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LM MARKET MATCH We've made your life a little easier by supplying icons that direct you to stories targeting your core business.

B—Business; D/B—Design/Build; I—Irrigation; LC—Lawn Care; M—Maintenance

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The role of the accounting manager

The principles of the Wilson-Oyler Group, including Tom Oyler (right), explain the evolving role of the account manager to contractors as part of the firm's Success Series tour.

FROM THE FIELD



READERS RESPOND

How has the \$2.20-per-gallon average drop in gas prices over the past six months affected the fuel surcharge you added?



18% We've kept our fuel surcharge the same.

9% We've eliminated it.

0% We've decreased it by less than 50 percent.

0% We've decreased it 50 percent or more.

» **Next month's question:**
How will you become more efficient in 2009?

Want to weigh in? Visit www.landscapemanagement.net/survey to voice your opinion.

WEB EXCLUSIVE

Suiting up for snow

Every year, winter maintenance contractors are counted on to keep our roads, parking lots and sidewalks safe. Without proper preparation, the spreaders that help them perform these tasks might not be ready for all the winter season can bring.



POD BITES

“Time management is the most important issue for a businessperson – more important than marketing, more important than people skills. ... Time management is the No. 1 business skill that any successful businessperson needs to learn how to do.”

Jeffrey Scott is a landscape-marketing consultant, business coach and author of “The Referral Guide” available at the LMBookstore at <http://shoplandscapemanagement.net/>



DIGITAL VAULT

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Though landscape services workers make up less than 1% of the U.S. work force, they experience approximately 3.5% of all occupational fatalities.

Athletic Turf News

The condition and the variety of programs around a community's parks and sports fields are perceived as indications of a community's vitality and economic wellbeing.

LD/B Solutions

Landscape architects join U.S. News & World Report's top 30 best careers to have in the coming year.

Get Growing

Even a small townhouse in the big city can blossom into a \$100,000 livescapes project.

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THE HALLMARK

RON HALL EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Contact Ron via e-mail at rhall@questex.com.

Tighten up now, before it's too late

What a dandy run we all had from 2002-2007. The U.S. economy hummed along, home construction boomed and credit, sweetened by temptingly low interest rates, flowed to anybody able to draw as much as a single warm breath. Who needed an ATM machine? The equity in our homes spit out cash for everything from pleasure boats to professionally designed and installed landscapes.

Many of you were as busy as you wanted to be, and you crammed as much production into your schedules as manpower and systems allowed.

Wasted time? Wasted materials? Yes, when you're running that fast and furious, details tend to fall through the cracks. Who's brave (or foolish) enough to attempt to change a tire when you're screaming along at 90 mph, right?

Even when things didn't go as smoothly (or profitably) as you would have liked on some jobs, you felt you could make it up on the next one. In most cases, you did. When the work was relatively easy to get and cash was flying in, you might have felt that you could afford to turn your head to a little sloppiness.

That won't cut it anymore.

Market conditions are nasty, the competitive

environment is getting bloodier and business casualties are mounting fast.

There's no reason for us to go into the sorry details of how our economy got into the mess we now find it in. It's history, so let's plow ahead and give ourselves a better chance of succeeding tomorrow and beyond.

That means streamlining our companies now — before we get into breakneck production. What we do in the next few weeks will be critical in preparing our companies for the scariest economic conditions we've yet faced.

Some of you might be going into 2009 confident that you will remain profitable. Others might be struggling to survive. It doesn't matter. Everyone's systems can be improved and made more efficient. Think back to this past season, and you'll agree with me.

Even when you were cranking out work like there was no tomorrow, didn't you sometimes feel like you needed too many last-minute fire drills to complete routine tasks? That too often it wasn't clear who was responsible for what in your company? That there was too much unnecessary duplication of effort?

Dissect your processes from start to finish. Break them into categories — sales, production, quality control, administration, etc. Huddle with key team members and analyze your systems one at a time, step-by-step. Look for wasted time, effort and materials. Be ruthless. Start with the small processes and work toward more complex ones. Small changes often result in big payoffs.

Once you've gone over a process or system, document the changes, communicate them to your employees, implement the changes, then monitor the improved processes to make sure they don't revert back to their inefficient ways. This is a continuous process. Once you start, don't stop.

And don't wait until the season gets hot and heavy. It will be almost impossible to make changes on the fly, and it will almost certainly be too late.

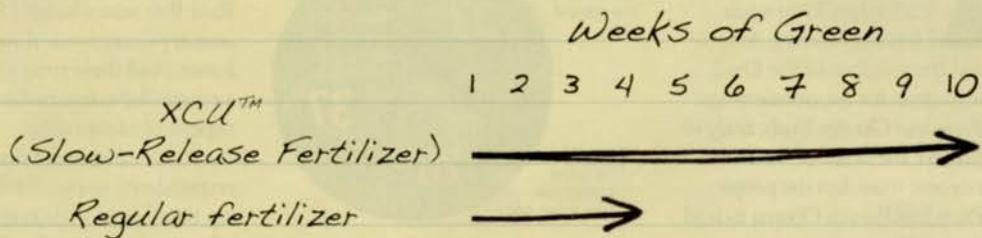
Some of you might be going into 2009 confident that you will remain profitable. Others might be struggling to survive. It doesn't matter. **Everyone's systems can be improved and made more efficient.**

FERTILIZER 101

When the price of fertilizer goes up, how can I save money?

Use MORE slow-release fertilizer for MORE Weeks of Green

- Releases Nitrogen gradually
- Fewer applications, less work
- More time to get new customers
- More profit 😊

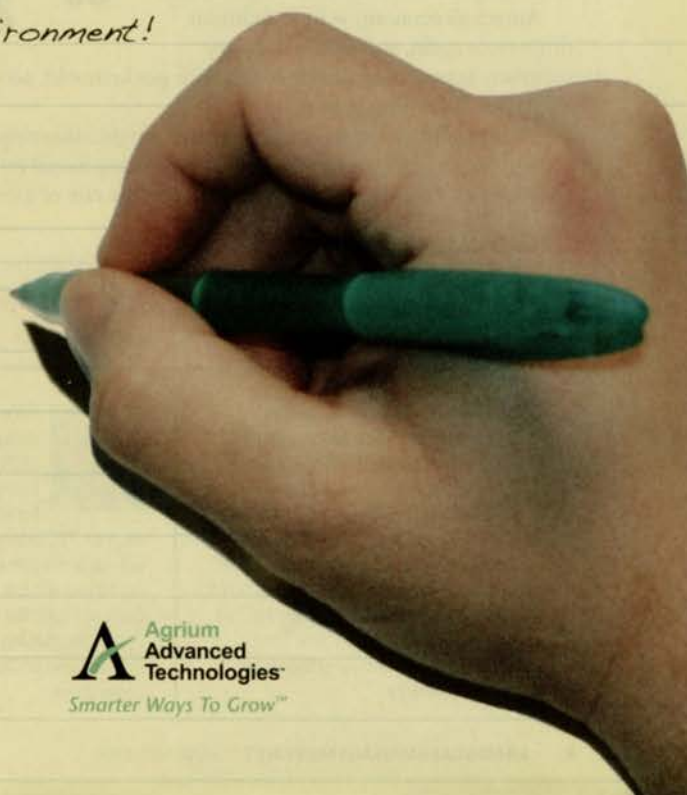


XCU Slow-Release Fertilizer is the best because...

- Keeps grass green up to 10 weeks, ordinary fertilizer lasts 4 weeks
- Most durable coating for gradual, consistent nutrient release
- Highest Nitrogen content, lowest Sulfur content
- Less leaching—better for the environment!



Note to Self
Ask my distributor for a blend with at least 75% slow-release fertilizer. Insist on XCU!



NEWS+VIEWS

GREEN INDUSTRY EVENTS, TRENDS AND TIPS

Obama election driven by economy

BY DAVID FRABOTTA

As the economic recession drags on, Americans are desperate for economic leadership. Ever since Herbert Hoover, Americans have used the resident of the Oval Office as a scapegoat for economic woes.

Former President George Bush, fairly or unfairly, might take the brunt of the criticism for our most-recent woes, but the people will look to President Barack Obama to lead us through the trouble.

Hoover, of course, had the unfortunate timing of taking the oath of office less than a year before the stock market crash of 1929. By 1933, stock prices were down 80% from their highs in 1929, which opened the door for a fiscally minded challenger. Franklin Roosevelt was an effective persuader and exhilarating speaker, who had the ability to reassure Americans the Great Depression would soon come an end.

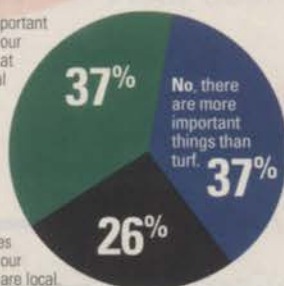
America's economy is in tumultuous times once again, and Green Industry members appear to have voted with their pocketbooks, according to our 2008 Election survey.

Housing foreclosures continue to send a frightening ripple through the banking sector, and jobs data is taking its toll on consumer confidence and spending. Though the rate of increase

Do turfgrass maintenance issues affect your federal voting preferences?

Yes, it's important to address our profession at the national level.

No, most of the issues that affect our profession are local.



What federal issues help dictate your candidate of choice? (please choose three answers)



in foreclosures has slowed in recent months, the overall number of foreclosures continues to climb.

The loss of manufacturing in many Rust Belt states helped fuel much of the country's economic downturn and job losses. And their struggling status has been a reason for concern for economists and superintendents alike.

So it's no wonder that three-quarters of respondents to our 2008 Election survey say they based their voting decisions on who would be best for the economy.

The economy was the most important federal issue for 74% of respondents, followed by national security (59%), taxes (56%) and military conflicts (43%).

Sixty-three percent of respondents said turfgrass maintenance issues do not influence their federal voting preferences, while 37% said it was important to address turfgrass maintenance issues, such as worker availability and chemical regulations, at the national level. Making up the 63% who do not vote on professional issues, 37% said there are more important things than turfgrass, and 26% said most turf maintenance issues are local.

FRABOTTA is a former Questex Media senior editor. He can be reached at info@landscapemanagement.net.

WORD ON THE STREET

Gas prices have dropped about \$2.20 per gallon since last summer. Do you expect these good gas prices to continue throughout 2009?



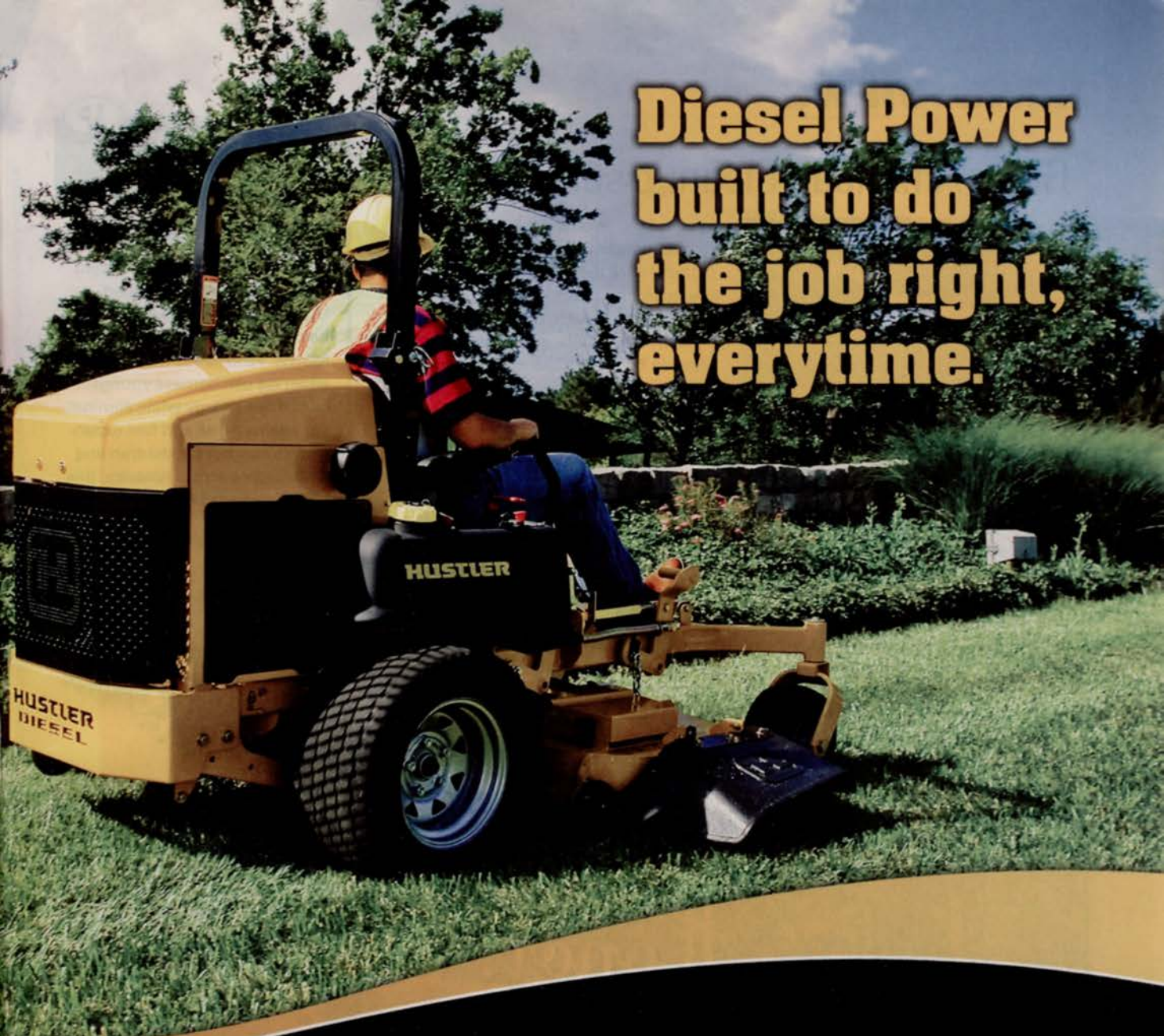
"Based on what I read and the opinions of the companies in my peer group and of a well-known oil executive in Denver I have a relationship with, we think gas will be sub-\$2 per gallon throughout 2009. We are keenly focused on reducing our fuel consumption by, among other tactics, efficiently routing of all of our work, re-evaluating the kind of equipment we use, and trying to travel during off-peak times."
— Tom Fochtman, co-owner and vice president for Denver-based CoCal Landscape



"We expect economic and market pressures to stabilize gas prices in 2009. This should reduce our fuel costs and help stabilize the prices for other oil-based commodities such as PVC piping and fertilizer. This certainly will be a welcome change from the wild swings we have seen the past few years. However, this does not take the pressure off. There are plenty of people chasing less work."
— Todd Williams, vice president of Littleton, CO-based American Civil Constructors



"Demand for fuel is down worldwide and will continue to be. Gas prices will continue to decrease in light of the current economic recession. Fuel represents 2% to 3% of our cost of goods sold, therefore, decreasing fuel prices could add a few percentage points to our bottom line. But it alone will not turn around the business. It will only lighten the burden and price wars going on in our industry."
— Joe Gonzalez, president and owner of Venice, FL-based ArtisTree Nursery Landscape Maintenance & Design



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Great American Cleanup sets record



Volunteers help reconstruct a park ravaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Keep America Beautiful's Great American Cleanup campaign to clean-up and green-up communities in all 50 states, resulted in a record 48,000-plus gardens, green spaces and xeriscapes created in 2008.

"The impact of more than 48,000 gardens nationwide is wonderful to imagine," said Matthew M. McKenna, president and CEO of Keep America Beautiful Inc. "Every one of these public spaces could be providing a quiet place to reflect on nature, food for the community, a gateway for the neighborhood, an activity space for

kids, or even an offset to a community's carbon footprint. We are incredibly thankful to all the volunteers and partners who made this possible."

The movement to create gardens in 2008 involved public-private partnerships between businesses and governments at national, state and local levels. One such partnership involves The Scotts Miracle-Gro Co., which has provided 47 grants to Keep America Beautiful affiliates to support the creation and maintenance of green spaces and community gardens since 2005. This year, Scotts Miracle-Gro also supported a national campaign to educate consumers about the importance of conserving water.

"Green spaces and community gardens provide numerous benefits to our environment and neighborhoods, from protecting our water, to providing a place for relaxation and recreation," said Rich Shank, chief environmental officer for Scotts Miracle-Gro.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT ...

Child Labor . . . 25 Years Ago

In 1984 the United States Patent and Trademark Office issued U.S. Patent No. 4,455,816 for the below-pictured Pedal-Operated Mower. Who needs H2-B visas when we can harness youngsters' boundless energy while eliminating engine noise and fuel expenditures? Luckily for children and landscapers across America, this invention pedaled nowhere fast.



PHOTO COURTESY: KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL; ILLUSTRATION COURTESY: UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE



Photo Courtesy of Master Sgt. Jim Varhegyi, U.S. Air Force

Christmas Decor Congratulates Franchise Owner Phil Fogarty For His Achievement

All of us throughout the Christmas Decor organization offer our sincere congratulations to Phil Fogarty for receiving PLANET's Lifetime Leadership Award. Phil, we gratefully appreciate your service and dedication to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our country who now rest at Arlington National Cemetery. Your philanthropic spirit is an inspiration to us all.

