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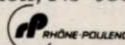
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## HAWAII'S MULKERN PRESERVES DESIGN OF ORIGINAL CONTRACTOR

BY THOMAS PACIELLO



Kevin Mulkern checking his crew's work.

Landscape maintenance in Hawaii is big business for one reason: GROWTH. Plant life of all types is continually popping up and more and more frequently the average homeowner is just overwhelmed and seeks a professional. Someone like Kevin Mulkern.

Mulkern has been maintaining landscapes in Oahu (the island that sports Pearl Harbor, Diamond Head and the capitol city of Honolulu) since 1975 and his maintenance business, much like the island's flora, is continually growing. One of the reasons for his success is his philosophy of working with the theme of the original landscape contractor. This, along with his professionalism and ability to work with his clients, has made Kevin Mulkern one of the island's most successful residential landscape maintenance contractors.

"I like to try to keep the theme that the architect set up," said Mulkern, "rather than ripping ev-

erything out and replanting." When Mulkern visits a client he visualizes what the original landscaper had in mind. At one residence he noted that the landscaper had planted Mondo grass and Rhapsis palms, both shade-loving plants. The third element in the area, Autograph trees, were planted close together. Mulkern concluded that the landscaper wanted to develop a canopy to create grotto under the trees. That made a critical difference in how he went about his maintenance. Instead of pruning the trees back, he is encouraging them to grow up and knit together. Some maintenance contractors have a different view of the landscape from both the original contractor and their client. Mulkern believes the view of the original contractor and the client should take precedence and he works within those confines as long as it is reasonable.

Working with his clients is an

important part of Mulkern's business. At one residence the client insisted on planting azaleas. The problem is that much of Oahu's soil is very sandy and lacking micronutrients. Inevitably the azaleas would have died but to please the client, Mulkern planted the azaleas in sunken pots and set up a drip irrigation system. "I like talking to the clients, making suggestions, and getting the go-ahead to act," said Mulkern. His preference for that direct relationship with his clients is one reason he hasn't actively expanded into the condominium market. At condominiums, townhouses and cooperative apartments, one group gives you specifications and another group contradicts that, saying its too costly, according to Mulkern. "Most of my residential clients realize nothing can be done overnight," said Mulkern. "They are patient and are aware that sometimes things don't work out as planned."



After consulting with a client, Mulkern works up a contract that details his responsibilities. His basic program calls for mowing (weekly), edging (biweekly), trimming (every 10 weeks), fertilizing (monthly) and weed control and sprinkler repair (as required). Additionally, Mulkern handles outdoor lighting and insect problems.

One of the benefits of Mulkern having a small but expanding company (9-man crew), is its flexibility. He will often add small non-related duties to the program as a service to his client. At some residences he repairs wooden doors and fences, hand waters potted plants and washes decks and patios.

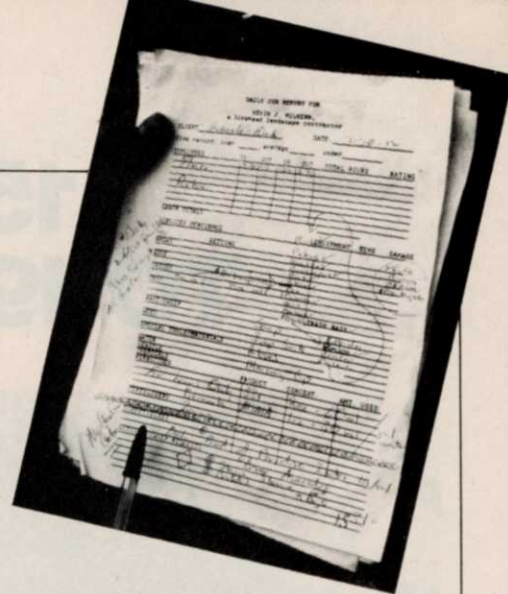
To instruct his crew on which tasks to perform at each client Mulkern has worked up a "Daily Job Report." On the form Mulkern notes which duties to perform, equipment setting, and concentration and chemicals to be sprayed. Crew members then fill in how much time was spent at each job,

the condition of the equipment, how much chemical was used and client comments. The Daily Job Report helps the crew by taking out the guesswork at each job site and it helps Mulkern to be more cost-effective at each client.

Mulkern hasn't been a boss so long that he has forgotten the employee's point of view. He believes coordinating employees is basic to a successful maintenance operation. The Daily Job Report provides one aspect of coordination. Mulkern knows the feeling of workers who believe there is no prospect of promotion in the future. He has begun organizing his crew so that selected workers supervise others. He currently has one man in charge of weed control and in that area the rest of the crew reports to him.

"I want my crew to know that as the company grows they can work their way into a supervisory position," said Mulkern.

He is also concerned about their training and safety. Weed identifi-



**Daily job report** makes instructions clear, keeps Mulkern informed.

cation is taught to crew members, not a small task considering the number of similar-looking plants in the Hawaiian landscape. Workers are also supplied with jumpsuits, rubber gloves and other safety equipment. Mulkern noted that many area landscapers take a cavalier attitude toward safety, something he finds shocking consider-

*continued on page 64*

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# 15 PLANTS TO ADD TO 1983 LANDSCAPES

BY DOUGLAS CHAPMAN



**June Bride** Little Leaf Linden is well-suited to urban conditions and flowers profusely in late June.

With the new year here, your shopping list for additional trees to use in the landscape should include a few of the following for their aesthetic qualities, tolerance to unique environmental conditions, or disease resistance. The plants are cultivars of crab apple, white ash, linden, and several conifers.

Crab apples are premier small trees in the landscape. They seem to compete well with turf and, therefore, work well as small street trees, in parks, or in the general home landscape. In the past, many of the varieties, although aesthetic-

ally gifted were susceptible to fire blight and/or apple scab. The following *Malus* cultivars are extremely resistant to fire blight and apple scab.

'Red Star' Crab Apple (*Malus* 'Red Star'), a new introduction of Weston Nurseries (Hopkinton, Massachusetts), is an upright, spreading variety, reaching 15 to 20 feet in height. The bright red flowers of spring have pale centers, adding color. The fruit in the fall is small (under 1/2-inch) and bright red, being extremely effective.

'David' Crab Apple (*M.* 'David')

is a round, compact tree, reaching 12 feet in height and width. The pink flower buds open to a pure white flower. The 1/2-inch diameter red scarlet fruits are exciting in the fall.

'White Angel' Crab Apple (*M.* 'White Angel'), a development of Dugan Nurseries (Perry, OH), has been around for several years. This cultivar is rounded, somewhat compact when young but becoming upright or open at maturity. The ultimate height is 15 to 18 feet. 'White Angel's' outstanding characteristics include annual profusely producing white flowers, followed in the fall by extremely abundant 1/2- to 3/4-inch scarlet red fruits. This plant fruits so heavily that the plant takes on an almost pendulous habit. 'White Angel' Crab Apple is outstanding spring and fall.

'Centurian' Crab Apple (*M.* 'Centurian') a Simpson Nursery (Vincennes, Indiana) introduction, named by Lake County Nursery Exchange (Perry, OH), is a narrow upright, almost columnar crab apple, reaching 14 feet in height. It resembles *M. baccata* 'Jackii' in shape or habit. Its leaves are a dark green, being 3 inches in length and 1 1/2 inches in width. The dark red flower buds open to magenta flowers when in full bloom. The fruit is small and bright red.

'Jewelberry' Crab Apple (*M.* 'Jewelberry'), another development of Simpson Nurseries, is a round shrubby tree, reaching 6 feet in height. The pink buds open to clear white blossoms. This plant has slight biennial blooming tendencies. The 1/2-inch scarlet red fruit should be effective in the fall.

'Henning' Crab Apple (*M.* 'Henning'), a crab apple being propagated by Frank Schmidt Nurseries (Boring, OR), at maturity

*Continued on page 46*

Douglas Chapman is horticulturist for Dow Gardens, Midland, MI

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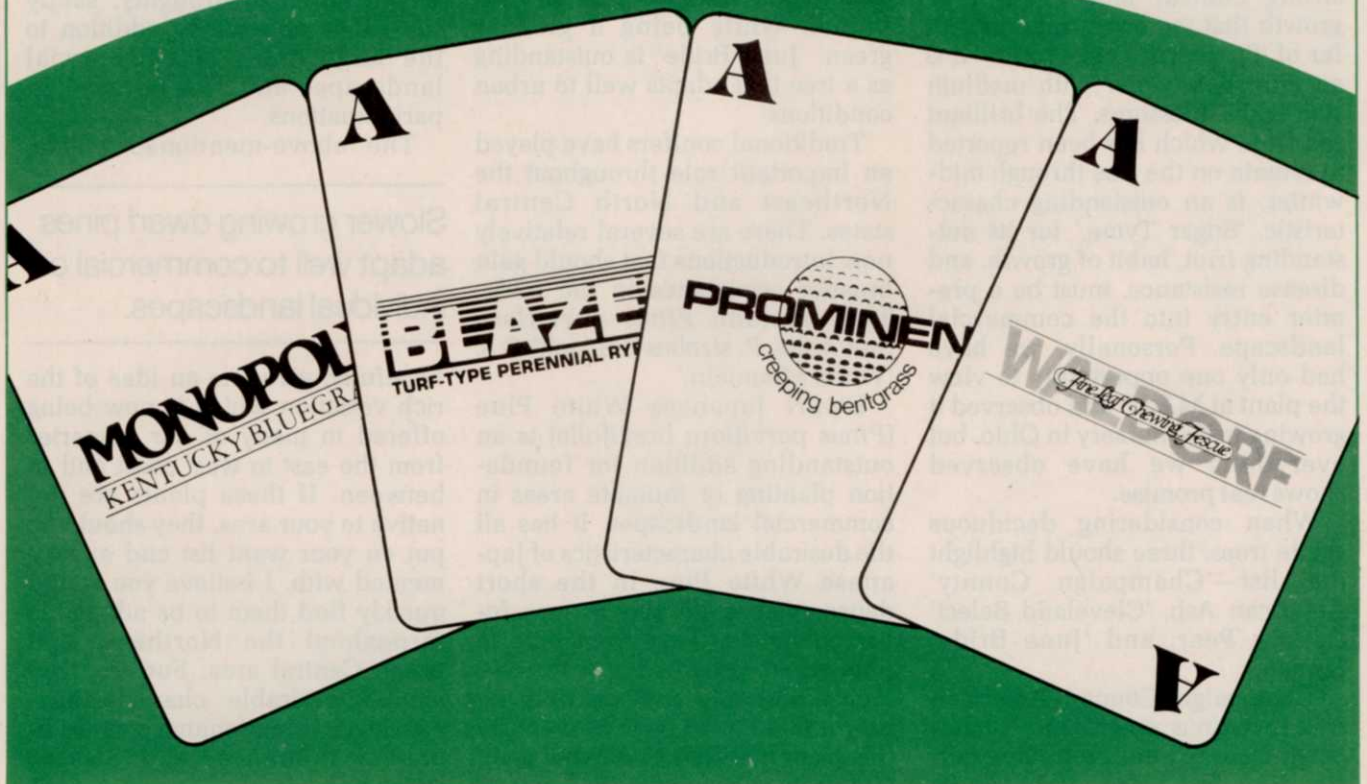
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has an upright oval habit, reaching 25 feet in height. The small white flowers are somewhat average for spring color but the bright scarlet fruit (½-inch in diameter) is exciting for the fall months.

'Indian Magic' Crab Apple (*M. 'Indian Magic'*), a recently introduced crab apple, has a broad oval habit of growth, reaching 15 to 18 feet in height. The showy red blos-

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Crab apples with extreme resistance to fire blight and apple scab are now available.

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soms are followed in the fall with small glossy red fruit which hold through November. Ultimately, the fruit changes from red to scarlet or orange-red while persisting long after foliar drop.

'Sugar Tyme' Crab Apple (*M. 'Sugar Tyme'*), my personal choice for a new and upcoming crab apple, was originally selected by Milt Barron at Michigan State University and is being introduced by the Lake County Nursery Exchange. This outstanding crab apple has the same basic upright, strong central leader habit of growth that we have come to prefer of 'Snowdrift Crab Apple.' It is an annual bloomer with medium size white blossoms. The brilliant red fruit, which has been reported to remain on the tree through mid-winter, is an outstanding characteristic. 'Sugar Tyme,' for its outstanding fruit, habit of growth, and disease resistance, must be a premier entry into the commercial landscape. Personally, we have had only one opportunity to view the plant at M.S.U. and observed it growing in the nursery in Ohio, but everything we have observed shows real promise.

When considering deciduous shade trees, three should highlight the list—'Champaign County' American Ash, 'Cleveland Select' Callery Pear, and 'June Bride' Linden.

'Champaign County' American Ash (*Fraxinus americana* 'Champaign County') does not have outstanding fall color. It holds its

green leaves late in the summer and if any color develops, it is a dull bronze. The reasons to plant 'Champaign County' American Ash are that it flourishes in moist soils, grows rapidly (reaching 40-50 feet in height), and exhibits a strong, central leader. The dark green lustrous leaves, which the tree holds almost tenaciously, make it particularly well suited as a street or park tree.

'Cleveland Select' Callery Pear (*Pyrus calleryana* 'Cleveland Select') is a logical selection from the original 'Bradford' Callery type. It's an ideal street or commercial landscape tree. The upright branching results in a tree at maturity with a somewhat upright oval habit, reaching 30 to 35 feet in height. Its summer foliage is a glossy deep green with fall color being maroon and very dependable.

'June Bride' Little Leaf Linden (*Tilia cordata* 'June Bride') is a selection that seems well suited as an urban or street tree. Its dense conical shape with annual profuse flowering makes it outstanding. The spicy yellow flowers that appear during mid to late June add color and aroma to the summer landscape. The leaves are smaller than even 'Greenspire' Little Leaf Linden while being a glossier green. 'June Bride' is outstanding as a tree that adapts well to urban conditions.

Traditional conifers have played an important role throughout the Northeast and North Central states. There are several relatively new introductions that should gain broader acceptance in the trade. They include *Pinus parviflora brevifolia*, *P. strobus* 'Elf,' and *P. s.* 'White Mountain.'

Dwarf Japanese White Pine (*Pinus parviflora brevifolia*) is an outstanding addition for foundation planting or intimate areas in commercial landscapes. It has all the desirable characteristics of Japanese White Pine in the short dense needles, the fine texture, foliar colors that vary from lime to blue-green, yet growing only 4 to 6 inches annually with an ultimate height of 12 to 15 feet. At maturity this plant becomes somewhat open and quite picturesque. Its habit of

growth is analogous to Bristle-cone Pine while being finer in texture.

'Elf' White Pine (*P. strobus* 'Elf') is another introduction of Weston Nurseries. This tree is slow growing and essentially a dwarf of the *Pinus strobus*. Its ultimate height is approximately 18 feet. It prefers sunny locations and adapts well in many landscapes, be it commercial or individual landscapes. The habit of 'Elf' White Pine is quite horizontal, mimicking a mature white pine, yet this mature habit occurs when the pine is under 10 feet. It is an exciting addition with all the inherent environmental tolerance of our white pine while having a picturesque habit, making it an effective size for any home landscape.

'White Mountain' White Pine (*P. s.* 'White Mountain'), an introduction by Weston Nurseries, is a selection that shows the extreme range of color that one can expect from white pine. Its silver-blue foliage holds on year-round and is somewhat fine in texture. The soft, thin needles result in a fine yet almost unbelievable texture (finer than species *P. strobus*). Although slightly slower growing than the species White Pine, 'White Mountain' thrives in full sun and prefers well-drained to droughty, sandy soils. It is an exciting addition to the large areas or commercial landscapes and can be used in park situations.

The above-mentioned plants,

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Slower growing dwarf pines adapt well to commercial or individual landscapes.

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hopefully, give one an idea of the rich variation which is now being offered in many of our nurseries from the east to west coast and in between. If these plants are not native to your area, they should be put on your want list and experimented with. I believe you would quickly find them to be adaptable throughout the Northeast and North Central area. Further, they exhibit desirable characteristics, e.g. lower maintenance, environmental tolerance, and disease resistance. **WTT**





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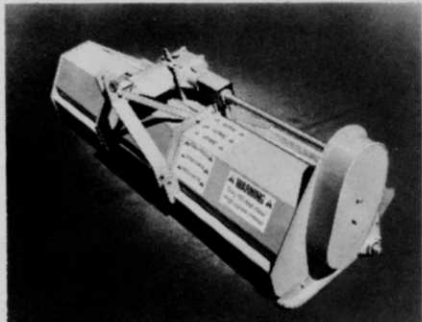
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