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FAMILY TRADITION

With a focus on fundamentals, Bland Landscaping continues its climb up the *LM*150 list

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chose to
sell, it had
to be to
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Congrats on making it!

Thanks for filling out our application for the LM150, and now that you've made the list, we want to know more about how you did it.

If you have an interesting growth strategy that helped you get this far or an intriguing story of rising up the list against the odds, let us know! 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 upcoming LM150 feature in the magazine!

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SCOTT HOLLISTER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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or shollister@northcoastmedia.net.



The LM150 and a rock 'n' roll fantasy

One of the perks of putting together big feature packages for *Landscape Management* is the significant steps that we often take to pull those sections together.

This month's focus on our annual LM150 rankings is a great example of that. As a part of my reporting on Bland Landscaping for one of the in-depth profiles you'll find in this issue, I traveled to Raleigh-Durham, N.C., and spent a day with Kurt and Matt Bland — the company's president and senior vice president, chief operating officer and chief financial officer, respectively — for interviews, a photo shoot and a great lunch with Bland's senior leadership team.

I always come away from visits to landscape and lawn care companies with something I didn't know before and new insights into the industry, and my time in North Carolina was no exception. As Kurt and Matt can attest, I asked more dumb questions about private equity, platform companies and the merger-and-acquisition process than I should have been allowed.

Those dumb questions would have likely continued into the dinner hour, as we had initial plans to connect for a casual dinner after our official duties had ended that day. But Kurt — who had just returned from a vacation with his wife, Meredith Keyes — had some family matters to attend to that night. And since family always wins out over work in my world, I happily stepped aside and looked for something else to occupy my time that night.

Which is how I ended up crossing something off my musical bucket list — I saw Pearl Jam in concert. The Seattle

“Not only did I get to rock out with Eddie Vedder and the boys, I also got to spend some quality time with some of the smartest business owners in landscaping.”

rockers have always been one of my favorite bands, but for a variety of reasons, I had never seen them in concert before. But as luck would have it, the band was playing the second of two shows at the Lenovo Center in Raleigh that very night. My free evening suddenly had very definitive plans. I did a little searching on the SeatGeek app, found a ticket that didn't break the bank and was in the door. And it was amazing.

Now, not all business trips end in such a memorable (and loud!) manner. But I'm eternally grateful that this one did, because not only did I get to rock out with Eddie Vedder and the boys, I also got to spend some quality time with some of the smartest business owners in landscaping (who also have great musical tastes — that “family matter” that scuttled our dinner was Kurt's wife surprising him with tickets to Pearl Jam!). I hope all that positivity shines through



in the cover story I wrote about Bland Landscaping, which you can read on page six of the LM150 supplement in this issue.

And with the release of this year's LM150 rankings, I can't imagine I'm the only one who will walk away from this experience with positive feelings (how's that for a segue?). Based on the number of phone calls and emails I've had from business owners asking how this year's list played out, I know there's incredible anticipation for the information that you'll find in this issue.

The news pegs for this year's list are noteworthy. For the first time, the combined revenue of the companies represented broke the \$20 billion mark (\$21 billion, to be exact). The top 10 of this year's list was largely unchanged from last year, although there was some shuffling in that order. Thirty-five companies on the list enjoyed growth in 2024 that exceeded 20 percent — including a trio of companies that grew more than 100 percent in the last year.

But don't let those bullet points be the last word on the matter. Even though the top-line numbers are wildly encouraging, there are additional insights to be gleaned from the LM150 regional breakdowns, the market-segment lists and the expanded profiles of three companies that are featured in this issue.

I hope this year's LM150 rankings make as big an impact on you as they did on me ... even if Pearl Jam isn't your favorite band. 🎸

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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 new technologies or software features have been game-changers for the landscaping industry?

“Our routing and digital post-application program for lawn treatments has been a time saver for us. (We have) iPad-mounted units in our trucks for our technicians to do this out in the field.”



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 Lawncare
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.

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.

“One of the biggest game-changers has been automated estimating. I’ve seen companies go from three or four weeks to turn around a proposal to doing it in just a couple of days. That changes how teams are structured, how quickly deals move and, ultimately, how competitive a company can be.”



“Team Engine’s automatic translation is a game-changer because it removes language barriers between managers and field crews, making it easy to send messages in English and deliver them in Spanish (or vice versa) without relying on bilingual staff.”



“This is a no-brainer — ChatGPT. I now have a high-level assistant, researcher, copywriter and coach in my pocket at all times. I use it multiple times a day, and the ‘Deep Research’ function is helping me outline large, high-level decisions and projects more quickly and efficiently.”

“It’s not that new ... but measuring tools like PropertyIntel have enabled us to bid on a property in minutes instead of hours, all while improving our profitability on the jobs at the same time. I find many contractors do too much guessing; why guess when you have a digital measuring tool? PropertyIntel ‘talks’ with Aspire and is easy to use.”



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CASE
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LM GALLERY

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

1 Electric avenue *Landscape Management's* Seth Jones grabbed a photo with Richard Ogawa of Gardenland Power Equipment and Towa industries during a visit to Northern California for the annual Zero-E Expo, which showcased the latest battery-powered and robotic products.

2 Full speed ahead Jones took a short drive to meet up with the PBI-Gordon team at their headquarters in Kansas City, Kan. From left to right with Jones are Callie Zevecke, Dale Sanson, Ph.D., Melissa McDonald, Dani McFadden, Ph.D. and John Kenny.

3 I'm on a boat! During the recent Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association (TOCA) meeting in Charleston, S.C., the **LM** team met up with their friends from John Deere and Sod Solutions. From left to right are **LM's** Bill Roddy, Craig MacGregor and Scott Hollister; Darius Lane, John Deere; Valerie Smith and Cecilia Johnson, Sod Solutions; and Jones.

4 Hall of famer At the TOCA meetings, the **LM** team — (from left) Hollister, Roddy, Jones and MacGregor — took time to get a photo with an old friend and recent inductee into the TOCA Hall of Fame, McGavock Edwards from Eckel & Vaughan.

5 They clean up nice At the TOCA meetings, the guys from **LM** — (from left) Jones, Hollister, Roddy and MacGregor — got all dressed up for the association's awards banquet.

6 Turn back the clock During a visit to Kansas City, Hollister and Jones met up with John Perry (right) with Greene County Fertilizer Co. to show off Up-Down, Kansas City's vintage coin-operated arcade and bar.



PHOTOS: LM STAFF

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LM brings home the hardware in TOCA Awards

BY LM STAFF



At the recent Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association (TOCA) Annual Meeting in Charleston, S.C., the team at *Landscape Management* was honored with awards in several categories, including writing, special projects and design.

"I'm always proud of the work that we do at *Landscape Management*, but it's always rewarding when others recognize those efforts, too," says Scott Hollister, the magazine's editor-in-chief. "These TOCA awards are just an affirmation that we're doing the right things from both a content and a design perspective, and our readers are the ones that benefit the most from this great work."

Combined with *LM*'s sister publication, *Golfdom*, the green team at North Coast Media won a combined 16 awards, including two Gardners, 10 first place awards and four merits.

LM specifically took home:

GARDNER AWARDS:

- **Product information article** – Electrifying the landscape industry, by Mike Zawacki

FIRST PLACE:

- **Cover page design** – Coast to coast (Nov.), by Tracie Martinez
- **Misc. special publishing print projects** – 2024 *LM*150, by *LM* staff
- **Product information article** – Electrifying the landscape industry, by Mike Zawacki

MERIT:

- **Websites** – 2025 *LM* media planner, by Brian Davis
- **Product information article** – The next big thing, by Scott Hollister

NALP FIELD TRIP HEADS TO MARYLAND

The National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP), in partnership with Marty Grunder's The Grow Group, is bringing its annual Field Trip event to McHale Landscape Design in Upper Marlboro, Md., Sept. 23-24.

The NALP Field Trip gives landscape professionals a behind-the-scenes look at the operations of a premier, award-winning firm. McHale Landscape Design boasts more than \$48 million in annual revenue and works across seven locations, specializing in high-end residential landscape design/build and estate management.

"We are excited to welcome the NALP Field Trip to McHale Landscape Design," said Kevin McHale, principal and co-founder of McHale Landscape Design. "This visit represents a fantastic opportunity to showcase the innovative work our team is doing and to learn from the diverse experiences of other NALP members."

The NALP Field Trip isn't just a tour. This event is an "idea-packed

adventure," according to the association, designed for landscape business owners and leadership teams that are interested in elevating their businesses. Attendees will get firsthand exposure to McHale's practices, investigate their operational efficiencies and connect with peers sharing a passion for growth and excellence.

"We believe in the power of sharing knowledge and fostering growth within the landscape industry. We look forward to opening our doors and connecting with fellow professionals," said Steve McHale, co-founder of McHale Landscape Design.

Visit the NALP's Field Trip website at landscapeprofessionals.org/FieldTrip for more information and to register for the event.



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
LANDSCAPE
PROFESSIONALS

Industry impact: The first 100 days of the Trump administration

BY NATHAN MADER | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The Trump administration hit the ground running, and with recent legislation and policy promises, many in the landscape and lawn care industry are uncertain about what the future holds.

As a result, the Irrigation Association (IA) hosted a Post-Election Webinar Series in April, a three-part educational event to answer industry questions and provide insights into what the association is seeing with the new administration.

“The past few months have underscored the importance of staying proactive and engaged as legislative and regulatory landscapes evolve at both the federal and state levels,” says Nathan Bowen, vice president of policy and industry advancement for the IA. “From trade and labor policies directly impacting irrigation businesses to state requirements for irrigation products, a host of policy issues are shaping the future of the irrigation industry.”

“A major takeaway is that informed, local-level advocacy is more important than ever to ensure the industry’s voice is heard in shaping policy that impacts the irrigation industry.”

The final webinar in the series, “100 Days In: Trump’s Return and What It Means for Irrigation,” was hosted by Bowen; Andrew Morris, IA associate director, technical and regulatory affairs; and Luke Reynolds, IA associate director, government and public affairs. Key topics covered included tariff uncertainty, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) updates and hirings, labor challenges, the IA’s involvement in policymaking and more.

“We want the irrigation industry to have a clear understanding of how policy shifts are affecting the industry — and how those changes connect back to irrigation businesses,” Bowen says. “We want them to see the concrete work the Irrigation Association is doing to advocate for the industry at every level. These webinars are about keeping stakeholders informed, showing where and how IA is making an impact and motivating industry leaders to engage alongside us.”

The webinar series engaged with attendees, asking for concerns, questions and feedback on what their biggest challenges are. One poll in particular asked for attendees’ outlook on the remainder of 2025, with the results showing:

- 0 percent were very optimistic
- 44 percent were somewhat optimistic
- 11 percent were neutral
- 19 percent were somewhat pessimistic
- 26 percent were very pessimistic

Another poll asked attendees to choose from a word bank on which issues regarding the new administration concerned them the most, with the top answers being tariffs, labor and overall uncertainty.

All webinars are available for free on the IA’s Irrigation Advocacy Insights webpage (https://www.irrigation.org/ia/Advocacy/Irrigation_Advocacy_Insights.aspx), including the first two, “Post-Election Impact: What’s Next for the Irrigation Industry” and “State Spotlight: Legislative Trends Impacting Irrigation.” 📺

ARES PRIVATE EQUITY LANDS MAJORITY STAKE IN LANDSCAPE WORKSHOP

Ares Private Equity fund has acquired a majority stake in Landscape Workshop, a full-service grounds management company that provides service and maintenance for outdoor commercial spaces across the southeastern U.S.

Landscape Workshop, which checked in at No. 28 on the 2025 *LM150* list, will gain additional capital to expand its regional footprint, scale through new acquisitions and drive customer growth through this transaction.

Since 1984, Landscape Workshop has provided professional service and maintenance for outdoor commercial spaces across various industries. With 38 locations across the Southeast, the company offers a range of services, specializing in landscape maintenance and enhancements, seasonal color, irrigation systems, landscape installation and more.

“This is a pivotal next step in Landscape Workshop’s journey and a credit to our exceptional team for their dedication to our disciplined growth strategy while maintaining quality service for our clients,” said J.T. Price, CEO, Landscape Workshop. “As one of the largest landscaping companies in the nation, we have focused on establishing a strong culture of high-performance, collaboration and entrepreneurship that extends across our operations.”

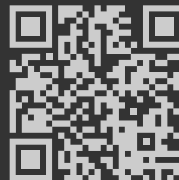
“We are thrilled to partner with Ares and leverage their investing experience to help accelerate our growth, both organically and through acquisitions, and create long-term shareholder value. Looking ahead, we remain steadfast in our commitment to provide great service to our customers and an exciting and supportive workplace for our current and future team members to succeed.”

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RENTAL



Introducing the Sprinkler Dude

Meet Justin Richards, a Conserva Irrigation employee spreading irrigation knowledge and good vibes online

BY ROB DIFRANCO | LM MANAGING EDITOR

Editor's note: "Time for some good news" is a regular feature that will spotlight the good deeds, great people and positive stories in the landscaping industry. If you have your own good news to share, reach out to either Seth Jones at sjones@northcoastmedia.net or Scott Hollister at shollister@northcoastmedia.net.

Justin Richards got his start in the irrigation industry in 2008 after a sudden career change. Sixteen years later, in 2024, Hunter Industries named Richards the winner of the Ann Hunter-Welborn Circle of Excellence Award.

The award honors individuals, companies and organizations demonstrating exceptional commitment to environmental stewardship, water conservation, local community support and other sustainability initiatives.

Richards, or SprinklerDude as he's known online, fits that bill with more than 50,000 followers across social media, with whom he shares irrigation tips and tricks.

"I'm trying to focus on water conservation and the proper use of water," Richards says. "You can still have a lush green lawn and not throw water all over the sidewalk at the same time. I try to educate at all levels, from the everyday person who may not know anything about sprinklers up to the experts."

Richards has been with Conserva Irrigation—No. 78 on the 2025 LM150 list—since 2019 and is now operations manager in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

In 2022, Richards started his SprinklerDude YouTube channel, which has since grown to a website with written content that supports anyone with irrigation issues. Richards says his journey with SprinklerDude started small with a video he didn't expect would gain major traction.

"I love teaching the new technicians that come on board all of my

little tricks of how I do things," he says. "I never thought to do it in video form until I filmed a video of how to push a pipe under a sidewalk using a reciprocating saw in a really funny way, and it actually worked. Two million views later, I said, 'Oh, OK, I can take these videos and reach way more people.'"

Richards also looks to help those in his community online in local Facebook groups.

"I will sit there and publicly go back and forth with the homeowner about their problem and try to solve it for them in hopes that some other homeowners might see that help and maybe be able to help themselves," he says. "I also explain where they can conserve water while making these repairs."

Richards also credits Conserva Irrigation for supporting him as he's grown his personal brand.

"Juan and Ellie (Lamonaca, owners of the Conserva Irrigation branch in Fort Lauderdale) were supportive right out the gates and have been supportive about it the whole time," he says. "I have franchise owners reach out to me all the time to ask me questions and thank me for videos that I put out that might have helped them



Justin Richards (right), aka SprinklerDude, the winner of the Ann Hunter-Welborn Circle of Excellence Award, with Russ Jundt, founder of Conserva Irrigation.

through something they were dealing with."

Although Richards did have previous experience with video editing and YouTube, he says others looking to start making educational videos don't necessarily need it. His best advice to fellow irrigation and landscape pros looking to follow in his footsteps is not to be afraid to be behind or in front of the camera.

"If you have a cool trick you've been doing for years, don't be afraid to teach others. There are not enough people in our industry right now. Let's take the ones we have in and supercharge them with this awesome information we've been holding on to for years," he says. 🌧️

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This year's educational sessions include:

- A Fireside Chat with Larry Ryan
- Become A Destination Company
- "Lean" in the Landscape
- Your Company, Your Culture
- Lead From the Middle — Yes, You!
- Labor Hour Management: *The Most Important KPI in Your Business*
- Get on the Bus: *Effective Onboarding for New Team Members*
- Sales Management for Dummies (and High-Flying Entrepreneurs)
- Strategic Planning 101
- Every Day I'm Hustlin': *How to be Proactive on Relationship Building and Sales*
- Retiring in Place
- A One-Stop Shop versus Doing One Thing Well



A SUPPLEMENT TO



LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

Powered by strategic acquisitions, Kurt (left) and Matt Bland have led Bland Landscaping through a period of steady growth.

FAMILY TRADITION

With a focus on fundamentals,
Bland Landscaping continues
its climb up the *LM150* list

150

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CHART TOPPERS

The 2025 *LM150* rankings highlight the landscaping industry's continued upward momentum, with combined revenues climbing past \$20 billion for the first time

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

As milestones go, this is a big one — both literally and figuratively. For the first time ever, the combined revenues of the landscape and lawn care companies represented on the *LM150* list have topped the \$20 billion threshold. The total of \$21,101,241,223 in 2024 represents an increase of nearly 14 percent over last year's figure of \$18,592,575,311 ... which was up 14 percent compared to the totals in 2022 ... which increased almost 14 percent from what was reported in 2021 ... well, you get the picture.

The top four spots in this year's *LM150* rankings — which are brought to you by Aspire Software, John Deere and Weathermatic — remain unchanged from 2023, with a familiar face in the No. 1 spot. BrightView Holdings, based in Blue Bell, Pa., topped the list for the 10th consecutive year, reporting revenue of \$2.77 billion.

The Davey Tree Expert Co. out of Kent, Ohio, remained at No. 2 with revenues of \$1.8 billion, and TruGreen, headquartered in Memphis, stayed at No. 3 with revenues of \$1.7 billion. Bunnell, Fla.-based Yellowstone Landscape stayed in the fourth spot and enjoyed the biggest revenue bump among the top four; its total of \$719 million was a 24-percent increase over 2023.

There was some slight movement in the remainder of the *LM150*'s top 10, most notably from the Mariani Premier Group out of Lake Bluff, Ill., which jumped from No. 7 last year to No. 5 this year with revenues of \$653 million, an annual increase of 42 percent.

The rest of the top 10 had HeartLand from Kansas City, Mo., at No. 6 with revenues of \$583 million; Bartlett Tree Experts, based in Stamford,

COMBINED 2024 *LM150* REVENUE

\$21,101,241,223

AVERAGE
REVENUE GROWTH
FROM 2023

16%

AVERAGE REVENUE
GROWTH PROJECTED
FOR 2025

12%

COMBINED 2024 REVENUE OF THE TOP 3 FIRMS

\$6,331,600,000

30%
OF TOTAL
LIST

Conn., at No. 7 with revenues of \$526 million; Monarch Landscape Cos., based in Los Angeles, returned to the *LM150* list at No. 8 with revenues of \$500 million; SavATree from Bedford Hills, N.Y., at No. 9 with \$479 million in revenues; and Gothic Landscape from Valencia, Calif., checking in at No. 10 with \$442 million in revenues.

HOW WE CALCULATE OUR FIGURES

LM seeks submissions from landscape companies in the magazine, on **LandscapeManagement.net**, via email and over the phone from January through May. Companies submit their details through a standardized form. *LM* editors compile the results and, where applicable, remove non-typical green industry revenue sources from the totals. For example, we omit revenue from pest and janitorial services.

We estimate revenue for firms that didn't provide data if they participated in last year's list and reported a projected 2024 revenue figure.

The *LM150* information is self-reported unless otherwise noted. Some companies do not break out individual service lines, so we can't be sure what revenue is specific to typical green industry services. Several firms opt not to participate in the list, there are others we are unaware of, and some revenues may overlap due to subcontracting agreements. 

WHO DID WE MISS? Should your company be on the *LM150* list of the largest landscape companies? Do you know of a firm that should be ranked but isn't? Contact special projects editor Marisa Palmieri at mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net to be notified next year when the submission period opens. We encourage companies that think they might make the list to contact us for information.

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RANKINGS

		Headquarters	2024 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change from 2023	% Projected Change for 2025	FTE/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm/ Res/Gov
1	BrightView Holdings	Blue Bell, Pa.	\$2,767,000,000	-2	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
2	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	Kent, Ohio	\$1,842,000,000	9	6	11456/505	NR/NR/NR
3	TruGreen ^	Memphis, Tenn.	\$1,722,600,000	3	NR	2477/10881	13/87/0
4	Yellowstone Landscape	Bunnell, Fla.	\$718,500,000	24	10	6500/800	79/0/21
5	Mariani Premier Group ^	Lake Bluff, Ill.	\$653,346,540	42	10	3566/1403	7/91/2
6	HeartLand	Kansas City, Mo.	\$583,300,000	9	10	3538/1475	100/0/0
7	Bartlett Tree Experts	Stamford, Conn.	\$526,000,000	9	10	2730/270	30/64/6
8	Monarch Landscape Cos.	Los Angeles, Calif.	\$500,000,000	20	10	3500/400	90/0/10
9	SavATree	Bedford Hills, N.Y.	\$479,000,000	22	10	2660/240	30/70/0
10	Gothic Landscape	Valencia, Calif.	\$442,000,000	13	0	2400/NR	95/5/0
11	Sperber Landscape Cos.	Westlake Village, Calif.	\$427,000,000	10	10	3250/50	100/0/0
12	Ruppert Landscape	Laytonsville, Md.	\$402,200,000	22	13	2400/NR	100/0/0
13	Weed Man ^	Orono, Ontario	\$371,520,000	10	8	NR/NR	4/96/0
14	Juniper	Fort Myers, Fla.	\$326,017,000	14	12	3200/250	88/5/7
15	LandCare	Frederick, Md.	\$322,000,000	10	12	2200/1800	100/0/0
16	Divisions Maintenance Group	Cincinnati, Ohio	\$315,363,671	14	12	1024/NR	100/0/0
17	United Land Services	Jacksonville, Fla.	\$285,217,000	18	15	1463/272	91/4/5
18	Outworx Group	Westbury, N.Y.	\$280,000,000	0	10	511/2246	85/0/15
19	U.S. Lawns	Orlando, Fla.	\$252,000,000	14	10	2400/650	100/0/0
20	Park West	Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.	\$231,253,043	17	1	1860/NR	100/0/0
21	Lawn Doctor ^	Holmdel, N.J.	\$207,270,479	6	6	NR/NR	20/70/10
22	Landscape Development Inc.	Valencia, Calif.	\$183,500,000	20	10	1420/NR	86/1/13
23	Yard Nique	Morrisville, N.C.	\$175,000,000	15	7	850/725	100/0/0
24	Perennial Services Group ^	Pittsburgh, Pa.	\$163,800,000	45	30	1000/700	8/92/0
25	Turf Masters Brands	Roswell, Ga.	\$145,215,000	17	20	950/50	4/96/0
26	Clean Scapes	Austin, Texas	\$145,213,563	6	8	1100/200	100/0/0
27	Senske Family of Cos. ^	Dallas, Texas	\$143,231,244	36	8	622/386	11/89/0
28	Landscape Workshop	Vestavia, Ala.	\$141,000,000	33	21	1060/530	93/3/4
29	The Grounds Guys*	Waco, Texas	\$138,050,000	10	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
30	Rotolo Consultants	Slidell, La.	\$134,000,000	9	14	500/700	80/0/20
31	Schill Grounds Management	Westlake, Ohio	\$130,000,000	4	4	1091/631	97/2/1
32	Visterra Landscape Group	Rosemont, Ill.	\$119,080,000	49	67	611/308	100/0/0
33	Sunrise Landscape	Tampa, Fla.	\$118,300,000	31	20	850/200	NR/NR/NR
34	LMC Landscape Partners	Plano, Texas	\$108,850,000	24	4	950/250	95/2/3
35	Massey Services	Orlando, Fla.	\$100,148,417	3	15	2840/NR	12/88/0
36	Garden Design	Farmers Branch, Texas	\$100,000,000	2	5	90/90	35/65/0
37	SunWorks Landscape Partners	Addison, Texas	\$97,300,000	5	8	500/300	85/5/10
38	Spring Green Lawn Care Corp. ^	Plainfield, Ill.	\$96,140,000	5	7	NR/NR	7/93/0
39	Mainscape	Fishers, Ind.	\$91,320,000	3	3	700/260	100/0/0
40	Elite Team Offices	Clovis, Calif.	\$91,000,000	22	15	646/NR	60/5/35
41	Fairwood Brands	Columbus, Ohio	\$90,000,000	11	5	450/100	0/100/0
42	Lucas Tree Experts	Portland, Maine	\$89,550,000	11	7	550/NR	100/0/0
43	Russell Landscape Group	Sugar Hill, Ga.	\$87,000,000	14	15	600/200	92/3/5
44	Ethoscapes	Sugarland, Texas	\$86,453,000	2	8	650/130	75/1/24
45	Bland Landscaping Company	Apex, N.C.	\$86,260,000	33	15	650/300	99/1/0
46	ExperiGreen	Mishawaka, Ind.	\$85,000,000	10	10	100/300	5/95/0
47	Dixie Landscape	Miami, Fla.	\$84,083,000	5	0	435/NR	NR/NR/NR
48	Choate USA	Carrollton, Texas	\$83,223,306	-3	10	134/438	67/33/0
49	Superscapes	Carrollton, Texas	\$83,000,000	22	20	550/100	NR/NR/NR
50	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	San Antonio, Texas	\$79,654,523	20	15	400/150	55/5/40

LEGEND NR = Not reported; * Indicates estimate, based on projected revenue for 2024 reported last year; ^ Indicates a portion of reported revenue was removed (such as pest control, janitorial services or other nongreen industry offerings).

		Headquarters	2024 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change from 2023	% Projected Change for 2025	FTE/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm/ Res/Gov
51	Ryan Lawn & Tree ^	Merriam, Kan.	\$79,618,079	12	13	507/55	10/90/0
52	DJ's Landscape Management	Grand Rapids, Mich.	\$79,000,000	10	10	550/100	NR/NR/NR
53	Impact Landscaping & Irrigation	Jupiter, Fla.	\$78,800,000	4	3	650/NR	98/2/0
54	The Greenery	Hilton Head Island, S.C.	\$78,000,000	7	6	650/100	85/9/6
55	EMI	Dublin, Ohio	\$77,325,000	19	5	368/185	80/1/19
56	ABM ^	Columbia, Md.	\$68,400,000	12	5	500/250	15/0/85
57	Creative Environments Design & Landscape	Tempe, Ariz.	\$68,250,000	32	12	195/NR	NR/NR/NR
58	American Landscape Cos.	Canoga Park, Calif.	\$68,000,000	0	25	250/NR	45/10/45
59	Pacific Landscape Management	Hillsboro, Ore.	\$67,972,000	13	12	400/100	100/0/0
60	Chenmark	Portland, Maine	\$67,400,000	7	7	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
61	SiteWorks	Chandler, Ariz.	\$65,614,254	13	9	190/82	100/0/0
62	AAA Landscape	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$65,000,000	25	10	600/50	96/1/3
63	SOI Group	Frisco, Texas	\$63,700,000	18	15	160/NR	100/0/0
64	Beary Landscaping	Lockport, Ill.	\$63,250,000	3	15	150/375	80/20/0
65	Teufel Nursery	Hillsboro, Ore.	\$60,000,000	-3	0	400/NR	60/0/40
66	Santa Rita Landscaping*	Tucson, Ariz.	\$59,534,000	3	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
67	Xquisite Landscaping	Stoughton, Mass.	\$59,400,000	22	10	210/70	100/0/0
68	Dupper Landscape	Tempe, Ariz.	\$56,738,000	16	0	190/48	95/0/5
69	Focal Pointe	Caseyville, Ill.	\$55,879,444	54	25	383/155	88.5/11.5/0
70	Harvest Landscape Enterprises	Orange, Calif.	\$55,685,000	15	20	622/75	100/0/0
71	Augusta Lawn Care	Blaine, Wash.	\$54,800,000	77	45	480/540	9/90/1
72	Perfect Cuts of Austin	Austin, Texas	\$54,054,631	10	1	37/89	99/0/1
73	Earthtones Cos.	Midlothian, Texas	\$53,750,000	17	10	250/50	89/11/0
74	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	Woodbine , Md.	\$50,000,000	0	10	300/125	93/7/0
75	Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management	Gilbert, Ariz.	\$49,430,149	13	10	355/9	100/0/0
76	Designscapes Colorado	Centennial, Colo.	\$49,000,000	10	6	210/136	20/40/40
76	Kline Bros. Landscaping	Manahawkin , N.J.	\$49,000,000	2	5	200/50	5/95/0
78	Conserva Irrigation	Glen Allen, Va.	\$48,535,342	16	21	200/150	16/83/1
79	McHale Landscape Design ^	Upper Marlboro, Md.	\$47,779,380	5	10	346/NR	0/100/0
80	Schumacher Cos.	West Bridgewater, Mass.	\$47,500,000	5	3	135/140	33/67/0
81	Unlimited Landscaping & Turf Management	Suwanee, Ga.	\$46,405,000	9	10	185/35	NR/NR/NR
82	Heaven & Earth Landscaping	Indian Trail, N.C.	\$45,532,423	18	20	100/350	100/0/0
83	Landtech Contractors	Aurora, Colo.	\$45,472,749	30	10	180/160	90/0/10
84	Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers	Portland, Oregon	\$44,735,396	6	3	287/37	50/43/7
85	Pierre Landscape*	Irwindale, Calif.	\$44,400,000	20	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
86	APHIX	Frankfort, Ky.	\$43,984,432	15	20	250/160	100/0/0
87	Southern Botanical	Dallas, Texas	\$43,981,259	7	0	298/60	66/34/0
88	Frank & Grossman Landscape Contractors	Hayward, Calif.	\$43,300,000	10	13	342/NR	35/60/5
89	Granite Hills Group	Charlotte, N.C.	\$42,400,000	30	25	230/75	NR/NR/NR
90	Green Garden Group	Downers Grove, Ill.	\$42,193,000	-7	10	100/275	40/60/0
91	Gras Lawn	Lakewood , N.J.	\$42,000,000	25	35	75/200	100/0/0
91	Verde Property Services	San Diego, Calif.	\$42,000,000	250	80	488/42	80/0/20
93	KeyServ Co.	Fernandina , Fla.	\$41,500,000	12	10	272/24	67/33/0
94	Andre Landscape Service	Azusa, Calif.	\$41,100,000	20	15	362/NR	99/1/0
95	Environmental Landworks Co.	Golden, Colo.	\$41,009,668	-2	9	275/80	85/1/14
96	Service Direct Landscape	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$40,183,150	22	20	280/280	40/60/0
97	Earthworks	Lillian, Texas	\$40,000,000	8	10	325/75	98/0/2
98	Valor Landscape	Aurora, Colo.	\$39,580,940	23	0	140/45	75/25/0
99	Cherrylake	Groveland, Fla.	\$39,328,404	17	7	397/58	100/0/0
100	Scott Byron & Co.	Lake Bluff, Ill.	\$39,200,000	1	9	79/214	1/99/0

		Headquarters	2024 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change from 2023	% Projected Change for 2025	FTE/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm/ Res/Gov
101	Merchants Landscape Services	Santa Ana, Calif.	\$39,000,000	10	5	470/450	0/0/100
102	Steadfast Contractors Alliance	San Antonio, Fla.	\$38,000,000	20	22	228/NR	100/0/0
103	Christy Webber & Co.	Chicago, Ill.	\$37,500,000	-15	0	160/NR	55/15/30
104	Great Oaks Landscape Associates	Novi, Mich.	\$37,300,000	22	5	197/NR	77/23/0
105	Stay Green	Santa Clarita, Calif.	\$37,221,341	2	14	420/30	61/0/39
106	Urban Dirt	Austin, Texas	\$37,200,000	0	10	175/75	100/0/0
107	Gibson Landscape	Alpharetta, Ga.	\$37,140,167	27	15	200/30	100/0/0
108	American Landscape Systems	Lewisville, Texas	\$36,898,448	4	3	325/54	55/0/45
109	The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin	Middleton, Wis.	\$36,561,200	-2	4	100/225	75/20/5
110	Naturescape	Muskego, Wis.	\$36,442,610	3	4	314/18	5/95/0
111	Saluda Hill Landscapes	Lexington, S.C.	\$35,491,577	35	20	150/NR	90/10/0
112	DLC Resources	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$35,097,000	8	3	403/NR	100/0/0
113	Urban Habitat	Palm Desert, Calif.	\$34,765,438	44	50	139/NR	5/0/95
114	Chalet	Wilmette, Ill.	\$34,735,000	1	11	130/180	0/100/0
115	Level Green Landscape	Upper Marlboro, Md.	\$34,666,000	29	20	147/183	95/0/5
116	Winterberry	Southington, Conn.	\$34,531,934	18	14	55/170	78/22/0
117	The Joyce Cos.	Marstons Mills, Mass.	\$32,855,510	9	4	150/50	0/100/0
118	Michael Hatcher & Associates	Olive Branch, Miss.	\$32,600,000	22	40	250/NR	NR/NR/NR
119	Green Lawn Fertilizing ^	West Chester, Pa.	\$32,034,638	17	13	325/NR	6/94/0
120	Landry's Professional Lawn & Landscape	Baton Rouge, La.	\$32,030,128	6	6	51/43	92/8/0
121	Realty Landscaping*	Yardley, Pa.	\$31,564,590	12	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
122	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting	Germantown, Wis.	\$31,540,000	1	8	180/90	65/35/0
123	Utz Environmental Services of Austin	Leander, Texas	\$30,183,400	1	15	141/75	100/0/0
124	Green Leaf Group	Raleigh, N.C.	\$29,900,000	12	15	200/40	95/0/5
125	Timberline Landscaping	Colorado Springs, Colo.	\$29,680,000	18	15	50/168	70/20/10
126	Mountain View Landscapes	Chicopee, Mass.	\$29,500,000	5	0	28/110	NR/NR/NR
127	Hittle Landscaping	Westfield, Ind.	\$28,330,000	16	18	198/55	96/2/2
128	Texas Land Care*	Dallas, Texas	\$28,116,895	12	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
129	Todd's Services	Hamburg, Mich.	\$27,905,872	34	25	150/12	25/74/1
130	Complete Landsculpture	Dallas, Texas	\$27,500,000	-5	10	120/110	60/40/0
130	LEI	Boylston, Mass.	\$27,500,000	13	5	120/15	100/0/0
132	Integrity Landscape	Morgan Hill, Calif.	\$26,550,000	2	10	230/15	100/0/0
133	Genesis Landscape Solutions ^	Mesa, Ariz.	\$26,460,000	20	10	300/NR	90/0/10
134	Growing Seasons Landscaping	Canonsburg, Pa.	\$25,932,354	117	-20	75/103	100/0/0
135	HighGrove Partners	Austell, Ga.	\$25,200,000	15	19	225/35	100/0/0
136	Roebuck Landscaping	Roebuck, S.C.	\$25,130,000	10	20	175/30	85/14/1
137	GreenView Partners	Raleigh, N.C.	\$25,129,637	20	17	200/30	100/0/0
138	Art By Nature	Granite Falls, Wash.	\$24,751,276	1	10	168/NR	98/2/0
139	Franz Witte Landscape Contractors	Nampa, Idaho	\$24,635,000	-3	5	138/81	55/40/5
140	North American Lawn & Landscape	Charlotte, N.C.	\$24,600,000	0	15	150/40	100/0/0
141	Earthco Landscape	Santa Ana, Calif.	\$23,500,000	15	10	250/NR	100/0/0
142	Mullin	Saint Rose, La.	\$23,495,000	16	11	190/30	84/16/0
143	Next to Nature Landscape	Olathe, Kan.	\$23,376,456	-10	7	139/49	NR/NR/NR
144	Clarence Davids & Co.	Matteson, Ill.	\$23,302,927	1	2	80/128	90/10/0
145	Nature Care	Santa Ana, Calif.	\$22,000,000	22	5	240/20	98/0/2
146	Pro Cutters Lawnsapes	Conyers, Ga.	\$21,904,598	9	11	70/15	35/0/65
147	Hidden Creek Landscaping	Hilliard, Ohio	\$21,000,000	3	25	100/50	10/90/0
148	Greenshade Trees	Oklahoma City, Okla.	\$20,700,000	150	10	115/20	45/5/50
149	Sposato Landscape Co.	Milton, Del.	\$20,600,742	0	7	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
150	Greener Group	Lowell, Mass.	\$20,500,000	0	5	82/19	99/1/0
			Total: \$21,101,241,223	Avg: 16%	Avg: 12%		

PEDAL TO THE METAL

From modest beginnings, Bland Landscaping has grown into a regional industry powerhouse and one of the fastest climbers on the annual *LM150* list

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

Kurt and Matt Bland know what people see when they look at Bland Landscaping, a company founded by their father, Tom, in 1976.

They see a company that has grown as fast as any in the country, buoyed by a focus on fundamentals, private equity support and a strategic approach to growth. They see a company that has expanded beyond its origins in Raleigh-Durham to include other North Carolina locations in Charlotte, Greensboro and Wilmington, two in South Carolina and one in Florida.

They also see a company that has experienced regular double-digit revenue growth in recent years and an accompanying meteoric rise up the annual *LM150* rankings. In 2024, Bland reported \$86.3 million in revenue—a 33 percent increase

over the previous year—which earned them the No. 45 spot on the 2025 rankings. Five years ago, the company was at No. 88 on the list.

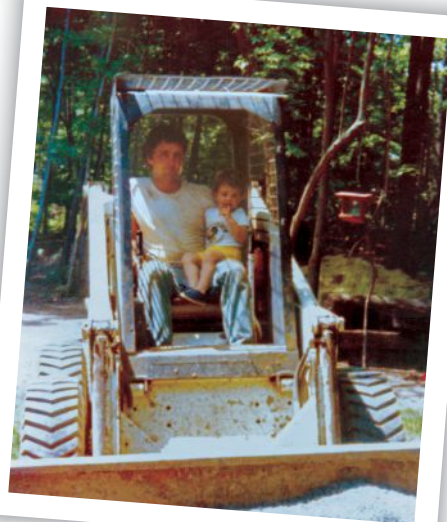
What they don't see, Kurt and Matt will tell you, is all that it took to get to this point; the struggles they faced when they took over the business in 2005 after their father stepped away to take care of their mother, Nancy, who was battling cancer. The economic hardships that battered the company during the Great Recession. The challenges they faced when reinventing the company from one that dabbled in a variety of commercial services to one that now focuses almost exclusively on commercial maintenance.

“Going through the loss of our mother, the recession, having to reinvent the business ... those were like merit badges when we walked into the private equity world almost

eight years ago,” says Kurt, company president. “When we had our first meetings with (investors), they didn’t want to talk about landscaping. They wanted to talk about what we’d been through and the lessons we had learned.

“Those are the type of things investors look at and say, ‘If you can figure things out then, we’re confident that you can figure it out if those kinds of things happen again and, maybe more importantly, how to prevent those kinds of things from happening in the first place. You can keep things moving in the right direction.’”

Tom Bland, the patriarch of Bland Landscaping who founded the company in 1976, with his son, Matt.



PHOTOS: BLAND LANDSCAPING



Community service projects like this lake clean-up effort last year are part of the culture at Bland Landscaping.



FATHER KNOWS BEST

Kurt was six months old when his father started the company — Matt is two years his junior — so it's no stretch to say the brothers grew up in the landscaping industry. Despite that, there were no guarantees that the pair would eventually run one of the country's fastest-growing companies.

Sure, both spent their formative years working for the company. Kurt even took to the work enough that he majored in agricultural business and horticulture in college, while Matt pursued a finance degree.

But when the two brothers shared an apartment at North Carolina State, their late-night conversations about what they wanted to be when they grew up didn't always focus on the family business.

"Matt and I would sit up in the evenings after going out with friends and talk about whether either of us was serious about coming back to the business," Kurt says. "We didn't always agree about that. But it was an opportunity to talk about it without our parents around and think about what the potential could be."

Not that anything would be put on a silver platter for them if and when they decided to return to the family business. "My mom and dad wanted us to have experiences, to stand on our own and decide if we really wanted to come back to the business," says Matt, who serves as Bland Landscaping's chief financial officer, chief operating officer and senior vice president. "I think they wanted us to, but they also wanted us to know there were other things out there if we were interested."

So, after college, they both tried their hands at those other things. Matt took a job as a financial analyst for IBM, while Kurt headed west for an office manager position



Bland Landscaping's senior leadership team (from left): Adam Gilpatrick, Joe Ritchie, Kurt Bland, Matt Bland and Tyner Tew.

with Del Conte's Landscaping in Fremont, Calif.

Eventually, though, the allure of home and the possibilities of what Bland Landscaping could become won out. Kurt returned to North Carolina in 2002, and Matt left IBM a year later to return to the family business.

STARRING ROLES

Less than two years after returning to Bland Landscaping, Kurt and Matt found themselves running the company. To focus his attention on their ailing mother, Tom stepped away from the business at the end of 2005.

"And when I say stepped away, I mean he told us what he was doing one week and then the next he was traveling with mom and spending time with her between chemo treatments," Kurt says. Sadly, Nancy passed away in December 2006.

The company Kurt and Matt inherited bore little resemblance to the one they helm now. Like today, it was primarily focused on commercial clients — "That was largely by design," Kurt says, "because that's all our father was interested in. He had come from a commercial construction background. He loved that type of work." But unlike today, about half

of its nearly \$10 million in annual revenue came from design and installation back then, the other half from ongoing maintenance.

Then, the Great Recession hit in 2008. That design and installation work dried up almost immediately, which forced two rounds of layoffs just to keep the company's figurative head above water. Both Kurt and Matt knew that charting a new path was no longer an option. It was a necessity.

"2008 was definitely a reality check," Matt says. "We realized that we didn't know as much as we thought we did and that restructuring the business was something we had to get serious about."

Fortunately, the company had strong bones despite the struggles it faced during the Great Recession. "We didn't have any debt, we had a strong balance sheet and we had opportunities in a lot of areas to grow," Kurt says. "As I looked at it, we had one shot to fix things and to put those things to work for us."

BRAVE NEW WORLD

For Bland Landscaping, those fixes happened on several fronts. First, the company made a strategic decision to direct almost all its efforts on commercial

Continued on page S10



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Continued from page S7

maintenance, which today represents 87 percent of Bland Landscaping's total revenue.

Next, the company expanded its definition of "commercial" to include homeowners associations (HOAs) and more institutional clients. "We didn't do any of that before," Kurt says. "But today, those make up over half of what we do."

Once those changes had taken hold, Kurt and Matt turned their attention to a third front — mergers, acquisitions and the introduction of private equity funding. The duo had always had designs on growing Bland Landscaping into a company with a regional presence. But both admit to being "debt-averse," so they proceeded with caution as they assessed ways to achieve those goals.

Enter private equity. In December 2017, the company partnered with Prospect Partners to begin turning those expansion dreams into reality. In the seven years that followed, Bland Landscaping tripled in size. And in November of last year, right before Bland expanded its footprint into Jacksonville, Fla., the company recapitalized with a new private equity firm, Comvest Partners.

"Everything just accelerates when you start to bring in private equity, both good and bad, and you have to be ready for that," Matt says. "The problems show up faster, but as we've found, the solutions also show up faster."

CULTURE CLUB

While the influx of private equity support has changed the pace of Bland Landscaping's growth, it hasn't changed the way Kurt, Matt and the rest of the company's senior leadership team — Joe Ritchie, vice president and general manager;



GROWTH AT BLAND ISN'T JUST ABOUT NUMBERS. IT'S ABOUT DEVELOPING PEOPLE, EXPANDING OUR CAPABILITIES AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS."

— JOE RITCHIE

Tyner Tew, vice president of sales; and Adam Gilpatrick, vice president of finance and accounting — view the company's values and culture.

Each one will tell you that Bland Landscaping remains focused on the fundamentals of the business, on disciplined growth and on creating a people-first workplace.

"For us, company culture and values aren't negotiable," Kurt says. "Our mission statement is the same as it was 25 years ago ... and our core values remain honesty, integrity, progressiveness, professionalism and excellence. No matter how big we get, I don't see those ever changing."

Tew says that approach is unique among the companies he's worked for throughout his career.

"We want to ... take care of our people so they can take care of our customers," Tew says. "Bland has been leading in the 'taking-care-of-people' category since Tom started the organization over 49 years ago. That is way more common here

compared to anywhere else I have been affiliated."

Ritchie emphasizes that culture and values drive the company's growth and not the other way around as can happen in some circumstances. "Growth at Bland isn't just about numbers. It's about developing people, expanding our capabilities and strengthening relationships," he says.

And at the end of the day, both Kurt and Matt are confident that discipline, the culture and those values will serve as the foundation for Bland Landscaping's continued growth in the years to come.

"Our true north — or true south, in this case — is to stay focused on acquisitions and the growth of our commercial maintenance business in the southeastern United States," Matt says. "We want to maintain our discipline and continue to do what we think we do well."

"It's worked for us so far, and we're confident that it's going to keep working for us." 

A "COMPLETE" PROCESS

Complete Landsculpture focuses on people and processes to create a fanatical customer experience

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

#130

Complete Landsculpture got its start before founder Chris Strempek was even physically able to pull-start a lawn mower. At age 10, his father would pull-start the mower for him at his house and Strempek would push the running mower for up to two blocks. "We were totally OSHA compliant," he laughs, thinking back to those early days. "But I never cut off a finger or toe.

And it also kept me in shape for high school football."

Forty years later, the company sits at No. 130 on the LM150 list with \$27.5 million in revenue in 2024. Strempek has always been a go-getter when it comes to his business. As a youth, when he saw a for-sale sign in a home's lawn, he'd call the real estate agent and see if he could add the yard to his roster of clients. More often than not, the answer was yes. But at the

time, he was only making \$5 a lawn.

Strempek had a friend whose dad was in the lawn care business, so as he got older and into college, pursuing a degree in real estate finance, he got a taste of the opportunities that were out there.

Continued on page S12



Chris Strempek

Complete Landsculpture is a staple on the LM150 list, checking in at No. 130 this year.



PHOTO: COMPLETE LANDSCULPTURE

Continued from page S11

"I was surprised at the type of money people would spend on their properties and the types of projects there were in Dallas," he says.

He convinced his roommate in his second year of college to come with him to knock on some doors to see if they could get a project to do over spring break. When they scored a \$50,000 job — his friend was sacking groceries at Tom Thumb for \$2.65 an hour — Strempek started to wonder if real estate finance was his true calling, or if it was landscaping.

DO THE RIGHT THING

Founded in 1985, Complete Landsculpture offers landscape management, residential and commercial design/build, pool construction and remodeling and tree services to its clients in Dallas, North Texas and Oklahoma. The company first expanded into Oklahoma with a satellite office in 1998. In 2008, the company moved into its "dream location" in the heart of Dallas —

a 30,000-square-foot office and design center on nine acres, adjoining a 20-acre lake and surrounding parkland. With additional growth, the company most recently expanded with a new 20-acre office in Oklahoma City.

Vice president and co-owner Gene Freeman says he attributes the company's success to both working hard and trying to do the right thing.

"You have to do the right thing for your clients, and you have to do the right thing for your team. Then everything else takes care of itself," he says. "And the second thing is, you have to realize this is not an easy thing. You have to put in the work. You have to show up and put up."

Strempek says he's always been enamored with large landscape installation jobs, and used to call maintenance a "necessary evil." Today he sees maintenance as



YOU HAVE TO DO THE RIGHT THING FOR YOUR CLIENTS, AND YOU HAVE TO DO THE RIGHT THING FOR YOUR TEAM. THEN EVERYTHING ELSE TAKES CARE OF ITSELF."

— GENE FREEMAN



an essential part of the company's program, set to be the No. 1 growth opportunity in all locations. Maintenance is more than 70-percent of the Oklahoma City branch's business model. Strempek hopes that 50 percent of Complete Landsculpture's revenue will soon be from maintenance and maintenance enhancements.

Strempek adds that a key to Complete Landsculpture's success is finding and hiring the right people. Having a good interviewing process to filter the right kind of people into the company has paid off.

"There are two components to every employee: the technical side, which is your skill set, and then there's the cultural side, which is how you play in the sandbox with everyone else," Strempek says. "We try to learn about the people — what's important to them, what's important to their families. You have to see if you can connect with them and learn what's important to them outside of work."

When someone is hired at Complete Landsculpture, they get "check-ins" with a supervisor after seven, 30, 60 and 90 days. And regular meetings — from safety reviews with supervisors to cheeseburger



Cookouts, one-on-ones and other fun team-building events help Complete retain staff.



cookouts — allow the team to stay well connected.

“We celebrate birthdays and anniversaries. We take our executive leadership team and our leadership team off-site every year for a goal-setting and team-building event,” Strempek says. “We do an Easter egg hunt every spring. We have a big Christmas celebration and celebrate Thanksgiving together. And we encourage one-on-ones. Get to know someone, don’t just talk about work.”

Freeman says he is excited to see the results of the team they’ve assembled. Each day, more of the young leaders in the company are evolving into bigger positions within Complete Landsculpture.

“We have some great leaders on our executive team, and we have some incredible young talent that’s stepping up and looking for the next level,” Freeman says. “We’re doing some great training and mentoring, and we’re seeing the payoff. Some of these young leaders, they’ll be running the company someday.”

LOOKING TO GROW! 2026

Complete Landsculpture will host GROW! 2026, the annual event hosted by Marty Grunder and The Grow Group. This will be the second time Complete Landsculpture will serve as the host of the event, the first company to serve as a repeat host.

“About 10 years ago, a fleet manager came to me and said, ‘Hey, this group wants to bring in 600 landscape companies to your company to walk through and talk to you about your company ... what do you think?’” Strempek recalls. “I wasn’t sure what we’d get out of it, but I thought, maybe we’ll get something, so let’s do it. Now, we’re in an ACE Peer Group. We’ve learned a lot by being with these other group members.”

Strempek and Freeman are excited to see GROW! — which has grown in numbers since the last time they hosted — come back to Dallas. This year, when the event visited Hidden Creek Landscaping, approximately 1,000 people made the trek to Columbus, Ohio, to attend.

Some of the things the company will be talking about will include their goals for the future, how they grow their maintenance division, grow their high-end services and how they can employ artificial intelligence in departments like human resources to get the job done better and faster.

“We’re trying to get to \$50 million in the next five to 10 years, and we need to use scalability and replicable processes so we can teach others how to do things the same way,” Strempek says. “Each and every time, the experience with our company has to be the same, because we’re trying to build fanatical customer experiences. We have to be fanatical about our training to consistently deliver a fanatical experience. That takes systems we can replicate with our team members. We’re really diving in right now on our people and our processes.” 

Complete will host GROW! 2026 next year, the second time it has hosted the event.

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— John Combs, Director of Irrigation, Focal Pointe

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KEEPING IT CLEAN

With a reliable reputation and a strong company culture, Urban Habitat has found itself rocketing up the *LM150* once again

BY NATHAN MADER | *LM* ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Urban Habitat has two core values that it uses to compete: To have fun in what it does and create chaos in the market.

CEO Brett Brennan says Urban Habitat doesn't have that multi-generational history or national outreach that some competitors can rely on, meaning that if they want to stand out in a tough market, they need to build their reputation in other ways.

"I'm just a guy who started 16 years ago," Brennan says. "I'm just in a different position, and our goal isn't to out-compete others. We're focused on enjoying what we do and delivering a high-quality product."

The Palm Desert, Calif.-based company — No. 113 on the 2025 *LM150* list — has spent its time growing from a simple landscaping company to one that now gets roughly 98 percent of its revenue in the government and public works sector, especially with the construction of community parks. Brennan says one of the largest areas of growth has been switching from subcontracting to being a prime contractor, now self-performing the majority of projects.

"In California, you have to self-perform 50 percent of these civil-type projects, and we have the equipment, the manpower, the knowledge and the resources to be able to do that, and a lot of

people don't," Brennan says.

Having the employees and the ability to self-perform and capture more revenue per project has helped them shoot up 20 spaces from last year's *LM150* list, with a 44 percent change in revenue from 2023.

A FRIENDLY FACE

To help "disrupt the market," Urban Habitat has worked to establish itself as a reliable, professional and knowledgeable company that cities and organizations can turn to with confidence. Especially when working with community projects, having a positive image and product is essential to their reputation.

"By the time we end the project and what we turn over, the community loves what we do," Brennan says. "We just opened up a park (recently). When they cut the ribbon, 200 kids ran out to go play on the playground. People were sitting under these trees reading books ... They love it, and that's what keeps this organization going."

Outside of landscaping and construction, Urban Habitat makes the effort to participate in the community as well, offering a friendly face where they can.

"We participate in all city events — cancer walks, whatever we can sponsor, try to give back to the community. We have a monarch butterfly garden as part of our parking lot, and we try to immerse ourselves in good things for our brand," Brennan says.

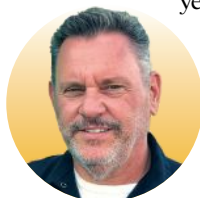


Urban Habitat opened a second office in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., to help with recruitment and for further outreach.



And this kind of branding has helped Urban Habitat stand out in the market despite its relatively young and local status. After being founded in 2009, Brennan says the company has worked to create a strategy that is low-key, letting their work and professionalism speak for itself.

"Our trucks feature understated branding, without our phone numbers. All our equipment is well-maintained and clean," he says. "Our brand is good; our brand is clean. What we do follows those guidelines, and I think all that makes us very, very different from our peers and our competitors that we deal with here in Southern California."



Brett Brennan

"There's strong funding in place currently. The pandemic brought significant investment into parks and green spaces, which contributed to our recent growth, and so that was a big push in our last couple of years," Brennan says.

Brennan calls the market they're in "unique," and with how well they've grown into it, Urban Habitat found itself at No. 6 on the LM150's top 25 revenue-generating firms in the government sector — up four places from last year.

"We're in a unique market share," Brennan says. "I mean, we're probably getting higher on that list. I would say before long, we'll probably be No. 1 (on the government sector list) because this is what we do."

GOLDEN (STATE) OPPORTUNITIES

As many in the landscaping industry know, operating in California can be "challenging," as Brennan describes it, all thanks to the state's heavy regulations, weather conditions and other restrictions. Brennan says it's even more regulated when you get into public works and funding like Urban Habitat does.

Despite this, for Brennan and Urban Habitat, there can also be some great opportunities that come from the Golden State if you play your cards right. For example, having a deep knowledge of a specific city, government and state processes impacting a project can help them either secure a contract or finish a job with fewer hiccups.

On top of that, Brennan says that contractors in California are larger per capita than those on the East Coast. And when working with public and city parks, there's a lot of government funding being pumped into that sector.

CALIFORNIA CULTURE

Despite the rapid growth, Brennan still says he's learning how to be a CEO, and his background in the field still creeps into his routine. One thing he's realized, however, is how important company culture is when trying to build a reputable business and retain top employees.

"(Back then) I didn't know culture was important, to where now, I know it's one of the most important things, and you can't have culture as a small company," Brennan says. "You don't have the resources to do it. You're just hiring people to fill positions to get the job done, but after you become more established ... that's where culture becomes very important in your organization to retain employees."

Brennan says the company has invested heavily in creating a fun, professional culture where people want to come to work. Self-development, for example, is highly encouraged, and Urban Habitat not only

offers professional development classes to employees, but it pays for them to go to classes as well.

"It's taken a while, and we have a good group of people, and I think that once that machine gets going, it operates and runs on its own," Brennan says. "It attracts other good people, and it attracts fun things around here."

Fun is also a key component of cultural growth. The company has a Newfoundland dog that comes to work every day with doggy doors into each room. Urban Habitat takes trips to ribbon-cutting events at the parks they work on and has monthly meetings with lunch provided to discuss work and personal topics, keeping everyone connected and working together.

LOOKING AHEAD

While Brennan says it might be time to pump the brakes and refine some internal processes, it likely won't stop Urban Habitat, and the company projects an even larger growth in revenue next year.

Regardless, Brennan says the goal for the next year is to thoroughly clean up their internal systems and processes to become more efficient in the office and out in the field. Software integration is another goal that they've been tackling recently.

But, like all hurdles they've faced so far, Brennan says Urban Habitat will work through them with the same efficiency and professionalism the company is now known for.

"We started in the recession here in California. Sixteen years ago, we had nothing to lose. We couldn't go backward, so we just constantly moved forward, and we found a way to make it work," he says. "And when it didn't work, we stood back, we made a decision, we punted again and moved forward." 🐾

150

TOP

25

A look at the *LM150* list — sorted for top performers by client mix, profit centers and regions.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Not all companies report client mix, profit center and regional data. Dollar amounts were calculated by *LM* from data reported. Landscape construction is included in Design Build + Installation figures.

COMMERCIAL

1	HeartLand	\$583,300,000
2	Yellowstone Landscape	\$567,615,000
3	Monarch Landscape Cos.	\$450,000,000
4	Sperber Landscape Cos.	\$427,000,000
5	Gothic Landscape	\$419,900,000
6	Ruppert Landscape	\$402,200,000
7	LandCare	\$322,000,000
8	Divisions Maintenance Group	\$315,363,671
9	Juniper	\$286,894,960
10	United Land Services	\$259,547,470
11	U.S. Lawns	\$252,000,000
12	Outworx Group	\$238,000,000
13	Park West	\$231,253,043
14	TruGreen	\$223,938,000
15	Yard Nique	\$175,000,000
16	Landscape Development Inc.	\$157,810,000
17	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$157,800,000
18	Clean Scapes	\$145,213,563
19	SavATree	\$143,700,000
20	Landscape Workshop	\$131,130,000
21	Schill Grounds Management	\$126,100,000
22	Visterra Landscape Group	\$119,080,000
23	Rotolo Consultants	\$107,200,000
24	LMC Landscape Partners	\$103,407,500
25	Mainscape	\$91,320,000

RESIDENTIAL

1	TruGreen	\$1,498,662,000
2	Mariani Premier Group	\$594,545,351
3	Weed Man	\$356,659,200
4	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$336,640,000
5	SavATree	\$335,300,000
6	Perennial Services Group	\$150,696,000
7	Lawn Doctor	\$145,089,335
8	Turf Masters Brands	\$139,406,400
9	Senske Family of Cos.	\$127,475,807
10	Fairwood Brands	\$90,000,000
11	Spring Green Lawn Care Corp.	\$89,410,200
12	Massey Services	\$88,130,607
13	ExperiGreen	\$80,750,000
14	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$71,656,271
15	Garden Design	\$65,000,000
16	Augusta Lawn Care	\$49,320,000
17	McHale Landscape Design	\$47,779,380
18	Kline Bros. Landscaping	\$46,550,000
19	Conserva Irrigation	\$40,284,334
20	Scott Byron & Co.	\$38,808,000
21	Chalet	\$34,735,000
22	Naturescape	\$34,620,480
23	The Joyce Cos.	\$32,855,510
24	Schumacher Cos.	\$31,825,000
25	Green Lawn Fertilizing	\$30,112,560

GOVERNMENT

1	Yellowstone Landscape	\$150,885,000
2	ABM	\$58,140,000
3	Monarch Landscape Cos.	\$50,000,000
4	Outworx Group	\$42,000,000
5	Merchants Landscape Services	\$39,000,000
6	Urban Habitat	\$33,027,166
7	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$31,861,809
8	Elite Team Offices	\$31,850,000
9	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$31,560,000
10	American Landscape Cos.	\$30,600,000
11	Rotolo Consultants	\$26,800,000
12	Teufel Nursery	\$24,000,000
13	Landscape Development Inc.	\$23,855,000
14	Juniper	\$22,821,190
15	Ethoscapes	\$20,748,720
16	Lawn Doctor	\$20,727,048
17	Designscapes Colorado	\$19,600,000
18	American Landscape Systems	\$16,604,302
19	EMI	\$14,691,750
20	Stay Green	\$14,516,323
21	United Land Services	\$14,260,850
22	Pro Cutters Lawnsapes	\$14,237,989
23	Mariani Premier Group	\$13,066,931
24	Christy Webber & Co.	\$11,250,000
25	Greenshade Trees	\$10,350,000

BY CLIENT MIX



MOWING + MAINTENANCE

1	BrightView Holdings	\$1,743,210,000
2	Yellowstone Landscape	\$560,430,000
3	HeartLand	\$419,976,000
4	Mariani Premier Group	\$303,575,160
5	Monarch Landscape Cos.	\$300,000,000
6	Ruppert Landscape	\$225,232,000
7	Juniper	\$215,171,220
8	Sperber Landscape Cos.	\$207,095,000
9	U.S. Lawns	\$166,320,000
10	Yard Nique	\$157,500,000
11	United Land Services	\$145,460,670
12	Gothic Landscape	\$132,600,000
13	Park West	\$108,688,930
14	Landscape Workshop	\$107,160,000
15	Rotolo Consultants	\$87,100,000
16	Bland Landscaping Company	\$75,046,200
17	Mainscape	\$67,576,800
18	LMC Landscape Partners	\$63,133,000
19	Schill Grounds Management	\$61,100,000
20	Russell Landscape Group	\$60,900,000
21	Perennial Services Group	\$60,450,000
22	Ethoscapes	\$56,194,450
23	Visterra Landscape Group	\$55,967,600
24	Augusta Lawn Care	\$52,060,000
25	Landscape Development Inc.	\$51,380,000

DESIGN BUILD + INSTALLATION

1	BrightView Holdings	\$802,430,000
2	Gothic Landscape	\$309,400,000
3	Mariani Premier Group	\$296,975,700
4	Ruppert Landscape	\$176,968,000
5	Landscape Development Inc.	\$115,605,000
6	Park West	\$99,438,808
7	United Land Services	\$94,121,610
8	Sperber Landscape Cos.	\$88,389,000
9	Garden Design	\$85,000,000
10	Yellowstone Landscape	\$79,035,000
11	Clean Scapes	\$75,365,839
12	Monarch Landscape Cos.	\$75,000,000
13	Juniper	\$71,723,740
14	HeartLand	\$69,996,000
15	Elite Team Offices	\$60,060,000
16	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$59,740,892
17	Dixie Landscape	\$58,858,100
18	Fairwood Brands	\$58,500,000
19	SiteWorks	\$57,084,401
20	U.S. Lawns	\$55,440,000
21	Choate USA	\$51,598,450
22	Xquisite Landscaping	\$48,708,000
23	Dupper Landscape	\$47,092,540
24	Rotolo Consultants	\$46,900,000
25	Kline Bros. Landscaping	\$44,100,000

TURF + ORNAMENTAL

1	TruGreen	\$1,548,600,000
2	Weed Man	\$371,520,000
3	Lawn Doctor	\$184,240,426
4	Turf Masters Brands	\$135,049,950
5	Senske Family of Cos.	\$129,590,173
6	Spring Green Lawn Care Corp.	\$93,104,000
7	ExperiGreen	\$85,000,000
8	Massey Services	\$81,587,029
9	Sperber Landscape Cos.	\$61,915,000
10	Perennial Services Group	\$44,850,000
11	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$34,473,807
12	Green Lawn Fertilizing	\$32,034,639
13	Naturescape	\$29,154,088
14	Unlimited Landscaping & Turf Management	\$23,202,500
15	Schill Grounds Management	\$22,100,000
16	Mariani Premier Group	\$19,798,380
17	Lucas Tree Experts	\$8,955,000
18	SOI Group	\$8,918,000
19	Michael Hatcher & Associates	\$8,150,000
20	ABM	\$7,200,000
21	Juniper	\$6,520,340
22	KeyServ Co.	\$5,395,000
23	Russell Landscape Group	\$5,220,000
24	U.S. Lawns	\$5,040,000
25	SunWorks Landscape Partners	\$4,865,000

IRRIGATION + WATER MANAGEMENT

1	Monarch Landscape Cos.	\$75,000,000
2	Conserva Irrigation	\$48,535,342
3	United Land Services	\$34,226,040
4	Choate USA	\$30,792,623
5	Juniper	\$26,081,360
6	Clean Scapes	\$25,267,160
7	Sperber Landscape Cos.	\$22,204,000
8	American Landscape Cos.	\$21,080,000
9	SOI Group	\$15,288,000
10	Massey Services	\$15,147,082
11	SunWorks Landscape Partners	\$14,595,000
12	Winterberry	\$14,503,412
13	Impact Landscaping & Irrigation	\$14,184,000
14	Perfect Cuts of Austin	\$12,973,111
15	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$10,670,464
16	U.S. Lawns	\$10,080,000
17	Garden Design	\$10,000,000
18	Cherrylake	\$9,832,101
19	Perennial Services Group	\$9,750,000
20	Steadfast Contractors Alliance	\$9,120,000
21	Dixie Landscape	\$8,408,300
22	Greenshade Trees	\$7,245,000
23	Mariani Premier Group	\$6,599,460
24	Mainscape	\$6,392,400
25	Elite Team Offices	\$6,370,000

BY PROFIT CENTERS



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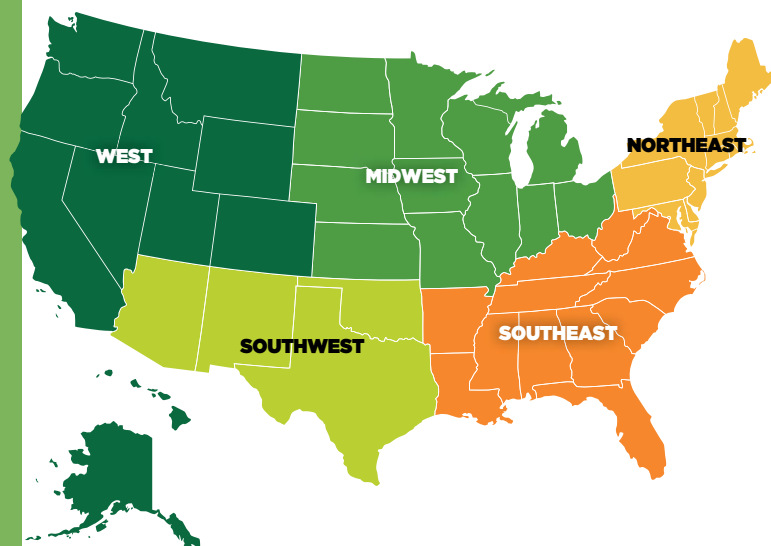
LM150

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*Special offers limited to companies named to the LM150 list published in the June 2024 issue of Landscape Management. Offers available July 1, 2024 through October 27, 2025. See participating John Deere Dealer for details.

150

BY REGION



NORTHEAST

1	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$241,960,000
2	Mariani Premier Group	\$189,470,497
3	Ruppert Landscape	\$156,858,000
4	Lawn Doctor	\$82,908,192
5	Perennial Services Group	\$73,710,000
6	Chenmark	\$67,400,000
7	Lucas Tree Experts	\$67,162,500
8	Xquisite Landscaping	\$59,400,000
9	Monarch Landscape Cos.	\$50,000,000
10	Kline Bros. Landscaping	\$49,000,000
11	Schumacher Cos.	\$47,500,000
12	Divisions Maintenance Group	\$40,997,277
13	LandCare	\$38,640,000
14	Gras Lawn	\$35,700,000
15	Level Green Landscape	\$34,666,000
16	Winterberry	\$34,531,934
17	McHale Landscape Design	\$33,445,566
18	The Joyce Cos.	\$32,855,510
19	Fairwood Brands	\$32,400,000
20	Green Lawn Fertilizing	\$32,034,638
21	Sperber Landscape Cos.	\$29,890,000
22	Weed Man	\$29,721,600
23	Mountain View Landscapes	\$29,500,000
24	LEI	\$27,500,000
25	Visterra Landscape Group	\$21,434,400

WEST

1	Monarch Landscape Cos.	\$350,000,000
2	Sperber Landscape Cos.	\$303,170,000
3	Gothic Landscape	\$256,360,000
4	Park West	\$231,253,043
5	Landscape Development Inc.	\$183,500,000
6	Mariani Premier Group	\$124,135,843
7	LandCare	\$122,360,000
8	Elite Team Offices	\$91,000,000
9	American Landscape Cos.	\$68,000,000
10	Pacific Landscape Management	\$67,972,000
11	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$63,120,000
12	Harvest Landscape Enterprises	\$55,685,000
13	Divisions Maintenance Group	\$53,611,824
14	Perennial Services Group	\$52,416,000
15	Designscapes Colorado	\$49,000,000
16	Landtech Contractors	\$45,472,749
17	Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers	\$44,735,396
18	Frank & Grossman Landscape Contractors	\$43,300,000
19	Andre Landscape Service	\$41,100,000
20	Environmental Landworks Co.	\$41,009,668
21	Valor Landscape	\$39,580,940
22	Merchants Landscape Services	\$39,000,000
23	Stay Green	\$37,221,341
24	Verde Property Services	\$35,700,000
25	Urban Habitat	\$34,765,438

MIDWEST

1	Mariani Premier Group	\$150,269,704
2	Weed Man	\$104,025,600
3	Schill Grounds Management	\$98,800,000
4	Divisions Maintenance Group	\$85,148,191
5	Visterra Landscape Group	\$84,546,800
6	ExperiGreen	\$80,750,000
7	EMI	\$77,325,000
8	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$75,637,175
9	Beary Landscaping	\$63,250,000
10	Spring Green Lawn Care Corp.	\$61,529,600
11	Focal Pointe	\$44,144,761
12	Green Garden Group	\$42,193,000
13	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$42,080,000
14	Lawn Doctor	\$41,454,096
15	Scott Byron & Co.	\$38,024,000
16	Christy Webber & Co.	\$37,500,000
17	Great Oaks Landscape Associates	\$37,300,000
18	The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin	\$36,561,200
19	Chalet	\$34,735,000
20	Naturescape	\$34,256,053
21	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting	\$31,540,000
22	Perennial Services Group	\$31,122,000
23	LandCare	\$28,980,000
24	Hittle Landscaping	\$28,330,000
25	Todd's Services	\$27,905,872



SOUTHEAST

1	Juniper	\$299,935,640
2	United Land Services	\$285,217,000
3	Ruppert Landscape	\$229,254,000
4	Yard Nique	\$175,000,000
5	Landscape Workshop	\$141,000,000
6	Mariani Premier Group	\$124,135,843
7	Sunrise Landscape	\$118,300,000
8	Turf Masters Brands	\$116,172,000
9	Rotolo Consultants	\$113,900,000
10	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$99,940,000
11	Divisions Maintenance Group	\$91,455,465
12	Weed Man	\$89,164,800
13	Massey Services	\$89,132,091
14	Russell Landscape Group	\$87,000,000
15	Bland Landscaping Company	\$86,260,000
16	Dixie Landscape	\$84,083,000
17	Impact Landscaping & Irrigation	\$78,800,000
18	The Greenery	\$78,000,000
19	LandCare	\$77,280,000
20	Mainscape	\$55,705,200
21	Monarch Landscape Cos.	\$50,000,000
22	Unlimited Landscaping & Turf Management	\$46,405,000
23	Heaven & Earth Landscaping	\$45,532,423
24	APHIX	\$43,984,432
25	Granite Hills Group	\$42,400,000

SOUTHWEST

1	Gothic Landscape	\$185,640,000
2	Clean Scapes	\$145,213,563
3	Garden Design	\$100,000,000
4	Ethoscapes	\$86,453,000
5	LMC Landscape Partners	\$84,903,000
6	Superscapes	\$83,000,000
7	Choate USA	\$81,558,840
8	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$79,654,523
9	SiteWorks	\$65,614,254
10	Mariani Premier Group	\$65,334,654
11	AAA Landscape	\$65,000,000
12	SOI Group	\$63,700,000
13	Dupper Landscape	\$56,738,000
14	LandCare	\$54,740,000
15	Perfect Cuts of Austin	\$54,054,631
16	Earthtones Cos.	\$52,675,000
17	Monarch Landscape Cos.	\$50,000,000
18	Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management	\$49,430,149
19	Divisions Maintenance Group	\$44,150,914
20	Southern Botanical	\$43,981,259
21	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$42,080,000
22	Service Direct Landscape	\$40,183,150
23	SunWorks Landscape Partners	\$39,893,000
24	Urban Dirt	\$37,200,000
25	American Landscape Systems	\$36,898,448

FUTURE FOCUSED

Industry pros from the LM150 share their goals for the coming year ... and beyond

"Our primary goal for 2025 is to prioritize and enhance customer retention and satisfaction. This will involve analyzing customer feedback, improving our services or products based on their needs, and ensuring every interaction fosters loyalty and trust. By implementing targeted strategies, such as personalized experiences, timely support and consistent quality, we aim to not only retain our existing customers but also build stronger, longer-lasting relationships that reflect our commitment to excellence."

J.T. PRICE, CEO, LANDSCAPE WORKSHOP, VESTAVIA, ALA.

"We look forward to expanding into new regional markets in 2025. With a strong foundation in the Southeast, we want to establish a significant presence in Nashville and other local markets. The 2025 goal focuses on leveraging existing operational excellence, innovative design and sustainable practices to secure major municipal and commercial contracts. Strategic partnerships, localized teams and targeted marketing will drive growth."

TONY GIBSON, CEO, GIBSON LANDSCAPE, ALPHARETTA, GA.

"Our biggest goal for 2025 is to continue capitalizing on the best practices of the various companies we have acquired thus far. In 2023 and 2024, we acquired many leading lawn care and pest control companies ... and now we are in the enviable position of putting all those resources and skillsets together in one dynamic company with some of the best minds in the industry. This is an enormous opportunity to build upon the great businesses we have acquired and take the best pieces of each and expand them across our platform."

CASEY TAYLOR, CEO, SENSKE FAMILY OF COMPANIES, DALLAS

"In 2025, we want to continue advancing our proprietary technology to streamline communication, drive action-oriented solutions and enhance efficiency. Additionally, we continue to focus on improving water management through smart technology and sustainable practices."

MATT WHITE, CEO AND OWNER, CARETAKER LANDSCAPE & TREE MANAGEMENT, GILBERT, ARIZ.

"Our biggest goal for 2025 is to continue our strong growth while enhancing our operations with updated systems that improve efficiency and service. By investing in innovation and refining our processes, we aim to better serve our clients, support our team and strengthen our position as an industry leader."

WENDALL FURTICK, PRESIDENT AND CEO, SALUDA HILL LANDSCAPES, LEXINGTON, S.C.

150

GROWTH

ONWARD
AND
UPWARD

Thirty-five companies on the 2025 LM150 list experienced more than 20 percent growth from last year, including three with growth numbers over 100 percent. Executives with some of those companies share the biggest challenges their companies have faced over the previous 12 months.

Gibson Landscape

"Our most challenging aspect ... has been navigating the shift in commercial real estate. By targeting mixed-use developments, health care and industrial sectors, we have aimed to adapt and sustain growth. Strategic regional expansion has helped us remain competitive amid the changing industry dynamics."

Tony Gibson, CEO

Landscape
Development Inc.

"Cultural and safety training during a growth cycle has been a challenge. We have doubled down on systematic training in the field and in classroom settings. We've also increased wide-area assigned studies in best practice construction and maintenance management."

Gary Horton, chairman

Growth Rank	LM150 Rank	Company	% Rev Change from 2023
1	91	Verde Property Services	250%
2	148	Greenshade Trees	150%
3	134	Growing Seasons Landscaping	117%
4	71	Augusta Lawn Care	77%
5	69	Focal Pointe	54%
6	32	Visterra Landscape Group	49%
7	24	Perennial Services Group	45%
8	113	Urban Habitat	44%
9	5	Mariani Premier Group	42%
10	27	Senske Family of Cos.	36%
11	111	Saluda Hill Landscapes	35%
12	129	Todd's Services	34%
13	28	Landscape Workshop	33%
	45	Bland Landscaping Company	33%
15	57	Creative Environments Design & Landscape	32%
16	33	Sunrise Landscape	31%
17	83	Landtech Contractors	30%
	89	Granite Hills Group	30%
19	115	Level Green Landscape	29%
20	107	Gibson Landscape	27%
21	62	AAA Landscape	25%
	91	Gras Lawn	25%
23	4	Yellowstone Landscape	24%
	34	LMC Landscape Partners	24%
25	98	Valor Landscape	23%
26	40	Elite Team Offices	22%
	9	SavATree	22%
	12	Ruppert Landscape	22%
	49	Superscapes	22%
	96	Service Direct Landscape	22%
	104	Great Oaks Landscape Associates	22%
	118	Michael Hatcher & Associates	22%
	145	Nature Care	22%
	67	Xquisite Landscaping	22%
35	8	Monarch Landscape Cos.	20%
	50	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	20%
	85	Pierre Landscape	20%
	94	Andre Landscape Service	20%
	102	Steadfast Contractors Alliance	20%
	133	Genesis Landscape Solutions	20%
	137	GreenView Partners	20%
	22	Landscape Development Inc.	20%

Verde Property
Services

"Our pain is the industry's pain. The primary challenges remain labor pool management, fuel costs and broad state compliance in the California market."

Gabriel Galvez, managing partner

Bland Landscaping

"We're keeping a close eye on the economy and recessionary pressures, like everybody. As a result, we're being a little more conservative in how we approach most things but still trying to stay focused on our goals and what we want to achieve in the long term."

Kurt Bland, president

For more on Bland Landscaping, see page S10.

Xquisite Landscaping

"Our biggest challenge has been managing disruptions from external factors like supply chain issues and market fluctuations. To address this, we've strengthened supplier relationships, improved internal processes, invested in technology and stayed agile to adapt to industry changes."

Victor Romeiro, president



LM150 COMPANY INDEX

Company name..... LM150 rank

AAA Landscape	62
ABM	56
American Landscape Cos.	58
American Landscape Systems	108
Andre Landscape Service	94
APHIX	86
Art By Nature	138
Augusta Lawn Care	71
Bartlett Tree Experts	7
Beary Landscaping	64
Bland Landscaping Company	45
BrightView Holdings	1
Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management	75
Chalet	114
Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	74
Chenmark	60
Cherrylake	99
Choate USA	48
Christy Webber & Co.	103
Clarence Davids & Co.	144
Clean Scapes	26
Complete Landsculpture	130
Conserva Irrigation	78
Creative Environments Design & Landscape	57
David J. Frank Landscape Contracting	122
Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers	84
Designscapes Colorado	76
Divisions Maintenance Group	16
Dixie Landscape	47
DJ's Landscape Management	52
DLC Resources	112
Dupper Landscape	68
Earthco Landscape	141
Earthtones Cos.	73
Earthworks	97
Elite Team Offices	40
EMI	55
Environmental Landworks Co.	95
Ethoscapes	44
ExperiGreen	46
Fairwood Brands	41
Focal Pointe	69
Frank & Grossman Landscape Contractors	88
Franz Witte Landscape Contractors	139
Garden Design	36
Genesis Landscape Solutions	133
Gibson Landscape	107
Gothic Landscape	10
Granite Hills Group	89
Gras Lawn	91

Great Oaks Landscape Associates	104
Green Garden Group	90
Green Lawn Fertilizing	119
Green Leaf Group	124
Greener Group	150
Greenshade Trees	148
GreenView Partners	137
Growing Seasons Landscaping	134
Harvest Landscape Enterprises	70
HeartLand	6
Heaven & Earth Landscaping	82
Hidden Creek Landscaping	147
HighGrove Partners	135
Hittle Landscaping	127
Impact Landscaping & Irrigation	53
Integrity Landscape	132
Juniper	14
KeyServ Co.	93
Kline Bros. Landscaping	76
LandCare	15
Landry's Professional Lawn & Landscape	120
Landscape Development Inc.	22
Landscape Workshop	28
Landtech Contractors	83
Lawn Doctor	21
LEI	130
Level Green Landscape	115
LMC Landscape Partners	34
Lucas Tree Experts	42
Mainscape	39
Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	50
Mariani Premier Group	5
Massey Services	35
McHale Landscape Design	79
Merchants Landscape Services	101
Michael Hatcher & Associates	118
Monarch Landscape Cos.	8
Mountain View Landscapes	126
Mullin	142
Nature Care	145
Naturescape	110
Next to Nature Landscape	143
North American Lawn & Landscape	140
Outworx Group	18
Pacific Landscape Management	59
Park West	20
Perennial Services Group	24
Perfect Cuts of Austin	72
Pierre Landscape	85
Pro Cutters Lawnsapes	146
Reality Landscaping	121

Roebuck Landscaping	136
Rotolo Consultants	30
Ruppert Landscape	12
Russell Landscape Group	43
Ryan Lawn & Tree	51
Saluda Hill Landscapes	111
Santa Rita Landscaping	66
SavATree	9
Schill Grounds Management	31
Schumacher Cos.	80
Scott Byron & Co.	100
Senske Family of Cos.	27
Service Direct Landscape	96
SiteWorks	61
SOI Group	63
Southern Botanical	87
Sperber Landscape Cos.	11
Sposato Landscape Co.	149
Spring Green Lawn Care Corp.	38
Stay Green	105
Steadfast Contractors Alliance	102
Sunrise Landscape	33
SunWorks Landscape Partners	37
Superscapes	49
Teufel Nursery	65
Texas Land Care	128
The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin	109
The Davey Tree Expert Co.	2
The Greenery	54
The Grounds Guys	29
The Joyce Cos.	117
Timberline Landscaping	125
Todd's Services	129
TruGreen	3
Turf Masters Brands	25
U.S. Lawns	19
United Land Services	17
Unlimited Landscaping & Turf Management	81
Urban Dirt	106
Urban Habitat	113
Utz Environmental Services of Austin	123
Valor Landscape	98
Verde Property Services	91
Visterra Landscape Group	32
Weed Man	13
Winterberry	116
Xquisite Landscaping	67
Yard Nique	23
Yellowstone Landscape	4



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Marty Grunder, Founder & CEO, Grunder Landscaping



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THE DIGITAL ADVANTAGE

Discover how cutting-edge business software, AI and data analytics unlock solutions that address landscape and lawn care's greatest operational challenges

BY MIKE ZAWACKI | CONTRIBUTOR

Business software has become as indispensable to today's landscape contractors and lawn care operators as zero-turn mowers, skid-steers and backpack sprayers.

Today's business software platforms — especially those designed to address processes and procedures used by landscape industry pros — provide users the ability to overcome common challenges like resource allocation and time management while empowering owners and managers to be more efficient, data-driven, customer-centric and, ultimately, more profitable.

Marty Grunder has seen it all in his four decades as owner of Dayton, Ohio-based Grunder Landscaping Co. and as an industry coach through his consulting firm, The Grow Group. That includes some professional landscape and lawn care firms that insist on staying low-tech, often with older, outdated legacy business systems that struggle to meet modern needs and standards. Or, he adds,

some pros shun technology altogether and still prefer pen-and-paper methods.

"I just don't get it. I really don't get it," Grunder says. "I know there's some heartache involved when switching over from paper to non-paper processes, but it's totally worth it. It boils down to whether you want to succeed with your business. Sometimes, you have to put your head down and do the worst of things to get things moving in the right direction."

Grunder can testify firsthand to a modern business software platform's impact on a landscape operation. Grunder Landscaping upgraded to Aspire's cloud-based comprehensive business management platform five years ago. He says it streamlined his operations, improved efficiencies and provided him with the tools to boost his annual revenue from \$4.5 million at that time to \$18 million today.

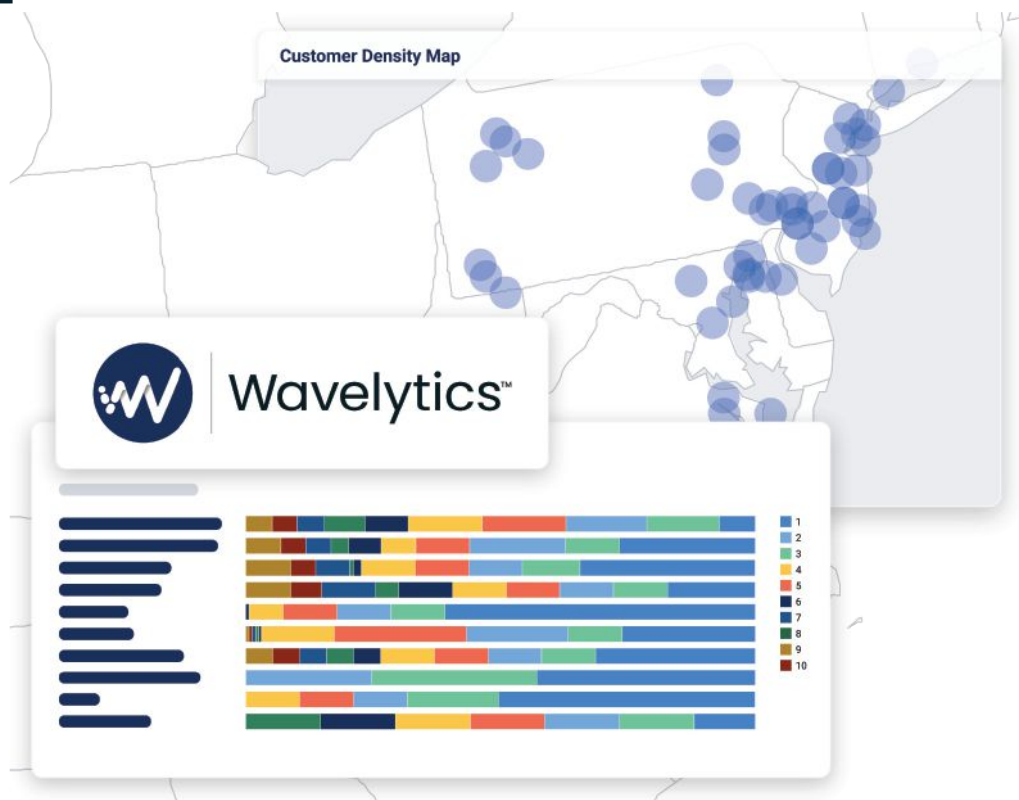
Continued on page 46



Marty Grunder

AN EXTRA HAND

Business management software, such as RealGreen by WorkWave, can help with a variety of tasks, including scheduling, managing customer relations, communication and much more.



Continued from page 45

"Companies still do business with people they know, like and trust," Grunder says. "Technology should be an element that helps customers like and trust you more."

Landscape and lawn care pros and software developers serving the industry voice their expert insights and thoughts on how these essential platforms address critical green industry challenges, streamline operations and drive growth.

Scheduling and beyond

For landscape and lawn care contractors, the core functionalities of scheduling and invoicing aren't just features — they're the driving force behind investing in a business management platform. These fundamental capabilities are essential to bring order to daily operations

and ensure consistent cash flow, making them the initial, nonnegotiable benefits that compel industry pros to take the leap with new technology.

At the root of all business software's functionality is greater operational proficiency, says Michael Carden, senior product manager at RealGreen



Michael Carden

by WorkWave. The Holmdel, N.J.-based company's business-in-a-box software solution streamlines operations, manages customer relationships and helps direct strategic growth.

"Business owners should be looking at (business software) and asking how they can become more efficient," he says. "What tools can I use to help not only the business drive efficiency but also every single employee in the operation? How can they become more efficient, and how can we grow? And it's a marvelous time in technology to help answer those questions."

Before adopting Aspire's platform in 2018, Sun Valley Landscaping in Omaha, Neb., relied on a magnetic scheduling board and reams of paper, an archaic system that made tracking anything accurately nearly impossible.

Adopting the software platform was instrumental in clarifying Sun Valley's indirect job time and production rates. Previously, it would take a week to sift through a three-inch packet of handwritten data sheets to build a job costing and product rate system, says Paul Fraynd, Sun Valley's owner. This manual, error-prone process made accurate job costing and production rate analysis a nightmare.

"You buy (a business management software), and you just can't help but have good habits," Fraynd says. "It allowed us to keep track of this to pay your payroll, which feeds into your job cost time and lets you update your

Continued on page 48

MEASURE REMOTE? MEASURE ON-SITE?

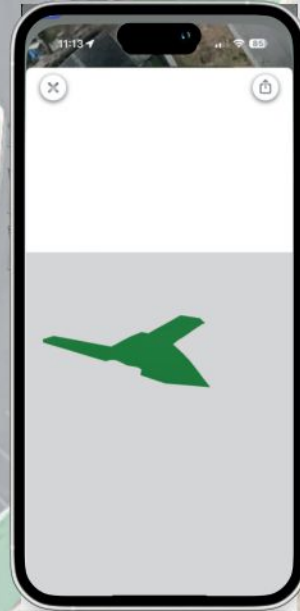
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2025 BUSINESS SOFTWARE GUIDE

“IN TODAY’S FAST-PACED WORLD, MERELY ANSWERING THE PHONE CAN SET YOU APART, BUT ONLY IF YOU HAVE A SYSTEM TO MANAGE THOSE INTERACTIONS EFFECTIVELY.”

PAUL FRAYND



Continued from page 46

production rates so that you can correct your contracts going forward. So, it was a big change ... but it opened a lot of opportunities for us, too.”

And it’s been a game-changer for Sun Valley’s lead management. According to Fraynd, web-based lead forms are automatically integrated, enabling instant follow-up and significantly boosting their response time to clients.

“In today’s fast-paced world, merely answering the phone can set you apart, but only if you have a system to manage those interactions effectively,” Fraynd says. “Our unified communication platform — utilizing cell phones, office phones and a Webex Connect system — ensures seamless communication. Our CRM centralizes all communication, providing a comprehensive history of every customer interaction. This client communication functionality is, arguably, the most crucial aspect of our technological evolution.”

Integrating modern business management software revolutionized the company’s operations and paved the way for integrating other critical software tools. Beyond client-facing advantages, Fraynd says fleet tracking has provided immense internal benefits, such as tracking vehicle locations and meticulously recording maintenance schedules, mileage and fuel consumption for Sun Valley’s fleet of trucks and equipment.

Riding the AI wave

Software developers readily admit that weighing business management software options can be complex and confusing for novices, as the process is often inundated with



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an alphabet soup of terms like ERP (enterprise resource planning) and CRM (customer relationship management). To clarify, ERP systems focus on back-office processes and operations, while CRMs focus on front-office services like managing customer interactions. Integrating the two can yield significant efficiency gains and enhanced business outcomes for landscape pros.

According to Carden, management features like routing, customer communication and payment processing have been the cornerstones of any effective software package, and leveraging these core capabilities is critical for contractor growth. However, software experts point out that other powerful new functions can significantly impact growth, efficiency and market competitiveness.

San Francisco-based Bobbyard, an artificial intelligence (AI)-powered estimation platform, dramatically streamlines a significant pain point for landscape contractors. According to chief of staff Haley Hineman, this innovative software automates the traditionally manual, painstaking and time-consuming process of counting shrubs, measuring piping and calculating square footage, thereby significantly reducing labor hours.

“We help automate (those tasks) and help contractors focus on higher-level human tasks that only humans can do,” Hineman says. “We’re basically using computer vision to analyze and understand blueprints.”

Effective software development and new functionality for the landscape and lawn care industry is deeply rooted in direct contractor feedback. Software developers emphasize that this collaborative, voice-of-customer approach is pivotal in ensuring new features directly address critical, real-world operational challenges.

As a testament to this, Bobbyard’s upcoming updates are a direct result of contractor input: It rapidly and precisely extracts specific square footage for planting areas, significantly boosting efficiency in a crucial yet tedious aspect of their work.

“That is such a headache for contractors,” Hineman says. “They have to click about 100 times around a certain area of a digital blueprint to understand mulch area, for

Continued on page 50



Haley Hineman

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Continued from page 49

example, or maybe sod for a lawn. So why are they clicking 100 times? Let's help automate that and give (the data) to them in one click."

According to software developers, adopting and integrating AI is not just a trend but a fundamental shift toward smarter, more adaptive and data-driven solutions. As a result, AI is making business software smarter through more intelligent, autonomous, efficient and user-centric solutions for landscape contractors that will provide significant competitive advantages in their businesses.

"You're seeing a whole wave of LLMs (large language models, powerful AI tools that automate tasks) and very specific AI for industries like landscaping," Hineman says. "That's exciting because that will move the needle a lot and save tons of hours."

Number crunching

A key game-changer with today's business software is the ability to compress the number of steps

involved in routine information-gathering tasks. Instead of keying data manually, it's more efficient to collect that data autonomously, says Drew Wagner, founder and CEO of Mount Pleasant, S.C.-based LaunchPad. The software platform automates and streamlines various aspects of a landscape or lawn care business, from initial lead capture and property measurement to quoting, client communications and invoicing, leveraging advanced technologies to improve efficiency and customer satisfaction.

"The biggest thing we hear over and over is they want to have a good picture of where their costs sit so they can price accurately," Wagner says. "So, on our mapping side, with the tools we've created ... we're enabling (landscape pros) to know their numbers. That's the reason someone chooses to use business management software. They want to be more profitable and efficient. It's the No. 1 reason people want to use these platforms."



Drew Wagner

In addition to more deeply linking landscape pros with their business operations and their customers, developers say business software must also provide a critical conduit for field crews — the true eyes on the ground.

"You need that ability to communicate data seamlessly, whether through photos, texts, voice or annotations," Wagner says. "It just makes it easier when you have that kind of visualization to make decisions. What do the conditions on the ground look like? What special things might I need to know beyond those numbers that are custom to that piece of property?"

Analytics: Smashing data

Today's software solutions provide industry pros with robust reporting tools that collect, extrapolate and analyze data to identify trends and inform strategic decision making. What makes this so attractive is that by understanding customer behavior, sales tendencies and operational efficiencies, owners and managers pinpoint areas for improvement and more efficiently gauge effectiveness across sales, marketing and in-the-field operations.

Beyond exceptional leadership, Grunder says data analysis drives business success. Shrewd managers leverage timely information to make astute decisions. He says that without a data aggregator providing owners and managers with a pulse on performance, a landscape business will inevitably fall short of its potential.

"It's like going to a (baseball) game, and there's no scoreboard," Grunder says. "They're not keeping score."

Continued on page 52

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Continued from page 51

They're just playing for fun. Well, businesses don't work like that. ... And if you don't know what to do more of and what to do less of, you'll never improve. It's impossible."

According to software developers, landscape's newest generation of owners and managers is focused intensely on analytics and how to leverage that data for growth and improvement. As a result, it's giving them an edge over technology-adverse veteran players.

"There's a new wave of things happening with these younger guys in the industry who are really sharp about software," Hineman says. "It's giving them a certain confidence in business that is interesting and cool to see."

Those same developers think that integrating AI with machine learning and operational analytics can revolutionize business software development. This empowers the software to deliver contractors deeper insights into their business health, identify opportunities for enhanced cost and time efficiency and pinpoint crucial areas for growth.

Top Green by Turing is one example of software addressing contractor needs by leveraging data analytics. The software digitizes crew planning and execution, increasing on-site efficiency. Top Green employs a unique GPS detector and a beacon embedded in crew members' safety vests to track movements and equipment usage in real time and report that information to owners and managers.

According to Top Green's Sashikumar Yeddnapudi, the company's chief revenue officer, landscaping companies strive for a comprehensive understanding of their businesses, particularly in operations, which are the core drivers of their success. However, many current processes remain manual despite a shift toward software and digital tools. Yeddnapudi sees a critical gap emerge once the sales

"START WITH A PLAN. THIS IS THE PROPERTY, AND THESE ARE THE FIVE ACTIVITIES YOU WANT TO PERFORM. INPUT THIS INTO THE SYSTEM, AND THE TECHNOLOGY RUNS A PLAN."

SASHIKUMAR YEDDNAPUDI



team secures a project and hands it over to operations to deliver the final product.

While high-level scheduling and planning software orchestrates crew movements and equipment needs, Yeddnapudi says those platforms can fall short of providing owners and managers the precise operational visibility and transparency necessary for optimal performance.

However, labor isn't to blame. Instead, Yeddnapudi believes it's a systemic flaw in the processes, and detailed analytics, viewed in a real-time format, address this challenge. For example, a common scenario involves a crew assigned to a property with a two-hour budget for mowing, trimming and blowing. Despite their experience, the lack of a precise action plan leads to inefficiencies and more time on-site to complete the work. As a result, the contractor's margins shrink.

"So, instead of guessing, we wanted technology to enable this process seamlessly," he says. "Start with a plan. This is the property, and these are the five activities you want to perform. Input this into the system, and the technology runs a plan."

While detailed planning is crucial, Yeddnapudi acknowledges the inherent differences between computer-generated plans and real-world execution. Factors like property nuances, obstructions and walking distances significantly impact production times, making accurate calculation difficult. Traditional methods of gauging actual time are not scalable for landscape pros. This is where the data gleaned from real-time production mapping is invaluable for identifying where a crew is lagging and where efficiencies can be gained.

"If we don't know the actual production details, then you cannot make a better plan," he says. "So, the trackable vest helps us to map the production in real-time. We know from the time crews check into the property how much time they take for each service."

Continued on page 55

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Bridging the labor gap

The pervasive issue of labor scarcity presents a significant hurdle for landscape and lawn care businesses. Business management software plays a vital role in mitigating this issue by maximizing existing staff efficiency and reducing the reliance on labor to tackle administrative tasks.

Imagine a commission salesperson, says Marty Grunder, driven to close deals, hampered by antiquated methods and obsolete technology. Instead of leveraging cutting-edge software, sales manually measure jobsites with a wheel — a time-consuming and remarkably inaccurate practice. This starkly contrasts with a software solution that seamlessly enables digital measurements.

“Now, you’re generating quotes that took five, six or seven hours in 10 minutes,” Grunder says. “Start thinking about how many more jobs a salesperson can sell, how much more money they can make and how much more time they can spend tending to clients.”

If software technology can compress a business process, then contractors should consider the immense frustration and wasted effort that can be mitigated, Grunder adds. Empowering teams with tools that simplify their lives directly translates into greater productivity, enhanced client satisfaction and a more prosperous business.

A recurring myth, often debunked by software developers, claims that modern software platforms and AI will eliminate landscape and lawn care jobs. Instead, developers clarify that these systems are designed to augment

existing workforces, providing contractors with advanced digital tools to achieve more with their current staff. Rather than job displacement, AI enables owners and managers to strategically reallocate employees to new opportunities and address previously underserved areas.

“(Bobyard) saves the estimators hours on doing the bidding so that they can focus on other higher-level tasks, like finding better production rates, or project managing better or submitting more bids, winning more jobs,” says Bobyard’s Haley Hineman. “We’re not here to take jobs away. We’re here to allow contractors to save money and increase their ROI and profitability with the same headcount. So, it’s really a win-win for everybody.”

According to Grunder, another critical factor to consider is that the next generation of talent — those individuals entering the landscape and lawn care industries — expect businesses to utilize modern software platforms to manage their businesses.

“Guys that age don’t want to come in and be handed a piece of paper,” Grunder says. “They want to be able to do things digitally. I don’t think contractors always realize the impact of technology in making the work easier on the team and making (young talent) want to stay and work at your company.”

Paul Fraynd with Sun Valley Landscaping agrees, adding he often encounters stressed-out, overworked landscape owners who claim they lack the time to integrate technology to help run their businesses. Yet, clinging to outdated methods guarantees perpetual stress.

“They say they don’t have time to adopt the technology, which means they never have time to get in control of their businesses,” he adds. “It’s imperative to make this happen because if you want to live a happy life as a business owner, then business management software is the easiest way to do that.”



PHOTO: JEREMY POLAND/E+/GETTY IMAGES

Continued from page 52

Similarly, in 2025, WorkWave soft-launched Wavelytics, a dedicated analytics and AI platform business unit. According to Carden, the core principle is that “what gets measured gets improved.”

This encompasses every facet of green industry business, not solely operations, and gets that data into owners’ and managers’ hands. Carden says it extends to scrutinizing how marketing campaigns are doing, understanding client retention and identifying and anticipating customer trends.

Carden emphasizes that analytics have an immense impact on the day-to-day operations of landscape businesses: “Again, it’s understanding critical key performance indicators (KPIs) and using those KPIs to target where improvements need to be made,” he says.

A satisfied customer

Customer satisfaction is a conundrum often referred to as the “Amazon Effect.” At its core, it

Continued on page 56

DATA-DRIVEN

LaunchPad automates and streamlines various aspects of a landscape or lawn care business, from initial lead capture and property measurement to quoting, client communications and invoicing.



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Continued from page 55

reflects the customer's decades-long demand for speed, convenience and a personalized purchasing experience from the companies they patronize.

For the green industry, customer satisfaction is no longer solely driven by service delivery, RealGreen's Carden says. Instead, customers weigh their overall experience with companies they do business with, including maintenance and lawn care.

"Homeowners, obviously, want to be informed," he says. "They expect easy access to information and the services you're performing for them. They want to feel connected."

An effective software platform does just that, Carden says, enhancing the contractor's ability to communicate with clients and ultimately allowing them to manage service expectations better and increase profitability.

LaunchPad's Wagner agrees, adding that meeting customer demands for transparency requires immediate access to upcoming service dates, recent payment history and other critical information. Likewise, Wagner states that equipping contractors with AI systems to instantly scour vendor and supplier sites for material availability

and real-time pricing enables faster, more accurate job quotes and fosters the transparency customers increasingly demand from service providers.

Fraynd believes operating with a modern business management system allows them to engage with higher-caliber professional clients who want to do business with industry leaders. For example, larger commercial clients mandate that their landscape contractors operate with GPS functionality, precise tracking of when crews clock in and out and sophisticated safety assurances.

"In the eyes of clients, this level of professionalism transcends the image of us being just 'guys mowing lawns,'" he says. "I'm passionate about professionalizing our industry, and this is where you start. It's the reason why private equity and larger companies are able to take more market share; they use technology. So, if you want to service large corporate clients, then you need to start with these basic tools." 

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.

BY FAR ONE OF THE BEST EVENTS

"Being in the green space for 42 years, this was by far one of the best events. Landscape Management has a great format. The information both from the vendors and the other attendees was top notch. I am currently conversing with many of the individuals who I met there."

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Gaining tools to grow and improve

Connecting with supplier partners at the 2024 LM Growth Summit helped Noe Loarca cut costs

BY LAUREN H. DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR



Noe Loarca's job is all about enjoying the outdoors and helping others do the same.

"I love what I do, like being outside all of the time; the fresh air, plants, getting to see things grow and seeing the before and after," says Loarca, owner of Avanza Landscaping in Arlington, Va. "My favorite part is being able to see the possibilities and create those possibilities for folks who didn't think they existed. It's a good way to give people happiness and joy with something they didn't think was possible."

One way he ensures he continuously delivers that level of service is by learning as much as he can from others in the industry. So when he heard about the annual *Landscape Management Growth Summit*, he knew attending would be the perfect way to stay at the top of his game.



Noe Loarca

ONE-ON-ONE CONNECTIONS

Loarca was one of 36 attendees at the three-day event in Orlando, Fla., last December. He met with leading supplier partners one-on-one, attended educational sessions, networked with other lawn care professionals, demoed new equipment, heard valuable business insights and more.

It was the chance to meet with those supplier partners that especially drew him to the event. He says he was particularly excited to talk with partners like Greene County Fertilizer Co. and PBI-Gordon during the *LM Growth Summit*. He also enjoyed testing out equip-

ment from Steel Green Manufacturing and learning more about their add-ons and customization options.

"I didn't have any relationship with these companies beforehand," Loarca says. "To be able to talk to them directly and get to know them was amazing. I wanted to take advantage of that, and I always try to soak up information."

But it wasn't only about seeing the machines and learning about the product specs. Loarca also learned how he could use the equipment showcased at the event to cut costs and save on labor with his business, all without lowering the quality of his services.

"Even if the machinery is a little more expensive upfront, we're looking at how much we can save knowing that labor is a huge thing," Loarca says. "We'll also save money on callbacks, and all of those intangibles start adding up."

In addition to seeing how the equipment could save him resources, Loarca also learned about preemergents that would treat certain troublesome weeds and save his team from needing to put down more applications.

ALWAYS IMPROVING

Connecting with other attendees was another benefit of the event, and he has stayed in contact with several of them since. Loarca says he talked with the other owners about ways they've been successful, the types of chemicals they recommend and how to mix products

to get better results. He also learned more about liquid aeration from them and ways he could implement it in his services in the future.

From the invaluable interactions with suppliers, attendees and the *LM* staff, Loarca says the event was an amazing experience. He encourages other professionals who want to advance their company to apply to attend the *LM Growth Summit* in the future. The event is also a great way for those who don't attend many industry events to get connected, he says.

"If you're looking to grow and improve your business in any way, why not be around experts and the people who know what they're doing?" Loarca asks. "If anyone has doubts about applying, that means they don't want to grow and aren't serious about doing something in landscaping." 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.

GET TO THE SUMMIT!

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

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FERTILE GROUND

Maximize control, minimize hassle

Lawn care experts explain how controlled-release fertilizers work and in what settings they are most beneficial **BY SARAH WEBB | CONTRIBUTOR**

Slow and steady describes the controlled-release fertilizer approach to winning a healthy lawn.

Another tool in the lawn care arsenal, these products release nutrients slowly into turfgrass over time.

“Controlled-release fertilizers extend the feeding window by weeks and in amounts the plant can take up, providing a longer and more efficient feeding,” says Christopher Gray, director of marketing at LebanonTurf. “Overall, it gives you better value for your money.”

THE UPSIDES

Controlled-release products tout a variety of benefits compared to products that are quick release, says Ben Pease, turfgrass agronomist at The Andersons.

“With consistent, predictable nutrient delivery, that improves turf health while lessening the chance of leaching or volatilization because we’re applying the correct amount,” Pease says.

This method also helps prevent dips or lulls in turfgrass quality, even if lawn care operators (LCOs) aren’t fertilizing that often.

Additionally, with a longer feeding window, LCOs can expect to put down fewer applications.

“If we’re doing fewer applications, we’re reducing our labor costs and equipment wear and tear,” Pease says. “Instead of being at a property every four

weeks, maybe we can only be there every six weeks. You can slightly extend the service window, but still keep customers satisfied and keep yourself hired.”

WHAT TO KNOW

Whereas slow-release fertilizers are activated by microbial activity, controlled-release products depend on other factors like water, heat and the thickness of the coating, Gray says.

He emphasizes that while both controlled- and slow-release products fill a need in the industry, it’s important for LCOs to understand what kind of performance and release mode they can expect from each product.

“For example, in springtime when it’s still cold, slow-release products will not release a lot of nutrients because the grass isn’t growing and the microbes aren’t active,” Gray says.

Controlled-release products are used in a variety of warm- and cool-season grasses.

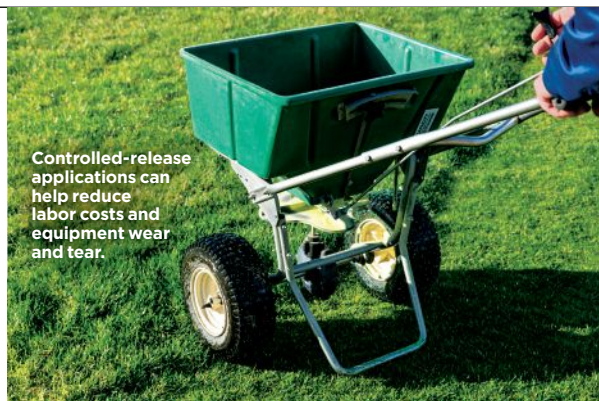
The timing of the application may depend, in part, on the product with which it is paired. For instance, many controlled-release technologies are paired with insecticides or herbicides.

“These combo-type products are becoming more popular as LCOs strive to become more efficient,” Pease says. “We’re also adding in soil health benefits to some of these products, like humic acids or microbial packages, to boost soil health.”



↑ KNOW YOUR PRODUCT
Understanding the release type and percentage is crucial for best results.

Controlled-release applications can help reduce labor costs and equipment wear and tear.



It’s important that LCOs read the label instructions to determine the best application rates for their needs.

WORDS TO THE WISE

Pease and Gray say it’s important for LCOs to pay attention to what percentage of a product is controlled release versus quick release.

“In spring, you want to get the grass kicking, so you want to have less controlled release, whereas in the middle of summer, you’ll want a longer release because the grass isn’t going to be growing nearly as much,” Gray says.

Gray says LCOs can put down more controlled-release fertilizer in the fall.

“That’s typically the most important fertilizer application of the entire growing season to make sure the plant is nice and pumped up going into dormancy,” Gray says.

The percentage of controlled-release technology in the fertilizer will coincide with the application interval. While 90- to 120-day products are available, Pease recommends LCOs opt for 30- to 60-day products.

“Most LCOs’ customers aren’t going to want a 120-day product because they want to see someone at their property a little more often than that,” Pease says.

Whatever type of product LCOs use, Gray recommends staying true to the products that help meet their goals.

“When you become comfortable with something, stick with it,” Gray says. “When you know the release curve and how your grass is going to respond, that’s where you get a level of confidence with a product.”

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

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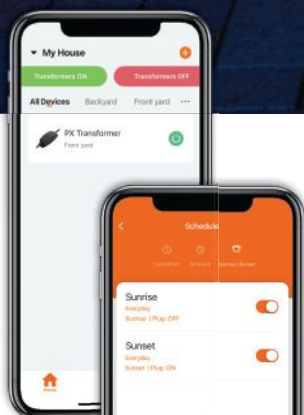
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GOING NUTS

Don't lose your mind trying to control this tough turf pest

BY NATHAN MADER | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

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For lawn care operators (LCOs) nutsedge can be an absolute nightmare. It's persistent, adaptable and, worst of all, doesn't have a perfect control solution available.

Richard Pearl, chief financial officer and director of operations at Veragreen in Nashville, Tenn., says it's similar to *Poa annua* in terms of difficulty to control. And for him, it's one of the most common perennial pests that results in customers calling for help.

Nutsedge has two popular varieties: a yellow variant (*Cyperus esculentus*) that is taller and more cold-tolerant, plus its purple counterpart (*Cyperus rotundus*), which hangs out more aggressively in warmer climates.

Together, these two can terrorize lawns and landscapes throughout the U.S., reproducing primarily through underground tubers and rhizomes which can persist in the soil for years. Pearl says pulling out nutsedge can help with identification if needed, but it should never be used as a control method, since the tubers will create more weeds.

"(Customers) are like, 'Yeah, well, I pulled it out. I don't understand why it

keeps coming back.' You pulling it out made it come back even worse," he says.

ON THE LOOKOUT

Pearl says nutsedge can sometimes be called nutgrass by homeowners or other industry pros, but that statement can be misleading when it comes to identification and control. The rapid growth rate is a great way to spot it initially.

He also says that yellow nutsedge stands out thanks to its lighter, more lime-green color, and purple nutsedge has darker green leaves. The seedhead colors are tan and straw-colored or red to purplish brown, respectively.

The leaves are also thicker and stiffer than grass and are usually arranged in sets of three at the plant's base. Both yellow and purple nutsedge can form dense colonies, making them a noticeable eyesore in any lawn.

CHEMICAL CONTROLS

Pearl says common active ingredients used to control nutsedge include halosulfuron and sulfentrazone.

"There are a lot of companies trying to put together different types of products that are one pre- and postemergent, which is what we're using," he says.

This year, Pearl says he's trying a slightly different application strategy to get control of nutsedge, and managing this tricky weed requires a lot of strategic thinking.

"We're currently blanket-treating corner to corner with Arkon (pyrimisulfan), and we're going full control and really just trying to get the best control we can," Pearl says. "And then what we're also going to do is, in the next round, use a halosulfuron-type product. The only



PURPLE PESTS
Purple nutsedge has darker, more red or brown seedheads.

issue with halosulfuron is it's very slow moving, but that is going to give us the back-end control of what we're currently putting down."

Pearl says a lot of times nutsedge can feel like you're just throwing the kitchen sink at it to see what works, but he recommends a strategic approach of rotating different modes of action to help combat the weed building up a resistance.

"There are studies of nutsedge right now that it's becoming resistant to a lot of products that are out there," Pearl says.

One thing Pearl recommends for LCOs is to get vocal and help others in the industry with this pest. He says nutsedge is something everyone can struggle with, so he hopes the industry keeps coming together to share what strategies it finds effective.

"As we continue to evolve in the industry, and as the industry continues to evolve around us, we become really reliant on those who are in the industry to continue to help each other," he says. "If someone knows of something that's working or something that isn't, don't be scared to share it with your peers, because at the end of the day, we're all in this together." 🍌



BIG BROTHER
Yellow nutsedge can grow twice as tall as its purple counterpart.

PHOTOS: HOWARD F. SCHWARTZ, COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY BUGWOOD.ORG (LEFT); MD SOJIBUL ISLAM / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES (TOP); HEADER: GETTY IMAGES, DNY59 / E+, BOSCHETTO PHOTOGRAPHY / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS

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THE BIG ONE

Acing the job

BY NATHAN MADER
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOCATION Daniel Island, S.C.

COMPANY Ruppert Landscape

DETAILS Home to concerts and the largest women's-only tennis tournament in North America, Credit One Stadium is a large, dynamic site that requires perfect execution.

As a result, Ruppert Landscape serves up constant upkeep of the property's 13 acres of turf, 150 mature trees, 11,000 irrigation heads and 13,500 annuals through full-service lawn, landscaping, irrigation and pest services. With the size of the project, Crisler Vaughn, Ruppert's senior account manager and horticulturist, says his team is able to slice through tough scheduling and rain issues with strict time management and adaptability.

And despite the high standards that come with a premier tournament and concert venue, Vaughn says he enjoys still having fun and being creative with the site, giving it an extra layer of personality with details such as a flower bed being designed to look like a tennis ball.

"My favorite part of commercial landscaping is being creative with designs, especially annual flower beds," Vaughn says. "The tennis ball bed is one of my favorites."

And these extra details didn't go unnoticed, as Ruppert Landscape won a gold award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' 2024 Awards of Excellence program for this project. 

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



Captions | **1.** The stadium surrounds its sitting areas and walkways with vivid annuals, bountiful perennials, formal hedges and shaded tree canopies to encourage a fun and pristine aesthetic. **2.** The 13 acres of turf require three or more fertilizations, aeration and overseeding annually, and a team of three is sent out twice a week for maintenance and detailing. **3.** Water features and fountains play a large role in adding to the tranquility of the stadium, and the fountains are cleaned monthly. **4.** The tennis ball flower bed, created using spiderwort, dusty miller and duranta, is one of Vaughn's favorite details at the stadium, and he says it's a great feeling to install fun ideas that align with the client's vision.

IRON WORKHORSES

What we saw at Zero-E Expo

It was a diverse assortment of mowers at Zero-E Expo, with battery power being the commonality

BY SETH JONES | LM EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Landscape Management recently attended the 2025 Zero-E Expo in Campbell, Calif. Now in its fourth year, the event — hosted by Gardenland Power Equipment — has grown to more than two dozen vendors and more than 600 attendees. The expo is unique in that all the landscaping tools on display are battery-powered.

Three manufacturers — Gravely, Segway and Mowrator — showed us three different mowers with three different applications. To see videos of these presentations, visit LandscapeManagement.net.

SEGWAY NAVIMOW

Jerrold Pehle, regional sales manager, Pacific Northwest

“We manufacture robots that can mow lawns from an eighth of an acre up to two-and-a-half acres. Our new robot is packed with features. It uses RTK satellite with 4G, multiple cameras and bump sensors for safe mowing. There are no wires. It’s designed to give you back time. You can use this mowing time for other tasks on a residential or commercial site.

“Our X3 series mower has three cameras. It will sense if there’s a dog, a ball, a tree and avoid obstacles. One of the benefits of having these cameras is it can tell where it’s at if you lose RTK signal. It will operate in tree cover. It’s designed to operate no matter what.”

MOWRATOR

Dean Kanemitsu, president, TMC Power Equipment

“The Mowrator is a robotic lawn mower that is operated by a remote control. There is a two-wheel-drive and a four-wheel-drive model. It’s ideal for any type of application where you’re using a 21-inch walk-behind. The four-wheel-drive is ideal for mowing slopes. The unit has a 21-inch rotary blade, a steel deck and aluminum frame. Safety features include ultrasonic sensors that surround the front; there’s also a bump sensor on the front so if you have a collision, it will automatically stop itself and stop the blades.

At the push of a button, it will do straight lines, and it will also make zero-turns. It will also dump the clippings. There are three different speeds. We’re seeing interest in landscape applications with areas that are hard to access.”



GRAVELY

Cole Brown, West regional sales director, Ariens

“We’re showing our latest and greatest in electric zero-turn mowers. We offer 48-, 52- and 60-inch options, both sit-down and stand-on, side-discharge or rear-discharge. There are three reservations people have with electric: run time, power and the overall feel of the machine. We’ve tried to soften all those in a couple different ways.

The first, run time — our machines offer four four-kilo-watt batteries, for a total of 16 kilowatts. What makes them unique is your ability to remove them and interchange them. On average, you’re going to get five to six hours of blades-on mow time. If you are a true cutter and need eight hours or more, we can offer that by adding more batteries as if you were refueling a fuel tank. That range time anxiety that many cutters have is eliminated by the ability of going to an interchangeable battery system.

The next piece — the spindle motor and cut quality. There’s a feeling that electric products don’t cut as aggressively or bring as much power. We run three-and-a-half kilowatt spindle motors. That’s going to be larger than almost any competitor. It gives you a true gas-powered cut quality; there’s nothing lost in the ability to get into tall grass or wet grass.

Last, but not least — the overall feel. We’ve engineered these with proprietary electric planetary wheel motors to give you the same feel you’d have on a gas machine. Some mowers maybe have a little delay or just feel like not what you’d expect from a professional piece of equipment. This mower is very smooth, very intuitive. So these three core areas are what we’ve brought to the market to address those primary concerns with an electric product.”



THE GRAVELY GUY
Cole Brown overviewed the key improvements being made to electric mowers.

THE FUTURE OF SMART LAWN CARE: SUNSEEKER'S X7 ROBOTIC MOWER DELIVERS SIMPLICITY AND POWER

In a world where technology is rapidly reshaping the landscape industry, Sunseeker's X7 robotic mower stands out as a game-changer for commercial operators. Matt Moore, Sunseeker's robotics lead for the U.S. and Canada, said the X7 redefines smart lawn care with its innovative design, ease of use and robust performance.



MATT MOORE

"One of the big things with the X7 model that we did accomplish was making it simple," says Moore, who brings over two decades of experience in the outdoor power equipment industry, including leadership roles at major brands, to his role with Sunseeker.

"When you go into many dealerships, you'll have 100 brands on the wall. It's very confusing for a consumer and the robotics space. I think it's even worse because you have 100 different models, and each one of them does an individual thing. A lot of consumers will just bail and go buy a push mower because it's old faithful."

Sunseeker's answer? "We wanted to take all of those basic, simple, common questions or demands and put them in one machine," says Moore. The X7, designed for commercial-scale properties, is engineered to handle rough terrain, hills and uneven surfaces without the hassle of buried wires or complicated setup.

Unlike traditional four-wheeled all-wheel drive systems that can damage turf with spinouts, the X7 features a unique three-wheeled approach. "It's

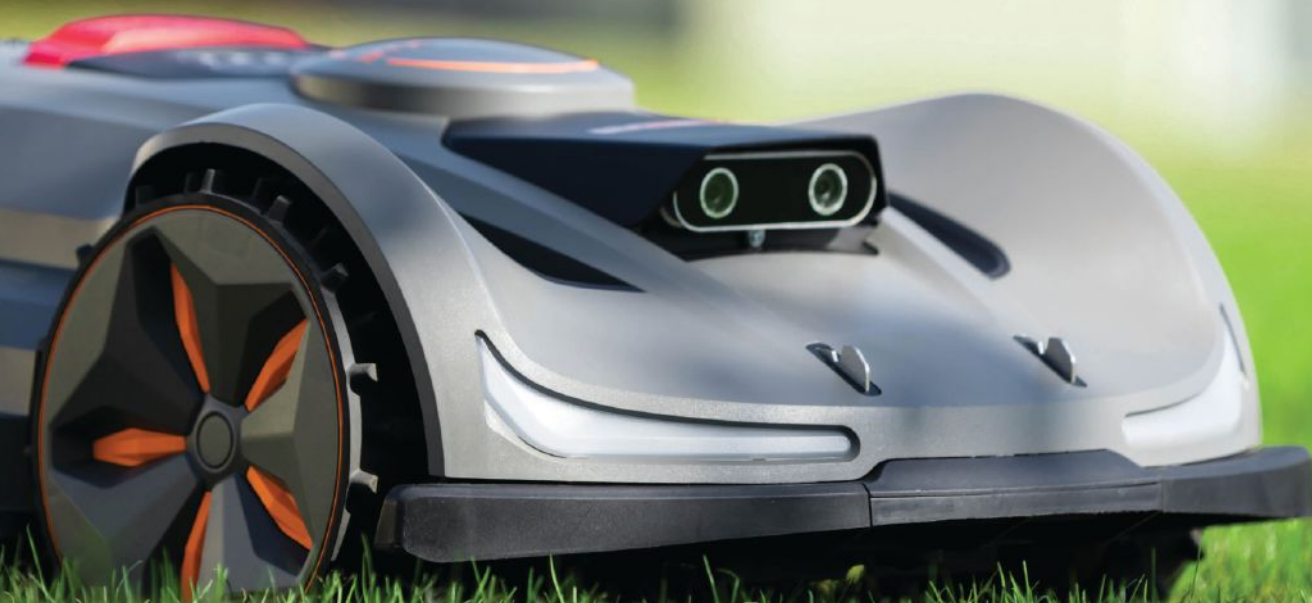


similar to a forklift," Moore describes. "The rear end drags itself around, lines itself up, and continues straight. That makes the lines a lot straighter. It takes away that spin out, so it's a very clean-cut appearance."

The X7's rubber tires over a plastic frame provide extra grip, and its balanced design allows it to conquer 70-75 percent grades, handling ditches and culverts that stump most robotic mowers. The X7's design minimizes the risk of getting stuck or slipping. The combination of rubber treads and a smaller rear wheel helps the mower reach little pockets, giving it that extra boost to get in and out of some difficult areas.

At the heart of the X7 is Sunseeker's proprietary AO Navi system, a three-way vision and navigation platform. "We have an AI navigation system that's in the machine, and what that allows it to do is take the RTK positioning, the vision system which sees in front of it, but also it acts as an odometer. It's fact-checking all the virtual borders that you programmed in the machine," Moore explains. Even if the mower loses RTK signal, it keeps working, relying on its internal map until connectivity is restored.

This technology shines on complex or irregularly shaped properties. "We have one deployed today



in an HOA in Iowa. It goes between about seven houses. The antenna is very far away, so the mower's not seeing the antenna for probably 75% of its cutting time, but it's able to get in and out of each one of these spaces," Moore says. The X7's internal mapping and vision allow it to access tight corridors and avoid obstacles. These capabilities set it apart from both wire-based and traditional RTK robotic mowers.

"Sunseeker's X7 is more than just a robotic mower- it's a comprehensive solution for commercial landscapers seeking efficiency, reliability and simplicity."

The X7 is fully app-controlled, from setup to daily operation. Users can draw property boundaries, set "stay out" zones, adjust cutting heights and schedule mowing sessions directly from their smartphone. "There are pre-designed shapes in the

app that you could just pop in. Or you can drive the machine over there and draw it," Moore says. The app even offers an AI mapping mode: "If it's like a fenced backyard, you could just drop the mower down and hit AI and play, and the mower will map itself."

Moore highlights the X7's success in challenging environments, including cemeteries. "Cemeteries are kind of like the unsung properties to use robotics. The X7 runs quietly, it's

lightweight, and has easy-to-make adjustments so that you can keep it out of areas while people are having a funeral. It's a very user-friendly system for that industry."

Sunseeker's X7 is more than just a robotic mower- it's a comprehensive solution for commercial landscapers seeking efficiency, reliability and simplicity. As Moore says, "It's an all-time worker, multiple solution provider, and that's exactly what we wanted to accomplish." For landscape professionals ready to embrace the future, the X7 offers a smarter, easier way to manage even the most demanding properties.



HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

Expect the unexpected

BY NATHAN MADER
LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOCATION Pewaukee, Wis.

COMPANY David J. Frank
Landscape Contracting

DETAILS David J. Frank's (DJF) "Bespoke Sanctuary" project started bleak, with the client assuming only a small back porch was possible due to the property's sloped terrain. However, DJF knew it could aim higher.

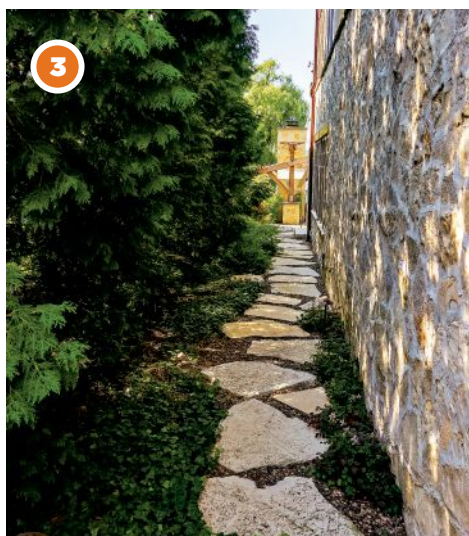
DJF came up with a redesign of the existing stone patio that now features a fireplace and pergola as the focal point of the backyard. These elements were designed to feel like different "rooms" that added a cozy place to entertain guests and provide scenic lake views.

The sloping landscape still provided challenges, and with a six-foot-wide cart path being the only way to access the site, large materials like stone and concrete had to be delivered in pieces.

Night and accent lighting was also added to create an inviting scene that enhanced the views at all times, resulting in DJF winning a gold award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' 2024 Awards of Excellence program for this project.

"Celebrating the great work of our team members never gets old. The focus we place on being an award-winning company has been part of our company history and culture for decades," says Dan Klemenic, marketing manager at DJF. 🏆

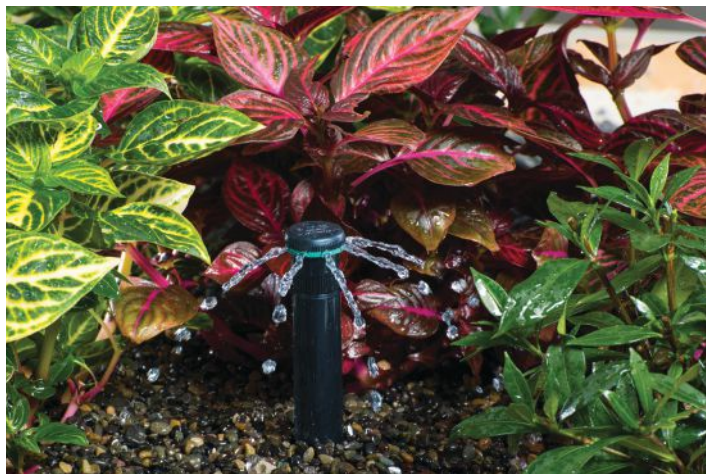
See more photos from this project at LandscapeManagement.net/hardscapecolutions.



Captions | 1. Lighting played a large part of the design, especially at night, and the usage is subtle to not take away from the lake views. 2. Drainage on the property was improved with extensive drain tiles that directed water to the lower parts of the yard, allowing plantings and landscape beds to thrive. 3. A pathway and other hardscapes complemented the backyard design, allowing the space to feel more inviting and practical. 4. The stones from the existing patio were removed and broken into smaller pieces to use on walls in the front and back of the property, and some walls were built to raise the grade along the yard's perimeter to dam water that came in from the neighbor's paved surfaces.



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IRRIGATION TECH

Smart irrigation, serious savings

Irrigation experts discuss the latest updates in smart irrigation systems and how irrigation professionals can leverage this technology

BY SARAH WEBB | CONTRIBUTOR

Have you ever seen an irrigation system watering a lawn during a rainstorm? Chances are the system did not deploy “smart” technology.

Smart irrigation systems adjust on the fly based on conditions, rather than watering at the same time every day, regardless of environmental factors.

“We all agree that landscapes require different amounts of water throughout the year,” says Don Davis, national training manager at SiteOne Landscape Supply. “A cool, cloudy day in March has a very different watering regimen than a bright, sunny day in July.”

Sean Azad, marketing manager at Rain Bird, and Davis delve into how these systems work and what they equate to in savings.

WHAT'S TRENDING

By definition, a smart irrigation system uses climate data, such as current and future weather and soil conditions, to adjust irrigation schedules. While some municipalities use on-site weather stations to gather this data, most areas use

internet weather data to accomplish that task, Davis says.

“It doesn’t just take rainfall data into account — it takes temperature, humidity, and it irrigates when needed to keep the moisture balanced,” Azad says.

Davis says that in recent years, the Wi-Fi components of these systems have become more dependable, and the control apps have also become more user-friendly.

Several other components can boost the intelligence of the overall system, Azad says, citing rain sensors that connect to the control system and stop irrigation during rain as one example.

“After it has stopped raining, the sensor takes time before allowing irrigation to resume,” Azad says. “That prevents you from watering right after it has rained.”

Similarly, flow sensors can monitor a system’s water use and send an alert if there’s a potential leak.

Finally, Davis notes that there has been a movement toward wireless control in which a system’s valves no longer need to be physically connected by a wire.

“Now, we can control that remote valve from the original irrigation controller and still receive all the benefits of the weather data and remote access,” he says.

WHY IMPLEMENT?

In addition to significant cost and water savings, there are numerous other benefits to smart irrigation systems as well, such as healthier landscapes.

“When you want a healthy landscape, you don’t want to under- or overwater,”

Azad says. “The intelligence in smart systems results in landscapes that look healthier and have a deeper root structure.”

Davis says that smart irrigation systems can result in labor savings, too, especially when it comes to minimizing site visits and maintenance.

“The end user gets a water schedule that’s tailored to exactly what their landscape needs in real time, and the contractor benefits by avoiding the labor and expense of an employee physically visiting the site to adjust these controllers,” Davis says.

WHAT TO KNOW

Before installing a smart irrigation system, it’s important to check that the site contains internet access.

“Verify that your Wi-Fi signal strength reaches that location,” Azad says. “Sometimes, it’s outside of a house or in a garage, and you may not have coverage.”

Davis notes that a smart system is not a fix-all for an improperly installed system.

“The term ‘smart irrigation’ isn’t a magic wand,” Davis says. “Smart water management starts with a properly designed, installed and maintained system.”

For instance, improper head spacing, crooked or misaligned sprinklers, leaks, aging components and excess water pressure are all issues that won’t be fixed by adding a “smart” element.

To account for any issues, Azad recommends running the irrigation system through each zone once a month.

“You can have a smart irrigation system ... but if you have a broken pipe because somebody ran over it, you’re still wasting a ton of water,” Azad says. 

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



PHOTOS: SITEONE LANDSCAPE SUPPLY (TOP); RAIN BIRD (BOTTOM)



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FROM THE SOURCE

The payoffs of proper training

BY JACK DEMSKI | CONTRIBUTOR

Among the most discussed topics in risk mitigation and insurance today is training and the benefits it can bring to your snow and ice management efforts. Your employees' knowledge base is how you differentiate yourself from the competition while establishing operational standards for best practices and building a safety culture that will enable everyone to go home safely after a long day.

Here is a deeper dive into some of the readily available training options you have at your disposal.

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOKS

This is by far the most underutilized tool that organizations have to protect their employees, set internal standards, outline common expectations and guard themselves from lawsuits.

The best way to describe this tool is to compare it to your personalized rule book for employment. These ever-changing and adapting handbooks are often only shared with new employees once. While they should be reviewed for compliance and alterations annually by a human resources professional or other internal staff, they should also be redistributed to the entire workforce and signed after reading.

Changes to things like cell phone use or drug testing policies are great examples of policy changes that can protect your organization.

EMPLOYEE STANDARDIZED TRAINING

If you have ever heard the words CPR or cyber awareness, then you have witnessed a standard training or an educational video. These are generic and can be applied to all employees and across many industries.

While they may not always be the most useful for specialized tasks, they are seen as "best-in-class" tactics in the insurance industry, and companies that take the time to onboard employees with general training often see a higher return on investment with this employee than with those who skip over the standard training.

EMPLOYEE SPECIALIZED TRAINING

Here is where the biggest returns are realized with the biggest cost savings. These trainings are industry and career-specific.

Some of the best examples are the Certified Snow Professional or Advanced Snow Manager training programs from the Snow and Ice Management Association, along with many other industry accreditations that exist. These designations and advanced training programs are how we can set ourselves apart from competitors within the industry.

They also help to increase employees' value to an organization, while increasing the general commitment to an employee for their own development and future within the company.

TEST COURSES AND PRACTICE TRAINING

These trainings are by far the most fun for all involved and have the best on-the-job impact. By setting up a test course or a

video recording and surveillance of the overall operation, you can use a practice setting to evaluate performances and familiarize employees with equipment operations and physical tasks. Some companies even go so far as to add a competitive advantage and timing or judging for safety and precautions while the training is going on.

A few great examples we have seen executed very well are:

- Ride-along driver assessments.
- Vendor equipment rental training days.
- Internal practice course competitions.
- Recorded dashcams for on-site operations with driver reviews post-incident.
- Safety incentives for claims-free performances.

ANALYZE TRENDS AND ADAPT

No two winters will ever bring the same problems, which is why companies need to pursue constant improvement and empower their employees to reach new levels.

This is where an annual claims review with your insurance agent or insurance provider can benefit you the most. They will be able to point out trends or recurring issues that need to be addressed either immediately or in the offseason. They can also identify training providers, partnerships, virtual materials and additional consultants to help you get a handle on any risk management or claims issues you may be having.

Be open with them and ask for help; it is always better to proactively analyze or plan for claims than to dig out of a hole. It also helps to encourage your insurance company to visit you and see how the operations work during the winter at a jobsite and during the offseason for training and other high-level discussions. 

Jack Demski is a commercial insurance advisor for Ansay and Associates, an insurance and benefit solutions company based in Port Washington, Wis.



TRAINING TIPS
Both standardized and specialized training can pay off for snow and ice companies.

FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Adam Dukes

OWNER

GRANDSCAPES
CHARLESTON, S.C.

1 Tell me about GrandScapes and how you got into the business?

GrandScapes is based in Charleston, S.C., and we launched the business back in 2009. We focus on both design/build work and maintenance for commercial and residential properties. I've always loved being outdoors and was drawn to landscaping from a young age. My brother and I had a landscaping business together growing up, and that passion stuck with me. I eventually went on to study landscape architecture at the University of Georgia. We've built an incredible team and a strong family environment at GrandScapes, and we truly love what we do.

2 Do you have a most memorable day at work?

There have been a lot of standout moments over the years, but one that really sticks with me is when we recently moved into a new facility. It was amazing to see our team come together to make it happen. It marked a new chapter for us, something we'd been working toward for a while, and when we finally set the date, everyone jumped in and got it done. Seeing that kind of teamwork and energy, especially heading into the busy season, was really inspiring.

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

It's not a physical tool; it's the team. I learned early on how valuable a strong team is, especially through some peer group experiences. Building a great team is absolutely core to what we do. You can hire talented people, but it takes real effort and intention to bring them together and create something cohesive. I'm

constantly working on building and developing our team so that we can grow together.

4 Tell me about your family, and what do you all do for fun?

Family is everything to me. I've been married to my wife, Kelly, since 2013, and we have two daughters. They are 6 and 8 now, which is such a fun age. We love being outside together, especially at the beach or out on the boat. The girls are also really into sports and dance, so a lot of our free time revolves around cheering them on and spending quality time as a family.

5 What team do you root for?

Georgia Bulldogs all day long! I've been a fan my whole life, and I am a fifth generation Bulldog. We live in Charleston now, so we do not get to games as often as we'd like, but we still root for the Dawgs! I'm hoping as the girls get older, we'll be able to take them to Athens and catch a few more games in person. 🐾

BEST ADVICE

"When I was younger, a family friend told me something that's always stuck: In life, there are going to be windows of opportunity. Your job is to recognize them and step through when they open. That mindset has shaped the way I approach both business and life. I try to stay ready for the right opportunities and make sure I don't let them pass me by."





BY JUSTIN WHITE

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

Building a growth-centered culture starts with you

Culture isn't a side project; it's the whole damn foundation.

You can have the best vision, the sharpest strategy and a killer product, but if your culture is weak, none of it will stick. It's like trying to build a skyscraper on sand. Growth doesn't happen because you want it to. Growth happens because you've built a company where it can happen.

At K&D Landscaping, we've spent the last decade proving that principle. We've scaled fast, broken records and expanded into new markets not because we chased numbers, but because we built a culture that supports high performance and demands better.

So, how do you do it? Here's the blueprint.

CREATE A VISION WORTH FOLLOWING

You can't expect your team to build something great if they don't know what they're building. At K&D, our growth culture starts with a clear 10-year BHAG — a Big Hairy Audacious Goal — a focused three-year

“You can't expect your team to build something great if they don't know what they're building.”

horizon and five annual goals that anchor our actions. It gives our team direction, purpose and a reason to show up on fire every day. This isn't fluff; it's structure. It's the concrete slab on which everything else stands.

DEFINE THE RULES OF THE GAME

Without a clear identity, culture drifts. And drift kills momentum. That's why we obsess over our fundamentals — our core values, behaviors and standards. It's how we coach, hire, fire and promote. We've learned the hard way: If you don't actively shape your culture, it will shape itself, usually not in your favor.

HIRE LIKE YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT

Because it does. Every person you bring on either strengthens or weakens your foundation. B players hire C players. And when you let C players stay, you send a message that mediocrity is OK. It's not. At K&D, we always recruit, offer competitive compensation and invest in the A players who want to grow with us.

GROW YOUR PEOPLE FASTER THAN THE BUSINESS

John C. Maxwell's “Law of the Lid” is real. Your business can't grow beyond

the capabilities of your team. So, we coach, we train, we challenge. If someone's not keeping pace, we step in early. If someone's thriving, we accelerate them. You can't scale a company if you're not scaling your people.

BUILD A CULTURE THAT EMBRACES CHANGE

Growth demands agility. New tech, new expectations, new challenges ... they're coming whether you're ready or not. A stagnant culture resists that. A growth culture leans into it. At K&D, we teach our teams to expect change and see it as an opportunity, not a threat. That mindset shift is everything.

PRIORITIZE ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

Culture needs systems to thrive. Without a framework, even the best team will eventually spin out. That's why we use an Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS). It's our system for alignment, accountability and clarity. Culture is the heart, but EOS is the spine that keeps everything upright and moving forward.

Culture isn't something you hang on the wall. It's something you build on. It's the soil where everything else takes root. Do you want explosive growth? Do you want high-performing teams? Do you want to lead an industry? Then stop outsourcing culture to HR or the annual kickoff meeting. Own it, shape it and defend it, because the best companies don't grow by accident. They grow by design. And that design starts with culture.



PHOTO: IMAGINIA/E+/GETTY IMAGES



BY PHIL HARWOOD

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

Why you should NOT exit your business

Business owners today are inundated with offers to sell their businesses. The phone calls, texts and emails are relentless. “We have qualified buyers ready to acquire your business.” “Now is the perfect time to sell.”

These solicitations may be appealing. They may be well-intended. But chances are these marketers know nothing about you or your business. They are simply dialing for dollars. And, in many situations, these targeted business owners should NOT exit their businesses — yet. That time will come, I promise, but there are several reasons why a business owner should not exit their business at the present time. We’ll discuss three of them in this article.

REASON #1: YOU’RE NOT PERSONALLY READY

Business owners who exit prematurely often live the rest of their days with regret. This is because they hadn’t considered their future. They hadn’t thought about how they would spend their time after exiting. The process of selling was all-consuming. Now that they’ve sold, they’re left bewildered, wondering what to do next.

Other business owners aren’t personally ready to exit because they haven’t accomplished their goals yet. They still have a passion for their businesses. I see this frequently, especially among people who are in good health and enjoying themselves in their business roles.

Some business owners aren’t ready to exit because they feel *called* to continue their work. I put myself in this category. I believe that I’ve been called to

do what I do. Exiting my business at this point is not even an option.

Business owners who are “ready” have done their homework and developed a clear plan for themselves and their families. They are prepared mentally, emotionally, spiritually, financially and relationally. They understand what they are doing and the implications.

REASON #2: YOUR BUSINESS IS NOT READY

To exit successfully, the business owner needs to be ready, and so does their business. I’ve spent the majority of my consulting career helping companies become more profitable, sustainable and transferable. I know from experience that it takes time to make significant changes in a business.

When a company isn’t ready to be sold, potential wealth can be left on the table. When a family business isn’t ready to be handed off to a child, the likelihood of failure increases. This is a common mistake business owners make and is why many businesses never survive the second generation.

A better approach is to proactively address the company’s most important areas that affect value and sustainability. Business value may be tracked over time to see the impact of changes. One or two

key changes can have a significant impact on valuation.

REASON #3: YOUR SUCCESSOR ISN’T READY

Many owners intend to leave or sell their businesses to a child, grandchild or employee. They would do well not to assume their successor is ready to take over.

One effective approach is to require that the successor work elsewhere for several years (five years is common). This requirement breaks the chain of entitlement. The outside experience is often invaluable to developing leadership skills and allowing time for additional maturing.

Another way to test readiness is to put the successor in charge before the owner departs. I recommend a minimum of a year. This hand-off will allow the successor to experience the challenges of being in charge with the current owner’s support and guidance.

SELLER BEWARE

As I was writing this article, I received an email informing me that there are many qualified buyers in my space and that my business is very valuable. I’m flattered, of course, but this person knows nothing about me. If they did, they would know I’m not ready to sell and won’t be anytime soon.

When I am ready to begin pursuing my exit, I’ll work with an adviser. A good adviser will educate, inform and help guide decisions that are in my best interest. He or she will ensure that I am personally ready, my business is ready and my successor is ready.

Now go forth. 🍀





BY BOB MANN

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

Pesticides, the ESA and a brave new world

It's been a while since I wrote about the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and pesticides.

If this is the first time you've encountered this issue, when a federal government agency (like the Environmental Protection Agency) takes an action (like registering a pesticide) on a product that could harm or kill a threatened or endangered species, that action must be reviewed by either the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) or the National Marine Fisheries Service.

This has been the case for half a century, but for many very good reasons, the EPA has only completed these required reviews for 10 percent of all pesticides registered in the United States. As a result of numerous lawsuits brought by environmental groups against the EPA, federal courts put the agency on notice: Do what the law clearly demands, or we will take those pesticides off the market.

The EPA's latest attempt to wrestle with the ESA began three years ago with the publication of a document that laid out a plan of action to finally put this issue to bed in a way that would efficiently evaluate pesticides that was legally durable. The agency's goal was to construct a framework that could be used for each pesticide active ingredient during the registration process to mitigate its effects on off-target species.

For example, if you're spraying a lawn for weeds, you know that the herbicide can easily kill the ornamentals that exist just inches away from the edge of the lawn.

“I think that five years out we are going to be living in a very different world, one that will require more in-depth training, more recordkeeping, more preparation, less ‘spray and pray’ and, finally, more accountability.”

What might you do to protect the ornamentals? Perhaps your pesticide program is built around a best management plan that employs IPM protocols, or you could spot spray the weeds, or maybe use a Chemlawn spray gun that uses low pressure and huge droplets. All those efforts would be considered mitigations.

The EPA has determined — correctly, in my estimation — that if you mitigate the off-target effects of pesticides for all species, then that means you are mitigating effects for threatened and endangered species, too. And if you can just be sure to use tactics such as edging correctly when spraying, deploying deflection devices and blowing off impervious surfaces when making granular applications, that goes a long way to achieving sustainability.

But wait ... there's more (You knew that was coming, didn't you?)! What I described above is just a portion of what the EPA is considering under section 7 of the ESA. The FWS is currently evaluating whether the iconic monarch butterfly should be listed as a threatened species under section 4 of the ESA and if there should be an exception granted for pesticide use, both in agricultural and non-agricultural uses, such as in our industry.

As you might imagine, putting together an argument in favor of an

exception is threading a very fine needle indeed. Fortunately, there was a precedent set in a previous decision made by the FWS regarding the Puerto Rican harlequin butterfly, an insect that has a similar obligate host relationship to the one the monarch has with milkweed. In our comments to FWS, which you can read at <https://documents.landscapeprofessionals.org/LP/Advocacy/Documents/NALP-Monarch-ESA-Comments.pdf>, we suggest similar mitigations based on employing best management practices for pollinators that are applicable to butterflies as well.

Nothing is going to change tomorrow, but as I gather all of the intel from all the initiatives going on right now in the pesticide world, I think that five years out we are going to be living in a very different world, one that will require more in-depth training, more recordkeeping, more preparation, less “spray and pray” and, finally, more accountability.

My goal is to make all those things digestible for the lawn and landscape industry. For all of this to work, we must have buy-in from the regulated community. I can envision working much of the compliance into the software that we already use so that it's seamlessly done.

That said, we still have a lot of work ahead of us. 🐛

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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.



Never stop growing

Last year, I saw one of my early mentors at a conference. It's someone outside of the landscaping industry who encouraged me to start the company that became The Grow Group.

He was speaking at the event, and I was looking forward to gaining some new ideas for how we could better market our offerings at The Grow Group or find different ways to relate to our clients. Instead, I left with a renewed drive to change and evolve.

What I saw at that conference was someone who was no doubt brilliant, but who had lost touch with what works in today's world and

“Worrying first about what you can do better instead of focusing on what others could do is the best attitude to have.”

with today's customers. This isn't a hit piece, so I won't share any other details, but what I am going to share are a few thoughts I took away from this interaction that can help all of us.

LISTEN TO YOUNG PEOPLE

There's a tendency to believe that lack of experience equates to lack of knowledge. That's a dangerous fallacy. Young people insist on integrating technology into their work and often have an intuitive understanding of it that makes implementing it easier. They may also have ideas that can help us better reach our clients or potential team members. We can't discount their ideas.

FIND INSPIRATION

During our April Virtual Sales Bootcamp, I shared that one of the ways I find inspiration and new ideas for landscaping is by watching virtual tours of botanical gardens on YouTube. These videos are free, easy to find and a great way to spend some time when you're feeling stuck. I usually just search for “botanical garden tour” to find a video, but looking for gardens that share your growing zone can be especially helpful.

I'm particularly fond of the Chicago Botanic Garden. My wife grew up nearby, and when we travel to visit her mom and sisters, I often

sneak off to walk through and see what's new. I've taken many ideas I've seen there and repurposed them in my own landscape designs.

HAVE A GROWTH MINDSET

You've heard this from me before if you're a frequent reader of this column: Worrying first about what you can do better instead of focusing on what others could do is the best attitude to have. It ultimately makes change happen faster by setting a good example for the people around you. When others know you're willing to take the first step, they're more willing to change themselves.

We evolve as leaders every day, and no matter your role within a company, you can be part of growth going forward. I encourage you to look at ways to learn and grow through events where you can get new ideas and meet new people, online learning to find inspiration without leaving your office, resources, podcasts or even by asking your team to show you something new. For younger pros, shadowing experienced team members is always a great way to develop.

I'm always surprised by how much we can learn by being curious and asking questions. So try to do more of that this summer; it'll make us all better. 🌱





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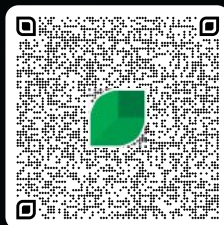
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