



Ecolawns are comprised of a dwarf grass, herbaceous plant and clover seed mix. Bob Grover says they're best suited for "drive-by" areas.

As far as controlling broadleaf weeds like dandelions, Pacific Landscape Management occasionally will do spot herbicide treatments, Grover says.

When implementing EcoLawns for customers, the company has grown them from scratch, but more commonly it converts existing lawns by overseeding. It charges about 50 cents per square foot for installations and the turf can take up to a year to be fully established.

Regular mowing, Grover says, is most important in maintaining the lawn. He suggests mowing no more than every other week in a growing season, which cuts maintenance needs for clients by about half.

Grover, who calls ecolawns a "necessary evil piece of landscaping," says it can be difficult for some customers to swallow the idea of willingly letting a weed govern their lawn.

"It's a different thought process and theory," he says. "We don't have people beating our door to say, 'Please convert my lawn.'"

Yet, to an extent, that's OK with him. "It's a great way to help your customer out," he says. "But if I did that on all the lawns I maintain, I would probably cut my revenue by 20 percent."

To strike a balance Grover floats the option of EcoLawns to customers, but doesn't actively market them. The idea,

he says, is to stay ahead of his competition with "cutting-edge" offerings.

"Ecological or otherwise, we really don't want to be left behind because somebody else is offering something we aren't," he says. "If this is something our customers are interested in, we don't want to be left behind."

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DESIGN/BUILD

Money talks

A Plus Lawn and Landscape grabs attention with a unique marketing ploy. —

By MOLLY BEALIN

In April, residents of select central Kentucky neighborhoods were surprised to find in their driveways Velcro wallets with what appeared to be large sums of money inside.

Each wallet was in fact a promotion from A Plus Lawn and Landscape in Lawrenceburg, Ky., including a business card for owner John Rennels, which appeared to be a Kentucky driver's license. It also included the full-service company's phone number and website. Several different cards for discounts and specials, some of which were written on fake \$100 bills were also in the wallet. The discounts were for maintenance and design/build services. They ranged from a free consultation and design with contract for project construction and a free first mowing with a weekly mowing service contract.

Several months after launching the promotions, Rennels says the company of eight employees plans to do a similar campaign again.

"We're still getting results from the promotion because we are doing year-



long analysis," Rennels says. "Feedback has been 95 percent positive; we've gotten some very good publicity and created some buzz."

The company spent \$11,000 on the campaign and choose to conduct it during April because that's when landscape services are the most in demand, he says.

"We have a two-week window when it first starts to get warm. Since it didn't get warm until May we're going to run it another year. It was a very odd sales season this year," he says.

Many advertising pieces are immediately discarded by the consumer and don't produce high results, he says. Rennels came up with campaign by asking himself the question, "How

could we take this driveway drop ... and make it something that people are going to pick up?"

He was fairly sure people would pick up something that gave the appearance of money. He purchased 10,000 wallets from China and stuffed them with his promotional materials before distributing them to target neighborhoods.

While Rennels is still quantifying the results of the wallet campaign he predicts it will bode well for the company and plans to do another campaign next year with the same concept in the same areas. **LM**

Bealin is a Cleveland-based contributor for Landscape Management.

“Feedback has been 95 percent positive; we’ve gotten some very good publicity.” —John Rennels



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PROFITING FROM DESIGN

JODY SHILAN

Shilan is editor of FromDesign2Build.com. Contact him at 201/783-2844 or jshilan@gmail.com.

The last proposal you'll have to write

Q I lose a lot of work because it takes me so long to get back to a new potential customer. Between the time it takes to meet with them, put together a plan and proposal and still keep my current projects running, many clients have already chosen to work with another contractor. How can I speed up my design/build sales process?

— George Margate, Mountain Lakes Landscape, Calgary, Alberta

A I have a process for everything I do, and you should too. I have standard operating procedures (SOPs) or best management practices (BMPs) for screening customers on the phone, managing the initial meeting, my landscape design process and even how I color render my drawings. Why? The better and more defined your processes are the more organized your projects will be, which translates to happier customers and higher profits.

This month I want to discuss one process many of you waste a considerable amount of time on: It's the proposal-writing process. I know, I know: What could be more boring or mundane than writing proposals? Well I couldn't agree more. That's why I no longer write proposals. I just take my standardized proposal template, make a few tweaks and hit print. Unlike my site visit proposal (see "Web Extras"), which you can use for smaller, non-design projects, this template is for bigger design/build installations. However, keep in mind that just because a project may be larger and more sophisticated, that doesn't mean your proposal has to be.

For example, when installing a paver patio or walkway, although your layout may change from project to project, your installation process stays the same. You'll still need to excavate down about 8 inches, put in a 4-inch base and a 1.5-inch screed bed. Next, you install the pavers, make your cuts, put in the edging and sand sweep the joints. So if this is how you do your paver installs, why do you need to reinvent the wheel and develop unique language every time you design a paver project? You don't.

Imagine if one day you decided to list all of the steps required for everything we do, including hard-scape installations, new plantings, etc., and wrote them all down? Now, what if you reviewed these processes with your coworkers so they could make comments and help you to fine tune them? Next, and only after you get a general consensus, you take this document, check for spelling and grammatical errors and save it onto your computer? You just may have all of the ingredients you need to create a master template that could be cut and pasted into a proposal in just a matter of minutes instead of hours.

Naturally, there will be some modifications you need to add to your proposal, such as paver style and color or the quantity and types of lights you're installing. However, all of the important language is not only already written; it has already been proofed for errors. This way you can be assured you're not going to forget to include one of those pesky little sentences like "we're not responsible for damage to irrigation lines during excavation," which could potentially cost you hundreds or thousands of dollars in irrigation repairs later on.

Although it's a template, you still may need to add a plant list to your proposal unless there's a planting schedule on the drawing. If that's the case, you can just use my three favorite little words, which are, "as per plan." Nothing shortens your proposal-writing process more than referring to the landscape plan and writing "plantings as per plan," "patio as per plan," "lighting as per plan," "swimming pool as per plan," etc., etc., etc. (as per plan).

So take the time now and document all your construction processes and create your own proposal template. It's certainly worth the investment and may be the last proposal you'll ever have to write. Combine this with my unbiddable master plan process (see "Web Extras") and you'll be getting back to your clients faster and selling more work than ever before.

To submit a question for Profiting From Design, please contact Shilan at jshilan@gmail.com.

» WEB EXTRA

Download Shilan's sample site visit proposal at wp.me/p2BT0U-8bx or read about his unbiddable master plan process here: wp.me/p2BT0U-8k4.

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UPCOMING PROGRAMS

DATE	SPECIAL GUEST	PROGRAM TOPIC
10/30	Shelly Hewson , Contractor, <i>Hewson Landscape</i>	Married to Your Business
11/7	AJ Davis , Contractor, <i>Davis Outdoor Jobs</i>	Young Guns of the Green Industry
11/14	Chris Heiler , Consultant, <i>Landscape Leadership</i>	It's Time to Update Your Website
11/21	Jason Cupp , Consultant, <i>Kolbe Certified Growth Consultant</i>	Hire and Keep the Right People
11/27	Maurice Dowell , Contractor, <i>Dowco Enterprises</i>	Growing a Successful Maintenance Company

Remember: all shows are archived for later listening at FD2B.COM!

ABOUT THE HOST

Jody Shilan, MLA is an award-winning landscape designer and former landscape design/build contractor, who has sold tens of millions of dollars of design and installation work throughout his career. He now uses his 35+ years of experience to coach other landscape contractors how to easily and dramatically increase their sales by following his unique landscape design/build/sales process. He does this through public speaking, private consulting, group workshops and his "exclusive" members-only website www.FromDesign2Build.com.



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Off the (green) wall

Green wall and roof installations are a profitable endeavour for The LaurelRock Co.



Light is a critical factor for green wall health.

AFTER HEARING A talk about living walls and roofs, Burt DeMarche was immediately interested in adding the service to his business. The owner of The LaurelRock Co. in Wilton, Conn., knew it would appeal to certain niche clients—particularly those interested in “going green.”

The talk that attracted DeMarche was given by George Irwin, the CEO of Green Living Technologies International (GLTi), a manufacturer of green roof and green wall panels.



Burt DeMarche

LaurelRock launched the service last year after having Irwin speak at an event of its own. Since then the service has seen slow but profitable growth—mostly through word of mouth. In fact, the company’s first customer was a direct result of the event it sponsored with Irwin.

“One of the guys from the catering company at our event was opening a restaurant and wanted a green wall inside,” DeMarche says. “He let us put up a plaque that says we built and maintain the wall, so that gives us some good publicity.”

Ongoing maintenance is a revenue driver of the green wall business. LaurelRock comes once a week to hand water the restaurant wall and clean out the catch. Initially, the company came twice a week, but the restaurant took over some of the watering on its own. This client’s system has no built-in irrigation, but the company has installed walls that have drip irrigation systems.

Besides watering, light is the most critical factor for a green wall to thrive and it may even dictate where walls can be installed. “Having someone on staff who has some knowledge of indoor plants and how to maintain them has been important to the success of this service,” DeMarche

says. “Getting the proper lighting on the plants can be a challenge, particularly if there’s not a lot of sunlight coming in. For the restaurant project we had to install light fixtures that came on via a timer at night since the plants weren’t getting enough light during the daytime. A working knowledge of plant selection is also really important.”

Though green walls are more suited for commercial clients, DeMarche says LaurelRock has designed a vertical vegetable garden for a residential customer. “She wanted a vertical vegetable garden installed on her fence and ended up really liking it,” DeMarche says. “In the winter she wanted to bring it inside so she purchased a freestanding unit where we could hang the panels and she grew herbs in her family room during the winter.”

For the most part, the bigger sell on the residential side is for green roofs. DeMarche says so far the company has installed two green roofs and hopes to continue to see growing interest as more homeowners embrace a green lifestyle.

“With the roofs you have to get the architect on board because it does have to be designed as part of the home’s design process,” DeMarche says. “But I do see the interest in it expanding as more customers become eco-conscious. They like the idea that it’s not only environmentally friendly and reduces runoff, but it also looks really good.”

To date, the service has been profitable. DeMarche estimates there’s at least a 20 percent net profit margin to be had on the jobs.

“Each time we do a project we’re also learning more efficient ways to do the planting and transporting. The more we learn, the more profitable we’ll be,” DeMarche says. “We’re always looking to expand our knowledge and learn more.”

» SERVICE SNAPSHOT

COMPANY: The LaurelRock Co.

HEADQUARTERS: Wilton, Conn.

WHY GREEN WALLS AND ROOFS?

“We saw George Irwin [CEO of Green Living Technologies International, a green wall and roof manufacturer] speak at a Professional Landcare Network event and got pretty interested in the idea,” says company owner Burt DeMarche. “We had George come speak at an event we were putting together at a client’s farm and he trained us on building.”

INVESTMENT? “The main investment was time,” DeMarche says. “We had to invest time in researching the products and learning what to do.”

Payton is a freelance writer with eight years of experience writing about the landscape industry.



Our mission is to preserve and enhance green spaces in our communities where we live, work and play.

BECAUSE GREEN MATTERS.

A national non-profit service organization, Project EverGreen works to help spread the good word to consumers about well-maintained lawns and landscapes, sports fields, parks—anywhere that green exists. The more people believe in the environmental, economic and lifestyle benefits of green spaces, the better off we'll all be.



WORKING TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.

Together with key industry partners, Project EverGreen has established the following programs to help make a greater impact, sooner:

GreenCare for Troops SnowCare for Troops



- Project EverGreen connects military families with lawn and landscape companies, as well as snow removal companies to receive free services while their loved one is serving overseas.
- More than 3,500 contractor volunteers and 12,000 military families have signed up for GCFT, while 1,100 contractor volunteers and 1,500 military families signed up for SCFT.
- These popular programs have garnered attention on TV and in newspapers across the nation including Mike Rowe's *Dirty Jobs* and NBC's *Nightly News*.

Community Based Revitalization Projects

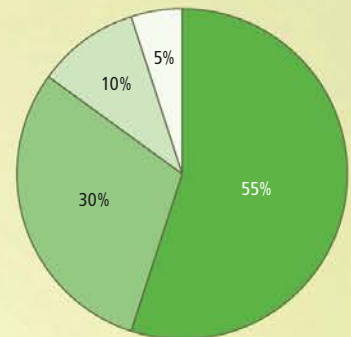
- Focused community revitalization and renovation projects across the United States encourage industry professionals, consumers and anyone who's passionate about healthy green spaces to work together to improve their city and surrounding areas.
- Over the last seven years, our message has made a positive impact in: Akron, Ohio; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Greensboro, Raleigh and Charlotte, North Carolina; Ft. Myers, Florida; Toronto, Canada; and San Antonio, Texas.
- Maintained green spaces generated community engagement, involvement and communication among residents, city leaders and visitors.

GreenCare for Youth

- By reaching out to children of all ages, we can create a greener tomorrow.
- The Art of Green Spaces Competition, sponsored by Birds and Blooms, encourages students to use all forms of art to share how they feel about the green spaces in their lives.
- Golf bag tags, featuring messages on the benefits of green spaces, are given to participants of the GCBAAs Sticks for Kids program.
- Youth sports field renovations make playing surfaces better and safer.

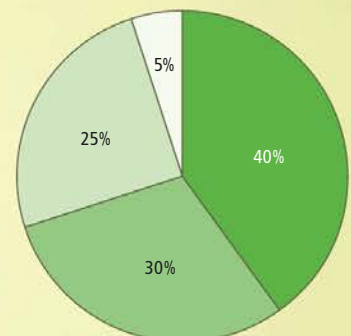
YOUR SUPPORT HELPS US SPREAD THE GOOD WORD.

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- Service contractor contributions (30%)
- Associations/Media/Agencies (10%)
- Individual contributions (5%)



HOW YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS ARE UTILIZED.

- Programs (40%)
- National marketing/communications (30%)
- Administration (25%)
- Fundraising (5%)



For more information about Project EverGreen, call us toll-free at 1-877-758-4835 or check us out on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ProjectEverGreen.

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LM REPORTS

YOUR GUIDE TO PRODUCT RESEARCH

SPECIALTY CHEMICALS



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FMC // FMCProSolutions.com

Enclave

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Quali-Pro // Quali-Pro.com/enclave



Tribute Total

Labeled for 55 grassy and broadleaf weeds, Tribute Total postemergent herbicide can now be used on Zoysiagrass as well as Bermudagrass. Each 6-oz. container treats between 1.875 and 6 acres. With a 60.5 percent water-dispersible granule formulation, it requires less storage space, transportation and less-frequent container disposal.

Bayer CropScience // BackedByBayer.com



Yardage

Yardage is a three-in-one combination adjuvant that helps applicators optimize the performance of pesticide applications. This acidifier, penetrant and drift-reduction product provides a triple action method that helps create the ideal pH conditions in the tank, improves pesticide penetration of pest surfaces and maximizes the amount of solution that lands on target.

Exacto // ExactoInc.com

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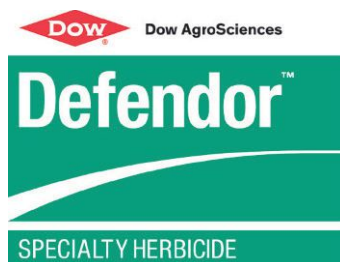
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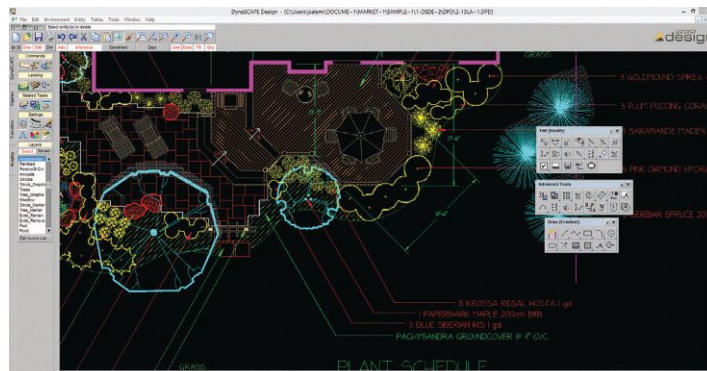
Solu-Cal USA // Solu-Cal.com



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Dow AgroSciences // DowProvesIt.com



Design v6.2

DynaSCAPE's new 6.2 landscape design application update features new tools, enhancements and fixes. This includes a new figure outliner tool to help with hatching; a new "close" option to the building outline tool; and a new PDF file import as a raster. The update is free for DynaSCAPE users with active subscriptions.

DynaSCAPE Software // DynaSCAPE.com

PRO Landscape Version 19

New PRO Landscape Version 19 helps users quickly create visual designs for customers, accurate site plans for crews and professional proposals to communicate every aspect of the proposed project. Features include photorealistic imaging, night and holiday lighting, CAD, estimating, 3D renderings and mobile tablet applications in an easy-to-learn and -use program.

Drafrix Software // PROLandscape.com



ENGINE CARE

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Toro // Toro.com

