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## NORTH

*Weed pictured: Curly dock*

- ▶ Postemergent herbicides are most effective in spring or fall (preferred).
- ▶ Use higher rates when hard-to-control species are prevalent, when applications are made in late summer or to mature weeds or during periods of drier weather. Spot treatments with products containing triclopyr ester are particularly effective during these times.
- ▶ Use amine-based formulations of 2,4-D when temperatures are high and volatility is a concern.
- ▶ Do *not* apply herbicides when the turf is stressed. Extreme weather conditions may inhibit the product's performance.
- ▶ Depending on the level of infestation, multiple applications may be needed for complete control. Two applications—two to four weeks apart—are ideal.
- ▶ Avoid overwatering. Excessive moisture encourages weed growth and germination. Curly dock and sedges thrive in these conditions.
- ▶ Aerate in spring or fall.



Recommended  
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solution  
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herbicide\***

## SOUTH

*Weed pictured: Dollarweed*

- ▶ Most postemergent herbicides are more effective when applied to weeds that are young and succulent.
- ▶ Early-winter applications target winter annuals. Spring or summer applications control weeds actively growing during these seasons. Fall is a good time for applications to perennial or biannual weeds.
- ▶ Do *not* apply herbicides when the turf is stressed. Extreme weather conditions may inhibit the product's performance.
- ▶ Adjuvants improve herbicide coverage and help penetrate the waxy leaf surfaces of species like broadleaf plantain and dollarweed. Be cautious with these additions to ensure they do not increase the potential for turf damage.
- ▶ Irrigate only when necessary. Deep, infrequent irrigation is better for turfgrass than light, frequent irrigation.
- ▶ Aerate in late spring or early summer.

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For more information regarding these and other turf weeds—and related control technologies and tips—please visit [www.DowProvesIt.com](http://www.DowProvesIt.com) or call 800/255-3726.

BY JAMIE BREUNINGER, DOW AGROSCIENCES TECHNICAL LEADER

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# Brickman/ValleyCrest: Culture clash?

As the two largest landscape companies work toward merging into one, the rest of the Green Industry is a split crowd sitting on the sidelines. Some spectators are biting their nails out of nervousness, while others have pulled up a seat, waiting to pick up employees and customers from the deal.

Many questions remain about the joint Brickman Group/ValleyCrest Landscape Cos. entity. The news of their merger came in late May, after a month of rumors about such a deal. Questions include: Can such a large national company flourish? Is this merger comparable to the failed TruGreen LandCare marriage? How will the culture mesh?

*Landscape Management* tracked down a few former employees of ValleyCrest and Brickman, among other professionals, for their reactions to the deal and to gauge the challenges and opportunities.

## TruGreen LandCare comparison?

A few former employees and professionals compared the Brickman/ValleyCrest deal to ServiceMaster's merger

*A look at their cultures, what defines a national company mentality and TruGreen LandCare comparisons.* BY SARAH PFLEDDERER

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of LandCare USA with its commercial landscape maintenance business to form TruGreen LandCare in 1999.

The Brickman/ValleyCrest merger trumps the size of the TruGreen LandCare one, forming a nearly \$2 billion company versus one with about \$500 million in annual revenue. But the latter transaction involved integrating several companies instead of just two, says Judy Guido, founder and principal of Guido & Associates, who was CMO of LandCare at the time.

LandCare was made up of multiple companies, she says, creating the struggle of integrating many cultures and personalities. It was an even greater challenge than the overlap of personnel and territories, adds Guido, who also previously served as an executive at

Environmental Industries (ValleyCrest's name before rebranding in 2002). On top of that, TruGreen's commercial maintenance business also was a roll-up of many companies.

"A culture is the personality of a company, made up over time by multiple stakeholders and experiences and is embedded into the DNA and fabric of the organization," Guido says. "When you merge multiple strong, independent and intelligent cultures, there's bound to be a convergence of intense passion, ideation, conflict and excitement."

The difficulty perhaps was too much. Private equity firm Aurora Resurgence Group purchased TruGreen LandCare from ServiceMaster for \$37.8 million in 2011. ServiceMaster valued the 1999 merger at \$250 million.

## Internal challenges: Different cultures

Not surprisingly, observers are questioning how Brickman and ValleyCrest will merge their cultures.

Brickman, former employees say, is a process-driven organization. ValleyCrest is built on an entrepreneurial mindset, prior staffers say.

Bill Colleter, Southeast regional business development manager for equipment manufacturer Ariens Co., had two stints at ValleyCrest, working in business development from 2002 to 2004 and 2007 to 2009. He left to become a partner at Landscapes USA, and he credits the professional development opportunities he received at ValleyCrest with helping him do that.

He further praises the organization for “working on their business and not in their business.”

Backing his outlook is Don Crawford, resident regional director of grounds at SSC Service Solutions in College Station, Texas. Crawford worked as a branch operations manager for ValleyCrest’s maintenance division in Chicago for three years. He says the company’s systems and capitalization, plus its reliance on consultants and former staff from McKinsey & Co., drove its financial success over the last 10 to 15 years.

He also recalls an unflattering part of the entrepreneurial-driven culture: That is, “making money” is a priority above all else.

Mike Rorie, CEO of GIS Dynamics, the parent company of Go iLawn in Loveland, Ohio, says that type of mindset goes hand in hand with being a national player.

“The national idea is a good one, but in reality you can’t respond to the needs [of customers] as effectively as a scaled regional player,” says Rorie, who sold his company, GroundMasters, to Brickman in 2006. “It’s the difference in having one owner who is committed to their business versus a group of investors and a decentralized management team.”

Rorie stayed on as a division vice president at Brickman until 2010. In that time, he found his regional leadership style wasn’t fit for a national level. Operationally, he had to make changes

to do things “the Brickman way.”

“Eventually everything was different,” he says. “We lost a lot of focus on what we did best.”

Yet, Rorie says Brickman’s processes and eye on costs and measuring, plus its organizational structure—its national, regional and branch levels and the personnel who communicate between them—are what make the company successful.

Phill Sexton, founder and managing director of consulting firm WIT Cos., recalls Brickman’s standard operating procedures being a large part of the organization when he worked there for 11 years. For some of his tenure, he says, the company empowered him with responsibility, similar to how some people describe ValleyCrest’s ownership culture. He left in 2011 from the role of corporate director of national snow operations when there was talk of private equity group KKR acquiring the company. (It did in November.)

“The culture was beginning to change,” Sexton says. “It seemed the writing was on the wall that, that sense of ownership, at least on my level, wasn’t going to be the same.”

Bob Grover, president of Pacific Landscape Management in Hillsboro, Ore., knows what that’s like. He was a regional manager for TruGreen at the time the company merged with LandCare. Before that he worked for 15 years at Northwest Landscape Industries, which was acquired by TruGreen. He left TruGreen LandCare in 2000 because it took on a different business model, he says.

He spent his days focusing on “financial methods,” working numbers, instead of enjoying the reasons he went into the industry, which are landscaping, plants and helping customers. Adding to that, he was losing a local focus.

“We lost that local control and ability to deal with local problems,” Grover says. The company solved problems on a national level without consideration of differing markets and customers, he adds.

Now, Grover wears the hat of a regional competitor with sympathy for the employees in the middle of the Brickman/ValleyCrest deal. His concern for them is the overlap of markets and job roles.

## EXEC’S VIEW

*Landscape Management* conducted a joint Q&A with Brickman CEO Andrew Kerin and ValleyCrest CEO Roger Zino about the merger. Kerin will become CEO of the yet-to-be-named joint company.

Zino will serve as vice chairman.

Here are a few key points:

- Kerin sees potential for organic growth and said the company will consider strategic acquisition opportunities.
- No members from the companies’ founding families will be involved in the joint entity’s operations, although both retain some ownership.
- The landscape market is in a good position. “People are building again. People are improving again. There’s a greater commitment to great landscapes out there than we’ve seen in years,” Zino says.

For the full interview, visit [buff.ly/1r1dsn9](http://buff.ly/1r1dsn9).

It turns out there will be nil overlap in his market, as Brickman has a presence there but ValleyCrest does not. Now, Grover has only two national competitors, TruGreen LandCare and the new Brickman/ValleyCrest entity, whereas before ValleyCrest could have entered as a third national competitor.

“I really think it impacts us very little,” Grover says. “We’ve even talked that it’s a positive. We’ve always said ValleyCrest will get here someday.”

Sexton also shed light on the positives of the merger.

“A lot of people like to hate the Brickmans and the ValleyCrests of the world, but it’s important for us to keep in mind that we need them to be successful,” he says. “If the biggest player isn’t able to grow, then it hurts the entire industry. If the biggest player isn’t successful, then the industry isn’t.” **LM**



Andrew Kerin



Roger Zino



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DATE	SPECIAL GUEST	PROGRAM TOPIC	SPONSOR
6/4	<b>Jim Huston</b> , Consultant, <i>J. R. Huston Consulting, Inc.</i>	Estimating the Right Way	<i>Sponsorship Available</i>
6/11	<b>Demi Fortuna</b> , Vendor/Contractor, <i>Atlantic Water Gardens</i>	Make Easy Profits with Waterscaping	<i>Sponsorship Available</i>
6/18	<b>Jim McClintock</b> , Vendor, <i>Company 119</i>	The 411 on Internet Marketing	<i>Sponsorship Available</i>
6/25	<b>Brett Kelly</b> , Vendor, <i>DASSO XTR</i>	The Other Hardscape—Wood Decking	<i>Sponsorship Available</i>
7/2	<b>Kevin McLaughlin</b> , Vendor, <i>MAC Events</i>	Successful Event Marketing	
7/9	<b>Marcus vandeVliet</b> , Consultant, <i>MV Consulting</i>	Strategic Planning for Growth	

*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](http://www.FromDesign2Build.com).



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DESIGN/BUILD



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IRRIGATION



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MAINTENANCE



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LAWN CARE



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# MARKETWATCH

SERVICE SEGMENT SNAPSHOTS

*What's in the pesticide pipeline? We surveyed chemical manufacturers to find out.* PAGE 56





# Survey says...

A consumer study conducted by home improvement website Houzz unveiled good news for the landscape profession.

By MARISA PALMIERI



**H**ouzz unveiled findings from its third Houzz & Home Survey, including homeowners are optimistic about the housing market, which is driving renovations.

The annual study covers historical and planned projects, the motivations behind these projects and the impact of the economy on home remodeling, building and decorating plans.

The research yielded data at the national, regional and metropolitan area level, which Houzz used to examine regional differences in priorities and spending. The survey was emailed to registered Houzz users between January and March. It garnered 135,000 respondents in the U.S.

**1 In demand.** While bathrooms and kitchens are the most popular renovation projects again this year, 30 percent of homeowners planning projects in the next two years plan to hire a

**64%** Percent of those who did landscape work to their home in the past five years and added a new lawn, plants or trees.

landscape professional. Adding to the attention on the Green Industry, patio or landscape addition or renovations have been among the top five projects completed in the past five years, with 22 percent of homeowners having completed one at an average cost of \$9,545. Those who remodeled the exterior of their home in the past five years were most likely to add a new lawn, plants or trees (64 percent); a new deck or patio (46 percent); grading/leveling/terracing of yard (32 percent); new fencing (29 percent); new structure like a shed, pergola or arbor (24 percent).



**21%** Amount of Millennials who are likely to install a fire pit versus 16 percent of older groups.

**2 Age differences.** When it comes to outdoor projects, Millennials are less likely than older age groups to build a new deck or patio (39 percent versus 46 percent), a new structure like a shed, pergola or arbor (18 percent versus 24 percent) or install new irrigation (16 percent versus 21 percent), but are most likely to install a fire pit or other fire feature (21 percent versus 16 percent).

**3 Planning horizons.** From initial research to the start of constructions, homeowners spend six months to more than a year prepping for renovation projects. At the top of the spectrum are custom home builds, averaging 12.6 months. Patios/landscapes take about 6.6 months to plan, the same stretch as siding, media room and garage/carport projects.

*continued on page 47*

**6.6** The average number of months homeowners take to plan a patio/landscape project.



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