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# USING PERENNIALS FOR 'CUSTOM' JOBS

## Commercial accounts are discovering what homeowners already know: perennials make landscapes distinctive.

■ Tom Coffman doesn't want to work on weekends. He gets enough of that Monday through Friday.

That's why the bachelor construction engineer hired Barnes Nursery to install a low-maintenance landscape at his weekend home. Barnes succeeded admirably. Tom spends precious little time caring for the green, cool landscape surrounding his neat, one-story ranch.

Barnes did this by planting groundcovers, dwarf woody ornamentals and herbaceous perennials. The Huron, Ohio, firm installed plant varieties that require little care. (Few, if any, landscape plants require absolutely no care. A Barnes' crew freshens up this landscape several times each season.)

It's not what this landscape contains that makes it unique, though.

It's what's it's missing—annuals; it contains just a cluster of geraniums for a splash of red at the home's front door. The rest of the landscape, now several years old, survives from season to season, some of it remaining green through the winter, some of it dying back and leaving delicate brown or gray leaves or stalks.

The homeowner's lifestyle and maintenance considerations dictated use of perennial plants in this garden. There is, however, no reason why perennial and annual plants can't be used together. More typically they are. Even an established perennial grower like Sam Jones of Piccadilly Farm in Bishop, Ga., acknowledges that "for color, it's hard to beat annuals."

**Commercial still lagging**—Because

homeowners want distinctive, one-of-a-kind landscapes, they're more likely to welcome herbaceous perennials into their landscapes than commercial clients, says Jim MacMahon, maintenance manager for Coronis Landscaping in Nashua, N.H.

But selling commercial accounts on perennials can be tougher.

"Often there are no gray areas with commercial accounts," says MacMahon. "To them, plants are either shrubs, trees or flowers. When they think of flowers, they think of annuals."

Landscape companies—even those specializing in commercial installations and maintenance—would, however, be unwise to ignore perennials and focus exclusively on flowering annuals and woody ornamentals.

"More landscapers in the Atlanta area are putting in nice gardens, using higher quality plants, because Post Properties is stimulating a lot of interest in perennials," says Picadilly Farms' Jones.

In this case, a larger, upper-end landscape firm is influencing an entire market area, commercial and residential. More typically, the impetus for professionally-installed perennial gardens comes from landscape designers who concentrate just on home gardens.

"Out here, a lot of relatively small-in-volume landscape designers like to use a lot of perennials," says Al Rogers of Caprice Farm Nursery in Sherwood, Ore. "They seem to be using proportionally many more perennials than the big companies that are landscaping the business campuses

and the other big projects."

**Plant vs. business people**—Rogers characterizes some of these professionals as plant people first, and business people second. "They do one or two residential gardens at a time and they do a very good job at it," he says.

One reason why bigger landscape firms often do not embrace perennials more enthusiastically is because they've become so comfortable delivering what they've always delivered, including seasonal color changeovers: annuals to mums to pansies, etc. Perennials, by contrast, live from year to year, although certainly not indefinitely. Most die back each fall, particularly in northern climates, to blossom again the following season.

But lack of familiarity with herbaceous perennials might be just as limiting.

"It's amazing. We still see landscapers who have been in business for 20 years and they ask us, 'I've never planted these flowers. Will you help me?' Of course, we'll help," says Mark Mackovajak, owner of North Coast Perennials in Madison, Ohio. His wholesale nursery has as many as 300,000 container plants.

**A well-designed landscape using perennial plants can be just as colorful as an annual garden.**



Mackovajak feels that some landscapers may be intimidated by the amazing variety of perennials. That's one reason why North Coast planted its own display garden with about 100 different types of plants.

"But, let's face it, perennials are something landscapers don't necessarily have to learn about, and they can still get by," says Mackovajak.

**Show them**—Bobbie Schwartz of Bobbie's Green Thumb in Cleveland, is a self-admitted plant person. She thinks she's a pretty fair business person too, even if the volume of her business is controllably small.

She credits much of her growing popularity as a landscape designer to her love and knowledge of perennial flowers. Like Mackovajak, she often has to show prospective clients actual growing plants before she can begin selling. She doesn't go far. She uses the property surrounding her fashionable home as a demonstration garden. Each perennial plant is labeled for easy identification.

Schwartz says the public—and even some landscape professionals—often mistakenly believe that perennials are *always*:

- less colorful than annuals,
- easier to maintain than annuals, and
- more expensive than annuals.

"A number of perennials will give you as



**Designer Bobbie Schwartz says the amazing variety of perennials give her a never-ending supply of landscape options.**

much color as annuals. They will start to bloom in June and bloom until frost," she says. Many don't, of course, but that barely lessens their value as landscape plants. "Because of the color and texture of their foliage, or because of their shape, some are almost as interesting when they're not blooming," claims Schwartz.

Some perennials require less maintenance and some don't, says Schwartz. Once established, some require only to be cut back each spring. Others require regular dead-heading (removal of exhausted blossoms)

and pruning.

Schwartz also maintains that, yes, perennials are more expensive to purchase than annuals, but cost less to install and maintain in the long run.

**Commercial applications—**

Schwartz says perennials at commercial sites will grow as landscapers learn to use them to solve difficult landscape problems in addition to accepting them for their beauty and form.

For example, she claims the management of a Cleveland chemical plant is extremely pleased with the low-maintenance landscape she installed at the office entrance. She used mostly perennials, ornamental grasses and low-growing shrubs.

"I decided on plants that will fill out and leave as little exposed ground as possible. I designed this landscape to solve problems, not to create problems for the future," says Schwartz.

That's the same philosophy MacMahon said his Coronis Landscaping used in planting daylilies in the parking island of a valued client. "When a snow plow runs over them in December, they don't even know they got hit. In the spring they're back up again," says MacMahon.

—Ron Hall

# Selected flowering perennials

Name	Height	Bloom period	Colors
Astilbe, <i>false spirea</i>	18-36"	mid- through late summer	white, pink, lilac, or red feathery plumes
Aster	3-4'	August-September	white, pink/lavender, raspberry red, blue
Bellflower	1-3'	late spring to summer	white, blue
Chrysanthemum	12-48"	late summer to fall	all colors but blue; pinch off flower buds to delay bloom till fall
Shasta daisy	24-36"	midsummer-late fall	white daisy, yellow center
Delphinium	24-48"	mid- to late summer	blue, white, purple spikes
Pinks	8-18"	early through late summer	white and red carnation-like flowers
Garden mums	12-24"	September, October	white yellow, pink/lavender, bronze, red, orange coral, salmon
Miniature roses	12-18"	spring through fall	white, yellow, pink/lavender, orange, red
Gypsophila	2-3'	late Aug. to late Sept.	white, pink

**LM REPORTS**

# Industry's best spreaders cover large areas, carry big loads

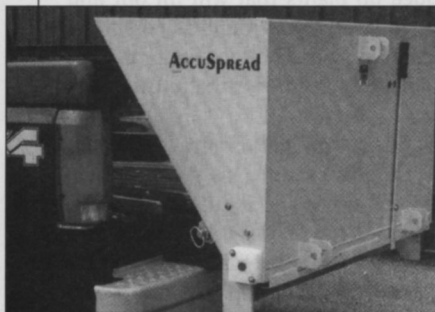
**Points to consider:  
versatility, load  
capacity, width of  
spread and weight.**



The Tyler F-42 spreads 40 to 50 ft.



Boss Products' V-Box line: great for snow control



AccuSpread dispenses sand, salt, deicers, top dressing, top soil.



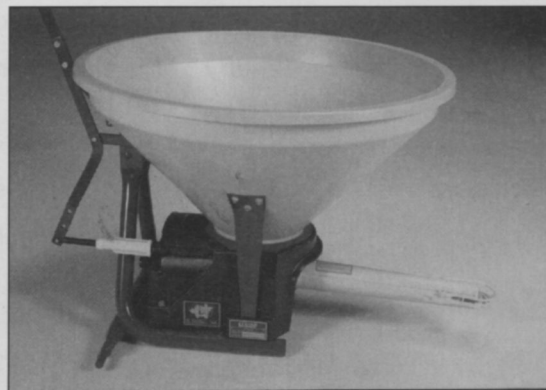
Befco Turbo Hop: 20-66 ft. spread



Dakota blender: large capacity, mixes materials for accurate formulations.



Classen R-36: a 100-lb. hopper for small jobs.



Lesco's Pendulum spreaders carry 400-2400 lbs.



The Ransomes 5th Wheel topdresser has 12 psi ground pressure.

# SPREADERS FOR EXPANDED TURF APPLICATIONS

COMPANY & MODEL	FEATURES
AccuSpread Circle No. 311	<b>Quick mount</b> to 3-pt. hitch, front loader or tractor, skid-steer or rear of truck; self-loading from bulk pile of material; hydraulic drive; 12- to 20-cu.ft. capacity; 12" spinner made of $\frac{3}{16}$ " steel; four welded steel vanes
Befco Turbo Hop Circle No. 312	Four models available; spout has infinitely adjustable arc, spreads from 20 to 66 feet; steel tubing frame covered with epoxy paint; <b>hydraulic remote control</b> flow opening; short steel spout for sand and salt; 13- to 32-cu. ft. capacity
Boss Products V-Box line Circle No. 313	<b>Sand and salt spreaders</b> for $\frac{3}{4}$ - and one-ton pick-up trucks; seven-ft. long; hopper holds up to 1.8 cu.yd; easy to install or remove; 12-gauge mild steel or 304 stainless steel; worm gear, self-cleaning conveyor pintle chain, 13" spinner disc with four vanes standard
Classen RS-36 Circle No. 314	A riding spreader that <b>maneuvers well in tight areas</b> ; 23" turn radius; edging control; 3-hole distribution system on spreader; rust-free, 100-lb. hopper
Dakota Blenders Model 220 Circle No. 315	To spread sand/peat mixes, especially on <b>golf greens and sports turf</b> ; Gandy Fertilizer applicator; conventional spreader; PTO drive; eight independent float ing wheels with smooth tires minimize compaction on golf greens; 15-hp drive
Fox Cub Spreader Circle No. 316	Designed to mount on pickup, flat bed or small dump trucks; good for <b>ice control</b> ; also spreads fertilizer or other dry granular material; 4- to 40-ft. spread
Garber Seeders Circle No. 317	Available in <b>three, five and six-foot widths</b> ; $\frac{3}{4}$ " diameter; 72-GDP axle/agitator; cast iron axle bearings with grease fittings; on/off control from driver's seat
Henderson FS-P Circle No. 318	A quick-mounting utility spreader for light duty trucks; self-powered by 8.5 hp I.C 4-cycle air-cooled engine controlled from cab; <b>metered spreading</b>
Herd "Sure Feed" Circle No. 319	8-hp Briggs & Stratton motor, electric start; independent clutch on motor operates seeder fan; constant spread width at all speeds; <b>spreads up to 36-ft. wide</b>
Lesco Pendulum Circle No. 320	Precision broadcast of granular products and grass seed over large areas; trail-behind or tractor-mounted; capacities range from 400 to 2400 lbs.; accurate <b>spreading and overlapping in a pattern of up to 46-ft.</b> on either side
PRSM "Bear" spreader Circle No. 321	60-inch spread; <b>5-cu. yd. capacity</b> ; made of 10- and 12-gauge steel; seven feet wide; double fork hitch; 12'x 3' high
Ransomes "5th Wheel" top dresser Circle No. 322	20-cu. ft. hopper holds up to 2500 lbs. of material. Spreads to 60-inches; <b>12 psi ground pressure for use on golf greens</b>
Spyker 96-22/94-22 Circle No. 323	Smaller walk-behind spreaders with a <b>90-lb. capacity</b> ; include screen/grater/ filter and front hand hold/bump bar
Tyler F-42 Circle No. 324	78" x 69" dimensions; 10" stainless steel conveyor with 2-speed stainless steel chain drive; <b>spreads 40 to 50 ft.</b>
Wilmar S-150 spreader Circle No. 325	409 stainless steel hopper, skid and rear-end; stainless steel roller chain; stainless steel conveyor chain; ASAE safety chain; 5-ft. wide; <b>spreads to 25 ft. on turf</b>
Wilson "Course Air" Circle No. 326	<b>Liquid or dry system</b> ; 0-ballistic segregation; vertical drop spread is unaffected by wind; dry rates from 5 to 500 lbs; boom shield prevents drift
Worksaver LSU-10 Circle No. 327	Broadcasts most seed crops, fertilizer and granular chemicals. Can be increased to 15- or 20-bu. capacity with <b>extension kits</b> . Fits Cat. I; Cat. II-3 pt.; Cat. II hitch

# Seek special prices, incentives when picking out 1994 pick-ups

**If it's high time to go shopping for a new truck or three, make sure you know what your dealer can offer.**

by Arthur Flax

■ Landscape managers can best take advantage of safer, more comfortable and powerful 1994 truck models if they seek out special commercial price and service incentives offered by many truck manufacturers and dealers.

Pick-up trucks are, by and large, the most popular vehicles among landscape managers, be they contractors, park supervisors or golf course superintendents.

New models for 1994 include:

- Full-size Dodge Ram. Dodge boasts that the new truck, which resembles a downsized Peterbilt, has the biggest interior, biggest cargo capacity, biggest tires, and highest torque of all full-size pick-up trucks. However, a crew cab is not available.

Engines range from a 3.9 liter V-6 with 175 hp to an 8.0 liter V-10 with 300 hp and 450 pound/feet of torque (available later this year).

- Chevrolet S-10 and similar GMC Sonoma compact pick-ups. The interior of the new trucks are three inches wider than the 1993 models, feature new trim, seats and instrument panels. Engines include a new 118 hp, 2.2 liter four-cylinder, as well as 165 and 195 hp, 4.3 liter V-6s.

- Ford Ranger Splash. Ford says this is the first compact pick-up to offer "flair-side" styling. Four-wheel drive will be offered at the start of the model year, followed by two-wheel drive versions.

- Mazda B Series compact pick-ups. These new trucks are built by Ford, alongside the Ranger pick-up, and are available with an optional 160 hp V-6. Ford and Mazda compacts compete with compact pick-ups from Chev-

rolet/GMC, Toyota, Nissan, Isuzu and Mitsubishi.

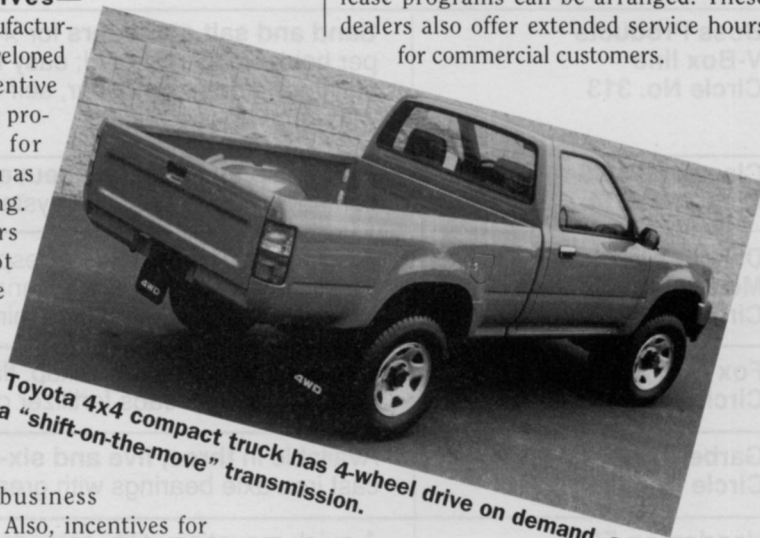
## Incentives—

Truck manufacturers have developed special incentive and service programs for trades such as landscaping. All dealers may not offer these programs, so landscapers must identify them -

selves as business customers. Also, incentives for small fleets often have short time limits, while large fleet incentives typically last throughout the model year, so judicious shopping is in order.

The Dodge Commercial Bonus Certificate Program provides qualified firms looking to purchase up to 10 trucks with a \$500

Ford Motor's "Mainstreet USA" program trains dealers to sell to smaller commercial fleets, generally (though not strictly) limited to 10 vehicles. Landscapers can choose between retail customer and fleet customer incentives to receive the best value. Special finance or lease programs can be arranged. These dealers also offer extended service hours for commercial customers.



Toyota 4x4 compact truck has 4-wheel drive on demand, and a "shift-on-the-move" transmission.

Chevrolet has recruited 500 Commercial/Specialty Vehicle (CSV) dealers to serve small fleets, purchasing up to nine vehicles. Customers can choose among retail, small or large fleet incentives. For example, Chevrolet is offering a \$500-off coupon for small businesses on 1993 model trucks, except for crew cab, Blazer and Suburban models. CSV dealers also offer special service hours, stock additional parts for commercial accounts, and may offer truck rentals.

Toyota also offers a fleet program for pick-up truck customers.

**What size is best?**—Compact pick-ups are suitable for light duty work. They can carry several mowers or a small spray tank. Most can accommodate payloads in the 1,200- to 1,500-pound range. Certain Nissan and Toyota versions offer greater payload capacities, up to one ton.



Larger, 3/4-ton trucks, like the Dodge Ram 2500 4x4, are very popular among landscapers.

rebate above any consumer rebates until the end of 1993. Landscapers can visit their dealers or call (800) 967-5726 to receive a certificate. Dodge is also encouraging its dealers to form special business arrangements to minimize service downtime.

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Many landscapers, of course, choose to trailer their equipment. A compact pick-up may be sufficient to pull an equipment trailer. The new Chevrolet S-10 and Mazda B Series, for example, offer towing capacities in the three-ton range.

Towing capacities and payloads vary according to the equipment specified. Trucks with the highest payloads and towing capacities typically require an optional package that includes heavy duty power-train and suspension components.

Dodge Dakota and Toyota T100 intermediate-sized pick-ups and the so-called 1/2-ton full-sized pick-ups can carry payloads of one ton or more and are well-suited for towing equipment and light snow plowing.

Models in this class include the all-new Dodge Ram 1500, the Chevrolet C (two-wheel drive) and K (four-wheel drive) 1500 and the Ford F-150.

Truck manufacturers say the most popular pick-ups for landscapers are the larger 3/4-ton versions. These include the Dodge Ram 2500, Chevrolet C/K 2500 and Ford F-

250. A 3/4-ton pick-up can typically carry payloads of more than 3,000 pounds.

door impact protection in most 1994 model trucks and center-high-mounted stop lamps in all light trucks. Also, most pick-up trucks feature the added safety of anti-lock braking systems.

Dodge Ram and Dakota, Ford F Series and Toyota T100 pick-ups for 1994 feature air bags for the first time.

For landscapers who plow snow, the new air

bags make it essential to

specify the truck with equipment suited for snow plowing and a factory-approved snow plow. Typically offered in a package, such equipment includes heavy duty suspension, cooling system and battery, skid plates and all-terrain tires. Truck manufacturers say a four-wheel drive, 3/4-ton pick-up is a good choice for landscapers who clear large areas of snow, such as parking lots.

—Arthur Flax writes for *Automotive Performance Projects* in Southfield, Mich., a suburb of Detroit.



Toyota's 4x2 Xtracab ranks high in customer satisfaction and quality.

The largest pick-ups include the Chevrolet C/K 3500, Dodge Ram 3500 and Ford Super Duty, as well as stake body trucks built on the same large truck cab-chassis. These are best for landscapers who carry topsoil, stone or other heavy loads. Payloads of more than 5,000 pounds are available.

More features—Landscapers benefit from government rules requiring additional side

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