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BY BETH GERACI

LM MARKET MATCH We've made your life a little easier by supplying icons that direct you to stories targeting your core business.

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Art Director Carrie Parkhill Wallace worked with this water droplet image from iStock International Inc.

OUR MISSION: *Landscape Management* — the leading information resource for lawn care, landscape maintenance, design/build and irrigation professionals — empowers Green Industry professionals to learn and grow from their peers and our exclusive business intelligence. Serving as the industry conscience, we not only report on but also help shape news, views, trends and solutions.



EDITOR'S NOTE

MARISA PALMIERI EDITOR

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Boomerang boom

Last month when I started as editor of *Landscape Management* I traded notes with many people I'd met during my first time around in the landscape market. (Two years ago, after reporting on the Green Industry for four years, I switched markets to work as editor of *Paperboard Packaging*. Yes, there is a trade magazine for everything.)

One of the people I reconnected with was Chuck Carr. I knew him five years ago as owner and operator of Carr Landscape Management, a company he founded after leaving ValleyCrest in 2000. I was surprised to see he's now working in business development for ValleyCrest Landscape Maintenance in the Conejo and Simi Valley area of California.

Carr is what HR experts refer to as a boomerang employee. These days many firms are looking to recruit these comeback kids, the *Wall Street Journal* and other news outlets report, dubbing them "alumni" and creating online networking groups to keep them connected.

Why did Carr go back? "I stayed on good terms with them, didn't burn any bridges, and when I decided I wanted something other than

what I could get from running my own business, they were the natural choice," he says.

It was smart of him to stay friendly with his former employer — and just as savvy for ValleyCrest to be willing to welcome him back.

Employees leave businesses for many reasons — more money, better flexibility, a perceived lack of opportunity for advancement. Some, like Carr, may be happy with the organization but leave to try something new. Many business owners or managers wouldn't consider taking back former employees, but there are a few good reasons to resist this instinct.

No. 1, there are savings in recruitment and training; some recruiters estimate the cost to hire a boomerang employee is one-third to two-thirds the cost of hiring a "virgin" worker. Another reason is the skills, experience and ideas the person will have picked up that could enrich your organization. Not to mention the potential morale boost that could come from the boomeranger sharing with others that the grass isn't always greener on the other side.

If you're someone who understands these benefits, experts say one of the most powerful things you can do to foster boomerang opportunities is to listen closely to top-performing workers' reasons for leaving (maybe it's something that could change over time, like a family situation) and let them know you'd be willing to welcome them back someday. Then, stay in touch.

I guess you could call me a boomerang member of the landscape industry. When the opportunity to work again in the landscape market came about, I was thrilled to join the *LM* team. I missed the candor, passion and willingness to share among the professionals who call the Green Industry their home, and I look forward to covering topics that will help you do your job more efficiently and improve profitability.

I'm happy to be back and I can confirm the grass *is* greener here.

Some recruiters estimate **the cost to hire a boomerang employee** is one-third to two-thirds the cost of hiring a "virgin" worker.



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PROGRESS



Business in a box

Franchises have advanced, but franchisors aren't too eager to mess with what's long been a winning formula.

With the advent of technology, increased emphasis on branding and better equipment, franchising has changed a lot over the years. But even with all its advances, its core has not budged.

"The concept of franchising is the same now as it always has been — proven systems that allow someone to start a business and be successful in a very short period of time," says Ron Madera, president of The Grounds Guys, Waco, TX.

Franchisors and franchisees are "strategic partners," Madera says. "We share a brand, and we have to build the brand together."

Like Madera, Nutri-Lawn Chief Operating Officer Jordan Lavin says his company seeks franchisees who share Nutri-Lawn's attitude.

"They have to fit the culture of the company so they can take advantage of our system properly," Lavin says.

According to U.S. Lawns Vice President Paul Wolbert, property managers in the franchise business used to manage properties within 60 miles of them, and "now they're managing buildings anywhere from coast to coast. That lends itself to the franchise model, because you're able to meet customers' expectations no matter where

they are. A Big Mac tastes the same in Cleveland as it does in Orlando." The level of service is the same from city to city as well, Wolbert says, because the franchisor ensures it.

Technological advances

The development of new technologies has changed franchising most dramatically, Madera says, including GPS, iPhones and text messaging. "We can move at light speed now," he says. "We can do much more business faster and better now."

The Grounds Guys uses something called Geo Fencing, in which a GPS system is under the hood of the vehicle, so remotely the franchisor can evaluate his trucks, see how fast trucks are moving and assess whether the engine is running or not.

Technology has played a critical role at Nutri-Lawn over the past five or six years, Lavin says, helping in benchmarking and best practices.

"Now we can actually share best practices from data, and it's hard data," he says. "Here are the facts on what location X is producing and how they're doing it.' It really changes the game for us."

Thanks to technology, Wolbert says, it's now easier to meet the needs of the customer than ever before — and to do it quickly.

Have a clear message

The core concepts of any franchise are the same, whether it be a lawn care franchise or restaurant franchise, says

NaturaLawn President Phillip Catron. "But you have inherent differences based on company culture and internal corporate philosophy," he says.

Having a clear message and distinct identity is vital to a franchise's success, Catron says. "The focus is very pin-pointed," he explains. "In any business you can integrate many things into it, but the less focused you become on your core business, the more likely it is that your brand will be diluted and fail."

Treating your people right

Franchise execs know their companies are only as good as their people. So rewarding franchisees and staff is integral to growth. Catron's been known to shut down NaturaLawn mid-week to host a pizza party or have film screenings.

"We have fun, we really do — everybody, the franchisees too," Catron says. "We try to take care of the family."

Nutri-Lawn too, has a close relationship with its franchisees, hosting a one-week trip with them every year.

Catron, Madera and Lavin all stress that an import success factor in this business is your people. "A true entrepreneur will not make a good franchisee," Catron says. "They want to do everything their own way. You want someone who understands the

benefits of a business system. You follow the system, I can grow your business with you, but if you start deviating, I don't know. I haven't checked that one out yet."

"Everybody's in business for different reasons," Lavin adds. "And unless you know why they're in business it's very difficult to understand them."

NaturaLawn staff trains some of its franchisees in the field.



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— **Todd McCabe**, Landscape Unlimited



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THE GREEN INDUSTRY AT A GLANCE



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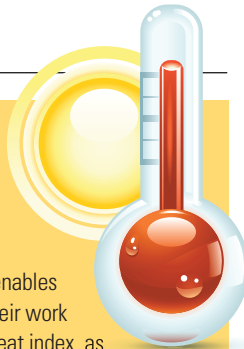
Owns { **19** trucks
13 mowers
6 trailers

48
years old

Source: *Accelera Research*

BEAT THE HEAT

Heat stroke has killed – on average – more than 30 workers annually since 2003, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration. As part of OSHA's outreach campaign it has released a free mobile device app that enables workers and supervisors to monitor the heat index at their work sites. It displays a risk level for workers based on the heat index, as well as reminders about protective measures that should be taken at that risk level. Available for Android-based platforms and the iPhone, the app can be downloaded in both English and Spanish at <http://s.dol.gov/RI>.



GOING OUT

Outdoor living spaces have become the new 'great room' in terms of must-have items for homeowners, according to the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Home Design Trends Survey for the first quarter of 2012.

"As people are more interested in adapting their property to their long-term needs rather than readying it for sale, we are seeing more attention paid to landscaping and features that have some return on investment like rainwater catchment systems," says AIA Chief Economist Kermit Baker.

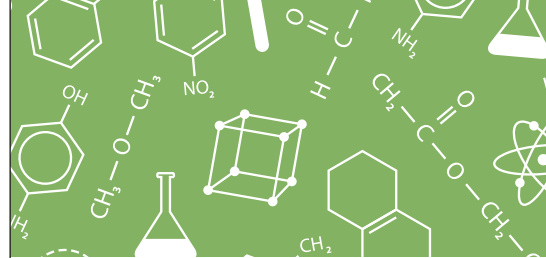


Outdoor Living & Landscaping Trends

% of respondents that reported increases

RESIDENTIAL ELEMENTS	2012	2011
Low-irrigation landscaping	26%	63%
Outdoor living space	64%	60%
Blended indoor/outdoor living	53%	46%
Rainwater catchment	48%	49%
Exterior/security lighting	33%	30%

Source: *AIA Home Design Trends Survey*



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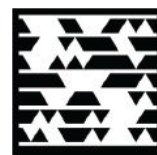
TIPS FOR SMARTER, SAFER CHEMICAL APPLICATIONS

By Corbett Schnatmeyer | FMC

Today's market offers a wide range of pesticide options with various Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements. Fortunately, the Environmental Protection Agency requires that all pesticide product labels contain instructions regarding the necessary PPE to be worn when handling, preparing, mixing and applying pesticides. While pesticides can come into contact with the human body several different ways, most exposure comes via contact with the skin. Wearing the proper PPE for each and every interaction with pesticides not only helps to guarantee individual safety and protection, it's required by law. At the end of each workday, ensure continued protection by discarding disposable gloves and washing PPE while verifying that it is in good condition.



Corbett Schnatmeyer is the Market Specialist for FMC Professional Solutions in Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming and Utah.



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DROP BY

DROP

With the heat wave that engulfed the country this month, no doubt many Americans have taken the liberty of letting the sprinkler run a tad bit longer than usual.

We hope people have been paying as much attention to the calendar as they have to the weather, because July also happens to be Smart Irrigation Month.

In honor of the occasion, *Landscape Management* takes a look at the recycled water movement that's emerging in the U.S., especially in the dry West.

WATER-MINDED PEOPLE

"Sustainability seems to be such a strong buzz word today," says Richard Restuccia, director for water management solutions at ValleyCrest Cos. "I'm talking to a lot of commercial building owners and managers. I try to show them the benefits of what's happening in this global movement right now toward sustainability."

That movement, Restuccia says, is gaining momentum. "There's starting to be some water awareness that we haven't seen before," Restuccia says.

He points to the water blog he started in June 2011. The day he launched it, it received 185 hits. One year later, Restuccia's receiving about 5,000 hits a day. That's no coincidence.

Higher water prices in the U.S. largely are responsible for increased water awareness, Restuccia says. In Arizona alone, he adds, water prices

Conservation-minded landscape professionals are turning to **rainwater harvesting** and **graywater systems** to recycle water. BY **BETH GERACI** SENIOR EDITOR

skyrocketed by 72% overnight, and homeowner associations are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on water annually.

Water awareness is building among Heads Up Landscaping's clientele as a result of higher prices, too, says Andrew Key, president of the Albuquerque, NM, company. Key's customers more frequently are inquiring about rainwater catchment on their properties, and it's a service he is proud to provide.

"Water is expensive and getting more expensive," he says. "In the Southwest and more arid regions, the cost of water is probably not going to go down."

On top of that, he says, many water utility companies have aging infrastructure that they'll have to replace soon, which will drive rates up even more.

DEMAND CLIMBING FOR RAINWATER HARVESTING

Jud Griggs, director of garden development for Dallas-based Lambert Landscape Co., which installs and maintains rainwater harvesting systems on residential properties, says demand for rainwater harvesting in the region is high thanks to a pervasive water consciousness among residents and businesses in the area.

"They're trying to preserve natural resources and not overburden what will become more and more a limited water supply," he says.

Consider that Texas is among the fastest-growing states in the country "and that's going to put a real dent in our water supply," he says. "It's inevitable that the growth will outstrip our water resources."

Consequently, more clients are asking

about Lambert Landscape Co.'s rainwater harvesting services, whether they are small rain barrels or 200-gallon cisterns.

"The long and short of it is that there may come a day in the Dallas area where there is no water to water your landscapes, but it's always going to rain," says Griggs' counterpart, Lambert Director of Garden Services Jodi Joseph. "If you have that rainwater harvesting tank and you've made that investment, it's going to rain eventually, and it will fill up."

The interest in water conservation in the Southwest can be seen in the number of rainwater catchment systems that have popped up in the region during the last six years, Key says.

He attributes that growth to commercial construction businesses striving to achieve LEED certification. "That really opened the door for rainwater catchment systems," he says. "Almost

continued on page 11



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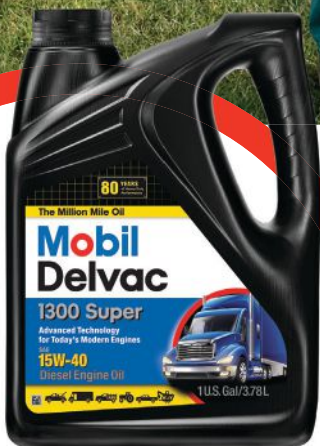
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