

Summer Maintenance Tips from Mobil Delvac

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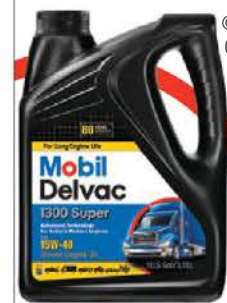
- **Coolant** – Drain your coolant and have your radiator inspected at least once a year.
- **Trailer** – Grease all axles and wheel bearings, and check all functioning light systems regularly.
- **Tire Pressure** – Tire pressure will rise as the temperature gets hotter. So check your tire pressure at least once a week, and adjust as necessary.
- **Clean Your Battery** – Obstructed connections can compromise the lifespan of your battery. Keep your connections clean by detaching the battery cables and wiping off the terminals on a regular basis.

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Heads Up Landscaping workers construct two rainwater harvesting tanks in the courtyard of the Silver Gardens Apartments in Albuquerque, NM (left). The finished photo (above) shows the same area after landscaping, from a slightly different perspective.

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any project that is going for LEED certification is going to consider installing a rainwater catchment system.”

GRAYWATER DEFINED

Not as widely used, but gaining momentum, is the emerging graywater movement. Graywater is wastewater from dishwashers, laundry machines, sinks and bathtubs, which is then flowed through pipes to the exterior landscape, where it irrigates plants, shrubs, grass and trees.

“I really believe it’s the future,” says Leigh Jerrard, principal of Greywater Corps, a Los Angeles-based company

specializing in installing residential graywater systems.

Washing machine water has ample nitrogen and phosphates. And though both create harmful algae blooms in water, they’re beneficial to plants on land, Jerrard says. Graywater, therefore, he adds, “keeps chemicals out of liquid ecosystems and keeps them in the earth, which is a lot better.”

Jeremiah Kidd is the director of San Isidro Permaculture in Santa Fe, NM, specializing in designing and creating sustainable landscapes. The company focuses on services such as edible gardens, rainwater catchment systems and graywater reuse systems.

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COVER STORY

SULFENTRAZONE: Protection that goes deep.

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“Graywater has a lot of nutrients for plants,” Kidd says. “It’s almost like a fertilizer for a lot of plants.” Many of Kidd’s clients reuse graywater and harvest rainwater in tandem together. “It’s a good balance,” he says. “It might not rain here for a month, but you’re always going to be producing graywater in your home. Graywater is the perennial resource, and the rainwater might be just in certain seasons.”

But use of graywater for irrigation often is controversial; the dirt and particles in it can grow and multiply bacteria if graywater is stored. That’s why it needs to be reused right away.

“If you use graywater as you produce it and drain it out to the trees, then the trees and plants use those

nutrients and actually clean the water,” Kidd explains. “It’s very safe. You just don’t want to store it.”

Graywater reuse in irrigation was green lighted in New Mexico and California within the last few years. Kidd would like it to become standard operating procedure for new construction and hopes it will become a normal building practice in the next 15 or 20 years.

“More places are going to be catching on,” he says. “I would encourage people to explore it more. It can be a very safe and effective method for irrigating property.”

For residential properties, perhaps. But ValleyCrest’s Restuccia makes an important point. “You’d be hard pressed to find a commercial landscape contrac-

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Leigh Jerrard, principal of Greywater Corps, points to one residential graywater system his company installed.



Greywater Corps occasionally leads workshops on how to install graywater systems, such as the lesson shown below.



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Ewing Irrigation Sign up for Ewing's e-mail list to receive different weekly specials throughout the month. The company is offering deals on smart controllers, efficient nozzles, rain sensors and more. Sign up at www.ewingirrigation.com.

Rain Bird The company is hosting a sweepstakes on its Facebook page throughout July, and different fans each week will win smart controllers. To be eligible to win, "like" Rain Bird on Facebook and complete the contact form, www.facebook.com/RainBirdCorp.

COVER STORY

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tor who's actively reusing graywater," he says. "From a commercial standpoint, I have to say I don't see very much of it at all. I really haven't seen any of it. I think it's still in the process of being figured out. It can be very costly."

Kidd says in his experience, the average price for installing a graywater reuse system on a home ranges from \$2,000 for a retrofit to \$5,000 for new construction.

Smart controllers are a much more viable alternative to graywater reuse, Restuccia says, because they're more affordable and have an average return on investment of two years.

A SPECIAL PROJECT

Roscoe Klausing is doing his part for the water conservation movement. The president of Klausing Group, a landscaping company in Lexington,

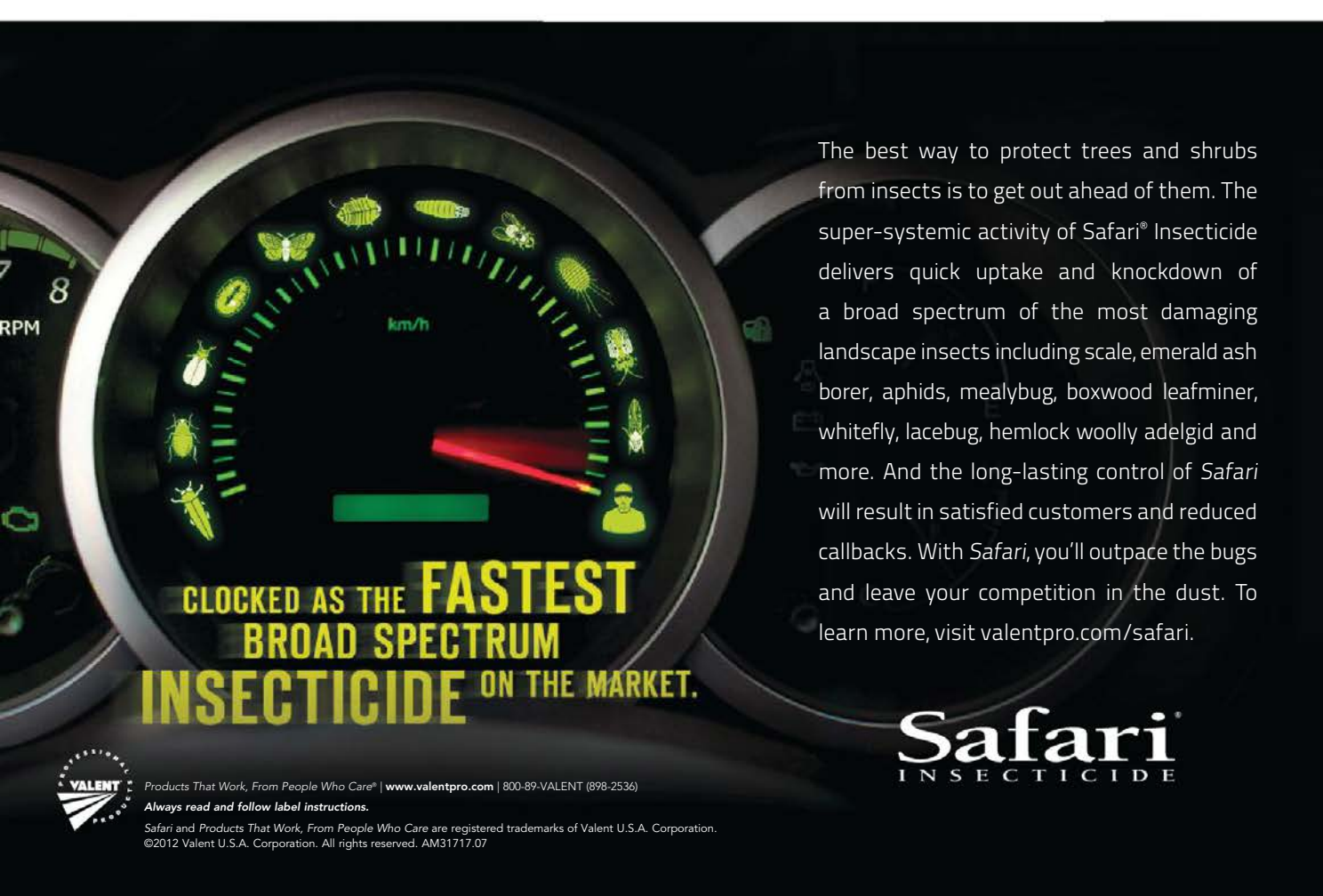
KY, recently received a \$320,000 grant from the City of Lexington to work on a water-efficient parking lot project at Klausing Group's headquarters.

The grant came to be after the Environmental Protection Agency sued the City of Lexington to clean up polluted streams. The \$320,000 grant awarded Klausing Group was among the highest the city awarded.

The project, set to begin next month and end in October, centers on the restoration of two Klausing employee parking lots using permeable pavers. Among the project's features: stormwater storage beneath the parking lots, rainwater harvesting and an oil and water separator.

The grant's purpose was twofold: Clean the water before it leaves the property and reduce the amount of stormwater runoff produced on the property.

"Because of the way these permeable pavers are built, you're actually getting better quality stormwater that's



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water to their site, so right now we buy treated water and use it in our work.”

Klausing says as few as 25% of commercial properties and 5% of residential properties in Lexington have any type of irrigation system. “It’s not a big deal around here,” he says. “I don’t know why it’s not. We need it.”

VALUE MEASURED NOT JUST BY THE DOLLAR

Hey! Tanks LA installs and plans rainwater harvesting and graywater systems on

residential and commercial properties in Los Angeles. Owner Scott Mathers stresses that before investing in rainwater harvesting or graywater systems, clients must assess their needs.

“Some people do it to save money, others just want to feel good about it,” Mathers observes. “So whatever their goals are, graywater might be better for them, or rainwater might be better for them, or they might benefit from both.”

It depends on how clients intend to

use the water and how large their properties are, Mathers explains. “Don’t spend the money on a rainwater tank unless you have efficient landscaping,” he warns. “You can’t have a huge lawn and have a rain tank. It doesn’t make sense. Forget it.”

Rainwater harvesting cisterns are more expensive to install and maintain than graywater systems, but they produce better quality water, Mathers adds.

“It’s not a cheap investment,” says Joseph. “Sometimes you don’t see the investment returned for many years to come.” I think it’s a commendable effort that these individuals are making.”

Key agrees rainwater catchment isn’t cheap. Small commercial rainwater catchment systems can run from \$20,000 to \$30,000, while large commercial systems usually cost between \$100,000 and \$150,000.

The bottom line, says Mathers, is that to be cost effective, both graywater and rainwater systems need to be looked at based on use.

“There’s not a one-size fits all,” he says. “It’s what’s the design, what’s the demand, is it a business or is it a family? You have to look at the supply and demand.” **LM**

cleaner,” Klausing says.

Klausing Group will also install a 12,000-gallon rainwater harvesting tank on its property. About 13 feet around and 13 feet tall, the tank will have a large pump system. The company will pump the water out of the cistern into water tanks, load them onto its trucks and haul them to one of its many jobsites that don’t have irrigation systems.

“In our market, most properties are not irrigated,” Klausing explains. “Customers have to pay people to transport

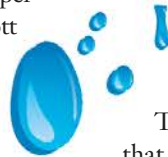


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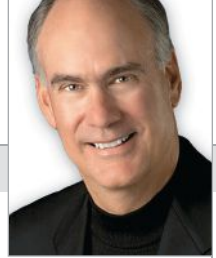
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Time for the 90-day scrub

The absolute best management planning document on the planet is the rolling budget. Managed properly, there is no better management tool ever invented. *Ever.*

In my January column (goo.gl/gSqQ1), we spoke of the benefits of creating a budget for your year — documenting that budget, spreading it by month and focusing your management team’s energies to achieving those anticipated results. You did that, right?

Now we are a bit past mid-year, and it is time to update our anticipated results for 2012 with the latest, greatest information as to how things are progressing — and to re-evaluate the anticipated results for the remainder of the year.

At the beginning of the year, we built a budget, spread it by month and laid out all of our benchmarks with which to evaluate our progress as we move through the year. (To see or download the following example, see the Excel chart at goo.gl/FOLj8.) Looking at the report, the first two columns on the left are the original budget. These were the columns we divided up and spread monthly when we initiated the budget at the beginning of the year. These columns will never change.

The next two columns are the sum of the months January through December. These columns will change as you change the numbers in the monthly spread to the right.

Starting with January, we need to enter in the actual data for each month that is completed. Yep, simply write over the budgeted information with the actual information.

The rolling budget columns will change to reflect *actual* activity so that you can compare the rolling budget activity to the original budget. Highlight the variances and discuss them with your team.

The next level

You have updated the rolling budget with actual data. Now, there is one more thing you can do. This is what I call the 90-day scrub. Look ahead to the

next 90 days and change the budgeted values to better represent how you are performing.

Why would you want to do this? Principally because wherever you are in your year’s activity, you are that much smarter than you were when the budget was created however many months ago. Put those smarts down on paper.

It is not so hard, either. For example, if we just closed June, we are looking at our updated rolling budget numbers and it is the second week of July. If we don’t know how July is performing when we are halfway through the month, something’s wrong. So, update July’s numbers. We also know what the month of August should be, as we already have August’s schedule in place. The same can probably be said for September as well.

If you can see variances in revenues or any of the cost categories, change them. Simply write over the budgeted values. *Horrors! We are writing over the budget? Changing the goals midstream?* You bet we are. If we are changing the numbers, the monthly budgets are outdated anyway. And remember, we have the first two columns to remind us what we were thinking when we created the original values.

We want this document to tell us, with the most accurate, up-to-date information, where we are going to end up the year.

Imagine if you could get your management team’s collective heads around goal setting at this level. Talk about owning the numbers! Talk about accountability! Talk about power!

Wherever you are in your year’s activity,
you are that much smarter than
you were when the budget was created.

When errors occur

YOU CAN'T ALWAYS PREVENT MISTAKES, BUT YOU CAN LESSEN THE BLOW OF PAYING FOR THEM.

A LANDSCAPE DESIGNER/CONTRACTOR DESIGNS a plan that doesn't take into consideration the septic tank field lying just beyond the property — and then selects trees with invasive roots. It's a liability situation that doesn't happen overnight. Several years down the road, when those roots grow into the field, damaging the septic system and wreaking havoc, the designer is still liable. And it wouldn't be covered by a general liability insurance policy.

That's just one of many possible scenarios where errors and omissions (E&O) insurance is so important, says John Hodapp, CPCU, Hortica Insurance & Employee Benefits.

"Errors and omissions insurance is a form of business liability coverage for those who provide professional services for a fee," says Hodapp. "It's different from general liability. Professional liability errors, such as design errors like the septic tank example, require E&O coverage."

Hodapp says that E&O insurance is a specialized form of coverage that protects the business owners against losses that would not be covered by traditional general liability insurance. These include claims for negligent acts, errors or omissions.

"If someone was injured during the installation of those trees, that would be covered by general liability," Hodapp explains. "But the fact that the design was faulty and the trees grew into the septic system is an error with the design, and that's where E&O comes into play. If the contractor isn't covered, the cost is going to have to come out of their pocket."

Up until recently, many landscape contractors and designers have been more concerned about general liability coverage, which is certainly also important. But Hodapp says that businesses

and property owners are becoming savvier about insurance types — and may now require E&O as well.

"If you're working for a school district or a general contractor, general liability is almost always universally required," says Hodapp. "But in the past, E&O coverage hadn't always been required, and landscapers either didn't know about it or chose not to pay for it. Nowadays, more and more businesses are starting to make it a requirement, and we're seeing an increase in coverage. General contractors or property owners are becoming better educated, and they want their landscape contractor to have full coverage."

Even if it's not required for a job, Hodapp says, you may still have the risk of exposure.

"Sometimes it takes that requirement to push contractors to buy the extra insurance," he says, "but the truth is that you have the risk of claims no matter what."

It's important for landscape contractors and designers to remember that the exposure is almost always much bigger than the size of the job, says Hodapp.

"Don't think about the size of the job. Think about the assets you want to protect," he adds. "You could lose your assets on one small job if things go poorly. For example, you may have made \$2,000 for the design and installation of those trees. But it may cost over \$20,000 to repair the septic tank system that was damaged. Regardless of the job size, you need to be fully covered."

Hodapp says that if injuries were involved with a faulty design, those costs could skyrocket even higher. When E&O coverage can be affordable, he says, he doesn't know why anyone would chance it.

"For example, if people are injured by a patio or retaining wall that had a faulty design, those injuries could cost far, far more than the job was ever worth," he says. "It's simply not worth the risk."

Casey Payton is a freelance writer who has covered the landscape industry for seven years.



ERRORS AND OMISSIONS, AT A GLANCE

► **What?** E&O is professional liability insurance that provides coverage for any errors or omissions that may occur from a professional service you provided.

► **Why?** Because mistakes happen. Whether you're an experienced landscape contractor or just starting out, human error is always a factor.

► **When?** Secure E&O coverage before the risk has any possibility of happening. Too many contractors wait until they've had to pay out of pocket for an error that wasn't covered by general liability before deciding to buy E&O for future work.

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“You don’t want to offer too many services and turn into this big Chinese menu, you know?” says **Matt Noon**, 32, president of Boston-based Noon Turf Care. “Really, the core of our business is lawn, tree and shrub care.”

Noon, a Boston College graduate, runs Noon Turf Care with his brother, Chris, 35. He talks about how he and Chris spun a burgeoning summer job into a \$5 million business and switched their focus from landscaping to lawn care.

How did your business get started? I started the business when I was 17, my senior year in high school, for just some side income. I started it just as a maintenance service. It grew pretty fast, and by my third year in college I was doing about \$400,000 a year in revenue. It was big. I contacted my brother and asked him to take it over while I finished school. Little did I know we’d turn this into a career.

How has your business evolved? In ’02, when I graduated from college, we did mowing, blowing, all the maintenance services. In ’05 we added the fertilizing segment, and in 2008 we sold the landscaping side of the business. That was a tough decision, because we were essentially starting over. We went from \$2.5 million in revenue to \$500,000. And at that point we really started to grow.

What’s been challenging? When you’re growing that fast you’ve got to be careful with a lot of things. But the biggest thing is quality and being able to quickly standardize things within your business to attract experienced employees. A lot of things we weren’t used to doing. We really had to get focused and start treating it more like a business.

How do you attract quality employees? We need good people, and we pay more for them. I try to recruit people. There’s usually three interviews, and we have a personality profile. It’s important, because at the end of the day, if you don’t have the right people it’s going to become a generic product. You need to have that personal touch.

What’s an important lesson you’ve learned? The thing I wish someone had told me years ago is, find a mentor that you want to emulate. That’s been a huge part of our success. We did not have a mentor until we got into the lawn care business. Paul Wagner of Fit Turf in Denver really gave us a lot of that industry benchmarking. I read about him years ago and I just reached out to him. I called him. A lot of people never make that call.

Where is Noon Turf Care’s focus today? We’re focusing now on fertilization and trees and shrubs. That segment of our business is growing. And insect control is a big service for us right now. Applying more of a business approach to our company has given us a

AT A GLANCE

NAME: Matt Noon

COMPANY: Noon Turf Care

YEAR INCORPORATED: 2002

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: Massachusetts Association of Lawn Care Professionals (MALCP)

BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY: Think of yourself as a customer.

FAMILY: I’m a bachelor. I like spending time with my nieces, whom I spoil.

DREAM VACATION: I’m living it every day. I’ve been around the world. If I want to get away, I go to Aruba.

WEBSITE: www.noonturfcare.com

clearer vision. We have goals now. And those goals don’t go away like a New Year’s resolution or something.

What does tomorrow hold? The last four years have been spent perfecting our formulas. The next three or four will be focused on expanding our markets — and always, always perfecting all the processes we have and staying focused on service.

“AT THE END OF THE DAY, IF YOU DON’T HAVE THE RIGHT PEOPLE IT’S GOING TO BECOME A GENERIC PRODUCT.”