



The graywater is delivered to an underground mulch basin; plants are watered using a flood irrigation technique.



as the type of washing machine they have, average amount of laundry they do, where the washer is located and which area of the landscape would most benefit from graywater. After analyzing a year's worth of water bills and running some

numbers, she can tell homeowners how much water they could save annually—anywhere from 1,000 to 11,000 gallons—and can then design them a graywater system for a similar fee.

The Ticker:

IRRIGATION

Louisiana, Colorado and the city and county of Denver officially proclaimed July 2014 as Smart Irrigation Month, marking Louisiana's first year to recognize the initiative and Colorado's third consecutive year.



An **Irrigation Association** survey showed irrigation contractors reported sales in 2013 to be greater than 2012. Other findings include the impact of droughts has weakened and "fly-by-night" contractors continue to be a top concern. For more on the survey results, visit buff.ly/RLZC7R.

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The Goods: IRRIGATION

RAIN BIRD ESP-RZX

This residential controller includes features that enable contractors to quickly complete the installation process and move on to the next job, the manufacturer says.

PROGRAM IT

Zone-to-zone copying makes it possible to copy a zone program to the next zone. A default setting saves a contractor's custom program to the controller's memory.



YOU'VE GOT OPTIONS

The controller is available in four-, six- and eight-zone models.

GO-TO GUIDE

A sticker on the controller includes the URL and a scannable QR code that takes residential customers to the homeowner reference website on their mobile devices.

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Osaka is certain the interest in graywater will continue to grow as water becomes a scarcer commodity in California and beyond. While only three of Osaka's primarily residential clients have installed graywater systems in the past 15 years, she currently is working on her first Laundry to Landscape system design. She makes it a point to promote the program to each of her clients.



Sherri Osaka

"California and other parts of the country, too, are experiencing more and more droughts, and graywater is a really great way to help a landscape survive because that water is available even when it's dry," Osaka says. "Graywater systems have become easy and legitimate. It makes sense, and the payback is there."

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Charlotte, N.C.

Big contracts pay off for Lawn Patrol

A Texas company takes a measured approach to growth as it targets muni contracts. *By JONATHAN KATZ*

Tony Conley found a niche for his landscaping business after several years in the industry. When he first transitioned his business, Lawn Patrol Service, to commercial landscaping he tried to do it all.

The company grew too fast and took on unprofitable jobs. Conley adopted a new business strategy that focused on larger municipal and commercial mowing contracts and a more measured approach to growth.

“I learned that you have to pick and choose the jobs,” says Conley, owner of the Fort Worth, Texas-based company, which today has a 99 percent commercial customer base. “Make sure your company is the right fit for the job you’re bidding on.”

The company that Conley and his brother, Michael, started in 1998 with a “mower, Weed Eater and a truck” now generates revenue in the

millions, Conley says, though he declined to offer specifics. Today, Lawn Patrol’s service mix is 60 percent landscape maintenance and 40 percent lawn care, irrigation and design/build. It’s grown about 20 percent annually since 2004.

The road to sustained growth began about one year earlier. At that time, Conley wanted a more stable annual income, so he switched from primarily residential services to commercial accounts. Residential customers often canceled their service during the winter months. The lull made it difficult for Conley to cover his overhead costs. He sought commercial contracts that he could secure for 12 months or more instead.

Lawn Patrol’s first commercial contracts included day care facilities, chain restaurants and an apartment complex. The new accounts provided a steadier stream of income, but



Upgrading equipment helped Lawn Patrol and its owner Tony Conley secure a few big municipal contracts.

The Ticker:

MAINTENANCE

Exmark recalled its Quest ZRT riding mowers, involving 2009 and 2010 model years, due to loss of steering control and crash hazards. There have been nine reported incidents, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.



Cleary Bros. Landscape and The Davey Tree Expert Co. report personnel changes. Cleary Bros. added Hudson Puente as an arborist, while Davey promoted Craig Holcomb to vice president of operations support services.

Kubota Tractor Corp. expanded its Z300 series zero-turn riding mower fleet with the ZD326H, a diesel model with a 72-inch deck.

Conley encountered unforeseen challenges. For instance, his crews faced delays while they worked at the apartment complex because of heavy residential traffic. The constant presence of residents forced workers to shut off their equipment several times throughout the day for safety reasons.

The delays resulted in lost productivity and excess labor costs. Conley also underestimated the need for equipment investments when bidding on the jobs. His crews used 32-inch walk-behind mowers when they first started the commercial accounts. The lack of efficiency from the slower-moving equipment and interruptions from residents resulted in a net loss on the apartment complex account.

“The quicker you can get a job done safely and effectively, the more profit you should be able to make,” Conley says.

Realizing he needed an upgrade, Conley invested approximately \$300,000 in new trucks, trailers, zero-turn mowers and handheld units. He also began bidding on more municipal contracts. In the 2004 to 2005 time frame, Lawn Patrol won a three-year contract with the city of Fort Worth park system.

Crews typically spend a day mowing the large-acreage fields, which present fewer obstacles than standard commercial jobs.

“The work we do now is a lot easier to manage because we have seven or eight guys working on one project with a supervisor, so I don’t have pieces of equipment running all over town,” he says.

GAINING MOMENTUM

The company’s reputation has paid off in the bidding process, Conley says. Current and potential commercial and municipal customers now know the company has the equipment and experience to handle large-scale maintenance jobs, Conley says. He added 6-foot and 15-foot tractor mowers so he could service larger sites, such as highway medians and airport projects.

The tractors give Lawn Patrol an advantage during the bidding process because few companies in the Fort Worth area own similar pieces of equipment. The tractors are costly, about \$50,000 to \$70,000 each, but the equipment is worth the investment if the company can land long-term contracts, Conley says. If properly maintained, the machines should last 15 to 20 years.

Three years ago the strategy helped the company win a five-year contract to mow the fields outside the secured area of the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. Lawn Patrol is a subcontractor on the project for TruGreen LandCare. The company had worked with Lawn Patrol in the past and was trying to meet a minority-participation goal. Lawn Patrol was a good fit, as a certified minority contractor through the local chapter of the National Minority Supplier Council, with equipment big enough to handle the job.

Conley purchased its second tractor specifically for the airport project along with a new truck for a total of \$170,000. A dedicated crew of four to five employees works at the site four days a week.

Since entering the municipal contract field, Lawn Patrol has faced some trouble finding enough workers to fill the jobs. The company operates with about 15 year-round employees, swelling to 45 total workers during the March to November busy season. Two years ago, the company began hiring employees through the H-2B seasonal worker visa program to address its hiring needs, Conley says.

The commercial accounts have provided the type of stability Conley was hoping to achieve when he first made the transition from residential services. Companies considering a similar move must move cautiously, he says. In 2005, Lawn Patrol grew by 50 percent, which was more than the company could bear.

“We took on more business than we could handle, we didn’t have the employees, we didn’t have the financial backing we needed to take it on,” Conley recalls. “It was a huge struggle for us.”

Today, Conley walks through planning scenarios to ensure he’s prepared for new business. When a contract is nearing the end, he looks at how he will allocate crews and equipment depending on whether the client renews the contract.

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Katz is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

The Goods: MAINTENANCE

WRIGHT MANUFACTURING COMPACT STANDER INTENSITY

Also known as the Stander I, the new mower is available with a 36-in., 48-in. or 52-in. deck. Engines range from 18.5 to 22 hp.

WEIGH IN

The floating deck tilts side-to-side and front-to-back, allowing the mower deck to follow the terrain contours. It also improves the weight distribution for better handling on hills.

GO WITH THE FLOW

It's equipped with Wright's AERO CORE technology, providing improved airflow, cut quality and anti-blow out features, the company says.



GET COMFY

The floating standing platform absorbs rough terrain through elastopolymer bumpers that provide a dampened feel similar to a car.

The best way to protect trees and shrubs from insects is to get out ahead of them. The super-systemic activity of Safari® Insecticide delivers quick uptake and knockdown of a broad spectrum of the most damaging landscape insects including scale, emerald ash borer, aphids, mealybug, boxwood leafminer, whitefly, lacebug, hemlock woolly adelgid and more. And the long-lasting control of Safari will result in satisfied customers and reduced callbacks. With Safari, you'll outpace the bugs and leave your competition in the dust. To learn more, visit nufarm.com/us.

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PROFESSIONAL
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PRODUCTS

In the pipeline

LM surveyed chemical manufacturers to provide a breakdown of the pesticide products slated for release in the lawn care industry.

By SARAH PFLEDDERER

PESTICIDE TYPE	NAME	COMPANY	LABELED FOR		PRODUCT TYPE		
			TURF	ORNAMENTALS	NEW CHEMISTRY	EXISTING CHEMISTRY	NEW CHEMICAL COMBINATION
Insecticide	Rycar	SePRO Corp.		X	X		
	XXpire WG	Dow AgroSciences		X	X		
Herbicide	Solitare (liquid formulation)	FMC Professional Solutions	X			X	X
	To-be-named fertilizer plus postemergent granular	The Andersons	X			X	X
	To-be-named preemergent granular	SipcamAdvan	X			X	X
	Specticle Total	Bayer CropScience		X*		X	X
Fungicide	3336EG	Nufarm Americas	X			X	X
	Strobe 50 WG	Quali-Pro	X	X		X	X

*Labeled for "around ornamentals and hardscapes"

PHOTO: ©STOCK.COM/ZU_09



ACTIVE INGREDIENTS	TARGET PESTS	ADDITIONAL INFO	EXPECTED MARKET AVAILABILITY
pyrifluquinazon	whiteflies, aphids, mealybugs, chili thrips	Upon contact or ingestion Rycar acts as an immediate stop-feed before eventual death, reducing viral transmission.	2016 or later
Isoclast active (sulfoxaflor)	whiteflies, aphids, mealybugs, lepidopterans, lacebugs, some scales, thrips, leaf-feeding beetles	XXpire WG controls 39 chewing and sap-feeding insects in total with translaminar and systemic activity.	Q3 2014
sulfentrazone, quinclorac	sedges, crabgrass, broadleaf weeds	Solitare will be released in a novel water-soluble liquid formulation.	Q4 2014
Not reported	broadleaf weeds, crabgrass	This product is expected to be packaged in a 40- to 50-pound bag.	Q4 2015
Not reported	grassy and broadleaf weeds	Labeled for use on all major warm season turf, this product will be available in a straight granule or a combination with granular fertilizers. Its target application times are January to March or in the fall.	Q3 2015
indaziflam, diquat dibromide, glyphosate isopropylamine salt	grassy and broadleaf weeds	Specticle Total is labeled for use near landscape trees and shrubs. It is not registered in all states.	Q1 2015
thiophanate-methyl	botrytis, cercospora, powdery mildew, rhizoctonia, thielaviopsis	This broad-spectrum fungicide has preventive and curative properties and a systemic mode of action.	Q3 2014
azoxystrobin	diseases	This is the first post-patent azoxystrobin fungicide in the market, the company says.	Q3 2014

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LAWN CARE

MARKETWATCH

The Ticker: LAWN CARE

Koch Agronomic Solutions is expected to acquire the assets of **Agrium Advanced Technologies** by the end of the second quarter 2014. Terms of the agreement have not been disclosed.

The Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) was eradicated from an area in Boston, declared the **U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Planet Health Inspection Service (APHIS)**. At just less than four years, the eradication time frame is the shortest in the history of APHIS's National ALB Eradication.

The University of Findlay, based in Findlay, Ohio, is replacing 75 percent of its grass after a chemical similar to Roundup was accidentally applied to the grass instead of fertilizer, according to *The Findlay Courier*.

The Goods: LAWN CARE

C&S TURF CARE 2014 TURF TRACKER TIME MACHINE

The 2014 Time Machine spreader-sprayer features several upgrades, in addition to coming with a two-year commercial-use powertrain warranty.

POWER PLAY

The machine is powered by Kohler's 15 hp OHV engine and Hydro-Gear hydraulic pumps and wheel motors.

LET'S MOVE

It features zero-turn maneuverability and fits through 36-in. gates.



GET TOUGH

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THE MISSION

Flip a post-war residence's overgrown, sloping yard into a private oasis.

When this post-World War II tract house in Bethesda, Md., built on a garage and library, among other renovations, Olney, Md.-based Botanical Decorators was called on to ramp up the landscape surrounding the additions. It wasn't as easy as installing plantings to complement the freshly repainted siding and brick, though. The firm removed more than 275 cubic yards of soil and debris and created a private garden.

"The yard itself was a jungle, with 14-foot-tall azaleas engulfing the house and the garage," says Brian Hahn, landscape designer and project manager. "When we first saw the property, the grade sloped right to the rear door, where water would sit for days when it rained." The rear property line was just 38 feet away.

The library addition retained 30 inches of water. Botanical Decorators installed a stone retaining wall to capture another 30 inches.

The sweeping stone walls creates the illusion of space and privacy from the neighbors, too, Hahn says. "The walls provide a backdrop to the fountain, which is centered on the rear window of the library," he says.

The team excavated into the rear of the hillside to build the library addition. It took advantage of topography to create an upper lawn for the resident's dog. The pet also received an air-conditioned doghouse, located beyond the wall in a hidden area behind the renovated garage.

Previously, the old block structure, the garage, was buried into the grade and "leaked like a sieve," Hahn says. "The entire garage was excavated, water-proofed and finished in three-part stucco, along with a new roof and trim."

Botanical Decorators convened with the library architect to redesign the garage and reflect the architecture of the house, down to the detail for the French doors.



PHOTOS: BOTANICAL DECORATORS