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what makes these standout
companies tick

August 2025 VOL 64, ISSUE 8
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Celebrating employee innovation

Ask any exec at a landscape or lawn care company, and they'll tell you that their employees are the key to their company's success. Now is the time to recognize those employees and the key role they play in the industry.

If you have an employee who has exhibited notable innovation or excellence that has made a positive impact on your business, we want to hear about them. Contact Editor-in-Chief Scott Hollister (shollister@northcoastmedia.net) and Editorial Director Seth Jones (sjones@northcoastmedia.net) for a chance to be featured in the November issue of LM!

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SCOTT HOLLISTER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Contact Hollister at 785-424-0932
or shollister@northcoastmedia.net.



Trading FaceTime for face time

As someone with a remote work setup, I'm fully cognizant of the dissonance between my professional set-up and the people and industry that we write about in the pages of *Landscape Management*.

It's pretty hard to mow grass, lay mulch in a landscape bed or install a stunning new hardscape from behind a desk. It turns out, though, that you can produce content about mowing grass, laying mulch and installing hardscapes from pretty much anywhere, whether that's my home office in the suburbs of Kansas City or at our company's corporate headquarters in Cleveland.

Despite my current circumstances, I've always been a firm believer in the power of personal connections. Personally, there's a restorative aspect to that; getting out and about is a great mental-health reset and a way to get a break from staring at the same four walls every day.

There are obvious professional benefits, too. Getting to travel and attend industry events is a great reminder of why we do the things we do and a way to reconnect with the folks who consume and support this publication.

I assume something similar holds true for landscape contractors and lawn care operators. I don't imagine many of you got into this business to pore over spreadsheets or fret over personnel matters — the mundane day-to-day part of running a business. My guess is you welcome any chance to get your hands dirty on a jobsite or to travel to an industry event so you can trade tips with your industry colleagues.

Thankfully, my recent schedule

“Getting the chance to travel ... is a great reminder of why we do the things we do and a way to reconnect with the folks who consume and support this publication.”

gave me two noteworthy opportunities to shed the home office for a few days and recharge the batteries with landscape pros and industry suppliers alike. The first of those was a trip to Park City, Utah, for the 2025 edition of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute's (OPEI) Annual Meeting.

As you likely know, OPEI is the association that owns and operates Equip Exposition. *LM* is OPEI's official media partner, and we work with them to present educational sessions during the annual event (you can learn more about what we have planned for this year's event, Oct. 21-24 in Louisville, right here: landscapemanagement.net/lm-education-returns-to-equip-exposition-2025-2). And that partnership earns us an invite to their annual meeting to spend quality time with OPEI execs and equipment manufacturers from all corners of the industry.

We have a handshake agreement with OPEI that the things we see, hear and discuss at the meeting are off the record, but I don't think they'll mind me saying that this year's event in Park City was one to remember. From a host of engaging keynote speakers and relevant industry updates to memorable

networking events and lots of bad golf (at least in my group!), there was plenty to get this homebody fired up.

My second recent expedition into the real world was to Washington, D.C., for the 29th Renewal and Remembrance service project organized by the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP). While this was my first time at R&R, it wasn't my first time taking part in a volunteer service project in our nation's capital; in my previous professional life in golf maintenance, I took part in several similar events sprucing up the National Mall as a part of National Golf Day.

This trip to D.C. had a similar impact on me. I was left impressed and moved by the level of dedication and commitment of the more than 400 landscape professionals who helped with various projects at Arlington National Cemetery and the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial. This is an industry that cares, that gives back to others (check out our Time for Some Good News feature on page 12 of this issue and in every issue of *LM* for more similar stories), and in this day and age, that ain't nothing.

There are certainly days when I'm thankful to be home, to be grinding away in my home office, and I know my dog, Porter, is certainly appreciative of those days. But trips like the ones to the OPEI Annual Meeting and NALP's Renewal and Remembrance are great reminders of how powerful personal connections can be and just how much good they can do for body, mind and spirit. 🐾

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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 role does technology play in how you interact with or market to clients?

“Technology helps us build trust at scale — from AI mapping and digital proposals to GPS tracking and automated outreach. It’s not just efficient; it sets us apart.”



Landscape Professionals

Bryan Christiansen
Mariani Premier Group
Lake Bluff, Ill.

Troy Clogg
Troy Clogg Landscape Associates
Wixom, Mich.

Pam Dooley
Plants Creative Landscapes
Decatur, Ga.

Paul Fraynd
Sun Valley Landscaping
Omaha, Neb.

Mike Giese
Perfecturf Lawn care
Mt. Pleasant, Wisc.

Chris Joyce
Joyce Landscaping
Cape Cod, Mass.

Jerry McKay
McKay Landscape Lighting
Omaha, Neb.

Max Moreno
Everthrive Landscape
Riverside, Calif.

Bryan Stolz
Winterberry Landscape
& Garden Center
Southington, Conn.

Justin White
K&D Landscaping
Watsonville, Calif.

“Technology plays a key role in tracking our communication and increasing the speed at which we respond. We utilize Aspire to ensure we track and measure how long it takes us to respond to client inquiries and leads. In today’s market, speed to lead is a critical metric for closing more deals.”



“Technology allows me to lead better. I can see and learn a lot without asking anyone. Facts don’t lie, and the way information is processed today makes running a business very objective. I know what to do more of and what to do less of, and people get more done with less, which reduces burnout and improves profitability.”



Industry Consultants

Tito Caceres
Bloom Talent Solutions
Coral Gables, Fla.

Marty Grunder
The Grow Group
Dayton, Ohio

Phil Harwood
Tamarisk Business Advisors
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Jeffrey Scott
Jeffrey Scott Consulting
New Orleans, La.

“We’ve seen some of our higher-tech marketing channels steadily become oversaturated, leading to an abundance of noise for prospective clients and increasing customer acquisition costs. To differentiate, we are shifting more of our budget from digital spending to time investments in more traditional relationship building.”



“At Bloom Talent Solutions, we’ve seen our (technology) ... personalize touchpoints at scale, automate follow-ups, surface real-time hiring dashboards and send weekly updates to keep clients informed without the need for endless meetings.”



“‘High tech, high touch’ is the name of the game. Technology is used for both marketing to clients and screening them, but high touch is required to pull them in, sign them up and onboard them, all supported by technology, of course.”



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

LM GALLERY

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

1 Mountain meetup LM got an exclusive invite to join our friends at the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) for their annual meeting in Park City, Utah, where LM's Bill Roddy caught up with Kristina Cerniglia, Briggs and Stratton CEO.

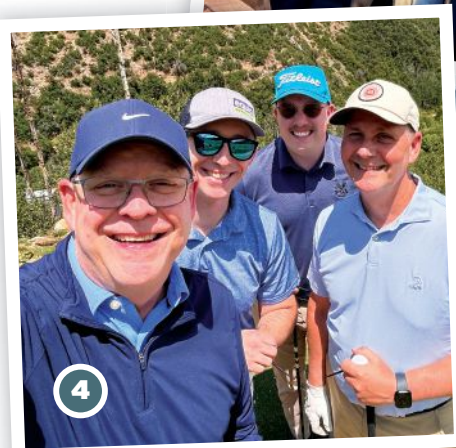
2 Equipped for success With Equip Exposition 2025 on the horizon, LM's Scott Hollister (second from left) and Roddy connected with Cleo Battle (left), Louisville Tourism CEO; Karen Williams (center), OPEI's director, partnership and development; and Kris Kiser (right), OPEI president and CEO.

3 Photo op Allie Filley (center) is an official Friend of LM who has served as the long-time photographer for OPEI and Equip Expo, so Hollister and Roddy had to take the opportunity to turn the camera on him for a change.

4 Fore! During the OPEI Louisville Golf Classic at the annual meeting, Hollister (left) and Roddy teamed up with Chuck Bowen (second from left), OPEI's vice president of communications, and Evan Cox (second from right), OPEI's director, marketing. A good time was had by all, but let's just say Scottie Scheffler has nothing to worry about.

5 King of the hill Mike Newland (right), the director of agriculture business development for the Propane Education and Research Council, talked about propane's role in landscaping with LM's Roddy at the OPEI Annual Meeting.

6 What a way to go Just days before his official retirement, Roddy and Hollister shared a celebratory conversation with David Thorne (center), OPEI's board chairman and, at that time, vice president, turf and compact utility business unit for Deere and Co.



Landscape industry gives back at Renewal & Remembrance

Service projects at Arlington National Cemetery and FDR Memorial highlight efforts at NALP's 29th annual event

BY LM STAFF

The 29th edition of the National Association of Landscape Professionals' (NALP) annual Renewal and Remembrance service event came to Washington, D.C., in July, with more than 400 landscape and lawn care professionals from around the country volunteer-

ing on projects at Arlington National Cemetery and the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial.

The landscape industry's largest day of service, volunteers for Renewal and Remembrance donate their time, expertise and equipment to honor America's veterans and public servants.

This year, teams tackled projects such as pruning cherry trees, stump removal and mulching at the FDR Memorial and applying lime, planting flowers and hardscape improvements at Arlington.

Volunteers at the FDR Memorial spread over 200 cubic yards of mulch during Renewal and Remembrance 2025.



"Renewal and Remembrance is a powerful example of our industry's deep commitment to community, country and stewardship," said Britt Wood, NALP CEO. "It's humbling to see so many professionals come together to care for sacred spaces that honor our nation's heroes."

This year's event included a children's program at Arlington National Cemetery designed to educate and engage the next generation in environmental stewardship and civic service.

The event receives support, equipment and materials from a host of NALP partners, including title sponsor Stanley Black and Decker, with significant assistance from NALP's additional Elite Partners Aspire Software, Caterpillar and Stihl.

Renewal and Remembrance also receives support from Gold Partners Carter Machinery, Hunter Industries, John Deere, SiteOne Landscape Supply and Silver Partners Envu, Ewing Outdoor Supply, Greenworks Commercial, RealGreen by WorkWave and The Toro Co. 📍

REAL MADRID PARTNERS WITH KRESS, WORX

Positec, the parent company of Kress and Worx, has entered into a strategic partnership with soccer club Real Madrid to prioritize sustainable groundskeeping at the club's properties.

The collaboration will see Real Madrid transition to battery-powered, satellite-guided robotic mowers and handheld equipment from Kress for turf maintenance at Ciudad Real Madrid, the club's training complex. Kress' robotic mowers, already in use at championship golf courses and historic sites, are

expected to deliver consistent turf quality while eliminating operational emissions, the company says.

This partnership is part of Real Madrid's broader sustainability strategy, which includes eco-efficient stadium renovations, electric mobility initiatives and environmental education programs.

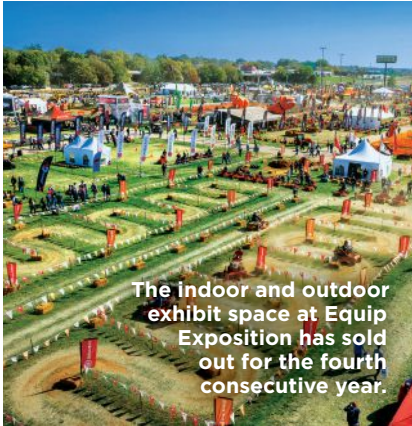
"This is more than a sponsorship," said Don Gao, CEO at Kress/Worx. "It's a declaration of intent — to lead with excellence, to innovate responsibly and to raise the global standard of sustainable lawn care."



Don Gao (right), Kress/Worx CEO, with Real Madrid legend Emilio Butragueño.

PHOTOS: LM STAFF; KRESS

Equip Expo exhibit space sells out



The indoor and outdoor exhibit space at Equip Exposition has sold out for the fourth consecutive year.

For a fourth year in a row, there's no room at the inn at Equip Exposition 2025.

During the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute's (OPEI) Annual Meeting in Park City, Utah, in late June, the organization that owns and manages Equip Expo said that available exhibit space at the Kentucky Exposition Center had sold out for the event, set for Oct. 21-24.

"We have 1.2 million square feet of exhibit space, including the Outdoor Demo Yard. Every inch of the Kentucky Exposition Center that can be used for exhibit space this year has been sold, as of mid-June 2025," said Kris Kiser, president and CEO of OPEI. "That translates to thousands of products and services that can help landscapers, contractors and dealers expand and better their business."

In 2024, the trade show sold its last booth in August, and in 2023, the last slot was sold in early October, a few weeks before the show opened.

Kiser noted that due to high demand to participate in the show, Equip staff worked with KEC officials over the past year to reimagine space and even open up Freedom Hall to exhibit sales for the first time. Equip also moved and expanded the UTV Test Track to deliver an even better experience for attendees in 2025.

Equip Exposition drew a record-breaking 28,500 attendees last year from all 50 states and 50 countries. It is one of the top five largest trade shows in the U.S. 

PHOTO: OPEI

MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

MARIANI ACQUIRES MD LANDSCAPING

Mariani Premier Group has acquired MD Nursery and Landscaping, a firm based in Driggs, Idaho. The move extends Mariani's reach into eastern Idaho and the Jackson Hole, Wyo., market, regions known for luxury residential development and unique landscape challenges.

Founded in 1991, MD Nursery and Landscaping has established itself as a staple of the Teton County community. The company, led since 2020 by Mike Hammond and Brian Haynie, employs approximately 260 associates and offers services ranging from landscape construction and irrigation to custom fencing and specialized excavation for both residential and government clients.

Mariani CEO Bryan Christiansen said the move was "an ideal

step for further expansion into the mountain region."

BROOKSTONE JOINS SPERBER FAMILY

Sperber Landscape Companies has acquired Brookstone Landscape and Design, a commercial landscape provider based in the greater Seattle area.

Founded in 2015 by husband-and-wife team Tim and Ethnie Hawkins, Brookstone began as a full-service landscape provider offering design, installation and maintenance services to both residential and commercial clients. Over the past decade, the company has focused primarily on commercial maintenance.

Brookstone will continue to operate under its name with the added strength of Sperber's nationwide network.

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A day to remember

HighGrove Partners goes to bat for kids in need during its Day of Service

BY NATHAN MADER | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

HighGrove Partners, based in Austell, Ga., and No. 135 on the 2025 LM150, has been donating to and volunteering with local charities for more than 20 years through its philanthropic division, HighHopes.

Whether it's one-time donations, pay-roll deductions, fundraisers or other volunteering efforts, this employee-funded and managed organization distributes more than \$10,000 each year to local charities and community efforts.

"We assist charitable organizations, schools and youth organizations," says Kim Wood, executive assistant at HighGrove. "We try to get our employees involved as much as possible. We usually do a Day of Service every year and pick a different charity."

The Day of Service is a large-scale volunteering effort that works to benefit the community. Wood says the charities and organizations receiving the Day of Service can range from a regular partner they donate to or a place where an employee has volunteered.

This year's recipient was Cavalry Children's Home, a facility in the Atlanta area for kids needing to live away from their families. Since its founding in 1966, Cavalry Children's Home has aimed to



Roughly 60 volunteers came together to spend the day renovating the Cavalry Children's Home campus.

provide a safe, loving environment for kids in need, and this year saw its campus get a fresh landscaping makeover thanks to HighHopes.

"We redid the whole landscaping in the front of the house; we even did some of the back and sides of the house. We redid the mulch in the playground area," Wood says. "We donated the plant material and then our time, so we had 60 employees that came out."

Wood says the day started with some motivating words from HighGrove CEO Jim McCutcheon and Cavalry campus director Brian Busby.

"For over 20 years, my wife and I have lived on this campus, and I promise you that on happy days, the kids are out here playing in the yard, and they will see your beautiful landscape," Busby said before kicking off the Day of Service. "On sad days, they rock in those rocking chairs, and they lick their wounds, and they'll see your beautiful landscape. And we just thank you for believing in us."

Wood says the impacts from the Day of Service were immediate. While crews were setting up in the morning, a handful of kids from the home left for school, getting to see the work that was being done.

"They shook every one of our hands, they hugged us, and they thanked us for coming out to make their property beautiful," Wood says. "It brought a tear, I think, to everyone's eye. That made the whole day rewarding."

Sydney St. Martin, CRM marketing manager at HighGrove, said that not everyone understands the importance of having or installing a beautiful landscape, but just seeing the time that goes into one of these projects is enough to show how much people care for others.

"Time is the best thing that we can give to them, and that's exactly the point that we try to get across with all of these (events) — we see you, you guys matter and let's pretty up your place," she says.

St. Martin says other charity efforts they've done in the past have included a bike drive for a youth group, a food and bed collection for an animal shelter, a landscaping renovation of a special needs school and more.

"It's really great because one thing Jim McCutcheon has really been bringing to the forefront of our minds for the last couple of years is our core values and our company's purpose," St. Martin says. "Our company's purpose is actually to drive positive change in people's lives." 

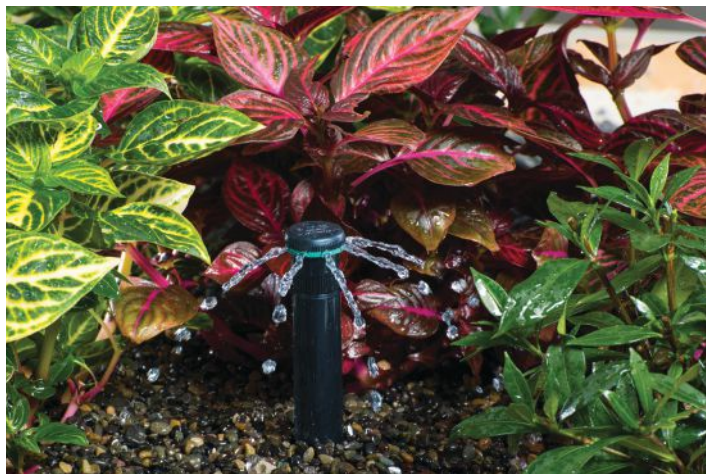


HighHopes donated the plant material that was used in the Day of Service renovation.

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GROWTH SPURT

Learn how the companies on *LM's* Rising Stars list are making a name for themselves now and setting the stage for even bigger things in the future

BY SCOTT HOLLISTER | *LM* EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The 2025 edition of the *LM150* — the magazine's list of the top 150 revenue-generating companies in the business — painted a rosy picture of the overall health and relative strength of the landscape and lawn care industry.

Revenues of the companies that made this year's list totaled more than \$21 billion, the first time that figure had exceeded the \$20 billion threshold. It was the 11th consecutive year that total revenue increased over the year before, and it was the third year running that those increases were in the double digits (coincidentally, all three years increased 14 percent over the year prior).

Just to earn a spot on the 2025 *LM150* was quite an accomplishment — the company at No. 150 this year,

the Greener Group from Lowell, Mass., reported annual revenue of just over \$20 million. Five years ago, the benchmark to make the list was a little more than \$12 million; 10 years ago, that number was \$7.7 million.

The good vibes and stories of impressive growth aren't limited to the companies that clear that high bar, though. Many landscaping and lawn care operations that submitted data for this year's *LM150* program or that came to the magazine's attention through other means enjoyed banner years in 2024, with double-digit (or more) year-over-year growth and future trajectories that are making them real players in the industry.

To shine a spotlight on some of these up-and-coming companies, we're introducing the magazine's newest feature — *LM's* Rising Stars. This annual collection will feature some of the industry's fastest-growing companies that largely fall outside of that year's *LM150* rankings, showcasing how they've built their operations, the keys to their growth and why they're on a path to becoming one of the business's biggest revenue-generating companies.

Information for this feature was submitted to *LM* either specifically for this story or as a part of the *LM150* application process. Submissions for both were solicited on the magazine's website, **LandscapeManagement.net**, via email and through notices on social media.



K&D Landscaping in Watsonville, Calif., is one of landscaping's fastest-growing companies.

North Point Outdoors

Derry, N.H.

Dave Fairburn always hoped his career would get off to a flying start. He just never imagined those professional pursuits and accomplishments would occur in the landscaping industry.

The CEO at North Point Outdoors long dreamed of a career as a pilot, earning a bachelor's degree in aviation from Daniel Webster College in 2009 and, later, his commercial pilot's certificate. But just as he began to search for work in corporate aviation, the bottom of that market fell out, jobs became hard to come by, so with student loans coming due, he began exploring a Plan B.

"I always had an interest in landscaping and actually started an irrigation services company in high school with the goal of it being a summer job while I was in college," Fairburn says. "When I was looking for a job as a pilot, I reached out to a customer that I was already working with on their irrigation and asked if I could take on a landscape contract. Surprisingly, they said 'sure.'"

"I didn't even own a lawn mower at the time, and I really didn't know what I was doing. But things took off from there."

Did they ever. Not long after landing that first lawn maintenance client, Fairburn teamed up with lifelong friend Andrew Pelkey, now North Point's chief operating officer, to merge his irrigation business with Pelkey's landscaping company. Soon, that new company — what would become North Point — began adding more lawn maintenance clients, started dabbling in residential design-build projects, broke into commercial installations and, considering their location, jumped into snow removal during the winter months.

Before long, it was clear that both Fairburn and Pelkey had found their true calling.

"I never intended on owning a landscape company," Fairburn acknowledges. "I was always trying to find a way to get back into flying, and to do that, I felt like I needed to convince other people to landscape for me. Inadvertently, I started to build a team of people, didn't micromanage them and tried to empower their growth because I felt like it was a way for me to ultimately stop doing landscaping at some point."

"A few years in, I realized that the landscaping industry was actually pretty fun. I really enjoyed growing my team, taking young people and creating careers for them out of the green industry. That became my passion, and flying is now a thing I do for recreation. I think we've ended up in a better place than I would have ever hoped."

North Point's recent success certainly confirms that. In 2024, the company racked up revenue of nearly \$19.5 million, which marked a 22-percent increase over 2023. Fairburn and team are hoping for similar growth this year that would put them among the elite earners nationwide in the landscaping and lawn care industries.



Owners Dave Fairburn (left) and Andrew Pelkey joined forces to create North Point Outdoors in 2009.



North Point is a full-service firm, but recently has focused on commercial maintenance and installations.

One of the keys to North Point's growth trajectory, Fairburn says, was an eventual pivot away from the residential market and toward focusing on commercial maintenance and installations.

"We were doing such a wide range of things that I felt like it was drawing us pretty thin," he says. "Think of it like a restaurant: If you go to a place with a huge menu, you wonder if they do any of those things well. When you go to a nice steak house with just nine or 10 things on the menu, you feel pretty good that they're going to be great at those nine or 10 things. That was the philosophy we wanted to establish."

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Another key — perhaps *the* key, in Fairburn's view — is the team at North Point and the culture that has been cultivated there.

"It's been my mission to elevate the blue-collar workforce because I've seen how it can change lives," he says. "I remember hiring this one young guy out of high school who had struggled in school, gotten into some trouble. He really took to the work, but his parents kept asking him when he was going to get a 'real job.'

"When I heard that, it put a chip on my shoulder because this is a real job. This is a job that can give you a life that a lot of people never dreamed possible. We focus on giving people the skills and the tools to succeed, put our trust in them and make sure they know how crucial they are to our collective success. None of what we do is about winning awards or anything like that. It's been about the people, and that's how we measure success."

That passion for people is so deeply embedded in everything the company does that Fairburn and Pelkey ran point on the creation of CrewHero (**crewhero.app**), a proprietary software solution that focuses on frontline workers in the landscaping industry.

"We had a powerful CRM (customer relationship manager), but every morning still felt like chaos. We were using whiteboards, magnets, and group texts to get everyone out the door. It was 2024, and we knew there had to be a better way," Fairburn says. "So, we built CrewHero to supercharge our CRM and handle the coordination, communication, asset management and maintenance and to support the culture of the frontline team. CrewHero starts before our CRM even wakes up, connecting people and assets before they leave their home."



Family-owned and operated K&D Landscaping grew to over \$20 million in revenue in 2024.

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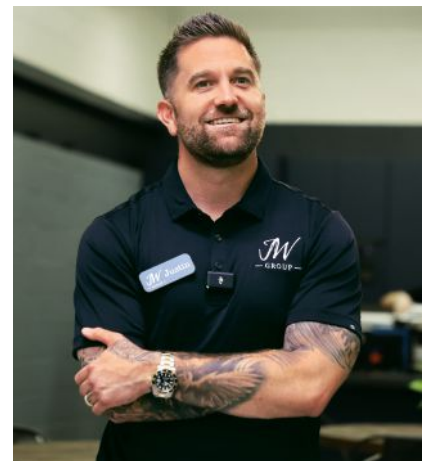
K&D Landscaping Watsonville, Calif.

Justin White has been a part of the landscape industry for most of his life. His father, Kendel, started in the business in 1986 in what, at the time, was a side gig to his full-time job as a chef. When lawn maintenance began earning the family more money than a day in the kitchen, he made landscaping his full-time job, Justin's mother, Dawn, stepped in to help, and K&D Landscaping was born. Eventually, both Justin and his brother Shane — along with a host of other family members — were working in various roles at the business.

But it wasn't until 2015 and an encounter with a popular business book that White began to focus on the company's long-term potential.

"Like a lot of people, I read the book *Good to Great* by Jim Collins," says White, who now serves as K&D's CEO. "And after learning about all these amazing companies and entrepreneurs, I wondered, 'Why not me? Why not K&D?' At the same time, I was working with a business coach, Jonathan Goldhill, and the light bulb went off. I started to realize that we had the opportunity to build something amazing in the landscape industry."

Based on recent performance, K&D is well on its way to doing just that. In 2024, the company had just over \$20 million in total revenue, a 15 percent increase over the year before. With similar growth projected for this year and a team of 135 full-time



employees dedicated to serving a blend of commercial, residential and government clients, today's K&D is fully transformed from its humble beginnings with 15 employees and a few trucks focused largely on residential maintenance.

It was about the time White finished reading *Good to Great* that he transitioned from working in the field at K&D to an executive-level role with the company. Looking to build on the close-knit, family-focused culture that had developed there, the company set a goal to take itself from the \$1 million revenue mark, which is where it was at the time, to \$30 million by the year 2030.

Not long after Justin moved into the role of CEO in 2016, K&D's hard work

Continued on page 18

After starting in the field with K&D, Justin White became company CEO in 2016.



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Continued from page 16

and focus started to bear fruit. It was a \$5 million company by 2018 and surpassed the \$10 million mark in 2020.

“That was a really exciting plateau for us to reach,” White says of the \$10-million mark. “We did something that we didn’t know was possible in a really small market like Santa Cruz and Monterey Bay.”

Reaching that milestone also reset expectations for K&D, White says. As a result, the company made changes and improvements to the leadership team and its structure. It reorganized into construction and maintenance divisions. And it began embracing technology at a whole new level, most notably by bringing in Aspire Software to streamline operations.

“We got smart about our operations, smart about our money and smart about our crews and our people,” White says. “We got really clear on how we were going to get to that \$30 million mark.”

As K&D continues to make steady progress toward that goal, White cites several moves that have been catalysts for growth for the company, including the introduction of a water management division in 2021, an increased interest in pursuing larger maintenance contracts (most notably with homeowner associations), and a “white-glove” residential design-build approach that keeps everything in-house.

“Those things are uncommon in our market and have allowed us to differentiate ourselves from the competition,” White says.

To date, all of K&D’s growth has been organic in nature, but that doesn’t mean White and the rest of the company’s leadership team aren’t interested in eventually considering mergers and acquisitions that make sense for the company. They’re just interested in approaching them in a uniquely K&D way.

“There’s obviously a lot of outside investment and outside money coming into the industry, which we encourage and we embrace,” White says. “But I think there is a demand and a desire from owners like my dad who want to sell their business ... but to more of a homegrown platform. Someone like myself and others who were raised in the trades, grew up on the jobsite and can offer something different than traditional private equity.

“So, part of our vision is to partner with strategic investors within the landscape industry to fund our growth, fund acquisitions and provide a bit of a differentiation from your average private equity roll-up out there. More along the lines of what Richard Sperber and Frank Mariani have done but led by the next generation who are ready to start making waves and build something great.”



Innovation and a focus on quality has sparked E&F Landscaping’s rapid rise among companies in the Mid-Atlantic region.

E&F Landscaping

Brandywine, Md.

Anthony Freni comes by his love of the landscaping industry honestly. In old photos that dot the shelves of his parents’ home, there are countless images of Freni sitting on tractors, on mowers or holding a variety of landscaping tools.

That’s because most of his childhood memories involve his parents — father Placido and mother Dia — and the business they started together, E&F Landscaping, just outside of Washington, D.C.

“I always had an interest in it, always wanted to be like my dad,” Freni says about his father, who originally started the company with another family member before his mother entered the picture to officially launch E&F. “I worked for the company in the summers, and when I found out that the University of Maryland had a landscape management major, I knew that was a perfect fit for me.”

And now, thanks to a dedication to diversification and a reliance on government contracts that were the foundation of the business in its early days, E&F Landscaping is a fast riser among companies that service the Mid-Atlantic region. In 2024, the company reported revenue of \$12.5 million, which marked an 8 percent increase over the previous year’s totals. In 2025, Freni says E&F is expecting a similar pattern of growth for the company that employs 85 full-time.

“Innovation has been key for us. Looking at ways of doing things better and easier than we’ve done in the past has paid off,” Freni says. “We try to be proactive instead of reactive, to not shoot ourselves in the foot



A lifelong love of the industry has been key to Anthony Freni’s rise at E&F Landscaping.

Continued on page 20

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Continued from page 18
and do things the right way the first time. If you can accomplish that, you can come out ahead and be more profitable.”

Freni traces the beginnings of E&F’s upward mobility to a 2010 project that involved landscaping for a new section of highway in Maryland known as the Intercounty Connector, a 19-mile stretch that links I-95 and I-270 on the northern edges of Washington, D.C. E&F was one of three companies to be awarded contracts to work on the project — E&F’s section was the largest of the three — and the project helped establish the company’s credentials in the market.

It also spurred the company to pursue a path of diversification that Freni says remains a key to its ongoing success, beginning with the cre-

ation of a new part of the business, Brandywine Growers.

“We were very proud to be a part of that (the Intercounty Connector project), and we learned a lot,” he says. “One of those lessons was that we needed our own farm, a nursery that could be a production facility for us so we could grow our own plant materials. As that took off, we had a desire to take that wholesale, sell to other people, so that’s what we ultimately did.

“I took a break from the landscaping side to fully run that business (he returned to E&F full-time last April), start building up the infrastructure, hiring good people and building up our customer base. It’s really worked out great and has been a key to our growth.”

Freni says E&F has taken a similar approach as it has expanded the

services it has offered to its client base, which remains largely focused on government and commercial contracts. It’s grown its design and construction capabilities and added irrigation services, for example, all the while making sure the company had the in-house expertise to make those endeavors successful.

“I have a philosophy that it takes a village, because no one can be in a million places at once and no one can take on every project by themselves,” Freni says. “I know what I don’t know, and I know that adding people with different perspectives, different experiences can only help us going forward. I think it creates a better culture and helps us serve clients better. At the end of the day, being successful at both of those things is a win for our company.”

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LM'S 2025 RISING STARS

Editor's note: LM's Rising Stars are listed here in alphabetical order. This list was compiled from information submitted to the magazine either specifically for this story or for our annual LM150 rankings, which were published in our June issue. Submissions were solicited on **LandscapeManagement.net**, via email and through notices on LM's social media accounts. Companies provided their details through a standardized form.

Allied Landscape

Headquarters: Livermore, Calif.
Company principal: Loren McIrvine, president and CEO
2024 revenue (U.S. dollars): \$17,400,000
Percentage growth from 2023: 14
Percentage projected growth for 2025: 25
Percentage of 2024 growth, organic: 100
Percentage of 2024 growth, acquisitions: 0
Comm/Res/Gov revenue %: 95/0/5

E&F Landscaping

Headquarters: Brandywine, Md.
Company principal: Anthony Freni, general manager
2024 revenue (U.S. dollars): \$12,500,000
Percentage growth from 2023: 8
Percentage projected growth for 2025: 9
Percentage of 2024 growth, organic: 100
Percentage of 2024 growth, acquisitions: 0
Comm/Res/Gov revenue %: 10/5/85

GreenPro Landscapes

Headquarters: Lakeland, Tenn.
Company principal: Kevin James, president
2024 revenue (U.S. dollars): \$6,000,000
Percentage growth from 2023: 15
Percentage projected growth for 2025: 20
Percentage of 2024 growth, organic: NA
Percentage of 2024 growth, acquisitions: NA
Comm/Res/Gov revenue %: 100/0/0

Grunder Landscaping Co.

Headquarters: Miamisburg, Ohio
Company principal: Marty Grunder, founder and CEO
2024 revenue (U.S. dollars): \$14,400,000
Percentage growth from 2023: 42
Percentage projected growth for 2025: 25
Percentage of 2024 growth, organic: 85
Percentage of 2024 growth, acquisitions: 15
Comm/Res/Gov revenue %: 35/45/20

K&D Landscaping

Headquarters: Watonsville, Calif.
Company principal: Justin White, CEO
2024 revenue (U.S. dollars): \$20,047,422
Percentage growth from 2023: 15
Percentage projected growth for 2025: 12
Percentage of 2024 growth, organic: 100
Percentage of 2024 growth, acquisitions: 0
Comm/Res/Gov revenue %: 50/40/10

Landscape Endeavors

Headquarters: Colorado Springs, Colo.
Company principal: Ray Shorette, president; Cory Shorette, vice president
2024 revenue (U.S. dollars): \$16,761,125
Percentage growth from 2023: 50
Percentage projected growth for 2025: 13
Percentage of 2024 growth, organic: 100
Percentage of 2024 growth, acquisitions: 0
Comm/Res/Gov revenue %: 95/5/0

LCU Properties

Headquarters: Machesney Park, Ill.
Company principal: Tim Key, president
2024 revenue (U.S. dollars): \$18,000,000
Percentage growth from 2023: 13
Percentage projected growth for 2025: 18
Percentage of 2024 growth, organic: NA
Percentage of 2024 growth, acquisitions: NA
Comm/Res/Gov revenue %: 83/2/15

Continued on page 22



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Continued from page 21

Meridian Landscaping & Design

Headquarters: Sterling, Va.
Company principal: Tim Gardiner, president
2024 revenue (U.S. dollars): \$16,250,000
Percentage growth from 2023: 60
Percentage projected growth for 2025: 40
Percentage of 2024 growth, organic: 35
Percentage of 2024 growth, acquisitions: 25
Comm/Res/Gov revenue %: 95/5/0

Mid-Atlantic Property Maintenance

Headquarters: Skippack, Pa.
Company principal: Matt Sibley, president
2024 revenue (U.S. dollars): \$9,500,000
Percentage growth from 2023: 20
Percentage projected growth for 2025: 20
Percentage of 2024 growth, organic: NA
Percentage of 2024 growth, acquisitions: NA
Comm/Res/Gov revenue %: 50/0/50

Miracle Farms Landscape Contractors

Headquarters: Moultonboro, N.H.
Company principal: Christopher Maroun, president
2024 revenue (U.S. dollars): \$25,600,000
Percentage growth from 2023: 8
Percentage projected growth for 2025: 13
Percentage of 2024 growth, organic: 100
Percentage of 2024 growth, acquisitions: 0
Comm/Res/Gov revenue %: 5/95/0

New Castle Lawn and Landscape

Headquarters: Birdsboro, Pa.
Company principal: Brian Cuccaro, founder
2024 revenue (U.S. dollars): \$10,578,341
Percentage growth from 2023: 12
Percentage projected growth for 2025: 19
Percentage of 2024 growth, organic: NA
Percentage of 2024 growth, acquisitions: NA
Comm/Res/Gov revenue %: NA

North Point Outdoors

Headquarters: Derry, N.H.
Company principal: Dave Fairburn, CEO
2024 revenue (U.S. dollars): \$19,450,000
Percentage growth from 2023: 22
Percentage projected growth for 2025: 22
Percentage of 2024 growth, organic: 100
Percentage of 2024 growth, acquisitions: 0
Comm/Res/Gov revenue %: 70/30/0

Nuvoro Landscaping

Headquarters: Richmond, Va.
Company principal: Nelson Omar Trejo, CEO
2024 revenue (U.S. dollars): \$3,494,824
Percentage growth from 2023: 246
Percentage projected growth for 2025: 100
Percentage of 2024 growth, organic: 100
Percentage of 2024 growth, acquisitions: 0
Comm/Res/Gov revenue %: 100/0/0

SouthWest Landscapes

Headquarters: Orange, Calif.
Company principal: Dan Hansen, president
2024 revenue (U.S. dollars): \$11,100,000
Percentage growth from 2023: 12
Percentage projected growth for 2025: 12
Percentage of 2024 growth, organic: 100
Percentage of 2024 growth, acquisitions: 0
Comm/Res/Gov revenue %: 100/0/0

Superior Landscape

Headquarters: Ypsilanti, Mich.
Company principal: Moe Kasham, president
2024 revenue (U.S. dollars): \$5,500,000
Percentage growth from 2023: 12
Percentage projected growth for 2025: 10
Percentage of 2024 growth, organic: 100
Percentage of 2024 growth, acquisitions: 0
Comm/Res/Gov revenue %: 80/10/10

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Moe Kasham, president
Superior Landscape
Ypsilanti, Mich.



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with a shared vision. Growth, for us, isn’t just about getting bigger — it’s about getting better, together.”

Dan Hansen, president
SouthWest Landscape
Orange, Calif.



“The biggest contributing factor to our company’s growth has been our unwavering commitment to both our customers and our employees. As a leadership team, we prioritize delivering on our promises to both groups. While not every situation goes exactly as planned, we hold ourselves accountable, own our mistakes and correct them quickly. Our core values drive every decision we make.”

Ray Shorette, president and co-owner
Landscape Endeavors
Colorado Springs, Colo.



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Loren McIrvin, president and CEO
Allied Landscape
Livermore, Calif.



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Christopher Maroun, president
Miracle Farms Landscape Contractors
Moultonboro, N.H.

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ALIGNMENT CHECK

Aligning operator metrics with private equity levers creates high-performing companies that satisfy customers and attract merger-and-acquisition interest

BY JEFF HARKNESS | CONTRIBUTOR

Editor's note: This is the second in a series of three articles discussing the characteristics of highly marketable and valuable companies in the green industry — commonly referred to as “elite performers” or “best-in-class” companies.

Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) is a widely used key performance indicator (KPI) in the green industry for assessing value. However, metrics like labor costs, gross profit, cash flow, and sales and retention trends also offer useful insights into performance. What do top-performing companies prioritize?

The fundamental question is whether the business's growth strategy focuses on incremental expansion — adding one customer and one employee at a time over decades — which may make EBITDA less critical. Conversely, if scaling through a buy-and-build approach is the objective, none of these KPIs can be overlooked.

Furthermore, it is essential to consider whether a business can truly achieve scalability and operational excellence without effective EBITDA management. Consulting with experienced operators and comparing their perspectives with private equity principles can offer valuable insights, so continued analysis of these factors is recommended.

Many say focusing on EBITDA often leads to a decline in customer experience. Maybe you've heard that narrative recently, but that myth has made the rounds in the industry and investor decks for years. The idea goes something like this — if you're laser-focused on EBITDA, there is more financial pressure, you are cutting costs, which must mean you're skimping on the customer experience or cheating scope in your production model.

But that's a false dichotomy based on what I have seen from the best companies operating in the facility services and skilled trades niche. In my view, it's an assumption that just doesn't hold up.

Labels such as “greatness,” “best in class,” or “elite” are not necessarily determined by funding or ownership; outcomes are influenced by leadership and the strategic decisions those leaders make. Leadership is frequently discussed in the context of performance metrics or KPIs, many of which rely on retrospective data. Aligning investor metrics with private equity benchmarks is important.

Business improvement strategies benefit from incorporating both viewpoints, in my opinion.

Key metrics to consider when scaling up

EBITDA

A financial metric used to assess operational profitability, EBITDA is not inherently anti-customer. This myth stems from the assumption that improving EBITDA means slashing expenses, especially in service-heavy areas, which could hurt customer satisfaction.

In reality, many companies have proven that delighting customers can actually improve EBITDA by increasing retention, reducing churn and driving referrals. Chick-fil-A, Apple and Ritz-Carlton are good examples of this.

Other critics argue EBITDA is a “fairy tale” metric because it ignores capital needs, working capital and long-term sustainability. Some say it's misused when companies manipulate add-backs or ignore recurring costs. But that's not a flaw of EBITDA itself; instead, it's a flaw in how it's applied. Poor leadership might chase short-term EBITDA at the expense of long-term brand equity, but that's a strategic failure, not a financial inevitability.

Internal rate of return (IRR)

The internal rate of return (IRR) measures annualized returns while accounting for the timing of cash flows. Although IRR is widely regarded as the benchmark for private equity performance, it is often overlooked by operators, primarily due to the absence of a liquidity event.

Nevertheless, operators typically experience annual cash flows through salaries and distributions. To determine IRR, one can input annual cash flow figures into Excel or Google Sheets and use the formula: “= IRR (A1:A6)” (See “The buy and build example” on page 30). If the firm aims for a hurdle rate of 20 percent, then a deal clears most bars and is considered attractive.

Multiple on invested capital (MOIC)

Represents the total value (realized plus unrealized) divided by invested capital. This measure does not account for the time value of money (see “The buy and build example” on page 30). Returns of 3x or better in a five-year time horizon are considered attractive.

Organic revenue growth

Tracking retention rates are key indicators of market traction and scalability. While operators may underestimate the importance of high single-digit or low double-digit revenue growth, investors often consider insufficient growth a critical concern.

Additionally, many companies continue to demonstrate a passive approach in their go-to-market strategies.

Debt leverage ratios

Measures how much debt is used. Private equity often leverages up to 4.5x EBITDA (e.g., \$2 million EBITDA = \$9 million debt), while operators using traditional or senior bank debt typically reach only 1x due to stricter underwriting, personal guarantees, credit checks, collateral and cash flow requirements.

Customer retention rate

Equally critical is the deliberate focus on customer retention and lifetime

value, as these metrics reflect both the health of client relationships and the company's ability to generate sustainable revenue without constantly relying on new customer acquisition. Monitoring customer satisfaction scores, Net Promoter Scores (NPS) and churn rates gives operators a deeper understanding of long-term revenue stability and brand loyalty.

When paired with rigorous financial and operational benchmarks, such as those highlighted above, these customer-centric indicators empower organizations to balance fiscal discipline with exceptional service, fostering not only profitability but also a resilient, people-focused culture that withstands market fluctuations.

Employee turnover and engagement

Another dimension that distinguishes high-performing organizations is their vigilance in monitoring non-financial indicators, such as employee headcount,

employee turnover and engagement. Companies that foster a culture of open communication, professional growth and clear purpose are better positioned to retain top talent and maintain institutional knowledge, which drives operational efficiency and innovation.

By routinely surveying employee sentiment and tracking development opportunities, leadership can proactively address issues before they impact morale or productivity. Such deliberate attention to people metrics complements rigorous financial analysis, offering a holistic view of organizational health and readiness for growth.

Safety metrics (TRIR, DART)

Organizations now track safety metrics like total recordable incident (TRIR) and day away, restricted or transferred (DART) rates alongside financial controls to gauge workplace safety and compliance. This integrated approach protects

Continued on page 26

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PARTNERS IN PLANT CARE

Continued from page 25

employees, demonstrates commitment to sustainability and balances performance in profitability, growth, culture, and risk management for long-term value.

Budget vs. actual variance

Many companies still lack effective budgeting and real-time tracking. Simply trying to outperform last year isn't an effective management approach, and consistent forecasting remains a major challenge, equivalent to driving by only looking in the rearview mirror.

All these strategies reflect a leadership mindset. When considering acquisitions or business evaluations, assess alignment in culture, metrics and operations. Private equity firms use fund-level metrics and portfolio KPIs to measure returns, manage risk and guide decisions, and operators should do the same.

What great leaders do

To truly drive sustained success in today's competitive landscape, organizations must weave together these quantitative and qualitative metrics into a cohesive strategy, ensuring that financial rigor complements people-first priorities. This equilibrium not only amplifies operational agility but also reinforces the vital connection between engaged employees, loyal customers, and robust financial outcomes, providing a solid foundation for the operational excellence and forward-thinking practices that follow.

- **Operational excellence without sacrificing experience.** Streamline operations to reduce waste and improve margins — think Six Sigma or Kaizen — but never at the expense of customer touchpoints.
- **Automation and asset.** Return-on-investment (ROI) measurement is crucial as robotic mowers and AI continue to evolve. Are these technologies included in your budget and strategy? Data visualization software is increasingly used in private equity to convert fragmented data into actionable insights.

THE BUY AND BUILD EXAMPLE

Initial purchase price	10,500,000	Recap price	89,718,370 11x
Adjusted EBITDA	1,500,000	Less debt (4.5x)	(36,702,969)
Multiple	7X	TOTAL	53,015,400
Equity investment	10,500,000	Less Fees	(2,691,551)
Initial debt	—	Final Exit Net Proceeds	50,323,849
Adjusted EBITDA Cumulative	Organic Growth @ 6 percent	Private equity return	
Year 1	1,500,000	(10,500,000)	Initial investment
Year 2	1,500,000	67,500	Annual fee from PE
Year 3	1,685,400	101,700	Annual fee from PE
Year 4	1,786,524	151,812	Annual fee from PE
Year 5	1,893,715	194,221	Annual fee from PE
Acquired EBITDA New Each Year	Acquisitions	244,686	Annual fee from PE
Year 1	750,000	50,323,849	Final exit net proceeds
Year 2	1,000,000		
Year 3	1,500,000		
Year 4	1,250,000		
Year 5	1,500,000		
Combined EBITDA		30% IRR	
Year 1	2,250,000	4.79 MOIC	
Year 2	3,390,000		
Year 3	5,060,400		
Year 4	6,474,024		
Year 5	8,156,215		

- **Empowered frontline teams.** Your foremen and supervisors are likely interacting the most with the customer. Training and incentives are essential and lead to higher retention and better performance.
- **Decentralized decision-making.** Ritz-Carlton empowers employees to resolve issues instantly, which reduces escalations and builds loyalty, all while keeping service costs predictable. If you look at the failures in the landscaping space from private equity or publicly traded companies, centralizing too many parts of the business becomes a fatal flaw. Empowering branches is the best strategy.
- **Employee development.** Chick-fil-A invests heavily in employee development, which translates into faster service, fewer errors and happier customers. Why not you?
- **Customer-centric metrics tied to financial outcomes.** Companies monitor NPS and customer lifetime value (CLV) alongside EBITDA to ensure long-term profitability.
- **Retention as a profit lever:** High retention reduces acquisition costs and stabilizes revenue, often a direct EBITDA booster.

Brands like Apple, Chick-fil-A and Ritz-Carlton have shown that investing in customer experience can lead to

premium pricing, loyalty and operational efficiency, all EBITDA boosters. In private equity, firms often use EBITDA as a performance yardstick, but the best operators know that customer delight is a lever, not a liability. If you're building a business culture that values both financial discipline and customer obsession, you're not just busting the myth, you're rewriting the playbook.

To push this philosophy further, integrating real-time feedback loops and embracing continuous improvement ensures that organizations quickly adapt to evolving market conditions while fostering a culture of innovation. Leveraging data analytics and customer insights, forward-looking leaders can anticipate needs and personalize offerings, enhancing the entire service journey.

This approach not only sharpens the company's competitive edge but also nurtures a workplace where empowerment and accountability drive both personal growth and organizational results, setting a powerful precedent for sustainable, people-driven success. [\[14\]](#)

Jeff Harkness is the CEO of 3PG Advisors, an Alpharetta, Ga.-based firm that advises on the merger and acquisition process with a specialty in the landscape, turf care and tree care industries.

equip 2025

**WHERE THE
LANDSCAPE
CHANGES**

OCTOBER 21-24 LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY



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(800) 558-8767

THE LANDSCAPE IS CHANGING AT EQUIP 2025



SHOW SCHEDULE

INDOORS

Wednesday –

West Wing Early Opening 9 AM – 12 PM
Dealer and Media Preview 9 AM – 12 PM
All Exhibits 12 PM – 5 PM

Thursday – 9 AM - 5 PM

Friday – 9 AM - 2 PM

OUTDOORS

Open to All Attendees

Wednesday – 12 PM - 5 PM

Thursday – 9 AM - 5 PM

Friday – 9 AM - 1 PM

*Admission to Equip's show floor and demonstration area is open only to those ages 12 and up. No exceptions. Must be 16 or older with a valid driver's license to demo.



PREP LIKE A PRO.

Once your hotel and education sessions are locked in, use the favorites feature in Equip App to mark key exhibitors and map out your show plan. It's the smartest way to make the most of your time at Equip.



NEW Expanded Demo Space



Outdoor Demo Yard



Download Our App

Attendee Maps, Schedules, and Events

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YOUR NEXT BREAKTHROUGH STARTS HERE

Equip set records in registrants and net square feet – making last year the **LARGEST AND BEST-ATTENDED** in the show's history.

Find It. Build On It.

Equip brings together 28,500+ pros and 100+ sessions to power your next move. Step out of the day-to-day into hands-on demos, expert training, and networking events. Whether you're a contractor, dealer, or manufacturer, this is where the industry connects and levels up.



4 DAYS YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS

The Ultimate Unboxing Experience

At our show, you don't just see what's new — you put it to the test. With 1,100+ exhibits across 1.2 million square feet and a 30-acre Outdoor Demo Yard, the industry's latest equipment and technology are revealed. It's the ultimate unboxing experience — live, loud, and built for pros who want to test the world's greatest products.



Hardscape North America: Better Starts Here

Experience the best in the hardscaping business at Hardscape North America, co-located with Equip. See elite installers face off in the Installer Championship, explore cutting-edge materials from top manufacturers, and pick up real-world tips to boost your outdoor living projects.



HARDSCAPE
North America



THE LANDSCAPE IS CHANGING WHAT'S NEXT FOR EQUIP?

MONEY GROWS ON TREES

Tree Care Arena is taking over Freedom Hall this October. Experience the industry with live demonstrations on a 50-foot tree, hands-on arborist equipment showcases, and expert-led training in pruning and planting techniques with The Davey Institute. See how bucket trucks and specialized tools can take your business to new and profitable places.

Sponsored by:  **Altec**

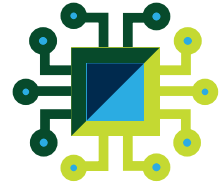


BREAKING GROUND IN 2025



GET BETTER TOGETHER

CREATOR SPACE



Experience the new hub of community meet-ups with content creators and aspiring landscape businesses networking, located in the South Wing C lobby of the Kentucky Exposition Center.

ECHO SOCIAL MEDIA PATIO

Fuel your connections. Power your devices.

The ECHO Social Media Patio keeps you charged and connected all expo long.

Sponsored by:



POD-ROW™

Step up to the microphone at Pod-Row™ where top industry podcasters are ready to hear your story. Share your business experiences, challenges, and turning point moments with thousands of online listeners as you become part of the conversation shaping the future of the industry.

\$393 MILLION RENOVATION

KENTUCKY EXPOSITION CENTER

This year the Kentucky Exposition Center begins renovations with the construction of a new 350,000-square-foot multi-purpose building, followed by a West Wing overhaul, expanding Class A exhibit space by over 70%.

UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES

EQUIP WELCOME RECEPTION

Tuesday, October 21, at 6:30 p.m.

Churchill Downs will welcome thousands of Equip attendees and exhibitors to network at the legendary home of the Kentucky Derby the night before the Equip Exposition officially opens.



Sponsored by:



OPENING KEYNOTE

Wednesday, October 22,
at 11:00 a.m.

Jesse Cole, the mastermind behind the Savannah Bananas, a baseball and sports entertainment phenomenon, will deliver the opening keynote at Equip.

Sponsored by:

Kress 



4TH STREET LIVE! PARTY

Wednesday, October 22, at 7 p.m.

Back by popular demand, 4th Street in Downtown Louisville will host a Wednesday after-party at 4th Street Live! featuring Equip's house band The Crashers.



GREEN SPACES MAKE HEALTHIER PLACES

#1 RIVERWALK IN THE NATION WATERFRONT PARK – HOME TO THE TURFMUTT FOUNDATION GREAT LAWN

Louisville's Waterfront Park — home of the Mulligan's 5K Fun Run & Walk — was just ranked #1 in USA Today's 10 Best Readers' Choice Awards! Thanks to your support, the TurfMutt Foundation Great Lawn is now recognized as America's top waterfront destination. We're proud to host Equip in a place where green spaces create unforgettable experiences for all.



MULLIGAN'S 5K FUN RUN & WALK

Wednesday, October 22, at 6:30 a.m.

Join us for the fourth annual Mulligan's 5K Fun Run and Walk at Louisville's award-winning Waterfront Park. The 5K begins Wednesday at 6:30 a.m., taking runners and walkers across the Ohio River via Louisville's scenic Big Four Pedestrian Bridge. The \$40 entry fee benefits the Kentucky Humane Society and includes a race t-shirt and a 5K medal.



Sponsored by:



MULLIGAN'S MUTT MADNESS

With The TurfMutt Foundation and Kentucky Humane Society

Thursday, October 23, at 11:30 a.m – 2 p.m.
South Wing A Lobby

On Thursday, team up with the Kentucky Humane Society to adopt a rescue dog right at Equip. It's all part of the TurfMutt Foundation's mission to highlight the power of green spaces. What started as a single pup's story has grown into an educational movement reaching over 70 million kids, teachers, and families — and even earned a spot in the U.S. Green Building Council's Global Learning Lab.



TURFMUTT FOUNDATION RESEARCH



89% of Americans considering a good public park system a top community amenity.



96% utilize public green spaces, like public parks, for recreation.



89% feel communities should prioritize providing these spaces for community health and well-being

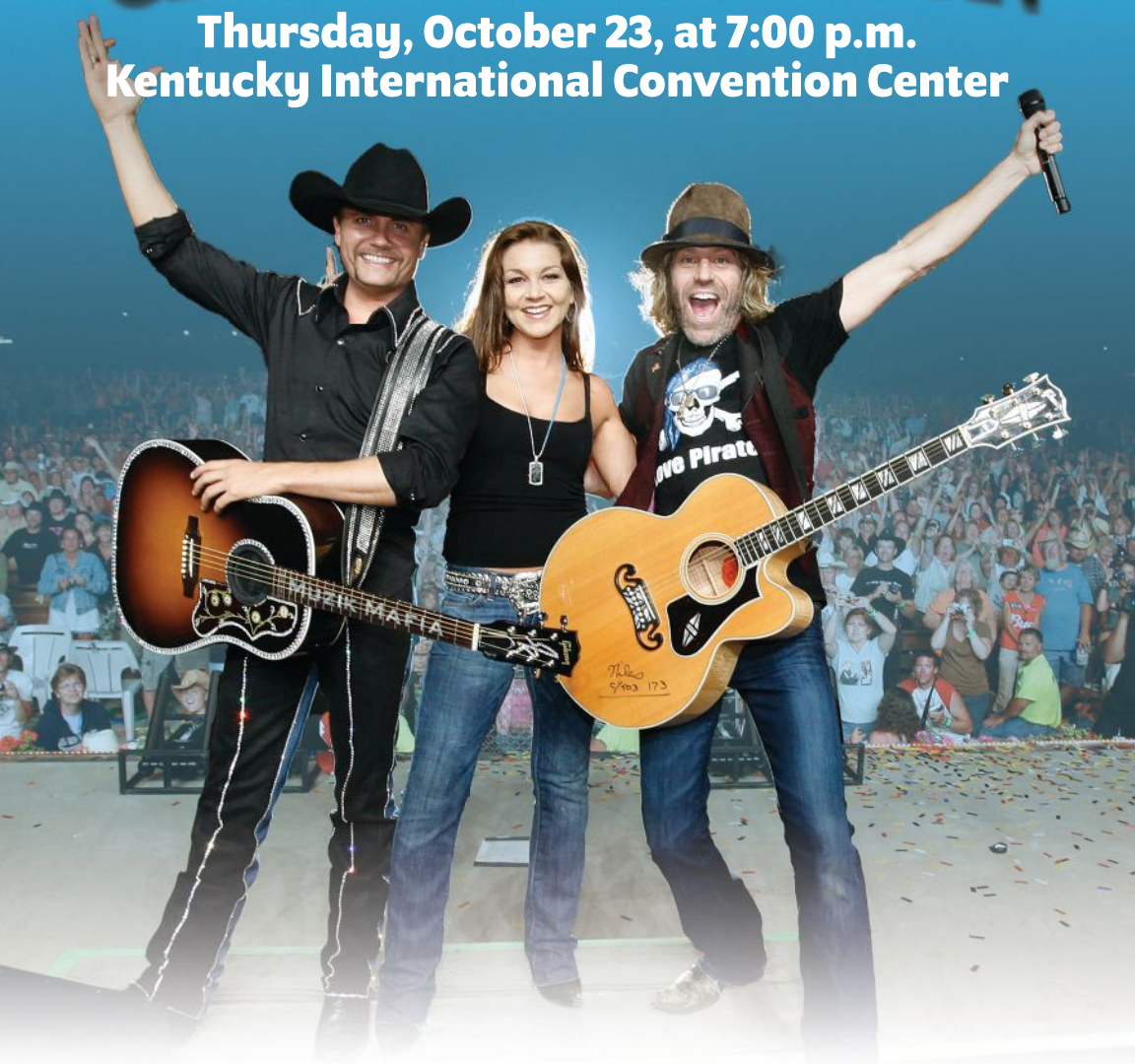
This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of The TurfMutt Foundation from April 15-17, 2025 among 2,075 U.S. adults ages 18 and older. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within +/- 2.5 percentage points using a 95 percent confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

BIG & RICH

Featuring

GRETCHEN WILSON

Thursday, October 23, at 7:00 p.m.
Kentucky International Convention Center



Get ready for a high-energy night of country music as **Big & Rich** takes the stage with special guest **Gretchen Wilson**! From anthems like *Save a Horse (Ride a Cowboy)* to *Redneck Woman*, this powerhouse lineup is bringing the hits, the attitude, and an unforgettable show you don't want to miss!

Sponsored by:



THE MORNING SHOW AT EXPO

Thursday, October 23, at 8 a.m.

Join us in the Event Center on Thursday morning for this can't-miss live podcast event. Hosted by three unique podcasts back-to-back, Landscapers will unlock valuable tips, enjoy entertaining stories, and discover ways to grow their business.

Hosts:

Naylor Taliaferro (LCR Media Podcast)

Paul Jamison (Green Industry Podcast)

Caleb Auman (Kid Contractor Podcast)

Guests:

Stanley Genadek, Dirt Monkey Inc.

Cornell Mack, MACK Landscaping & Lawn Care

Jeremy Talbot, North Georgia Landscape Management



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ENERGIZE

Thursday, October 23, at 2 p.m.

Get ready to supercharge your experience with **ENERGIZE**, hosted by Brian Fullerton from Brian's Lawn Maintenance and the Fullerton Unfiltered Podcast! Meet industry leaders and discuss growing, marketing, and investing in your business. Don't miss this chance to ignite your passion and network with fellow contractors.

Host:

Brian Fullerton (Fullerton Unfiltered Podcast)

Guests:

Marty Grunder, Grunder Landscaping Co.

Mark Bradley, Leanscaper

Sam Gembel, Atlas Outdoor

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP RECEPTION

Thursday, October 23 at 5 p.m.

Connect and build your network with women leaders from across the industry at this complimentary reception, held after trade show hours.



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EQUIP COFFEE HOUSE & LOUNGE

Need a pick-me-up? Swing by Equip Coffee House & Lounge for your caffeine fix to recharge at the beginning of your day.

Sponsored by:

SUNSEEKER



BOBCAT MOWER GIVEAWAY

Thursday, October 23 at 1:30 p.m.

Bobcat Booth #3052

The Bobcat ZT7000 zero-turn mower is the peak of toughness and best-in-the-business performance. With transport speeds up to 19 mph and mowing speeds up to 13 mph, you can deliver quality results job after job. **You must be present to win at the Bobcat's booth #3052.**





SUMMER JUST GOT HOTTER

Register for Equip Exposition by July 31 and you'll be entered to win the a \$5,000 giveaway to purchase the newest gear, tools, and tech you see at the Equip.

More Ways To Win!

- \$15,000 UTV Giveaway
- Bobcat Mower Giveaway
- \$5,000 Dealer Giveaway
(sponsored by STIHL)
- \$5,000 Demo Yard Giveaway
- \$5,000 Concert Cash Winner
- \$1,000 Daily West Wing Giveaway

See All Giveaways Here:



EXHIBITOR FEATURED EVENTS

VERMEER PRODUCT ANNOUNCEMENT

Wednesday, October 22, 1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Thursday, October 23, 10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
Vermeer Outdoor Booth #7634D

Join Vermeer at our outdoor demo area for an exciting product announcement.



STIHL PANEL DISCUSSION

Thursday, October 23
10:00 a.m. - 10:50 a.m. & 2:00 p.m. - 2:50 p.m.
STIHL Indoor Booth #5068

MECHANIZE TO MAXIMIZE...

TRY IT IN THE 30-ACRE DEMO YARD



LESS LABOR. MORE HORSEPOWER.

When labor is hard to find, the smartest move is to invest in equipment that works harder for you. In our 30-Acre Demo Yard, you can test powerful machines that take on manual tasks, speed up your workflow, and lighten the load on your crew. From intuitive controls that shorten training time to features designed for efficiency, the right tools can help you get more done with fewer hands.



EXPANDED UTV TEST TRACK

We're cranking up the adrenaline in 2025. The UTV Test Track is moving to a larger space, making room for an even more connected 30-Acre Outdoor Demo Yard.



“I can talk to somebody about the piece of equipment and say, hey, why don’t you go run it and come back and tell me what you think. You can’t get that anywhere else.”

Aaron Griffith
Stanley Black & Decker



CONTRACTOR EDUCATION

Equip’s education environment connects you with your peers, builds your network, and helps you gain a competitive edge through industry-specific sessions and leadership development.

CONTRACTOR EDUCATION PARTNERS



WEDNESDAY	Turfgrass Cultural Practices Dive into the world of turfgrass management with this engaging course! Discover essential techniques like mowing, irrigation, and fertilization, while mastering practices that ensure vibrant, healthy turf.	Wednesday, October 22, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	\$99
	Turfgrass Cultural Practices (Taught in Spanish) Dive into the world of turfgrass management with this engaging course! Discover essential techniques like mowing, irrigation, and fertilization, while mastering practices that ensure vibrant, healthy turf.	Wednesday, October 22, 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	\$99
	Aerification and Cultural Practices Unlock the secrets of turfgrass management in this dynamic course! Explore vital techniques like mowing, irrigation, and fertilization, while mastering secondary practices for vibrant, healthy turf.	Wednesday, October 22, 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM	\$99
	Aerification and Cultural Practices (Taught in Spanish) Unlock the secrets of turfgrass management in this dynamic course! Explore vital techniques like mowing, irrigation, and fertilization, while mastering secondary practices for vibrant, healthy turf.	Wednesday, October 22, 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	\$99
THURSDAY	Weed Management in Turfgrass Discover effective weed management strategies for lawns and turf! This session highlights weed identification, sprayer calibration, and the latest herbicide recommendations for tackling tough weeds.	Thursday, October 23, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	\$99
	Weed Management in Turfgrass (Taught In Spanish) Discover effective weed management strategies for lawns and turf! This session highlights weed identification, sprayer calibration, and the latest herbicide recommendations for tackling tough weeds.	Thursday, October 23, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	\$99
	Interpreting Pesticide Labels for the Turfgrass Industry Unlock your potential in the turfgrass industry! This course empowers you to master pesticide labels, covering key terms, safety, and environmental impact for responsible turfgrass management.	Thursday, October 23, 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	\$99
	Interpreting Pesticide Labels for the Turfgrass Industry (Taught In Spanish) Unlock your potential in the turfgrass industry! This course empowers you to master pesticide labels, covering key terms, safety, and environmental impact for responsible turfgrass management.	Thursday, October 23, 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	\$99

CONTRACTOR EDUCATION



WEDNESDAY	Become A Destination Company Experience insights from Jeffrey Scott, the author on the subject! For the first time in seven years, he'll share his updated strategies to attract, retain, and nurture top talent for your business.	Wednesday, October 22, 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	\$99
	A Fireside Chat with Larry Ryan In an engaging fireside chat, Larry Ryan, founder of Ryan Lawn & Tree, reflects on his 37-year journey, sharing insights on company culture and the future of the lawn care industry. Don't miss it!	Wednesday, October 22, 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	\$99
	"Lean" in the Landscape Discover how Lean manufacturing principles can transform landscaping! Join us to learn how to deliver value to customers by eliminating waste and enhancing efficiency in your projects.	Wednesday, October 22, 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM	\$99
	Your Company, Your Culture Exciting news! Now in its fourth year, a panel of seasoned industry experts will share insights and strategies for fostering a positive workplace culture. Engage in a dynamic discussion and Q&A session!	Wednesday, October 22, 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	\$99
THURSDAY	Lead From the Middle — Yes, You! Are you a second-in-command, production manager, or foreman? This session is tailored for you! Discover how to empower your role and drive success in landscape operations with insights from Sam Gembel.	Thursday, October 23, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	\$99
	Labor Hour Management: The Most Important KPI in Your Business Unlock the secrets to maximizing productivity in this dynamic session! Discover how to track, analyze, and optimize labor hours to cut costs and enhance business efficiency for sustainable growth.	Thursday, October 23, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	\$99
	Sales Management for Dummies (and High-Flying Entrepreneurs) OK, so you're not a dummy ... you're a high-flying entrepreneur. But what are the most effective ways to manage your sales team — and yourself — so the company is on the right trajectory? Industry consultant Jeffrey Scott will share his methods for launching sales growth.	Thursday, October 23, 12:30 PM - 2:00 PM	\$99
	Every Day I'm Hustlin': How to be Proactive on Relationship Building and Sales The "order taking" of 2021-2023 is over. We have to go make sales and that is a daily activity. This session will show you the daily tasks you or your sales team needs to do to hit your goals and then some.	Thursday, October 23, 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM	\$99
FRIDAY	Retiring in Place Have you invested countless hours into your business? Discover insights from successful entrepreneurs who navigated the challenges of stepping away and learn when the time is right to let go.	Friday, October 24, 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	\$99
	Get on the Bus: Effective Onboarding for New Team Members First impressions really do matter. If you want to stand out, grow your team and reduce turnover, you need an onboarding program. In this session you'll learn the key points and actions needed for a successful onboarding program.	Friday, October 24, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	\$99
	Strategic Planning 101 Unlock the power of strategic planning! Discover how to create impactful plans that prioritize and sequence initiatives to elevate your organization and drive transformative success.	Friday, October 24, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	\$99
	A One-Stop Shop versus Doing One Thing Well When the phone rings, a potential client seeks help with a specific goal. Discover why Justin White, CEO of K&D Landscaping, champions specialization over generalization in this engaging session!	Friday, October 24, 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	\$99

CONTRACTOR EDUCATION



WEDNESDAY	Business Opportunities Associated with Trees Unlock the secrets to thriving trees in urban landscapes! This session will equip you with essential strategies and services to enhance plant health care, perfect for those eager to improve their skills.	Wednesday, October 22, 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM	FREE
	Pesticide Safety and Emergency Procedures Discover the vital role of pesticides in our industry while mastering safe handling techniques. This session covers label importance, application procedures, and emergency preparedness for any situation.	Wednesday, October 22, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	\$30
	Develop Your Detective Skills: Diagnosing Plant Problems Discover how to diagnose plant issues like a pro! This session will guide you through essential steps, real-world scenarios, and valuable tools to confidently identify and treat your plants' ailments.	Wednesday, October 22, 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	\$30
	How to Prune Large Trees Unlock the secrets to successful tree care! Discover essential pruning techniques for both young and mature trees, focusing on tools, timing, and industry standards (ANSI A300) for optimal results.	Wednesday, October 22, 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM	FREE
	Navigating Pesticide Compliance: How to Adapt and Thrive in a Complex Regulatory Landscape Navigating the landscaping industry's challenges can be tough! Discover essential compliance strategies, state-specific requirements, and valuable resources to impress your local agriculture department and ace inspections!	Wednesday, October 22, 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM	\$30
	Tree Planting and Mulching Discover the essentials of nurturing a tree for optimal growth, adhering to ANSI A300 standards. This engaging session will guide you from selecting a nursery plant to ensuring its thriving success!	Wednesday, October 22, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM	FREE
THURSDAY	Reducing the "Spray and Pray": Using IPM for Sustainable Landscaping Discover effective ways to nurture your urban landscape without pesticides! This session delves into Integrated Pest Management and Cultural Practices that promote plant health and vitality.	Wednesday, October 22, 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	\$30
	Tree Planting and Mulching Kickstart your tree's journey with our engaging session on nurturing nursery plants to thrive, adhering to ANSI A300 standards. Discover essential steps for a successful growth transformation!	Thursday, October 23, 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	FREE
	How to Prune Large Trees Unlock the secrets to successful tree care! Discover essential pruning techniques for both young and mature trees, focusing on tools, timing, and industry standards (ANSI A300) for optimal results.	Thursday, October 23, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM	FREE
	Pruning Small Trees & Shrubs Unlock the secrets to nurturing young trees for robust maturity! Discover essential pruning techniques, timing, tools, and sanitation practices. Elevate your skills with insights from the ANSI A300 standard!	Thursday, October 23, 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM	FREE
FRIDAY	Turf Sprayer Calibration Workshop Discover essential techniques for calibrating backpack and ride-on sprayers in the lawn care industry. Learn to optimize speed, flow rates, and spray volume while minimizing spray drift effectively!	Thursday, October 23, 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM	FREE
	Turf Sprayer Calibration Workshop Discover essential techniques for calibrating backpack and ride-on sprayers in the lawn care industry. Learn to optimize speed, flow rates, and spray volume while minimizing spray drift effectively!	Friday, October 24, 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM	FREE
	Pro Tips: Tree Removal Techniques: How to Dismantle a Tree Master the art of tree removal! Discover essential techniques for safely taking down large trees and the right tools to use. This session will emphasize key ANSI A300 industry standards.	Friday, October 24, 12:30 PM - 2:00 PM	FREE

CONTRACTOR EDUCATION



THURSDAY	From Worker to Leader: Developing Your Foreman Unlock the key to success in contracting! This dynamic seminar empowers foremen to master tight deadlines and enhance customer satisfaction, balancing leadership with hands-on teamwork for optimal results.	Thursday, October 23, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	\$99
	From Worker to Leader: Developing Your Foreman (Spanish) Unlock the key to success in contracting! This dynamic seminar empowers foremen to master tight deadlines and enhance customer satisfaction, balancing leadership with hands-on teamwork for optimal results.	Thursday, October 23, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	\$99
FRIDAY	From Worker to Leader: Developing Your Foreman Unlock the key to success in contracting! This dynamic seminar empowers foremen to master tight deadlines and enhance customer satisfaction, balancing leadership with hands-on teamwork for optimal results.	Friday, October 24, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	\$99
	From Worker to Leader: Developing Your Foreman (Spanish) Unlock the key to success in contracting! This dynamic seminar empowers foremen to master tight deadlines and enhance customer satisfaction, balancing leadership with hands-on teamwork for optimal results.	Friday, October 24, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	\$99



WEDNESDAY	Demo 1: Segmental Retaining Walls Engage in interactive demonstrations where attendees participate in building segmental retaining walls. Learn essential techniques including proper excavation, base preparation, block installation, and coping firsthand through hands-on sessions.	Wednesday, October 22, 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM	HNA Upgrade
	Demo 2: Stairs, Returns & Columns: Elevating Your Hardscapes Dive into the crucial techniques of designing and building stairs and returns. Learn the proper techniques for grading, building strong structures, and finishing with precision—ensuring your hardscapes stand the test of time.	Wednesday, October 22, 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	HNA Upgrade
THURSDAY	Proven Recruitment Strategies That Attract the Right Talent for Your Hardscape Business Unlock the secrets to successful recruitment in the hardscape industry! Discover how to spot top talent, streamline your hiring process, and establish effective onboarding for a winning team.	Thursday, October 23, 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	\$99
	Demo 3: Paver Installations Learn about the world of paver installations through immersive demonstrations where you will actively engage in prepping base, laying pavers, cutting and fitting, and joint sanding. Gain practical skills and insights while working alongside industry experts.	Thursday, October 23, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	HNA Upgrade
	The Relationship Advantage: Turning Prospects into Partners Unlock the keys to forging authentic connections with prospects that foster lasting partnerships. This dynamic session offers actionable strategies for impactful outreach, effective follow-ups, and building trust.	Thursday, October 23, 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM	\$99
	Demo 4: Illuminating Hardscapes: Water, Fire, and Lighting Features Discover the art of integrating lighting, water features, and fire pits into your hardscapes. You'll get the chance to design and install these captivating features in minutes, learning best practices and maintenance tips for each.	Thursday, October 23, 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	HNA Upgrade
	Demo 5: Modern Tools that Will Revolutionize Your Workflow Get hands-on experience with the latest hardscape construction tools and equipment. Attendees have the opportunity to test out modern machinery, explore innovative technology, and learn time-saving techniques under the guidance of knowledgeable professionals.	Thursday, October 23, 2:30 PM - 3:30 PM	HNA Upgrade
FRIDAY	Demo 6: Outdoor Kitchens & Beyond: Design, Build, and Profit Transform your outdoor kitchen design skills! This hands-on session, led by industry experts, covers layout, bidding, and installation—ensuring client satisfaction and profitability. Delicious rewards await!	Friday, October 24, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	HNA Upgrade

CONTRACTOR EDUCATION



THURSDAY	Unlocking Profits: How to Break Into the Irrigation Business Tap into a booming industry! Learn how adding irrigation services can boost your revenue, attract more clients, and set your business apart.	Thursday, October 23, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	\$99
	Inside the System: A Deep Dive into the Anatomy of Irrigation Know what makes it work! Get a complete breakdown of the essential components in an irrigation system—how they function, how they fit together, and why they matter.	Thursday, October 23, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	\$99
	Irrigation Repair Made Easy: Fundamentals Every Contractor Should Know Fix it fast, fix it right! Master the essential repair skills that will keep your customers coming back and your business growing.	Thursday, October 23, 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	\$99
	Water Like a Pro: Irrigation Scheduling Strategies for Maximum Efficiency Smarter scheduling, healthier landscapes! Discover how to optimize watering schedules to conserve water, improve plant health, and boost your bottom line.	Thursday, October 23, 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	\$99
FRIDAY	Power Up Your Skills: Electrical Troubleshooting for Irrigation Pros Say goodbye to guesswork! Get hands-on strategies for diagnosing and fixing electrical issues in irrigation systems like a pro.	Friday, October 24, 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	\$99
	Mastering Irrigation Controllers: The Key to Efficiency & Profitability Take control of water management! Learn the fundamentals of programming and troubleshooting irrigation controllers to save time and maximize results.	Friday, October 24, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	\$99



WEDNESDAY	Communication Techniques to Reduce Conflict and Improve Customer Satisfaction Explore the power of communication with Don Rheem in this dynamic session. Discover techniques to speak confidently, navigate tough talks, and inspire your team to drive success and connection.	Wednesday, October 22, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	\$150
THURSDAY	Unlocking the 'Buy' Button: Mastering Customer Engagement for Lasting Relationships Unlock the secrets of customer loyalty with Don Rheem as he explores the neuroscience behind buying decisions. Learn to foster trust and turn clients into passionate brand advocates!	Thursday, October 23, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	\$150



THURSDAY	Plug In Outdoor Lighting to Your Business Offerings Join landscape lighting experts to explore the booming market! Discover the benefits of adding lighting services, get tips for success, avoid common pitfalls, and start your journey right.	Thursday, October 23, 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	FREE
	Hardscapes and Lighting – A Perfect Match Transform your hardscaping with landscape lighting to enhance your projects and elevate your business. Join experts as they share design tips, product recommendations, and innovative techniques.	Thursday, October 23, 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	FREE
FRIDAY	Lighting Design 201: Diving Deeper into Lighting Design Transforming outdoor spaces with lighting is an art. Discover how to elevate your designs from merely “lit” to “lit beautifully,” showcasing their true value and captivating your clients’ imaginations.	Friday, October 24, 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	\$99

CONTRACTOR EDUCATION



THURSDAY	Replacements for Glyphosate: Weed Control After Roundup Elevate your turf management skills! Discover effective strategies for identifying and controlling grassy, broadleaf, and sedge weeds, while mastering herbicide rotation to combat resistance.	Thursday, October 23, 9:30 AM -11:00 AM	\$99
	What's the Role of Incident Command and How Can it Help You in Emergencies? Explore the aftermath of Hurricane Helene with Bill Quade as he tackles the challenges of river crests, fallen trees, and communication breakdowns. Learn how to navigate emergencies effectively!	Thursday, October 23, 9:30 AM -11:00 AM	\$99
FRIDAY	Cultivating Leadership: Growing Your Influence in the Landscape Industry Unlock your leadership potential in landscaping with Sal Hernandez! Gain actionable insights on resilience, mentorship, and team empowerment. Enhance your skills and drive success in your organization!	Friday, October 24, 8:00 AM - 9:15 AM	\$99
	Managing Natural Turfgrass on High Traffic Common Grounds Discover the vital role of natural turfgrass in common areas! This session covers innovative traffic management strategies and turf selection to enhance quality and resilience under high foot traffic.	Friday, October 24, 8:00 AM - 9:15 AM	\$99

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MIÉRCOLES	Prácticas Culturales del Césped (Taught in Spanish) ¡Sumérgete en el mundo del cuidado del césped con este atractivo curso! Descubre técnicas esenciales como el corte, el riego y la fertilización, mientras dominas las prácticas que garantizan un césped vibrante y saludable.	Miércoles 22 de octubre, 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	\$99
	Aireación y Prácticas Culturales (Taught in Spanish) ¡Descubre los secretos del cuidado del césped en este curso dinámico! Explora técnicas esenciales como el corte, el riego y la fertilización, mientras dominas las prácticas secundarias para un césped vibrante y saludable.	Miércoles 22 de octubre, 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	\$99
JUEVES	Manejo de malezas en césped (Taught In Spanish) Descubra estrategias eficaces para el manejo de malezas en céspedes y césped. Esta sesión se centra en la identificación de malezas, la calibración del rociado y las últimas recomendaciones de herbicidas para combatir las malezas resistentes.	Jueves 23 de octubre, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	\$99
	De trabajador a líder: el desarrollo de su capataz (Spanish) ¡Descubre la clave del éxito en la contratación! Este dinámico seminario capacita a los capataces para cumplir plazos ajustados y mejorar la satisfacción del cliente, combinando liderazgo y trabajo en equipo práctico para obtener resultados óptimos.	Jueves 23 de octubre, 11:00 AM -12:00 PM	\$99
	Interpretación de las etiquetas de los plaguicidas para la industria del césped (Taught In Spanish) ¡Libera tu potencial en la industria del césped! Este curso le permite dominar las etiquetas de pesticidas, cubriendo términos clave, seguridad e impacto ambiental para el manejo responsable del césped.	Jueves 23 de octubre, 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	\$99
VIERNES	De trabajador a líder: el desarrollo de su capataz (Spanish) ¡Descubre la clave del éxito en la contratación! Este dinámico seminario capacita a los capataces para cumplir plazos ajustados y mejorar la satisfacción del cliente, combinando liderazgo y trabajo en equipo práctico para obtener resultados óptimos.	Viernes 24 de octubre, 11:00 AM -12:00 PM	\$99

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WEDNESDAY	Rev Up Your Dealership: More Profit, Less Headaches Join us for a workshop that transforms your dealership from chaos to clarity. Learn smart strategies to enhance operations, empower teams, and delight customers. Let's make your dealership thrive!	Wednesday, October 22, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	FREE
	Keep Customers Coming Back: How to Turn First-Time Buyers into Lifelong Fans Discover the secret to customer loyalty! Join Sara Clements-Hey from Bob Clements International to learn how to keep customers engaged and turning into raving fans for your dealership in 2026!	Wednesday, October 22, 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	FREE
THURSDAY	Finding and Hiring Great Employees: Build a Rockstar Team That Drives Results Finding the right employees can feel impossible. Join us for a workshop where we'll share proven strategies to attract and retain top talent for your dealership. Let's build a winning team together!	Thursday, October 23, 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM	FREE
	Smash Your Sales Goals and Set New Records in 2026 Ready to surpass your sales goals? Join Bob Clements to discover proven strategies top salespeople use to grow their customer base and boost sales. Learn to sell smarter and build unstoppable momentum!	Thursday, October 23, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	FREE



WEDNESDAY	How Contractors and Homeowners Buy Equipment & What it Means for Your Business Unlock the secrets of customer behavior in landscaping! Discover key insights on purchasing trends, project intentions, and the expectations of both homeowners and landscapers in this enlightening session.	Wednesday, October 22, 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	FREE
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THURSDAY	Unlocking Consumer Insights: What Drives Purchases? Join Consumer Reports for an exclusive session exploring the key factors influencing consumer behavior in the outdoor power equipment market. Learn about purchase drivers, trends, and CR's testing process to enhance your sales strategy.	Thursday, October 23, 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	FREE
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WEDNESDAY	Hydro-Gear - Hydrostatic Transmissions Join our immersive training course on Hydro-Gear Hydrostatic Transmissions, focusing on zero-turn and stand-on mowers. Gain hands-on skills in disassembly, reassembly, and essential repair techniques.	Wednesday, October 22, 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM or 12:30 PM - 3:30 PM	\$45
	Tuff Torq - Hydrostatic Transmissions Join our hands-on training course on Tuff Torq hydrostatic transmissions, focusing on zero-turn and stand-on mowers. Gain hands-on experience in disassembly and repair while mastering essential skills!	Wednesday, October 22, 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM	\$45
	ZMOST - ZTR Operator Safety Training Class This condensed ZMOST (Zero-Turn Operator Safety Training) course focuses exclusively on classroom instruction, covering key safety principles to ensure responsible and informed equipment operation.	Wednesday, October 22, 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM or 12:30 PM - 3:30 PM	\$45
	Mastering Engine & EFI Diagnostics: Fuel, Ignition, and Starting Systems Boost your diagnostic confidence with Rehko's hands-on session focused on solving engine starting and running issues. Learn proven techniques for troubleshooting fuel, ignition, and starter systems, including EFI and no-crank conditions.	Wednesday, October 22, 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM or 12:30 PM - 3:30 PM	\$45



WEDNESDAY	Unlocking Hidden Profits: The Financial Secrets OPE Dealers Don't Know They Don't Know Unlock your dealership's potential! Discover how hidden gaps in your financial statements can cost you. Trent Hummel will guide you to transform your balance sheet into a growth blueprint. Don't miss out!	Wednesday, October 22, 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	FREE
THURSDAY	Stop Giving Away Your Margin: Selling Smart in OPE Retail Unlock your profit potential! Many OPE dealers unwittingly diminish margins by buying down customer interest rates. Discover strategies to safeguard your profits and sell confidently without compromise!	Thursday, October 23, 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	FREE

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Dealers, how does a chance to win \$5,000 sound? STIHL is hosting a dealer giveaway during the show, and you won't want to miss your opportunity to win this incredible prize. Visit their booth by 10:25 AM to enter the drawing.

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POP QUIZ

Test your knowledge on common patch diseases in lawns

BY NATHAN MADER | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

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The patch diseases in turfgrass are a pesky problem for lawn care operators (LCOs) to deal with from late spring to the fall.

Being heavily weather dependent and causing tan or brown spots with wilting grass, dealing with brown, summer and large patch can be an annoying fungal fight that takes some experience to correctly identify and manage.

So, how does your knowledge of these turf pests stack up? Read about the differences between the three diseases and take the quiz below.

BROWN PATCH

Jay Wyrick, turf and ornamental agronomist at FineTurf in North Carolina, says brown patch (*Rhizoctonia solani*) forms in humid conditions when day and night cumulative temperatures reach roughly 150 degrees F (such as 80-plus degrees in the day and 70-plus degrees at night) mixed with some rain, humidity or excessive irrigation.

Once the disease has established itself, large, circular patches of brown turf will soon appear.

"You'll get these irregular black lesions or tan lesions that have a black smoke ring around them," Wyrick says. "It kind of makes the leaf almost shrivel in the middle, and typically you don't see it toward the tip of the blade."

Wyrick says once the weather starts showing signs of 150-plus degree F days and nights, he and his team ready propiconazole and azoxystrobin to provide chemical control.

LARGE PATCH

Large patch is similar to brown patch, coming from slightly different strains

of the *Rhizoctonia solani* fungus. However, instead of targeting turfgrass when the weather gets hotter and more humid, large patch more commonly attacks in the spring and fall when soil temperatures drop to 70 degrees F.

Another slight difference between large and brown patch is the damage it causes, with large, brown rings in the turf forming. Oftentimes, the center of the affected area will recover, resulting in a donut-like appearance.

Wyrick says azoxystrobin and propiconazole work on large patch, but he also recommends Xzemplar fungicide on warm-season turf for more broad-spectrum control with dollar and other leaf spot diseases.

SUMMER PATCH

Summer patch is where the diseases start to differentiate a bit more, as this fungus (*Magnaporthe poae*) primarily affects Kentucky bluegrass, annual bluegrass and fine fescues. Like brown patch, this summertime nuisance thrives in hot weather and is exacerbated by stressful conditions like compact soil, drought or heavy thatch.

Summer patch is known for producing irregular or crescent-shaped patches (often 6 inches to 3 feet across) that turn yellow to brown as the leaf blades die. Treating this fungus is especially important, as diseased areas may coalesce, making it harder to identify the problem in severe cases.



While azoxystrobin and propiconazole can be effective against summer patch, other ingredients such as myclobutanil can be used as well. 

PICK THE PATCH

Test your patch knowledge by reading each question, then pick which patch disease it's describing. Answers can be found below.

1. This patch is most commonly found in warm-season grasses:

- a. Brown
- b. Large
- c. Summer

2. If patches keep popping up in the same damp spaces every year in a lawn, it is most likely:

- a. Brown
- b. Large
- c. Summer

3. When investigating this patch, you find the roots and crowns to be dark and rotted. You suspect this is:

- a. Brown
- b. Large
- c. Summer

4. This turf disease is generally the quickest to spread, especially after prolonged leaf wetness in the grass:

- a. Brown
- b. Large
- c. Summer

5. When identifying this patch, an LCO notices the turf pulls up very easily and has no noticeable fungal growth, meaning it is likely:

- a. Brown
- b. Large
- c. Summer

Answers: 1. B; 2. B; 3. C; 4. A; 5. C

Durentis™ Insecticide Pro Tips for Lawn Care

Lindsey Hoffman Chappell, Ph.D., Green Solutions Team, Envu

Insect pests in home lawns can be problematic throughout the growing season and have the potential to cause significant damage. The best defense against any pest damage is a healthy, dense turf managed appropriately with cultural practices that promote stress tolerance. In addition, applications of preventative insecticides will protect turf against insect damage and reduce the need for increased management inputs (i.e., water and fertility) that would be required to promote turf recovery from pest injury.

Durentis™ insecticide by Envu is a broad-spectrum insecticide that can provide season-long control of many insects that can cause damage to home lawns. The active ingredient, chlorantraniliprole, provides excellent control of white grubs (Figure 1) and many caterpillar species, like fall armyworms (Figure 2). In addition, Durentis insecticide offers flexibility in application rate and timing depending on targeted insect species.



Fig. 1 White grub larvae



Fig. 2 Adult fall armyworm

White grubs

There are at least seven different species of annual white grubs that will feed on turfgrass roots, but most have similar life cycles:

- Overwinter as large larvae (fifth instar)
- Emerge as adults in late spring to mate and lay eggs, but only Japanese beetles feed as an adult
- Eggs hatch in midsummer and larvae start to feed on roots
- As larvae enlarge, they become targets for vertebrate feeding in the fall
- Larvae tend to move deeper in the winter with cold soils, and animal-feeding damage usually ceases depending on location

For white grub control, applications of Durentis insecticide can be timed when adults are first detected to give the active ingredient time to move into the soil where it can control the larvae. With the flexibility of this formulation, Durentis insecticide can also be applied mid-spring with a sequential application of a preemergence herbicide to maximize flexibility in lawn care logistics. The standard rate of Durentis insecticide is 2.7 fluid ounces per acre, which will provide 90 days or more of white grub control. By waiting until adults are seen, a lower rate of 1.3 fluid ounces per acre of Durentis insecticide will provide 60 days of residual control. The application should be watered-in with 0.125 inch of irrigation or rainfall.

Fall armyworms

Fall armyworms will usually infest a geography with adult moths flying in with a storm front or other high winds from southern Texas or southern Florida where they overwinter.

- Eggs are laid in groups of 100 to 200 (Figure 3), usually over three to five days upon arrival, and require about two to 10 days to hatch depending on temperature
- Fall armyworms damage turf by chewing plant tissue, with the most damage seen 14-21 days after storms pass
- The window of activity for fall armyworms can start early in the summer and may continue into October, with the potential for additional generations three to four weeks after initial activity



Fig. 3 Fall armyworm eggs

A preventative application of Durentis insecticide should be made shortly after adult moths or their eggs are detected on home siding, benches or other hard surfaces. Durentis insecticide will provide fairly rapid knockdown of existing caterpillars and will continue to provide 60 days of residual control at 1.3 fluid ounces per acre and 90 days of residual control at 2.7 fluid ounces per acre. For the most effective control of fall armyworms, let this application dry on the leaf and delay mowing for 24 hours. If targeting white grubs, the application should be watered-in, but it will also control fall armyworms as the active ingredient can translocate up into the leaves for ingestion.

Altogether, the combination of sound cultural practices to promote healthy turf along with preventative applications of Durentis insecticide will help protect turf throughout the season. As always, read the pesticide label prior to any application to ensure compliance with all regulations.

To learn more about how Durentis insecticide can protect turf, visit us.envu.com/lawn.



WITNESS THE DIFFERENCE

When healthy turf is your top priority, Durentis™ insecticide is the difference. With the lowest use rate in its class – thanks to its high concentration of chlorantraniliprole – you'll get season-long control of pests like white grubs and fall armyworms in just one simple application.

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People, products, plans for the future

LM Growth Summit connected Matt Freedman to other owners and vendors that helped him improve his services

BY LAUREN H. DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

From customers and professionals to vendors, the lawn care industry truly revolves around people. And for Matt Freedman, president of Beach Landscaping in Surfside Beach, S.C., it's about connecting with all of those groups.

So, it's no surprise one of his favorite parts of the job is seeing the satisfaction the finished product gives customers. He also stays connected with other owners from across the country by attending industry events at least once a year. Those shows and summits also allow him to keep up with new best practices and what's going on within the industry.

When he was invited to attend the annual *Landscape Management Growth Summit* last year, Freedman says he knew it would be a good opportunity to meet other professionals and learn from vendors in a one-on-one setting.

He was one of 36 attendees at the three-day event at Reunion Resort in Orlando, Fla. In addition to meeting with leading supplier partners and other lawn care professionals, Freedman attended education sessions, demoed new equipment, learned about lawn care products and heard valuable business insights.

In the 25th growing season with his company, Freedman says the most valuable part of the event was the interactions he had with others. He spent time with an owner from Virginia who was a little further along in scaling his business, so Freedman was able to hear that

owner's story and what has worked for him and his team.

"That was useful to put into force with what I'm doing here," Freedman says. "He has four times more residential customers than us, so I was able to ask him how he manages all of that. They have account managers who oversee 200 to 300 accounts. It gave me ideas on how, moving forward, we could scale that portion of our business."

But it wasn't only networking with the other professionals that left a lasting impression on him. Attendees also had the opportunity to be paired with leading supplier partners for a round of golf, and Freedman played with PBI-

Gordon product manager Sal Strano.

"It was really interesting talking to him," Freedman says. "He worked in my industry before on the maintenance side, so I got a lot of good tips from him about what he had been doing."

Freedman says he also enjoyed talking with other pesticide suppliers and learning about their products and how he could incorporate those into his own services.

"We have issues that are specific to the area we live that I was asking a lot of the vendors about," Freedman says. "They were able to share about products they have that help with the issues we have."

He connected with the team on site from Greene County Fertilizer

Co. during one of the after-hours events and has since begun using their products in addition to attending the company's own summit, Lawncology, a few months later.

Freedman also checked out the new equipment demoed at the LM Growth Summit, including a spreader/sprayer from Turfco. He had

"It's a no-brainer to go. It's a great opportunity to meet other business owners and learn from them and vendors."

MATT FREEDMAN



recently purchased one from another company, but he says he wasn't happy with its performance. After learning about the Turfco equipment and how it was user-friendly and easier to maintain, Freedman decided to return his current one and replace it with the machine Turfco showcased at the Summit.

From the products to the people, the LM Growth Summit was a worthwhile experience, Freedman says, and he encourages other lawn care professionals to apply to attend in the future.

"It's a no-brainer to go," Freedman says. "It's a great opportunity to meet other business owners and learn from them and vendors." 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.

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THE BIG ONE

First class to best in class

BY NATHAN MADER
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOCATION Houston, Texas

COMPANY Monarch Landscape Management

DETAILS Things didn't start the greatest for Monarch Landscape Management (MLM) when they first began on their "Belfiore Condominiums" project.

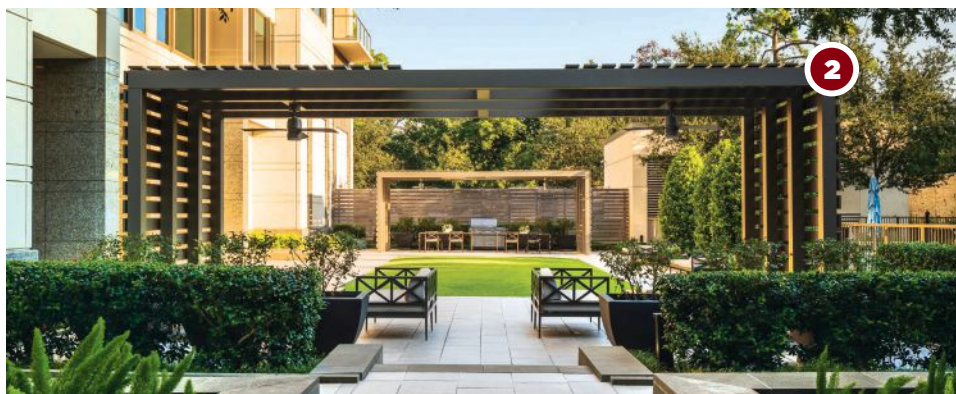
Taking the reins in March 2020, Chris Cornell, account manager for MLM, says it was only two weeks before the COVID pandemic really hit hard. It put a dent in their future plans, and most of the work was first focused on maintaining the property's overgrown trees, plant replacement and, overall, just getting it up to its multi-million-dollar expectations.

But before their execution on a large renovation could get underway, Texas suffered its big freeze event in February 2021, something Cornell says is still impacting tree and plant health to this day.

However, Cornell says the freeze made the team realize it needed to act quicker, and in March 2022, they kicked off renovations with the goal of giving residents a new landscape and outdoor space to be excited for.

The team focused heavily on plant diversification, planting and maintaining a variety of azaleas, ferns, herbs and much more in the walkable garden spaces and flower beds.

Despite the slow start, MLM won a gold award from the NALP's 2024 Awards of Excellence program for its efforts. 🏆



Captions | 1. Cornell says maintenance is done by the same crew of four every Monday. He says crew leader Valente Lopez and production manager Javier Belmontes deserve a massive shoutout for their proactive work and detailing on-site. 2. Foxtail fern and ligustrum hedges outline the entrance to the rear courtyard lawn. Cornell says the clients wanted artificial turf installations, grills and other backyard benefits to transform the site into a park-like space. 3. Cornell says a lot of research went into the plant selections. He says the board wanted an herb garden by the patio, and getting to pick unique plants to include was a cool experience. 4. Little gem magnolia trees are used to provide some extra privacy from nearby condominiums. Tree fertilizations and systemic insecticides are used on the magnolias as part of the plant health care program.

PRODUCTS THAT WORK



VANQUISH

COMPANY: Mean Green

URL: meangreenproducts.com

The Vanquish is Mean Green's first commercial-electric stand-on autonomous mower. It delivers up to eight hours of all-electric runtime with a 60-inch mulching rear discharge deck. Available now from Mean Green dealers nationwide, Vanquish features Greenzie self-driving technology that provides camera-based obstacle detection, live performance tracking and a call-back feature to return the mower to its starting position. Featuring a 22-kWh battery, the Vanquish has the flexibility to switch between autonomous and manual operation and is capable of speeds up to 11.5 mph.

Mean Green supports the Vanquish with a five-year limited battery warranty and a five-year limited mower warranty.



PRO-STANCE ULTRA

COMPANY: Gravely

URL: gravely.com/en-us

Gravely's new Pro-Stance Ultra stand-on mowers, unveiled during Equip Exposition 2024,

are now available. The mowers feature 52- and 60-inch decks, as well as a 72-inch electronic fuel injection offering. They carry over the proprietary deck-lift assist pedal from the existing Pro-Stance platform, which allows the operator to float the deck over roots and ruts without the need to remove their hands from the controls. The Pro-Stance Ultras are powered exclusively by 35- and 38.5-horsepower Kawasaki FX1000 and FX1000 EFI engines and feature a high-capacity 16-gallon fuel tank. With a focus on operator comfort, the Pro-Stance Ultras also have a wide, curved operator pad extending below knee height and pitched, forward-facing controls that are angled to reduce wrist strain.

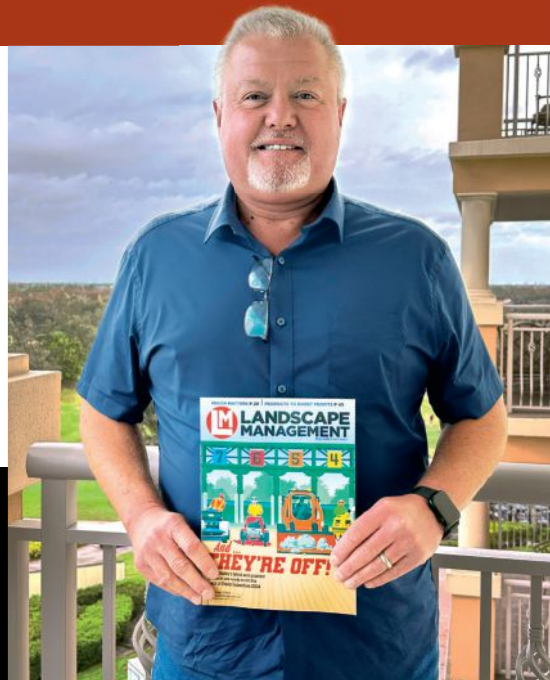


Continued on page 62

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Continued from page 61



QUIKTRAK

COMPANY: John Deere

URL: JohnDeere.com

Launched last year, the six models in the Q800 Series of the QuikTrak stand-on mowers offer compact designs that provide visibility, maneuverability and ease of operation, according to the company. The E Series models — the Q810E and Q820E — feature a single power take off (PTO) belt design and aluminum commercial mowing spindles that make changing mower blades simple and fast. The new Q800 M and R Series models (the Q820M, Q850M, Q850R and Q865R EFI) have been transformed from previous generations to amplify speed, comfort and power. They feature a wider horsepower range, with 27-hp carb and 34.5-hp EFI options, as well as the 7-Iron PRO decks in 48-, 54- and 60-inch sizes.



SO27

COMPANY: Grasshopper

URL: grasshoppermower.com

The company's most powerful stand-on mower ever, the OutStander SO37 was designed to combine the agility and precision of a zero-turn with an easy on/off build ideal for the start-and-stop nature of commercial work. The SO37 comes equipped with a 37-hp Vanguard V-Twin EFI engine, twin fuel tanks with a combined 9 1/4-gallon fuel capacity and 61- and 72-inch cutting deck options. Ride-smoothing enhancements like a wide antislip platform and coil-spring suspension ensure comfort, the company says. The SO37 also features an EZ Deck Lift Lever that allows operators to adjust cutting heights in one smooth move, and an adjustable Command Center Tower that can better align controls to the height of the operator.



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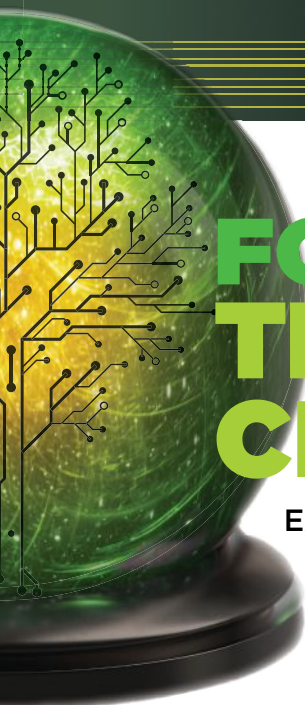
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FORTUNE TELLERS: TECH, TALENT AND CLIENT EVOLUTION

Explore how leading experts predict labor, technology and customer expectations will shape the landscape and lawn care industry by 2035. Discover key trends, challenges and opportunities to enhance your future success **BY MIKE ZAWACKI | CONTRIBUTOR**

Back in 2015, Tyler Reiter would have bet big that battery-powered equipment would never work commercially and that robot mowers were just a passing industry fad.

"I guess I got that wrong," jokes Reiter today, the second-generation owner and director of operations at Florida Image Landscaping. A decade ago, when Reiter's father, Scott, ran the business, he relied on traditional pen-and-paper methods.

Reiter says his approach reflected the broader challenge the West Palm Beach firm faced in integrating new technologies into its established practices.

However, when Reiter took the helm three years ago, his foresight led him to embrace robotic mowers and software solutions for tasks like payroll and job costing. His experience exemplifies technology's profound impact on a company's trajectory in a short period of time.

"Ten years ago, the thinking was stick to two-stroke (handheld equipment) and stick to gas-powered mowers," Reiter says. "But I would say us getting more in tune

with software was the one thing that we did that helped us grow."

Today, Florida Image's portfolio splits evenly between commercial and high-end residential clients. Its service focus is roughly 50 percent design-build and 50 percent maintenance, and under Reiter's three-year leadership, the company has grown rapidly from \$780,000 to \$2.2 million in revenue.

A decade ago, Ted Rightmire anticipated a surge by 2025 in embedded sensors, software and

Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), all connecting devices and systems and exchanging data over the internet. Working in conjunction, these technologies were set to facilitate automation, remote monitoring and improved

efficiency for landscape pros.

Today, however, the CEO of St. Paul, Minn.-based HindSite Software sees some of this tech in action in irrigation and landscaping, but its widespread adoption has fallen short of his original expectations.

"Talking to (landscape pros) back then, it would have been very focused on sales enablement and communication with clients," he says. "Kind of the same old

problems, but it would have been push-button type stuff—easy to implement, easy to run. And it has happened in some ways, but solving those problems effectively requires more work than we thought."

Everyone wishes for a crystal ball to hint at what the next decade holds, and entrepreneurs are no different. For owners and top managers of professional landscape and lawn care firms, understanding economic outlooks for 2035 directly informs strategic planning, investment decisions and service offerings.

Furthermore, these outlooks empower small business owners and managers to shift their strategic focus from reactive to proactive. Armed with these insights, leaders can navigate uncertainties more fluidly, preemptively mitigate risks and secure a stronger position for long-term success.

Experts broadly agree that the professional landscape and lawn care industry is poised for a favorable economic climate through 2035. This trend is driven by steady

Continued on page 174



Tyler Reiter



Ted Rightmire

Continued from page IT3

economic growth, predictions for sustained residential development and evolving consumer preferences towards convenience, sustainability and technologically advanced solutions. According to insiders, green industry firms that embrace these trends and adapt their services will be well-positioned to thrive in the challenges of 2035.

We asked leading experts and industry insiders to peer into their crystal balls and offer a glimpse of what they anticipate the defining trends in labor, technology and customer relations will be by 2035.

LABOR

Unsurprisingly, insiders predict that labor will remain a central industry concern in 2035. However, most anticipate that the focus and priorities will evolve throughout the coming decade.

According to Lee Edwards, president and CEO of Hilton Head, S.C.-based The Greenery, securing middle management personnel will be of paramount importance to landscape and lawn care companies in 2035.

Historically, entry-level roles are routinely filled by new crew members operating string trimmers and mowers, Edwards explains. Over time, these individuals advance into roles in production management, customer relations or operations management.

Edwards theorizes that the current difficulty in recruiting and retaining these entry-level staff will, within a decade, create significant mid-management gaps in the developmental pipeline as tenured employees retire. He fears this will become a critical hurdle by 2035.



Lee Edwards

"I think that's going to be a huge challenge," Edwards says. "A lot of people don't see landscaping as a career. And because of that, we don't have a lot of young people ... who want to get into those middle management roles. So, that's been really hard for us to fill those positions these days. In 10 years, it's going to be a real challenge."

Landscape companies with

strong cultures commonly retain employees for decades. However, as this established labor force ages out, HindSite's Rightmire warns companies risk losing a wealth of institutional knowledge.

According to Rightmire, new industry entrants lack the decades of nuanced experience that veteran professionals possess. Therefore, to adequately prepare for 2035, he emphasizes the need for developing rapid and effective training methodologies that transfer this legacy knowledge to the next generation.

"So, it's using technology like artificial intelligence (AI) to help

troubleshoot, diagnose and recommend fixes (for an accelerated training program) and bridge this gap," he says.

TECHNICAL SYNERGY

In 2015, the concept of robotic mowers was entirely off Carlos Teles' professional radar. However, a serendipitous conversation with a client a few years ago, highlighting the benefits of robotic mowers for his maintenance operation, completely transformed the perspective of the Martha's Vineyard-based owner of Teles Landscaping, making him a firm convert.

"In the next 10 years, the improvements in the technology will come much faster," says Teles, whose firm splits evenly between maintenance and full-service design-build work for a client portfolio that is 90 percent high-end residential. "In 10 years, they're going to be everywhere."

Continued on page IT6



Experts agree finding labor and training that allow employees to embrace technological advances will remain a concern in 2035.



Carlos Teles

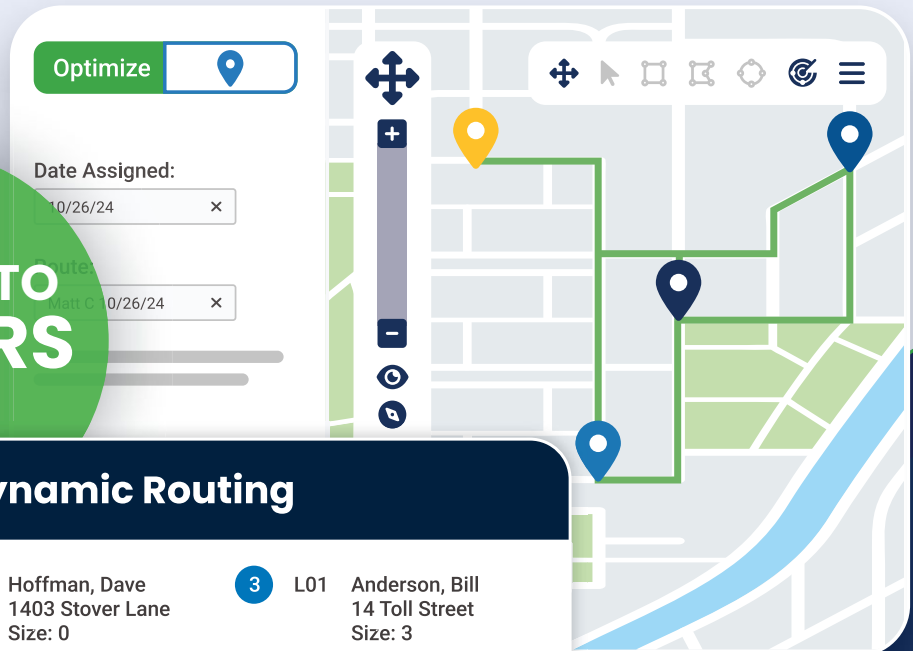


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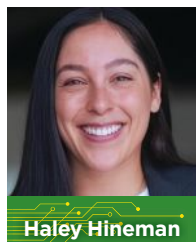
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Teles fully expects the integration of robotics, AI and maximized battery efficiency to drive rapid industry-wide adoption of these technological advancements. In fact, many insiders envision technology playing a transformative role among landscape professionals by 2035. They predict immense potential across every facet of the workflow, from business management to site condition analysis.

However, many recognize the need for significant innovation in next-generation technology over the next decade. Insiders readily point to vast opportunities and potential in developing new software, integrating AI and creating tailored applications across every facet of the landscape and lawn care industry.

The nature of back-office work makes it most susceptible to immediate and rapid technological gains. Therefore, Bobyards' Haley Hineman predicts technology will first revolutionize time-intensive tasks like estimating, cold calling and lead generation.

In contrast, Hineman, chief of staff at the San Francisco-based AI-powered landscape and construction estimating software provider, believes the automation of fieldwork will progress at a slower pace over the next decade. The hands-on nature of these tasks, which demand extensive historical knowledge and precision, presents a considerable challenge for technological replication. Teaching a robot to perform complex outdoor labor, she explains, is inherently more difficult to achieve.



Haley Hineman

However, Hineman firmly believes that software and hardware are on a collision course to converge over the next decade, and she's excited by the future possibilities. Today, a landscape professional might utilize a drone for a basic site walkthrough. But imagine a future where drones not only conduct site walkthroughs but also perform tasks such as pruning, she says. This blending of worlds, where software drives robotic hardware to execute tasks, represents the core of her vision for the landscape industry in 2035.

"There's so much software to be built yet, and so much robotics to be built," Hineman adds. "So, in that crystal ball, when those things finally do come together, it will make something really magical."

In the coming decade, landscape pros will no longer be solely defined by their ability to cut grass and manage residential and commercial properties. Instead, the true differentiator will be a company's proficiency in utilizing technology to foster growth and enhance efficiency, says Bill Benoit, a landscape industry veteran and vice president of sales and marketing at Charlotte, N.C.-based Boss by Integra, a provider of business management systems for the landscape and snow industries.

While this might seem counterintuitive to those deeply rooted in the industry's hands-on traditions, Benoit says technology and the industry are becoming inextricably linked. He adds that landscape professionals who effectively leverage integrated software platforms and customer relationship management (CRM) tools will be significantly better positioned for success.

"These technological adoptions are crucial for scaling operations, retaining skilled talent, efficiently managing costs and adapting to the dynamic shifts within the industry and the broader global landscape," he says.

The landscape industry has historically resisted rapid adoption of high-tech innovations, but Benoit hypothesizes this trend may finally reverse by 2035, and he's betting the next generation will be a major driver behind this movement.

"Our industry has been slow to adopt technology, and I'm not really sure why," Benoit adds. "But as we experience a generational shift over the next decade, this next generation of young people, who are much more tech savvy (than previous generations), may drive a more rapid adoption of this technology into the industry."



Bill Benoit

CLIENT EXPECTATIONS

As the landscape and lawn care industry evolves over the next decade, insiders anticipate client expectations will adapt in tandem. In fact, many companies are already leveraging tools like customer portals and real-time reporting systems that provide seamless comprehensive reporting. Though not universally adopted in 2025, many believe chatbots and automated notification systems will become industry standards, driven by client demand.

Just like in the workforce, the newer, younger generation of clients craves instant gratification. Over the next decade, landscape veteran

Jim van Dijk believes this will drive the landscape industry to reevaluate its approach to client communications and service delivery.

“Another big thing that we’re going to have to figure out is how do we communicate and adapt to (the customer’s) need for instant information and instant gratification,” says The Greenery’s director of client services. “We see this in all aspects of the service industry where they’re opening up new client portals and communication tools. So, how does the landscape industry ensure its clients have a better experience?”

“We’re used to having a conversation with a client when they’re unhappy,” van Dijk adds. “Today, people just fire you, and you don’t understand what really happened

or have the opportunity to talk it out. So, our clients and the public are adapting, and we have to figure out how to provide them with information in a way they don’t have to question.”

Just as human involvement remains vital in field operations, insiders contend that future automation will never fully replace the human element in customer acquisition and retention. Benoit, for one, finds automated communication inherently unconvincing and firmly believes the human aspects will remain critical elements in the client success equation for 2035.



THE INDUSTRY

With its low barriers to entry, the landscape industry has always welcomed passionate, hardworking, entrepreneurial-minded individuals. Mom-and-pop operations — one-truck-and-a-mower ventures — are as prevalent today as they were 50 years ago, and insiders predict this will remain alive and well in 2035.

While this fosters opportunities for new ventures, it also intensifies competition in a market that has seen considerable consolidation fueled by seemingly limitless private equity dollars. Consequently, many envision a varied, highly competitive business landscape by 2035.

Continued on page IT8

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The concern, according to Rightmire, isn't private equity's market domination, but rather the squeeze on midsized companies.

"There's always going to be room for small operators, because they can compete on price like nobody else can," he says. "But the mid-size operators are going to struggle because they need to distinguish themselves based on service."

Rightmire says AI-enhanced technology will redefine the next decade by collecting, managing and rapidly delivering real-time information and operational analytics to landscape contractors and their customers. This crucial insight will empower midsized businesses to compete and thrive amid the challenging 2035 market.

Reiter envisions a more evolved and unified professional landscape community by 2035. He hopes that a stronger sense of collaboration and mutual support between newer and existing generations of landscape and lawn care professionals will propel the industry forward.

"I've been working hard to bring companies together — people from my generation," Reiter says. "My father's generation was so big on ... not sharing numbers, processes and best practices. It was taboo to have open dialogues about what you were doing differently or how you were handling (operational strategies)."

As the industry approaches the next decade, Reiter sees a positive shift towards greater transparency, particularly among younger,

smaller businesses leveraging platforms like YouTube and social media. He aspires to see more robust social connectivity between landscape professionals, convinced it will empower professionals to elevate one another and achieve new levels of success.

"I would love to see more of a social network for landscape contractors and really bring each other up and help each other get to that next level. Every company is different, but we all have the same issues. Here's what I'm doing right, and now I want to teach you guys how to do it." 

Mike Zawacki is a Cleveland-based journalist and frequent contributor who has covered various aspects of the green, horticultural, sports turf, and irrigation industries for the last 20 years.

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WHY YOUR SPREADSHEETS ARE SABOTAGING YOUR LANDSCAPING SUCCESS

By Eli Zevin, General Manager, Landscaping • Aspire

Landscaping companies face a fundamental problem: operational fragmentation. Every day, landscape contractors lose money not because they lack skilled crews or quality equipment, but because their business processes are scattered across disconnected systems that don't communicate.

The Hidden Cost of Disconnected Operations

When your estimating software doesn't talk to your scheduling system, and your field crews work from printed sheets while your office operates from digital dashboards, you're hemorrhaging profits. A single miscommunication can turn a profitable lawn maintenance contract into a loss. An outdated fertilizer cost in your estimating system can lock you into seasonal agreements that barely break even. A scheduling mix-up can damage relationships with property managers who control multiple commercial accounts.

This fragmentation forces landscaping business owners to become full-time problem solvers instead of strategic leaders. They spend their days firefighting communication breakdowns rather than growing their companies. The result? Stagnant landscaping businesses that struggle to scale beyond what one person can personally manage.

Speed Through Integration

Aspire creates a single source of truth for your entire landscaping operation. When a property manager accepts a recently proposed enhancement, the update is instantly

transmitted to estimating, scheduling and purchasing systems simultaneously. Your crew leader receives the updated service details on their mobile device within seconds, not hours. Mulch and plant material costs are updated across all estimates, ensuring that every landscape installation bid reflects current rates.

This integration transforms response times from days to minutes. Client requests for seasonal color changes, which once required multiple phone calls and email chains, are now resolved with a few clicks. Emergency schedule adjustments due to weather now happen seamlessly across your entire landscaping team.

Efficiency Through Automation

The platform eliminates repetitive tasks that consume valuable hours in landscaping operations. Route optimization automatically arranges your crews' daily mowing schedules for maximum efficiency. Completed jobs are surfaced automatically upon completion. Renewal reminders for seasonal services are triggered based on predetermined workflows to ensure existing contracts are proactively renewed.

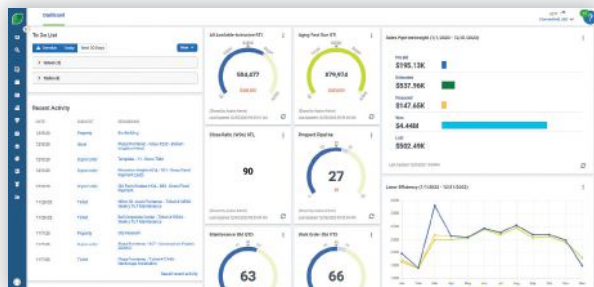
But the real efficiency gain comes from data visibility specific to landscaping. Real-time job costing shows you which services—maintenance, installation, or enhancement—are most

profitable, which crew combinations work best for different property types, and where you're losing money on contracts. GPS tracking reveals actual travel times between properties, helping you build lawn care routes more accurately and schedule landscape installations more efficiently.

Agility Through Intelligence

Most importantly, Aspire gives landscaping businesses the agility to adapt quickly to changing conditions. When rain forces you to reschedule mowing jobs, the system helps you find the best backup days based on which lawns need cutting most and which clients are most flexible. When your supplier raises fertilizer prices or plant costs change with the season, those new prices are accessible within the platform for updating all your pending estimates.

This operational agility directly translates into a competitive advantage. While other landscaping contractors struggle with rigid systems and manual processes, Aspire users respond more quickly to seasonal opportunities, deliver more consistent lawn care services, and make decisions based on real-time data rather than outdated assumptions.



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AUTOMATING THE PROFESSION

A trio of university researchers weigh in on autonomous mowing for the landscape and lawn care industries and the benefits it can deliver

BY J. SCOTT MCELROY, PH.D.; LUCAS RAMON NUNES; AND JOHN KAMINSKI, PH.D. | CONTRIBUTORS

Robotic mowers are a point of much discussion in the professional lawn care industry. When we first started doing research on robotic mowers for lawn care, we immediately met resistance from lawn care professionals.

And for good reason. If the perception is that a homeowner can automate a process like mowing lawns, this could take work away from the lawn care industry. Mowing is a key component of the multi-million-dollar professional lawn care industry, and reducing it through automation could potentially disrupt the livelihood of thousands. Resistance and the fears were definitely warranted.

What we have experienced, though, is that mowing automation remains in the early adopter phase among homeowners. In fact, most homeowners are still oblivious to the fact that autonomous mowers even exist. The majority who have bought and used mowers are hobbyists with an interest in gadgets that decrease their work and improve their lives in different ways. Most importantly, they are willing to invest

the upfront time to set up a mower or other technology. In our experience, a homeowner trying to use a robotics mower without the right drive and motivation will quit at the first problem.

Homeowners can also buy the mower from a professional and have them set it up. But in our experience, as soon as that professional sets up that mower, they will get a call for every single problem the mower encounters. No matter the level of training and work to educate the homeowner, the professional will be the manager of that equipment. And returning to a location to fix a robotic mower can be an enormous drain on the bottom line.

AUTOMATION AS A SERVICE

We think that lawn care professionals should consider deploying robotic mowers for individual clients. Instead of being wary of this technology, professionals should do the math, which says that companies can deploy different types of robots for customers that the companies own, which leads to a bigger profit margin and reduces return time to locations.

While mowing may be a key component of professional lawn care, anyone who is worth their salt in this industry knows the margins for mowing are thin. Automated mowing could decrease travel and location revisits to potentially improve mowing profitability. We are not going to pretend to solve the economic problem with this one article, but to start the process, we are going to review the basics of the technology available.

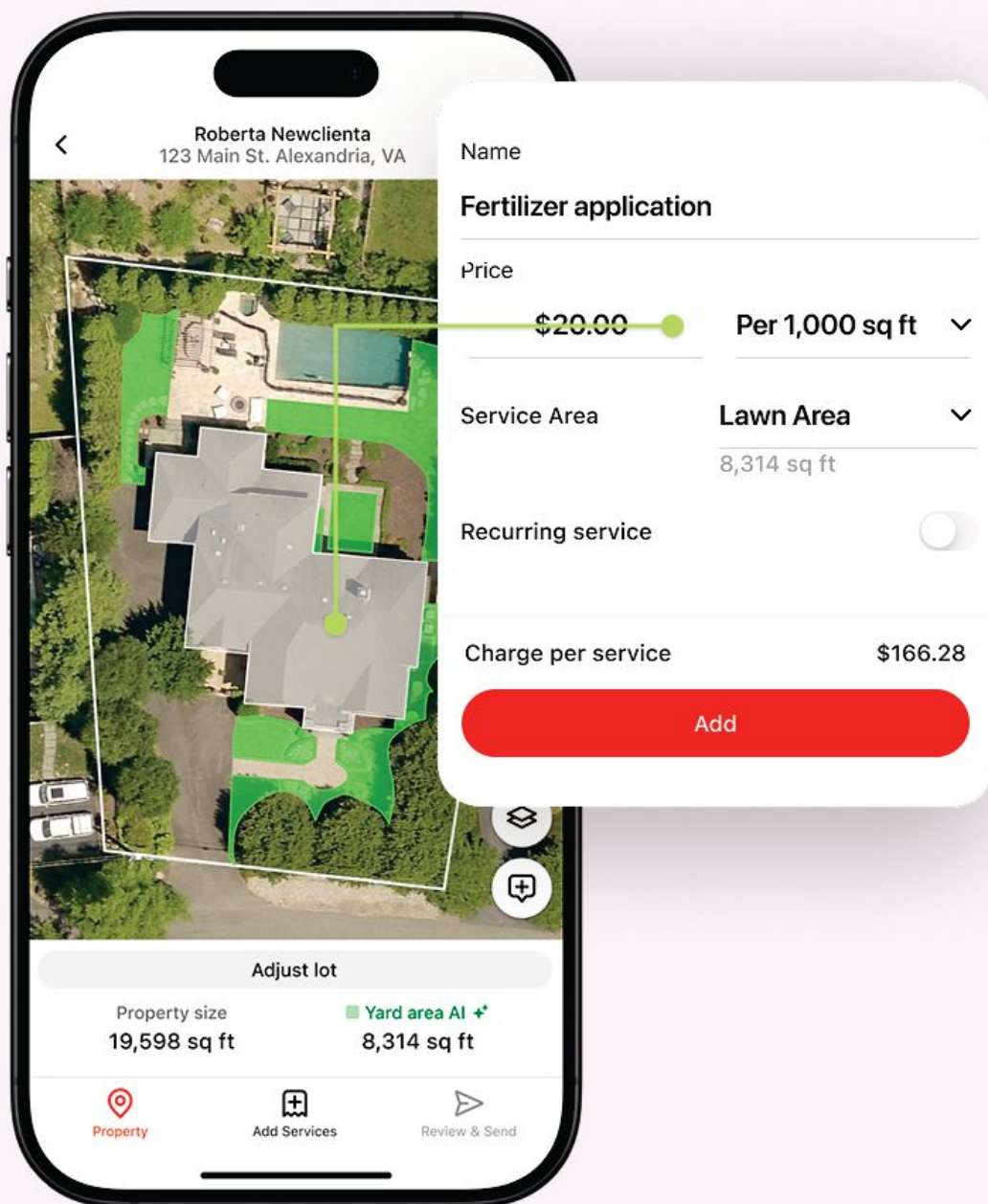
THE BASICS

Robotic technology can be broken down into two groups — fully autonomous and semi-autonomous. Fully autonomous robotic mowers operate from a charging station, have a defined zone they work in and conduct deploy-work cycles on a daily basis without any

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intervention. Fully autonomous mowers are housed at a location and cannot be taken to a new location to work.

Semi-autonomous can be moved from location to location and are not married to a specific location only. There are two types of semi-autonomous mowers — deployed semi-autonomous, which we call “drop and mow,” and large semi-autonomous. Deployed semi-autonomous are of similar cutting technology and size as fully autonomous and do not need to be monitored when in operation. Large semi-autonomous must have an operator present to monitor the device while in operation.

When it comes to fully autonomous mowers, there are two means of deployment — wire-bound and GPS-RTK. Wire-bound units must have wire buried in the ground that acts as an electromagnetic fence that contains the mowers. The mowers mow in a random pattern and usually can cover an area approximately a third less than a systematic mower of the same size. A GPS-RTK mower uses satellite positioning via GPS or other global navigation satellite systems combined with a local antenna/beacon/reference station that increases positioning precision. The antenna is the RTK (or real-time kinematic) portion of the GPS-RTK and is what gives it the precision to operate exactly where it is supposed to.

Mowers deployed with only GPS-RTK can have problems with connectivity in all situations. To overcome this issue, companies are layering on computer vision, which is the integration of cameras to help mowers “see” what is around them. Not only do they allow the mowers to see, but they can also create a virtual map that allows them to navigate when they lose signal.

On the face of it, why would anyone want to deploy a wire-bound mower? There are three primary reasons:

- They don’t need satellite or RTK station signals, so they can work under trees and very close to buildings.
- They are incredibly reliable. Once the wire is in the ground, mowers can work for months without the need for human intervention. The reduced need for human intervention is critical to making the use of robots economically viable.
- They are less expensive. Wire can be installed in the winter months when there is downtime, so mowers are ready to go when the grass starts growing.

FORMING A GAME PLAN

Over the past two years, there have been multiple companies that have introduced robotic mower technology.



Commercial autonomous mowers like Husqvarna's Ceora are wireless GPS-RTK units.

The “wow factor” has been off the charts, with high-quality commercials and videos produced to promote these new products. It is important to see through all these factors and find an answer to the most important question — “Are robotic mowers economically viable for professional lawn management?”

Based on our experience, we present four options we think are best for professional lawn care. These are not in order of preference. Here are our thoughts and opinions on the pros and cons of each of these options.

Wire-bound units. People hate wire and hate the thought of putting wire in the ground. The thought of breaks and wire-break repairs just seems like an enormous headache they don’t want to deal with. But the fact of the matter is that cheap wire-bound units are the most reliable technology for automated deployment. We have literally seen Husqvarna wired mowers running for nearly a decade in Europe. The technology is simpler; therefore, there are fewer problems.

But, of course, one of those problems is the wire itself. When we have done installations, we use copper braided wire with thick plastic insulation. We also use standard direct burial yolks (DBYs) with wire nuts commonly used for irrigation connections. They are stronger and they last longer.

GPS units with computer vision. I am going to jump straight past mowers that are GPS-RTK units to GPS-RTK with vision. Computer vision solves a major issue for lawn care deployment — loss of position. Computer vision allows the mower to create a visual map of the area, so when the signal is weak or is lost, the mower can position itself via the virtual map. In our opinion, GPS-RTK alone in most lawns that have trees, fences and close mowing to the house are too prone to signal loss. In our evaluations, only Kress (kress.com/en-us) has been able to hold a GPS-RTK

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signal alone well in home lawns. Redundant layers of positioning make home lawn deployment a reality.

There are too many mowers to cover in this section, but some we have evaluated include Segway Navimow (us.navimow.com), Mammotion Luba 2 (us.mammotion.com), Novabot/BestMow (best-mow.com) and Sunseeker (sunseekerelite.com).

Small drop-and-mow systems. Drop and mow is a system of deployment that allows mowers to be dropped off at the lawn, where they can complete the mowing and then notify the user when it is finished. Drop and mow allows lawn care operators to map out hundreds of lawns that can be managed simply by dropping off the mowers.

Nexmow (nexmow.com) recently rolled out the M2 mower that has GPS-RTK and computer vision and can be deployed as a drop and mow or with a charging station, giving it the flexibility to remain at a location.

Large semi-autonomous systems. Drop and mow can also be utilized with larger mowers such as those that use technology from Greenzie (greenzie.com) or produced by Scythe (scytherobotics.com) or

FJDynamics (fjdynamics.com), but these mowers may be too large for some lawns. These mowers are ideal for high-acreage areas like parks and large-mowed areas.

FINAL THOUGHTS

We realize that change can be disconcerting. You may own or work at a professional lawn care company that you have built with your own sweat and blood. You have given your all to the development of systems that work to make your business profitable and economically sustainable.

But automation is coming whether you want it or not. The time to embrace the future is now, to figure out how this technology can be used to your advantage before it undercuts what you have worked so hard to build. 📺

J. Scott McElroy, Ph.D., is a professor at Auburn University where he teaches advanced turfgrass management, computational thinking for agriculture, and researches turfgrass robotics and weed science. Lucas Ramon Nunes is a Ph.D. candidate at Auburn focusing on research in robotics for turfgrass management. John Kaminski, Ph.D., is a professor at Penn State University where he manages the Golf Course Turfgrass Management Program and conducts research in turfgrass agronomy and pathology.

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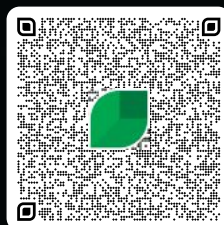
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- Retiring in Place
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HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

Mid-century makeover

BY NATHAN MADER
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOCATION Barrington Hills, Ill.

COMPANY Mariani Landscape

DETAILS When it comes to American architecture, not many names stand out more than Frank Lloyd Wright. So, when trying to modernize one of his last standing designs, there's a lot of pressure to stay true to the original masterpiece.

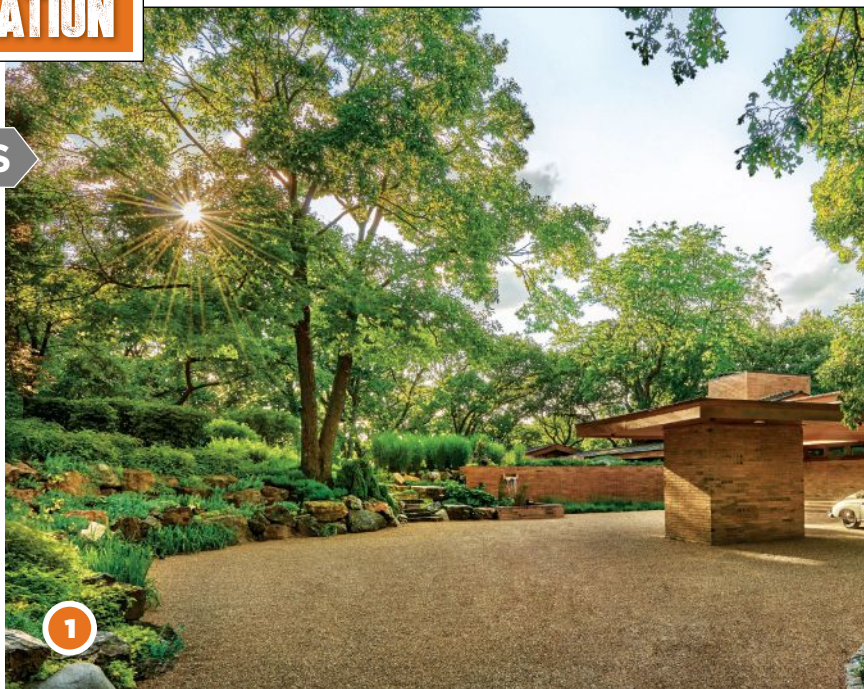
"It was kind of a thrill though, just to work on a project like that with that significance," says Tony LoBello, design principal for Mariani. "That was a privilege, and at the same time, you're a little bit nervous because you're treading on history."

The residential home was designed in 1957, and LoBello says the 10-acre site sits in the middle of thick woodlands.

The project included a complete overhaul of the outdoor spaces, as much of it had been completely overgrown with the oak forest and buckthorn. Lawns and gardens were added with sweeping views from the house, and LoBello says it was key to keep that mid-century prairie aesthetic that Wright had used in the original design.

LoBello also says restoration was important, and in the three years working on the project, the house saw its parking area, border wall, water feature and more freshly modernized. And to connect these new and improved spaces, decking and walkways that mimicked the design's horizontal lines were installed.

And to (hopefully) make Wright proud of what his design has become, Mariani Landscape's "Mid-Century Mastery" project won the company a gold award from the NALP's 2024 Awards of Excellence program. 



PHOTOS: TONY SOLURI



Captions | **1.** The parking area was updated for larger, modern cars and use. LoBello says the car in the driveway was loaned for this special photoshoot. **2.** The wall next to the parking area needed a complete renovation, and LoBello says the materials used for this project were blended and extended with Wright's original build. **3.** An old footpath existed that was unsafe for walking, so the renovations connected the property with new stone stairs and paths. **4.** LoBello says it wasn't a heavy planting project, but they did install ornamental grasses for the prairie aesthetic, hawthorn species and a perennial garden. Plantings had to be deer resistant. **5.** LoBello says the property has a slight Japanese flair mixed into the prairie vibes, and balancing the two aesthetics was done through details like the colorful perennial garden and sprawling turf fields. **6.** The property is located on a hilltop with severe elevation changes. LoBello says water played a factor in the renovations, as storms and rains were quick to wash away their work on the hillsides. **7.** The teahouse and surrounding boulders were an original part of Wright's design. **8.** LoBello says the soil provided some challenges when picking and planting vegetation. Clay and sand were very prevalent, making it tough to grow anything other than the large oak trees.

INSTALLATION IRON

Compact machines, big rewards

Skid-steers and compact track loaders can help design-build contractors cut costs and increase productivity **BY SARAH WEBB | CONTRIBUTOR**



By using compact equipment for residential hardscape projects, design-build companies can slash labor costs and reduce equipment needs while cranking up efficiency and stacking up profits.

“The big thing is doing more jobs and getting them done quicker because that’s how the landscaper is making money,” says Emily Pagura, product marketing manager at John Deere.

Here’s a look at how using skid-steers and compact track loaders (CTLs) can help design-build contractors level up their hardscape game.

THE UPSIDES

Many residential hardscape projects take place in tight backyards with limited access. In the past, design-build companies had to budget more time and money for manual labor because large equipment couldn’t access those areas.

“Now, you can get a small CTL or skid-steer through a 36-inch-wide gate,” says Michael Fitzgerald, marketing manager for Bobcat Co. “These machines also minimize disturbance to existing surfaces.”

The equipment’s compact footprint also allows for increased maneuverability, without compromising on power or performance, says Dylan Freeman, product manager at Takeuchi-U.S.

“Contractors can navigate around landscaping features and operate close

PHOTO: JOHN DEERE

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to structures with precision,” Freeman says. “They can also move quickly across a site, even in muddy conditions and get materials exactly where they need to go.”

Finally, because the machines feature a smaller footprint, they are also easier to transport, Pagura says.

WHAT'S TRENDING

Compact machines have come a long way from what was manufactured even a decade ago. For example, electric-over-hydraulic (EH) controls allow operators greater precision and customization, Freeman says.

“Operators can fine-tune how the machine responds, adjusting loader arm and travel sensitivity to match the task at hand or their personal preferences,” Freeman says. “That’s especially valuable when transitioning between rough grading, material placement or working around existing landscape features.”

However, EH controls aren’t the

only tool that zeroes in on precision, Fitzgerald says. Lasers and even GPS systems incorporated on grader attachments can add an extra level of finesse.

THE RIGHT ATTACHMENT MIX

By adding attachments into the mix, contractors can reduce the need to purchase or rent multiple pieces of equipment or subcontract specialized work. Integrating attachments also enables DBI pros to stay up and running even in the “off season.”

“You don’t just buy a machine and have a bucket and set of pallet forks anymore,” Fitzgerald says. “You enhance that machine’s utilization using attachments and keep one machine working in a cost-effective manner.”

Further enhancing the time savings of using attachments, many machines come with quick-attach and intuitive control systems that allow operators to change attachments in minutes, Freeman says.

Companies can use the machines’

attachments to perform the following types of work:

- **General-purpose and grading buckets.** Site prep, material transport and finish work.
- **Pallet forks.** Handle hardscape materials like pavers and sod pallets.
- **Augers.** Plant trees and shrubs and dig retaining wall footing.
- **Trenchers.** Dig irrigation and drainage systems.
- **Graders.** Level a site.
- **Power rakes and soil conditioners.** Prep a site.
- **Angle brooms and landscape rakes.** Clear debris and perform final cleanup.
- **Snow pushers and plows.** Remove snow and ice.

Because new attachments are coming out all the time, Pagura suggests contractors stay in touch with their dealer. 

Sarah Webb is a freelance writer based in Cleveland and the former managing editor of *Landscape Management*.



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"My favorite tool that I use is, hands down, the zip level. The simplicity of it and the ease of use make elevations, layouts and placements faster and easier. The zip level is quickly replacing a transit (level) for my team. I grew up in the industry and have spent the last 18 years using transits and have come to be a believer in the zip level. I've been elevating some of my crew leaders quicker with it, and now they are starting to do their own shots."



**JARED
BATCHELDER**
PROJECT MANAGER,
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"For the last few seasons, we have been blessed with landing multiple large commercial hard-scape projects, many with elevated courtyards. On each of these projects, you will find an iQMS362 dustless masonry saw. The iQ saws help us stay compliant with the silica safety regulations and save man-hours on cleanup since we aren't generating concrete slurry. The iQ's taller 16-inch blade is also great for wall block and cap cuts, minimizing the number of tools we need to drag up onto a roof."



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DIRECTOR OF
LANDSCAPE
OPERATIONS,
ATLAS OUTDOOR
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"From a design and build perspective, the U-Level by Smart Level has been invaluable. It significantly reduces the time spent creating terrain models by allowing quick elevation checks and seamless 3D-mapping integration. The ability to verify elevations on-site without interrupting crews or resetting transit equipment streamlines the workflow. While we're also testing Moasure, the U-Level currently plays a critical role from initial design through project completion."



JEREMY ROSS
VICE PRESIDENT
OF CONSTRUCTION,
K&D LANDSCAPING
WATSONVILLE, CALIF.

"This answer may be a little different than what you'd hear from our crew members, but I am going to say our laser site levels. We use DeWalt outdoor rotary site levels primarily. On a large-square-foot project, it is imperative that all the areas of scope line up with each other. The site level is a small and effective tool to make everything line up seamlessly."

FROM THE SOURCE

From theory to game changer

How Weathermatic's SmartLink technology went from pie-in-the-sky thinking to a true landscaping innovation **BY LEX MASON | CONTRIBUTOR**

In the early 2000s, most irrigation companies were making their controllers more complicated. They added more buttons and confusing menus.

Meanwhile, contractors were stuck in the same old routine — drive to Site A to adjust a timer, drive to Site B to replace a broken head that's been flooding for three days, drive to Site C because the client called about brown spots that could have been prevented with a simple schedule change.

Every day was reactive maintenance. Every problem was a surprise. Every service call ate into margins. But Bill Savelle at Weathermatic had a different idea. "I only limit myself by my own visualization," Savelle says. "You have to be a consistent learner and educate yourself to stay current."

This thinking led him to ask a simple question that would change everything: What if you never had to drive to a jobsite to fix irrigation again?

THE VISION

Savelle's question foresaw a different

future. What if you could monitor every system remotely? What if you caught problems before clients noticed? What if adjustments took 30 seconds on your computer or phone instead of 30 minutes in traffic?

Back then, there were serious limitations to consider when it came to remote options. Wi-Fi controllers weren't reliable for outdoor installations. Radio-based systems were too complicated for most crews to program and troubleshoot. These early technologies required technical skills that most irrigation teams didn't have.

The breakthrough came unexpectedly during the 2008 housing crisis. While the economy was crashing and everyone was cutting costs, banks were under intense pressure to prove they were being responsible with resources. Water conservation had become a mandate, not just a nice-to-have.

That's when a major bank approached Weathermatic with a bold proposal. They wanted to retrofit over 200

commercial properties with SmartLink technology, even though it was still in beta testing. The contract was worth \$1.4 million. Think about that: During the worst economic downturn in decades, a major financial institution was willing to bet serious money on unproven wireless irrigation technology.

THE RESULTS

Four months later, the bank's facilities manager called with news that stunned everyone. The water savings were so dramatic that they had already recovered their entire \$1.4 million investment. Not over years; in four months. The beta version of SmartLink had eliminated waste, caught leaks before they became disasters and optimized watering schedules across 200-plus properties so effectively that the water bill savings paid for the entire system in one-third of a year.

This wasn't just a successful pilot program. This was proof that wireless irrigation control could deliver immediate, massive returns even during an economic crisis when every dollar mattered.

What seems obvious today — remote monitoring, predictive maintenance, smartphone control — was revolutionary 20 years ago. The idea came from an engineer who understood that contractors should spend their time growing their business, not chasing irrigation problems.

SmartLink technology is now standard for many landscape professionals. It helps thousands of contractors transform their irrigation operations from cost centers into profit drivers. The technology has made remote monitoring and proactive maintenance the industry standard, proving Savelle's original vision that you should never have to make unnecessary trips to jobsites. 

Lex Mason is the president of Weathermatic.



CUTTING EDGE
Weathermatic president Lex Mason unveiled the SmartLink Connect system at SmartCon 2025.

PHOTOS: LM STAFF (LEFT); WEATHERMATIC (RIGHT)

“Filing early means your team is in place before the first snowflake falls.”



BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Tapping into a gold mine

Why snow and ice operators hold the key to H-2B success and how they can tap into this valuable resource BY NATALY MUALEM | CONTRIBUTOR

Every winter, snow and ice management companies brace for chaos: Early storms, subcontractor no-shows and crew shortages. But in the world of seasonal employment, snow removers may be sitting on something more valuable than salt — prime access to H-2B workers.

While landscapers and hospitality operators face intense competition every spring to secure H-2B visas, snow and ice companies are uniquely positioned to come out ahead. With the right strategy and timing, they can bring in workers before the busy season starts and keep them through the spring using a legal provision many employers overlook.

THE WINTER ADVANTAGE

The H-2B visa program allows U.S. employers to hire foreign workers for temporary, non-agricultural jobs such as landscaping, hospitality and snow removal. The program caps out at 66,000 visas per fiscal year. Half are allocated to jobs starting from October through March; the other half is for jobs beginning April through September.

Each year, demand for spring visas far outweighs supply. Most landscapers file for April start dates, which means the odds of being selected can drop significantly. Snow and ice operators, however, have the advantage of applying under the fall cap, which is *significantly* less crowded.

Even if your plowing routes don't begin until December, you can justify an October start by building in pre-season tasks. These include fall clean-ups, equipment preparation, salt staging, site walkthroughs and crew training.

Filing early means your team is in place before the first snowflake falls.

CAP-EXEMPT GOLD MINE

Here is where snow operators truly strike gold. Once an H-2B worker is counted against the cap in one fiscal year — for example, with an October start — he or she is exempt from the cap for the rest of that fiscal year. This creates a huge opportunity for spring planning.

If you bring in workers through an October filing, you can later file a second petition for those same workers to continue with you or transfer to a new role in the spring. No lottery. No waiting on a cap. No starting over.

Snow companies can legally use the same H-2B workers in the spring, whether for cleanup, early landscaping or transitioning to another seasonal business.

There are also options if you missed these deadlines and the gold rush the program can offer. Consider worker-sharing options where you collaborate with other employers whose winter workload ends early. Their cap-counted H-2B workers may be available for transfer.

If your needs expand or you land new contracts mid-winter, mid-season filings also can help. You can still file petitions, especially if you are hiring workers already in the U.S.

FOCUS ON COMPLIANCE

With increased scrutiny from immigration authorities, compliance must be a top priority. Ensure your operation is clean and audit-ready. That means:

- No illegal recruitment fees paid by workers.

- Accurate and up-to-date I-9s and payroll records.

Keep detailed documentation in case of a site visit or audit.

2025 PROGRAM UPDATES

New federal rules are reshaping how the H-2B program works. There are tools available to move quickly, but there is also more accountability. These updates include:

- Workers may now begin work immediately after a valid in-country transfer petition is filed.
- A 60-day grace period allows time to find new employment or make departure plans if a job ends early.
- Employers face stricter penalties for violations, including whistleblower retaliation or non-cooperation with audits.

THE SNOW-AND-ICE EDGE

If you operate in snow and ice, you have a rare advantage. Your business fits the fall cap filing period. Your season gives you early access to workers. And best of all, you can keep those same workers into the spring, even when others are locked out by the visa cap.

The H-2B program isn't simple. But with the right planning, it can be your most reliable tool to keep crews working and contracts fulfilled through winter and beyond.

Don't miss the labor gold rush. In a market where reliable workers are more valuable than gold, snow and ice operators have a unique opportunity to secure talent now and carry it into spring while others are left behind. 📍

Nataly Mualem is an immigration attorney and the founder of The Mualem Firm, which advises landscaping businesses nationwide on how to build reliable seasonal teams through the H-2B program.

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FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Aaron Zych

VICE PRESIDENT

ILT VIGNOCCHI CHICAGO

1 Tell me about ILT Vignocchi, and how did you get in the business?

We serve the entire Chicagoland area, mainly focusing on the North Shore. The company was started in 1969 by my father-in-law, Harry. He and his father and uncles, they were Italian immigrants, and when they came here they were stone masons. Harry had an entrepreneurial spirit, and combined with his love of the outdoors, he started the company. We're a design/build and maintenance company, both commercial and residential. I started here as an intern in 1999. I rolled it into a full-time position in 2000 when I graduated and I've been here ever since — I even met my wife (Donna, president) here.

2 What is your favorite tool to get the job done?

My favorite tool is a program called Lumion. You take your SketchUp model into it and make it look any way you want, so you can make it look like real life. Make it rain, make it snow, make it do videos from it. When I started using Lumion about three or four years ago, that has been a game-changer in terms of how our team puts out drawings to our clients.

3 Do you have a family and what do you do for fun?

My wife and I have a 16-year-old daughter. She's just a great kid. I played the French horn growing up and now she's playing the French horn ... we're both music nerds. And for fun, we're all foodies — we like going out to eat with friends. And we have friends who live all around the country, so we do travel a lot to see our friends.

4 What is something — a book, movie, anything — that you'd recommend to me and LM's readers?

As I said earlier, I'm a huge foodie. I think there's a lot of correlation between extremely high-end restaurants and our industry — the front-of-house / back-of-house, sales people versus production. When everything is moving smoothly, your experience at that restaurant is second to none. But when there's tension between the two, you can feel it. There's a book (by Paul Clarke) called "Lessons in Excellence from Charlie Trotter." Trotter was a chef in Chicago; at one point he had the top restaurant in the world. The small stuff he did to make sure his restaurant was the best in the world, it gets your mind thinking — what can we do in our industry, the little things that make a big difference, that really make our customers' experience the best you could possibly imagine?

5 Do you have a most memorable day at work?

I should say the day I met my wife, if I want to be politically correct (laughs). It's not just one day, it's any day you leave the customer's house, when you finish a job or you bump into them three years after you've finished the job, and they tell you how much they love it and that it still looks great. When I walk away from a meeting like that, I'm on cloud nine. ☺

BEST ADVICE

"Anyone who is debating joining some kind of peer group to help them grow and be better, stop hesitating. Do it. Three years ago I joined a peer group, and it has been such a great thing, the connections I've made and the growth I've experienced."



PHOTO: ILT VIGNOCCHI

TECHNOLOGY-BASED BIDDING #141

AI and a proprietary customer portal helped Earthco Landscape take a tech-forward approach to landscaping BY LAUREN H. DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

Finding a way to digitally track everything that goes into completing a project has helped Earthco Landscape add and retain customers, says vice president and co-owner Daniel Morrison.

Based in Santa Ana, Calif., Earthco Landscape landed at No. 141 on *Landscape Management's* 2025 LM150 list of the industry's top revenue-generating firms, experiencing 15-percent growth from 2023 to 2024. The company was founded in 1984 by Daniel's father, Robert, a longtime landscape industry veteran. Two of Daniel's brothers, Kyle and Will, also work with the company. Earthco offers commercial landscape maintenance, lawn care, design-build, irrigation and tree care services.

DIGITAL FOUNDATION

While there's more than 100 years of landscape experience at Earthco, there were still times the company missed opportunities with over- or under-bidding projects, Morrison says. To combat those issues, it revamped its sales and estimating process to use a data-based approach. Morrison designed an artificial intelligence (AI) system to improve bidding accuracy.

"We're at an interesting time with landscaping where technology has a foothold and is taking companies to the next step," Morrison says.

Coming from a tech background, Morrison had an inside look at what made companies run efficiently and saw there was room for improvement when he came to the landscape industry. He looked for a

digital solution that would take a real-life process and put technology behind it. Earthco's AI combines metrics like property size, labor time and materials to produce the bid amount.

"Because of that estimating process and data we can provide customers, it's not just a shot in the dark. We can show exactly what it will take to get the job done," Morrison says. "Not only has that helped us acquire new clients, but we've also been able to keep clients for the long term."

Since instituting the new technology, Earthco's retention rate for new clients has been 98 percent. Another component of its success has been ensuring all its work is profitable. For legacy maintenance accounts, that meant raising prices across the board to get them back to being profitable.

"If you're just trying to hit growth no matter what, that leads to sales that have a small margin or aren't profitable," Morrison says. "There's no way you can be cutting prices with how much things have gone up."

On the back end, the company created a proprietary client portal app — available for download in all major app stores — for customers to submit requests, receive prompt responses, manage interactions and view reports.

Morrison only wishes Earthco had implemented all of the technology sooner.

"Technology is an ever-evolving beast. Every day, there are new processes available," he says. "If you're



Morrison says his tech background has helped him find improvement opportunities in landscaping.

thinking about it or interested in implementing technology, you probably should have done it a year ago, so do it now."

NEXT GENERATION

Even with all the digital resources the company has created, Earthco's success still depends on its team. To ensure it's leading the charge with the industry's best new talent, the company implemented a program to attract and mentor recent college graduates.

Over the course of 18 months, the graduates join the Earthco team to learn all about the industry, from entry level all the way up to management, Morrison says.

"Landscaping is such an awesome industry, but it's overlooked by people going to school or college," Morrison says. "We wanted to create an environment to bring them out of college and give them a taste of why it's so cool. It's been great to see people straight out of college who didn't know anything about landscaping start to grow and want to learn more. That's been super rewarding." 🌱

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.



Daniel Morrison



BY JUSTIN WHITE

The author is the CEO of K&D Landscaping in Watsonville, Calif. He can be reached at justin@kndlandscaping.com.

The true power of sweat equity

Let's get one thing straight: You don't need private equity to win. You don't need millions in the bank or big backers to win. What you need is a clear vision, relentless execution and the guts to bet on yourself.

Whether you're stepping into your family business or building one from scratch, this is your time. With technology advancing our businesses and an entire generation approaching retirement, there has never been a better time to grow, scale and monetize your hard work.

When I took over K&D Landscaping from my parents, I had no outside funding, no playbook and a hell of a lot of pressure to figure it out. What changed the game wasn't luck. It wasn't timing. It was one moment of clarity and a decision to go all in on a real plan. From 2015 to 2024, we scaled from a small mom-and-pop \$1 million business to a technology-driven \$20 million market leader. My parents had put in 30 years of sweat equity, and it was our turn to add the rocket fuel of growth.

Now, everywhere I look, private equity firms are making noise, scaling at 100, 200 percent or more year over year, snapping up companies

“They may have capital, but you have control. You know your people. You know your market. You know what this business means to your family and your community.”

and plastering their wins across the headlines. It's easy to feel small in that world, that your \$3 million family-owned maintenance operation just doesn't have a chance.

But don't get it twisted.

They may have capital, but you have control. You know your people. You know your market. You know what this business means to your family and your community.

And most importantly, you've got sweat equity. That's your superpower. Sweat equity is the unrealized and sometimes unmeasurable value in your business. It's the years of hard work, long nights and the incredible reputation you have built. While it may not show up on a balance sheet, there is a tremendous amount of value sitting right under your feet. You just have to figure out how to monetize it.

With new technology becoming available almost daily, right now is the time for locally owned, blue-collar next-generation entrepreneurs

to take massive action and move fast. The opportunity to seize market control in your area has never been more real.

The truth is that real returns in this industry aren't being built in boardrooms. They're being built by leaders in steel-toe boots who show up every day and

push the ball forward. Understanding how the game is played in 2025 is key to monetizing that sweat equity.

In a recent keynote, I laid out what I call the Massive Action Protocol. It's a simple but proven strategy to take control of your future:

- 1 Strategy and Focus.** Get clear on your goals. Eliminate the distractions.
- 2 Purpose.** Know why you're doing it. If your "why" is weak, your results will be too.
- 3 Focus.** Get clear on your actions and eliminate the distractions.
- 4 Massive Action.** Don't wait. Move fast. Take bold steps — every day.

That's how you scale. That's how you lead. That's how you outwork everyone else.

Here's what I want every young leader to hear: This industry is wide open. You don't have to play by the old rules. You can build something scalable, profitable and meaningful. With sweat equity, technology, smart systems and relentless execution, you can create massive returns and a business that stands out. Now is the time to strike.

But no one's going to hand it to you. You've got to earn it.

Don't wait. Make your plan, rally your team together and take the shot. Because the future of this industry isn't being written by Wall Street. It's being built by people like you. 





BY GREG HERRING

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

Outsourcing for growth

Because many owner/operators in the landscape industry started from scratch, they developed a do-it-yourself mentality. The DIY mindset was necessary in the beginning, as they grew from a one-man show into a multimillion-dollar operation. And frankly, their drive, tenacity and versatility across many areas — horticulture, operations, sales, marketing, customer relations, finance and human resources — made them successful.

But growth requires transitions. Not making those transitions makes the owner's role intolerable and constrains future growth.

Essentially, as companies grow, owners must continually identify strategies and tasks that other people can do. Said differently, to grow, owners must transition from a DIY mindset to a do-it-for-me (DIFM) approach. In the "old days," this transition meant hiring more employees. Fortunately, with the internet, owners can hire contractors not only in the United States, but also in places around the world. These hires could be part-time or project-based.

COMPETING WITH PRIVATE EQUITY

Private equity-backed landscape firms are here to stay, and it is clear they will continue to be tough competitors.

Private equity brings a sophisticated approach to growth along with the academic concept of organizational development. These firms are experts at turning owner-operated companies into enterprise-grade organizations with systems and techniques designed to improve performance.

I believe owner-operated landscape companies have certain

advantages and have a great chance of dominating their marketplaces in the long run. But they cannot win unless they are willing to change and develop their organizations just like the private equity firms are doing.

To understand the management transformation that will be required, try this: Go to LinkedIn and find a peer who works for a PE-backed landscape company. Click on the company name. LinkedIn will serve up a list of the firm's employees. Notice the titles and experience of the people listed.

I did this with a \$70 million high-performing landscape company. I was astounded at the depth and breadth of the management-level people on staff. It was amazing for a company of that size in the landscape business, even though I realize PE-backed companies like these are capable of significant growth while maintaining significant profitability.

This exercise may help you recognize the resources you will need to grow consistently and profitably as your company matures. How will you access the tactical and strategic expertise you need to compete against PE-backed competitors?

DEVELOPING A DIFM MINDSET

At The Herring Group, we are proponents of outsourcing to partner with next-level experts you need when you need them.

Not only are we outsourced financial leaders for landscape companies, but we also use many outsourced providers in our own business. We work with independent professionals for marketing, SQL server reporting and management and more. Partnering with these outside experts gives

“To grow, owners must transition from a DIY mindset to a do-it-for-me (DIFM) approach.”

us strategic insights, operational flexibility and access to unmatched talent without having to commit to full-time employees.

How can you do the same? Here are four steps to take to get started.

1. Make a list of tactical items that you, the owner, perform that are not the highest and best use of your time and skills. Also, include vital tasks that other people do not want to do or have time to do.

2. Identify areas where you need strategic assistance, perhaps areas that are beyond your expertise, areas being ignored or areas that are not the best use of your time. Marketing, information technology and financial leadership might be examples.

3. Develop a list of potential providers for your tactical and strategic lists. To find partners, you could advertise on LinkedIn or Indeed, search on a freelance platform like Upwork or network with fellow executives inside or outside the industry.

4. From there, you and your leadership team can craft a plan to proceed with your new DIFM strategy.

You may be tempted to keep doing things the way you have always done them, but at some point, you will grow beyond your ability or desire to do the work. I recommend getting ahead of your breaking point by finding experts to support your organizational development today. As you do, you will gain a lot more life margin and have much more fun growing your company. 



BY BEN GANDY

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

Developing divisional leaders in your company

In the competitive world of the landscape industry, your company's success is directly tied to the strength of its leadership. At Envisor Consulting, we understand the critical importance of cultivating divisional leaders who can drive growth, innovation and operational excellence.

One of the most common — and most complex — decisions business owners face is whether to promote from within or hire from the outside. On the surface, it may seem like a straightforward choice. But in reality, it's anything but simple.

Business owners often wrestle with questions like:

- Are my internal candidates ready to lead?
- What if I promote someone and they don't succeed?
- What if I overlook a strong team member and they leave?
- Could someone from outside bring in a fresh perspective we desperately need?

We've worked with many companies that find themselves caught between wanting to reward loyalty and needing to find the "perfect" fit. Let's take a closer look at both options and explore how to make the right choice for your team.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Divisional leaders are the engine of your business. They oversee day-to-day operations, manage people and performance and help translate big-picture goals into tangible results. Whether your need for leadership is driven by growth, a key vacancy or the desire to upgrade your team's capabilities, one thing is clear: Having the right person

“Having the right person in the role is essential to scale your business and stay competitive.”

in the role is essential to scale your business and stay competitive.

ADVANTAGES OF STAYING INTERNAL

- **Cultural fit.** Internal candidates already understand your company's values, mission and expectations. This familiarity allows for a smoother transition and a faster ramp-up.
- **Employee loyalty.** Promotions from within show your team that hard work is rewarded. It boosts morale, encourages retention and builds a culture of growth.
- **Cost savings.** Hiring internally often requires fewer resources — both in time and money — compared to external recruiting and onboarding.

CHALLENGES OF STAYING INTERNAL

- **Limited perspective.** Internal candidates may be less likely to challenge the status quo or bring in new ideas.
- **Risk of bias.** Without a structured evaluation process, promotions can sometimes be perceived as favoritism, potentially damaging morale.

ADVANTAGES OF LOOKING OUTSIDE

- **Fresh ideas.** External hires bring different experiences and a new lens. They may spot inefficiencies or opportunities that insiders can't see.
- **Expanded talent pool.** Looking outside your organization

increases the chances of finding someone with the exact skills, experience or leadership style you need.

- **Unique skill sets.** You may find expertise that simply doesn't exist within your current team.

CHALLENGES OF LOOKING OUTSIDE

- **Longer onboarding.** It can take time for external leaders to learn your systems, culture and team dynamics.
- **Higher costs.** External recruitment often involves additional expenses like recruiter fees, relocation packages or salary negotiations.

STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE

If you do choose to hire externally, it's important to communicate openly with your team. Acknowledge their contributions and share the reasons behind your decision. This builds trust and minimizes feelings of being passed over.

At Envisor Consulting, we believe there's no one-size-fits-all answer. The decision to promote from within or hire externally should be guided by your company's unique needs, culture and long-term vision.

In some cases, internal growth is the clear path forward. In others, injecting new energy and ideas from the outside may be just what your organization needs. The best approach often lies in maintaining a strong pipeline of internal talent while staying open to outside opportunities that can accelerate your growth.

By thoughtfully evaluating your options, you'll be better equipped to place the right leaders in the right roles. 📌

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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.



Giving morale a summer boost

I was scrolling LinkedIn recently and saw a fellow business owner, Steve, who posted a question to the community: How do other landscaping companies deal with the summer slump?

Even the best long-distance runner can't maintain a 100-meter-sprint pace for a full marathon, and I think sometimes it can feel like that's what we're trying to do as landscape professionals. Let me share with you a few things that I think can help.

OFFERING VACATION

There are nuances to our paid time-off policy at Grunder Landscaping Co., but the gist is this:

- Seven paid holidays.
- Six days of paid time off (PTO) for full-time team members, which increases with tenure.
- Three days of PTO for full-time seasonal team members, which increases with tenure.

From here, the details are a little complicated and specific to our company, but I think it's important to note that we've been offering a policy like this for 20-plus years and implemented this policy when we were a much smaller company.

“No matter what's going on in the world, one thing is true — great people ... make companies successful.”

I think companies often think they can't afford a policy like this, but what I've found is the inverse. You can't afford not to give your team a break. Our team members are people with lives and families they want to spend time with, and often they come back from their time away refreshed and ready to go.

WATCH YOUR WORDS

Our words have power, both in influencing our own thoughts and attitudes and in influencing the people around us. I often see teams speak misery into existence. By sitting around complaining, all we're doing is pointing out and stewing on problems.

Instead, try to be part of the solution. There's a reason why branding is a multimillion-dollar industry: Perception often becomes reality.

Let's talk about our challenges as opportunities, make a concerted effort to pay compliments to our teammates, and when presented with a problem, focus on finding solutions instead of placing blame. These small shifts in the way we talk can actually

shift the way we think, too.

And remember — what you say and do as a leader sets the example. If you're complaining, you're giving your team license to do the same.

BE MINDFUL OF THE SCHEDULE

We have to keep one eye on our fall schedule at this time of the year and make sure that we have enough work to keep our crews busy through the fall. When we look ahead, we can anticipate problems before they become emergencies. If the schedule is looking a little sparse, I encourage salespeople to start with their existing clients. Where could we find some additional enhancement work to do? What projects do we know we could sell them? There's work everywhere. It may be a little harder to find this year, but it's still out there.

Grunder Landscaping Co. has been in business for 40-plus years at this point, and we've seen it all, from the strong demand of the COVID years to the Great Recession. But no matter what's going on in the world, one thing is true — great people are what make companies successful. Supporting our teams, keeping a positive attitude and staying ahead of the problems we can foresee separate great companies from the good ones.

If you'd like to see how we support great people at our own company, we're opening our shop up for four groups to tour this fall. Come see us at one of our remaining Grunder Landscaping Co. Fall Field Trip dates. Learn more at growgroupinc.com/glc-fall-field-trips. 📍





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