

He adds military members also bring loyalty, and says: “They made a commitment to the country and completed it. That spells loyalty and they’re going to be loyal to your company and loyal to your client. That’s a big plus.”

Challenges to consider

Hiring military members may not always go smoothly, though, cautions Dirk Bakhuyzen Jr., president of PROCARE Landscape Management in Byron Center, Mich.

With two veterans and one National Guard member, who is his daughter, in the makeup of his 35-member team, Bakhuyzen says hardships can surface from employing military members.

His daughter, for example, was sent to Advanced Individual Training for the National Guard during PROCARE’s midseason. (This branch of the Army allows soldiers to maintain their military training part-time amid working or acting as a civilian.)

Although PROCARE is operating sufficiently in his daughter’s absence, Bakhuyzen says it’s not always easy.

“You want to leave their job open for them but you can’t necessarily do that,” he says. “You may have to fill that job temporarily until they get back.”

Still, employers should know the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) is a federal law in place to protect military members against discrimination and safeguard their civilian jobs, ensuring their position is available upon return from trainings or deployments.

Another challenge Bakhuyzen once had was with a veteran employee who suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder after a deployment to Iraq.

“We stood by him for a long time but he ended up ultimately having to leave,” he says.



CHRIS VEDRANI



JUSTIN SPITTAL

ENLISTING RESOURCES

American Jobs for America’s Heroes, a nonprofit alliance with the National Guard, helps unemployed Guard members, veterans and spouses obtain skills and jobs in the private sector. Companies can post job openings for free online and are also assigned a case manager who will actively match National Guard candidates with job requirements.

The Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) has signed on to this program’s honor roll of trade and professional organizations promoting the effort. For more information or to post free job listings online, visit CenterforAmerica.org/register.html.



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MY MILITARY EXPERIENCE

How two Green Industry business owners have turned their military service into private-sector success.



Daryle Johnson and his wife, Linda, attend PLANET's Renewal & Remembrance ceremony nearly every year with grandchildren.

Daryle Johnson

CEO of All American Turf Beauty in Van Meter, Iowa
Service: U.S. Army, 1954-1956

"I was 18. I'd worked one summer, gone two quarters to college, ran out of money and volunteered for the service. I spent 16 months in Korea. I got out when I was 20. They wouldn't let me buy a beer when I got back.

The G.I. Bill gave me a chance to complete college. That's a reason I went to the service.

I majored in agronomy [at Iowa State University] and went to work for Swift Agricultural Chemicals, a division of Swift & Co. that was large in the fertilizer business. I worked there in sales and management for 17 years. We marketed and sold fertilizers and pesticides to golf courses, lawn care people and farmers, so we were deeply involved with the Green Industry. At that time chemical lawn care was just starting. There

weren't any program chemical lawn care companies doing business in Iowa, so I started the first chemical lawn service business, All American Turf Beauty.

The first two years were difficult. We obviously didn't make any money. It takes a while to get started and you've got to stick with it. We started in 1976 and in 1983 we were an Inc. 500 company, one of the fastest-growing privately owned companies in the U.S.

We financed our expansion with our own profits. About every two years we would move into another market, when we developed enough money to buy the equipment and hire the people. We financed our own growth rather than getting huge loans. We had 67 percent compound annual growth over five years each year.

Anybody that's been in the service knows you have to have a certain amount of discipline. That's also necessary to start a business. It's not easy. You've got to stick with it and be disciplined or else it falls apart."

—As told to Sarah Pfledderer

Brandy Prettyman

Co-owner, The Grounds Guys of Omaha, Neb.

Service: U.S. Army, 2001-2004; husband Dan Prettyman served in the U.S. Army from 2001-2007

"Both my husband, Dan, and I were in the Army. We're both Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans. We were both in Iraq for the initial go around in 2003. I got out during 2004. He came home in 2004 and went back out again in 2004. He pretty much did back-to-back trips.

When we got out of the Army we both went into government contracting. Last year we decided we wanted to do something different. We both knew we wanted to start a business but starting a business from scratch wasn't the way we wanted to go. We knew the VetFran program was available to us and we started looking at The Dwyer Group. The episode of "Undercover Boss" that Dina Dwyer-Owens was on featured The Grounds Guys. I said to Dan, "You like being outside, and I could run the business side of it." It was just a good fit. We created our corporation in March 2012.

Last year we started with just myself and Dan. This year we currently have 10 employees. During the summer we actually surged to 14. We have the Offutt Air Force Base grounds maintenance contract. We provide maintenance services for over a thousand acres. It's a \$1.4 million contract over five years. Dealing with a federal contract is never easy, but our experience helped us hone in on what was important and what needed to be done. We knew this is where our specialty was.

It has been an exhausting year, but it's also been very rewarding being able to run your own business and know you control how well you do.

The one thing about the military that prepared me the best to run a business was being able to roll with the punches. In the Army I wasn't in a leadership position; I was a specialist when I got out. You learn as member of lower enlisted to just roll with it. Learning how to diplomatically react to your [military] team leader or a drill sergeant is similar to reacting to a customer. You have to find a way to explain why you did what you did.

Another thing the military taught me is having a structure and knowing that structure. You really learn how to empower your subordinates. As an owner, you cannot control everything; it's the same as being a squad leader or platoon leader. There are so many tasks that have to be completed to keep the mission going. You can't do them alone. You have to depend on your team. One of the best lessons the military teaches you is it's not just about you. We either succeed or fail as a company."

—As told to Marisa Palmieri



Brandy and Dan Prettyman met in the Army; today they co-own a The Grounds Guys franchise.

» WEB EXTRA

To read about L.G. Scott Landscaping & Tree Service, a Pennsylvania landscape business operated by a military family, visit the Web Extras section of [Landscape Management.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net).

Landscape business owners, he says, should not be deterred from hiring veterans dealing with the aftereffects of deployment, though. They just need to be attentive to their needs.



DIRK BAKHUYZEN JR.

Attraction between parties

The advantages to hiring veterans in the Green Industry, Bakhuyzen says, far outweigh the downsides. It's for that reason he hopes to recruit more veterans going forward.

"The experiences I've had with veterans and active (members) is that they're very job-focused. They take instruction easily, listen and try to follow through on everything," he says. "They're not whiners."

Hence its name, Military Veterans Landscaping (MVL) was formed from the notion veterans and the Green Industry mesh well, says Chris McDonald, managing member of MVL. The company was largely established for the purpose of employing veterans in the Green Industry.



"WHEN YOU BRING SERVICE MEMBERS BACK THAT ARE LOOKING FOR EMPLOYMENT, THEY ARE STRONG, ABLE-BODIED INDIVIDUALS. A LOT OF THESE GUYS ARE LOOKING FOR A JOB AND THEY'RE WILLING TO WORK HARD NO MATTER WHAT THE SECTOR IS. WHEN THEY PUT ON OUR UNIFORM THEY GIVE 100 PERCENT."

—CHRIS MCDONALD, MILITARY VETERANS LANDSCAPING

Based in Washington, D.C., MVL is mainly staffed by veterans, with the exception of some seasoned landscapers for training purposes.

"When you bring service members back that are looking for employment, they are strong, able-bodied individuals," McDonald says. "A lot of these guys are looking for a job and they're willing to work hard no matter what the sector is. When they put on our uniform they give 100 percent."

After a 10-year service in the Navy, McDonald cofounded MVL with John Yori in January 2012.

While he had no experience in landscaping, McDonald joined the industry for an obvious comparison between it and the military, which is they both require outdoor work.

"I liked getting outside. I enjoyed working really hard," he says of his service, and adds of his landscaping career, "I love that you go to a property and it's a mess. You tear it up and put something back more beautiful than before."

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★★HIRING HEROES★★

The outdoor aspect, Hall agrees, attracts veterans to the Green Industry.

“Being in the military, they are used to hard work and working outdoors a lot,” Hall says. “People who sign up for the military, they’re the type of person who enjoys the work we’re doing.”

Veterans, Austin adds, like the structured environment of a landscape business and may be beneficial to a company looking to put structure in place.

“Having military management experience is a skill set that can be a strategic advantage for entrepreneurial companies seeking to build efficient systems and practices,” she says.

These comparisons are the reason many landscape business owners seek out veterans for employment, too.

“It’s hard work, long hours, hot, cold.



I think [the military] provides some of that before they get here,” says Vedrani, who actively recruits veterans from Hire Heroes USA. The nonprofit organization trains job-seeking veterans for employment in the civilian sector. It creates engagement between employers and veterans via job postings and offers a database of veteran candidates to employers.

For other business owners, the drive to hire veterans goes beyond gaining a dedicated staffer.

In Bakhuyzen’s case, it’s about returning a favor.

“I’d like them to work for me just for the satisfaction of knowing I can give back to someone who gave something to me and my country,” he says. “If I can help them achieve their goals after service, that would be a great thing.” **LM**

Just the facts

★ **270,000**

Estimated number of active military, Reserve and National Guard members discharged annually. Statistically, about 32,000 of those veterans will join the ranks of nearly 1 million veterans already unemployed.

SOURCE: HIREHEROESUSA.ORG

★ **10%**

The unemployment rate for Post-9/11 veterans in August.

SOURCE: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

★ **49%**

The rate of unemployed members of Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America who don’t feel employers are open to hiring veterans.

SOURCE: IAVA’S 2012 MEMBER SURVEY

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Controller or CFO:

What's the difference?

I've been asked several times by people inside and outside the Green Industry about the differences between a controller and CFO. After having many of these conversations, I've come to realize most people think they're the same thing—except maybe a CFO is a supercharged version of the controller. They think the next step along the career path of any controller is to be promoted to CFO. I've held both positions and can attest they're quite different. I read a quote on LinkedIn recently that differentiates the two roles: "Controllers put the numbers together in black and white and CFOs add the color."

Main responsibilities

There are many responsibilities for each role, but the most evident and important to end users inside and outside the organization are the financial statements. The controller is in charge of preparing the financial statements each month and reconciling all the underlying data. He or she is responsible for making sure all controls are in place and the data contained within the financials maintains integrity. When complete, the CFO will interpret the financials. He or she performs variance analysis and researches underlying issues to determine why anything differs from the budget. A CFO should be able to provide internal and external end users a clear understanding of the results, and, more importantly, project an accurate picture of future results.

BY ERIN MILAM

Hiring one or the other

While the responsibilities of both positions are important to a company, it may not be financially possible to hire both. A company needs to reach a certain size before it makes sense to have both, and that size is determined by the company's industry and the strength of its staff. In the meantime, you have to have a controller but you don't need a CFO. This is even truer if the CEO or president has a keen understanding of finances and a clear vision for the company. Because the function of the controller is to perform required tasks daily, this position is essential.

If your company size or cash flow doesn't allow for a CFO, another option is an outsourced CFO or financial consultant, who can be used as needed. His or her hourly rate can be expensive, but you'll be able to receive strategic help at a much lower cost than a full-time salary of a CFO. Another advantage to these types of advisers is they remain objective because they're independent contractors.

Individual type

It's difficult to find someone who can operate extremely well as a controller and CFO. I did

Successful controllers are methodical, backward-looking individuals. They're detail-oriented, generally risk averse and take on a large workload.





CFOs tend to take more risks because they have to make decisions based on assumptions and projections, so there's always more implied risk.

both. And while I did a pretty good job as a controller, I'm much better suited as CFO. That's what you'll find with most job seekers—there's a common set of skills required for each role, but that's where it ends. The individual's personality is paramount.

Successful controllers are methodical, backward-looking individuals. They're detail-oriented, generally risk averse and take on a large workload. They have strong managerial skills and stick to process as if their lives depend on it. They believe in chain of command and ensure compliance and effective controls. From a back office perspective, they're the backbone of the company.

In contrast, a successful CFO is forward-thinking and strategic in nature. While by nature financial professionals tend to be conservative, CFOs tend to take more risks because they have to make decisions based on assumptions and projections, so there's always more implied risk. Skilled at forecasting, budgeting and cash management, they have strong relationships with bankers and have the ability to work well with decision makers throughout a company. They listen more than they talk and have the ability to identify and hedge against unnecessary risk.

Duties and overlap of a CFO and controller

Responsibility	CFO	Controller
ACCOUNTING		
Assist with the annual audit	X	X
Accounts payable		X
Accounts receivable		X
Issue billings promptly		X
Calculate job costs		X
Complete bank reconciliations		X
Issue management reports	X	X
Prepare financial statements		X
Interpret financial statements	X	
Maintain policies and procedures		X
Maintain the chart of accounts		X
Manage the accounting staff		X
Manage the budgeting process	X	X
Review capital requests	X	
Process payroll		X
Implement operational best practices	X	X
Provide financial analysis	X	X
Develop performance measurements	X	
Maintain performance measurements		X
Review control weaknesses	X	X
FINANCE		
Formulate financial strategy	X	
Formulate tax strategy	X	
Formulate risk management strategy	X	
Negotiate acquisitions	X	
Maintain banking relations	X	
Arrange for debt financing	X	
Invest funds	X	
Issue credit to customers		X
Maintain insurance coverage	X	
Monitor cash balances	X	X

Due to these differences, it becomes clear why these roles need filled with different individuals. It's important to search for these employees carefully, with extensive interviews and reference checks. The controller and CFO will need to work closely together regularly, so find people whose personalities mesh well. **LMI**

Milam, a CPA, is the CFO of HighGrove Partners in Austell, Ga. She oversees all financial elements of the landscape company, including strategic planning, corporate accounting and reporting, risk management, internal controls, tax management, treasury, budgeting and various special projects. Reach her via highgrove.net.

MARKET WATCH

IRRIGATION

Harvesting savings

A California company focuses on “smart” landscaping and irrigation to reduce clients’ water use. *By JONATHAN KATZ*

Steven Schinhofen speaks with the business acumen of a Silicon Valley entrepreneur. His company, Harvest Landscape Enterprises, is actually located about 400 miles down the coast in Anaheim, Calif., and the business is a far cry from the high-tech world of microprocessors.

Still, the 34-year-old business-school graduate says his maintenance and design firm is beating traditional “mow-and-blow” competitors by applying a science-based approach to landscaping. This includes a focus on water conservation through sustainable landscape practices.

It’s much more than a feel-good marketing ploy. The president of Harvest says sustainability is key to profitability. “It’s not just the right thing to do, but it’s also the smart thing,” Schinhofen says. “By being more efficient with the water, we actually haul less green waste and make more money.”

The “green waste” typically occurs when companies overwater and overfertilize their properties, which eventually require more maintenance and labor, he says. Harvest offers customers a program called SmartScape that focuses on creating a landscape requiring less water and thrives in the Southern California climate.

BREAKING WITH TRADITION

Schinhofen has landscaping in his blood. His grandfather started a landscape company in 1963, and 20 years later his father opened his own landscaping business. Schinhofen began working summers for his father after graduating high school in 1997. By 2003, he decided to add a third landscaping business to the family portfolio. He established Harvest using the business knowledge he gained in college and the real-world experience he achieved working for his father. But he didn’t want

to do things the old-fashioned way.

Early on, a local water district asked Harvest to test a smart irrigation controller on one of the company’s properties. Schinhofen liked how the controller worked, so he contacted the manufacturer to provide training on the system. He also hired a bilingual irrigation expert to educate his staff on how to be more resource efficient.

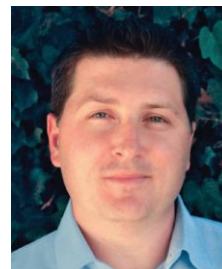
He noticed drought conditions in California created customer demand for these controllers and sustainable landscapes as water prices increased. Property owners were installing their own smart controllers, but many landscape contractors weren’t willing to help their customers reduce water consumption. That’s where Harvest stepped in.

The company also became involved with a nonprofit environmental group called Orange County Coastkeeper, which focuses on protecting the region’s waterways. Harvest helped establish Coastkeeper’s sustainable demonstration garden, which enhanced the company’s reputation as an expert in sustainable landscapes.

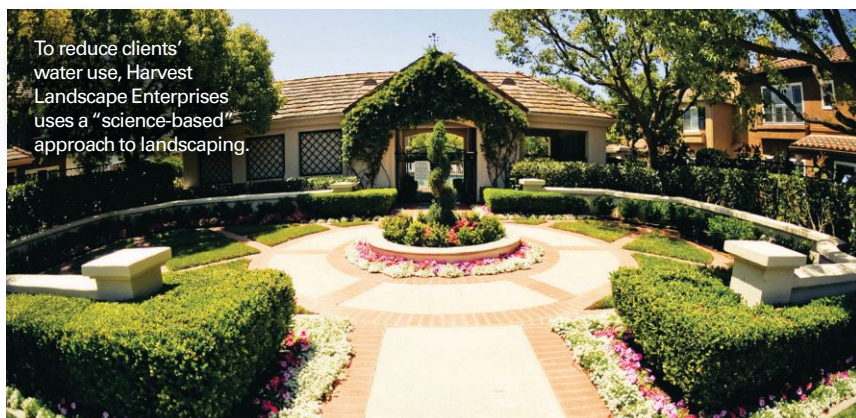
WATER-SAVING CASE STUDY

Managing irrigation volume is only part of the water-conservation equation. Landscape design plays a significant role as well. While many companies and customers may suggest replacing shrubs with native plants as a way to reduce water usage, Schinhofen says that alone is typically not effective. All

- PG 27** **IRRIGATION** Reducing clients’ water use with “smart” practices
- PG 29** **MAINTENANCE** Contractor takes part in a historic project
- PG 30** **LAWN/TREE CARE** How one firm uses ecolawns as part of its mix
- PG 32** **DESIGN/BUILD** An attention-grabbing marketing ploy



Steven Schinhofen



To reduce clients’ water use, Harvest Landscape Enterprises uses a “science-based” approach to landscaping.

native plants aren't visually appealing and the return on investment can take up to 20 years. As an additional measure he advocates replacing turf, where appropriate.

An example of where turf reduction made sense is a beach community in Dana Point, Calif., called Niguel Shores of Dana Point. It had been using the same landscape contractor for the past 35 years to maintain the 95-acre property. When Schinhofen arrived he noticed the property was "grossly overwatered." To fix this problem and others like it, Harvest begins with an assessment process that considers the square footage of the landscape along with other factors, such as the percentage of turf, flower beds, slope and evapotranspiration rates. He puts those variables into a formula to determine how much water the property is wasting. The company then maps the irrigation system to identify flaws.

Harvest replaced more than 100,000 square feet of turf at Niguel Shores with

drought-tolerant shrubs and replaced a irrigation systems with drip irrigation to save water and prevent runoff. The community expects to save \$17,000 a year with the improvements. Schinhofen helped the community earn rebates from the local water department to subsidize the project. The project should pay for itself within seven years, Schinhofen adds.

"We are already using less water, making faster progress on the implementation of the master landscape project and at a sharply reduced cost versus initial projections, says Steve Stewart, a Niguel Shores Community Association board member. "Also, we are seeing higher homeowner satisfaction with the current condition of our landscape."

For Harvest, the payoff has been an increasing share of the local landscape market. Schinhofen eventually purchased both his father's company and the business his grandfather founded. Harvest now



has five branches throughout Southern California and more than 400 employees. The focus on sustainability also has made the business more resilient.

"The peak of us doing all this conservation work was also when the market crashed, which impacted our profits, but we probably weren't impacted as much as our competitors and were able to survive the economic downturn," Schinhofen says.

Katz is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

PHOTO: HARVEST LANDSCAPE ENTERPRISES

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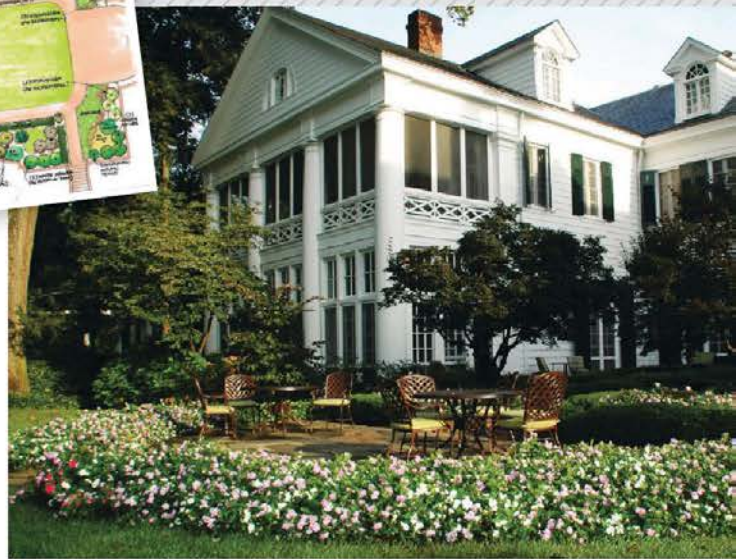
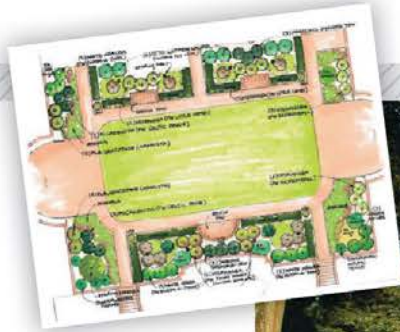


MAINTENANCE

History in the making

Providence Landscape gets the chance to redesign and maintain a Proven Winners Signature Garden at 100-year-old The Duke Mansion.

By MARISA PALMIERI



The decision nearly 20 years ago to provide landscape maintenance at cost for a high-profile but financially struggling property with historical significance has turned into a unique opportunity for Jim Lawrence, owner of Providence Landscape in Charlotte, N.C.

Today the \$8 million landscape maintenance and design/build company is a partner in the effort to redesign the gardens at The Duke Mansion in celebration of its 100th anniversary in 2015.

“As a landscaper, to be a part of a project like this, it’s once in a lifetime,” Lawrence says. “If you can’t get excited and passionate about something like this, you shouldn’t be in the business.”

The relationship between Lawrence and the mansion started in the mid-1990s. At the time he was with the Charlotte branch of Atlanta-based HighGrove Partners. (Lawrence purchased the branch in 2006, forming Providence.) The Duke Mansion, which operates as a nonprofit event and meeting venue with 20 guest rooms, was going through some financial troubles. It had a full-time horticulturist on staff but was looking to cut costs. Lawrence’s company, offering its services at cost, was able to improve the look of the property and do it less expensively than the Duke was paying a full-time staff member.

“We do it at cost for them because it’s Charlotte’s most historic property,” Lawrence says. “We can help preserve it and at the same time it helps us sell more work because it’s a very prominent, high-profile property and we can show that on our resume. It works out really well for both of us.”

Currently, Providence sends a three- or four-man crew to the mansion twice a week. For the centennial garden project the company will be on site even more, providing project management, design, installation and eventually maintenance on the new gardens. The Duke Mansion aims to raise \$5 million, about \$800,000 of which will go to the gardens. The rest will go to an endowment to maintain the mansion for years ahead, Lawrence says.

» WEB EXTRA

To learn more about the Signature Garden program and why The Duke Mansion gardens were a good fit, visit the Web Extras section on LandscapeManagement.net.

‘SIGNATURE’ DESIGN

As the project is still in the fundraising stage, only one “baby step” is complete, Lawrence says. Two small gardens were completed in time for the campaign’s kick-off last spring to give patrons and donors a taste of what’s to come. Many of the details are still in the works but one vital component has been solidified: The Duke Mansion will be home to a Proven Winners Signature Garden—it’s just one of three in the U.S. The others are the Hotel Iroquois on Michigan’s Mackinac Island and Grand Tradition Estate and Gardens in Southern California.

After Lawrence heard about plant brand Proven Winners’ Signature Garden program from his local grower, King’s Greenhouse in Matthews, N.C., he, the folks at the Duke and Proven Winners began a months’ long “courtship” to ensure it was a good fit for all parties, he says. The property was officially accepted as a Signature Garden last year.

As for specifics of the design, it’s still in the early stages, but it will include a path to welcome visitors to tour the gardens. Currently, the grounds of the mansion are open to the public, but the building’s stateliness is intimidating. “You feel like maybe you shouldn’t go behind the gate,” Lawrence says. “These gardens are going to invite people to take advantage of this property.”

A Southern aesthetic also is expected, including roses, camellias and magnolias. “It will include Proven Winners’ latest and greatest signature and heirloom plants throughout,” Lawrence says. “The challenge is to preserve the Southern architectural heritage and the historical value of the property.”

Lawrence is also quick to point out even though the Duke is a century-old property, its landscape will feature new technology, including a brand new “smart” irrigation system and LED landscape lighting.

“It’s those kinds of things, coupled with the latest and greatest-engineered plants, that are going to be the one of the neat things about this,” he says. “Through the collaboration we’re going to be able to put out an incredible garden for Charlotte, and I really think it will be known throughout the U.S.”

Providing services for The Duke Mansion at cost is a win-win, Jim Lawrence says.

LAWN/TREE CARE

35-mph grass

How one landscape company uses ecolawns as part of its mix. *By SARAH PFLEDDERER*

Envision a lawn that needs to be mowed only a couple times a year. Your customers are likely ecstatic about the reduction of landscaping costs and so much so you make up the slump in revenue from new work, per their referrals.

Sound too good to be true? It is.

But this was the overrated notion for ecological lawns, aka ecolawns, when they came about 20 years ago as the brainchild of Tom Cook, an associate professor of horticulture at Oregon State University.

The majority clover-covered turfgrass that required nearly nil maintenance was to be a sustainable substitute for traditional lawns recalls Bob Grover, president of

Pacific Landscape Management in Hillsboro, Ore. But after going untouched for more than a month, the lawns would look like an ugly field once mowed.

Due to sustainability interests from commercial clients, Pacific Landscape Management bounced back the ecolawn concept five years ago.

Since then it has installed and maintained about a dozen ecolawns, which it markets as EcoLawns, and has seen a threefold advantage to them versus traditional turf:

- › 50 percent less mowing.
- › 100 percent less fertilization.
- › 30 percent less irrigation.

SUITABLE SETTINGS

Ecolawns are not “front-door grass,” Grover says. In fact, they’re most suitable in spaces that receive few visitors passing close by.

A more fitting description, he says, is “35-mph grass.” “It’s green and you glance at it as you’re driving by. But if you walk on it, it may not look as great every day as a fine-cut lawn,” Grover says. “If you’re using it at the right place and you give it enough maintenance, we’ve had some good success.”

Grover says an ecolawn fares best in locations with little foot traffic because passersby can’t tell from afar the turf is mostly comprised of clover. Moreover, clover attracts bees when it blooms, making ecolawns a risky substitute for a backyard, school or athletic field where people could get stung.



Bob Grover, president of Pacific Landscape Management

“It’s green and you glance at it as you’re driving by.”

—Bob Grover

This type of turf, though, is able to grow in any area traditional lawns grow, Grover says.

“I think it would be possible to grow this in all regions of the country,” he says. “If you really want to be ecological, it’d be a great option.”

THE LOGISTICS

Ecolawns are comprised of a dwarf grass, herbaceous plant and clover seed mixture. Pacific Landscape Management purchases its mixture from Oregon suppliers Hobbs & Hopkins, Sunmark Seeds and Nichols Garden Nursery.

Clover is the key ingredient to the lawn’s sustainability, given it is drought tolerant—although not 100 percent—and it nitrifies the soil, thus naturally and fully fertilizing the lawn.

PHOTOS: PACIFIC LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT