

ALTERNATIVE FUEL

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For Baker, no more time is wasted at the gas station, pulling the lawn equipment off the trailers for refueling. The price “at the pump” is also a welcome change, as the company saves about \$1.50 per gallon with propane compared to gasoline. Heritage refuels all of Baker’s cylinders on-site, with the company estimating that it burns more than 300 gallons of propane a week.

Moreover, propane provides a 6.5% better fuel burn than gasoline, and its clean-burning qualities reduce engine repairs by about 30%, while keeping many of its commercial customers satisfied during business hours, Baker President Marc Blum says. The company also notices a better response to the firing system with propane, as the walk-behinds are easier to start than the gasoline models.

“We have no regrets. We’re not going back [to gasoline]; we’re never going to consider it,” Jensen adds.

Shannon Wilson might not, either.

Competitive Lawn Service, Downers Grove, IL, converted 18 mowers including 12 Wright Standers, to propane.

He says he was “like a deer in headlights” when a representative from Metro Lift Propane, a division of Heritage, approached his landscape company, Greenscape Services in Sarasota, FL, about using propane in his equipment. That was about two years ago. The price of gasoline was a primary driver in the company adding four 61-in. zero-turn propane riding mowers to his 12-mower fleet.

“It’s ridiculous. It’s pushing almost four bucks a gallon,” Wilson says of gasoline prices. “It makes it really tough. You have to pass that on, but it doesn’t make the customers very happy, either. With propane, you can get a price locked in and it doesn’t fluctuate.”

Metro Lift supplies Greenscape’s propane through tank exchanges, with Wilson estimating a near 30% savings in fuel costs with the propane mowers. He says he hasn’t found any negatives with the units, noting the longevity of their clean-burning engines and fewer oil changes (once every eight months instead of three).

Wilson says he will continue to transition to propane mowers, with an



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ALTERNATIVE FUEL

Propane isn't just for mowers. This Lehr leaf blower is powered by a 1-pound refillable propane canister.



eye toward adding propane vehicles and his own refueling station as well.

Cleaning up

Billy Leavell is encouraging his colleagues to help clean the industry through propane partnerships. Nashville, TN-based Turf Managers LLC, which Leavell co-owns with Nathan Brandon, is running five of its 12 Exmark and Ferris 52- to 62-in. walk-behind lawn mowers on propane, servicing about 900 mostly residential customers 10 months out of the year.

The company first converted two mowers in 2008 in response to high gasoline prices, and has continually added propane to its new equipment in stages — with plans to convert them all to propane.

“We were and still are concentrating on environmentally friendly practices, and this is just a natural step for us to be more environmentally responsible, and at the same time it does have its economical advantages to us,” says Leavell, crediting the guidance and support of Jim Coker at Heritage Propane.

Turf Managers, which receives its propane supply in tank exchanges from Heritage's Metro Lift division, saves about \$1.05 per gallon with propane. The company is able to pay off the \$1,000 to \$1,200 per-mower conversion cost in about one year, Leavell says. But there are other benefits as well, particularly with the clean qualities of propane.

“You don't have to worry about filling up out of gasoline cans and the trash that gets in the gas tank and goes through the engine. The engines are much cleaner in that regard,” says Leavell, adding that the engines run and sound similar to gasoline.

“I didn't meet a gas can that didn't have a leaky nozzle; these cylinders attach just like a gas grill and you're good to go,” he says. *LJM*

Brian Richesson is senior editor of Landscape Management's sister publication LP Gas.

RESOURCES

According to the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC), there are 150,000 to 200,000 new commercial mowers sold each year, and the OEMs are making efforts to grow propane's share to 15% by 2015. That could translate to more than 150 million gallons of propane sales each year.

PERC's Marketer Technology Training Program educates propane marketers on opportunities in commercial mowing, among other applications. Visit www.propanecouncil.org/MTT.

Propane lawn equipment manufacturers include:

- › Bad Boy
- › Bob-Cat
- › Cub Cadet
- › Dixie Chopper
- › Exmark
- › Ferris
- › Gravely
- › Husqvarna
- › Lehr
- › Scag
- › Snapper Pro

Brian Feehan, vice president of engine fuel for PERC, says:

“Even though propane in commercial mowing was out there four years ago with two small OEMs [Enviogard and Dixie Chopper], and the adoption of larger OEMs points us in the right direction, this still needs to be viewed as an infant market — and it requires us to maintain our presence and get stronger in it.”

A SUPPLEMENT TO

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WHO
MADE
THE CUT

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MANY OF YOU started your businesses with a truck, trailer, mower, hand tools and most importantly, a passion for creating, beautifying and maintaining outdoor spaces. From those humble beginnings, you have grown into the trusted brands you represent in the markets you serve today.

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Over the years, we have all faced business challenges and refined our businesses. By moving and molding with the times, we have been allotted the privilege to take advantage of new opportunities while building and growing our people and brand along the way. The LM150 survey proves, with a showing of over 96,000 full and part time employees, that despite a down economy, the opportunity to flourish still exists.

The recent economic environment has, undoubtedly, been challenging on businesses. Many who've been in the industry for more than 20 years claim it's been the toughest time they've encountered. If these challenging economic times have taught us anything, it's to remember our simple beginnings — the drive and focus that inspired you to follow your entrepreneurial spirits and soar.

As I talk with lawn care and landscape professionals across the country, I hear optimism and focus. And it's inspiring and contagious. Instead of



KENTAYLOR, CLP

succumbing to flat growth, many are taking these lumps and renovating their businesses, implementing lean principles and, yes, even growing in the more complicated business environment we work in today. Proof of this optimism can be seen in the LM150 survey, which shows that the combined revenue in 2010 increased by 3.5 percent.

Today's economic reality calls for new and innovative approaches and John Deere is dedicated to providing the support and solutions necessary to achieve these successes. Our commitment to your business does not stop with providing innovative products and solutions. Our experienced John Deere dealer network is there to support your business needs, after the sale, with the most extensive factory trained service technicians and knowledgeable parts staff in the industry. We have one priority: To ensure product uptime in the most responsive manner, because we understand downtime is not an option when you are running a business.

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Ken Taylor, CLP

General Sales Manager-

Commercial Business Development

WHO MADE THE CUT

It was a traumatic year for Green Industry companies. Some thrived, while others struggled to maintain even last year's losses. *LM* unveils its exclusive list of the 150 largest landscape contractors in the country.

BY **DAN JACOBS** EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

IF the results of the past year were a classroom, well, let's just say not everybody aced the final exam. 2010 was the weed-out class, the one that makes students decide whether they really want to pursue the Green Industry as an option.

The students in this scenario are the business owners who, no matter how well they did, learned a great deal about the study of running a business.

Of course, there are always those students who pass every test, seem to complete every homework assignment with ease and managed to pull a 4.0 grade point average — which for the purposes of this analogy means double digit growth. (Yeah, we hated those guys, too.)

Of course, the quality of your business acumen was by no means the sole factor in determining how well companies did ... or will do next year.

"We have identified only one obstacle for 2011," says Dennis Kaiser, senior manager of communications for ValleyCrest Cos., No. 3 on the *LM*150 list: "The economy."

But whether companies expanded or contracted, what earned professionals a passing grade in 2010 was surviving with the increased competition, along with less work and downward price

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LEGEND * 2009 data; ° 2010 estimated data;
 • Info from outside source; # Remaining revenue
 from retail garden center; NR = Not reported

	Company	Headquarters
1	TruGreen Lawncare and Landcare	Memphis, TN
2	ValleyCrest Landscape Cos.	Calabasas, CA
3	Brickman Group	Gaithersburg, MD
4	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	Kent, OH
5	ISS Grounds Control	Phoenix, AZ
6	Scotts Lawn Service	Marysville, OH
7	Bartlett Tree Experts	Stamford, CT
8	USM	Norristown, PA
9	Massey Services Inc.	Orlando, FL
10	Weed Man	Mississauga, Ontario, Canada
11	U.S. Lawns	Orlando, FL
12	Ambius	Buffalo Grove, IL
13	Lawn Doctor	Holmdel, NJ
14	Yellowstone Landscape Group	Plano, TX
15	Gothic Landscape Inc.	Valencia, CA
16	Ruppert Landscape	Laytonsville, MD
17	Vila & Son Landscaping Corp.	Miami, FL
18	Onesource Landscape & Golf Services	Tampa, FL
19	SavATree	Bedford Hills, NY
20	Clintar Landscape Management	Markham, Ontario, Canada
21	Marina Landscape Inc.	Anaheim, CA
22	Lipinski Outdoor Services	Marlton, NJ
23	Acres Group	Wauconda, IL
24	Jensen Corp.	San Jose, CA
25	Mainscape	Fishers, IN
26	NaturaLawn of America	Frederick, MD
27	Denison Landscaping Group	Fort Washington, MD
28	The Groundskeeper	Tucson, AZ
29	Mariani Landscape Management	Lake Bluff, IL
30	Fairco Inc.	Scottsdale, AZ
31	Nanak's Landscaping (Now Valleycrest)	Longwood, FL
32	Spring-Green Lawn Care Corp.	Plainfield, IL
33	Complete Landscaping Service	Bowie, MD
34	The Bruce Co of Wisconsin	Middleton, WI
35	Sierra Landscape Co.	Palm Desert, CA
36	Lucas Tree Expert Co.	Portland, ME
37	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	Woodbine, MD
38	Cagwin & Dorward	Novato, CA
39	The Greenery Inc.	Hilton Head, SC
40	Mission Landscape Cos.	Tustin, CA
41	Terracare Associates	Littleton, CO
42	Gothic Grounds Management	Valencia, CA
43	James River Grounds Management	Glen Allen, VA
44	Landscape Concepts Management	Grayslake, IL
45	RCI	Slidell, LA
46	McFall Berry Landscape Management	McLean, VA
47	Chalet	Wilmette, IL
48	Shearon Environmental Design Co Inc.	Plymouth Meeting, PA
49	Scott Byron & Co Inc.	Lake Bluff, IL
50	AAA Landscape	Phoenix, AZ

2010 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change From 2009	FT/PT Employees	% Employee Change From 2009	2010 Avg Rev Per Employee	% Avg Rev Per Employee Change From 2009	Comm/ Res/ Gov Mix
\$1,335,175,000	+1.8%	NR (12,000 total)	NA	\$111,265	NA	0/100/0
\$835,000,000	-10.9%	9000/0	-10%	\$92,778	-1%	100/0/0
\$807,508,000	+17.5%	10000/0	-0.5%	\$80,750	+18.2%	70/30/0
\$591,732,000	+5.3%	6723/281	+1.3%	\$84,485	+4%	0/100/0
\$380,474,000	NA	1800/6700	NA	\$44,761	NA	18/0/82
\$290,000,000	0%	1550/150	-15%	\$170,588	+17.6%	3/97/0
\$158,000,000	+5.3%	1350/25	+10.7%	\$114,909	-4.8%	16.80/4
\$133,305,900*	0%	1446/536	NR	NR	NR	100/0/0
\$129,011,218	NA	1191/0	0%	\$108,322	+9%	9/91/0
\$105,000,000	0%	750/2500	-4%	\$32,307	+5%	5/95/0
\$102,000,000	+8.5%	1650/0	+3%	\$61,818	+5.2%	100/0/0
\$96,277,345	-21.7%	NR	NR	NR	NR	99/1/0
\$83,000,000	+3.8%	40/4	+1%	NR	NR	1,99/0
\$74,000,000	-7.7%	1180/0	+18%	\$62,712	-21.6%	69/7/24
\$68,500,000	+0.3%	960/0	+3.6%	\$71,354	-7.3%	85/5/10
\$65,338,681	+12.5%	600/0	0%	\$108,898	+12.5%	100/0/0
\$61,400,000*	0%	798/0	NR	NR	NR	99/1/0
\$60,000,000	0%	1000/0	0%	\$60,000	0%	100/0/0
\$55,098,000	+15.8%	440/60	+8.7%	\$110,196	+6.5%	15/85/0
\$46,200,000	+2.7%	175/400	0%	\$80,348	+2.7%	95/5/0
\$43,000,000	+2.4%	604/0	+19.6%	\$71,192	-14.4%	25/0/75
\$42,756,217	+16.2%	61/50	-7.5%	\$385,191	+25.6%	100/0/0
\$41,151,872	-6.7%	80/550	-15.4%	\$65,320	+10.3%	20/25/45
\$41,000,000	-0.2%	390/0	-6%	\$105,128	+4.5%	45/45/10
\$39,900,000	+22.4%	350/150	+22%	\$79,800	+3%	99/1/0
\$37,750,000	+6.3%	271/72	+22.5%	\$110,058	-13.2%	10/90/0
\$36,000,000	+3%	225/180	+42%	\$88,889	-27.6%	100/0/0
\$35,090,500	-3.5%	700/0	+16.7%	\$50,129	-16.5%	100/0/0
\$35,000,000*	0%	100/290	NR	NR	NR	10/90/0
\$35,000,000*	0%	NR(200 total)	+33.3%	\$175,000	+50%	NR
\$34,500,000*	0%	450/200	NR	NR	NR	100/0/0
\$34,215,000	-0.8%	250/50	NR	\$114,050	NR	10/90/0
\$32,650,000	NA	125/400	NR	NR	NR	90/5/5
\$32,126,000*	0%	183/330	NR	NR	NR	80/20/0
\$32,000,000*	0%	250/0	NR	NR	NR	90/10/0
\$31,600,000	+23.9%	400/0	NR	\$79,000	NR	85/10/5
\$29,000,000°	0%	210/130	0%	\$85,294	0%	60/40/0
\$27,464,594	+3.1%	350/50	+6.7%	\$68,661	-3.3%	85/15/0
\$25,200,000	-0.4%	340/60	0%	\$63,000	-4%	60/28/2*
\$25,000,000	-3.9%	470/0	-6%	\$53,191	+2.3%	100/0/0
\$24,500,000	-7.5%	225/150	-6.3%	\$65,333	-1.4%	100/0/0
\$23,777,961	+14.4%	490/0	+3.1%	\$48,526	+10.9%	90/5/5
\$23,721,283	+20%	475/4	+7.9%	\$49,523	+11.3%	100/0/0
\$23,656,000	-10.1%	90/250	-5.6%	\$69,576	-4.8%	95/5/0
\$23,560,000	+30.1%	120/300	+91.8%	\$56,095	-32.1%	98/2/0
\$23,400,000	0%	180/120	0%	\$78,000	0%	100/0/0
\$23,100,000	-2.2%	275/0	0%	\$84,000	-2.2%	5/95/0
\$22,701,518	+3.2%	300/0	-37.5%	\$75,672	+65.1%	60/30/10
\$22,600,000	-1.7%	73/159	-9.4%	\$97,414	+8.4%	6/94/0
\$22,500,000	-19.6%	427/0	0%	\$52,693	-19.6%	50/2/48

listing continued on next page

continued from page S4

pressure — to name just a few of the challenges.

What does the class of 2010 look like? If we use the *LM150* as a guide, the ideal landscape company services mostly commercial customers, has a small percentage of residential clients, dabbles in government work — and maybe, just for fun, operates a tiny retail garden center.

But while running the numbers keeps statisticians employed, trying to pin a single label on all Green Industry enterprises is a little like lumping everyone in the melting pot that makes up this country as American. Well, yes, we're all Americans, but that glosses over the differences in language, customs, culture and geography, to name just a few.

2010 COMBINED
REVENUE OF *LM150*

\$7,762,431,033

2009 COMBINED
REVENUE OF *LM150*

\$7,501,566,624



= an increase of 3.5%

Similarly, the variety of companies comprising the *LM150* is as varied as any United Nations meeting. But there's something, from the largest company on the list (TruGreen Lawncare and Landcare at \$1.335 billion) to the smallest (Lawn Dawg at \$6.83 million) that separates these from the rest: Size matters.

Big firm on campus

Whether it's buying power, setting a legislative agenda or serving as a role model (intentionally or otherwise) for the industry nationally or in the local community, the sheer mass of a company gives it machismo, swagger, gravitas.

In 2010, the *LM150* earned a total of \$7.762 billion. That's an increase of 3.5% over 2009, but not quite up to 2008's \$7.97 billion.

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	Company	Headquarters
51	Greenscape Inc.	East Taunton, MA
52	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping Inc.	San Antonio, TX
53	Sebert Landscaping	Bartlett, IL
54	Christy Webber Landscapes	Chicago, IL
55	Environmental Management Services Inc.	Plain City, OH
56	DLC Resources Inc.	Phoenix, AZ
57	Russell Landscape Group Inc.	Dacula, GA
58	Moore Landscapes Inc.	Northbrook, IL
59	D Schumacher Landscaping	West Bridgewater, MA
60	David J Frank Landscape Contracting Inc.	Germantown, WI
61	Bemus Landscape Inc.	San Clemente, CA
62	Senske Lawn & Tree Care	Kennewick, WA
63	Cornerstone Solutions Group	Dade City, FL
	Heads Up Landscape Inc.	Albuquerque, NM
65	Creative Environments Design & Landscape Inc.	Tempe, AZ
66	Clean Scapes	Austin, TX
67	Urban Farmer Inc.	Thornton, CO
68	Lambert Landscape Company	Dallas, TX
69	Teufel Landscape Management	Portland, OR
	Girard Environmental	Sanford, FL
	The Highridge Corp.	Issaquah, WA
72	Ryan Lawn & Tree	Overland Park, KS
73	Gachina Landscape Management Inc.	Menlo Park, CA
74	Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care	Denver, CO
75	Landscape Specialists Inc.	Lake Forest, CA
76	Dobson's Woods & Water Inc.	Ocoee, FL
77	Metroplex Garden Design Landscaping LP	Dallas, TX
78	Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping Inc.	Portland, OR
79	CoCal Landscape Management	Denver, CO
80	Dora Landscaping Co.	Apopka, FL
	The Dworsky Cos.	Gardena, CA
82	Gibbs Landscape Co.	Smyrna, GA
83	Nissho of California Inc.	Vista, CA
84	Clarence Davids & Co.	Matteson, IL
85	Naturescape	Muskego, IL
86	Meadows Farms Inc.	Chantilly, VA
	High Tech Landscapes Inc.	Branchburg, NJ
88	McHale Landscape Design Inc.	Upper Marlboro, MD
89	Countryside Industries Inc.	Wauconda, IL
90	Benchmark Landscape Management	Poway, CA
	Greenscapes of Southwest Florida	Naples, FL
92	Andre Landscape Service Inc.	Azusa, CA
93	Precision Landscape Management	Dallas, TX
94	PROscape	Orlando, FL
95	Complete Property Maintenance Inc.	Coconut Creek, FL
	Earthworks Inc.	Lillian, TX
97	Dixie Landscape Co Inc.	Miami, FL
98	Reliable Property Services	St. Paul, MN
	LMI Landscapes Inc.	Carrollton, TX
	Stay Green Inc.	Santa Clarita, CA

2010 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change From 2009	FT/PT Employees	% Employee Change From 2009	2010 Avg Rev Per Employee	% Avg Rev Per Employee Change From 2009	Comm/ Res/ Gov Mix
\$22,184,000	-3.5%	225/0	+12.5%	\$98,596	-14.3%	50/50/0
\$21,000,000	-12.5%	300/25	+55.5%	\$64,615	-43.7%	77/12/11
\$21,000,000*	0%	50/300	NR	NR	NR	90/10/0
\$20,467,809*	0%	264/0	NR	NR	NR	70/30/0
\$20,400,000	+10.3%	130/180	+10.7%	\$65,806	-4%	80/5/15
\$20,372,200	-9%	348/2	+6%	\$58,206	-14.2%	100/0/0
\$20,010,000	+12.7%	275/120	-31.3%	\$50,658	+64.1%	90/5/5
\$20,000,000*	+11.1%	250/0	0%	\$80,000	+11.1%	100/0/0
\$19,950,000*	0%	160/0	NR	NR	NR	60/40/0
\$19,800,000	0%	260/18	+9%	\$71,223	-8.3%	70/30/0
\$19,300,000	-5.7%	340/0	-2.9%	\$56,765	-2.9%	94/3/3
\$19,000,000	+2.7%	200/70	+8%	\$70,370	-4.9%	25/70/5
\$18,500,000	-21.3%	325/35	+51.9%	\$51,389	-48.2%	75/25/0
\$18,500,000	+5.1%	220/100	+36.2%	\$57,813	-22.8%	85/10/5
\$18,300,000*	0%	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
\$18,226,000	NA	200/25	NR	\$81,004	NR	100/0/0
\$18,000,000	-.04%	110/150	-13.3%	\$69,231	+14.9%	75/25/0
\$17,850,000	-.08%	165/5	+6.3%	\$105,000	-3.7%	5/95/0
\$17,500,000	-34%	190/70	-19.6%	\$67,308	-18%	86/14/0
\$17,500,000	-12.5%	240/120	+12.5%	\$48,611	-22.2%	100/0/0
\$17,500,000	+25%	NR (750 total)	NR	\$23,333	NR	NR
\$17,362,000	+18.5%	160/3	-37.3%	\$106,515	+89%	80/20/0
\$17,151,943	+3.7%	251/3	-2%	\$67,527	+5.8%	90/10/0
\$17,004,427	+8.9%	197/3	+3.6%	\$85,022	+5.1%	33/66/1
\$17,000,000*	0%	300/0	NR	NR	NR	100/0/0
\$16,800,000*	0%	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
\$16,600,000	-27.2%	28/1	0%	\$572,414	-27.8%	65/35/0
\$16,557,661	-10.5%	230/43	+8.8%	\$60,651	-27.7%	25/33/9*
\$16,250,000*	0%	120/150	NR	NR	NR	100/0/0
\$16,000,000*	0%	80/0	NR	NR	NR	90/10/0
\$16,000,000	+6.7%	NR (350 total)	NR	\$45,714	NR	NR
\$15,950,096	NR	275/0	NR	\$58,000	NR	61/39/0
\$15,700,000*	0%	260/0	NR	NR	NR	20/80/0
\$15,625,000	-13.2%	250/0	-9.1%	\$62,500	-4.5%	90/5/5
\$15,602,612	+12.8%	164/8	+4.9%	\$90,713	+7.6%	10/90/0
\$15,000,000	+7.1%	100/125	-33.8%	\$66,667	+61.9%	2/98/0
\$15,000,000	NA	25/250	NR	\$54,545	NR	75/0/25
\$14,600,000	0%	140/0	-6.7%	\$104,285	+7.1%	0/100/0
\$14,500,000	-24%	47/122	-25.9%	\$85,799	+2.6%	80/20/0
\$14,200,500	-12.4%	225/3	+11.8%	\$62,283	-21.6%	70/20/10
\$14,200,000	+0.7%	212/0	0%	\$66,981	+0.7%	100/0/0
\$14,191,846*	0%	260/0	0%	\$54,584	0%	85/15/0
\$14,000,000	+3.7%	250 peak season	-40%	\$56,000	+71.7%	NR
\$13,650,000	+21.9%	260/60	+18.5%	\$42,656	+2.8%	95/4/1
\$13,500,000	-3.6%	275/40	0%	\$42,857	-3.6%	90/10/0
\$13,500,000	+32.4%	150/125	+27.9%	\$36,000	-24.1%	100/0/0
\$13,255,000	-15.8%	195/0	+34.5%	\$67,974	-37.4%	80/20/0
\$13,000,000	+8.8%	40/250	+26.1%	\$44,828	-13.7%	90/0/10
\$13,000,000	-13.9%	185/0	0%	\$70,270	-13.9%	100/0/0
\$13,000,000	+3.8%	210/0	+5%	\$61,905	-1.1%	95/1/4

listing continued on next page

continued from page S6

Revenue changes were all over the place. Some companies saw huge leaps in revenue, while others were hit hard. Many adjusted by reducing staff or cutting back in other ways.

And don't forget the regulatory challenges continuing to force owners to adapt.

Others looked and continue to look for new ways to grow.

"The biggest client growth opportunity will be from large portfolio retail properties," says Kaiser. "These clients have numerous small sites spread over a large geographic area.

"The second area of growth is geographic," Kaiser continues. "Our goal is to grow within our current footprint by adding multi-site clients."

Making the grade

There certainly is some optimism. While the housing market for the most part remains in shambles, there is a light at the end of the tunnel for some contractors.

"The biggest opportunity is in former customers we and our competitors lost due to the struggling economy in recent years, in both residential and commercial markets," says Barry Matthews, COO of Spring-Green Lawn Care Corp. and No. 32 on this year's list.

For many, the hard work has been done. Staffs have been pared back; bidding has been adjusted for the downward pressure; in some cases, purchases have been delayed. Everyone is running leaner and more efficiently. Still, many executives are leery about 2012.

There are some signs of improvement, and silver linings being found: Even in the hardest-hit areas, there are opportunities.

"It's been an eye-opener for (owners)," says Bruce Wilson, LM columnist and partner at the Wilson-Oyler Group. "In spite of the fact prices are down, you can still make money."

And that, in the end, is what most of us went to school for. LM

TOTAL # OF PEOPLE
EMPLOYED BY TOP 150
COMPANIES IN 2010

96,206

TOTAL # OF OFFICES/
BRANCHES OF TOP 150
COMPANIES IN 2010

2,868

	Company	Headquarters
	ProGrass	Wilsonville, OR
102	RGS (Resident Group Services Inc.)	Anaheim, CA
	Raymow Enterprises Inc (now a ValleyCrest Co.)	Oldsmar, FL
104	Florida Landscape Service Inc.	Orlando, FL
105	Land-Tech Enterprises Inc.	Warrington, PA
106	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	San Diego, CA
107	Westco Grounds Maintenance Co Inc.	Houston, TX
	Hermes Landscaping Inc.	Lenexa, KS
	Sun City Landscapes Inc.	Las Vegas, NV
110	HighGrove Partners	Austell, GA
111	ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	Venice, FL
112	Perficut Companies Inc.	Des Moines, IA
113	Sposato Landscape Co Inc.	Milton, DE
114	Mickman Brothers Inc.	Ham Lake, MN
	Rosehill Gardens Inc.	Kansas City, MO
	BDG Maintenance, Berghoof Design Group	Scottsdale, AZ
117	Realty Landscaping Corp.	Newtown, PA
118	Arteka Cos.	Shakopee, MN
119	Mill Brothers Landscape Group	Fort Collins, CO
120	Houston Landscapes Unlimited	Sugar Land, TX
	Lied's Nursery Inc.	Sussex, WI
122	Basnight Land and Lawn	Chesapeake, VA
123	Gardeners' Guild Inc.	Richmond, CA
124	Designs By Sundown	Englewood, CO
125	Luke Brothers Landscape Services	Holiday, FL
	Parker Interior Plantscape Inc.	Scotch Plains, NJ
	Carson Landscape Industries	Sacramento, CA
128	Cleary Bros Landscape Inc.	Danville, CA
129	The Spencer Co.	Houston, TX
130	Angler Environmental	Richmond, VA
131	Kinsella Landscape Inc.	Blue Island, IL
132	American Landscape Systems Inc.	Lewisville, TX
133	Becker Landscape Contractors Inc.	Indianapolis, IN
134	Odyssey Landscape Management	Lodi, CA
135	Hoffman Landscapes Inc.	Wilton, CT
136	Oak Leaf Landscape Management	Anaheim, CA
137	Grant & Power Landscaping Inc.	West Chicago, IL
138	Schultz Industries Inc.	Golden, CO
139	Native Land Design LLC	Cedar Park, TX
140	John Mini Distinctive Landscapes	Congers, NY
141	Carol King Landscape Maintenance Inc.	Orlando, FL
142	Webb Landscape Inc.	Ketchum, ID
143	Tree Tech Inc.	Foxboro, MA
	Blondie's Treehouse Inc.	Mamaroneck, NY
145	The Celtis Group	San Jose, CA
146	Kujawa Enterprises Inc.	Oakcreek, WI
147	Peabody Landscape Group	Columbus, OH
148	Pacheco Brothers Gardening	Hayward, CA
149	Executive Landscape Inc.	Fallbrook, CA
150	Lawn Dawg Inc.	Nashua, NH

2010 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change From 2009	FT/PT Employees	% Employee Change From 2009	2010 Avg Rev Per Employee	% Avg Rev Per Employee Change From 2009	Comm/ Res/ Gov Mix
\$13,000,000	+8.3%	175/0	0%	\$74,286	+8.3%	70/30/0
\$12,500,000	+0.8%	185/0	+8.8%	\$67,568	-7.4%	85/10/5
\$12,500,000*	0%	275/0	0%	\$45,455	NR	90/10/0
\$12,280,000*	0%	60/0	0%	\$204,667	0%	NR
\$12,200,000°	+10.4%	245/135	0%	\$32,105	+4.5%	95/5/0
\$12,131,000	+8.3%	180/0	-10%	\$67,394	+20.3%	70/30/0
\$12,000,000	0%	150/10	+10.3%	\$75,000	-9.4%	100/0/0
\$12,000,000	-7.7%	120/60	-5.3%	\$66,667	-2.6%	60/35/5
\$12,000,000*	0%	147/0	0%	\$81,633	0%	NR
\$11,944,000	+18.3%	94/3	-15.7%	\$123,134	+40.2%	95/3/2
\$11,930,000	-3%	165/50	-28.3%	\$55,488	+35.3%	80/20/0
\$11,800,000	+2.6%	45/75	+9%	\$98,333	-6%	85/15/0
\$11,700,000	+11.4%	150/55	+24%	\$57,073	-10.3%	70/30/0
\$11,500,000	+1.8%	80/10	-14.3%	\$127,777	+18.7%	50/40/10
\$11,500,000*	0%	150/30	0%	\$63,889	0%	60/40/0
\$11,500,000*	0%	140/1	0%	\$81,560	0%	70/30/0
\$11,000,000	+8.9%	65/75	0%	\$78,571	0%	70/30/0
\$10,929,718*	0%	100/5	0%	\$104,093	0%	80/20/0
\$10,818,658*	0%	140/0	0%	\$77,276	0%	80/20/0
\$10,750,000	-7.3%	NR 114 (total)	-8.8%	\$94,298	-1.7%	90/10/0
\$10,750,000*	0%	150/18	0%	\$63,988	0%	NR
\$10,500,000	+11.7%	100/67	+1.2%	\$62,874	+10.3%	70/25/5
\$10,325,000	+3.3%	145/0	+7.4%	\$71,207	-3.9%	80/15/5
\$10,000,000	+11.1%	90/0	-5.3%	\$111,111	+17.3%	5/95/0
\$10,000,000	-76.7%	230/45	-57.7%	\$36,364	-45%	80/0/20
\$10,000,000	+5.3%	99/6	-34.4%	\$95,238	+60.4%	95/0/0
\$10,000,000	0%	125/0	0%	\$80,000	0%	90/10/0
\$9,800,000	-10.1%	140/2	+12.7%	\$69,014	+3%	92/8/0
\$9,539,690	-13.8%	173/7	-4.3%	\$52,998	-9%	100/0/0
\$9,500,000	-14.6%	75/2	-11.5%	\$123,376	-3.5%	25/25/50
\$9,330,000	-20.7%	32/90	+7%	\$76,230	-26.2%	73/25/2
\$9,254,480	+6.4%	98/0	-3.1%	\$94,433	+10.7%	50/0/50
\$9,200,000	+2.2%	45/110	-3.1%	\$59,355	+5.5%	90/10/0
\$9,065,000*	0%	NR	NR	\$78,826	0%	NR
\$9,015,000	+21.8%	86/0	+14.7%	\$104,826	+6.2%	99/0/1
\$9,000,000*	0%	NR	NR	\$150,000	0%	NR
\$8,900,000	+20.3%	25/76	+21.7%	\$88,119	-1.2%	53/47/0
\$8,897,375	+16.7%	84/62	+52.1%	\$60,941	-23.3%	100/0/0
\$8,707,429	+14.2%	141/0	-4.1%	\$61,755	+19.1%	98/2/0
\$8,700,000	+3.6%	58/37	+3.3%	\$91,579	+3%	95/5/0
\$8,390,000	+2.3%	118/40	-5.4%	\$53,101	+8.1%	68/10/22
\$8,197,277	+6%	125/15	-15.2%	\$58,552	+18.5%	29/70/1
\$8,000,000*	0%	75/4	0%	\$101,266	0%	60/40/0
\$8,000,000*	0%	95/35	0%	\$61,538	0%	70/30/0
\$7,750,000*	0%	78/0	0%	\$99,359	0%	NR
\$7,724,223	-9.4%	75/50	-13.8%	\$61,794	+3.3%	90/2/8
\$7,600,000*	0%	45/75	0%	\$63,333	0%	70/30/0
\$7,200,000	NA	110/4	NR	\$63,157	NR	30/10/60
\$7,100,000	-8.6%	125/0	+4.2%	\$56,800	-12.2%	50/40/10
\$6,822,841	NA	68/6	NR	\$92,201	NR	4/96/0

BY REGION

(IN U.S. DOLLARS)



NORTHEAST

1	Brickman	\$282,627,800
2	Scotts Lawn Service	\$87,000,000
3	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$83,740,000
4	Lawn Doctor	\$56,440,000
5	SavATree	\$50,139,180
6	Ruppert Landscape	\$39,203,209
7	Denison Landscaping Group	\$36,000,000
8	Lipinski Outdoor Services	\$32,067,163
9	NaturaLawn of America	\$28,690,000
10	Shearon Environmental Design Co.	\$22,701,518
11	Greenscape	\$22,184,000
12	Complete Landscaping Service	\$21,222,500
13	D. Schumacher Landscaping	\$19,950,000*
14	Ambius	\$16,367,149
15	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	\$14,500,000°
16	McFall and Berry Landscape Management	\$14,040,000
17	Land-Tech Enterprises	\$12,200,000°
18	Sposato Landscape Co.	\$11,700,000
19	Realty Landscaping Corp.	\$11,000,000
20	McHale Landscape Design	\$10,220,000
21	Hoffman Landscapes	\$9,015,000
22	John Mini Distinctive Landscapes	\$8,700,000
23	Parker Interior Plantscape	\$8,200,000
24	Tree Tech	\$8,000,000*
25	Blondie's Treehouse	\$7,200,000*

SOUTHWEST

1	Brickman	\$32,300,320
2	ISS Grounds Control	\$30,437,920
3	The Groundskeeper	\$29,826,925
4	Yellowstone Landscape Group	\$29,600,000
5	AAA Landscape	\$22,275,000
6	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$21,000,000
7	DLC Resources	\$20,372,200
8	Scotts Lawn Service	\$20,300,000
9	Heads Up Landscape	\$18,500,000
10	Clean Scapes	\$18,226,000
11	Lambert Landscape Co.	\$17,850,000
12	Metroplex Garden Design Landscaping	\$16,600,000
13	Precision Landscape Management	\$14,000,000
14	Earthworks Inc.	\$13,500,000
15	Ambius	\$12,516,055
16	Westco Grounds Maintenance Co.	\$12,000,000
17	LMI Landscapes	\$11,960,000
18	BDG Maintenance, Berghoff Design Group	\$11,500,000*
19	Houston Landscapes Unlimited	\$10,750,000
20	U.S. Lawns	\$10,200,000
21	The Spencer Co.	\$9,539,690
22	American Landscape Systems	\$9,254,480
23	Native Land Design	\$8,707,429
24	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$7,900,000
25	Gothic Grounds Management	\$7,608,947

WEST

1	Brickman	\$80,750,800
2	Gothic Landscape	\$48,635,000
3	Marina Landscape	\$43,000,000
4	Jensen Corp.	\$41,000,000
5	Sierra Landscape Co	\$32,000,000*
6	Cagwin & Dorward	\$27,464,594
7	Mission Landscape Cos.	\$25,000,000
8	Terracare Associates	\$24,500,000
9	Ambius	\$21,181,015
10	Bemus Landscape	\$19,300,000
11	Senske Lawn & Tree Care	\$19,000,000
12	Urban Farmer	\$18,000,000
13	Teufel Landscape	\$17,500,000
14	Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care	\$17,004,427
15	Landscape Specialists	\$17,000,000*
16	Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping	\$16,557,661
17	CoCal Landscape	\$16,250,000*
18	Gothic Grounds Management	\$16,169,013
19	Nissho of California	\$15,700,000*
20	Benchmark Landscape	\$14,200,500
21	Andre Landscape Service	\$14,191,846*
22	Stay Green	\$13,000,000
	ProGrass	\$13,000,000
24	RGS	\$12,500,000
25	New Way Landscape & Tree Service	\$12,131,000

THE COMPETITIVE EDGE

We asked our *LM150* what separates them from the rest. Here's a sampling of the programs and systems that give them an edge over their competitors:

SOUTHEAST

1	Brickman	\$169,576,680
2	Massey Services	\$129,011,218
3	Scotts Lawn Service	\$87,000,000
4	Vila & Son Landscaping Corp.	\$61,400,000*
5	Yellowstone Landscape Group	\$44,400,000
6	Nanak's Landscaping	\$34,500,000*
7	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$26,860,000
8	Ruppert Landscape	\$26,135,472
9	The Greenery	\$25,200,000
10	James River Grounds Management	\$23,721,283
11	RCI	\$23,560,000
12	Mainscape	\$22,743,000
13	Russell Landscape Group	\$20,010,000
14	Lawn Doctor	\$19,920,000
15	Gothic Landscape	\$19,865,000
16	Cornerstone Solutions Group	\$18,500,000
17	Girard Environmental Services	\$17,500,000
18	Ambius	\$17,329,922
19	Dora Landscaping Co.	\$16,000,000*
20	Gibbs Landscape Co.	\$15,950,096
21	Chapel Valley Landscape Co	\$14,500,000°
22	Greenscapes of Southwest Florida	\$14,200,000
23	PROscape	\$13,650,000
24	Complete Property Maintenance	\$13,500,000
25	Dixie Landscape Co	\$13,255,000

MIDWEST

1	Brickman	\$242,252,400
2	Scotts Lawn Service	\$87,000,000
3	Acres Group	\$41,151,872
4	Mariani Landscape	\$35,000,000
5	The Bruce Co of Wisconsin	\$32,126,000
6	Ambius	\$27,920,430
7	Spring-Green Lawn Care Corp.	\$23,950,500
8	Landscape Concepts Management	\$23,656,000
9	Chalet	\$23,100,000
10	Scott Byron & Co.	\$22,148,000
11	Sebert Landscaping	\$21,000,000
12	Christy Webber Landscapes	\$20,467,809
13	Environmental Management Services	\$20,400,000
14	Moore Landscapes	\$20,000,000
15	David J Frank Landscape Contracting	\$19,800,000
16	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$16,841,140
17	Clarence Davids & Co.	\$15,625,000
18	Naturescape	\$15,602,612
19	Countryside Industries	\$14,500,000
20	Mainscape	\$13,566,000
21	Reliable Property Services	\$13,000,000
22	Hermes Landscaping	\$12,000,000
23	Perficut Cos	\$11,800,000
24	Rosehill Gardens	\$11,500,000
25	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$11,060,000

Complete Landscaping — Bowie, MD

1. Complete Landscaping utilizes GPS systems for all multi-site routing. The systems allow for more efficient routing and cost-savings. Crews can be dispatched more quickly and efficiently to any site within our company portfolio.
2. Complete Landscaping recently invested in a new database for service and billing. This database tracks client services at the task level. Reporting and management oversight data have been greatly enhanced by the new system.

ISS Grounds Control — Phoenix, AZ

Aggressive marketing, value added services, present value driven business propositions

Gothic Landscape Inc. — Valencia, CA

1. Decentralize local management dedicated to that region
2. Commitment to our mission statement
3. Long-term planning sessions

Ruppert Landscape — Laytonsville, MD

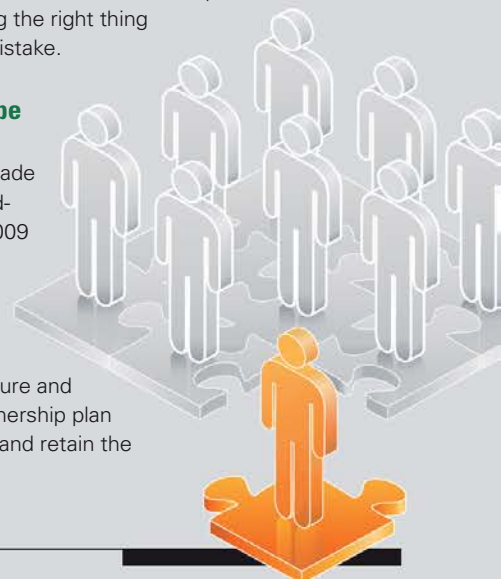
1. We have a strong charitable giving ethic and programs in place which help reinforce for employees that the work being performed has value that goes far beyond a day's work and a paycheck. As a result, employees are proud of the organization they work for.
2. We have a number of systems designed to recognize and appreciate our employees regularly — from hosting employee appreciation events and town hall meetings, to recognizing performance excellence and employee milestones.

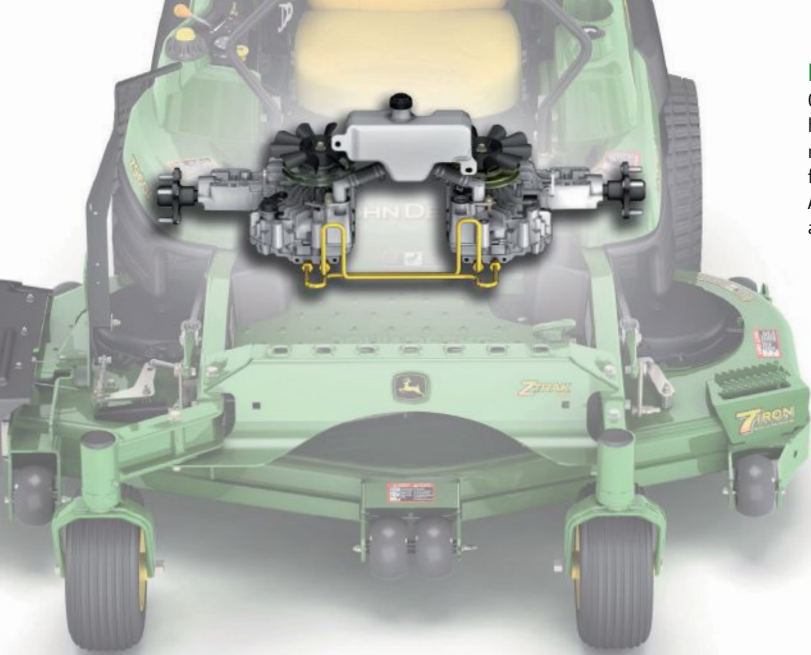
Earthworks Inc. — Lillian, TX

We don't have any magic bullets. We work hard and try to handle every situation with honesty, integrity and humility. We do everything possible to demonstrate true concern for our clients and their needs, and we don't put a price limit on doing the right thing when we make a mistake.

Mission Landscape Cos. — Irvine, CA

1. The investment made in software and hardware upgrades in 2009 are saving overhead costs and rapidly improving efficiencies.
2. Our company culture and employee stock ownership plan continues to attract and retain the best in the industry.





Exclusive Hydro Ground Transmission

Our unique cross-porting system routes the coolest hydraulic fluid to the hydraulic pump doing the most work. For long life, our transmissions also feature a piston pump and internal wet disk brakes. And for performance, gear reduction drives were added to enhance torque to the drive wheels.

Heavy Duty C-Channel Frame

The C-Channel frames on the Z900 are rock-solid, indestructible foundations. And a redistribution of weight, from front to rear, including a cast-iron bumper, makes side-hill mowing a breeze.

Our design philosophy?



7-Iron PRO Deck

The only deck in the industry stamped from a single sheet of thick, seven gauge steel using four million pounds of pressure. The result? Superior strength, excellent airflow, and an industry best blade tip speed of 18,000 feet per minute.



The ZTrak™ PRO 900 Series

When we sat down to design our zero-turn mowers, we had three goals in mind: make it easier to operate. Make it stronger. And make it more productive. The result is a machine that excels in all three areas, with features you won't find on any other mower. See your John Deere dealer for a Z900 demonstration and ask about our Work It For A Week Guarantee.

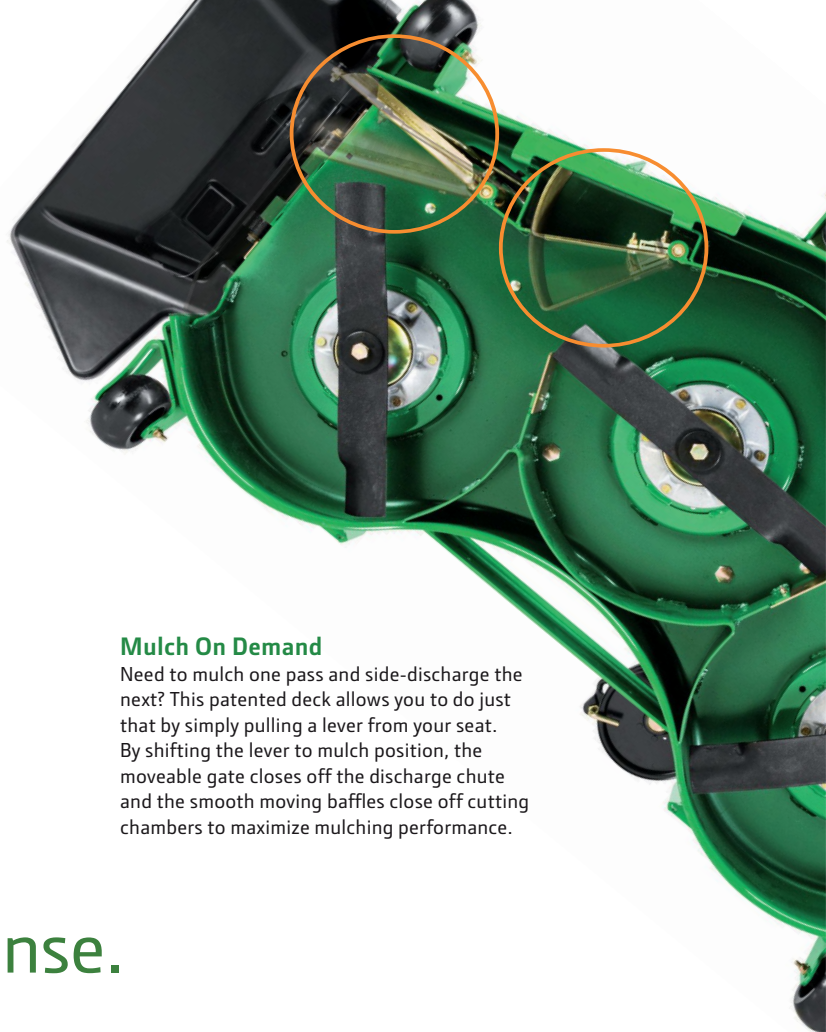
Accept Nothing Less





Height-of-cut Adjustment Dial

Our exclusive HOC dial allows you to set the cut height with just the twist of a dial. The simple mechanical design ensures superior performance and long life. A transport lock keeps the deck in place when loading and unloading. And the cut range is 1.5 to 5.0 inches at $\frac{1}{4}$ in. increments.



Mulch On Demand

Need to mulch one pass and side-discharge the next? This patented deck allows you to do just that by simply pulling a lever from your seat. By shifting the lever to mulch position, the moveable gate closes off the discharge chute and the smooth moving baffles close off cutting chambers to maximize mulching performance.

Common sense.



Comfort and Convenience Package

This industry exclusive features built-in electronic controls embedded in the levers that allow you to raise or lower the deck as well as disengage the mower blades, all with the push of a button. Also, these ergonomically angled control levers come with thick padded grips for less fatigue.

0% APR
FOR 24 MONTHS



JOHN DEERE

JohnDeere.com/MowPro

COMMERCIAL

1	ValleyCrest Landscape Cos.	\$835,000,000
2	Brickman	\$565,255,600
3	USM	\$133,305,900*
4	U.S Lawns	\$102,000,000
5	Ambius	\$95,314,572
6	ISS Grounds Control	\$68,485,320
7	Ruppert Landscape	\$65,338,681
8	Vila & Son Landscaping Corp.	\$60,786,000*
9	Onesource Landscape & Golf Services	\$60,000,000
10	Gothic Landscape Inc.	\$58,225,000
11	Yellowstone Landscape Group	\$51,060,000
12	Clintar Landscape Management	\$43,890,000
13	Lipinski Outdoor Services	\$42,756,217
14	Mainscape	\$39,501,000
15	Denison Landscaping Group	\$36,000,000
16	The Groundskeeper	\$35,090,500
17	Nanak's Landscaping	\$34,500,000*
18	Complete Landscaping Service	\$29,385,000
19	Sierra Landscape Co	\$28,800,000*
20	Lucas Tree Expert Co.	\$26,860,000
21	The Bruce Co of Wisconsin	\$25,700,800*
22	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$25,280,000
23	Mission Landscape Cos.	\$25,000,000
24	Terracare Associates	\$24,500,000
25	James River Grounds Management	\$23,721,283

RESIDENTIAL

1	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	\$591,732,000
2	Scotts Lawn Service	\$281,300,000
3	Brickman	\$242,252,400
4	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$126,400,000
5	Massey Services Inc.	\$117,400,208
6	Weed Man	\$99,750,000
7	Lawn Doctor	\$82,170,000
8	SavATree	\$46,833,300
9	NaturaLawn of American Business Media	\$33,975,000
10	Mariani Landscape Management	\$31,500,000*
11	Spring-Green Lawn Care Corp.	\$30,793,500
12	Chalet	\$21,945,000
13	Scott Byron & Co.	\$21,244,000
14	Jensen Corp.	\$18,450,000
15	Lambert's	\$16,957,500
16	Meadows Farms	\$14,700,000
17	McHale Landscape Design	\$14,600,000
18	Naturescape	\$14,042,351
19	Senske Lawn & Tree Care	\$13,300,000
20	Nissho of California	\$12,560,000*
21	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	\$11,600,000*
22	Swingle Lawn, Tree and Landscape Management	\$11,222,922
23	Greenscape	\$11,092,000
24	Acres Group	\$10,287,968
25	Designs By Sundown	\$9,500,000

BY MIX
(IN U.S. DOLLARS)

% GAIN IN REVENUE PER EMPLOYEE

1	Ryan Lawn & Tree	89%
2	Precision Landscape Management	71.7%
3	Shearon Environmental Design Co.	65.1%
4	Russell Landscape Group	64.1%
5	Meadows Farms	61.9%
6	Parker Interior Plantscape	60.4%
7	Fairco	50%
8	HighGrove Partners	40.2%
9	Dixie Landscape Co.	37.4%
10	ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	35.3%
11	Lipinski Outdoor Services	25.6%
12	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	20.3%
13	Native Land Design	19.1%
14	Mickman Brothers	18.7%
15	Webb Landscape Management	18.5%
16	Brickman Group	18.2%
17	Scotts Lawn Service	17.6%
18	Designs By Sundown	17.3%
19	Urban Farmer	14.9%
20	Ruppert Landscape Management	12.5%
21	James River Grounds Management	11.3%
22	Moore Landscapes	11.1%
23	Gothic Grounds Management	10.9%
24	American Landscape Systems	10.7%
25	Acres Group	10.3%
	Basnight Land and Lawn	10.3%

% GAIN IN TOTAL EMPLOYEES

1	RCI	91.8%
2	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	55.5%
3	Schultz Industries	52.1%
4	Cornerstone Solutions Group	51.9%
5	Denison Landscaping Group	42%
6	Heads Up Landscape	36.2%
7	Dixie Landscape Co.	34.5%
8	Fairco	33.3%
9	Earthworks Inc.	27.9%
10	Reliable Property services	26.1%
11	Sposato Landscape Co.	24%
12	NaturaLawn of American Business Media	22.5%
13	Mainscape	22%
14	Grant & Power Landscaping	21.7%
15	Marina Landscape Management	19.6%
16	PROscape	18.5%
17	Yellowstone Landscape Group	18%
18	The Groundskeeper	16.7%
19	Hoffman Landscapes	14.7%
20	Cleary Bros Landscape Management	12.7%
21	Greenscape	12.5%
	Girard Environmental	12.5%
23	Benchmark Landscape Management	11.8%
24	Environmental Management Services	10.75%
	Bartlett Tree Experts	10.7%

BY EMPLOYEE FACTORS



IN THE

GROW

Angels Landscape Contractors | Garfield, NJ

Angels Landscape Contractors didn't make our *LM150* list last year. But the company is fast on the move. From 2009 to 2010, its revenue nearly doubled — from \$800,000 to \$1.5 million, says Angels General Manager Diego Lovato.

The huge leap is due in part to Angels' commitment to beginning accepted projects within 30 days. That commitment, says Lovato, increases the company's reliability among customers.

Angels' increasing focus on

manager training also has contributed to its newfound growth. As a result of that training, Angels' workers consistently are meeting customers' expectations — and developing a reputation for quality service.

In the last three years, Angels has grown its finances about 30% and its customer base roughly 25%, Lovato says. In 2010, Angels grew most in two areas: gardening and design, and construction. The reason? "People need renovations right now," Lovato says. "With the market down for home sales, if you're selling a house, you need to do updates on your house. And gardening makes a big difference."

Angels' rise in a lagging economy was spurred by its ability to do more with less. "It's unbelievable how efficient we have become," Lovato says.

To be as efficient as possible, Angels' field workers educate customers on how best to maintain their properties once work is finished. That way, Angels doesn't need to return to make repairs, saving the company time and money. Likewise, Angels' managers show employees how to care for equipment, therefore reducing new machinery costs.

Lovato is hardly surprised by Angels' growth, however: "We've been working hard for that," he says. **LM**

Many in the landscape business took another hit in 2010 — but not these growing companies.

BY **BETH GERACI**

2010
GROWTH
47%

SavATree | Bedford Hills, NY



Merging with multiple companies is one way to grow. Just ask the arborists at SavATree, whose 2010 growth resulted largely from its mergers with three companies: Northbrook, IL-based AutumnTree; New Jersey-based Town & Country Tree Service; and Deertech, a producer of ultrasound technology that deters deer from eating shrubs.

The mergers, which earned SavATree the No. 2 spot on our 2011 list of top tree companies, make SavATree a stronger competitor — not only because it now has a larger talent pool, but also because the company can spend more on marketing and reach a wider audience, SavATree President and CEO Daniel van Starrenburg says.

While the Deertech merger enables SavATree to

broaden its range of services, van Starrenburg says joining forces with the AutumnTree staff made sense because the companies were built on similar principles. Joining with Town & Country was an equally attractive prospect, he adds, because “any time you have a presence in the marketplace and are able to merge with, in this case a competitor, it increases market share and visibility.”

But acquiring businesses is fraught with challenges. Enduring change can stress employees, van Starrenburg explains. Consequently, “you have to overcommunicate,” he asserts. “We’ve learned that lesson over and over. You literally have to overcommunicate.”

Just as important as communicating is weighing the companies’ cultural similarities and differences, van Starrenburg says.

Fortunately for SavATree, its employees — whether longtime or newly acquired — are passionate about their work. “If you have employees who are passionate about what they do, that’s the flame you need to keep alive,” van Starrenburg says. **LM**



WHO GREW AND HOW THEY DID IT

These 25 companies had the highest growth rates in 2010. We asked a few how they plan to keep growing in 2011 and how they’ll get it done.

What they’ll do: Continued maintenance growth, capturing expanding capital opportunities (landscape upgrades), increasing irrigation revenue by educating our clients on the importance of being water conscious

How they’ll do it: Honesty, integrity, humility and education

What they’ll do: Environmental services, hardscapes and pool construction and maintenance

How they’ll do it: The environmental division has merged with a larger established company so will not be part of RCI in 2011 — expected revenue \$18M. Hardscapes and pool will continue to grow at a 15% rate due to customer retention and new services. Maintenance has been supported by our first full sales force dedicated to maintenance.

1	Earthworks	32.4%
2	RCI	30.1%
3	The Highridge Corp.	25%
4	Lucas Tree Expert Co.	23.9%
5	Mainscape	22.4%
6	PROscape	21.9%
7	Hoffman Landscapes	21.8%
8	Grant & Power Landscapes	20.3%
9	James River Grounds Management	20%
10	Ryan Lawn & Tree	18.5%
11	HighGrove Partners	18.3%
12	Brickman Group	17.5%
13	Schultz Industries	16.7%
14	Lipinski Outdoor Services	16.2%
15	SavATree	15.8%
16	Gothic Grounds Management	14.4%
17	Native Land Design	14.2%
18	Naturescape	12.8%
19	Russell Landscape Group	12.7%
20	Ruppert Landscape Management	12.5%
21	Basnight Land and Lawn	11.7%
22	Sposato Landscape Co.	11.4%
23	Moore Landscapes	11.1%
	Designs By Sundown	11.1%
25	Land-Tech Enterprises	10.4%

What they’ll do: Start and grow a turf fertilization division; expand our snow and ice management accounts; grow our residential design/build division

How they’ll do it: Hire good quality people that specialize in what we need; develop new programs; get more employees certified in CLT, fertilization applicators, etc.; market to the right audience and areas

What they’ll do: Enhancement Sales; qualifying leads; expanding markets

How they’ll do it: Restructure the way we approach enhancements; Take the time to more accurately qualify a lead; add to sales team, adding branches and satellite offices

2010
GROWTH
15%



Brickman | Gaithersburg, MD

Mother Nature dumped a boatload of snow on the United States last winter — and a boatload of cash on snow removal companies.

The harsh winter was a lucrative one for Brickman, which began ramping up its snow services a few years ago in an effort to partner with its customers year-round. In 2010, with nearly \$194 million in snow revenue, Brickman topped our 2010 snow revenue list.

Brickman President Mark Hjelle says the company experienced double-digit growth in snow removal services last year, servicing “virtually all the major U.S. snow markets.”

According to Hjelle, Brickman’s growth in the national commercial snow market resulted from its management team’s efforts to be proactive, discussing snow removal strategies with clients well in advance — during spring and summer. Among other things, Brickman teams help customers plan which winter services they will need, then create detailed service plans to meet those needs. Such proactivity has enabled Brickman to grow in hard economic times, Hjelle says.

Brickman’s reputation has only been enhanced by its team members’ eagerness to sit down with customers one-on-one, Hjelle says.

The company’s maintenance business, which accounted for nearly \$600 million of Brickman’s \$807 million 2010 revenue, experienced “solid growth” and about a 90% renewal rate in 2010, Hjelle says. Why so high? Because, Hjelle says, Brickman service teams focus on “finding creative ways to deliver solutions to what customers are looking for,” such as how they can best manage their water systems.

“Proactive communication is key,” Hjelle reiterates. “It’s part of the company’s strategy to deliver high quality services on time, as promised.” **LMI**

GrassCor Lawn & Landscapes, LLC | Cincinnati, OH

Not many maintenance companies can say they’ve “grown everywhere” in the last year. But somehow, GrassCor has pulled it off.

“We’re small enough that it’s been easy,” explains GrassCor Vice President Alex Sulfsted. Virtually all aspects of GrassCor’s business grew in 2010, Sulfsted says, especially its commercial business, which constituted 60% of its \$932,000 2010 revenue. The lawn care and enhancements aspects of the business have performed well, too, he reports.

With a projected 2011 revenue of \$1.6 million, GrassCor only continues to expand. How has the company thrived when other companies are struggling? “A lot of long days,” Sulfsted sighs. “Really, we’ve worked on ways to become more efficient, to have a better pricing model. You have to make everything you do as efficient as possible.”

The way to be most efficient, Sulfsted says, is to always ask “what is our goal here with this property?” before beginning a project. “And even then, you have to say to the customer, ‘OK, is this really what you want?’ It’s identifying what they want and what they need.”

Such communication is vital when building and maintaining a loyal clientele, and in 2010 it helped GrassCor nurture a stable of longtime clients who spread the word about the business. GrassCor’s success last year, Sulfsted says, was driven largely by its follow-up with customers, its strong relationships with clients, and customer referrals.

“We were able to come up with ways of reducing some services customers were getting, trying to find them ways to save a little bit of money,” Sulfsted says.

And that’s exactly what GrassCor customers sought. **LMI**

2010
GROWTH
60%



RISING UP

Four companies just off the *LM150* list share how they plan to continue growing.

BY **CASEY PAYTON**

With the effects of the recession still lingering, it's even more impressive that so many landscape enterprises have been able to grow their business this year. But it's not just the businesses that made the *LM150* that deserve recognition. Plenty of other companies came close to making our list. And still many more had successes that weren't just measured in revenue growth numbers. The following four companies fell just shy of making the *LM150* — and we believe they deserve some recognition as well.

Staying the course

Donald Garritano, president and CEO of Las Vegas-based D&K Landscape, says that trying to get back to the basics that made his company successful in the first place is what has helped them succeed in this tough economy.

"Old-school loyalty in your local market is critical," he adds.

D&K fell just shy of making the *LM150*, bringing in \$5.3

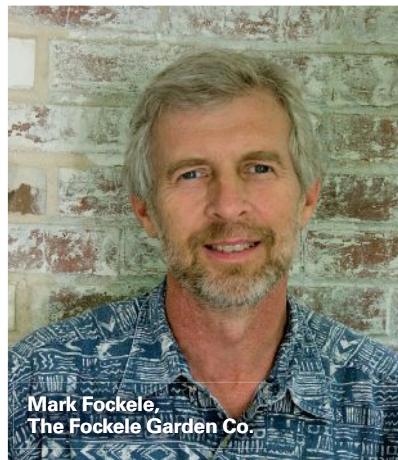
million in revenue in 2010 and growing about 10%. For 2011, the 90% commercial company is looking at being up another 15%.

Landing a large installation contract for the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Headquarters certainly helped. "It was a \$900,000 contract that landed in our laps in April, and will be finished by the middle of June," says Garritano. "Also, our playground division almost tripled its revenues this year."

Creative Play, the company's park, playground and leisure division, was added just two-and-a-half years ago — but has already taken off. This year, it will do almost \$1.8 million in playground sales and installation.

Garritano advises other landscape businesses that want to strive for the same success to "stay the course."

"Reduce unneeded overhead, and stand by your pricing," he adds. "Sell service, not price, and then back it up. Invest in your people and your organization. Now is the time to refine your company."



Mark Fockele,
The Fockele Garden Co.



The Green Lawn Fertilizing executive team (from l. to r.) Alex Wolfington (VP of Sales), Matt Jesson (President), David Chu (CFO), Tom Knopsnyder (VP of Operations)

green lawn
FERTILIZING, INC.

Client retention

Like many businesses, Earthworks Landscape Services Inc., headquartered in Mukilteo, WA — with branches in Bellevue and Sumner — has had to look at all its expenses and cut where possible. Where it did not cut back, however, was in client services and quality control. That has helped Earthworks to continue to have success in both client retention and overall growth. Offering 100% commercial service, it did \$5,065,490 in 2010.

While the company only grew 2.5% over 2009, company president Michael Moshcatel says he's quite satisfied with that number.

"In this environment, we were just happy to grow, and were a bit more profitable as well — especially after having a net revenue decrease from 2008 to 2009 of around 12%," he explains.

Plus, 2011 is on track to grow the company even more, he says.

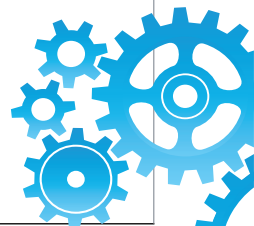
"Going back to the theory of maintaining our existing customer base rather than replacing them with newer, lower-

yielding clients, we have worked hard on retention — and had an extremely good year in that area," says Moshcatel. "We were able to grow slightly this year due to our clients starting to invest in enhancement services. We did more large-scale projects this past year."

Moshcatel says he'd also attribute the company's success to its long-tenured management team and a stable work force — people who share the corporate vision. He says the following are the company's keys to success: "Communicating with our clients to find out what their budget mandates are, and being flexible to work with them should cuts be necessary; being proactive by monitoring jobs and maintaining quality control; and being timely and responsive when a problem does occur. These are the major components to our success, and we feel they're even more important when our clients are struggling."

An open ear

Matt Jesson, owner and president of West Chester, PA-based



Green Lawn Fertilizing Inc., attributes his company's success to having the right people for the job. He's quick to emphasize that the company operates as a team.

To keep that momentum going, Green Lawn takes the hiring process very seriously — hiring only about one employee for every 100 or more resumes submitted.

"This is a very time-consuming, expensive and difficult process, but the service business is about finding great people who will do what it takes to keep customers satisfied," says Jesson. "We continue to spend more money on advertising so we can increase the number of people who apply for jobs, in an effort to find the best in the industry."

The effort seems to be paying off: The business saw a 2010 revenue of \$5,000,273.

"Year-to-date, we have been able to increase revenue between 12% and 15%, and our customer cancel rate has decreased," says Jesson. "This is a true sign we are implementing the proper changes, and listening to customers to make sure we provide quality service."

Change is nothing that Green Lawn shies away from, should it prove to be valuable to the business. Jesson knows that customers will be honest about what's working — and what isn't — and he pays attention to what they say. In the past year, the company has received more than 3,000 feedback response surveys, and Jesson

values every one.

"This past year, we have made more changes than ever," he admits. "One idea we learned from customer surveys was they needed more crabgrass control. We also increased insect control by adding additional free applications for customers to prevent issues in the summer."

Jesson isn't afraid to lean on industry mentors for help, either. In 2003, when he was transitioning his business from "Jesson Landscaping" into "Green Lawn Fertilizing," he remembers reading Landscape Management's *LM150* list and reaching out to several of the cream-of-the-crop companies. He wanted to know how he could lead Green Lawn to become an *LM150* company.

"I sent letters and Tastykakes to leaders in the industry such as Jim Campanella, Paul Wagner, Ken White, Chris Senske and Mr. Massey, asking for help and about bringing my management team out for a visit," he recalls. "Most people were very receptive, and since 2003, Jim Campanella has been my closest mentor. I gave Jim a scorecard from Pebble Beach in 2004 and said that when we hit the 5,000 customer mark, I'd take him there. In 2007, we exceeded the 5,000 customer mark."

A strategic focus

Mark Fockele, owner of The Fockele Garden Co. in Gainesville, GA, says that an



Michael J. Moshcatel, Earthworks Landscape Services



emphasis on business development paid off in 2010. The

company had a strong year, pulling in \$3.25 million. But it's been a specific focus on work in the healthcare industry that Fockele sees as the most strategic move.

"It does seem, at least so far, that the healthcare industry has been able to maintain its ability to carry on with their operations and continue to build new facilities and improve old ones, while other commercial properties are holding off," says Fockele, who adds that the company has a commercial base of about 60%.

In addition to focusing on more work for hospitals and other healthcare facilities, Fockele says he's been stressing to existing clientele that the company is willing to travel to distant locations for installation jobs. He says that's helped get new jobs from his existing client base — customers where good working relationships have already been developed.

Being based in a drought-prone area, Fockele has gained recognition for offering sustainable services, like rainwater harvesting. "It's a service that our customers like and that helps preserve our revenue." **LM**



LESSONS FROM THE RECESSION

After working more than 45 years in the Green Industry, Erv Denig was thinking about retiring. That didn't seem like an unreasonable expectation, except for one thing.

Denig was making his plans when the economy dried up faster than a plot of grass in the arid Southwest. Retirement will happen, just not anytime soon.

"That's completely out of the picture. I've lost half of my 401(k) in the stock market," says Denig, CEO of Lawn & Turf Landscaping, Fort Wayne, IN.

Denig and many other contractors have seen their plans change. Denig, whose business did about \$2 million last year, isn't sure how much longer he'll have to work before he can reach his dream. And the challenges this recession created are not limited to smaller enterprises.

"It's basically setting the landscape industry back 10-15 years, when it was harder to sell landscaping," says Bill Davids, president of Clarence Davids & Co., Matteson, IL, and No. 84 on the *LM150* list.

"My work is not coming back," Denig says. "The

The economy created a self-preservation attitude and taught many Green Industry business owners new ways to run their companies.

BY **DAN JACOBS** EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

housing boom is gone. All we're doing is remodeling, retrofitting existing landscaping."

Denig, Davids and just about every other contractor on the planet has been forced to evaluate how they do business. Maybe they cut staff, manipulated the service mix or became hyper-focused on

operations and efficiency; definitely they've become hyper-focused.

The mantra for many executives, says Jeffrey Scott, author, consultant and former Green Industry business owner, is "I'm working a lot more hours; I have a lot less free time. This is not the dream."

Of course not everyone suffered.

"I had some clients who continued to grow, continued to do well," Scott says. "These were companies that were well run. They had a great marketing and branding program. They had a great group of people."



New Thinking

In other words, executives who learned their lessons early and are running lean, efficient operations.

The owners and managers of companies who make it through this downturn are unquestionably better businessmen. That will allow them to get back to pursuing and more quickly achieving their dreams.

Lessons learned

When the economy is riding high it's much easier to run a successful enterprise. But as the river of money recedes, mistakes and waste become the rocky riverbed that can run a business aground.

For months, there have been reports of bankers being stingy with their money, making it difficult for some business owners to borrow. More recently, contractors are suggesting that's not so much the case anymore — but there's a catch.

“Our banker, he wants us to borrow money,” Davids says. “There're only so many successful companies out there and he sees us as one. There's plenty of money out there to be borrowed. If the bank is telling you ‘no’ there's probably something on your financials.”

And that's the key. The heady days of lending that led to the subprime mortgage fiasco are over.

Companies are starting to pay attention to balance sheets, says Bruce Wilson, *LM's* Best Practices columnist and co-owner of the Wilson-Oyler Group. They've always managed their profit and loss statements, but banks are putting more covenants into their loan agreements.

“A lot of them really didn't understand,” Wilson says. “They've heard the ratios, but they didn't understand where they come from.”

And it's not confined to small operations.



“THERE ARE WAY TOO MANY CONTRACTORS. THERE REALLY NEEDS TO BE LESS. WE'RE ALL TRYING TO VIE FOR THE SAME DOLLARS.”

— Bill Davids, president, Clarence Davids & Co.

“There are a lot of companies in the industry where the owner makes a lot of money so they aren't as profit driven as they should be,” Wilson says.

Along with a sound financial approach comes a focus on people. While many have reduced staff it's those who have cut back spending on their employees who will suffer.

For Todd Pugh, CEO and founder of Enviroscapes and co-founder of Green

Industry Innovators, one of the keys is continual training. It's something he's maintained at Enviroscapes since its inception 15 years ago.

One thing is for sure. The company that comes out the other end of this recession will be a different one than the one that went into it.

“We will be a completely different company then,” Pugh says. “Our DNA will be different; we'll be a better company.”

Changes

To be sure, some companies made money. There are several on the *LM150* list who boosted revenue, but

THE GOOD NEWS THE GOOD NEWS THE GOOD NEWS THE GOOD NEWS

Small business **bankruptcy filings** (companies with fewer than 100 employees) **declined in Q4** of 2010 to 341, an **18% drop** from the 416 during the same quarter of 2009.

Source: Equifax

The number of **small business loans** approved in the first quarter of 2011 **rose to 1,294**. That's a more than **50% increase** from the 852 during Q1 of 2010.

Source: Biz2Credit

Companies with fewer than 500 workers hired **168,000 new employees** in April 2011, which raised that total to nearly 91 million, **up 2%** from 89.6 million at that time last year.

Source: Automatic Data Processing Inc.

Venture capital investments in business **jumped to \$5.9 billion** in Q1 of 2011, a **26% bump** from Q1 a year ago.

Source: The MoneyTree Report



very few, if any at all, talked about maintaining the status quo.

To compensate for his lost business, Denig, like many other contractors, has shifted his service mix by “beefing up” snow removal and chemical lawn care.

A shift away from the design/build arm of the business forced many companies to downsize or at least reassign those workers, which could cause problems for some when the work returns.

Figuring out how to deal with more work is a problem a lot of companies would love to have.

Cutting back employees and other expenditures is one way to deal with falling revenues, but it’s not a long-term solution, and it certainly will catch companies unprepared when the economy ramps up. And it’s not just when the work comes back. Many companies tried to save money by spending less in areas other than personnel.

“Some made money cutting back, but they also cut back on marketing,” Scott says. “They made money, but it was short term. The need for customer service is going to grow,” Scott continues. “If you weren’t a great marketer, you can’t just market when things go downhill, it’s too late.”

Employee outlook

For years the complaint among business owners was the lack of quality employees. That was most clear — or at least most complained about — at a mid-manager level, including foremen and account managers. There aren’t many benefits to a recession, but this was one area people expected to improve.

“Everyone assumed the pool of candidates would be bigger and better,” says Jennifer Buck, owner of Buck Consulting, which does recruiting for Green Industry companies. “Even though the pool became bigger, it didn’t become better.”

Companies laid off workers, but it was the non-producers, employees who survived more from workplace inertia than the quality of their work. Companies simply can’t afford to carry the dead weight any longer.

“When it first hit, we let go several people,” Davids says. “You take the rest of your people and you double up. You get as efficient as you possibly can. The hardest thing about this whole thing is getting everyone on board and letting them know they’re going to work harder for less money.”

That process is made a little easier when they see their less productive peers being shown the door.

“You have to get all the employees in on this,” Davids says. “Once they see you’re serious and several people have exited, you get the buy-in pretty quick.”

The economic outlook

There are signs the economy is improving.

“In general, companies I work with are feeling a little bit of an improvement,” Wilson says. “The higher end residential construction is picking up. The maintenance companies are holding their own.”

That’s not to say everyone is ready to resume business as usual.

“The biggest effects we’ve seen is it’s long staying,” Pugh says of the economic downturn. “Pricing has continually gone down. There’s been an influx of new competition. There are a lot of general contractors that are bringing the work back in house.”

Davids agrees the influx of new competitors is a problem.

“There are way too many contractors,” Davids

“MY WORK IS NOT COMING BACK. THE HOUSING BOOM IS GONE. ALL WE’RE DOING IS REMODELING, RETROFITTING EXISTING LANDSCAPING.”

— Erv Denig, CEO
Lawn & Turf Landscaping



says. “There really needs to be less. We’re all trying to vie for the same dollars.”

That competition has forced business owners to focus on all those things they always knew they needed to do, but could get away with not worrying about.

“It wasn’t that we weren’t doing any of this stuff, but what happened it’s like going from playing in the little leagues to the majors,” Pugh says.

Maybe it’s all in the attitude.

“It’s a tough time and we’re all experiencing it,” Pugh says. “We’re resilient people. At the end of the day this is just a speck on the timeline of life. When we look back. For me, at 39 years old, I feel blessed.”

And if the rest of us could learn to feel that way, perhaps we’ve learned the best lesson of all. **LM**



VOICE ACTIVATED.

For more than five years, customers like Dennis Allendorf, Randy Gill, Jerry Dallman, Tim McComish, and Brad Jorgensen worked alongside our engineering team to design the D-Series. Along the way, their words and ideas were documented, studied, and transformed into our most productive skid steers yet. From the fuel-saving, noise-reducing auto-idle feature, to a simple switch that allows you to easily shift control patterns, to a host of outstanding comfort upgrades, their words are echoed throughout the entire machine. See how their voice was our command at your John Deere dealer or our website.



JOHN DEERE



YOU'RE ON.™

www.JohnDeere.com/YoureOn

MAINTENANCE: FUNGICIDES

Arysta LifeScience

The Disarm G granular strobilurin formulation is priced at a reasonable cost per 1,000 sq. ft. — so users can apply the same premium strobilurin disease control used on golf courses at an economical cost for their lawn care accounts. In addition, the company says, Disarm G is the only strobilurin granule labeled for control of light-to-moderate dollar spot infestations. TotalDiseaseControl.com/DisarmG

United Turf Alliance

ArmorTech MYCLO 20EW Fungicide relies on the systemic activity of myclobutanil to deliver preventive and curative disease control to turfgrass and landscape ornamentals, as well as greenhouse and nursery ornamentals. It is effective against more than 20 diseases, including anthracnose, brown patch, summer patch, snow mold, dollar spot and others. UTAarmortech.com



Valent Professional Products

To help end users tackle the toughest diseases facing them this season, the 2011 Tourney Fungicide In-Season Promotion is available to Green Industry professionals who purchase Tourney from a distributor or retailer now through June 30, 2011. Tourney controls a broad spectrum of the toughest diseases, including anthracnose, summer patch, gray leaf spot and many others in turf, and powdery mildew, apple scab, rusts and leaf spots in woody outdoor ornamentals and landscape settings. Because it can do the job of multiple products in just one application, Tourney helps users get the most from their fungicide budget and save time. Confirmed purchases of Tourney made and received by June 30, 2011 will be eligible for rebates of 10% to 30% per pound, depending on purchase volume. The promotion is not available to any commercial retailers or distributors, nor does it apply to purchases made during 2010 programs. Invoices must be submitted to www.valentpro.com/promo by July 15, 2011, to be eligible for a rebate. ValentPro.com/tourney



Growth Products

Companion Liquid Biological Fungicide prevents, controls and suppresses a broad range of root and foliar diseases, including anthracnose, brown patch, dollar spot, summer patch, fusarium patch, pythium and phytophthora. Companion was the first-ever biofungicide approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, according to the company. It contains the environmentally friendly GB03 strain of *Bacillus subtilis*, which prevents and controls plant diseases through multiple modes of action. GB03 produces a broad-spectrum antibiotic that disrupts pathogen cell-wall formation, and it stimulates a plant's natural immune system. As a competitive and fast-colonizing rhizobacterium, GB03 also crowds out pathogens to prevent their growth and antagonistic effects. Because Companion is a biological fungicide, pathogens do not develop disease resistance. It can be used in rotation with chemical fungicides or be tank-mixed with smaller amounts of chemical fungicides for improved efficacy. GrowthProducts.com



Bayer Environmental Science

Armada fungicide is a pre-mixed product containing two active ingredients, triadimefon and trifloxystrobin, for a broader spectrum of activity against most turf diseases of importance in lawns — and more convenience. It is designed specifically for Green Industry professionals and offers 30-day control of two major turfgrass diseases: brown patch and dollar spot. It also controls grey leaf spot, anthracnose, various leaf spots, red thread, southern blight and summer patch, among other turf diseases. It offers good compatibility for tank mixing with foliar fertilizers or insecticides. BackedByBayer.com



Earth & Turf Products

The new Heavy-Duty Rubber Drag Mat is designed

to break up debris after core aeration and level fields after topdressing. The 3/4-in.-thick mats measure 6x6 ft. and are made from heavy-duty, recycled rubber. A durable, long-lasting hitch system sandwiches the rubber between two heavy steel plates using 7/16-in. bolts. All mats are shipped rolled up and bound with two cable ties. Total weight of each mat is 133 lbs. (pull chains are not included). EarthAndTurf.com

LAWN CARE: TURF SEED AND EQUIPMENT



Turfco

Featuring changes derived from customer feedback, the newly redesigned T3000 spreader and sprayer features improved durability and reduced maintenance needs. The unit maintains the overall compact design that can fit through a 36-in. gate, while still offering 6- and 9-ft.-wide spreading widths, making it versatile enough for both residential and large com-

mercial properties. An optional electric start is available, and a standard 16-amp charging system provides turf professionals with greater versatility in mounting accessories. Cruise control helps maintain speed while freeing operators' hands to control spreading and spraying. A new variable speed diaphragm pump features Viton valves for extended life and minimized maintenance. An improved spinner design is longer lasting and easier to maintain. TurfcoDirect.com

Billy Goat

Billy Goat's new Self Propelled Over Seeder reduces fatigue associated with pushing and features intuitive forward and reverse operator controls. The 22-in.-wide unit features an exclusive 11-blade slicing reel that floats along contours of yards, increasing seed-to-soil contact and improving germination rates, the company says. The unit comes standard with a 30-lb. seed box that is elevated above the turf to eliminate clogging that may occur from moisture. An Auto Drop system automatically starts and stops seed drop with reel engagement and disengagement, conserving seed and preventing "end of run" seed piling. Infinite depth adjustment of the slicer blades promotes longer blade life vs. presets, and seed settings are found on board for operator convenience. BillyGoat.com



IRRIGATION: CONTROLLERS AND LOCATORS



Armada Technologies

The new Pro-800 Hi-Power Irrigation Wire and Valve Locator features a rechargeable, 12v transmitter battery, a 20% more powerful transmitter to track cable over longer distances, a triple AC buzz and hum filter for a clearer signal, and a new wireless connection/broadcast mode so users don't need to connect to the wires to get a tracking signal. The unit provides a powerful and accurate irrigation valve and wire fault and tracing capability, the company says. ArmadaTech.com

Rain Bird

Rain Bird has enhanced the former STPI residential controller. Now known as the new STP Plus and available in 4-, 6- and 9-zone models, the controller is user-friendly. New icon-based At-a-Glance programming makes it possible for anyone to quickly set irrigation schedules without looking at a manual or requiring professional assistance. When programming a zone, all irrigation schedule information is displayed on the controller's screen. RainBird.com



Underhill International

Sapien is a dedicated two-wire controller that operates up to 63 stations. It works in new irrigation systems, a multi-wire conversion or a two-wire (or multi-wire) expansion. No special wiring or field grounding is required. With an easy-to-read backlit display, the unit features an exclusive LightTouch screen that "talks" the user through the set-up with buttons that light up sequentially. Sapien offers ABCD and manual programs, seasonal adjust by percentage and 12 start times per day. It is radio-control ready and rain/wind/frost sensor compatible. The controller measures 6.3 in. high x 7.33 in. wide x 1.78 in. deep. Stainless steel wall mounts, waterproof enclosures and pedestal models are available. Underhill.us

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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.

Your enhancement profit plan

Enhancements are such a vital service for customers and source of revenues and profits for maintenance companies, let's stop and consider this line of work again.

Remember, enhancements can and should be profitable. In fact, many companies consistently top 50% gross margin over a year's worth of enhancements. That's after labor costs, workers comp costs, cost of materials and sub costs.

Admittedly, it's not always easy to be so profitable. In a lot of cases the jobs are small — making organization, set up and pricing critical. Larger construction jobs don't require such precise execution because of their longer duration.

Get your pricing right

There are many ways to diminish returns on enhancements, usually starting with pricing. Account managers are the primary sales agents, and if they're inexperienced in construction they often inaccurately price the work. They might overlook important issues. Examples of profit killers they might overlook include:

- › Underground interference such as drainage lines, irrigation lines and lighting wires that could significantly add to the job's cost
- › Site preparation issues such as removal of existing plants and roots
- › Not accounting for disposal of excess soil when installing a large number of plants

Sometimes a small amount of masonry, or a small water feature can't effectively be subbed out. In these cases, the contractor ends up having to figure out how to do it.

These examples are just three of many. That's why it's critical to create a checklist for the person doing the pricing. That checklist must list these and other unique considerations that add costs to jobs. The checklist will remind the people who sell enhancements to identify them and account for them in their pricing. Nobody likes surprises, especially customers.

Just as deadly to job profits is the practice of over-engineering an enhancement. These include enhancements that stretch your team's skill set. This could include masonry, retaining walls and similar specialized work. Sometimes a small amount of masonry, or a small water feature can't effectively be subbed out. In these cases, the contractor ends up having to figure out how to do it, complicating an otherwise simple job.

Producing the work

Information is key to efficiently and profitably producing the enhancement. A company's estimating system should produce a work order with an hourly breakdown of how much time each task should take. Among other things, this would include site-prep, removal of old plants, irrigation modifications, planting and cleanup.

The work order should also have a materials list and the cost that was included in the estimate so whoever is buying the material knows the numbers. That way, the purchaser won't exceed the cost and can, hopefully, get a good price, thus improving the margin.

Finally, the work order should include pictures of the area to be improved along with a list of specialized tools and/or equipment needed for the job.

As you can see, it's not complicated. Selling and doing enhancements just require planning, discipline and execution. Companies that develop a step-by-step approach to selling and delivering enhancements excel at this potentially profitable line of work.



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Woodland retreat

THE MISSION

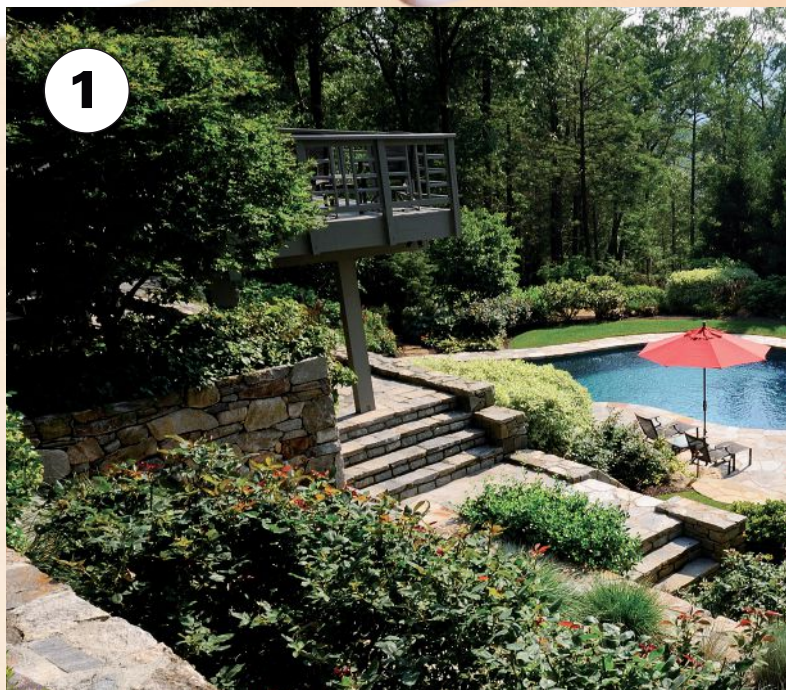
Create an upstate New York oasis for busy Manhattanites.

The new owners of this contemporary house wanted to create a weekend getaway in the Hudson Highlands where they could escape from their busy life in Manhattan. To them, that meant the following:

- › Make the house invisible from the gravel access road and three neighboring properties.
- › Take full advantage of the views of the bend in the Hudson River at West Point.
- › Add a swimming pool and spa.
- › Fully experience the wooded nature of their property by creating paths and enhancing the understory as a Ken Druse-type woodland garden.

The couple turned to The LaurelRock Co., a Wilton, CT-based firm. Led by CEO Dickson DeMarche, FASLA, LaurelRock was able to meet the above goals despite a few challenges along the way, including:

- › The house was situated less than 60 ft. from the access road, at the end of a straight driveway that threaded between ledge outcrops.
- › The garage was only 50 ft. from the northern neighbor's driveway and parking area.
- › Opening views through the trees to the river had to be carefully executed to avoid exposing views to a private boarding school situated downslope.
- › Existing retaining walls at the driveway and under the deck were sound, but the dry-laid walls between them were failing. Also, the steps from the driveway down to the terrace level were relocated to allow for the expanded deck.
- › The septic system location required placing the pool close to the house and on ledge rock, requiring careful blasting.
- › The largest portion of the woods, where the woodland garden was to be created, was inaccessible by machine. To compensate, the LaurelRock team hand-carted materials more than 300 ft.



PHOTOS COURTESY: LAURENCE MERZ PHOTOGRAPHY

THE WORK

1 | Step by step. From near the garage at the entry level, this view shows the expanded deck (at the highest level), the existing stone terrace (at mid-level) and the new steps leading to the upper and lower lawn areas and the pool.

2 | Holding court. The pergola strengthens the feeling of “entry court” by connecting the garage to the house. It also adds shadow interest, and creates a foreground frame for the view. Paving replaced gravel at the doors to differentiate pedestrian circulation. Without diminishing the already-restricted maneuvering space for automobiles, planting was introduced to separate the driveway from the house and the end stone wall. It also serves to highlight and frame the entrances and the viewing location under the pergola.

3 | The water's edge. Note the new planter wall next to the expanded deck and stairs. Boulders were placed instead of walls to retain grade adjacent to the steps to the lower lawn area, transitioning to the more casual pool area design.

4 | Natural beauty. The woodland garden is in the lowest and least-accessible part of the site. Large trees and slab steps were brought in by ball carts. In the foreground is the bog garden, featuring sedges, phlox and primroses.

5 | Reuse — and reinforce. Boulders from the pool excavation were used to reinforce the slope between the house and the pool, and to create a retaining wall on the downside of the pool area terrace. Shrubs and vines were planted to stabilize the soil between the boulders. Perennials were then added for color.

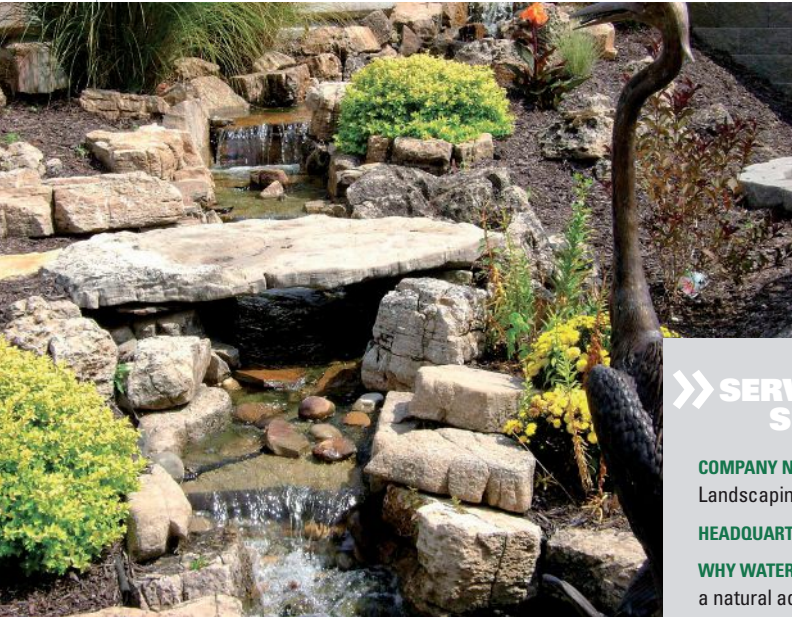
6 | Rock stars. Masons from MNM Masonry Contractors, Ossining, NY, took care to match the original wall style and tie all levels together.

As one of the only landscape design/build and maintenance firms in Fairfield County that started as a landscape architectural firm, LaurelRock takes a design-driven approach to its clientele. This particular project garnered a 2010 Environmental Improvement Grand Award from the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET). For more information, visit LaurelRock.com.



Clients love the sound of water

Water features flow nicely with Weilbacher Landscaping's other services



A Weilbacher waterfall made from limestone boulders.

Weilbacher admits selling water features has become tougher in today's shaky economy. Many potential clients view them as an extravagance. Consequently, Weilbacher promotes moderately priced water features that add curb appeal and increase property value.

Pondless waterfalls in the \$2,000 to \$5,000 price range have become more popular and are easier to sell, he says.

"With the pondless waterfall, you don't have to build the whole pond. It makes them low maintenance and more cost effective. But you still get the same look and sound," he says.

Since adding a water feature division, Weilbacher says his website has become more important. Clients want to see recent color photos so Weilbacher makes sure his site is up to date.

Aesthetics are involved in water features, and Weilbacher says it takes a keen eye to make a job attractive. However, that's where he's seen other contractors make the biggest mistakes.

"I've seen other landscapers just dig a hole and throw the water feature and some rocks in," he says. "There's more to it than that. We actually go to the quarry and hand-select boulders. And we may have rocks all laying out on the ground and rearrange them with the Bobcat three or four times until we get it just right.

"You do have to have an artistic eye to be successful with water features. Having attractive existing jobs makes a big difference in future sales," he says.

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

» SERVICE SNAPSHOT

COMPANY NAME: Weilbacher Landscaping

HEADQUARTERS: Millstadt, IL

WHY WATER FEATURES? It was a natural addition for the 8-person company that does about 90% residential work.

INITIAL INVESTMENT: It depends on the size and scale of projects. Weilbacher purchased a \$25,000 Bobcat Mini Excavator that could be rented for about \$250/day. Other equipment includes hand tools like shovels, rakes, and knives. Smaller water features only require the basic tools plus labor.

INVESTMENT RECOUP TIME: Installing \$2,000 water features, should return \$1,000 on each one. Labor is the biggest expense since large equipment isn't required for smaller water features.

WHY CUSTOMERS LIKE IT: Water features create a relaxing retreat at home. Instead of taking costly vacations, clients enjoy a paradise right outside their door.

A SIMPLE REQUEST FROM a client led Andrew Weilbacher to launch a profitable new division offering water features. Weilbacher, owner of Weilbacher Landscaping, Millstadt, IL, recalls he was finishing a retaining wall using boulders when a client suggested a waterfall would also look nice.

After thinking it over, he accepted the job, invested \$25,000 in a new Bobcat Mini Excavator and installed a \$55,000 water feature for the client. That experience five years ago convinced Weilbacher his team could do this work well. Today, the segment brings in about 25% of the revenue for the \$500,000 business.

Now whenever he's working up a landscape design, he always suggests a water feature. Any time of year is fine for selling, but Weilbacher prefers not to do installs during January or February when the ground is frozen. He'd rather not risk tearing up clients' yards with large equipment. That's easy to do when the ground is frozen or wet and muddy. In Illinois, summer is the best time to build water features.