

Most workers who apply for a seasonal job want to start working as soon as possible, not two or three months down the road.



the Caribbean and other Latin American countries.

If you apply for H-2B visas without the assistance of a labor or H-2B contractor, you'll be responsible for recruiting your own workers as well as making sure they have legitimate passports and no previous problems with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). You may also have to take a trip to the appropriate consulate you indicated on your H-2B visa application. This could be a good thing if the consulate you listed was in Jamaica because you could write off your vacation and take care of your labor needs in one trip! On the flip side, if you listed a consulate in Mexico (the most common consulate listing) and your application was delayed, you might have to wait in line for hours in triple digit temperatures.

#### Don't delay

The first thing to realize when pursuing an H-2B visa is that you can't wait two weeks before you need workers to start the application process. The earliest you're allowed to apply is 120 days before you need workers. Expect the process to take 90 to 120 days before you receive INS authorization. If you're a first time filer, give yourself 150 days because you'll probably place a comma in the wrong place in

the job description and delay your application indefinitely.

#### Is it right for you?

If you think H-2B is the answer to your labor woes, think again. Realize the following five things:

1. If you're looking for cheap labor, you shouldn't use this program. Companies with this attitude have bad experiences.
2. H-2B workers are looking to work at least 50 hours a week.

3. Housing costs should be around 15% of the average monthly wage. Remember, these guys are working for your company to save money for family.

4. You will need to set up a housing arrangement before your workers arrive, which means finding bedding, cooking utensils, etc.

5. If you're looking for a way to legalize your illegal workers, you'll be disappointed!

#### H-2B simplified

The first application for an H-2B visa is with your state's employment security agency or department of labor. This will determine the prevailing wage your company will be required to pay the workers.

The next step, the recruiting process, takes at least 30 days. This process begins with a

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## H-2B remains your best option

Despite the economy falling deeper into recession after the terrorist attacks on America Sept. 11th, labor companies say the need for additional labor is still high and predict it will remain high.

"The grass isn't going to stop growing," said Robert Wingfield, president of Amigos Inc., a Dallas-based labor contracting firm that supplies U.S. businesses with Mexican seasonal workers. "So far, I've only had one client cancel their order for workers, and that wasn't a landscape company."

"From an immigration standpoint, everything has slowed down considerably," says labor contractor Jeff West, president of GTO International, Rochester, MI. West said he expects less demand for immigrant workers in industries such as hospitality and food service, but U.S. landscape companies will still need seasonal help.

"Even though there will be workers unemployed, they don't tend to gravitate to the Green Industry because the work is seasonal and involves a lot of physical labor," he said.

Terry Foley, with Foley Enterprises, Austin, TX, another sizable labor contracting firm focusing on the Green Industry, said that one of the biggest problems her firm faces is companies that wait until the last minute to start processing their H-2B employees.

"We're kind of chewing our nails, but we do that every year about this time," she said.

This year in particular, she cautioned, companies needing seasonal immigrant help should begin the process immediately. "They have to supply so much documentation to substantiate their need that it's taking them longer."

Like West, Foley doesn't see the pool of recently unemployed U.S. workers desiring the jobs typically filled by H-2B workers. "Part of me thinks that the people who are getting laid off are in high tech and related jobs and they will not work on landscape crews. They will stay on unemployment first."

— Ron Hall





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classified ad that runs in a daily local newspaper for three consecutive days, usually including Sunday. The ad's wording is dictated by the State Department of Labor. Once the recruiting period is over, you have to supply the State with your results.

Once the recruitment period has ended, the State forwards your results along with

your application to the U.S. Regional Department of Labor. Your application will probably sit on someone's desk for at least four weeks before anyone grants approval or rejection.

The last step is to file with the INS. If you want really good service, you can write a check for \$1,000 and the INS will guarantee your application will be

processed within 15 days of receiving your check. If you want the regular service, you only pay \$110 and processing could take from 15 to 45 days.

### Passport, please

Don't think you're out of the woods once the INS has authorized your company to obtain an H-2B visa. The passports you've submitted to the U.S. Consulate must be approved.

Every worker you sponsor for an H-2B visa must have a valid and up-to-date passport. A Mexican male must prove he has completed his military requirements with a validated military card. Without the military card, he can obtain a temporary passport for three months, but only under the pretense that he will start his military obligation within one year.

Also, if workers have any previous problems with U.S. immigration or a police record in the United States or Mexico, they will be rejected.

— Jeff West is president of GTO International LLC, a labor recruiting company based out of Rochester, MI. He can be reached at 810/797-4422, or visit [www.gtointl.com](http://www.gtointl.com) for more information.

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Circle 114

## Premium Service Policy

The INS's \$1,000 Premium Service Policy for application processing was enacted in June of 2001. I will at this time plead the 5th amendment if asked my opinion of this new policy (just in case someone with a good memory from the INS is reading this)! I wonder if this policy will catch on with other companies? Can you imagine having to pay McDonald's an extra dollar if you want your food warm? I might be willing to pay that in some instances...

— Jeff West

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Circle No. 115 on Reader Inquiry Card

# How "green" is your software?

## Industry-specific software helps you capture profits and win clients

BY LYNNE BRAKEMAN /  
ON-LINE CONTENT EDITOR

Of all your important tools, among the most important (and the most bewildering) is computer software. Whether it's business management or design/estimating/presentation software, the choices are many and the investment is considerable.

When it comes to software, it's especially hard to determine when it's finally

time to make the leap from off-the-shelf solutions (like Intuit Corp.'s QuickBooks or Microsoft's Excel) to industry-specific products.

If you think you've arrived at that jumping off spot, *Landscape Management* has compiled a list of 25 Green Industry-specific products which begins on page 37. Go to [www.landscapemanagement.net](http://www.landscapemanagement.net) for an expanded listing including product descriptions and live Web links.

Several Green Industry software vendors share their insights on recent trends in business computing and explain why their customers believe the investment has paid off in measurable growth of productivity and profitability.

David Tucker, president  
Sensible Software Inc. (CLIP Software)  
[www.clip.com](http://www.clip.com)

"When we were still a lawn maintenance company, we already knew we had to control our job costing data so we could capitalize on our best properties," says Dave Tucker, explaining how Sensible Software got its start at the dawn of personal computing back in 1988.

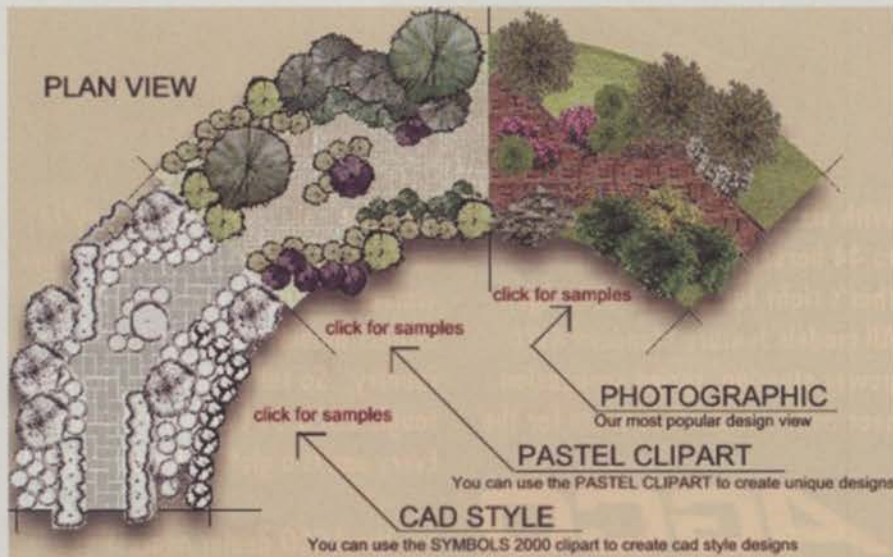
Tucker says he's frequently asked why a company should switch from off-the-shelf software to an industry-specific solution like CLIP.

"The answer to that is the same as for somebody who says 'I'm happy mowing lawns with my little MTD I bought at Home Depot,'" Tucker says. "Yes, maybe you are, and maybe you can continue to be in business for the short term with that tool. But, if you're going to be professional and maximize your profit — if you're going to be in control of your company — you need to get the right tool for the job."

Tucker says some companies he's seen are using thrown-together systems as nothing more than electronic Post-It pads. He says the real key to profitability is tracking and maximizing profit. Some new landscape CAD programs can generate estimates and create proposal presentation documents from a single project plan.



Dave Tucker



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### The fire ant challenge.

Since arriving in Alabama from South America in the 1930s, red imported fire ants have earned a reputation as a stubborn and vicious pest. If disturbed, they will attack in mass, each insect stinging repeatedly and injecting venom with each sting. They can maim and even kill animals and humans. Today, they infest more than 260 million acres in 13 southern states as well as California, New Mexico, and Puerto Rico; and the problem is spreading. One dome-shaped mound may contain more than 200,000 ants.

Controlling fire ants has been challenging, to say the least. Traditional methods are troublesome and results are often less than satisfying. Baits and contact insecticides are the two primary approaches. Both have drawbacks.

In the case of baits, they must be fresh and the fire ants must be actively foraging for treatments to be effective. Baits can be ruined by rain, and even if there is no rain, multiple applications are required. Baits don't provide residual control either, so they are only curative, not preventative.

Contact materials provide quick surface kill, but not complete eradication. (The foraging ants they kill are only about 10% of the total population and die before returning to the colony.) Mound treatments often must be watered in and, again, multiple applications are required per season. Multiple applications are more than just an

inconvenience. They increase user exposure, the environmental pesticide load, and the cost of labor and materials. Contact materials often have an offensive odor, too.

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TopChoice is registered for use on golf turf, sports fields, commercial lawns, home lawns, landscape beds, school grounds, parks, campsites and other recreational areas, sod farms, and cemeteries.

cast application of the ultra-low-dose .0143% granule can deliver up to 95 percent control in 4-6 weeks.

Once the fire ants are gone, expect them to stay gone for up to a full year. Chipco TopChoice has the residual power to control developing queen cells and also new queens that enter the landscape. It's a novel concept in fire ant control: *prevention*.

### Forget about mole crickets, too.



The active ingredient in Chipco TopChoice is more than just a top-notch fire ant product, by the way. It's also the world's best insecticide for mole crickets. So while your fire ant problem is disappearing, your mole crickets will be too. An application of Chipco TopChoice for fire ant control will also control fleas and ticks and nuisance ants.



### **It's fipronil.**

The active ingredient in Chipco TopChoice is fipronil, a unique chemical compound that has revolutionized insect control in several industries worldwide. Since 1995, fipronil has been used globally for flea and tick control on millions of cats and dogs, and it is the active ingredient in the revolutionary new termiticide Termidor®. And of course Chipco Choice™ with fipronil has quickly become the new, unmatched standard for mole cricket control on golf courses.



### **The lowest-dose, non-bait insecticide.**

Despite its remarkable efficacy, fipronil is a responsible choice for use around animals and humans. At just 0.0143% active ingredient, Chipco TopChoice is the lowest-dose, non-bait insecticide available for fire ants. Getting the same control that one application of Chipco TopChoice provides would require 3 or more applications of an organophosphate. Or, put another way, one pound of the active ingredient in Chipco TopChoice is equal in efficacy to over 25 pounds of an organophosphate active ingredient.

### **A unique mode of action.**

Fipronil employs a unique mode of action to control fire ants. It interferes with the insects' inhibitory nervous systems. As a result, the insects die of overstimulation. Fipronil is active in insects by both contact and ingestion. Thanks to its Transfer Effect™, it will also kill insects that have not had primary contact with the compound themselves, but merely have touched others that have. Chipco TopChoice controls fire ants gradually, allowing time for affected fire ants to spread the insecticide throughout the colony before dying. This attribute works extremely well, resulting in up to 95 percent control in 4 to 6 weeks.

## **Moisture is key.**

*Fire ants, like all insects, require moisture. During hot and dry weather, they burrow deeper into the soil to find more moisture and cooler temperatures. In contrast, when the ground is wet, fire ants are closest to the surface — and most vulnerable to insecticides, including Chipco TopChoice. So, to ensure best results, please apply Chipco TopChoice after rainfall or irrigation.*

## How Fipronil Compares to Other RIFA Control Products

Active Ingredient	Chemical Class	Use Rate (LB./Acre)	Est. Length of Residual Control	Speed of Control
<b>Fipronil</b>	<b>Phenylpyrazole</b>	<b>0.0125</b>	<b>Up To 52 Weeks</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Acephate	Organophosphate	0.75 - 1.5	Few Days	Fast
Chlorpyrifos	Organophosphate	1.0 and 8.0*	4 To 6 Weeks	Medium to Fast
Diazinon	Organophosphate	4.4	Few Days	Fast
Hydramethylnon (Bait)	Amidinohydrazone	0.0073 - 0.011	Up To 24 Weeks	Medium
Fenoxycarb (Bait)	IGR	0.01 - 0.015	3 To 8 Weeks	Medium
Bifenthrin	Synthetic Pyrethroid	0.2 - 0.4	4 To 16 Weeks	Fast
Pyriproxifen (Bait)	IGR	0.005 - 0.0075	12 To 16 Weeks	Slow
Methoprene (Bait)	Hormone Analog	0.005 - 0.0075	10 To 12 Weeks	Medium

\*8.0 lb. rate only labeled for 50W on sod farms in the fire ant quarantine zone.

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mizing labor efficiency.

According to Tucker, hand-held computers (also called personal digital assistants or PDAs) for on-the-job data collection is an irreversible trend. Data saved in the PDA is downloaded to the main office computer. Some vendors already offer routing and mapping applications that can be uploaded to a crew's PDA at the start of the day, eliminating printed route schedules. CLIP communicates with English or Spanish-language PDAs.

"Another trend is moving data on the Internet," Tucker says. "We now have an option that allows customers to go to a Web site and check their bills and schedules. We're working on extending this to on-line communication with suppliers."

Paul Jackson, president

Alocet Software (Lawn Monkey)  
[www.lawnmonkey.com](http://www.lawnmonkey.com)

"I think, by 2005, you will see a lot more Web-based applications," says Paul Jackson.

This model is a lot like leasing equipment. The user pays by the month or by usage for an application that is hosted on a vendor's Web site.

Jackson has also noticed his clients struggling with the problem of having multiple

PHOTO COURTESY ALOCET SOFTWARE



Specialized software can help you compare and analyze crew efficiency and job profitability.

shops and off-site locations.

"What's coming is the ability to e-mail the schedule to a crew's PDA so they don't have to connect at the main office," Jackson says.

John Decell, president

Software Republic LLP  
[www.softwarerepublic.com](http://www.softwarerepublic.com)

Software Republic started out making software for irrigation designers. Decell says contractors who handle both irrigation and landscape design kept asking for a landscape program, so the company created two programs: EcoCAD for design and job costing and Photoscapes for customer presentations.

"The most important thing for our clients is ease of use," says Decell.

Although three-dimensional (3D)

landscape design packages are beginning to become affordable, Decell says his company made a decision to stick with a two-dimensional solution to keep the learning curve short.

"That's also why we went with a separate imaging program for visual presentations," Decell says. "We focus on what is going to be easiest to learn — that's what our customers say is important to them."

### Green Industry software products

Following is a list of 25 vendors that sell green industry-specific software applications.

### BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Adkad | 800/586-4683

[www.adkad.com](http://www.adkad.com)

■ GroundsKeeper Pro 2000

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■ LawnMonkey 2001 PRO

Compuscapes | 800/350-3534

[www.compuscapes.com](http://www.compuscapes.com)

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[dkenet.com/winlawn.html](http://dkenet.com/winlawn.html)

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Practical Solutions | 614/436-9066

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■ The Service Solution

Rapp Industries Inc. | 800/999-1159

[www.rappind.com](http://www.rappind.com)

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Real Green Systems

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[www.realgreen.com](http://www.realgreen.com)

■ Lawn Assistant III

Sensible Software, Inc.

800/635-8485

[www.clip.com](http://www.clip.com)

■ CLIP and QuickCLIP

Slice Technologies

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[www.sliceplus.com](http://www.sliceplus.com)

■ SlicePlus

Tree Management Systems 812/876-7664

[www.turftree.com](http://www.turftree.com)

■ TurfGold

UDS, Green Industry

Software | 800/626-7247

[www.activeapplications.com](http://www.activeapplications.com)

■ Active Applications

Vanguard Computer

Systems |

888/590-1696

[www.camelotsoftware.com](http://www.camelotsoftware.com)

■ Camelot Software



Real Green Systems Lawn Assistant III



Sensible Software's CLIP PDAs come in both English and Spanish versions.

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3D Nature LLC | 330/665-9080

[www.3dnature.com](http://www.3dnature.com)

■ Visual Nature Studio

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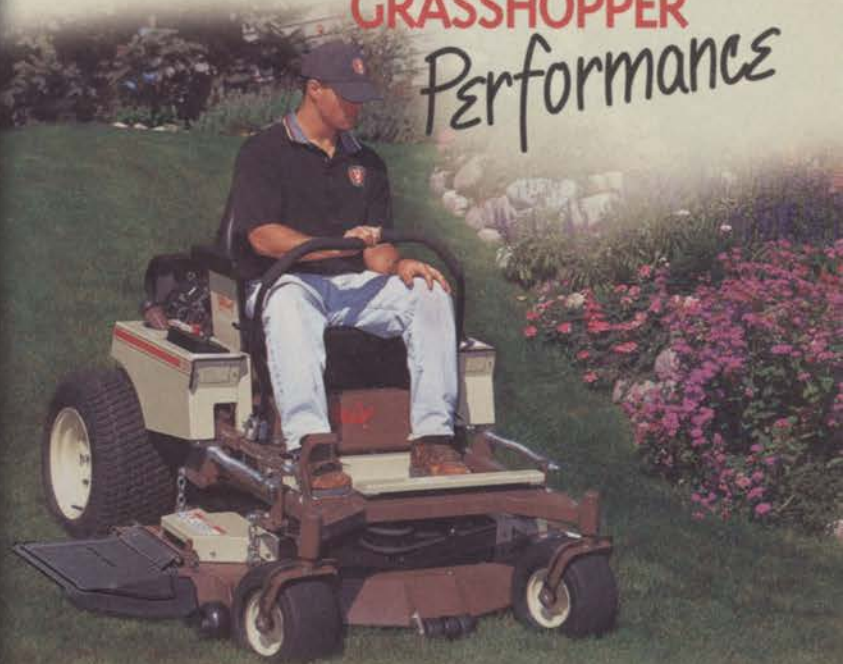
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