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NWLP



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- Out-front deck allowing for better **trimming capability**



Presiding is easy with a precision steering and handling system. The out-front deck allows for better trimming capability. Park Point, Midvale, Connecticut, Metairie, Ontario, Canada.



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YEAR-ROUND PRODUCTIVITY

- Mulching and collection **deck options** make quick work of **leaf cleanup**
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- The **Dethatcher** attachment is an easy solution for removing thatch from lawns



The Walker mower that does it all. It gets you out there with a snowblower, the out-front deck for leaf cleanup, and the dozer blade for quick sidewalk or driveway snow removal. Chris Conner, Oakbrook Landscape, Idaho Falls, Idaho.



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BEAUTIFUL CUT

- The **front-mount deck** of the Walker reduces impact on the turf prior to cutting
- **Lower overall mower weight** improves agility and reduces rutting
- **Internal Grass Handling System** vacuums grass clippings, leaves, or debris
- Grass is lifted, cut, and processed evenly to produce natural **stripping**



The Walker mower that does it all. It gets you out there with a snowblower, the out-front deck for leaf cleanup, and the dozer blade for quick sidewalk or driveway snow removal. Chris Conner, Oakbrook Landscape, Idaho Falls, Idaho.



WATCH THE VIDEO ▶



ALL THE LITTLE THINGS

- **Seat options** and **adjustable footrests** improve operator comfort
- The **Power Dump** allows you to dump the grass catcher without leaving your seat
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- **Tilt-up decks** allow cleaning, blade sharpening, or blade changing in seconds



The Walker mower that does it all. It gets you out there with a snowblower, the out-front deck for leaf cleanup, and the dozer blade for quick sidewalk or driveway snow removal. Chris Conner, Oakbrook Landscape, Idaho Falls, Idaho.



◀ WATCH THE VIDEO



MAINTENANCE

- **Tilt-up decks** allow cleaning, blade sharpening, or blade changing in seconds
- **Tilt-open bodies** give you full access to the engine, belts, battery without tools
- Maintainable **grease fittings** greatly extend the life of your mower
- Each Walker Mower is **reliable**, engineered to perform and proven to last



The Walker mower that does it all. It gets you out there with a snowblower, the out-front deck for leaf cleanup, and the dozer blade for quick sidewalk or driveway snow removal. Chris Conner, Oakbrook Landscape, Idaho Falls, Idaho.



WATCH THE VIDEO ▶

See the videos at
walker.com/advantage/easy

Or experience the Walker for yourself on a **FREE** on-site demonstration.



Northwest Landscape Professional

The NWLP – Northwest Landscape Professional – is the official publication of the Washington Association of Landscape Professionals and is published and distributed quarterly to WALP members and extended gratis to select courtesy subscribers.

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Washington Association of Landscape Professionals

The Washington Association of Landscape Professionals (WALP) offers your company first-tier access to decision-makers in the Landscaping Industry. WALP reaches more than 1,500 landscape professionals and supporters with our print magazine, the Northwest Landscape Professional (NWLP) and online newsletter, WALP Wednesday. WALP also reaches out to Industry professionals and the general public with our innovative website. Gain access to this customer base for your business to business marketing needs and start promoting your company's products and services with WALP today.



For information regarding advertising opportunities, please call us at 800-833-2186 or email at info@walp.org.



A Bright Future!

*Will Bailey
Avid Landscape Management LLC
2023 WALP State President*

We are completing on our goals and looking toward a bright future! The WALP Board has been working diligently over the past year to enhance value for our members through regular communication and in-person events and meetings and our membership is responding. We are growing as new companies join and past members re-engage, creating even more value for those who attend our events. If you haven't been to a WALP event recently consider this your invitation! There are two great ways to learn about upcoming events. If you are not receiving information via these channels please let us know so that we can add you to our mailing lists.

WALP Wednesday

Every Wednesday we send out an email blast called WALP Wednesday where you can learn about upcoming events. This is an easy way to keep up to date with Chapter happenings and state-wide landscape industry events.

Northwest Landscape Professional

WALP's magazine is a high-quality publication full of insightful articles, industry and legislative updates, advertiser specials, Awards Program winners, and your window into upcoming events at the state and chapter levels. Please continue to send your ideas and inspiration to Peter@walp.org.

Thus far in 2023 we have held:

Landscape Technician BootCamp

One of WALP's signature events of the past returned recently in late March of 2023 as a re-booted training event designed to train your crews on 25 different competency areas that were previously a part of the Certified Landscape Technician (LIC) field exam. This program answers the need for high-quality, field-based training from volunteer industry professionals that was engaging and fun with over 140 participants!

Annual Conference

The Conference Committee along with the WALP State Board hosted similar numbers at our popular Annual Conference in mid-January of 2023. The conference engaged you and your teams in thoughtful education and access to vendors to prepare for 2023.

Northwest Flower & Garden Festival

Our King County Chapter worked very hard in mid-February to create a display garden at the Festival this year winning a Silver Award and garnering attention from attendees for our membership. All of those who helped out had a great time, forming new friendships and enjoying old ones.

Mission Statement For The Washington Association Of Landscape Professionals

To promote professionalism, integrity, and education to a thriving membership within the Green Industry and the communities served.

Vision Statement For The Washington Association Of Landscape Professionals

- The Washington Association of Landscape Professionals is a publicly recognized and unified industry of landscape professionals who embody business and technical excellence.
- The Washington Association of Landscape Professionals provides and promotes the opportunity to mentor and support its members.
- The Washington Association of Landscape Professionals' members receive value and benefit by sharing knowledge, resources, and experience.
- The Washington Association of Landscape Professionals is the networking place and referral resource for "Green Industry" professionals.

"Defining Professionalism In The Green Industry"

WALP Office

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Legislative Committee

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Marketing/Communications Committee

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Puget Sound Plants

Membership Committee

Tim Buiten
*Tim's Complete
Landscape Management*



President's Message *continued from page 2*

Thank you to all who helped make these events a reality! We continue to work on more events for 2023 including the following;

Golf Tournament

Our Golf Committee is working on another great golf tournament for us this August. The final date and location will be announced soon. The committee will be reaching out to sponsors this spring and summer. Any Associate Member companies that are hoping not to miss out on this marquee event can reach out to the Golf Committee Chair.

Annual Strategic Planning Meeting

WALP is working on rekindling our annual Strategic Planning Meeting this fall and is hoping to return to the Kiana Lodge and Suquamish Clearwater Casino. This fun and engaging event helps us set our plans for the following year, gives business owners and managers tools and ideas for engaging their own teams, and is a whole lot of fun to boot!

Lastly, Thank You to all of our past and present members! Your support over the years has made WALP possible and is the driving force behind the value our organization creates for everyone involved. The greater our membership, the greater the opportunity to find community, learn from one another, and increase professionalism in our industry. I challenge you to increase the benefit you receive from your WALP membership by participating in a committee, attending a chapter meeting or one of the events above, and by supporting our events through sponsorship and in-person engagement this year!

See you at an event soon! 🌿

The Washington Association of Landscape Professionals was founded in 1984 by a group of landscape professionals who wanted to define professionalism, develop educational programs, and evoke legislative representation on the issues pertinent to the Landscape Industry.

The Washington Association of Landscape Professionals (WALP) is a non-profit organization of landscape professionals dedicated to providing opportunities that promote professionalism, integrity, and education within the Landscape Industry through the members it serves.

Cover image: Grand Award winner Place Landscape Architecture, LLC., Landscape Design, Woodside Residence

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Northwest Premier Landscape Awards Program

By Lloyd Glasscock – Awards Committee Chair, Northwest Flower & Garden Festival

The Washington Association of Landscape Professionals (WALP) were proud to announce the recipients of the 2022 Northwest Premier Landscape Awards Program at the Annual Conference held at the Hotel Indigo in Everett this past January.

Every year, WALP Members submit projects of various scope in a variety of categories. This past two years we received 17 entries by 8 firms in 8 categories. All the projects earned an award; 5 Award of Distinction, 10 Grand Awards and 2 projects of Special Recognition. Projects were of all sizes from Corporate Campuses to backyard firepit areas.

An Award of Merit means the project meets industry standards. An Award or Distinction means the project is exceptional, but still with some room for improvement somewhere. A Grand Award generally means the project is exceptional with no obvious room for improvement. Usually there is some 'wow' factor considered, even in small projects. For the 2021-2022 program years all projects surpassed Merit.

Judges are landscape professionals as well as WALP members and standards are taken seriously. In all categories, the degree of difficulty, be it access or site conditions or some other factor is considered. The projects were judged remotely with communication done via e-mail, Zoom or by phone.

Numerous articles were presented over the 2022 year of award recipients for

continued on page 6

2022 Award Winners



AWARD of DISTINCTION

Presented to: NORTHWEST OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Category: Lighting | Project: West Seattle



AWARD of DISTINCTION

Presented to: DEVONSHIRE LANDSCAPES

Category: Residential Construction | Project: Lange Residence

2021. For that reason, we are presenting images of the 2022 projects here which the membership may not have seen yet.

Grand Awards For 2021:

- Pacific Earth Works WBE:
Commercial Construction, Block 18
Seattle
- Northwest Outdoor Lighting:
Lighting, Lake Washington Villa
- Northwest Outdoor Lighting:
Lighting, Carillon Point
Property
- Synthetic Turf Northwest McGraw
Project
- Vulcan Design & Construction:
Hardscaping, Ogden Residence
- Malone's Landscape Design/Build:
Residential Construction, The Tree
- Hedahl Landscape Services:
Residential Construction, Olympic
View Renovation



AWARD of DISTINCTION

Presented to: PLACE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE LLC
Category: Landscape Design | Project: Farmhouse Residence



AWARD of DISTINCTION

Presented to: PACIFIC EARTHWORKS WBE
Category: Public Works | Cedar Heights Middle School/Fields Renovation

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GRAND AWARD

Presented to: PLACE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE LLC
Category: Landscape Design | Project: Woodside Residence



GRAND AWARD

Presented to: PACIFIC EARTHWORKS WBE

Category: Commercial Construction

Project: Seattle Children's Building Care/Forest B Expansion



GRAND AWARD

Presented to: MALONE'S LANDSCAPE DESIGN/BUILD

Category: Design/Build | Project: The Backyard Bar & Grill

Grand Awards for 2022

- Place Landscape Architecture LLC: Landscape Design, Woodside Residence
- Malone's Landscape Design/Build: Design/Build, The Backyard Bar & Grill
- Pacific Earth Works WBE: Commercial Construction, Seattle Childrens Building Care, Forest B Expansion

Awards Of Distinction for 2021:

- Hedahl Landscape Services Design: Design/Build, Suarez Retreat

Awards Of Distinction for 2022:

- Pacific Earth Works WBE: Public Works, Cedar Heights M.S. Fields Renovation
- Place Landscape Architecture LLC: Landscape Design, Farmhouse Residence
- Devonshire Landscapes: Residential Construction, Lange Residence
- Northwest Outdoor Lighting: Lighting, West Seattle

Special Recognition for 2021:

- Bartlett Tree Expert Co.: Unique Project, Sooty Bark Disease
- Bartlett Tree Expert Co.: Unique Project, An American Legacy Tree

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- Groundcovers
- Rhododendrons and Azaleas
- Natives and vines
- Berries: Blueberry, Logan, Raspberry
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2023 WALP Conference Recap

By Will Anstey, LIC, Eco-Pro, Conference Committee Chair, Devonshire Landscapes

It is good to be back! I would like to thank everyone who attended, and helped support our 2023 WALP Annual Conference this year at the Hotel Indigo in Everett. Everyone seemed very happy with this new location. This year we pulled off the Conference completely in-house, with efforts of primarily Peter Dervin, Will Bailey, Lloyd Glasscock, Ella Vogelpohl, and myself. I would again like to thank all our vendors and sponsors, especially our title sponsor, Stihl, for their support of our event.

We had a great turnout and were very pleased with how things went coming out of the “COVID break”. The weather held for our outside equipment vendors to show off their shiny wares. We had a packed house of old and new vendors sharing their products and services with our Member business owners, their managers, and employees during nice long breaks between training sessions.

We had a great group of speakers sharing their professional experiences with our membership. We were especially thrilled to have such great attendance of ~30 employees in our Spanish speaking classes! A special thanks to Martin Munoz with Horizon, and Gonzalo Yeppes, owner of Columbian Gardens LLC out of Tacoma, for presenting and helping us train our valued employees.

This year also included WSDA Pesticide Recertification credits for our Licensed Pesticide Applicators. We had a total of 22 credit hours this year, and hope to continue to expand on this member benefit moving forward. Classes offered to our Spanish speaking employees included

“weed identification”, among others to help our employees understand the underlying causes of weed infestation and reduce unnecessary use of pesticides. It is my belief that these efforts will help reduce unnecessary expenses, improve employee safety, and improve public perception of Landscape Professionals.

Our WEF auction and WALP Awards presentation was MC'd by Lloyd Glasscock. A special thank you to all those vendors and members who donated auction items. Through your generosity we were able to raise several thousand dollars for the WEF

educational fund. There were many great projects and beautiful pictures displayed and awards presented. Congratulations to all of the award recipients. Stay tuned to WALP Wednesday and our NWLP Magazine for the highlights!

In closing I want to assure everyone that the WALP Conference committee is already working hard to make sure our next conference is even better! I would also like to invite anyone who has any input or feedback, or who would like to be involved in next year's event to reach out to me via email. 🌿

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2023 WALP Golf Tournament

August 10, 2023

Mount Si Golf Course

9010 Boalch Avenue SE,
Snoqualmie, WA 98065

Tournament Schedule:

7:00AM Registration

8:00AM Shotgun Start

1:00PM Banquet & Awards

Registration Starts At:

\$150/WALP Member Golfer

\$600/WALP Member Team

\$200/Non-WALP Member Golfer

\$800/Non-WALP Member Team

Sponsorships Still
Available!



Register at www.walp.org/annual-events/golf-tournament/

We are so excited to see you at the WALP Golf Tournament this year!
Please join as a sponsor, player, or both!



WALP
WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONALS

2023 GOLF TOURNAMENT SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

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Two complimentary tournament registrations, course signage, logo displayed at the banquet, logo on all tournament literature and website.

Beverage Cart Sponsorship - \$2,000 (2 available)

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Golf Cart Sponsorship - H.D. FOWLER COMPANY

Two complimentary tournament registrations, logo displayed on each golf cart, logo on all tournament literature and website.

Hole in One Contest Sponsorship - \$1,500 (2 available)

Two complimentary tournament registrations, logo displayed at check-in area, course signage, logo on all tournament literature and website.

Breakfast Sponsorship - \$1,000

One complimentary tournament registration, logo displayed at check-in area, and logo on website.

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Driving Range Sponsorship - \$500

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Putting Green Sponsorship - \$500

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Hole Sponsorship - \$450

One complimentary tournament registration, Course signage, logo on website and manage your hole.

BUD CLARY AUTO GROUP / CASTOHN / BARTLETT TREE EXPERTS



2023 WALP Golf Tournament

Thursday, August 10, 2023

Mount Si Golf Course

9010 Boalch Avenue SE, Snoqualmie, WA 98065

Tournament Schedule:

Registration: 7:00 AM

Shotgun Start: 8:00 AM

Lunch and Awards: 1:00 PM

Registration Fees:

WALP Foursome: \$600 (4 Golfers)

WALP Individual Golfer: \$150

Non-WALP Foursome: \$800

Non-WALP Individual Golfer: \$200

Main Contact: _____

Company Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

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Email: _____

Golfer # 1 _____

Golfer # 2 _____

Golfer #3 _____

Golfer #4 _____

Credit Card Name _____

Credit Card # _____ ZIP _____

EXP: _____ CSV _____

Please scan completed registration and email to info@walp.org

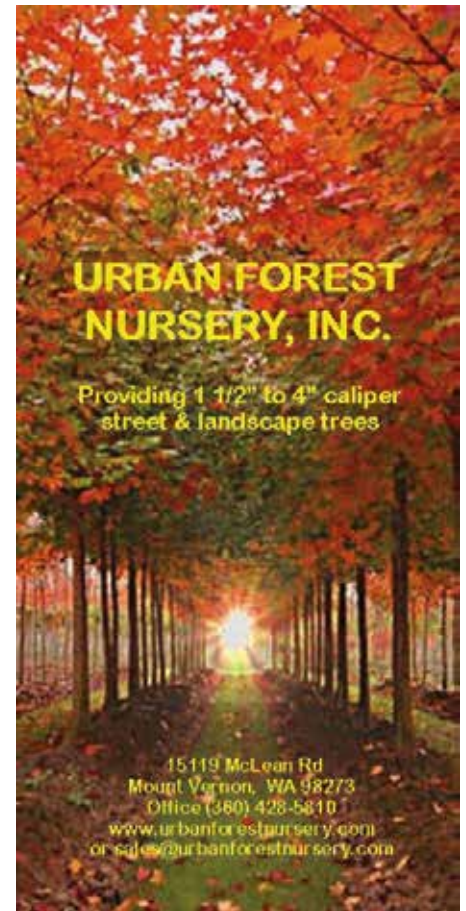


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The Green Meridian Brief

"Impressions of Recessions"

by Alan Burke, asla, Landscape architect, Classic Nursery

Folks in the landscape industry are wondering what's on the horizon for our whacked out economy. We are looking at economic developments that don't track in expected ways. Unemployment is crazy low right now. Anyone that is hiring knows that. Consumer spending continues at a wicked pace. Pandemic shutdowns are almost completely reversed. The supply chain is loosening up finally. Lumber prices have come down. Alternately, a select group of small banks are failing or teetering on the brink. Tech companies are laying folks off and selling the trampolines in the lobby out from under software-bros that need to buckle down now and write some code. Interest rates have skyrocketed over the year without dampening spending at all. Clients are torn between selling their home – only to buy a home priced way above market – or renovate where they already live. There are barely a dozen homes for sale in any region anyway. You can hear a melodramatic undertone in the Wall Street Journal. It's just plain confusing. So that's the gist of this article, a look at the potential economic downturn, and: *What's a landscape pro gonna do?*

For most of us in the construction and design arena, we expect that calls might taper off through 2023 – at least in comparison to recent years – and some are scaling back to adapt to a possible new reality. It is busy though – and surprising how many folks are inquiring with us – given what the economic pundits are saying about inflation, the tech bubble and the gray economic notion of the rest of the year. Consumers, perhaps are being a bit more conscious in their buying

– especially in the hi-end residential design/build outdoor construction marketplace, a rarified atmosphere that many designers claim to breathe, without really knowing much about the scent. I think some Clients have been burned by the “two guys and a chainsaw” companies, many of which have finally gone under. But what is the nature of the economy and how is it affecting the new landscape client? People are more discriminating. They are looking more closely at materials and phasing. Small, well managed efforts are creating big visual impacts. Many folks are looking again at



their homes and saying “Ok, so if I really am going to live here, let's do it right” as they look for solutions that take advantage of all aspects of their property. Folks are doing more research and not only want a garden that's sustainable, but a landscape company that is as well.

How does a design/build landscape company and nursery manage through all of this? What timeframe are we comparing to? The pandemic downturn? The recession of the mid-2000's? There really isn't a solid foundation to consider unless we go back 25 years or more. Still, there are clear lessons to learn – and ways to

prepare, for those with a bit of fiscal discipline combined with a spirit of careful optimism. Frankly looking back at the recession in 2008, we probably should have adjusted staff earlier, maybe as early as Autumn of that troubling year, but we weren't sure. It's hard to know the right thing to do, weighing the need to maintain a strong business while considering the needs of real people with families. Remember how we were all panicked when the pandemic started and shut it all down? People arguing about who is an “essential business”, while holding fast to a job that could go under at any minute. Contrast that with the post PPP period or even further, the ERTC tax relief package, an unasked-for massive refund of prepaid taxes that had many business owners looking at hundreds of thousands of dollars in Federal refund checks – with no strings attached. It's been a roller-coaster ride with hairpin turns and whiplash inducing starts and stops. It's been hard to know when to step on the gas or slam on the brakes.

You know how the business magazines see these issues. If you anticipate things early and make changes, you're “*thinking outside the box*”, but if that doesn't work, you “*reacted too early*”. Keep things consistent and you are “*steady as a rock*”, lose profit based upon this and you're “*not nimble enough*” as a manager. What I'm trying to convey is that you can't really rely on the magazines to tell you what's working and what isn't. They're just gonna justify their argument based upon the

continued on page 16

outcome, not really how the company owner resolved it. For our landscape clients, it may be just as confusing to choose what to do. Should you hunker down to renovate your home instead of selling it? Should you realize the value of your landscape by investing in the fabled “outdoor garden room” we hear so much about? Should you order that latest plant from Garden Design magazine? *Let’s part the clouds on some of this stuff.*

Recently I was asked to do a talk for WALP’s annual meeting. The topic was “Keeping your crews busy during an economic downturn”. I have kind of paraphrased a bit of that presentation here. One key facet of it that set my thinking about any potential recession – was the turmoil that we went through in the mid 2000s. For our part, my wife and I were five years into our effort

in owning the company. I had been there for perhaps 10 years overall as a designer, and then subsequently as a business owner. We had a staff of about 50 with about 3 nursery managers – and we had 3 kids at home.

We had managed through a misreported inventory from the previous owners – a pair of crooks – but that’s another story and had an asset list that was missing significant plant materials that had been reported as part of the sale. We couldn’t do anything about that – and times we’re getting tough. In design build, keep in mind that at least in the residential sense, it does not really mean the recurring revenue that it does in landscape maintenance. So it was rough. We laid off individuals every week for about a three-month period, eventually shrinking the staff to about

17 overall. Over time, we paid off our debt and innovated and adapted – and the remaining employees were pretty solid. Coming close to declaring bankruptcy, one unanticipated silver lining was that *my kids learned a valuable lesson about the value of money* – and when we sold our home, a beautiful place that we had owned for over 16 years to pay off the business debts, the lesson was not lost on them. In later years, each of my 3 children would write about this troubling period for their college entrance exam. I think there are worse things than imparting the value of money on your children, albeit, in this case – from a situation I would rather have not experienced.

So I have come to calling my experience “The Fever”. Like a fever, our recession will likely find you wallowing with a confused and sweating

An advertisement for the Rain Bird RC2 Controller. The image features a white, rectangular controller unit with a digital display showing 'RC2' and several control buttons. The Rain Bird logo is prominently displayed at the bottom of the unit. The background is a dark, abstract landscape with green, glowing lines and dots, suggesting a smart or connected environment. To the right of the controller, the text 'Smarter From The Inside.' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below this, 'RC2 Controller' is written in a smaller font. A QR code is located in the bottom right corner, with an arrow pointing to it and the text 'Scan to Learn More!'.

demeanor – only to eventually break out of it. When you do – if you handle it carefully and with confidence – you will be the better for it, and you will know that you have antibodies that help you resist the next economic downturn. *I know that's making lemonade out of lemons – but hey that's what we do.*

The landscape industry views this kind of thing statistically in categories that I think you can understand. In the 2022 Lawn and Landscape Magazine “State of the industry report”, most company owners list their concerns in order as #1: high fuel prices, #2: A quality labor shortage, #3: the economic recession, #4: the supply chain issues, #5: high health insurance costs, #6: high fertilizer prices. #7: personal life stress, #8: customers cutting back and canceling services – and #9: lower margins on work . You

will note here that a potential recession comes in as #3, below high fuel prices and the ever concerning labor shortage (listen to the GM podcast episode “My Missing Labor Force” for more on this) ...

Let's talk about some of the statistics related to recessions and how they affect us. I will try not to nerd out here, so no worries. It's not like I really understand this stuff – it's more of my opinion, so pick and choose, if you will here. If you look at some statistics around these recurring economic downturn cycles, you can see when they occur and how long they last. You'll be struck by a number of things looking at it this way.

First of all, when you look at stock market growth over time on a statistical chart – you'll see that recessions really don't last that long in the grand scheme of things anyway. The Standard and

Poor's stock index basically rises at a 45 degree angle from the turn of the 20th century onward – with a few blips up and down. Noting that your lifetime might be half the chart, you can see that even the worst recession only takes a small chunk of that time. If you can weather it, it begins – and it ends. The pandemic for example, one of the biggest chaotic periods a business could ever experience, if we put it on a chart over the course of the 20th century to the present day -it really is only a very small blip in time. With hindsight we might experience it that way in the coming years as we look back. I know that over a million people died in the United States – and that is not something to minimize in any way, but the pandemic economic downturn was really very short lived.

If you can hang in there, facts will

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show that most folks will regain 70% of their original stock market investment within one year of the lowest point during any recession. They will gain 84% back within two years from a recession low point, so the takeaway for me is that recessions don't last – and that recovery is actually quite fast. Knowing this can help inform your thinking about how you are going to choreograph yourself through the next economic down cycle.

The labor market has rebounded significantly now and is only 1% or so down from where it was in February 2020. There are still 11 and a half million jobs open in the US as of 2023 – but workers that are 55 and older have increased by 16 million over the last 20 years, while correspondingly – workers 55 and younger have declined over the past two decades. I've mentioned it before, but it's surprising to consider that over 40% of landscape

production workers will stay less than one year on the job. I think if you take this statistic to heart, it might help to lessen the blow when somebody leaves unexpectedly – knowing that that is often going to be the case. One in five young adults aged 25 to 34 is living with their parents now. This is another statistic that helps us understand why young people don't necessarily have to apply for a position with you – pushing rocks up a hill in the rain – when they could be at home playing Xbox.

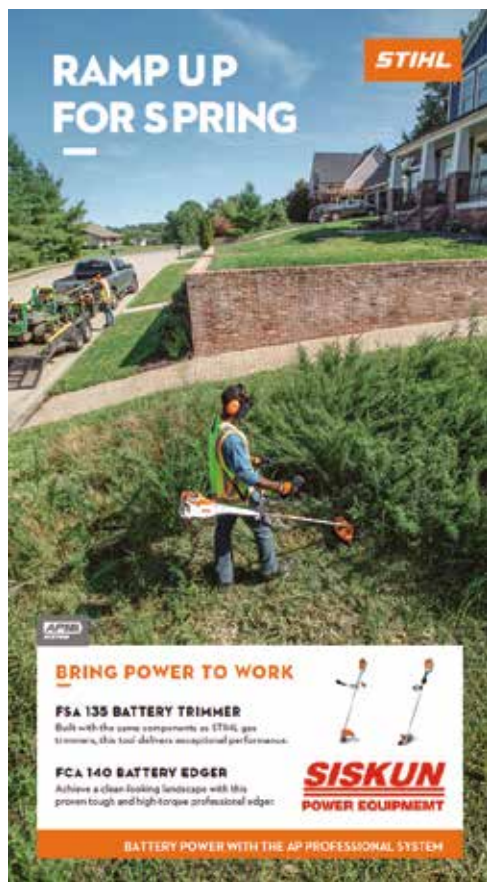
There are quite a few elements that are holding us back and keeping us from making better business progress in the economy as it exists now. One issue is the exponential increase in construction costs overall. Not only the supply side delays that are slowly easing now, but the fast-rising costs related to supply chain disruptions, port issues and the inventory of imported goods that have been rolled back from suppliers. Concrete and cement inventories were reduced significantly in 2022, due to supplier and labor issues, and we can generally expect overall higher material pricing in construction costs versus consumer pricing overall.

Keep in mind that construction bids generally will lag behind any pending cost increases. This is a hard thing to factor in. Hourly construction wages are up 6% from 2021 to 2022 overall and many firms are offering premium wages and hiring incentives. On the brighter side, it appears that inflation is finally going down now. But this all combines to make it a difficult management atmosphere and in saying this, underscores the fact that you do need to plan ahead for any economic downturn.

Think about the various aspects of your business that you can improve or clarify to counteract any potential downturn during a recession. None of these suggestions are going to solve all your problems – but I've taken

some time to think about it – and I think that if you use at least a few of these approaches to good effect, you might mitigate the worst aspects of any upcoming recession. One basic issue is the fact that – we really need to counteract the landscape worker image problem. I've talked about this before – in the education and labor force episodes, that we have a real problem with how the younger labor force looks at the work. This needs to be reappraised and presented *as a career and a craft*. That noted, when you are looking at a potential downturn in the economy, you need to understand clearly what right sizing means for your company – and what layoffs are potentially going to occur, so having a good sense of your actual productivity is key. Are there redundant efforts taking place? Who is creating unnecessary drama in the office and shop? Who can best multitask if put in a new position? These are all things that you will probably want to answer privately – and be ready to turn on a dime to resolve. Further, you will need to know your shop and tool inventory needs. Whether it is equipment, or shop supplies or office materials or computer equipment, you will need to know and anticipate your upcoming inventory needs. If you're in a retail situation – you might want to consider consignment from a supplier – and think about how you can organize leftover materials from job sites into overstock that you can resell.

Needless to say, it's important to understand your main competitors – and their strengths and weaknesses. You'll probably need to adjust to more competitive pricing when it all hits the fan, as more and more people are on the street claiming to be landscape companies – once laid off from work and looking for something to do. Their time and material markups and lowball hourly rates are a killer. So you need to offset this with strategic marketing and



special offers of your own. Automate everything where you can and set up a digital agreement system. Gantt chart your installation periods online and tighten that up as best you can. Look at value added services and preset options that you can easily and repeatedly add to your proposals. There are a number of things that you do over and over – and we talk about this in the Green Meridian ‘Dozen things we do’ podcast episodes, but you will want to standardize certain things that you can do on a repeated basis, say a planted pot arrangement or something of that nature. Consider additional perennials that everyone would want, or a rock accent that you can do quickly. Create a sense of urgency with a giveaway or a timing special, whereby you give the client something for signing within a 10-day period or something of that nature. These kinds of things can be add-on items that can add a percentage to each project, a small amount that might be enough to help you reach a profitable tipping point.

On another note, you’ll want to

understand your profit overall – your break-even points and your key profit indicators. How much cash billing is needed every day for your company? Do you know what your profit centers are and how to differentiate between the facets of the work that are more profitable than others? Do you make more money hardscaping than you do installing pots? Are irrigation systems more profitable than planting layouts? You should know this. In addition, you’ll want to work the cash flow with the bank. Establish and gather an early line of credit. At the first sniff of a recession, cash out your entire line of credit before it gets pulled. This will give you more cushion when you need it from a cash flow perspective. Talk to your personal banker early and find a backup banker at the bank as well – because it’s highly likely that you are going to see turnover from the bank in the same way that you have turnover at your own company. Of course, you will want to check for PPP, ERTC and special grants that might be available. Talk to your suppliers and consolidate

your purchases overall. If you can focus your purchasing with a single supplier, you might be able to garner some loyalty and additional discounting or extended terms. Purchase any materials that you can dependably sell ahead of a downturn. On the staffing front, learn the rules of partial unemployment to relate to staff. This might enable you to put together a rolling layoff, in which your staff would be able to make some income while shifting to a part-time position. Think about how to make a flexible staffing solution for certain segments of your company. Talk to your staff about your thinking overall – and be optimistically outlining solutions to help get them ready for what might be a bit of a roller coaster ride. One good aspect of this – is that your smarter employees will know that there is not necessarily another position right around the corner, so they will want to make the best of getting the business rolling again.

What are some other important

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things you can do while in the midst of the downturn? We talked about this a bit in the Green Meridian 'Office systems' podcast episode, but I will say again that it's fundamental to set your office up with a simple lead generating infrastructure. Base your leads on a series of promotions if you can. Gather project images and set up collateral materials that you can distribute. Organize timely automated and easy responses for client inquiries. Critically and I can't stress this enough, you need to start using a CRM, a client relationship manager or database that helps you to collate information related to your inquiries. Initially this will not seem very important, but over a period of time it is a critical aspect of measuring how you gain business. CRM will help you in several areas. It serves as a good format for record keeping and finding current and past client account data. It helps you understand your job sizes, demographics and how potential clients are finding your company. It will inform you about how well inquiries are being managed by you and your team – and it can also help list out potential pending clients that need a more immediate follow up.

Think about doing a deep dive into Google Adwords. This is a critical marketing tool that I've talked about before. Set up a free or low cost AdWords expense so that you can direct how clients will find you online. Look at your best value offerings and your best margin materials. Diversify your services. What is something new that you could offer? Provide new and innovative services where you can and show repeatable options as I said and add-ons on every proposal. Try to be clear in your understanding of advertising overall. Too often you hear in the industry talk about how this or that venue 'doesn't work'. You'll hear things like "Angie's list doesn't work" or "Houzz is a rip off" or "I'm

not on social media". These folks are being very short sighted. The "I don't really get clients through my website" is another one you sometimes hear. This is just a way to obscure the fact that they don't have their **** together at all with regard to marketing. What are they doing – going door to door? Sending smoke signals? If that's all working for them then fine, but it's not a good way to base a business. You should base your decisions on actually knowing the answer – and not relying on something anecdotal. You will likely know someone in the design build business that is working from job to job. You may be doing this yourself. Working one job at a time and thinking about the following week rather than six months ahead. Try to jump out of this bind and put yourself in a position to be more forward thinking.

One thing is clear. Be wary of trends, in economics or gardening. *Trend watching is to landscaping what dressage is to rodeo.* It's not the real deal. It denies the Duende. Real landscape professionals can embrace chaos with a smile. Real landscaping means getting in there and creating durable, beautiful lasting solutions. We've displayed a bit of hubris collectively over the years, let's admit it. We thought we were so

smart back in the day – before the big recession or the pandemic aftershock. We thought we were marketing geniuses, while we rode a wave that we had no idea was breaking. We used to think we could anticipate the market and know what the "garden trends" were and how to articulate them clearly. As far as I'm concerned, that's a lot of hoo-ha. Design magazines are full of "professionally designed" gardens that simply won't be there decades from now. I think pragmatic creativity is what people want. (*Could that be the new trend?*) Folks really don't change as much as the design magazines would have us believe. What do Clients want? They hope for a good rapport with their horticultural consultant and a sensible and creative landscape solution. They want to review hardscape choices, to choose from a selection of low-maintenance plant material and see evidence of good craftsmanship. *We may not know what the economic changes will be*, but our businesses – like our landscapes – should be built for resilience, but stand ready to embrace the chaos.

This article is edited for WALP from *The Green Meridian Podcast – a Landscape Design Build Toolkit*.

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Are You Growing as a Business Leader?

by John Marshall, Founder of Results-Driven

Recently, you realized that as the owner of your landscape firm you're stuck. You're not really growing. You're not developing. You don't want to admit it, you're afraid to think it, but you're not growing as a leader.

To help you grow here are some strategies you can implement into your lab tomorrow.

Many of you like to read. When you're reading various articles including one's in the NW Landscape Professional capture the ideas. Don't move onto your next task too quickly. Record them. Make a note of them. One idea that successful lab owners and other professionals do is to create a folder of the ideas that resonate with you. Then you can refer to them in the future.

Once you learn a creative idea, implement it into your business, instead of letting it linger. See how it works in your company. Test it. Use it. Look for ways to make this idea even better.

One of the by products when you

learn new ideas and skills, is you'll be more confident. Often significantly more confident. It can even re-ignite your passion if it's waning. For many landscape professionals, it can help them to stay focused and on track.

Growth can also occur when new ideas challenge you as a leader. These new ideas, or concepts can help you go outside your existing comfort zone and push you into a new territory. The new areas can be new markets, and new technology.

The implementation and execution of your new ideas will also help evolve you into a stronger leader. What do I mean?

A strong leader is more forward thinking and more proactive rather than being reactive. If you've recently felt you're too reactive, perhaps this article is the wake up call you need to grow as a leader.

Growing and developing as a leader can be fun, invigorating, and beneficial.

And surprisingly, there are many ways to grow if you keep looking out for new ideas.

The final benefit that might get you to focus more on personal growth is, as you grow, so does your business. 🌱

About the Author

John Marshall, Founder of Results-Driven, is an expert at helping small business owners get results. As the owner of a Landscape Company, you're probably frustrated because your business is underperforming, and you don't know why. You don't know where to look. Or, even where to start. That's why Results-Driven created an innovative business assessment tool, used by clients in over 30 industries. The assessment will shine a light on your business. In 15 minutes, it'll give you the truth. Perhaps, the unpleasant truth. You'll finally understand why your company is performing at its present level, with a score out of 100. To request your free business assessment, email John [john@results-driven.com].

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Landscape Contractors: Stay Safe As You Gear up for the Spring Season



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As the weather grows warmer, and mowers and other outdoor power equipment are put to greater use and new equipment is acquired, remember to instill safe operating practices among your employees.

“Think safety first,” says Kris Kiser, President & CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI). “I can’t stress enough the importance of your employees, seasonal help and H2-B workers understanding and following manufacturer’s guidance for safe operation, especially mowers.”

OPEI offers these tips to get your crews and their equipment ready for a safe season:

- **Identify the differences in your machines.** Whether you’re using a zero-turn, ride-on, mid-mount, rear-mount, garden tractor or other type of mower, make sure you and your crew members understand their unique design, requirements, weight classification, and other differences that impact how to use it safely.
- **Review** equipment with your work crews before the season gets rolling. **Make sure all your workers understand the safety features** of the equipment they are using, and that they are following manufacturer guidelines and on-product messages for safe operation. Do spot safety checks on job sites, and incorporate safety checks into your morning roll-out.
- **Make sure safety features are operable.** Figure out the safety features on all your equipment, and make sure they are operable. **Do not disable or modify** manufacturer-installed safety equipment. Be sure that you review this with your work crews and check equipment when it returns from a work site.
- **Keep children away from machines during operation.** A child should never be on the equipment. Be aware of your surroundings and watch out for bystanders who may be nearby.
- **Walk the areas you intend to mow and remind crews to do so.** Slopes, wet grass and weather may impact the equipment’s performance, as well as safe handling procedures. Remind everyone to pick up sticks and limbs that may have fallen to the ground and any loose objects that could be hit by a mower. Inspect trees for damaged limbs that may get in your way when mowing.
- **Identify slopes in advance.** Follow all manufacturer guidance regarding operating machinery on slopes.
- **Manufacturer-supplied owner’s manuals and guidance should be readily available.** If you have lost the guidance supplied with the machine, look it up online and save a copy of it on your computer, print out a copy, in any language needed, for your employees and keep it in an easily-accessible location like the break room and trucks. Do not remove on-product safety messages.
- **Look over equipment before use in the field.** Check the air filter, oil level and gasoline tank. Watch for loose belts and missing or damaged parts. Replace any parts needed or

take your equipment to a qualified service representative. Check to be sure that you have the appropriate, manufacturer-recommended batteries, if needed.

- **Protect your power. Use only E10 or less fuel in gasoline-powered outdoor power equipment if it is not designed for higher ethanol blends.** Add a fuel stabilizer if you don’t use up all the fuel in the tank right away. Burn off any fuel before storing the mower more than 30 days.

Also, for battery-powered equipment, only use battery packs specified **by the manufacturer.** Follow all charging instructions as outlined in the owner’s manual. Be sure to store fuel and batteries safely. Keep batteries away from other metal objects, store them in a climate-controlled area, and never stack batteries. Look at your trucks and work trailers and determine how you will store batteries in the field, before the crews leave the garage or office.

- **Keep your equipment clean.** It will run more efficiently and last longer. **Always** remove dirt, oil or grass **before using and storing, and store equipment in a dry place, avoiding damp or wet environments.**

For information on safe fueling, go to www.LookBeforeYouPump.com

Kris Kiser is the President and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), an international trade association representing outdoor power equipment, small engine, utility vehicle, golf car and personal transport vehicle manufacturers and suppliers. For more safety information visit www.opei.org.

Contratistas de jardinería: Manténgase seguro mientras se preparan para la temporada de primavera

Mientras que el clima se vuelve más cálido y las cortadoras de césped y otros equipos de energía al aire libre se utilizan más y se adquieren nuevos equipos, recuerde inculcar prácticas operativas seguras entre sus empleados.

“Piense primero en la seguridad”, dice Kris Kiser, presidente y CEO del Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI). “No puedo enfatizar lo suficiente la importancia de que sus empleados, la ayuda estacional y los trabajadores H2-B comprendan y sigan las pautas del fabricante para una operación segura, especialmente las cortadoras de césped”.

OPEI ofrece estos consejos para lograr que su personal y sus equipamiento para una temporada segura:

- **Identifique las diferencias en sus máquinas.** Ya sea que esté utilizando un tractor de jardín de giro cero, montado en bicicleta, montaje medio, montaje trasero, o cualquier otro tipo de cortadora de césped, asegúrese de que usted y los miembros de su equipo entiendan su diseño único, requisitos, clasificación de peso y otras diferencias que afectan la forma de usarlo de manera segura.
- **Revise el equipo con sus trabajadores antes de que comience la temporada.** Asegúrese de que todos sus trabajadores comprendan las características de seguridad del equipo que están utilizando y que estén siguiendo las pautas del fabricante y los mensajes en el producto para una operación segura. Realice controles de seguridad puntuales en los sitios de trabajo e incorpore controles de seguridad en su despliegue matutino.
- **Asegúrese de que las características de seguridad sean operables.** Averigüe las características de seguridad de todos sus equipos y asegúrese de que estén operativos. No desactive ni modifique el equipo de seguridad instalado por el fabricante.
- **Mantenga a los niños alejados de las máquinas durante el funcionamiento.** Un niño nunca debe estar en el equipo. Sea consciente de su entorno y tenga cuidado con los transeúntes que puedan estar cerca.
- **Camine por las áreas que tiene la intención de cortar el césped y recuerde a sus trabajadores que lo hagan.** Las pendientes, la hierba mojada y el clima pueden afectar el rendimiento del equipo, así como los procedimientos de manejo seguro. Recuérdeles a todos que recojan palos y extremidades que puedan haber caído al suelo y cualquier objeto suelto que pueda ser golpeado por una cortadora de césped. Inspeccione los árboles en busca de ramas dañadas que puedan interponerse en su camino al cortar el césped.
- **Identifique las pendientes con anticipación.** Siga todas las instrucciones del fabricante con respecto al funcionamiento de la maquinaria en pendientes.
- **Los manuales del propietario y la orientación suministrados por el fabricante deben estar fácilmente disponibles.** Si ha perdido la guía suministrada con la máquina, búsquela en línea y guarde una copia de ella en su computadora, imprima una copia, en cualquier idioma necesario, para sus empleados y guárdela en un lugar de fácil acceso como la sala de descanso y los camiones. No elimine los mensajes de seguridad del producto.
- **Revise el equipo antes de usarlo en el campo.** Revise el filtro de aire, el nivel de aceite y el tanque de gasolina. Esté atento a las correas sueltas y a las piezas faltantes o dañadas. Reemplace las piezas necesarias o lleve su equipo a un representante de servicio

calificado. Asegúrese de tener las baterías adecuadas recomendadas por el fabricante, si es necesario.

- **Protege tu energía.** Use solo E10 o menos combustible en equipos de energía para exteriores que funcionan con gasolina si no están diseñados para mezclas de etanol más altas. Agregue un estabilizador de combustible si no usa todo el combustible en el tanque de inmediato. Queme cualquier combustible antes de almacenar el cortacésped más de 30 días.
- Además, para equipos alimentados por batería, solo use baterías especificados por el fabricante. Siga todas las instrucciones de carga como se describe en el manual del propietario. Asegúrese de almacenar el combustible y las baterías de manera segura. Mantenga las baterías alejadas de otros objetos metálicos, guárdelas en un área climatizada y nunca apile baterías. Mire sus camiones y tráiler de trabajo y determine cómo almacenará las baterías en el campo, antes de que los trabajadores salgan del garaje u oficina.

- **Mantenga su equipo limpio.** Se ejecutará de manera más eficiente y durará más tiempo. Siempre retire la suciedad, el aceite o el césped antes de usar y almacenar, y guarde el equipo en un lugar seco, evitando ambientes húmedos o mojados.

Para obtener información sobre el abastecimiento seguro de combustible, vaya a www.LookBeforeYouPump.com

Kris Kiser es el presidente y CEO del Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), una asociación comercial internacional que representa a fabricantes y proveedores de equipos de energía para exteriores, motores pequeños, vehículos utilitarios, automóviles de golf y vehículos de transporte personal. Para obtener más información de seguridad, visite www.opei.org.

■ The Lawn & Landscape Technology Conference Dates Heads to Las Vegas

The green industry's only conference dedicated exclusively to education and exhibits focused on technology will take place August 9-11, 2023, at Paris Las Vegas Hotel and Casino

CLEVELAND, OHIO — The Lawn & Landscape Technology Conference, the green industry's only conference dedicated solely to technology for landscape contractors, lawn care professionals and industry decision-makers will be held August 9-11, 2023 at the Paris Las Vegas Resort & Casino. This day 2 ½ event will feature a robust educational program completely focused on how landscape professionals are using technology and software to operate more efficient and profitable businesses.

"With new challenges arising and new solutions coming to the forefront in 2023, it's more important than ever for you to connect and discover ways to build and strengthen competitive and profitable green industry businesses," said Lawn & Landscape Editor Brian Horn. "We are excited to once again offer both high-level education, as well as the latest technology, all under one roof for the most rewarding conference experience."

In addition to a powerful education

program, attendees will also have access to the exhibit hall featuring the latest technology and software companies serving the professional landscape and lawn care markets. Throughout the conference, attendees will also find ample time for networking.

"Our goal with the Lawn & Landscape Technology Conference is to provide you direct access to the top technology and software companies on the market," Lawn & Landscape Publisher Dave Szy said. "In 2023,

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Registration rates and pass options will be announced soon.

About Lawn & Landscape Technology Conference

Launched in February 2020, the Lawn & Landscape Technology Conference is the industry's premier industry conference to bring professionals together to learn how technology can better their business and to network with business-savvy entrepreneurs. In addition to focused educational programming, the conference features a world-class exhibit floor.

About Lawn & Landscape

Lawn & Landscape is the leading b2b publication serving the \$70-billion landscape and lawn care industry. With a suite of services – including a monthly print edition, dozens of e-newsletters, active social media accounts and events – Lawn & Landscape provides landscape business owners with the research, insight and analysis to help them grow their companies. To learn more, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com.

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