

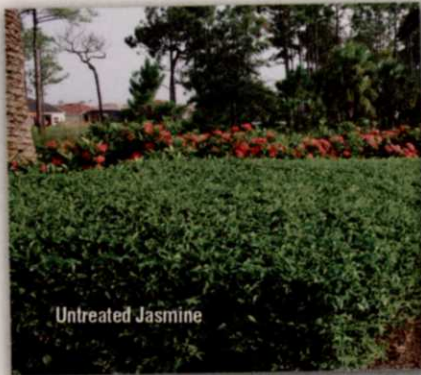
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RAIN  BIRD®

continued from page 10

Rand has solid, hands-on expertise in that arena. She started her marketing and public relations company that specializes in environmental issues after serving as director of communications at the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

But if the majority of the public has yet to embrace green with its wallets, why would anyone suggest, as we now are, that the Green Industry must become greener, and that ultimately

following that path will provide landscape and lawn service providers with its best opportunities for long-term revenue growth and prosperity.

The short answer is the Green Industry might have no choice in the matter.

Government agencies, activist organizations, the state of the economy (the age of extravagant waste is over) and other industries that provide allied services, such as the building industry, will see to that.

ULTIMATE SUSTAINABILITY?

BALLARD, WA — The only aspect of Eco Mow lawn service in danger of not being sustainable might be the legs of its owner/operator. Scott McCredie, 55, bicycles to his job sites, pulling a small trailer loaded with a battery-powered (or corded) mower, a broom, grass shears and, on bigger properties, an electric trimmer.

"The weight starts to add up pretty quickly when you put a mower and few tools on a trailer like that," says McCredie, whose service vehicle is his Jamis Dakota city bicycle.

"The bicycle has 27 speeds so it can handle the hills here — and we have some pretty steep hills, which means I have to go into granny gear and go one mile per hour or less when I'm going up a hill with the loaded trailer," says McCredie, acknowledging it's unlikely he will challenge the likes of TruGreen anytime soon.

"Most of the lawns here are fairly small," he explains. "It usually takes me a half-hour to an hour to mow them."

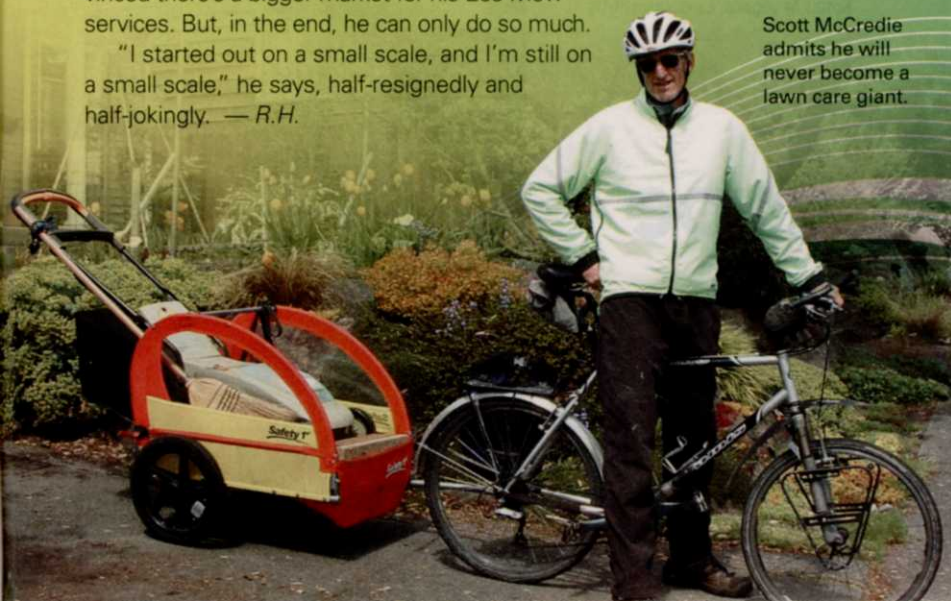
What prompted McCredie, an avid bicyclist and confirmed outdoorsman, to start such a unique (and physically taxing) service two years ago?

"I watched the mow-blow-go guys pull up in their pickup trucks pulling trailers with big gas-guzzling mowers on them, and listened to lawn mower after lawn mower, noisy things in my neighborhood. When I looked into it, I learned that it's polluting on a number of levels, and felt that property owners needed another option," he says.

McCredie says the Seattle area embraces environmental issues, and he's convinced there's a bigger market for his Eco Mow services. But, in the end, he can only do so much.

"I started out on a small scale, and I'm still on a small scale," he says, half-resignedly and half-jokingly. — R.H.

Scott McCredie admits he will never become a lawn care giant.



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Changing standards

Will the public accept this new reality? Evidence suggests yes. Witness how Canadian citizens have accepted the ban on the use of synthetic pest control products on public and private landscapes in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Or how property owners throughout the United States are

changing their landscape irrigation practices because of water agency restrictions or water costs.

Hendrikus Schraven, owner of a successful design/build company in Issaquah, WA, and a decades-long advocate of sustainable practices, says the industry must shift its mindset. Professionals must begin designing and

delivering landscapes that provide clients with ecological benefits in addition to being functional and beautiful.

A conversation Schraven had with a client several decades ago — in this case, Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft — suggests to him that it can be done. “I’m going to put a computer in every home in America,” Gates told Schraven, who found the statement to be more than a bit bold at the time.

“How are you going to do that,” queried Schraven?

“I’m going to change the standard,” he recalls Gates responding in a matter-of-fact voice.

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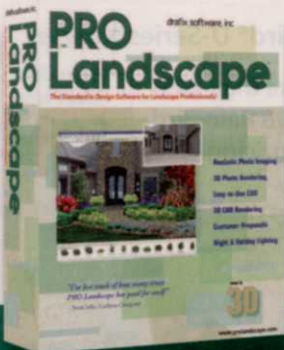


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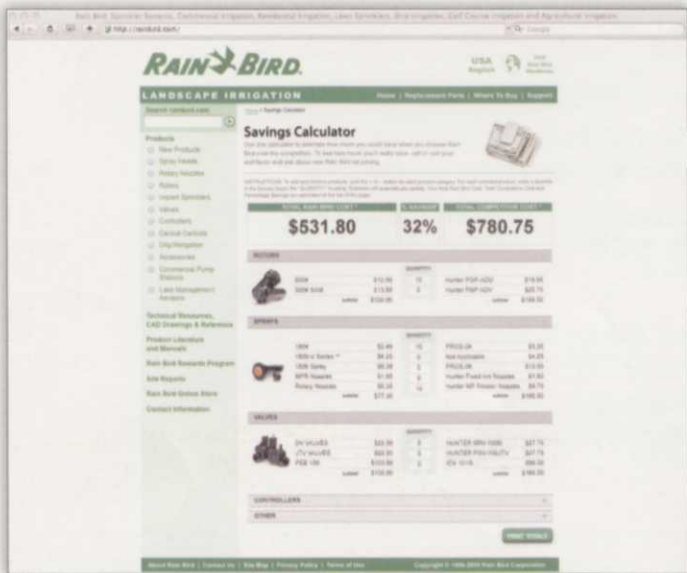
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ESP-Modular	1	\$127.00	\$127.00	PC300I	1	\$162.00	\$162.00	\$35.00
Module Upgrade	1	\$50.00	\$50.00	Module Upgrade	2	\$47.00	\$94.00	\$44.00
5004 Rotor	10	\$12.00	\$120.00	PGP-ADJ	10	\$19.95	\$199.50	\$79.50
1804 Spray	10	\$2.48	\$24.80	PROS-04	10	\$3.35	\$33.50	\$8.70
DV Valve	7	\$22.50	\$157.50	SRV-100G	7	\$27.75	\$194.25	\$36.75
Rotary Nozzle	10	\$5.25	\$52.50	MP Rotator	10	\$9.75	\$97.50	\$45.00
TOTAL \$531.80				TOTAL \$780.75				\$248.95

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Typical Commercial Installation

Rain Bird Model	Qty	Rain Bird List	Total	Hunter Model	Qty	Hunter List	Total	Est. Savings
ESPBLX 120V	1	\$356.00	\$356.00	ICMB00PL	1	\$379.00	\$379.00	\$23.00
Module Upgrade	1	\$129.00	\$129.00	Module Upgrade	1	\$140.00	\$140.00	\$11.00
5004 SAM Rotor	120	\$13.50	\$1,620.00	PGP-ADV	120	\$25.75	\$3,090.00	\$1,470.00
1806 Spray	40	\$9.39	\$375.60	PROS-06	40	\$10.50	\$420.00	\$44.40
PEB 100 Valve	16	\$103.00	\$1,648.00	ICV 101G	16	\$99.00	\$1,584.00	\$64.00
TOTAL \$4,128.60				TOTAL \$5,613.00				\$1,304.40

YOU SAVE \$1,484.40*

*Based on 2009 U.S. Rain Bird, Hunter and Netafim List Pricing effective January 1, 2009.



SSI'S BENCHMARKS A TURNING POINT?



Heather Venhaus

AUSTIN, TX — Heather Venhaus, program director for the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SSI), says the nation's growing green consciousness offers landscape, lawn service and irrigation contractors a "huge opportunity" to increase

the value of their services to customers. In fact, it provides a path for the Green Industry, as a whole, to follow to prosper indefinitely into the future.

"This (the green movement) is about building upon the eco-system services that landscapes provide. It brings a whole new value to the people who design, develop and maintain those landscapes," says Venhaus, headquartered at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin. "We're moving the discussion beyond aesthetics, and toward landscapes that provide cleaner air, cleaner water, more diverse habitats and all of those other special needs."

Get up to speed with SSI, because it promises to affect the landscape industry, perhaps profoundly — and soon because some landscape architects and municipalities already are starting to adopt them.

Briefly, SSI is a collaboration among three organizations — the wildflower center, the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) and the U.S. Botanic Garden — to develop voluntary national guidelines and performance benchmarks for sustainable land design, construction and maintenance practices. These, of course, are services that landscape, lawn service and irrigation contractors perform.

Last fall, SSI published a draft of guidelines and performance benchmarks, seeking comments from stakeholders and the public. The draft represented several years of work by SSI committees and covered topics such as soils, materials, hydrology, vegetation, and human health and well-being. That draft document generated more than 350 responses to SSI, which later this year will publish a full report. SSI is also plan-

ning to launch its pilot project process in 2010. This is where SSI will test its performance benchmarks and make adjustments prior to its eventual incorporation with LEED, perhaps in 2012.

LEED is short for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, an international certification system developed and administered by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC).

In the 11 years since its inception, LEED has become a powerful force in the building industry. During 2008, and counting Jan. 2009, LEED-registered and -certified "green" construction projects doubled from about 10,000 to 20,000, reports the USGBC. As of March 2009, worldwide there were an estimated 101,000 LEED-certified professionals.

While the intent of LEED guidelines is to drive energy efficiency and the adoption of sustainable and human-health practices in building construction and maintenance, some of its provisions focus on the grounds and landscapes that surround buildings, as well.

This attention on the outside environment will grow once SSI folds its guidelines and performance benchmarks into future versions of LEED, creating in essence an expanded scorecard for contractors to track the sustainability of their operations and services on LEED projects.

In light of the number of cities, governmental organizations, corporations and others requiring LEED certification for construction projects, SSI will have a huge impact on any Green Industry contractors working on those projects.

"Until we have guidelines to judge against, everyone can call themselves green, everyone can say they're making a difference," says Venhaus. "Until we can grade, until we have criteria to grade against, we can't make improvement. Once we have benchmarks, we can begin to work toward them, and then push beyond them and raise the bar again."

"Projects like this initiative are providing the will for the landscape industry to demonstrate why its work is important, and to set itself apart from those industries that aren't operating in such a sustainable manner," she says. — R.H.

continued from page 14 The new normal

Schraven, founder of The Hendrikus Group and a 30-year-plus devotee of sustainable landscaping, says he was considered "a weirdo" when he first began promoting his sustainable landscape services, but no longer.

"This isn't the 'in' thing to do any longer," says Schraven. "It's the life thing to do. There shouldn't even be a question on doing it."

Schraven says that healthy, "alive"

soil is the basis for all landscapes. He says the industry must increase its knowledge of soils and must work with builders and developers to insist upon better quality soils. The other option is to remediate soils so that they can nurture healthy plants.

What's the answer? Schraven advises accepting only projects that allow for the remediation of poor-quality soils. Because of The Hendrikus Group's reputation, this strategy works for him. Obviously, most contractors, operat-

ing in the competitive and price-driven landscape services business environment, feel they can't do this.

But they can, says Schraven, particularly if they approach the market with an ecology-based value proposition.

"You do a project right the first time and you pay less later — less plant replacement, water, maintenance. Clients will listen to this," says Schraven.

In 1997, Brad Wolfe started Organo-Lawn, shortly after graduating from the University of Colorado.

COVER STORY

He says he couldn't find a lawn service in Boulder responsive to his concerns about the environment. Sensing a business opportunity, he put together a lawn care company built *mostly* on the use of natural products.

As the company grew — something that happened rapidly, thanks to his university entrepreneurship train-

ing — Wolfe incorporated even more ecologically friendly initiatives into his company. Today, he points to the proprietary natural products that his technicians use to improve customers' lawns, along with the firm's fleet of biodiesel-fueled service vehicles, company-wide recycling efforts, wind-generated energy powering its shop and



Organo-Lawn treats lawns with proprietary, natural, soil-enriching products.

office, and the organically grown cotton shirts its employees wear.

"Organo-Lawn understands these steps are small in comparison to what can be done," Wolfe says. "But, we're continuing to grow and we're always looking at ways to become more sustainable."

In the decade since its founding, Organo-Lawn has grown to be a dominant lawn care firm in Boulder and surrounding communities. Wolfe now eyes the Denver market as he contemplates franchising the Organo-Lawn model.

Schraven and Wolfe are among the growing numbers of Green Industry business owners recognizing the industry is on the threshold of a new era and must make one of two choices. The first is to embrace products and services that enhance the ecology, conserve resources and build diversity within urban landscapes — this in addition to delivering landscapes with lifestyle and aesthetic benefits customers desire.

The other choice is to continue to offer the same services in the same ways, face increasing regulations and realize the possibility of stagnating growth.

Actually, there might be no choice. The possibility exists that the Green Industry will get dragged kicking and screaming into the new era if it doesn't embrace more ecologically sound business decisions on its own. **LM**

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CrestView Job	Planting	—	—	—	7:58	7:49	15:47
		7:38	7:35	7:53	7:58	7:49	38:53

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WORKINGSMARTER

JIM PALUCH

The author is president of JP Horizons Inc. Visit www.jp horizons.com.

Rally your team to a daily win

Imagine you and a friend have just sat down at Game 7 of the NBA Finals, the arena buzzing with electricity. Your team grabs the opening tip and scores the first basket — followed by exuberant cheers. Baskets are traded furiously, yet with each score the crowd grows quieter.

You look up at the scoreboard over center court and there is nothing being reported. No scores, no statistics — just blanks where the numbers should be.

You wonder what is going on as you slump back in your seat. You soon lose interest in watching grown men run up and down a floor for what appears to be no purpose at all.

After about two hours, both groups of men walk off the floor. You and the few remaining people in the arena trudge to the parking lot. On the drive home, you turn on the radio and learn your team won the game by one point with a last-second three-pointer.

How do you feel?

The oversimplified scenario above might border on the absurd, but try to apply the concept to your business. How many of your employees trudge to their cars not knowing whether they won or lost at the end of the day? How many are told the final outcome long after the “game” is over? For companies that Work Smarter, putting up easy-to-understand scoreboards for their teams makes sense — and, ultimately, makes money.

Stroll around your company and see how many scoreboards you can identify. You might be rationalizing that all of your scorekeeping is in the computer and in reports shared with “need-to-knows” at

company meetings. That’s fine, but how does that help employees heading home every evening know whether they won or not?

“Did we win today?” should be a question you and your teammates ask every day. The most important thing, regardless of the answer, is that everyone is able to answer the question. If your employees know the score is being kept, they will strive to win — it is our human nature to want to win and achieve.

Game on

Here are some simple guidelines that will help your players enjoy the game and focus on winning:

- 1. Get visual.** Think about where the scoreboards are at sporting events. They are not hidden; they are a major focal point and constantly being looked at by fans and players. Get your scoreboards up where everyone in the company can see them.
- 2. Keep it simple.** One of the biggest mistakes companies make when it comes to keeping score is trying to track too many things. Determine one or two key indicators, and make sure everyone understands what they mean.
- 3. Train the team.** Spend time coaching the team and help them determine what they need to do to improve scores and earn a victory for the day. Time spent discussing this will pay dividends quickly.
- 4. Celebrate every win.** I’m sure you’ve watched a team win an NBA or NCAA championship: There is an enormous rush onto the court and the celebration begins. Now you might not need to cut down the nets, but you can and should use such victory celebrations to build up your team. Acknowledge the success achieved on the scoreboard, and draw attention to it. The more you make a practice out of doing this, the more opportunities you will have to do it.

Did you win today?

MONTHLY CHALLENGE

Get a very visual scoreboard up somewhere with just one simple measurement on it. Allow your team to decide what they want to measure — and how they will celebrate a victory.

More than 250 Green Industry companies have participated in JP Horizons’ Working Smarter Training Challenge (WSTC), typically saving tens of thousands of dollars annually. To learn whether your organization qualifies to participate in the WSTC, visit www.jp horizons.com/LM.htm today.