

# IRRIGATION & green industry®

MARCH 2019

THE BUSINESS MAGAZINE FOR LANDSCAPE, IRRIGATION AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACTORS • WWW.IGIN.COM

Discover this year's most popular plants and the trends influencing them.

## Blooming with possibilities

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- Expert advice for keeping turf green, p. 24
- Why water features are worthwhile, p. 36

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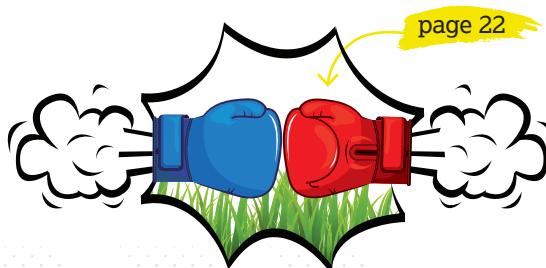


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**But there's also a flip side to that coin. Just as a bad manager can ruin a good job, a great manager can make a good job even better.**

**KRISTIN SMITH-ELY**

## Give them a reason to come to work

I've heard it said before, "People don't leave jobs, they leave managers." I suspect we've all been there at one time or another. While I hope you've never had to endure working for a bad manager, please also don't actually be the bad manager who drives people to start looking elsewhere!

A Gallup poll of more than 1 million employed U.S. workers, referenced in a recent *Forbes* magazine article, concluded that the No. 1 reason people quit their jobs is a bad boss or immediate supervisor. "It doesn't matter how good a job may be, people will quit if the reporting relationship is not healthy," the article states. It concludes, "People leave managers, not companies ... in the end, turnover is mostly a manager issue."

But there's also a flip side to that coin. Just as a bad manager can ruin a good job, a great manager can make a good job even better. If good labor is as valuable as I hear everyone saying it is, it's important to make sure you don't let the good ones get away. What can you do to increase the odds of them sticking around? As it turns out, plenty.

It really comes down to making your employees feel valued. One way of doing that is

by listening. You may not completely agree with the employee, but just knowing his concerns are being heard can go a long way in earning and keeping his loyalty.

Another way to keep your employees looking forward to punching the clock day in and day out is by investing in them. It could be by providing training or certification classes or by giving them raises after a certain length of employment.

A simple perk like a prime parking spot or acknowledging when someone goes above and beyond for a customer might be all it takes to let them know they are appreciated.

Of course, it's also possible that you could do all of these things, and the employee still doesn't work out or decides to leave the company, but I say it is still worth it.

Those who do respond to your efforts will thank you for them, not only by doing a good job, but by staying with your company. And they'll spread the word about what a good employer you are. That means more people want to come work for you. You'll have your pick of employees, and your good reputation in the community will earn you more customers. Everybody wins! 🌱

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# DuPont breaks ground on European headquarters for Industrial Biosciences

DuPont Industrial Biosciences has officially broken ground on its new site at the Leiden Bio Science Park in Oegstgeest, the Netherlands. The company says the new multidisciplinary facility is designed to use the tools of modern biotechnology to make industrial processes more efficient and products more sustainable.

lowering environmental impacts in the textile and laundry industries.

The capacity of the new site in Oegstgeest will double the potential for growth of the current employee base, with the potential of creating an additional 100 jobs at the facility in research and development, application development, marketing, sales

**“This new facility will enable our teams to do even more to improve the pace of biotechnology and the speed with which we can deliver it to market.”** — Simon Herriott

The bio-based solutions created in Leiden will have a direct impact on some of the most pressing societal issues, according to DuPont: reducing food waste; reducing the environmental impacts of livestock farming and improving animal health; producing renewable fuels; and

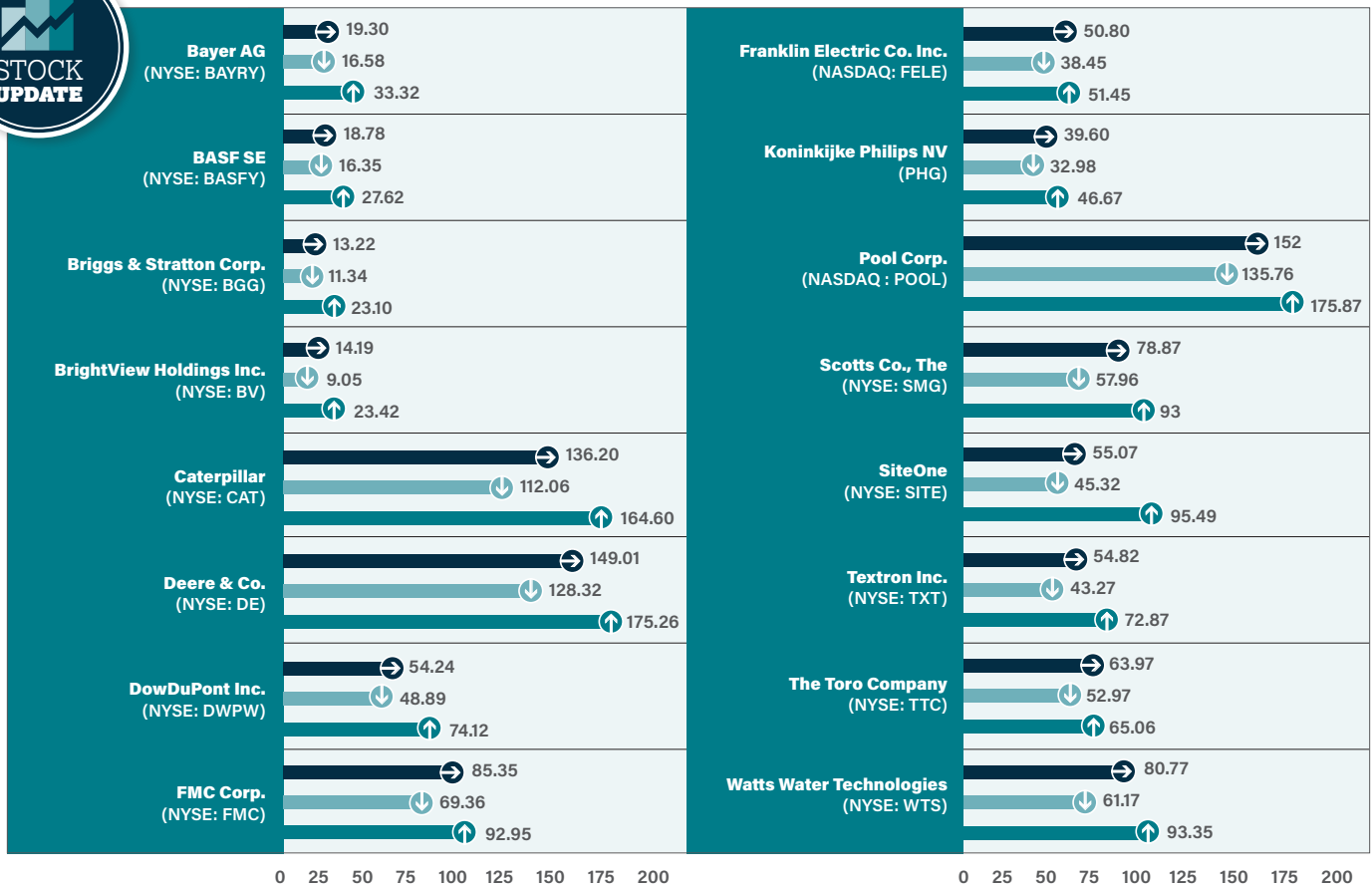
and customer service. The building will serve as the new Europe, Middle East and Africa headquarters for DuPont Industrial Biosciences.

“Our Leiden scientists have been developing innovations that enable our customers to improve the efficiency and



Artist impression of the new DuPont Industrial Biosciences site in the Netherlands. Image courtesy of Dura Vermeer and Ector Hoogstad Architecten

sustainability of their processes and products for many years,” says Simon Herriott, vice president and global business director for bioactives at DuPont. “This new facility will enable our teams to do even more to improve the pace of biotechnology and the speed with which we can deliver it to market. The ecosystem of talent, academia and community we find in the Leiden Bio Science Park is ideal for our work and for keeping us globally competitive.”



↔ Last trade (2-15-19) ↓ 52-week low ↑ 52-week high; Source: Bloomberg.com

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**Irrigation**

**Conserva Irrigation expands with 45 new franchises**

Conserva Irrigation, Richmond, Virginia, announced a total of 45 new franchise agreements signed in 2018 and nine territory expansions from existing franchisees.

“Our team couldn’t have asked for a better year. Alongside our franchisees, technicians and partners, Conserva Irrigation was able to surpass expectations. The accomplishments achieved throughout 2018 reflect everyone’s hard work and commitment to our brand and services,” says Russ Jundt, founder of Conserva Irrigation.

Conserva Irrigation says it remains the only environmentally responsible irrigation company with a franchise business model focused on providing repair and maintenance practices for sprinkler systems. Jundt says, “Water conservation has been and will continue to be at the heart of everything we do at Conserva.”



**Irrigation**

**San Francisco park to undergo major irrigation system upgrade**

Washington Square Park in San Francisco is a favorite spot for local tai chi groups, dog walkers and picnickers. But it also has perennially swampy turf and an antiquated irrigation system that uses more than 3 million gallons of water a year, according to an article by the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

To the disappointment of neighboring residents and business owners, the park will close for at least six

months this spring in order to undergo a major irrigation upgrade. The closure, set to take place in April, will last into prime spring and summer months when residents and tourists visit the park.

According to the article, the park is deteriorating. It is often a slushy, muddy mess, even during dry summer months. The 65-year-old irrigation system uses more water than any park per acre in the city, according to the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department.

According to the department, the new irrigation system could reduce the park’s annual water use by more than 2.2 million gallons and save the city thousands of dollars. It also says a more efficient drainage system will help mitigate the park’s constant slush.

The work is the last phase of a \$6.5 million renovation of the park, which includes new bathrooms that opened a few years ago and a recently rebuilt playground.

Dan Macchiarini, board president of the North Beach Business Association, says the project will be yet another hit to the North Beach area where the park is located, which has experienced a large amount of construction projects over the past few years.

According to the article, the association originally appealed the project, seeking traffic and noise mitigation from Recreation and Park Department. It withdrew the appeal after negotiating a memorandum of understanding that promised no jackhammering between 8 a.m. and noon, that construction equipment would occupy only two parking spaces and that if the project takes more than six months, the contractor will be fined \$1,200 per day.

**Landscape**

**Project EverGreen and STMA team up to renovate Phoenix park**

Project EverGreen, Mentor, Ohio, the Sports Turf Managers Association, Lawrence, Kansas, the city of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department, local businesses and residents teamed up on Monday, Jan. 21 at Phoenix’ Lindo Park to construct a baseball field for the community.

Volunteers included sports field managers, lawn care professionals, landscape contractors, groundskeepers and neighborhood youth, who assisted with the transformation that had an estimated value in excess of \$50,000.

“Neighborhoods deserve a healthy park or community green space that they can call their own,” says Cindy Code, executive director of Project EverGreen. “Thriving parks create a community hub for neighbors young and old to connect.”

STMA supported the renovation project by having more than 100 professional sports turf managers on site.

“We were thrilled to be a part of this important project and bring a well-managed and playable ballpark to a deserving community,” says Kim Heck, CAE, CEO of STMA. “To use our professional expertise and know-how and bring a plan like this to life is a win-win for everyone.”



More information is available at: [www.projectevergreen.org](http://www.projectevergreen.org)

**Mergers and Acquisitions**

**BrightView acquires Austin, Texas-based Benchmark Landscapes**

BrightView Holdings Inc., Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, has announced the acquisition of Benchmark Landscapes LLC, a commercial landscaping company headquartered in Austin, Texas. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

Benchmark was founded in 2002 and provides commercial landscaping services, including landscape maintenance, design, installation, hardscapes, irrigation and tree care. Benchmark's 240 employees cover a service area from Austin to San Antonio, including Corpus Christi and the San Marcos and New Braunfels areas. The company operates six branches in four markets.

"With the acquisition of Benchmark, we expand our footprint in one of the country's fastest-growing markets and bring passionate and skilled team members into the BrightView family," says BrightView President and CEO Andrew Masterman. "This transaction further strengthens our position in Texas and supports our 'strong-on-strong' acquisition strategy."

Benchmark founder and owner Casey Vickrey says that Benchmark represents a good fit for BrightView's expanding portfolio. "I am proud of the business and relationships our team at Benchmark has built. We are excited to join the BrightView team and continue to grow the business, strengthen relationships and make new ones, all while taking care of the team that has been instrumental in making us who we are," says Vickrey.



**Distributors**

**SRS Distribution acquires CPS Distributors and Automatic Supply**

Heritage Landscape Supply Group Inc., a new wholly owned subsidiary formed by SRS Distribution Inc., McKinney, Texas, has announced it has acquired CPS Distributors Inc. and Automatic Supply. Terms of the transactions were not disclosed.

Headquartered in Westminster, Colorado, and founded in 1890, CPS is a wholesale distributor of irrigation and landscape supplies in the Rocky Mountain region. CPS serves landscape and irrigation contractors, municipalities, pump and well contractors, and other professional contractors through its 13 branches across Colorado and Wyoming.

Headquartered in Fishers, Indiana, and founded in 1982, Automatic distributes landscaping, irrigation, outdoor lighting and related products throughout the state of Indiana. Automatic serves a diverse group of professional landscape, irrigation and outdoor lighting contractors through its four branches.

To ensure continuity and consistency for customers, employees and supplier partners, management of CPS and Automatic will remain in place. Lowell Kaufhold, president of CPS, and Steve Christie, president of Automatic, will remain actively involved, be co-investors and join forces to help guide the company's strategy.

Heritage plans to grow by forming a national network of independent distributors aligned to provide exceptional customer service while increasing its value as a trusted growth partner to top manufacturers in the industry. Heritage seeks to preserve the legacy of every acquired company by maintaining local brand identity and management, and the entire group will run as a family of independents rather than a national platform.

In connection, SRS further announced that Matt McDermott has been appointed president of Heritage. "Both CPS and Automatic have outstanding reputations as trusted partners for both customers and suppliers," says McDermott. "Looking ahead, we will continue to win with a people-first culture and provide unlimited resources to grow our local brands around the best teams of people in each market where we operate."



**QUICK TAKES**

**Landscape contractor builds wall to stop theft**

Chicago landscape company owner Brian Awad constructed a wall around his business after being victimized by two different robberies within just two weeks of each other.

Awad says that the robberies have cost his business more than \$21,000 in stolen equipment. The frustrated contractor then built a wall around his warehouse in hopes it will deter any future break-ins.

**Carbon monoxide fumes take landscapers lives**

On Dec. 11, police found two landscapers on the ground, not breathing, at a condominium complex in Washington Township, New Jersey. The incident occurred because a lawn mower was left running inside a closed trailer belonging to AJR Landscaping. Both landscape workers were given CPR at the scene and rushed to a nearby hospital.

The first victim, a 26-year-old landscaper, died soon after the incident. The other victim was taken off life support in mid-January.

**New York landscaping company debuts new reality TV show**

One company has turned the concrete jungle of New York City into a canvas with its new reality TV show, "Backyard Envy," which debuted on Bravo Jan. 17.

The series follows James DeSantis, Garrett Magee and Melissa Brasier, three friends who run Manscapers, a Brooklyn, New York-based, landscaping firm. Each episode shows how the team transforms a client's backyard into an outdoor haven.

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BY GARY HORTON

## Remember, “It’s just business”



I'm as serious about my business as just about anybody. I've gone through my share of sleepless nights, worry, stress and strain. I've come home grouchy and worse. I even hit deep depression during the Great Recession.

And boy, did we go through the wringer in the Great Recession. We'd lost three-quarters of our construction business and workforce and in 2013 had to basically start all over again. Boy, did I think I'd seen and experienced it all. I was wrong.

I'd bet just about any landscaper reading this column has, at one time or another, gone through much of the same. We care about our companies, we care about our futures, and things can really get to you when business gets rough or things go wrong.

So, today I'm here to tell you, "Lighten up! It's just business." Almost any problem in business can eventually be overcome with enough diligence and thought. A personal experience really shocked me into proper perspective, and it's how I overcame the over-worry syndrome.

Four years back our family was invited to a huge wedding in India for a friend of my son's from college. He'd planned an enormous affair with a two-week tour of India all wrapped up with a wedding with elephants and camels and castles.

We began our tour with a visit to the Taj Mahal. Indeed, that is quite a site and nearly a must-see for landscapers and architects. After the Taj, we went shopping for wedding attire. My daughter found what she was looking for and headed down the street with a friend to find a tailor.

Not more than five minutes after she left, a young man came running back into the store yelling, "Your daughter's been hit! Your daughter's been hit!"

My son and I ran down the street to find Katie splayed on the curb. A motorcycle had hit her at high speed. She'd been thrown an unknown distance and suffered blunt trauma to her head in multiple areas. She was motionless, unconscious, and her breathing was shallow.

No police or ambulances were to be found. We

ended up riding a three wheeled "tuk-tuk" with Katie laying on Jon's lap and me hanging from the basket on the outside. We made our way over bumpy cobblestone streets to a hospital. Seventy long minutes passed before we got Katie to the emergency room. It was a close call as her lungs had filled with blood.

Surgeons performed brain surgery three hours later to stop cranial bleeding and to compensate for swelling. The doctors said, "It was in God's hands."

My daughter remained in a coma in the ICU for three days before finally coming to. For the next 24 days, we stayed with Katie 24/7. She began speaking in very short sentences after a week, and bit by bit, her brain rebooted back up. But she couldn't retain memory from one day to the next and her behavior was erratic as happens with brain injuries.

After nearly a month in India, Katie was well enough to fly home accompanied by two doctors and immediately admitted to UCLA Medical Center. She stayed with my wife and me during two months of intense rehab. She later returned home and began working part time and eventually full time.

Remarkably, if you met my daughter today you'd sense no indication of such a devastating injury. Our family has been blessed beyond any expectation and humbled to have a second chance with our daughter.

Business stress? So, what about it? Business is nothing compared to holding a dying daughter in one's arms. No business stress approaches the agonizing wait of a family member in a coma or the true tortured strangeness of brain injury recovery.

In this profound experience we were given two gifts: First, our daughter's life was restored. And second, profound perspective. Whereas previously business so consumed me, so ate me up, here I learned in my gut what really matters.

Remember, business is just business. When things seem tough, breathe deep and put things back into perspective. Don't let the tough, maddening days get to you. Truly, it's not life or death, so embrace the challenges that come and tackle them without the baggage of stress and worry. 🌱



**Almost any problem in business can eventually be overcome with enough diligence and thought.**



**Gary Horton, MBA**, is CEO of Landscape Development Inc., a green industry leader for over 35 years with offices throughout California and Nevada. He can be reached at [ghorton@landscapedevelopment.com](mailto:ghorton@landscapedevelopment.com).



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BY KEVIN SMITH

## The lighter side of lighting



**I**t's the middle of winter, and many of us are still waiting for the ground to thaw. So, I thought this might be a good time to bring you a few stories of humorous events that have happened on job sites across the country.

**Always ask, "Why light?"** — During Bill Locklin's career as an electrical contractor, he designed a lighting job for a client who was hardly ever home. The weekend before he started it, Locklin and his family went to see the 1957 film "Boy on a Dolphin" starring Sophia Loren.

Wouldn't you know it, this customer's property happened to have a beautiful fountain with a bronze dolphin in the center. Perhaps inspired by the film — and without asking — Locklin took it upon himself to light the fountain.

After a week went by, Locklin finally was able to meet with the client to discuss the job and receive the final payment. Bill asked the customer how he liked the job. The customer explained that all of it was fantastic "except for that darned dolphin fountain!"

Locklin was puzzled; the fountain had been lit perfectly. The man explained, "My mother-in-law had that fountain installed while I was away and spent a rather large sum of money on it — my money!" He told Locklin that he never really cared for his mother-in-law nor "her" cetacean fountain.

That is why, when teaching lighting classes, Locklin would always stress asking, "Why light?"

**"Please the pooch"** — An associate of mine once worked with a designer in Toronto who explained to him that his customers wanted outdoor lighting for their pet. This couple wanted their dog to be able to see in the backyard so he could have nighttime talks with the neighbor's pup through the fence. It was also expressed that this dog had better like the lighting, or it would need to be changed to suit him.

Although this was a rather unusual request, my associate went to work on a fantastic design. When the job was completed and adjusted, the four-legged

"client" was let out into his newly lit yard. After a short walk around and a few bragging barks to the neighbor mutts, the dog turned and ran to my associate, jumped up into his arms and began licking his face. His owners were ecstatic!

My associate was then awarded another job at their summer home. The moral of this story is, sometimes it pays to please the pooch.

**The "hell hole"** — Back in the day, I accompanied a contractor friend to help design a backyard for a Pentecostal pastor, a great guy with a very loud voice and a profound sense of humor. Walking the property, he told us the effects he wanted in all the areas of the yard except one — a corridor along the west side of the house where the trash cans were stored. He told us he was not sure what he wanted in that area.

We suggested that cable be installed in the area with a switch on the wall for control. He agreed, and the job was installed. After the final nighttime adjustment, he confessed that he still didn't know what to do on that west side. Looking at me, he asked, "Can you think of anything?" I asked him to go in the house and we would call him out shortly.

Deciding to play to the pastor's sense of humor, we installed two up lights with very bright 50-watt MR16 lamps. The fixtures, which we cross-lit, were fitted with red and amber lenses. My friend and I were snickering when I called out, "Okay, pastor, turn on the switch!" with a big grin on my face. When he did, red and yellow light flooded the corridor and I yelled, "Pastor, here is your hell hole!" The pastor roared with laughter, exclaiming, "I love the hell hole! This is going to get a lot of people back to church."

I don't know about that, but the hell hole is still up and running today.

I hope you all were able to get warmed up with a little humor. If you have any funny stories you would like to share, please send them to me, and I will put them in another article. And remember to smile and laugh often. 🌿



**The moral of this story is, sometimes it pays to please the pooch.**



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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Among the trends influencing new plants is the growing desire of homeowners for beautiful landscapes that are durable and low maintenance. To help make this possible, growers are working to improve plant genetics to resist pests, diseases and harsh conditions.



Incorporating new plants in your palette not only keeps your landscapes looking fresh to customers but keeps your job new and exciting too. Each year, new plant varieties with unique, vibrant colors, eye-catching patterns and sweet fragrances are introduced to the market.

And while plant genetics are getting better with each passing year, growers are constantly having to respond to ever-changing factors like water restrictions, pests and plant diseases. Having to forecast production months, even years, before the plants come to market also creates real challenges.

That's why the relationship between the landscape industry, growers and garden centers is oh-so



Growers and suppliers continue to see an increased demand for native plants and succulents that are drought resistant, yet colorful and attractive. Container gardening and growing edible fruits, vegetables and herbs in landscapes are also popular trends on the rise.





important. It's one built on lots of listening and good communication. There's always going to be bumps along the way, but when we work together to provide customers what they want, it's amazing to see the results. The nursery industry is filled with brilliant plant experts who have dedicated their whole careers to horticulture. What better way to learn about this year's top plants and the trends that are influencing them than to go straight to the source?

#### **Market overview**

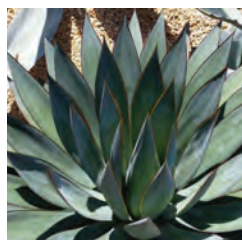
George Wolf is one of these plant experts, getting his start in the industry as a college student and continuing to work with plants his whole career. Today, he is the director of nursery category management at

# Blooming with possibilities

Discover this year's most popular plants and the trends influencing them. **BY SARAH BUNYEA**



Getting new plants into the hands of contractors takes teamwork and a lot of behind-the-scenes coordination. Photos: SiteOne Landscape Supply



Bright, drought-resistant plants are always popular. Above: *Ceanothus Maritimus Valley Violet* (left), Photo: UC Davis Arboretum and Public Garden; and *Platinum Beauty Lomandra*, Photo: Sunset Western Garden Collection. At left: *Color Guard Adam's Needle* and *Bottle Pop Neon Pink Bottlebrush*, Photos: Village Nurseries.

## What is boxwood blight?

Boxwood blight is a widespread fungal disease that's been causing the defoliation of boxwood in the U.S. since 2011, where it was initially discovered in North Carolina, Connecticut and Virginia.

Symptoms begin as leaf spots followed by rapid browning and leaf drop starting on the lower branches and moving upward in the canopy. Boxwood blight is very difficult and costly to control with fungicides.

Growers are focused on increasing resistancy to the fungal disease with improved genetics.

SiteOne Landscape Supply, Roswell, Georgia, where he works with senior leadership at the company to develop its strategy to grow its nursery segment with the ultimate goal of adding value to contractors.

Right now, 83 of the company's 500-plus locations have nursery yards, but all branches technically sell nursery products through the company's Nursery Direct Program. Wolf says there's always a team of SiteOne folks in place to deliver or ship nursery products regardless of location.

A couple of considerations go into SiteOne's offerings. "The first part of it is the basic palette of that market that we're in," says Wolf. "Then we'll also look at what the customer mix is of that individual branch — whether the customer mix is primarily contractors that focus on doing renovations for existing residential homeowners or if the contractor base is primarily geared toward builder work."

SiteOne continually seeks input from contractors in the markets it serves as well as its brands and growers. One trend Wolf says is influencing SiteOne's nursery products is the increasing number of homeowners who have smaller yards, which means offering more compact varieties of plants and shrubs.

Wolf also says that tropical foliage plants seem to be making a comeback, and SiteOne has seen an increase in demand from contractors to stock more of these colorful species. Another popular trend he's seeing stretch beyond the traditional South and Southwest regions is the use of succulents and natives in landscapes.

Ultimately, says Wolf, "The biggest trend right now that we continue to see is anything that is a sub-

stitution for boxwood blight issues. That pretty much hits the eastern U.S."

Boxwood blight is why SiteOne is promoting Garden Debut's Baby Jade Boxwood this year, as well as the Gem Box Inkberry holly from Proven Winners, which Wolf describes as a subtle substitute for boxwood. A bright, colorful ground cover opportunity the company anticipates will grow is the Evercolor Everillo Carex from the Southern Living Plant Collection. Wolf says SiteOne will also introduce new roses as they come out this year from Star Roses and Plants, as well as Encore azaleas as they are released by the Southern Living Plant Collection.

**"All indications are it's going to be a great spring and should be a great year because of how the weather impacted most of our markets last year."**

— George Wolf, SiteOne Landscape Supply

When it comes to planning for plant trends, Wolf says a beneficial opportunity SiteOne has had is investing in a software platform that uses algorithms allowing the company to examine three-year trends.

"Rather than just going with gut instinct, we can forecast out, with fairly good accuracy, three years in advance on most items. And in some cases, we can actually take it out a little bit further," says Wolf.

This helps the company work with its primary grower partners by providing them data to help them determine their production cycle and what to grow. "We're on the back end of what the cycle has grown already. So if we aren't able to give them good information, they're kind of guessing at what to grow. It's definitely a little bit of an art as well as a science," he says.

Wolf and the SiteOne team are anticipating a successful year. "All indications are it's going to be a great spring and should be a great year because of how the weather impacted most of our markets last

year. When we talk to contractors, they lost a lot of work days just due to the rain or abnormal weather conditions. So there's a lot of pent up work that didn't get done in 2018 that from talking to contractors will definitely hit the market in 2019," Wolf says.

### It's all in the name

The scenic Fraser Valley region of British Columbia is home to Van Belle Nursery, a grower of over 400 varieties of plants on 100 acres. The nursery's Young-plants business works with hundreds of growers that stretch into almost every region of North America.

The nursery is the creator of the brand, Bloomin' Easy. In fact, branded plants make up about half of its volume, according to the nursery's marketing manager, Kevin Cramer. "Close to 55 percent of our product volume is nonbranded. This percentage has been slowly shrinking over time as branded plants become more sought after with landscapers and retailers in North America," says Cramer. "As long as we continue to replace older varieties with newer ones, we will keep up with this trend."

One of the more unique plants the team at Van Belle Nursery is excited to introduce this year is the Electric Love Weigela. With electric red bell-shaped flowers against dark foliage, the plant is striking with its rich contrast. Cramer says growers are really building up Bloomin' Easy varieties like Nightglow Diervilla, Flare Hydrangea and Rainbow Fizz Spiraea in 2019. He says they are incredibly low maintenance, and the smaller, mature form that these varieties offer is appealing to homeowners.

Younger-generation homeowners who desire a beautiful outdoor space but are "hesitant to jump right in" are a growing target market for the nursery. According to Cramer, this type of homeowner perceives caring for a landscape as too much work or too difficult. It's for this reason that Van Belle Nursery focuses on genetics like Proven Winners and Bloomin' Easy, because they are naturally compact and tidy,

are disease resistant, flower longer and perform in a variety of conditions that work for the majority of consumers.

### Good genes

Located in the foothills of Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains is Saunders Brothers Nursery, a family-owned nursery, orchard and farm market that began as a partnership between five brothers in 1915 and today is operated by the family's third generation.

"When we're deciding what to grow, we're trialing it in production for sure," says Sonya Westervelt, chief of wholesale sales at Saunders Brothers.

The nursery simulates a natural habitat by using a minimal amount of fertilizers and growing plants in its own office's landscape to see how they perform. Planning what to grow is "an educated guess based on industry hype, on past sales of similar plants, and also, it's a gut feeling when you're growing something new," says Westervelt.

The nursery is introducing many new plants this year, including the Berberis WorryFree Crimson Cutie, a noninvasive barberry that has been exempted for sale in the New England region.

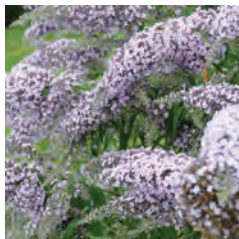
Westervelt says it's an exciting plant for that market since other barberries have been banned due to their invasive nature when planted outside of their native regions. A few others she's excited about are the Buddleia Grand Cascade, a purple blooming butterfly bush that has large flowers in beautiful arching form, as well as the Summer Crush hydrangea by Endless Summer, with its rich, deep pink blooms. The nursery is producing some new perennials too. Among them are Rudbeckia "American Gold Rush," a Black-Eyed Susan that's resistant to fungal infections.

### 2019 plant trends

- small yards
- boxwood substitutes
- branded plants
- succulents and natives
- disease- and pest-resistant plants
- edible fruits, vegetables and herbs
- balancing beautiful with low maintenance

From Bloomin' Easy comes new ground cover varieties with bright, vibrant blooms that contrast against dark foliage. Left to right: Electric Love Weigela and Nightglow Diervilla.





Left to right: Berberis WorryFree Crimson Cutie, Photo: SynRG; and Buddleia Grand Cascade, Photo: Walters Gardens Inc.

Creating the biggest buzz at Saunders Brothers is arguably the boxwood program, which has been part of the family tradition for over 70 years. This year, the nursery unveiled a new generation of boxwood development and production with its NewGen Boxwood. Years in the making,

the NewGen is a response to address the challenge of boxwood blight and has a better tolerance of the disease and also better resistance to boxwood leafminer.

Westervelt says that while there are tried and true product groups that remain popular over the years, “the quality of the plants are always improving if you’re keeping up with new genetics.” As a nursery that has spent decades trialing and evaluating plants, she says Saunders Brothers will continue to recommend and evolve cultivars with the best genetics.

**A relationship-driven business**

Part of the West Coast division of TreeTown USA, Village Nurseries is a wholesale plant and tree grower based in Orange, California. It’s here that Nicholas Staddon serves as the company’s official “plantsman” and plays a central role in the nursery’s plant introduction program. A true veteran of the industry, he joined Village Nurseries three years ago after a 27-year career leading Monrovia’s new plant program.

Staddon explains that the plant palette in California has changed quite a bit over the last 10 to 15 years because of the state’s serious drought issues. “The landscape architects and designers are driven by government regulation on the plants that they can

put on jobs, so they have to conform with specific water needs that are required by plants. That has really driven our plant mix for the landscape industry.”

He admits that while native plants are growing in popularity, they can sometimes tend to be on the unattractive side. “They’re not emotionally fulfilling in their own environment. They fit into the sides of mountains and things like that, but when you put them on job sites and peoples’ gardens, they just don’t have that same emotional appeal.”

While people like the idea of drought-tolerant plants that don’t require as frequent watering, he says that homeowners also want their yards to look beautiful and full of fragrant flowers. To find a happy medium between these two desires, he says the nursery looks for varieties that perform well in the landscape, don’t get quite so big as some of the native varieties and are profuse bloomers. An example of this is the Ceanothus Maritimus Valley Violet, which he describes as a “really handsome plant” that’s long-lived with stunning flowers and small evergreen leaves.

“The landscape community and the landscape architects and designers, they’re looking toward someone like myself and Village Nurseries to provide them with great plants that are low-water, handle somewhat inhospitable soil, and when it warms up, do well in high heat.” Staddon says Village Nurseries is always looking for new varieties of water-wise plants, especially ones coming in from New Zealand, Australia and South Africa because of these countries’ similar climates to Southern California.

The nursery is working with a newer group of plants from Australia called Dianella, grass-like plants that are very drought tolerant. According to Staddon, an attractive variety of this plant is Clarity Blue Dianella from Sunset Western Garden Collection. Another plant the nursery has found to be very popular is the Platinum Beauty Lomandra, also from Sunset Western Garden Collection, which is used

Brightly colored plants are always in high demand. Left to right: Summer Crush hydrangea, Photo: Bailey Nurseries Inc.; and Rudbeckia American Gold Rush, Photo: Walters Gardens Inc.



## TOP 10 PLANTS TO WATCH FOR

	NAME	ZONE*	DESCRIPTION
	Baby Jade Boxwood	5	compact boxwood with small, dark green leaves that hold color throughout the year
	Electric Love Weigela	4	striking shrub with electric red bell-shaped flowers against dark foliage; a bee and hummingbird magnet
	Nightglow Diervilla	4	intense yellow blooms light up the dark red foliage, and its dark leaves become more intense as they age
	Buddleia Grand Cascade	5-10	purple blooming butterfly bush that has large flowers in beautiful arching form
	Summer Crush Hydrangea	4-9	compact hydrangea with a profusion of big raspberry red or neon purple blooms
	Ceanothus Maritimus Valley Violet	5-9	native plant covered with dark evergreen leaves and in spring is cloaked in clusters of dark violet flowers
	Clarity Blue Dianella	8-11	tough hybrid with upright foliage that gets strong upright growth from one parent and deep blue color from the other
	Platinum Beauty Lomandra	8-10	tough, low-water perennial with green and white striped variegated form
	Meerlo Lavender	9-10	vigorous lavender with highly fragrant variegated foliage and pale blue flowers in summer
	Erik the Red Sunbird Aloe	8-11	tall-growing aloe with its stem topped by a rosette and dark/mid green shades of leaves with whitish green teeth along the leaf margin

\*USDA Plant Hardiness Zones

for ground cover and erosion control on banks.

Staddon says a hot plant this year is the Bottle Pop Neon Pink Bottlebrush from Monrovia with its striking hot pink flowers. A new lavender that's come out is Meerlo Lavender from Sunset Western Garden Collection. Staddon says it's unique because it has a higher fragrance than most other lavenders, and it also has beautiful variegated leaves.

Of course a true Southern Californian landscape wouldn't be complete without succulents. "As well as being staples in the landscape, they're very trendy. I mean, people love to have them in their garden landscapes," Staddon says. Examples are Erik the Red Sunbird Aloe and the Color Guard Adam's Needle.

Container gardening is also gaining traction. Gardens and yards are getting smaller in some parts of the country, so people are looking for container plants that not only work on a patio or in an entrance way but in a smaller garden, too. Staddon's seen an increase in vegetable gardening and in fruit or flowers that can be harvested and then brought indoors.

Horticulture therapy is a huge passion of Staddon's. It's going on all over the U.S., and he says it's a big deal. "Being involved in plants used to be kind of trendy. Now, it's this massive cultural shift. There's more people that really get it." The "it" being that plants are not only good for the environment, but they're good for our health, too.

He says landscape architects are designing more areas around commercial buildings where people can sit down and enjoy the environment. "There's a lot

of interest in rooftop gardens now where people are putting these gardens in so employees have a place to go on their break and completely relax."

So how does a "plantsman" like Staddon gather all this insight about trends? "A lot of our job is listening to people," he says. "I will always fall into conversation with people just chatting them up, and then you can ask them: Do you have a garden? What are your favorite colors? Does your family use the garden? Over a period of time, you begin to see that everyone actually is really thinking the same way."

Staddon likes to drill down what people like in plants: shapes, forms and colors. It is a relationship-driven business after all. He encourages landscape contractors to visit their suppliers and vice versa.

"It's crucial that we are all seeing each other face-to-face on a regular basis because that's where the business is done. That's where you communicate how things are going, what's working, what's not working, what's coming down the pipeline in plants. As a group of people, we're still very social. We always do our best business when we're together," he says.

With a renewed appreciation for what these plant gurus do to bring new plants to market every year, it may be time for you to go and check them out.

While you are at it, be sure to give your nursery growers and suppliers feedback, so they can serve you well in the future. 🌱

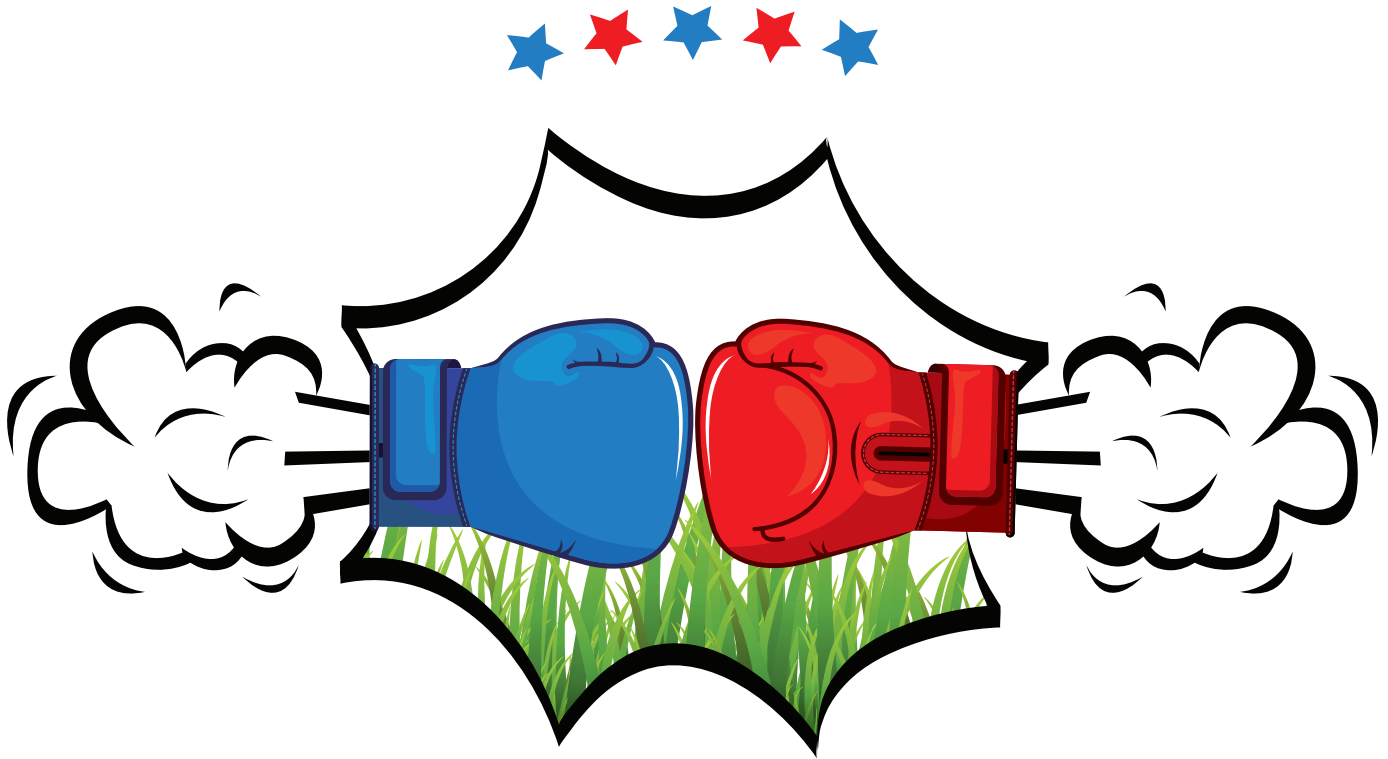
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## Discover more

Check out a complete list of this year's hottest plants in the online version of the article at [www.igin.com](http://www.igin.com).



From Van Belle Nursery, the Rainbow Fizz Spiraea has copper-colored foliage and candy-like buds that start red and open to a bright pink.



# GOING UP AGAINST GIANTS

**COMPETING FOR TALENT WITH LARGER FIRMS DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY PUT YOU AT A DISADVANTAGE.**



**BY KATE KJEELL**

**I**s bigger always better? Not necessarily when it comes to recruiting talent. Today's job seeker is looking for more in a new position than just how big a company is. Just as David killed the giant with a strategic blow to the head, small companies can beat their larger competition by knowing their strengths — and the competition's weaknesses.

A quick scan of job postings will confirm that the competition for talented professionals is fierce. As the saying goes, "The war for talent is over ... and the talent won." With next to full employment, most candidates, including entry-level workers, have more career options than ever before. That means companies have to up their game to fill their open positions.

This represents a unique challenge for the green industry as over half of it is comprised of small businesses. Competing for talent against companies with bigger name recognition and fatter recruiting budgets can feel like a David versus Goliath scenario. But it doesn't need to be that way.

Savvy small business leaders can create compelling offerings to candidates, but they need to be proactive and carefully plan their approach. Here are five

tips that can help you bag that highly coveted talent.

**1 MAXIMIZE YOUR NETWORK.** Small businesses are often well connected locally. Don't underestimate your network — and if you don't have one start developing one.

You can get the word out about openings through your membership in green industry and other business associations. Teaming up with other small businesses can be a great way to leverage your efforts, particularly with companies that are hiring in different areas than you traditionally hire in. This allows you to expand your reach.

Always be on the lookout for great talent even if you don't have a need for it right then and there. Establish relationships and build a pipeline of talented individuals before you need them. This requires a longer view and some care and feeding, but it pays off in big dividends. Encourage your executive team to do the same. Recruiting is a team sport and everyone needs to play a position to win in this game.

A recent green industry client took this advice to heart. While we were searching for a national sales manager, we found several candidates that were not

quite a fit for that position but would be ideal as regional sales managers. By treating them respectfully and providing a great hiring experience they were left with a good impression of the company. The hiring leader kept in touch with these two candidates, connecting with them on social media and occasionally checking in. Three months later, when they were ready to hire a regional sales manager, there were already two great candidates in the pipeline ready and waiting. This is a great example of hiring for the future in a competitive market.

Another network to cultivate is early-career talent. Consider local schools and universities as a feeder source. A well-planned internship program can provide you with a great pool of candidates who are already familiar with your company. It will give you a leg up when these candidates graduate and enter the job market.

**2 TURN EMPLOYEES INTO TALENT AMBASSADORS.** Statistics show that employee referrals are your best recruiting resource, shortening the time-to-hire interval and providing the highest quality potential hires.

Turn your employees into talent ambassadors by equipping them with the right tools for sharing your available openings. Here are a few specific steps to get your employees thinking like talent ambassadors:

- Start small and pick a handful of people who are passionate about your company and its mission.
- Quantifying your employee value proposition.
- Empower your talent ambassadors to post about your company on social media. A mix of job posting information and authentic content about your company will provide a nice balance.
- Once you get some traction with your core team, build on that success. Have your talent ambassadors enlist the support of others in the company in getting the word out.

If you don't already offer incentives for employee referrals, consider this an opportunity. Studies show that even small forms of recognition, including those that are nonmonetary, get employees excited about referring candidates. After all, who doesn't want to work with their friends?

**3 CREATE A UNIQUE SOCIAL MEDIA FOOTPRINT.** A study by recruiting technology firm iCIMS stated that over 50 percent of job seekers are using social media to learn about potential employers. For a small company, social media is a great tool to highlight your unique culture and stand out from the crowd. Sharing your company's values and mission can attract candidates that might be drawn to those things.

For example, the green industry is well positioned to compete with other industries that may not be as environmentally friendly. Sustainability and environmental awareness are values that resonate with can-

didates and attract a larger talent pool.

On the other hand, small businesses can overlook negative social media reviews and posts due to a lack of resources or an understanding of their impact. Make sure you are proactively managing your social media message. If left unattended, the most negative voices will drive the narrative.

**4 HIGHLIGHT CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES.** Nobody enjoys a boring job. This has never been truer than with the millennial

***SMALL COMPANIES INHERENTLY EMBRACE EMPLOYEES PLAYING DIFFERENT ROLES AND STRETCHING THEMSELVES IN DIFFERENT AREAS; THIS IS COMPELLING TO MANY JOB SEEKERS.*** ★ ★ ★

workforce. A key competitive advantage of a small business over a larger one is the opportunity to wear multiple hats. Small companies inherently embrace employees playing different roles and stretching themselves in different areas; this is compelling to many job seekers.

Make sure you are specific about what this looks like in various roles and provide examples. This will capture a candidate's imagination and attention more than the typical vague statement most companies put out there such as, "We encourage employee growth." Show them what that means.

In addition to having broader roles for their employees, small companies have less bureaucracy and typically make decisions quicker. It's exciting to a candidate to understand the impact he or she can make on a business by having the flexibility to make decisions and have visibility across an organization.

**5 RETAIN THE EMPLOYEES YOU ALREADY HAVE.** Sometimes the best defense is a good offense. Companies that do a great job of developing and retaining their employees don't have to spend a lot of time and effort on recruiting. Retaining and developing employees that are already contributing to your business is one of the best strategies for competing with the big companies.

Lastly, move quickly in the hiring process. This is another competitive advantage that small companies have over larger ones. Big organizations often make a candidate face six or even more interviewers before a decision is made. An organization that is willing to act fast on a good candidate has a big advantage.

If these tips feel daunting, start small and pick one area to concentrate on. But don't let the week go by without committing to be proactive in your recruiting strategy. With some focus and creative thinking, your company can become a "giant killer" when it comes to competing for great talent against bigger — but not necessarily better — companies. 🍀



**Kate Kjeell** is president of TalentWell, a recruiting firm that specializes in helping small and mid-sized businesses find and hire the right people to enable them to thrive. The firm's approach can be described in three words: find, fit, flourish. She can be reached at [kate@talentwellinc.com](mailto:kate@talentwellinc.com).

BY MARY ELIZABETH WILLIAMS-VILLANO

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# IT'S NOT EASY KEEPING TURF GREEN

THERE ARE MANY, MANY PARTS TO A TURF MANAGER'S JOB AND NONE OF THEM CAN BE IGNORED.

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**T**o manage something well means to help it perform at the highest level it possible, whether that thing is a group of people, a business, a sports team or one's personal fitness regime.

The same goes for turf. A turf manager's job, whether he's in charge of the grounds of a corporate campus, the greens of a golf course or the lawns of a homeowners' association is to help that grass perform to

the best of its ability for the purpose it has.

It's a demanding, multifaceted task, a bit like herding cats, as Nolan Butterfras, president of Texas Turf Management, Cypress, Texas, knows. Ninety-eight percent of his clients are large commercial sites. The obstacles his turf managers face include high foot traffic, grass-killing pet waste or someone monkeying with precisely planned watering or fertilization schedules ... and nature herself.



“Mother Nature is with you — and against you — every day,” he says. “So one of my favorite sayings is, ‘get boots on the ground,’ which means you need to walk the sites you’re working on. Look at the watering and the mowing practices. See if the fertilization is being done safely and correctly and whether it’s working or not. Look for any signs of pests, diseases or fungus.”

The job gets really tough when she throws you a curve ball, like the prolonged Texas drought a few years back. “It was the worst I’d seen in 20 years of being in business,” says Butterfras. “The watering restrictions were so tight, scheduling was tricky. We had many meetings at the office just to calculate watering times.”

Dealing with the drought was so difficult that Texas Turf’s main goal changed from making their clients’ properties shine to preserving their investments in plants and turf. “Our properties had just enough [water] to keep everything alive and almost zero losses while meeting all the different municipalities’ requirements.”

I asked Butterfras what the most important aspect of keeping turf healthy is — Fertilization? Irrigation? Soil conditions? Mowing practices? Pest, weed and disease control? He answered, “All of the above, and more. A turf manager has to pay attention to all of them; they’re all equally important.”

### SOIL RANKS

It all starts with the soil, says Dr. Nick Christians. An agronomy professor at Iowa State University’s Ames campus. He co-wrote the book on this subject, *Fundamentals of Turfgrass Management*. He says if any single aspect of turf management ranks above the others, it’s soil.

“The quality of the soil is number one,” Christians continues. “And yet, I see so many lawns in our region, the Midwest, established on terrible soil — subsurface clay or gravel. For years afterward, they’re going to have problems.”

What’s a turf manager to do when faced with poor soil? Christians says, “Adding organic materials will help, mixing some compost or peat into it.” Sand can also be mixed in, as is often done with athletic fields. However, he cautions that one should never mix sand into clay soil, because then, “What you’re making is concrete.”

A soil test is always a good starting point. It tells the turf manager not only the type of soil he’s dealing with but where it might be deficient.

### IRRIGATION FACTOR

The soil profile also dictates how he should irrigate, as Casey Reynolds knows. The executive director of Turfgrass Producers International, Lombard, Illinois, spent 10

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**“You can absolutely water turf too much. It not only wastes water, it promotes fungus and root rot.”**

— Nolan Butterfras, Texas Turf Management

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years at North Carolina State University doing research and extension work on turf grasses. Later, as a professor at Texas A&M University, he taught landscapers how to manage lawns and athletic fields.

# To bag or not to bag

It's one of the landscape profession's great debates: to bag or not to bag lawn clippings. CoCal Landscape, Denver, comes down firmly on the no-bag side. "We never bag clippings," says Carlos

Medrano, CLT, QS, maintenance department manager. "In fact, if we have a potential client who insists that we do it, we'll turn down his business. We'll mulch-mow because it adds organic matter to the soil and releases nitrogen back into it. That reduces the amount of fertilizer we have to put down each spring."

If it's better not to bag, why do so many landscape companies follow a "no clippings left behind" policy? Because their clients want it, of course. "Homeowners, property managers aren't educated about this," says Medrano.

Many clients fear that leaving cut grass on lawns will look messy. But Justin

Trimble, COO of Signature Landscapes, Reno, Nevada, says when mulch mowing is done correctly, you should never see the clippings, unless the turf is too wet or has been mowed too high. Signature mulch-mows "95 percent of the time. It gets nutrients back into the soil, and it also helps minimize the amount of green waste that goes into landfills."

The other objection to mulch mowing is that it contributes to thatch buildup. Considering its other benefits, that seems like a minor consideration.

A couple of states over, at Omaha Organics, Omaha, Nebraska, the no-bag philosophy also applies. President and Owner Rob Elder says, "We're highly against bagging, don't even own a bagger. If you bag a yard every week, you're losing up to 30 percent of your annual nutrients each year. Then you have to fertilize to replace them."



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“With sandy, coarser soils you can irrigate deeply, heavily and infrequently because the soil can infiltrate a lot of water at once,” Reynolds says. “But with clay, if you ran your system for an hour and a half, the first 30 minutes of it may get into the soil. The rest of it would just wash off the top. It’s better to use cycle-and-soak; run all the zones for 20 minutes, then go back a couple hours later and run them another 20 minutes. It slows the application rate but still gets the same amount of water down into the soil.”

The long, drawn-out Texas drought demonstrated to Butterfras the power of water auditing. “It’s one of our highest priorities at Texas Turf. In a drought, if you’ve done your auditing correctly, you’ll soar above your competition.”

I’ve often heard that when it comes to turf, there’s no such thing as too much water. Right? “Wrong,” says Butterfras. “You can absolutely water turf too much. It not only wastes water, it promotes fungus and root rot.”

Medrano agrees. “If you’re in a shady microclimate and you’re overwatering, it doesn’t give the turf enough time to dry. Then you will have problems with fungus and turf diseases like fairy ring and necrotic ring spot.”

**MOWING HEIGHT**

A good turf manager would never allow grass to be “scalped,” cut too low. How high it should be mowed will vary. What never changes, though, is the need to do it with sharp blades. Dull mower blades rip and tear at grass rather than give it a clean cut, so turf management companies make

sure their mowers’ blades get sharpened at least once a week.

As for the right cut height, “that will differ by species,” says Christians. “Kentucky bluegrass should be mowed to 2 to 3 inches; Bermuda grass can be mowed much lower. If you try to mow a cool-season grass like bluegrass the same height as Bermuda grass it won’t make through the summer.”

“In early spring and in the fall, our mowing height is roughly 2½ to 3 inches,” says Justin Trimble, COO of Signature Landscapes LLC, Reno, Nevada. “In the peak season, it’s anywhere from 3 to 3½ inches. It really depends upon the site and how fast the turf is growing.”

**FERTILIZERS AND CHEMICALS**

When it comes to applying chemicals to



**Tips from a professional sports field turf manager**

While you’re watching your favorite football, baseball or soccer team play, do you ever wonder what goes into keeping the playing field so green and safe? Hear from one such turf manager who shares some trade secrets in an online Q&A only available at [www.igin.com/sports-turf-q-and-a](http://www.igin.com/sports-turf-q-and-a).



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nourish turf or achieve pest or weed control, “it’s all about timing, and that will vary, depending on whether you’re dealing with warm or cool season grasses,” says Christians. “People will put the herbicides or pesticides on at the wrong time. They’ll put the fertilizer on at the wrong time. It’s all about having the right timing.”

Christians says, for cool season grasses, begin at the start of spring by applying

a pre-emergent herbicide to control crabgrass, and then apply fertilizer. “But don’t put a lot of it on in midsummer because it’s hot,” he warns. “You might put just a little bit on and then do it again in the fall.”

“That’s just the opposite of what you’d do with a warm season grass,” he continues. “There, you’re going to fertilize through the middle of the season when it’s hot and not

apply any in the spring or fall.”

Fortunately, grass has a “tell” that will signal the attentive turf manager that something is amiss. Phil Dwyer, a research principal for lawns and water at the Scotts Miracle-Gro Co., Marysville, Ohio, has a Ph.D. in turf grass pathology. He says turf that’s thinning, yellowing, going off color or that has high weed pressure is telegraphing its lack of fertility.

“Nitrogen is the most important nutrient for turf grass, more than phosphorous and potassium, which are often available in the soil,” says Dwyer. A soil test will show which nutrients you need to supplement.

**“Nitrogen is the most important nutrient for turf grass, more than phosphorous and potassium, which are often available in the soil.”**

— Phil Dwyer, Scotts Miracle-Gro Co.

Many lawn care companies fertilize four times a year. Trimble’s company tries to do it less than that. “We’ve been successful getting one job site in Reno down to two applications a year. You have to look at the slow release products and their longevity in the face of heat and water.”

“Our season’s rather short in the Rocky Mountains, typically six to seven months,” says Carlos Medrano, CLT, QS, maintenance department manager at CoCal Landscape, Denver. “We fertilize one time in the spring and that carries us into the summer and fall. We use a fertilizer that slow releases over a period of five to six weeks. As a sustainable company, we don’t want to put too many synthetic chemicals into the ground.”

Turf that has been weakened by drought or other stressors is especially vulnerable, flashing a green light to pests, diseases and weeds to “Come on down!”


Grubs are the primary turf pest, leaving behind brown patches as they feast on tender grass roots. “Every yard has seven to 10 grubs per cubic foot,” says Rob Elder, owner and president of Omaha Organics, Omaha, Nebraska. That’s no need for panic, though; he says it’s only a problem when there is more than that amount.

Imidacloprid, trichlorfon and halofo-nozide are some of the chemicals that will

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kill grubs. Some turf managers use a natural approach, distributing beneficial nematodes or milky spore bacteria.

But the best pest control of all is healthy turf. “Strong, vigorous turf fights off pests, weeds and diseases,” Trimble says. “Just like our bodies, when we’re strong and healthy we fight things off. It’s when you’re in a weakened state that you’re the most susceptible to attack.”

A turf manager must also deal with weeds — and the property owners and managers who feel that “the only good weed is a dead weed.” Yet, “there’s no such thing as a completely weed-free yard,” says Elder. “Even the nicest yard on the block has a weed on the edge of the sidewalk somewhere. It’s just a matter of how many weeds you can tolerate.”

For Elder, weed control goes back to the soil conditions. Once again, he says, soil testing is key. “We do a soil test for all our customers. The turf could have a low pH or be low in organic matter, phosphorous or nitrogen or have high sodium. If the turf is unhealthy, it’s going to attract a lot of weeds.”

Signature’s approach is to do an aeration first thing come spring and follow that up with an application of fertilizer and weed control.

“Some climates (Signature also works in California) need a pre-emergent blend, but not all; if they don’t then we apply post-emergent a couple times a year,” says Trimble.

**“Strong, vigorous turf fights off pests, weeds and diseases. Just like our bodies, when we’re strong and healthy we fight things off.”**

— Justin Trimble, Signature Landscapes LLC

Some tough weeds, like nutsedge, just aren’t going to go quietly; you’ll need some sort of substance to eradicate them.

Again, as with pest control, the best defense against weeds is a good offense. The healthier turf is, the fewer the weeds that will make their appearance.

Dethatching, aerating and overseeding are other tools a turf manager utilizes to make sure his client is getting the emerald greenswards he’s paying for.

**IS IT FOR YOU?**

Butterfras says the frustrations of doing turf management include, besides the usual suspects of weather and pests, “third-party irrigation companies, commissioned sales teams from poorly operated competitors and many more. Owning a turf business means accepting that you need to wake up every day determined to be a fighter and a winner.”

But with great efforts come great benefits. The rewards of a career in turf management go beyond the monetary ones. “I love to walk our sites with a smile on my face gazing at lush, green turf,” Butterfras says. That kind of sums it up, doesn’t it? 🌿

The author is senior editor of *Irrigation & Green Industry* magazine and can be reached at maryvillano@igin.com.

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# NEXT



A FORMER NBA ALL-STAR SHOWS THE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO HELP YOUR EMPLOYEES SOAR.

**T**rust is essential in today's business world. Every day people talk about how important trust is, yet few know how to create it. Trust comes when people know they can count on you. Trust comes when people know you're there for them. When people protect each other, there is trust — it's that simple. When you're committed to others and their well-being, you can expect an extraordinary commitment in return.

In the NBA, basketball players follow the concept of "sticking together." They know that by protecting each other, working collaboratively, and standing united against the competition, their chances of winning are greatly increased.

In business, the only way you can do your job effectively, be creative and be innovative is when you know that someone has your back. When you're confident that someone is watching out for you, you're more willing to take risks to increase the bottom line.

Unfortunately, in many companies, people are just there to collect a paycheck. There's no creativity, no innovation and no risk-taking all because there's no sense of trust among team members. After all, if you know that no one is backing your ideas, why try to implement them? The chance of failure is too great.

The world of professional basketball offers the perfect learning example. In basketball, one person's job is to guard the basket. As long as that person is doing his job, his teammates up the court can take

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risks and try to steal the ball from the other team. If they're unsuccessful with the steal, and the competition happens to get by them, they can count on the person guarding the basket to protect the team and keep the rival from scoring.

But if the team members can't count on each other, they're not going to take risks. They're going to play it safe and stay in a defensive mode rather than taking an offensive position and going for the score.

The same is true in business. People may have some good ideas, but they don't voice them because they don't feel protected. They don't feel that sense of trust or appreciation, so they stay under the radar doing just enough to not get fired. They become clock watchers who only care about themselves and their own agendas. As a result, you have a company filled with people who know only how to complain and whine rather than take action and responsibility. Now you no longer have a team; all you have is a group of people who look out only for themselves and deal with each other with a lot of divisiveness.

If you want people in your company to not only think of new ideas but also to execute them, they need to feel supported. Protecting your teammates is a key ingredient in the NBA because if you don't have that trust then things quickly fall apart. For a business to succeed, it needs the same mentality. If you want your company to grow, change, innovate and rise to the top of your industry, you can't afford to have a bunch of people playing it safe. You need the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit that comes when trust abounds.

So if you're ready for your company to go from a bunch of "play-it-safe" rookies to an innovative team of All-Star champions, consider these suggestions.

**1. If you're an employee, encourage other employees to step out and take risks.**

What would it be like if everyone on your team truly felt safe? To be invaluable, be the person people can count on. To have enduring relationships, put others first. When you protect others, they take risks. They know they won't be criticized should they fail.

This creates an environment of safety and freedom. That's what supports innovation and the fast responses required by a world and a market characterized by incessant change. When you protect others you may give up an opportunity or put yourself on the line. But when you do that, you show people you care. Let people know that they have your trust and support, even if that's not the prevalent culture. Remember that change has to start somewhere.

**2. If you're in a management or supervisory position, become a protector.**

Encourage people to come to you with ideas. When you decide to implement someone's idea, let that em-

ployee know that you completely support him. Win or lose, you're there for him.

If it helps, think of your employees as your children. As a parent, your first priority is protecting your young. Just like kids, adults do their best when they feel cared for and safe. If you want peak performers, create an environment where everyone feels safe.

The ideal manager is like the coach who stands up for his team. The man or woman who creates an atmosphere of trust is really creating a space where people will exceed expectations.

**3. Observe how behavior changes in the workplace with the implementation of this concept.**

One glimpse of trust starts a wellspring of performance and confidence. Think about it ... if your supervisor said to you, "That's a great idea. Take this project on. You have my complete support," how would you feel? You'd probably feel a sense of shock, and then a sense of eager anticipation. You'd be excited and quick to tell others on your team what just happened.

Then your co-workers would think, "Wow — I have an idea, too. I want to talk to the boss about it." One simple gesture of trust can create a sense of energy and enthusiasm in the workplace, which is really what everyone wants. The more management communicates with staff that they're creating an environment of trust, the more ideas and innovation people will bring to the table.

**The keys to performance and success**

Trust and loyalty are what distinguishes a team from a group. They're what make relationships irreplaceable and irresistible and people invaluable. When you fight for another person and transcend your own self-interest you change the world.


Trust comes when people know they can count on you ... that you're there for them no matter what. When people protect each other, trust is inevitable. It's that simple. When you commit to protecting others you can expect an extraordinary commitment in return.

Trust sets people on fire. When you defend another, you find courage that you didn't know you had. Fighting for someone else and doing more for others than you do for yourself will bring out the best in you. And that's where you find the win. It's called the magic of teamwork. 🌱

Mark Eaton is a speaker, author and coach who works with organizations and individuals sharing the four commitments that bring about teamwork, breakthrough success and sustained cultural change. His inspiring journey from auto mechanic to record-breaking NBA player, combined with his practical strategies, help organizations play and win. More information is available at [www.7ft4.com](http://www.7ft4.com) or e-mail him at [mark@7ft4.com](mailto:mark@7ft4.com).



**If you want people in your company to not only think of new ideas but also to execute them, they need to feel supported.**



# DOUBLE TROUBLE OR TWICE AS NICE?

TWO-WIRE SYSTEMS CAN SEEM INTIMIDATING AT FIRST, BUT WITH SOME KNOWLEDGE, YOU CAN ACHIEVE INSTALLATION WITHOUT TREPIDATION.

BY MARY ELIZABETH WILLIAMS-VILLANO

Some people like tradition, finding it comforting and safe. Other more iconoclastic types buck tradition wherever possible. Which way do you sway? The answer may reveal your risk tolerance level and also your position on two-wire irrigation systems.

Contractors who are used to installing conventional irrigation systems can be a bit intimidated by two-wire and its mysterious decoders. “The reason a lot of people are still afraid of two-wire is because they think it’s new,” says Mark Grenert, vice president of Tucor Inc., Wexford, Pennsylvania.

But two-wire is hardly new. It’s been around more than 20 years and has become the go-to system for large com-

mercial sites. Still, two-wire may be new to you and to a lot of other contractors who have mainly installed conventional irrigation systems.

“Contractors that have only worked on conventional who suddenly inherit a two-wire can definitely be afraid of it,” says Grenert. “They think it’s so intimidating, so technology-dense that they don’t even want to pursue it.”

You can’t blame a guy for sticking with what he knows. That strategy may not work forever, however, because two-wire is making inroads into the residential irrigation space.

There are other reasons why some contractors shy away from two-wire. “Cost is one,” says Dave Shoup, senior

product manager, central control systems for Hunter Industries, San Marcos, California. “The price of entry has been high. Not many contractors do projects large enough to justify it. Two-wire as a straight-up alternative to conventional wire has traditionally only made sense or allowed a contractor to break even at a certain system size.”

But contractors do like the flexibility of being able to add stations at will without trenching back to a controller or running a bundle of wires.

The big trick with a decoder-based system, says Shoup, is that it depends on a really good installation. “What happened when two-wire first came out is some guys just sort of jumped in. They’d been wiring sprinklers the same way for 25 years, so they didn’t necessarily pay attention to the stricter requirements, and they got burned. Mystery problems on a new installation? Nobody wants that.”

It’s like the first time you tried sushi. If it gave you a tummy ache, it was probably the last time, too. When our initial experience with something is poor, it’s human nature to walk away and never look back. But a lot changes in 20 years. You aren’t using the same computer you used back in 1999, are you?

**Easier? Harder?**

Two-wire systems are either easier to install than conventional systems or harder, depending on whom you talk to. Which part of the installation you’re talking about also makes a difference.

A conventional system has a wire going out to each valve plus a common. Every valve has the hot wire plus a common wire going back to the controller. For a 24-zone system, there’d be 24 wires plus a common for every zone.

In a two-wire system, the two wires coming out of the controller are hooked up to a decoder placed at the first valve. These same two wires are then connected to the next decoder and valve combination, and the next and the next. As you can see, much less wire is needed.

“What’s the best thing about two-wire systems?” asks Grenert. “There are only two wires. What’s the worst thing about two-wire systems? There are only two wires. All that data has to come down the same two wires.” That makes the installation simpler but at the same time, more exacting.

Keith Schweiger, CID, CLIA, CIC, CIT, CLWM, lands on the “easier” side of the debate.

“WHAT’S THE BEST THING ABOUT TWO-WIRE SYSTEMS? THERE ARE ONLY TWO WIRES. WHAT’S THE WORST THING ABOUT TWO-WIRE SYSTEMS? THERE ARE ONLY TWO WIRES.”  
— MARK GRENER, TUCOR INC.



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Now a key account manager at SiteOne Landscape Supply in Englewood, Colorado, he spent many years prior to that installing both conventional and two-wire irrigation systems.

“Two-wire is easier for a couple reasons,” he says. “Most of the work is trenched, so the wire can go right into the ground. You don’t need to know today exactly how many zones you’re going to need to run tomorrow. With a conventional system, you need to know that, because you have to install individual wires for all of them.”

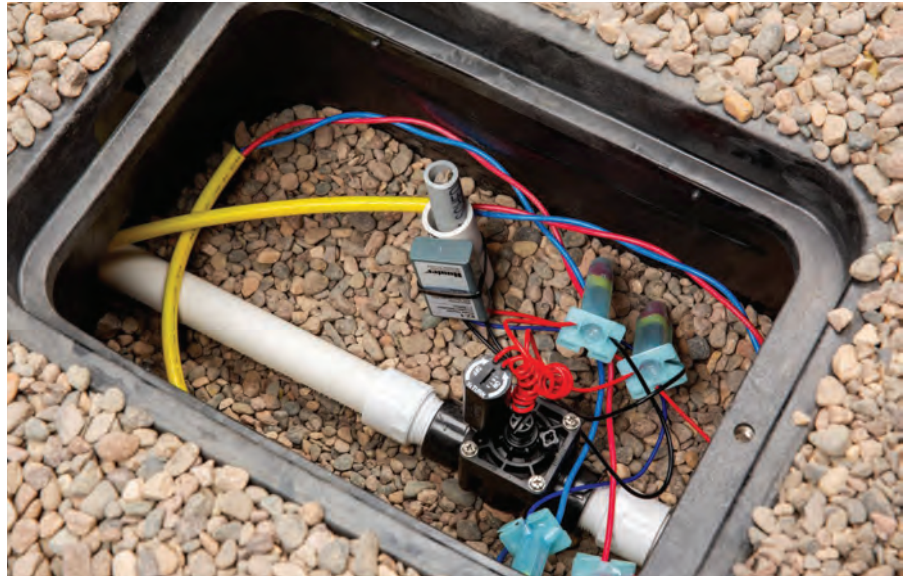
Two-wire has more flexibility to adapt to changing conditions. “The fact that I only have two wires to make my connections is, to me, one of the best things about two-wire systems,” adds Schweiger.

But they are a tad touchy. Like millenials, two-wire systems are very sensitive. “The copper wire has to be pristine, like jewelry; it can’t have any dirt on it,” says Mark Twiss, irrigation manager/contractor at D.W. Burr Landscape and Design Inc., Sinsbury, Connecticut. “Even a tiny nick in a wire can cause havoc.”

A conventional system is a lot more forgiving. It can handle a bit of sloppiness in installation, where a two-wire system really can’t. A higher level of craftsmanship is needed.

You’ve heard the expression, “When all else fails, read the instructions?” That’s never truer than it is with two-wire.

“First and foremost, the most important



Two-wire was originally developed for golf courses. Today, it’s the primary type of system used for irrigating large commercial developments, city parks and college campuses. Photo: Hunter Industries Inc.

gle-strand wire for everything. “Everybody used it and it didn’t matter whose clock it was on. That’s not the case with two-wire. The manufacturer’s specs apply to using the proper wire, the proper connectors and the right installation technique to connect everything.”

By “the right technique,” Twiss means that every manufacturer stresses the need to make sure the wire connections are done properly. “In the old days you would strip your wires, grease them together and put

signals as well as power, so all of the wire connections have to be done both securely and properly.”

There’s another consequence to not following the manufacturer’s specs. For instance, Tucor wants you to use its own brand of double-jacketed tin-coated copper wire on its two-wire systems. “Just a little side note — if they don’t use our wire, there’s no warranty,” warns Grenert, “and the same is true of every manufacturer.”

Another reason to follow the maker’s specs to the letter — should you need another one — is that everything isn’t completely uniform across all brands. “In the real world there is some intermingling of wire,” Schweiger says. “It doesn’t mean that a system will fail, necessarily. But you’ll have much greater success if you follow the manufacturer’s requirements. A lot of guys found out the hard way that they needed to pay a little bit more attention to the specs.”

As was true for the wire, the same goes for the connectors, sometimes called splices, the little devices that link the solenoids to the system’s wires. The exact ones they want you to use will be specified, too, usually 600-volt-rated waterproof DBRY-6 connectors, with exactly the right kind of waterproofing gel inside, and they’ll come with instructions. “You do need to use the manufacturer’s recommended connectors,” says Schweiger.

Bad connections will create a host of problems. Sometimes they’ll show up quickly and sometimes not for a while. But

thing is that you follow the manufacturer’s specifications — that’s critical, and they’ll differ with every manufacturer,” says Grenert. “Some require a certain kind of wire versus others. When there are problems, it’s often because you have someone installing a two-wire system the way he’s always been comfortable.”

Twiss points out that before two-wire systems, installers used 14-gauge sin-

them in the DBYs, and for the most part they worked pretty well,” he says. “The old mechanical rotary 24-to-30-volt systems, you flipped a switch and they either worked or they didn’t. They were very stout and reliable. You could get away with mistakes and the fault could literally take years to show up.”

“But in two-wire decoder-based systems, the wire carries communications

they will show up.

Other problems are caused by failing to think inside the box. “Anything connected to the two-wire path must be installed inside the valve box, including the decoders,” Grenert stresses. “If they’re left outside, they’re exposed to weather.”

**Ground the heck out of it**

Grounding is especially vital with two-wire. It won’t keep lightning from striking a system, but if it should get hit, proper grounding will minimize any damage. Some systems require separate grounding decoders in every valve box; others connect directly to the rods.

“We’ll ground the system right away at the point of connection with a 10-foot rod inserted into the ground 8 feet deep and put a surge protector and decoder on it,” says Twiss. “About 11 feet away from there, we’ll insert a grounding plate approximately 30 inches down. Then we’ll insert more grounding rods every 500 feet or so and another at the end of the line. That creates a kind of grounding umbrella that will protect the system.”

The rods and plate are installed in line with the main decoder wire. Should Zeus throw a lightning bolt at the ground, the surge would be confined to one section between two grounding circuits, meaning that you’d lose two decoders instead of 200.

Back to that pesky valve box — installers have differing opinions as to whether you need to place a grounding rod inside the valve box itself. Again, the safest course is to do what the manufacturer recommends. “Mark Grenert has always told us to do that, so I follow his point of view,” says Twiss.

**Pros and cons**

A 200-zone conventional system uses lots of wire, and copper isn’t cheap. With less wire used, you save both time and labor.

But one of the reasons two-wire has mainly been used in commercial and some high-end residential applications is its higher cost. Each decoder costs around \$150, so whatever you saved on wire can be spent on buying decoders. You’ll also need copper rods and grounding plates. And

two-wire controllers tend to be heavier duty and more expensive.

Two-wire has the edge when it comes to retrofitting. You have virtually unlimited flexibility to expand a system, anywhere you want, with no spare wires to run. “If a customer says, ‘I’d like to add two zones over here,’ it’s very easy to do that because you just add another couple of decoders to that wire, as long as your controller’s not full,” says Lyle Oulette, CIC, director of irrigation at Landscape Maintenance Services, Hillsborough, New Jersey.

**“YOU’LL HAVE MUCH GREATER SUCCESS IF YOU FOLLOW THE MANUFACTURER’S REQUIREMENTS. A LOT OF GUYS FOUND OUT THE HARD WAY THAT THEY NEEDED TO PAY A LITTLE BIT MORE ATTENTION TO THE SPECS.”**

— KEITH SCHWEIGER, SITEONE

Troubleshooting is less troublesome, too. “Using cable TV as an analogy, if half the block has its cable out, the problem isn’t at every single house,” says Schweiger. “It’s likely to be one connection, and when that is fixed, all six subscribers will be back up and running.”

**Do they save water?**

Twiss thinks so. “I have a 65-acre HOA community with multiple points of connection. We put in an ET- (evapotranspiration) based two-wire system, and it saved the community 6.7 million gallons of water valued at \$28,000 to \$30,000.”

There’s clearly money to be made installing two-wire systems. They open the door to bidding on big commercial projects with high profit potential. But before you venture into this world, “get some training, and have your guys get training as well,” advises Oulette.

Trodding the two-wire path may not be a simple journey, but it can be a road well worth traveling. 🌿

The author is senior editor of *Irrigation & Green Industry* magazine and can be reached at maryvillano@igin.com.

**SIMPLER, CHEAPER, LESS FUSSY TWO-WIRE:**

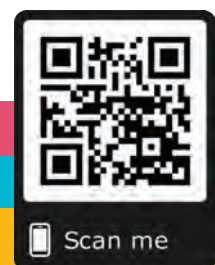
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# WATER FEATURES: BY ANNEMARIE MANNION

## PRETTY AND PROFITABLE

LEARNING TO INSTALL AND MAINTAIN WATER FEATURES CAN LEAD TO WATERFALLS OF INCOME.

**I**magine gazing at an expanse of serene blue water, watching waves gently lapping or listening to rain splash outside your window. You feel your heart beating slowly, your breathing deepening and those stressful thoughts melting away. For perhaps as long as the history of humankind, people have been drawn to water. It's no wonder that many homeowners want to have water features of their own.

As a landscape contractor you may be fielding requests from clients who are seeking water features in their yards or patios. Knowing the ins and outs of installing and maintaining them, whether they're fountains, pondless waterfalls, water walls, ponds, rain curtains, reflecting pools or any other type of feature, can pay off substantially.

Demi Fortuna, director of product information for Atlantic Water Gardens, Mantua, Ohio, says a simple stone pillar with a bubbler, a basin, a pump and a light would cost about \$400 to \$500 wholesale. He estimates that a contractor who adds some mulch, flowers or plants around the installation can charge a customer in the range of \$1,500 to \$2,000 for it, and he'll be delighted by the result.

"They look like a liquid torch," says Fortuna. "People are just entranced by them."

### Extended benefits

Another way a landscaper can reap rewards from a water feature is by doing repairs. The part of a fountain that's most likely to break is the pump. Fortuna says new pump costs about \$100 to \$120 wholesale, and an install-

er can charge about \$100 for a 15-minute installation.

Dave Jones, owner of The Pond Professional, Woodstock, Georgia, charges \$150 for a service call. He also assesses an upcharge to the customer for any equipment needed.

Fortuna and others involved in manufacturing and installing water features are seeing lots of innovations and refinements in these products.

"LED lighting has just exploded in both landscape and water applications," says Fortuna, who notes that his company's modular waterfall product, appropriately called Colorfalls, comes with lights capable of displaying 48 different colors. "The light is carried by the water," he says. "It looks like the water is glowing from within."

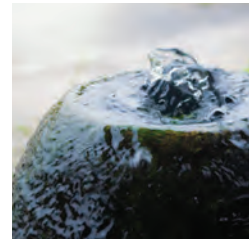
Lighting that enhances water with a multitude of hues or patterns has extended the time in which a water feature can be enjoyed, taking it from a daytime-only delight to a 24-hour attraction.

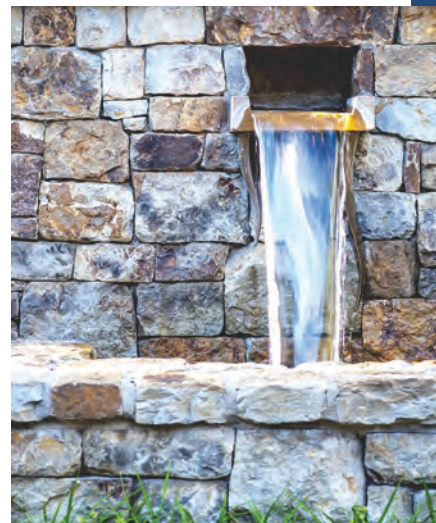
"Over the past 10 years, water features have become a nighttime thing," Fortuna says. "You can see and hear your feature during the day, but it's actually more interesting at night."

The appeal of falling water speaks to just about any homeowner, but Fortuna says the demand for water features is also driven by another sort of customer.

"Many people are looking to extend their outdoor living spaces," he says. "They already have an outdoor kitchen and a fire pit and want to add a water feature."

Frank Hanold, owner and president of Stonecasters LLC and Henri Studio, a producer of cast stone fountains, bird baths,





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Water features come in all shapes and sizes from fountains to natural-looking waterfalls and ponds. Photo: Henri Studio

statuary and garden décor in Wauconda, Illinois, has noticed customers drifting away from the traditional multitiered fountains.

“They’re still out there, but we’re seeing a trend toward more compact fountains with multiple bowls flowing into each other. They’re not your traditional three- or four-level fountain,” says Hanold.

Pondless waterfalls, too, are growing in popularity, adds Geoff Steele, Midwest territory sales manager

for Castle Aquatics, San Leandro, California. He also operates a business that installs water features.

“Pondless waterfalls need less maintenance,” he says. “People don’t want to spend their time cleaning out the algae or feeding the fish. In most cases, they give you a similar look without all the work.”

Many people like the look of fountains, ponds or other water features with an aged appearance, as if they were always a natural part of the yard. “Some people are doing more woodland types of fountains that blend into the landscape,” Steele says. “They might look like fallen logs.”

“As a contractor, I want to make a water feature look like it’s been there forever,” adds Jones. “If it looks like it’s been there since the glaciers receded then that’s good design.”

Scale also matters. “You don’t want to install a small vase or a little multilevel birdbath in an acre-sized backyard. It would just get lost,” he notes.

#### Step by step

The process of installing a fountain isn’t difficult, especially with a kit, according to Hanold. Henri Studio’s kits come with instructions, and the company’s

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# Keyfit Tools

## Innovation By Necessity

[www.KeyfitTools.com](http://www.KeyfitTools.com)



website has a library of instruction manuals for all its products, including discontinued ones.

Atlantic Water Gardens also offers instruction manuals and videos. "We try to make things as clear and easy as possible," says Fortuna.

"Fountain kits can be installed by a couple of guys in two or three hours," says Jones. "Even though these kit fountains tend to be small, they're still quite attractive."

Steele agrees that kits are useful. "It takes the guesswork out of things," he says. "The company has already decided that the pump they're providing is adequate for the application."

While many contractors work on their own, Paul Keeler, director of sales and marketing for Midwest Tropical, Skokie, Illinois, says his company operates somewhat uniquely.

"We design, fabricate and test water features in our factory and then ship those factory-built components to the site," he says. "Then we send one of our employees to complete the installation by working with a local contractor to complete the install and explain the unit's operation and maintenance."

Midwest can make features in cell-cast acrylic,

stainless steel or other materials a customer specifies. The company has designers who can help a contractor better visualize and sell a feature.

"We have talented designers in-house and can operate as a local contractor's back-office team," he says. "We can make color renderings to show what a new water feature will look like in an existing area."

The main utility that is required for a fountain or other small water feature is electricity. "People don't even need to have a garden hose," Steele says. "As long as they have a bucket to fill the fountain."

**"As a contractor, I want to make a water feature look like it's been there forever."**

— DAVE JONES, OWNER, THE POND PROFESSIONAL

**Cautionary notes**

No matter the size of the feature you're installing, Jones recommends checking with local utilities and the town's construction laws and ordinances first to be sure it's okay to dig in the chosen spot or if it's okay to do any digging at all.

"It depends on what area of the country you're in and the municipality, but you may need a permit. In Georgia we need a state-issued permit just to stick a

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rubber lining is heavy and it can be expensive. I won't sugarcoat that," says Steele. "You want to have enough liner to have some excess that extends over the sides of the pond. You can always hide it under rocks or something."

Jones suggests leaving at least 3 feet of extra lining to compensate for the weight of water, which will pull the lining down.

If a pond springs a leak as a result of piecing the liner together then you're back at square one, says Jones. "In most cases you'll have to start all over again."

Steele agrees, but adds that ponds are long-term investments, and properly installed linings should last at least 20 years.

**Make them last**

Winterizing a concrete water feature isn't difficult, but it is important to do in the colder parts of the country, both Steele and Hanold say.

**“Mankind is drawn to water at almost a genetic level. Water is life-giving. I think that might be the tie-in.”**

— DAVE JONES, OWNER, THE POND PROFESSIONAL

“In most cases, it involves cleaning and draining it until it's empty of water, then filling the basin with towels to remove extra water and then covering it with a tarp or fountain cover,” says Steele.

Regular maintenance of a water feature can better assure its longevity. Steele advises periodic cleaning with a brush — even a 99-cent toothbrush will do for a small feature — to break up any algae or debris that could clog the pump then running clean water through it. With regular care most pumps will last three to five years.

Midwest Tropical recommends using distilled water in its features because it's free of dissolved solids, so there is no potential for scale or lime buildup. It also suggests nonchemical ultraviolet sterilization.

Steele recommends putting a fountain on a timer. “There's no need to have a fountain running day and night,” he says. “It's not like a pond with fish that has to constantly have running water in it.”

Ponds are a different story for Jones. “To me, a pond is a living mechanism,” he says. “If you shut off a pond you shut off its heart.” He also says submersible pumps have longer lifespans if they aren't turned on and off every day.

Much of Steele's knowledge on ponds and water features came through sheer trial and error, but he recommends taking the classes and seminars manufacturers offer. It

may not be a bad idea learning how to install these wet wonders as the desire to have them certainly isn't going away.

“Mankind is drawn to water at almost a genetic level,” says Jones. “Water is life-giving. I think that might be the tie-in.”

Annemarie Mannion is a Chicago-based freelance writer who covers business, technology and the environment.

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# NALP workforce summit aims to solve industry labor issues



## Attracting talent with apprenticeships

NALP has announced the establishment of its Landscape Management Technician Apprenticeship Program. Registered by the Department of Labor and administered by NALP, the program is an association-sponsored, employer-driven model that combines on-the-job training with related classroom or online instruction that increases an employee's skill level and wages.

Participating companies benefit by adding another avenue to attract and retain employees, training them through a structured program and potentially recruiting participants as full-time employees after the completion of the program.

This program targets young people interested in beginning a career in the industry or those who are simply seeking a career switch. Apprenticeships are attractive to participants because these programs allow them to advance in a specific career path, gain valuable skills, earn national accreditation and earn high wages that increase as they reach benchmarks within the program.

The program focuses on the skills needed by a landscape technician in maintenance, installation and irrigation. It requires 2,000 hours of on-the-job training and 144 hours of classroom or online instruction. Companies interested in participating can learn more at [www.landscapeprofessionals.org/apprenticeship](http://www.landscapeprofessionals.org/apprenticeship).

## Dealing with labor pains

The National Association of Landscape Professionals, Fairfax, Virginia, hosted its first-ever Workforce Recruitment and Development Summit Feb. 12-13.

Held in Alexandria, Virginia, the think tank was part of NALP's Industry Growth Initiative, a series of national media relations, advertising and outreach campaigns that aim to grow the industry and its workforce. Over 100 industry professionals gathered to share and identify solutions to the green industry's labor crisis. The two-day event included a variety of speakers who explored big picture topics, as well as roundtable dialogue between attendees.

Missy Henriksen, NALP vice president of public affairs, 71,000 full-time landscape industry jobs went unfilled in 2017. "This stat comes from the Bureau of Labor and is the most recent stat we have. I think we would all say that number is much higher and feels much higher," said Henriksen.

The lack of seasonal, entry- and management-level employees is the biggest impediment to growth in the industry, according to Henriksen. Contractors are turning away business and canceling contracts because there are not enough people to do the work.



Jim McCutcheon (pictured), co-chair of NALP's Public Affairs Advisory Council, was among the speakers at the summit.

## Connect online

Keep up with how the Industry Growth Initiative is promoting green careers by following [@WhyILandscape](https://www.facebook.com/WhyILandscape) on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. While you're online, check out "Confessions of a Landscape Professional," a video series by NALP of dozens of digital stories painting a picture of passionate people in the industry who love their careers and want to tell their stories.



Sarah Anderson, American Forests, discusses how to attract a broader spectrum of people to the industry.

## Diversity in the workforce

The green industry tends to be predominantly male. That's hard to argue with, but Sarah Anderson, senior manager at Tree Equity Programs, American Forests, challenged summit attendees to consider if the industry is ready to welcome and retain underrepresented communities.

"Ethnically diverse companies are 35 percent more likely to outperform the industry median companies," she said. "You need to build trust and evidence with people you want to hire ... so they can look around your company and see true representation."

If a company's entire network is mostly made up of people with the same background, it can limit the reach and ability to connect with potential hires, she added.

## Putting veterans to work in the landscape industry

As an industry with many veteran-owned-and-operated companies, landscape companies understand the benefits former military personnel bring to the table. Nearly 50 percent of all veterans are presently in the workforce, according to John Ladd, administrator, Office of Apprenticeship, U.S. Department of Labor. To him, hiring veterans “is not about social welfare, it’s about a good business decision,” because they’re typically hard-working, disciplined and highly skilled.

To attract even more veterans to the green industry, Ladd encouraged summit attendees to connect with their local workforce agencies and job centers that offer resources and funding to assist in hiring veterans.

Ladd says that over 49,000 veterans are participating in apprenticeship programs.

A big draw to these programs is that they can use their GI Bill benefits to receive a tax-free monthly stipend while enrolled. Ladd describes apprenticeships as a “veteran magnet” for those who have discovered college isn’t for them.

Resources are available to help employers interested in hiring veterans. The website [www.veterans.gov](http://www.veterans.gov) allows you to post jobs, download a hiring toolkit and get one-on-one assistance in hiring veterans.

Become a “medallion-certified” company, which identifies you as an employer proven ready to hire veterans, at [www.hirevets.gov](http://www.hirevets.gov). You can align job descriptions with military occupational specialties on [www.mynextmove.org](http://www.mynextmove.org). By taking advantage of these resources, you can create a culture that welcomes those who have served our country.



Landscape companies can participate in hiring programs that help military veterans find jobs.



## Start 'em while they're young

One of the most talked about ideas at the summit was the importance of getting people interested in green careers when they're young. Several landscape companies have been successful introducing landscaping curriculum in their local schools.

Caitlin Clineff of Myatt Landscaping in Fuquay Varina, North Carolina, said, “We are all facing the same problem — a labor shortage. The heart of the issue is how our industry is perceived in today’s society. The only way to change that is for us to do something about it ourselves, and the key time frame to be reaching people to change their perception is high school or earlier.”

## Sending a clear message

NALP’s Industry Growth Initiative has invested in career perceptions research to see how the green industry measures up to other industries vying for employees, as well as to learn the most effective messaging landscape companies can use to reach people.

Erin Kelly, president and CEO at Advanced Symbolics, has created a method of research that uses artificial intelligence to “listen” to social media. This technology can go back in time and pick up on what people have said and are saying about careers in the green industry. Kelly said this is more effective than traditional research because people don’t want to participate in surveys anymore, and you have the advantage of being able to obtain data from past years.

The research included 118,000 people from the ages of 14 to 45. The findings show that family, especially parents, and friends are the most powerful influences when someone is considering a career in the industry. This was significantly higher than the level of influence of guidance counselors and teachers.

The opportunity to be creative and design beautiful landscapes, followed by the opportunity to use the newest technology to create efficiency, were the biggest motivators.



## Want to host your own landscape career day?

Increase the public’s awareness and perception of careers within the landscape industry by hosting a behind-the-scenes tour of your company, a community service event at a park, a hands-on learning activity or interactive programming at a local school. You can help inspire and cultivate the next generation of landscape professionals by letting them see, touch and feel the profession in action. Get resources for hosting your own event at [www.landscapeindustry careers.org](http://www.landscapeindustry careers.org).

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**1 Underground cable locator**

Armada Technologies, Caledonia, Michigan has debuted its new Pro900 Digital Underground Cable Locator, a troubleshooting tool for contractors and maintenance personnel. Incorporating three different locating frequencies, the unit tracks metallic cabling for CATV, electrical, telephone, irrigation and lighting and transmits easy-to-follow solid or intermittent signals. It provides crystal-clear tone reception in most situations with either null or peak reception.

Users will hear a clear, interference-free signal. Added digital sensitivity allows for reception of signal changes over splices, decoders and anomalies, and detection of subtle underground changes.

It features both the new IC3 inductive clamp and inductive antenna modes for tracking wires and cable you don't wish to disconnect. A Koss headset is included.

 **Armada Technologies**  
[www.armadatech.com](http://www.armadatech.com)



**2 Pull-behind mower.** The Toro Company, Bloomington, Minnesota, has introduced its new Grounds-master 1200 pull-behind rotary mower, featuring a 12-foot cut width and three independent contour-following cutting decks. It's designed to give a consistent cut across the width of the mower while distributing clippings evenly.

The wing decks fold up for faster transport and easy access to the underside of the deck for cleaning and blade replacement, says Toro. If an operator should hit an obstacle with a wing deck, it will pivot out of the way. The cut height is adjustable from 0.5 to 4 inches.

Two full-width rollers on the front and rear of each deck reduces scalping on undulating terrain and provides striping. It's compatible with Toro's new Outcross 9060 and other tractors with at least 35-horsepower power takeoffs.

 **The Toro Company**  
[www.toro.com](http://www.toro.com)



**3 Dust vacuum/blower kit.** Makita, La Mirada, California, has added the new 18V LXT (XCV11T) cordless 2-gallon portable wet/dry dust extractor/vacuum kit for dust management applications to its expanding 18-volt cordless tool system. The unit quickly converts from a vacuum to a blower, making it two tools in one. The vacuum's efficient wet/dry HEPA filter captures 99.97 percent of particulates down to 0.3 microns in size and larger.

A brushless motor delivers suction of 57 cubic feet per minute and 27 inches of static water lift. One 5.0Ah lithium-ion battery gives you up to 60 minutes of continuous runtime.

It includes Makita's Star Protection Computer Controls monitoring technology to prevent overheating. Comes with two 18V LXT lithium-ion 5.0Ah batteries, a rapid optimum charger, a flexible hose, a wide nozzle and a crevice nozzle.

 **Makita**  
[www.makitatools.com](http://www.makitatools.com)

**SUPPLIER IN THE NEWS**

**Excel breaks ground on major facility expansion**

Excel Industries, Hesston, Kansas, manufacturer of zero-turn mowers and utility vehicles under the Hustler Turf and BigDog brands, held a groundbreaking ceremony recently to begin construction on a multimillion dollar facility expansion.

The expansion will provide additional manufacturing space to support new product introductions as well as an upgrade to the existing paint system. The project is slated to be completed by the end of the third quarter of 2019.

"The facility expansion and paint system upgrade will help position us for future growth," says Brent E. Edmisten, vice president of operations, SCM and engineering. "This investment will support our team's efforts in providing world-class products to our global customers."

Conco Construction has been selected to be the prime contractor for the project.



Left to right: Jeremiah Heredia, manager nonproduction supply chain, Excel Industries; Bryan Dugan, director of operations, Excel; David Pipes, project manager, Conco Construction; Derek Roth, director of maintenance/facility, Excel; Craig Nelson, president and CEO, Conco Construction; Bill Unruh, CFO, Excel; Joe Wright, president, Excel; Brent Edmisten, vice president, operations, SCM and Engineering; and Adam Mullet, vice president of sales and new products, Excel.

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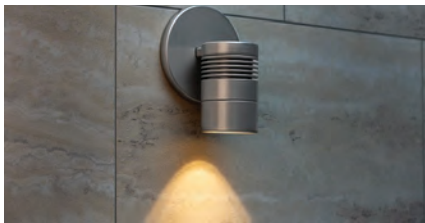
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**4 Surface-mount luminaire.** The new sDelta-8 surface-mounted luminaire from Holm, a division of Hunter Industries, San Marcos, California, has a simple cylindrical drum design that complements a range of classic and contemporary applications while providing maximum optical control for downward illumination.

The sDelta-8 is designed for entryways, outdoor meeting spaces, seating areas and other applications where there's no available ceiling or overhead surface. For maximum comfort, an extended glare shield is designed to prevent light from shining into the eyes of passersby.

The wall-mounted bracket is designed for easy installation with a standard junction box, and the back plate efficiently seals and masks the installation opening.

Made of die-cast aluminum, the sDelta-8 is offered in three-, six- and nine-LED versions. A ZDC option is also available for expanded zoning, dimming and color applications when used with the ZDClink controller.

 **Holm**  
[www.holmlighting.com](http://www.holmlighting.com)



**5 Rebar and dowel adhesive.** W.R. Meadows, Hampshire, Illinois presents Poly-Grip, a fast-curing acrylic adhesive system for high-strength dowel and tie bar adhesion in full-depth concrete repairs. This two-component, styrene-free product is used for anchoring and doweling applications in uncracked concrete using threaded rod and rebar. The adhesive can also be used in short-term anchoring and shear-loading applications in accordance with allowable stress design.

It may be easily dispensed and successfully used in temperatures from 15 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit and offers a wide service temperature range from -40 to 176 F. It can be used even in damp and water-saturated environments and is designed to still cure due to its moisture-insensitive properties. It will reach full cure in 30 minutes in dry conditions at 77 F.

 **W.R. Meadows**  
[www.wrmeadows.com](http://www.wrmeadows.com)



**6 Submersible pump.** Goulds Water Technology, Rye Brook, New York, a Xylem brand, has introduced its new 10 GPM G Slimline Submersible Pump.

The new 10 GPM G Slimline Submersible Pump boosts the capacity of the G Slimline series, designed for compact wells where corrosion is present. It's designed to provide reliable performance in tight residential water-well applications.

The pump's 3.75-inch diameter allows for quick installation and features an integrated spring-loaded check valve for easy service with no need for disassembly.

Its powerful motor, available in ½-, ¾-, 1- and 1½-horsepower versions, allows for continuous service without damage, and the stainless steel design is corrosion resistant for long life expectancy.

 **Goulds Water Technology**  
[www.goulds.com](http://www.goulds.com)

**SUPPLIER IN THE NEWS**

**Rain Bird receives fourth Circle of Excellence Award**

For the fourth year in a row, Rain Bird, Azusa, California, has been ushered into The National Business Research Institute's Circle of Excellence. The NBRI Circle of Excellence Award bestows recognition on organizations that place a high value on employee and customer engagement and commends their leadership for their commitment to the Continuous Improvement Process.

Companies selected for this honor have proven their dedication to their employees by conducting "best in class" survey research with NBRI.

"We are proud to have so many talented and innova-

tive people at our company," says Ivonne Flores, recruiting and communications manager at Rain Bird. "Feedback opportunities like these help us continue to improve and keep Rain Bird among the best places to work."

"Engaged employees not only perform better at work but also have better work/life balance," continues Flores. "At Rain Bird, we are always looking to develop the full potential of our people, and communications channels like these help us understand how we can become better as an employer and as a company."



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# NALP reveals its top landscape trends of 2019

The National Association of Landscape Professionals, Fairfax, Virginia, has announced its official list of the top lawn and landscape trends of 2019.

Trending topics



## 1 Mesmerizing metals.

Whether homeowners want a bold statement or whimsical touch, incorporating metals can bring new dimension to landscape design. Used for decorative art, water features, or furniture and accessories, creative uses of metals including steel and iron can make for lovely accents or entire focal points.



## 3 Automated lawn and landscape maintenance.

The latest technology and equipment allow tasks to be more streamlined and environmentally efficient than ever before. Robotic lawn mowers continue to rise in popularity among both homeowners and landscape professionals, and programmable irrigation systems and advanced lighting and electrical systems are a few ways outdoor spaces are becoming extensions of today's smart homes. Homeowners relish knowing that these technological advancements afford them with more time to relax and enjoy their outdoor spaces.



## 2 Two-in-one landscape design.

Functional elements are no longer a perk, but rather a necessity in today's landscapes, as consumers desire stunning outdoor features that have been cleverly designed to serve a dual tactical purpose. An edible vertical garden on a trellis that acts as a privacy fence, a retaining wall that includes built-in seating for entertaining and colorful garden beds that divide properties all combine function and style.



## 4 Pergolas.

A staple of landscape design for years, pergolas constructed of wood or composite material are now becoming more sophisticated with major upgrades, including roll-down windows, space heaters, lighting and sound systems. When paired with a luxury kitchen, seating area or fire feature, pergolas can become the iconic structure for outdoor sanctuaries.

## 5 Pretty in pink.

Pops of coral and blush are anticipated to add a more feminine touch to landscapes this year. With Living Coral named the Color of the Year by Pantone, a leading provider of color systems and an influencer on interior and exterior design, landscape professionals predict that this rich shade of pink could bring fresh blooms of roses, petunias, zinnias and hibiscus to flower beds. Experts also anticipate light blush tones to become "the new neutral" and another option for hardscapes and stone selections.



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