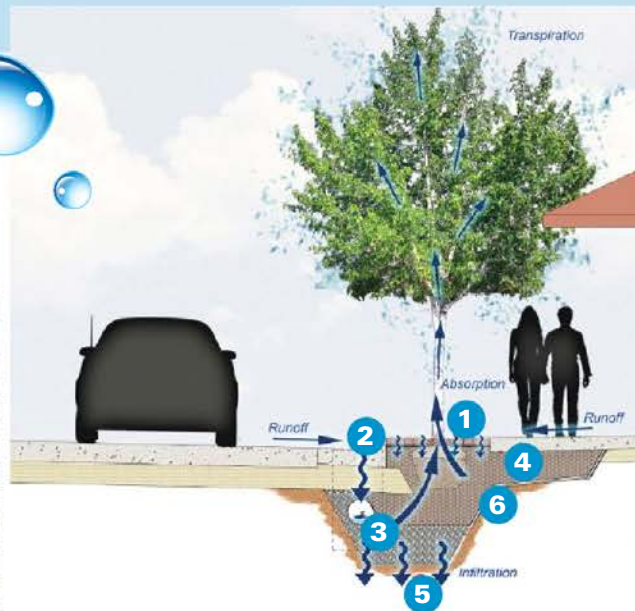




A green roof, like this one on the Target Center in Minneapolis, provides stormwater catchment and energy conservation.



LEGEND

- 1 Permeable pavers
- 2 Catch basin in street curb
- 3 Crushed Granite Infiltration trench & 12" diameter perforated pipe
- 4 Structural soil
- 5 Infiltrating soil
- 6 Impervious PVC barrier

add increased function and value through the introduction of rain water management and low impact design (LID) techniques. Commercial, industrial and residential green spaces can be transitioned into multi-functional landscapes through water management indicators.

**Water: A tool to add value**

Circling back to the opening question, “What the devil does all this “greening” mean for water? A simple answer is: “Greening” through water management in multi-functional landscapes adds value and functionality for our clients and the environment.

The perspective of traditional landscapes is changed by using water as a tool to allow landscapes to be used for multiple purposes. New products and tested practices now provide the Green Industry feasible economic and environmental solutions for new construction and re-development. Water-related technologies increase the capability for landscape and lawn care professionals to transition applicable green spaces from single serving to multi-functional.

We will find that it’s easier for a customer to pull the trigger on projects that have double value on any dollar invested in multi-functional landscapes for water management. Water always wins, regardless of the odds. It’s time to work with water to capitalize on the sustainability marketplace niche. **LM**

quite literally as close as the curb. Efficient water conveyance systems of grey infrastructure result in dirty flushes of water runoff and ambient heat pollution radiating from our asphalt and concrete jungles. From a bird’s eye view, the face of urban areas appears pockmarked from grey infrastructure.

Today, nonpoint source pollution remains the largest contributor to America’s water quality and quantity problems. It is the biggest single reason that 40% of our surveyed rivers, lakes and estuaries are not clean enough to meet basic uses, such as fishing or swimming, says the U.S. EPA. Urban and rural flooding events are increased by runoff from traditional engineering and storm water management.

Parks and private landscapes may have innovative irrigation systems, top-of-the-line construction materials and maintenance techniques, but the greater opportunity is to

*APFELBACHER is Product Manager at 3BIDS, a Sustologist at Sustology and Director of Development at Minnesota Green Roof Council. Contact him at [mapfelbacher@gmail.com](mailto:mapfelbacher@gmail.com).*

# Life without lawns

Faced with an uncertain water future, California water agencies are using cash to entice homeowners to remove their turfgrass lawns.

BY **RON HALL** EDITOR-AT-LARGE

**F**OR 30 YEARS, and until the recent economic slowdown, California's Inland Empire (IE) was one of the fastest growing regions in the U.S. Comprised of portions of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, its population ballooned from 1.55 million to 4.1 million between 1980 and 2008, including a 23% increase over the last decade. While growth has slowed since 2008, it's generally believed that robust growth will eventually return.

This vast, arid region of Southern California, at 27,000 square miles and approximately two-thirds the size of the state of Connecticut, is located 30 miles northeast of Los Angeles. Surrounded by rolling hills and mountains, it has just about everything one could desire in terms of a modern American lifestyle including year-round sunshine, modern infrastructure and plenty of recreational

opportunities. However, with all of these aforementioned amenities, the IE lacks one major core component in maintaining its enviable way of life and necessary for future growth and development. It faces an uncertain water future.

The region receives 11 in. to 15 in. of precipitation and rain annually, depending on geography, and available ground and surface water is not reliable enough to sustain its many bustling communities or allow future growth. Most IE communities supplement the water they draw from underground aquifers or nearby streams with imported water provided by the half-century-old State Water Project that brings water south through the San Joaquin Valley Delta. This is an expensive proposition, The transportation and delivery of this water (each gallon weighs 8.3 lbs.) to the Southern California area consumes

an incredible amount of energy. The State uses an estimated 19% of its available energy treating and transporting water.

The relative scarcity of regional water sources and the expense of providing outside water to this vibrant region of California will almost

certainly mean the downsizing of irrigated lawns and more landscaping with synthetic turf and native plants. Water agencies in the IE have been experimenting with ways to entice homeowners to replace their lawns with low water using plants that will remain healthy, or with synthetic turf or hardscapes. And, for the most part, these programs have been well received and successful, especially when coupled

## CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

- Agree to pre- and post-site inspections
- No restrictions in plant type or site coverage
- No irrigation modification requirement
- Must install permeable surfaces
- No reinstallation of cool-season turfgrass

with financial incentives. This is an increasingly common strategy by water authorities throughout the arid U.S. Southwest.

Lisa Morgan-Perales, Water Resources Analyst II, IEUA, describes a 19-month project by the Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA) to evaluate the public's interest in replacing turfgrass with low-water-use plants and surfaces. She says the program was patterned after similar programs implemented by the Southern Nevada Water Agency and the Crescenta Valley Water District.

The IEUA is a regional wholesale water supplier and wastewater treatment provider serving eight retail water agency members – the cities of Chino, Chino Hills, Ontario, Upland and the Cucamonga Water District, Fontana Water Company, Monte Vista Water District and the San Antonio Water Company.

The IEUA began developing the program in the spring of 2007 and launched it in December of the same year. It ran for 19 months, concluding in July 2009. Initially the program had been budgeted with \$50,000 to convert 30 residential landscapes. A year after its initiation it received additional funding expanding the budget to \$240,620 to cover the expense of 136 residential conversions. Participants were paid \$2 a sq. ft. per conversion with a minimum



of 400 sq. ft. being converted. The maximum allowable rebate per property was \$2,000 or 1,000 sq. ft. removed.

Once a member agency received an application to be included in the project from a homeowner to be a part of the project, the agency did a pre-site inspection that included photographing the site. At the conclusion of the Program, the member agencies conducted post-site inspections of the participating properties, again photographing the sites to document the changes, and sent the information to the IEUA for final review and payment to the participants.

Morgan-Perales says the project resulted in 186,446 sq. ft. of turfgrass being replaced with low-water-use plants and approximately 28,320 sq. ft. of artificial turf and other low-water-using surfaces on homeowners' properties. This resulted in an estimated water savings of 26 acre feet per year. An acre foot of water is the amount of water it takes to cover an acre of flat land with a foot of water —325,851 U.S.gallons.

In assessing the project, Morgan-Perales describes how the converted properties were classified, using subjective visual criteria, into three categories:

▶ **Models of Success**, 61 properties, landscape design contains a high percentage of plant coverage or a mixture of plant and non-permeable materials

Water authorities in the U.S. Southwest are promoting smaller areas of maintained turfgrass on residential properties as evidenced by this conversion in Montclair, CA.

▶ **Alternative Landscapes**, 23 properties, landscape design contains a higher percentage of “other” plant (non-native plant) coverage and may contain a higher percentage of hardscape

▶ **Made the Grade**, 52 conversions, Landscape design contains a high percentage of permeable paving surfaces with minimal plant coverage.

Morgan-Perales says analysis of the results of the project suggested similarly focused future turf removal projects require each applicant to submit a mandatory site plan with live plants covering a minimum percentage of the design, require that participants modify their irrigation systems and require that eligible project areas include the front yard.

Beyond that, the IEUA would like to develop and circulate a “recommended plant/materials list” and increase the maximum conversion area while lowering the rebate amount, she says.

All in all, the project that ended in July 2009 was positive on several fronts, she adds, including building the IEUA's recognition and strengthening customer relations between agency staff and the public. **LM**

## IN THE PROGRAM

- ▶ Encouraged to install low-water-consuming plant materials
- ▶ Encouraged to modify existing irrigation with drip or subsurface irrigation technologies
- ▶ Maintain converted landscaping for five years
- ▶ Agree to water usage monitoring for five years

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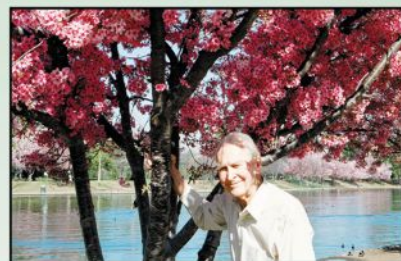
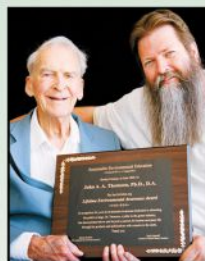
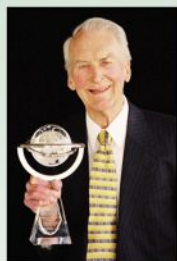
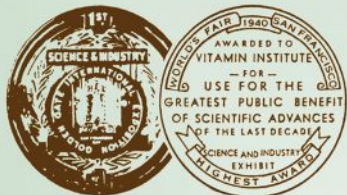
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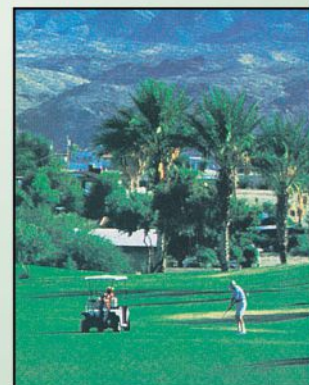
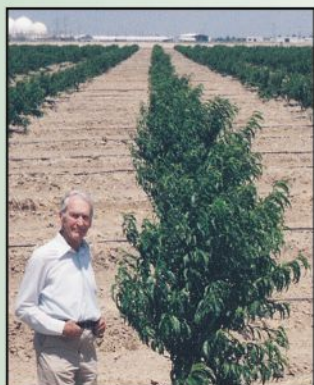
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By John A. A. Thomson, Ph.D., D.A.



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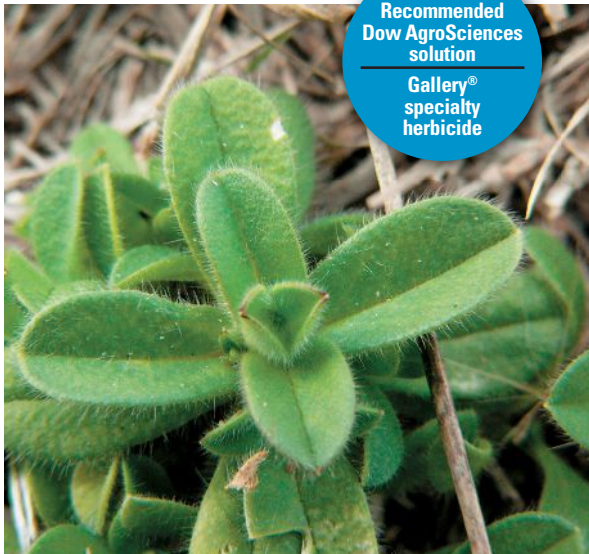


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## MOUSE-EAR CHICKWEED

*Cerastium vulgatum*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This spreading, mat-forming perennial prominently features hairy, prostrate stems.
- ▶ Its small white flowers have five notched petals that bloom in late spring.
- ▶ Leaves are noticeably hairy or fuzzy, long and narrow, and grow opposite; like the weed's common name, they resemble mouse ears.
- ▶ Commonly found in lawns, pastures and cultivated fields, mouse-ear chickweed spreads by seed, but can root at the nodes.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Preventive practices can discourage infestation. Improve soil drainage and decrease shade if possible.
- ▶ Nitrogen fertility, liming and aeration will encourage a dense stand of turf, minimizing potential for mouse-ear chickweed establishment.
- ▶ Apply a pre-emergent broadleaf herbicide such as isoxaben prior to germination.



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## ANNUAL BLUEGRASS

*Poa annua*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This erect, or clump-forming, annual grass tolerates close mowing.
- ▶ It is light green in color, especially compared to the dark green of related turfgrasses.
- ▶ Leaves are keeled, and feature a distinctive boat-shaped tip.
- ▶ Once soil temperatures fall below 70° Fahrenheit, germination of *Poa annua* will begin.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Develop a dense, healthy turf to reduce sunlight at the soil surface.
- ▶ Keep soil phosphorous levels in the low-to-medium range.
- ▶ Cultural practices can reduce *Poa annua*, but herbicides are needed for superior control.
- ▶ *Poa annua* produces most of its seedheads in the spring. Apply a pre-emergent grass herbicide, such as dithiopyr, prior to germination of seedlings.

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**LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT** (ISSN 0894-1254) is published monthly (12 issues per year) by Questex Media Group LLC, 306 W Michigan St, Suite 200, Duluth, MN 55802. **Subscription rates:** one year, \$54, two years \$76 in the United States & Possessions; \$87 for one year, \$127 for two years in Canada and Mexico; all other countries \$165 for one year, \$246 for two years. For airmail delivery, include an additional \$75 per order annually. Single copies (pre-paid only): \$8 in the United States; \$10 in Canada and Mexico; \$15 all other countries. Back issues, if available: \$16 in the U.S.; \$20 in Canada and Mexico; \$30 all other countries. Add \$6.50 per order for shipping and handling. Periodicals postage paid at Duluth, MN 55808 and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Please send address changes to Landscape Management, P.O. Box 1268, Skokie, IL 60076-8268. Canadian G.S.T. number: 840 033 278 RT0001. Publications Mail Agreement Number 40017597. Printed in the U.S.A.



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# MYBIGGESTMISTAKE

LESSONS LEARNED THE HARD WAY » BY CASEY PAYTON



Joel Korte's business was strong but depended heavily on only a few major accounts. When he lost one of them — and 30% of his business with it — he realized an important lesson.



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**OWNER:** Joel Korte (now division vice president for Brickman)

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**BEST ADVICE:** Never let one client pose too much risk to your business and, as owner, try not to be the only one with the job of selling work and growing the business.

**I**N 2001, BUSINESS was not only strong and stable but growing for Joel Korte, then-owner of Urban Environments, Inc., in Columbus, OH (Korte has since sold his business to Brickman, and is now a divisional vice president at the \$667 million company).

"I was about a \$6-million or \$7-million company at the time, and the business had largely grown with me being the primary salesperson, something not uncommon for this industry," explains Korte. "I'd built relationships with a number of commercial developers in our market. And as long as we continued to do good quality work and remain competitively priced, these developers continued to give us business and, as a result, help us grow our company."

Among Urban Environment's largest clients was a national developer that had offices in not only Columbus but multiple other cities across the country. Urban Environments did about 75% to 85% of that firm's local work in Columbus, making it a big account for Korte. In fact, that account alone brought in 30% of his overall revenue. Everything was going great until Korte had what he says was a big "wake-up call."

"A large national landscape company ended up pursuing this developer on

a national basis and the developer made a deal for that landscape company to manage *all* of its markets," he recalls. "It wasn't something I could even compete with. The deal was that the landscape company took over the work in all of the developer's cities."

Overnight Korte had lost 30% of his revenue — just like that. "What a wake-up call!" he remembers. "I had to ask myself, 'How did I allow one client to become this big of an exposure to my business and not protect myself?' I may not have had *all* of my eggs in one basket, but I certainly had more eggs in one basket than I should have had."

But Korte says this story has a happy ending, and he learned a valuable lesson. At the time, he was doing 80% to 90% of the sales work for Urban Environments himself. He saw himself as the *only* person who could sell and grow the business. But the minute he saw that large amount of revenue disappear, he knew he couldn't make up the difference alone.

"I immediately turned to two key individuals in my company who were managing operations at the time," says Korte. "I said, 'Tomorrow you're going to be salespeople.' We didn't have a lot of time to respond to this loss of

business. We either had to accept being 30% smaller or get out there right away to replace this lost business with new business."

In the end, Korte was not only able to replace that lost 30%, but grew another 10% on top of it. He says it was an important moment in his business. "In the past, I always depended on myself, thinking I was the only person who could really sell the business," says Korte. "But it was only a matter of taking the time to teach two other individuals the things I knew about selling to increase our sales. If I can sell \$500,000, and I can get someone else to do what I'm doing, I'm now selling \$1 million."

The lesson is an easy one to grasp, Korte says. "It's simple thinking, but too many business owners struggle to look past themselves," he explains. "That's very limiting."

Korte's advice to landscape business owners: "Don't be afraid to look within your own company and beyond yourself for ways you can grow sales."

The other big moral of the story is to never let one client pose that much risk to business. "You just never know what could happen," Korte warns. "Something may never happen to you, but it could happen to them. They may go out of business or hire a new company — things that are out of your control. You have to be prepared."

The author is a freelance writer with six years of experience covering landscaping.