

# FASTEST TURF

## ● HAPPY TURF REPEATERS —

U.S. Air Force, W.W. II. U.S. Navy, salty muck. U.S. National institutes of Health. Masters Golf Course. U. of Cal, turfgrass specialists. Hollywood Park & Santa Anita Race Tracks. Golf Associations' Home Course, turf grass researchers. State Highway Departments. Sod Farms. Countless parks systems and landscape contractors. Palm Springs, saved desert greens

## ● SAVE 2/3 of GRASS SEED WAIT DAYS?

*Example - Maryland State Highway Dept.: one week vs. three.*

## ● OR – as U.S. civil service head groundsman said: - “We’ve never seen grass up so fast! Now 3 or 4 days from sowed seed routinely!”

## ● Used by U.S. Air Force to control dust on dirt flying fields, World War II.

## ● HOT or COLD - DRY or WET - Another “making impossibles easy” When 115°F (46°C) to 122°F (50°C) daily in Palm Springs, CA.

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Typical California green kept green and smooth by Monday a.m. *SUPERthrive*® spraying.

WORKED WONDERS ON 400 TREES WE PLANTED. *SUPERthrive*® is a blessing. *SUPERthrive*® kept the greens alive and together through the dry summer days. It also keeps roots penetrating in COLD weather.”

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## ● Guinness Book of Records, “*Biggest ever moved.*” Standardly, with *SUPERthrive*®, contractors and parks claim to **ACCEPT NO LOSS** of trees. Worldwide (though no salesmen.)

*Biggest ever moved enabled by SUPERthrive®*

## ● 100% of 2000 *SUPERthrive*® dealers asked at trade shows said they are “aware that *SUPERthrive*® **revives** shrubs and trees with as little as green under their bark.”

## ● **Saving** 50,000 Mojave Desert trees and plants, for U.S. Bureau of Land Management.



Live Oak Tree

## MORE UNIQUE FACTS -

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## ● Regularly helps win American Rose, Orchid, Hibiscus, Bromeliads, etc., Societies' flowering plant competitions.

## ● Said U.S.D.A. head grower scientist - “**Far more growth** above and below ground than when fertilizers used alone.”

## ● Over 500 parks systems heads wrote that nothing **works** so well.

## ● Tested, bought, taught, used for turf, plants, trees, by a great number of state university campuses, *Since 1940.*

## ● Famed offer-proof:- Since 1940, unchallenged, \$5,000 guaranteed to be world champion **Activator, Reviver, Trans/Planter, Extra Grower, and Perfecter.** — Far Best. Unique. **Nothing is at all “like” it.**

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[ CASE STUDIES ON GROWTH ]

# Signature solutions

## Government work helped Signature Contracting Services grow 18%. BY LINDSEY GETZ

MARSHA NEWBERRY, OWNER of Signature Contracting Services, LLC in Grand Prairie, TX, says she can't pinpoint just one reason why the company has been so successful this year. "It's the whole picture," she says. "There are a multitude of reasons."

The top two are diversification and customer loyalty. While she's heard other companies tell prospective clients they "don't do that type of work," Newberry says Signature doesn't like to say 'No' to future clients and have been diversified from the beginning in the type of services they offer their all-commercial base. That includes everything from mowing to erosion control and construction and street work. In terms of creating customer loyalty, she says it's simple — they build great customer relationships from day one. "We have really deep customer relationships," she

says. "It's mostly because we make them feel comfortable from the start. We have a conference room here with couches and big televisions where we hold meetings. Our clients always feel welcome. And, of course, we follow through with great work performance."

This year, despite a down economy, Signature is projecting 18% growth. In some ways, Newberry says, the economic situation has actually helped her business, due to the type of work they do. In fact, while most landscape companies have no construction work going right now, that division has actually grown for Signature. "That's mostly because of the large contracts we work on, which the Federal government has put money out for," she explains, adding that Signature is a certified business. "We have certainly reaped the benefits on those types of jobs, and it's also the type of work where you know you're going to get paid since the government has laid the money out."

While they've had a great year, Newberry says it wasn't without challenges, and the economic situation did have some negative effect on the business in terms of cash flow. "Probably one of the largest challenges we face today is that the banking industry does not want to let go of money and that makes it difficult to get cash flow for big projects," she says. "We're a small company with many big projects, so that's a real issue for us."

As a result, Newberry says that she's really started watching the company's money a lot closer. "I will call clients before it gets to the 90-day period and discuss the payment with them," she says. "Staying on top of your accounts receivable in a down economy is highly important. People who used to pay right away will wait the whole 90 days now. Being on top of that has helped us continue to succeed. Nobody is going to watch your own money as closely as you do."

Despite some cash flow challenges, Newberry feels fortunate to be one of the few companies that did grow this year. "We definitely feel lucky," she says. "And we'll continue to work hard for another good year." LM

GETZ is a freelance writer with experience covering the lawn care and landscape industry.

### GROWTH PROFILE

Signature Contracting Services

Grand Prairie, TX

2010 Growth: 18%



Marsha Newberry

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[ CASE STUDIES ON GROWTH ]

# Back to basics

Improving client connections helped Stay Green stay out of the red. BY LINDSEY GETZ

OPERATING FROM THE garage of their home in the San Fernando Valley, Richard and Charlene Angelo launched Stay Green, Inc. in 1970 with a truck, a handful of residential customers and a vision.

Richard's sense of professionalism drove customer satisfaction, and the business grew quickly through referrals. Today, the company has more than 200 employees working in three divisions — landscape maintenance, plant health care and tree care.

In tough times, sticking to the basics of where one started really counts, says Chris Angelo, president of the Santa Clarita, CA-based business and son of Richard and Charlene. That's what's helped Stay Green grow the business despite a challenging economy. "It's why we got into the business in the first place — or, for me, why my father founded it — and that's to provide exceptional customer service," he says.

In trying times, Chris Angelo believes it's more important than ever to be connected to the client. "We do not lose sight of the clients and what they need," he says. "We achieve that with things like monthly walk-throughs and working with them to find solutions that will help them stick to their budgets. These include water retrofits, water efficiency savings or changing annual color beds to perennials."

These types of efforts, have kept client retention above 95% this year, despite the economy, Chris Angelo says. He's also been empathetic toward his clients who are struggling, and that effort has been appreciated. "We recognize most landlords who own commercial properties, whether office or retail, have conceded rent rates as much as 30%," he says of his all-commercial base. "That means we've had to be flexible enough to provide them with a price that fits their budget this year. That flexibility and willingness to work with them has allowed us to keep high retention rates."

Stay Green focuses largely on landscape maintenance and grew that division by 9% this year, which Angelo sees as a great success during the recession.



Chris Angelo

Overall revenue is tracking to grow slightly, but any growth in this market is also a success.

In addition to a focus on customer relations, Angelo says growth was also achieved with smart planning. "The secret to success is aligning our estimating with our current productivity," he says. "That means working on productivity efficiencies in operations and building specifications that work for the different client market segments."

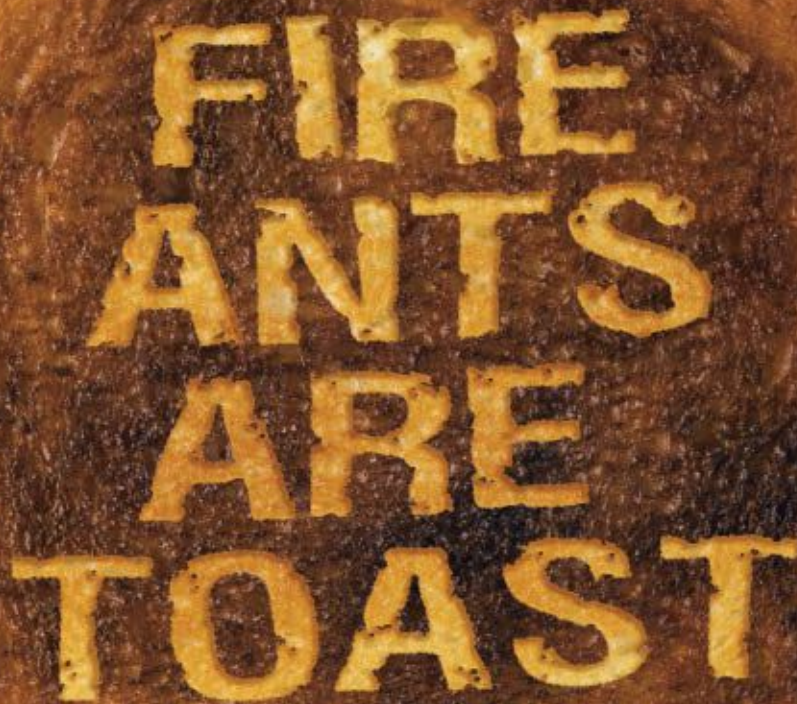
Of course, Angelo also recognizes he can't do any of this without good employees, and he's turned some of the focus on them as well. In fact, he says helping them through these difficult times has been one of his biggest challenges. "The most difficult thing is morale in today's economy," he says. "People we work side-by-side with are having financial challenges of their own, and it's tough to keep their spirits up in these darker days. We have employees who have spouses who lost jobs and no longer have a dual income. That's a reality for many."

Angelo says he has made a real effort to boost morale this year. "We are offering more company appreciation programs, including a picnic that will have around 400 or 500 people in attendance," he says. "We're doing what we can to keep our employees motivated." **LM**

GETZ is a freelancer with experience covering landscaping.

## GROWTH PROFILE

Stay Green  
Santa Clarita, CA  
2010 Growth: 5%



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ARE  
TOAST

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[ CASE STUDIES ON GROWTH ]

# Persistence pays off

Urban Farmer found the work it wanted and chased it until it was theirs. BY LINDSEY GETZ

The Urban Farmer management team.



## GROWTH PROFILE

Urban Farmer  
Thornton, CO  
2010 Growth: 4.5%

GETTING TO THIS point was a lot of hard work, but Urban Farmer, a Thornton, CO-based full-service landscape, irrigation, reclamation and maintenance firm, is tracking 4.5% growth for the year. How did they do it? One word, says Sean Lynam, business development manager: “Persistence.” “It came down to finding the work we wanted to chase and staying after it until we got it,” he says. “When bidding, we were also persistent in finding the target number and making it happen.”

Like so many other successful landscape firms, when times were good, Urban Farmer had a lot of jobs coming in. Sales didn’t have to be too aggressive and could almost pick and choose the jobs they wanted. But in this economy, every job counts and Lynam says their persistence has paid off — though he admits, it was a lot of work to achieve that success. “We really chase down leads now,” he continues. “In the past, there was so much more to bid that you didn’t have to be as tenacious. That’s certainly not the case today.”

Once Urban Farmer gets a job, it makes every effort to keep it. “We’ve always been about customer

service, but now more than ever, if our customers ask us to do something, we do it,” Lynam says of the mostly commercial clientele they work with. “And we handle it when they need it — even if our bid table is busy we find the time to fit it in. Basically, whatever they need, they get.”

This year, Urban Farmer’s maintenance division is seeing the strongest growth. Though construction/installation is their larger division (60%), Lynam says maintenance (which accounts for 30%) is holding up better in the tough economic times. “Probably because all our property managers and other customers have to spend money that’s allotted for maintenance or it doesn’t come back next year in their budgets,” he hypothesizes. “Though in this area, con-

struction is at least holding steady.”

One adaptation the company has undergone to deal with the economy is to bring more work in house that they typically would have subbed out. “We do a lot of our concrete in house now,” Lynam says. “We do as much work in house as we can, though it doesn’t always work that easily. There are times when you have nine projects going on and they all want to start the same day, so you’re forced to sub out some work. But we make an effort to do it ourselves whenever we can.”

Besides doing some more work in house, Lynam says the company didn’t make any major changes this year. It didn’t add any new marketing plans or map out a detailed growth strategy. Instead, the Urban Farmer team just focused on working as hard as ever. “In terms of a strategy or goal, it was really just to push as hard as we could and to really latch on and stay with our core group of customers,” he says.

In the end, that persistence has certainly paid off. **LM**

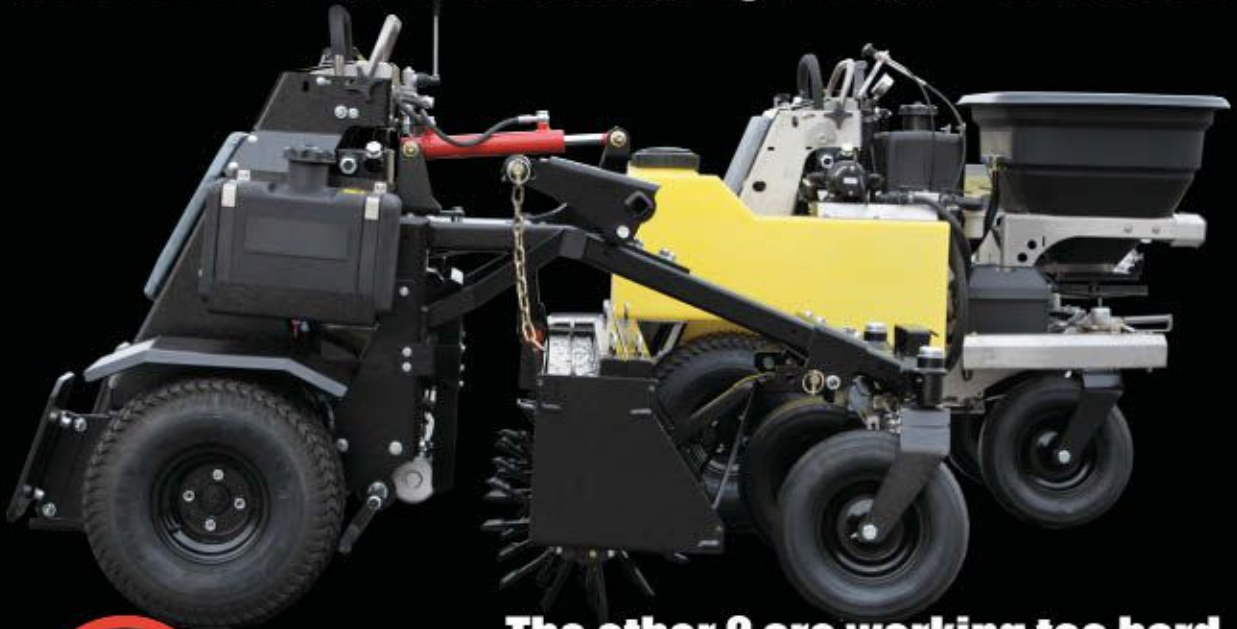
GETZ is a freelance writer with experience covering the lawn care and landscape industry.

**BUSINESS PLANNER** 2011

# RESOURCE PROFILES

A look at what some of the top companies in the Green Industry have to offer. >>>

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# Agrium Advanced Technologies

Agrium Advanced Technologies is the leading manufacturer and marketer of slow- and controlled-release fertilizers, plant protection products and micronutrients for agriculture, golf courses, greenhouses, nurseries, landscapes, lawn care and specialty agriculture. Agrium Advanced Technologies is at the forefront of economic, environmentally friendly technologies. Our company is working hard to provide innovative, cost-saving solutions with slow- and controlled-release products that release nutrients to the soil gradually and consistently over a longer period of time to meet plant demands.

Our turf brands include **Spread it & Forget it™**, **XCU®**, **DURATION CR®**, **POLYON®**, **NITROFORM®** and **NUTRALENE®** slow- and controlled-release fertilizers; **AMP™** micronutrients; and **PRECISE®** controlled-release plant protection. These products go into dozens of fertilizer brands and hundreds of blends sold by blenders and distributors throughout North America.

Our products are also available from our new direct-to-market sales division called Agrium Advanced Technologies Direct Solutions, which boasts more than 100 industry professional field representatives across North America.

Agrium Advanced Technologies continues to focus on further advancing enhanced efficiency fertilizers with an emphasis on quality and customer service. We are committed to developing new technologies, products and best practices that will help turf and lawn care professionals do their jobs more efficiently, save money and discover *smarter ways to grow*.

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➤ **Spread it & Forget™** is a new, season-long fertilizer **DRIVEN BY DURATION™** that is formulated to effectively feed lawns or professional turf for six months or more. In many parts of the country, that means you get a full growing season's worth of green, healthy turf with just one fertilizer application. By using **Spread it & Forget**, you can drive down your fertilizer costs plus save on labor, fuel and other overhead associated with multiple fertilizer applications.

➤ **XCU® Slow-Release Fertilizer** is the only sulfur-coated urea (SCU) with a polymer layer inside the protective sulfur layer. This adds durability and consistency so there is less breakage during blending and application, which means less quick release,

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➤ **NITROFORM®** and **NUTRALENE® Slow-Release Fertilizers** have been trusted brands delivering dependable, long-lasting performance to countless turf professionals.



**Jack Roser**  
President

# AlturnaMATS, Inc.



in Titusville, PA, birthplace of the oil industry.

## Major product lines:

AlturnaMATS manufactures ground protection mats, including:

- The original **AlturnaMAT** with diamond cleats on both sides. This mat was designed for heavy equipment and to keep equipment from getting stuck in the mud, sand or snow, and to keep the equipment from tearing up manicured landscapes. This style is available with cleats on both sides, one side or smooth both sides, depending on your application. AlturnaMATS are available in sizes ranging from 2-ft. x 4-ft. up to 4-ft. x 8-ft. and are ½-in. thick. The AlturnaMATS will bend, but will not break. Made of 100% recycled HDPE, AlturnaMATS is environmentally friendly.

- The **VersaMAT** features a flat, oval, slip-resistant tread on the top surface and the diamond cleat on the under surface. This mat was designed for pedestrian traffic or lightweight equipment such as wheel barrows, mini Bobcats, etc. The VersaMATS are available in 3-ft. x 8-ft. and 4-ft. x 8-ft. and are ½-in. thick. Made of 100% recycled HDPE, VersaMATS is environmentally friendly.

- The **Mobile Matt** is designed for light and heavy weight equipment. The Mobile Matt has an “M” shaped tread and studs on the under surface for maximum traction. The Mobile Mats are available in sizes ranging from 2-ft. x 4-ft. up to 4-ft. x 8-ft. and are made of “virgin” HMWP.

All three styles of mat are guaranteed for six years.

## Product focus:

AlturnaMATS has been providing landscape professionals with ground protection they can count on for more than 15 years.

## Manufacturing facilities:

AlturnaMATS began and continue to be manufactured



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**Eddy Gibbs**  
President

# Ameristar Fence Products

## Product focus:

Ameristar® was chartered more than 25 years ago to provide specialty fence products that were more affordable but did not compromise the quality level demanded by specifiers and consumers. This could



be accomplished only by a complete reformation of the way fence products were being manufactured.

Product design was approached from many new perspectives: maximizing high-volume productivity; increasing strength and durability; designing the ultimate level of system security; promoting ease of installation; enhancing aesthetic appearance; and maintaining an environmentally friendly workplace.

A new plant was designed and built to house state-of-the-art roll-forming, metal processing and powder-coating equipment. The result has boosted Ameristar® to its current position as the largest

manufacturer of architectural metal fence systems in the world. Ameristar will maintain its leadership in providing fences of multiple performance capability and design style, within the limitations of applicable building codes and budget allotments.

## Major product lines:

▶ **Montage®** is the new generation of ornamental fencing that is changing America's landscape. Unparalleled quality, made affordable through new technology and manufacturing processes, has made Montage the No. 1 choice of landscapers across America for both new fence construction and replacement of existing wood, chain-link or PVC fences. The popular Montage Plus® Fence System has been taken to the next level, with 7- and 8-ft.-tall fencing in several styles. All systems include matching gates available for a wide range of opening sizes and, for projects requiring added distinctiveness, special arched gates called Estate Gates are available.

▶ The **Aegis®** ornamental fence system is the strongest steel ornamental fence in the industry. It has a proprietary internal fastening system that eliminates unsightly exterior fasteners and allows the fence to follow changing landscape grades.

## ▶ The **Echelon™**

ornamental fence system offers an aluminum alternative for projects where corrosion considerations are amplified by harsh environmental conditions.

## ▶ **Ameristar's Impasse™**

**Security Fence** (patent pending) offers the resistive strength of heavy-duty ornamental spear-tipped steel pales, vertically secured to a framework of specially formed steel rails and I-beam posts. The stylish design of the Impasse™, combined with its strength and security, provides an effective first line of defense.

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