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DECEMBER 2020/  
JANUARY 2021

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## 2021 Green Industry OUTLOOK

Our annual survey tracks a challenging year for industry professionals.

### + INSIDE

Give your crew room to grow, p. 26

Install irrigation systems correctly, p. 32

Add new services seamlessly, p. 40

See the features in 2021's new truck models, starting page 28.

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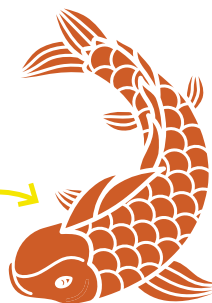
## 2021 Green Industry OUTLOOK

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It's true that business growth was mostly flat across the board in the last year, but that doesn't mean that contractors didn't get anything useful out of the hardship.



Photo: Nikki Avramovich

KYLE BROWN

## Looking back to go forward

One of the biggest parts of putting together our Industry Outlook Survey every year is taking a look back at previous surveys to see how the results stack up.

Contractors in general were so optimistic about the promise of 2020 in our previous survey. One of the survey sections that I always check closely is the open-answer portion about what they saw as the biggest opportunities and challenges for the year. It always provides me with a lot of useful insight into how contractors felt about the year overall.

Talking about the biggest challenges in last year's survey, contractors covered the usual topics like labor, equipment or competition. There were a few worried about facing too much business growth and overextending their capabilities. There was plenty of work available, as long as you had built a team ready to take it on.

This year, there are still some of the familiar challenges. Labor continues to be the major issue on contractors' minds. Many are taking on increased workloads because of high demand, but there are plenty of responses still talking about dealing with COVID-19, either in keeping employees healthy or recovering from

the stalled start to last year's season. Responses about the biggest opportunities feel like the opposite side of the same coin: The pandemic is providing extra demand as homeowners continue to spend more time at home.

I've been thinking lately about how we could've been better prepared to take on the challenges of the past year. It's tough to work on what the possibilities could've been, but it's more useful to think about what we can learn moving forward.

It's true that business growth was mostly flat across the board in the last year, but that doesn't mean that contractors didn't get anything useful out of the hardship. If you weren't looking too specifically at cash flow last year, I'll bet you have a more solid grasp of your company's status now. It's likely there are more plans in place this year for what would happen if a large chunk of crew members suddenly aren't able to show up one morning. Incorporating job management software to remotely interact with customers might now be standard operating procedure.

The new year is looking more positive for the industry as a whole. I'm hopeful that professionals bring along what they've learned from getting through 2020 to make the most out of whatever 2021 has in store. 🌱

# IRRIGATION & green industry

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INVESTORS CORNER

# FMC and NALP partner to help lawn care operators grow

FMC Corporation, Philadelphia, and the National Association of Landscape Professionals, Fairfax, Virginia, launched a joint initiative to help lawn care operators grow their businesses by providing access to a variety of tools and resources offered by both FMC and NALP.

**“FMC is committed to growing the future of the lawn care industry. We built the FMC True Champions end-user program as a way to support LCOs strategically grow their business.”**

— Mike Sisti, marketing manager at FMC Professional Solutions

The FMC True Champions program helps small- to medium-sized lawn care companies (\$450,000-\$850,000 in annual revenue) transition from working “in” their business to working “on” their business.

“FMC is committed to growing the future of the lawn care industry,” says Mike Sisti, marketing manager at FMC Professional Solutions. “We built the FMC True Champions end-user program as a way to support LCOs strategically grow their business.”

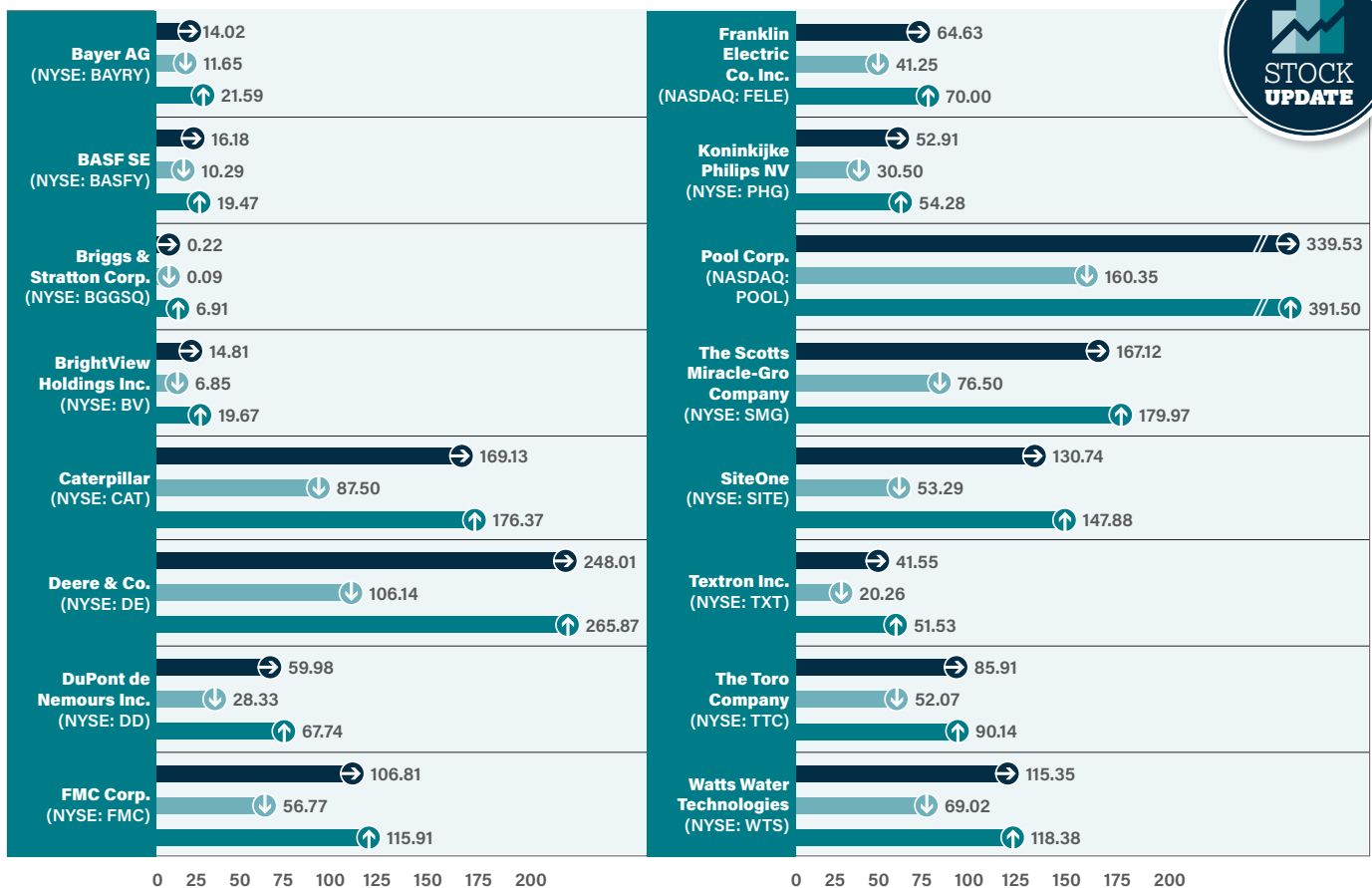
FMC sponsored free, one-year memberships in NALP to companies that meet a minimum requirement for the promotion to give them access to resources and training. FMC True Champion program members will also receive a discount for the following two years of NALP membership



to allow lawn care operators to fully engage with the association.

“We are extremely excited to partner with FMC and their True Champions program on this effort,” says NALP CEO Britt Wood. “By working together, we can help up and coming LCOs grow and develop their businesses.”

FMC offered the NALP-FMC Kickoff Promotion Nov. 30-Dec. 11, 2020, with rebates on FMC products specifically geared toward the lawn care market. Companies enrolled in the program will also receive a complimentary registration to some NALP education events.”



➡ Last trade (11-13-20) ⬇ 52-week low ⬆ 52-week high; Source: Bloomberg.com

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**Landscape**

**Centre Partners forms new landscaping services platform in the Southeast**

Centre Partners, a middle market private equity firm with offices in New York and Los Angeles, partnered with independent sponsor LP First Capital to form United Land Services Holdings LLC, a platform to build a landscape services provider in the Southeast. United Land Services has completed its first five acquisitions: United Landscapes, Blandford Turf, Tree World, O'Hara and River Region Sports Fields.

Headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida, United Land Services is a commercial and residential landscape services platform serving a range of national and local customers throughout the Southeast. The company provides a suite of services, including landscape design and installation, commercial property maintenance, sod installation, tree/plant nursery and other specialty services. With the completion of its first five acquisitions, United Land Services has established a presence across several of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the Southeast, including the Florida cities of Jacksonville, Orlando and Port St. Lucie and the Alabama cities of Birmingham and Montgomery.

Bob Blandford, founder of United Landscapes and Blandford Turf and a veteran landscape operator with more than 20 years of experience in the industry, will serve as CEO of United Land Services.

"Centre is an excellent partner for United Land Services given its long track record of successfully collaborating with founders and entrepreneurs to scale their businesses," says Blandford. "Centre and LPFC's financial and strategic resources will enable us to accelerate our growth trajectory, expand our service capabilities and strengthen our market leadership, allowing us to better serve our customers."



**Landscape**

**The Grounds Guys honors top franchise performers for 2019**

The Grounds Guys, a Neighborly company based in Waco, Texas, named three companies as the network's top performers for 2019 during the organization's first virtual reunion.

The Franchisee of the Year award was given to Ben and Stephanie Schoot, owners of The Grounds Guys of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. This award is the highest honor that can be bestowed upon a franchise owner. It is presented to the owner who has consistently grown through proper training and management of their organization with a consistently high level of sales through quality and professional service.

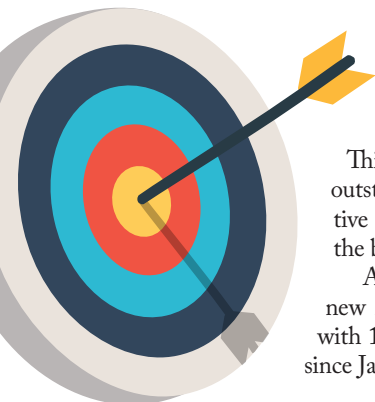
Rookie of the Year went to Matthew and Aleah White, owners of The Grounds Guys of Gulf Breeze, Florida. This award is presented to the franchise owner who has

demonstrated outstanding performance in sales and building their organization in their first 12 months. Only franchise owners in the system for less than 18 months are eligible.

The President's Award went to Travis Hicks and Travis Reed, owners of The Grounds Guys of League City, Texas.

This award is presented to the franchise owner who demonstrates outstanding performance, leadership and engagement with a proactive contribution to the brand. This recognition is specifically from the brand president of The Grounds Guys.

As of the close of September 2020, the brand has awarded 31 new franchise agreements, including a record-setting third quarter with 13 new agreements, and opened 28 new franchise locations just since January.



**COVID-19**

**BrightView pays \$6 million in bonuses to frontline team members**

BrightView Holdings Inc., Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, will pay \$6 million in one-time bonuses to frontline team members for their work during the peak of the coronavirus outbreak. More than 13,500 employees in branches across the U.S. will receive the bonus.

"Very early in the pandemic, landscaping was designated an essential service by federal and state authorities, allowing us to continue to serve our clients and help assure the safety of their properties," says Andrew Masterman, BrightView president and CEO. "For our frontline team members, this meant working outside, day after day, providing those essential services. This bonus is our way of acknowledging their work and commitment to BrightView and our clients under very difficult circumstances."

Those eligible for the one-time bonus include frontline workers and leaders employed by BrightView on May 1, 2020, and remaining with the company through Oct. 31, 2020, in BrightView's maintenance, development, golf maintenance and tree care businesses.

"I have never been more proud to be part of this team," says Masterman. "Every employee in every role has stepped up during this challenging time and made significant contributions to BrightView. We created custom protocols for equipment and vehicle sanitation, personal hygiene, face coverings and social distancing that were appropriate for the nature of our work, but our frontline workers in the field still had to leave their homes every day and do the difficult work of serving our clients."

Masterman said the bonus is one small way BrightView can show appreciation for those team members who have worked in the field with clients during these months of quarantine and lockdown.



## QUICK TAKES

### Sperber Landscape Companies partners with Crystal Greens

Sperber Landscape Companies, Westlake Village, California, acquired Crystal Greens Landscape Inc. Headquartered in Clackamas, Oregon, Crystal Greens has multiple facilities servicing the greater Portland, Vancouver and Salem metropolitan areas.

Founder and CEO Pat Murphy will continue his leadership of the company alongside General Manager Jason Sutton and his existing management team.

### Aquascape unveils new online training curriculum

Aquascape Inc., St. Charles, Illinois, will start a new online training curriculum designed for water feature professionals. Aquascape University includes free and paid courses and can be purchased in bundles or individually.

The courses are curated by Aquascape experts based on the education and training needs of customers. Also available are targeted courses that are specific to the roles of the various personnel within a water feature installation business, such as marketing or finance.

### Irrigators Supply joins the Heritage family of companies

McKinney, Texas-based Heritage Landscape Supply Group Inc. acquired Irrigators Supply Inc., a family-owned distributor of irrigation, agronomics, power equipment and other landscape products.

Headquartered in McKinney, Texas, Irrigators was founded in 1998 by Kenneth and Patty Phelps and currently employs a team of more than 20 people. The company also operates a second location in Denton, Texas.

## Landscape

### Weed Man announces South Florida development plans

Lawn care franchise Weed Man welcomes its newest subfranchisor to the 50-year running legacy company. CEO Joe Chiellini and Chief Operating Officer Mark Almeda of ASI Landscape Management, Thonotosassa, Florida, are the subfranchisors set to drive Weed Man expansion plans and services throughout South Florida.

Chiellini, Almeda and their team members will be instrumental to Weed Man's development across South Florida. With their first lawn care season beginning in 2021, the subfranchisors will be operating throughout the Tampa Bay area with 14 territories to start. They will increase the Weed Man brand awareness and superior service throughout South Florida with both new qualified franchisees and multiple corporate locations.



## Equipment

### Grasshopper Mowers honored for American export growth

The Grasshopper Company, Moundridge, Kansas, received the President's "E" Award for making a significant contribution to the expansion of U.S. exports. The company was honored Oct. 22 by Wilbur Ross, U.S. secretary of commerce.

"After decades of work to grow our international presence, this award comes as a great honor to the employees throughout our world headquarters and international importers who have worked tirelessly to promote and deliver the legendary benefits of Grasshopper equipment around the globe," says Grasshopper President Stan Guyer. "Our vision has always been rooted in relationships and long-term goals, and the decision to enter global markets was a commitment by the entire Grasshopper team to expand our vision and our skill sets. From logistics to finance, from engineering and production to marketing, all Grasshopper employees play a key role in assuring international sales are as seamless as domestic sales. The company's roots run deep in Kansas, and the expansion of international sales has allowed its employees and the region at large to benefit from the ripple effects of revenue generated from outside of the United States."

The company was selected in 2017 to represent Kansas on the front lawn of the White House as part of the inaugural Made in America product showcase celebrating each state's commitment to manufacturing.

The President's "E" Award was created in 1961 by executive order and is the highest recognition a U.S. entity can receive for making a significant contribution to the expansion of U.S. exports.

## Sports Turf

### PGA Tour welcomes TruGreen as an official marketing partner

The PGA Tour and TruGreen, Memphis, Tennessee, entered into a new multiyear marketing relationship that designates TruGreen as the "Official Lawn Care Treatment Provider of the PGA Tour, PGA Tour Champions and TPC Network."

By joining the Tour as an Official Marketing Partner, TruGreen will collaborate with the Tour and TPC Network agronomists on research and development opportunities along with educational content about lawn maintenance and the benefits of partnering with a lawn care professional. TruGreen will launch a campaign on the company's digital channels and [pgatour.com](http://pgatour.com), while continuing to advertise during PGA Tour telecasts.

"At TruGreen, we take immense pride in creating beautiful, green outdoor spaces where individuals can enjoy living life outside," says John Cowles, president and CEO of TruGreen. "This mission makes our partnership with the PGA Tour a natural fit. We are excited to support the impactful work of First Tee while joining our science-based expertise and tailored approach to lawn care with the agronomists of the TPC Network's iconic courses."





BY STACIE ZINN ROBERTS

# 5 offseason marketing tips

Just because your business slows down in the offseason doesn't mean your marketing should slow down too. Marketing in the offseason creates a top-of-mind awareness of your company so that when your customer is ready to buy, they think of you first. If you wait until spring to market your business because you assume that is when buying decisions are being made, you're probably already too late.

Here are five tips to keep your marketing working to grow your all year long.



You've been taking photos all year long of your best projects, right? **Turn those photos into social media posts.**

**1 Email marketing.** Every time you onboard a new customer, you gather email addresses as you record their contact information. The offseason is the time to begin turning those email addresses into assets that work in your favor. Create an email marketing campaign, launch a digital newsletter and send special offers for booking services ahead of the spring rush. If you have a blog or are just starting one, send an email to your customers asking them to subscribe. Use that email list to let your customers know you're on social media. Provide links to your accounts and ask them to follow you.

**2 Social media.** You've been taking photos all year long of your best projects, right? Turn those photos into social media posts. In the offseason, folks staring out their windows at snow will relish some scenes of green grass and trees with foliage. If you don't already have Facebook, Instagram and Houzz accounts, create them now in the offseason. Research which hashtags are popular in our industry and use them. A few to start with are: #landscaping, #backyarddesign, #irrigationsystem. Be sure to tag your location so local customers can find you.

**3 Think beyond traditional holidays.** Everyone sends Christmas cards (print or e-cards) or holiday gifts — and you should too. But don't just think about the traditional holidays. Build promo-

tions around other significant dates, especially ones that tie into landscaping and irrigation. Groundhog Day (Feb. 2) is the perfect time to remind your customers that spring is coming and they'll need your services soon. Use Groundhog Day to suggest they get on the calendar now, offer discounts or simply use it as one more marketing touchpoint. Earth Day (Apr. 22) provides another option to get your clients thinking about landscaping, especially if your company has a sustainability focus.

**4 Branded trinkets.** Consider sending your customers something beyond the typical (and expensive) hat or T-shirt. Smaller trinkets emblazoned with your logo such as pens, tote bags or coffee mugs are good choices. My favorite idea with a landscape connection is flower seed packets with your company logo printed on them. You can find them online priced at less than \$2 each depending on how many you order, and they're easy to mail. I've seen some that are self-contained postcards/seed packets in one. How cool is that? Imagine your customer's reaction when they receive a packet of seeds in the mail on a dark winter day. It's like sending hope with a postage stamp.

**5 Create a marketing plan.** In peak season, when you're busy serving customers and running crews, the last thing you have time to deal with is an advertising sales rep. Take the time now to create a marketing plan for the year. Contact your local media outlets to get pricing on ads. Develop a budget. The U.S. Small Business Administration recommends that small businesses with annual revenues less than \$5 million should allocate 7% to 8% of their revenue on marketing. When you have a plan and a budget in place, you'll be less likely to feel pressured to make marketing decisions when your focus is on other parts of your business.

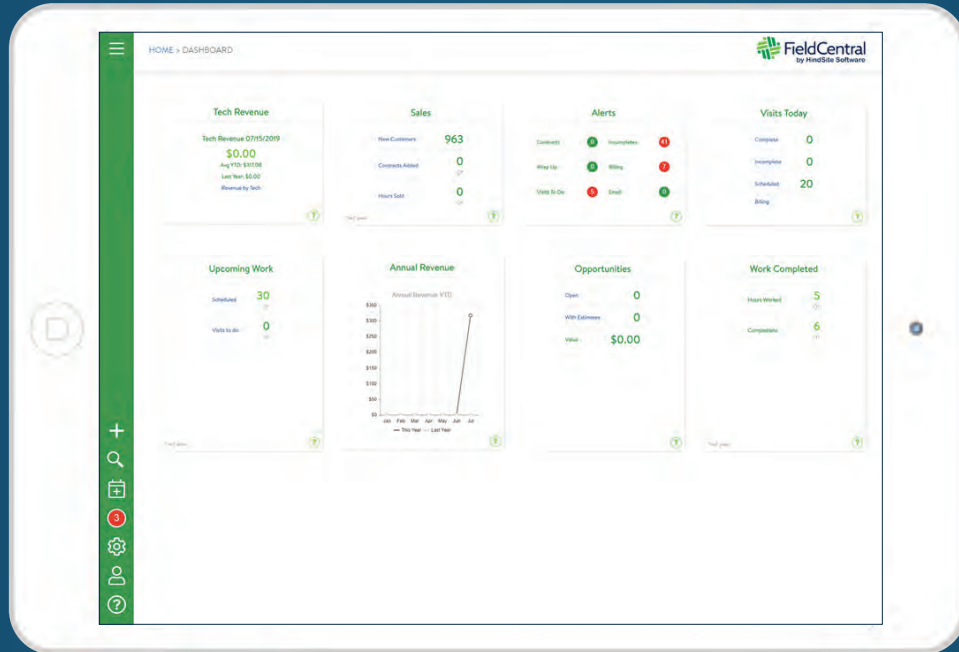
If you use these tips in the off-season, the work you do now will pay off in the year to come. 🌱



**Stacie Zinn Roberts** is an award-winning writer, marketing expert and founder of What's Your Avocado? Marketing and Public Relations, Mount Vernon, Washington, which specializes in green industry marketing. She can be reached at [stacie@whatsyouravocado.com](mailto:stacie@whatsyouravocado.com).

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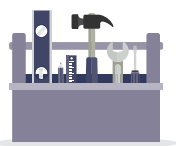
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BY KEVIN SMITH

## Keep lighting tools tidy



Keeping the correct mix of products and maintenance materials is key to a successful lighting business.

**H**ave you ever been out on a job site and needed that one extra cable connection? You look in every parts bin, but no luck! Or perhaps you needed a sharp pair of cable cutters. You finally get your hands on them but they are dull because one of your coworkers used them to prune or cut bailing wire. Both of these scenarios cost you time and money. Performing routine maintenance on equipment and keeping inventory in check is just as important as maintaining a previously installed job.

### Organizing

I am sure there have been times that you have thought, “I don’t know if I am ever going to need this, but I hate to get rid of it!” There are many ways to keep your shop and truck inventory rotated and up to date. For those lesser-used tools and materials, it might be necessary to store them in a special area. If you have not needed something in the last two to five years, it may be time to sell it. If something is broken or past its useful life, it might be time to part with it.

### Inventory

Keeping the correct mix of products and maintenance materials is key to a successful lighting business. Be sure to ask your rep about bulk purchases. Everyday items such as transformers, replacement lamps, cable connections and wire can often be purchased in bulk. Sometimes contractors achieve significant savings by purchasing in this manner.

If your company is smaller, you may want to split a bulk purchase with another contractor. Over the years, I have known contractors who have friendly competitor relationships and work with each other when it comes to bulk buying.

In addition, many distributors have outside sales reps assigned to your account. Some have adapted the concept of helping you take care of your inventory. Certain reps will schedule a time to visit your shop and help you with your normal inventory items. Many can also document your hot-moving items so you can plan your inventory and get the best pricing possible.

### Hand and power tools

Purchasing higher-quality hand tools is often debated amongst the trade. Some contractors agree that these tools are often lost on job sites. One day in the future, I am sure archaeologists will be digging up all those lost wire strippers and side cutters. The loss of these tools adds up over the years.

Improper use can also lead to tool loss. Using wire strippers for anything other than copper cable can dull the blade significantly. Be sure that these cutters are only used for copper and not steel or bailing wire.

Some contractors will only purchase higher-quality tools. These tools will generally have a much better design and an ergonomic, comfortable fit in the hand. Nonslip grips and sharper blades can increase productivity and cause less frustration. Higher-quality tools often have a limited lifetime warranty. Many contractors who purchase these tools have provided an incentive program for their employees. Each technician is issued a rig of hand tools. After one year, a bonus is given to those who have not lost or damaged the issued rig.

Power tools make all installations and service calls much easier. It is important to inspect these tools regularly. In larger companies the lead foremen are generally given the responsibility of keeping track of all tools. Any issues or replacement needs are reported to the operations manager. The operations manager will purchase new tools and schedule service for all equipment.

Many independent manufacturer reps and distributor sales managers are skilled in offering training for a variety of tools. Be sure to ask about these training classes. This will help you stay on top of the latest equipment and try before you buy.

What nuggets of wisdom have you learned about tools and inventory that help set you up for success? I’d love to hear what has worked well for you. Reach out to me at [kevin.smith@brillianceled.com](mailto:kevin.smith@brillianceled.com) and share your advice. 🍀



Kevin Smith is the national technical support and trainer at Brilliance LED LLC, Carefree, Arizona, and can be reached at [kevin.smith@brillianceled.com](mailto:kevin.smith@brillianceled.com).



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# 2021 Green Industry OUTLOOK

By Kyle Brown

Our annual survey tracks a challenging  
year for industry professionals.

Welcome to *Irrigation & Green Industry's* 2021 Green Industry Outlook. This year's survey expands on trends from the last two years of our reports on the wider industry, building a more complete picture of the market and providing insights to benchmark your business against.

Whether you ended up expanding or struggling, 2020 supplied plenty of challenges for irrigation and landscape professionals. Between COVID-19, labor issues and a presidential election, there was enough uncertainty in the past year, even on top of the usual struggles for green industry businesses.

Our survey tracked how readers made it through 2020 and uncovered the larger trends shaping the industry. It showed how the demographics have continued to change through the past few years. We added several questions to this year's survey to gauge how contractors dealt with some important issues, such as the pandemic and diversity, and refined a few of the questions from last year to get the best and most relevant results.

This year's survey brought back an even larger response than last year with a total of 1,063 respondents. We're so grateful for your help in building an accurate snapshot of the landscape and irrigation industry, as well as showing how you're taking on those important day-to-day obstacles. Our respondents came from across the industry with a wide range of job titles and company sizes,

and those varied viewpoints make all the difference in building confidence in these results.

Once again, we had so much information from this year's survey that we could not fit it all in the print edition.

Several parts of our analysis here are expanded online. In the digital edition, the labor section includes more information on how much employees are being paid, how many employees respondents keep on staff, and crew diversity. For the look ahead, it covers which products respondents are purchasing for customers in the upcoming year and which trends they expect to grow the most. We also dig deeper into the impact made to the industry by COVID-19, including how it affected overall business growth, how it changed employee headcounts and how respondents expect it to influence the future. Check out the full report on [www.igin.com](http://www.igin.com) for all of the details and additional statistics.

We'd also like to thank our sponsor, Heritage Landscape Supply Group, which assisted by providing the two drawing prizes for this year's survey, a mini quadcopter drone and a \$250 gift card to Bass Pro Shops/Cabela's.

If you're preparing for the new year with an eye toward growth or just finding a way to get back on your feet after last year, our report is a guide to how the wider industry is moving forward. Use our data to build a plan to take on whatever 2021 has in store.

*Thanks to Heritage Landscape Supply Group  
for sponsoring this year's report.*



# Seeing the BIG PICTURE

This year's survey respondents had a similar distribution across the U.S. to the last two years, with the majority (33%) coming from the West. Representation shifted slightly in the Upper and Lower Midwest from last year's survey, with a few more voices in the southern states and a few less in the north. The response in the Southeast has remained almost exactly the same through all three surveys. With even more responses than last year's record-setting survey, this year's demographic breakdown is a reliable representation.

The number of respondents who run their businesses year-round has held steady across each survey at 83%, compared to seasonal (17%).

Our respondents are primarily contractors, taking up 66% of the total with the top three spots. Landscape contractors take the lead with almost a third of all respondents (31%), with irrigation (21%) and lawn care (14%) not far behind. No other response

received more than 10%, though government and municipality personnel come close at 8%.

The vast majority of respondents are executives (53%) and managers (29%), a wider spread than last year's survey, which had executives at 66% and managers at 21%. An increased number of respondents consider themselves primarily specialists at 7%, up from 4% two years ago.

Survey respondents tend to have plenty of experience, with a total of 37% having been around the green industry for more than 31 years. That's down from last year's 42% for the same group, and 49% for 2019's survey. Newer contractors are gaining ground, as those with up to 10 years of experience rise to a total of 17% compared to last year's 14%. The largest cohort decade is between 21 and 30 years of experience at 27%.

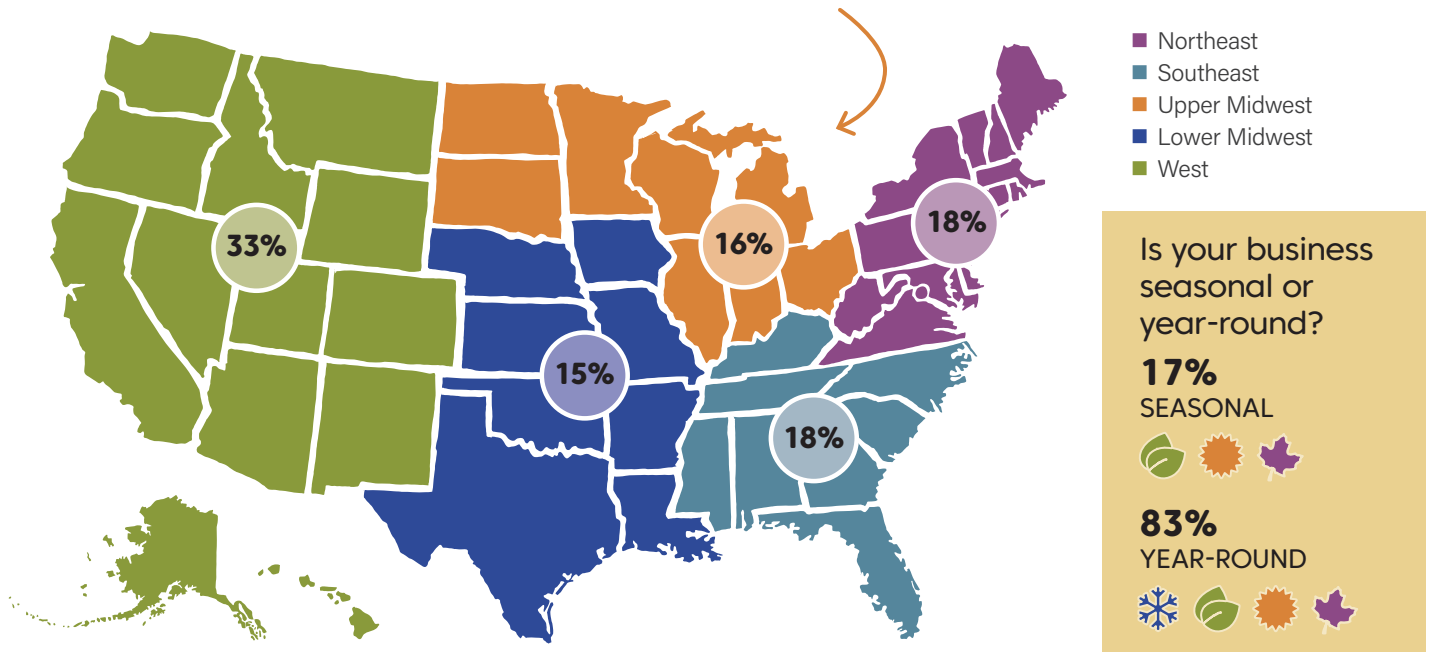
Age range saw a shift from last year's results, with the 40 to 49 range jumping to 24% from 18%. That's more in line with

our 2019 survey. Younger voices, including those between 20 and 39, saw increases as well. Almost a third of all respondents (27%) continue to land in the 60+ bracket, however.

About half (55%) of these companies are family-owned, which is trending down from last year (57%) and 2019 (63%). Privately held companies are about the same at 32%, but government representatives are up slightly at 11%, from 8% last year.

The total number of companies that have been in business for more than 31 years is exactly the same as last year at 43%. Across the younger spread, companies between 11 and 20 years gained some ground at 19% after reducing to last year's 15%, but that segment still has a distance to go before reaching its high of 21% in 2019. The industry continues to tend to be driven by older experts who have been at the lead of their companies long enough to work past some obstacles.

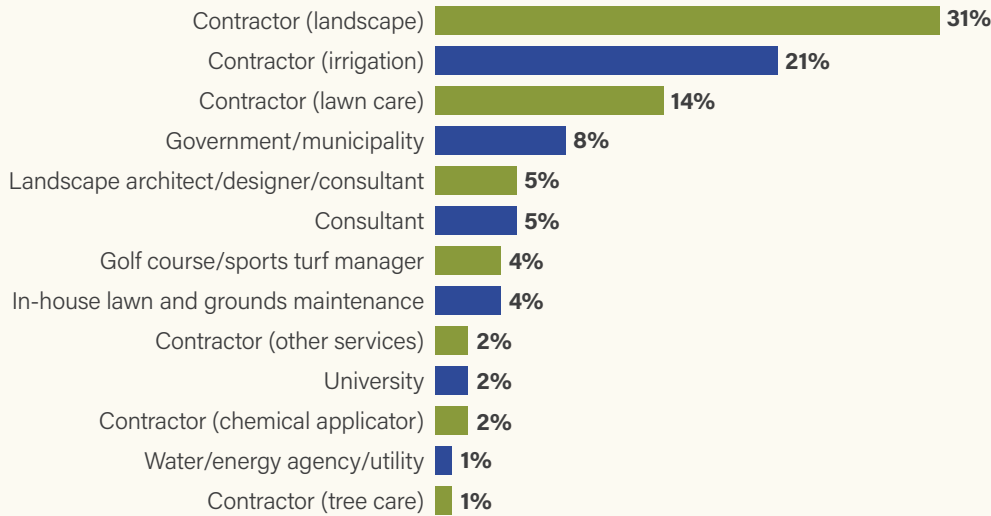
## INDUSTRY RESPONDENT REPRESENTATION



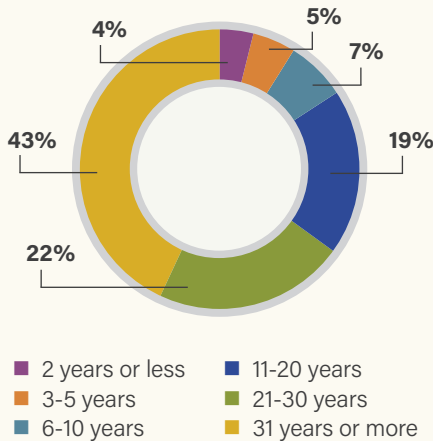
### What types of properties do you service?



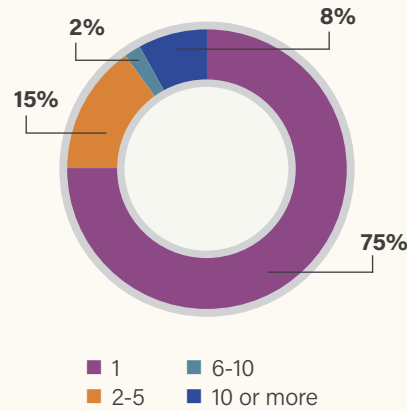
## What is your company/organization's primary business?



## How long has your company been in business?



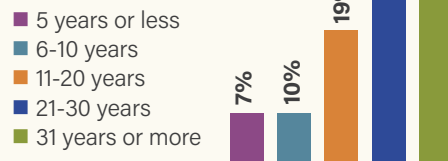
## How many locations does your company have?



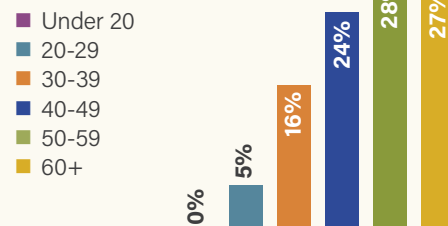
## AN EXPERIENCED GROUP OF RESPONDENTS

Which of the following best describes your title?	
<b>Executive</b> Owner, partner, CEO, president, general manager	<b>53%</b>
<b>Manager/supervisor</b> Architect, director, superintendent, foreman, landscape grounds manager, consultant	<b>29%</b>
<b>Specialist</b> Arborist, agronomist, forester, horticulturist, instructor, water manager, researcher, engineer	<b>7%</b>
<b>Sales/marketing/PR/advertising</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Service crew member</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>6%</b>

## How long have you been working in the landscape industry?



## How old are you?



## WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SERVICES DOES YOUR COMPANY PROVIDE?

**70%**  
Irrigation maintenance

**63%**  
Irrigation design and installation

**57%**  
Lawn maintenance

**57%**  
Landscape design and installation

**52%**  
Drainage

**50%**  
Turf and landscape renovation

**47%**  
Disease, insect and weed control

**46%**  
Hardscaping

**45%**  
Chemical application

**42%**  
Tree and ornamental care

**40%**  
Landscape lighting

**33%**  
Snow/ice management

**29%**  
Water features

**27%**  
Environmentally friendly services

**21%**  
Hydroseeding/erosion control

**16%**  
Holiday lighting

# Looking FORWARD

The industry definitely saw some shake-ups in the past year, especially as what was expected to be a strong season opened under the threat of COVID-19. Many contractors found ways to push through, but the struggle seems to be a reason for one of the largest swings in this year's survey. Respondents who expected their business to have remained flat or decrease rose to a total of 43%, compared to 20% in the previous year and 25% in 2019. That outpaced the next two highest groups combined. Those who expected a decrease jumped by almost 10% over the past two years.

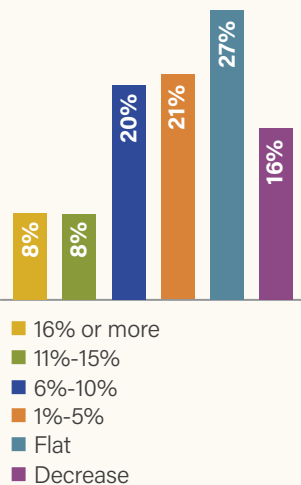
Despite the roughest growth year so far in our survey, respondents aren't expecting a heavy change in gross revenue overall for 2020. The results for this year line up fairly neatly with both of the previous surveys, with the highest peaks still for those projecting between \$100,001 and \$500,000 (27%) and between \$1,000,001 and \$5 mil-

lion (25%). Those expecting less than \$100,000 increased to 19% for 2021 from 14% in 2020. Business development might be stifled, but respondents are still finding ways to maintain revenue goals.

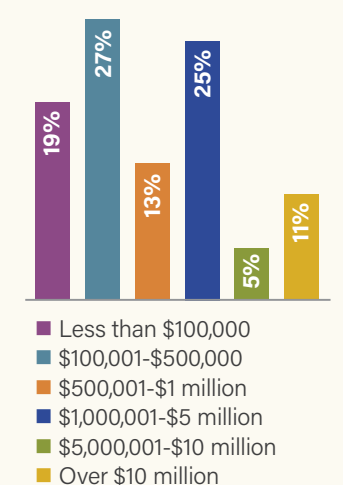
Looking back at the year, most contractors didn't seem to think COVID-19 heavily impacted overall growth, with 64% saying it didn't have an effect or encouraged growth. That still leaves 36% who struggled. Roughly the same group (41%) applied for additional loans in the past year to help weather the pandemic.

Labor continues to be the largest expense and biggest obstacle for the industry for the second year running. The top three expenses and obstacles stayed the same from 2020's survey, though more respondents are concerned about overall economic conditions (16%) than the previous year (10%). That's no surprise in a year with both a pandemic and an election.

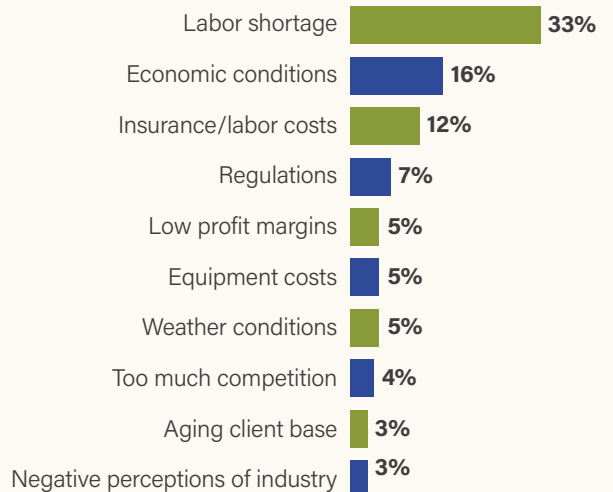
Compared to 2019, how much do you expect your business has grown in 2020?



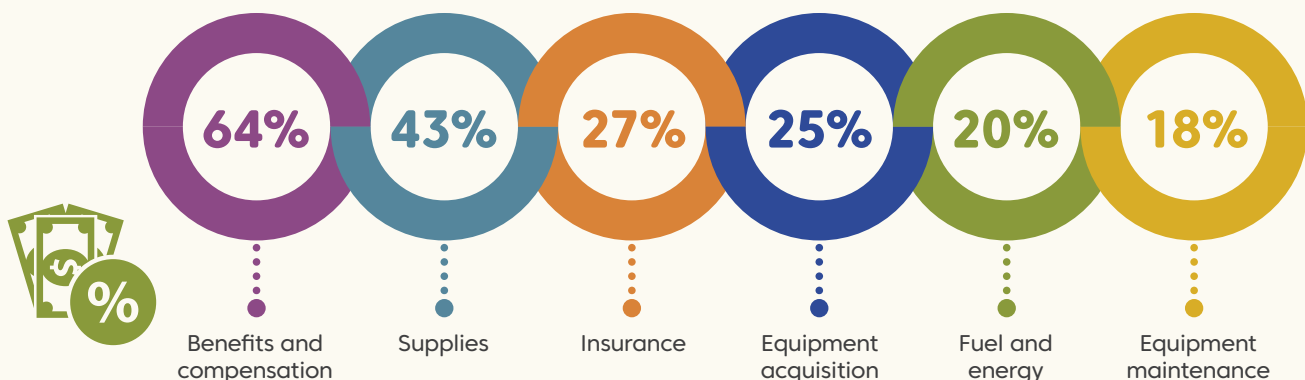
What is your company's projected gross revenue for 2020?



What barriers most impact your business growth?



## WHAT ARE YOUR COMPANY'S LARGEST EXPENSES?





# Putting in THE WORK

**B**uilding and maintaining a strong crew continues to be difficult for the industry, and that was made no easier by other obstacles this year. Almost the same exact number of respondents (64%) say there aren't enough qualified workers this year as in the last two years (65% and 66%, respectively). Out of that group, 24% strongly believe that their region doesn't have enough labor available.

The trend continues with the number of employees at peak season, which again has similar numbers to previous years. Slightly fewer maintained 1 to 5 employees in 2020 (37%) compared to the previous year (40%), though both of those are down from 48% in 2019. There was an uptick of those employing between 6 and 25 employees (35%) in 2020 compared to the previous year (30%), so it's possible some contractors are still finding enough potential employees to see some expansion.

Employers tend to pay their crew members more than \$9 over minimum wage (30%), with the next highest group paying \$5 to \$6 more than minimum wage (24%).

The H-2B nonimmigrant visa program saw an additional obstacle last year with executive orders limiting its effectiveness. Slightly fewer respondents used the program for 2020 (7%) as compared to the previous year (9%). The number of respondents who have never participated at all (83%) continues to trend downward (84% and 88%, respectively). The program remains a challenge, but it is useful to some contractors.

One additional challenge respondents faced this year was maintaining a labor force in the face of a pandemic. Almost a third (29%) of respondents saw a decrease in total employees because of COVID-19, but 9% gained a few new workers to handle the extra available work.

More respondents have no Spanish-speaking employees (36%) than last year (33%), but there's a slight uptick in the 26% to 75% range, comparing 23% of respondents this year to last year's 21%.

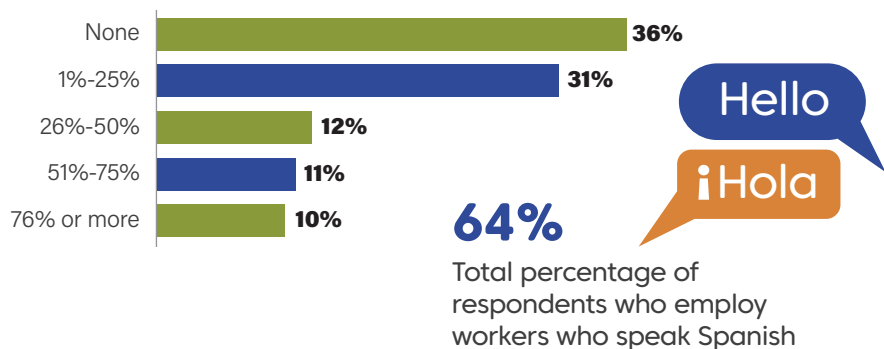
Some of the new questions on this year's survey dealt with overall diversity among employees. Almost three-quarters (71%) of respondents say they have a business that is racially diverse, and almost the same number (70%) say that the business has gender diversity as well. About two-thirds (59%) of respondents have a policy or program related to employee diversity.

More crews are using job management software than not, but it's close, with 56% incorporating it consistently into the routine. That's still a jump up from last year, when 43% of respondents used job management software regularly. It's possible that the increase was due to contractors rapidly shifting to socially distant business practices. It'll be interesting to see if that trend continues into the new year as companies see efficiencies from the software beyond just getting through the pandemic.

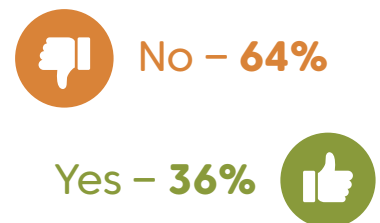
A wide majority of employers encourage employees to pursue education and development, with 91% supporting crew development. That's even an increase from last year's 89% in the affirmative, which shows the continued dedication of contractors to empowering their teams to grow. Especially as labor is still such a challenge, it's important for crews to be able to take on more responsibility.

One-fifth (20%) of respondents perform daily crew safety checks or training, and a little more than half (52%) do them weekly or monthly. A little more unnerving is that 13% don't do any regular safety checks or training. Getting into a routine of providing safety information and training regularly is one of the best ways to keep crews safe and healthy and maintain workflow.

## What percentage of your employees speak Spanish?



## Does your region offer enough qualified workers to meet your company's needs?



# A BETTER YEAR ahead



Despite a rough year for many contractors, respondents are optimistic about what 2021 will bring. A total of 88% expect either moderate or significant growth in the upcoming year. That's even more confident than last year, when 79% of respondents expected growth. It's possible that among contractors, the feeling is that the market can't contract much more.

The majority of respondents believe that COVID-19 won't make a heavy impact on business growth in 2021, with 16% expecting a moderate or significant decline. News of potential vaccines are probably buoying those hopes, though relief is likely still some distance off.

Contractors are looking for the continued benefits of clients who have spent much of 2020 at home and improving their yards.

Next year is about "the positive that evolved from COVID-19 that is driving people outdoors, investing and working from home," writes one respondent.

Others have taken the time in the past year to really look at what the business needs to develop. The best opportunity is "general growth of the company, fruits of internal growth and development through 2020," writes another respondent.

"We're still in business," writes one respondent. "Some companies haven't, or won't, make it through next year."

Many are hopeful about finding better crews in the upcoming year and having a more stabilized economy in the green industry, as well as in the building and construction industries. Others are looking at just the company's survival through 2020 as the real accomplishment.

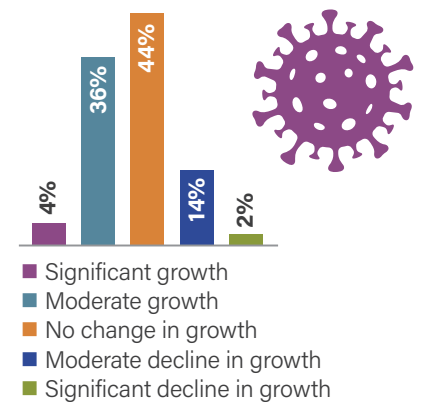
## Which of the following services are you considering expanding or adding in 2021?

Irrigation maintenance	28%
Irrigation design and installation	23%
Landscape lighting	22%
Landscape design and installation	20%
Environmentally friendly services	19%
Chemical application	17%
Hardscaping	17%
Lawn maintenance	17%
Disease, insect and weed control	16%
Tree and ornamental care	16%
Turf and landscape renovation	15%
Drainage	15%
Water features	13%
Holiday lighting	12%
Snow/ice management	10%
Hydroseeding/erosion control	6%

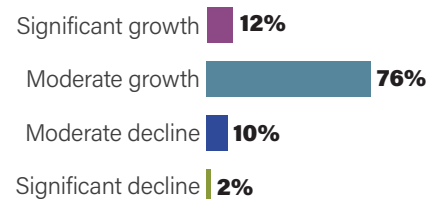
## Which of the following services are you considering reducing or eliminating in 2021?

Chemical application	23%
Snow/ice management	19%
Holiday lighting	18%
Water features	16%
Lawn maintenance	15%
Hydroseeding/erosion control	12%
Disease, insect and weed control	11%
Drainage	9%
Hardscaping	9%
Irrigation maintenance	8%
Landscape lighting	7%
Irrigation design and installation	6%
Landscape design and installation	5%
Tree and ornamental care	5%
Turf and landscape renovation	5%
Environmentally friendly services	4%

## How do you expect COVID-19 to impact your business's growth in 2021?



## How do you rate the expected growth in demand for your business's services in 2021?





## Methodology

The 2021 Green Industry Outlook Survey was developed in SurveyMonkey with three mail invitations including individual, anonymous links sent to respondents between Oct. 20 and Nov. 3. An open link was also shared via *Irrigation & Green Industry* social media and by sponsor Heritage Landscape Supply Group via email. Responses gathered by the open link were additionally checked for duplicates and relevance to the survey. Each invitation included information on the drawings for a DJI Mavic mini quadcopter drone or a \$250 gift card to Bass Pro Shops/Cabela's. Survey results were closed Nov. 3 with 1,063 responses. *Irrigation & Green Industry* staff analyzed the survey results.

## A special thanks

Thanks to everyone who participated in this year's survey. These insights into the wider industry would not be possible without you. It was so helpful to have you take the time to respond to our survey and make your voice heard.

To show our appreciation, sponsor Heritage Landscape Supply Group provided prizes for two drawings. That drawing was completed at the end of November.

Thanks again for your help in putting together our industry outlook and for making it the largest so far!



## Read the full report online

We gathered so much information for this year's survey that we couldn't fit it all in the print edition. To read more and dig into the details, including which industry trends respondents expect to grow the most in 2021, head to [www.igin.com/2021-green-industry-outlook](http://www.igin.com/2021-green-industry-outlook). Download the full PDF and see how your business compares.

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KEVIN RINSCHLER

## BRIDGING THE GAP

The regional irrigation technical advisor at SiteOne Landscape Supply helps employees and contractors tackle challenging irrigation issues.

BY SARAH BUNYEA

**M**any people dream of taking the things they're passionate about and creating their ideal job. Kevin Rinschler, CID, CIC, CLIA, has had the unique opportunity to do just that. His role as regional irrigation technical advisor at SiteOne Landscape Supply, Roswell, Georgia, gives him the chance to travel the country sharing his knowledge with industry professionals everywhere. Based out of Charlotte, North Carolina, his role is twofold: to be a resource to SiteOne employees on all kinds of irrigation topics and to support the contractors that SiteOne serves.

"It's basically a one-off position that I created within the company just from my tenure being here and identifying needs not just within our company, but within the industry," explains Rinschler.

Because SiteOne is a large, diverse company that sells products across all green industry segments, there's not always an irrigation expert working with every customer on every job, he says. That's where

he steps in as a resource to bridge these gaps. His 20-plus years working in both landscape and irrigation contracting and sales have given him the knowledge, network of contacts and overall product knowledge that he regularly uses to point SiteOne associates and outside consultants, specifiers and contractors in the right direction when they need assistance.

"I'm a resource that contractors can rely on for the technical support and

guidance on various challenges that they face that may be outside their current wheelhouse or level of expertise," Rinschler says. "I can be a point person and a go-to guy for the more challenging projects."

He explains this looks different for every contractor he works with, whether they're just getting into irrigation or are more experienced and need help with an advanced issue.

"My goal is to try to make things easy, in particular for contractors, and take some of the technical burden off of them. They have enough to worry about. Their business is challenging enough, let alone to figure out, 'Well, I don't know how to speak the language to a network administrator to get my irrigation controller to connect to the internet,'" says Rinschler. "So, it's like, 'Hey, don't worry about that. I'll take care of that. You go do all the physical work and turn wrenches and dig trenches, and I'll help you manage that and be there to support you.'"

Rather than working with specific customers, he's a "project person," going where the need is. This means a combination of working with the local SiteOne branches and staff that are there, and when needed, getting in the car or on a plane and traveling to be on the front end of the project to assist the consultant or specifier.

"A lot of times there's another seller that's on the frontline with the relationship that's making the sale," says Rinschler. "They just call me in when they get to that complicated pump station, for example, and I'm behind the scenes doing what I need to do to assist with that portion of the project. It takes some of that stress and burden off of them."

### UP FOR A CHALLENGE

Rinschler was drawn to irrigation in the early days of his career because it required troubleshooting and

**I'm a resource that contractors can rely on for the technical support and guidance on various challenges that they face that may be outside their current wheelhouse or level of expertise."**

— KEVIN RINSCHLER,  
SITEONE LANDSCAPE SUPPLY



Kevin Rinschler, CID, CIC, CLIA, is the regional irrigation technical advisor at SiteOne Landscape Supply, Roswell, Georgia. He is passionate about educating and supporting both SiteOne employees and contractors with the technical challenges they encounter in irrigation. Photos: Michael LoBiondo Photography



Whether it's a puzzling technical issue that needs solving or the variety of colleagues and contractors he gets to work with around the country, Rinschler enjoys that his job brings new experiences every day.

problem-solving skills. Even today, he says it's the challenges and diversity that come with each project that make his job interesting. The high-need projects he's involved in usually are related to pump systems, rainwater harvesting, retrofits and more advanced irrigation control systems. In addition to the technical challenges of working with these projects, he says it's enjoyable to work with various coworkers and contractors in different markets.

"It's just intriguing to me to work with them and be able to help them and also learn from that, because each market operates a little bit differently," says Rinschler.

**If you have a younger go-getter at your company that understands technology well, that employee may be that next person who can manage the technical side of irrigation systems.**

Whether it's each project location's regulations or even just the different personalities of contractors he works with, he welcomes the challenge of being able to adapt to that to train and support each of them. His job has taken him many places, including to a project he sold in Indonesia in 2019. The specifications required commissioning of the pump and control equipment, so he assisted the commissioning agent in closing out that project with the contractor. It took a lot of prep work, making sure he had all the parts needed ahead of time, and he was challenged in working with a 12-hour time difference. But the project wrapped up successfully. His aim on each project isn't just to fix the one issue he's called in for, it's about helping contractors improve their method of installation to prevent future risk of the same thing happening.

"If I can help someone be successful, then as a result, I'm successful. We both win," he says.

Rinschler spends a lot of time with retrofit projects. He gets a lot of questions when a contractor has a large irrigation system that needs to be upgraded. These projects can take a lot of time because there's not always good information on existing sites, he says. When starting work with a contractor, he'll ask questions, evaluate the site and provide recommendations on what systems they should look at based on what their needs are. Once this overview is done, he then assists them on moving forward. Sometimes this means being present at their client meetings as a backup expert to explain the systems, some of the features and how they work.

"At that point, you're selling a different side of the system when you're talking to an end user versus the contractor, and they don't necessarily need to know how it works, they just want to know if it meets their needs and if it fits their budget," Rinschler says. "Those projects can be drawn out. I have some that I've been dabbling with on and off for the past five years."

## GETTING CONNECTED

A lot of the challenges Rinschler helps contractors with involve the integration of emerging technology into the industry. He says it's difficult for a contractor who is used to working every day in the field to suddenly have to figure out how to connect an irrigation controller to the internet.

When there's a need for it on projects, Rinschler acts as the go-between to handle communicating with the appropriate people to manage the connectivity issues so the contractor can focus on the actual irrigation installation. He advises contractors to find somebody who can take on this more administrative type of role to manage the technical side of irrigation systems.

"If you have that younger go-getter, up-and-comer and they seem to be pretty technologically advanced with things in general, he or she may be that next person that understands Wi-Fi and networking," he says.

## EDUCATION IS KEY

While the COVID-19 pandemic has meant less time traveling to visit customers at job sites, it's allowed Rinschler to focus more on training programs and developing resources to easily send to people when they need them. During the past few years, Rinschler has also been a part of SiteOne's development and implementation of an in-house employee training program for irrigation.

"We were always providing training, but what we did is we started looking at our own people and saying, 'Hey, we have to make sure that our own people are getting this level of training as well,'" Rinschler says.

They've found that irrigation contractors want to talk to and buy from people who understand irrigation terminology and all the technical parts of a system.

Rinschler says the goal of this in-house training is "to raise our standard as a distributor to be able to better serve our customers. It's a great way to build the relationship between the customer and supplier, but it also gives them the confidence that they can rely on us again as a resource to help them through things."

In addition to the ongoing education classes and events SiteOne offers its customers, Rinschler helps provide individual and small group training.

"I'll just gather up my stuff and go to their office or go to a job site and do specific one-on-one training that can be geared to the needs of that specific customer, because then they feel like they're getting the most value out of it because they can ask pointed questions," he says.

While in person training is on hold during the pandemic, Rinschler is looking forward to getting back out there and continuing to train, support and build relationships with others in the industry.

### NO LIMITS

Rinschler strongly believes that technical support is critical for contractors and says there's practically no ceiling for his role to grow due to SiteOne's size and growth.

"SiteOne gives me a platform that is pretty much endless, and it's kind of an open canvas that I'm able to take the things I've learned and the experience I have and keep expanding on that," says Rinschler. "It's exciting and it's unique that we value, and upper management understands, that

we need these key irrigation technical people because they're critical to the business."

Rinschler looks forward to the opportunities ahead of him and wants to continue focusing on education and trying to raise the standard of the industry overall.

"I've always tried to be that person to create opportunity for myself, which is why I'm where I am today, within SiteOne and in the industry. But I'm always going to

have that focus for the future," says Rinschler. "I want to continue to expand my sphere of influence in the industry to be a resource and to be influential and to help train and educate contractors and the next generations of professionals." 🌱

The author is digital content editor of *Irrigation & Green Industry* and can be reached at sarahbunyea@igin.com.



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Rinschler spends the majority of his time working on projects involving pump systems, rainwater harvesting, retrofits and more advanced irrigation control systems.



By Tom Borg

# Plan for **GROWTH**

Create a developmental success plan for your employees.

**H**ow would you like to make your green industry company one of the best places to work, a company that attracts and keeps the best employees? This would be a place where people who work there feel they have a purpose, a direction and a future. It would be a company where they are excited about coming to work each day.

Sound too good to be true? It's not. It just takes some creativity, planning and a little work.

Let's face it, one of the biggest headaches businessowners are facing today is hiring qualified employees. Like the wise old saying goes: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." How can that age-old advice be translated to address this concern?

According to the 2020 Engagement and Retention Report by Achievers.com, 43% of employees in U.S. companies would consider leaving their company for career advancement with another organization.

One way to help prevent this conundrum that I recommend to all of my green industry clients is to create and implement a process that retains the right people. With many of the clients I work with, we create a career ladder for every team member in their company. You can do the same thing in your organization. Here's how to do it.

The first step is to conduct some internal focus groups with your managers and employees. Find out what they like about working at your company. What don't they like? What can be improved? What would make it a really great company to work for?

One of my clients reported to me that when they asked their team of foremen what one of the things they disliked was, he and his partner were surprised by the answer. Many of his high-achieving foremen resented the fact that some of their peers were not performing up to the high standards the company had set, and yet, they were still getting their full quarterly bonuses. Upon hearing this my client wisely revamped the quarterly bonus system and made sure those foremen who were not performing properly did not receive a bonus.

Next, do an inventory of your onboarding process for new hires. Make sure it's the kind of process that helps your newly hired employees and managers start out on the right foot and have ongoing support for a successful experience. One thing you can do is to make sure there is a buddy system in place for each new hire to receive the support they will invariably need and want in the first 90 days and beyond.

Next, create a career ladder for each position in your company. Make sure that all new hires, as well as your managers and employees, know what their career path can look like in your organization.

To illustrate what a career ladder would look like for each position, create a flow chart showing the steps a person would take to progressively move up within your organization, starting from a particular entry-level position. This flow chart would include these types of necessary items or accomplishments:

- amount of work experience
- certifications
- in-house training completed
- outside training completed
- attendance at either in-person or virtual conferences
- mentoring and coaching programs completed
- emotional intelligence skills
- mastery of customer relation skills
- mastery of specific leadership skills

The key is to show the progression of an individual in each particular position and how they can progress step by step up their company career ladder. Again, let me remind you to be sure to create a company career ladder for entry-level positions as well as management-level positions. If you do it correctly, many of your future foremen are going to come from your new entry-level hires.

The next step is to take the job description for each position and use it to develop an Annual Developmental Success Plan for each person in your company. Here's how to do it. Create a spreadsheet for each person in your organization. Using their job



**MAKE SURE THAT ALL NEW HIRES, AS WELL AS YOUR MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES, KNOW WHAT THEIR CAREER PATH CAN LOOK LIKE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION.**

description, divide the skill sets and competencies into three groups:

- must haves
- should haves
- nice to haves

Use a point system of five points for must haves, three points for should haves and one point for nice to haves. Requiring a specific point level of mastery for each section will help you determine if that person has met the level of competency they need to develop over the next 12 months.

You now have a system to continually assess an individual's progress throughout the year. Email me to receive a free Annual Developmental Success Plan document.

As I have mentioned in past articles, it is critical to give periodic and continual feedback to your employees and managers. As employee development specialist Bob Kelleher advises, annual reviews or performance appraisals are dead. A continual feedback system is one of the best ways to help your employees and leadership teams succeed in reaching their full potential. Three of the benefits for taking this approach are that you will

- give your team members something to strive for.
- build pride among your employees and foremen.
- build your company's reputation for being the place to come to work.

By giving periodic and continual feedback to each person throughout the next 12 months, you can help them stay on track to accomplish their Annual Developmental Success Plan. This can help you determine their success in reaching their agreed-upon objectives during that time frame. Bonuses, raises, special perks and promotions can be fairly awarded based on their ability to successfully complete their objectives. At the end of the year, there will be no surprises when they earn or don't earn them. If you need help in putting this together, feel free to contact me with your questions. 🌱



**Tom Borg** is a team performance and customer experience expert who works with green industry organizations and their leadership teams to help them connect, communicate and work together better without all the drama through his consulting, training, coaching, leadership instruments and job benchmarking tools. To ask him a question, please call 734.404.5909, email [tom@tomborg.com](mailto:tom@tomborg.com) or visit his website at: [www.tomborgconsulting.com](http://www.tomborgconsulting.com).

**CREATE A COMPANY CAREER LADDER FOR ENTRY-LEVEL POSITIONS AS WELL AS MANAGEMENT-LEVEL POSITIONS.**

# THE RIGHT FIT FOR THE JOB

By Kyle Brown

The 2021 model year brings features that make trucks safer and more versatile.

**N**o matter how else the past year has changed the industry for landscape and irrigation professionals, one aspect isn't likely to shift: Contractors rely on their trucks.

This year's truck models deliver on features that make the day-to-day job go more smoothly, with safety upgrades and connectivity boosts.

"In the truck segment and in this industry, we're continually trying to improve capability for the owners," says Brian Bell, F-150 and Ranger marketing manager for Ford Motor Company, Dearborn, Michigan. "It's a tool to do a job. We want to give them the best tool we can."

To start, look for trends in improvement in towing and payload, as well as other efficiencies, he says.

Features that help in working with a trailer can save both time and labor, says Mark Namuth, commercial sales manager for Nissan North America, Franklin, Tennessee. Some include features that allow contractors to check the lights of a connected trailer from the key fob or a camera setup that assists in hooking up the trailer quickly.

"Probably the biggest cost in the landscape business is labor," Namuth says, as saved time for the crew

in getting a trailer set up and to the job site more quickly saves money overall.

New features don't have to just be on the outside of the vehicle either, as OEMs get more savvy about a truck doubling as an office in the field. Some bring new features that make it easier to handle paperwork or use a laptop or tablet comfortably while on-site, says Bell. On-board modems and Wi-Fi capabilities provide even more options to streamline mobile work.

"Connectivity is big," Bell says. "It becomes your mobile office so you can use it as your Wi-Fi hotspot instead of your cell phone."

Namuth also notes a current trend toward jobs at smaller residential properties for landscapers. "That's really making a need for smaller vehicles to get into these spaces," he says. That's another position where extra cameras and viewpoints can be critical to easy maneuvering around a work site for both a truck and trailer.

Safety items also include features like intelligent cruise control, where a vehicle uses sensors to determine and match the speed of the vehicle ahead on the road, causing less shifting back and forth between modes, he says.

Safety features in new models also extend to using sensors to help prevent collisions, both on the road and in closer quarters, says Brian Tabel, executive director of marketing for Isuzu, Anaheim, California. That includes concepts like audio and visual alerts when pedestrians are in range or when another vehicle



**NEW SAFETY FEATURES AND SENSORS HELP PROTECT YOUR CREW AND YOUR EQUIPMENT WHILE ON THE ROAD.**

is in a blind spot during a lane shift. Those features can help track lane drifting by sensing the center line or right line on the road, to help get the crew from the garage to the job site safely.

“Lane detection is really paramount from the standpoint of making sure that everyone’s paying attention to their surroundings as they drive a commercial vehicle,” he says.

### MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

When looking at buying a new vehicle this year, start by really considering the application, says Namuth. Have you recently scaled your business because of extra work due to COVID-19? Will your crew need to haul a lot of tools to the site, and will they need a power supply once there? Drill down on what you’ll need and make certain that the vehicle you’re looking at will deliver.

“These guys will go to great lengths to inspect a lawnmower or zero-turn mower,” Namuth says. “Do that same due diligence on your vehicle.”

Have a good understanding of how much you’ll be hauling or towing, and know the weight that truck will need to be able to move reliably, he says.

“All OEMs provide a little bit of leeway into their spec in terms of what they need,” Namuth says. “But still, if you’re running 10% over what that OEM’s max towing is, that’s just going to lead to a lot of expensive problems.”

Keep those extra connectivity capabilities and user comfort features in mind as well, given how much time your crew spends in the cab, says Bell. The truck needs to be able to support the team not just by hauling equipment but also in its usefulness in being an organized mobile office.

As landscaping jobs increased through last season, there was an immediate need for trucks in the field, Tabel says. It’s important to keep in mind dealer and vehicle availability when making a purchase this year. Make sure they can meet your need within the timeframe you’re working with.

Even if you’re not running a large crew to a site, a crew cab vehicle is a solid consideration, says Namuth. That way, you’ll have room for potential expansion later without having to invest in a brand-new vehicle.

Look through some of the features in this year’s new models and see which truck will help you get the job done. 🌱

The author is editor-in-chief of *Irrigation & Green Industry* and can be reached at [kylebrown@igin.com](mailto:kylebrown@igin.com).



### CHEVROLET SILVERADO 2500 HD & 3500 HD

This year’s Silverado HD includes two heavy-duty powertrain options, new towing technologies and a large Durabed.

Its maximum towing capacity has increased to 36,000 pounds, and it now carries a maximum available payload of 7,442 pounds. It maintains its two powertrain options from last year’s model. The first is a 401-horsepower 6.6-liter V-8 gas engine with direct injection and variable valve timing and cast-iron block for durability, providing 464 pound-feet of torque with a six-speed automatic transmission. The other choice is a 445-horsepower Duramax 6.6-liter V-8 engine with a segment-exclusive air induction system and variable geometry turbocharger. That engine provides 910 pound-feet of torque with a 10-speed Allison automatic transmission.

The frame has multiple options and is constructed with seven different types of steel chosen to be stronger and more durable than the previous generation, with a gross combined vehicle weight rating of up to 40,000 pounds.

Its segment-first Advanced Trailering System creates customized trailer profiles to monitor information from hitching to driving. These can be tracked through the on-board information system or a mobile device with the app and include features like predeparture checklists and exterior trailer lighting diagnostics.

The model offers up to 15 different camera views, including six available driving views such as the transparent trailer option that allows the driver to virtually see through a trailer to the road behind it.

Both the Silverado 2500 and the 3500 are available in five trim levels including Work Truck, Custom, LT, LTZ and High Country.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- New inside rearview mirror with partial video display
- BedSteps feature CornerSteps, both standard, easing loading of cargo bed
- Removable skid plate and front air dam for straight-forward snow plow installation



### FORD F-150

The F-150 provides updates to its design and powertrain, as well as brand-new additions to improve customer productivity.

The exterior has been redesigned, including an updated headlamp design, new power dome hood and wrap-around bumpers. It has higher front fenders and larger-diameter tires pulled out three-quarters of an inch.

The interior has also been redesigned around utility and technology, with soil-resistant seats and a new standard dual glovebox. It introduces a new 12-inch center screen standard on XLT high series and above. The new optional Interior Work Surface provides a flat working space for signing documents, working on a 15-inch laptop or enjoying a meal when parked. It is available in both bench and captain’s chair configurations.

An all-new 3.5-liter PowerBoost full hybrid V-6 powertrain available on every trim level from XL to Limited adds electric torque to the V-6. It has an EPA-estimated range of about 700 miles on a single tank of gas and delivers at least 12,000 pounds of available maximum towing. The PowerBoost combines the EcoBoost engine and SelectShift automatic transmission with an integrated 47-horsepower electric motor with software calibrated for truck use. The electric motor applies regenerative braking energy capture to help recharge the 1.5-kilowatt-hour lithium-ion battery.

An available Pro Power Onboard expands the truck’s capabilities by bringing generator levels of exportable power to work sites, with a 2-kilowatt-hour output on optional gas engines, while PowerBoost-equipped F-150 comes standard with 2.4-kilowatt-hour output or 7.2-kilowatt-hour output. Power is accessible through in-cabin outlets and up to four cargo bed-mounted 120-volt 20-amp outlets.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Ford Co-Pilot360 2.0, with standard pre-collision assist with automatic emergency braking and pedestrian detection
- Available Active Drive Assist, which allows for hands-free driving on more than 100,000 miles of divided highways in the U.S. and Canada
- New SYNC 4 is standard across trim options



**GMC**  
**SIERRA 1500 AND SIERRA 1500HD**

The Sierra HD brings several new available features centered around trailer technology.

Those include a new trailer length indicator on the center console screen, showing a red overlay twice the length of the compatible trailer and when other vehicles could be in the way during a lane change. It also has a new jackknife alert that tracks the position of the trailer in relation to the vehicle. If the front of the trailer approaches the rear of the vehicle, a warning is displayed for the potential jackknife situation.

Another new feature is an enhancement to the cargo bed view, which now includes a zoom view and bed hitch guidance, assisting in aligning and hooking up a gooseneck or fifth-wheel trailer.

The Sierra offers five available engines, including an available 3.0-liter Duramax Turbo Diesel, providing 460 pound-feet of torque and 277 horsepower. Compared to last year's model, that engine adds an additional 1,900 pounds of trailering capacity on 2-wheel-drive configurations with a maximum capacity of 9,300 pounds. The 2.7-liter turbo provides 348 pound-feet of torque and 310 horsepower, and pulls 2,300 pounds more than last year's model, reaching 9,200 pounds maximum trailering capacity.

Other new features for the Sierra Heavy Duty include new surround vision and bed view cameras as standard on the Denali trim. The Sierra HD Denali Black Diamond Edition will also include power-retractable assist steps.

The Sierra SLE crew cab carries a maximum payload of 1,550 to 2,140 pounds with 62.9 to 71.7 cubic feet of cargo volume.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Available six-function Multi-Pro tailgate
- Front leg room of 44.53 inches in the SLE, Elevation and SLT Crew Cab
- Up to 15 camera views available on SLT



**HINO**  
**M SERIES**

The Class 4 and 5 model M Series (formerly the 155 and 195, respectively) have new features to increase safety and overall capability, including a new grille design and optional LED headlamps to better illuminate the road ahead.

The Hino J05E Series diesel engine provides 210 horsepower with 440 pound-feet of torque, alongside an Aisin A465 HD 6-speed automatic transmission. It has proprietary Selective Catalytic Reduction technology to lower nitrogen oxide emissions by more than 80%. The M Series has a 28.8-gallon center-mounted fuel tank standard. The M4 has a gross vehicle weight rating of 14,500 pounds with a gross combined weight rating of 20,500 pounds, and the M5 takes that up to a gross vehicle weight rating of 19,500 pounds and gross combined weight rating of 25,500 pounds. Both are available in day and crew cabs, seating respectively three and seven crewmembers, with available rear heat and air conditioning for all climates.

The truck is connected to Hino Insight, a platform that combines telematics, remote diagnostics and case management into one system. The system monitors statistics such as idle times, heavy braking, speed, location and distance traveled. The diagnostics platform will notify you of trouble codes, next steps and urgency, and case management will assist with the service process.

The truck includes a fully integrated lane departure warning system and has a new shifter layout with a gear hold feature. It also has a driver's seatbelt sensor, steering wheel controls and a gauge layout with a 4.2-inch LED multi-information display.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Steel constructed with a 78.5-inch-wide cab
- High driving position provides a wide perspective of the road
- Optional keyless entry



**ISUZU**  
**N-SERIES AND F-SERIES LCF**

The Isuzu N-Series and F-Series LCF line of cab-over-engine trucks offer a variety of options depending on class size. Class 4-6 trucks are equipped with an EPA-certified diesel engine and the Class 3-4 N-Series trucks have gasoline alternatives.

The gas engine options include a 6.0-liter Vortec V-8 engine that provides 297 horsepower with 372 pound-feet of torque, and a GMPT Gen V L8T V-8 engine supplying 350 horsepower with 425 pound-feet of torque. The diesel option is a 5.2-liter 4HK1-TC turbocharged intercooled engine that provides 215 horsepower and 452 pound-feet of torque, and it should last for a service life durability of 375,000 miles. The engines offer power options for gross vehicle weight ratings from 12,000 pounds to 25,950 pounds.

Changes for this year's models include a new cab latch switch with an I/P indicator and buzzer and a new spare key PIO option that offers two additional chassis keys for four in total. The NPR Gas and NPR HD Gas models also have new increased steering angles of 49.5 degrees and 46.5 degrees for 16-inch and 19.5-inch wheels respectively. Those two models also feature new 38.6-gallon stainless steel fuel tanks. The FTR has a new Hendrickson HAS 230 air suspension with a 23,000-pound capacity and in-cab air dump switch.

Available cab and chassis combinations offer standard three-seat cabs or crew cabs with seating for seven. The N-Series can accommodate truck bodies ranging from 10 to 20 feet and offer wheelbases between 109 and 176 inches.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- N-Series includes Aisin A465id 6-d speed double overdrive automatic transmission with lockup torque converter plus PTO opening
- Isuzu Diagnostic Service System provides a "health report" and performance data for diesel-model owners from Isuzu dealers
- Optional Mobileye passive safety system, which provides warnings for forward and pedestrian collisions, lane departures and headway monitoring

Mitsubishi Fuso announced that it would discontinue new truck sales of its medium-duty cab-over trucks in the U.S. and Canada, citing a heavily competitive market. The company will shift to a service-focused operation in those markets. The company will maintain its Logan Township, New Jersey, headquarters and its parts distribution and technical training centers.

Mitsubishi Fuso plans to support U.S. and Canada customers through its authorized service network through 2028. Customers should contact their dealership for more information.





**NISSAN**  
**TITAN AND TITAN XD**

The 2021 Titan and Titan XD carry forward their complete redesign from the 2020 model year. The models are still powered by Nissan's 5.6-liter Endurance V-8 gasoline engine, which is rated at 400 horsepower and 413 pound-feet of torque. The engine connects to a 9-speed automatic transmission with a large final gear ratio of 3.692:1, providing coverage for both standing starts and highway passing. The engine features the Variable Valve Event and Lift technology, combining hydraulic-controlled variable valve timing and electronically controlled variable valve lift on the intake side to provide performance and response. It also has Direct Injection Gas technology to provide better wide-open throttle performance, fuel economy and emissions performance.

The Titan XD is 3 inches taller, 11.8 inches longer in wheelbase and 14.8 inches longer than the Titan overall. The extra length includes a full-size 6.5-foot bed and a unique frame.

The Titan's front suspension is a double-wishbone design, with leaf springs and leaf bushings along with twin-tube shock absorbers for the rear axle. Pro-4X models use Bilstein mono-tube off-road shocks. All models feature an Off-Road Gauge that displays the vehicles tire angle, relative pitch and roll angles.

It features Safety Shield 360 standard, a set of six driver-assist systems including automatic emergency braking with pedestrian detection, blind spot warning, rear cross traffic alert, lane departure warning, high beam assist and rear automatic braking. It also includes Intelligent Forward Collision Warning, which uses a radar sensor in the front of the truck to assess the distance and speed of other vehicles on the road.

The Titan is offered in three King Cab grades and five Crew Cab grades in both 4x2 and 4x4 drive. The Titan XD is offered in Crew Cab 4x4 models with five trim levels.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Integrated Command Center with 8-inch touchscreen, 9-inch touchscreen available
- Available LED headlights and bed rail lighting
- Available Utili-track bed channel system with adjustable tie-down cleats



**RAM**  
**RAM 1500**

The new Ram 1500 brings multiple engine options for various applications and provides several new driver assistance options to boost safety and efficiency on the job.

The truck comes with four engine options, including a 3.6-liter eTorque Pentastar V-6 with 305 horsepower and 269 pound-feet of torque, a 3-liter EcoDiesel V-6 delivering 260 horsepower and 480 pound-feet of torque and a 5.7-liter Hemi V-8 or 5.7-liter eTorque Hemi V-8, both with variable-valve timing at 395 horsepower and 410 pound-feet of torque. The half-ton truck has a maximum payload of 2,300 pounds and a maximum trailer tow of 12,750 pounds.

Its air suspension enhances fuel efficiency while providing greater off-road capability and load-leveling. It has configurations in 4x2 and 4x4, with a Quad or Crew Cab and a 5-foot, 7-inch or 6-foot, 4-inch bed.

New driver assistance options begin with a new full-color heads-up display that can show up to five different content areas at once with customization through an available Uconnect 4C 12-inch touchscreen. The HUD can show details such as Lane Departure, Lane Keep Assist, adaptive cruise control, turn-by-turn navigation and current speed. A new digital rearview mirror is available with a 9.2-inch-wide LCD monitor, displaying video in real-time from a rear-facing camera and can be turned off to revert to a reflective mirror. The Trailer Reverse Steering Control option assists in guiding the truck and trailer while backing up. The new Snow Plow Prep option includes a 220-amp alternator, truck-side plow wiring harness and a rear power-sliding window with a defroster.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Wired trailer camera prep kit is available on all 2021 models
- Full-speed Collision Warning Plus is now standard on Laramie, Rebel, Longhorn, Limited Longhorn and Limited models
- Available in nine models such as Tradesman and Big Horn



**TOYOTA**  
**TUNDRA**

The 2021 Tundra has several new edition and driver comfort options while continuing to provide the capabilities of last year's model.

New this year is the Tundra Nightshade edition, based on the Limited trim level, featuring a darker design throughout, including black leather-trim seating, exterior trim details and 20-inch alloy rims.

Only 5,000 of the Tundra Trail Special Edition will be made, based on the SR5 CrewMax trim. It provides added lockable storage space as well as features such as all-terrain tires and all-weather floor mats.

All models of the Tundra are powered by the 5.7-liter i-Force V-8 with DOHC with dual independent Variable Valve Timing with intelligence and 4-2-1 tubular stainless-steel exhaust manifold. The engine offers 381 horsepower and 401 pound-feet of torque. It connects to a six-speed automatic transmission and is capable of towing up to 10,200 pounds with a maximum payload of 1,730.

The Tundra's TripleTech frame features an integrated tow hitch receiver. It has an available Integrated Trailer Brake Controller and standard Trailer-Sway Control, which adjust the amount of trailer braking and mitigate trailer sway by applying brake pressure at individual wheels. The 4x4 models include an A-Trac system that optimizes traction across the front and rear axles simultaneously to improve grip.

The Tundra has an available 8-inch touchscreen display and integrated navigation. It's outfitted with Toyota Safety sense, which includes pre-collision with pedestrian detection, lane departure alerts, automatic high beams and dynamic radar cruise control.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Standard backup camera and optional blind spot monitor with rear cross-traffic alert
- Standard automatic limited slip differential
- Available deck rail system with four adjustable tie-down cleats, each rated at 220 pounds



# PLAN »it« OUT

BY MARY ELIZABETH WILLIAMS-VILLANO

Keep a checklist handy of all the necessary tools to get the installation done correctly in order to make sure critical items don't get missed. Photo: Poseidon Irrigation Oklahoma



## Think ahead to make irrigation system installation jobs run smoothly.

**M**ost irrigation work doesn't require professionals to have a crystal ball allowing them to see the future. No customer expects you to know where a tree's roots are going to grow or how a new sidewalk will block a sprinkler head. But a successful irrigation system installation calls for considering the future's possibilities.

Experienced irrigation professionals know there's a long list of steps to consider when installing a new irrigation system. No matter how simple the initial design looks, there's a lot to do before jumping in to begin trenching.

"You have to start with a plan, a design, that has water conservation as the focal point," says Tave Close, Florida team leader for Masuen Consulting LLC, Newport, Washington, an irrigation design, consulting and water management firm. "A good design, whether it's residential or commercial, takes into account what the turf and plant material is that's going to be irrigated, the climates and microclimates that are present, local watering restrictions, codes and regulations."

A pre-installation site visit is important to verify that the field conditions match the plan, Close says.

Scot Latham, CIC, CIT, owns Poseidon Irrigation Oklahoma in Edmond and is president of the Oklahoma Irrigation Association. He says looking at the water requirements of your project and making sure they match the actual availability at the site is a crucial first step. "Doing that at the start will make your job much easier," he says. "So will communicating with customers about what their expectations are and whether or not you can meet them with the water that's available."

For Stephen Geckeler, CLIA, CIC, vice president of sales and estimating at Aqua-Lawn Inc., Fairfield, Connecticut, a smooth-flowing installation begins during the sales process. You need to understand where you're going and why, and what you're going to do when you get there. Make sure you and the client are in agreement on the work that is to be done. "You need to know where you're getting the water from, what the water pressure is and where everything is going to be installed," he says. "You need to know what the budget is. That all should be resolved before you begin and that really gets done during the sales process."

### Getting started

Close says one of the first pre-installation steps is "doing your locates," finding out where all the underground utilities are buried, including cable, electricity, gas, water and sewer. "If they're not properly located, you'll tear them out with a trencher," Close says. He adds that most utility-locating companies give themselves a minimum of 72 hours to respond, so you've got to plan ahead and make sure this task is done in time to accommodate your groundbreaking date.

Close advises making sure that all the needed materials are on hand before the construction begins. "There's nothing quite as devastating to the morale of the field personnel as getting things going and moving along; then, all of a sudden, you find you don't have something you need."

Geckeler starts by logging the new customer into his job management system, which is used for both installation and service. "We make sure the plumbing is done, or at least scheduled, and we coordinate with the homeowner, the landscaper and/or builder. Some contractors order materials per project. We don't typically do that, as we have a good stockpile of materials on hand at the office so we're ready to go."

### Using a checklist

Latham says having a checklist helps make sure critical items aren't missed. "Ours includes the requirements of the sprinkler system, what the available water is, and whether we're using city water or well water. With city water, what's available depends upon



Before beginning any trenching work, make certain to locate all underground utilities such as cable, electricity, gas, water and sewer. Give utility companies plenty of time to respond. Photo, top: Aqua-Lawn Inc., below: Poseidon Irrigation Oklahoma

the size of the water meter — how much water is allowed to go through it and what size piping we're tying into."

It's quite a bit different when the water source is a well. "Wells work off of pressure and use either a pressure tank or a pump starter, so you have to take that into consideration," Latham says. "You need to determine whether it's feasible to even do a sprinkler system." He says many times, incorrectly installed sprinkler systems that draw from wells will deplete the water supply for the house.

Other items on the list include what kind of nozzles will be used for the rotors and the sizes and configurations of spray heads. Pipe sizing and elevation changes are also important. "If our valves are set to where the water will have to be pushed uphill, this reduces the pressure toward the top," says Latham.

Finally, he takes pressure compensation into account. "If our valves are up above where the zone is, that would increase the pressure as you go down," he says. "A lot of times municipalities will have 100 pounds of pressure, so you have to determine whether we do pressure compensation at the heads or at the valves or overall."

### Making maintenance easier

Irrigation systems should ideally be installed with an eye toward what might be needed down the road. "A lot of installers do not do maintenance," says Latham. "They're only thinking, how fast and how quick can I slap all this stuff together and then move on to the next job, and they don't take into consideration if somebody has to fix it later on."



**You have to start with a plan, a design, that has water conservation as the focal point.**

— Tave Close, Masuen Consulting

This is how you get things like too many valves crammed into a valve box, he says. "It kills me when I get to a job site and someone has literally put the valves right next to each other. Then you've got a four-valve manifold and only one of them is leaking. You have to tell the customer, 'Well, the previous installer didn't give me enough wiggle room, enough piping, to cut out that valve and replace it, so I'm going to have to charge you to replace all four of them.'"

There are many things an installer can do that will make the next tech's life much easier, such as using color-coded wire. "If I go to a controller, and they've used multistrand wire, I can tell which valve is tied to what by color," says Latham. "If somebody runs single strand out to everywhere, it's usually the same color and then you're not so sure."

Documentation of the what, the where and the how deep is critical. This is known as an "as-built" or site plan, Close says. "Everything should be on that as-built: GPS coordinates of where every valve is, where the main line is and its depth, where every turn in the main line is, the depth of the turns of the main line, where the gate valves are, where there are crossings, where every remote control valve is, the controller itself, and the wire path. All of these things should be documented on it." This way, any maintenance company that takes over won't have to start from scratch. As Close puts it, the customer already paid to have a system installed, they shouldn't have to pay for discovery every time they switch landscape providers.

Close says there are other techniques that will simplify future maintenance and repairs, such as putting unions on valves that will allow for easy replacement and repair and isolating valves before the remote control valves. "That way you don't have to drain the main line in order to effect a repair on a valve, you can just isolate that valve, do the repair and turn the main line back on."

### Avoiding mistakes

Any irrigation professional with any time in the field at all has stories about mind-boggling mistakes they've run across. Latham once saw a site with piping so shallow that a heavy rain exposed them. "They were literally within just a few inches below the surface, so shallow that the spray heads were flush to the ground."

Latham says a lot of errors happen when installers feel rushed. "When you're going too fast, you don't take the time to make sure that fittings are glued in properly. Or you just run wire without keeping track of where valves are and what their numbers are."

Of course, even experienced irrigation professionals make mistakes sometimes. "Everybody's flooded a house before, we've done it too," says Geckeler.

Good on-site quality control is essential to avoid mistakes, according to Close. "You need to make sure proper solvent-welding techniques are being used,"

he says. “On a system with 4-inch piping and above, there really shouldn’t be any solvent welds. There should be mechanical joint fittings used, and those have to be properly installed, properly restrained and properly thrust-blocked.”

Thrust-blocking, explains Close, is important when gasketed pipes take a turn in direction. “Say you have a 90-degree turn. When the water hits it, natural forces are pushing the fitting away from the pipe. Thrust-blocking can be as simple as dropping a bag of concrete or two behind the turn. Or, you can wrap the fitting in plastic and then pour concrete around it.”

Overtightening is a common error. “If you overtighten a threaded pipe, you can create a stress point, and it can crack because plastic is brittle,” says Geckeler. “It might not break right away, but over time it might start creating a stress fracture.”

Another mistake is failing to communicate with the customer about changes, the correct way the system is supposed to be run or how to schedule and handle future maintenance to keep things going smoothly. “That is a huge one,” says Latham, “when a contractor just gets in there, installs things and goes down the road and the homeowner is left with this

piece of equipment (the controller) hanging on the wall and having no idea how to operate it. Then they become very dissatisfied.”

“Wrong nozzling is one of the biggest areas where genuine, honest mistakes occur,” says Close. “It usually happens when field employees are not trained in hydraulics or precipitation and just throw nozzles wherever. The result is water going where it shouldn’t go.”

Geckeler agrees that preventing mistakes comes back to training and the sales process. “If the sales person doesn’t determine what the water source is and how much water is available, or if a booster pump is needed, then you can’t properly plan a job and you end up shooting from the hip and working backwards.”

Avoiding mistakes and completing a system installation correctly could be much easier with visions of the future, but proper planning and solid training will go a long way to make up the difference on your next job. 🌱

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# A TALL ORDER

Understanding the client's needs was essential in building a hardscaped outdoor living space that brings visitors up close to a relaxing koi pond. Photos: Enviroscapes LA Landscapes



Mike Garcia's crew took on heavy lifting to bring a hardscaped outdoor living space to life.

BY KYLE BROWN

There's a common saying about having to hike uphill to *and* from school or work, enduring a tough trek without the help of modern conveniences.

Mike Garcia, sustainability expert and founder of Enviroscapes LA Landscapes, Redondo Beach, California, put his crew's toughness to the test with a recent hardscape and pond project that required a lot of hand-digging and climbing flights of stairs with loads of dirt. Although his crew might have felt like this project required them to trek uphill both ways, the result gave his clients the feeling of walking on water.

Garcia, who has been a landscape contractor for 40 years, got his start gardening and mowing lawns in high school. He moved on to get his degree in ornamental horticulture. As he developed his business, he started to notice that he got better results with his work when using fewer chemicals and focusing on



Water features should have some form of interactivity, such as these stepping stones across the pond, says Garcia. Various types of stonework can accentuate different elements of the design.

developing the entire landscape with a view toward permaculture.

That practice continues into his current projects, where he works on landscaping and hardscaping elements that blend and support each other, he says. Finding ways to connect those different parts of the landscape requires having a solid understanding of what each piece entails. That's especially true when working with hardscaping and a pond.

"There's nothing more relaxing than to have a koi pond, but I really have to qualify what people really want," he says. "You really have to know your definitions and be on your game."

Garcia had worked with these clients in the past doing landscape work before they started working through the idea of installing a koi pond to offset a high-stress job. A structured, natural space could help relieve some stress without the need for blood pressure medication. It only made sense to start the conversation with Garcia.

### LOOKING FOR CUES

Finding the right hardscaping and pond design wasn't as easy as just ordering off a menu. It's more similar to going to get a haircut, he says, where a seasoned professional works on their craft every day. When customers come in, they often know what they want, but they don't know the same jargon or technical work that goes into that. "All this language, it's just meaningless to them," Garcia says. Starting

with reference pictures will get you much further along in both situations, whether you're looking for an inviting outdoor living space or a mohawk.

It also gives you visual cues that are useful in determining exactly what the client is really after, he says. "When you see a picture, you resonate with it," he says. "You can see the look in their eyes, when they light up. That's when you know you're on the right path."

This is one area where new technology has helped, as Garcia used to bring about 10 albums of images to client meetings to gauge reactions, he says. There are no shortcuts to getting at what the client is after. It takes time to work with a client to get the guidelines for the design and field experience to be able to explain what's involved in getting the project to that point.

The clients were looking for an immersive experience, where a visitor could get the sense of walking over the water's surface. As they talked about the hardscape and pond design, the clients spent time looking through images and visited public spaces to get more ideas for what they wanted in their backyard. The house had more of a modern interior, so a full organic design would look out of place, Garcia says. "They were looking for a more modern, contemporary design."

One of the tallest obstacles for the overall design was just height itself. From the street, the client's house looks like a single-story design. But it actually

## CASE STUDY



extends down two more stories, with the backyard set on the lowest floor. The space had no outdoor or vehicle access from neighboring yards, blocked by concrete. The only point of access was through three stairwells leading back up to street level. That meant that all the materials had to be carried by hand down to the job site, and all the removed soil had to be carried up and out.

“There’s literally no way to get machinery or a Bobcat back there,” Garcia says. “You have no idea how heavy soil is until you’ve got to carry about 30 cubic yards of it up three flights of stairs.”

The team had to dig by hand, then carry the 5-gallon buckets across the yard, up three flights of stairs through the house, to the front yard and the bin in the street, he says.

“It would’ve been nice to have a helicopter,” he jokes.

Taking on a project with these kinds of restrictions wasn’t going to be an easy sell to his crew, but Garcia stayed in touch with his employees and made plans to make sure they would be up to the task. The

work wasn’t set to be done during the hottest part of the summer, and the cooler temperatures made the work a little bit more manageable. He also scheduled the project to have work done every few days rather than every single day to stagger the heavy work out and give the crew time to recover. The lunches provided on tough days didn’t hurt, either.

“You just don’t want to wear your guys out because they’re human,” he says. “They appreciate knowing that you have their back.”

### AN INTERACTIVE DESIGN

The actual design of the koi pond and hardscaping was done by putting Garcia’s past experience to work, using the sketched-out plans from the clients. “The customer had a lot of faith in what was going in,” he says. They wanted a unique, interactive experience that brought a visitor up close to the water. That lined up with Garcia’s usual approach of incorporating water in his landscape and hardscaping spaces.

“Any time you do a water feature, you want it to be ‘in your face.’ You want it to be as interactive as possible and as close to the house as possible. You want your client to interact with it,” he says. “This case is more art than just building a box, so it made it more challenging.”

Garcia used tile and stone to frame the pond, bringing the refined edges of a modern look to a natural view. But the design stayed connected to more



The only access route to the work space was at the bottom of three flights of stairs, meaning any supplies and all removed dirt had to be carried down and up by hand. Garcia protected his crews by scheduling the work during cooler temperatures and breaking up the daily work with less strenuous jobs to give them time to recover.





## CASE STUDY

**“WHEN YOU SEE A PICTURE, YOU RESONATE WITH IT. YOU CAN SEE THE LOOK IN THEIR EYES, WHEN THEY LIGHT UP. THAT’S WHEN YOU KNOW YOU’RE ON THE RIGHT PATH.”**

organic roots, with uneven facing of the blocks making up the walls of the pond and waterfall. “Having it unfinished gave it an earthiness,” he says. Another part of the pond’s framework incorporates wood patio flooring to bring another texture in. The hardscaping became one of the most interactive elements with a series of square stepping stones almost at water height across the pond, bringing the visitor up close and personal with the resident koi and the series of waterfalls.

The top pond and waterfall are completely ornamental as a backdrop, he says. The lower pond is four feet deep and has filtration to keep the water clear and the koi happy. Garcia chose tile and stonework that would react and emphasize their color when wet, given the close proximity to the water.

“That gives it some wow factor. Anybody can dig a hole and throw in a liner and put some water down,” he says. “They pay you to be an artist, so this is art.”

The design incorporates landscaping through several ornamental plants and flowers brought to the water’s edge with the stonework. It also meant being conscious of a neighbor’s set of hedges nearby.



The pond had to be placed far enough away so that when the hedge was trimmed, clippings wouldn’t fill either pond and require cleaning.

“I’ve seen jobs where they put these right up next to hedges,” Garcia says. “You have to think about things like future maintenance.”

Garcia’s design kept a small patch of grass nearby as well as a place for the client’s small dog, but he wanted to approach it with a water-conscious focus, he says. The space is irrigated using dripline to keep water usage well within the region’s restrictions and to make certain the water is applied precisely where he wanted it.

In the end, Garcia’s team won an award from the California Landscape Contractors Association for the project.

### PLANNING AHEAD

Hardscaping work can be difficult because it’s easy for contractors to shortchange themselves for the amount of work that’s being done, Garcia says. For a project like a hardscaped pond and outdoor living space, a contractor needs to remember every step of the work that needs to be completed and think of the cost.

“You’ve got to understand, you need guys to dig that hole and move the soil,” he says.

That means making sure early in the process that the client is aware of the potential cost of the project and is able to afford it, he says. That’s part of making sure the client knows what comes with a hardscaped outdoor living space, especially with a water feature involved.

“It’s very important to educate your client on expectations,” Garcia says. “I always tell people that algae will happen, fish will die. But you have to tell them so they don’t set up false expectations.”

Making certain that clients know how to maintain the living space and features will help them enjoy the project for years to come and help you keep them as a long-term client as well. 🌿

The author is editor-in-chief of *Irrigation & Green Industry* and can be reached at [kylebrown@igin.com](mailto:kylebrown@igin.com).



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**By Lauren Sable Freiman**

# **EXPAND** your options

## Small steps can lead to solid growth when adding on new services.

**I**t's no secret that launching a business requires undivided attention, complete dedication and endless hard work. Once you've successfully started a landscape or irrigation company and built a clientele, adding services to your list of offerings might seem like the next logical step. With the right planning, timing, training, budgeting and marketing strategies, beefing up your offerings is a key way to expand your business and your reach. Though there isn't one linear path to growth, heeding some best practices can help with a smooth and successful expansion.

### LISTEN TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

Growth isn't new to Tim Brucks, CEO of Total Landscape Concepts, Roseville, California, but it has come in different ways through the years. In the early days, his business focused on mowing and maintenance. He says a trip to the store changed that.

"I happened to be at Home Depot, and they were selling equipment, and one of them was an aerator," he says. "I had a Home Depot credit card and was able to put the aerator on it with no interest, so I bought it. I went out the next day and made all my money back."

Perfecting the services that you offer is a great way to increase your own confidence as well as the confidence that your clients have in you. When clients are pleased with the quality of your work, they will often ask you to take on additional work — work that might be outside of your current scope.

"A lot of it has to do with what customers are asking for," Brucks says. "When you start getting a lot of inquiries about lighting you stop and think, 'I guess that's a hot thing and it's time to learn something about that and make it happen.'"

Shaun Omar experienced a similar type of organic growth stemming from customer inquiries and requests. When his business, Decoscapes Home Services Inc., Delray Beach, Florida, began answering calls from clients interested in landscape lighting, he started to consider the logistics and costs involved with growing his services to include installing this.

"We had several people asking for lighting, and I had done small jobs here and there, so it seemed like a perfect fit to add to our list of services," Omar says.

Requests from clients and a hot market pushed Adam Puhl to expand services for his company, Puhl Landscape Design, Nelsonville, Ohio. Though his main service was landscape design, customers began asking him to do irrigation and lighting work.

"I'm in a very fast-growing section of Ohio, and I knew that there weren't a whole lot of people doing lighting in my area," Puhl says. "I was being asked to do things here and there. I had done all those services in the past, so I knew what it entailed, and it turned into adding those services to the business."

Even with urging from customers, Omar says it has to be the right time for the business, and for you as a contractor, to expand. One of the biggest pitfalls is launching a new service before the idea is fully researched and planned, and before you have truly mastered it.

"I made the mistake once of adding a service before we were really ready and it almost backfired on us," Omar says. "We made so many mistakes because we hadn't done enough due diligence before releasing the service that clients were losing confidence in us. We fought back and it ended up being very successful, but it could have been a disaster."

Brucks had plans to launch tree, lawn and shrub care services featuring fertilizer and insecticide application just as COVID-19 hit. He said he realized that instead of focusing the time and effort on a new revenue stream, the timing dictated that he focus on obtaining personal protective equipment and making sure his employees could work safely. Although the launch was delayed, he says he will still roll out that service in the near future.

### BECOME AN EXPERT

Installing a patio or landscape lighting may seem to fall within your skill set, but that doesn't mean it's time to roll out that service to clients.

"The biggest thing is knowing that just because you can do something, it doesn't mean that you are proficient at it and should do it without correctly knowing how to do it," Puhl says.



Take the time to learn how to provide new services effectively before offering them professionally to clients. Use the offseason to hone new skills. Photos: Puhl Landscape Design



“The biggest thing is knowing that just because you can do something, it doesn’t mean that you are proficient at it and should do it without correctly knowing how to do it.”

— Adam Puhl, Puhl Landscape Design

Though it requires extra time and effort, learning how to do things correctly and thoroughly training your staff are important steps before offering a professional service to clients. During the offseason, Puhl says he takes advantage of training sessions on irrigation and lighting installation that are offered by his suppliers.

“We’ve gone in to fix other jobs where a landscaper said they can put lighting in,” Puhl says. “We take the time up front learning to do things the correct way.”

As Brucks prepares to launch his spray service, he will rely heavily on an employee with previous experience and a strong knowledge of chemical applications and the licensing process for the state of California. As he adds employees to his team of 15, Brucks says training is always at the front of his mind, and he places a strong focus on teaching the fundamental skills required to complete the job.

“Most people cycle through a crew with my right-hand guy, and I go out to jobs and train people,” Brucks says. “We find that some companies aren’t doing things properly, so I don’t mind training to make that happen. We also do some fun things where we quiz people for a gift card, which leads to learning some of the basics a lot faster.”

### EXPLORE THE FINANCIALS

Once you have an understanding of the market and the services you are planning to add, it’s time to explore the financial side of expansion. If your current business model is profitable, it could be the perfect time to invest in the equipment or talent necessary for expansion.

When Total Landscape Concepts was in its infancy, Brucks said he picked up broken mowers from yard sales, which he then fixed and turned into his first fleet. That desire to minimize borrowing, keep costs low and test a business model before mak-

ing a large financial investment has followed him throughout the years as he has grown his business to a full-service landscaping company providing landscape lighting, irrigation systems, hardscaping, turf installation and other services.

“A big part of it is how are you going to fund it, what’s your return, how long is it going to take to see a return,” Brucks says. “You can do things on credit, but we try to keep our credit use to a minimum.”

Brucks says he isn’t one to dive into a large financial commitment. As he has added services to his business model, he has been methodical about allocating labor and equipment. Instead of hiring a new employee to spearhead lighting or turf installations, he has cross-trained employees who have expressed a desire to learn new skills and take on more responsibility within the company.

As he prepares to launch his spray services, he says he will repurpose older maintenance trucks by converting them to handle chemical applications.

“We will utilize them to make money first, to make sure this service supports itself before we invest in new vehicles,” Brucks says. “When I buy new trucks I will try to take advantage of cheap financing options.”

After doing his research by talking to distributors and manufacturers, Omar was confident he could keep startup costs low while still delivering a quality landscape lighting product in a reasonable time frame.

“Knowing we can get our products in a timely manner doesn’t require us to make a huge investment in inventory, keeping our investment in our new income stream at a minimum while not affecting our service to our clients,” Omar says.

Rather than investing in equipment, Puhl has chosen to rent most of the equipment he uses for irrigation installation and lighting installation in order to keep his costs low.

“For the way we are set up, any equipment we need, we rent,” he says. “That’s the better way to do things rather than have all the overhead that a small business doesn’t need. I don’t keep a lot in stock. I may buy a dozen lighting controllers if I see a good deal, knowing throughout the year they will get put in.”

### MAKE SURE THE PRICE IS RIGHT

When Puhl first began installing irrigation systems and lighting, he gauged the market by talking to suppliers. But finding the sweet spot for pricing also included some guesswork.

“The first few systems, it was kind of a guess as to how long it would take to get in,” Puhl says. “Then I considered how much my time was worth and went from there.”

In a perfect world, Brucks says pricing a service would simply entail calculating costs, overhead, labor and anticipated margin, but competition dictates that you have to provide a service better, faster or cheaper.

## SERVICES

"Sometimes you just get out there and start selling and it works really well, or people start saying that they know another contractor who will do it for a lot less," he says. "For commercial services, it took me a long time to figure it out. We bid and bid and bid until we started getting jobs."

Omar says his pricing strategy avoids undercutting competitors, which drives down the market and affects everyone's profit margin.

"I have learned the easiest way to separate us from our competitors is to offer a better-quality product and back it up with a higher quality of service," he says.

### HAPPY CUSTOMERS BRING MORE CUSTOMERS

Puhl says that word of mouth marketing has been his best source of new clients. Many jobs have entailed fixing another contractor's mistakes, leaving his customers satisfied with the quality of his work.

"I don't do a ton of marketing," Puhl says. "It is mainly a little bit on social media and lots of word of mouth."

The biggest way to grow a new service is to make sure existing customers know that you offer that service, says Brucks.

"I started doing lawn maintenance and I had clients for years who would then get an irrigation system installed by someone else, not realizing that we also installed sprinklers," Brucks said. "You always need to make sure your customers are aware of what you have to offer."

When Omar launched his lighting service, he cross-marketed with a friend who owns a pool service company. His costs, postage and printing the postcard, were low, but he says his investment turned into an effective marketing strategy.

"We got a lot of work and the word-of-mouth clients continue to come in," Omar says.

No matter how many customers inquire or how prepared you are to launch a new service, Brucks says the ultimate decision comes down to your own readiness.

"Make sure the timing is right," he says. "Make sure you have enough time to commit. You're not going to improve your life or your business by overextending yourself." 🌿

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## IA announces 2020 New Product Contest winners

The Irrigation Association, Fairfax, Virginia, named the winners of the 2020 New Product Contest. The contest is usually held during the annual Irrigation Show and Education Week, but this year the IA hosted it online.

Thirty-one new products and technologies were entered in five agriculture and landscape categories. Products were evaluated based on innovation, design quality, increased water/resource-use efficiency, ease of use and product life expectancy.

The winner of the landscape irrigation category is the **ESP-LXIVM with Smart Valve Technology** by **Rain Bird Corporation**, Azusa, California. The ESP-LXIVM is a high-capacity controller with Smart Valve technology that elevates the performance of proven two-wire technology to a new level. The innovative breakthrough is in the Integrated Valve Module, which relays valve status back to the controller and provides real-time monitoring of valves.

The winner of the landscape specialty category is **E-Sport with Ribbed PE Hose** by **Irriland SRL**, Guastalla, Italy. E-Sport is a self-propelled solar-powered traveling sprinkler with innovative low friction coefficient tube. The eco-friendly machine is completely activated by an electric motor powered by solar energy, and with a series of batteries it can be operated 24/7, 365 days a year.

The winner of the landscape lighting category is the **AC-LVDD-1210 Low Voltage Digital Dimmer** by **Letzgo Products Inc.**, Gilbert, Arizona. This 12V AC digital dimmer delivers up to 10 amps of smooth LED dimming, utilizing trailing edge dimming to eliminate flicker when driving dimmable LEDs. It features solid-state (fuse-less) short-circuit protection with auto-restart, overload indication, transient protection and intelligent soft-start.

For more details about the contest and to see which products were named this year's People's Choice winners, visit [www.irrigationshow.org](http://www.irrigationshow.org).



## SWAT announces 2020 awards

Smart Water Application Technologies, a committee of the Irrigation Association, Fairfax, Virginia, annually recognizes water providers that are committed to promoting outdoor water conservation by increasing engagement, education and partnerships with important stakeholders. SWAT recently announced the recipients of its 2020 awards.

### Outstanding Industry Partnership

Colorado Springs Utilities is the recipient of the SWAT Outstanding Industry Partnership Award. This award recognizes a water provider that has successfully implemented a program focused on partnership building with landscape and irrigation professionals to promote outdoor water conservation.

The utilities' trade allies program aims to transform the market to increase the purchase of efficient irrigation technologies throughout its service area through educational events, communication and rebate programs targeted to irrigation and landscape professionals.

Colorado Springs Utilities currently serves about 135,000 residential customers and 8,200 commercial customers, and it has a water service territory that covers 195 square miles. Each year, the utilities provides about 73,000 acre-feet of water to its customers, with an estimated 30% of that used in the landscape.

### Outstanding Public Engagement

Sonoma Water is the recipient of the SWAT Outstanding Public Engagement Award. This award recognizes a water provider with a successful program focused on public engagement and education on smart, efficient irrigation technologies and practices.

The Garden Sense program provides interested customers with the tools and information to take their projects through to completion and reduce outdoor water demand from inefficient irrigation systems, high water use plants and poor landscaping practices.

The Garden Sense program is offered in partnership with the UC Master Gardener Program of Sonoma County. Sonoma County, which has a population of more than 500,000, covers a geographic area of 1,768 square miles.



## Western Nursery & Landscape Association to dissolve

The Western Nursery & Landscape Association, Kansas City, Missouri, will be dissolved after a unanimous decision by its board of directors. The nonprofit 501(c)6 organization has been active for 130 years.

WNLA canceled its annual January 2021 trade show event with an announcement Aug. 31. The event was the association's main source of income. Without that income, the board determined that the organization could not be sustained. A vote of the WNLA members was taken and membership approved of the dissolution.

Columbus, Ohio-based AmericanHort will establish the Western-1890 member group inside AmericanHort to retain the identity and community of WNLA in the industry. It will also facilitate quarterly communications, offer a \$189 introductory membership and expand the existing Horticultural Research Institute research fund, among other steps.

The remaining assets of WNLA will be transferred to the Kansas Nursery & Landscape Association, a nonprofit corporation, and the HRI.

## NALP announces dates and locations for its 2022 and 2023 annual meetings

After more than a decade in Louisville, co-located with GIE+Expo, the National Association of Landscape Professionals, Fairfax, Virginia, is moving its annual education and networking event to different cities around the country, providing attendees with exciting experiences each year and allowing new people the opportunity to participate in the event.

The dates and locations are as follows:

**Sept. 18-21, 2022**

Gaylord Palms Resort & Conference Center, Orlando, Florida

**Sept. 10-13, 2023**

Gaylord Texan Resort & Conference Center, Dallas, Texas



“We’ve enjoyed our time in Louisville, but members have been asking us to move our meeting to new venues around the country, and the time has come to do that and grow the event and the association in the process,” says Britt Wood, NALP CEO. “The Gaylord properties are exceptional locations to hold the new annual meetings in the first two years, and we know that attendees will love the experience.”

A planning task force of contractors and supplier members selected the dates and locations with input from NALP members. With a few years to plan, the new event will be a re-envisioning of what a 21st-century conference for landscape and lawn care professionals should look like with new styles of education and networking opportunities, local facility tours and the latest innovations.

## NALP announces award winners at LANDSCAPES 2020

The National Association of Landscape Professionals, Fairfax, Virginia, named the recipients of its 2020 leadership and project awards at its annual conference, LANDSCAPES 2020: The Virtual Experience.

**Jon Cundiff, LIC**, president of Weed Man Kansas City, was honored with the Lifetime Leadership Award for his years of service to the industry, including his role as president of NALP twice and its legacy association.



**Claire Goldman**, principal and head of design and business development for R & R Landscaping, in Auburn, Alabama, was honored with the Women Entrepreneur of the Year Award for her work building R & R Landscaping, mentoring others and service to the community.

**Neil Bales**, chief operating officer and partner at LandPatterns in Dallas, Texas, was recognized as the 2020 Young Entrepreneur of the Year.

This year, 110 landscape projects were awarded an Award of Excellence from NALP. The awards honor outstanding landscape maintenance, design/build, lawn care and interiorscape projects.

View a complete list of winners and photos of the projects at [www.landscapeprofessionals.org](http://www.landscapeprofessionals.org).



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●● **PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT**



**1 Vehicle inspection tool.** NexTraq, a Michelin Group company in Atlanta, Georgia, is launching NexTraq Vehicle Inspection, a tool that provides a customizable pre-trip vehicle inspection checklist.

Customizable inspection checklists are available for popular industry vehicles used in construction, HVAC, plumbing, electrical, landscaping, excavation and others. Paperless, easy-to-use vehicle inspection forms can help save money on costly repairs and keep comprehensive inspection histories documenting the condition of equipment.

Checklists can be customized to meet the unique needs of a specific business to include information for various vehicles and equipment. Drivers/employees fill out each form associated with their vehicle from the NexTraq Connect app and can confirm they have all necessary items and equipment in working order before they hit the road.

 **NexTraq**  
[www.nextraq.com](http://www.nextraq.com)



**2 Trencher.** John Deere, Moline, Illinois, introduces two new trencher models, the TC36 and TC48, to its family of attachments. The newly introduced TC36 and TC48 trenchers are economic models for lighter-duty tasks and equipment rental. These attachment models are compatible on John Deere skid steers and compact track loader models as well as most competitive models.

The TC-series trenchers are designed for lower duty-cycle customers with several configurations to match most soil conditions or trench requirements. To ensure enhanced productivity, the TC36 and TC48 trenchers come equipped with a spring-loaded trencher boom that reduces system shock. The carefully designed frame provides easy ingress and egress during use.

The digging chain can be used for tough conditions and the integrated skid shoe helps stabilization while trenching.

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**3 Zero-turn mower.** Bobcat Company, West Fargo, North Dakota, introduces its new Bobcat zero-turn mowers. The 21-machine lineup includes zero-turn sit-on and zero-turn stand-on mowers, built to give both commercial and residential customers a professional edge to help them work harder.

Available on the new ZS4000 through ZT7000 zero-turn mowers is the Air-FX cutting system. Its deep profile and bullnose design lifts the grass to the blade, and it creates a powerful vacuum for a razor-sharp, uniform cut. The new Bobcat zero-turn mowers come with a high-performance Kawasaki or Briggs & Stratton Vanguard engine.

The Hydro-Gear transmission features hydrostatic transaxles to quickly and efficiently power through the most challenging turf conditions. The pump and motor are housed together in a single sealed housing.

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**SUPPLIER IN THE NEWS**

**John Deere dealers to sell and service Western snow and ice removal products**

John Deere, Moline, Illinois, entered an allied distribution agreement with Douglas Dynamics, parent company of Western plows, to sell and support Western products through the John Deere dealer channel.

Through this agreement, John Deere dealers in the United States and Canada will sell and service Western snow and ice removal products that are compatible with John Deere Gator utility vehicles.

“With more than 70 years of experience in making integrated snow and ice removal products, Douglas Dynamics was the obvious choice for us,” says Justin VanderHeyden, John Deere product marketing manager. “Western snow and ice control products are the brand of choice for those who move snow, so we’re excited to provide this new offering for Gator utility vehicles.”

This agreement enables one-stop-shopping for utility vehicle customers who also want Western snow and ice removal products.

“John Deere’s global brand presence and reputation for manufacturing the highest quality products while providing outstanding service aligns closely with our long-standing brand strength and dedication to quality and service,” says Michael Frank, manager of business development for Douglas Dynamics. “The partnership brings two premium brands together with the shared goal of providing John Deere dealers and customers with easy access to best in class snow and ice control products for John Deere Gators.”



Photo: John Deere



**4 Battery chainsaw.** Husqvarna, Charlotte, North Carolina, launched two new battery-powered products – the T540i XP top-handle and 540i XP rear-handle chainsaws. These two saws were specially designed and developed together with Husqvarna and professional arborists and feature an optimized system to deliver the next step in battery performance.

The new Husqvarna battery-powered chainsaws feature a new design developed specifically with professional users in mind. Used with the newly released Husqvarna BLi200X (T540i XP) or Husqvarna BLi300 (540i XP) batteries, the new chainsaws have capabilities equivalent to professional 40cc petrol chainsaws.

With the redesigned, optimized system, power has been increased by more than 30% compared to previous Husqvarna battery chainsaws, opening up for applications previously exclusive to petrol chainsaws.

 **Husqvarna**  
[www.husqvarna.com/us](http://www.husqvarna.com/us)



**5 Compact vacuum.** Milwaukee Tool, Brookfield, Wisconsin, introduces its new M18 Fuel Compact Vacuum. The M18 provides performance and versatility to excel in small-area and spot clean-up applications on the job site. Armed with a Powerstate brushless motor and exclusive two-stage debris separation, the compact shop vac is optimized for dry job site debris.

The two-stage debris separation divides small and large particles into the bagless canister prior to entering the filter. This provides up to 50% more sustained suction and efficient clean-up. The portable vacuum's orientation and quick-change accessories can be manipulated for upright use at ground level, waist level or for use overhead.

It comes fully equipped with an extension wand, powered floor tool, floor tool, flexible hose, crevice tool, utility tool, brush tool, accessory holder, HEPA filter and foam prefilter.

 **Milwaukee Tool**  
[www.milwaukeetool.com](http://www.milwaukeetool.com)



**6 Fertilizer.** Anuvia Plant Nutrients, Winter Garden, Florida, announces its product line expansion with the new GreenTRX lawn care fertilizer. Each of the new GreenTRX products is based on Anuvia's proprietary sustainable nutrient delivery technology. The products are comprised of 100% nutrients with no filler and no uncoated urea.

All GreenTRX products are environmentally friendly. The slow release nitrogen reduces environmental impact as more nitrogen is used by the growing plant and less is lost into the atmosphere and in water. With a fine-tuned nutrient analysis, the product line can better match customer needs.

The new Green TRX products include Anuvia's TRX technology and incorporate a poly-coated urea, which increases the slow release nitrogen and provides better visibility and an extended feed.

 **Anuvia Plant Nutrients**  
[www.anuviaplantnutrients.com](http://www.anuviaplantnutrients.com)

**SUPPLIER IN THE NEWS**

**Doosan Bobcat and Wounded Warrior Project present veteran with new Bobcat compact track loader**

Doosan Bobcat North America, West Fargo, North Dakota, in partnership with Wounded Warrior Project, Washington, D.C., presented U.S. Army veteran Andrew Long with a new Bobcat R-Series T76 compact track loader and 80-inch bucket attachment, together valued at nearly \$90,000.

Long was randomly chosen as the winner from a pool of candidates and says the T76 will speed up the process of refurbishing the decades-old former tobacco farm he recently purchased in Elon, North Carolina. As a veteran, Long says he is excited to give back to the military community as well, either by hiring and teaching local veterans or working with veteran-owned businesses.

Long, a native of Branchburg, New Jersey, served in the U.S. Army from 2010 to 2014, including a deployment to Afghanistan. Returning home with post-traumatic stress disorder and a

traumatic brain injury as a result of his service, Long found support with WWP, a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving injured veterans and their families, which helped him with his recovery.

Doosan Bobcat formally launched its partnership with WWP at CONEXPO-CON/AGG in March 2020. Doosan Bobcat raised money at the industry trade show by selling a limited-edition, scale model of a T76 camouflage-wrapped loader with the WWP logo. More than \$81,000 was raised to support injured veterans and their families.



Photo: Doosan Bobcat



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Photo: Ruppert Landscape

Trending topics

## RUPPERT LANDSCAPE ASSISTS IN COVID-19 MEMORIAL

In Washington, D.C., the oval of green space on East Capitol Street between RFK Stadium and the D.C. Armory was filled with small white flags from October through early December, according to an article by WJLA News.

The art exhibit was put together by Bethesda, Maryland-based artist Suzanne Brennan Firstenberg and Ruppert Landscape, Laytonsville, Maryland. Each flag represented someone in the U.S. who has died of COVID-19. At the head of the exhibit is a billboard listing the numbers of nearly 260,000 victims.

Firstenberg says she initially approached Ruppert Landscape to learn how much it would cost to have them put down the flags, but after they learned that the project was about COVID-19, they decided to do it without charge, says Kyle Meissner, branch manager at Ruppert Landscape. His company put down 215,000 of the flags. They called in workers from Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia and Delaware for the two days of work it took to install them.

Firstenberg encouraged members of the public to visit the exhibit and place the rest of the flags in memory of loved ones.

## STIHL SUPPORTS 2020 U.S. CAPITOL CHRISTMAS TREE

Each year a different national forest is selected to provide a tree to appear on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol building for the holiday season. This year, under the theme “Experience Your Nature,” the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests, in partnership with nonprofit partner Choose Outdoors and Colorado Tourism, delivered the tree from Colorado to Washington, D.C., for the 2020 holiday season.



“Stihl is proud to support this wonderful tradition that highlights the beauty of our national forests,” says Nick Jiannas, vice president of sales and marketing. “This magnificent

tree will provide an opportunity for all Americans to celebrate the spirit of the holiday season as the tree makes its journey to our nation’s capital.”

With the support and expertise of Stihl and U.S. Forest Service sawyers, the 55-foot-tall Engelmann Spruce was harvested in the Uncompahgre National Forest on Nov. 6 and prepared for the nearly 2,000-mile expedition. The journey of the U.S. Capitol Christmas tree, also known as the “People’s Tree,” includes a series of 10 outdoor community celebrations primarily within the state of Colorado and was delivered to the U.S. Capitol on Nov. 20. The tree was then decorated by handmade ornaments specially created by Coloradans and lit on the West Lawn in early December.

## GREEN INDUSTRY COMPANIES RECEIVE RECOGNITION

### Focal Pointe Outdoor Solutions

Focal Pointe Outdoor Solutions Inc., Caseyville, Illinois, was named to the *St. Louis Business Journal*’s list of the 50 fastest-growing companies in the region. Joining five other firms to be included on the “Fast 50” list for three years running, Focal Pointe ranked 43rd on the 2020 list. The *Business Journal* compiles revenue data for privately held companies in the St. Louis region that had sales of at least \$1 million in 2017 and experienced a revenue increase between 2018 and 2019. Focal Pointe had revenue of \$17.8 million in 2019 and experienced 53.21% growth during the three-year period.

### Pioneer Landscape Centers

Pioneer Landscape Centers, Highlands Ranch, Colorado, was named one of the 50 Most Trustworthy Companies of 2020 by *The Silicon Review*, an online and print community for business and technology professionals. Established in 1968, Pioneer is a distributor of landscaping and hardscaping materials in the western United States, with 35 retail distribution facilities and 20 company-owned and operated quarries and production facilities in Colorado and Arizona. Pioneer recently added four new quarries to its operations, allowing the company to increase production and further move into the concrete, asphalt and road base markets.

### Conserva Irrigation

Conserva Irrigation, Richmond, Virginia, received World-Class Franchise certification from the Franchise Research Institute. The recognition comes after an independent franchisee validation survey conducted by the Franchise Research Institute in which 95% of Conserva Irrigation franchisees participated. The survey was designed to determine the quality of 10 key metrics crucial to franchisee success within the Conserva Irrigation franchise system. The survey asked Conserva Irrigation franchise owners to rate their franchisor through a series of questions in categories such as overall quality, growth potential, support and communication.

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