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The growing role of the landscape architect in residential design/build

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Grubs: get 'em before they grow fat and sassy, Dr. Shetlar says.

[LAWN/LANDSCAPE]

**G**ary, who's sprayed more than a few lawns in his time, tells me about the time he was standing inside a customer's front door writing out a service order when the homeowner's hound walked over, cocked his leg and watered Gary's trouser leg.

"But here's a better one," says Gary. "Let me tell you about this crazy Shih Tzu that almost caused me to have a heart attack right there on this lady's lawn."

I interrupt him.

"What's a Shih Tzu?" My curiosity's growing because I can see that Gary's getting himself in a fine fever remembering the details.

"It's one of those fancy little dogs with short legs. Got the hair hanging down. Kinda yappy," he says. "You know, the kind that women like to keep in the house."

"So what about the Shih Tzu?" I ask.

"Well," continues Gary, "the one I'm talking about wasn't in the house.

It was in the backyard, but I didn't know this. Always before it was in the house. So when I open the gate to treat the backyard, the dog runs out. It just takes off and before I know it, it's around the house and gone. I don't know where it's gone.

"What am I gonna do? I gotta get the lady's dog back."

So Gary says he ran to the front of the house and he started calling for the dog, except he didn't know its name. Then he started walking down the sidewalk peering into peoples' backyards hoping to spot the little critter. But it's like it had just vanished into thin air.

After about a half hour or so, Gary says he went back to his truck and called on his mobile radio for his helper, and since his pal was in the neighborhood treating other lawns, in no time at

all he was there looking for the Shih Tzu, too.

The two of them resumed the search, but they still couldn't find the dog.

"Finally, I go to the neighbor's house and the neighbor tells me how I can contact the lady who owns the dog," says Gary. "She's at her office. I call. She says she'll come right home. She gets home in about 10 minutes or so, calls the dog, and right away here comes the dog out from under a bush in the neighbor's yard. It's right there. Maybe it was afraid. Maybe that's the reason it was hiding.

"The dog's real happy; it's smiling; its tail is wagging," says Gary.

"It's been sitting there the whole time watching me, I guess."

"Was your customer angry?" I ask.

"No, not at all," says Gary. "She laughed about it, put the dog in the house and went back to work.

"She's still a customer, a good one. But it gave me a few gray hairs. Here...see for yourself.

"And it cost me and my partner a couple of hours, so we had some catching up to do the rest of the week."

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## Shih Tzu on the loose: a 'shaggy dog' tail/tale (?)



Ron Hall

RON HALL  
Senior Editor



# Today's architects: spearheading top-quality residences

by RON HALL / Senior Editor

**W**anted: Landscape architect for residential projects. Must be able to gain confidence—including friendship—of homeowner clients. Strong sales ability. Superior supervisory skills. Ability to work hand-in-hand with co-workers and

contractors alike while developing and executing construction projects of various sizes (usually several at various stages

of completion simultaneously).

Oh, by the way, applicant must have proven design and site planning skills.

If you think that's asking too much of today's landscape architect (LA), the residential design/build landscape market may be passing you by.

Judson Griggs of Lied's Landscape Design & Development in Sussex, Wis., detailed what's expected of today's LA at last winter's ALCA Conference.

It opened a few eyes, judging by the questions that flowed from some of the 200-plus contractors in the audience.

Griggs, himself, is a landscape architect. He's one of 11 on the Lied's staff. (He's also 1996 president elect of ALCA.)

But, to describe Griggs or any of the others on that staff, as an LA is like describing Dan Marino as "just a football player."

They're, in effect, the quarterbacks in Lied's residential design/build business. It's a market in which the company excels, but it's a tough market.

"The residential work that we do is involved and it's challenging," says Griggs. "When I talk to clients,



This Lied's project shows what a dramatic and positive impact a well-designed and installed landscape can have on a home. A landscape architect may have to do a lot of client hand-holding in a residential job like this. The benefits—higher profits, customer satisfaction and loyalty—are well worth it.





I'm talking about dealing with their outdoor environment...the entire outside of their property."

Although some contractors chase commercial design/build work because it's generally a larger ticket item and perceived to present fewer hassles, residential design/build has a lot going for it.

"There are higher profits in residential design/build work," says Griggs. "But you're going to work for it; you're going to work *hard* for it."

Also, residential work comes at a steadier pace. It's not as likely to follow boom or bust fluctuations in the economy.

Another difference: while commercial property owners look at the competitive advantage that landscaping can give them (they see it in light of return on investment), homeowners approach landscaping more emotionally.

That fact dictates that residential design/build requires more hand-holding from the landscape provider, more patience, and usually more meetings.

Crucial to this process, the LA must learn—really *learn*—what each homeowner wants, says Griggs. The LA must build a bond of trust and confidence in each client and, in fact, make the process fun and enjoyable for that client.

"You're dealing with feelings and emotions, and you've got to understand your clients as people," says Griggs.

He says he sees two market trends that favor the continued growth of residential design/build.

Busy two-income families are increasingly willing to pay somebody else for landscapes and services. Also, families are "cocooning" in their homes. Some have safety concerns about going out at night; others are too tired.

"Comfort and convenience are more important than price, and I see that as an opportunity for us," says Griggs.

Lied's relies strongly on its LAs to meet this opportunity.

Their involvement in a project begins as early as possible. Ideally, it starts with meetings with architects and builders as the home itself is being planned and designed.

At Lied's, anyway, the LA sells, designs, does the estimates, and then serves as the

▶ *'When I talk to clients, I'm talking about dealing with their outdoor environment, the entire outside of their property.'*  
— Judson Griggs,  
Lied's in Wisconsin.



liaison between client and production to the project's completion.

One of the most crucial steps in this process is the handoff from sales/design to construction. That's when the build crew gets the job packet with plans, bid sheets and any other information specific to that job.

"There can be no surprises to the client," he stresses.

Griggs says it's a good idea to introduce homeowners to foremen and crew leaders as construction commences. Hopefully, the client and construction leaders will form a link. But the client's primary contact remains with the LA.

While most new LAs come to Lied's with strong design skills, they generally work as design assistants alongside more experienced LAs first. Then, as they learn the company's philosophy, they're given more sales responsibilities.

"We seem to like to make our work complex and complicated," says Griggs, half joking. □

## 8 steps to residential success

**Be recognized as the best** in a particular market niche. High-end design/build? Turf renovation? Stone work? Water features?

**Develop a client-sensitive design staff.** If, for instance, your company's forte is high-end, the design staff must be able to deal with clients on their level, including being aware of and involved with community events like symphonies, charity functions, and service organizations.

**Keep clients' interests foremost.** "Never say to a client, 'if this was my house, I would do it this way,'" says Judson Griggs of Lied's Landscape Design. "It's not your house. What you want to do is deliver what the client wants."

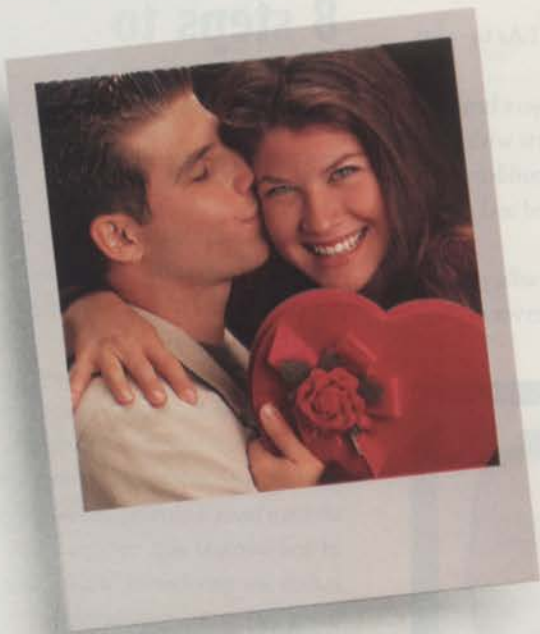
**Learn to work with tough, demanding clients,** people who are used to getting what they want, but nevertheless recognize value and quality.

**Base all decisions on client satisfaction.** Discover what's important to individual clients, what they want to get out of their landscapes. Ask for clarification whenever you feel it's needed. Seek specific feedback.

**Sell benefits, not features.** Homeowners generally don't care about the technical features of, say, a water garden or a brick patio. They want to know how it will give them pleasure and relaxation.

**Deliver timely service,** but don't sacrifice service for expediency. "If you continually say 'yes, yes, yes' and you can't meet your commitments, you will develop a problem," says Griggs.

**Adapt with the market.** Homeowners read about beautiful landscapes in colorful, consumer magazines. Increasingly, they're demanding features such as waterfalls, pools, spas, irrigation systems, and lighting systems. □



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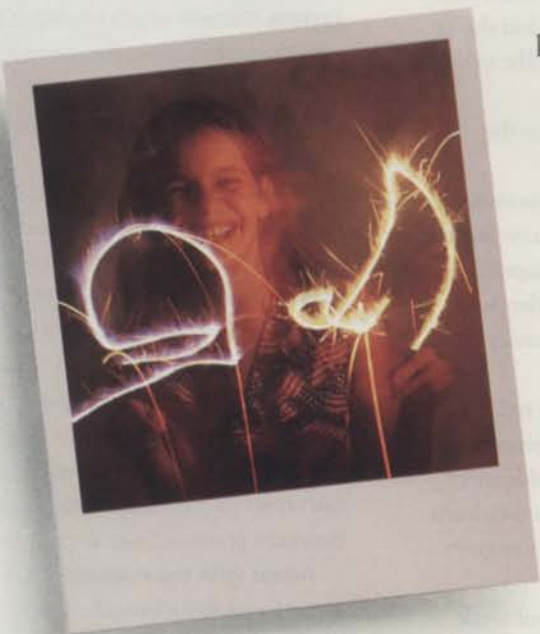


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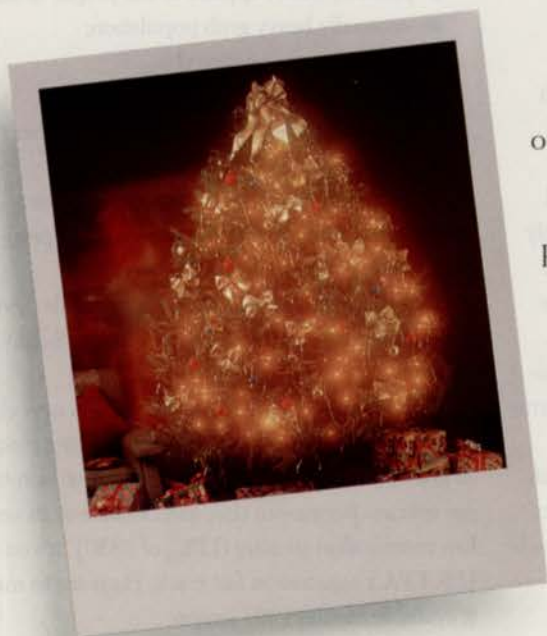


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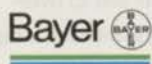


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# Grubs: get'em before they grow fat and sassy

Two promising new products—one a molting inhibitor, the other a biological—will soon be available in the battle against turf-damaging grubs, says Ohio State University entomologist Dr. David Shetlar.

by RON HALL / Senior Editor

**T**he best way to control white grubs with chemical products is to get them when they're small and vulnerable.

Attempting to eliminate "big, fat and sassy third-instar grubs," is a lot harder and probably won't result in satisfactory control, says Dr. David Shetlar, landscape entomologist at The Ohio State University.

This is as true for a new material, like imidacloprid (Bayer's Merit), as it is for more familiar chemical controls.

Imidacloprid, explains Shetlar, affects grubs differently than other materials. When a grub ingests imidacloprid, the messages traveling across the grub's nerve synapses are blocked; the grub quits feeding.

This is a catastrophe for a tiny, hungry first-instar grub. But for a plump third instar that's migrating deeper into the soil to overwinter anyway, it's not such a big deal. Products such as diazinon, isazophos (Triumph) and trichlorfor (Dylox, Proxal) are more effective as late-season, curative-type products against these bigger grubs.

But even with favorable conditions, chemical controls aren't always going to be 100 percent effective, cautions Shetlar.

Common reasons for failure:



'Understand which grub you're dealing with, and what size it'll be when you're dealing with it.'

—Dr. David Shetlar, landscape entomologist

- ▶ product wasn't applied at the proper time;
- ▶ unusually heavy grub population;
- ▶ material wasn't watered in;
- ▶ too much thatch;
- ▶ or a combination of any of these or other related factors.

The good news is that turf managers have a growing selection of effective grub control products—and two more are on the way.

One of these is halofenozide, a molecule developed jointly by American Cyanamid and Rohm & Haas Co.

Halofenozide (trade name Raster) is a new class of chemical that interferes with the molting process of grubs, but reportedly has little effect on non-target species. Because of this, and because of its very low mammalian toxicity (LD<sub>50</sub> of 2850), it's on the U.S. EPA's registration fast track. Plans are to make it available for the 1997 season.

The other product being readied for the turf market is a "buihui strain" of *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) developed by Mycogen. Its trade name is M-Press, and it, too, provided excellent control in test plots monitored by Shetlar and fellow entomologist Dr. Harry Niemczyk.

"For those people who are trying to deliver organic lawn care, there is real hope for grub control. We think this new Bt, M-Press, will be an important material for them," says Shetlar.

While the grub of the Japanese beetle remains the number one target of these products, the root-eating larvae of other large beetles are just as destructive in selected areas of the United States and Canada.

These include the chafers (southern and northern masked, and European), the black turfgrass ataenius

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## Early treatment stops billbugs, too

Although white grubs may be your primary target, an application of imidacloprid (Merit) in May or early June controls bluegrass billbugs, too, says Dr. Harry Niemczyk.

Niemczyk, speaking at the Ohio Turfgrass Conference this past winter, explained that billbugs lay their eggs inside the stems of grass plants in late April-early May in Ohio. As they hatch, the billbug larvae feed within the stems and hollow them out. As they grow, they start feeding in the crowns. Because imidacloprid is taken up by grass plants, the larvae, in eating the grass, take the material into their system and die.

"Maybe it's a week or 10 days before Merit is picked up by the roots of the plant and translocated up into the plant, but it (Merit) is definitely systemic," he said. "If the Merit is there, the little larva is easy to kill."

He suggested that superintendents with billbug problems make applications in early May, although control is generally good with applications through June. Depending on their chemical budgets, they probably should concentrate on tees and greens first, he suggested.

As part of his presentation, Niemczyk showed slides of several golf courses in Ohio where applications of imidacloprid dramatically improved turfgrass on tee banks and around sand traps.

and, to a lesser degree, the Oriental, Asiatic garden, and the green June beetle grubs.

Each variety of beetle has a distinct life cycle but, generally, all can be controlled with properly-timed applications.

In Ohio at least, May, June and July applications of Merit and the experimental Raster provided almost 100 percent control, Shetlar says. But when the products were applied in mid-August, control fell off somewhat.

"You can't wait for remedial treatment for these kinds of materials," he says. "Put them down early to get the best efficacy."

The reason is simple. The larger the grub, the more material it takes to kill it. A third-instar grub can be as much as 70 to 80 times the body weight of a newly-hatched grub, points out Shetlar. It's many times more difficult to control. **LM**

—Dr. Shetlar's comments came from presentations at the Ohio Turfgrass Conference and the OSU Short Course this past winter.

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