



50,000 coconut husk trays, each with 3 in. of soil and native California plants, were loaded onto the roof by crane.

WHAT'S UP THERE?

The native plants used on the green roof were included, at least in part, with the idea they would serve as a habitat for local fauna.

Plants used	What they attract
Beach strawberries (<i>Fragaria chiloensis</i>)	native birds
Self heal (<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>)	hummingbirds and bumblebees
Sea pink (<i>Armeria maritime</i>)	moths and butterflies
Stonecrop (<i>Sedum spathulitholium</i>)	San Bruno elfin butterfly
Tidy tips (<i>Layia platyglossa</i>)	parasitic wasps and pirate bugs
Miniature lupine (<i>Lupinus bicolor</i>)	bees and butterflies
California poppies (<i>Eschscholzia californica</i>)	bees and butterflies
California plantain (<i>Plantago erecta</i>):	butterfly larvae
Goldfield plants (<i>Lasthenia californica</i>)	beneficial native insects

— Jensen Corp. Landscape Contractors

different types: tidy tips, miniature lupine, California poppies, California plantain and goldfield plants.”

Jensen planted the varying color flowers almost in a paint-by-numbers method.

“The Prunella have gone to a dark-red color,” Vlay said in mid-August.

“I was up there (in June), and it was a beautiful purple. As the seasons come and go, it takes on different colors. Even though it’s called a green roof, sometimes it’s a purple roof. Right now, it’s the maroon roof. Other times, it’s the yellow roof. It’s always changing based on the seasons.”



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"EVEN THOUGH IT'S CALLED A GREEN ROOF, SOMETIMES IT'S A PURPLE ROOF. RIGHT NOW, IT'S THE MAROON ROOF."

— JOHN VLAY, CEO OF JENSEN CORP. HOLDINGS

Maintenance strategies

The project's goal is to have the roof become self-sustaining in San Francisco's foggy, seaside climate, but that's still a year or more away, Vlay says. In the meantime, Jensen maintains the roof and grounds around the building, which it installed, too.

Until the green roof is more established, an irrigation system must be used to keep plants alive. But the California Academy of Sciences' roof has a number of skylights, which open automatically to release the heat that builds up during the day, particularly over an indoor rainforest.

"The irrigation water would get into the skylights, go down and hit the top of the rainforest, which was all glass,"

JUST THE FACTS

- › Largest living roof in California, featuring seven dramatic hills to mimic the hills of San Francisco
- › 50,000 of coconut husk trays were loaded onto the roof by crane and installed
- › The porous trays hold 1.7 million plants
- › 197,000 sq. ft. total
- › Cost was about \$17 per sq. ft.
- › 4.5 acres total roof space, including solar panel canopy
- › 2.5 acres of planted material
- › 2.6 million lbs. total weight of soil and plants
- › Four-month construction period
- › Absorbs about 98% of all storm water, preventing as much as 3.6 million gallons of runoff from carrying pollutants into the ecosystem each year
- › An overhead spray irrigation system, featuring its own weather-tracking system, is designed to establish plant material with the intent it will be shut off in a few years once the roof becomes fully sustainable
- › A wide grid of rock gabions with reinforced steel and straps provide additional support, and create walkways for future roof maintenance
- › Gabions filled with more than 30,000 lbs. of lava rocks

— Jensen Corp. Landscape Contractors

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Vlay says. "That required a lot of glass cleaning. We had to change our irrigation system so it didn't go off when the skylights opened."

The irrigation situation translated into having to hand-water the plants, to keep them from getting stressed during the heat of the day, until they became established.

"Now that the plants are much more established, we don't have to water them throughout the day," Vlay says, noting the ultimate goal is for irrigation to be self-sustainable after two to three years.

Jensen's portion of the project was about \$4.7 million, with the green roof making up about \$2 million of the total. The project earned the company first-place honors in the Special Effects division of the California Landscape Contractors Association awards this past year. **LM**



Translating the design on paper to the reality of the 2.5-acre roof had its challenges, including transporting the material onto the roof.

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ACUTABOVE

GREEN INDUSTRY MAINTENANCE LEADERS » BY DAN JACOBS

For more than five decades, **Dennis' 7 Dees** has served the Portland area. President **David Snodgrass**, with help from Maintenance Department Manager **Jeff Rieger**, offer insights about the issues facing the maintenance industry.

TOPTRENDS

» **Sustainability.** There's been a lot of buzz about that for a number of years. It keeps getting stronger. It's not a phase. It's a trend that's going to be part of business. Obviously, we see that as our reality. We've jumped on board with sustainability and started to make sure we operate a sustainable or green business. There's a lot that makes good business sense. Some things definitely turn a profit for you. Some things give you a good image and customer reputation.

» **Cut costs.** There's a necessity to reduce costs to pull down all we can to reduce prices for our clients. There's downward pressure on prices that includes out-in-the-field costs and reducing overhead costs in the office. We're becoming leaner every day as an efficient operation driving out waste and unnecessary costs.

» **Savvier customers.** More savvy customers are paying more attention to things they haven't paid close attention to before – safety. Companies can't afford an accident. The savvy customers are getting information about your company. And nobody wants an accident on their property. They're starting to look deeper before they hire.

TOP OBSTACLES

» **Low-bidders.** There's always been a challenge from low bidders, but it seems like some national companies are putting extreme pricing pressures on the market. The temptation is to play the same game. But that's a short-term strategy, and we're in business for the long haul. We're not being drawn into that competitive low-pricing-at-the-cost-of-low-service strategy.

» **Soft pockets.** There are soft pockets in the industry. One of those is design/build and enhancement work. It's difficult to convince people to spend in those areas. It's a huge obstacle to figure out how to get them to spend money for the right reason, when it involves improving their property.



David Snodgrass, right, and Jeff Rieger are dealing with the obstacles of extreme pricing pressures and convincing customers to spend money in the design/build area.

INSIDE INFO

Company: Dennis' 7 Dees

Founded: 1956

Employees: 260

Revenue 2009: \$19 million

Rank on 2009 LM Top 150: 66

Keys to being an industry leader: As an industry, we're getting attacked. Activists are trying to label our industry as the industry that pollutes, the industry that uses illegals, the industry that wastes water. The Green Industry has one of the smallest carbon footprints. We're not doing a good job of defending ourselves. We're the original Green Industry. It's important we do what we have to in order to ensure the industry stays strong. We need to protect it and not rely on others to do that for us. If we're really going to do what we can for the industry, we need to get involved. We need to take a stand and defend the industry.

» **Pricing pressure.** Many long-term clients are saying, 'Maybe, I can get good pricing because prices seem to be coming down.' Some long-standing clients and contracts are deciding it's time to bid. That's a challenge.

TOP OPPORTUNITIES

» **Everybody sells.** We've got design/build residential staff, commercial installation, maintenance services and retail garden centers. There's lot of opportunities to cross sell. We're doing a much better job of one department setting up or selling for the next department. The opportunities are developed for one department by someone outside that department.

» **New markets.** We offer snow and ice service, though we have iffy weather. Some years we may get it; some year we don't. Hopefully, we can leverage that to get our foot in the door and become their landscape maintenance company. To invest in snow plowing equipment is a huge speculation. We're doing it so when the event happens, we'll be able to service our customers better. That gives us a competitive advantage. We're able to talk to our customers and separate ourselves from others because of that capability.

» **Marketing.** When the economy slows, our natural reaction is to hunker down and try to improve our numbers by cutting back. That works great for many of our costs, but not all of them. Our competitors aren't spending money on marketing. This is a big opportunity. We've increased our marketing budget and are looking for a gain in market share. Some of that shows up in a tough economy. We're counting on most of it showing up when the economy and the marketplace improve.

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A red dog with a big bark

BigDog Mowers, Excel Industries' new value product line of zero-turn mowers, includes the R Series (pictured). Available in a 48- or 54-in. fabricated deck and a choice of Kohler V-Twin or Briggs & Stratton engines, the mower line features commercial-grade, Hydro Gear ZT 3100 transmissions that provide smooth operation and durability. Large 20-in. tires and 13-in. caster tires provide a smooth ride. The top speed is 7.1 mph. BigDogMowers.com or 800/395-4757

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Grind it up

Fecon offers its Bull Hog compact equipment mulcher for mid-size and smaller excavators. It features a fixed rotor system that allows users to grind material as wide as 4 in. in diameter. It also features

the HDT tooling system, which includes double and single carbide and stone and chipper tools. The unit offers a 36-in. cutting width and a maximum weight between 1,000 and 1,200 lbs. Targeted for excavators in the 7- to 12-metric-ton range with 17 to 30 gpm of auxiliary flow, the mulcher also works on other applicable machinery, such as larger backhoes. *Fecon.com or 800/528-3113*



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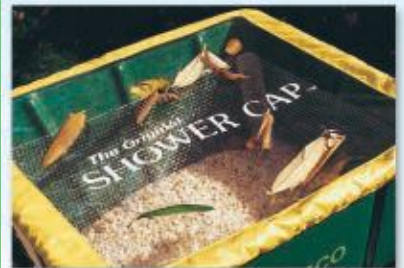
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Learning to laugh at ourselves

Rose are red.

Violets are blue.

I sleep naked.

How 'bout you?

Last month, I promised I'd close this rather difficult year by sharing a few "Jamie gems" — humorous stories proving our middle son, who happens to have Down syndrome, is wiser than his 14 years on Earth — and much wiser than his Old Man.

I knew the limerick above would grab readers, and probably kick-start your 2010 weight-loss program. Don't worry: In this poetic instance, I'm the reporter — not the author.

In mid-November, my wife, Bridgid, asked me to help Jamie with his homework. I noticed "write a poem" was one of the tasks and immediately thought, "Yeah baby. Now we're talking. Writing's my area of expertise. I'm your Daddy."

Not really. I've come to find out poetry is *my* Daddy. Jamie's vacant stare after I struggled for half an hour to come up with two lame examples of self-made poems confirmed as much.

Little did I know when I sat down with our "special needs" child that night that it would take Jamie less than 60 seconds to one-up the Old Man. Jamie's poem wasn't one we could share with his class, but I can share it with you, and I think we all can agree it's much shorter and sweeter than my usual prose.

Here are three more Jamie gems intended simply

to give you a few fat-free bellyaches this holiday season:

▶ Ever since we bought his older brother, Mickey, a cell phone, Jamie's tried to make a case that he, too, needs one. When Jamie's *younger* sister, Meg, got a cell phone before he did, Jamie was off the hook. Bridgid tried in vain to reason with Jamie: "Meg knows my work number, Daddy's work number, our cell phone numbers, Grandma Bonnie's and Pop's home and cell numbers, and Grandma Pat's home phone number." "Mom, that's why they have speed dial on cell phones," quipped Jamie, who, in Dad's book, earned himself a cell phone with that response. (Too bad — or, some might say, thank God — I can't combat Bridgid's reasoning as quickly or effectively as Jamie.)

▶ A few Decembers ago, I lost Jamie in a JC Penney store attached to a mall. After a failed 10-minute search, I finally came clean with the store's security guard, who quickly boomed, "Code Adam! Code Adam!" into her walkie-talkie. As she and I rushed to the mall entrance to ensure Jamie didn't leave the store alone, or with anyone else, she asked me "standard questions" and jotted my answers down on a form on her clipboard. "What color shirt is he wearing?" "Blue, I think. Maybe black, gray or green." She shook her head, clearly disappointed in clueless Dad. Then I realized I was sitting on a gold mine of information: "Jamie has Down syndrome, glasses, red hair, and a stuffed fake snake around his neck he likes to shake," I proudly offered up. But this by-the-book security guard didn't write down, or share with her co-workers via walkie-talkie, even one of those nuggets. "Mmmhmm. What color pants?" she proceeded. No thanks to Dumb & Dumber, Jamie was found, safe and sound — before Bridgid found out!

▶ A few years ago, we spent the holidays skiing and snowboarding in Burlington, VT. While dining at a fine restaurant, Jamie became fascinated with a nutcracker his size. I shared how the wooden toy soldier works. "Show me, Dad," Jamie impishly urged. "I can't. There aren't any nuts," I answered. "You're a guy ... Put 'em in there, and I'll slam his arm down," Jamie roared, with his contagious crazy cackle.

See, 2009 could have been worse ...

With the notorious **nutcracker incident**, Jamie reminds me that **2009 could have been worse.**