

**Dimension**<sup>®</sup>  
Specialty Herbicide

**Gallery**<sup>®</sup>  
Specialty Herbicide

**Snapshot**<sup>®</sup>  
Specialty Herbicide

 **Dow AgroSciences**



## It takes courage to admit there's a problem.

Meet Frank. He's got what you'd call a "problem" with hand-weeding. Fortunately, there's Dimension<sup>®</sup>, Gallery<sup>®</sup> and Snapshot<sup>®</sup> specialty herbicides from Dow AgroSciences. They give Frank the kind of group therapy he really needs by delivering serious control of the toughest weeds in lawn and landscape settings. So go ahead and skip the awkward meetings. Come learn more about the portfolio of products proven to help kick the hand-weeding habit at [DowProvesIt.com](http://DowProvesIt.com).

[www.DowProvesIt.com](http://www.DowProvesIt.com) 800-255-3726

\*Trademark of Dow AgroSciences LLC. State restrictions on the sale and use of Dimension specialty herbicide products and Snapshot apply. Consult the label before purchase or use for full details. Always read and follow label directions. \*The swinging golfer logo is a registered trademark of PGA TOUR, Inc. ©2010 Dow AgroSciences LLC T38-000-018 (2/10) BR 010-60665 DATOTURF9072



**P R O V E N   S O L U T I O N S**

# ACUTABOVE

GREEN INDUSTRY MAINTENANCE LEADERS » BY DAN JACOBS

Like many Green Industry business owners, **Jon Dozier** and **Jarrett Martin** have a love of the great outdoors. The two began building Merry Acres Landscape & Lawn Maintenance nearly a decade ago, and they try to share their passion with their customers. The duo derives “immense satisfaction from being able to apply their creativity and vision to positively transform clients’ lawns and outdoor living spaces.” Dozier offers some insight into the Green Industry.

## TRENDS

› **Propane-fueled equipment.** Merry Acres was one of the first in the region to adopt propane-fueled lawn mowers, and our propane provider has told me there are others in the area moving in this direction. Plus, I was just down at our equipment dealership recently, and they told me they have a propane-fueled model they are keeping in stock because they have guys who are interested. Companies are always asking themselves, “Is there a way I can operate more efficiently?”

› **Economically influenced changes.** One of the major trends we’ve seen since the downturn of the economy has been on the installation side of our business. Whether it is landscape, irrigation or hardscape, we have seen fewer of those projects since the downturn of the housing market, and we have had to investigate more projects on the commercial side of our business. But we haven’t really had revenue fall off in the maintenance business; in fact, we’ve ticked up percentage-wise on the maintenance portion of our business. It’s close to 50% of our business, and was down to 30% a year or two ago.

› **Cost-conscious customers.** People are looking to save a dollar in this economy, and also looking to receive the most value from the money they do spend. We’re not the cheapest guys in town, and if that’s what you’re looking for, we’re not your guys. But we offer a lot for what we do. We tailor the packages and options we have to meet our customers’ budgets. If our proposal is over what the customer is willing to pay, we will go back and rework the plan with their input instead of walking away.

## OBSTACLES

› **Fuel costs.** Every day, it seems that the price of fuel, whether it be gasoline or diesel, is climbing. It’s hard to quote a job accurately when planning it six to nine months in advance, because you don’t know what the cost of fuel will be at that time.

› **Labor pains.** Labor is always an obstacle. As sad as it sounds,



Jarrett Martin (left) and Jon Dozier adopted propane early on.

## INSIDE INFO

**Company:** Merry Acres Landscape & Lawn Maintenance, MerryAcres-Landscaping.com

**Founded:** 2002

**Headquarters:** Albany, GA

**Key to being a maintenance leader:** Our key is that we take advantage of every opportunity and phone call that comes in to our office. Our motto is that no one project is too big or too small for us to take on. Bigger projects are always needed, but at the same time, smaller projects help sustain the overall health of our business.

finding someone with a valid driving record and driver’s license is tough, as well as finding guys who want to come to work and labor. There are many factors to look at with a team of 25. We always try to promote our employees, and replenish our staff at the bottom. I feel very fortunate that we are able to keep such a great staff; the majority of our employees have been with Merry Acres for more than three years.

We have very little turnover. I think this year we’ve had two positions turn over out of 25.

› **Cultivating new clientele.** The economy has created an obstacle for us to overcome to create new business. Clients, primarily residential clients, are very hesitant to make a change and switch to a different company. People know how small businesses are struggling to retain clients and believe switching companies would be detrimental to the overall health of that small business. Clients have become more hesitant on finding another option.

## OPPORTUNITIES

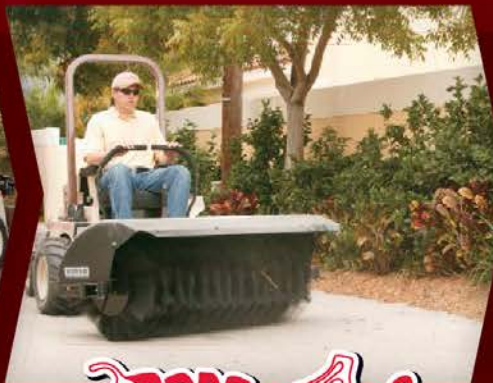
› **Cost management.** We have a fleet of eight propane-fueled lawn mowers, as well as a Ford F-150 work truck fueled by propane autogas. This equipment gives us the opportunity to better manage our costs, since we purchase propane for our on-site refueling station by negotiating an annual price. That allows us to lower our costs right now because we negotiate our propane price around June, and we’re locked in for a year. We use about 10,000 gal. of propane a year.

› **Diversification.** We pride ourselves on being a one-stop shop. We offer an array of services: landscape, irrigation, hardscapes, outdoor lighting and mosquito misting, which is similar to an irrigation system: You program the system to run about three times a day, and it fogs for about 15 to 30 seconds.

# “WE’RE A ONE-STOP SHOP.”

WE DO EVERYTHING, EVEN COMPLEX AND SPECIALTY  
JOBS, BECAUSE WE INVESTED IN IMPLEMENTS LIKE  
THE TURBINE BLOWER, AERA-VATOR™, SPRAYER,  
ROTARY BROOM AND EDGER.”

SCOTT BREWER | *Rotolo Consultants, Inc.*  
Slidell, LA



**GRASSHOPPER**  
YOUR NEXT MOWER®

Visit [grasshoppermower.com/implements](http://grasshoppermower.com/implements) or call **620-345-8621** for more information.

© 2011 The Grasshopper Company

## Necessity breeds profitability

A Midwestern region's need for grub control leads to an instantly profitable add-on division.

**A**FTER A LARGE outbreak of grubs in the Illinois area 12 years ago, Jack Robertson recognized the need for adding a grub control service to all of his lawn care packages. It was a necessity at the time, yet it's since become a profitable division.

"When we started the white grub control service, it was automatically added to everyone's program and if they wished to decline, they could," explains Robertson, the president of Robertson Lawn Care Inc., a company with primarily residential clients. "But by letting them have the option to decline the program, it put the ball in their court. If they end up having a problem, they can't say it's something we did wrong."

For those who do decline the service, which is performed annually around the start of summer, Robertson mails a postcard reminder to customers explaining their lawns are not protected. "It's a sales tool, but even more so, it's a communication tool," he says. "A cover-your-butt type of thing making sure clients know we've given them the opportunity to protect their lawns. We don't want to force the service down anyone's throat."

### GOING WITH GRUB CONTROL

The obvious but quite important factors in whether to add a grub control service is if there is a need in a particular market and whether it will be profitable. The Midwest, where Robertson is located, certainly has a grub problem, helping that division to thrive. Since landscape companies should already have the necessary equipment, the product itself becomes the only investment. But the product is costly, adds Robertson, so you should ensure it will be a profitable entity to start recouping those costs. "Your clients don't want to have a grub problem," he says. "It can lead to skunks and raccoons hanging



Jack Robertson

around their yards and digging holes."

Lawn care companies don't want their clients to have grub problems either, points out Robertson, making it even more of an incentive to sell them on the service. "A grub problem becomes a concern for the landscaper, too. It can hinder seeding, cause brown areas, and make caring for the lawn more difficult."

Each year, Robertson starts the grub control applications in early June. It's done once annually, however, he says sometimes retreating the property is necessary, especially after heavy rainfall. That makes pricing the service profitably even more important. The best time to sell the grub service is in the springtime, so you can get clients lined up for the summer. However, Robertson says this is also a challenge. "The spring is not when customers are thinking about the grub problem they might have had last September," he says. "It's out of sight, out of mind when you're selling it. and that can make the sale more challenging."

One of the most important things, says Robertson, is to sell a preventive service. It's better to protect the lawns with a simple application than try to apply a curative application to lawns that already have problems. "Grubs will turn a customer off to the landscape company, even though it's not your fault in any way they're causing a problem," he says. "The last thing you want is an unhappy customer so it's best to keep them from having any problems in the first place."

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



The notorious — and ugly — grub.

### » SERVICE SNAPSHOT

**COMPANY NAME:** Robertson Lawn Care Inc.

**HEADQUARTERS:** Springfield, IL

**WHY GRUB CONTROL:** There's a strong need for grub control in the Midwest.

**INITIAL INVESTMENT:** Product only. The basic lawn care company would already have a spreader, the laborer and a truck. It's just choosing which product you like best.

**INVESTMENT RECOUP TIME:** Immediate, assuming the need for the service is there. You should pre-sell the product to ensure immediate profitability.

**WHY CUSTOMERS LIKE IT?** Nobody wants a grub control problem. If they're investing in making their lawn look nice, why let grubs ruin that?

New for LCOs



## Sometimes getting ahead means not going back.

If your preemergence herbicide is causing callbacks among valuable tree and shrub customers, switch to the longest residual herbicides in new SureGuard® sprayable and BroadStar™ dry granule—both providing long-lasting control of many tough weeds. Your customers will be happy with the time you spend on their landscape. And you will be, too.

Fewer callbacks. More happy customers.

**SureGuard** | **BroadStar**  
HERBICIDE | HERBICIDE



Products That Work, From People Who Care® | [www.valentpro.com](http://www.valentpro.com) | 800-89-VALENT (898-2536)

Read and follow the label instructions before using.

BroadStar is a trademark and SureGuard and Products That Work, From People Who Care are registered trademarks of Valent U.S.A. Corporation. ©2010 Valent U.S.A. Corporation. All rights reserved. AM22456.03

Integrated Turf Care takes sustainability seriously. The Coral Springs, FL-based company is a platinum member of the Audubon Lifestyles and a chartered member of the International Sustainability Council. It's clear **Kenny Perkins**, CEO, is excited about what his company has to offer. "Work is fun for me again," he says. "I never minded coming to work, but now I look forward to doing this every day. I'm loving being on the forefront of where this industry is going."

**Kenny, tell us why you're so enthusiastic about organic turf fertilization.** We now have organic products that perform as good as synthetics. That hasn't always been the case. I tried organic processes several years ago, and I wasted maybe \$90,000 because the products didn't perform well. We're now using a natural organic product — a 15-0-0 granular and a 10-0-0 liquid — that's produced by a high-pressure composting process using food waste. Some of the products have lysine, which is a single-source nitrogen product derived from corn. We get it and other turf and ornamental products from Purely Organic, a company located in Maine.

**Obviously, you're pleased with the results.** We've had great success. We're applying a granular in the spring and fall, and a liquid product in fertigation systems on several different proper-

ties during the summer. We probably have 80 or 90 acres under fertigation.

**Fertigation, that's applying fertilizer in irrigation water. When did you get involved with that?** We started this past summer. I got the idea while I was meeting with a distributor and got involved with a discussion concerning a turf problem at a golf course. I had experience injecting rust inhibitors in irrigation systems, so it dawned on me that I could inject fertilizers, too. I investigated the idea and called Michael Chaplinsky and learned about his company, Turf Feeding Systems.

**Please share your experience with fertigation so far.** One of the properties we've improved is the St. Mary's Medical Center in West Palm Beach. It's about 10 acres. The hospital is committed to having a sustainable landscape, and that's what we offer. I've been working

to bring its older irrigation system up to standard. We started fertigating with organic fertilizers in mid-summer and within four or five weeks, the improvement was dramatic. They've been very pleased.

**What other benefits do you feel your organic program offers customers?** Once we get the properties under control, we believe we can reduce the amount of fertilizer we use and still get great results. The increased biological activity within the soil will allow us to reduce the amount of nitrogen we apply, reduce pesticide use and save water, too. That's what sustainability is about, right?

**We understand that your firm joined Audubon Lifestyles as a Platinum member. What does that mean?** We're proud to be a part of Audubon Lifestyles. Audubon Lifestyles is a non-profit organization based on the principles of



## AT A GLANCE

**COMPANY:** Integrated Turf Care

**ONLINE:** IntegratedTurfCare.com

**CEO:** Kenny Perkins

**HEADQUARTERS:** Coral Springs, FL

**SERVICE AREA:** Miami/Dade/Broward/Palm Beach Counties

**FOUNDED:** 1986, merged with another company in 2006 to become ITC

**EMPLOYEES:** 40 employees (peak season)

**SERVICES:** lawn maintenance, fertilization, pest control, landscaping, irrigation, soil analysis

**PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS/HOBBIES:** Motorcycling ("I'm a speed freak.")

**FAMILY:** Wife, Robin

sustainability. Our company's focus is offering sustainable landscape solutions.

**Obviously, you feel the direction you've chosen differentiates your company in your market.** Absolutely. What we're offering is industry-altering services and products, game changers. I've been in this industry since 1986, and I sense a true metamorphosis taking place these last two or three years with the industry's understanding of the importance of enhancing soil biology to reduce chemical and water use.

WHAT WE'RE OFFERING IS **INDUSTRY-ALTERING SERVICES** . . . I'VE BEEN IN THIS INDUSTRY SINCE 1986, AND I SENSE A **TRUE METAMORPHOSIS** TAKING PLACE." —KENNY PERKINS



GORGEOUS DEPENDABILITY



AMERICAN DESIGNED & MADE

### The Wright Stander X. The New Stander of Excellence.

It's our newest Stander. But it has all the timeless qualities – high ground speed, unmatched maneuverability and rock-solid reliability – that you expect from a Wright. And now with a quick cut height adjustment and floating cutter deck, the Stander® X™ delivers cut quality that's second to none in any mowing environment. The most versatile mower today just got better. And that's a beautiful thing.

To learn more about the Wright Stander X, call 301.360.9810 or visit [www.wrightmfg.com](http://www.wrightmfg.com)

THE WRIGHT WAY TO MOW

**wright**  
commercial products

# WEEDWATCH

STANDING SENTINEL TO PROTECT PLANT HEALTH



Recommended  
Dow AgroSciences  
solution  
Confront® specialty  
herbicide\*

## CORN SPEEDWELL

*Veronica arvensis*

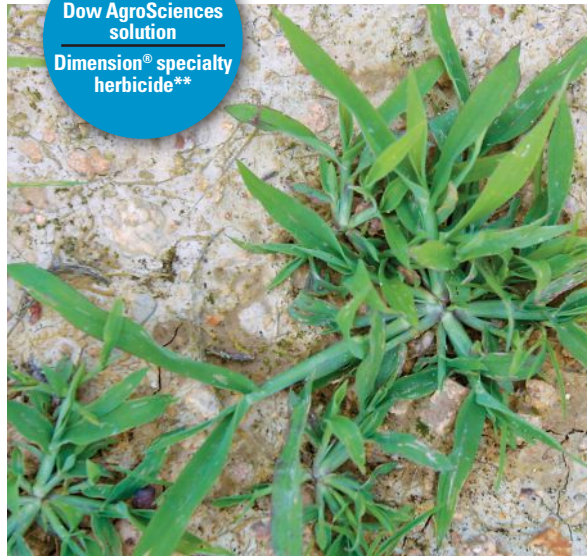
### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This low-growing winter annual thrives in open turf, and becomes upright as it matures.
- ▶ Corn speedwell has small lower leaves that are rounded and toothed; the upper leaves are pointed.
- ▶ The plant, which is entirely covered in fine hairs, grows small bright blue flowers with white throats.
- ▶ A distinctive heart-shaped seedpod grows below the flowers.
- ▶ It does not typically last long after flowering, and cannot live in high temperatures.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Increase turfgrass density and minimize open turf areas by fertilizing, mowing and irrigating.
- ▶ Control winter annual broadleaf weeds before seed set.
- ▶ Treat early stages of growth with a product containing multiple broadleaf herbicides, such as 2,4-D; MCP; dicamba; clopyralid or triclopyr.
- ▶ Apply a pre-emergent broadleaf herbicide such as isoxaben in late summer.

\* Confront is not for sale or use in Nassau and Suffolk counties, New York. Other state restrictions on the sale and use of Confront apply.



Recommended  
Dow AgroSciences  
solution  
Dimension® specialty  
herbicide\*\*

## LARGE CRABGRASS

*Digitaria sanguinalis*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This light green, bunch-type grass features seed-head spikelets in two to nine finger-like branches along the stalk.
- ▶ The summer annual germinates when soil temperatures reach a consistent 55° F.
- ▶ Its tall, membranous ligule has jagged edges and no auricles.
- ▶ Leaves are rolled in the bud, and the collar is broad with long hairs.
- ▶ It grows under close mowing, and prefers open areas with thin turfgrass.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ When soil temperatures reach 55° F in the spring, apply a pre-emergent crabgrass herbicide.
- ▶ Choose the formulation that works best for your operation. There are several liquid, granular or fertilizer granule options.
- ▶ Consult the appropriate product label for recommended rates for your area, as well as reseeding and overseeding recommendations.

\*\* 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](http://www.DowProvesIt.com) or call 800/255-3726.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY  **Dow AgroSciences**



Dow AgroSciences

**Dimension<sup>®</sup>**

Specialty Herbicide



GOLF



LAWN



NURSERY



ORNAMENTAL



## THE HOTTEST SHOW ON THE WEED CONTROL ROAD JUST GOT EVEN LOUDER.

Only a superstar rolls like this, and you're about to get a backstage pass to the hottest tour on the road. It's the Rock the Weeds Tour featuring Dimension<sup>®</sup> specialty herbicide, the No. 1 preemergence herbicide brand in the lawn and landscape markets.<sup>1</sup> Dimension is cranking up the volume on tough weeds like crabgrass, creeping woodsorrel, bittercress and many other grassy and broadleaf weeds. And its nonstaining formulation rocks all season long and delivers outstanding early postemergence control on crabgrass. On this tour, there are no groupies or wannabes. It's brought to you by the company that delivers only proven solutions — Dow AgroSciences.

[www.DowProvesIt.com](http://www.DowProvesIt.com)

<sup>1</sup>2008 Specialty Product Consultants. <sup>®</sup>Dimension is a trademark of Dow AgroSciences LLC. State restrictions on the sale and use of Dimension specialty herbicide products apply. Consult the label before purchase or use for full details. Always read and follow label directions. <sup>®</sup>The swinging golfer logo is a registered trademark of PGA TOUR, Inc. ©2010 Dow AgroSciences LLC T38-813-002 (12/09) BR 010-60661 DATOTURF9075

OFFICIAL  
CHEMISTRY  
COMPANY



P R O V E N   S O L U T I O N S



# THE BENCHMARK

KEVIN KEHOE

The author, owner-manager of 3PG Consulting, is a 25-year industry veteran. Reach him at kkehoe@questex.com.



## Achieve your sales goal

**N**ot achieving sales goals is one of the chief causes of low net profit. Let's focus on two causes of this problem — and the attendant solutions.

### Cause 1: Planning

Too often, not enough time goes into the details required to turn a goal into an invoiced reality. Specifically, most managers underestimate the number of leads necessary. Identify specific numeric targets in your annual plan, and break them down into weekly goals. Table 1 provides an example of this type of sales planning.

TABLE 1

**Sales goal** — \$1 million  
*New sales sold and produced in a fiscal year*

**Close rate** — 20%  
*Percentage at which bid dollars close*

**Bid goal** — \$5 million  
*Sales goal divided by closing rate*

**Average job size** — \$15,000  
*Dollar value of average job or contract*

**Number of bids** — 333  
*Bid goal divided by average job size*

**Qualification rate** — 50%  
*Percentage of leads that are qualified to bid*

**Number of leads** — 667  
*Number of bids divided by qualification rate*

Per the Table, achieving \$1 million in sales at a 20% close rate requires \$5 million in proposals. Close rates are falling as competition has increased. In grounds maintenance, 17% is now a typical rate. In design/build, it's higher — usually around 35%. In bid/build, it may be as low as 5%.

Translating bid dollars into a bid number requires an assumption about average job size. Recognizing that all leads are not qualified (for an assortment of reasons), it makes sense to apply a qualification rate to determine a

number of leads. This qualification rate can be as low as 40% in grounds maintenance, for example.

The bottom line is that \$1 million in sales requires a starting point of 667 leads. Keep in mind, a lead is a job or property. Therefore, a single property management relationship may generate many leads.

TABLE 2

**Prospecting time** — 0.5 hours per  
333 total hours (leads times hours)  
*Average time it takes to make prospecting call*

**Qualification time** — 0.5 hours per  
333 total hours (leads times hours)  
*Average time it takes to meet and qualify*

**Bidding time** — 5 hours per  
1,667 total hours (leads times hours)  
*Average time it takes to measure and estimate*

**Closing time** — 2.5 hours per  
833 total hours (leads times hours)  
*Average time it takes to present, close and follow-up*

**Total hours** — 3,167  
*Hours required to achieve the goal*

**Solution:** Build a solid list of leads. The best sources include existing relationships, lapsed customers, previously bid but lost jobs, and geographically oriented door-knocking or mailing campaigns.

### Cause 2: Division of labor

More management thinking should go into time and talent allocation. Specifically, in today's world it is highly improbable that one person can effectively execute the sales process: prospecting, qualification, measuring, estimating, presenting and closing. To understand what you need, you must identify time requirements by activity. Table 2 does this.

The sales process is labor-intensive. If time and talent are improperly allocated, the goal will not be achieved. Table 2 makes this clear: To sell \$1 million, more than 3,000 hours of someone's time is a realistic estimate. Obviously, a single individual will not be able to get it all done — especially during crunch times.

**Solution:** Focus your salespeople on prospecting, qualification, presenting and closing, and assign measuring and estimating tasks to someone else who is far better and faster at it anyway.