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You've got enough things to worry about. But with **Drive® XLR8 herbicide**, rain isn't one of them. Our new liquid formulation is rainfast in just 30 minutes. And a single application quickly controls a broad spectrum of broadleaf and grassy weeds — from crabgrass and foxtail to clover and dandelion — even at low use rates per 1,000 square feet. Let it rain. You've got **Drive XLR8**.



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# LMREPORTS

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## IRRIGATION: DRIP UNITS

### Hunter Industries

Hunter's Professional Landscape Dripline applies water slowly and evenly for consistent distribution. Water soaks in gradually, easily reaching its intended goal. It incorporates a pressure compensated and check valve emitter that prevents clogging and keeps water in the tubing between cycles. It's flexible- and kink-resistant, with industry-standard flows and spacing. [HunterIndustries.com](http://HunterIndustries.com)



### Rain Bird

As the latest innovation in the Rain Bird Xerigation Family, the XF-SDI Series Sub-surface Dripline offers up to 90% watering efficiency for turf grass, shrubs and groundcover. Because the dripline is buried underground, it is unaffected by wind, evaporation or vandalism, effectively watering plants and turf while using 30% to 70% less water than overhead sprays. The patent-pending Copper Shield Technology protects dripline emitters from root intrusion without the use of chemical-treated filters. [RainBird.com/drip/index.html](http://RainBird.com/drip/index.html)

### John Deere Water

Ro-Drip's patented design employs two independent anti-plugging systems: Vortex Flow Action, which resists clogs by keeping particulate in suspension; and the exclusive Expanding Flow Channel, which reacts to blockages by actually changing shape, often pushing even the toughest particulate build-up. [JohnDeereWater.com](http://JohnDeereWater.com)



### The Toro Co.

Pre-packaged and ready for installation, Toro Drip Zone Valve Kits provide everything you need for drip zone automation. Choose from Toro EZ-Flo Plus or TPV valves for residential and light commercial applications, or the 700 Series UltraFlow valve for commercial and institutional applications. Toro's Y-Filter features a 150-mesh stainless steel screen filter to assure clog-free operation. Kits also include a pressure regulator to prevent emitter blowouts, as well as needed fittings. [Toro.com](http://Toro.com)

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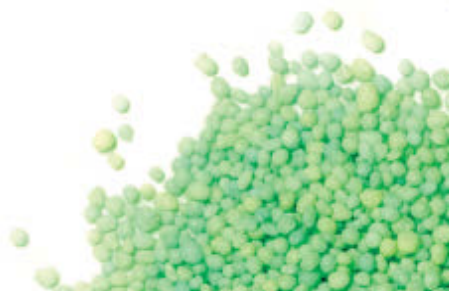
Your turf gets the nutrients you're paying for with XCU Slow-Release Fertilizer. Each XCU granule delivers the most bang for your buck of any Polymer-Coated, Sulfur-Coated Urea (PCSCU) thanks to its superior, more durable coating technology. When using XCU in your blends, you can be assured of a consistent, more predictable nutrient release for healthy, green turf.

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**John Gibson** was well on his way to an electrical engineering degree when a summer job cutting lawns for Tom Garber, a former president of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA) changed his plans. Gibson joined Swingle in 1991, starting in ground maintenance. From there, he took over care/plant health care and eventually was named director of operations, overseeing acquisitions, geographic expansion and technology upgrades and implementation.

**You became president of Swingle in the fall of 2008. What do you see as your chief responsibility within the company?** My primary role is to lead and motivate our team to accomplish our goals in line with our overall strategic plan. This includes maintaining our strong culture, coordinating the activities of our executive team, overseeing our financial management and, of course, leading our team.

**What changes have you seen in the Denver-area lawn care market since joining Swingle?** The industry has matured dramatically, but there continues to be many new companies starting up in our market. Most of them are small, but the individuals running them are strong and some are entrepreneurial. Of course, there are more than a few not-so-professional operators, too. Swingle's focus remains — as it's always been — about keeping our promises. As our business

grows, we keep growing our highly trained, professional staff. We are capable of helping our customers with almost every service their landscapes require.

**Describe the state of the economy in your market and its effect, if any, on professional lawn care services.** The local economy started to slip in the fall of 2007, which continued throughout 2008 — and by the spring of 2009, it reached its lowest point. This spring, we're seeing modest recovery in our other services, especially tree work, but we think it will probably be the spring of 2011 before lawns start to pick up to the level we would like to see them.

**Swingle's market, the Front Range of the Colorado Rockies, gets lots of sunshine and**

**mild temperatures, but is semi-arid with not-infrequent droughts. What does this mean for lawn care?** Basically, it means we have to be aware of and educate our customers about any water restrictions we may currently have. It also means we have to focus on teaching our customers how to water for the best results over the long run, so restrictions don't dramatically change the look of their lawns.

**You have served on many industry committees and taken leadership roles both in Colorado and nationally, as a past president of the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET). What have you learned from these experiences?** I was encouraged by the example of the mentor I work for at Swingle, Tom Tolkaacz. Industry involvement

## AT A GLANCE

**COMPANY:** Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care

**FOUNDED:** 1947

**TITLE:** President

**NUMBER OF LOCATIONS:** Two (Denver and Fort Collins, CO)

**INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT:** Chair for the Irrigation Landscape Industry Certified Technician Test for the Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado; director for the Green Industries of Colorado (GreenCo); past chairman of GreenCO's Water Efficient Leaders in Landscape Program; past president of the Colorado Association of Lawn Care Professionals; former VP of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (now part of the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET)); past president, PLANET.

**EDUCATION:** B.S. business management from the University of Phoenix

**WEBSITE:** [myswingle.com](http://myswingle.com)

has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my personal and professional development. It's allowed me to get to know and to learn from and share with the best people in our industry.

**MY ROLE IS TO MOTIVATE OUR TEAM TO ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS IN LINE WITH OUR STRATEGIC PLAN**



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With all the things you have to do, you don't have time to wait around for your sedge control to start working. That's why FMC Professional Solutions formulated Dismiss for faster, visible control against yellow nutsedge, green kyllinga and purple nutsedge\* than any other product.

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\*For purple nutsedge, two applications of Dismiss turf herbicide are recommended for optimal control. Always read and follow label directions. FMC and Dismiss are trademarks of FMC Corporation. ©2010 FMC Corporation. All rights reserved.

# WEEDWATCH

STANDING SENTINEL TO PROTECT PLANT HEALTH



## ANNUAL LESPEDEZA

*Lespedeza striata*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ Summer annual features small, inconspicuous purple flowers and three slender oval leaves per node, with pronounced and pinnate veins. Hairs on stems point down.
- ▶ Grows all summer and blooms from August through October.
- ▶ Prostrate in structure, it thrives in areas where turf is thin. It grows so close to the ground that it is rarely cut with a mower.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ In early spring, apply a pre-emergent herbicide labeled for lespedeza control.
- ▶ Maintain a dense, actively growing turf through proper mowing, fertilizing and watering practices.
- ▶ If you use a post-emergent herbicide, it is best to apply in late spring or early summer to allow the turfgrass a greater chance to fill in areas previously occupied by this weed.



## KYLLINGA

*Cyperus brevifolius*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ Dark-green, narrow, ridged leaves have a shiny, grass-like appearance.
- ▶ Tightly bunched round seed heads sit on spikes.
- ▶ Flowers bloom from May to October on three-sided triangular stems.
- ▶ This perennial plant forms dense mats, and thrives with low mowing — preferring wet, poorly drained soils.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Control soil moisture, because excessive moisture encourages growth and germination.
- ▶ Low, routine mowing heights reduce its persistence.
- ▶ Make multiple post-emergent applications of an arsonate herbicide like MSMA, or sulfonyleurea-type herbicides like halo-sulfuron or penoxsulam.

For more information regarding these and other turf weeds — and related control technologies and tips — please visit [www.DowProvesIt.com](http://www.DowProvesIt.com) or call 800/255-3726.

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## BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

The author is a partner with the Wilson-Oyler Group consultancy. Visit [www.wilson-oyler.com](http://www.wilson-oyler.com).

# Optimize crew size

**A**mong the frequently asked questions I receive is “What is the ideal crew size?” While on the surface it sounds like this should have a simple answer, it’s really quite complex. There are just as many factors favoring small crews as those favoring larger crews. Let’s take a look at six of the most common.

**1. Job size.** It’s nearly impossible to efficiently do a small job with a large crew. This is especially true of a route made up of small jobs. If a crew has to make four or five stops per day to service the route, things such as travel time, set-up time and loading time can eat into efficiency. The larger the crew, the more time is lost to non-revenue producing activities — making small crews more efficient on small jobs.

An exception might be if the small jobs were all in one industrial park, and the same crew could work numerous jobs simultaneously. Cost tracking is difficult, but should not be reason enough not to do it.

**2. Route density.** While every good manager strives to improve route density, it rarely is perfect. Four- to six-man crews can be efficient on large sites (one to three sites per day), as long as there aren’t long drives between jobs. Crew sizes of two to three people work well for mixed job size routes with varying job density.

**3. Average hourly wage.** The larger crew usually has a lower average hourly wage than a smaller crew, because a lower-paid crew offsets the crew leader’s higher wage. A simple example is a \$12/hr foreman with two \$9/hr laborers. This crew has an average hourly wage cost of \$10. Compare that to a \$14/hr foreman with five \$9/hr laborers, which creates an average hourly wage of \$9.83. The wage savings alone with the larger crew contributes 1.7% to the bottom line.

Understanding and managing average hourly

wage can be a significant factor in improving profitability, especially if combined with right-sizing crew to other factors.

**4. Crew leader qualifications.** While larger crews can have advantages of size and lower cost, they mean nothing if the crew leader cannot manage properly and crew members get in one another’s way. Large crews need good crew leaders, with leadership being the driving factor. Many crew leaders are the best workers — or in some cases, the person with the driver’s license. If this is the case, that person might be ineffective at managing five people and keeping them all operating efficiently.

With small crews, the job of leadership is important, but is much simpler: The hard-working crew leader’s personal impact is more significant.

**5. Equipment availability and efficiency.** Smaller crews require a company to have more vehicles on the road. We all know that has a higher cost and greater liability exposure. Large crew trucks may have a higher initial cost, and big trailers might be harder to drive safely — but long-term, the cost is lower because you can derive higher revenue per hour per vehicle and dollar of capital investment.

**6. Job requirements.** A larger job that might be more efficiently serviced by a large crew requires someone on-site daily. Perhaps the client wants the whole job mowed in one day, requiring a large crew. In these and similar situations, you may find that individual job requirements dictate crew size.

Crew right-sizing and route optimization can be a big profit driver for a landscape maintenance company. The right crew size for a company is probably a combination of large and small routes and crew sizes. Based on the above, the best practice is to understand and manage the variables and to plan out the most efficient and effective combination of factors in constructing your routes and crew sizes.



# SNOW+ICE

## GUIDE

# Liquid saves the season

When salt supplies dried up, this Michigan contractor knew it was time to try something different — or suffer through another tough winter.

BY DANIEL WEISS



New sprayer models feature lightweight construction for reduced stress on the vehicle and in-cab controllers for convenient operation from inside the cab.

PHOTO COURTESY: BOMEX, A DIVISION OF TRINEX INTERNATIONAL

**T**HE PROBLEMS OF THE WINTER of 2007-2008 were not going to be repeated, I promised myself, heading into this past snow and ice management season. As you may remember, in mid-season 2008, salt ran out. There was little warning, a few rumors, grumblings from vendors, but little clarity. Salt deliveries were on the way — yet, by about February (at least in Michigan), the salt was gone. First it slowed to a dribble, and then like the drying action of a bread-and-butter snow melt, it was just gone.

Here's what we heard in our market: There are two major deposits of salt in the United States, one stretching from northern Ohio into Michigan and the other in Louisiana and northeast Texas. Curiously, much of the salt in Michigan, where we offer services, is sold elsewhere, out of state. Barges travel down the Mississippi with grain and bring back salt. But because of record-high fuel prices and the big push to produce bio-fuels, grain that ordinarily would have been shipped south stayed in the Midwest to be turned into bio-fuel. Fewer barges going south empty helped push up the price of the salt coming back. Eventually the stores of salt available for transport ran out.

This wasn't a new development. It started the previous winter — with the economy in the dumper, a record snowfall in our region of the country and salt, when it was available, at previously

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PUT YOUR  
**RIGHT WING OUT**  
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