

Indoor holiday decor

McHale Landscape Design's move toward interior holiday work has strengthened client relations.

MCHALE LANDSCAPE DESIGN, based in Upper Marlboro, Md., promotes itself as a "property management" company. As such, its crews handle a slew of services for clients in a "one-stop shop" effort—everything from gutter cleaning to fall annual installations and exterior holiday lights for clients throughout Maryland, Virginia and Washington D.C. A few years ago, one of McHale's exterior holiday displays led to an interior job for a residential client's second home in St. Michael, Md. That job has become an ongoing account and a service the business plans to grow.

"(They) asked if we could take over their interior holiday decor since they liked what we were doing on the outside and trusted our crews," says Samantha Fischer, Maryland Eastern Shore maintenance regional manager for the \$21 million company. "We're not as busy in the winter with landscape maintenance, so we have the extra time to focus on interior decorating."

While McHale's Virginia division has completed three indoor projects, this was the first for its Maryland Eastern Shore division.

The company, Fischer says, is content with the service's slow growth, though.

"There's a fine line of getting too many clients for a service like this," she says. "Three or four clients could make it a nice, profitable service, but too many more would mean we couldn't devote the time needed to do the job right. The client and I start throwing around holiday ideas in the spring."

The service is more of a customer service builder than a major moneymaker, Fischer says. The client sets the budget, from which Fischer buys decorations and factors in labor.

In terms of adding interior holiday work to the company's service lineup, there weren't any additional costs or equipment needed—the service only required ladders, which the company already had for hanging exterior lights.

"We just needed to train staff to be extra cautious while working on the interior,"

Fischer says. "Working inside requires just a little more care."

Fischer says any company could add a service like this, but it does require having at least one staffer with an "eye for design" to oversee the work. "It's not just sticking a Christmas tree in the corner; we do every single room," Fischer says. "Last year, the (St. Michael's) client wanted a



McHale begins planning its interior holiday decorating jobs in spring.

wonderland theme and we incorporated the entire house."

That effort even included importing fake snow and putting it in the children's rooms. Poinsettias also were brought in, wreaths and garland were hung and two decorated Christmas trees were installed.

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, Fischer devotes a lot of her time to the project, utilizing extra staff as needed to hang items and follow her plans. "It takes a crew of about five people, though they're not at the property every day," she says.

Once the holidays pass and the clients return to their full-time home, the crew comes back in for clean-up. "We wrap up the decorations and store everything in tubs in the client's attic so it's ready for future use," Fischer says. "We have the client's cleaning service lined up to come in right after us and do a good cleaning."

From an internal standpoint, Fischer says the interior holiday decor service has been really enjoyable for her, as well. "Throughout the year, I'll get ideas from landscaping shows and magazines," she says. "I really enjoy seeing it all come together."

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

▶▶ SERVICE SNAPSHOT

COMPANY: McHale Landscape Design

HEADQUARTERS: Upper Marlboro, Md.

ADD-ON SERVICE: Interior holiday decor

WHY INTERIOR HOLIDAY DECOR?

Doing interior holiday decorating was a natural extension from doing exterior holiday lighting—particularly for clients with vacation homes who aren't regularly on the property to do it themselves. This service is more of a customer service builder than a huge revenue driver.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE? The timeline—there are typically only three full weeks to have the decorating complete.

BEST TIP? Have your theme decided before Thanksgiving, giving yourself plenty of time to prepare.

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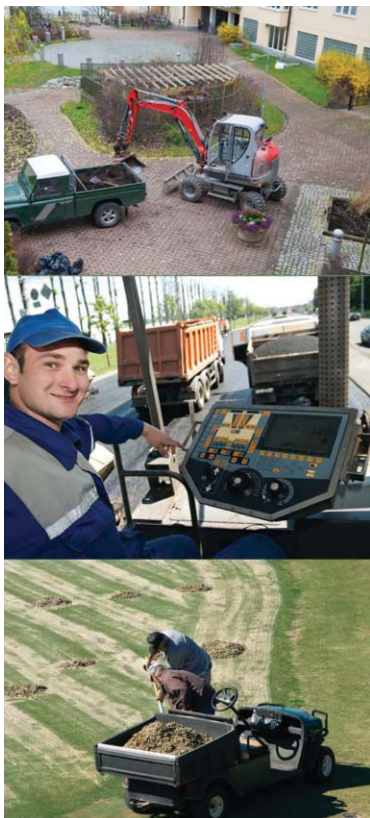
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YOUR GUIDE TO PRODUCT RESEARCH

PREEMERGENT HERBICIDES



Specticle

Bayer received an Agrow award in the best new crop protection product category for indaziflam, the active ingredient in Specticle preemergent herbicide. Specticle controls more than 90 grasses, broadleaf weeds and annual sedges with residual at low-use rates—up to 40 times less than current standards, the company says.

Bayer Environmental Science //
BackedByBayer.com

Barricade

Barricade is a long-lasting preemergent herbicide for crabgrass control, Syngenta says, noting even fall applications can withstand snow and heavy rains to remain effective throughout the season. Low water solubility and high affinity for soil particles means Barricade stays where most weeds germinate—in the top half-inch of the soil. The product is backed by a performance guarantee.

Syngenta // *GreenCastOnline.com*



Prodiamine 4L

Prodiamine 4L, a liquid formulation, provides preemergent control of crabgrass, goosegrass, *Poa annua* and other small-seeded broadleaf weeds. It may be applied for season-long control, Quali-Pro says, and has low solubility and volatility. It's also available in as a water dispersible granule.

Quali-Pro // *Quali-Pro.com*



Echelon

Echelon, which delivers preemergent sedge control, is the first herbicide in its class with a dual mode of action. It controls weeds from the foliage down and from the root up with residual for preemergent crabgrass. It also controls pre- and early postemergent goosegrass. Echelon is available as a sprayable application or as a dry application on fertilizer for most cool- and warm-season grasses.

FMC Professional Solutions //
FMCProSolutions.com



Dimension

Dimension specialty herbicide provides preemergent control of more than 45 annual grassy and broadleaf weeds, including crabgrass, goosegrass, bittercress and *Poa annua*, as well as early postemergent control of crabgrass. Dimension can be used over the top of more than 440 landscape ornamentals and in noncrop areas, including roadsides. It also can be used on established cool- and warm-season seeded, sodded or sprigged turf without staining surroundings.

Dow AgroSciences // *PowerOfMORE.com*

TURF SPRAYERS/SPREADERS

RS7200E

The new unit boasts an electric start, adjustable electric spray pump and a hand-held spray wand. It's driven by a 7-hp Subaru EX210 engine with electric start and a 0.95-gal. fuel tank. A 17-gal. tank system has a single port for easy filling and a balanced design for enhanced stability. The RS7200E is backed by a two-year limited warranty; the engine features a five-year warranty.

TurfEx // TurfExProducts.com



T3000i

Turfco's T3000i spreader/sprayer features hands-free speed control and trim-lock speed for consistency and an intuitive experience. The spreader/sprayer features 12- to 18-ft. spreading widths, 6- and 9-ft. spraying widths and a 4-ft. trim spray, as well as a wand for spot treating. It has the ability to cover 124,000 sq. ft. per fill and fits through a 36-in. gate.

Turfco // TurfcoDirect.com



Triumph

The 2014 PermaGreen Triumph Spreader Sprayer has improved power steering technology, which offers control on difficult properties. A drop-down handle-bar system and articulating joints help operators ride or walk through difficult terrain. The machine treats up to 1 acre per fill, resulting in fewer trips to the truck. Two set-ground speeds and fixed spray widths offer instant recalibration and greater precision when broadcasting or trimming.

PermaGreen // PermaGreen.com



Z-Spray

LT Rich's Z-Spray machines have liquid capacities from 18 gal. to 89 gal. and granular capacities from 100 lbs. to 300 lbs. They are powered by a 16 hp twin cylinder electric-start engine and feature a 4 gmp pump, hydrostatic drive system, locking caster system and hydraulic hopper motor.

LT Rich Products // Z-Spray.com



SALT SPREADERS

VBX spreader

This V-box spreader features an 8-ft. poly hopper with 2 cu. yds. of capacity. Choose from pintle chain or auger feed options. Powered by a completely sealed, 0.5-hp motor, the stainless-steel drivetrain components are corrosion-resistant for reduced maintenance and longer life. A rear-mounted dump switch allows operators to quickly dump remaining material to cut down on waste. The spinner assembly is removable.

THE BOSS Snowplow // BossPlow.com



Economizer line

Performance improvements to ACE Torwel's Economizer gas-over-hydraulic pickup truck spreaders target more efficient, reliable snow and ice control in its 1.3-, 1.7-, 2.5- and 3.0-cu. yd. models. Made in the U.S., these V-box spreaders are lightweight and feature stainless steel or painted 14-gauge steel construction. They feature a quiet 5.5-hp Honda gas engine with electric start.

ACE Torwel // ACETorwel.com



Drop Pro line

These two new tractor-mounted spreaders offer controlled application of bagged ice melters and bulk rock salt. Model SD-600 has a 6-cu.-ft. capacity with a 36-in. spread width; model SD-1400 has a 14-cu.-ft. capacity with a 48-in. spread width. Both units include a polyethylene hopper and variable-speed auger feed system, which is run by a self-diagnosing digital controller.

SnowEx // SnowExProducts.com

Comparison charts

SaltDogg's CompareSaltSpreaders.com offers comparisons on same-level salt spreaders from 10 brands. Users can find side-by-side product specifications and features for SUV; tailgate gravity-fed; vertical-auger; two-stage; 2-yd. polymer; 3-, 4- and 6-yd. polymer auger; electric stainless steel chain-drive; and under-tailgate electric salt spreaders.

Buyers Products // CompareSaltSpreaders.com



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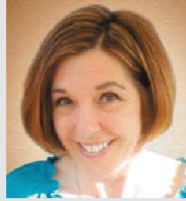
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Pam Berrios

secretary of the National Hispanic Landscape Association board of directors, owner of Alexandria Lawn Service, Alexandria, Va.



Who is your mentor? It's been a lot of people. My total years in business have been 17 years. Six years ago, I bought my partner out. I knew everything on the back end as far as the billing and customer service, but I didn't know anything about the field, (so) my mentors became the crew members I have. I went outdoors to see what they do on a day-to-day basis.

What led to your involvement with the National Hispanic Landscape Association (NHLA)? My brother Raul Berrios,

who is the current president, is a founding member. He's been extremely involved in the NHLA and he got me involved as well.

As a woman in the Green Industry, how do you get a leg up on your male competitors? (Being a woman) has its advantages and disadvantages. A lot of times, because of personality and being a woman, it will open doors for me and I'll be able to quell difficult clients. On the other hand, when you're dealing with suppliers and vendors and people who are used to dealing with a hundred males a day, when you walk in it's like "OK, what is she doing here?" I just take it as a challenge. It's been really rewarding to set foot in the industry as a female business owner.



You're also a real estate agent. Does that profession cross paths with the Green Industry? I started being a real estate agent 10 years ago, looking for my own home to buy and then people started looking for me. It was right at the boom of the real estate industry. My clients knew I had my real estate license and they started saying, "You service our lawn and, at the same time, you can list our home for sale." Throughout the years, it's something I've been able to keep side by side. It's worked out perfect.

What do you expect to be the main initiatives and topics of discussion in 2014 for the NHLA? We're dealing a lot with immigration reform. There are a lot of questions about that in the industry. (But) our biggest campaign is getting people to the GIE+EXPO. When I went three years ago, for the first time, most of the people I saw were American business owners. We know for a fact there are thousands of Hispanic business owners and they're not aware yet of the GIE, that there's training courses, resources for us to use. We're trying to build awareness to those types of events. We want people to go there.

OFF THE CLOCK

WHO MAKES UP YOUR FAMILY? I'm a single mom of three teenagers. A lot of my spare time is spent with them. They're wonderful kids.

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST INDULGENCE? Volleyball. I love to play. I even coach kids. I steal time from work to sometimes get lost there.



DO YOU HAVE A DREAM VACATION SPOT? I would like to go to Paris.



WHAT TV SHOW DO YOU HAVE TO TUNE INTO EVERY WEEK? The only thing I watch is the serial killer show "Dexter."

WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN YOUR CURRENT CAREER? Between the Green Industry and real estate, I wouldn't have it any other way.



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