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WEEDWATCH

STANDING SENTINEL TO PROTECT PLANT HEALTH



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Dow AgroSciences
solution
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herbicide

HENBIT

Lamium amplexicaule

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This winter annual has square, flowering stems that grow up to 10 in. tall.
- ▶ Henbit features mint-like pink to purple flowers, and prefers thin, nutrient-rich soil.
- ▶ It is commonly confused with purple deadnettle (*L. purpureum*), but deadnettle's upper leaves have petioles (henbit does not) and are distinctly red- or purple-tinted.

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Apply a labeled, pre-emergent herbicide in late summer/early fall before the weed germinates.
- ▶ For post-emergence control, apply a labeled two-, three- or four-way product that contains fluroxypyr, triclopyr, clopyralid or similar active ingredient.
- ▶ Post-emergence applications should be made to actively growing, immature henbit in fall. If a spring application is made to mature weeds, multiple applications may be needed.



Recommended
Dow AgroSciences
solution

Dimension®
specialty
herbicide*

DALLISGRASS

Paspalum dilatatum

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This abundantly seed-producing perennial grows in clumps with a tall, membranous ligule.
- ▶ Leaves are rolled in the bud and lack auricles. They also are without hairs except for several long, silky hairs that grow in the collar region.
- ▶ The seedhead is produced on a terminal stalk with three to five finger-like spikes branching from the center. Each spikelet is covered in black silky hairs.

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ If present, the best way to eradicate dallisgrass is by digging out the clumps prior to formation of rhizomes or seed set.
- ▶ Dallisgrass seed begins to emerge when soil temperatures reach 60° F. For optimal control, apply dithiopyr in the spring just prior to these soil temperatures being reached.
- ▶ If dallisgrass is a problem in ornamental beds, apply a layer of mulch over the top of your pre-emergent herbicide.

* State restrictions on the sale and use of Dimension apply.

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

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

LM REPORTS

YOUR GUIDE TO PRODUCT RESEARCH

MAINTENANCE: MOWER ACCESSORIES



Husqvarna

A new “dump from seat” collection system is available for the Husqvarna PZ and Dixon DX200 commercial zero-turn

mowers. The collection system fits 54- and 60-in. cutting decks. The commercial collection system includes a 12-gauge steel hopper and high-density polyethylene hood. The 11-bushel hopper has a convenient spring-assisted release handle, which is accessed from the seated position. Efficiency is increased by allowing the operator to remain on the machine during the removal of collected material. With a deck-driven blower assist, the collection system accelerates debris through the tube and into the hopper. Husqvarna.com

Gravely

Gravely introduces a new Rear Discharge Deck option for the Pro-Master 260 mower. The deck enhances safety, efficiency and productivity and meets a growing need for commercial and government contractors. It's designed for mowing near obstacles, as clippings are diverted behind the machine instead of out the side. This way, clippings remain on the turf instead of on roadways and sidewalks — making for easier cleanup, the company says. The deck includes trim edge on both sides, improving productivity. Ariends.com



Magna-Matic Corp.

Since 1958, Magna-Matic has been primarily known for lawn mower blade balancers and sharpeners. Its new MAG-12008 Lawn Mower Blade Cleaner, the company says, is the first of its kind in the industry — able to clean a blade with two large gangs of wire brushes. It will clean up to a 30-in.-long, 3.75-in.-wide mower blade in 60 seconds. All dirt and debris is channeled to a vacuum port of the MAG-12008, so your shop environment is not filled with dust. Magna-Matic.com

MAINTENANCE: NEW MOWERS



Kubota

The new Kubota ZP330 is the latest addition to Kubota's top-of-the-line Z300 Series of commercial mowers. It boasts a 31 gross horsepower, 3-cylinder, liquid-cooled liquid propane gas (LPG) engine

for greener performance with reduced carbon dioxide emissions. Available in two Pro Commercial mower deck sizes — the 72-in. ZP330LP-72 or 60-in. ZP330P-60 — the mower includes a full-flat operator platform, high-back deluxe suspension seat, adjustable-speed control levers and hands-free hydraulic deck lift and parking brake. Kubota.com

Grasshopper

The new Model 321D-48 is a compact size for precision maneuvering in close quarters. It features a 48-in. cutting deck, yet uses less than 1 gal. of fuel every hour, saving up to \$3,000 every year in fuel costs compared to gasoline and propane. The Tier 4i-compliant, fuel-efficient diesel engine also reduces emissions of greenhouse gases, according to test data from the California Air Resources Board. GrasshopperMower.com/mid_321d



Excel Industries

The new BigDog T-Series of walk-behind mowers features the user-friendly PowerBar Steering System and easy hand-operated deck lift. All T-Series mowers come equipped with Kawasaki FS engines, available in 16 to 24 hp. Choose from a 36-, 48- or 54-in. deck. An optional electric start is available on the 54-in., 24-hp model. A two-year warranty is standard. BigDogMowers.com



continued on page 26



SVL SERIES

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RTV1140CPX



M59TLB

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Massey Ferguson

Available with 60-in., 72-in. standard or 72-in. high-volume mower decks, the new ZT29 and ZT33 (pictured) zero-turn mowers (ZTM) feature 3-cylinder, liquid-cooled diesel engines. Two hydrostatic pumps and two hydrostatic motors with gear reductions at the drive axle provide long life and excellent performance. An electro-hydraulically engaged multi-disc wet clutch

engages and disengages the mower deck through the use of the yellow knob on the right hand control console. The Standard Folding Rollover Protection System (ROPS) folds to 90° without tools to easily fit into an enclosed trailer or garage. MasseyFerguson.us

Toro

Toro Z Master Professional 5000/6000 Series and GrandStand EFI (pictured) mowers use the latest in fuel management technology, reducing fuel consumption costs by up to 25%. They feature a Kohler engine with a closed-loop electronic fuel injection system (EFI), allowing the engine to automatically adapt to load, weather, fuel and altitude changes. Easy starting in a wide range of altitudes and conditions, along with no-choke starting, helps operators get down to work quickly. A system of engine sensors monitors the engine while running, and indicator lights provide early warning of any potential issues before they actually occur. Toro.com



Cub Cadet Commercial

During a four-week road tour this fall, Cub Cadet unveiled to its 1,500 dealers its new, next generation of advanced commercial zero-turn riders: the Tank LZ and SZ (pictured). The Tank SZ, which denotes steering wheel Zero turn, delivers maneuverability, turf protection and remarkable traction, even on steep inclines, thanks to Cub Cadet's exclusive 4-wheel steering technology, patented as Synchro Steer Technology. The Tank LZ, which denotes lap-bar Zero turn, features the industry's only lap bar system that allows for a full range of adjustability and rider egress, regardless of position. CubCadet.com



John Deere

The new John Deere ZTrak PRO Z925 with Electronic Fuel Injection (EFI) can provide up to 25% fuel savings for landscape contractors. It offers a closed loop fuel injection system that constantly monitors engine performance. Fuel injectors respond to the load on the engine with the right amount of fuel, delivering maximum fuel efficiency for the conditions. The engine includes an exclusive Tuff Torq integrated transmission. The transmission, which is standard across the ZTrak PRO 900 Series, features 13cc piston style pumps and 13cc wheel motors for increased efficiency. Another series exclusive is the cross-porting system that routes the coolest hydraulic fluid to the hydraulic pump doing the most work. JohnDeere.com/EFI



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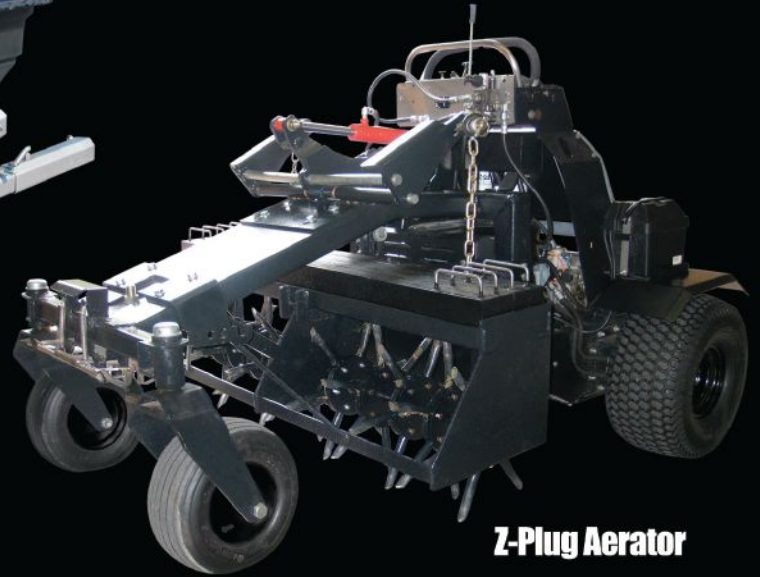
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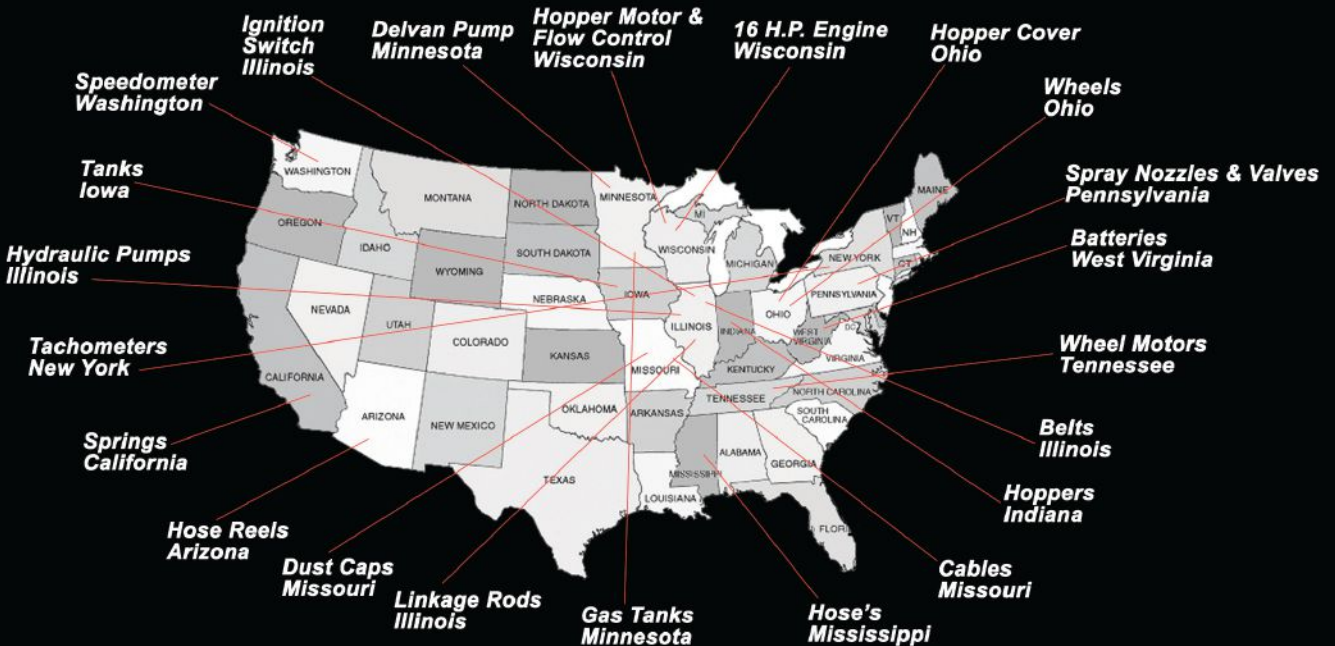
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BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

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

Are bad habits keeping profits down?

*“Chains of habit are too light to be felt
until they are too heavy to be broken.”*

— Warren Buffet

It's budget season. Time to take a look at how your performance stacked up against last year's goals and set improvement milestones for next year that will grow sales and increase profitability.

It sounds simple enough, but it's not. Problem is, developing an executable strategy for sustained profitability is tough. Let's take a look at what gets in the way and how to fix it.

The biggest obstacles to improved profits are bad habits that consistently inhibit your potential.

One common “old way of doing business” is also the second most common obstacle to improved profitability — the lack of a clear path. Both habits need to change if you want to increase profits.

Start by making small adjustments — consistently and over time. Unless you have some fundamental flaws in your organization, such as poorly bid work, there is always room to improve habits, clear the path and improve profits. I have clients who want to jump from 5% profit to 10% profit. This can be done, but usually not in one year.

I am an advocate of the defined path. The defined path to higher profitability starts with knowing where your opportunities are most likely found. This is where benchmarking can help. If other companies spend less as a percent of sales on a cost line such as labor, it means you might be able to do the same.

You can also learn from your own performance. Place the last few years' financials on a spreadsheet in columns so you can easily compare results side-by-side. Look for indications where you might have had lower costs for a line item. Track trends. Plot hits and misses. By studying your financial performance you can start to dissect your costs and reflect on the reasons that your costs are rising, or on practices that you may have gotten away

from, that led to lower costs in the past.

With improving profits there are no silver bullets, but once you know what you're doing wrong and fix it, the change will have a positive effect on your business. You will be much more successful at what you do. And it will be more profitable.

Identifying areas of potential savings

In looking at costs, consider that the greatest impacts on savings can be made in labor, equipment and enhancements. Enhancements, in particular, are often small and not very cost effective. If not well planned or managed, it is easy to see bid margins evaporate.

When you identify an opportunity to save, it takes more than wishing to make it improve. You must dig into the cost category and try to identify why it's too high. Often, it is not obvious. If you do not spend time analyzing the probable cause, you will probably not be as effective in gaining improvement.

Common mistakes affect labor cost

Two primary but different factors can affect labor costs. The average hourly wage composite of crews affects the margin. So if you manage hours, you might be hitting your budgeted hours but missing the gross margin because the composite average hourly rate of the crew is higher than you think. Since companies have lost work due to the economy, many have laid off the newer lower paid employees. This in turn has increased your average hourly wage cost. This must be managed.

The other reason labor may be higher than desired is exceeding the bid hours. This could be due to a number of things, including: inefficient crews, wrong crew size for the job, not assigning enough work for the day, not having the right equipment and poor routing. You must take time to look at exactly what the problem is and fix it. Some companies approach this by cutting crew hours. But it's a bandage that does not fix the underlying problem and leads to a loss of quality.

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PROJECT PORTFOLIO

A SCRAPBOOK OF DESIGN/BUILD OVERHAULS

Urban oasis

THE MISSION

Create a private yet inviting garden for a brownstone residence

The client wanted total privacy from all sides and above to screen the surrounding four-story building. The challenge, notes Greener by Design President Richard Heller, was “how to accomplish this while preserving light in the urban valleys of New York City.” A secondary challenge was bringing in 10 yds. of sand and planting medium, 10 tons of stone, two trees and hundreds of plants, among other materials and tools, all through a labyrinth of residential hallways.

The space was conceived as “a textural modern garden with clean lines and uncomplicated elements, while still feeling warm and inviting,” he says.

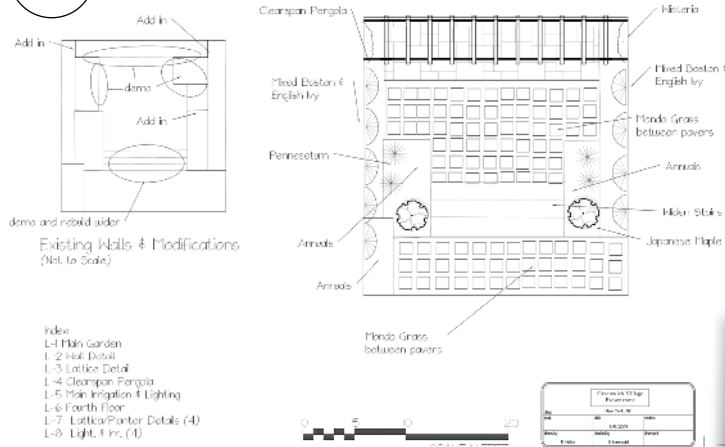
Heller created a raised patio planting area, used varying gray and silver tones, and incorporated a variety of geometric and textural elements. For example, the wisteria connected lattice to the pergola, while Mondo grass brought plantings into the paved areas.

An upstairs patio was designed as a more private, separate space; by using similar textures and materials, Heller says, it “became an extension of the lower garden.” Budget restrictions prevented replacing the existing concrete pavers, so the team stained the tiles instead.

“The final effect is a marriage of serenity and drama,” Heller concludes. “The owner was pleased with the private, modern look of his garden.”



2



PHOTOS COURTESY: 1, 4, 5 - JEFF HUTTON; 2, 3 - GREENER BY DESIGN; 6 - BRUCE BUCK