

## 7 ways to prepare

Preparation is everything. Try these steps first:

- 1.** *Dress for success.* Good options are cotton khaki pants, a golf shirt with a company logo (if available) and casual shoes. Carry a clean shirt in your truck.
- 2.** *Plan your visits the day before.* Emergencies do come up, but remember to block out time to visit the properties the day before. And don't forget to tell the crew.
- 3.** *Focus on seeing people — not writing proposals.* Don't worry about submitting a proposal at first — focus on and engage people. Give them your full concentration and you will end up submitting more proposals.
- 4.** *Work around your current properties.* Start at a property you maintain well and go to the next suitable one. Use that current property in your introduction. "Have you noticed how nice that property down the street looks?" After they answer "yes," add, "I'm glad to hear that because my company does the landscaping. Who here oversees your landscape contractor?" Remember to stay in the neighborhood. You don't make money driving your truck around.
- 5.** *Drop names.* If one of your property managers gives you permission, use his or her name. You could say, "Sue at Pine Ridge Apartments uses us for her landscaping and she suggested I stop in and introduce myself."
- 6.** *Leave the phone in the truck.* If your crew cannot go an hour without calling you, you may need to manage your operations better before growing your business.
- 7.** *Lead from the front.* If you want your foremen to go on property visits, you need to be out front and go on some yourself. I've always found it challenging to inspire someone to visit properties while I'm sitting in the office.

## Tough numbers, but it works

According to Mr. Per, cold calling on property visits results in the following approximate numbers. (These are for acquiring commercial landscape maintenance contracts.)

- ▶ It takes 20 to 25 cold property visits to find one highly qualified proposal (meaning they're going to change contractors and will seriously consider a proposal.)
- ▶ It takes four to five proposals to close one sale.
- ▶ It takes 80 to 125 cold property visits to result in one sale.

## Make face time work

Face time is the most critical element of your cold call. These ideas have worked for me:

- 8.** *Pick up trash.* When you visit a property, pick up some trash. The office manager will never tell you "no soliciting" or "we're not interested" when you walk in with two handfuls of trash. Treat a potential property as if you already maintain it and you're more likely to get that job.
- 9.** *Walk quickly.* Move from your truck to the door as fast as you can without jogging. This builds your energy and leaves less time to think, and we all know what we think about when approaching a "cold" door. When you pick up trash, do it quickly.
- 10.** *Always stand while waiting.* If you have to wait, always stand to command more respect and attention. The receptionist is more likely to take action on your behalf when he or she realizes you don't expect to wait long enough to sit down.
- 11.** *Get your hands out of your pockets.* Jiggling coins or keys is a great way to annoy or distract someone.
- 12.** *Avoid questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no."* The worst question to ask is, "Are you looking for proposals?" Regardless of the answer, you'll gain no relevant information. Ask questions that use "how" in them or lead to other open-ended options. Examples include, "How long has your current contractor worked with you?" or "What's your biggest property maintenance challenge?"

Selling has nothing to do with successful cold calling.

*continued on page 34*



**When someone suggests you spend more money on a less effective preemergent, it's time to hold on to your wallet.**





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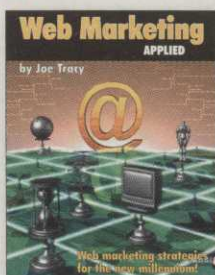
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**13.** *Be short on practice, long on experience.* Practice only tells you what you're good at practicing. Real life tells you what you need to practice. Get out of your truck and start talking!

**14.** *Write down the most common questions you hear.* Then, write your best answers to these questions, and read that list daily. Practice doesn't make perfect, but it builds confidence.

**15.** *Be positive in all you say and do.* Everything you say and do will be associated with you. If you tell someone that his or her current contractor is giving bad service, he or she will associate this negative comment with you. Be professional and concentrate on problem solving or positive ideas.

**16.** *Offer your business card at the end of the meeting.* If you walk in and offer your business card right away, the receptionist may say, "We have your card. We will call you." Now what do you do? Offer your card when you leave, unless they ask for it earlier.

### Follow-up right away

There are several methods for following up, but these have worked well:

**17.** *Send your thanks — today.* Hire a local creative person (college

students are great at this) to make a good-looking and unique company postcard to send as a follow-up. Write a thank you note for every business card you collect. Your handwriting can't be any worse than mine, so don't skip this step.

**18.** *Write down all you learned.* You'll have it for later reference.

**19.** *Schedule your follow-up before leaving the property.* What action are you going to take next — another visit, a mailing?

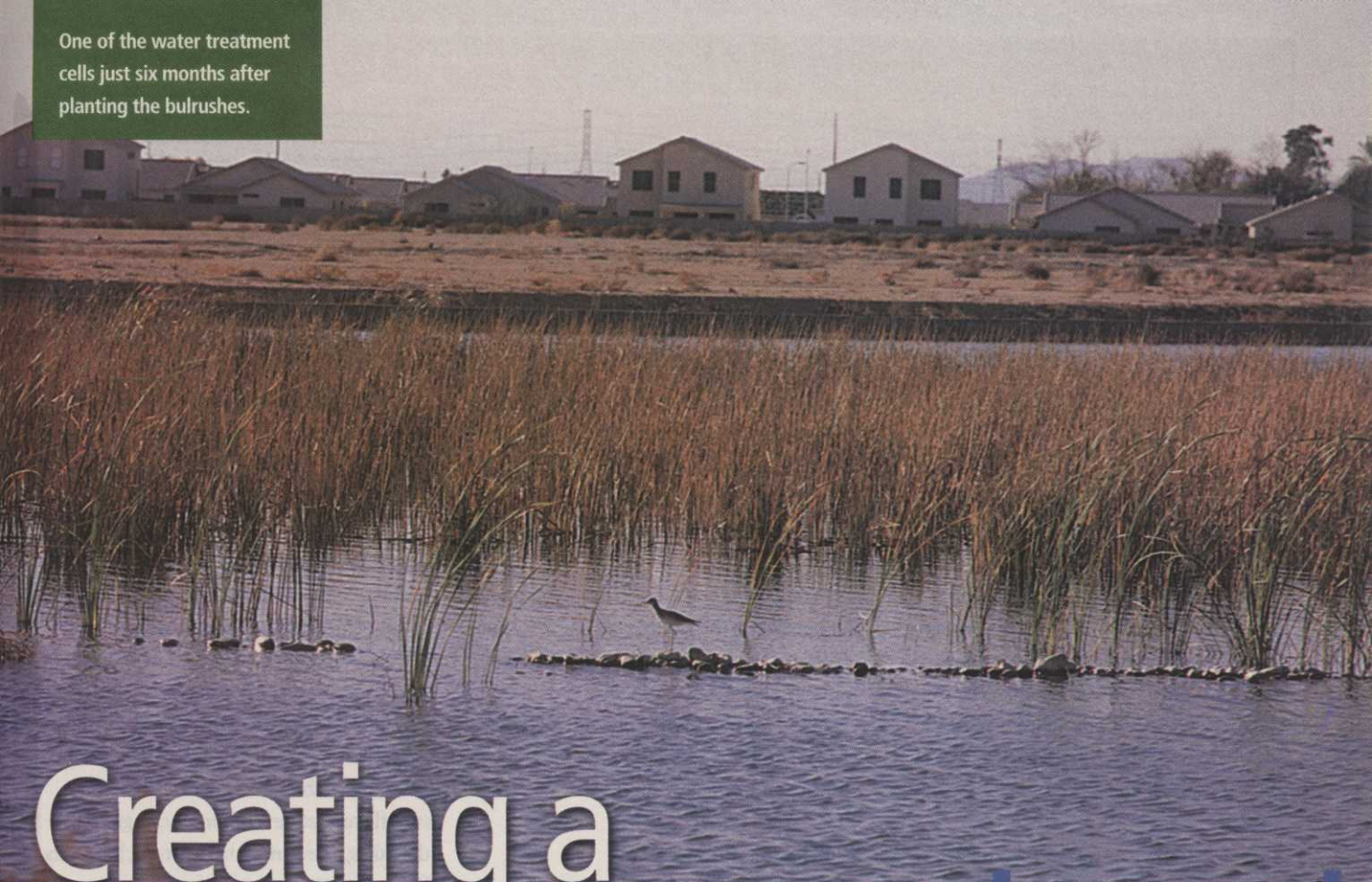
**20.** *Get out of your truck.* Truck time doesn't make you any money. Make that call!

I suggest you add 80% to 90% of your new properties from referrals and 10% to 20% from cold calling. Cold calling isn't the answer to everything, but it will give you confidence to use in all areas of your life. I also think you're more likely to close a referral proposal because of your confidence from "cold" visiting.

*The author moved on from selling coupons to working with Environmental Care and U.S. Lawns in marketing and sales support. He now serves as a consultant to the Green Industry and can be reached at 407/210-3666.*



One of the water treatment cells just six months after planting the bulrushes.



# Creating a Desert Wetland

BY DON DALE

**I**t's an odd place to find wetlands, and it's no surprise that man created it. Right now, it looks like any other suburban development lake system, but eventually it will look more natural and help clean up water. The City of Avondale, AZ, built its Wetlands of Avondale right in the middle of the desert and the Crystal Gardens housing development. It's designed to help clean up river water before it goes into the city's water system.

"This was a cotton field, or whatever they were growing at the time," says Tom Georgio, Avondale facility director for the water treatment plant just west of Phoenix.

The wetlands is not a natural area in the traditional sense — it's a series of interconnected water treatment cells interspersed among housing lots, landscaped to provide water purification and an aquatic wildlife habitat.

Water from the Agua Fria River, destined for groundwater recharge basins, must first have nitrates and phosphates removed. The lakes are designed to do that, as well as provide landscaping for the growing subdivision.

"The plants will take out 'x' amount of nutrients, and you have bacteria and microbes that will take out the other nutrients," says senior water treatment operator Martin Nanna.

*continued on page 36*

Water destined for groundwater recharge basins must first have the nitrates and phosphates removed.

These lakes are designed to do that, as well as provide landscaping for the growing subdivision.



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The system, designed by Integrated Water Technologies of Santa Barbara, CA, uses bulrushes to clean the water. But installing 121,290 plants was a big job because the lined lakes had no planting medium after excavation.

Bottoms of the 21 separate lakes, or cells — which cover 72.2 surface acres and vary in depth from 8 to 15 ft. — were lined with 30-mm PVC liner overlain with a geotextile mesh fabric that protects the liner. Textured concrete lines the sides of the cells, which are curbed to prevent overspill.

Islands in the centers of lakes selected for planting were built up inside rock re-

the sand, 3 ft. apart, and water levels were slowly adjusted upward as the plants germinated and developed shoots. After the plants were up and thriving, the water was leveled off at 18 in. above the islands' sand base.

"We were trying to keep the soil saturated but not drown the plants," says Patrick Murphree, project manager for Western Sod, the contractor hired to install plants grown by a Colorado nursery for this project. Once the plants mature, they will spread by sending out rhizomes and new shoots.

#### Planting challenges

"You'll probably have better luck if you fluctuate water levels in the spring," Murphree says of encouraging new shoots in established bulrush populations. He notes that the tubers were planted with 15 grams of 23-13-0 slow-release granular fertilizer per plant.

"We dug a hole, dropped the fertilizer in and dropped the tuber in," he says.

The fertilizer was to last six months, after which the nutrients in the lake would supply all of the bulrushes' needs.

The different bulrush species were selected because each grows to a different height, giving the lakes a natural look. But the three-square bulrushes apparently didn't like the water level because they all died.

Some parts of the islands' bulrushes didn't germinate, Georgio says, because tubers were uprooted by wave action caused by high winds. That happened in areas

where water leveled off above the sand. It's better to saturate the sand and not let the water surface at all during the sprouting period, he says.

#### A system with a purpose

Although the city owns the lakes and 15 ft. of land surrounding them, the subdivision's developer owns the adjacent land and is in charge of its vegetation. The developer planted the turf areas adjacent to the lakes as well as the trees. Turfed surrounds are designed as shallow trenches to catch runoff from streets before it can get into the lakes, preventing toxic petrochemicals from upsetting aquatic life.

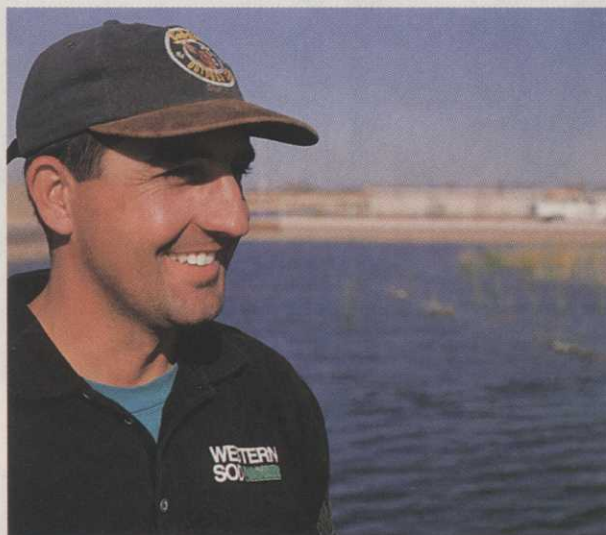
Georgio says that 24-in. pipe connects the cells, which are designed so that all water flows by gravity, eliminating the need for pumps. On a normal day, 4 1/2 million gallons of water flow through the system. The system can handle 13 1/2 million total gallons.

"We can bypass the entire system and go right to the recharge," Georgio says of the facility, where construction started in 1996. The last cell was finished late in 1998.

Plant maintenance is still in the planning stages for the city, Georgio says. "They will be cut once or twice a year," he says, keeping the 8-ft. tall plants attractive. Sections of bulrushes in each lake will be cut alternately for aesthetic purposes, and plant material will be removed.

"It just makes a conducive environment for recharging water," says Nanna.

By the time the water goes through the lakes and seeps through the four sandy recharge basins nearby, it will be potable. At times, the water might even be drinkable after it leaves the treatment cells, but that isn't the purpose of the system. The city will get its drinking water from wells drilled near the recharge basins, complying



Patrick Murphree managed the installation of plants for the Avondale project.

taining walls, and 13 in. of screened sand was laid down on top of the islands to provide a growing medium. "It was material that came out of the basins," Georgio says.

The plants were the giant bulrush (*Scirpus californicus*), the three-square bulrush (*Scirpus americanus*) and the hard stem bulrush (*Scirpus acutis*).

The bulrushes were planted as tubers in



with state groundwater protection laws.

Inlet and outlet pipes in each lake are positioned in the middle of the bulrush areas so that new water will be forced through the plants, providing maximum cleaning potential. All of the cells but one have been planted.

In addition, fish have been stocked in the lakes. There will be some urban fishing allowed, but the fish have other purposes.

"Some are for insect control and some are for algae control," Georgio says. Koy take care of the insects, and tilapia handle the algae.

Tim Thompson, vice president of Inte-

grated Water Technologies and a designer of the project, says this is a unique water treatment system in that it uses bacteria on the bulrushes to clean the pollutants and is located in a residential subdivision.

"That's very new," Thompson says of the system's characteristics.

Two of the bulrushes are native to California and Arizona. They will go partly dormant during the winter and green up in the spring.

"It's a part of assuring our own water



Tom Georgio, facility director for Avondale's water treatment plant.

supply for growth," Georgio says of the water system for the city of 26,000, a number expected to double in five years. The cost of the system was about \$11 million without landscaping, a huge savings over a conventional sewage treatment system.

The result is not an unsightly water treatment facility but an attractive lake system for Avondale that is home to a number of egrets, herons and other birds. **LMI**

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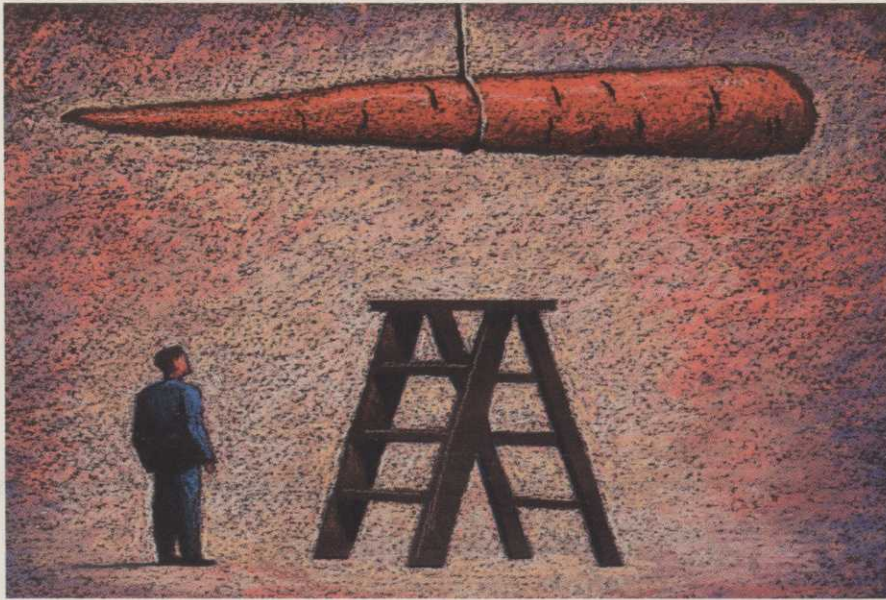
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# They don't participate

**Some employees are reluctant to participate in training, yet may need it the most. Here are some tips to get them involved**



BY JIM PALUCH

**I** often wonder why someone wouldn't want to participate in a training program. Many companies tell me they only have a few employees who won't participate, yet it's a problem.

Here are some reasons why they may not be "in the loop:"

- ▶ They don't understand the program.
- ▶ They're afraid of being called on and not knowing the answer.
- ▶ They may be lazy and not want to do thinking exercises.
- ▶ They may worry about others improving and passing them by, so they try to hold everyone back.
- ▶ They may have a learning disorder they want to conceal.
- ▶ They've never participated before – this is just another in a long line.
- ▶ They want attention, and get it by being

contrary.

- ▶ Their low opinion of training stems from a low opinion of themselves.
- ▶ They're tired of the same person training, yet won't offer any suggestions themselves.
- ▶ They're unaware of how training can control costs, improve service, reduce accidents and improve morale.
- ▶ They've always sat in the back of the room and don't want to change.

This list could go on, but I believe every non-participant can participate and would have incredible ideas if they had the courage to speak up. It's a fact that those who step to the plate and participate move ahead in life and their careers.

Some non-participants may want to join in but are influenced by others who are negative. I wonder what they think is more important — sitting silently in the back or im-

proving at work and earning their families' appreciation?

## Rethink your sessions

There is no magic fix to motivating the unmotivated, but here are a few suggestions that might work:

- ▶ One of the worst things to do is pay too much attention to non-participants. That's what they may want. You might reverse the situation and ask them not to participate and give them a break from training for a few weeks. Tell them you're covering some in-depth stuff with key people who are participating in training and they don't need to be there unless they want to.
- ▶ Hold a session called "idealistic redesign." Tell everyone you'll redesign the meetings next week and brainstorm ideas to make them more effective for everyone. In the process, you may find ideas to improve your sessions and hear why some don't want to participate.
- ▶ Use a film clip (see LM October, page 40) to liven up training.
- ▶ Give non-participants some Silly String. When they hear a good idea, let them set it off.
- ▶ Give a certificate for training or offer motivational prizes.
- ▶ Hold a meeting on "Why I Hate Training." Play funeral music with the lights low. Try to get at least 50 reasons, then pick the top five and ask for ideas on how to fix them.

— The author is president of JP Horizons Inc., and is a well-known trainer and consultant to the Green Industry. He can be reached at: 440/254-8211 or email: [jpaluch@jphorizons.com](mailto:jpaluch@jphorizons.com)



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### Property at a glance

Location: Chene Park, Detroit, MI

Staff: Davey Commercial Grounds Management

Category: Park, recreation area or athletic field

Total budget: \$247,000

Year site built: 1978

Acres of turf: 10.5

Acres of woody ornamentals: 1.3

Acres of display beds: 2.1

Total paved area: 6.5

Total man-hours/week: 180

### Maintenance challenges

- ▶ Location — Central inner city Detroit
- ▶ Full event schedule
- ▶ Steep slopes over terrain

### Project checklist

(Completed in last two years):

- ▶ Re-engineering of water feature
- ▶ Incorporation of perennials
- ▶ New record keeping system

### On the job

- ▶ 3 full-time staff, 2 seasonal employees, 1 licensed pesticide applicator

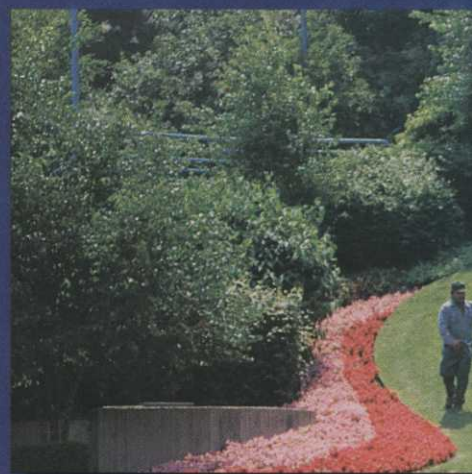
# Chene Park

## The 1999 Grand Award Winner of the Professional Grounds Management Society for Park, Recreation Area or Athletic Field

Put a park smack dab in the middle of inner city Detroit and what do you get? One big maintenance hassle, that's what. Gang members and the homeless play no small part in creating that nightmare, which includes debris, vandalism and graffiti that are handled daily as top priority.

It's the Davey Commercial Grounds Management crew that makes sure Chene Park keeps its reputation as the crown jewel of Detroit's Riverfront Parks. This includes stripping and resodding the turf surrounding the 5,000-seat amphitheater that attracts lots of traffic as it is used for concerts, graduations and civic affairs. Trampled flowers are replaced daily from a supply of backups grown off-site. Steep slopes make for scenic terrain for visitors, but provide a challenge to mowing crews.

But it isn't all mowing and cleaning up graffiti at Chene Park. For instance, take the water features, which act as storm water management ponds. They weren't engineered properly to maintain consistent levels, so the Davey crews re-



Slopes create mowing challenges but provide vivid displays of the landscape.

engineered the overflow/drainage system to divert excess water into the Detroit River.

If these weren't challenges enough, the Davey managers must meet the requirements of a detailed monthly reporting system so approval from as many as eight levels of city officials is granted in a timely fashion. Aspirin, anyone?

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