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continued from page 60

## Quali-Pro

Tebuconazole 3.6F fungicide provides preventive and curative control on a broad spectrum of disease pathogens, including dollar spot, brown patch, anthracnose, snow molds and more. A systemic mode of action delivers up to three weeks of residual control, and its multi-site activity is excellent for rotation in resistance management programs. Low use rates and the latest “mix-friendly” Quali-Pro formulation make Tebuconazole 3.6F easy to work with and convenient to apply. Although labeled for disease control on warm- and cool-season grasses, golf course turf and around landscape, nursery ornamentals, Tebuconazole is not labeled for use on residential lawns. *Quali-Pro.com*



## Environmental Science, a division of Bayer CropScience

Tribute Total is a novel herbicide that provides lawn care managers with a complete solution for postemergent treatment in bermudagrass. Its combination of active ingredients replaces the need for tank-mixing multiple products to achieve desired weed control. Tribute Total is effective against a broad spectrum of grassy and broadleaf weeds, sedges and kyllingas—including dallisgrass, crabgrass and yellow and purple nutsedge. At a use rate range of 1 oz. to 3.2 oz. per acre, each 6-oz. container treats between 1.875 acres and 6 acres. Additionally, with a 60.5 percent water dispersible granule formulation, Tribute Total requires less storage space and transportation and less-frequent container disposal. *BackedbyBayer.com*

## Dow AgroSciences

New Kerb SCT&O is a proven, versatile tool for Green Industry professionals. It provides both preemergent and early postemergent control of many winter annual and perennial grasses, including annual bluegrass from warm-season grasses and the removal of perennial ryegrass from warm-season grasses during spring transition. Kerb SCT&O, which replaces Kerb 50WP specialty herbicide, is now available in most states. The new liquid formulation is easier on equipment and reduces worker exposure. *DowAgro.com*

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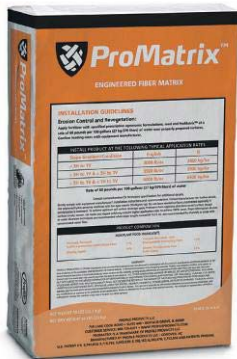
## FMC Professional Solutions

Over the past two years, FMC Professional Solutions, a business unit of FMC Corp., has been enhancing its granular product line. First, FMC added zeta-cypermethrin to its bifenthrin granular product, creating Talstar XTRA for enhanced speed and broad-spectrum protection. Then, FMC introduced Verge granule technology on its Talstar EZ product. Now, all of the "XTRAs" come standard in one granular product—and at no additional cost—with the introduction of Talstar XTRA granular insecticide featuring Verge Granule Technology. The new product combines the fast and long-term power of Talstar XTRA with the Verge granule's many performance benefits, including a more uniform product distribution and less dust. [FMCprosolutions.com](http://FMCprosolutions.com)



## BioSafe Systems

New AXXE broad-spectrum herbicide is formulated as an herbicidal soap utilizing ammonium nonanoate. This active ingredient is National Organic Program (NOP) compliant. AXXE is formulated as a liquid concentrate that is mixed with water. It's powerful, effective and economical for control of annual and perennial broadleaf weeds as well as mosses, liverworts and lichens, the company says. Made of natural fatty acids, AXXE works by removing, or "burning," the waxy cuticle of green vegetation and will not move through soil to injure nearby plants. AXXE works within hours of application, produces no residue and is available in 5-, 30-, 55- and 275-gal. sizes. [BioSafeSystems.com](http://BioSafeSystems.com)



## Profile Products

New ProMatrix provides 20 percent less tank loads per job because of the high loading formulation—and offers excellent erosion

control, shootability, coverage and germination. Its patented Engineered Fiber Matrix (EFM) technology was created to give contractors an edge when bidding on jobs requiring bonded fiber matrix (BFM)/stabilized mulch matrix (SMM) hydraulic products. With a recommended 60 lbs. per 100 gal. of water, ProMatrix is the highest-loading product among BFMs, according to the company. Proprietary dispersion granules facilitate the even distribution of the fibers and chemistry to optimize product performance. A consistent slurry pumps out easily to assume smooth and efficient application. [ProfileProducts.com](http://ProfileProducts.com)

## BASF

Pillar G fungicide controls diseases such as dollar spot, anthracnose, brown patch, large patch, take-all patch, summer patch, snow mold and leaf spot on most types of turfgrass. The fungicide combines triticonazole and pyraclostrobin. The granular formulation gives contractors application flexibility and convenience—allowing them to apply it when a spot treatment is needed, in wet or snowy conditions or when temperatures may freeze spray lines. The active ingredient moves quickly off the granule after irrigation or precipitation, and protects the turfgrass soon after application. [BASFTurftalk.com](http://BASFTurftalk.com)



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## APPLICATION EQUIPMENT

### Earthway Products

The S25SS SPRAY-PRO push sprayer is the newest model in the S-series product line, featuring a brand-new, all stainless-steel chassis. Designed for spraying ice control products, pesticides,

herbicides and fertilizers, the S25 has an adjustable spray system that makes sidewalks and parking lots easy to manage, as well as the ability to apply precise



amounts of liquid. Use it on lawns, driveways, paths and any area that your boom sprayer will not go: No gas, no batteries, no problem. [Earthway.com](http://Earthway.com)

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### Grasshopper

Apply pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers more efficiently with a Shielded Sprayer for Grasshopper zero-turn mowers. The design contains the spray pattern for on-target application, even in windy conditions. The independent suspension and dolly wheels follow ground contours for precise and even spray application. Each spray chamber features four spray nozzles, which provide uniform coverage by applying finer spray droplets. Zero-turn maneuverability eliminates wasted motion, spraying up to 5.5 acres per tank with fewer chemicals, faster application times and faster drying times, while keeping chemicals away from the operator and non-target areas. [GrasshopperMower.com/sprayer](http://GrasshopperMower.com/sprayer)

### Turfco

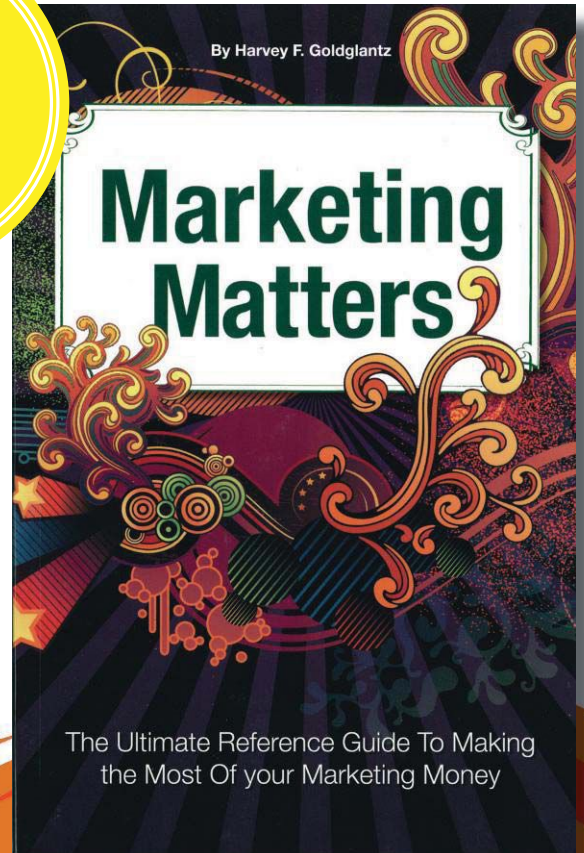
Turfco introduces the optional 3-in-1 Auxiliary Tank for its patented and pending T3000i spreader/sprayer. The 3-in-1 Auxiliary Tank fits securely on the front of the T3000i without obstructing the view or inhibiting the hands-free speed control system. Using the same liquid in the 15-gal. Auxiliary Tank and the primary 16-gal. tank enables the operator to spray up to 124,000 sq. ft. Alternatively, having the capacity to spray two liquids makes it simple to spray separate areas without switching equipment. The secondary liquid can be sprayed with the additional front-mount spray nozzle for the Auxiliary Tank, which sprays in 6- or 9-ft. widths. [Turfco.com](http://Turfco.com)



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Author: Harvey Goldglantz

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**Landscape**  
Management

## On new turf

A Maryland firm finds artificial turf installation can be a nice addition to design/build work.

**WHEN A CLIENT** asked Four Seasons Landscaping & Nursery for an artificial turf putting green, it led to a new division for the Damascus, Md.-based company. The company's always focused on design/build (with no maintenance division). Adding an artificial turf service fit well with that niche. Today, the company installs artificial putting greens but also artificial grass for a variety of purposes.

In fact, putting greens are probably the least popular installation for Four Seasons right now. The company found a larger market in selling artificial grass installation to kennels and day care centers.

"Adding artificial turf to a kennel or day care adds value to their companies," says owner Doug Del Gandio. "An outdoor space with a lot of dogs is hard to grow grass on. It gets trampled and dug up. But with the artificial turf, a kennel can still offer a clean area for the dogs to play. Similarly, day cares have to worry about the kids getting muddy in regular grass but an artificial turf eliminates that. It's also hypoallergenic and has some soft padding, which is nice for playgrounds."

Del Gandio says he's seen a growing market for colleges and high-end high schools converting their sports fields to artificial turf. He hasn't gotten into that area, but he says he's seen other companies become successful with it.

"The schools see it as an obvious return on investment because with no mowing or fertilizing, they're ultimately making their money back," says Del Gandio. "But that's a large application and it's more for companies who focus on this full time. For us, it's just an add-on service right now."

As the market grows, Del Gandio believes it will become a bigger money maker for his business. "We're still pretty new to it and doing about 15 projects a year, but as it becomes more of a mainstream idea, I could see it driving a lot of revenue for a company like ours."

Right now, 100 percent of the company's marketing effort is web driven. It had previously tried direct mail, with little luck.

"People don't know a lot about artificial grass right now, so they're already getting online to find out more about it," says Del Gandio. "As they do that, the first thing they'll do is a Google search to see who offers it."

With putting greens there's an opportunity for repeat revenue, says Del Gandio. "The putting greens do require maintenance and we tell our customers that they need to have us come back at least once a year to roll the green," he says. "You want the putting green to play like a real golf course, and in order to do that, we need to get the roller on it for a couple of hours to make sure it's laying right. But that's the only recurring service that comes out of artificial grass. Once you lay down the turf there isn't any future maintenance work that needs to be done. The product is permeable and rainwater goes through it. And if it doesn't rain for a while and you want to wash it out, you can always hose it down."

Although putting greens aren't the most popular application right now, Del Gandio says he could see them coming back. "They're somewhat expensive to install, so it tends to be customers with expendable income that want them, which isn't as many people in this economy," says Del Gandio, adding that a typical 800-sq.-ft. to 1,000-sq.-ft. putting green would cost \$10,000 to \$14,000 to install. Synthetic turf applications for general use range from \$8,000 to \$12,000. "They're sort of viewed as a luxury. But there are also so many practical applications for artificial grass, which continue to drive the market in commercial opportunities like playgrounds, day cares, veterinarian's offices and kennels. I definitely see this as a growing service for our company."

Payton is a freelance writer with seven years of experience covering the landscape market.



Artificial turf installation prospects go beyond putting greens.

### » SERVICE SNAPSHOT

#### WHAT WAS THE LEARNING

**CURVE?** An artificial turf manufacturer helped Four Seasons build a green at its facility as part of its training process.

"There really wasn't a huge learning curve," owner Doug Del Gandio says. "It's very similar to laying a paver patio and is the same kind of base, but you're just laying down turf instead of brick in the end."

#### WHAT WAS YOUR INVESTMENT?

For a design/build company that likely already has excavating equipment and a roller, the cost of training is the biggest investment, says Del Gandio. Small tools specific to artificial turf would cost less than \$2,000.

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## EDUCATION

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"I was amazed at the size of the show and the technologies presented there. The hardscape technology was very interesting, and we found some new methods for installing.

In the education seminars I picked up a lot of useful, take-home ideas on business building and planning. The speakers really knew this business and presented at our level."

**Darryl Orr**  
Pacific Landscapes  
Sebastopol, CA

# GIE+EXPO



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Bergenfield, N.J.-based Kindergan Landscaping has successfully built a strong base of residential design/build and maintenance clientele in its 25-plus years of business. Now there are plans to expand even more, getting into the commercial segment and continuing to grow the maintenance division by converting every new design client into a maintenance customer. The key is: “Don’t forget to ask for that sale,” says **Chris Hricik**, account manager and manager of the landscape maintenance division, who also serves as vice president of the New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association. He recently shared his outlook with *Landscape Management*.



Chris Hricik says homeowner spending is finally coming back.

## INSIDE INFO

**Company:**  
Kindergan Landscaping

**Headquarters:**  
Bergenfield, N.J.

**Employees:** 30

**Key to being a maintenance leader:** Communication. Be proactive on a customer’s property and make sure they know you’re there and you’re finding problems before they do. Help make them aware of their property needs and help them to protect their investment.

local functions and getting involved in the community. Participating in service activities, such as donating a project to a school or a non-profit community organization, also helps.

» **Keeping employees focused on the customer.** It’s a challenge here, and I’m sure for a lot of other companies as well, to keep the employees focused on just how important our customers really are. The truth is that without our customers, we don’t have a business. The customer does need to come first. That means putting the focus on giving them top quality and not overlooking that one weed. It may sound small, but that one weed could be the reason behind the negative

phone call or even losing the job. We try to drive that point home with employees.

## TOP OPPORTUNITIES

» **Expanding markets.** A short-term goal for us is to become more involved with the commercial and industrial market. Right now we’re a residential company for the most part, but we’re looking to expand our business into commercial landscape maintenance. We’re also looking to get into snow removal.

» **Technology.** GPS truck- and equipment-tracking and routing software provide a great opportunity. Competition is ramping up and rates are coming down. To know where your equipment is at any given moment and to get it to the job efficiently is just smart. Fuel savings alone can pay for each tracking unit.

» **Continuing education.** We emphasize continuing education for all employees on best maintenance practices, safety regimens and offering them opportunities to further their career with our company. Smart employees are efficient and profitable.

Payton is a freelance writer with seven years of experience covering the landscape industry.

PHOTO: CHRIS HRICK

## TOP TRENDS

» **Investing is back on track.** The single-family homeowners are finally starting to invest in their homes again. It had slowed down a good bit and for a while we weren’t sure when it would come back. But now people want to redo their 15-year-old patios or renovate their yards. They see work going on in their neighborhood again and they want to keep up. It may not be as much work as it once was, but things have turned around.

» **Controlling costs.** We’re finding a trend toward controlling more costs, not only on supplies but on fuel, insurance and even controlling the salaries and hourly wages of our employees. We’re also looking for ways we can reduce costs for health benefits. The idea is to find opportunities to stay competitive, and controlling costs has been part of that solution. One of the things I’ve focused on these past few years is price checking on long-term vendors. We’re not just assuming we got the best price but going out there and finding out. We’ll go out for that second or third quote on plant or hardscape material.

## TOP OBSTACLES

» **Staying current.** Being able to keep up with all of the new products and education is always going to be a challenge, since our industry changes so quickly. There’s always something new to learn. But we really value continuing education and believe that’s the solution.

» **Getting bogged down by price checkers.** It’s always a challenge to put your business out there but not get too overwhelmed by fielding calls from the price checkers. Price checkers do help support the business, so it’s not like we won’t take any of those calls, but there’s only so much time that any one company has to invest in that. We’re not saying we only want the slam-dunk jobs, but we’re looking for elevated clientele who are willing to pay a little more for the better product and the better service. We find that type of clientele by attending





### THE BENCHMARK

KEVIN KEHOE The author is owner-manager of JPC Consulting. Reach him at editor@thebenchmarkmedia.net.

## The power of pricing

There is still a lot of gnashing of teeth about market pricing. I showed a chart at a recent Professional Land-care Network (PLANET) event that reported moving prices in different regions of the country and what the average

Some explanation is in order, however, to explain pricing differentials. Table 2 shows the contractors in two geographic markets can at a very different price for the same service and make the same profit percentage. In this very example, the respective contractors each made



### PROFITING FROM DESIGN

JODY SHILAN Shilan is editor of fromdesign2build.com. Contact him at

TABLE 1: MOVING RATE VS. GROSS MARGINS

AMR	AGM
\$0	51%
\$5	49%
\$10	47%
\$15	45%
\$20	43%
\$25	41%
\$30	39%
\$35	37%
\$40	35%
\$45	33%
\$50	31%
\$55	29%
\$60	27%
\$65	25%
\$70	23%
\$75	21%
\$80	19%
\$85	17%
\$90	15%
\$95	13%
\$100	11%

This table shows what a contractor's average gross margin is (AGM) based on a given average moving rate (AMR).

## The unbiddable master plan

This might be a silly question, but is there anything that you can do to stop your client from taking your design, making copies of it and then shopping it around to your competitors to try and get a lower price? Any advice would be greatly appreciated.

—Darryl Wartogaj, Dreamscapes LLC, St. Paul, MN

The short answer, Danny, is yes! However, it is my opinion that if clients pay you for a design, they own the plan and can do whatever they want with it. You've been paid for your design services.

Why that said, there are things that you can do to provide professional design services and still make it difficult for a client to shop your plan.

Unlike the alternative process, where homeowners hire an independent landscape designer or land-

scape designer, you are the one who is doing the design. One of the things that you can do is to stop your client from taking your design, making copies of it and then shopping it around to your competitors to try and get a lower price? Any advice would be greatly appreciated.



### BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON The author, of the Wilson-Dwyer Group, is a 30-year industry veteran. Reach him at editor@thebenchmarkmedia.net.

## It's good if your head's in the clouds

You cannot do today's business with yesterday's tools or yesterday's thinking.

If the last few years have not convinced you that landscape maintenance services are a commodity and differentiated primarily by price, you are in the minority. If, in that same period of time, you have not reconsidered the tools you use to do business, you also are in the minority and it's time to catch up.

One way the business of our industry can reinvent itself is to embrace new technologies that are changing the way we work.

As mobile computing and Internet-based technology knock down walls, the cloud has replaced the cubicle. The dynamics of working, meeting, selling and interacting online have created new behaviors and job descriptions as well as new business models and expectations for performance and success.

The problem is there is a staggering amount of new tools, gadgets, applications, programs and downloadable must-haves available every day, trying to figure out which ones are best and how they work in unison can be overwhelming.

Do not do it yourself. Bring in the skill to make it happen. Even if you are cutting overhead, hire a professional who can tie it together and assist you and your team with identifying and integrating the right technologies to run your business and ensure they work together seamlessly.

In my consulting practice, I see some companies

as if nothing is working the way it should. A recent study by IBM reported that over the next three years, the number of businesses that will



### THE BENCHMARK

JEFF HARKNESS The author is owner-manager of JPC Consulting. Reach him at jph@jpcconsulting.com.

## Considering an exit?

Building profits and increasing the value of your company in the current environment is a challenge. Does it seem like today's economic climate and political agenda are working against you? Health care mandates, expiring tax cuts, immigration reform, high fuel costs and little change in the housing market—shall I go on? If you're considering an exit in the next six to 18 months, make sure you have a plan to quantify

deal is unique, understand that retained assets or liabilities can be negotiated just like your multiple or adjusted EBITDA. Cash, timing of a closing date, working capital requirements or the payoff of long-term or short-term debt all contribute to your net purchase price.

**Tax consequences**  
Most deals in the Green Industry typically involve purchasing assets rather than stock. Liability risk



### THE BENCHMARK

The author is owner-manager of JPC Consulting. Reach him at editor@thebenchmarkmedia.net.

FRANK ROSS

## 90-day scrub

ent planner is the property. 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 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

# Meet the Columnists

## Stop by booth #3018 at the GIE+Expo to say hello to LM's expert contributors.

### Bruce Wilson Best Practices

The former president of Environmental Care and vice president of the parent company, Valley Crest Cos., Bruce Wilson has held numerous leadership positions in the landscape industry. Under his guidance, Environmental Care grew from a single-service California operation to the first \$100 million multi-service landscape maintenance company in the country.



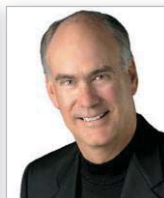
### Jody Shilan Profiting from Design

As a former design/build contractor, Jody Shilan has designed, sold and managed millions of dollars worth of highly profitable installation work. He's now an independent designer, consultant and executive director of the New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association. He also operates fromdesign2build.com.



### Kevin Kehoe, Jeff Harkness and Frank Ross The Benchmark

Kevin Kehoe has worked with more than 150 companies in the services industry, helping them increase profits, grow revenues, acquire companies and exit for retirement. Jeff Harkness specializes in growth and exit strategy planning and has spent the last 10 years working exclusively with the owners of contracting and service firms. Frank Ross' in-depth work on several national Green Industry financial studies and 35 years of hands-on experience with the most successful companies in the country give him unparalleled knowledge of what Green Industry firms do to become profitable and what steps they must take to make money.



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