to work with extra caution. **4.** In addition to the pool installation, Lee’s team was responsible for the installation of a zoysiagrass lawn, flowers and LED lights.

PHOTOS/LANDSCAPES
BY RANDY LEE

INSTALLATION IRON

ALL YEAR ROUND
No matter the season,
maintenance for
compact track loaders is
always essential.



How to keep your CTL running all season long

Get the inside scoop on the best compact track loader maintenance practices

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

As compact track loaders (CTLs) continue to grow in popularity with design/build contractors, it's become increasingly important to know the best maintenance practices.

Lee Padgett, product manager with Takeuchi-US, shares the most important maintenance tips you need to know before investing in a CTL.

IN-SEASON MAINTENANCE

As you might expect if you have experience with other compact equipment, there's a fair bit of maintenance involved with CTLs. Padgett recommends daily maintenance checks by contractors — both before and after operation — to keep the machines running without any unexpected hiccups.

"During the spring and summer seasons, you'll likely be working in some warmer temperatures, and that calls for some extra maintenance steps," he says. "First, clean and inspect the radiator and hydraulic cooler. Additionally, remove the belly pans so you can properly clean the compact track loader's tub, and then reinstall it before operating the machine."

This area, he adds, is often packed with mud and debris, which can insulate components and prevent heat from dissipating efficiently.

Padgett says it's important to keep an eye on the operating temperatures

Continued on page 64

PHOTO: TAKEUCHI



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DESIGN BUILD + INSTALLATION

INSTALLATION IRON

Continued from page 63

of engines and hydraulic components. For contractors working in warm-weather areas, this is especially important to avoid costly repairs.

"If the operating temperatures approach the upper end of your machine's recommended range, remove the load until the machine has cooled," says Padgett. "Then, take a few moments to clean and inspect the coolers again to ensure they are clear of debris."

REGULAR MAINTENANCE MATTERS

The most common wear items on a CTL include the tracks, the undercarriage, the hydraulic system and the loader arm/bucket, according to Padgett.

The frequency that contractors should check on these items changes based on the usage of the CTL. If contractors operate in harsh conditions (i.e. extreme heat or cold), or perform a lot of high-intensity work, they'll need to check them more often.

When creating a daily maintenance schedule, Padgett recommends checking sag or tension on the CTL's tracks.

"A rubber track system that gets too loose can cause the machine to de-track," he says. "Meaning the rubber track rides off the undercarriage. Conversely, operating with the rubber tracks too tight could result in operating inefficiencies such as increased component and track wear. Track tension usually can be adjusted in just a few minutes, and taking the time to ensure your tracks are properly tensioned can serve to reduce costly downtime and headaches."


Dust and dirt are a CTL's worst enemies, Padgett adds. To combat them, he says regularly checking the undercarriage is important.

"Not regularly cleaning the CTL's belly pan will result in accumulated dirt, mud and debris around the hydrostatic pump group," Padgett says. "This inhibits the heat generated from escaping, and the excessive hydraulic temperature will impact the engine temperature."

AVOID THESE MISTAKES

There are plenty of mistakes that contractors can make with CTL maintenance, Padgett says, from shutting down the motor while it's still hot to not warming up the engine in cold weather.

But the most common mistake a contractor will make is skipping a simple daily walk-around inspection.

"A quick look at machine cleanliness, fluid levels, air filter cleanliness and more can save the operator from catastrophic equipment failures," Padgett says. "These easy checks can be the difference between a simple preventative maintenance measure and a failed engine." 

BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Top tips for renting compact equipment

Learn how to get the most out of your compact equipment renting experience

BY BRIAN LOVE
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

With the rise in the cost of goods — from groceries to seeing a movie — it's no surprise that compact equipment costs have also spiked in recent years.

Because of this, Ryan Anderson, product manager at Case Construction Equipment, says design/build contractors have been steadily gravitating toward renting.

"Equipment has been easier to source, but there is still a level of necessary planning ahead to make sure you get what you need and understand when you need it," Anderson says.

Joe Haynes, president of Little Beaver in Livingston, Texas, a manufacturer of one-man earth drilling machines, including augers, extensions, blades and points, agrees.

"For equipment you don't plan on or don't need to use every day, renting rather than buying saves money," Haynes says.

Anderson and Haynes offer their recommendations on how to navigate the compact equipment rental market and get the most bang for your buck.

WHAT TO KNOW

For Anderson, the rental experience should start with some homework, including knowing the renters in your area and figuring out which one offers



the equipment — and terms — that fit your business.

Once you locate your options, Anderson recommends looking at the location's fleet size and inventory.

"Most rental locations these days have some form of online rental and a catalog. This makes life much easier as you can look up equipment availability when you choose," he says.

From there, he says it's important to understand the renter's support offerings in case you need a fix on the job site. This, he says, is what can set one option apart from another, as most rental locations will have their equipment meticulously maintained on the lot.

"This has improved over the years with the adoption of telematics. But things happen," Anderson says. "Machines fail or break. What resources does the rental location have or offer? Are there field technicians or do you have to bring the machine back to the shop to be repaired?"

MORE TO THINK ABOUT

When you're looking to rent a piece of compact equipment, Haynes says you need to have a good understanding of how long you'll need that piece of equipment. Not only will the rental location need to be known, but it will also help you stay within budget on the project.


He adds that knowing as much as you can about the brand you are renting is an important part of the process.

"Think carefully about how you can get the most value out of the equipment you're renting," Haynes says. "Not all earth drills are made the same. Choosing which one to rent means analyzing the project you're facing."

Additionally, if the situation calls for it, he recommends renting a certain piece of equipment long-term. He says this is a great way for small businesses that looking to expand services to test out different machines and attachments. It can also allow the contractor to use the machine to knock out several projects over the term of the rental.

WHAT'S TRENDING?

Anderson says he's noticed a trend toward renting smaller compact equipment, such as mini-track loaders and small articulated loaders.

"They're light and nimble, but with enough power to bring construction-grade muscle to small jobs," Anderson says. "They're less intimidating when compared to skid steers, compact track loaders and compact wheel loaders. They also come with a high level of versatility because of a wide variety of attachments." 



Joe Haynes

EXPERTS' TIPS

TAKIN' CARE OF BUSINESS
Experts say choosing the right attachment depends on the service you're offering.



Find the right tools for the job

Experts share how choosing the right attachments can improve your design/build projects **BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR**



The equipment attachments landscape contractors use can affect all aspects of your design/build projects, including efficiency and the bottom line.

Experts from Ignite Attachments, John Deere, Case, Bobcat and Takeuchi share how to know which attachment is best for your job.

DECIDE BY SERVICE

Attachment categories to consider include grapples, augers and buckets, says Darin Gronwold, product specialist senior at Ignite Attachments. Grapples can be used for scooping, sifting, moving or ripping. Grapple types include industrial, rock, root, rake and specialty.

Augers are useful attachments, especially for professionals who offer fencing or deck installation services. Buckets help with scooping, scraping and hauling, though they don't provide as much versatility as a grapple, he adds.

"If you are mostly hauling dirt or gravel, you probably don't need a severe-duty option (bucket)," says Gronwold. "On the other hand, if demolition and debris removal are a frequent task, paying for the upgrade will provide ROI over the lifetime of the attachment."

He encourages contractors to think carefully about choosing attachments with several moving parts, like breakers since those require more maintenance.

PREP YOUR SITE

Landscape contractors should consider attachments related to clearing

and preparing the land, says Emily Pagura, product marketing manager at John Deere.

"Rock grapples and root rakes help clear large rocks, roots, root balls, brush and other debris, while leaving behind the dirt," she says. "Power rakes can efficiently clear debris, aerate soil and create a level surface to prepare the ground for seed or sod."

Rotary cutters, stump shredders and mulching heads can make quick work of larger debris, she adds. Pallet forks and buckets are efficient at moving materials and trenchers and augers are ideal for digging trenches and holes.

MATCH TO THE MACHINE

Core attachments landscape contractors should have are buckets, pallet forks and grapples, according to Ryan Anderson, product manager of subcompact equipment, and Gustav Krejcha, product marketing manager of construction equipment attachments at Case Construction Equipment.

Adding augers, trenchers and soil conditioners can diversify the job scope and size. Tools like hydraulic breakers, four-in-one buckets, brush mowers, tree spades and land planers will expand the contractor's ability to quote and win more jobs more effectively, according to Krejcha and Anderson.

Finding the proper fit and prioritizing hydraulic flow requirements and case drain capabilities are also important, according to Anderson. He stresses that contractors should be mindful of the size

and weight of the attachment to make sure it's appropriate for their equipment.

Mike Fitzgerald, marketing manager at Bobcat, adds that landscape business owners should start with the most popular attachments and grow based on their customers' needs and projects.

By keeping an attachment usage log, contractors can see where they've lost business due to not having the right attachment. Also, understanding what attachments their competitors are using may help them realize a gap in the market.

"If there's an in-demand application supported with a certain attachment, your company could become the go-to landscape business for that attachment, further growing your overall business opportunities," Fitzgerald says.

NOW AND LATER

Choosing the right attachments can make a landscape operation more efficient and productive, improve bottom lines and decrease the safety risks, says Lee Padgett, product manager for Takeuchi.

Popular options include buckets for digging and grading, grapples to move heavy materials, root rakes to pick up materials that are long or oddly shaped, soil conditioners to aid in final soil preparation, tree booms to pick up and place bushes/trees and tilt rotators to work in smaller areas.

"Don't look at that one job," Padgett says. "We encourage contractors to look at how that purchase could help them over the long run."

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.

PRODUCTS THAT WORK



PRO LANDSCAPE VERSION 25

COMPANY: Drafix Software

URL: : ProLandscape.com

Drafix Software recently released the 25th version of its Pro Landscape Design Software. Pro Landscape 25 includes 1,200 new library Items bringing the total to more than 19,000 images of plant material for all climate zones, hardscapes, light fixtures, water features and more. It also features a new 3D editor, adding tools to add both depth and perspective to CAD drawings. The editor also contains new tools for 3D decking, fencing, arbors, pergolas and more. Additionally, version 25 allows users to import and export AutoCAD drawings in the latest formats; and operates faster with using 64-bit technology to offer a faster and more secure processing experience.

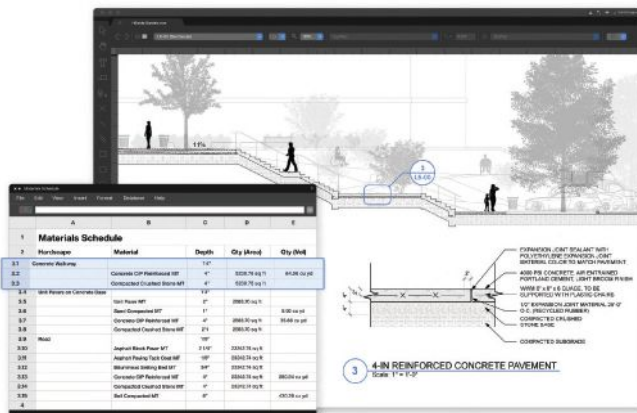


LANDMARK

COMPANY: Vectorworks

URL: [Vectorworks.net](https://www.vectorworks.net)

Vectorworks released its first update for the Vectorworks 2024 product line, including a new partnership with NCS Colour and updates designed to enhance user experience and introduce improvements to newly added tools. In collaboration with NCS Colour, the NCS+ Prointegration offers Vectorworks users access to a web app that bridges color work with desktop compatibility. With an NCS+ Pro subscription, the integration lets architects identify, define and visualize NCS color concepts in their Vectorworks projects. Users will also find improved texturing of railing, hardscape and fence objects. Additionally, landscape architects and designers now have enhanced IFC support for plants, fence and hardscape objects.



DESIGN F/X

COMPANY: Land F/X

URL: LandFX.com

Design F/X from Land F/X allows users to customize labels, layer and line colors, fonts, title blocks, plotting preferences and more. Design F/X features a detail manager that helps users work with details in CAD and file them into a single master library. The detail manager allows multiple users to access the details from every project. Users can also access their detail library in CAD search functionality and organize details how they prefer. Land F/X also offers Planting F/X and Irrigation F/X for landscape designers.

» EVERY DROP COUNTS

With a little help from my friends

Go behind the scenes of this irrigation passion project **BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

Max Moreno, director of technology and water management for Everthrive Landscape Co., says the opportunity for this project came from his relationship with Hannah Standerfer, farm manager at the Second Harvest Food Bank in Irvine, Calif.

Standerfer previously worked with Moreno as an intern at Bemus Landscape, in San Clemente, Calif., where

Moreno served as the director of water conservation for several years.

“(Second Harvest Food Bank) had some land from the (University of California) South Coast Research and Extension Center,” Moreno says. “I got together with them and a distributor to donate my time and expertise so that we can create these drip beds so that they can produce fresh vegetables (for the community.)”

Moreno says Hunter Industries and Imperial Sprinkler Supply, an irrigation distributor with locations in Southern California, aided with the project by donating materials, including a solar-powered irrigation controller from Hunter.

“Now (the food bank) is cultivating a lot of fresh vegetables on 93 raised beds throughout the property. It’s going to help a lot of these low-income

LEARNING ON THE JOB
The new raised-bed garden area — named Founders Farm — produces romaine lettuce, green butter crunch lettuce, red sails lettuce and Swiss chard.



PHOTO: SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK

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families to have nutritious food for the community,” Moreno adds.

Moreno and his team of volunteers utilized Netafim Techline drip lines and Hunter valves for the raised beds. The project utilizes both potable and recycled water supplied by the Irvine Ranch Water District.

Even with all the help, the project was not without challenges. Moreno says getting the water from the source to the beds was among the most challenging problems he and his team faced.

“It’s a really large open space, so getting the water from the point of connection from where it is street side to where these raised planter beds was a bit of challenge,” he says. “We used a bit of irrigation equations to figure out pressure and elevation changes.”

The entire process took around a month, Moreno says, with help from community volunteers — many of whom had no previous experience with drip irrigation installation.

“I had to educate the volunteers on how to do drip installation,” he says. “So not only was it an installation, but it also ended up being used as a class on how to install a drip irrigation system.”

Not only did Moreno see the installation as an opportunity to help those in need, it served as a way to potentially introduce volunteers to the idea of a career in irrigation.

“Every time we do anything with irrigation, not only do we talk about how we got our start and how it’s a potential career path,” he says. “It also helps (homeowners) to understand why it’s actually really important to pay attention to their irrigation systems. That’s always one of my driving points in any kind of situation like this.” 🇺🇸

MORENO ON THE MOVE

Max Moreno, a *Landscape Management* contributor, recently joined Everthrive Landscape Co. as director of technology and water management. Moreno previously served as vice president of water conservation for Harvest Landscape in Orange, Calif.

“Everthrive was looking for somebody to implement new ideas with, not just water management, but just anything to do with landscaping,” Moreno told *LM*. “We align very well. That’s one of the reasons why I joined, because they’re very much into water management and conservation, and they also want to implement new technology.”





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PROS' TOOLBOX

SmartCon encourages irrigation pros to go to the next level

The event brought more than 200 to Austin, Texas

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Lex Mason, president of Weathermatic, had a question for attendees of the third annual SmartCon, held last month in Austin, Texas. He wanted to know if anyone knew the exact number of working days in 2024.

"Any guesses? There are 262 working days. You invested two-and-a-half days by being here. You made an investment of 1 percent of your entire working year to be here," Mason told the audience. "One percent might not sound like a lot to some people in here. To others, 1 percent might be the difference between winning a bid and losing a bid. My challenge to you is don't leave here without capturing the value we've created."

Over those two-and-a-half days, SmartCon offered attendees a wide variety of classes to help any irrigation professional overachieve in 2024. Mark Pyrah of Peak Landscape in Hillsboro, Ore., delivered a commanding presentation on the value of standard operating procedures to the SmartCon attendees. University of Texas professor

Mike Peterson spoke to a packed room on the topic of strategic management. Other classes landed in one of two paths; executive or technical, offered in both English and Spanish.

"We bring together all of our premier partners, those landscape companies who are making water management a priority at their business," Mason told *Landscape Management*, who served as the event's exclusive media partner. "It's a big event. We bring everybody together to share best practices. This year, we've got a focus on how to focus on ourselves, on our team and how do we better our overall business."

LEADING THE CHARGE

Attendees came for a variety of reasons, but staying at the peak of their market was a common denominator.

"Technology is really leading the charge on how we advance the industry and our company, and I just want to stay on top," said Bob Grover, Pacific Landscape, headquartered in Portland, Ore. "I bring my team to this so we can learn from the providers and some of these people in here are my competition ... I'm learning from them and they're learning from us."

Grover was one of four panelists who answered questions from the audience. Moderated by Jared Rice of Weathermatic, panelists included Grover; Niwar Nasim, Nasim Landscape; Michaela Rivas, Padilla Group; Mark Howell, Ideal Landscape; and Chase Cook, SMC Landcare. Topics included increasing irrigation numbers, properly integrating SmartLink, being more efficient and what brands they prefer.



Jared Rice of Weathermatic (standing) moderated The SmartCon Q&A with Platinum Partners. Panelists included (from left to right) Niwar Nasim, Nasim Landscape; Bob Grover, Pacific Landscape; Mark Howell, Ideal Landscape; Michaela Rivas, Padilla Group; and Chase Cook, SMC Landcare.

KEEPING UP WITH THE TRENDS

It wasn't all work at SmartCon. Attendees were bused from the AT&T Conference Center to Austin live music venue Stubb's for a barbecue dinner followed by a concert by country music performer Coffey Anderson.

Mason says he was thrilled with the results of SmartCon 2024 and added that it keeps growing. He said it's vital for Weathermatic, and for his customers, to keep adapting and staying on the cutting edge of the industry, something Weathermatic has been doing since the 1940s.

"If you look at the timetable of Weathermatic back to 1945? We started as a landscaping company. Then we started milling and CNC, brass and metal, then we got into plastic manufacturing, plastic-injection molding, then there was technology ... it's a sprint," Mason says. "A lot of businesses don't last that long in general. It is a constant evolution. If you don't have your finger on the pulse of the industry, you can get left behind. It is a full-time job-and-a-half, keeping up with the trends and trying to figure out where it is going so we can be there when it lands." 🗣️



Lex Mason, president of Weathermatic, welcomes the group to SmartCon 2024 and encourages them to get a "Texas-sized" boost to their company.

BUSINESS BOOSTERS

It's time for a spring wakeup call

Pros offer invaluable tips to prepare your irrigation maintenance and service operation for a successful and profitable spring

BY MIKE ZAWACKI | CONTRIBUTOR

As spring arrives, professional landscape contractors with irrigation expertise transition into high gear.

Experts provide some essential steps to ensure your irrigation maintenance and service operations are ready to flourish.

PREP YOURSELF

Before embarking on spring duties, irrigation pros recommend performing preventive maintenance on all service vehicles and equipment, including backflow testers, pressure gauges and leak detection tools.

Strip down each crew vehicle and conduct a thorough inventory of tools and parts, says John Castanoli, owner of Central Lawn Sprinklers, an irrigation engineering, installation and maintenance firm based in Elk Grove, Ill.

"Screwdrivers and channel locks are the tools we find are misplaced at some point and often need replacing," Castanoli says. "Review your client and service histories to learn what parts are used most frequently and equip your crews so they leave fully equipped and don't waste time having to return or head to (an irrigation supply) store during the day to restock."

In addition to parts, Castanoli's detailed client histories reflect how long it takes to get a client's irrigation system out of hibernation and functioning.

"You want to avoid overburdening your techs," he says. "So, just like outfitting (crews) with the right parts and tools, you need to get them the information and data they need to make the right decisions effectively and efficiently."

TRAINING

While irrigation pros say training should be an ongoing task, they recommend spring as the ideal time to ensure certifications are current and crews are briefed on new technology and best practices.

"Get crews up to date on current trends and topics as they relate to troubleshooting (system issues), wiring and hydraulics," says Steve Smith, owner of Smitty's Sprinklers, an irrigation retail, service and installation company based in Centennial, Colo. "Anything we can do to prepare our guys and make their jobs easier, we'll line up for them." Pros encourage contractors to prioritize safety training, including reviewing the protocols for working with water and electricity and procedures for properly managing handheld tools and operating heavy equipment.

COMMUNICATION

Scheduling spring service can often be the initial communication irrigation contractors have with clients in the new year. Smith suggests structuring your calendars to optimize the amount of stops made within a particular geographic market or neighborhood.

"We give clients two or three dates for when we'll be in the area and have them schedule our visit around those dates," he says.


Spring service is an opportune time to check for system leaks and clogs and to identify broken heads and malfunctioning valves. It's also advisable to learn what a client's wishes or expectations are for their irrigation system this year, says Daniel Martinez, a technical service and training manager at Rivulis North America, owned by Temasek and Jain Irrigation.

"The property owner may only be concerned with their landscape getting watered, and that's fine," Martinez says. "But you also might find out that it's important for them to lower their water bills this year and are open to retrofits that will (accomplish) this."

In addition to making appointments and gauging expectations, it's essential to alert clients that crews will be on the property to service systems.

ADDING SERVICES

Smith prefers not to spring additional service offerings on clients during his preseason communications. Instead, during the winter, he takes comprehensive notes about potential system failures, as well as areas for upgrades that will improve functionality and includes the pricing.

"When we connect to schedule spring services, we go over those options again and (inquire) if the clients also want to schedule those repairs or upgrades," Smith says. 

Mike Zawacki is a Cleveland-based writer who has covered the landscape and irrigation industries for the last 20 years.



John Castanoli



Daniel Martinez



Steve Smith

FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cole Weller

CEO

WELLER BROTHERS LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONALS
SIOUX FALLS, S.D.

1 What should I know about Weller Brothers Landscape Professionals?

We're in our 23rd year of business. We're kind of the all-American entrepreneur story. My brother and I started cutting grass when we were in high school, we're just the ones who never quit. We've got three branches — our home base, Sioux Falls, S.D., and then we've got a branch location in Rochester, Minn., and another branch location in Des Moines, Iowa. The other thing I'd say about Weller Brothers is we're a good place to work. We've got high standards for all of our team. Our internal quality standards for the work we do are high and we're the best in the markets that we serve.

2 Your company recently landed on *Inc.* magazine's list of fastest-growing companies. What's the secret to your success?

The answer is kind of funny. The construction industry, I would say as a whole, is not known as the most savory industry. Our secret is really simple: We do the fundamentals really well. We answer the phone. We call people back. We tell people the truth. We deliver difficult news face-to-face. That's it. We show up for our team. I think it's one thing when you've got team members that show up for their manager. That's good, right? Show up because if you don't, you'll get in trouble. But it is a whole other thing to show up for the guy working next to you. And when you can achieve that level of accountability, I think that's the difference between good and great organizations.

3 Do you have a family?

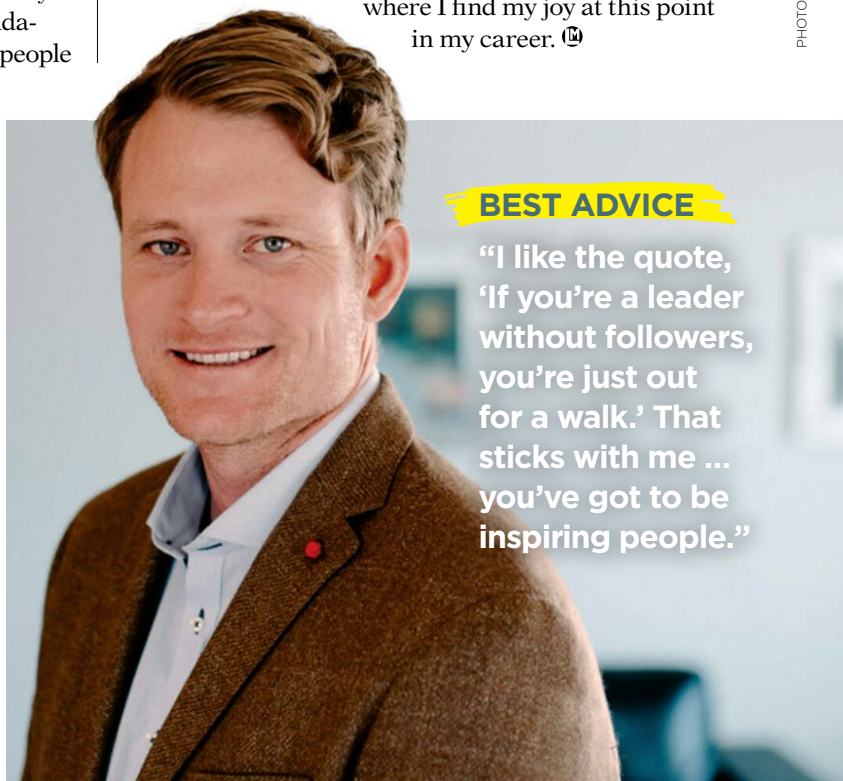
I do have a family; I've got a wife and we've got our 10-year anniversary coming up in September. We've got three kids: a 10-year-old, a 7-year-old and a 4-year-old turning 5 in May. Girl, girl, boy. I'm in the weeds, busy every day running girls to dance class and my son's going to start soccer and flag football this summer. I'm excited for that. You like to think that you're running them out of energy, but it doesn't work that way.

4 What's it like working alongside your brother Brent?

We never disagree on anything. We get along every day. (Laughs.) OK, I'll tell you what, we're 23 years in and we're still together and we've only come to blows one time. And it depends on who you asked how that went. If you ask me, I had him pinned up against a wall and if you ask him, maybe there's a little disparity in his version! Overall, it's good. We have our disagreements. We get along almost all the time. We've got a great CFO who is not an owner but has done a good job moderating our disagreements and getting us to a resolution on the things that we tend to not align on. I'm thankful for that.

5 What's the best part of having your job?

My team members, like Cally (Anderson), who is sitting here next to me to make sure I don't sound like a total idiot! And she's not the only one — it takes an army to keep me in line. We've got a good team here; there are a whole bunch of people who come to work every day and work their tails off for us. That's inspiring. We've got guys here who started on a lawn mower and now they're managing a division of 40, 50 people. We're giving people opportunities every day to improve their careers and do better for their families. That's where I find my joy at this point in my career. 🙌



BEST ADVICE

"I like the quote, 'If you're a leader without followers, you're just out for a walk.' That sticks with me ... you've got to be inspiring people."

PHOTO: COREY GROSS PHOTO

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The Holy Grail of scalability

Our Equip Expo panelists examine how you can successfully scale your business

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

What does it take for a company to keep its momentum during a growth period?

That's what Ken Thomas and Ben Gandy sought to answer during the *Landscape Management* education session "Scaling for Success: Strategies for Growing Your Landscaping Business" at the 2023 Equip Exposition in Louisville, Ky.

"We come to conferences like this and we're looking for the silver bullet. We're all searching for the Holy Grail of scalability," Thomas told attendees. "So as Ben and I have pursued that, we've found that there's a predictable growth pattern for businesses."

That growth pattern steps are:

- Growth mode;
- Adolescence; and
- Maturity.

HELP US CREATE MORE CLASSES FOR EQUIP 2024!

Landscape Management returns this year as the official magazine partner of Equip Expo. We will again be offering a full slate of classes for attendees. Do you have a great idea for a session you wish you could attend if only someone would offer it? Now is your chance — send your ideas for consideration for future Equip Expo educational seminars to LM Editor-in-Chief Seth Jones at sjones@northcoastmedia.net.

Growth

The growth phase of your business will move quickly, according to Thomas and Gandy. After a while, you'll need to start scaling your business to increased demand, opening you up to potential pitfalls.

"When you start your business, there's only so much gas that one person can produce. As you prove yourself, you start handing off those duties to other people," said Thomas. "There might not be a real process, which works okay at first. But then you get better and (experience) more revenue, volume and more problems."

At that point, it's time to stop, collect yourself and then start to build systems, processes and accountabilities.

Adolescence

In a company's adolescence, owners will face plenty of challenges, including problems with cash flow, profitability and personal issues that arise as a result of the rapid growth. Once that growth slows and your business starts to level out, moving past the adolescent phase can be difficult according to Thomas and Gandy.

"We've worked with businesses that have been stuck in an adolescent phase for 20 years," Gandy said. "Not understanding how to advance your business is something we can all relate to. We've all been there and know what that feels like."



"IN BUSINESS, YOU CAN'T JUST WAIT TO MATURE WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME. YOU HAVE TO MAKE BUSINESSES GROW UP."

Ben Gandy

Gandy told attendees their business doesn't have to be stuck in its adolescence for decades. Overcoming adolescence comes down to how quickly and efficiently they face growth issues head-on.


"In business, you can't just wait to mature with the passage of time. You have to make businesses grow up," he said. "It takes the attention of owners, leaders and managers to get businesses to grow to that next stage."

Breaking through

Reaching what Gandy and Thomas refer to as maturity is the end goal for any landscaping business.

What does it take to get to that stage? It starts with discipline and perseverance, Thomas said.

"You have to take the time out away from (your busy schedule) to write your SOPs, train your team, make people comply, police it

and then stick to it," Thomas told attendees. "It's (the reason why) people fail their diets or their exercise programs; it takes discipline and perseverance. It takes courage to make big changes to the processes in your business." 



Ken Thomas

#52

BLAND LANDSCAPING STAYS TRUE TO ITS ROOTS

The N.C. company attributes its growth to acquisitions, software and a dedicated team

BY LAUREN DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

No matter how many companies it acquires, Bland Landscaping continues to put landscaping and its people first, says Kurt Bland, president and CEO of the Apex, N.C.-based company. Bland Landscaping also has branches in Wilmington, Garner, Greensboro, Charlotte, Durham and Wake Forest.

The company offers landscape maintenance, enhancements, snow and ice removal, design/build and irrigation services to commercial properties and also have a few legacy estate and residential clients.

Bland Landscaping was No. 52 on the 2023 *LM150* list, which ranks the top revenue-generating landscaping companies in the country. The company experienced a 28-percent change in revenue from 2021 to 2022, with about 20 percent of that growth coming from acquisitions, Bland says. The company gained private equity backing in December 2017.

In November 2022, the company acquired The Byrd's Group, which became its East Charlotte branch.

"They were a very highly respected company with more than four decades of market history as an industry leader in Charlotte," Bland says.



Building off five acquisitions in 2023, Bland Landscaping recently added Cameron's Inc. of Indian Trail, N.C., to kick off 2024.



Kurt Bland

Then in December 2022, Bland Landscaping acquired Mutch Landscaping in Apex, N.C., a few miles down the road from its home office. The Mutch team integrated into the company, and Bland turned the Mutch office into the new corporate headquarters and construction branch.

"Both of these were accretive and synergistic acquisitions that expanded our market share, secured needed talent and gave us excellent facility expansion options," Bland says. "Their staff have largely stayed onboard with us and have been successful in our model. We knew what we were buying and who we were buying it from."

The company closed its fifth acquisition in December.

"Accretive acquisitions accelerate our growth in new markets and maturing markets by gaining market share and securing talent," he says. "It also allows us to flex the strength of our balance sheet and our capital structure."


While integrating is never easy, Bland says it's rewarding for those who enjoy strategy and execution. The process includes merging cultures, implementing new systems and communicating messaging to get individual buy-in.

"We don't leave room for anyone to question our objectives, and we work hard to show how opportunities are created through acquisitions and organic growth," he says.

In addition to acquisitions, Bland also attributes its growth to the company's ability to invest in roles that support daily operations and production at the branch level.

"We have built out a sales team, added regional recruiters, invested in more designers, promoted from within and continued to build out our entire business model as a middle-market company," Bland says.

Using technology like Go iLawn, SilkRoad human resource management, IntelliShift GPS, Boss LM, Pipe-drive and other software has helped the company grow.

"The No. 1 thing that will determine our success or failure is and always will be people," Bland says. "I'm not one who is enamored by finance or technology as primary drivers of business. Both are important, but we are in the people business. That's the lifeblood of this organization." 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.

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 JEFFREY SCOTT

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

Why accountability is the key to stellar results

It's going to be a great year — I can feel it. But only for the companies that have created an accountable organization.

There are five key types of accountability that any organization must master to be on top of its game. I spoke about these, and more, at my client-exclusive event, The Executive Retreat, that we held in January in New Orleans.

Here are some critical takeaways from that talk that you can implement now.

KPI ACCOUNTABILITY

Greatness starts by knowing your deliverables and being accountable to them. Each leader — and each division — need absolute clarity on which Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) they need to achieve.

To stay on top of your KPIs, make them part of your daily, weekly and monthly accountability meeting rhythms. A great example of who does this well is Jerry Schill, owner of Schill Grounds Management in North Ridgeville, Ohio.

He lives and breathes one sheet of KPIs — it drives his weekly activities. For those of you doing quarterly strategic planning, KPI accountability can also include the quarterly rocks each leader has committed to. A quarterly review of each leader will keep them and your company on track.

Schill Grounds Management ranked No. 27

on the 2023 *LM150* list with a revenue of \$92,500,000.

PEER-TO-PEER ACCOUNTABILITY

An accountability agreement between the key managers and leaders will help ensure that everyone is supporting each other to fulfill their roles accurately and timely. Ironically, peer-to-peer accountability is as much about following your systems as it is about how you interact with one another.

A recurring (weekly) team review of your systems (i.e. accountability to your systems) will keep everyone on track.

TEAM ACCOUNTABILITY

All for one and one for all. No company has ever achieved greatness without having team gusto. This requires the leader of your company to push teamwork above all else and to keep this value front and center.

Ted Lucia, owner of Lucia Landscaping in Roseville, Mich., does an excellent job of this with his “One Team” value system. Everyone on his team bleeds this core value, but team spirit is not enough by itself.

It takes the company leader to set a compelling vision and stretch goals. Without a meaningful stretch goal of some kind, people get comfortable and become less accountable.

SELF-ACCOUNTABILITY

It's hard to teach self-accountability but it can be reinforced. I recommend following my “APLOMB” model for hiring, promoting and training employees to be accountable.


- Action-oriented
- Personal goals
- Learning mistakes
- Ownership
- Management of time
- Balance

BUILD A SUPER LEADERSHIP TEAM

A super leadership team thrives by staying accountable to each other, their KPIs and their systems.

But they are supercharged with the following secret ingredient: your leadership must commit to candor with total openness and honesty in discussions of your company's strategy, goals, issues and performance.

If your team can achieve this high level of open dialogue, you are sure to have a stellar year. And remember, be hard on the process and the rest will come easier.

Editor's Note: Jeffrey Scott is starting a new high-impact Leaders' Edge peer group for landscape business owners called The Empire Group. For details, go to jeffreyscott.biz/peergroup. 





BY BOB MANN

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

Save the Date: Give a little back for everything that's been given to you

If you've never participated in the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Renewal and Remembrance (R&R) event, make it part of your Green Industry Bucket List. (Did you realize you needed a Green Industry Bucket List? You do now!)

This annual volunteer effort began with one of NALP's legacy associations, the Professional Lawn Care Association of America, at Arlington National Cemetery spreading pelletized limestone. Everything was donated — labor, equipment and materials.

For nearly 30 years, we succeeded in raising the pH of the soil at the cemetery to the point where we didn't have to apply quite as much lime, so we branched out into aeration, irrigation, hardscape installation, tree work and other things that I'm sure I have forgotten about.

Now, we've taken on new projects. Have you ever heard of the

“Arlington is an incredibly special place. As a student of American history, I can get lost walking amongst the endless tombstones and recognizing names of prominent military heroes, politicians and even the boxer Joe Louis.”

Congressional Cemetery? Apparently, given the condition of the property, not too many people had. NALP stepped in to provide a tremendous amount of work, starting with heavy pruning of some very overgrown trees.

Arlington is an incredibly special place. As a student of American history, I can get lost walking among the endless tombstones and recognizing names of prominent military heroes, politicians and even the boxer Joe Louis. A few years back, I was assigned to aeration duty. Upon arriving at my area, I noticed that the top of the hill was curiously absent of the carefully arranged grave markers, except for three lonesome tombstones.

I walked over to see who was buried there and found it to be John Pershing, the highest-ranking soldier in American history. Along with George Washington, Pershing is the only person to hold the rank of General of the Armies. Buried with him were his son and his grandson, who was killed in action in Vietnam.

Many yards away, the endless tombstones begin yet again. But in the case of General

Pershing, he is surrounded by soldiers who served under him and were killed in the First World War.

In years past, the application of lime would take place during the morning to avoid working in the stifling heat and humidity, which, by the way, never worked because Washington D.C. is always hot and humid in July.

After a few hours, many acres and many trailer-loads of lime, we'd all head back to the hotel, jump in the shower and put on suits and ties to attend the second half of the event, Legislative Day on the Hill.

We have since decoupled R&R from Legislative Day on the Hill as a strategic move since there aren't many Senators or Representatives in town during July. Instead, we organize issue-specific fly-in events.

For instance, NALP has hosted numerous fly-in events in support of the H-2B temporary guest worker visa program as well as a fly-in in support of the Farm Bill.

This year's Renewal & Remembrance event will be held at the Arlington National Cemetery and the Washington Monument on July 15, 2024. Because this event is so popular, it fills up quickly, so make sure you visit our website (www.landscapeprofessionals.org/RR) to be put on the mailing list. That way, you'll know when it opens for registration. See you there! 📍

PHOTO: LM STAFF



The Renewal and Remembrance event is a favorite, not only for Bob Mann, but for LM Staff members who have participated over the last several years.



BY PHIL HARWOOD

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

Is your bench empty?

You know spring is around the corner when baseball season is upon us. Like most sports, the success of a baseball team largely depends on the strength of its bench, because there will be a need for players to come off the bench and fill in.

Our businesses are no different. If our bench is empty, we're in big trouble if we have to replace a starter. But what steps can we take to build a bench in our businesses?

The first step is to update your organizational chart with bench positions incorporated.

Keep it simple, by only showing direct reporting relationships, not indirect reporting relationships. If I work for you, who is my boss? Show me that on a chart so I can see how the company I work for is structured.

For businesses running on EOS, there is a tool called an accountability chart. This tool is like an org chart but also includes major accountabilities for each person. I'm not against this tool, but it can overcomplicate things. I would prefer to outline accountabilities in a separate document for a variety of reasons. Keep the org chart clean with direct reporting relationships and nothing else.

Now, we need to add our bench positions. In our industry, there are two that stand out to me as essential: Crew Leader in Training and Operations Manager in Training.

Let's start with discussing the Crew Leader in Training bench position.

CREW LEADER IN TRAINING

We need to have some good bench strength here so that when a crew leader position opens up, there is a capable person ready to take their spot. If we don't have a bench for

crew leaders, what happens? Managers have to fill the holes and that is never ideal.

A Crew Leader in Training is in development, which means we need to develop these up-and-coming leaders. We need to give them some responsibility that a regular crew member doesn't have.

“If our bench is empty, we're in big trouble if we have to replace a starter.”

For example, let them drive the truck and trailer under the watchful eye of the crew leader. Let them give out some job instructions to the crew so they can get over the awkward feeling of doing that.

What title should we use for this person? Some options include Senior Crew Member or Assistant Crew Leader. Regardless, the more important idea is to make this a designated position on your org chart and check that these positions are staffed.

OPERATIONS MANAGER IN TRAINING

The second critical bench position is Operations Manager in Training. These bench players are senior crew leaders who have the desire and ability to be promoted into management. Many of the same rules apply. We need to develop these people by exposing them to tasks that managers perform.

Here, there are many options for giving our Operations Manager in Training experience with management responsibilities:

- Speaking at morning huddles
- Training new employees
- Taking the lead with equipment maintenance scheduling

The Operations Manager in Training may be more of a crew leader or more of a manager, depending on your needs and budget. The transition from the field into management may be in incremental steps. Maybe you start with 80 percent in the field and 20 percent in management, then move to 60/40, then to 40/60, 20/80, and eventually to 100 percent.

What title should we use for this person? Some options include Senior Crew Leader, Crew Leader III, Assistant Operations Manager or Field Supervisor. Regardless, just as we said with the Crew Leader in Training, the more important idea is to make this a designated position on your org chart and ensure that these positions are staffed.

The nice thing about having a solid bench is that you know these people. And they know your jobs, clients and processes. You know their strengths, weaknesses and what they bring to the table.

Jack Welch, retired CEO of General Electric, famously said that GE spent more than \$10,000 on every new hire to make sure they passed the pre-employment screening tests and interviews.

Despite this, the H.R. managers could never predict which of the new hires would no longer be employed in a year, which would be marginal and which would be great. This means that if you're hiring from outside, there's a 33 percent likelihood that you'll need to hire three people to get one great person — that's an expensive, time-consuming and risky proposition.

How about we build a bench instead?

Now go forth. 🍀

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RESOURCES

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GROW WITH GRUNDER

BY MARTY GRUNDER

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



Nothing happens if you do nothing

I often say, “When you do nothing, what happens? Nothing.” But sometimes, doing nothing is something that sneaks up on you. You mean to make progress, but before you know it, a year has passed and nothing’s changed.

We have found, after 30 years of working with the owners and leaders of landscaping companies, that doing nothing is the number one barrier to companies’ success.

Every business has four pillars that they rest the success of their business on; platform, people, process and profit. This is the foundation of what we teach at The Grow Group and you must have all four in good order to succeed.

Here’s a quick overview of what we believe is the recipe to success:

- **Platform:** a vision, mission and core values that are clearly defined and lived within the company’s daily operation.
- **People:** a team and a strategy for investing in them.
- **Process:** systems that enable companies to replicate their successes.
- **Profits:** the natural byproduct of doing platform, people and process well. Profits are needed to grow, to give back to the communities that support us, and to invest and compensate our teams fairly.

The foundation for successful companies is really quite simple to understand. The implementation, however, can be hard. Sometimes, it seems impossible. For me, the greatest source of inspiration has always come from observing, visit-

“It makes me question what I’m doing in a good way. I often leave JT and CFO Christianna Denelsbeck wondering, ‘Why couldn’t we do it that way?’”

ing or reading about other successful companies. I have learned a ton from the 175 companies that are in our ACE Peer Group Program, and from other entrepreneurs who are doing great things in other industries, too.

I’ve found ideas from a local grocery store chain in my hometown. I’ve toured a UPS facility and I got to see into the kitchen at one of my favorite restaurants near where I like to vacation in Florida. I’ve taken away ideas on marketing, branding, systems and more from all of these places. There are ideas literally everywhere, but I also have to say that the greatest success stories come from people who spend equal time gathering ideas as they do implementing them.

My friend JT Price runs the wildly successful Landscape Workshop headquartered in Birmingham, Ala. The company operates in 20 cities with sales of more than \$130M. They’ve grown rapidly in just 10 years with a business model that’s very different from what I’ve done at Grunder Landscaping Co., and I’ve learned so much from the way they approach their work.

It makes me question what I’m doing in a good way. I often leave conversations with JT and CFO Christianna Denelsbeck wondering,

“Why couldn’t we do it that way?” They make me think and that’s a good thing.

Another company I’m looking forward to learning from in 2024 will be Sebert Landscaping in Chicago. They’ve built a company model that centers sustainability as part of their platform. Once again, I find myself asking, “Why couldn’t we do it that way?” If we better marketed the sustainable practices we are already using in our business, could it become a reason that new clients choose to work with us?

So often, as landscape pros, we get so weighed down by the day-to-day that we accidentally end up putting off the work we need to do to get better or grow to the next level. Sometimes, it just takes some inspiration to break through that barrier, which is why The Grow Group partnered up with NALP to offer our annual field trip event.

This year, we’re excited to double the fun with TWO field trips — Landscape Workshop, June 11-12, and Sebert Landscaping, Sept. 17-18 — make plans now to join us at one or both. You’ll find plenty of inspiration to keep you from doing nothing in 2024. To get more information, visit: www.growgroupinc.com/nalp-field-trip. 📍

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