

IRRIGATION & **green industry**®

MAY/JUNE 2021

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

GO THE EXTRA MILE

Encourage a healthy customer relationship by making it personal.

+ INSIDE

- Get precise with drip irrigation, p. 26
- Build vibrant native plants designs, p. 30
- Tune-up equipment to run smoothly, p. 38

Changing the Landscape Awards:
Landscape Design winner, p. 34



MP ROTATOR® MORE COVERAGE. LESS WATER.



STANDARD MP



8-35 ft.

- Maximum water efficiency
- Slowest precipitation rate
- More heads on one zone



MP800



6-16 ft.

- Small spaces
- Tight water windows
- Spray retrofit solution



MP STRIPS



5 ft. wide

- Rectangular spaces
- Pair with standard MP or MP800 nozzles

Higher water savings. Faster installation. More than a decade of proven performance.

Manage irrigation according to exact landscape needs with the industry-best MP Rotator nozzle family. With two precipitation rates across the widest radius range available, install the smarter solution for high-efficiency irrigation. Choose the MP Rotator.

IRRIGATION & green industry®

May/June 2021 | Volume 25 | Issue 5



20



Changing the Landscape Awards
2021 Landscape Design Winner

34



ON THE COVER

14

Photo: NatureWorks

Features

- 14 Cover Story: Go the extra mile**
Encourage a healthy customer relationship by making it personal.
- 20 Close-up Profile: Kevin Mulkern**
The key to Mulkern Landscaping & Nursery's success is Kevin Mulkern's focus on projects, while his wife Susan covers the details.
- 24 Service on purpose**
Use these 5 tips to build a culture of service excellence.
- 26 Precision performance**
Use drip irrigation for direct application of water for clients.
- 30 Native plant know-how**
Use native plants to build a vibrant, sustainable design.
- 34 A dream backyard**
Landon Adair worked with his clients to bring a rough sketch into a stunning reality.
- 38 Stay on the move**
Keep equipment running smoothly throughout the season with maintenance.



page 43

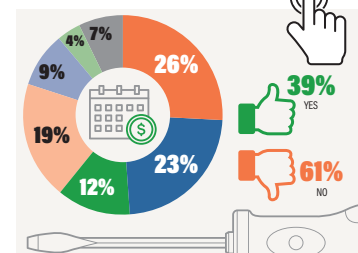
GPS tracking helps with fleet productivity during the pandemic.

In this issue

- From the Editor 4
- Market Watch 6
- Green Business Brief 8
- Industry Insights 10
- Night Lighting..... 12
- Associations in Action..... 44
- Product Spotlight..... 46
- Ad Index 49
- Branching Out 50

See the results

Discover how contractors maintain and purchase equipment online at www.igin.com/2021-equipment-maintenance-survey.





To do outstanding, precise work that really gets to the core of what needs to be done for the property, there needs to be a conversation.

KYLE BROWN

Photo: Nikki Avramovich

Time to talk

know most everyone in the landscape industry is heading toward the busiest time of the season right now, but I'm hoping you can spend a few minutes here with me.

I want to start out this month with a quick thank you to all of the contractors who submitted projects to our brand-new Changing the Landscape Awards earlier this year. I've already gotten a few eager emails asking about when the winners will be announced, and I'm glad to tell you that it will be soon. Keep an eye on both www.igin.com and our print editions for those updates. The suspense to reveal the winners is really eating at me too, I promise.

You don't have to wait any longer to see the winner of the Landscape Design category, who's featured later in this issue. We received so many amazing projects this year, and this category in particular got some really stunning submissions. I appreciated that we saw landscape designs that incorporated a range of different approaches, from heavy hardscaping to native installations meant to support local pollinators. One of the perks of working in landscape design is that there's always a new dream that a client wants to bring into the world.

But none of the amazing projects we saw submitted to this year's awards would be possible if contractors hadn't really taken the time to sit down with their clients and figured out how to make that possible. Especially during the height of the season, it can be tough to find even a few seconds to talk with clients. As it is with so many things, the effort usually at least counts for something.

To do outstanding, precise work that really gets to the core of what needs to be done for the property, there needs to be a conversation, and more than a quick handshake at the start of service. There's no way to really wow clients without taking the time to get to know their needs. It's possible that your client is eager to just have your team show up, do the job and leave. Even finding that out means spending at least a little bit of time up front to show that you mean it when you talk about a commitment to customer service.

While you're finishing reading this column, it might be worthwhile to think of two or three clients who you can check in with briefly, just to make sure their customer service needs are being met. If it leads on to more work down the road, it could end up being a profitable few minutes. 🌿

Follow us!



IRRIGATION & green industry

The business magazine for landscape, irrigation and maintenance contractors

Irrigation & Green Industry is published 10 times per year by the Irrigation Association 8280 Willow Oaks Corporate Dr., Ste. 630 Fairfax, VA 22031 T: 703.536.7080 • F: 703.536.7019

Publisher
Deborah Hamlin

Associate Publisher
Trisha Klaus

Editor-in-Chief
Kyle Brown
330.353.8874
kylebrown@igin.com

Senior Editor
Anne Blankenbiller

Digital Content Editor
Sarah Bunyea

Business Development Director
Stephanie Clark
703.472.5810
stephanieclark@igin.com

National Sales Representatives
Central U.S.
Tom Schoen
952.905.3214
tom.schoen@bock-assoc.com

East, West, International & Classifieds
Tara Schelling
215.588.5811
taraschelling@igin.com

Creative Director
Sean Burris

Database Coordinator
Andreina Orozco-Rodriguez

IGIN Advisory Council
Sharon Vessels, chair
David Crary, vice chair
Judy Guido, past chair
Eric Santos, board liaison
Alexis Bookman
Perry Bruggeman
Bruce Moore Jr.
Dawn Norris
Tessa Norton

Founder
Denne Goldstein

Irrigation & Green Industry (ISSN 1521-7620 [print] and ISSN 2689-8675 [online]) is published 10 times per year by the Irrigation Association, 8280 Willow Oaks Corporate Dr., Ste. 630, Fairfax, VA 22031. Subscriptions are free to qualified landscape and irrigation professionals; publisher reserves the right to determine qualification. Subscribe online at www.igin.com/subscribe. Nonqualified subscription rates: one year: \$55; two years: \$80; one year surface mail foreign: \$95; single copy: \$8. Copyright 2021. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be produced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Irrigation & Green Industry, 8280 Willow Oaks Corporate Dr., Ste. 630, Fairfax, VA 22031.

ISUZU

HAVE YOU HEARD THE EXCITING NEWS?



2022 ISUZU F-SERIES

- A Cummins B6.7 engine with 260-hp. and 660 lb.-ft. of torque.
- Classes 6 and 7
- Allison 2000-series transmission (includes a PTO).



ISUZU N-SERIES GAS

- Class 3 and 4 - 6.6L gas powertrain with 350 hp. and 425-lb.-ft. of torque.
- Class 5 - 6.0L gas powertrain mated to a 6-speed automatic Allison® 1000-series transmission.



2022i ISUZU N-SERIES DIESEL

- Class 4 and 5
- LED Lights
- Stability Control
- Limited Slip Differential
- Optional Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS)

INVESTORS CORNER

Robin Autopilot acquires Mowbot, expands partnership with Husqvarna

Robin Autopilot USA, Dallas, a producer of robotic mowing technology, acquired Mowbot, a robotic lawn care franchise business with 16 locations throughout the U.S. As part of the acquisition, Robin Autopilot will launch a newly expanded partnership with Husqvarna Group, a major investor in Mowbot and a current equity partner of Robin.

Following the transaction, Mowbot will become known as “Mowbot Powered by Robin” and will move its headquarters from Durham, North Carolina, to the Dallas-

Fort Worth Metroplex where Robin is looking to expand its U.S. headquarters. The business will be managed by Robin Holdings, led by CEO Logan Fahey.

Mowbot’s operators will gain full access to all of Robin’s key offerings, including a proprietary software package of fleet management, surveyor and customer acquisition tools, patented products and Robin Academy, training, and e-learning tools.

The acquisition continues Robin’s rapid expansion in the U.S. lawn care industry. In December 2020, Robin entered a similar arrangement with Weed Man USA to introduce the benefits of robotic mowing to a growing portion of the North American lawn maintenance and landscaping market.

“Husqvarna is a pioneer in the robotic mowing industry, and we are pleased to

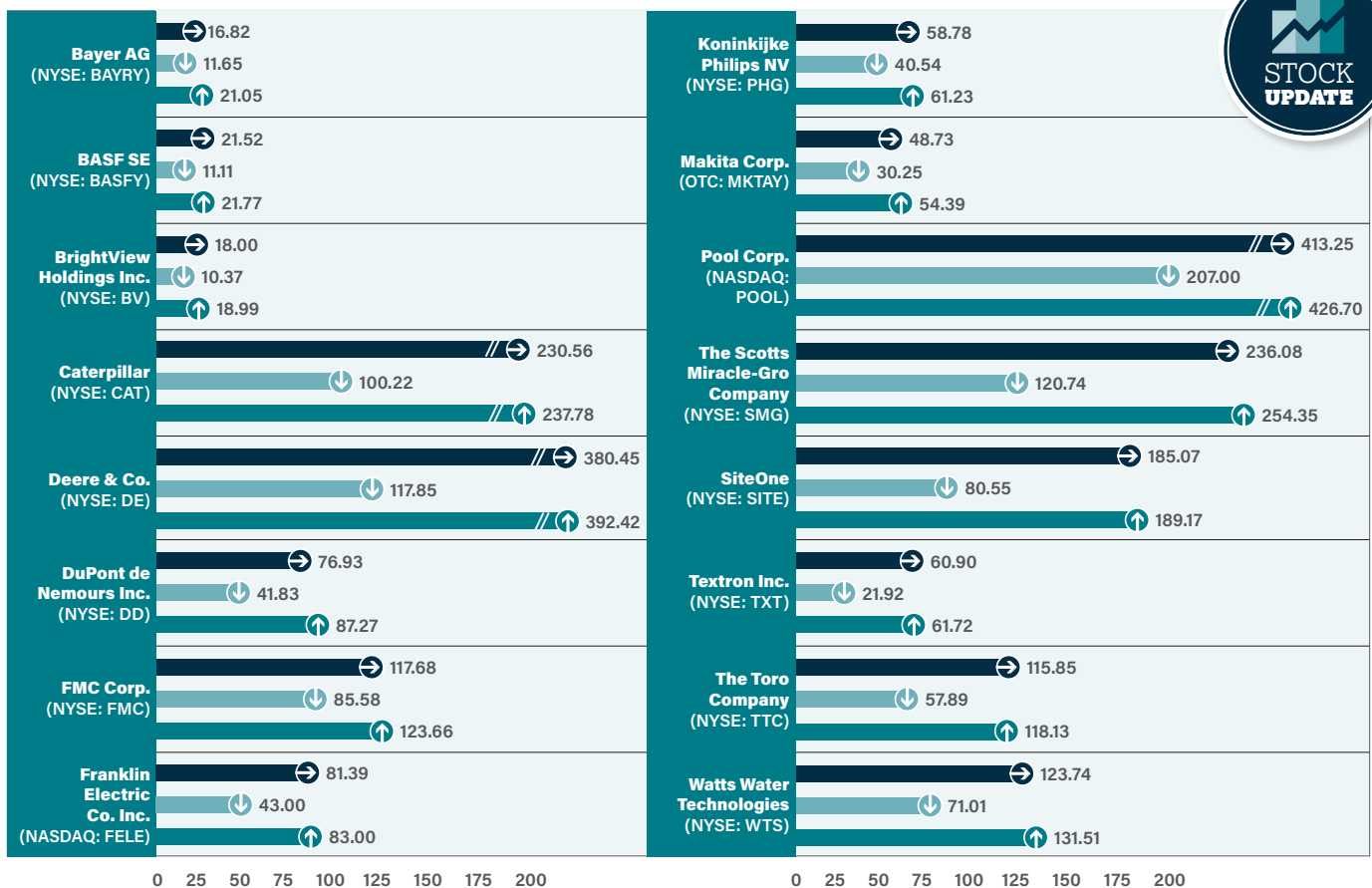


partner with them even more directly as we work together to change how North America mows,” says Fahey.

“We believe robotic technology will play a rapidly growing role in the future of lawn care,” says Robert McCutcheon, president of Husqvarna NA. “We consider this an outstanding opportunity to partner with Robin, the leader in the (robots as a service) market for the U.S., to expand our presence in this expanding market.”

“We believe robotic technology will play a rapidly growing role in the future of lawn care.”

– Robert McCutcheon, Husqvarna NA



↻ Last trade (4-27-21) ↓ 52-week low ↑ 52-week high; Source: Bloomberg.com

Control your lights from anywhere.

The Kichler Smart Control Timer and Kichler Connects™ app work together to digitally control landscape lighting with a smartphone or tablet in minutes.



Smart Control Timer and Kichler Connects features

External Antenna increases range of signal outside of the enclosure.

Easy installation plugs directly into the transformer. Can be used for indoors or in outdoor enclosures.

Kichler Connects App digitally controls the Smart Control Timer, available for iOS and Android. Allows you to choose preset or create custom schedules.

Bluetooth® and Wi-Fi allows for local or cloud-based control.

16085BK

"Alexa, turn on the landscape lights."



Let your voice do the work.

Use voice commands with smart home devices like Amazon Alexa™ or Google Home™ to tell your landscape lighting to turn on or off.



© 2021 Kichler Lighting LLC. All rights reserved. Kichler Connects™ is a trademark of Kichler Lighting LLC. Amazon Alexa is a trademark of Amazon.com, Inc., Apple, App Store, and the Apple logo are registered trademarks of Apple Inc., Bluetooth® word mark and logos are registered trademarks owned by Bluetooth SIG, Inc., The Google Home logo, Google Play, and the Google Play logo, are trademarks of Google LLC, and Wi-Fi® is a registered trademark of the Wi-Fi Alliance.

Learn more at [Kichler.com/Kichler-Connects](https://www.kichler.com/Kichler-Connects)

KICHLER®

Policy

Biden administration increases seasonal worker visas by 22,000

The Department of Homeland Security announced a supplemental increase of 22,000 visas for the H-2B Temporary Non-Agricultural Worker program. The additional visas will be made available in the coming months via a temporary final rule in the Federal Register.

A total of 6,000 of these visas will be reserved for nationals of the Northern Triangle countries of Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. That move expands lawful pathways for opportunity in the U.S. consistent with Executive Order 14010, according to a DHS release.

Employers seeking H-2B workers must test the U.S. labor market and certify in their petitions that there are not enough U.S. workers who are able, willing, qualified and available to do the temporary work for which they seek a prospective foreign worker, and that employing H-2B workers will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed U.S. workers. The supplemental increase will require businesses seeking H-2B workers to engage in additional recruitment efforts for U.S. workers.

The additional visas will only be made available to employers that attest that, if they do not receive workers under the cap increase, they are likely to suffer irreparable harm. The temporary final rule will allow employers to immediately hire H-2B workers who are already present in the U.S. without waiting for approval of the new petition. The supplemental increase is based on a time-limited statutory authority and does not affect the H-2B program in future fiscal years.

Under the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended, Congress has set the H-2B visa cap at 66,000 per fiscal year, with 33,000 visas available to workers who begin employment in the first half of the fiscal year, from Oct. 1 through March 31, and the remaining 33,000 (plus any unused visas from the first half of the fiscal year) available for workers who begin employment in the second half of the fiscal year, from April 1 through Sept. 30. Unused H-2B numbers from one fiscal year do not carry over into the next fiscal year.



Education

Takeuchi opens new training center

Atlanta-based Takeuchi-US hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house on March 25 at its new 37,000-square-foot training center in Pendergrass, Georgia. Located next door to the company's headquarters, the Takeuchi Training Center will be the site of sales and technical instruction for the company's salespeople, dealer principals, dealer technicians and corporate dealer trainers. The facility's larger classrooms and additional staff will give Takeuchi the ability to increase class capacity and add more service training classes over the coming months.

After purchasing nearly 10 acres in 2020, Takeuchi expanded its U.S. campus to about 44 acres. With the addition of the new Training Center, the campus includes two buildings that together provide 500,000 square feet of space.

Courses that will be offered at the Takeuchi Training Center include intermediate-level technical trainings for both compact track loaders and compact excavators with simultaneous classes starting in May 2021. These classes will cover general machine layout, electrical and hydraulic component location and function, general engine controls and exhaust after-treatment systems on all products. Soon, Takeuchi will also offer quarterly sales training for dealers. Beginner-level courses will be offered online via Takeuchi's Learning Management System.



Photo: Takeuchi-US



QUICK TAKES

Sperber Landscape Companies partners with Cagwin & Dorward

Westlake Village, California-based Sperber Landscape Companies expands into the Northern California marketplace as it joins forces with commercial landscaping services company Cagwin & Dorward. Transaction terms were facilitated by Bill Arman of Harvest the Green Partners.

Headquartered in Petaluma, California, Cagwin & Dorward was founded in 1955. It has grown to include multiple locations servicing California's Bay Area, Sacramento and the Central Valley.

Conserva Irrigation opens a new location in Northwest Portland

Conserva Irrigation, Richmond, Virginia, announced that Sally McCurdy has opened a new franchise location serving Northwest Portland, Oregon.

Known as Conserva Irrigation of Northwest Portland, McCurdy will lead the team of irrigation designers and technicians in repair, maintenance and installation of home and commercial irrigation systems. This is the company's first location in the state of Oregon.

BFG Supply acquires L&L Nursery Supply

BFG Supply, a technology-enabled distributor to the green industry headquartered in Burton, Ohio, has acquired L&L Nursery Supply, San Bernardino, California, a distributor of lawn and garden products on the West Coast.

The acquisition of L&L significantly expands BFG's geographic footprint and ability to serve customers in the Pacific region. The combined company operates 14 warehouses across the U.S.



Technology

Cogniac provides Doosan Bobcat with AI platform

Doosan Bobcat North American, West Fargo, North Dakota, has partnered with Cogniac Corporation, San Jose, California, a provider of enterprise-class artificial intelligence image and video analysis. Bobcat is implementing Cogniac's proprietary visual data processing platform within the manufacturing warehouse kitting inspection process. This move will increase operational efficiencies, boost productivity and reduce material handling times.

The partnership currently serves the Bobcat operations and warehouse in Otsego, Minnesota.

"We're excited about this partnership as it demonstrates the efficacy of the Cogniac systems," says Chuck Myers, CEO of Cogniac. "Our technology is designed to be additive to the manufacturing processes, offering companies the ability to increase the safety and standards of their products. Bobcat was a great choice for a partnership because they are pushing to innovate and adopt technology as a core pillar of their growth strategy."

Cogniac's Visual Operations Intelligence Platform offers customers the ability to process, in real time, large amounts of visual data collected for inspection, flagging them to a human operator for review. The system also allows for more strategic distribution of employees to projects requiring the human touch which maximizes workforce productivity.

Bobcat leverages visual data in its warehouse to inspect bulk materials and parts for any potential inconsistencies to create precise kits to be used for downstream manufacturing processes.

Statistics

Jobber releases its Q1 2021 Home Service Economic Report

Jobber, Edmonton, Alberta, a provider of home service management software, released its Home Service Economic Report: Q1 2021 Edition, which showcases market trends and insights pertaining to the performance of the home service category throughout 2020 and the beginning of 2021. Consumer spending in home service started growing faster than pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2020 and continues to do so into 2021, with the category reaching record revenue growth in March.



The home service category had a slow start to the year, but activity quickly accelerated throughout the quarter. The category experienced a 32% year-over-year growth in new work scheduled.

"Throughout the pandemic, and now as we continue our path towards recovery, home service businesses have continued to prove their reliability and resilience," says Sam Pillar, CEO and co-founder at Jobber. "With consumer spending on home services outpacing pre-pandemic levels and technology adoption within the category continuing to rise, these battle-tested entrepreneurs are prepared to take advantage of what is expected to be a prosperous second quarter."

Jobber's Home Service Economic Reports are compiled using data from over 100,000 residential cleaners, landscapers, HVAC technicians, window washers, plumbers and others who use the platform.

A key finding from the report is that spring arrived early for the green segment. New work scheduled in the green segment, which includes landscaping, lawn care and outdoor services, has had consistent positive growth throughout the pandemic and into this year, with revenue following a similar pattern.

Acquisition

AZ Stone and Solstice joins SiteOne Landscape Supply



SiteOne Landscape Supply Inc., based in Roswell, Georgia, acquired Arizona Stone & Architectural Products and Solstice Stone on April 1. AZ Stone and Solstice operate

seven locations throughout Arizona and two locations in the Las Vegas market focused on the distribution of hardscapes, natural stone and landscape supplies to landscape professionals.

"We are very excited to welcome AZ Stone and Solstice to the SiteOne family," says Doug Black, chairman and CEO of SiteOne Landscape Supply. "They have an outstanding reputation for delivering quality products and exceptional service to customers throughout Arizona and the Las Vegas market. AZ Stone and Solstice is a perfect complement to our current irrigation, agronomics, landscape lighting and hardscapes business in those markets."

Technology

ServiceTitan announces \$500 million investment

ServiceTitan, Los Angeles, a software provider, announced a \$500 million round at an \$8.3 billion valuation. The round was led by Tiger Global Management and Sequoia Capital Global Equities with participation from H.I.G. Growth Partners. Existing investors participated, including Arena Holdings, Battery Ventures, Bessemer Venture Partners, Dragoner Investment Group, Durable Capital Partners LP, ICONIQ Growth, Index Ventures and T. Rowe Price Associates Inc.

The capital raised will be used to fuel rapid growth as the company continues to invest in customer experience, product development and hiring top talent around the globe.

The company also surpassed \$250 million in annual recurring revenue, having grown more than 50% over the past 12 months.



BY GARY HORTON

More than a commodity



Many customers want to view your landscaping services as another commodity to be shopped for lowest price, as if hiring your company was no different than buying another gallon of regular gasoline. Landscapers face sealed bids, negotiated bids and reverse bids, all designed to drive your numbers down and pressure your profit as low as you will allow.

Fortunately, there's a workaround: Stand out from the "other guys" and meaningfully differentiate your company from all the rest. Give customers real reasons to pick you over "good enough." Make them first want you, then connect with you, and even become your fans and promoters!

Consider customer devotion to Tesla and Mercedes. Lots of cars are manufactured in the world, but these are among the most distinguished, most popular and also most pricy. Consider Apple's following. Lots of phones are made, but Apple leads the pack in higher prices with their perceived quality and cool factor. Each is its own standout from competition. In every case, winning customer love and realizing high profits come from meaningful differentiation from competitors and exceeding customer expectations.

In our industry, the best customers are those who value great, attentive service. They're the ones you should seek. They're keen on no problems, no worries and no punch lists, and they're thrilled when they're proactively kept informed and cared for. When you consistently deliver, customers come to love you for your attentive care. Soon, they can't live without it. And your company escapes commodity hell and stands on far firmer ground when pricing is discussed.

Knowing and exceeding your customer desires and expectations is key to breaking the chains binding you to all the other bidders. If you don't, you're just a commodity, like gravel or plastic pipe. It's all the same and you buy on price. Yes, there's money to be made in competitive bidding. But until you differentiate yourself from the pack, you'll be like a running back with five tacklers pulling you down.

Our company has thrived because decades ago we adopted a uniquely personal, highly attentive, distinctively dependable customer service process as our bedrock, core operating principle. Over this time, we've consistently trained our people to exceed customer expectations in all their client interactions.

Quality doesn't cost, it pays! Superior customer response builds clients for life. And client loyalty is what has sustained us through all our past challenges.

This is key: Differentiate yourself from your competition by training everyone who comes in contact with the public to carefully understand their customer's needs and to hone their actions to exceed them. Teach that going the extra mile for the folks who write your checks pays off again and again.

Here's a clip from our oft-repeated Vision Statement: "We are known for the highest ethical values, with special emphasis on honesty, plain dealing, transparency, artistry and commitment to highest service." Excelling in these key behaviors differentiates ourselves from our competition. Honesty and transparency are paramount, as our clients quickly learn to fully trust whatever we communicate, from pricing to specs. Trust and dependability go a long way in contracting.

We also strive to build personal, meaningful relationships with those we serve. And the results are that most of our clients stay put. Some have been around for as long as I can remember. Many refer to us as their industry friend. Most won't take a chance on a cheaper price. Retaining the high service they're accustomed to is more important than price alone.

Yet, these happy outcomes only happen as long as we dependably live out our vision, day in and out, without fail or aberration. It takes a long time to build lasting client relationships. Conversely, it usually only takes one or two significant missteps to blow them up.

Exceed expectations consistently and dependably. And remember: Add fresh, unexpected touches on-site and in your relationships to keep things vibrant and alive.

Investing in client loyalty is the smart price you'll pay for customers who are lifelong fans. 🌱



Teach that **going the extra mile** for the folks who write your checks **pays off** again and again.



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.



SITEMASTER™

2-Wire Decoder Controller

**For use on large commercial,
industrial and residential sites.**

Easy setup and advanced diagnostics set the K-Rain SiteMaster 2-wire decoder controller apart from the rest. Sporting a large display screen, full on-screen keyboard and a 99 zone capability, the SiteMaster is the most simple and intuitive 2-wire decoder controller yet. Master *your* next site. krain.com #krain



K-RAIN | Designed for easy. Built for reliable.

BY KEVIN SMITH

Never let 'em see you sweat



Customer-imposed deadlines can create a substantial amount of workday tension. For some reason, in all the years I have been in the green industry, these deadlines are frequently associated with a party. It's easy to think, "So you knew you were having a party and you called me three days before it?"

Years ago, advertising agency CEO Phil Slott coined the phrase, "Never let 'em see you sweat!" These are important words to remember in running your business.

Here are some tips that can help you stay organized and prepared.



It is a good practice for any contractor to **stock enough supplies** to complete at least three to five standard lighting jobs.

Manage your inventory

Thanks to the pandemic, supplies have been harder to acquire. Planning is key to staying on point for upcoming jobs. Communication with your supply house is especially important.

It is a good practice for any contractor to stock enough supplies to complete at least three to five standard lighting jobs. This inventory should include an ample quantity of your normal go-to fixtures and several different sizes of transformers. Be sure to include your normal lamp and cable connections and other materials in this inventory.

For some, investing in inventory like this might be tough financially. Check with your supplier to see there are any large purchase terms. This may lead to a greater discount for you as well. If you are good friends with another contractor, you could consider a team bulk purchase. For instance, I have known many contractors who split purchase a pallet of wire. Both of you can get the pallet price this way.

Form an emergency response team

If you are fortunate to have a good group of employees, you may want to create an emergency response team. Prep this team to be ready 24/7 for emergency repairs or priority expedited installations, like those last-minute parties that crop up.

Of course, this service should be priced at a premium. If an important job needs to be completed for a valued customer, price is usually no object. Your team should be well trained and made up of key employees that you can always count on to deliver excellence, both on and off the job. Since projects like this warrant a premium, consider flexing the wages paid to team members or offering a bonus plan to them as well.

Under-promise and over-deliver

Providing that little something extra goes a long way. For instance, perhaps you are updating a lighting system with new fixtures for a customer. They might have a few fixtures from the old system that are in good shape. Clean them up and use them in an area of the yard that is lacking illumination. When the lights come on, your customer will realize you went the extra mile for them and provided more than their expectations.

Create a contractor referral network

Most of us are greatly confident in our abilities. Sometimes a customer may ask for a service that is not in your normal offerings. If this occurs, listen to them to understand every aspect and their expectations. Use that info to ascertain whether you're the right person for the job. Ask yourself if this is the highest and best use of your time and talent. If the answer is no, this is where it is important to know trusted sources who are right for the project.

Network with a good group of contractors who will reciprocate referrals and partner with them in cases like this. Whether you refer the customer outright or subcontract their work under your project, do not be worried about losing business to this group. They are going to need your expertise for their projects as well.

These are just a few suggestions to assist with the stressors of running a service business in the green industry. Keep calm and carry on! And remember, never let 'em see you sweat! 🍀

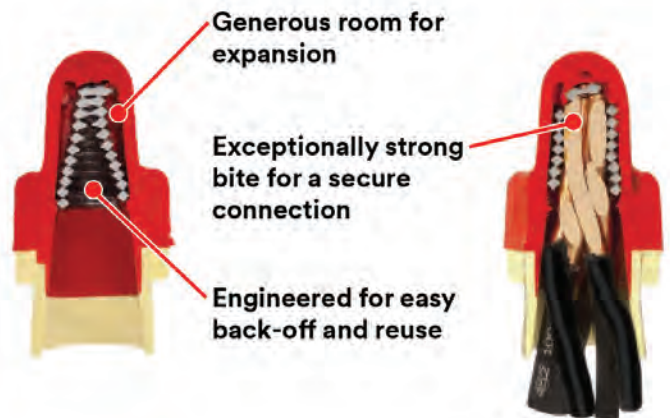


Kevin Smith is the national technical support and trainer at Brilliance LED LLC, Carefree, Arizona, and can be reached at kevin.smith@brillianceled.com.



The difference is in the connector!

- Conical Spring has sharp points that bite into the copper conductors of the wire for solid connection.
- The tip of the Conical Spring has a small arm that prevents it from spinning when removing the connector from the wires.



3M Direct Bury Splices — DBR/Y-6 and DBO/B-6

We consider these water-resistant* connectors the absolute best for landscape irrigation (both conventional and 2-Wire) and outdoor lighting applications.

- 600-volt rating. Can be used in virtually any irrigation or lighting splice
- UV-resistant – Can be installed above or below ground
- Can be safely used in virtually any country - UL listed for the USA and Canada. Also Meets Directive 2006/95/EC and IEC standards EN61984:2009, EN60998- 1:2004 and EN60998-2-4:2005.
- Long history of performance – this family of connectors has been successfully used in landscape irrigation and lighting applications since 1985.
- Proudly made in the USA by the 3M Company.



<http://www.paigewire.com>

Available from Paige Electric Co., LP
(Master Distributor for 3M)

Paige#	3M Model#	Connector Color
270672	DBR/Y-6	Red/Yellow
270674	DBO/B-6	Orange/Blue

*Not for continuous submersion in water
*3M is a registered trademark of the 3M Company

GO THE EXTRA MILE

Encourage a healthy customer relationship by making it personal.

BY KYLE BROWN

Most service-based companies have high goals for customer relationships. Green industry professionals might have an edge on understanding how to really build something that lasts. Developing a strong customer relationship takes a lot of the same things that cultivating a healthy plant does, including plenty of time and effort, right from the start.

The first meeting with a new client is all about finding common ground and education, says Laura Harrigan, director of customer service and sales, NatureWorks, Walpole, Massachusetts.

“I love making connections. Understanding what’s at the heart and soul of what a customer wants and cares about and then connecting that to my knowledge of horticulture and design and making suggestions for them that are super personal,” she says. “I really try to understand what they care about and what would bring them joy, whether that’s a plant material or an aesthetic look or feel.”

James Tolentino, owner of Imperial Landscaping, Winston Salem, North Carolina, says he tries to be very informative and realistic about the services his team can provide to establish options and set expectations.

“I don’t try to sell them something that we can’t deliver on,” Tolentino says. “Some people have expectations that beautiful lawns are grown overnight, and I try to impress on them that that just isn’t how it works.”

Starting from a place of education gives the relationship the chance to develop based on trust, he says.

“I’m realistic and honest with them,” he says. “That’s the skeleton of the relationship, it’s truthfulness, and offering what they’re seeking in a realistic timeframe.”



Photo: NatureWorks





Building a strong customer relationship starts by listening to a client's issues and sharing expertise for a personalized experience. It's important that the entire team knows how to connect with customers. Photos above: NatureWorks

For John Bell, operations manager, Quiet Village, St. Louis, good customer service has its roots in company culture. Training on how to listen to people and take action on their wants and needs are great techniques, but client retention comes from the company's values, he says.

"We hire people that have the same value systems as we do, and we train on those systems and make decisions on them," Bell says. "It's baked into everything we do."

TAKING CARE OF NEEDS

One of the first notes in Quiet Village's value system is to "love on the customer," Bell says. "We do whatever we can to get the client to a 'yes' situation when we're listening to them. We're taking care of their needs. We go the extra mile."

That can mean taking on difficult tasks that a client asks for "with joy in our hearts," he says. It's about meeting the client's needs where they are that day. It takes understanding that every client is going to have a different perspective based on the stresses or other inputs they're dealing with that day and having empathy.

"Today's upset, irrational client who won't pay anything for a service is going to be tomorrow's exuberant, loving client who's going to spend 10 grand, right?" says Bell. "We just have to love on them in whatever mood they're in."

Harrigan encourages her team to "make it personal, whatever it is you're doing for the client. That's what makes those relationships." For a recent customer whose mother had died, Harrigan asked if she could plant an Alice Oakleaf hydrangea, which shares its name with the client's parent. NatureWorks installed the plants at their own cost.

"They're there, and they're thriving in a place that I think reminds her of her mom," Harrigan says. "We try to do really personal, meaningful things like that for our clients a lot."

Tolentino takes the time to look over the client's property while talking with them. Walking the yard gives him the chance to listen to what parts of the lawn the customer is most concerned about while also doing his own evaluation, he says. It also allows him to organically introduce different levels of service and related prices to the conversation, so the client feels like they're receiving a personalized package.

"I can tell them what I think their needs are and give them a real explanation of why they need them," he says.

Similarly, Bell thinks of the sales team as consultants who get a call from a customer because there's a problem, or they have a dream they'd like to build.

"We take the approach that we're going to go out there and see if it's in our wheelhouse," he says. If it is, "Then we're the professionals who are going to teach the client what we think the best solution is, or what certain things would work in this situation."

Harrigan says taking that first walk around the customer's property is where you're able to learn what parts of the property the client values, and what they'd rather see changed, on top of your own insights. If the client doesn't have much to work with on their property, Harrigan suggests they look to neighboring yards for inspiration.

"You give them something to react to, and you learn from that," she says. "Sometimes it's a process by which the client also learns what they really like and want. They might not be able to articulate that quickly, but by questioning you can get there."

WE DO WHATEVER WE CAN TO GET THE CLIENT TO A 'YES' SITUATION WHEN WE'RE LISTENING TO THEM. WE'RE TAKING CARE OF THEIR NEEDS. WE GO THE EXTRA MILE.

**- JOHN BELL,
QUIET VILLAGE**

HUSQVARNA PROVIDES THE TOTAL SOLUTION

© 2021 Husqvarna AB. All rights reserved.



Trimmers and
Brushcutters



Battery
Series



Backpack
Blowers



Automower®
Robotic Mowers



Stand-on
Mowers



Zero-Turn
Mowers

PUT THE POWER OF HUSQVARNA TO WORK FOR YOU.

Get your hands on the power, reliability and innovation of Husqvarna. From our new and innovative professional mower line-up to powerful, productive and ergonomically designed handheld equipment, Husqvarna delivers professional results.

Learn more at [HUSQVARNA.COM](https://www.husqvarna.com)

Connect with HusqvarnaUSA



Husqvarna®

Getting to the heart of the actual problem the client is trying to solve might take time, but it establishes your expertise and professionalism, says Harrigan.

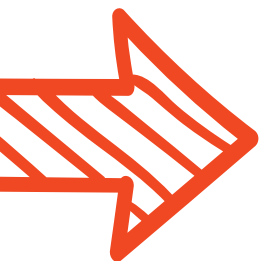
“The more consultative you can be and the more you can bring ideas, I think that’s always really appreciated by the clients,” she says. “Then they start to turn to you more and more, and you become the go-to problem-solver.”

When a customer has an issue, Harrigan’s account managers try to take care of it immediately or make a quick call to her to brainstorm the best solution, she says. Each week, the company has a team meeting, and there’s always time set aside to discuss what she prefers to call “tricky situations.”

Quiet Village also doesn’t use terms like “problem customer” when dealing with someone who’s upset, says Bell. Instead, they say that a client is “at risk,” similar to a new lead, because they’re at risk of going to another company. A technique that he uses to work with a customer who calls with a complaint is to have them explain the problem to him three times in full, maybe asking for a repeat to make some notes. By the third time, the customer realizes that Bell is actually taking the time to listen to them, and even the most angry customer begins to calm down.

“They start realizing, ‘This person is listening to me. And I was not expecting that,’” Bell says. That’s the point when the caller will actually tell you what can be done to solve the problem. Once that solution is provided, make sure to follow through and make the customer a partner in the process by showing your efforts.

Educate crew members to be able to talk with customers about both the work that’s being done, and empower them to make decisions for customers quickly, especially when trying to do right for the customer. Photo: Quiet Village



SURPRISE AND DELIGHT

Part of going the extra mile for customers involves taking as little time as possible to make the right decisions for the job, says Bell. Part of his job is to make sure his team uses their time efficiently, and to do that, he hires and trains people who use as little of his own time as possible.

“We try to push the decision for a job as close to the people who are actually doing the work and as close to the client as possible,” Bell says. “That’s part of the client relationship. Instead of having the client having to ask the crew leader, who has to ask an account manager, who has to ask somebody else, we want the crew leader to be able to answer those questions and install that bush or fix that sprinkler head.”

To do that, it means that leadership often acts more like support staff than direct overseers, he says. Crew members could be afraid to make those decisions because they could get in trouble for the wrong call. So Quiet Village has a rule that as long as they’re trying to “love” on the customer, no one will get in trouble for a decision made.

“Even if it’s the wrong decision, we will come and debrief on it and help change our decision parameters for the future,” he says. “But people are free to make mistakes as long as they’re honestly trying to do right.”

Bell looks at his crew leaders as people who have a lot of direct, professional experience with the projects and who love the job, which often makes them the best person to make the right call on a job site, whether it’s adding another plant or fixing a sprinkler head. Afterward, the account manager can catch up with the client and determine the next steps.

“They can make that call because they’re constantly speaking with their clients. They know the homeowner, they have the relationship,” he says. “We equip all of our crews with the tools and implements where they can make those decisions right there.”

Throughout the summer, Tolentino makes it a point to remain available to his customers. Each customer has his direct cell phone number and can contact him as needed for concerns, he says. Usually those questions can be handled quickly over the phone, or an appointment can be set up.

“I develop that closeness in a relationship, as I’m being accessible,” he says. “They can always call me. A lot of my customers choose to text me.”

Account managers at NatureWorks have a regular visit schedule that varies depending on the landscape’s sophistication and the client’s involvement level, says Harrigan. When they visit the property, they make it a point not only to drop a quick note detailing any issues that they’ll be taking care of on the next visit, but also a positive point such as the flowers blooming.

“Sometimes clients don’t see things as they’re happening,” she says. “If they have a huge property, they might not notice something way out in the back.”

The continued physical time spent on the property helps give the customer confidence in the work that's being done, she says.

Tolentino stays in communication with the client throughout the season to evaluate where the property stands and what he'd like to do going forward, he says. That gives him the chance to talk about other services he can offer such as aeration or other treatments, which is an easier sell with customers who are already buying from him.

"I'm trying to retain their business," he says. "I'm trying to make sure that I can keep the customers that I've already got."

Even though Tolentino is the main point of contact for his customers, he trains his team to be able to respond to customer needs and be knowledgeable about the project. "They're the first contact between the customer and the company when they're out there," he says. "I need to make sure they know what they're doing and that they're always exuding that sense of positiveness."

Harrigan's research found that 50% of the company's new clients came from referrals from the existing portfolio. That led to the development of the "Sur-

prise and Delight" initiative, in which a budget is set aside and is available to the entire staff to find a way to add something special to the property.

"The idea is that when you're on the property, whether you're mowing, gardening, whatever it is, pick up your head and look beyond the scope of the task you are there to do and see what else the property could benefit from. And just do it," she says. "It's been awesome, because we've come up with some incredibly creative things and really impactful things."

The company has a form that allows employees to submit the projects they've completed and developed a reward system around it that includes gift certificates and monetary rewards.

"We've made a big deal out of it, because our best clients come from our current clients," she says. "We look to create what we call raving fans. And it makes people feel good at the end of the day to come up with something that has an impact directly for the client. It's so much more rewarding when the work you're doing, you feel like it's appreciated by someone." 🌿

The author is the editor-in-chief of *Irrigation & Green Industry* and can be reached at kylebrown@igin.com.



LOOK FOR WAYS TO GO BEYOND YOUR REGULAR SERVICE TO ADD SOMETHING SPECIAL TO THE PROPERTY FOR A POSITIVE IMPACT.

servicewire.com/irrigation

American Made— QUALITY ASSURED.

Turn to the wire and cable manufacturer with over 50 years of unmatched quality and service.

BEST-IN-CLASS SERVICE

SAME-DAY SHIPPING

LEADING INVENTORY

Call **800-231-WIRE** for **PRICING** and **AVAILABILITY**.
UF | SPRINKLER CONTROL | DECODER | ID WIRE

Service Wire Co.

Manufacturing quality. Delivering service.



Kevin Mulkern

A MATCH MADE IN PARADISE



The key to Oahu, Hawaii-based Mulkern Landscaping & Nursery's success is Kevin Mulkern's ability to focus on projects, while his wife Susan attends to the details.

By Kristin Ely

Kevin Mulkern likes to quote the author Anita Brookner as he reflects back on his life, "Time misspent in youth is sometimes all the freedom one ever has."

Kevin has worked nearly nonstop since he began Mulkern Landscaping & Nursery in Oahu, Hawaii, 46 years ago, and he's not ready for a break any time soon.

His younger days were a little different, however. When he was in his early 20s earning a degree in marine biology from Leeward Community College in Pearl City, Hawaii, he admits studying wasn't always his main priority. Living in a beach house with several roommates where he could see one of the best surfing spots in the world from his bed made studying a little challenging.

If the waves were good that day, he'd grab his surfboard instead of his textbooks and head toward the water instead of the library. But it was also during his college years that he began to develop a passion for horticulture.

SURF AND TURF

"While I was in college, I took what I call my fun courses, and they were Hawaiian plants, horticulture, agriculture and botany," he recalls.

He also got his first taste of working in the green industry when he took a part-time job working at a nursery that also did landscaping. At the same time, his career aspirations of being a marine biologist quickly changed "once I realized that going to sea wasn't as glamorous as the Jacques Cousteau movies."

The pristine waters with highly visible coral and fancy yachts portrayed by Cousteau

were far from reality for most sea scientists. Choppy seas and getting ejected from your bunk bed in the middle of the night was more accurate. That was not the lifestyle he wanted.

"By the time I graduated I realized I wanted to do landscaping," he says.

It was while on the job at his part-time landscaping gig that he got the idea of starting his own landscaping business.

"One day, I looked in the back of my little Datsun pickup truck and thought, I've got my truck and I'm using my own tools. Why not start my own business?" he says.

He put his resignation in at his job. It was about the same time that he was planning to marry his high school sweetheart, Susan. She was on board with the business idea and wanted to be part of it. He admits, he couldn't have done it without her. "I married well," he says of his wife and business partner.

A FAMILY BUSINESS

Mulkern Landscaping & Nursery was founded in 1975. Initially, there was a lot of surfing and little working ... about eight hours a week, but that quickly grew. Susan has been part of the company since day one in the role of vice president. Her business knowledge complements Kevin's landscape expertise.

"I do enjoy what I do, but I am not a businessman," he says.

Susan, on the other hand, has a four-year degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, and bookkeeping experience she gained from her previous job working for an attorney's office.

"My wife keeps a close eye on the books. I trust her and try to defer to her with regard to our bidding," he says.

That trust allows Kevin to focus on what he does best: consult on projects; perform and oversee hundreds of landscaping, maintenance and irrigation projects; and grow things.

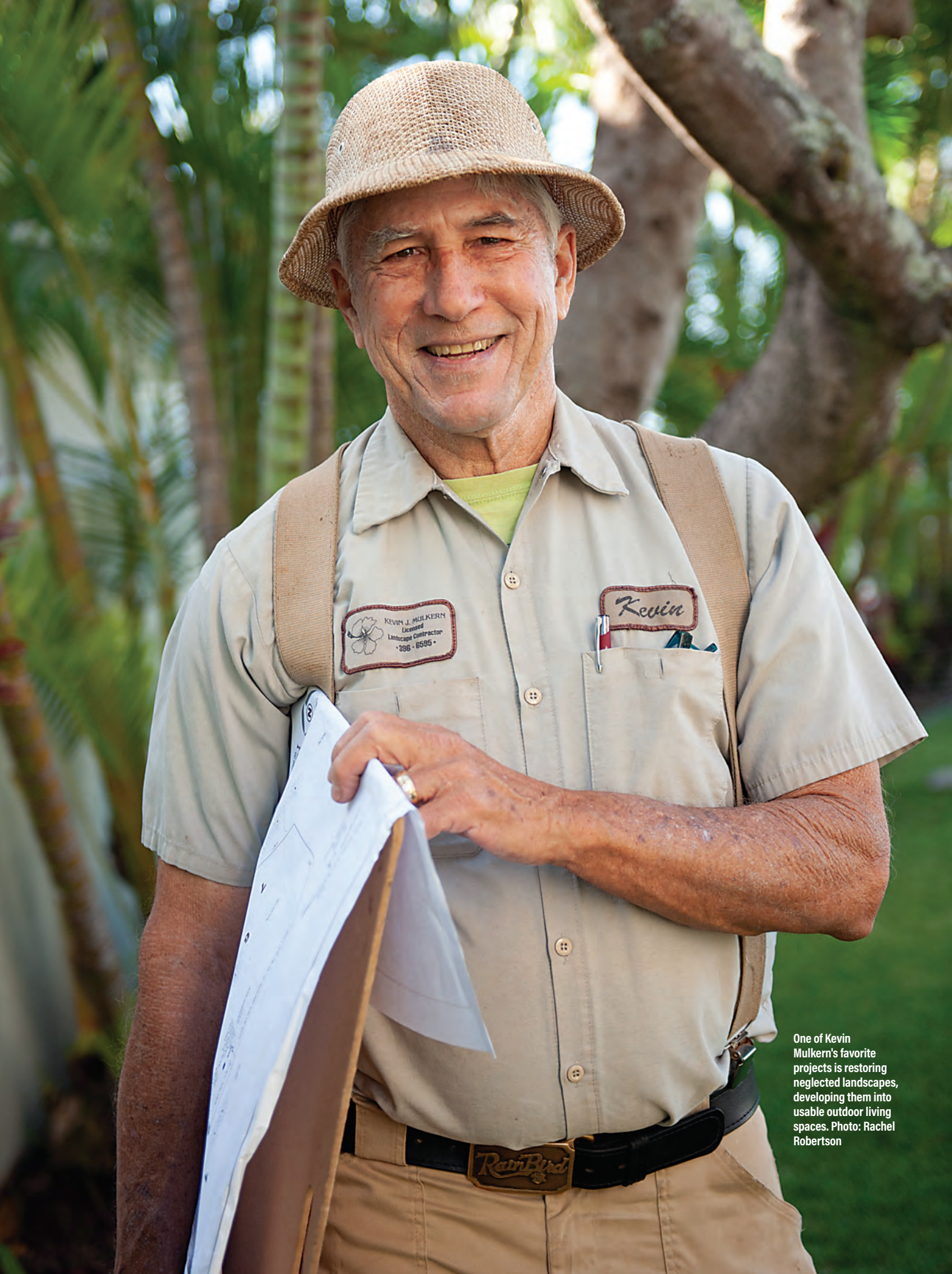
Susan also keeps meticulous records on clients, from how many crewmen were on-site during the last visit to what work was performed and when. She's also that constant reminder Kevin needs when he is out in the field that there are bills and people that need to be paid.

Susan's English degree and attorney's office experience also helps with the company's contracts.

"I think our contracts are fairly clear and precise," says Kevin. "Any misunderstanding is generally because the client didn't read the contract or didn't bother to Google the definition of different words such as 'not responsible for underground unidentified objects.'"

He adds, "We really appreciate it when people ask us questions about our proposals so we can iron things out before we get started rather than someone being overwhelmed with excitement about the job and later realize they wanted something done differently."

Mulkern Landscaping & Nursery charges for its estimates. There's good reason. Before they began charging for consultations, the company would provide the customer with a lot of information for free, and often the customer would turn around and do the work themselves, leaving the company high and dry for the time and effort. Now, Kevin



One of Kevin Mulkern's favorite projects is restoring neglected landscapes, developing them into usable outdoor living spaces. Photo: Rachel Robertson



Kevin and Susan share the work of running Mulkern Landscaping & Nursery. Her business knowledge complements his landscape expertise. Photo: Alyn Nishioka

doesn't mind if they want to do the work themselves. He'll even tell them where to rent equipment and purchase fertilizer and plants.

"When people call us for help with their landscape or help with their lawn, we call it a consultation. We tell them we have a two-hour minimum," Kevin says. "Right off we are trying to explain to them that our time has value, and we'd like to work for you, but we'd like to get paid."

That's not to say there aren't occasions when he doesn't charge a customer, such as when he arrives at a job for an irrigation repair and it turns out the ground fault circuit interrupter outlet tripped, and it's just a matter of pressing buttons. "They'll call us when they have real irrigation work," he says.

The Mulkerns' daughter, Dorothy, has also been involved with the business from time to time. Like many children of landscape company owners, she grew up in the office and joined her parents at trade shows and meetings in her youth.

Apparently, it had a lasting effect. Though Dorothy isn't currently working for the family business, she decided to follow in her parent's footsteps, earning a master's in landscape architecture and urban planning. She and a friend are credited with building Mulkern Landscaping & Nursery's website, which has helped tremendously with new business.

"I can't really overestimate the importance of having a virtual presence. Sixty percent of our new work comes in from internet searches, 40% is referrals and some we get from our vehicles. That's a very inexpensive way of letting people know that you're working in the area," Kevin says.

BUSINESS BREAKDOWN

Over 90% of Mulkern Landscape and Nursery is residential. About 40% of the work Mulkern Landscaping & Nursery performs is new design and installation work, including installation, irrigation, lighting and ponds.

The projects Kevin is most fond of are those that involve restoring neglected landscapes.

He recalls a lot a while back that was covered with invasive plants that were between 3 feet and 7 feet tall.

"When I looked at the project, I could kind of see remnants of a lawn and plants underneath this dense overgrowth," he says. He suggested to the owner that the crew try to restore it.

"It was actually kind of amazing there after we pulled out the weeds. There was enough of the el toro (zoysia) lawn to recover," he says. "We actually almost ended up with a perfect lawn without having to plant anything."

In the beds, there were native plants, both fruiting and flowering, so the crew didn't have to put in any new plants, either.

"And we found an irrigation system that was functional, it just needed the heads cleaned and a couple of broken heads replaced," Mulkern says. "That is the kind of project I really like to do, versus coming in and bulldozing everything."

In another renovation on a large property, crews were restoring walkways in what appeared to be a forest and found a tennis court with a chain link fence and 20-foot trees growing out of it.

"We really didn't do any new planting, we pruned and shaped the trees and shrubs, restored the walkways and started them on a weed control program," Kevin says.

Because Kevin is a landscape contractor, he says his designs are a little more conservative than that of a landscape architect.

"I don't want to make something I can't keep alive," explains Kevin. "I think what makes me unique is I listen very carefully to what the client wants so our designs represent the client's desires."

Kevin was recently joking with the local fire department about how offended he was that while he was in the middle of a conversation with them, they abruptly left for a call.

The fire chief told him, "The way we respond to calls is as if every call is a call from our mother."

That comment resonated with Kevin, and he says his company takes the same approach. "The majority of our business is dealing with homeowners or families. We like to try to treat them the way we would treat our moms and develop relationships with them."

He still even helps his own mom with her plants. She turns 100 in July.

FUTURE PLANS

The nursery part of the company name makes up the remaining part of the company. It's on an acre and a half of land but has been slowly transitioning to a larger, 7-acre parcel. The move has been a few years in the making, and Kevin acknowledges his slowness.

"I'm on Hawaiian time, and I probably work slower than most Hawaiians as far as getting my projects off the ground, but eventually my parcel will be developed. We'll have a little stand and I'll be picking avocados, mangos and other fruits and running my landscaping business," he says.

As far as retirement goes, the Mulkerns don't have any plans to slow down just yet. The two spend about 80% of their time together, most of it working, and that is OK with them.

"We haven't really developed an exit strategy, and my wife continues to tolerate me in the office until she chases me out to work in the field," he kids. "We enjoy what we are doing, and I'm not sure what we'd be doing if we weren't doing what we are doing." 🌿

Kristin Ely is an award-winning writer who specializes in industry reporting for business publications, and can be reached at kristinmithely@gmail.com.

"I THINK WHAT MAKES ME UNIQUE IS I LISTEN VERY CAREFULLY TO WHAT THE CLIENT WANTS SO OUR DESIGNS REPRESENT THE CLIENT'S DESIRES."

- Kevin Mulkern, Mulkern Landscaping & Nursery



GICON[®]
ENGINEERED PUMPS

866-656-0823
GICONPUMPS.COM

PACKAGED SYSTEM SOLUTIONS

We are ISO 9001 certified and an industry leader in packaged systems products that utilize the latest in variable speed technology.

Each system provides top performance and versatility that saves you time, energy and money.

Give us a call today to discuss application options!



GPE



Service on purpose

Use these 5 tips to build a culture of service excellence.



When you think of great customer service, what companies come to mind? Nordstrom Inc., the upscale retailer of apparel, shoes and accessories is frequently praised for its service excellence. There is a widely circulated story about a man who went into the Nordstrom in Anchorage, Alaska, to return a set of tires. The problem was that Nordstrom's does not and never has sold tires. The customer bought the tires at the store that occupied the same space prior to Nordstrom moving in. However, after some discussion, the Nordstrom store manager allowed the customer to return the tires and refunded his purchase price.

Urban myth? Not according to Nordstrom spokesman Colin Johnson, who said the above is a true story and great example of how far Nordstrom's employees are willing to go to keep existing customers happy and create relationships with new customers. It speaks to the culture created by Nordstrom that empowers employees to use their good judgment and make decisions on the spot that result in happy customers.



EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT MEASURES HOW MUCH EMPLOYEES VALUE THEIR COMPANY AS WELL AS ITS CUSTOMERS.



DEFINE YOUR DESIRED CULTURE.

A company's culture is defined by strongly held and widely shared beliefs that reinforce positive and negative behaviors. These are the bedrock of company culture rather than a set of principles or values hung on an office wall or posted on a website. The intersection of culture and behavior is captured in this quote from education experts Steve Gruenert and Todd Whitaker: "The culture of any organization is shaped by the worst behavior the leader is willing to tolerate."



When it comes to creating a company culture of service excellence, leaders need to define the behaviors that support this environment and align those behaviors with their business processes. This includes hiring, training, rewarding and recognizing employees who exemplify these behaviors as well as holding them accountable when they don't.



LEADERS NEED TO DEFINE THE BEHAVIORS THAT SUPPORT A CULTURE OF SERVICE EXCELLENCE.



CREATE A PLAN FOR CHANGE.

If your culture isn't where it should be when it comes to service, don't despair. Once you define your desired culture, put together a plan for change. If you aren't proactively shaping and developing your culture, one will be created organically. It may not be the healthy, customer-centric culture you want!

The Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania suggests the following five steps for culture change:

- Quantitatively measure your current culture.
- Intentionally align culture, strategy and structure.
- Ensure staff and stakeholder participation.
- Communicate and demonstrate the change.
- Manage the emotion response, both from you and your employees.

This is a change in management effort that requires clear communication and emotional intelligence to influence employees to change. Most importantly, leaders need to model these behaviors on a day-to-day basis.

Using these steps, leaders can develop a culture that fosters service excellence. First identify where your current culture doesn't support a "customer-first" approach, align your organizational structure and strategy to support these goals and let your staff know why you are doing this and how they can help. Enlisting the support of your employees as well as having leaders be authentic role models for new, desired service-oriented behaviors will go a long way to making change.



ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES.

Employee engagement measures how much employees value their company as well as its customers. It is a metric that is closely tied to customer satisfaction. According to the Aberdeen Group, companies that work to actively engage employees have customer loyalty rates 233% higher than those who don't. Most customers don't want to go through the hassle of finding another vendor or service provider. A poor customer experience will make them question your company while a great experience from an engaged employee will make customers want to stick around.

Make sure all employees are being heard and engaged, especially frontline employees. These em-

ployees are often the face of your organization and the first point of service. When employees are disengaged, they are often not attentive to customers' needs. This can lead to a poor experience, harm your company reputation and ultimately impact your bottom line.



REWARD THE RIGHT BEHAVIORS.

If culture is defined by the worst behaviors a company tolerates, it can be changed by rewarding the right behaviors. By consistently reinforcing positive service excellence behaviors, employees will emulate these desired traits. In a recent survey by HubSpot, 69% of employees say they would work harder if they were better appreciated. Creating a rewards and recognition program doesn't have to be a million-dollar campaign. Small gestures, recognition by peers and on-the-spot bonuses can have a big impact.



HIRE FOR GREAT SERVICE.

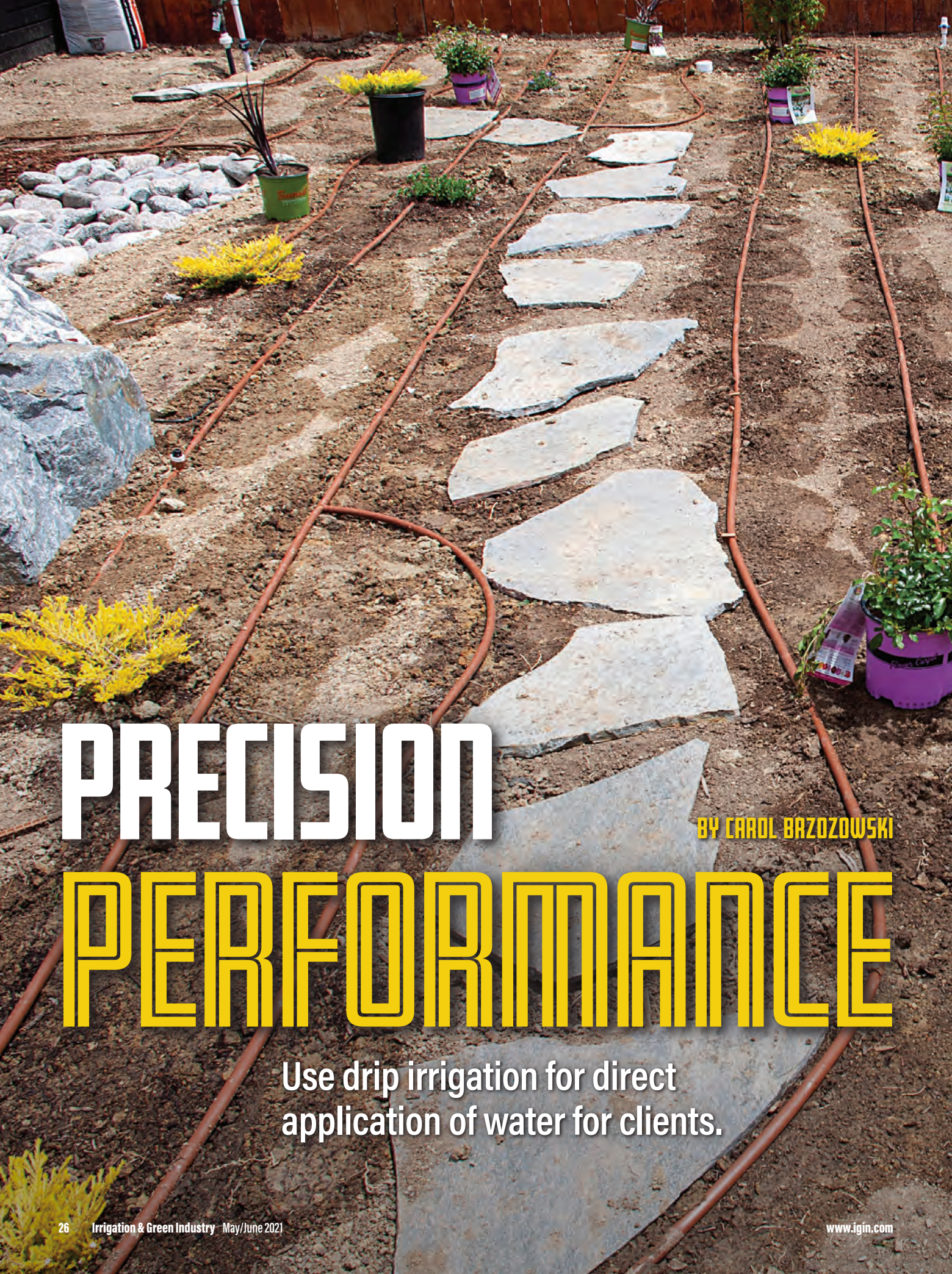
With a defined culture of service, engaged employees and a solid rewards and recognition program in place, the last piece needed is to hire the right people that uphold your service goals. You can identify the skill sets, both hard and soft skills, that lead to excellent service. Evaluate the employees that are providing the best customer service in your company. What background and character traits do they have that have allowed them to be successful? Ask for their input as you create a profile for hiring.

In addition to being clear on the competencies that make for great service, there are also a host of assessment tools that can provide some objective data about an individual's character traits and how they are associated with high-quality customer service. Often the best customer service hires come from surprising places. When evaluating candidates, look for service aptitude as well as experience to make the best hire.

Nordstrom is known for empowering employees and creating a culture that allows them to do what is best for customers. As John Nordstrom says, "I know that I won't be criticized for taking care of a customer. I will only be criticized if I don't take care of a customer." Are your customers walking away with the same legendary customer service experience? If so, tell them to let others know. If not, it's time to remedy the situation. 🌱



Kate Kjeell is president of TalentWell, a recruiting firm that specializes in helping small and mid-sized businesses thrive by finding and hiring the right people. The firm's approach can be described in three words: find, fit, flourish. She can be reached at kate@talentwellinc.com.



PRECISION

BY CAROL BRAZOWSKI

PERFORMANCE

Use drip irrigation for direct application of water for clients.

Any maintenance professional called out to do a repair would not go out on the job with just a hammer. Each project requires the right tools used in the right applications to be a success.

Similarly, drip irrigation is another tool to remember in the irrigation professional's kit. In the right situations, it can provide low-pressure, precise results in a landscape design, delivering water directly to a plant's root zone.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency WaterSense program, drip irrigation systems use 20%-50% less water than conventional sprinkler systems. Still, it can be a hard sell with clients.

Judith Benson, president of ClearWater PSI near Orlando, Florida, points out that drip and micro irrigation carry stigmas: they don't work, they don't last and they require extensive maintenance. While some municipalities require drip irrigation for new irrigation systems, most do not.

"If they have more finite water resources, they're going to be extremely conservative with it," she says.

One driving force for the use of drip irrigation in Florida is the Florida Water Star program. In partnership with the Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association, it provides professional accreditation for landscape and irrigation professionals toward the goal of achieving sustainable project design and implementation.

Benson notes commercial landscapes in her area utilize drip irrigation more. There are low-water-volume choices among conventional sprinklers, and those are more along the lines of what customers are used to seeing, she says. The residential sector doesn't embrace drip as easily.

"Home builders who have a very strong voice in the state of Florida, which carry a lot of weight with the municipalities, want something that's going to look good and really works," she says. "In Florida, the way to keep plants looking good and working well typically is the more standard irrigation because it gets the bigger curb appeal. It's the aesthetic of the plant that helps drive or not drive micro and inline drip in the industry."

Benson considers the stigmas with drip irrigation to be misnomers.

"I help clients cultivate azaleas, which are thirsty plants for Florida especially with micro and inline drip, and that can be done if it's installed well," she says.

In speaking with her clients about the benefits of drip irrigation, Benson says she emphasizes the ability to use water on demand "any day, any time of day. Whereas with turf and other areas, any aerial-type irrigation is limited to a maximum of two days a week unless we start a variance due to a smart controller."

Hands-on gardening buffs are good drip irrigation system candidates, Benson says, adding "they're able to care for their landscape plants to the manner they would like."

Benson also emphasizes some benefits of drip irrigation for a plant's health.

"We get a lot of water damage on the plants itself due to aerial watering in Florida," says Benson, adding plants can get "sunburn" if not properly hydrated in a manner drip and micro irrigation provides.

The bottom line: drip irrigation can work well in some applications with certain caveats.

"Drip irrigation needs to be designed, installed, maintained and operated properly," says J. Randall Merriott, owner of Irrigation Dynamics in Lubbock, Texas. "If you do those four things, you'll have success."

Landscape professionals offer several tips to attaining that success.

DESIGN FOR PRECISION

A drip irrigation system can be used in new installations and retrofits or by adding to existing systems. Where water supply pressure is typically greater, emission devices should include pressure compensation to ensure a consistent flow rate.

Drip irrigation is most practical in landscape beds and small odd-shaped areas that are difficult to water with sprays, notes Mark Torkelson, president of Indiana Irrigation.

"Drip works well in applications where low water pressure and flow are all that is available," he says.

Randy Wildeman, owner/operator of Western Irrigation in Garden City, Kansas, notes that water quality and soils are key considerations when designing drip irrigation.

"We need to check the soil type and the annual rainfall so we know how to design that application," he points out. "You can do just about any soil type for this."

Other key design considerations include how much water is needed by different plant types based on their location as well as the tubes with integrated, evenly spaced emitters used to dispense the water and how and where they should be placed.

Merriott favors drip irrigation in flower beds.

"You can use it on a slope," he says. "We like to put it in a grid pattern so the whole planting bed is covered. If you have containers, you can tie them onto the drip system."

Merriott says if customers don't feel like their drip system works well and end up with a poor overall experience, it could be because the installing contractor didn't use enough product in the ground or pay attention to where the lines are. That can cause spots that aren't getting coverage.

"If you have a really sparse bed with only a couple of plants, it's fine to just put the drip where the plants are," Merriott says. "A lot of people like to build their beds up to cover or fill them up with perennials or different plants. If that's the case, they want to have the whole bed covered with the product."



When running a drip irrigation system, be aware of its precipitation rate, which is calculated on the flow rate and spacing of the emitters as well as the time of year.

DRIP WORKS WELL IN APPLICATIONS WHERE LOW WATER PRESSURE AND FLOW ARE ALL THAT IS AVAILABLE.

— MARK TORKELSON,
INDIANA IRRIGATION

Installers need to know how many emission devices will be on the drip zone and the flow rate of each to properly size the tube, says Torkelson.

Installation considerations focus on water source connection and components. Some local codes may require a backflow preventer to protect the potable water supplying the house from contamination by the irrigation water.

When converting a flower bed from sprinklers to drip irrigation, Merriott's crews will space the emitters about 12 inches apart and 18 inches between lines, which can achieve about 1 inch per hour precipitation rate.

Merriott uses mulch, wood chips or decomposed granite during installation, rather than burying the lines.

"It's difficult to see problems in a buried system," he says. "You could have problems with root intrusion. If your water is not really clean, you can have clogging problems."

Mulch also helps conserve moisture and decrease evaporation.

Benson notes in her water audits that some contractors aren't putting in adequate pressure reduction through the valve system during installation.

"We've got extremely hard water in Florida," she adds. "Once you put reduced pressure valves in there, they come with a filter that requires maintenance. Minerals build up because of the hard water and with low pressure, the water can't get to the plants a lot of times."

OPERATE FOR SUCCESS

In operating a drip irrigation system, it's necessary to know its precipitation rate, which is calculated on the flow rate and spacing of the emitters as well as the time of year, says Merriott.

"Our typical precipitation rate is about 1 inch per hour spread over the whole bed," says Merriott. "If you have a 1 inch per hour precipitation rate and your plants need 1 inch of water per week, then you want to water your system for about an hour a week."

If your system has a higher precipitation rate, adjust the time accordingly to meet the needs of the plants. State extension services are helpful in supplying that information, she says.

Time of day in running a drip irrigation system is not an issue, given there is less evaporation. "With sprinklers, we have water restrictions as far as what time of day we can water," says Merriott. "Drip is exempt from our water restrictions because it really doesn't matter what time of day you water. The amount that you water matters."

Ground-level drip irrigation systems can sustain weed growth damage, clogged emitters, freezing pipes and damage from landscape work or animals.

Some property owners don't want the maintenance responsibility of a drip system, Benson says.

"They just want it to work," she says. It can also be an opportunity to sell regular maintenance checks to take care of that step for the client.

The drip system needs to be regularly monitored and inspected to see if there has been damage by rodents or humans to the system that cause leaks or clogging, Torkelson says.

"Also, some water sources are high in minerals and can cause clogging, so the system needs to be monitored for that," he adds.

The biggest issue Merriott sees with drip irrigation systems is that squirrels like to chew on them. To try to mitigate that, she uses mulch or large river rocks squirrels are unable to move.

Wildeman tells clients as long as chlorine or acid is run through the system once a year to clean it, the drip irrigation system is low maintenance.

"The only failure point is going to be if they do not do the maintenance; it causes issues with the system as far as it starting to plug up," he says.

Merriott advises that systems are checked at least three times a year or more to ensure proper operation. Maintenance can depend on location and the water source.

"We have city water, which already has chlorine in it," Merriott says. "But if you're in a rural area and your water has bad stuff in it, you might need to flush it. In situations with well water, you might have to clean the sand out of the filters. We don't put filters on most of our systems because it's drinking water."

Landscape professionals note the return on investment in a properly designed, installed, operated and maintained drip system is water efficiency and aesthetics. 🌿

Carol Brzozowski is a freelance writer with a specialty in environmental journalism based in Coral Springs, Florida. She can be reached at brzozowski.carol@gmail.com.

Simplify Lighting Design *and Close Sales Faster*



With the new online My Design tool, it's easy to conquer landscape lighting design — no technical skills required! Snap photos of your jobsite, place fixtures over each photo, and generate a visually stunning proposal to close the sale. Then send your complete product list directly to your local distributor for faster, more accurate ordering.



<https://fxl.com/mydesign>



Work Smarter with My Design
All you need is a free account to get started!

LANDSCAPE & ARCHITECTURAL LIGHTING
Learn more. Visit fxl.com



FXLuminaire®



BY LAUREN SABLE FREIMAN

Native plant know-how

Photo: Judy Nasset

Use native plants to build a vibrant, sustainable design.

Boring. Wild. Temperamental. The problem child of the landscaping world. Despite thousands of years spent adapting to the local soil type, climate and water conditions, native plants still get a bad rap. But by tapping into many available educational resources and shifting traditional views of design, installation and maintenance, landscape professionals and their clients will see the benefits of incorporating native plants into landscape design.

Education is key

Planting an exotic shade plant in full sun is not a recipe for success, and the same rule of thumb applies to native plants.

“It is extremely important to know your conditions,” says Elisa Meara, president of Native Plant Landscape Design in Falls Church, Virginia. “It is worth it to spend the time looking at your conditions, your soil type, your soil moisture, how much light you have, then do your research and see what kind of plants can grow happily in those conditions. Investigate the species and see how big and how fast it will grow, then choose the best plants for the site.”

Each region of the United States has a particular ecotype of plants that grow naturally in that environment, and each state has a plethora of resources to guide contractors toward the native plants that best suit their needs. If you are looking for a starting point, 44 out of 50 states are home to native plant societies.



“Any contractor can call their state’s native plant society,” says Karina Veaudry, principal of NFC Landscape Architects in Orlando, Florida. “They are literally there to educate and provide resources, so it’s not like you’re taking someone’s time and effort. They are there to field these calls. Don’t assume anything you know is correct for natives. If you talk to them, they will educate you and offer tips on how to avoid pitfalls.”

Native plant nurseries are another tremendous resource for contractors. Most nurseries have online catalogs, but a phone call will yield even more specific information about the best plant choices and how to successfully install them.

“I have their catalogs and go on their websites to find things that work for my customers,” says Judy Nauseef, owner of Judy Nauseef Landscape Design in Iowa City, Iowa. “They are very happy to give help and instruction.”

Design with natives in mind

Part of the reason native landscapes have a bad reputation is because there is a misconception that they are all drooping and wild, says Nauseef. While some native plants do fit that description, those issues are easily remedied through design.

“The solution for floppy, messy plants is a design solution, not a maintenance solution,” Nauseef says. “The plants you choose will be ones that don’t flop, or you will learn how to place the taller plants in the back and then work with a palate of smaller plants around them.”

While many native plant landscape designs challenge traditional ideas of the landscape aesthetic, Veaudry says that some simple tricks can create a look that is more widely accepted. In order to contain the wilder look of some native plants, Veaudry recommends planting a low native evergreen hedge as a border to make a wilder plant, like a milkweed, appear contained within the hedge.

“It helps frame the messiness and the border helps it to be more aesthetically acceptable,” Veaudry says. “Then you can let your milkweeds go wild behind it, and for people walking down the street, their eye is drawn to the hedge.”

Veaudry also recommends keeping a half-moon area of grass or native ground cover that can be kept short to mimic the look of a lawn and give the appearance of a more traditional landscape. Then, designers can create any look a customer desires using traditional design elements like color, shape, texture and height, and native plants that function as focal point shrubs, hedges and small flowering trees.

Pairing plants properly can also ensure that customers are pleased with the final result. Goldenrod, which begins as a 2-inch tall, 8-inch round plant, will shoot up a 2-foot-tall bloom stalk in the spring, which then gets heavy and leans over. Veaudry explains that by planting native clumping grasses around them, the grasses blend in with the wildflowers and provide support, preventing the stalks from flopping, therefore providing a neater look.

“You can create any style using native plants,” Meara says. “You just need to get to know your plants, and the more you know your plants, the more flexibility you will have.”

For a style that is minimalistic, modern and organized, Meara suggests choosing a beautiful sculptural tree enhanced by a native sage ground cover. For a looser, more informal look, designers can incorporate more color and a wider variety of textures.

Meara also encourages designers to consider planting every layer, including the area under trees and shrubs and the areas between plants. Ground covers, often referred to as green mulch or living mulch, help tie a design together while keeping weeds at bay.

“

You can create any style using native plants. You just need to get to know your plants, and the more you know your plants, the more flexibility you will have.

– Elisa Meara, Native Plant Landscape Design





Once clients see that they can achieve the look they're after while using plants that support the ecosystem and require fewer inputs, they're often excited about using native plants.

In addition to creating visually pleasing designs, many designers interested in creating native landscapes want to create a garden that provides nectar and pollen from early spring into late fall, to ensure that bees, butterflies and overwintering birds are provided for year-round, Meara says.

"That means the client will have species that will be giving their garden color in the early spring, summer, fall and winter," she says. "For winter, we have an array of evergreens

that we can choose from or shrubs that produce berries during the winter, so you get these beautiful red berries throughout the winter months that are food for migrating birds."

A personalized approach

One of the biggest mistakes a contractor can make is caring for native plants the same way they care for exotics. While using fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides might be part of maintaining traditional landscapes, they can be not only unnecessary, but harmful, to native plants.

"When you have a nonnative plant, like an oleander, it attracts an oleander caterpillar, and the birds won't eat those caterpillars because it isn't a native shrub or caterpillar," says Veaudry. "When you have no predator to keep those in check, the caterpillars will eat the plant all the way to the ground without pesticides."

Veaudry says that native plants follow the rules of basic biology. Native birds feed their young the insects that are attracted to the native plants they have coevolved with. Because there are so many hungry birds, the insects will never have a chance to destroy the plant.

When the appropriate native plants are chosen for the conditions, they will acclimate quickly. In fact, Nauseef says most natives can be planted in poor soil, as their deep roots will grow very low into the soil, improving it as they grow. Smaller plants won't be as needy for nutrients, and as they send roots deeper into the soil, they will access everything they need to thrive.

When planting, natives should be planted more densely, according to Meara. Planting in groups of five or seven mimics the way natives grow in their natural habitat.

"Sometimes people have the perception that you need a lot of space between the plants, that the plants are like museum pieces, and that is not the case," Meara says. "In nature, for the most part, they grow very close together, and you can do that in your own garden."

Once native plant material is installed, maintenance also looks different. While nonnative foundation hedges can be sheared, shearing a native hedge will remove the fruiting and flowering that feeds wildlife, and the plant will not recover like nonnatives.

"Often contractors assume they can maintain natives the same way they maintain traditional plants, and they ruin the plant material or make it look really bad," Veaudry says. "When you prune natives, they don't fill in the holes like hedges that have been cultivated in nurseries for 100 years. It stresses them out, and they will start to decline."

Because native plants have evolved to exist in a region's weather and soil conditions, water needs are also different.

"In terms of watering, any new plant needs to be watered the first season, and we usually use a soaker hose for that, because you don't want water hitting those plants all the time," Nauseef says. "Using natives is much more sustainable because after the first year, you aren't going to need to water as frequently, which saves time and resources."

Share your knowledge

"There is a connection that has been developed and created for thousands of years between the ecosystem and the native plants, and an ecosystem isn't healthy if it doesn't have the native plants to support it," Meara says.

Nauseef says she is constantly surprised by how many customers have become aware of the realities of climate change and are interested in incorporating native plants into their landscapes.

"It's coming from their desire to do something for the environment, and everyone can do something with their own yard for the environment," she says. "I've put in gardens in newer developments and when I come back there are monarch butterfly caterpillars on those plants. That's what customers want, they want to see that kind of life in their landscape, especially if they had very little life before."

When discussing native plants with clients, Meara says a little education goes a long way. When clients learn that they can have the look they desire while using plants that support the ecosystem and require no chemicals and little maintenance or water once established, she says they are excited about the benefits.

"If you think natives are boring, you aren't aware of the array of natives," Meara says. "Famous designers in Europe are using plants native to the United States in their gardens in Europe. If the most prestigious designers in the world are using them, when we aren't using them here where they are native, that tells you something." 🌿

Lauren Sable Freiman is a freelance writer based in Cleveland and can be reached at laurensable@gmail.com.



Working with native plants often requires a personalized maintenance approach with fewer inputs.

Ditch Witch

MAKE LIGHT WORK OF HEAVY LIFTING.

With operating capacities ranging from 600 to 3,100 pounds, and dozens of versatile attachments, Ditch Witch® stand-on skid steers will shoulder the bulk of your load—working harder so you don't have to.

Ditch Witch®. We're In This Together.



SK600



SK800



SK1050



SK1550



SK3000



A *dream* backyard

Landon Adair worked with his clients to bring a rough sketch into a stunning reality.

By Kyle Brown





Landon Adair started with a client's loose drawing of their vision for an outdoor living space, turning it into a landscape that integrates three separate areas of the house seamlessly. Throughout the process, he met with the clients regularly to check progress and develop the next steps. Photos: Adair's Landscape & Maintenance Corp.



Most successful complex landscape installations start with a plan, full of painstaking detail and precise notes. Even if some of the particulars shift between concept and completion, the general idea is usually laid out on paper before a shovel ever breaks the dirt.

That wasn't the case for one large installation finished by Adair's Landscape & Maintenance Corp., South Jordan, Utah.

When the clients for this project came to Landon Adair, company president and winner of the Changing the Landscape Awards 2021 Landscape category sponsored by Ditch Witch, in 2016 after seeing his team work on a new installation up the street, all they had to work with was a sketch of an idea. Looking at it, Adair was fairly certain the project wouldn't come together.

"It was an extremely rough drawing," he says. "We threw a number at it."

Having received the bid, the clients disappeared. He assumed that either the homeowners had decided to take the project elsewhere or to skip the installation altogether.

Then in May of 2019, Adair received another call saying that they finally wanted to move forward with the project. He revisited the original drawing and got some additional sketches from the homeowner.

From there, his team met with their subcontractors to determine how the project could work and then started to compose something on the job site, he says.

Generally, Adair doesn't ever like to work without a plan in place, especially on job of this caliber, he says. Usually, for projects this large he works with the client



before



after



Starting with a backyard mostly full of tall grass and boulders, Adair used painted lines to block out the areas. That allowed the clients to get a 3D sense of the project.

I THINK THEY HAD REALLY LOOKED AT THEIR LANDSCAPE, REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT HOW THEY WOULD LIKE TO ENVISION IT.

—Landon Adair, Adair's Landscape & Maintenance

to look at how to tackle it in a few phases. Most homeowners are eager to take smaller steps for budgeting purposes.

“This wasn’t such a budget-constricted project,” Adair says. “They had the funds to meet what they envisioned, and we were given free range to move through the project that way.”

Without a full design in place, there can be a lot of hand-holding for the customer, with heavy involvement every step of the way. “With a design, that sets expectations of the bird’s eye view of the plan that the client can see,” Adair says.

Even though developing a plan at the start might take some effort, “I think it’s worth its weight in gold up front on a big project where monetary requirements

can creep up on you,” Adair says.

The project was an addition to an existing house, which presents different challenges than a brand-new building, he says. Not only were there multiple levels of the house to consider, the team had to work with an outdoor pool as well.

“Existing landscapes can be a little bit challenging to work around,” he says. “On a new slate, that area is kind of open to interpretation.”

Adair connected with his subcontractors for the deck and pergola pavers as well as other elements such as the barbecue. He worked in multiple meetings with the clients through every step of the process to keep the overall project in line with their developing vision. One tactic he used to help the homeowners was putting down painted lines in the backyard to block out specific areas in multiple colors, so they could get a sense of scale and space even without a fully developed plan.

“They can start seeing that 3D vision on-site instead of on paper,” he says. “Painting on the landscape seemed to do the trick.”

Using paint to block out the spaces for the project helped get a sense for traffic flow as well, he says. “There were so many directional flows to that landscape, from the deck to the basement, to a second deck, to a basketball court and a pool,” he says. “If we didn’t paint those access points and directional flows, it just wouldn’t have worked.”

Even with full-time jobs, both of the homeowners made time to be a part of the meetings, sometimes in the mornings or during breaks. Their efforts to keep in touch made all the difference to Adair in keeping the project moving.

“Hats off to them for communicating and being a part of it,” he says. “They were open to meeting late or early in the morning or taking lunches to get to their goal.” Overall, Adair estimates they were meeting at least twice a week from June through early December.

Without that continuous interaction, the project would’ve struggled to come together at all, he says. But even without a fully developed plan on paper, the clients came in with plenty of thought put into the installation.

“At this stage, it was something they’d been thinking about for four-plus years,” he says. “I think they had really looked at their landscape, really thought about how they would like to envision it.” The homeowners had hosted parties in the home and already had some ideas about how traffic moved through the space and how an outdoor living area could change that.

Creating an atmosphere

Developing those distinct spaces came down to talking with the clients about how each area would be used. “Before any new landscape came in, we tried to create kid-safe zones, conversational areas where the adults can be away while the kids are off playing. They’re not trying to talk over one another,” he says. “Or if there’s a transition from the home, to the pool, to the basketball court, we’re putting in alternative ways that don’t go through a conversational point.”

Keeping that in mind where people could enjoy these areas and have intimate conversations but still be able to visually see what’s going on all around them was important, he says. “We were designing things so they could be able to see the landscape all in one space at one time but also making them really private rooms, where you felt that you were in your own room versus being claustrophobic,” he says.

For instance, the pergola in the deck and the fire-pit is close to the basketball court. Instead of doing a 4-foot step down from that, Adair elected to do an 11-foot step down the side of the pergola to keep traffic from having to flow directly through the fire pit. “There’s plenty of room for movement when one person was trying to get from point A to point C without disturbing the people in point B,” he says.

Blending a basement walkout with a vertical space is always difficult, and with a lot of hardscaping surrounding the area it can end up feeling like a dungeon, Adair says. He used lighting and plant materials in the area to soften those edges and make the space more inviting. Subsurface drip irrigation maintains the potted plants to reduce overall homeowner maintenance as well.



LANDON ADAIR MET WITH THE HOMEOWNERS MULTIPLE TIMES THROUGHOUT THE INSTALLATION FROM JUNE THROUGH EARLY DECEMBER.

Adair suggested some sustainable plant choices that would come back each year and provide some color and pleasant scents in the outdoor living space alongside some of the other potted plants.

“I think the pots are critical to softening all the hardscaping going on,” he says. Overall, the plants include a mix of annuals and perennials throughout the area.

One horticultural touch is the inclusion of an area for growing herbs placed near the outdoor kitchen.

“We designated that bed the herb garden so they could have fresh herbs to use when they’re barbecuing, like rosemary or sage. It gets them to use the landscape when they’re in it and when they’re entertaining,” Adair says. “It builds a relationship not only with us, but with the landscape.”

One of Adair’s biggest tasks throughout was keeping clear communication among not just the clients but also the subcontractors he worked with, he says. From the start, he made certain to get as many of the crucial subcontractors together to meet and discuss the project’s approach and goals. Especially given the undeveloped plans early on, he had to prepare everyone to have some availability for changes to come as the work continued.

Looking back now, having a more complete plan to start with would’ve made the entire project run more smoothly, he says. “It’s so much easier to have a plan in place, and it sets expectations,” he says. “Nothing’s going to change faster than a plan, but at least it’s a starting point. It’s something you can mark up and take notes on to move through a general flow.” For this installation, it made a big difference to work with great clients who made the effort to be a part of the process and provided the budget to see it through.

Adair’s crew maintains the property on an ongoing basis now, and he’s seen some photos from parties held in the new outdoor living space shared on social media. “It’s so nice to just have clients who are appreciative of the hard work that goes into this and that you can continue to have a relationship with them,” he says. 🌿

The author is editor-in-chief of *Irrigation & Green Industry* and can be reached at kylebrown@igin.com.

BUILDING A BACKYARD

Learn how Landon Adair transformed this backyard full of weeds into an inviting outdoor living space in the full version of this article at www.igin.com/a-dream-backyard.



BRILLIANCE



Chameleon PAR36 RGBW Lamp



MADE IN AMERICA





STAY ON THE MOVE

KEEP EQUIPMENT RUNNING SMOOTHLY THROUGHOUT THE SEASON WITH MAINTENANCE.

BY KATIE NAVARRA


Equipment breakdowns are costly. At a minimum, there is the cost to repair the tool. If it can't be repaired quickly or you don't have a backup, downtime cuts into profitability. In worst-case scenarios, poorly maintained equipment can damage part of the landscape or throw debris that injures a person or property.

Being proactive about equipment maintenance can save you time and money. Ideally, preventive maintenance begins at the end of the previous season. Nick Minas, the go-to-market manager at John Deere Commercial Mowing, Moline, Illinois, recommends adding a fuel stabilizer and keeping tanks full year-round.

"Throughout the off-season, it's also good to start vehicles periodically to charge the battery, as well as get fuel circulating to minimize carburetor issues that cause varnishing," he says.

Jack Easterly, brand manager of the professional handheld category at Husqvarna, Stockholm, Sweden, agrees that an ethanol-free stabilizer should be used with fuel and left in the tank. However, he acknowledges there is often debate around running a piece of equipment before storage.

"One thing that is a little controversial in the service world is running the engine dry out of gas," he says. "That runs the risk of damaging the diaphragm, which can potentially dry out and become brittle."



Good product life has a lot to do with following original equipment manufacturer servicing guidelines, according to Tim Cromley marketing manager for Walker Manufacturing Company, Fort Collins, Colorado. Customers who get familiar with maintenance schedules and are disciplined at performing maintenance will often have the best results.

“Proper operation is also a big part of the longevity of a mower, and using a mower properly for its intended task will give good overall product life,” he says.

COMMON ZERO-TURN REPAIR ITEMS

Landscape work takes a toll on any piece of equipment. Even the most well-cared-for, best-built tools have common parts that fail simply due to the nature of the work. Some parts to include in routine checks for a mower include belts, air filters, hoses, seals and o-rings, as well as spark plugs and tires.

Certain parts require maintenance checks at different times. For example, engine oil levels and air filters should be checked before each use, and spark

plugs and fuel filters should be checked every 100 hours, says Amberlee Perry, the email and content analyst for Ariens Co., Brillion, Wisconsin.

“Engine maintenance, such as changing the oil and filters, should be performed per the engine manufacturer’s recommendations,” says Perry.

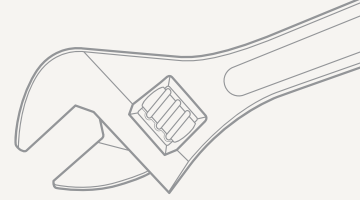
Before a mower starts use at the beginning of the season, make sure moving parts such as caster fork bearings and caster wheel hubs are lubricated, the oil has been changed and blades are sharpened.

Overall cleanliness of the mower is also important. Brad Unruh, director of new product development at Hustler Turf, Hesston, Kansas, recommends removing grass, dust and debris build-up from the top side and underneath the mower.

Use air to blow off debris around the air intake, beneath shrouding, hydraulic components and around the muffler and engine compartment daily. If air is not an option, use low-pressure water. High-pressure water forces water and contaminants past seals in bearings, especially around electronics.

“Mower blades can dull after multiple uses or belts can loosen, so we recommend checking if they are





IN WORKING ORDER

Landscape contractors rely on their equipment to keep them in business. That's why it's so important to make sure that each piece is running smoothly at the start of the season and replace older machines with newer models as necessary. We asked our readers for their insights on how they make new equipment purchases and maintain the pieces of equipment already in use.

More than half (68%) of our respondents were focused on landscape and lawn care as their specialties, with slightly more covering residential customers than commercial. A majority of respondents (51%-69%) generally purchased one of each category per year, if they made equipment purchases.

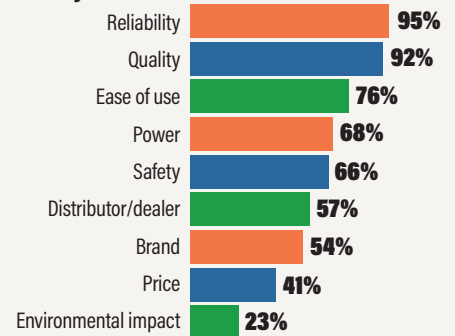
A quarter of contractors (26%) budget \$2,500 or less each year for new equipment, with another 23% setting aside between \$2,501-\$5,000. Almost one-fifth of contractors (19%) budget between \$10,001-\$25,000 annually.

When buying new equipment, 88% of respondents almost always go to authorized dealers directly. Big box stores only pulled 6% of contractors for equipment purchases.

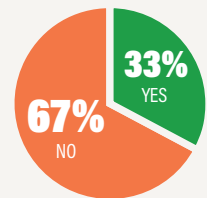
In choosing the right piece of new equipment, 95% of respondents said that reliability was a very important factor in consideration. Quality was close behind with 92% of contractors. Beyond those points, three-quarters of respondents (76%) prioritize ease of use in equipment.

Contractors tend to be diligent with regular maintenance checks on equipment, with a total of 71% performing them daily or weekly. Another 18% run checks every month, with the rest taking on a little more risk with quarterly or seasonal checks. About one-third of respondents (33%) have a dedicated mechanic on staff.

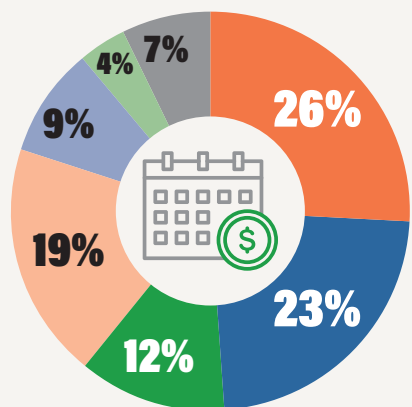
What's most important to you when deciding which edgers, string trimmers, leaf blowers and mowers to buy?



Does your business maintain a dedicated mechanic?

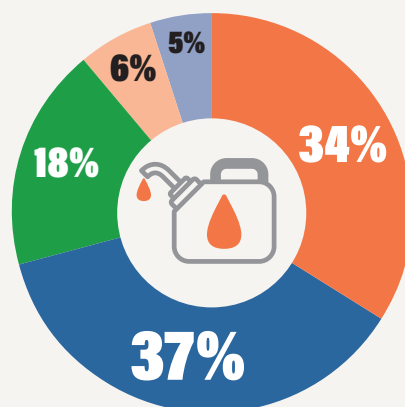


What is your business's total annual budget for handheld power equipment and mowers on average?



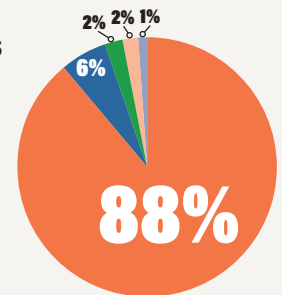
- \$2,500 or less
- \$2,501 to \$5,000
- \$5,001 to \$10,000
- \$10,001 to \$25,000
- \$25,001 to \$50,000
- \$50,001 to \$100,000
- \$100,001 or more

How often do you perform maintenance such as oil and filter checks on equipment?



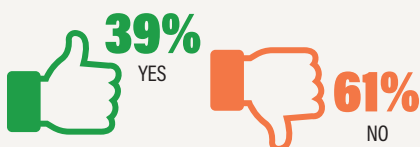
- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Seasonally

Where does your business typically buy handheld power equipment and mowers?



- Authorized distributor/dealer
- Big box store
- Local hardware store
- Other
- Nursery/garden center

Does your business use any battery-powered handheld equipment?



Does your business use any battery-powered mowers?



Read the full report online

To dig deeper into the details, including information on how much contractors are spending on individual equipment types, head to www.igin.com/2021-equipment-maintenance-survey.

sharp and tight, respectively. Being mindful of tire pressure will avoid a midday tire change or need for an air pump," he says. "These practices will make a big difference in the performance of the mower and overall impact on a contractor's productivity."

Belts and idler pulleys cause the most downtime in the commercial landscaping industry, he says. Because of the environment they're in and how many hours they're used, they get worn down easily and need to be replaced often.

A common parts stock list for mowers includes these:

- spark plugs
- air filters
- oil filters
- blades
- tires
- belts (deck and drive belts)

"We recommend contractors check their zero-turn mowers daily to ensure optimal performance," Unruh says. "If you're going to mow for eight or more hours straight, it's best to give it a once-over at the start of the day in case any issues need addressing. Something simple, like low tire pressure, could inconveniently set a job back."

Much of the regular maintenance can be done in-house. However, having a good relationship with a local dealer can also help you have their equipment ready to go for the year. This relationship can sometimes involve a "no-downtime" guarantee if the dealer can do a full winter service.

"This can mean that the dealer may offer a loaner to prevent downtime," Cromley says. "Besides this type of a relationship, contractors who have consistent maintenance as directed by the OEM will generally have the best success."

MAINTENANCE FOR HANDHELD TOOLS

Handheld tools are smaller and typically less costly to purchase than mowers, but that doesn't mean it's okay to skimp on maintenance. Easterly says that good maintenance begins with a predelivery inspection. This ensures the equipment is in working order before getting onto the job site.

This checklist includes

- assembling per owner's manual and following additional attachment instructions.

- checking for loose fasteners.
- checking the operation of choke/primer and throttle/throttle lock.
- inspecting fuel filter, lines, clamps and connections.
- applying filter oil to foam and felt-type air filters.
- checking that the air filter is fitted correctly.
- adding recommended fuel mix.
- conducting a test run to warm up the engine and adjust the carburetor.
- confirming idle and max RPM.
- testing the operation of the stop switch.
- retightening muffler fasteners.
- checking the gearbox and greasing as needed.
- lubricating the cutter bar on hedge trimmers.
- completing the warranty registration.

KwikTap™
Professional Quality

**A SUPERIOR TOOL-LESS SADDLE TEE
FOR POLYETHYLENE PIPE AND
PVC CLASS 160 & 200 PIPE**

- PE: 3/4" to 1 1/2"
- Metric: 25mm & 32mm
- 3/4" & 1" Class 160 & 200 PVC pipe
- Outlets available: 1/2" & 3/4" FPT, Funny/Swing Elbow, Straight Adapter or 17mm Drip Adapter
- No Tools Required
- No Snaps or Straps
- Swing & Drip fittings pre-installed and are removable for onsite customizations

THE MOST SECURE FITTINGS ON THE MARKET

www.dawnindustries.com
800.321.7246

Patent Number 7150289

Dawn™

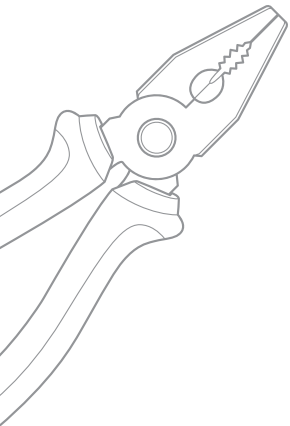
MADE IN USA



Photo: Hustler Turf

"MOWER BLADES CAN DULL AFTER MULTIPLE USES OR BELTS CAN LOOSEN, SO WE RECOMMEND CHECKING IF THEY ARE SHARP AND TIGHT, RESPECTIVELY."

- BRAD UNRUH, HUSTLER TURF



Like larger equipment, handheld tools include an owner's manual. This provides detailed instructions for maintenance on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. In general, Easterly recommends checking the main safety features every time the tool is used. Operating equipment carries risks and even the most well-maintained equipment can break down. Taking preventive steps to catch and repair problems early helps reduce the number and severity of injuries caused by equipment failures.

"Check the chain saw chain brake and throttle lockout to be sure they're functioning properly," he says.

In addition to safety checks, Easterly says fuel issues, filtration and spark plugs are the most commonly reported issues from the field.

Here is a common parts stock list to avoid long stretches of downtime:

- carburetor
- fuel filter
- fuel line
- air filter
- spark plugs
- trimmer heads
- trimmer line
- gearbox lubricant

Parts most affected by wear vary among manufacturers. However, Easterly says fuel-related issues that cause the carburetor, fuel filters and fuel lines to fail top the list of common breakdowns. Most of these are attributable to ethanol and poorly mixed fuel.

"A lot of landscapers use 5-gallon cans to transport fuel and refill. When it sits it separates if it doesn't have a premix. Over time that leaves more and more oil at the bottom of the tank," he says. "The reason premix is expensive is that it is formulated not to separate. Cleaning out the gas tanks periodically is also a recommended step."

When it comes to fuel, you are what you eat. If you have a poor diet your disease risk increases. Similarly, if you "feed" handheld tools the wrong fuel you increase the chances for failure. Easterly recalls a customer calling because 12 blower engines seized and blew up. When he visited the site, he found the contractor had a 100-gallon tanker that wasn't agitated so the fuel separated.

"Fuel is a big deal. Older engines that were less environmentally friendly and much dirtier run on 30:1," he says. "Today, the most common mix for two-stroke engines is 50:1, and they are pretty clean. You can't even see exhaust on ours these days."

Ignoring routine maintenance for your equipment can add up to hundreds or thousands of dollars in repairs and new machines. If your equipment is not functioning properly and the guards are not in place, you could very well damage your client's property or even injure someone who is nearby.

Equipment that doesn't function well can't get the job done right. If the job looks sloppy, clients become disappointed and you may lose referrals along with their business.

Additionally, there may be times that you're looking to sell a piece of equipment. The better maintained the piece is the higher resale value in trade or private sales. Keeping detailed maintenance records goes a long way to getting the most money. Thorough service records and documentation can answer questions a buyer may have around reliability.

Invest in your equipment maintenance upfront because it will pay off later. Equipment warranties also tend to require good documentation, so keep detailed service records to ensure you'll be covered in the event of a manufacturer-related failure. 🍃

The author is a freelance writer in Mechanicville, New York, and can be reached at ktnavarra@gmail.com.

Safety **ON TRACK**

GPS tracking helps with fleet productivity during the pandemic.



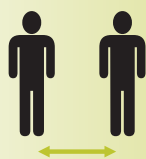
BY DEL WILLIAMS

Even with vaccines being introduced, as the pandemic continues, landscape business owners and fleet managers still need to manage their fleets without risking possible exposure to themselves or others.

New technology offerings like a real-time GPS vehicle tracking system via a smartphone, tablet or PC, in addition to email and Zoom meetings, allows them to socially distance as well as dynamically manage their fleets and work crews throughout the day without missing a beat.

A GPS tracking system can facilitate social distancing and virtually eliminate the need for routine personal interaction, while ensuring that drivers and work crews stay on task.

When logistics during the pandemic require it, emergencies occur or work must be handled by the nearest qualified, available technician, such a system can be very advantageous. With real-time GPS vehicle tracking, landscape managers can see which technicians they have across the area, including who is nearest and who is experienced and properly qualified for the job. And by accessing real-time traffic data in the software, they can identify who is easiest to send to that location as well.



A GPS tracking system can **FACILITATE SOCIAL DISTANCING** and virtually **ELIMINATE THE NEED FOR ROUTINE PERSONAL INTERACTION**, while ensuring that drivers and work crews stay on task.

Dispatches can be made throughout the day and sent directly to the driver's phone to tell the work crew the next job site address. Once they complete the job, it is recorded in the system, so the owner or fleet manager can stay apprised. In that way, it can serve as a remote time sheet.

ENHANCE EFFICIENCY AND SAFETY

During the pandemic or any period when a quick response is required, advanced GPS tracking systems can also improve efficiencies on more established routes.

For example, because the GPS system is automated, travel reports can be generated that analyze vital historical data, such as on-

time pick-ups or drop-offs, and they can also be emailed without anyone having to open software. The reports can be customized to include as much detail as needed, such as how many stops, how long per location, top speed, mileage, idle times of the day, etc. Identifying and implementing more efficient routing and performance, in turn, enables individual drivers and the fleet as a whole to accomplish more in less time.

When landscape owners and fleet managers are busy dealing with logistical challenges, a system like this can also help individual drivers to drive more safely and take greater responsibility for their own conduct without the need to micromanage. A maximum vehicle speed can be set and drivers informed of this. The system will then track their vehicle speed and compare this with the speed limit in its national database, with exceptions automatically emailed to the driver and fleet manager in a report, if desired.

In addition, implementing real-time GPS tracking can increase driver accountability by making them less inclined to take unauthorized excursions, such as personal errands, when not on a job. This can help to minimize unnecessary vehicle mileage, fuel use, and wear and tear. GPS tracking can also be used to recognize and reward consistent timely employee response to a job.

For landscapers, the bottom line is that today's advanced GPS tracking systems can help to keep everyone as socially distanced from each other as possible, while still enabling optimal vehicle and crew management for work productivity. 🌿

Del Williams is a technical writer based in Torrance, California.

The Alleviator® The Irrigation Shut Off Valve



NO ACCESS PROBLEMS. NO FREEZE PROBLEMS.

The Alleviator® is a unique irrigation valve that gives the contractor access to the system's water supply from **OUTSIDE** the customer's home or building. No more scheduling headaches. Call 978-663-9448 www.TheAlleviator.com



Mark your calendar for the Irrigation Show

Save the date for the 2021 Irrigation Show and Education Week to be held Dec. 6-10 in San Diego at the San Diego Convention Center. The show, hosted by the Fairfax, Virginia-based Irrigation Association, provides an opportunity to explore the latest technology and products while connecting with other professionals and learning about relevant industry topics.

The show will offer on-site IA University courses and certification exams for landscape irrigation professionals looking to learn core skill sets and level up their expertise.

The trade show floor will showcase the latest technology with a new Innovation Row section dedicated to irrigation tech startups and an Innovation Hub area for product demos, spotlight sessions and a pitch competition. The new product contest also returns to the show floor, where attendees can check out some of the newest innovations in the landscape, specialty irrigation and lighting markets.

Housing for the event is now open and registration will open in July. For more information, go to www.irrigationshow.org.

National Lawn Care Month campaign focuses on climate change

The National Association of Landscape Professionals, Fairfax, Virginia, started National Lawn Care Month with the release of a new animated video that educates the public about how healthy lawns and landscapes help fight climate change.

The video is part of a suite of grassroots campaign resources that NALP makes available each April to amplify the message about the benefits of managed lawns and landscapes.

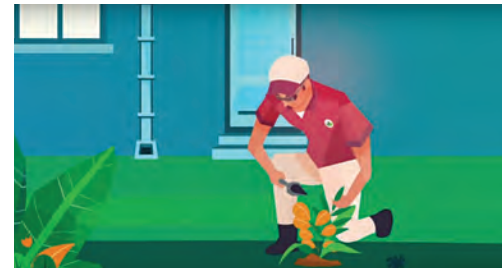
This year's focus on climate change is a joint effort of NALP's Government Affairs Council, Marketing Advisory Council and Lawn Care Communications Committee.

"There is more of a focus from the new administration and in state legislatures about addressing the impacts of climate change," says Andrew Bray, NALP vice president of government relations. "We want to ensure that we are leading the discussion about how healthy lawns and landscapes help mitigate the negative effects."

The 60-second video and infographic were produced by the Emmy Award-winning animation studio Digital Brew. The video features lawn care and landscape professionals caring for greens spaces. It also provides a high-level look at how grass, plants and trees sequester carbon, produce oxygen and provide cooling and energy savings.

"We want to show people that their backyards, public parks and other green spaces are not just places to relax and have fun," says Lisa Stryker, NALP vice president of marketing and communications. "But they should also feel good about the yard's ability to help fight climate change."

Watch the video and access the National Lawn Care Month resources on NALP's website. National Lawn Care Month is promoted by industry partners, including the Irrigation Association, Outdoor Power Equipment Institute and Turf Producers International.



Turface Athletics partners with Cubs Charities for field maintenance workshop

Turface Athletics, Buffalo Grove, Illinois, and Conserv FS, Woodstock, Illinois, have partnered with Cubs Charities, Chicago, to provide Diamond Project field maintenance workshops for youth baseball and softball leagues. The goal of the workshops is to teach youth sports volunteers how to get their fields into playable shape so athletes can safely and fully enjoy a new season of team sports.

In April, volunteers with Turface and Conserv FS provided expert guidance to youth league volunteers and Chicago Park District employees during a field day at Warren Park in Chicago. Participants learned the basics of maintaining the field, pre- and post-game routines, tips and tricks for how to manage rain and preseason and postseason prep.



As part of the program, Turface and Conserv FS also donated infield conditioner and clay for the event and provided field maintenance tools for participants to maintain their own fields.

"We're proud to partner with these great organizations to provide coaches with the tools and knowledge they need to maintain their fields and provide a safe playing surface for athletes of all ages," says Jeff Langner, brand manager for Turface. "After a year where many districts had to shut down youth sports, we're happy to be rebuilding fields while also reestablishing community connections and supporting our youth."

Since 2014, the Diamond Project has committed nearly \$8,900,000 to fund 90 capital improvement projects and more than \$840,000 in grants to 72 youth baseball and softball programs to support operations and equipment needs. For more information on Cubs Charities and the Diamond Project, please visit www.cubscharities.org.



John Deere announces winners at the 2021 NCLC

John Deere, Cary, North Carolina, named the 2021 winner of the John Deere Landscape Industry Scholarship. Brayden Johnson, a student at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, will be awarded a check for \$2,500 to help further his education and dreams of pursuing a career within the landscaping industry. Johnson was recognized at this year's National Collegiate Landscape Competition virtual event that took place March 15-19. Hosted annually by the National Association of Landscape Professionals, the NCLC aims to foster and develop students to be successful in agriculture and landscaping.



Brayden Johnson

"The National Collegiate Landscape Competition is one of the most important opportunities that we offer students each year, and we're thrilled to be part of the virtual platform to continue our scholarship tradition for 2021. This competition helps students to recognize their potential and sets them up for long-standing careers in the industry," says Nick Minas, go-to-market manager, John Deere. "We were thoroughly impressed by Brayden Johnson and are pleased to award him a cash prize that can be used to support his future goals and endeavors."

Johnson is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in landscape management. He has a passion for plant sciences and gardening and also serves as a student greenhouse manager on campus. To further fuel his passion, Johnson also has his own side business of selling and propagating exotic plants.

John Deere also crowned a new champion at NCLC, announcing that Shasta College won the "Team Spirit Photo Contest" and will be awarded with a \$1,000 prize. In recent years, John Deere has helped to select a winner of the "Best Cheer Award" at NCLC. With this year's event going virtual, John Deere and NALP worked to shift the competition to a photo contest to ensure school spirit could still be honored among this year's landscaping and horticulture students.

"As a gold sponsor of the 2021 NCLC, we were excited to present a new way to promote school spirit through this year's photo contest," says Minas. "The passion seen through Shasta College was notable and we're proud to offer these students a reward that will help their landscape and horticulture programs grow."

This year's virtual event included over 15 student workshops, a career fair and industry-related challenges for students to compete in. John Deere was the lead sponsor for this year's compact excavator quiz, testing students about the safety, maintenance, operation and key machine characteristics of a compact excavator.

Easy-to-use landscape and irrigation design software.



Visit us online today at www.RainCAD.com for details!



Trusted by thousands of green industry professional contractors, consultants and architects in over 30 countries.

Email: sales@raincad.com | Phone: (936) 372-9884



1 Telehandler. Genie, Redmond, Washington, introduces the Genie GTH-1056, the newest addition to its telehandler lineup. The GTH-1056 has been designed to lower total cost of ownership by 10% while delivering 20% more lift capacity at max height in a machine with a 30% stronger design.

The GTH-1056 builds on features found on the GTH-636 and GTH-846 models, including a side-mounted engine and stronger boom design, to deliver a telescopic handler with a 10,000-pound capacity.

The GTH-1056 was designed for durability. With its boom and chassis, it is able to lift 5,000 pounds at maximum height of 56 feet, 7 inches, and 3,000 pounds at maximum reach of 42 feet, the GTH-1056. The boom with mid-pivot point uses a single lift cylinder.

 **Genie**
www.genielift.com



2 Water transfer pump. Reed Manufacturing, Erie, Pennsylvania, introduces the Pump Stick cordless water transfer pump.

The Pump Stick provides a portable way to remove water. The multiuse pump reaches and quickly moves water from all kinds of places such as pool covers and tanks. The pump can be used with the operator's own 18V-20V battery by choosing a compatible battery adapter plate.

The Pump Stick includes a hard shell, aluminum main body shaft. For safety, the on/off switch is sealed. The pump ships with a 2-foot hose, but 4-foot and 7-foot hose extensions are available. The slim design allows the operator to place the pump deep into small cavities and lifts water up to 12 feet. For extra deep reach, add the 24-inch comfort grip handle.

 **Reed Manufacturing Company**
www.reedmfco.com



3 Variable frequency drive. Franklin Electric Co. Inc., Fort Wayne, Indiana, introduces its SubDrive Connect Plus as the newest member of the SubDrive family of variable frequency drives suited for residential, agricultural and commercial applications.

The SubDrive Connect Plus VFD is engineered to provide a full-featured constant pressure solution for water pumping systems in an array of submersible and above-ground applications that utilize three-phase motors up to 30 horsepower.

SubDrive Connect Plus includes soft-start, pump protection, built-in lead/lag and alternation capacity up to 8 drives, dual set point, pipe fill mode to reduce water hammer, and phase conversion for applications with 230V single-phase input power. Its platform saves time during installation and servicing using an array of setup, monitoring and troubleshooting solutions.

 **Franklin Electric Co. Inc.**
www.franklinwater.com

SUPPLIER IN THE NEWS

Fishing pros partner with Toro for spring clean-up event

Brent Chapman and Jeff Sprague, two Major League Fishing Bass Pro Tour anglers sponsored by Bloomington, Minnesota-based Toro, joined in for a spring clean-up event at the house of local Jasper, Texas, resident Kamron Slaydon.

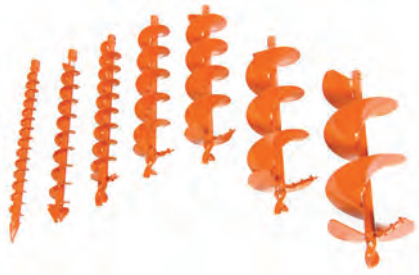
Slaydon was raised in Jasper and graduated from Jasper High School in 2018. Immediately after graduation, Slaydon joined the U.S. Marine Corp. In January 2019, while on leave, Slaydon was severely injured in an accidental shooting which damaged his C4 and C5 vertebrae, causing quadriplegia.

Sprague and Chapman arranged for Toro distributor Professional Turf Products and local Toro dealer Scooter's Lawnmower in Beaumont, Texas, to allow them to use the equipment. The group of anglers spent a few hours on their day off doing yard work for the Slaydon family, mowing, trimming and blowing the entire residence.

“We wanted to do something to give back, and this is one of those things that maybe doesn't seem like much, but it's one of those chores that just needs to get done,” says Chapman. “We are incredibly lucky to be able to fish for a living, so the least we could do on our day off is to come out here and give back a little bit and thank Kamron for his service to our country.”



Photo: The Toro Company



4 Auger. General Equipment Company, Owatonna, Minnesota, introduces the 2350 Bor-Max Series earth augers and auger extension for small, hand-held type earth auger products. These augers are specially designed to drill through unconsolidated soil classifications, such as loams, sands, soft clays and granular rubbles.

The Bor-Max Series earth augers are engineered with heavy-gauged helicoid-type fighting and axle to better withstand bending and torque loads. The augers are built to be more aggressive with soil penetration, requiring less horsepower to dig a hole.

The cast-steel boring head includes an alloy-steel screw bit and heat-treated cutting blade. The cutting blade's outside edge extends past the boring head and fighting to extend service life of the auger. The augers come in nominal diameters ranging from 2 to 8 inches.



General Equipment Company
www.generalequip.com

Do you have a product to spotlight?

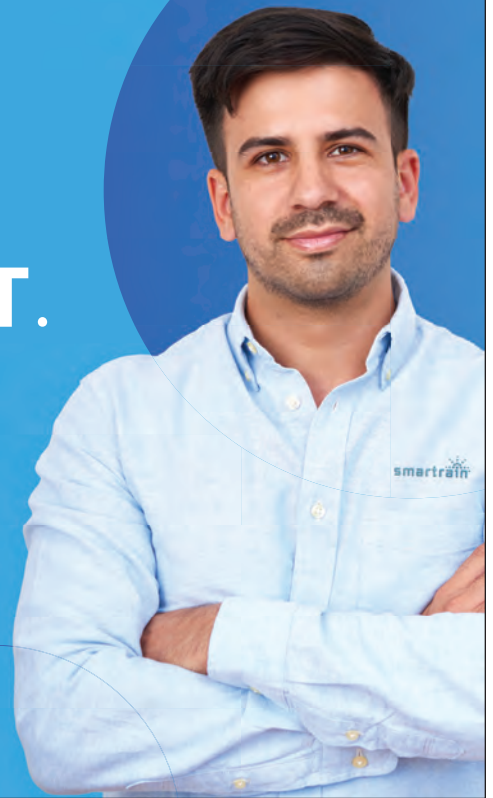
Submit your 125-word product description and high-resolution photo to news@igin.com.



smartrain

BETTER TECH.
 BEST PRICE.
GREAT SUPPORT.

EXPLORE OUR TECHNOLOGY
SMARTRAIN.NET



Check out our newsletters!

IT'S JUST AS IMPORTANT TO STAY CURRENT ON WHAT IS HAPPENING IN BETWEEN ISSUES.

Receive industry news and insights straight to your inbox.



Weekly Newsletter

Packed with up-to-date information and articles to help contractors stay in the know
 — WEEKLY —

Product Roundup

Showcases the latest and most innovative products available to the landscape industry
 — QUARTERLY —

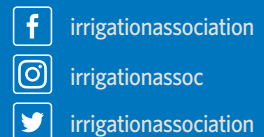
Subscribe online: www.igin.com/subscribe

Smart irrigation. Sustainable solutions.

This Smart Irrigation Month, we're celebrating the solutions that irrigation professionals bring society through best practices and efficient technologies. Let's share with the world the importance smart irrigation has in global food production and sustaining landscapes.



This July, visit our website for smart ideas and free resources:
www.smartirrigationmonth.org



Share your Smart Irrigation solutions with us:
#SmartIrrigationMonth

Why choose BOWSMiTH NonStop® Emitters?



No Call Backs!

"I've never had a problem with a callback on Bowsmith emitters in my design work. Out here, it is a best seller, it is the emitter of choice with professionals."

- Doug Matthews, Logan Simpson Design

Best in the World Against Clogging

To learn more go to www.bowsmith.com and click to see how the NonStop Emitter works or call 1-800-269-7648

BOWSMiTH®



One Product... **COMPLETE**
Plant - Soil - Root
AGRONOMICS

BioPlex®
Transplant
Concentrate & **Plant** Enhancer™



TOTAL INSTALLATION

toll free: 800.441.3573
eMail: bioplex@earthlink.net
order on-line: bio-plex.com

MINI MART ●●

Cutting Edge Performance from Billy Goat!

A Hardscaper's dream: 18" Sod Cutter

Exclusive laser clad cutting blade's hardened leading edge offers precision cut & up to 3x blade life.

Variable-speed hydro transmission plus reverse. Match cutting speed to ground condition.

NEW 24" coming in July



Text "cut" to 33988 US or 33433 Canada*



*Data rates may apply

Call 800-776-7690 or visit billygoat.com

Fill Your Off Season With Profits

Christmas Decor

We provide:

- Comprehensive Training
- 24/7/365 Support
- Consistent Product Availability
- Marketing and Sales Plans
- Proprietary Industry Software



Call 1.800.687.9551 for a No-Obligation Territory Analysis
www.christmasdecor.net/franchise

AD INDEX ●●

Billy Goat Industries - www.billygoat.com	49
BioPlex Organics - www.bio-plex.com	49
Bowsmith - www.bowsmith.com	49
Brilliance LED - www.brillianceled.com	37
Christmas Decor - www.christmasdecor.net	49
Dawn Industries - www.dawnindustries.com	41, 45
Ditch Witch - www.ditchwitch.com	33
Ewing Irrigation - www.ewingirrigation.com	51
FX Luminaire - www.fxli.com	29
Gicon Pumps & Equipment - www.giconpumps.com	23
Hunter Industries - www.hunterindustries.com	2
Husqvarna - www.husqvarna.com	17
Irrigation & Green Industry - www.igin.com	47
Isuzu Commercial Truck of America - www.isuzucv.com	5
K-Rain - www.krain.com	11
Kichler Landscape Lighting - www.kichler.com	7
Paige Irrigation & Landscape Lighting - www.paigewire.com	13
Pappas Products Inc. - www.thealleviator.com	43
Service Wire Co. - www.servicewire.com	19
Smart Irrigation Month - www.smartirrigationmonth.org	48
Smart Rain - www.smartrain.net	47
Software Republic - www.softwarerepublic.com	45
WAC Landscape Lighting - www.waclighting.com	52



SPANISH MOSS: MYTH OR FACT?

SPANISH MOSS IS FROM SPAIN.

» **MYTH:** Spanish moss is a native plant to Florida, as well as the Southeastern states and Central and South America. Its name came from French settlers who thought the plant reminded them of the beards of Spanish conquistadors.

SPANISH MOSS IS A MOSS.

» **MYTH:** It is a Bromeliad, a flowering plant with vascular tissue.

SPANISH MOSS IS FULL OF CHIGGERS.

» **FACT & MYTH:** Spanish moss in trees will not have a chigger issue; however, Spanish moss that has spent time on the ground could have chiggers living on it.

TOO MUCH SPANISH MOSS CAUSES TREES TO DECLINE.

» **MYTH:** Spanish moss does not cause trees to decline, although it can allow us to see that a tree is declining. As a tree declines, it will lose leaves, which gives more room for Spanish moss to grow.

THE BEST METHOD OF CONTROL IS HERBICIDAL SPRAY.

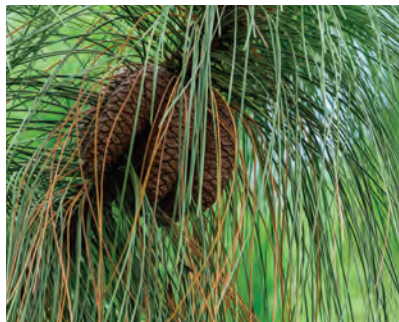
» **MYTH:** There are few herbicides used to control Spanish moss and all can harm the tree. The best method is manual removal by a professional.

NORTH CAROLINA'S 'BROWN GOLD'

There is a saying among some farmers in the Carolina Sandhills: "A man would have to be a fool to cut down a longleaf pine." The longleaf pine's most obvious attribute is its strong, straight timber, perfect for utility poles. But, the reason that longleaf pines are prized is their needles.

The dropped needles are in such demand that a lucrative business has grown up around raking, baling and selling them to landscapers and homeowners as mulch. Three varieties of pine needles are farmed, but the discarded debris of a longleaf pine is the most sought-after and fetches the best price because of its unusual length and high resin content, making it an attractive, water-retaining ground cover for gardens. And it does not attract termites. Some even call it "brown gold."

The pine straw industry generates an estimated \$200 million in annual sales across the Southeast. And like anything valuable left just lying on the ground, theft is a problem. North Carolina has now even made it a felony to steal pine needles.



ARE YOU PLAYING IT SAFE?

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration announced its preliminary top 10 most frequently cited workplace safety violations for 2020.

- Fall protection — general requirements
- Hazard communication
- Respiratory protection
- Scaffolding
- Ladders
- Lockout/tagout
- Powered industrial trucks
- Fall protection — training requirements
- Personal protective and lifesaving equipment — eye and face protection
- Machine guarding



LANDSCAPER BUILDS GARDENS FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

A Texas landscaper is using his stimulus money to put vegetable gardens in the backyards of low-income families. He wants to gift them the ability to afford to eat healthier.

"Eating healthy can be expensive. We want to change that," says Neale Mansfield, owner of Mid Cities Landscaping in Fort Worth, Texas. Mansfield has a dream to help families and communities grow their own food. With his own stimulus funds and donations to his new Backyard Gardens DFW initiative, Mansfield is installing raised bed gardens for local families in need. He has put in three gardens and plans to do more.

Low-income families can request to join the waiting list to receive a garden, and volunteers are invited to join him and help install the gardens. "With this initiative we hope to increase food security and help families save money on their food bills," Mansfield says. "An added benefit is that freshly harvested fruits and vegetables provide maximum nutritional value and also reduce waste."

Take the Stress Out of Summer with EMPRO

The EMPRO line offers consistent quality products at a great value, exclusively at Ewing.

Help your turf get the most out of your fertilizer with these products!



**EMPRO DURAARMOR
2.5 GAL.**

Humic Acids, Kelp and Amino Acids help fight excessive heat and inconsistent rainfall keeping your turf looking great!



**EMPRO CLEAR IRON 5%
2.5 GAL.**

Give your turf a color boost without staining concrete!



**EMPRO BATTERY POWERED
BACKPACK SPRAYER 4 GAL.**

No cords or hassle to spray fertilizer and weed killer.

Follow us on social media:



Everything You Need to Keep Your Turf Looking Its Best

Ewing is the largest family-owned supplier of landscape and irrigation products in the country, offering superior products, education and service to make projects of any size a success. With deep industry expertise and a complete line of water-efficient products, customers have relied on Ewing for nearly 100 years to help create and maintain healthy, beautiful, water-smart landscapes.



Treat weeds to keep your turf healthy and beautiful. Check out our videos on how to treat summer weeds and using pre and post-emergent herbicides.


Irrigation & Landscape Supply

800.343.9464 | EwingIrrigation.com



**PERFECT
EVERY TIME**
DREAM IT, SOLVE IT
ACCENT FIXTURES

- ✓ Adjustable Beam Angles
- ✓ Adjustable & Continuous Lumen Output
- ✓ Multiple Kelvin Temperature options (2700K, 3000K & 4000K)



5211 / 5212
Output: 740-2000 lm
Voltage: 12v, 120v
Finishes: Black, Bronze
Construction: Brass, Aluminum

Grand Accent



5011 / 5012
Output: 50-1160 lm
Voltage: 12v, 120v
Finishes: Black, Bronze
Construction: Brass, Aluminum

Accent



5111
Output: 45 to 365 lm
Voltage: 12v
Finishes: Black, Bronze
Construction: Brass, Aluminum

Mini Accent