

## Mother Nature beats the clock

An estimated 13.5 million irrigation systems are currently installed in residential lawns across the United States, and an additional 308,000 new systems are installed each year as a part of new home construction. The industry estimates indicate that less than 10% of the units already installed use weather-based controllers to schedule irrigation. Currently, the most common method used to schedule irrigation is a manually programmed clock timer that irrigates a specified amount on a preset schedule programmed by the user.

Clock timer controllers can be a significant source of wasted water, because irrigation schedules are often set to water during the height of the growing season, and might not be adjusted to reflect seasonal changes or changes in plant watering needs. Although plant water requirements decrease in the fall, many homeowners forget to reset their irrigation schedules, and landscapes will be watered in October as if it were July. Overwatering plants also results in shallow roots, weed growth, disease and fungus.

As an alternative to clock timer controllers, weather-based irrigation controllers can make irrigation schedule adjustments automatically by tailoring the amount, frequency, and timing of irrigation events based on current weather data and landscape conditions, applying water only when the landscape needs it, and promoting a healthier, more attractive landscape.



## Partnering with professionals

As the demand for “smart” irrigation technology increases, so does the demand for cutting-edge irrigation professionals. Proper installation, programming, and maintenance are key to ensuring that weather-based irrigation controllers save water on landscape irrigation and reduce runoff.

Professionals who have successfully completed a WaterSense-labeled certification program that focuses on water-efficient irrigation automatically qualify to become a WaterSense partner. EPA recommends homeowners and facility managers look for a WaterSense irrigation partner to design, install, audit, or maintain irrigation systems to ensure controller performance. WaterSense-labeled new homes that include an irrigation system require design or installation and audits to be conducted by an irrigation partner. Each year, WaterSense singles out one such partner and recognizes his or her efforts to promote water efficiency.

“My designs are only as good as the equipment in my legend,” explained Christopher Curry, the 2011 WaterSense Irrigation Partner of the Year. “The work done by the manufacturers in smart controllers really helps the overall goal to save water.”

To learn more about the WaterSense Specification for Weather-Based Irrigation Controllers, find WaterSense-labeled products, or learn more about WaterSense irrigation partners, visit [www.epa.gov/watersense/outdoor/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/watersense/outdoor/index.html). **LW**

## EDUCATION AND INNOVATION AT CLCA'S LANDSCAPE INDUSTRY SHOW!

We've got lots of NEW at this year's show to keep you on your A game!

Brought to you by the California Native Plant Society, Norman's Nursery and the Theodore Payne Foundation for Wildflowers and Native Plants, Native Plant Bingo is a new addition to CLCA's Landscape Industry Show for 2012! Horticulturists and show attendees could win \$100 cash and a book on native plants!

CLCA's new Technology Café features industry apps for the iPhone and Droid. Learn about networking on LinkedIn and Facebook. Also learn about Jibbiggo, Sprinkler Times, Soil Web, the Landscaper's Companion, ProntoForms, Fleetmatics, Heartland's new Mobuyle payment system and more! Bamboo Pipeline will also be available to show attendees the iPad.

Are you a good designer? Try this year's "Designer's Challenge" brought to you by the Association of Professional Landscape Designers (APLD). This contest shows how quickly you can think on your feet and communicate your finished design to your client. Speed is good, but quality of design is just as important. This fun, interactive, pen and paper challenge will have you thinking on your feet and will be over before the ink is dry!

CLCA's Landscape Industry Show features excellent seminars including Introduction to Green Wall Systems, Design and Installation and Dirt — Can You Dig It?, sponsored by the American Society of Landscape Architects, and Professional Selling Skills sponsored by Ewing Irrigation. Other seminars and CEU classes include: edibles, social media, pesticide technology, how to get paid in full and more! CLCA's Water Management Certification Workshop and test will also be available in English and Spanish.

Besides excellent educational opportunities, attendees have the opportunity to network and meet vendors. CLCA's Landscape Industry Show takes place Feb. 1-2, 2012 at the Los Angeles Convention Center in Los Angeles and is FREE to those who register in advance and \$5 at the door. Seminars are a bargain and begin at \$40 with unlimited classes for \$120. Attendees achieve an excellent return for their time as well as opportunities to grow! Register to attend for FREE today! Go to [www.clca.us/lis](http://www.clca.us/lis).

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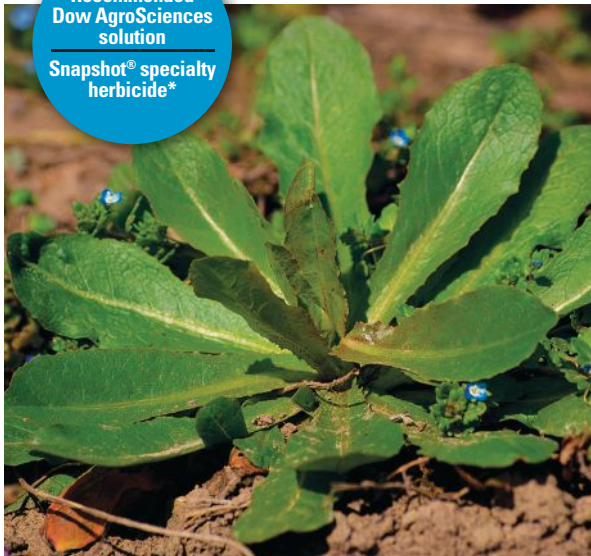
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# WEEDWATCH

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## PRICKLY LETTUCE

*Lactuca serriola*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

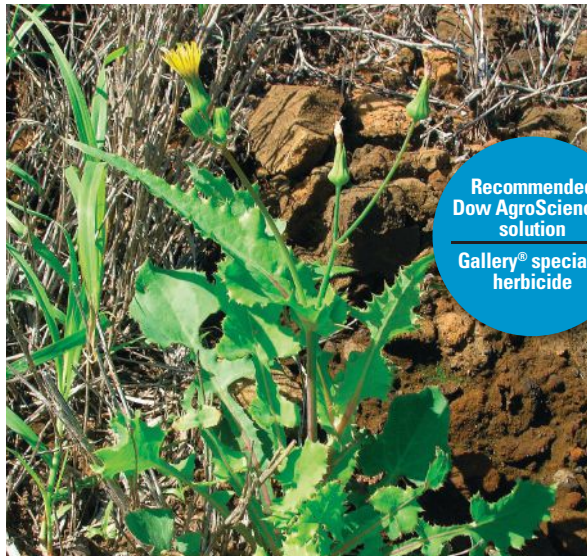
- ▶ This winter annual's leaves form in a basal rosette.
- ▶ It produces an upright stem with alternating, deeply lobed leaves, which feature a row of spines along the mid-vein of the lower surface.
- ▶ Its deep tap root will secrete a milky sap.
- ▶ Small, yellow flowers appear in late spring to early summer.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Prickly lettuce is a weed commonly found in container plantings and nurseries. For optimum weed control and plant safety on a broad range of ornamentals, apply a pre-emergent herbicide that contains isoxaben.
- ▶ Till the area prior to planting, or pull any existing seedlings prior to pre-emergent herbicide application.

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## ANNUAL SOWTHISTLE

*Sonchus oleraceus*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This annual's bluish/green leaves form a rosette, deeply lobed with prickly spines on the margin.
- ▶ Yellow flowers, similar to dandelion, appear in mid- to late summer — but they form on a branched stalk vs. a hollow, solitary stem.
- ▶ Has a tap root, and all plant parts exude a milky sap when broken.
- ▶ It's often confused with prickly lettuce, but does not have spines along the mid-vein.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ For optimum control, apply a pre-emergent herbicide, such as isoxaben, that is labeled for control of annual sowthistle.
- ▶ Pre-emergence herbicides must be applied before weeds germinate. Any existing annual sowthistle must be physically or chemically removed prior to pre-emergent herbicide application.
- ▶ Tilling of a landscape bed prior to planting and herbicide application will improve control of annual sowthistle.

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.

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P R O V E N   S O L U T I O N S

# LM REPORTS

YOUR GUIDE TO PRODUCT RESEARCH

## MAINTENANCE: MOWERS & ATTACHMENTS

### Gravely

The new Pro-Turn 400 zero-radius turn mower is designed for maximum operator comfort and efficiency. The mower features the industry's first air-suspension seat and a new effortless deck lift. The seven-gauge fabricated and welded X-Factor Deck features an all-new deck-lift system. Minimal force is required to raise and lower the deck, reducing operator fatigue, especially for operators who manually float the deck over the terrain. Combined with the dial adjust height-of-cut system, the Pro-Turn 400 makes changing cutting height simple and easy to learn. The dial system is faster than pin height-of-cut selectors on other decks, the company says. [Gravely.com](http://Gravely.com)



### Wright Commercial Products

The Stander X mower combines the feature-filled Stander with an easy-to-use deck-lift system and new AERO CORE deck design. The height of its 48-, 52- or 61-in. decks can now be adjusted on the fly with Wright's new-generation, height-adjustable deck. Its 9.5 mph cut speed increases productivity without sacrificing comfort. A suspension platform provides a smoother ride, and a full-length thigh-to-knee pad increases operator comfort. Plus, the open, unconfined design allows the operator to quickly step off in case of an emergency or to pick up debris. [WrightMfg.com](http://WrightMfg.com)

### John Deere



The Z700 ZTrak Series includes the Z710A (48- and 54-in. decks) and the Z720A (60-in. deck). The ZTrak 700 Series provides contractors a productive machine in a less expensive, and lower-featured model than the ZTrak PRO Series. Using a similar steel channel frame and castings as those on the PRO Series, the Z700s feature the 7-Iron II mower deck with mowing speeds up to 10 mph, and a 400-lb. towing capacity. They are equipped with pneumatic front tires for a soft ride; comfortable high-back bucket seat with armrests; a fully folding rollover protective structure (ROPS); an easy-grip turning height-of-cut adjustment; and John Deere's exclusive Brake & Go system. [JohnDeere.com](http://JohnDeere.com)

### Bobcat

The soil conditioner attachment prepares lawns for seed or sod. It separates rocks and debris; grades, levels, fills and pulverizes soil; and tears out sod. The attachment can be angled as wide as 25° left or right and has forward or reverse raking action. The soil conditioner fits all company loaders. A three-point hitch model fits compact tractors. [Bobcat.com](http://Bobcat.com)



### Wright Commercial Products

Wright Commercial Products introduces the Sport X mower, which combines the benefits of the Stander with the choice of stand-on or sit-down operation. The mower is equipped with an easy to use deck-lift system and Wright's AERO CORE deck design. The height of the 48-, 52- or 61-in. decks can be adjusted on the fly, and the 9.5 mph cut speed maintains productivity. A fold-away seat allows the operator to step off for quick exits, and the mower stops immediately. An operator presence switch on the foot platform stops the blade and engine, and the control levers return to the neutral position when the operator lets go. [Wrightmfg.com](http://Wrightmfg.com)





## TurfEx

This versatile attachment can be converted from a sweeper to a dethatcher without having to purchase additional equipment. Available in 48- and 60-in. widths (models MT480 and MT600, respectively), the attachment uses a universal mount that easily fits the form of most major manufacturers' zero-radius-turn mowers. It includes two rows of brush sections that can be replaced with spring-mounted tines to turn the sweeper into a dethatcher in a matter of minutes. To switch between the two, the operator simply removes a containment plate, then slides the brush or tine sections in and out of the housing. As a sweeper, the attachment is popular for grooming and debris cleanup applications. The durable, resilient polypropylene brushes work equally well in forward and reverse, helping to clean out tight spots a zero-radius-turn mower is capable of reaching. The dethatcher version contains special tines for keeping turf damage to a minimum, whether the mower is driving forward, backing up or conducting a tight turn. It also includes support wheels with adjustable height to optimize control while dethatching. [TrynexFactory.com](http://TrynexFactory.com)

## Kubota

The new Kubota F-Series 100-in. RCL100F-F36 Flex Mower Deck — for application on Kubota F3680 Front Mount Mowers — has a 100-in.-wide cut width yet mows with the precision of a 21-in. walk-behind mower. The patented design integrates five 21-in. mower decks, pinned together and belt driven, for a total 100-in. width cut. The belt drive system allows for maximum power efficiency to drive the deck, while the 100-in. width provides large acreage mowing in a short amount of time. [Kubota.com](http://Kubota.com)

## LAWN CARE: AERATING EQUIPMENT

### Classen

With all of the performance and features of Classen's current turf rake line, the new spring tine reel models TR-20RH (with Honda GX160 engine) and the TR-20RB (with B&S Intek 850 engine) are more forgiving on lawns that have in-ground sprinkler systems or other permanently installed objects in the turf. The models are also ideal for those areas where flail reel or slicer blade reels are too aggressive. They feature 104 individual spring tines that are surface treated to provide more than 50% added strength and tine life. Partial spring tine or complete spring tine reel assemblies are also available. Both assemblies will fit any Classen brand turf rake or seeder model, and make an ideal retrofit for adding dethatcher functionality to existing Classen machines. [ClassenTurfCare.com](http://ClassenTurfCare.com)



### Exmark

These aerators feature intuitive operation, removable suitcase weights and low-effort maneuverability. Users can turn the aerators more easily with the self-cleaning, easy-to-replace tines engaged. Operators also can turn and reverse the aerators with the tines engaged. The aerators feature Kawasaki and Honda commercial-grade engines; offer a one-year limited warranty; and qualify for Exmark's fleet discount program. [Exmark.com](http://Exmark.com)



### Toro

The 21-in. Single Hydro walk-behind and 30-in. Dual Hydro Ride-on aerators are designed for high productivity, and are compact enough to go anywhere. With zero-radius-turn maneuverability, variable speed and reversible traction drive, the aerators can get into and out of tight areas easily. The company's 20-in. slit seeders are capable of power-seeding, dethatching and verticutting. These 3-in-1 machines hold as much as 40 lbs. of seed, allowing operators to seed as much as 8,000 sq. ft. without refilling. With zero-radius-turn maneuverability and a variable-speed drive system that allows forward and reverse operation, the slit seeders offer maximum productivity on every jobsite. [Toro.com](http://Toro.com)

## OPERATIONS: ENGINES & TRANSMISSIONS

### Briggs & Stratton

Attributes of the E Series engines (550e and 550ex) include easier starting with the ReadyStart starting system (no need to choke or prime); best-in-class, torque-to-weight ratio, which means the engine has the power to get the job done while

being light enough for easy maneuvering; a more comfortable mowing experience, with reduced vibration and an improved sound level with the addition of the Super Lo-Tone muffler; enhanced engine life with the overhead valve design that lets the engine run



cooler and cleaner; improved air cleaner (no tools are needed); and an optional paper air cleaner

element that provides even greater, auto-style debris filtering for dusty conditions. [BriggsAndStratton.com](http://BriggsAndStratton.com)

### General Transmissions

The Element V automatic transmission uses less power than hydrostatic, leaving more for the cutting deck. The transmission, which has been tested in extreme temperatures ranging from 100 F to -30 F, operates at lower temperatures for less wear and greater fuel efficiency. It's been bench tested to withstand axle-torque loads 30% greater than competitors'. An almost indestructible glass fiber composite housing resists torque and won't rust or corrode. The transmission is maintenance-free and lubricated for life. [ElementVautomatic.com](http://ElementVautomatic.com)

### Kohler

The Command PRO EFI FlexFuel E85 engine provides the flexibility to use all ethanol fuel blends, from E0 to E85, which translates to significant savings at the pump. The closed-loop EFI technology, which allows for a low operating cost, closes the loop between the air/fuel intake and the exhaust output to provide a constant stream of critical feedback, which helps deliver optimal fuel efficiency, easier starting, improved power and an increased life span. The closed-loop technology automatically senses the ethanol mix in the engine — even if that includes many different grades — and optimizes performance accordingly. The end user, then, has fewer worries about fuel type, fuel quality or ethanol content. The engine is designed to make performance enhancements intuitively, regardless of operating conditions. [KohlerEngines.com](http://KohlerEngines.com)



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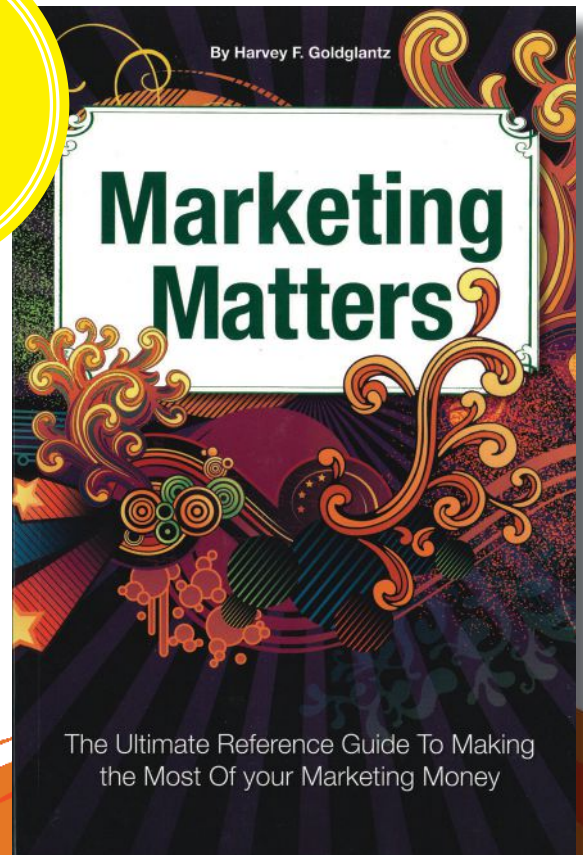
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**Landscape**  
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## BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

The author, of the Wilson-Oyler Group, is a 30-year industry veteran. Reach him at [bwilson@questex.com](mailto:bwilson@questex.com).

# Pythagoras, where art thou?

**F**rom the dawn of ages, many have tackled the complex operation of keeping score. Whether using primitive techniques to quantify time or applying complex economics to manage large capital assets, a wide range of monetary problems requires solutions grounded in understanding how the numbers work.

I've often been called a numbers guy. By looking at key ratios, I can instinctively identify trouble spots — as can many people who know their numbers. But knowing what to do about them, or what is causing them, is much more complex.

Sharpen your financial IQ with these 10 steps:

- 1. Use a chart of accounts** — Make sure your company is using a chart of accounts to manage important costs. As a general rule, it is necessary to have separate cost of sales accounts for each type of sales or revenue account. Labor is your single largest manageable cost. A chart of accounts will help you manage it.
- 2. Keep in mind the velocity of cash** — More has to come in than go out.
- 3. Net not** — The bottom line isn't the bottom line. Many managers look at the bottom line, and if the net gain/loss numbers look OK, they do not dig any deeper. This is a mistake.
- 4. Welcome pushback** — Don't be afraid of the Devil's Advocate. Pick someone on your accounting team to challenge your results. You want your accounting team to help you see things you might miss or take for granted.
- 5. "Like" your P&L** — The balance sheet is your friend. This is the true measure of your business's health. Learn your ratios, what they mean and how to influence them.
- 6. Get a budget** — It will help you build, re-build and provide the tools to guide spending and measure your short- and long-term success.
- 7. Get a fiscal posse, too** — Enlist key members of your accounting and management teams to help

build a sustainable budget. This gives them shared ownership in doing their part to achieve the targets.

**8. Be an open book** — This does not mean you have to share your whole financial statement with your team, although some companies do. Be open with your employees about numbers they can influence. This benefits their sense of ownership, helps engage them in a positive outcome and is good for morale. For instance, operations managers should see sales and job costs; crew leaders should understand how the hours work.

**9. Manage what you can measure** — Measurement is the cornerstone of evaluation. You can determine whether your practices are improving or deteriorating, and assess processes and outcomes. You can become more successful over time if you measure where you are now.

**10. Offer incentives wisely** — Aligning business goals and targets with organizational structure can generate positive outcomes. When these are misaligned, there is a danger that performance can become self-serving. If you create incentives for employees to achieve targeted goals, beware of unintended consequences: It can bleed red ink and create a cutthroat culture. More damage can be done by an ill-conceived plan than no plan at all. This is one area where you should get help from consultants or other contractors you know.

Numbers are important and require rigorous attention to detail. But stressing financial numbers can also contribute to sending mixed messages to your team. Remember that other numbers have an equally important value system in your business: the number of people who trust and respect your company; the roster of satisfied (and retained) customers; having a high percentage of engaged, motivated employees; and the amount of credibility your company has in the community.

Whether you use an abacus or an Apple, measurement is the best practices way to ensure your company has an agenda for action.



# 3 tips for **future** **success**

**PREPARE FOR THE 2012 SEASON BY RESPONDING TO ECONOMIC CHALLENGES.**

BY JAMIE J. GOOCH

**A**STHE old saying goes, “if it were easy to do, everyone would do it.” By that measure, it must be easy to tell the future. This time of year, there is no shortage of prognosticators predicting everything from landscape plant color choices to popular accessories to overall design trends for 2012.

While it’s impossible to know exactly what’s coming, and specific tastes vary by region (and even client), the big picture is largely the same. The economy dominates the presidential debates, dinner table discussion and the 24-hour news cycle. It will dominate 2012 landscape designs as well.

Lucky Red Flame Lantana stay upright all season, making them well-suited to small-space landscapes.

PHOTO COURTESY: BALL HORTICULTURE



## It’s the economy

If you’re a cup half full kind of person, you might predict the poor economy could actually lead homeowners to invest in their landscapes. After all, they’re not taking vacations and they’re not planning on selling anytime soon, so they want their properties to be as comfortable as possible. Maybe so, but as high unemployment rates continue, it’s easy to see the cup as half empty. Abandoned properties don’t need much in the way of landscaping, and as budgets shrink, the landscaping service may be one of the first to be cut.

One way to prepare for the worst and hope for the best is by offering services that appeal to recession-weary clients. What services can you provide that could save money for your clients?

**1 Renovate landscapes.** Rather than starting from scratch, develop services and pricing plans that allow you to spruce up budget-conscious property owners’ landscapes without breaking the bank. Use high-impact specimen plantings and pops of color to add needed design elements to existing landscapes when possible. Get your foot in the door with small changes that make big impacts and build your customer base. Smaller changes over time can still

lead to a dramatically different landscape, though it may take multiple seasons to accomplish. Keep all those changes moving in the right direction by offering to create a long-term master plan for clients. In addition to being critical to a cohesive landscape design, a master plan engages clients in the future of their landscape and helps make them repeat customers.

**2 Save water.** After an initial installation investment, a well-designed irrigation system starts paying the property owner back by saving water costs. Whether replacing an inefficient system or installing a new irrigation system, less maintenance is also a selling point. Putting the right amount of water in the right place can also reduce the need for disease control inputs because it helps prevent fungal and mold growth.

Landscapers can even offer lower-tech services to help property owners conserve water, such as rain barrel sales and installation, or installation of rain gardens to collect runoff. Rain gardens can be planted with deep-rooted plants that make use of extra water as it’s collected.

The money-saving benefits of water-wise plants, too, should be communicated to your clients. Breeders have successfully reduced many popular plants’ water requirements.

“Plants bred to withstand attacks from pests and diseases that are also tolerant

of climate and soil extremes provide a better value,” states Anthony Tesselaar, cofounder and president of Tesselaar Plants, in a recent news release. “Gardeners are more aware than ever that choosing the right plant for the right situation is imperative if you want to help save the planet — let alone your bank balance.”

**3 Sell sustainability.** The renewed interest in the environment in recent years is not slowing with the pace of the economy. In fact, the recession may have brought even more attention to the importance of sustainable landscapes.

Green roofs are one example of a growth area that owes its popularity to environmental awareness. From reducing heating and cooling costs, to improving air quality and lowering city temperatures, the benefits of green roofs are becoming too obvious for many city planners to

A container garden featuring Tangerine Tango, the Pantone Color of the Year: Tropicanna Black cannas (top), ornamental peppers (lower left) and croton (lower right).

ignore. Landscapers can learn the specialized skills needed to install green roofs themselves, or find partnering opportunities with progressive roofing companies who are installing the structures needed to top cities with green.

The focus on reducing our environmental impact by buying locally sourced products is a boon to local growers, nurseries and landscapers. It’s also an opportunity to market the benefits of native plants. Mixing native species in with more traditional cultivars can help lower the need for inputs and maintenance.

Edible landscapes have been making headlines for years. From modern victory



gardens to the First Lady planting edibles at the White House, consumers have taken notice.

“Economic, nutritional, environmental and social interests are converging to elevate the practice of home vegetable gardening to mainstream relevance,” said Jessie Atchison, brand manager for Burpee Home Gardens, at an Edible Garden exhibition presented by the New York Botanical Garden during the 2010 growing season.

And edibles continue to make inroads into suburban back yards. In addition to being seen as providing “free” food, some clients also equate personal fruit and vegetable gardens with lessening the environmental footprint of shipping produce globally.

The economic benefits of a well-designed landscape are one thing, but the intangibles should not be forgotten. A beautiful landscape can provide your clients with a welcome respite from their economic anxieties.

Some property owners will certainly still be in a spending mood in 2012, but having service and pricing plans to appeal to all income levels looks like a safer bet this year than focusing only on the high end. ■■

**Gooch is a freelance writer and editor based in Northeast Ohio.**

## HOT COLOR FOR 2012

The world is an increasingly smaller place. From national television marketing campaigns by plant producers, fashion labels and even paint manufacturers to social networking among friends and families, design trends travel more quickly now than ever before.

Some of those “trends” are little more than hopeful soothsaying, but one in particular is backed up by some serious research.

Pantone LLC is well known to many who work with color.

Graphic artists, interior designers and fashion designers use the company’s color swatch library regularly. Color is, literally, Pantone’s business. So when the company announced “Tangerine Tango” (PANTONE 17-1463) as its color of the year for 2012, plant breeders and consumers paid attention.

“The color of the year selection is a very thoughtful process,” according to a Pantone press release. “To arrive at the selection, Pantone quite literally combs the world looking for color influences. This can include the entertainment industry and films that are in production, traveling art collections, hot new artists, popular travel destinations and other socio-economic conditions. Influences may also stem from technology, availability of new textures and effects that impact color, and even upcoming sports events that capture worldwide attention.”

Over the past several years, orange has grown in popularity and acceptance among designers and consumers alike, according to the company’s research.

As clients hear about and see more orange shades, they may request a complementary color palette for their landscapes.

Anthony Tesselaar, cofounder and president of Tesselaar Plants, suggests using red-orange with other plants featuring subtle echoes of the same color: “Not too much of this fiery hue,” he says. “A little goes a long way.”

Or, since the orange-red tangerine color is opposite of blue-green on the color wheel, it could be grouped with frosty, cool-hued plants.

For more information on Tangerine Tango, visit [www.pantone.com/coy2012](http://www.pantone.com/coy2012).



Can-Can Orange Calibrachoa (top) can be used to pinpoint spots of color. Bonfire begonias add a punch of tangerine color to the landscape (bottom).