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LM100

TOUGH LANDSCAPES TO MAINTAIN

TOUGHEST 10

Think you have problems? Check out these 10 very challenging landscapes that require the professional touch

BY GEORGE WITTERSCHEIN

Graceland Mansion, Memphis, TN

The biggest challenge at Graceland Mansion, Memphis, TN, is its 650,000 annual visitors.

"My crew starts blowing driveways and pathways and checking the gravesite at 7 a.m.," says maintenance manager Jimmy Gambill.

"Our work is dictated by the climate. Last summer, we had consistent temperatures in the 90-to-100-degree range with little rain. We have no sprinkler system (Elvis installed a lot of TV and security wires and cables — a major barrier to installing an irrigation system), so we do all watering by hand."



Graceland

Utah State University's Logan Campus

Standards are high at Utah State University in Logan, in part because of a top-notch landscape architecture department on campus. The campus is also part of the state arboretum.

Local conditions also make things challenging. It's not necessarily warm in May in Utah, but the campus expects flowers in bloom for early May graduation. Ellen Newell and her staff use the winter months to get as ready as possible, and plant pansies and other flowers that should bloom in time for the event. To address water restrictions,

Newell installed a Maxicom satellite system for more efficient water use.

Overpeck Park, Bergen County, NJ

Todd Cochran, regional director of the Professional Grounds Manage-



Overpeck Park

ment Society (PGMS), is the assistant superintendent of parks for Bergen County, NJ. The challenge there is environmental: much-visited Overpeck County Park is built on a reclaimed landfill. "Every few feet, the soil type may be different," Cochran explains. It also sits at the edge of a protected wetlands that is the source of salt water infiltration and debris.

Other challenges? The ground settles often, making sinkholes that General Supervisor Mike Gallucci and his crews must keep refilling. A constant wind dries things up, and methane gas from garbage buried in the landfill hurts trees. The park also adjoins the New Jersey Turn-

pike, one of the most traveled highways in the world...and one of the biggest litter producers.

Villanova University, Philadelphia, PA

As campus Superintendent of Grounds, Kevin O'Donnell has a classic task at Villanova University: keeping a large, semi-urban academic landscape beautiful despite substantial foot traffic and public events drawing large crowds.

O'Donnell and his crew of 16 grounds employees have a clear strategy for the 150-year-old campus designated as an arboretum: "Take care of the basics first," O'Donnell says. "Keeping litter off the ground helps maintain a pleasant atmosphere and the beauty of the landscape. We think today's effort results in less litter being deposited in the future because, when an area is clean, people tend to leave it clean and respect it."

Groundmasters, Cincinnati, OH

For Mike Rorie, president of Groundmasters, it's not the landscape that's challenging but the

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TOUGH LANDSCAPES TO MAINTAIN

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client. Groundmasters has a subspecialty in homeowners' associations (HOAs), and the typical client is a board of volunteers, none of whom are landscape professionals. "They are under tremendous budgetary pressure from their fellow homeowners, creating an intense focus on price," Rorie says. "Plus, as



Groundmasters' headquarters

soon as an individual develops expertise in landscaping, he or she is replaced by someone else and we start the learning process all over again.

The best way to deal with this, Rorie says, is to "know the players and educate them about the details of the agreement and the recent history of the community's landscaping."

Hilton Grand Vacation Club, Orlando, FL

Adam Koenigsknecht is an account manager with Environmental Care Industries, Orlando, FL, where his responsibility includes



Hilton Grand Vacation Club

the Hilton Grand Vacation Club, a high-end time-share with a strong appetite for attractive landscaping. It's a large property with 13 units containing timeshares, plus the clubhouse and a sales center. A multi-year drought, however, has made his job a lot harder.

"Florida irrigation systems were installed to supplement rainfall water, not replace it," Koenigsknecht says. "Without rain, the dropping groundwater causes problems with pumps, coverage pressure and everything else having to do with irrigation."

The key to success is an educated client. "As the account manager, I'm constantly keeping the client aware of the changing water restrictions and ways to deal with them. It's time-consuming, but it's my job."

Busch Gardens, Tampa, FL

Ron Schmoyer is president of OneSource Landscape and Golf Services, Tampa, FL, which maintains both Busch Gardens theme parks (Williamsburg, VA and Tampa Bay). The Florida theme park is the most challenging because of the state's drought and its year-round operation.

"We have hundreds of pots and baskets of annuals to keep watered. The restrictions come from a local water management board and change from time to time as the drought conditions vary," Schmoyer says.

Another challenge is fixing the damage caused by guests who Busch Gardens believes should have a "hands-on experience"



Busch Gardens

with the landscape. Landscape features are not barricaded and fenced off, which means the crew has to replace many flowers.

The Grand Casino, Tunica, MS

The Grand Casino, Tunica, MS, lists landscape maintenance challenges that are built into the soil and water itself, according to project manager Scott Brewer and director Rod Rotolo, both of whom work for Jack's Landscape in Mississippi, a subsidiary of Randall and Blake, Littleton, CO.

The property and landscape is designed around a sizable barge casino. The resort's parent company, Park Place Entertainment, demands that the property look first



The Grand Casino

class. That, however, isn't easy. "We're situated in the Mississippi Delta on land that has different soil types with pH levels that have to be adjusted," Brewer says. "Also, our service road is a seven-mile and 4 to 5-lane 'highway' that requires a lot of landscape maintenance."

City Place,

West Palm Beach, FL

Rick Leal, vice president of Vila and Son Landscaping Inc., Miami, takes care of City Place in West Palm Beach, a retail/residential complex in the city's downtown area.

The demands are similar to Graceland's: "Watering the pots and keeping the flower beds intact is a challenge given the several thousand people who walk through every day," Leal says. "Because the aesthetic standards are high, we have to get the place looking good by morning when the stores open for business."

Universal Studios, Orlando, FL

The most formal landscapes at Universal Studios Orlando are at the entrances. The Resort Garden Walkway has no hours of operation, so guests come and go at all hours. Employees must be out of



Universal Studios

guest view by 7 a.m. every morning and stay out of view until 2 a.m., 365 days a year.

Rainfall is another big problem. Some years, it's 30 inches. Others, it's seven inches. This keeps some of the 100 employees running around adjusting irrigation computers and programs all the time.



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Circle No. 120 on Reader Inquiry Card

Get into irrigation

Find the right niche and start increasing your bottom line by creating an irrigation service for your customers

BY JIM DAVIS

Many landscape contractors handle nearly every aspect of creating beautiful landscapes — except irrigation system installation. This is usually because it makes more sense to focus on their specialty, which is landscape design and planting, and subcontract the irrigation to others who specialize in that trade.

The presence of too many irrigation contractors in some markets makes it not feasible to start an op-

eration within your company to compete against them. However, there may be niches in the marketplace that encourage you to start that irrigation branch. The questions you need to ask yourself in considering whether to add irrigation installation to your service offerings are:

- Are there gaps in the irrigation industry in my marketplace?
- Are existing contractors doing mostly residential or commercial work?
- Do those contractors offer irrigation services exclusively, or do they also install plant material and lighting?
- How many other companies offer a full spectrum of services: planting, lighting, water gardening, decks/patios and irrigation?

Start with servicing

One of the first things contractors do to begin their irrigation installation service is get involved in the "service" side of the business. When requested by a homeowner or builder, offer to repair an area that was disturbed by sitework modifications. This type of involvement requires few, if any, extra tools or equipment, yet may serve as a springboard for further work. Soon, you'll learn

several tricks of the trade and eventually gain the confidence to take on a new installation job.

Capital investment

Because of market conditions or the availability of key people, some companies decide to jump right in and activate a crew devoted solely to irrigation. If you want to do this, there's a minimum of six things you need:

1. Crew of two or three workers, one of them to be a team leader.
2. Trencher/vibratory plow (and trailer) with plow blade, one or two pipe grips and boring rod/attachment.
3. Truck or van with pipe rack, or an enclosed box van.
4. Hand-tools, including shovels, pipe cutters, hoes, saws, drills, rakes, crowbar and tamps.
5. A relationship with a distributor and a line of credit.
6. Someone capable of making sales calls, visiting the site and understanding the scope of work, and developing and presenting a thorough, profitable bid/quote.

Numerous training opportunities offered by irrigation distributors or the Irrigation Association (703/536-7080) throughout the country cover design, installation



Are you considering adding irrigation services to your landscape operation? You'll need skilled employees.

Typical components of irrigation systems

and service issues. These classes are the best source of irrigation installation information and technical training.

Bidding and estimating

Once you learn how to install irrigation properly, learn how to do it profitably. One way is to learn from consultants who focus on landscape and irrigation operations. In addition to providing energetic and enlightening seminars, many of these groups have workbooks that show how to analyze your

- Water tap & meter (municipal water source)
- Backflow preventer
- Ball valves (for shutting off the system)
- Quick coupling valve or coupling for compressed air connection (winterization)
- Booster pump (if necessary)
- Mainline pipe (usually PVC)
- Schedule 40 PVC fittings
- Electric remote control valves
- Valve boxes
- Lateral pipe (either PVC or poly-pipe)
- Gear-driven rotary sprinklers (large areas)
- Spray heads (small areas)
- Drip tubing (optional for planting beds)
- Control wire (between valves and controller)
- Solid state controller (clock/timer)
- Rain sensor (connected to controller)

company's specific equipment and work habits so that you can profitably bid on projects. A few of the basics you'll learn are:

- Allowing for "mobilization" time/labor (planning, coordinating, loading, driving).
- The four basic compo-

nents of a bid: cost of materials, labor rates (public jobs may require prevailing wage rates), equipment costs (includes depreciation expense for each piece of equipment to be used on the job), profit and overhead (usually figured as a percentage — 10% to 20%).

■ Remembering to allocate time for: site clean-up, punch-list corrections, compilation of "as-built" drawings and system review/training with the owner.

Project budget parameters
Evaluate project-specific vari-

Specialized forms just for Landscape Professionals.

The advertisement displays several landscape forms from NEBS. The forms include:

- LANDSCAPING PROPOSAL**: A document for submitting proposals, featuring a header with the NEBS logo and contact information for Cascadia Landscaping.
- LANDSCAPING ESTIMATE**: A form for providing cost estimates, with a header and a large table area for itemized costs.
- LANDSCAPING WORK ORDER/INVOICE**: A form for tracking work and billing, including a header, a table for work items, and a section for payment.
- Lawn Maintenance Invoice**: A form for billing regular lawn care services, with a header and a table for recording service dates and costs.
- Doorknob Hanger**: A small green card with a hole punch, used for hanging forms on a door.
- Proposals Laser & Manual**: A red circular badge indicating that proposal forms are available in both laser-printed and manual versions.
- Work Order/Invoices Laser & Manual**: A red circular badge indicating that work order and invoice forms are available in both laser-printed and manual versions.

 The forms are branded with the NEBS logo and contact information for Cascadia Landscaping, located at 3445 Ferguson Drive, Portland, Oregon 97232, with a phone number of (503) 555-4788.



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Circle 121

ables before submitting your bid. Ask yourself:

- Is the water source easily accessible?
- Does the municipality require a licensed plumber to make the water tap?
- Is there power available in case a booster pump is needed?
- Where will the client want the controller?
- Where will the backflow preventer be located?
- Is there existing turf, or will your crew be performing work prior to sodding?
- Who will be responsible for site repair/final grading?
- What time of the year will the project take place?
- Are all parts of the site accessible?
- Will it be clear where all the utilities are before you start digging?
- What is your gut reaction toward the project overseer?
- Will there be an irrigation consultant overseeing the project?
- Will any delay affect materials and labor costs?
- Will this one project create future additional work for your company?

Network like crazy

As with any service, your best advertising is word of mouth. To get established, though, be assertive with the people you meet by letting them know your company installs ir-

Hand tools are just one category of products you'll need to start an irrigation service.

rigation. Potential customers are those already on your mailing list. Eventually, you will get irrigation installation work by:

- learning of a project and contacting a general contractor,
- being contacted by a general contractor to bid on a prepared plan, or
- being asked by a homeowner or builder to develop a plan and submit a quote.

— Jim Davis is a Certified Irrigation Designer (commercial) and a registered landscape architect in Indiana. As the Irrigation Sales Manager for Kenney Outdoor Solutions, he also serves as general manager of LandTech, Kenney's irrigation design and consulting division. Contact Jim at jimd@kcmcturf.com or 800/878-8676.

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Circle 122

Property at a glance

Location: Oasis Pines, Las Vegas, NV

Staff: J.R. Landcare Group, Inc.

Category: Condominium Complex

Total budget: \$41,530

Year site built: 1996

Acres of turf: 5

Acres of woody ornamentals: 4

Acres of display beds: 3.5

Total paved area: 5 acres

Total man-hours/week: 48.5

Maintenance challenges

- ▶ Combatting desert heat
- ▶ Dealing with pets and their deposits
- ▶ Handling tenant vandalism

Project checklist

- ▶ Turf reduction
- ▶ Installation of irrigation controls
- ▶ Irrigation renovation/upgrades

On the job

- ▶ 20 full-time staff, 20 seasonal employees

Oasis Pines

The 2000 Grand Award Winner of the Professional Grounds Management Society for Condo, Apartment Complex or Planned Community

he desert can be rough. Just ask the employees of the J.R. Landcare Group, who have grown accustomed to 100-plus degree temperatures and bone-dry conditions working on landscapes in and around Las Vegas, NV.

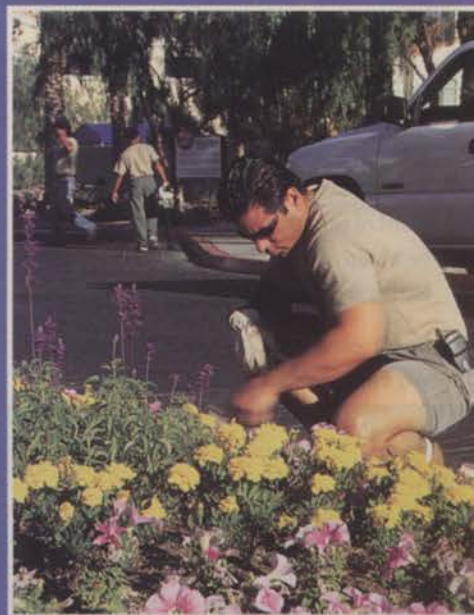
As everybody knows, water is gold out west, which is why the J.R. Landcare Group is big on designing water-efficient landscapes. The company's also good at it, having recently won first place from the Southern Nevada Water Authority in the category of commercial maintenance for designing a landscape judged to be both beautiful and water-efficient.

One example is the grounds at Oasis Pines, a gated 320-unit condominium community nestled in the Mojave Desert that features pools, spas, gazebos, barbecues, picnic areas, beautiful paseos and desert garden areas.

Within the last two years, crew members have reduced the amount of turf on the grounds and upgraded the irrigation system without sacrificing the natural beauty of the site. In between, they've

also managed to handle the continual cleanup of fecal matter from residents' pets and mend the occasional tire track from a late night "turfing" session.

J.R. Landcare Group president Rob Diaz casts a critical eye over one of Oasis Pines' many flower beds.



PGMS
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Editors' note: *Landscape Management* is the exclusive sponsor of the Green Star Professional Grounds Management Awards for outstanding management of residential, commercial and institutional landscapes. The 2001 winners will be named at the annual meeting of the Professional Grounds Management Society in November. For more information on the 2001 Awards, contact PGMS at:

720 Light St. • Baltimore, MD 21230 • Phone: 410/223-2861. Web-site: www.pgms.org