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Tech tips

Business management software has become a crucial factor in growing a landscape business. But with so many options, services and features, it can sometimes be overwhelming when trying to take full advantage of this technology.

If you've got some tips and tricks up your sleeve when it comes to optimizing your business management software, let us know! Contact Editor-in-Chief Scott Hollister at (shollister@northcoastmedia.net) for a chance to be featured in an upcoming edition of LM!

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SCOTTS THOUGHTS

SCOTT HOLLISTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Where everybody knows your name



Case in point was a humbling (but pleasant!) encounter I had during Marty Grunder's GROW! 2025 event in Columbus, Ohio, back in February. For the uninitiated, GROW! is an annual professional development event put on by Grunder, a longtime *LM* columnist, and his consulting group, The Grow Group. It includes networking, a trade show and a tour of a local landscaping company.

GROW! has, well, grown to the point that it attracts more than 1,000 landscape and lawn care pros from all around the country, and the edition in Columbus was my first since joining the *LM* team. For an industry newcomer like me, it was a great opportunity and a great experience.

That said, for every one person at GROW! I already knew or had at least met in my year on the job, there were probably 10 or 15 I had never laid eyes

It was all a nice reminder for me that, at the end of the day, the work we do here at *LM* matters to our readers. They really do value what we do.

on before. That's why I was taken aback when an unfamiliar face turned to me on a long, slow elevator ride and said with a smile, "Hey Scott, how are you liking the new job?"

It took me a second to process his question because, as I said, I had no idea who this person was or how he knew I had taken a new job in the last year. Slowly, though, the old brain started to kick into gear, and I realized he knew me because he read *LM*, he had seen my face attached to this column, and he knew I had taken a new job because I mentioned it about 15 times in this very space.

As soon as I put two and two together — and I really hope that process only took a couple of seconds and not the 10 minutes that it felt like in the moment — I thanked him for asking, told him how

much I was enjoying the magazine and the industry and formally introduced myself. As we continued chatting, several others chimed in about the magazine and stories they'd enjoyed, and by the time I stepped off that elevator, I had four new familiar faces (and their business cards) to add to my personal network.

It was all a nice reminder for me that, at the end of the day,

the work we do here at *LM* matters to our readers. They really do value the content we produce, whether they're consuming that in the print magazine, through a video on our website or a quick glance at social media. That can be easy to forget when you're neck-deep in the pressures of producing a monthly publication, so I can't tell you how rewarding this encounter was for an old dog like me.

I think each of you can take away something from my little story, too, because it reminded me how open and willing to help this industry can be. Even though it would be naïve to ignore competitive considerations, I've found folks in landscaping and lawn care to be almost overwhelmingly welcoming and collaborative, whether to a magazine editor like me or a fellow industry professional looking to share stories or best practices.

So, I hope this encourages some of you out there to take that leap and interact with your colleagues as a way to improve your own business. Head to GROW! 2026, which will be in Dallas next February (growgroupinc.com/ about-grow), check out Jeffrey Scott's Summer Growth Summit, Aug. 19-21 in Cleveland (jeffreyscott.biz/2025**summer-growth-summit/**) or hit any of the industry's upcoming conferences and trade shows — Equip Expo (Oct. 21-24 in Louisville) or Elevate (Nov. 2-5 in Phoenix). You'll be surprised how easy it is to expand your network and connect with a few new friendly faces. I know I was. @



GROW! 2025 in Columbus attracted more than 1,000 landscape and lawn care pros.

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EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD



MORE ONLINE

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

How do you keep your teams focused and moving forward during the dog days of summer?

"The heat might be unavoidable during the summer, but stagnation isn't. From a recruiting/HR perspective, one thing that has worked for great companies we've worked with is to turn summer into a culture moment. Share team wins ... and celebrate with appreciation cookouts. These things build pride in the team and help future hiring by showing what it's like to work with you."

"Constantly talk about what matters the most. Share the objectives for the year and the score so the team knows how you are doing. Use your emotional intelligence to be the kind of leader others want to follow. ... Stay engaged, focus on and support your team, and show

by your own actions not just your words — what matters the most."

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.

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Tamarisk Business Advisors Grand Rapids, Mich.

Jeffrey Scott

Jeffrey Scott Consulting New Orleans, La.



"Each quarter, we play mini-games to focus the team on key priorities. In summer, it's about connecting

with customers through online reviews and celebrating quality work, channeling our energy into what we love!"

"It starts with quarterly planning sessions to ensure the company's goals are clear. Throughout the season, we celebrate success at every opportunity, ensuring we are providing daily recognition to stay on track



with our goals."

"Individually, every employee has their own needs and obstacles at work and home. Staying personally connected

(by an employee's leader) will help each person, and thus your entire company, to survive — and thrive — after 100 days of hell."



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Product Patents 11

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

A family affair *LM*'s Nader Hassen (foreground) spent some time with Bret (center) and Jared Ritter from Petitti Family Farms during his visit to the Illinois and Wisconsin Landscape Show — iLandscape — in Schaumburg, Ill.

Ricky Roddy *LM* publisher Bill Roddy did his best Talladega Nights impersonation during a NASCAR driving experience at Texas Motor Speedway that was part of Envu's Advisory Board meeting in Dallas. Word is Roddy took few prisoners on the track, turning in the fastest lap among the Envu participants.

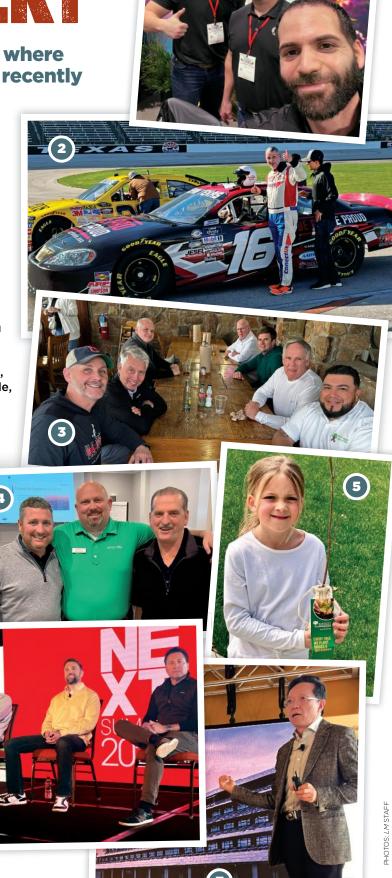
3 Shiny happy people The *LM* team had an exclusive invite to join their friends from Envu and members of its advisory board in Dallas. Pictured here (clockwise from left) are Roddy; Dan Stepinski, Perennial Services; Shawn Mullen, Envu; Ricki Linyard, Lawn Doctor; Michael Miracle, Envu; Ed Fleming, Lawns Unlimited; and Dusty Montiel, Happy Palms Lawn and Pest.

Terrific trio Chad Noyes (center), Envu's campaign activation manager, joined his Envu colleagues Ryan Madden (left), and Mike Dzurenko for a photo during the company's Advisory Board event.

School days Sarah Roddy, the adorable daughter of *LM*'s very own Bill Roddy, now has her own connection to the landscaping industry thanks to the folks from Bartlett Tree Experts, who provided saplings to Sarah and her classmates at a school event.

Electric Avenue At the Kress NEXT Summit in Colorado Springs, Colo., (from left) Greyson Walldorff, Lawn Capital; Justin White, K&D Landscaping; and Chris Angelo, Stay Green, shared stories of adding electric and autonomous equipment to their fleets.

7 All systems Gao Don Gao, the founder and CEO of Kress and its parent company, Positec, provided an optimistic outlook on the state of the electric and robotic equipment industry for attendees at the Kress NEXT Summit.



MVP-CALIBER STRIPES? IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY.





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Kress NEXT Summit showcases the cutting edge

BY SCOTT HOLLISTER | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

very movement needs its early adopters, and there has been no shortage of evangelists in the landscape industry as it gradually continues to embrace batterypowered and autonomous equipment.

That much was clear last month as a broad selection of leaders from some of the country's most prominent landscaping and lawn care companies gathered in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains for the Kress NEXT Summit, hosted at The Broadmoor resort in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Anchored around the introduction of a new "cut-and-go" autonomous mower, the event featured state-of-the-industry addresses from Kress senior leaders, panel discussions on both electrification and robotics in landscaping and an opportunity to test drive much of the company's product line, from blowers and string trimmers to the previously mentioned robotic mowers.

"The industry is experiencing a major shift from gas to electric," says Don Gao, the founder and CEO of Kress and its parent company, Positec. "We wanted to have the CEOs and leaders of the top

landscaping companies here to really introduce them to what Kress is and where the technology is today. We want them to understand that Kress' technology is different, and Kress' technology can meet their requirements."

Joe Langton, the vice president of the Langton Group in Woodstock, Ill., and acting CEO of Automated Outdoor Solutions, has embraced robotic and electric technology in his own businesses and has

been encouraging colleagues to do the same. The opportunity to continue spreading that word was a primary reason he prioritized attending the Kress event.

"Part of the reason why I was here was because a lot of the people I have been mentoring were going to be here, too," Langton says. "I wanted to show them that, 'Hey, I've been telling you about Kress, telling you they're the real deal, so let's see what they have to offer together."



Todd Zimmerman, the vice president of product development for Kress, with the 40-inch, cut-and-go autonomous mower.

The most obvious demonstration of that philosophy was the unveiling of a new 40-inchrobotic mower that Kress says will hit the market in 2026. In contrast to the company's RTK autonomous mowers machines that Kress calls "cut-and-stay" since most remain in place at properties managed by the landscape companies that own them — these cut-and-go mowers are designed to move from job to job and tackle larger properties. An even larger 60-inch version is also in the works.



Longtime industry consultant Jim Huston dies

Jim Huston, a longtime landscape consultant and figure in the green industry for more than 30 years, died last month at his home in Grand Lake, Colo. He was 75 years old.

Huston was the founder and president of J.R. Huston Enterprises, which

provides consulting services, software solutions and educational workshops and seminars to the green industry. He had a Master of Business Administration degree in finance and was a Certified Professional Landscape Estimator — one of only two such professionals in the

world. He was also an inductee into the Green Industry Hall of Fame.

In a letter sent to J.R. Huston clients, his son, Josh, wrote that his father had "pioneered the concept of 'brainstorming meetings,' which brought together multiple landscape and green industry professionals for open discussions on common challenges and solutions. While these types of consulting events are now commonplace, Jim was a trailblazer, organizing them as early as the early '90s."

Huston wrote seven books and developed five software packages during his career that dealt specifically with the landscape, irrigation and tree service industries.

LM education returns to Equip Exposition 2025

andscape Management and the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) will partner for the fourth consecutive year to deliver high-quality educational sessions at Equip Exposition, Oct. 21-24, at the Kentucky Exposition Center in Louisville, Ky.

Equip Expo 2025 attendees will have access to 12 educational sessions, covering key topics such as business management, staff development, employee retention and landscape industry innovations. Whether you're seeking solutions to improve team performance, streamline operations or implement cutting-edge technology, these sessions offer invaluable learning opportunities.

"We are in an uncertain and quickchanging business climate. There are extreme challenges associated with uncertainty related to tariffs, taxes and labor shortages. This year, landscapers can't afford to not come to Equip, where you learn how other contractors around the country and around the world are adapting to business challenges," said Kris Kiser, president of OPEI and Equip Exposition.

"Equip and Landscape Management are planning education to address these very challenges. This is the year to learn, to share, and to come to Equip."

Bill Roddy, the publisher of *LM*, said, "We're grateful to continue our partnership

with OPEI at Equip Exposition, delivering comprehensive educational sessions for landscape professionals and their teams. In 2025, we'll offer sessions on industry trends, labor solutions and business strategies designed to help attendees grow their landscape businesses."

Only registered show attendees are eligible to participate in Equip Expo education. You can register using this



LM is offering a new slate of classes for Equip Expo 2025, with new topics, new industry experts and regular favorites.

link (plus.mcievents.com/event/equipexpo2025/summary) and receive a 50-percent registration discount by using the code **LM50**. During the registration process, you will be prompted to add educational sessions.

For more information on the classes being offered at Equip Expo 2025, visit landscapemanagement.net/Im-education-returns-to-equip-exposition-2025. (a)

New faces take center stage at 2025 NCLC

The National Collegiate Landscaping Competition (NCLC) returned to Fort Collins and Colorado State University with record numbers. The National Association of Landscape Professionals' annual event drew 56 schools and 770 students, including several new faces and universities.

"Missouri is a perfect example," said Britt Wood, NALP CEO. "They brought seven kids last year and had to turn people away this year. BYU brought 60 kids this year, which is a new record."

In addition to new students and schools, several new companies participated in the event and the career fair. That came about after a change that NALP implemented ahead of the event.

"To attend, you have to be a member," Wood said. "We had several members who came on board just for this event. That's how important this event is for us and the industry."

Brigham Young University's Provo campus team took home the first-place trophy for the second year in a row. The second and third-place finishers also remained the same, with Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C), based in Cleveland, coming in second and Colorado State ranking third.

Top student finishers included top overall performer Alexsis Perrmann from Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, Christine Kermond from Tri-C and Nate Hawks from Michigan State University.

To view the complete list of schools and student scores, go to landscapeprofessionals.org/NCLC/Final_Results/NCLC/Final_Results/2025_Final_Results.aspx

After two years in the mountain time zone, NCLC will be moving back east in 2026 to Michigan State University. NALP also announced that in 2027, Cuyahoga Community College will host the event for the first time.

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The excitement will keep rolling with more next-gen rubber tire machines coming this year, packed with advanced technology and operator-focused design.



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rew Christopher is no stranger to managing challenging projects. The construction branch manager for Oberson's Nursery and Landscapes in Hamilton, Ohio, for the past decade, Christopher has been involved with his fair share of difficult design/build efforts and knows all about clients who can get cold feet when the going gets tough on those projects.

But he knew right away that wouldn't be an issue when Oberson's was hired to design and build a courtyard area inside a newly built emergency facility for the University of Cincinnati's hospital system. Instead, he immediately saw the project's potential and recognized they were working with a client willing to think outside the box.

That's a good thing, because while the University of Cincinnati was thinking big, the space that Christopher and his teammates had to work with on the project was anything but.

"Our design team really wanted to create a greenscape in that courtyard where the employees could take a break from the stresses of the emergency and trauma center ... something that would give them a little bit of nature in the workplace," Christopher says.

"The hard part was that (the area) wasn't a huge space ... and we had to bring everything in through the same place where the ambulances bring patients in, down about 150 feet of hallway with several turns along the way. The doors in that area were only 40 or 42 inches wide, too. And because it's a hospital, we had to really minimize things like dust and disruptions. There were just a lot of things we had to take into consideration with this project."

But as the saying goes, good things often come in small packages, and that's exactly how the

hospital staff views the finished product, successfully brought together thanks to a healthy dose of creativity from the team at Oberson's.

Take, for example, the floor of this space, which was originally 22 inches below the level of the hospital hallways that surrounded it. To avoid having to haul topsoil and gravel by hand through the halls of the hospital to raise that grade, the design team instead developed a plan that utilized piers as the base for pavers and a concrete masonry unit block wall to define the overall footprint as a way to navigate around those problems. Not only did that plan



The "stone"

features in this

courtyard at the University of

Cincinnati Hospital

are actually foam

so they could more easily be

capped with stone

moved into place.

of attack save man-hours and reduce headaches, but it also created space for proper drainage, utilities and other belowground necessities.

The hospital's wish list also included using a pair of large, natural stones to anchor opposite corners of the courtyard. Using the real thing wasn't a

realistic option, however — natural stones would be too big to maneuver through the hospital's

halls and doorways, and using a crane to

lift the stones up and over the hospital's walls and roof was out because, as a Level I trauma center, the airspace in and around the facility had to remain clear at all times.

So, Christopher and Oberson's worked with a concrete artist from California to create a foam version of the

> stones that were set in place and then capped with the real thing. Only the most observant of visitors would know the stones were not natural.

"When you're working in smaller spaces and areas that might be hard to get to, the key is to be flexible, have some contingency plans when things don't work out quite as you expect them

to and be patient," Christopher says. "These projects are never as easy as you think they'll be, but they're also never as hard as you worry they'll be. But when you navigate everything and get to the finish line, they're almost always super rewarding."

That message was common among the landscape architects, construction supervisors and project managers that LM asked about the costs — and benefits — of managing projects in small spaces, with a few common keys to success emerging from these landscape professionals.

Continued on page 20

THESE PROJECTS ARE NEVER AS EASY AS YOU THINK THEY'LL BE. BUT THEY'RE **ALSO NEVER AS HARD AS** YOU WORRY THEY'LL BE."

Drew Christopher

Continued from page 19

Plan, plan and plan again

This might seem like a no-brainer for any project — even those that don't necessarily involve smaller spaces — but all the pros LM talked with emphasized the importance of advanced planning when it comes to successfully managing hardscape and design/build projects in tight quarters or with restricted access.

Mark Mazzurco speaks from experience on this point. The CEO of H&M Landscaping in Newbury, Ohio, just outside of Cleveland, has more than 35 years of experience in design, construction and ongoing maintenance for residential and commercial clients.

"Trust me ... you have to do a little more due diligence, think things through a little bit more (when considering projects in small spaces)," Mazzurco says. "It takes a lot more organization and thinking about the logistics of the project. Something that might be a small hurdle in a larger project can be a big deal in a small space or a



SOMETHING THAT MIGHT BE A SMALL HURDLE IN A LARGER PROJECT CAN BE A **BIG DEAL IN A SMALL SPACE** ... A LITTLE MORE PLANNING **GOES A LONG WAY."**

Mark Mazzurco

space that's hard to get to. A little more planning goes a long way."

Case in point: H&M landed a project with the Cuyahoga County Public Library system. "My salesman didn't know this when we bid the project, but they came to us after the fact

> ... and informed us that they didn't want to interrupt the flow of traffic coming in and out of the library during normal business hours," he says. "So, we had to pivot and do all of the work at night.

"But as I always say, nothing that looks nice ever comes easy. You have to deal with fewer headaches if you can think about the surprises you might encounter before they even happen."

Find the right tools

Unique working conditions often require unique tools to get the job

done. That came through loud and clear from the landscape pros sharing best practices for construction projects in non-traditional areas.

Take, for example, the work that Drew Standfuss and the team at Greenscape Lawns in Montague, Mich., completed



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at Lewis Adventure Farm and Zoo in nearby New Era, Mich. This family-focused facility features a working fruit farm, a corn maze, a petting zoo and a host of other activities.

The challenge with this particular project wasn't necessarily its size; the farm itself is spread over 700 acres, and the area Greenscape worked in was relatively flat and open, perfect for the area around a restaurant and bar the company had been asked to design and build.

Instead, the challenge included maneuvering through the rest of the farm to bring equipment, materials and manpower to the worksite, and then constructing a massive retaining wall with a steep grade using large, natural stones.

"You weren't picking these up by hand. They weighed more than 1,000 pounds each," Standfuss says. "The old-school way was you'd either pick them up with a forklift, which often led to chipping the face when you put them back down, or use a hook-and-pulley system, which is pretty cumbersome and takes time.

Continued on page 22







CUTTING-EDGE HARDSCAPES

Continued from page 21

"So, I found this suction device (from Pave Tool Innovators) that was a godsend. It did exactly what we hoped it would, was fairly easy for our guys to master and use, and I'd recommend that to anyone doing steps, stairs, anything like that."

And sometimes, the most obvious tools could still work the best. Mazzurco stresses not to discount the possibility that some compact equipment will be available to ease the burden of the manual labor normally associated with projects in smaller spaces.

"Believe it or not, there is a lot of compact equipment that will fit through a four-foot gate," he says. "We've even taken the roll cage off and driven them through hallways before to get them to interior courtyards and places like that. It can be done in the right circumstances."

Look up!

When vexed by the limitations and hurdles presented by a small space or one with limited access points, several landscape pros said that taking a non-traditional view of the space — by looking up as much as looking out — can lead to a breakthrough that positively affects both design and logistics.

Continued on page 24





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Continued from page 22

Aaron Schlines, PLA, is a landscape architect and project director with James Martin Associates in the Chicago suburb of Mundelein, Ill. The company offers its clients a full slate of residential and commercial landscaping services and regularly works within the city limits of the Windy City.

It's there that Schlines and the team at James Martin Associates deals with many of the small-space challenges referenced in this story. "(Working in the city) adds a whole new level of logistical challenges," he says. "You've got narrow streets, condensed street parking, pedestrians, people walking their kids to school. Just being able to carve out an area on the street where you can park your trucks and



trailers can be a challenge. You have to be strategic with all those decisions."

When Schlines is finally able to put on his designer hat and focus on the space where the work will actually be done, his best practices include considering how the area will be used in the long term — and by whom — and taking time to consider the entire

space at his disposal, not just what's at ground level.

"In a lot of these projects, I'm acting as the liaison between the property owner and our crews, in addition to being the designer. So, my approach has always been to learn how all the puzzle pieces you have will fit together,"

WONDERS Working in an

Working in an urban setting like Chicago creates both logistical and design challenges for James Martin Associates' teams.

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he says. "On the front end ... it's understanding how the space will be used — are you going to entertain, do you need a space for kids to play, an outdoor kitchen? — and figuring out how to deliver that with the square footage you have to work with.

"In really defined spaces, we've had a lot of luck using plants, trees and some structures to create verticality and make the space seem bigger than it really is. That can mean using small pergolas on one end to block



IN REALLY DEFINED SPACES,
WE'VE HAD A LOT OF LUCK
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Aaron Schlines

the wind and sun, plants like hydrangeas that grow up as much as out ... those have all been really well received by clients. Psychologically, they just make those spaces feel bigger than they actually are."

Embrace the challenge

Not unlike the many other day-to-day challenges that we all can encounter in our lives, the power of positive thinking was cited more than once as a key to successfully navigating the pressures of design/build projects in tight quarters.

Sure, looking on the bright side alone won't get the job done. But as Standfuss says, overcoming obstacles and beginning with the end in mind can go a long way toward making the experience better for all involved.

"Listen, guys do get frustrated. When you're on projects like these, you get tired of seeing the same things and doing the same things. You have to remind them it's the end result that matters," he says. "It's gratifying to step back, look at what you accomplished and what we did as a team. Just knowing that people are going to enjoy these spaces for a long time after we're done is a great feeling."

Schlines said that was a point of emphasis for the team at James Martin Associates as well. He also noted that despite all the challenges, hardships and troubles that can accompany these kinds of projects, there is also a positive buzz for designers such as himself when the creative juices start flowing on small spaces.

"Truth be told, we like working in smaller spaces better from a strict design perspective," Schlines says. "You have some definition of the space you're working in, and it allows you to be a little more creative in how you're going to interact the spaces you're designing for with the ways they're going to be utilized."

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PROTECT YOUR TURF

Easing summer turf stress

Turf pros outline strategies for addressing heat-stressed turf that lies above — and below — the surface by MIKE ZAWACKI | CONTRIBUTOR

he dog days of summer are inevitable. They bring high temperatures and heat-stressed turf. The latter is often accompanied by complaints from residential and commercial clients about unsightly brown grass.

Before lawn care operators can begin remedying this issue, it is essential to determine whether heat stress is the cause. According to turf professionals, misdiagnosis is common. Heat stress, most prevalent in cool-season grasses, presents symptoms similar to fungal diseases such as brown patch and drought. Not understanding the root cause of the problem often leads to ineffective management strategies.

A key heat stress indicator includes leaf chlorosis, which is a noticeable yellowing of the plant tissue, and a progressive reduction in shoot density, leading to a thinning of the turf canopy over time, says Ross Braun, Ph.D., assistant professor of turfgrass and landscape management and the director of the Rocky Ford Turfgrass Research Center at Kansas State University.

A less obvious indicator is the root dieback occurring below the surface,

resulting in an underdeveloped root system that further weakens the plant, Braun says.

"The turf is unable to keep up with the photosynthesis," Braun says. "It's not making enough energy (compared to) the energy that it's using, and it's not forming new roots. It's unable to keep up with growth, and you start having that thinned-out yellowing turf appearance."

Turf experts outline several proactive and reactive actions that landscape and lawn care professionals can consider to reduce the impact of heat stress.

GAUGE SOIL TEMPERATURES

As summer progresses into the peak heat of July and August, soil temperatures have a direct impact on root health. And just as turfgrass shoots have an optimal air temperature range for growth, their roots also thrive within specific soil temperature parameters.

According to turf experts, popular cool-season grasses such as tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass and perennial

ryegrass possess a lower optimal growing temperature range. Consequently, these turf varieties experience stress once air temperatures consistently exceed 85 degrees F. Conversely, warmseason grasses like Bermudagrass and zoysia don't begin to stress until air temperatures reach 100 degrees F.

Stress further intensifies for coolseason grasses when mid-summer's nighttime cooling is minimal. The

lack of respite from the heat exacerbates the physiological strain on these grasses, Braun says.

Consequently, turf managers often rely solely on air temperature as an indicator of stress. However, by the time foliar symptoms manifest in turfgrass, their

roots may have already begun to decline, hindering the plant's ability to cool itself and absorb nutrients efficiently, says Michelle DaCosta, Ph.D., chief undergraduate adviser of turfgrass science and management and associate professor of turfgrass physiology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

"It's important for turf managers to start to understand, as we're going into these periods, what the general soil temperatures are," DaCosta says. "If we see soil temperatures that are increasing above 75 to 80 degrees, that starts to tell us we're getting into a period where the roots are not as efficient as they are if temperatures were below that."

DaCosta recommends that turf managers invest in soil temperature gauges — around \$200 for a pro-grade digital model — to track these trends, especially for properties with chronic heat stress issues.



Ross Braun

TEST THAT TURF

Turf managers are encouraged to do routine soil testing every few years.



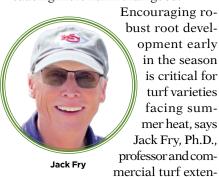


Managing heat stress is not solely about monitoring temperature but also understanding the complex interaction with soil-water dynamics. Poorly drained soils, common in general landscapes and residential properties, tend to warm gradually but cool even more slowly.

DaCosta says this interplay between ambient temperature and soil moisture creates a delicate balance impacting heat stress.

"You have to find the sweet spot. You need water, of course, because you want to prevent drought stress," she says. "But if the soil is not draining, it's going to hold on to the heat longer, which is something (turf managers) don't often think about."

A common misconception is that increasing irrigation alleviates heat stress. However, Braun says excessive watering compounds the problem. Saturated soil restricts the oxygen available to roots, which, like the above-ground portions of the plant, require air for respiration. When high soil temperatures combine with waterlogged conditions, the effects of heat stress significantly amplify, causing more harm than good.



sion specialist in the Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources at Kansas State University.

While spring brings ample rainfall, many regions experience significant dry periods by mid-summer. To capitalize on this, Fry recommends a specific irrigation approach: In late spring, apply a substantial amount of

water, but then allow the soil to dry until the turf exhibits signs of stress before the next deep irrigation.

"This is going to enhance root development," Fry says. "If you're irrigating frequently, you're going to have a shallow root, and you're going to be encouraging more upward plant development rather than deep root development."

GO ON THE OFFENSIVE

Rather than solely reacting to visible symptoms, turf experts say proactive management is another key to mitigating summer heat stress.

Fry advises turf managers to emphasize the importance of routine soil testing for homeowners and property managers. Checking pH, phosphorus and potassium levels every few years provides valuable insights into the soil's nutritional status, and any deficiencies can be addressed.

Braun advises that fall fertilization, with a focus on nitrogen, supports robust top growth and root development before the onset of summer stress.

"Essentially, if you have more vegetation on the top, and you have a deeper root system on the bottom, then you're going to be in the best position to tolerate those really stressful summer periods of heat stress," he says.

Interestingly, Fry says recent research at Kansas State has revealed certain slow-release nitrogen sources can, surprisingly, contribute to higher levels of brown patch disease in tall fescue, similar to the effects of quick-release urea. Therefore, Fry warns that while practical nitrogen application is important, turf managers working with tall fescue in hot, humid summer conditions also should consider the proactive use of fungicides to minimize brown patch outbreaks.

"It's good to put effective nitrogen out," Fry says. "But if you're dealing with tall fescue, and you get a lot of rain and



you have heat, you may need a fungicide to minimize any brown patch during the summer months."

Cultural practices such as core aeration, ideally performed in the fall or early spring to allow for turf recovery, are vital for alleviating soil compaction and improving air and water movement, fostering deeper root systems that enhance overall summer heat resistance resilience. Fry recommends utilizing a solid or thin tine if aeration is performed during the summer to increase airflow through a dense soil profile and minimize further damage to already stressed turf.

Turf experts advise maintaining a higher mowing height year-round, which is another critical strategy. "Time and time again, the research shows the benefits of higher mowing heights," Fry says. "Even raising the mowing height up a half inch is going to help and may not even be noticeable to customers."

Finally, advising clients to limit foot traffic and activity on the turf during periods of peak heat stress, while often impractical and difficult to enforce, will limit damage and aid recovery.

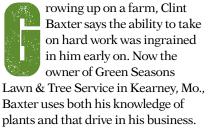
Mike Zawacki is a Cleveland-based journalist and frequent contributor who has covered various aspects of the green, horticultural, sports turf and irrigation industries for the last 20 years.

GROWTH SUCCESS STORIES SUMMIT

The power of one-on-one connections

Networking at the 2024 *LM* Growth Summit helped Clint Baxter improve his lawn care services

BY LAUREN H. DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR



"What I love about the green industry is it takes into account both the desire to produce healthy living results and the work ethic to be able to do what it takes to get it done," Baxter says.

He also uses that initiative to connect with other industry professionals. One way he did that recently was by attending the 2024 *LM* Growth Summit.

Baxter was one of 36 attendees who participated in the threeday Summit this past December in Orlando, Fla. The annual event brings together lawn care professionals from across the country to connect with other owners and leading industry suppliers. From the group sessions to one-on-one meetings, attendees like Baxter had the opportunity to learn from their peers in a relaxed, noncompetitive setting.

It was during one of those networking opportunities that Baxter picked up valuable takeaways that he has since incorporated into his business. He was paired with another owner throughout the sessions, and Baxter says their conversations helped affirm an adjustment he needed to make to his services.

Last year, Baxter changed some practices with his lawn fertilization company and began using more granular products. However, that wasn't as successful as the liquid applications he typically made, something his peer at the event encouraged him to return to.

"He reinforced the thoughts I had about going back to the way I did things in the past," Baxter says. "We talked a lot, and I was able to listen and pick up things from him."

Baxter also enjoyed learning about new products from the various lawn care and equipment suppliers who participated in the Summit. He saw several familiar faces from companies, including Stinger Equipment and Steel Green Manufacturing, and said he also enjoyed the PBI-Gordon meeting, where he learned more about Arkon liquid herbicide.

While at the event, Baxter had the opportunity to try out new pieces of equipment and ordered a wetting agent product from Greene County Fertilizer Co. that he'd used in the past, but not to the scale he's using now.

"I always enjoy the Greene County folks," Baxter says. "I've been buying from them for a long time."

Participants also had the chance to meet and learn from others at the event in a speed-dating format, which Baxter says was unique and interesting.

"I'd never done anything business-related like that before," he says. "It was a neat event and different from anything I'd ever done. I'm grateful to have been invited."

A variety of speakers come to the event each year to share industry insights, information on new technologies and product information.



Baxter says hearing from all the speakers was helpful, which added to the overall experience.

"Getting both the vendor and user points of view is always a great idea," Baxter says.

From the round of golf to talking with other attendees at meals, Baxter says the social activities at the *LM* Growth Summit just added to the experience, and he would go back if given the opportunity. He encourages other lawn care professionals to apply for the event to attend in the future.

"It's a great time," Baxter says.

"You connect with a lot of interesting people, hear about products, and also learn about some things that might be outside of your realm of products or services that might be useful."

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.

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TOUGH SUMMER JOB

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Be ready for these pests to pop up this year

BY NATHAN MADER | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

s many of us start enjoying the nice spring weather, the hot summer months are starting to rear their ugly heads from right around the corner. And with them comes a slew of new problems that will be quick to pop up in lawns and landscapes.

Many summer weeds are annuals that germinate quickly in the spring or early summer and grow rapidly in the warmer months. They are highly adaptive, can thrive in poor conditions, spread quickly, produce large amounts of seeds and are tough to remove once established.

Jay Wyrick, turf and ornamental agronomist at FineTurf in North Carolina, says many of them come in several varieties, making identification a crucial step in managing these pests. Once that happens, one overarching preventative measure he says will make life easier down the road is to have thick, well-maintained turf that can resist weeds popping up.

"That's the best weed control out there," Wyrick says. "You're never going to (fully) herbicide your way out of things. Mother Nature is doing her job when there's an opening (in the lawn) by filling that void. That's just something that's going to happen."

Wyrick sat down with us at *LM* to take a look at the characteristics and control measures for some of the most common summer weeds:

PURSLANE (PORTULACA SPP.)

While there are dozens of purslane varieties in the U.S., it is generally a broadleaf weed that forms a dense, tangled mat close to ground. Fleshy leaves alternate on opposite ends of the smooth stem, and on top of spreading by seed, purslane is even trickier to control since it can spread through stem fragments that can root at its nodes. Wyrick recommends using 2,4-D and dicamba as a postemergent.



FOXTAIL (SETARIA SPP.)

Wyrick says there are a small handful of common varieties in the U.S., including yellow, green and giant foxtail. This is an upright, clumping grass that can range typically from 1 to 3 feet in height with leaves that often have a spiral twist. They are topped with a long, fuzzy seed head, and a prodiamine preemergent is effective with an application around February or March.



"Preemergents do a pretty good job of it in the spring," Wyrick says. "When we do see it in the summer, we think quinclorac would probably be the best."

SPURGE (EUPHORBIA SPP.)

This pest also has many key species, including prostrate, spotted and creeping spurge. It forms a low mat over the ground and, depending on the type, is a light to dark green color with oval leaves. Spotted spurge is known for its purple or red spot in the center of leaves, and Wyrick says one key giveaway for identification is a white, milky sap inside the stem. Like many summer weeds, Wyrick says reacting to spurge with postemergent applications is likely the most effective strategy.



COMMON KNOTWEED (POLYGONUM ARENASTRUM)

Common knotweed, also known as prostrate knotweed, is another low-growing pest with wiry, slender stems that form mats. Wyrick says it's sometimes confused with spurge, and the branching stems can have a zigzag appearance. Leaves are either linear or football-shaped, and like other summer weeds, Wyrick recommends most 3-way products, with 2,4-D, triclopyr and MCPP working well.



PHOTOS: QUALI-PRO (1-2), PBF-GORDON (3-4) HEADER, GETTY IMAGES: DNYS9/ E+, BOSCHETTOPHOTOGRAPHY / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS



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THE BIG ONE

Multi-layered masterpiece

BY NATHAN MADER

LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOCATION Deerfield, Ill.

COMPANY James Martin Associates

DETAILS When maintaining Tamarisk NorthShore's retirement community, it's important to bring life into the environment to promote the well-being of residents. And with the two outdoor social areas, that's exactly what James Martin Associates (JMA) tries to do, despite one notable issue.

Mike Windhauser, director of client relations and sales at JMA, says one outdoor area is on ground level; the other space is on the rooftop of the parking garage, creating a hassle when moving crews and equipment.

For example, crews must carry a 21-inch mower up the single exterior stairway to mow the rooftop, and all mowing and pruning debris is carried down by hand. Another key part of the job was identifying the on-site areas with poor drainage causing plant material to decline in health.

"We installed below-ground drainage collection basins connected to 4-inch PVC that carried the water away to a drain," Windhauser says. "The top of the drainage basins had granite cobbles to diffuse the water discharged from the gutters located 3-feet above grade. The soil now is not being displaced, and the plants growing in this bed are thriving."

JMA won a gold award from the 2024 National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program for this project. ©

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









Captions | 1. Windhauser says a weekly two- to three-man crew provides full-service maintenance on-site. Windhauser personally visits the property two to three times a month and will typically walk the site with the client during one of these visits. 2. With the popularity of the outdoor spaces, crews work diligently with property managers to schedule maintenance that minimizes disruption and is safe for residents who are present. 3. With the parking garage's outdoor area sitting on top of a concrete floor, an irrigation system is needed to maintain the healthy gardens, and it is evaluated based on weather conditions and plant health. 4. Safety and accessibility for residents was a major goal for the project, and compacted gravel was used to widen the pathways for those using wheelchairs or walkers.

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GROUNDS SUPERVISOR, PATRIOTS POINT FACILITY, COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON

CHARLESTON. S.C.

"We're using Stihl battery-powered units. We're at a college, and there are a lot of noise ordinances with the school - we can't disrupt the classes. We've invested in several battery-powered blowers, and I've been impressed. They last a long time on a single charge, and they're lightweight."



KYLE NARSAVAGE

PRESIDENT AND OWNER, GREENSWEEP AND GARDEN GATE LANDSCAPING SILVER SPRING. MD.

"We use Echo for gas. They're durable, easily accessible through our dealer network, and parts are easy to find and order. For electric blowers, we use Husqvarna. Their customer service is extremely responsive, and I feel their design and power are top-notch. The battery runtime and power are comparable to gas. With D.C. and Baltimore banning gas blowers, more than half of our blowers are now electric."



K.C. BELL

DIRECTOR OF GROUNDS, CLEMSON ATHLETICS

CLEMSON, S.C.

"I've recently made the change to Echo, and I'm excited to see how they perform. I made the change because I was disappointed in my previous brand. Blowers for our industry need to be durable because the guys are always banging them around."



JUSTIN WHITE

CEO, K&D LANDSCAPING **WATSONVILLE, CALIF.**

"At K&D Landscaping, we're on a mission to end noise pollution. We're partnering with Kress Outdoor **Power Solutions** to have our crews all-electric, reducing noise and pollution. We just want to be human and work in a courteous manner. For example, what if we just didn't use the blowers before 10 a.m.?"



MIKE McCARRON

OWNER, IMAGE WORKS LANDSCAPING FAIRFAX STATION. VA.

"We're all Stihl. We use the small handheld version for our small properties, the medium for larger residential and the largest for commercial because they're blowing off big areas, including parking lots. We're loyal to Stihl because we have a fantastic dealer just 15 minutes away, Virginia **Outdoor Power,** in Merrifield, Va."

HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

Confined construction

BY NATHAN MADER LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LOCATION Stafford, Texas

COMPANY Lawn Management Co.

DETAILS Hardscape projects are hard enough, but when there's watchful eyes coming from all around you, it can add a bit of extra pressure.

That's what Shane Smith, landscape consultant for Lawn Management Co. (LMC) in Houston, said for the Puffer-Sweiven atrium renovation his team finished last year.

"(The atrium was) surrounded by floor-to-ceiling windows, so we often felt like we were working inside of an aquarium because it was an active office site," Smith says.

This layout also made just working on the site difficult, as Smith explained how he and his team needed to trudge through the office property's hallways to access the atrium. Obtaining security key fobs, protecting the office walls and floors and leaving the place spotless after hours were key challenges on-site.

It also meant tasks like cement mixing and edging cuts had to be done 100 feet away from the building to ensure the noise and mess stayed far from the office employees.

And, after two months of excavating, planting, installing and more, LMC won a silver award from the 2024 National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program for this project.

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









PHOTOS: BRYAN MALLOCH PHOTOGRAPHY

Captions | 1. Smith had to remove the existing river birch trees in the atrium and replace them with new ones. Clara hawthorn, variegated flax lilies, sandy leaf fig for ground cover, Lily of the Nile and more rounded out the rest of the vegetation used. 2. The centerpiece featured a roughly 20-foot diameter turf seating area surrounded by asymmetrical concrete steppers. Smith said the steppers helped interweave the turf's aesthetics into the granite walking path. 3. The old atrium had an abandoned irrigation system, collapsed drainage pipes and rock-hard soil that all needed to be replaced, extending the project by a few weeks. 4. Smith says the design and installation of the new atrium provides great views from inside the office at all angles. LMC still maintains the property, meaning many of the challenges with entering the building and reducing noise still persist. 5. Water was a large part of the project. From heavy rain creating a mud pit in

the atrium during the renovation to the abandoned irrigation system and lack of proper drainage, Smith says water challenges had to be solved on the fly.

DESIGN BUILD + INSTALLATION

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/265 COMPACT TRACK LOADER

COMPANY: Caterpillar **URL**: cat.com The 255/265 compact track loaders from Caterpillar are a groundup redesign of the previous series, featuring

improved engine performance, lift and tilt capabilities, stability, operator comfort and technology. The 255 and 265 loaders are powered by Cat C2.8T and Cat C2.8TA engines, respectively, which offer 74.3 hp (55.4 kW), and the company says both offer class-leading lift height. Both models feature a larger cab design with 22 percent more overall volume and 26 percent additional foot space. The loaders are equipped with either a five-inch (127-mm) standard LCD monitor or an eight-inch (203-mm) advanced touchscreen monitor, depending on the technology package selected.



331G COMPACT TRACK LOADER

COMPANY: John Deere URL: deere.com The John Deere 331G compact track loader features a boom design close to the machine and longer track frames for better stability. The machine's height-to-



hinge pin of 11 feet allows for easy dumping into trucks and convenient transport of pallets of heavy pavers or other hefty materials. The cab offers clear sight lines to the bucket corners, above and below the lift arms and the jobsite both forward and backward. The 331G can be paired with more than 100 John Deere attachments to make the machine a versatile workhorse on any jobsite. Options include side lighting, rearview camera and onboard-grade indication among others.



MT120 MINI TRACK LOADER (



COMPANY: Bobcat

URL: bobcat.com/na/en

Bobcat Co. says its new MT120 is its most powerful mini track loader, with increased operating capacity, lift height and reach performance. Powered by a 1.2-liter, non-diesel particulate fil-

ter (DPF) engine, the MT120 was designed to be powerful with robust breakout forces and a maximum rated operating capacity of 1,200 pounds. The high-torque engine, optimum machine balance, fast travel speeds and focus on pilot controls aim to deliver fast cycle times for increased productivity, according to the company. At just under 36 inches wide, the MT120 is meant to work in confined workspaces. The MT120 will be available at Bobcat dealerships in the U.S. and Canada in the second quarter of 2025.





TL8R2 COMPACT TRACK LOADER

COMPANY: Takeuchi URL: takeuchi-us.com

Takeuchi's TL8R2 compact track loader features a radial-lift design and a 74.3-hp engine. It weighs in at 8,807 pounds, offers a bucket breakout force of 6,204 pounds and has a rated operating capacity of 2,116 pounds. The TL8R2's undercarriage features repositioned travel motors with internally routed drive lines, double- and triple-flange track rollers, as well as a quietride track design for better ride quality. Two working modes, Standard and Eco, let operators choose the most appropriate option for their applications. An upgraded operator's station comes standard with a redesigned overhead door, 5.7-inch multi-informational color display with rearview camera, LED lighting package and high-torque spin turn assist. Optional features include creep mode, load-sensing auto shift and high-flow auxiliary hydraulics.

FROM THE SOURCE

Winning wiring strategies

These best practices for irrigation wiring can help ensure durability, reduce downtime and support sustainable water use by MICHAEL PIPPEN, CID | CONTRIBUTOR

n the world of landscape irrigation, attention often turns to sprinkler heads, smart controllers and water conservation technologies. Yet, beneath the surface — literally and figuratively — lies a critical component that doesn't always get the spotlight: wiring.

Wiring forms the communication backbone of any irrigation system. It connects controllers to valves, sensors

to processors and the

entire infrastructure
to the precise timing and control
that today's efficient systems demand. But when
wiring is improperly selected, installed or maintained,
even the best-designed

Michael Pippen

systems can suffer from costly performance issues. Fortunately, a proactive approach can change that.

START WITH SMART DESIGN

Every successful irrigation system begins with thoughtful planning, and wiring should be a key part of that plan from day one. This includes evaluating site conditions such as soil type, moisture levels, topography and exposure to UV radiation or foot traffic. These variables affect not only where wiring should run, but what kind of protection it needs.

A few simple design strategies go a long way. Avoid sharp bends or unnecessary splices and ensure routes minimize exposure to hazards like roots, machinery or water pooling. When planning expansion zones or smart tech integration, build in flexibility and extra capacity so the system can grow without rewiring.

INSTALLATION: DO IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME

Proper installation is perhaps the most important step in ensuring long-term reliability. In many cases, wiring problems don't stem from the wire itself but from how it was installed.

Best practices include:

- Clean, dry connections. Always make connections in dry conditions when possible and use reliable waterproofing techniques.
- **Consistent depth.** Maintain a consistent burial depth appropriate for the site to protect against weathering and incidental damage.
- Avoid unnecessary joins. Every splice is a potential failure point. Minimize them, and when unavoidable, ensure they're well-protected.
- Labeling and documentation. Future troubleshooting becomes far easier when wires are clearly labeled and as-built drawings are kept up to date.

Paying attention to these details may take more time upfront, but it pays off in fewer service calls and happier clients.

ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

Outdoor wiring lives in a tough world. It's subject to heat, cold, moisture, UV rays, chemicals, soil shifts and physical damage. Understanding the environment you're wiring helps guide material selection and installation techniques.

For example, areas prone to heavy rainfall or high humidity require robust waterproofing and possibly additional conduit protection. In desert climates, UV resistance and heat tolerance become priorities. And in high-traffic landscapes, protection from abrasion and compaction is key.

MAINTENANCE THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Even the best systems need occasional check-ups. A smart maintenance routine includes:

- **Visual inspections.** Periodically check controller boxes, valve connections and any above-ground exposure for signs of wear or intrusion.
- **Electrical testing.** A multimeter can quickly identify voltage drops, shorts or breaks before symptoms appear in system performance.
- **Seasonal checks.** Before peak irrigation seasons, verify all wiring is functional and secure. In freezing climates, ensure that insulation hasn't degraded over the winter months.

Establishing regular inspections as part of your seasonal service offering helps prevent downtime and builds long-term client trust.

WIRING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

As water becomes an increasingly precious resource, efficient irrigation is about more than keeping landscapes green—it's about stewardship. Wiring plays a surprisingly important role in supporting smart, sustainable systems. It enables the integration of sensors, flow meters and remote management technologies that optimize water usage in real time.

Wiring may not be the most visible part of an irrigation system, but its performance touches every part of the operation. By treating it with the same care and strategic thinking given to other components, landscape professionals can ensure greater reliability and more efficient water use across every project. (4)

Michael Pippen, CID (Certified Irrigation Designer), is the director of sales for Paige Water & Outdoor based in Mountainside, N.J.



PROPANE SAFETY FOR COMMERCIAL MOWERS

Propane-powered commercial mowers increase productivity by reducing downtime — and by making safety a top priority, crews can operate even more efficiently. A new safety guide is now available to help, offering best practices on hazard awareness, fuel supply, cylinder storage and handling, and more. Whether your business currently uses propane mowers or is considering making the switch, prioritizing propane safety is crucial for helping your team operate at its best.

Download your free commercial mowing safety guide at propane.com/commercial-mowers

EPA-certified conversion kits for mowers are available at these retailers:

Alliance Small Engines Mike Morris | 804-283-4003 alliancesmallengines.com

Propane Power Systems Jake Coker | 803-479-1186 propanepowersystems.com

Onyx Systems Jeremy Hahne | 800-858-3533 onyxsolutions.com

IRRIGATION TECH

Bigger is better

How one breakthrough project redefined subsurface expectations BY NATHAN MADER | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

rystal Lake Township Park was in need of a new irrigation system. However, the 5.8-acre community space — complete with a fishing pier, sport courts, beachfronts and grassy areas to enjoy the views — had one issue.

Perfect for walking around or laying down to bask in the sun, this high-traffic area would struggle with a traditional irrigation system that uses sprinkler heads and other aboveground elements. That's where Ryan Kremsreiter, a commercial irrigation project manager at Grapids Irrigation, came in.

With some collaborations with SiteOne Landscape Supply, Hunter Industries and the local landscaper, Horrocks,





he decided to try Hunter's Eco-Mat subsurface irrigation technology along the terraced park. NO SMALL FEAT
Roughly 9,500 square
feet of Eco-Mat was
used. Most projects use
less than a few hundred.

"We were kind of like the guinea pigs on that when we learned how to install this. And it really hasn't been installed in other places to such a scale. It's usually smaller formats like residential or high-end office (spaces) that's maybe like 20 feet, 100 feet," Kremsreiter says. "Nothing to the nature of the scale that we did."

And the scale was massive — roughly 9,500 feet of Eco-Mat drip irrigation was used to provide a high-quality yet low-maintenance solution that would keep the park looking pristine and clear of obstacles. Kremsreiter says it was one of the largest single-location installments of its kind at the time of its completion last July.

With the project, the client was hoping for an extended beachfront and grassy picnic area next to the lake, and to make it work with this unconventional approach, Grapids Irrigation had to learn on the fly. Kremsreiter says there was a lot to figure out to overcome the initial unfamiliarity.

"The key steps probably started off with making sure we could get that product—getting it sourced—and then making sure that we had an understanding of how much soil would have to be on top of it, how we'd be able place it, then how we

were able to essentially run water to each of the areas — really kind of building ourselves a design," he says.

Being new to this kind of scale also came with some installation challenges to work through. A terraced landscape made moving water and soil tricky, and isolation valves were needed to work on specific areas of the project. Plus, to re-add soil on the terraces without crushing the drip lines,

SCHOOL IS IN SESSION

Want to learn more about how the Crystal Lake project was completed? Think this irrigation method might be right for an upcoming project of yours?

Kremsreiter says he's happy to help other industry pros with a deeper dive into this technology and the best practices he discovered during his installation. For questions and inquiries, contact him at ryank@grapids.com to learn more.

The winding terraces proved tricky when laying the Eco-Mat.

a special excavator was used to sling dirt on top from a distance.

Kremsreiter says the curves in the design also provided a challenge, and his team had to get creative with routing and pre-building some areas to lay down the rolls of Eco-Mat.

"In smaller applications, you're probably more of like a rectangle or a square, whereas this (had) quite a bit of curves going around, especially on the tail end of it," he says. "We had to come up with some creative ways to make sure that we got proper coverage."

Outside of removing the need for sprinkler heads, Eco-Mat's subsurface technology also provided Crystal Lake with some other benefits. Due to water going directly to the roots, the project can save 20-40 percent on water usage thanks to eliminating sun and wind exposure.

"Eco-Mat was the perfect solution for the Crystal Lake terraced park," said Brent Snippe, sales manager at Hunter Industries. "It's engineered to tackle hard-to-irrigate areas by using fleece-wrapped, inline emitter tubing (Eco-Wrap) with specialized fleece. This system evenly distributes water underground, making it ideal for high-traffic areas."

Kremsreiter says with the successful installation of Eco-Mat, he hopes to help other industry pros understand how they can use this technology. He also praises the people and companies he worked with for turning an unfamiliar tool into the perfect solution for the park.

"The Crystal project was incredibly rewarding," said Spencer Tellkamp, CEO of Dan's Excavating, who helped

throughout the job. "We moved about 16,000 cubic yards of material to enhance the park's usability. Eco-Mat helped alleviate concerns about water stains and ensured high-quality irrigation." (19)



"I look forward to reading Landscape Management each month as it's a great resource to learn about industry trends, best practices, and new technologies and equipment. It has helped me gain new perspectives and, at times, given me the confidence that I'm on the right track."

- MATT FREEDMAN, PRESIDENT BEACH LANDSCAPING, SURFSIDE BEACH, S.C.



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BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Dodging the dry-up

Don't let summer water restrictions slow your irrigation business. Learn how pros can provide valuable services, maximize opportunities and thrive

BY MIKE ZAWACKI | CONTRIBUTOR

s incidents of drought increase and the demand for outdoor water use peaks, it's common for water systems to implement summertime water restrictions. However, irrigation pros and landscape companies may incorrectly assume that stringent water cutbacks mean a temporary hiatus for their services. In fact, the opposite is often true.

"You'd think business would slow down during water-restriction periods," says Eric Santos, CIC, CID, CLIA, CIT, owner of Epic Irrigation Services and Management in Livermore, Calif. "But that doesn't seem to be the case. Among clients, there's a heightened awareness about using their irrigation systems as efficiently as possible."

Here are strategies irrigation pros can use during periods of mandatory water restrictions to engage residential and commercial clients, offer indispensable services and foster stronger relationships.

SHARE THE DETAILS

The sudden onset of drought conditions often triggers water authorities to enact mandatory water restrictions. This news can send property owners into a water-use panic. Irrigation and land-scape pros have a prime opportunity to establish themselves as the epicenter for information on those restrictions.

"In California, we have over 400 water districts, and each of these districts has its own unique rules and guidelines," Santos says. "You must understand the rules in the districts you're doing business in."



Chad Sutton, CID, CIC, CIT, CLIA, director of water management services at Sperber Landscape Companies in Westlake Village, Calif., says, "The number one service that I provide is being a trusted advisor and a true consultant to help clients understand what these mean and how they apply to their specific properties."

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

For years, there's been a growing emphasis on greater water conservation and efficiency throughout the country. As a result, water districts and local governments offer incentives to encourage the adoption of water-saving technologies.

"Irrigation upgrades often involve certain exemptions to water restrictions or even rebates by the local water district," Sutton says. "Discuss with your clients how you can maximize these advantages by making certain technical improvements to their systems."

ENSURE PROPER SETTINGS

Water restrictions often redefine the functional parameters for routine

irrigation operations. It's not uncommon for homeowners and property managers to inherit an existing irrigation system and lack the basic knowledge to alter or program run times.

Santos and Sutton agree that an experienced irrigation professional can set those con-

trollers correctly and teach their clients how to use and program them properly.

AUDITS

Offering clients an irrigation audit

during extended water restrictions is a way to comprehensively assess an irrigation system and evaluate its overall health.

Audits gather and assess details about irrigation system func-



Eric Santos

tions. They can involve a thorough review of existing design plans and service/maintenance records and a deep dive into past water bills.

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



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FIVEQUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Kurt LaButte

OWNER / CEO TODD'S SERVICES HAMBURG, MICH.

Tell me about Todd's Services, and how you got into the business?

We've been in business just over 45 years. We're primarily design/build. We also do commercial and residential lawn maintenance, snow, sprinkler service and sprinkler installation. And in a couple of our northern branches, we do tree service. I got my start as a young kid, like most stories from people in this industry. My brother and I ... started at a very young age, just mowing some lawns. One thing led to another, and we really didn't find anything else that interested us. We could make a couple bucks and have some fun; that's how it started.

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

My wife, Debbie, and I have been together for almost 33 years of marriage. We have five kids, four boys, and then the youngest is our daughter. They're all mostly married and out of the house. Our youngest is soon to be a senior at Tennessee. The whole empty-nesting thing is new to us. We have a couple of grandkids already. We like to do anything outdoors. We love to boat. We love to travel. Anything "family fun" — that's our little mantra as a group. It's "family fun."

I've met your sons who work with you. What's it like working with your family?

It's great. My goal is to have the business go on to a second generation. It's in the process of what we're doing right now. Our 50th anniversary is when I want to step down as CEO. I still want to be involved in the company, but I also have a sister and brothers-in-law in the company who will probably be retiring in the next five to 10 years. Some of my leadership team, their kids are now in the business, and so is my daughter-in-law, so it's not just my second generation, it's a lot of second generations. Seeing the young people come up in the leadership roles ... it's fun, it's exciting.

Any trends you're seeing with your clients?

I don't want this to come out wrong, but today's clients are really, really smart. Most of the time, they know the answers to the questions they're asking. It's more like you're on an interview with them. You'd better be on your game if you want to sell to these clients, because they know what they want. They know what they need, and they're very educated. What's going on with technology, anyone can get any answer they want. So, if you don't know the answer, don't guess. You're better off to back away and find the answer than to try to push your way through it.

What's the best thing about having your job?

I've enjoyed trying to make a difference. Years ago, my answer would probably be building the biggest job. Now, I just enjoy the people and having a little bit of fun ... that's my thing. I learned to get out of the way. It is just amazing when you give people autonomy to grow and to adventure; you create a culture where they're not afraid to make a mistake. I feel that's been a huge piece

of our growth and our success. Seeing these people evolve ... that's the best part of my job. (4)

Kurt LaButte (third from left) with his sons Keegan, Mikal and Austin.



"We call it the five Ps: proper preparation prevents poor performance. We're big on being prepared so we can put our best foot forward."



Four seasons, one team

DJ's Landscape Management focuses on building trust and stability when acquiring companies

BY LAUREN H. DOWDLE | CONTRIBUTOR

t the start of the pandemic, the team at DJ's Landscape Management in Grand Rapids, Mich., heard that some of their competitors were ready to leave the trade or retire. So, they began looking at the opportunities those exits might create for their company, says Jeff Kladder, company president.

"We started digging into it and asking, 'What does it look like when they're talking about moving on, and how do they do that?" Kladder says. "We wondered if maybe we could be part of their succession plans if they're looking to transition their companies."

DJ's has acquired five companies during the past four years and plans to continue making that part of its story going forward. This strategy has allowed the company to open in new markets across Michigan and brought it to \$79 million in annual revenue, landing it at No. 47 on the 2024 LM150 list.

When evaluating a pos-

sible acquisition, Kladder says the company sees if there's an Jeff Kladder opportunity to grow the customer base and if services align with DJ's current offerings. Once it acquires a business, it works to bring it under its existing umbrella but doesn't make any major changes initially. Instead, DJ's focuses on retaining employees, maintaining a level of stability and building trust, with a long-term goal of transitioning the acquired business into its own within 12 to 18 months.

"Even though we know that we're coming in with positive intentions and the desire to see the team grow,

it takes time for the team that's on the acquired end to see that come to fruition or really earn that trust," Kladder savs.

TAKING OWNERSHIP

With more than 500 employees, Kladder says DJ's Landscape Management strives to instill a sense of ownership and accountability by breaking the team into smaller groups, whether that's by division or branch.

DJ's provides landscape management, landscape construction, irrigation, snow/ice management and plant health care services to a largely commercial customer base (94 percent). Its remaining customers are government/municipality (5 percent) or residential properties (1 percent).

The company also works to retain employees by providing them with opportunities to grow their

> careers. It does that, in part, by expanding in its existing markets so the team has the chance to develop. It's about nurturing both the employees and customers it currently has, Kladder says.

"We don't want to be in a situation where we lose people out of the bottom as quickly as we add them on the top," he says.



DJ plans to expand outside of Michigan into more of the Midwest, but Kladder wants to ensure they maintain the same level of connectivity across state lines.

"The motto here at DJ's is. 'Four seasons, one team,' so it's really trying to make sure that, even though we are



going to be over a larger geographic area, we're not losing that one-team approach," Kladder says. "We don't have a desire to be 12 different companies running in parallel. We have a goal to build one great company."

DJ's recently developed a board of advisers from different industries, and Kladder encourages others looking to grow to connect with professionals who can serve as mentors. "Find someone who has done that journey before, even if it's not in the same industry," Kladder says. "Ask them what struggles they saw and what hurdles they had to overcome."

When looking to expand, Kladder suggests other professionals review their current systems, technology and overall structure to ensure it can support the desired growth.

"You're building for what you want to be and not necessarily what you are," Kladder says. "There's a balancing act to make sure you're not bloated from where you're at today but also prepared for where you go tomorrow."

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.

A framework for better group decision making



BY BRYAN CHRISTIANSEN

The author is the CEO of Mariani Premier Group, the largest premium residential landscape firm in the U.S. Reach him at BryanC@marianipremiergroup.com.

n my last column, we began exploring the foundation of group decision making, a critically important key for success in running any business. I shared the work of American business theorist Chris Argyris, Ph.D., who identified a set of governing values that influence our decision-making process.

This "Human Operating System" asserts that people naturally want to win every interaction, be in control, avoid being embarrassed and to be seen as rational (even if they aren't). People's natural tendencies often make effective group decision making incredibly challenging. Some common pitfalls and difficulties that can arise include reaching a false consensus, weak consensus or failing to reach a consensus at all.

Making effective group decisions is an important skill for success in the landscaping industry where teams of all types are faced with myriad decisions daily. In this month's column, I want to share one of the most effective tools I've discovered for successful group decision making.

Whether investing in equipment, hiring new employees or expanding operations, decisions must be wellinformed. Business writer Roger Martin in *The Responsibility Virus* builds on Argyris' research to help structure decision making. His "Strategic Choice Structuring Process" — which I call the "What Would We Have to Believe?" (WWWHTB) framework — offers a powerful tool for aligning teams around data-driven decisions.

THE WWWHTB FRAMEWORK

Asking "what would we have to believe?" provides a structured way ff Effective decision making is not just about logic; it's about understanding human behavior. People naturally avoid risk, resist being wrong and seek control.

for teams to reach consensus by clarifying:

- What are we trying to decide?
- What are all of our options?
- What would we have to believe to choose option X?
- Is the belief (or requirement) a must-have?
- Does the option pass the criteria?
- If we believe or disbelieve the statement. why?

Using this framework prevents decisions based on emotions or personal biases. Instead, it fosters logical discussions rooted in facts and can even help speed up decision making.

EXAMPLE: BUYING A VEHICLE

Consider the last time you purchased a vehicle. You likely followed an informal version of WWWHTB. Here's how my wife and I used it when buying our first (and last) minivan:

- The decision: What new car should we purchase?
- Our options: Sedans, vans, minivans, trucks, coupes.
- The WWWHTB criteria: Seats at least six; strong safety ratings; feels small when driving; preferably black; DVD player for kids (optional).
- The must-haves: Seating, safety and drivability were deal-breakers. Color and DVD player were preferences.
- The final decision: The Honda Odvssev won — it met all musthave criteria. And the fact that we knew our must-haves allowed us to eliminate certain options quickly.

WWWHTB IN LANDSCAPING

There are several ways to use this technique in your landscaping business. If you're investing in new equipment, refining your hiring strategies, considering branch expansion or implementing new software, you can use WWWHTB to guide the decision-making process.

At the Mariani Premier Group, we use this framework in our M&A filtering process and "Go/No-Go" system implementation meetings. By structuring decisions this way, teams can focus on critical factors, eliminate weak options early and make more confident decisions.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Effective decision making is not just about logic; it's about understanding human behavior. People naturally avoid risk, resist being wrong and seek control. These subconscious tendencies can often lead to weak or false consensus. The WWWHTB framework counteracts these pitfalls by ensuring transparency, logic and alignment in group decisions.

Once you start thinking about decisions through this framework, you'll be amazed at all of the places this approach will come in handy. I would love to hear your real-world examples of applying the WWWHTB framework, so send me an email to read with "WWWHTB examples" in the subject line. Here's to better group decisions!

Pricing fundamentals: Fixed vs. time & materials?



BY KEN THOMAS The author is principal of Envisor Consulting. Reach him at kenthomas@envisorco.com.

he debate between fixed-price contracts and time-andmaterials (T&M) pricing is common in our industry. As we consult with clients across the country, this topic surfaces often. Let's break down both models to better understand their implications.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Under a T&M model, little or no upfront estimate is provided. Instead, clients receive an invoice after the work is completed based on actual hours worked and materials used, typically with a markup. This approach is simple and doesn't require much upfront experience.

At first glance, T&M seems like the obvious choice — just bill for your time and materials, cover your costs, and make a little profit. Easy, right?

Not quite. While T&M can be appropriate in some situations, relying too heavily on this model has significant drawbacks.

T&M COSTS VS. BENEFITS

Invoicing complexity: Creating accurate T&M invoices can be a challenge. You'll need to track all material receipts (including inventory) and record exact labor hours, including travel time. This requires tight coordination between sales, production and accounting. Delays in gathering this information often hold up invoicing, and in some cases, can result in jobs never being invoiced at all.

In contrast, fixed-price jobs are easier to manage. Once a job is sold, it gets logged into accounting. When the work is complete, an invoice is sent immediately. This is especially

important in maintenance enhancement work, where fixed-price contracts allow for streamlined monthly billing, improving cash flow and reducing administrative burdens.

Gross profit transparency:

T&M pricing should be tied to a clear gross profit percentage. Yet many businesses don't fully understand their margins. For example, pricing labor at some predetermined rate, such as \$85 per hour, and marking up materials by 60 percent means little without connecting those numbers to your overhead recovery strategy and gross profit goals.

Another downside is T&M doesn't reward efficiency. Whether your crew finishes a job quickly or slowly, your margin stays the same. With fixed pricing, however, beating your labor estimates or sourcing cheaper materials can result in higher-thanexpected profits.

Budgeting and forecasting challenges: Building an annual operating budget is difficult with a T&M model since you lack a predictable backlog of revenue or labor hours. This uncertainty makes it hard to plan and forecast.

On the other hand, fixed-price contracts - especially in maintenance — allow you to predict revenues and labor needs for the year.

Customer frustration: Even with good communication, T&M jobs can result in invoice surprises that upset clients. Often, businesses offer last-minute discounts to ease tensions, eating into profits.

Fixed pricing eliminates this issue. When estimates are accurate and transparent, clients know exactly what to expect on their invoice.

PRICING Q&A

How can a company transition from using T&M to more fixed-price contracts without disrupting operations? Start by identifying the services that can be scoped and costed in advance. Build a library of standard estimates and train your team on how to break down job costs accurately. On maintenance accounts that have heavily relied on T&M, develop fixed-price proposals based on historical production trends and sell your clients on larger bundled fixed-price contracts. Fixed pricing can be phased in while closely monitoring profitability and client feedback.

What systems or tools can help streamline the fixed-price **estimating process?** Estimating or enterprise software can help standardize costs, manage proposals and integrate with accounting. Use templates and production rate databases to speed up pricing.

Are there hybrid models that combine the benefits of T&M and fixed pricing? Yes, hybrid models such as "not-to-exceed" T&M contracts or fixed pricing with allowances for certain unknowns can offer flexibility while still giving clients price confidence. These models are great when the scope is mostly defined but includes variable elements.

FINAL THOUGHTS

While T&M has a place, it shouldn't be your default model. Fixed-price estimating requires more upfront effort, but the benefits in profitability and planning far outweigh the additional work.

Climbing the value curve

ven in the face of increasing interest in the buying and selling of landscaping companies, many owners are ill-prepared for this important life event.

The reason is twofold. Some owners find themselves in a reactive selling position. They are being approached to sell and get caught up in the moment instead of having a clear plan to build value before selling. Other owners are simply frustrated with their business, and they pull the rip cord early, selling their company at a depressed level of earnings.

Planning your exit can take five to 10 years to do right. It's important to understand that the value of your business will escalate over time as you grow it into a stable and scalable entity.

I call this climbing the "value curve," where, for example, a \$20 million company is worth more than four times the value of a \$5 million company.

We all know that value is driven by earnings (EBITDA). It is also driven by reducing business risk and building opportunities for growth. Here are four key phases of growth to consider as your company climbs up the value curve.

OWNER-LED GROWTH

All companies start at this level. Building a multimillion-dollar company is a grind, with the owner still heavily involved in most areas of the business, whether that's employee

management, sales or day-to-day administration and operations.

Traits of owner-led companies include:

- The owner holds too many positions on the org chart.
- The leaders and doers wear multiple hats.
- The company has limited systems, and thus limited delegation from the owner.

During my time in the industry, I have seen small companies (\$3 million) move beyond this level quickly, and larger companies (\$10 million) still stuck at this level. The main obstacle is not the revenue: it is the owners' mindsets and the tools they use to grow their companies.

TEAM-LED GROWTH

This next phase of growth has clear roles in place for the different areas of operations — sales, finance and administration. It also has clear division leaders with their own profit/ loss responsibility.

Traits of team-led companies include:

- A stronger focus on budgeting, forecasting and living by the numbers.
- Consistent meeting rhythms and reporting structures.
- Real systems being used to develop people and manage costs.
- Clarity of roles in the front and back office.
- Better software setup, allowing the company to scale.
- One or two specialty functions (see list below).

DIRECTOR-LED GROWTH

In this third phase of growth, director leadership roles are established to oversee middle managers. For



BY JEFFREY SCOTT

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

example, these companies have sales directors, finance directors and directors of operations.

In this phase, you start seeing more specialty functions, which might include human resources, recruiting, marketing, information technology, training, safety and possibly systems or data analysis.

PLATFORM-LED GROWTH

In this fourth level, you have built a profound platform for scalability. You have learned how to replicate growth and establish branches, and you have vice presidents in place overseeing various directors and other specialty functions.

Traits of platform-led companies include:

- They can easily expand regionally with the right resources and focus.
- Succession planning happens at multiple levels in the business.
- They have a proven ability to launch or acquire new branches.
- Financial maturity makes them attractive to investors.
- They have a strong regional brand that is easy to build on.

In many cases, companies can straddle two levels at once as you develop some parts of your business faster than others. That is natural and part of the journey. Overall, building value means growing consistent, repeatable earnings while removing yourself from key roles over time. This will generally require that you constantly upgrade your leadership teams to run and grow the expanding areas of your business.

To help climb your own value curve, reach out to us and identify your next steps. Go to www.JeffreyScott.biz for more information.

Three traits of high-performing companies

n my February article for Landscape Management ("The haves and the have-nots," page 48), I analyzed the results of the 11th-annual Herring Group Benchmark Report. I broke down the differences between high performers (those with an operating profit greater than 10 percent) and everyone else.

I also discussed the three attributes that are essential to high performers. They all have:

- 1. Courageous pricing.
- **2.** A motivating vision (the culture piece).
- 3. Diligent execution (operating systems, reports, daily habits, etc.). To illustrate how these three traits work together, I interviewed three high-performing landscape company leaders on a webinar in January:
- Judd Bryarly, CEO, and Josh Pool. COO, of Timberline Landscaping in Colorado Springs, Colo. Timberline is a large, full-service residential and commercial landscape company.
- Andrew Craft, CFO, of Site Landscape Development in Lewisville, Texas. Site is a large commercial design/build, maintenance and irrigation company.

Here's what they had to say about the three key attributes of high-performing landscape companies.

COURAGEOUS PRICING

Both companies have experienced a pricing concept we espouse at The Herring Group — if you are not nervous, you are not pricing high enough.

Site has doubled revenue over the last five years and hit its stride this year, according to Craft. He attributes part of the success to overcoming a reluctance to raise prices on mainte**Every successful** landscape company has a motivating vision for the team to rally around.

nance renewals. The team used data and steeled themselves for internal resistance to the increases. Out of 300 customers who received an increase. Site lost only one account. Many said they had been expecting an increase; others said Site was the last vendor to raise prices. Customers who went out for bid learned prices had gone up overall.

Timberline also struggled with pricing in the past. Its pricing model did not capture all its overhead costs, such as equipment usage. After a pricing analysis, the team learned that some accounts were priced accurately, but many were off track. Like at Site. Timberline's leaders were nervous about increases, but ultimately did not get much pushback from clients.

Internal resistance is often the hardest part. "It's been a challenge, and our teams questioned it, but they also trust this is the right direction because they also realize, 'If I want to keep getting raises, the company has to raise prices," Pool says.

MOTIVATING VISION

Every successful landscape company has a motivating vision for the team to rally around. Motivating vision serves as the expression of company culture.

At Timberline, the team values grit, which Bryarly defines as "doing what it takes to get the job done."



BY GREG HERRING

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

Company leaders hold monthly training sessions around grit and hire for it over credentials on a résumé.

The go-getting culture starts at the top, according to Pool. "(Owner Tim Emick) has always instilled in us, 'Let's go after the biggest, hairiest projects we can find because, first, nobody is bidding on those and, second, there is a lot of reward at the end, typically."

DILIGENT EXECUTION

Executing well is one of the toughest things to do in any business. It is never complete. You must remain diligent.

At Site, the team self-implemented the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) to streamline operations and focus on results. "It's a framework to help businesses get everybody on the same page, stay focused on the goals, work smarter, grow and succeed," Craft explains. "And that's where you get momentum — all these things working together."

YOUR TURN

Are you courageous in your pricing for new work and contract renewals? There is a lot of psychology at work with pricing, so we help our clients understand the psychology and provide comparable data to help them be courageous.

Does your company have a motivating vision? You may want to compare your vision to other landscape companies (or even other service companies).

Diligent execution: Could the CEO of your company leave for a month and, upon returning, find the company operating just like it was when he or she left? (4)

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RESOURCES

[LM150 FEATURES]

Welcome to the club!

Are you making the LM150 this year? If so, congratulations, and let's talk! If you had an interesting journey that got your company where it is today or have a unique growth method that others can learn from, we'd love to hear from you. You might even be featured in an upcoming LM150 profile

in our magazine! Contact Editor-in-Chief Scott Hollister at (shollister@northcoastmedia.net) or Editorial Director Seth Jones at (siones@ northcoastmedia.net) to learn more.



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WE MEET YOU WHERE YOU ARE



GROW WITH GRUNNIER

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.

Make your marketing work

e're right in the middle of the "100 Days of Victory" — the three-plus months leading up to July 4 when landscap-

ing companies are at our busiest. This time of year can be stressful and fast-paced, but it's also our biggest opportunity (hence the 100 Days of "Victory" instead of the 100 Days of "Hell"). Now is the time for sales teams to be putting on the full-court press because we know that demand is seasonal for our businesses, and if we don't capture the work now, we'll miss the opportunity.

As we're focused on nailing our sales goals at Grunder Landscaping Co., there are a handful of things we do to set up our sales teams for success. The biggest thing is having a marketing plan and sticking to it but still remaining flexible when we need to adapt based on what we're seeing in the market.

I asked Emily Lindley, content and events manager for The Grow Group and marketing manager at



We know that demand is seasonal for our businesses, and if we don't capture the work now, we'll miss the opportunity.

Grunder Landscaping Co., to help me with this month's column because I know many companies are putting a renewed focus on their marketing efforts. She's in the weeds doing this for us. Here are the tips she shared:

TARGET YOUR ONLINE ADS

Emily joined us for an episode of my podcast, *The Grow Show*, to dive into exactly why this is important and how you can do it. Go check out that episode (published March 26) for more details, but her biggest piece of advice was this: Make sure you are geotargeting your social media and online ads. When you don't do this, many platforms default to targeting the entire country, which isn't getting you the leads you need if you're only serving certain markets.

FOCUS ON TIMELY ISSUES

In the spring, the seasonal issue we see most frequently in our area is flooding and standing water. We sent a March e-blast to existing and past clients about drainage solutions, generating leads within our existing client base and resulting in a handful of sales.

E-blasts are a simple, low-effort way to get in front of your clients and potentially sell them one or two new services. They're easy to implement and have a high impact.

HAVE A PLAN

We started out the year by breaking our total marketing budget into categories so we knew how much we could spend on each individual piece of the puzzle. This meant that we could allocate effectively and know upfront how many mailings we could do, what our budget should be for digital ads and if there was any wiggle room for the community sponsorships that always come along throughout the year.

We've adjusted our plan a few times to move some mailings up in the schedule or shifting which service a particular piece was promoting, but overall, this has been our map for the year.

Emily will share more of her marketing strategy during our Virtual Sales Bootcamp 2.0, which will be held live on May 7-8 with recordings available until June 9. In addition to her perspective, our attendees will also get sales tips from Chris Psencik, principal and vice president with McFarlin Stanford, and me.

Our goal for landscape professionals reading this and attending our event is simple — to help you sell more so you can have a great 2025. This event will give you the tools to do just that, all without having to leave the office. Register and learn more: www.growgroupinc.com/virtual-sales-bootcamp-2.0. ©



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