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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 3,000 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.



Fall is here!

Tim Buiten

*Tim's Complete Landscape Management & Mist'er Rain
2024 WALP State President*

I hope you've had a wonderful summer and are looking forward to the upcoming fall season. With the leaves beginning to change and irrigation winterization just around the corner, it's an exciting time of year! Hopefully, you've had a chance to relax, spend quality time with family, recharge personally, and are now ready to finish the year strong.

Reflecting on all that WALP has accomplished over the summer, it's been an eventful season. From vendor events and trainings to our annual golf tournament and the WALP/APLD/WSNLA summer BBQ, there's been plenty of opportunities to connect and grow. I hope you were able to attend one or more of these events!

As we transition into fall, keep an eye out for more activities on the horizon. We have additional vendor events, specialized training classes, our annual WALP planning session, holiday gatherings, and, of course, our biggest event of the year—the WALP Conference. Be sure to stay tuned for details on these exciting events by regularly checking our website, www.WALP.org, and by keeping up with our weekly WALP Wednesday newsletter.

If you aren't receiving the newsletter yet, you can easily subscribe at the bottom of our website, or feel free to reach out, and we'll gladly assist you in getting signed up.

Wishing you a productive and rewarding fall season! 🍁

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 Photo: GRAND AWARD, Malone's Landscape, Design / Build
Double Decker Delight – A one-note back of home and yard is transformed into an area the whole family can enjoy. Thoughtful use of space creates space for all.*

Garden Artwork Credit: Vecteezy.com. Page 5.

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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website: www.walp.org

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WALP Conference 2025: Driving Efficiency in the Field

By Will Anstey
Devonshire Landscapes
WALP Conference Chair

As we close out another vibrant Pacific Northwest summer, I hope you've found time to enjoy it as much as I did. In addition to growing my business by 20% last year, I made sure to balance work with recreation in the mountains, lakes, and rivers, and even worked on my home landscape alongside my wife. It was great to connect with many of you at the WALP Golf Tournament, and I'm looking forward to seeing you again at this year's Annual Conference, where we've planned more hands-on, real-world training for our contractor members.

This year, we're offering three tailored educational tracks: Professional, Technical, and Environmental. Each track includes four 90-minute sessions on Friday, February 8th, offering critical insights for growing and fine-tuning your business. Additionally, we will host First Aid & CPR certification classes in both English and Spanish on Thursday, February 7th.

Maximizing Efficiency for Greater Profitability

Last year's keynote speaker, Tony Bass, shared his industry knowledge, emphasizing the importance of understanding your numbers and pricing strategies to ensure profitability. Knowing how to calculate expenses, depreciation, and other financials is essential, but as we all know, labor is often our biggest expense. Efficiency in the field is an area where owners and managers can make a huge impact, which directly contributes to profitability.

Many of the challenges we face are "people problems," often exacerbated

by cultural differences between predominantly white management and a largely Hispanic workforce. This year, we are fortunate to have a keynote speaker uniquely suited to help bridge this gap and improve team dynamics.

Meet Our Keynote Speaker: Ermelindo Escobedo



Ermelindo Escobedo, our 2025 keynote speaker, brings over 30 years of experience in human resources, public speaking, and employment

law. Growing up in the Yakima Valley and working in agriculture, Mr. Escobedo earned a Bachelor's degree from Eastern Washington University and a Master of Public Administration from The Evergreen State College. He now runs his consultancy, Work Strategies, where he focuses on leadership development and improving workplace culture. Fluent in Spanish, he has a deep understanding of the nuances and challenges in managing a multicultural workforce.

Leadership Training for Long-Term Success

Mr. Escobedo's presentations focus on leadership and its critical role in shaping company culture. His interactive sessions are designed to equip managers with the skills to motivate, develop, and coach their teams to perform at their best. Leadership, he emphasizes, isn't just about getting the job done—it's about inspiring teams to elevate their performance. His training integrates

both legal knowledge and best practices, making it highly relevant in today's evolving workplace landscape.

Key benefits of leadership training include:

- Helping participants see themselves as leaders, inspiring both personal and team performance.
- Equipping leaders with skills to focus on positive, productive activity rather than wasting time on unproductive tasks.

continued on page 5

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WALP Conference 2025

Driving Efficiency in the Field



The 2025 Northwest Landscape Industry Conference, Trade Show and Awards Banquet will be held on February 6th – 8th 2025 at Hotel Indigo Everett for our third straight year. Thank you to our Conference Title Sponsor: Turf Star Western.



We are excited to announce a one-day special event by offering a First Aid & CPR seminar in both English and Spanish to become certified and recertified. The cost for this all-day seminar is \$150 for WALP members, and \$300 for non-WALP members. This seminar is not a part of the conference registration.

The conference will be offering professional track sessions and technical track sessions for your employees. The conference registration is now open online. WALP members cost is \$295 per person, non-WALP members is \$600 per person. More detailed information shall be forthcoming.

During the conference, our annual Trade Show featuring over 40 industry manufacturers, distributors and equipment providers will be on hand to show off their products and services.

To cap off the conference is the always popular Northwest Premiere Landscape Awards Program presentation will be recognized at the 2025 Awards Banquet.

As of this writing, going to press, thank you to the following sponsors:

- Conference Title Conference – Turf Star Western
- Lunch Sponsor – STIHL

continued on page 6

Conference Committee

continued from page 3

- Creating stronger team collaboration and a more positive work environment.

Mr. Escobedo will conduct two sessions in the morning for our Professional track (aimed at owners and managers) and two afternoon sessions for our Technical track (designed for Crew Leaders and Field Supervisors). Investing in leadership training can significantly improve field efficiency and, ultimately, your bottom line. Several of Mr. Escobedo's clients have reported profit increases of up to 20% after implementing his strategies!

First Aid & CPR Certification: Ensuring Safety and Compliance

As owners and managers, we are responsible for the safety of our employees. Our First Aid and CPR certification training is designed to help you meet this responsibility and comply with Washington State regulations. Washington Industrial Safety and Health rule WAC 296-800 and WAC 296-155 (Safety Standards for Construction Work) require that all employees be provided with quick and effective first-aid attention in the event of an on-the-job injury. The presence of personnel who have been adequately trained in first-aid procedures at or near those places where employees are working is required by the following:

- Whenever there are two or more employees working at any worksite, a person or persons holding a valid first-aid certificate must be available.
- All crew leaders, supervisors, or persons in direct charge of one or more employees must have a valid first-aid certificate.

We're offering limited slots for certifications in both English and Spanish instruction, so I encourage you to sign up early on our website to secure your spot.

continued on page 6

Conference Committee

continued from page 5

Discover the Latest Innovations at Our Trade Show

Of course, our Annual Conference wouldn't be complete without our Trade Show, where leading vendors will showcase the latest products and services in the landscaping industry. This is a great opportunity to discover new tools and innovations to streamline your operations.

The Awards Banquet and WEF Silent Auction are also on the agenda—always a highlight of the event. It's a chance to dress up, celebrate, and connect with peers while supporting our industry.

Thank You to Our Sponsors

A huge thank you to our Title Sponsor, Turf Star Western Equipment, and all our other sponsors who make these events possible. I encourage all of our contractor members to support our sponsors as they are integral to our industry's growth and the success of our association. These vendor representatives are a huge and underutilized resource and wealth of knowledge that more of our members should connect with and take advantage of.

For the latest updates and additional speaker announcements, as well as sponsorship opportunities stay tuned to WALP Wednesday emails and visit our website at www.walp.org. I encourage everyone to sign up their team early this year. Get the tax write off and invest in your team in the off-season. We look forward to seeing you in February! 🌱



continued from page 5

WALP Conference 2025

Driving Efficiency in the Field



- Morning Break Sponsor – Coates Landscape Supply / Walker Mowers
- Annual Meeting Sponsor – Bartlett Tree Experts

Sponsorships and Trade Show Table Tops Display Spaces are available. Contact the WALP office for more detailed information at info@walp.org.

The early sign-ups for Sponsorships and the Trade Show have been amazing. Thank you to the following WALP members for their continued support:

Sponsors

- Conference Title Sponsor: Turf Star Western
- Lunch Sponsor: STIHL
- Morning Break Sponsor: Coates Landscape Supply / Walker Mowers
- Annual Meeting Sponsor: Bartlett Tree Experts

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Bartlett Tree Experts
Benefit Solutions NW
Coates Landscape Supply / Walker Mowers
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GOLF TOURNAMENT

2024 WALP Golf Tournament

The WALP Annual Golf Tournament was a fantastic success. Thank you to all the Golf Teams and Golfers. Thank you to our Tournament Sponsor Cedar Grove for their continued support. Thank you to our managing partner Golf Events for putting on a great event. Thank you to Preston Smith of Bud Clary Auto Group for donating the Big Screen Television for the Post Tournament Raffle.

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AWARDS PROGRAM



Northwest Premiere Landscape Awards Program

*By Lloyd Glasscock
Awards Committee Chair
Northwest Flower & Garden Festival*

The summer has appeared to come to an abrupt end and with it the rainy season. It is hoped our landscapers took advantage of some good weather earlier to get their photos ready for the WALP Awards Program! Take the time to enter projects in one of our Association's longest running programs.

The application and accompanying info can be found at <https://www.walp.org/northwest-premiere-landscape-awards-program/>. This will take you directly to the info you need to enter. Awards will be presented at the Annual Conference slated for February 7th at the Hotel Indigo in Everett WA.

Interested in serving on the Awards Committee? We do have space available, particularly for someone that would like to continue with it and chair the Program

in 2025. Contact Lloyd Glasscock, kaibab66@gmail.com or phone 425.422.3336 for more info. Likewise, if you have questions about how to enter a project or what category to place the entry in I would be happy to answer those for you.

In closing, here are a few of our entries from 2024. Make it a great Fall! 🍁

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RAIN BIRD



GRAND AWARD in Residential Landscape Construction for Double Decker Delight entered by MALONE'S LANDSCAPING

This project featured the renovation of an uninteresting landscape with nowhere to gather or enjoy the space. The site now includes a spacious outdoor kitchen with seating and access to an upper level. A gas firepit adds to the interest as a gathering place while the backyard still provides opportunity for play.



GRAND AWARD in Design/Build for 'Farmer Residence' entered by NEW LEAF CREATIONS

A mess of a rotting back patio was changed into a spot you don't want to leave in this residential project. Great year-round appeal and thoughtful use of plant materials are accented by creative though functional uses of stone throughout. The outdoor entertaining area is a cohesive part of the project transitioning well into the new landscape.

Entry No:

(For Office Use Only)

WALP 2024 Premiere Landscape Awards Program**ENTRY FORM****Entry Deadline: November 8, 2024**

USE SEPARATE FORM FOR EACH ENTRY

All information on this form should be typed or carefully printed.

Entry Category

Cost Limits

Applicant's Firm Name

Phone

Business Address

Cell Phone

Email

Name of Contact Individual in Firm

Project Name

Project Owner's Name

Location or Address of Project

City

State

Zip

How to Take Memorable Photos:

- Use the highest quality setting on your digital camera. RAW format is best if your camera has that setting. If not, JPEG format is acceptable. If you scan the photos, scan them to a high-quality JPEG file. 300 dpi / 1.5 MB >
- Take before and after photographs.
- Take photographs early in the morning or late in the afternoon/evening.
- Check the area for debris, spent blooms, hoses or other "ugly" parts.
- Try to get the greatest depth of field for a landscape.
- Look at a shot from different perspectives; higher, lower, or from a different angle.

Owner's/Owner's Agent Consent:

I/WE hereby grant permission to enter our property or premises for the purpose of photographing and publicizing the landscape project in this competition to the accredited representatives of the Washington Association of Landscape Professionals. It is understood that no fees or charges of any kind are required of the owner.

Date

Project Owner's/Owner's Agent Signature

Telephone No.

ENTRY FORM

Entry Fees:

- A fee of **\$155** for a firm's first entry and **\$125** for each additional entry must accompany this form when it is uploaded.
- Make checks payable to Washington Association of Landscape Professionals (WALP). WALP also accepts VISA or MC.
- Entries must be received in the WALP Office no later than 5:00 PM **of the due date. Late or incomplete entries may not be judged.** All entries become the property of WALP and may be used for publication or for any other purpose the Association deems appropriate.
- Presentation of awards will occur at the WALP Annual Conference or at a 'stand alone' event.
- The Awards Banquet is generally held in January as a part of our Annual Conference. You are encouraged to bring family, project designers, owners, and anyone else affiliated with your project.

Press Release Information:

List two publications, print or on-line in your area; please include contact person if known, e-mail addresses, department, phone, and fax numbers.

Company History/Personal Biography for PR Purposes:

Entry No: _____
(For Office Use Only)

JUDGING FORM

To Be Filled Out By Entrant

Instructions: In the first column, check items performed by you; in the second column, items performed by sub-contractors; in the third column, items that were part of existing conditions or that the project owner did; and in the fourth column, work designed by the entrant. Use the remaining space to the right to describe work performed by subcontractors or to provide further explanations as needed. It is understood that all items may not be applicable.

Entry Deadline November 8, 2024

Entry Category

Entry Name

Date Project Started

Date Project Completed

	Work by Entrant	Work by Others	Existing	Designed by Entrant	Name of Subcontractor/Others
Benches					
Decks					
Drainage					
Driveways					
Fences					
Grading					
Irrigation System					
Lawn					
Lighting					
Ornamental Pools					
Placement/Rocks & Boulders					
Planters					
Pool Decking					
Seasonal Color					
Seeding/Sod					
Soil Prep					
Steps					
Swimming Pool					
Walks					
Walls					
Water Features					
Woodworking (specify)					
Misc. Work not listed					

Project Designed By: ☐ Owner ☐ L.A. ☐ Designer ☐ Contractor ☐ Other (specify) _____

Suppliers: _____

Judging Form

Entry No:

(For Office Use Only)

Description of Project

Special or unusual problems encountered

Photo Descriptions: Make sure the following descriptions correspond with your numbered photos. Do not display company name or logo on any of the photos (uniforms, trucks, signs, etc.) Do not put company name or logo on CDs. Please put project name on all photos.

No.

Description

1.	
2.	
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4.	
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6.	
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15.	

Which photo(s) above would you prefer be used in marketing materials, website, etc. Please list photo number(s) below:



AWARD OF DISTINCTION in Residential Landscape Construction “West Seattle Backyard Kitchen” entered by SEATTLE SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES

This cloistered and depressing backyard becomes a wonderful spot for entertaining or family dinners. Good use of lighting keeps it useful for all hours. Existing pavers were incorporated into the design as the homeowners wanted to keep the same look & feel of the paving. The design process finished by adding a Pergola to the patio, lighting, irrigation, and a new planting with mulch.



GRAND AWARD in Design/Build for ‘Wojick Residence entered by DEVONSHIRE LANDSCAPE

This small space challenge is transformed to a delightful private area with pathways dividing small planting areas and leading to beach access. Challenges included steep grades of work and limited access for equipment making for a labor-intensive project. Narrow sunlight windows created the need for a creative planting palette.



Getting Waterfront Lawns and Landscapes Ready for Winter

by Mary Krauszer, Shore Friendly Program, Pierce Conservation District



Winterizing our yards and landscapes is a typical item on the fall to-do list. Depending on location, we may lay winter soil amendments, move delicate potted plants indoors, or give one last trim to the grass. For Washington waterfront properties, particularly those on the Puget Sound, preparing for winter also means preparing for high tides and heavy rain.

In western Washington, our highest tides of the year, called king tides, generally occur November through February. King tides can exceed 15 feet in elevation on Puget Sound shorelines, sometimes reaching high onto waterfront lawns and properties. Recent king tide events, like that of December 2022, have caused record-breaking water levels at tide stations throughout the Sound, flooding waterfront properties with saltwater.

The record king tide in 2022 was nearly 2-feet higher than predicted due, at least in part, to a low-pressure weather system that coincided with the high tide. While some elements of king tides – like the weather – are unpredictable, we can still prepare for them. Damage to waterfront properties' lawns and landscapes from winter high tides can be minimized with some preparation.

Winter also brings heavy precipitation to western Washington. In recent years, there have been instances of record precipitation levels throughout the Pacific Northwest. This coming winter may follow suit. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicts the winter of 2024-2025 will be wetter and colder than normal in western Washington thanks to a La Niña phase of the Central Pacific Ocean's sea surface temperature oscillation. While we are not strangers to wet winters, persistent heavy rains can bring risks for waterfront lawns and landscapes through issues like surface erosion,

flooding, and landslides.

Landscape professionals can help homeowners prepare for winter on waterfront properties to avoid excessive risk and keep lawns and landscapes beautiful year-round with these tips:

Move lawn equipment, furniture away from shoreline

During king tide events, water can reach high onto shoreline properties, flooding areas that have been dry all summer and fall. We can prepare for king tides by making sure all floatable objects - like landscaping equipment and materials, furniture, and recreational equipment - are moved far enough away from the shoreline so they won't be washed away or moved by tides. Ensure that stockpiles of soil, mulch, and amendments are stored out of reach of the tide by moving them back from the water or up-slope. Homeowners who are new to a property may not know the potential for marine flooding at their properties, so encourage them to talk to neighbors

or previous homeowners to learn how much area to clear of floatable materials near their shoreline.

Avoid bare soil

During the rainy season, exposed soil is vulnerable to surface erosion. Avoid leaving bare soil over winter by placing appropriate temporary soil cover such as mulch or straw. Or establish longer-term soil cover by installing a mix of groundcover plants and taller shrubs to intercept and slow falling rain.

Recognize the value of established native vegetation. Treat plants as critical “free infrastructure” and leave as many trees on the shoreline and upland as possible while meeting other homeowner goals. Trees and shrubs provide a critical service by decreasing erosion while slowing, intercepting, and using rainwater. Without vegetation, slopes are significantly more vulnerable to saturation and erosion. Maintain all native vegetation around slopes, and carefully replace invasive weeds with deep-rooted native plants that will help to stabilize slopes.

Inspect and test drainage infrastructure

The best time to find a problem with drainage infrastructure is before the rainy season starts.

Work with your clients to establish a drainage infrastructure inspection schedule. If you install drainage infrastructure, make a monitoring and maintenance plan with the homeowner, such as fall and spring inspection. For higher risk properties or properties where the homeowner is only there seasonally, you can offer more frequent inspection services. This will allow you and the homeowner to detect problems such as clogs or leaks so they can be addressed promptly. Inspection services offer peace of mind and risk-reduction for the homeowner, as well as repeat business for your company.

During inspections, make sure that all pipe connections are sealed, with no leaks or breaks. You can check the drainage system by running water through the system during the dry season. Confirm that the amount of water going in equals the amount

coming out. If there is a significant difference, there may be a leak. Fix any drainage issues immediately to avoid contributing to erosion or landslide risks on waterfront properties.

Landscape professionals can also help homeowners recognize drainage concerns and consider solutions. On properties receiving regular professional landscaping maintenance, there may be areas of the property that the homeowner does not frequently monitor. This may be particularly common on vacation properties. Your customers will thank you if you can alert them to a potential drainage problem before it escalates into a land stability issue.

If you notice drainage issues or signs of instability, and don't offer drainage services yourself, speak with the homeowner about your concerns and connect them with the right experts to help them explore management options. Remember to bring in the appropriate experts before making recommendations; drainage

continued on page 20



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management on marine shorelines can be a very serious issue. Often working with an engineer or coastal geologist will result in the best solution and the least liability for your company.

Plan for king tides; remove salty debris from lawns

You can help your waterfront customers plan ahead for high waters by tracking predicted king tides on the Washington Sea Grant King Tides Calendar. Knowing when king tides are coming allows you and the homeowner to schedule maintenance that may be needed immediately following a flooding event, like wrack cleanup. When tidewaters reach onto a shorefront lawn, they usually leave behind material called wrack. This wrack can contain driftwood, plant material, and seaweed that has been carried onto the land by the movement of the tide. Dense wrack piles can be removed from lawns to avoid the potential for smothering grass or decaying in place. Organic debris can be returned to the beach or placed into appropriate yard waste. Take care to remove any marine trash that may be mixed in with the wrack. Make note of how high into the property the wrack

line reaches to get an understanding of the potential flood zone of a particular property. Encourage the homeowner to keep records so you can plan your future landscaping decisions accordingly.

Trade tide-impacted lawns for salt-tolerant plants

In areas that are frequently inundated with saltwater, traditional lawn grasses tend to suffer. Lawns can become patchy, and salt-tolerant weeds may out-compete lawn grasses. If lawn edges are suffering from saltwater exposure, consider replacing with salt tolerant plants of your choice. To maintain a grass-like look, try plants such as seaside saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*) or Lyngbye's sedge (*Carex lyngbyei*). Or consider creating a boarder garden of salt tolerant perennials and low-growing shrubs to provide winter coverage and summer color. Many native plants are well adapted to tolerate salt spray and salt inundation and will make a more resilient and attractive alternative to salt-impacted lawn at the water's edge.

Connect homeowners to resources

Navigating winter weather and

tides on a waterfront property can be a challenge for homeowners, even with the help of professional landscaping. Encourage homeowners to get in touch with their local Shore Friendly program (shorefriendly.org/resources) if they need help understanding issues like erosion, landslide risk, or making land management plans for their Puget Sound shoreline property. 🌿

Sources

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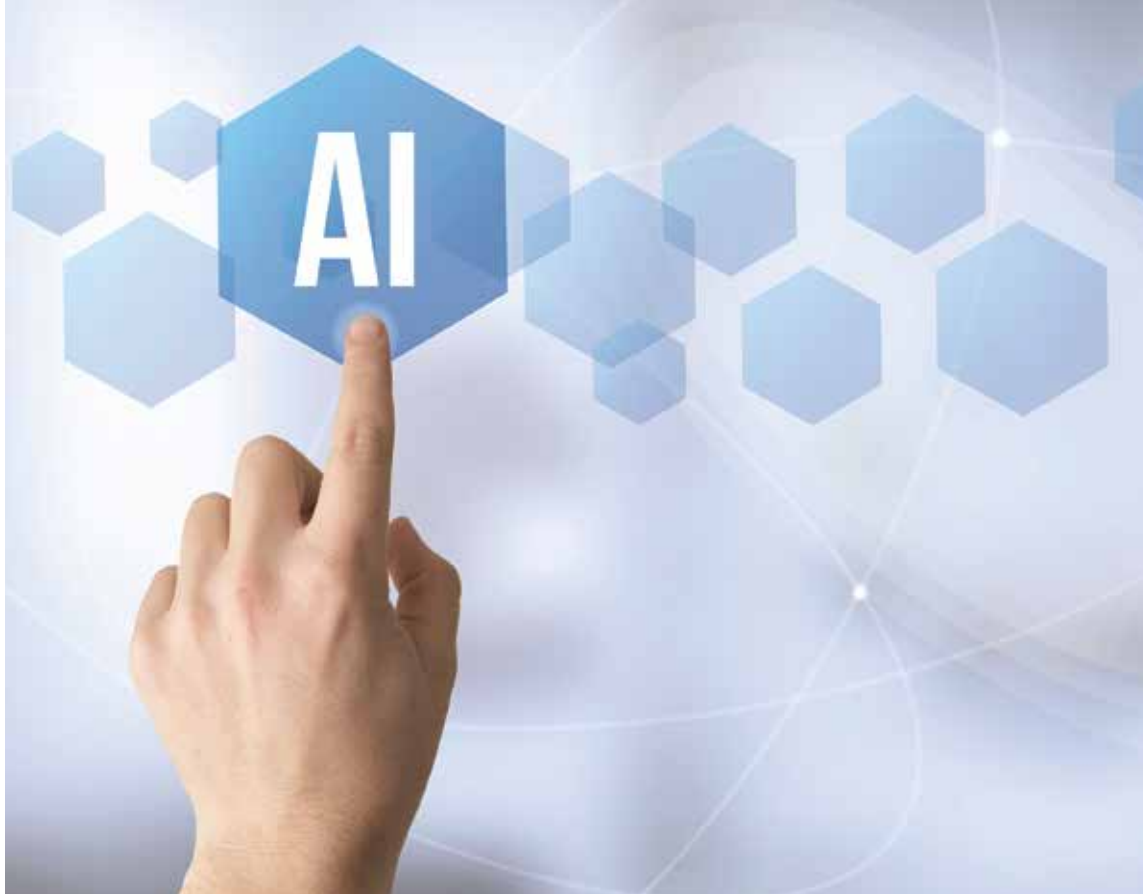
Ken Yorozu, WEF Director with 2024 Scholarship recipients

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Embracing AI: The Benefits and Drawbacks for Small Landscaping Businesses

by CHAT GPT – Submitted by Rick Longnecker, Buds & Blades Landscape Company

In the ever-evolving world of technology, artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming a game-changer across industries. For small landscaping businesses, AI offers both promising opportunities and notable challenges. Understanding these can help you navigate this new landscape effectively.

Benefits of AI for Small Landscaping Businesses

1. Enhanced Efficiency and Productivity

AI tools can automate routine tasks such as scheduling, invoicing, and customer management. For instance, AI-driven software can handle appointment bookings, send reminders, and even follow up on customer inquiries. This automation saves

valuable time and allows your team to focus on more complex, value-added activities like design and customer service.

2. Improved Customer Experience

AI can significantly enhance customer interactions. Chatbots and virtual assistants provide instant responses to customer queries, improving service availability and satisfaction. AI-driven customer relationship management (CRM) systems can analyze customer data to personalize communication and offers, leading to more effective marketing and increased client retention.

3. Data-Driven Decision Making

AI tools can analyze data from various sources—such as customer

feedback, market trends, and operational metrics—to provide actionable insights. For example, AI can identify patterns in customer preferences, helping you tailor your services and marketing strategies. This data-driven approach supports more informed decision-making and strategic planning.

4. Cost Savings

By automating tasks and improving efficiency, AI can reduce operational costs. For example, AI-powered equipment can optimize resource usage (e.g., water and fertilizer) in landscaping projects, leading to cost savings and more sustainable practices. Additionally, predictive maintenance tools can anticipate equipment issues before they become costly problems.

Drawbacks of AI for Small Landscaping Businesses

1. Initial Investment and Maintenance Costs

Implementing AI technology often requires a significant upfront investment. Small businesses may find it challenging to allocate funds for advanced AI tools, software, and training. Additionally, ongoing maintenance and updates can add to the overall cost, which might be a concern for businesses with tight budgets.

2. Complexity and Learning Curve

Adopting AI technology can be complex, especially for those unfamiliar with the tools. The learning curve associated with new software and systems can be steep, requiring time and effort to train staff. This complexity might lead to temporary disruptions in operations as the team adapts to the new technology.

3. Data Security and Privacy Concerns

AI systems often rely on large volumes of data, raising concerns about data security and privacy. Small businesses must ensure that they comply with regulations and implement robust security measures to protect sensitive customer information. A breach could damage your reputation and result in legal consequences.

4. Potential Job Displacement

While AI can enhance productivity, there is also the concern of job displacement. Automation of routine tasks might lead to reduced demand for certain roles within the company. It's important to balance technological advancements with a focus on upskilling and reskilling your workforce to adapt to the changing landscape.

Conclusion

AI presents a range of opportunities and challenges for small landscaping

businesses. While it offers potential benefits such as increased efficiency, enhanced customer experience, and cost savings, it also comes with drawbacks, including initial costs, complexity, and data security concerns. By carefully evaluating these factors and strategically implementing AI solutions, small businesses can harness the power of technology to drive growth and innovation in the landscaping industry.

In the end, the successful integration of AI into your business strategy depends on understanding your specific needs and resources. Embrace the possibilities, but do so with a clear plan and a commitment to addressing the associated challenges. 🌱

CHAT GPT is the Author of this article.



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■ First-Timer Tips: Strategies for Getting the Most Out of Equip Expo

Conquer the Landscape Industry's Award-Winning, Blockbuster Trade Show



LOUISVILLE, KY. – For landscapers, dealers, and contractors attending award-winning Equip Exposition for the very first time, show organizers are offering tips to help first-timers make the most of this blockbuster show, to be held October 15 to 18 at the Kentucky Exposition Center (KEC).

“I’ve ‘only’ been to eighteen of the 41 shows, but I have some advice. First, for the first-timer, it’s not really a one day show. For an immersive experience, you’ll want to be there all three days,” says Kris Kiser, President & CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), which owns and manages Equip Exposition, the international landscape, outdoor living, and equipment exposition.

Last year, the show drew over 27,000 people, and had more than one million square feet of exhibit space with a 30-acre Outdoor Demo Yard, which allows attendees to dig, drive, cut, mulch and other testing of new equipment they need for their businesses.

Kiser says, “Since OPEI has taken

full ownership and management of the show, our goal has been to create a world class event for our attendees. This year, we’ve invested in more peer-to-peer social opportunities like renting Churchill Downs for our welcome reception, having Kevin O’Connor of This Old House as keynote speaker, a happy hour at Freedom Hall with the Crashers band and having Trace Atkins give an arena concert at the Yum! Center at no charge to attendees and more.”

But he notes planning is key to get the most out of Equip. “Do some homework. Before you get here, download the app, go to the web site, look at the maps. Familiarize yourself with the logistics. It’s important to know how to get in and out of the KEC,” he adds. “It’s also the kind of event you want to share and bring your colleagues. It’s a team-building exercise where you can learn new things as well as from one another, have some fun and have a shared experience.”

A core mission of Equip is facilitating networking so attendees can meet people who are likely going through

similar business challenges. It’s the industry’s family reunion. “It’s crazy how willing people are to help other people [at Equip],” said Blake Albertson of B&B Lawn Care.

Identifying your business needs also is an important step when planning time at Equip. “Last few times we’ve been here, we found new equipment to help us be more efficient in our business,” said Kendal Caldwell of Senske/Emerald Lawns.

Kiser offers these tips to help first-timers to Equip plan for the best experience possible:

Before the Show

1. **Register now.** If you’re registered, you will receive Equip’s regular emails about everything going on at the show. Sign up at EquipExposition.com for \$30 before prices double on September 6. On October 14, the price doubles again. Don’t get stuck paying full price (\$120) at the show.
2. **Add education, certification classes, and training to your registration before sessions sell out.** Sessions are targeted to help you explore ways to grow their businesses, address common problems, and develop employees. Other sessions will cover irrigation, pesticide management, tree and shrub pruning, pool and spa, outdoor lighting and more. Select classes, including the popular From Worker to Leader course, are available in Spanish.
3. **Book travel arrangements and hotel reservations.** Louisville’s hotel rooms often sell out with thousands of Equip Expo attendees in town.

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You don't want to stay miles away. Some hotels are along the trade show's complimentary shuttle route.

4. **Invite others.** Bring your teammates from your company (if you are a landscaper) or your contractor customers (if you are a dealer). Equip is a fantastic team building opportunity, through shared educational experiences and testing new equipment to having fun at concerts with one another. This makes acting on new knowledge and ideas when home easier.
5. **Download the Equip Expo app.** The app is your event guide. It works with any Android or iPhone. On the app, find the Event Schedule with start times for all sessions and a tradeshow map for the entire facility. Every week leading up to the show it's updated with even more information, like where the biggest Giveaways are and where you can find breakfast, lunch, and coffee at the KEC. You can favorite any event or location to build a custom schedule as well.
6. **Determine the top three business problems you are trying to solve.** Look at the speakers, exhibits, and education offerings and identify the ones that will help you the most with those problems.
7. Familiarize yourself with the navigation tools. Many attendees drive in to the show so it's important to map the route from your hotel to the KEC and other venues, and look at available shuttle or rideshare options.
8. **Learn the five main areas of the show.** The North Wing has registration, exhibits, badge pickup, and a coffee shop. The South Wing has exhibits and easy access to the Outdoor Demo Yard (which also has food trucks and tented areas to relax) and the UTV Driving Experience. The West Wing is loaded with exhibits, Mulligan's Mutt Madness

dog adoption event, the new Garden Center and food options (as well as the rideshare pickup/drop off zone). Freedom Hall will host the Happy Hour with the Crashers on Wednesday.

9. **Pack strategically.** Check the weather and dress for both indoor and outdoor. Bring comfortable shoes, a printout of your registration confirmation (you can scan the QR code to print your badge), and dress in layers for any sudden weather changes. The Outdoor Demo Yard is a real-world experience and can get cold so bring weather-appropriate clothes.
10. **Plan to meet others.** Many events are planned to help facilitate networking so you can meet others to share relatable business challenges and solutions, learn what they know, and get real-world advice and ideas.

At the Show

1. **Don't get stuck in traffic.** Remember parking is free. Hot tip: For ease of entry, don't use the main gate at the show's rush hour. If you are coming later than 10 a.m., use Crittenden Drive gate or the Preston Highway gate and park on the North side, which is the best way to enter the KEC. Leave via a similar route to avoid any bottlenecks at the main gate.
2. **Start your day in the West Wing.** Ride shares and shuttles will drop off at the West Wing and there will be food options available.
3. **Avoid lines for badge pickup.** Print your badge at the Welcome Reception at Churchill Downs' First Turn Club or in the North Wing at the Kentucky Exposition Center. More locations are scattered throughout Louisville Hotels, the Airport, and the KEC.
4. **Don't hesitate to talk with others.** Equip is a city-wide event. That means people in your hotel elevator and restaurant are likely to be Equip attendees. Take time to meet people

as you navigate the halls, stand in line, or grab a bite to eat.

5. **Have fun at the pre-planned events.** Go to the Welcome Reception at Churchill Downs sponsored by CAT®, the Happy Hour on Wednesday with the Crashers in Freedom Hall, the Morning Show at Expo sponsored by Kohler on Thursday morning, Energize on Thursday afternoon, and the Trace Adkins concert sponsored by SENIX, Toro, Bobcat and Gravelly. Join Equip attendees at the third-annual Mulligan's 5K Fun Run and Walk, sponsored by Active Dynamics, on Wednesday morning at 7 a.m. where you'll go across the Ohio River on Louisville's Big Four Pedestrian Bridge.

After the Show

1. **Follow up with the people you met at Equip.** You can swap ideas, encourage each other in growing your respective businesses, or remind each other to do "that thing you said you would do" when you returned home.
2. **Put new ideas you picked up at the show into action.** Take that leap, do the "new thing," roll out better pricing, marketing, services, and more that you find applicable to your unique business.
3. **Register for next year's show that is planned for October 22-24, 2025.** "Though 40 years old, Equip Exposition remains the unique opportunity for the industry," sums up Kiser. "It's our industry's largest event, and it continues to grow. We're doing something right because every year we hear what an incredible return on investment it gives to the industry." 🌱



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