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This industry was built by the contractors and grounds managers who saw opportunities for themselves, and today is no different. Whether you lead a large landscape organization or are a newcomer, you are part of a tradition that started humbly and succeeded because of hard work and good business sense. Until now, the best and the brightest in our industry could pretty much claim this was their story. Our best and brightest are comfortable both in suits and jeans. They know about biology, equipment, operations and keeping customers happy. They also know a lot about finance, profitability and productivity. And, they still get outside a lot.

But now we're seeing a change that's driven by our industry's consolidation. Despite all the fuss about consolidation overtaking our industry, we're told that only about 5% has been consolidated so far. Participants in a January seminar I just attended on mergers and acquisitions said there literally are "trillions" of dol-

lars in the investment world looking for a good home in an industry like ours.

So now we're sexy, just like others who are consolidating: real estate, construction and utility management, to name a few. At the conference, we met representatives of several new consolidation groups who will soon announce their debut into the green industry. And more will follow.

The big money coming into our industry comes in the pockets of a new breed of best and brightest. They're very smart, very educated and very savvy investors, deal-makers and advisors. They routinely handle transactions involving millions of dollars. They know due diligence, stock swaps, tax minimization, business valuation and all other aspects of mergers like they know the back of their hands.

Forget the fact that our best and brightest have years of experience in the landscape business and the new ones don't. Forget the fact that most of them rarely work outside. The new breed is smart enough to learn a lot about our operations and learn it quickly.

So how will this affect you? Will you learn about the consolidators as quickly as they've learned about you? Will you understand how these new consolidations will operate in your markets and how they'll affect your firm? Will you have enough savvy to make the right decision when someone invites you to sell?

Some of the contractors at the meeting said they liked this new breed because they bring "professionalism" to our industry. I think they also bring a whole new set of challenges and opportunities to everyone — established firms and beginners alike. And I'd recommend you learn as much about them as you can. Next month, we'll look more closely at consolidation and what it will mean to you. **LM**

Meet the new 'best and brightest'



Sue Gibson

SUE GIBSON
Executive Editor

CONSOLIDATION CLIPS

Ruppert Moves On

Craig Ruppert, founder of Ruppert Landscape in Ashton, MD, has resigned his position as senior vice president of the TruGreen-ChemLawn Landscape Division, headquartered in Memphis. Chris Davitt, also formerly of Ruppert Landscape, has also left TruGreen-ChemLawn. Ruppert can be reached at Ruppert Nurseries, also in Ashton.

Another national player

HOUSTON — GrowScape LLC, based here, is the newest 'national' landscape company. This spring it will announce its seven founding companies, with estimated combined revenues of \$75 million. GrowScape will integrate 'vertically,' offering installation, maintenance, foundation, perennial plant materials, turf, irrigation, architecture and design. The company hopes to be in top 25 U.S. metropolitan areas within four years.



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Eldarica pine problems

I have about 12 Eldarica pines and about three or four are having branches dying out from the center to the base of the tree. Each year a few more branches die, which doesn't appear normal. There are no indications of insects or other obvious disease.

The pines are growing in a location in the mountains about 4,000 feet high. The soil is sandy to silt. Trees are watered every two weeks during the hot, dry windy summer. I planted these pines as they thrive in heat, drought, wind and poor soil.

—CALIFORNIA

Dr. Len Burkhart, Davey's resident horticulturist and technical adviser in California, said that there is some confusion over the naming of Eldarica pine, both the common and the Latin names. Trees labeled Eldarica pine (*Pinus eldarica*) in a nursery may actually be Afghan pine (*Pinus halepensis eldarica*) or even mixed up with Brutan or Calabrian pine (*Pinus brutia*). Mondel pine also occurs in the nursery trade in the West and Southwest and is probably the true Afghan pine. Due to the confusion of these species in the nursery trade, the actual identity of your trees should be questioned.

In this situation, the importance of the specific species relates to ability of the trees to withstand cold. Calabrian pine can not tolerate temperatures below 0°F, while true Afghan pine can. Trees planted in conditions to which they are not

adapted are more prone to stress and environmental conditions, which in turn can make them more susceptible to disease and pest problems as well as simple decline.

The problem could be as simple as cold injury or the trees could be stressed and subject to increased branch loss. Other possible problems for pines in your area include pine rust, pitch canker and other cankers, bark beetles and various needle diseases.

It would help if you had confirmation of the species of pine on your property but, for now, removal of the dead and dying branches is recommended. Take photographs of the trees from several angles, including the trunk (especially if you see excessive pitching, holes, etc.). You should contact your local county personnel with the photos and a branch sample (preferably dying, not completely dead) or send your sample to a diagnostic laboratory for further diagnosis.

Dogwoods declining

Some of the dogwoods in our area show various degrees of decline. The affected trees have smaller, lighter-colored leaves and they often develop fall color early and curl or shrivel in the summer. On some trees, there are slightly sunken areas at the soil line. We cut open the area and found that the bark is discolored. In some, the bark is gone and the wood is exposed. What causes this? What can be done to control?

—PENNSYLVANIA

Based on your description, the problem appears to be related to crown canker disease caused by *Phytophthora cactorum*. This disease can weaken the affected plant and cause smaller and light-colored leaves which discolor prematurely, with slight distortion. As the disease progresses the problem may be on one side first and later spread.

Study the base of the trunk at the soil line. The sunken areas may be cankers produced by the fungus. These cankers can discolor and kill the cambium. In addition, when the bark sloughs off, it exposes the underneath tissue. If these cankers extend and surround the trunks they can girdle and kill the tree.

Crown canker is found mostly on newly planted plants because of basal bark injury or other type of transplanting wounds. Wounds can also result from improper mowing or trimming. Consider providing barriers or mulching to protect the trunks.

Avoid planting dogwood plants where there was incidence of dogwood mortality. Consider treating affected dogwoods with *Phytophthora* specific fungicides such as Subdue, Aliette or Terrazol as needed. In addition, examine the plants for possible dogwood anthracnose disease. This is also a potential destructive killer disease.

Follow label specifications, and treat as needed. **LM**



BALAKRISHNA RAO
Manager of Research and
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for the Davey Tree Expert
Company, Kent, Ohio

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO:

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What species of trees are you planting?



Nancy Stairs

NANCY STAIRS
Technical Editor

Being a "tree person," I have always noticed trees — to the point of obsession at times (at least according to my friends). And I'm often amazed at what people will do to their trees in the name of ... maintenance? ...art? ...goodness knows what?

But there are other things I notice as well, including hazardous trees, to the point where there are some places I won't park even my old beat-up pickup.

I also notice tree species — what is being planted and where. In street tree situations I have noticed that many communities seem to pick a few preferences and stick to them. In our part of the world, maples, ashes and honeylocusts are favorites, with callery pears and crabapples running close behind.

There are a couple of problems with planting monocultures or a narrow range of tree species. One is that if a specific pest or disease strikes a narrow species range, it can drive up the cost of maintenance of the trees, even threaten the survival of large numbers of them because the problem spreads so easily from tree to tree. Dutch elm disease is a perfect example since it virtually wiped out American elms in many communities.

The other concern that I have with planting a limited number of tree species, and it is not one which I have ever really heard discussed, is the continual expansion of our suburban areas (let's include developments including golf courses in this), particularly into formerly forested areas.

Very often, large tracts of land are essentially denuded of the variety of native trees and replanted with a limited and often unimaginative selection of species. This is not necessarily any one person's fault, since often these decisions are made by people who aren't all that familiar with

trees. Dealing with a tree nursery with a limited selection of choices or trying to maximize the number of trees by buying what is most common and least expensive are not unreasonable decisions; just short-sighted.

There are a lot of different species out there which are valuable landscape trees. Granted, not all native species will be appropriate to all aspects of a newly developed area. But I think it's important to begin thinking about this. I am not trumpeting using only native species BUT — there are species out there that we are not seeing being planted nor are they being left to reproduce in the landscape.

In my area in particular I am thinking of the hickories. They tend to be scarce in nurseries (but they are out there) and, with their fruits, are certainly not appropriate for street situations. But there are places where they can and should be considered, including park areas, natural edges and other places where maintenance levels tend to be lower.

You could make quite a list of neglected but attractive species that we will miss if we continue to limit our choices in the landscape. Sourwood, black gum (or tupelo) or sassafras are some of my personal favorites. And all have their place.

For those of you who do some tree planting, and where you have some choice in species selection, consider what is native to your area and not being planted. The architectural characteristics, fall color, bark and leaf textures and the wildlife use of these species are all valuable additions to the landscape. If you aren't sure, ask your extension agent what they would suggest and start asking the nursery you deal with for the species you want. If they can't get it, there are other nurseries that can.

This does take some extra effort on your part, but not a lot and it is well worth it. Internet searches are also very useful, as long as the source of the planting stock is from a close hardiness zone and elevation.

We aren't going to fall off the edge of the earth if you don't, but if you at least try, I give you permission to call yourself "visionary." **LM**

Agree/Disagree? Comments/Questions? Column Suggestions? Let Nancy Stairs know at 440/891-2623. Fax: 440/891-2675. E-Mail: nstairs@advanstar.com

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FQPA opened industry's eyes in '98

COLUMBUS, OHIO—Widespread industry concern this past year over implementation of The Food Quality Protection Act of 1996 (FQPA) had some positive effects, said Anne R. Leslie, a former official of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

This concern, expressed in letters and meetings with federal office-holders, focused on the EPA's methods for review of pesticide residues on foods, and whether these methods were fair and accurate, said



Former EPA official
Anne R. Leslie

Leslie, a speaker at the Ohio Turfgrass Conference here in December. The greatest fear by pesticide-using industries

like agriculture and turf/ornamental care is that the FQPA will result in the loss of popular chemical control products.

The climax of this concern in 1998 was a memo from Vice President Al Gore to the EPA in April. The memo instructed the EPA to:

- ▶ ensure that its decisions are made based on the best available science.
- ▶ ease the transition to new pest management strate-

gies for affected pesticide users.

▶ make the regulatory process transparent.

▶ consult with affected stakeholders.

Also, it led to the establishment of the Tolerance Reassessment Advisory Committee (TRAC) in 1998. TRAC consisted of representatives from growers, pesticide registrants, food processors, environmental groups and medical professionals.

Although uncertainty remains about FQPA's effects on the green industry, she said that the EPA is trying to make its decision making process more transparent.

While the FQPA attracted much of the attention of professional pesticide users, Leslie reported that the EPA nevertheless registered 27 new pesticides this past year. These included 14 "reduced risk" pesticides and 13 conventional chemicals. It also approved 12 biopesticides and 2 antimicrobials, said Leslie, who retired from the EPA this past summer and now consults on IPM and pesticide issues.

Playing the awards game

For 27 years, members of the Professional Grounds Management Society have celebrated the importance of top quality landscape and grounds management through a rigorous judging system, culminating in the Professional Grounds Maintenance Awards. Grand and honor awards are given for winners in a variety of categories — many of which our readers maintain: small residential sites, commercial properties, institutions, multi-family communities, public works and others.

To encourage industry participation in this award program and build a higher consumer awareness of the role of landscape and grounds management, *Landscape Management* has established a partnership with PGMS to become the exclusive sponsor for these awards.

As part of our sponsorship, *Landscape Management* and *Athletic Turf Maintenance & Technology* will promote the best our industry

has to offer in our magazines, on our Website (www.landscapegroup.com) and to the business and consumer press.

Entry is not limited to PGMS members. In fact, it is encouraged throughout the industry. Those who win will survive multiple rounds of judging by experienced, nonpartisan practitioners.

The first of several

award-winning landscapes is featured on page 66. Future issues of LM will include updated contest entry instructions, more award-winning landscapes, a guide on how to present your projects in the best possible light for judging and tips on how to get maximum marketing benefit from your efforts.

Updated entry guidelines will be available at www.landscapegroup.com or by contacting PGMS at 120 Cockeysville Road, Suite 104, Hunt Valley, MD 21030 or call 410/584-9754.



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AgriBioTech takes cost cutting measures

Henderson, NV — AgriBioTech Inc. (ABT), late in 1998, shut down seven facilities in four states, a move that's expected to save the seed company \$750,000 per year. The action led to the elimination of about 20 nonsales jobs in units in South Dakota, Ohio, Kentucky and Missouri.

"We expect better customer service, increased operational efficiencies and reduced cost, to the benefit of our shareholders," president and chief operating officer Kent Schulze said in a statement.

Also, on Dec. 23, 1998, the company said that it had completed the sale of the chemical and fertilizer division of Willamette Seed Co., with about \$20 million in sales, to Wilbur-Ellis Co., San Francisco. ABT kept the seed division of Willamette Seed CO.

ABT announced that it had increased equity by about \$18 million through an \$11.2-million private placement and a \$6.7-million voluntary warrant exercise. It has also received commitments for at least \$25 million of long-term debt, which it expected to close before Christmas.

Repeat of hopper invasion in SW not likely in '99

A grasshopper isn't your everyday turf or landscape pest, but millions of them in a particular area can devastate plants, any plants. The summer of 1998 saw grasshopper populations rise so dramatically in some areas of the Southwest that they damaged turf and ornamentals.

"They'll eat anything green, killing grass, landscape plants, trees and shrubs," said Dr. Cliff Hoelscher, an extension specialist with Texas A&M University. "We've had 60 counties in Texas that have had an unbelievable problem." And Hoelscher wouldn't rule out similar problems in the Southwest this growing season, although conditions shouldn't be as favorable for infestations.

The El Niño, blamed for about every unusual weather occurrence last year, is getting the blame for the grasshoppers too — at least in part. Scientists theorize that the wet '98 spring in the Southwest in 1998 spurred plant growth and allowed the hungry hoppers to multiply.

"Grasshoppers are going to move around and find the greenest, most lush things," said Dr. John Jackman, an entomologist with the Texas Agricultural Ex-

tension. "As they move off dry pastures to find something to eat, they are concentrated."

There are ways to combat more localized infestations. One is to try to exclude them from a property or plant material. Since grasshoppers like tall vegetation to hide in, mowing a barrier 20 feet wide around a property will reduce their num-



bers significantly. Also, a plastic, small-mesh product called Row Cover can be used to cover valuable plant material.

For the few grasshoppers that cause more annoyance to property owners than landscape damage, Hoelscher suggested that landscape managers can prepare a bait made from Sevin XLR and wheat bran bait. Sevin XLR is labeled for turf and ornamentals, and the label lays out the bait recipe. Hoelscher recommended that molasses be added to the bait to keep it from drying out too quickly during hot, dry weather.

"The bait needs to be placed in open areas," says Hoelscher. "You can't put it in the grass because the hoppers can't find it. If you have open areas in ornamental beds it works quite well there."

For a more info on grasshopper control, obtain the pamphlet Grasshopper Integrated Pest Management, free from the U.S. Animal Health and Plant Inspection Service (APHIS), 4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD 20737. Ask for technical publication 1809. **LM**

Milliken teams up with Emerald Isle

SPARTENBURG, SC— Milliken Chemical, headquartered here, announced in January that it is acquiring the products and brands of Emerald Isle, Ltd., Ann Arbor, MI. The acquisition includes a long-term agreement to codevelop new products for the turf and ornamental market.

"It's a good strategic fit," said Lawrence Kind of Milliken Chemical. "Milliken Chemical and Emerald Isle can combine worldwide distribution and excellent quality products for strong future growth."

Added Bill Middleton, CEO of Emerald Isle: "We see this as an extraordinary opportunity to collaborate with really top-quality people."

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