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*Available on select models, call for details

continued from page 40

BORA, a division of Affinity Tool

The updated Wide Track Clamp Edge series of straight edge guides features solid construction and a wider base. The Wide Track is available in five lengths, including 24-, 42-, 66-, 100-in., and the most recent



addition, the 50-in. model. In addition to cutting-type tasks, the Wide Track can be used for other applications, such as a vise or bar clamp for gluing. Thanks to its integrated T-tracks, the Wide Track can also double as a portable T-track. The

integrated T-track feature is compatible with special T-track jigs and accessories. Not only does this increase the versatility of the Wide Track, it also eliminates the need for an additional T-track. The series is also backed by the company's lifetime warranty. AffinityTool.com/bora



Oly-Ola Edgings Inc.

Oly-Ola has added more pre-cut staking slots to its 100-ft. Super-Edg Landscape Edging Rolls. The additional staking slots are pre-cut into the edging every 2 ft. The increase in pre-cut slots gives landscape contractors more options and the flexibility to decide where to place stakes depending on specific project needs. Oly-Ola provides 25 stakes and two connectors in its 100-ft. Super-Edg Roll package. To securely hold more elaborate installations and designs with lots of joints and curves, Oly-Ola recommends using extra stakes. OlyOla.com

Schröder Lighting US

The energy-efficient NEOS series is designed for floodlighting multiple applications. Three floodlights are offered in four sizes, with power ranging from 35 to 1,000 watts, operating on 120- to 347-volt systems. Three beam spreads are available, including narrow, wide and asymmetrical. The standard NEOS mounting bracket provides a wide range of adjustments. A variety of custom finishes and colors are available. Schröder.US



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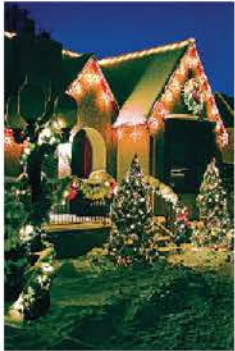


CORONA.
SEASON AFTER SEASON

DESIGN/BUILD: HOLIDAY LIGHTING

Brite Ideas Decorating

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and proven business model to make your holiday lighting business a reality. That's where Brite Ideas Decorating comes in: It's been helping companies just like yours

earn extra income with its program for more than a decade. Additionally, it doesn't charge any royalties or renewal fees. Financial assistance to help you get started is available. Briteldea.com/Home/BusinessOpportunities.aspx



Holiday Bright Lights

With Holiday Bright Lights' (HBL) classroom and webinar training program, companies will be given the proper training to operate a successful and profitable business. HBL's marketing program is designed to work before the lights even go up. Plus, its seasoned personnel have owned their own holiday lighting businesses — and are available to answer any questions — from estimating to installing. HolidayBrightLights.com



Christmas Décor

The Christmas Décor franchise opportunity enables seasonal businesses to offset their fixed overhead costs and maintain their key employees all year round. They cross-sell Christmas decorating services to their existing customer base, while generating new customers with the convenience of the holiday decorating services.

Most of its almost 400 franchisees nationally were operating a seasonal business when they came to Christmas Décor. They had no prior decorating experience but knew how to grow a business and expand their revenues. ChristmasDecor.net

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IRRIGATION: IRRIGATION EFFICIENCY

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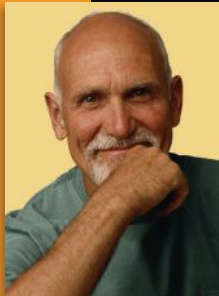
The high-performance Techline CV drip-line is now manufactured with recycled materials — an industry first and a new opportunity to earn LEED credits on land-

scape installations. Techline CV is widely used in a broad range of applications to irrigate turf, trees, shrubs and bedding areas. The 17mm flexible tubing features 2 psi check valves in each dripper for

equalized application of water throughout the system (all drippers turn on and off at the same time). Check valves also prevent low emitter drainage, with elevation changes up to 4.5 ft. The dripper design offers continuous self-flushing throughout the line, not just at the beginning or end of a cycle. Pressure compensation allows equal amounts of water delivered over a broad pressure range (14.7 to 70 psi), and a physical root barrier protects the internal system from root intrusion without chemicals. NetafimUSA.com

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Rain Bird

Featuring a square spray pattern with a throw radius of 2.5 or 4 ft., the SQ Series is designed specifically for watering small, narrow areas of turf and ornamental plantings like those found near walkways, parkways and street medians. Because these unique, low-volume nozzles offer pressure compensation, they use less water and eliminate inefficient over-spray — saving time, money and water for both new and existing installations. They can be installed in either head-to-head or edge-to-edge configurations. RainBird.com/landscape/products/sprayNozzles/SQseriesNozzles.htm

WaterOptimizer Inc.

The WaterOptimizer, a smart irrigation system, was named Innovation of the Year at the inaugural Biz-Tech Innovation Summit Awards & Expo held last spring at the Tampa Convention Center. The smart irrigation system takes the next step in technology: Sensor nodes are placed in the ground, designed to measure the amount of water in the soil. Sprinklers only turn on when the ground is dry, and then only long enough to reach the desired moisture level. The system is controlled remotely, using an Internet connection. The wireless mesh network relays information back to the user, giving instant data and immediate control. Water-Optimizer.com





Underhill International

New Water Dex is a palm-sized remote that adjusts sprinkler run times without reprogramming the irrigation controller. Called a "shortcut to seasonal adjustments," the unit includes a 3x2x2-in. mini-transmitter with a 200-ft., line-of-sight range and micro-receiver that hardwires into the irrigation controller. Visible and hands-on, the transmitter can be placed on a desktop or kitchen counter or affixed to a refrigerator door to remind end-users to be water-wise. With WaterDex, contractors have a new opportunity to sell an efficient irrigation add-on to customers. It also saves time on callbacks, because homeowners no longer need to reset their controllers when the seasons change. *Underhill.us*

The Bauer Group

The Rainstar A3 high-efficiency irrigation system is precise, rugged and ideally suited for golf courses, playing fields, horticulture, parks and gardens, municipal recreation centers and agriculture. In one irrigation run, the sprinkler covers up to 230 ft. side-to-side over a maximum irrigated length of 656 ft. A second strip opposite the first area can be irrigated following the initial run, without having to change the position of the unit — providing efficiency and saving labor. The unit features a galvanized pipe reel that swivels easily through 180°, and can be assembled by a single operator. *Bauer-AT.com*

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BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

The author, of the Wilson-Oyler Group, is a 30-year industry veteran. Reach him at bwilson@questex.com.

Measure for success

We all want to get the best from our teams. Certainly, our employees want to give their best. But how do we inspire great performance and motivate for continued success?

Thomas Edison said genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration. In trying to improve performance, there is one tried-and-true path to success: Measure and keep score. People respond when they have measurable goals. It starts early in life when

they get their first report cards. They thrive on positive recognition from their parents and teachers when they do well.

The same is true of employees. If you give them a way to measure their performance, they will work hard to hit their targets. Not all people ultimately meet their goals. But this helps you, as a manager, identify those who need extra training or support, or who may be in the wrong position.

When identifying measurable goals, consider some of the common targets used in the landscape industry to improve profits and drive growth:

➤ **Hours-to-budget:** This can be used to give crew lead-

ers time management objectives, or hours spent on each job. Most companies develop budgeted hours from their estimates of how long the job will take.

One of the best ways to use this measure is to post the hours and efficiency rankings of each crew at a central location where crew leaders regularly meet. Posting can bring out the competitive instinct

of the crew and encourage goal-driven behavior. It motivates the weaker members of the team.

➤ **Ratio of enhancement sales to contract sales:** This ratio is used by many companies to give account managers sales targets for enhancement services. You can look at your historical records to see what that ratio has been. It varies widely in the industry because of variances in what companies classify as “enhancements.” For example, some consider enhancements to be improvements to the landscape while others consider any extra billing, such as mulch, an enhancement.

Because of this inconsistency, some companies sell 25% enhancements as a percent of the contract price, while others might sell as much as 100%. Either way it gives tangible targets to each account manager — and helps improve your enhancement sales. Again, another posting opportunity: Track the ongoing effort, publish the results and unleash the competitive juices.

Enhancement opportunities can vary widely. Some types of clients tend to spend more, so the goals should be developed with your market and your book of business in mind.

➤ **Hours billed as a ratio of hours worked for irrigation technicians:** This has been a good tool to make sure that everything gets billed. Many companies have trouble with small jobs falling through the cracks and not getting billed. Try to measure and score your technicians on this, and billing will most likely go up.

Goals for new contract sales

The most successful salespeople are goal-driven. They are also competitive. Tracking their new business is an obvious first step, but don't stop there. Keep score on the number of proposals generated and dollar volume of each. Track and post. Measure activity: How many sales leads actually make it to the finish line and are closed?

By using multiple measures, you can encourage your salespeople to generate the right amount of activity and hit their goals every step of the way.

SUCCESS HAS ITS REWARDS

Essential to implementing measurable goals is identifying what the rewards are for meeting defined targets. Compensation is always effective, but so, too, are public recognition and the high-five of a job well done.

Keep in mind, though, that a solely reward-driven culture can become counter-productive. If the rewards are too great, it will eventually drive the behavior to become negative. For instance, there have been situations where so much focus is placed on performing the job quickly that quality suffers. Or an account manager tries to sell so many enhancements to meet goals, that customers feel they are being nicked and dimed.

Instead, inspire to perspire. You can never say “thank you” enough. Give lots of recognition and set consistent, measurable goals with realistic rewards, and you'll find a high-performing team willing to give you their best.



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P R O V E N S O L U T I O N S

PROJECT PORTFOLIO

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THE MISSION

Create a landscape deserving of this beautiful 1920s Georgia residence.

The clients' Atlanta home had wonderful lines, architecture and charm; their landscape did not. That's where Roswell, GA-based Ed Castro Landscape came in.

Led by landscape architect Chris Hopper, the majority of the existing, outdated landscape was removed — and new gardens were created that were both functional and aesthetically pleasing.

The biggest challenge on the project, according to the team, was “creating a landscape that would complement the style of the home, tying historical elements to the present without compromising the home's Old World charm.”

To accomplish the twin goals of practicality and beauty, portions of the driveway were removed to allow for decorative cobblestone banding and inlays. A combination of brick and granite cobblestone inlay was constructed in the center of the rear motor court. These updates using such authentic period materials properly accentuated the home, Hopper notes.

No part of the perimeter escaped the touch of the Ed Castro team. The side entry to the home was just as bland and empty as the front entrance, with meager plantings and harsh hardscapes in need of some soft decoration. New plantings at the side entrance updated the space, while new containers and topiary plantings were added to decorate the large stoop.

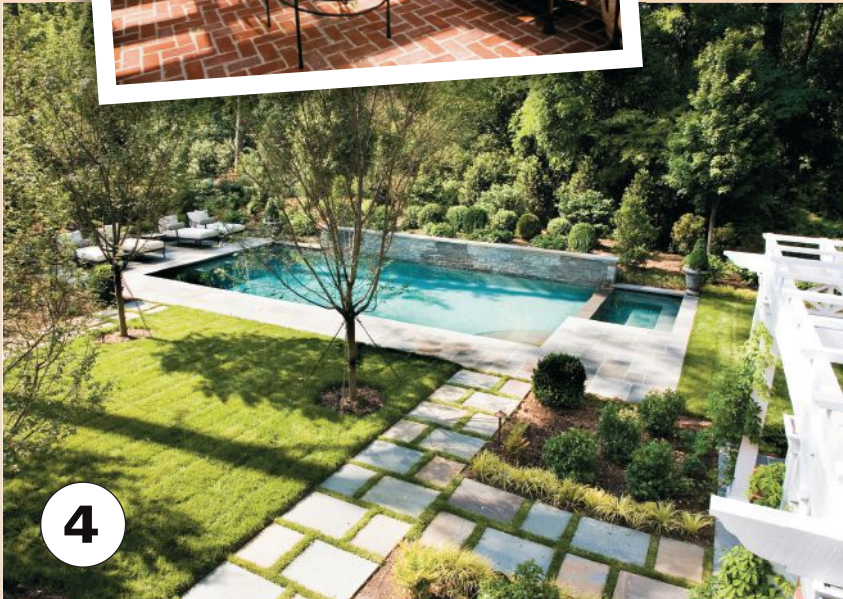
Other elements included a new back patio, a fireplace, a pool with connected spa, and other formal garden spaces. The outdoor entertainment area is just a few steps away from the pool, making it both a convenient and functional outdoor space.



PHOTOS COURTESY: EMILY DRYDEN PHOTOGRAPHY



3



4



5



6

THE WORK

1 | Best foot forward. Granite cobbles were installed to decorate the edges of the driveway. The entire front and side entrances were replanted with colors and forms to better accent the architecture of the home.

2 | Form meets function. After removing all existing portions of the backyard patio, a new and more modern patio was installed. It includes a seat wall, an enlarged terrace and an outdoor kitchen — to create a more functional entertaining space.

3 | Serene space. Herringbone brick paving, a stacked bluestone fireplace and a decorative pergola unite to create a cozy entertainment space — just steps away from the pool.

4 | The view from above. From up in the guesthouse, there is a delightful view of the pool and all its features, including three sheer descents, an in-ground spa and a terrace for lounging.

5 | Cutting edge. The crisp lines and formal spaces of this landscape design are evident in the pool terrace area, stepping-stone pathways, rear lawn and cherry tree alley.

6 | Rear alignment. A bare and unattractive lawn area in the rear yard was unused, empty and just waiting for a more functional design. It turned out to be the perfect space for a pool to be aligned on axis with the rear doors of the home, and accompany a gathering space with an outdoor fireplace.

Ed Castro Landscape's services include sustainable design, installation and maintenance for both commercial and residential accounts. In addition, its horticulture capabilities include smart planning/seasonal color, garden design and installation, technical pruning, water management, lawn reduction/renovation and organic disease and pest control. This particular project garnered a 41st Annual Environmental Improvement Grand Award from the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET). For more information, visit EdCastro.com.

Drip irrigation

Takehara Landscape Designs, Gardena, CA looks to innovative products for more flexibility.



Drip irrigation allows for precise placement of water.

WHEN NATHAN TAKEHARA saw an up-to-date drip irrigation system at an industry trade show six years ago, he was surprised. He had recently relocated his landscape business to southern California from Hawaii, where he had been using what he now calls “primitive products.” The drip system on display was radically different from what he’d been installing, and it offered a range of innovative features that would give him greater design flexibility — and help him build his business.

Takehara Landscape Designs is known for creating authentic Japanese-style landscapes. Clients who desire a traditional Japanese garden have certain images in mind: a landscape that creates a sense of serenity; traditional plants and features; perhaps a koi pond, a waterfall or river rock stream.

To create a dramatic Asian garden — or any complex design with angles and curves, ponds and garden walls — Takehara needed irrigation products that would be flexible.

“It was clear to me that to expand our design business, we had to include the newest drip products in our plans,” he says. “It was the best way to ensure creativity, water conservation and minimal maintenance.”

Becoming a drip expert did not require any capital outlay or extensive training, Takehara says. He and his crew had been installing overhead systems for years, and already had the tools and knowledge. After a couple on-site “tutorials,” and a little research and reading, Takehara and his lead installer had it figured out after the first job.

“I made the right contacts when I decided to install Netafim Techline CV on a project,” he says. “The company’s sales rep was very helpful and patient and guided me through the entire process. It was hands-on training, and it really paid off.

“Now I use both 17mm and new

12mm on-surface drip line, depending on the site,” Takehara continues. “The 12mm is ideal for smaller beds, hardscape channels, garden walls or other creative features. Both products are self-flushing and pressure-compensating, and 17mm has check valves.”

Takehara says that anyone who is familiar with landscape irrigation can expand into drip. The same controllers, valves and irrigation lines are used, but instead of rigid PVC, it’s flexible tubing. There’s virtually no additional expense. Drip line costs about the same as rigid pipe, but neither PVC glue nor cement are needed because drip tubing has barbed or insert fittings.”

“Clients are enthusiastic about drip because they see new benefits,” says Takehara. “Drip delivers water directly to the root zones slowly, and at lower pressure. Plants flourish because they get the precise amount of water they need. There is no overspray or water running down the gutter. This all means substantial water savings — and it’s good for the environment because today’s tubing is made from recycled materials.”

Major municipalities, like Los Angeles County, are promoting the use of drip line for all those same reasons. And with new regional mandates across the U.S. to cut water use, drip is becoming increasingly popular.

“Drip irrigation allowed us to focus on the type of installations that we wanted to do,” Takehara points out. “It’s very compatible with the clean, refined look of contemporary architecture as well as traditional gardens.”

His advice to contractors is to not be “squeamish” about drip irrigation.

“It’s the future. Expand your capabilities, and you’ll earn more money,” he says. “...You’ll also see the benefits of a new business niche, healthier landscapes and water-wise environment.”

The author is a partner at Hardwick Creative Services and writes about landscape irrigation.

>> SERVICE SNAPSHOT

WHY DRIP IRRIGATION: Drip’s design flexibility and water-saving features helped Nathan Takehara carve out a new niche for his business while attracting more clients interested in his specialized services.

INITIAL INVESTMENT: No capital expense if a contractor is already installing overhead irrigation systems and has the basic tools. Hands-on training is a must, and can often be arranged with a manufacturer’s rep.

WHY CUSTOMERS LIKE IT: Water costs are lower because irrigation is applied in a more precise manner; plants, trees and shrubs are healthier; overspray is eliminated, along with run-off and erosion; there’s less maintenance; and it’s eco-friendly because new drip lines are made with recycled content.